Bridging the Gap between Research and Practice for Crime Victim Service

December 16, 2015

Genesis and Goal

- OVC's Vision 21 revealed a research to practice gap in victim services, with insufficient data and studies of effective responses.

- OVC funded this effort to help bridge this gap and improve communication/collaboration between practitioners and researchers.

- Ultimate goal: a more effective response to victims, families, and communities harmed by crime and abuse.

Our Plan

- Literature review

- Interviews of experts

- Survey – victim service providers

- Survey - researchers

- "Case studies"

- Stakeholder meeting

Bridging the Gap

Integrating Crime Victim Services Research & Practice

Lessons from the Literature
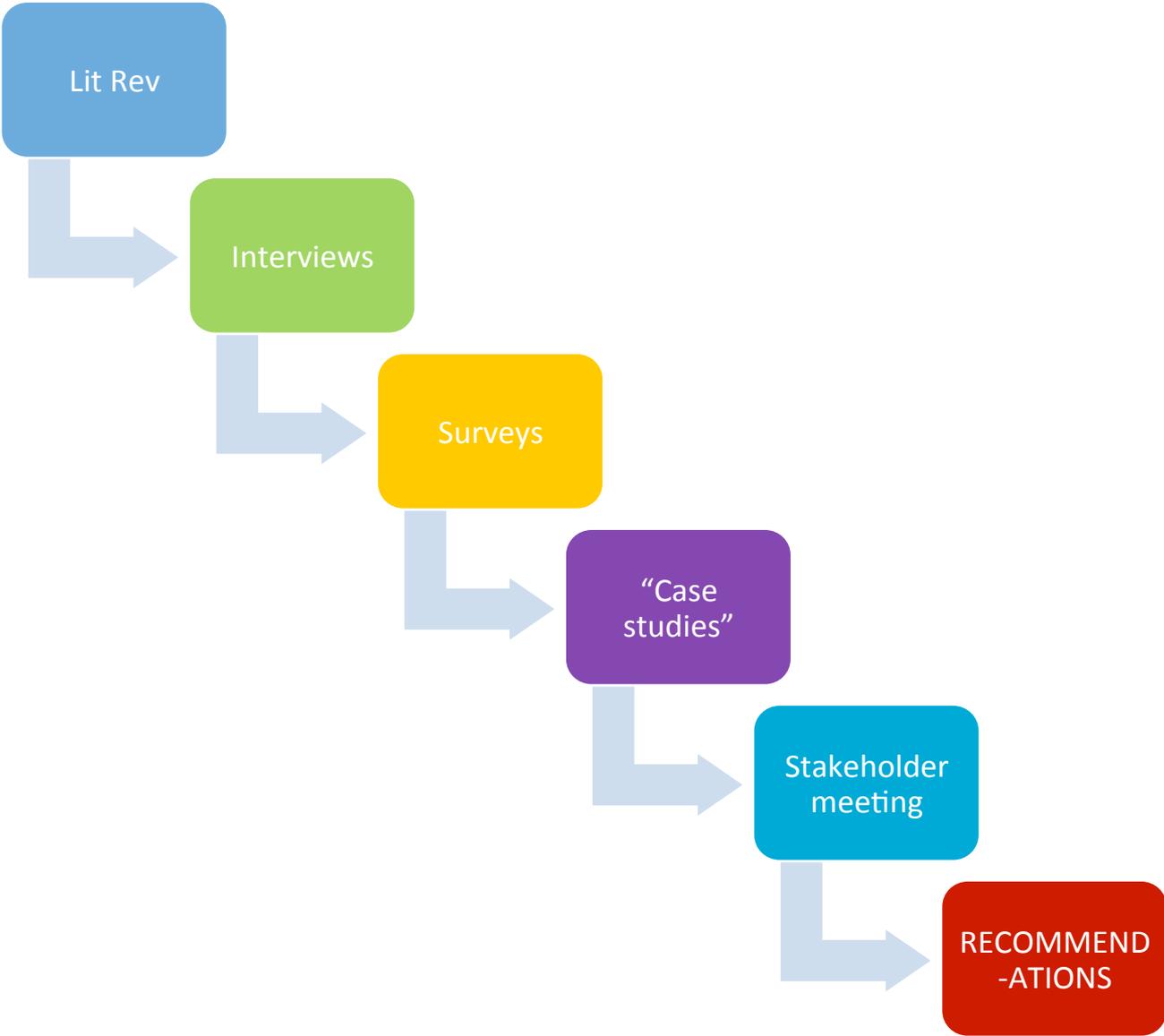
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OFFICE FOR **V**ICTIMS OF **C**RIME

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Presentation Outline

- Goal & Methods
- Conceptual Model
- Key Barriers
- Promising Strategies
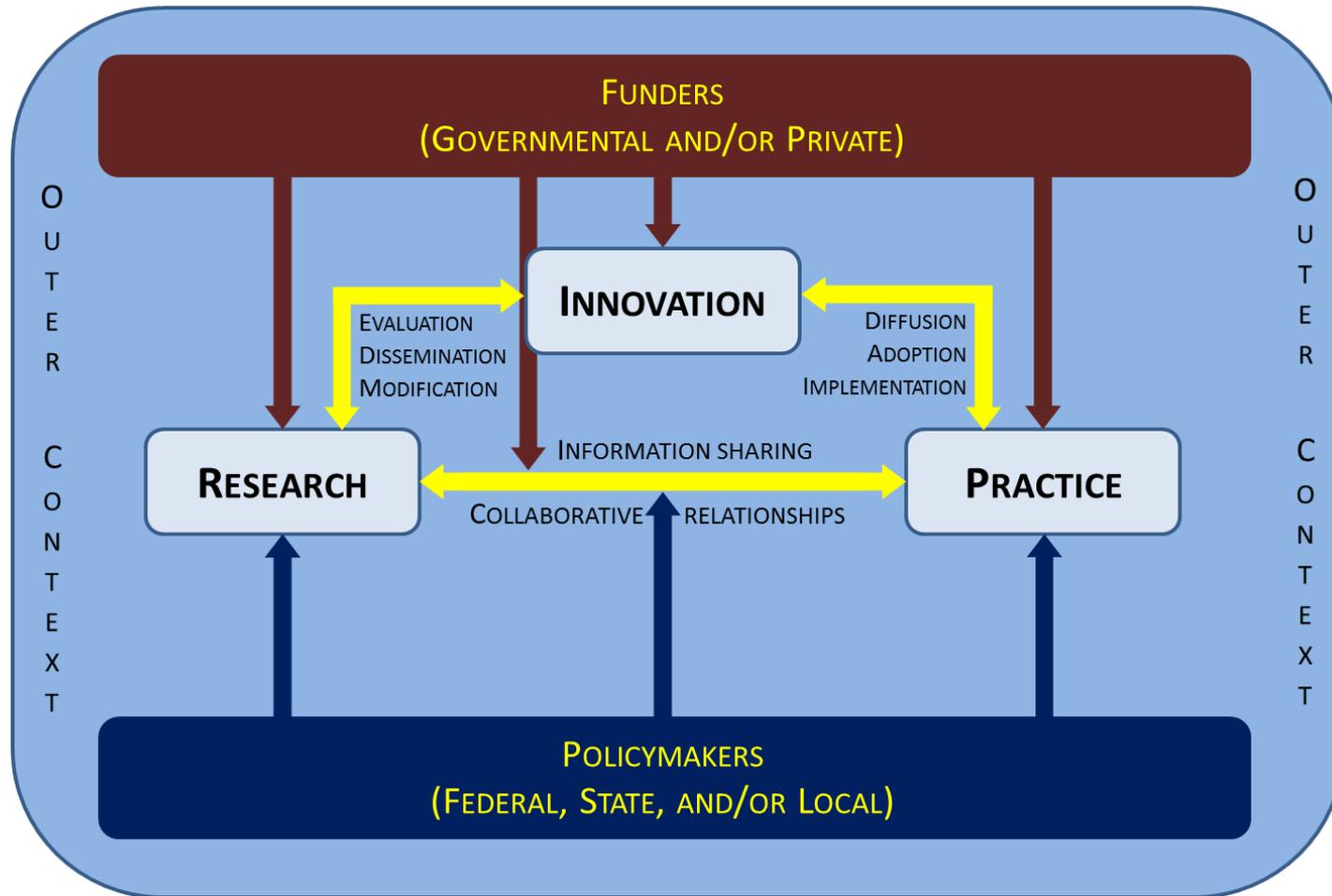- Comments/Questions

