

SSA BENEFITS ISSUES SURVEY 2023

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Benefits Planning Work Team

Prepared 9/21/23

Improving Employability for IDD with Social Security Survey – Snapshot Report

- The Improving Employability for IDD with Social Security Survey went live on 7/26/23.
- A Snapshot of the survey was taken on 9/21/23
- At that time, we had received
 - 591 Responses of which 585 met California residency Requirement (English)
 - 31 Responses of which 31 met California residency Requirement (Spanish)

Executive Summary

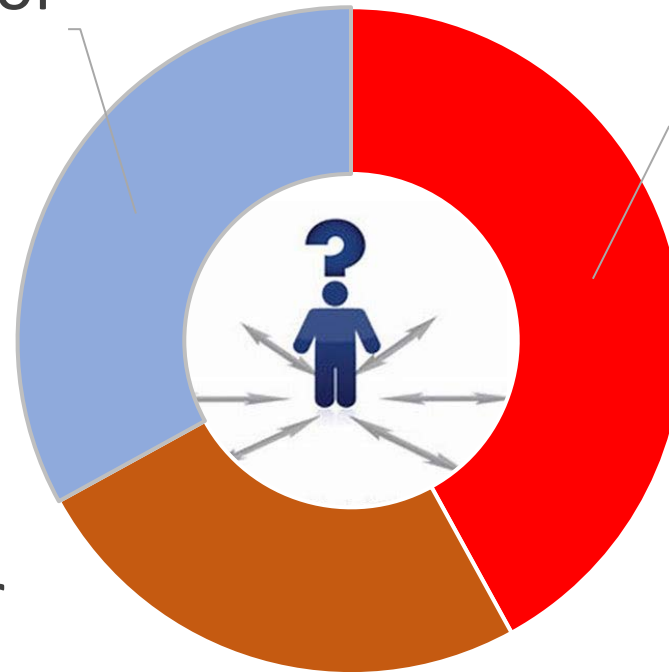
“...You say you want people with disabilities to work but penalize them...”

“I wanted to work so i did social security did not help me in the least. did not answer the phone cut off medical , sent me letters and now an overpayment issue that was there fault how am i supposed to work and take care of this. You say you want people with disabilities to work but penalize them when they do what the point in working if you lose everything or are misinform why not just sit down and live off ssi or ssdi. Well i wanted to work and i do. i assist people with disabilities and have a son that's disabled too. the ssi /ssdi people that don't want to lose there benefits are right to fear losing them because there is no real help if you decide to work just overpayments awaiting you.”

For 67% of the Respondent Fear of Losing Benefits is a Factor in Working



Not a Factor
33%



Major Factor
42%

Factor
25%



28% of the 591 Respondents Experienced Social Security Problems including:

Overpayment Notifications



72% were told that that they needed to refund prior benefit payments

Termination of Benefits



37% had Benefits Terminated

Modified Disability Status



10% were told they no longer had a disability

Loss of Medical Insurance



14% had their Medical Insurance terminated

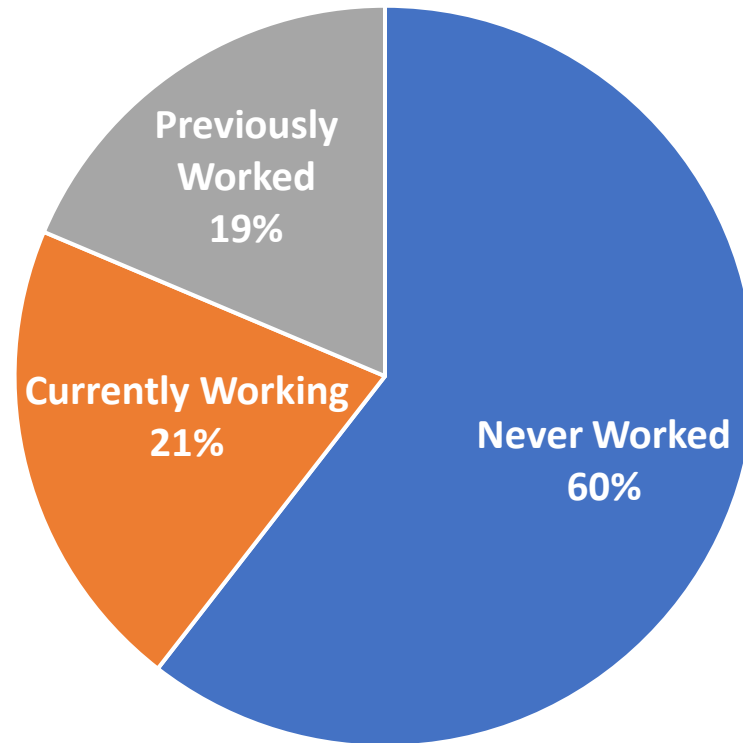
Problem Resolution is still an Issue for many

- 138 of 165 People contact SSA
- 36 people indicated that they were never responded to by SSA
- 44 people escalated to a judicial hearing.
- Out of the 64 reporting problems many still need assistance resolving the matter with 59 providing email addresses requesting assistance.

