

# 2019 VocRehab Vermont Consumer Experience Survey

Prepared for



**VocRehabVermont**  
A PROUD PARTNER OF CREATIVE WORKFORCE SOLUTIONS

**STATE OF VERMONT  
State Rehabilitation Council**

**October, 2019**



**Market Decisions Research**  
75 Washington Ave, Suite 2C  
Portland, ME 04101  
[www.marketdecisions.com](http://www.marketdecisions.com)  
(207) 767-6440

**Prepared by:**  
Brian Robertson, PhD  
Mark Noyes, MPH

# Table of Contents

- Methodology
- VR Consumer Experience Core Metrics
- Other Key Areas of Experience
- Benefits Counseling
- Employment Services
- Transition Services
- Factors Impacting Services
- Future Planning and Career Goals
- Problems Experience by VR Consumers
- Feedback and Quality Improvement
- The Client Assistance Program
- Employment and Job Satisfaction
- Discussion and Conclusions





# Methodology



# Methodology

- MDR Worked with VocRehab Vermont to identify topics and to design the survey.
  - It included survey questions asked since 2004 to allow trending of results.
  - It included new questions to investigate emerging issues.
- The target population were current and former consumers of VocRehab Vermont.
- Data collection began April 2, 2019 and was completed by June 12, 2019.
- Overall, 700 surveys were completed among VocRehab Vermont consumers.
  - 484 open cases
  - 111 cases closed successfully
  - 105 cases closed unsuccessfully
  - 94 consumers receiving transition services

# Response Rates

	%
AAPOR Response Rate 3	27.2%
AAPOR Cooperation Rate 3	80.9%
AAOPR Refusal Rate 1	11.3%

**AAPOR** – The American Association for Public Opinion Research.

**Response Rate** – The response rate is the number of completed interviews divided by the number of eligible consumers in the sample.

**Cooperation Rate** – This represents the proportion of all consumers interviewed out of all eligible consumers ever contacted. That is, the percent of identified consumers that ended up completing the interview.

**Refusal Rate** – The refusal rate represents the proportion of all cases in which the consumer refused to be interviewed or broke off an interview out of all consumers that were contacted and spoken with.



# VR Consumer Experience Core Metrics



# What are the VR Consumer Experience Core Metrics?

**The core metrics are the broad measures of the VR consumer experience.**

- These core metrics provide key measures of the consumer experience that can be compared across concept, across groups, and trended year to year.
- They allow comparison of results across VR agencies using similar metrics.
- Some are comprised of domains, which are calculated by combining a number of questions.
- Others are individual questions.
- For VocRehab VT, we report nine core metrics including six domains and three key questions.
- See “VR Consumer Experience Core Metrics Description” PowerPoint for a more detailed description.

# Calculation of VR Consumer Experience Core Metrics

**The consumer experience core metrics all use a common 0 to 100 scale.**

- The most positive result is bound to 100.
- The least positive result is bound to 0.
- There are even intervals for all responses between.
- Each metric is the average of all scores.

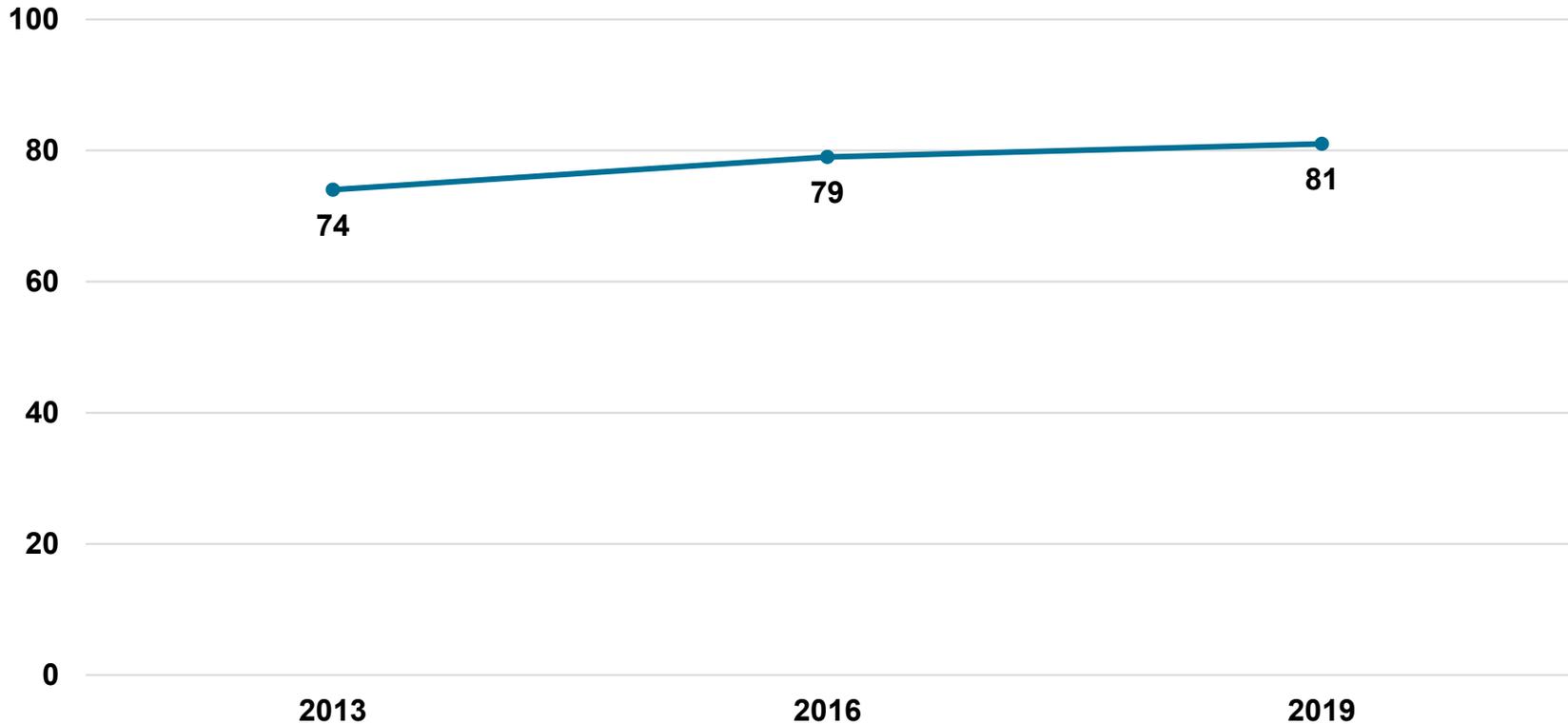
**The higher the score the more satisfied the consumer or the more positively they view their experience.**

- A score of 100 would represent an extremely positive experience among VR consumers.
- A score of zero would imply an extremely negative experience.

# 2019 Vermont VR Consumer Experience Dashboard

	2013	2016	2019
Overall Satisfaction and Expectations	74	79	81
Experiences with Services Provided by VR	80	84	83
Experience with VR Staff and Counselors	89	91	92
Communications with VR Staff	79	86	87
Consumer Control and Involvement	78	87	88
Outcomes and Meeting Goals	71	81	81
Satisfaction with Current Employment	79	81	85
Would you tell your friends with disabilities to go to the VR program for help? (% yes)	91	95	96
Did you experience any problems with the services they provided to you? (% no)	79	84	85

# Overall Satisfaction and Expectations

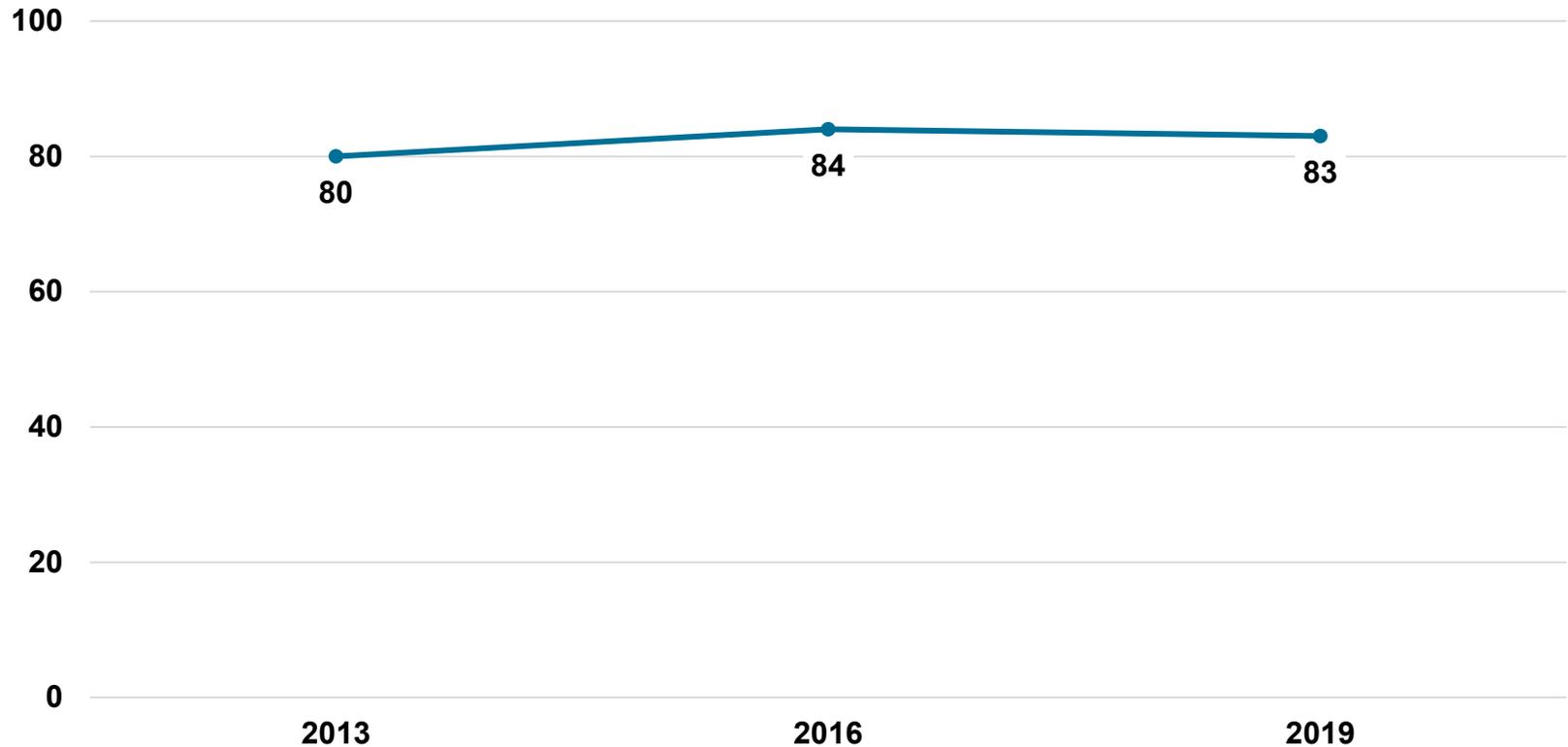


OVERALL1: Overall, how satisfied were you with the VR's program?

OVERALL2: How satisfied would you say you were with the services provided by VR?

OVERALL3: Considering all of the expectations you may have had about the services provided by VR to what extent have these services met your expectations?

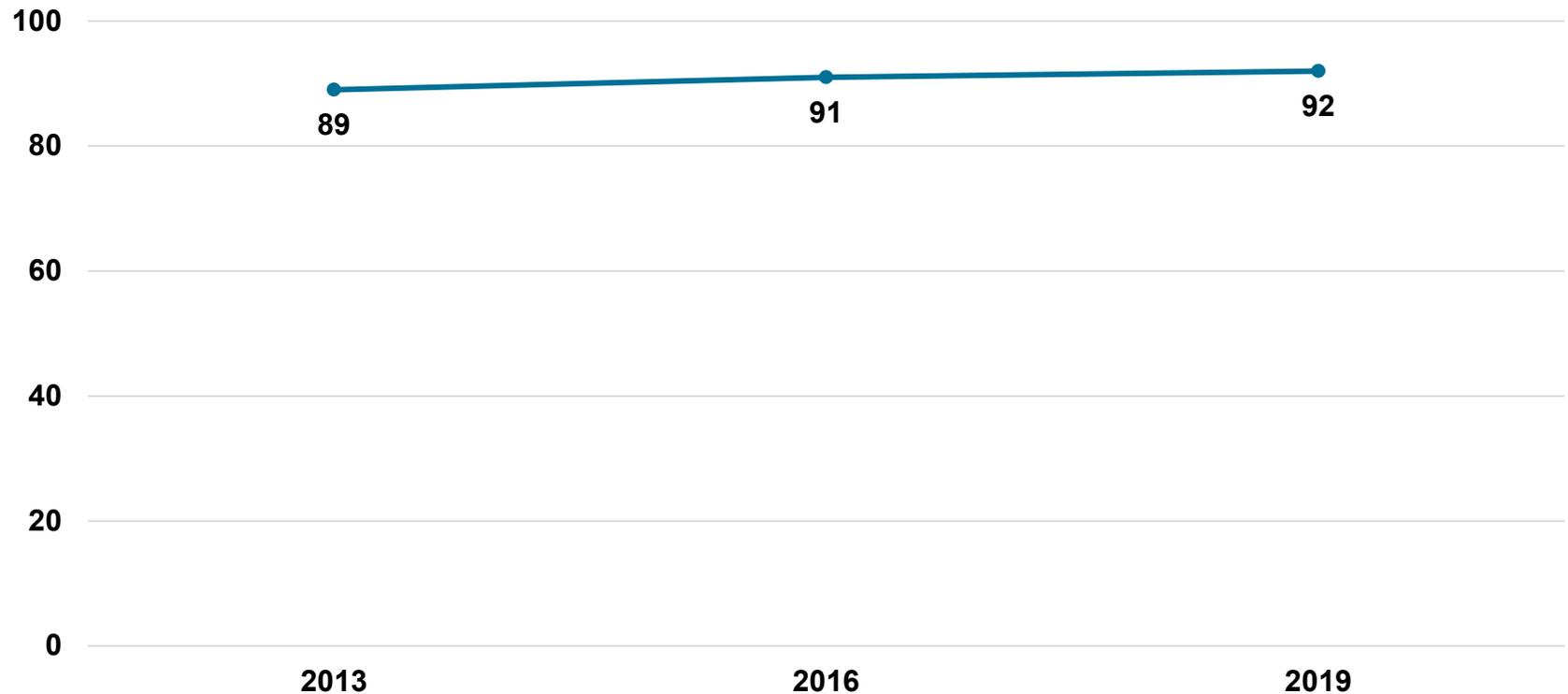
# Experiences with Services Provided by VR



SERVICE1: How satisfied were you with the choice of services that were available?

SERVICE2: How satisfied were you with the choice of service providers?

# Experience with VR Staff and Counselors



STAFF1: How helpful were the staff of VR in helping you achieve your vocational rehabilitation goals?

