



# Worker Survey 2022 Results & Next Steps

Worksite Cooperation Committee

# Objective

**In an effort to better understand the experiences of workers in highway heavy construction, we conducted an anonymous survey in 2022 about barriers to entering and working in the industry.**

# Subcommittee Members – Survey Development

- Norma Miller, Urban League Twin Cities
- Jorrie Johnson, City of Rochester
- Steve Tuhy, Operating Engineers
- Megan Holland, Ames
- Jason Zins, Shafer Contracting
- Isela Xitlali Gomez, MnDOT
- Alexis Johnson, MnDOT

# Subcommittee Members – Data Analysis

- Norma Miller, Urban League Twin Cities
- Elaine Valadez, MDHR
- Akeethia Lloyd, Operating Engineers
- Jorrie Johnson, City of Rochester
- Nichole Schroepfer, Mathiowetz
- Steve Tuhy, Operating Engineers
- Darcus Mitchell, MnDOT
- Isela Xitlali Gomez, MnDOT

# Background

**To learn about the barriers to entering and working in the industry, the survey was provided to as many workers as possible, with ultimately 266 respondents. The Subcommittee compiled and analyzed the results, publishing them in this Report in February 2024.**

# Timeline

Survey Development began July 2021

Launched June 2022

Scheduled to close in August 2022

Deadline extended to October 2022

Received only 88 responses by October deadline

Extended again with push from partners to reach as many workers as possible

Closed on November 30, 2022

Subcommittee has been analyzing data since February 2023

Report highlighting results published in February 2024

# Methodology

- SurveyMonkey
- QR Code
- Flyer

Digital Survey

29 Questions

- Multiple Choice
- Fill in the blank
- Rating scales

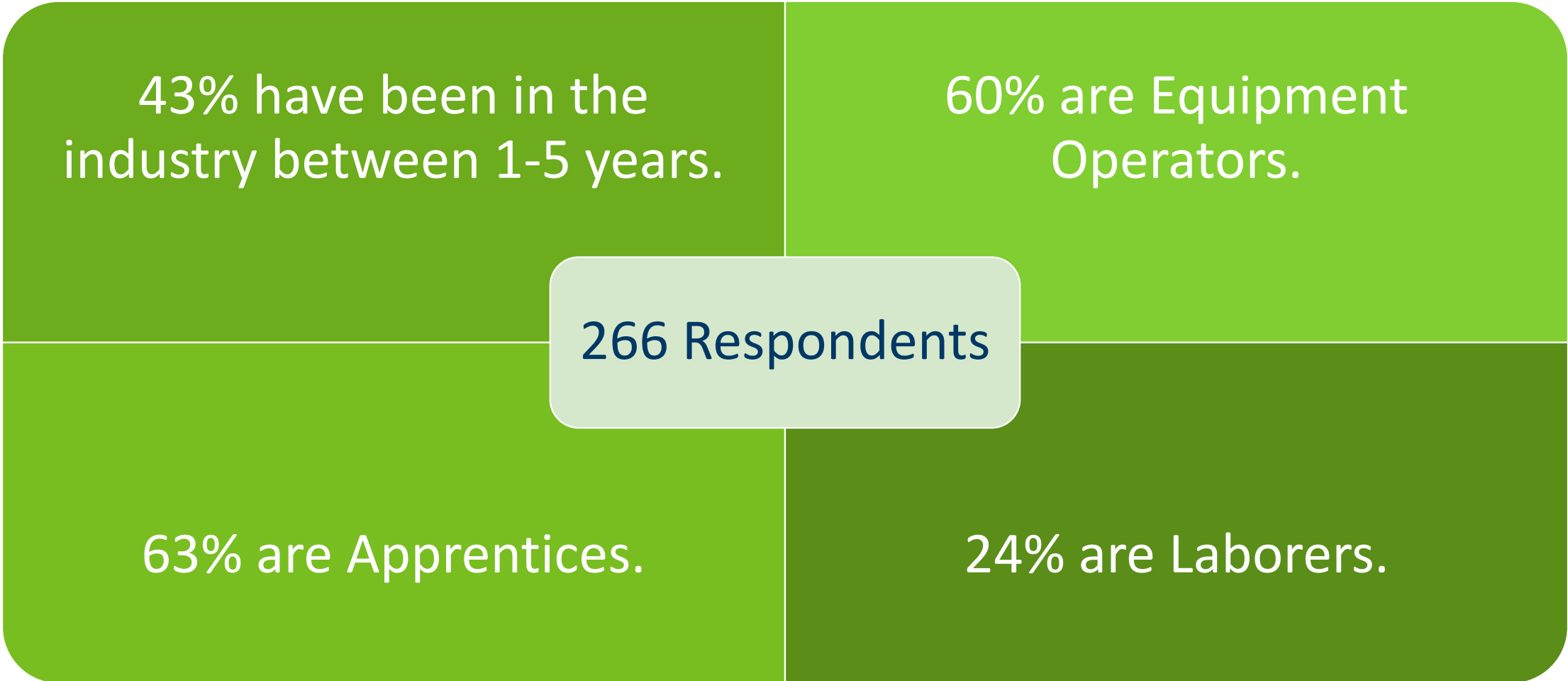
Dissemination through Contractors, Unions, Apprenticeship Coordinators, etc.

