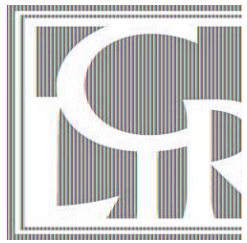
AI is for Access: An Investigation of AI Adoption

SAA Research Forum

Wednesday, July 30, 2025

Background

The AI for Access project was awarded a 2024 Society of American Archivists Foundation (SAAF) Catalyst grant and is sponsored by the CLIR/DLF Born-Digital Access Working Group (BDAWG)



Project Members

Timi Adediran, PhD, she/her, EpiStats Solutions

Dara Baker, she/her, Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation

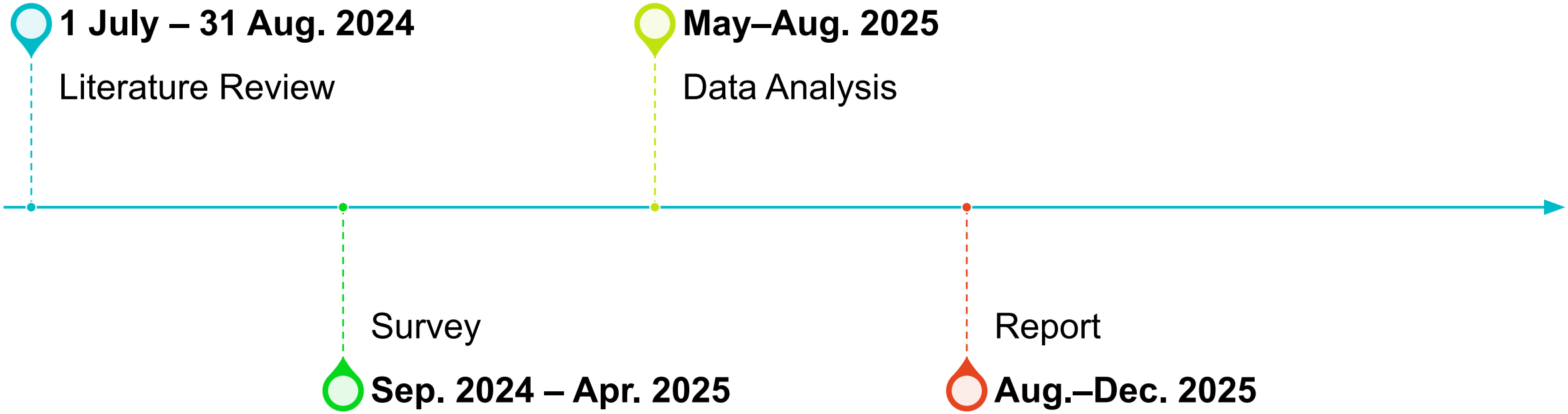
Christina Velazquez Fidler, she/her, The Bancroft Library, University of California, Berkeley

Steven Gentry, he/him, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan

Jen Wachtel Litwin, she/her, U.S. National Archives and Records Administration

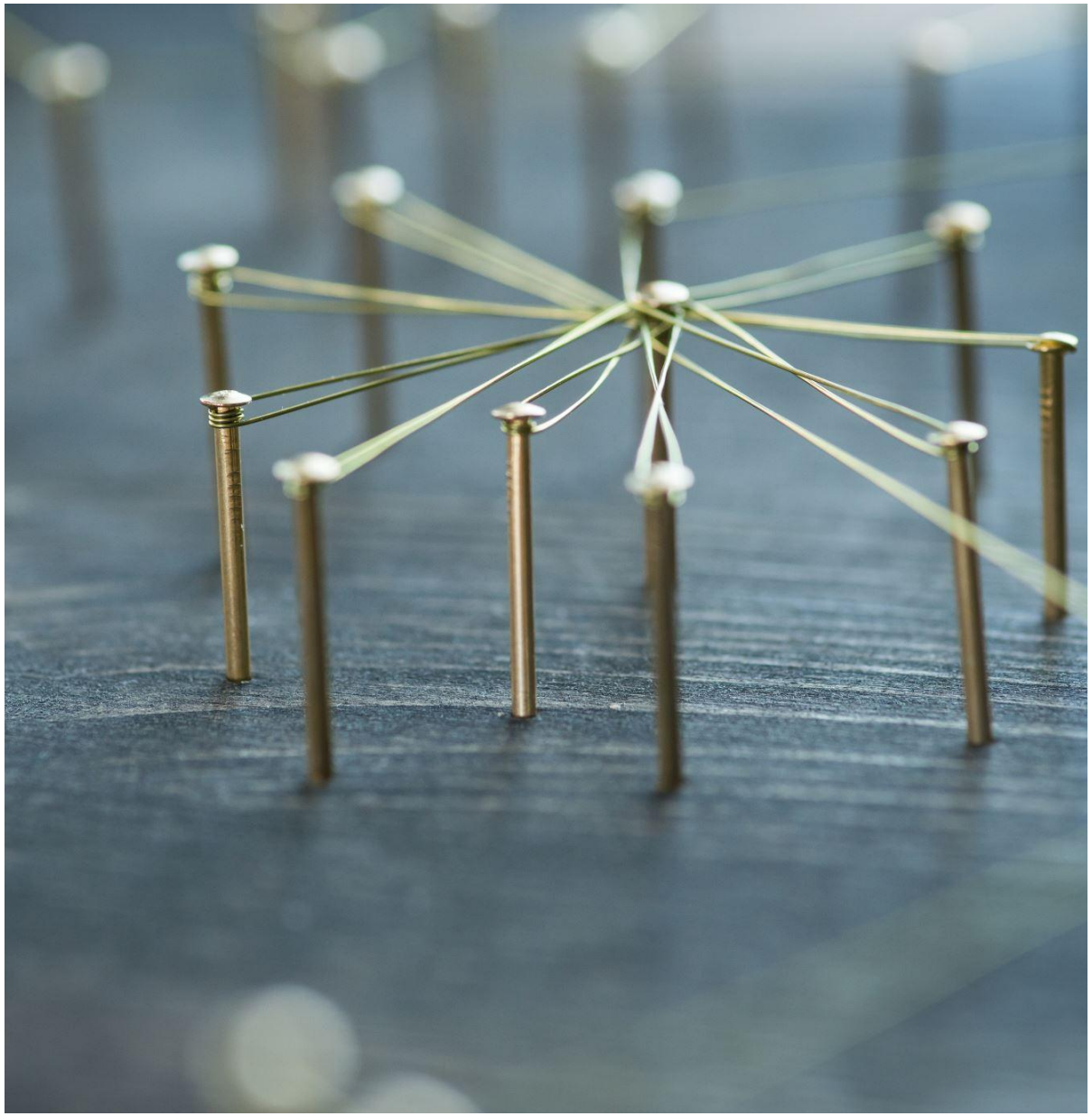
Jamie Wiser, she/her, Brigham Young University

