



# 2023 Military Transition Survey



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# Survey Method



The research was conducted online in the United States by The Harris Poll on behalf of the University of Phoenix among 762 US adults aged 18-55 who have ever served in the military and are either currently active or non-active duty who served in the military less than 5 years ago. The survey was conducted July 10 – 31, 2023.

Data are weighted where necessary by education, age by sex, race/ethnicity, region, income, size of household, marital status, active and non-active duty status, and propensity to be online to bring them in line with their actual proportions in the population of those who are age 18 to 55 and have served in the US military.

Respondents for this survey were selected from among those who have agreed to participate in our surveys. The sampling precision of Harris online polls is measured by using a Bayesian credible interval. For this study, the sample data is accurate to within + 5.3 percentage points using a 95% confidence level. This credible interval will be wider among subsets of the surveyed population of interest.

All sample surveys and polls, whether or not they use probability sampling, are subject to other multiple sources of error which are most often not possible to quantify or estimate, including, but not limited to coverage error, error associated with nonresponse, error associated with question wording and response options, and post-survey weighting and adjustments.

Throughout this report:

- ✓ An **asterisk (\*)** signifies a value of less than one-half percent and **a dash (-)** represents a value of zero
- ✓ Percentages may not all add up to 100% due to weighting, computer rounding, and the acceptance of multiple responses.
- ✓ Data for total military is shown in **red**. Data for active military is displayed in **blue**, and data for non-active military is displayed in **purple**.
- ✓ Statistically significant differences are shown in call-outs on the detailed finding slides.

# Executive Summary



# Executive Summary



***Regardless of active or non-active status, military members have a confidence in their skills that they bring to their life post-military — though not without some doubts and concerns.***

- In 2021, 83% of military members reported positive feelings about transitioning from military life to civilian life. Though still mainly positive in 2023, fewer reported positive feelings this year, dropping to 75%.
- Still, four in five active military members express positive feelings when thinking about transitioning to civilian life, much more so than non-active military (70%). At least two in five active military (42%) or non-active military (40%) members feels ready to see what is next but also fear of the unknown (42%, 41% respectively).
- Though military members may have mixed feelings about their life after separating from the military, the majority believe the military has provided them with all the skills they need to be successful in the workplace (78%).
- At least half of active and non-active members identify qualities like the ability to **perform under pressure**, **leadership skills**, **problem-solving** skills, and others to be among the most important qualities gained as a service member, though not always in similar order.
- These skills, including the ability to **adapt to a rapidly changing environment** are also skills that members agree improved greatly due to joining the military.
- Perhaps because of believing their military experience will have a positive impact on obtaining their desired job, two in five active military believe it will take them 3 months or less to find a job after leaving the military, a timeline that holds true for the same proportion of non-active military.
- That doesn't preclude military members to also see barriers associated with their military experience, such as the ability to relate to people who don't understand what military personnel experience or navigating the system to find work.
- In fact, for nearly one-third of non-active military (32%), they encountered obstacles in transferring their military skills to the right job.

# Executive Summary (continued)



## ***Military experience may have provided top skills but those may not be enough in the civilian job market, with continuing education being a solution.***

- At least four in five military members agree that they need more education to be successful in a civilian workplace, and that their ideal career requires additional education or training.
  - Still, nearly half of employed non-active military believe they are underemployed and working under their current skill level.
- The feeling that more education is needed for the civilian workplace translates to an interest in continuing education, as slightly more than half of military members (51%) are interested in continuing education — including apprenticeships, certification programs, and college degrees (2-year, 4-year, or graduate programs).
- For three in five military members interested in going back to school, classes that have flexible hours and classes that are online are needed for them to continue their education.

## ***Beyond skills to help transition to military life, mental health – or rather the stigma for seeking help for mental health – issues still a burden for military members.***

- Most active and non-active military agree that mental health is as important as physical health, and at least half have experienced symptoms such as lack of sleep or anxiety. These symptoms but also sadness/depression would lead them to seek professional or non-professional care.
- Nearly two-thirds of active or non-active members have sought professional counseling.
- And for those who have not sought out professional counseling, at least one-third of active or non-active military did not do so because they did not want to be perceived as weak.

# Detailed Findings





# Section I: Attitudes toward Post-Military Life



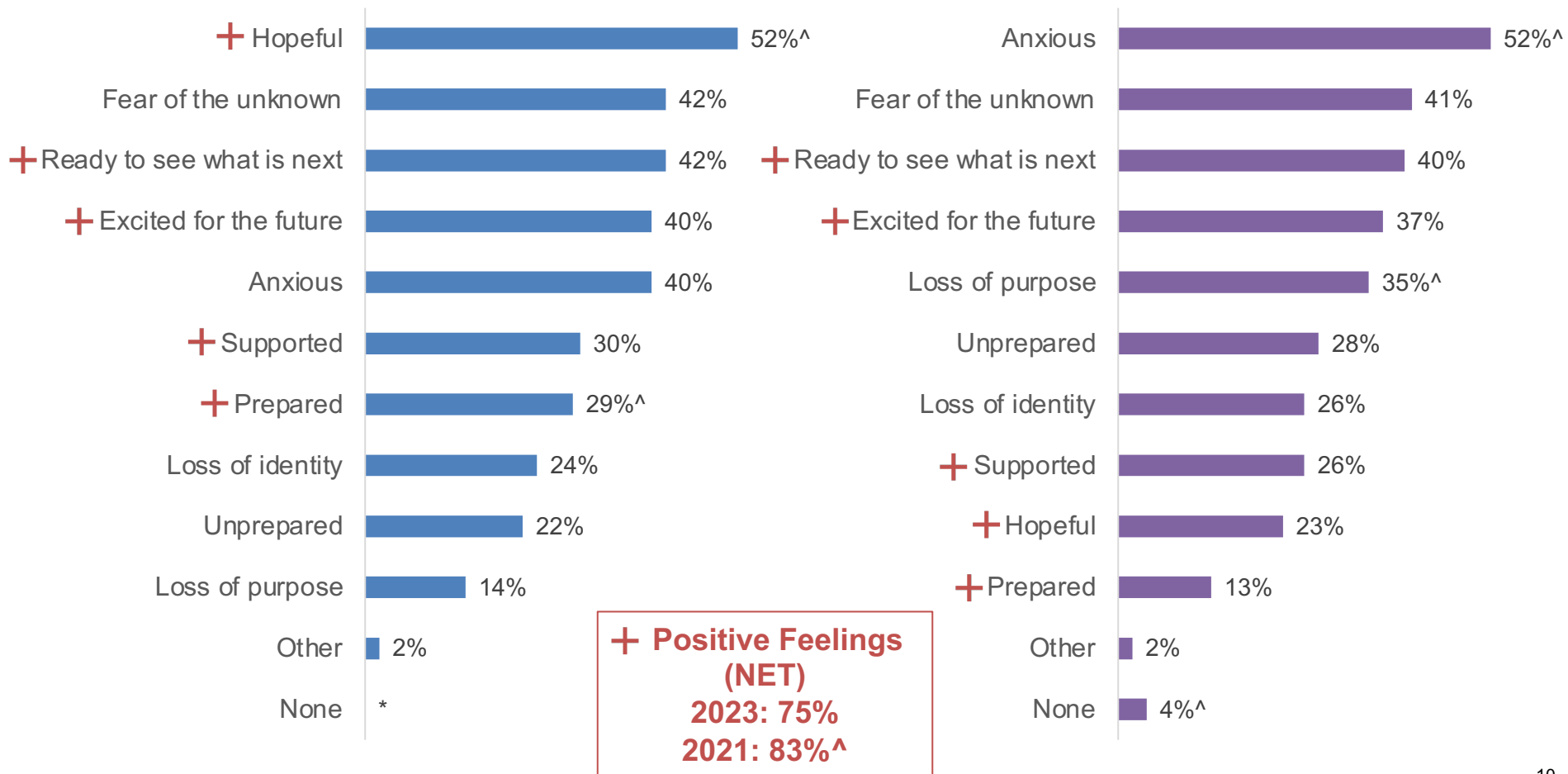
# Military members express mixed feelings about life after the military – less positive than in 2021



## Feelings Toward Transitioning From Military to Civilian Life

Active n=378

Non-active n=384

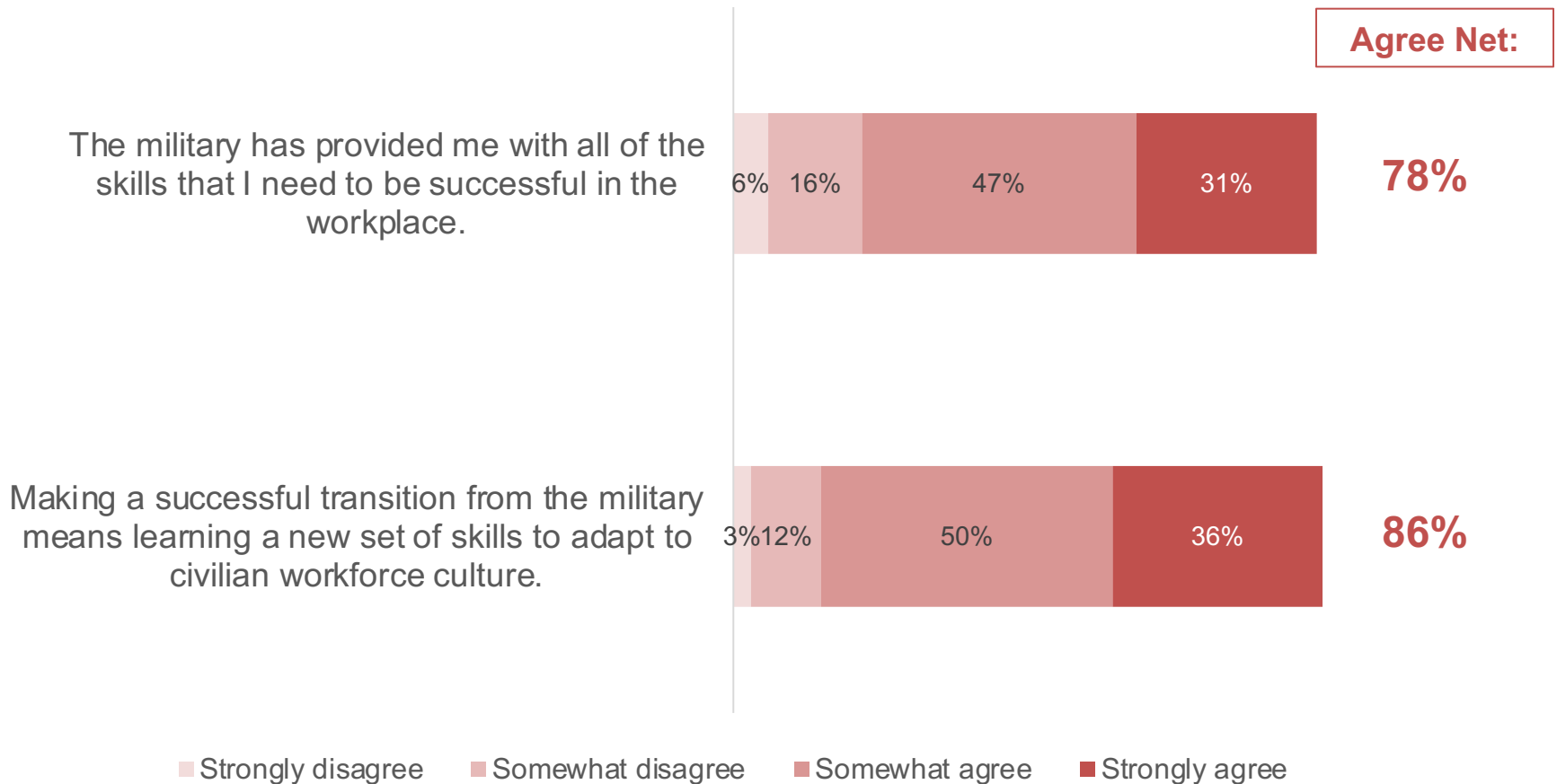


^ Indicates statistically significant difference

# While the majority say the military has provided them with all the skills needed to be successful in the workplace, even more agree they'll need to learn a new set of skills to adapt



## Agreement With Statements (Total Military n=762)



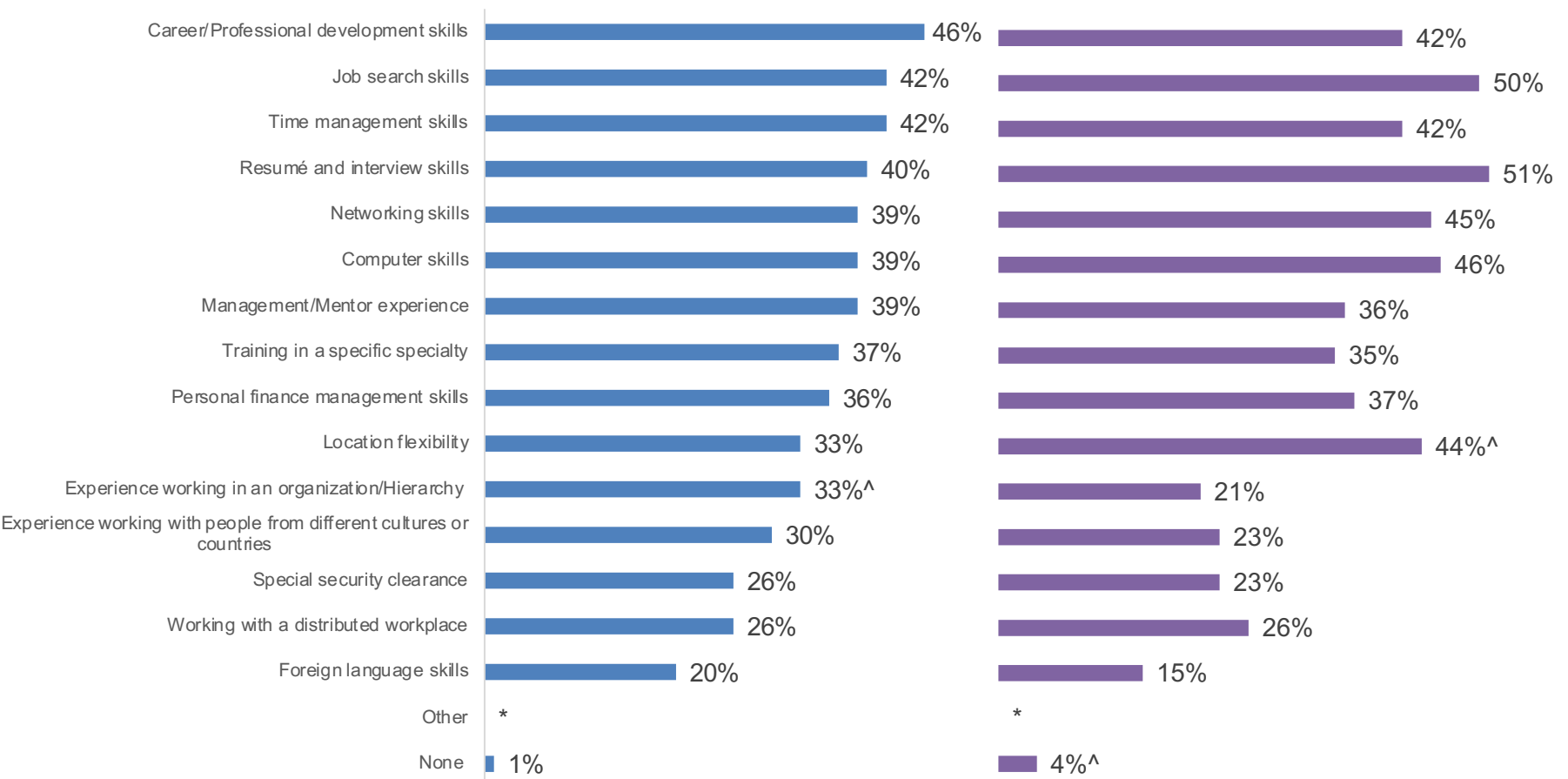
# Specifically, over two-fifths say they need professional development, job search, and time management skills to be successful in their transition from military to civilian life



## Skills needed to be successful in transitioning from military service to civilian life

Active n=378

Non-active n=384



^ Indicates statistically significant difference

# Section II: Perceptions of Getting a Job

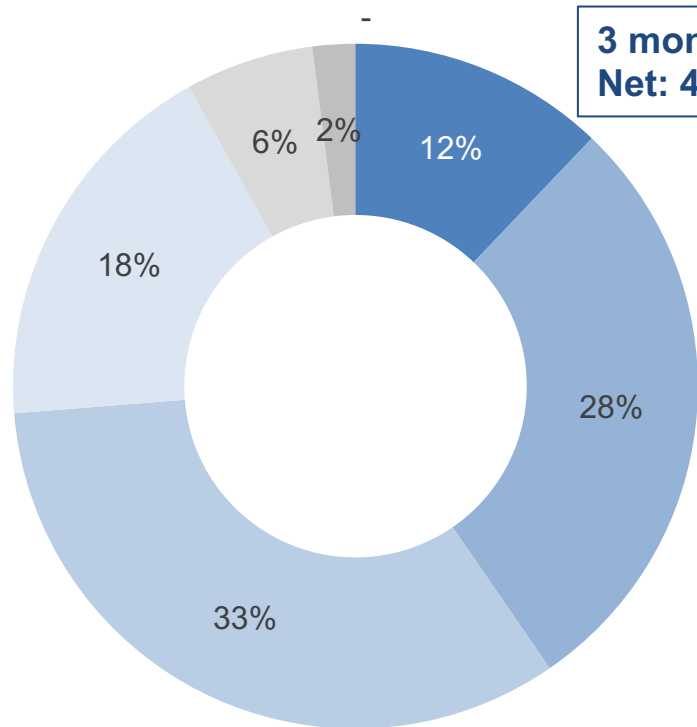


# Equal proportions of active and non-active service members say it will take them/took them 3 months or less to find their first civilian job



