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# A survey of occupational therapists using vocational rehabilitation for individuals with severe and enduring mental illness



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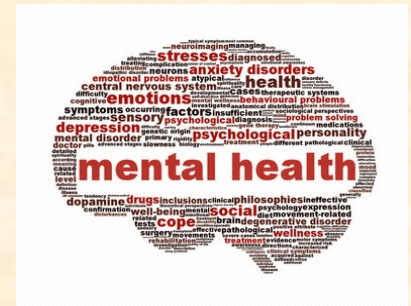
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# Defining vocational rehabilitation (VR)?

**VR** is a process:

- ‘To overcome the barriers an individual faces as a result of injury, illness or impairment when accessing, remaining in or returning to purposeful activity, work and employment’ (College of Occupational Therapists [COT] 2008, p3)
- Promotes recovery and social inclusion (COT 2010; Waghorn & Lloyd 2010)
- VR has been acknowledged as a key component in the delivery of mental health services for enhancing individuals’ recovery, health and well-being (Department of Health [DoH] 2011)
- Occupational therapists have a key role in promoting recovery in relation to employment (COT 2006; Blank & Hayward 2009).

# Key Definitions



## Severe and enduring mental illness

- Affects mood, thoughts and/or behaviour that can heavily impact on a person's life. Individuals usually require long-term support from mental health professionals (World Health Organisation 2008)
- Approximately 5.5 million of working aged adults have a severe and enduring mental illness (Royal College of Psychiatrists 2010)

## Employment

- 'Work as 'not only 'a job' or paid employment, but includes unpaid or voluntary work, education and training, family responsibilities and caring' (Waddell & Burton 2006, p4)



# Background: mental health and employment

- In 2013, 40.9% of employment and Support Allowance recipients had a mental or behavioural disorder as their primary condition (Davies 2014)
- 60–70% of people with common mental disorders (such as depression and anxiety) are in work (Davies 2014)
- The unemployment rate for people with severe mental illness is four times that of people with no disorder; the rate for more common mental disorders is double that of people with no disorder (Davies 2014)
- Average disability employment rate is 33% compared to 71% of the overall UK population (Shaw Trust 2014)

# Aim and Objectives



## Aim:

- To explore the views of occupational therapists regarding the success of Vocational Rehabilitation [VR] to enable individuals with severe and enduring mental illness into employment.

## Objectives:

- To explore occupational therapists' views on the success of VR as an intervention for individuals with severe and enduring mental illness.
- To determine the VR outcome measures used by occupational therapists with people with severe and enduring mental illness.
- To contribute to the evidence base for the development of future VR practice within the United Kingdom [UK].