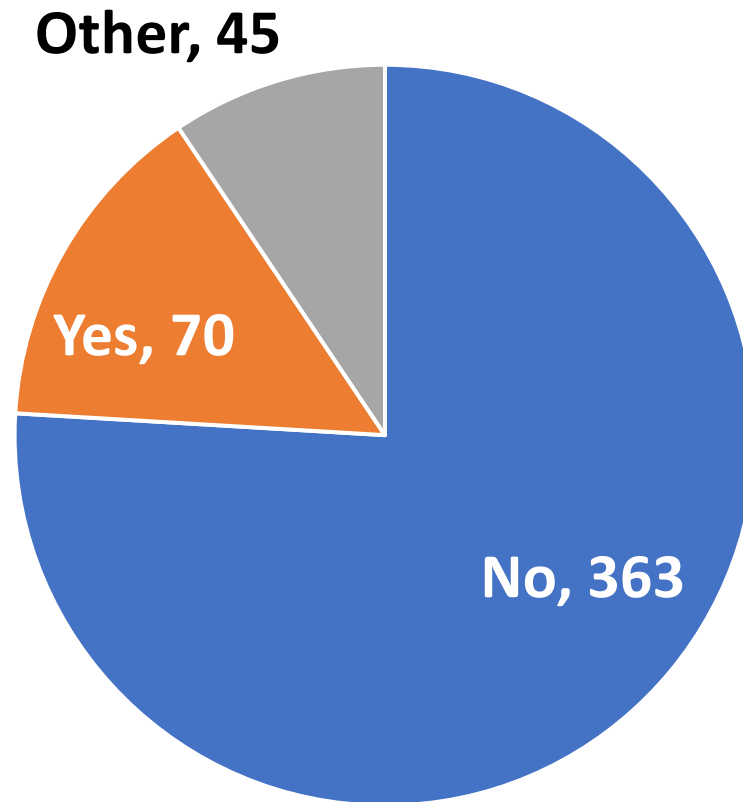


Survey Question Details

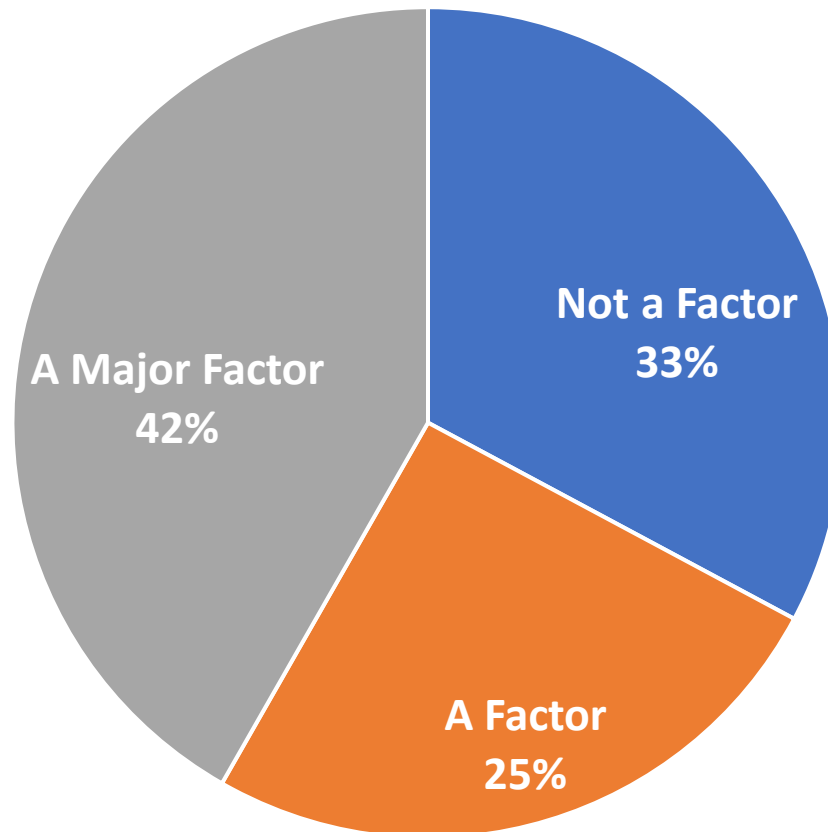
Please provide the beneficiary's current employment status. (585)



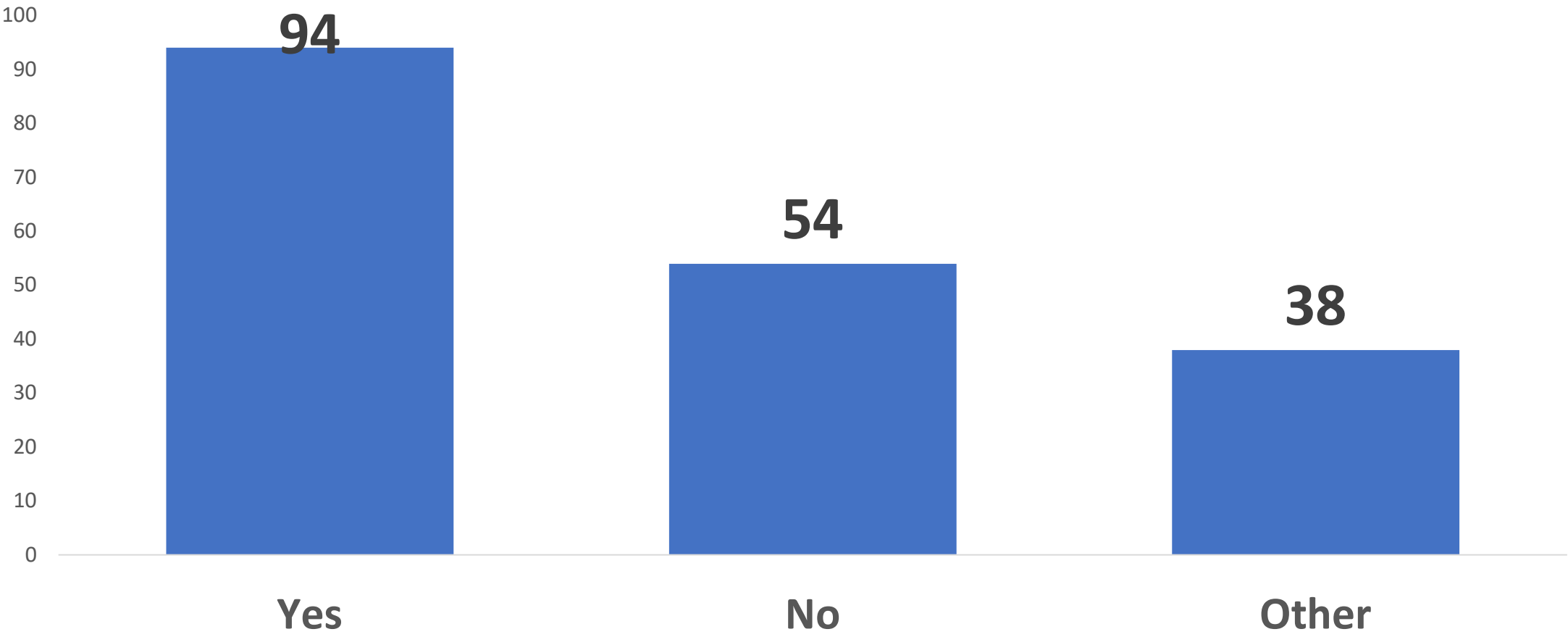
Has the beneficiary ever been counseled to work fewer hours? (478 responses)



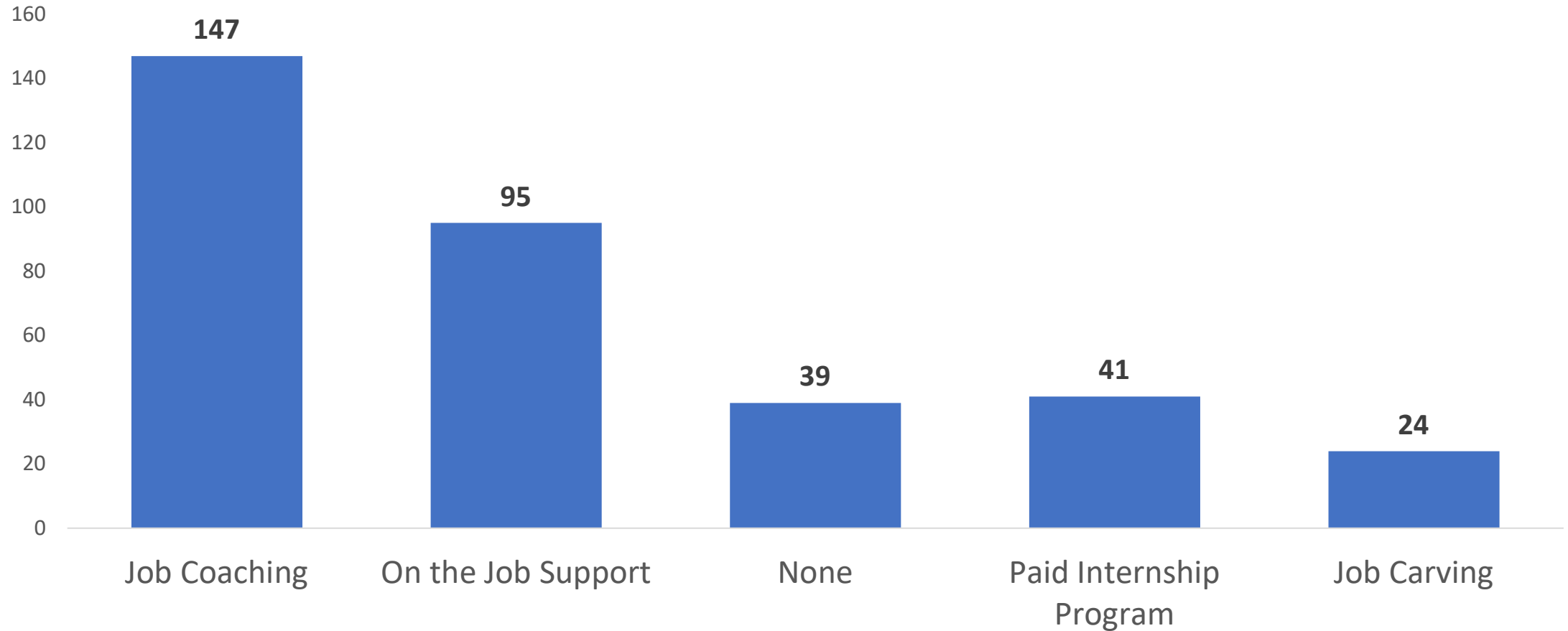
How much has a fear of losing government benefits (medical or cash) been a factor in employment decisions? (460)



