

The Veterans Metrics Initiative

Learning What Works for Veterans

National Endowment for the Arts
December 18, 2019



TVMI: Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being

Research Aims

Aim 1:

- Document Veteran well-being in four key domains – **mental and physical health, vocation, finances, and social relationships** – over the first three years of the transition from military service to civilian life
- Identify factors associated with better and worse well-being

Aim 2:

- Describe programs used by veterans as they reintegrate into civilian life and distill them into their components, identifying common components across programs

Aim 3:

- Identify program components that are associated with changes in well-being following separation from military service



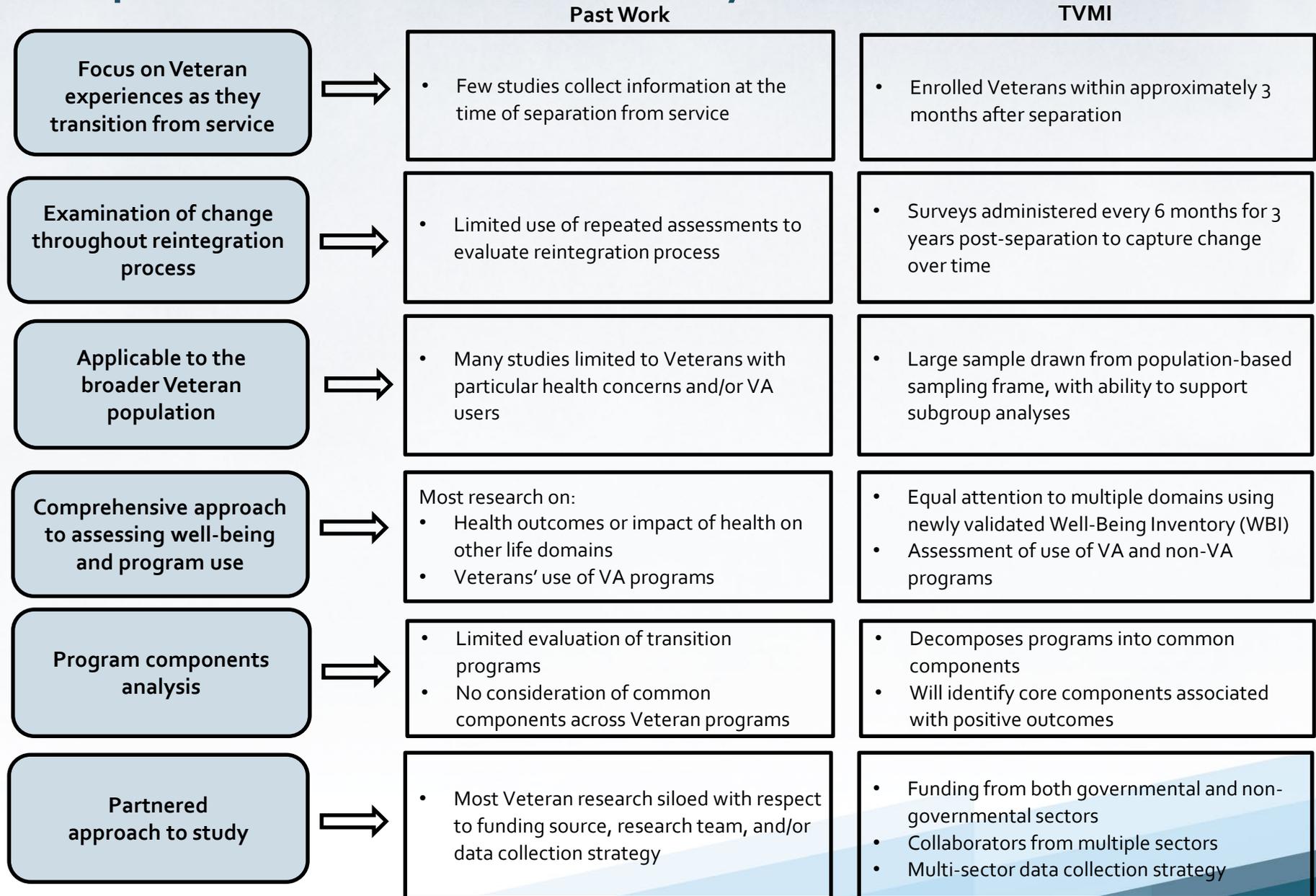
TVMI: Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being

Research Outputs

- Validated multidimensional tool for assessing key components of well-being (Well-Being Inventory)
- Veteran Utilized Program (VUP) instrument
- “Menus” of common program components associated with successful Veteran outcomes across multiple well-being domains
- Public-use dataset of Veteran well-being outcomes across transition continuum

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Unique Contributions of TVMI Study



Data Collection Operations and Cohort Update



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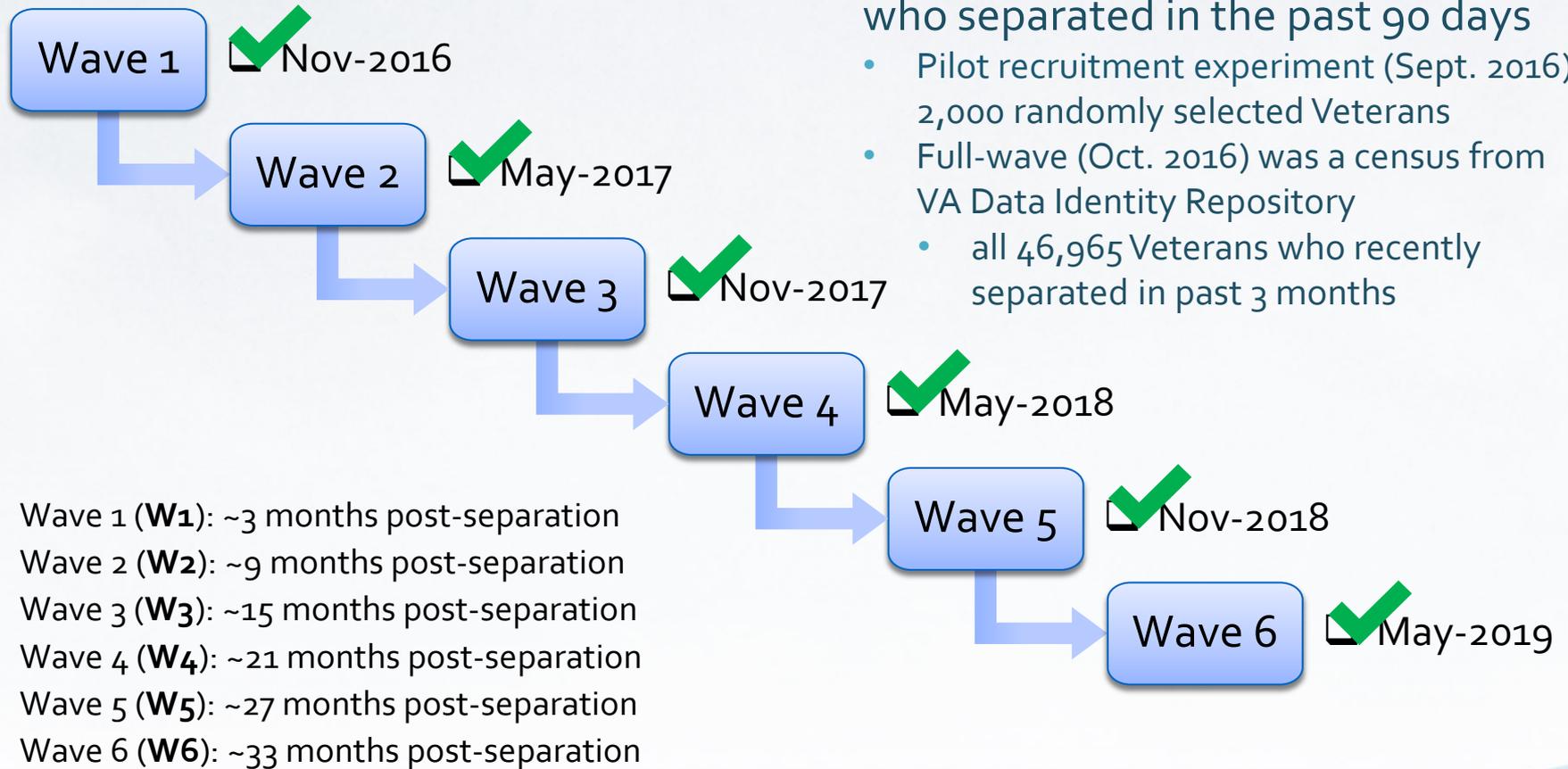
Key Components of Outreach Strategy

- **Initial mail recruitment** of Veterans who separated in the past 90 days
 - Pilot recruitment experiment (Sept. 2016) - 2,000 randomly selected Veterans
 - Full-wave (Oct. 2016) was a census from VA Data Identity Repository
 - all 46,965 Veterans who recently separated in past 3 months
- **Follow-up web surveys** every six months for 3 years
 - Web survey, but paper and CATI were available if requested (only 18 mail surveys and no CATI surveys were requested)
 - Invitation by email, text, and mail
- **Instant Amazon giftcodes** provided at end of web survey on screen and by follow-up email or text (amounts increased each survey wave)
- Participants can **skip any question**, but are shown a red warning message that they have missed a question on the page
- **Study website and Helpdesk** to provide information and update contact information



www.VeteranSurvey.org 1-844-356-4606

TVMI: Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being Data Collection Timeline



Initial mail recruitment of Veterans who separated in the past 90 days

- Pilot recruitment experiment (Sept. 2016) 2,000 randomly selected Veterans
- Full-wave (Oct. 2016) was a census from VA Data Identity Repository
 - all 46,965 Veterans who recently separated in past 3 months

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Survey Contacts and Completes