Highway Heavy Workers

- Jobsite board
- Email/text

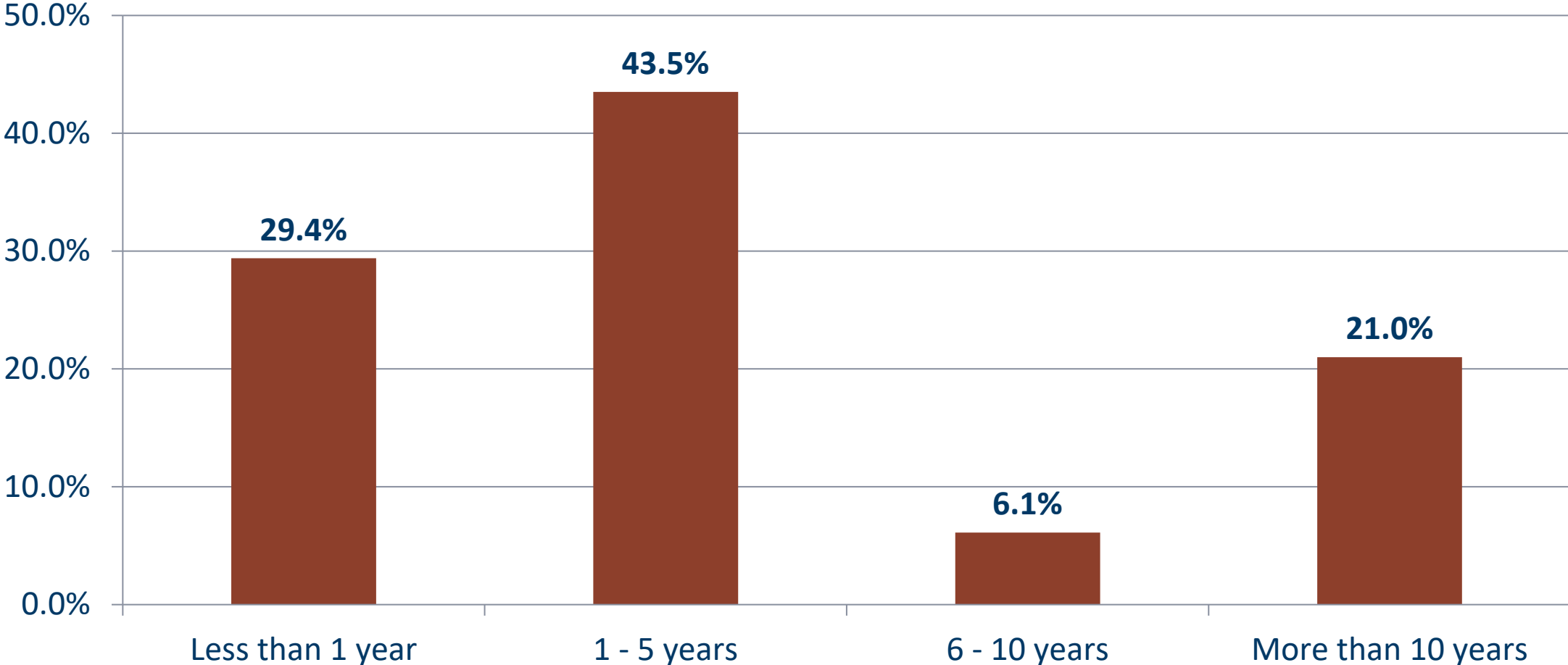
- All trades & levels
- Anonymous

# Who Responded: Highlights

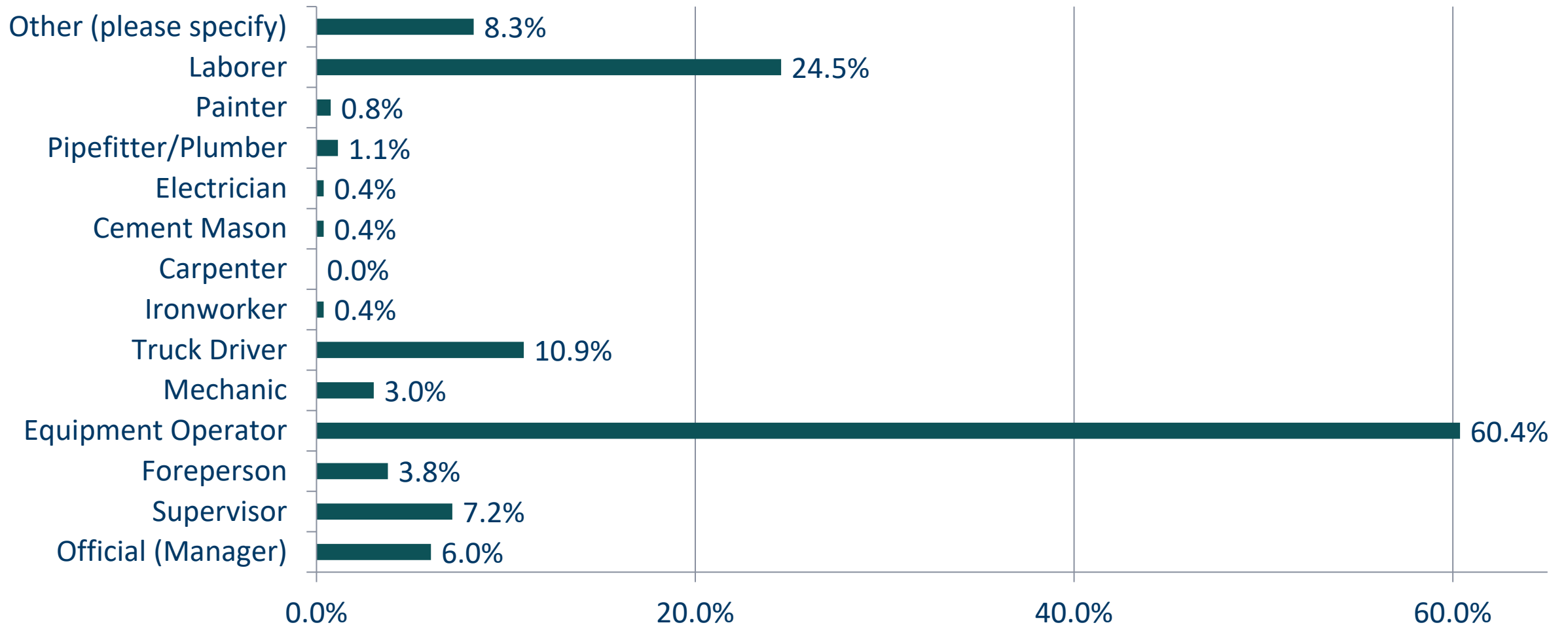




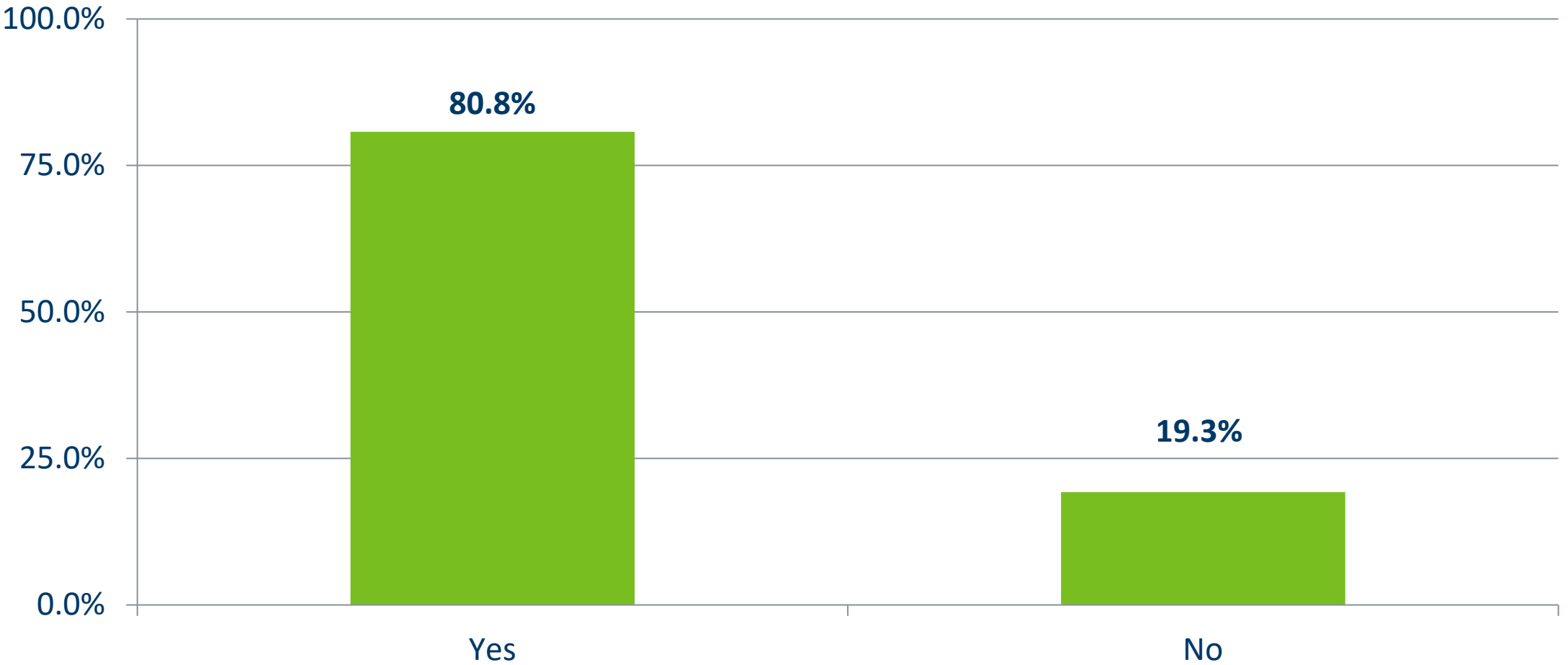
# Years in the Industry: 262 Workers Answered, 4 Skipped



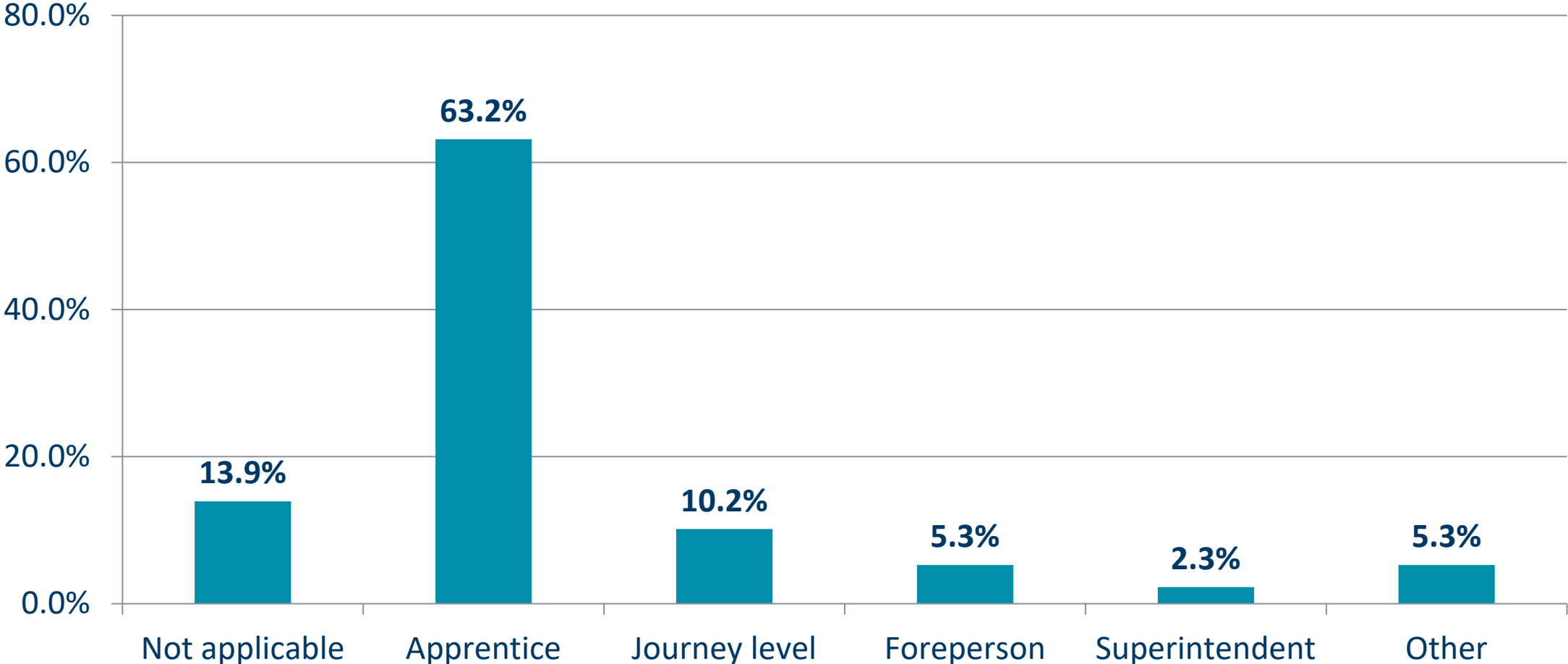
# Role/Trade: 265 Answered, 1 Skipped



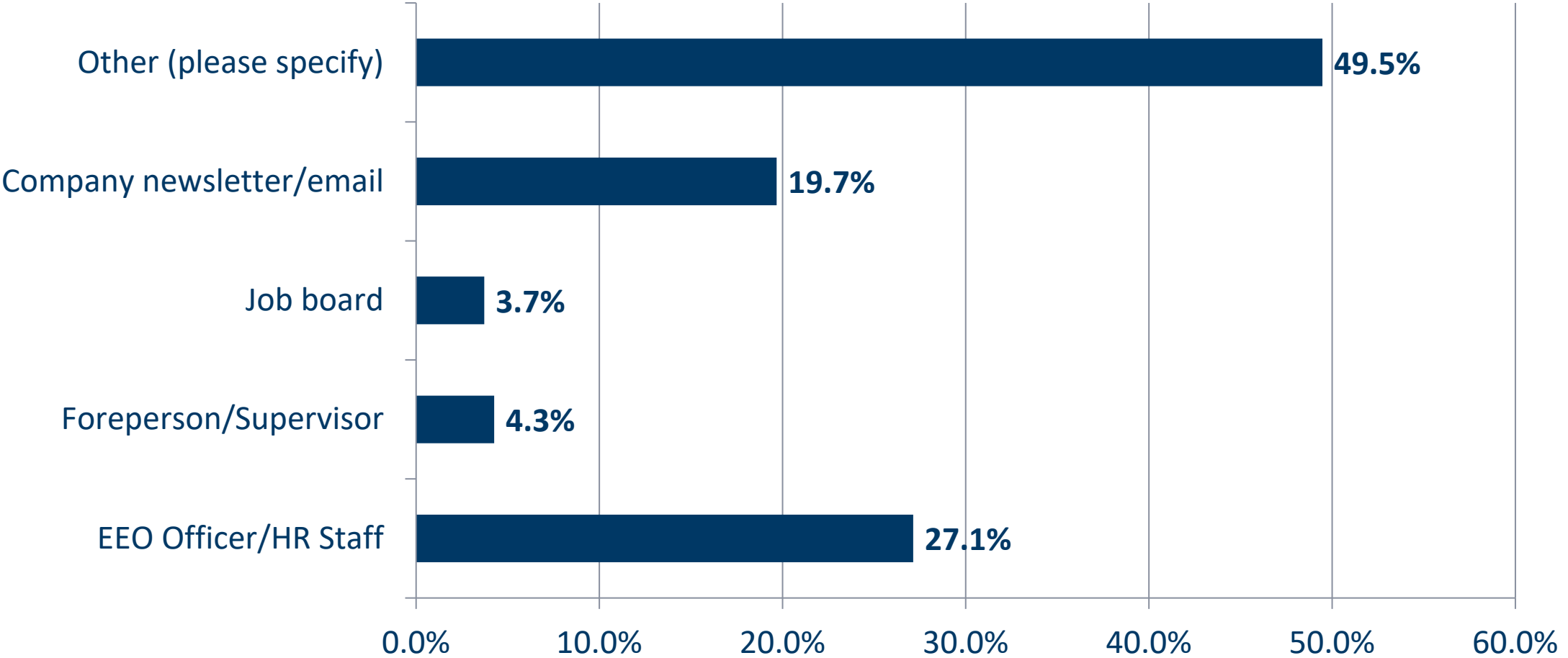
# Union Membership: 265 Answered, 1 Skipped



# What level are you?: All 266 Respondents Answered



# Where did you hear about this survey? (Select all that apply): 188 Answered, 78 Skipped



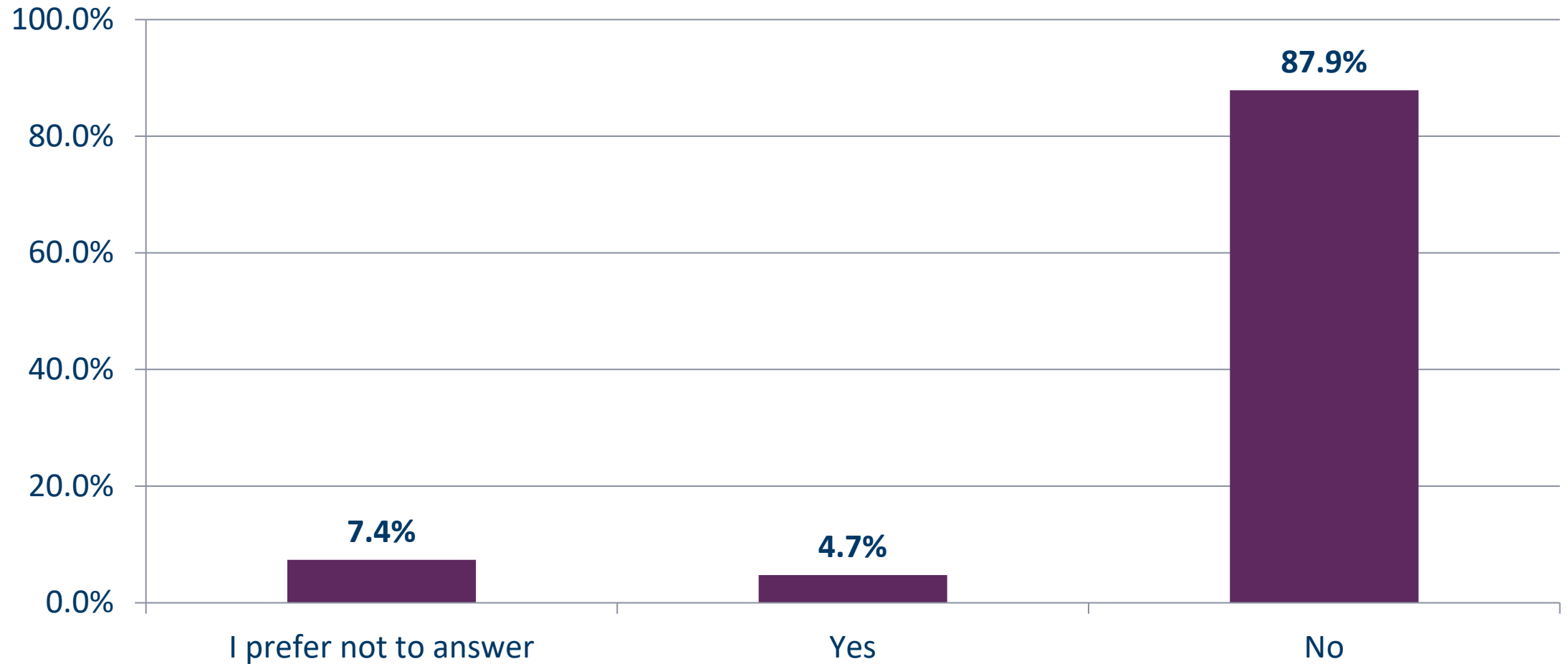
Almost 50% answered Other:  
They specified they heard about the survey through:

Union (via text or  
at the training  
center)

Apprenticeship  
Coordinator  
(specifically those  
with the 49ers)

MnDOT (email)

# Demographics: Are you Latino/Hispanic?: 190 Answered, 76 Skipped

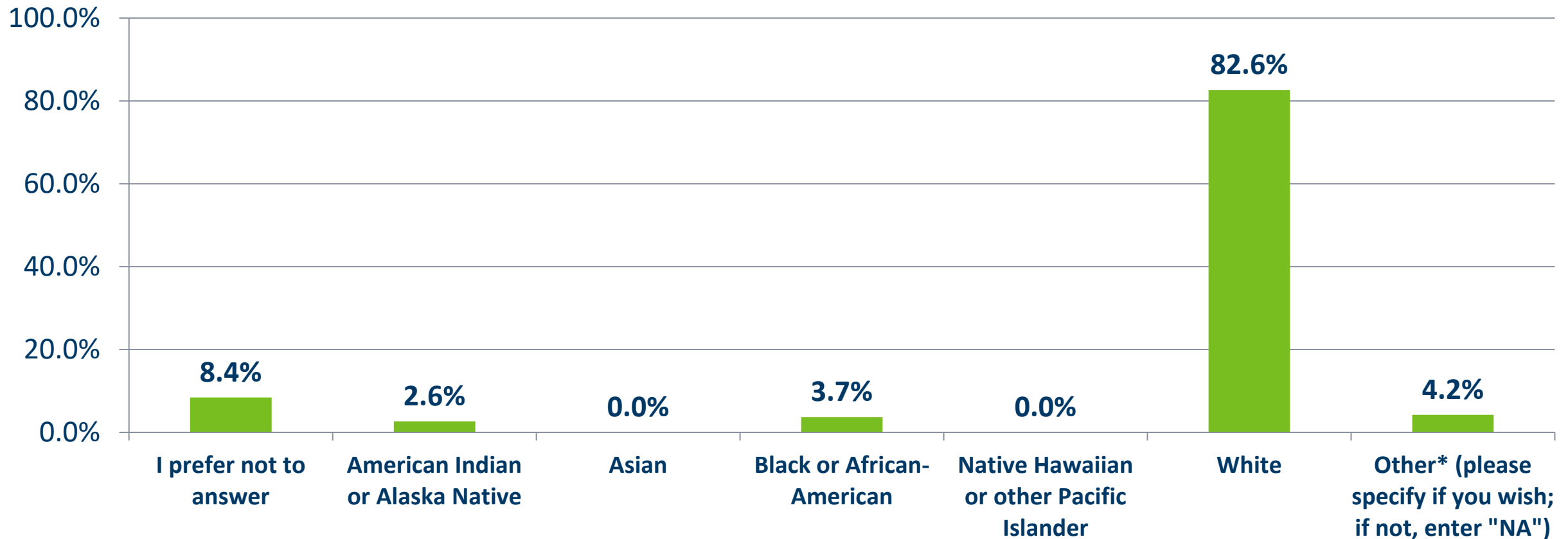


# A Note on Separating Latino/Hispanic from Race/Ethnicity:

- During Survey Development, the committee opted to frame the Affirmative Action Survey portion based off of the federal reporting categories.
- The demographic questions asked of the workers reflect how you see these questions asked on government forms.
- This includes separating the “Race/Ethnicity” question from the “Latino/Hispanic” question.
- There are pros and cons to this framing, but it was an intentional choice for this survey to mirror the federal reporting categories. Any further surveys may address demographics differently.