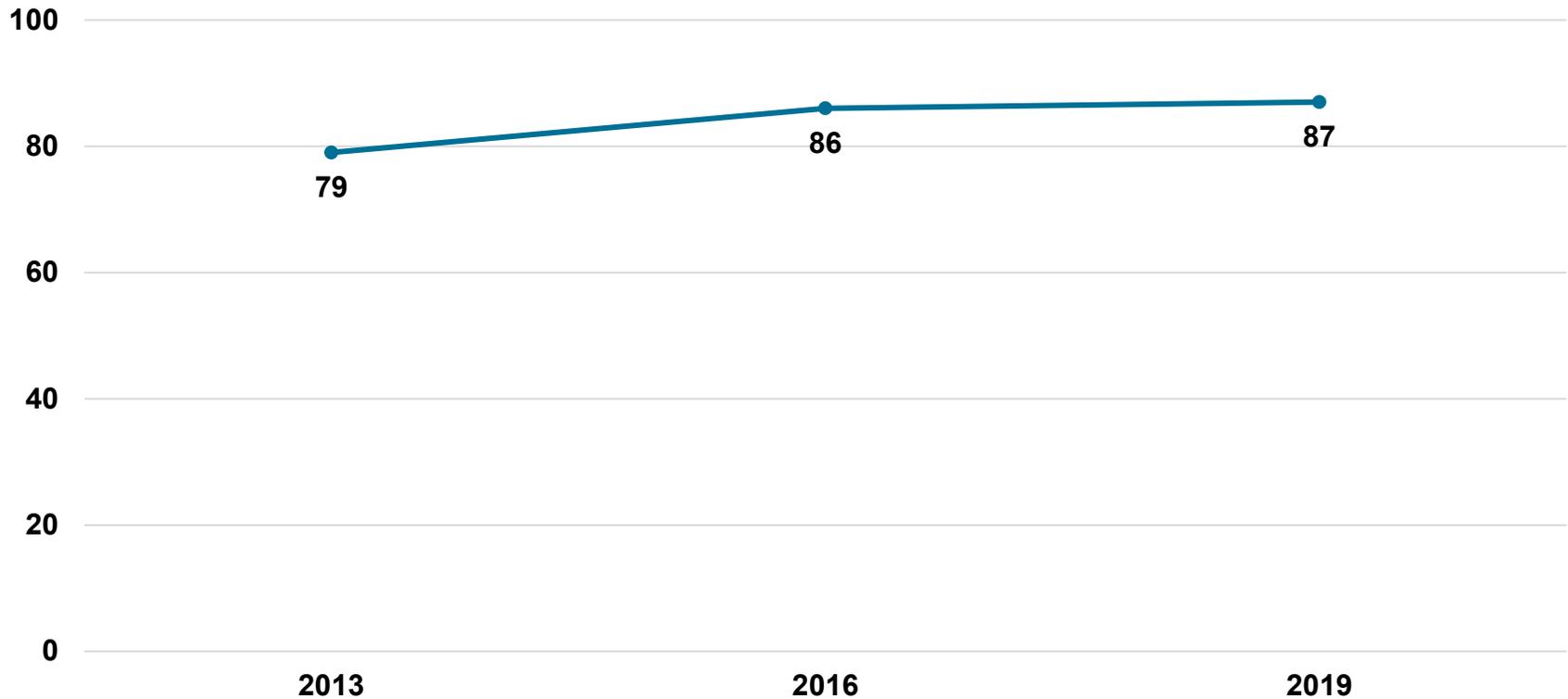
STAFF2: The VR staff treated me with dignity and respect.

STAFF4: In thinking about the attitude of the staff and the office environment, how welcome did you feel when coming to vocational rehabilitation for services?

STAFF6: VR Staff understood my particular situation and needs.

STAFF7: VR staff believed in my abilities and partnered with me to achieve my employment goal.

# Communications with VR Staff



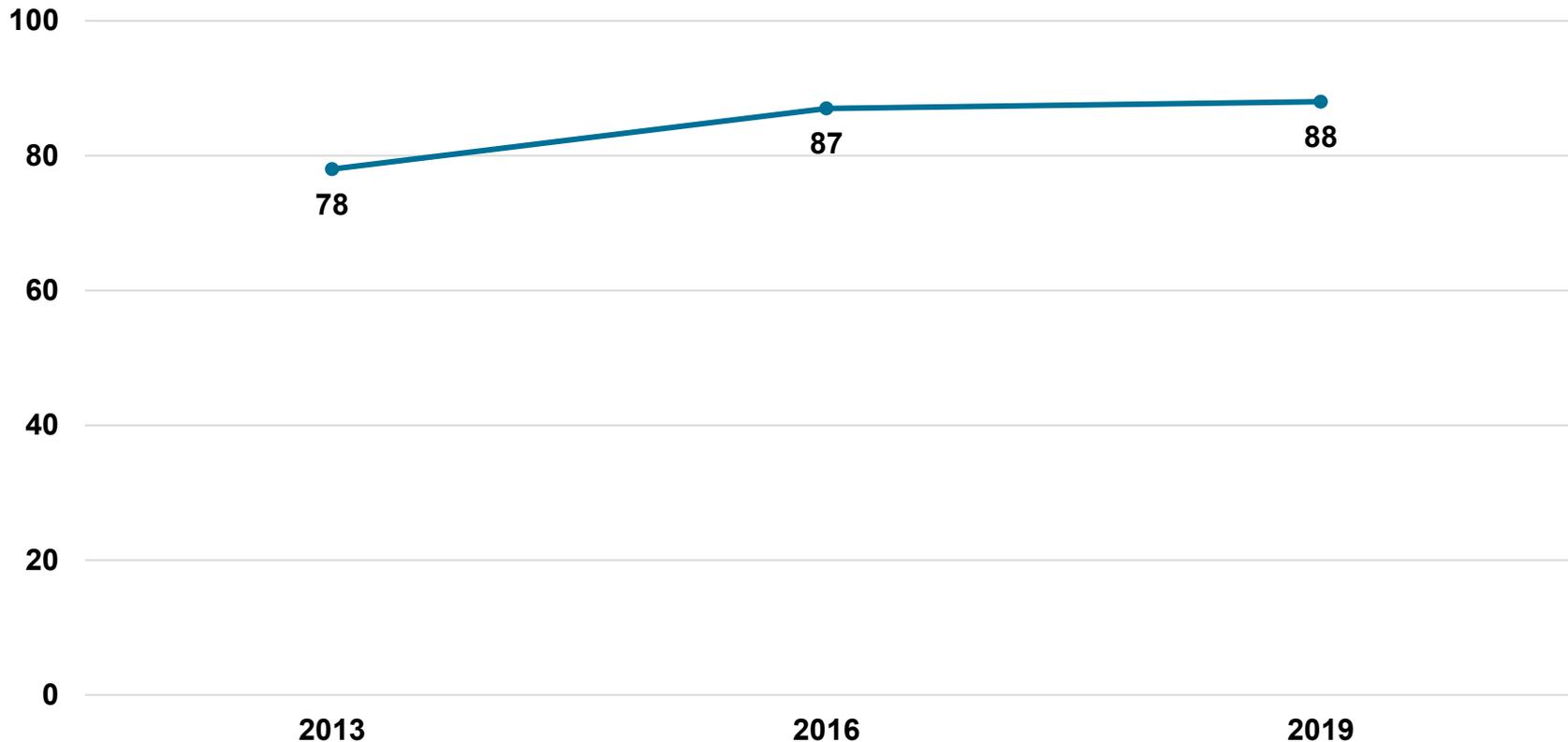
COMM1: How satisfied were you with the kind and amount of information you were given about the choices you had?

COMM2: How satisfied were you with how long it took your counselor to answer your questions or address your concerns?

COMM3: How easy was it for you to contact your vocational rehabilitation counselor?

COMM4: My counselor made clear my role and responsibilities in communicating with vocational rehabilitation

# Consumer Control and Involvement



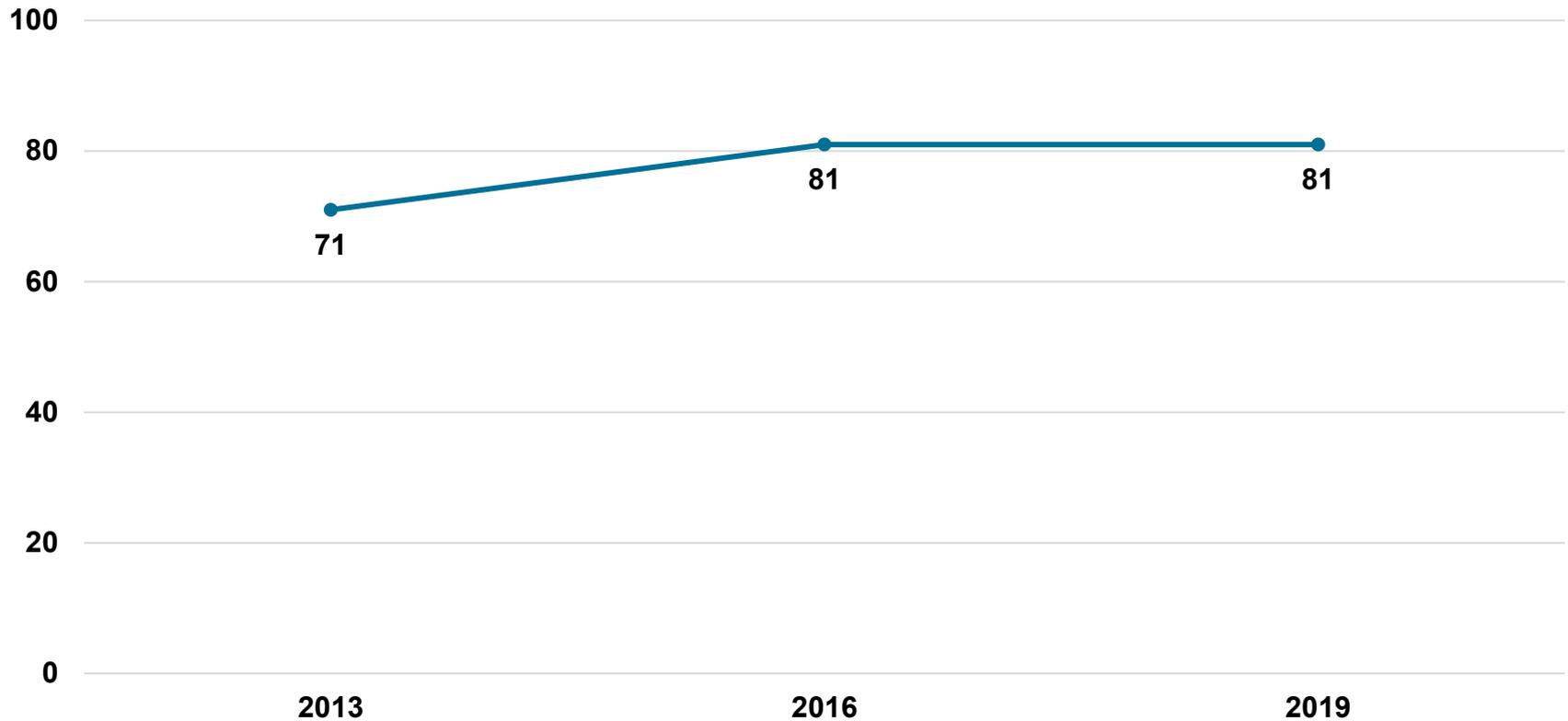
CONTROL1: How satisfied were you with your control and involvement in your vocational rehabilitation experience?

CONTROL2: How satisfied were you with your choice of a vocational goal?

CONTROL3: VR staff asked me for my opinions and ideas about the services I need.

CONTROL4: VR staff asked me for my opinions and ideas about my vocational rehabilitation goals.