Process and Timeline



Literature Review Project Research Questions

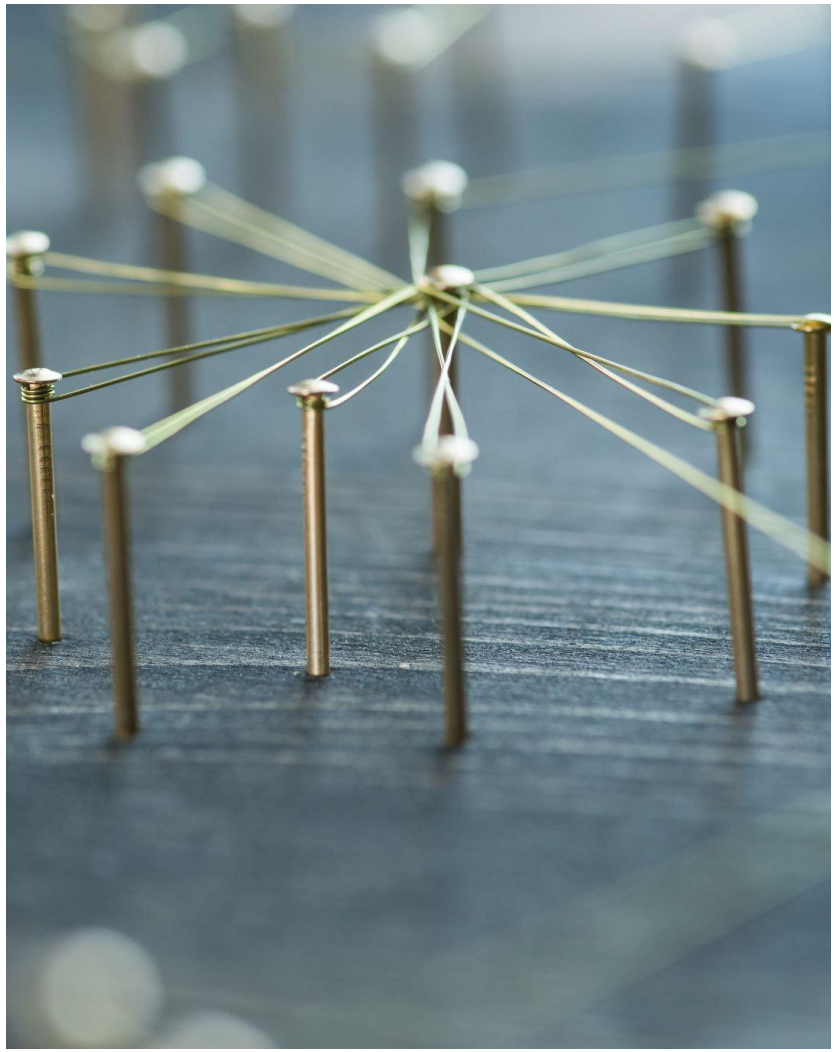
- Demographic of users
- Current Use
- Planned Use
- Adoption
- Challenges



Literature Review
Project Research Questions

Demographic of users

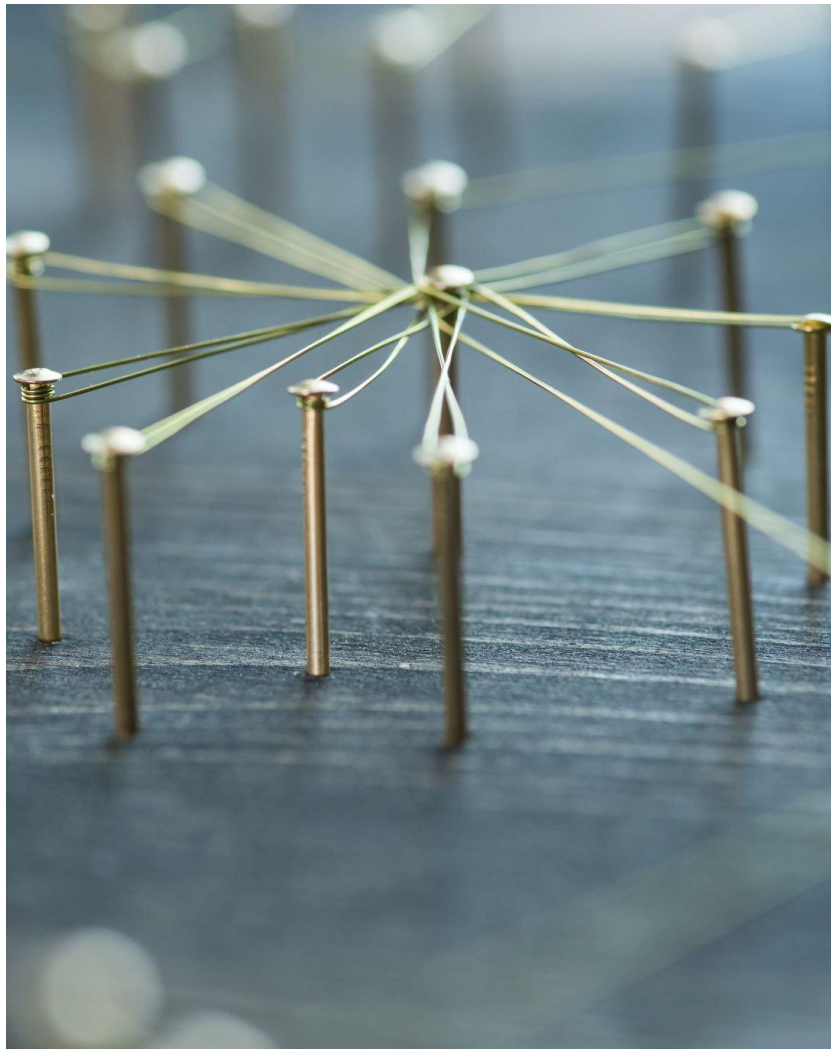
- What are the characteristics of American archival workers who are and are not adopting AI/ML technologies to provide access to digital archival materials?



