



Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Consumer Satisfaction Survey Results

FFY 2009

Prepared in Collaboration with the  
State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee



**ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

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***The mission of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is to assist individuals with disabilities to obtain and maintain employment.***

## **Executive Summary**

In an effort to ensure that DVR is meeting its program responsibilities to its consumers while providing the best services possible, the Governor's Committee on Employment and Rehabilitation of People with Disabilities (GCERPD) in collaboration with DVR conducts an on-going Consumer Satisfaction Survey. The survey contains a series of statements designed to measure consumers' attitudes and satisfaction levels. A survey was mailed to all DVR consumers whose cases were closed during federal FY2009 after having received services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). The information gathered from this process is used in the comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA), the strategic plan and the state plan. This report summarizes the results of those surveys.

### **Key Findings**

- 847 surveys were mailed; 10% or 84 were returned undeliverable; 24% or 183 consumers responded.
- Overall satisfaction with VR services was at 88% which is a 3% increase from FY2008. Those respondents who left employed expressed a 92% satisfaction with DVR while those who left unemployed rated their satisfaction at 78%.
- 94% of respondents were willing to refer either friends or family to DVR.
- 98% of respondents felt they were treated with courtesy and respect.
- 90% reported services were provided in a reasonable amount of time which is an 8% increase from FY2008 and was the item with the largest increase.
- Overall, the survey results show an increase over the FY2008 survey. Positive increases also include respondents receiving enough information to make good choices, VR helped the individuals reach their vocational goal, and counselors explaining all services available to them.
- The top two items respondents reported they liked about their experience with DVR are: the relationship with their VR counselor and the help they received.
- 11% of the respondents reported what they disliked the most about their experience with DVR was the lack of some services. Examples given were often items such as health insurance and housing assistance which DVR does not provide. Nine percent (9%) felt too much time was required which was down by 3% from FY2008.
- The results are skewed slightly towards urban and employed consumers. The urban consumers greatly out-number those from the other areas. Those consumers who were employed after VR services responded at a higher rate than those who were unemployed.

## **Background**

34 CFR § 361.17 (h) (4) charges the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to review and analyze consumer satisfaction with DVR. In Alaska, the GCREPD functions as the SRC.

In an effort to measure the level of satisfaction and examine the general attitudes of DVR consumers, the GCREPD and DVR jointly implemented an on-going consumer satisfaction survey process in July 2007. The survey is a series of statements designed to measure the consumer's attitudes and satisfaction level in the broad categories of:

1. Program Satisfaction: overall satisfaction with the program with a focus on employment.
2. Program Information: are we conveying our mission and providing adequate information about the VR program.
3. Consumer Involvement: this area focuses on client choice in both VR services and the vocational goal.
4. Consumer and Staff Interaction: this area focuses on the counselor/client relationship and overall interaction with all VR staff.

The survey results become part of the GCREPD's annual report and are used in DVR's strategic planning process, the comprehensive statewide needs assessment, the state plan, and throughout the year by DVR in an on-going attempt to improve VR services.

## **Methodology**

- Surveys are mailed monthly to all consumers whose cases were closed in the previous month after receiving services on an IPE. Timely surveying helps to maximize the response rate. This group of consumers was initially targeted as they have been through the entire VR process and DVR does not want to continually resurvey consumers with open cases. The GCREPD and DVR are currently designing a means of surveying open cases without over-burdening the consumer.
- The survey utilizes a Likert Scale format with a comment section.
- The survey is sent from the GCREPD and includes a postage paid return envelope.
- Follow-up surveys are not sent to non-respondents due to the staff time required for this activity.
- Descriptive statistics are used to summarize the results. The survey data will be kept and used for longitudinal comparisons and trend analysis.

## Survey Results

### Validity

Of the 847 surveys mailed, 10% or 84 were returned as undeliverable leaving a total population of 763. From this group, 183 consumers responded thus achieving a valid statistical sample size with a confidence level of 95%, plus or minus 6.32%.

Table 1 shows the breakdown by employment status at case closure and the geographic location. The employment status was selected for analysis as DVR is always trying to improve the service delivery system in order to increase the number of people who become employed. The geographic location of consumers is of interest as DVR has a statewide obligation and serving the remote areas of the state is a challenge and a concern as identified in the CSNA.

The results in the report will be slightly skewed toward employed consumers over unemployed consumers as those who exited employed responded at a higher rate than those whose cases were closed unemployed. This has been the trend in the past two years since the survey started and is probably to be expected.

The responses from the remote areas of the state have a higher return rate than from the larger communities. Even so, the consumers from the non-rural communities of Anchorage, Fairbanks and Juneau greatly out-number those from the other areas, thus skewing the results toward a non-rural setting.

<b>Table 1: Percent Surveyed and Responses by Geographic Location and Employment Status</b>				
	<b>Mailed Surveys</b>		<b>Returned Surveys</b>	
<b>Geographic Location</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>#</b>	<b>%</b>
Non-rural	652	74%	130	71%
Marine Highway or Road	150	18%	34	19%
Remote	45	5%	19	10%
<b>Employment Status</b>				
Employed	524	62%	130	71%
Unemployed	323	38%	53	29%

### Comparison to Last Year

Table 2 shows the change in responses from last year to this year. All but four statements showed an increase or remained constant as compared to the results of the FY2008 survey. The most noticeable increase was an 8% increase in those individuals agreeing that services were provided in a reasonable amount of time. This is a very important measurement for DVR as providing timely services is a priority and we often hear that services take too long. Other notable increases from last year include: consumers receiving adequate information to make good decisions, VR helping me reach my vocational goal and counselors providing information about available services.

