



**THE COUNSELLING FOUNDATION OF CANADA
AND THE CANADIAN EDUCATION AND RESEARCH
INSTITUTE FOR COUNSELLING**

Report On A Nationwide Survey

MARCH 2015

Table of Contents

- Page 3: Approach
- Page 5: Key Findings
- Page 7: Data Overview - Workforce
- Page 13: Those With a Career
- Page 20: Those With a Job
- Page 27: Students
- Page 36: Conclusions



Approach

The study was conducted:

- Among adult Canadians, 18 years of age or older.
- Using an online methodology among a national, proportionate sample of 1500 respondents.
- A random sample of those 1500 respondents would yield a margin of error of +2.5 percentage points, nineteen times out of twenty.
- In the field between November 16 and November 23, 2014.

The study's goals were:

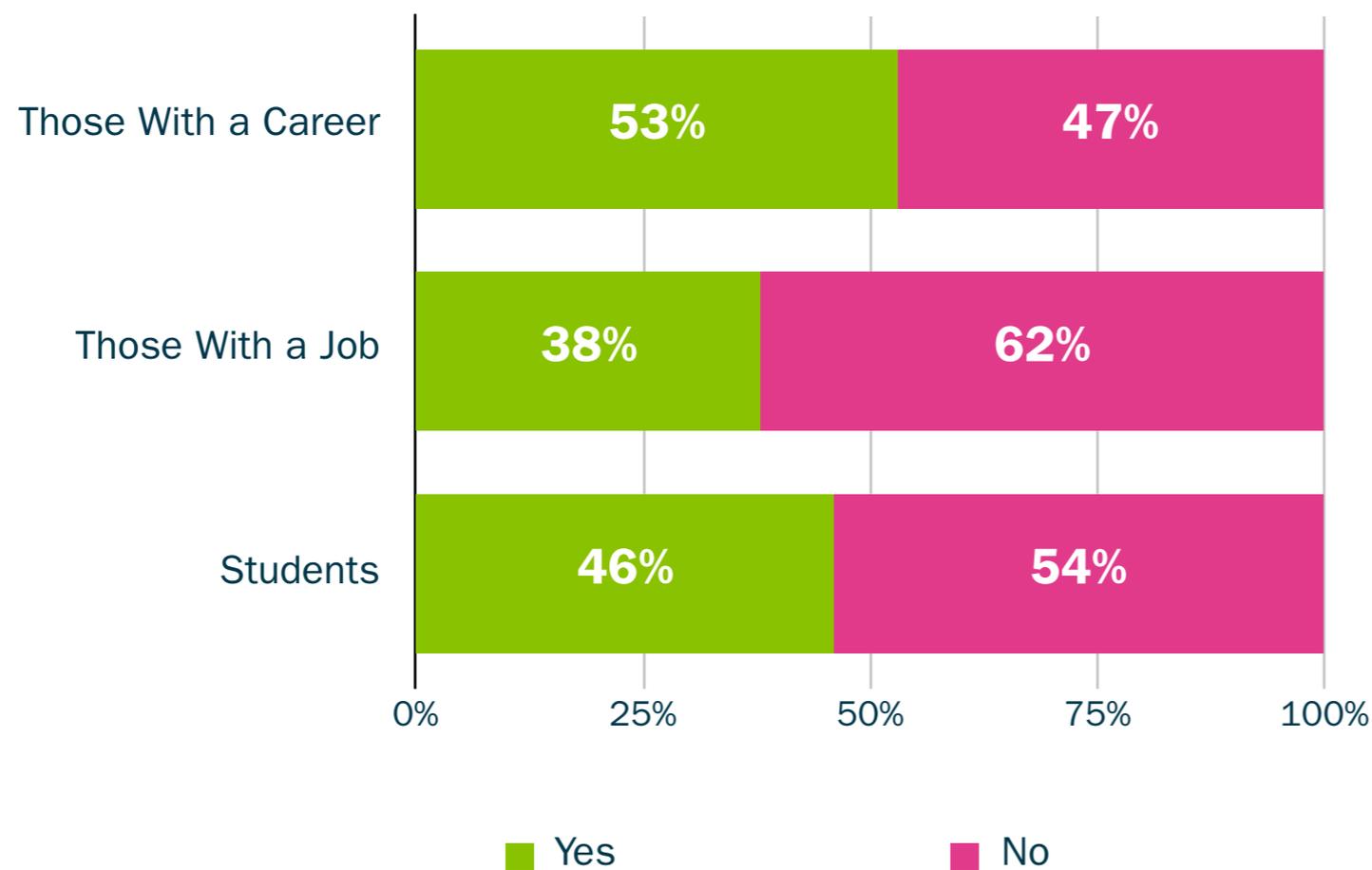
- To determine familiarity with, and effectiveness of, a range of career and employment counselling services among those who are working or have worked or are students;
- To isolate barriers to accessing a variety of career and employment counselling options; and
- To determine if consistent barriers emerge across specific, self-identified subgroups (those with a **career**, those with a **job** and **students**).



Key Findings

Canadians are accessing career counselling services

- Roughly one in two Canadians throughout the entire population are accessing career and employment counselling services.
- Use of these services varies significantly, however, among the three groups examined in the survey: those with a career, those with a job and students.



Q (careerists): People often talk over or seek advice about their career plans or options from different individuals or from representatives of different organizations before making decisions about a career path or change in their career path. Thinking back over the years, including your time at school, did you seek any advice from a career or employment professional? Base: (n=828)

Q (employees): People often talk over or seek advice about their employment plans or options from different individuals or from representatives of different organizations. Thinking back over the years, including your time at school, did you seek any professional counselling or coaching services about employment or job options? Base: (n=460)

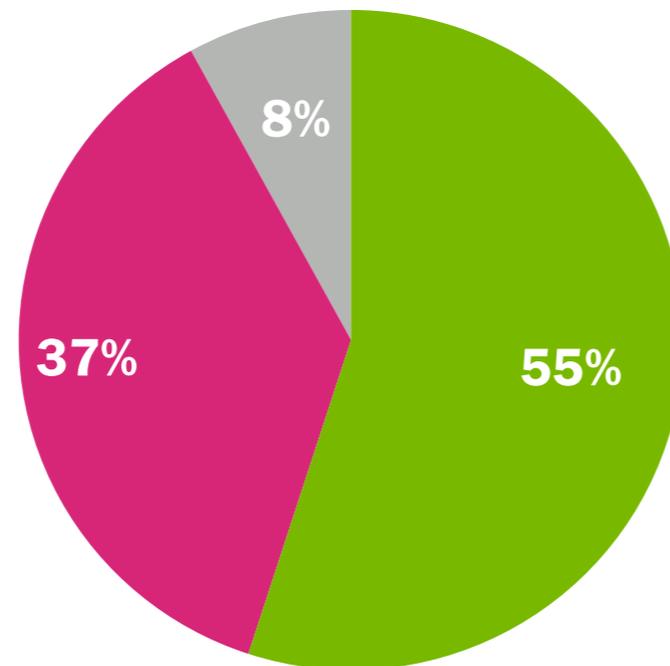
Q (students): Have you had a career counselling experience or not? Base: (n=80)