Literature Review
Project Research Questions

Current Use

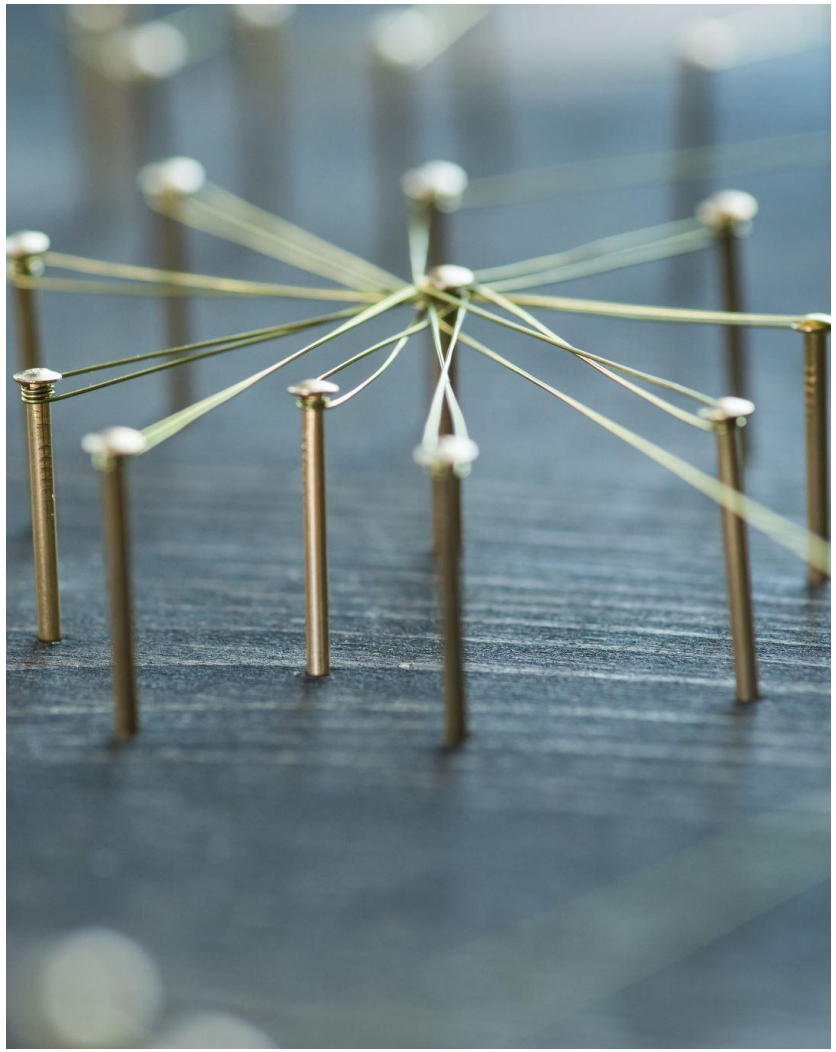
- How are American archival workers currently using AI/ML tools to provide access to digital archival materials?



Literature Review
Project Research Questions

Planned Use

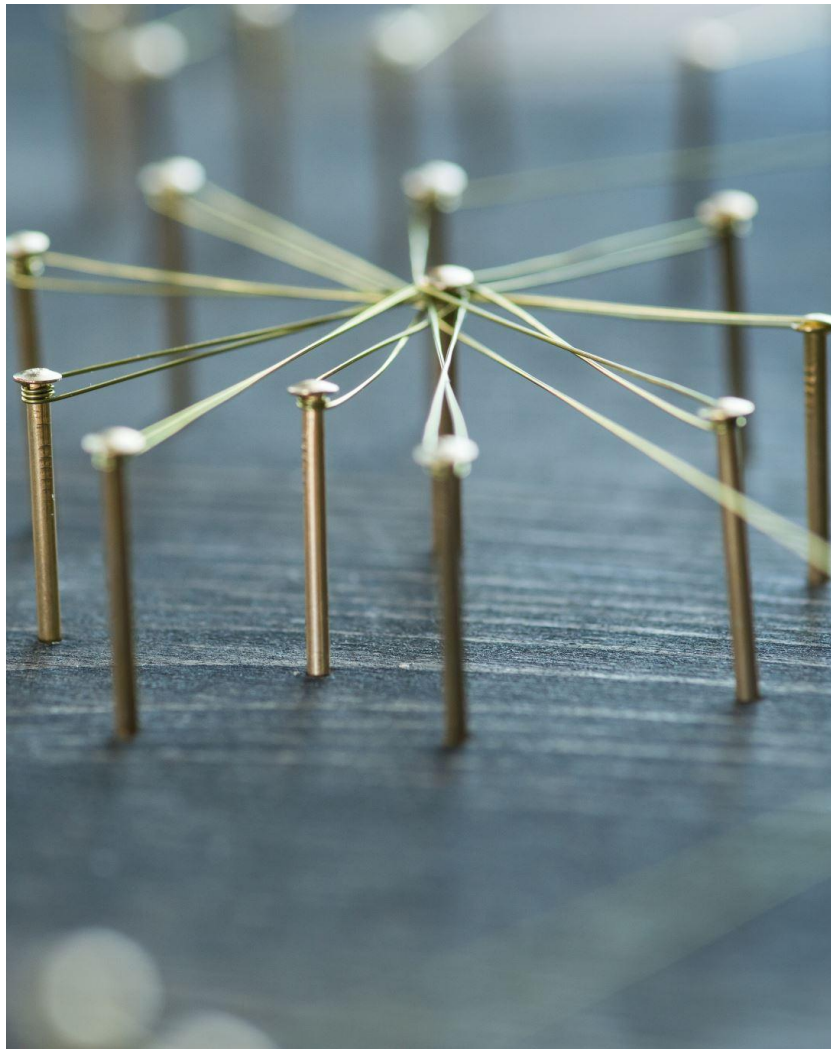
- What are American archival workers' planned use of AI/ML tools to provide access to digital archival materials?



