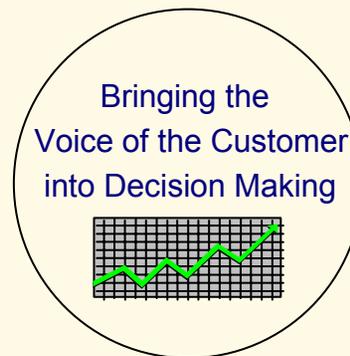


SURVEY OF VETERANS' SATISFACTION WITH THE VA VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AND EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM

TRAINING AND EDUCATION (REHABILITATION SERVICES) PHASE

2002 Results

National Summary



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

April 2003

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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."

Survey Objectives (continued)

- 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 employment services.
- 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 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. In the 2002 survey, the term "specialist/counselor" was changed to "counselor/specialist" on Questions 40-43. The final Training and Education 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 random sample of approximately 6,500 veterans were sent the Training and Education questionnaire. A Spanish language version of the survey was provided to veterans residing in Puerto Rico.
- The sample of respondents who received the Training and Education questionnaire were in the rehabilitation phase phase of their program for a minimum of four months, or had just completed the rehabilitation phase in the previous four months. This included those who interrupted or discontinued the program at any time between the period when the sample was drawn and data collection was complete. A total of 35,372 persons were in the phase when the sample was drawn.
- Veterans who were selected into both the 2001 sample and the 2002 sample, and were listed in the same phase for both years, were removed from the 2002 sample. However, veterans who were selected into both the 2001 sample and the 2002 sample, but had moved to another phase from 2001 to 2002 were included in the sample, since they would receive a different questionnaire in the 2002 administration.
- A total of 6,500 questionnaires were distributed. The sample was not designed to yield data for any one regional office, only for the national total.
- A total of 3,574 respondents completed the **Training and Education** questionnaire for a response rate of 55.0 percent.
- A more detailed discussion of the survey methodology appears in Appendix B.

■ Demographics:

- Most respondents were male (76.8 percent), averaging 41 years of age.

■ Background Information About the VR&E Program:

- Respondents indicated the most common length of time since their vocational rehabilitation plan of service was developed was more than one year to two years, in which 28.1 percent indicated that length.
- 74.9 percent of respondents indicated a VA staff counselor and 16.0 percent of respondents indicated a counselor under contract with the VA was their counselor during the rehabilitation phase.
- 87.2 percent of respondents said they were very or somewhat satisfied with the rehabilitation goal selected by themselves and the counselor.

■ Knowledge and Use of Vocational Rehabilitation Services:

- Common types of counseling or referrals were assistance in enrolling in an educational/training program (72.6 percent) and career counseling (43.9 percent).
- The most frequently reported benefits that respondents would have liked to receive but did not were computer equipment/software (41.9 percent) and dental services (27.2 percent).
- Respondents found a lack of knowledge about what benefits are available (41.3 percent) and too much red tape to obtain supplies/services (40.1 percent) to be most difficult about obtaining benefits.

■ Relationship with the Counselor

- 74.0 percent of respondents said they had a clear understanding of the respective responsibilities and obligations of themselves and their counselor.
- 73.4 percent of respondents indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed that their counselor gives good information and advice.
- 67.8 percent of respondents indicated that they strongly agreed or agreed that their counselor shows a genuine interest in their progress.

■ Contact with the Counselor

- 83.1 percent of respondents indicated the number and length of their in-person meetings with their counselor are adequate.
- 84.1 percent of respondents said the location and 85.2 percent said the scheduled time of in-person meetings were very or somewhat convenient.
- 77.3 percent of respondents indicated their counselor fully addresses their questions, concerns, or complaints.

■ Employment Services

- Of those who received employment services, 54.7 percent of respondents indicated that they were very or somewhat satisfied with the employment services they received during their program.

■ Access to the VR&E Program

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

■ Current Status in the Program

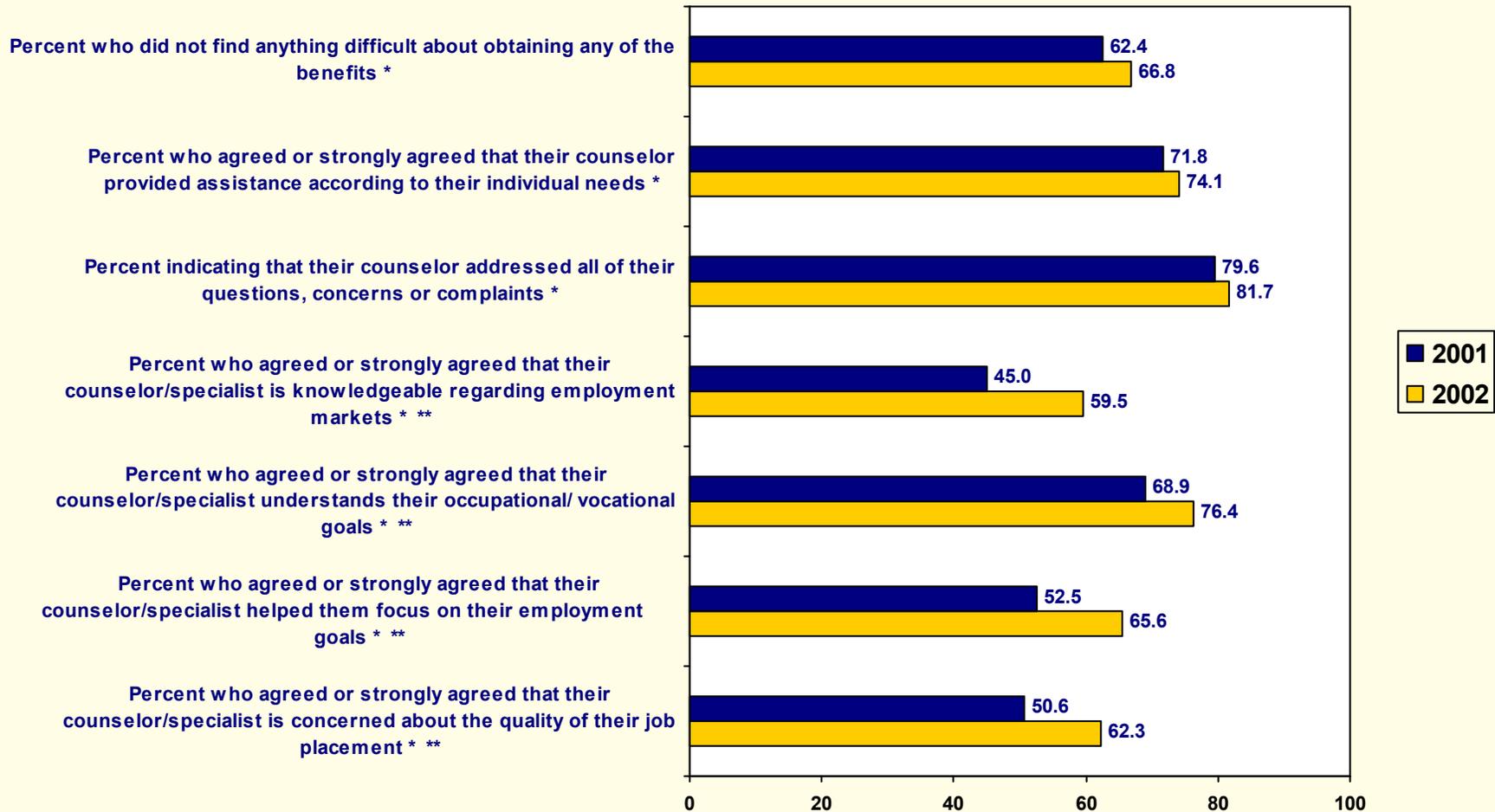
- 88.4 percent of respondents were currently pursuing the program. Voluntarily, 1.5 percent withdrew from the program and 7.5 percent interrupted their program. At the request of the VA, 0.9 percent withdrew from the program and 1.8 percent interrupted their program.

■ Overall Program Impressions

- 71.0 percent of respondents indicated the VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program has treated them as an individual, not just a case to be managed.
- Overall, 81.4 percent of respondents indicated the Rehabilitation process reflected the courtesy, compassion, and respect they would expect as a veteran of the United States.
- 60.1 percent of respondents indicated their educational goals were raised and 74.5 percent indicated that their educational goals were more realistic as a result of the program.
- 59.8 percent of respondents indicated their career goals were raised and 71.0 percent indicated that their career goals were more realistic as a result of the program.
- Overall, 86.2 percent of respondents said they were very or somewhat satisfied with the training or education phase of their program.
- 97.1 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.

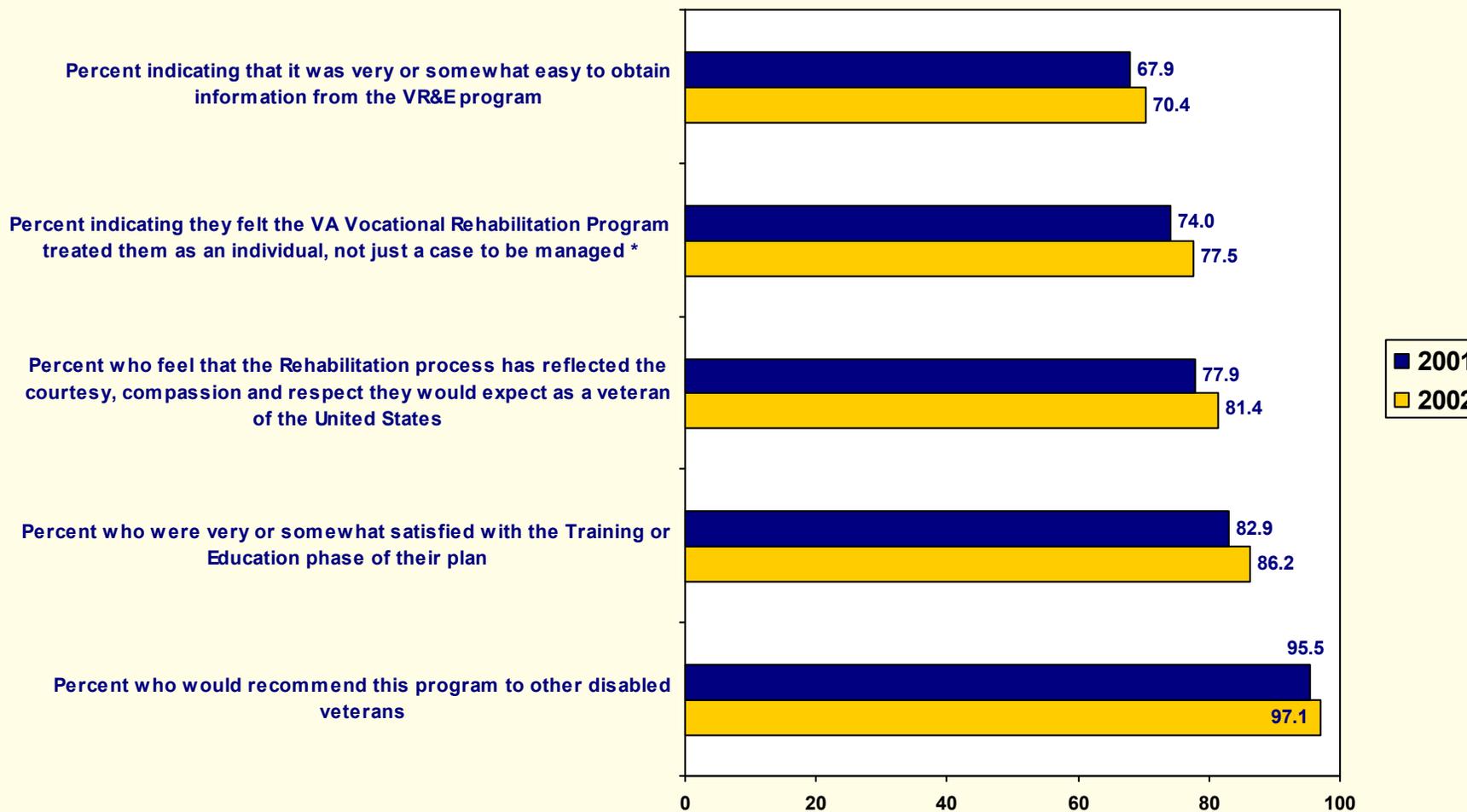


* Excludes responses of "Don't know" or "Not applicable"

** The significant increase shown in these questions should be interpreted with caution due to a change in the questionnaire between 2001 and 2002. In 2001 all survey respondents were directed to answer these questions, but in 2002 respondents who reported that they had not received any employment services were directed to skip over these questions to the next section.

Significant Results in Trend Analysis: 2002 vs. 2001

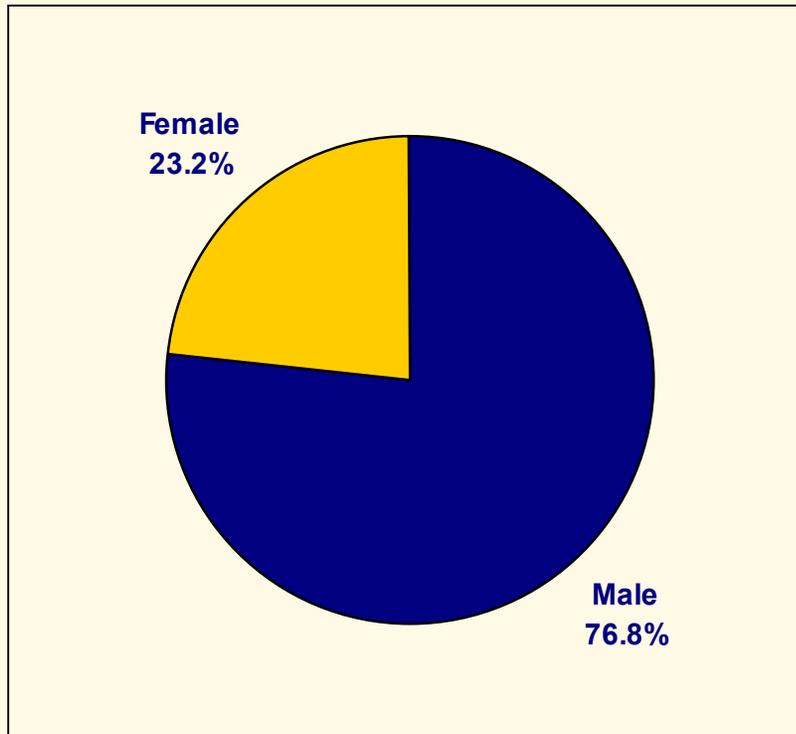
The items shown here reflect true differences in performance over time. If an item does not appear, then performance did not significantly change between the years.



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

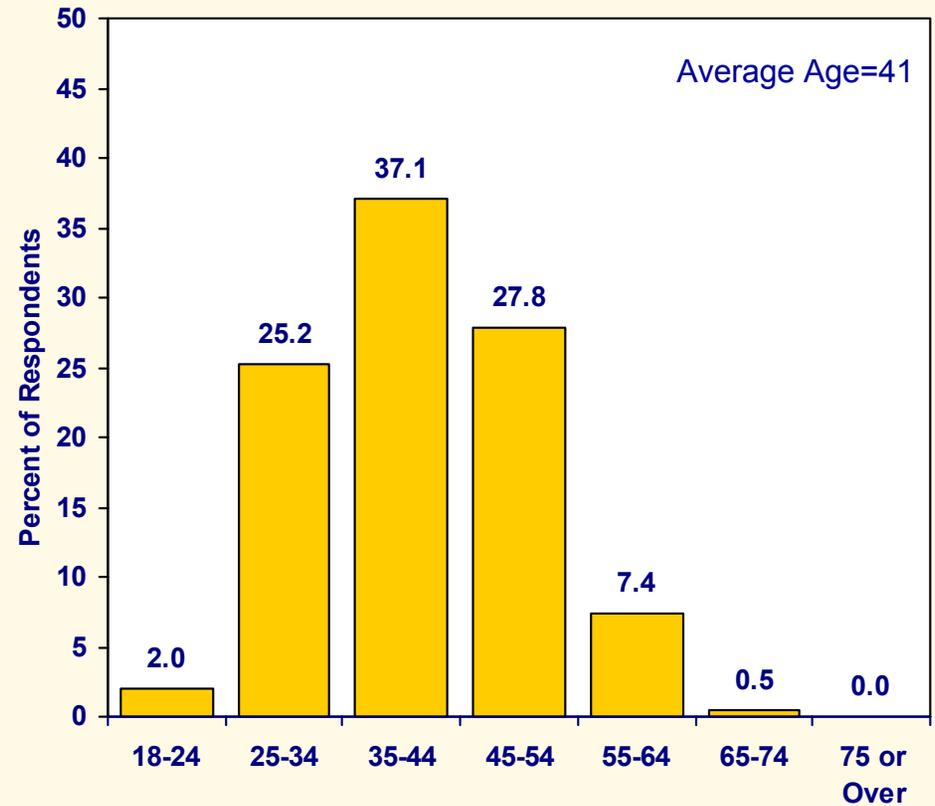
Respondent Characteristics

Gender Distribution



Valid n=3441

Age Distribution (in years)



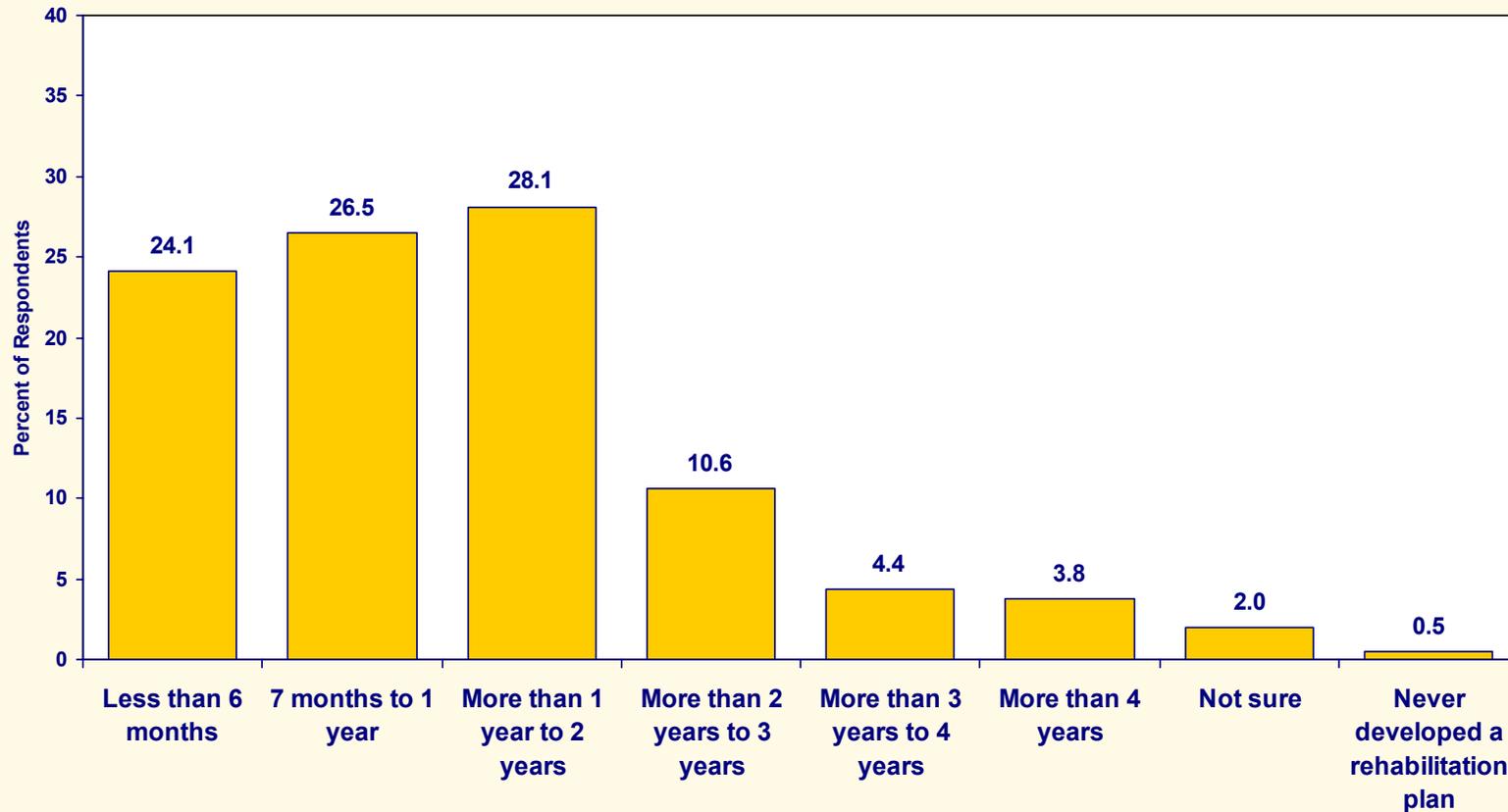
Valid n=3441

**Survey Findings:
Background Information About Respondents'
VR&E Program**

Background Information About Respondents' VR&E Program

Question 1:

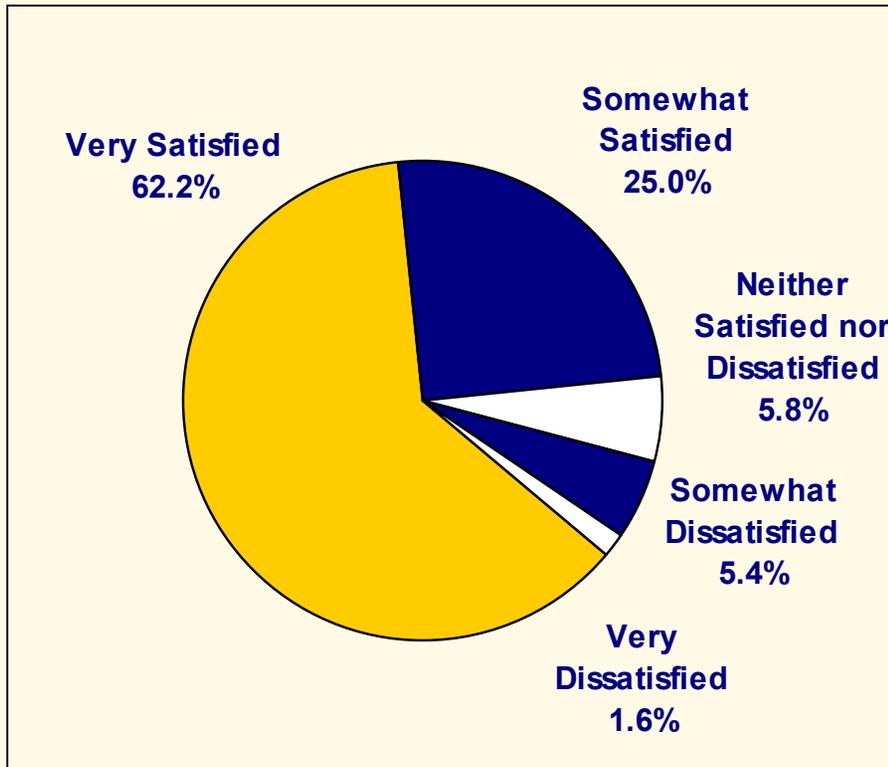
How long has it been since you developed a vocational plan of services with your counselor?



