



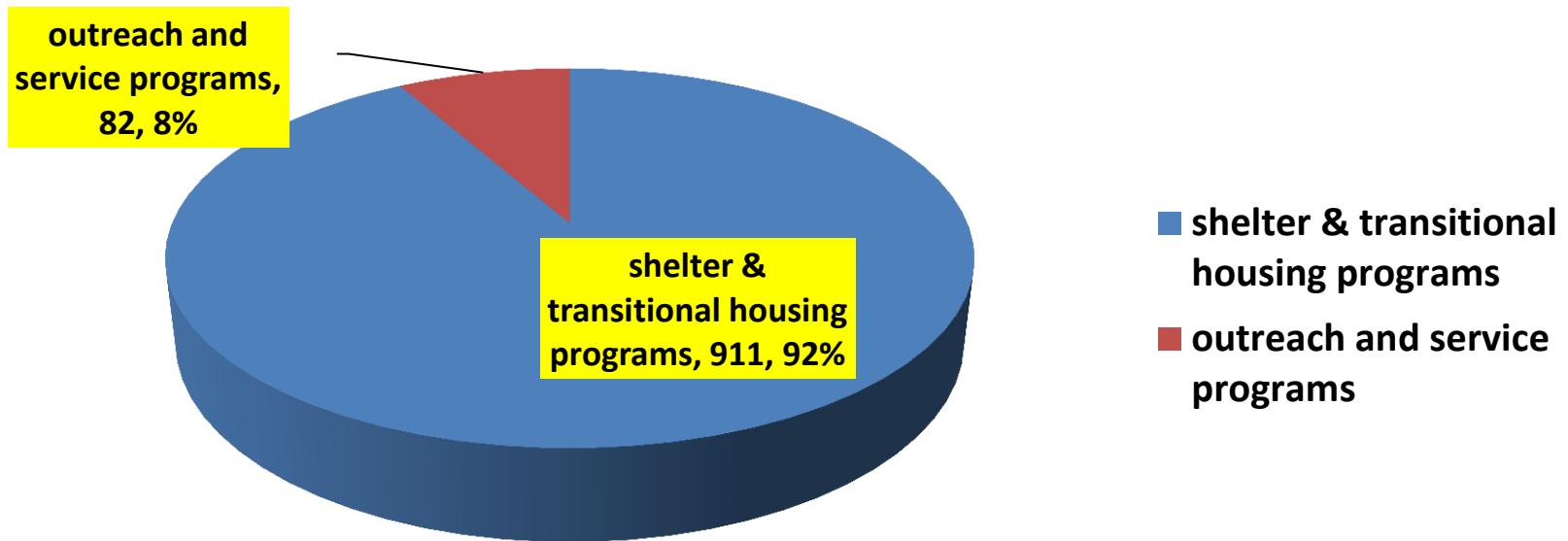
# Preliminary Results from March 14, 2012 MHSA Survey of Homeless Older Adults

Analysis by Fred Berman, National Center on Family Homelessness  
September 2012

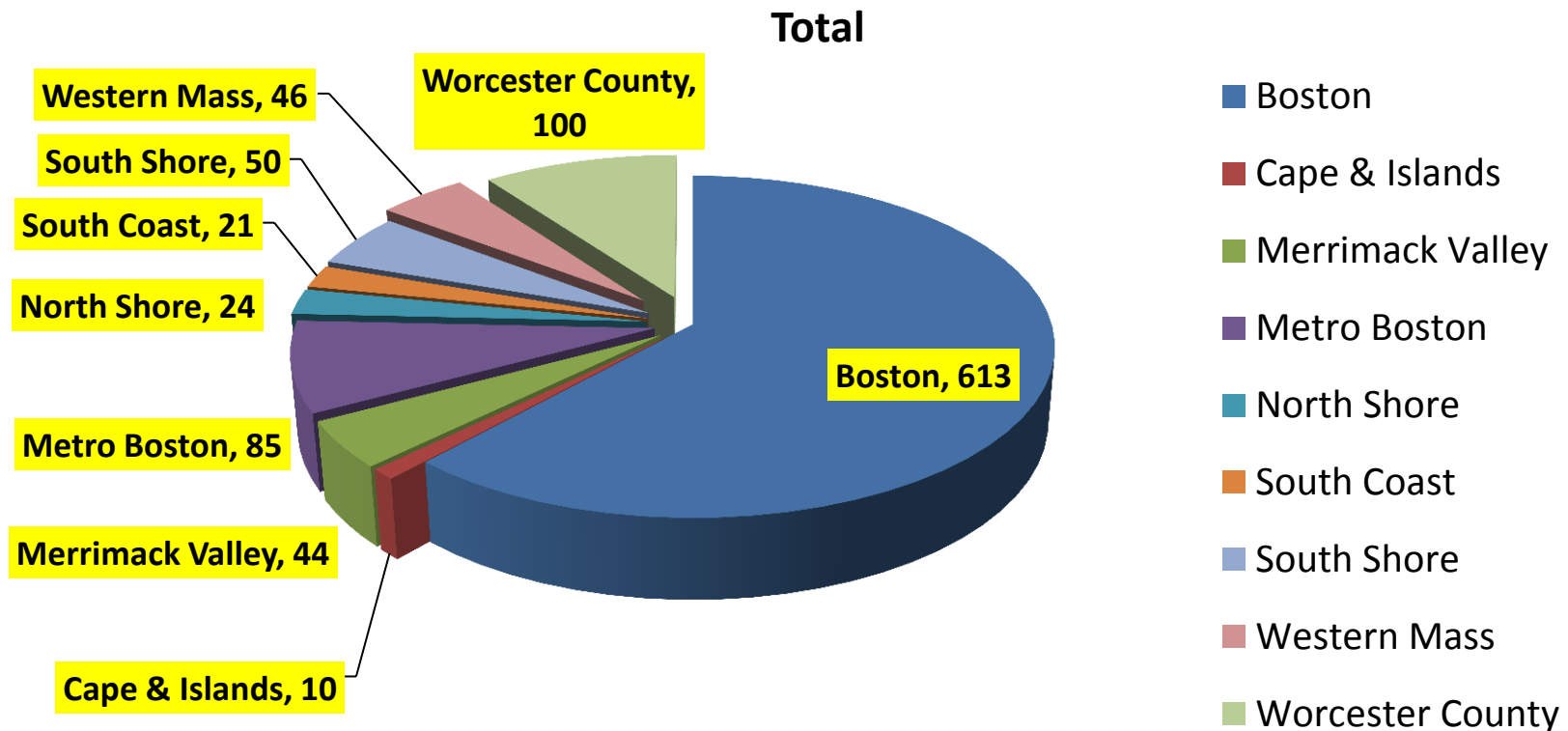
Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance

A total of **1,736 surveys were distributed** to older adults in targeted shelters, transitional housing programs, outreach, and service locations.

A total of **993 surveys were completed** by respondents in **42 locations**.



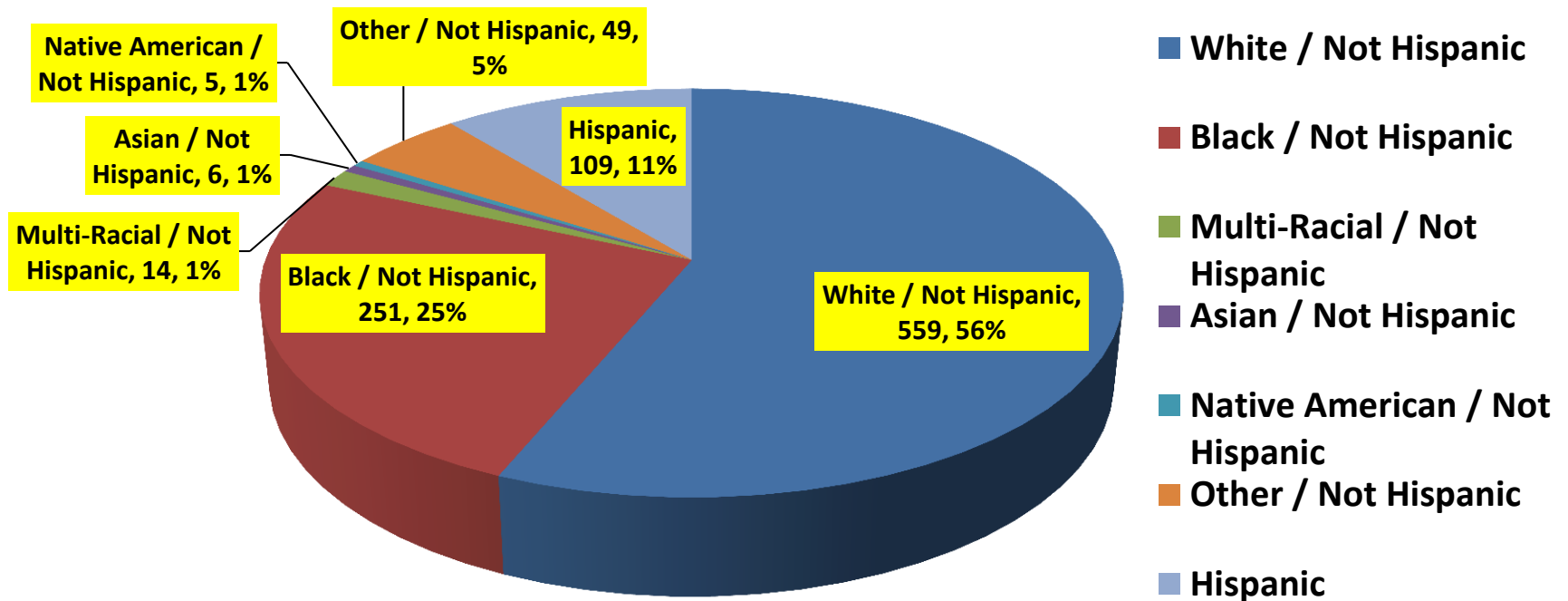
Approx. 80% of respondents were surveyed in Metro Boston and Worcester County locations.



