

# Department of Services for the Blind

## Program Details

The Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) programs provide vocational rehabilitation services including information, assessment, and referral; vocational counseling including guidance, referral, and placement; and rehabilitation training in adaptive skills, job skills, and assistive technology. DSB also provides occupational licenses, tools, equipment, technological aids, and other goods and services that can be reasonably expected to help clients achieve successful employment outcomes.

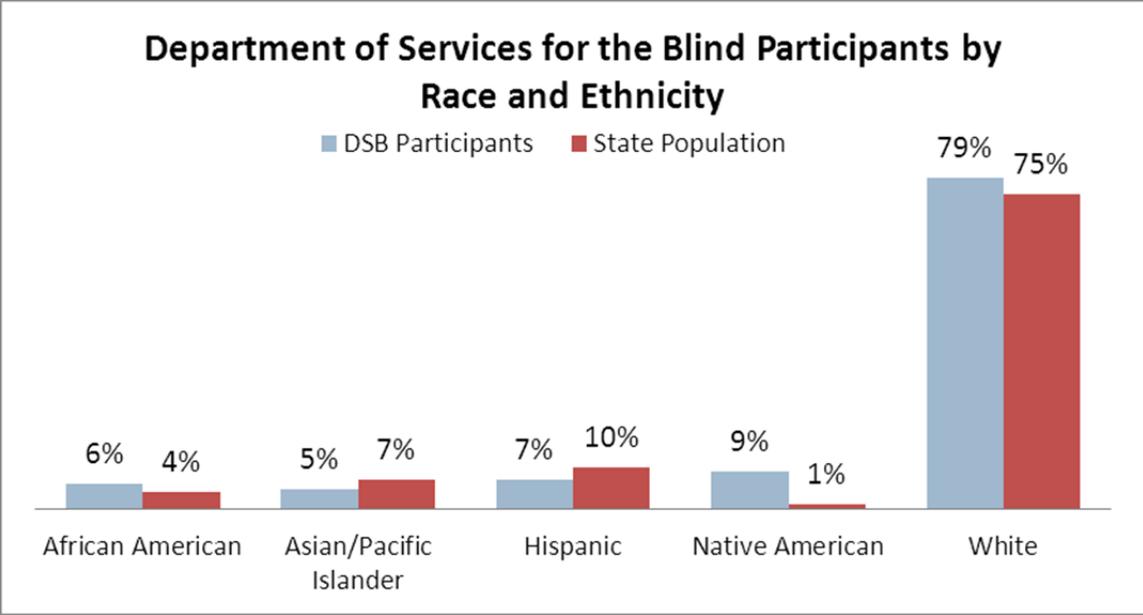
To receive services, an individual must be legally blind or have a visual disability that causes an impediment to employment, and vocational rehabilitation services are required for the individual to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain employment.

*Every two years, the Workforce Board measures the performance of key workforce programs. In this report, you'll find out more about the program and who is served, the metrics used to measure performance and how the program performed.*

