

# **Health Connection:** *Evaluating the quality and impact of a public health telephone response service*

***CHNC Conference: Knowledge to Action - June 17<sup>th</sup>, 2010***

**Presenters: Reina Barker, RN, BSc.N**

**Joyce Fox, RN, BSc.N, MHS**

# Outline

- Overview of Health Connection
- Review Health Connection Client Survey
  - Purpose & Objective
  - Methodology
  - Survey limitations
  - Findings
  - Recommendations
  - Implementation enablers & barriers

# Health Connection

- local public health information and referral service
- serves as the first point of contact for the public seeking access to public health information and the services, programs and resources
- service consist of 8 separate lines
  - access is primarily by phone
  - staffed by public health nurses, public health inspectors and customer service representatives
  - inquiries relate to the full spectrum of public health topics
- health promotion approach used to help clients get the information, knowledge and skills required to make choices that support health

# Client Survey

- conducted as part the data gathering activities of a larger Health Connection review
- external researcher hired to conduct the survey of clients who access HC
- to identify changes to improve the client experience and service delivery
- undertaken as a way of obtaining information directly from users with respect to:
  - client characteristics
  - client satisfaction
  - how clients use the service and the information provided
  - the impact of the service on clients
  - client needs and expectations
  - barriers to using and accessing the service

# Research Questions

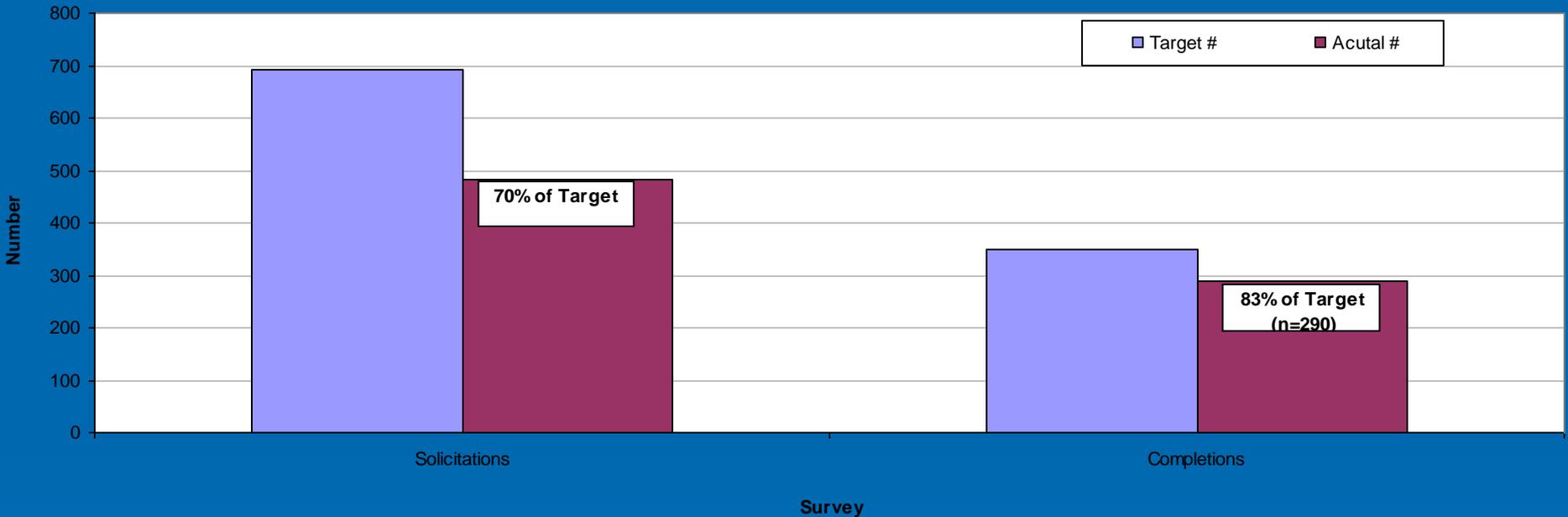
- Does Health Connection provide information and service that meets the needs and expectations of its users?
- How satisfied are users with the information and service provided?
- What are the barriers to using and accessing the service?
- What changes are needed to improve the effectiveness and the quality of the service?