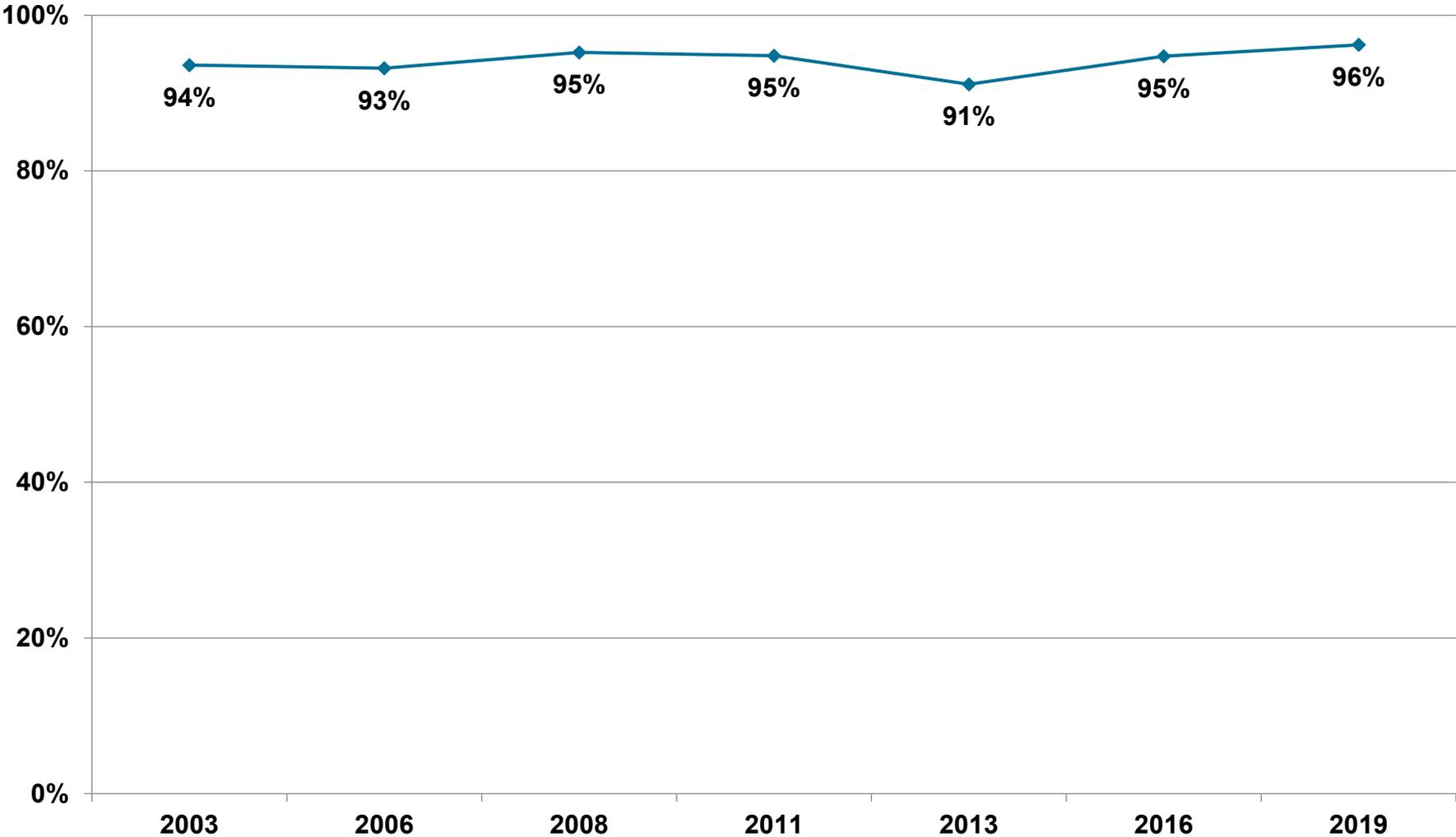
# Outcomes and Meeting Goals



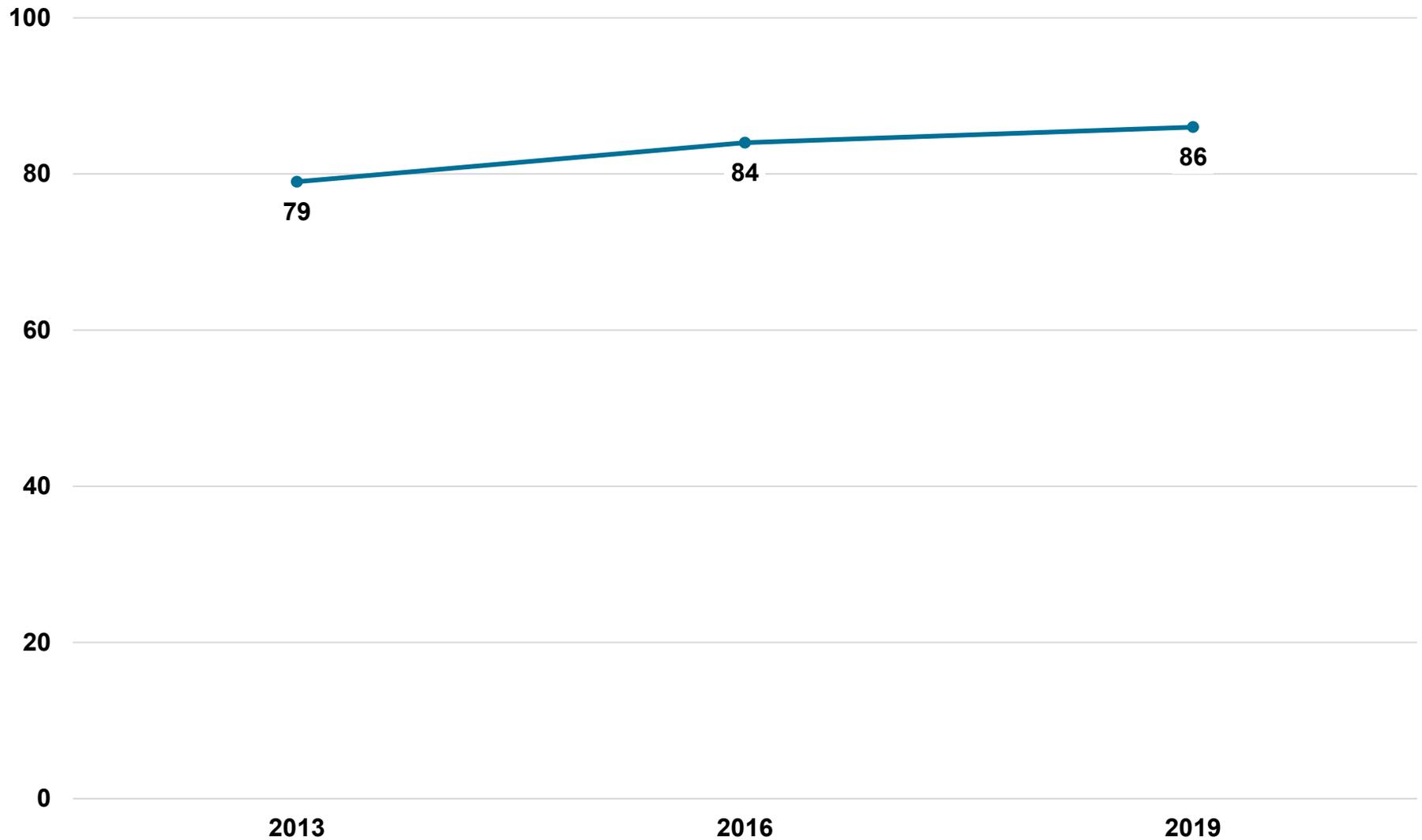
OUTCOMES2: The vocational rehabilitation services I received helped me or will help me become more financially independent.

OUTCOMES5: VR helped me or will help me reach my job goals.

# All things considered, would you tell your friends with disabilities to go to the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation program for help? (% yes)



# Did you experience any problems with the services they provided to you? (% no)



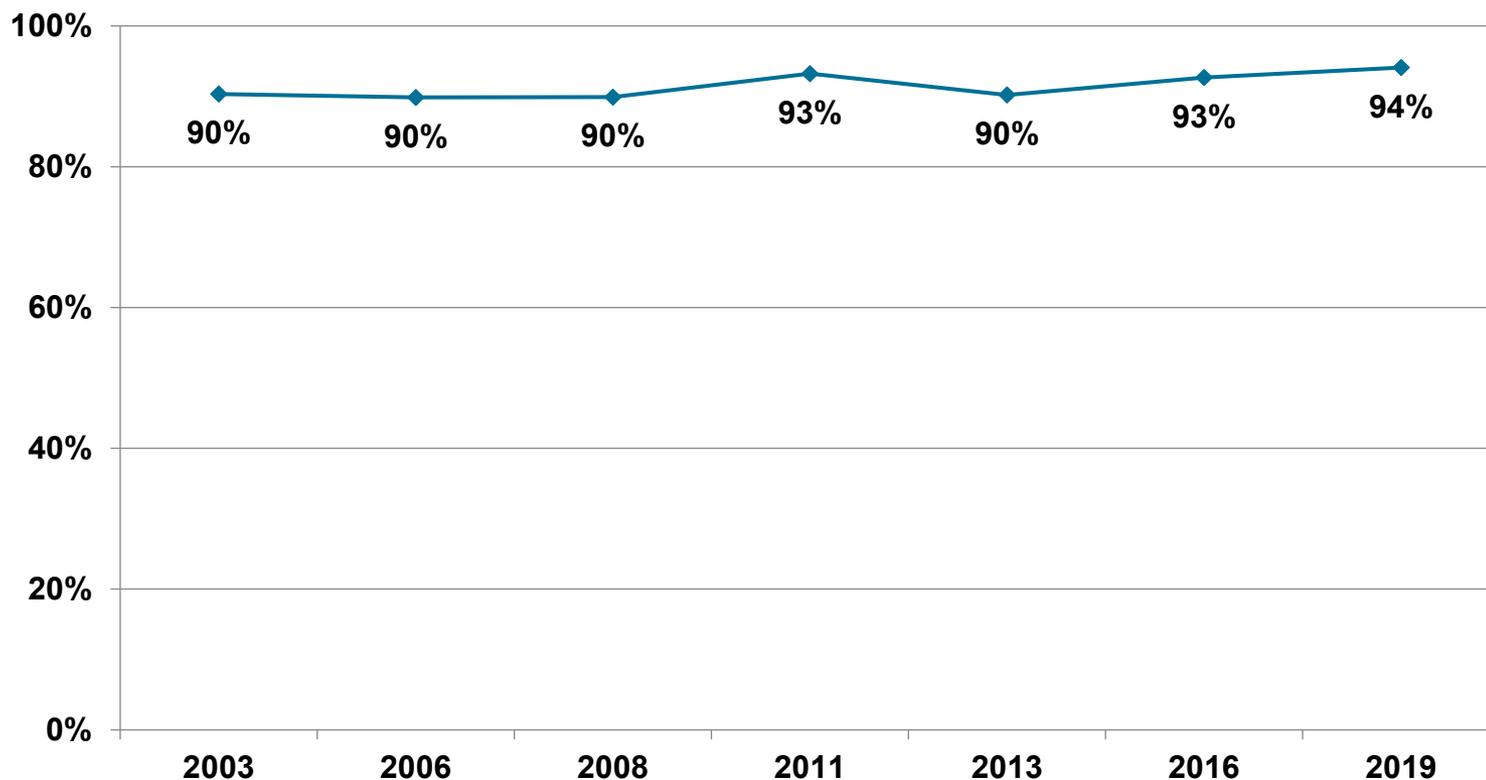


# Other Key Areas of Experience



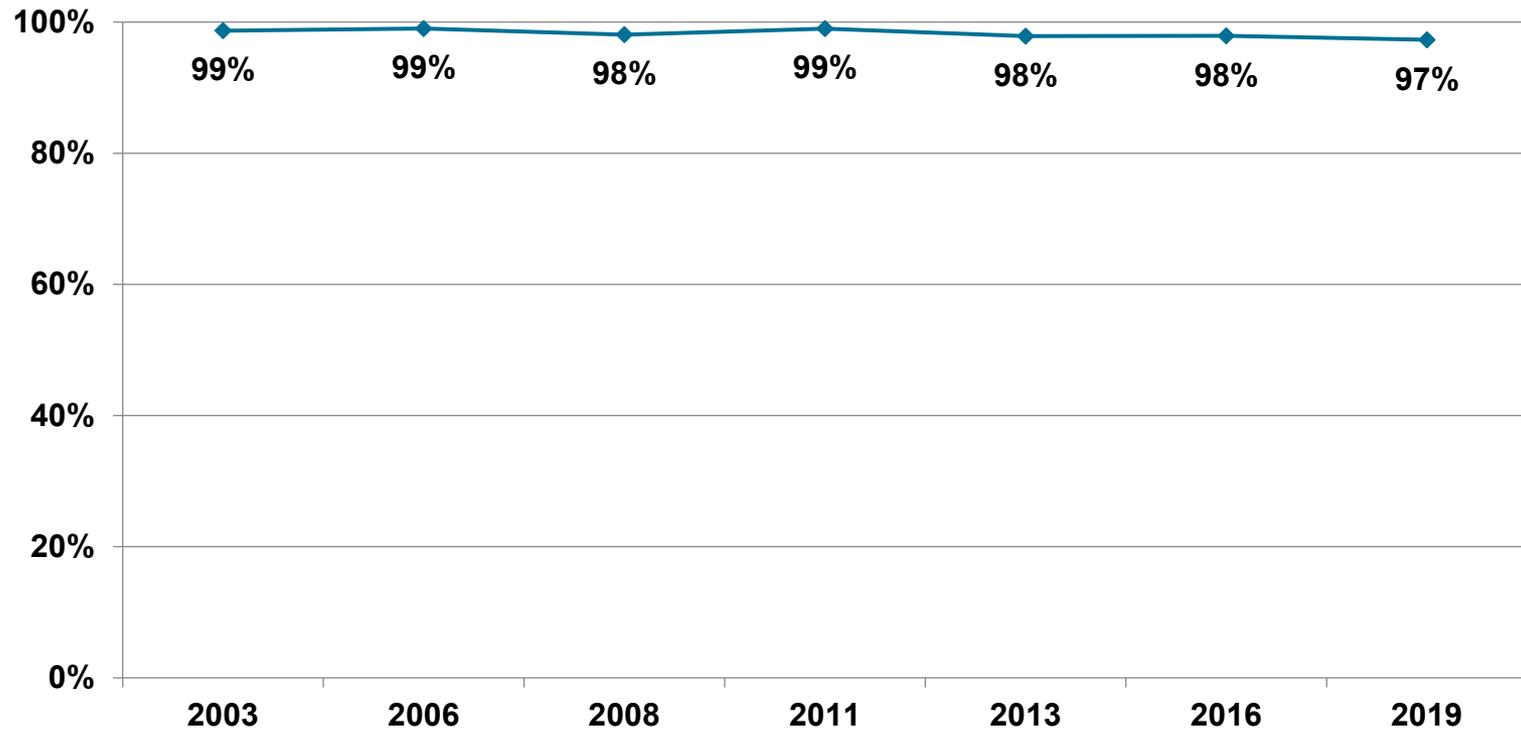
Over nine in ten (94%) say completing an application for VR services is easy, its highest level since the survey was begun in 2003.

**How easy was it for you to complete an application for VocRehab services?  
(% very and somewhat easy)**



Consistent with prior years, 97% report the VR office is accessible for their type of disability.

**How accessible was VocRehab Vermont office for someone with your type of disability?  
(% very accessible or accessible)**



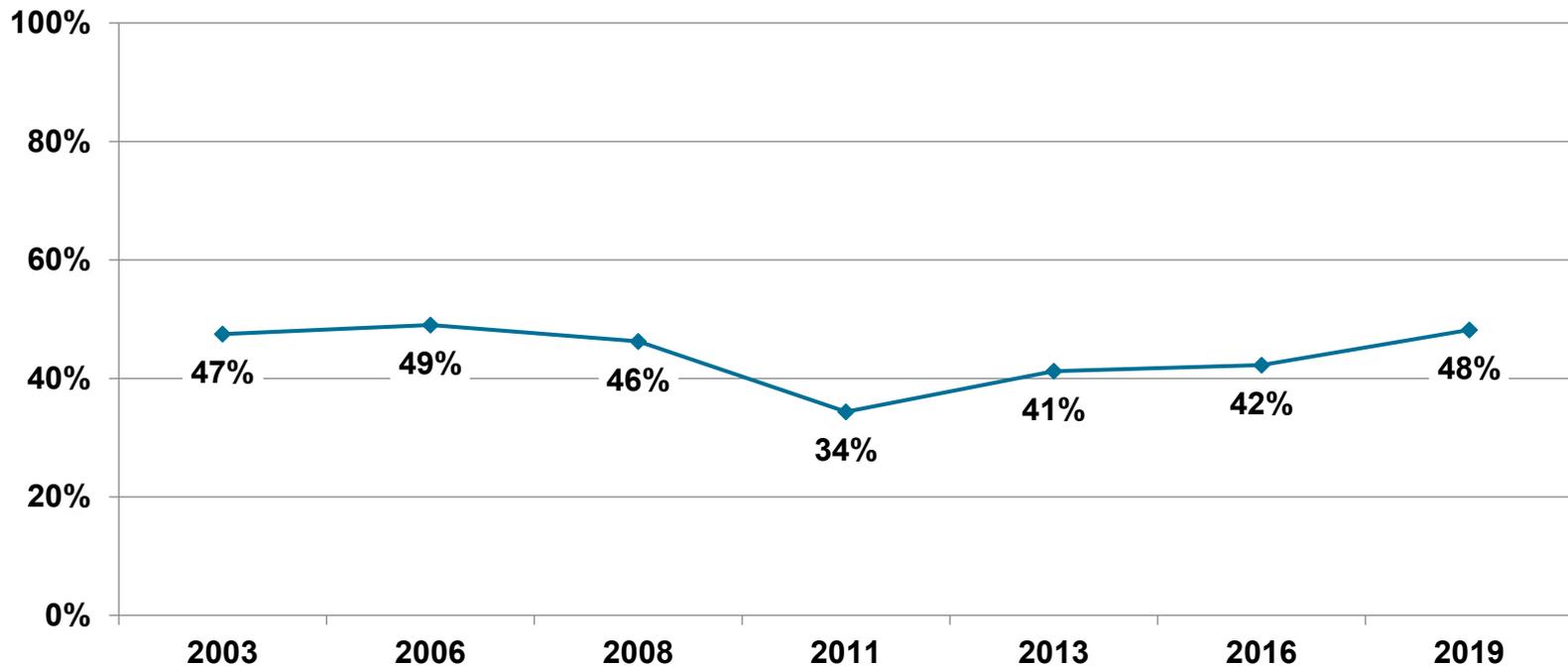


# Benefits Counseling



Up from 2016, nearly half (48%) say they are able to access benefits counseling through vocational rehabilitation.

