Veteran Centers, Scholarships, and Clubs: The Impact of Educational Common Components on Student Veterans' Success

Nicole R. Morgan, Ph.D.

Co-Investigator, The Veteran Metrics Survey
Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness
Pennsylvania State University
Team: Daniel F. Perkins, Julia Bleser, Keith Aronson

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Study Background

- **Student Veteran characteristics:**
  - 70% of post-9/11 either have received or is working towards a degree/certificate (NVEST, 2017)
  - Older than traditional students (> 22) (IVMF, 2017)
  - Education is the top reason for joining the service majors: law, business, social work, & criminology (Heyden et al., 2014)

Study Rationale

- Barriers to completing an education:
  - Financing an education (lack of knowledge of financial aid availability) (NVEST, 2017)
  - Transferring credits (Mikelson & Saunders, 2013)
  - Feelings of isolation on campus and difficulty connecting with traditional students (Bonar, 2016; DiRamio, Ackerman, & Mitchell, 2008)

Presentation Aims

- Identify Veterans who completed degrees with in the first 3 years after separating from active military service

- Describe utilization of scholarships, Veteran centers, organizations and school services

- Identify the components that related to completing their educational goals or withdrawing

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Methods: Recruitment

- **Initial mail recruitment** of Veterans who separated in the past 90 days
  - Recruitment (Sept to Oct 2016) – census from VA Data Identity Repository of 48,965 Veterans who separated in past 3 months
  - Non-response survey weights based on gender, paygrade, and service branch

- **Follow-up web surveys** every six months for 3 years (last assessment May 2019)
 - Invitation by email, text, and mail

Incentives Increase Participation

- Robust incentives (Amazon gift codes) provided immediately after survey completion
  - $25 at Wave 1 (October 2016)
  - $50 at Wave 6 (May 2019)
  - Total of $225 for all 6 waves

- Raffle of 10 additional $100 Amazon giftcodes
  - Loyalty gift (magnet) and thank you letter sent after Wave 2 (July 2017)
 - $100 gift codes x 10 winners x 6 waves

Cases Completing Baseline and Follow-Up

15%

7%

7%

39%

11%

21%

- Only 1 wave
- 2 waves
- 3 waves
- 4 waves
- 5 waves
- All 6 waves

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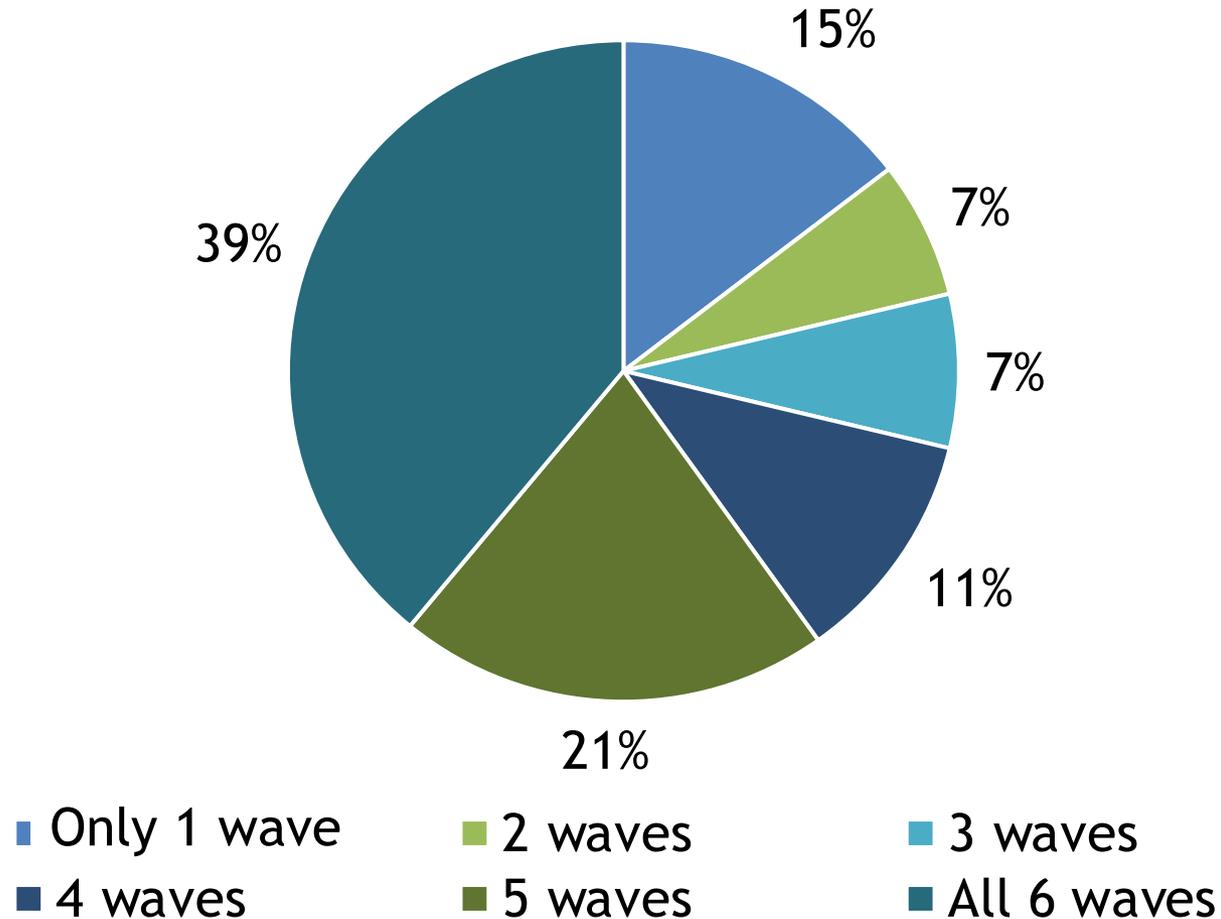
Where Veterans Live

Percent of Total Veteran Population by State and Region: 2010

Northeast 11%
Midwest 27%
West 22%
South 40%
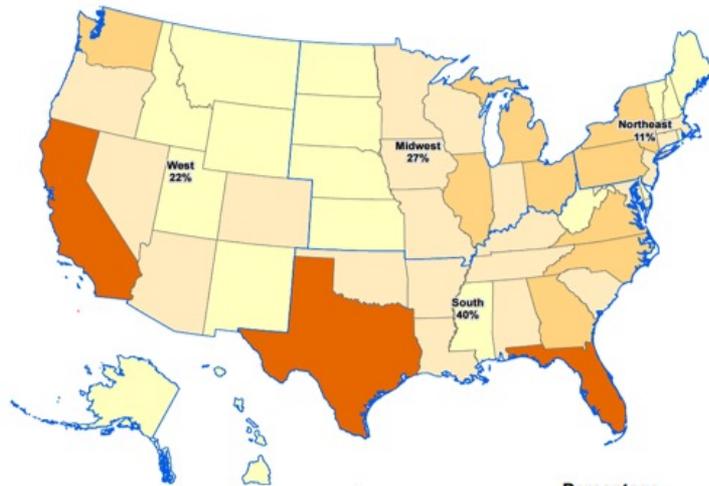
Prepared by the National Center for Veterans Analysis and Statistics
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 Census

Percentage
- 0.2 - 1.0
- 1.1 - 2.5
- 2.6 - 5.0
- 5.1 - 7.0
- 7.1 - 9.7
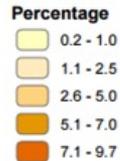
Percent of TVMI Study Population by State
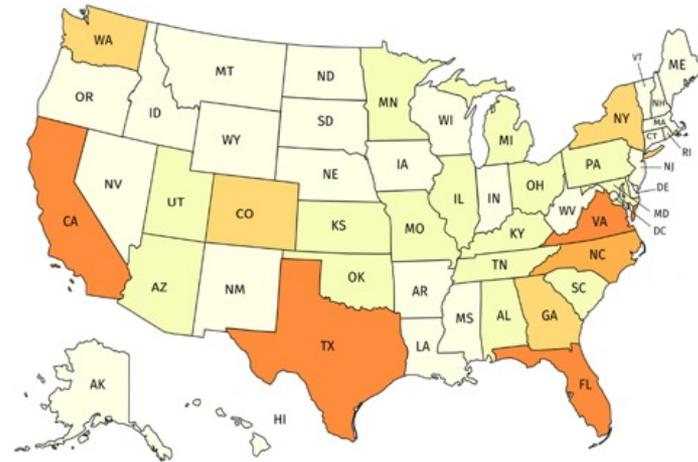
Prepared using mapchart.net

Percentage
- 0.1 - 1.0
- 1.1 - 2.5
- 2.6 - 5.0
- 5.1 - 7.0
- 7.1 - 10.5
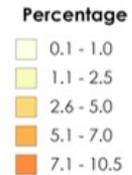
Veteran Wellness Model
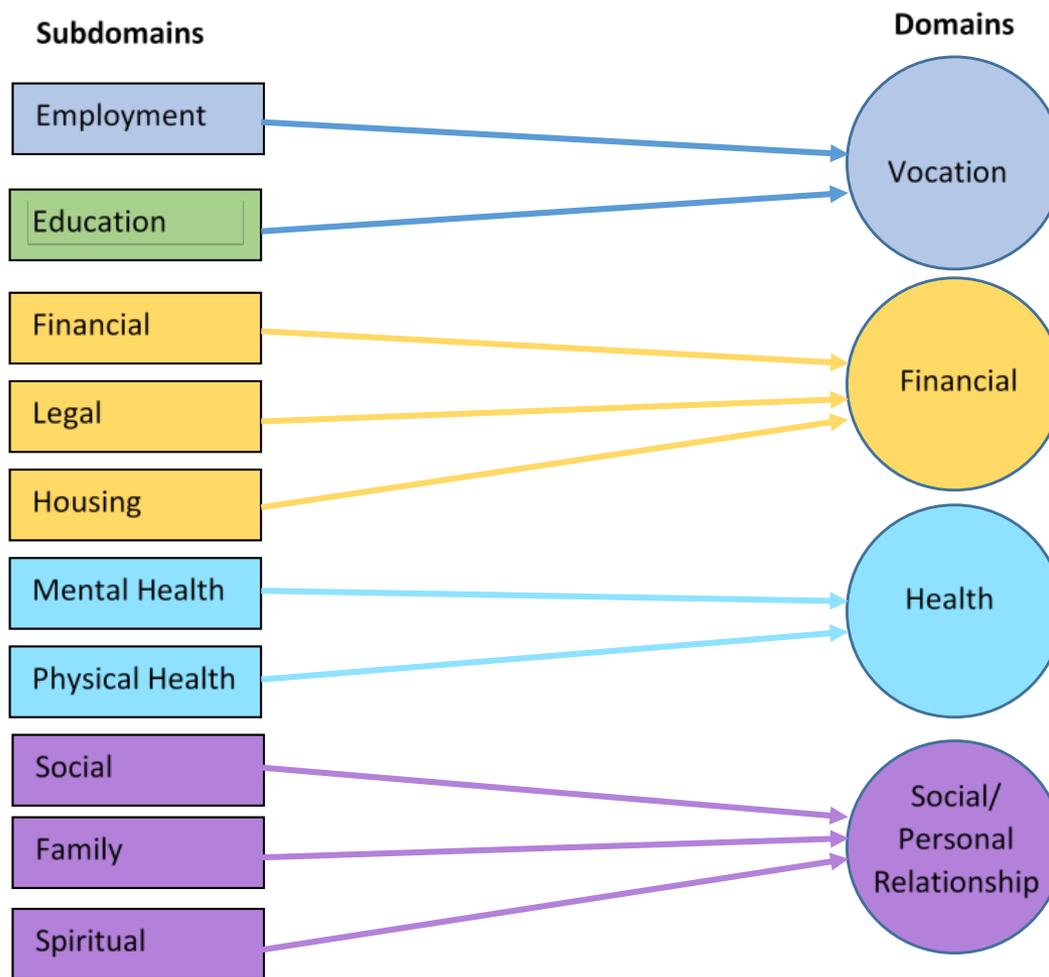
Adapted from Berglass & Harrell (2012)

Methods: Measures

- **Education:**
  - Highest level, currently engaged in full-time or part-time coursework (including technical training)
  - Name of school
  - Participation in Veterans center, Veterans organization, other student organizations
- **Other Covariates:**
  - Financial difficulties (Vogt, 2019)
  - Mental health symptoms (PTSD, depression, anxiety)
- **Outcomes:**
  - Completed education
  - Left school or training due to other possibilities and/or difficulties with grades, performance
 - Social engagement

Who attends education or training within the first 3 years after discharge?