# Methodology

- telephone survey
- eligible clients solicited by staff between October 9 – November 16, 2007
- clients contacted 2-3 weeks later by independent surveyors
- sample size = 290
- data analyzed using SPSS software and descriptive statistics compiled for each item

# Sample

Target and Actual Number of Survey Solicitations and Completions



➤ 60% of clients solicited to participate actually completed the survey

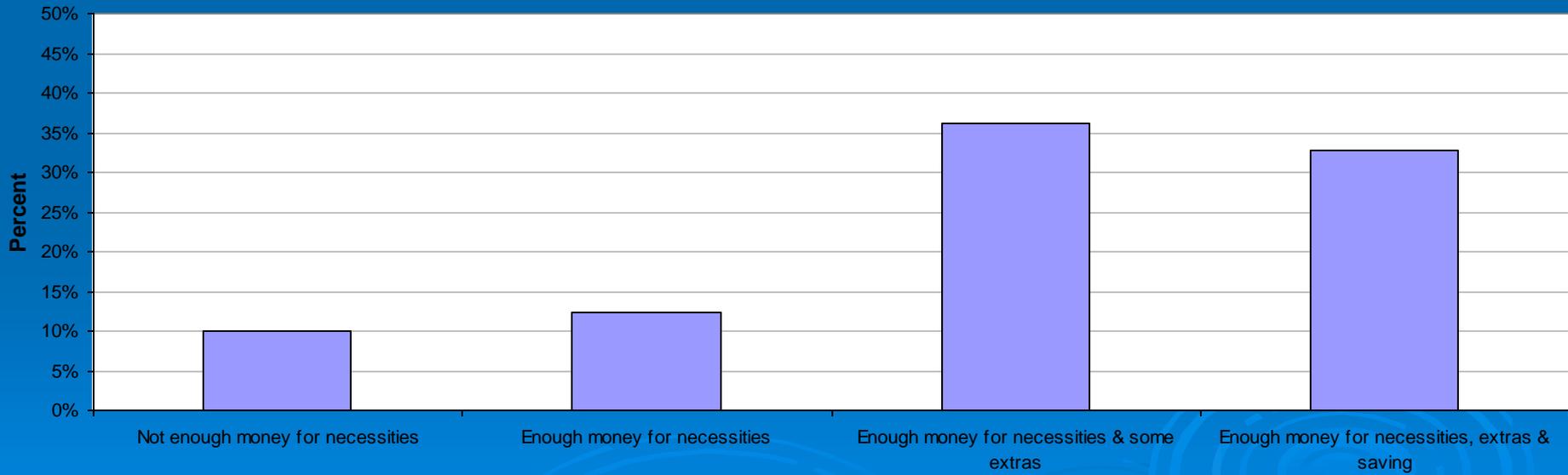
# Limitations

- Reliance on human reporting as the primary data source
- Potential respondent bias related to social desirability of responses
- Potential selection bias related to staff soliciting clients to participate
- Small sample size and resulting sensitivity to respondents responses.

# Key Findings: Client Characteristics

- predominantly female (88%)
- majority had completed post secondary education (60%)
- geographical breakdown of respondents close to population distribution in Simcoe and Muskoka

