# Preferred Client Card Preliminary Report

On October 16, 2002, the Salvation Army Cambridge Corps began issuing "Preferred Client Cards" to Drop-In Center clients. Each card has a unique barcode that is attached to a particular client. When receiving a card, a client fills out some basic demographic information, which is then attached to their barcode. This barcode can be scanned with a handheld scanning device to record information on various services. The data on this handheld device is transferred daily to a secure database and erased from the handheld. All of the client information is also stored in this secure database. We hoped that by implementing this automated data collection system, we would be able to do the following:
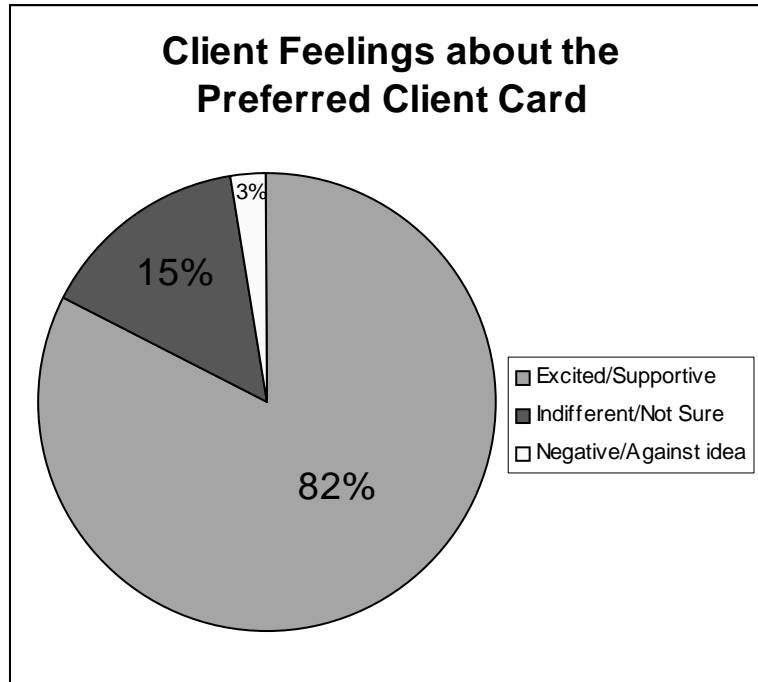
1) Collect data on services offered through the Drop-In Center, such as lunch, showers, laundry, clothing, and counseling in an automated fashion. We had not previously recorded any of this service usage information.
2) Collect demographic data on a much larger population than we had previously been able to do.

Card Information

As of January 11, 2003, 606 cards had been issued to 535 clients. The following chart shows how many cards were issued each day from Oct. 16 to Jan. 11.

606 Cards Issued from 10/16/02-1/11/03
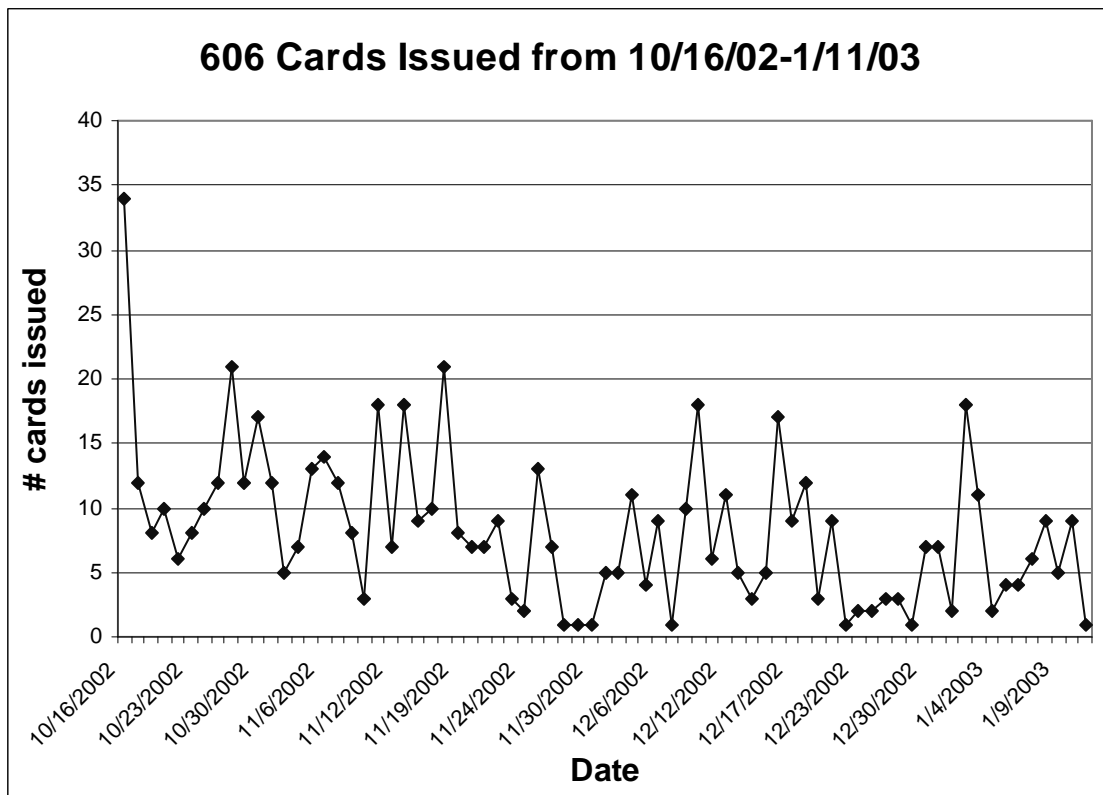
One concern we had initially was whether clients would be willing to receive a card. We handed out a survey to Drop-In clients before we began issuing cards to gauge their receptivity. Out of 40 clients who completed the survey, 33 (82%) were excited or supportive of the card, 6 (15%) were indifferent or not sure, and 1 person (3%) was negative or against the idea.

Client Feelings about the Preferred Client Card

- Excited/Supportive
- Indifferent/Not Sure
- Negative/Against idea

The results of this survey were supported by the response of the clients when we began issuing cards. From the time that we began issuing cards (October 16), there were less than 10 clients who refused to get a card. For these clients, we scanned a generic barcode that recorded basic demographic information on the client (sex, race, age range). This means that out of a maximum of 545 clients who came to the Drop-In Center between October 16, 2002 and January 11, 2003 (535 clients who received a card + a maximum of 10 clients who refused to get a card), less than 2% of them refused to receive a card.