Valid n=3424

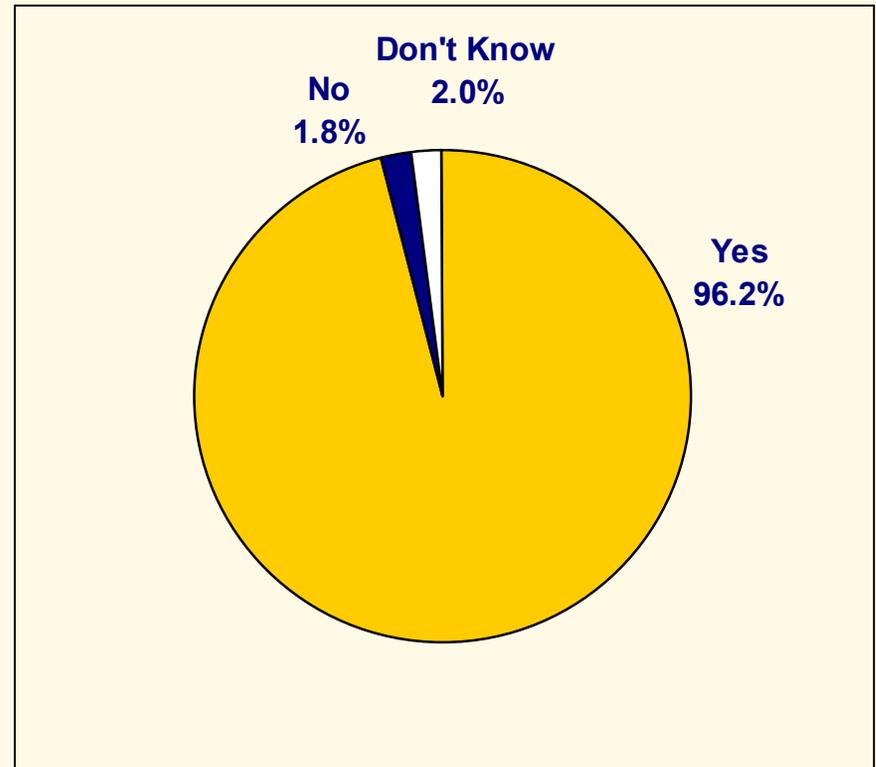
Background Information About Respondents' VR&E Program

Question 2:
How satisfied are you with the occupational/vocational goal you and your counselor selected?



Valid n=3369

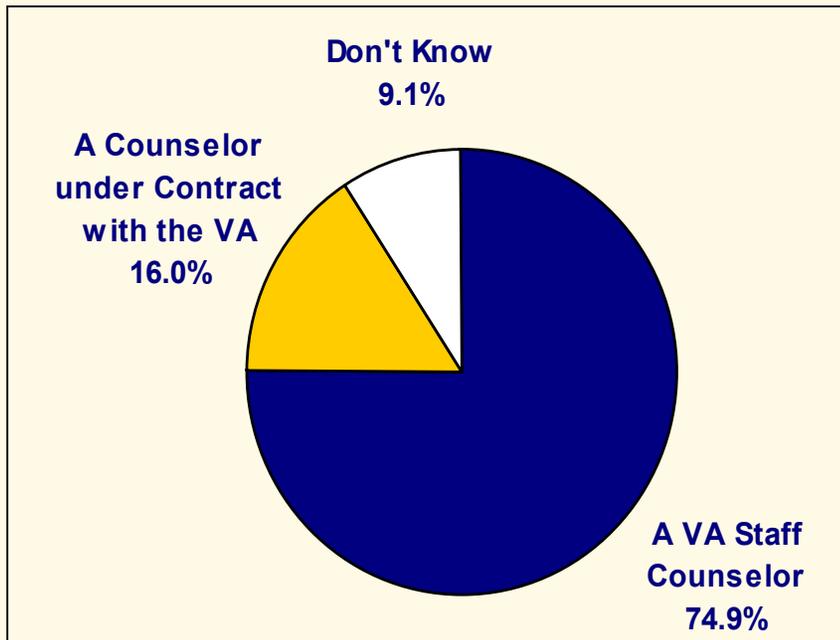
Question 3:
Do (Did) you have a vocational rehabilitation specialist or counselor assigned to you during the training or educational phase of your program?



Valid n=3418

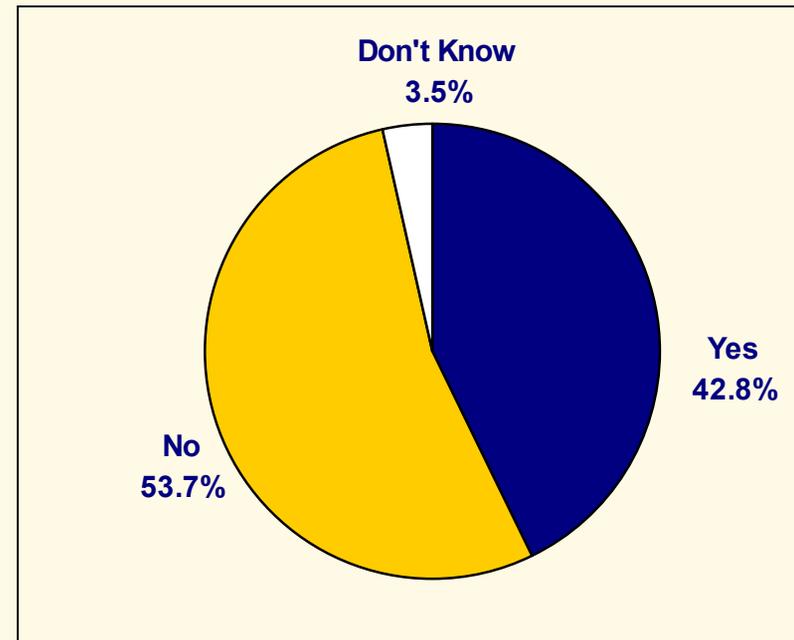
Background Information About Respondents' VR&E Program

Question 4:
Who is (was) your primary specialist or counselor assigned during this rehabilitation phase?



Valid n=3265

Question 5:
Is this the same counselor who prepared your plan of services?



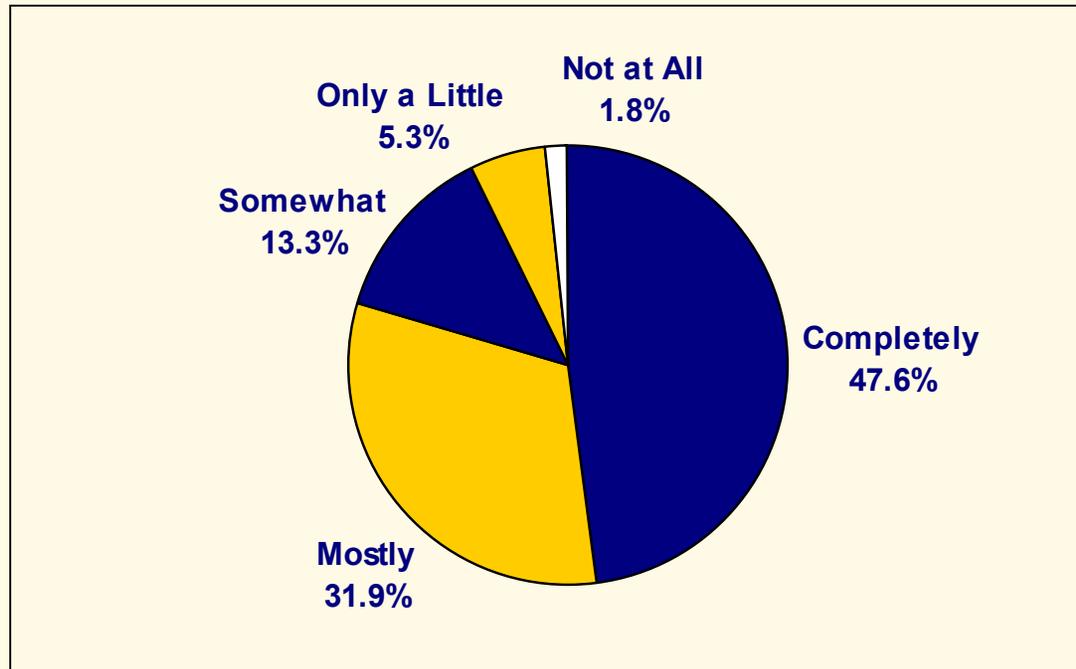
Valid n=3296

**Survey Findings:
Knowledge and Use of Vocational
Rehabilitation Services**

Knowledge and Use of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Question 6:

How completely did your counselor explain all the benefits and services available to you during your rehabilitation program?

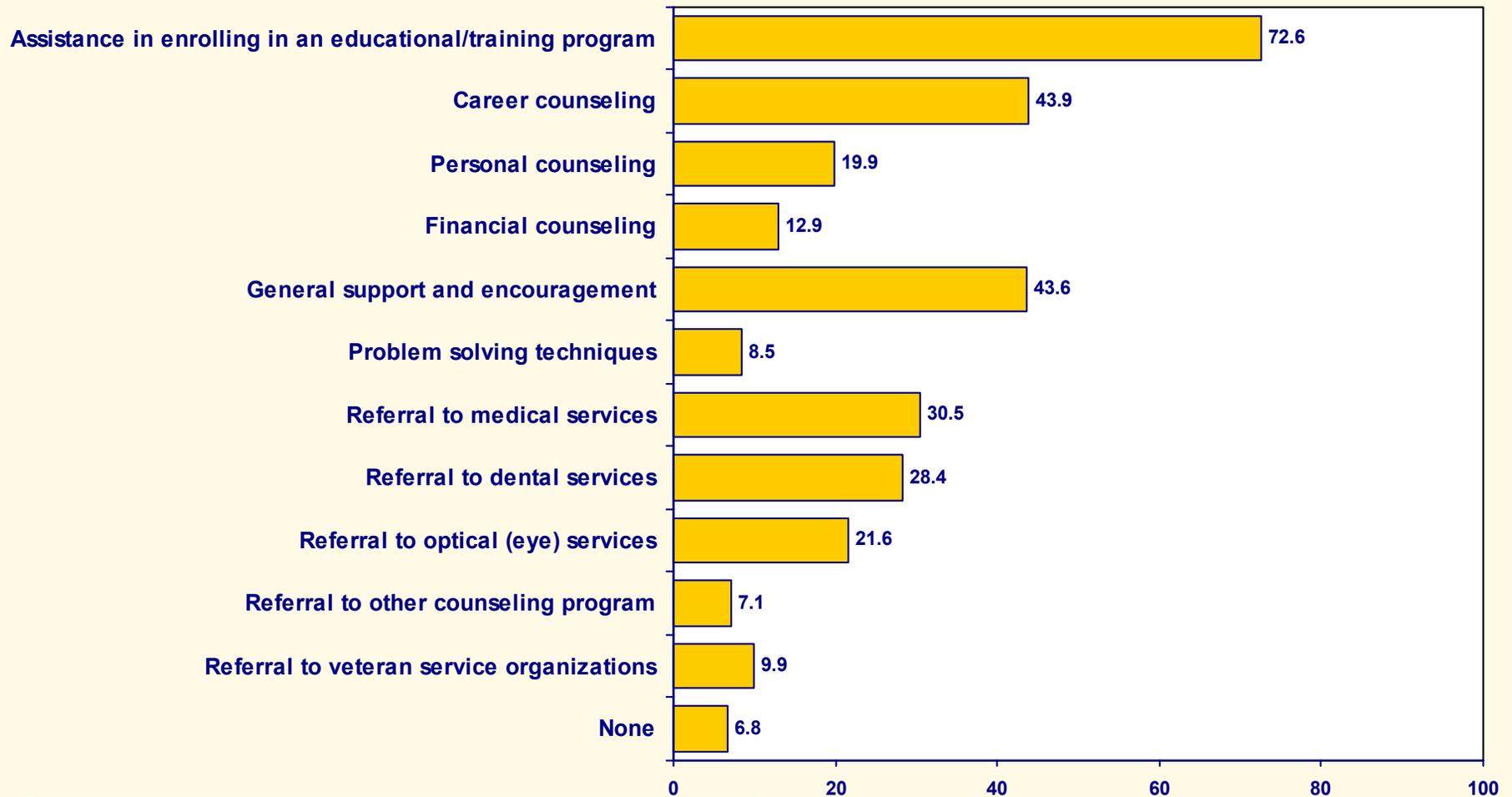


Valid n=3293

Knowledge and Use of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Question 7:

Which of the following types of counseling or referrals has your counselor provided?



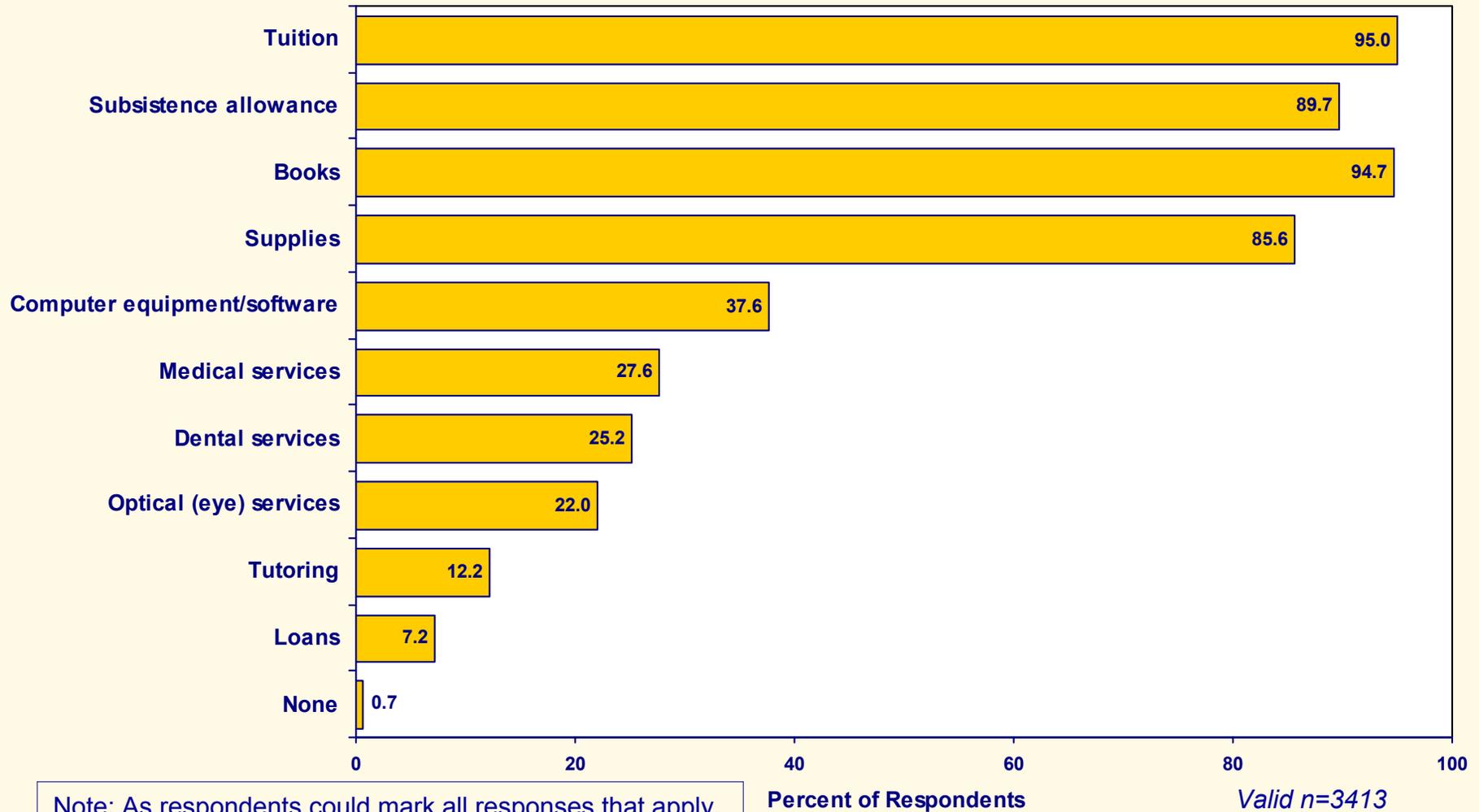
Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=3312

Knowledge and Use of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Question 8:

Which of the following benefits have you received during your rehabilitation program?

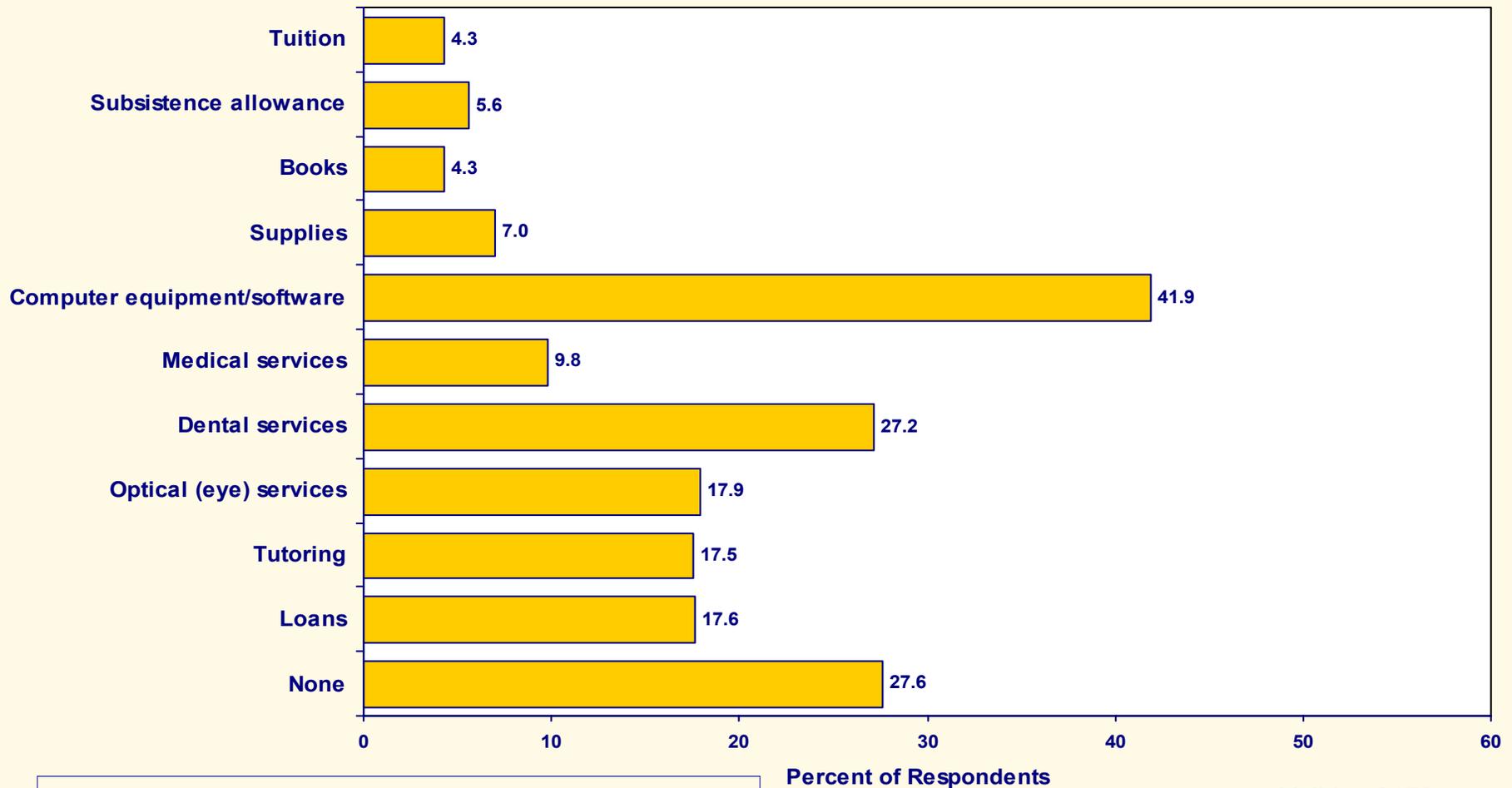


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Knowledge and Use of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Question 9:

Which of the following benefits would you have liked to receive during your rehabilitation program, but did not?