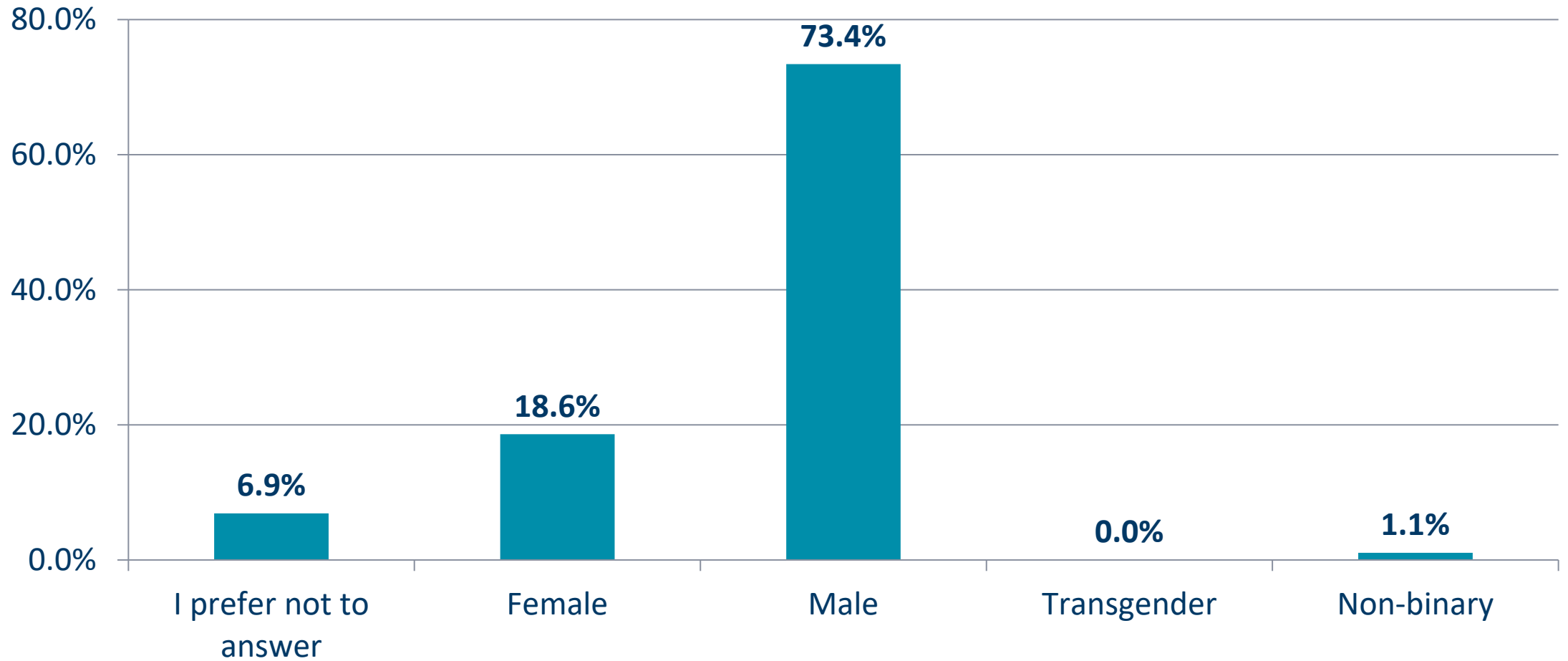


# Demographics: Race/Ethnicity (Select all that apply): 190 Answered, 72 Skipped

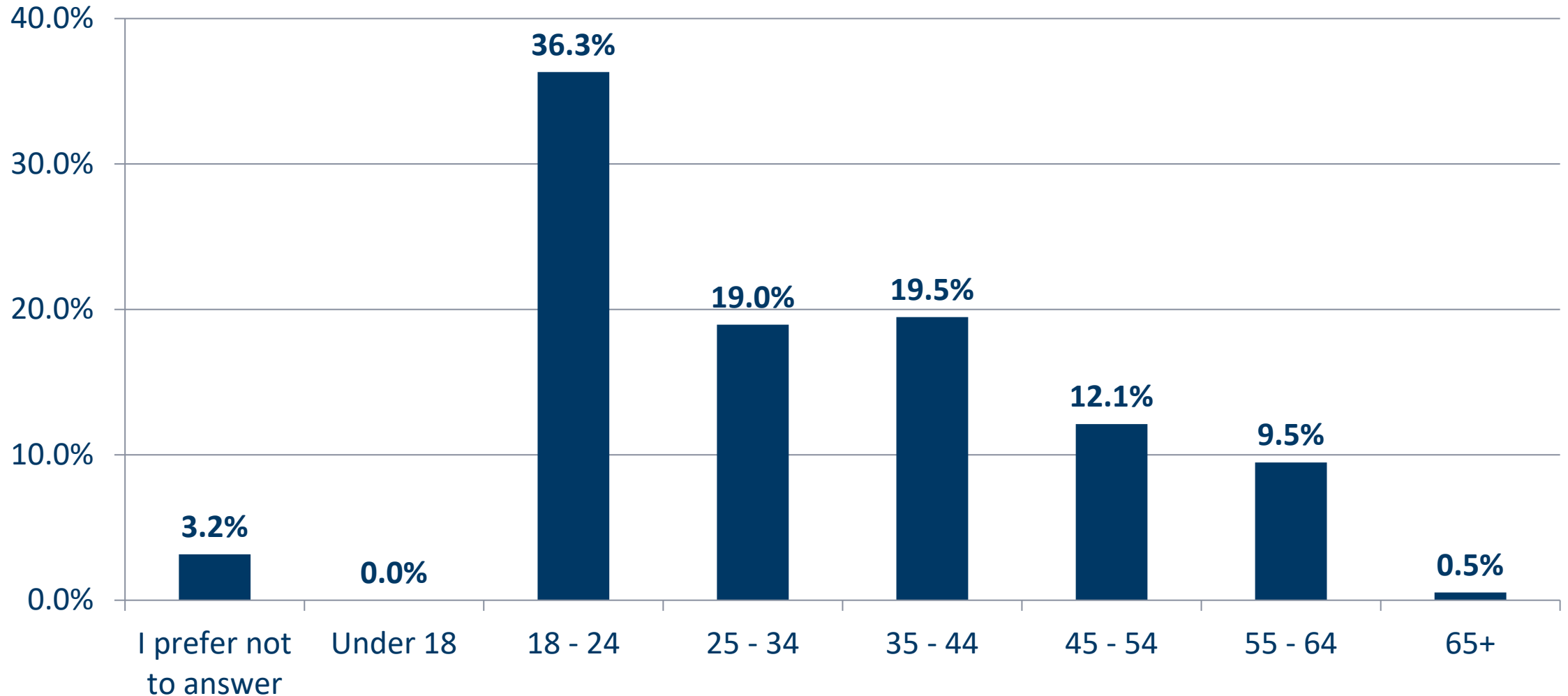


**\*Many of the Respondents who chose “Other,” entered “Hispanic” in the Fill in the Blank Box\***

# Demographics: Gender: 188 Answered, 78 Skipped

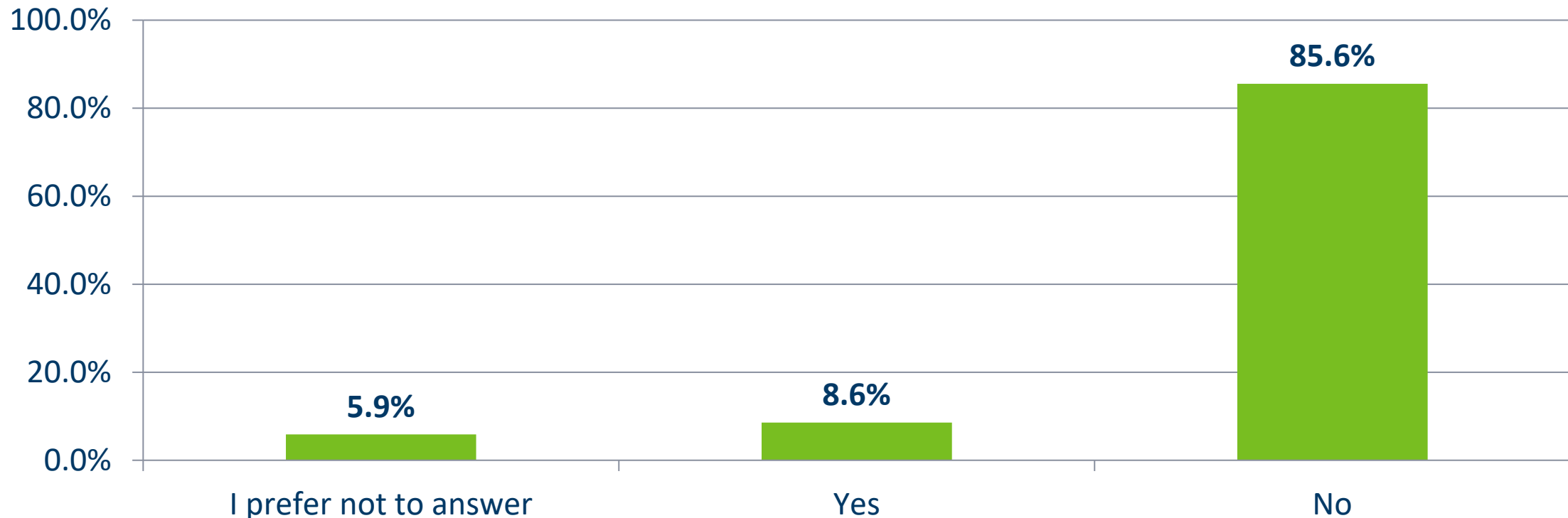


# Demographics: Age: 190 Answered, 76 Skipped

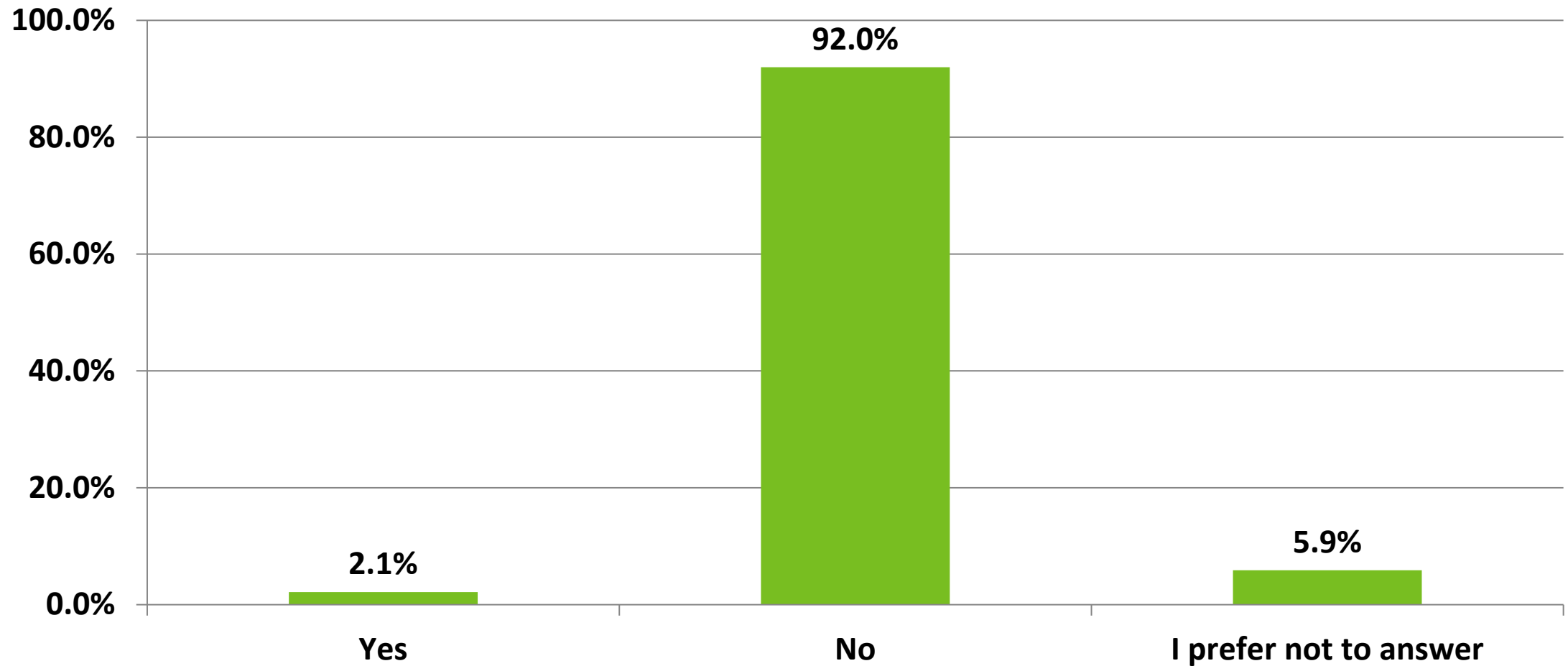


# Demographics: Disability Status: 187 Answered, 79 Skipped

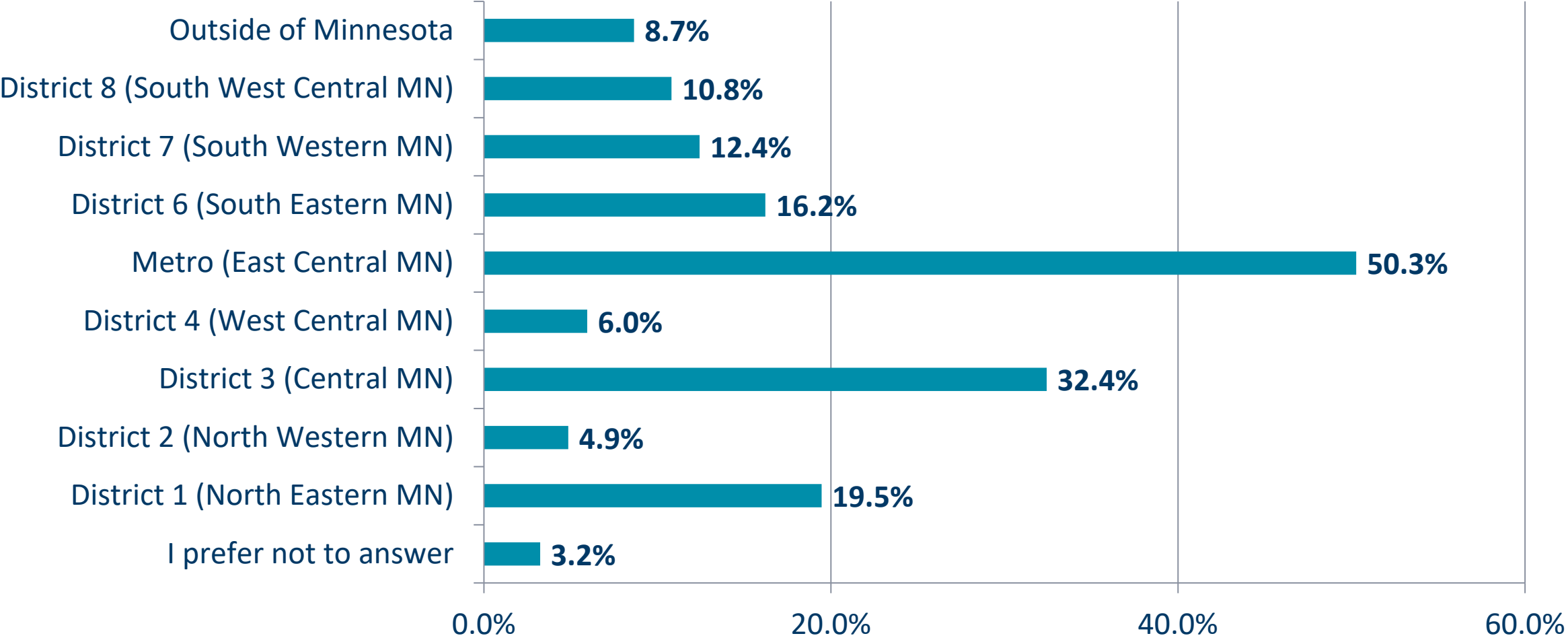
**Do you have a long-lasting or chronic condition (physical, visual, auditory, cognitive or mental, emotional, or other) that substantially limits one or more of your major life activities (your ability to see, hear, or speak; to learn, remember, or consent)?**




# Demographics: Do you identify as LGBTQ2S+?: 187 Answered, 79 Skipped



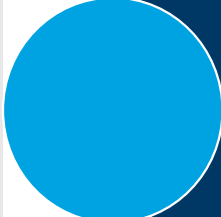
# Which parts of the state do you primarily work in? (Select all that apply): 185 Answered, 81 Skipped



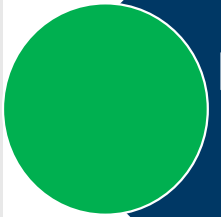
# Analyzing Where People Work



District 3 (East Central MN which includes St. Cloud & Brainerd) had the second-most workers and there are a couple projects over \$100 million that have been going on for a couple of seasons, along with a large share of projects over \$5 million that we are tracking.

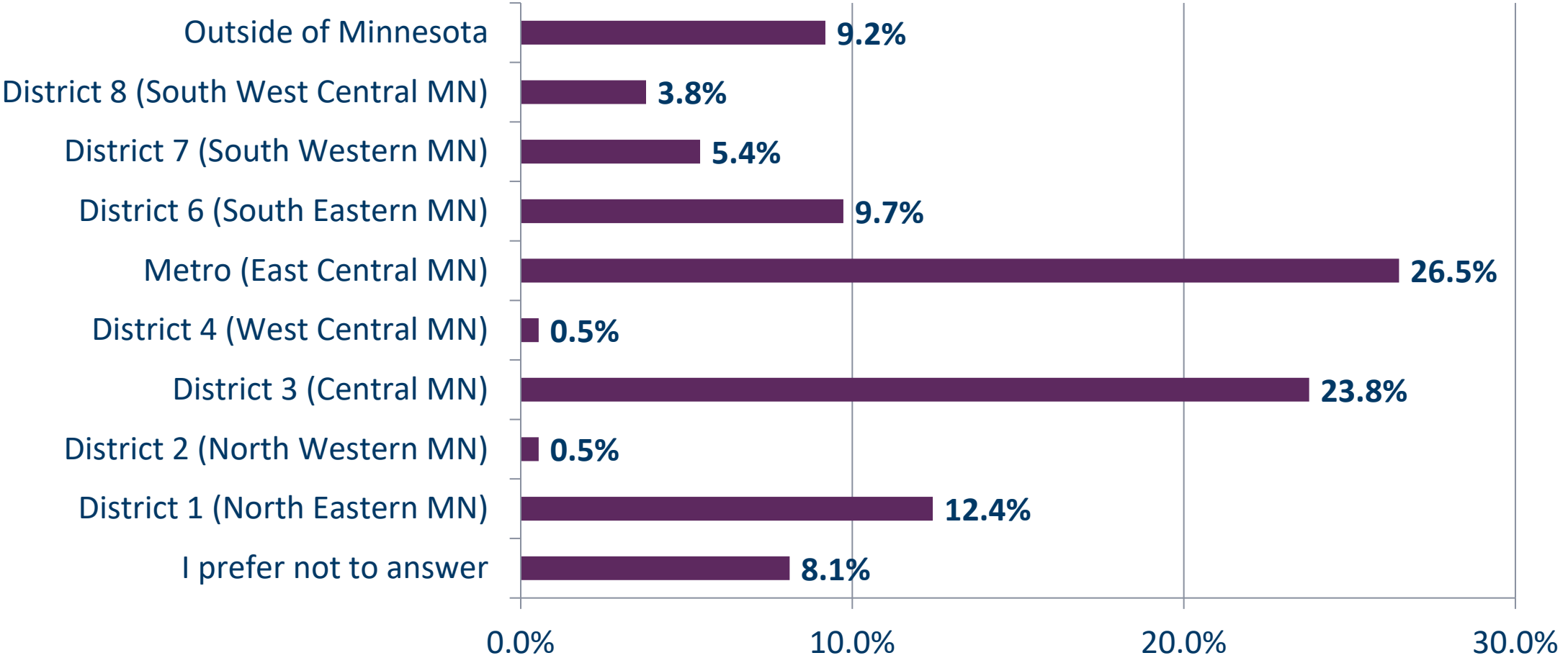


District 1 (Northeast MN which includes Duluth) had the third-most workers. The major Twin Ports Interchange project (\$275 million) brought in workers, through Work Package 1-2. TPI Work Package 3-4 had just barely begun when the 2022 Survey closed.