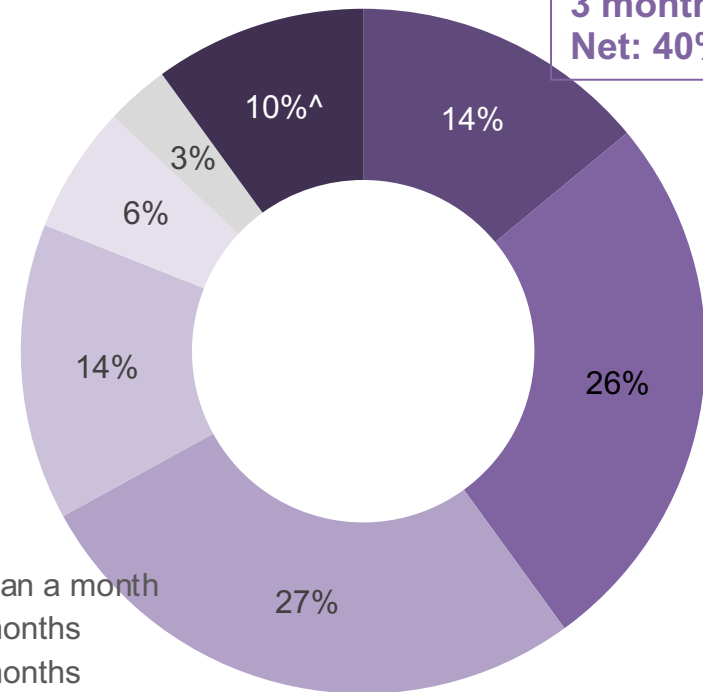
## Amount of time to find a job after leaving the military Expected (Active) vs. Actual (Non-active)

Active n=378



**3 months or less  
Net: 40%**

Non-active n=384



**3 months or less  
Net: 40%**

- Less than a month
- 1 – 3 months
- 4 – 6 months
- 7 months – 1 year
- More than a year
- I never worked a civilian job
- I am still looking

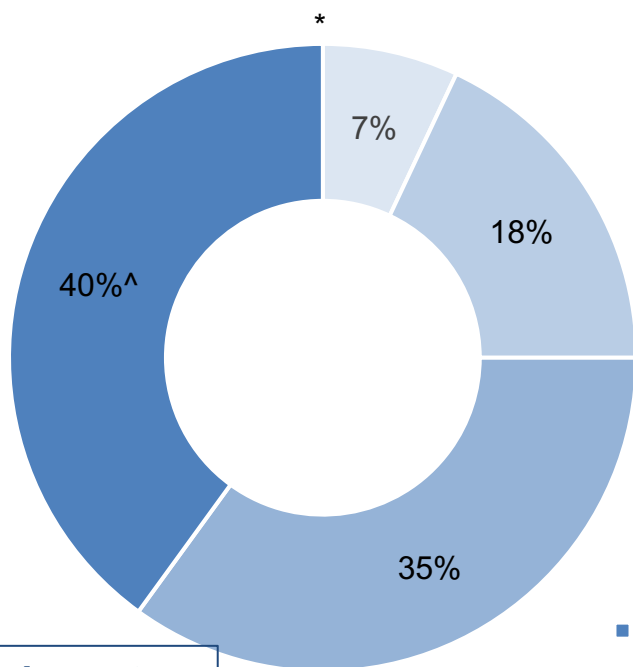
<sup>^</sup> Indicates statistically significant difference

# Active military are significantly more likely to expect their military experience to positively impact their ability to get the job they want compared to their non-active counterparts



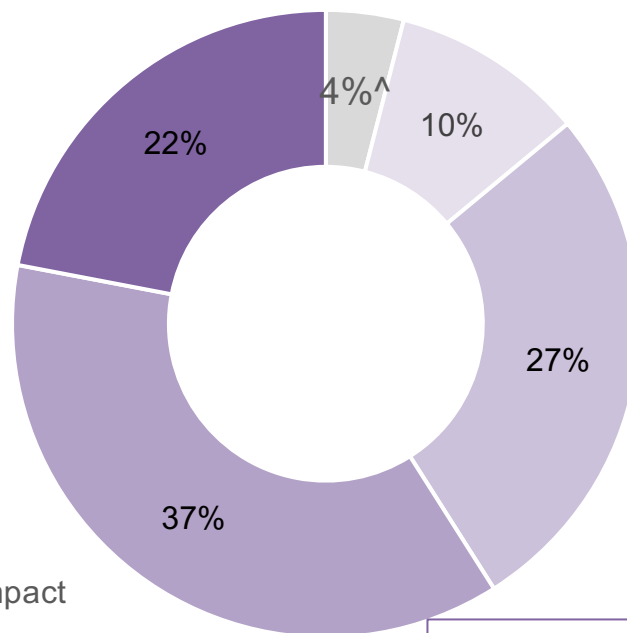
## Impact that military experience will have on obtaining desired job

Active n=378



**Positive Impact Net: 75%^**

Non-active n=384



**Positive Impact Net: 60%**

- Significant positive impact
- Slight positive impact
- Neither negative nor positive impact
- Slight negative impact
- Significant negative impact

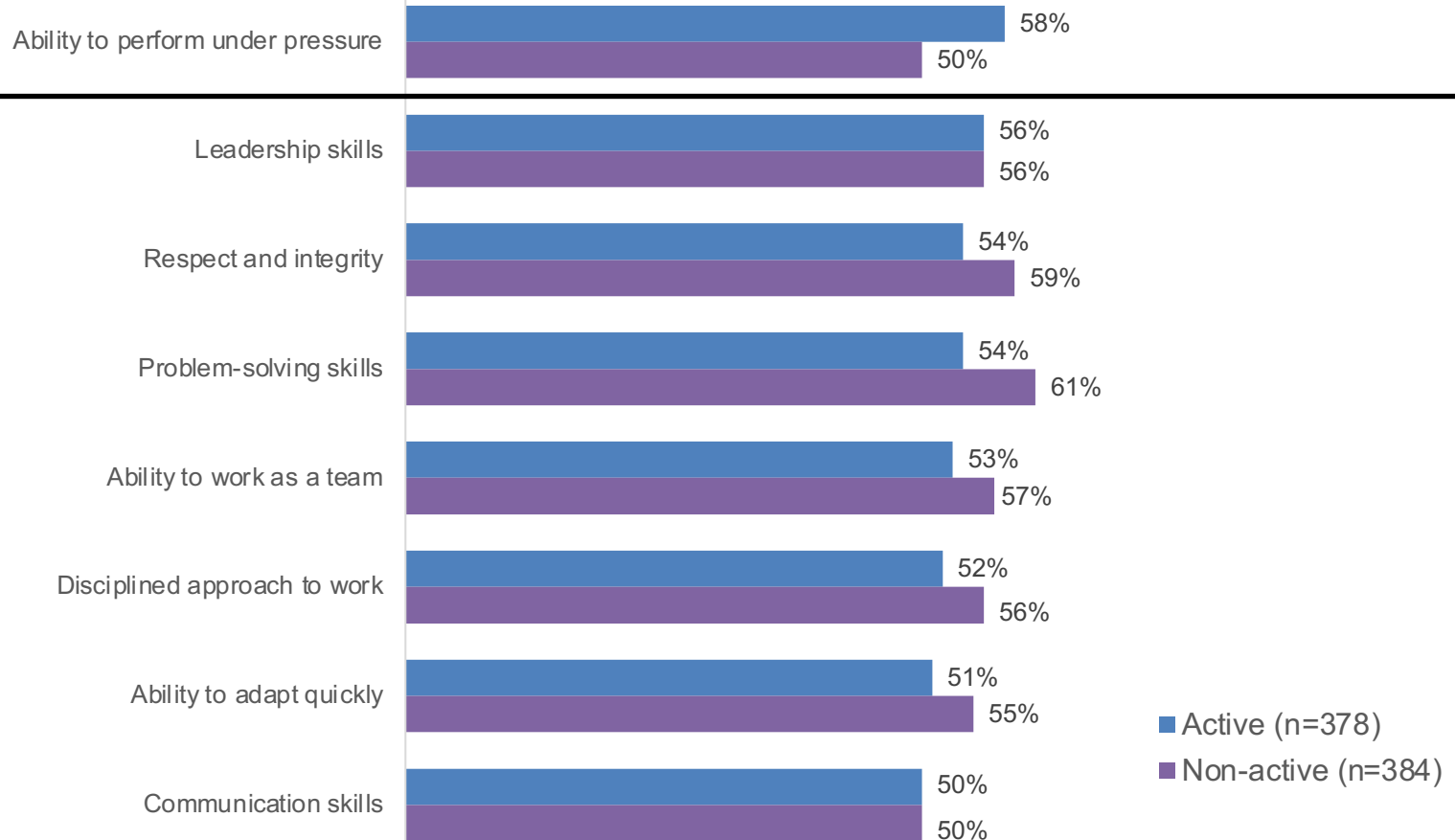
^ Indicates statistically significant difference

# Ability to perform under pressure is among the most important qualities military members feel they gained in the military that can be transferred to a civilian job



Most important qualities gained as a member of the military that can be brought to an organization/job/employer

Top Reported Responses  
(50% or more)



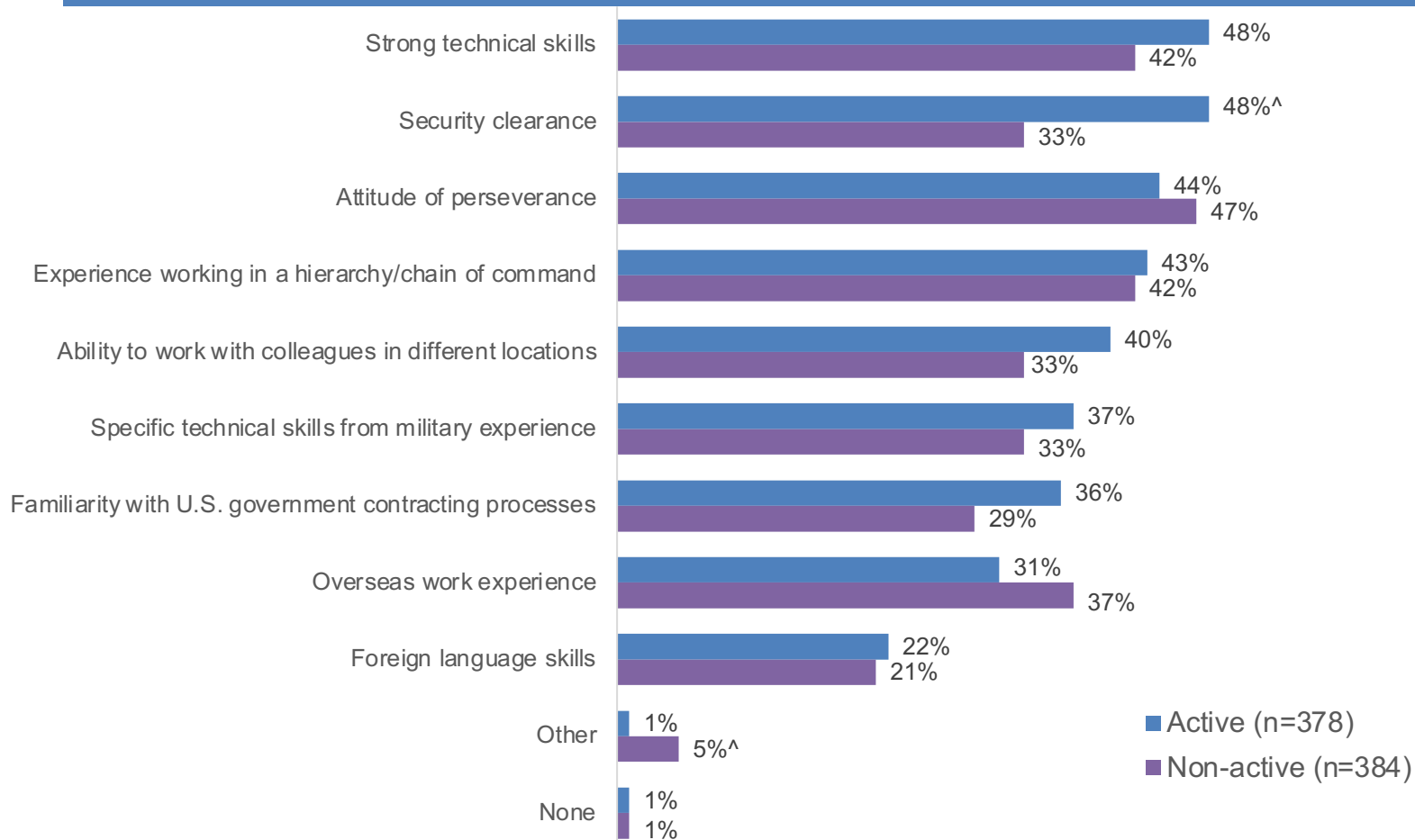


# Fewer view overseas experience, foreign language skills, technical military skills, and familiarity with government contracting as important qualities that could be transferred to a civilian job



## Most important qualities gained as a member of the military that can be brought to an organization/job/employer

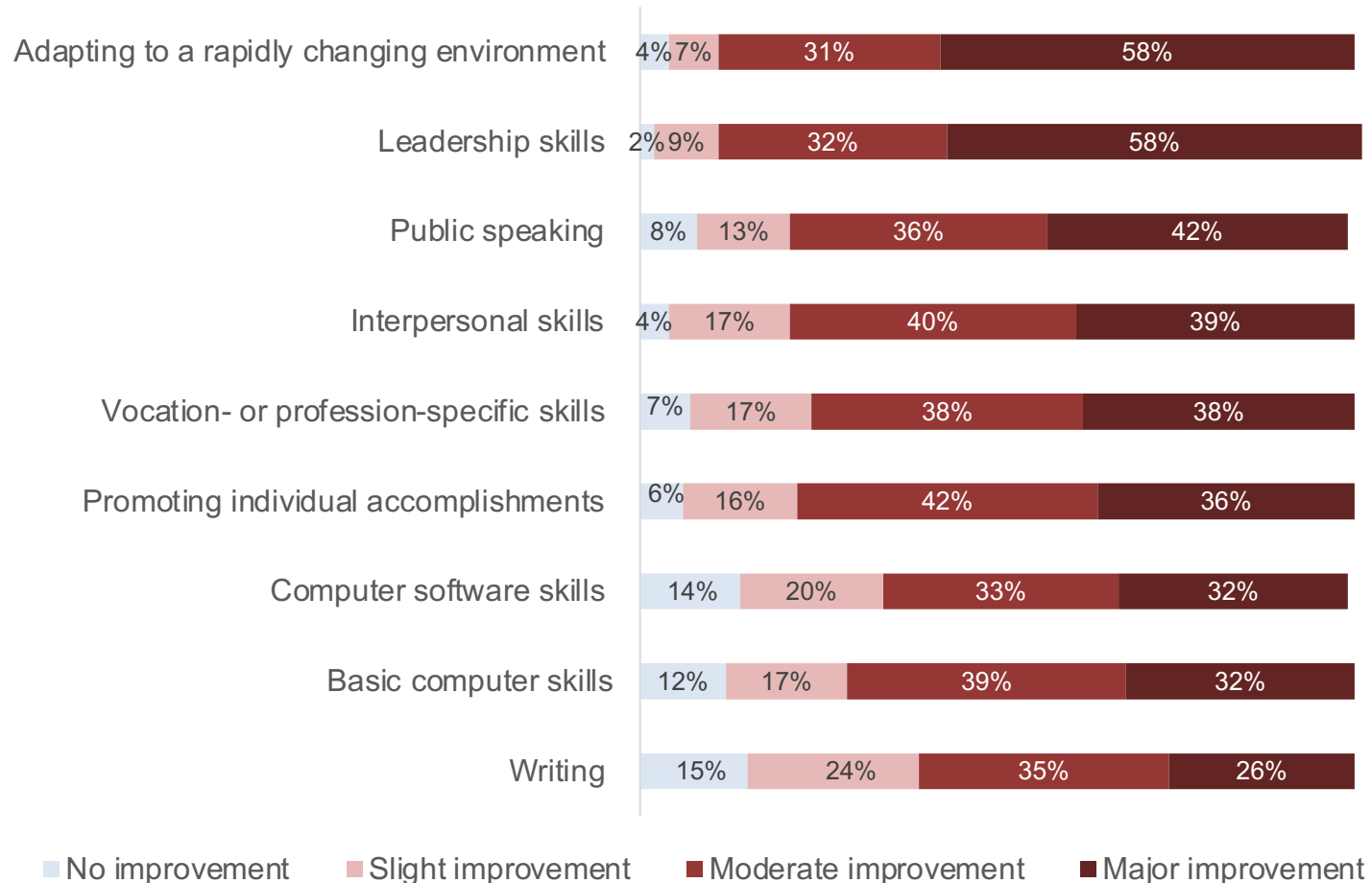
### Bottom Reported Responses (less than 50%)