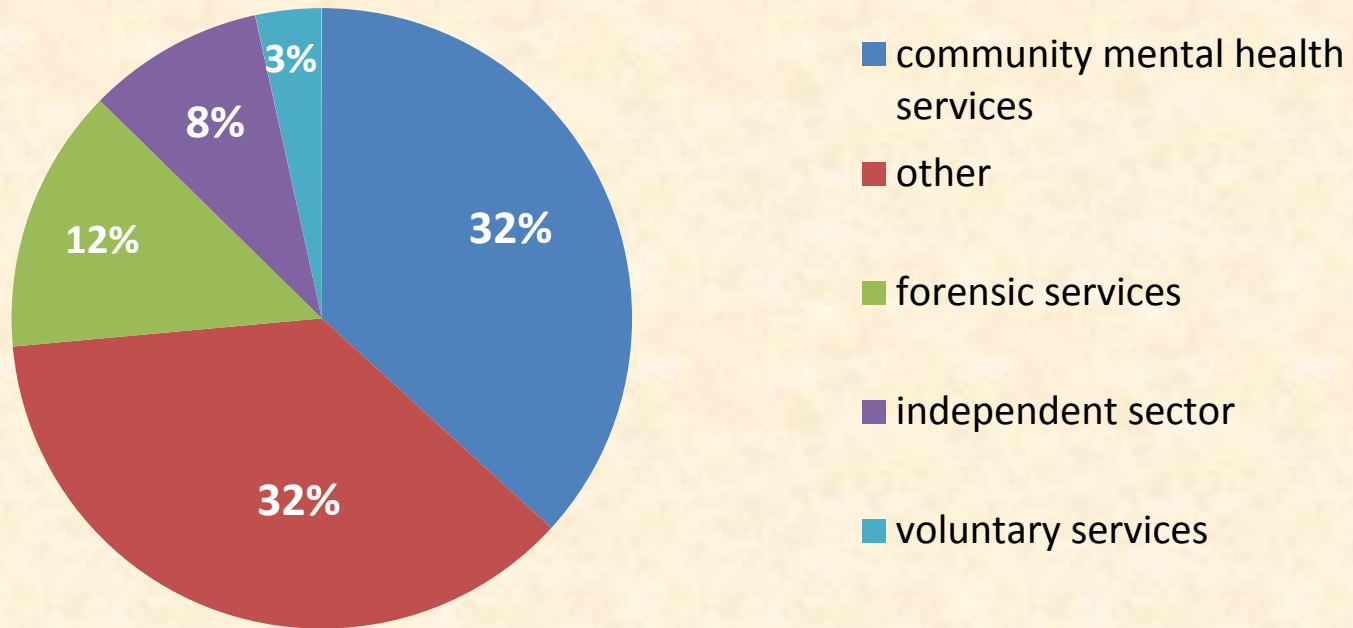
# Method



- **Data collection:** Online Survey Monkey questionnaire (adapted from McQueen (2011))
- **Pilot:** Three OT educators with a background in mental health practice.
- **Sample:** 444 members of the College of Occupational Therapists' Specialist Section for Mental Health and Work (COTSS-MH and COTTS-W)