Literature Review
Project Research Questions

Adoption

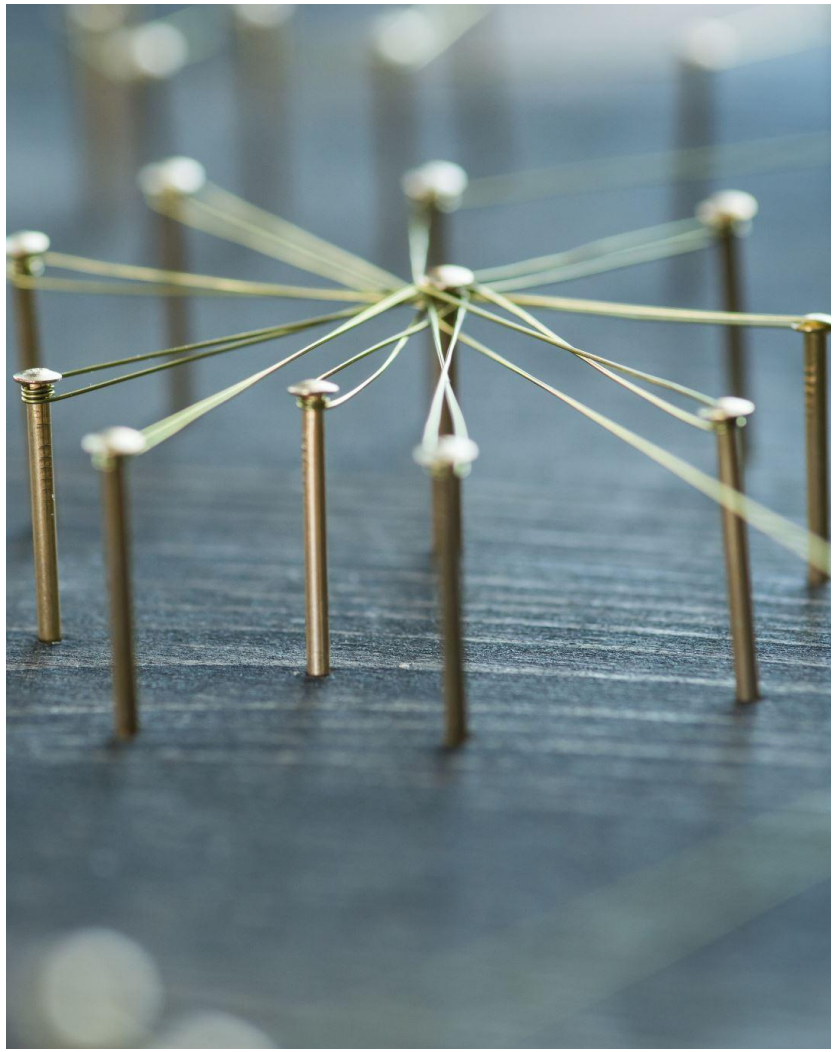
- Why are American archival workers adopting or not adopting AI/ML tools to provide access to digital archival materials?



Literature Review
Project Research Questions

Challenges

- What are American archival workers' perceptions of challenges and opportunities of using AI / ML tools to provide access to digital material?



Literature Review

- 698 sources collected identified as related to archives and AI
- Organized in Zotero and Notion
- 66 sources identified as
  - Addressing archival processing and providing access
  - Within a US GLAM framework

Survey Development

Survey focused on answering project research questions

Draft questions for IRB

Recruitment of trained data analyst and survey assessment expert

Finalized survey structure and questions

Survey Testing and Refinement

Testing Details

- Testing between February 2, 2025 – March 6, 2025
- Testers recruited from
  - UC Common Knowledge Group for Born Digital collections.
  - Bentley Historical Library at the UM.

Questions for Survey Testers

1. How much time did it take for you to complete the survey?
2. Usability - is it easy to use? Are there confusing questions?
3. Pacing - is it too lengthy? Was it a slog?
4. Any questions needing tweaking?

Survey Distribution

Developed exhaustive list of 99 distinct groups for survey distribution

95 groups contacted between March 17 and April 8, 2025

Preliminary Findings

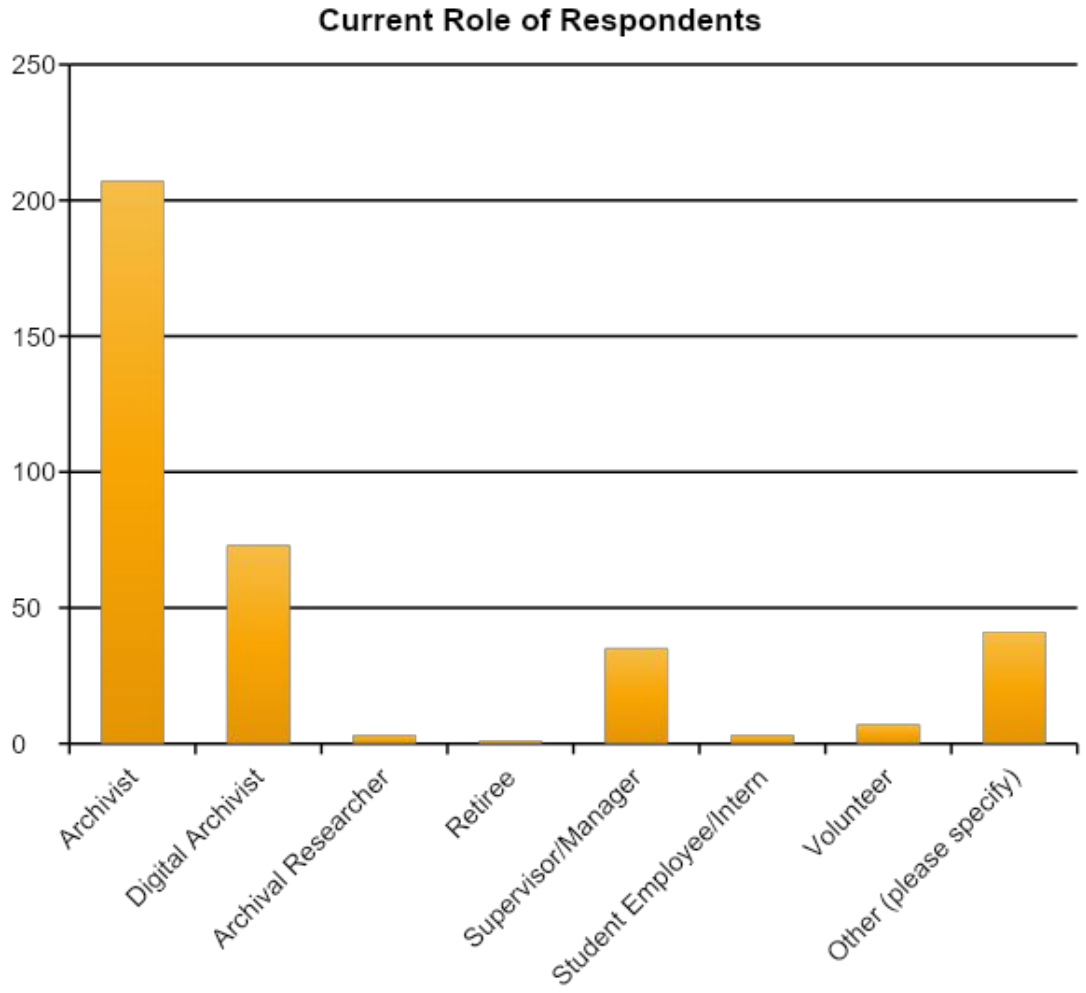
Total Response (N=502)