Background on Education Data

- Across all 6 waves of data, approximately 46% of all Veterans went on to some continuing training or education

Higher Education Attendance by Gender
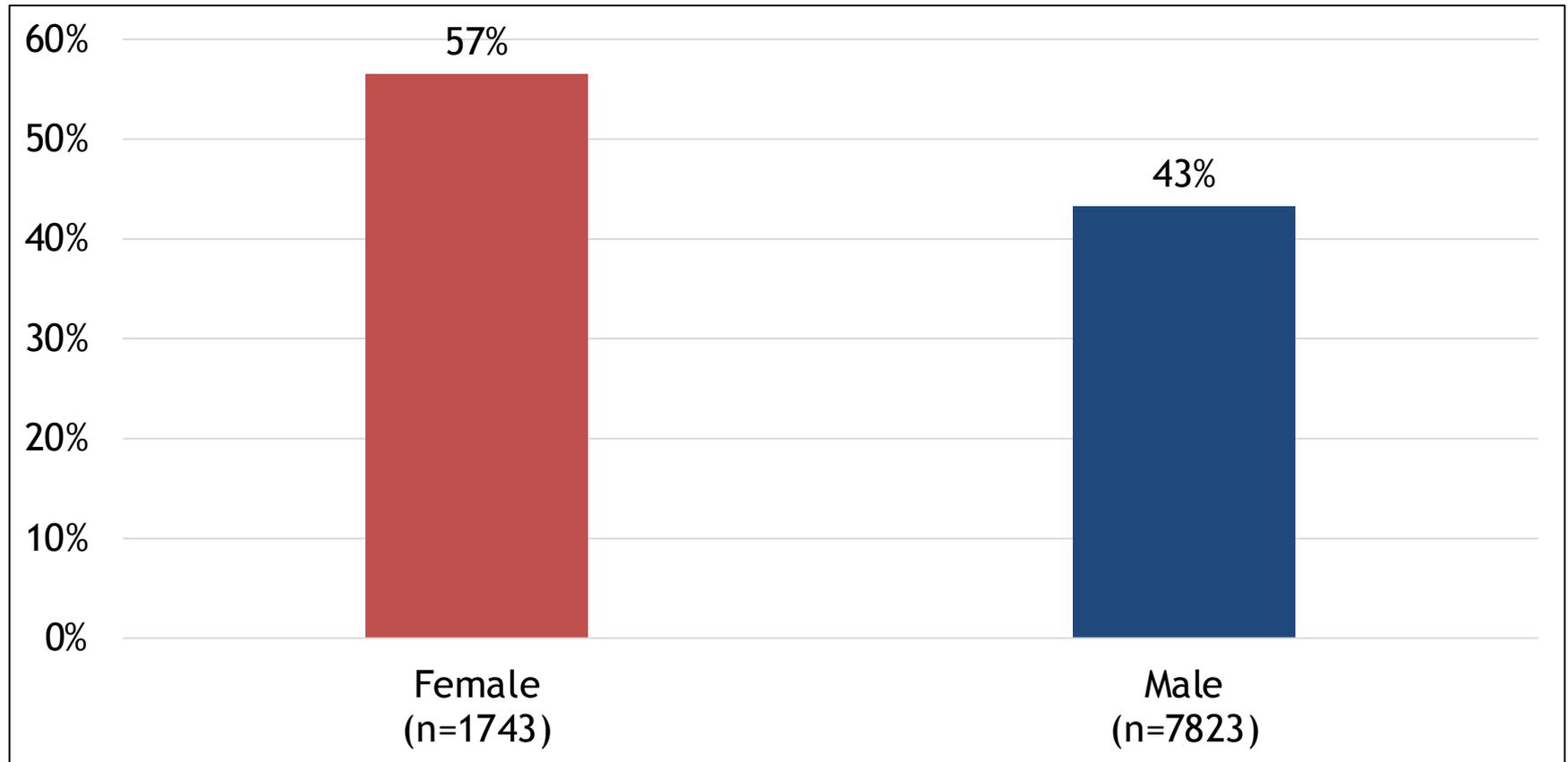
Higher Education Attendance by Race/Ethnicity
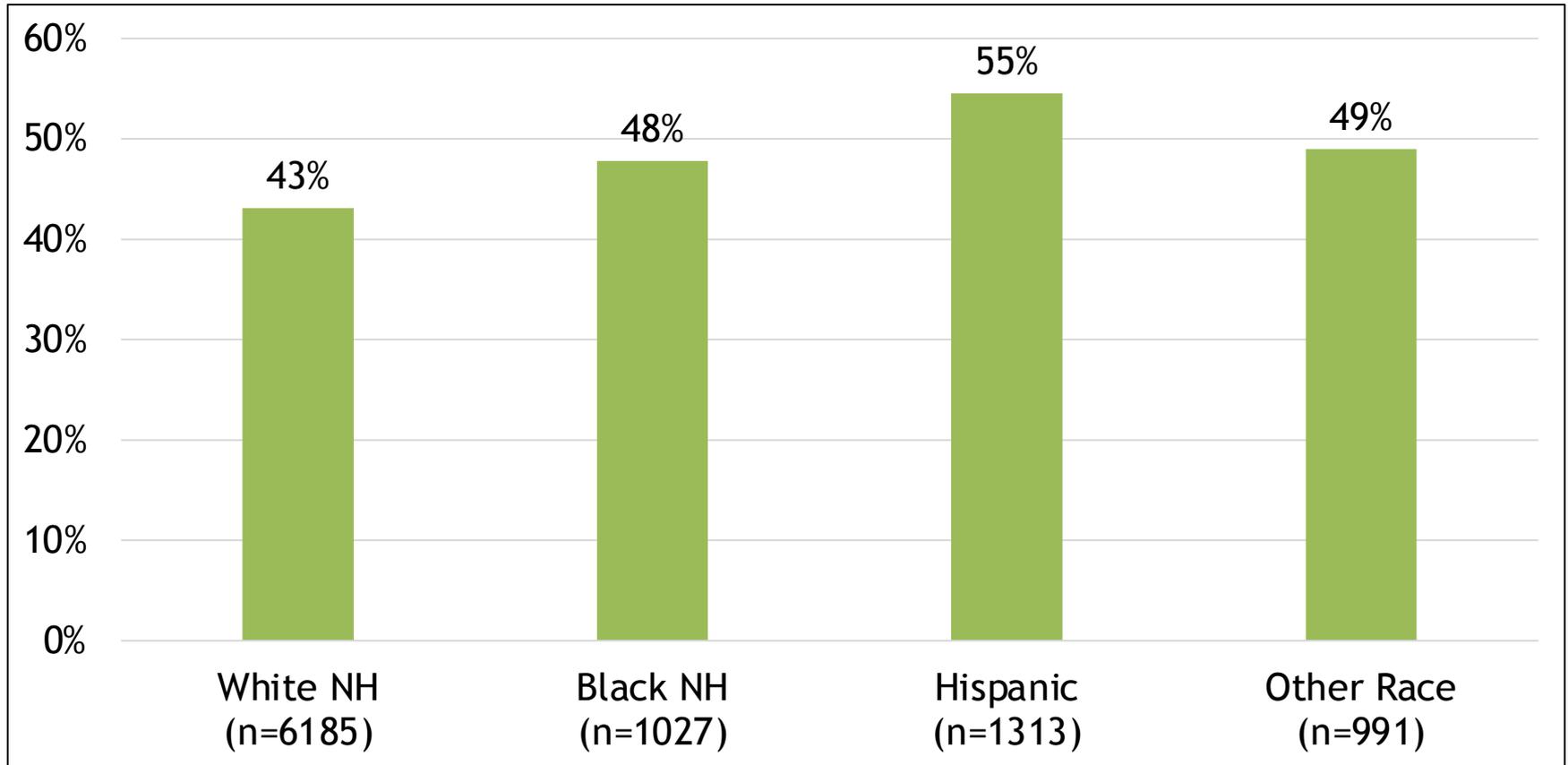
Higher Education Attendance by Service Branch

Bar chart showing higher education attendance percentages:
- Army (n=3149): 48%
- Navy (n=1839): 47%
- Air Force (n=1819): 39%
- Marine Corps (n=1520): 57%
- Deactivated from NGR (n=1233): 35%
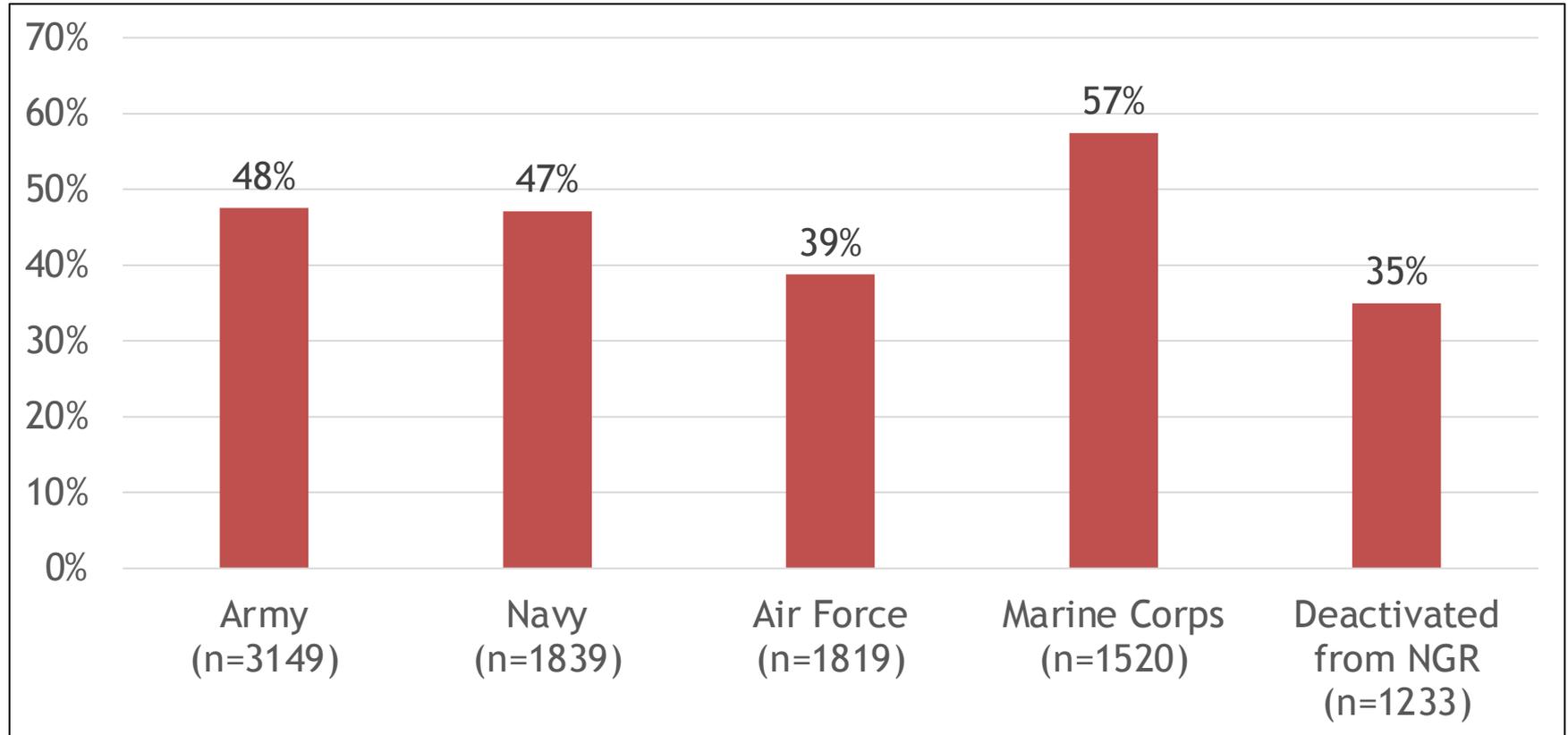
Higher Education Attendance by Paygrade

