

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

JOB READY PHASE

2002 Results

National Summary



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

April 2003

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■ **This information was collected and analyzed under the direction of the:**

U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Benefits Administration
Office of Performance Analysis and Integrity
Surveys and Research Staff (20M44)
Washington, DC 20420

■ **Questions or comments should be directed to:**

Lynne R. Heltman, M.A.
Assistant Director for Surveys and Research (20M44)
Veterans Benefits Administration
810 Vermont Avenue N.W.
Washington, DC 20420
Phone: (202) 273-5440
email: ormlhelt@vba.va.gov

■ **Intranet Address (VA);**

<http://vbaw.vba.va.gov/bl/20/cfo/surv/srsindex.html>

■ **Internet Address;**

<http://www.vba.va.gov/surveys/>

■ **In conjunction with:**

Caliber Associates
10530 Rosehaven Street
Suite 400
Fairfax, VA 22030

■ **Or to other Surveys and Research Staff members:**

Mike Angell, (202) 273-6783
Helen T. Granito, (202) 273-6957
Missie Vaccaro, (202) 273-7452
Ronda Britt, M.A., (202) 273-6425

Executive Summary

- To measure veterans' satisfaction with the Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment (VR&E) program at the national level.
- To identify areas of the VR&E program which are most satisfying to veterans, areas of the VR&E program which are least satisfying to veterans, and areas of the VR&E program which are in greatest need of improvement.
- To determine where improvements to the VR&E program will have the greatest impact on veterans' satisfaction.
- To determine program variations that affect veterans' satisfaction.
- To create performance measures, including measures of customer service, through a strategic planning process, as required by the Government Performance and Results Act (GPRA) passed and signed into law in August of 1993.
- To establish an explicit goal for the quality of service that is "equal to the best in business" as described in Executive Order 12862, Setting Customer Service Standards, issued in September 1993. This order was aimed at "ensuring that the Federal Government provides the highest quality of service possible to the American people."

- To provide data for the purpose of monitoring VBA's performance against its customer service standards and driving improvements in customer service.
- To provide much-needed customer measures for evaluating VR&E's ongoing business process reengineering (BPR), case management, and related initiatives. Information from this survey will also be used to populate VR&E's balanced scorecard.

- As part of this project, VBA's Surveys and Research Staff held a series of focus groups with veterans and front-line employees to gather information relevant to customer satisfaction issues.
- From the focus group data, three surveys were developed to assess customer satisfaction at three phases of the program: evaluation and planning, training and education (rehabilitation services), and job ready.
- The original VR&E surveys, designed by the VBA, were pretested from June to August 1999. Pretest reports for the three phases of the program were developed to summarize the pretest findings, to examine the skip patterns, and to analyze the verbatim responses.
- Using the information provided in the pretest reports, the VBA Surveys and Research Staff and Caliber Associates modified the three questionnaires, which were used during the first full administration in 1999. Results from the 1999 administration were provided in a national report and reports for each SDN in March 2000. The second full administration of the survey occurred in 2000 with results provided in a national report and reports for each SDN in March of 2001. The third full administration of occurred in 2001 with final SDN and national reports provided in April of 2002.
- This report presents data on the fourth full administration of the VR&E surveys. Because SDNs were eliminated prior to this survey administration, the 2002 sample was taken at the national level.
- Prior to gathering data for this administration, the surveys were slightly modified by VBA Surveys and Research Staff and Caliber Associates. Changes to the 2002 Job Ready questionnaire include the following: Question 6 (Who is (was) your primary counselor or employment specialist assigned to you during the job ready phase of your program?) was added; and Question 39 (After you completed your rehabilitation plan and became job ready, how satisfied are/were you overall with the services provided to assist you in obtaining a job?) was added. The final Job Ready questionnaire and mailing materials appear in Appendix A.
- Data for this report were collected during December 2002 and January 2003 by Caliber Associates. The Office of Management and Budget approval was obtained for each survey by the Veterans Benefits Administration. The date on the reports is December 2002, which reflects the midpoint of the data collection period.

- A Job Ready questionnaire was sent to all veterans in the Job Ready phase of their program. A total of 8,147 persons were in the phase when the mailing list data was extracted. A Spanish language version of the survey was provided to veterans residing in Puerto Rico.
- The census of veterans included those in the Job Ready phase of their program or veterans deemed rehabilitated within the past four months. This included those who interrupted or discontinued the program at any time between the period the census was drawn and data collection was complete.
- Veterans who were selected into both the 2001 census and the 2002 census, and were listed in the same phase for both years, were removed from the 2002 census. However, veterans who were selected into both the 2001 census and the 2002 census, but had moved to another phase from 2001 to 2002 were included in the census, since they would receive a different questionnaire in the 2002 administration.
- A total of 7,326 questionnaires were distributed.
- A total of 3,885 respondents completed the **Job Ready** questionnaire for a response rate of 53.0 percent.
- A more detailed discussion of the survey methodology appears in Appendix B.

- **Demographics:**

- Most respondents were male (80.6 percent), averaging 44 years of age.

- **Background Information About the Vocational Rehabilitation Program:**

- Respondents indicated the most common length of time since the educational/training phase of their vocational rehabilitation plan of service was completed was six months to one year, with 44.2 percent of respondents indicating that length.
- Respondents most frequently reported that a VA staff counselor was their primary counselor during the job ready phase of the program, with 52.4 percent of respondents indicating this response. 14.8 percent of respondents indicated a counselor under contract with the VA, and 8.1 percent of respondents indicated that a VA staff employment specialist was their primary counselor during this phase.
- 76.1 percent of respondents said they were very or somewhat satisfied with the occupational/vocational goal selected by themselves and the counselor.

- **Knowledge and Use of Employment Services:**

- The most common types of employment services respondents reported needing were resume preparation and development (27.5 percent) and job hunting strategies (26.4 percent).
- The most frequently reported employment opportunities and referrals counselors provided were referrals to state rehabilitation and employment agencies (24.8 percent), references to an electronic job bank on the Internet (22.1 percent), and referrals to the federal job market (16.9 percent).
- Other than their counselor, respondents most frequently reported using Internet job searches (58.3 percent) and newspapers/help-wanted advertisements (51.6 percent) as additional sources of employment information.

■ Contact with the Counselor

- 78.4 percent of respondents indicated the number and length of their in-person meetings with their counselor were adequate.
- 79.6 percent of respondents said the location and 84.6 percent said the scheduled time of in-person meetings were very or somewhat convenient.
- 71.0 percent of respondents indicated their counselor fully addresses their questions, concerns, or complaints.

■ Overall Satisfaction with Employment Services

- 52.3 percent of respondents said that overall, they were very or somewhat satisfied with the employment services they received during their program.
- After completing their rehabilitation program and becoming job ready, 52.1 percent of respondents who needed services indicated that they were very or somewhat satisfied with the overall services provided to assist them in obtaining a job.

■ Current Employment Status

- Respondents most frequently (24.9 percent) reported starting their current job before completing the educational/vocational phase of their program. Another 17.9 percent reported the length of time between completion of the educational/vocational phase of their program and the start of employment was less than one month.
- 63.2 percent of respondents felt that the length of time it took to find a job was very or somewhat reasonable.
- Of those that needed help, 37.6 percent of respondents said their employment specialist or counselor was very or somewhat helpful in helping them find their current job.

■ Access to the VR&E Program

- 67.5 percent of respondents indicated it was very or somewhat easy to obtain information from the program.

■ Current Status in the VR&E Program

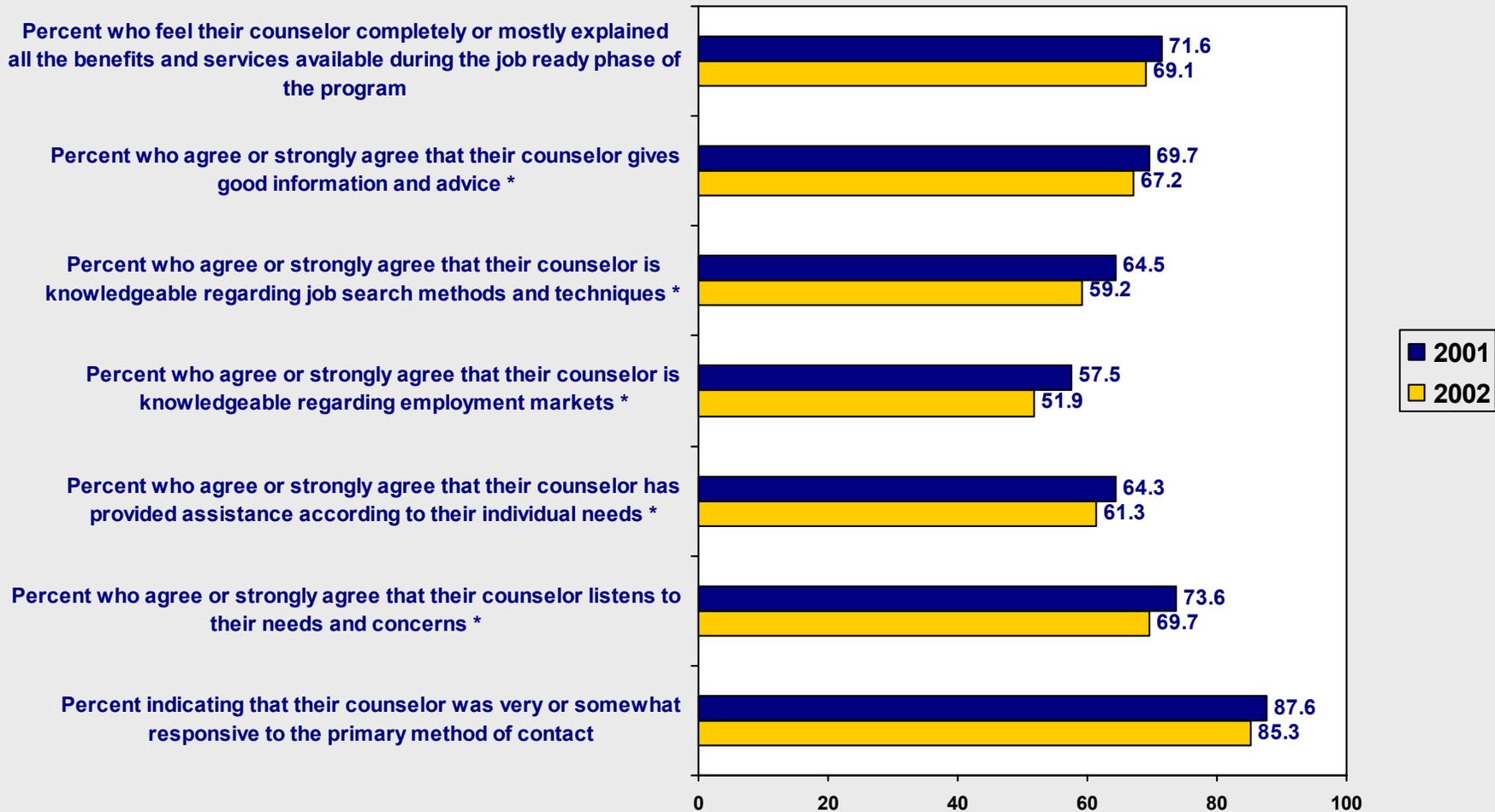
- 75.5 percent of respondents had completed the program and 12.8 percent were currently pursuing the program. Voluntarily, 2.8 percent withdrew from the program and 4.3 percent interrupted their program. At the request of the VA, 2.1 percent withdrew from the program and 2.3 percent interrupted their program.

■ Overall Program Impressions

- 47.3 percent of respondents indicated their experience with the VA's VR&E program was much better or better than expected.
- 56.4 percent of respondents indicated their career goals were raised and 35.1 percent of respondents indicated their career goals were met as a result of their interaction with the VR&E program.
- 59.3 percent of respondents indicated that their career goals were more realistic as a result of the program.
- Respondents indicated that the most helpful VR&E services were payment of tuition, fees, books, supplies, and/or monthly subsistence (85.6 percent) and education/training (55.5 percent).
- Overall, 76.7 percent of respondents who completed the program or withdrew from the program said they were very or somewhat satisfied with the VR&E program.
- 92.1 percent of respondents would recommend this program to other disabled veterans.

Significant Results in Trend Analysis: 2002 vs. 2001

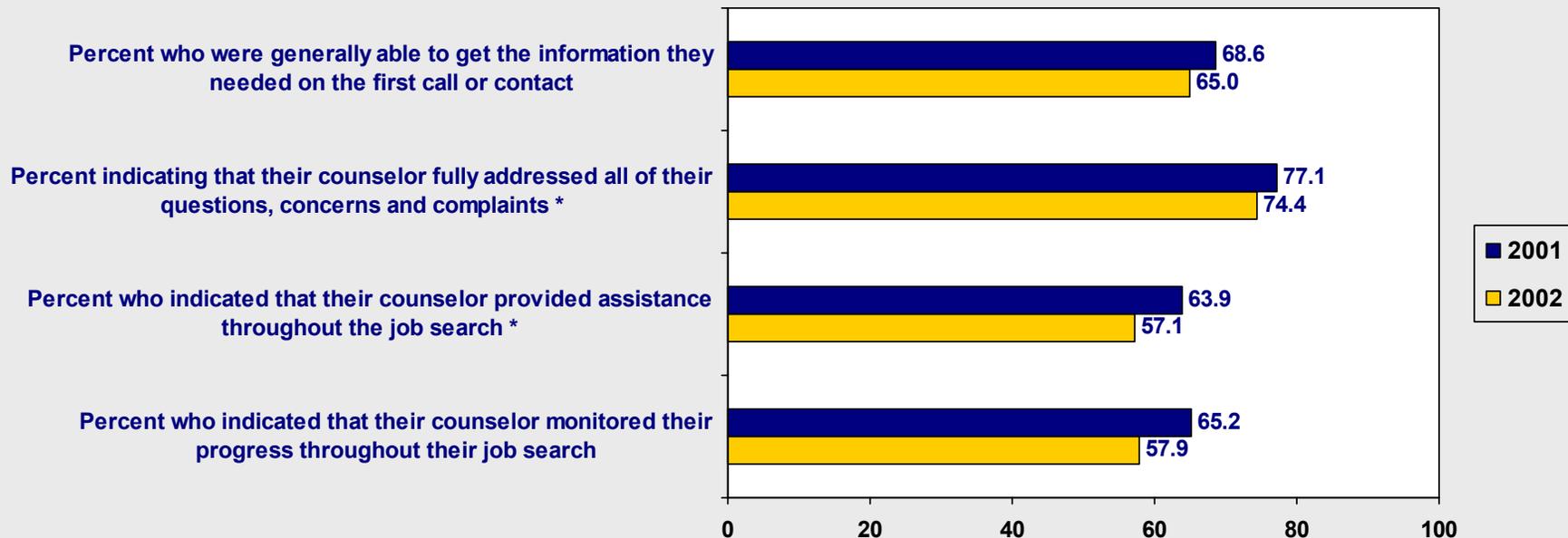
The items shown here reflect true differences in performance over time. If an item does not appear, then performance did not significantly change between the years.



* Excludes responses of "Don't know" or "Not applicable"

Significant Results in Trend Analysis: 2002 vs. 2001

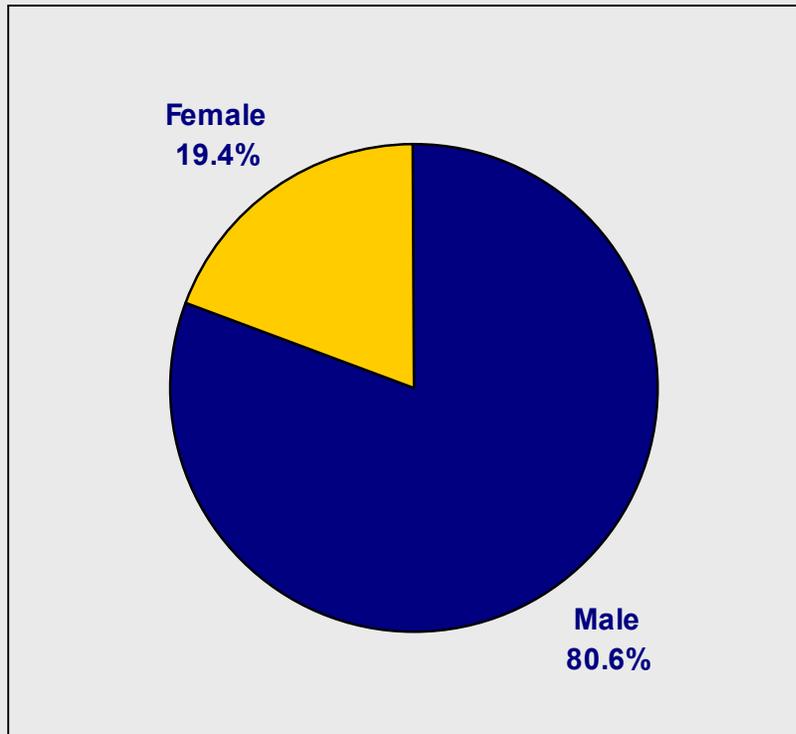
The items shown here reflect true differences in performance over time. If an item does not appear, then performance did not significantly change between the years.



* Excludes responses of "Don't know" or "Not applicable"

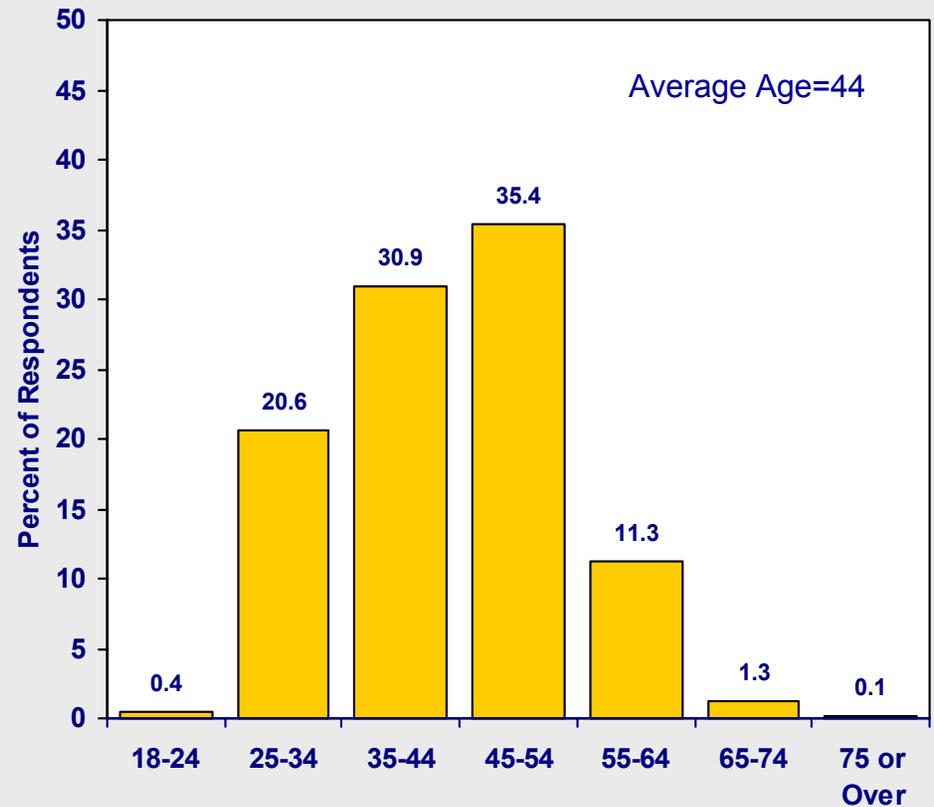
Respondent Characteristics

Gender Distribution



Valid n=3633

Age Distribution (in years)

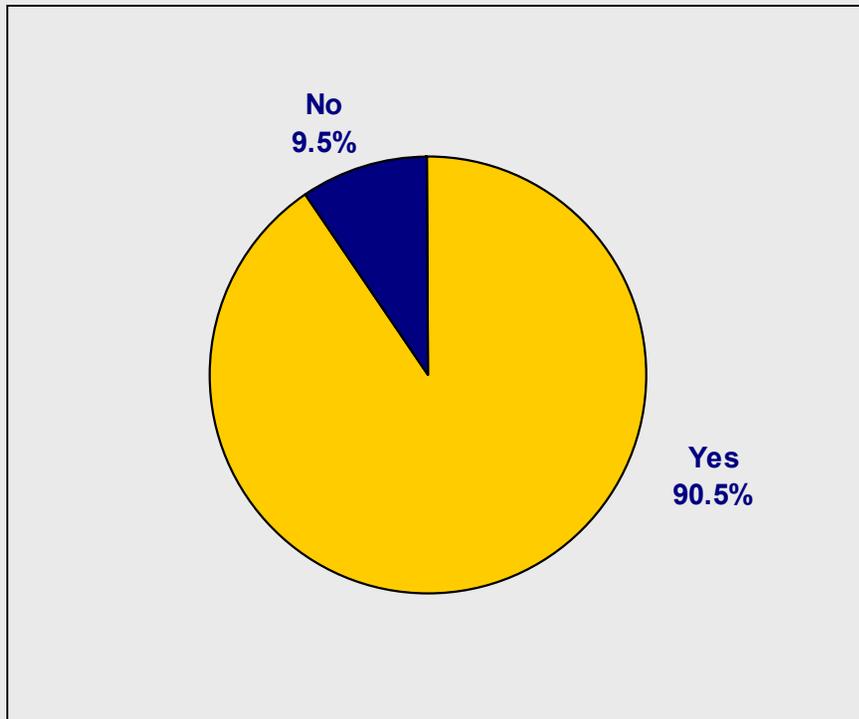


Valid n=3632

**Survey Findings:
Background Information About Respondents'
Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

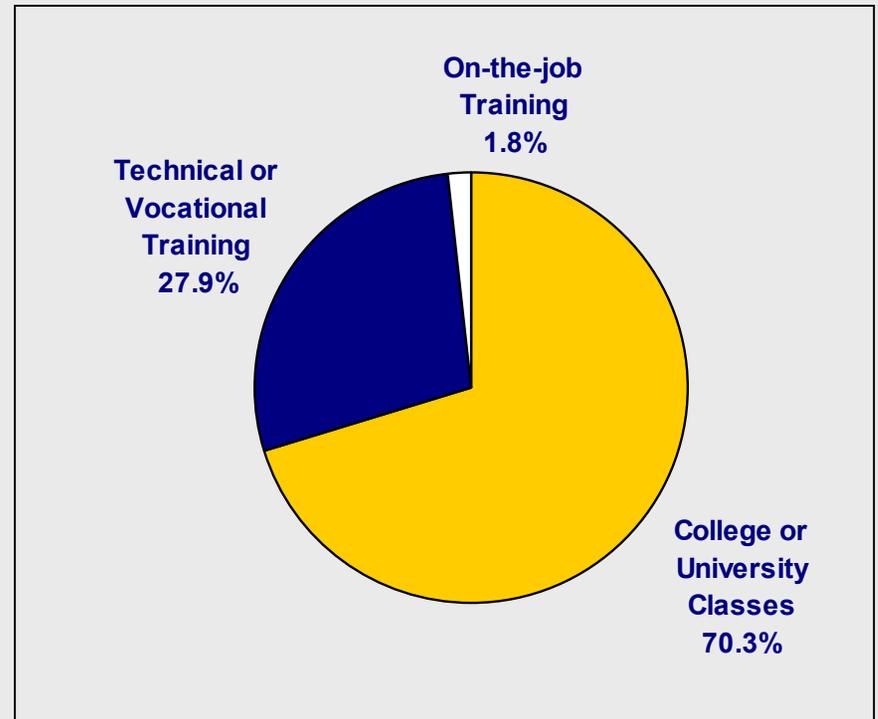
Background Information About Respondents' Program

Question 1:
Did your vocational rehabilitation program include an education/training phase?