Data Overview - Workforce

Workforce participants come from three streams

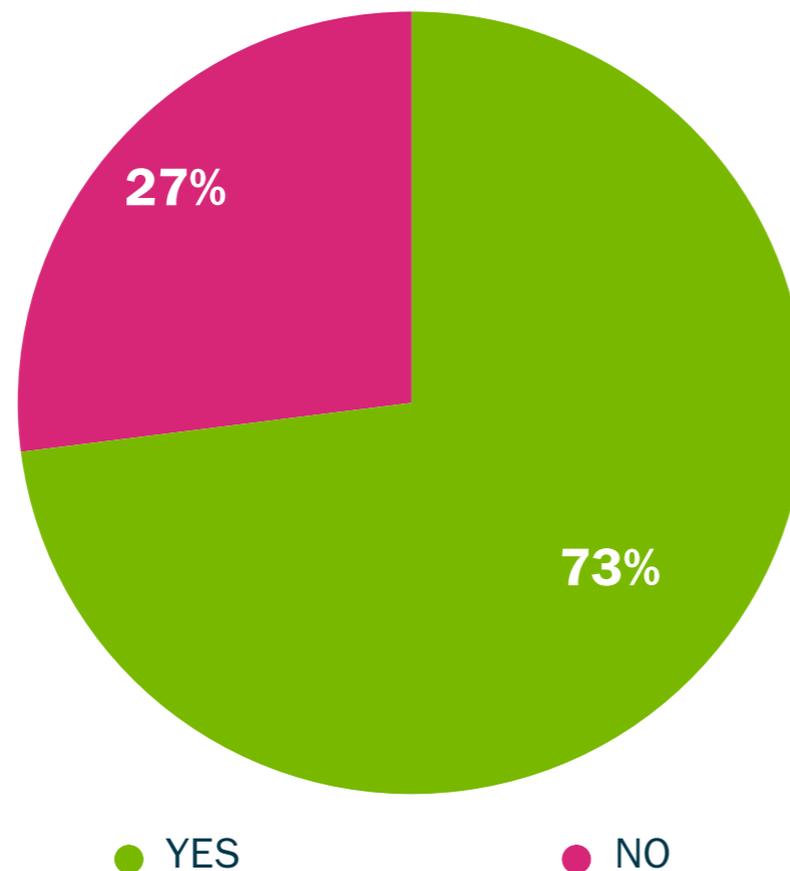
- All survey respondents who are or have worked were asked to identify their employment status from a series of options intended to isolate them as working in a career, at a job or as self-employed business owners/entrepreneurs
 - 55% of all workers described themselves as working or having worked in a **career**.
 - 37% described themselves as working or having worked in a **job**.
 - 8% reported that they started **businesses** or are **entrepreneurs**



● CAREER ● JOB ● BUSINESS/ENTREPRENEUR

Most workforce participants who have completed post-secondary are working in their field

- The overwhelming majority of those who completed post-secondary studies reported that **they work or have worked in a field related to those studies** (73%), while a little over a quarter of respondents (27%) reported that they did not.



Q: Did you complete post-secondary educational studies that are linked to the field in which you were/are now working? Looking back at your working life, did you hold a job that was directly related to your education?
Base: (n=594)

Patterns emerged amongst workforce participants *with a career*

- A slight majority (55%) of those who are working or have worked described themselves as **having a career** (i.e. working in a career that fits with my post-secondary educational background (35%); working in a career that is unrelated to their educational focus, but required a degree, diploma or certificate as an entry requirement (10%); working in a career that required them to undertake studies, upgrade my studies or take additional training after they had started in the workforce (10%))
- Those most likely to be working or have worked **in a career that fits with their educational background (35%)** include:
 - Those 25–34 years (46%) and those 35–44 years (43%)
 - Residents of Ontario (38%) and Alberta (42%)
 - Those in high income households: \$80K–\$100K (45%) and \$100k+ (49%)

Amongst workforce participants *with a job...*

- Almost four in ten (37%) survey respondents described themselves as **having a job** (i.e. employees/working in a job that did not require any specific educational background (21%); working at the best job they could get (10%); working at a job they were able to find (3%); or working as an apprentice (3%).
- Those most likely to describe themselves as working in a **job that did not require any specific educational background** (21%) included:
 - Those 18–24 years of age (32%)
 - Residents of British Columbia (28%)
 - Those in households earning <\$40k per annum (24%)
 - Those born in Canada (22%) vs. those born outside Canada (12%)
- Those most likely to describe themselves as working at **the best job they could get** (10%) included:
 - Those 18–24 years of age (12%) and those 65+ years (14%)
 - Residents of Quebec (19%)
 - Those in households earning <\$40K per annum (41%)

Meanwhile, amongst business owners/ entrepreneurs...

- Just under one-in-ten (8%) respondents reported that they have or **had started their own businesses or were entrepreneurs.**
- Those most likely to have **started their own businesses** included:
 - Men (10%) vs. Women (6%)
 - Those 45–54 years (11%) and those 65+ years (12%)
 - Those in households earning \$80k–\$100k (11%)



Those With a Career

Most in a career *have sought* advice from a career professional, but...