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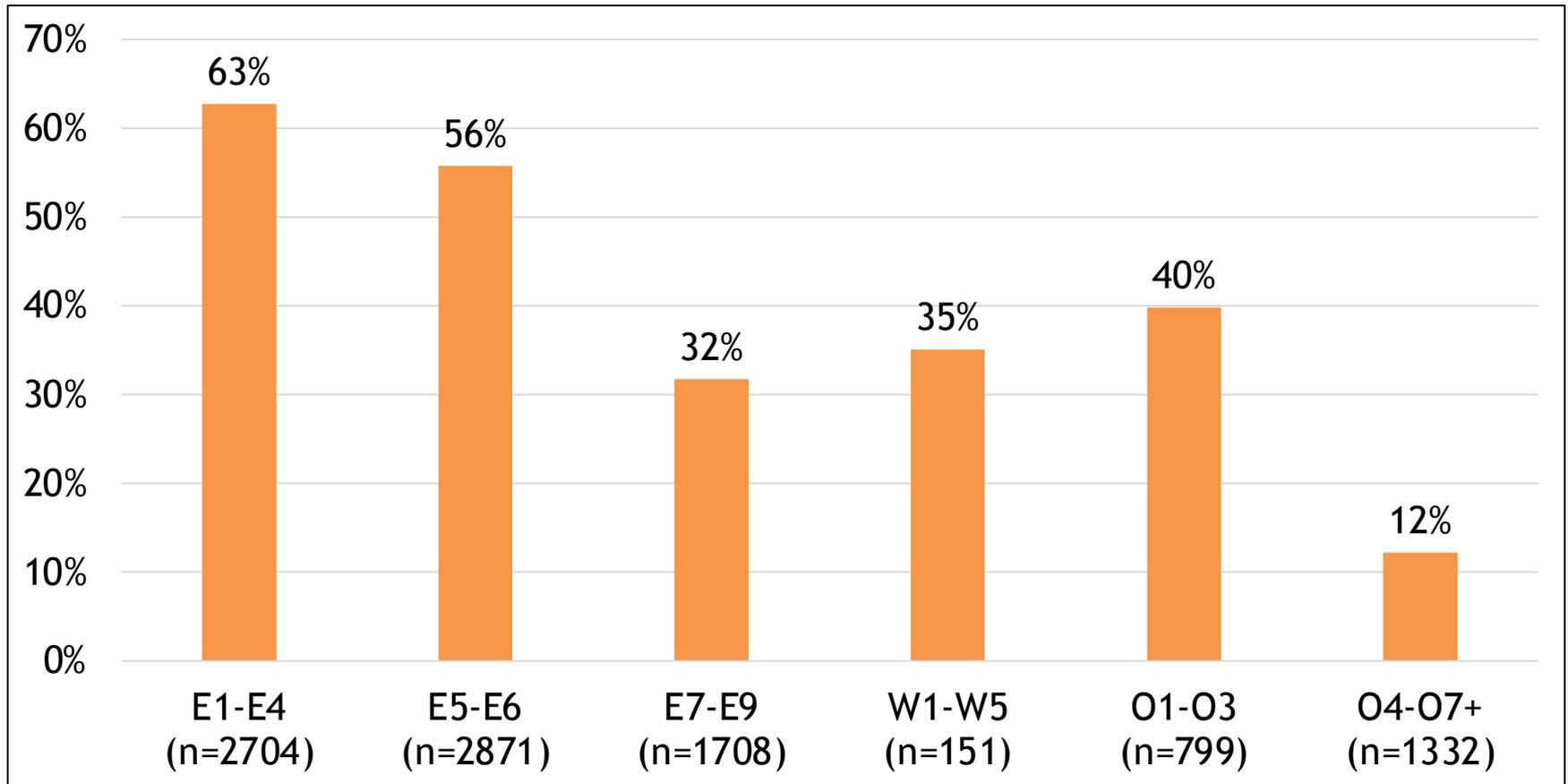
Higher Education Attendance by Military Occupation

Reasons Veterans Joined the Military

Very Influential (3.0)
Somewhat Influential (2.0)

Reason	Not Enrolled in Education/ Training (n=2530)	Enrolled in Education/ Training (n=2729)
Educational benefits	2.3	2.7
To travel the world	2.5	2.6
Adventure	2.5	2.6
Call to serve my country	2.5	2.3

■ Not Enrolled in Education/ Training (n=2530)   ■ Enrolled in Education/ Training (n=2729)