<b>Table 2: Percent Change from FY2008 to FY2009 for All Consumers Responding to Survey</b>			
<b>Statements</b>	<b>FY08</b>	<b>FY09</b>	<b>% Change</b>
Services provided in a reasonable amount of time.	82%	90%	8%
I received enough information to make good choices.	86%	92%	6%
VR helped me reach my vocational goal.	79%	84%	5%
I feel my counselor explained all services available to me.	86%	91%	5%
Overall, I am satisfied with the services I received.	85%	88%	3%
I would refer a friend or relative to DVR	90%	93%	3%
I was treated with courtesy and respect.	96%	99%	3%
I was able to see my counselor when I needed to.	87%	89%	2%
I was involved in choosing my vocational goal.	92%	94%	2%
DVR staff were available to help me when needed.	89%	91%	2%
My phone calls were returned.	90%	91%	1%
I was informed of my right to appeal DVR's decisions.	91%	92%	1%
I was aware of CAP & it could help me with disputes.	85%	86%	1%
VR services helped get my job.	77%	77%	0%
My counselor and I had a good working relationship.	92%	92%	0%
I am satisfied with my job.	86%	85%	-1%
I helped plan the services I received.	92%	91%	-1%
I knew DVR services were to help me find a job.	97%	96%	-1%
I knew I could ask for help to settle disputes.	88%	84%	-4%

Survey results are summarized below by survey categories, geographic area, employment status, transfers and consumer comments about their experience with DVR. Graphs follow the narrative showing all the survey results.

#### Results by Survey Category

Graph 1 shows the results grouped by the four survey areas: program satisfaction, program information, consumer involvement, and counselor/staff interaction. No one category stands out as particularly stronger or weaker than the rest; all have strengths that can be built upon and areas that could be improved. Overall, the DVR program appears to be rather consistent and stable in all areas.

#### Results for All Respondents

Graph 2 presents the survey responses for all respondents. The results show an extremely strong positive and respectful attitude of DVR staff to those individuals receiving VR services with 99% of VR consumers saying they were treated respectfully. Of the nineteen (19) statements from the survey, twelve received 90% or greater positive responses.

As with the results from the FY2008 survey, the two lowest scores are similar: VR helping reach the vocational goal and VR helping get a job. These items are answered only by those consumers who are employed and are discussed in the employment results section.

#### Results by Employment Status

Graphs 3 and 4 present the employment status related responses. As would be expected, a higher percentage of surveys were returned and the overall satisfaction scores were higher for those employed than those unemployed. Both groups had the most respondents agreeing they were treated with courtesy and respect with 98% for those employed and 100% for those unemployed. Most of the remaining responses for those employed remained above the 90% level while many of the remaining responses for the unemployed dropped to below 90%.

Both groups had identical scores of 86% for the awareness of the Client Assistance Program. Overall satisfaction with the DVR program was 14% higher for the employed group, even so, 91% of the unemployed group said they would refer a friend or relative to DVR. The lowest response for the unemployed group was for services being received in a reasonable amount of time at 69%.

Graph 3 demonstrates the employed group's very strong sense of the purpose of DVR, counselor relationship, and their involvement in the VR process. It is interesting to note this same group rated VR's help with getting a job in reaching the vocational goal as two of the lowest items. This was bothersome at first analysis, but after speaking with former consumers, DVR now interprets these scores to show that VR services have enabled many individuals to acquire the skills and knowledge to obtain employment on their own which is truly a measure of success.

### Results by Geographic Areas

Graphs 5, 6 and 7 present the results by geographic area. The respondents self-identify their location on the survey questionnaire. For future surveys, DVR is considering determining the consumer's location through DVR's data management system to ensure uniformity and more reliable results.

As a statewide program, DVR has an obligation to provide services as equitably across the state as possible. This is a challenge given the size of the state and the itinerant nature of VR services provided in some areas. The 2009 CSNA identified rural Alaska as being under-served.

The satisfaction with VR services and the program directly relates to the ready access of such services with the non-rural areas of the state the most satisfied and the remote areas of the state the least satisfied with VR services. Even so, 100% of the remote respondents would refer a friend or family member to DVR and also felt they were treated with respect.

### Results by Transfer Cases

Graph 8 presents the data on cases that have been transferred. The question about case transfer is included as anecdotal information over the years has indicated transfer cases are problematic as the service delivery is interrupted and a relationship must be developed with a new VR counselor.

Thirty percent (30%) of those surveyed reported their case had been transferred at sometime during life of the case. DVR initiated the transfer which is typically a result of VR counselor turnover in 71% of the cases. Other reasons include the consumer moved (17%) and the consumer requested a transfer (12%). Of those transfer cases, 67% became employed as compared to 71% of total respondents and the overall satisfaction with VR services was 81% for transfer cases compared to 91% for those who did not have their case transferred. DVR considers this to be significant.

### Consumer Comments

The consumer's comments about experience with DVR are grouped by common themes and shown in Tables 3 and 4 shown below.

Eighty percent (80%) of the consumers surveyed registered positive comments while 34% registered a negative comment about their DVR experience. As in the previous FY2008 survey, the counselor relationship was the most liked aspect of the overall DVR experience at 26% with the help individuals received at 23% was a close second.