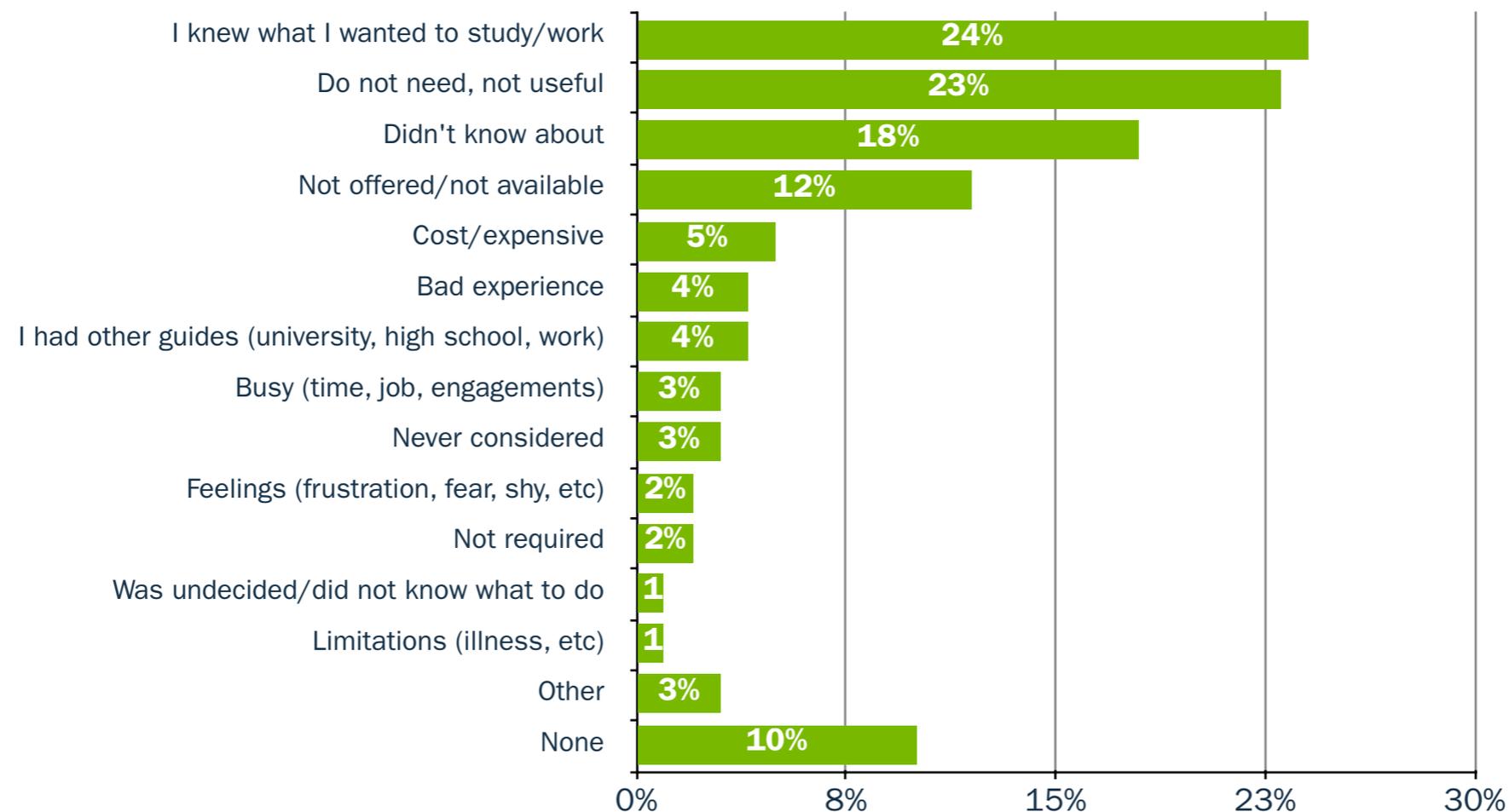
- A slight majority (53%) of those who described themselves as being in a career report that they have sought advice from a career or employment professional.
- **The data show that as age rises, the incidence of seeking counselling declines.** Those 18–24 years of age are **most likely** to have reported that they have accessed career counselling services (76%), while those 55+ years **are least** so inclined (37%)
- Those most likely to have accessed counselling services included:
 - Those 18–24 years (76%)
 - Residents of Ontario (61%)
 - Women (57%) vs. Men (50%)
 - Those with children <25 years of age (62%)
 - Those with a post-secondary education, especially those with post-graduate/professional degrees (64%)
 - Those in middle income households (\$60K–80K) – 59% and those in upper middle income households (\$80K–100K) –57%

Meanwhile, those with a career who *haven't* sought advice from a career professional include...

- Those most likely **NOT** to have accessed counselling services (47%) include:
 - Those 55+ years of age (63%)
 - Residents of BC (55%), Atlantic Canada (54%) and Quebec (51%)
 - Men (50%) vs. Women (43%)
 - Those with a trade/apprentice educational background
 - Those in lower middle income households (\$40K–\$60K) (53%)

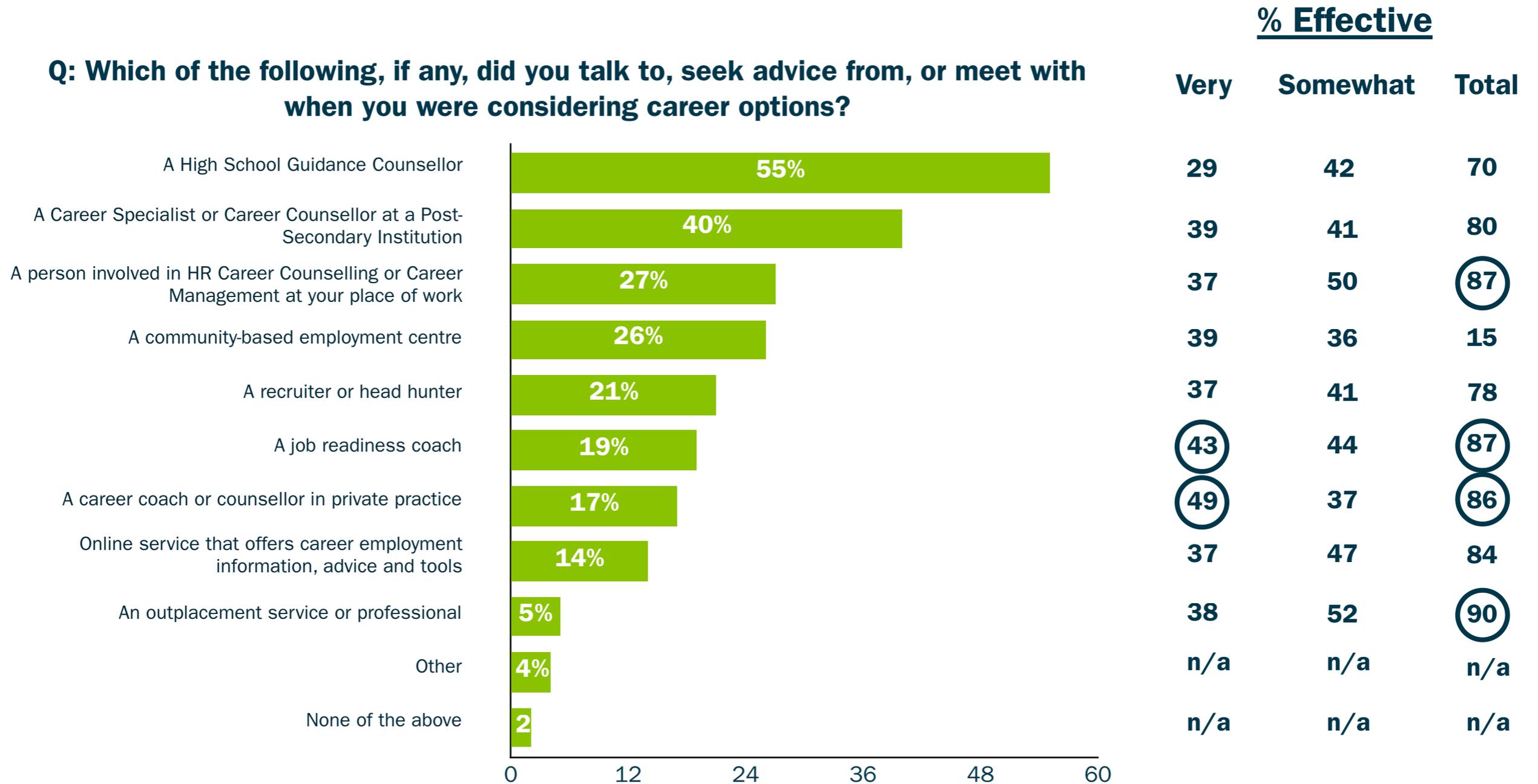
Those who *did not* access career counselling services cited a variety of reasons

Q: Thinking about the different reasons that you may have had for not seeking career counselling services, what would you say is the main reason?



Q: Thinking about the different reasons that you may have had for not seeking career counselling services, what would you say is the main reason?
Base: (n=478, careerists who did not access career counselling services)

High school guidance counsellors most accessed, but other sources seen as more effective



Q: Which of the following, if any, did you talk to, seek advice from, or meet with when you were considering career options?