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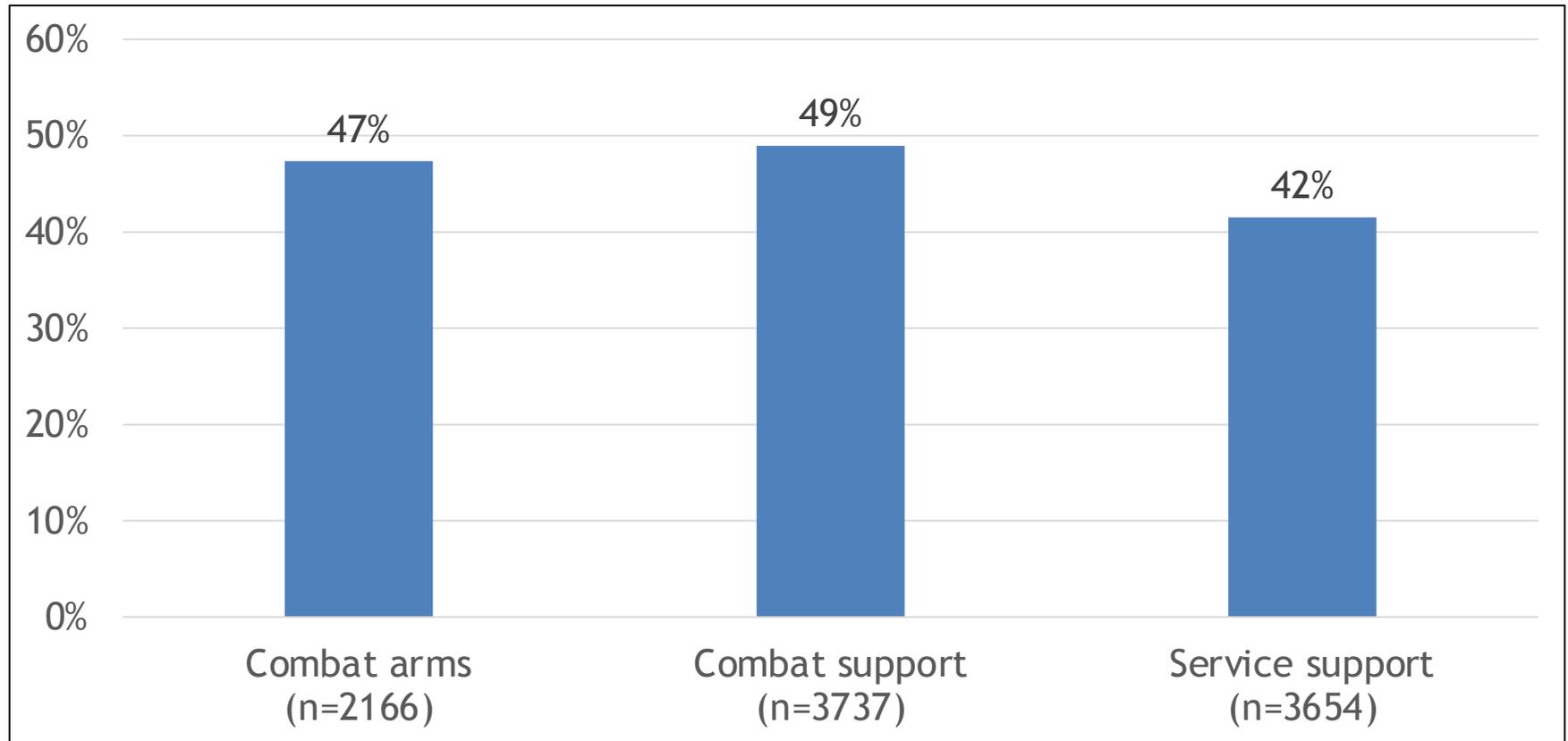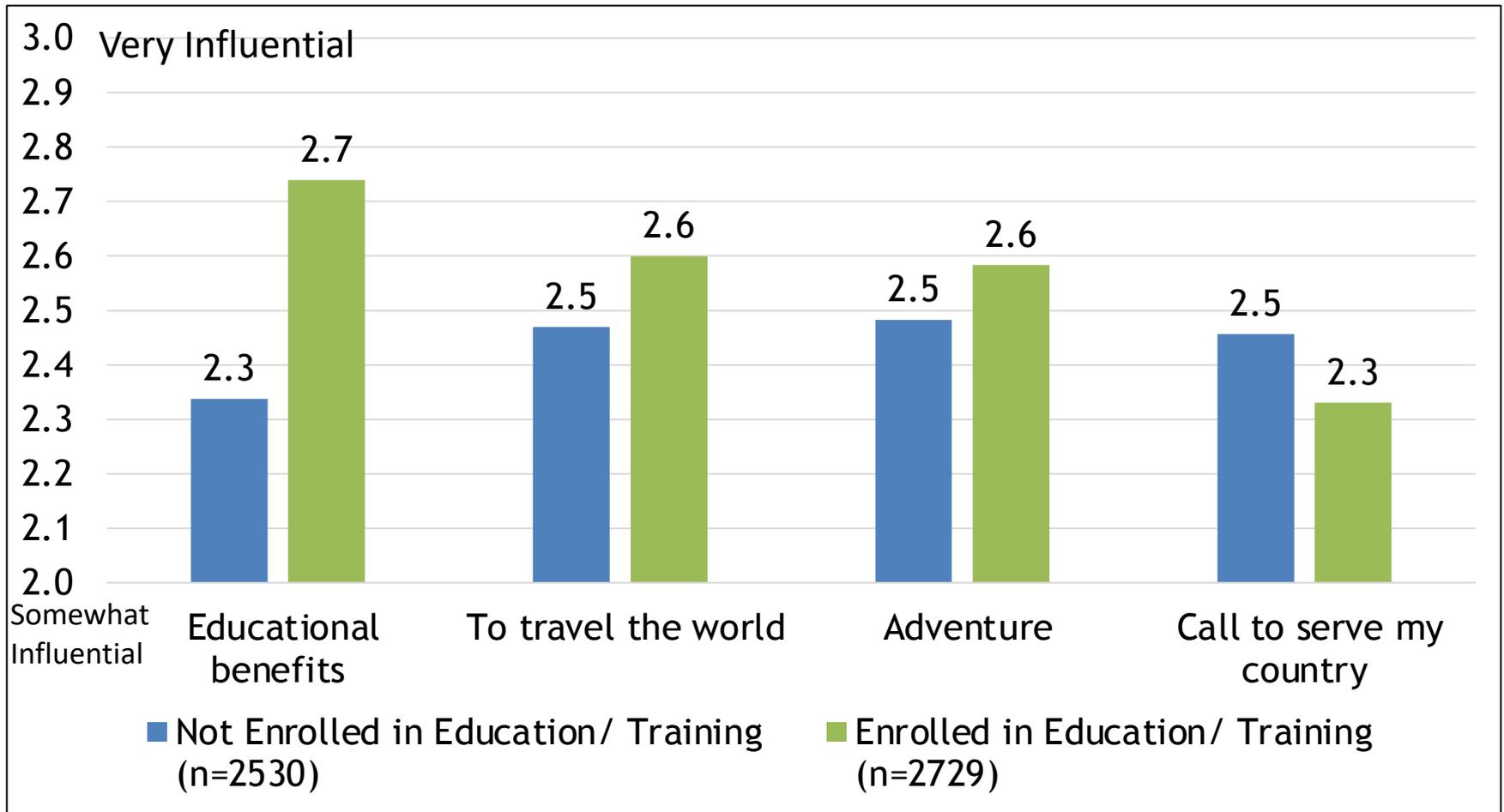
Reasons Veterans Joined the Military - Educational Benefits by Paygrade
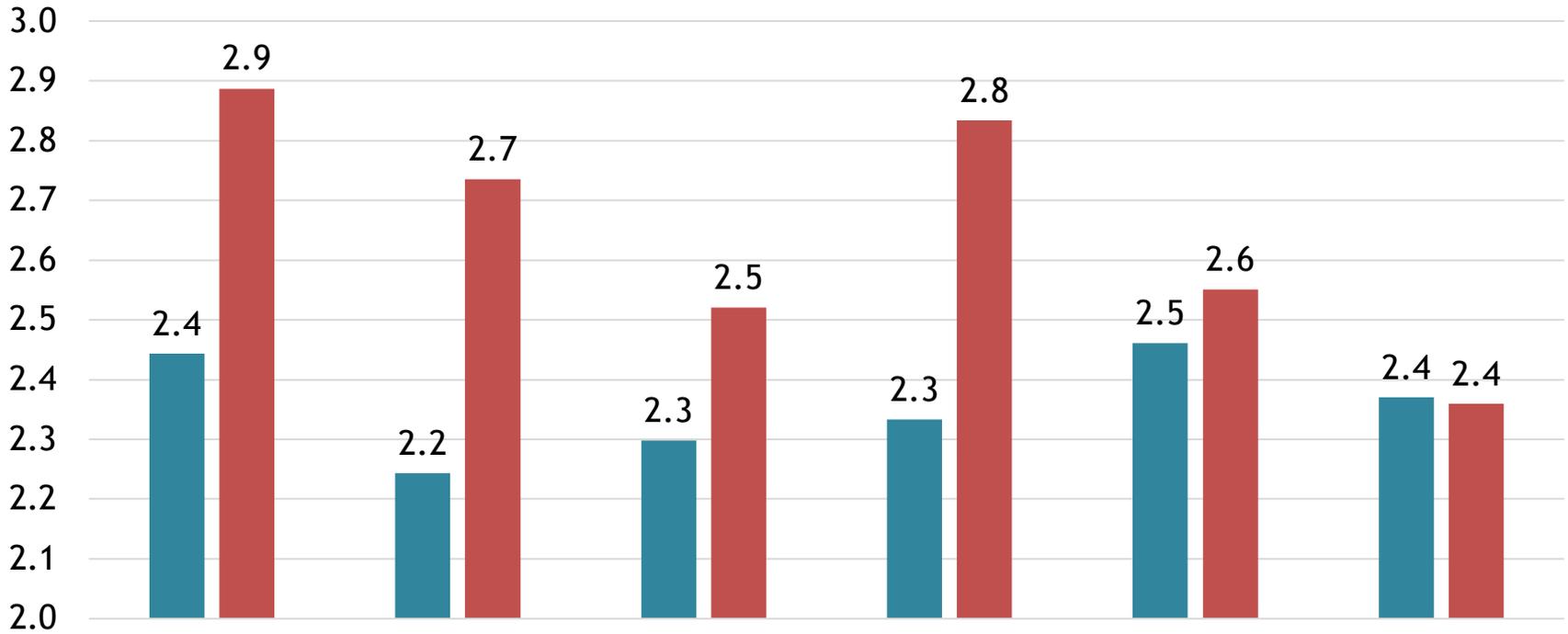
Very Influential

	E1-E4	E5-E6	E7-E9	W1-W5	O1-O3	O4-O7+
Not Enrolled in Education/ Training (n=2329)	2.4	2.2	2.3	2.3	2.5	2.4
Enrolled in Education/ Training (n=2529)	2.9	2.7	2.5	2.8	2.6	2.4

Somewhat Influential

■ Not Enrolled in Education/ Training (n=2329)   ■ Enrolled in Education/ Training (n=2529)

Additional Covariates Predicting School Attendance

- Less likely to attend school or training
  - Males
  - E5 to E6 vs. E1 to E4
  - E7 to E9 vs. E1 to E4
  - O1 to O3 vs. E1 to E4
  - General or other discharge honorable discharge)

- More likely to attend
  - Single
  - Veterans with PTSD symptoms
  - Veterans with anxiety symptoms

Background on Part-time or Full-time Students' Current Highest Level of Education

Chart showing current highest level of education by student status:

Education Level	Not a student (n=5193)	Student within first 3 years (n=4373)
High school diploma, GED	17%	17%
Some college credit, no degree	20%	39%
Associate degree	10%	17%
Bachelor's degree	22%	18%
Master's degree	22%	6%
Doctorate or professional degree	7%	1%
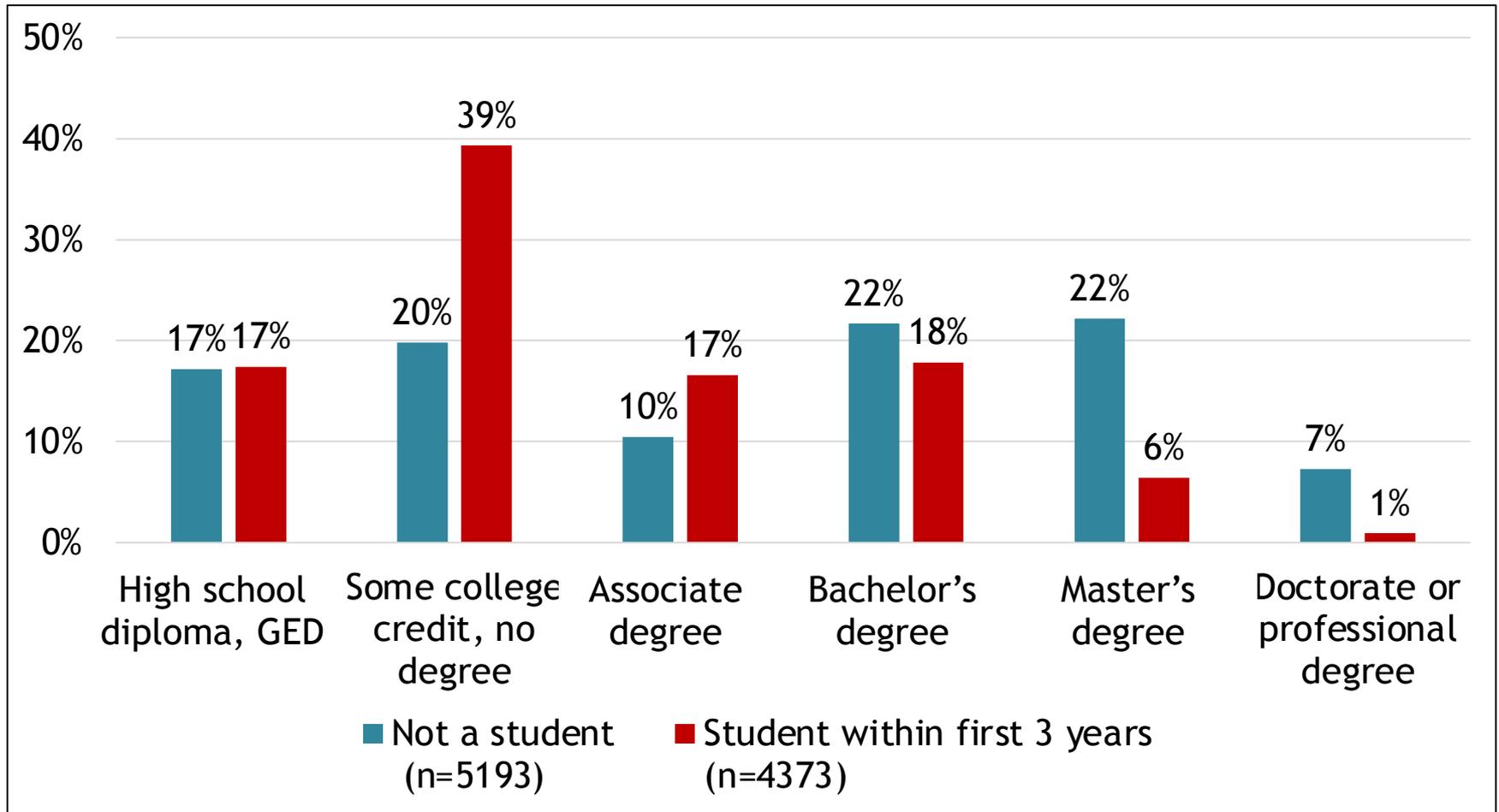
At Which Wave Did Veterans Start Education?

