

NYC Veterans' Experience Research Breakfast

May 15th, 2025

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Logistics



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About LMIS

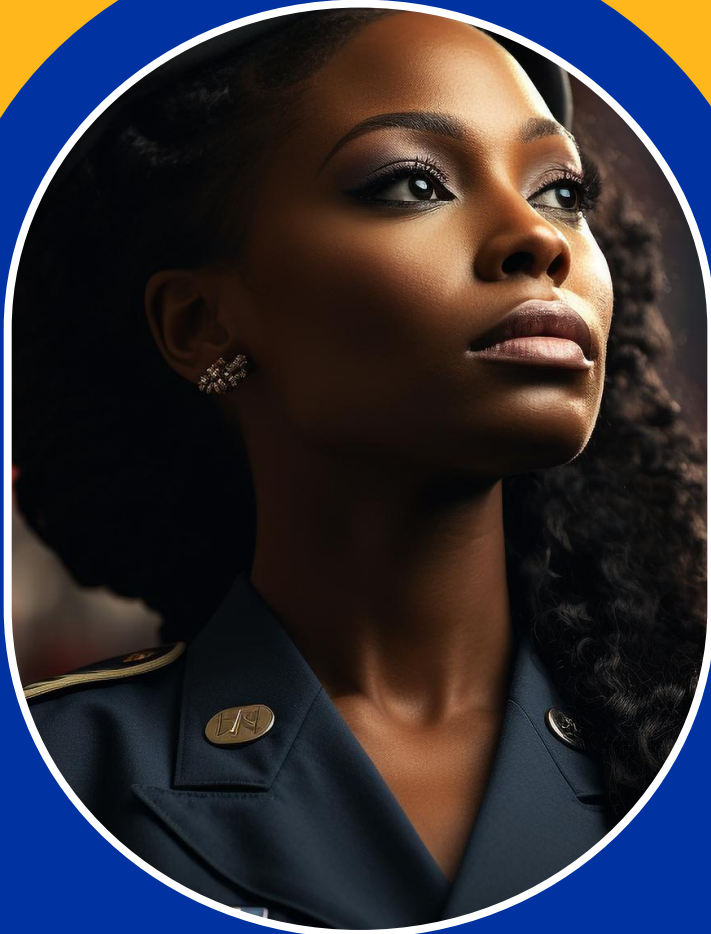
- ❖ NYC Labor Market Information Service (LMIS) is an applied research center located within the Center for Urban Research at the CUNY Graduate Center.
- ❖ We are the only NYC-based organization devoted to conducting mixed-methods labor market research and making the findings relevant and actionable for mission-driven organizations.



Research Presentation: NYC Veterans' Experience

Jaclyn Kelly, Director, LMIS





**Background
and Context**



**Veterans'
Experience
in NYC**



**Veteran
Engagement**



**Policy
Proposals**

Content Overview



Background and Context

Background & Context

LMIS partnered with DVS in 2023 to support their work strengthening NYC's Veterans' community and ensuring all Veterans are aware of and have access to the benefits and services for which they are eligible. Research goals include:

- A** Understanding the lived experiences, priorities, and needs of NYC's Veterans
- B** Hearing first-hand why some Veterans are highly engaged while others are not
- C** Providing DVS with policy recommendations to support their mission to connect, mobilize, and empower NYC's Veteran community

Research Methodology

Idea Scoping

- LMIS, DVS, Syracuse University D'Aniello Institute for Veterans and Military Families, Student Veterans of America (SVA)

NYC Veteran & Military Community Survey

- Administered in 2024, 571 valid responses

Focus Groups

- Veterans, mission-driven sector communications & marketing professionals

Interviews

- Veteran-focused policy leaders

Nest Steps: Upcoming Focus Groups

- Feedback on policy proposals from nonidentifying Veterans

Research Methodology Caveats!

- ❖ Data were collected in an iterative process from Fall 2023 through Spring 2025. There have been recent changes to Veterans' services at the Federal level.
- ❖ Survey is not a "representative sample".



Veterans' Experience in NYC

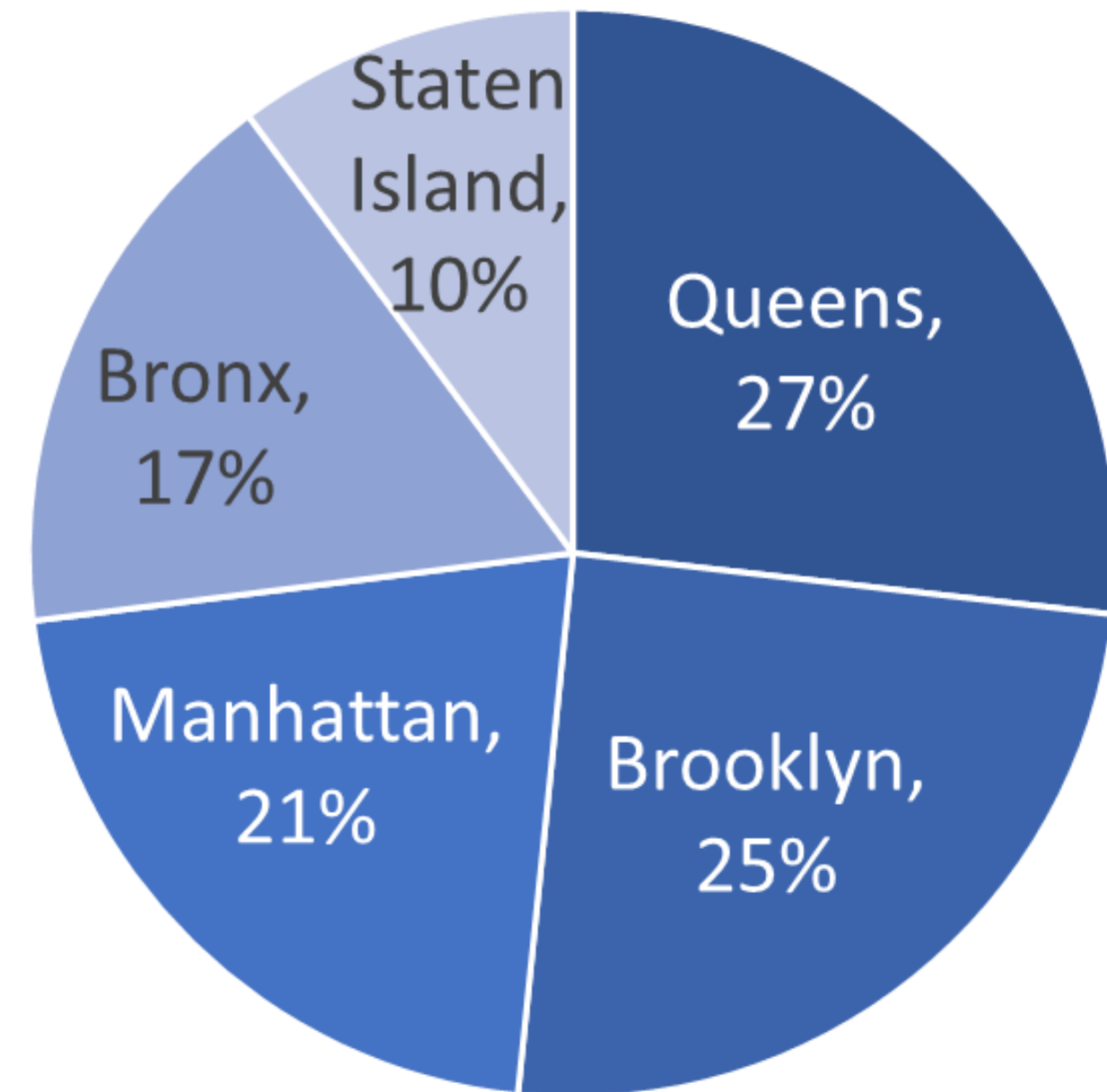
Who are NYC's Veterans?

