



**2013**  
**NATIONAL PROFESSIONALISM SURVEY**  
*Workplace Report*

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# **Introduction**

## Project Purpose

Each year, York College of Pennsylvania's Center for Professional Excellence conducts a nationwide study on the state of professionalism in the workplace. This is the fourth year for the study.

The focus is on employers' experiences with recent college graduates. Persons who are responsible for hiring decisions involving new college graduates are surveyed on a variety of topics related to the professionalism exhibited by these employees.

Findings from the study are used to track changes in the state of workplace professionalism. They are also used to direct the content of professionalism seminars that the Center for Professional Excellence sponsors every year for York College's students, faculty, and administrators.

In addition to human resource professionals, this year a national sample of college professors was surveyed on the state of professionalism among upper classmen. The findings from that survey are presented in a separate report.

## Report Format

The first three sections of the report constitute an executive summary. These sections are Introduction, Research Design, and Major Findings.

The sections following the executive summary present the detailed findings. These findings are reported in both graphic and narrative forms.

# Research Design

<b>Sample</b>	<p>A nationwide random sample of 401 human resource professionals was surveyed. Detailed information on the composition of the sample is presented in the section of the report titled Profile of Respondents.</p> <p>The maximum margin of error associated with the sample is +/- 4.9% at the 95% confidence level. This means the answers that would be obtained from the population of all employment decision-makers would be within this range of the samples' answers 95% of the time.</p>
<b>Data Collection</b>	<p>The data was collected using an online survey. An e-mail introduced the study and contained a link to the survey.</p>
<b>Research Instrument</b>	<p>The survey was developed using input from the Center for Professional Excellence's Advisory Board and previous year's research.</p> <p>Prior to being administered, the survey was reviewed and approved by the Advisory Board and the Center for Professional Excellence.</p>
<b>Data Analysis</b>	<p>Statistical analyses were conducted to discover any significant differences involving respondent characteristics and answers to the survey. Any differences are reported in the text.</p> <p>Where possible, comparisons are made to previous years. These are shown in the graphs.</p> <p>Open-ended responses were coded into descriptive categories for presentation purposes. The report shows the predominant categories. The data tables should be consulted for a complete review of all the coded responses.</p>

# Major Findings

## Annual Survey of Professionalism

This is the fourth annual survey of professionalism in the workplace conducted by York College of Pennsylvania's Center for Professional Excellence. Each year, persons responsible for hiring new college graduates are surveyed to assess the state of professionalism in the workplace.

## State of Professionalism

In this year's study, there are six dashboard measures of professionalism in the workplace. Two new ones have been added in reaction to previous studies' findings.

After four years of research, there are enough data points for the original measures to start looking for trends. An improvement in professionalism would be indicated by a decrease in each of the percentages. As seen below, there are no clear trends indicative of improvement. At the best, the state of professionalism is remaining the same.

Indicator	2009	2010	2012	2013
% feeling less than 50% of new employees exhibit professionalism in their first year	38.9%	38.2%	40.8%	48.6%
% reporting a decrease in the % of new employees demonstrating professionalism	33.2%	23.7%	33.1%	35.9%
% reporting an increase in the % of new employees exhibiting a sense of entitlement	60.9%	55.3%	50.5%	52.9%
% reporting an increase in IT etiquette problems	39.1%	38.4%	51.8%	50.1%
% reporting an increase in number of unfocused employees	NA	NA	NA	37.9%
% reporting worsening of work ethic	NA	NA	NA	44.6%



## Benefits of a Recession

If there is a silver lining to the poor economic times experienced over the past several years, it is there is a larger pool of job applicants from which to choose. Over half of the respondents (52.5%) who feel there has been an increase in the professionalism of new college graduates point to more competition for the job openings that exist. As a result, they are able to be more discriminating in who they hire.

## Entitlement

A reoccurring theme in the research is the sense of entitlement which new hires demonstrate. When asked why they believe professionalism has decreased, over a fourth of the respondents (27.5%) feeling this way refer to a sense of entitlement. Reinforcing this, over half of all respondents (52.9%) say there has been an increase in the percentage of new employees who exhibit a sense of entitlement.

The way parents raised their children is most often seen as the reason for new employees feeling entitled (34.5%). Probably related to this, another 16.2% of the respondents believe new employees exhibiting a sense of entitlement have been coddled.

## IT Abuses

Abuses of information technology continue to plague the workplace. Half of the respondents (50.1%) report that IT abuses have increased over the past five years. It is estimated that, on the average, half of all new college graduate employees (48.8%) abuse IT in some way.

The types of IT abuse encountered in the workplace are numerous. The common types are:

- Text messaging at inappropriate times (74.3%)
- Inappropriate use of the Internet (65.7%)
- Excessive twittering/use of Facebook (65.2%)
- Excessive cell phone usage for personal calls (59.7%)
- Text messaging/e-mailing when direct conversation is more appropriate (56.1%).

## Unfocused

New, this year, is a measure of changes in employees being unfocused. This was added in reaction to findings in previous studies. A total of 37.9% of the respondents have observed an increase in unfocused employees. Only 7.5% report that the percentage of unfocused employees has decreased. The remaining 54.6% believe the number has remained the same over the past five years.

Most respondents (78.7%) indicate that the reason for employees being unfocused is they allow technology to interrupt their focus. The next most frequently cited reason is employees are attempting to multi-task (38.0%).

## Work Ethic

Another measure added this year is changes in the work ethic of new employees over the past five years. On this measure, 44.6% of the respondents indicate the work ethic has gotten worse. The same percentage (44.6%) feels the work ethic has remained the same. The other 10.7% see it as having improved.

The reasons for perceiving a worsening of the work ethic are numerous. The most commonly cited reasons are:

- Too casual of an attitude towards work (86.6%)
- Not being self-driven (71.5%)
- Lack of ownership of one's work (69.3%)
- Not understanding what hard work is (65.9%)
- Willingness to do work that is less than professional quality (59.8%).

Similar answers are given by respondents describing the generational differences that exist in employees' professionalism.

## **Qualities of the Professional**

One of the reasons for conducting the initial research on professionalism was to make certain the Center for Professional Excellence had a solid understanding of how professionalism is defined in the workplace. This would ensure that efforts by the Center to address the professionalism of students would emphasize the appropriate qualities.

After four years of research, these qualities are clearly understood. While the percentage of respondents naming each quality varies from year to year, the qualities that are consistently mentioned remain constant. To be a professional in the workplace, an employee should demonstrate these qualities:

- Work until a task is completed competently
- Interpersonal skills including civility
- Appropriate appearance
- Punctuality and regular attendance
- Communication skills
- Honesty
- Focused/attentive.

Few respondents mention expertise in one's field. Most likely, this is taken as a given quality of a professional.

An extension of defining the qualities of a professional is describing the qualities associated with being unprofessional. Here too, the findings have been consistent. The unprofessional employee is characterized most often by these qualities:

- Inappropriate appearance
- Poor work ethic
- Unfocused
- Apathetic
- Sense of entitlement
- Disrespectful and rude
- Lack of time management.

## Generational Differences and Professionalism

With 83.3% of the respondents observing generational differences in the workplace, it may seem appropriate that definitions of professionalism should adapt to better reflect the behaviors and attitudes of younger employees. That is not what most respondents want to see occur. Instead, the most common belief is new employees should change to meet the expectations of their employers. Nearly three-fourths of the respondents (74.1%) either agree or strongly agree with this sentiment.

## How Not to Get Hired

The best way to not get hired for a job is to exhibit one of the following qualities related to appearance:

- Poor personal hygiene (90.8%)
- Inappropriate attire (74.8%)
- Facial piercings other than ears (74.3%)
- Inappropriate footwear (70.8%)
- Visible tattoos (60.6%)
- Unnatural hair color (39.2%).

The importance of proper appearance cannot be emphasized enough. When rating the impact of attire and appearance on likelihood of being hired, 80.6% of the respondents give a rating of either 4 or 5, great impact.

The influence of attire and appearance goes beyond the hiring process. It has an impact on the perception of one's competence. Using the same rating scale, respondents rated the impact of appearance on their perception of an employee's ability to perform their job requirements. Over half (56.9%) assign a rating of 4 or 5, great impact.

Beyond inappropriate appearance, there are other things the candidate can do to ensure not being hired. The most frequently mentioned are:

## How Not to Get Hired (continued)

- Not being prepared for the interview (30.1%)
- Being tardy for the interview (29.3%)
- Having poor verbal skills and grammar (21.3%)
- Not acting interested (18.8%)
- Being over confident (17.1%)
- Giving a poor presentation of one's self (16.6%).

## Best Ways to Get Fired

According to the most respondents (57.9%), the best way to get dismissed from a job is to have poor attendance and a lack of punctuality. The second most frequently mentioned way to lose a job is poor quality work (45.5%). A significant increase occurred in the percentage of respondents citing poor quality work, going from 25.7% in 2012 to 45.5% this year. This is worth watching in the future to see if this continues.

## Age Differences

There are a few areas where the age of the respondent makes a difference in the perceptions of professionalism. This is quite likely a reflection of generational differences.

- Younger respondents are less likely to see text messaging and the use of e-mail when direct conversation would be more appropriate as a problem. Being part of a generation that would rather text someone than talk to them, this should not be surprising.
- There is a correlation between age and naming multi-tasking as a reason for not being focused. As age decreases, the percentage of respondents pointing to multi-tasking as a negative also decreases. This is a generation who believes that it is possible to multi-task effectively.
- Those under 35 are less likely than older respondents to agree that there are generational differences in the persons who exhibit professionalism on the job. As a result, they are more likely to think that definitions of professionalism should change to reflect the attitudes and behaviors of younger employees.

## Observations – How to Succeed on the Job with Professionalism

With the state of professionalism in the workplace not improving, job candidates understanding professionalism will have a significant advantage over those who do not. The demonstration of the qualities of professionalism will give the candidate an edge in getting hired. Once hired, professionalism on the job will help distinguish the new employee from other recent hires.

The qualities that characterize the professional are straightforward. The challenge is many of the behaviors and attitudes that epitomize being unprofessional are a part of our culture and, in some cases, daily lives. An argument that could be made is standards of professionalism should change with time to reflect these cultural values and behaviors. There is evidence that younger respondents view professionalism somewhat differently than older ones. However, today's job applicants do not have the luxury of waiting for the older respondents, who find professionalism lacking in new employees, to retire.

Based on the research findings from the past four years, here is the advice that will differentiate applicants from one another.

- **Do not demonstrate a sense of entitlement**

Comments are made by respondents that job applicants feel they have paid their dues by graduating from college. Students have the right to feel joyous about graduating from college. It is an accomplishment about which one should be proud. However, students would be wise to refer to the event as commencement rather than graduation. The undergraduate degree is only a start. It is a prerequisite for eligibility for many of today's jobs. The degree does not entitle the recipient to anything.

When sharing the research findings, a discussion inevitably occurs on what factors have led to this sense of entitlement. Respondents in the surveys point to parents, privileged childhoods, the political climate, and our culture as being responsible for the sense of entitlement. The education system should be added to this list. As one example, students have learned that they can receive acceptable grades without necessarily putting in the effort that should be required to those grades. Anyone who has given students the opportunity to get extra credit to improve a

**Observations (continued)** grade has contributed to a sense that one can receive a reward without putting in the effort.

Whatever the culprits are that contributed to this sense of entitlement, being aware of it and not demonstrating it will reward the job applicant. An attitude that cannot fail is “no one owes you anything.”

- **Control your on-the-job use of technology**

One of the best things a new employee can do is lock away their cell phone and disable access to the Internet when on the job. Abuse of technology has become common in the office. Other studies have found that persons feel lost without their cell phones. This research has discovered situations in which job applicants either have their cell phones on or have actually used their cell phones during an interview. The sad fact is some of these persons probably do not understand what is wrong with this.

It is time for employees to wean themselves from the addiction of constantly having to be in contact with others via technology. Twittering or checking Facebook are activities that do not belong on the job.

With job related activities, when you are sending an e-mail or text, ask yourself if a direct conversation with the person would not be more appropriate. The convenience of technology can prompt us to use it when other means of communication would be better or more effective.

An additional benefit of disciplining oneself in the use of technology is becoming more focused. Over a third of the respondents observed that there has been an increase in new employees who are unfocused. The number one cause of a lack of focus is identified by respondents as allowing technology to interrupt one's activities. Remember that the ability to multi-task effectively is a myth.