Valid n=3576

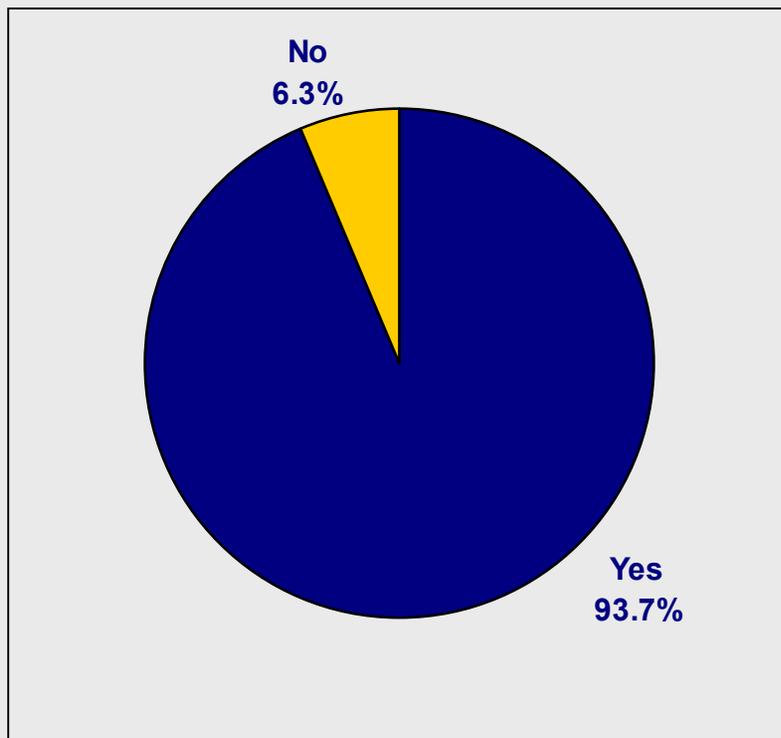
Question 2:
What type of education/training was this?



Valid n=3217

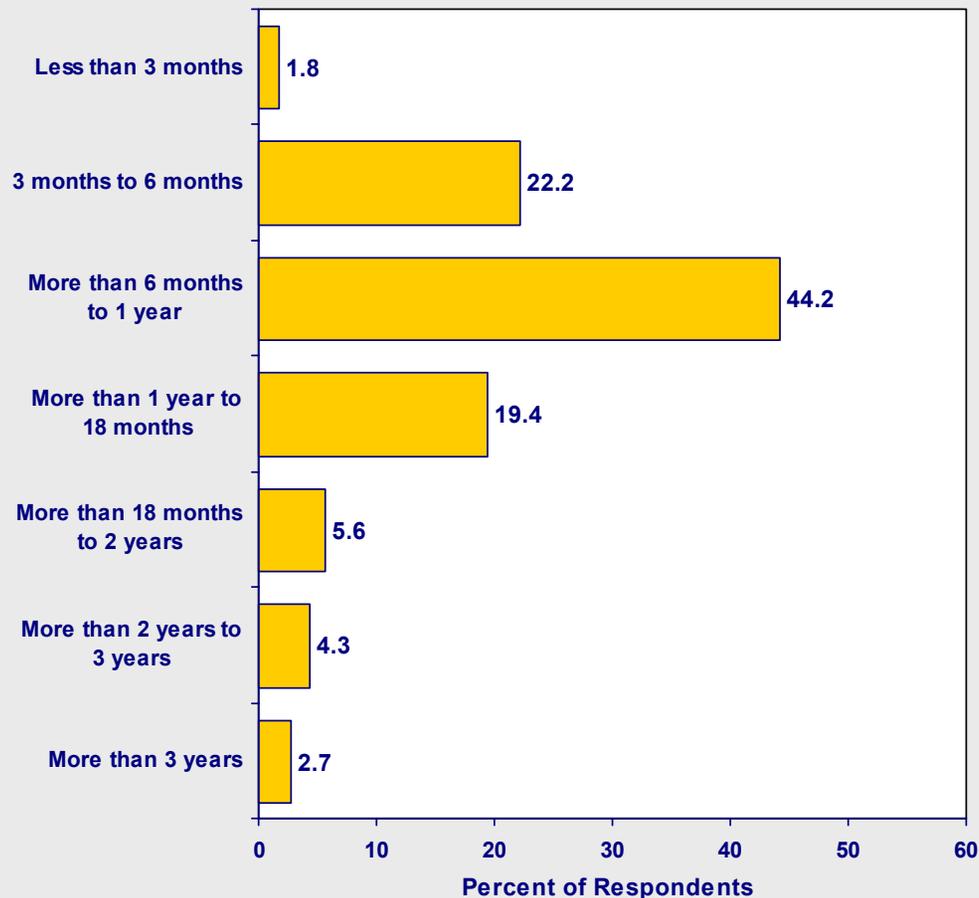
Background Information About Respondents' Program

Question 3:
Have you completed the education/training phase of your program?



Valid n=3258

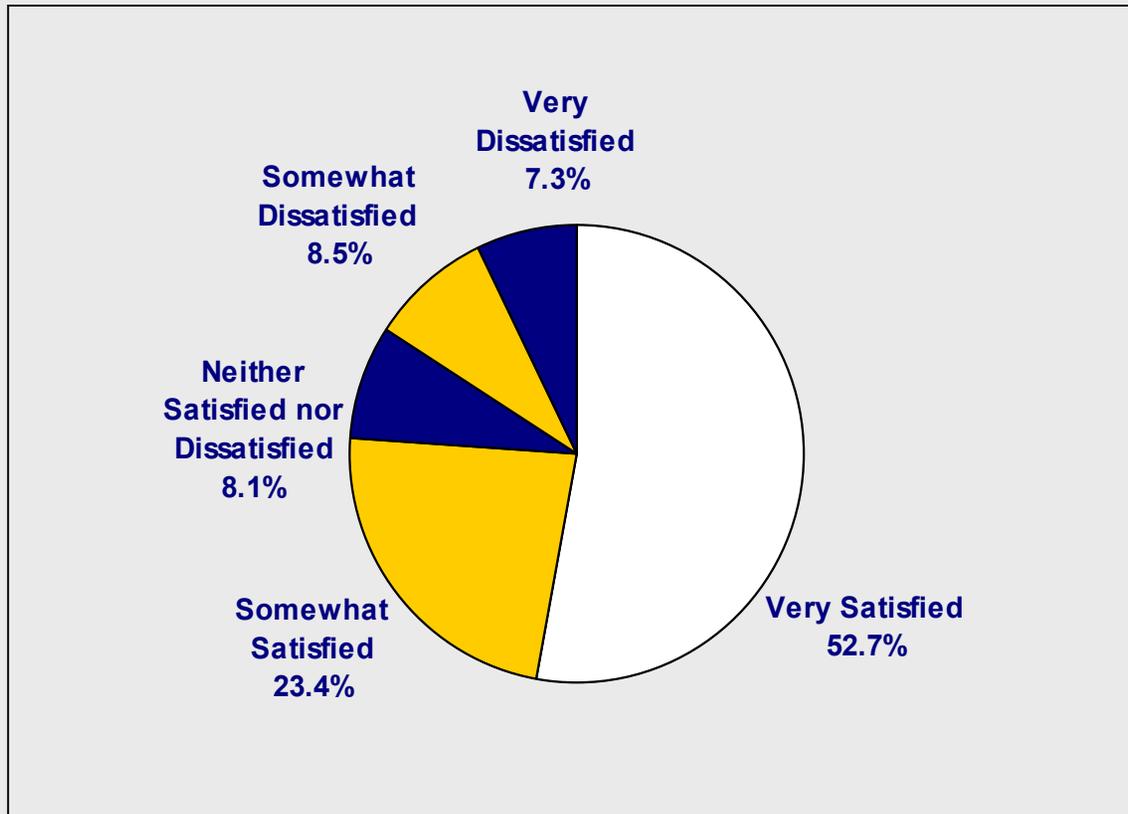
Question 4:
How long has it been since you completed the educational/training phase of your vocational rehabilitation program?



Valid n=3052

Question 5:

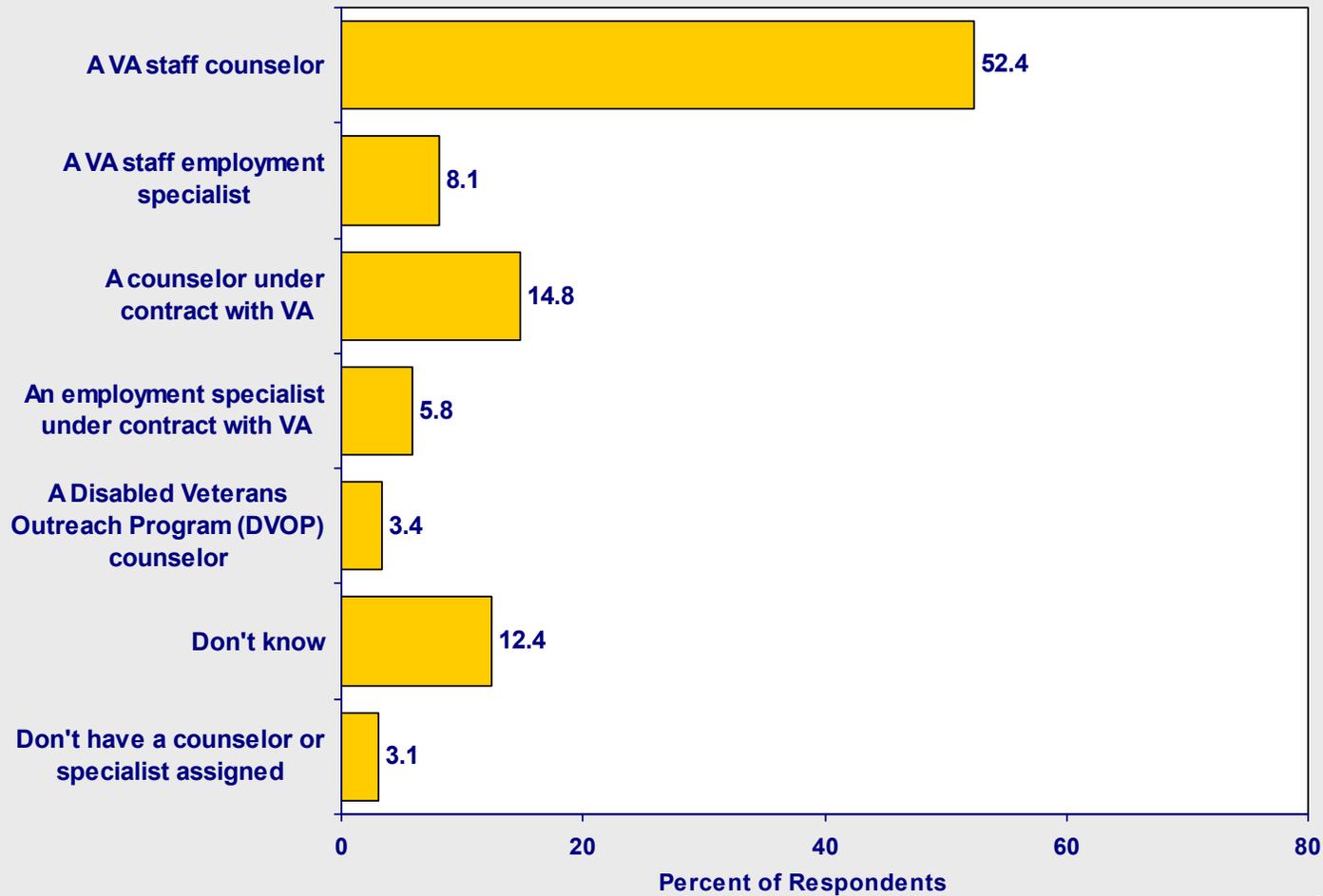
How satisfied are you with the occupational/vocational goal you and your counselor selected during the planning phase of your program?



Valid n=3600

Question 6:

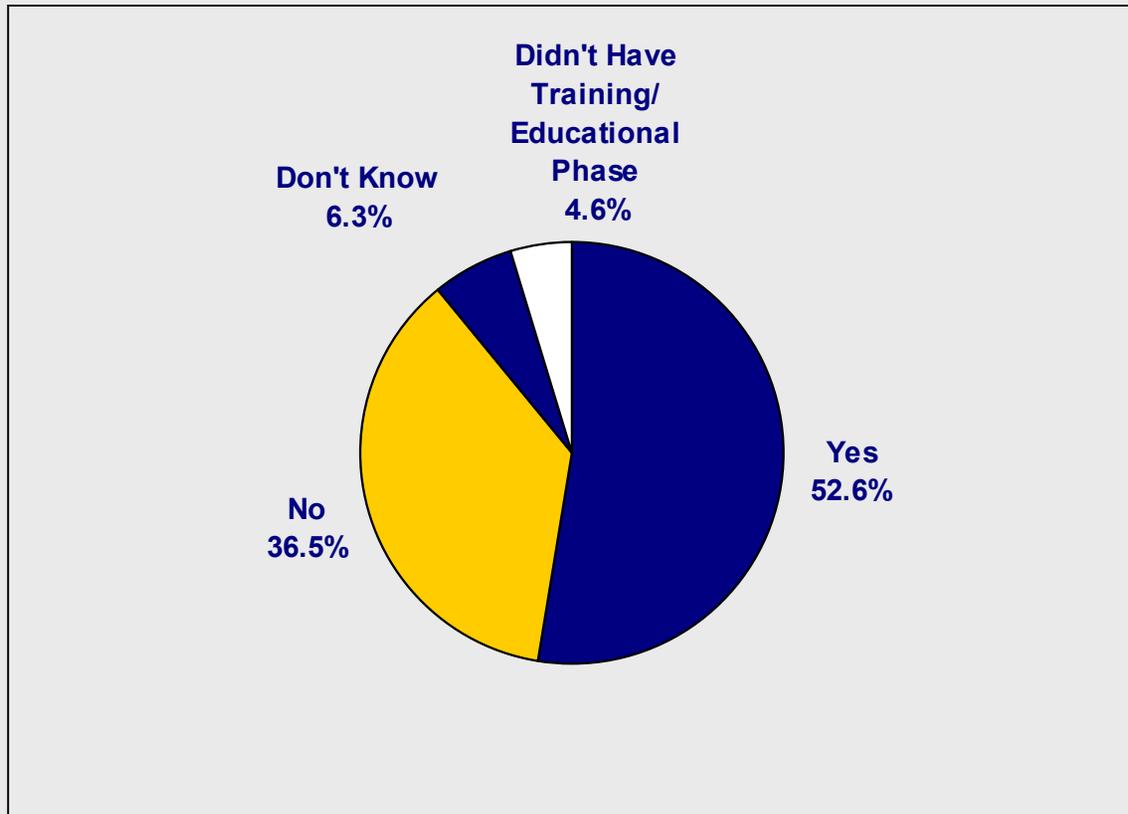
Who is (was) your primary counselor or employment specialist assigned to you during the job ready phase of your program?



Valid n=3549

Question 7:

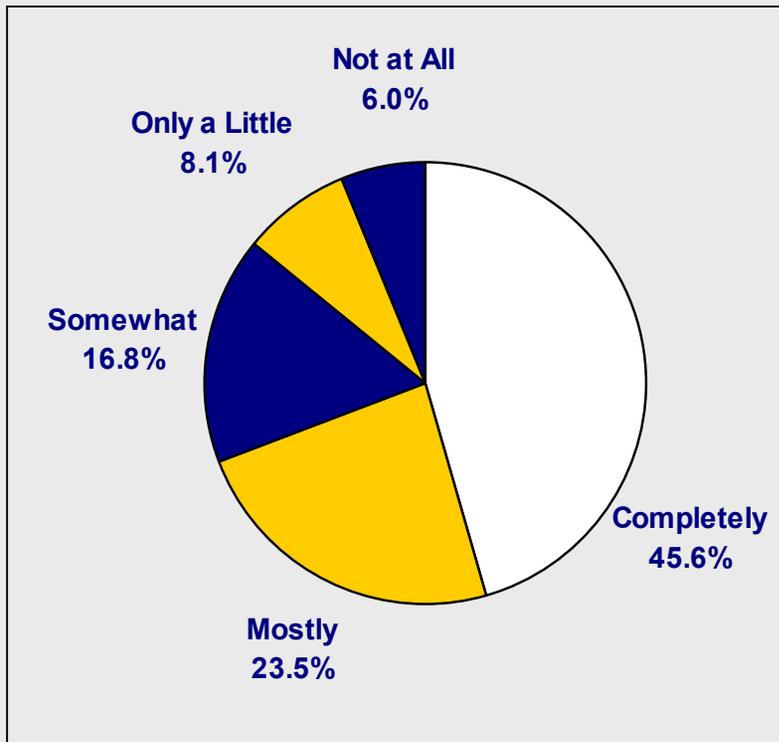
Is this the same specialist/counselor who was assigned to you during the training or educational phase of your program?



Valid n=3360

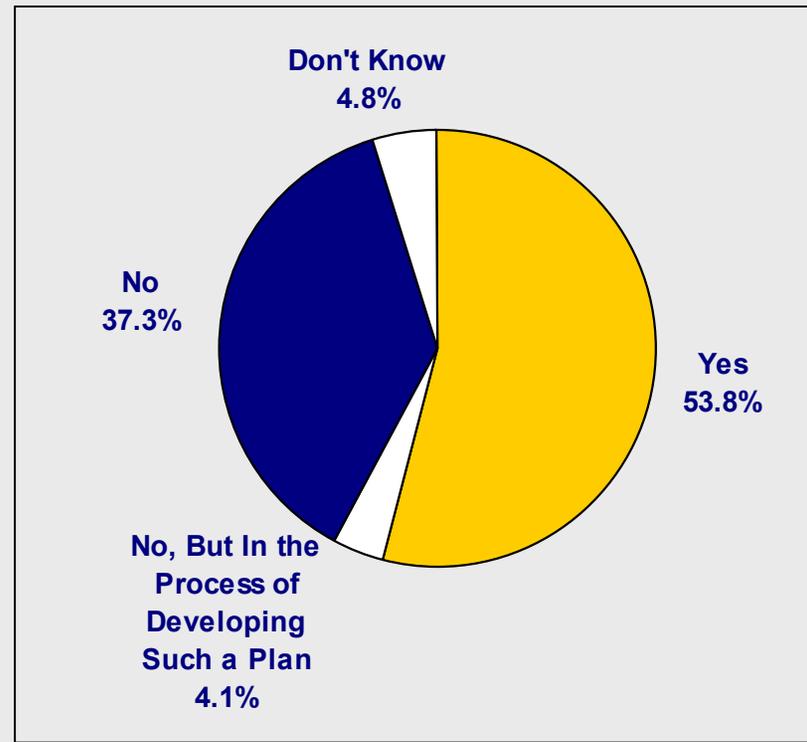
**Survey Findings:
Knowledge and Use of Employment Services**

Question 8:
How completely did your counselor explain all the benefits and services available to you during the job ready phase of your program?