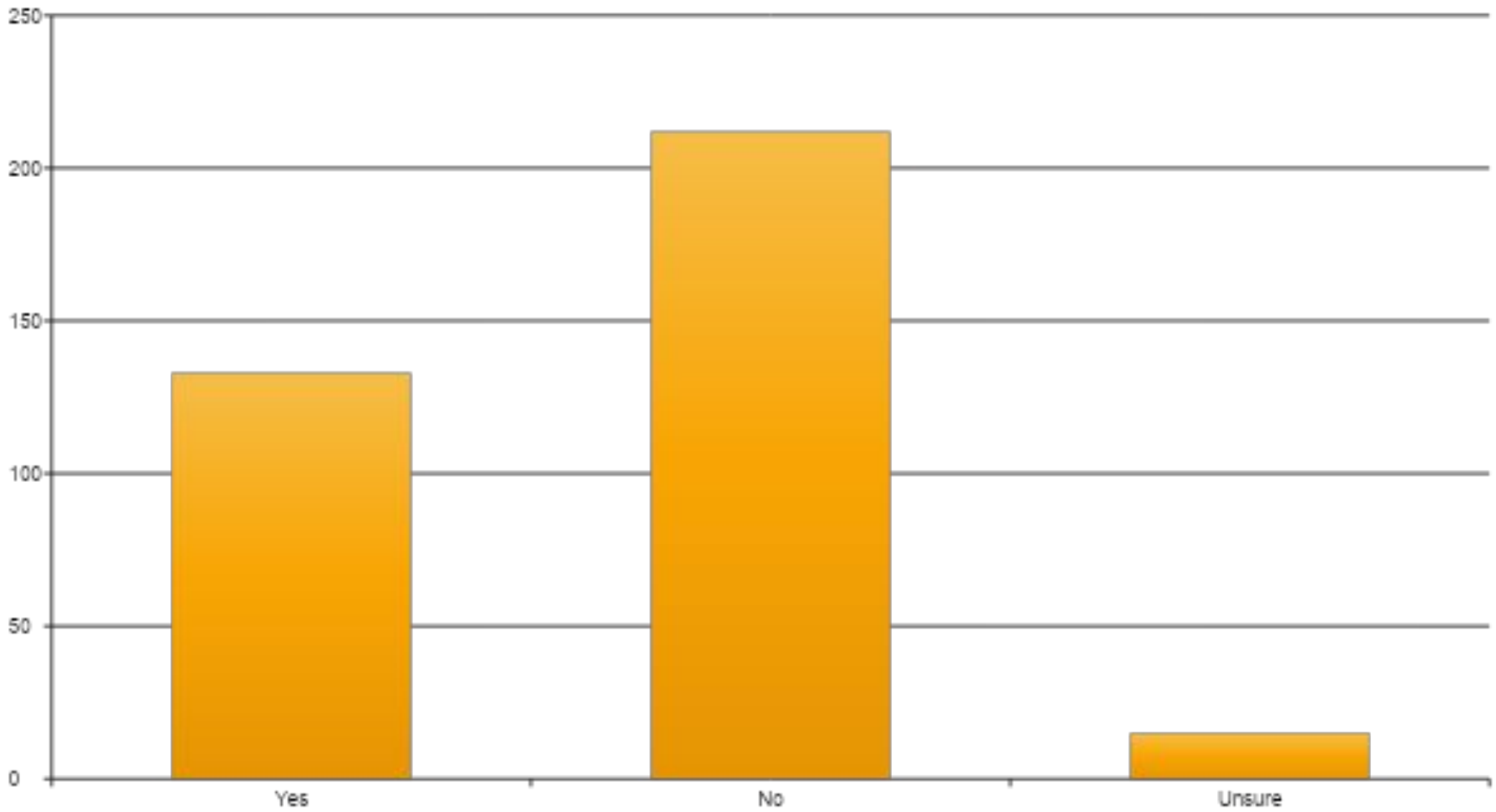
Removed Individuals before March 17, 2025 (n=33)