Another concern we had initially was whether clients would hold onto their card, or if they would lose it. Of the 535 clients who received a card, 57 (11%) lost their card, while 478 (89%) did not lose it.

11% of clients lost their card
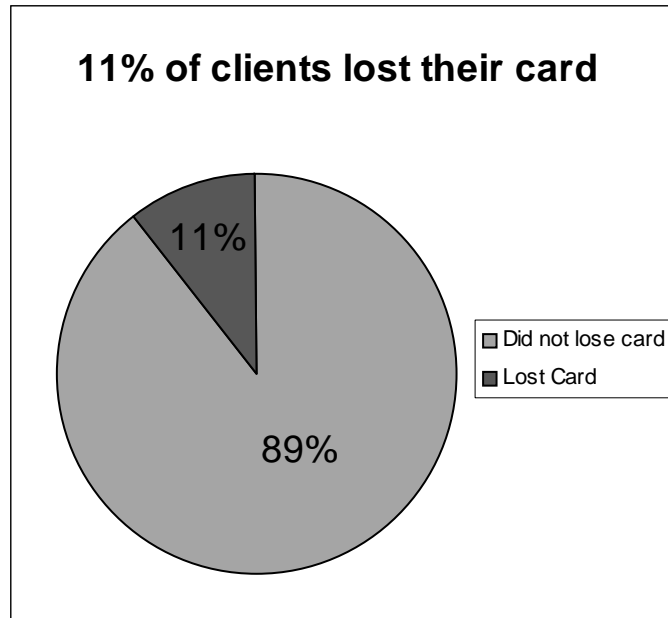
For those clients who lost their card, we issued them a replacement card that was also attached to their client demographic information. Of the 606 cards, 535 (81%) were first-time cards and 71 (12%) were replacement cards.

12% of cards issued were replacements
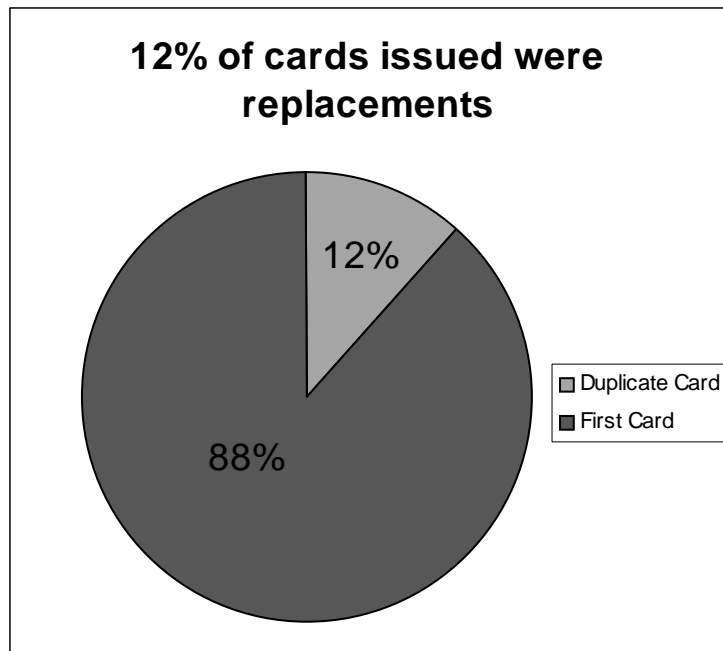
Service Usage Analysis

We began scanning cards for lunch at the Drop-In Center on October 28, 2002. From October 28, 2002 to January 30, 2003, a total of 3466 lunches were recorded on the scanner. The average number of lunches scanned per day was 36. The following chart shows the number of clients per day who were scanned for lunch from October 28, 2002 to January 30, 2003.

Lunch 10/28/02-1/30/03
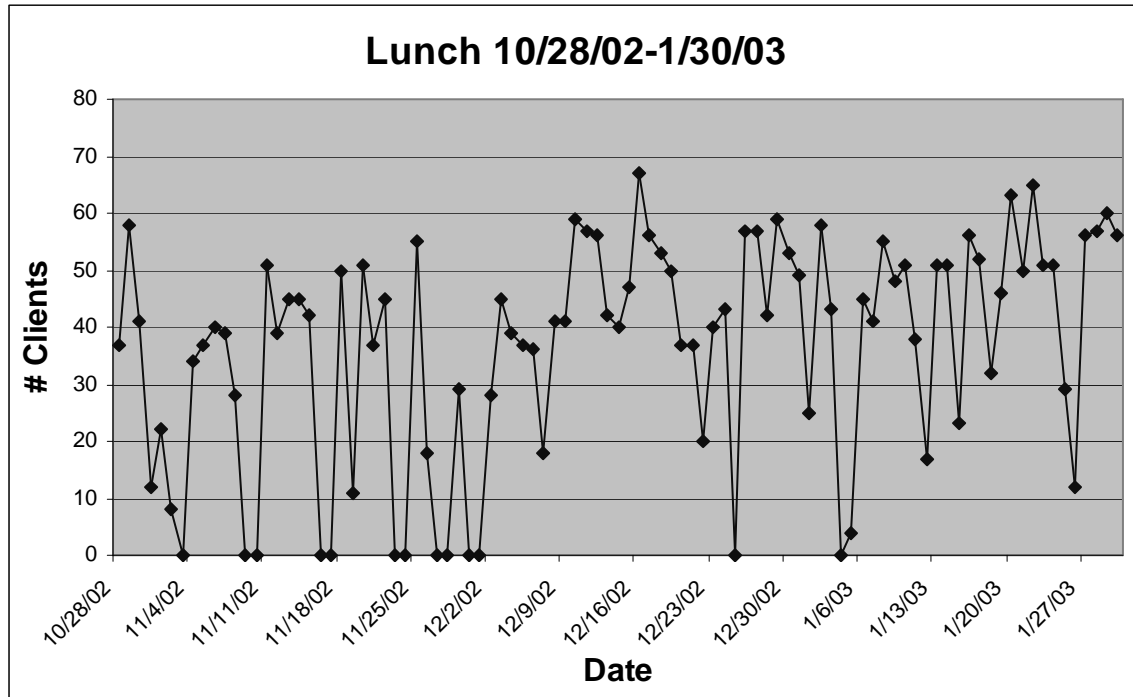
As you can see, there were many days when zero or an abnormally low number of clients were scanned. These low numbers are the result of one of three things.