## Observations (continued)

- **Be committed to doing quality work**

Close to half of the respondents feel the work ethic in new employees has gotten worse. When asked why they believe this, respondents reply that employees take a casual attitude towards their work and are willing to do work that is less than professional quality.

The education system can take some credit for this. Giving students extensions on deadlines for assignments and not taking the time and effort to demand quality work promotes the mistaken belief that this is acceptable behavior. When students receive good grades for mediocre work, they can develop an inflated image of their abilities and talents. It is too easy to transfer these learned behaviors to the job.

- **Learn what is means to be professional**

The qualities associated with being professional and unprofessional are now clearly understood. The new employee should never assume that there is not something new to learn about themselves. Of course, the perception of oneself can be distorted by subjectivity. This is why being open to criticism and feedback is a professional quality that should be emphasized.

It cannot be assumed that the employer will offer the new employee professionalism training. Less than half of the companies in the 2012 survey reported that their company has programs on professionalism. Until more colleges take on the task of exposing students to professionalism, it is incumbent upon the individual to learn how to behave professionally.

- **Remember appearance matters**

It is important to recognize that what was acceptable or the norm in college does not necessarily apply to the workplace. Dressing appropriately for an interview is a given. Poor personal hygiene will negatively impact one's chances of being hired. Visible tattoos will limit the odds of getting the job.

The impact of appearance goes beyond affecting the likelihood of getting hired. Respondents also indicate that it has an impact on the perception of one's competence on the job.



## **Observations (continued)**

- **Be prepared for the interview**

The final piece of advice to maximize one's probability of being hired is to be prepared for the interview. Know what works and does not work during an interview. Learn about the company prior to the interview. During the interview, be engaging by asking questions and showing interest. Avoid asking about benefits and opportunities for advancement. Those topics should be addressed later. Have a realistic assessment of your current abilities and talents.

Lastly, be certain to turn off your cell phone when in walk in the door.

# **State of Professionalism**

**Percentage of New College Graduates Exhibiting Professionalism**

The average percentage of new college graduates exhibiting professionalism in their first year on the job is 44.8%.

Looking at the findings in more detail, respondents vary widely in their perceptions of new employees' professionalism. At the extremes, 16.8% of the respondents indicate that very few college educated hires are professional compared to 11.6% who believe most exhibit professional qualities.

**Trend Analysis**

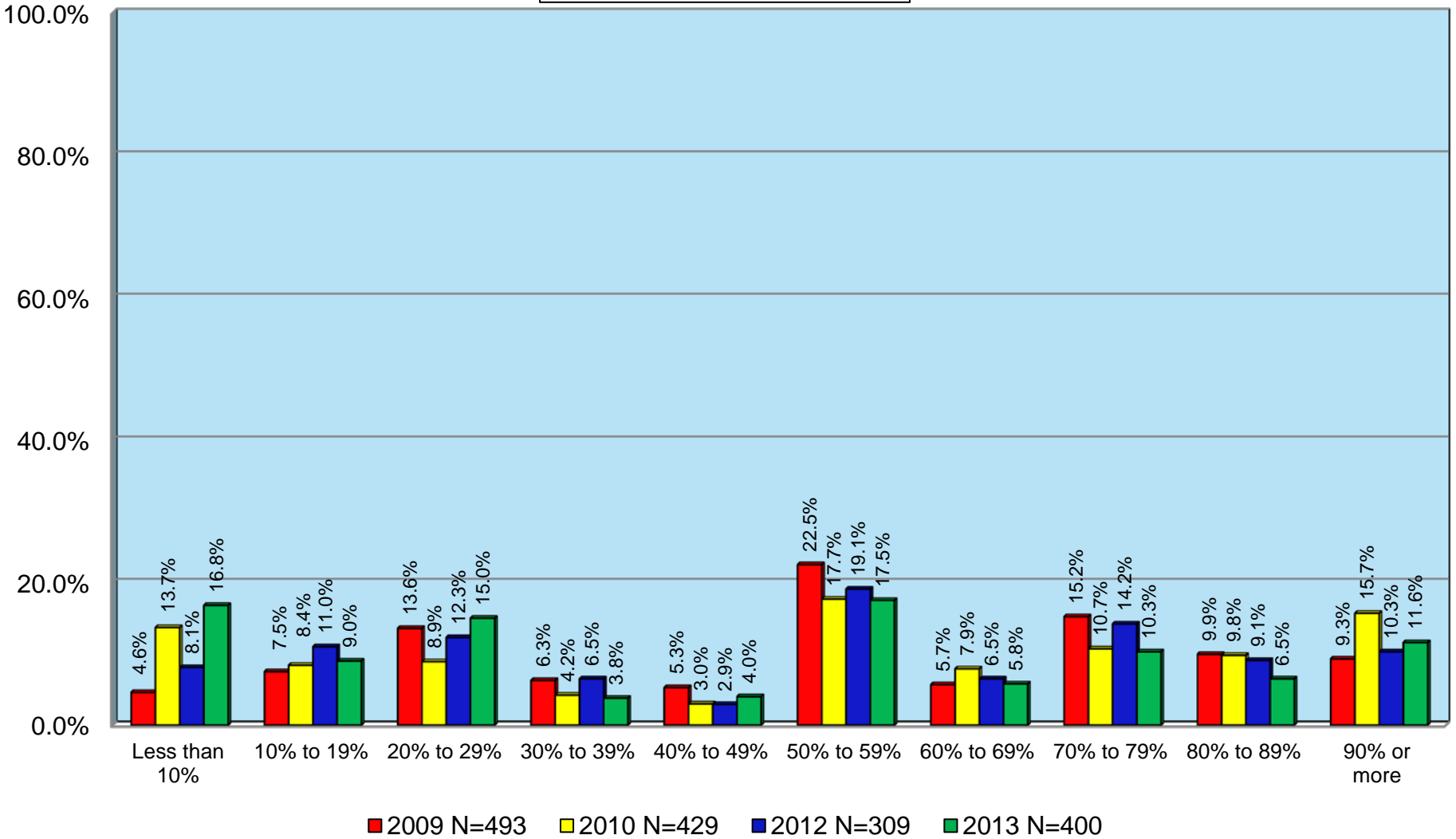
The percentage of new college hires exhibiting professionalism in their first year of work has been relatively steady over the past four years.

**Comparison by Segments**

Respondents from companies with 50 and less employees (18.5%) are clearly more likely than those with 51 to 500 (1.0%) and over 500 (1.8%) employees to feel that none of their first year college graduates are professional.

Percentage of New College Graduates Exhibiting Professionalism

Mean Percentage = 44.8%



**Changes in Exhibiting Professionalism**

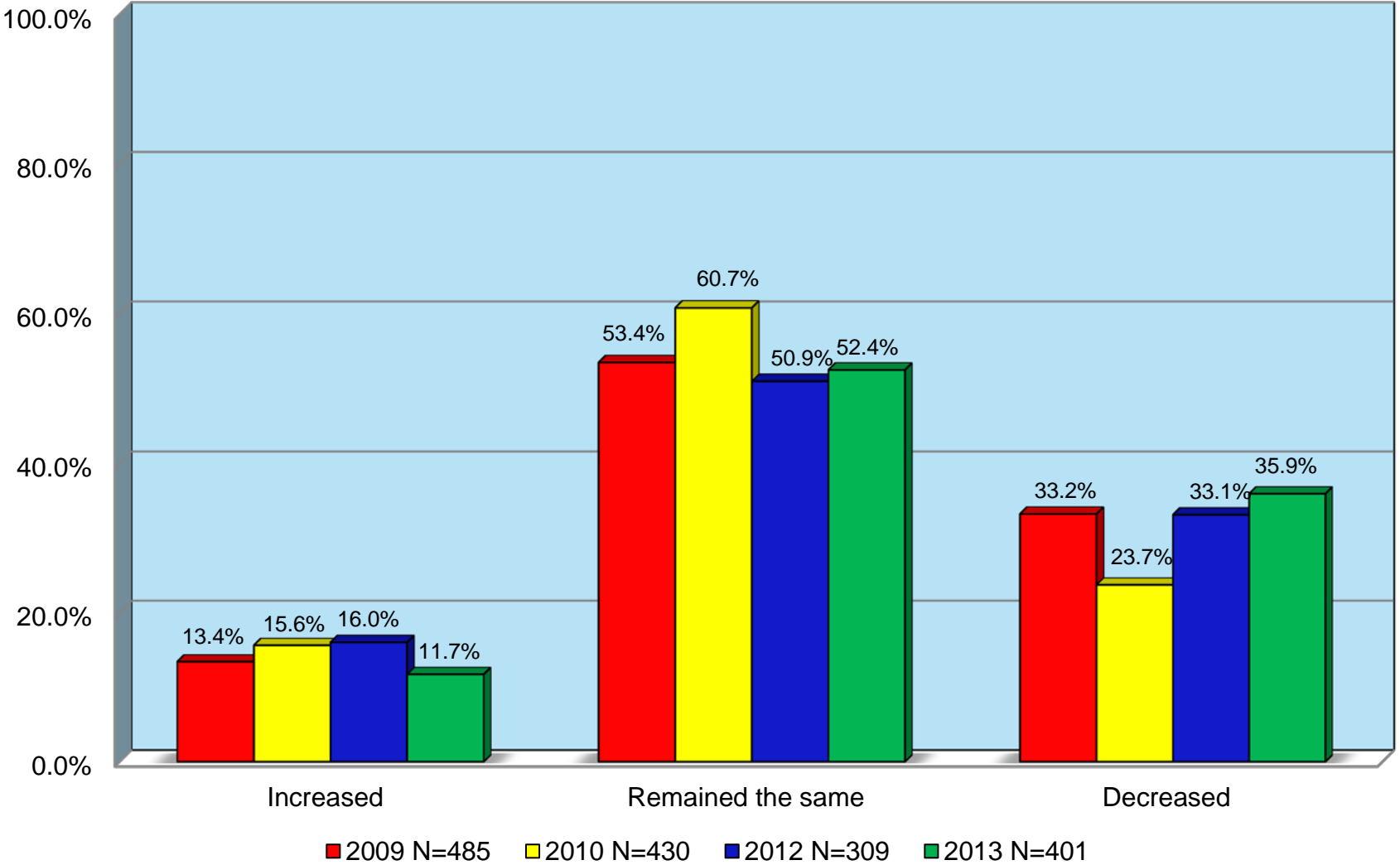
More than a third of the respondents (35.9%) feel the percentage of new college graduates exhibiting professionalism over the past five years has decreased. In contrast, 11.7% indicate that professionalism has increased. This leaves 52.4% who believe it has remained the same over this time period.

**Trend Analysis**

With the exception of 2010, these percentages have remained the same.

# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace

## Changes in Exhibiting Professionalism



**Reasons for Increases in Professionalism**

The most common reason cited for an increase in professionalism is more competition due to fewer jobs being available (52.5%). The same was found last year. This is one positive outcome of the economic recession. With more persons looking for work, companies have a larger pool of applicants from which to hire.

**Reasons for Decreases in Professionalism**

Over a fourth of the respondents (27.5%) point to a sense of entitlement as the reason for a decrease in the percentage of new employees exhibiting professionalism in their first year of work. This is followed by the belief that schools are not adequately preparing students for the work world (16.7%), a lack of motivation and focus (14.5%), and a change in cultural values (13.0%).

**Trend Analysis**

Reasons given for increases and decreases in professionalism parallel those seen last year.