# The skills military members bring to civilian jobs were improved due to joining the military — especially their leadership skills and ability to adapt to rapidly changing environments



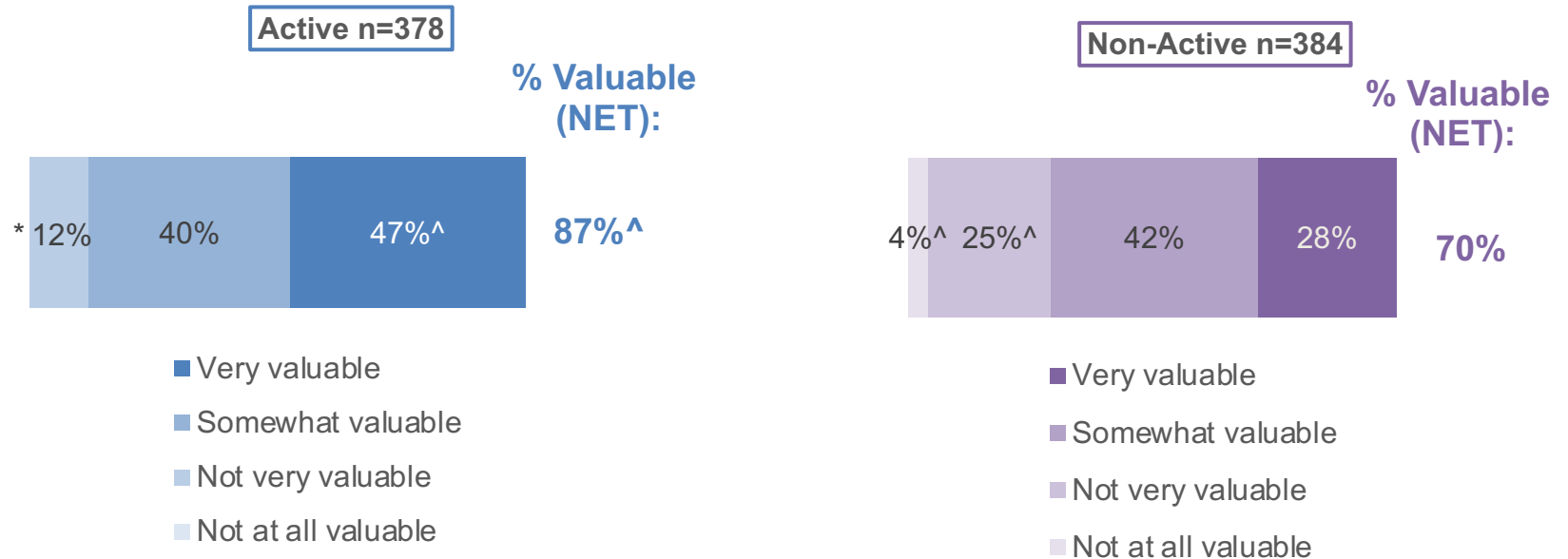
Skills that have improved due to joining the military (Total Military n=762)



# Although most active military members say employers will find their military experience valuable; non-active military are less likely to believe so



## Perceived value of military experience by employers in desired field(s)



<sup>^</sup> Indicates statistically significant difference

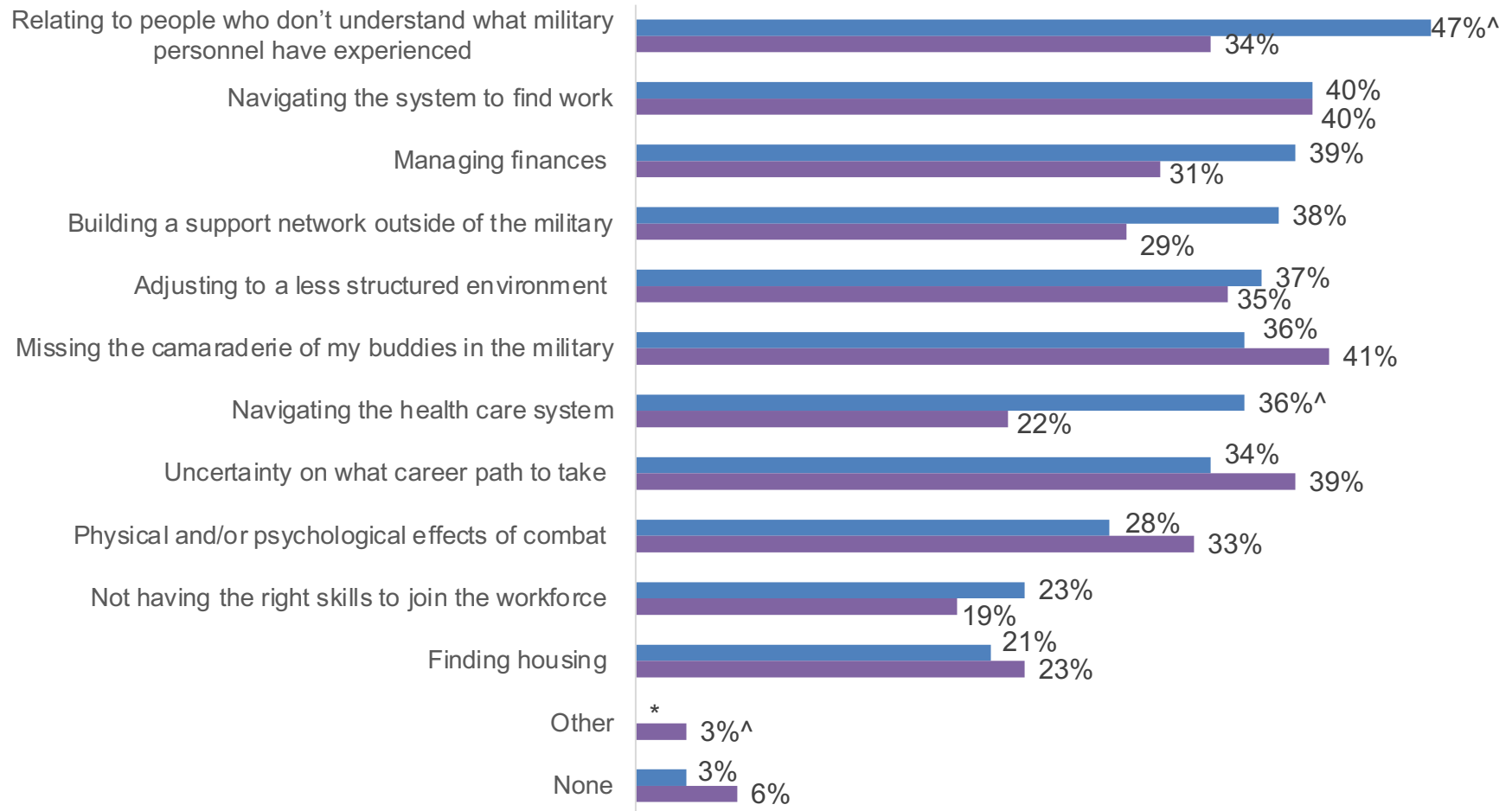
# Section III: Barriers & Resources



# Active military believe they will face a number of barriers post-military, especially relating to people who don't understand what military personnel have experienced



## Adjustments or barriers expected to face (Active) and actually faced (Non-active) post-military

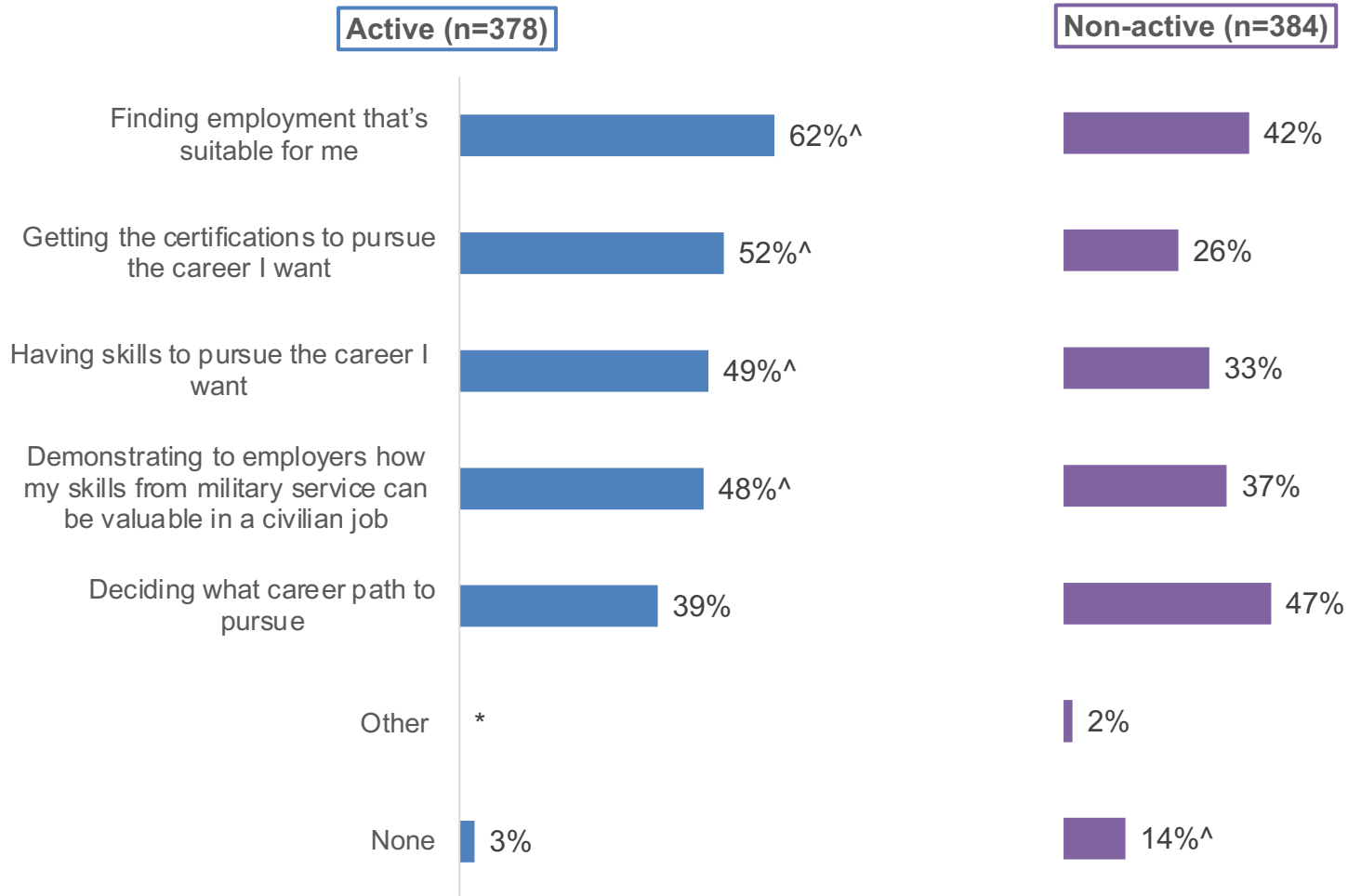


^ Indicates statistically significant difference

# More than 3 in 5 active military are concerned about finding suitable employment after separating from the military; fewer non-active military says it was actually difficult



## Employment activities concerned about/that were difficult after separating from the military



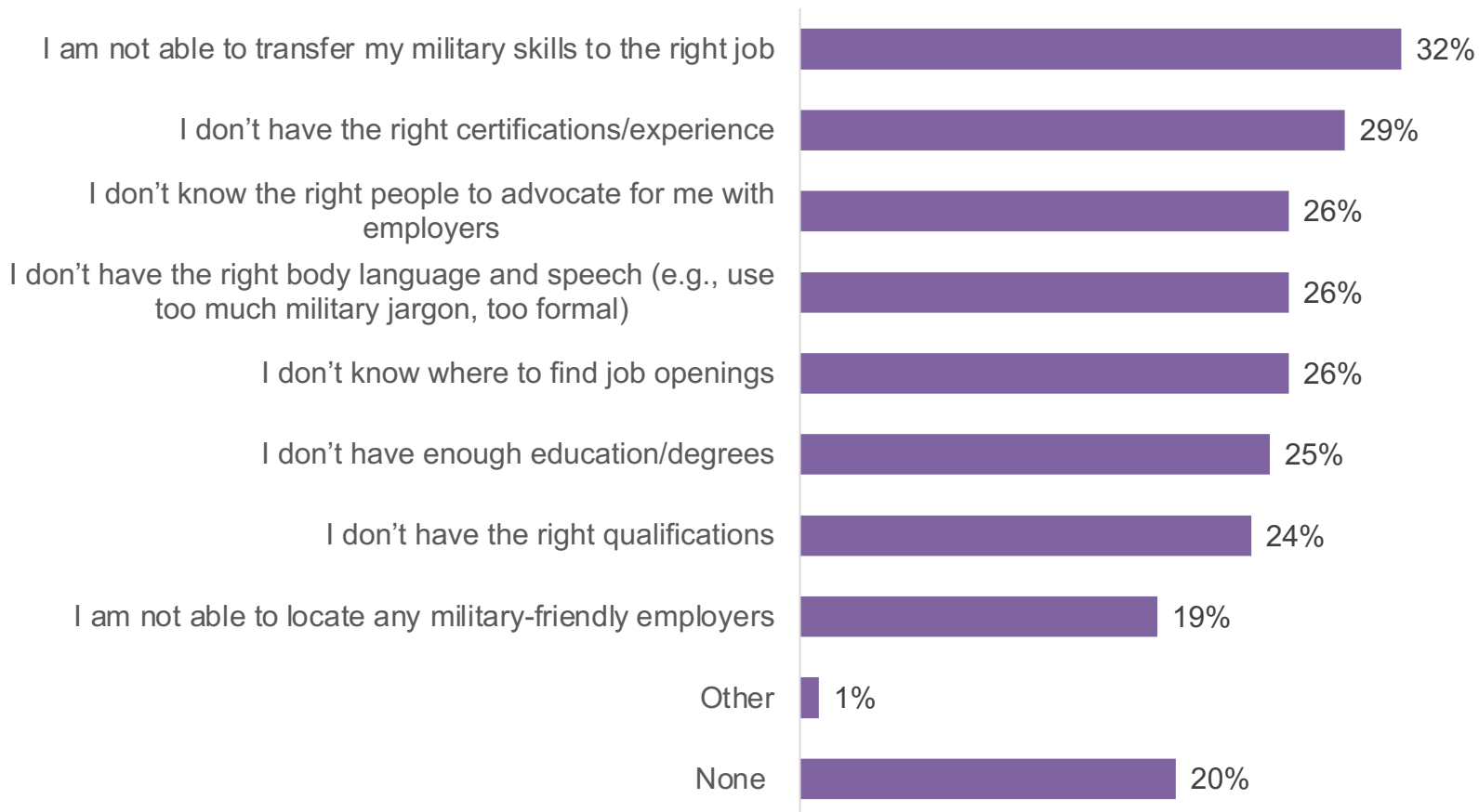
^ Indicates statistically significant difference