Financial Status among Survey Respondents

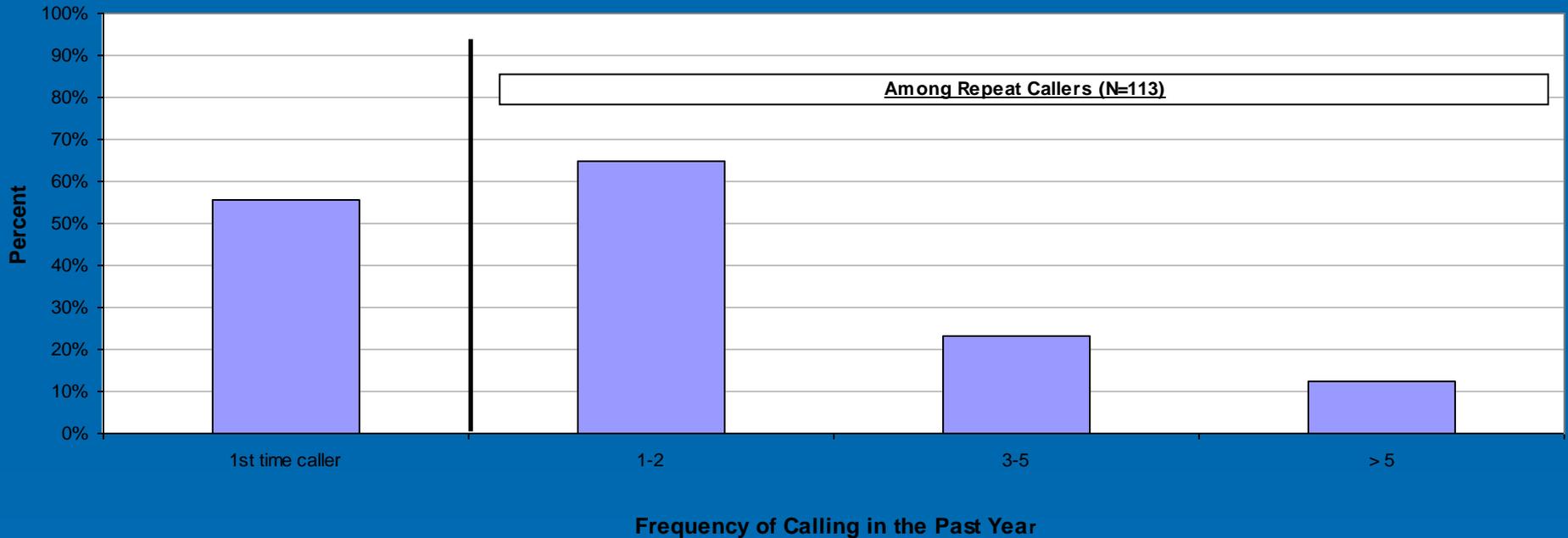


Financial Status

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

# Key Findings: Access to Service

Number of Times Called Health Connection in the Past Year