Goal

- Identify key barriers and strategies for bridging the gap between research and practice in victim services

Methods

- Review published reports, briefs, journal articles, working papers, & websites
- Search the Internet, journal databases, project reports, & references cited

Conceptual Model

Revised model from Greenhalgh et al. (2004) and Tseng (2007, 2012, 2013)

Bird's Eye View

Researchers	Practitioners
Forest	Trees
Data driven	Victim/story driven
Competitive academic environment	Collaborative multidisciplinary environment
Objective approach	Protective approach
Standard protocols	Individualized services
Want their work to make a difference in people's lives.	Want their work to make a difference in people's lives.

Reprinted with permission from Faragher (2013)

Key Barriers

- Limited Resources (funding, time, staff)
  - Effective integration requires extra communication, training, implementation, and evaluation activities
- Cultural Differences
  - Forest vs. tree perspective—both important
  - Researchers value empirical findings, practitioners value examples/experiences
- Organizational Bureaucracies
  - Inefficiencies and resistance to change

Key Barriers (cont.)

- Evaluation & Dissemination Challenges
  - Challenges producing and clearly communicating findings that are useful and relevant
  - Limited agreement on and syntheses of evidence-based victim services practices
- Implementation Challenges
  - Standardized vs. individualized protocols
  - Requires staff buy-in and training

Strategies for Integration

- Funding Strategies
- Evaluation & Dissemination Strategies
- Implementation Strategies
- Online Resource Centers
- Social Interaction Strategies
- Collaboration Strategies

Funding Strategies

Funding requiring evidence-based practices and encouraging researcher-practitioner partnerships

What's Promising?

- Streamlining funding for programming efforts with those supporting evaluations
- Flexible definitions of "evidence-based" that include innovations where research is still developing
- Requiring outcome-tracking to improve services not enforce accountability

Evaluation & Dissemination

Strategies for improving the amount, quality, usefulness, and accessibility of research findings

What's Promising?

- Evaluations focused on "dual-use" outcomes relevant to both practitioners and researchers
- Empowering practitioners with evaluation tools or linking them to research partners (can save time, $)
- Systematic reviews to identify literature gaps & comprehensive research databases in clear, accessible language
- Disseminating research findings in person, by video, or in research-to-practice briefs

Implementation Strategies

Training practitioners to understand and apply research findings

What's Promising?

- In-person training that is sensitive, appropriate, and backed by "best practice" information
- Active learning techniques (e.g., role-playing) with opportunities for discussion and practice
- Coordinated, multidisciplinary efforts led by state or federal agencies or coalitions

Online Resource Centers

Repositories of practitioner-friendly research findings, training materials, videos and webinars

What's Promising?

- Resource centers that are comprehensive yet easily accessible, with fair and transparent rating systems
- Resource centers that provide opportunities to connect in person at trainings, conferences, etc.
- Limited end-user data but may be most used by legislators, policymakers, & victim services coalitions

Social Interaction Strategies

Opportunities for practitioners and researchers to connect and interact

What's Promising?

- In-person meetings that facilitate dialogue between researchers and practitioners can help establish trust and rapport critical to future collaborations
- Online webinars may be another helpful way to connect

Collaboration Strategies

Partnerships of researchers and practitioners working to produce useful, relevant findings for one-time or ongoing evaluations

What's Promising?

- Successful collaborations involve:
    - Resources and commitment
    - Supportive institutional cultures
    - Shared purpose, mutual respect, trust, & learning
    - Well-defined roles & outcomes
    - Well-anticipated challenges
    - Efficient communication between partners

Sullivan, Khondkaryan, & Fisher (2013); Barton, Nelsestuen, & Mazzeo (2014)

Conclusion

- Research and practice integration requires 2-way information-sharing and collaboration
- Practitioners must be willing to accept the necessary requirements of evaluations
- Researchers must be flexible to accommodate the concerns of practitioners delivering victim services

For more information, contact Jennifer Yahner at jyahner@urban.org

Victim Service Practitioners' Perspectives on Bridging the Gap between Research & Practice

Introduction

- Urban Institute conducted a survey of victim service providers from a variety of agencies

- Goal: To understand victim service providers' perspectives on victim research, particularly the barriers to successful research-and-practice collaboration

Survey Sampling

- Random sample of 500 victim service providers

  - 450 from NCVC and OVC national databases of VS providers

  - 50 state coalitions

- Extensive efforts to validate contact info

- Launched web survey Sept 2014 with 4 months of email, postcard & phone reminders

- Achieved 67% response rate (N=333)

Survey Topics

- Respondent and agency characteristics

- Research use, barriers, and importance

- Use of online resource centers

- Research and practice collaborations, perceptions of researchers

- Promising steps for integrating research and practice

Sample Characteristics (N=333)

Agency Characteristics

- Covered all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands

- Most (86%) belonged to a state coalition & were government-funded (92%)

- One-quarter (28%) were part of a national organization (e.g., MADD)

- Majority (60%) had less than 25 staff

Respondent Characteristics

- Half were executive staff, ¼ were midlevel managers, ¼ were frontline staff

- Educated and experienced

  - 71% had 10+years working with victims

  - Half had Master's degree, most had Bachelor's degrees

Victimization Focus

Focus	Percentage
Domestic violence	75%
Sexual assault	71%
Child abuse	53%
Elder abuse	36%
Prosecution	33%
Human trafficking	32%
Courts	30%
Homicide	29%
Trauma counseling	29%
Law enforcement	29%
Corrections	10%
Tribal victimization	8%