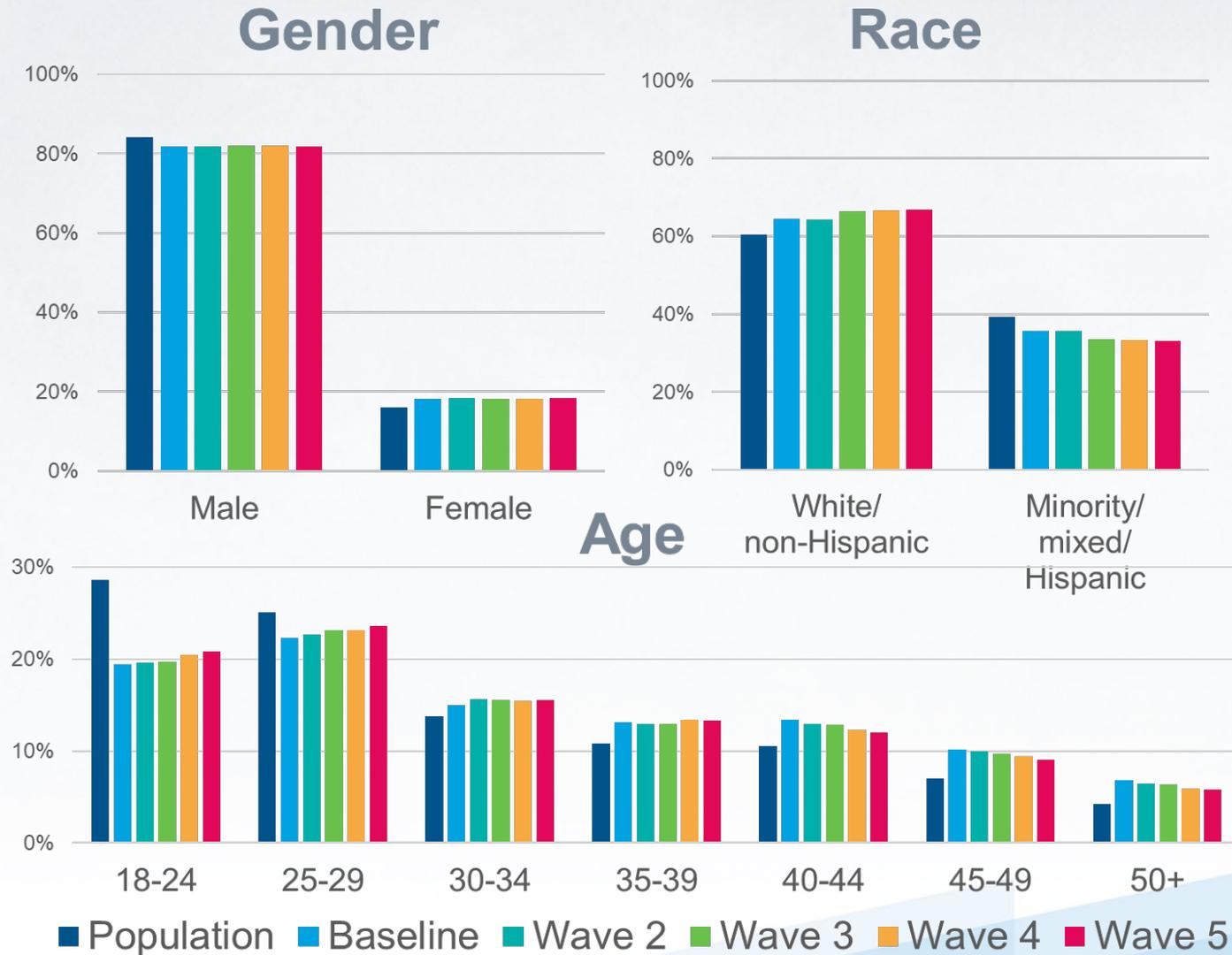
	Baseline - Wave 1		Wave 2		Wave 3		Wave 4		Wave 5	
Sample	N=48,965		N=9348		N=9348		N=9348		N=9348	
Completed survey	n=9,566		n=7,200		n=7,201		n=6,840		n=5,844	
Interview length (median)	36.7 min		37.0 min		40.1 min		39.9 min		41.0 min	
Refusals at login	687		77		34		32		18	
Break-offs after start	581		77		148		76		102	
Break-offs after survey mid-point	62		26		62		26		30	
Questions skipped after warning	Under 2%		Under 2%		Under 2%		Under 2%		Under 2%	
Help-desk calls	93		92		127		104		83	
Completes/Break-offs by device	Comp.	Break-off	Comp.	Break-off	Comp.	Break-off	Comp.	Break-off	Comp.	Break-off
Desktop/laptop/tablet	78.0%	561 (6.6%)	56.6%	110 (2.5%)	61.0%	74 (4.4%)	54.7%	76 (2.0%)	63.3%	63 (2.0%)
Smart-phone	22.0%	160 (8.8%)	43.4%	116 (3.9%)	39.0%	91 (3.4%)	44.5%	61 (2.0%)	35.7%	45 (2.0%)

* 81.4% of the sample (7,789) said they would be willing to be contacted by HJF about other study opportunities in the future for themselves or their families.



TVMI: Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being

Maintaining Representativeness

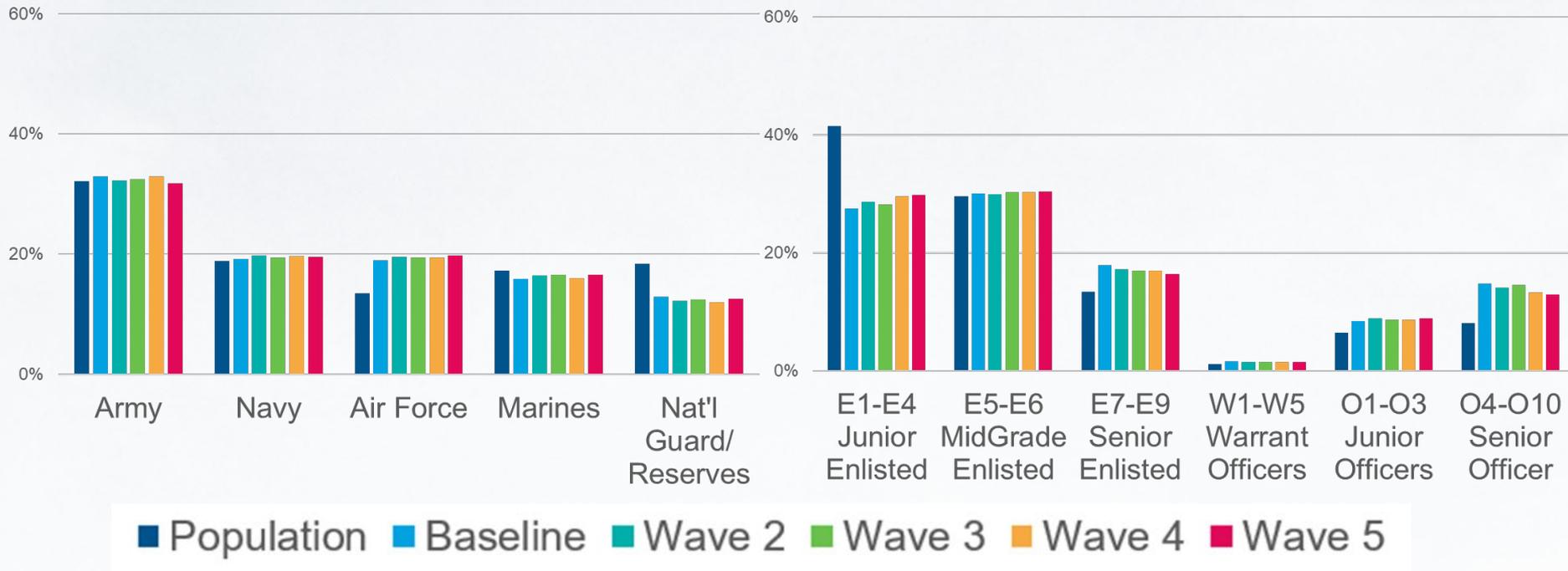


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Maintaining Representativeness

Branch/Component

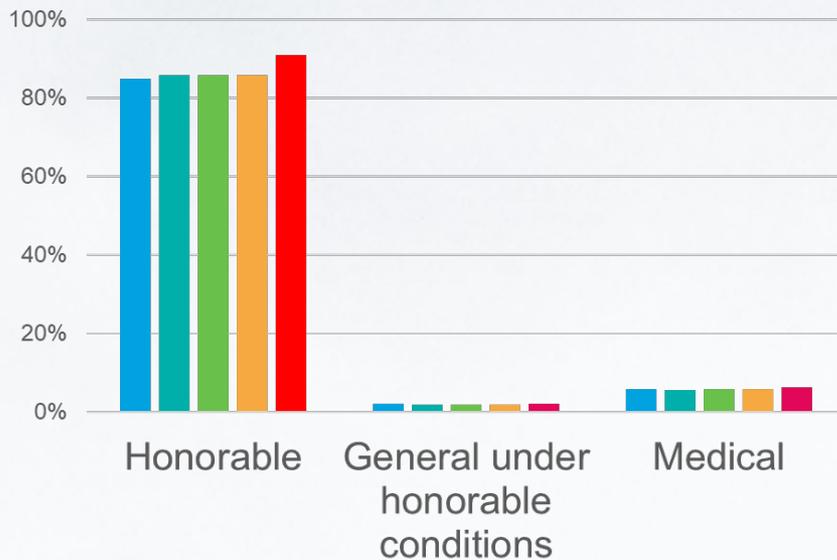
Paygrade



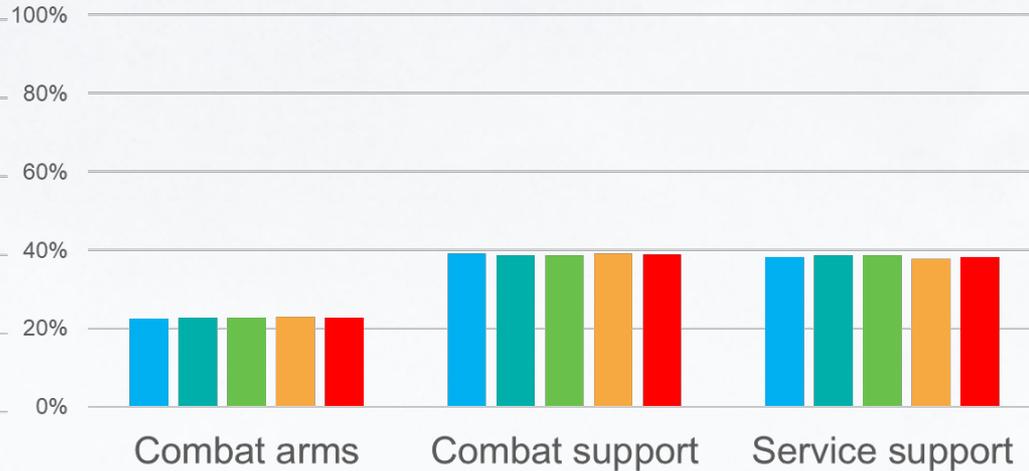
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Maintaining Representativeness