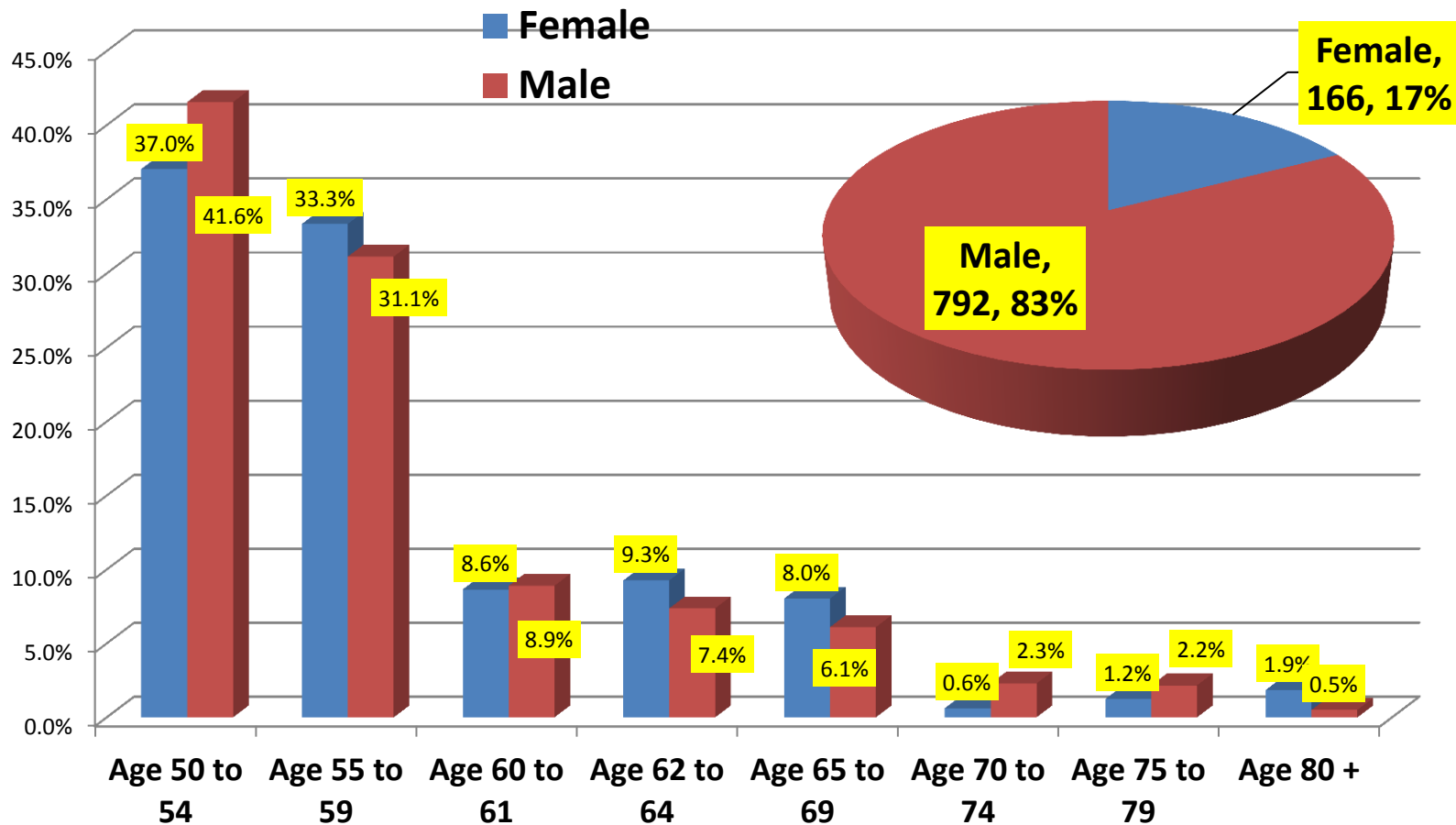
**Note:** The relatively small numbers of respondents from outside Metro Boston and Worcester County made it impractical to calculate regional differences.

92% of respondents were from three demographic groupings:

- White Not Hispanic (56%)
- Black Not Hispanic (25%)
- Hispanic persons (various races) (11%)



Of respondents with a known gender, 83% were male and 17% were female. The distribution by age range was pretty similar for men and women. Overall, 19% of respondents were age 62 or older.

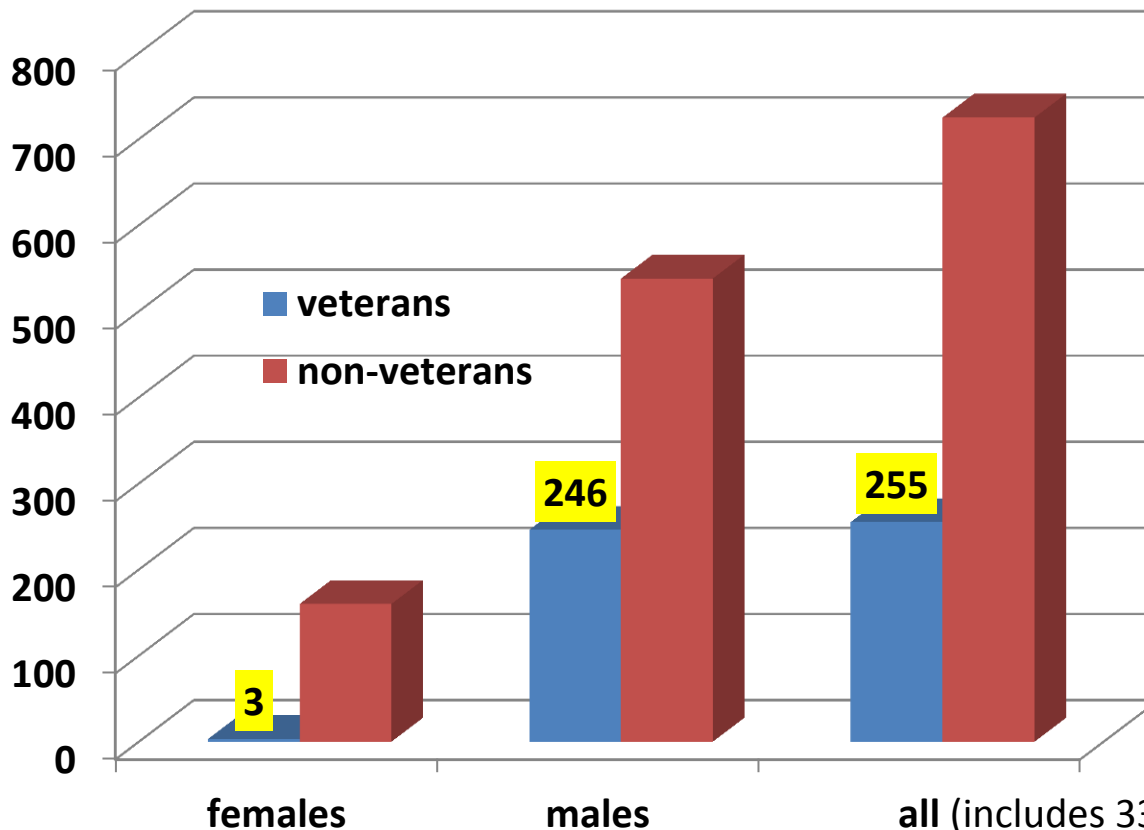


# Veteran Status

Approximately 26% of the respondents reported being veterans (or receiving veterans benefits): 2% of females, 31% of males.

Two programs - the New England Center (Boston), and Veterans Inc. (Worcester) – accounted for 101 of the 255 vets.

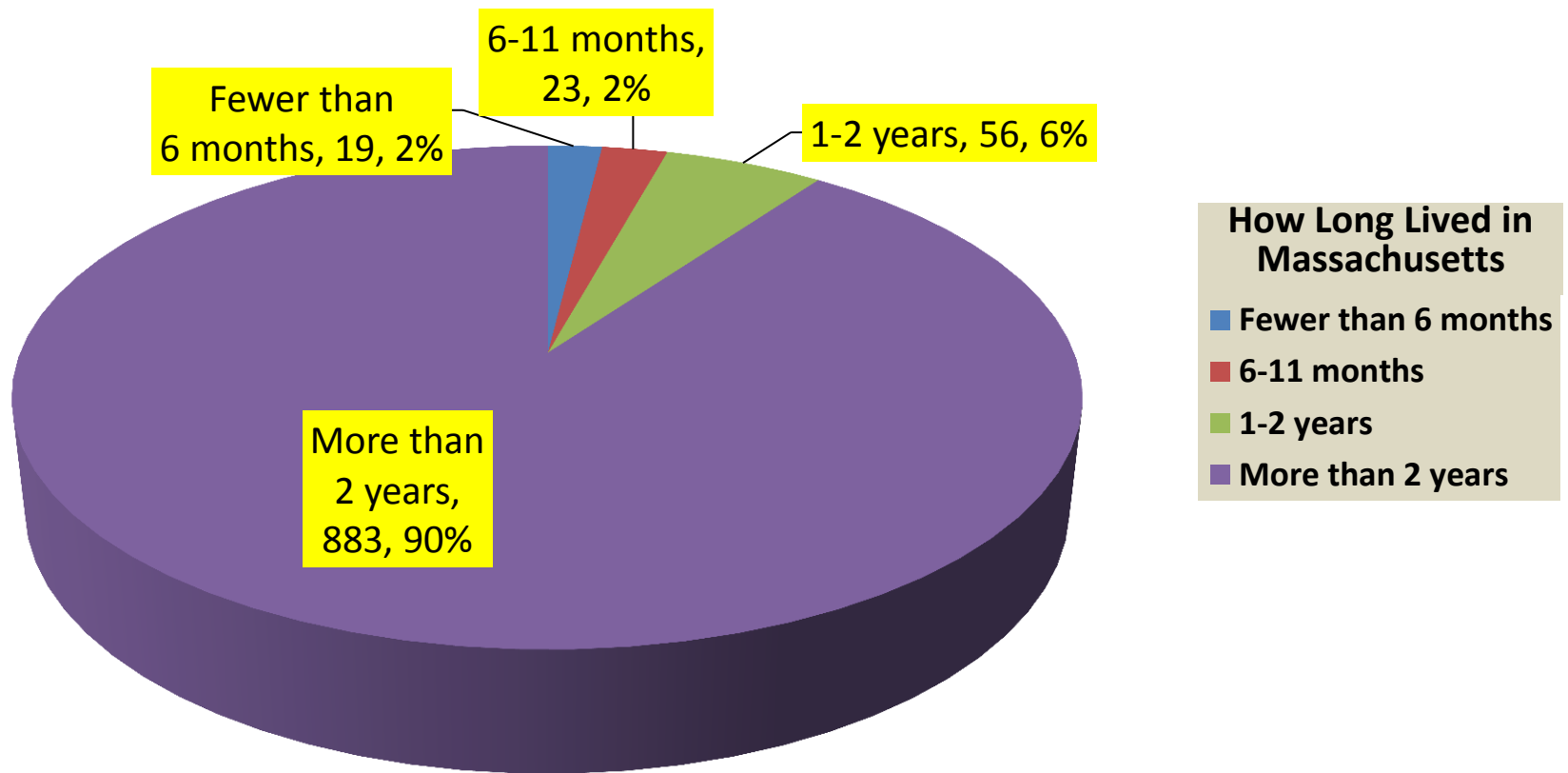
The remaining 154 vets responded from 27 different programs.



The age distribution of veterans paralleled the overall age distribution of male respondents.