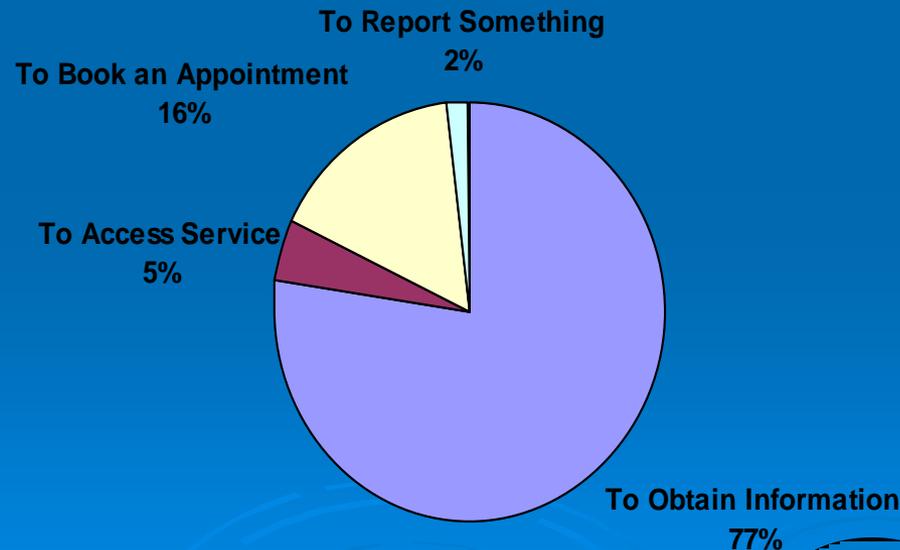


➤ service was accessed equally throughout the day

# Key Findings: Access to Service

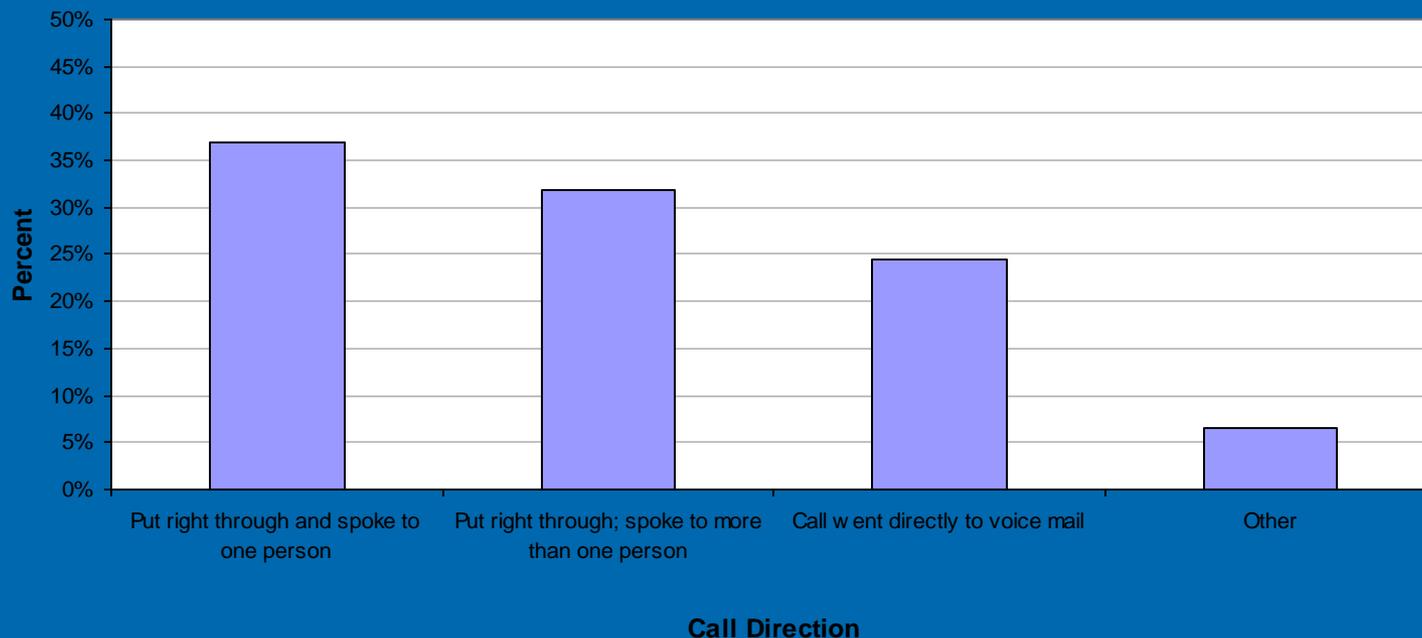
- majority of respondents heard about the service through a notice to call
- most were seeking information