Legend:
- Criminal Justice Agency
- Non-Criminal Justice
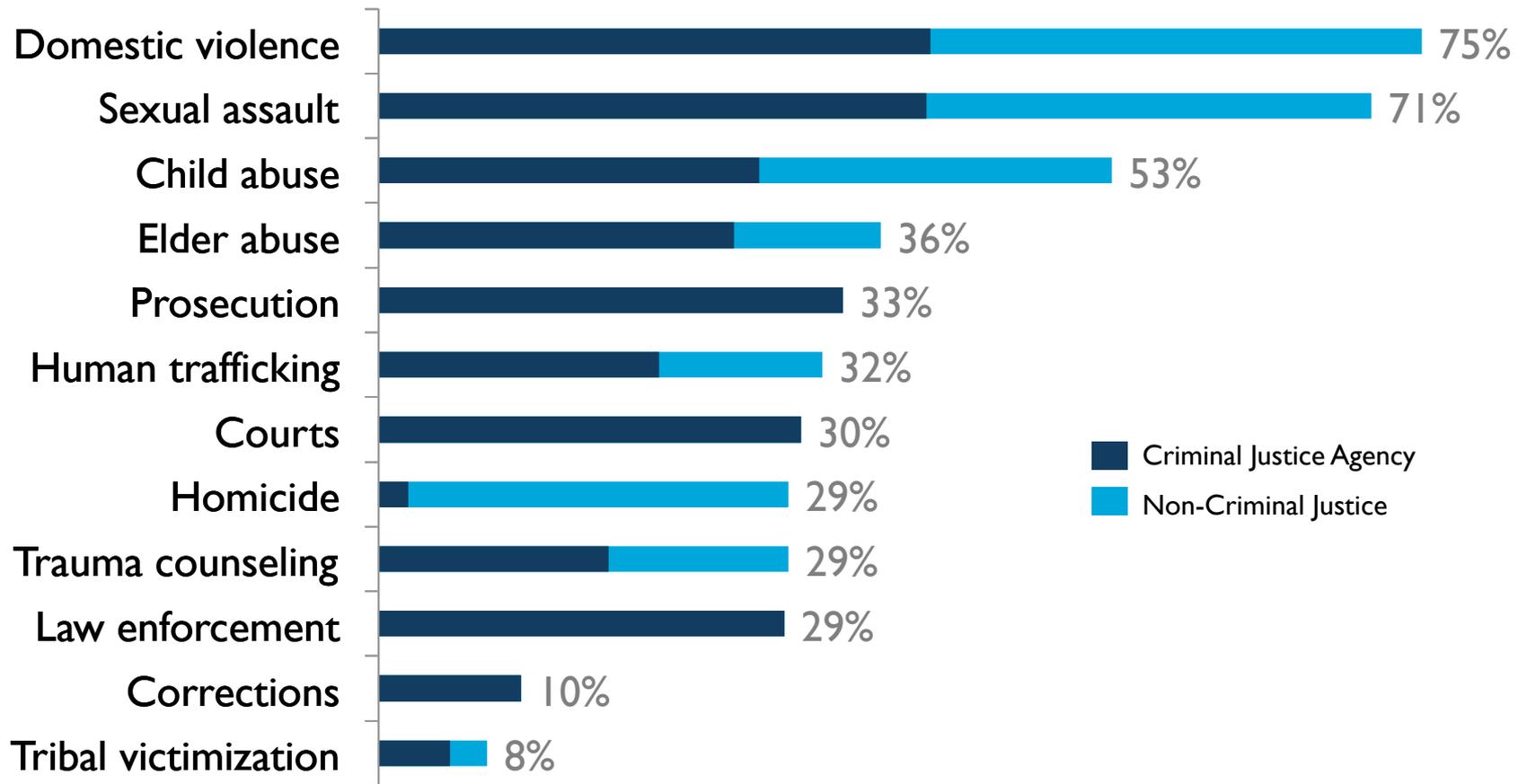
Takeaways

1. Resources are needed to support research-and-practice partnerships, including <u>funding</u>, <u>time</u>, and <u>training</u>

2. <u>Substantive relationships</u> between practitioners and researchers facilitate collaboration success

3. <u>Interactive activities</u> most effectively facilitate learning about victim research and practitioner-researcher relationships

Takeaway 1

Resources are needed to support research-and-practice partnerships, including funding, time, and training
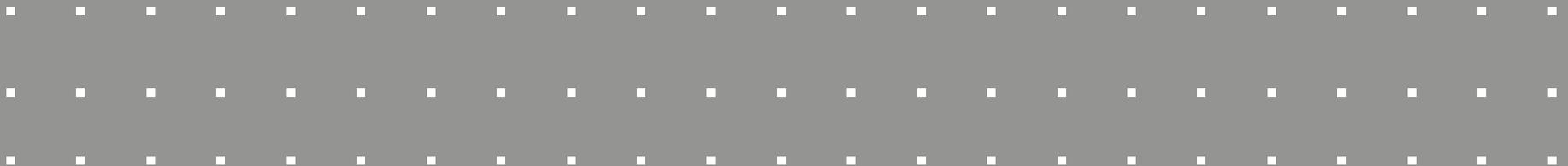
Practitioners' Research Experience & Activities

- Most were *aware* of research (62%), but less than half (49%) were *familiar*

- Most common research activities were client tracking
    - Track services provided (73%)
    - Measure client satisfaction (60%)
    - Track client outcomes (54%)

- Few partnerships with external researchers & very few internal research staff

- Most common activities to become familiar with VS research
    - Attend conferences (84%)
    - Attend online training or webinars (78%)
    - Talk to knowledgeable colleagues (74%)
    - Attend in-person trainings (71%)