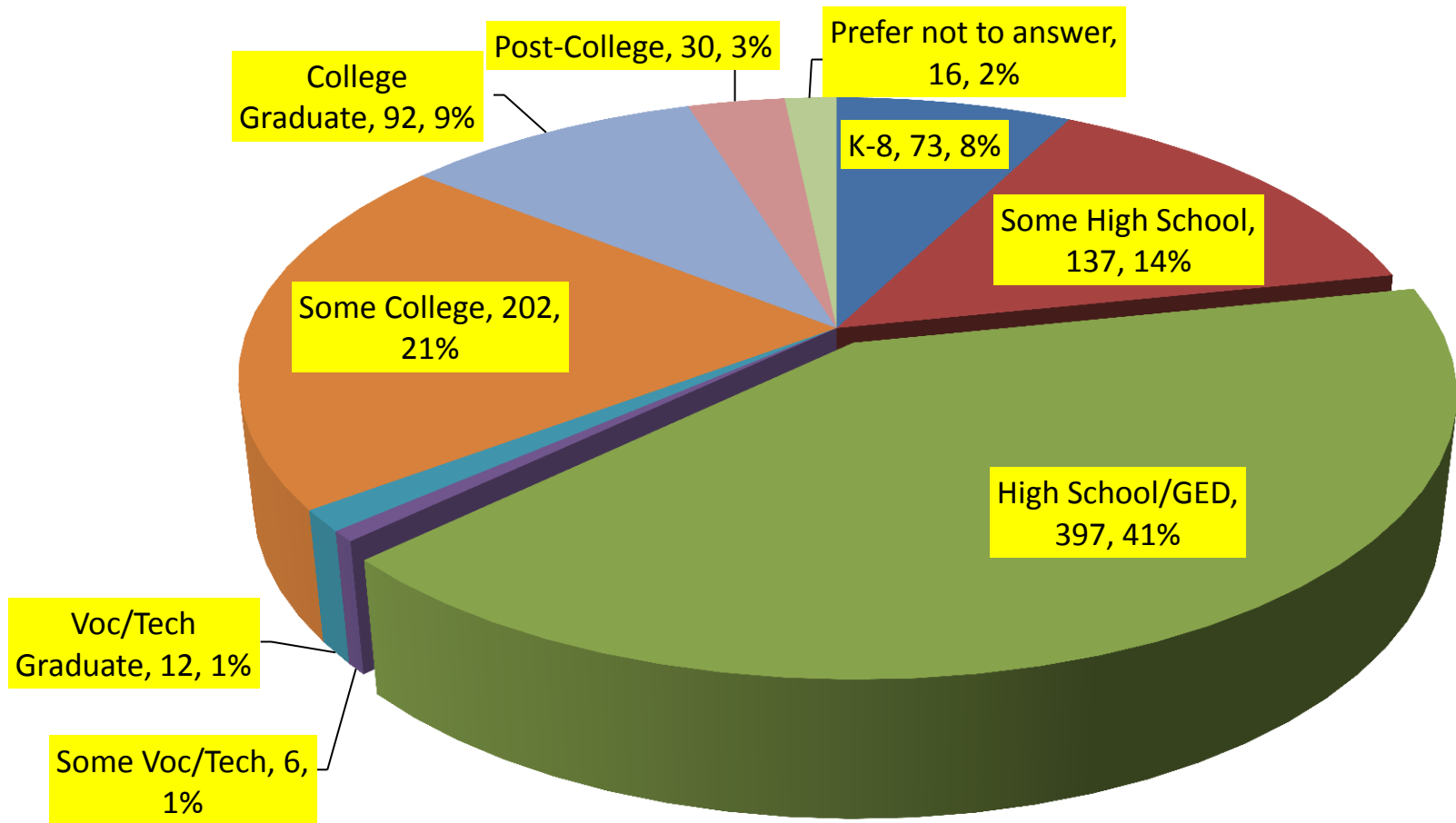
Only 44 (17%) of the 255 known veterans cited the receipt of veterans benefits.

# The men and women surveyed were long-time Massachusetts residents.



# Highest Education

Of 965 respondents who answered the education question, one-third (324) reported at least some college.

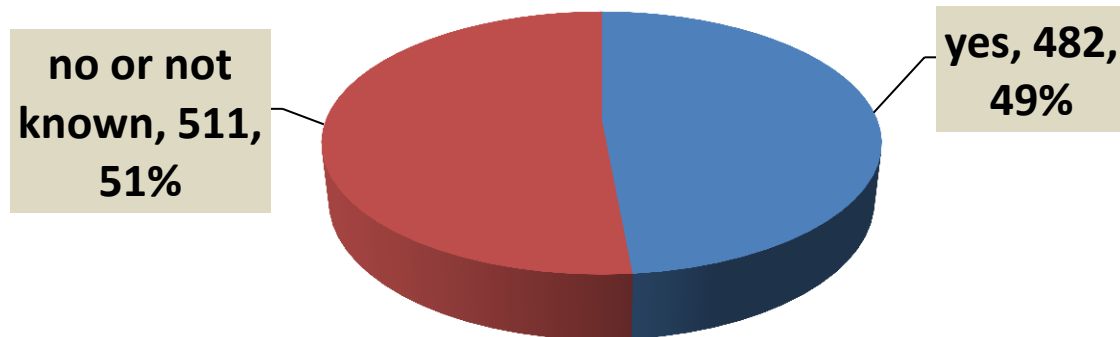




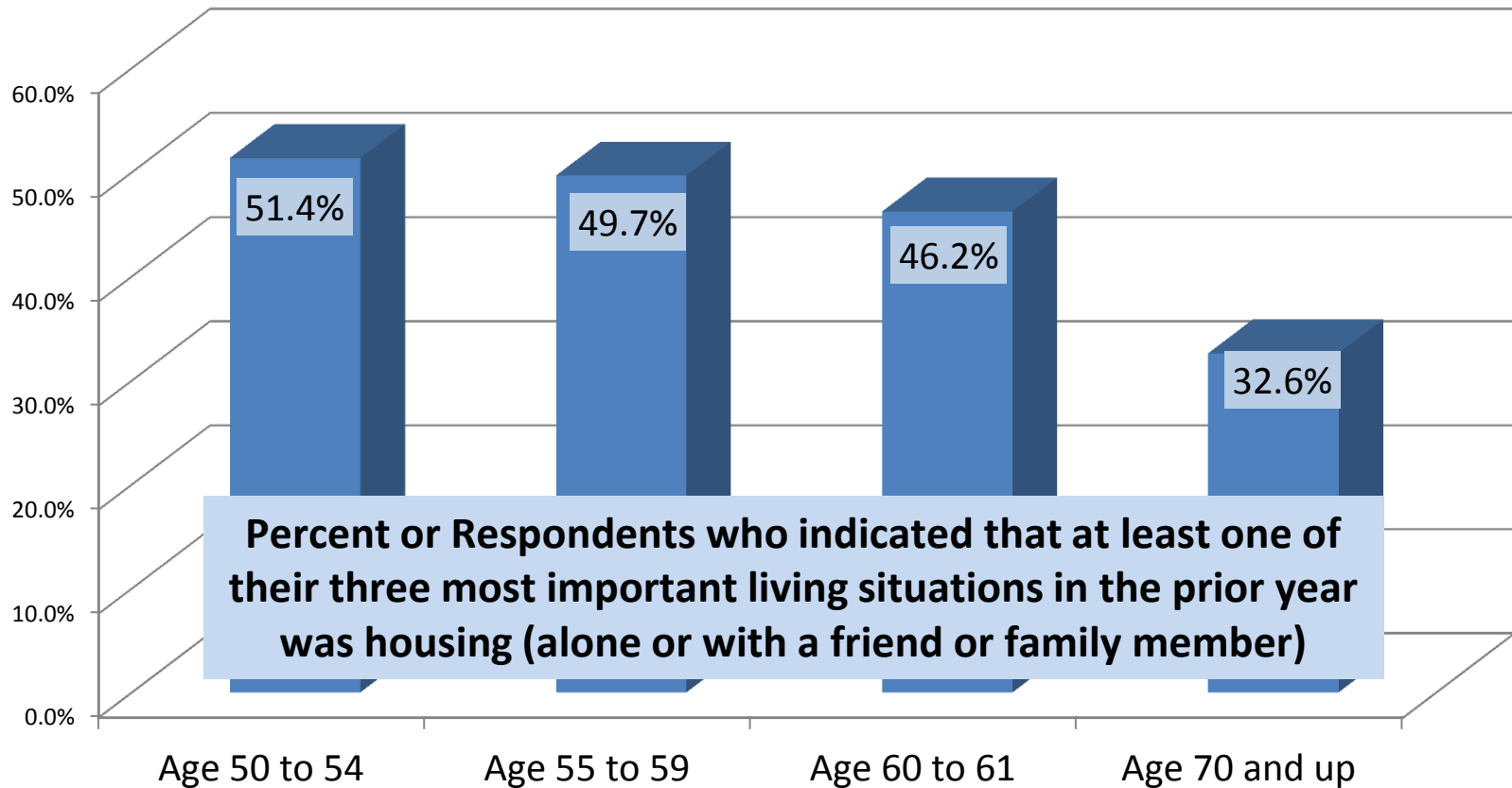
**Nearly half of all respondents reported housing - on their own or with family or friend(s) - as one of their three most important living situations the past year.**

**One wonders what percentage of those housing situations could have been extended with help....**

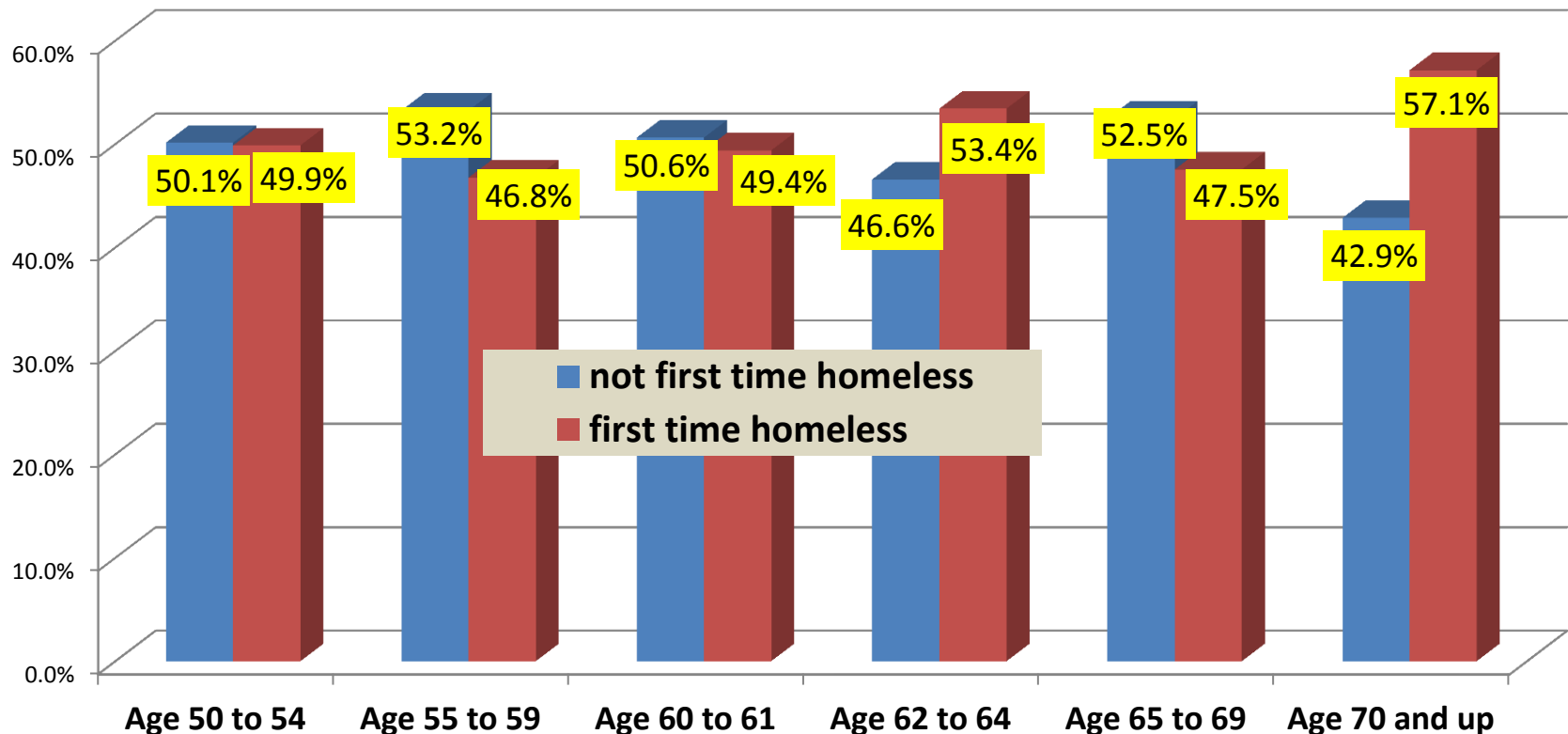
**Was Housing (Respondent's or Friend/Family)  
One of the Top Three Living Situations  
During the Prior Year?**