Discharge Type



Primary Military Occupation



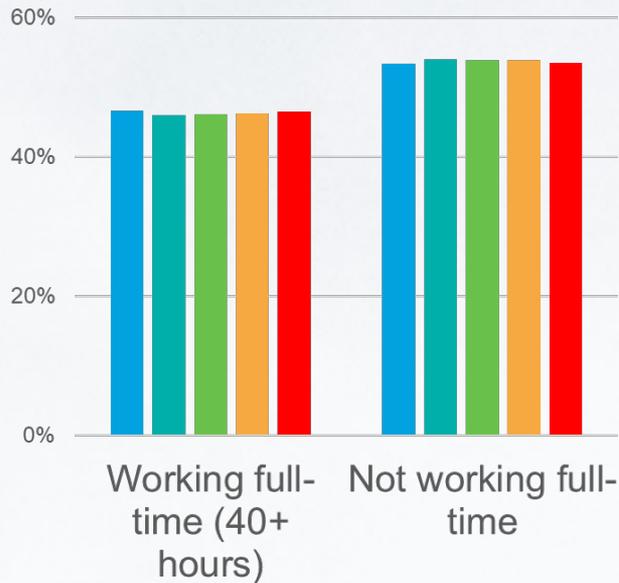
■ Baseline
 ■ Wave 2
 ■ Wave 3
 ■ Wave 4
 ■ Wave 5



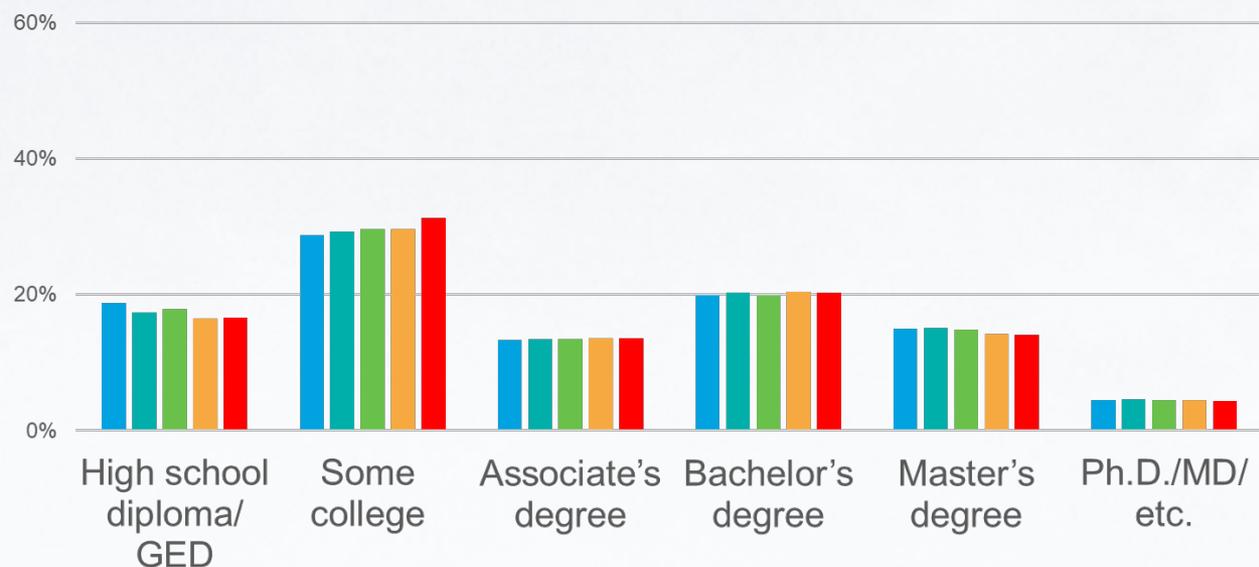
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Maintaining Representativeness

Working



Education



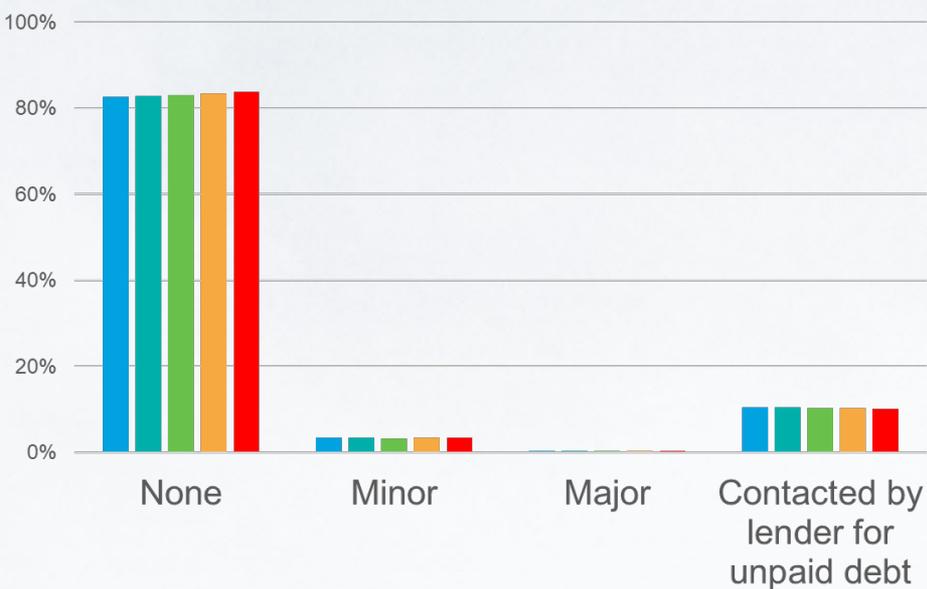
■ Baseline ■ Wave 2 ■ Wave 3 ■ Wave 4 ■ Wave 5



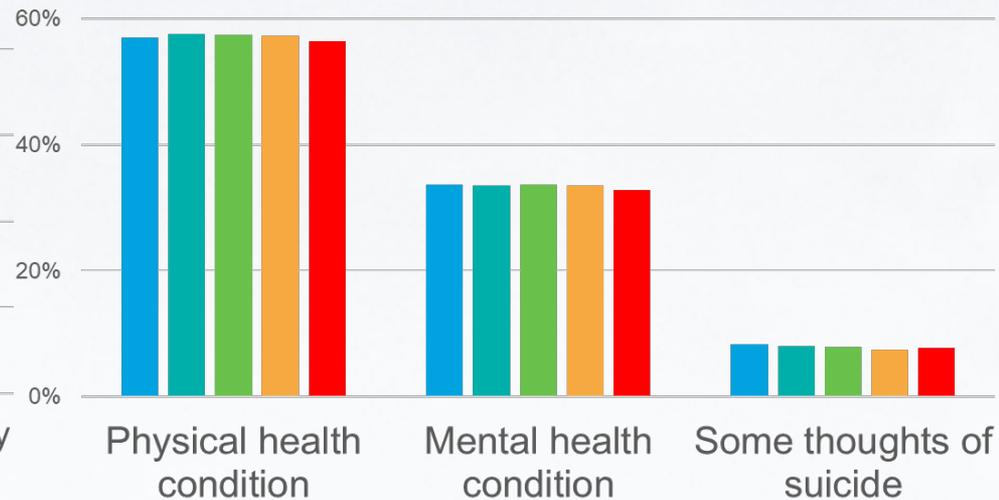
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Maintaining Representativeness

Legal and Debt Problems



Overall Health Problems



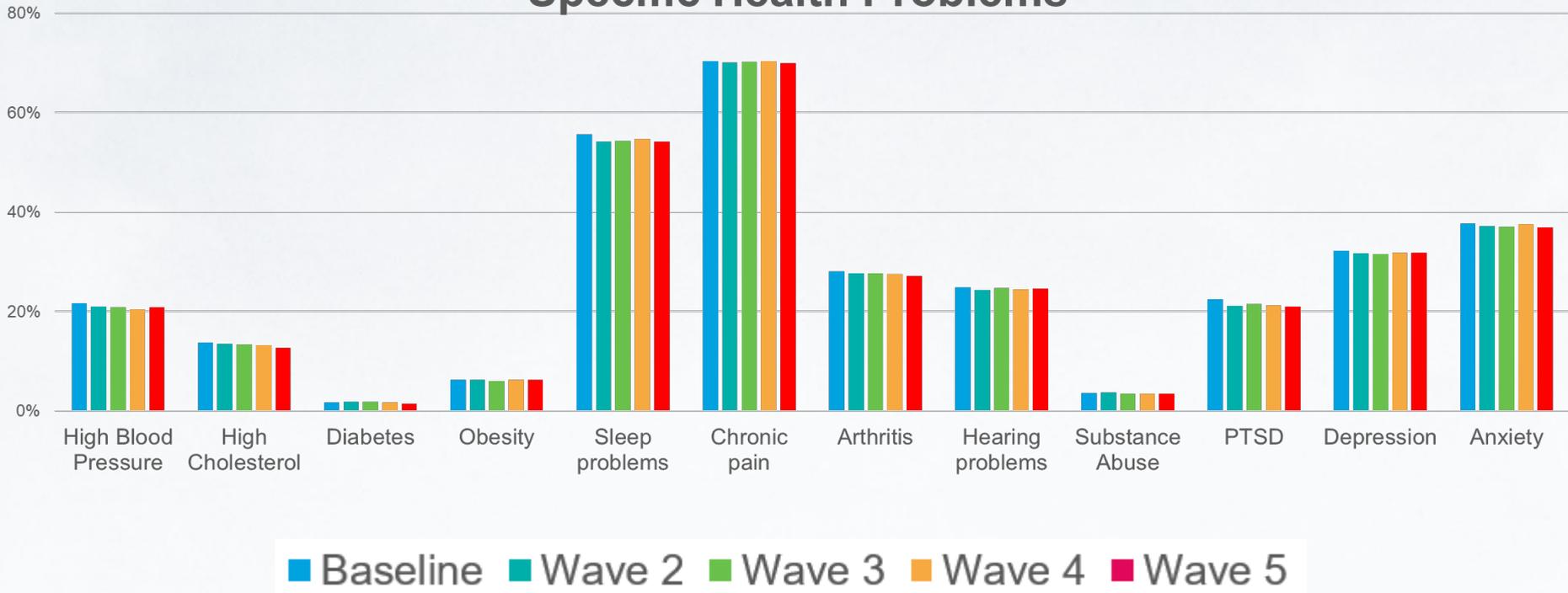
■ Baseline ■ Wave 2 ■ Wave 3 ■ Wave 4 ■ Wave 5



