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Quality Improvement Report : Vocational Services

Maine Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services

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**Quality Improvement Report
Vocational Services**

July 2001

Abstract

The Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (the Department) reports that Vocational services are thriving for people with mental illness. The working relationship between the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and the Department is highlighted. Acceptance rates from DVR are up, as is the number of consumers with mental illness who are finding employment. Outcomes, based on DVR data, from an historical perspective through the end of the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2000 are presented. This report also identifies Departmental funding for long-term support services and describes some continuing trends based on FY 2000 and nine months of Fiscal Year 2001 data. Long-term support funding remains stable and adequate. The data demonstrate a steady demand for employment supports and evidence that individual support needs are being met.

Introduction

This report shows some of the more salient data and trends in meeting the vocational service needs for class members and non-class members.

Purpose: The Department is committed to promoting work for consumers who want to work, recognizing that work is a powerful determinant in a person's economic status as well as in recovery. The Department continues to be committed to the realization of employment goals as a vehicle to recovery for many consumers.

The December 1999 Surgeon General's report, *Mental Health: A Report of the Surgeon General*, identified a number of salient factors in recovery. The report states: "Through semi-structured interviews with consumers about recovery, a subsequent study identified the most common factors associated with their success in dealing with a mental illness. They included medication, community support/case management, self-will/self-monitoring, *vocational activity (including school)*, and spirituality (Sullivan, 1994)." (italics added)

Recent supported employment national studies have been uniformly positive in their vocational outcome findings when compared to outcomes from traditional services of the mental health system. In an article entitled, "Implementing Supported Employment as an Evidence-Based Practice" appearing in *Psychiatric Services*, March 2001, it was concluded that "Although a work history predicts better employment outcomes in supported employment programs, supported employment remains more effective than traditional vocational services for clients with both good and poor work histories". This report also identifies three principles that serve as a foundation for providing effective employment services. These principles are:

- Staff and consumers find individualized job placements according to client preferences, strengths and work experiences.

- The supported employment program is closely integrated with the mental health treatment team.
- Follow-along supports are maintained indefinitely.

Despite these positive findings, most clients work part-time in order to preserve and maintain benefits such as SSI. Maine is fortunate to have already implemented (August 1999) a Medicaid Buy-In Option for Working Disabled. This program allows consumers to work as much as they are able and still access health insurance through Medicaid. Further development of this option will afford many consumers the opportunity to pursue employment beyond the restrictions of hours or income to avoid losing cash benefits.

Studies have consistently shown that most people with mental illness want to work and that consumers rank being employed as an important personal goal. Research among people with mental illness also indicates that improvement in one's employment status results in higher levels of self-esteem, morale, self-efficacy, and overall life satisfaction.

History: The supported employment approach to vocational rehabilitation for persons with mental illness represents an alternative to traditional methods. The roots of this approach can be traced to several historic developments in the vocational rehabilitation and mental health fields:

- An initial influence came from the field of developmental disabilities which was a shift from a "first train, then place" approach to a *"place and train" model*. The later model is the practice of placing a person in a job and providing the necessary initial training and support and ensuring ongoing supports.
- This innovation in adult mental health services was followed by psychosocial clubhouse development. Psychosocial clubhouse programs emphasize transitional employment and jobs located in businesses but managed by clubhouse staff. This model reinforces the normalizing function of work.
- Another innovation was the Assertive Community Treatment model of case management using community-based services to help clients find and keep jobs.
- A fourth significant influence was the application of the "choose/get/keep" model of psychiatric rehabilitation developed by the Boston University Center for Psychiatric Rehabilitation. This model emphasizes a career planning approach to identifying areas of work and interest to the client.

It is important for the reader to note that the vocational activities described in this report do not constitute the total vocational efforts undertaken by the Department. Community Support Workers routinely work with consumers as part of the ISP process to help them gain meaningful employment as part of recovery. Consumers described in this report require a more specialized effort that includes at least two additional criteria. The first is that the consumer has to need long-term supports in order to maintain employment and, secondly, must agree to work with an employment support provider over a period of time to achieve this goal.

As noted in the research cited above, competitive employment and supported employment are the most desired outcomes. The Department has focused much of its efforts in developing, designing and supporting employment for consumers. Here are some highlighted activities:

- An excellent working partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation that, from October 1, 1990 through March 31, 2001, has helped 1,752 mental health consumers find employment. For FFY 2000, an all-time high of 340 consumers with mental illness found employment.
- Regional Mental Health Long-Term Support Coordinators administer long term support funding in the annual amount of \$904,717.00 statewide.
- Issuance of the Department's Vocational Policy in November 2000.
- Requiring accreditation from the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) for all community employment providers that are not licensed as mental health providers. This process will begin in July 2002.
- The Department has based its long-term support funding on a fee-for-service approach that allows for flexibility in the intensity and duration of services post-employment.
- Empowered consumers by asking them to sign off on any invoices to be submitted to the Department.
- Providing leadership in partnership with DVR to develop an employment specialist training curriculum that allows for multiple delivery modalities

Defining Quality in Vocational Services

The current definition of the quality of vocational services is organized around these core questions.

1. *Where are consumers working?*
2. *Of those individuals who are working, how many hours are they working?*
3. *What is the hourly wage of those individuals who are working?*
4. *Are vocational goals, as identified in an individual's ISP, being met?*
5. *To what extent are vocational services available to meet consumer needs?*
(Vocational services may include, but not be limited to: vocational counseling, employment preparation programs which focus upon the development of work-related skills, supported employment programs, transitional employment programs, and competitive employment referral services.)
6. *To what extent have unmet vocational services needs been identified?*
7. *To what extent do consumers have a choice in vocational services and vocational providers?*
8. *To what extent are consumers employed in competitive employment situations (i.e., non-provider temp agency; non-provider employer; self employment; community provider employer?)*
9. *To what extent are consumers satisfied with their work/job (i.e., work environment, co-workers, pay, type of work that they do, etc)?*

The answers to these questions are addressed through querying several data systems which are described in the Methods Section.

Methods

The data used for this report were obtained from six data sources including:

1. DMHMRSAS Regional Vocational Long-Term Support Data. These data contain specific information about where a consumer is working, how many hours are worked per month, what the wages are, who the employer of record is, who the community rehabilitation provider is, and how many hours of support on and off the job are provided. These data are compiled from monthly service invoices from providers of the long-term supports. These data reflect a full fiscal year for 2000 and, when appropriate, refer to nine months of data for 2001. The findings are reported as they relate to a number of vocational measures.
2. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Data. These data contain information about the number of consumers who apply for services, the number who are accepted or closed from services, the types of services provided, and the percent of accepted cases that are rehabilitated (i.e., placed in a job).
3. Contract Performance Indicators. These data contain information about Community Support services by region, including employment for persons in case management.
4. The Case Management Application. These data contain detailed ISP information on all class members, including individual goals, action steps, and unmet resource needs.
5. Annual Class Member Survey. This survey involves telephone interviews with a random sample of AMHI Class Members residing in the community and face-to-face interviews with AMHI inpatients who are able and willing to participate in an interview. This interview contained questions about whether vocational services were perceived as needed, having been received, and helpful. The sample size included in this report was 59 in 1999, 98 in 2000 and 82 in 2001.
6. ISP Goal Tracking Data System: As a supplement to the CMA, this data system was specifically designed to identify the kinds of goals being established in ISPs and to track individual progress on meeting identified goals. This tracking system was implemented on February 1, 2001 and is maintained and updated by Consent Decree Coordinators (CDCs) in each Region. As new ISPs and ISP quarterly updates are received by the CDCs, all goals that are currently active are logged into the system along with the date they were established and current status information. The status of each goal is then checked and updated on a quarterly basis.

Results

1. Where are consumers working?

Figure 1 displays data on the use of the Department's Long-Term Vocational Support Services for FY2000. As shown in the figure:

- A total of 431 individuals received long-term vocational supports over the 12 month period. Of these, 120 individuals were members of the AMHI Class representing 28% of all service recipients;
- The use of long-term supports differ significantly by Region, with Region I exhibiting the highest use (224) and Region III the lowest use (60) of these services;
- Across all three regions, substantially fewer class members receive these supports than non-class members.

Figure 2 displays the types of jobs that class member recipients of the Long-Term Supports are working in. These results indicate that:

- Three quarters (76%) of class members are working in two primary job families, clerical services (29%) and service occupations (47%) as defined by the Dictionary of Occupational Titles.

2. Of those individuals who are working, how many hours are they working?

Figure 3 displays the number of hours worked per month by class member and non-class member recipients of Long-Term Vocational Supports. As shown in the Figure:

- Most individuals work part-time, between 0 and 79 hours per month;
- Class Members work fewer hours per month than non-class members with nearly one-half working between 0 and 39 hours.

Figure 4 displays preliminary comparative data on the number of hours worked per month. It should be noted that FY2001 data is not yet complete and should be interpreted with caution. As shown in the figure:

- If early trends for FY 2001 remain constant, there will be a slight increase in the percentage of class members working 40 – 79 hours and 80 – 119 hours per month and a decrease in the percentage working for 39 hours or less. The trend for non-class members shows a slight decrease in the number of individuals working 40 to 79 hours and increases in the numbers working 80 to 119 hours and 120 to 159 hours.

Figure 5 displays the employment status of individuals receiving Community Support Worker Services based on FY 2001 Agency Quarterly Performance Data. As shown in the figure:

- Of individuals receiving community support worker services, between 5% and 7% are employed part-time (less than 32 hours and approximately 10% are employed full-time (greater than 32 hours per week). This trend is consistent across all three regions.

3. *What is the hourly wage of those individuals who are working?*

Figure 6 shows the distribution of hourly wages of Long-Term Support recipients for FY 2000. As shown in the figure:

- The majority of recipients are working at or just above minimum wage, with only Region I having nearly the same number of persons in the \$6.50 to \$8.99 range.
- Less than 10% of individuals across all regions earn less than minimum wage.
- Individuals in Region I tend to earn higher wages overall with slightly over one-half (51%) earning above \$6.50 per hour compared to 20% in Region II and 13% in Region III earning the same wage.

Figure 7 and Figure 8 provide a comparison of hourly wages between class member and non-class member recipients of Long-Term Support Services.