Valid n=3371

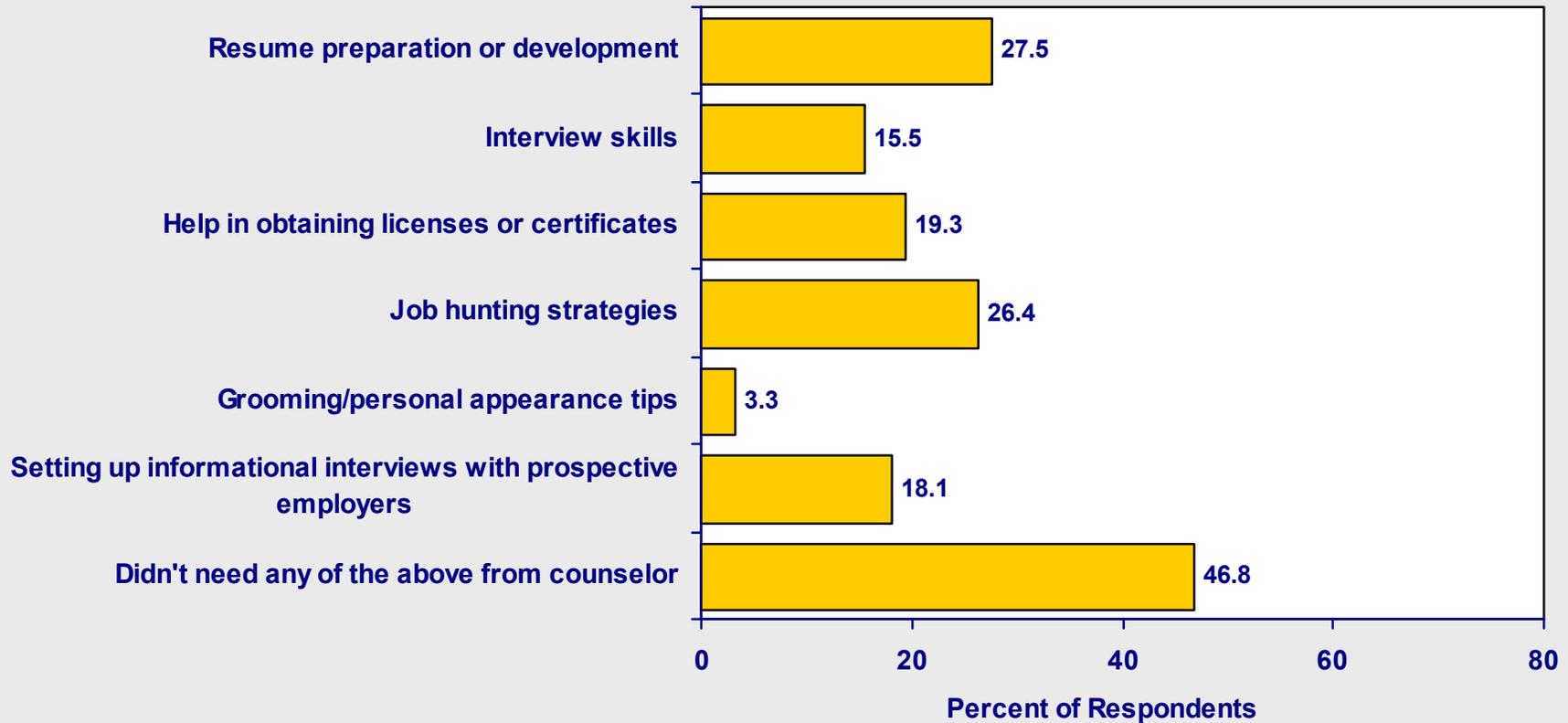
Question 9:
Have you and your counselor developed a plan (Individualized Employment Assistance Plan) to guide you in your job search?



Valid n=3359

Knowledge and Use of Employment Services

Question 10:
Which of the following types of employment services did you need?

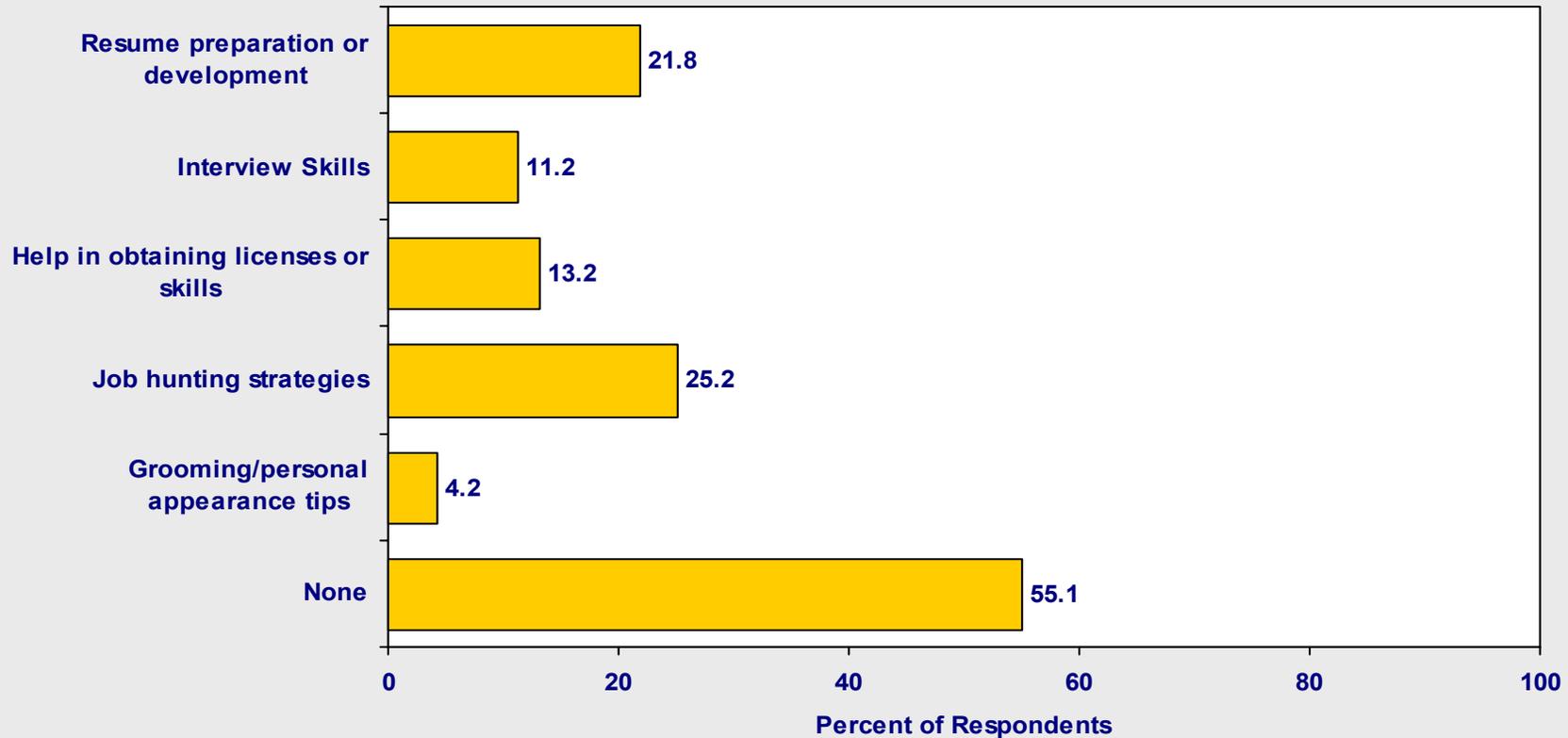


Valid n=3333

Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, percentages do not add up to 100%.

Question 11:

Which of the following types of employment services has your counselor provided?

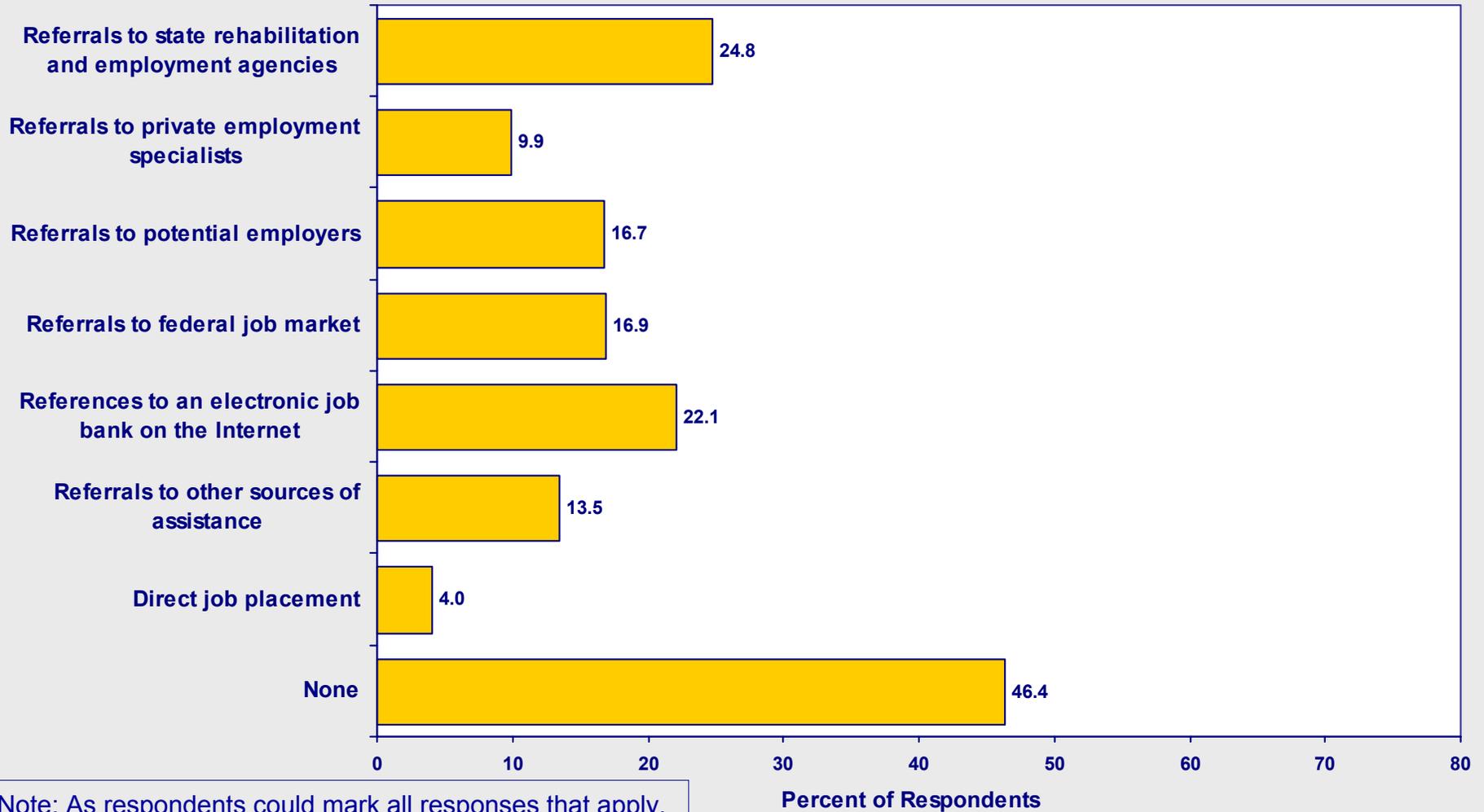


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=3331

Question 12:

Which of the following potential employment opportunities or referrals has your counselor provided?



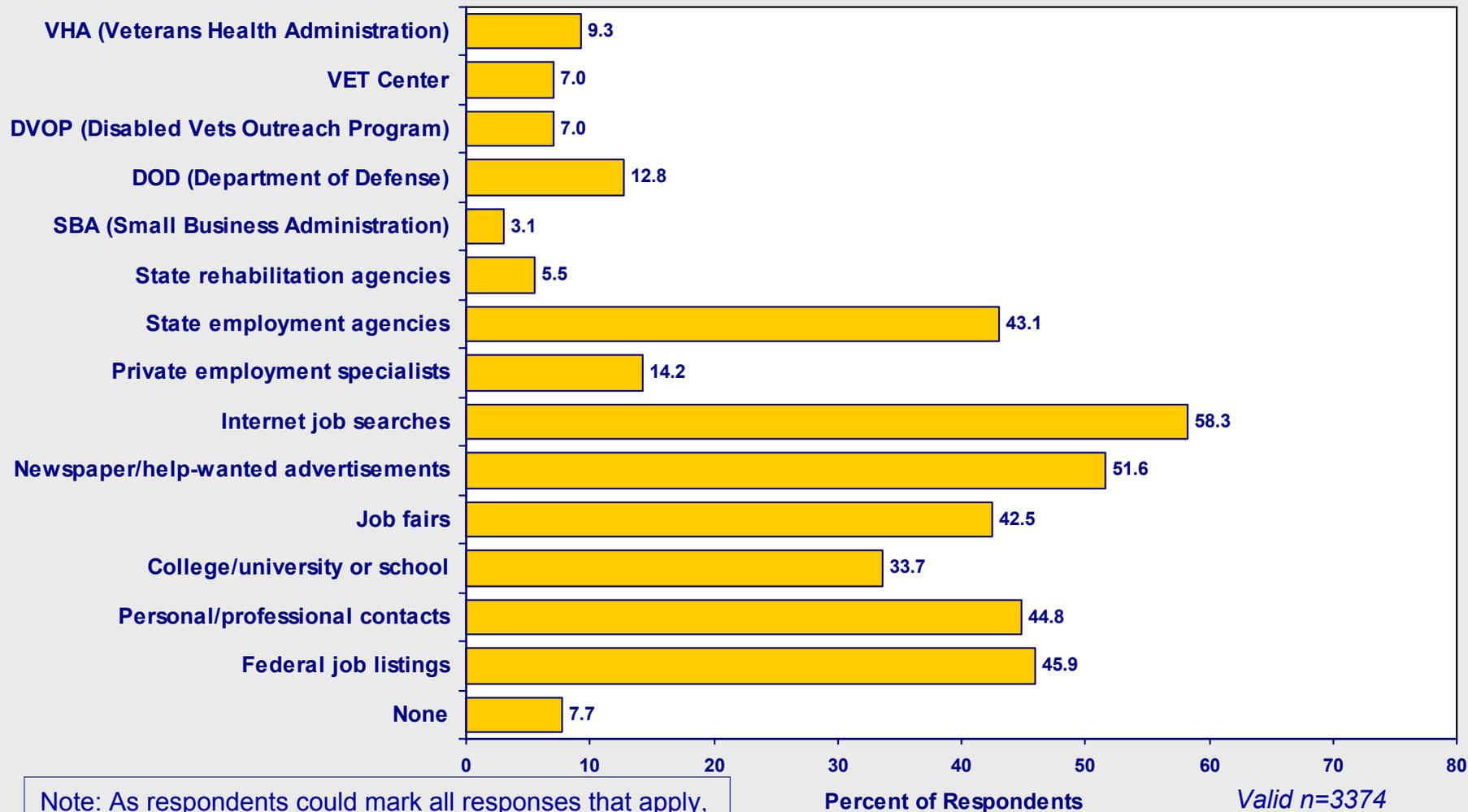
Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=3309

Knowledge and Use of Employment Services

Question 13:

Other than your counselor, which other sources of employment information have you used?



Knowledge and Use of Employment Services

Questions 14-25:

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly Disagree

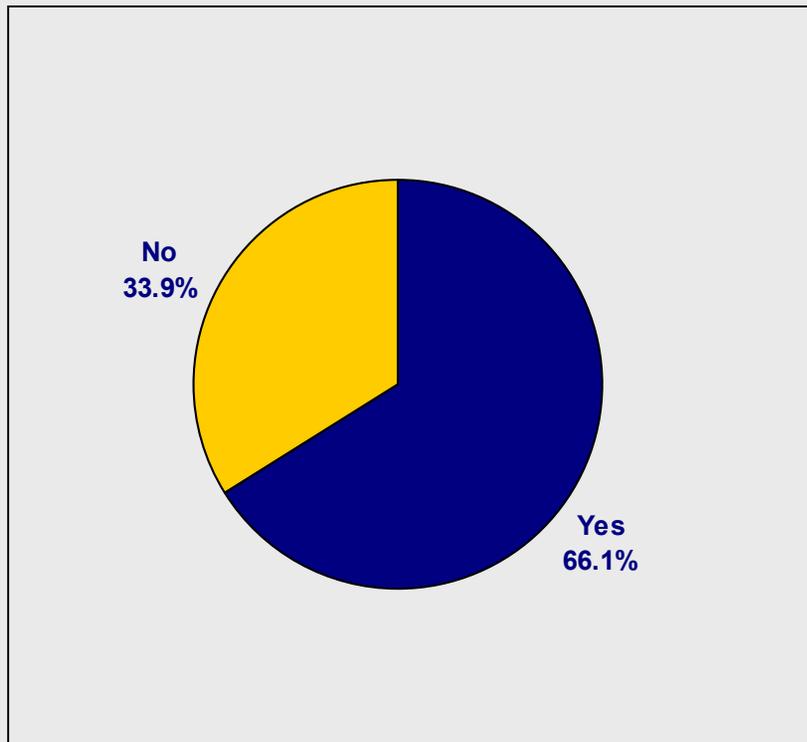
Q14: Your counselor gives you good information and advice.	32.1	35.1	17.4	8.4	7.1
Q15: Your counselor is knowledgeable regarding job search methods and techniques.	27.2	32.0	26.8	8.2	5.8
Q16: Your counselor is knowledgeable regarding employment markets.	21.7	30.2	32.0	9.5	6.6
Q17: Your counselor has provided assistance according to your individual needs.	30.6	30.7	16.7	11.4	10.6
Q18: Your counselor understands your vocational goals.	33.1	35.5	14.6	9.2	7.5
Q19: Your counselor shows a caring and compassionate attitude toward you.	37.6	31.0	17.0	6.5	8.0
Q20: Your counselor listens to your needs and concerns.	35.5	34.1	16.1	6.8	7.4
Q21: Your counselor has a communication style that is easy to understand.	36.1	36.1	15.6	6.2	6.1
Q22: Your counselor is flexible.	31.3	32.7	21.0	7.6	7.4
Q23: Your counselor is resourceful.	28.6	28.6	26.9	8.4	7.5
Q24: Your counselor is available when needed.	25.6	34.1	20.8	11.2	8.3
Q25: Your counselor is concerned about the quality of your job placement.	28.9	28.4	22.5	9.5	10.8

Note: Responses of "Not Applicable" are not included in the analysis.

Percent of Respondents

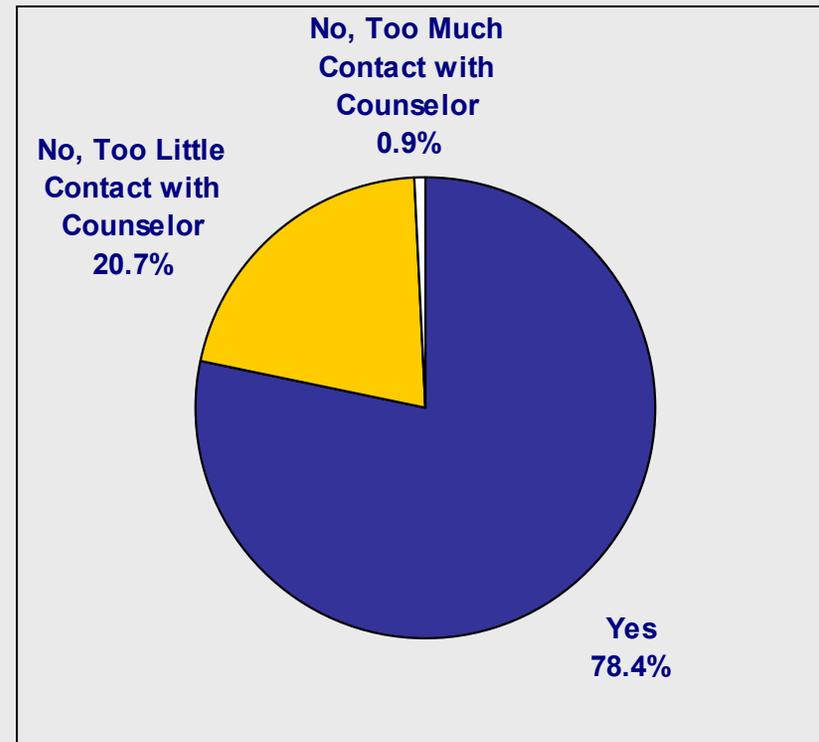
**Survey Findings:
Contact With Counselor**

Question 26:
Do you have scheduled in-person meetings with your counselor?



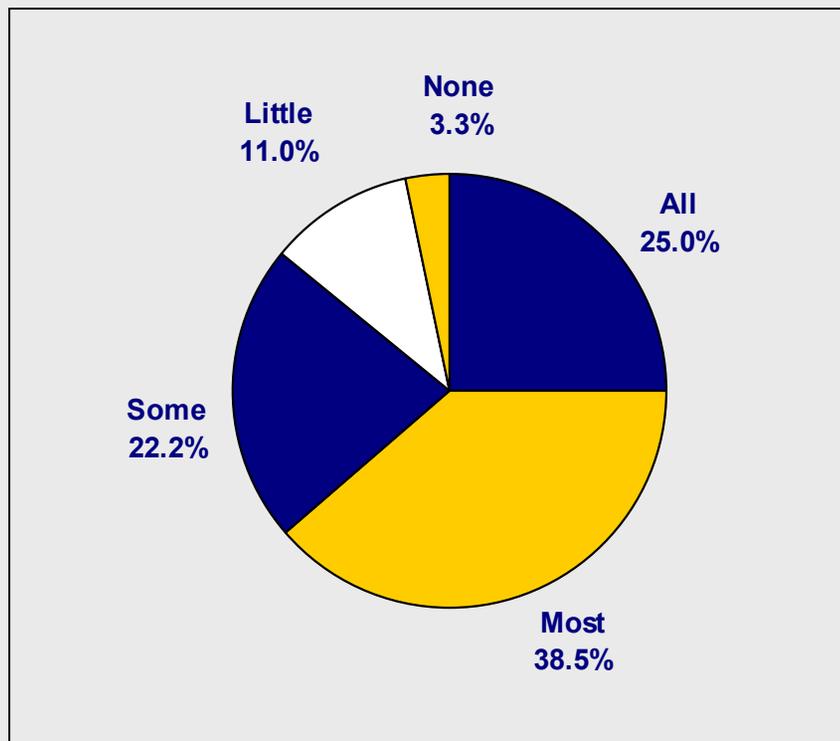
Valid n=3354

Question 27:
Are the number and length of these sessions adequate to meet your counseling needs?