Reasons for Changes in Professionalism

Reasons for Increases in Professionalism	
More competition due to fewer jobs	52.5%
More awareness in academia	10.0%
Better education in schools	7.5%
Students more professional and focused	7.5%
Increased awareness	7.5%
	N=40

Reasons for Decreases in Professionalism	
Sense of entitlement	27.5%
Schools inadequately prepare students/decrease standards	16.7%
Lack of motivation/focus	14.5%
Change in culture/values	13.0%
Decreased maturity/independence	10.9%
Lack of work ethic	8.7%
Lack of social skills/respect	5.8%
Lack of experience/training/fewer internships	5.1%
	N=138



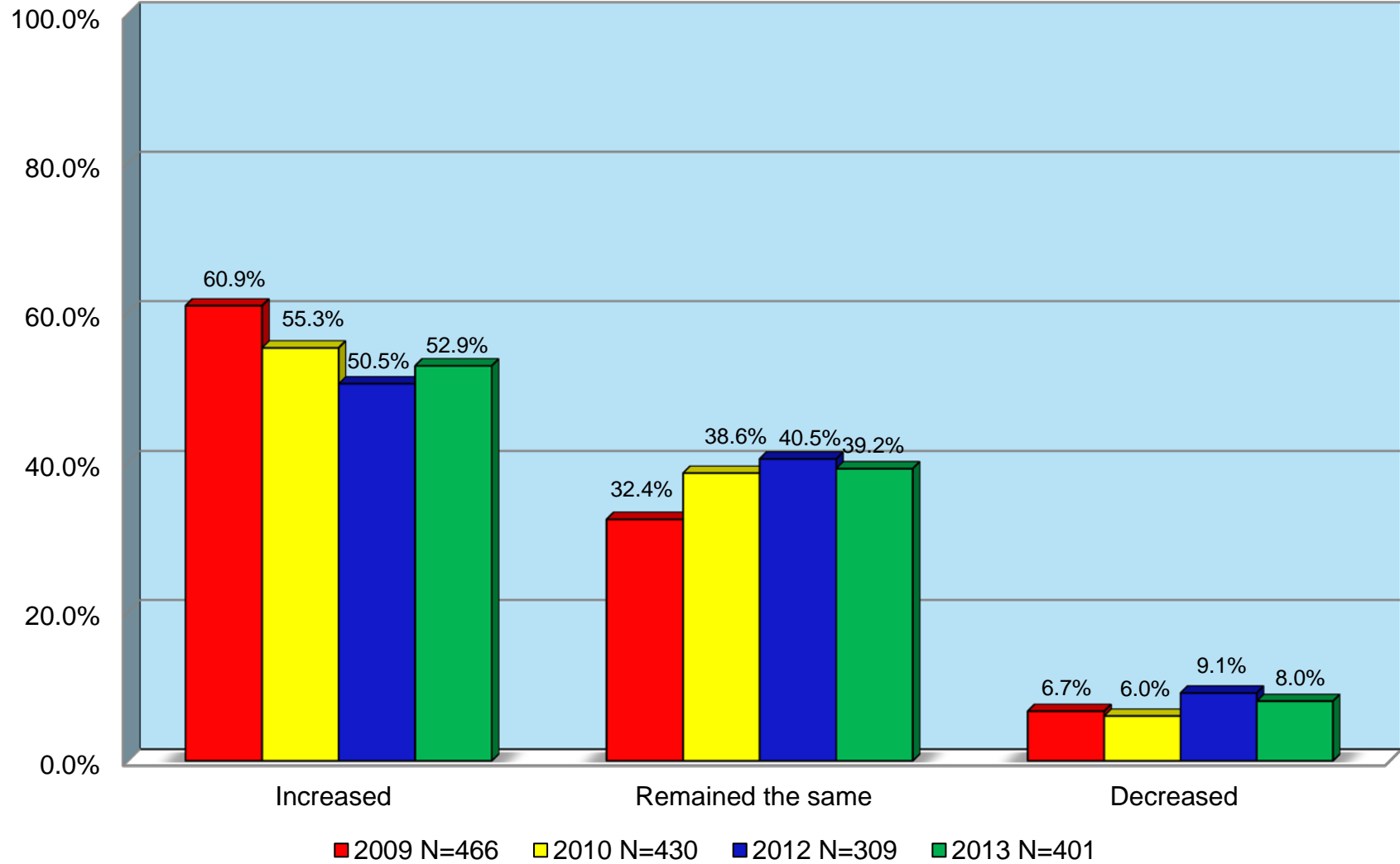
## **Changes in Sense of Entitlement**

Comments on entitlement as a reason for the decline in professionalism foreshadowed a question on changes seen in a sense of entitlement. The question asked about the sense of entitlement exhibited by first year college educated employees over the past five years. Entitlement was defined as expecting rewards without putting in the work or effort to merit the rewards.

Over half of the respondents (52.9%) feel a sense of entitlement has increased during the past five years. Only 8.0% believe it has decreased. This leaves 39.2% stating it has remained the same over this time period.

## **Trend Analysis**

For the last three studies, these percentages have been similar.



**Factors Contributing to Sense of Entitlement**

Respondents who see an increase in the sense of entitlement most often point to the way parents have raised their children as the factor responsible for this (34.5%). Related to this, 16.2% believe these employees have been coddled.

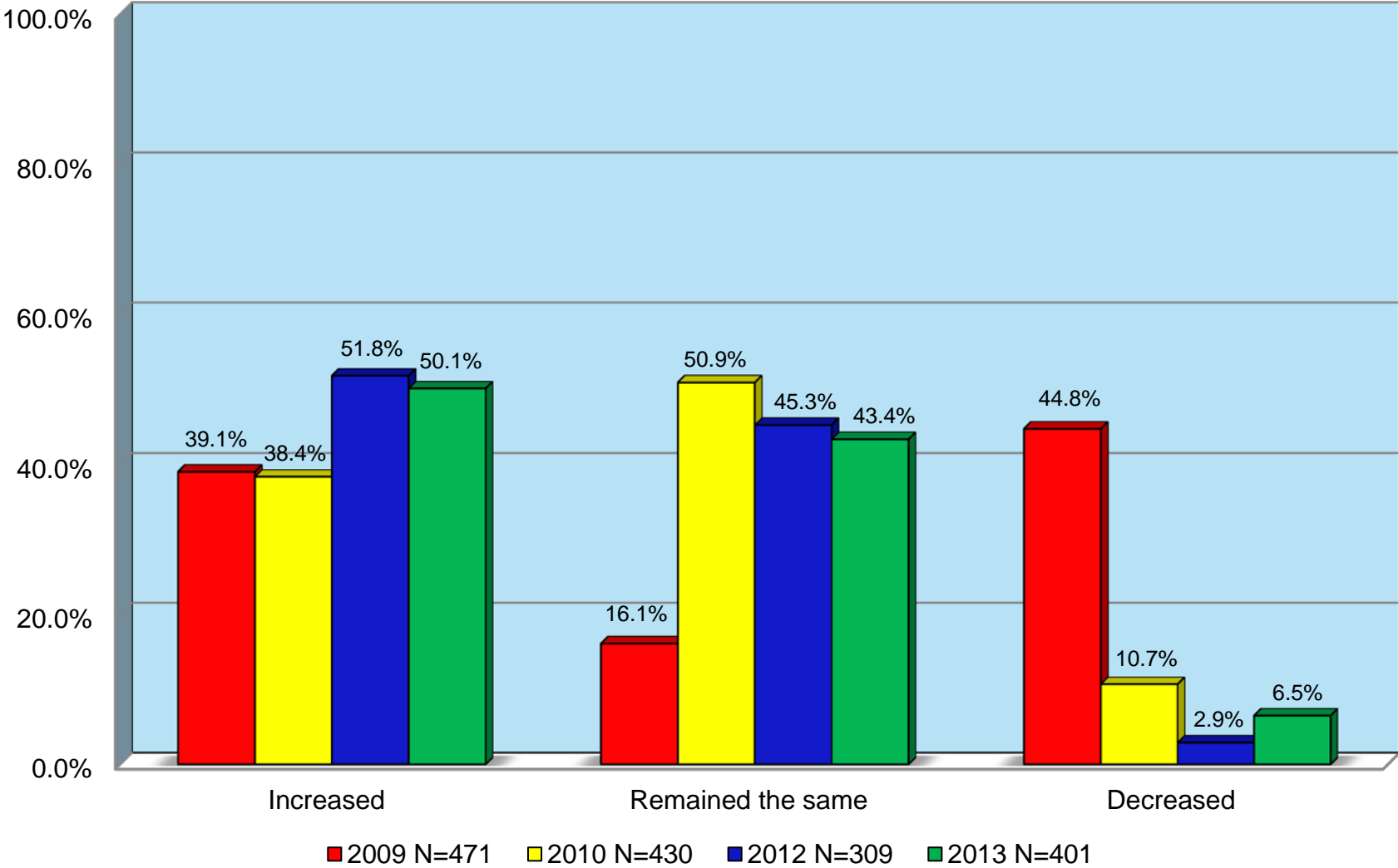
Most Common Reasons for Sense of Entitlement	
Upbringing by parents	34.5%
Have been coddled /privileged	16.2%
Need for instant gratification/immediate reward	9.6%
Feel paid dues simply by graduating	7.1%
Government/political climate	6.6%
American culture	6.1%
Lack of work ethic	4.1%
	N=197

## **Changes in IT Etiquette/Abuses**

Half of the respondents (50.1%) indicate that problems with IT abuses or etiquette among new employees have increased over the last five years. Few respondents (6.5%) believe these types of problems have decreased during this time period.

## **Trend Analysis**

From 2010 to 2012, there was a notable increase in the percentage of respondents reporting more problems with IT abuses. This increase has been sustained this year.



**Percentage of New College Graduates Engaging in IT Abuses**

A notable percentage of respondents (43.4%) observed that the percentage of new employees abusing technology has remained the same over the past five years. This could be positive or negative.

To better understand what this finding means, a follow-up question asked respondents what percentage of new college graduates exhibit some type of problem related to IT abuses or IT etiquette.

On the average, nearly half of new hires who are college graduates (48.8%) engage in some type of IT abuse. Looking at the graph, it is apparent that respondents vary considerably in their experiences with this problem.

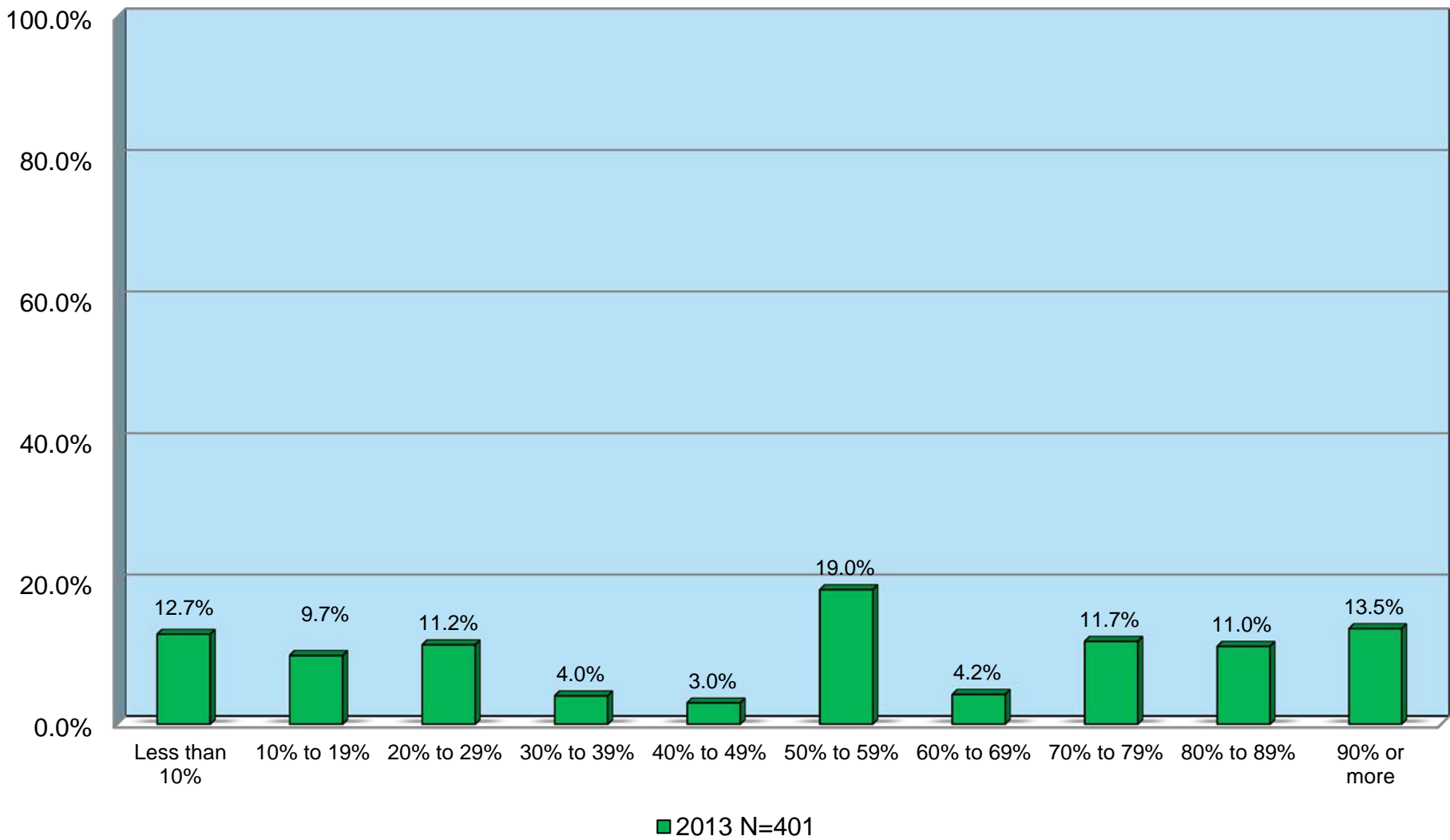
**Comparison by Segments**

It is worth noting that respondents of all ages see about the same percentage of new employees engaging in IT abuses.