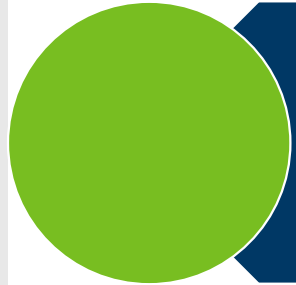
The Metro predictably had the most workers. District 6, 7, & 8 (Southern MN) each had similar numbers, around 15% of workers. And District 2 (North Western MN) and District 4 (West Central MN) had the least amount of workers represented, which is reflected in the lower number of projects monitored in those districts.

# Which parts of the state do you primarily live in? (Select all that apply): 185 Answered, 81 Skipped

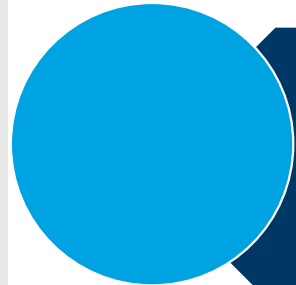




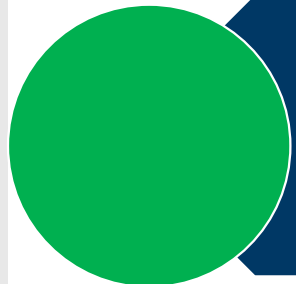
# Comparing Where People Work versus Where they Live



Similar numbers as compared to where people work, but there was slightly more even-distribution around the state. As expected, many people work and live in the Metro.



However, half of those who work in the Metro do not live there, and most other districts had small differences in numbers. Many people are, therefore, commuting to work.



Future questions: How far are people commuting? Considering the long days of work for construction, how does a significant commute affect recruiting and retention?

# Survey Questions: Themes

Barriers to Entering and Working in the Industry

Reporting and Retaliation

Discrimination & Harassment

# Survey Questions: Themes: Things to Consider

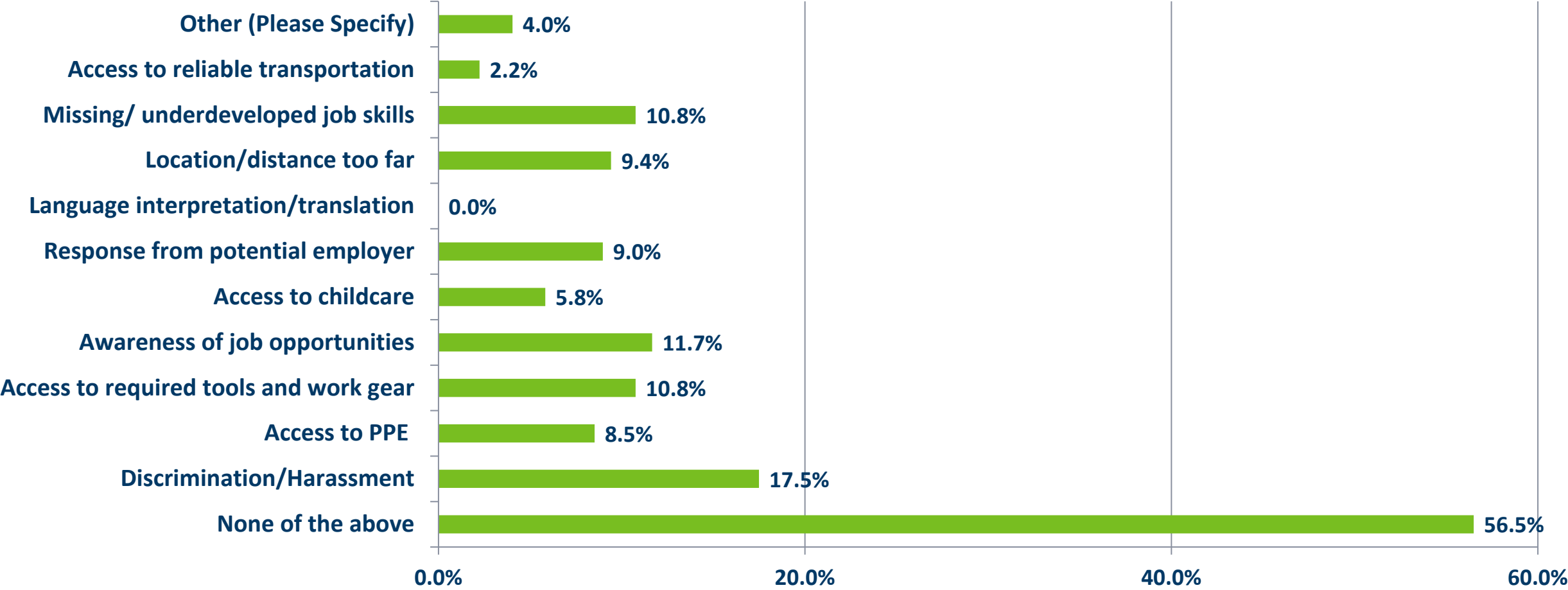
These themes don't exist in isolation; they are intertwined when workers reflect on their experiences.

For example, for those who have experienced discrimination or harassment, that experience could be a barrier to continue working in the industry.

Further, even acknowledging experiencing discrimination or harassment could be affected by the fear of retaliation.

# Barriers to Entering and Working in the Industry

# Have you ever witnessed or experienced barriers entering the industry? (Select all that apply): 223 Answered, 43 Skipped



For those who said Other: Please specify what barriers you've experienced or witnessed entering the industry (Fill in the blank)

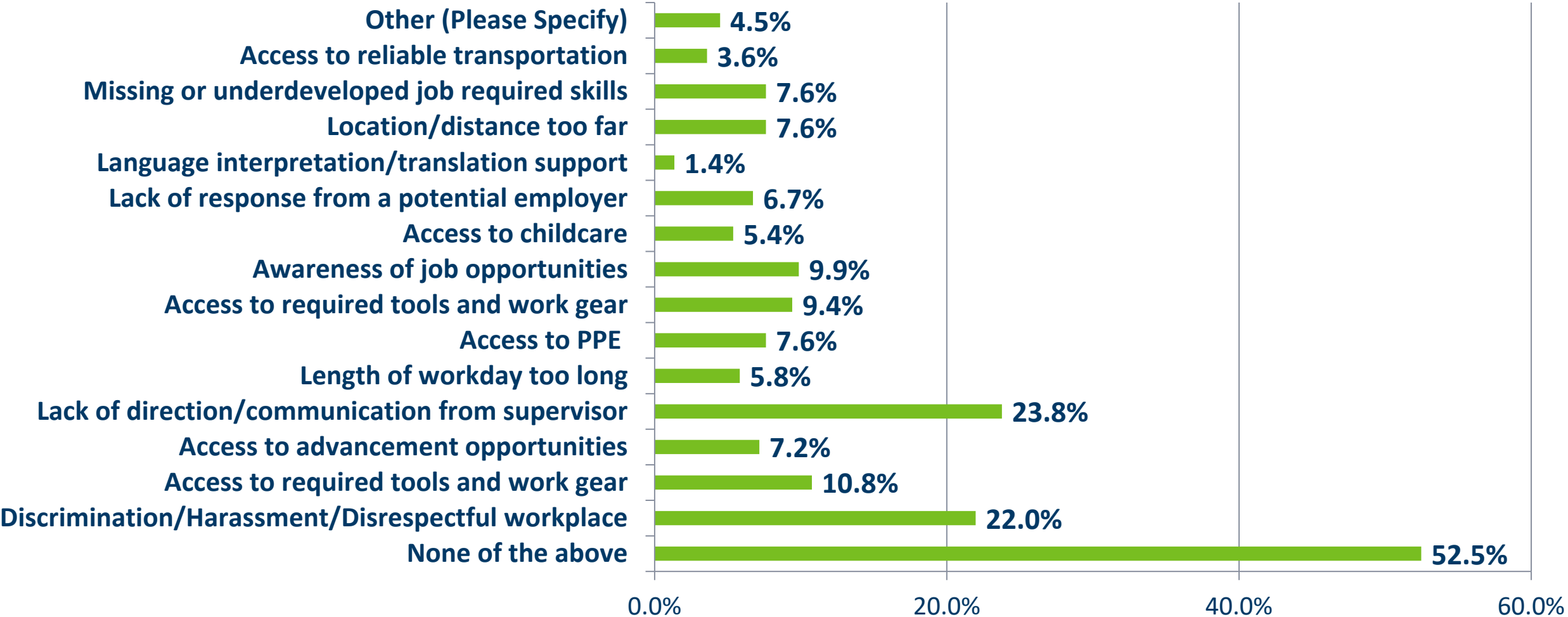
Sexism &  
Defamation

Forced to Work  
in Unsafe  
Conditions

Racism

Bullying

# Have you ever witnessed or experienced any barriers while working in the industry? (Select all that apply): 223 Answered, 43 Skipped



For those who said Other: Please specify what barriers you've experienced or witnessed while working in the industry (Fill in the blank)

Sexism &  
Defamation

If you're not in the  
Inner Circle, it's  
Difficult to Obtain  
Job Opportunities

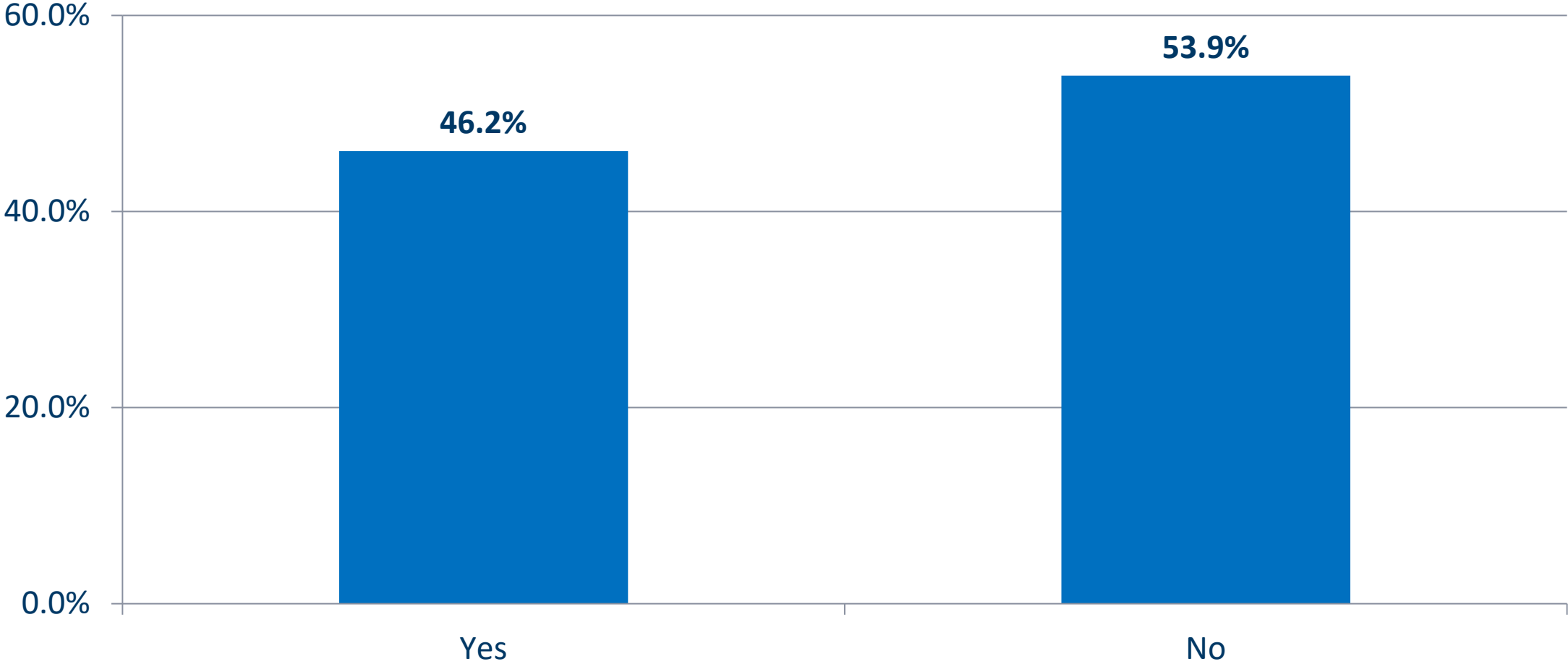
Unsafe Work  
Conditions

Racial  
Discrimination

Bullying



# Have you ever discussed these barriers entering or working in this industry with anyone?: 221 Answered, 45 Skipped



# For those who said No: Why haven't you discussed these barriers of entering or working in the industry? (Fill in the blank)