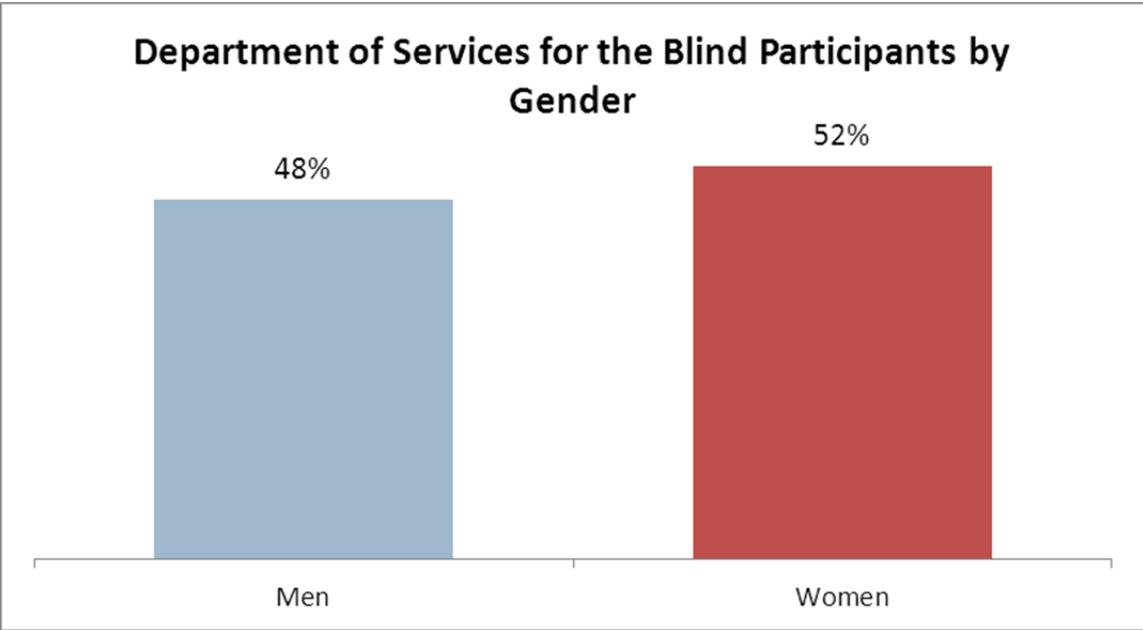
For this report, researchers studied the results of 228 clients who left DSB programs during the 2008-09 program year. The median length of program enrollment from application to exit was 16 months. Program participants were more likely to be Native American (9 percent), African American (6 percent) and white (79 percent), and slightly less likely to be Hispanic (7 percent) or Asian/Pacific Islander (5 percent) than the general population of Washington.<sup>1</sup> Forty-eight percent of the 2008-09 DSB clients were women, up 2 percentage points from the prior program year. The median age upon applying for the program was 43, with one quarter under age 29 and another quarter over age 53.

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<sup>1</sup> In this report, unless otherwise stated, racial and ethnic minority groups are mutually exclusive; that is, an individual belongs to one group only. The groups include the following: Hispanics of any race (also referred to as Hispanics); non-Hispanic African Americans (also referred to as African Americans); non-Hispanic Asians/Pacific Islanders (also referred to as Asians/Pacific Islanders); non-Hispanic Native Americans and Alaskan Natives (also referred to as Native Americans); non-Hispanic multiracial (also referred to as multiracial); and non-Hispanic whites (also referred to as whites). According to the 2009 U.S. Census Bureau estimates from the American Community Survey, 75 percent are white; 4 percent are African American; 1 percent are Native American; 7 percent are Asian/Pacific Islander; 3 percent are multiracial; and 10 percent are Hispanic.



Source: Department of Services for the Blind Administrative Records



Source: Department of Services for the Blind Administrative Records

When they applied for the program, 35 percent had not previously received postsecondary education, 23 percent had postsecondary education but no degree or certificate, 15 percent had an associate’s degree or a vocational certificate, and 28 percent had a bachelor’s degree or higher.

## **State Core Measures: Tracking DSB Progress**

The Workforce Board routinely measures the performance of our state's largest workforce programs. As a customer-focused advocate for Washington's workers and employers, the Workforce Board strives to provide performance accountability, verifying whether worker education and training programs provide a return on investment for participants and taxpayers.

The Workforce Training Results report seeks to answer five core questions:

- Did participants get the skills they needed?
- Did participants get a job and how much were they paid?
- Were employers satisfied with the preparation workers received?
- Has the program made a difference in the participant's success?
- Did participants and the public receive a return on their investment?<sup>2</sup>

## **Data Comes From State Wage Files**

The 2011 Workforce Training Results includes information obtained from Employment Security Department wage files in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon, and federal employment records for 2008-09.

## **Did Participants Get the Skills They Needed?**

Some 63 percent of DSB clients were classified as rehabilitated upon leaving the program (that is, they were working for at least 90 days prior to leaving the program), higher than the 55 percent of those observed in the 2008 survey.

## **Did Participants Have a Job and How Much Were They Paid?**

To find out whether participants had jobs and how much they earned, participant records were matched with Employment Security Department wage files from Washington and neighboring states.<sup>3</sup> Record matches found 45 percent of DSB clients had reported employment during the third quarter after leaving the program during the 2008-09 program year. Among those who were considered rehabilitated upon leaving the program (that is, those who had been working for 90 days prior to exit), 63 percent still had reported employment the third quarter after exit, about 3 percentage points higher than for the 2007-08 participants. Among participants who were working during the third post-program quarter, the median hourly wage was \$12.32—down nearly two dollars from the prior

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<sup>2</sup> Due to small sample size and difficulty in identifying a comparison group, DSB participants were not included in the 2010 Net Impact Study and Cost-Benefit analysis that detailed the performance of several of Washington's workforce programs by comparing participant outcomes with non-participants. Also, DSB participants were not included in the Workforce Board's 2010 Employer Survey, which provides feedback on how well workforce program participants perform in the workplace in areas such as job skills; reading, writing and math, and teamwork, among others.