NYC's Veterans represent 1.7% of the city's 6.6 million civilian adults.

Compared to NYC's nonveterans, Veterans are:

- Older (55% aged 65+)
- Mostly male (88%)
- Less racially diverse (47% White, 26% Black)
- More likely to be disabled (29%)

Residency

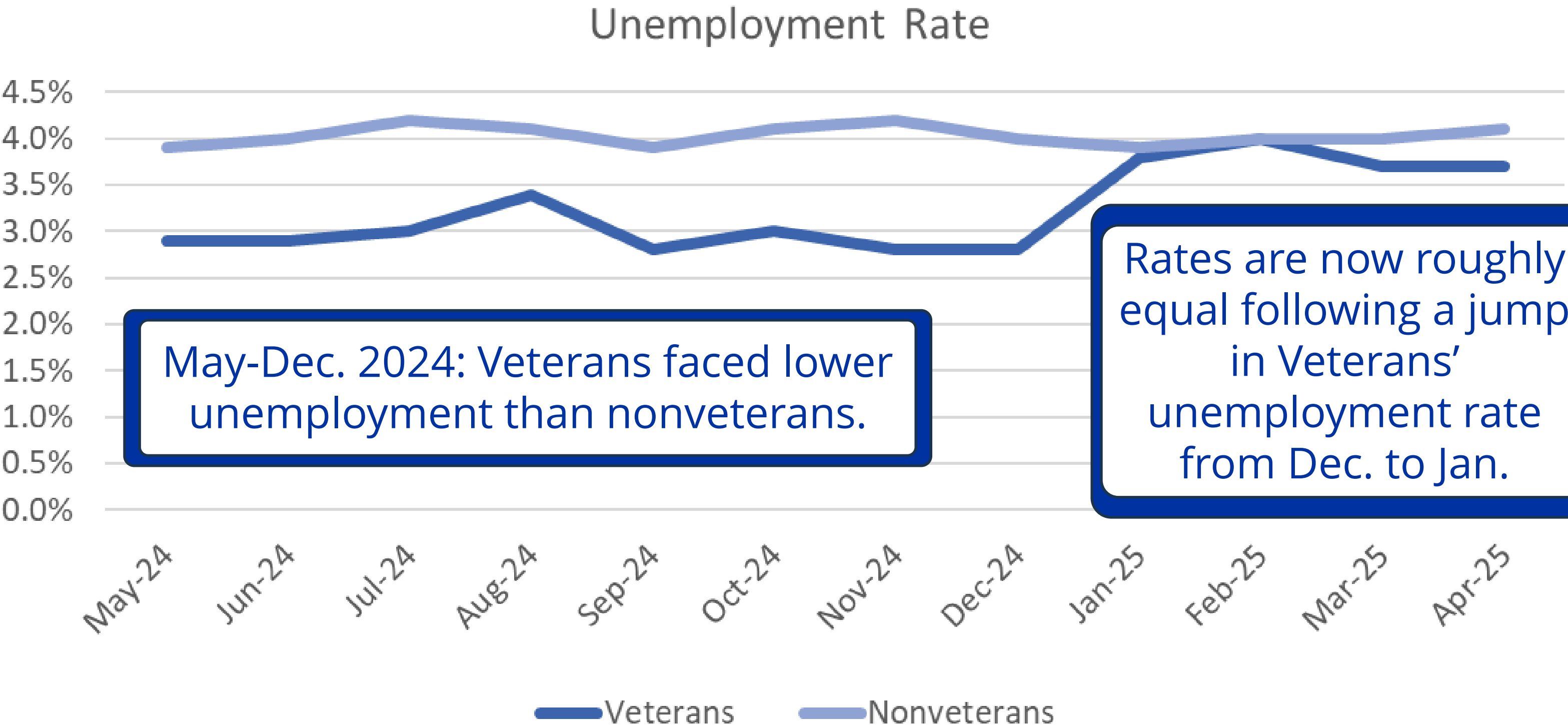


Veterans' Income

Median Income (*all sources*)

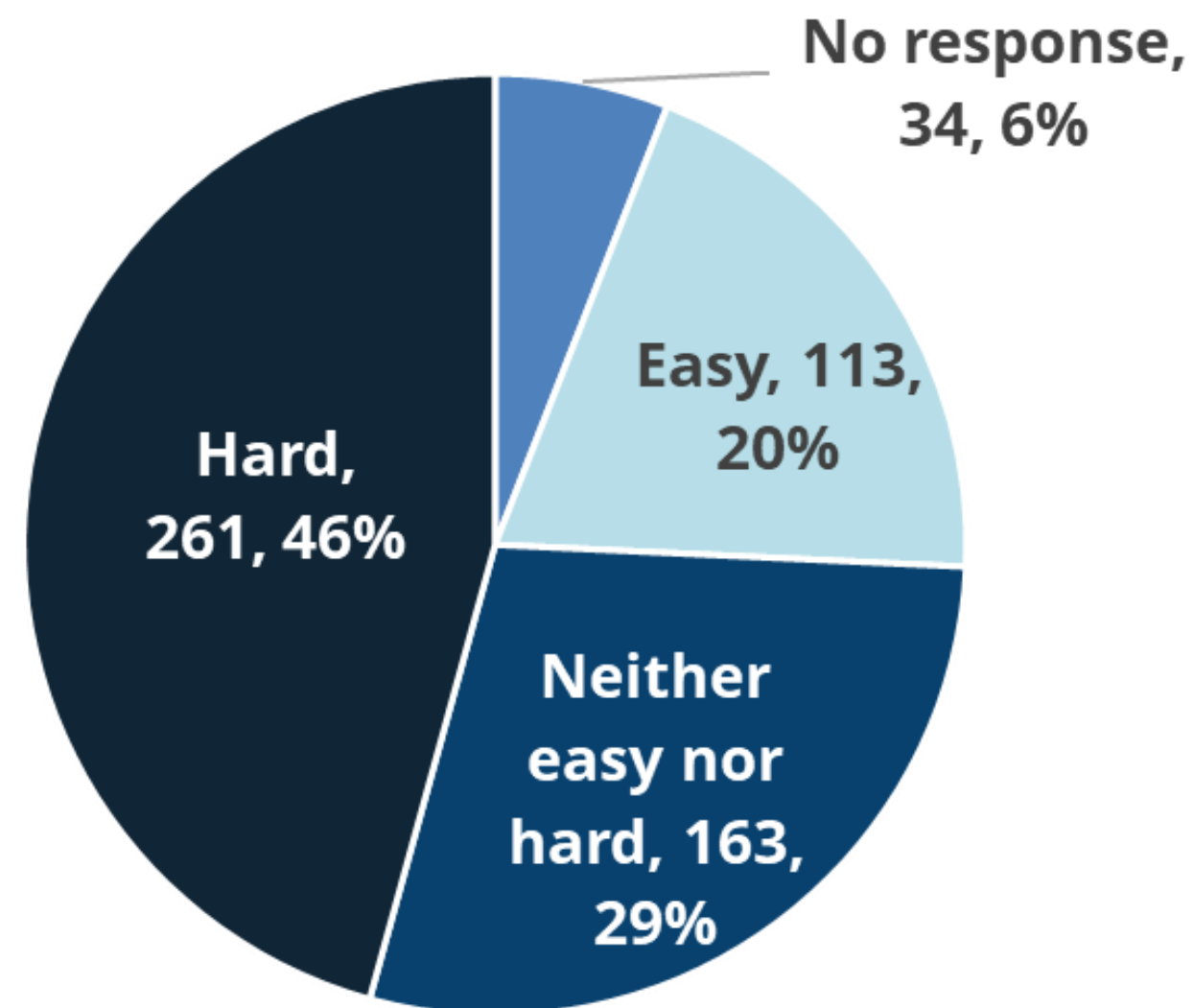
Geography	Veterans	Nonveterans
NYC	\$49,265	\$41,212
US	\$52,122	\$40,368

Veterans in the US Labor Market



NYC Veterans in the Labor Market

How hard has it been for you to get the type of work you want in NYC?



