

Employment services: a broken system that breaks people

The AUWU undertook a confidential and independent customer satisfaction survey for people who have used employment services in the last 12 months. It was distributed by email and on our social media channels. There were 650+ respondents in the period between 19 November and 25 November when we extracted the data for this headline report. Respondents were able to select more than one option for most of the questions, and this means the totals have irregular tallies. Respondents were female n=346 male=301 and 22 elected not to disclose. The age ranges were 18—25 (n=35); 26-49 (n=286); 50-55 (n=107); 55-64 (n=234); 65+ (n=6) and 9 respondents chose not to disclose.

The results are unique because job seekers were asked to rate various elements of the Mutual Obligation system, and an independent survey has never been undertaken on this scale; more individual job seekers have been consulted in this survey than in any of the McPhee consultations (Nous=9; SRC=188). The survey used a Likert scale where the questions were rated from strongly agree to strongly disagree.

This interim report¹ has been produced to influence current policy discussions about mutual obligation in the current and future employment services models. The results tell us about what aspects of current Mutual Obligations need urgent reform; and that these issues need to be given priority in discussions about the New Employment Services model.

Program and/or activity

The survey responses were mainly about jobactive n=407, but there were also a significant number of responses about Disability Employment Services n=221 Work for the Dole n=148, EST= 26; ParentsNext n=10.

¹ A more detailed report that discusses the findings in more detail will be published before the end of this year.

Chart 1 – Job plan activities

The results clearly show how current Mutual Obligation requirements are punitive and that the majority of job seekers do not get any benefit from employment services. In particular, respondents indicated a high level of dissatisfaction at the kind of activities that we put in their job plan. The results showed there was very little choice over activities and that job seekers were not listened to about what they wanted to do.