Type of Research Experience

Category	Percentage
Participated in a research study	47%
Completed a research course	42%
Attended a research presentation	33%
Attended a research workshop	31%
Other: Conducted research	7%
None	24%
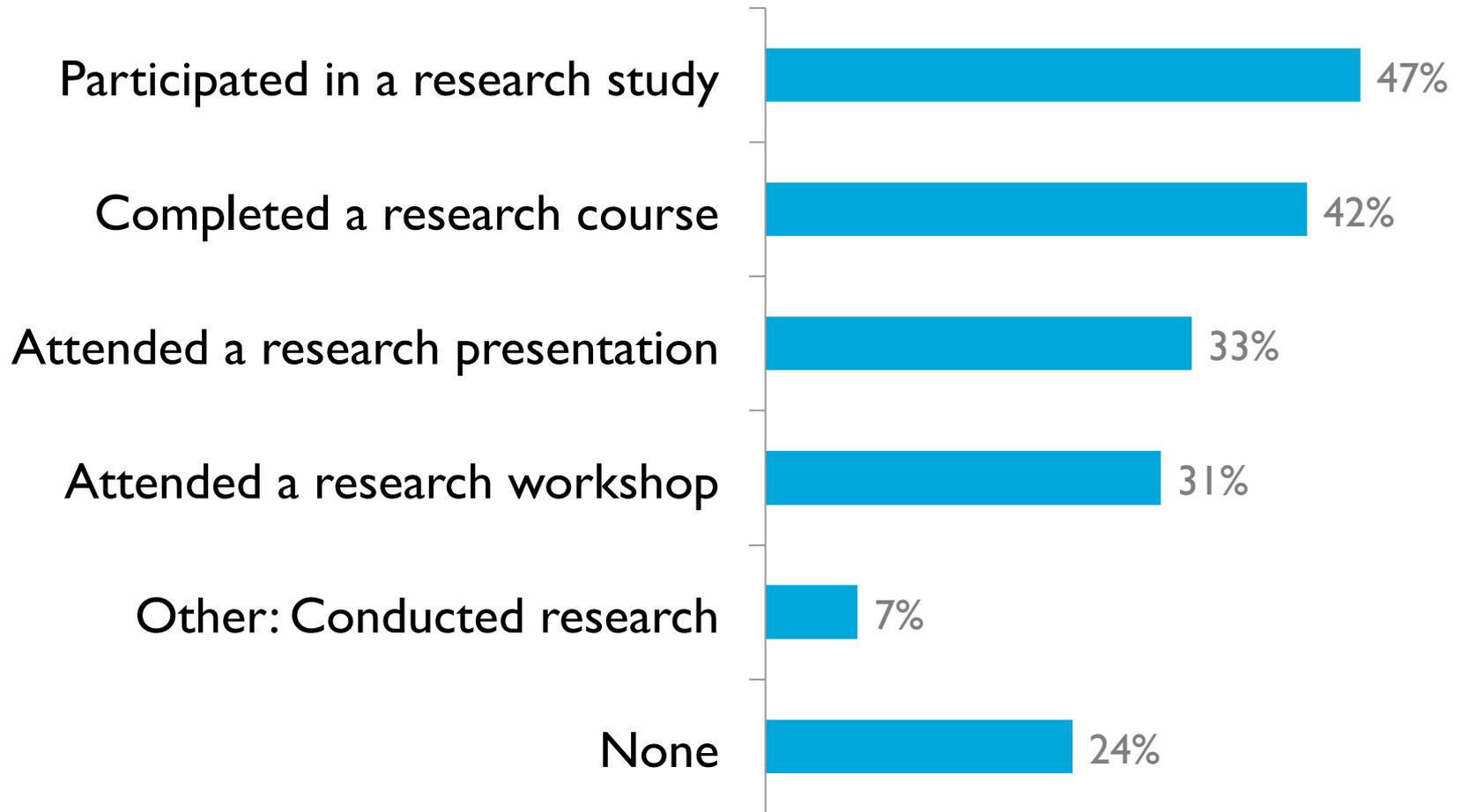
Importance of Funding Support

"A year ago, I attended a 2-day event which brought together researchers & DV practitioners around issues similar to this survey.

It was a good idea, but essentially yielded nothing without further resources & support for continued cross-disciplinary collaborations."

Barriers to Research Use at Your Organization

Barrier	Percentage
Insufficient funding to implement new ideas	59%
Relevant research is not compiled in one place	54%
Insufficient training to implement new ideas	51%
Managers do not have time to read research	44%
Insufficient ongoing support to implement new ideas	41%
Insufficient time to spend implementing new ideas	33%
Staff are resistant to changing current service practices	23%
Managers don't feel capable of evaluating research quality	21%
Managers unaware of research	21%
*Facilities are inadequate for implementation of new ideas	20%
Statistical research is not reported in understandable way	14%
Research is written in overly complex way	13%
Staff are suspicious of research-informed ideas	10%

Less than 10% cited:
*Managers unaware of research
Research findings cannot be adapted to local community
Research findings cannot be adapted to victims we serve
*Leadership is resistant to implementation of new ideas

* Frontline Staff agreed more than Executive Directors

Only 14% of VS providers had experienced an unsuccessful collaboration with a researcher

Why Was It Unsuccessful?

Reason	Percentage
Researcher told us how to collect data and was not willing to modify activities	50%
Did not receive funding to participate in research	48%
Researcher had specific RQs and did not ask for input	45%
Researcher did not spend time learning about our organization	43%
When we encountered problems, were not sure how to overcome	26%
Never provided info/feedback about our organization	24%
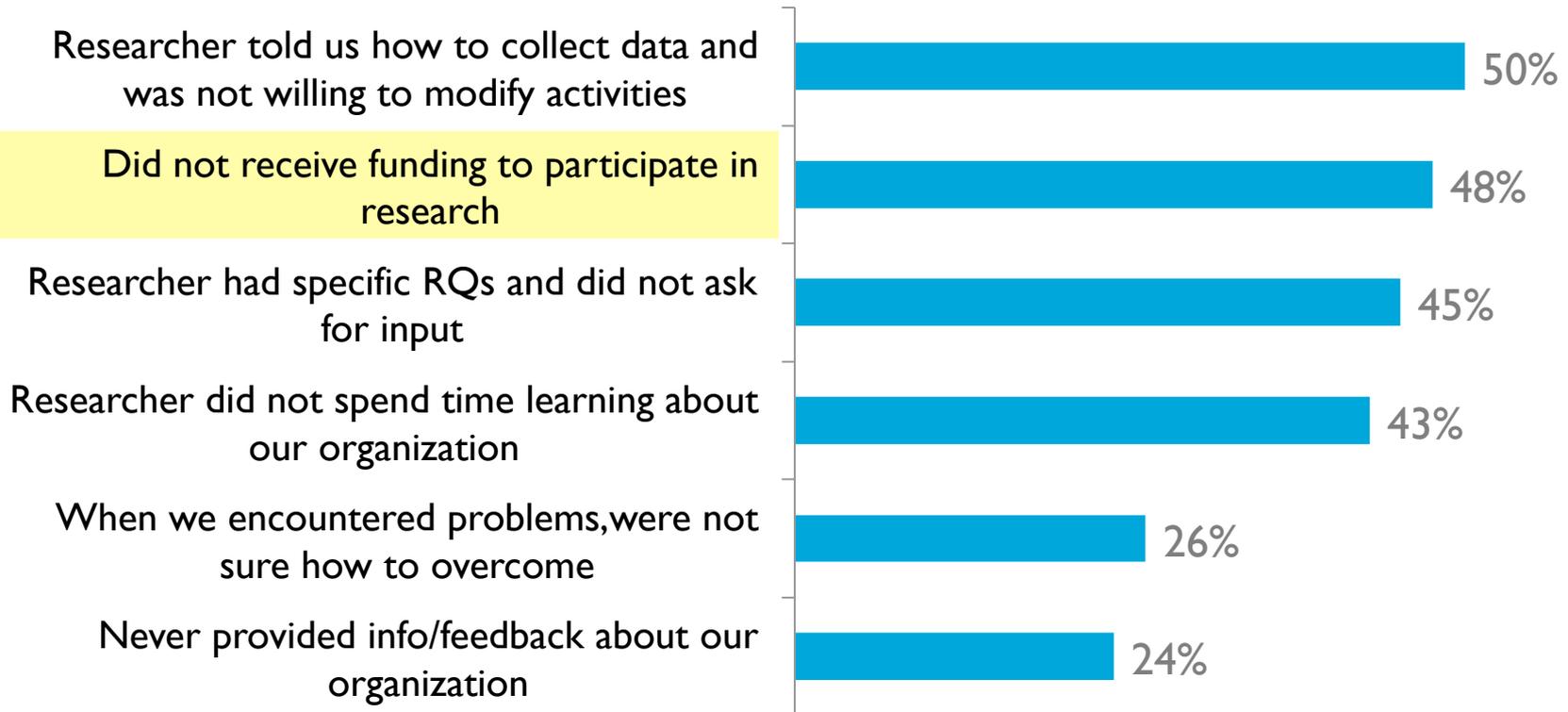
Single most important factor

