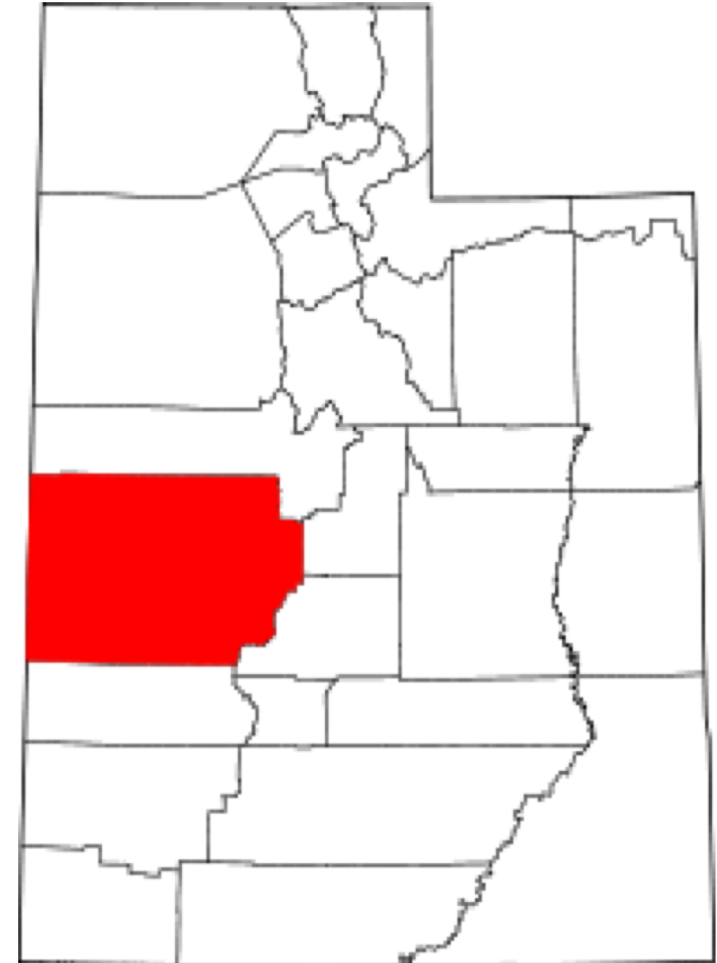


Health Care Provider Recruitment and Retention Millard County, Utah



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Abstract

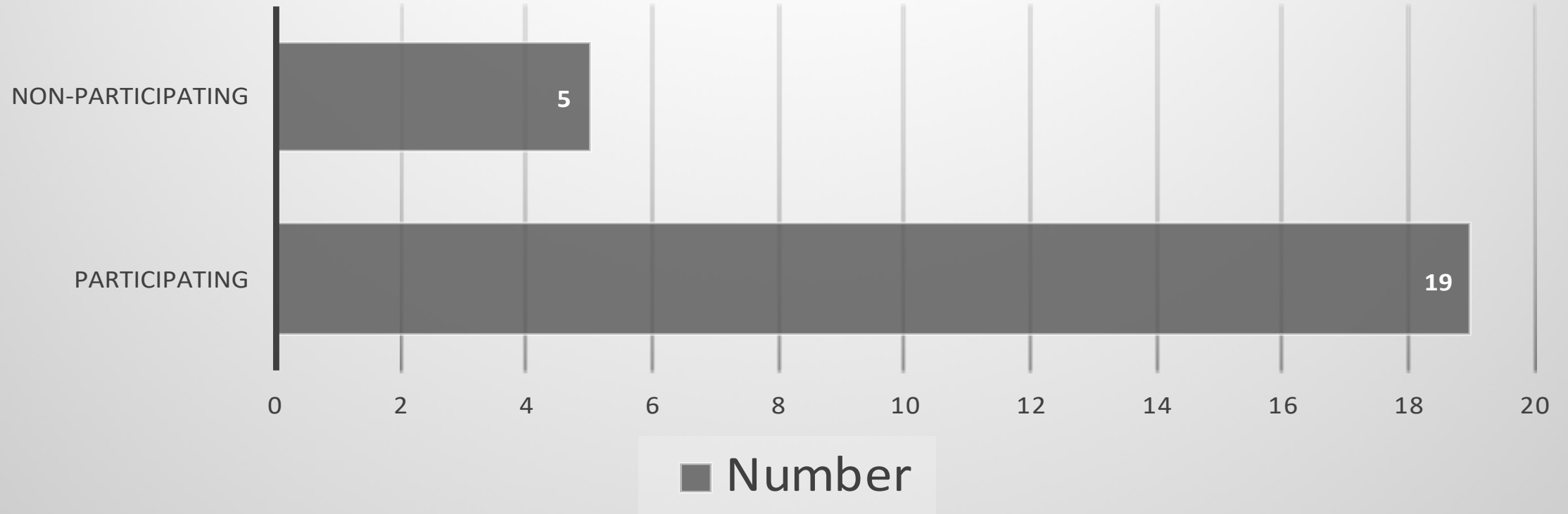
Millard County, Utah, with its remote location and sparse population, has experienced recurring problems recruiting and retaining primary health care providers. Though widely recognized, this problem has not been systematically and rigorously studied. This research addressed this need by collecting and analyzing the data gleaned from a series of semi-structured interviews with nineteen (nine current and ten former) of the twenty-four known providers who established practice in the county from the 1980s to 2018. The analytic data of this study also included four administrators who were involved in the recruitment process.