<sup>3</sup> These files contain quarterly earnings and hours-worked information on those individuals with employment reported for UI benefits purposes (approximately 90 percent of in-state employment, with self-employment, active duty military, and those working for religious nonprofit organizations being the major groups of employers not included).

program year— and the median annualized earnings was \$500 less than the prior program year at \$20,555.<sup>4</sup> As expected, rehabilitated clients had better employment and earnings outcomes than all clients combined.

## Employment and Earnings for Department of Services for the Blind Participants, 2009-10

Performance Measure	Results
Employment Rate (Self-Reported)	60%
Employment Rate* (State Records)	45%
Full Time Employment **	59%
Median Hours Worked Quarterly	441
Median Hourly Wage***	\$12.32
Median Annualized Earnings***	\$20,555

\* These figures apply to those with employment reported to state employment agencies six to nine months after leaving the program. Rate does not include self-employment, employment outside the Northwest or military service and thus understates total employment by approximately 10 percent.

\*\*Full-time employment averages 30 or more hours per week.

\*\*\*Earnings/wages expressed in first quarter 2009 dollars in order to account for inflation.

To put earnings in context, the median number of dependents DSB participants were able to support at the poverty level in 2009-10 was 3.6 people. However, for those considered to be rehabilitated, that support level rose to 3.9 people. At the 200 percent of poverty level, this worked out to a little less than one person for all DSB participants but rose to one person among rehabilitated participants.<sup>5</sup>

## Self Sufficiency Level for Department of Services for the Blind Participants

Performance Measure	2002-03		2004-05		2006-07		2008-09		2009-10	
	All	Comp.								
Self Reported Receipt of Medical Benefits from Employer	4.3	4.4	4.5	5.2	2.9	3.2	3.7	5	3.6	3.9
Self Reported Receipt of Retirement Benefits from Employer	1.2	1.3	1.3	1.6	0.5	0.6	0.9	1.5	0.9	1

<sup>4</sup> Annual earnings are calculated as third quarter earnings multiplied by four. Quarterly earnings are the result of hourly wage rates and the number of hours worked in a calendar quarter. All wages and earnings are stated in first quarter 2009 dollars.

<sup>5</sup> In 2009, the poverty level for one person was \$10,830 per year. The 200-percent-poverty level that year was \$21,660 for one person.

## Department of Services for the Blind Participants Receiving Benefits from Employers

Performance Measure	2004-05	2006-07	2008-09*	2009-10
Self-Reported Medical Benefits from Employer	56%	58%	N/A	57%
Self-Reported Retirement Benefits from Employer	39%	37%	N/A	39%

\*Due to budget concerns, the Workforce Board's Participant Survey was not conducted in 2008-09.

The following table shows employment and earnings information over the course of five study periods. Since 2001, DSB participants' employment rates were highest in the middle of the decade when the state's economy was relatively healthy, and then declined with the beginning of the recession in 2008. Earning levels have fluctuated widely, although they have increased since the previous survey a year ago.