**Were you able to access benefits counseling through vocational rehabilitation? (% yes)**



- 40% report they did not need benefits counseling services.
- 80% of those requiring benefits were able to access benefits.

Two thirds indicate their benefits counselor helped them with identifying community agencies providing services, better understand existing benefits, and fill out paperwork and forms.

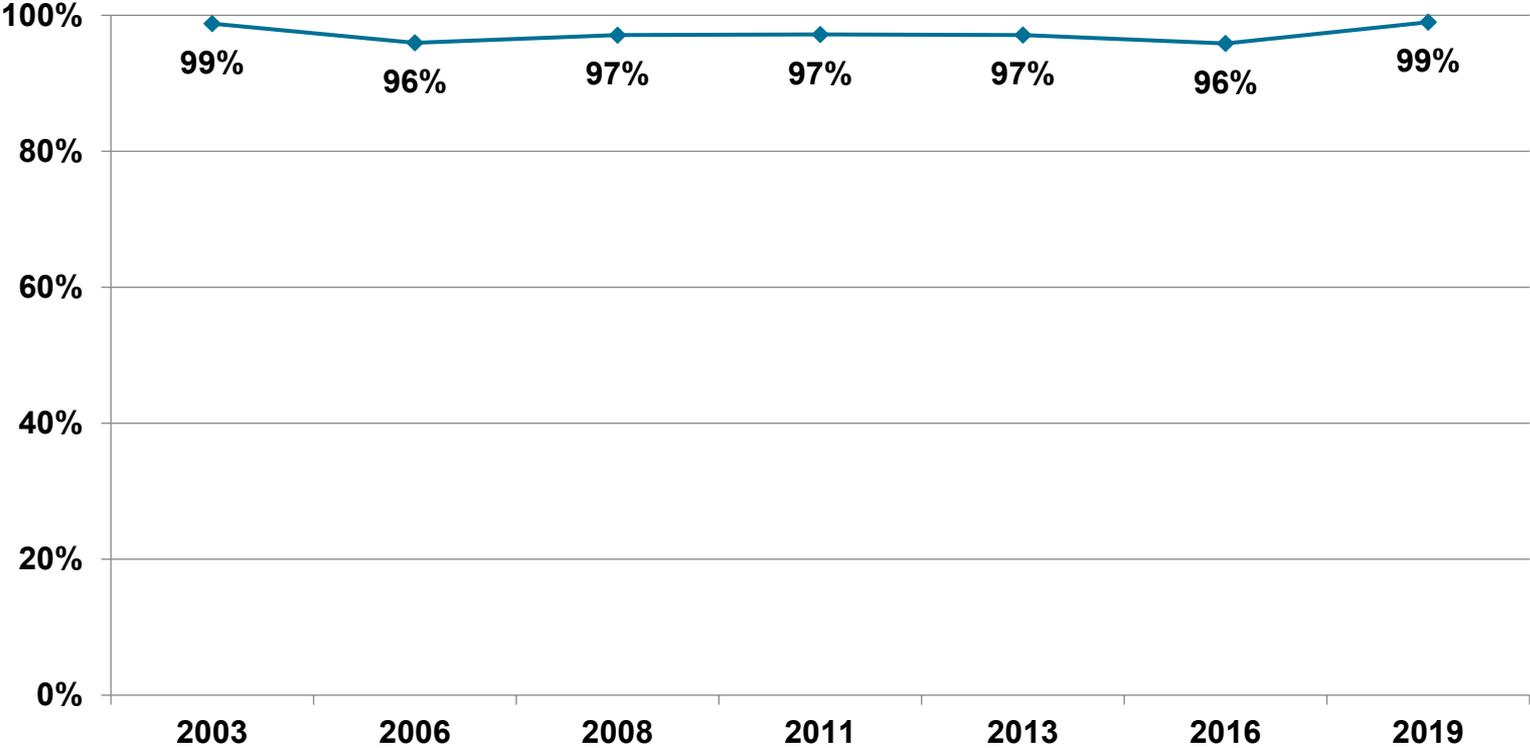
**Which of the following did your benefits counselor help you with?**

**(% among those accessing benefits counseling)**

<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Identifying community agencies that were able to provide helpful services	69%
Better understanding benefits you currently receive	67%
Filling out paperwork and forms	67%
Understanding the effects of paid employment on disability and state benefits programs	63%
Securing benefits you were not previously receiving	51%
Finding easier ways to report your earnings	43%
Something else	2%
None of these	1%
Total	100%

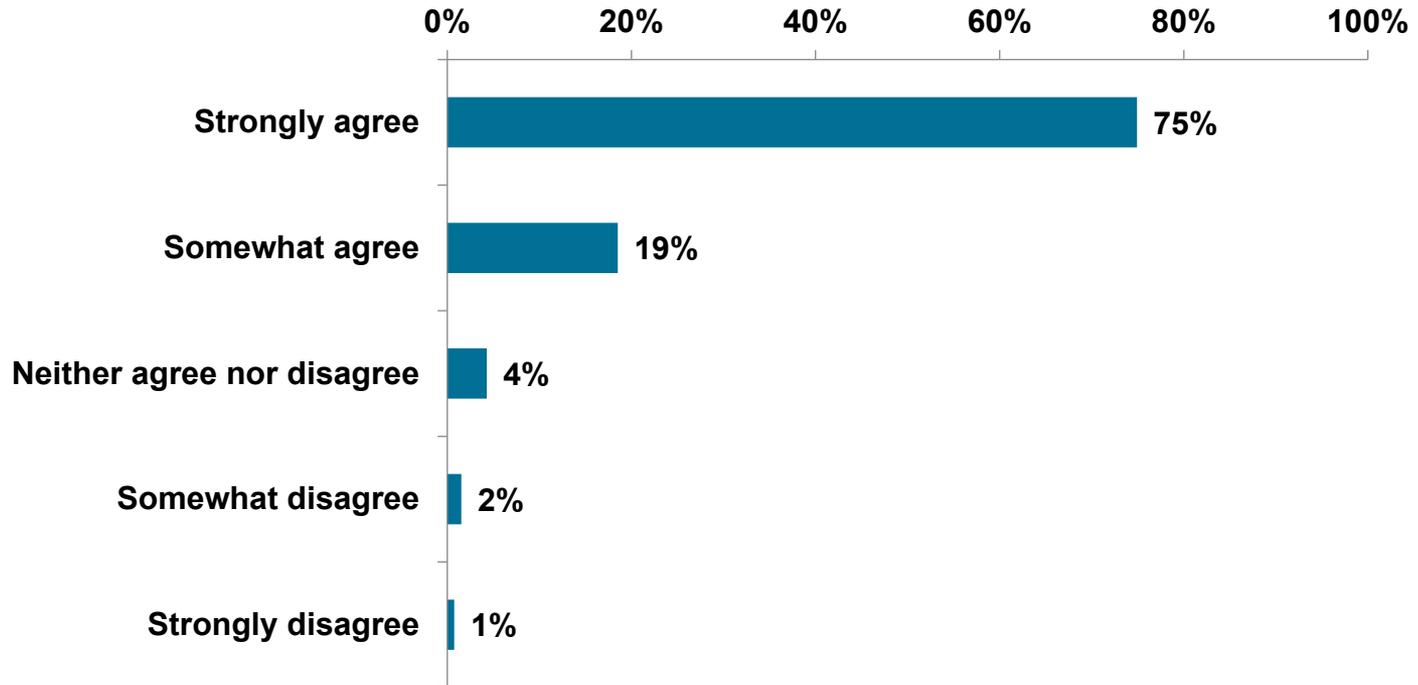
99% of those receiving benefits counseling find the services to be valuable.

**How valuable did you find this benefits counseling?  
(% valuable among those accessing benefits counseling)**



94% of those receiving benefits counseling agree somewhat or strongly that they feel more confident about being able to work and increase their wages after meeting with a benefits counselor.

**BenCouns4: After meeting with a benefits counselor, I felt more confident that I could work and increase my wages.**  
(% among those accessing benefits counseling)



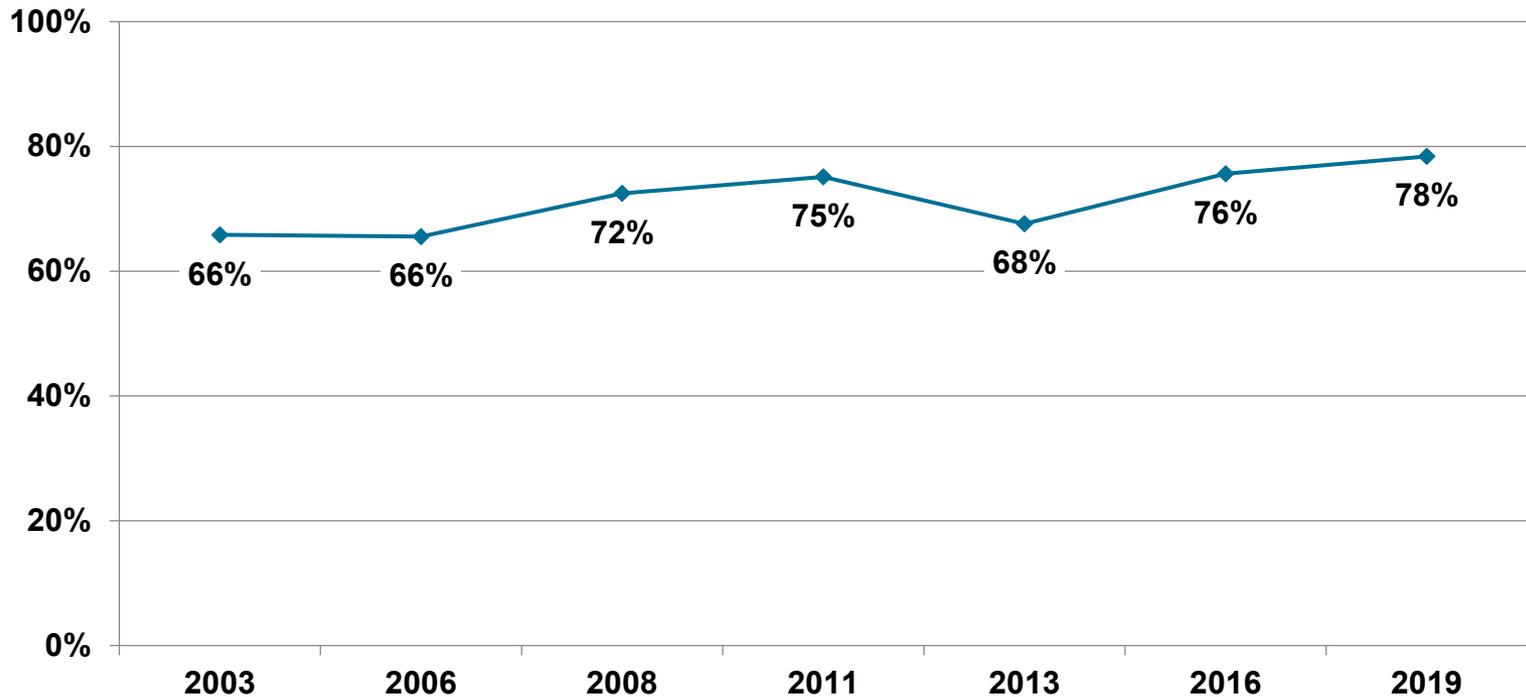


# Employment Services



78% are satisfied with the job placement services they received, slightly higher than in 2016.

**How satisfied were you with the job placement services?  
(% very satisfied or satisfied)**



Among those dissatisfied with job placement services, the largest percentage indicate that the services did not help them find a job.

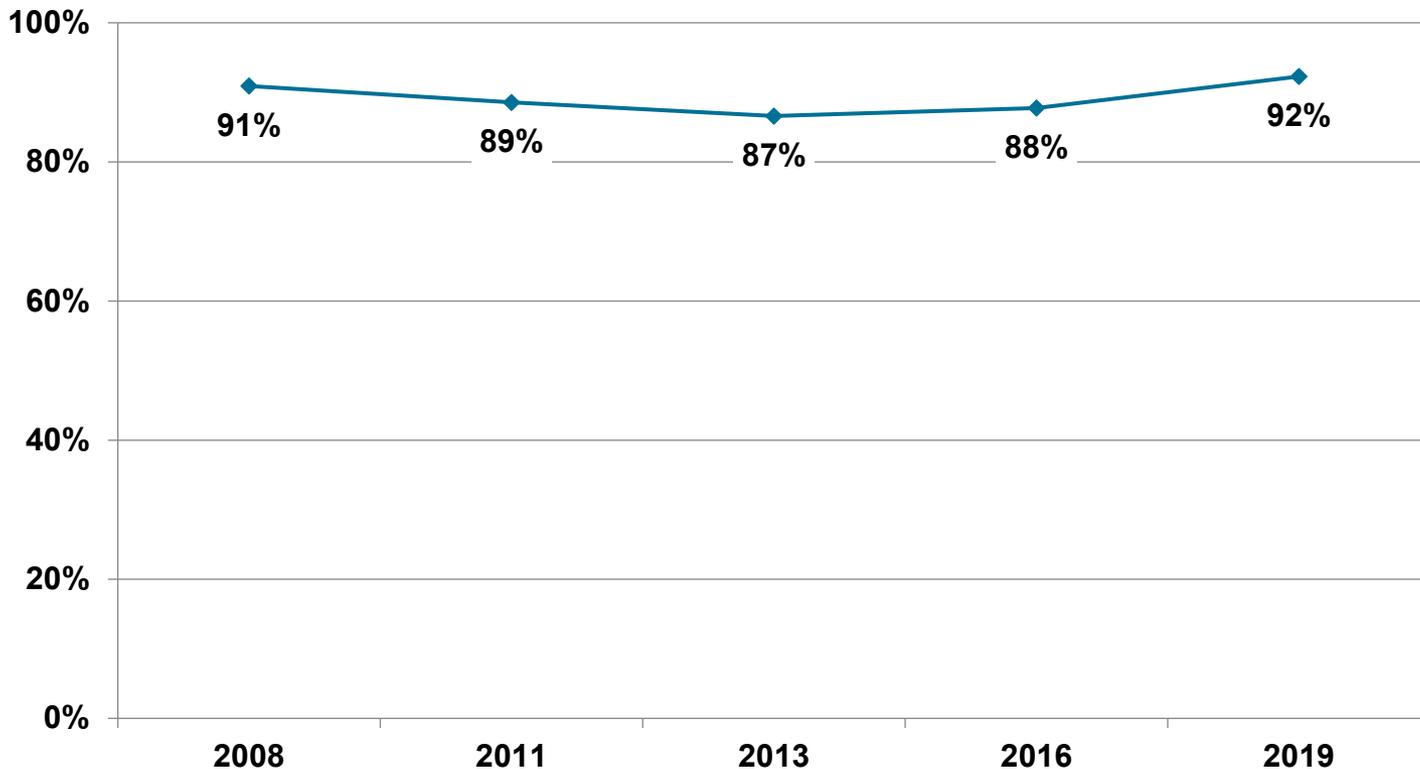
**Why weren't you satisfied with the job placement services?  
(% among those dissatisfied or very dissatisfied with job  
placement services)**

<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Ineffective - still no job	44%
Didn't match interest, ability, goal	10%
Didn't really help me, not much help	7%
Coach, counselor did nothing, could have done more	6%
Limited options available due to disability	5%
Communication problems, no follow-up	3%
Got work on my own	3%
Still in process - taking a long time	3%
All jobs I could have found on my own	2%
Problems with coach, counselor - poor match for me	2%
Varied experiences; some bad, some good	2%
Other	12%
Total	100%

92% are satisfied with how VR's coordination of job placement services with their VABIR representative.

