DMEC
2026 ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Centering Employees with Disabilities:

The Disability Experience Survey

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Multnomah County

Who am I and what is my role?



Introduction

Ashley Carroll, MSW
ADACC, SHRM-SCP

- she/her pronouns
- White cisgender woman
- Millennial
- Disability status
- Other identities: partner, mother, friend, advocate, activist, fan



Disability Equity Policy Analyst Sr.

- Housed in the Office of Diversity and Equity
- Works with Human Resources and employees to improve Title I ADA accommodation process
  - Provide technical assistance, confidential consults, trauma informed lens and approach
- Lead disability equity efforts/employee engagement
- Accessibility best practices
- Title II ADA Coordinator role (kind of)

Multnomah County and the Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP)



Multnomah County

- Located in Portland, OR metropolitan area
- Roughly 6000 employees
- A progressive government policy and nationwide equity leader
- 10+ employee resource groups (ERG)



The Workforce Equity Strategic Plan (WESP)

2017: Driven by employee experiences and stories shared with our Board of County Commissioners about working at Multnomah County (Multco)

2018-2022: WESP 1.0 adopted with a focus on HR and infrastructure

2023: WESP renewal process

2024-2028: WESP 2.0, includes benchmarks specific to marginalized populations



The Disability Equity WESP Workgroup



Disability Equity WESP Workgroup

Formed in response to WESP 1.0 lacking disability-specific recommendations

- **Purpose:** to create recommendations to be included in the second iteration of the WESP
- **Instructions:** Dream BIG, Bluesky scenario, Universal Design
- **Question:** What would improve the employee experience of staff with disabilities?



Recruitment

- Recruited from ERG, previous workgroups, HR
- Ended up with seven committee members
  - All identified as having disability experience



Meeting Structure

- Met seven times over the course of four months
  - Virtual
  - Agendas one week in advance
    - Farther in advance if providing materials to review/outside work
  - Adequate breaks (scheduled ahead of time)
  - Multiple formats to convey and collect information
    - Google docs, slides, Jamboard, surveys
  - Awareness of decisions ahead of time



Process and Deliverables

- Began reviewing reports already created
- Surveyed disabled staff (218 responses)
- Distilled survey data into recommendations
  - Centralized ADA unit
  - Disability Experience Survey
  - Disability justice and anti-ableism training
  - ADA information included in onboarding materials
  - And more



WESP 2.0



Adopted in early 2024

Covers four phases throughout 2024-2028

Includes many benchmarks that began as recommendations from the Disability Equity Workgroup

Workforce Equity Strategic Plan 2024-2028

The Disability Experience Survey (DES)



The Disability Experience Survey (DES)

Multnomah County
Office of Diversity and Equity

Phase I benchmark (‘24-’25)

- Distributed every other year

Survey created and disseminated, data analyzed and presented by Office of Diversity and Equity (ODE)

DES Survey Advisory Group (SAG)

Initially formed in January of 2024 to create survey questions

- Made up of staff with disability experience interested in data collection
- Began with question: What do you want to know about the disability experience at Multco?
- Workshopped many questions
- Limited to a primarily quantitative approach
- Landed on 34 final questions, many with Likert scale response options



Sample Questions - Demographics

- Race (RealID)
- Gender identity
- Sexual orientation
- Disability status and type
- Employee Resource Group (ERG) participation
- Job type (e.g., Director, Frontline Staff, etc.)
- Telework status

Sample Questions - Sense of Belonging

Likert scale response: **Strongly Agree, Agree, Neither Agree nor Disagree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree**

- You trust your supervisor to respect your privacy regarding your disability/disabilities status.
- In your personal experience, your manager(s) respected your decision regarding disclosure of your disability to others
- In your personal experience, the county creates activities that are accommodating to all staff, regardless of their disability status.



Training, Education & Professional Development

- The county offers training that discusses disability rights.
- The county offers training on disability justice.
- The county should develop intersectional, disability justice training with external consultants who have experience with disabilities and disability justice work.
- I believe I have the same opportunities as my colleagues to engage in professional development activities in the county.