Haven't experienced barriers

Fear of retaliation

Didn't feel comfortable

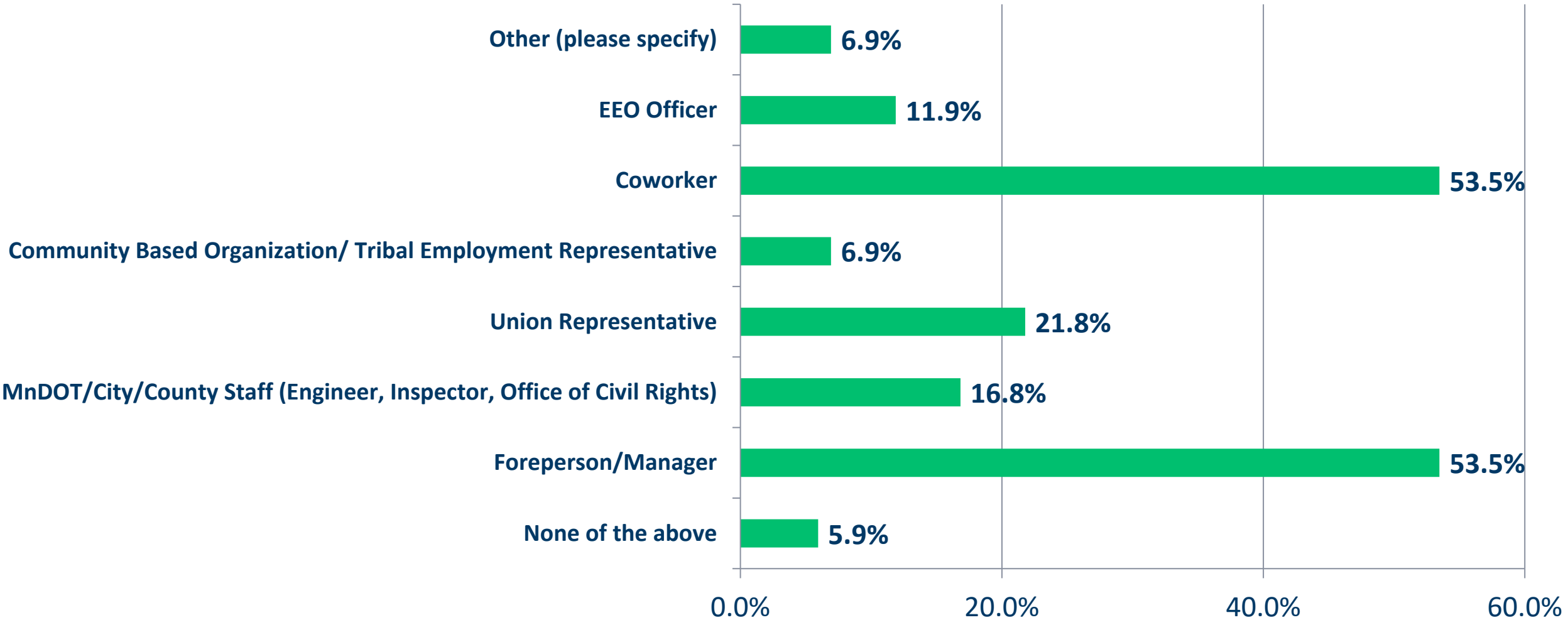
Won't do any good

Nothing to discuss

My word against theirs

Problem usually gets resolved

# For those who said Yes, they discussed the barriers: Who was it discussed with? (Select all that apply): 101 Answered, 165 Skipped



# For those who mentioned they discussed barriers with “Other”: Who was it discussed with? (Fill in the blank)

Lawyer

Family

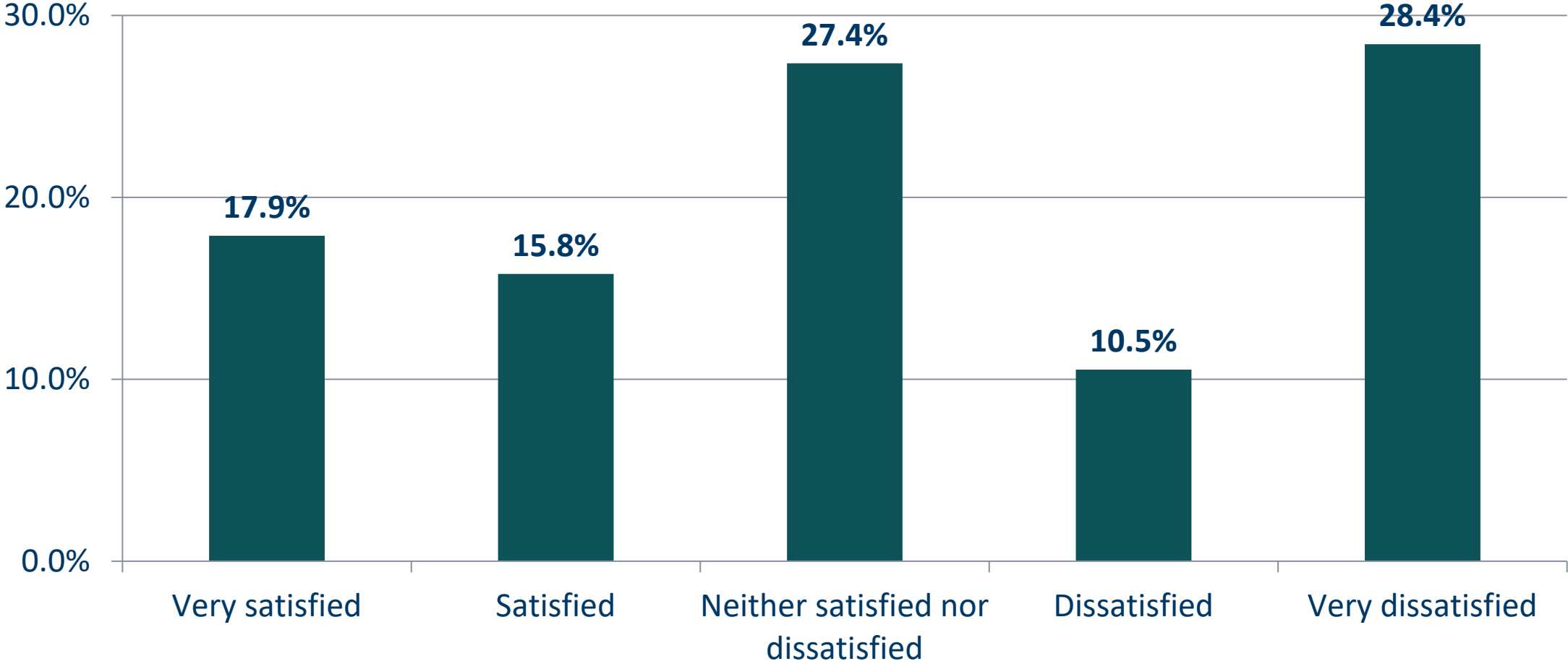
Owner of  
Company

State and  
Federal  
Representatives

Company HR

Office Staff

# How satisfied were you with the outcome of that discussion about the barriers?: 95 Answered, 171 Skipped



# What was the result of this discussion?

Nothing

Investigation from  
MnDOT

Told not to ask too  
many questions

Better understanding

Proactive changes to  
policies and steps to  
strengthen standards &  
practices

It's been that way for a  
long time

Some change, not a lot

Found a different job

Retaliation – lost job,  
blacklisted, etc.

Pending

Investigation resulting  
in findings of  
disrespectful workplace

Positive – informed of  
my rights, directed to  
training center and  
who to go to for  
questions

# Reporting & Retaliation

# Reporting

- **Federal and state law requires a reporting avenue** for employees regarding concerns and complaints of harassment and discrimination.
- If people are experiencing any barriers while working in the industry, they need to be able to file a complaint with the company and the company is required to investigate, follow up, and implement an appropriate corrective action plan if applicable.
  - **But if people are afraid to report because, perhaps, the person causing the issue is their supervisor or trainer, then how does that impact the industry?**
  - **What if the person that they're required to report it to is the person discriminating or harassing the employee?**
  - **What if the employee is nervous that reporting might do more harm than good?**



# Retaliation

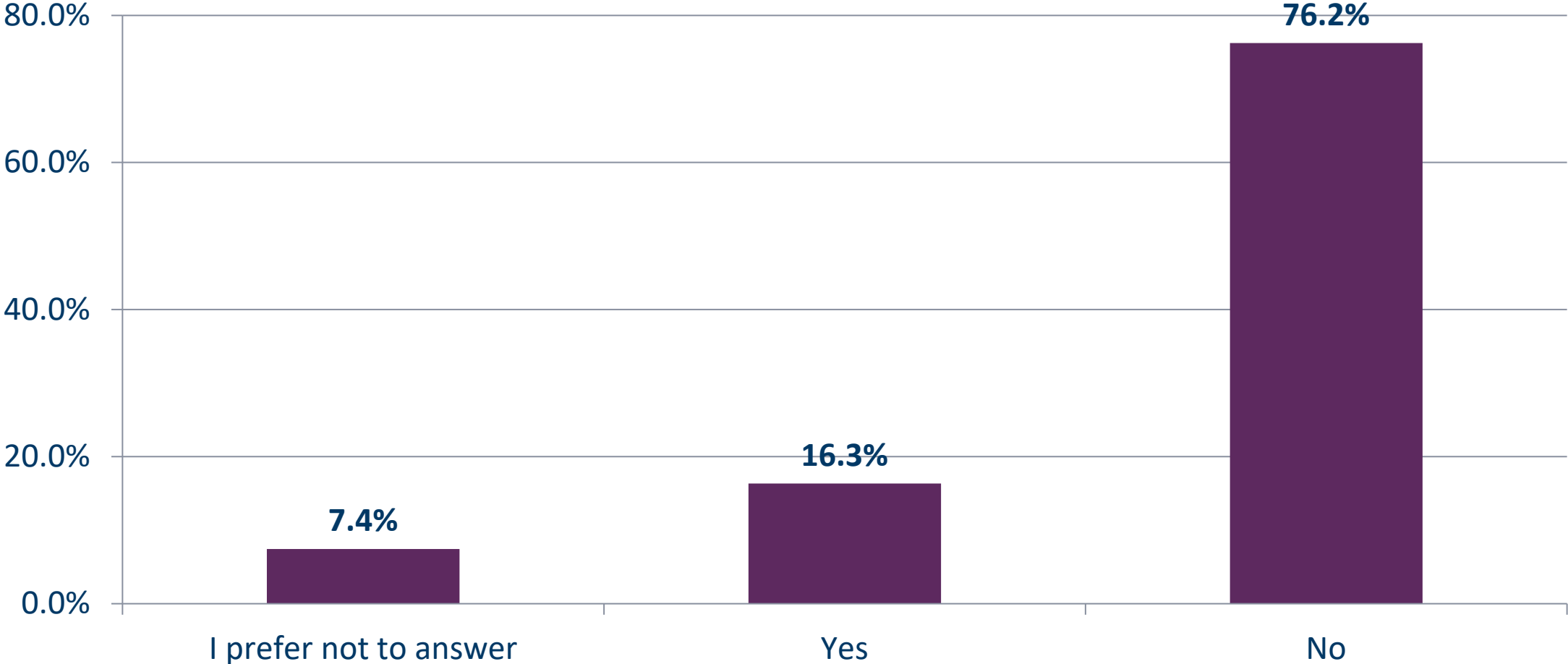
## Retaliation can include, but is not limited to, the following:

- Verbal abuse or threats
- Physical threats or attacks
- Ignoring or giving the “cold shoulder”
- Denying raises or promotions
- Generally making life at work more difficult or uncomfortable
- For highway heavy:
  - Less hours to complete apprenticeship
  - Moving people to a different job for a reason not related to work needs
  - Not providing sufficient training

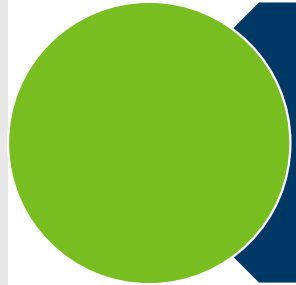
# Reporting & Retaliation

**Acts of retaliation are harmful, and the mere threat of retaliation or the perception of management indifference can also prove to be a strong deterrent and reduces the likelihood of reporting.**

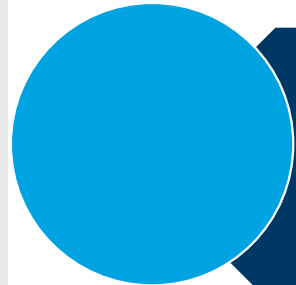
# Have you ever feared or worried about retaliation?: 202 Workers Answered, 64 Skipped



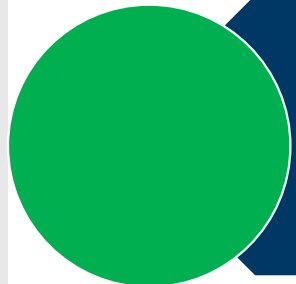
# Keep in Mind



This means 24% of respondents did not say that they have never feared or worried about retaliation.