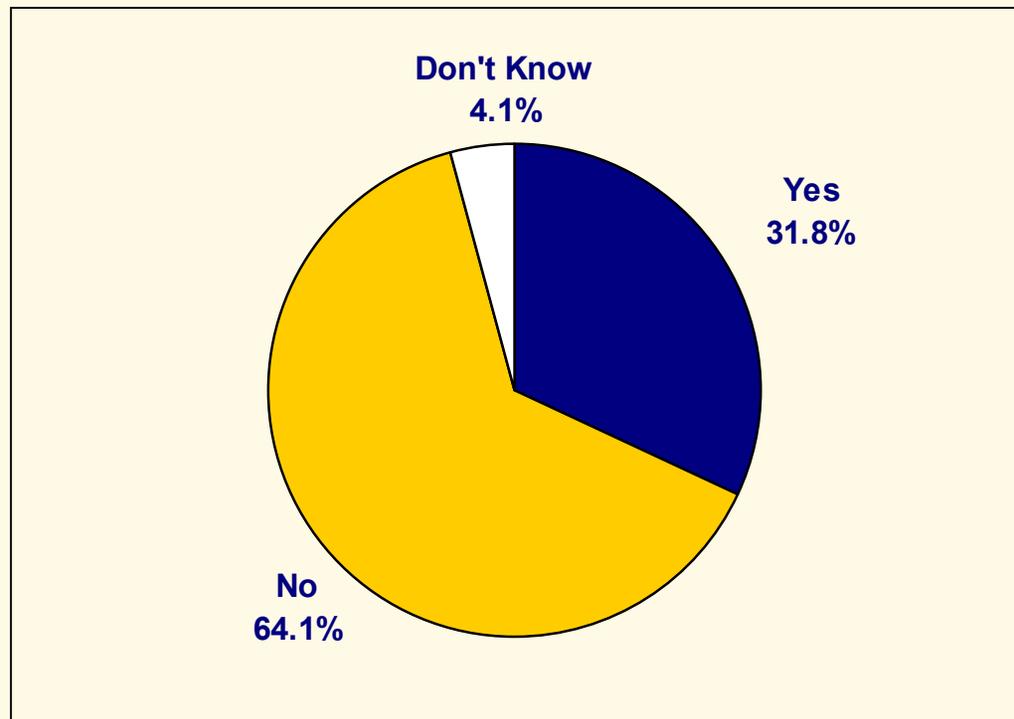


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=3173

Question 10:

Have you found anything to be difficult about obtaining any of the benefits?

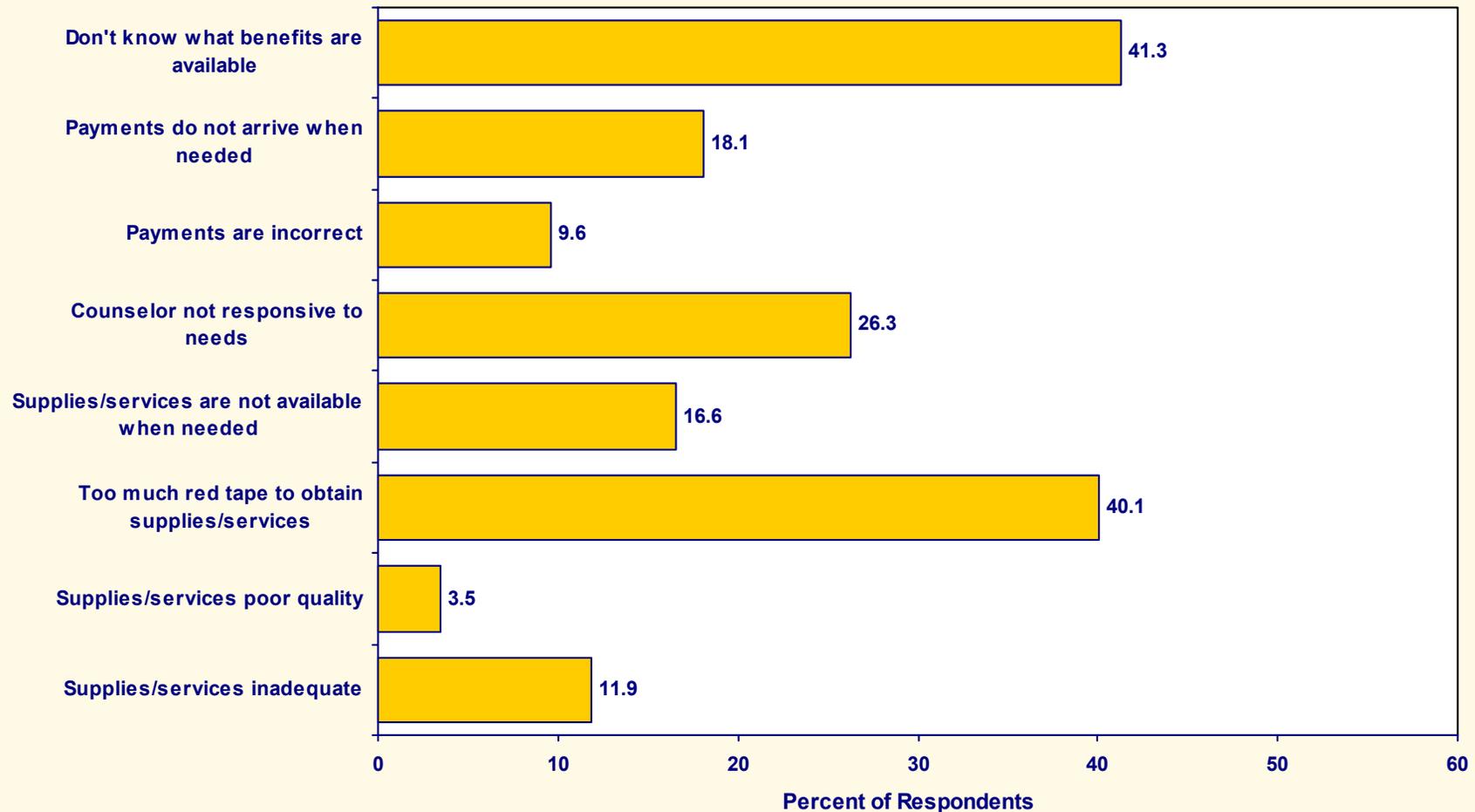


Valid n=3385

Knowledge and Use of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Question 11:

What specifically do you find to be difficult about obtaining any of these benefits?

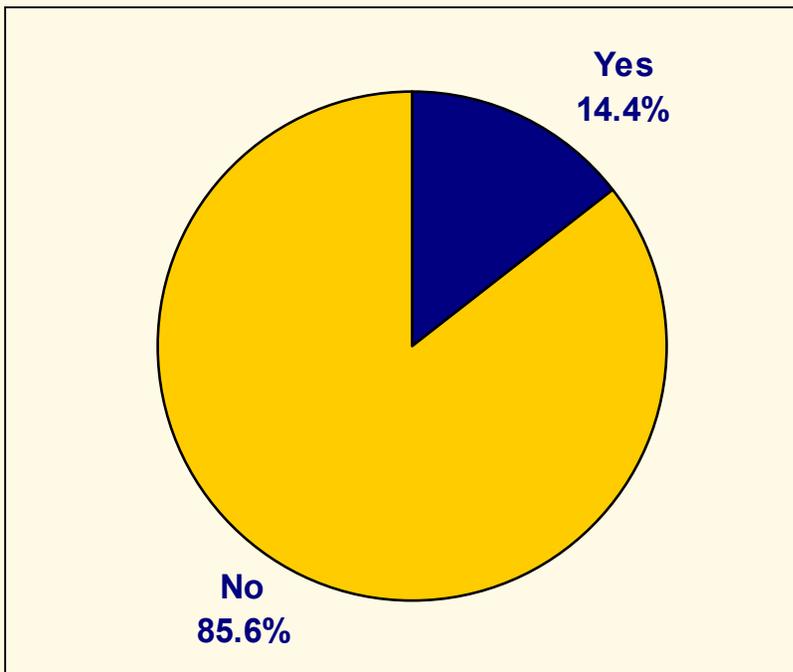


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=1215

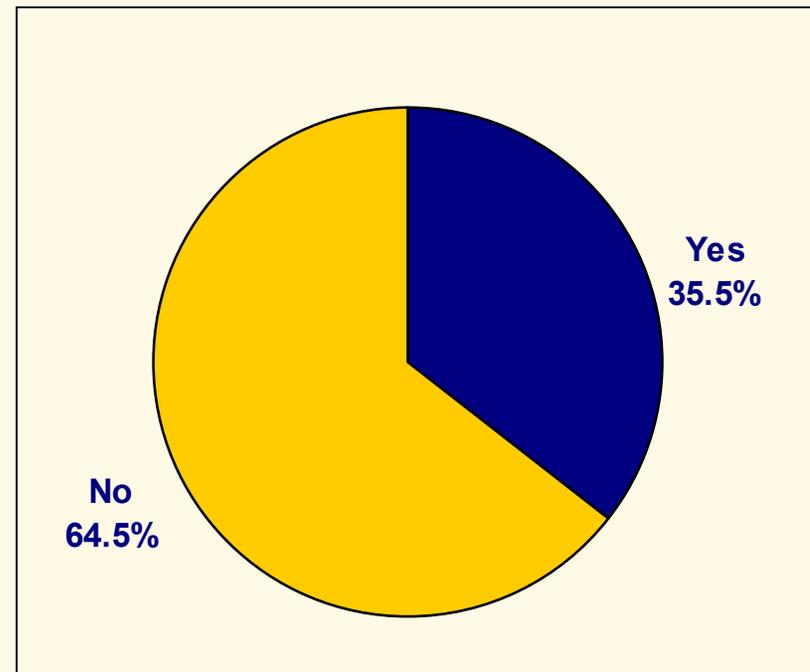
Knowledge and Use of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Question 12:
Have you ever had to borrow or pay out-of-pocket expenses in order to ENROLL or stay enrolled in training or education BECAUSE VA DID NOT PROVIDE PAYMENTS ON TIME?



Valid n=3384

Question 13:
Have you ever had to borrow or pay out-of-pocket expenses in order to obtain needed SUPPLIES or benefits BECAUSE VA DID NOT PROVIDE THEM WHEN NEEDED?

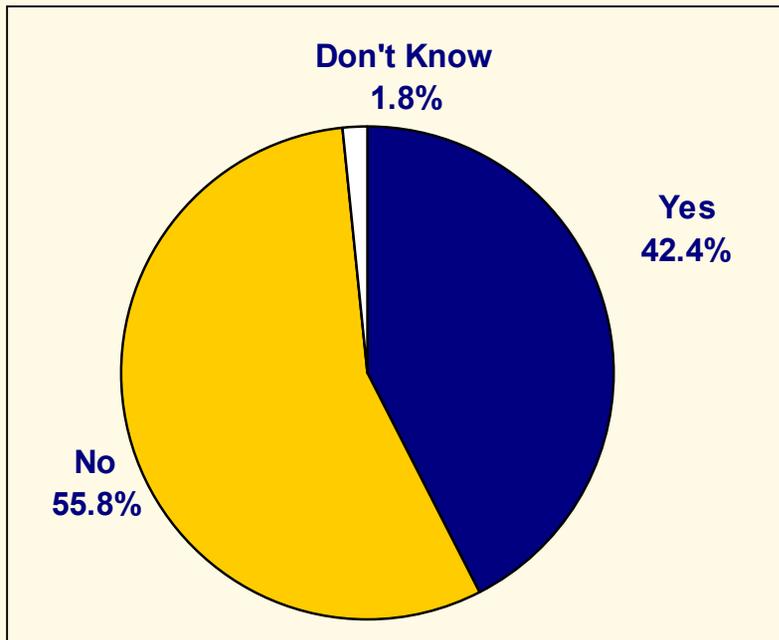


Valid n=3382

**Survey Findings:
Relationship With Counselor**

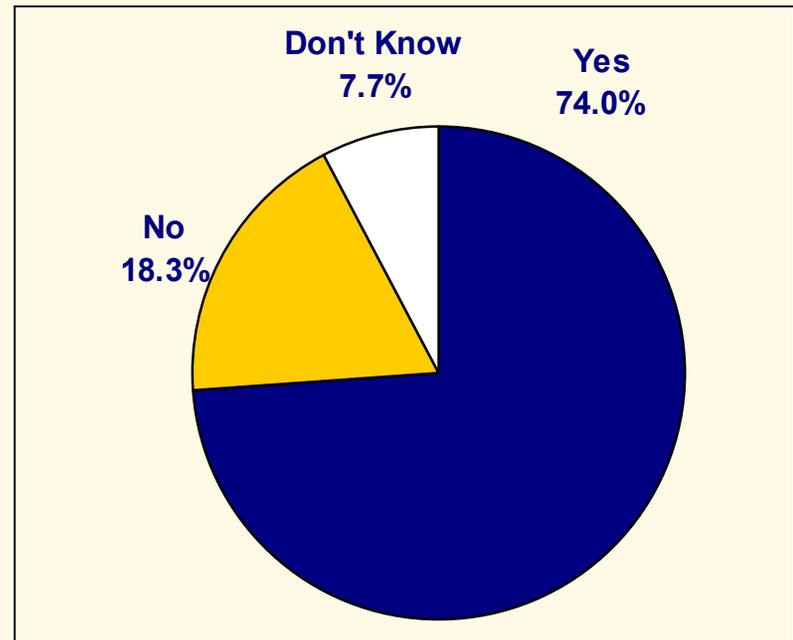
Relationship With Counselor

Question 14:
Have you had the same counselor since you developed your vocational rehabilitation plan for services?



Valid n=3409

Question 15:
Do you have a clear understanding of the respective responsibilities and obligations of yourself and your counselor?



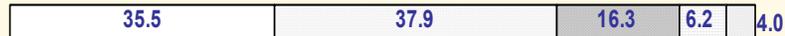
Valid n=3396

Relationship With Counselor

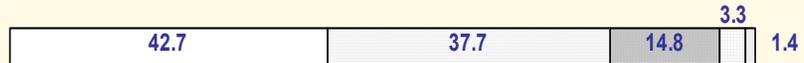
Questions 16-25:

Strongly Agree Agree Neither Disagree Strongly Disagree

Q16: Your counselor gives you good information and advice.



Q17: Your counselor is knowledgeable regarding VA's vocational rehabilitation program.



Q18: Your counselor has provided assistance according to your individual needs.



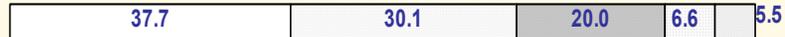
Q19: When your counselor makes a decision regarding your program, the reason for the decision is clearly explained.



Q20: Your counselor shows a caring and compassionate attitude toward you.



Q21: Your counselor shows genuine interest in your progress.



Q22: Your counselor has a communication style that is easy to understand.



Q23: Your counselor is responsive to your needs.



Q24: Your counselor listens to your feelings and concerns.



Q25: Your counselor is available when needed.



