Pilot Study: Reference & Research Support Services in Universiti Sains Malaysia Library

Year 2013

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Abstract

Reference & Research Division, USM Library has distributed an online survey to customers in Universiti Sains Malaysia starting March 2013. The main purpose of this pilot study was to investigate customer feedback on current and future demands for Reference & Research Services (RSS). There were 100 completed responses received. 89% were responded by students. The study found that the majority of respondents knew about RSS but they used the services 'once in while' (52%). When respondents got personal consultation from the staff, 79% of them felt that the staff were answered questions effectively. More over, 75% of them felt satisfied on overall reference services too. For Research Support Services expectation, the respondents felt that they are need to learn more about literature searching techniques (67%), academic writing skills (66%), and consultation on publishing academic articles (59%). Although more than 80% of respondents could not give ideas about the training courses for their needs, but 8% of them suggest RSS should run on publishing courses and 4% on statistical analysis software (SPSS) courses.

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Introduction

Reference & Research Division (RRD) is one of the division in the library that sustaining guided students in learning and research by offering a range of information services. The necessity of service transformation urging RRD to study the customer satisfaction with the current services and finding their expectation on Research Support Services. For that purpose ,the RRD had created an online survey since March 2013 and attracted about 100 respondents to send their feedback and ideas.

The survey consists of 3 sections :-

A. Referral service usage
   –   Investigate the usage frequency on current services.

B. Referral service satisfaction
   –   Investigate the level of customer satisfaction with existing services.

C. Introduction of Research Support Services (RSS)
   –   Investigate the needs and expectations of the customer on RSS.

Research Questions

1. What are the common trends of reference services that attract users?

2. Do reference librarians & staffs provide good services?

3. What kind of Research Support Services are need by users?

Research Objectives

1. To expose usage trend towards Reference Services.

2. To determine users' satisfaction with Reference staff and their services.

3. To find the needs of Research Support Services among users.

Section A: Demographic Findings

By refering to Figure 1 until Figure 7, background of respondents showed that:

1. 95% of them were aged from 18 until 44.
2. 59% of respondents were female.
3. 89% of respondents were students.
4. 77% of them were first and second year student.
5. 77% of them were postgraduates and PhD students.
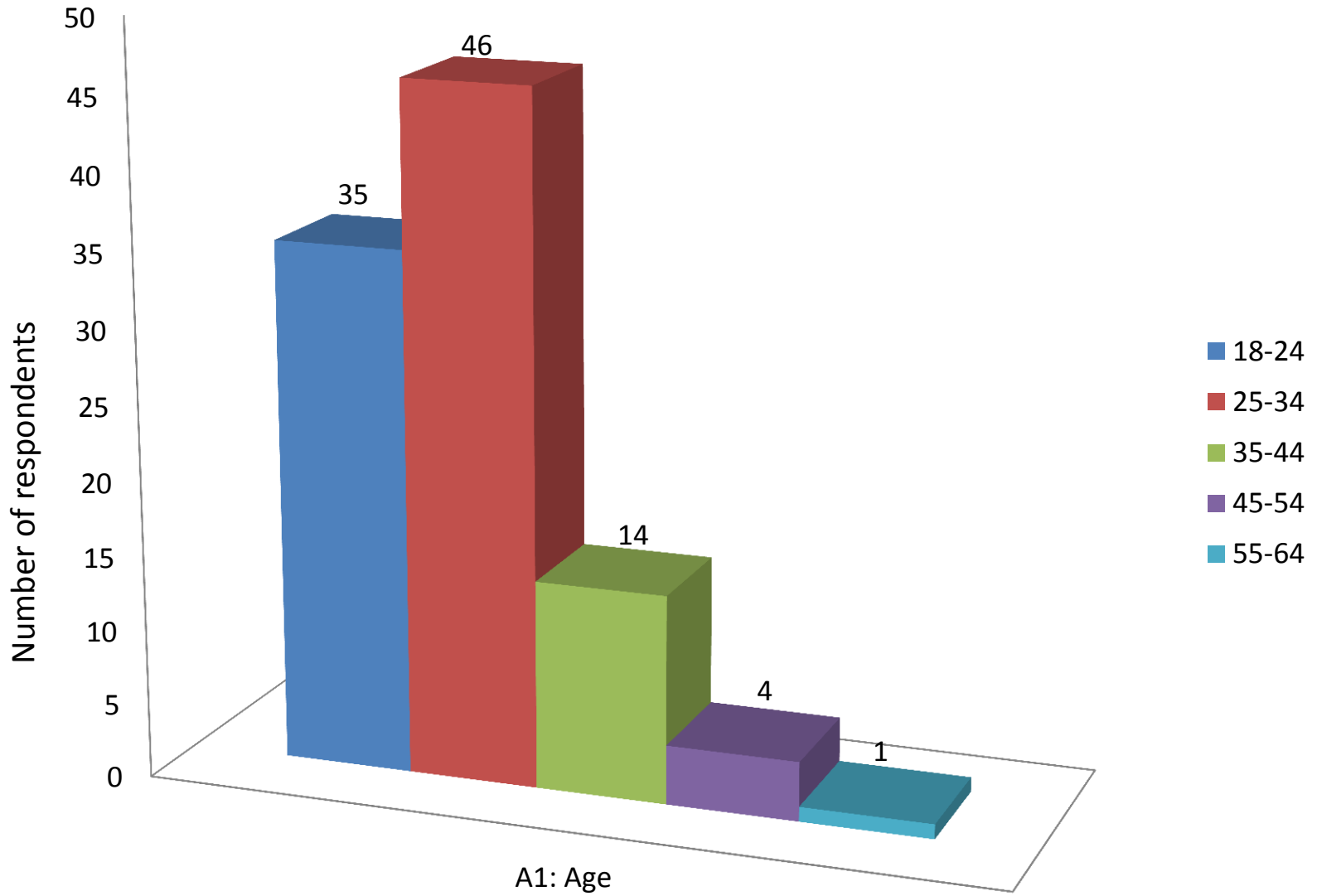6. 85% of them were situated in USM Main Campus.
7. 79% of them were Malaysians.

Figure 1:

Figure 2:
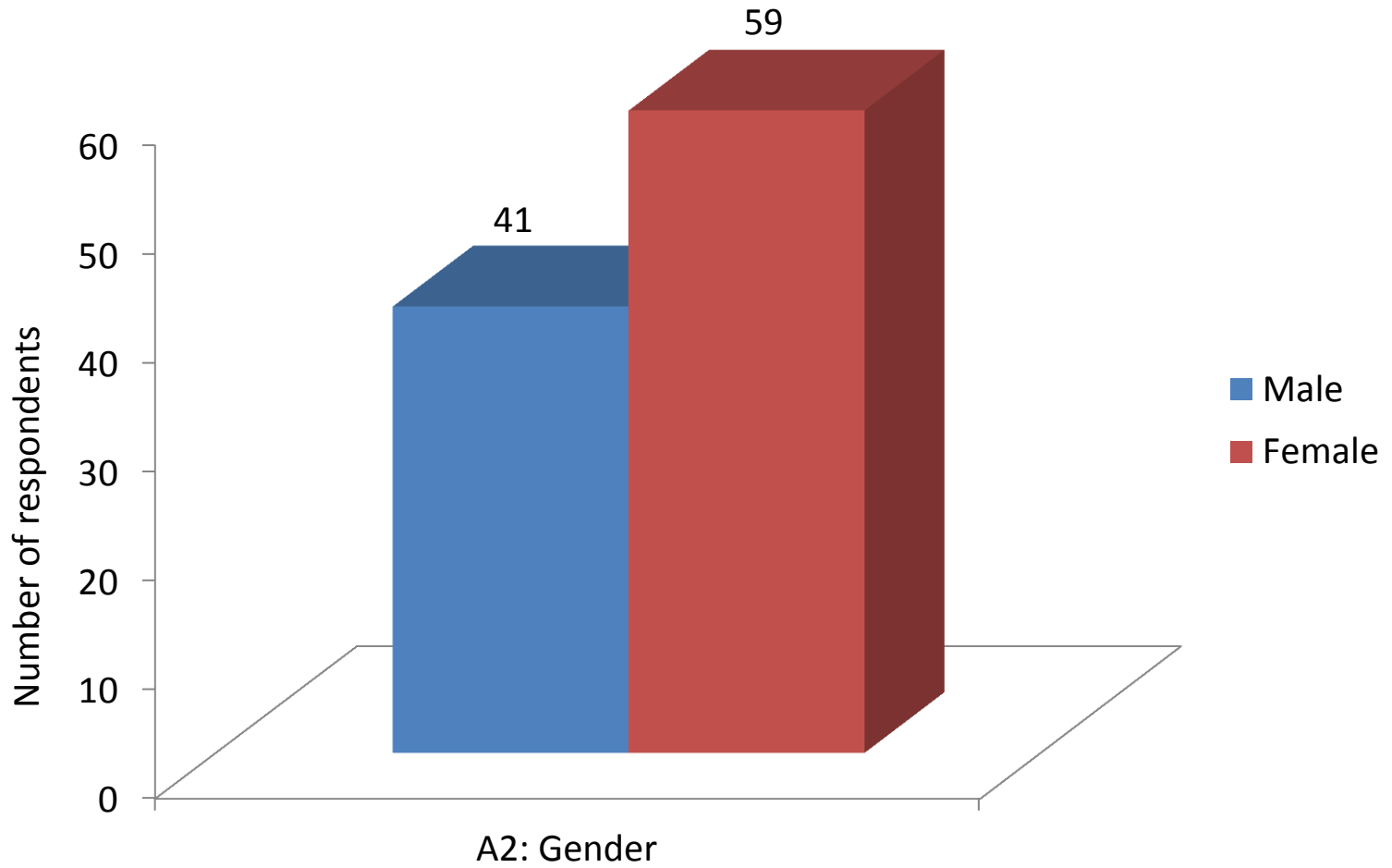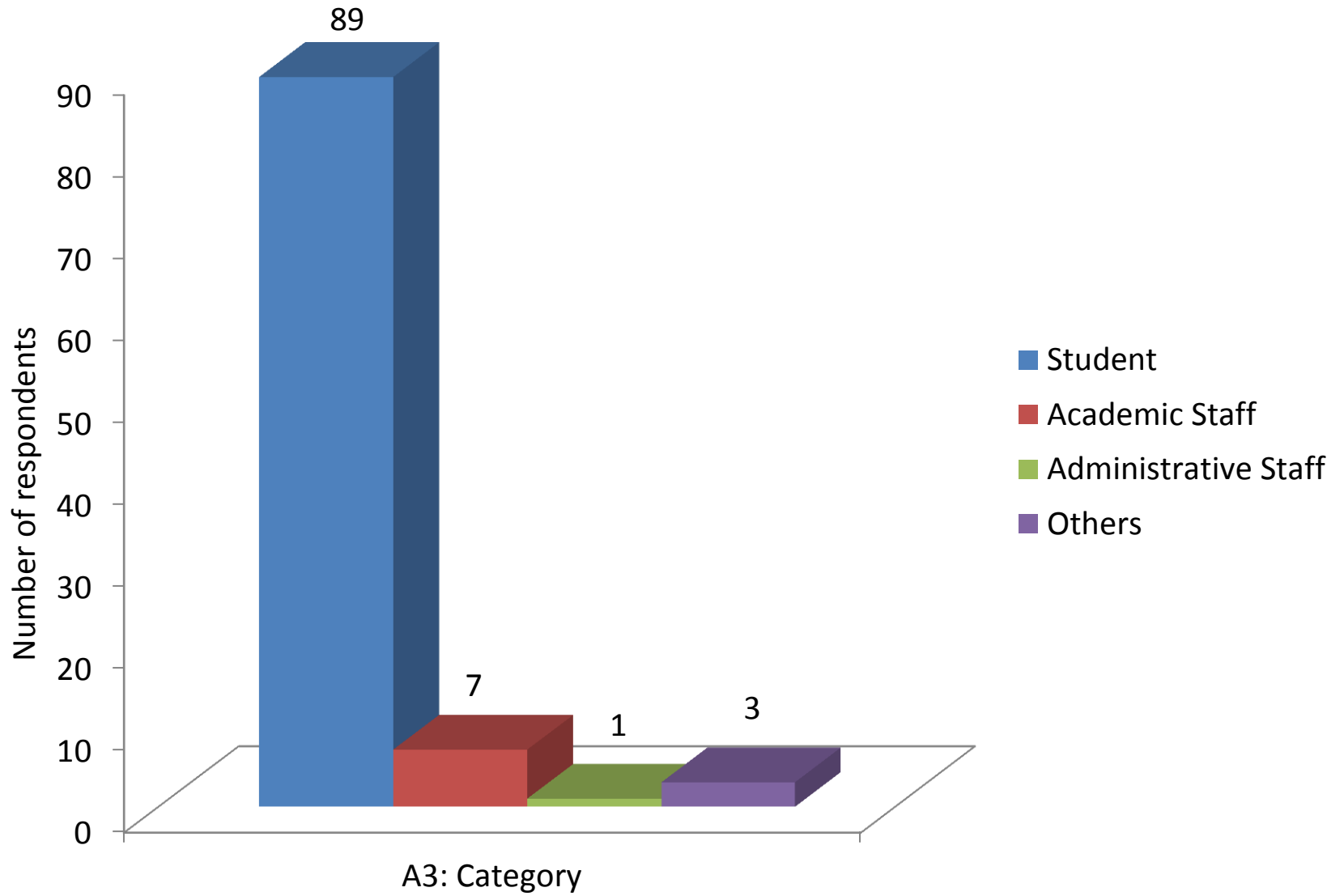
Figure 3:

Figure 4:

Figure 5:

Figure 5: A5: Degree — Number of respondents by degree type: Master by Coursework (8), Master by Research (20), Master Mix-Mode (6), PHD (39), Undergraduate (27)

Figure 6:

A6: Schools

Number of respondents

Figure 7:

Number of respondents

A7: COUNTRY

- ALGERIA
- BANGLADESH
- INDIA
- INDONESIA
- IRAN
- IRAQ
- JORDAN
- MALAYSIA
- NIGERIA
- OTHERS
- PAKISTAN
- SAUDI ARABIA
- SOMALIA
- SUDAN
- YEMEN
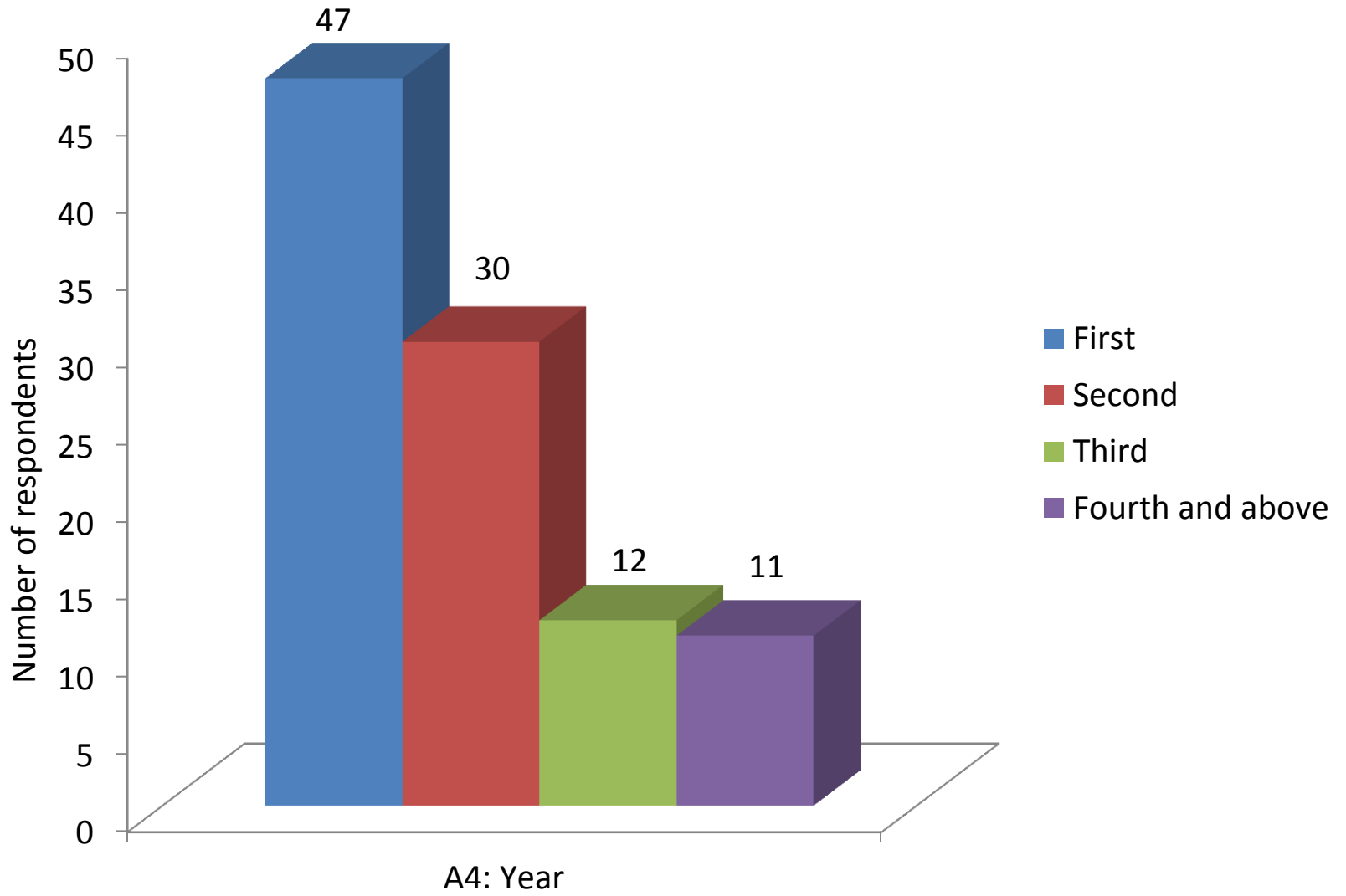
SECTION B: GENERAL USAGE OF REFERENCE SERVICES

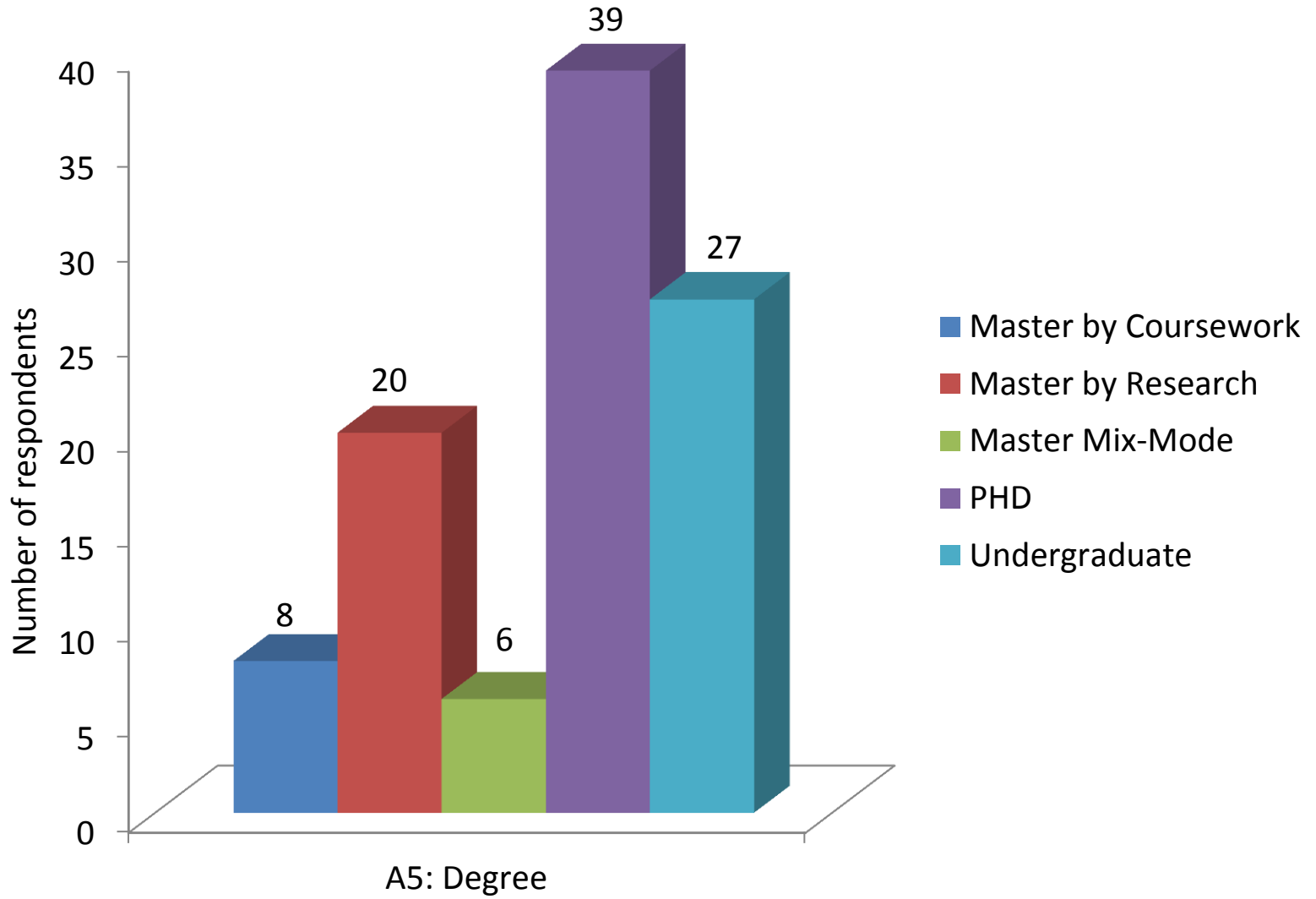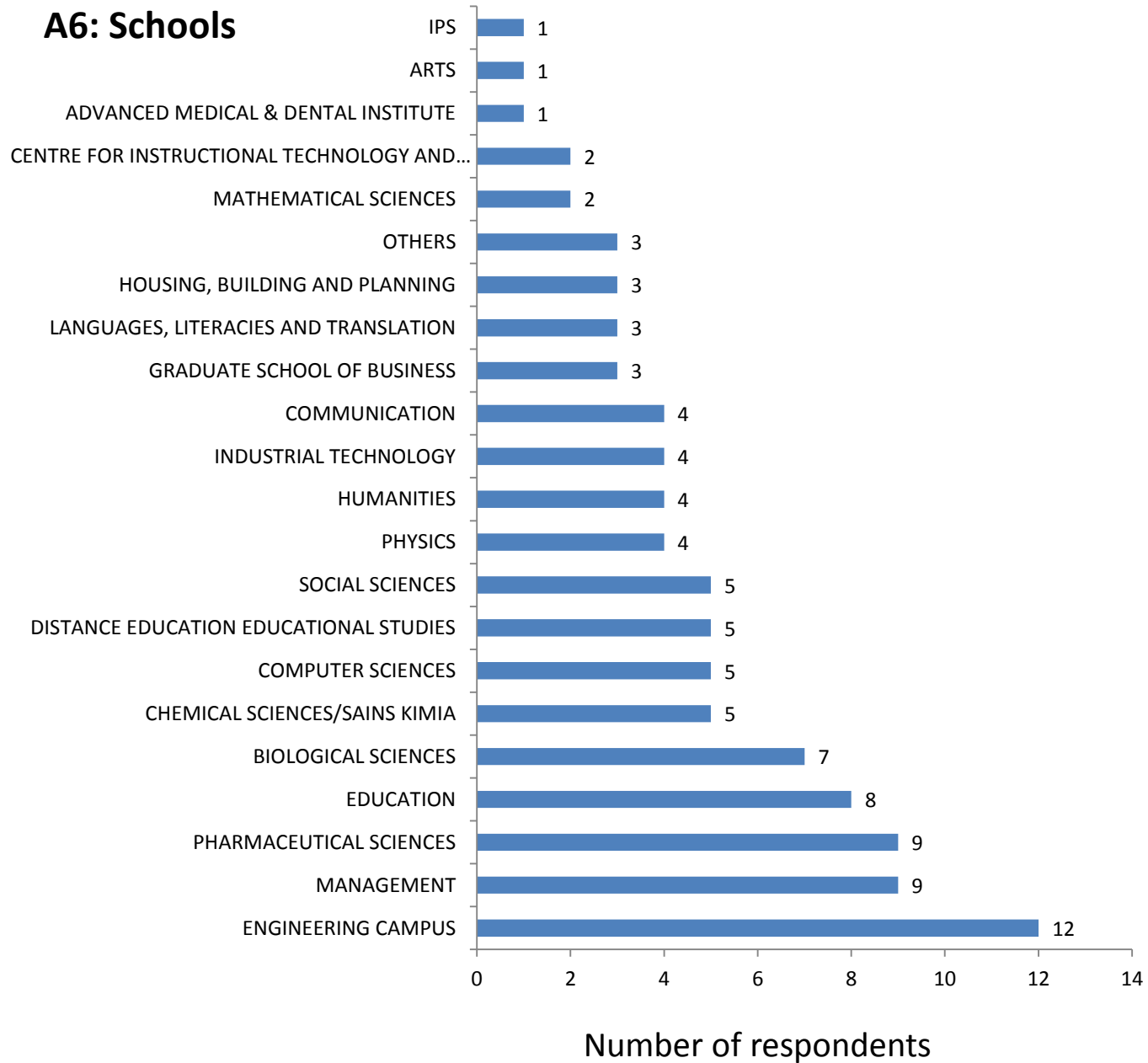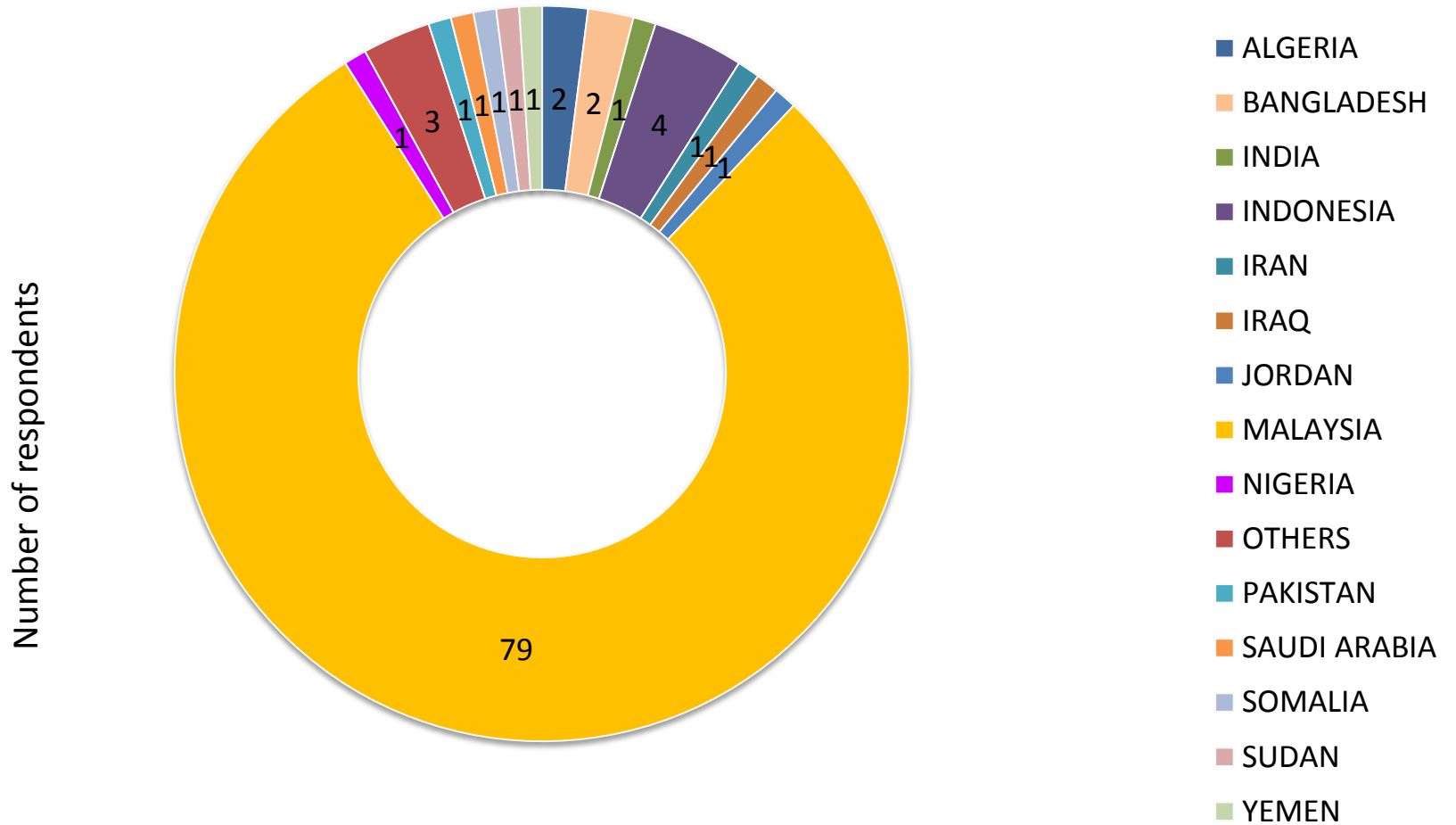This section is aimed to expose usage trend towards Reference Services. It is found that only 14% of respondents knew the name of librarian or staff. This showed that the facilitators or staff were not remembered by customers as important experts in supporting their studies and research. Among three (3) workshops being held by RRD, the highest participation were Endnote (31%), OPAC (30%), and lastly, Information Literacy Skill (ILS) (23%). This showed that Endnote was popular workshop among respondents. Many of the respondents were rarely visited Reference & Research Division blog (35%) and the iCounter (47%).Furthermore, 52% of the respondents 'once in while' requested assistance/services/help from the Reference and Research Services. The highest problem required to solved was access database (16%). Meanwhile, the highest usage of reference material in the library were handbooks (37%).