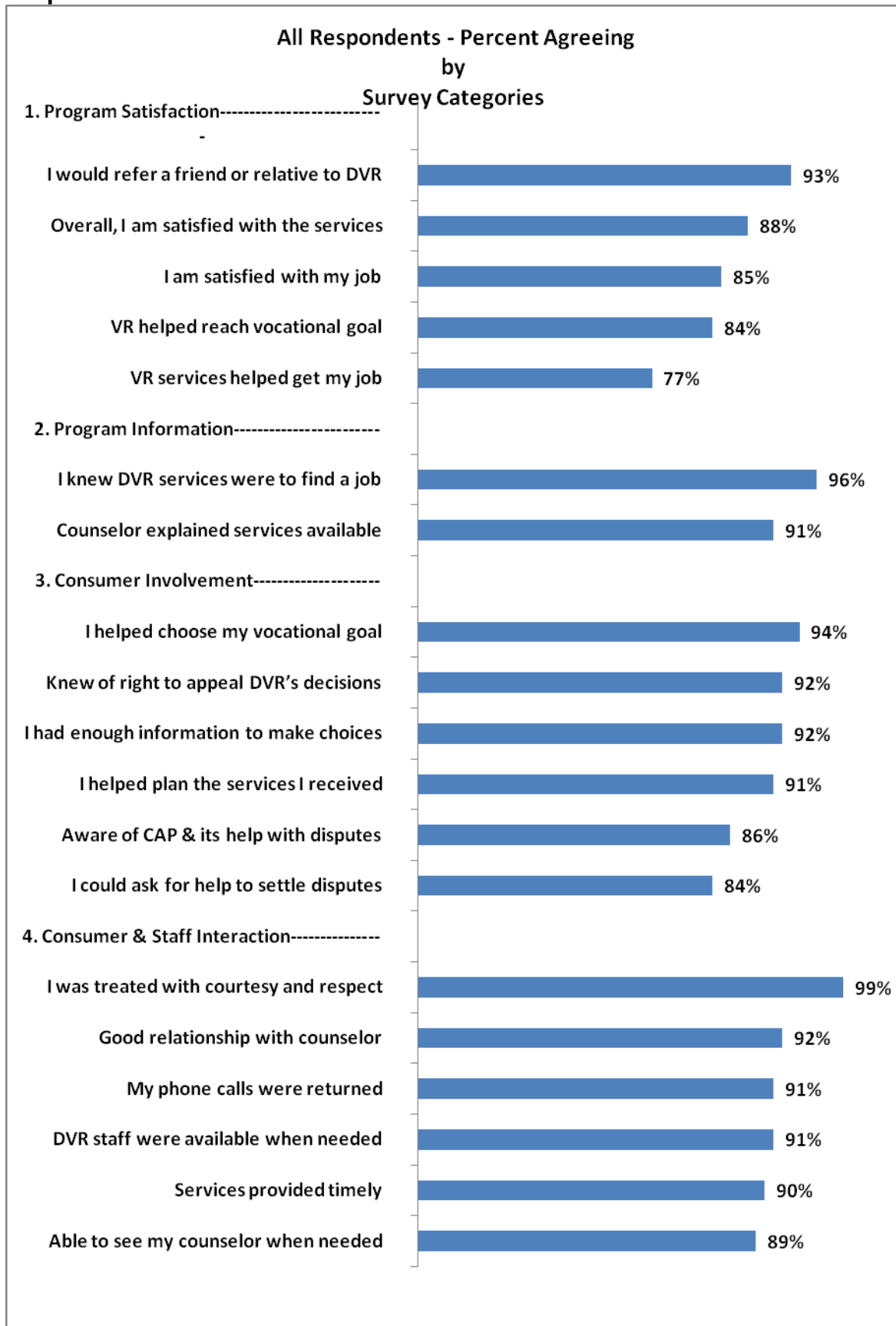
<b>Table 3: What Consumers Liked the Most About Their Experience with DVR</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Number on</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>
Counselor relationship	47	26%
Help received	42	23%
Entire staff	25	14%
Overall program	21	11%
Employment assistance	8	4%
Timely services	4	2%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>80%</b>

The most predominant negative aspect of the DVR experience was in the area of services individuals were not able to acquire from DVR. Examples of services mentioned include housing and health insurance.