	Average % of New Employees Exhibiting IT Abuses
Under 35	49.4%
35-55	50.8%
Over 55	45.9%

Percentage of New College Graduates Engaging in IT Abuses

Mean Percentage = 48.8%





## Problems Being Experienced With IT Etiquette/Abuses

To better understand what abuses are being experienced, respondents were presented a list of possible abuses or etiquette problems and asked what are the major problems they encounter.

As seen in the graph, the problems are numerous. The most common one is text messaging at inappropriate times (74.3%). This is followed by inappropriate use of the Internet (65.7%) and excessive twittering and use of Facebook (65.2%).

This year, text messaging or e-mailing when direct conversation would have been more appropriate was added to the list. Over half of the respondents (56.1%) report that this is a problem they see in the workplace.

## Trend Analysis

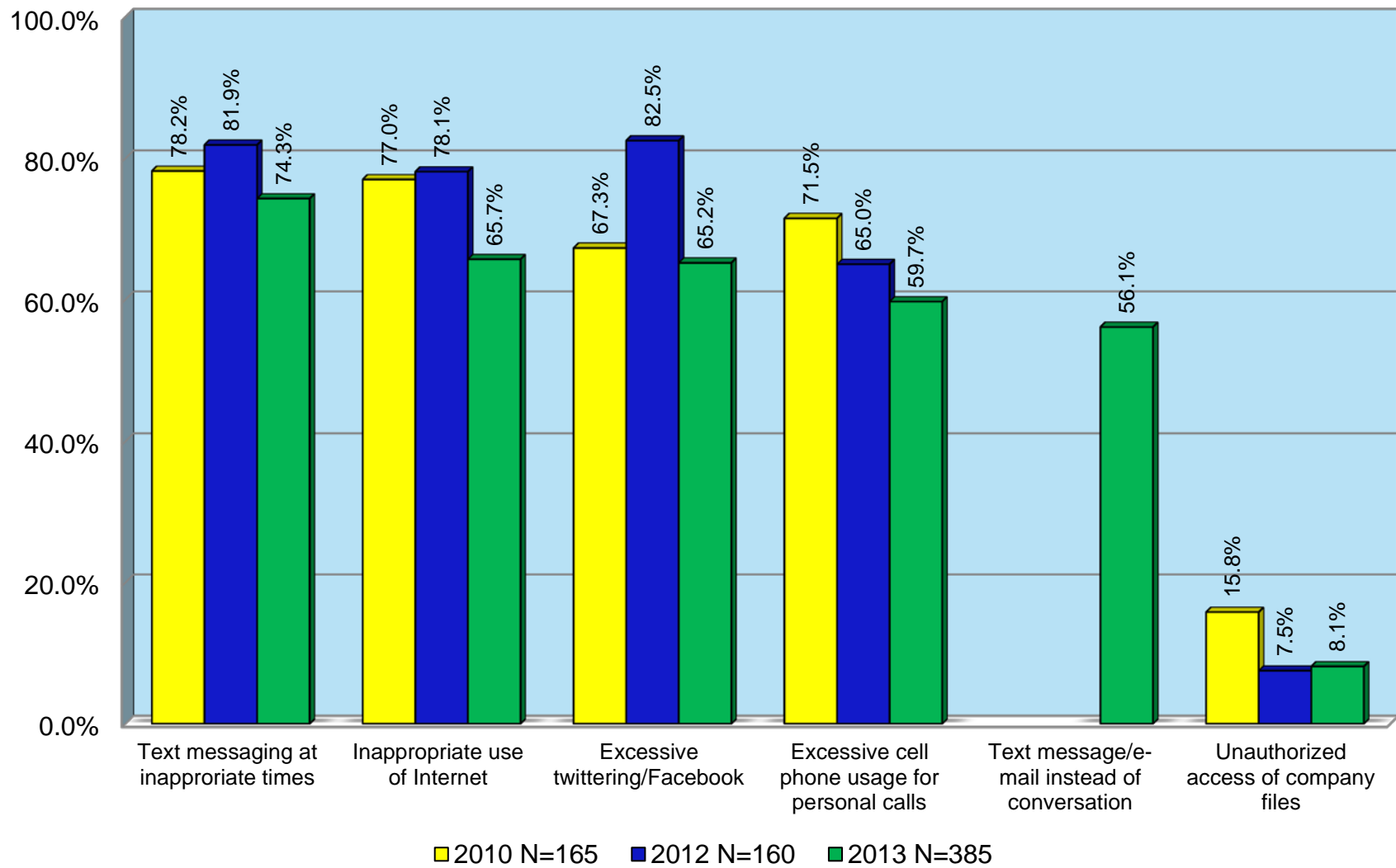
Over the three years that IT problems have been identified, the problems most often experienced have remained the same.

## Comparison by Segments

A correlation exists between age of the respondent and the likelihood of reporting text messaging or e-mail when direct conversation would have been more appropriate. As age increases, the percentage of respondents indicating this is a problem also increases. It is possible that younger respondents do this themselves and, as a result, do not see it as a problem.

While younger respondents may not see texting or e-mails instead of direct conversation as a problem, it should be recalled that they are no less likely than older respondents to report employees are engaging in IT abuses.

Problems Being Experienced With IT Etiquette/Abuses



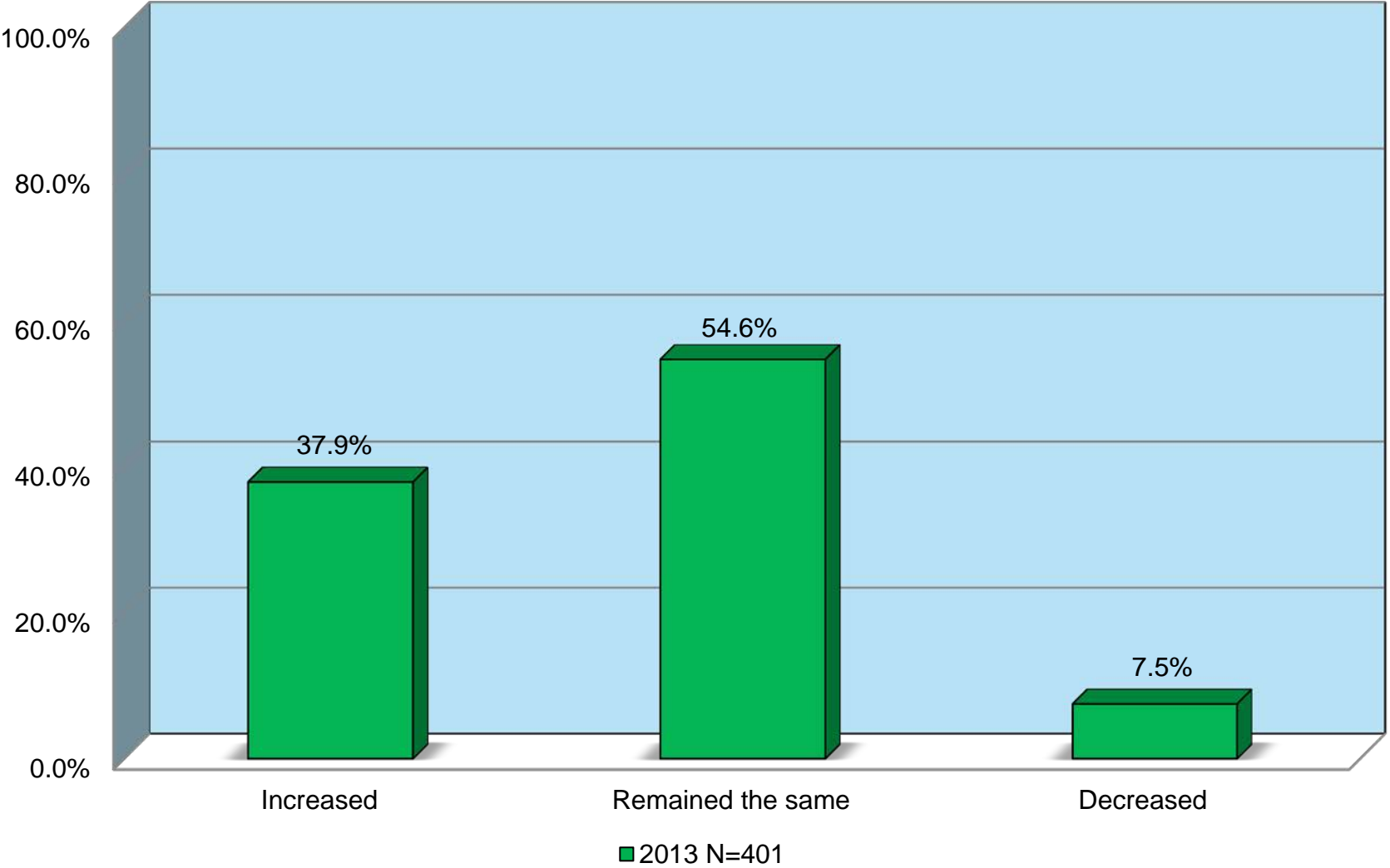
## **Changes in Unfocused New Employees**

In 2010, the percentage of respondents reporting employees being unfocused increased dramatically to 20.5% from 6.1% in 2009. In response to this, respondents in this year's study rated whether the number of new employees who are unfocused decreased, remained the same, or increased over the past five years.

The most notable finding is 37.9% of the respondents report the number of unfocused employees has increased.

# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace

## Changes in Unfocused New Employees



**Reasons for Employees Not Being Focused**

Respondents indicated from a list possible reasons why employees are unfocused. They were also able to state reasons not included on the list.

Clearly, the most common reason for being unfocused is allowing technology to interrupt one’s focus. Over three-fourths of the respondents (78.7%) identified this as a reason. This was followed by employees’ attempts at multi-tasking (38.0%) and interruptions due to increased work loads (20.6%).

