



# Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Consumer Satisfaction Survey Results

FFY 2010

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**

- 869 surveys were mailed; 14% or 121 were returned undeliverable; 20% or 146 of those surveyed responded.
- 442 surveys were emailed; 14% or 63 were undeliverable; 1% or 5 actively opted out (refused to take the survey and asked not to be contacted again); 11% or 41 of those surveyed responded.
- 82% expressed an overall satisfaction with DVR's services. The satisfaction was 83% for those exiting the program unemployed compared to 81% for those exiting employed.
- 89% said they would refer either friends or family to DVR.
- 88% felt they were treated with courtesy and respect.
- 86% reported having a good relationship with their counselor.
- 87% indicated their phone calls were returned and that staff were available when needed.
- Overall, the survey results show a decrease from the FY2009 survey results. However, with a validity factor of plus or minus 6.6, the majority of the survey responses fall within the range of FY2009's results.
- The top two aspects of the program respondents reported that they liked were the overall program and their relationship with their counselor and/or staff.
- The items respondents disliked about the program include the unavailability of their counselor including phone calls not being returned and that the process took too long.
- The survey results are slightly skewed towards the opinions of those participants exiting employed, males and those with a physical/orthopedic disability as these participants returned a higher proportion of surveys. Those living on the road system are well under-represented with 26% of the surveys sent to them with only 9% returned. The non-rural and rural areas of the state are slightly overly represented. Due to the sheer numbers, the non-rural areas of the state always skew the results toward that population group.

## **Background**

34 CFR § 361.17 (h) (4) charges the SVRC to review and analyze consumer satisfaction in regards to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services as delivered by the state vocational rehabilitation program. In an effort to meet this regulatory requirement and to measure the level of satisfaction and the general attitudes of DVR participants, the SVRC 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 participant's attitudes and satisfaction level in the broad categories of:

1. Program Satisfaction: focus is on the overall program and employment.
2. Program Information: focus is on the provision of adequate information about the VR program.
3. Participant Involvement: focus is on client choice in both VR services and the vocational goal.
4. Participant and Staff Interaction: focus is on the counselor/client relationship as well as support staff.

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

## **Methodology**

Surveys are mailed monthly to all participants whose cases were closed in the previous month and who received services under an individualized plan of employment (IPE). Timely surveying hopefully helps to maximize the response rate. This group of participants was targeted as they have been through the entire VR process. DVR also does not want to repeatedly resurvey active participants.

In an attempt to increase the number of respondents, in January 2011 DVR began using a combination of email and letter surveys. All individuals who did not respond to the original FY2010 mailed survey and who had an email addresses were sent an electronic survey. The email survey had 40 respondents or a 10% response rate. While not as high a rate as both the SVRC and DVR thought it might be, these are people who did not originally respond to the first survey, so more information was collected. DVR will continue to survey using both letters and emails.

The survey was also modified to allow comments for each question and changed the response from a Likert type scale to agree/disagree. All surveys were sent from the SVRC. The mailed surveys include a postage paid return envelope; the email surveys were sent using the Survey Monkey tool. Due to staff limitations, DVR neither resends surveys to those individuals who do not respond nor does telephone interviews.

Descriptive statistics are used to summarize the results. The survey data will be kept and used for longitudinal comparisons and trend analysis.

## Validity

Of the 869 surveys mailed, 121 or 14% were returned as undeliverable leaving 745. From the 745, 146 or 20% of the participants responded. Of the 442 emails sent, 5 opted out, 68 were undeliverable and 374 were acknowledged as received. Of the 374, 41 or 11% responded. Combining the mailed and emailed survey results, a valid statistical sample size with a confidence level of 95%, plus or minus 6.6% was achieved.

## Results

Tables 1 through 5 provide information on five different attributes of the DVR participants surveyed with a comparison of the percentage of those surveyed to those returned. These five characteristics were selected for analysis as they give a broad picture of the individuals served by DVR thus helping to validate that the survey responses are representative of the DVR participant population.

Table 1 show those participants with a behavioral health disability are under-represented while those with a physical/orthopedic disability are over-represented. The other disability groups are appropriately represented in the results.

Table 2 shows that females returned the written survey at higher rate than males while the converse was true of the email survey. Overall, females are under-represented in the results.

Table 3 shows all age groups are fairly represented. It is interesting to note that proportionally, more participants in the >65 age group returned the email survey as compared to the other age groups. Both the SVRC and DVR thought an electronic survey might appeal to the younger age group.

Table 4 shows participants from the more urban areas of the state returned a much higher proportion than did the other areas although the rural or bush areas returned at a higher rate than those participants who are on the road system.

Table 5 shows that participants exiting employed responded at a higher rate than those who exited unemployed. This supports the hypothesis that participants who exit the program employed are happier with DVR than those exiting unemployed and thus more likely to respond to the survey at a higher percentage level.