- As shown in the figure 7, class members earn about the same wages as non-class members, with a slightly higher percentage of class members in the \$5.15 to \$6.49 wage range.
- As shown in Figure 8, preliminary data for FY 2001 indicate that FY 2001 trends will be largely consistent with FY 2000.

4. *Are vocational goals, as identified in an individual's ISP, being met?*

Figure 9 displays unmet educational and vocational resource needs established and met between 1997 and 2001. As shown in the figure:

- Between 1997 and 2000, 8 unmet resource needs were identified and all have been met. In FY 2001, to date, no unmet needs have been identified.

A preliminary review of the ISP Goal Tracking Data indicate that out of 2014 goals established since January 1, 2001, 106 were established to meet vocational needs, accounting for 5.3% of all goals established.

- ### 5. *To what extent are vocational services available to meet consumer needs?* (Vocational services may include, but not be limited to: vocational counseling, employment preparation programs which focus upon the development of work-related skills, supported employment programs, transitional employment programs, and competitive employment referral services.)

Figure 10 displays Vocational Rehabilitation acceptance and rehabilitation rates for persons with mental illness between FFY 1991 and FFY 2000. As shown in the figure:

- Since 1991, the State VR agency has continued to increase the rate of acceptance of applicants who have mental illness as a primary disability. The rate has gone from 34% in 1991 to 66% in 1995, to 86% in 2000. The six-month data available from VR indicate that acceptance rates are consistent with FFY 2000. This gives evidence to the increased understanding of mental illness by VR counselors and to the increased capacity of the community providers to serve individuals referred by the State VR agency.
- DVR rehabilitation rates have remained relatively stable over time, with 39% in 1991 and 31% in 2000. When combined, with the above data, however, it is clear that a greater number of persons are rehabilitated each year as the acceptance rate increases.

Figure 11 displays DVR data pertaining to the types of vocational services utilized by class members. As shown in the figure:

- In all regions, the two principle services provided to service recipients who are class members are job coaching and job placement, accounting for 32% and 27% of class member recipients of VR services respectively. This data reflects a trend in Maine toward supported employment practices.

6. To what extent have unmet vocational services needs been identified?

See question # 4 above.

7. To what extent do consumers have a choice in vocational services and vocational providers?

Currently there are no discreet data to address this question. There are however practices that support and encourage vocational services and provider choice for consumers.

8. To what extent are consumers employed in competitive employment situations (i.e., non-provider temp agency; non-provider employer; self employment; community provider employer?)

Figure 12 displays the type of employment services and supports consumers receive via the Long-Term Supports Program. As shown in the figure:

- Statewide, between 52% and 72% of individuals are working in competitive jobs;
- Compared to the other regions, Region I shows a substantially higher percentage of individuals working in competitive community employment situations. When these data are combined with the percent of persons working in enclaves (group situations managed by a community rehabilitation provider), at least 90% of persons (approximately 390) are working in community settings.

Figure 13 displays the type of employment engaged in by class member and non-class member recipients of Long-Term Support Services. As shown in the figure:

- The percentage of class members in competitive jobs is only slightly lower than non-class members (57% vs. 65%), and the total in community settings is 91%

9. *To what extent are consumers satisfied with their work/job (i.e., work environment, co-workers, pay, type of work that they do, etc)?*

Figure 14 displays the results of the Annual Class Member Survey pertaining to vocational services. As shown in the figure:

- In 1999, 26% of class members surveyed reported needing and receiving vocational services, and 87% reported these as helpful.
- In 2000, 23% reported needing services with 20% receiving them and 78% reported that these were helpful.
- In 2001, 15% reported needing vocational services with 26% receiving them and 86% reported that these were helpful.

Figure 15 summarizes the findings of the new work related questions included in the 2001 Annual Class Member Survey. As shown in the figure:

- Nearly a quarter (24%) of class members surveyed reported that they had received help in finding work;
- Ten percent of all class members surveyed reported that they need help in this area;
- Of those who received help, 88% reported that they found the support they received helpful.

Summary, Conclusions and Recommended Actions

Where are consumers working?

At least half of persons receiving long-term supports are working in their own jobs. Class members are working primarily in service and clerical jobs reflecting both a general workforce growth trend and consistency with national data about types of jobs accessed by consumers who need supported employment services long term.

Recommendation 2000: The DMHMRSAS and the Department of Labor should continue to support outcomes of competitive/supported employment. Policies and funding should give evidence to this direction. The DMHMRSAS should also enhance its data collection to include data on DOT (Dictionary of Occupational Titles) categories of employment for all consumers. Status: Met.

- DMHMRSAS and the Department of Labor continue to support competitive employment outcomes. The recently adopted Vocational Policy and the continuation of funding give evidence to this direction. The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation no longer includes sheltered employment as a successful outcome.
- The DMHMRSAS is reviewing its data categories to assure consistency with DOT (Dictionary of Occupational Titles) categories of employment for all consumers. However, preliminary feedback from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation indicates that the categories currently utilized are correct.

Recommendation 2001: The DMHMRSAS and the Department of Labor should continue to support outcomes of competitive/supported employment.

Of those individuals who are working, how many hours are they working?

The majority of persons, both class and non-class members, are working in part-time jobs, perhaps largely a reflection of the disincentives of the Social Security System. Earnings affect the cash benefit of recipients including threatening loss of medical coverage. However the preliminary data reveal a slight increase in number of hours worked.

Recommendation 2000: These data should continue to be examined as Maine enhances the Medicaid Buy-In Program and seeks to implement the Federal legislation of the Ticket to Work Programs. The funding rules have not yet been developed, but Maine is positioning itself to participate as fully as possible. The Department of Labor and DMHMRSAS are joining with community providers in a planning effort, beginning in late August 2000. Status:

- The number of people enrolled in the Medicaid Buy-In Program is increasing. Currently, approximately 500 people in Maine are participating.
- The Ticket to Work final rules have yet to be issued, so national implementation of that particular program has been delayed. The planning group, which includes representatives from various state agencies, community agencies and advocacy groups, has recently met. Another day is planned to address information dissemination strategies specifically designed for the Ticket to Work program.

Recommendation 2001: Continue efforts to assist in dissemination of Medicaid Buy-In Program information and, when Maine becomes a designated state, in the Ticket to Work Program.

What is the hourly wage of those individuals who are working?

The majority of individuals are working at or just above minimum wage, again a reflection of the disincentives of the Social Security System. If a person works too many hours or at an hourly wage that is above the minimum wage, he/she risks losing the cash benefit of SSI, and, until very recently, the associated Medicaid coverage. This statistic

could improve as consumers avail themselves of the Medicaid Buy-In Option and must be examined as SSA attempts to eliminate work disincentives.

Recommendation 2000: No additional recommendations.

Recommendation 2001: No additional recommendations

Are vocational goals, as identified in an individual's ISP, being met?

Vocational goals represented just under 6% of all goals listed in new plans developed since February 2001. Vocational services goals fall within the top five goal areas overall.

Recommendation 2000: The DMHMRSAS should undertake a review of the goals to better understand what types of goals are established and then met. A cursory review to date indicates few goals that are explicitly about getting or keeping a job. Status:

- An ISP Goal Tracking Data system was implemented in February (see Methods Section for a description). Preliminary data is being reviewed.

The Department should explore the feasibility of the Vocational Coordinators reviewing these goals and designing/facilitating staff training as necessary. Status:

- The Long-Term Support Coordinators continue to provide training to case managers and provider agencies. The Coordinators are also developing ISP examples to further assist in the identification of employment goals.

Recommendation 2001: The Department should continue its efforts to provide consultation and training in developing and including vocational services in ISP goals.

To what extent are vocational services available to meet consumer needs?

The data clearly indicate an emphasis on the job placement and job coaching services that are the primary service features of supported employment. When combined with the consumer data that services were helpful, one can conclude that the types of services needed are available. Given the findings of recent research studies providing positive evidence to the efficacy of these approaches, it is clear that the delivery of services in Maine is on the right track. Data from the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation also indicates access to a variety of diagnostic, counseling and training services

Recommendation 2000: The Departments should develop a system to ascertain what educational services are provided to increase the job options consumer consider as a result of increased education and training. Status:

- This area is part of the Department's on-going work with DVR. DVR supports education and training as needed to meet an individual's vocational goal.

Recommendation 2001: The Department should undertake a review of the supported education program, partnering with DVR to maximize the use of available resources.

To what extent have unmet vocational services needs been identified?

All class member unmet resource needs are tracked through the CMA. The findings indicate that few unmet resource needs have been identified in vocational services and all that have been identified have been met.

Recommendation 2000: It is recommended that the Department develop a strategy to expand unmet need tracking to all adult service recipients, so that a more comprehensive view of the extent of unmet need can be obtained. Status:

- Data system is under development. This information should be available beginning in July 2002

To what extent do consumers have a choice in vocational services and vocational providers?

There are no data available to answer this question; however, practice indicates that consumers are provided with a list of local service providers and can choose from these. The DMHMRSAS consumer sign-off on invoices is also a strategy for providing consumers a voice in continuing to choose their service provider.

Recommendation 2000: It is recommended that the Department develop questions in consumer surveys (i.e., Annual Class Member Survey, Housing Resident Survey, etc.) that specifically ask consumers about the extent to which they had options and choices in the vocational services and providers. In order to adequately assess this question, it would be important to query individuals who have had experience with vocational services and supports. Since a more generic consumer survey alone will not adequately address this question, it is recommended that the Department develop and implement a consumer interview to be administered on an annual basis with all recipients of DMHMRSAS Long-Term Support Services. Status:

- This recommendation will be part of the 2002 planning.

To what extent are consumers employed in competitive employment situations (i.e., non-provider temp agency; non-provider employer; self-employment; community provider employer?

The majority of consumers receiving DMHMRSAS Vocational – Long Term Support Services are working in their own jobs (non-provider employer) providing greatest opportunity for inclusion in workplace cultures. The number in enclaves (community provider employer) is an area being addressed in policy discussions between the Department of Labor (DOL) and DMHMRSAS.

Recommendation 2000: No additional recommendations.

Recommendation 2001: No additional recommendations.