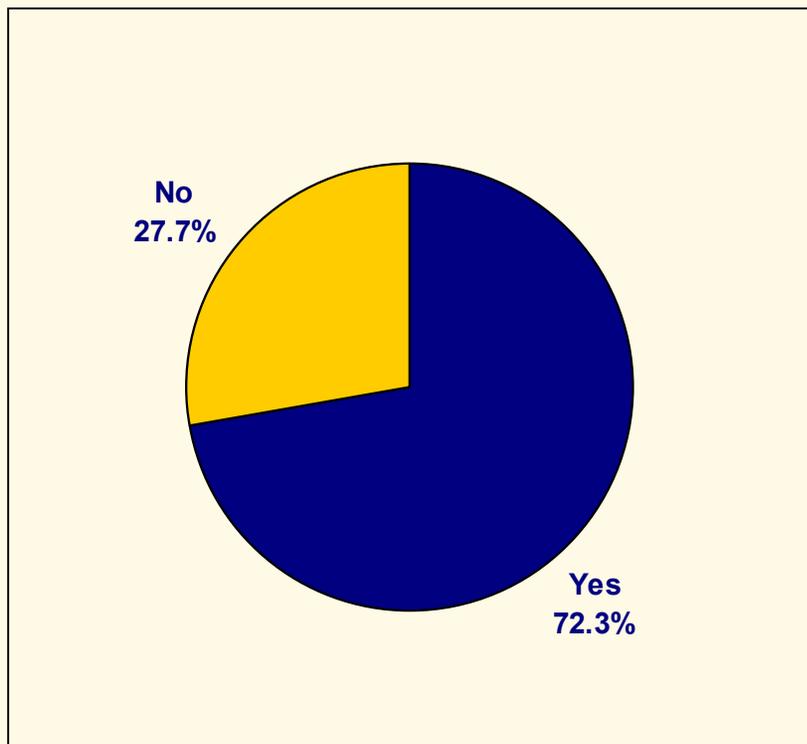
Percent of Respondents

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

**Survey Findings:
Contact With Counselor**

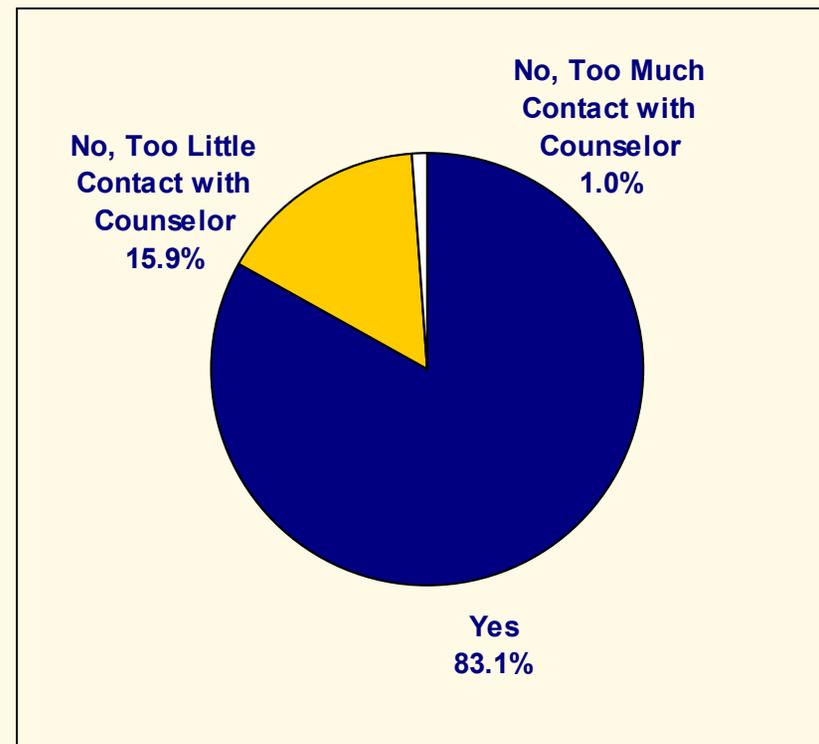
Contact With Counselor

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



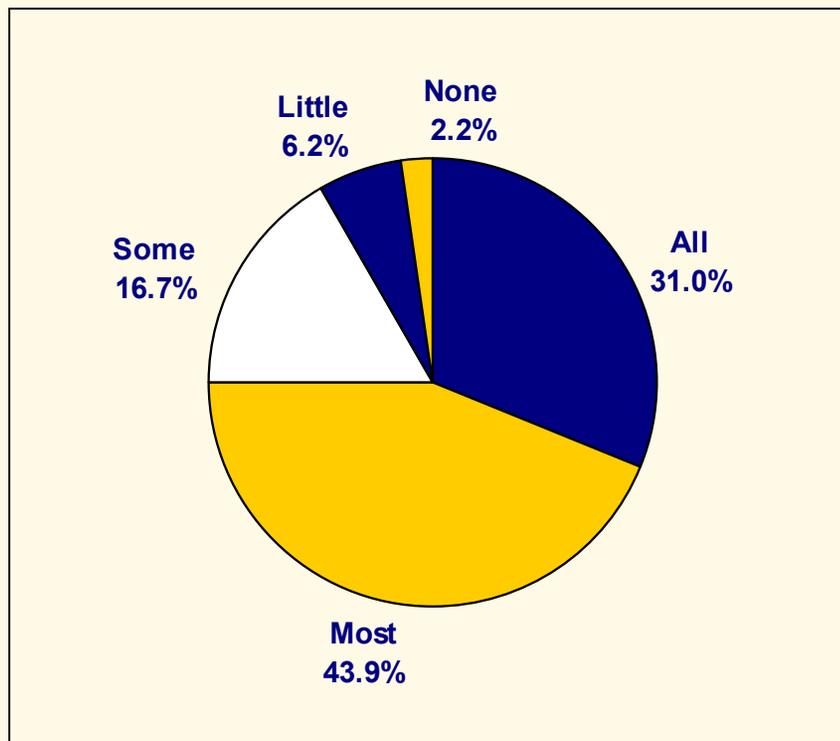
Valid n=3414

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



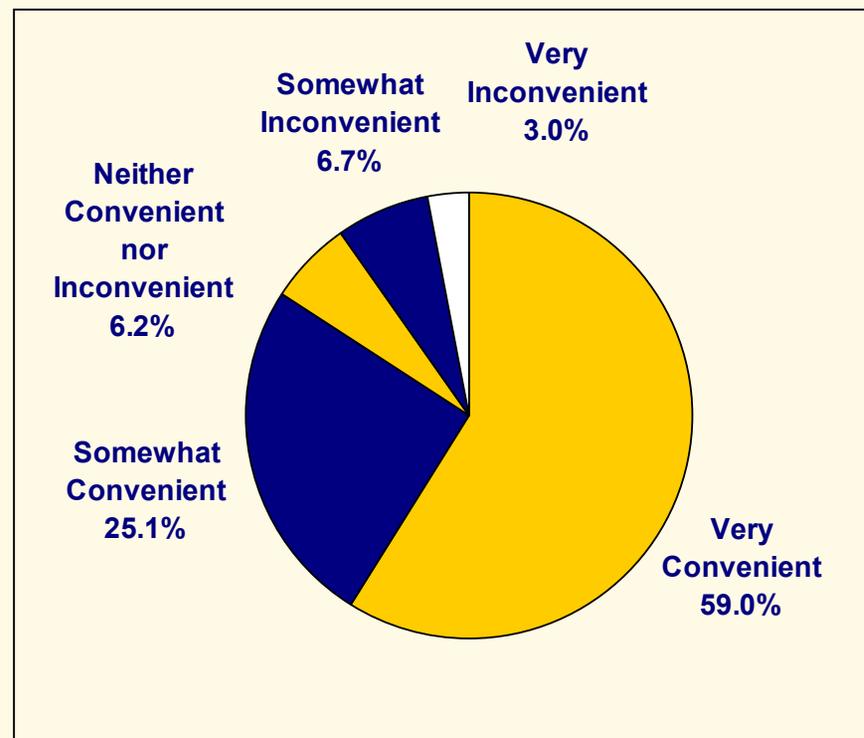
Valid n=2463

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



Valid n=2467

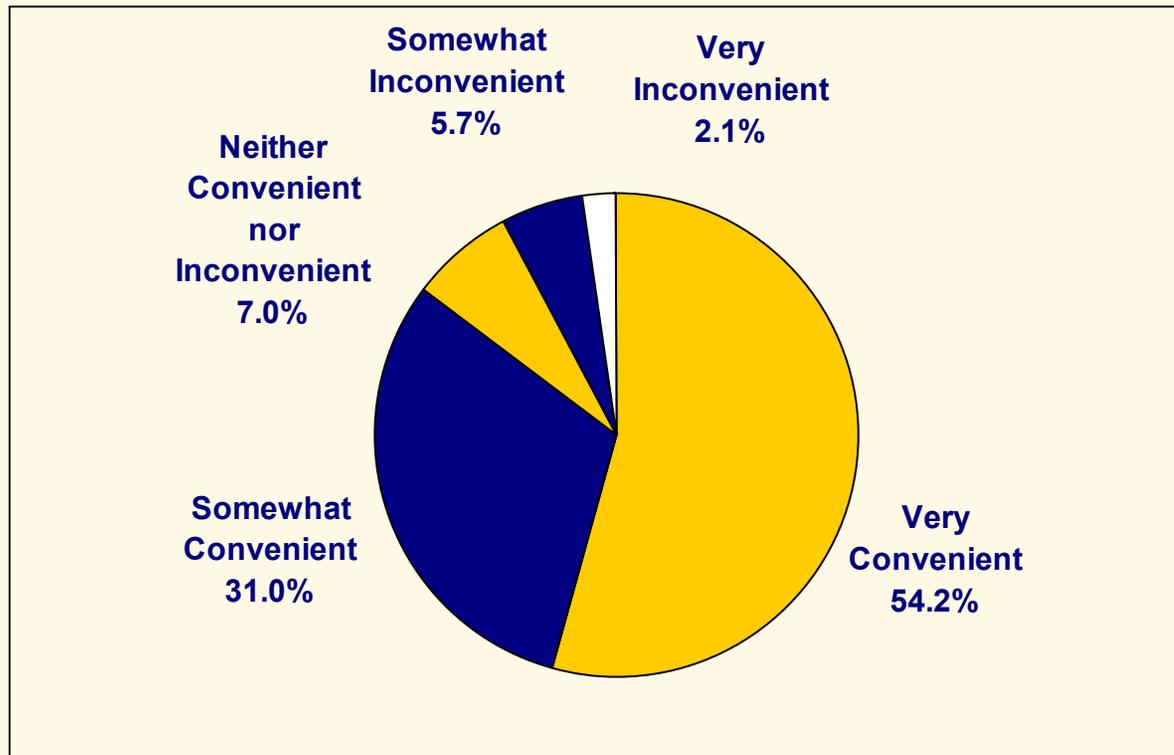
Question 29:
How convenient is the **LOCATION** where these meetings are held?



Valid n=2472

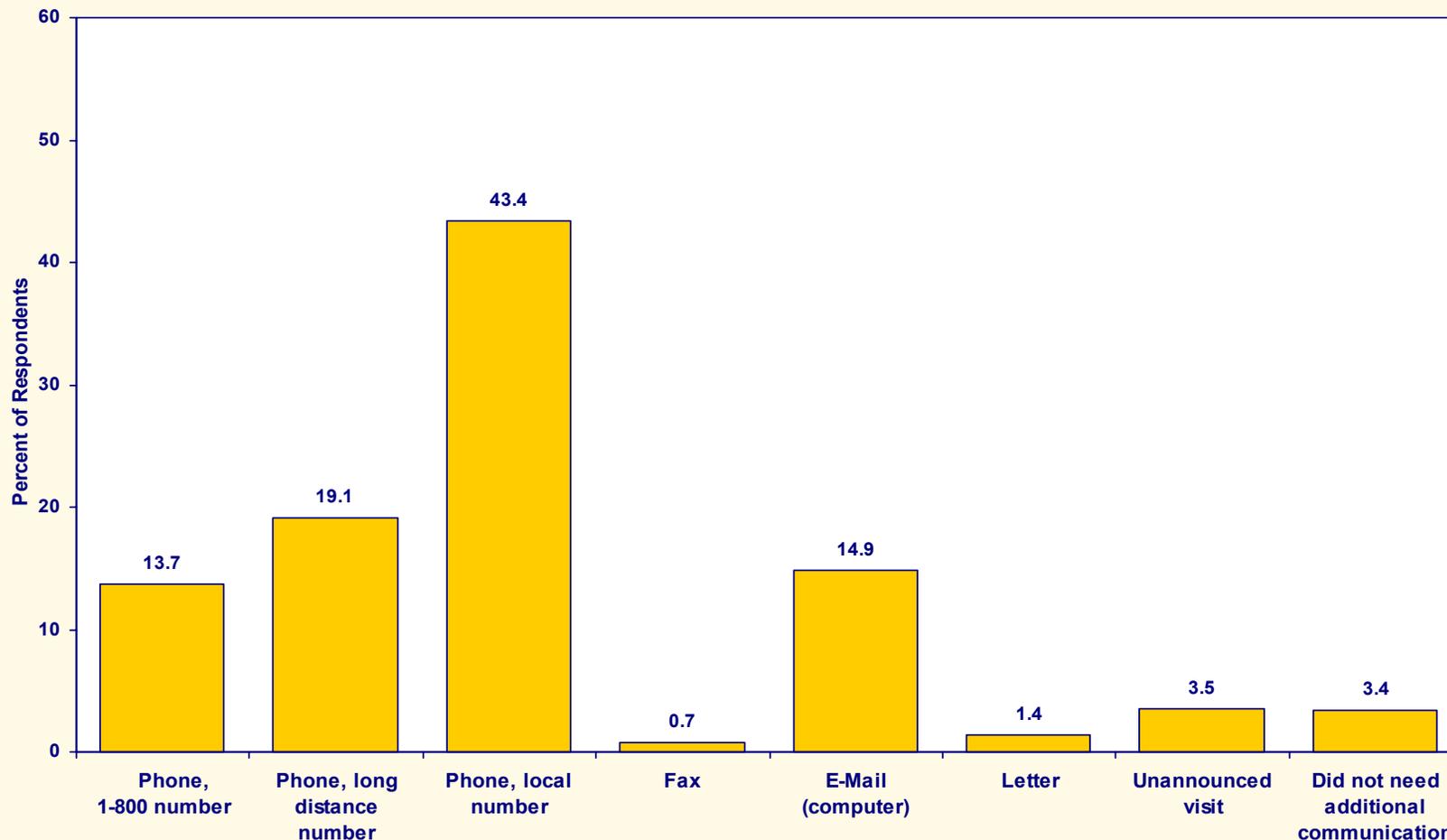
Question 30:

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



Valid n=2470

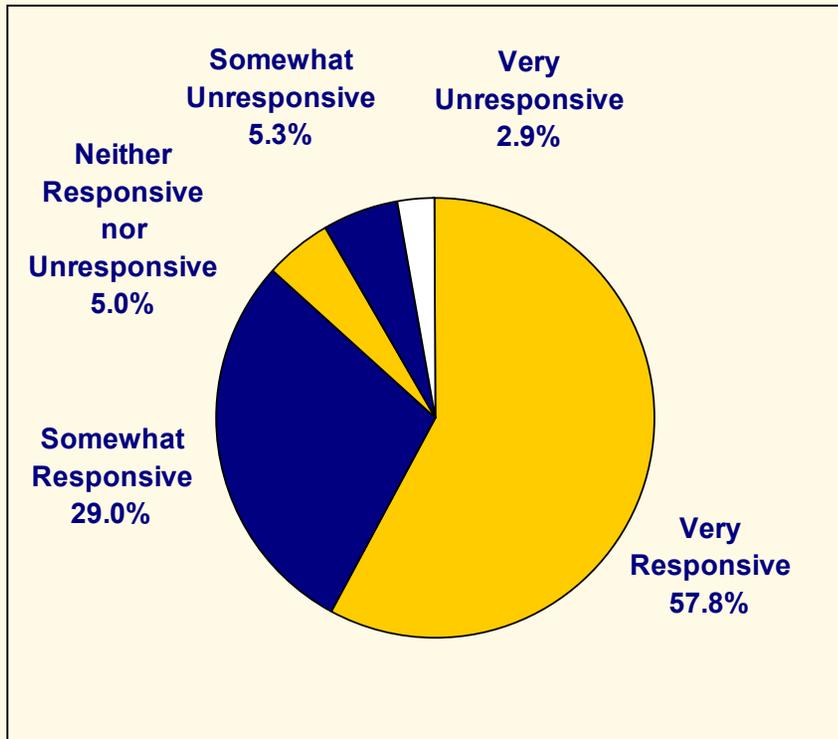
Question 31:
Aside from scheduled visits, what is the PRIMARY method you use to contact your counselor?



Valid n=3073

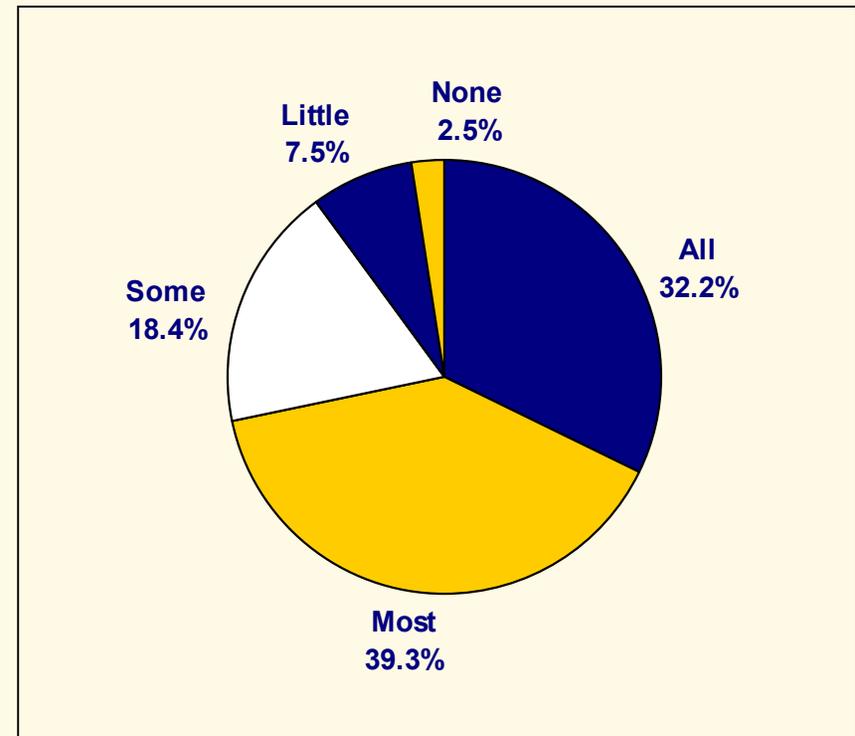
Contact With Counselor

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



Valid n=3298

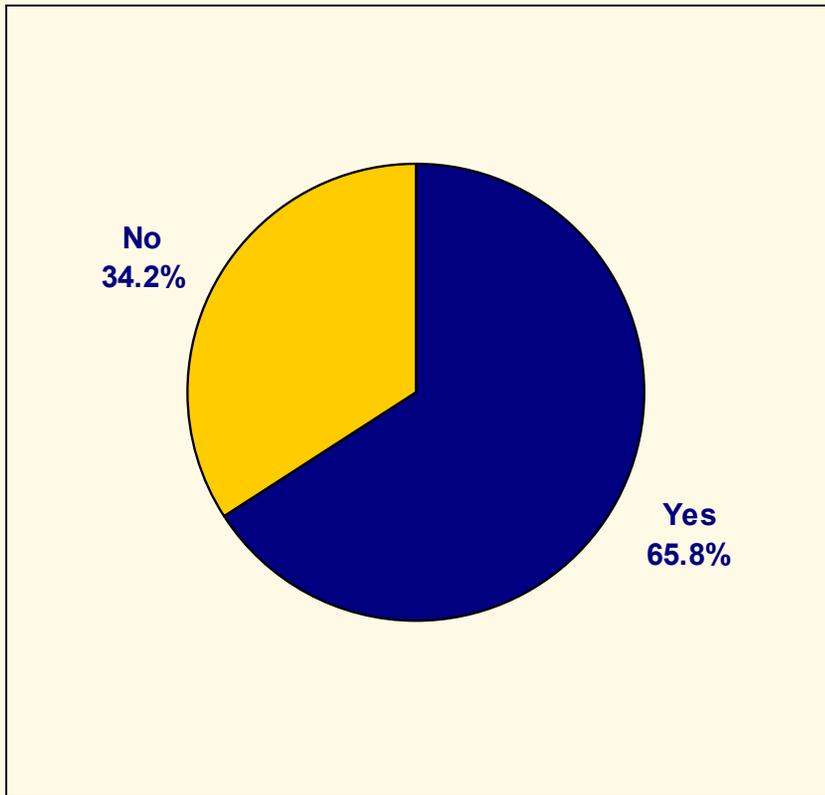
Question 33:
In general, how much of what you NEEDED TO KNOW did you get from this method of contact?



Valid n=3299

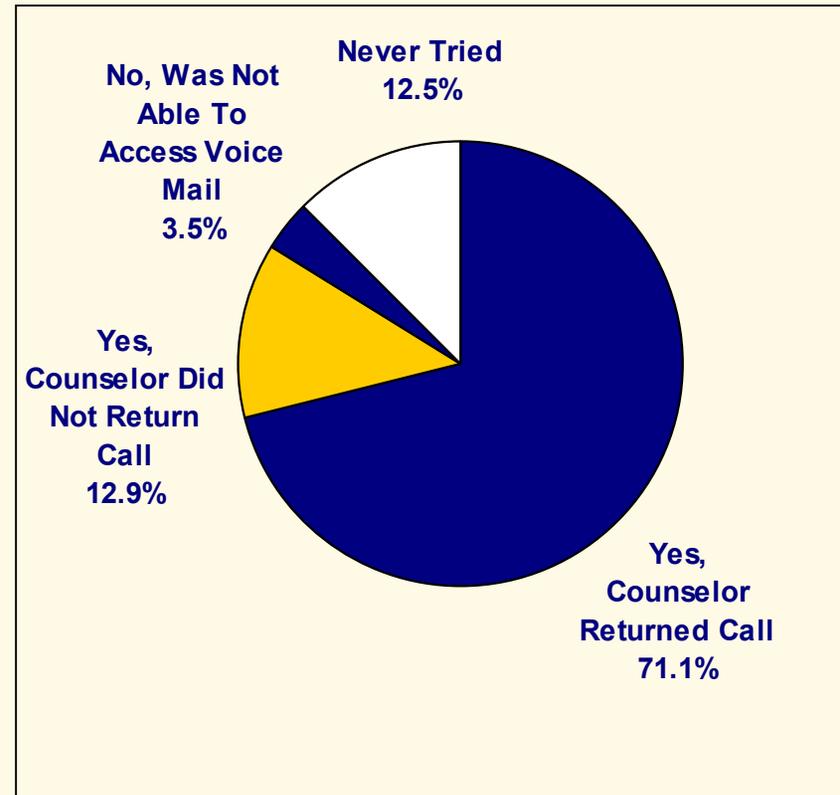
Contact With Counselor

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



Valid n=3288

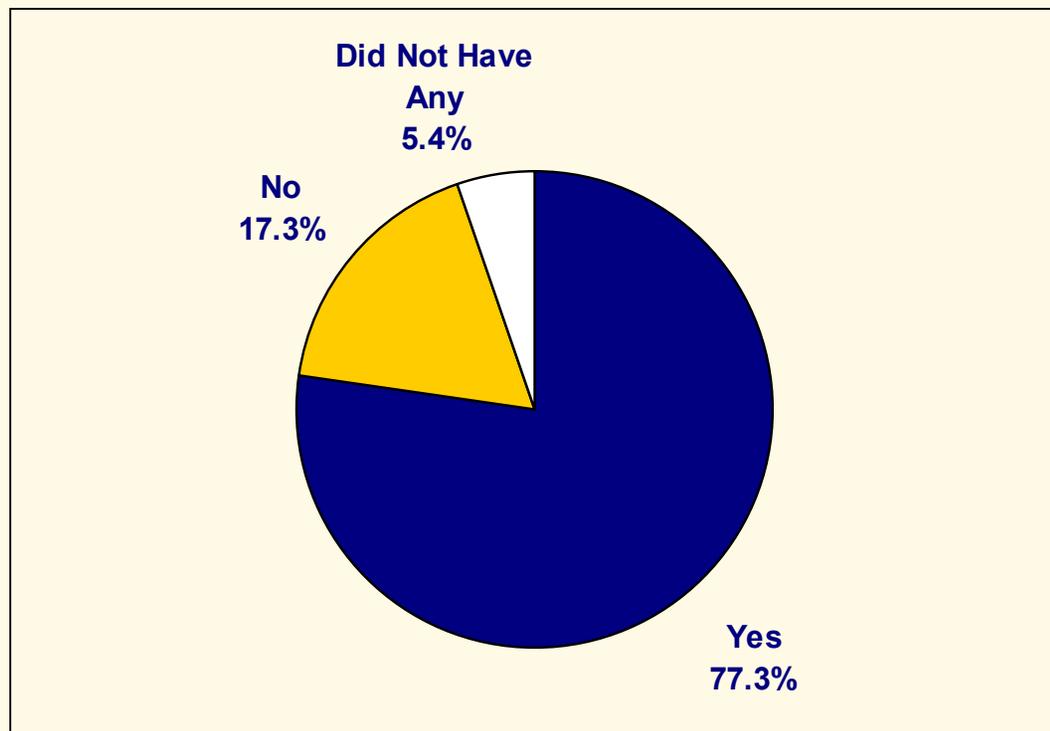
Question 35:
Were you able to access voice mail in order to leave your counselor a message?