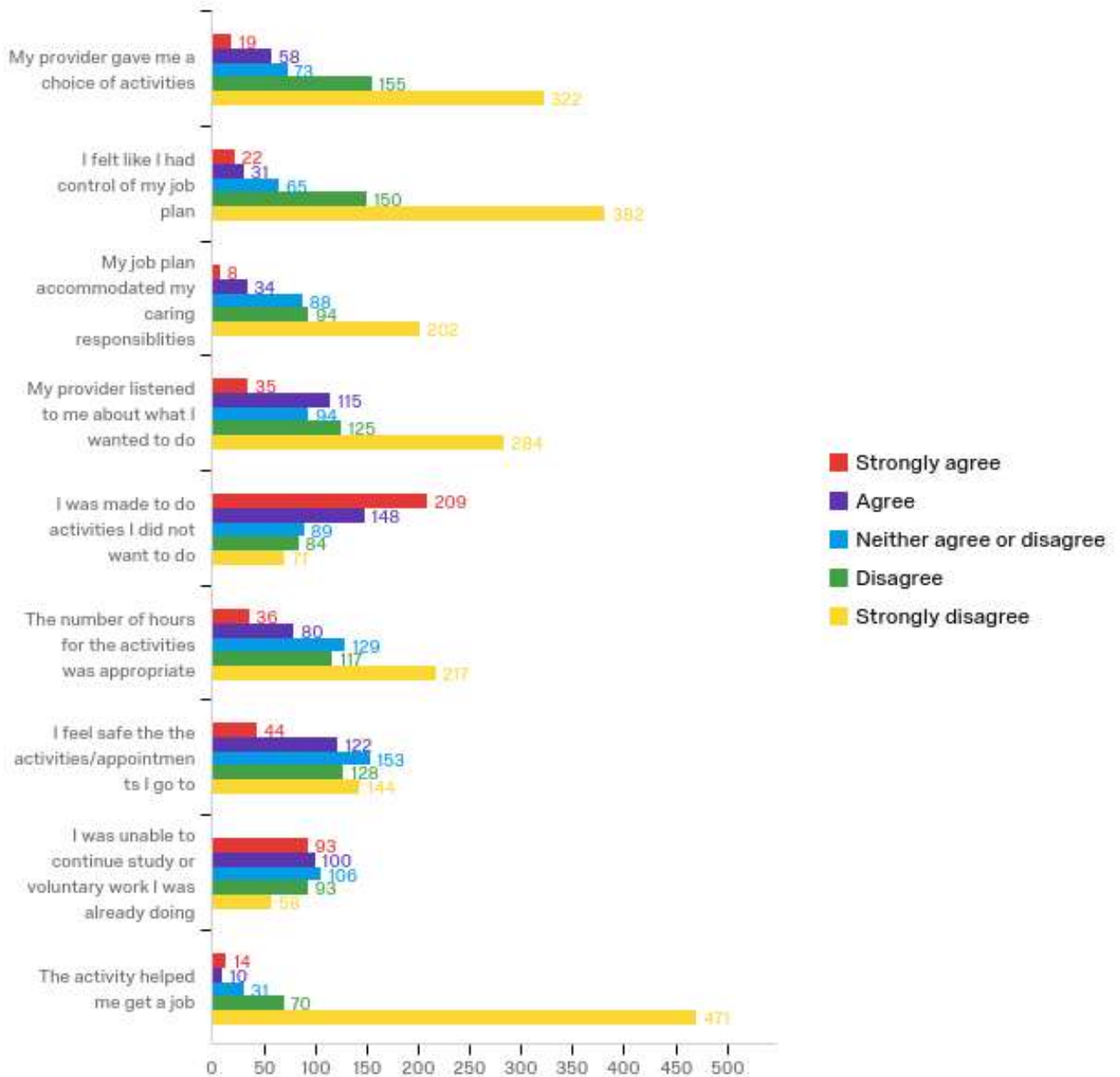


Chart 2 - Provider appointments

The report shows that respondents did not feel provider appointments were useful for getting a job; they also show how bad the relationships between job seekers and providers have become