# Nearly a third of non-active military say they are unable to transfer their military skills to the right job



## Obstacles encountered while looking for a job as a U.S. veteran

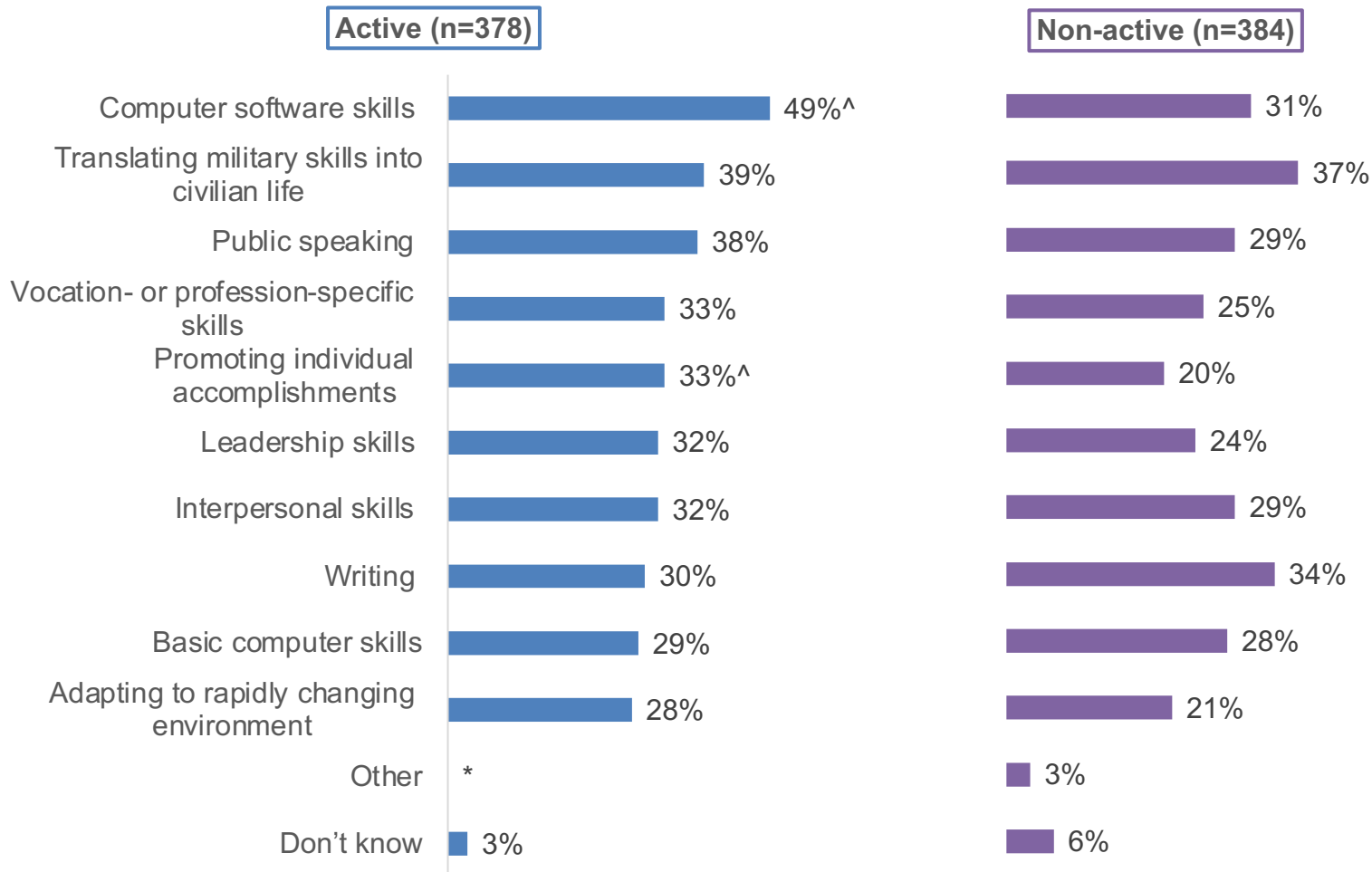
### Non-Active Military (n=384)



# In fact, military members say they still need to improve a number of skills for a civilian job, most notably computer software skills and translating military skills into civilian life



## Skills still needed to be improved for employment in a civilian career



<sup>^</sup> Indicates statistically significant difference

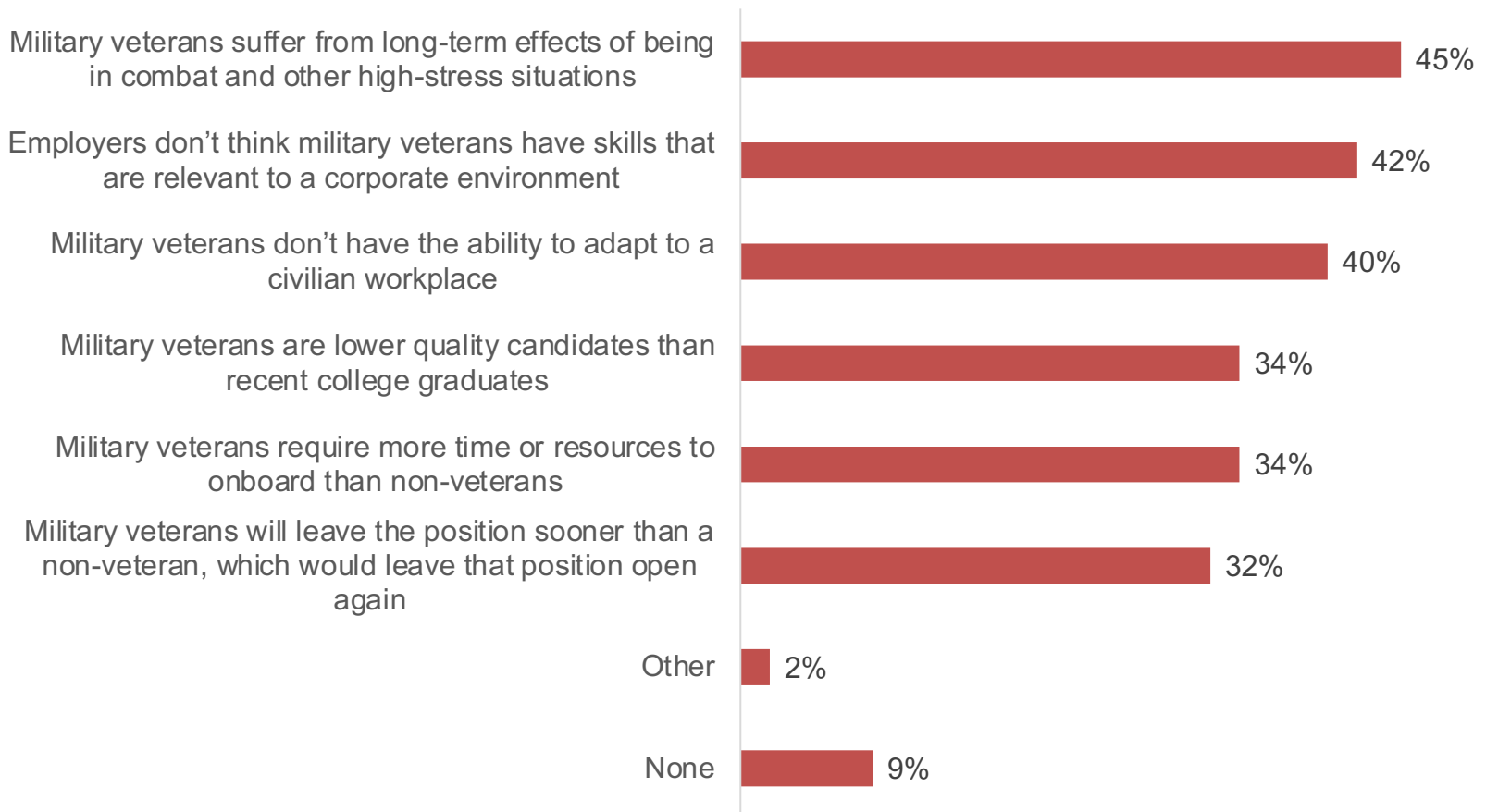


# Military members believe employers have a number of misconceptions about veterans that may hinder their willingness to hire them



## Common misconceptions military members believe employers have about U.S. military veterans

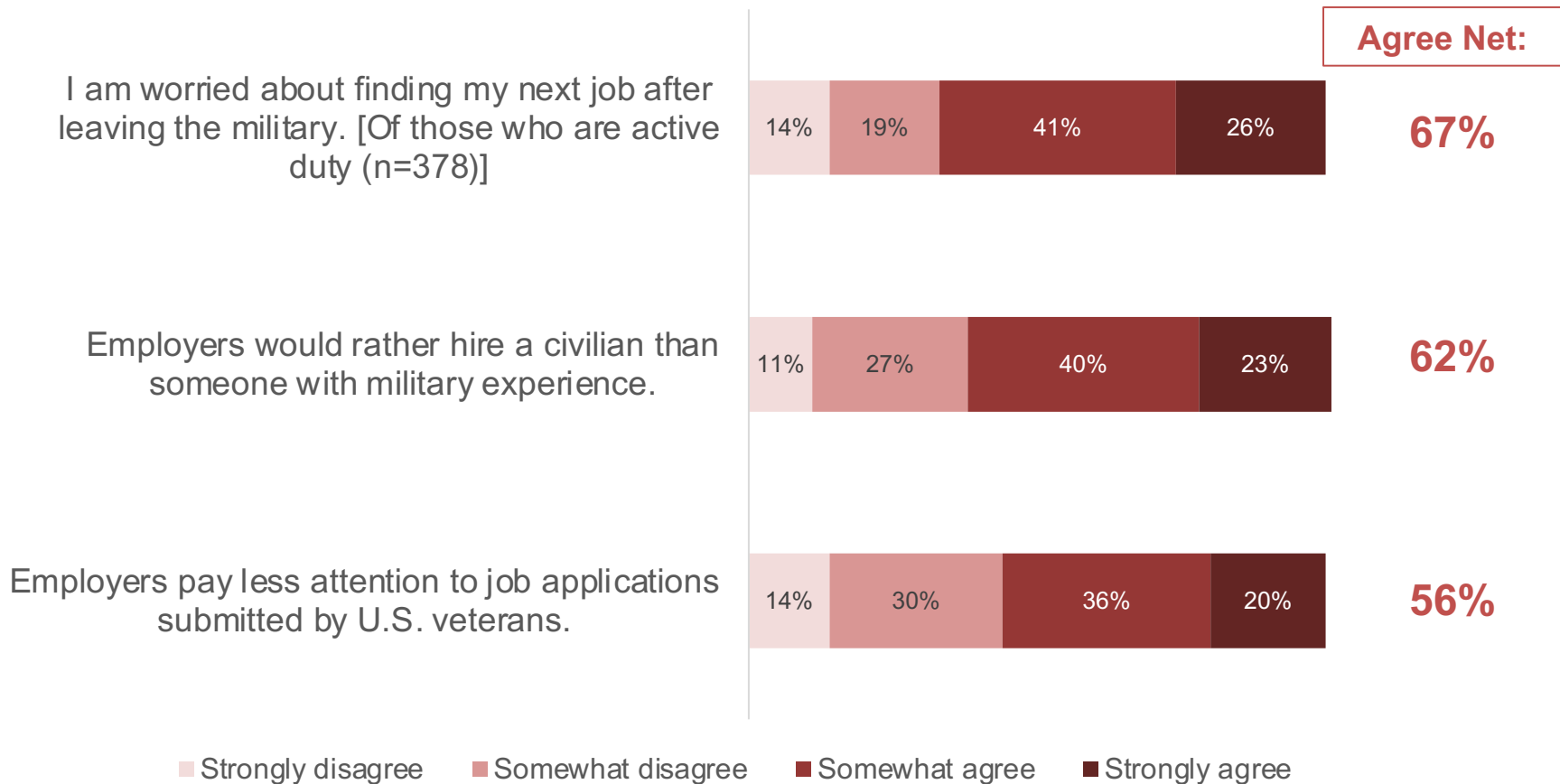
### Total Military (n=762)



# More than half of military members agree employers pay less attention to their application and would rather hire a civilian, leading them to worry about finding their next job after leaving the military



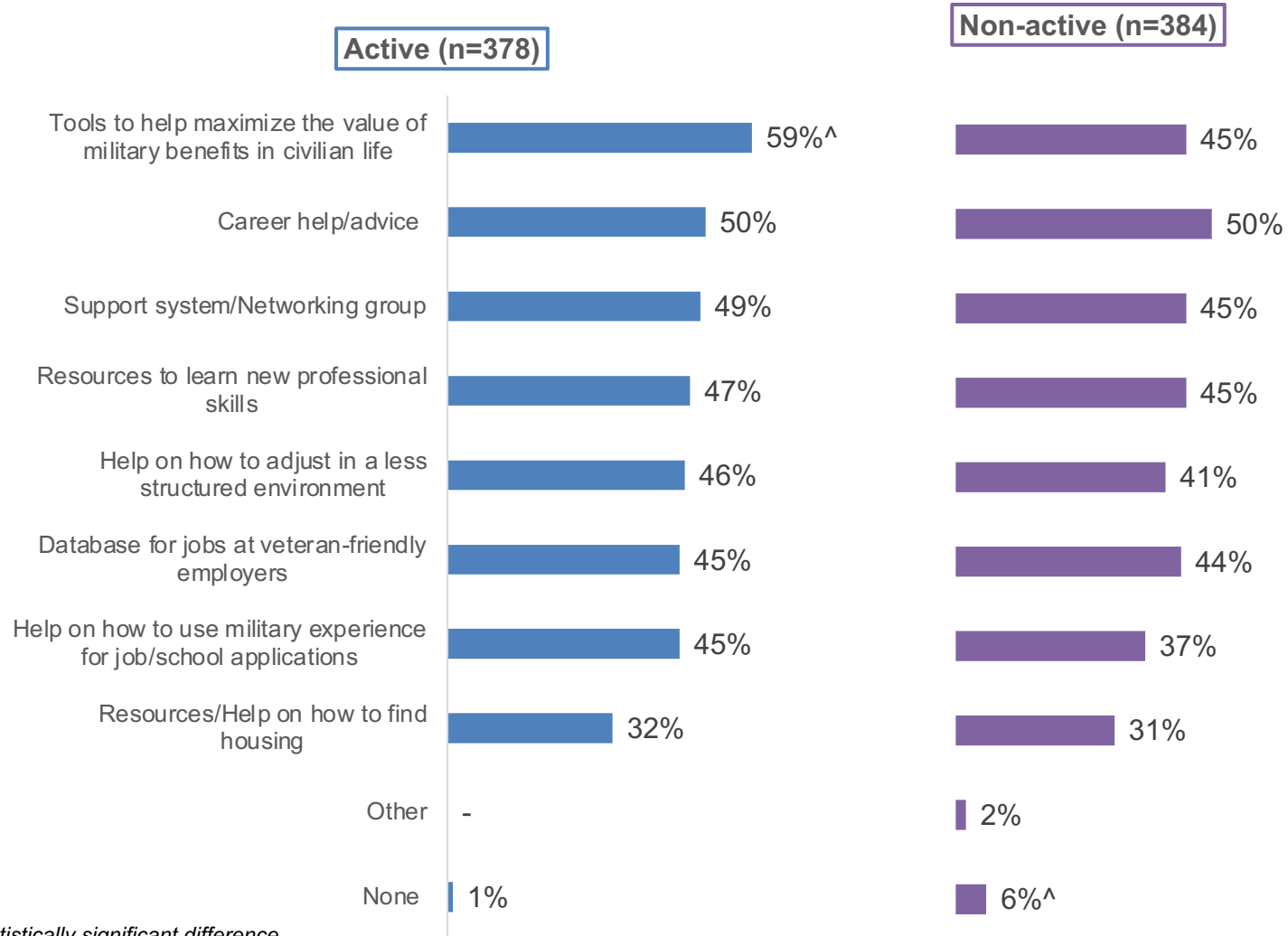
## Agreement with statements



# Military members identify a number of resources that would be helpful in their post-military transition to civilian life



## Resources that would be helpful in transition from military service to civilian life



<sup>^</sup> Indicates statistically significant difference

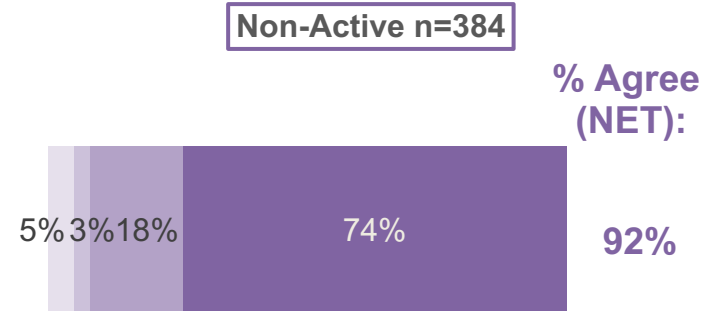
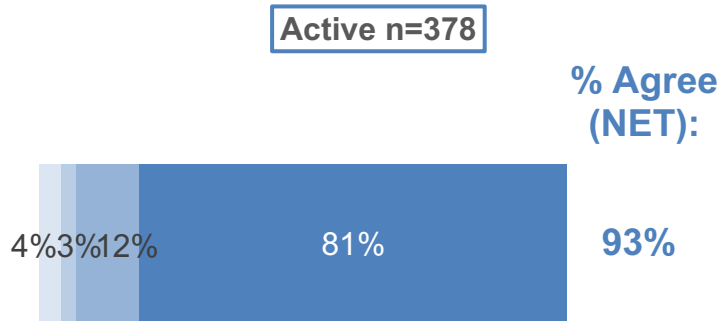
# Section IV: Mental Health



# Most active and non-active military agree mental health is just as important as physical health



“Mental health is as important as physical health.”



- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

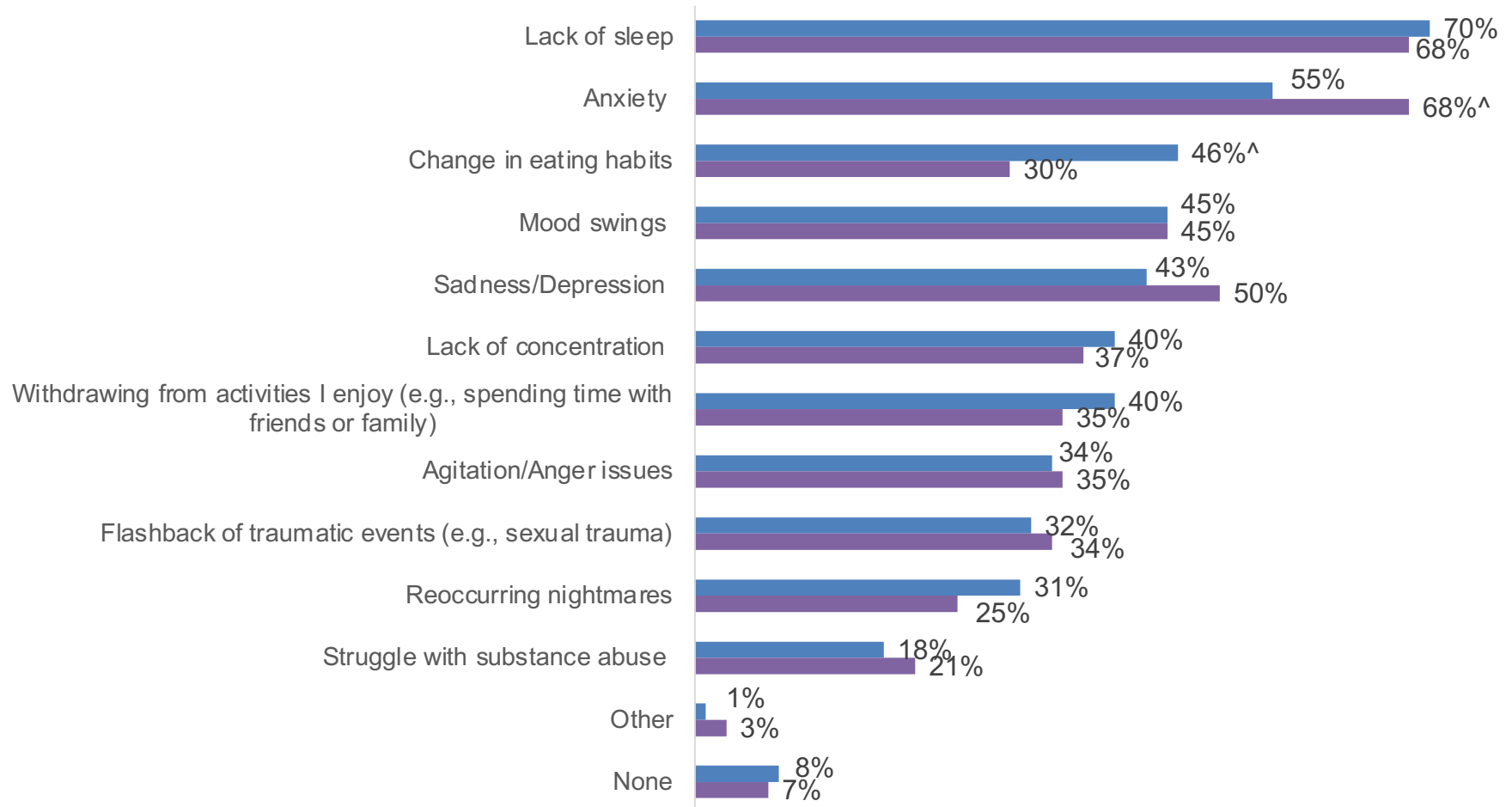
- Strongly agree
- Somewhat agree
- Somewhat disagree
- Strongly disagree

<sup>^</sup> Indicates statistically significant difference

# Lack of sleep and anxiety top the list of symptoms that active and non-active military have experienced



## Mental Health Symptoms Experienced



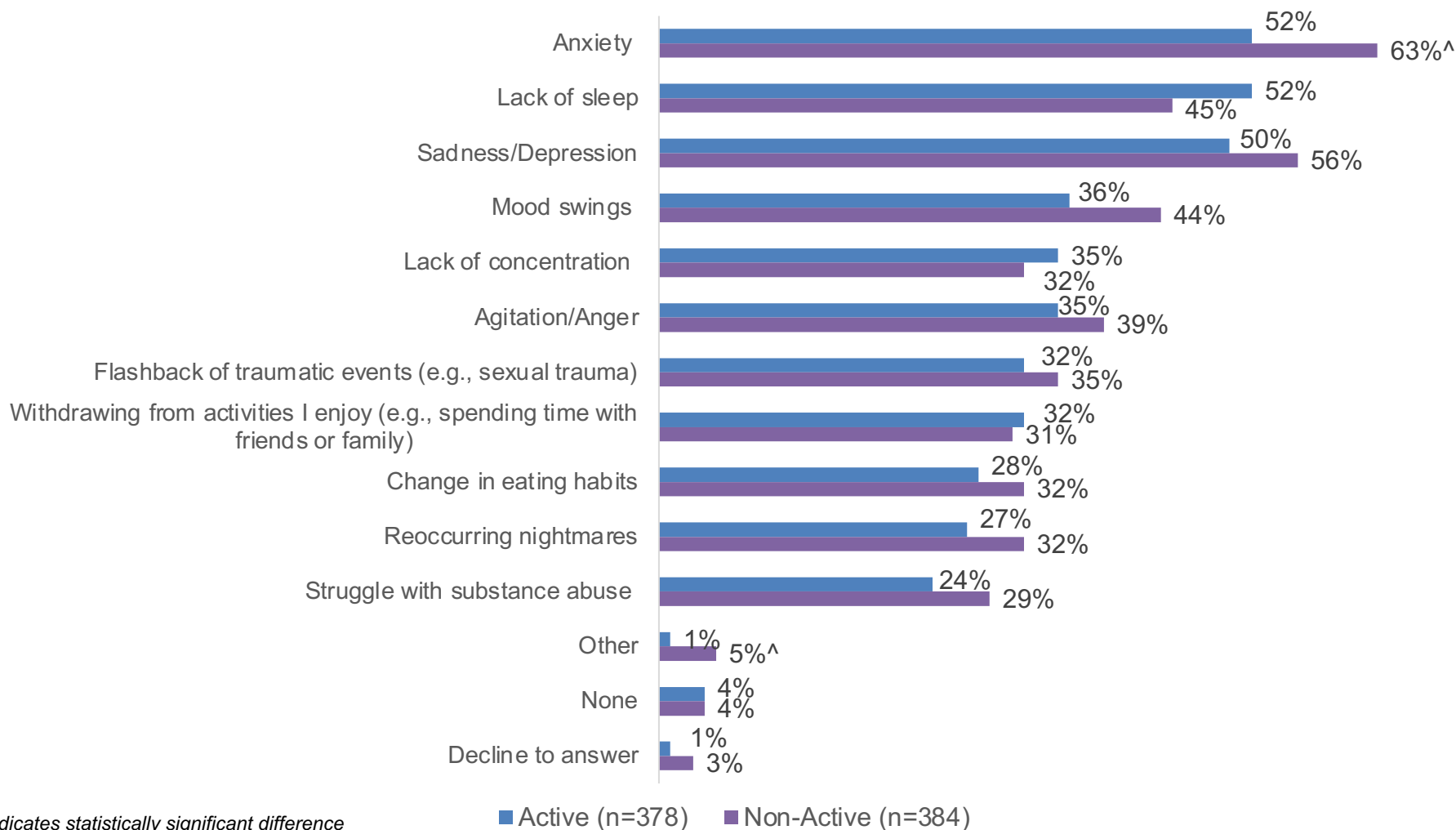
■ Active (n=378) ■ Non-Active (n=384)

^ Indicates statistically significant difference

# Yet, non-active military are more likely than active military to say they would seek care for anxiety



## Concerns That Would Lead to Seeking Professional or Non-professional Care



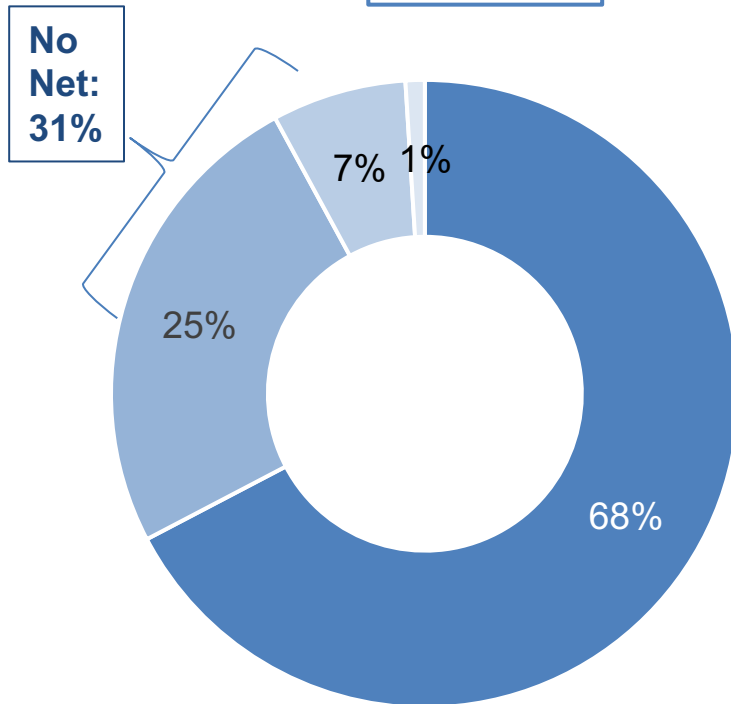
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# Still, around a third of active and non-active military have never sought out professional counseling

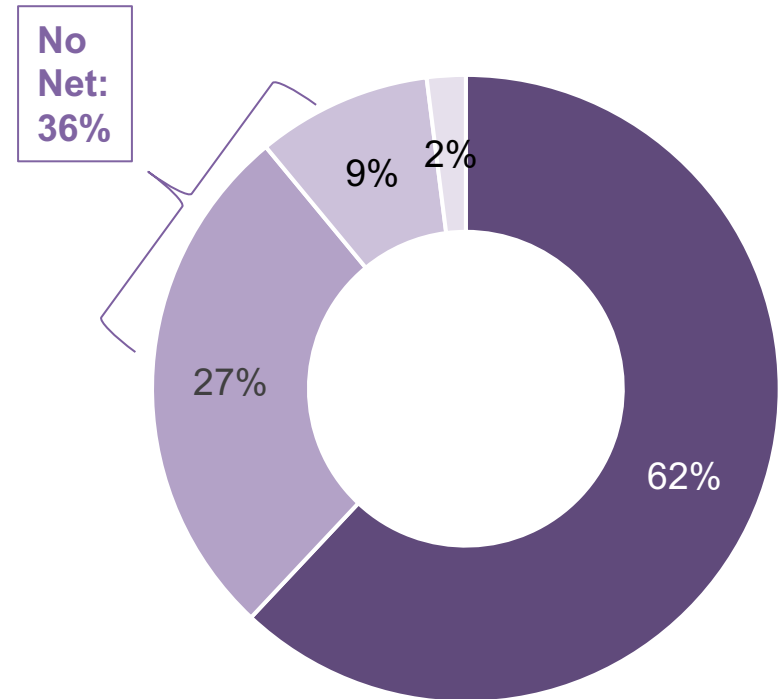


## Sought Out Professional Counseling

Active (n=378)



Non-active (n=384)



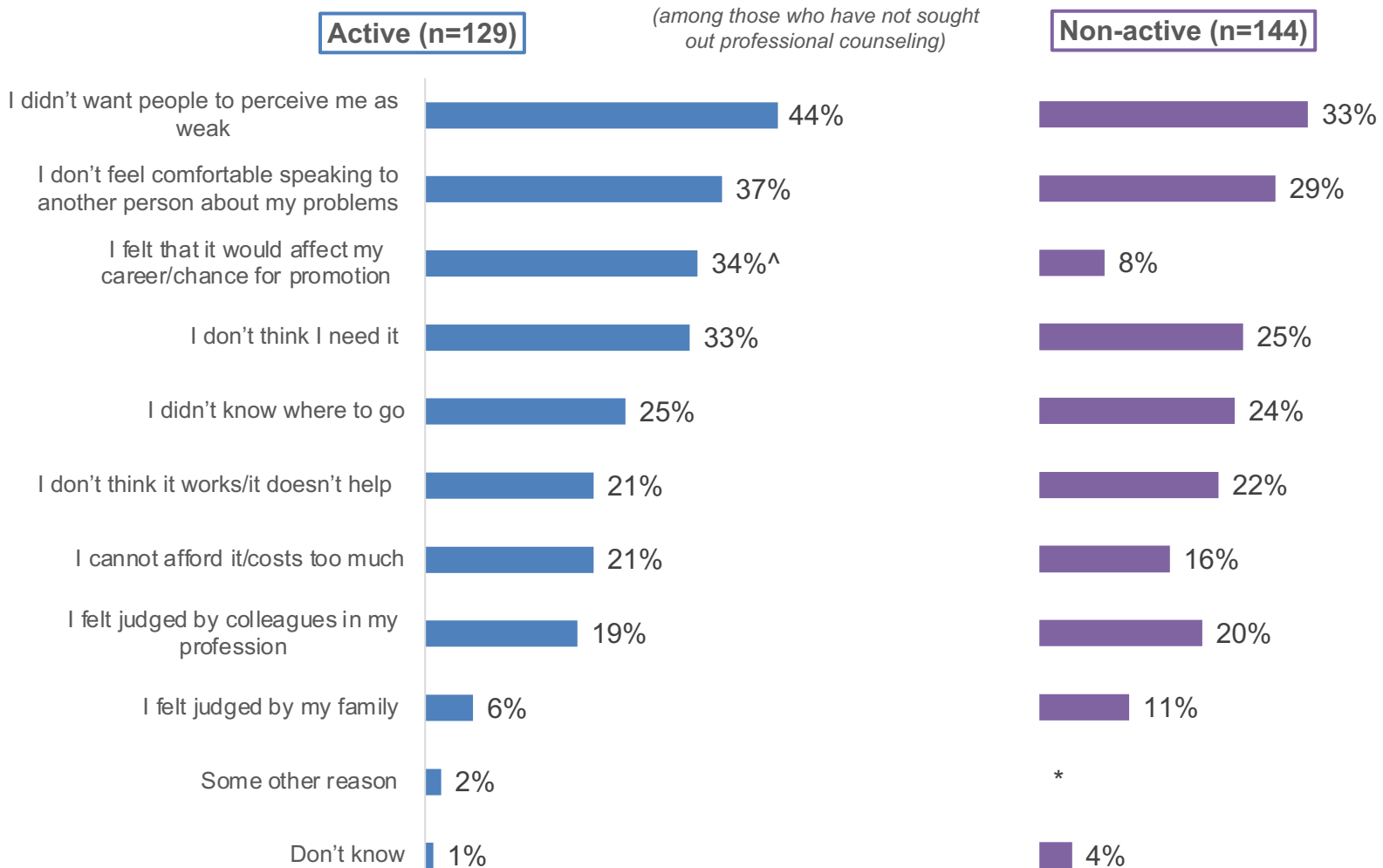
- Yes
- No, but I have considered it
- No, but I have not considered it
- Decline to answer



# For at least one third of active or non-active military, being perceived as weak has kept them from seeking professional counseling



## Reasons to Have Not Sought Professional Counseling

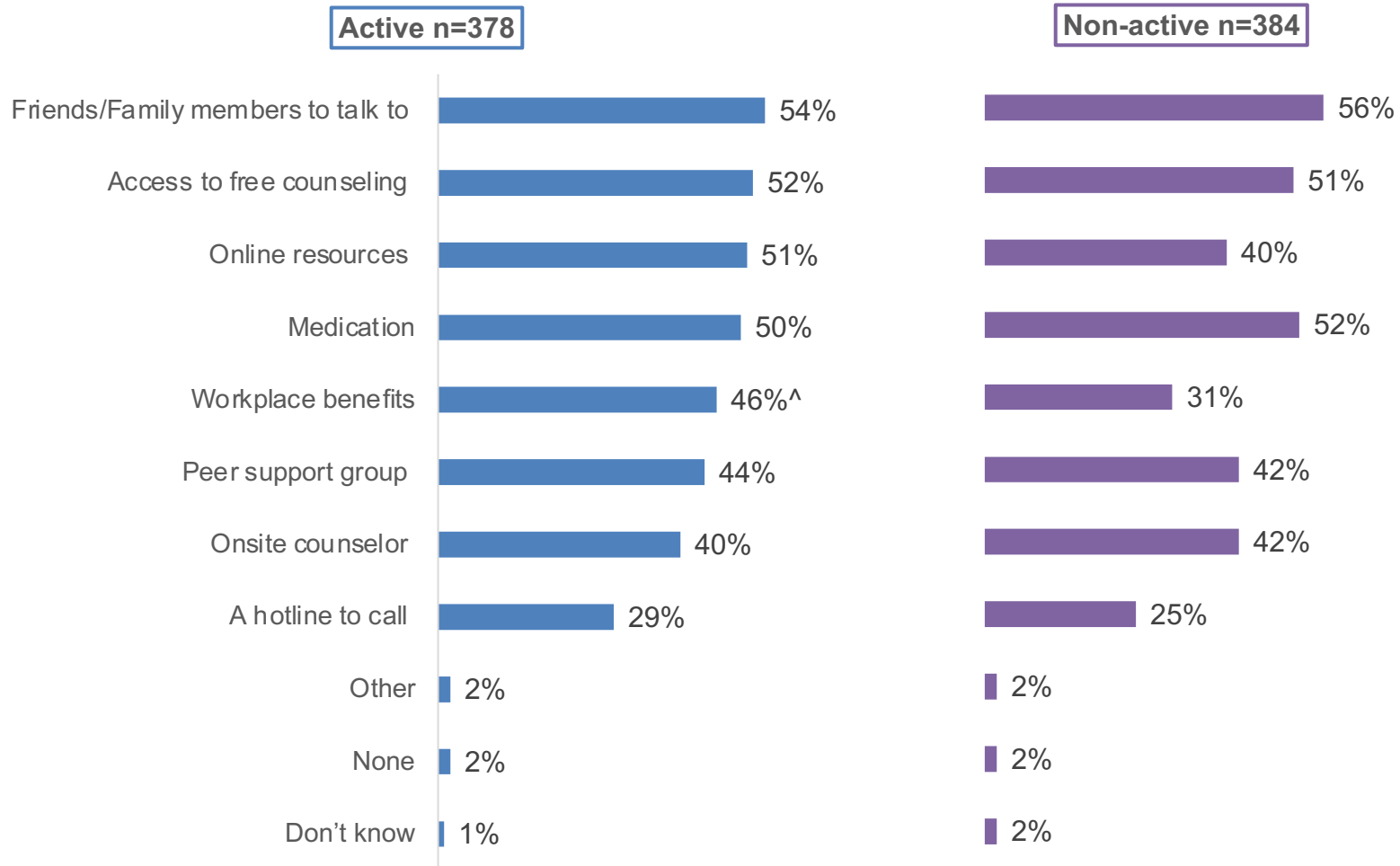


^ Indicates statistically significant difference

# Nearly half of active military say they would use workplace benefits to manage their mental health, significantly fewer non-active military say the same



## Tools That Would Be Used to Manage Mental Health



^ Indicates statistically significant difference

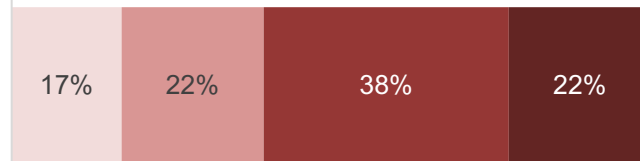
# The majority agree that there are repercussions for seeking professional counseling, whether it is on the job or as a service member



Agreement with statements (Total Military n=762)

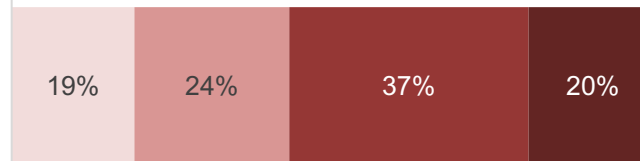
**Agree Net:**

I do feel there are repercussions on the job for seeking professional counseling.