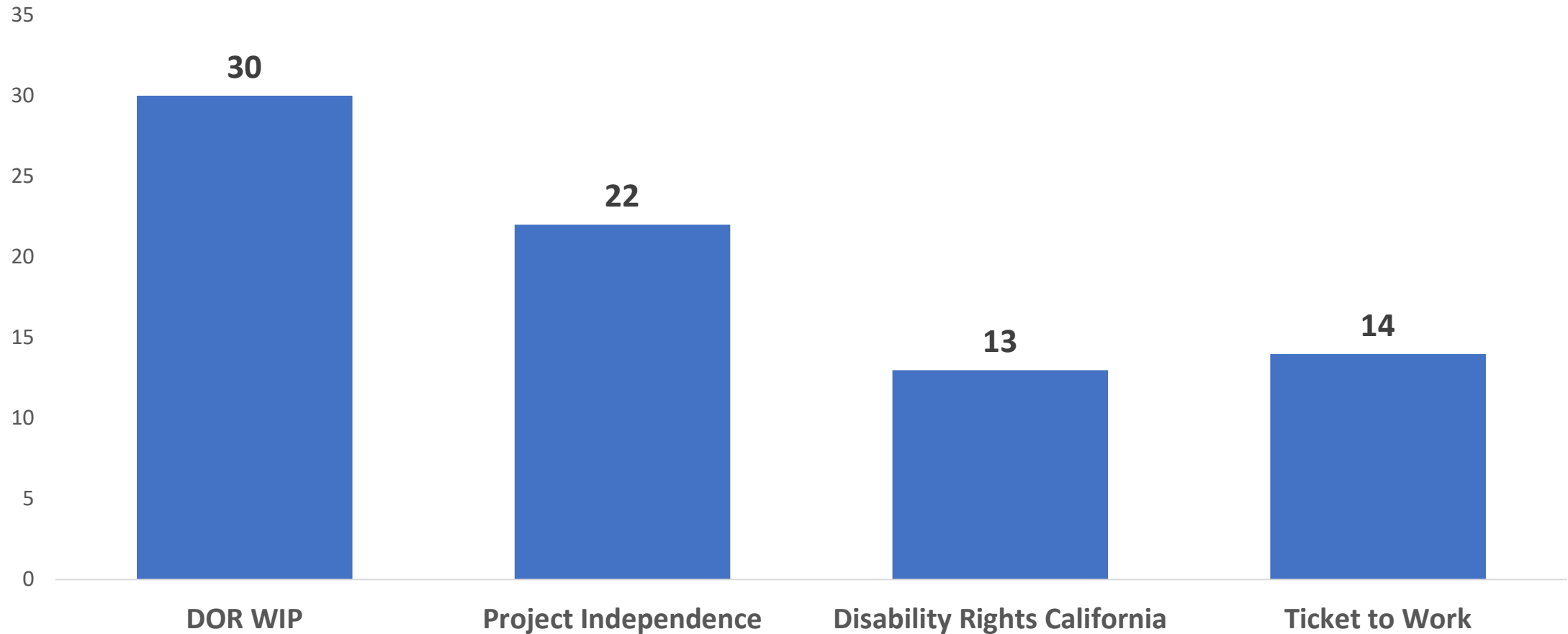
Would the beneficiary work more hours if there were no issues related to receipt of their benefits? (186 Responses)



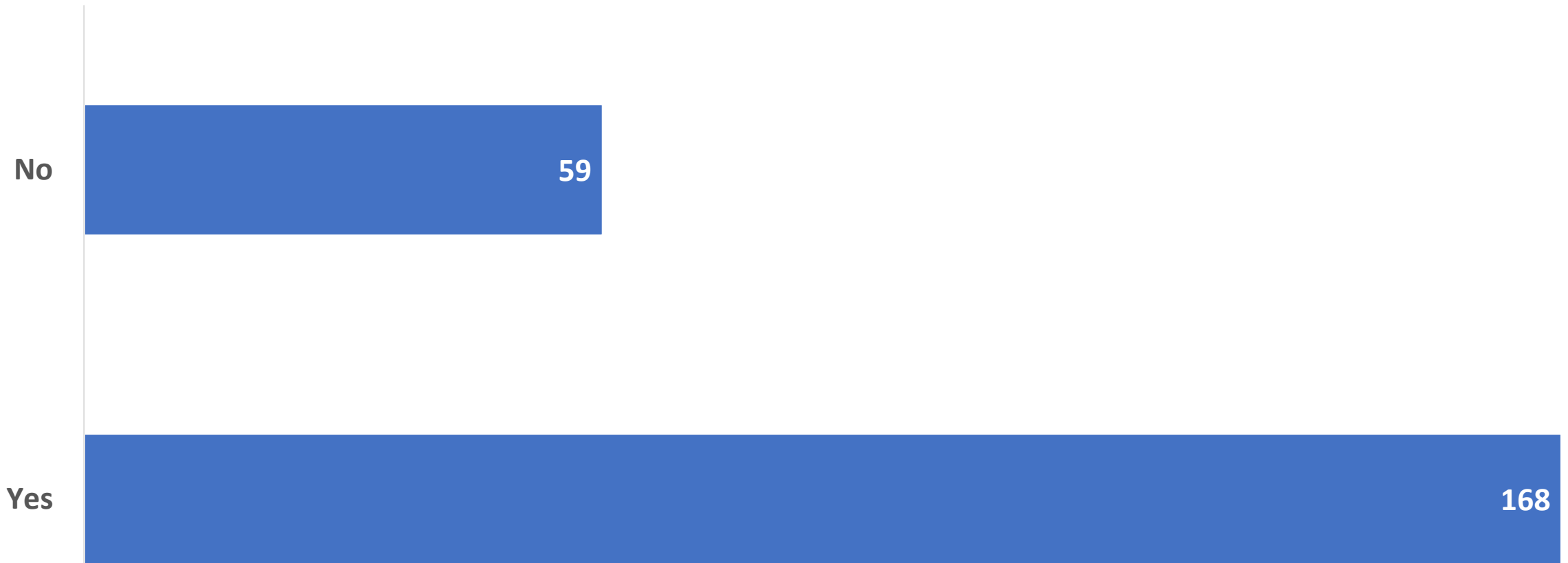
Which of the following employment assistance services has the beneficiary received in the past or is currently receiving? (213)