1) We did not scan for lunches on the weekends until the weekend of 12/7/02-12/8/02.
2) We did not scan for lunches on some holidays, such as Thanksgiving, the day before Thanksgiving, and Christmas Day.
3) There were some days when not all of the clients were actually scanned, because the staff were still getting used to the barcode scanner and sometimes made mistakes. These mistakes became less frequent after November.

In order to get a better picture of the actual number of lunches served in the period of Oct. 28-Jan. 30, the following chart removes all of the zero counts and low counts that we know were due to staff mistakes.


Modified Lunch 10/28/02-1/30/03
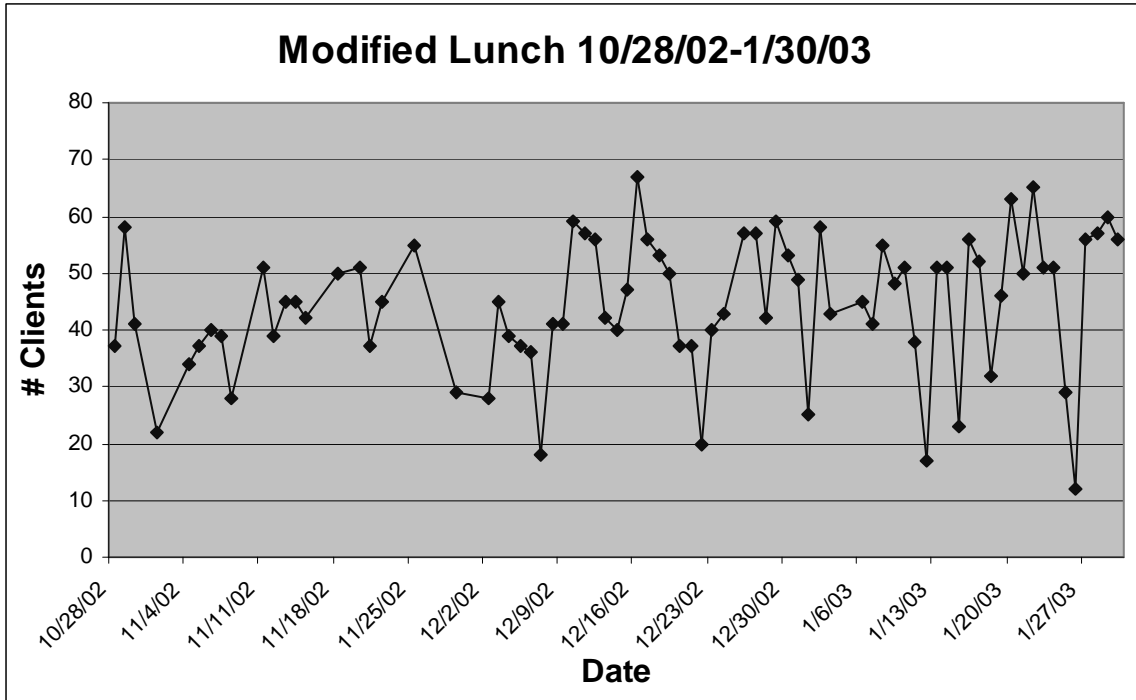
Many of the remaining counts that are below 30 are still somewhat questionable, especially those that occurred on the weekend, because we only began scanning for weekend lunches on Dec. 7, and the weekend staff took some time to get used to the handheld scanner. However, by using this modified set of days, we can at least get a little better picture of the number of clients who were served lunch per day. From this modified set of days, the average number of lunches served per day was 44.

Using this same modified set of days (removing zero counts and very low counts that we are sure were the result of staff mistakes), we can look at the average number of clients served on each day of the week from October 28 to January 30.

Modified Lunch 10/28/02-1/30/03
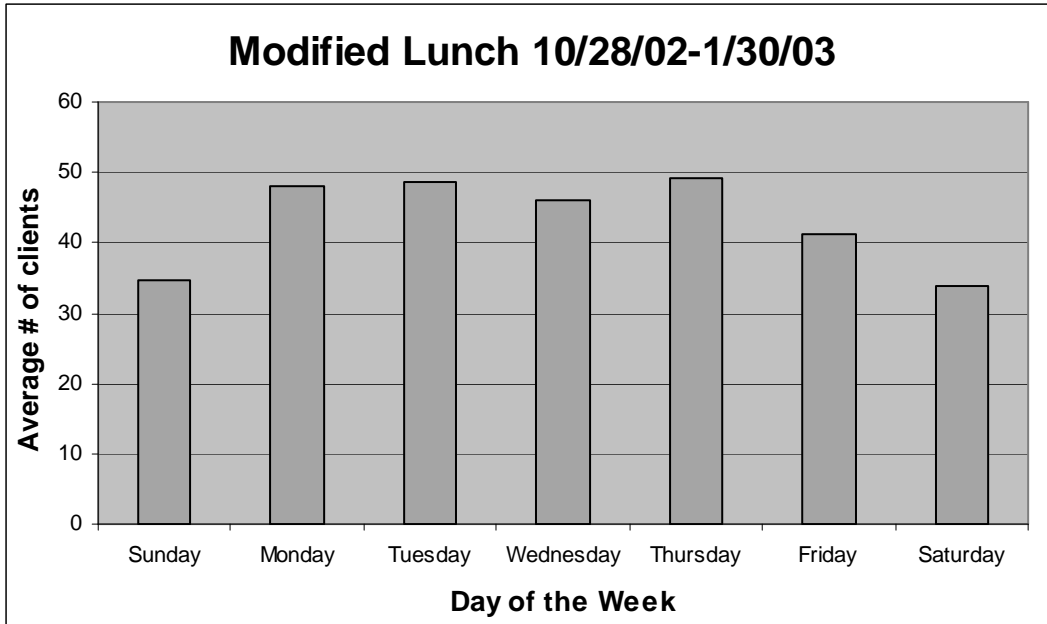
There were many fewer clients who ate lunch on the weekends (although some of this may be a result of staff mistakes on the weekend). During the week, there were fewer clients on Wednesday and Friday.