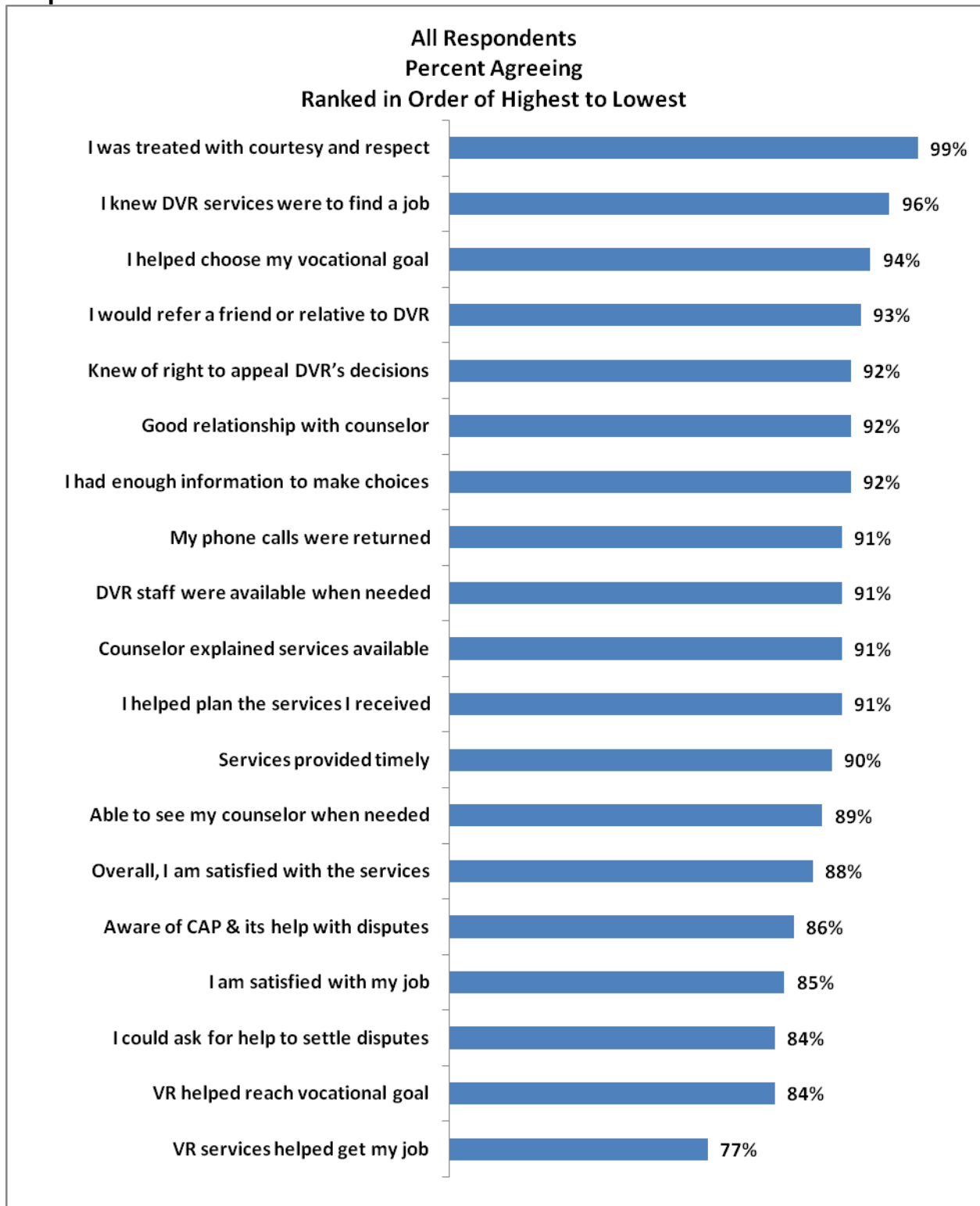
<b>Table 4: What Consumers Disliked the Most About Their Experience with DVR</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>
Services not provided	21	11%
Time required	17	9%
Staff	12	7%
Didn't understand	5	3%
Offices – location and facility	4	2%
Overall program	4	2%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>34%</b>