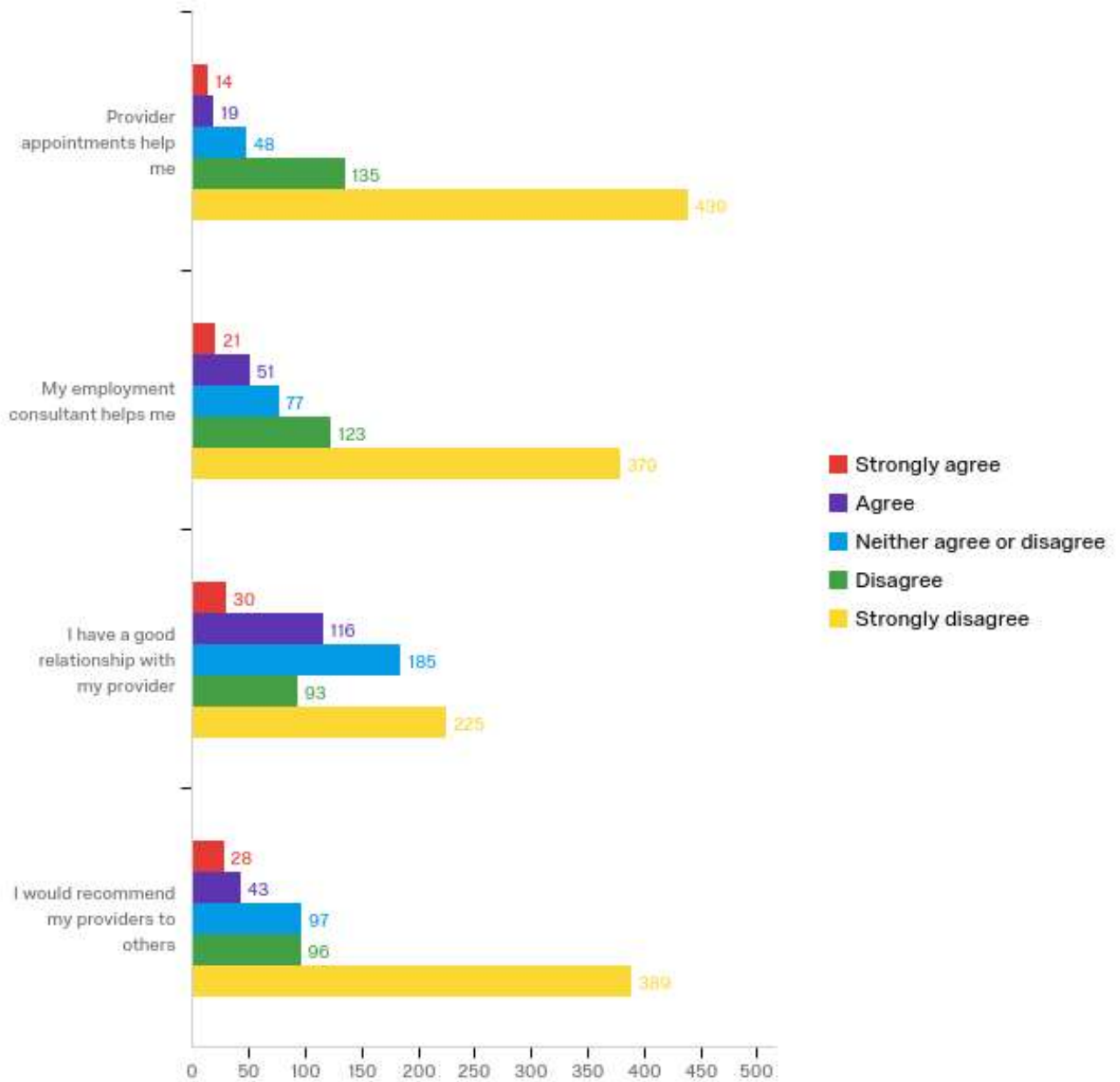


Chart 3 Funding on items that are useful for my employment goals?

The majority of respondents did not believe their provider funded the items that would have been useful for them to achieve their employment goals.

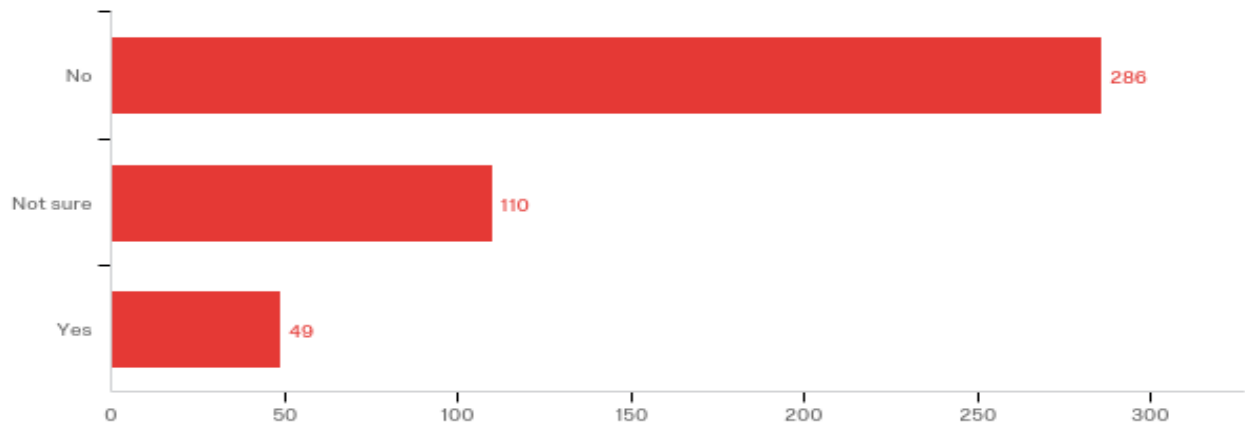


Chart 4 Digital or personal?

One of the informing assumptions of the McPhee recommendations for the reform of employment services is that job seekers want digital services. These responses indicate the inadequacy of the current digital interfaces such as jobactive on mygov or the jobactive app. They also indicate that job seekers would prefer human relationships over digital interfaces.