Using the same modified set of days, we can also look at the average number of clients served on each day of the month.

Modified Lunch 10/28/02-1/30/03
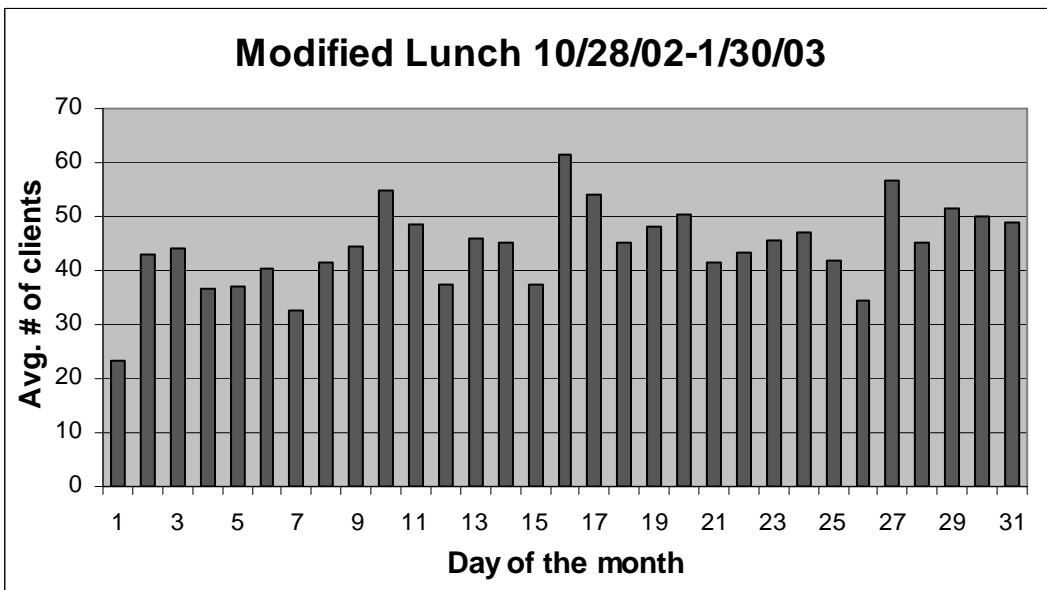
In general, fewer clients eat lunch at the beginning of the month, while at the end of the month, the number of lunches served goes up.

Both the day of the week analysis and the day of the month analysis are very preliminary at this point, because we are only using data from three months and some of that data had to be removed because of staff mistakes. However, as we continue to collect data on lunches over the long-run and as mistakes are minimized (which has happened in December and January), we will begin to have an accurate picture of how many lunches are served on average for each day of the week as well as for each day of the month.

We focused primarily on recording lunches when we first issued the Preferred Client Card, but in December and January, we began to scan for other services as well. Much of this scanning has been fairly inconsistent and incomplete, but the following charts will give an example of some of the data we have begun to collect on other services.

We began scanning for dinner on December 5, but have done so somewhat irregularly. We do not serve dinner on Sunday, so there is always a zero count for Sunday. After removing all zero counts and counts of less than five (likely the result of staff mistakes), we have the following chart of dinners served from 12/5/02-1/30/03. The average number of clients per day who ate dinner during this modified period was 17.

Modified Dinner 12/05/02-1/30/03
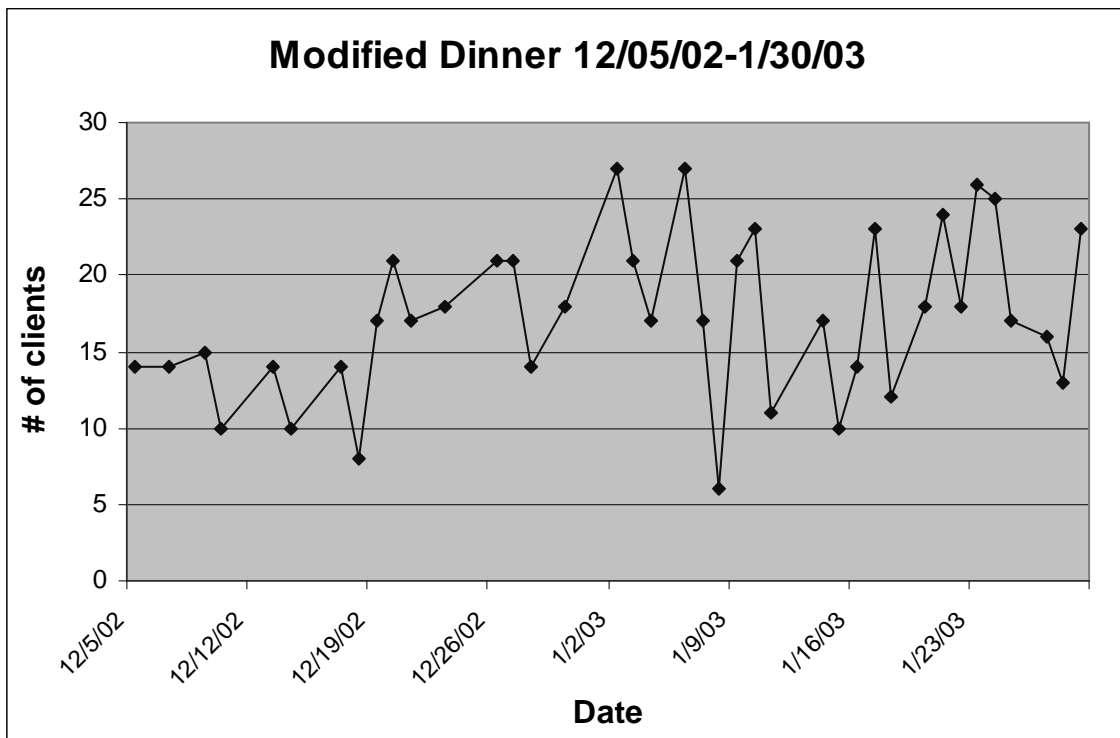
We began scanning for showers at the beginning of November, but did not do so on any kind of regular basis until the beginning of January. The following chart shows the number of showers that were recorded in January. This is still a very incomplete count, because showers were not recorded in as systematized a way as meals have been.