**60%**

I feel there are repercussions for seeking professional counseling as active duty military / non-active duty military.



**57%**

Strongly disagree   Somewhat disagree   Somewhat agree   Strongly agree

# For the majority, those repercussions manifest in concerns that they would be treated differently in their job for seeking professional care

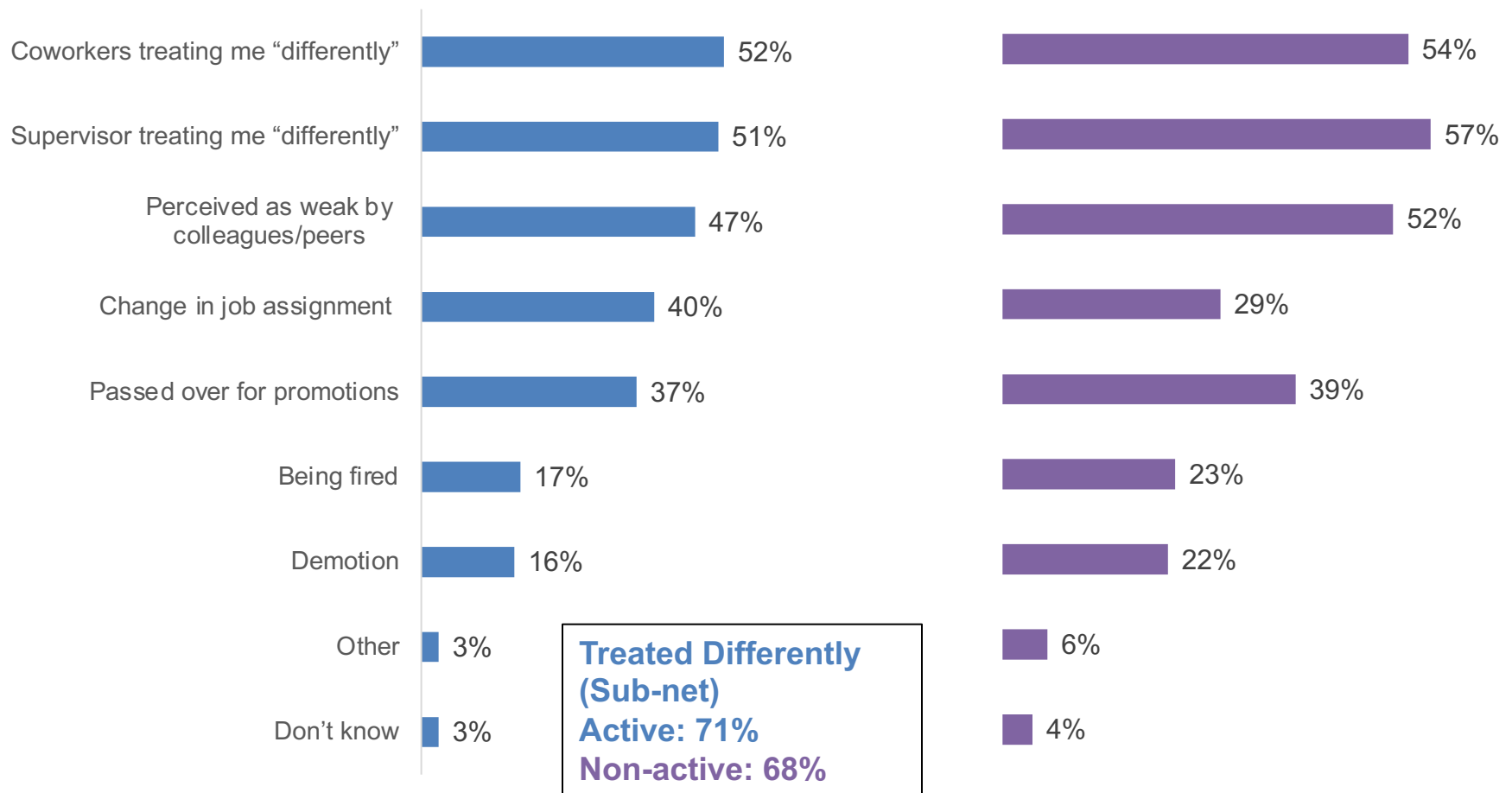


## Repercussions in Their Job for Seeking Professional Care

**Active n=270**

*(among those who agree they feel there are repercussions)*

**Non-active n=271**

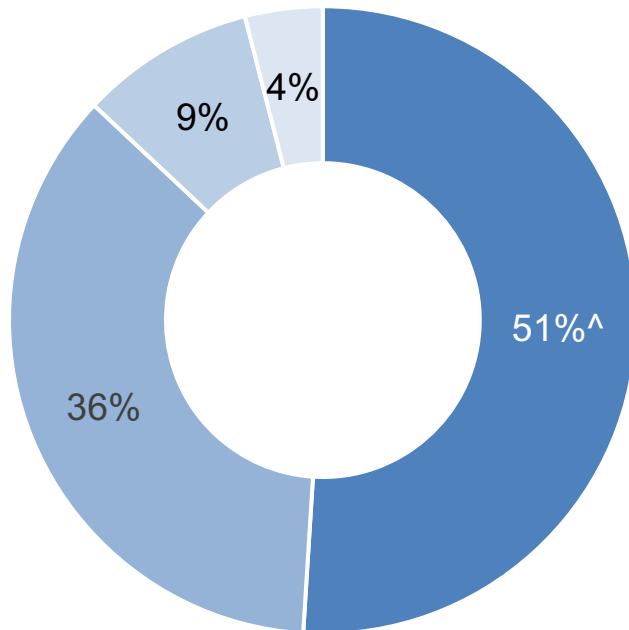


# Active military are more likely than their non-active counterparts to say that people who receive professional counseling help, generally, feel a lot better

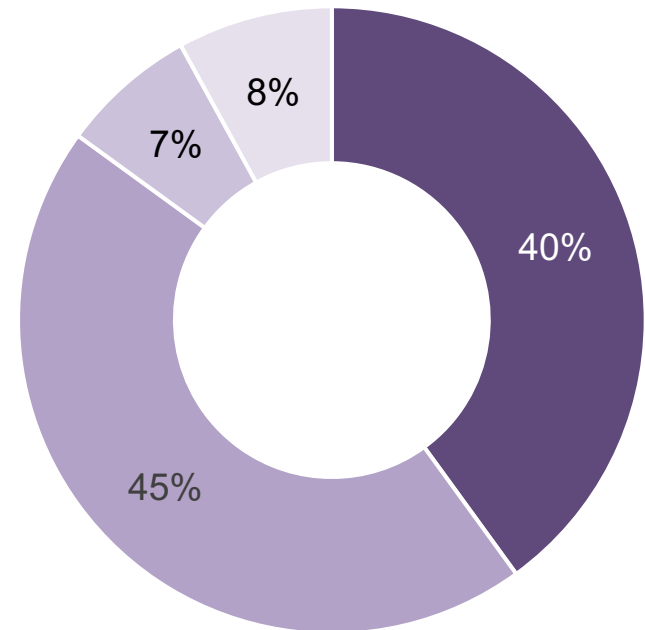


## Perception of Professional Counseling Care

Active (n=378)



Non-active (n=384)



- People who receive professional counseling help generally feel a lot better
- People who receive professional counseling generally feel a little better
- People who receive professional counseling generally never feel better
- Don't know

^ Indicates statistically significant difference

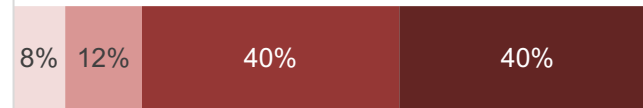
# A majority agree that those in leadership positions openly discussed the importance of addressing mental health concerns



Agreement with statements (Total Military n=762)

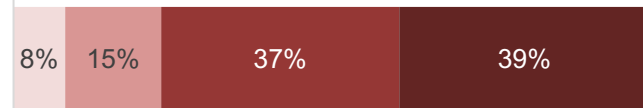
**Agree Net:**

Leadership/My supervisor openly discussed the importance of addressing mental health concerns while I was active duty military / non-active duty military.



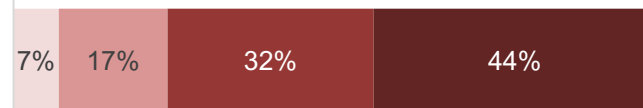
**80%**

My supervisor openly discusses the importance of addressing mental health concerns.



**76%**

My organization's leadership openly discusses the importance of addressing mental health concerns.



**76%**

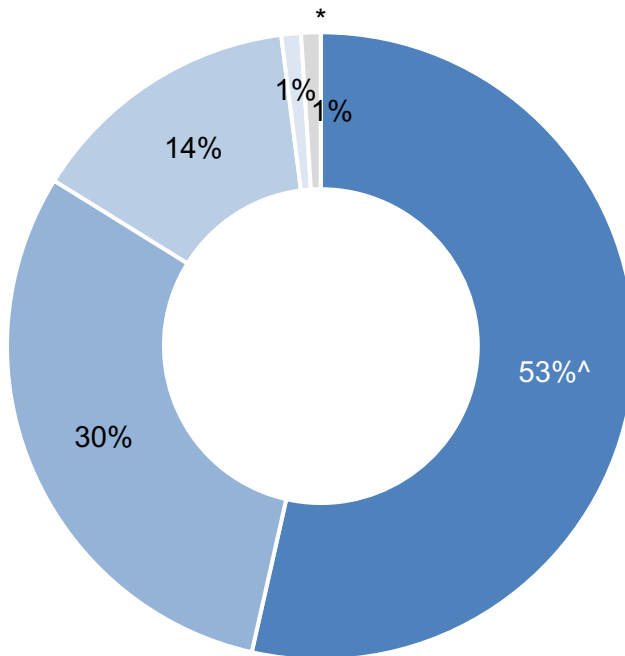
Strongly disagree
  Somewhat disagree
  Somewhat agree
  Strongly agree

# In fact, leadership speaking about their experience receiving counseling would make those in active duty significantly more likely to seek counseling



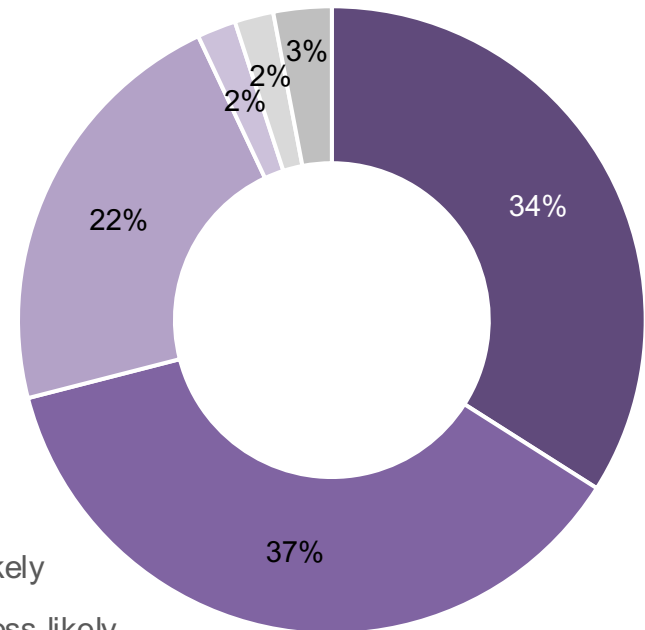
## Likelihood to Seek Professional Counseling if a Leader in Their Organization Were to Speak About Their Experience Receiving Counseling

Active n=378



**Likely Net: 83%<sup>^</sup>**

Non-active n=384



**Likely Net: 71%**

- Much more likely
- Somewhat more likely
- Neither more nor less likely
- Somewhat less likely
- Much less likely
- Not applicable

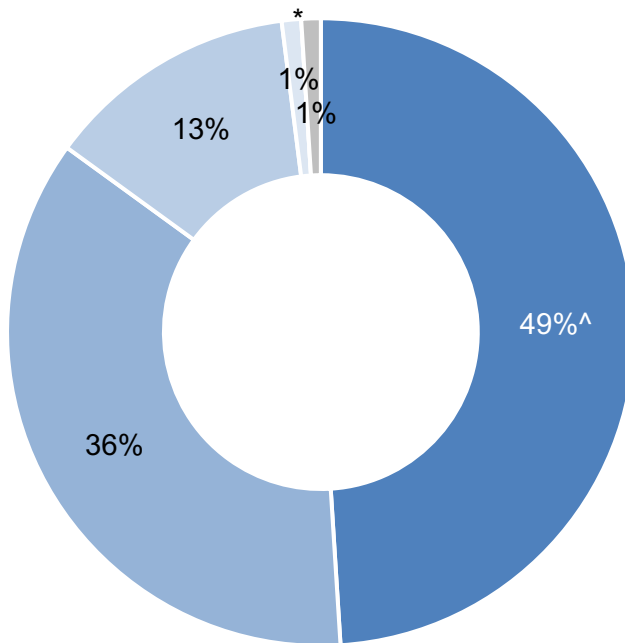
<sup>^</sup> Indicates statistically significant difference

# Half of active military – and a third of non-active – say they would be much more likely to seek professional counseling if a close colleague/friend/family shared their experience



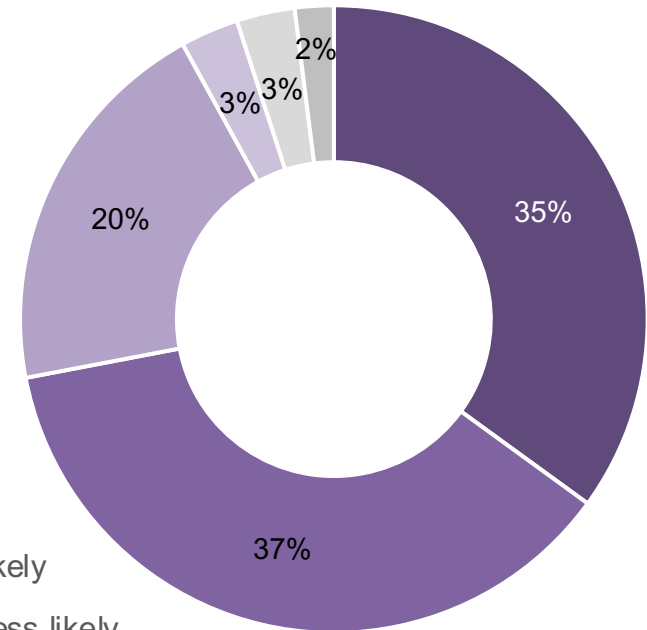
## Likelihood to Seek Professional Counseling if a Close Colleague/Friend/Family Member Were to Speak About Their Experience Receiving Counseling

Active n=378



Likely Net: 85%^

Non-active n=384



Likely Net: 72%

- Much more likely
- Somewhat more likely
- Neither more nor less likely
- Somewhat less likely
- Much less likely
- Not applicable