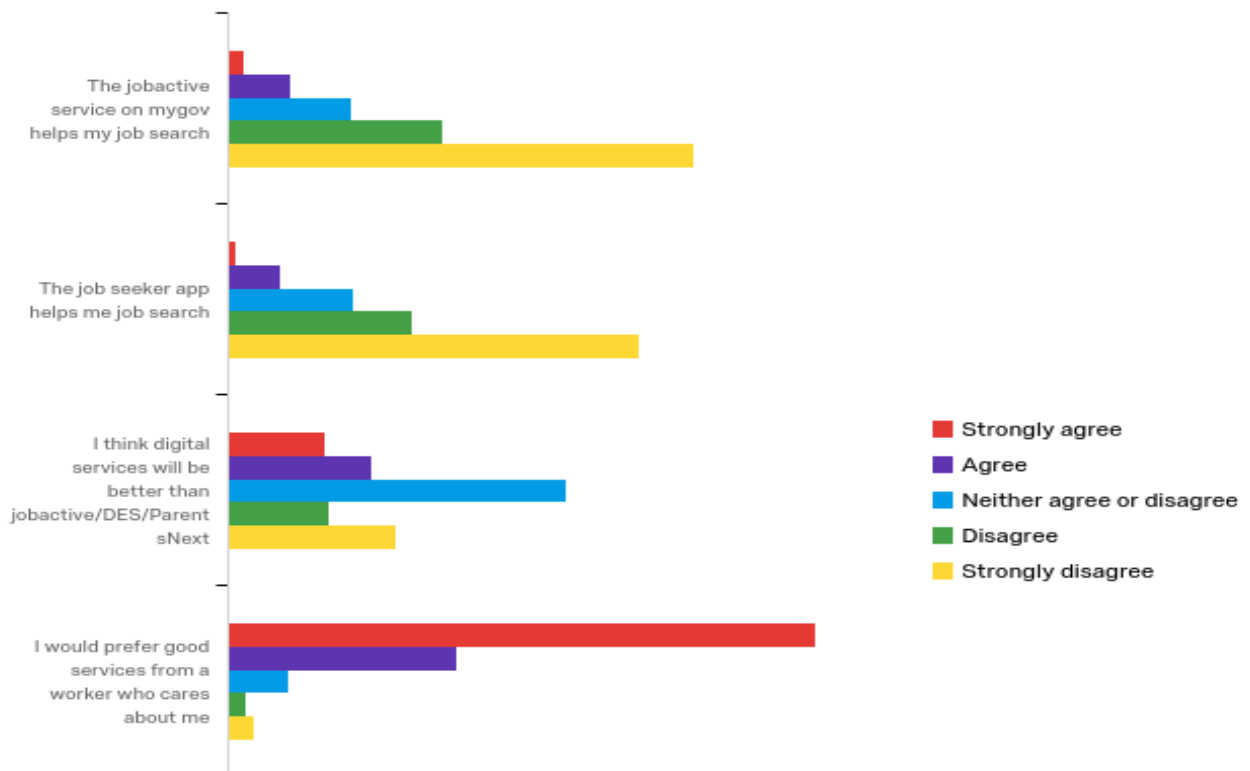


Chart 5 - Accessibility of complaints processes

We asked job seekers about how easy it was to complaints about employment services and the results show that information they need to make complaints is not accessible.