Base: (n=441, careerists who accessed counselling services)

Q: How effective were each of there to you in helping you understand your employment options...very effective, somewhat effective, neither effective no ineffective, somewhat ineffective or very ineffective?

Base: size varies

Those with a career ranked the *least accessed* sources as the *most effective* (among those identifying each)

- A significant change in rankings is apparent when effectiveness of advisors is compared to the incidence of having sought advice from different types of counsellors/advisors. **Those advisors or counsellors that were most commonly identified as sources for advice tended to be less effective than others. Conversely, those least identified as advisors/counsellors tended to be most likely to be effective.** The findings suggest that as expertise of advisors become more focused, the perceived effectiveness of the counselling service increases.
- For example, high school guidance counsellors emerged as the advisor/counsellor with whom the largest proportion of respondents have sought advice. But among all the other advisors/counsellors tested, high school guidance counsellors were least likely to be described as effective.
- Similarly, outplacement services or professionals were the least likely to have been accessed by respondents, but among those who have accessed them, these advisors received the highest effectiveness ratings.

Those with a career often *did not* consider services...

- Those who described themselves as working in a career were most likely to report that they did not consider career counselling services, did not need them or knew their career goals and pursued opportunities on their own.
- Education and income exert a notable influence on accessing career counselling services: those with a university education and those in high income households were least likely to have considered such services or to indicate that they needed such services. This higher socio-economic stratum reported that it had a clear sense of its career ambitions and did not require career counselling services to pursue their career choices.
- These findings are borne out by those who reported that if they were able to do it over, they would have sought career counselling services: those with a university education and those in high income households were least likely to agree that such services would have been sought. By contrast, those with a high school education and those in middle income households (between \$60K - \$80K annually) were most likely to agree.
- Further, those in a lower socio-economic stratum were less aware of career counselling services, suggesting that while they indicated that they would have benefitted from such services, they were among the least likely to understand where or how to access such services.
- Experience with high school guidance counsellors or with professional career counselling services appears to have little influence on consideration of those services. Only relatively small minorities reported that unhelpful experiences with either had an influence on whether or not they sought career counselling services.

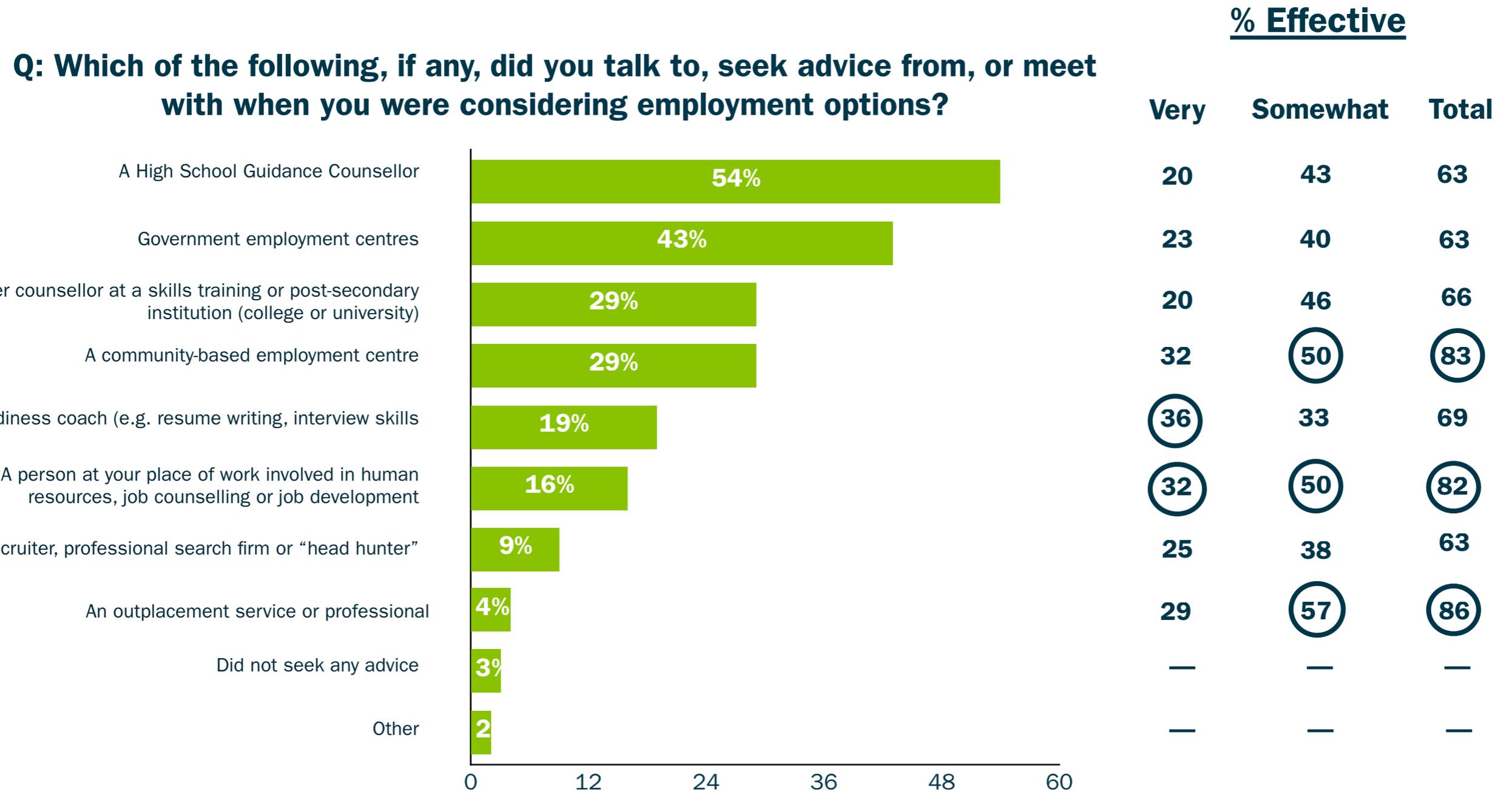


Those With a Job

Those in a job identified high school guidance counsellors and government employment centres as *most likely* advisors, but those least accessed were seen as the *most effective*

- As was evident with those working in a career, those working in a job are most likely to identify high school guidance counsellors as the most likely professional sought for advice. 63% of those who identified a high school guidance counsellor described their performance as “effective.” But, only one-in-five (20%) of those with experience with a guidance counsellor describe them as “very effective”.
- Two sources for counselling emerge with significant strength when assessed on the basis of effectiveness: community-based employment centres (83% describe them as very or somewhat effective) and a person at respondents’ place of work involved in HR, job counselling or job development (82%).

Those in a job also cited high school guidance counsellors as most accessed advisor



Q: Which of the following, if any, did you talk to, seek advice from, or meet with when you were considering employment options?

Base: (n=173)

Q: How effective were each of these to you in helping you understand your employment options...very effective, somewhat effective, neither effective nor ineffective, somewhat ineffective or very ineffective?

Base: size varies

Those in a job tended to fit certain profile characteristics...