If the beneficiary received benefits counseling, please indicate from whom. (100)

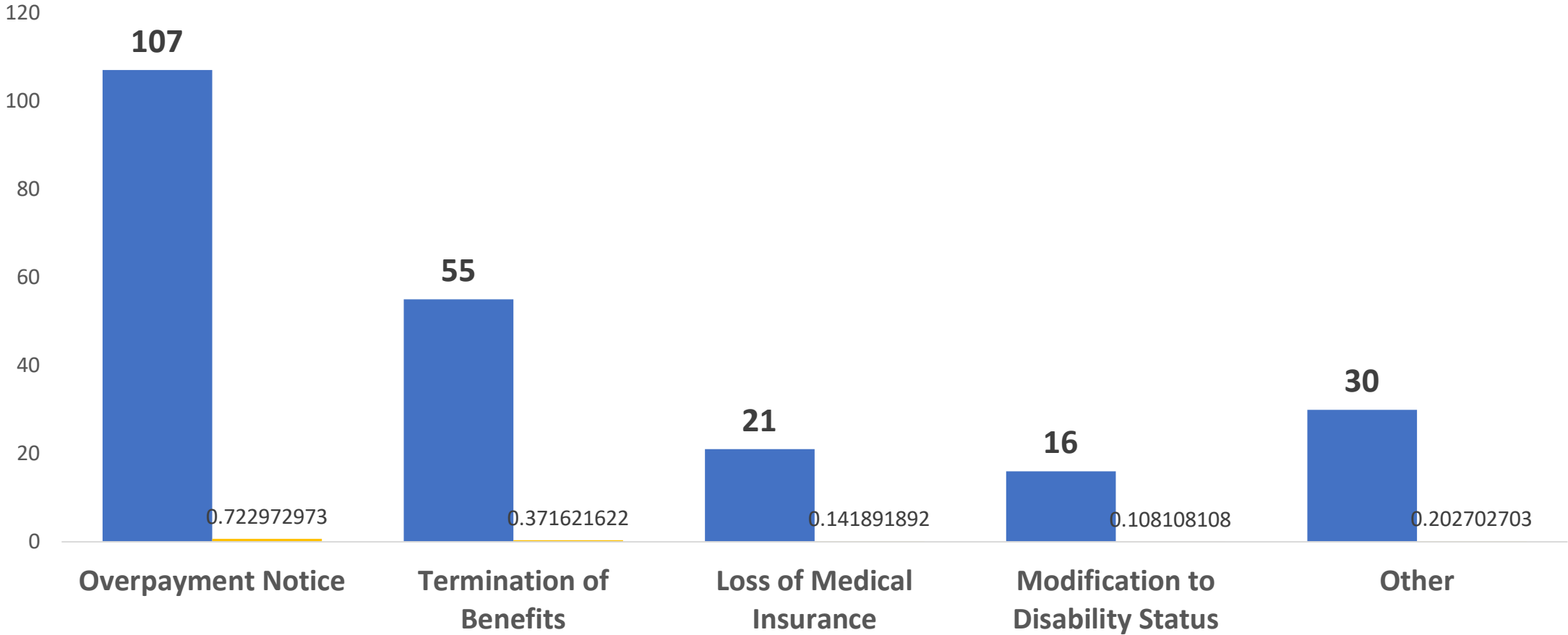


Has the beneficiary ever encountered a problem related to Social Security? (231)

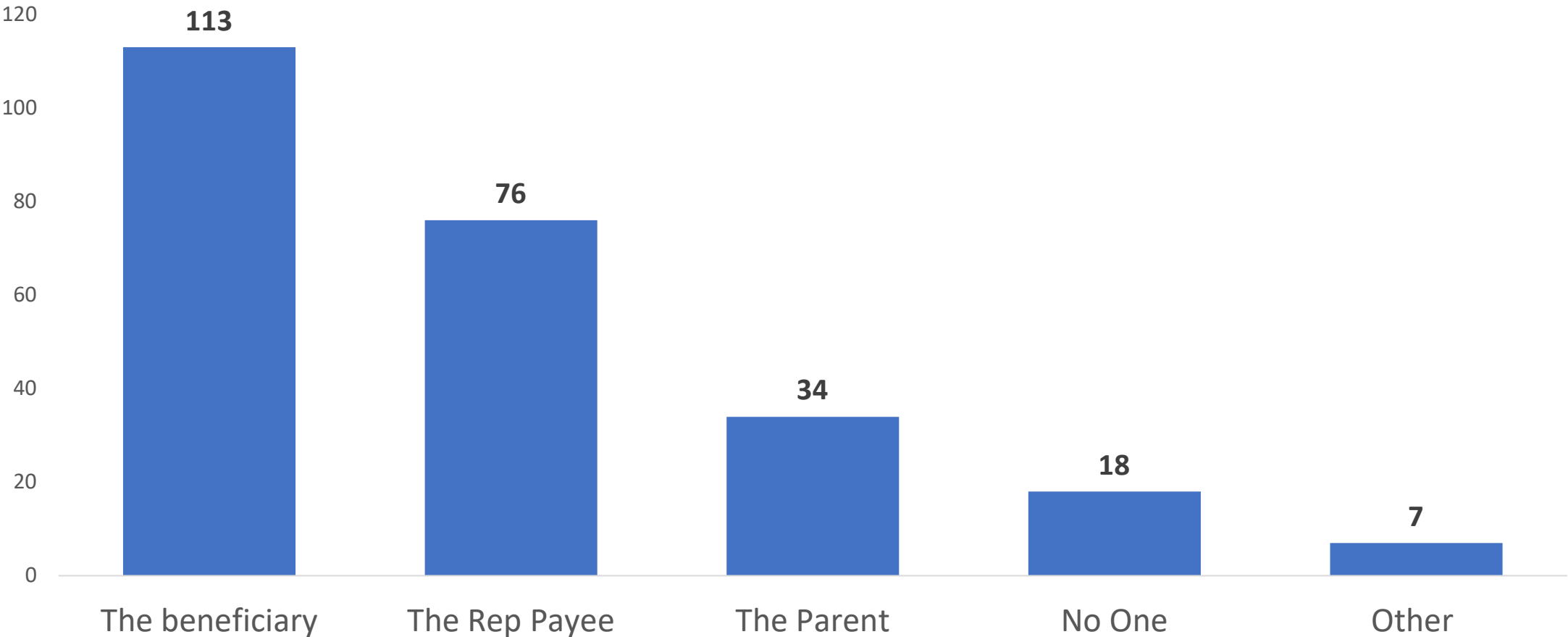


28% of the 591 Respondents indicated that they have experienced problems with Social Security.