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Maintaining Representativeness

Specific Health Problems

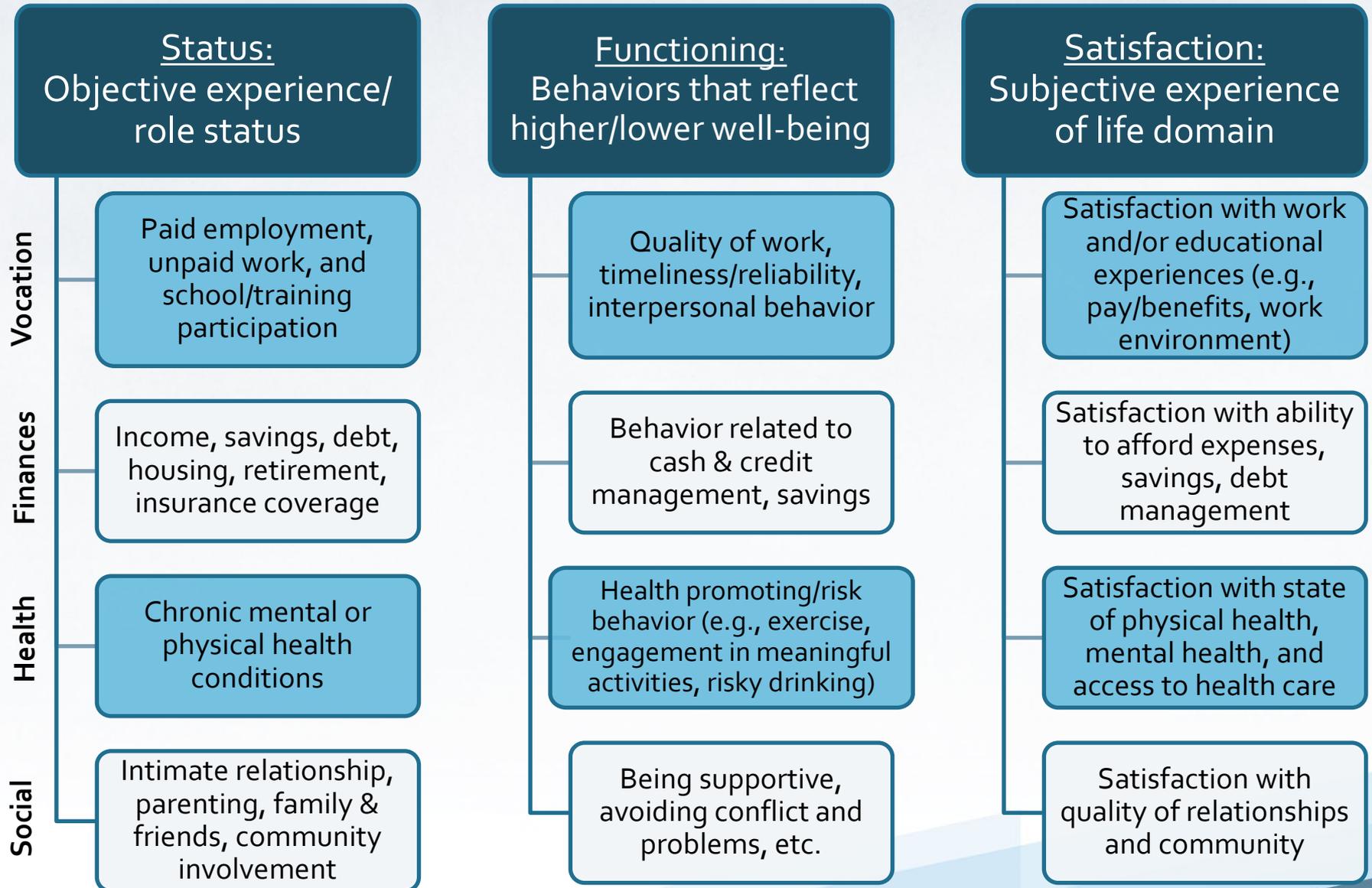


Update on Well-Being Analyses Led by VA Boston Team



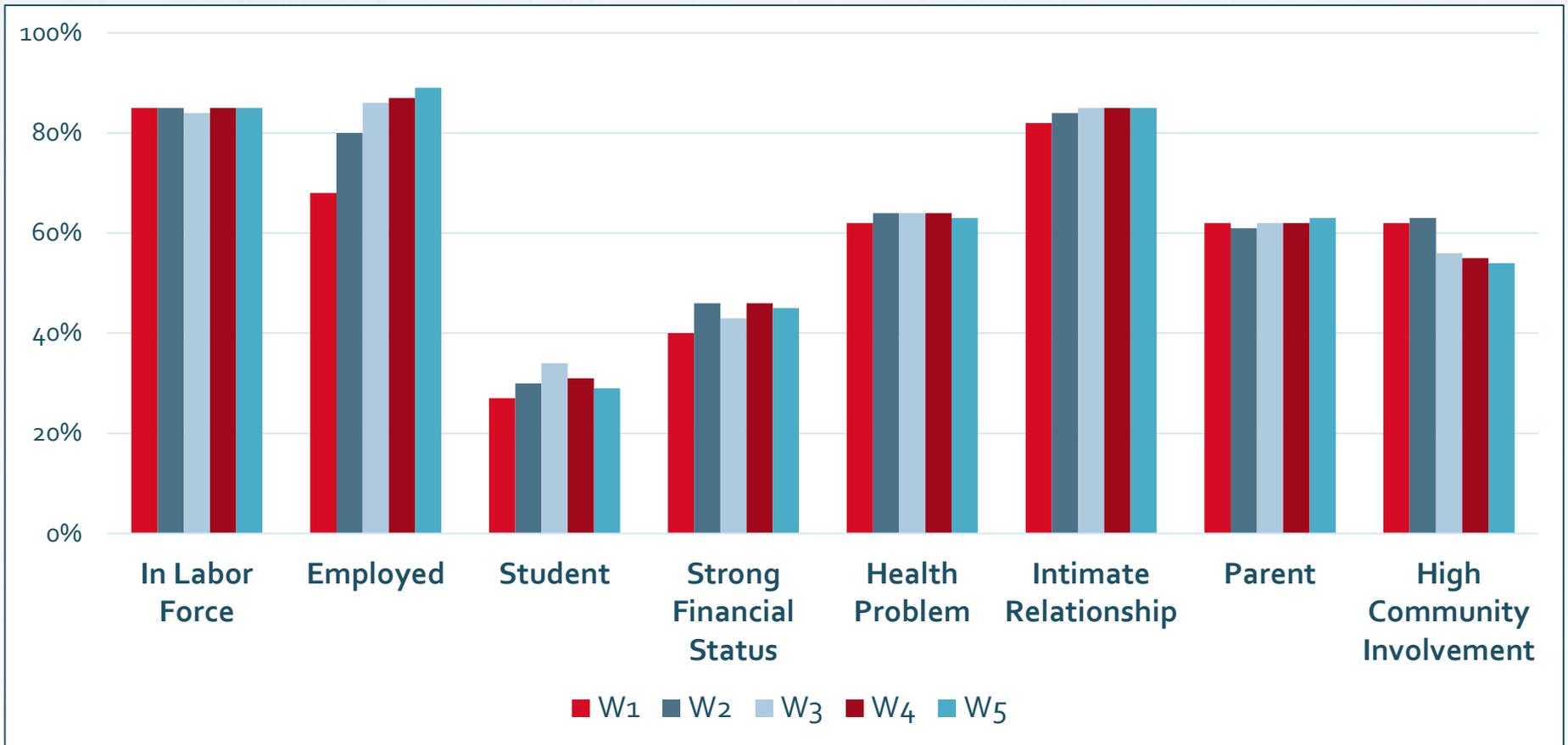
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Well-Being Inventory Components



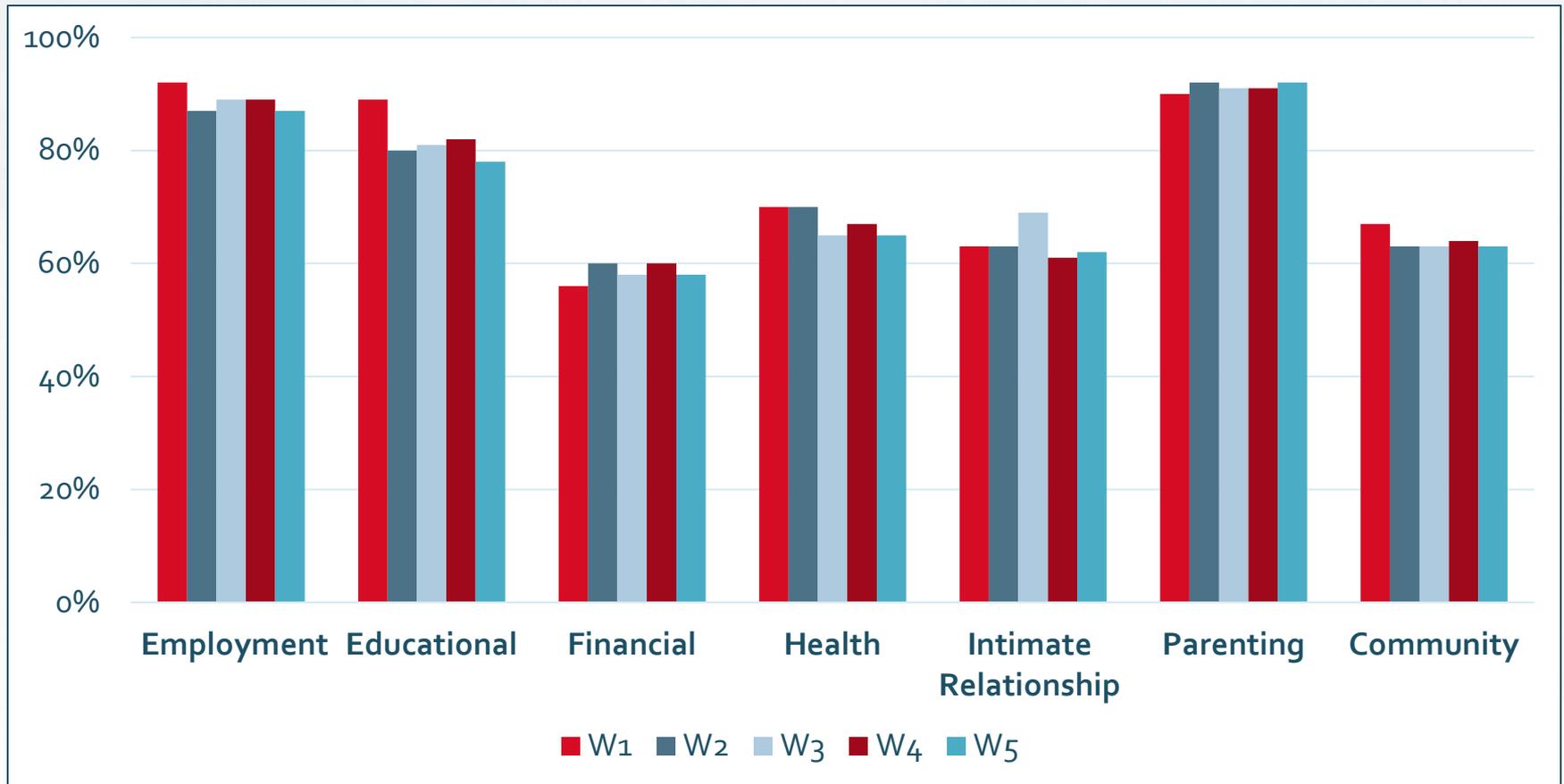
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Change in Status Over Time