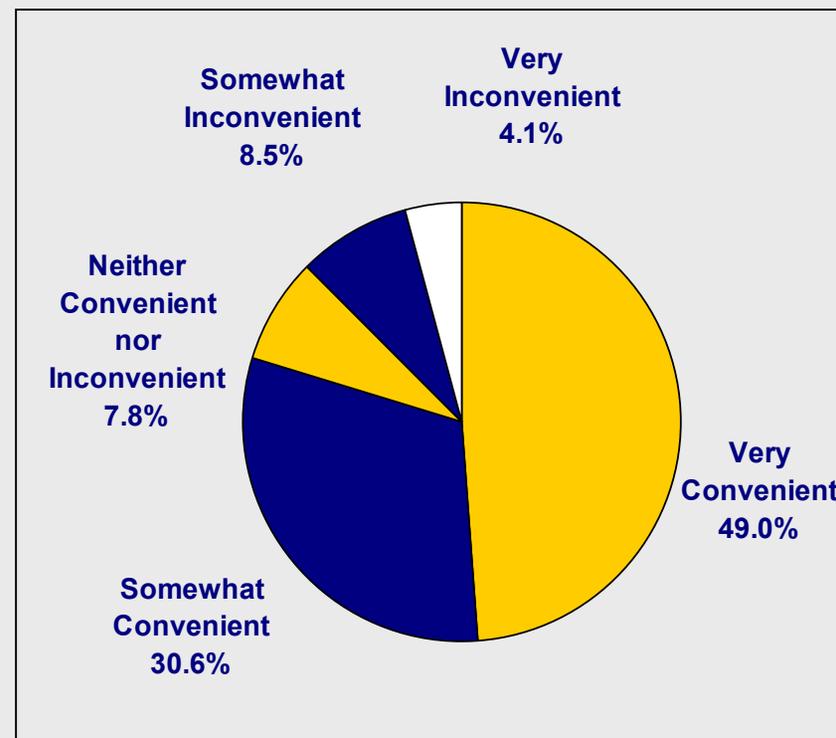
Valid n=2220

Question 28:
 In general, how much of what you **NEEDED TO KNOW** did you get from these meetings?



Valid n=2225

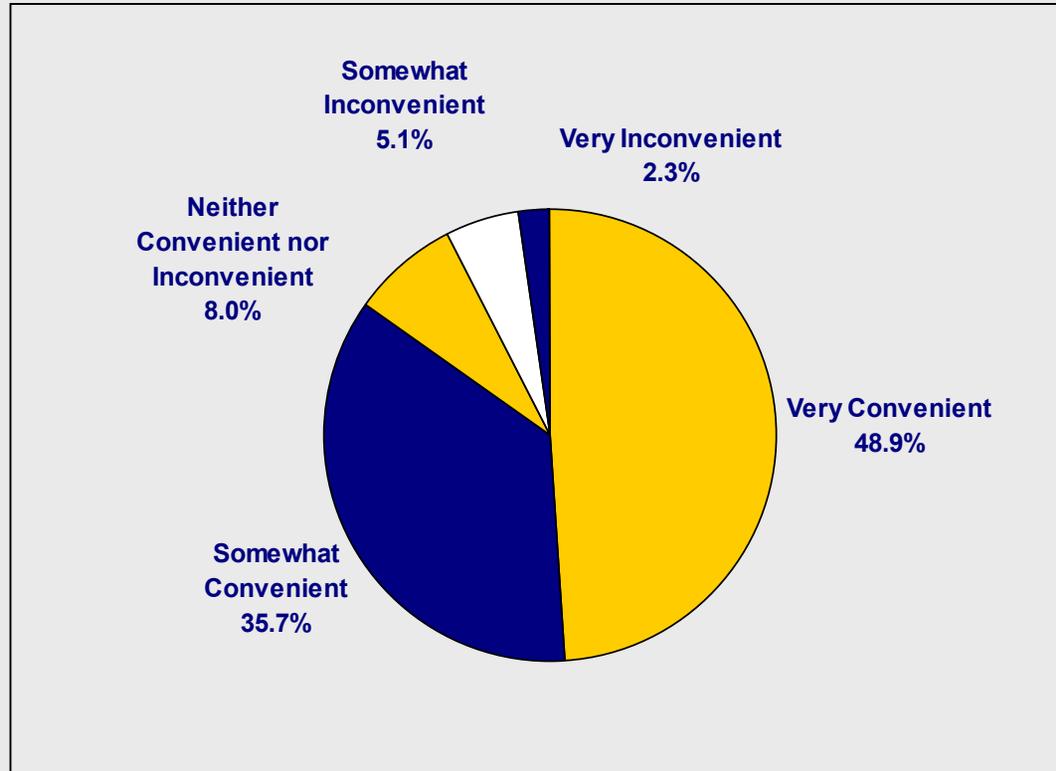
Question 29:
 How convenient is the **LOCATION** where these meetings are held?



Valid n=2224

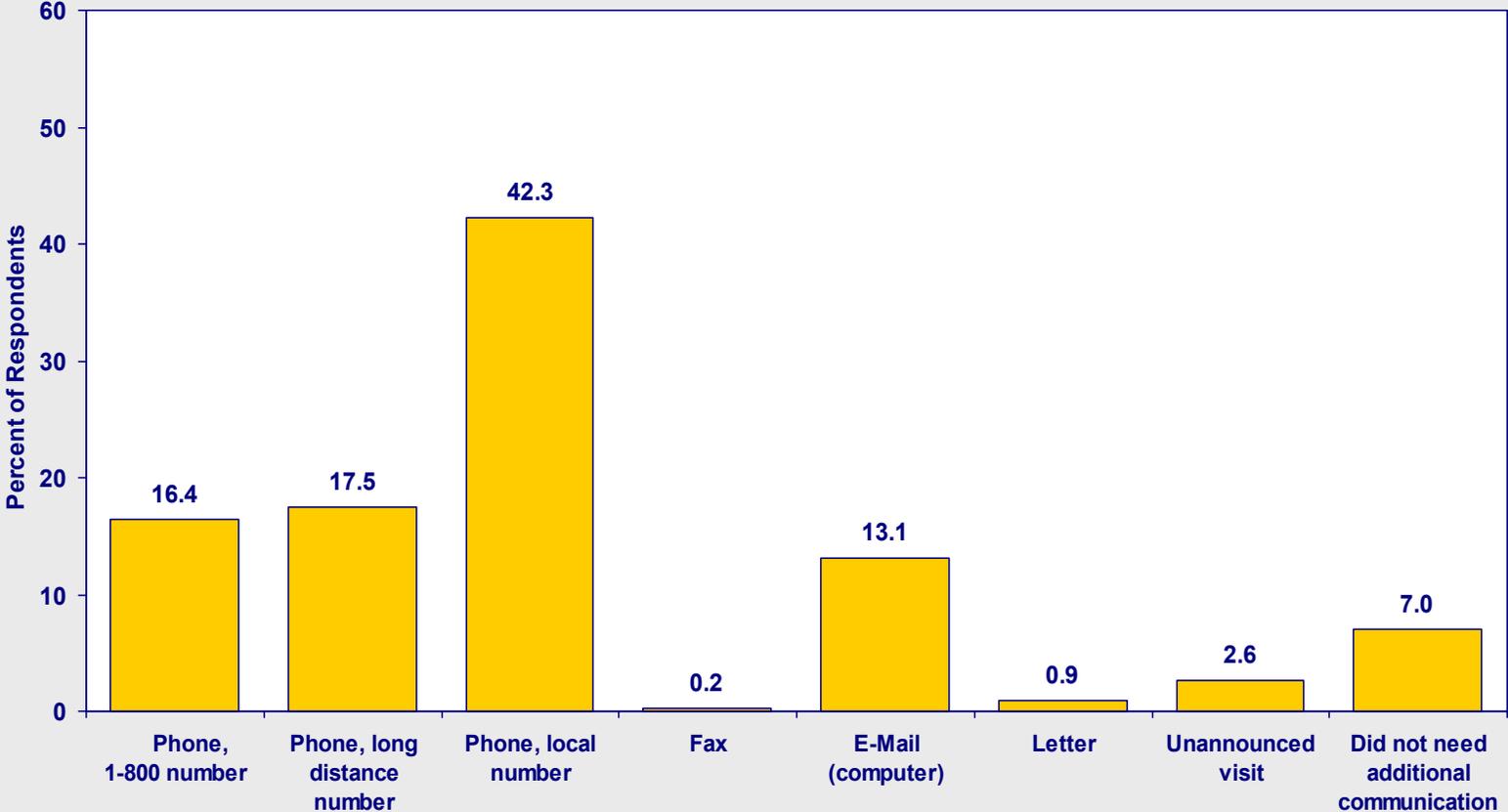
Question 30:

In general, how convenient is the TIME scheduled for these meetings?



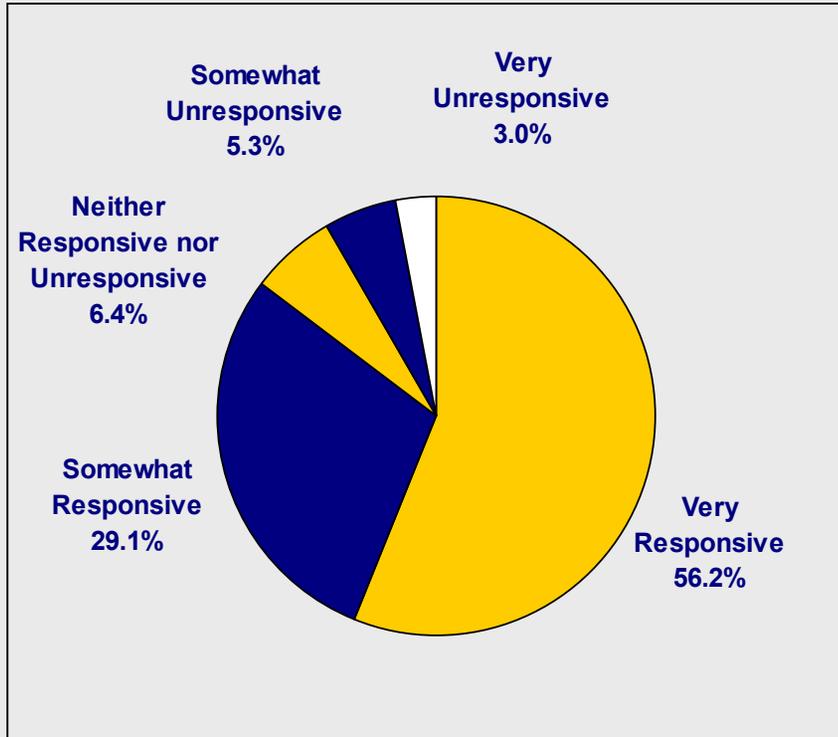
Valid n=2225

Question 31:
Aside from scheduled visits, what is the primary method you use to contact your counselor?



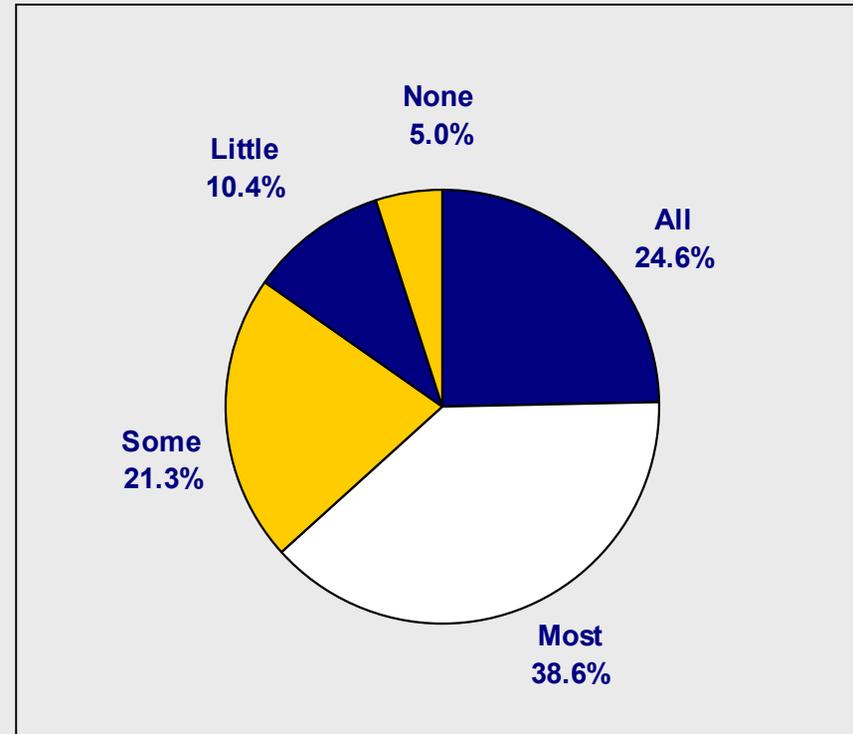
Valid n=2813

Question 32:
How responsive was your counselor to your contact through this method?



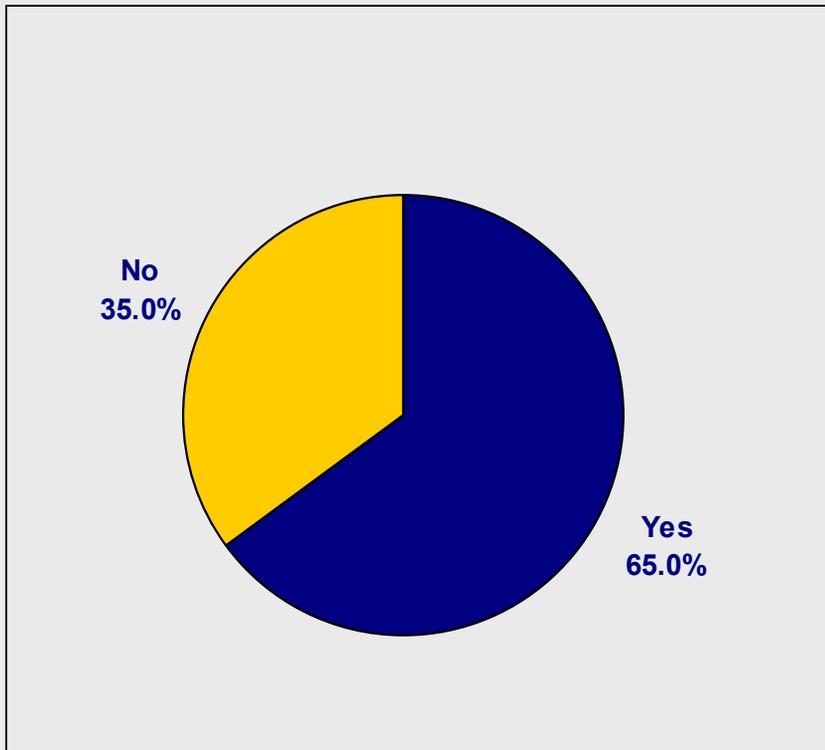
Valid n=3156

Question 33:
In general, how much of what you NEEDED TO KNOW did you get from this method of contact?



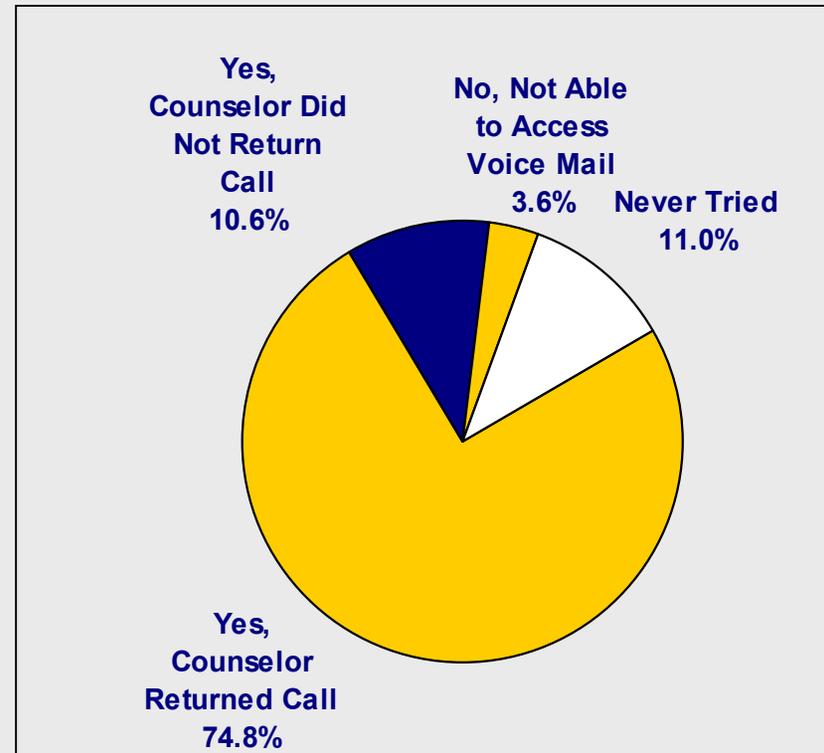
Valid n=3160

Question 34:
Were you generally able to get the information you needed on the first call or contact?



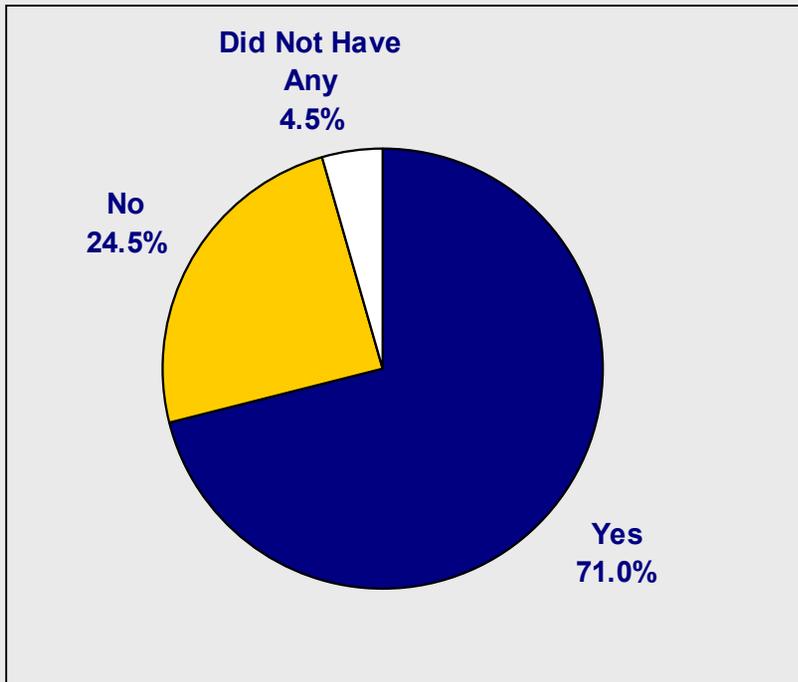
Valid n=3155

Question 35:
Were you able to access voice mail in order to leave your counselor a message?



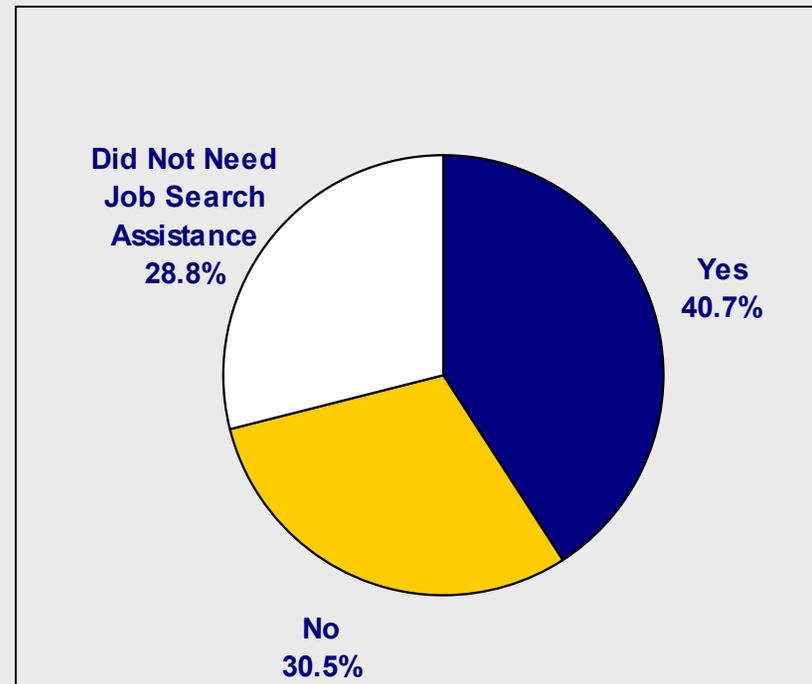
Valid n=3150

Question 36:
Did your counselor fully address all your questions, concerns, or complaints?



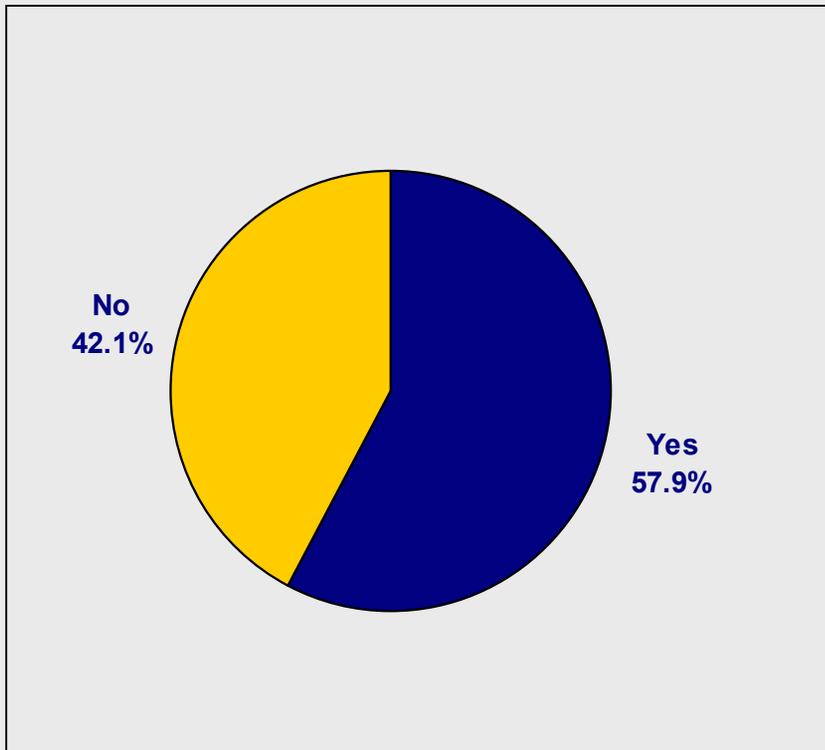
Valid n=3160

Question 37:
Did your counselor provide assistance throughout your job search?