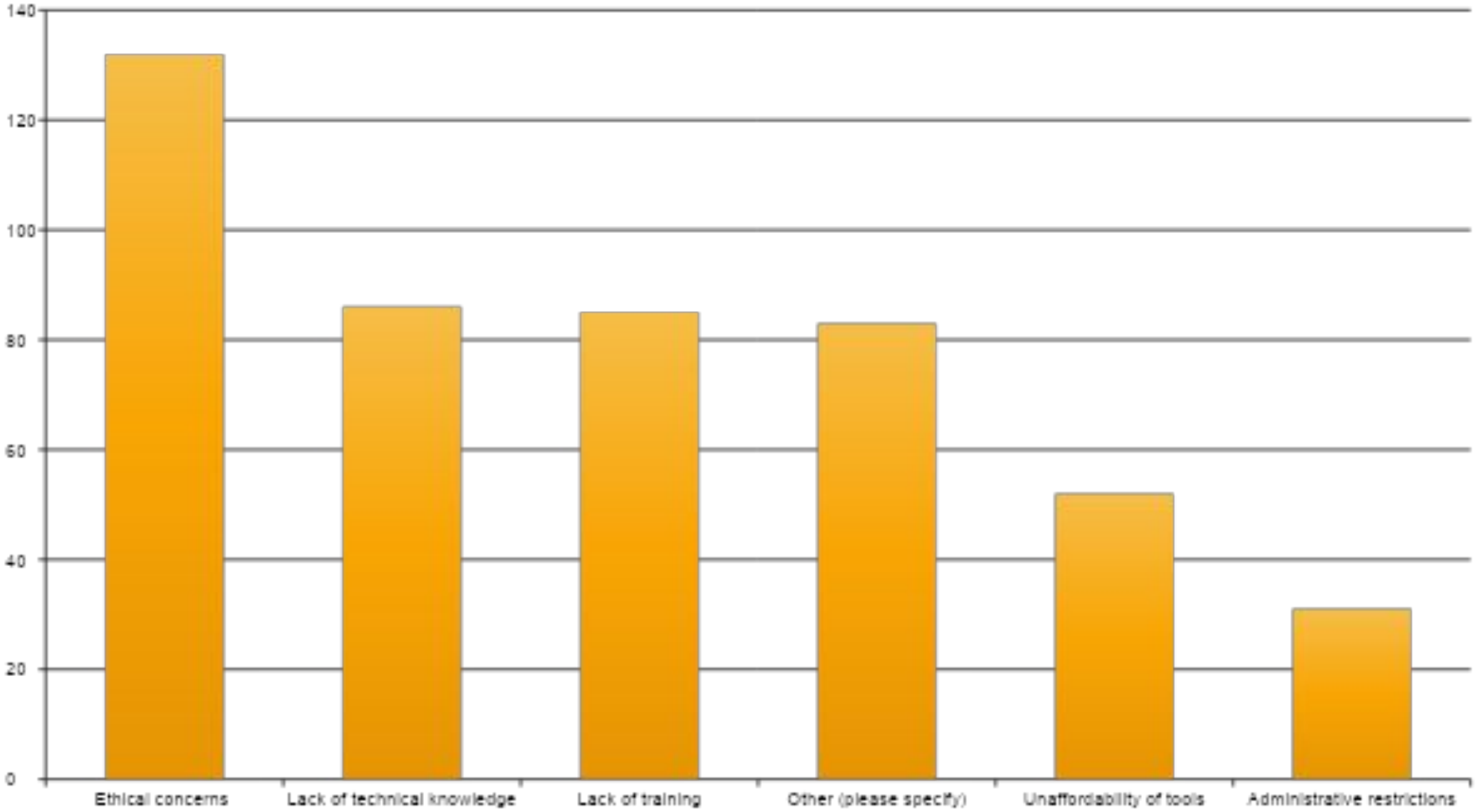
Survey's part of Dissemination(n=469)

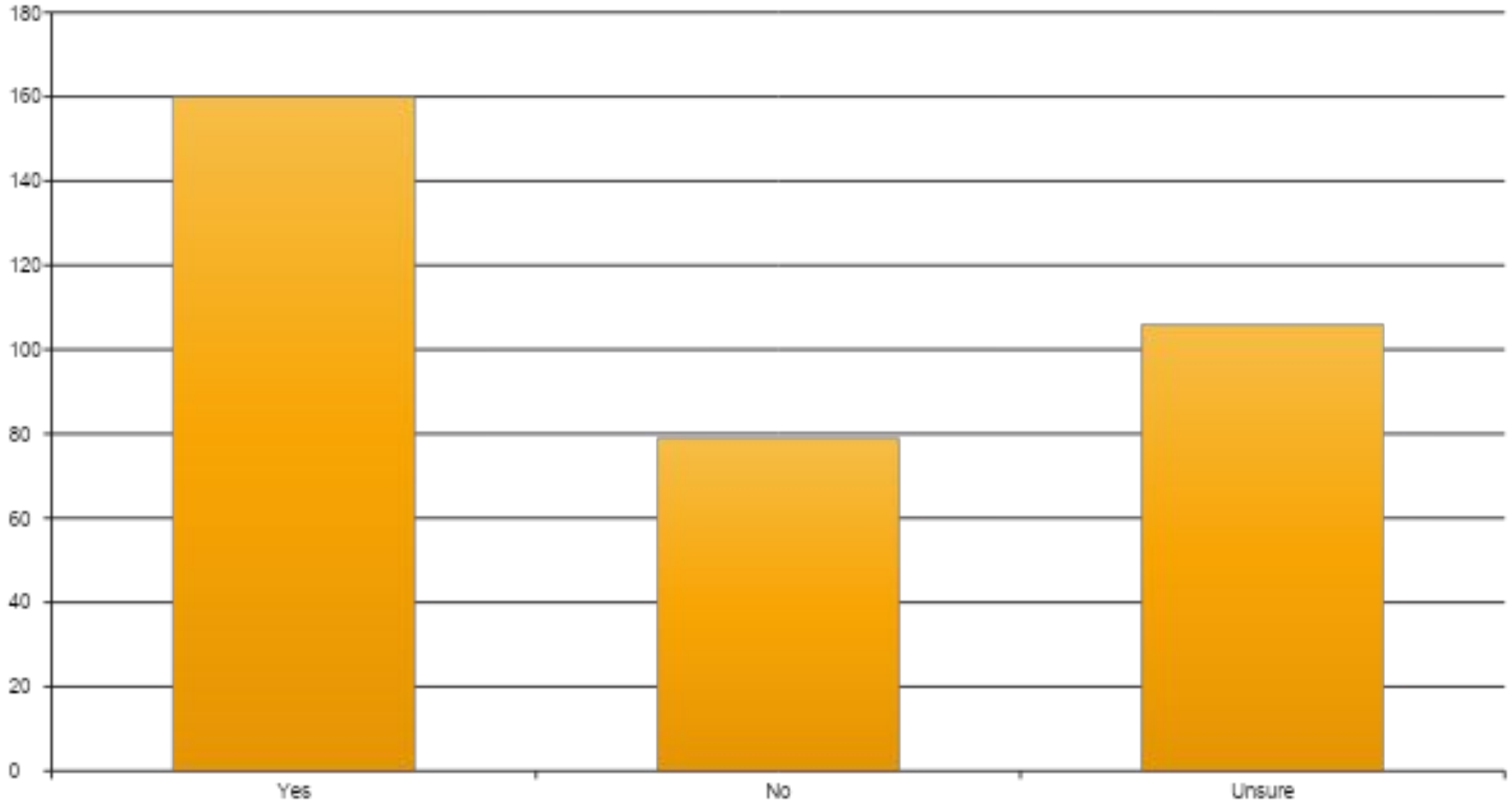
Removed Individuals who just clicked the survey (n=85)