**How well did VR coordinate job placement services with the VABIR representative?**

**(% very satisfied or satisfied)**





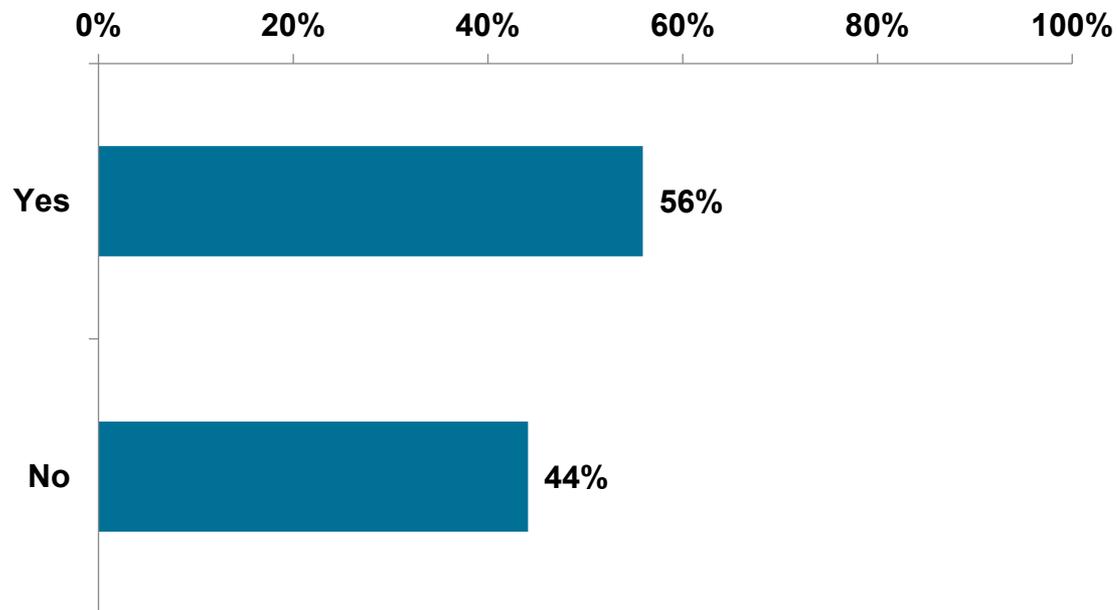
# Transition Services



Among those 25 years of age and younger, more than half (56%) recall working with a VR transition counselor to make the change to post-high school life.

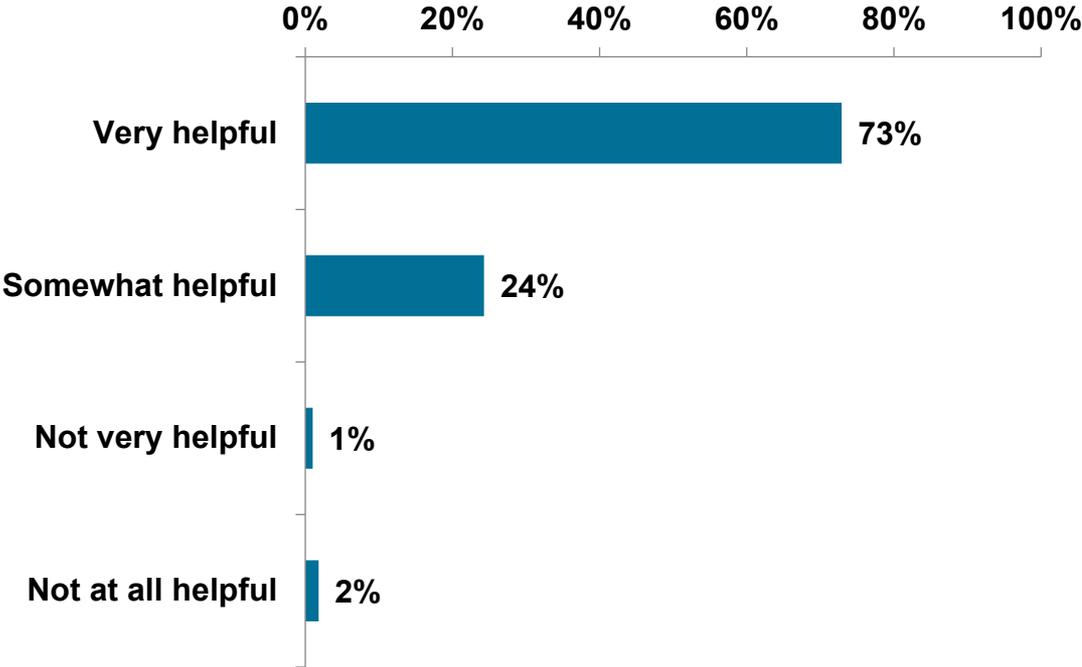
**Do you recall working with a VR transition counselor to help you make the change from high school to life after high school ended?**

**(% among consumers 25 years of age or younger)**



Nearly all (97%) say working with a transition counselor is somewhat or very helpful.

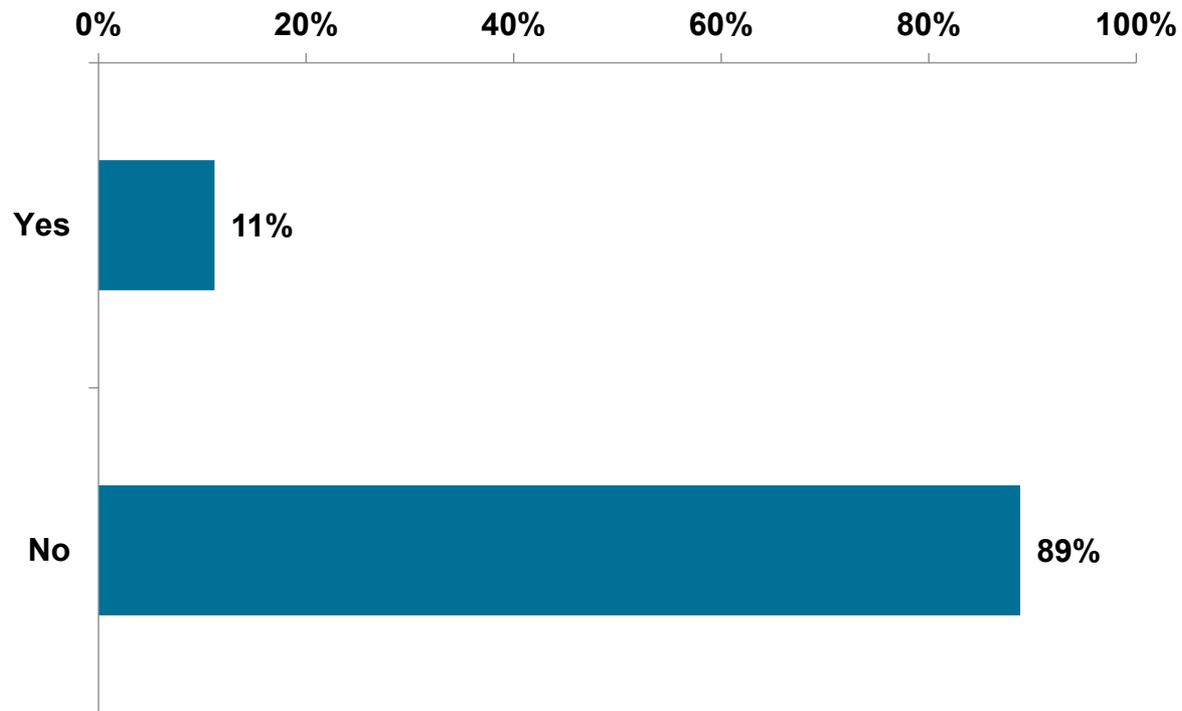
**How helpful did you find working with this transition counselor?  
(% among those that received transition services)**



Only 11% experienced a problem while working with a transition counselor.

**Did you experience any problems during your transition from school services to the workforce?**

**(% among those that received transition services)**



Among the few experiencing problems, 58% indicate they did not receive a job while 31% experienced health issues.

# Youth indicate that more meetings, communication and information would improve the process of transition.

**What could VR do in the future to help improve the process of transitioning from high school to life after high school? What could have been done better in your case?**

**(% among those that received transition services)**

<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
More meetings, communication, follow-up	27%
Offer more help, more information	16%
Start process earlier	16%
Market program more, make more people aware	13%
Explain transition better, lay out options	8%
More help with the transition	4%
Expand the types of educational opportunities that are available	2%
Other	15%
Nothing	5%
Total	100%

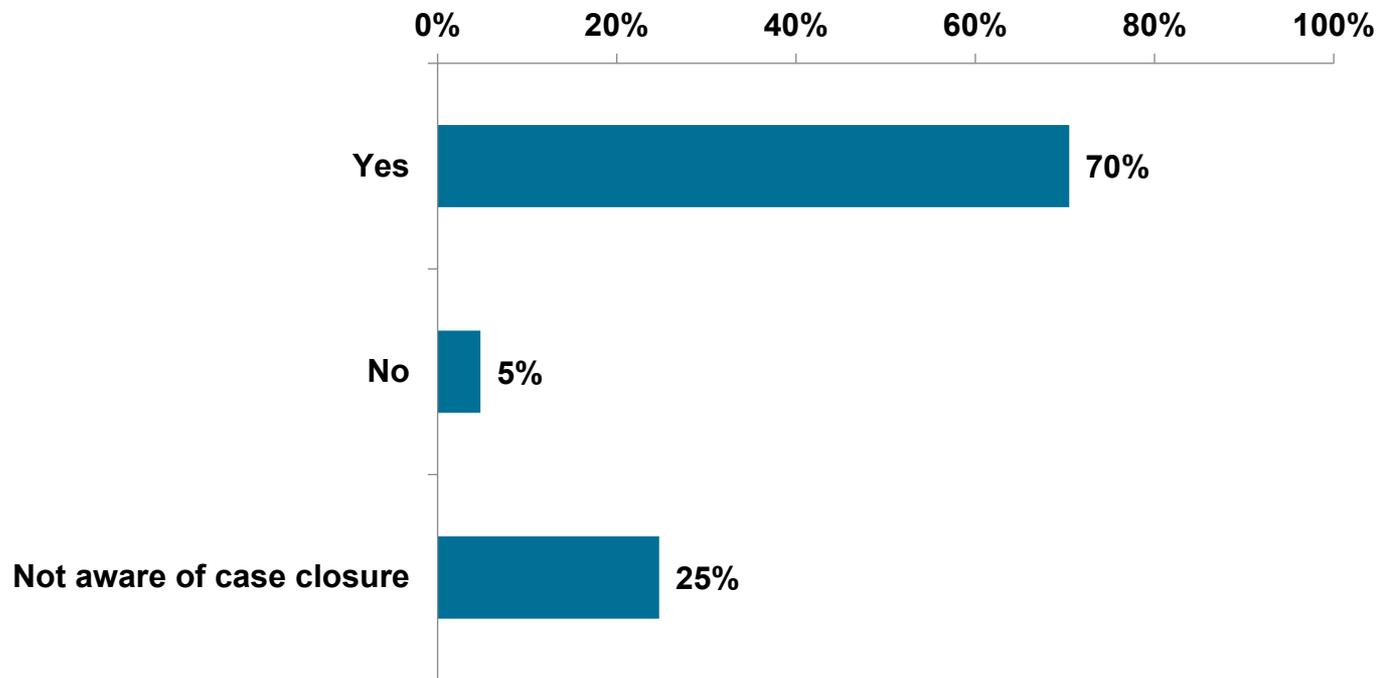


# Factors Impacting Services



Among those with unsuccessfully closed cases, 70% agree with the reason while 25% are unaware their case had been closed.

**Unsucc05: Did you agree with VR on the reason given for closing your case?**  
(% among those with cases that were closed unsuccessfully)



Lack of communication is the main factor that consumers who disagreed with the reason or were unaware of case closure thought their case was closed.