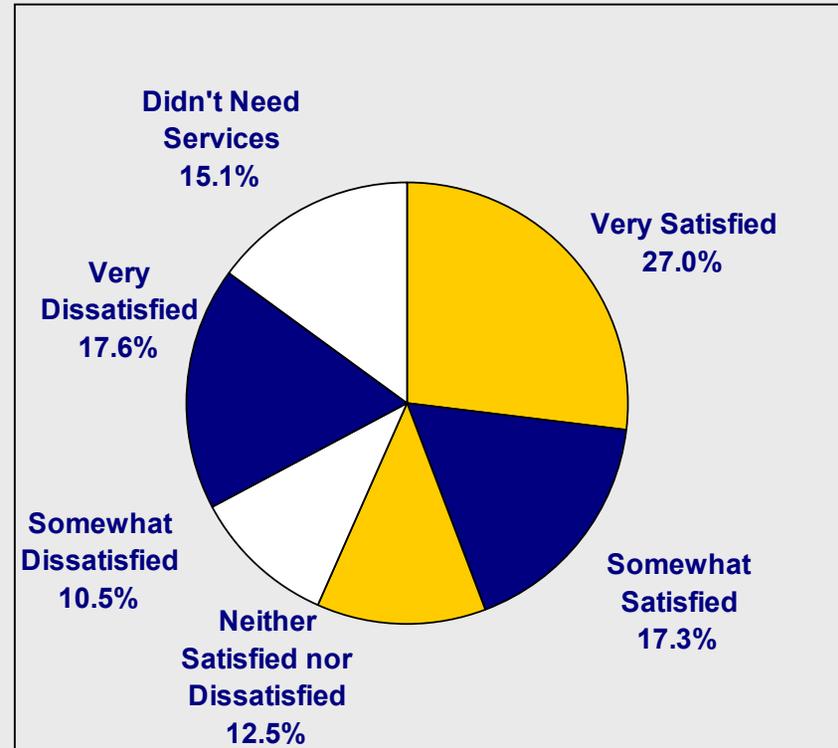
Valid n=3354

Question 38:
Did your counselor monitor your progress throughout your job search?



Valid n=3286

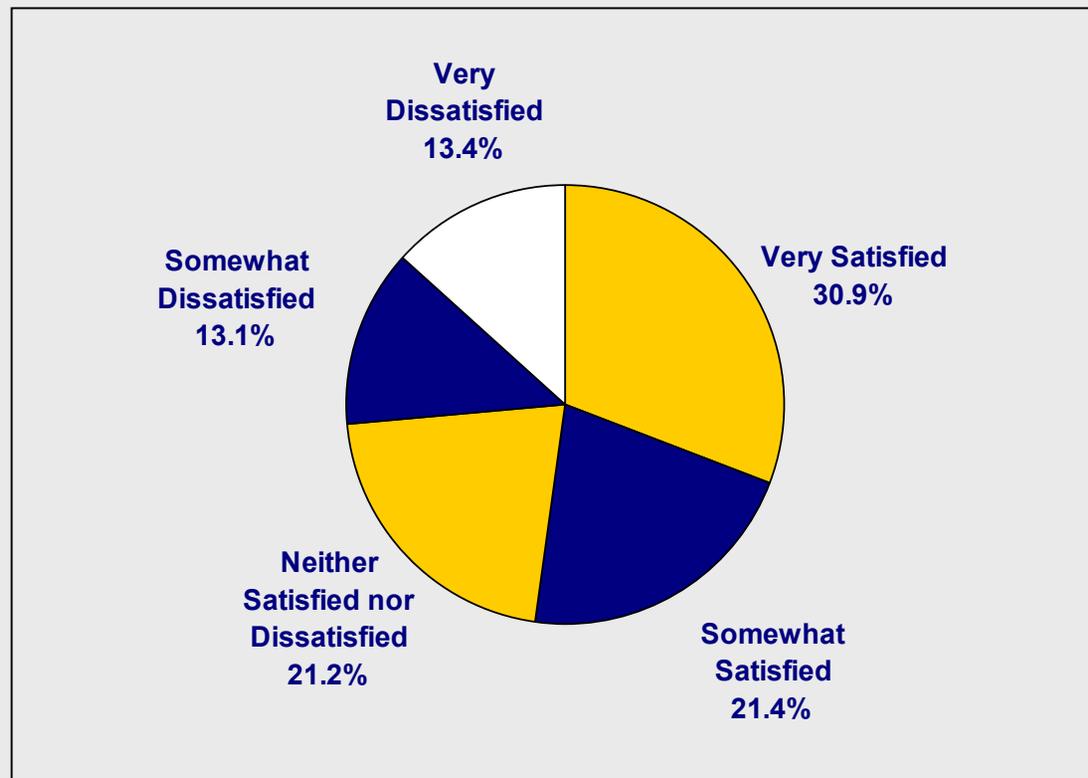
Question 39:
After you completed your rehabilitation plan and became job ready, how satisfied are/were you overall with the services provided to assist you in obtaining a job?



Valid n=3584

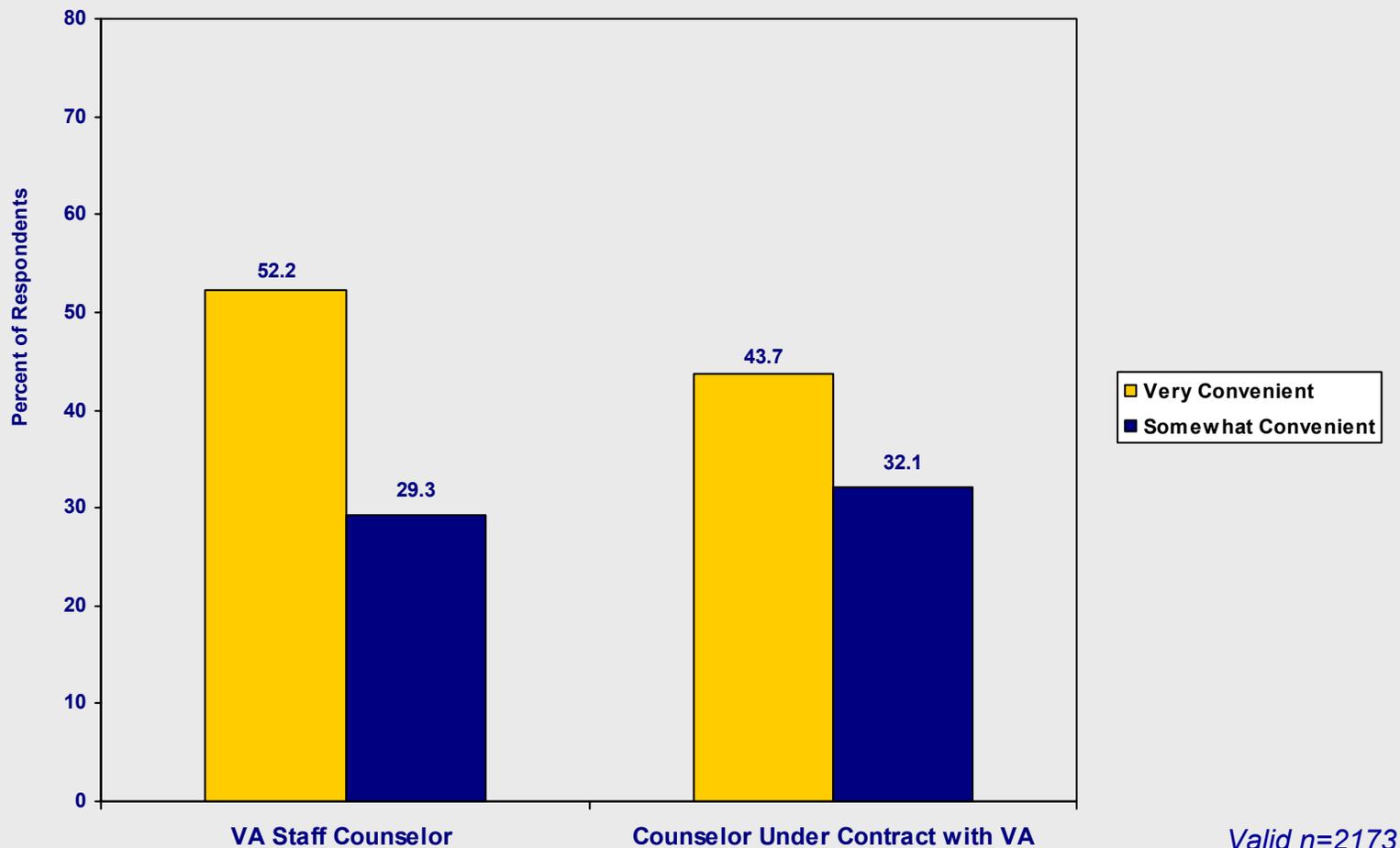
Question 40:

How satisfied are/were you with the employment services you've received during your entire program?

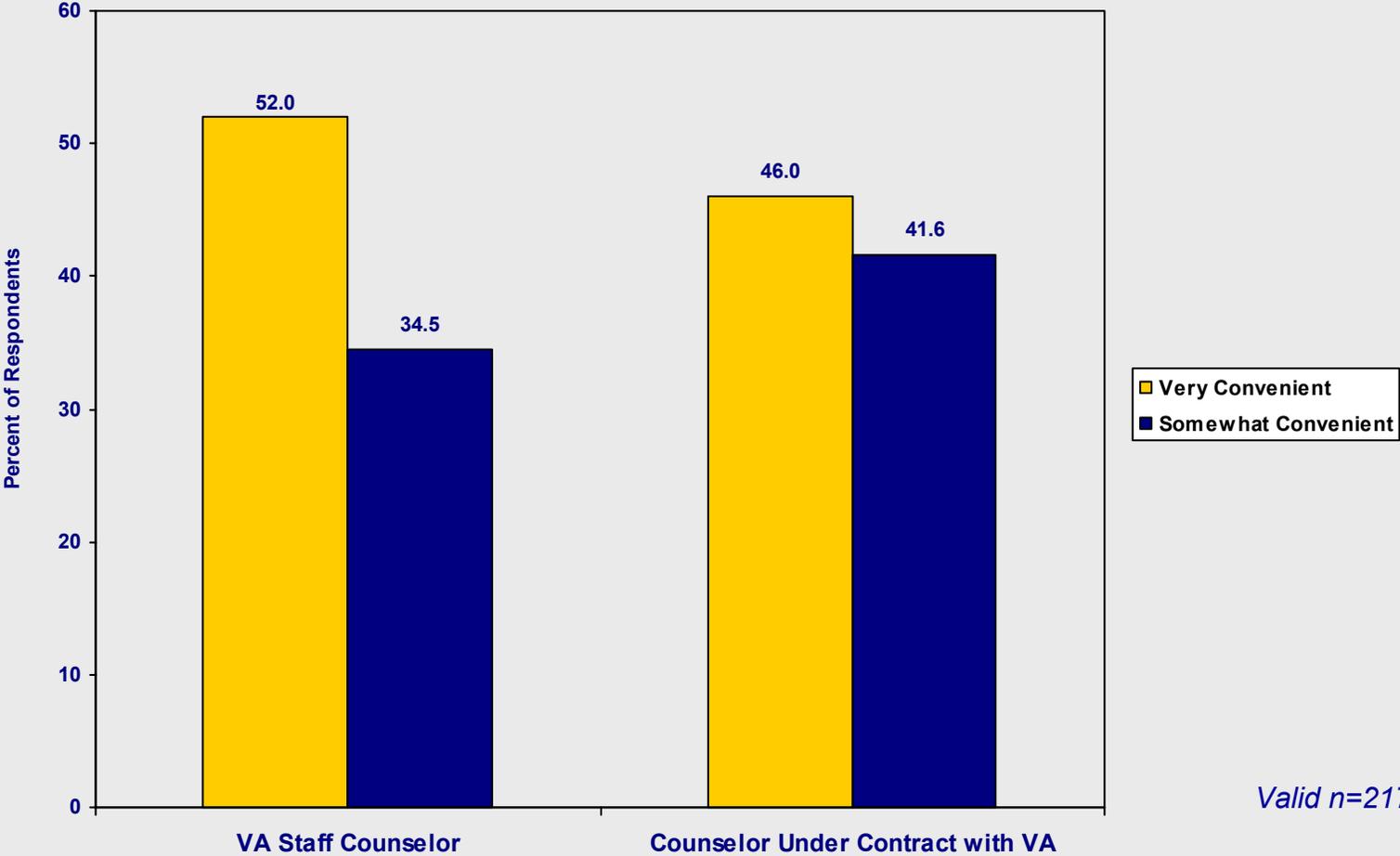


Valid n=3563

Question 29 by Question 6:
Convenience of location for in-person meetings by type of counselor during this phase of program.

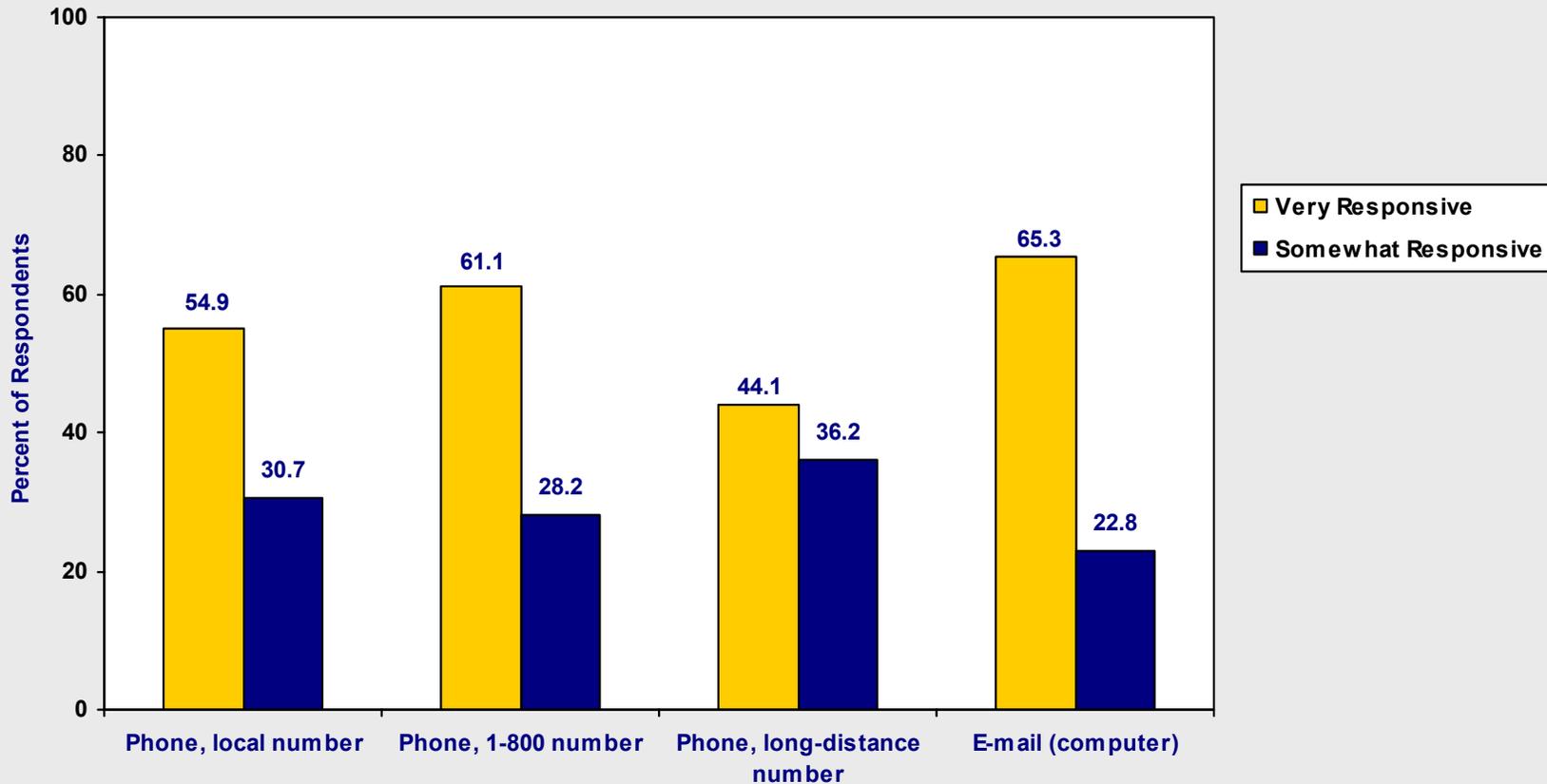


Question 30 by Question 6:
Convenience of time scheduled for in-person meetings by type of counselor during this phase of program.



Contact With Counselor

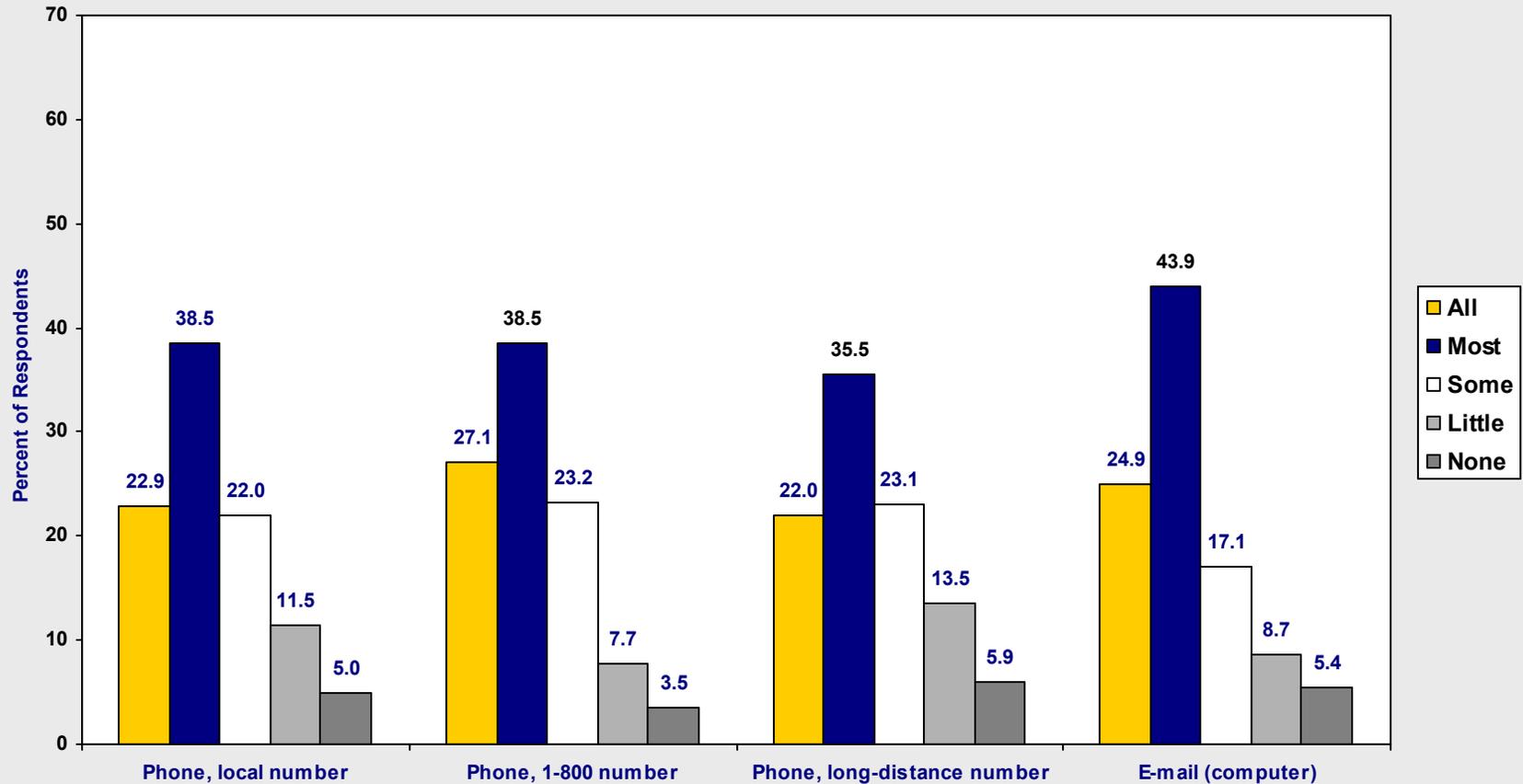
Question 31 by Question 32:
Responsiveness of counselor by primary method of contact, aside from scheduled visits.



Note: The chart presents data on the 4 most frequently reported methods of contact, aside from scheduled visits.

Valid n=2612

Question 31 by Question 33:
Amount of needed information obtained by primary method of contact, aside from scheduled visits.



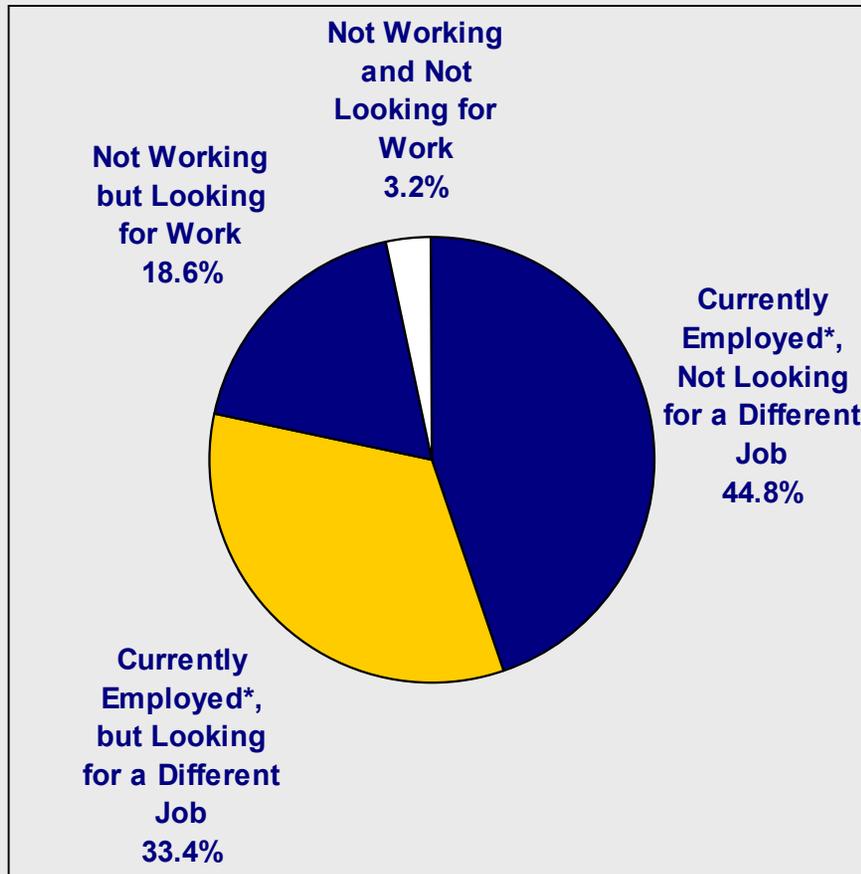
Note: The chart presents data on the 4 most frequently reported sources of information, aside from scheduled visits.