This is, however, only a small snapshot of the Minnesota highway heavy construction workers, as there were only 266 respondents.



Further, there was low representation within the 266 respondents from several groups, including Women and People of Color.

# For those who answered Yes: Please describe your fear or worry about retaliation (fill in the blank): 23 Responded

Losing my job, or being given worse job conditions

I was terminated

Faced demotion

I have witnessed it, or I have experienced it

Future potential employment was affected

Increased harassment, sidelining, and loss of future work

Harassment

Fear of discussing without representation

Blacklist from industry

Laid off early, or Not called back for work

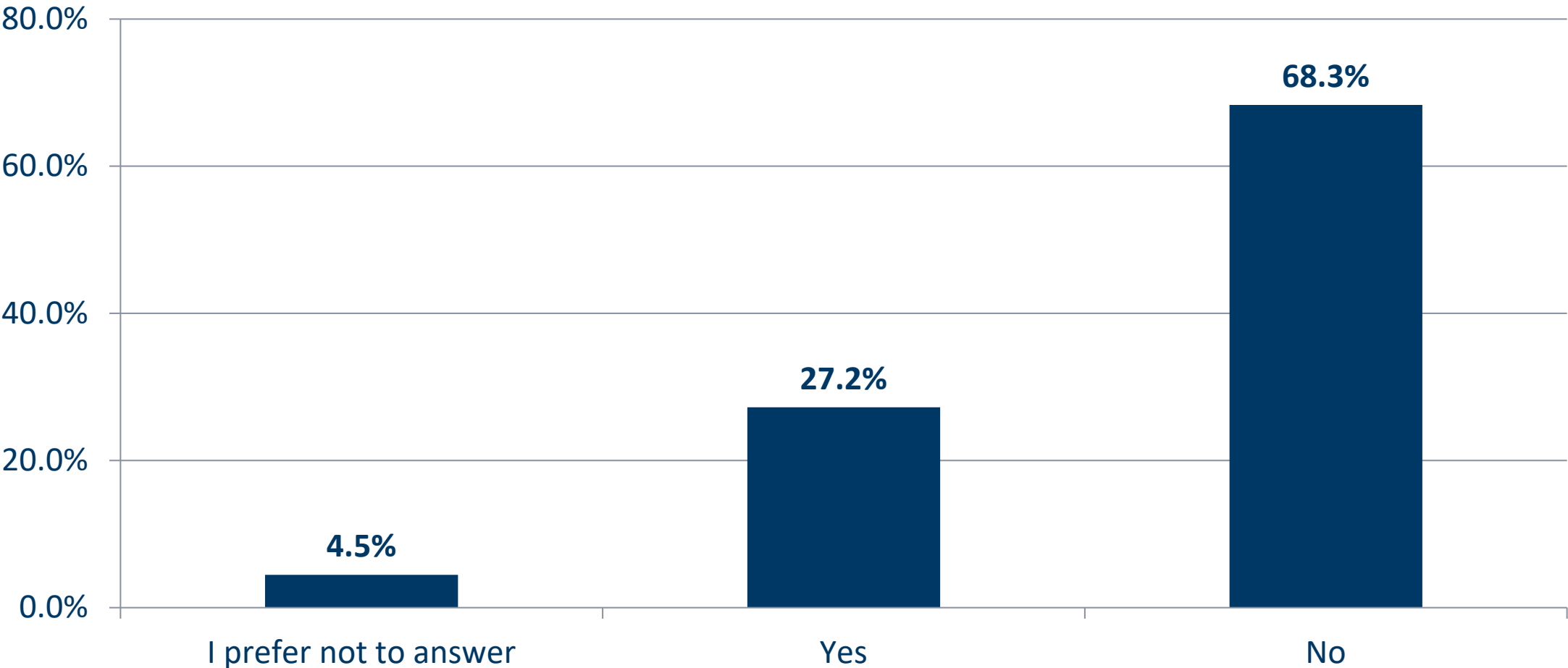
Removed off job by company

Will not be dispatched to jobs

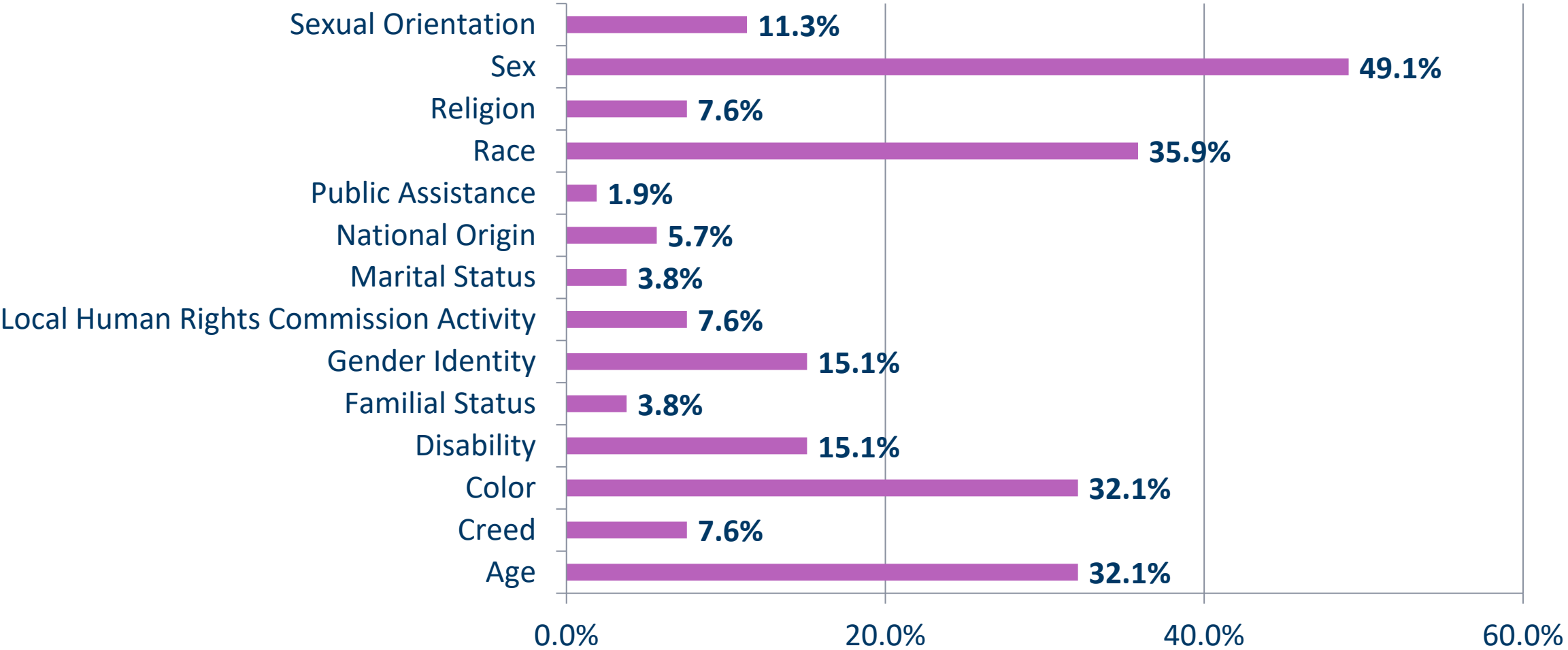
Fear of position being easily replaced

# Discrimination & Harassment

# Have you ever witnessed or encountered discrimination/harassment at your worksite?: 202 Answered, 64 Skipped

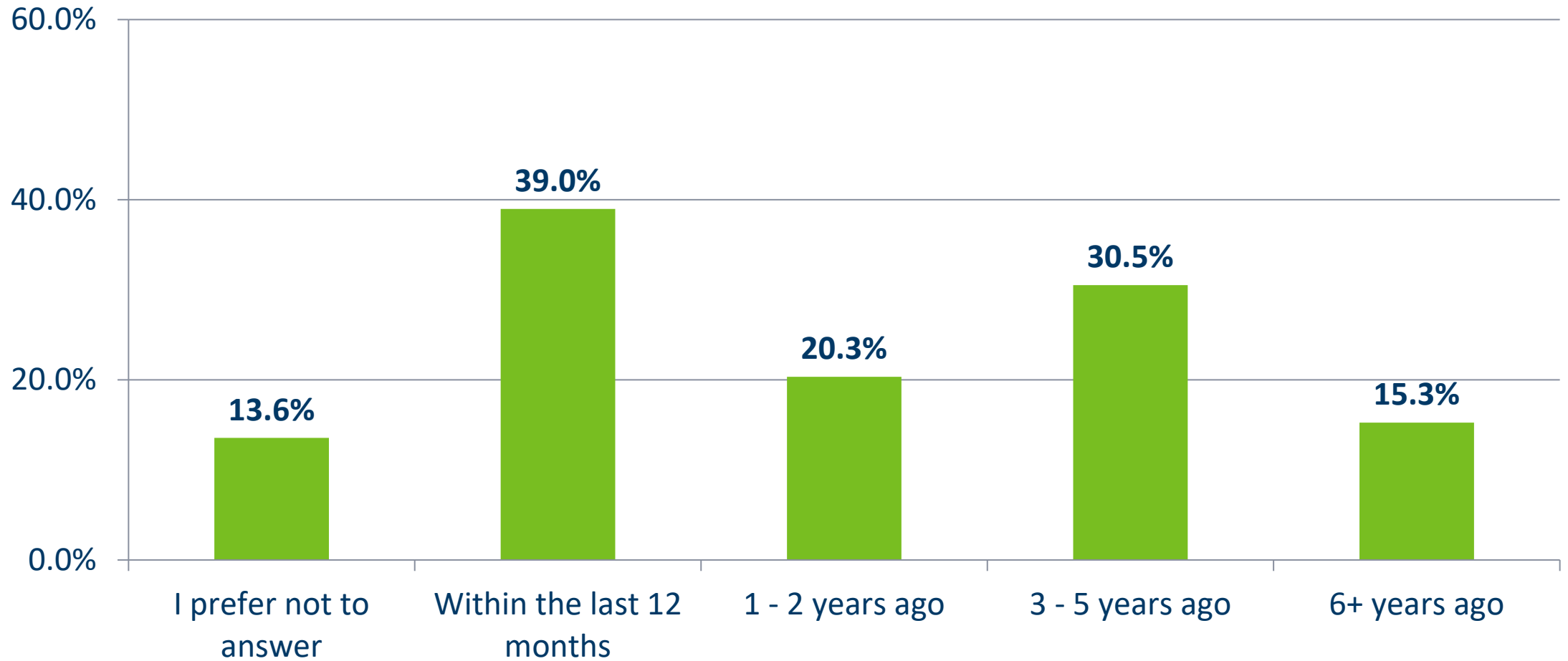


# What do you believe the discrimination was based on? (Select all that apply): 53 Answered, 213 Skipped

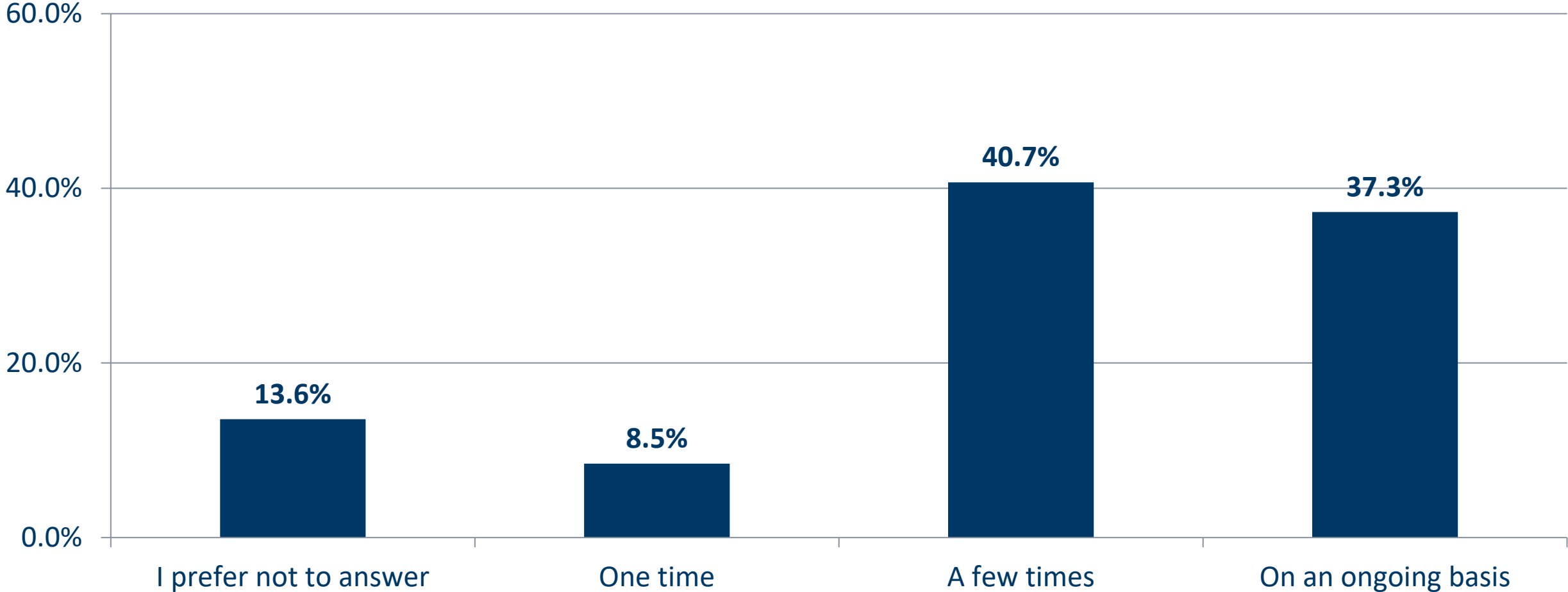




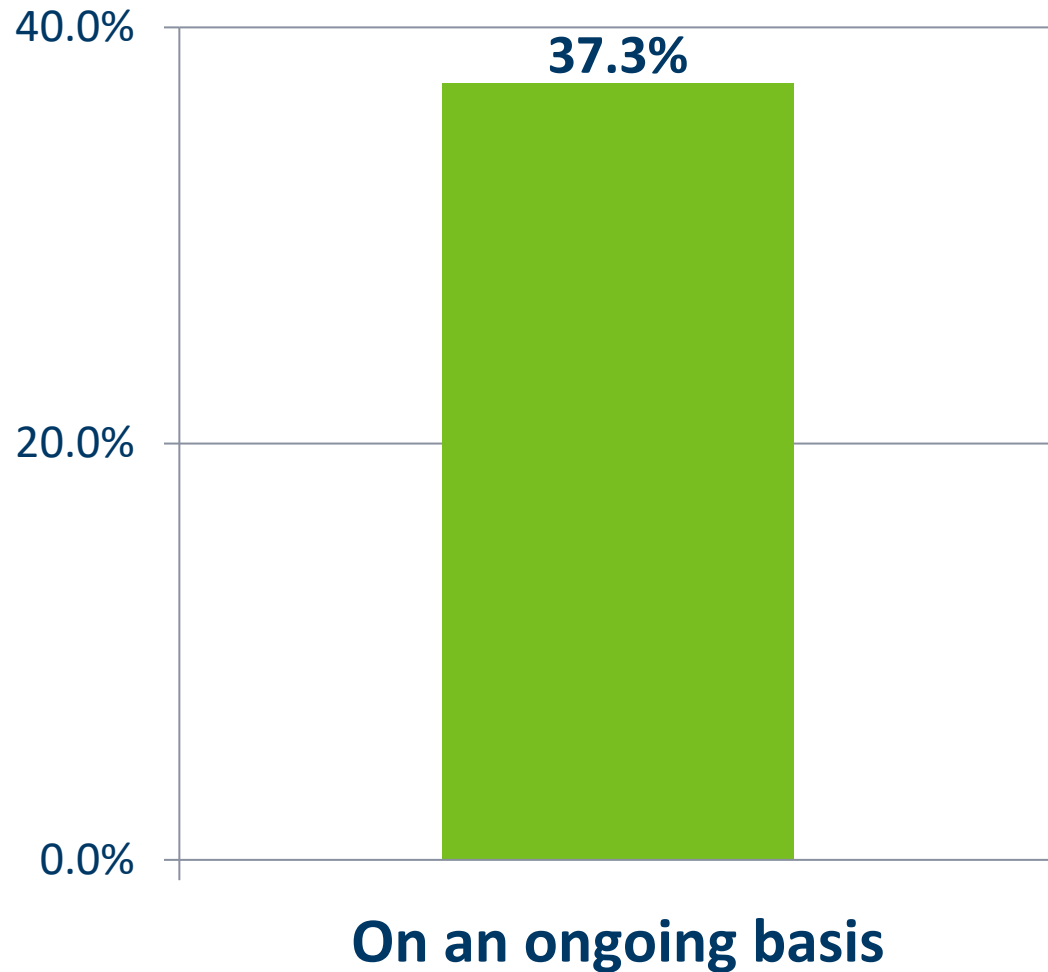
# When did you witness/experience the discrimination/harassment? (Select all that apply): 59 Answered, 207 Skipped



# How frequently did the discrimination/harassment take place?: 59 Answered, 207 Skipped

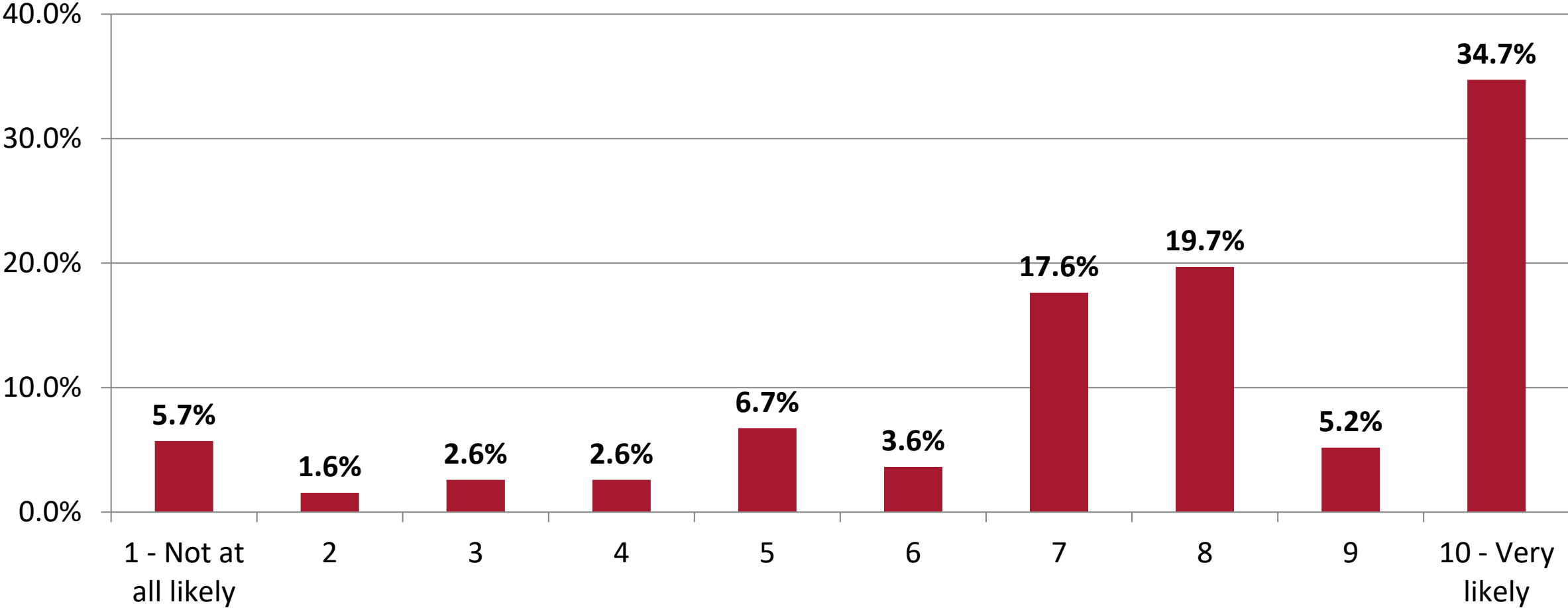


# Focusing in on “On an Ongoing Basis” Response



- **The high percentage of “On an ongoing basis” responses is significant as this means they are not isolated incidents**
- **Discrimination and harassment may be part of a broader worksite culture if the discrimination/harassment is allowed to continue**

# How likely are you to recommend working in the highway heavy construction industry to someone? (On a scale from 1 – 10)



# Reasons why they would or would not recommend working in the Highway Heavy Construction Industry (Fill in the blank)

Long hours hard work  
but it pays well

Great learning  
experience and union  
pay plus benefits

Weather conditions  
outside elements and  
overall hard & heavy  
work but rewarding

Entering the industry is  
hard for Women. Also  
new people don't get  
enough hours

Lots of hours in the  
summer away from  
friends/family. Lots of  
downtime in the winter