To what extent are consumers satisfied with their work/job (i.e., work environment, co-workers, pay, type of work that they do, etc.)?

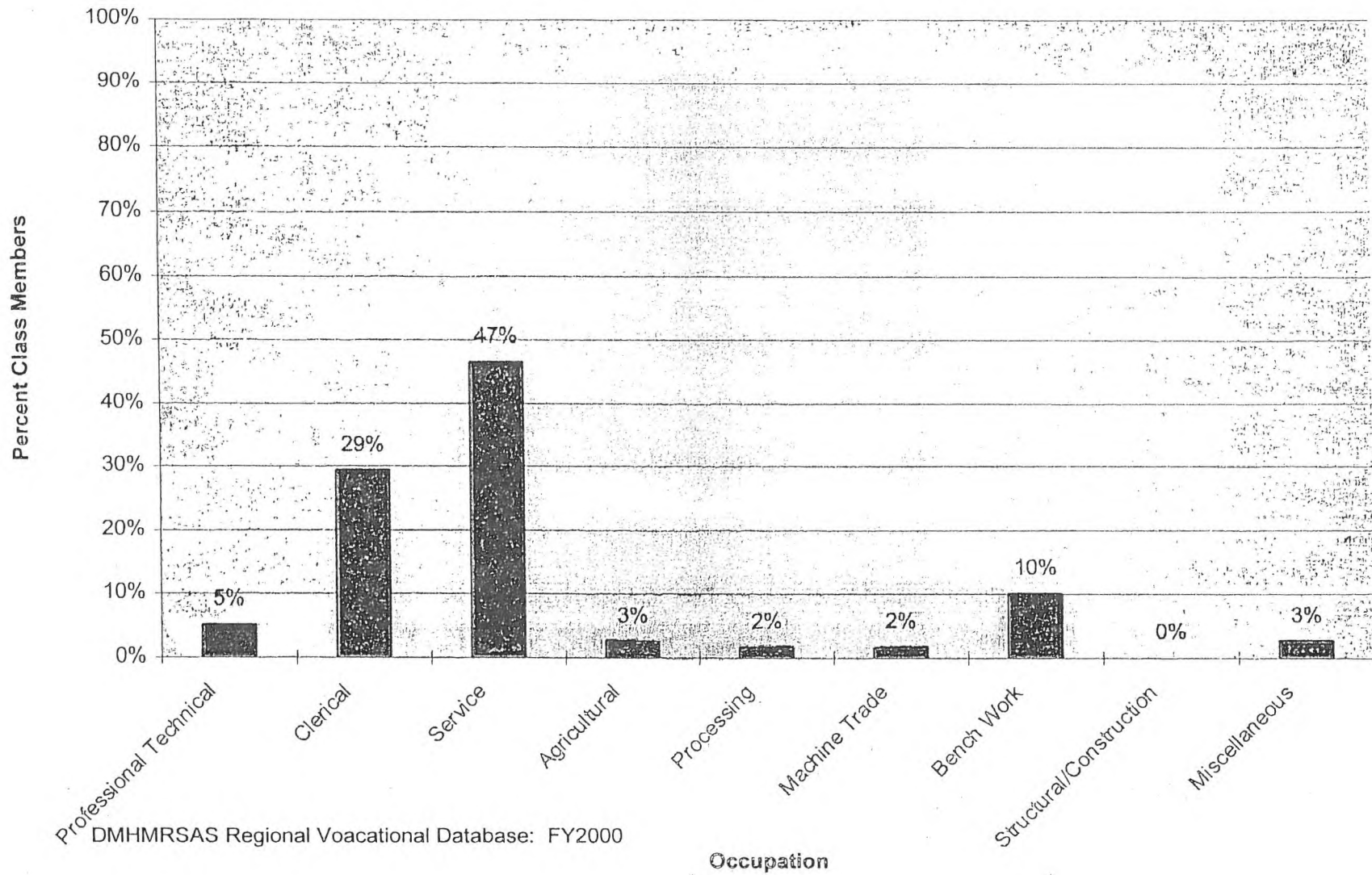
The DOL collects satisfaction data but is not able to retrieve it for any particular group, as the data collected is anonymous. Community providers are also expected to have systems to ascertain consumer satisfaction, but the Department does not have a systematic way of compiling that data at this time.

Recommendation 2000: The DMHMRSAS should adopt a process for assessing consumer satisfaction in the long-term support system. Status:

- Some satisfaction data are collected as part of the Annual Class Member Survey.

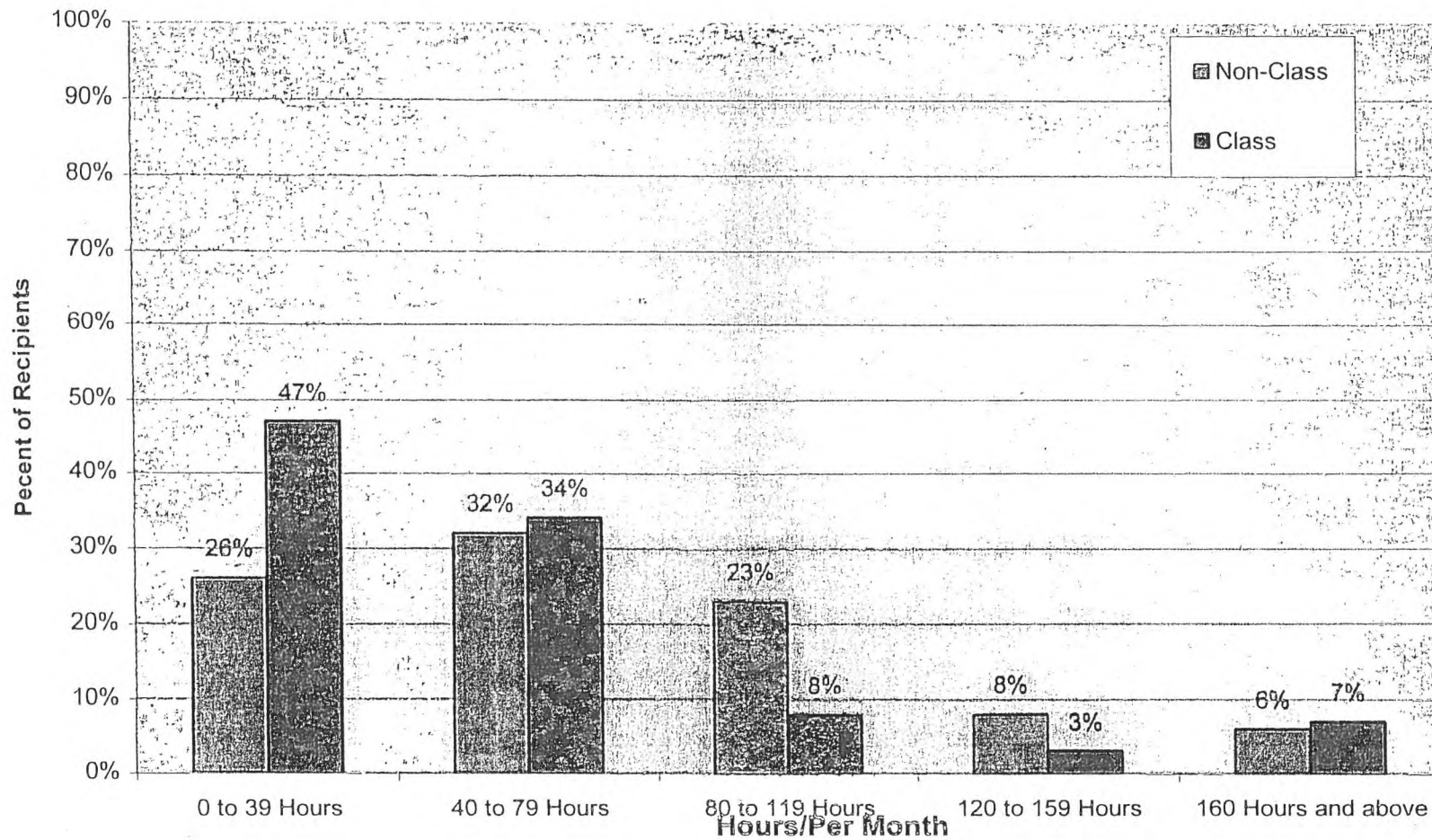
Recommendation 2002: The Department should explore other methods for assessing consumer satisfaction with vocational services.