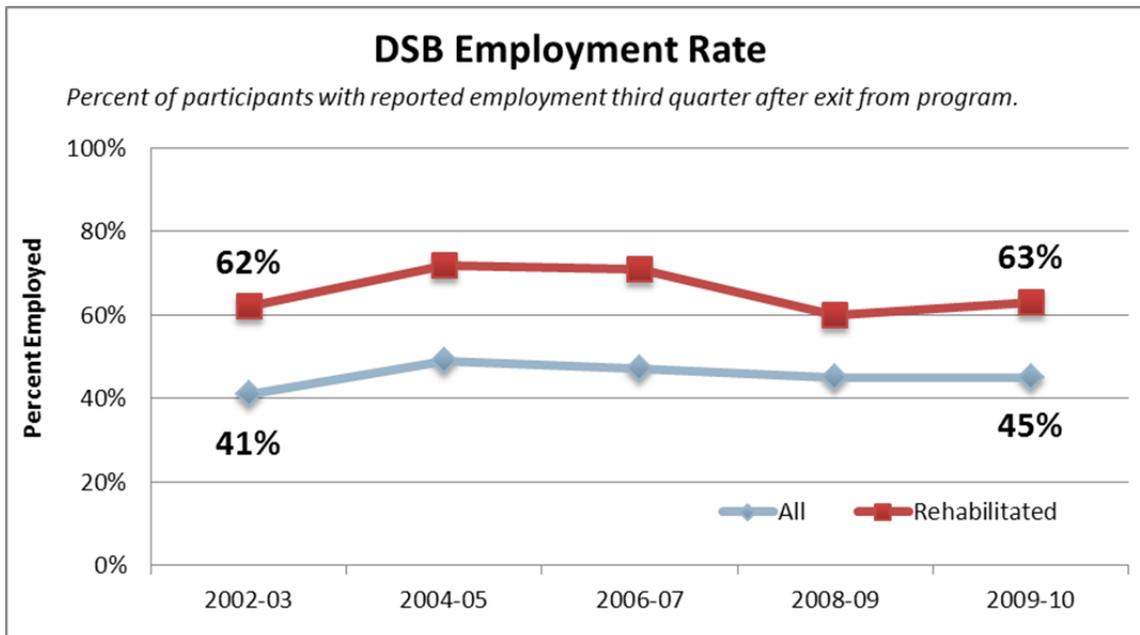
## Employment and Earnings Trends for Department of Services for the Blind Participants, 2009-10

Performance Measure	2002-03		2004-05		2006-07		2008-09		2009-10	
	All	Rehab.								
Employment Rate* (Self-Reported)	70%	-	67%	-	64%	-	N/A	-	60%	-
Employment Rate* (State Records)	41%	62%	49%	72%	47%	71%	45%	60%	45%	63%
Full Time Employed**	61%	61%	55%	55%	51%	49%	50%	51%	59%	60%
Median Quarterly Hours	430	430	411	425	389	384	388	387	441	450
Median Hourly Wage***	\$15.61	\$16.05	\$14.04	\$14.38	\$12.22	\$13.79	\$14.19	\$15.72	\$12.32	\$13.23
Median Annual Earnings***	\$23,053	\$23,661	\$24,091	\$26,391	\$17,824	\$18,954	\$21,056	\$25,640	\$20,555	\$21,743

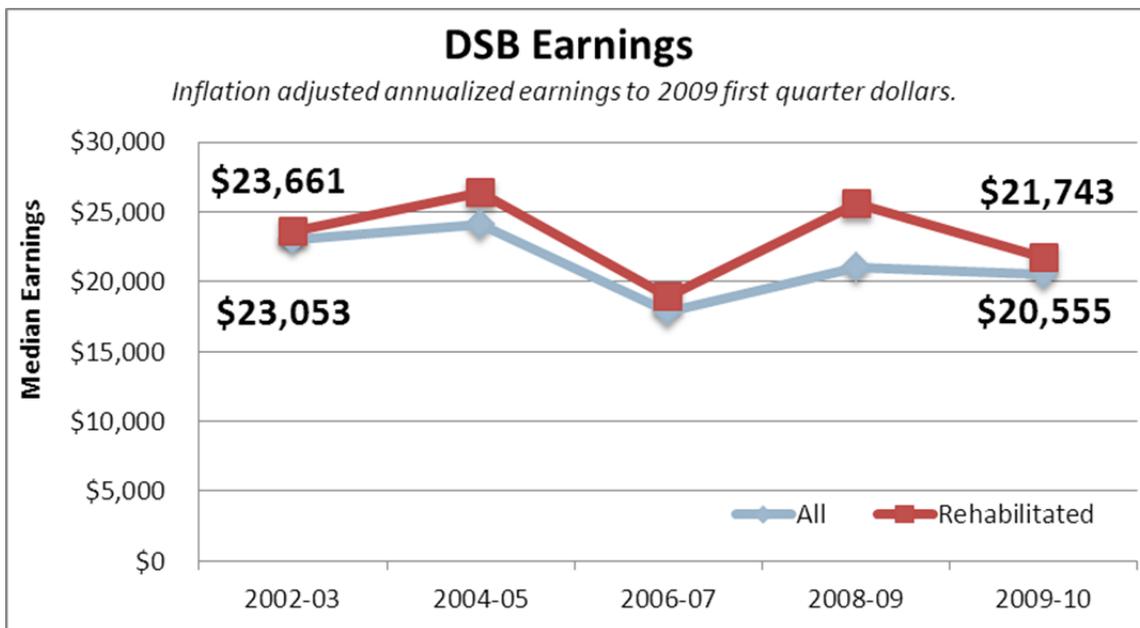
\*These figures apply to those with employment reported to ESD six to nine months after leaving program. Rate does not include self-employment, employment outside the Northwest or military service and thus understates total employment by approximately 10 percent.