This high participation percentage was one of its important strengths as it provided the ability to more thoroughly discover the root causes underlying these short-comings. One important finding of this study is that is not a single reason or even a handful of factors underlying recruitment and retention failures, but rather, when the cumulative effect of a variety of negative experiences finally reaches a tipping point, the provider feels compelled to terminate his/her in-county health care services. This conclusion is supported by data that showed providers who were not provided with on-going support, such as building their practice or having access to loan repayment, still chose to leave practice in the county, in spite of their positive rural background.

Findings of this study suggest that a comprehensive and on-going effort is necessary for the successful recruitment and retention of health care providers; for example, my results identified several factors that attracted and kept health care providers to rural Utah including appropriate provider selection, family engagement, loan forgiveness, and a clear, fair, and fully implemented compensation package. It is also imperative to continually assess stressors impinging on primary care providers and effectively dealing with them before the tipping point is reached.

Study Demographics Providers

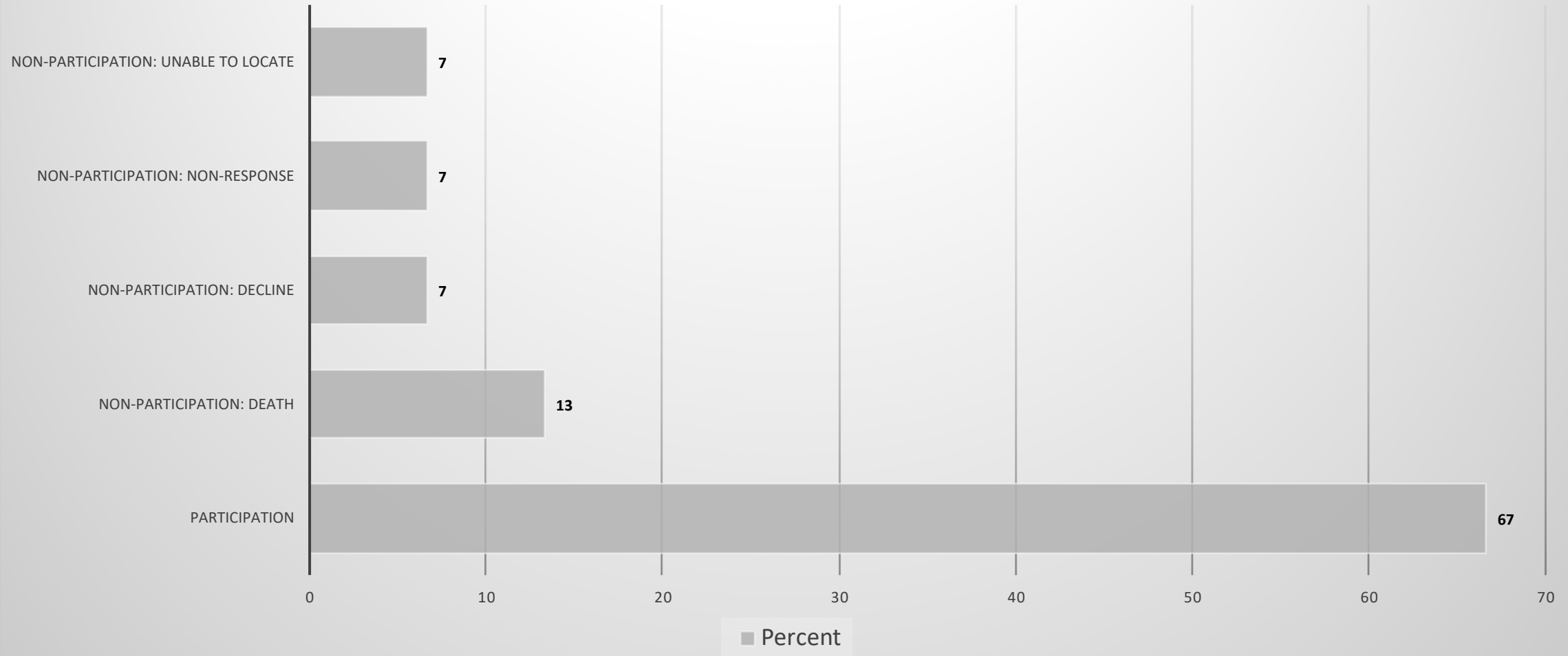
Potential Participation vs. Actual Participation