Figure 2: Number of Class Members by Occupational Category



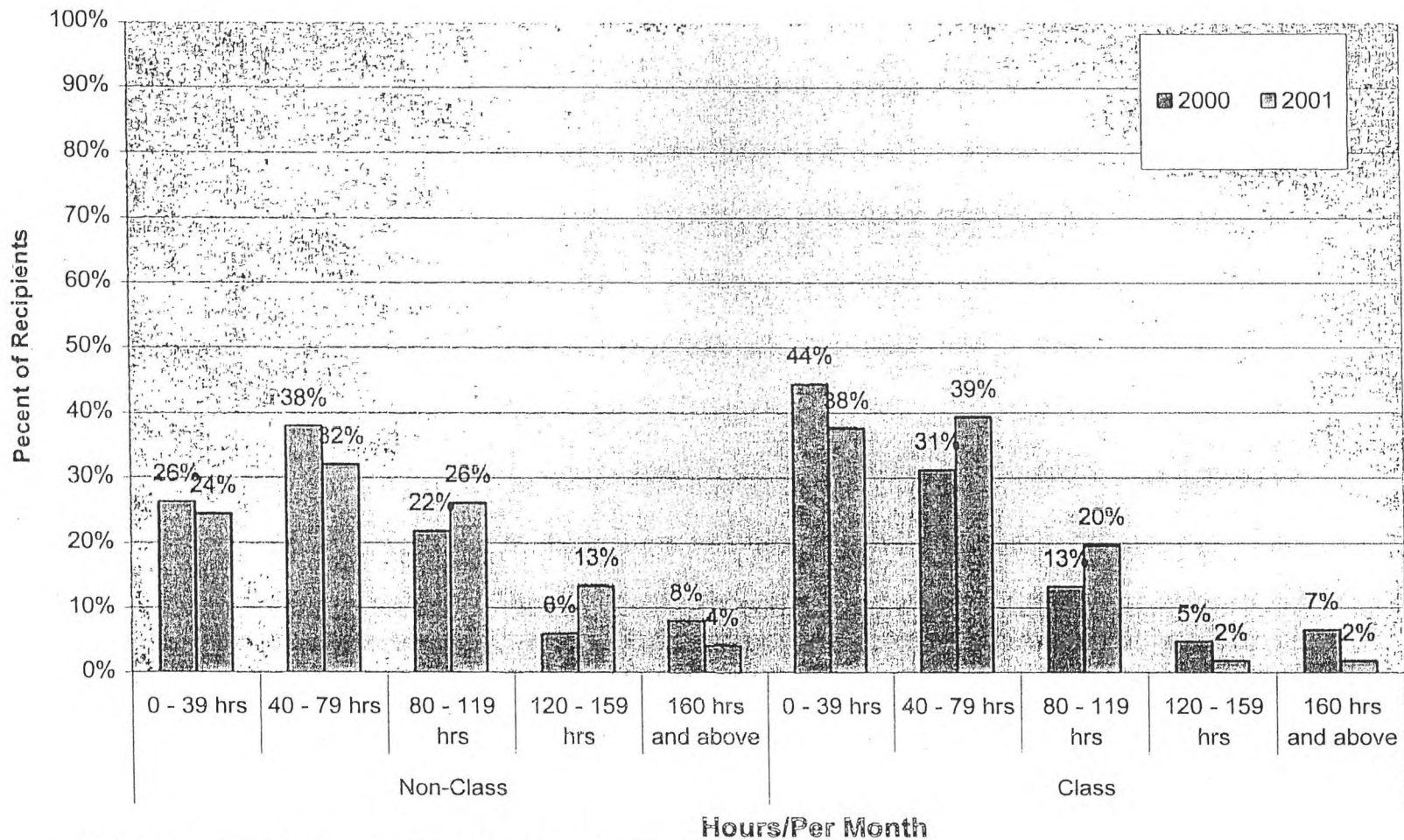
DMHMRSAS Regional Vocational Database: FY2000

**Figure 3: Hours Worked per Month by Class Members and Non-Class Members:
DMHMRSAS Vocational Data: FY 2000**



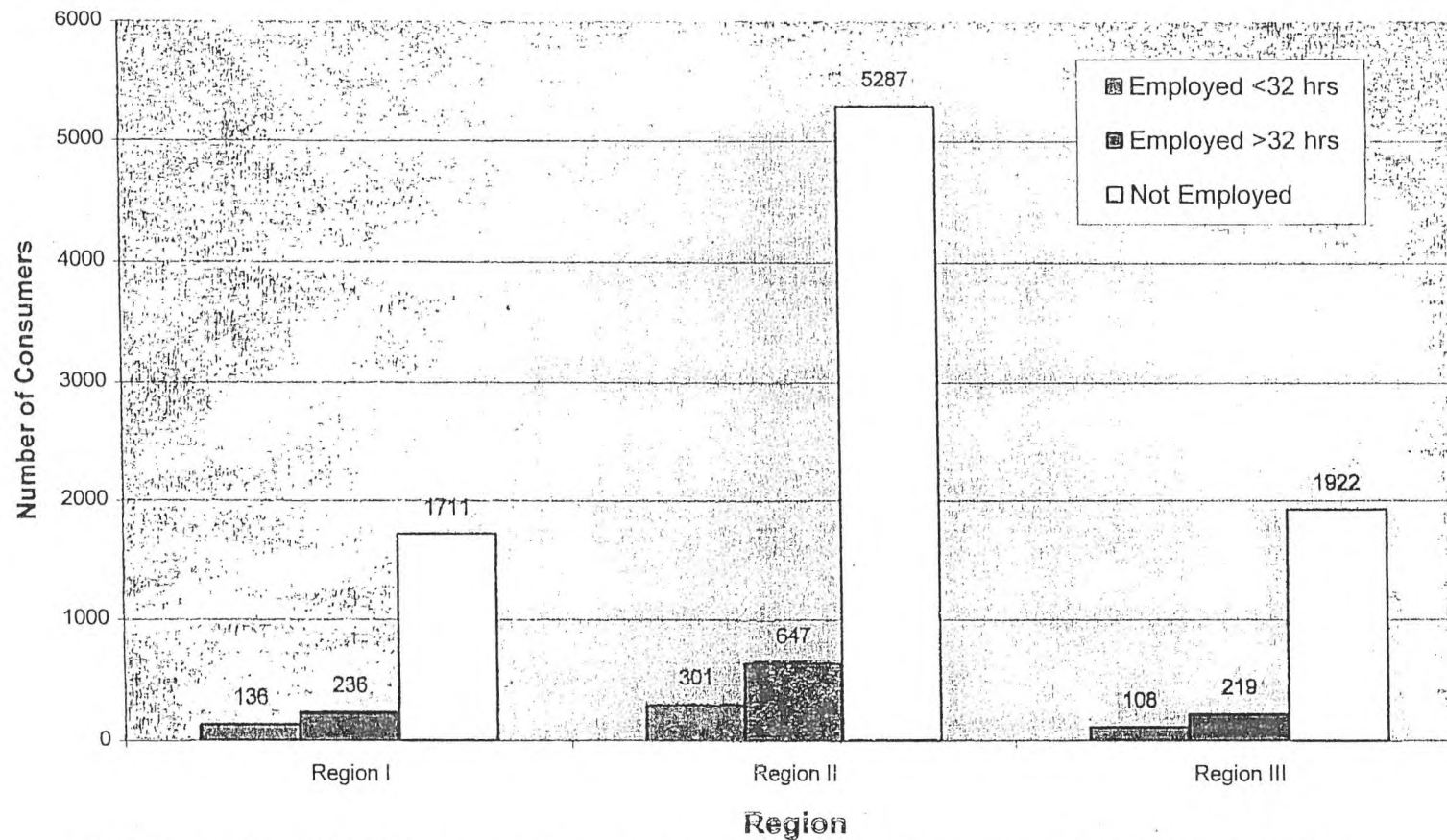
Data Source: DMHMRSAS Regional Vocational Services Data: FY2000

**Figure 4: Hours Worked per Month by Class Members and Non-Class Members:
DMHMRSAS Vocational Data: FY 2000 - 2001**



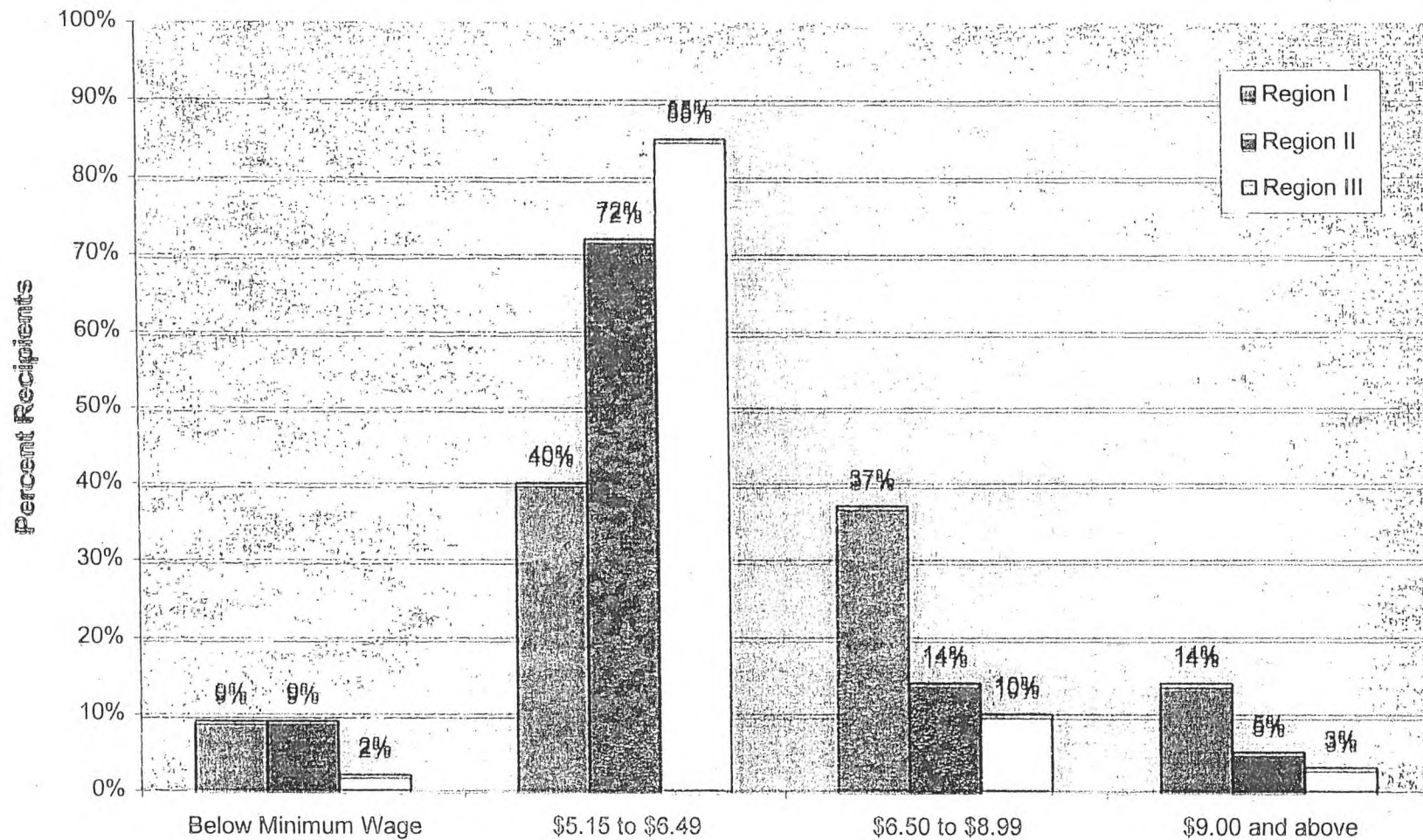
Data Source: DMHMRSAS Regional Vocational Services Data