\*\*Full-time employment averages 30 or more hours per week.

\*\*\*Earnings/wages expressed in first quarter 2009 dollars in order to account for inflation.



Source: Workforce Training Results 2002-10.



Source: Workforce Training Results 2002-10.

Employment among DSB clients is heavily concentrated in manufacturing (22 percent), social assistance (12 percent), all other services (11 percent) and health care (10 percent). This is a shift in employment patterns from the prior program year, with a 4 percentage point increase this year in manufacturing, a 3 percentage point increase in employment within the social assistance industry, and a 2 percentage point decrease in health care employment.

## DSB Employment by Industry

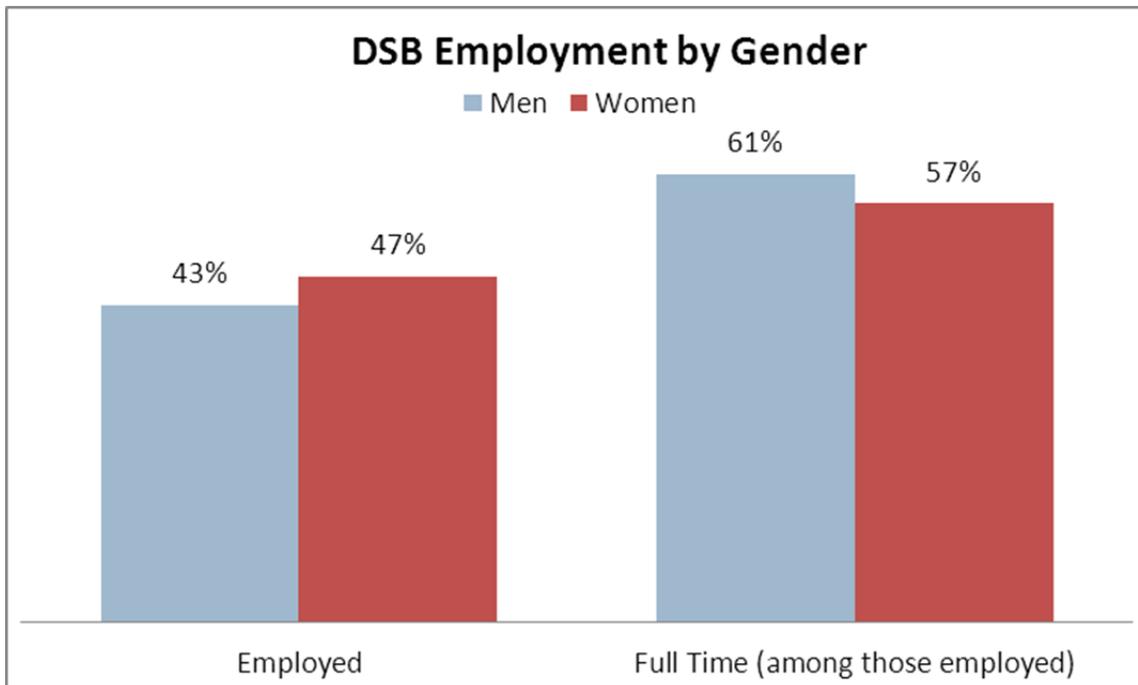
Industry Group	
22%	Manufacturing
12%	Social Assistance
11%	All Other Services
10%	Health Care
9%	Educational Services
8%	Public Administration
8%	Retail Trade
6%	Transportation and Warehousing and Utilities
5%	Accommodation and Food Services
5%	Financial Activities
3%	All Other Industries

Source: Matches with Employment Security Department data in third quarter after exiting program.  
Note: Industry groups based on North American Industry Classification System codes.