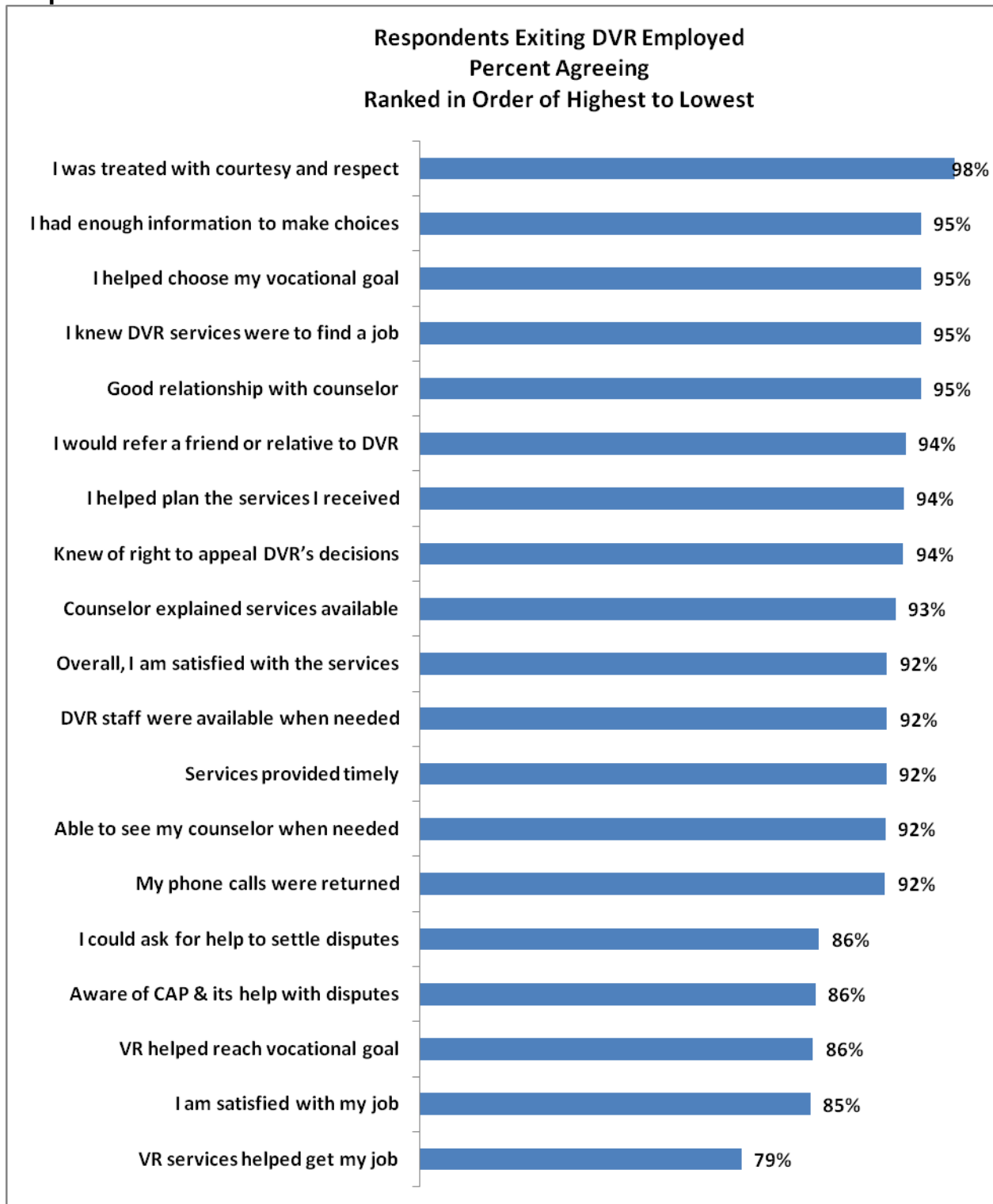
**Graph 1**



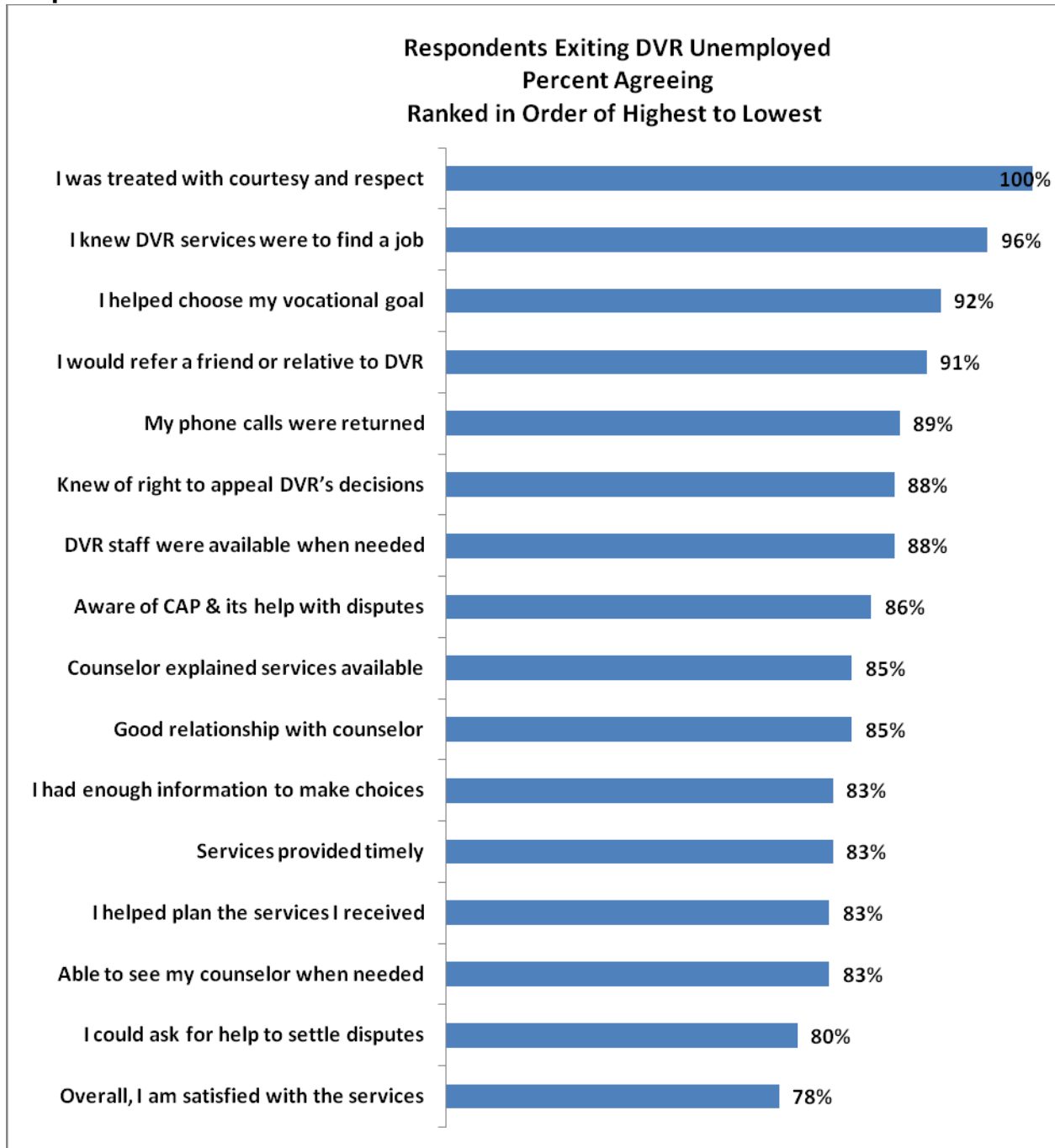
**Graph 2**



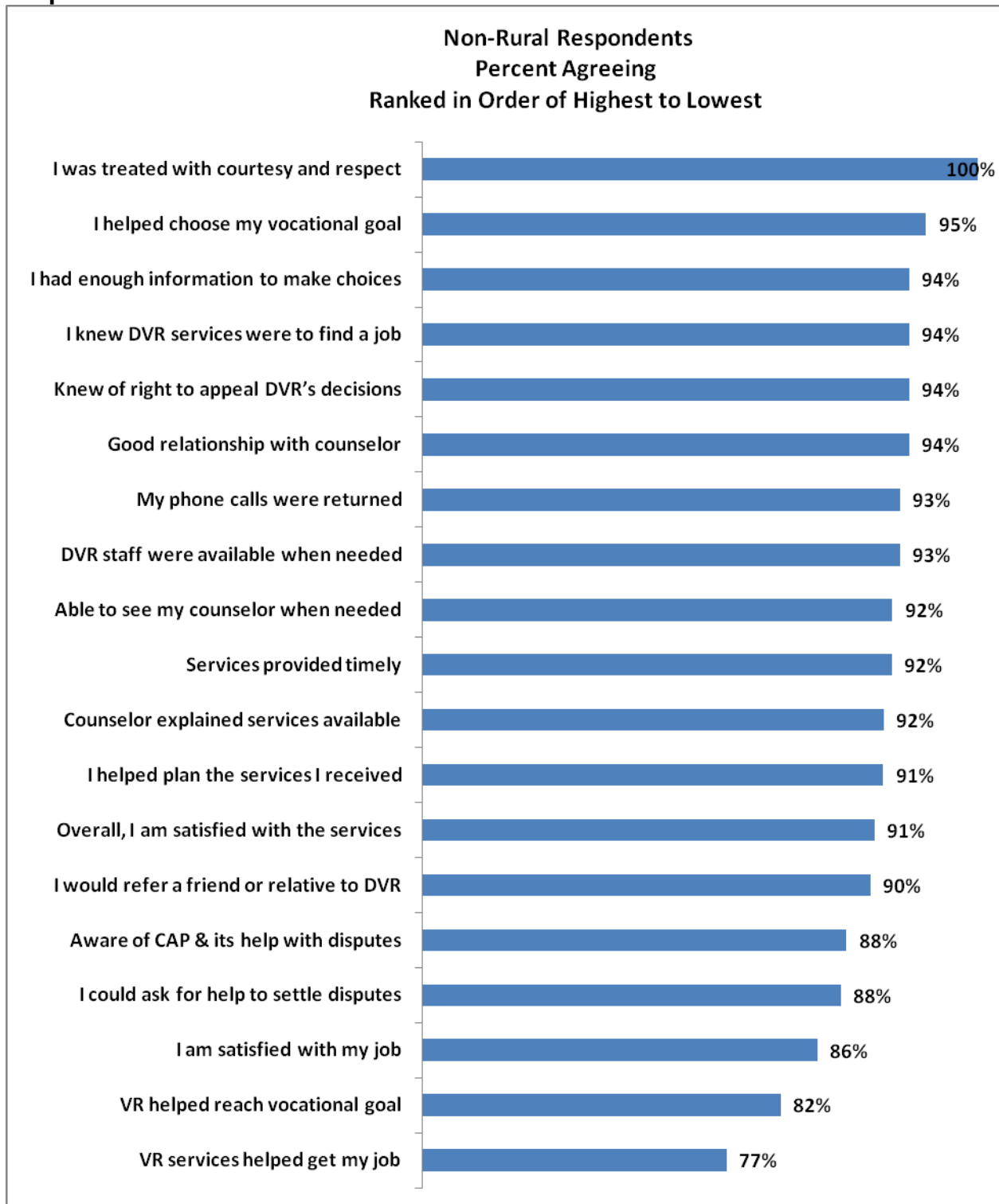
**Graph 3**



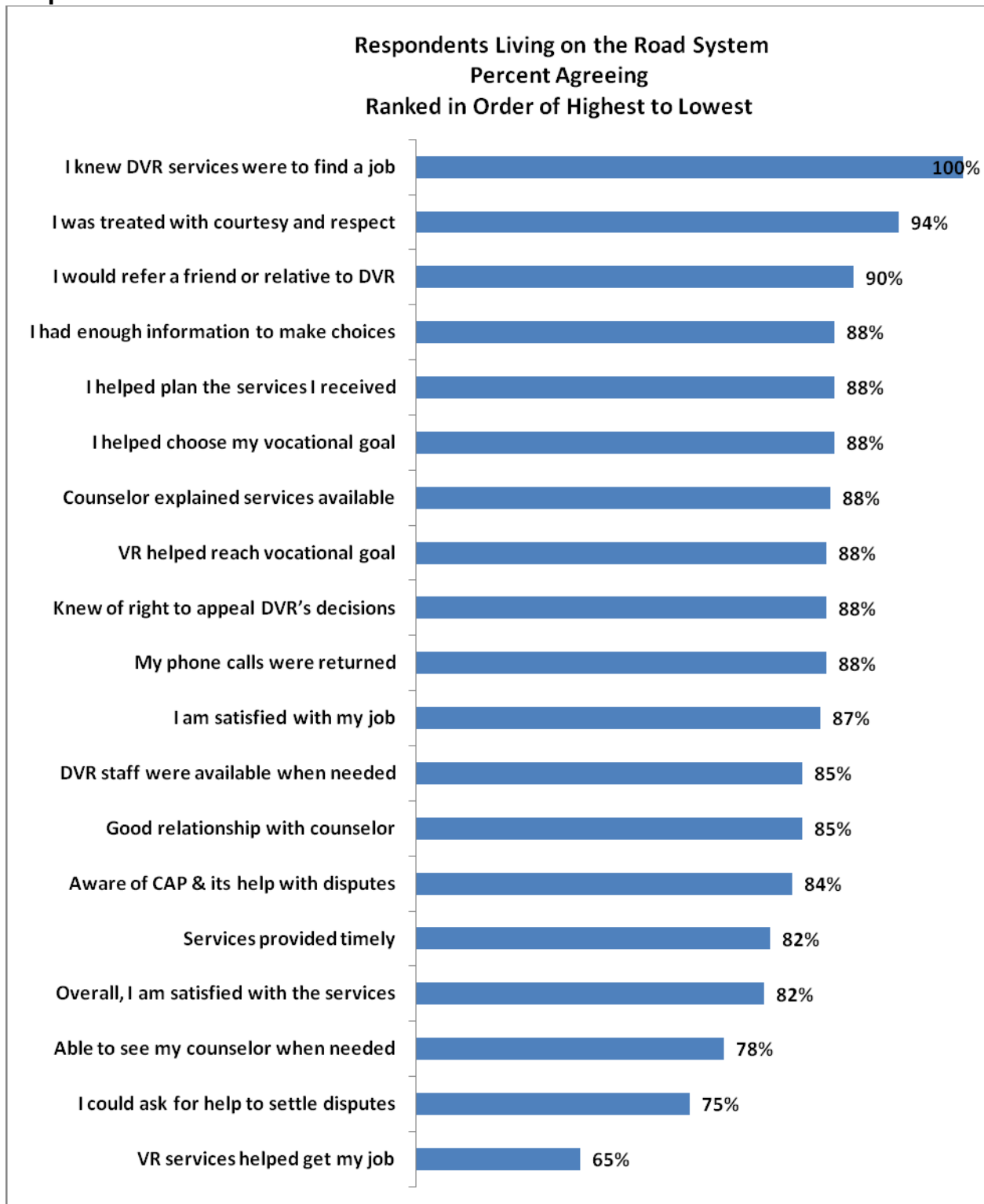
**Graph 4**



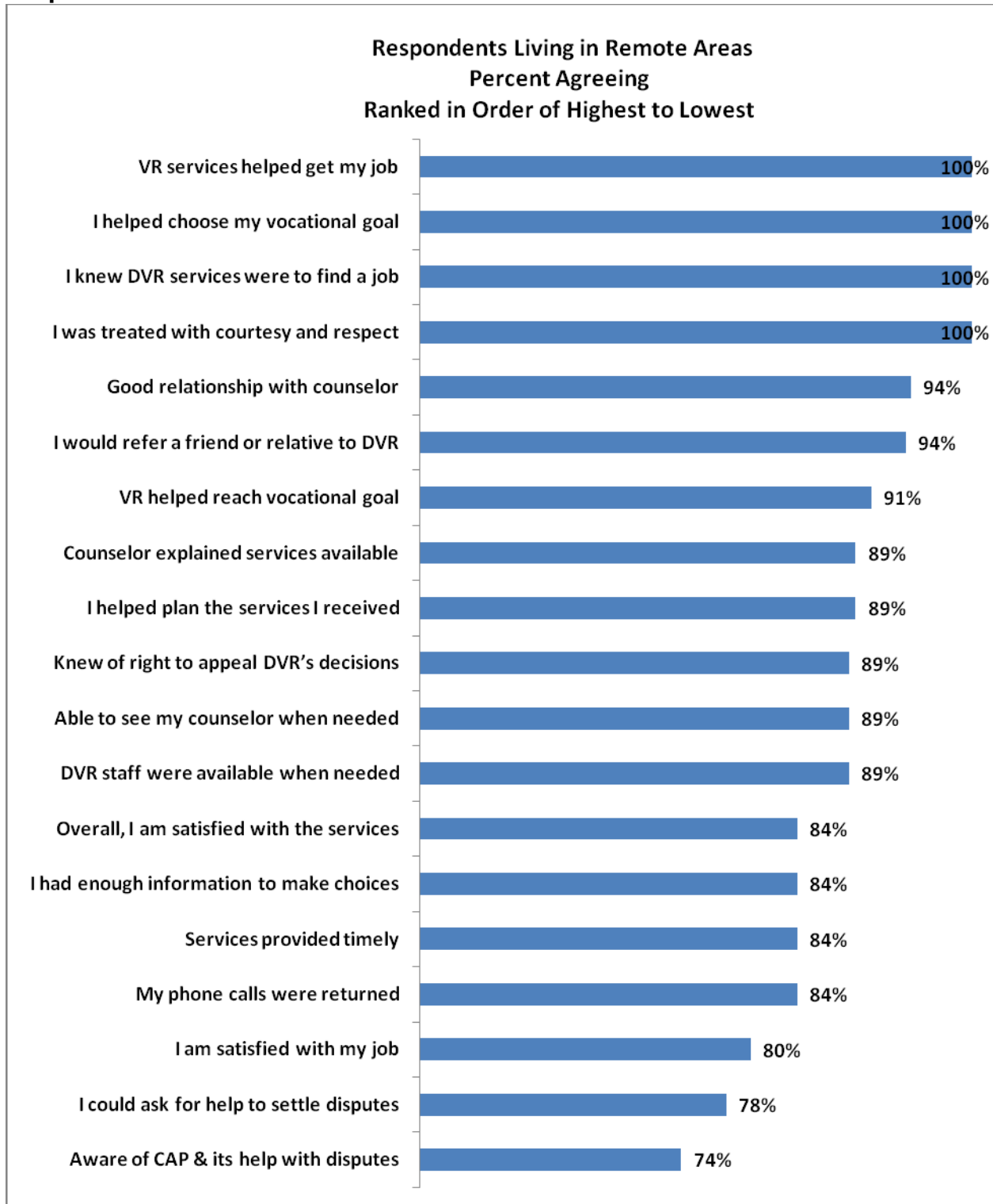
**Graph 5**



**Graph 6**



**Graph 7**



**Graph 8**

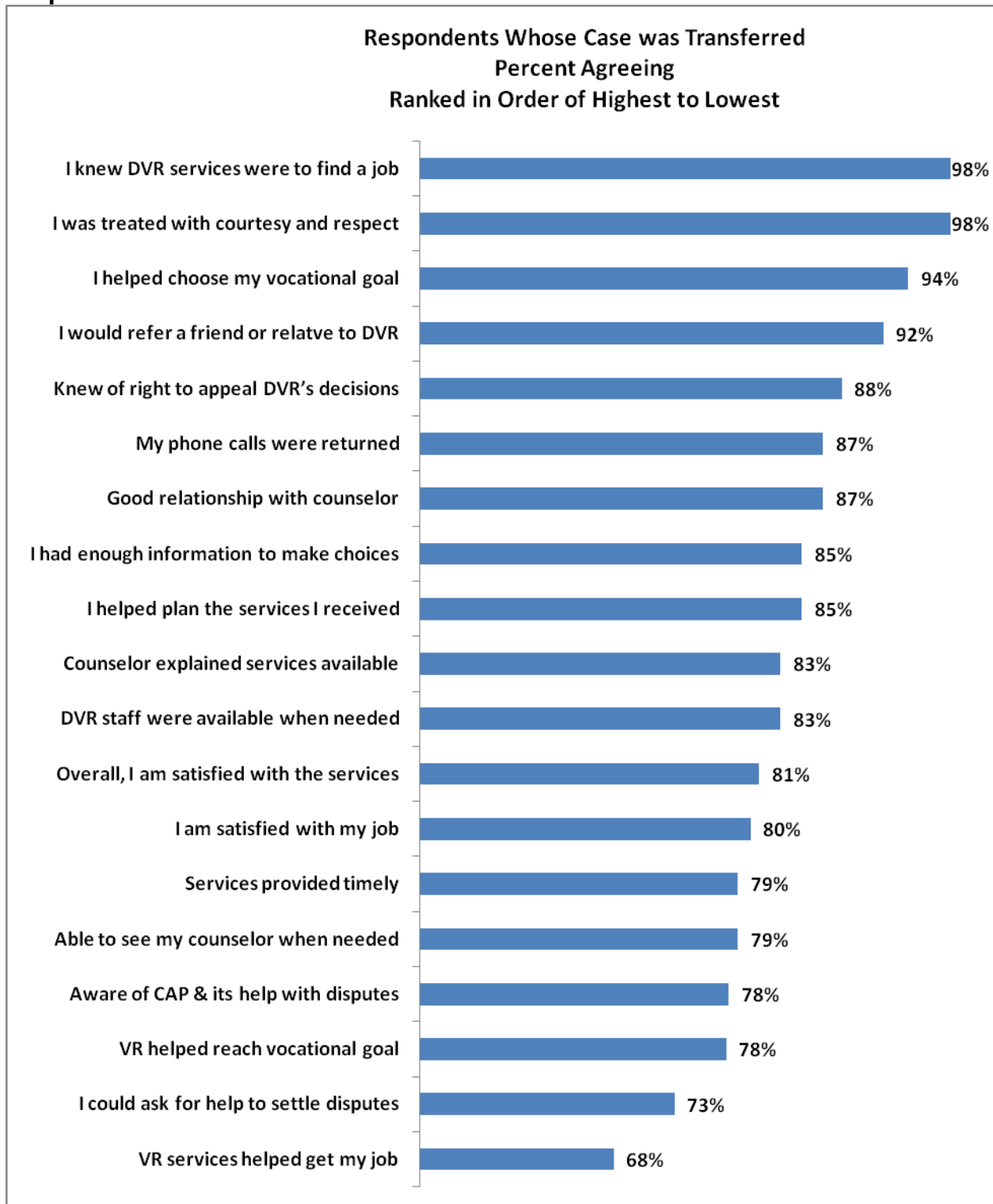




Table 5 provides an opportunity to compare all the categories of data.