**Why do you believe your case was closed?**

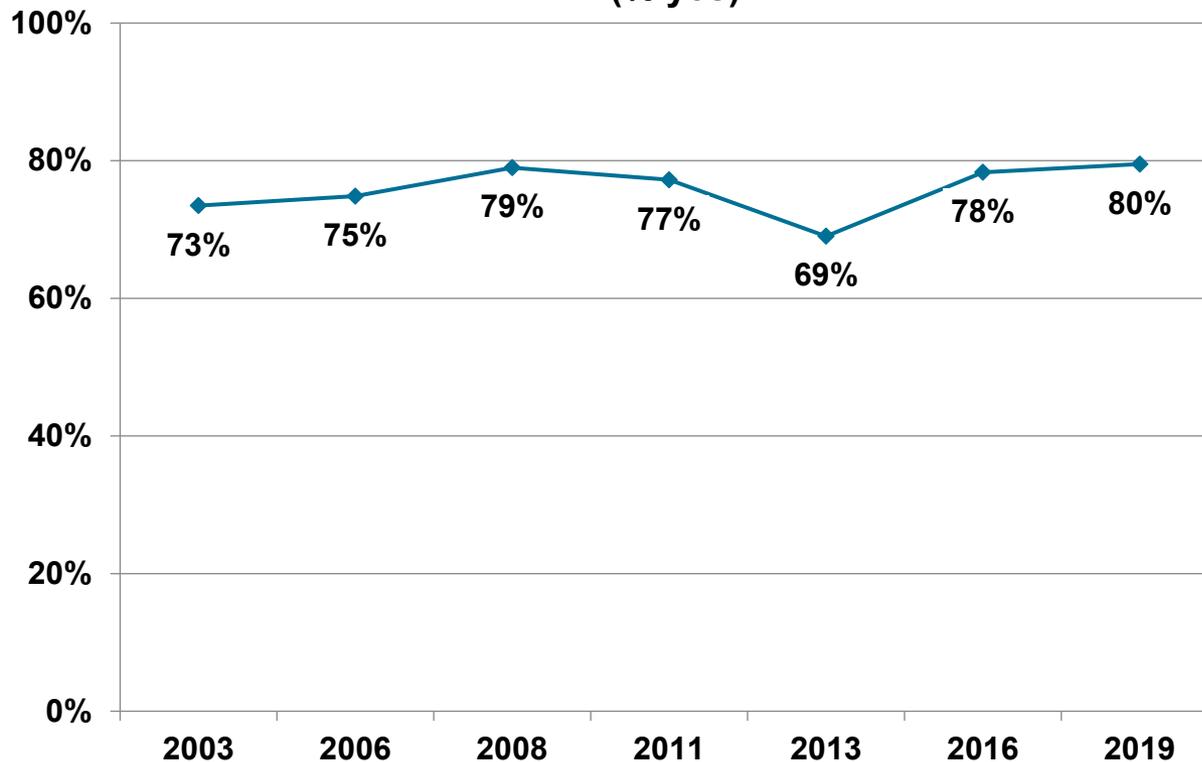
**(% among those who disagreed with reason for case closure or were unaware of case closure)**

<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Lack of communication	36%
VR couldn't help, never found jobs	10%
Completed program, received all expected services	8%
Transportation issues, customer couldn't keep appointments	7%
Customer relocated	6%
VR did not keep customer informed	6%
Health issues	4%
Other	13%
None of these	10%
Total	100%

80% say they are still able to receive services when their counselor was unavailable.

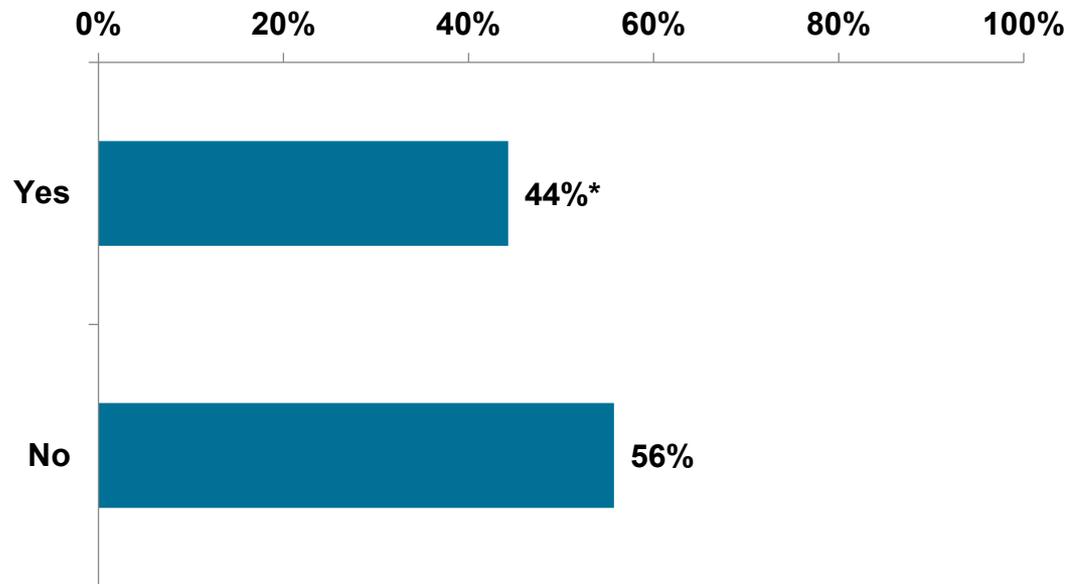
**Were you able to receive needed services even when your vocational rehabilitation counselor was not available?**

(% yes)



Only 44% of consumers report having had more than one VR counselor.

**While a client of VR, did you have more than one vocational rehabilitation counselor?**



\*Among those with more than one counselor, only 19% say having more than one counselor did not impact their ability to receive services from VR.

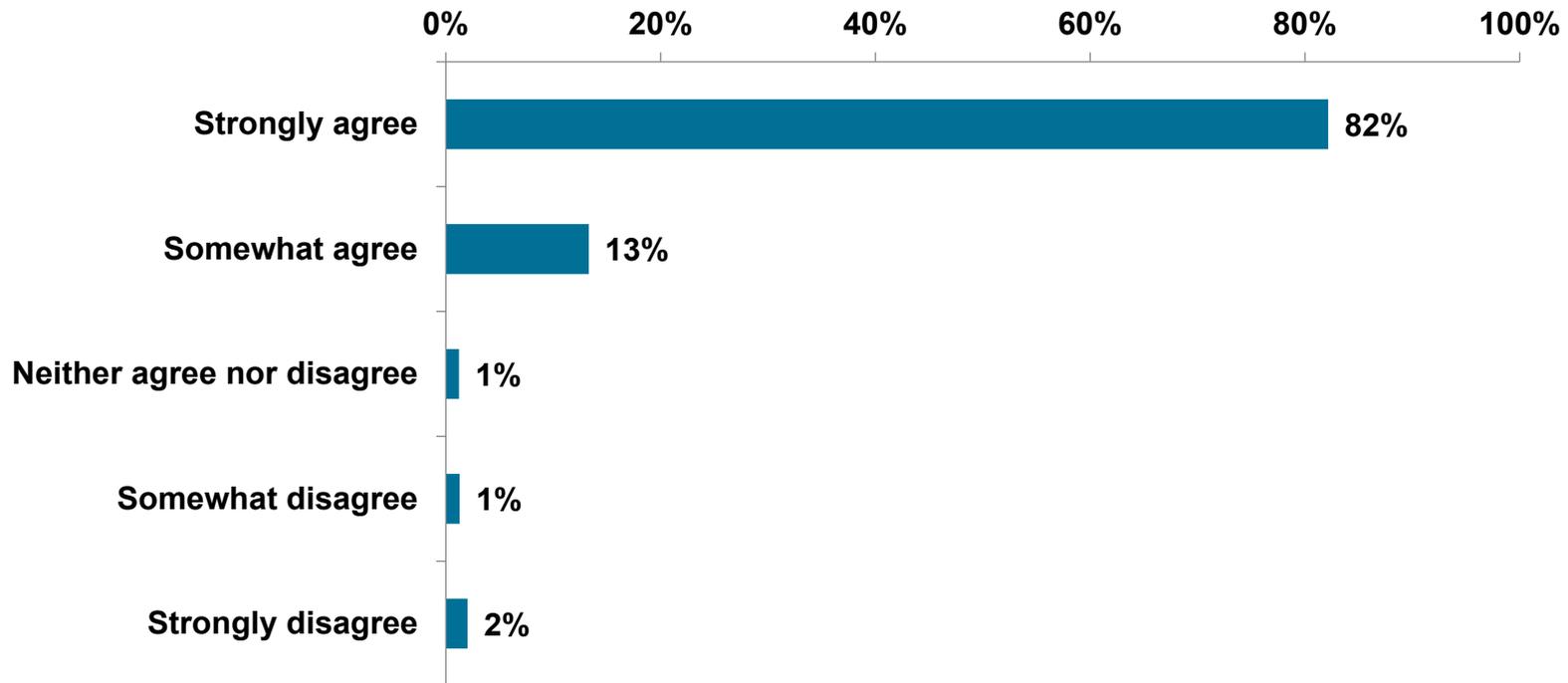


# Future Planning and Career Goals



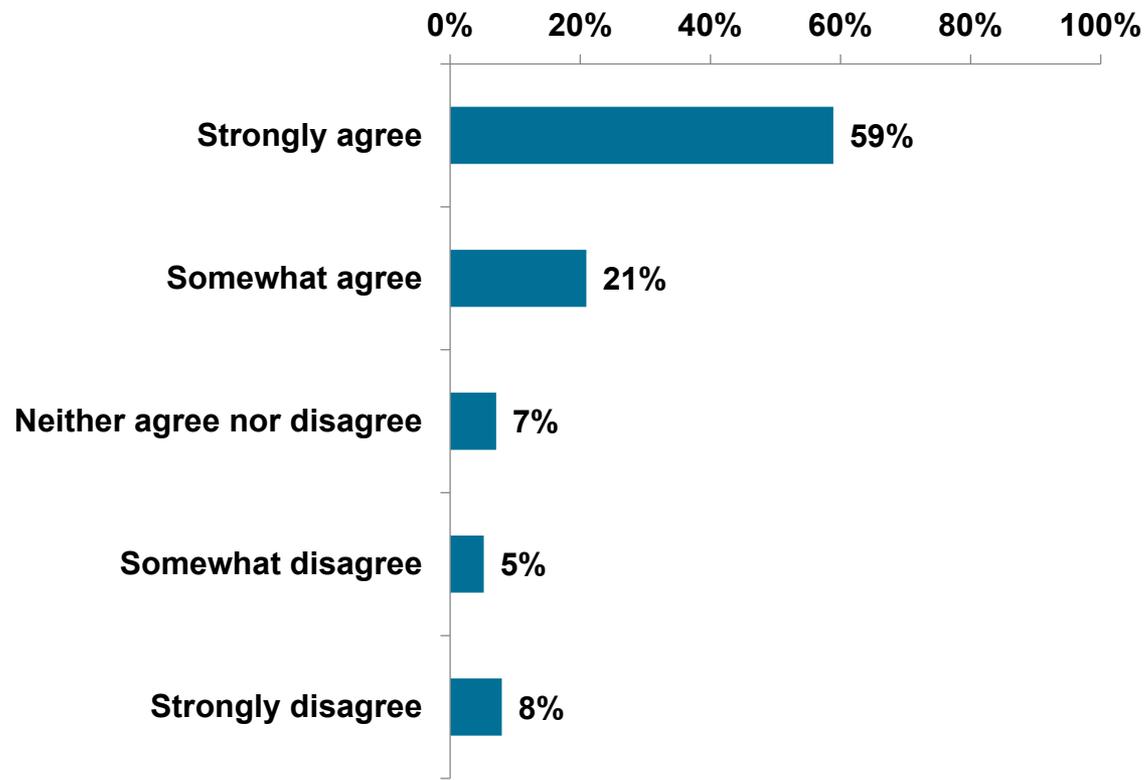
Almost all (96%) consumers say their counselor consulted them about long-term goals.

Please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: My VR counselor asked me about my long-term goals.



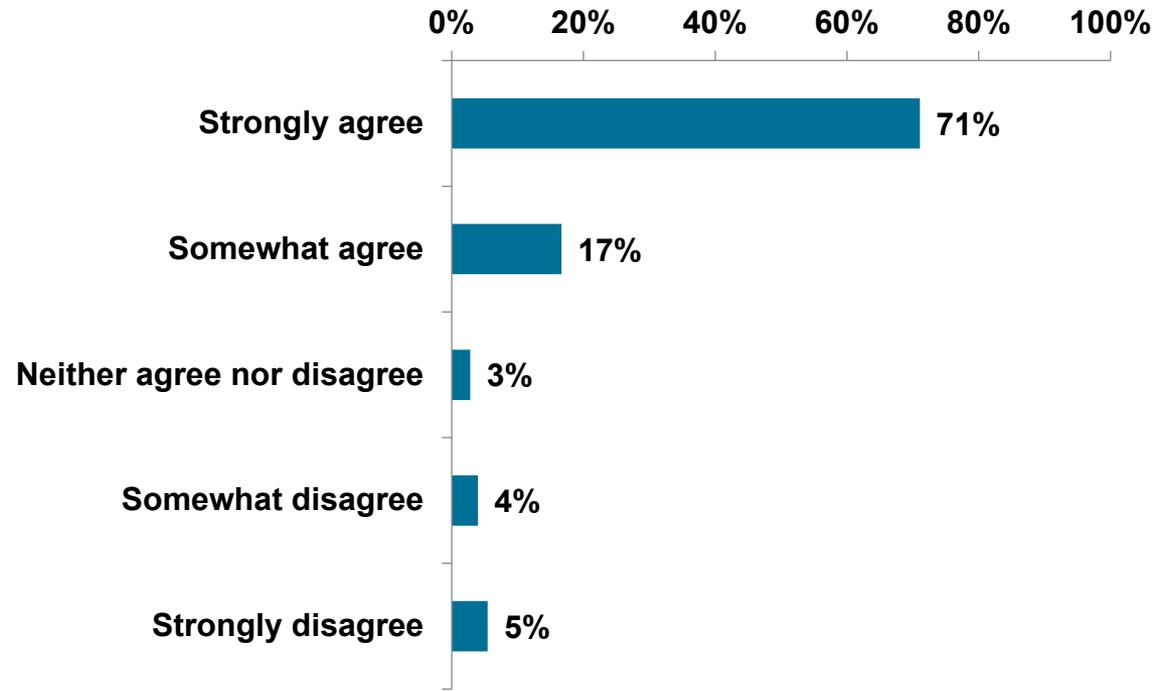
80% strongly or somewhat agree that their counselor helped them explore local higher paying jobs based on interest and ability.