- **Data analysis:** Qualitative responses analysed using thematic analysis (Bowling 2009). Quantitative data analysed using descriptive statistics
- **Ethics:** Approved by the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Ethics Committee, York St John University and COT Research Development Committee

# Results: participant information

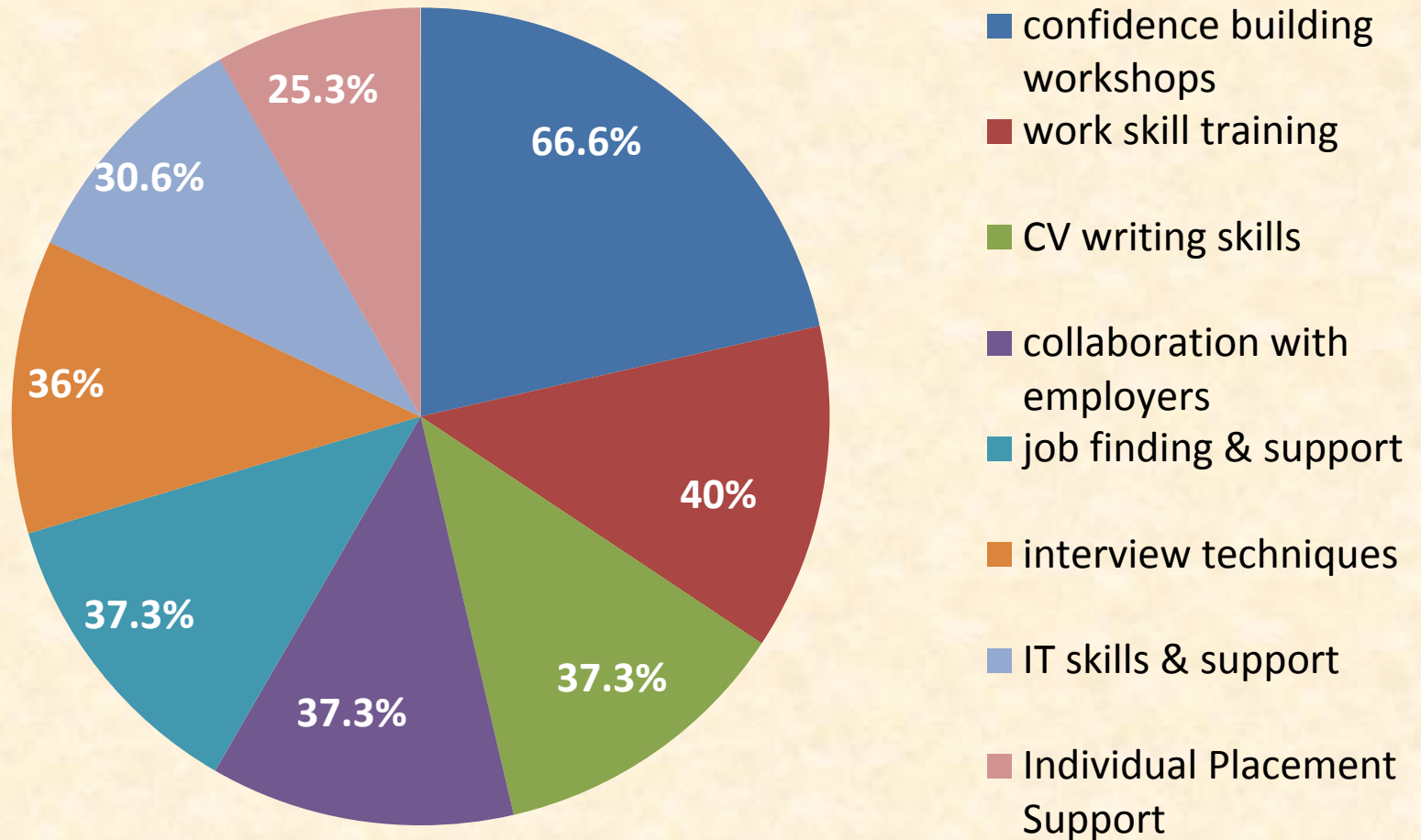
➤ Sample = 75 / 444 respondents (17%)