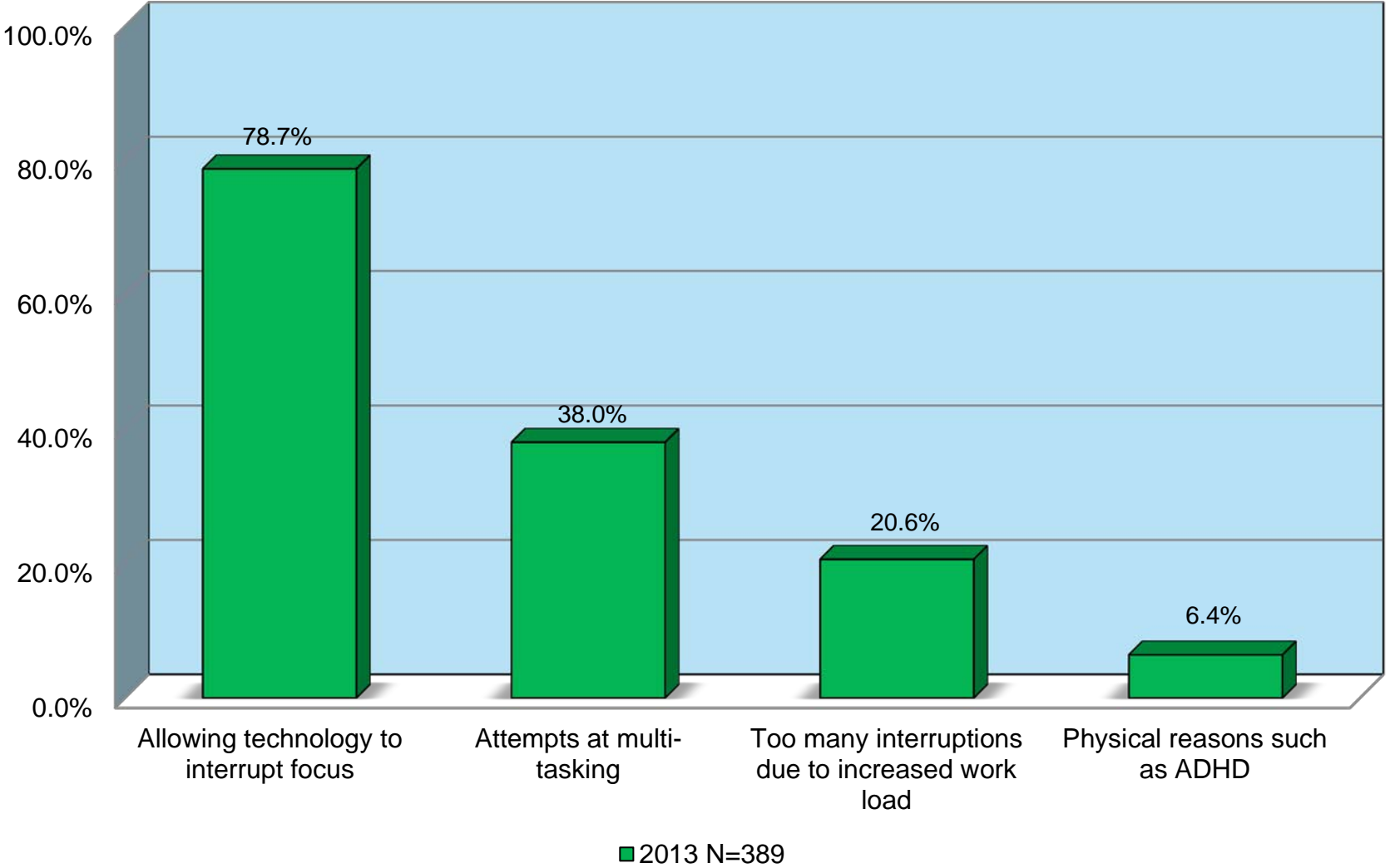
It is worthwhile to note that few respondents (6.4%) point to physical reasons, such as ADHD, as the cause of being unfocused.

**Comparison by Segments**

It appears the younger generation is more likely to feel that effective multi-tasking is possible. As age goes down, the percentage of respondents identifying multi-tasking as a source for being unfocused also decreases.

	<b>% Naming Multi-Tasking</b>
Under 35	31.8%
35-55	35.1%
Over 55	44.1%

Reasons for Employees Not Being Focused

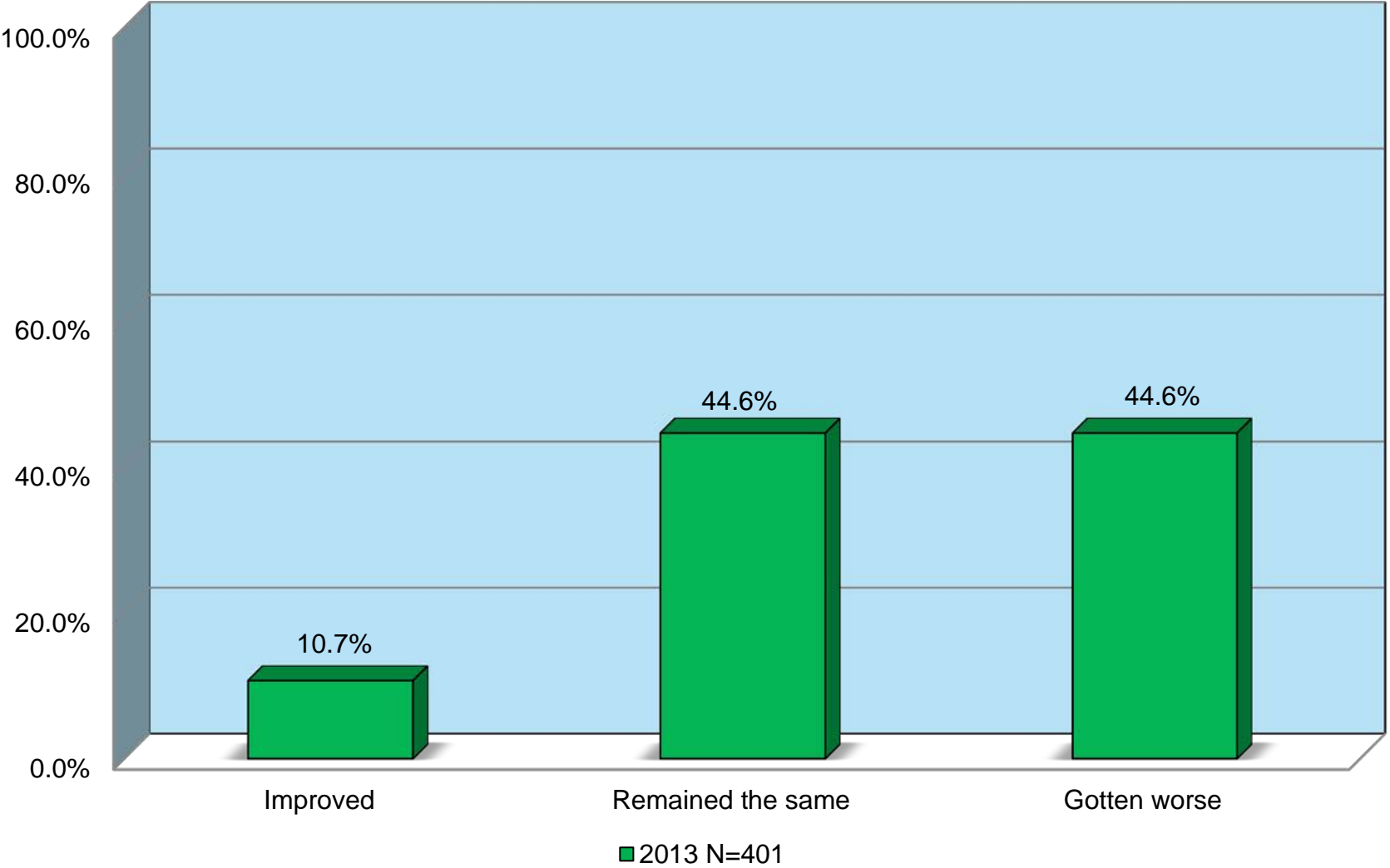


## **Changes in Work Ethic**

Previous research found respondents complaining about the work ethic of new college educated employees. To quantify the extent to which this is experienced as a problem, a new question was added to this year's survey. The question asked respondents if the work ethic of new employees has improved, remained the same, or gotten worse over the past five years.

The most striking finding is the percentage reporting that the work ethic has declined. This percentage is 44.6%. The same percentage feels it has remained the same. This leaves 10.7% who believe the work ethic has improved.

Changes in Work Ethic





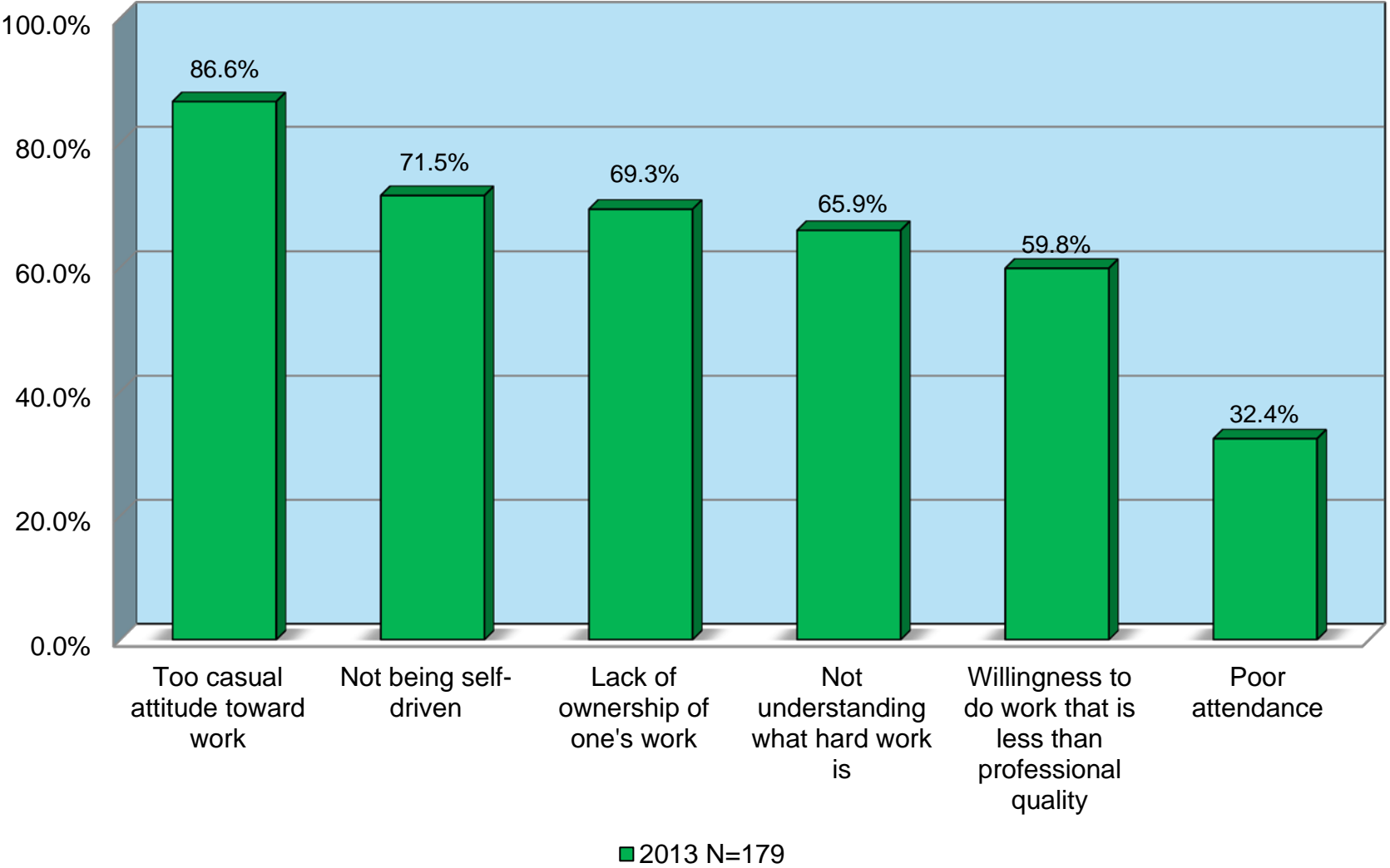
## **Evidence of Decreased Work Ethic**

Respondents who feel the work ethic has gotten worse were asked for evidence that this has occurred. They could either select answers from a list or provide their own response.

Numerous reasons were given for a decline in the work ethic. The most frequently cited reason was having too casual of an attitude towards work (86.6%).

Four other behaviors were commonly identified as evidence of a decrease in the work ethic. These were not being self-driven (71.5%), lack of ownership of one's work (69.3%), not understanding what hard work is (65.9%), and willingness to do work that is less than professional quality (59.8%).