**Please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: Based on my interests and abilities, my counselor helped me explore local higher paying jobs.**



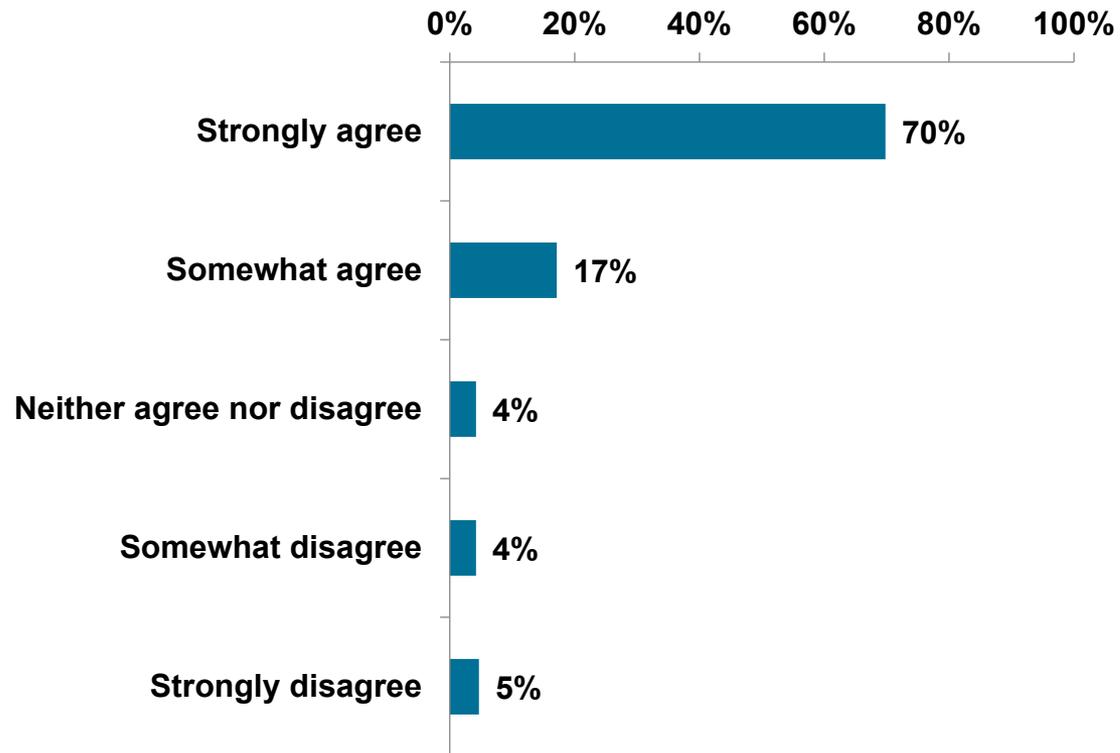
88% say their counselor spoke with them about education or training they would need to pursue jobs of interest.

**Please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement: My VR Counselor spoke with me about the education or training I would need to pursue the jobs I am interested in.**



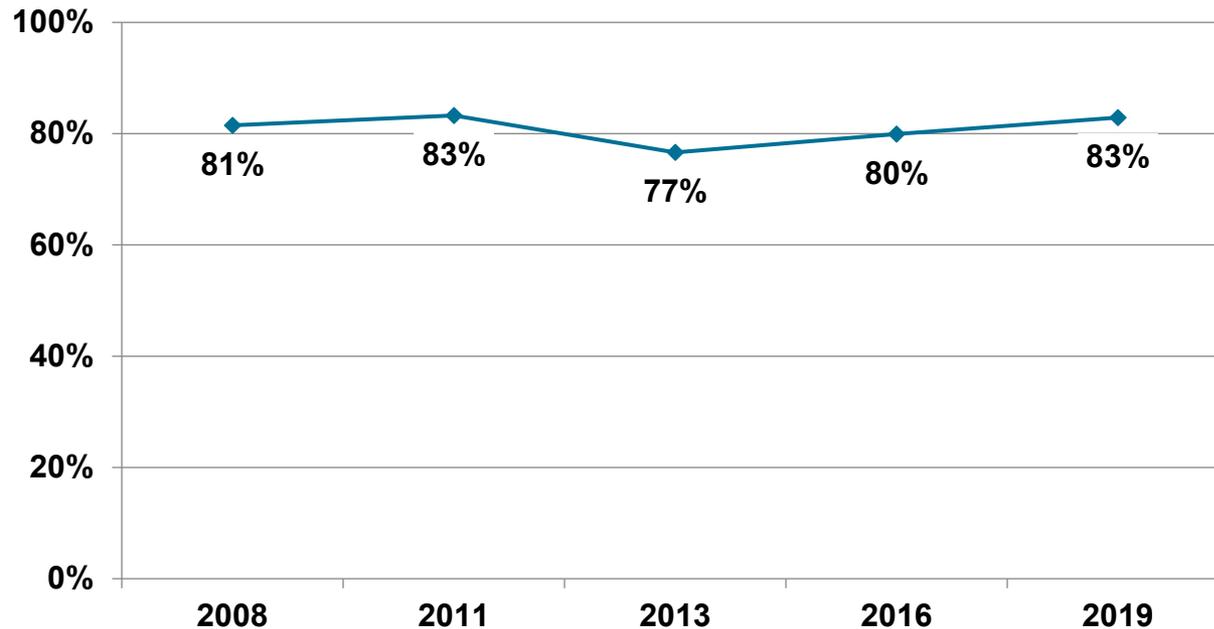
87% strongly or somewhat agree that their counselor offered opportunities to learn about the knowledge, skills and abilities associated with jobs of interest.

**Please tell me how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statement:  
My VR counselor offered me the opportunity to learn more about how my  
knowledge, skills and abilities apply to jobs I am interested in.**



83% felt they receive the support needed to be successful in the long term, a small increase from 2016.

**Do you feel that you are getting the support needed to be successful in the long term? (% yes)**



Among the 17% of consumers that do not feel they are receiving support, comments mention VR was no help at all, didn't provide enough support and guidance, or could not secure them a job.

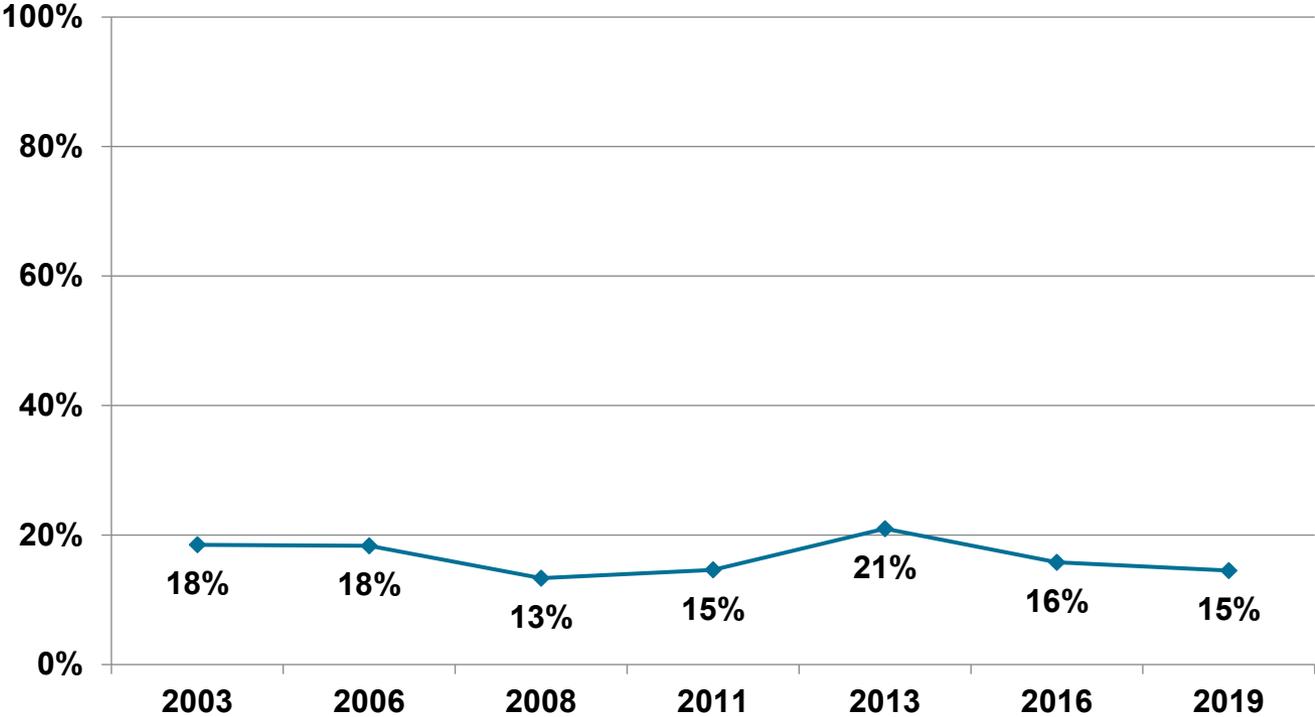


# Problems Experience by VR Consumers



Only 15% of consumers experienced problems with VR or the services they receive.

**Problems: Did you experience any problems with VR or the services they have provided to you? (% yes)**



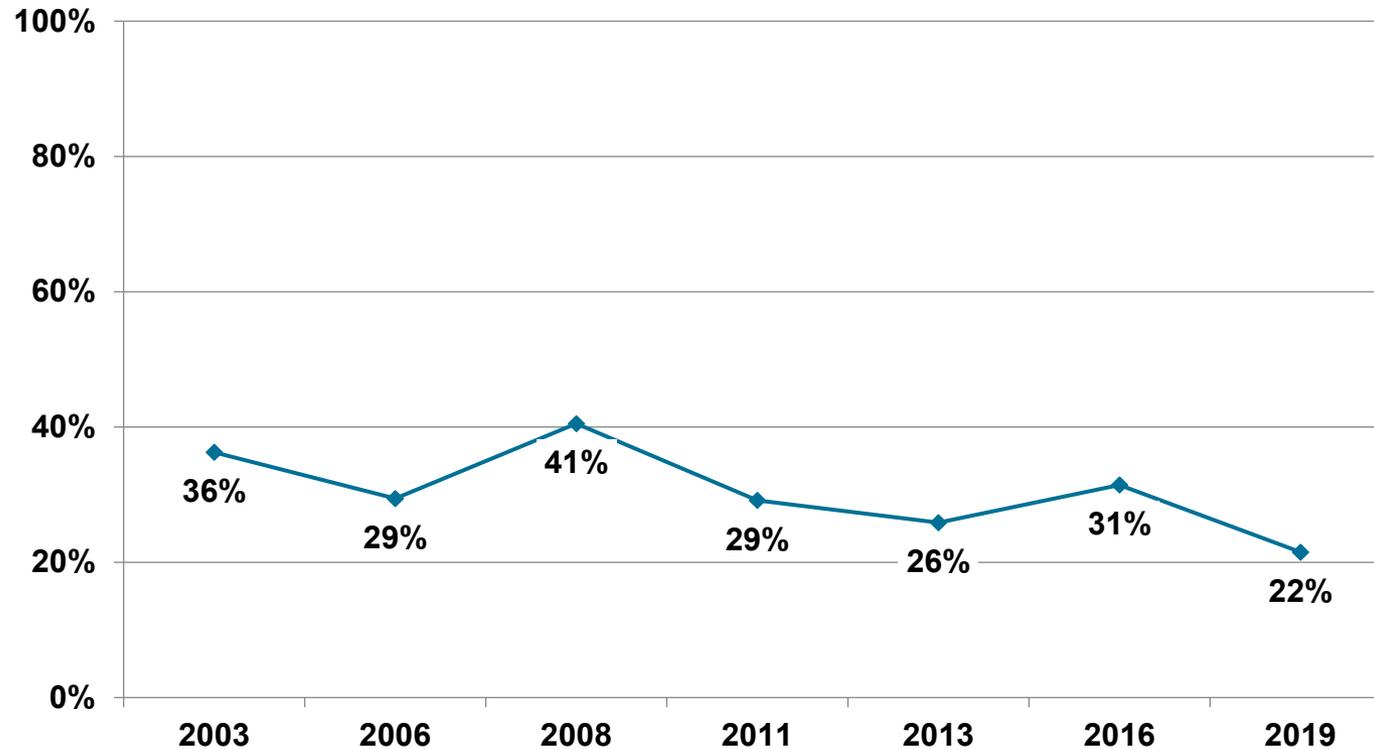
Among those reporting problems, the most common issues are communication difficulties with staff and VR personnel who are unprofessional, rude or apathetic.

**What types of problems did you experience?  
(% among those reporting problems)**

<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Issues communicating with staff or counselors, difficulty reaching staff or counselors	34%
VR counselors or staff was unprofessional, rude, did not care	30%
VR program was not effective in helping customer or helping customer meet goals	26%
Difficulties in finding employment, few job options	24%
Needed more support or services, had to fight to obtain services, needed more guidance	14%
Needed more help finding work, need to help customers find work, customer had to find a job on their own	14%
Waiting to receive services, have not received services	14%
VR Counselors or staff did not provide the help I needed, broke promises, customer had to do all the work	12%
VR needs more funding, under-funded, needs more support	3%
Customer needed financial help or assistance	3%
Other	23%
Total	100%

22% of those who experienced problems say VR worked to resolve the situation.

**Did VR work to resolve this problem?  
(% yes among those reporting problems)**



Problems that were not resolved include understanding the consumer, receiving job search help or help to meet goals, returning calls, and time lags for services.



# Feedback and Quality Improvement



# Respondent Feedback

Customers were asked to provide additional feedback when they were not positive in their assessment.

A consumer responded they were not satisfied, they felt VR did not meet expectations, they disagreed that VR helped or met their goals, they did not feel welcome, they found something difficult, they did not find VR accessible.

Feedback was collected throughout the survey in response to 21 questions.

Customers could provide more than one response.

The following table summarizes the most common responses from 472 (60%) customers that provided additional feedback.

Nearly half of consumers who provided feedback say they had issues communicating with staff or counselors. Others report difficulty with paperwork, and some need more services or help from their counselors.