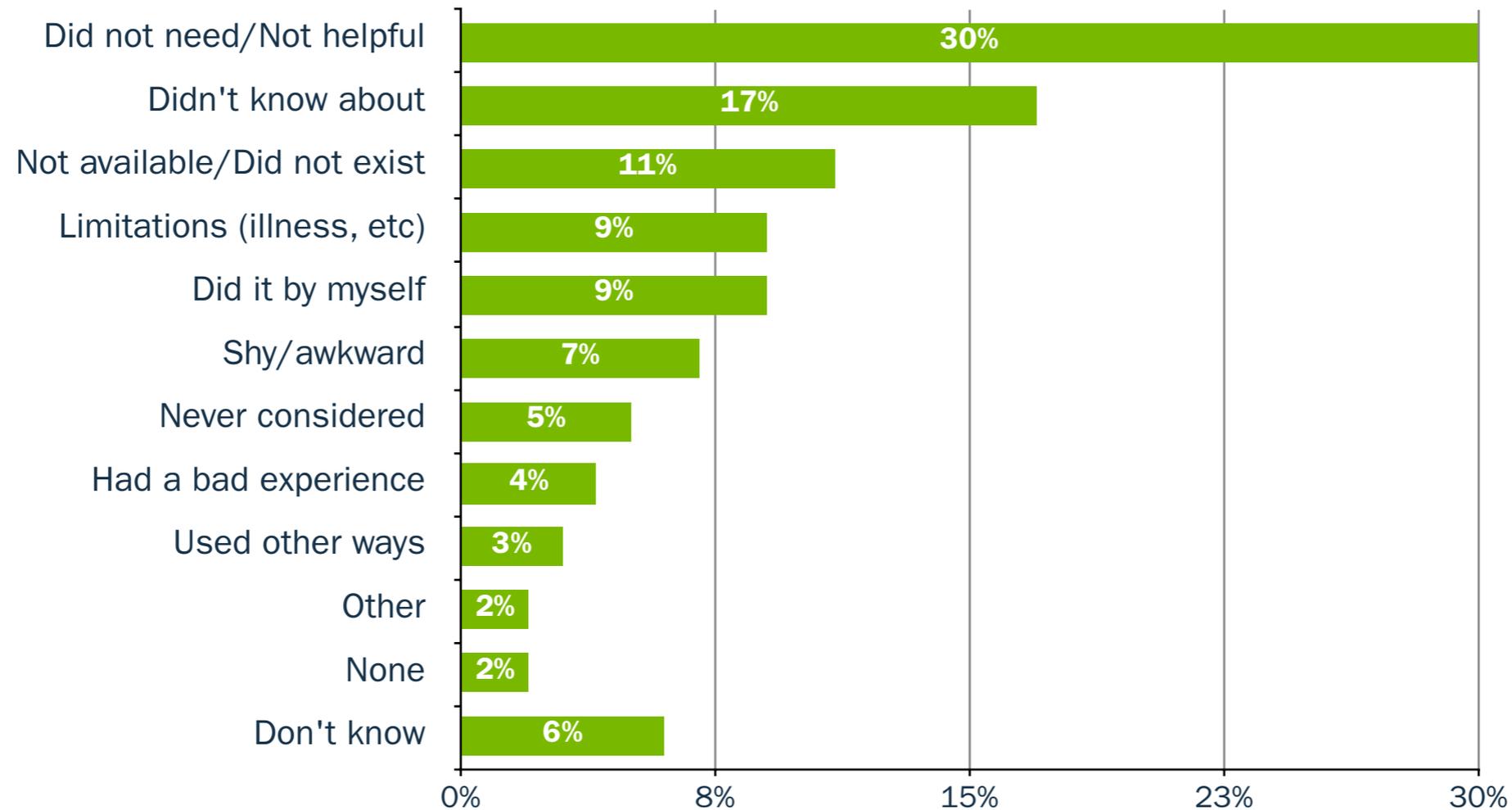
- Fewer than four in ten (38%) of those who describe themselves as having a job reported that they sought professional counselling or coaching services about employment and job options.
- Those most likely to have reported that they sought such counselling or coaching services include:
 - Those 18 – 24 years of age (50%) and those 25 – 34 years (43%). A direct correlation between age and having sought career and coaching services is apparent: as age increases, the incidence of accessing services declines.
 - Those with a college (44%) or university (48%) education.
 - Residents of Atlantic Canada (45%) and Quebec (41%) were somewhat more likely than average to have accessed career and coaching services.
- As noted, when probed on sources of advice, a majority (54%) identified **high school guidance counsellors**. Guidance counsellors are the only service that was accessed by a majority in the employee category.
- Those most likely to have identified high school guidance counsellors as a source of advice included:
 - Those 18 – 24 years of age (73%).
 - Those with a high school education or less (69%) – as educational attainment rises, identification of high school guidance counsellors declines.
 - Women (60%) are more likely than men (49%) to identify high school guidance counsellors.

Those with a job who *did not* seek career counselling mostly cited lack of need, knowledge

- The reason most cited for NOT seeking career or employment counselling services was that respondents did not feel it was necessary for them (30%).
- The next tiers of reasons included a lack of awareness regarding these services (17%) and that those channels were not available to respondents or did not exist (11%).

On the whole, those with a job who *did not* seek career counselling services cited several reasons...

Q: Thinking about the different reasons that you may have had for not seeking career counselling services, what would you say is the main reason?



Q: Thinking about the different reasons that you may have had for not seeking career counselling services, what would you say is the main reason?
Base: (n=478)

Those with a job also cited the *least accessed* sources as the *most effective*

- The services accessed by a relatively small proportion of these respondents tended to be the types of counselling services that were deemed the most effective
- Two sources for counselling emerged as having significant strength when assessed on the basis of effectiveness: community-based employment centres (83% describe them as very or somewhat effective), and a person at respondents' place of work involved in HR, job counselling or job development (82%).