Sample Questions - ADA Accommodations

- Have you ever begun an accommodation request at the county?
- What was your accommodation request outcome?
- If you have begun an ADA accommodation request, but not completed it, what were the three primary reasons for not completing.
- If you did not complete an accommodation request but needed one, what was the primary reason.



DES Dissemination Successes

- Widely promoted
- Lots of appetite to participate
- Multiple avenues of awareness:
  - Internal newsletters
  - Direct emails
  - ERG meeting attendance
  - Link sent to employees with accommodations



DES Dissemination Surprises

Promotion materials caused confusion

- Identify as “disabled” vs identify as ”having a disability”

Technical difficulties

- Testing
- Dead link



SAG Input During Data Analysis

SAG met monthly from Jan 2025 - July 2025

- Reviewed findings section by section
- Questions about data analysis
  - Suggested intersections to analyze
- Ease of comprehension when findings were presented (i.e graphs, tables)
- Suggestions for data presentation
- Weighing relevance of findings
  - Neutral may indicate a different question needed

SAG Input During Report Creation

Report draft provided before SAG meeting

- Survey to collect feedback
- Same questions asked in group/discussion format

Lots of feedback on format! (Formatting not completed)

- Readability
- At-a-glance or glossary



Additional Multco Data Collection Efforts

Workday (HR database):

- **Identifiable**
- 7% identify as having a disability
- 380 employees

Countywide Employee Survey (2023):