Shower 1/1/03-1/30/03
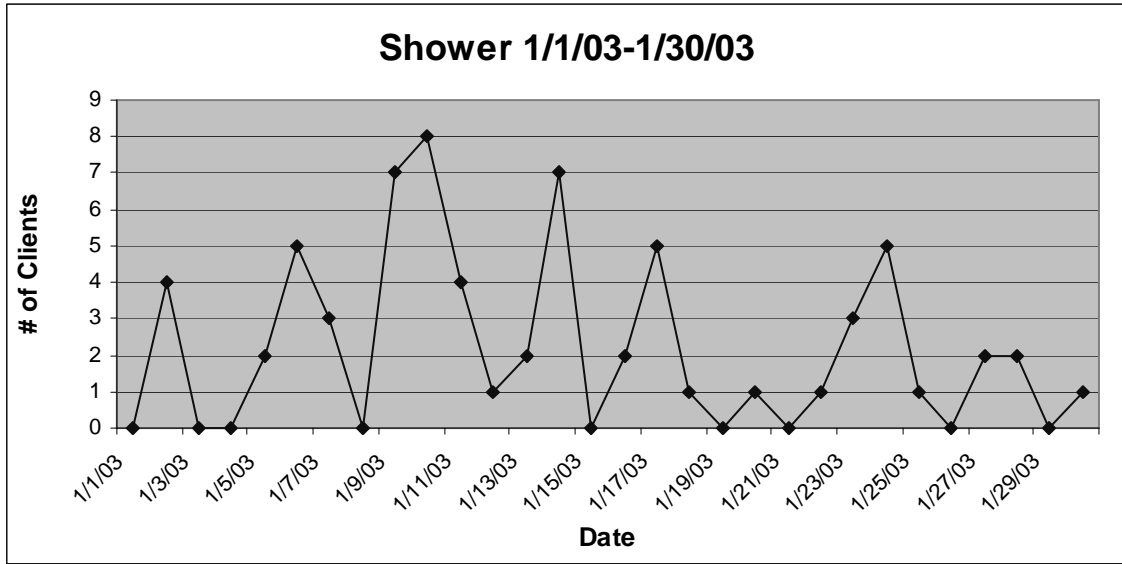
One final piece of data that we have recorded on a fairly consistent basis is the accessing of the main benefit that is attached to the Preferred Client Card. When we first introduced the card, we offered the benefit of receiving six nights at the Salvation Army Emergency Shelter rather than the typical four nights. This benefit could be accessed twice a month per client. The following chart shows the number of clients who accessed this six-night stay benefit each day since October 28.

Six-Night Stays 10/28/02-1/30/03
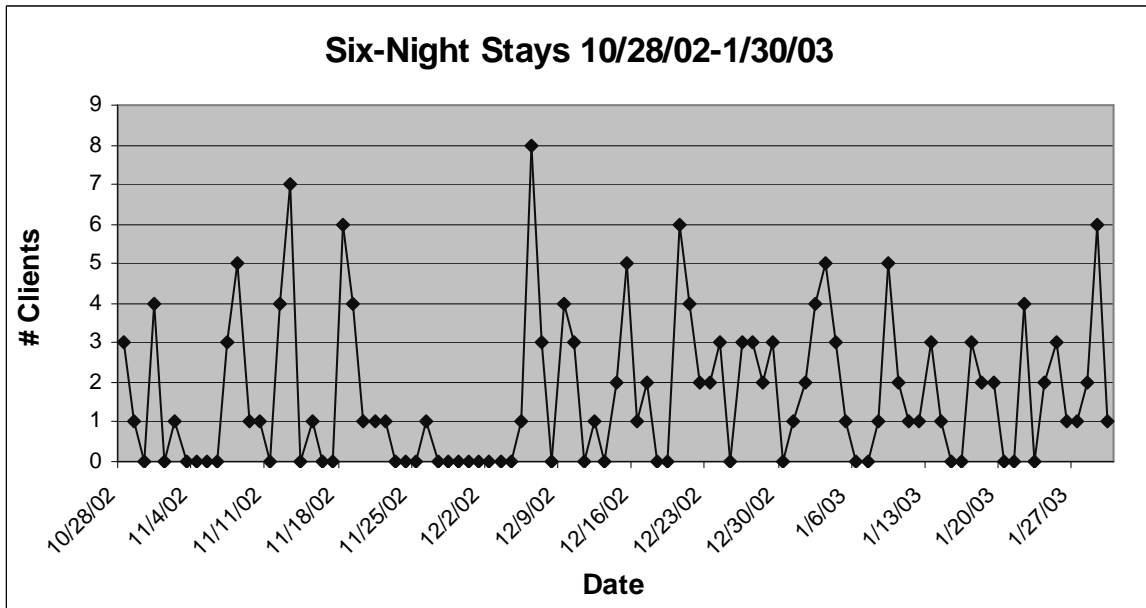
Demographic Analysis