Students

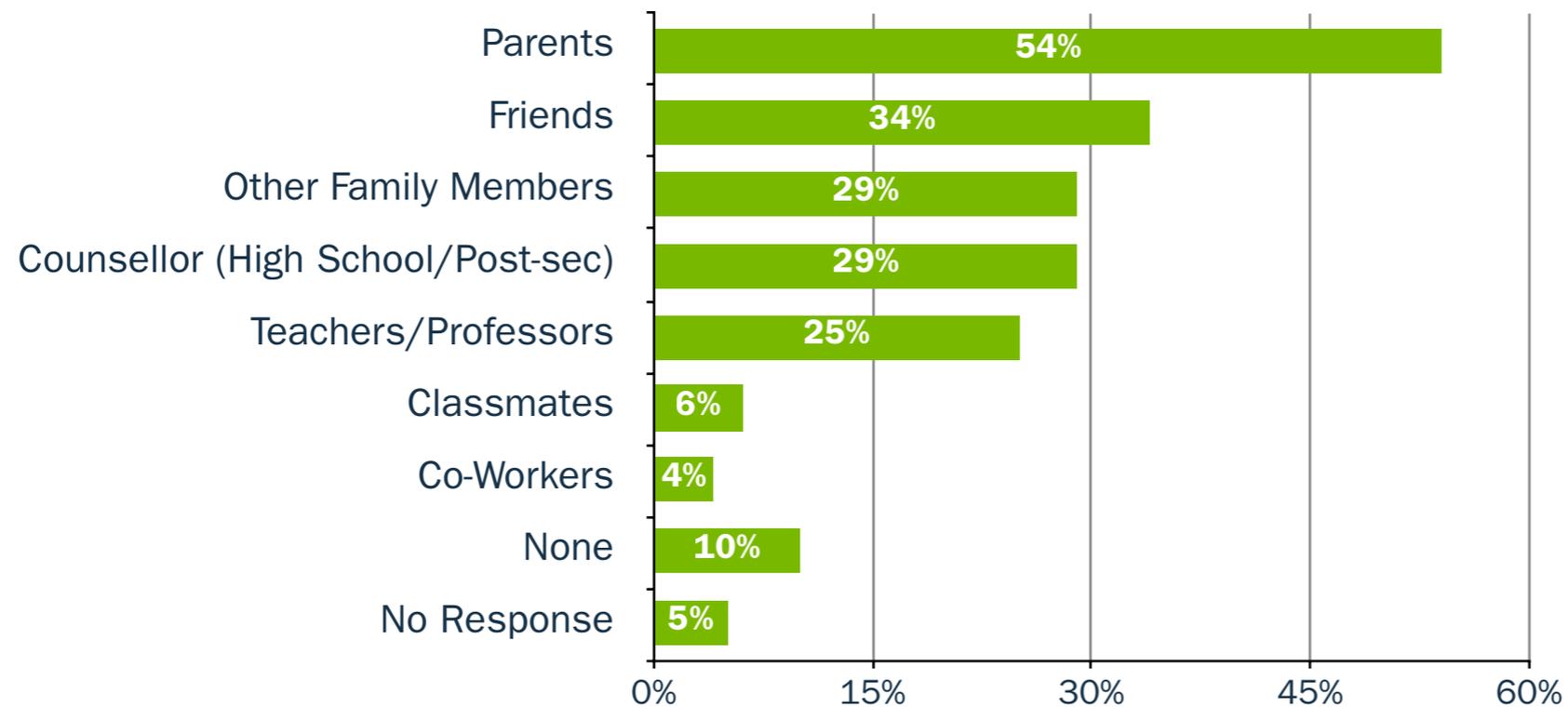
Students' characteristics

- Students made up the smallest segment of the study's participants (5%).
- The substantial majority of the respondents who identified themselves as students were between 18 and 24 years of age (83%). The majority (66%) were university students, while one quarter (25%) were college students, with the remainder identifying as high school students (6%) or trade apprentices (3%).
- Almost six in ten (58%) students reported that they are likely to seek career advice from professional career or employment counsellors about their career paths.
- Almost half (46%) of all students reported that they have had some kind of career counselling in the past, though a slight majority (54%) have not.
- Those most likely to expect to seek advice (58%) included: Female students (65%) vs. Male students (44%); University students (63%).
- Those closest to students—family and friends—emerged as the individuals that students were most likely to consult on both an aided and unaided basis.
- On an aided basis, majorities identified those in their personal circle, including parents, friends, other family members and classmates.
- The only other individuals to have been consulted by a majority, albeit a slight majority (51%) were individuals working in students' area of interest.

Students who *did* consult someone on career plans cited several sources (unaided)

- On an unprompted basis, students cited five key sources of career advice: parents (54%), friends (34%), other family members (29%), counsellors (high school or post-secondary) and teachers or professors (25%).

Q: Who, if anyone, have you talked to or met with about your career or employment options and plans?

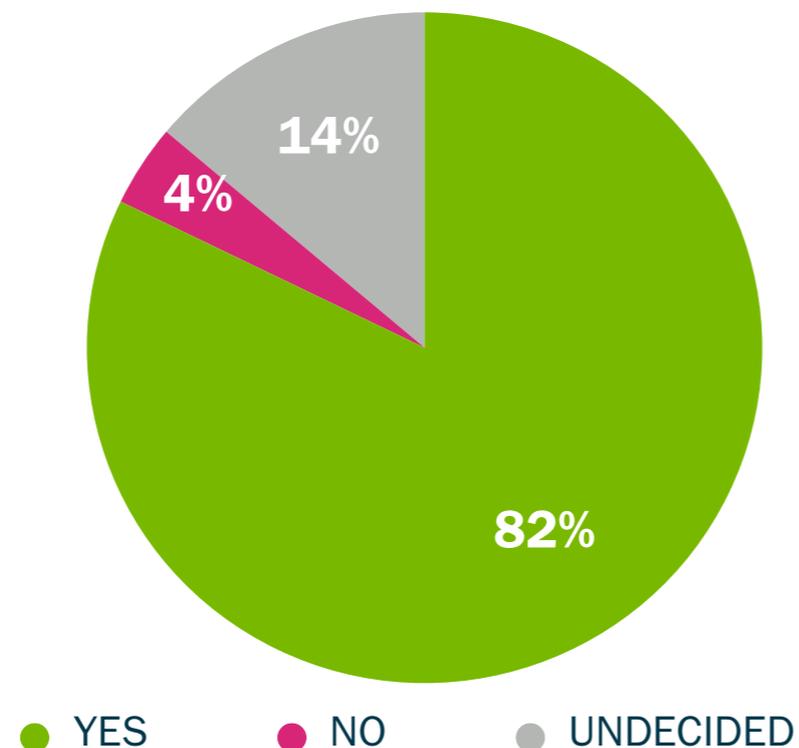


Q: People often talk to or meet with others – from family members working in a profession – when they are considering their career path and making decisions about the educational options or the type of career that they might pursue. Who, if anyone, have you talked to or met with about your career or employment options and plans?

Base: (n=80)

Most students *are* studying with a career path in mind

- The vast majority (82%) of student respondents reported that they are currently taking courses in a career area that they intend to pursue upon completion of their studies.
- Only 4% are not taking courses toward a career.
- A small minority (14%) reported that they have not yet decided whether they will pursue a career in the area of studies they are currently undertaking.