<b>Disability</b>	<b>% Sent (mail/email)</b>	<b>% Returned (mail/email)</b>	<b>Combined (sent/returned)</b>
Behavioral Health	38% / 39%	30% / 7%	38% / 28%
Physical/Orthopedic	36% / 35%	39% / 19%	36% / 45%
Cognitive	17% / 16%	18% / 7%	16% / 16%
Deafness/Hearing Loss	7% / 8%	10% / 3%	7% / 8%
Blindness/Visual Impairments	3% / 3%	4% / 0%	3% / 3%

<b>Table 2: by Gender</b>			
<b>Gender</b>	<b>% Sent (mail/email)</b>	<b>% Returned (mail/email)</b>	<b>Combined (sent/returned)</b>
Female	43% / 44%	54% / 42%	57% / 50%
Male	57% / 56%	46% / 59%	43% / 50%

<b>Table 3: by Age</b>			
<b>Age Group</b>	<b>% Sent (mail/email)</b>	<b>% Returned (mail/email)</b>	<b>Combined (sent/returned)</b>
< 24	14% / 15%	16% / 3%	15% / 13%
24 – 65	84% / 82%	82% / 31%	83% / 84%
> 65	2% / 3%	3% / 9%	2% / 2%

<b>Table 4: by Location</b>			
<b>Location</b>	<b>% Sent (mail/email)</b>	<b>% Returned (mail/email)</b>	<b>Combined (sent/returned)</b>
Non-Rural	66% / 87%	65% / 10%	73% / 86%
Road System	30% / 10%	27% / 5%	23% / 9%
Rural (Bush)	5% / 4%	8% / 39%	4% / 6%

<b>Table 5: by Employment Status</b>			
<b>Employment Status</b>	<b>% Sent (mail/email)</b>	<b>% Returned (mail/email)</b>	<b>Combined (mail/email)</b>
Employed	63% / 62%	69% / 11%	54% / 60%
Unemployed	37% / 38%	32% / 10%	46% / 40%

Comparison to Previous Years

Table 6 compares survey results from FY2007 to FY2010. While it is difficult to identify trends in the data as most responses do not have a consistent increase or decrease. There is a decrease in all positive responses from FY2009 to FY2010. This could be a result of the increase in survey responses in Fy2010 of those individuals who exited the program unemployed (an increase from 29% of all respondents in Fy2009 to 40% in Fy2010).

<b>Table 6: Respondents Agreeing with Survey Statements - FY2007 through FY2010</b>				
<b>Statements</b>	<b>FY07</b>	<b>FY08</b>	<b>FY09</b>	<b>FY10</b>
I knew DVR services were to help me find a job.	95%	97%	96%	92%
I would refer a friend or relative to DVR	91%	90%	93%	89%
I was treated with courtesy and respect.	91%	96%	99%	88%
DVR staff was available to help me when needed.	86%	89%	91%	87%
My phone calls were returned.	80%	90%	91%	87%
My counselor and I had a good working relationship.	86%	92%	92%	86%
I was involved in choosing my vocational goal.	89%	92%	94%	86%
I helped plan the services I received.	83%	92%	91%	86%
I was able to see my counselor when I needed to.	81%	87%	89%	85%
I was informed of my right to appeal DVR's decisions.	81%	91%	92%	84%
Overall, I am satisfied with the services I received.	82%	85%	88%	82%
I am satisfied with my job.	84%	86%	85%	82%
I received enough information to make good choices.	80%	86%	92%	82%
I feel my counselor explained all services available.	81%	86%	91%	81%
I knew I could ask for help to settle disputes.	84%	88%	84%	80%
Services provided in a reasonable amount of time.	84%	82%	90%	79%
VR helped me reach my vocational goal.	70%	79%	84%	78%
I was aware of CAP & it could help me with disputes.	64%	85%	86%	76%
VR services helped get my job.	77%	77%	77%	72%

Survey results are based on the combined mail/email data and are summarized below by survey categories, geographic area, employment status, transfers and participant 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, participant involvement, and counselor/staff interaction. The strongest areas are in program information and program satisfaction.

Results for All Respondents

Graph 2 presents the survey responses for all respondents. The results show that DVR is getting across its message that we are here to help them find and keep a job with 92% of VR participants saying they knew DVR services were to find a job.

The low perception of individuals regarding VR services helping them get their job is always perplexing. On one hand, DVR believes in empowering participants through training and building skill sets to enable them to be independent. Often after this occurs, individuals see themselves as getting the job and do not see the relationship of VR services to the job getting. Because of the potential confusion around this statement, the FY2011 surveys replaced the current statement with “VR services helped me prepare for, get or keep my job”.

Name recognition of CAP continues to be an issue in this survey as we have seen in other surveys. Information about CAP is presented at orientation and a CAP brochure is included in the intake packet, the low percentage seen in the responses may be related to the fact that most individuals never have the need for CAP. Another hypothesis is that there is a great deal of information to process during the VR orientation process and that the information pertaining to CAP is not retained. There is no data to support the previous statements and the survey information will be shared with staff.

#### Results by Employment Status

Graphs 3 and 4 present the employment status related responses. In reverse of what would be expected, a higher percentage of surveys were returned and the overall satisfaction with the program was slightly higher for those unemployed than those employed. Both groups had similarly high marks for DVR personnel with slightly lower marks coming from those who left DVR employed. Overall satisfaction with the DVR program was 2% lower for the employed group.

#### Results by Geographic Areas

Graphs 5, 6 and 7 present the results by geographic area. DVR has an obligation to provide services statewide. This is a challenge given the size of the state and the itinerant nature of VR services provided in some areas. The 2009 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment identified rural Alaska as being under-served.