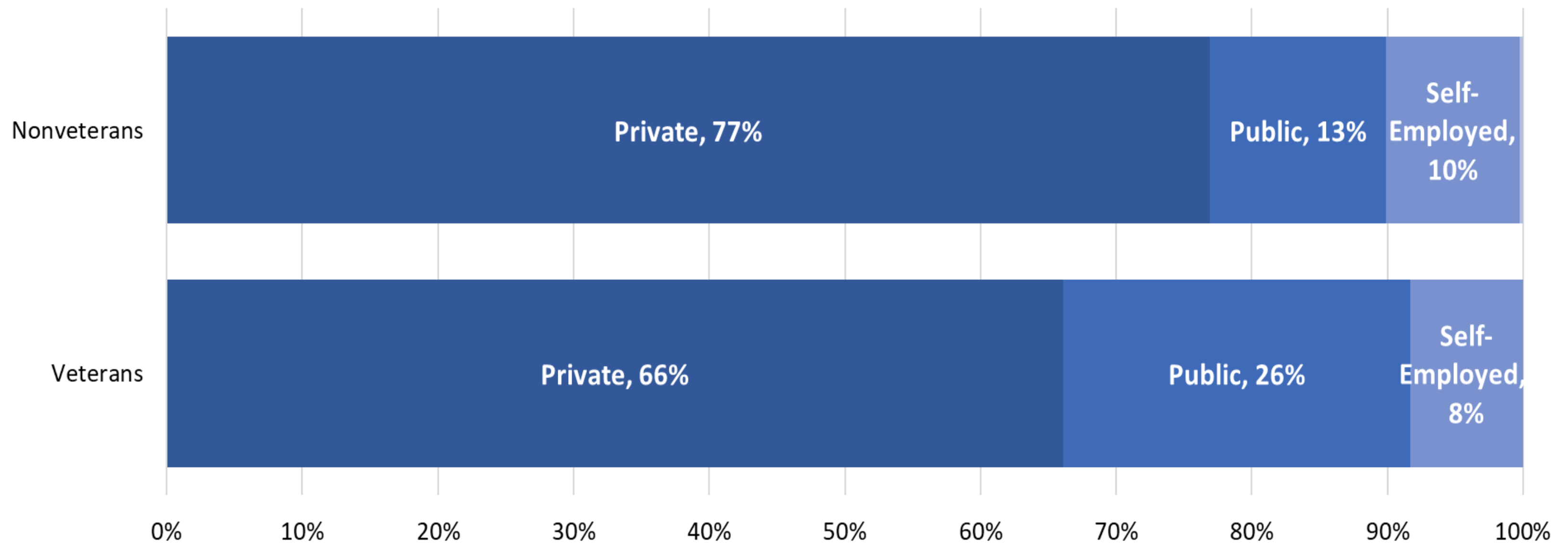
Among respondents who said it's hard to get desired work:

- 13% reported being unemployed
- 13% work part time
- 53% work full time

So, many do have jobs, but may be underemployed or looking to shift to a different type of career than what they have been doing.

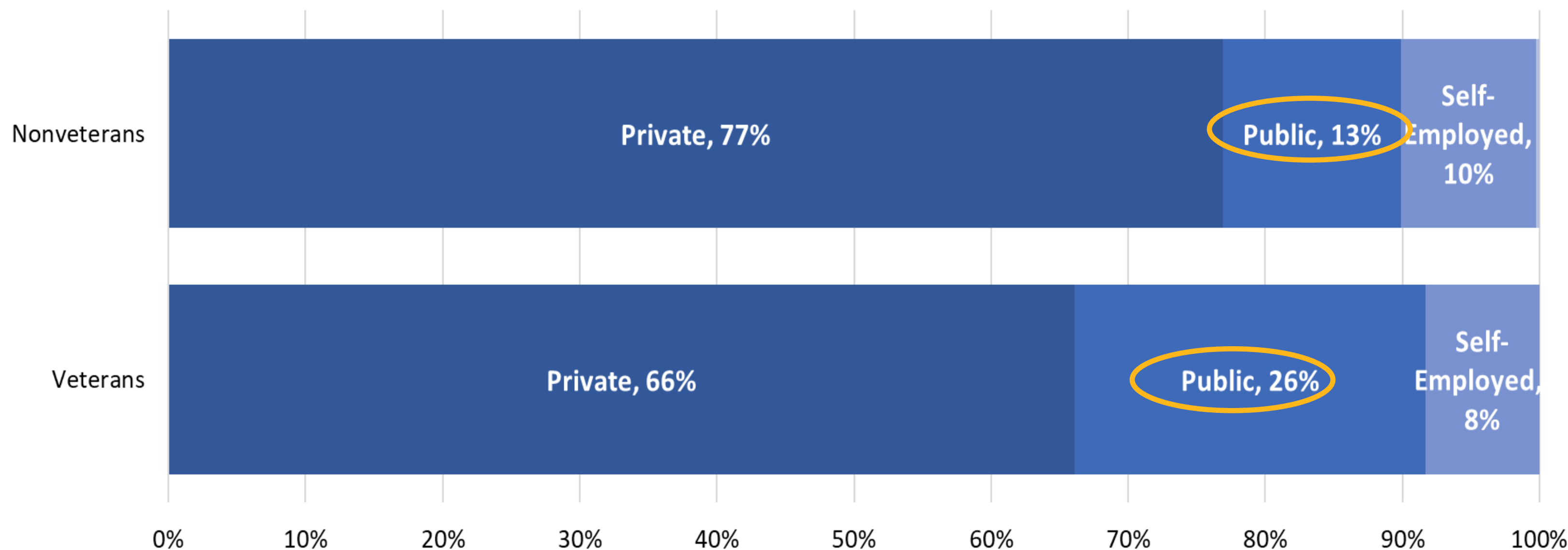
NYC Veterans in the Labor Market

NYC's roughly 44,000 employed Veterans are more likely to work in the public sector than the average New Yorker.