Takeaway 2

Substantive relationships between practitioners and researchers facilitate collaboration success
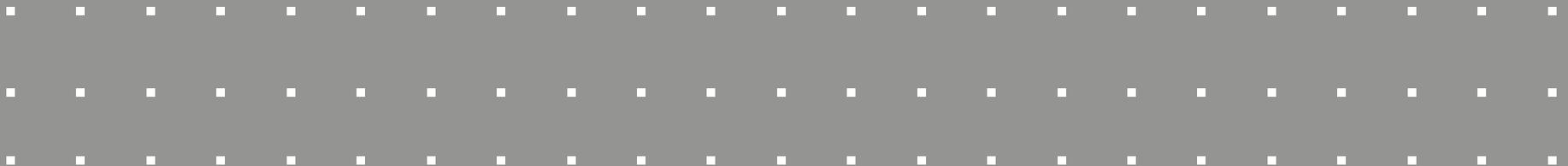
Substantive Relationships Needed

- Important factors for successful research-and-practice collaborations are relationship-based

  - Practitioners are part of the decision-making and design process

  - Practitioners feel that researchers listen to them and understand their work

  - Practitioners and researchers create relationships beyond the research task

- Building relationships is dependent on face-to-face interactions

  - Interactive activities are most useful for developing practitioner-researcher relationships

Types of Funding Most Useful to Helping Providers Evaluate Own Programs & Understand Research

Category	Percentage
Partner with an external researcher	48%
Give existing staff more time to participate in research	36%
Hire new staff specifically for research	35%
Develop existing staff's research capabilities	30%
Other	2%
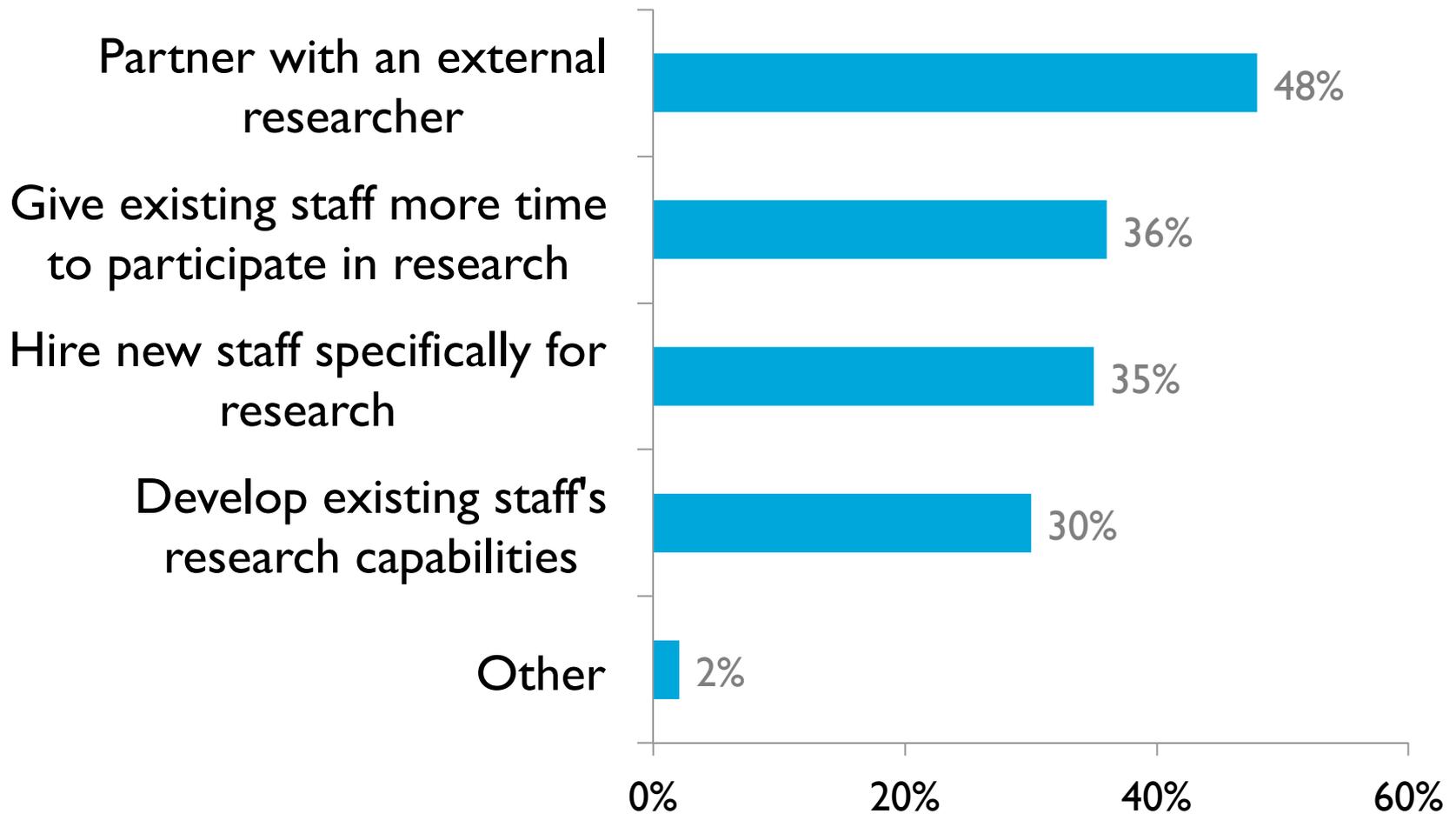
Only 14% of VS Providers Experienced an Unsuccessful Collaboration with a Researcher

Why Was It Unsuccessful?