For the purposes of this survey, non-rural includes the larger cities of primarily Anchorage, Juneau and Fairbanks.

Respondent's overall satisfaction levels for the remote and non-rural areas are, interestingly enough, opposite of what one might expect. Those in remote areas whom have access to the least number of services are the most satisfied while those in the non-rural areas whom have access to the most services are the least satisfied. Respondents living on the road system are between the two.

#### Results by Transfer Cases

Graph 8 presents the data on cases that have been transferred. Over the years, transfer cases have proven problematic as the service delivery is interrupted and a relationship must be developed with a new VR counselor.

Twenty-one percent (21%) of those surveyed during FY2010 reported their case had been transferred at sometime during life of the case which is a decrease from 30% in FY2009. Of those cases transferred, 67% were initiated by DVR due to staff turnover and 19% were due to participants moving. The overall satisfaction with VR services was the same for both transfer cases for those who did not have their case transferred, 84%. Sixty-seven percent (67%) of transfers became employed as compared to 66% of those whose case was not transferred.



### Participant Comments

The participants' comments about experience with DVR are grouped by common themes and shown in Tables 7 and 8 shown below.

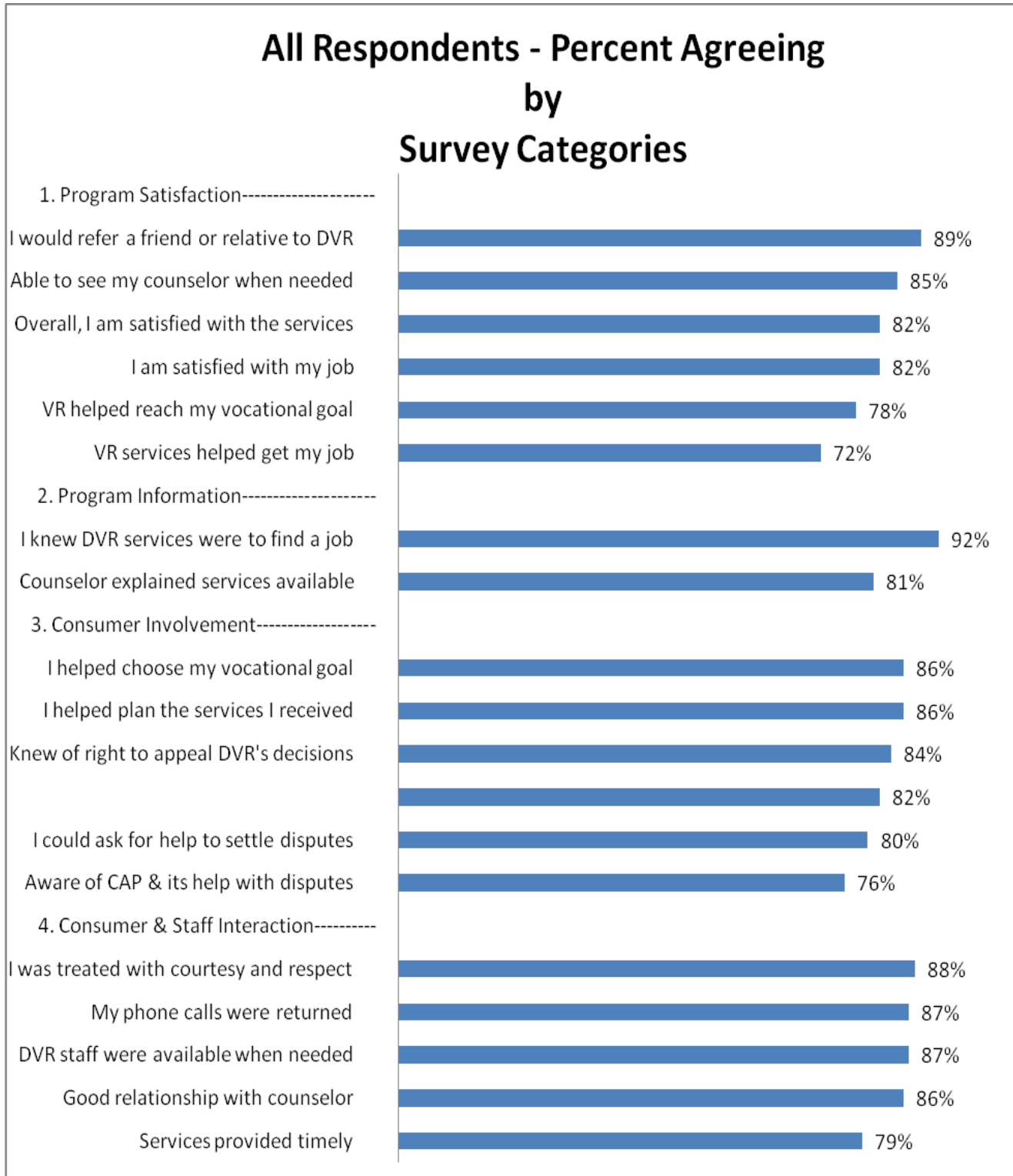
Seventy-seven percent (77%) of the individuals surveyed commented on what they liked about DVR while only 43% commented on what they disliked about their DVR experience. The most liked aspect of DVR was the overall program followed closely by the counselor relationship.