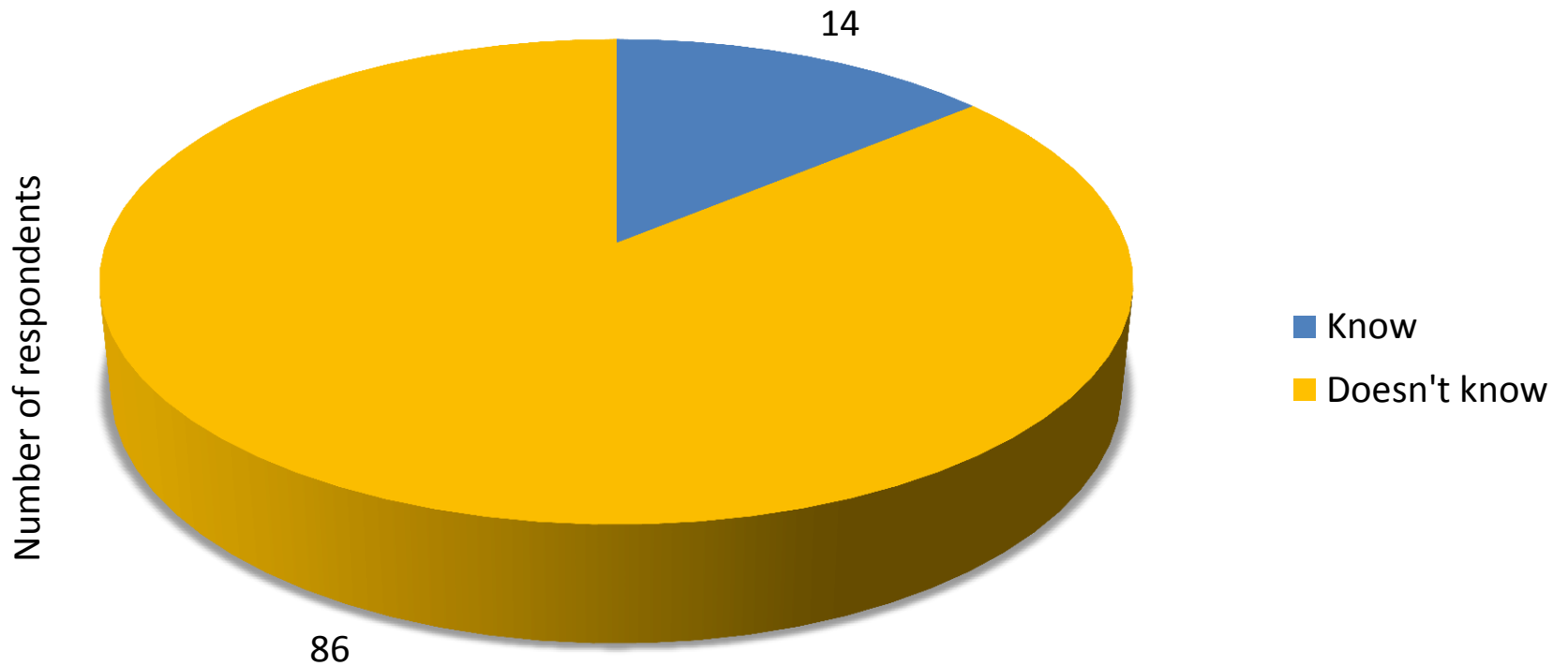**B1. I know one of the library staff or Reference Librarians by names.**
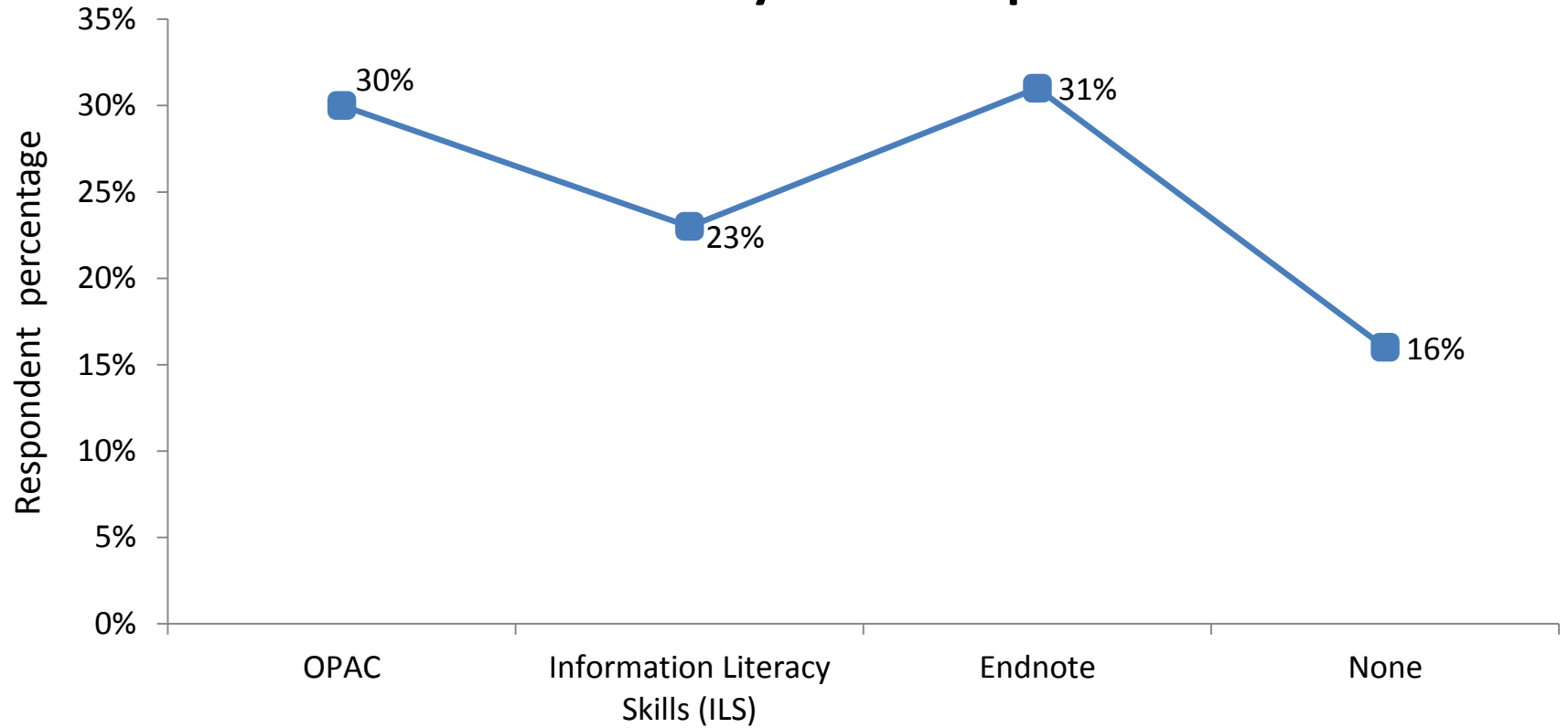
B2. I have attended these Library Workshops.