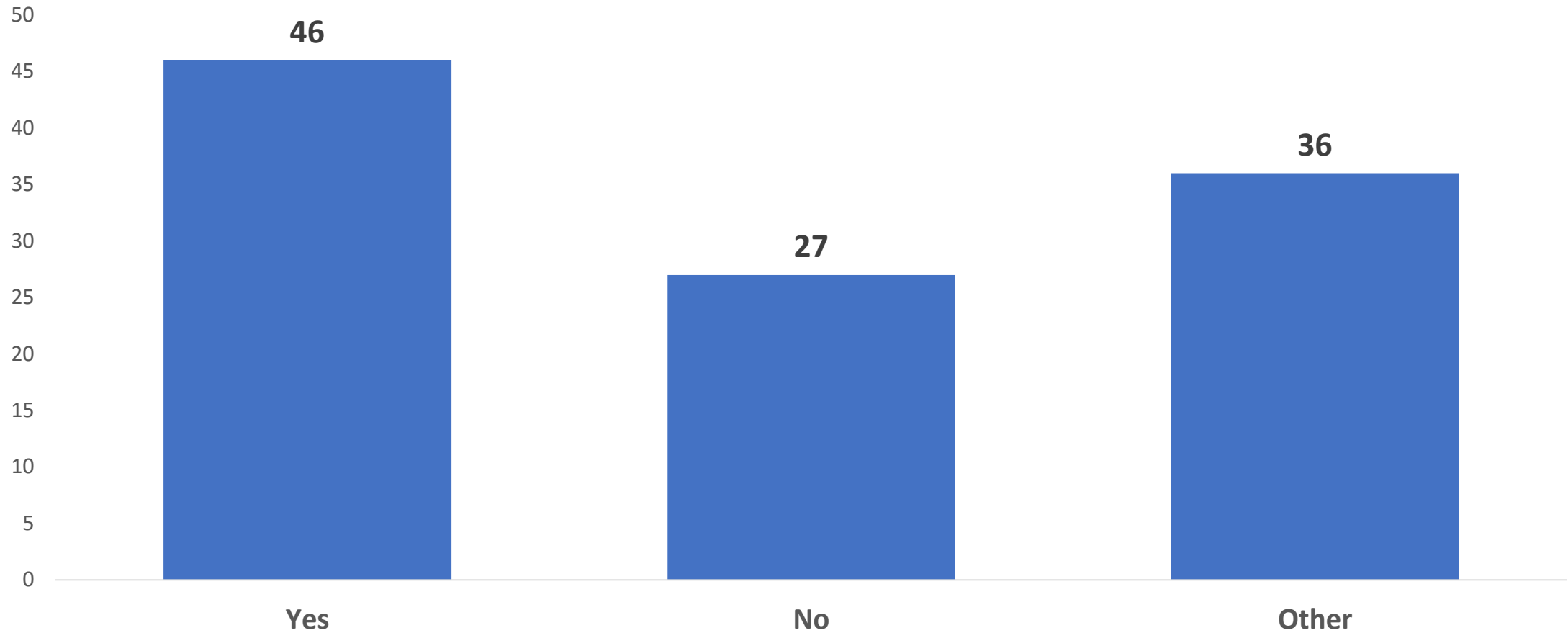
How were benefits impacted? (Check All that Apply) (157)



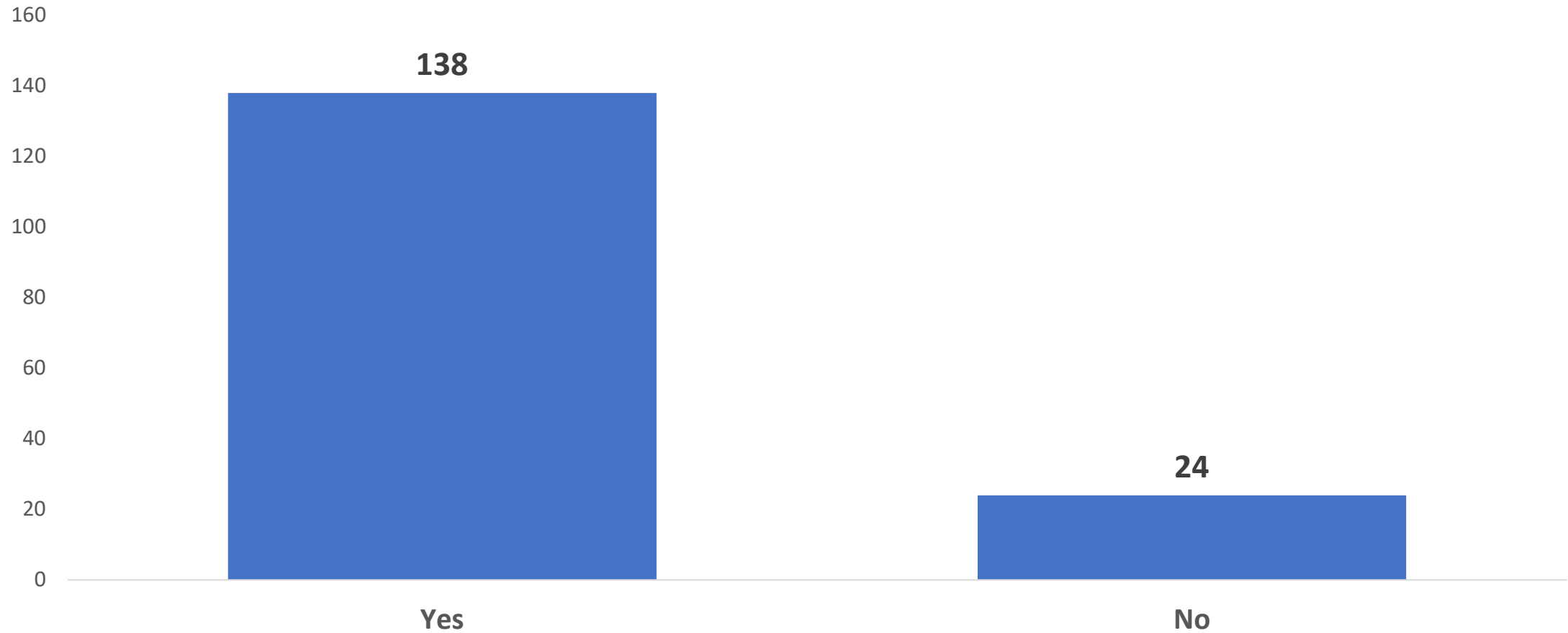
Who was notified by SSA of the issues impacting Social Security benefits? (Check all that apply) (157)