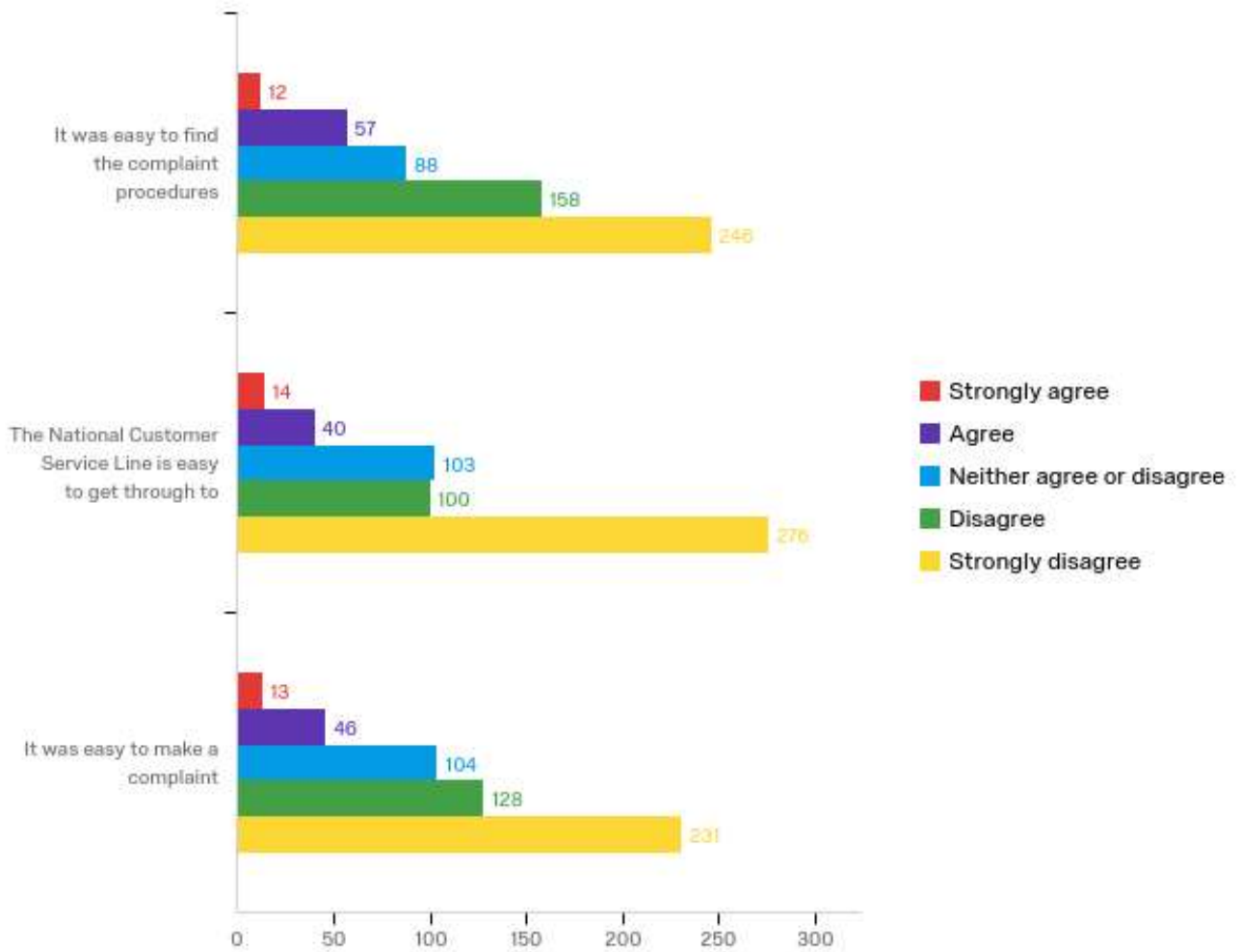


Chart 6 - Job search and job search training

One key aspect of employment services is job search. Our survey results show that employment services do not help with job search, and that job search requirements are unreasonable for the majority of job seekers.