Valid n=3288

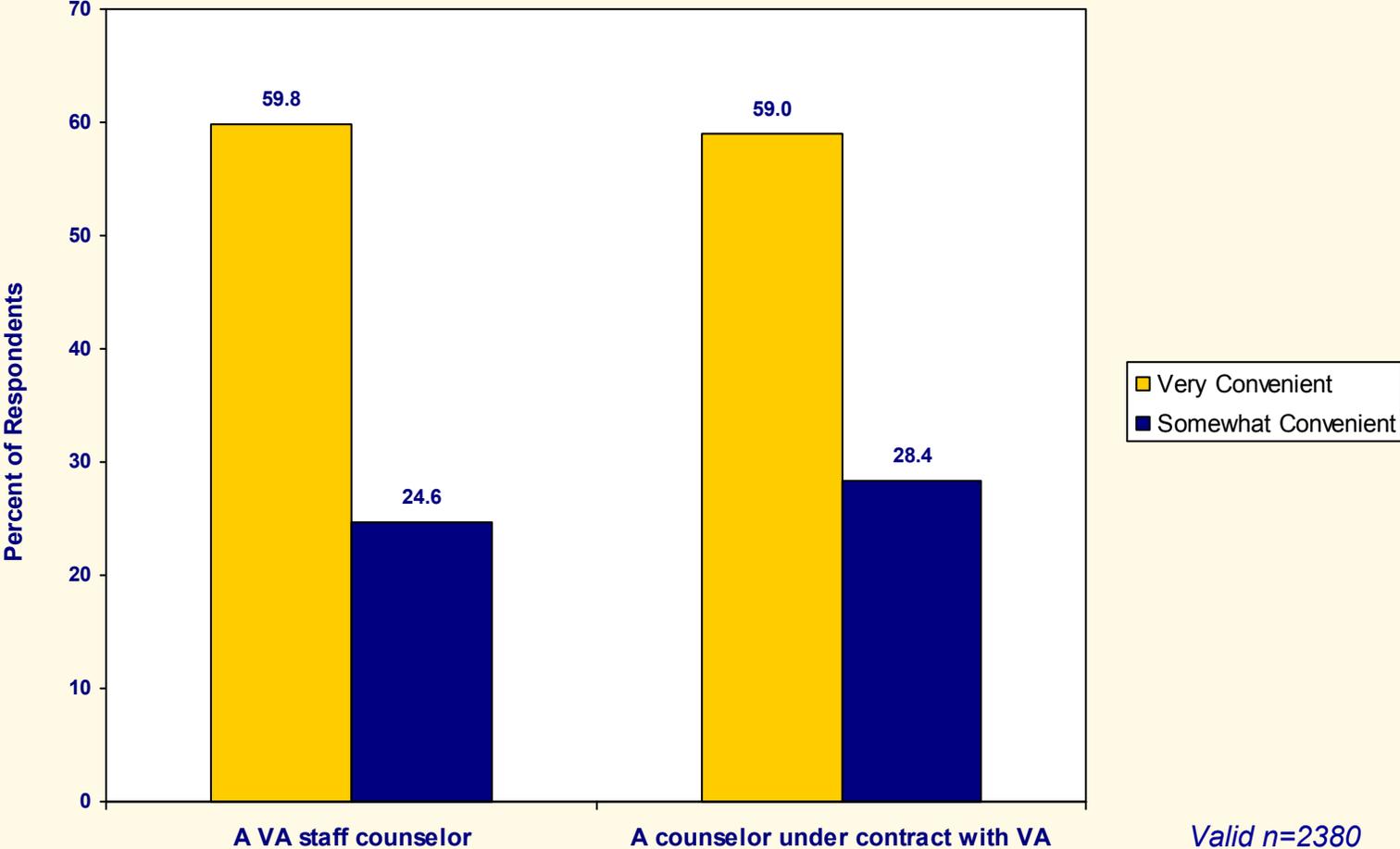
Question 36:

Does your counselor fully address all your questions, concerns, or complaints?



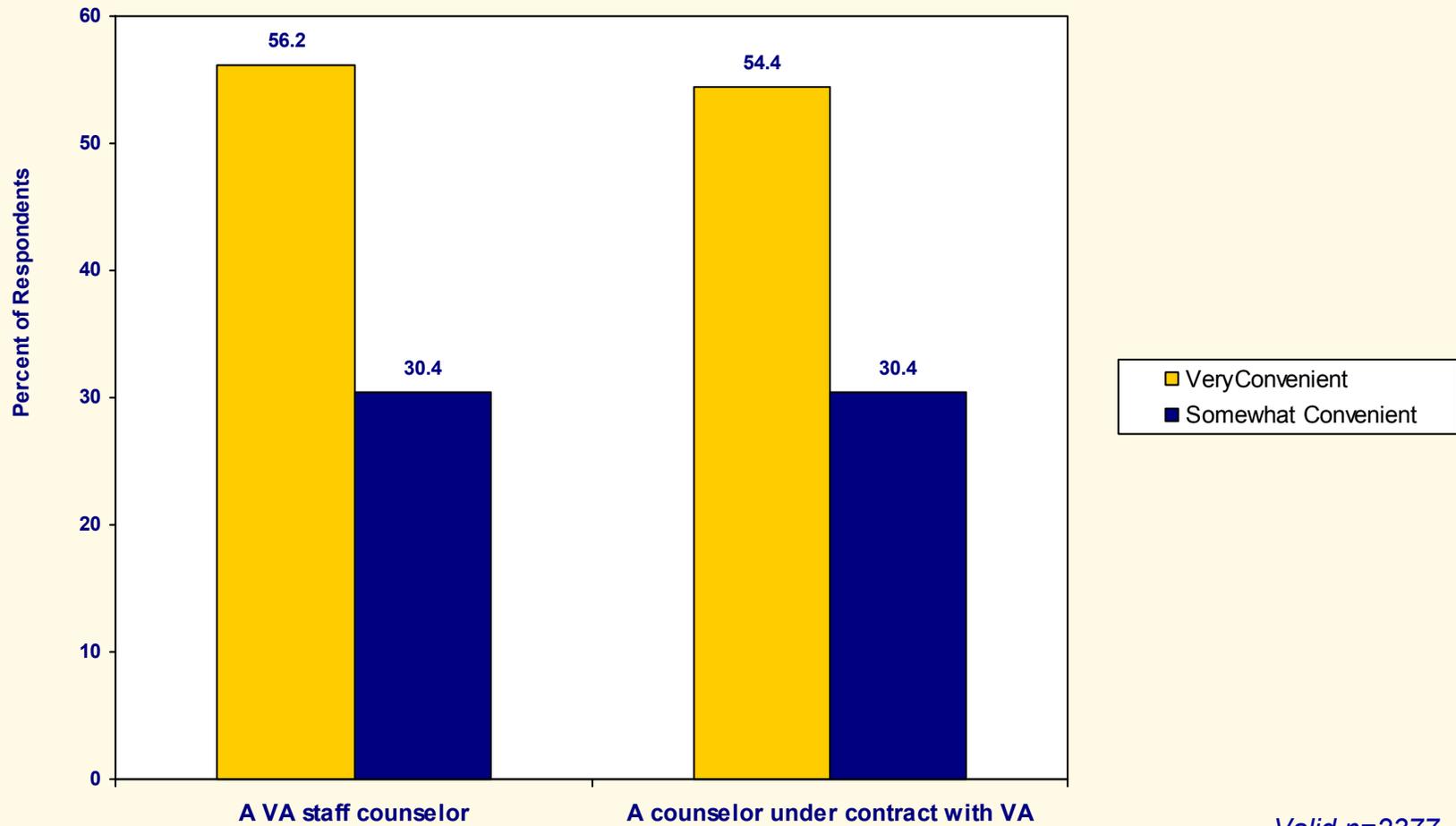
Valid n=3401

Question 29 by Question 4:
Convenience of location for in-person meetings by type of counselor during this phase of program.



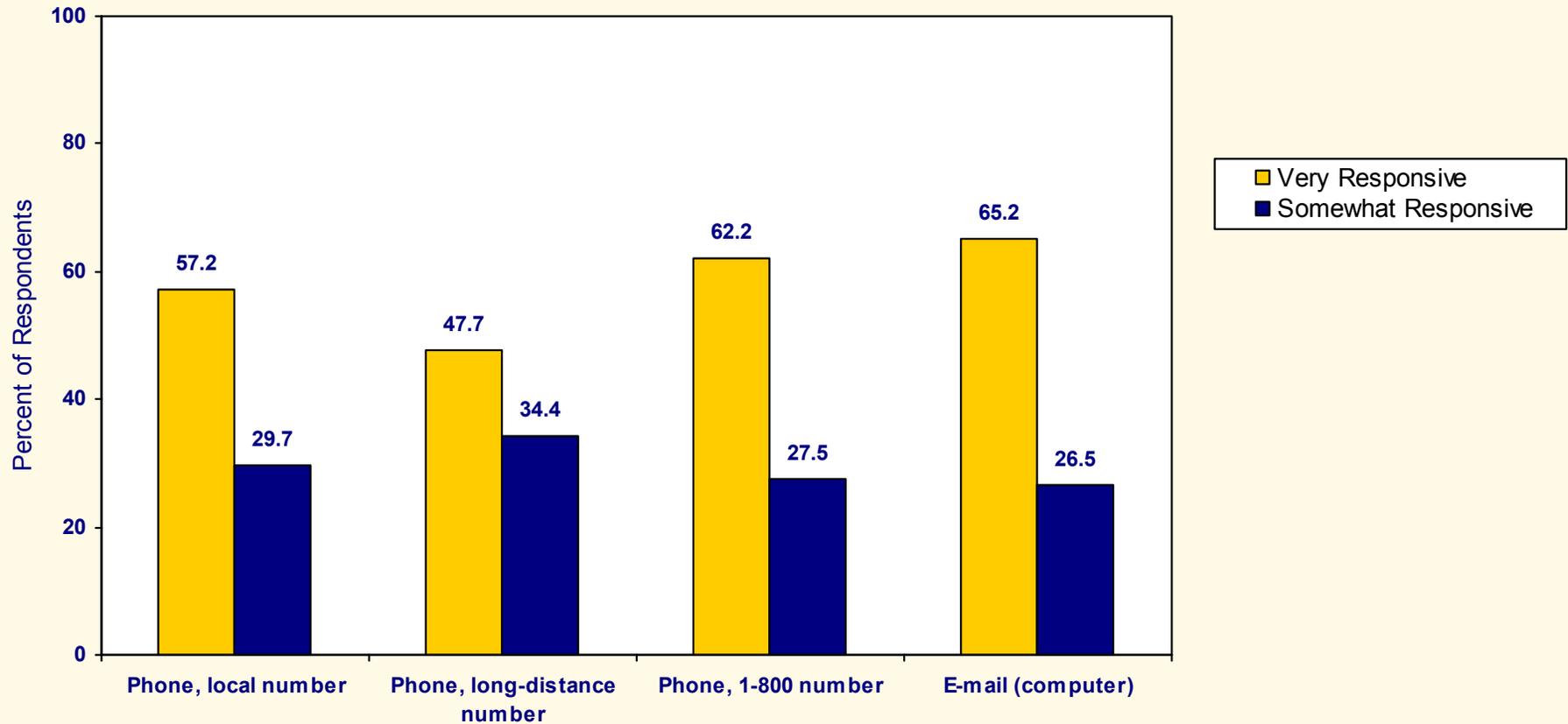
Contact With Counselor

Question 30 by Question 4:
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.

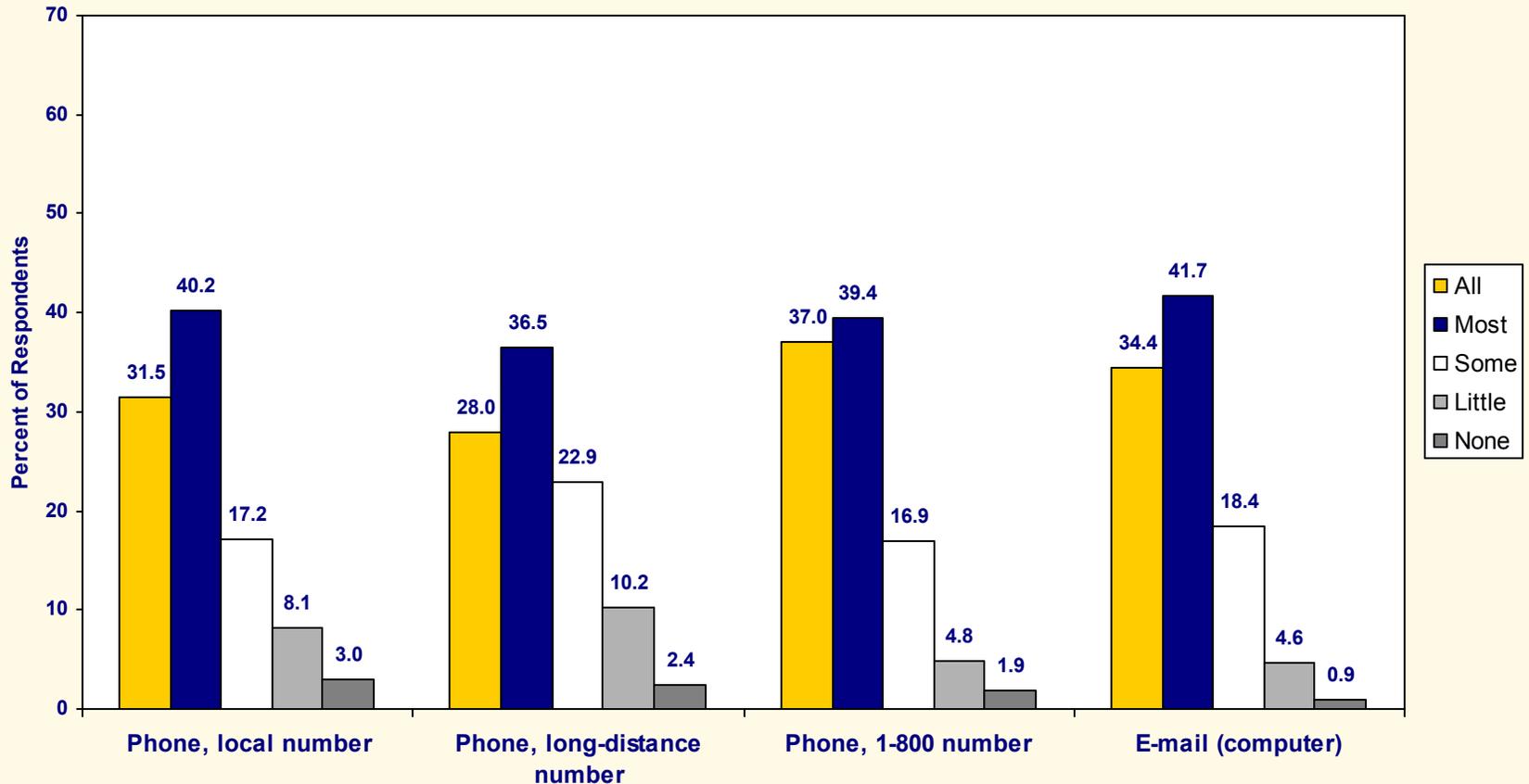


Note: The chart presents data on the 4 most frequently reported methods of contact, aside from scheduled visits.

Valid n=2995

Contact With Counselor

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



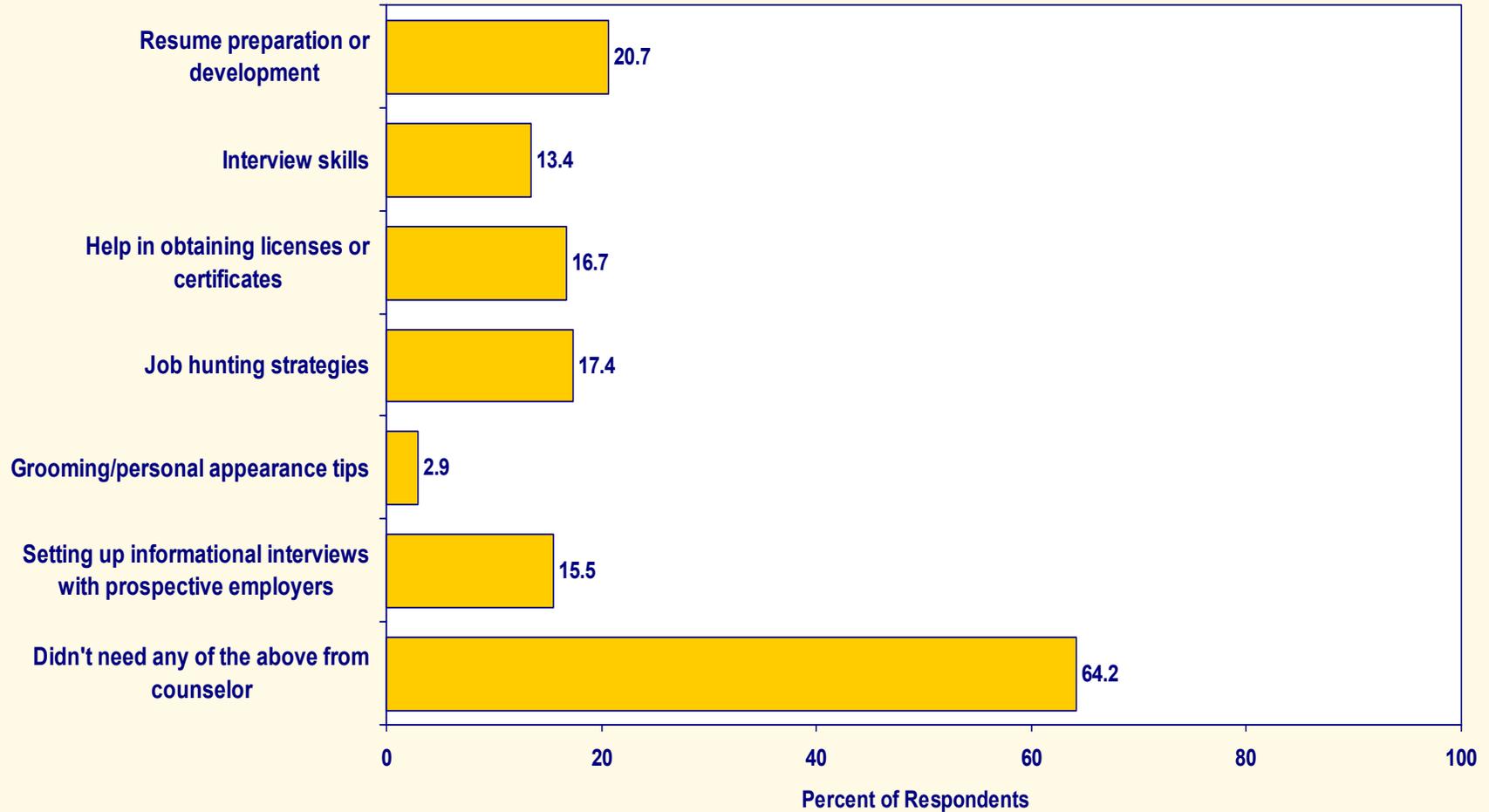
Note: The chart presents data on the 4 most frequently reported sources of information, aside from scheduled visits.

Valid n=2956

**Survey Findings:
Employment Services**

Question 37:

Which of the following types of employment services did you need?

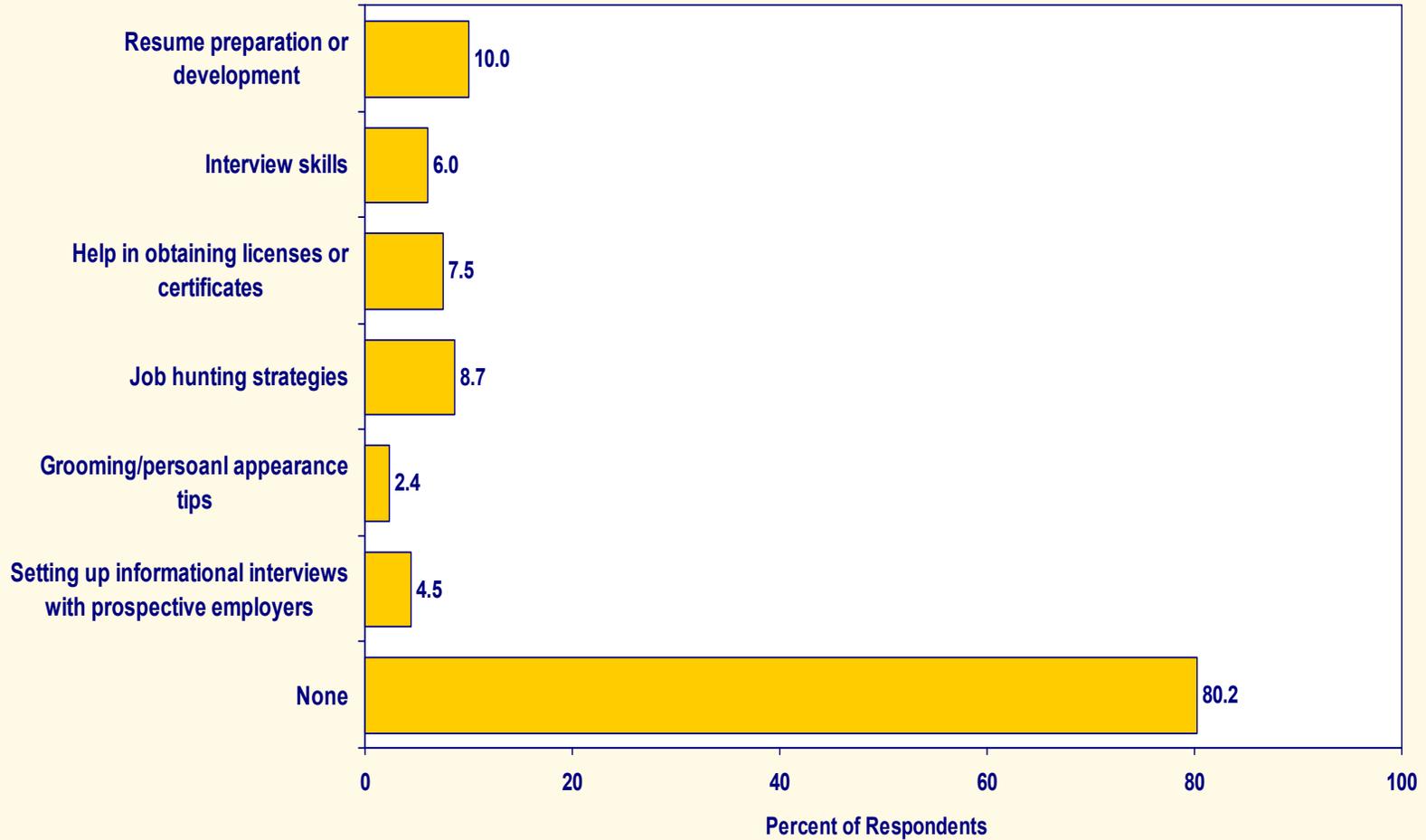


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=3236

Question 38:

Which of the following types of employment services have you been provided?