Each client who received a card was given a short intake asking various demographic questions. From these intake forms, we have been able to sketch a general client profile for those clients who received a card between October 16 and January 11.
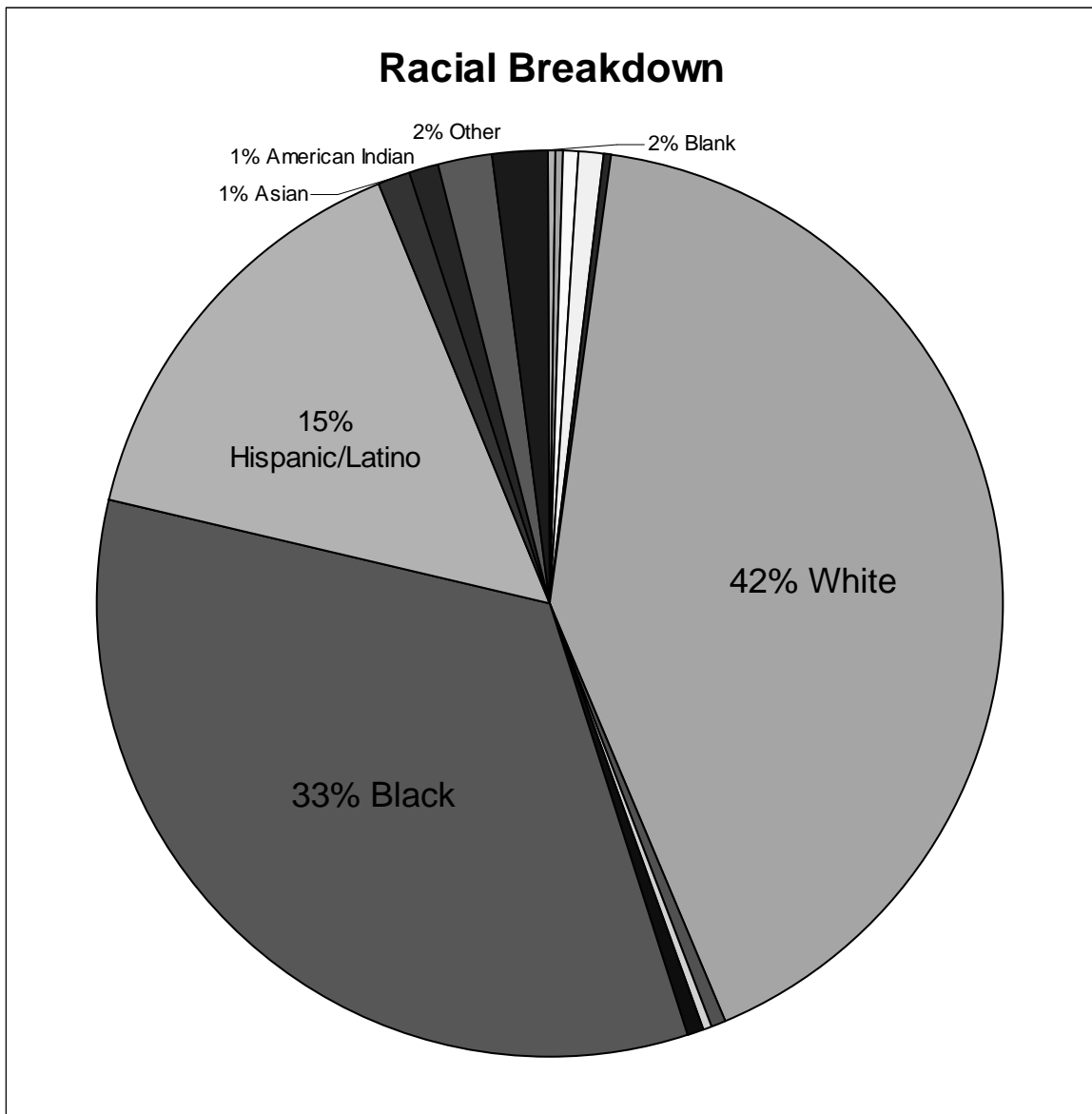
Of the 535 clients who received a card, 490 (92%) are male and 45 (8%) are female.

92% of clients are male

8%

92%

F
M
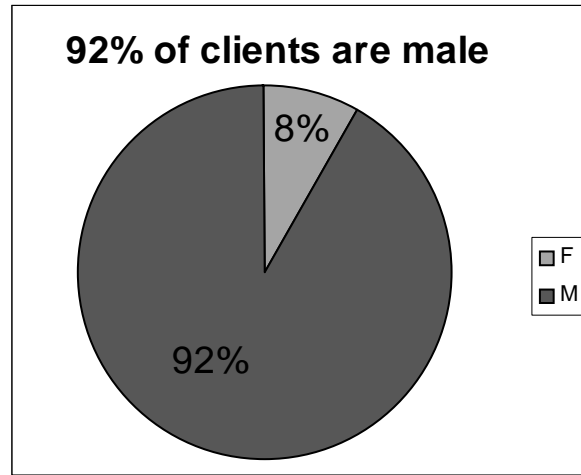
Of the 535 clients who received a card, 525 (98%) gave their date of birth. Of those 525, 10 (2%) are under 21 years old, 61 (12%) are between 21 and 30 years old, 164 (31%) are between 31 and 40 years old, 188 (36%) are between 41 and 50 years old, 76 (14%) are between 51 and 60 years old, 19 (4%) are between 61 and 70 years old, and 7 (1%) are 71 years old or older.

Age Distribution

1%   2%
4%
14%   12%
36%   31%

<21
21-30
31-40
41-50
51-60
61-70
71+
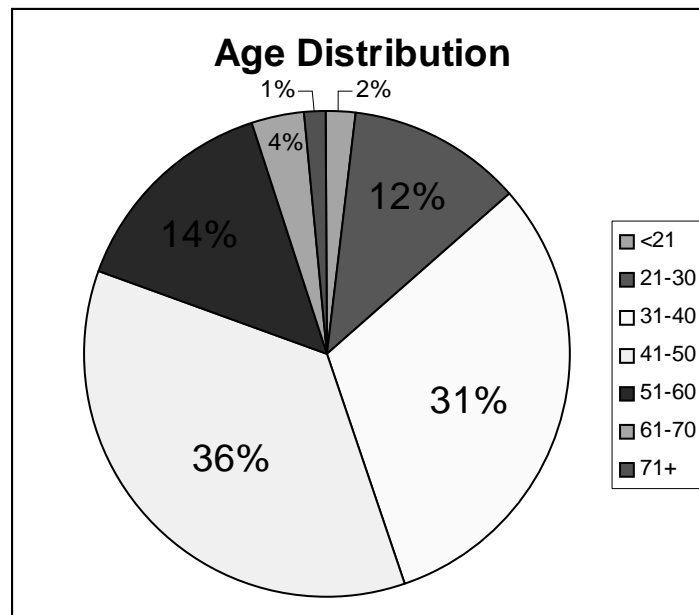
Of the 535 clients who received a card, when asked to give their race, 222 (42%) identified themselves as "White," 179 (33%) identified themselves as "Black," 81 (15%) identified themselves as "Hispanic/Latino," 6 (1%) identified themselves as "Asian/Pacific Islander," 6 (1%) identified themselves as "American Indian," 10 (2%) identified themselves as "Other," and 11 (2%) did not answer the question. The remaining 20 (4%) identified with more than one race. On the pie chart below, each unique combination of two or more races is represented by a separate section. For instance, 5 clients identified themselves as both "White" and "American Indian." These clients are represented by the pale blue section, which is not labeled on the chart.