Valid n=2610

**Survey Findings:
Current Employment Status**

Current Employment Status

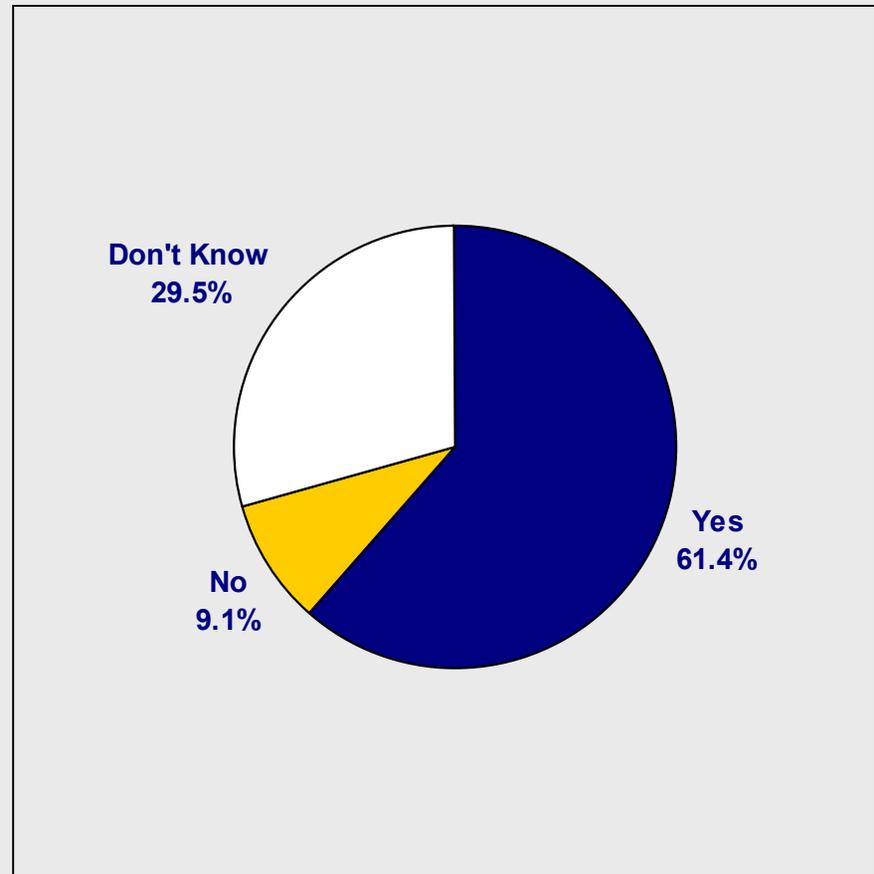
Question 41:
What is your current employment status?



* Includes full-time, part-time, or self-employment

Valid n=3591

Question 42:
Has the VA's Vocational Rehabilitation Program determined that you are suitably employed?



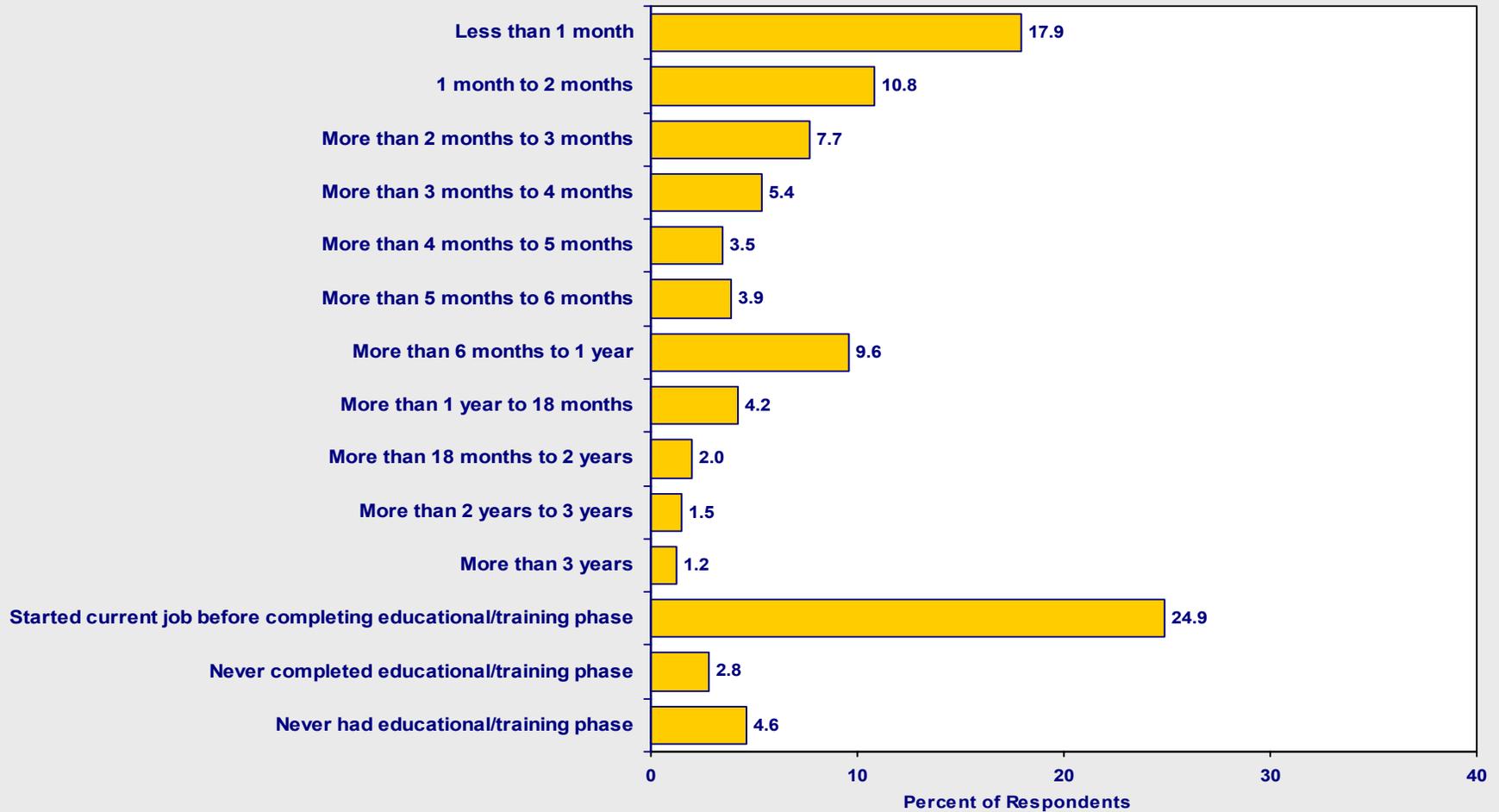
Valid n=2814

Current Employment Status

Question 43:

How long did it take from the time you completed the educational/training phase of your vocational rehabilitation program until you started your current job?

Average=4.0 Months

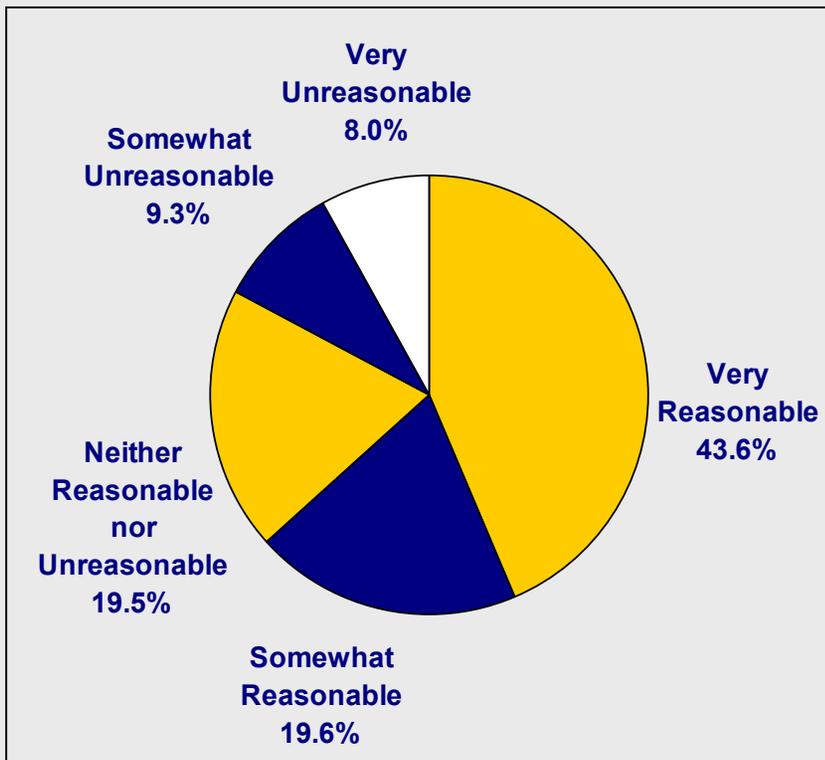


Valid n=2775

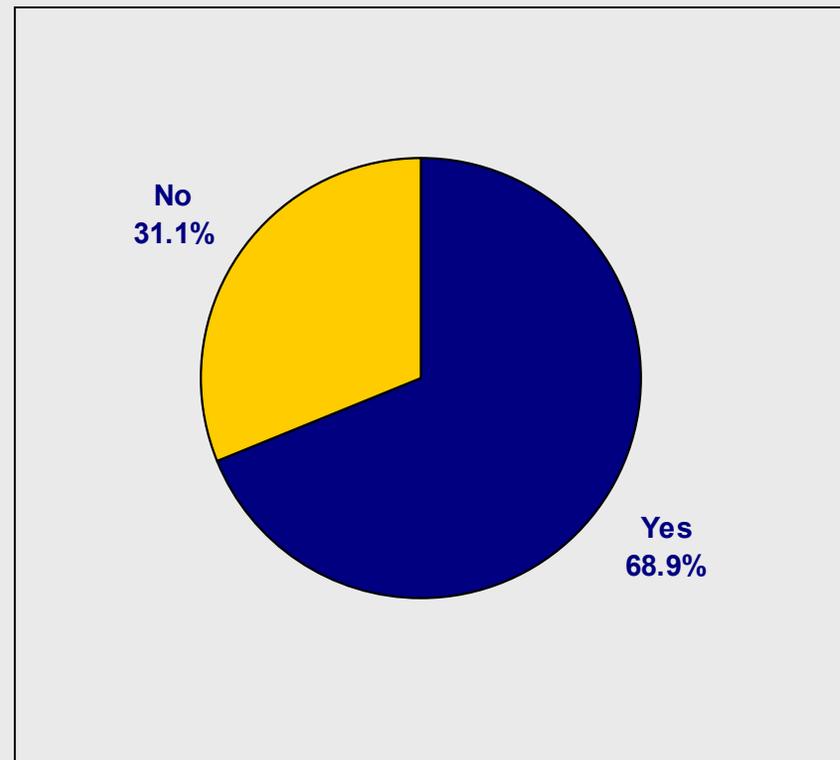
Current Employment Status

Question 44:
How **REASONABLE** was the length of time it took you to find a job?

Question 45:
Does this job meet your rehabilitation needs?



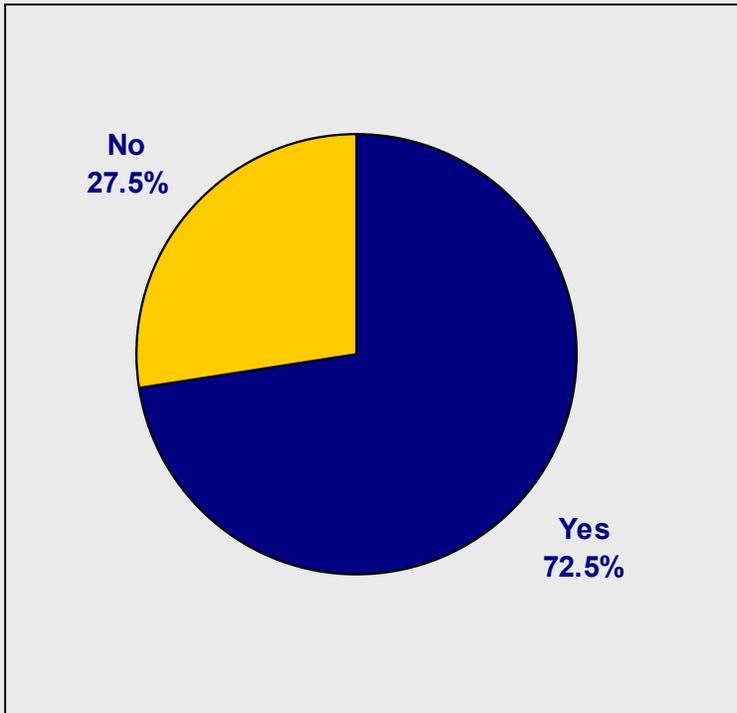
Valid n=2753



Valid n=2765

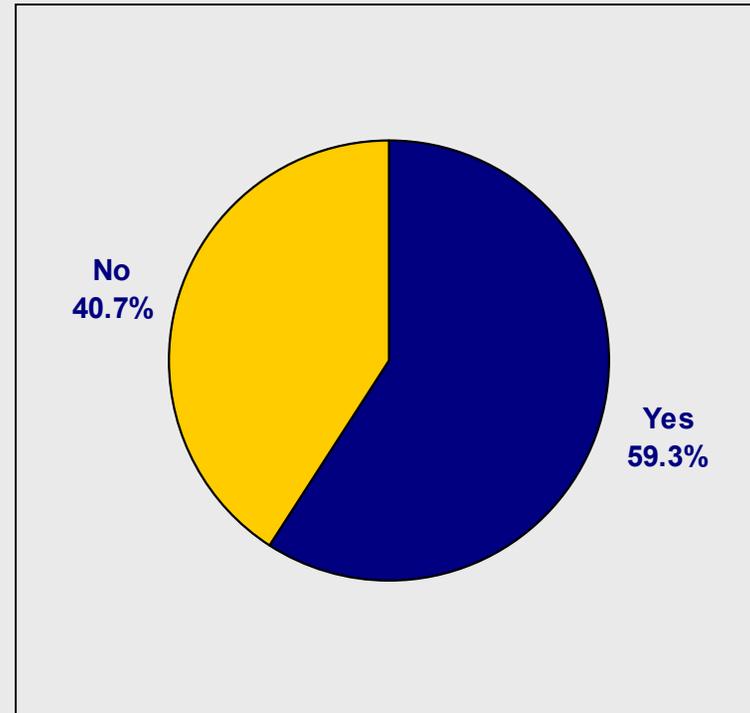
Current Employment Status

Question 46:
Does this job suit your skills and abilities?



Valid n=2774

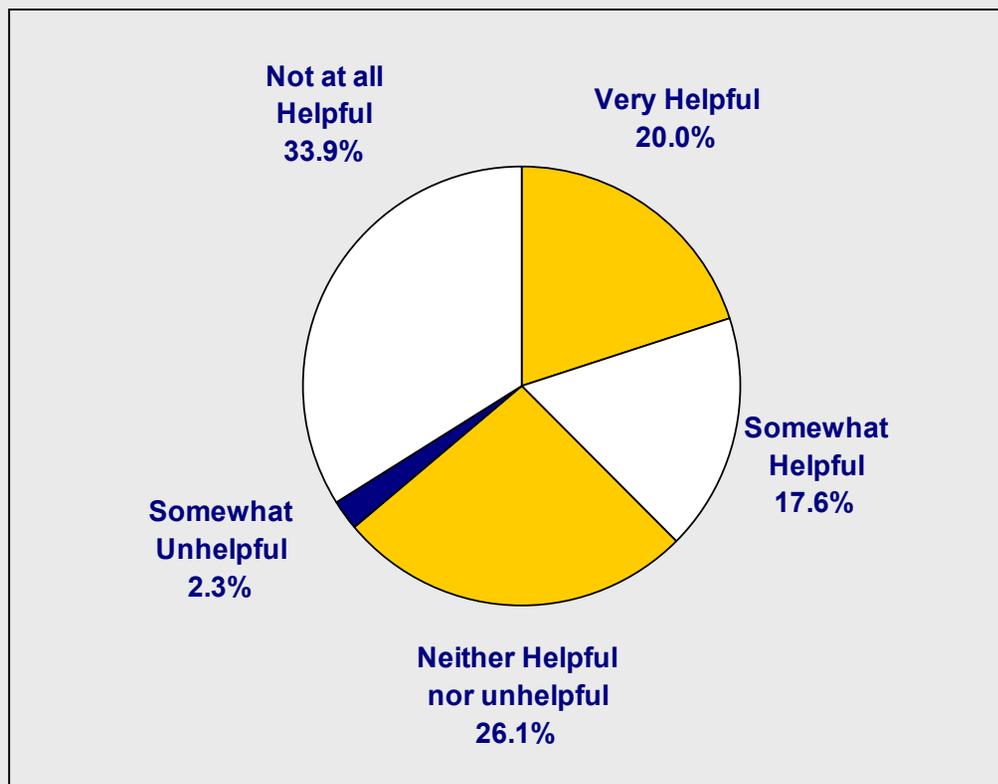
Question 47:
Does this job match the occupational/vocational goal you and your counselor selected during the planning phase of the program?



Valid n=2772

Question 48:

How helpful was your employment specialist/counselor in helping you find your current job?

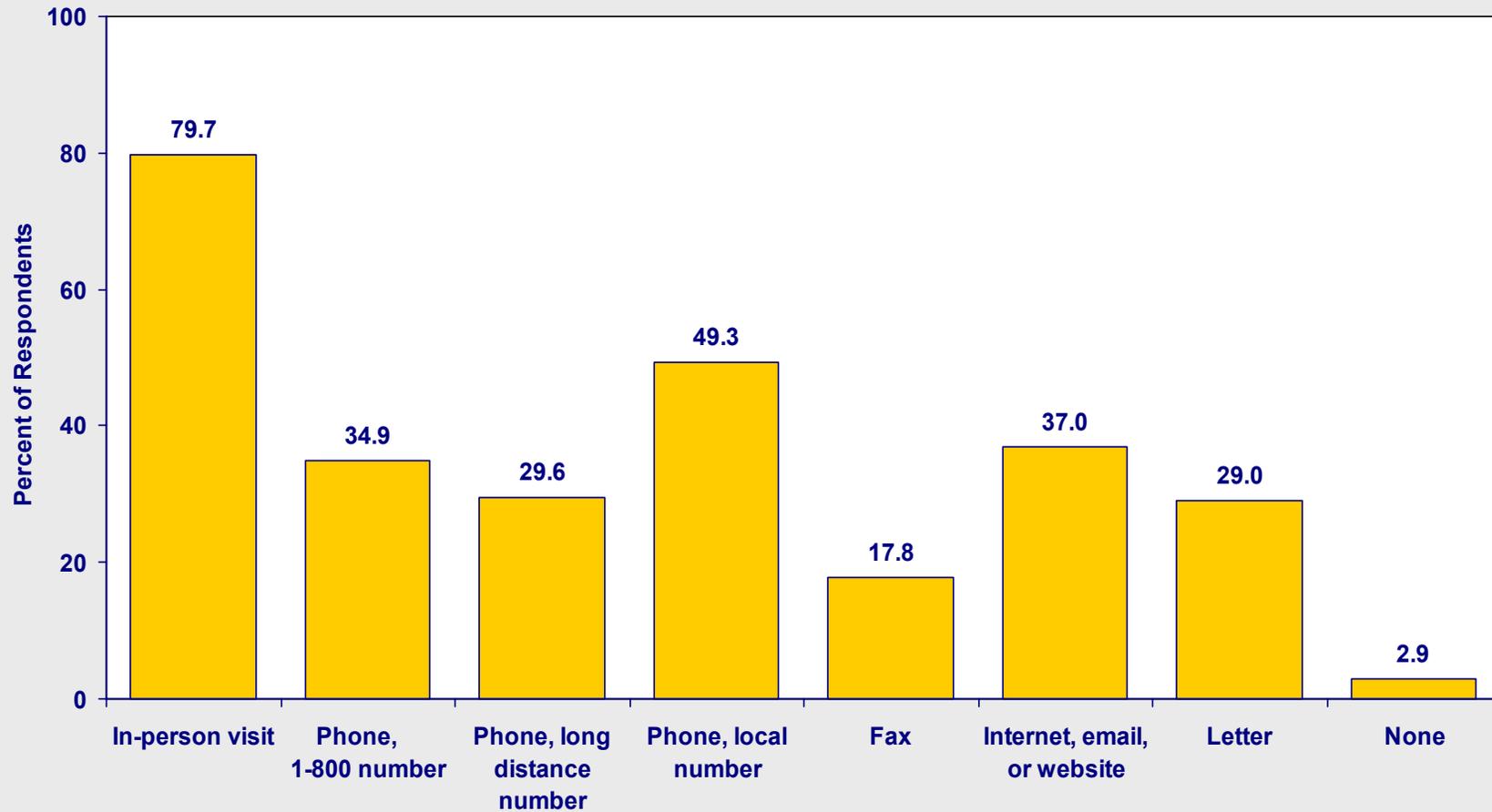


Valid n=1673

**Survey Findings:
Access to the VR&E Program**

Question 49:

Looking back to your contacts with the VR&E program thus far, which methods of contact did you EVER use?