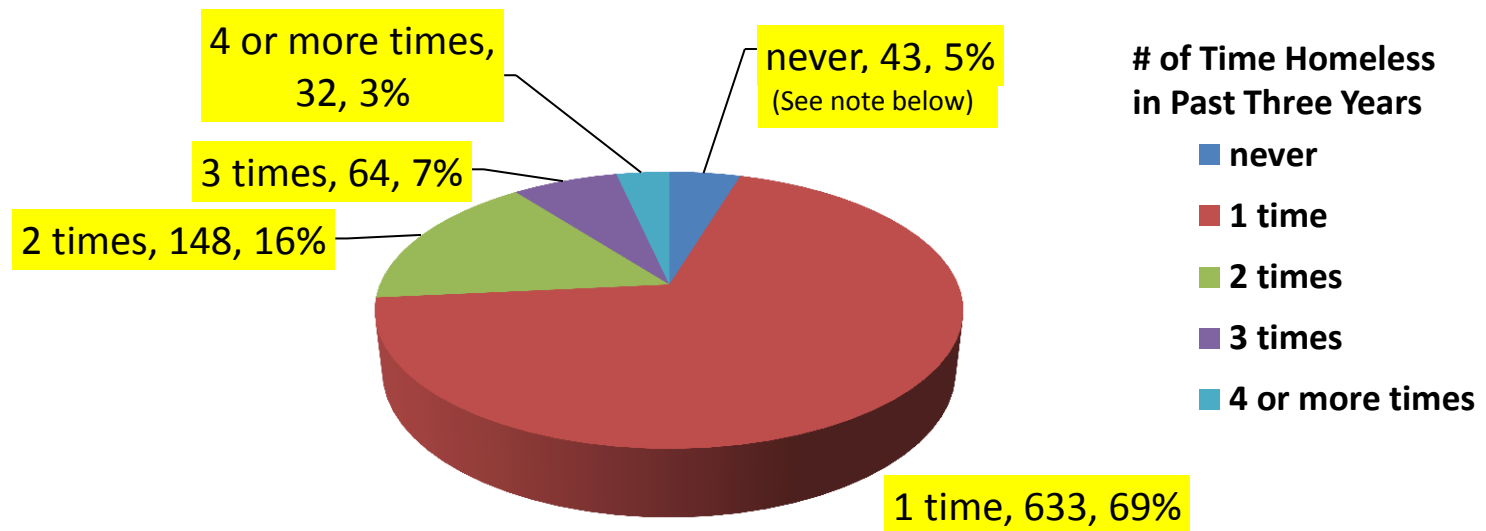
**The older the respondent, the less likely that they reported having spent a significant portion of time during the prior year in their own housing or staying/living with family or friend(s).**



For about half the respondents, their current situation was the first time they had become homeless. That percentage did not vary predictably with age.

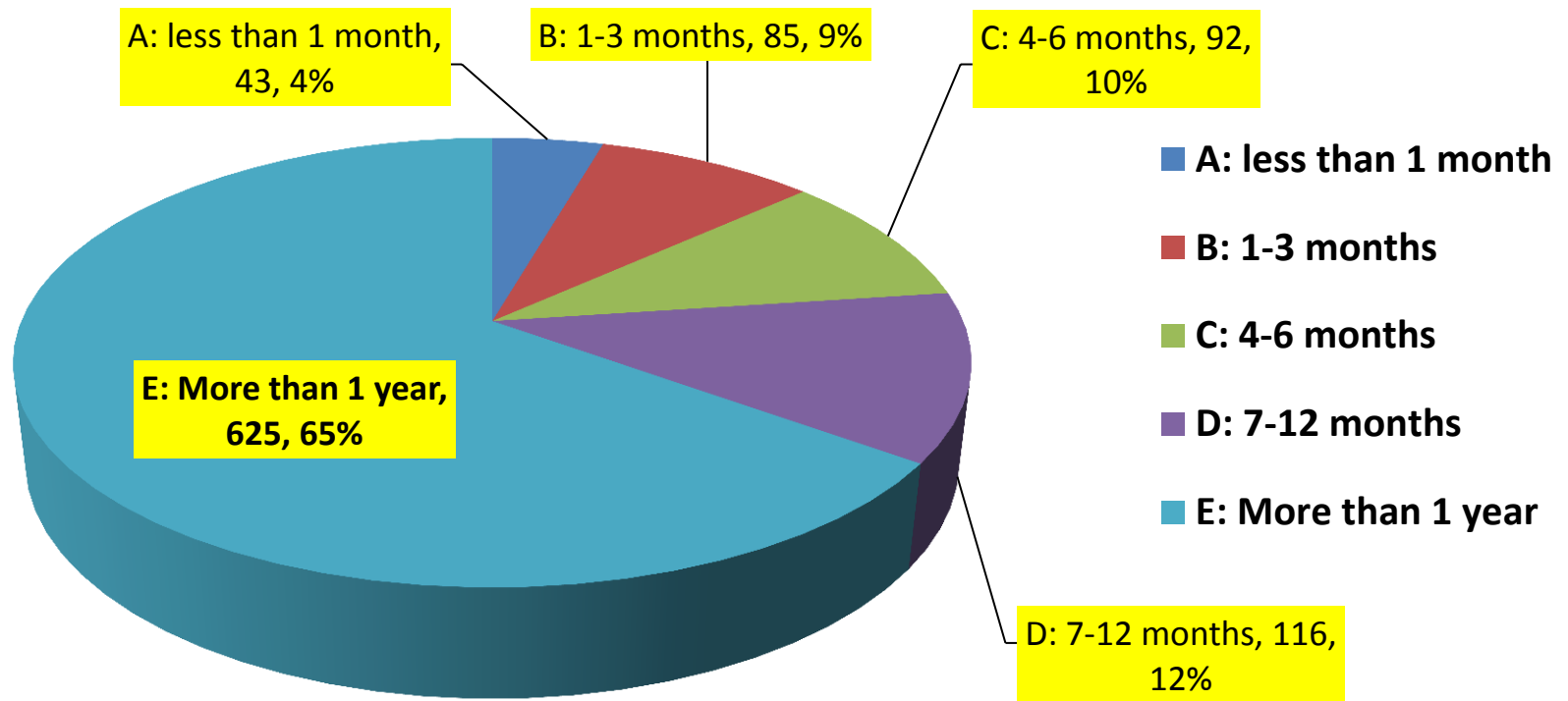


26% of respondents\* reported having been homeless at least one other time during the past three years; approximately 10% had been homeless three or more times.

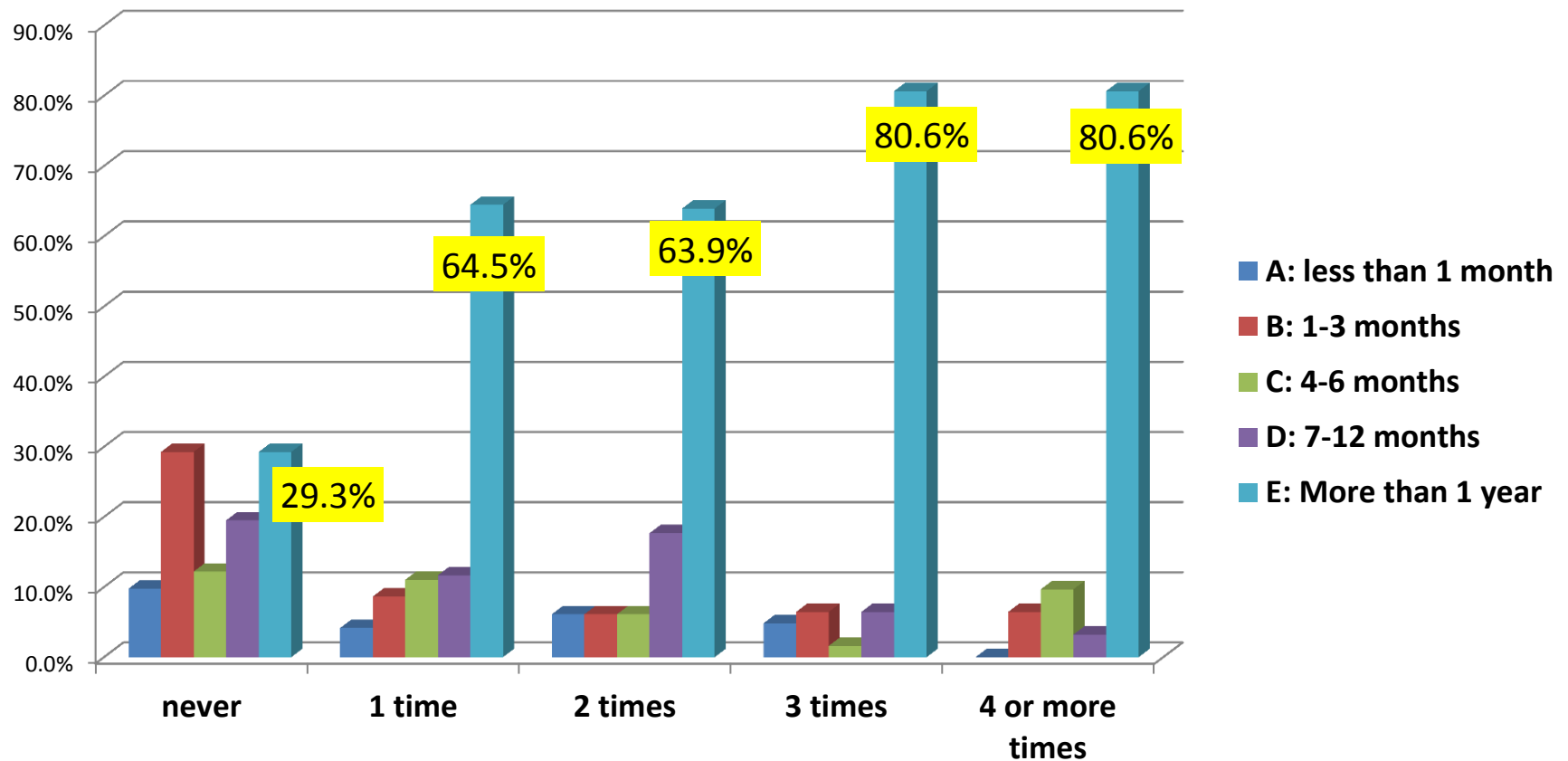


\* Given the number of currently homeless persons reporting 0 times homeless in the past three years, it appears that at least some portion of the respondents interpreted this question as meaning “how many **additional** times during the past three years had they been homeless.?”