Reason for Calling Health Connection



# Key Findings: Access to Service

Direction of Health Connection Client Calls



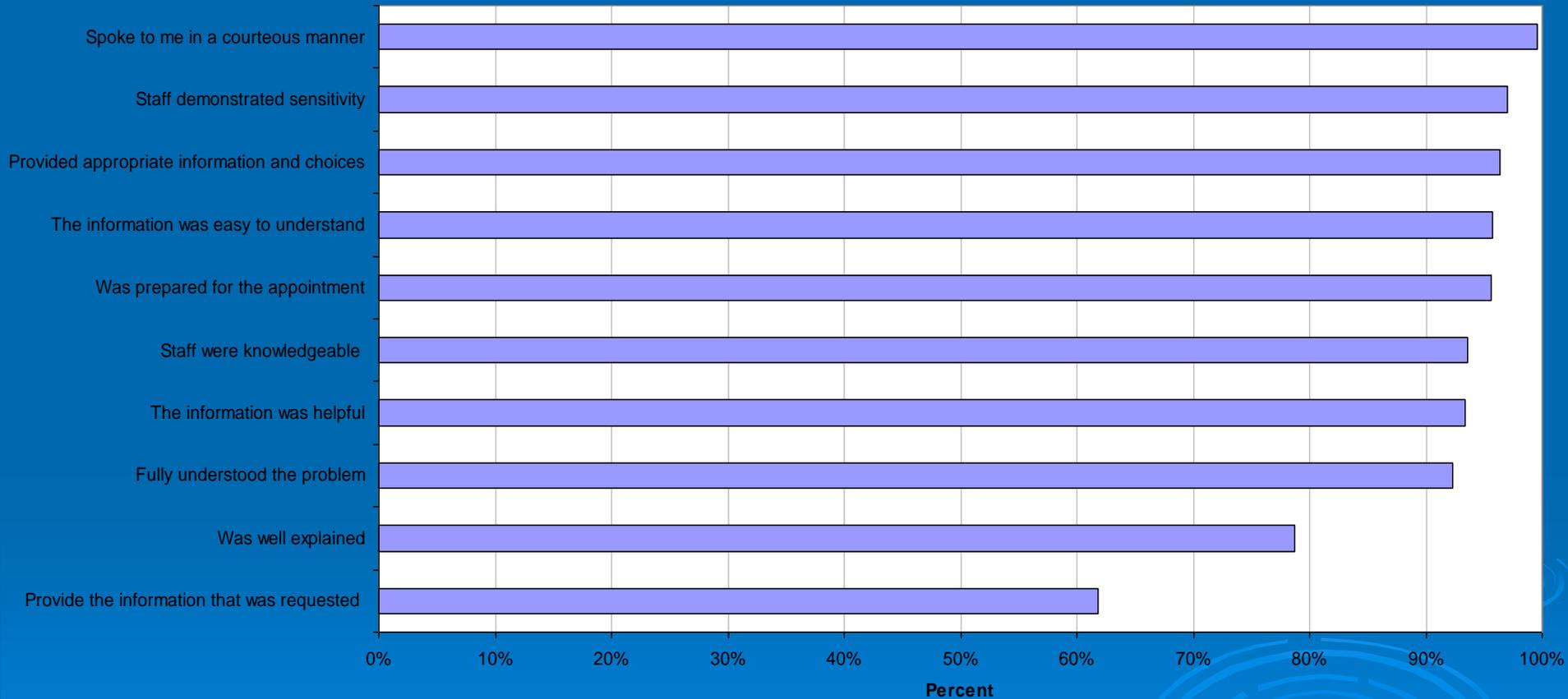
- 86% of respondents reported being satisfied to very satisfied with their overall experience of how their call was directed
- most respondents who went to voicemail reported feeling comfortable doing so

# Key Findings: Service Quality & Impact

- Respondents reported a high level of satisfaction with the service, information and recommendations provided by staff
  - 92% indicated they were *very satisfied/satisfied* with Health Connection service
  - 87% said they would use HC service again
  - 89% would recommend service to family and friends