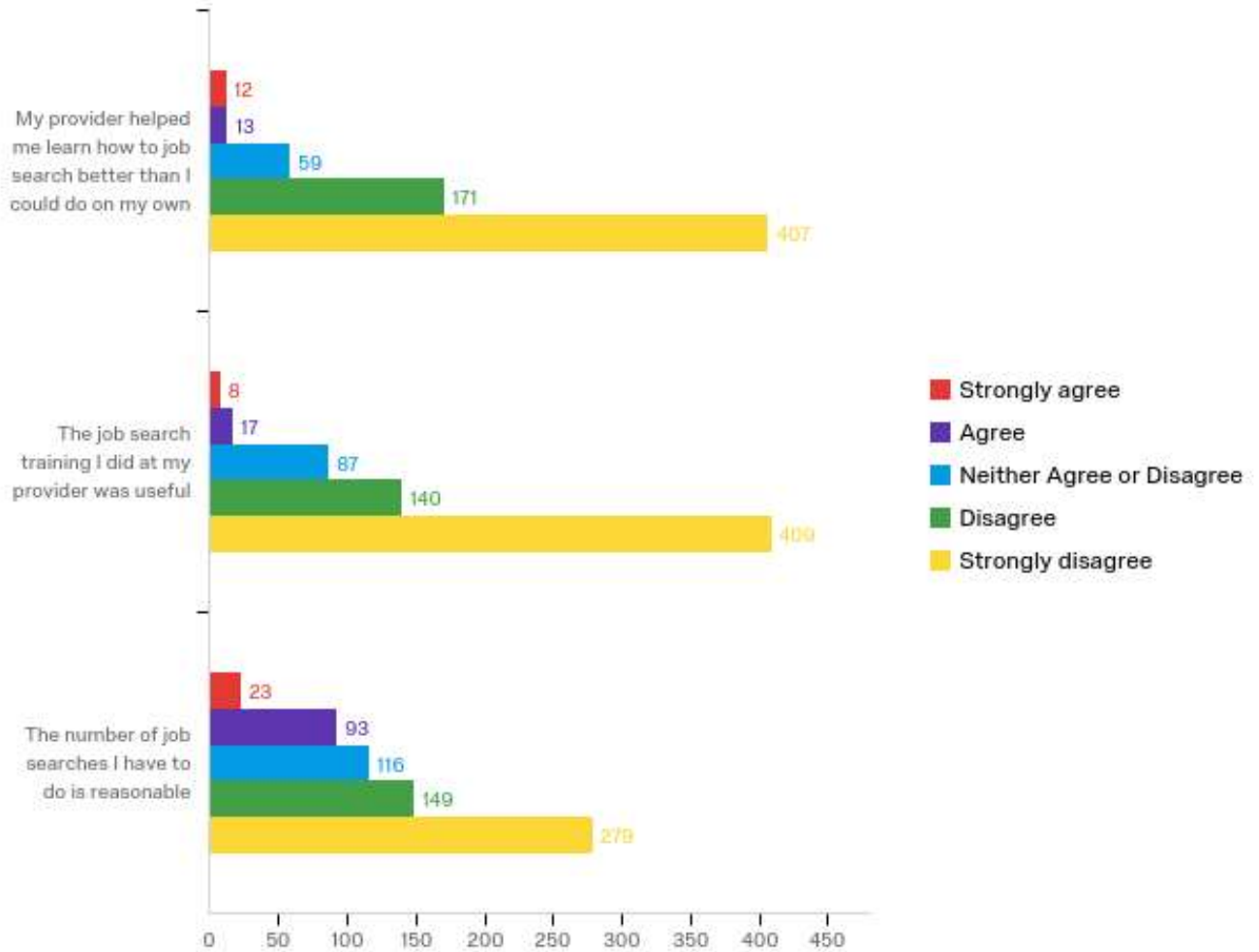


Chart 7 - Payment suspensions, demerits and payment penalties

Since the Targeted Compliance Framework (TCF) was introduced, there has been interest in how well it has been working. These data show that many job seekers believe they are receiving payment suspensions in error and that the TCF is not flexible or fair.