- 84 % (n=63) of the sample indicated that aspects of their role included VR.
- Over a third (26.7%, n = 20) of the respondents indicated that they had received post graduate training in VR.
- Around a half (49.3%, n=37) had received no form of post graduate training.



# Interventions offered to service users



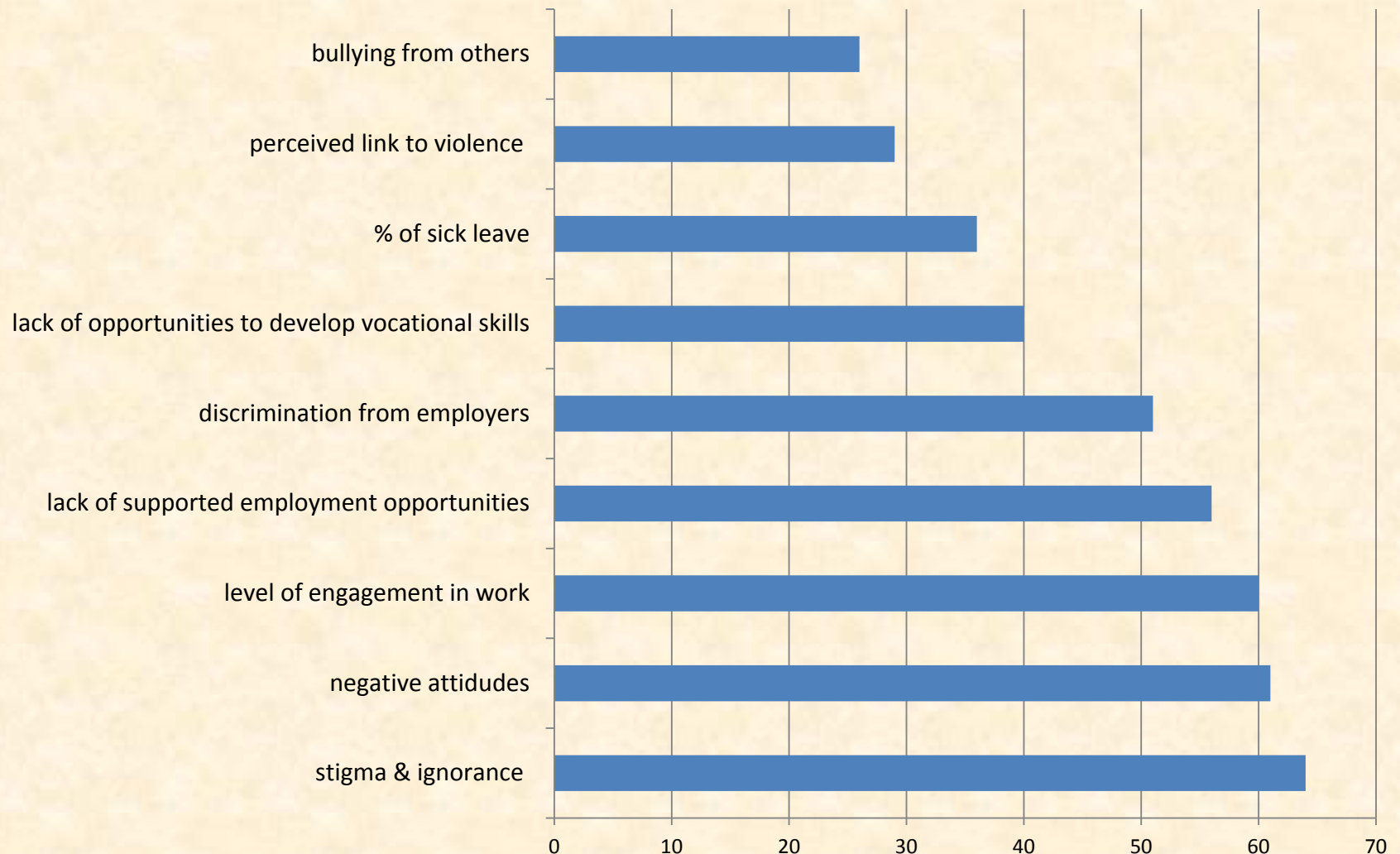
# What category best defines your client group?