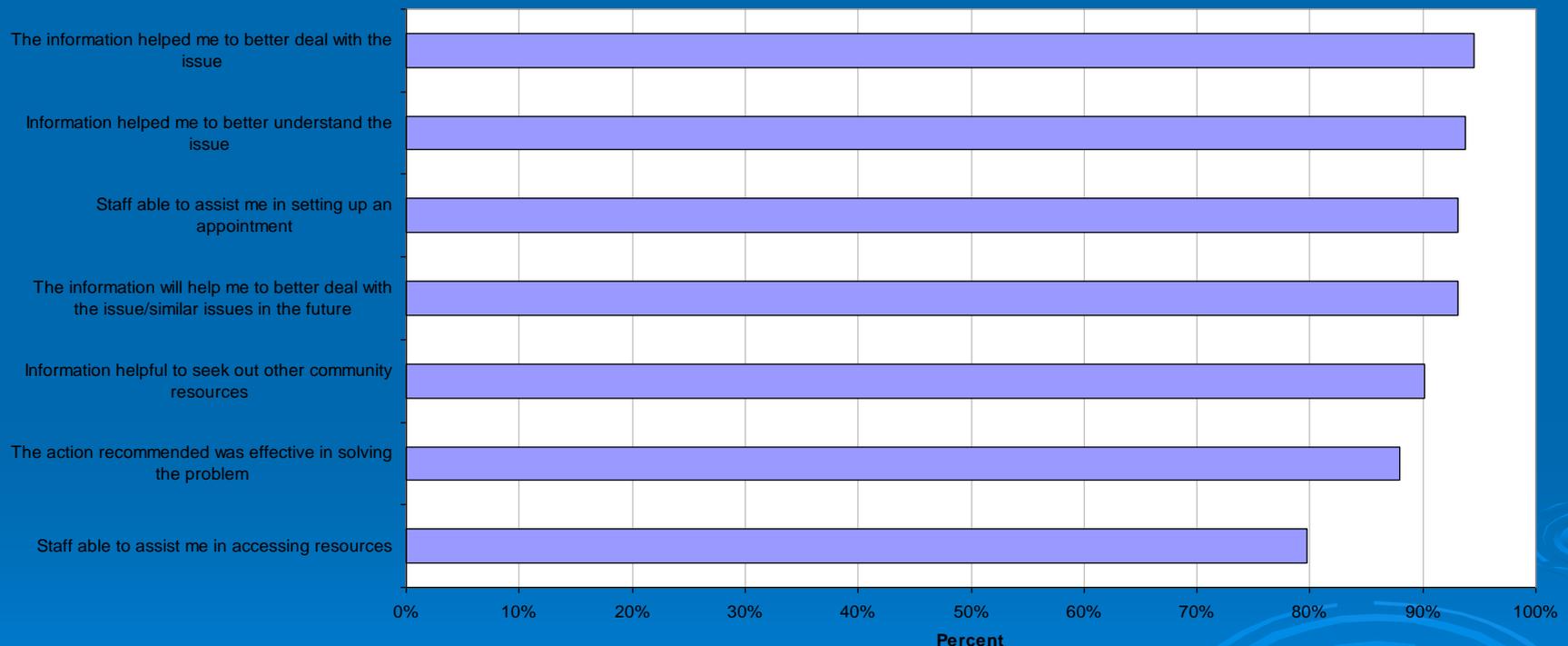
# Key Findings: Service Quality & Impact

Client Perceptions of Quality of Interaction with Health Connection Staff  
(Strongly Agree / Agree responses)



# Key Findings: Service Quality & Impact

Client Perceptions of Quality of Information Provided by Health Connection Staff  
(Strongly Agree / Agree responses)