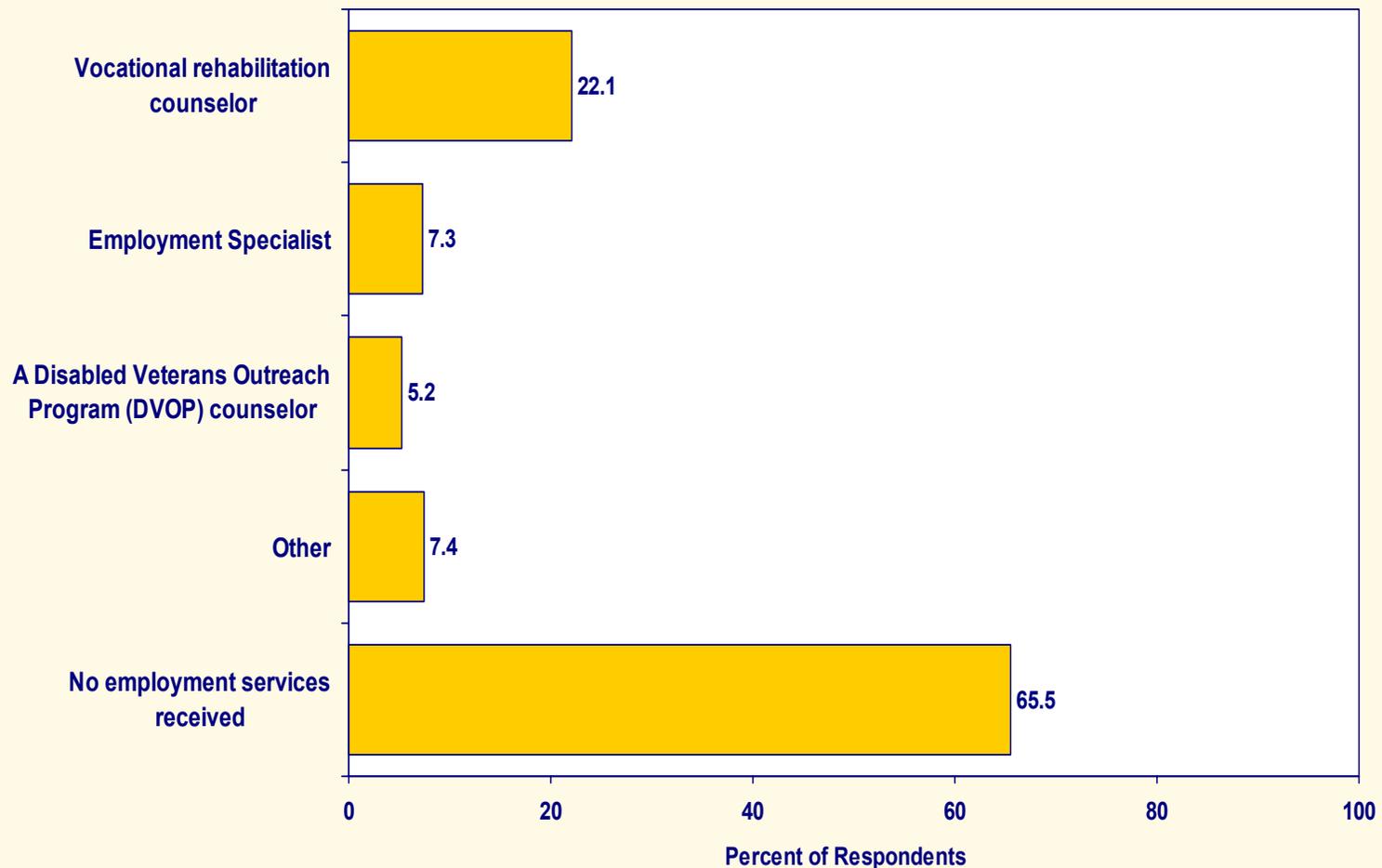


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=3285

Question 39:

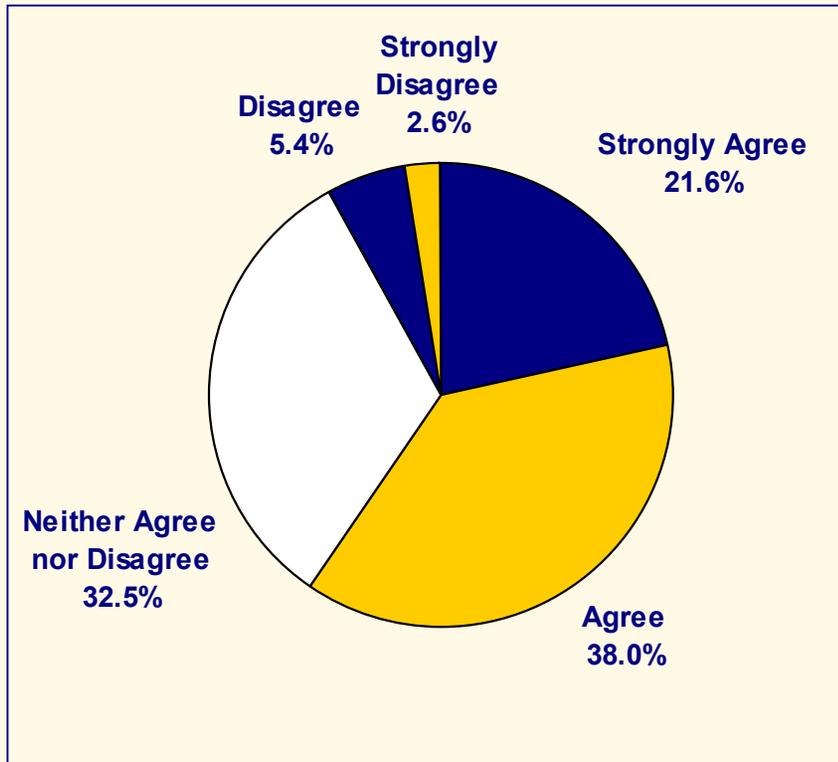
From which, if any, of the following have you received employment services?



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

Valid n=3280

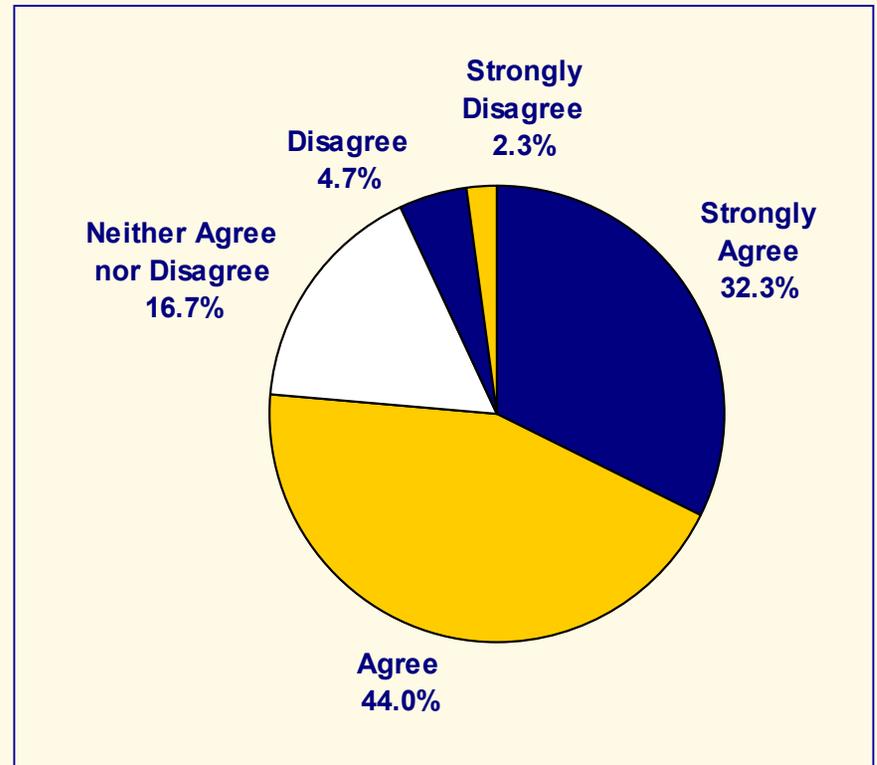
Question 40:
Your counselor/specialist(s) are knowledgeable regarding employment markets.



Valid n=1053

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

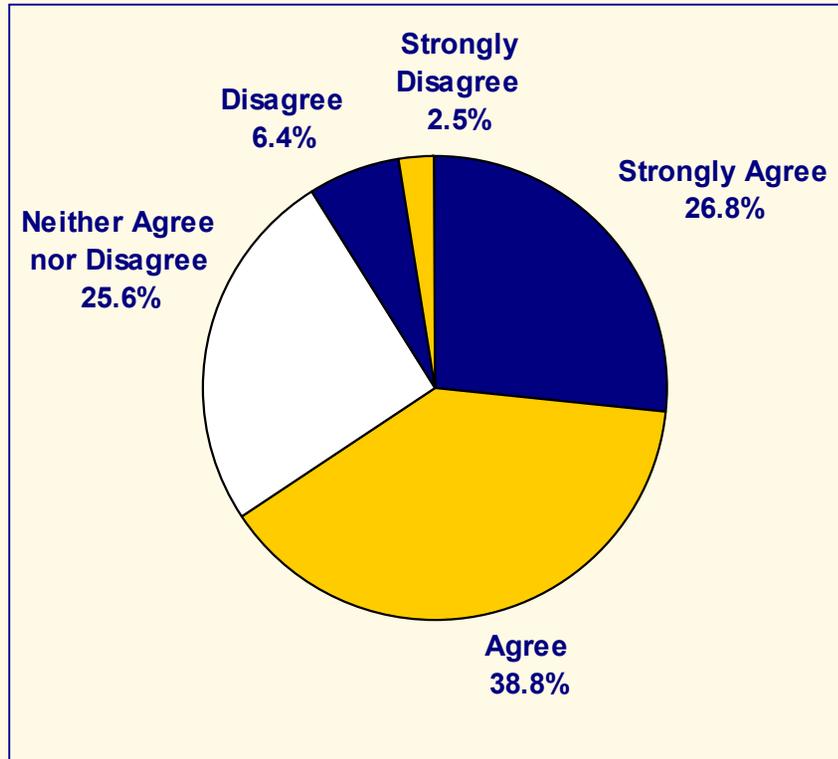
Question 41:
Your counselor/specialist(s) understand your occupational/ vocational goals.



Valid n=1147

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

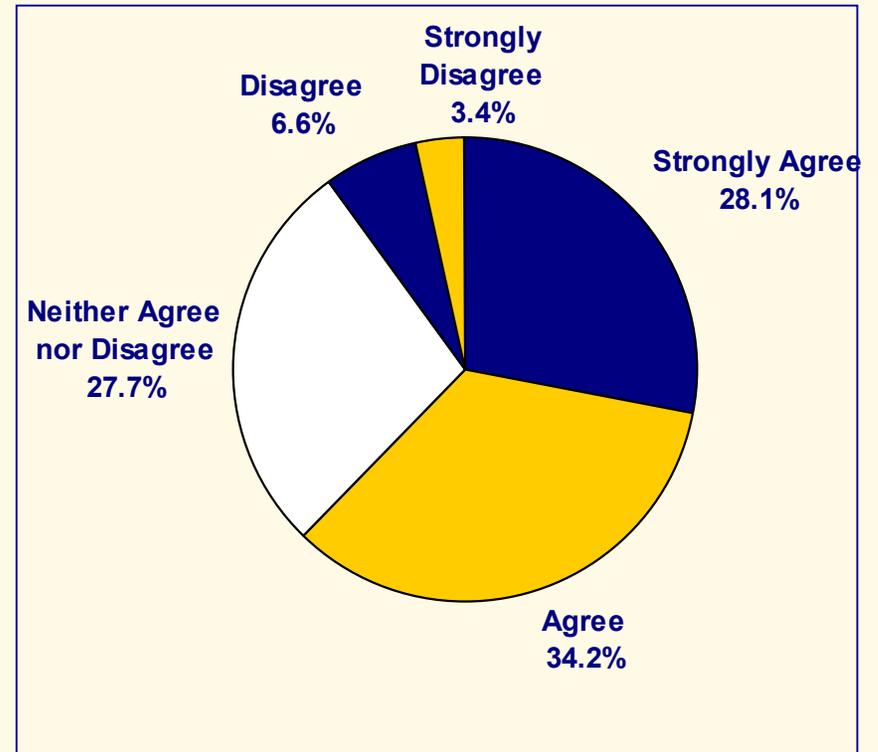
Question 42:
Your counselor/specialist(s) help you focus on your employment goal.



Valid n=1101

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

Question 43:
Your counselor/specialist(s) are concerned about the quality of your job placement.

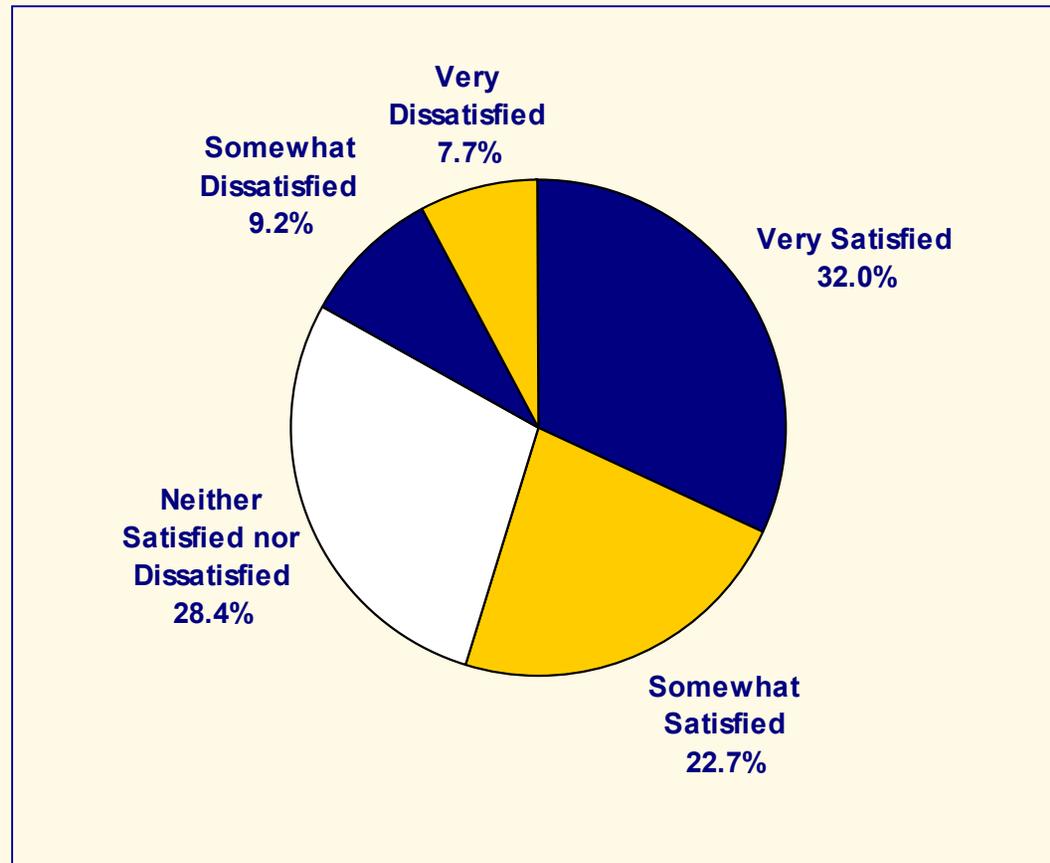


Valid n=1073

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

Question 44:

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



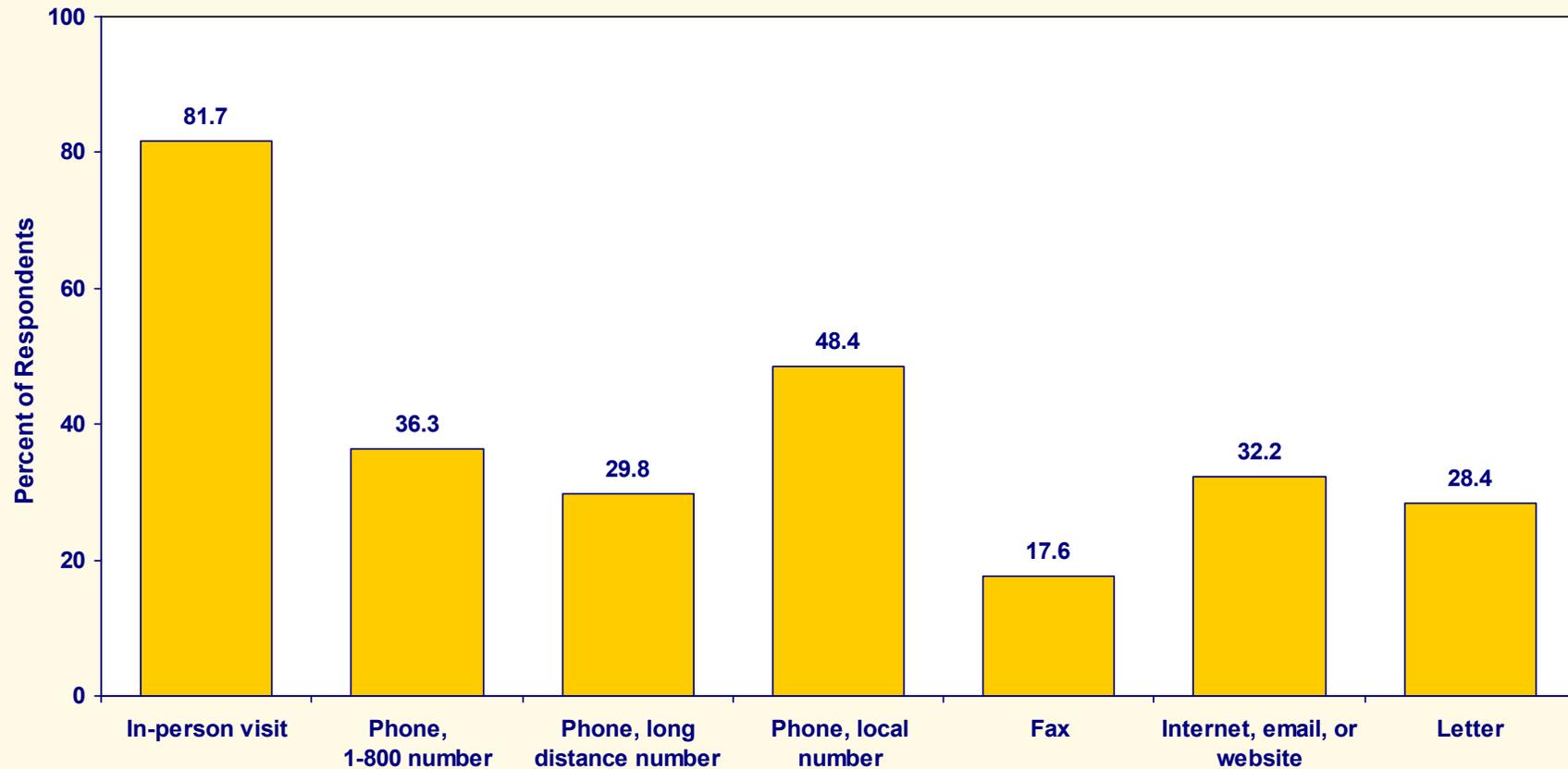
Valid n=1136

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

Access to the VR&E Program

Question 45:

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

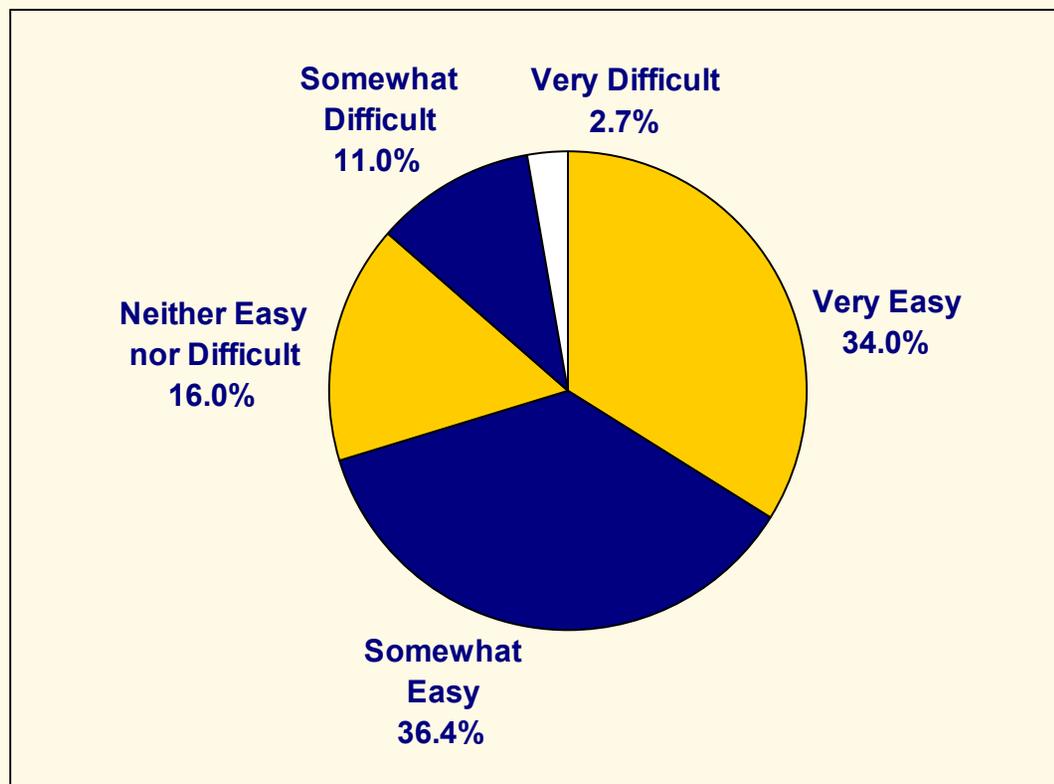


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=3346

Question 46:

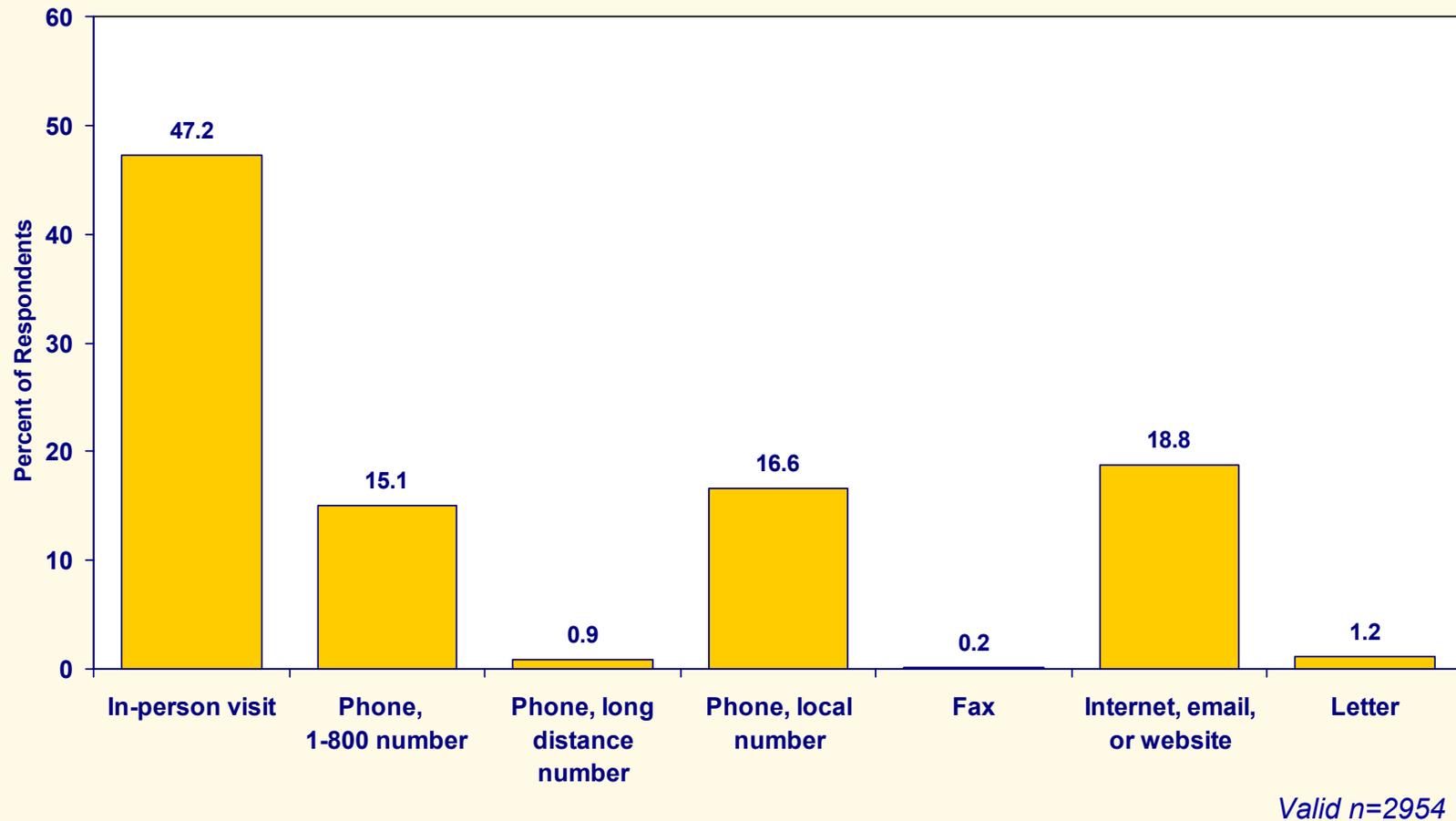
In general, how easy was it for you to obtain information from the VR&E program?



Valid n=3360

Question 47:

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

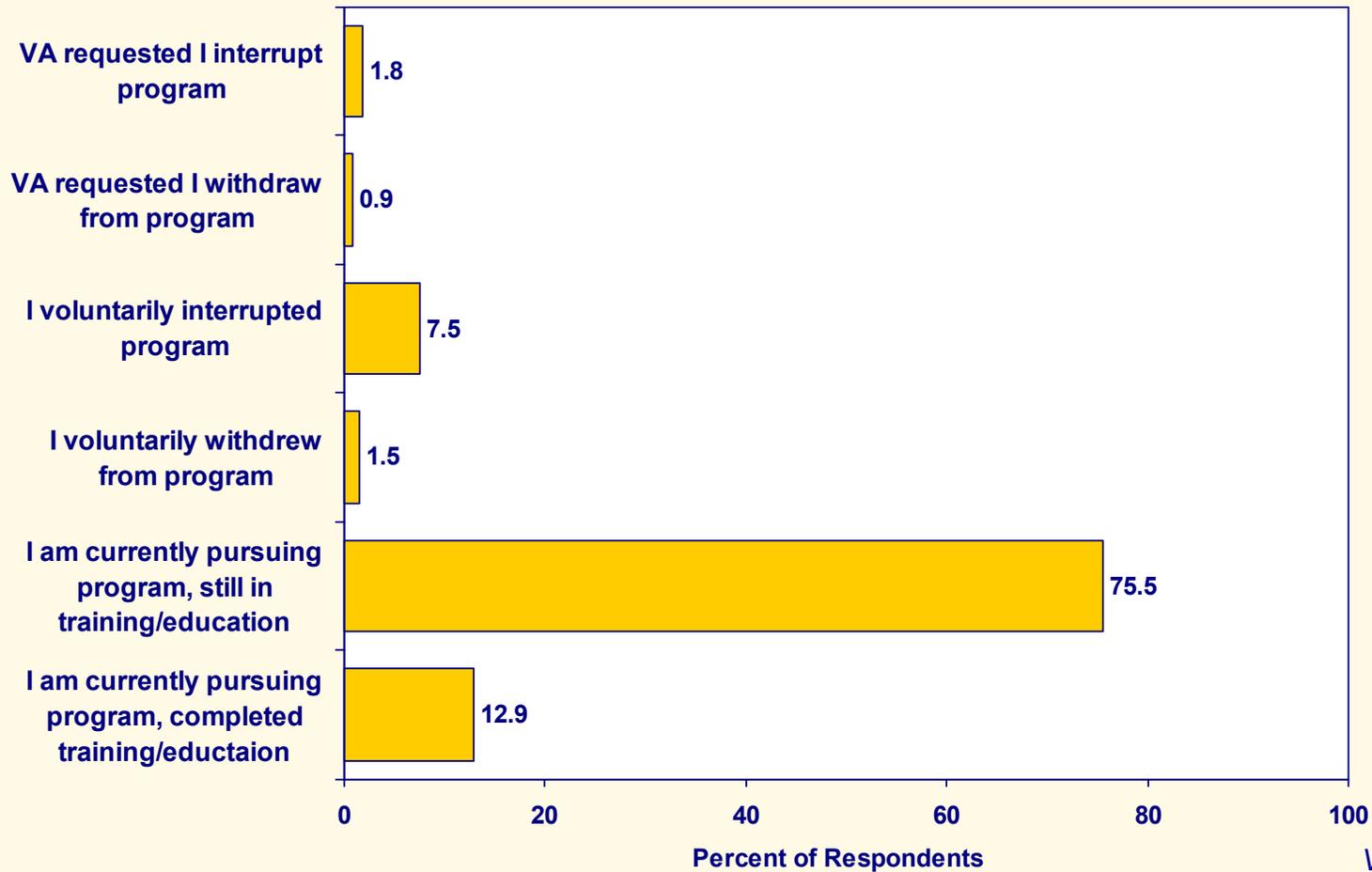


**Survey Findings:
Current Status in the VR&E Program**

Current Status in the VR&E Program

Question 48:

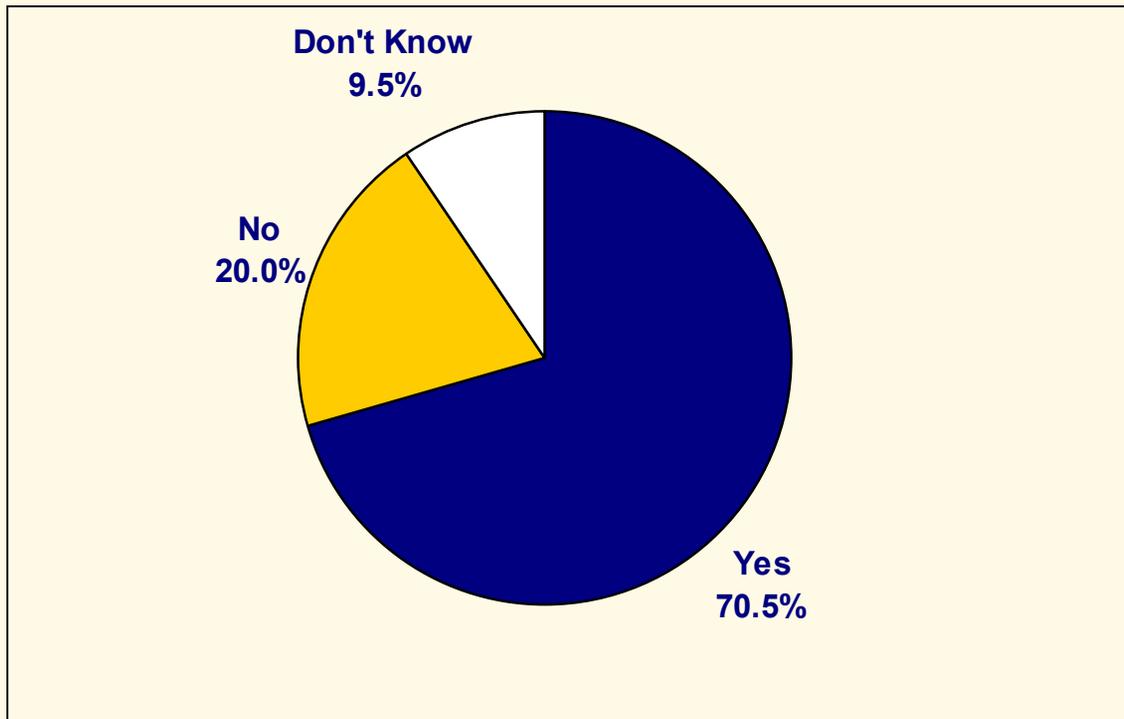
How would you best describe your CURRENT status with regard to the VA VR&E program?



Current Status in the VR&E Program

Question 49:

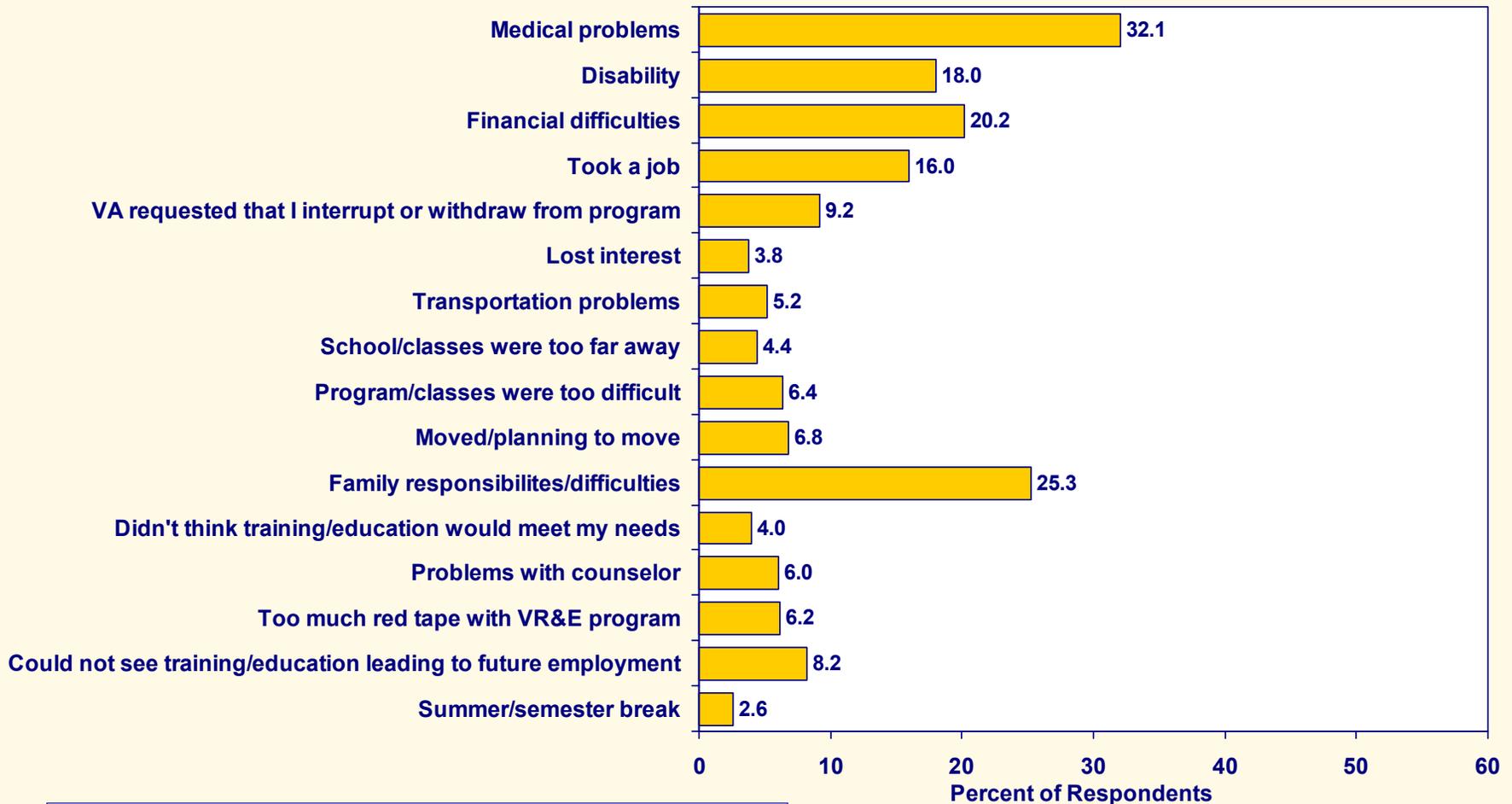
Did VA tell you the reasons why you were interrupted or withdrawn from the program?



Valid n=105

Current Status in the VR&E Program

Question 50:
Why did you interrupt or withdraw from the training or education phase of your plan?

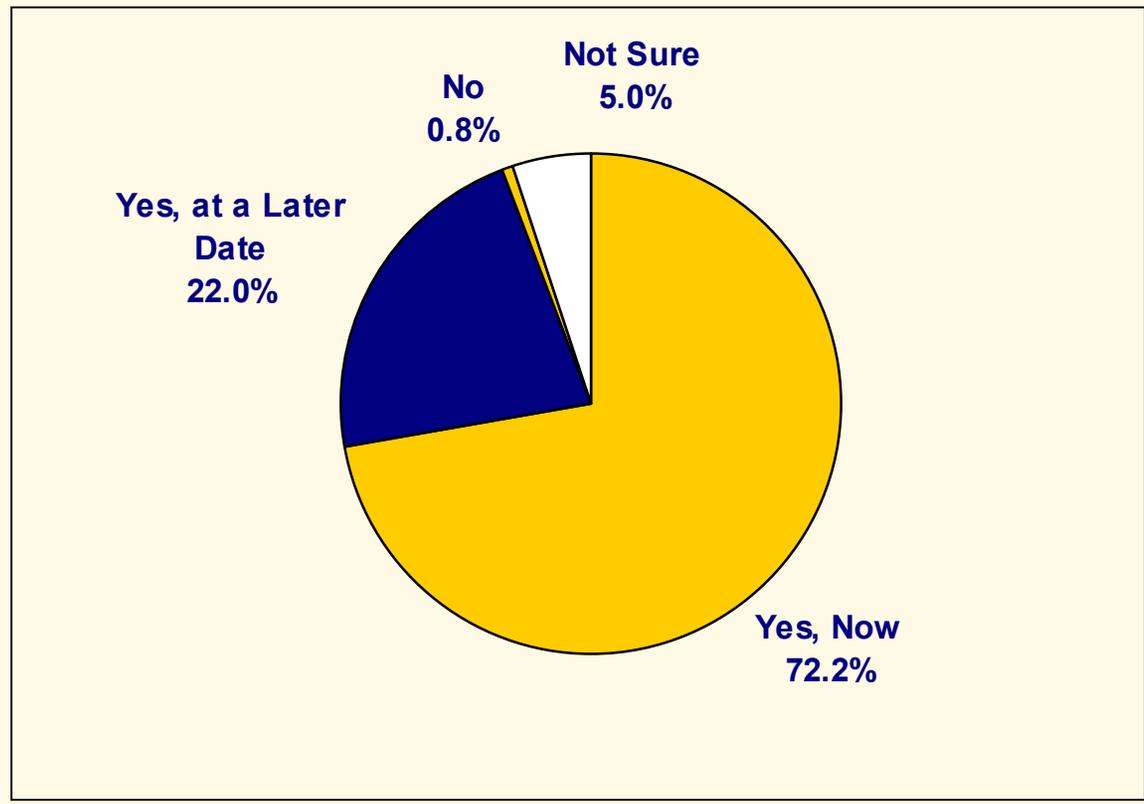


Note: As respondents could mark all responses that apply, the percentages do not add to 100%.

Valid n=499

Current Status in the VR&E Program

Question 51:
Do you plan to complete your rehabilitation program now or at a later date?