**Figure 5: Employment Status of Persons in Community Support Services:
FY2001**



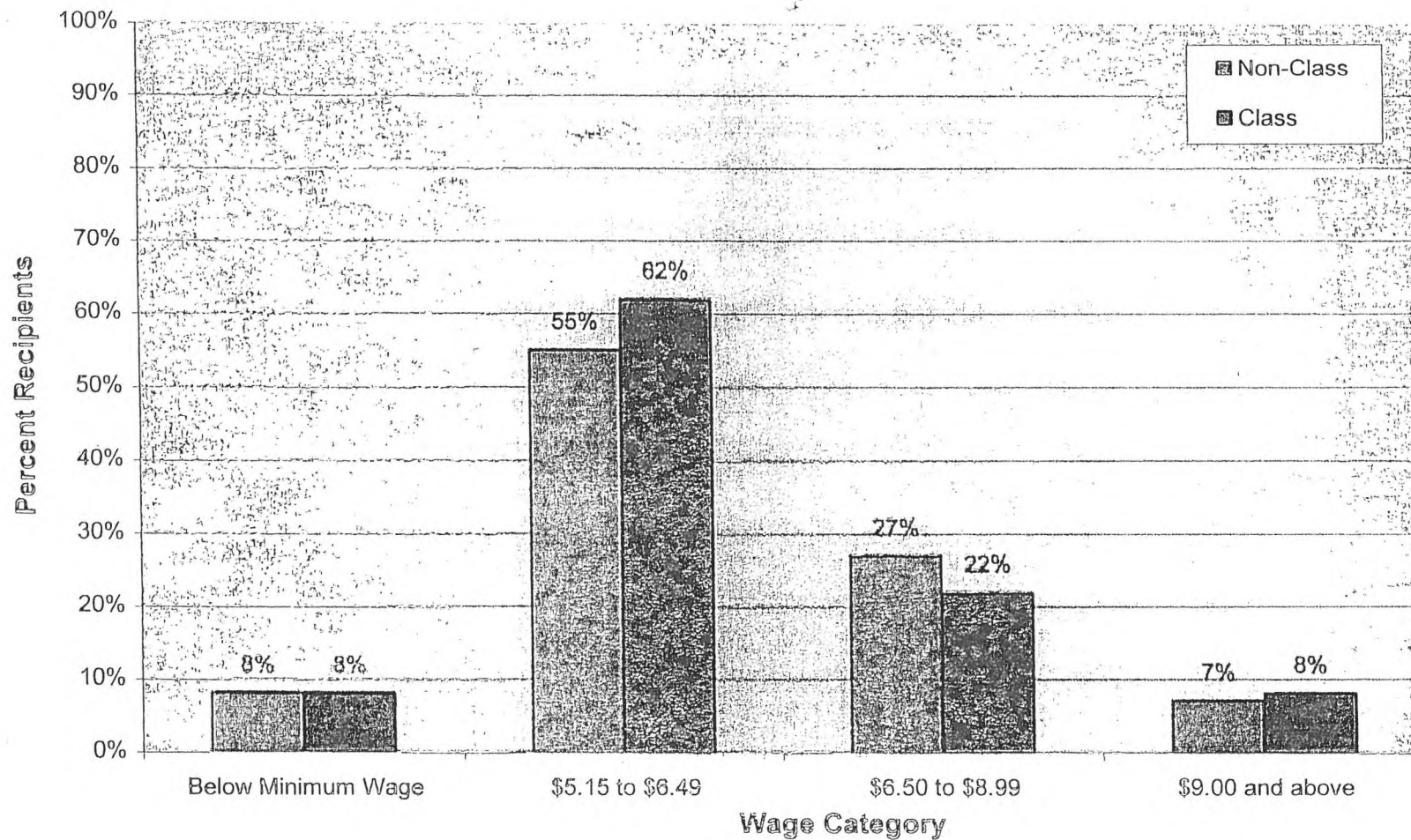
Data Source: DMHMRSAS Agency Performance Indicator Database. Data represent reports from 10 provider agencies in Region I, 9 agencies in Region II and 7 agencies in Region III.

Figure 6: Vocational Services: Distribution of Hourly Wages of Vocational Service Recipients: FY 2000



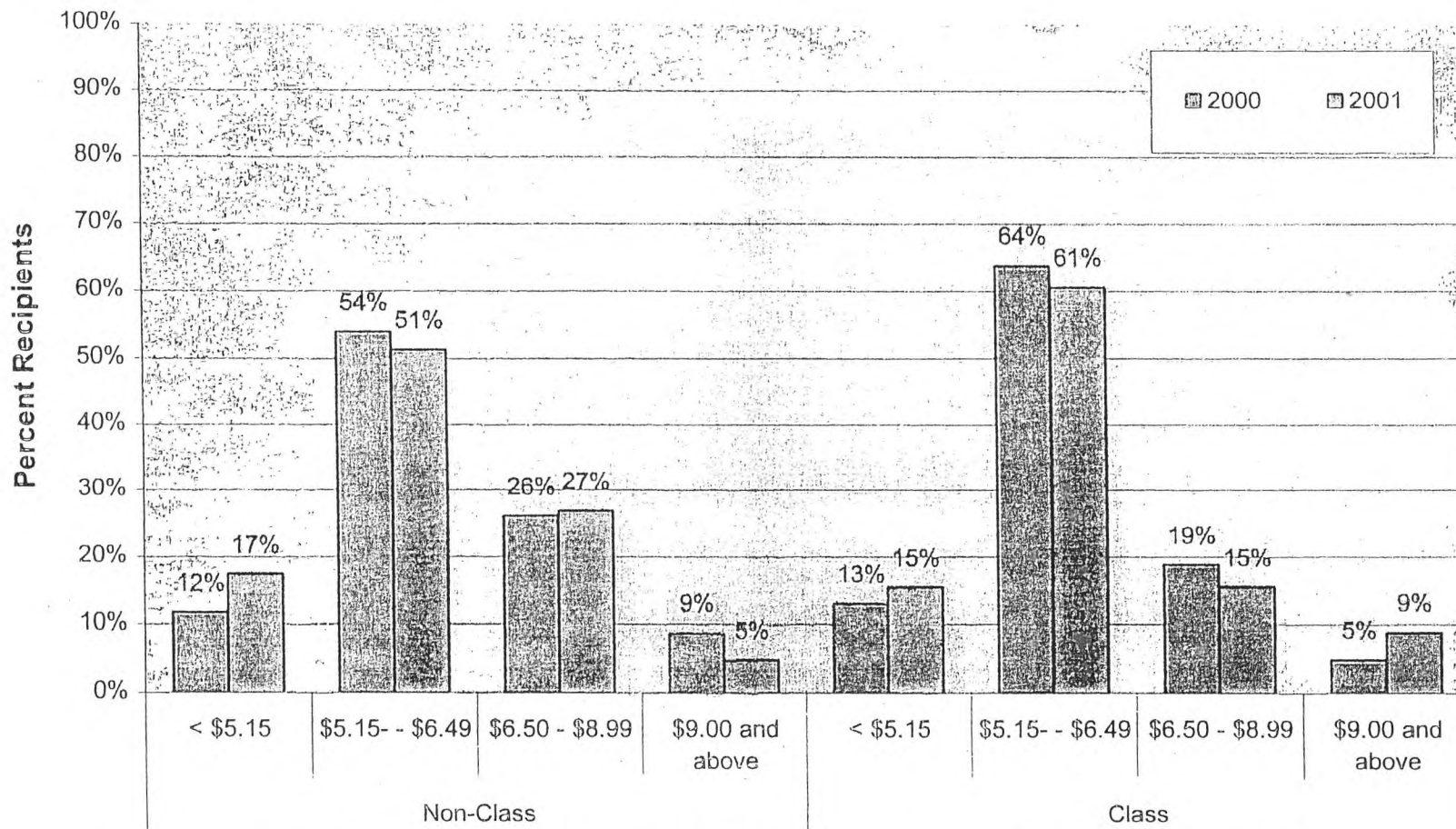
Data Source: DMHMRSAS Regional Vocational Services Data: FY2000

Figure 7: Hourly Wage of Class Members and Non-Class Members: DMHMRSAS Vocational Data: FY 2000



Data Source: DMHMRSAS Regional Vocational Services Data: FY2000

**Figure 8: Hourly Wage of Class Members and Non-Class Members: DMHMRSAS
Vocational Data: FY 2000 - 2001**



Data Source: DMHMRSAS Regional Vocational Services Data: FY2000 - FY2001. FY 2001 data is based on first two quarters of FY 2001.