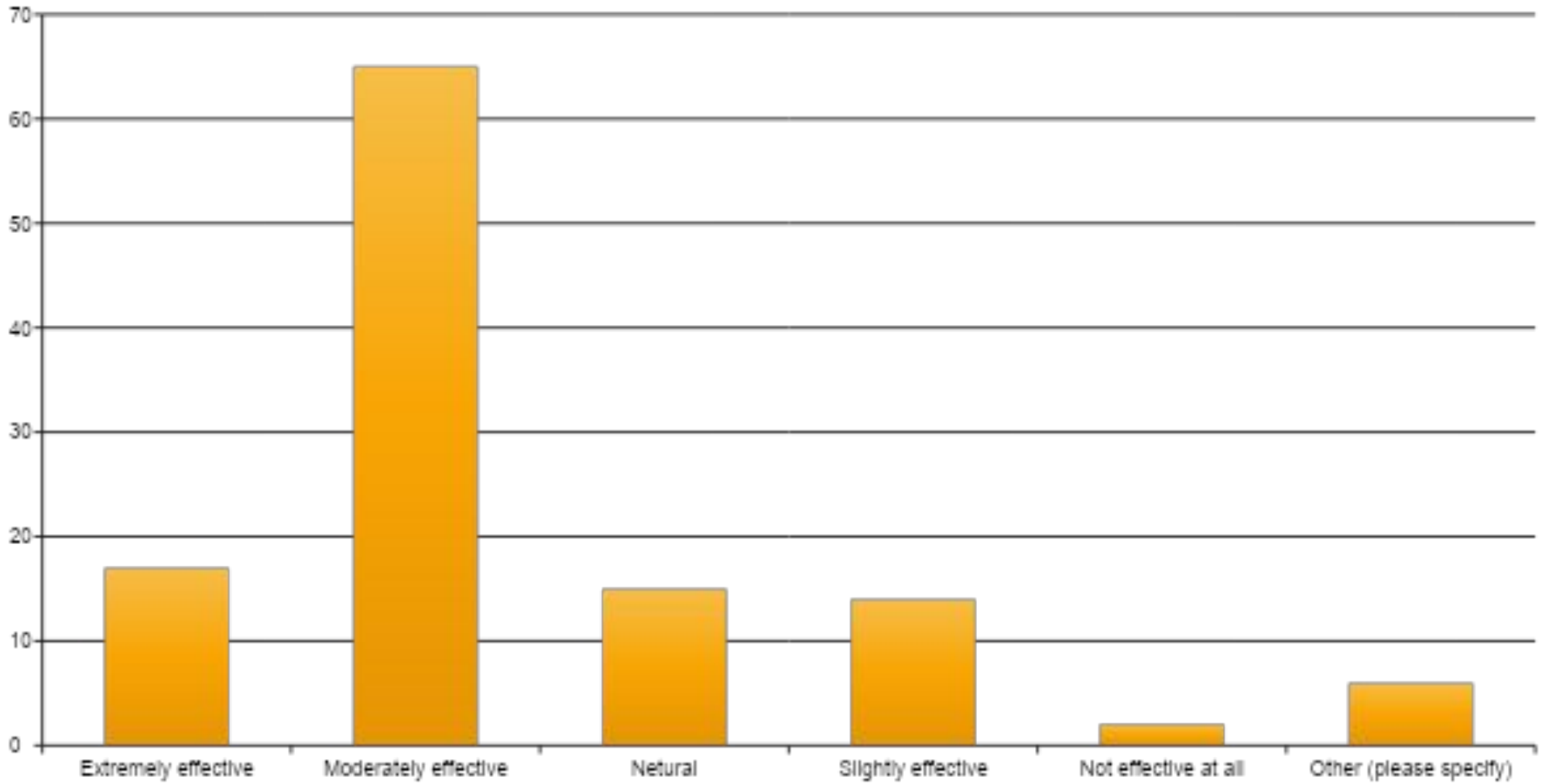
Survey with a progress of more than 2% (meaning they just clicked the survey) (n=386)