## Wages and Employment Results by Population

Employment and earnings vary by gender, race and ethnicity, and disability status. Women were more likely to be employed than men (47 percent compared to 43 percent), but less likely to be employed full time (57 percent compared to 61 percent). The employment rate for those exiting the DSB program in 2008-09 represents a 2 percentage point increase for women and a 2 percentage point decrease for men from the prior year. However, the rates for full time employment were higher than the prior year for both women and men.

Women's and men's hourly wages and earnings were similar during this reporting year, with women earning \$12.40 per hour compared to men, who earned \$12.20. However, both groups experienced a marked decline in hourly wages and earnings. Male DSB participants' hourly wages fell by \$5 per hour from the previous program year. Women's wages dropped by \$2 per hour. Annual earnings were \$21,064 for men and \$19,866 for women. Compared to the prior program year, female earnings were over \$3,000 less and male earnings were over \$7,000 less this year.



Source: Department of Services for the Blind Administrative Records

### **Race/Ethnicity Plays Role**

Although data from other chapters provide evidence that employment rates, wages and earnings vary among racial and ethnic groups, the sample size for non-white program participants was too small to make valid statistical inferences among DSB participants.

### **Competency Gains**

In 2011, the Workforce Board surveyed DSB participants who had left their program in 2009-10. The survey provided data on employment and participant satisfaction with the training. The survey was conducted by telephone and was completed by 111 participants.

Based on survey results, most DSB clients (75 percent) enrolled to get equipment they needed because of their disability. Some 56 percent of all clients enrolled to learn skills for a new job and 56 percent to get job search help.

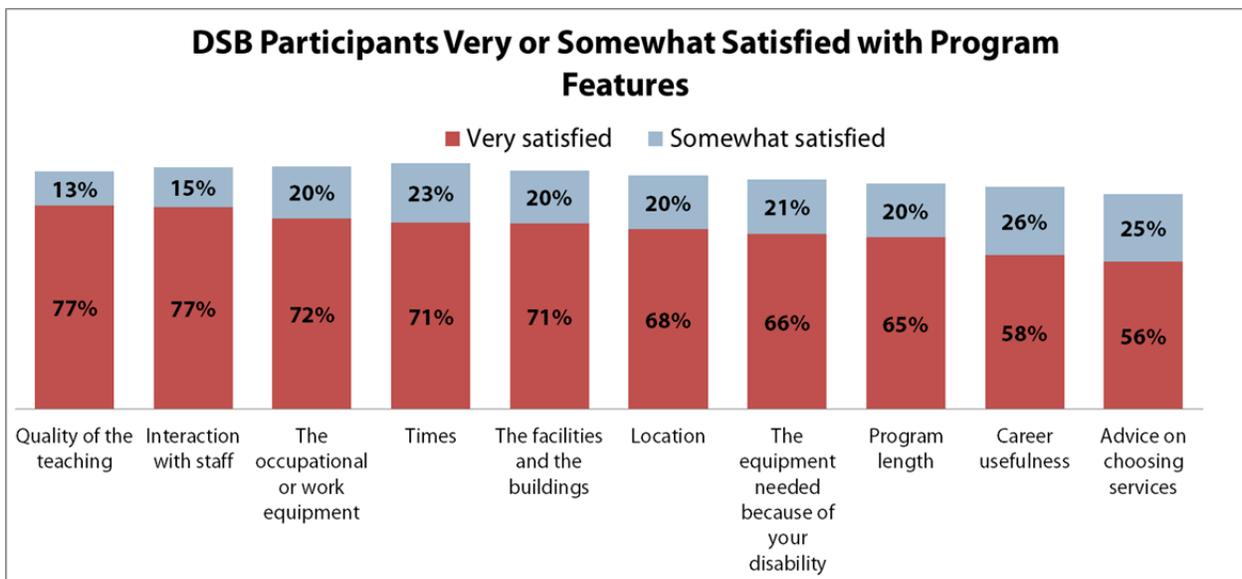
DSB clients were more likely to report receiving training in job skills, such as machinery operation (30 percent) or learning skills for a new job (34 percent), rather than general workplace skills, such as work habits (10 percent) or teamwork (14 percent).



Source: Workforce Board's Participant Satisfaction Survey 2011.