Reason	Percentage
Researcher told us how to collect data and was not willing to modify activities	50%
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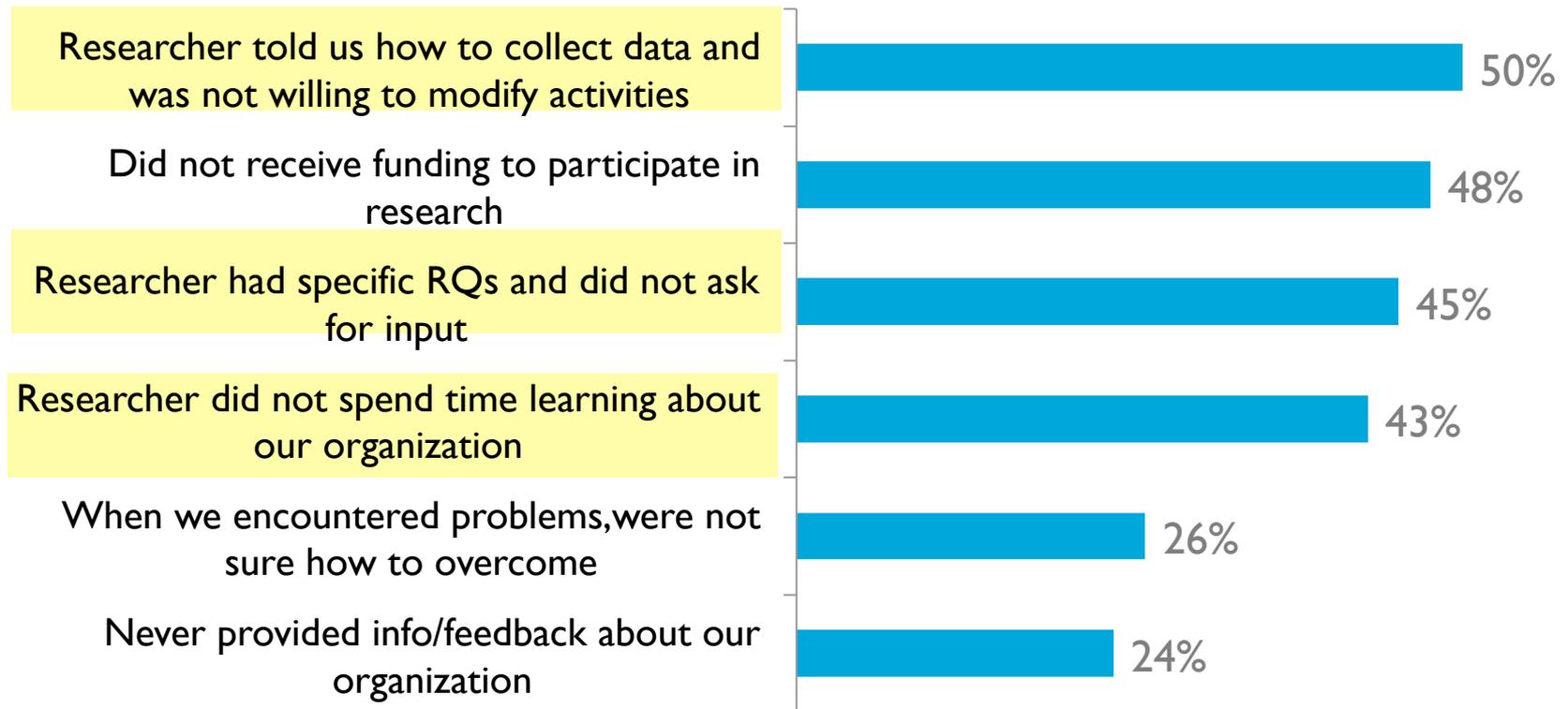
Less than half (42%) had experienced a successful collaboration with a researcher

Why Was It Successful?

Researcher listened to what we wanted to learn	78%
We helped determine what info to collect	74%
Researcher met and interacted with staff	60%
Researcher helped deal with data collection issues	60%
Researcher explained how to collect info they needed	59%
Researcher provided info/feedback about our program	58%
We helped design how to implement data collection	58%
Researcher allowed us to read report before publishing	54%
Researcher spent time with us doing other activities	34%
Researcher collaborated with us to write report	34%
We received funding to participate in research process	29%

Single most important factor

What negative perceptions does your organization have about working with outside researchers?

Response	Percentage
None	57%
They don't understand service practices & challenges	28%
They don't understand clients needs & characteristics	18%
They focus on wrong outcomes	13%
They collect data but don't report useful findings	12%
They don't listen to practitioners' viewpoints	12%
They don't provide adequate safeguards for victims	11%
They don't really want to help us	5%
They don't respect practitioners expertise	5%
Other	4%
They can't do anything to help	1%

Takeaway 3

Interactive activities most effectively facilitate learning about victim research and practitioner-researcher relationships
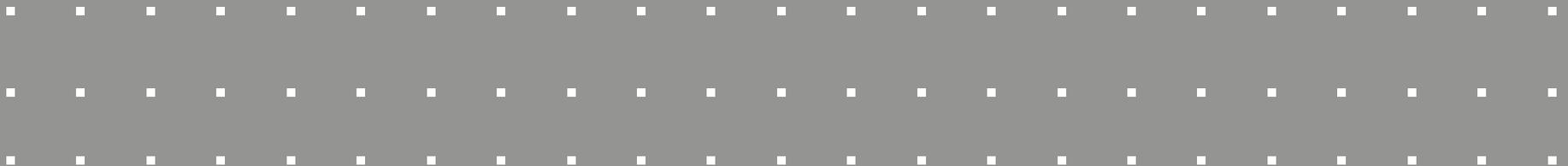
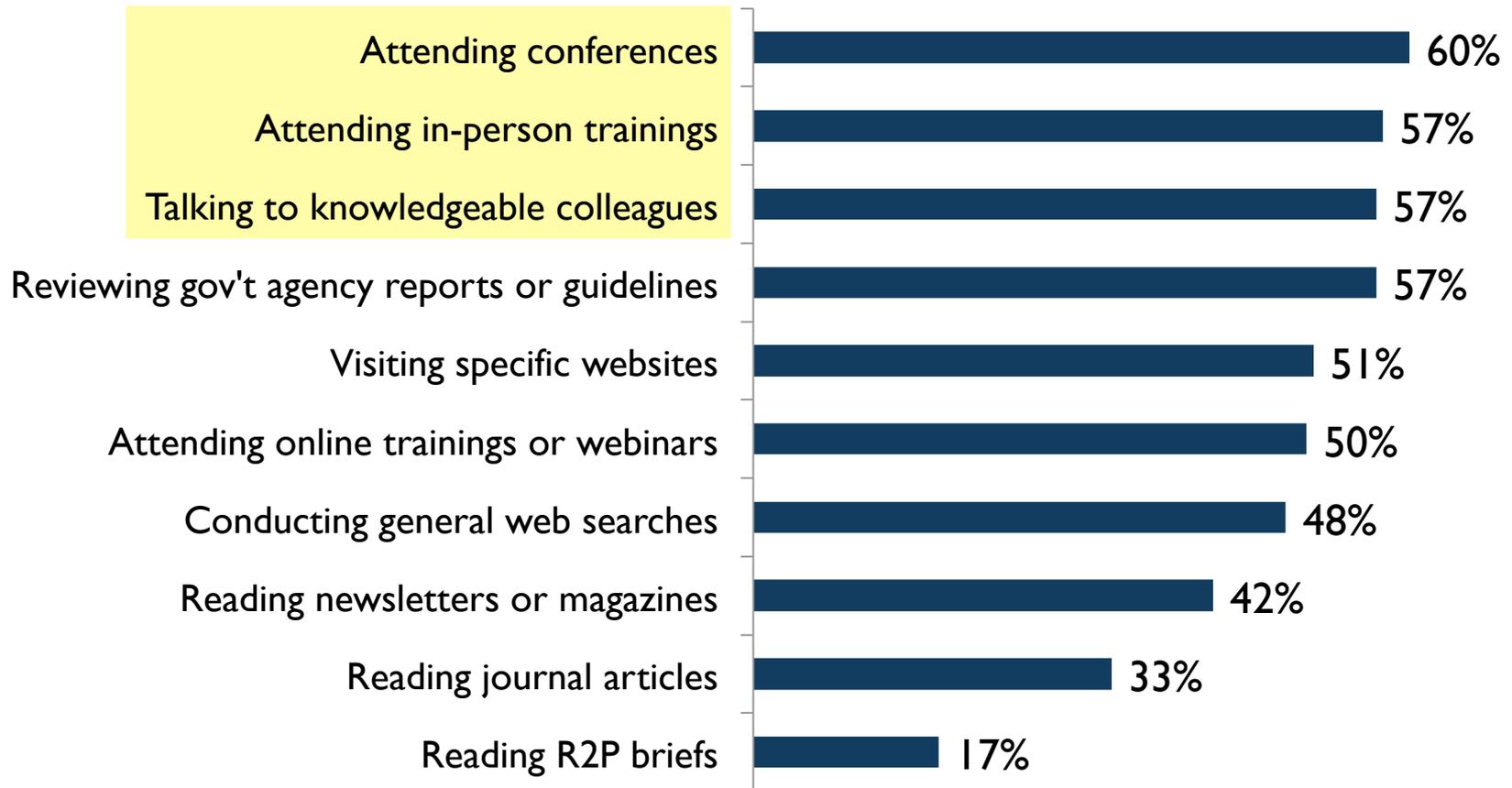# What do you do regularly to become familiar with victim services research?