**VR Consumer Feedback**  
 (% among those providing additional feedback)

<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Issues communicating with staff or counselors, difficulty reaching staff or counselors	49%
Difficulties with paperwork and forms, need help in completing forms, need alternate formats	30%
Needed more support or services, had to fight to obtain services, needed more guidance	27%
VR Counselors or staff did not provide the help I needed, broke promises, customer had to do all the work	26%
VR program was not effective in helping customer or helping customer meet goals	25%

**VR Consumer Feedback**  
 (% among those providing additional feedback)

<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Difficulties in finding employment, few job options	24%
Needed more information about programs and services, did not provide enough information	21%
Not assigned a counselor, switched counselors, counselors need to spend more time with customers	21%
VR counselors or staff was unprofessional, rude, did not care	20%
Needed more help finding work, need to help customers find work, customer had to find a job on their own	19%
Waiting to receive services, have not received services	17%

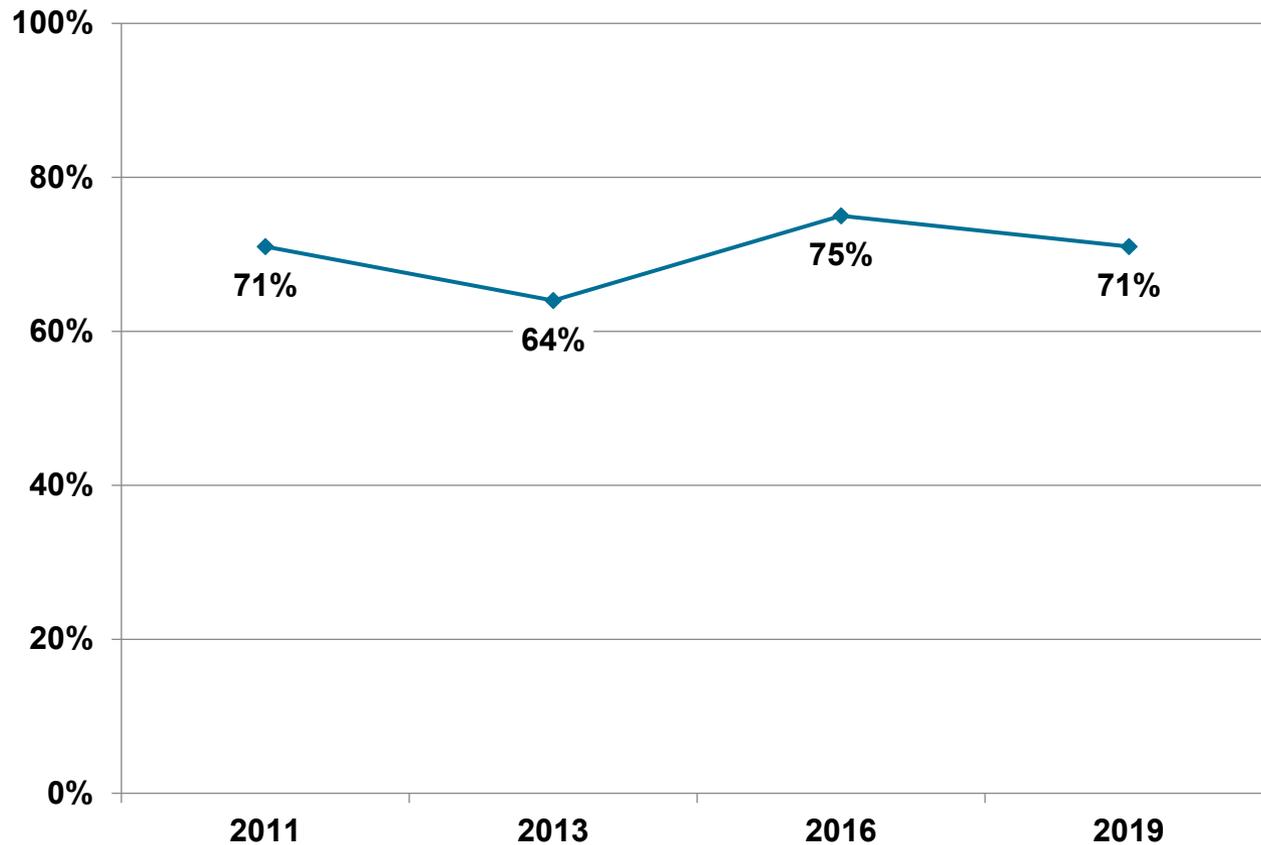


# The Client Assistance Program



71% say they were informed of the option to address problems with the Client Assistance Program.

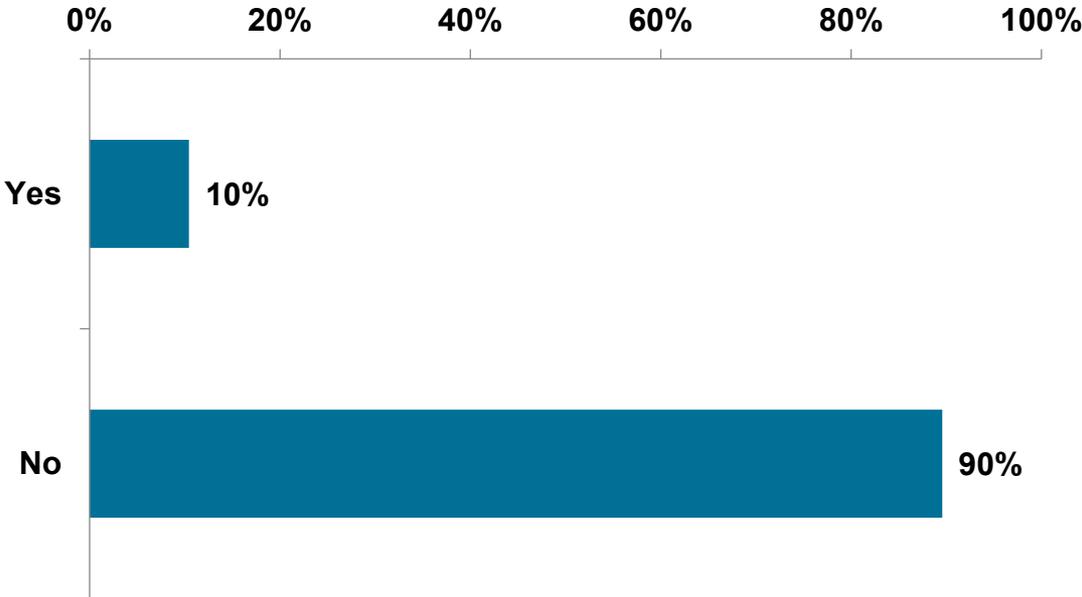
Were you informed you could address any problems with the Client Assistance Program? (% yes)



# One in ten consumers that experienced problems contacted the program about their concerns.

**After being informed of the Client Assistance Program did you follow-up with them about any concerns or issues you may have had?**

**(% among those who were informed about the Client Assistance Program that also experienced problems with VR or the services received.)**



Among those not contacting the client assistance program most saw no need while a few indicate they did not think they would receive help or that they were simply too busy.



# Employment and Job Satisfaction



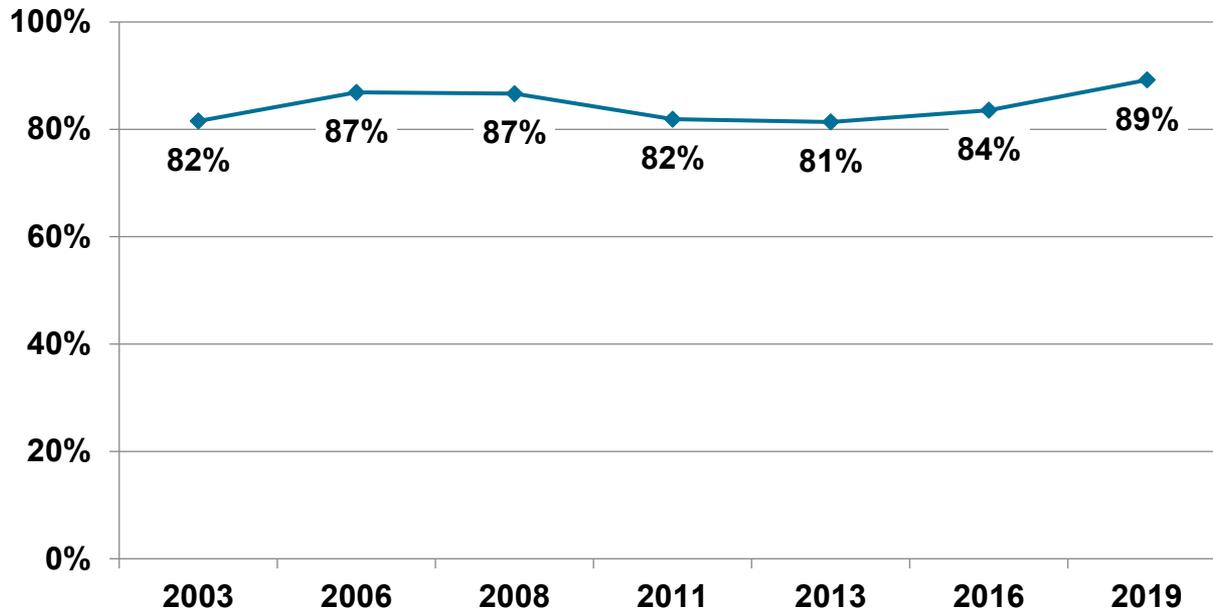
55% of consumers are working full or part time with another 41% actively looking for employment or receiving training or education.

**These last few questions ask about what you are currently doing.  
Are you currently...**

<b>Response</b>	<b>%</b>
Working full time, that is, more than 35 hours per week	25%
Working part time	30%
Currently looking for a job	22%
In school or receiving job training	19%
Keeping house	6%
Currently unable to work	10%
Volunteering my time	7%
Disabled, on Disability	1%
Unemployed	1%
In therapy, rehab	0%
Other	1%
None of these	0%
Total	100%

# 89% of employed consumers are satisfied with their current employment.

Thinking about your current job, how satisfied are you with what you are doing? (% very satisfied, satisfied)  
(% among those currently employed)



Among the small percentage dissatisfied with their employment, one third say they are dissatisfied with specific aspects of the job. One quarter feel the job did not provide adequate benefits and one quarter are bored with their job.



# Discussion and Conclusions



## The overall trends continue to be positive.

- The core metrics measuring the VR consumer experience continue to trend positive.
  - In 2019, most VR consumers had a very positive experience with VocRehab Vermont and the services they received.
  - In 2019, fewer consumers experienced problems.
  - Nearly all consumers would recommend VocRehab Vermont.
- Consumers that stood out as most positive about their experience include:
  - Cases that were closed successfully,
  - Consumer in the Middlebury District, and
  - Consumers in the White River Junction District.

## **VR counselors and staff continue to shine and are a key influence on the positive consumer experience.**

- More than nine in ten consumers:
  - Found VR staff helpful in helping them to achieve vocational rehabilitation goals,
  - Felt that VR staff treat them with dignity and respect,
  - Felt that staff made them feel welcome,
  - Felt that VR Staff understand their situation and needs, and
  - Felt that VR staff believe in their abilities and partner with them to achieve employment goals.

## Outcomes continue to improve.

- More consumers reported that:
  - The vocational rehabilitation services they receive helped them or will help them become more financially independent and
  - VR helped them or will help them reach their job goals.

# People are accessing benefits counseling and using job placement services.

- The percentage of consumers accessing benefits counseling services continues to increase.
  - Nearly all found these benefits counseling services valuable.
  - Consumers indicate these services have improved their confidence that they can work and increase their wages.
- Satisfaction with job placement services continues to trend positively.
  - Consumers are satisfied with the coordination between VocRehab VT and VABIR.

## Services provided to youth in transition are making a difference.

- Youth in transition found working with a transition counselor helpful in reaching their goals, in providing support after high school, or helping them go to college.
  - Few experienced problems with their transition from school to the workforce.
  - There is some sentiment for the need for more meetings during the process and more follow-up communication.

## There is, of course, room for improvement. There are some differences in the consumer experience by District.

- Consumers in the **Springfield District** are not as positive as consumers in other districts across all metrics.
- Consumers in the **Newport District** are somewhat more likely to report problems with VR or the services they received.
- Consumers in the **Burlington District** are somewhat less positive about their outcomes and meeting goals.
- Consumers in the **St. Johnsbury District** are somewhat less positive about their communications with VR Staff.
- Consumers in the **White River Junction District** are more likely to report issues with accessibility of the VR office.
- Employed consumers in the **Middlebury** and **Newport** districts are not as satisfied with their current employment.

# There is one group whose experiences was significantly less positive than others: Hispanics and Latinos.

- While Hispanic or Latino consumers make up a small fraction of your consumer base (1.4%)...
  - They are less positive across the entire spectrum of core metrics.
  - They are more more likely to experience problems.
  - In their feedback they are more likely to report:
    - They need more information about programs and services
    - They need more support or services, had to fight to obtain services, or need more guidance
    - That VR Counselors or staff did not provide the help needed
    - That the VR program is not effective in helping customer or helping customer meet goals
    - That VR counselors or staff are unprofessional, rude, did not care
    - That they need transportation assistance, did not receive needed transportation assistance
    - There are issues with accessibility and condition of VR facilities
    - They had to wait to receive services, have not received services

\*\*But look at this as a qualitative rather than quantitative assessment as only a small number of Hispanic/Latino consumers were surveyed.

## There are some problems that remain unresolved.

- While the percentage experiencing problems is small (15%) and has declined, only 22% of those with problems indicate that VR worked to resolve the problem.
- Specific areas where these consumers feel problems weren't resolved include:
  - Listening to the customer, understand needs, wants, ability.
  - Counselor did not listen, dismissed concerns.
  - Didn't receive job search help.
  - Counselor did not return calls, emails or follow up.
  - Received no help in reaching plan or goals.
  - Time lags to get into the program.
  - Counselor is not helpful or supportive.
  - Time lag to get services, appointments.

# Consumer feedback did identify some areas of focus for improving the experience.

Response	% of <u>all</u> VR Consumers
Issues communicating with staff or counselors, difficulty reaching staff or counselors	29%
Difficulties with paperwork and forms, need help in completing forms, need alternate formats	18%
Needed more support or services, had to fight to obtain services, needed more guidance	16%
VR Counselors or staff did not provide the help I needed, broke promises, customer had to do all the work	16%
VR program was not effective in helping customer or helping customer meet goals	15%
Difficulties in finding employment, few job options	14%
Needed more information about programs and services, did not provide enough information	13%
Not assigned a counselor, switched counselors, counselors need to spend more time with customers	13%
VR counselors or staff was unprofessional, rude, did not care	12%
Needed more help finding work, need to help customers find work, customer had to find a job on their own	11%
Waiting to receive services, have not received services	10%

# There are differences in feedback by District which may identify local foci for quality improvement.

## Bennington

- Need more help finding work, need to help customers find work, customer had to find a job on their own

## Burlington

- VR Counselors or staff did not provide the help I need, broke promises, customer has to do all the work
- VR counselors or staff are unprofessional, rude, did not care

## Middlebury

- Difficulties with paperwork and forms, need help in completing forms, need alternate formats

## Morrisville

- Accessibility and condition of VR facilities

## Newport

- Issues communicating with staff or counselors, difficulty reaching staff or counselors
- VR program is not effective in helping customer or helping customer meet goals
- Not assigned a counselor, switched counselors, counselors need to spend more time with customers

## **There are differences in feedback by District which may identify local foci for quality improvement.**

### **Rutland**

- Difficulties with paperwork and forms, need help in completing forms, need alternate formats

### **St Johnsbury**

- Issues communicating with staff or counselors, difficulty reaching staff or counselors
- Need more information about programs and services, did not provide enough information
- Not assigned a counselor, switched counselors, counselors need to spend more time with customers

### **White River Junction**

- Need transportation assistance, did not receive needed transportation assistance
- Location of VR facilities, need additional offices, expanded operating hours

## Finally, while 70% consumers whose cases were closed unsuccessfully agreed with the decision for case closure but...

- 25% are unaware that their case was closed.
- 36% feel their case was closed due to a lack of communications.

Falling out of communications with VR is often a reason for case closure. This makes it difficult to inform consumers that their case has been closed or the reasons why. Finding ways to keep in touch with consumers may help reduce the number of unsuccessful cases overall.



Thank you. I would be happy to answer any questions.



## New Questions to Consider....

- If you obtained employment as part of your services, did someone regularly follow up with you about providing supports if you required them? (strongly agree/somewhat agree...)
- I always feel treated with full respect by my counselor regardless of my race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, disability, or any other difference. (strongly disagree/disagree/neutral/agree/strongly agree).
- My counselor is supportive of (racial, ethnic, gender, sexual orientations, disability) diversity. (strongly disagree/disagree/neutral/agree/strongly agree).
- How easy was it for you to meet with your vocational rehabilitation counselor if you needed to meet virtually? (very easy, somewhat easy, somewhat difficult, very difficult)
- If no, what would have made it easier for you to meet with your counselor virtually?