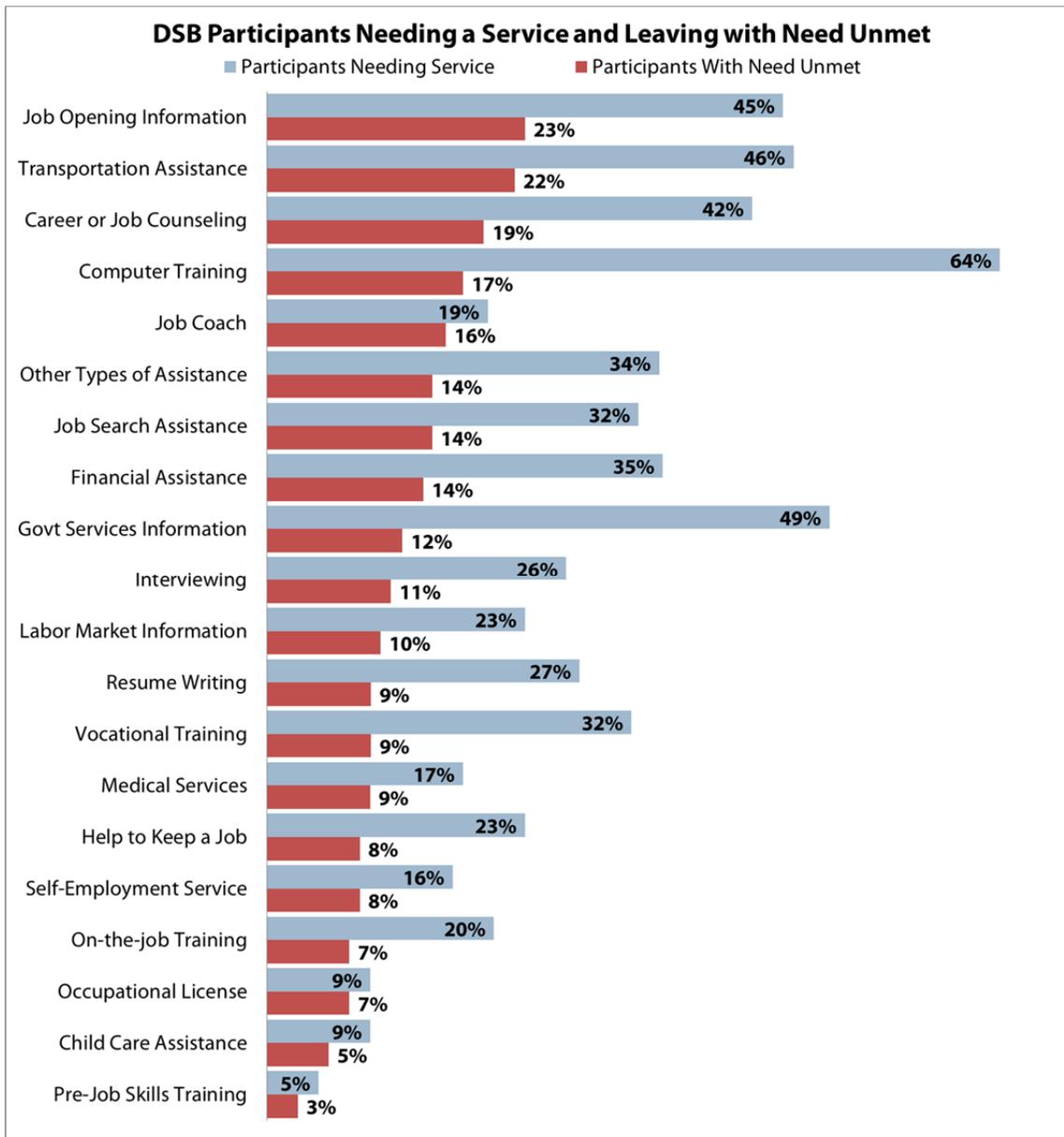
### Participant Satisfaction - Did Participants Get the Skills They Needed?

Some 63 percent of DSB clients were classified as rehabilitated upon leaving the program (that is, they were working at least 90 days prior to exit). This is 8 percentage points higher than reported in 2007-08. Some 81 percent of clients said they were "very satisfied" or "somewhat satisfied" with their DSB program, down from 89 percent of the DSB clients in the 2008 participant survey. Over three-quarters of the respondents were "very satisfied" with the teaching quality and the level of interaction with staff. Relatively few participants were "very satisfied" with career usefulness (58 percent) and advice on choosing services (56 percent).



Source: Workforce Board's Participant Satisfaction Survey 2011.