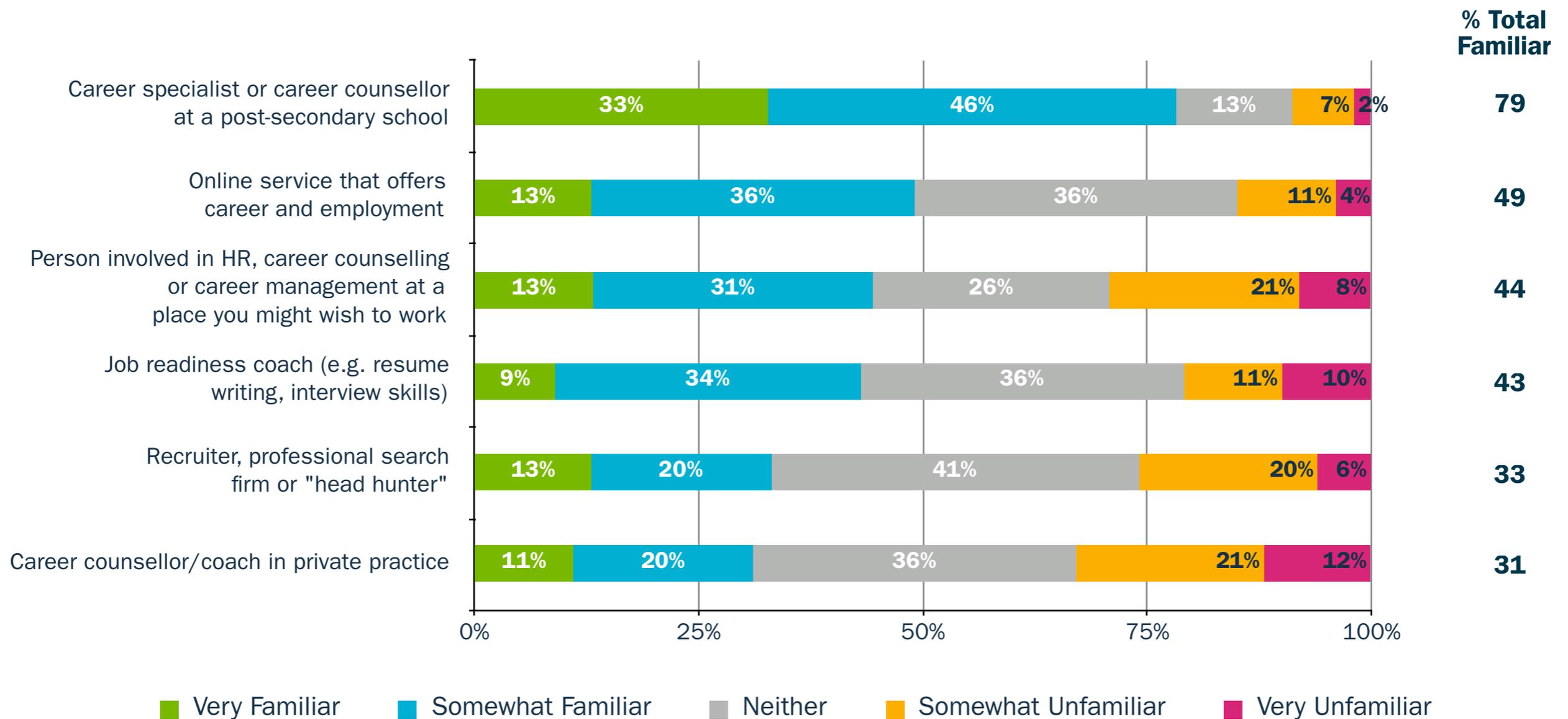
Q: Are you currently taking courses that are related to a career that you hope to pursue?
Base: (n=80)

Students cited different sources as the most effective

- Two types of advisors emerged as, by far, the most effective: **People working in the students' area of interest** (93% effective) and **a teacher/professor who is NOT a guidance counsellor** (87% effective). The intensity of effectiveness for both is notable: a third or more of those with experience in seeking advice from these two types of advisors describe them as “very effective.”
- By comparison, less than two-thirds of those with experience with **High School Guidance Counsellors**, describe them as effective (63%) and only one-in-five (19%) describe them as “very effective.”

Students: Familiarity with Career and Employment Counselling Options

(among those likely to seek advice from professional or employment counsellor)



Q: Thinking about different career and employment counselling options that might be available, please indicate the extent to which you are familiar with each of the following.
Base: (n=61)

Most students identified one source as their most recognized type of advisor (among those likely to seek advice)...

- Only one type of counselling option is identified by a majority of students as an option with which they are familiar: **Career specialist or career counsellor at a post-secondary school** (79%)
- High and similar levels of familiarity with post-secondary counsellors emerge across all regions and demographic profiles, with no statistically significant differences apparent.
- Familiarity with all other counselling options is notably lower.
- One-in-two (49%) reported familiarity with **online services** that offer advice, information and tools (49%).
- While caution is advised in interpreting findings due to small sample sizes, those who were most likely to be aware of online services include:
 - Those in college (83%) compared to those in university (41%)
 - Women (55%) vs. Men (29%)
- Just under half of the students in the survey (44%) reported familiarity with **those involved in HR, career counselling or career management at a place you might wish to work.**
- No significant differences in familiarity were apparent among subgroups of students or by region.

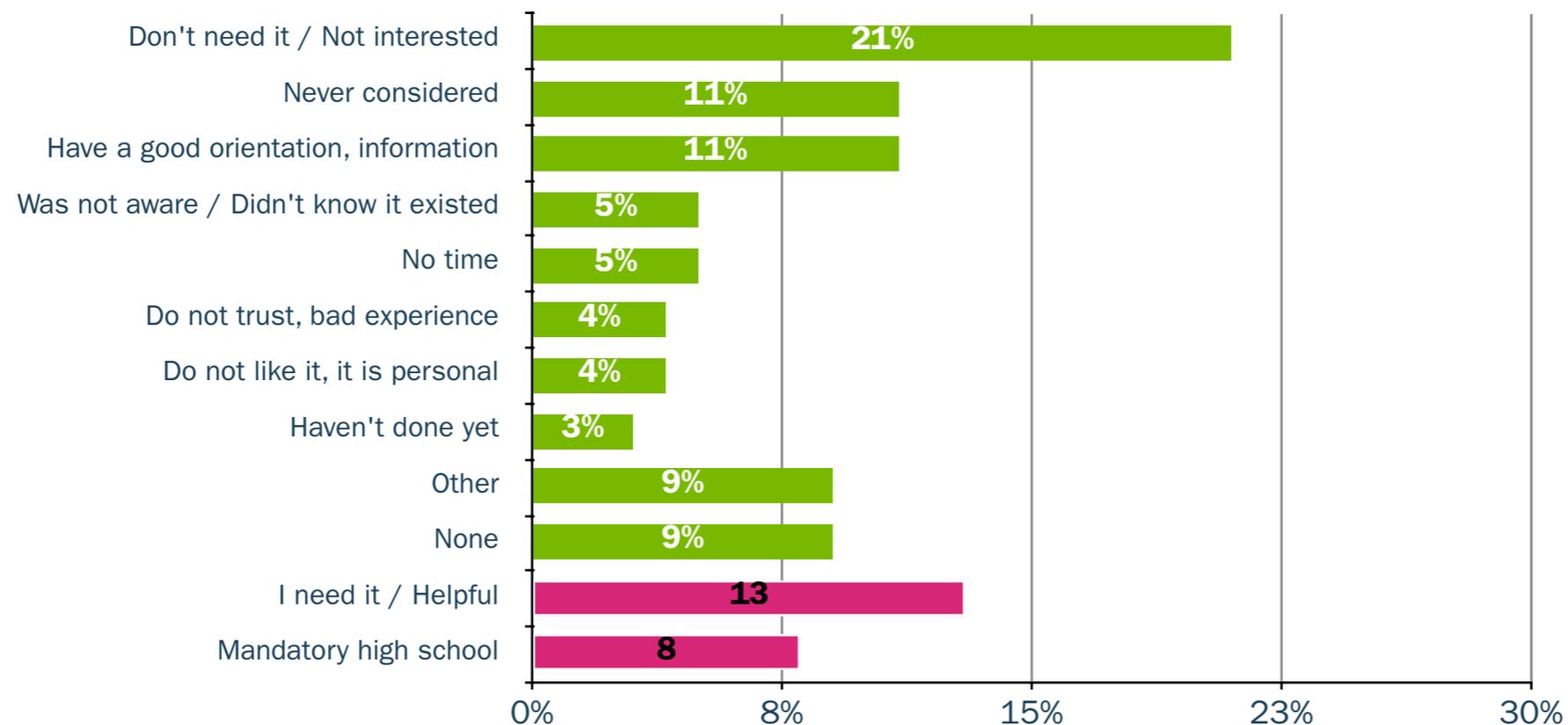
Students were often unaware of other types of advisors (among those likely to seek advice)