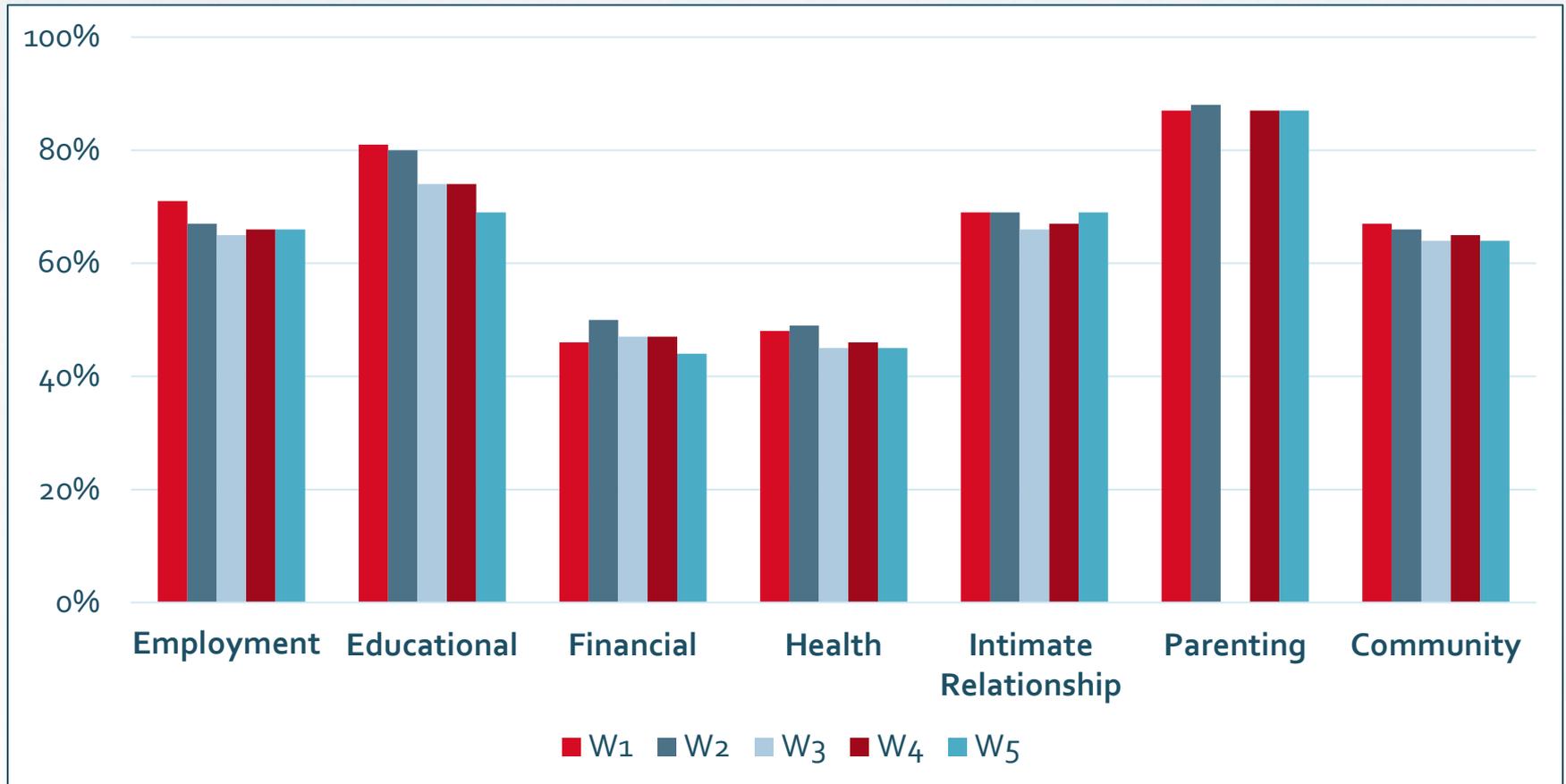
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Change in Functioning Over Time



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Change in Satisfaction Over Time



* Due to a programming error, parenting satisfaction was not asked at Wave 3.



Stress, Trauma, and PTSD: Waves 1-4

Findings by VA South Texas and VA Central and Western
Massachusetts teams



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Predictors of PTSD

PreTrauma

- Age, gender, race
- Education
- Rank
- Prior trauma
- Childhood adversity
- Own/family psychiatric history

PeriTrauma

- War exposure
- Deployment stressors
- Severity of trauma
- Perceived threat

PostTrauma

- Lack of social support
- Additional life stress



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Life Stressors Measured



Unsafe in neighborhood

8%



Physical and mental health

32%



Unwanted sexual attention or contact

2%



Unsafe at home

3%



Caring for a loved one with illness/disability

7%



Death of someone close

9%



Discrimination (race, ethnicity, sex, religion, etc.)

7%



Financial problems

29%



Pressure at work or school

21%



Legal problems

6%



Separation, divorce, or serious problem

14%



Family member with legal, financial problems

11%

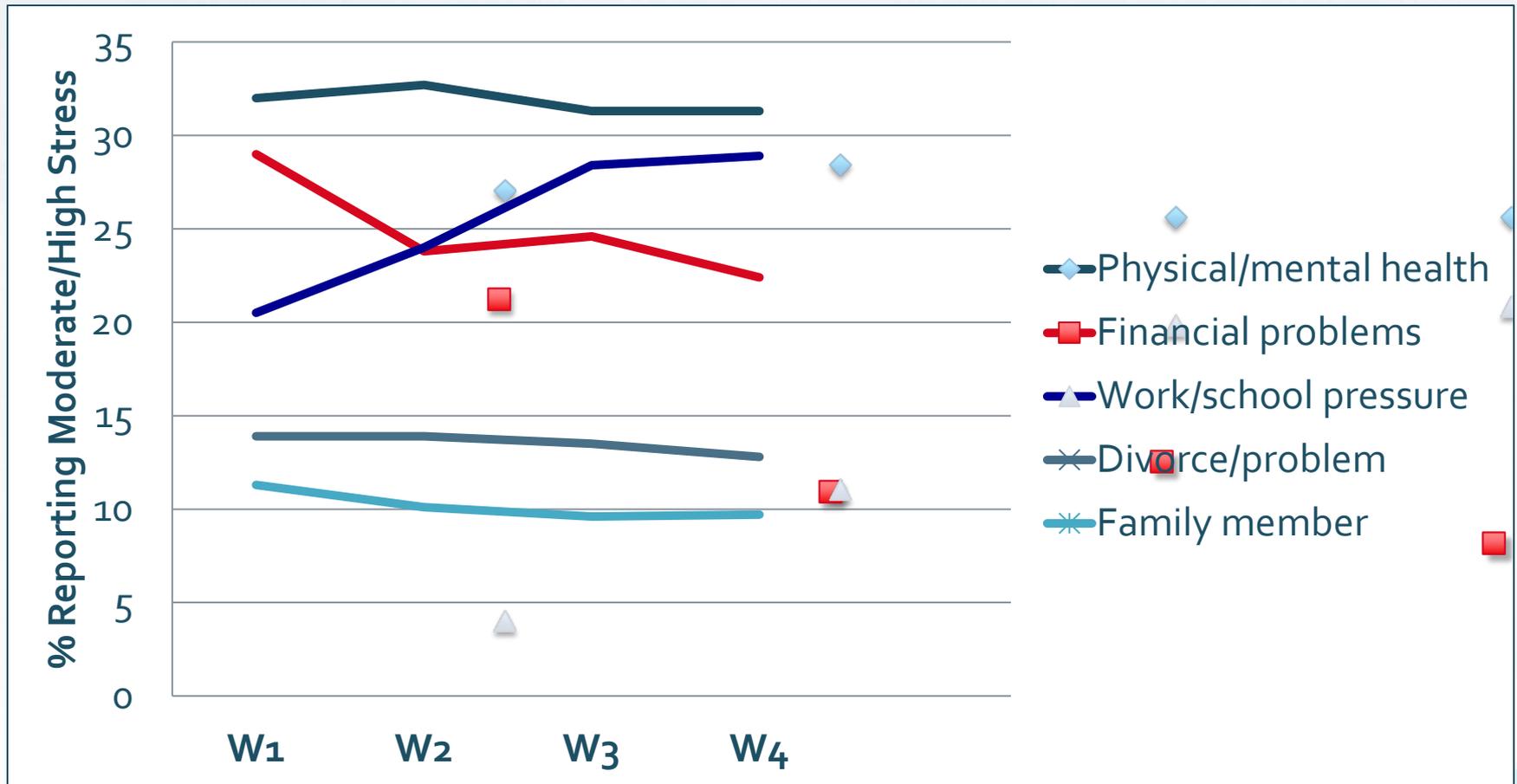


Children

7%

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Top 5 Chronic Life Stressors, Wave 1-4