Pays well and  
environment can be  
okay in some districts

The environment is  
toxic to BIPOC and  
Women

# Next Steps

# Next Steps

Present Data to Stakeholders

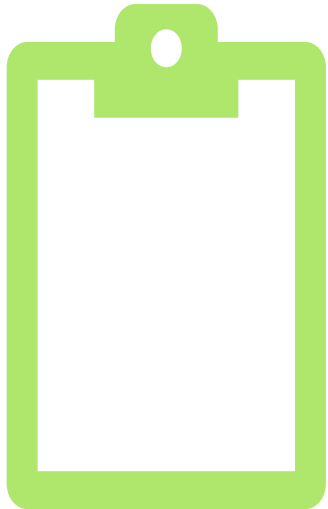
Conduct Another Tailored Survey

Offer Recommendations on Addressing Childcare Challenge

Make Additions and Complements to Respectful Workplace Guide

Research on Retaliation

# Conduct Another Tailored Survey



Focus on specific topic(s) to get more in-depth information:

- Childcare
- Discrimination/  
Harassment
- Retaliation
- Mental Health
- Support/Mentorship

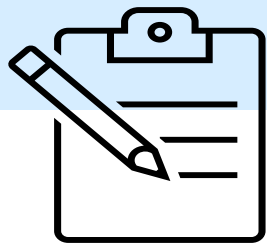
Narrow the pool of respondents to get a better understanding of that subsection of workers:

- Apprentices?
- Journey-level?
- Pre-apprentices?



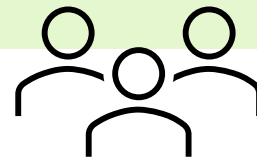
# Conduct Another Tailored Survey

Conducting survey again emphasizes anonymity because no retaliation or singling out would have occurred



Partner with:

- Apprenticeship coordinators
- CBOs



Funding:

- Gift card drawing for respondents?
- Professional study? To coordinate the data collection and visualization component?



# Offer Recommendations on Childcare Challenge

## Awareness:

- Connect services to industry in all districts/areas of MN
- Identify champions/liaisons in districts to connect stakeholders (unions, contractors, and employees)
- Research financial support: resources that assist with “startup cost” of childcare



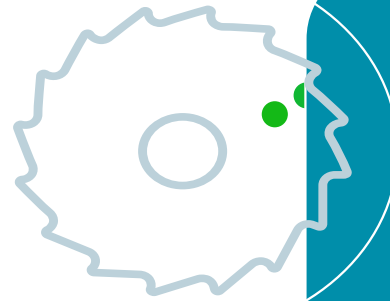
## Availability:

- Extended hours
- Age of child (limited spots for newborns)



Draft strategies and talking points for companies to talk about childcare in the context of a respectful workplace.

# Make Additions and Complements to Respectful Workplace Guide



Guide revised in June 2023.  
Revise again as we become  
more informed of workers'  
experiences



Conversation series  
dedicated to findings from  
the survey

# Research on Retaliation



What are other companies/industries doing to prevent retaliation and curb the fear of retaliation?



How does the fear of retaliation impact people in the workplace?

**Share this research with stakeholders through: webinar, one pager, peer panel, etc.**

# Worker Survey Data – Questions to Consider



- What sticks out to you?
- Do you have questions that could dig deeper into data?
- Suggestions for who else we can share this with?
- Suggestions for next steps?
- Feedback on how we can get more respondents?