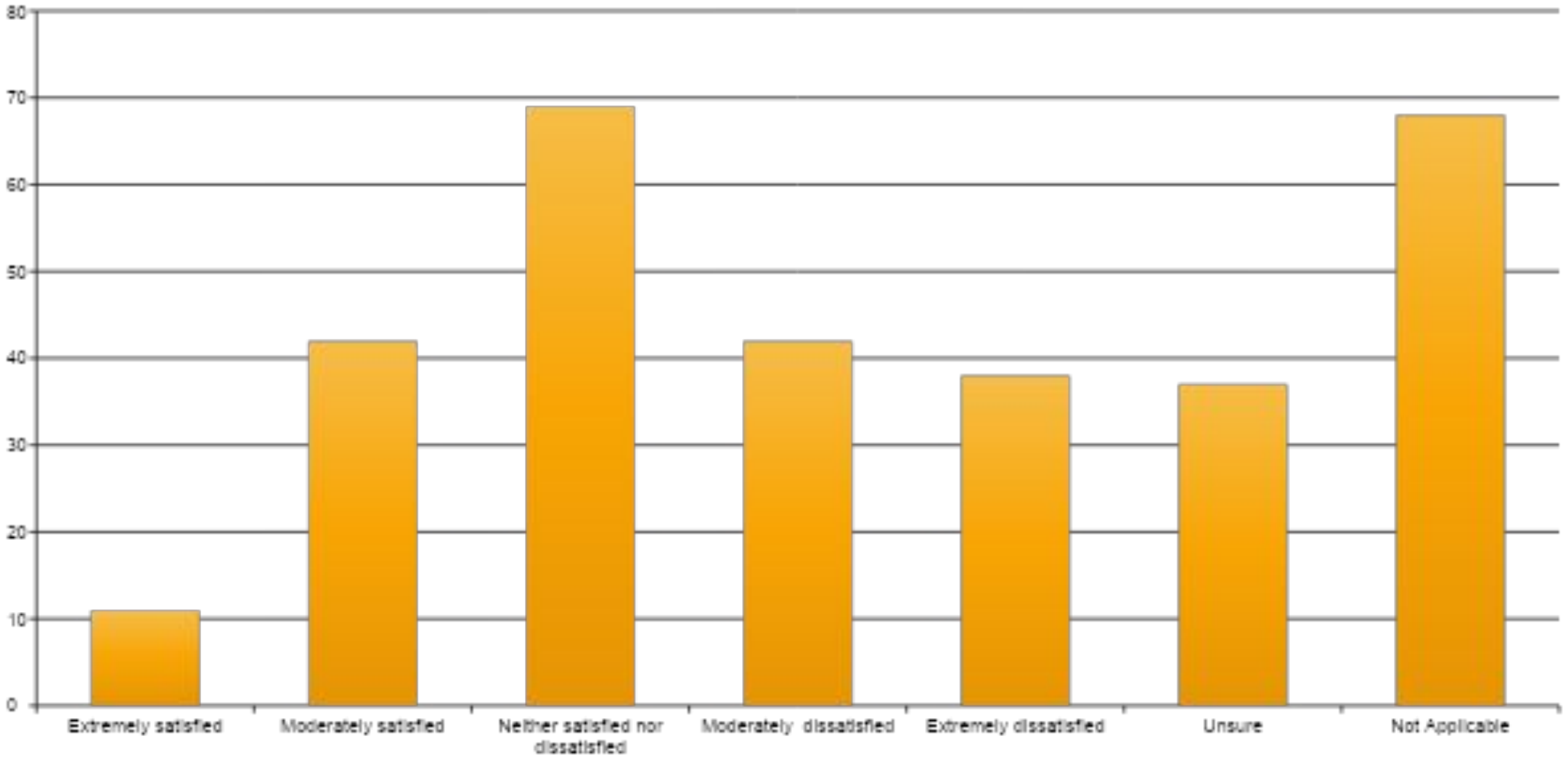


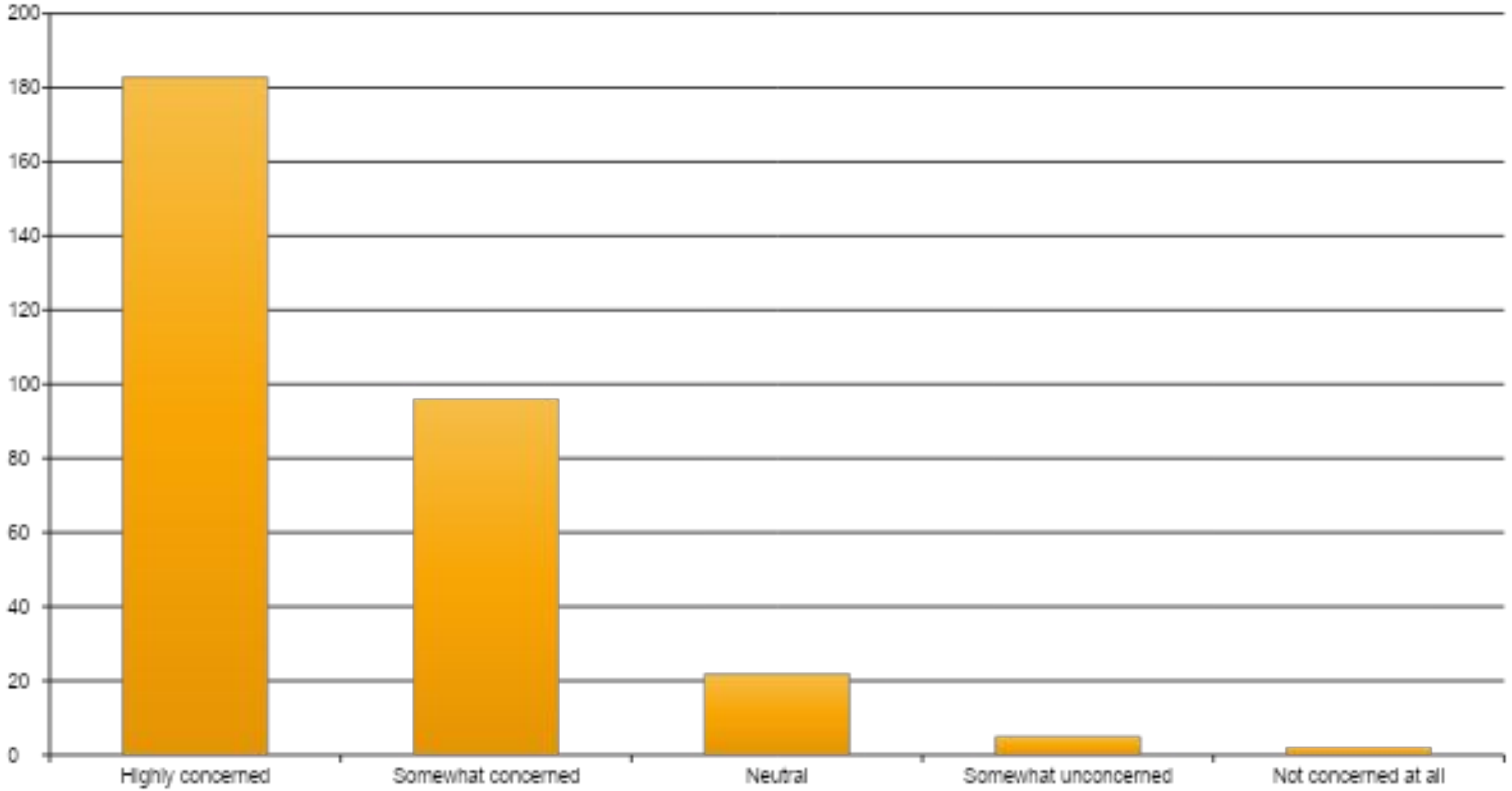

250
200
150
100
50
0
Yes
No
Unsure


140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
Ethical concerns
Lack of technical knowledge
Lack of training
Other (please specify)
Unaffordability of tools
Administrative restrictions


180
160
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
Yes
No
Unsure


70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Extremely effective
Moderately effective
Netural
Slightly effective
Not effective at all
Other (please specify)


80
70
60
50
40
30
20
10
0
Extremely satisfied
Moderately satisfied
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
Moderately dissatisfied
Extremely dissatisfied
Unsure
Not Applicable


200
180
160
140
120
100
80
60
40
20
0
Highly concerned
Somewhat concerned
Neutral
Somewhat unconcerned
Not concerned at all

What questions do you have about this data?