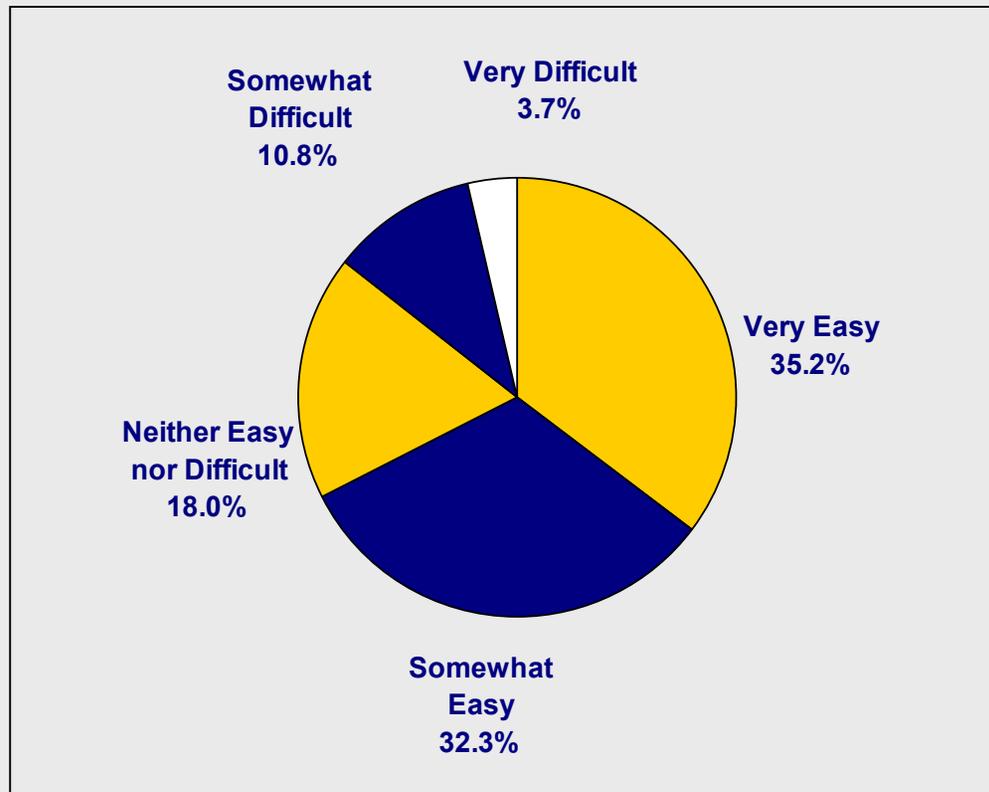


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=3589

Question 50:

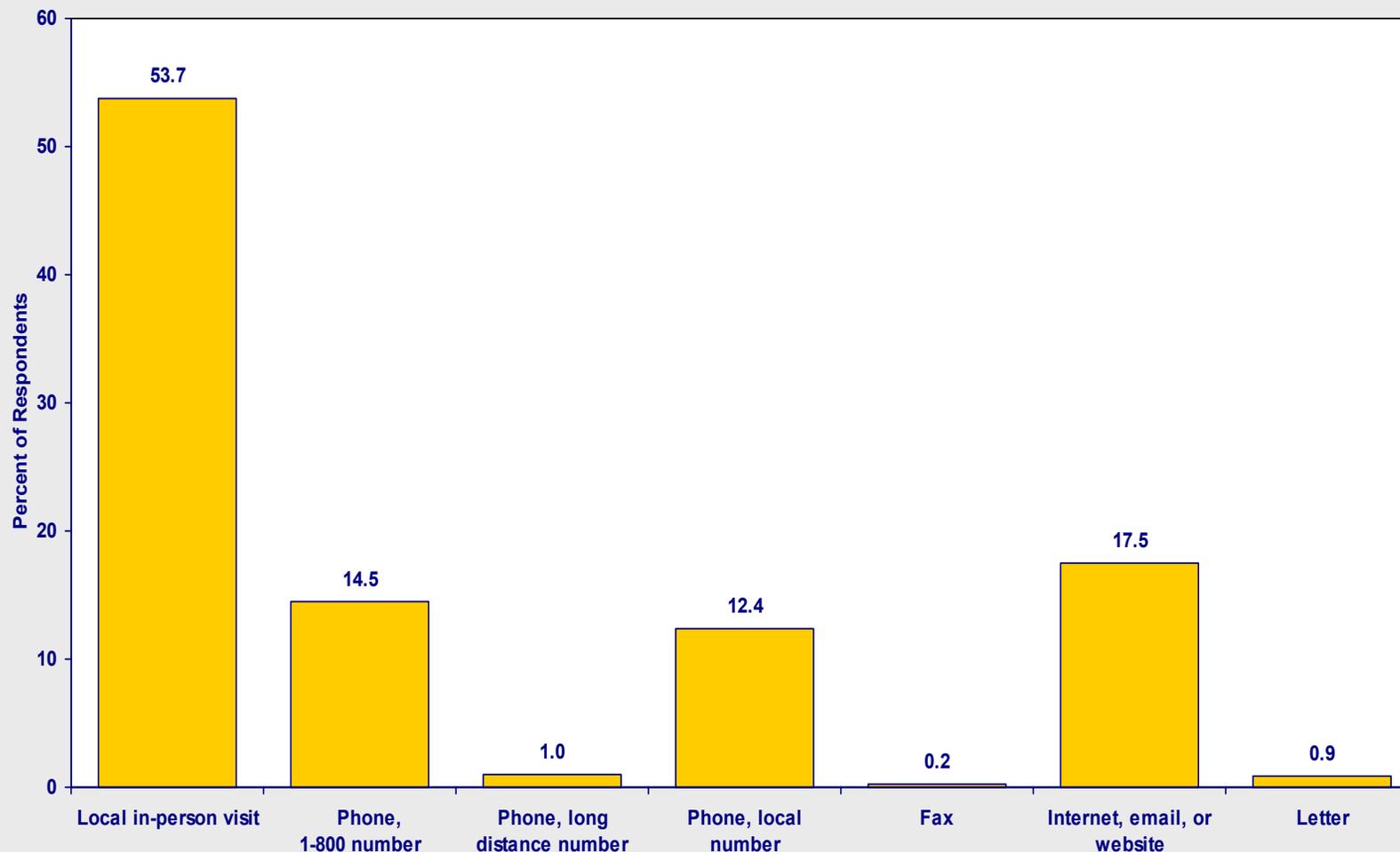
In general, how easy was it for you to obtain information from the VR&E program?



Valid n=3591

Question 51:

Which method of contact with the VR&E program would you prefer, if you could get the same degree of service?

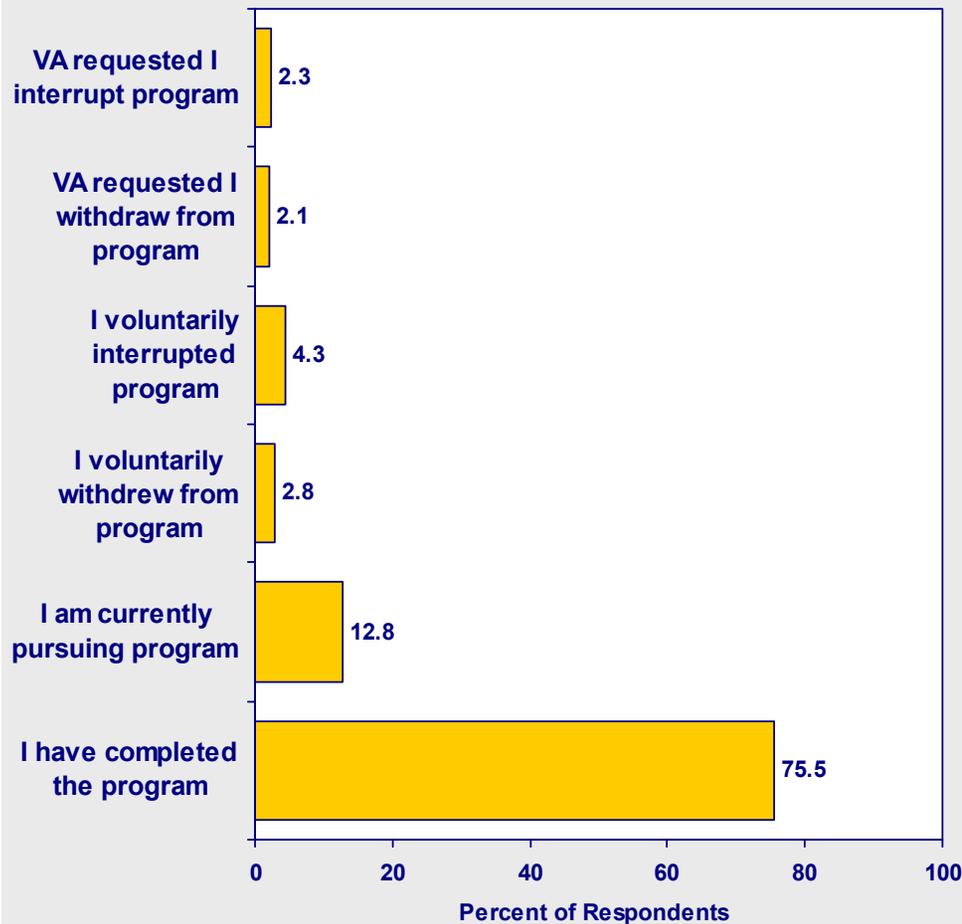


Valid n=3207

**Survey Findings:
Current Status in the VR&E Program**

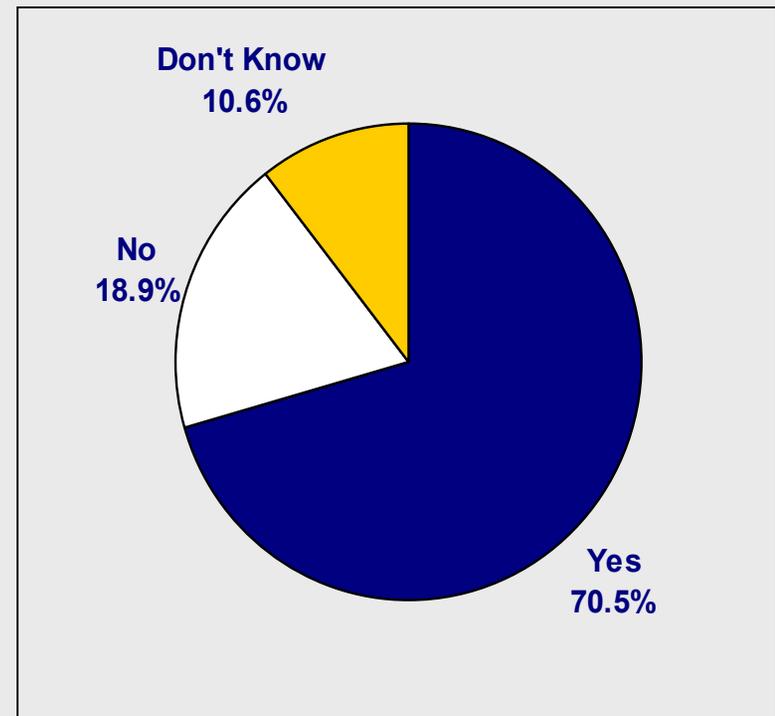
Current Status in the VR&E Program

Question 52:
How would you best describe your current status with regard to the VA VR&E program?



Valid n=3499

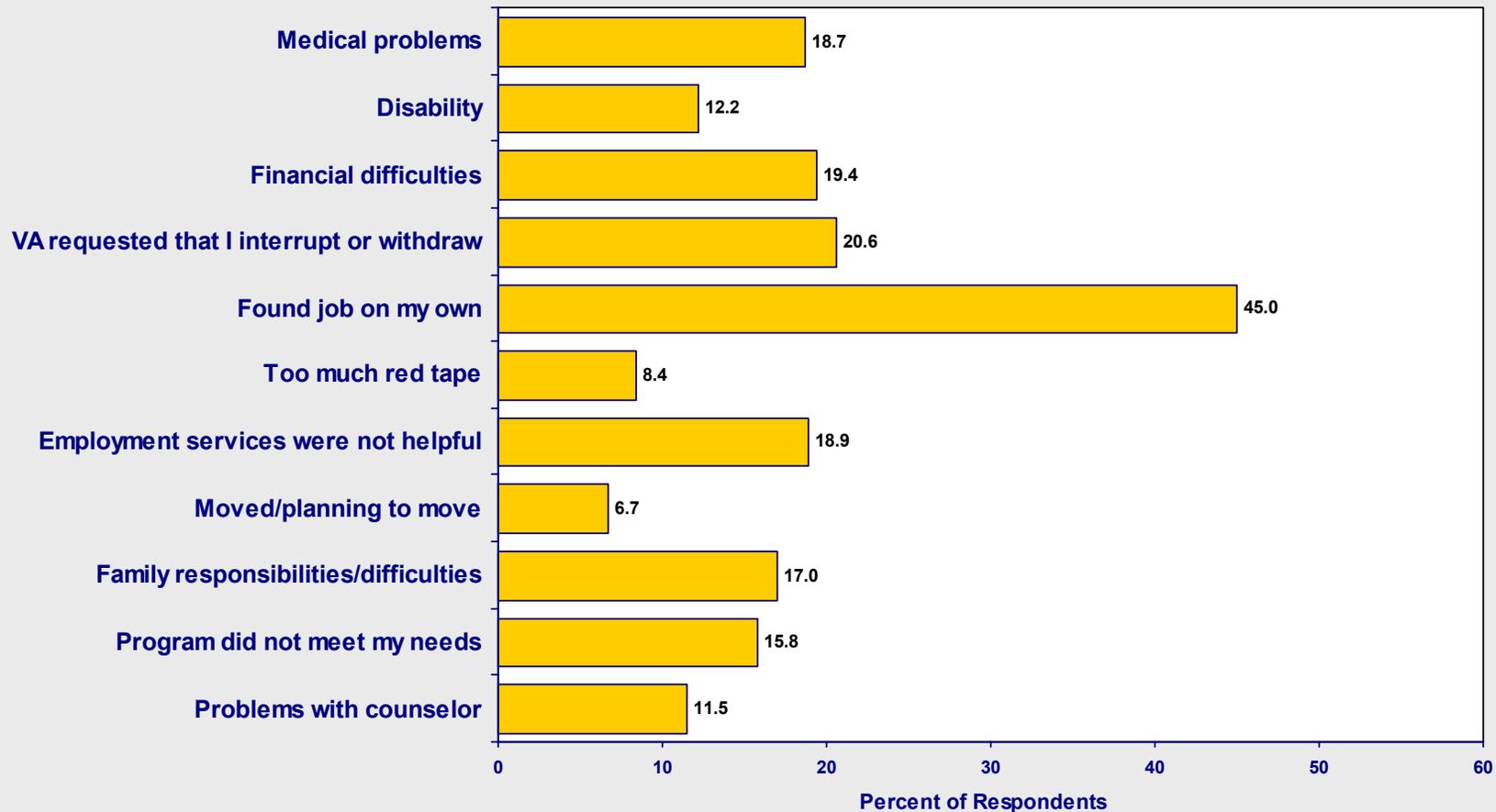
Question 53:
Did VA tell you the reasons why you were interrupted or withdrawn from the VR&E employment services program?



Valid n=180

Question 54:

Why did you interrupt or withdraw from the VR&E employment services program?

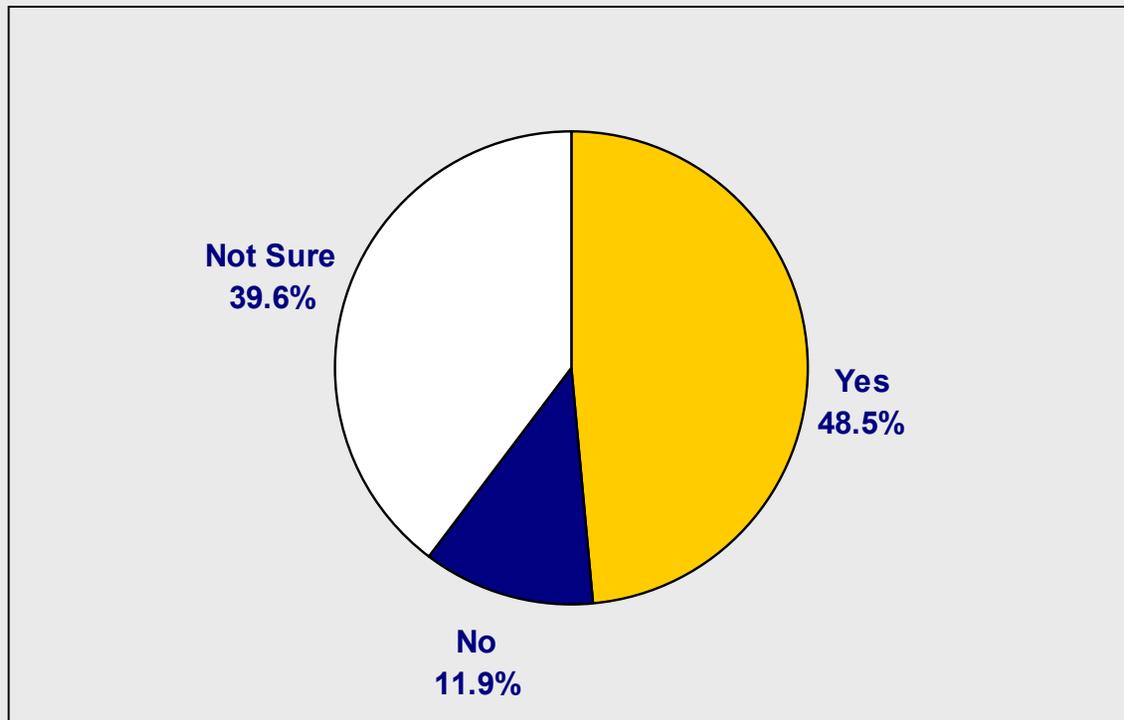


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=418

Question 55:

Do you plan to complete your rehabilitation program now or at some later date?



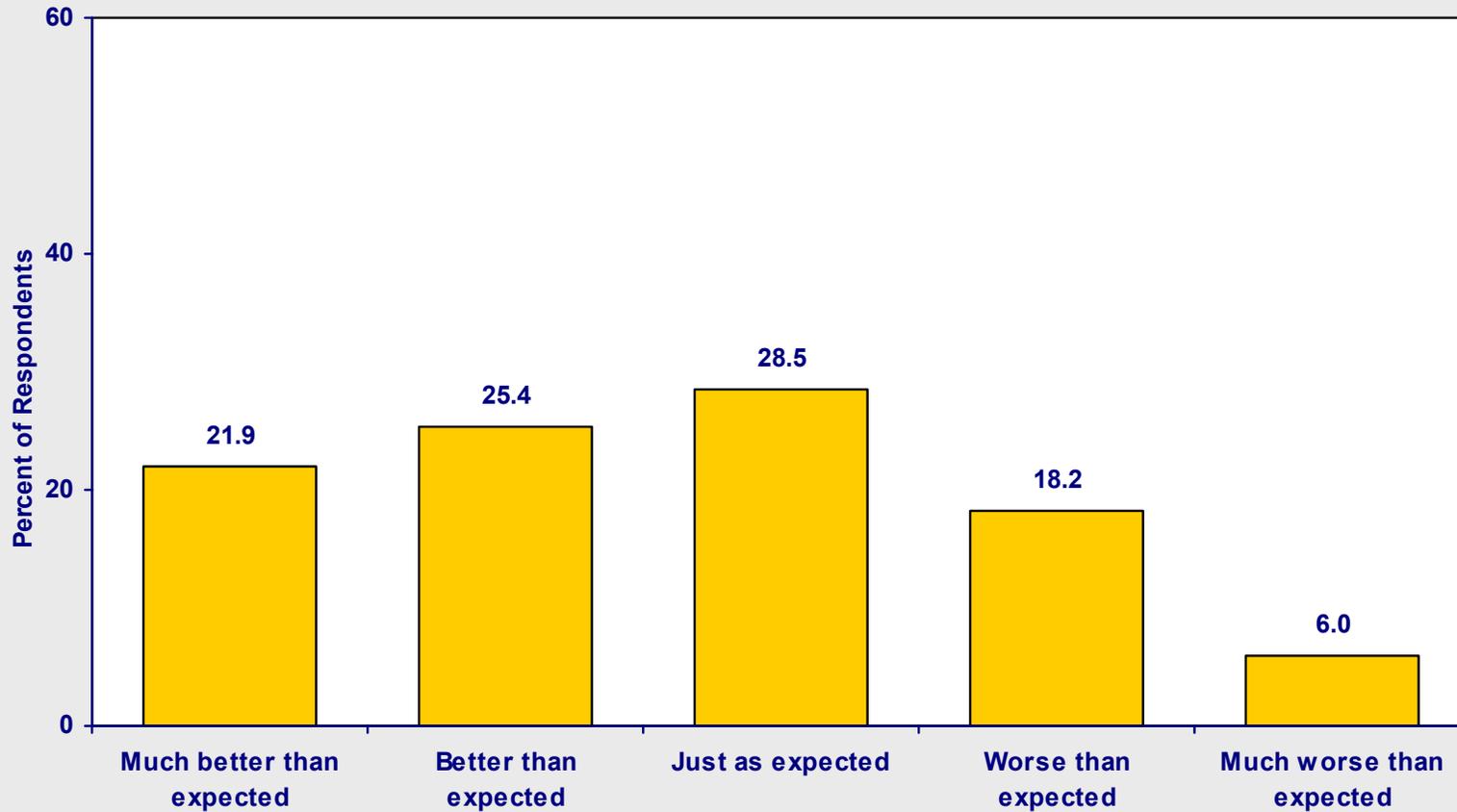
Valid n=412

Overall Program Impressions

Overall Program Impressions

Question 56:

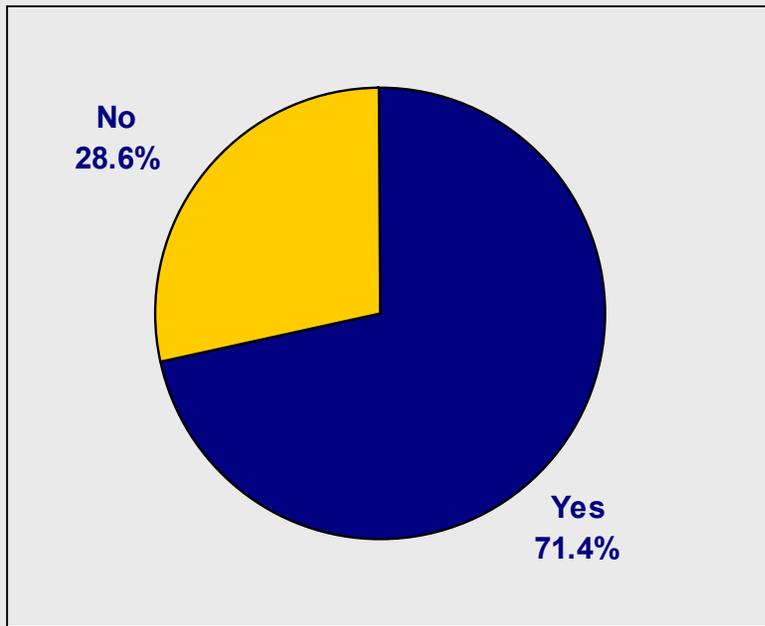
Thus far, how well has the VA's VR&E program met your expectations?