B3. How often do you visit Reference and Research Divison's blog?
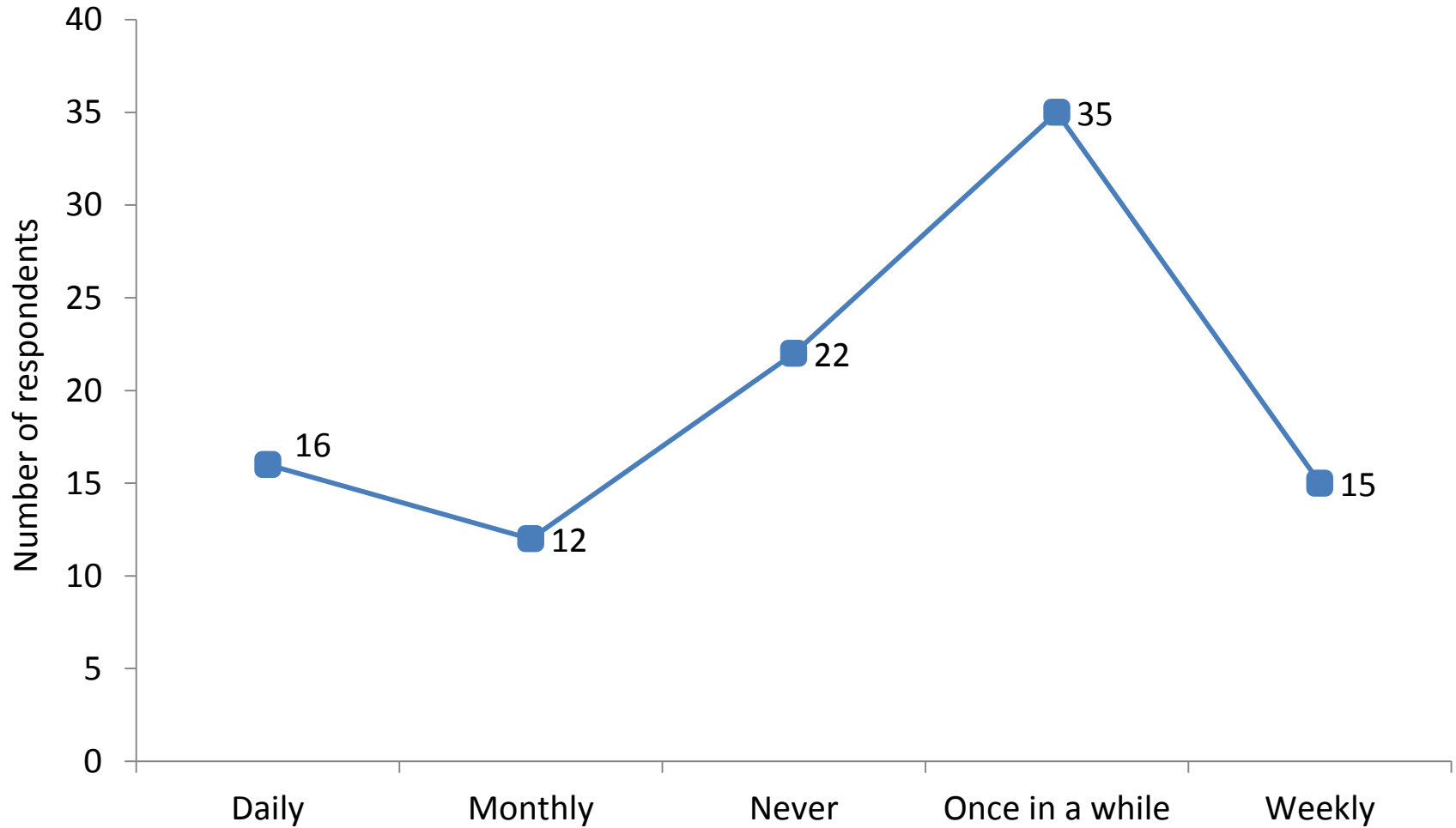
Figure 11:

B4. How often do you visit Reference Counter / iCounter, PHS?
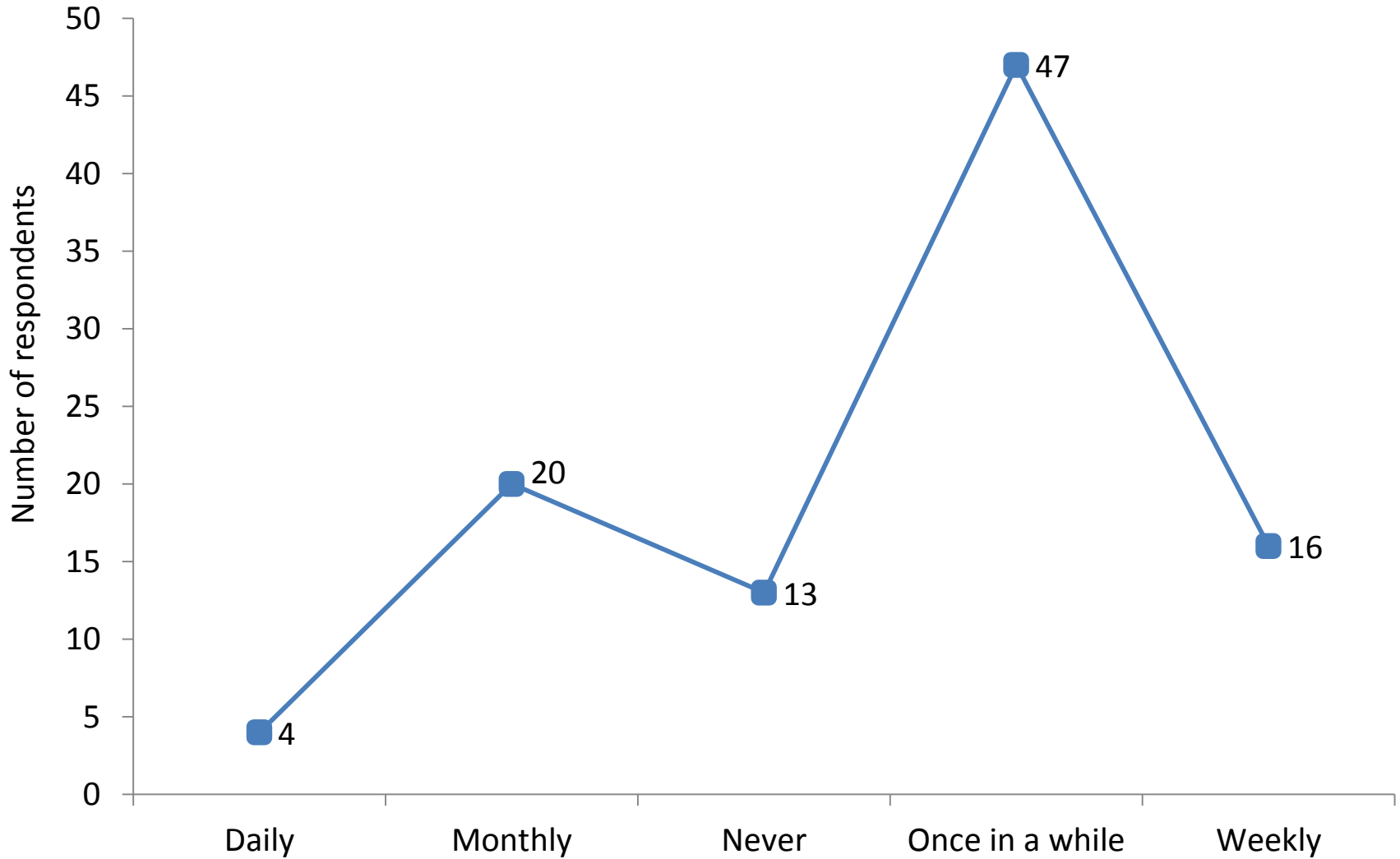
B5. How often do you request assistance/service/help from the Reference & Research Division?
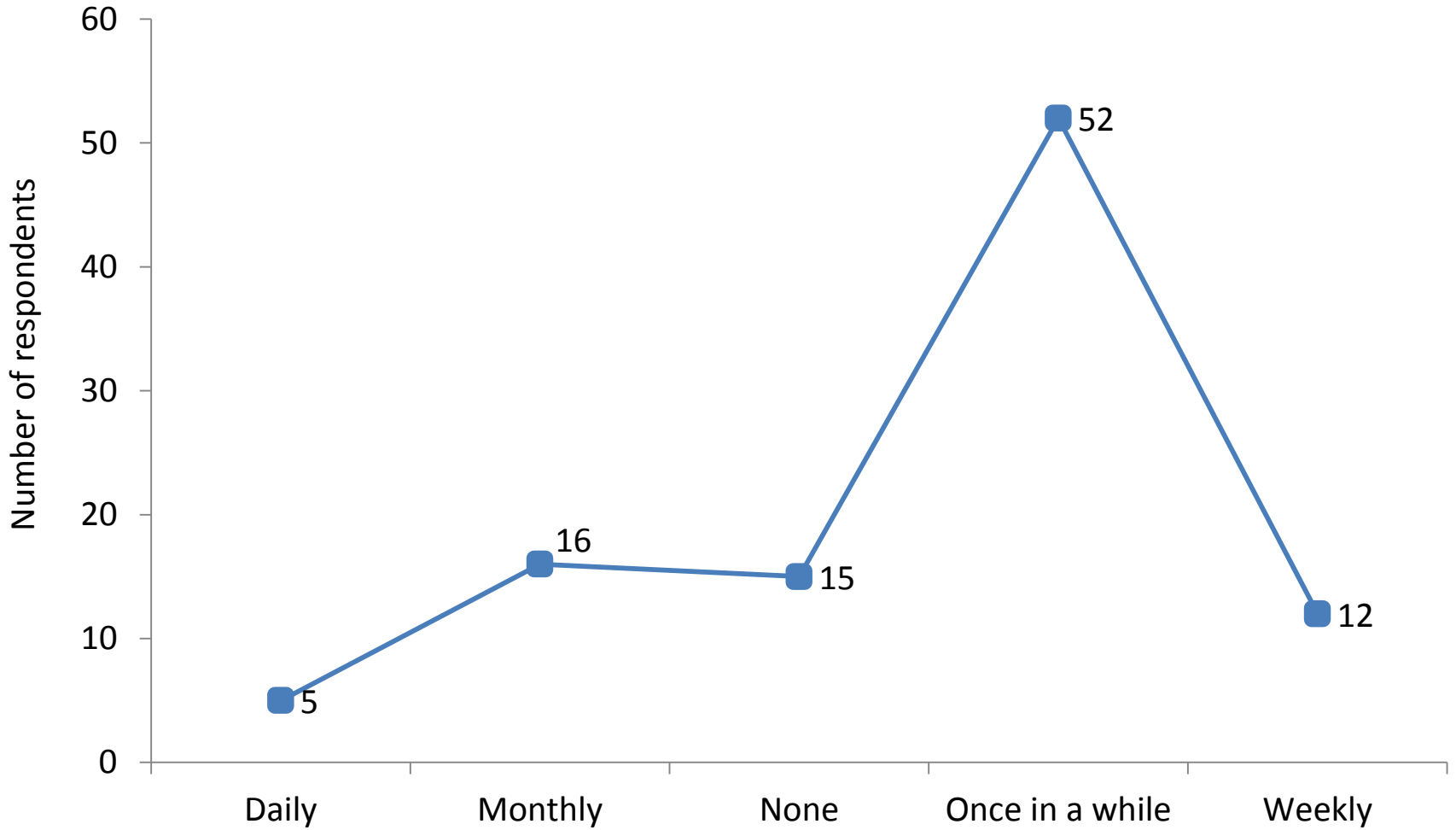
Figure 13:
B6. What assistance/service/help do you usually request?