<b>Table 7: What Participants Liked the Most About Their Experience with DVR</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Number on</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>
Overall program	47	32%
Counselor relationship	35	23%
Help received	23	15%
Entire staff	30	20%
Employment assistance	15	10%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>150</b>	<b>81% overall response rate</b>

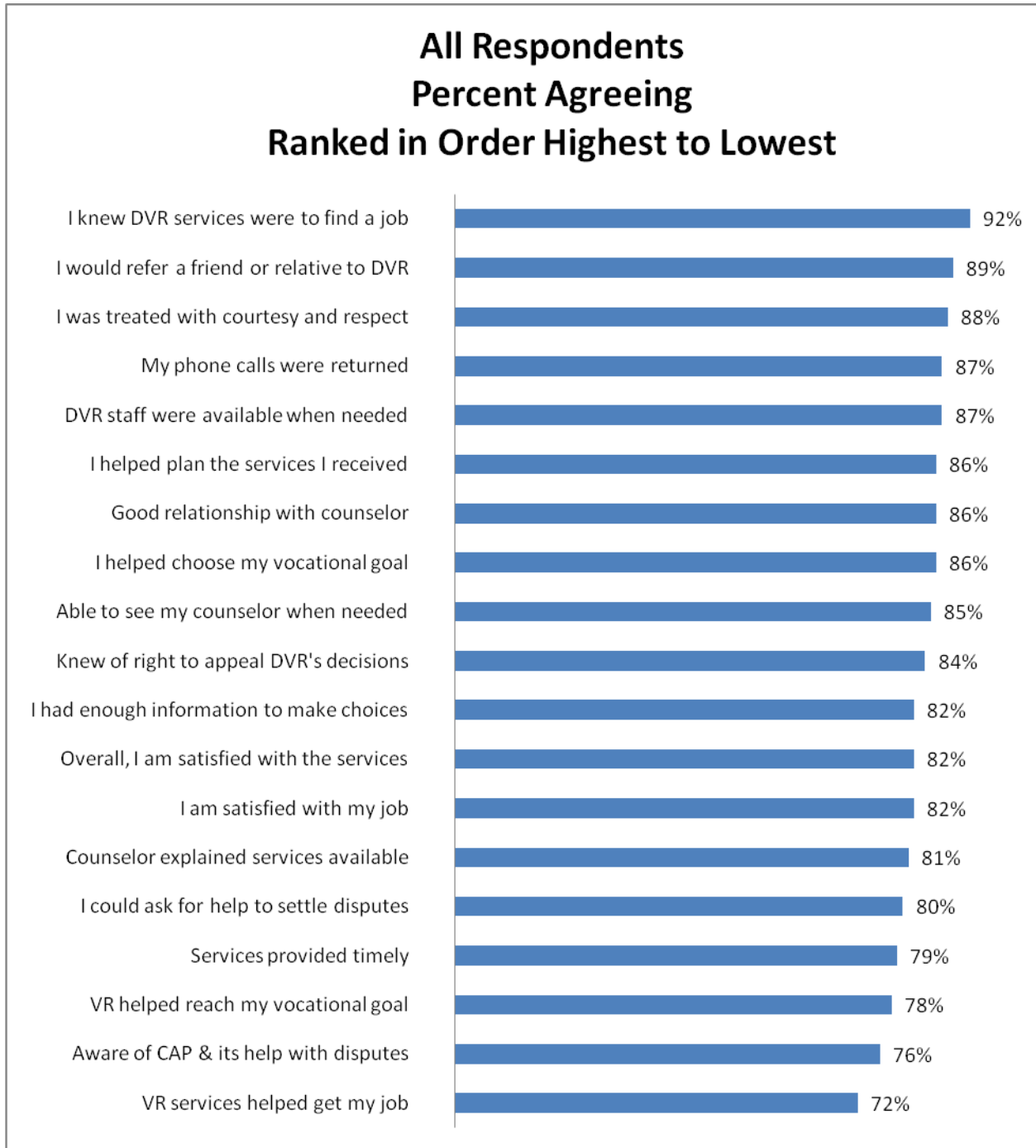
Counselors not available and staff in general not returning phone calls were the most disliked aspects of the VR experience. Transfer cases generated the bulk of these staff related comments.

<b>Table 8: What Participants Disliked the Most About Their Experience with DVR</b>		
<b>Category</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>% of Total Respondents</b>
Staff – phone calls not returned, not available, etc.	26	37%
Time required	16	23%
Services not provided	13	19%
Lack of information	5	7%
Offices location	3	4%
Overall program	4	6%
Change in Counselor	1	1%
Lack of good job choices	2	3%
<b>Total Respondents</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>38% overall response rate</b>