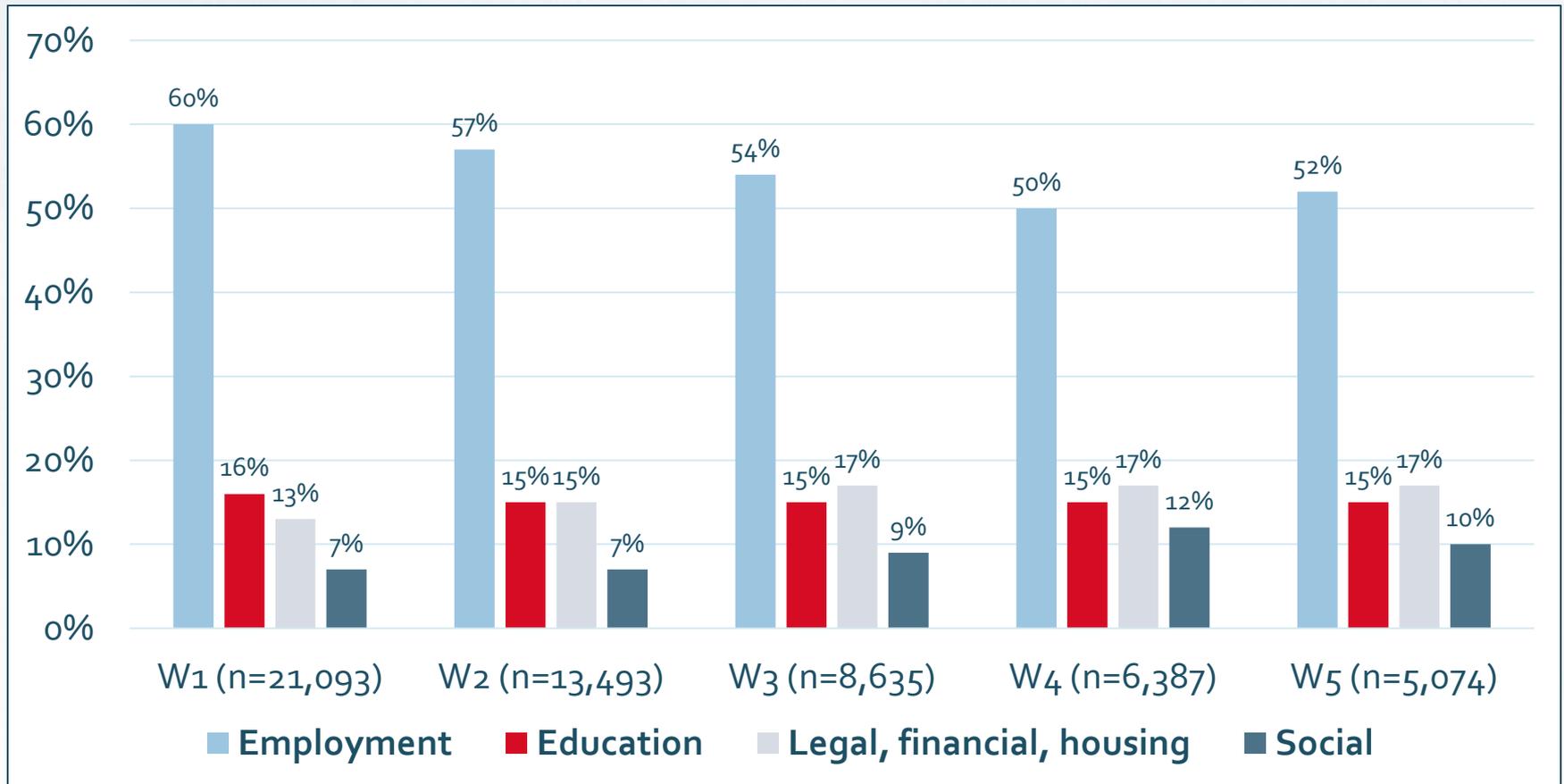


Veteran-Utilized Programs and Highlighted Results led by Penn State team



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Wave 1, 2, 3, 4, & 5 Program Nominations



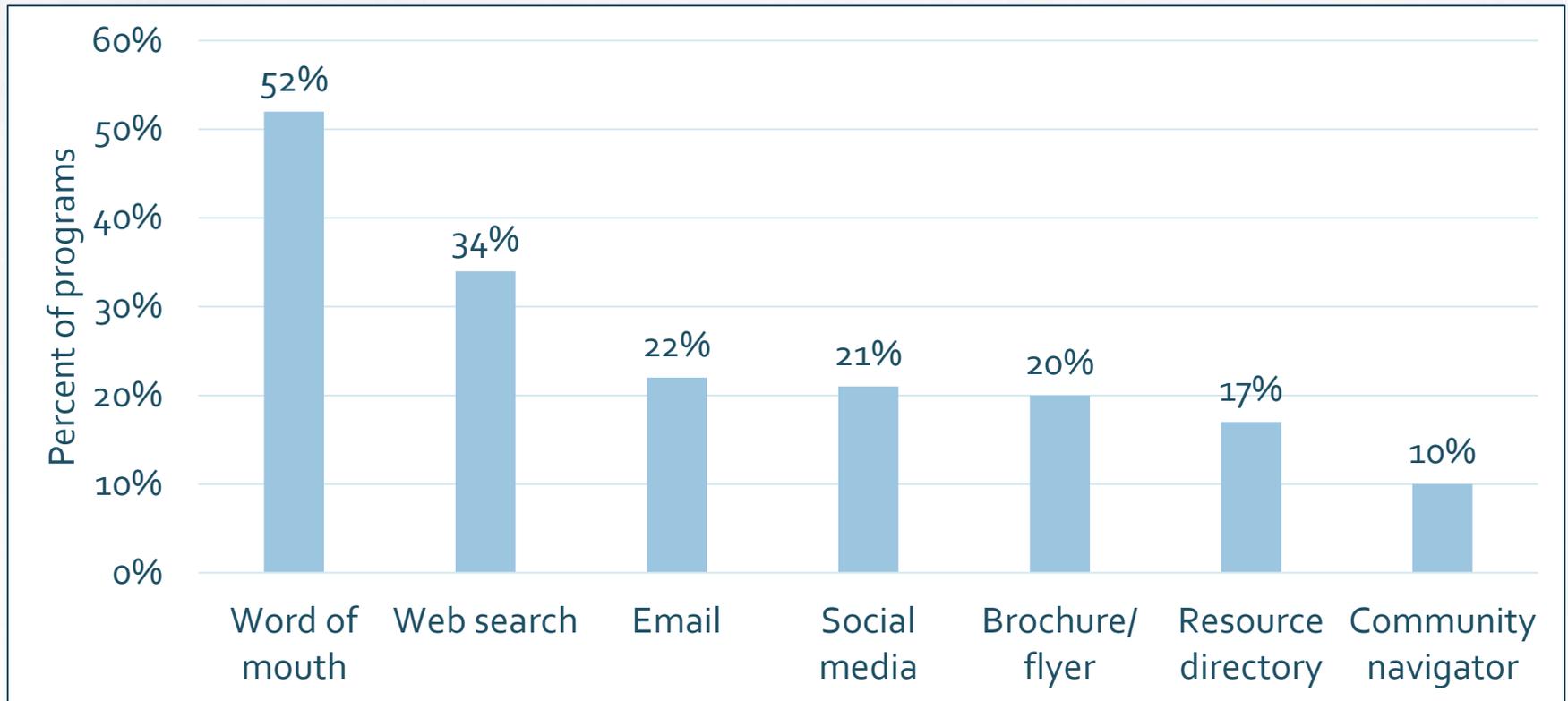
Waves 1-5: How did you hear about this program?

- Each wave, Veterans were asked to nominate programs used within the well-being domains
- Next, Veterans were given the opportunity to discuss 2 programs in more detail.
 - “How did you hear about the program?” is one of the questions
- Data were merged from Wave 1 to Wave 5
 - Summarized by Veteran (n=6,199)

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How did you hear about this program?

(n=1,835 unique programs)



Common Components Around the Creative Arts



What are Common Components?

- **Content**: what does the program teach or what information does it provide?
- **Process**: how does the program convey information or teach skills?
- **Barrier reduction**: does the program provide tangible supports or does it reduce barriers to accessing the program?
- **Sustainability**: how does the program keep participants engaged once formal programming has ended?

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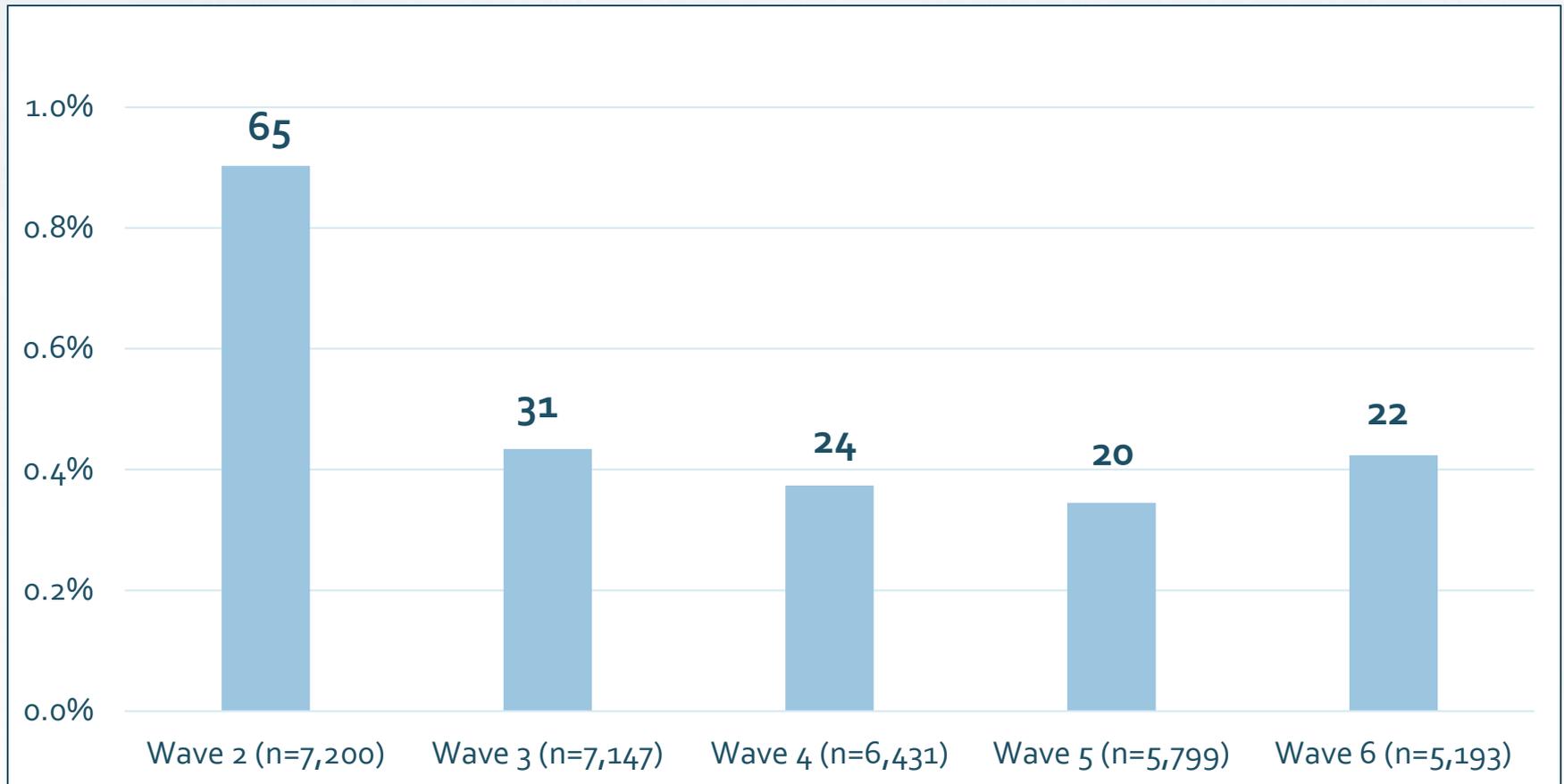
Background