Similar to two years ago, DSB clients indicated computer training, information about government services, transportation assistance, and information about jobs as the support services most needed while participating in the program. Also similar to two years ago, a relatively high percentage left with an unmet need<sup>6</sup> for information about job openings (23 percent) and other job related services (career counseling 19 percent, job coach 16 percent, interviewing 11 percent). In addition, 22 percent left with an unmet need for transportation assistance.



Source: Workforce Board's Participant Satisfaction Survey 2011.

<sup>6</sup> Unmet need refers to cases where the student reports that either they did not receive the required service or what was provided did not meet their needs.

## Relationship of Training to Employment

To measure the extent to which a participant’s education program and training related to employment, we asked participants three questions:

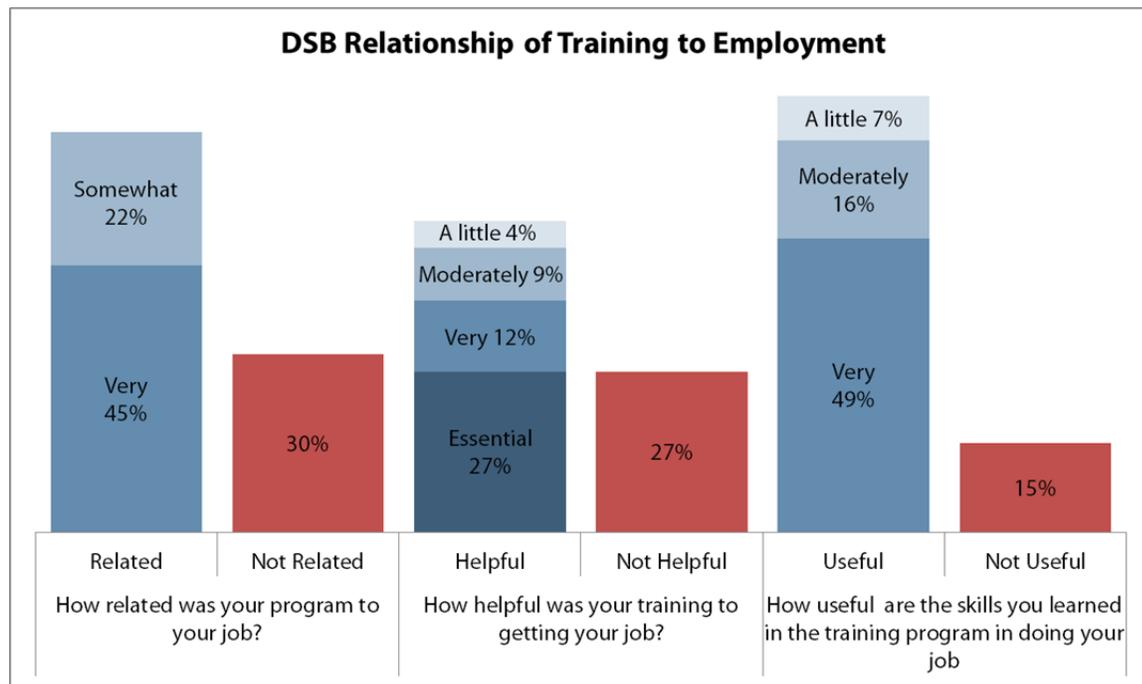
1. How related was the program to their job?
2. How important was the training in getting hired?
3. Are the skills they learned useful in their job?

Asking about the relationship between training and employment in different ways can produce more complete information. For example, some participants said their training was not related to their job, but nevertheless found the skills acquired were useful on the job.

Among DSB participants employed seven to nine months after leaving a program, 45 percent said their training was “very related” to their job. A further 22 percent reported the training was “somewhat related” to their job. In 2008, lower rates of employed participants reported their training was “very related” to their job (36 percent).

Participants interviewed in 2011 also indicated the training was helpful to them in getting their job. Of those participants, 27 percent indicated their training was an “essential requirement,” another 12 percent indicated it was “very important,” and 9 percent reported it was “moderately important.” Only 27 percent indicated their training was “not important at all” to getting their job.

Most participants said the skills they learned in their training program were useful in doing their job. Some 49 percent of participants indicated the skills were “very useful,” 16 percent said “moderately useful,” and 7 percent “a little useful.” Only 15 percent of participants who were employed indicated the skills were “not useful at all.”



Source: Workforce Board's Participant Satisfaction Survey 2011.