- Wave 1
- Wave 2
- Wave 3
- Wave 4
- Wave 5
- Wave 6

60%

15%

13%

5%

4%

3%
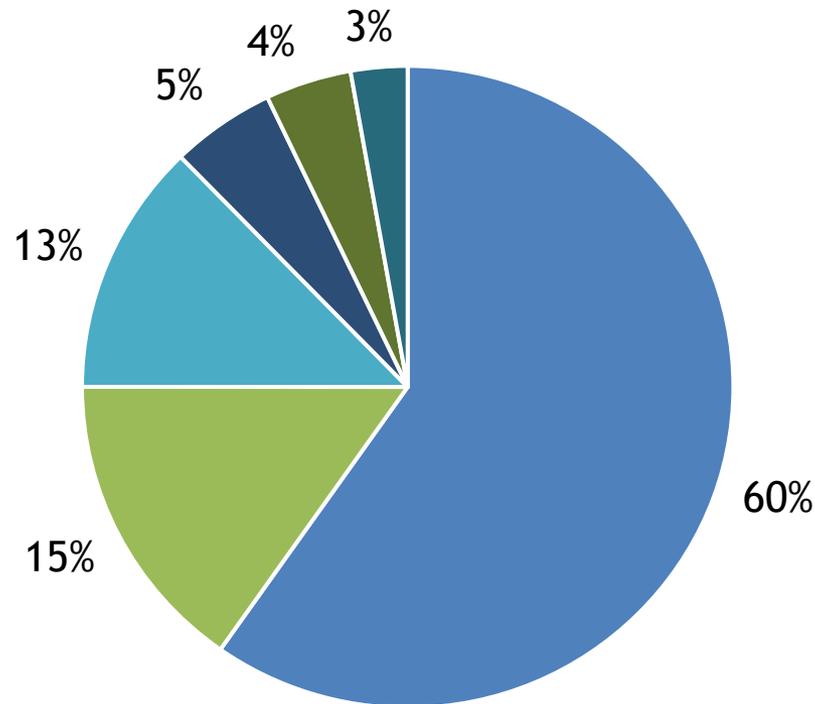
Approximately 30-33 months after discharge

Within first 3 months after discharge

Types of Education or Training
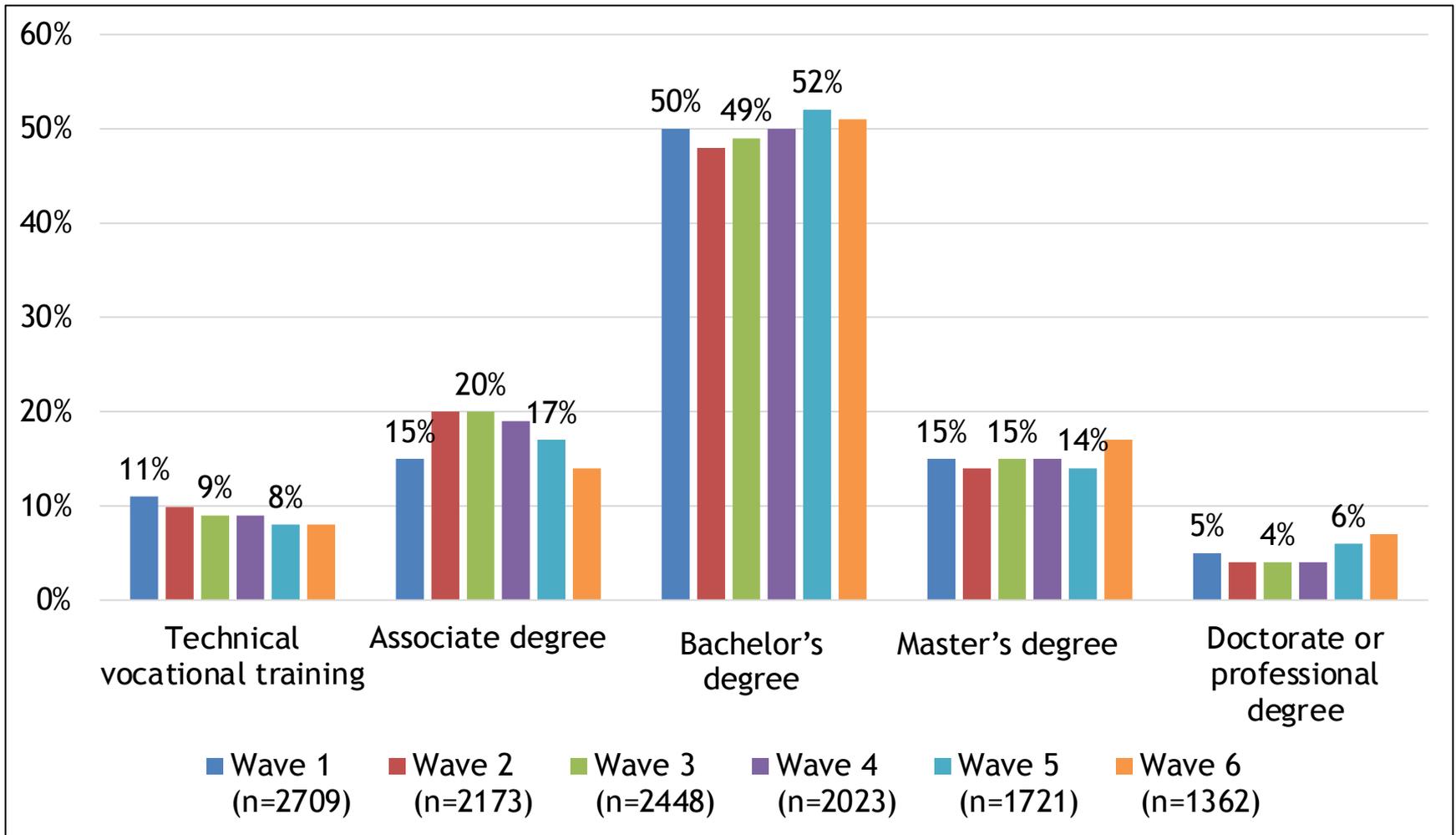
Primary Fields of Study

- 20% business
- 16% health science (nursing, health technology)
- 13% computer-related
- 9% engineering
- 8% social science (social work, psychology)

Background on Education Data

- 41% of Veterans completed their education within 3 years after discharge

Education Completion by Wave

Education Completion or Withdrawal at Wave 2 by Degree Type

Bar chart showing education completion or withdrawal at Wave 2 by degree type.

W2 completed school or training:
- Technical/vocational training: 36%
- Associate degree: 29%
- Bachelor's degree: 29%
- Master's degree: 31%

W2 left school:
- Technical/vocational training: 6%
- Associate degree: 10%
- Bachelor's degree: 8%
- Master's degree: 5%