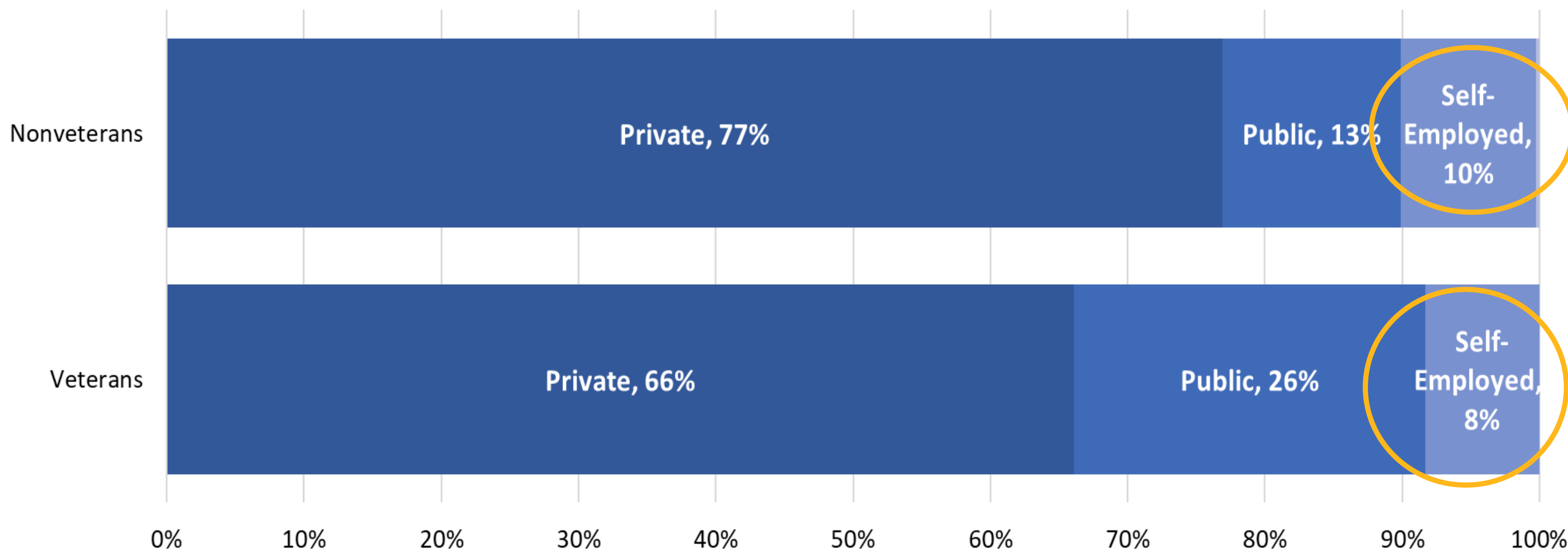
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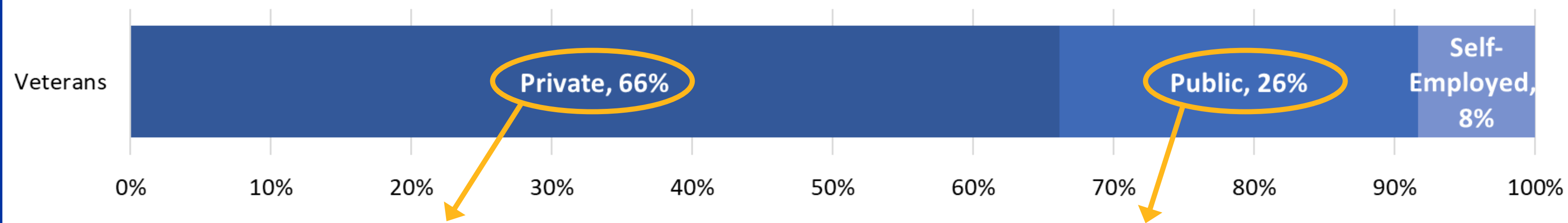


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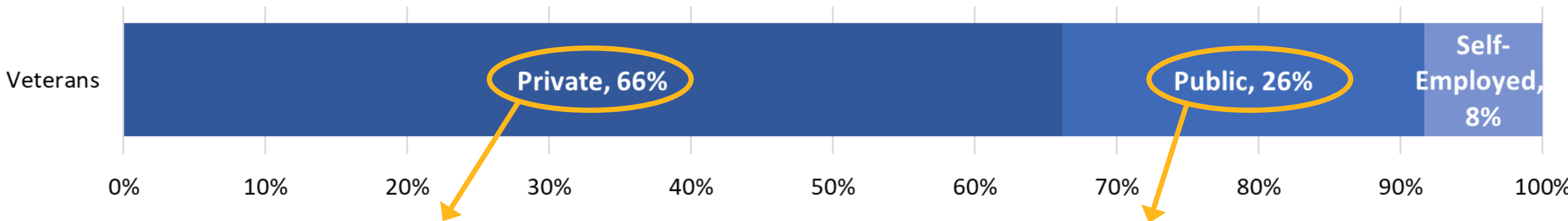


NYC Veterans in the Labor Market



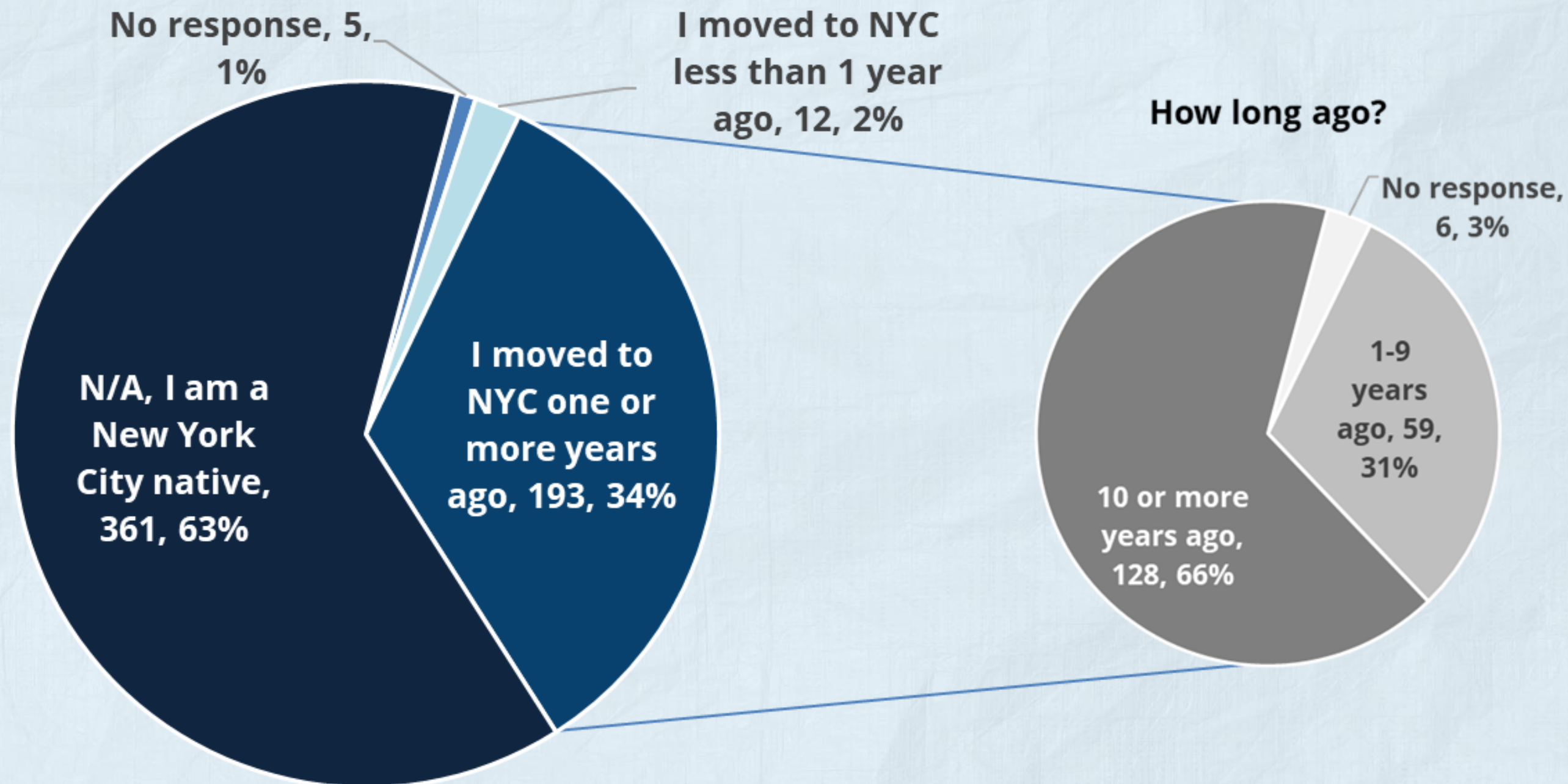
Private Sector (29,400 Veterans)		Public Sector (11,370 Veterans)	
Industry	# Vets	Industry	# Vets
Hospitals	2,430	Justice, Public Order, & Safety	2,180
Home Health Care Services	1,280	Elementary & Secondary Schools	1,690
Food Svcs & Drinking Places	1,270	Admin of HR Programs	1,230
Legal Services	1,250	Exec Offices, Legislative Bodies	850
Investigation & Security Svcs	980	Waste Mgmt & Remediation	650