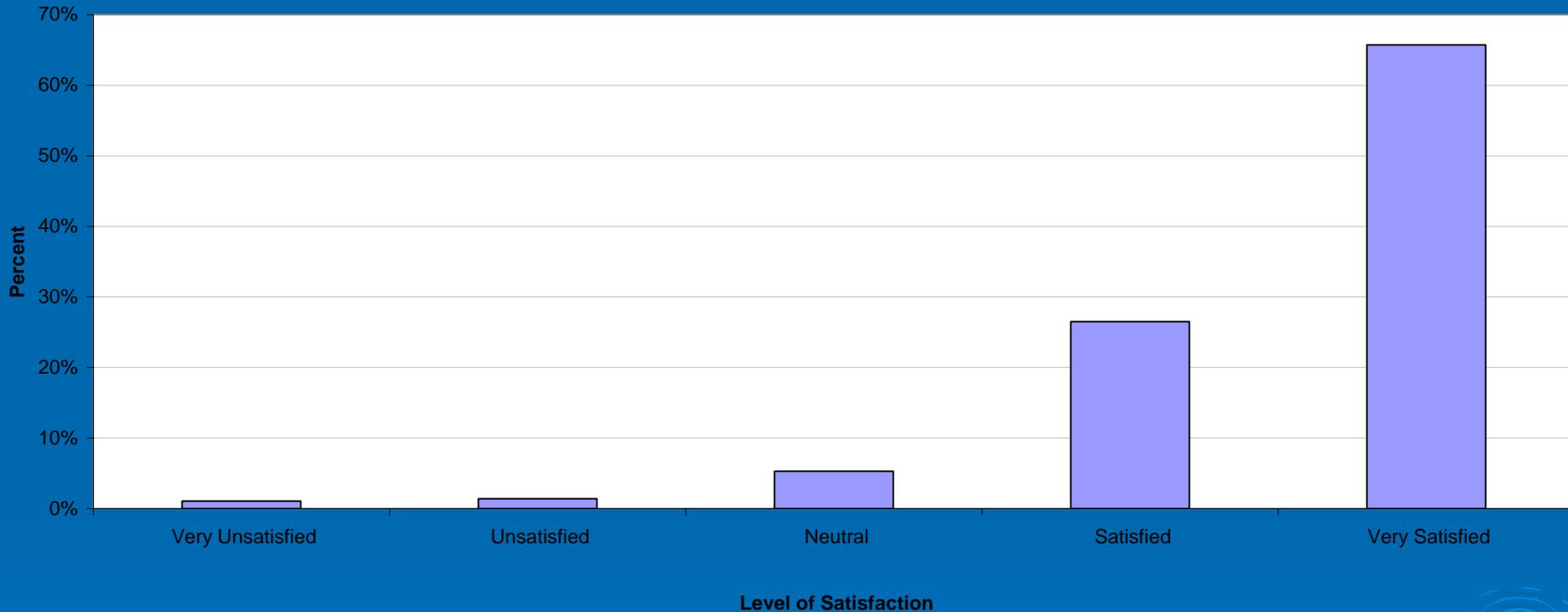


# Key Findings: Service Quality & Impact

| Client perception of the helpfulness of the service |  |                                       |
|---|--|---------------------------------------|
| Themes  | Examples of responses/subthemes  | Frequency of responses for this theme |
| <b>Supportive staff</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ staff very knowledgeable</li> <li>➤ staff very supportive and provide reassurance</li> <li>➤ staff professional, felt very comfortable speaking with staff</li> <li>➤ staff provided good advice and resources</li> </ul> | <b>59 %</b>                           |
| <b>Knowledge gained</b>                             | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ linked to additional resources</li> <li>➤ questions were answered, issues addressed , second opinion very helpful</li> <li>➤ mailed out additional information after call</li> </ul>                                      | <b>25%</b>                            |
| <b>Service convenience</b>                          | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ access to appointments</li> </ul>   | <b>12%</b>                            |

# Key Findings: Service Quality & Impact

## Overall Ability to Meet Needs of Client



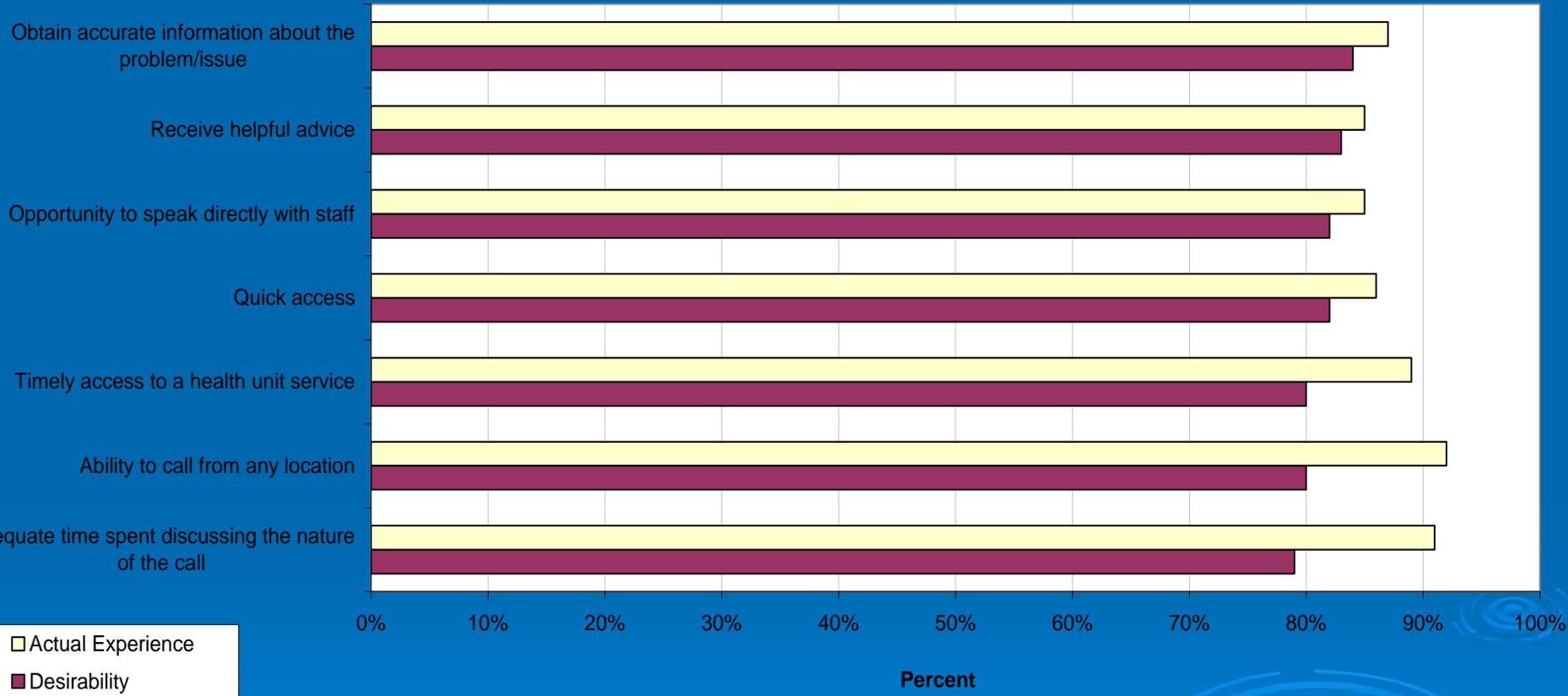
- 65% of respondents indicated they followed up with the recommendations made by staff