**Figure 9: Unmet Education/Vocational Needs Established and Met
Between 1997 and 2001**

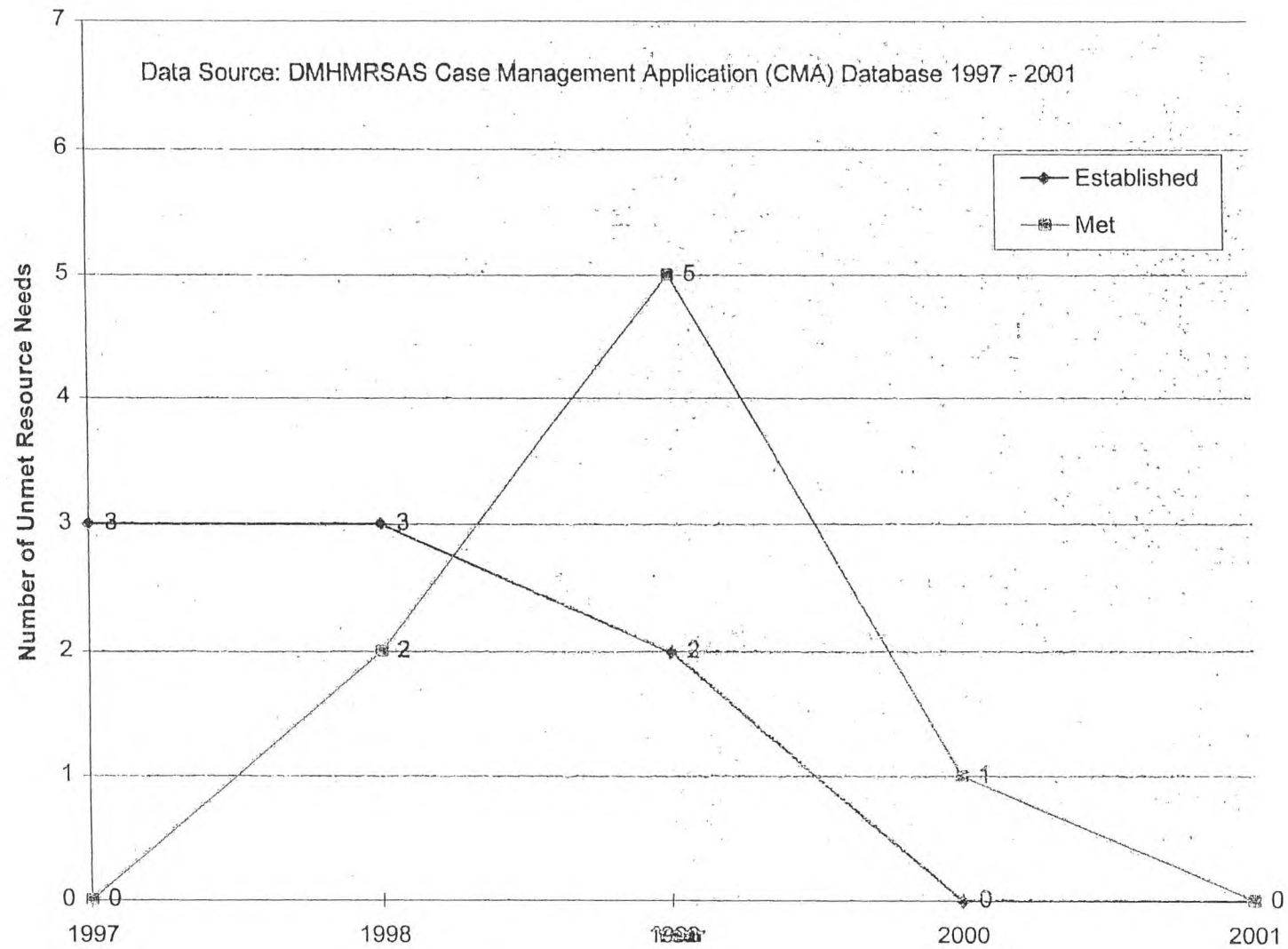
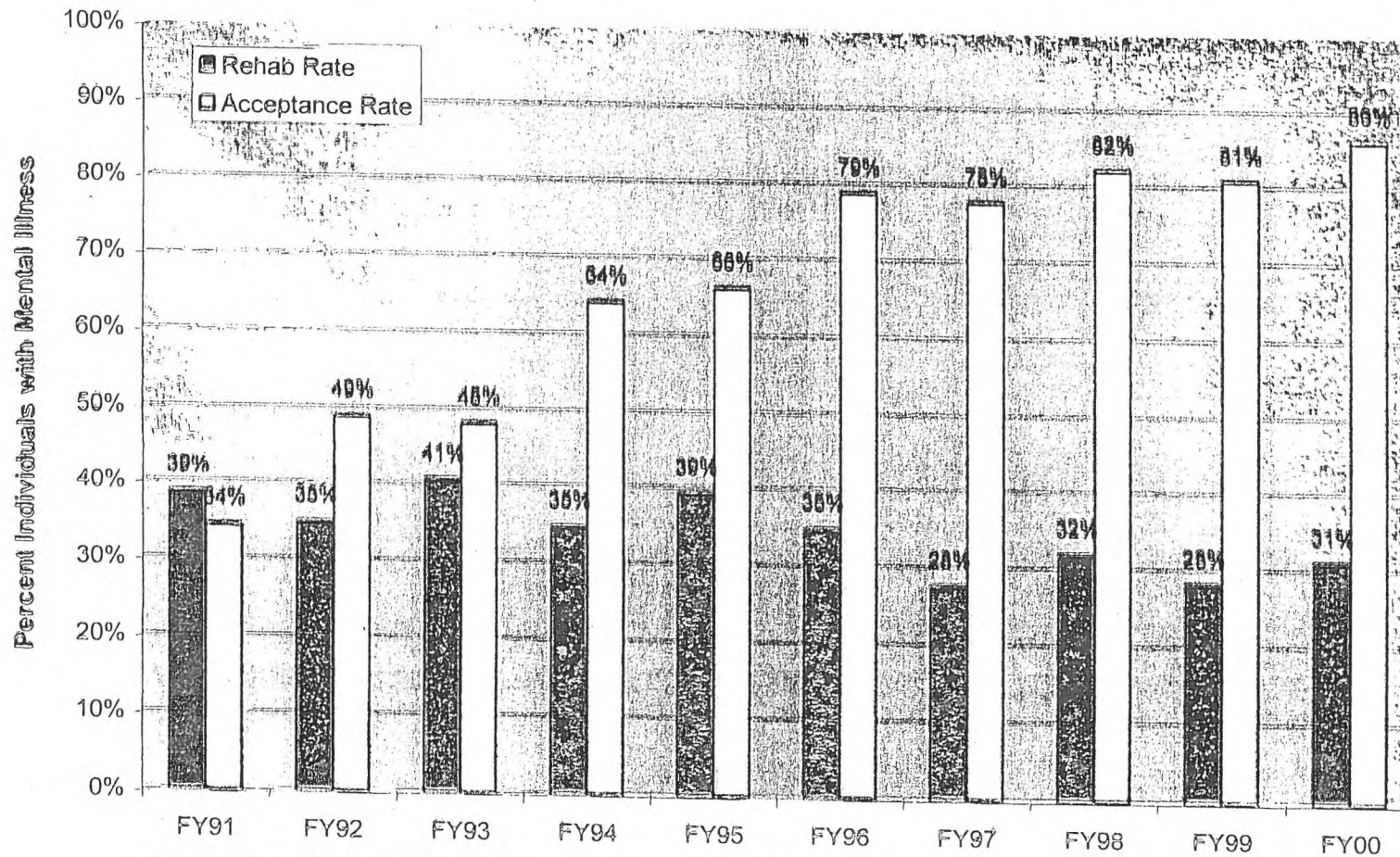
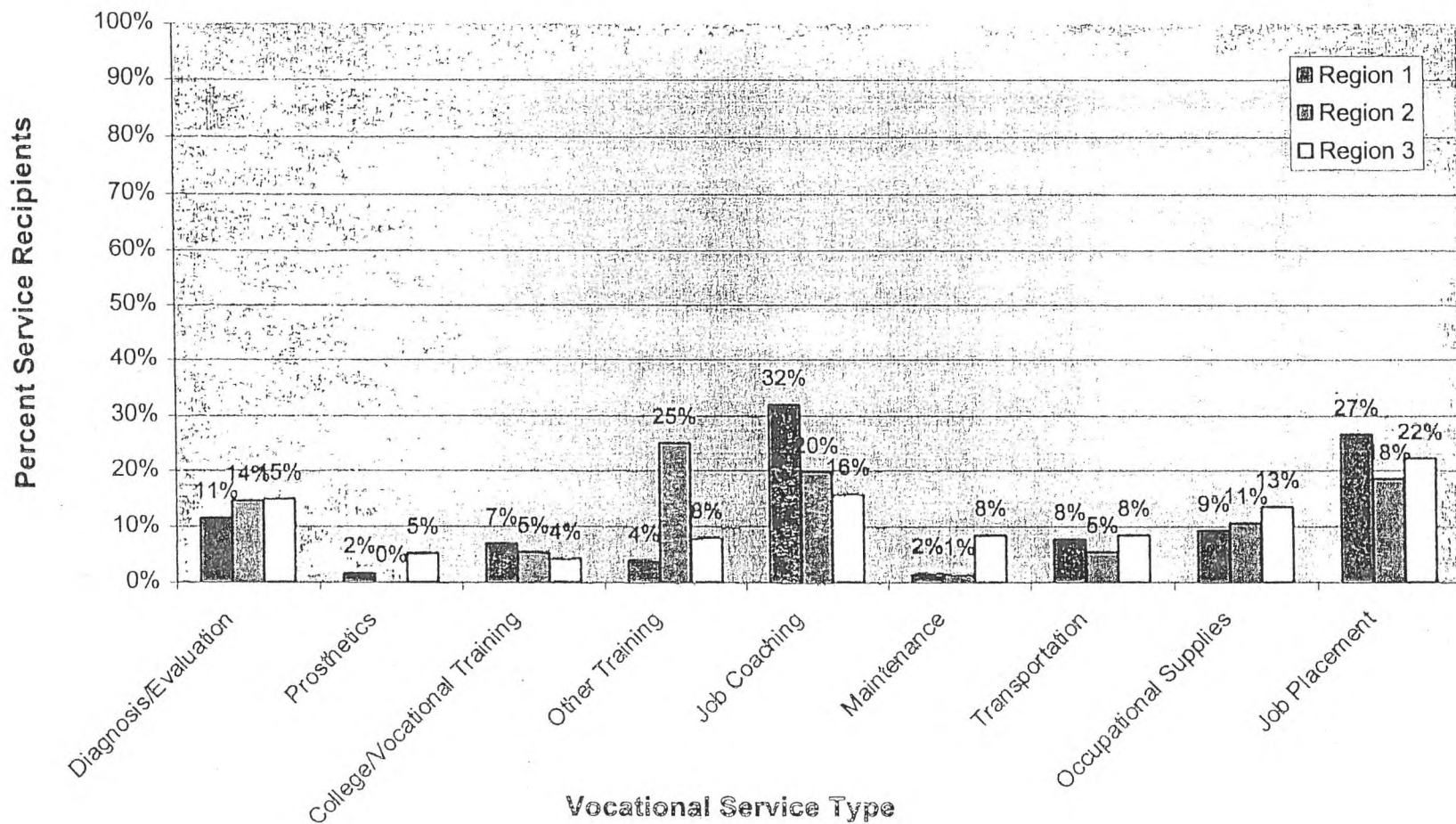


Figure 10: Vocational Rehabilitation Acceptance Rates and Rehabilitation Rates for Persons with Mental Illness: Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Data