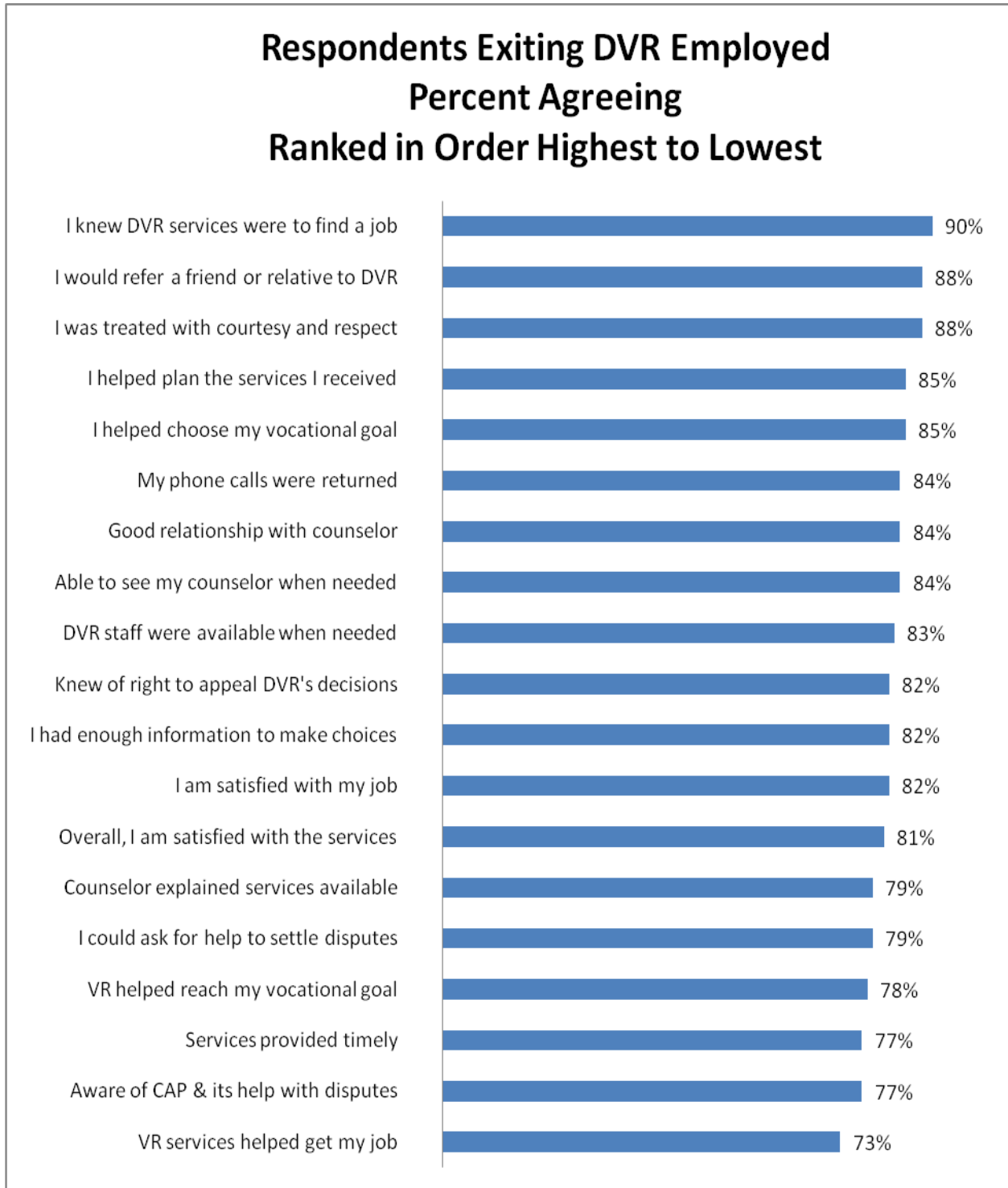
**Graph1**



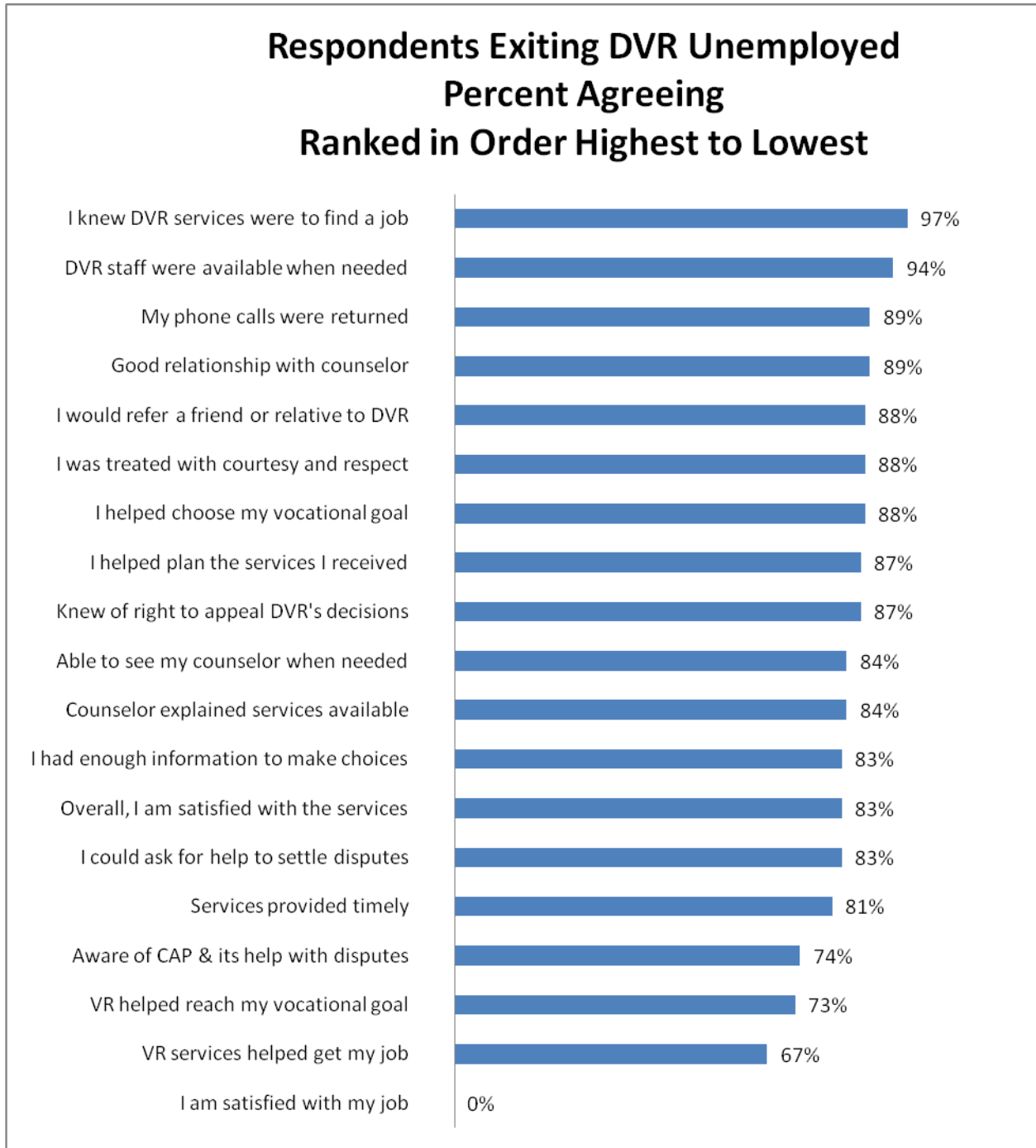
**Graph 2**



**Graph 3**

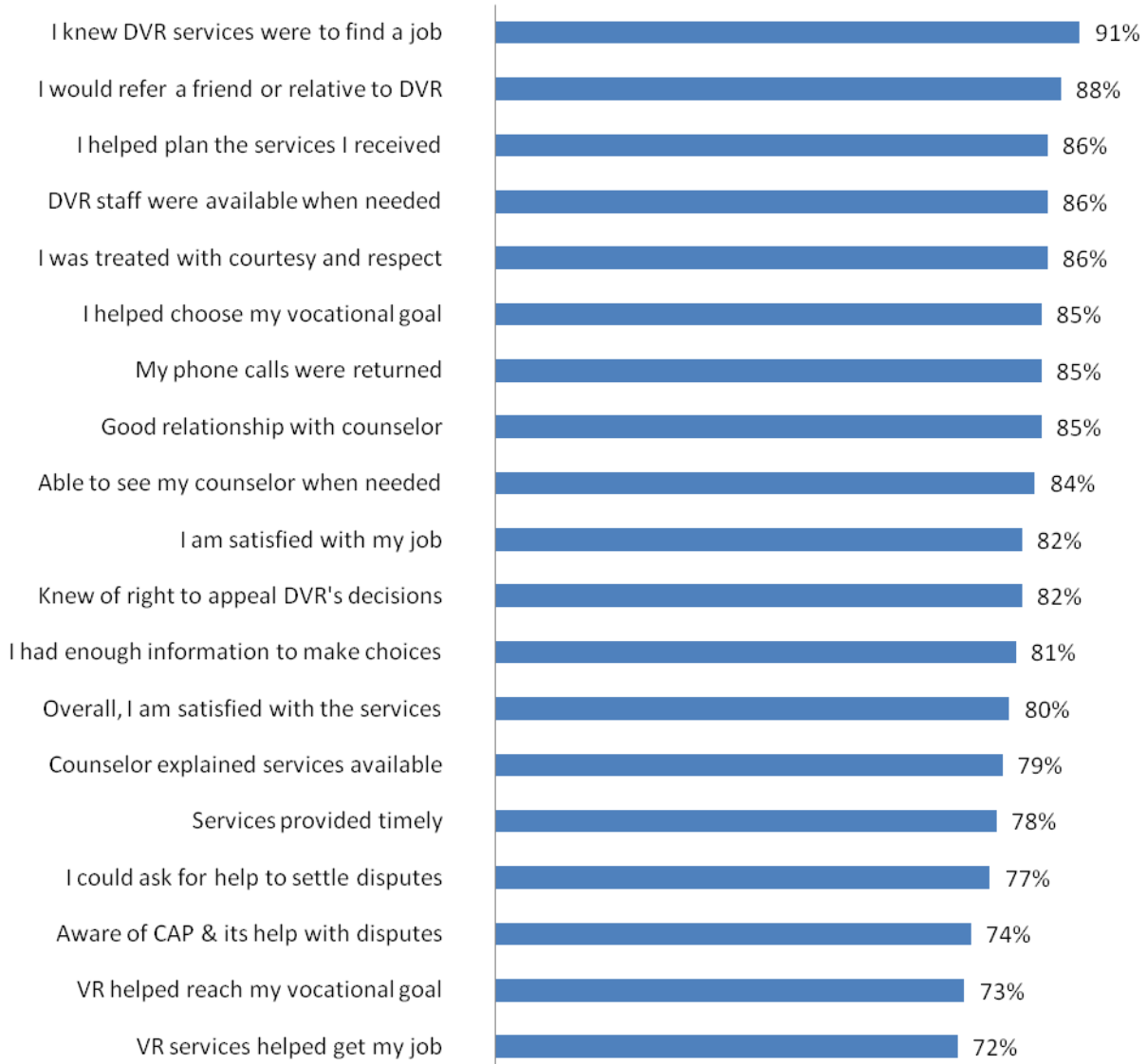


**Graph 4**



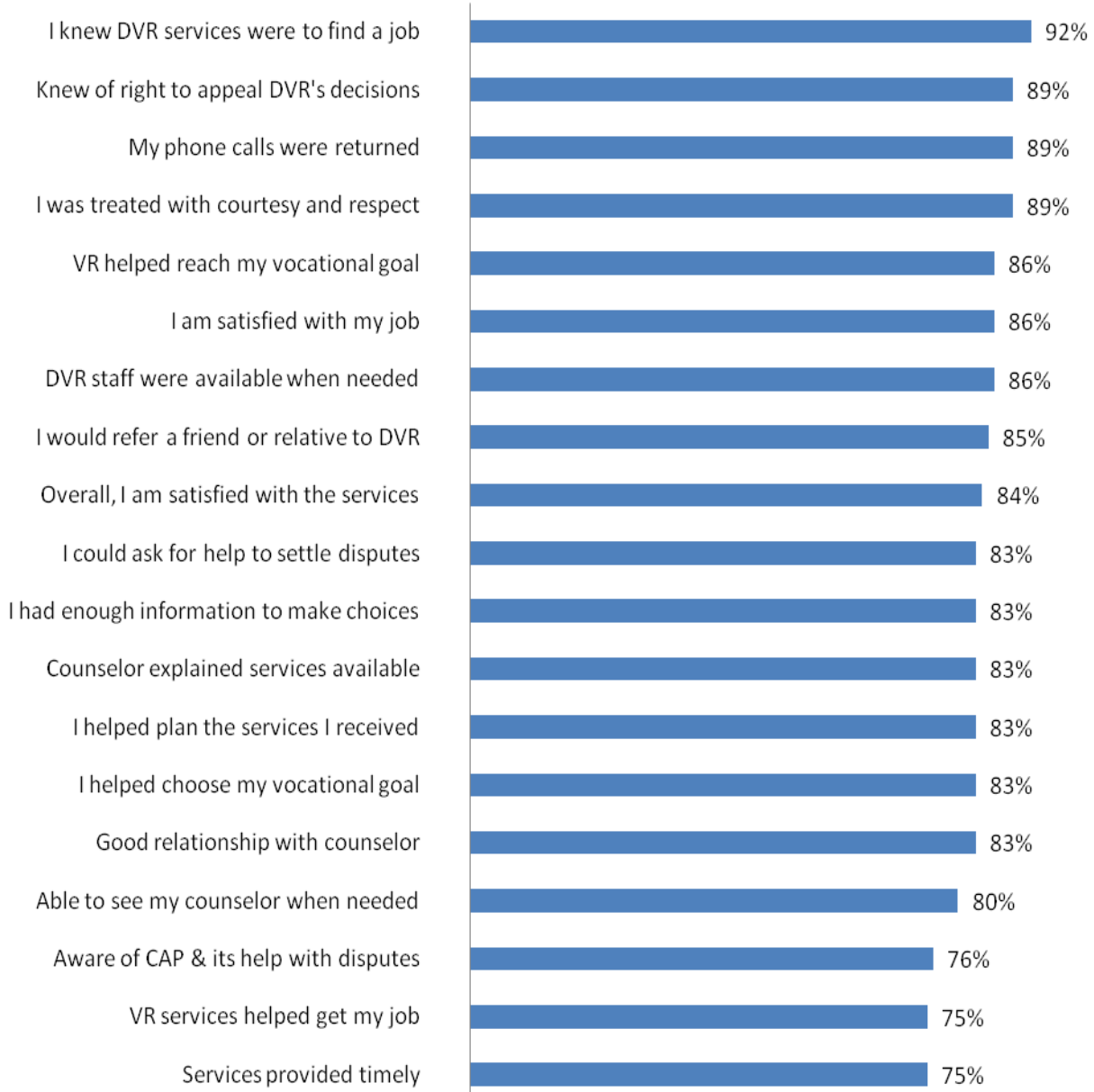
**Graph 5**

### **Non-Rural Respondents Percent Agreeing Ranked in Order Highest to Lowest**



**Graph 6**

### **Respondents Living Along the Road System Percent Agreeing Ranked in Order Highest to Lowest**



**Graph 7**





**Graph 8**

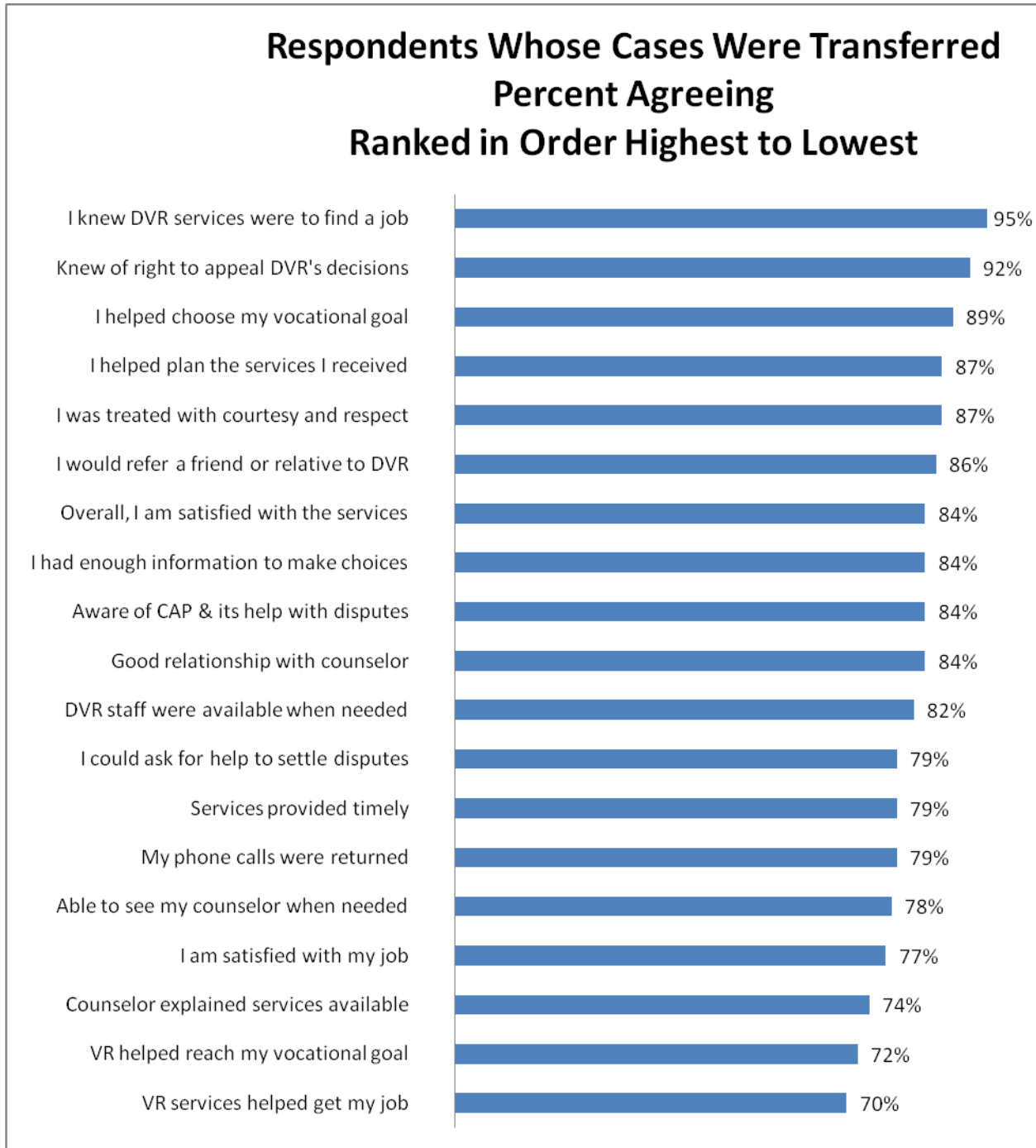