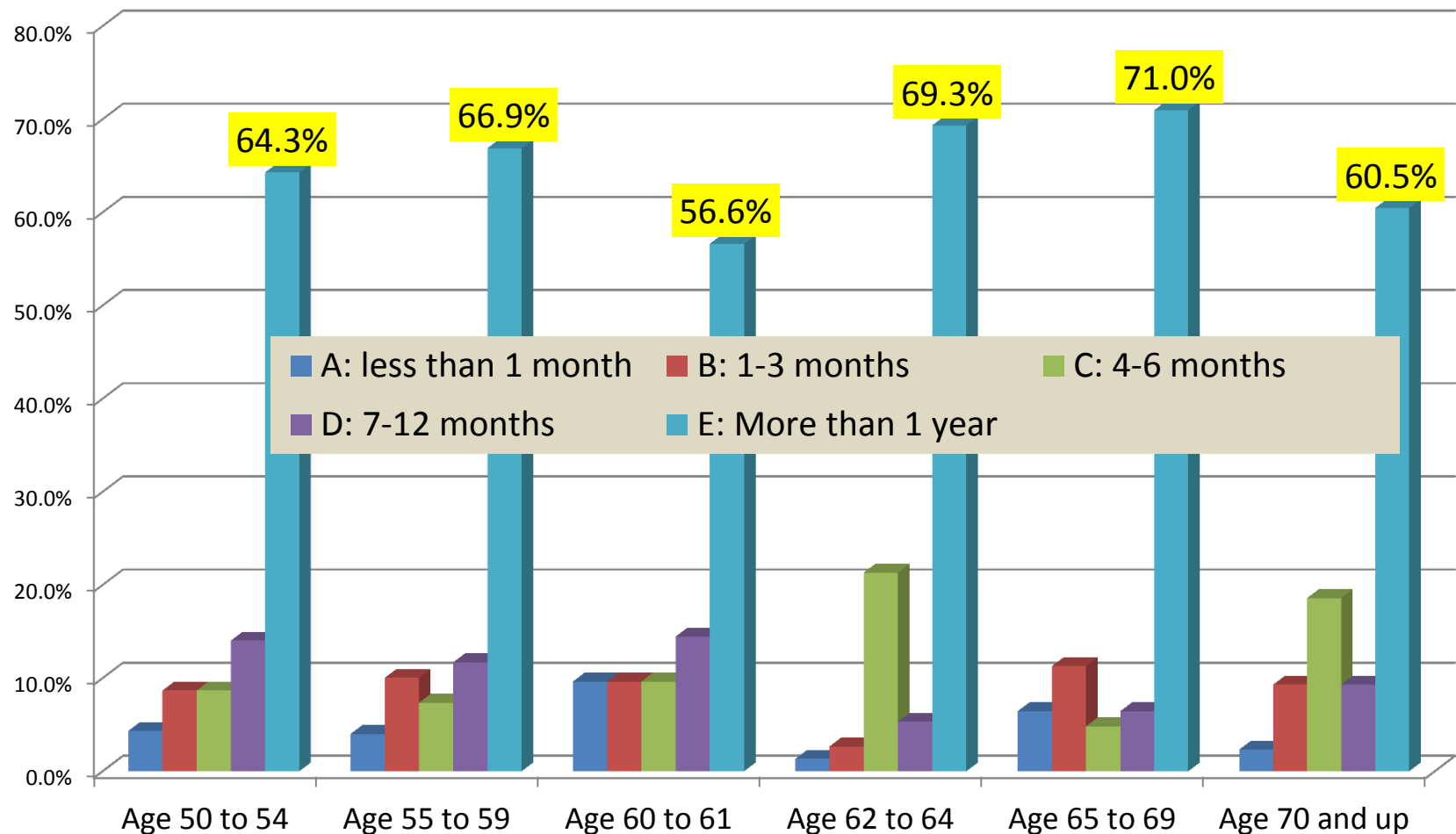
For 65% of respondents, their current period of homelessness had persisted for over a year.



The more times a respondent had experienced homelessness during the previous three years, the more likely the current period of homelessness had extended at least a year.

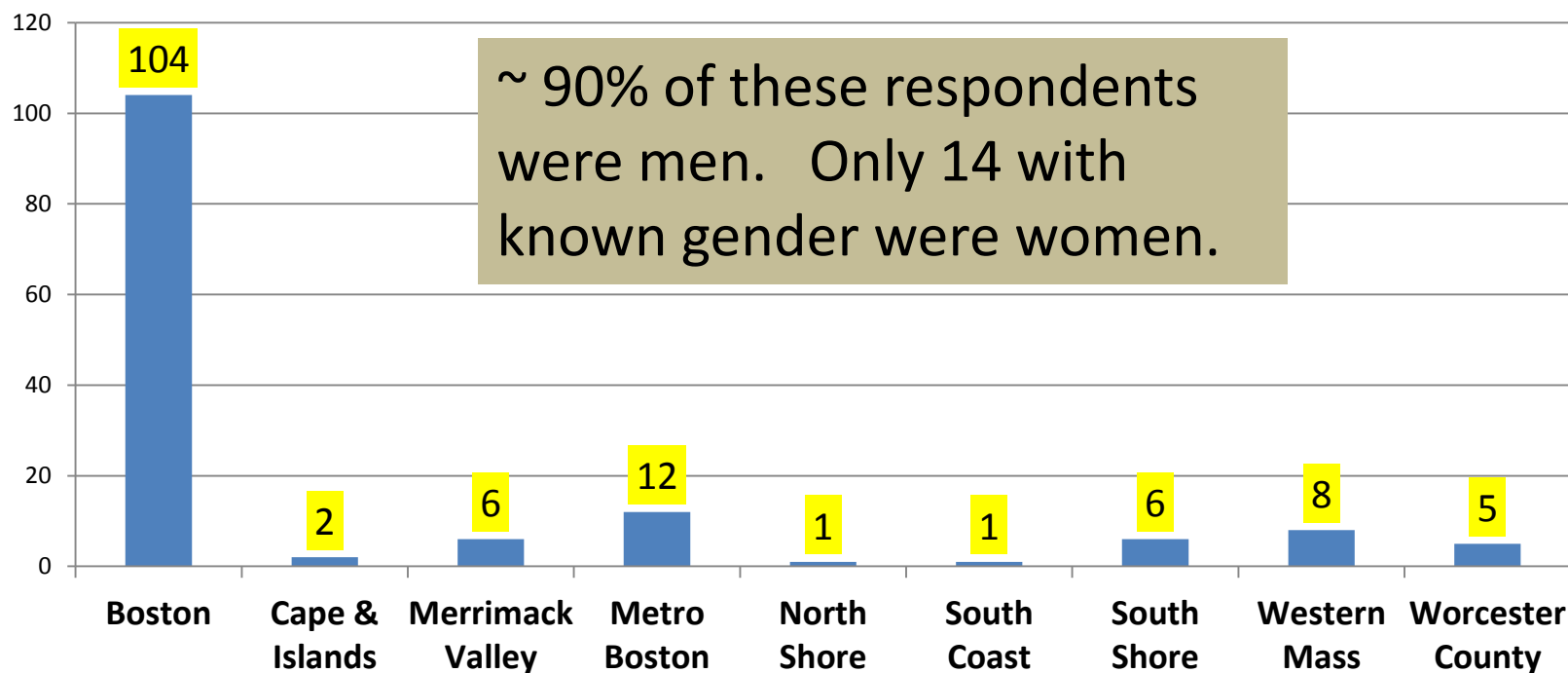


The length of current homelessness did not appear to have a clear relationship to age. **The large majority of every age cohort had been homeless for over a year at the time of the survey.**