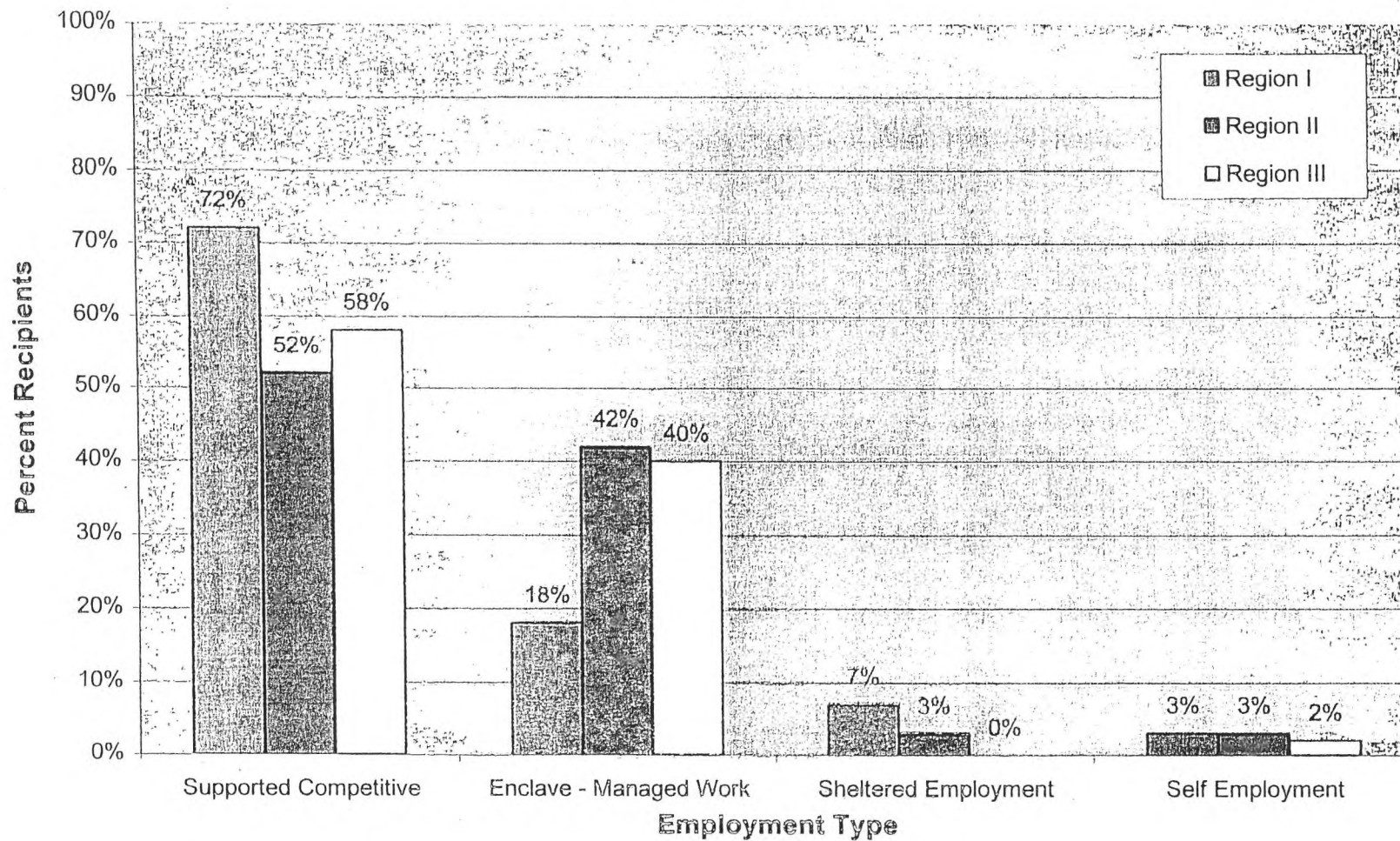
Data Source: Division of Vocational and Rehabilitation Services
Data System - FY1991 to FY 2000

**Figure 11: Vocational Services - Percent of Total Class Members
by Vocational Service Type by Region**



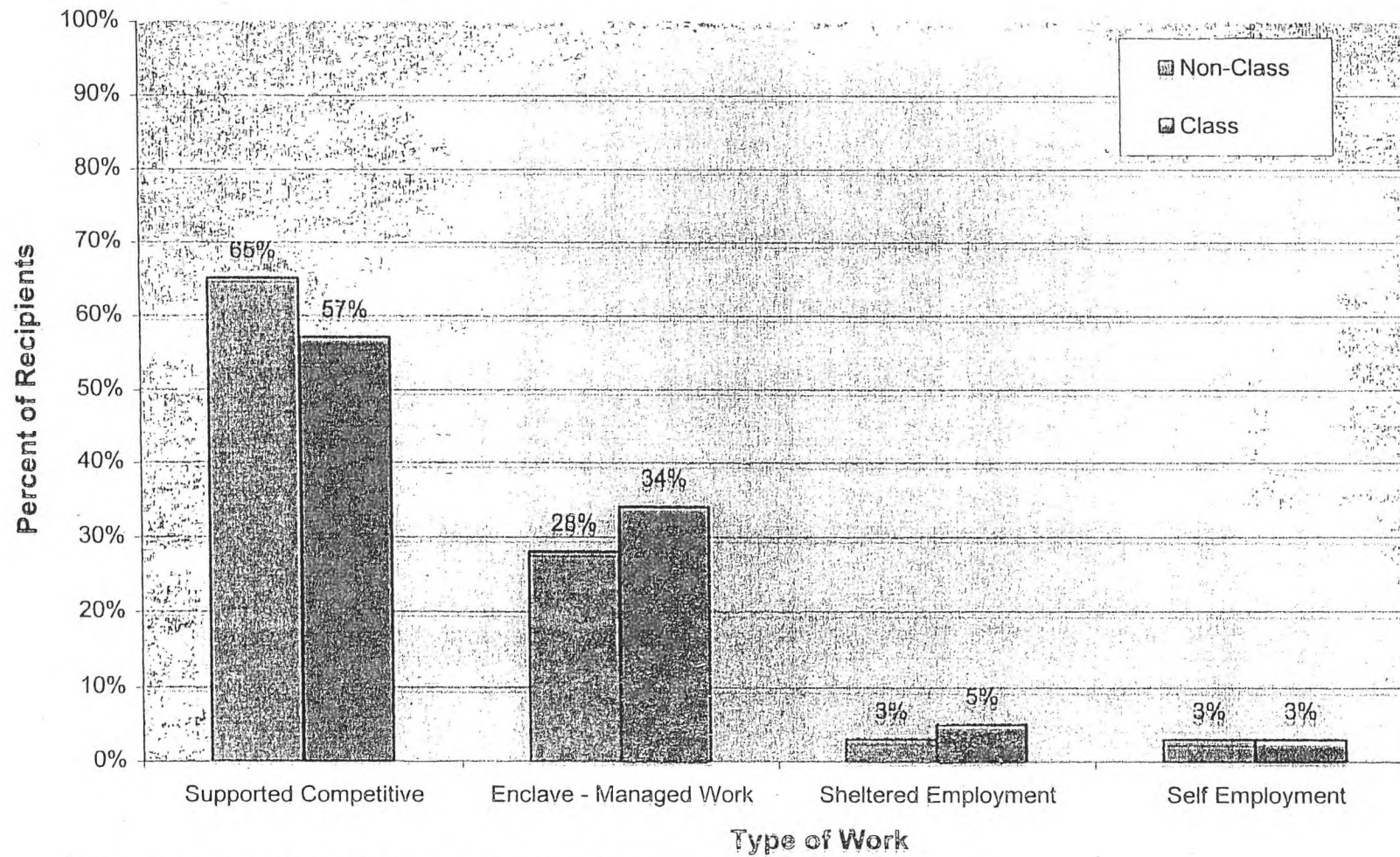
Data Source: Division of Vocational and Rehabilitation Services Data System - FY2000

Figure 12: Type of Employment by Region: DMHMRSAS Vocational Services: FY2000



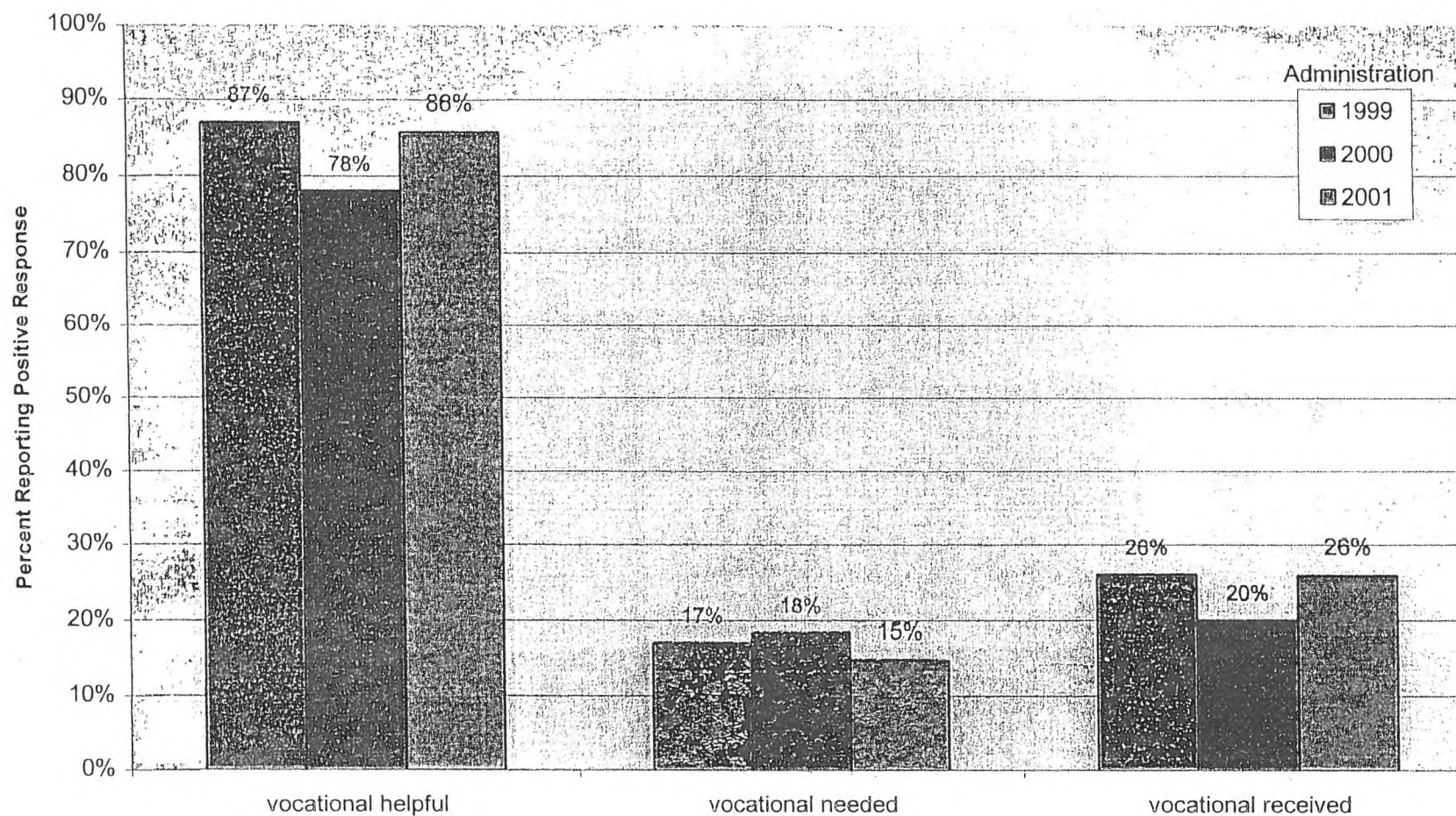
Data Source: DMHMRSAS Regional Vocational Services Data: FY2000