Activity	Percentage
Attend conferences	84%
Attend online trainings or webinars	78%
Talk to knowledgeable colleagues	74%
Attend in-person trainings	71%
Review government reports or guidelines	60%
Visit specific websites	60%
Read newsletters or magazines	59%
Conduct general web searches	54%
Read journal articles	47%
Read research-to-practice briefs	25%
Work directly with a researcher	19%
None	2%

NOTE: VS providers in CJ agencies (law, prosecutor, courts) expressed same level of awareness/familiarity with VS research but were about 10% less likely to engage in activities above, compared to non-CJ VS providers.
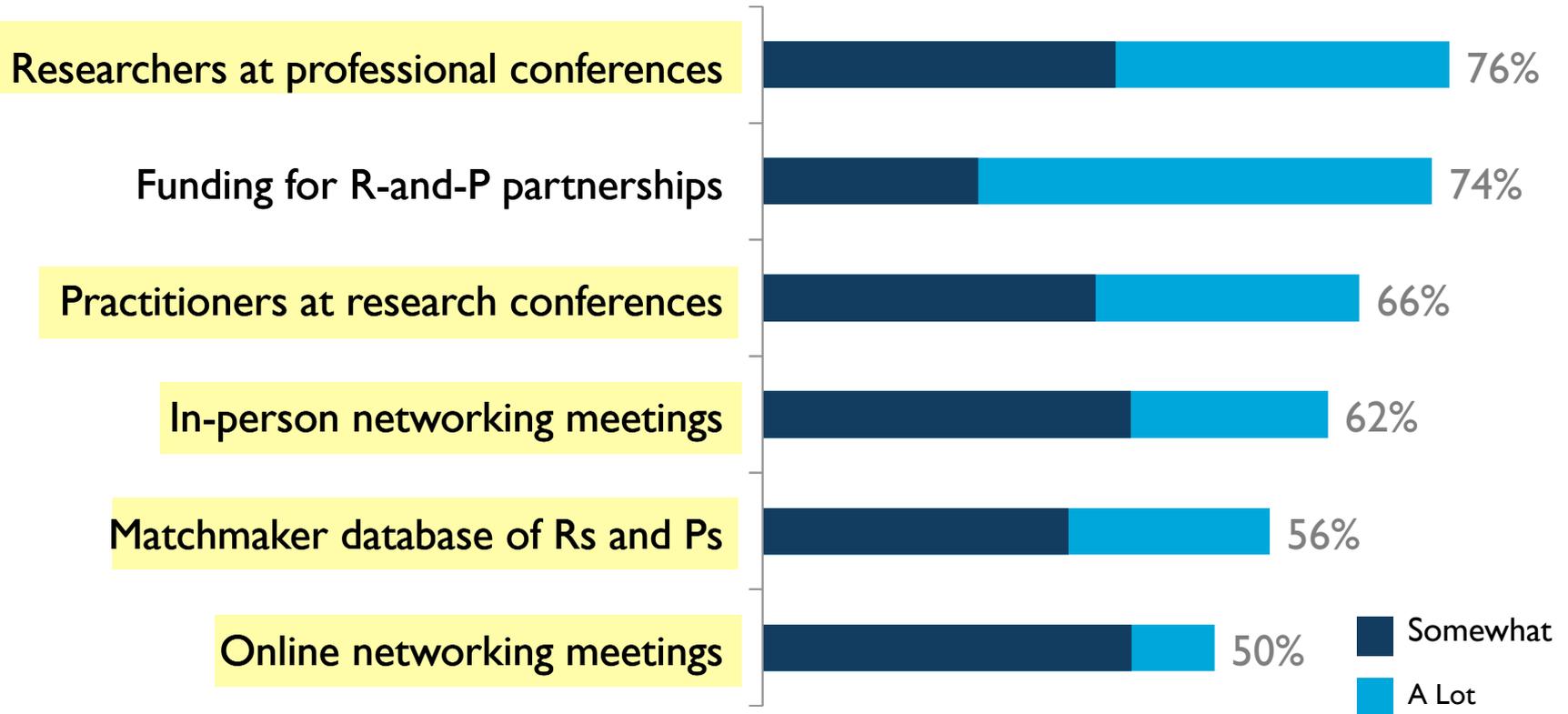
Which activities provide most useful information re: basic data on victimization in your community?

Activity	Percentage
Attending conferences	60%
Attending in-person trainings	57%
Talking to knowledgeable colleagues	57%
Reviewing gov't agency reports or guidelines	57%
Visiting specific websites	51%
Attending online trainings or webinars	50%
Conducting general web searches	48%
Reading newsletters or magazines	42%
Reading journal articles	33%
Reading R2P briefs	17%

Which activities provide most useful information re: research-informed practices in victim services?

Activity	Percentage
Attending conferences	63%
Attending in-person trainings	54%
Attending online trainings or webinars	50%
Reading journal articles	47%
Talking to knowledgeable colleagues	44%
Reading R2P briefs	43%
Reviewing gov't agency reports or guidelines	40%
Visiting specific websites	38%
Reading newsletters or magazines	32%
Conducting general web searches	31%

Which strategies are useful for developing relationships with researchers?