- Similarly, just under half (43%) of students reported familiarity with a **job readiness coach**.
- Only one-third of students were familiar with either a **recruiter/search firm/head hunter** (33%) or a **career counsellor in private practice** (31%).
- Importantly, when respondents were probed on the likelihood of seeking career counselling services, the hierarchy is tied to familiarity. Students were most likely to report that they will seek counselling services from a career specialist or counsellor at a post-secondary school (69%) and least likely to access services through a career counsellor/coach in private practice.
- Familiarity with services has a significant influence on intention to access services. Those services that respondents are most familiar with emerged as the ones that they are most likely to access.

Most students who *did not* seek professional career advisors cited one reason: not needed

- Students were probed on their reasons for accessing or not accessing counselling services. Two key reasons for NOT accessing service are most common: One third (32%) reported either not needing or not being interested in such services, or that they have the right amount of information or orientation where additional counselling is deemed unnecessary. One in ten (11%) report that they have never considered counselling services.

Q: What is the main reason that you have/had not had career counselling services?



Q: What is the main reason that you have/had not had career counselling services?
Base: (n=80)



Conclusions

Summary of Key Findings: Those in a Career

This group made up the largest of the three respondent categories (55% among those who are working or who have worked):

- Just over half reported that they have sought advice from a career or employment professional.
- Sources of advice most identified were associated with academic institutions: high school guidance counsellors and career counsellors at post-secondary schools.
- Fewer than one quarter of those in a career identified other professional counselling options.
- A substantial majority of those with experience seeing a guidance counsellor described the interaction as effective.
- Those who have accessed *other* professional services beyond high school guidance counsellors attributed very high levels effectiveness to these professionals.
- High levels of effectiveness were associated with career specialists at post-secondary institutions, HR counsellors at workplaces, job readiness coaches and career counsellors/coaches in private practice. Again, those advisors least likely to have been accessed emerge as the most effective.
- When those who had not accessed professional consulting services were probed further, majorities reported that accessing professional services never occurred to them, they never felt the need or they knew what they wanted to do and pursued opportunities on their own.
- Slight majorities of those who did not engage professional counselling advisors reported having no clear idea of the services available, would not have known where to look or would have had no way of determining the quality of services. Lack of knowledge and awareness of services therefore emerged as a clear barrier.
- Almost half of all of those who did not access professional services reported that, had they to do it over, they would have accessed such services.

Summary of Key Findings: Those in a Job

A similar pattern emerged among Canadians who self-categorized themselves as having a job (37% of all survey respondents who are working or have worked).

- Challenges around awareness of appropriate services and the means by which to identify and access the right services results in limited take-up. In fact, these respondents were among the least likely to report having accessed professional services about employment and job options. Just slightly more than one third of all those describing themselves as having a job indicated that they have sought professional employment counselling.
- High school guidance counsellors emerged at the top of the list as those who were consulted, with a slight majority identifying such counsellors. Almost two thirds of those who met with high school guidance counsellors described them as effective, but perceived other professional service providers as being more effective.
- High levels of effectiveness were attributed to those who accessed community-based employment centres and human resources personnel/professionals at their places of work.
- Significant concerns were expressed about the costs associated with professional counselling services. But, like all respondents who did not seek advice from professionals, a lack of awareness, an absence of knowledge about the types of services available and a sense that they would not have known where to seek such services were cited as significant reasons for not having procured such services.

Summary of Key Findings: Students

The student category was the smallest of the three respondent segments (5%).

- Almost all students reported discussing their career options with an individual, but the vast majority identified a relatively narrow circle of family members and friends as their source. Students' contact with professional counsellors was notably more limited, though about half reported that they have discussed their career ambitions and options with contacts who are working in their areas of interest or with professors and teachers who are not guidance counsellors. In fact, these two groups – those working in areas of interest and teacher/professors – emerged as among the most effective providers of advice for students.
- Use of high school guidance counsellors was limited to four in ten students. While only a minority reported seeking advice from guidance counsellors, almost two thirds of those who did so described it as at least somewhat effective. The identification of other professional counsellors (e.g., career specialists in private practice or professional career coaches) was limited to small minorities. Where specific professionals had been accessed, however, their effectiveness was deemed high.
- Awareness of *professional* services for career and employment counselling is limited among students. The only type of professional service with which a majority (79%) reported familiarity was career counselling at their respective post-secondary institutions. Familiarity with private career counsellors was limited to only about three in ten (31%) students.
- A lack of awareness emerged among the key barriers to pursuing professional options. Six in ten students conceded that they did not know enough about the options available and half reported that they would not know where to look or how to select appropriate counselling services. Students also reported that the perceived costs associated with professional career counselling inhibited their consideration or pursuit of professional advice.
- Exposure to, and engagement with, professional counsellors generated positive assessments of their value.

Conclusions: Respondents from all three streams consistently agreed on several key topics

- When agreement with statements were examined along the three main subgroups, only limited differences emerged.
- A lack of knowledge regarding the **type of career or employment counselling services available** is evident as an issue with some strength with all groups, but especially with students.
- All respondents agreed to the same level (about one in two) that they would not know **where to look for career and employment counselling services**.
- Interestingly, despite agreement about barriers to accessing career or employment counselling services, one in two of those with careers and with jobs agreed that, were they to start again, **they would try to get more counselling services**.
- For all three groups, the issue of having **no means of determining the quality** of career or employment counselling services emerged at the top, or near the top, of the list as a barrier to accessing services.
- The **potential cost** of career or employment counselling services is a relatively strong barrier, particularly for those currently working at a job and for current students.
- While **high school guidance counsellors** were seen as being less effective than some other professional advisors, they are an important and initial point of contact with counselling services.

Conclusions: Key Takeaways

- **It's clear that awareness of services is limited and that an ability to sort through types of services and appropriate options is a challenge.**
- **Many who did not access professional counselling services beyond high school guidance counsellors reveal that, in retrospect, they would have benefitted from professional services.**
- The incidence of accessing professional career or employment counselling services beyond those available with high school guidance counsellors is limited throughout the population.
- Significant majorities of those who have accessed the services of high school guidance counsellors described them as at least somewhat effective. Other professional counsellors – particularly those that are more specialized and focused – emerged as more effective. The findings reveal, however, that the use of such services is limited throughout the population.
- **Relatively high proportions of those who did not seek services revealed that they had limited knowledge of available services; reported that they had no means of identifying appropriate services based on their career and job ambitions; and were unable to assess the quality of the services that may have been available.**

When you can't afford to lose.[®]

TORONTO • CALGARY • EDMONTON • OTTAWA • MONCTON