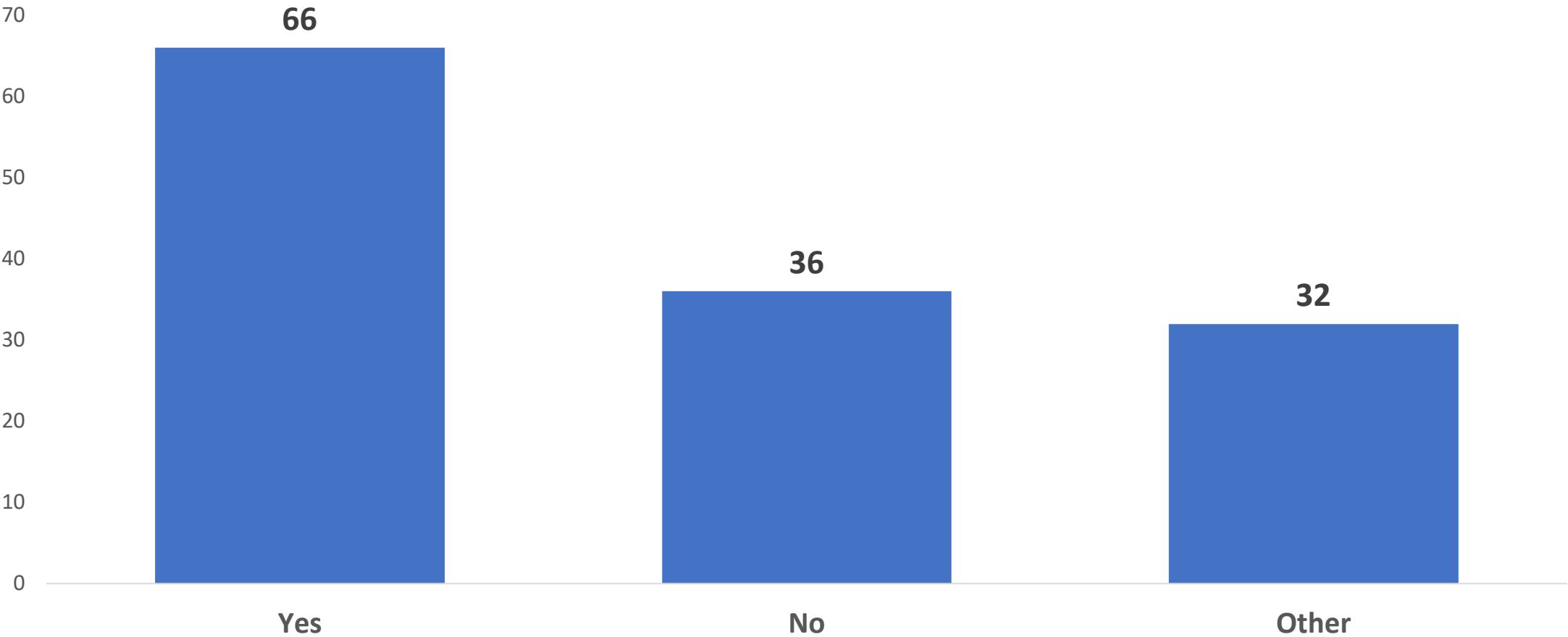
If the beneficiary was receiving job-related accommodations or modifications, were they reported to Social Security Administration? (109)



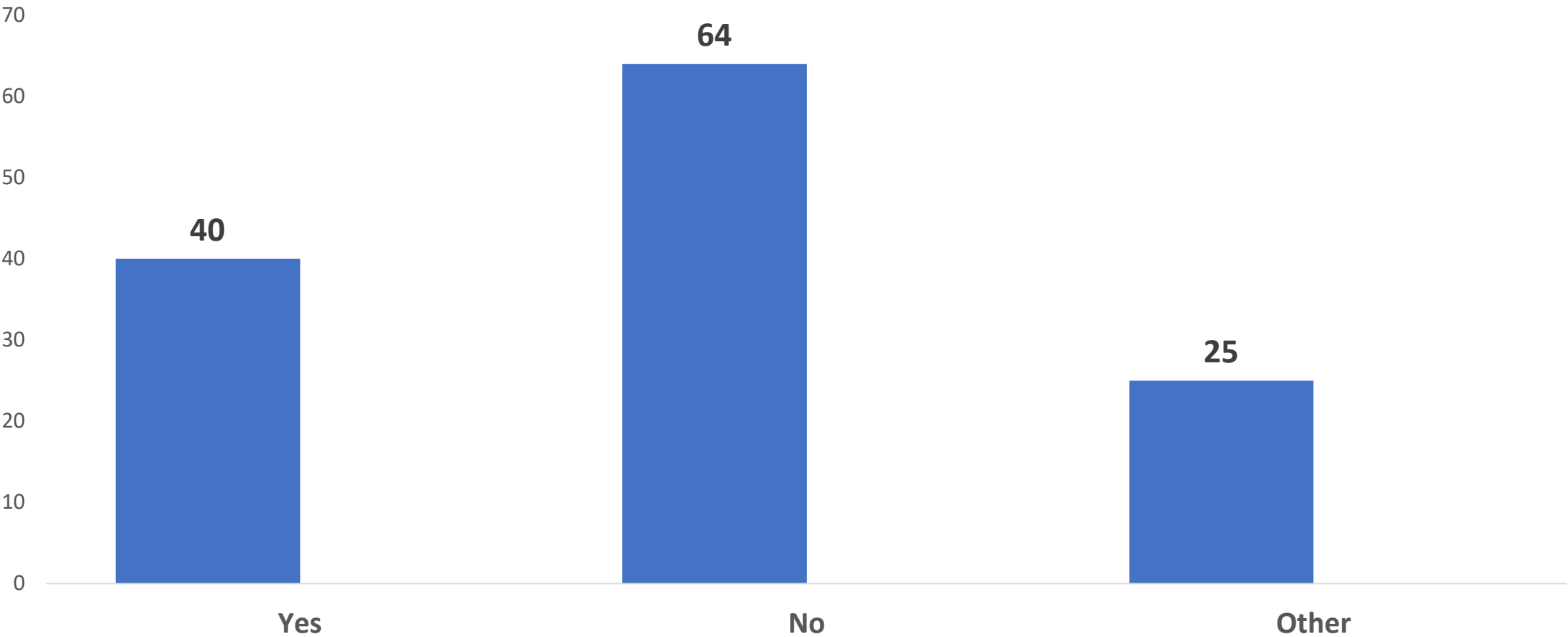
Did the beneficiary or a representative of the beneficiary contact Social Security Administration to discuss the problem? (165)



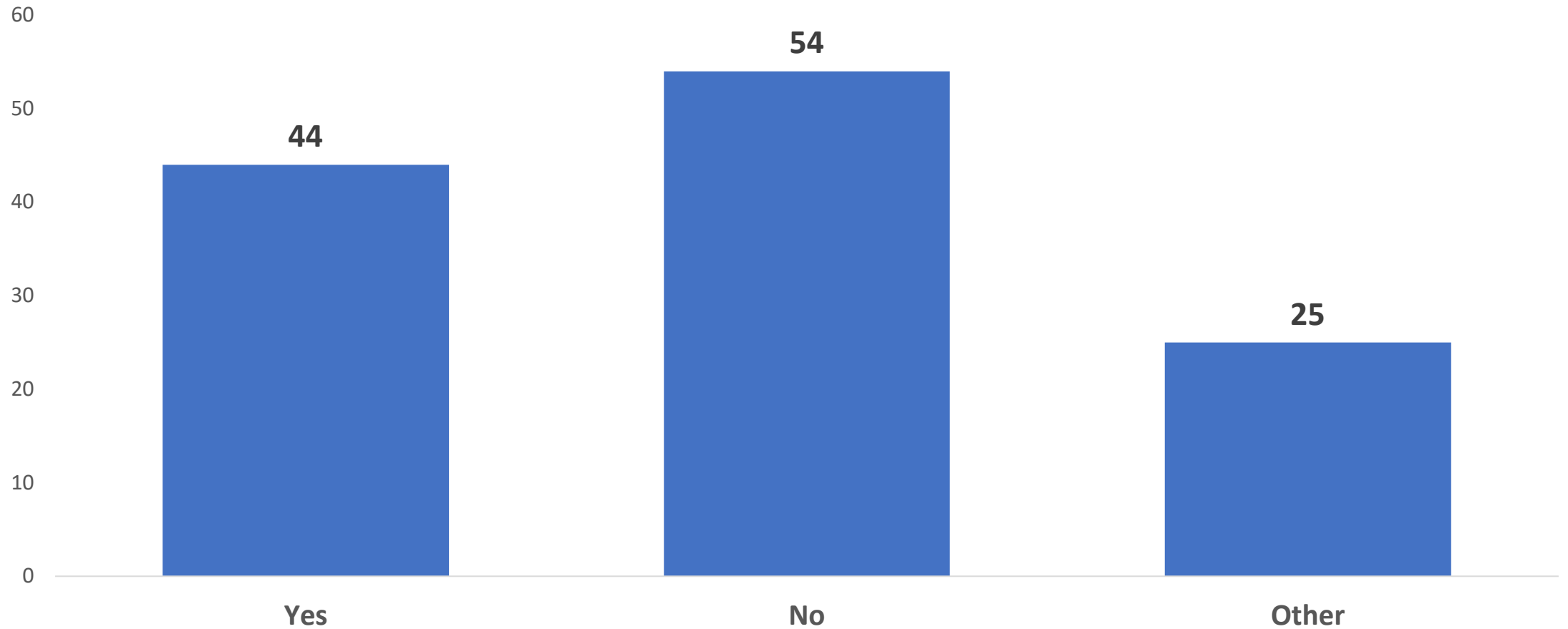
After reporting an issue, did you receive a response from SSA staff ? (Select one) (134) – 50% said yes.