Valid n=3509

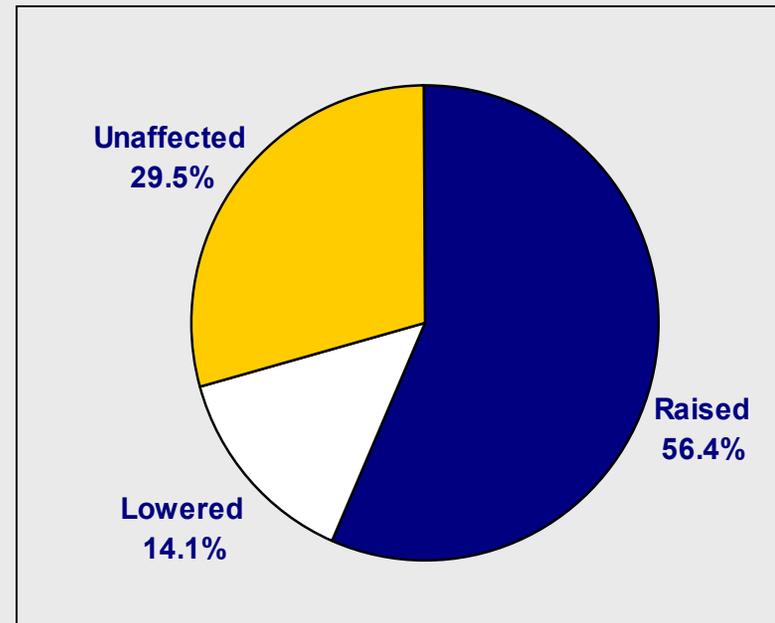
Overall Program Impressions

Question 57:
Overall, did the VR&E program meet your rehabilitation needs?



Valid n=3547

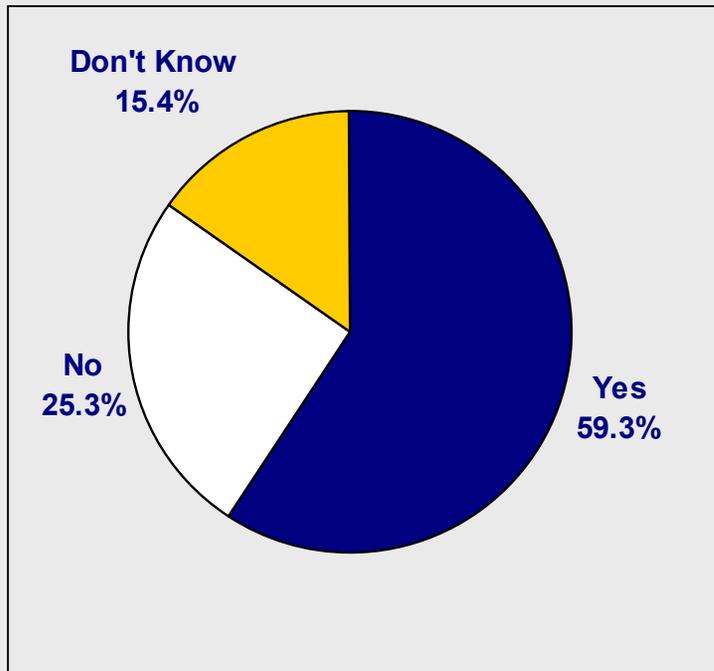
Question 58:
Have your CAREER goals been raised, lowered, or unaffected as a result of your interaction with the VR&E program?



Valid n=3577

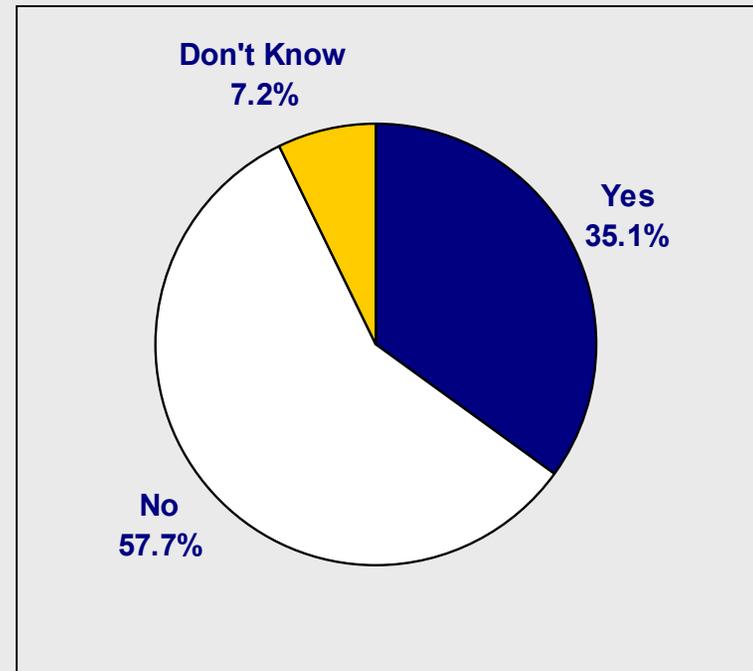
Overall Program Impressions

Question 59:
Are your career goals more realistic as a result of the program?



Valid n=3579

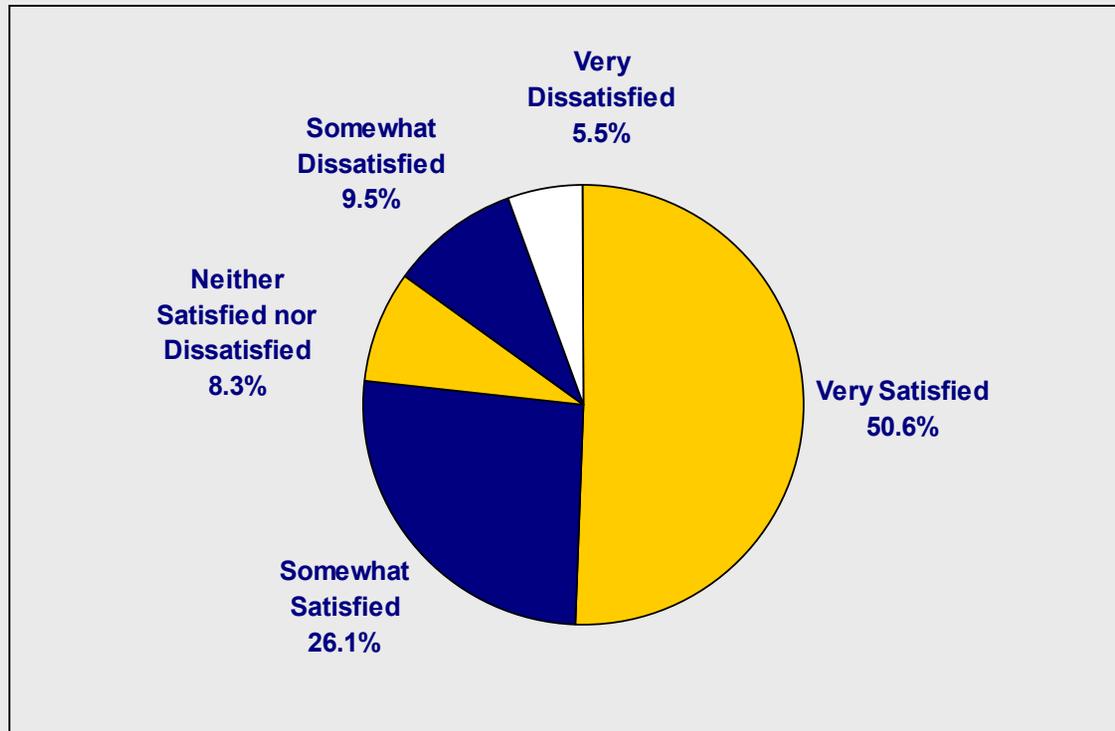
Question 60:
At this time, would you say that your career goals have been met?



Valid n=3580

Overall Program Impressions

Question 61:
Overall, how satisfied are you with VA's VR&E program?



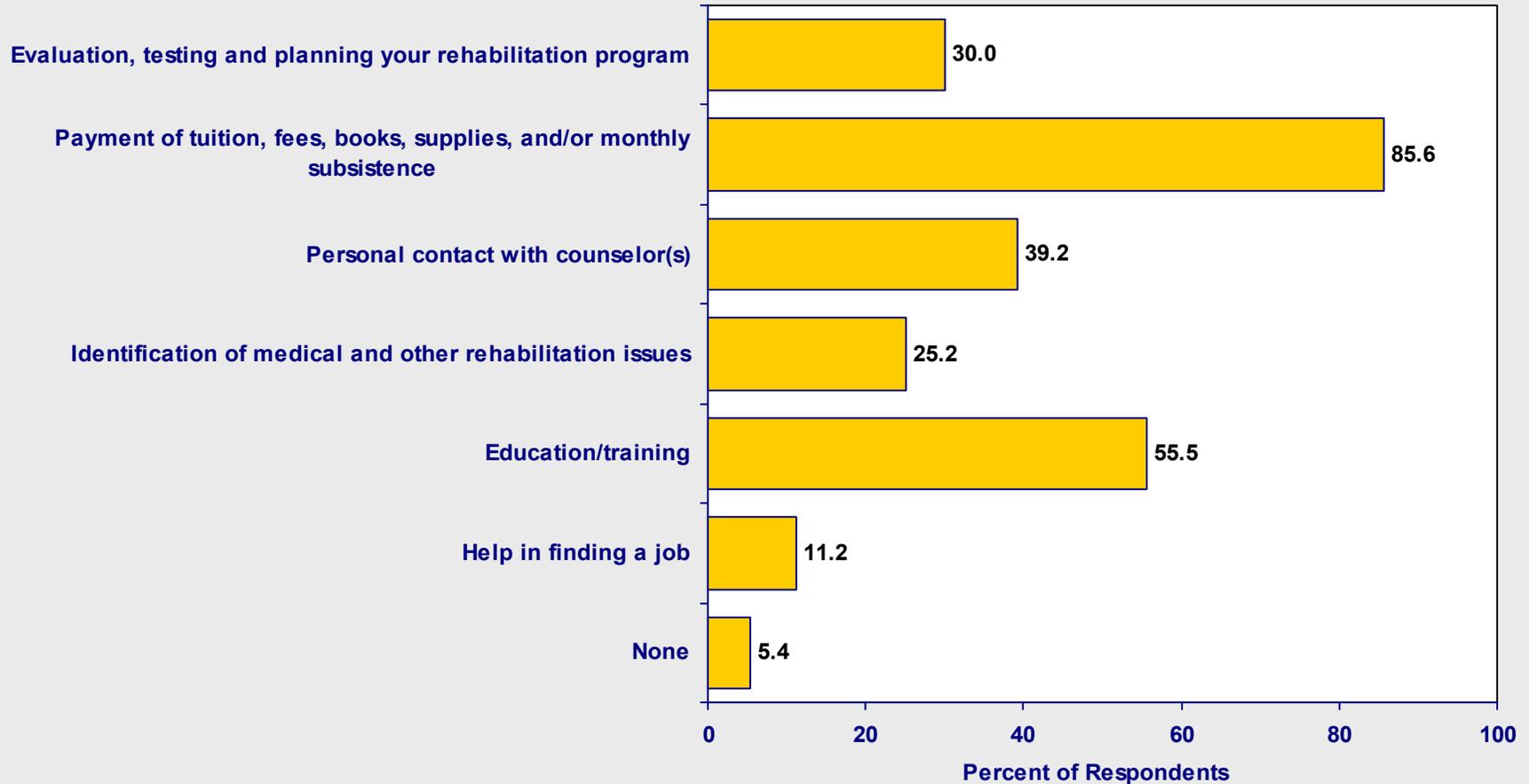
Note: Includes respondents who have completed the program or withdrew from the program, either voluntarily or by VA request.

Valid n=2799

Overall Program Impressions

Question 62:

Which of the following VR&E services were the most helpful?



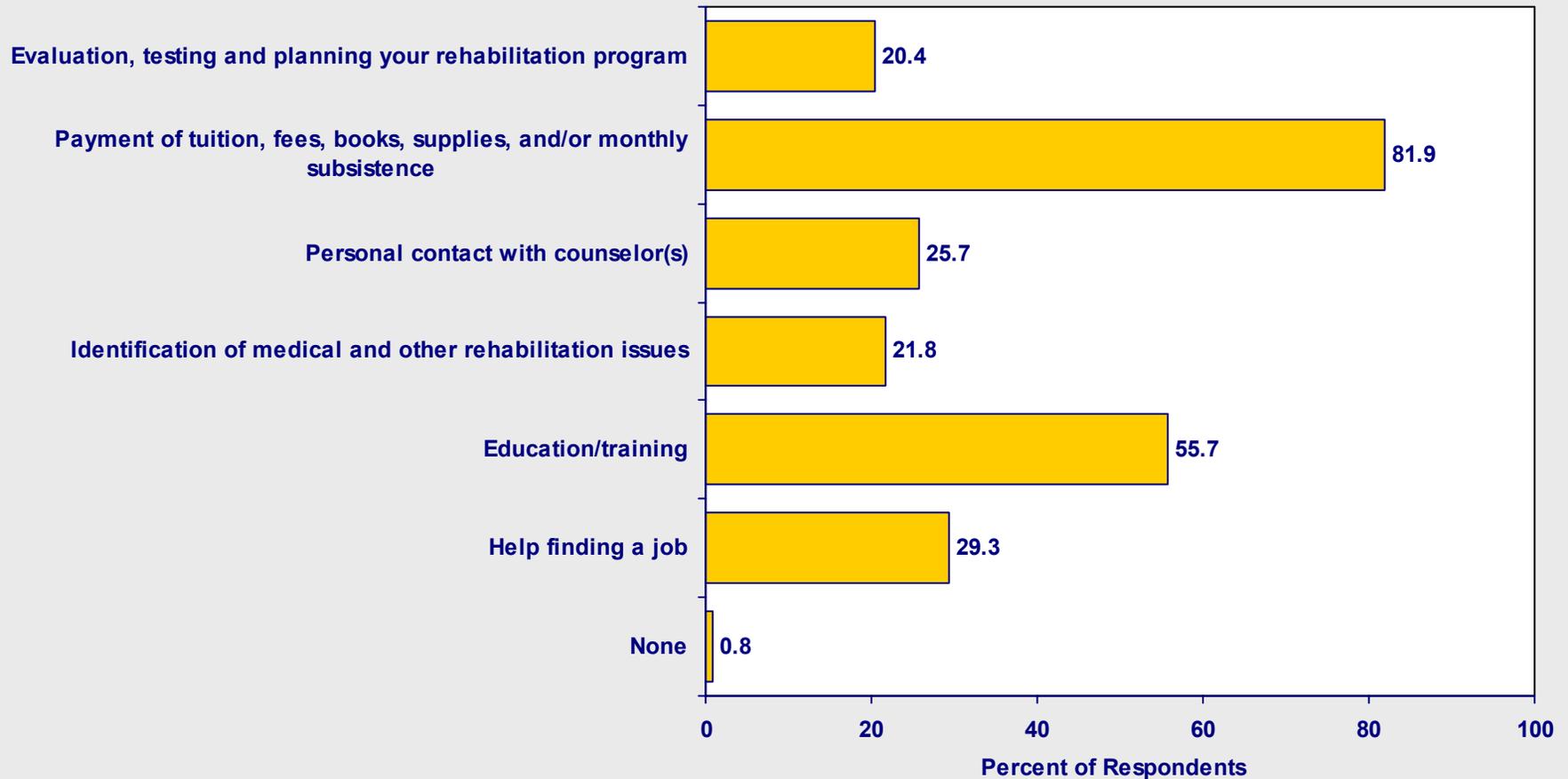
Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=3579

Overall Program Impressions

Question 63:

Which of the following VR&E services did you need the most?



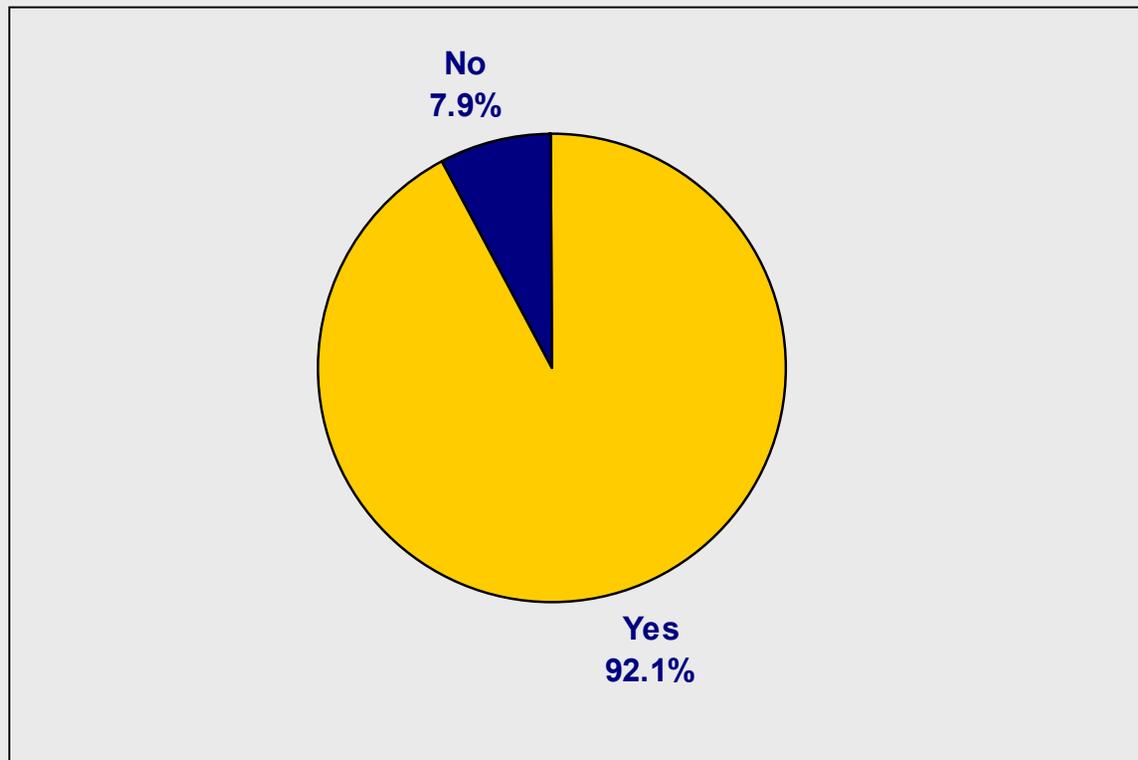
Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=3571

Overall Program Impressions

Question 64:

Would you recommend this program to other disabled veterans?



Valid n=3508

Appendix B: Methodology

Mailing Protocol

- A total of 7,326 surveys were distributed to veterans in the Job Ready Phase.
- The survey mailing protocol consisted of five mailings to a census of veterans participating in the Job Ready phase of the program. These five mailings included: 1) a prenotification letter informing selected participants that they should expect to receive a mailed survey questionnaire; 2) the questionnaire, including a cover letter and standard return envelope; 3) a reminder/thank-you postcard; 4) a second questionnaire mailed to those who had not yet responded, along with a cover letter and standard return envelope; 5) a second reminder/thank-you postcard. Examples of these materials appear in Appendix B.
- All mailing materials were sent bearing the VBA seal, and the cover and prenotification letters included a signature from the VBA Under Secretary for Benefits. Each questionnaire mailout contained the cover letter on VBA letterhead, a questionnaire, and a pre-posted envelope. Toll-free numbers for both Caliber Associates and VBA were included on the cover letters to assist respondents with questions regarding the survey.
- The mailings took place on the dates indicated in the table below.

Mail Survey Schedule	
Prenotification Letter	December 4, 2002
First Questionnaire	December 11, 2002
First Reminder Postcard	December 18, 2002
Second Questionnaire	January 8, 2003
Second Reminder Postcard	January 15, 2003
Fieldwork Completed	January 30, 2003

Response Rates

- The Job Ready survey yielded 3,885 completed questionnaires, resulting in a 53.0% response rate.
- The response rate is calculated by dividing the number of completed questionnaires by the number of eligible questionnaires. Generally, a response rate of 70 percent or more is considered excellent, 60 to 69 percent is considered very good, 50 to 59 percent is considered good, 40 to 49 percent is considered fair, and any response rate less than 40 percent is considered poor. Without further information, data derived from a survey with a response rate of less than 50 percent should be interpreted with caution.
- Eligible questionnaires are those which were returned completed, those which were not returned, or those which were returned blank or incomplete.
- Ineligible questionnaires are those which were returned undeliverable or those which were returned with an indication that the recipient was deceased or unable to complete the questionnaire.