Racial Breakdown

2% Other
1% American Indian
1% Asian
2% Blank
15% Hispanic/Latino
42% White
33% Black

Of the 535 clients who received a card, 525 (98%) answered the question asking for their primary language. Of those 525, 423 (81%) answered "English," 71 (14%) answered "Spanish," 13 (2%) answered "French," and the remaining 18 (3%) were divided between Creole, Portuguese, Arabic, Czech, Dutch, and Japanese. The vast majority of clients identify English as their primary language, but we also have a fairly large Spanish-speaking population as well.

Although most clients speak English, a sizeable minority identify Spanish as their primary language

Creole 1%
Czech 0%
Arabic 1%
Dutch 0%
Portuguese 1%
Japanese 0%
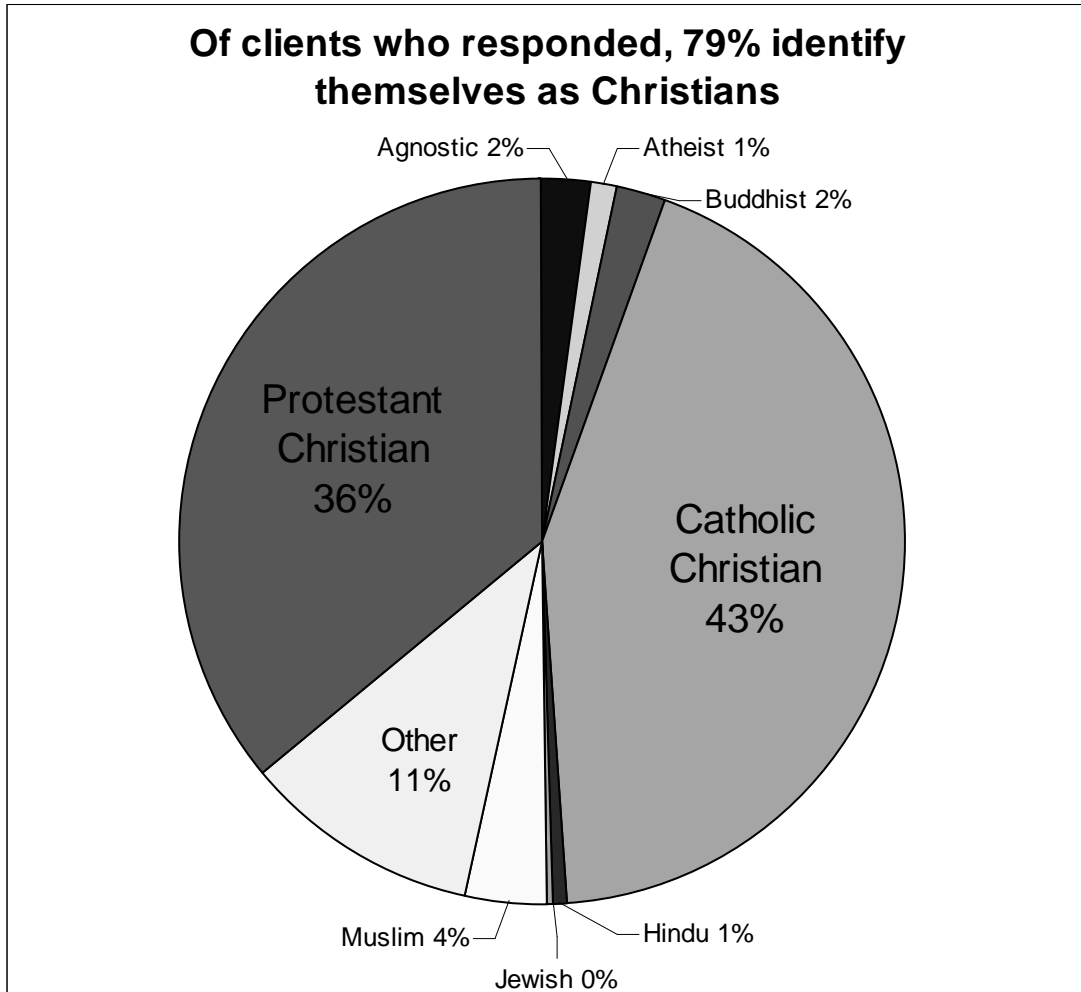Spanish 14%
French 2%
English 81%
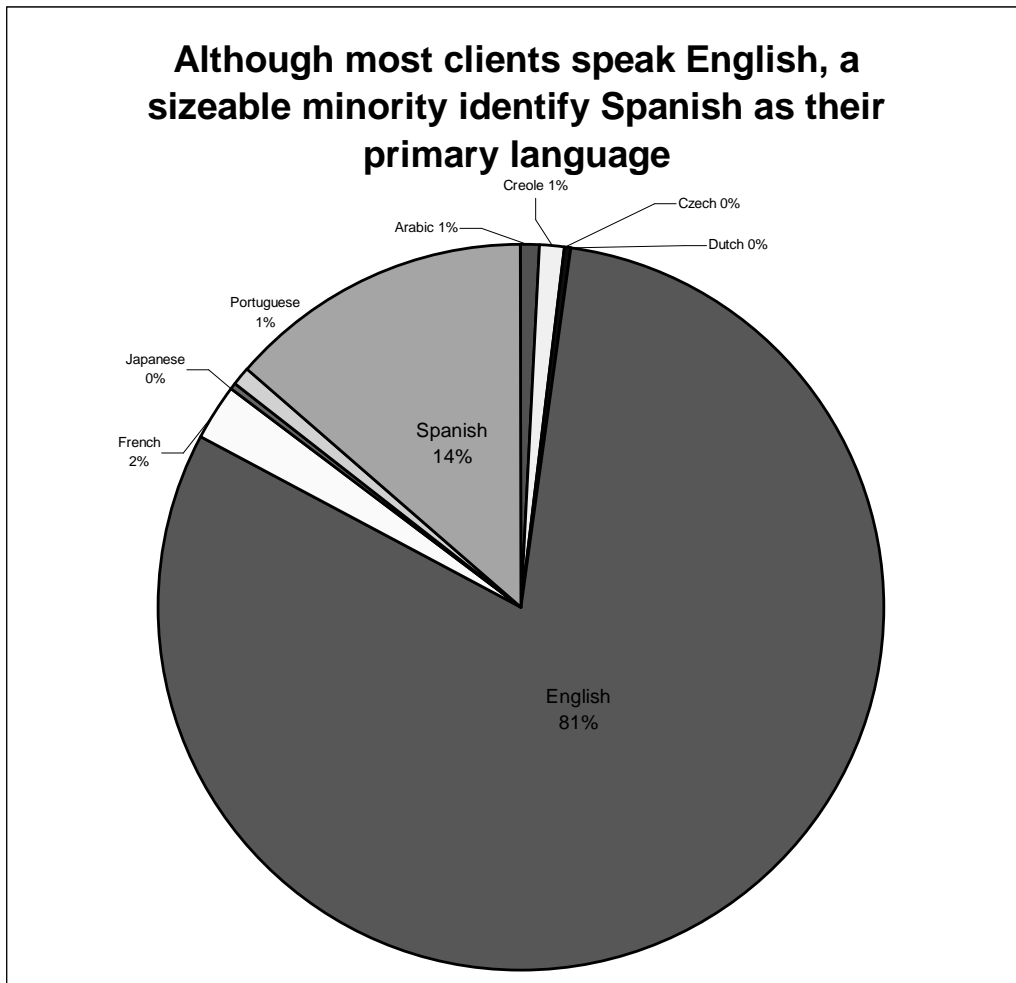
Of the 535 clients who received a card, 488 (91%) answered the veteran question. Of those 488, 412 (84%) are not veterans, while 76 (16%) are veterans.