# Key Findings: Service Quality & Impact

- Most respondents reported accessing the service had a positive impact
  - 57 % obtained new information
  - 11% changed their behavior
  - 4% had either increased confidence in dealing with issue, decreased stress and were reassured by the support

# Key Findings: Service Quality & Impact

Client perception of Desired Features of a Health Information Service as Compared to Actual Experience with Health Connection  
(Bars = Level of Importance)



➤ HC services currently being provided are meeting or exceeding client expectations

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

# Key Findings: Service Quality & Impact

- reported challenges/barriers to utilizing the service were around call management (56%) and unmet needs (24%)
  - long wait times before reaching staff (42 % waited 2-5 mins.)
  - clarity of voicemail instructions (being unsure of what information to provide)
  - limited access to a live person
  - advice/information provided did not meet need
  - limited appointment times
  - staff unable to answer question

# Recommendations

- **Call Management: increase the ability of clients to self-direct through the system and minimize number of transfers**
  
- **Implementation:**
  - **self-direct options provided off main menu**
    - **direct access to specific line**
    - **access to pre-recorded information**
    - **ability to leave requested information by voicemail**
  
  - **call routing algorithms developed for switchboard staff**

# Recommendations

- **Service Access: improve access to live answer by staff, service and timely responses**
  
- **Implementation:**
  - **Increase call response capacity**
    - **CSR positions**
    - **VPD/OH pilot**
    - **Back-up staff**
  
  - **Electronic Scheduler**

# Recommendations

- **Web-services: increase availability of web-based services**
- **Implementation:**
  - **website redesign**
  - **secure submission of personal health information i.e. immunization records**

# Recommendations

- Implementation enablers
  - fit with agency strategic priorities
  - Executive sponsorship and endorsement
  - broader benefit impact
  
- Implementation barriers
  - competing priorities
  - current economic climate
  - stakeholder fatigue

# Presenter Contact Information

Reina Barker

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

15 Sperling Drive

Barrie, On L4M 6K9

(705) 721-7520 ext 7359

[reina.barker@smdhu.org](mailto:reina.barker@smdhu.org)

Joyce Fox

Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit

15 Sperling Drive

Barrie, On L4M 6K9

(705) 721-7520 ext 7210

[joyce.fox@smdhu.org](mailto:joyce.fox@smdhu.org)