NYC Veterans in the Labor Market



Private Sector (29,400 Veterans)		Public Sector (11,370 Veterans)	
Occupational Group	# Vets	Occupational Group	# Vets
Management	4,990	Protective Service	2,760
Business & Financial Ops	3,020	Educational Instr & Library	1,670
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	2,700	Management	1,230
Healthcare Support	2,570	Transport & Material Moving	1,100
Transport & Material Moving	2,490	Office & Admin Support	1,000

Survey respondents tended to be long-term NYers



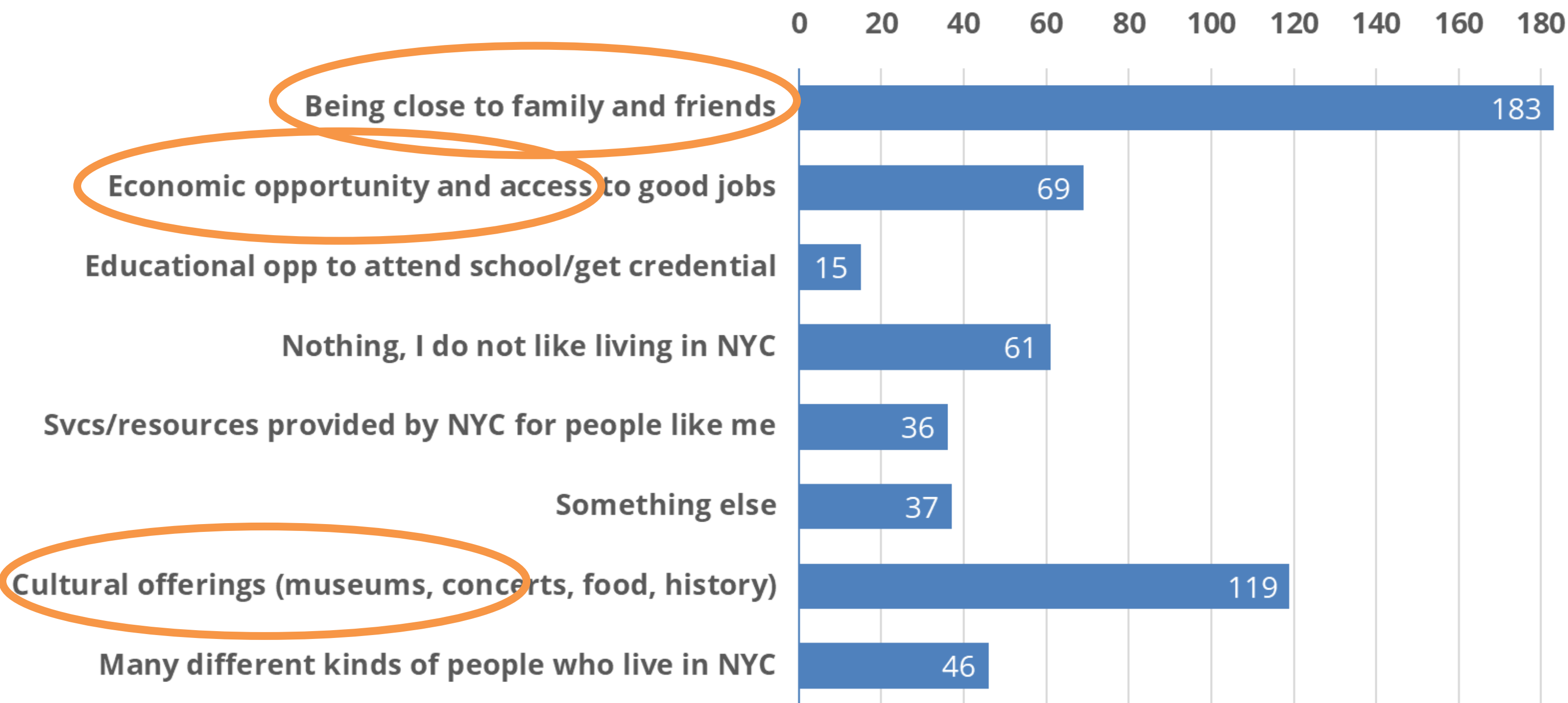
But, about just as many want to leave NYC as want to stay