Study Demographics

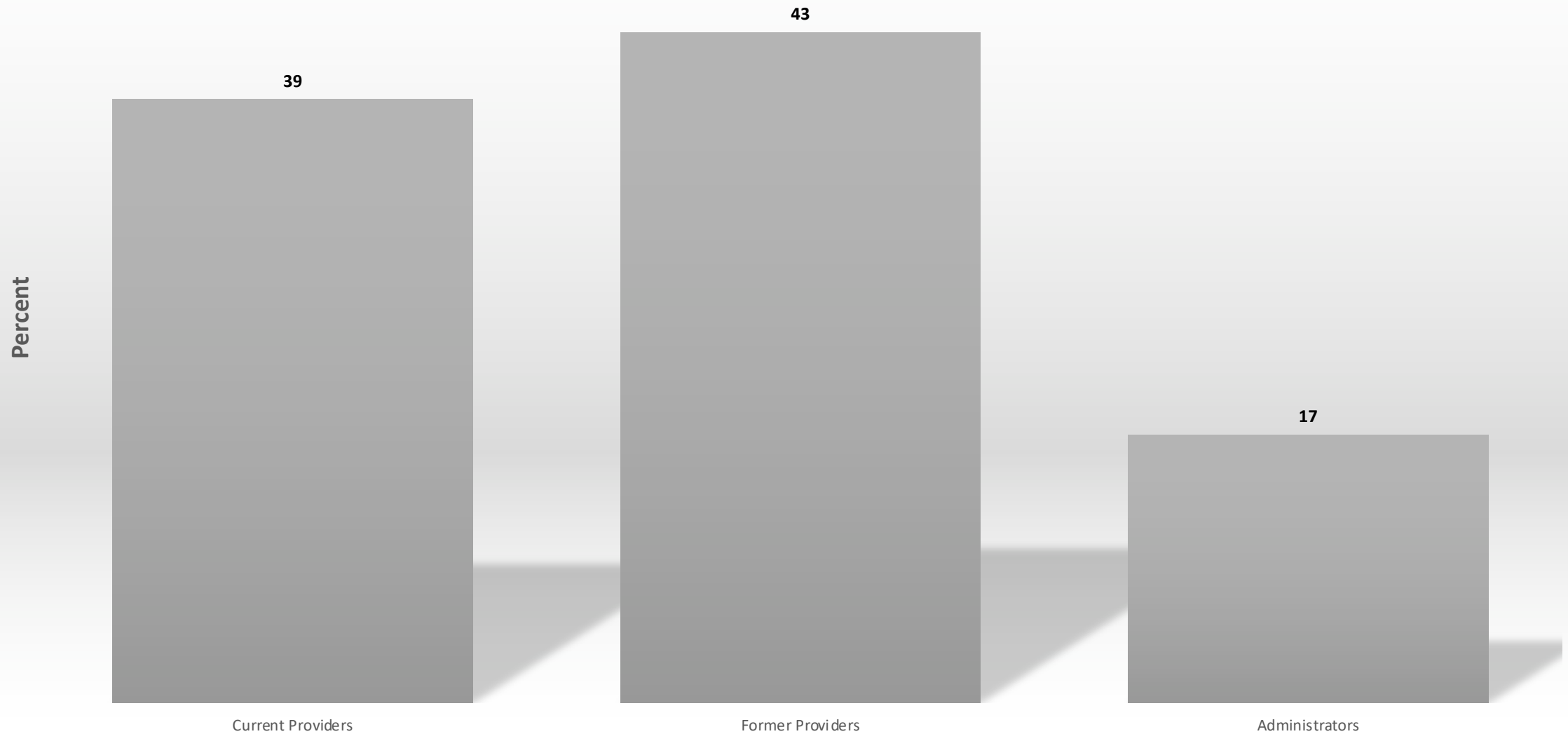
Former Providers

Participation vs. Non-Participation



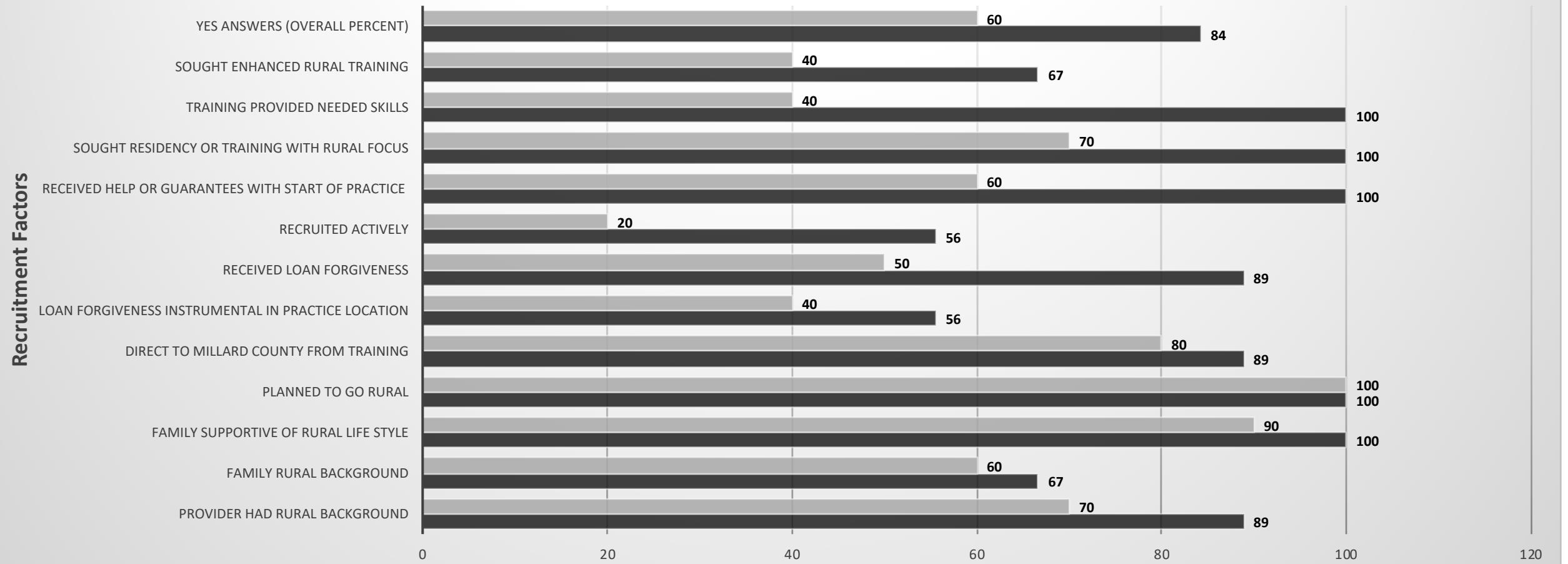
Study Demographics

Participant Category



Recruitment Experiences

Former vs. Current Providers

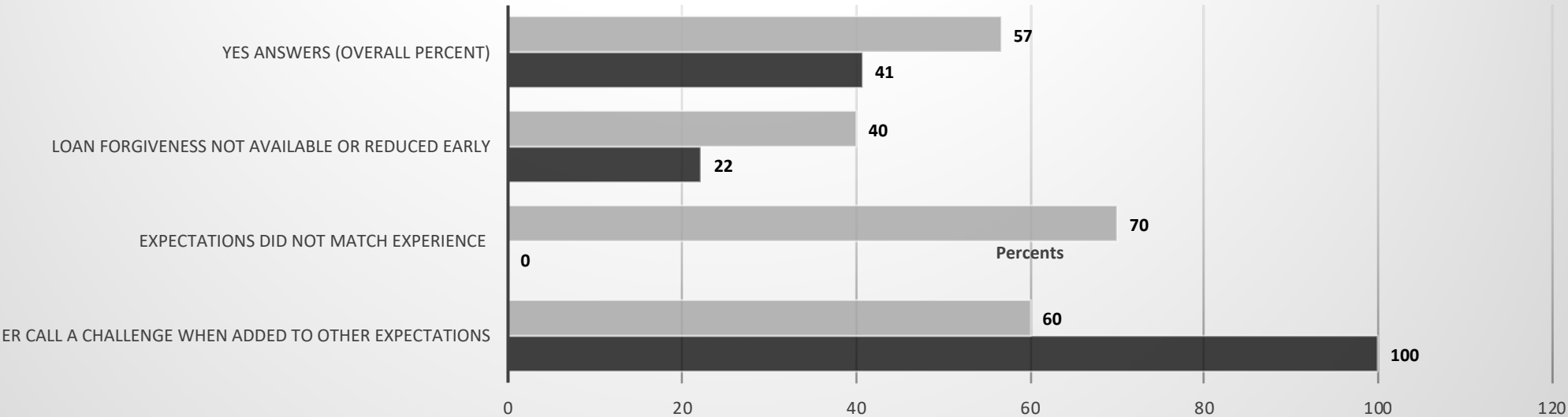


	Provider had rural background	Family rural background	Family supportive of rural life style	Planned to go rural	Direct to Millard County from training	Loan forgiveness instrumental in practice location	Received loan forgiveness	Recruited actively	Received help or guarantees with start of practice	Sought residency or training with rural focus	Training provided needed skills	Sought enhanced rural training	Yes Answers (Overall Percent)
Former Provider	70	60	90	100	80	40	50	20	60	70	40	40	60
Current Provider	89	67	100	100	89	56	89	56	100	100	100	67	84