Researchers at professional conferences — 76%

Funding for R-and-P partnerships — 74%

Practitioners at research conferences — 66%

In-person networking meetings — 62%

Matchmaker database of Rs and Ps — 56%

Online networking meetings — 50%

Somewhat
A Lot

Conclusions

Three takeaways regarding barriers to research-and-practice integration

1. Research-and-practice partnerships cannot occur without appropriate resources
   - Funding
   - Time
   - Training

2. Relationships that demonstrate collaboration and understanding among both parties are important for successful partnerships
   - Practitioners need decision-making and design input
   - Researchers need to build understanding of practitioners' work

3. Interactive activities facilitate learning about VS research *and* building practitioner-researcher partnerships
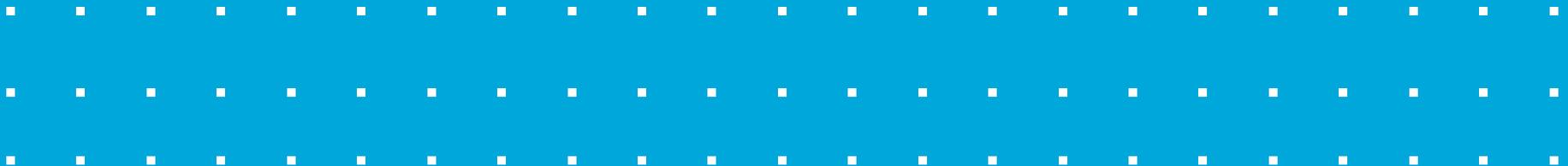   - Conferences, trainings, and meetings help develop relationships and disseminate relevant research

For More Information

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Bridging the Gap Between Research & Practice in Victim Services:
A National Survey of Researchers

Purpose

- To understand the current challenges to developing research-informed practices and practice-informed research in victim services.

- Survey examined researcher perceptions and experiences to identify strategies for facilitating victim-related research.

Methodology

Researchers doing victim-related research:

- Authors of books on victim-related topics
- Primary authors of 2 or more journal articles on victim-related topics
- Recipients of research grants related to victims/victimization
- Members of relevant organizations:
  - ASC Division of Victimology
  - ACJS Victimology Section
  - Homicide Research Working Group
- After removing duplicates, survey was sent to 1,021 researchers
- 257 total responses; 224 valid responses

Researcher Backgrounds

- Respondents were highly educated and experienced
    - 95% held graduate degrees
    - 81% had over 5 years of research/evaluation experience
    - 92% worked on multiple victim research/evaluation projects

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Researcher Backgrounds

Respondents worked in:

- Research organizations located across 43 states and DC

- Supportive research infrastructures
    - 95% worked at a university or government agency
    - 85% reported the institution was supportive of applied research

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Victim-Related Research Experience

- Respondents worked on victim-related research in multiple areas and utilized different types of data sources.

  - Majority conducted research on domestic violence (64%) and sexual assault (60%)

  - Most commonly used types of data

    - Victim data collected on community samples (e.g. school or campus samples)

    - State or local victimization surveys

Researcher & Practitioner Contact

- Contact is lacking between researchers and practitioners.
    - Over 1/3 of victim researchers reported they did not work directly or closely with practitioners
    - Less than half became aware of research topics and needs by talking with victim service providers
    - About half belong to a organization that focuses on victim research (e.g., ASC's Division of Victimology)

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Capacity to Conduct Victim Research

- Work satisfaction in victim services research is either comparable to or greater than in other research areas.

- Over 90% of respondents indicated researchers in victimization/victim services are as, or more, collaborative than researchers in other fields.

Capacity to Conduct Victim Research

- Researchers most frequently indicated their ability to conduct research on victim-related topics is no more or less difficult than other research areas.

- Victim researchers perceive themselves as similar to researchers in other fields in:

  - Qualifications

  - Awareness of key research findings

  - How well they translate research findings

Capacity to Conduct Victim Research

Researchers reported some impediments to successful research collaborations in this field compared to others:

- Less funding for victim research
- Fewer researchers in this area
- Randomized controlled trials are more difficult

Capacity to Conduct Victim Research

- 55% of researchers who expressed an opinion indicated the knowledge base of "what works" in victim services is less than in other research areas.

- 77% of researchers who expressed an opinion thought that it was more difficult to conduct RCTs in victim services

- 46% thought that the difficulty in conducting RCTs affected the knowledge base to a significant degree ('4' or '5' rating on a five-point scale)

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Researcher Perceptions of Practitioners

- Researchers believe practitioners:
  - Want to do what's best for their clients
  - Offer valuable insights for research
  - Can be forceful advocates for research funding
- But researchers also believe practitioners:
  - Fear negative research results
  - Don't understand research practices and challenges

Research Work Experiences with Victim Service Organizations

- 85% of researchers reported that the manager or staff of the organization used the research findings.

- Most frequently indicated uses were:
  - Training and presentations
  - Changed practices or policies

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Research Findings Dissemination

- 85% of researchers indicated the dissemination of research findings to victim organizations is important.

- However, primary methods for dissemination tended to target academic audiences:
  - 74% presented at research conferences
  - 69% submitted articles to peer-reviewed journals
  - 45% presented at practitioner conferences
  - 18% disseminated through victim services publications

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Researcher/Practitioner Relationships

- Researchers stressed the importance of establishing and maintaining good relationships to ensure research findings are used by practitioners.

- 70% attributed research-driven changes in victim services to a successful researcher/practitioner collaboration.

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Researcher/Practitioner Collaborations

- 60% reported they experienced successful collaborations with practitioners.

- Successful collaborations were most frequently attributed to:
  - Cooperation and support from practitioners
  - Agreement with the research plan

Researcher/Practitioner Collaborations

- 23% of researchers experienced an unsuccessful practitioner collaboration.

- Unsuccessful collaborations were most frequently attributed to:
  - Lack of cooperation and support from practitioners
  - Concerns about research findings affecting funding

Research Problems Experienced

- Fewer than 1/3 of researchers reported problems with practitioners in conducting victim-related research.

- Among those researchers, the most prevalent issues were:
  - Practitioners misinterpreted findings (51%)
  - Being asked to "prove" a program/policy works (42%)

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Strategies for Effective Collaborations

- Researchers were given a list of strategies to help build rapport and develop relationships with practitioners. Strategies rated as somewhat or very useful by most researchers included:
    - Funding for research and partnerships (93%)
    - Researchers presenting work at practitioner conferences (88%)
    - Practitioner presence at professional research conferences (76%)
    - Researcher/practitioner matchmaker databases (74%)
    - Biannual networking meetings (68%)

Strategies for Effective Collaborations

- Several also offered suggestions on how to improve researcher and practitioner relationships:
  - Treat practitioners as partners in research rather than objects of a study
  - Present findings so they can be understood
  - Make the research relevant: show practitioners how findings can improve outcomes

Conclusions and Implications

- Researchers believe collaboration with practitioners is beneficial for research and victim service organizations:
  - Practitioners can offer valuable insight and serve as funding advocates
  - Collaboration can produce research-driven changes in victim services
- Researchers and practitioners should forge closer working relationships.
  - Professional conferences with both researchers and practitioners
  - Researcher/practitioner matchmaker databases
  - In-person networking meetings
  - Research and practice partnerships

Questions?