Legend:
- Technical/vocational training (n=219)
- Associate degree (n=322)
- Bachelor's degree (n=1082)
- Master's degree (n=318)
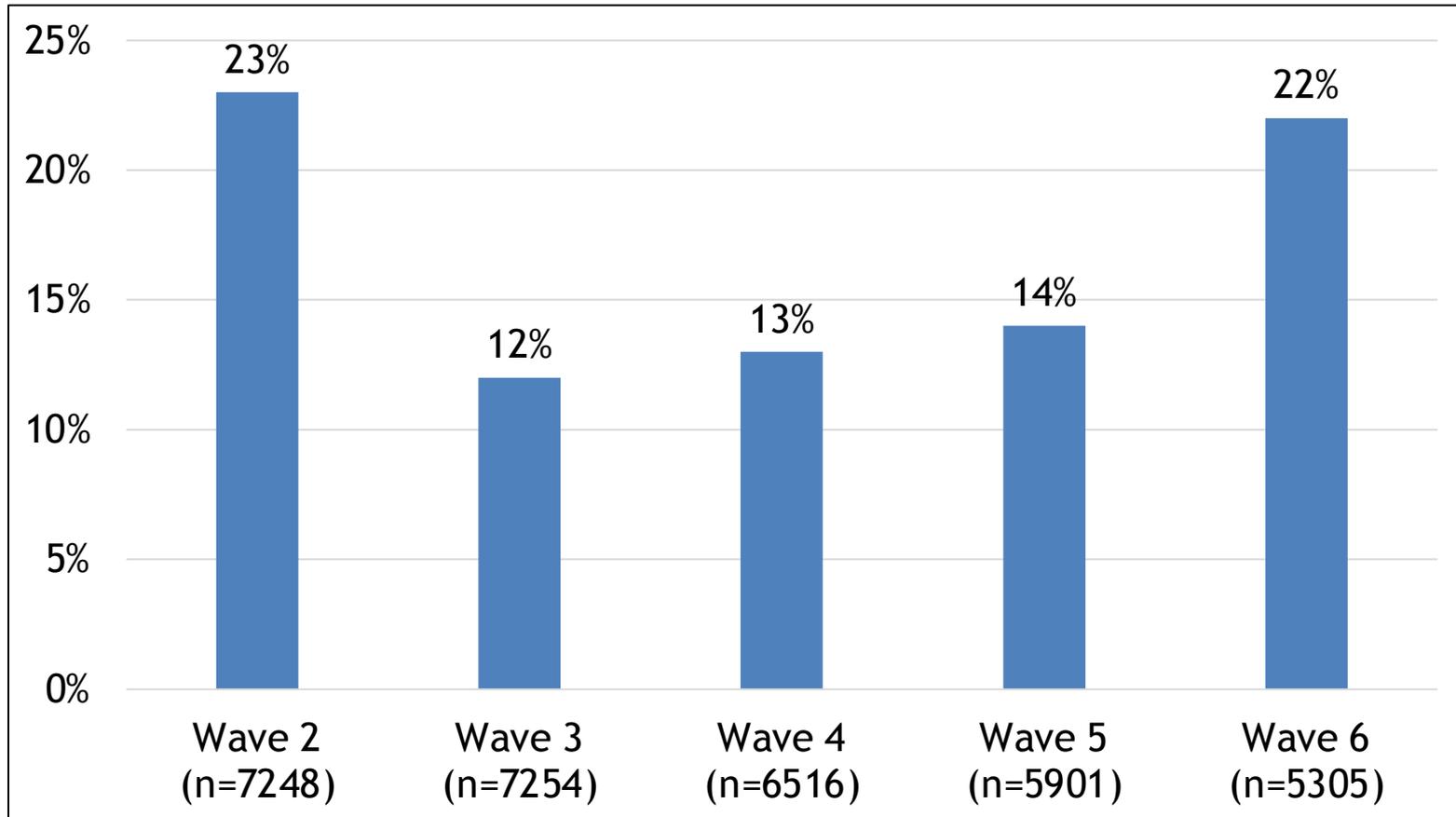
Percent Leaving Education by Wave
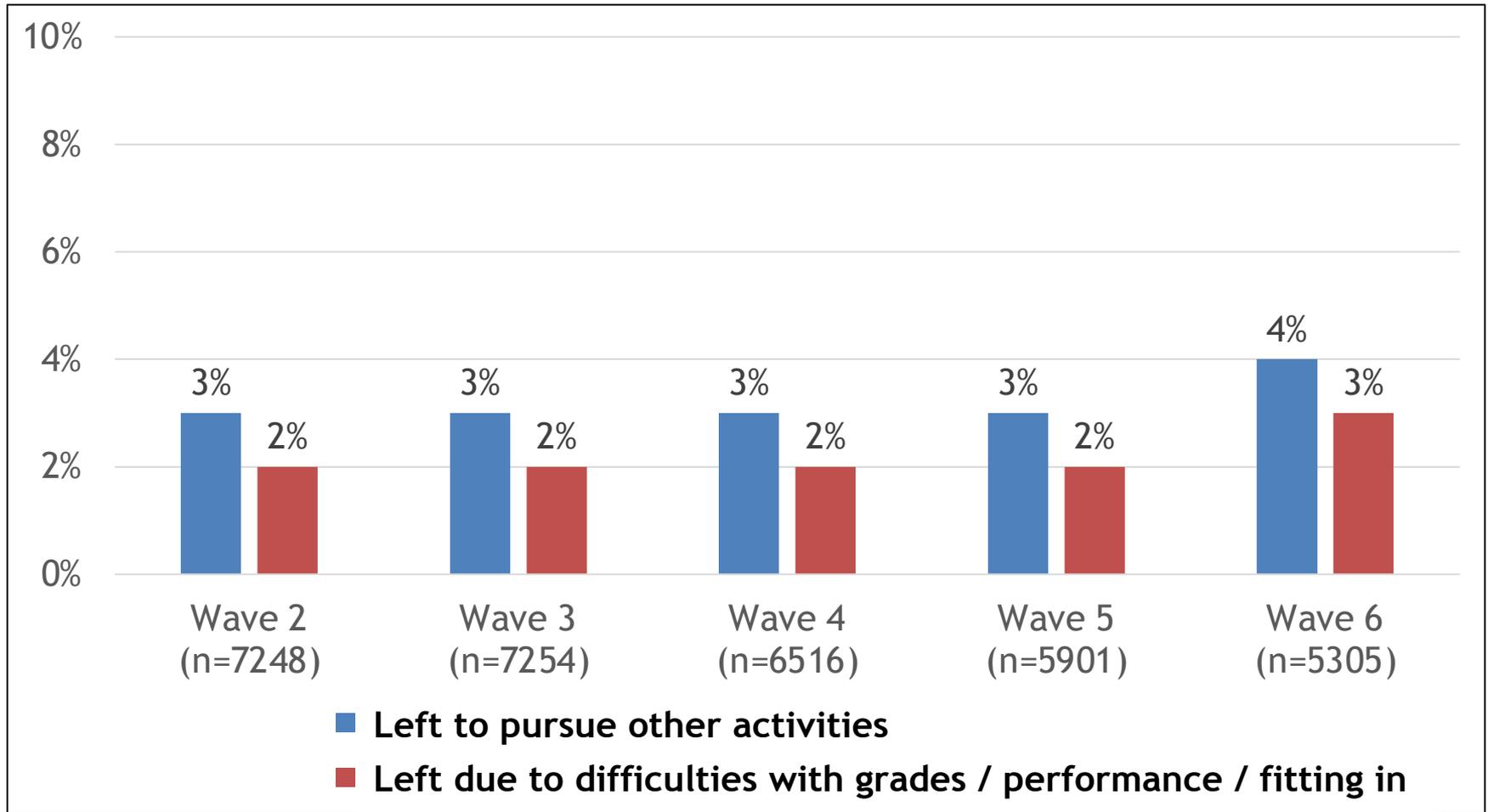
Education Completion or Withdrawal for Veterans in Technical Training Programs
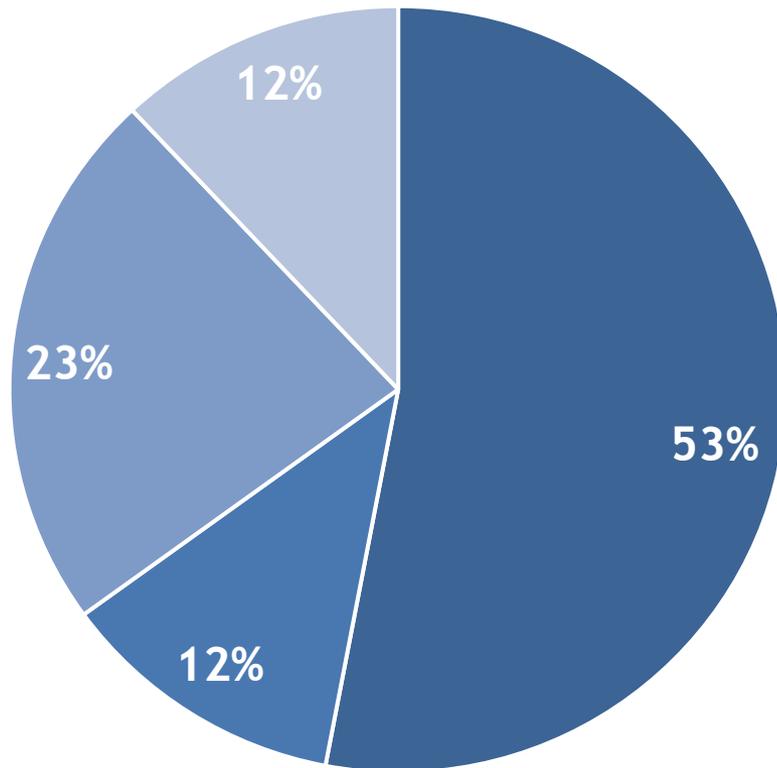
- Completed program without leaving at any wave
- Completed program but left at 1+ waves
- Currently in technical training program
- Did not complete program, left education

Education Completion or Withdrawal for Veterans in Bachelor's Degree Programs
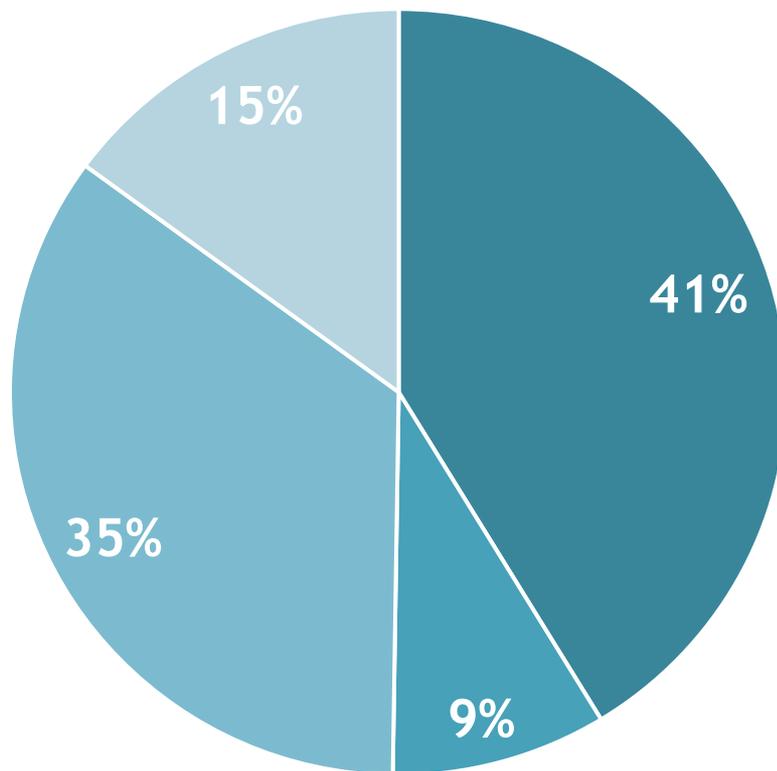
- **41%** Completed degree without leaving at any wave
- **9%** Completed degree but left at 1+ waves
- **35%** Currently in bachelors degree program
- **15%** Did not complete program, left education

Background information relating to leaving school

Significant Covariates:

	Technical degree	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree
Male gender	47% less likely			2x more likely
Single, no relationship				2.2x more
Problematic financial status			70% more likely	
At-risk financial status	62% less			
PTSD symptoms	90% more	60% more	80% more	
Probable depression			50% more	

Education Components Predicting Degree Completion

	Technical degree	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree
W1 Problematic financial status	59% less likely		24% less likely	
W1 Probable depression			36% less likely	64% less likely

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Common Components that Educational Institutions (n=219) Provide to Veterans

Program Components: technique, strategy, or feature used as part of a program

- **Content Components**
  - Coping skills; information on how to... write a resume, find a career, finance an education

- **Process Components**
  - Method of delivery
    » Lecture (direct instruction), mentoring, rehearsal, peer-to-peer interaction, homework
  - Mode of delivery
    » Online, phone, and face-to-face

- **Barrier reduction**
  - Providing monetary or tangible support, providing transportation, reducing stigma

Background on Education Institutions

Wave 1 schools nominated
(n=993)

4 or more nominations
(n=101)

3 or few nominations
(n=892)

Coded all 101 schools

Coded 75 schools

817 schools not coded
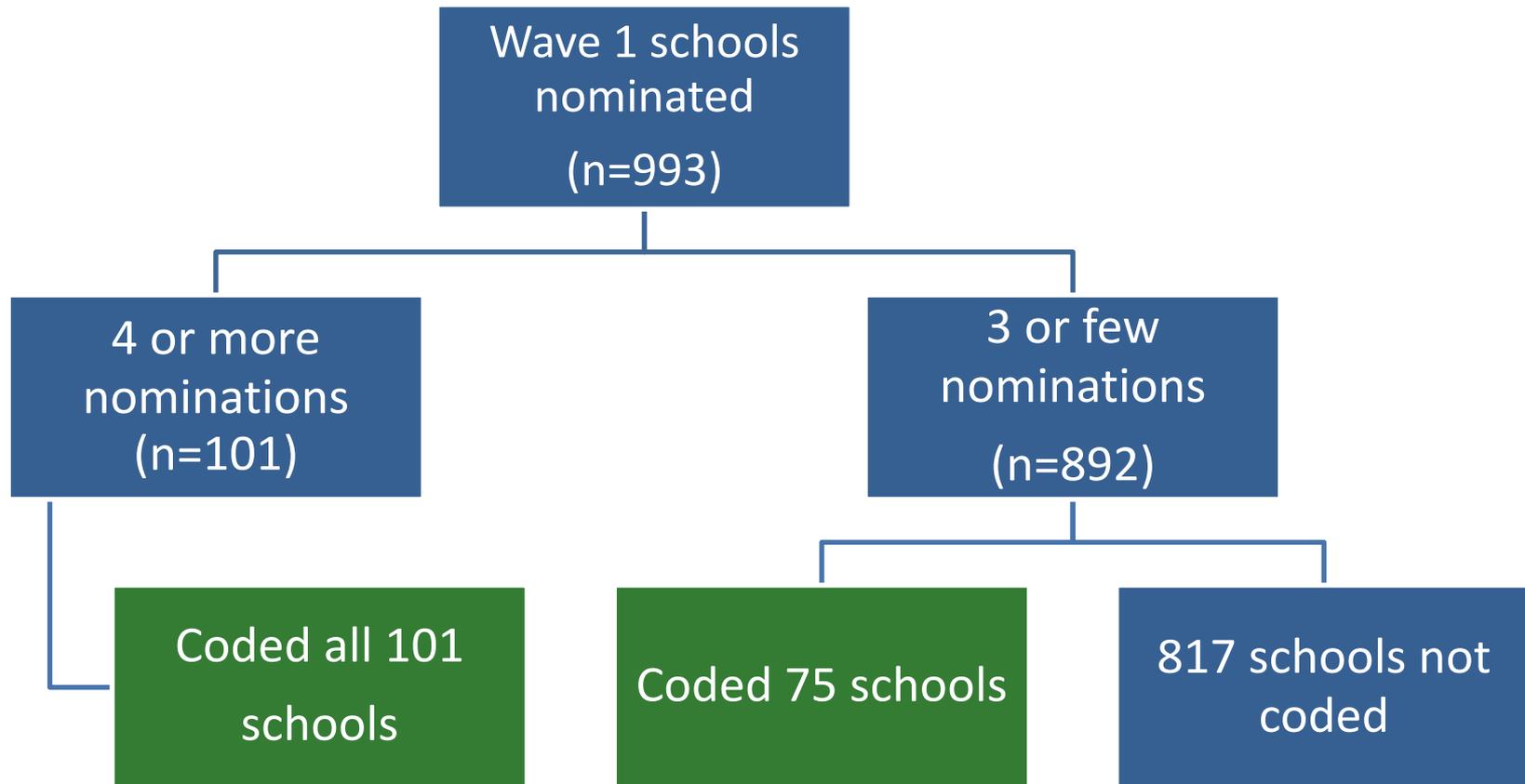
- Each wave had the same criteria for coding. Across all 6 waves, there were a total of 219 school coded with 4 or more nominations.
- 44% of the schools Veterans attended were coded.