- **Anonymous**
- 24.5% identify as having a disability
- 753 employees

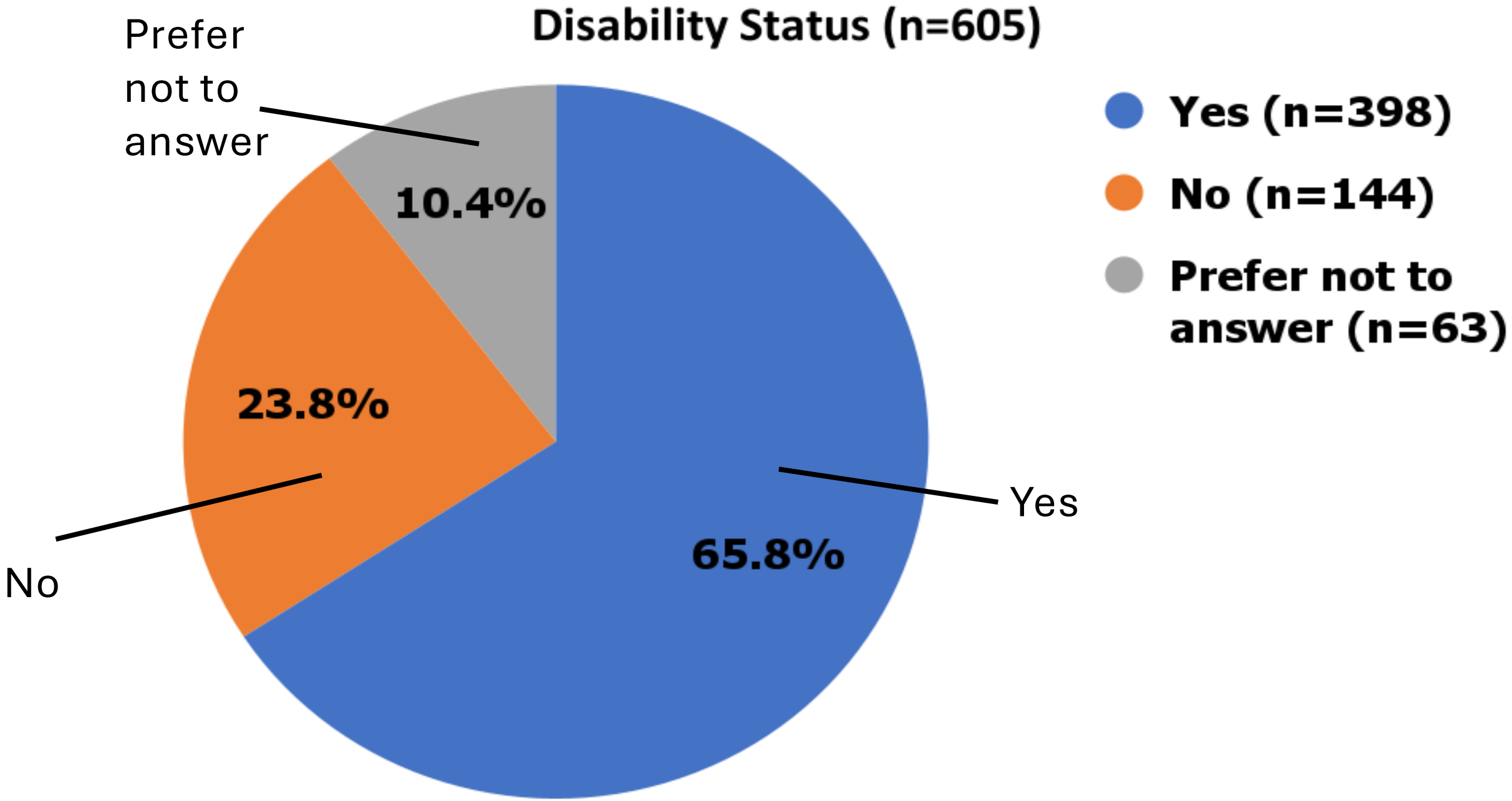
DES Response Rate

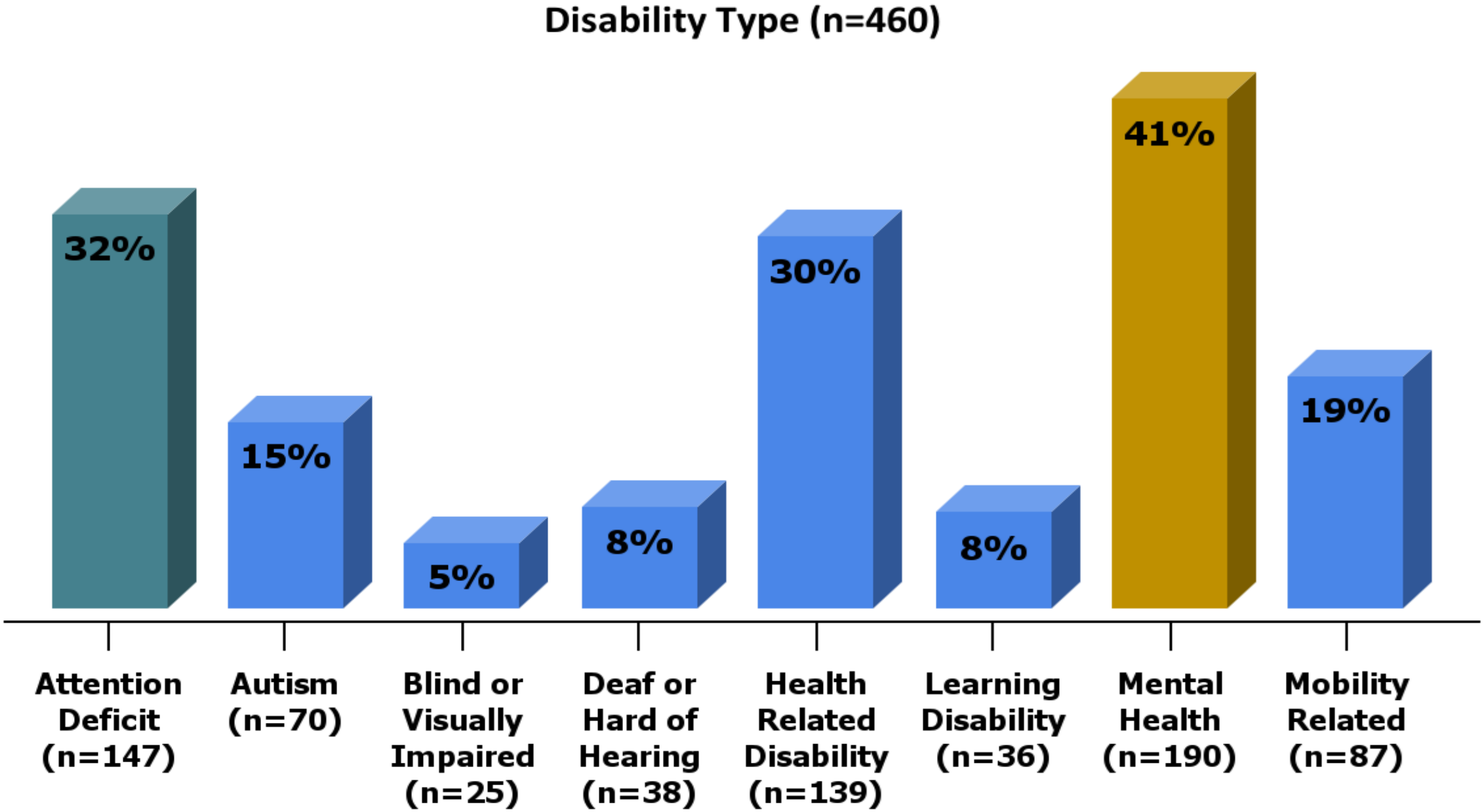
- 717 survey respondents
  - 112 removed due to being incomplete
- 605 remaining
  - 144 answered “No”, when asked “Do you identify as having a disability?”
- 461 responses left
  - 398 identify as having a disability
  - 63 “prefer not to answer”