44% of
respondents
plan to stay

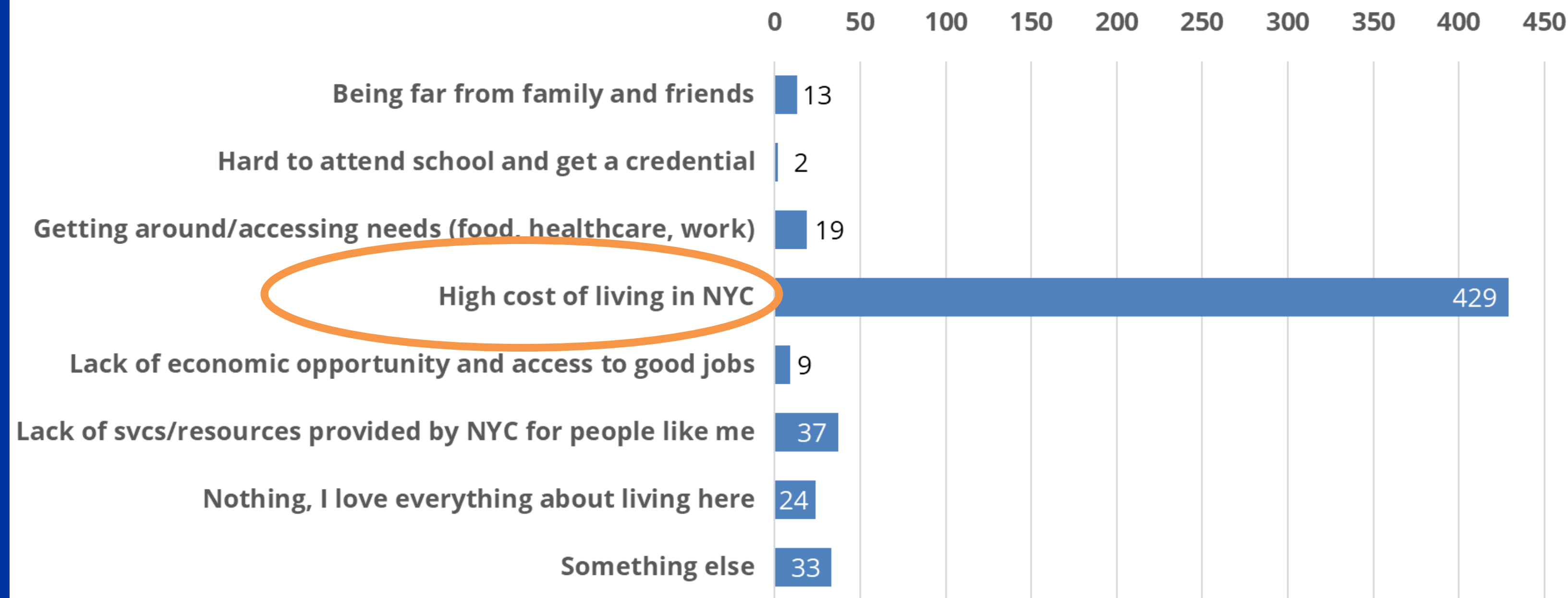
42% plan to
move

13% are
unsure

Favorite Thing About Living in NYC



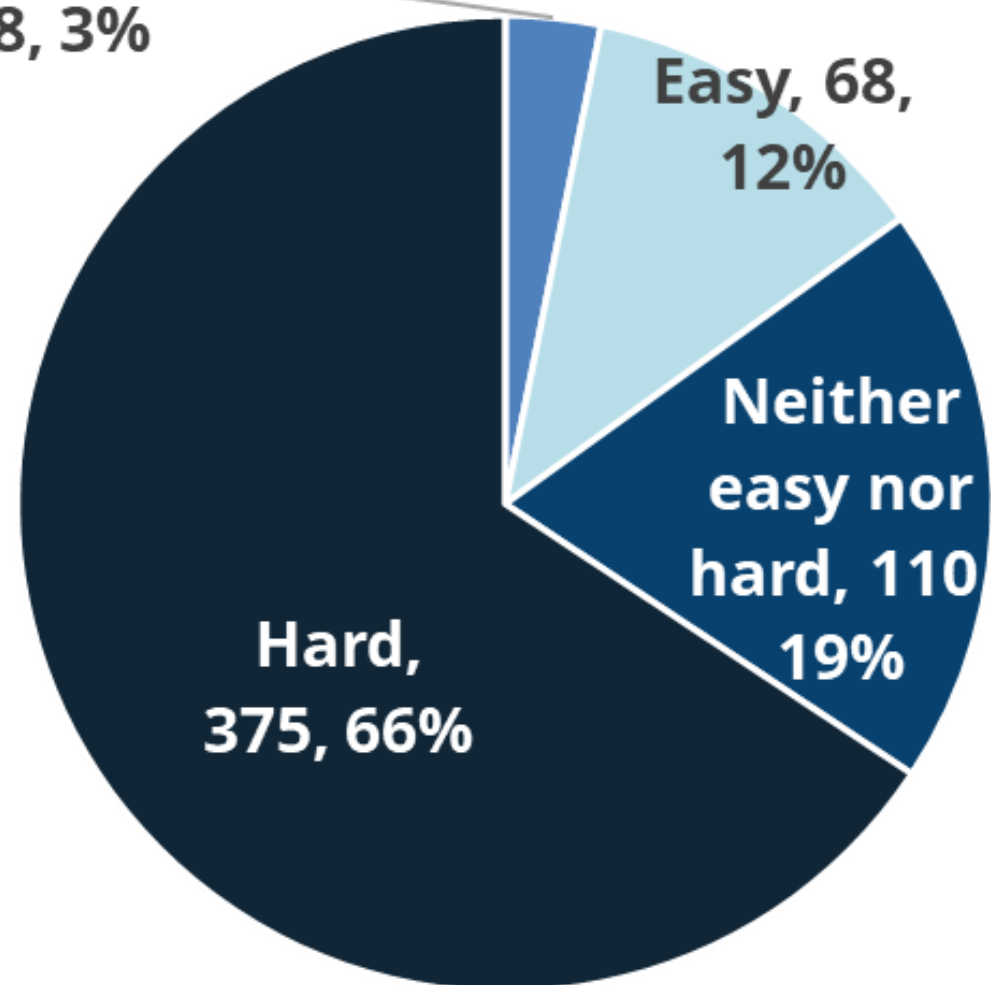
Hardest Thing About Living in NYC



Challenges of Living in NYC

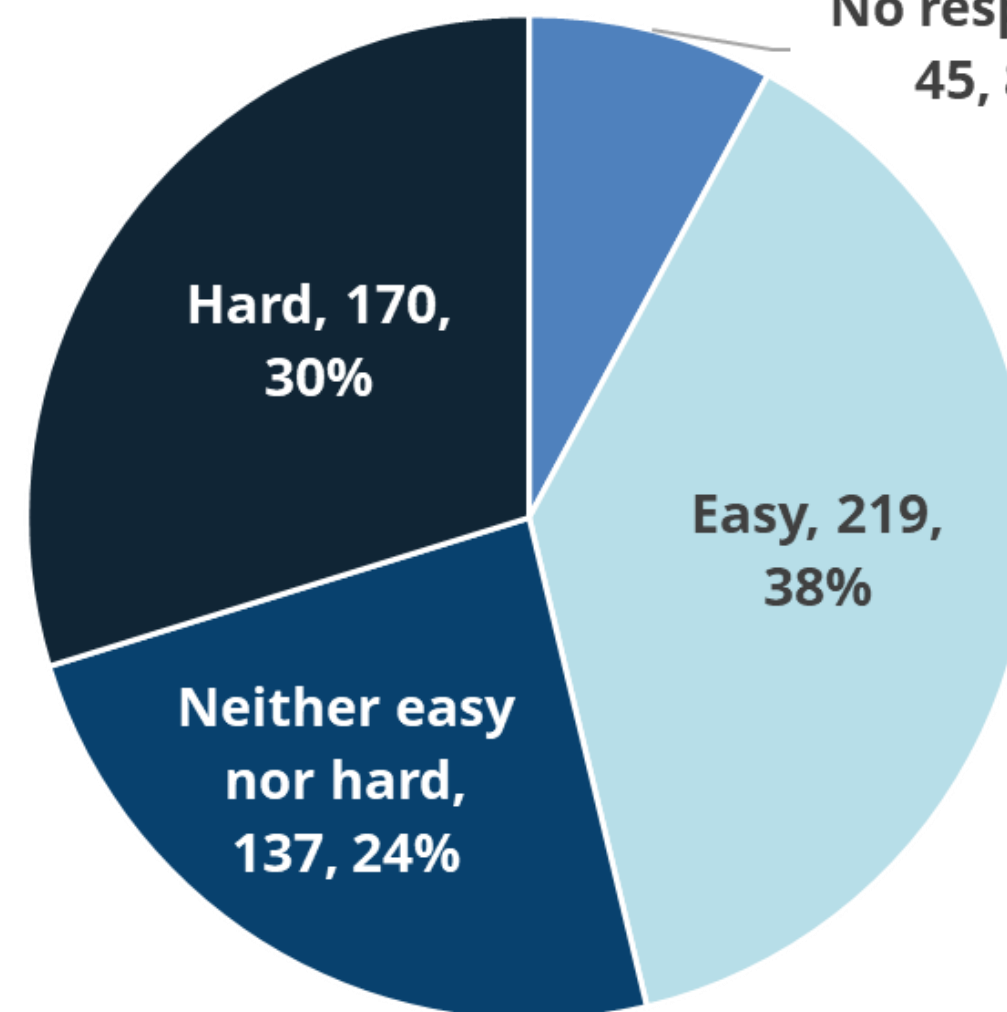
How hard has it been for you to find stable, affordable housing in NYC?

No response,
18, 3%



How hard has it been for you to meet your basic needs in NYC (accessing food, healthcare)?

No response,
45, 8%



Respondents' Housing Situation

Housing Status	Percent (%)
Rent my home/apt	45
Own my home/apt	38
Living w/family or friends	10
At risk of homelessness	3
Temp/transitional housing	2
Currently homeless	1
No response	1
Student/dorm housing	0

Respondents who rated finding housing as “hard” tend to be younger (41% born after 1980) and support more individuals (32% support 3+ people, including themselves).