Was the issue resolved? (129) – 31% said yes



Did you have to appeal a decision from the Social Security Administration (Request for reconsideration or hearing with Administrative Law Judge?) (123)

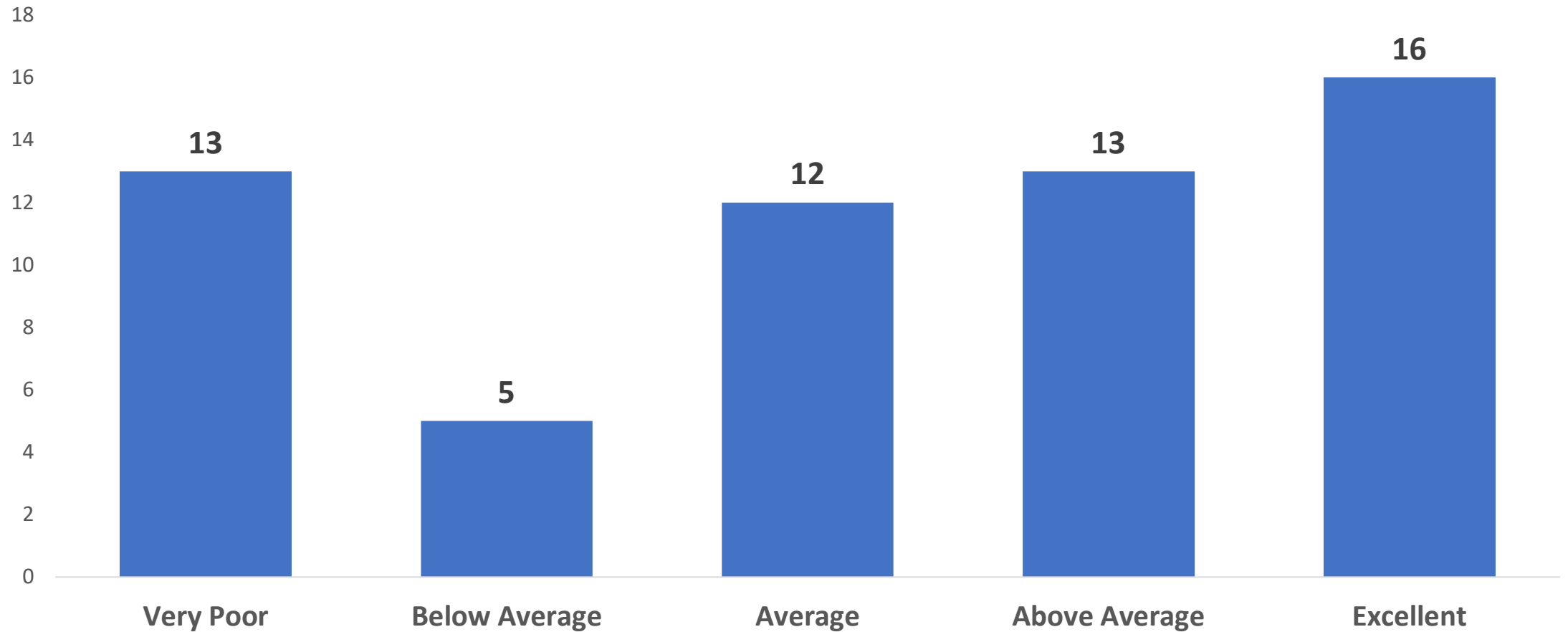


Did you receive help from any of the following? (Check all that apply) (60 Responses)

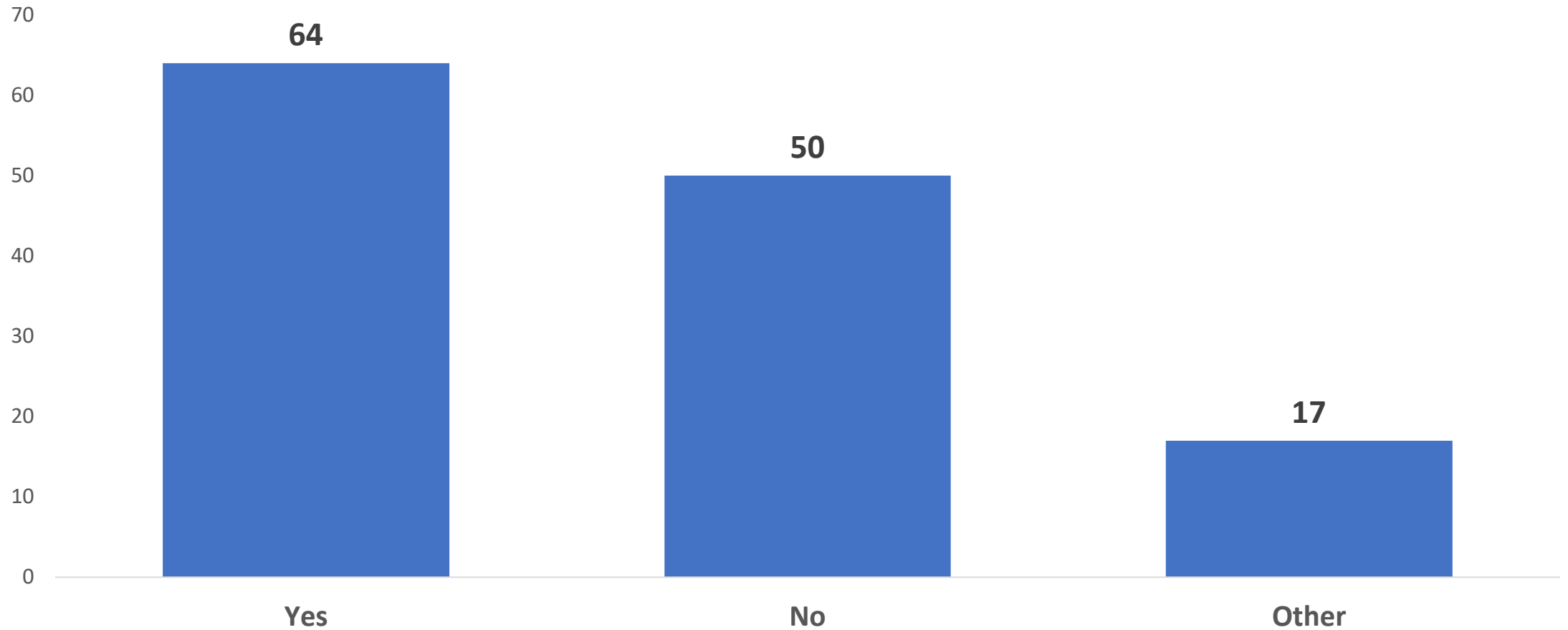
Note that there was a lack of consistency regarding assistance available:

- Lawyer (6)
- Advocacy Group (7)
- Advocates (11)
- Regional Center (2)

Please rate their helpfulness. (59)



Do you still need help resolving the issue? (131)



55 People Provided Their Email Addresses Requesting Assistance

Examples of Problems Shared

Overpayment

Laura received an overpayment letter which led to her SSDI payments being stopped for almost 2 years! It took us sending in numerous requests to review her status, paperwork, calls, etc. and they finally agreed that they erred by not taking her work subsidy into account. A result of their error caused SS to repay Laura thousands of dollars which she had to pay taxes on, costing her thousands as well. Unfortunately, it happened again and we had to go through the process all over!! Luckily, SS reinstated Laura's SSDI more quickly the second time and she was again repaid money they kept from her after they saw her work subsidy. We are constantly worried that SS will again stop Laura's SSDI and have been so stressed over the past 5 years due to this occurrence.

Termination of Benefits

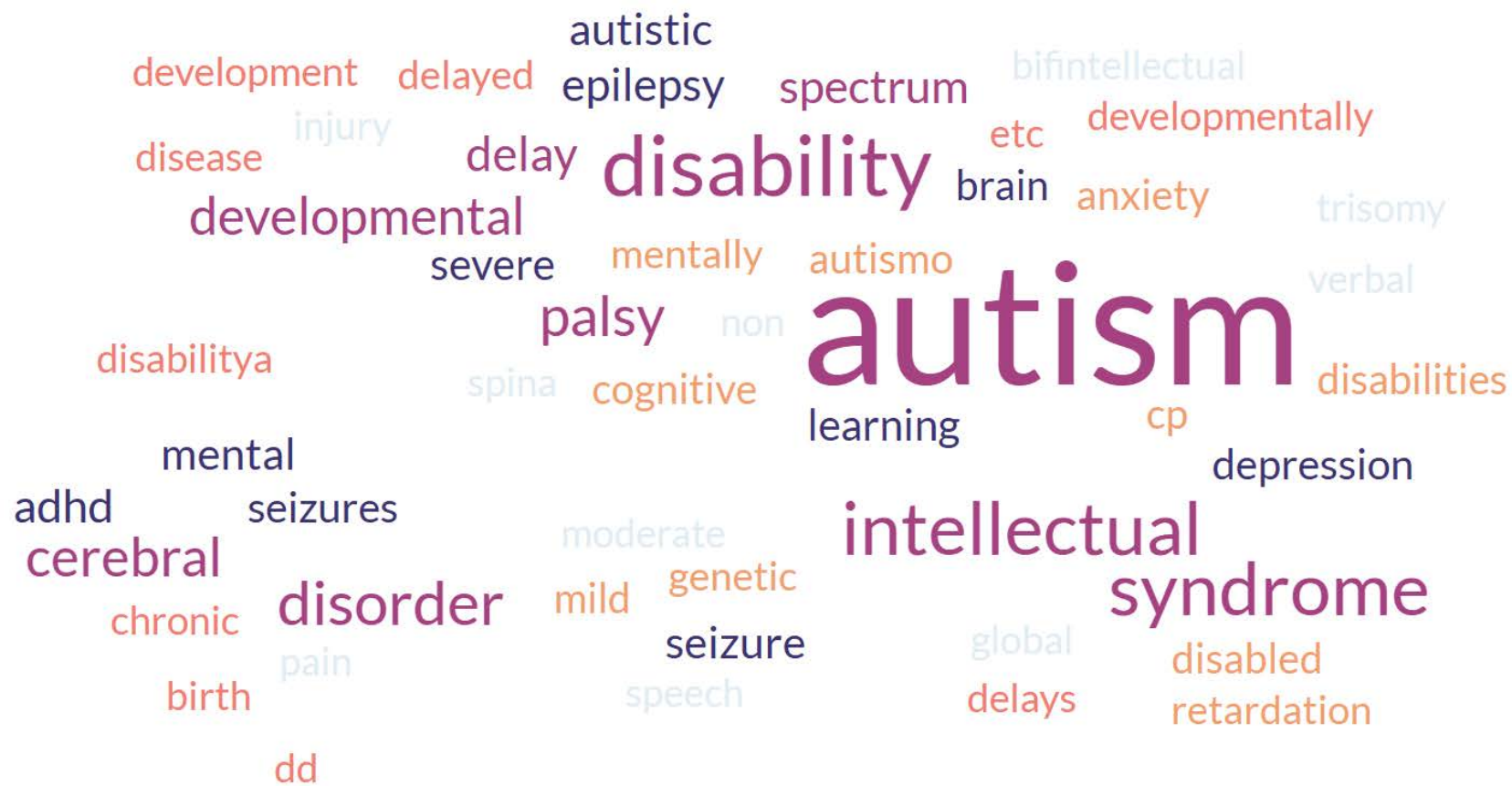
I have had issues reporting information to social security since I first started receiving benefits at age 21. They kept entering my pay stubs incorrectly and then sending me overpayment letters that were inaccurate. I never received the amount of SSI I was supposed to be eligible for and they kept sending me overpayment letters. I received a surprising termination of benefits letter during COVID. Benefits were terminated, but I was unable to get a hold of anyone for a year, had no ability to understand why my benefits were suddenly terminated, and later found out that they terminated my benefits to start an annual review. The review did not start until July 2022, despite me losing my benefits in 2020-2021. They still have not completed the review and it is only estimated to take 8 months from start to finish. I was in school on financial aid during this time full-time and was not employed. Social security contacted the school on my behalf to revoke my student loans. I fought this and reinstated them. A month or so later, I received a letter stating I was required to pay back the financial aid (pell grant) I had received and was forced to withdraw from my classes because of this. I am currently in limbo with social security and they refuse to provide me with an advocate or representative to help me understand what's going on. They have multiple addresses under my SSN that they refuse to remove, so my mail often goes to the wrong address. They continue to send time-sensitive information over mail only and due to having roughly 6 incorrect addresses for me, I usually do not receive this information in time. They refuse to communicate over email or via the portal with me. My food stamps were terminated because of this issue and I was informed that the only way to reinstate them was to reapply for them, even though I was still eligible.

Examples of Problems Shared

Lost Medical Insurance

I think my benefits have been terminated- the proof of income form from their website says so. But I have so far never received any written correspondence (just orally by phone) other than a letter stating they can't restore my Medicare due to outstanding appeals. I only even knew my Medicare was terminated due to a letter from Kaiser (I got Senior Advantage). I called several times and went to their office a couple times and got two different answers as to why my benefits ended- but being no longer disabled at least is straightforward and makes better sense. The other is dropping an appeal which I can only make an educated guess what that was about- they never explained.

Disabilities



Beneficiary's Age (418 Responses)

Ages	Number
Under 18	65
18-29	190
30-39	89
40-49	32
50-59	24
60-69	17
70+	1

Next Step

- Dennis – CDR and
- Paula – to set up a webinar / or clinic / Q&A (Linda / Nighttime 6-7:30 pm) / end of September / November 15th / Linda reaching to Paula
- Amy – (survey, legislation,