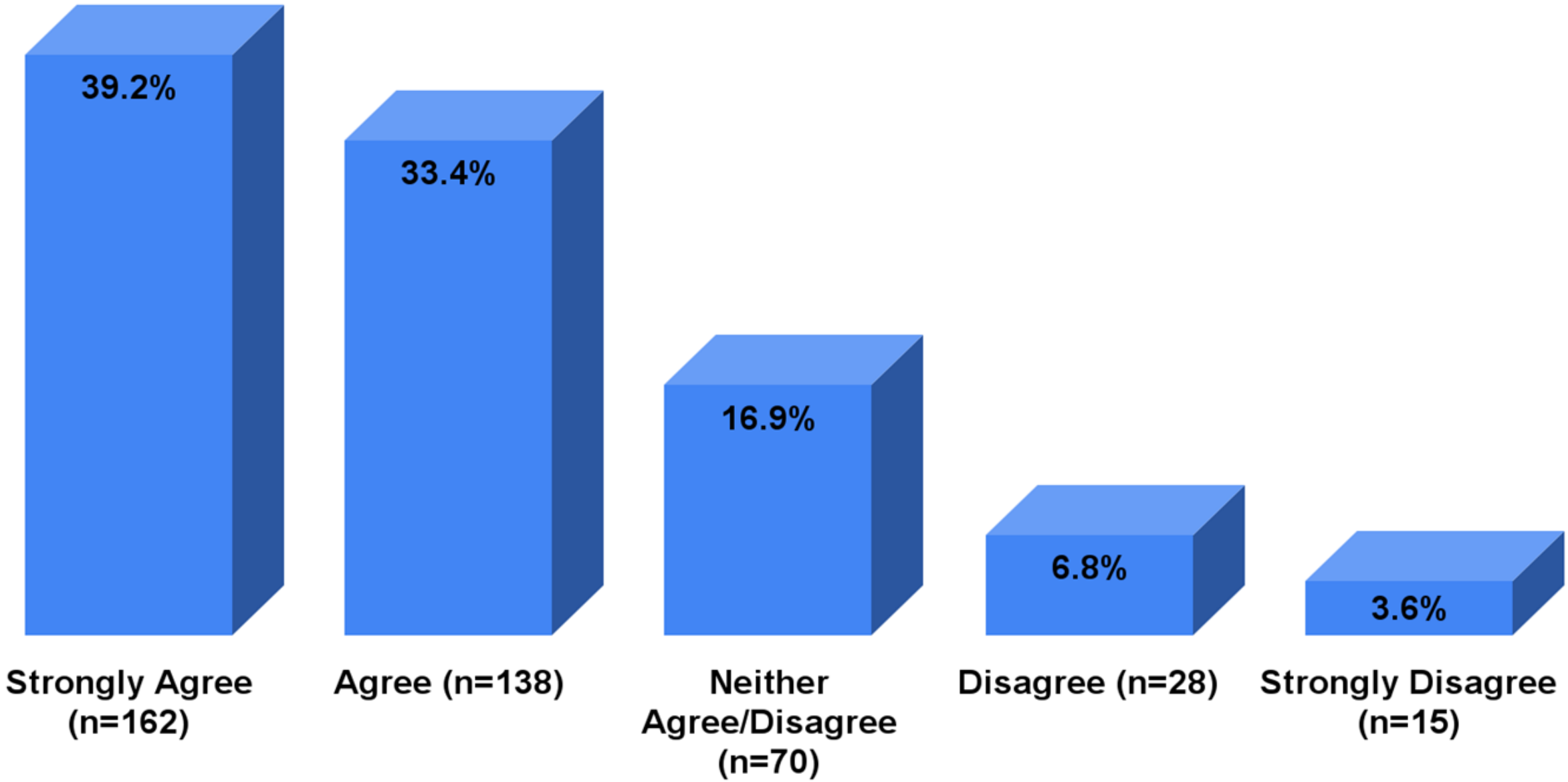
Disability Experience Survey Findings



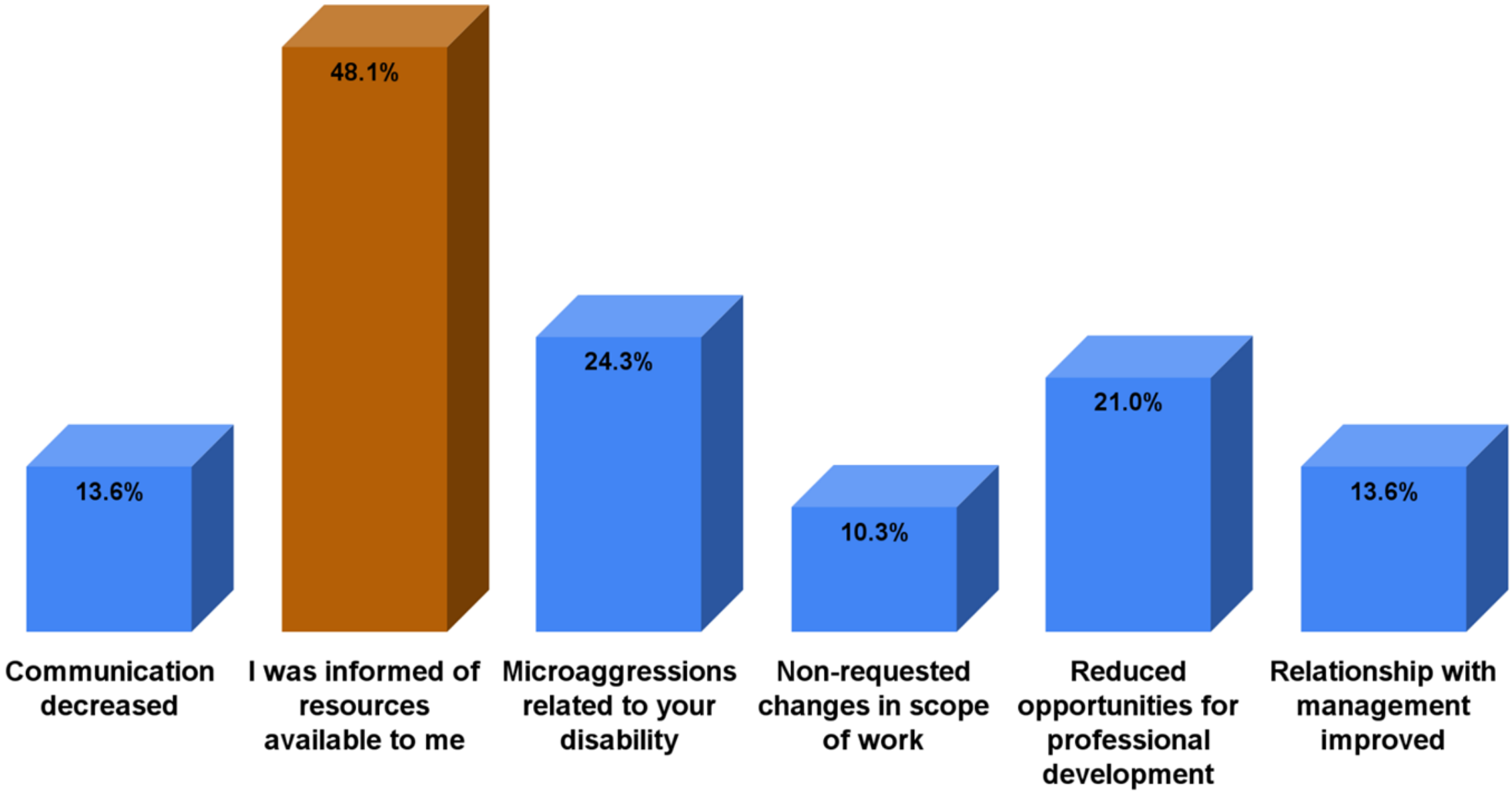

Disability Status (n=605)
Prefer not to answer
10.4%
23.8%
65.8%
No
Yes
Yes (n=398)
No (n=144)
Prefer not to answer (n=63)


Disability Type (n=460)
32%
15%
5%
8%
30%
8%
41%
19%
Attention Deficit (n=147)
Autism (n=70)
Blind or Visually Impaired (n=25)
Deaf or Hard of Hearing (n=38)
Health Related Disability (n=139)
Learning Disability (n=36)
Mental Health (n=190)
Mobility Related (n=87)