NYC Residents' Housing Burden

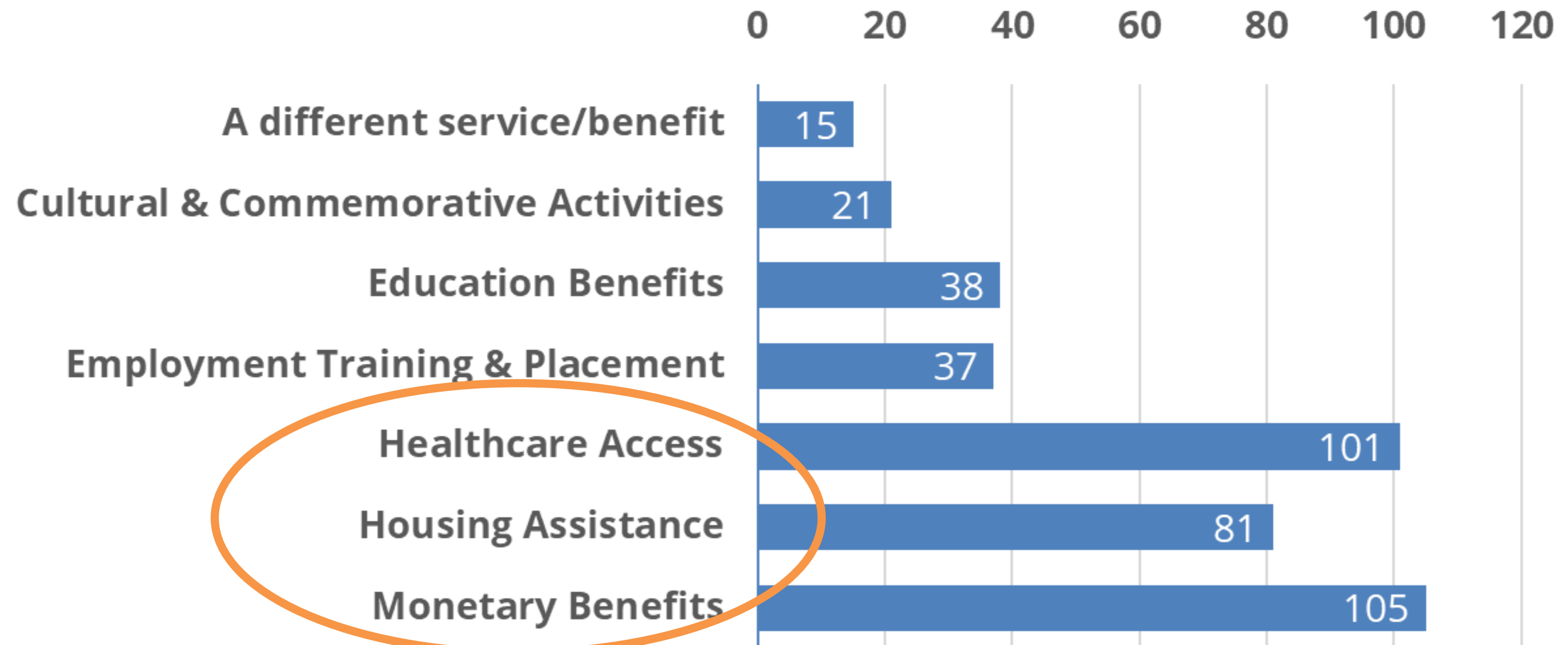
- ❖ Annual housing costs are ~\$30,000 on average for NYC households, typically accounting for ~40% of NYers' household expenses.*
- ❖ Housing costs have skyrocketed in NYC. They increased 68% in the decade up to 2022, leading the nation.*

Veteran Status	Median Household Income
Veterans	\$71,800
Nonveterans	\$75,000

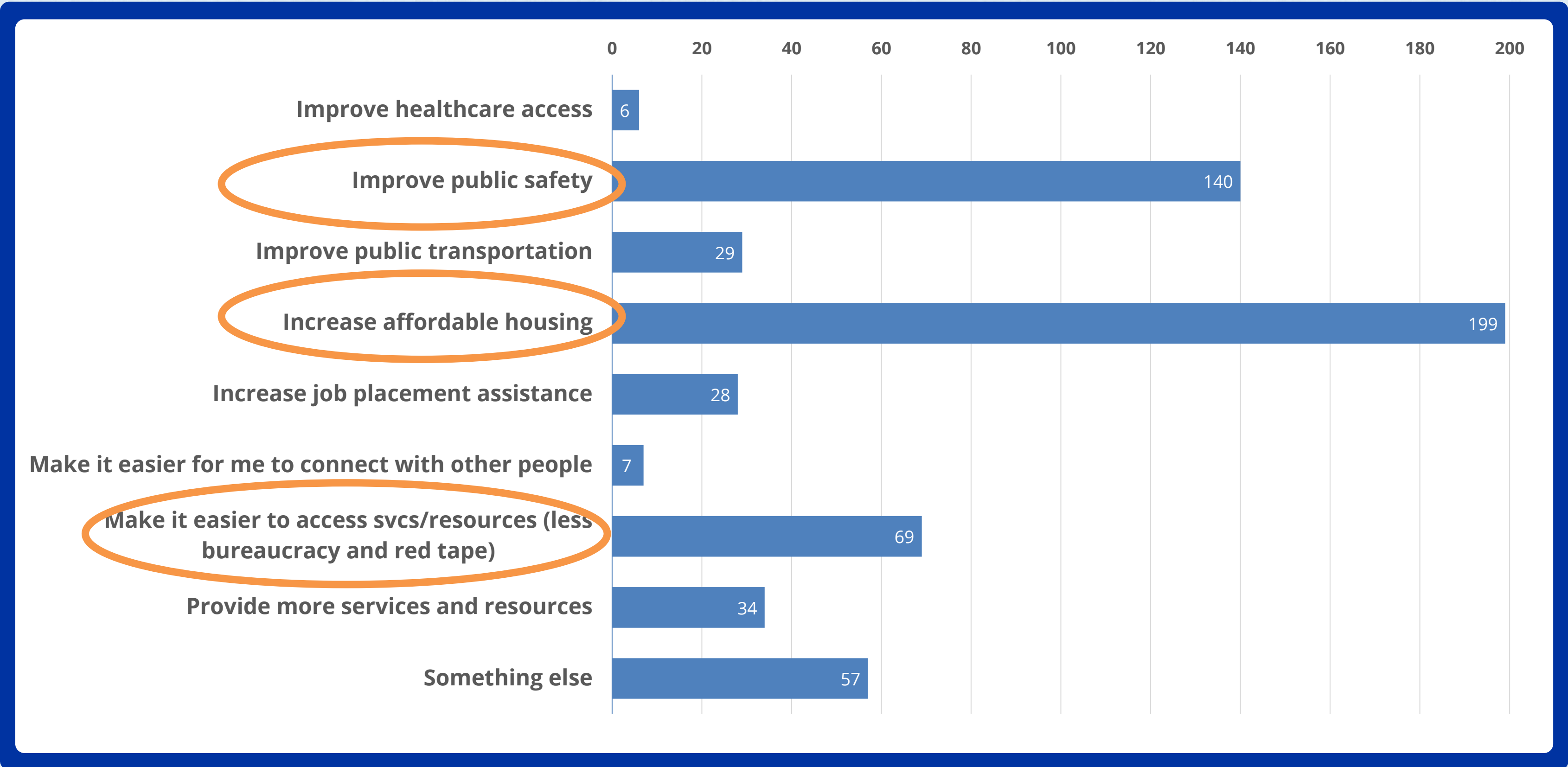
* [*\\$30,000 a year for housing? That's average in New York*](#). NY Times, Jan 22, 2024