# Background on Coded Schools

- Online only (7%; n=18)

- Average student population (n=23,564)
  - Median (n=19,775)
  - Range 883 to 84,289

- Type
  - Public (56%)
  - Private, for-profit (5%)
  - Private, not-for-profit (11%)

# Education Components by Wave
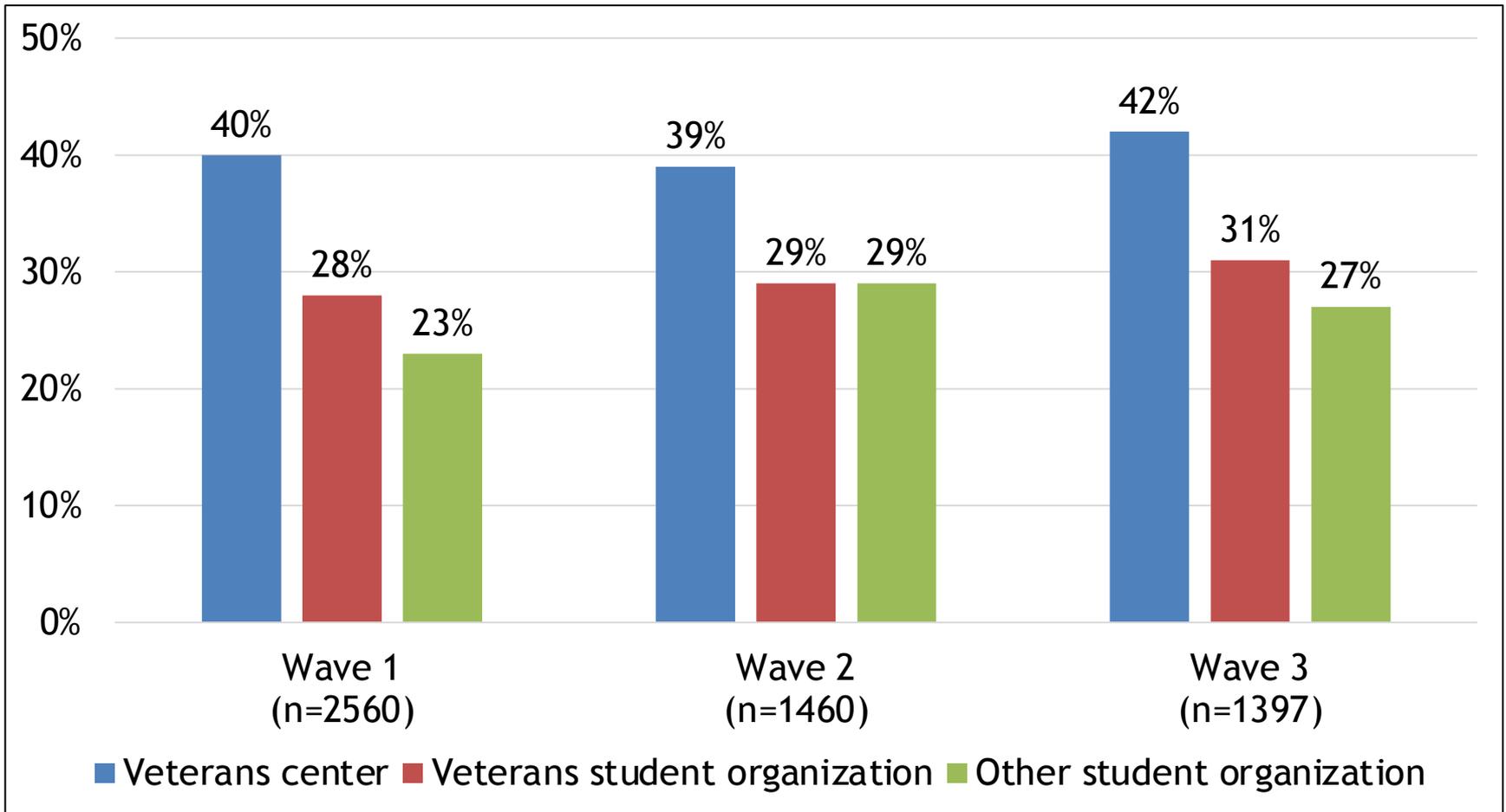
Education Components by Degree Type in Wave 1
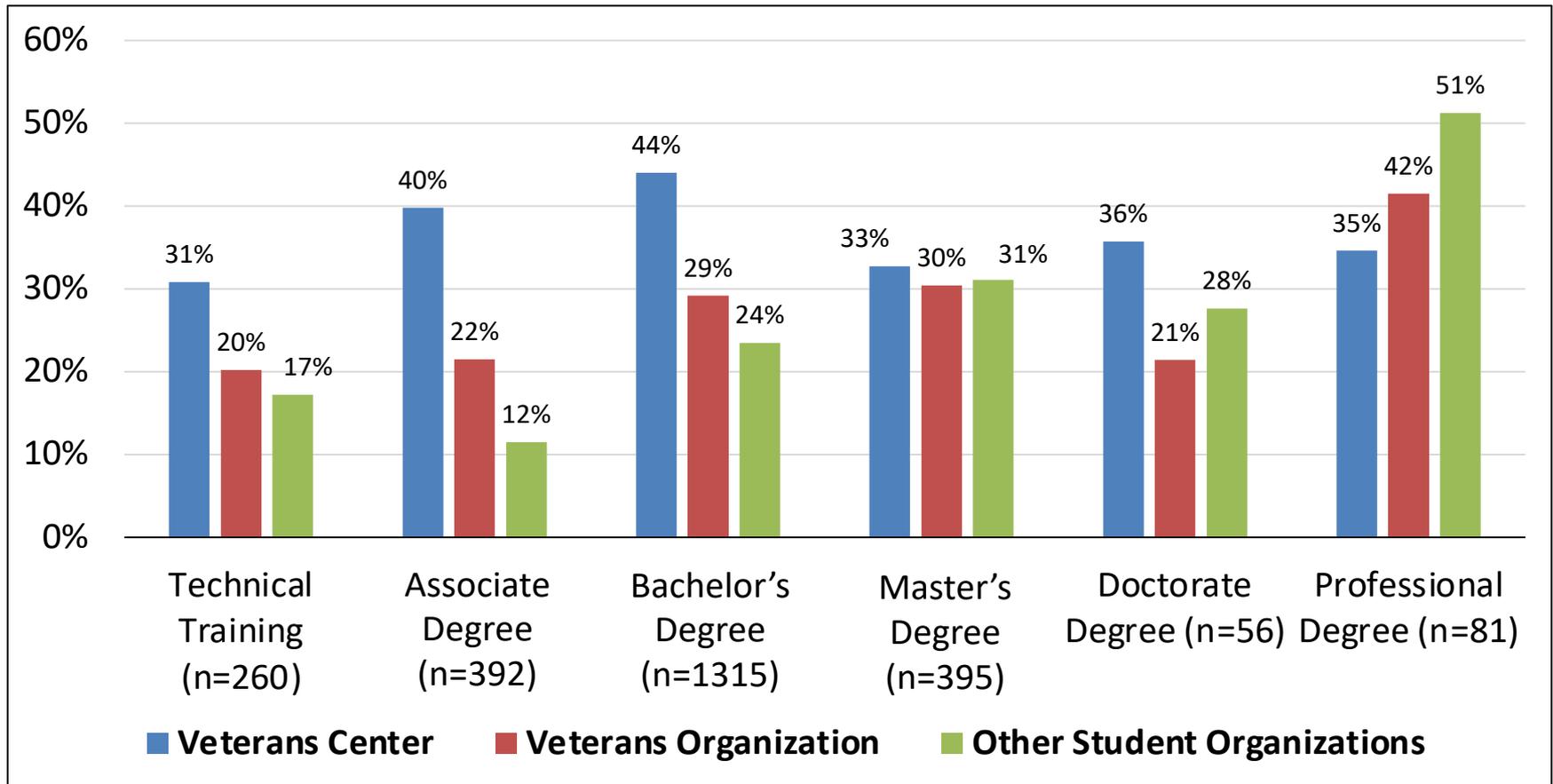
Component Use Bachelor's Degree
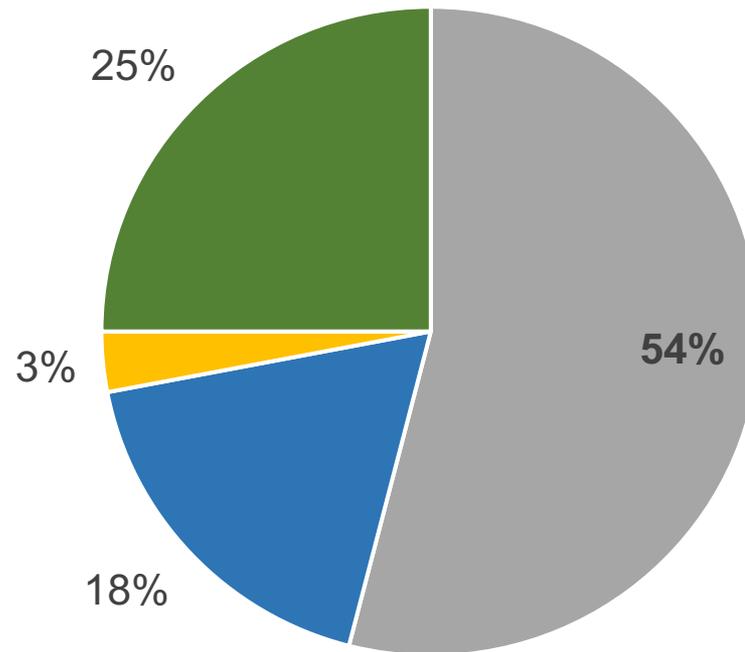
- Neither
- Only Veterans Group
- Only Veterans Center
- Both Veterans Center & Group