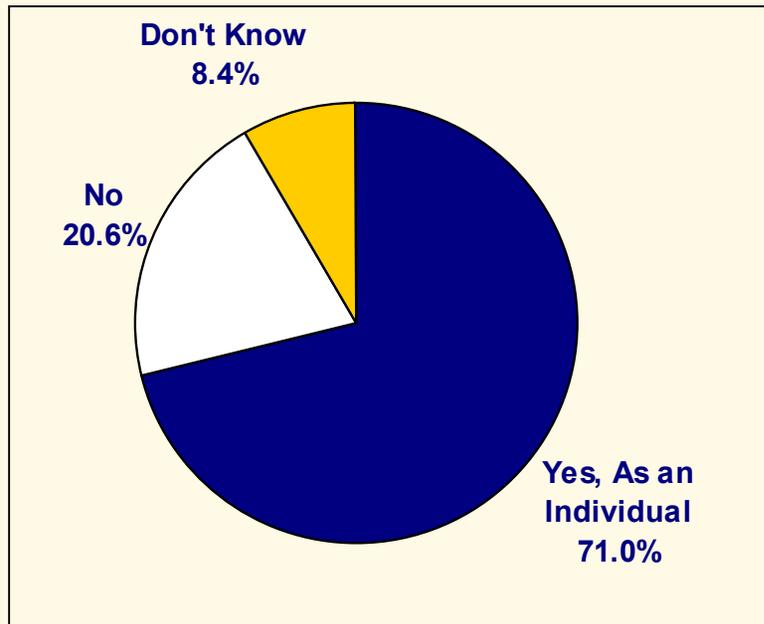


Valid n=3308

Overall Program Impressions

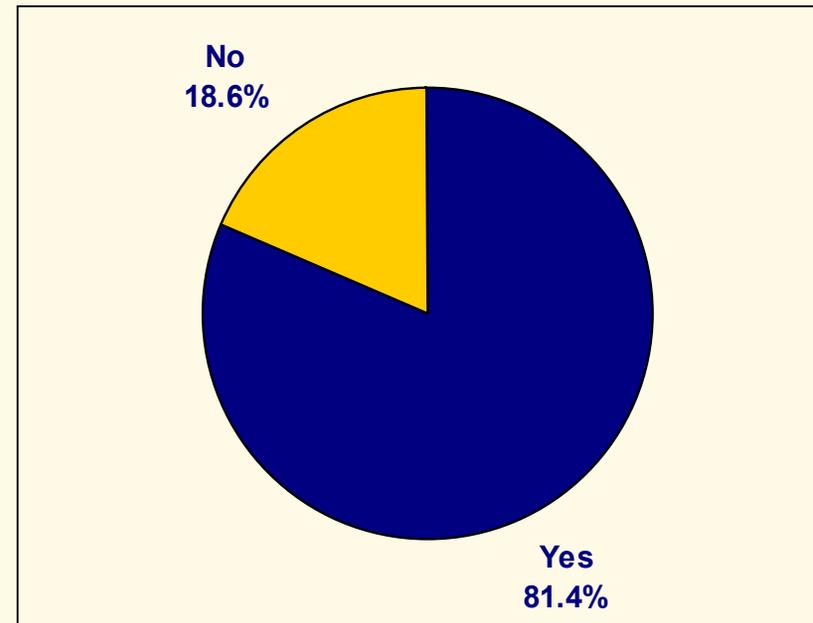
Overall Program Impressions

Question 52:
Do you feel that the VA Vocational Rehabilitation Program has treated you as an individual, not just a case to be managed?



Valid n=3407

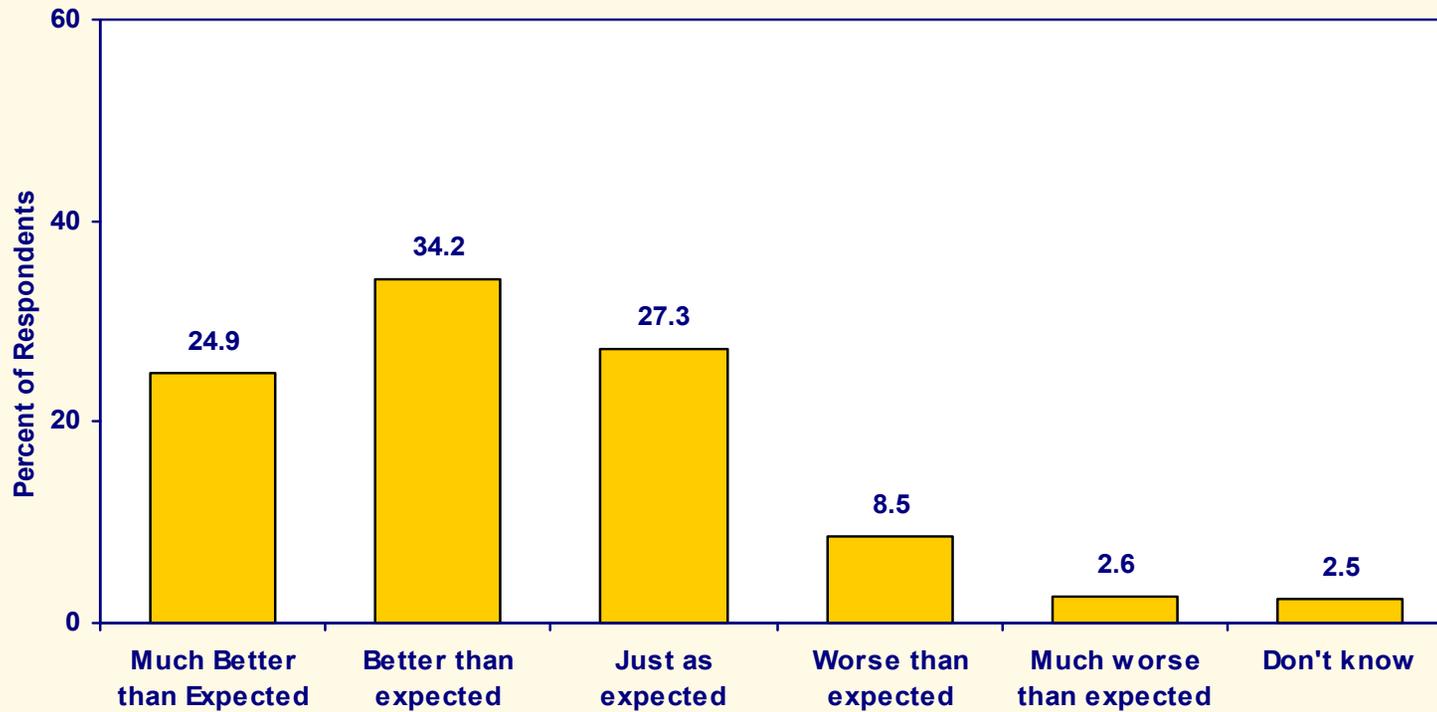
Question 53:
Overall, has the REHABILITATION process reflected the courtesy, compassion, and respect you would expect as a veteran of the United States?



Valid n=3396

Overall Program Impressions

Question 54:
Thus far, how well has the program met your EXPECTATIONS?

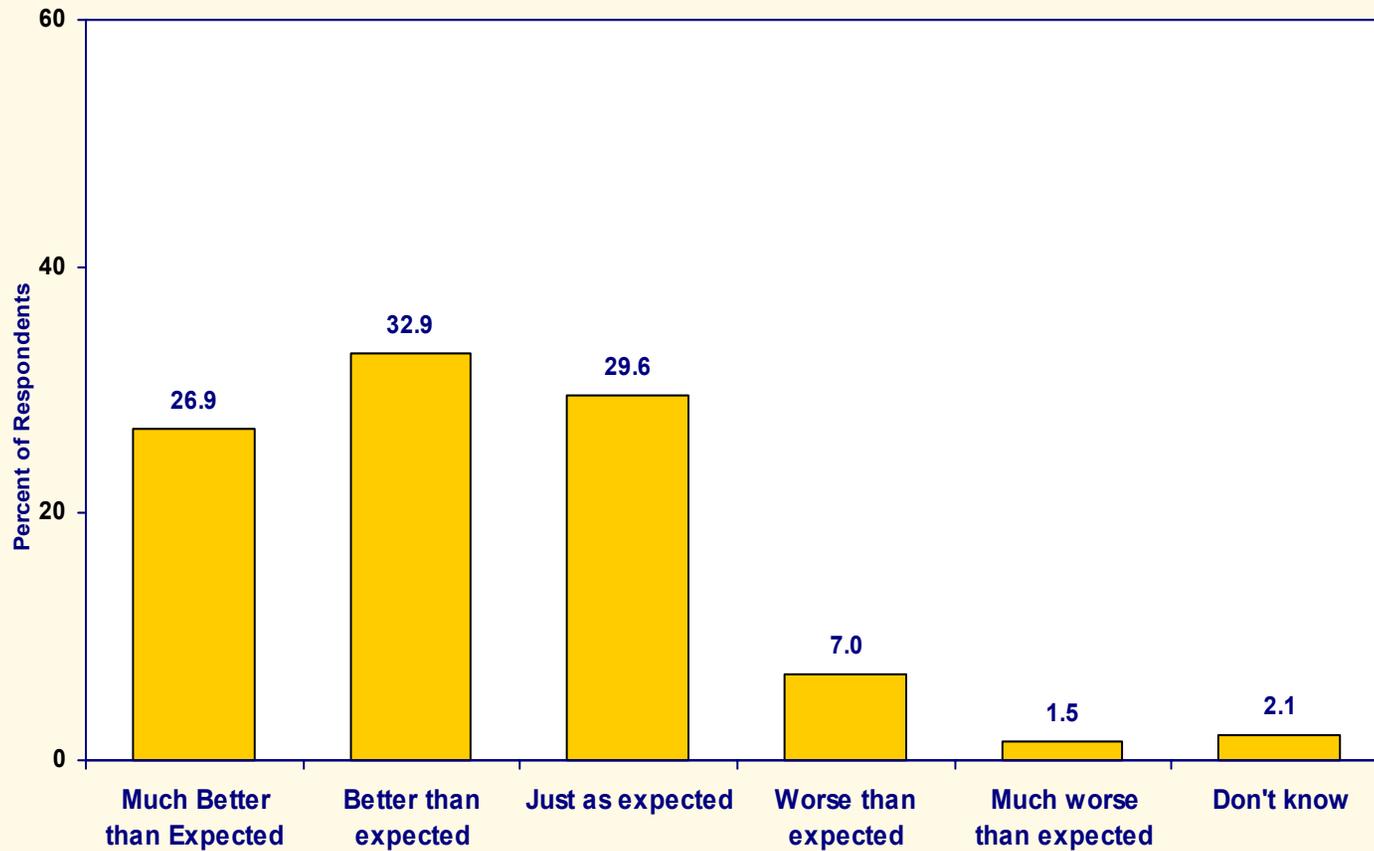


Valid n=3408

Overall Program Impressions

Question 55:

Thus far, how well has the program met your training or educational NEEDS?

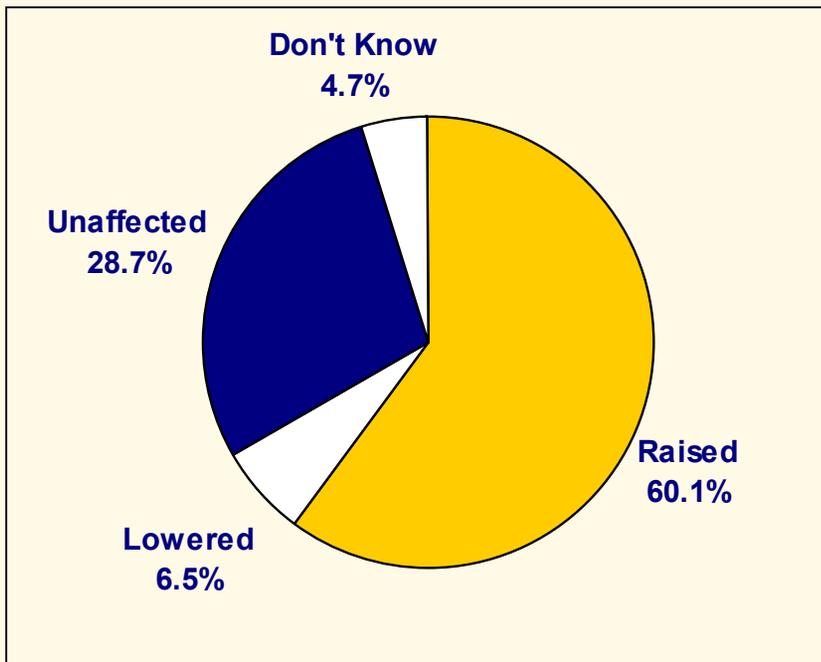


Valid n=3411

Overall Program Impressions

Question 56:

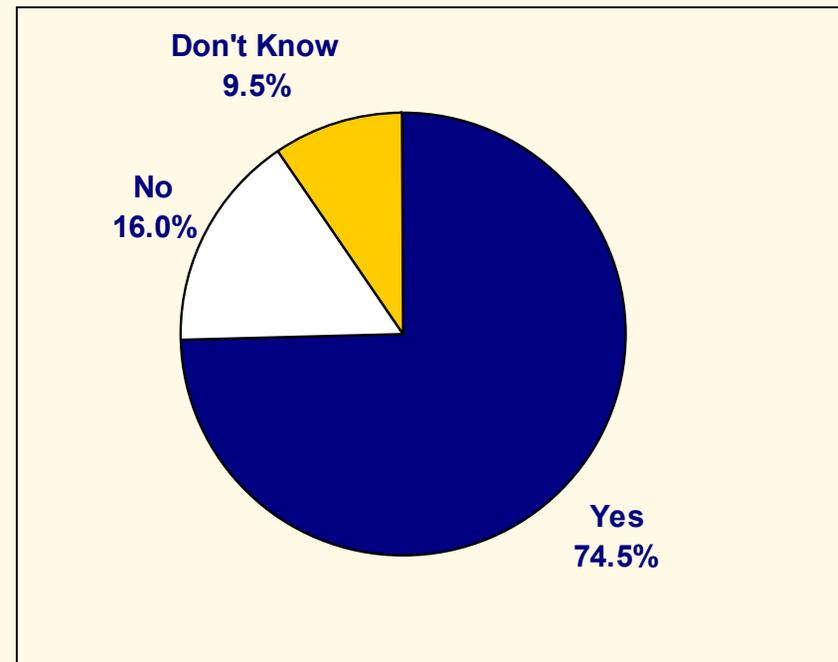
Have your EDUCATIONAL goals been raised, lowered, or unaffected as a result of your interaction with the VR&E program?



Valid n=3412

Question 57:

Are your educational goals more realistic as a result of this program?

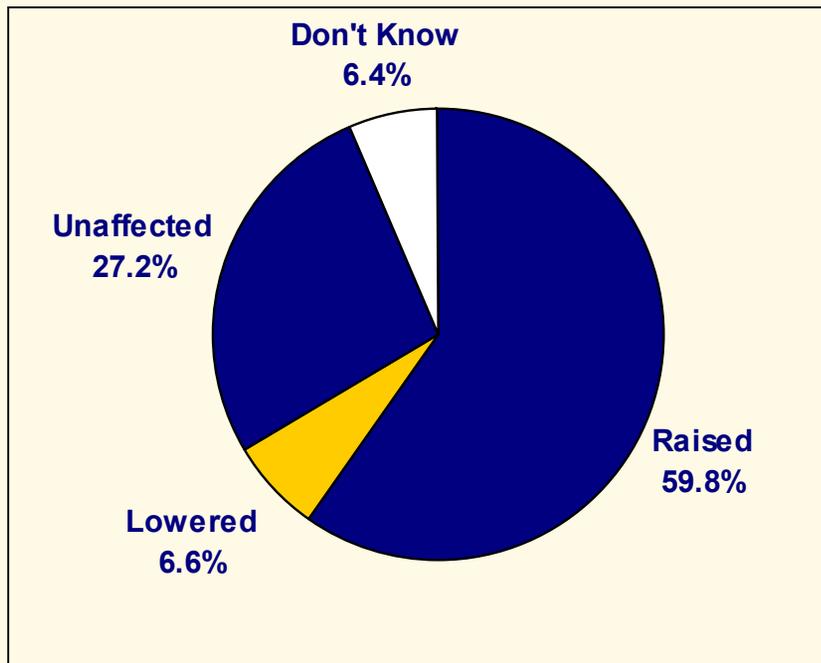


Valid n=3411

Overall Program Impressions

Question 58:

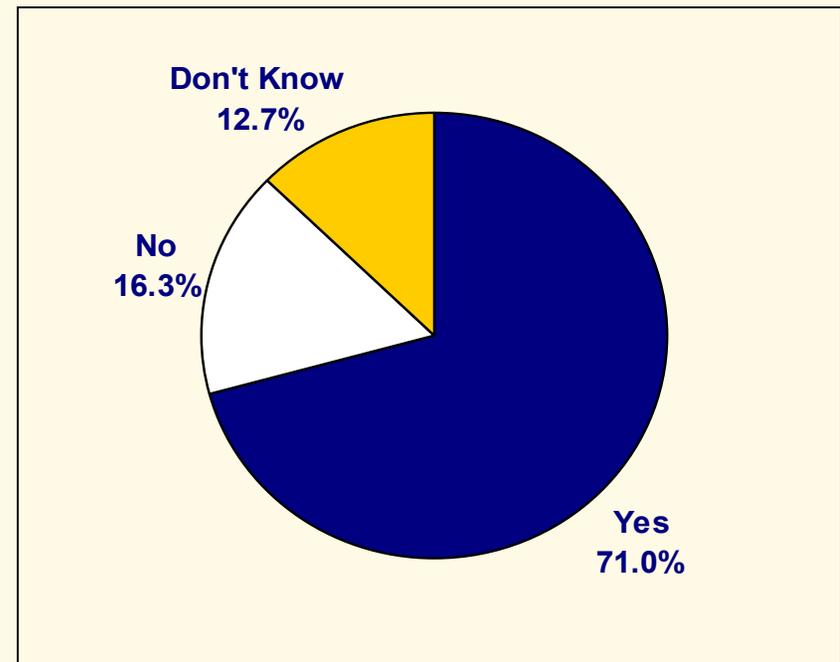
Have your CAREER goals been raised, lowered, or unaffected as a result of your interaction with the VR&E program?



Valid n=3416

Question 59:

Are your career goals more realistic as a result of this program?

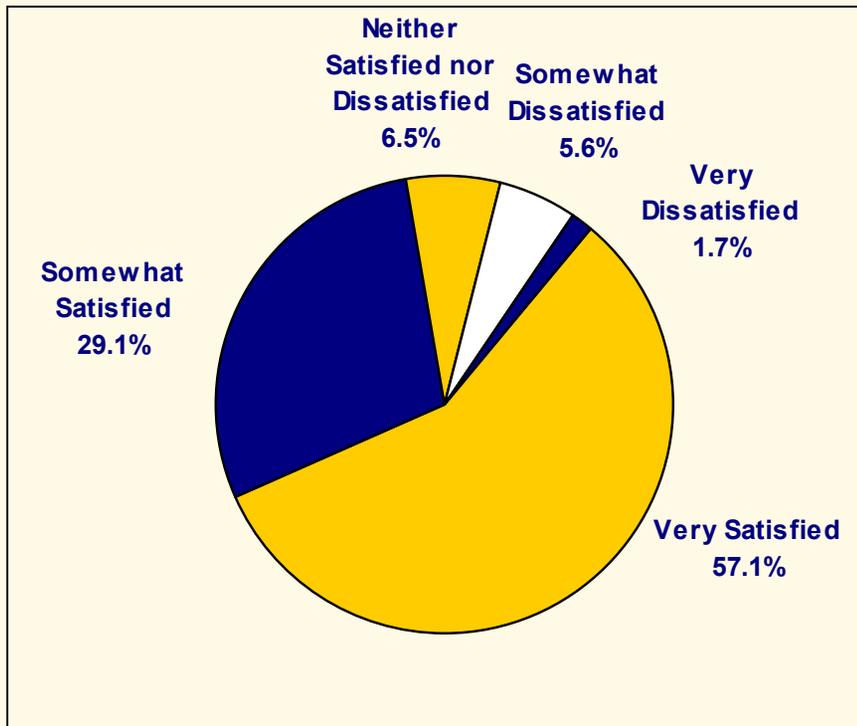


Valid n=3395

Overall Program Impressions

Question 60:

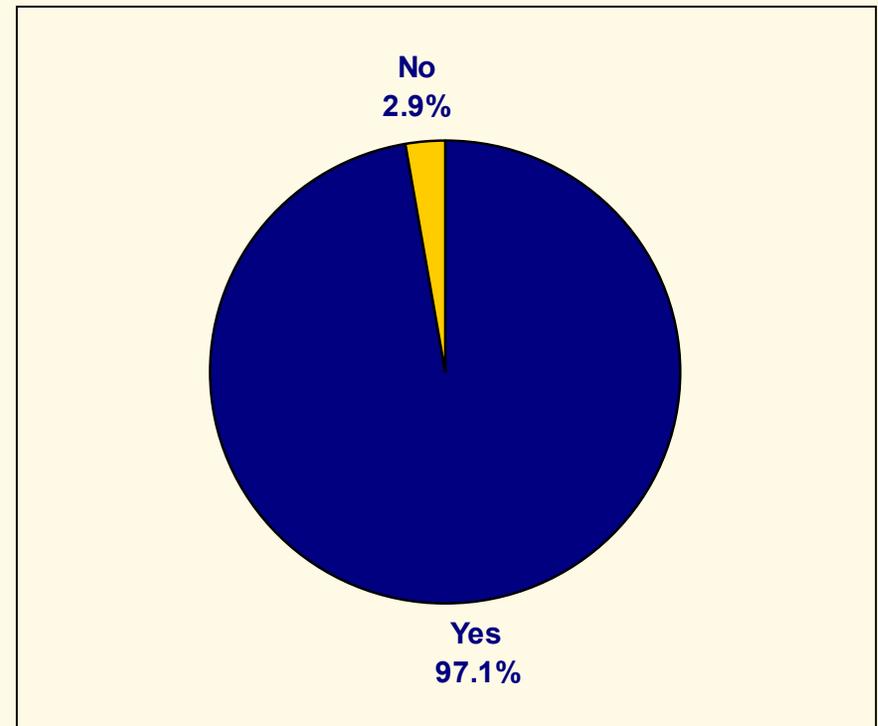
Overall, how satisfied are you with the TRAINING OR EDUCATION phase of your plan?



Valid n=3406

Question 61:

Would you recommend this program to other disabled veterans?



Valid n=3389

Appendix B: Methodology

Mailing Protocol

- A total of 6,500 surveys were distributed to veterans in the Training and Education Phase.
- The survey mailing protocol consisted of five mailings to veterans randomly selected into the survey sample. 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 Training and Education yielded 3,574 completed questionnaires, resulting in a 55.0% 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.