^ Indicates statistically significant difference



# **Section V: The Role of Continued Education**



# Around half of employed non-active military feel they are currently underemployed

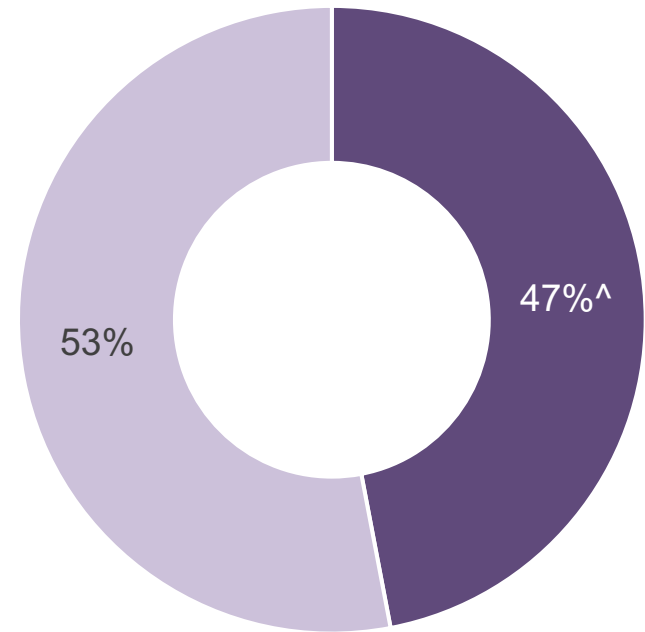
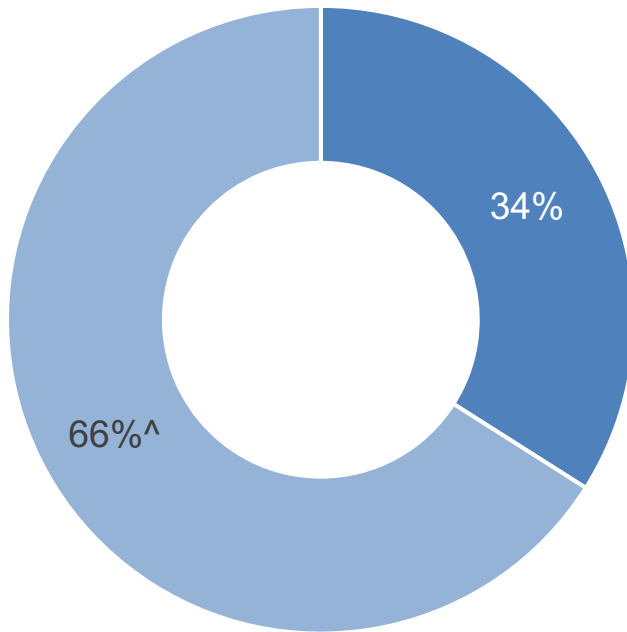


Belief they are currently underemployed (i.e., working at a job below personal skill level)

(among those who are employed)

Active (n=258)

Non-active (n=303)



■ Yes ■ No

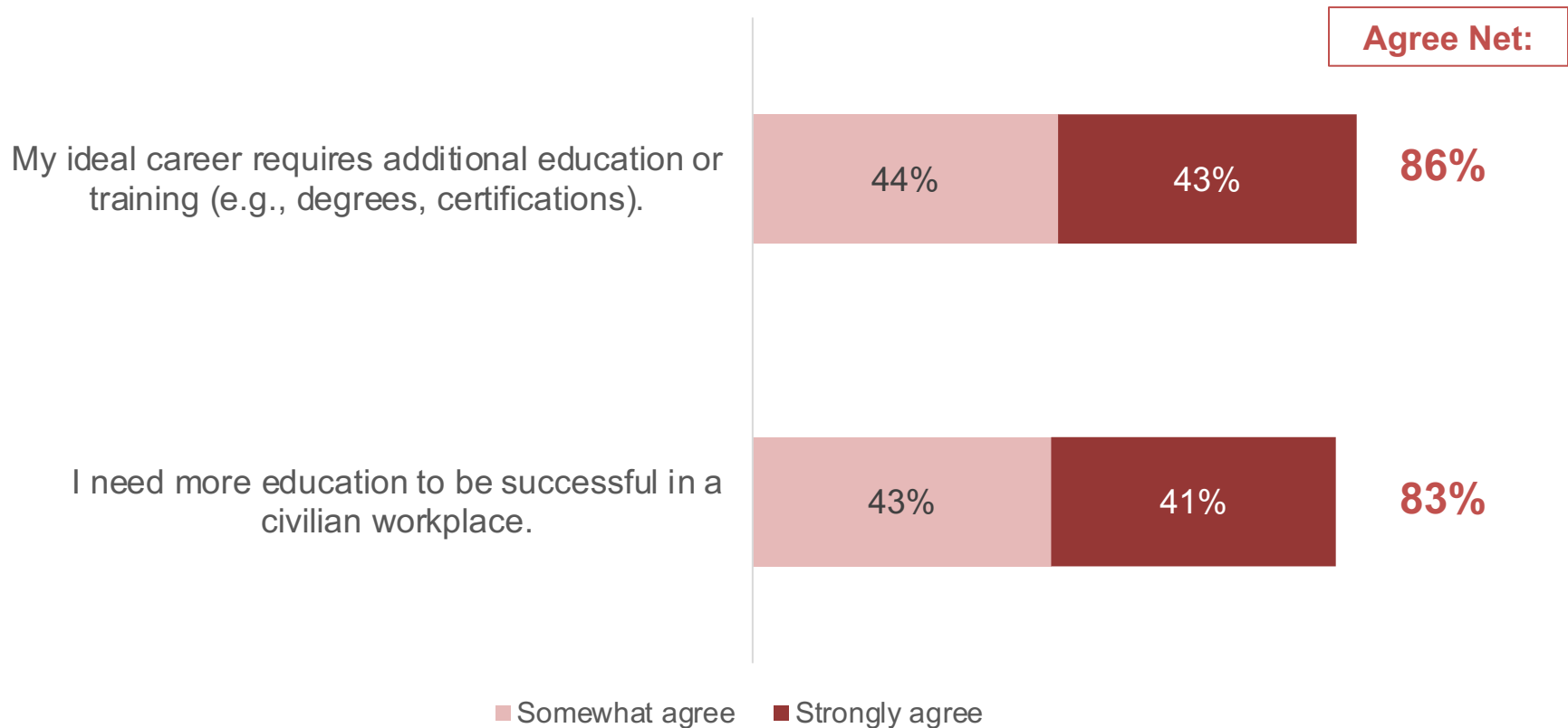
^ Indicates statistically significant difference

# The majority believe additional education is key to their success in a civilian workplace



## Agreement with statements

### Total Military (n=762)

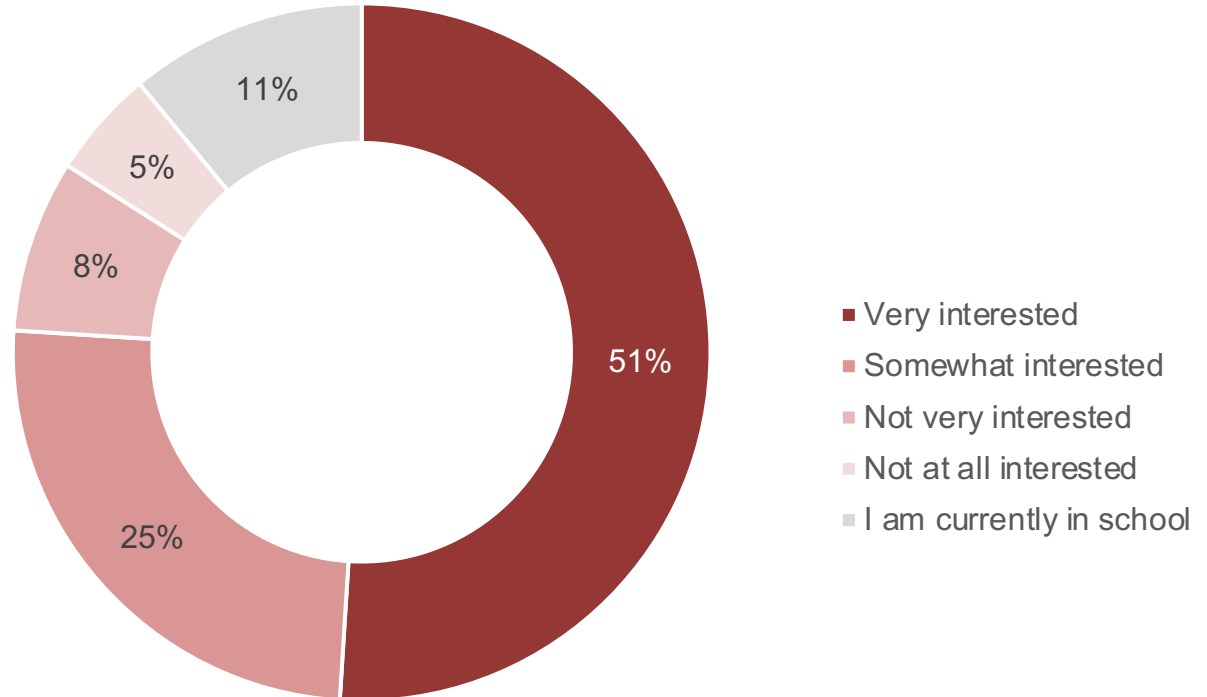


# Most are interested in continuing their education, with half saying they are *very interested*



## Interest in continuing education

Total Military (n=762)

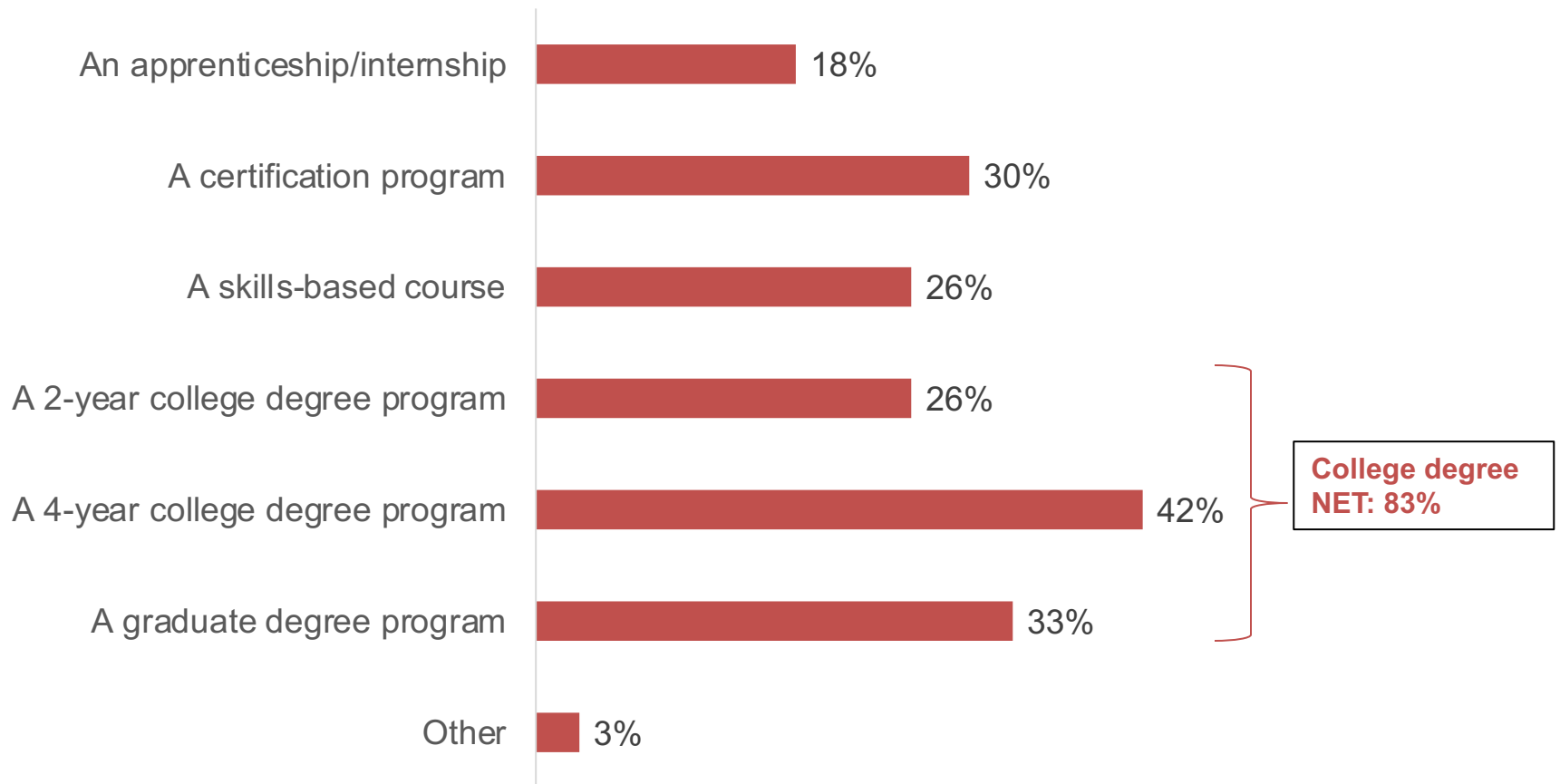


# Among those interested in continuing their education, more than 4 in 5 would like to get a college degree



## Interest in different types of continuing education

### Total Military Interested in Continuing Education (n=601)

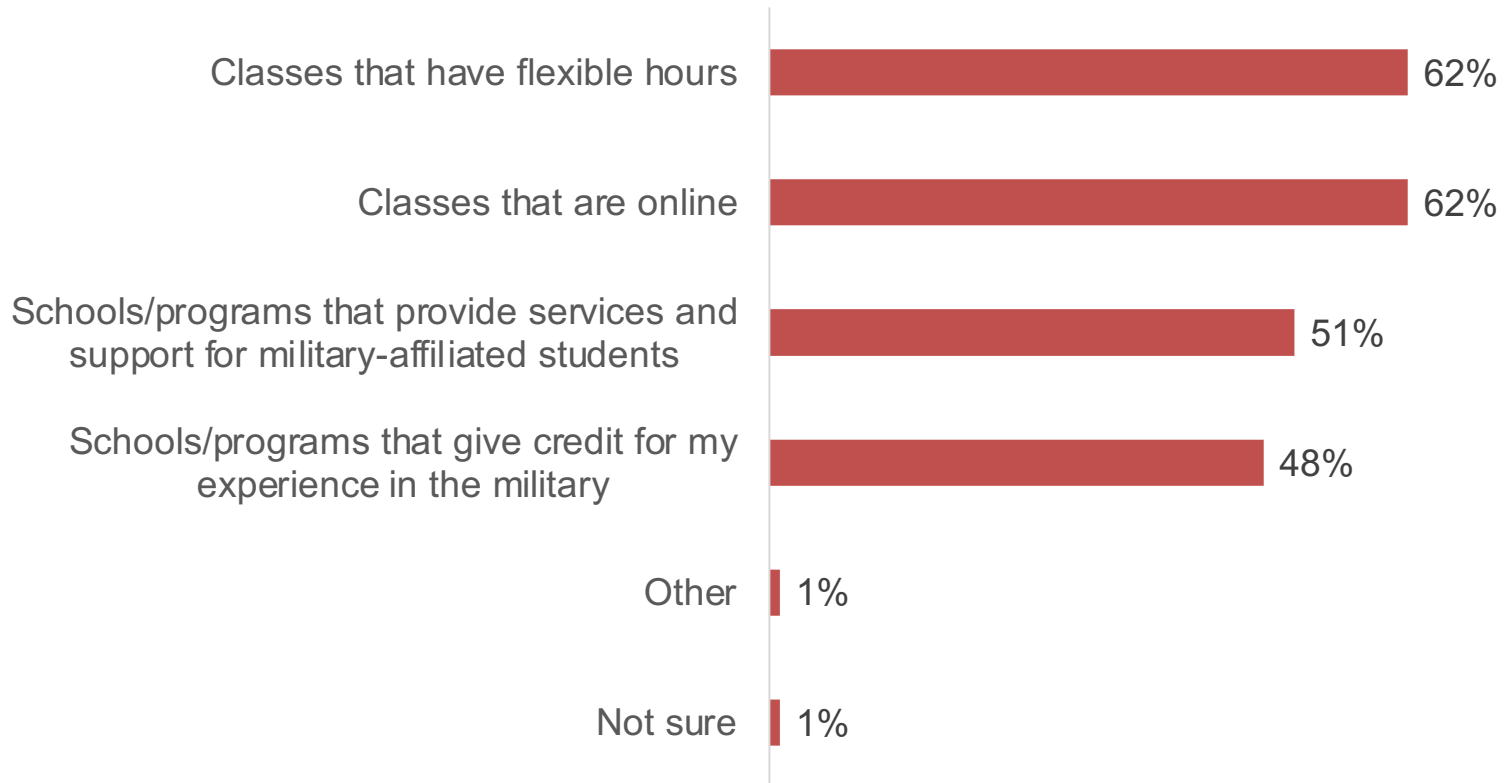


Specifically, the majority of those interested say they would need classes that are flexible and online to continue their education