25%
54%
3%
18%

Component Use by Degree Program
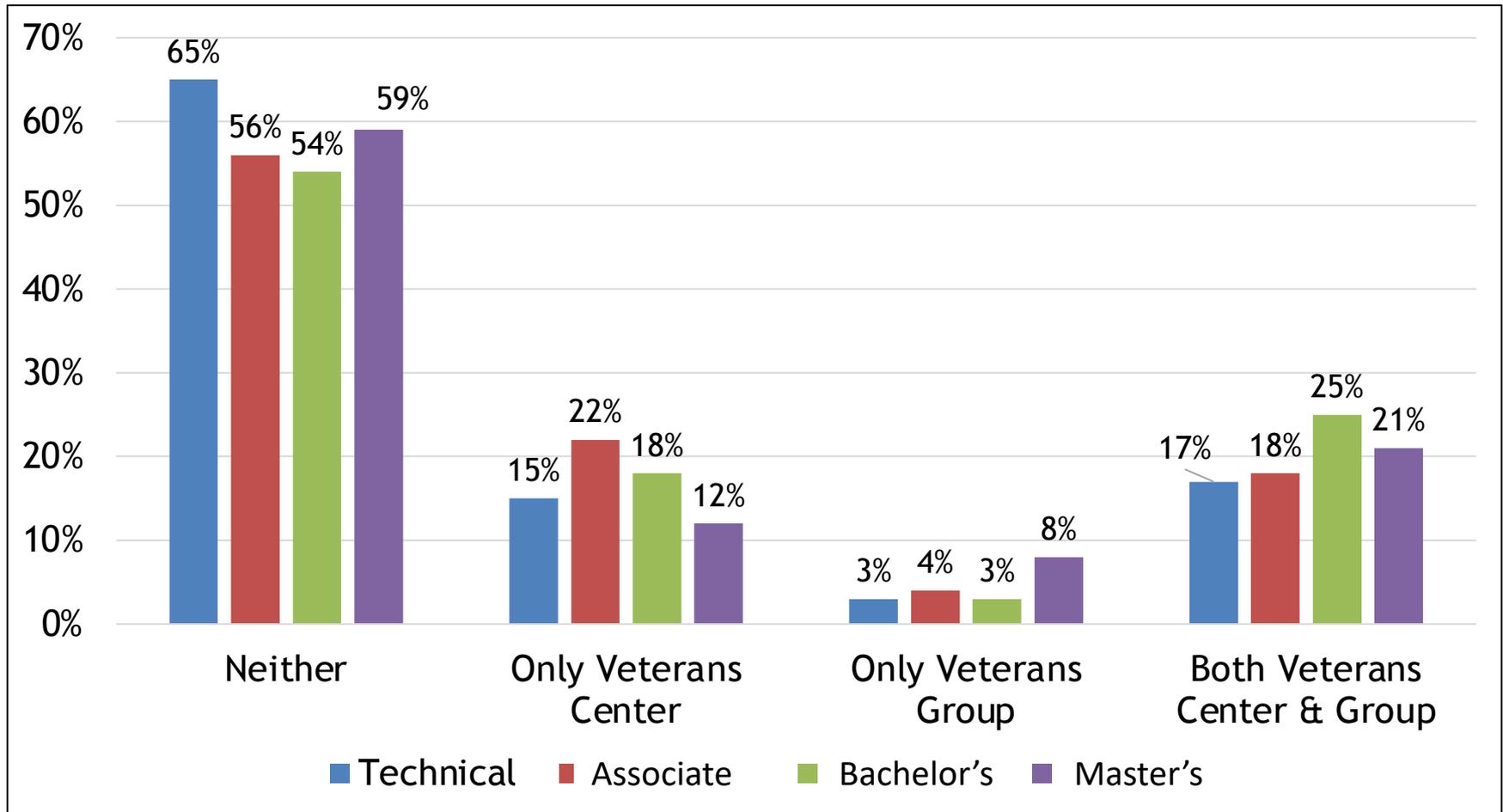
Education Components Predicting Leaving School

	Technical degree	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree
Male gender	47% less likely			2x more likely
Single, no relationship				2.2x more
Problematic financial status			1.7x more likely	
At-risk financial status	62% less			
PTSD symptoms	1.9x more	1.6x more	1.8x more	
Probable depression			1.5x more	
Attended Veterans center + group at W1 vs. Neither				
Attended Veterans center + group at W2			31% less likely	
Attended Veterans center + group at W3			34% less likely	

Education Components Predicting Degree Completion

	Technical degree	Associate degree	Bachelor's degree	Master's degree
Problematic financial status	59% less likely			
Probable depression			36% less likely	64% less likely
Attended both Veterans centers and groups at W1	51% less likely			
Attended Veterans center at W1 vs. Neither			27% less likely	
Attended Veterans group at W1				2.8 times more likely
Attended Veterans group at W2				6.7 times more likely

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

Component	Percentage
Household budgeting	8%
Financing, online tool	13%
Financing, classroom	16%
Financing, mentor	19%
Financing, reading online	39%
Financing an education	54%
Benefits, classroom	37%
Benefits, reading online	88%
Benefits, coach	90%
Accessing benefits	97%
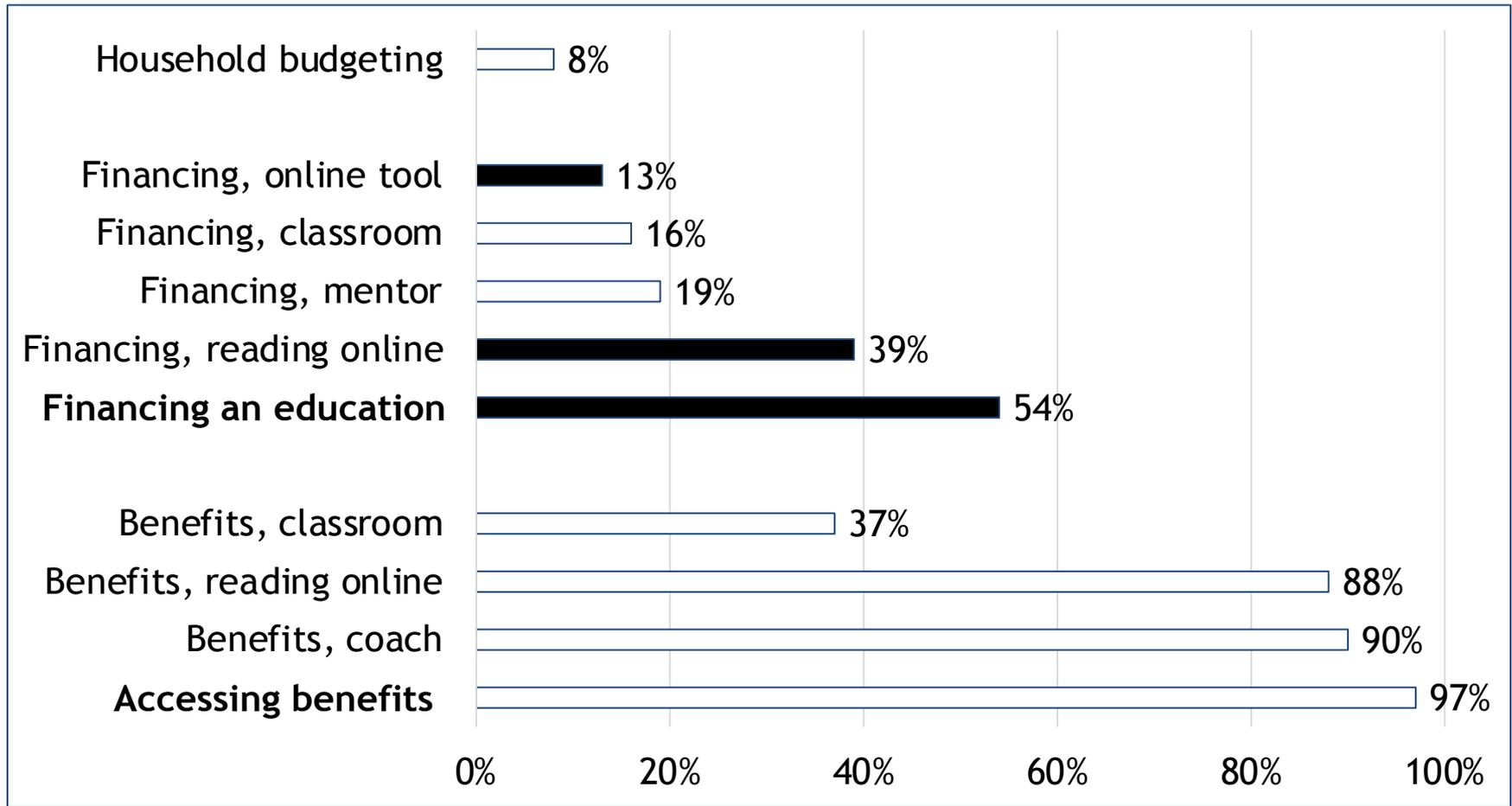
Common components in the <u>social</u> domain related to education completion by Wave 5

Leadership & teamwork skills — 9%

Community engagement events — 25%

Volunteering activities — 41%

Veterans centers — 66%

Organizations, networking — 30%

Organizations, casual socializing — 76%

Veterans organizations — 79%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

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

Component	Percentage
Entrance & certification exam prep	4%
School application considerations	14%
Translating military education to credits	47%
Transitioning, peer learning	13%
Transitioning, classroom	32%
Transitioning, mentor	58%
Transitioning to civilian school	69%

Common components in the education domain related to education completion by Wave 6

Horizontal bar chart:

- Other programs that assisted with educational expenses: 7%
- Post 9/11 GI Bill: 51%
- Montgomery GI Bill (Chapt 30): 8%
- Yellow Ribbon Program: 5%
- Vocational Rehabilitation (Chapt 31): 3%
- Reserve Educational Assistance Program (REAP): 1%
- Veterans Educational Assistance Program (VEAP, chapter 32): 1%

X-axis: 0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%

Education Common Components that Improve Mental Health & Decrease Social Isolation

Correlates of Social Isolation

- Veterans with these attributes were more likely to be socially isolated at Wave 1:
  - Problematic financial status
  - Traumatic brain injury
  - PTSD symptoms
  - Probable depression

Social Isolation and Program Components

- Veterans who were socially isolated at Wave 1 but visited a Veterans center at their school, at Wave 1, were less likely to feel socially isolated at Wave 2.

Social Isolation and Program Components

- Veterans who were socially isolated at Wave 1 but participated in a religious or spiritual community at Wave 2 were less likely to feel socially isolated at Wave 2.

Social Isolation and Program Components

- Veterans who were socially isolated at Wave 1 but reported volunteering at Wave 2 were less likely to feel socially isolated at Wave 2.

Social Isolation and Program Components

- Veterans who were socially isolated at Wave 1 but reported regularly participating in a community group that shares similar hobbies at Wave 2 were less likely to feel socially isolated at Wave 2.

Discussion

- School administrators should:
  - Recruit students early, before separation
  - Educate Veterans on financial budgeting (outside of paying for education)
  - Improve access to PTSD treatment

- Veterans should:
  - Plan early for college finances and debt
  - Choose schools with student groups
  - Get involved

Future Directions

- Longitudinally, do changes in PTSD symptoms improve educational outcomes?

- Deeper dive into what the Veterans centers are doing, particularly at technical schools

- Investigate how these educational components relate to <u>employment outcomes</u>

- Long-term outcome tracking

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Thanks to Our Study Sponsors

Questions/Comments

Thanks to our Veterans!

Contact:

Nicole R. Morgan

Clearinghouse for Military Family Readiness

Pennsylvania State University

nrf106@psu.edu