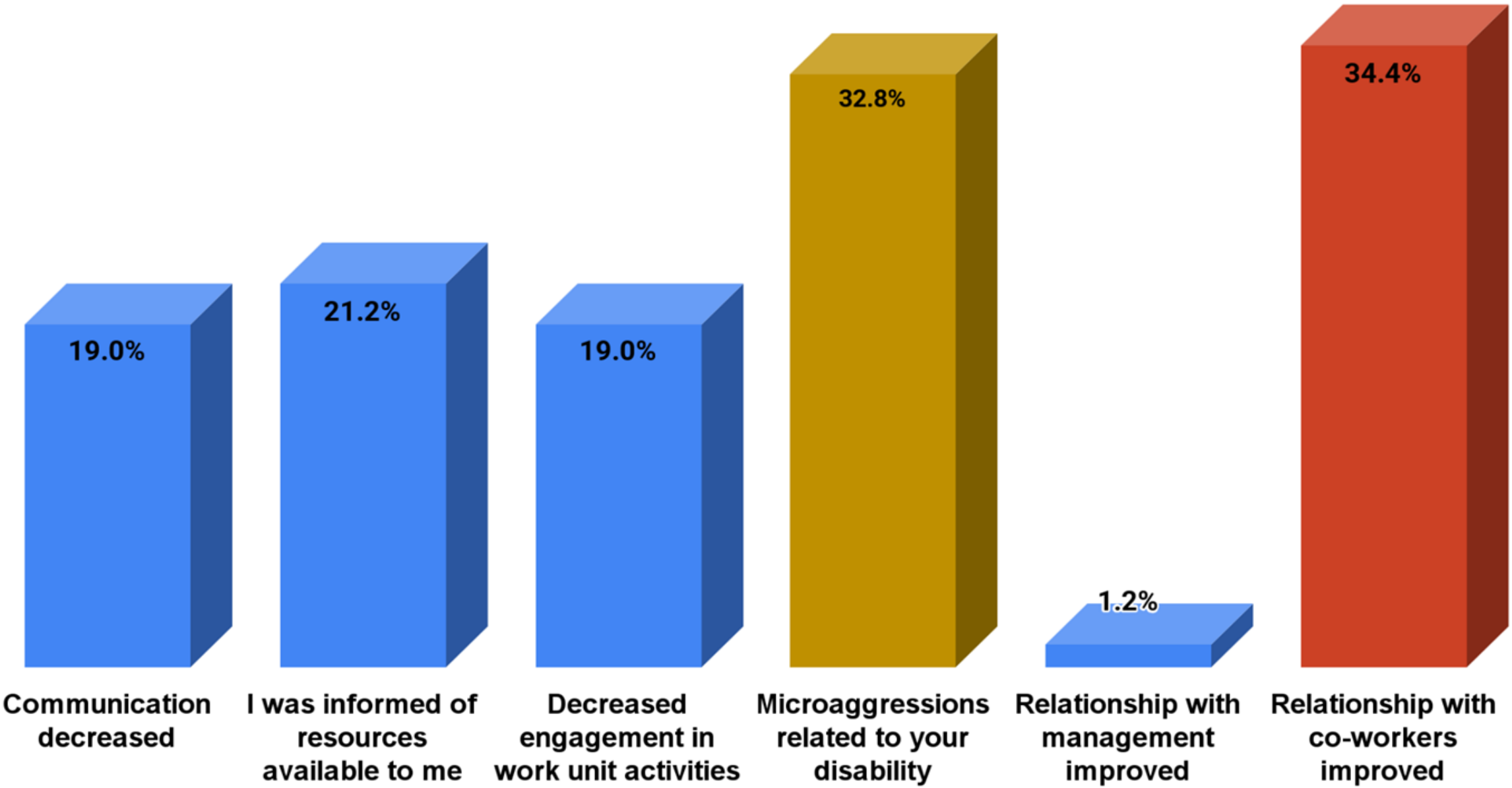
Trust Supervisor w/ Privacy (n=413)