Resources needed to continue education

Total Military Interested in Continuing Education (n=601)



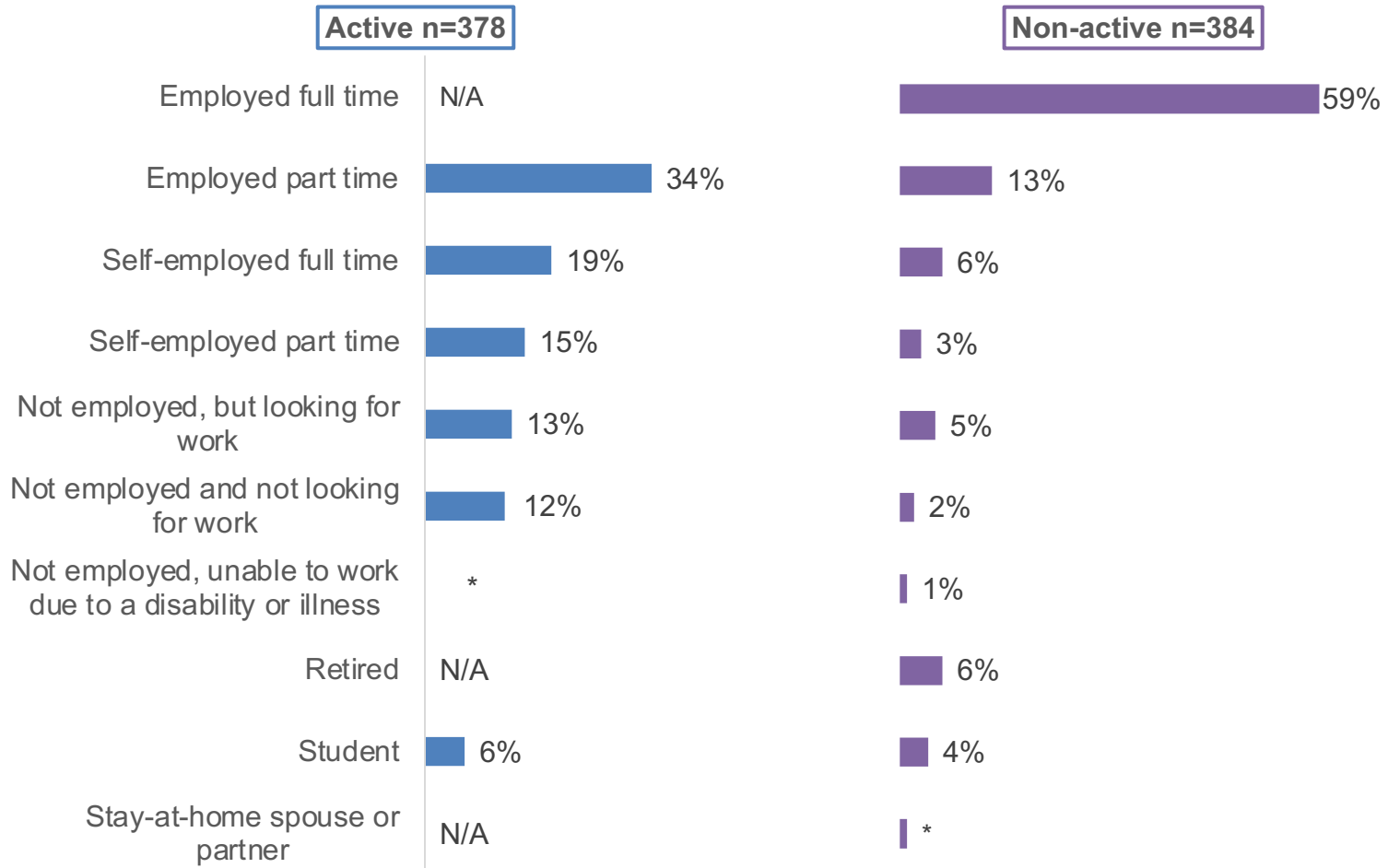
# Appendix



# Nearly 3 in 5 non-active military are employed full-time



## Employment status outside the military



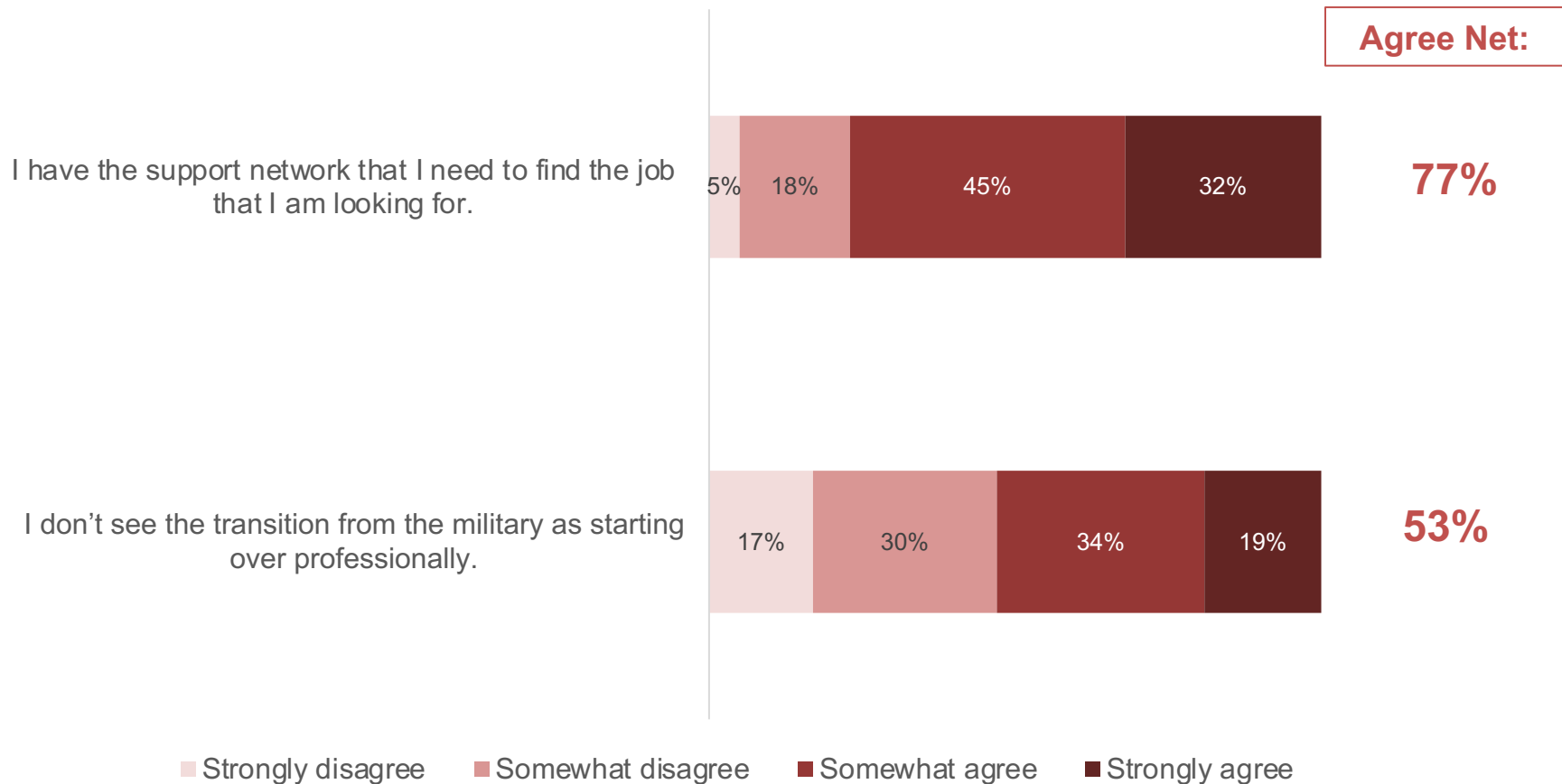


# Many don't believe they will have to start over professionally after leaving the military and say they have a support network to find their desired job



## Agreement with statements

### Total Military (n=758)

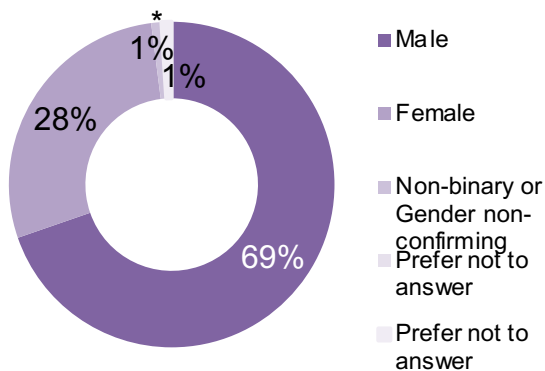
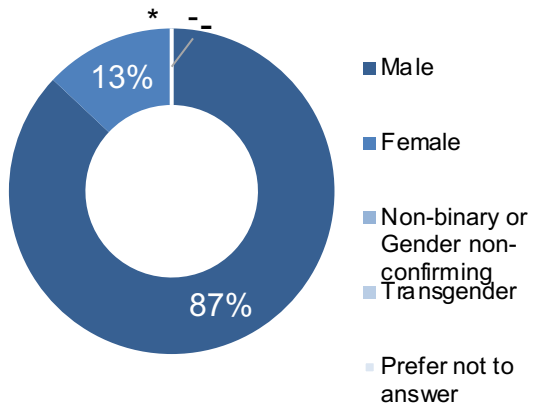


# Demographics

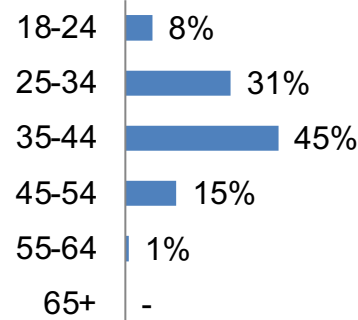


# Demographics

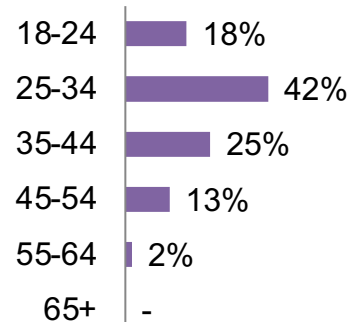
## Gender



## Age

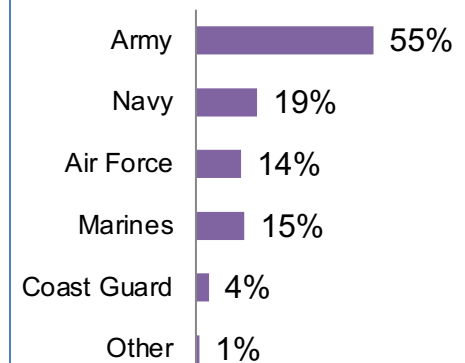
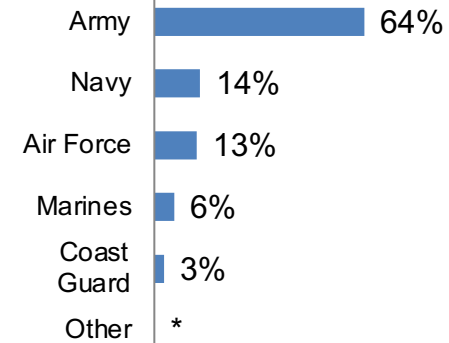


**Mean: 36 years old**



**Mean: 33 years old**

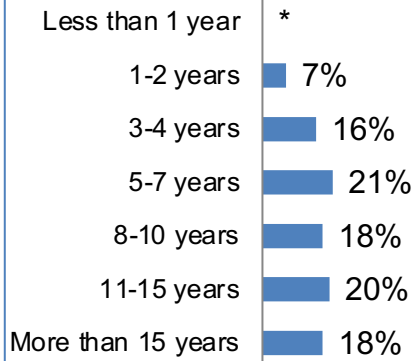
## Branch of Military



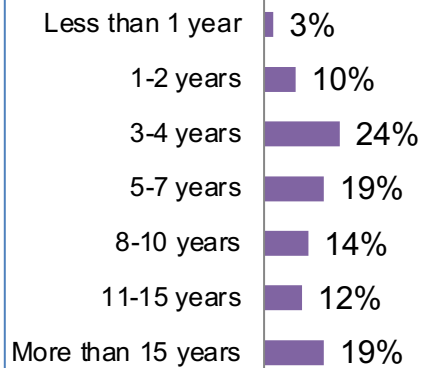
# Demographics



## Years of Military Service

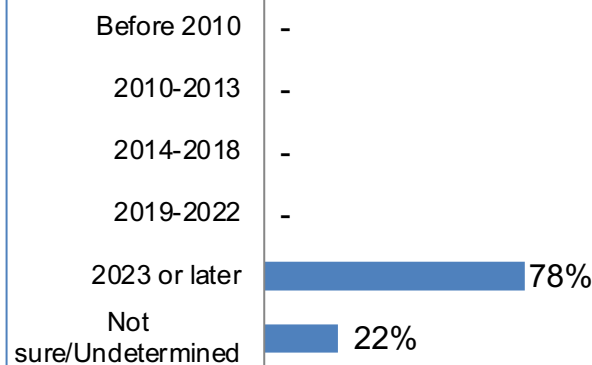


**Mean: 10 years**

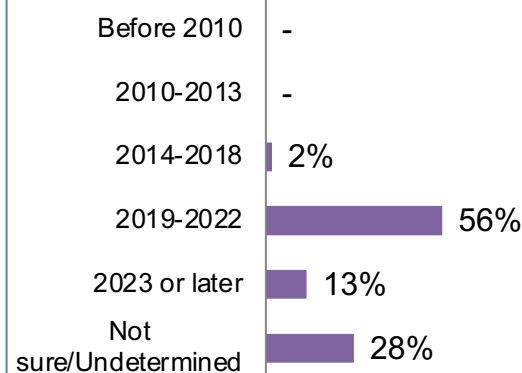


**Mean: 9 years**

## ETS

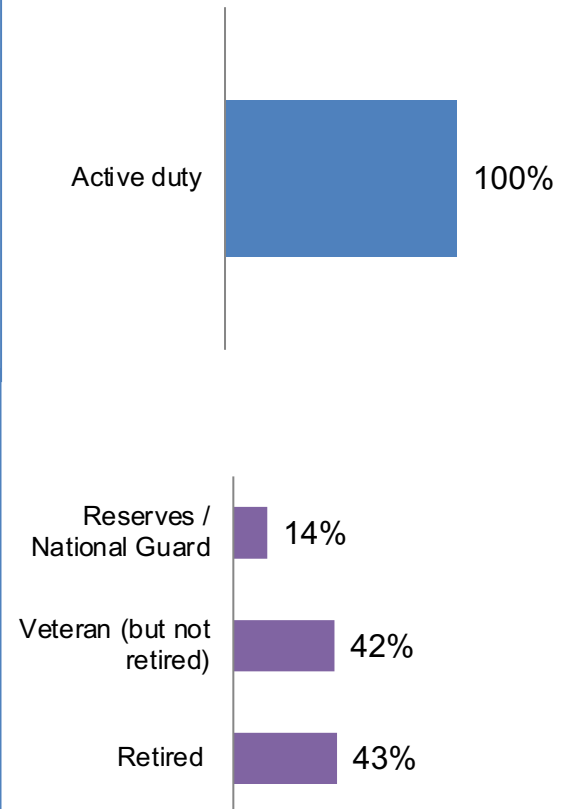


**Mean: 2028**



**Mean: 2021**

## Current Military Status

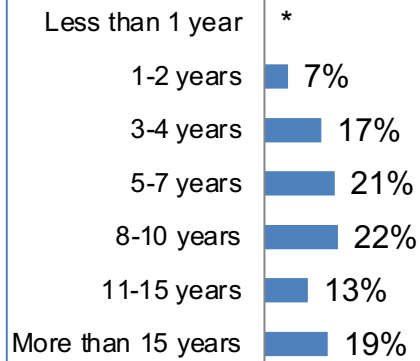


# Demographics



## Time in Active Duty

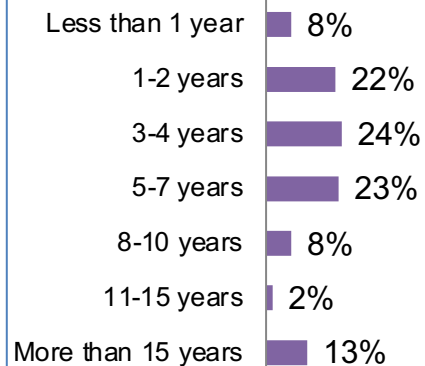
(Of those who are active duty or reserves)



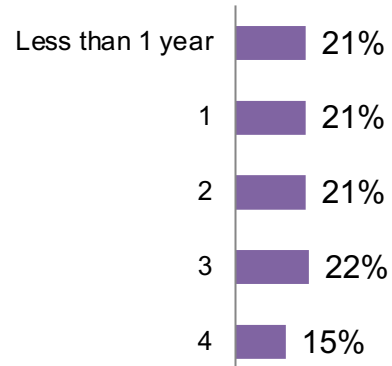
**Mean: 10 years**

## Time Since Active Duty

(Of those who are non-active)



**Mean: 7 years**



**Mean: 2 years**