Percent

Former Provider Current Provider

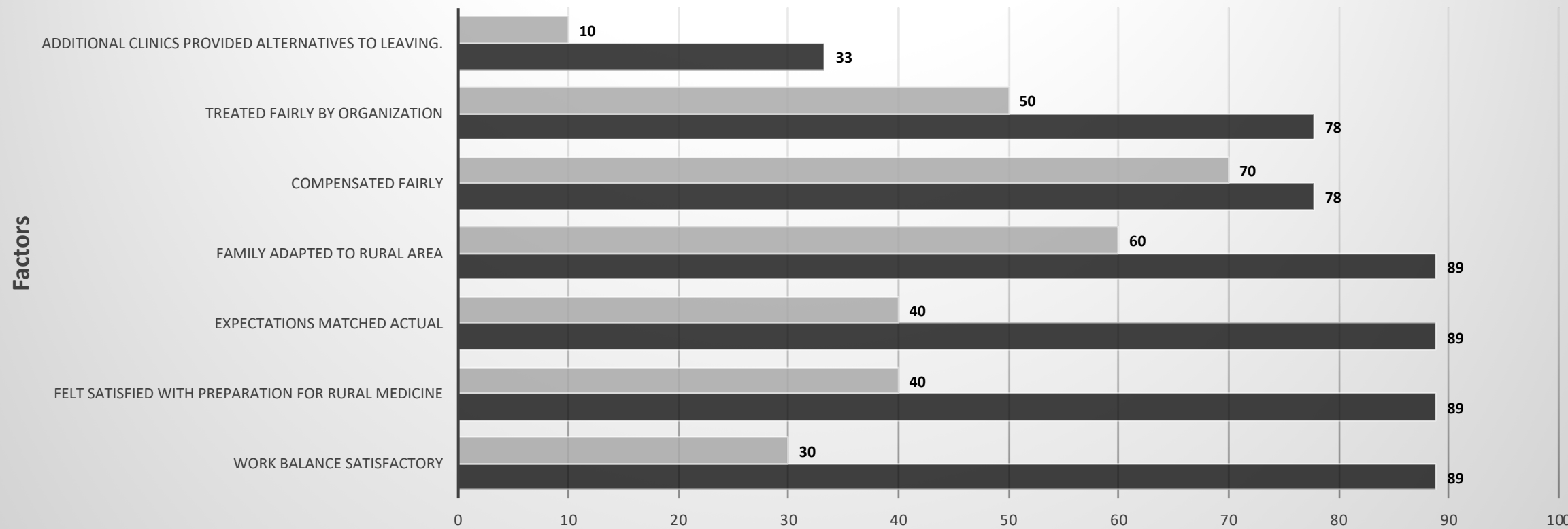
Major Challenges Reported Former vs. Current Providers



	ER call a challenge when added to other expectations	Expectations did not match experience	Loan forgiveness not available or reduced early	Yes Answers (Overall Percent)
Former Provider	60	70	40	57
Current Provider	100	0	22	41