Vets' Most Valued Service/Benefit

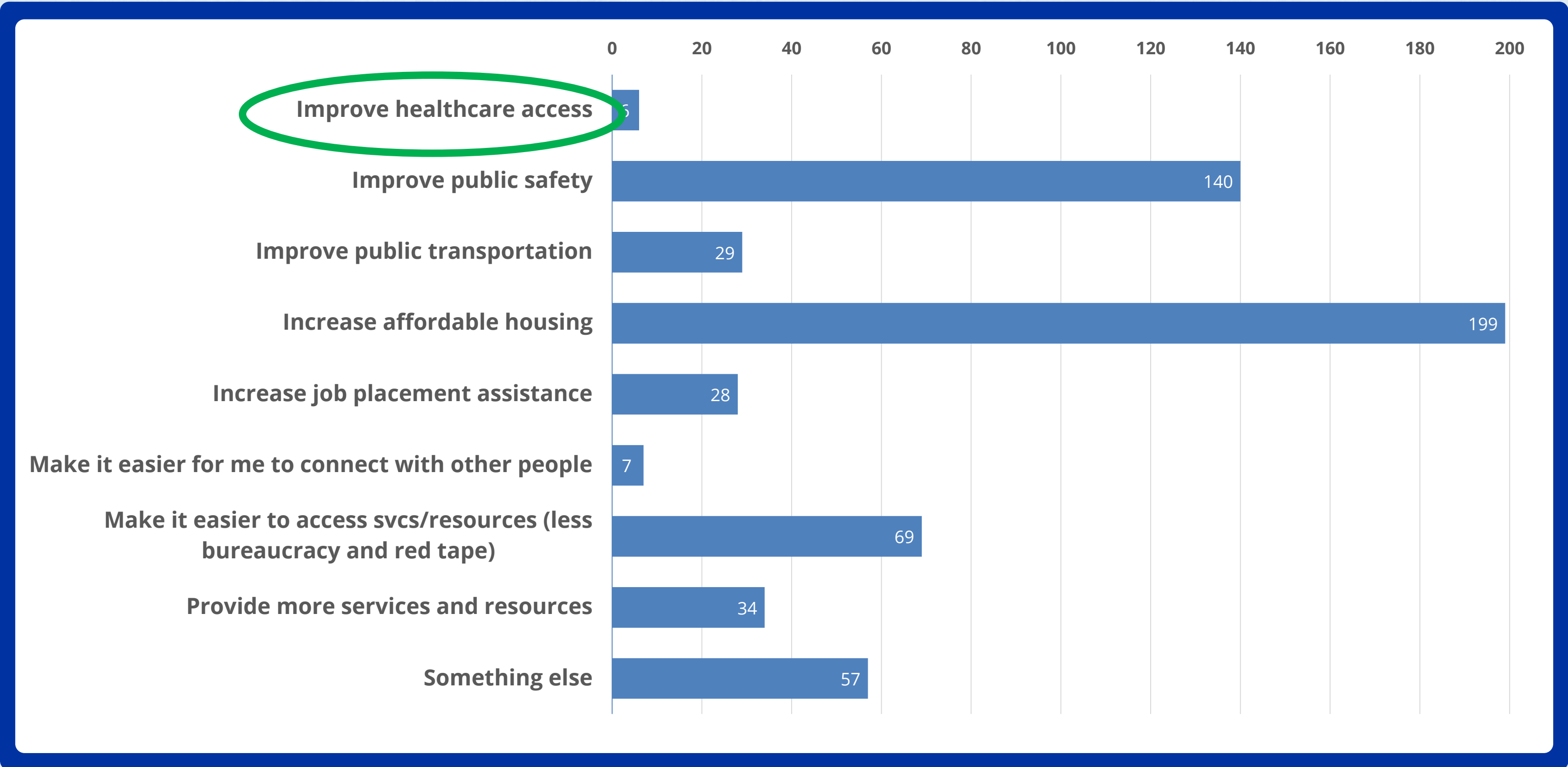
Which *single* Veterans' service is most important to you?



What one thing could NYC gov't do to most improve your quality of life in NYC?



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Veteran Engagement

Identifying as a Veteran: Survey Findings

An apparent paradox: more than half of the survey respondents consider being a Veteran an important part of who they are, but many do not actively share with others that they have military experience.

Identifying as a Veteran: Survey Findings

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Only 22% of survey respondents mention their Veteran status when they meet new people.

Similarly, only 28% tell people in their life (neighbors, coworkers, school peers) that they are a Vet.

Self-identification as a Veteran: Focus Group Insights

Why some Veterans do not disclose their status:

- ❖ **To avoid judgment**

- By other members of the military community
- By the public

- ❖ **To avoid unwanted conversation**

- Discussion that might trigger painful memories
- Questions/scrutiny irrelevant to the moment that dominate the discussion

- ❖ **Moved on / identify with other interests**

- Having been in the military is only one aspect of a Veteran's identity. While important, it does not solely define them.

Engagement: Survey Findings

Many respondents who do not use benefits/services or are not engaged in the Veteran community cite being too busy or a lack of information as reasons.

320 respondents (56%) have never been part of a Vet-affiliated organization. The top 3 reasons:

- ❖ **Too busy** with other life responsibilities (44%)
- ❖ Other (30%)– **lack of awareness** and/or knowledge about Vet-affiliated orgs is a theme
- ❖ The Veteran services and benefits that are offered are **not needed/useful** to me (17%)

105 respondents (18%) have never received any benefits, nor interacted with DVS.

- ❖ 69%: **lack of awareness** for how to access services/benefits/Vet orgs
- ❖ 28%: too **complicated or time consuming** to access services/benefits
- ❖ 20%: benefits/services are **not needed/useful**

Engagement: Focus Group Insights

❖ **Eligibility Criteria: Limitations and Misunderstandings**

- Strict criteria for accessing some services may serve as a disincentive
 - Receiving certain benefits may prohibit working
 - Difficulty accessing supportive housing unless essentially homeless
- Privacy concerns – extensive, invasive questions to determine eligibility
- Differing definitions of a “Veteran” across organizations and services

❖ **Ease of access**

- Lack of a centralized location for enrolling in certain benefits
- Difficulty accessing support for questions related to services

Engagement: Focus Group Insights

❖ Lack of awareness

- Several cited word of mouth as the primary method by which they learned of benefits
- Difficulty reaching vulnerable Veterans (e.g., those with housing instability, lack of access via phones)

❖ Age as a factor

- Younger Veterans are busy with family, work, other commitments
- Don't feel the immediate need or realize they are eligible because injuries or disabilities worsen slowly over time

❖ Pride

❖ Moved on / identify with other interests

- Having been in the military is only one aspect of a Veteran's identity

Fostering Inclusivity: Survey Insights

Among survey respondents who have never been part of a Veteran-affiliated organization, 73% said, “Yes,” changes would make them more likely to engage/use Vet benefits and services. Top suggestions:

- ❖ Having more info
- ❖ Providing services/opportunities that fit better with my needs and interests
- ❖ Outreach from DVS & other Veterans orgs
- ❖ More online opportunities
- ❖ More in-person opportunities

Fostering Inclusivity: Focus Group Insights

- ❖ **Connect with Veteran-supporters influential in Veterans' lives**
 - Spouses
 - Peers, fellow Veterans
- ❖ **Outreach targeted to Veteran subgroups**
 - Varied communication channels: physical spaces, print media, digital media
 - Special interest groups: connect with Veterans through their other identities
- ❖ **Incentivize**
 - Tangible benefits
 - Value of engagement within the broader Veterans' community and with DVS



Policy Proposals

Proposal: Honor & leverage Veterans' multiple facets & identities

- ❖ Build relationships with *niche* and *highly trusted* community-based organizations to serve as ambassadors and points of contact to connect with Veterans by way of their interests outside of their military experience.
- ❖ Advertise in trusted public spaces as a way to reach older adults who are not connected to social media.
- ❖ Create/leverage a network of community boards.



Proposal: Establish a peer-navigator program

Use a peer-navigator model to provide Veterans with 1:1 support and a trusted contact with a shared experience to walk them through the process of accessing benefits/services (i.e., part-time roles or volunteer corps of Veterans who have gone through the process themselves).



Proposal: Clearly define & communicate DVS' value proposition

There is some uncertainty around DVS' specific role and contribution relative to other state and federal agencies.

What problem can DVS solve for the Veterans' community that other agencies can't?

- ❖ Clarify and differentiate DVS' unique role and services
- ❖ Define metrics for success
- ❖ Communicate and raise awareness



Proposal: Refine communications strategy

DVS' messaging of their mission should include a call to action or something tangible for people to hold onto, but it needs to be tailored in communication style and channel for specific subgroups to appeal to the diversity of needs and interests among NYC's Veterans.

- ❖ Incentivize with tangible items (e.g., food) to get people in the door
- ❖ Ensure any call to action is not burdensome to Veterans

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