Respondent percentage

- KRISALIS OPAC (Library Catalog)
- Endnote
- Download articles
- Access database
- Ezproxy
- Patron Login
- Information Literacy Skills (ILS) workshop
- Endnote workshops
- Library portal website
- Refer reference materials e.g: Dictionary
- None of the above
- Others
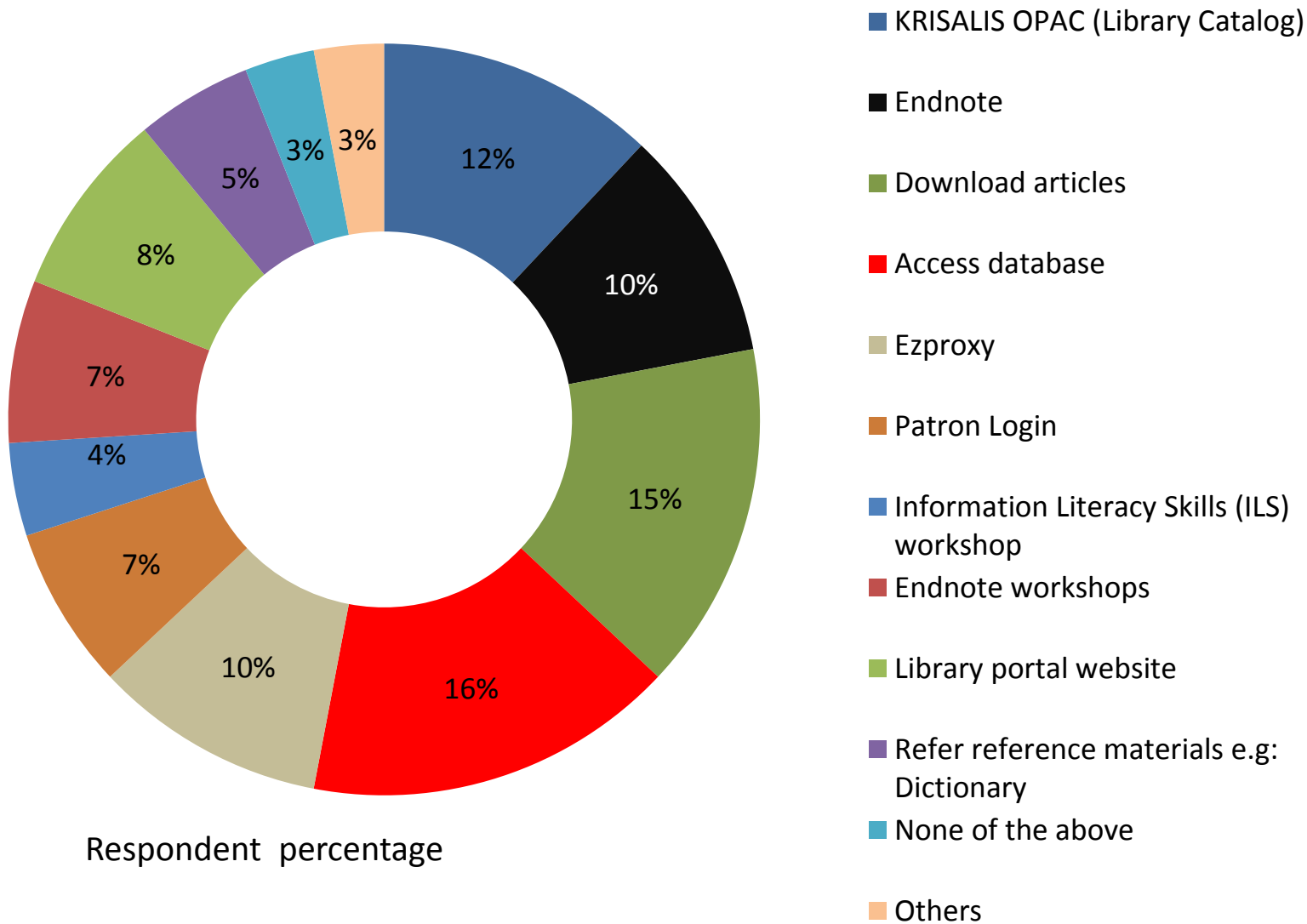
B7. I have used these kind of reference materials before in the library
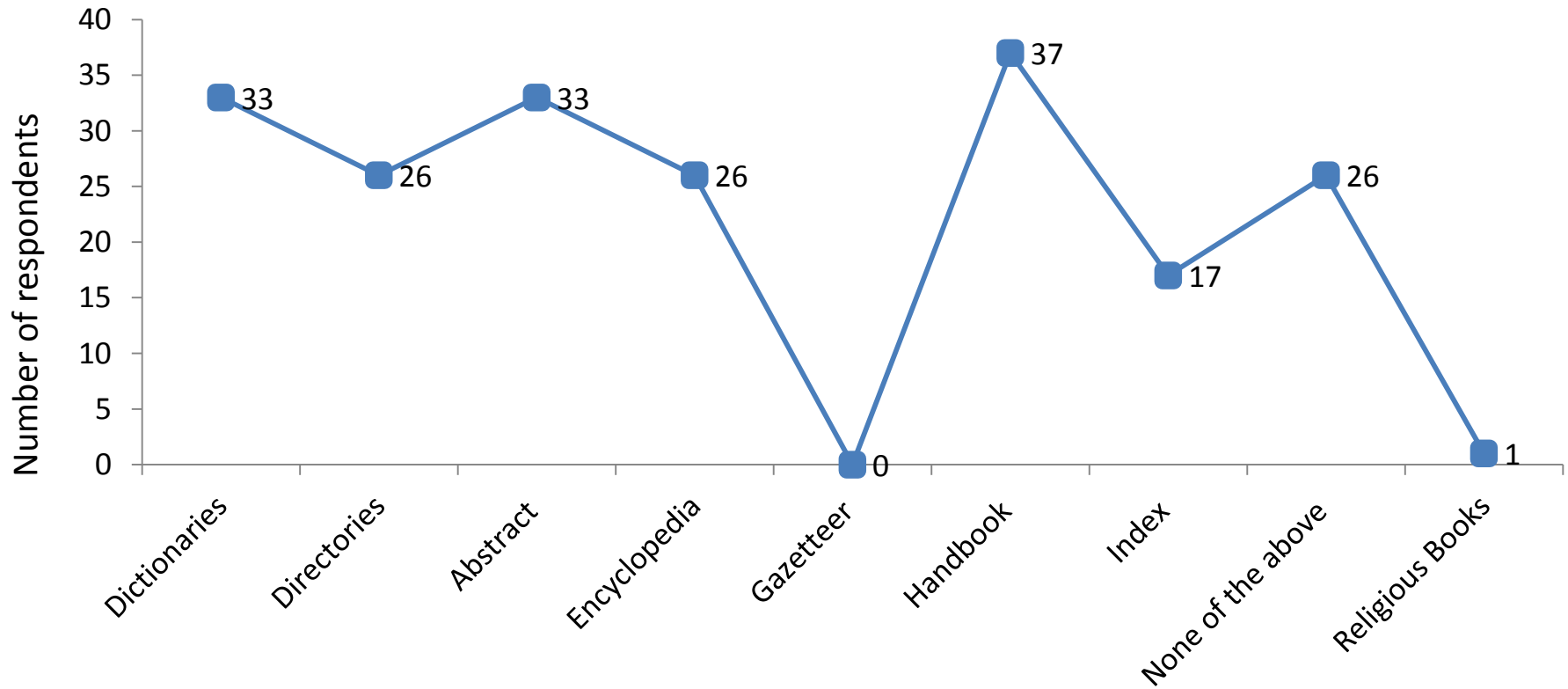
SECTION C: SERVICES SATISFACTION

This section is aimed to determine users' satisfaction with Reference Services. 66% of respondents 'once in while' meet RRD staff to get personal consultation. Most of them get help through the iCounter (48%). Majority of respondents (72%) felt that the staff were very good paying attention when communicating with them. 79% of the respondents also felt that the staff were very good answering questions. More over, 75% of the respondents felt Reference Services was very good in fulfilling their relevance needs. As a whole, the respondents (75%) were satisfied with current Reference Services.

C1. How often do you meet staff to get personal consultation?
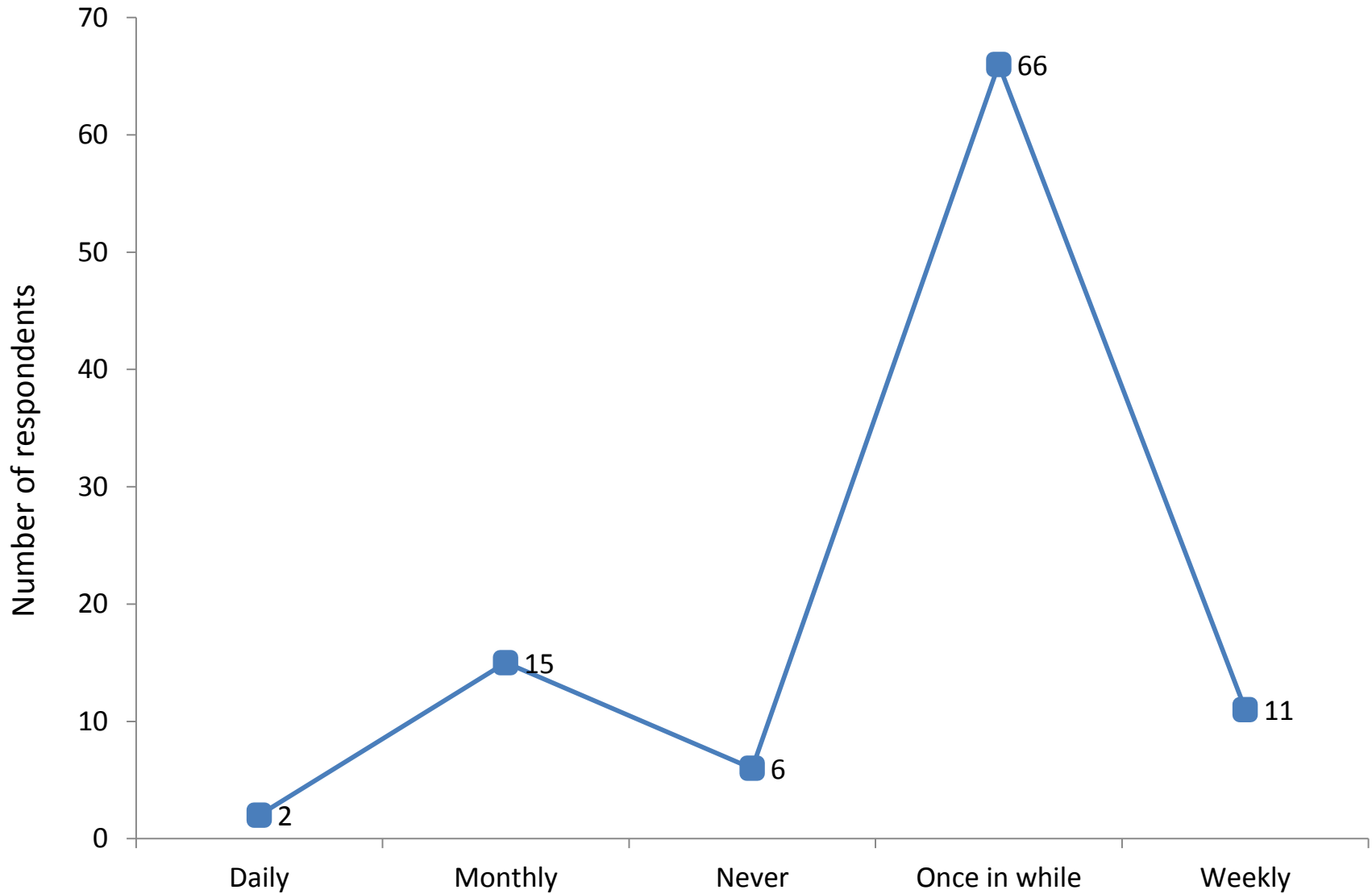
Figure 16:

C2. How do you communicate with them?