Former Provider Current Provider

Positive Factors Reported
Former vs. Current Providers

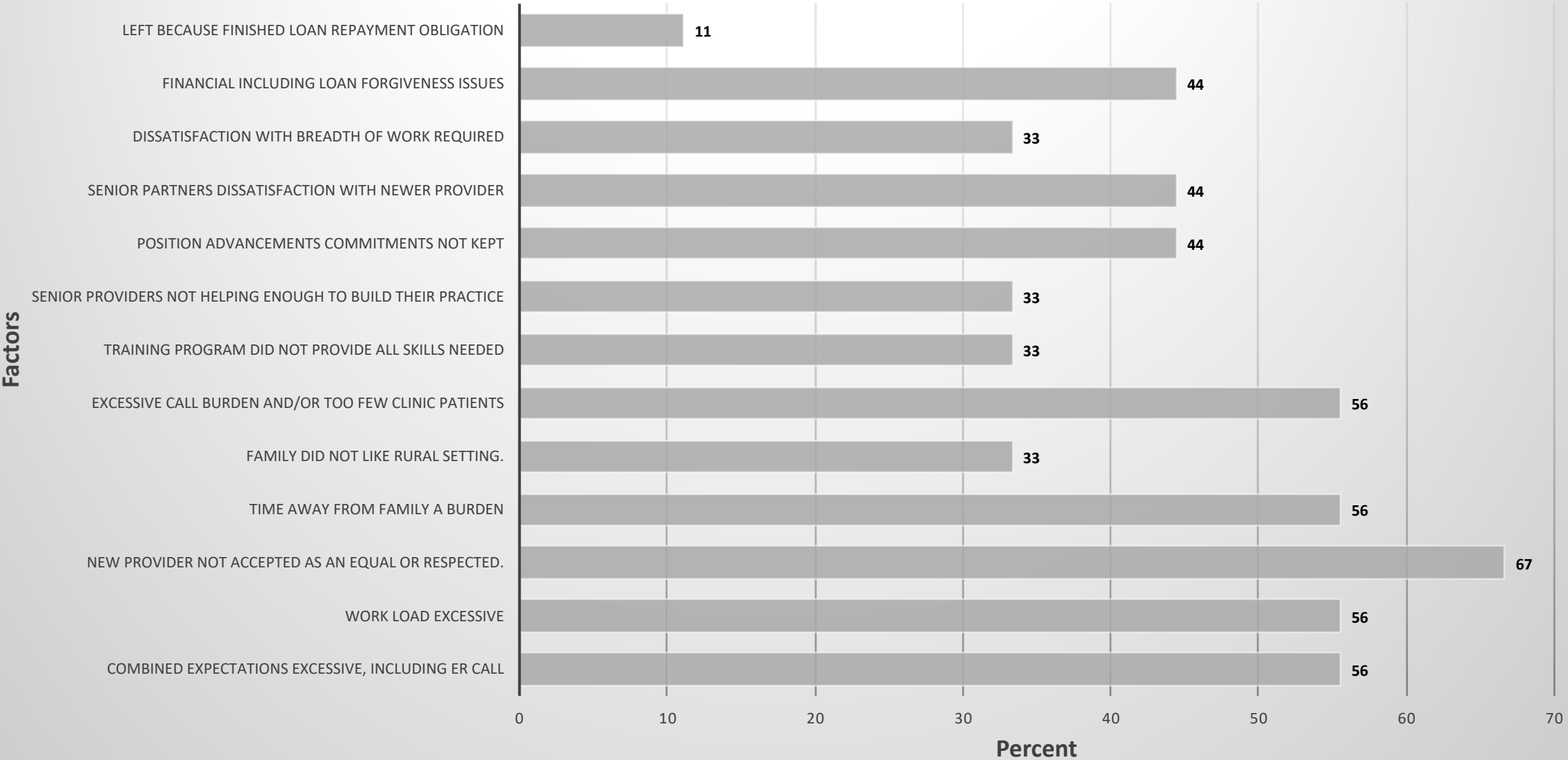


	Work balance satisfactory	Felt satisfied with preparation for rural medicine	Expectations matched actual	Family adapted to rural area	Compensated fairly	Treated fairly by organization	Additional clinics provided alternatives to leaving.
Former Provider	30	40	40	60	70	50	10
Current Provider	89	89	89	89	78	78	33

Percent

Former Provider Current Provider

Factors Driving Former Provider's Decision to Leave



Conclusions

- Robust study, very high participation rate.
- Current and former providers expressed candidly opinions.
- Previous literature identifies typically that factors in successful recruitment include: Rural background, training provides rural exposure, family satisfaction and support issues, loan forgiveness, financial incentives.
- Current study found that most had rural background and exposure, families typically wanted to be rural. Lack of loan forgiveness was a negative.

Conclusions

- This was a qualitative study. Further studies may be helpful to quantify further the issues.
- Major finding: The large gap between expectations and actual experiences present more commonly in former providers than in current providers.
Issues:
 - Lack of support, respect, advancement opportunities, and help in building practice were major reasons for providers leaving.
 - Few, 10%, cited family dissatisfaction as reason for leaving.
 - Few, 10%, left after loan forgiveness obligation completed.
- Recommendations:
 - Comprehensive retention program that addresses individual needs and concerns before cumulative effect leads provider to “tipping point” that drives decision to leave. Individual issues are key.