Evidence of Decreased Work Ethic



**Generational Differences in Professionalism**

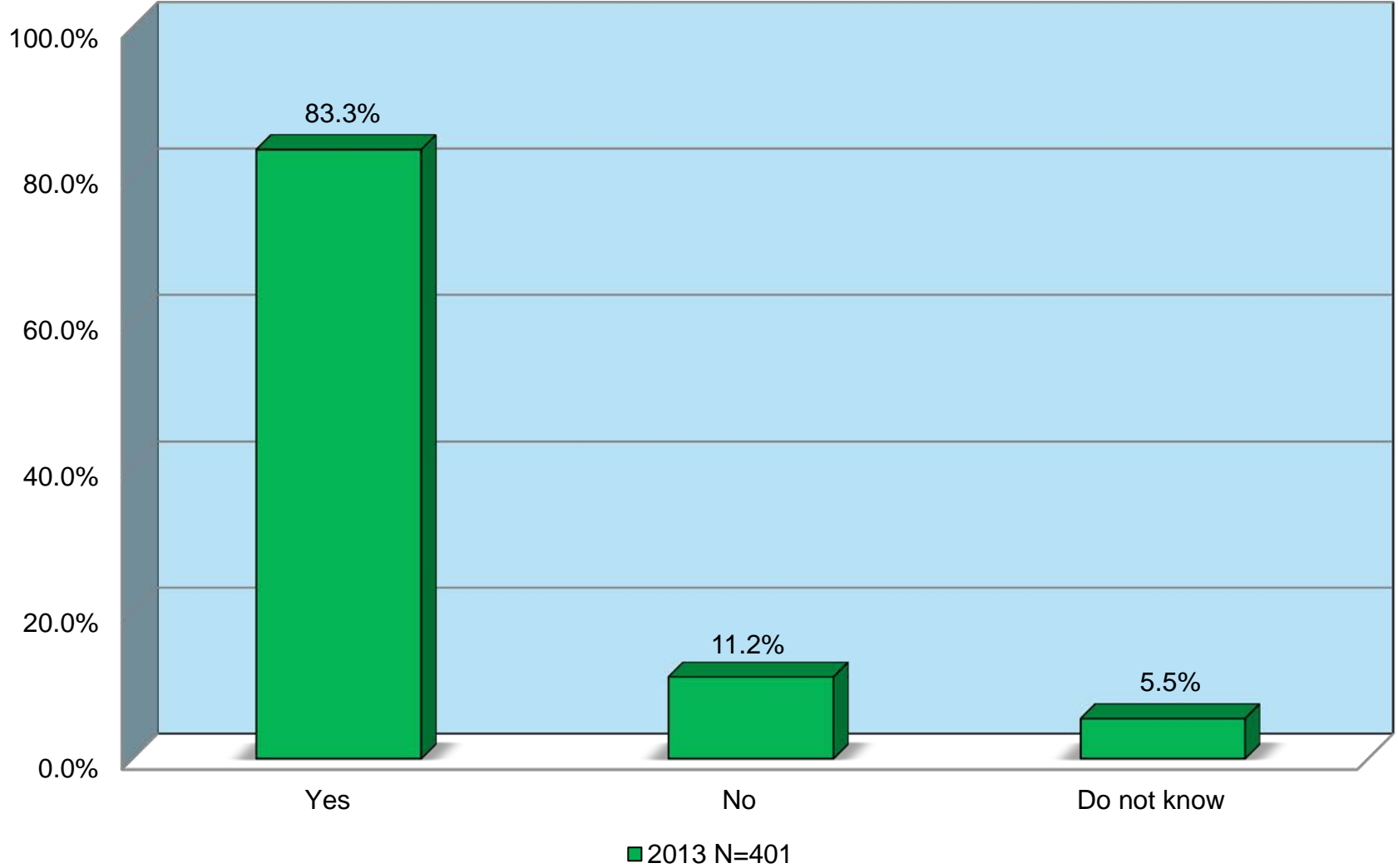
Respondents (83.3%) clearly feel that generations differ in the amount of professionalism exhibited in the workplace. Only 11.2% responded that the differences in professionalism are not generational. This reinforces findings from last year’s study. In that study, respondents repeatedly stated that it is the younger generation that is most lacking in the demonstration of professionalism.

**Comparison by Segments**

As might be expected, respondents under 35 (68.9%) are the least likely to believe there are generational differences in the exhibition of professionalism.

	<b>% Observing Generational Differences in Professionalism</b>
Under 35	68.9%
35-55	83.9%
Over 55	86.3%

Generational Differences in Professionalism



**Generational Differences**

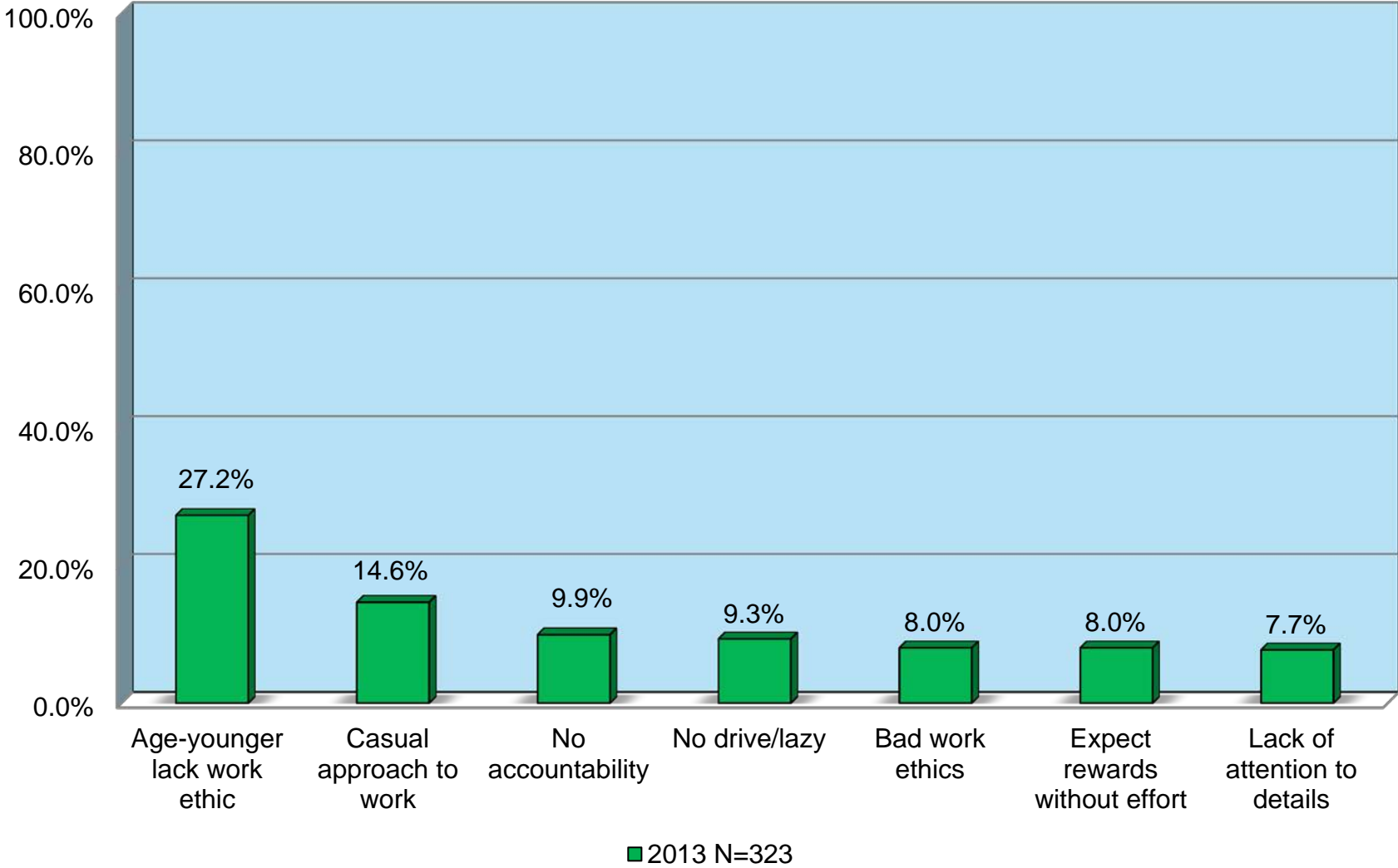
The most frequently cited generational differences are displayed in the graph. The predominant differences are the younger generation lacking a work ethic (27.2%) and too casual of an approach to work compounded by a lack of focus (14.6%).

The table in the Appendix presents all the differences mentioned.

**Reasons Differences Exist**

The most common reasons given for generational differences are shown below. These parallel reasons given for a decrease in professionalism and the rise in a sense of entitlement.

Parenting/upbringing	21.5%
Today's cultural expectations	19.1%
Entitlement attitude	14.9%
Lack of accountability	11.6%
Technology/electronics	10.9%
	N=303



# **Qualities of Professionalism**

## Qualities That Best Describe Professionalism

Each year, respondents name three qualities that they feel best describe an employee who they consider to be professional. This permits a tracking of how professionalism is defined over time.

The graph displays the most commonly cited qualities. The table in the Appendix contains all the qualities that were mentioned.

Displaying a work ethic by working until a task is completed competently (34.0%) is the most commonly mentioned quality. Close behind this is interpersonal skills with 32.1% of the respondents naming this.

As seen in previous years, being knowledgeable in one's field is not among the top qualities (13.3%). It is likely that this quality is considered to be a given component of professionalism.

## Trend Analysis

While the percentage of respondents citing a quality changes from study to study, the same qualities have been named over time.

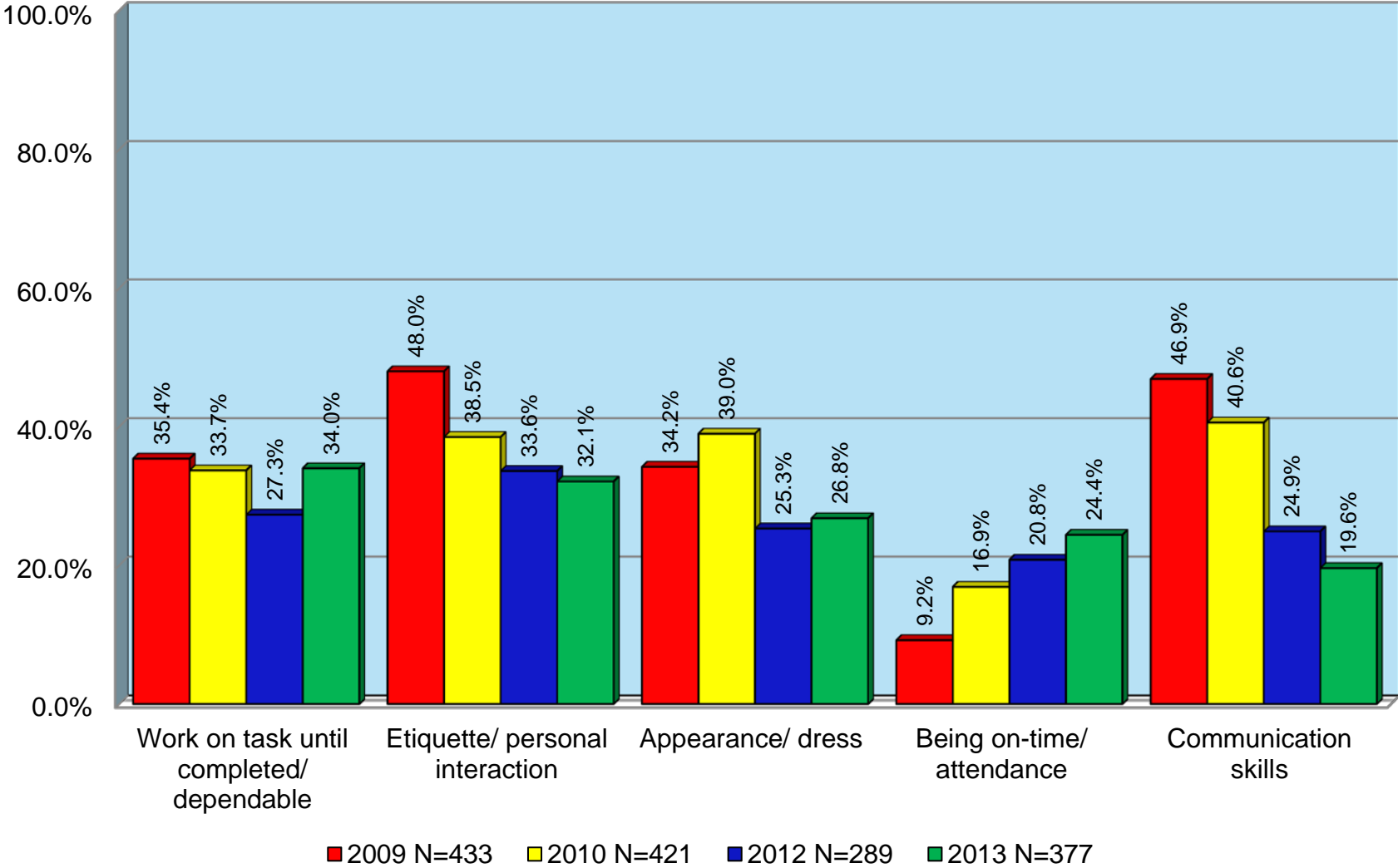
There does appear to be several trends when looking at the past four studies.