Figure 13: Type of Employment Engaged in by Class Members and Non-Class Members: DMHMRSAS Vocational Data: FY 2000



Data Source: DMHMRSAS Regional Vocational Services Data: FY2000

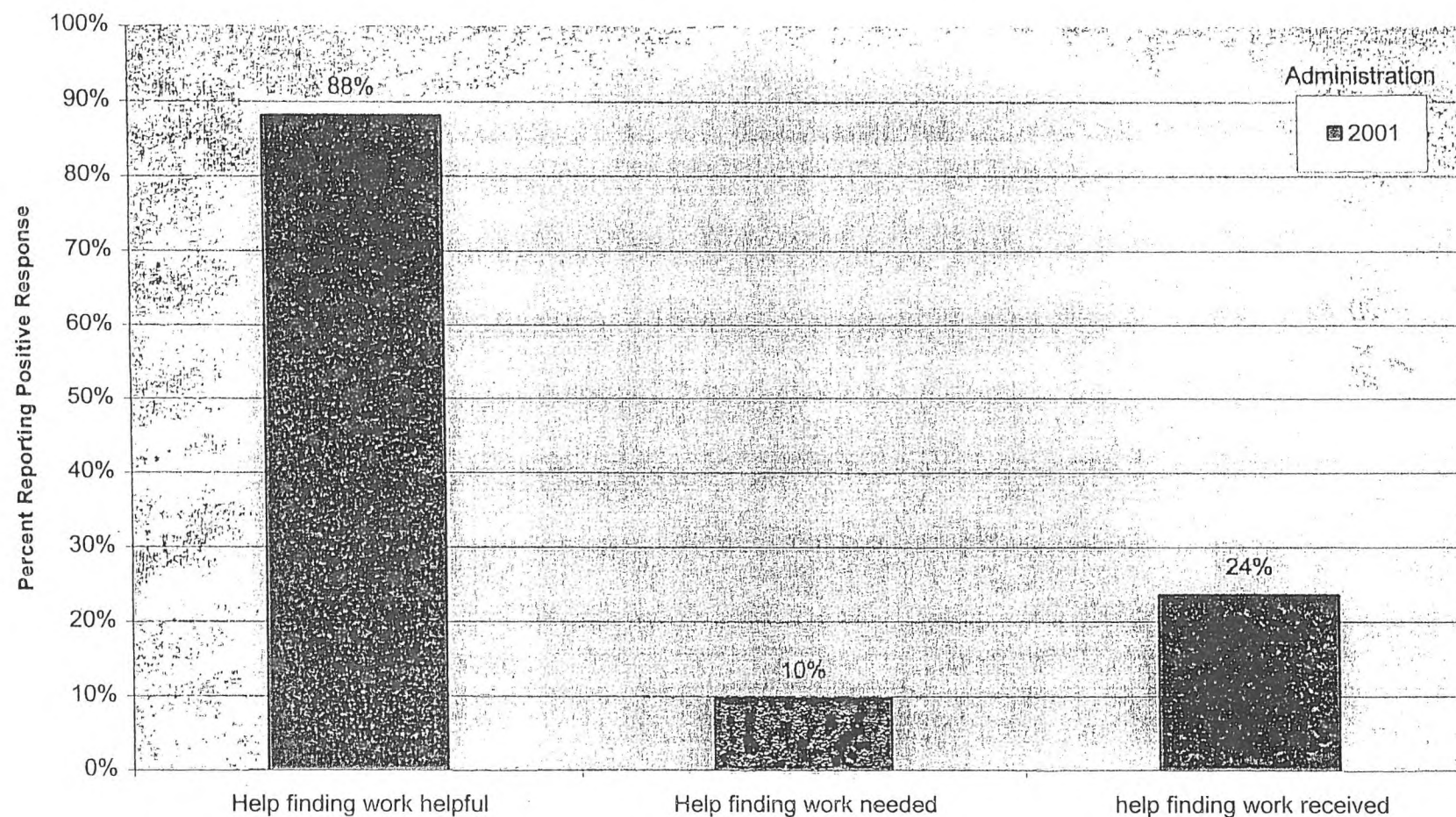
Figure 14: Consumer Perceptions of Vocational Services Received, Needed, and Overall Helpfulness: Annual Class Member Survey



Data Source: Annual Class Member Survey- 1999, 2000, and 2001 Data

Note: Sample sizes for the 1999, 2000, and 2001 Community Class Member Surveys are N=59, N=98, and N=82, respectively.

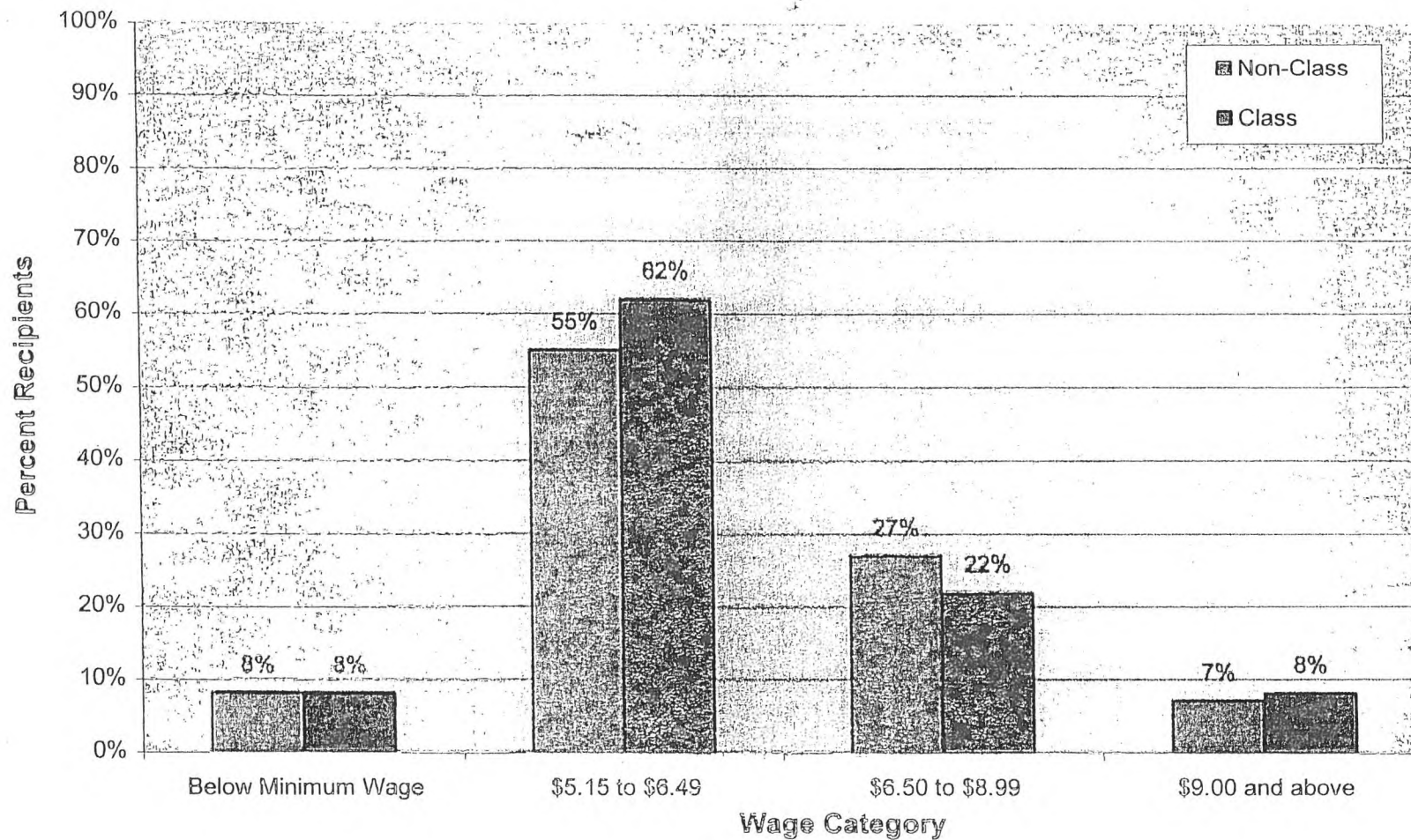
Figure 15: Consumer Perceptions of Vocational Services Received, Needed, and Overall Helpfulness: Annual Class Member Survey



Data Source: Annual Class Member Survey- 2001 Data

Note: Sample sizes for the 1999, 2000, and 2001 Community Class Member Surveys are N=59, N=98, and N=82, respectively.

Figure 7: Hourly Wage of Class Members and Non-Class Members: DMHMRSAS Vocational Data: FY 2000



Data Source: DMHMRSAS Regional Vocational Services Data: FY2000