<b>Table 5: Comparison of All Responses for All Categories Analyzed</b>							
	All Respondents	Employed	Unemployed	Non-Rural	Road	Remote	Transfers
Number of Respondents	183	130	53	130	34	19	52
I was treated with courtesy and respect	99%	98%	100%	100%	94%	100%	98%
I knew DVR services were to find a job	96%	95%	96%	94%	100%	100%	98%
I helped choose my vocational goal	94%	95%	92%	95%	88%	100%	94%
I would refer a friend or relative to DVR	93%	94%	91%	90%	90%	94%	92%
Good relationship with counselor	92%	95%	85%	94%	85%	94%	87%
Knew of right to appeal DVR's decisions	92%	94%	88%	94%	88%	89%	88%
I had enough information to make choices	92%	95%	83%	94%	88%	84%	85%
DVR staff were available when needed	91%	92%	88%	93%	85%	89%	83%
My phone calls were returned	91%	92%	89%	93%	88%	84%	87%
I helped plan the services I received	91%	94%	83%	91%	88%	89%	85%
Counselor explained services available	91%	93%	85%	92%	88%	89%	83%
Services provided timely	90%	92%	83%	92%	82%	84%	79%
Able to see my counselor when needed	89%	92%	83%	92%	78%	89%	79%
Overall, I am satisfied with the services	88%	92%	78%	91%	82%	84%	81%
Aware of CAP & its help with disputes	86%	86%	86%	88%	84%	74%	78%
I am satisfied with my job	85%	85%		86%	87%	80%	80%
I could ask for help to settle disputes	84%	86%	80%	88%	75%	78%	73%
VR helped reach vocational goal	84%	86%		82%	88%	91%	78%
VR services helped get my job	77%	79%		77%	65%	100%	68%
Case was transferred	30%	28%	35%	32%	24%	28%	