# Prevalence of Unsheltered Elder Homelessness

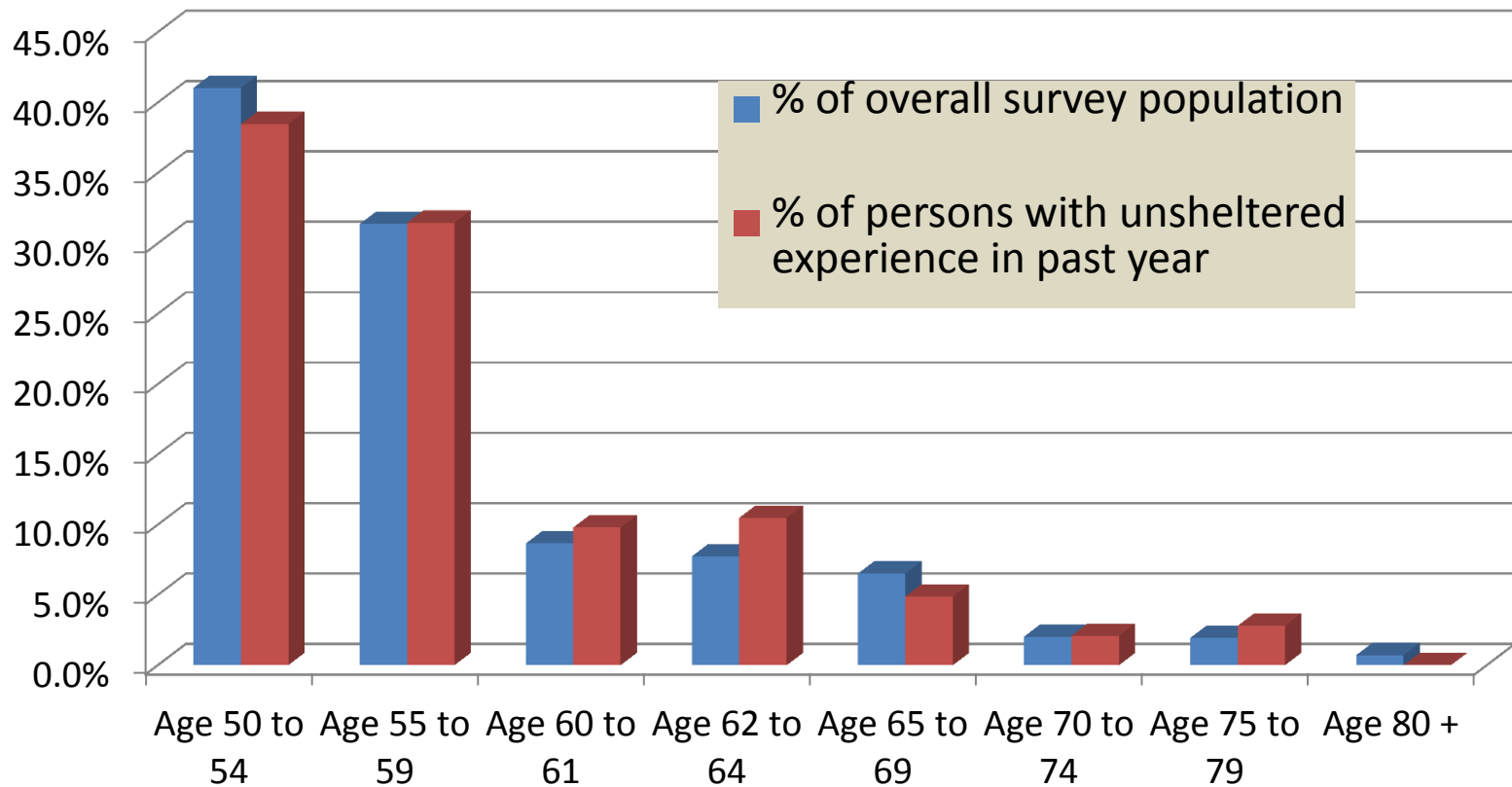
Though “only” 3% of respondents cited spending the prior night in unsheltered homelessness, unsheltered homelessness was one of the top three living situations for 145 (14.6%) of the 993 respondents.





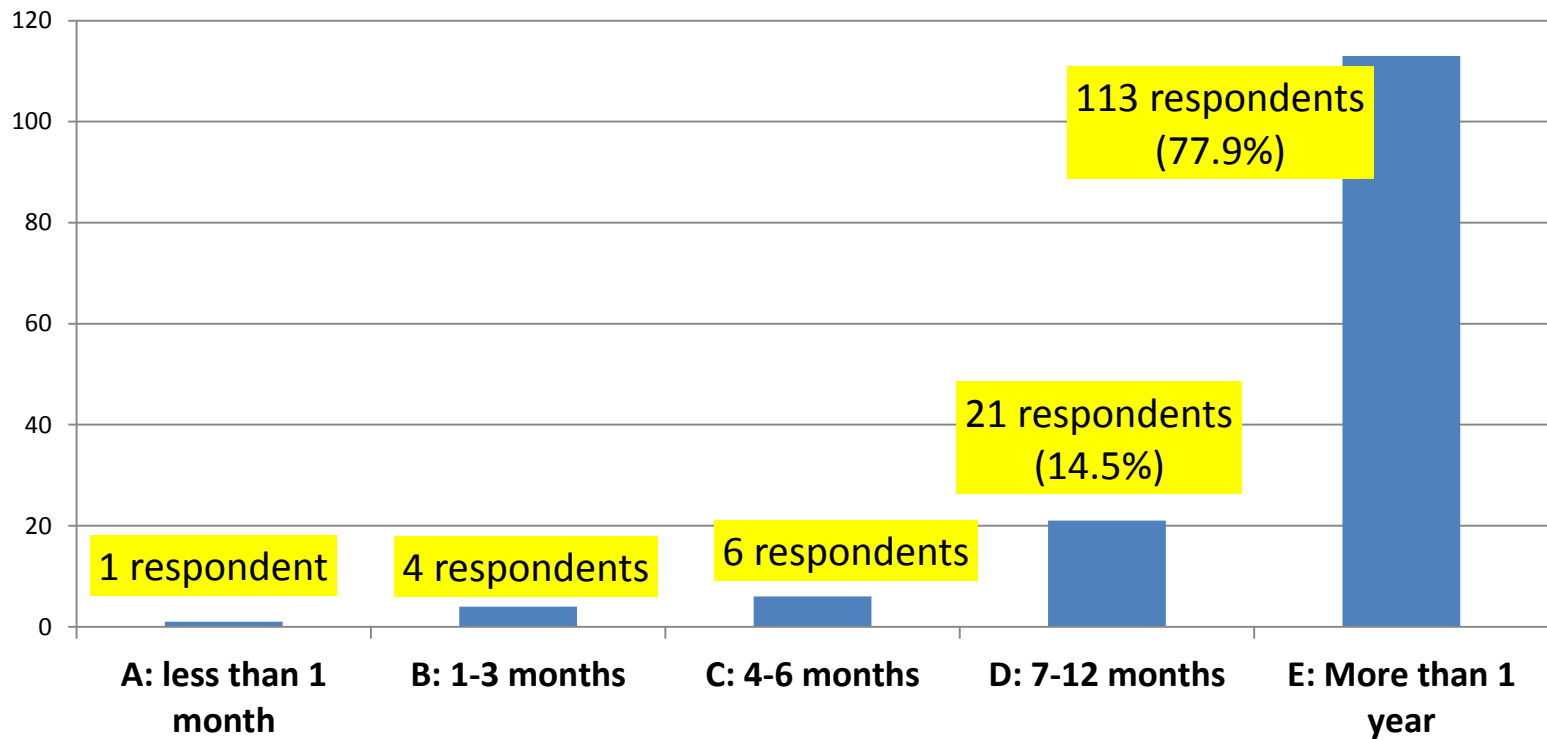
# Prevalence of Unsheltered Elder Homelessness

The age profile of the 145 respondents with significant time unsheltered during the year prior to the survey matched the age profile of the overall survey population.

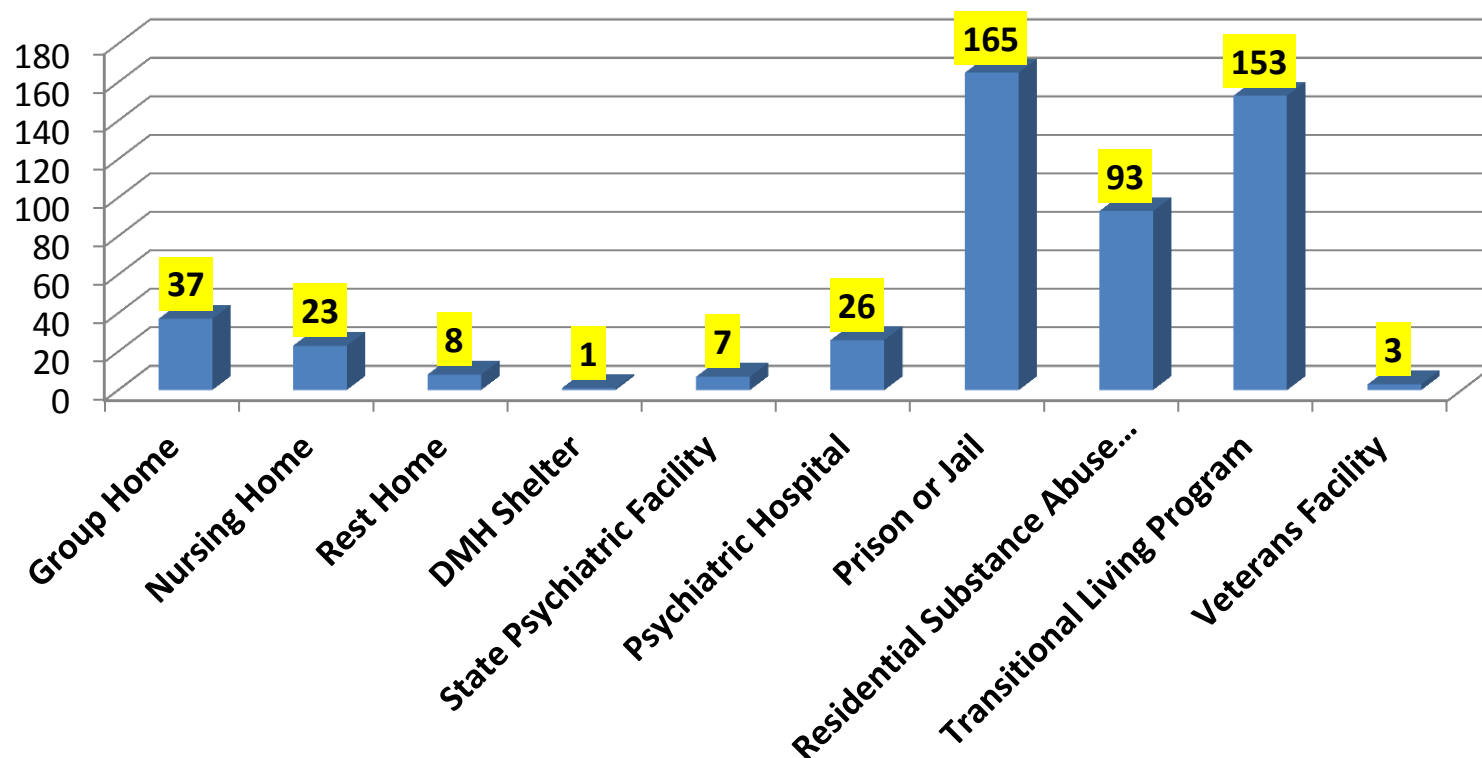


# Prevalence of Unsheltered Elder Homelessness

Not surprisingly, however, these 145 respondents were more likely than their sheltered counterparts to have been homeless for over a year.