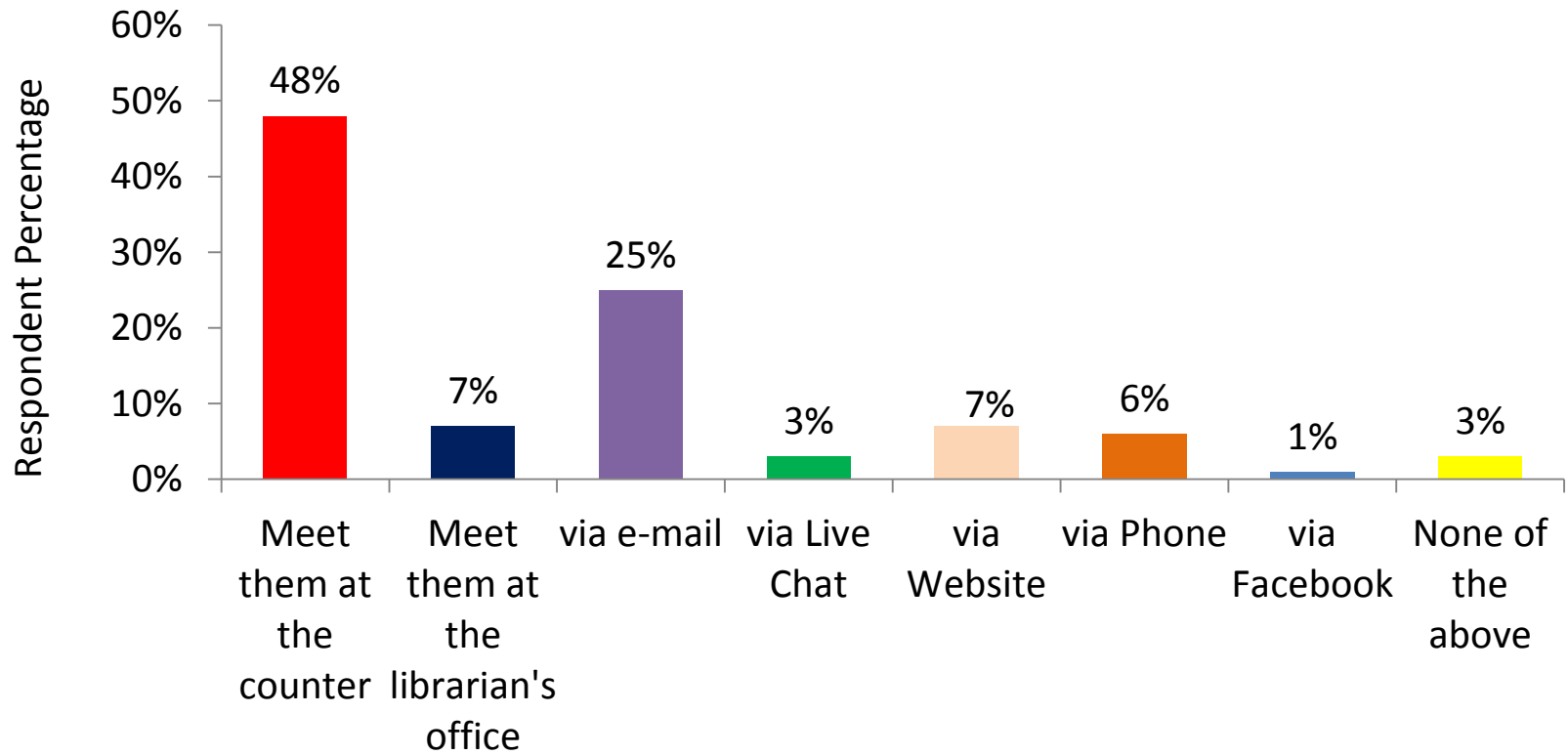Figure 17:

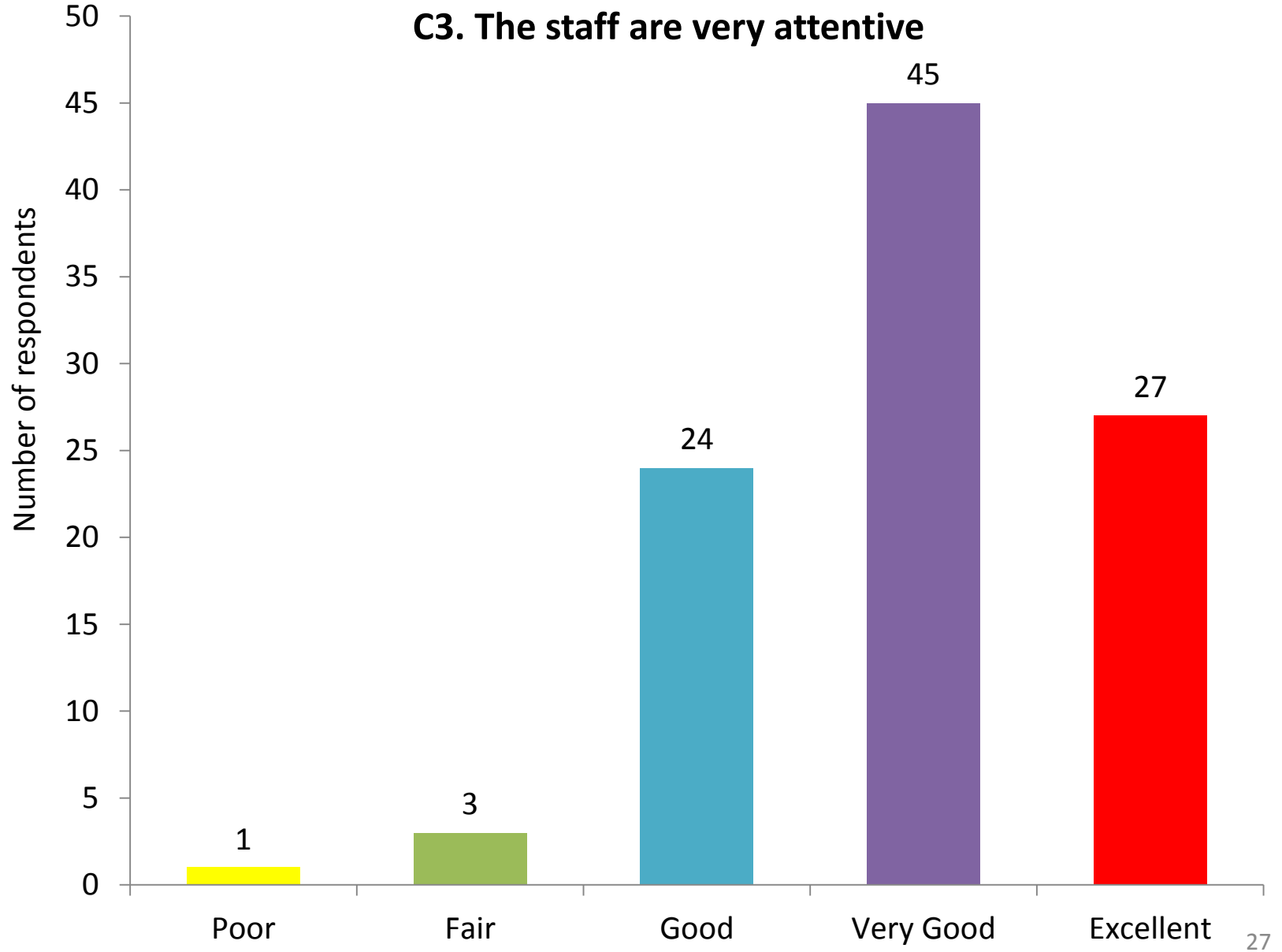**C3. The staff are very attentive**

C4. The staff are always answered questions effectively

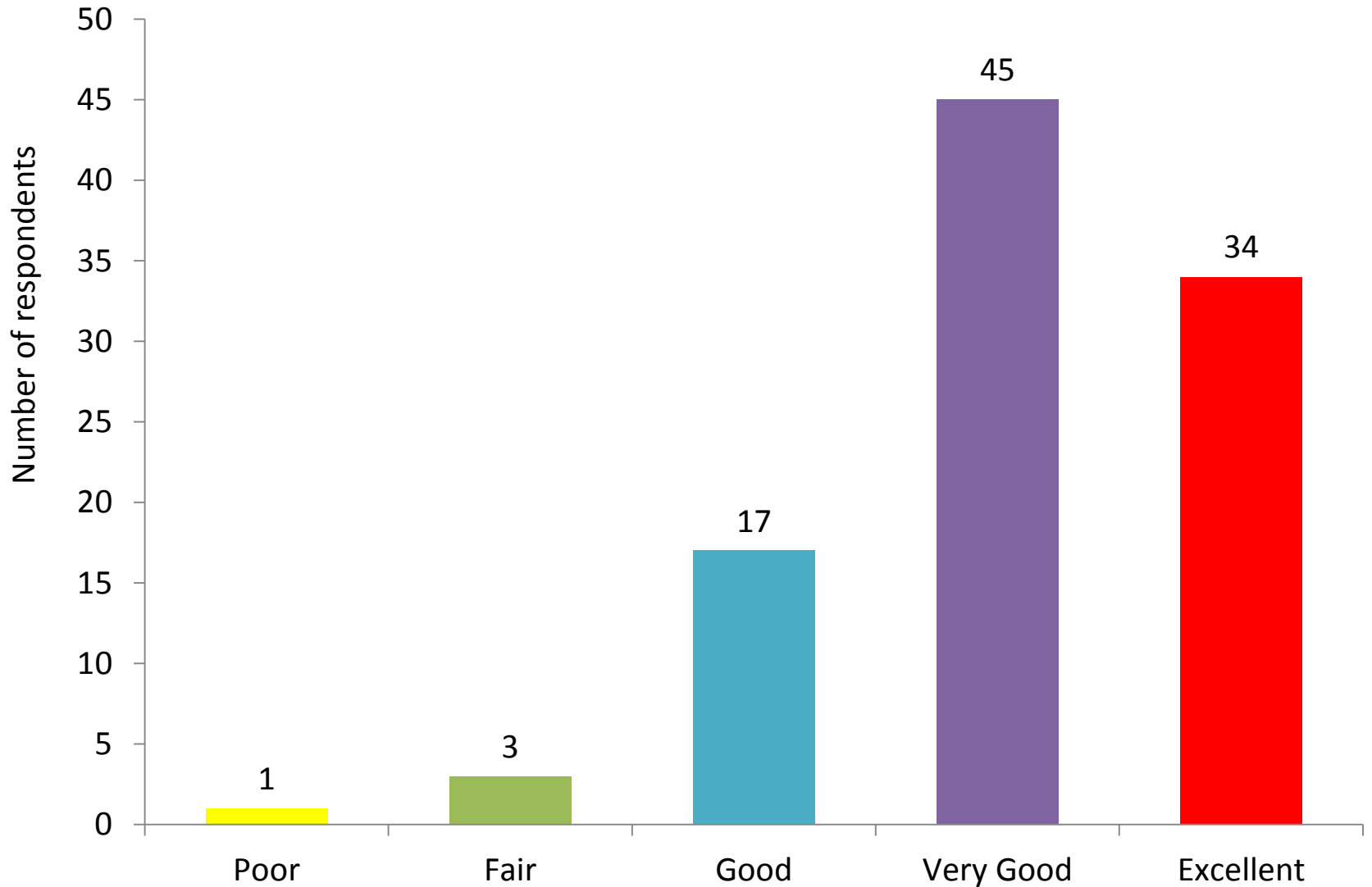**C5. The reference services always relevant to my needs**
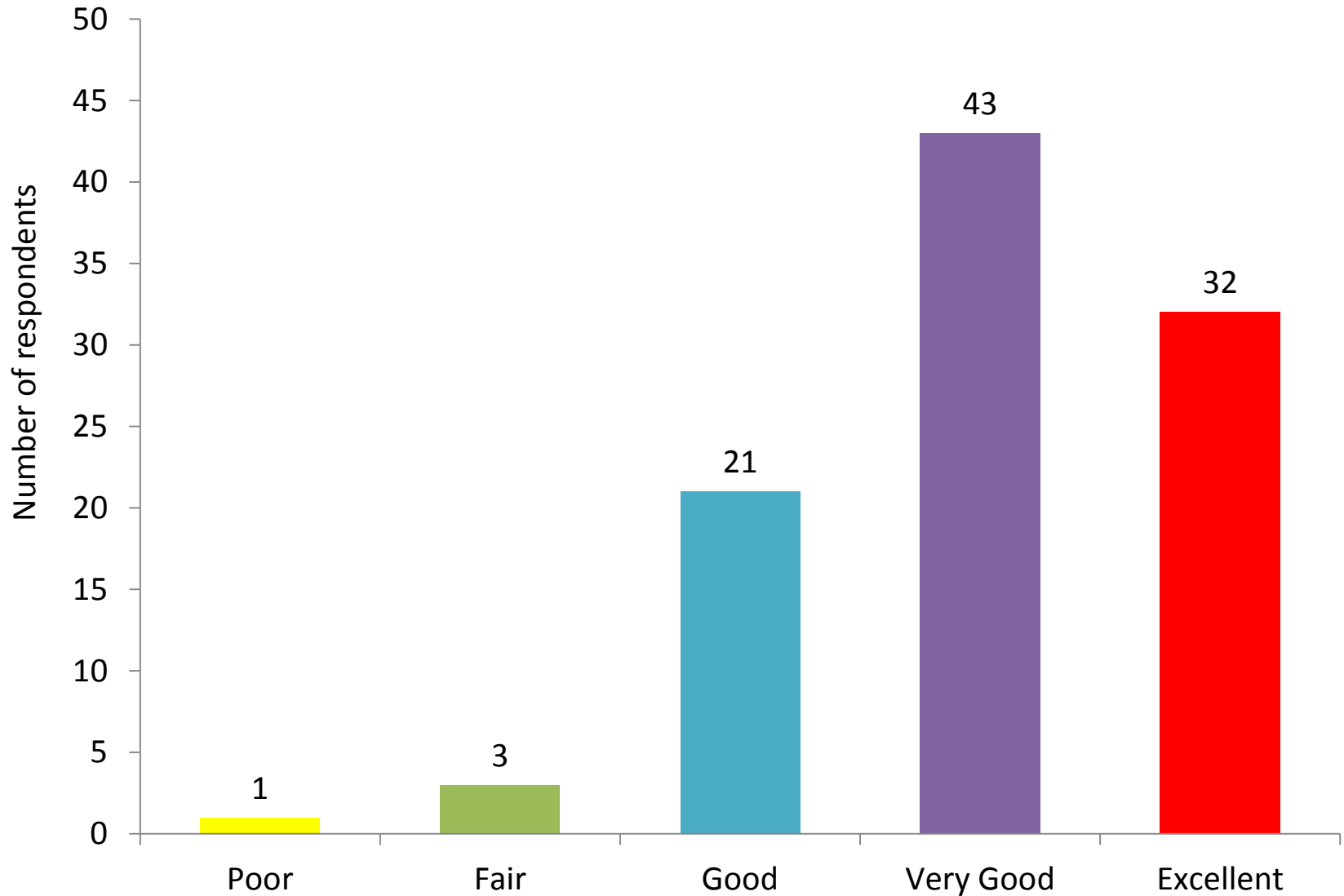
C6. My overall satisfaction level with the reference services
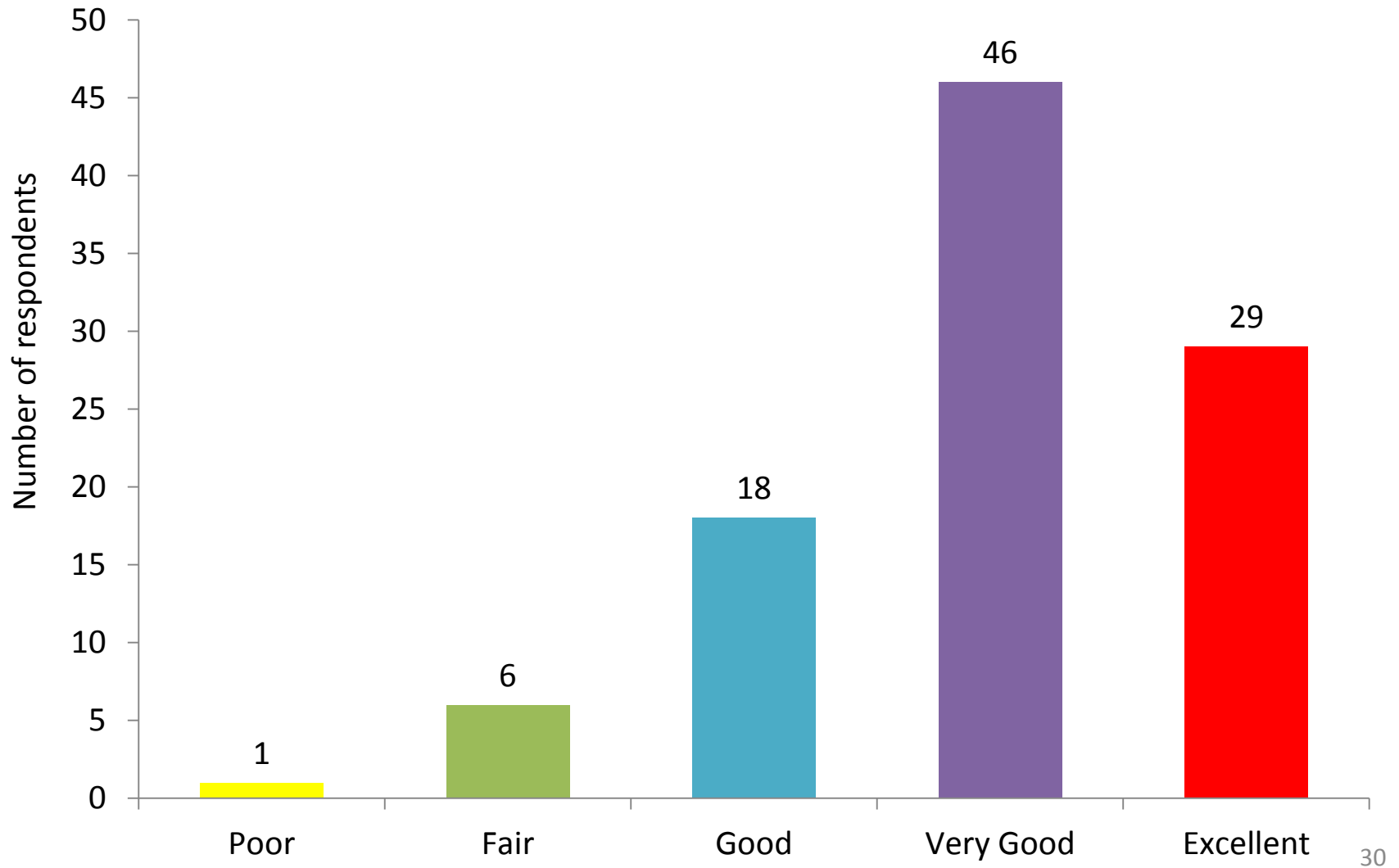
SECTION D: RESEARCH SUPPORT SERVICE

This section is aimed to find the users' needs on Research Support Services. 90% of respondents felt that Reference Librarians were highly supporting their research works. Whereas, 10% of respondents felt contrary as showed in these three statements :

i.   The Reference Librarians were unable to understand the research needs according to their perspectives (3%),

i)   The Reference Librarians were unable to get the fulltext document (3%), and,

ii)   The lack of technical support (2%).

Elsewhere, if they are find some information today in the library, 67% of the respondents answered "literature searching techniques" and 66% of them were looking "academic writing skills". On the other hand, only 8% of the respondents to suggest more research support courses and unlimited fulltext journal articles. Hence, 8% of respondents suggested research support service should organize publishing courses.

D1. Do you feel the Reference Librarians are supporting your research work?
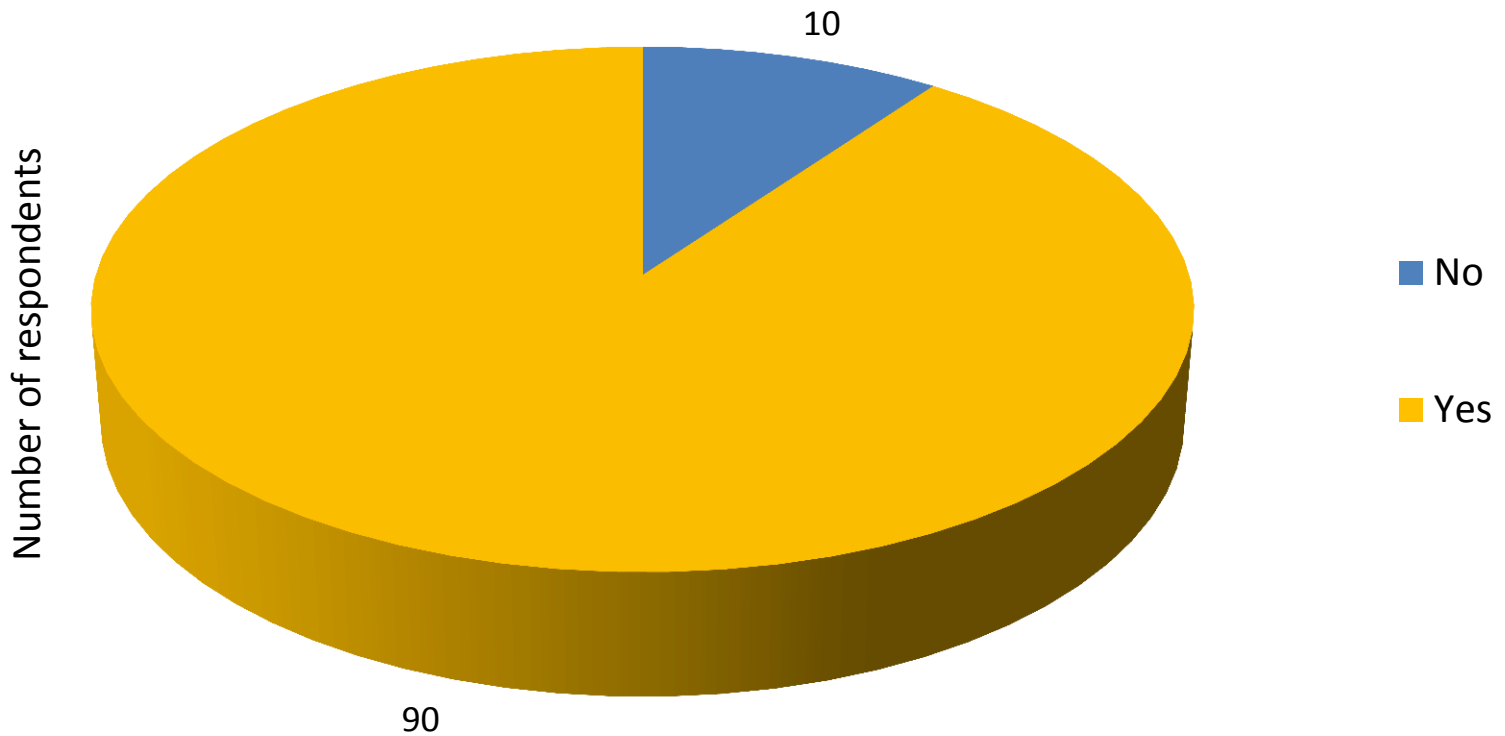
D1i. If NO, the Reference Librarians ARE NOT supporting students' research works because
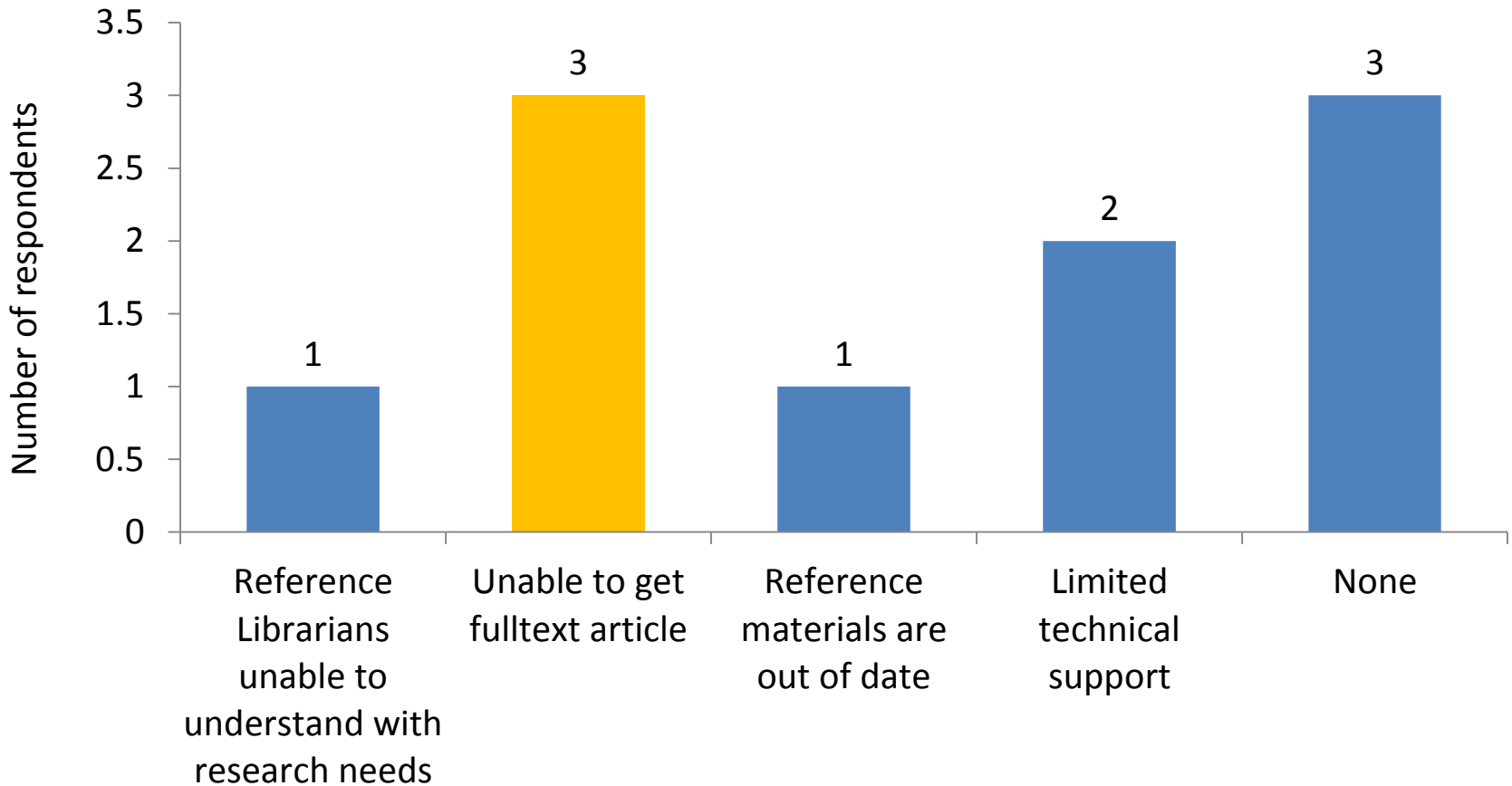
Figure 23:

D2. If you are looking for information today, you be looking for?

Number of respondents

- Consultation on publishing academic articles
- Academic writing skills
- Literature searching techniques
- Bibliography/references management consultation
- Data collection analysis consultation
- Unlimited period and title of journal subcription
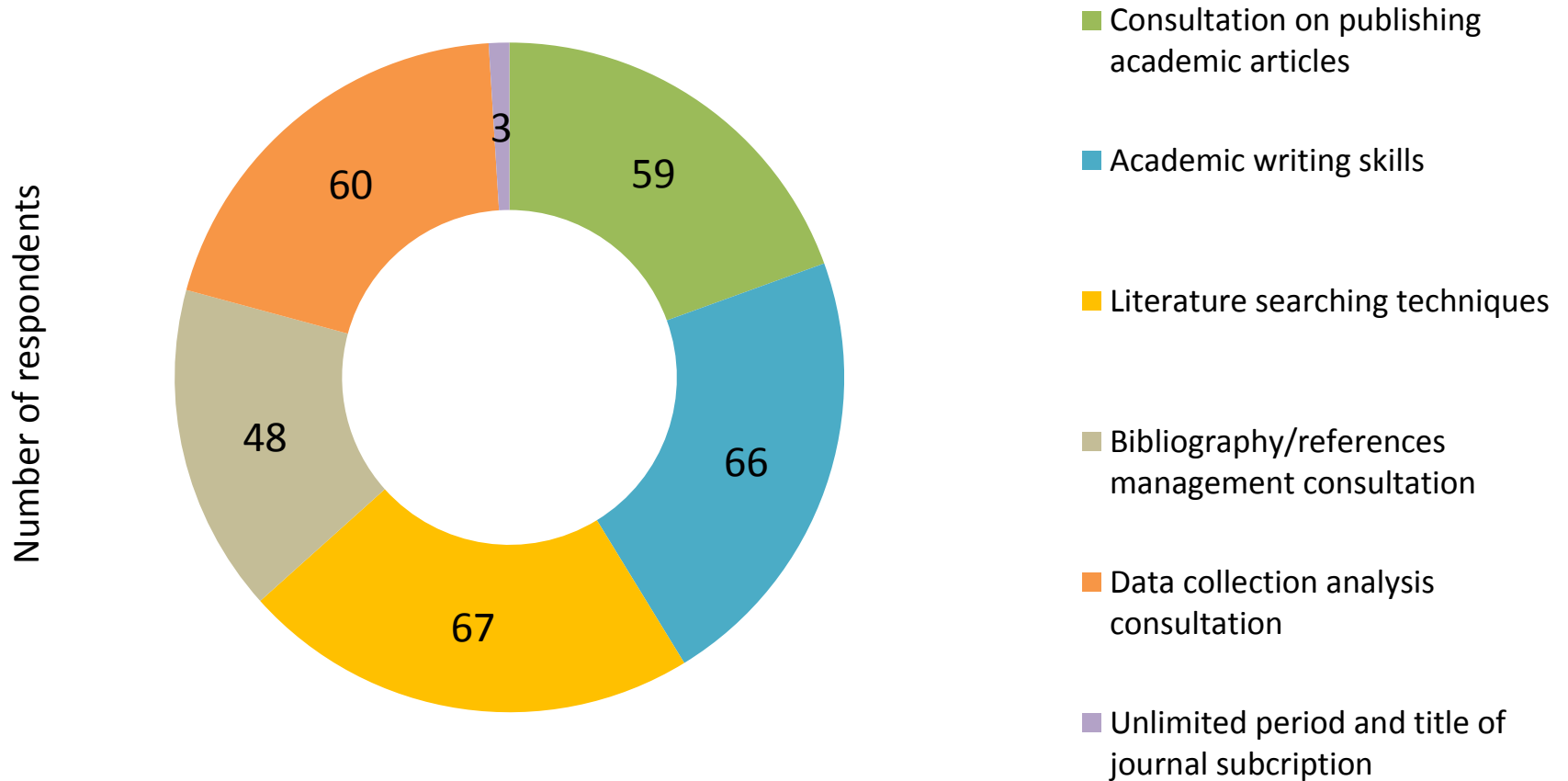
Figure 24:

D3. Any suggestion to help us improve the Reference and Research Services?

Number of respondents

- Unlimited fulltext in journal articles
- More research support courses
- More latest editions on reference books
- More information on FAQ
- More promotion involved
- More faster feedback in email
- Need notes and handout via e-learning
- Subject lists appear with tags
- Digitize old books
- More contact with academicians
- Sustain eagerness when assist users
- More license on Datastream
- Enhance skills on IT savvy
- No idea

Values shown on chart: 8, 8, 2, 1, 1, 1, 2, 1, 1, 2, 4, 3, 1, 65

35

D4. What other courses/ applications (which are not currently being offered) would you like us to run?

Legend:
- SPSS
- Publishing
- Advance Microsoft Office software
- Hands-on Databases
- Guide to use databases from government agencies
- Subject focus courses
- ReseacrherID, Scopus ID, Google Scholar ID dan ORCID
- Data mining
- Mendeley, ATLAS Ti, AMOS
- SEM, NVIVO
- No idea

Number of respondents

Values shown: 4, 8, 1, 1, 1, 1, 80
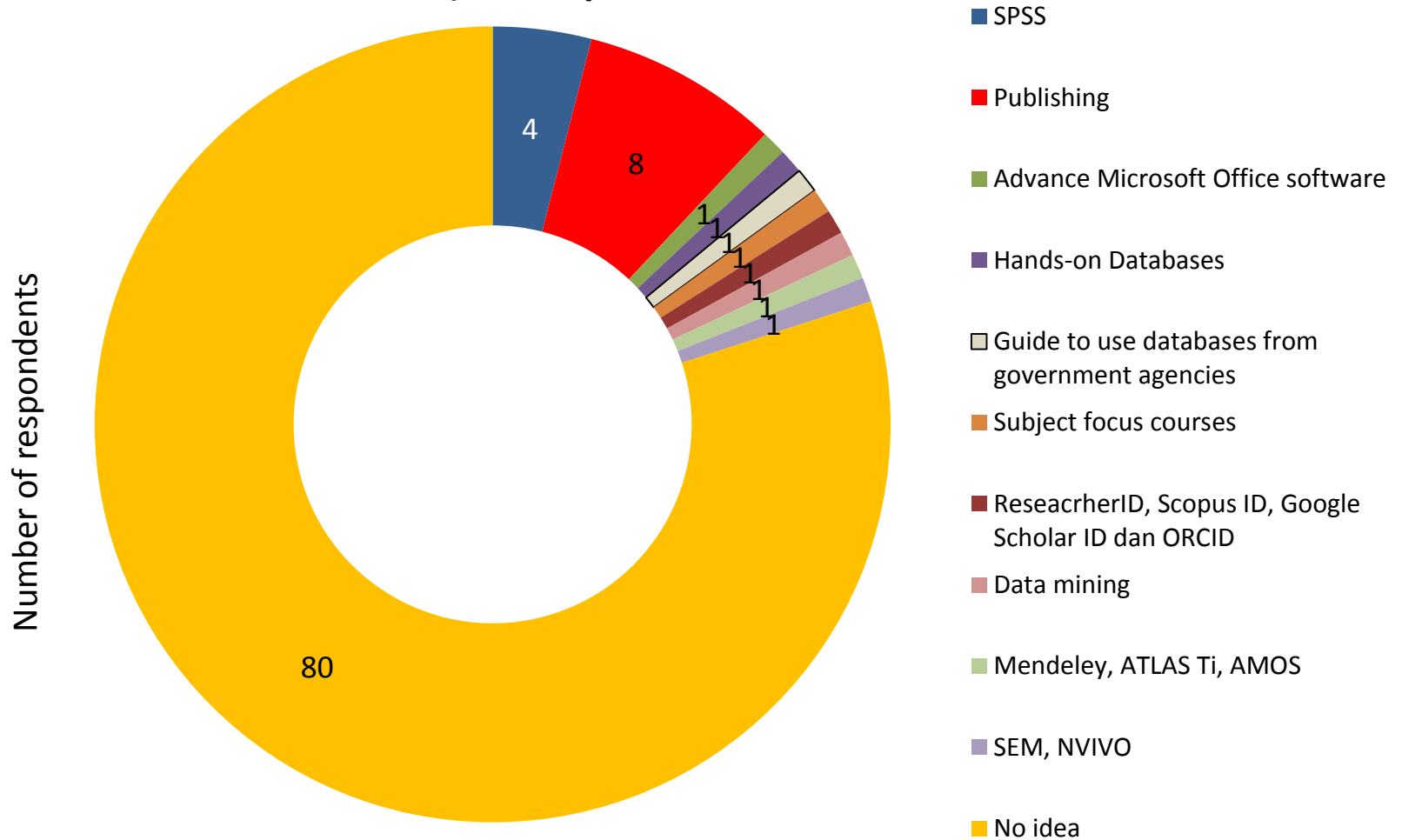
Conclusions

1. Staff in Reference & Research Division are still not being remembered by customers as important experts in supporting their studies and research. Therefore, the further study to identify these causes should be implemented in future.

2. The most popular service was Endnote consultation.

3. Counter facilities were still popular among customers rather than online facilities . This showed that the first place they were going to get information was at the counter not via online.

4. Although customers rarely get engaged with Reference Services, the majority of them felt very satisfied on current services.

5. Lastly, the majority of respondents could not give ideas to upgrade Research Support Services.

Recommendations

1. Reference Librarians need more creative efforts to make themselves as visible experts.

2. Reference Librarians need to develop more scholarly publishing and application software training that would help their research works.

3. This pilot study needs deeper research to get more details on how Research Support Services can create a bigger impact towards research works.