The percentage of respondents referring to interpersonal skills and communication skills has declined since 2009. The opposite is found for being on-time and attendance.

Future research will discover if these are, indeed, trends or yearly fluctuations.



Qualities That Best Describe Professionalism



**Qualities That Describe Being Unprofessional**

Similar to professionalism, respondents named three qualities that describe an employee they consider to be unprofessional. The predominant qualities are shown in the graph.

The qualities that most often are associated with being unprofessional are inappropriate appearance/dress (26.5%), a poor work ethic (24.7%), and being unfocused (24.1%).

**Trend Analysis**

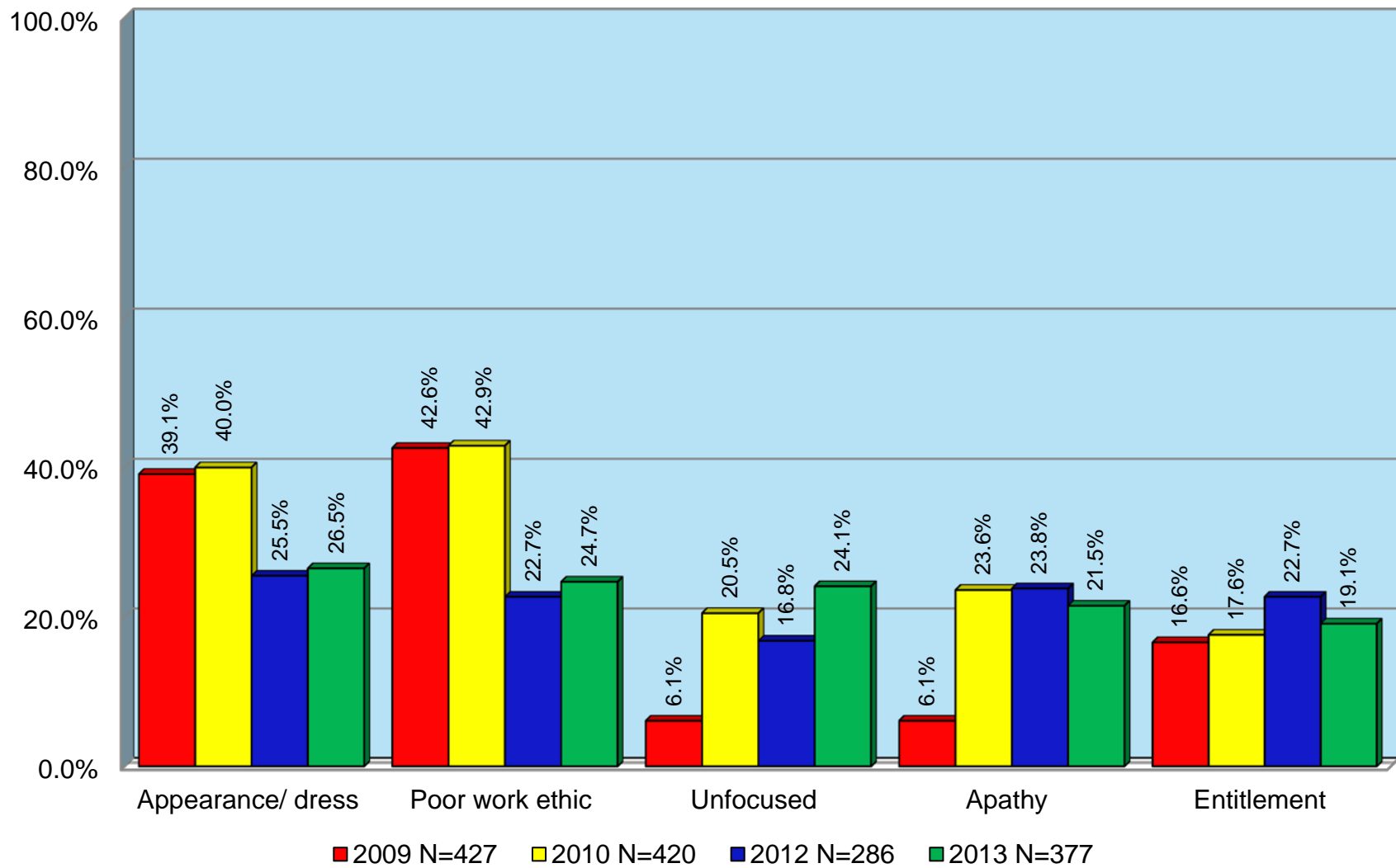
The qualities that define being unprofessional have been fairly constant over the four studies conducted thus far. The most notable changes have been the increases in the percentage of respondents citing unfocused and apathy/lack of commitment since the initial study. These two topics are worthy of more in-depth research to understand what is happening.

**Gaps Between Importance and Prevalence**

Respondents identified what they feel are the largest gaps between the importance of a quality associated with professionalism and the extent to which this quality is found in employees. The largest gaps exist for not understanding professionalism (13.7%) and a lack of taking responsibility for one’s work (13.2%).

Largest Gaps	% Naming
Not understanding professionalism	13.7%
Lack of being responsible for one’s work	13.2%
Sense of entitlement	8.8%
Lack of focus	8.2%
Social interaction skills	7.7%
Communication skills	6.6%
	N=182

Qualities That Describe Being Unprofessional



# **Assessment of Professionalism**

## **Changing Definitions of Professionalism**

With changes in professionalism most often being associated with the younger generation, it is possible that what is considered to be professional should evolve to stay current with the newest generation of employees. To test this, respondents were presented four statements each dealing with some aspect of changing definitions. Respondents indicated the extent to which they disagree or agree with each statement. Ratings ranged from 1, strongly disagree, to 5, strongly agree.

An examination of the mean ratings shows that respondents mainly disagree that definitions of professionalism should change with each generation.

## **Comparison by Segments**

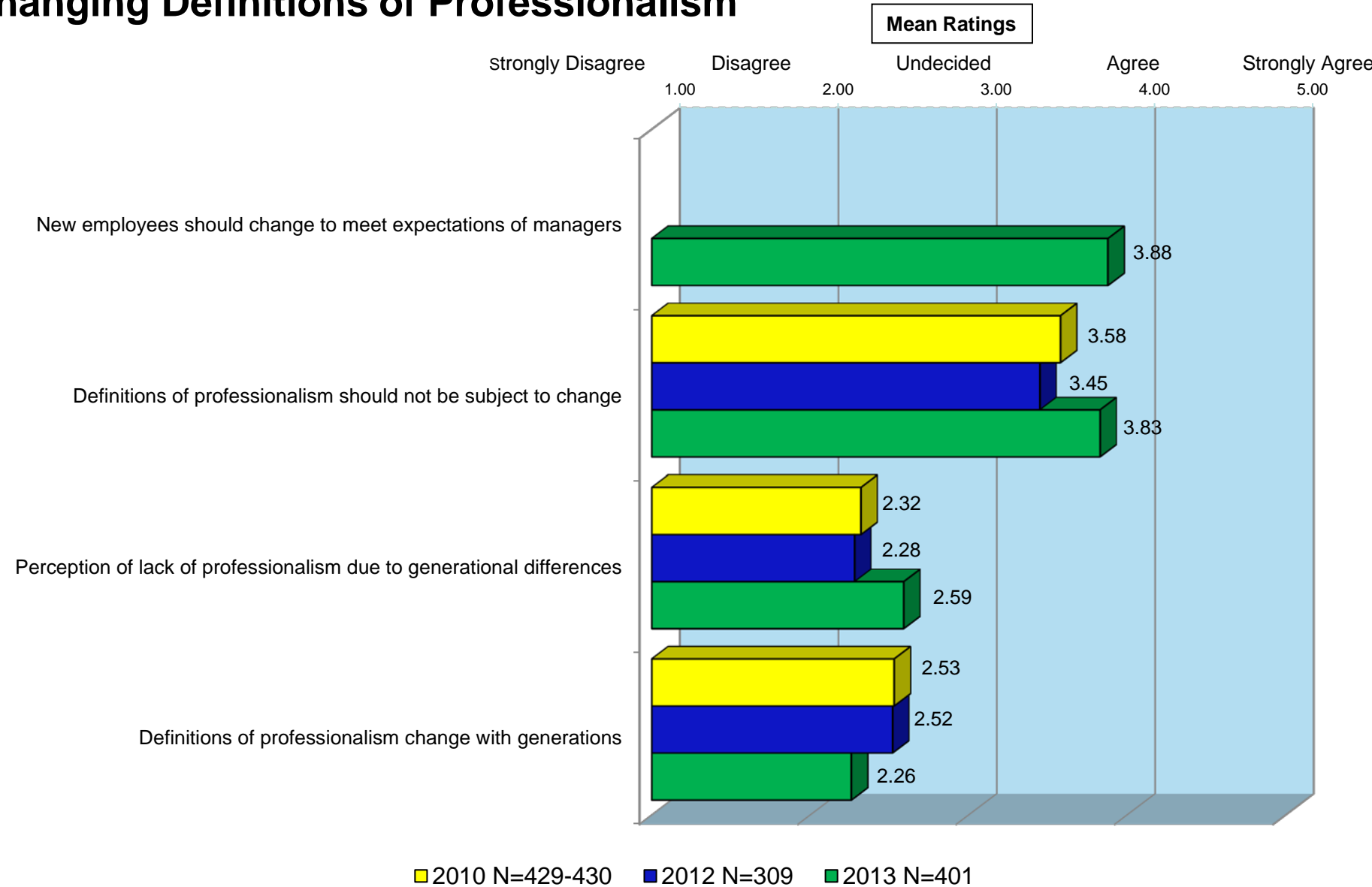
As would be expected, respondents under 35 are more likely than older ones to feel definitions should change to conform to younger generations of employees.

## **Trend Analysis**

There has been general agreement in respondents' ratings of the three statements included in the past three studies. The statement about new employees changing to meet the expectations of their managers was added this year.

# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace Assessment of Professionalism

## Changing Definitions of Professionalism



# **2013 Professionalism in the Workplace      Assessment of Professionalism**

## **Changing Definitions of Professionalism**

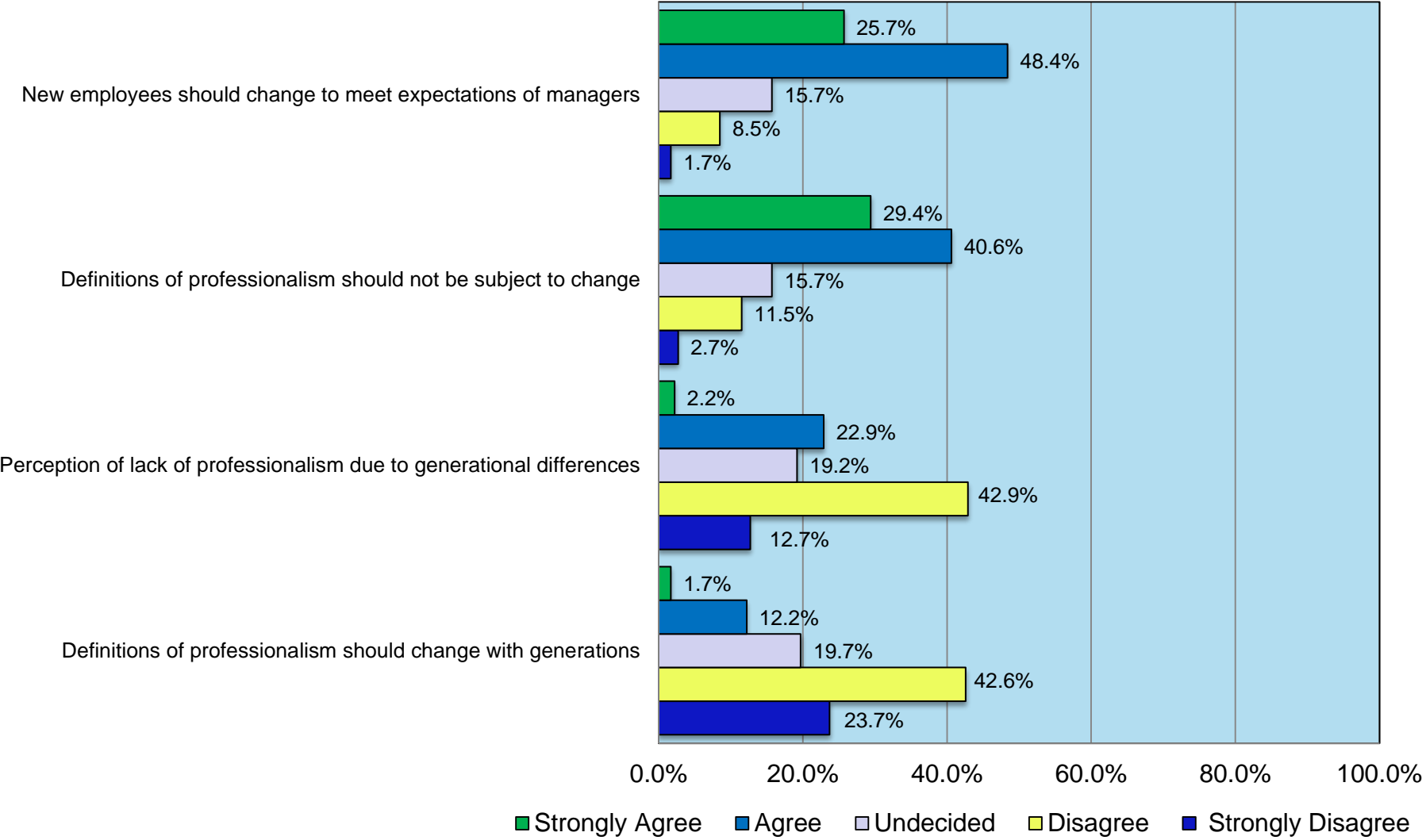
This graph gives perspective to the mean ratings in the previous graph by showing the percentage of respondents assigning each rating.