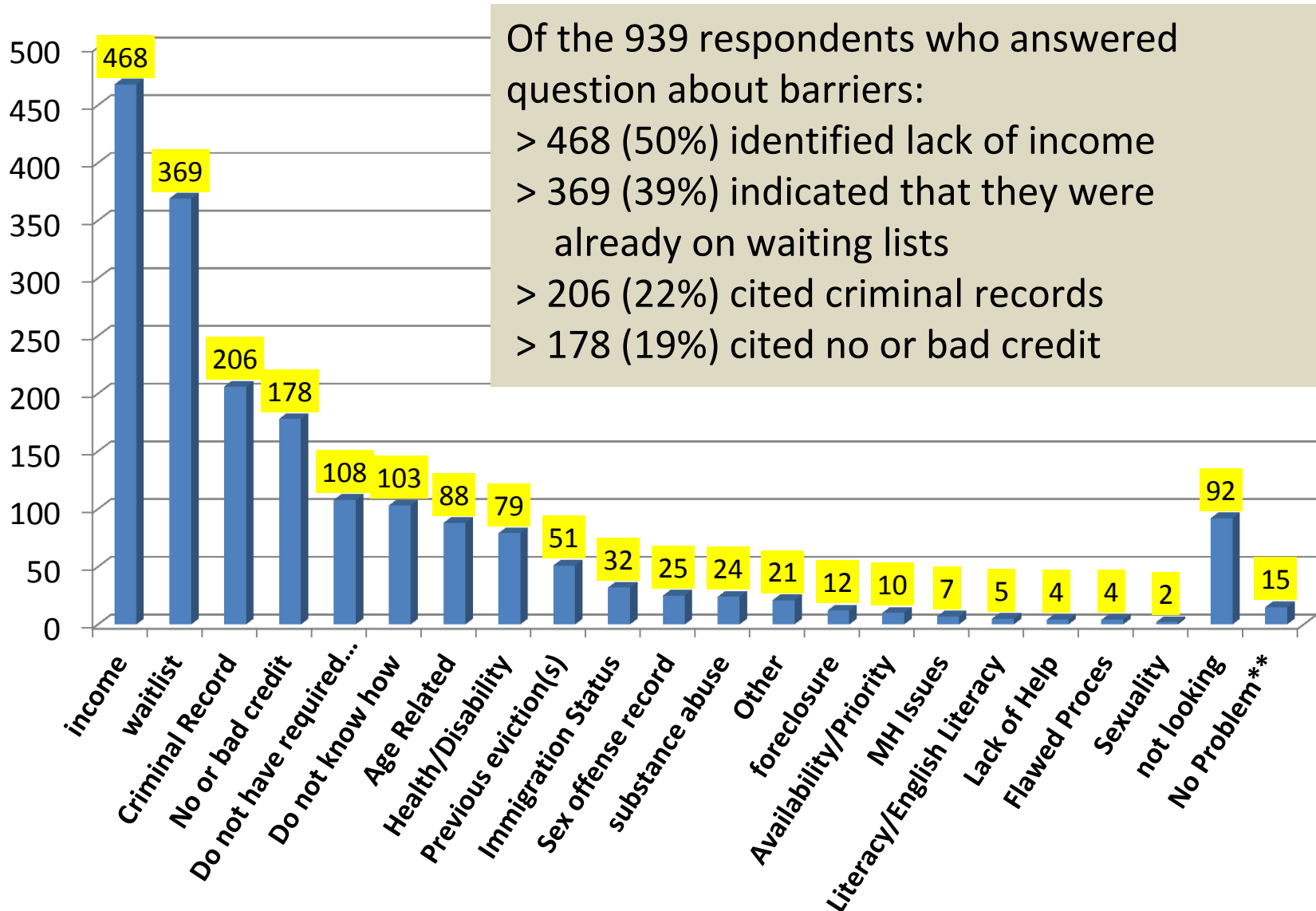


**Prison or Jail was the most common system of care\* that respondents reported having spent six or months living in.**

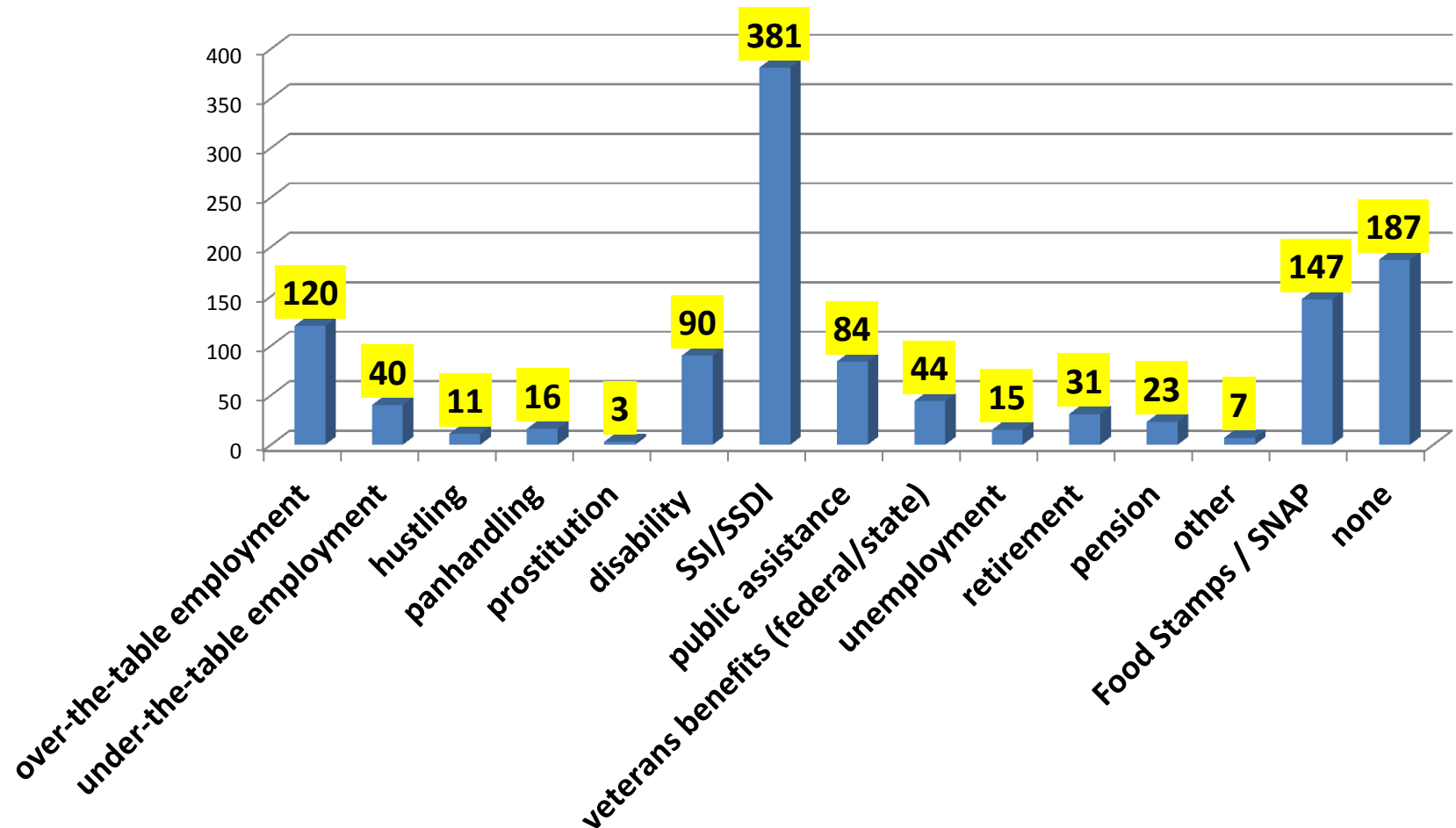


**\* A significant number of respondents were surveyed while living in transitional housing (TH) programs, but TH was not a listed option for prior night's residence or residence last year. Instead, it was written in as an "other" situation. In the future, it may make sense to include TH as a listed option, instead of treating it as a separate system of care.**

# Problems Encountered in Finding Housing



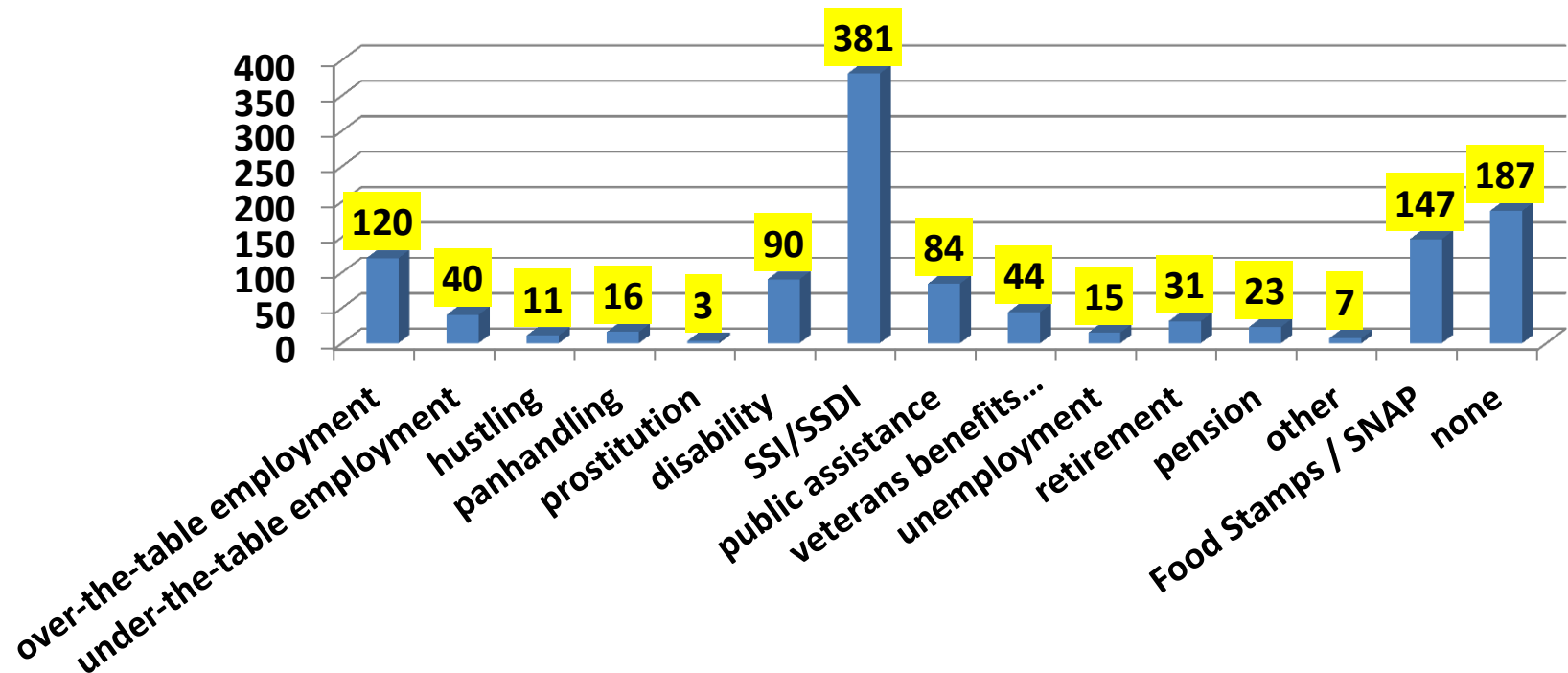
Of the 468 respondents who cited “income” as a barrier to finding housing, at least 73% cited an income source (not including Food Stamps).



\* 14 of these respondents cited hustling, panhandling, or prostitution, of whom 3 also cited mainstream benefits.