- Added at Wave 2 (6-9 months post-separation):
What program(s) have you used for artistic expression (i.e. painting, music, drama, creative writing), such as Veteran Artist Program or Foundation for Art and Healing?
 - Program 1 _____
 - Program 2 _____
 - No I did not participate in any types of these programs (EXCLUSIVE)



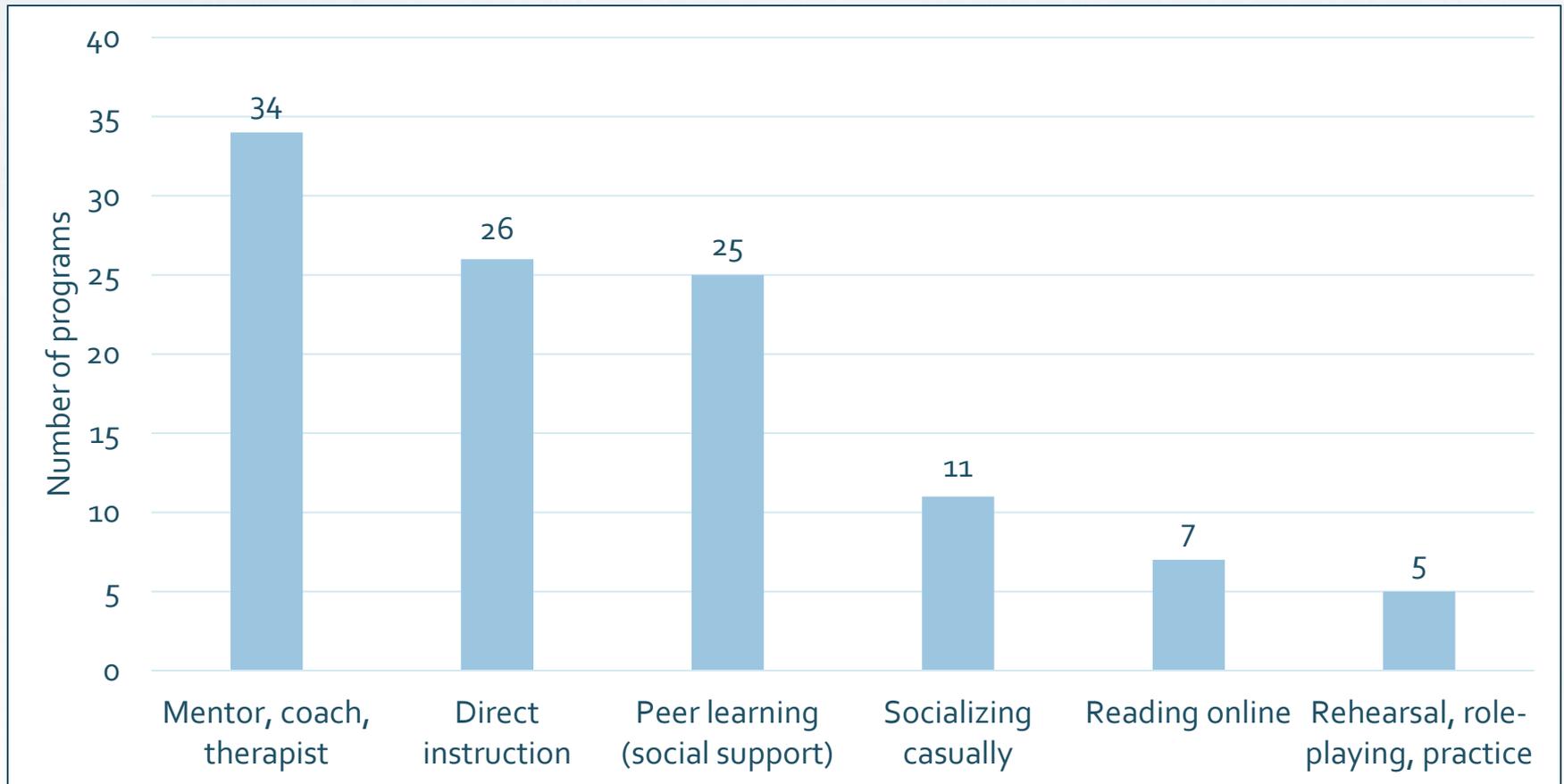
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Therapeutic Arts Components – By Person



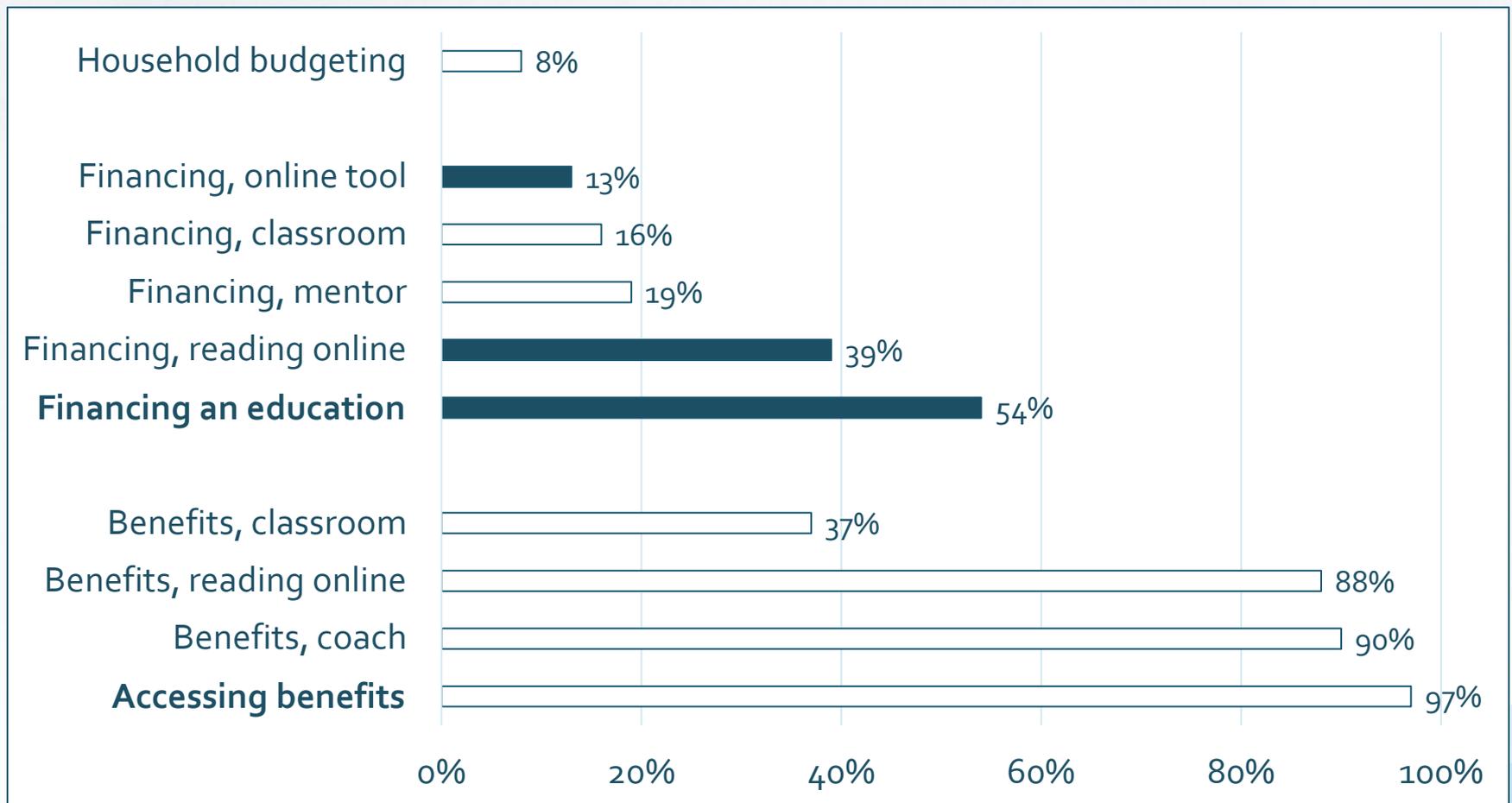
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Therapeutic Arts Components – By Program



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Common components in the financial domain related to education completion by Wave 5



Dissemination Activities



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Presentations

- Global Implementation Conference
- Canadian Institute for Military and Veteran Health Research
- Society for Research in Child Development
- International Society for Traumatic Stress Studies
- AMSUS – The Society of Federal Health Professionals
- Student Veterans of America (January 2020)



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WBI Psychometric Paper

Lead Author: Dawne Vogt, PhD; Status: In Press

Background/rationale

- No comprehensive, multidimensional measure is available to assess vocational, financial, health, and social factors that set the stage for well-being

Purpose

- Develop a measurement tool for use in the TVMI study and to serve as a resource to others interested in assessing Veterans' well-being

APPLIED PSYCHOLOGY: HEALTH AND WELL-BEING, 2019
doi:10.1111/aphw.12161

**Development and Validation of a Tool to Assess
Military Veterans' Status, Functioning, and
Satisfaction with Key Aspects of their Lives**



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Baseline Program Use

Lead:: Daniel Perkins, PhD; Published in Journal of Social Service Research

- Approximately two-thirds of veterans used at least one program to enhance their well-being, while one-third reported using multiple programs across multiple domains.
- Veterans primarily sought assistance for employment and educational advancement, and fewer veterans sought assistance for legal/financial/housing, health, and social functioning challenges.