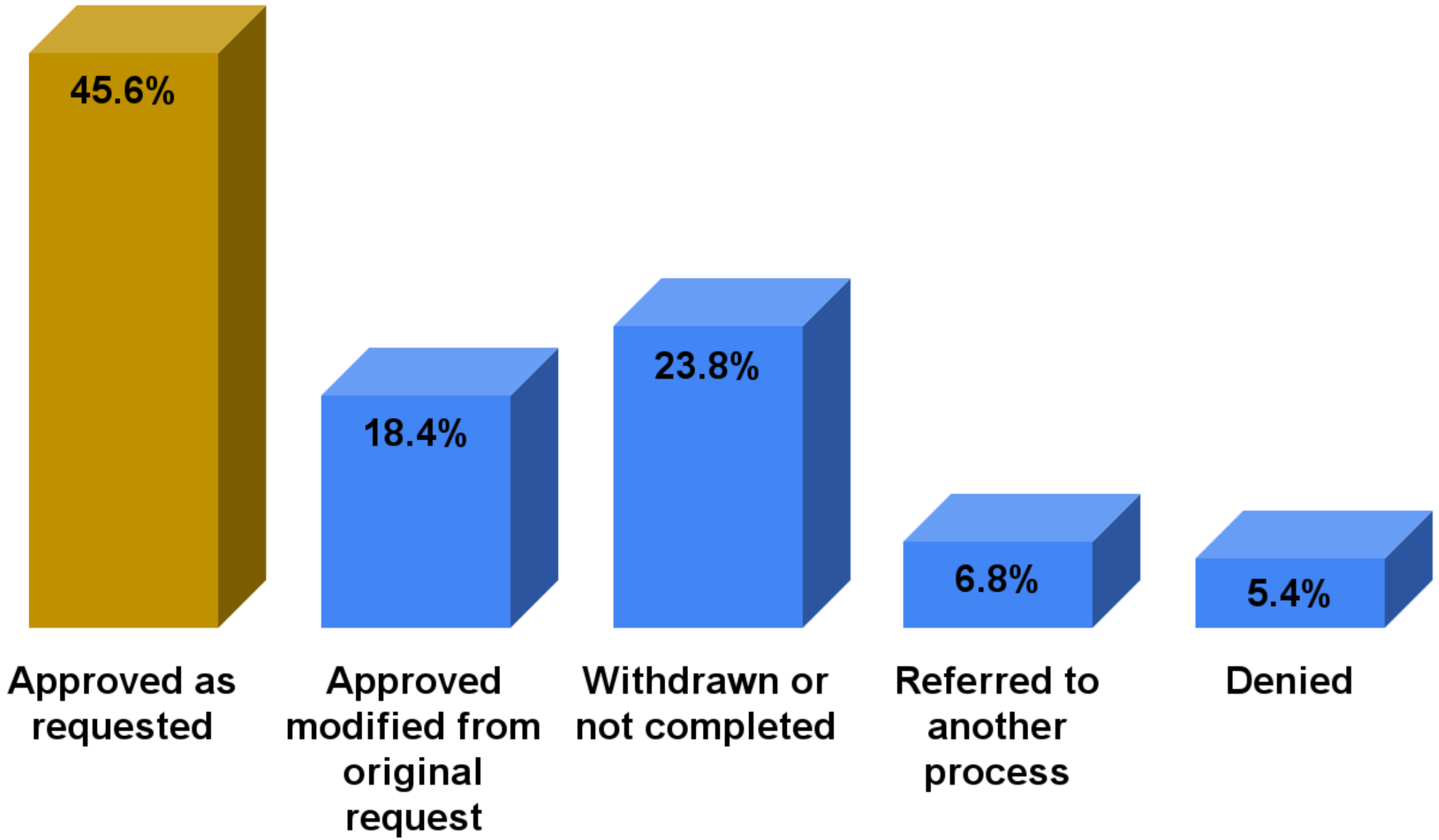
Reactions to Disclosure from Management (n=214)



Reactions to Disclosure from Coworkers (n=163)



Accommodation Outcome (n=132)



DES Recommendations

- Enhancing trust and support in management-employee relationships
- Improving co-worker interactions and inclusive work environments
- Strengthening recruitment and retention strategies
- Enhancing training/education and professional development opportunities
- Streamlining the ADA accommodation process



Creating Intentional Space

- Removing as many barriers as possible:
  - Accessible materials in advance
  - Accessible space/platform
  - Thoughtful facilitation
- Asking about access needs
- Clear roles and responsibilities (job description)
- Knowing what to expect
  - Scope and authority (advising, reviewing, deciding)
- Feedback opportunities (discussion, surveys, email, 1:1s)
- Closing the loop - coming back with outcome(s)



Moving Beyond ADA Compliance

- Asking and including the most impacted in process development and decisions
- Creating accessible spaces
  - Including a trauma informed perspective
- Codifying equity and inclusion efforts in strategic plans, policies, job descriptions, etc.
- Don’t use equity practitioners/those with lived experience as a checkbox



SAG Experience Feedback

SAG Member 1: “I've informed my managers that this group has been a very good use of my time, personally and professionally. I have learned a lot about my colleague's experiences at work, and how I might be able to advocate for others who may need support.”

SAG member 2: “This work has absolutely felt meaningful to me…I've been so appreciative to be a part of this.”



DES Report release!



- May 13th, 2026
- Recruit for next SAG
- Review and update questions
- Next DES dissemination date: early 2027

Resources

Disability Experience Survey Report

Access Guide: Meetings, Training and Events

- Accessible Presentation Techniques: A Quick Guide

Workforce Equity Strategic Plan website

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