Table 9 provides an opportunity to compare all the categories of data.

<b>Table 9: Comparison of All Responses for All Categories Analyzed</b>							
	All Respondents	Employed	Unemployed	Non-Rural	Road	Remote	Transfers
Number of Respondents	186	116	70	127	43	16	39
I was treated with courtesy and respect	88%	88%	88%	86%	89%	100%	87%
I knew DVR services were to find a job	92%	90%	97%	91%	92%	100%	95%
I helped choose my vocational goal	86%	85%	88%	85%	83%	100%	89%
I would refer a friend or relative to DVR	89%	88%	88%	88%	85%	100%	86%
Good relationship with counselor	86%	84%	89%	85%	83%	100%	84%
Knew of right to appeal DVR's decisions	84%	82%	87%	82%	89%	94%	92%
I had enough information to make choices	82%	82%	83%	81%	83%	94%	84%
DVR staff were available when needed	87%	83%	94%	86%	86%	94%	82%
My phone calls were returned	87%	84%	95%	85%	89%	88%	79%
I helped plan the services I received	86%	85%	87%	86%	83%	94%	87%
Counselor explained services available	81%	79%	84%	79%	83%	94%	74%
Services provided timely	79%	77%	81%	78%	75%	94%	79%
Able to see my counselor when needed	85%	84%	84%	84%	80%	94%	78%
Overall, I am satisfied with the services	82%	81%	83%	80%	84%	94%	84%
Aware of CAP & its help with disputes	76%	77%	74%	74%	76%	93%	84%
I am satisfied with my job	82%	82%		82%	86%	67%	77%
I could ask for help to settle disputes	80%	79%	83%	77%	83%	93%	79%
VR helped reach vocational goal	78%	78%		73%	86%	82%	72%
VR services helped get my job	72%	73%		73%	75%	70%	70%
Case was transferred	21%	22%	19%	21%	23%	13%	