Journal of Social Service Research

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0148-8376 (Print) 1540-7314 (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wssr20>

Veterans' Use of Programs and Services as They Transition to Civilian Life: Baseline Assessment for the Veteran Metrics Initiative

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Employment Program Use at Transition

Lead Author: Keith Aronson, PhD; Published in Journal of Veterans Studies

- Program utilization differed by gender, paygrade, race/ethnicity), with males, junior enlisted, and White non-Hispanic veterans less likely to use employment programs.
- Veterans with warfare exposure or a current physical health condition were more likely to use programs.
- Veterans with an ongoing mental health problem used programs at the same rate as those without problems.



Aronson, K. R., et al. (2019). Post-9/11 Veteran Transitions to Civilian Life: Predictors of the Use of Employment Programs. *Journal of Veterans Studies*, 5(1), pp. 14–22. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21061/jvs.v5i1.127>

RESEARCH

Post-9/11 Veteran Transitions to Civilian Life:
Predictors of the Use of Employment Programs



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Non-Use of Health and Social Programs

Lead Author: Keith Aronson, PhD; Published in J of Social Service Research

- Male veterans often reported that they did not need programs.
- Female veterans and veterans from the lowest enlisted ranks were more likely to report that they did not know if they were eligible for support programs.
- A small percentage indicated they had not found the right program or did not know where to go to get help.



Journal of Social Service Research

 Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group

ISSN: 0148-8376 (Print) 1540-7314 (Online) Journal homepage: <https://www.tandfonline.com/loi/wssr20>

**Going It Alone: Post-9/11 Veteran Nonuse of
Healthcare and Social Service Programs During
Their Early Transition to Civilian Life**



TVMI: Linking Program Components to Post-Military Well-Being Race, Ethnicity, and PTSD Screening Rates

Lead Author: Juliette McClendon, PhD; Published in J of Anxiety Disorders

- Among men and women, positive PTSD screening rates were significantly elevated among Black, multiracial, and Hispanic/Latinx veterans compared with White veterans.
- Sociodemographics, trauma exposure, stress and social support accounted for elevated positive screening rates among all racial/ethnic groups except Black men and multiracial women.

Journal of Anxiety Disorders 68 (2019) 102145

Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Journal of Anxiety Disorders

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/janxdis

 Patterns and correlates of racial/ethnic disparities in posttraumatic stress disorder screening among recently separated veterans 

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Gender Differences in Healthcare Use

Lead Author: Laurel Copeland, PhD; In press at Am J Managed Care

- For women but not for men, concerns about unstable housing or losing housing at separation from the military was associated with failure to use healthcare one year later
 - This was true for subgroups with identified need for healthcare as well as for low-risk groups such as the employed
- The implication is that transition services need to be gender-tailored for the 10% or 12% of veterans with unstable housing at separation.
- This paper was presented at VHA's HSR&D/QUERI National Meeting (Oct. 2019) and was the topic of an invited interview that will be released as a podcast soon.



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Scientific Papers Under Review

Baseline Well-Being

- Describes findings on the well-being of Veterans in the first year after separation

Stress and Reproductive Health Outcomes

- Describes the impact of women's exposure to stress/trauma on their post-military reproductive health

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

- Describes findings on the rates of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs) reported by veterans and impact on mental health outcomes



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Scientific Papers Under Review

Introduction to Barrier Reduction Components

- Describes findings on the types of program access, tangible supports, and intrinsic barriers addressed by programs used at Wave 1

Health Care Use Among Veterans with Mental Health Needs

- Describes rates of health program and service use at baseline for veterans with probable depression, anxiety, PTSD, or alcohol misuse

Moral Injury and Social Well-Being

- Describes the impact of moral injury on veteran's satisfaction and functioning with their broader community



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Scientific Papers in Preparation

Risk Profile Paper

- Identify factors that predict risk for poor overall well-being

Moral Injury and Well-Being

- Examine role of moral injury and other factors in predicting decline in Veterans' post-military health and well-being

Suicide and Well-Being Paper

- Will examine the role of post-transition well-being in Veterans' subsequent suicidality

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Scientific Papers in Preparation

Post-Traumatic Growth

- Identify factors that predict likelihood of post-traumatic growth

Mothers' & Fathers' Parenting

- Examine the role of deployment and other factors in predicting parenting satisfaction and functioning for mothers and fathers

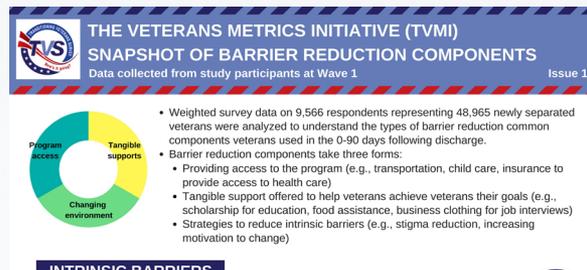
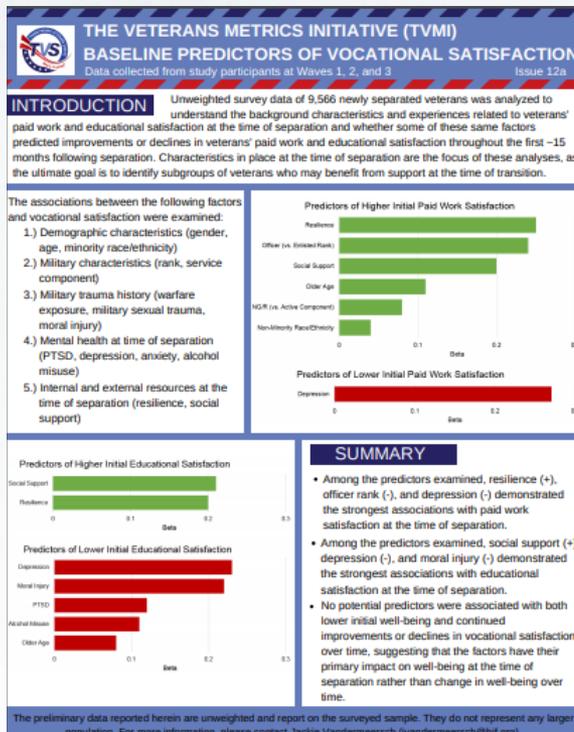
Impacts of Childhood and Service Trauma

- Examines the combinations of adverse childhood experiences and warfare exposure on veterans' mental health

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Infographics and Menus of Common Components

- Created 5 infographics and 1 menu in 2019



The Veterans Metrics Initiative

Using Wave 1-5 Common Components Schools Provide Veterans to Predict Educational Program Completion, April 2019

BACKGROUND

- Wave 1-5 participants nominated technical and vocational schools, colleges, and universities they attended, with 44% reported attending an educational program in the first 2 1/2 years post-separation.
- Veterans self-reported participation at their school's student Veterans center, student Veterans organization, or non-Veterans student organization.
- Schools nominated by four or more Veterans (n=185) were coded in Summer 2018-Winter 2018 using the common components analysis technique.
- The content common components coded were Veteran-specific, meaning that the school offered the components exclusively to Veteran students, not the general student population.
- Information presented below reflects the proportion of programs with each coded component.

CONTENT COMPONENTS

Content components describe what a program teaches or what information it provides.

- Accessing benefits - 97%
- Veterans organizations - 79%
- Career planning and exploration - 75%
- Transferring to a civilian school - 69%
- Veterans centers - 68%
- Financing an education - 64%
- Translating military education to credits - 47%
- Volunteering activities - 41%
- Resume writing - 35%
- Interviewing skills - 20%
- School application considerations - 14%
- Job training and certification - 13%
- Leadership & team communication - 9%
- Entrance and certification exam prep - 4%

PROCESS COMPONENTS

Process components capture how a program conveys information or teaches skills.

- Mentors or coaches: 19-90% of content
- Reading online: 24-88% of content
- Classroom format: 16-37% of content
- Networking group: 13-36% of content
- Casual socializing: 76% of only 1 content
- Interactive online tool: 13% of only 1 content

EFFECTS OF COMPONENTS ON OUTCOMES

We used logistic regression to determine the likelihood of a Veteran student completing their education by Wave 5 compared to component non-users.

- Veterans in Associate's degree programs who self-reported participating in non-Veteran student organizations were about 2 times more likely to complete their degree program by Wave 2.
- Veterans in professional degree programs (ex. JD, MD) who self-reported attending a Veterans student center were 7.5 times more likely to complete their degree by Wave 2.

Veteran students were more likely to complete their educational program by Wave 5 if their school offered the following content and process components:

- Career planning and exploration content taught via self-paced online reading
- Financing an education content taught via self-paced online reading or interactive online tools
- Leadership and teamwork skills content taught via any process

The preliminary data reported herein are unweighted and report on the surveyed sample. They do not represent any larger population. For more information, contact Jackie Vandemeersch (jvandemeersch@hmf.org).



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Future Directions – VUP Evaluation Tools

- Develop an online evaluation system where programs in the field can select outcome measures from an evaluation-rubric based on the various subdomains (e.g., well-being, sense of purpose, resiliency) they wish to target
- Use the menus of effective components to help programs create detailed logic models that allow them to lay out a clear theory of change to be evaluated



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Future Directions – TVMI Sample Comparisons

- Utilize the TVMI sample as a comparison group for programs that want to do evaluations of their effectiveness but do not have a reference group to do so
- Survey the spouses/partners about their experiences with programs and reintegration
- Develop a brief intervention to address moral injury



Questions?