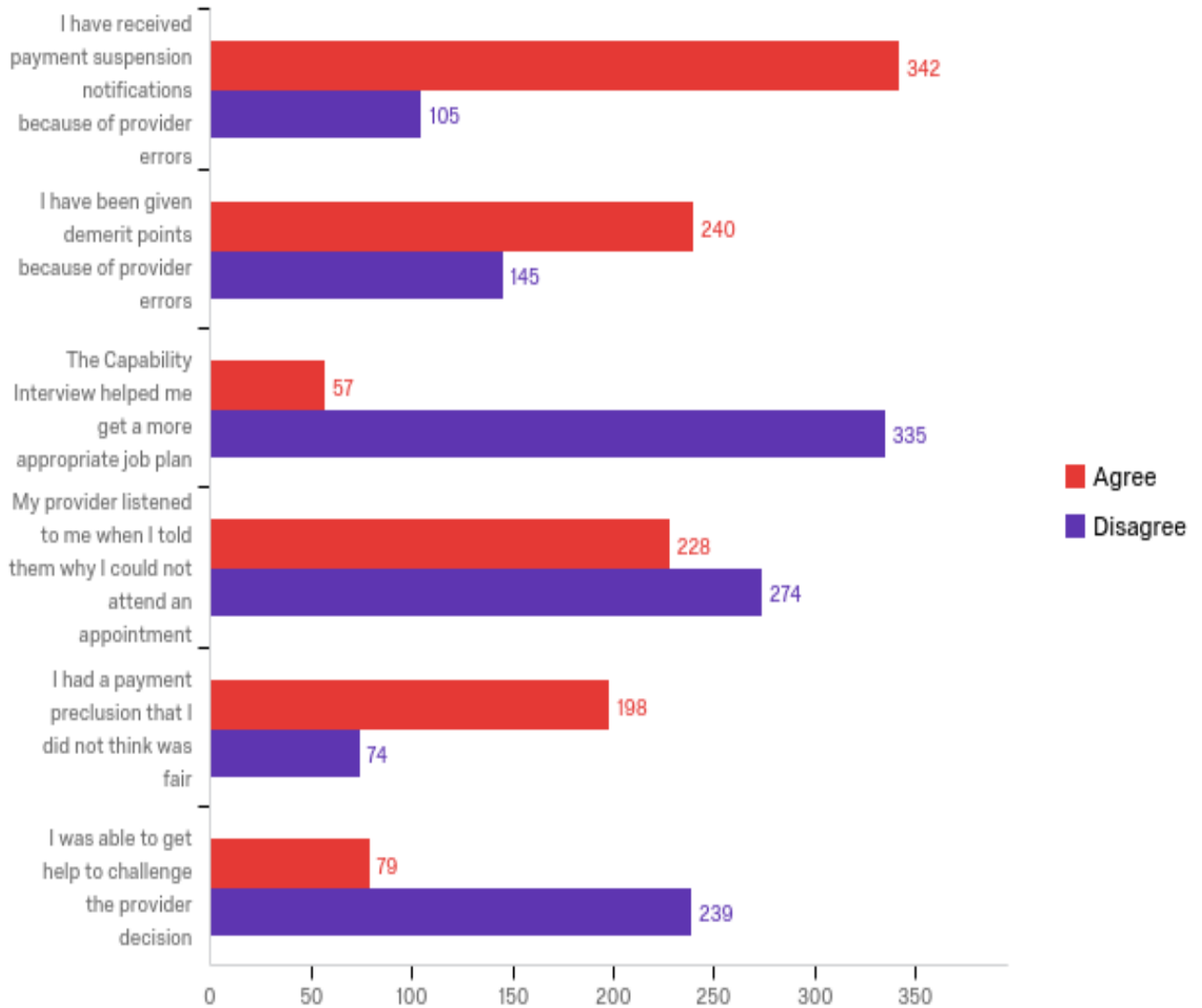


Chart 8 – Payment Cancellations

A high number of respondents indicated they had received payment cancellations because they had not done what was required in their job plans.

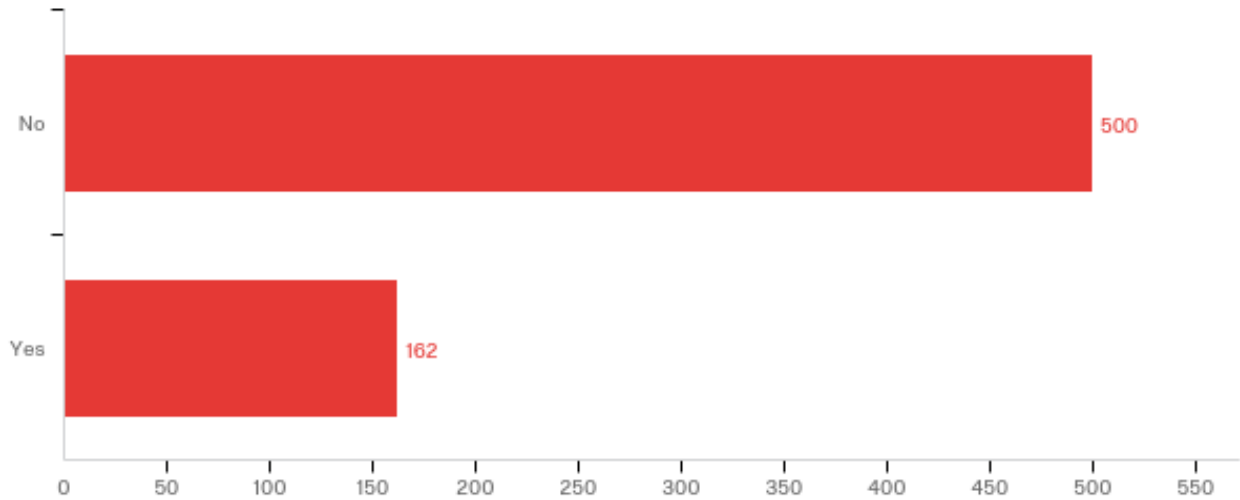


Chart 9 - How did they survive without Newstart?

The results show the consequences for job seekers whose payments are cancelled. Of the respondents to this survey, 75 indicated payment cancellations had led to the most extreme consequence, homelessness.