# Sources of Income

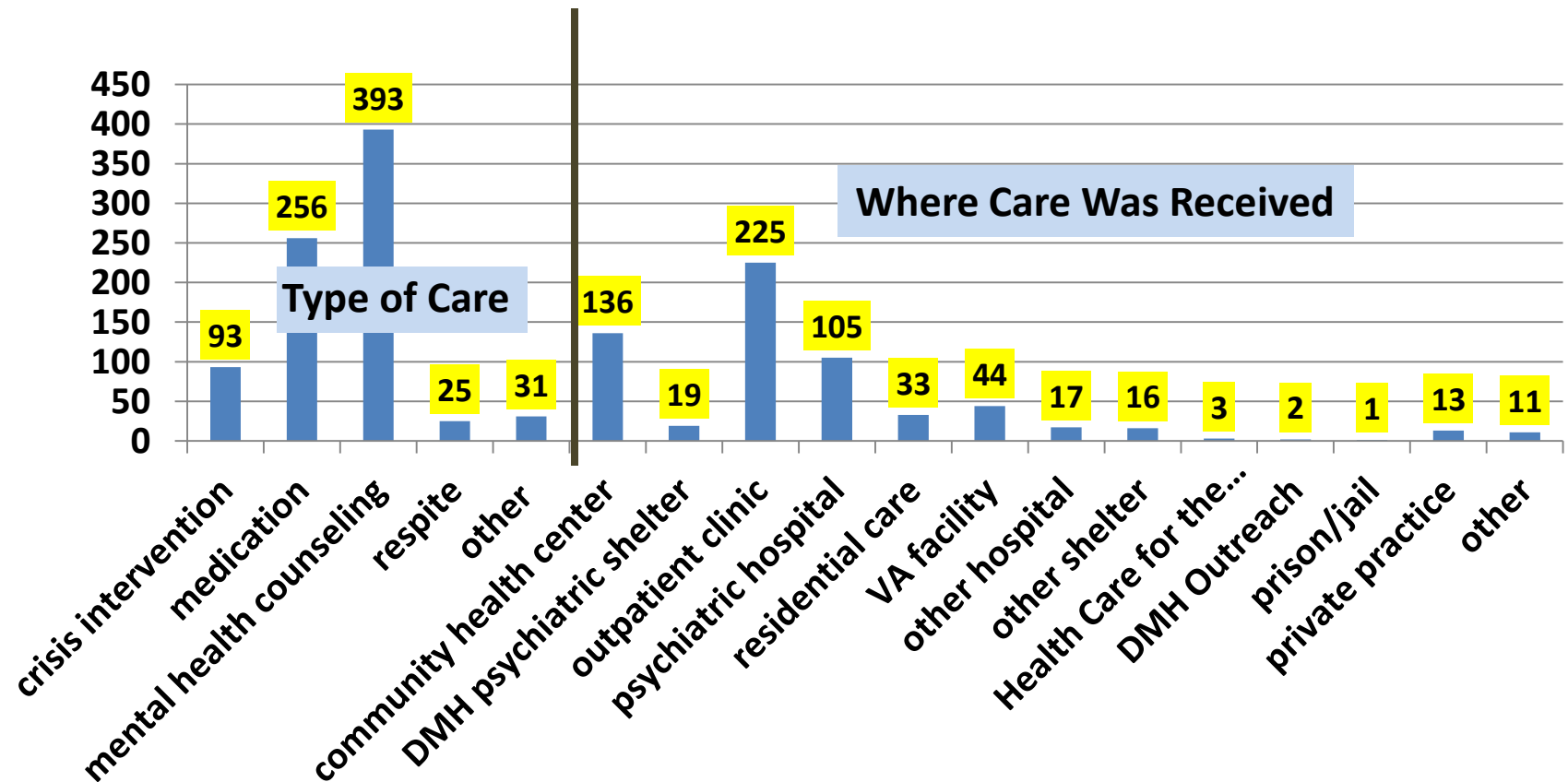
Of 962 respondents who answered the income question, 79% cited at least one mainstream source of income\* other than Food Stamps.



\* That is, excluding 16 of the 23 respondents citing income from hustling, panhandling, and/or prostitution who reported no mainstream income sources.

# History of Mental Health Care

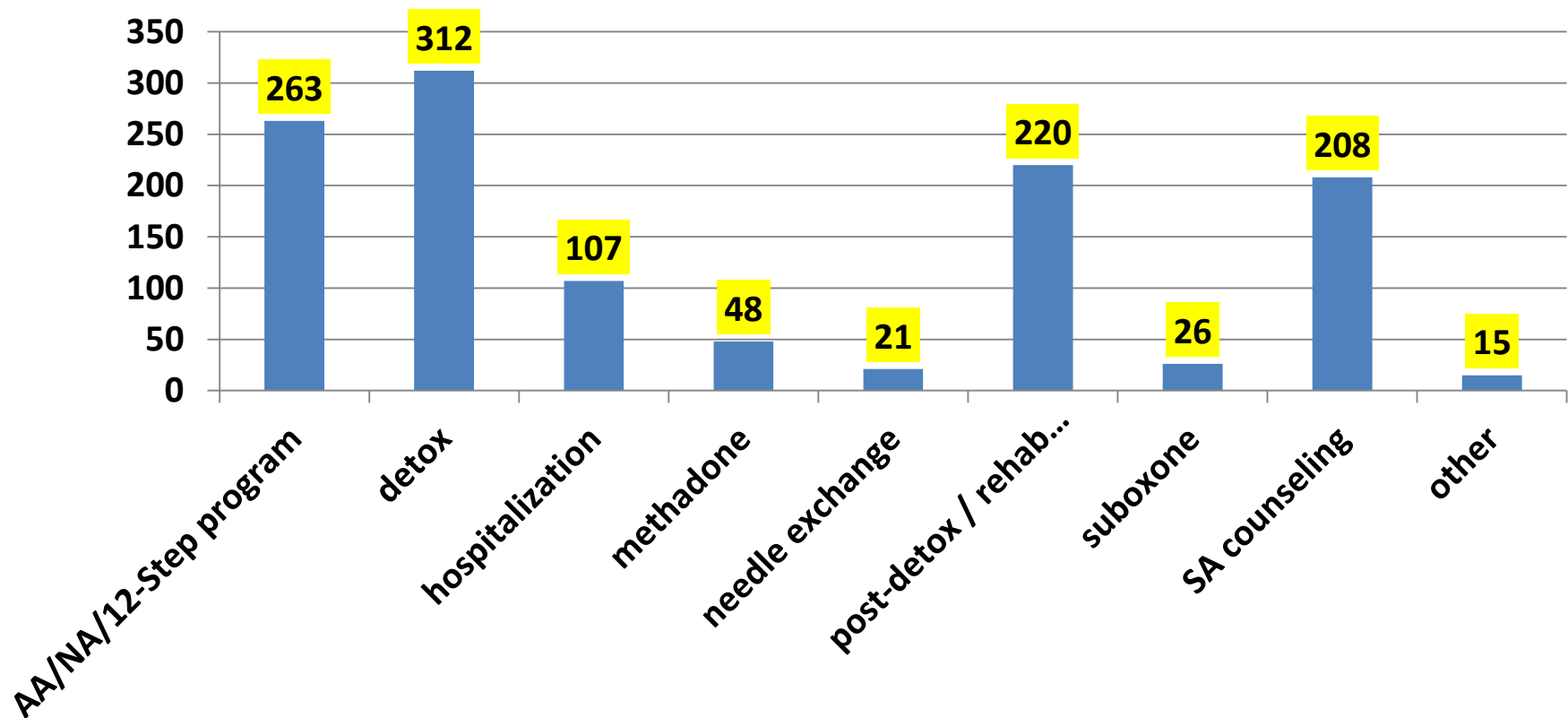
501 (52%) of the 962 respondents who answered the question about prior mental health care reported having received such care at some point.



# History of Substance Abuse Treatment

447 (47%) of the 956 respondents who answered the question about substance abuse services reported having received such care at some point.

(96 of these respondents indicated **current use of illegal drugs**; another 24 currently using illegal drugs cited no prior treatment.)

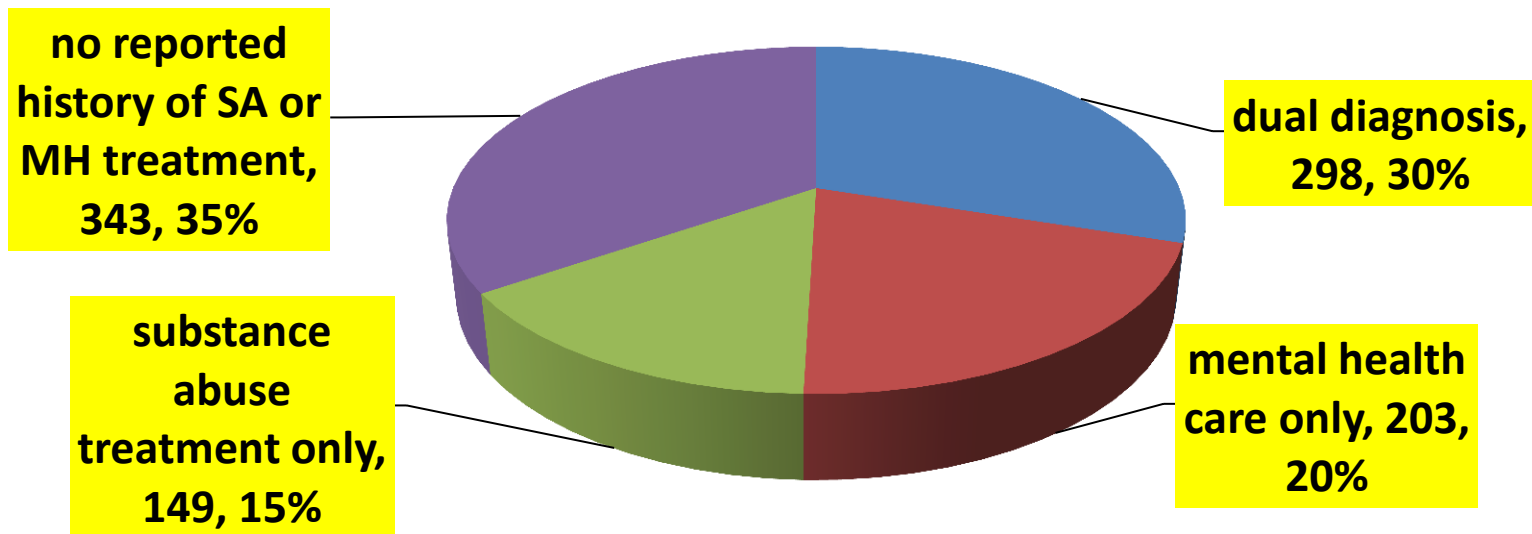




# Dual Diagnosis

298 respondents indicated having received both mental health care and substance abuse treatment.

- ~ 30% of the overall respondents
- ~ 67% of respondents who reported having ever received substance abuse services
- ~ 60% of respondents who reported having ever received mental health services



# Reported Need for Housing / Services

784 (83%) of 944 respondents who answered the question about needing housing and/or services indicated one or more such needs.

The overwhelming stated need was for permanent housing. Of the 83 persons citing a need for temporary residential placement, 70 also sought (so presumably preferred) permanent housing.