# Which employability/work category defines your client group?



# In your opinion (OT), what are the barriers experienced by the service user group?



# What barriers do you experience in assisting service users to achieve their vocational goals?

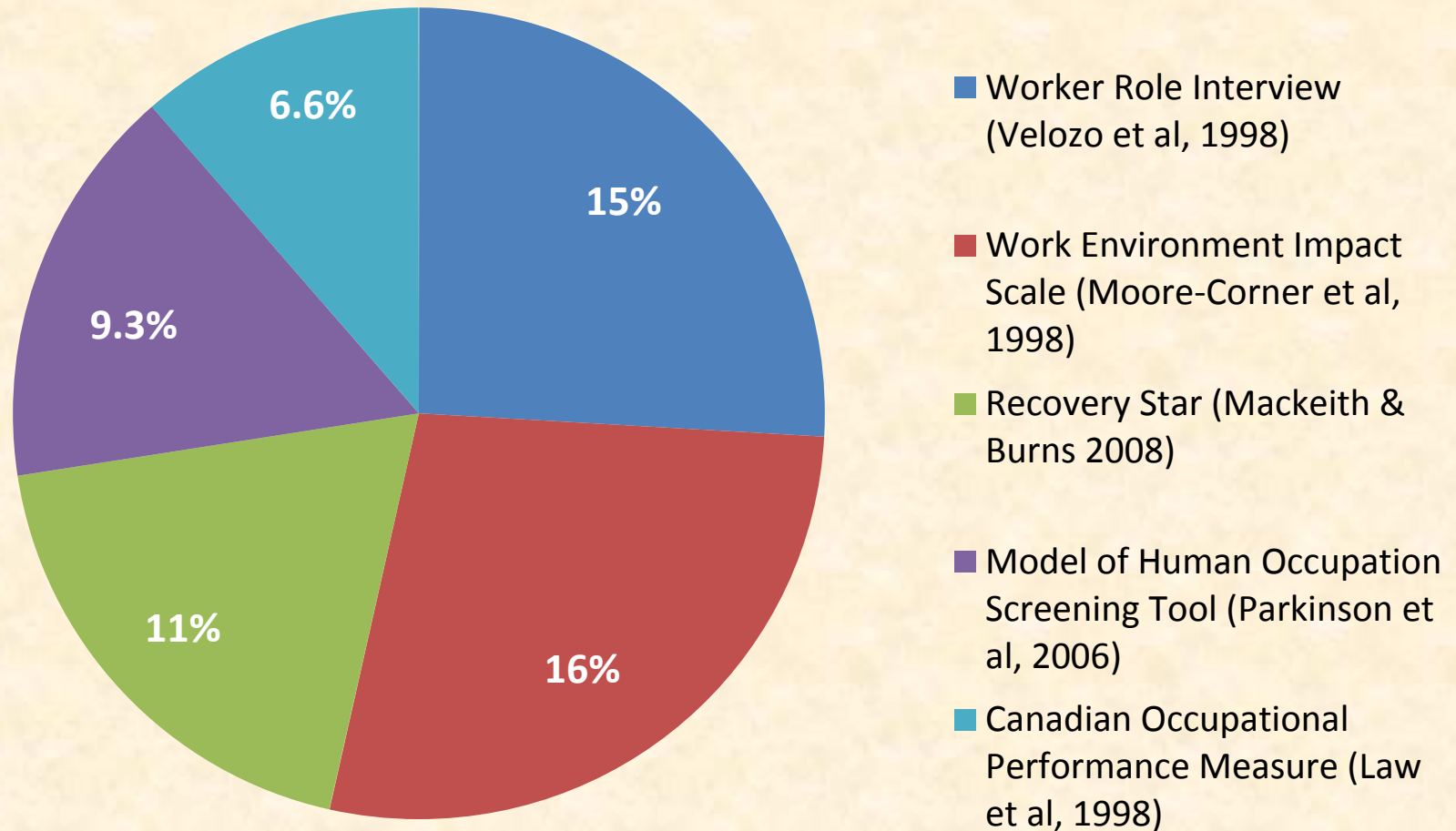
Answer Options	Response Percent, n=number
There is limited resources available within my service to enable me to develop or maintain my vocational rehabilitation skills	32%, n=24
I do not have enough time to address vocational issues with my client group.	29%, n=22
There are few employability services available to my clients in my locality	29%, n=22
The employability services in my area are not able to offer adequate support for my client group	26%, n=20

# What barriers do you experience in assisting service users to achieve their vocational goals?

Answer Options	Response Percent, n=number
Employability outcomes were not considered to be a priority for service users within the service	24%, n=18
I am unclear about welfare rights and legislation	16%, n=12
I do not have good awareness of the employability services available within my locality which can help my client move towards employment or other vocational goals	12%, n=9
I am unclear about issues around disclosure of criminal convictions	11%, n=8
I am unclear about issues around disclosure of mental health	9.3%, n=7



# Summary of outcome measures used in VR



# Recommendations



1. Need for **professional training in VR** at undergraduate & postgraduate level.
2. Recognition regarding the **crucial role of occupational therapist** for enabling the successful transition into work.
3. **Collaborative working to improve inter-agency working** across employment specialists and **increase opportunities for employment** for people with severe and enduring mental illness.
4. Need to address the **complex barriers** for people with severe and enduring mental illness accessing work.
5. Need for the development of **Independent Placement Support** within the UK.
6. The development of **vocational focussed outcome measures**.

# Limitations



- The survey was disseminated to four hundred and forty potential participants were members of the COT SS mental health and work. Only 75 (17%) of respondents started the survey.
- The sample obtained is not fully representative of the population of occupational therapists working in VR within the UK consequently affecting the richness of the results (Bowling 2009; Robinson 2011).

# Final thoughts...



- ‘The maintenance of work ability (a person’s capacity to do the work tasks they are required to do) and return to ‘good’ work should be a key clinical outcome for all care pathways formulated for people of working age’ (The Council for Work and Health 2016, p.10).
- AHP mental health leads should work with key stakeholders to ensure the provision of alternative occupational, leisure and educational activities for service users whose vocational goals are not employment-focused’ (Scottish Government 2010).
- Key focus upon promoting recovery and optimising an individual’s true potential in occupational skill and work capacity.

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