Among clients who responded, 16% are veterans
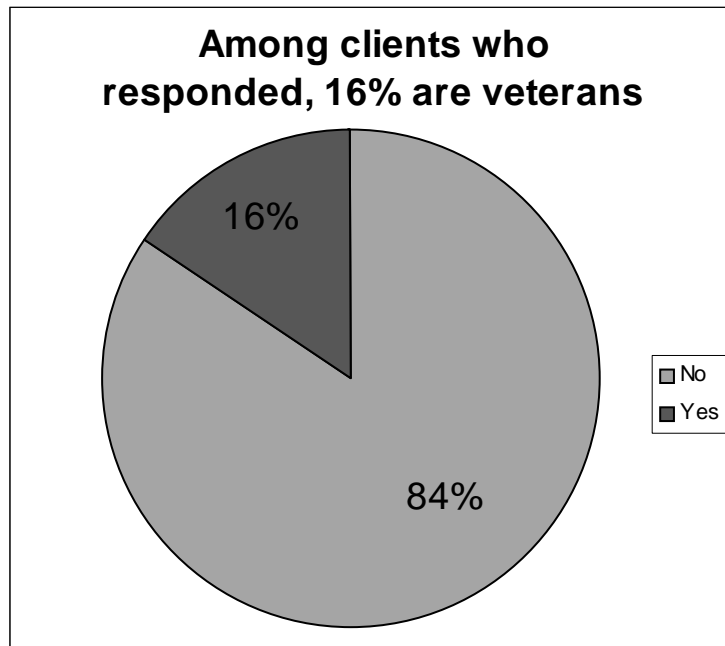
Of the 535 clients who received a card, 457 (85%) answered the question about how they rate the services at the Salvation Army. Of those 457, 167 (37%) answered "Excellent," 237 (51%) answered "Good," 45 (10%) answered "Fair," and 8 (2%) answered "Poor." So, 88% of clients rated the Salvation Army "Excellent" or "Good."

Of clients who responded, 88% rate their satisfaction with S.A. services as excellent or good
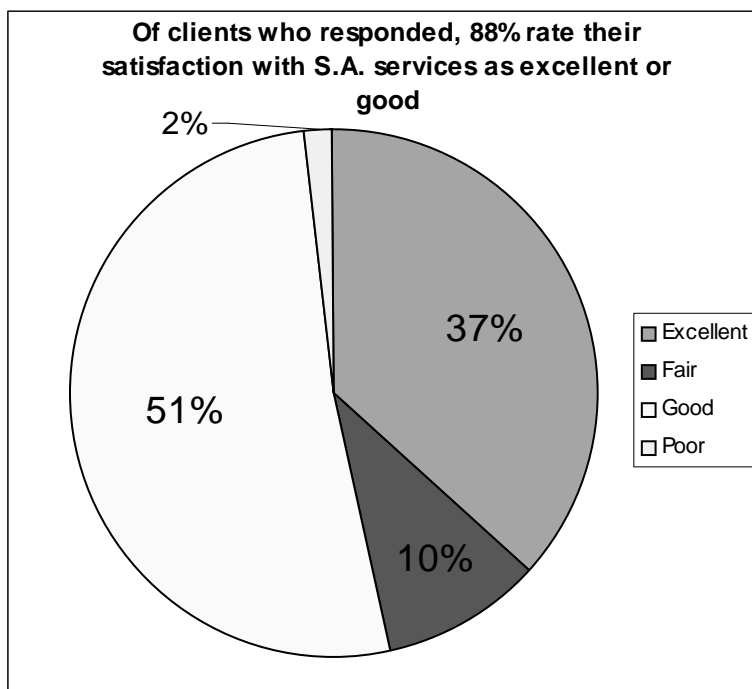
Of the 535 clients who received a card, 467 (87%) gave their religious preference. Of those 467, 202 (43%) are Catholic, 168 (36%) are Protestant, 17 (4%) are Muslim, 10 (2%) are Buddhist, 11 (2%) are Agnostic, 5 (1%) are Atheist, 3 (1%) are Hindu, 1 person (less than 1%) is Jewish, and 50 (11%) identified themselves as "Other." So, 79% identify themselves as Christian of some sort.

Of clients who responded, 79% identify themselves as Christians

- Agnostic 2%
- Atheist 1%
- Buddhist 2%
- Protestant Christian 36%
- Catholic Christian 43%
- Other 11%
- Muslim 4%
- Hindu 1%
- Jewish 0%

Of the 535 clients who received a card, 471 (88%) answered what the level of their religious practice was. Of these 471, 49 (10%) answered, "very high," 101 (21%) answered, "high," 195 (42%) answered, "moderate," 93 (20%) answered, "low," and 33 (7%) answered, "non-existent." The largest percentage was in the moderate group, and the very high/high group was about equal to the low/non-existent group.

Clients split pretty evenly down the middle for religious practice, with the majority being moderate

Legend:
- High
- Low
- Moderate
- Non-Existent
- Very High