The statement with which the most respondents agree is “Instead of managers changing to meet the expectations of new employees, it is the new employees who should be changing to meet the expectations of their managers.” Nearly three-fourths of the respondents (74.1%) either agree or strongly agree with this statement.

The statement with which the fewest respondents are in consensus deals with the perception of new college graduates lacking professionalism being due to a generation gap. The argument is older employees have always found younger ones somehow lacking. Over half of the respondents (55.6%) either disagree or strongly disagree with this statement. About a fifth (19.2%) are undecided. The remaining 25.1% agree or strongly agree that this perception is the result of a generation gap.

# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace Assessment of Professionalism

## Changing Definitions of Professionalism





# **2013 Professionalism in the Workplace      Assessment of Professionalism**

## **Negative Impact on Being Hired**

From a list of seven items, respondents indicated which ones have a negative impact on being hired.

The vast majority of respondents (90.8%) report that poor personal hygiene will negatively impact hiring opportunities. Three-fourths point to attire (74.8%) and facial piercings other than ears (74.3%) as having an adverse effect on the prospects of being hired.

## **Trend Analysis**

Looking at the findings from the 2012 and 2013 studies, there is general agreement on what will have a negative effect on the likelihood of being hired. Poor personal hygiene and inappropriate footwear were added to this year's survey in response to findings from last year.

## **Comparison by Segments**

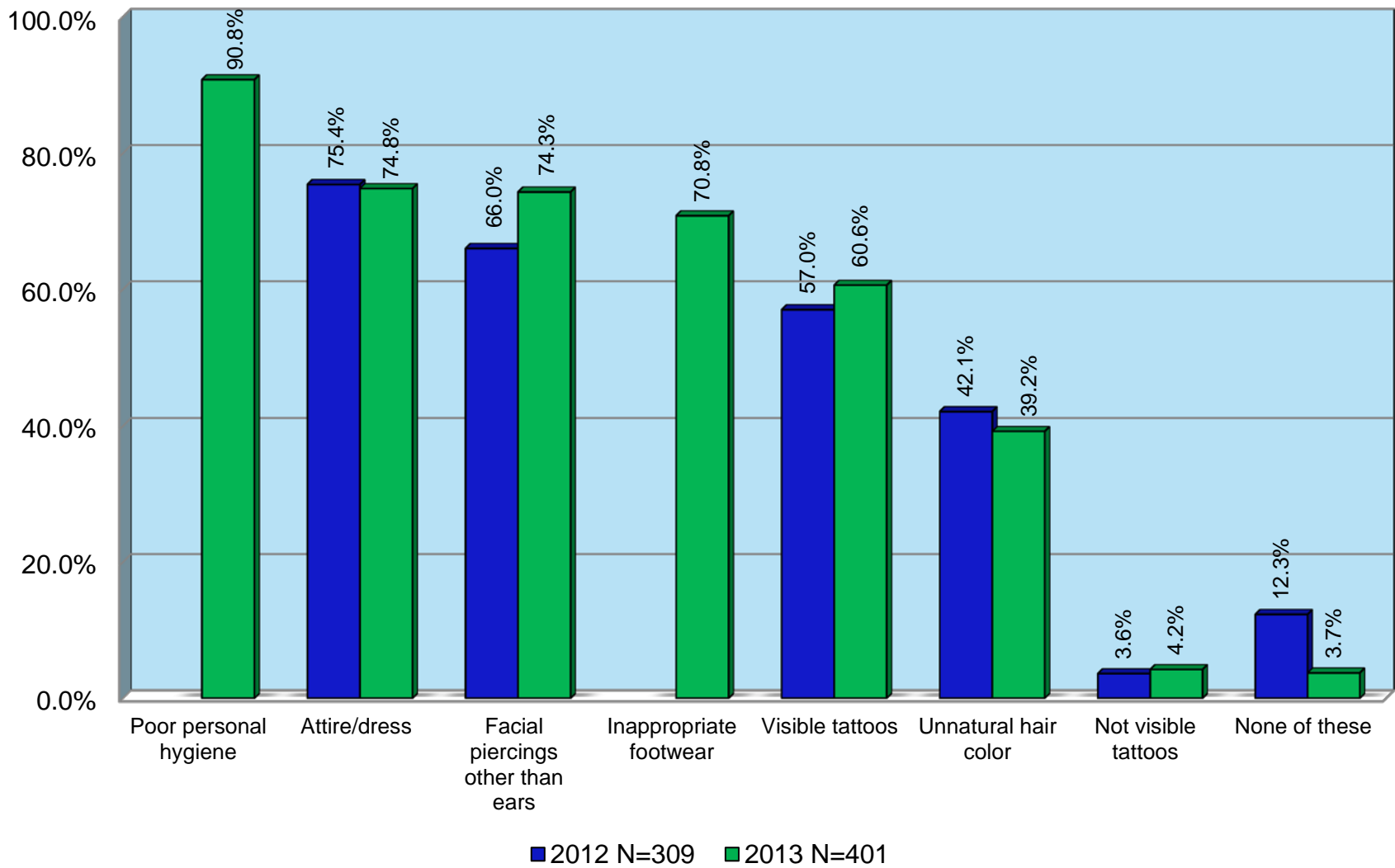
As age of the respondent increases, so does the likelihood of citing facial piercings other than ears and visible and nonvisible tattoos as having a negative impact on hiring. It appears younger respondents are more comfortable with these features than are older ones.

## **Other Factors**

In addition to the list, respondents were able to name other factors that have a negative effect on being hired. Cited most often was one's body language (50.0% out of 62 respondents). The data table should be consulted for a complete review of these other factors.

# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace Assessment of Professionalism

## Negative Impact on Being Hired



# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace      Assessment of Professionalism

## **Impact of Attire/Appearance on Being Hired**

Respondents rated the impact which attire and appearance have on the likelihood of being hired. Possible ratings went from 1, no impact, to 5, great impact.

A total of 80.6% of the respondents give a rating of 4 (39.7%) or 5 (40.9%) indicating that appearance does matter.

## **Trend Analysis**

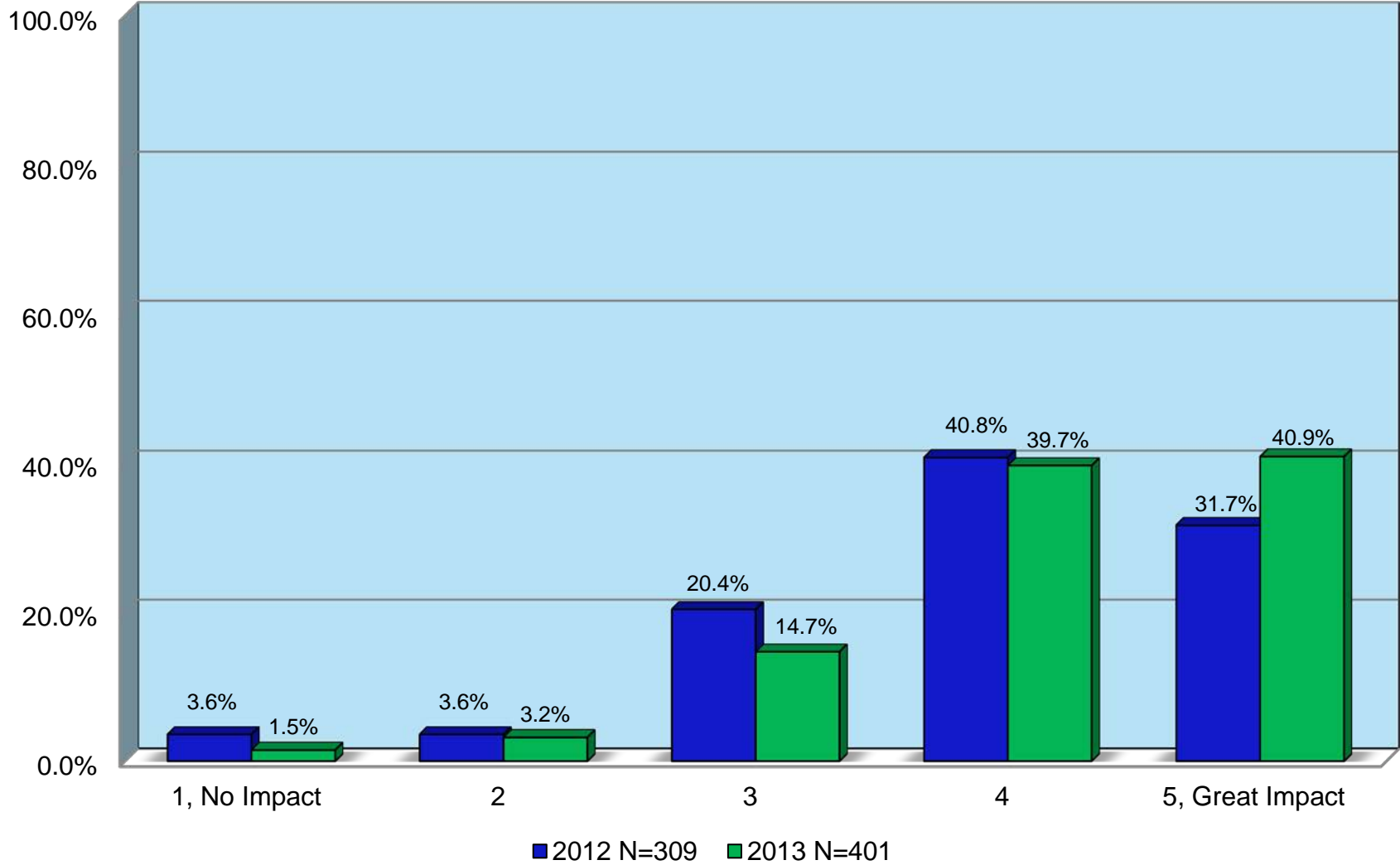
From 2012 to 2013, there has been a notable increase in the ratings of 5, great impact. Future studies will monitor this to see if this increase is sustained.

## **Comparison by Segments**

Consistent with previous findings, there is a correlation between age of respondent and the ratings given to the impact of appearance. As ages increases, so does the perceived impact of appearance.

# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace Assessment of Professionalism

## Impact of Attire/Appearance on Being Hired



# **2013 Professionalism in the Workplace      Assessment of Professionalism**

## **Impact of Attire/Appearance on Perception of Competence**

If appearance can have an impact on hiring prospects, it could also have an effect on the perception of an employee's ability to perform their job requirements. To measure this, the same five point rating scale was used.

While the impact is not as great as it is for being hired, appearance still has an effect on the perception of one's competence. Over half of the respondents (56.9%) assign a rating of 4 (37.7%) or 5 (19.2%).

## **Trend Analysis**

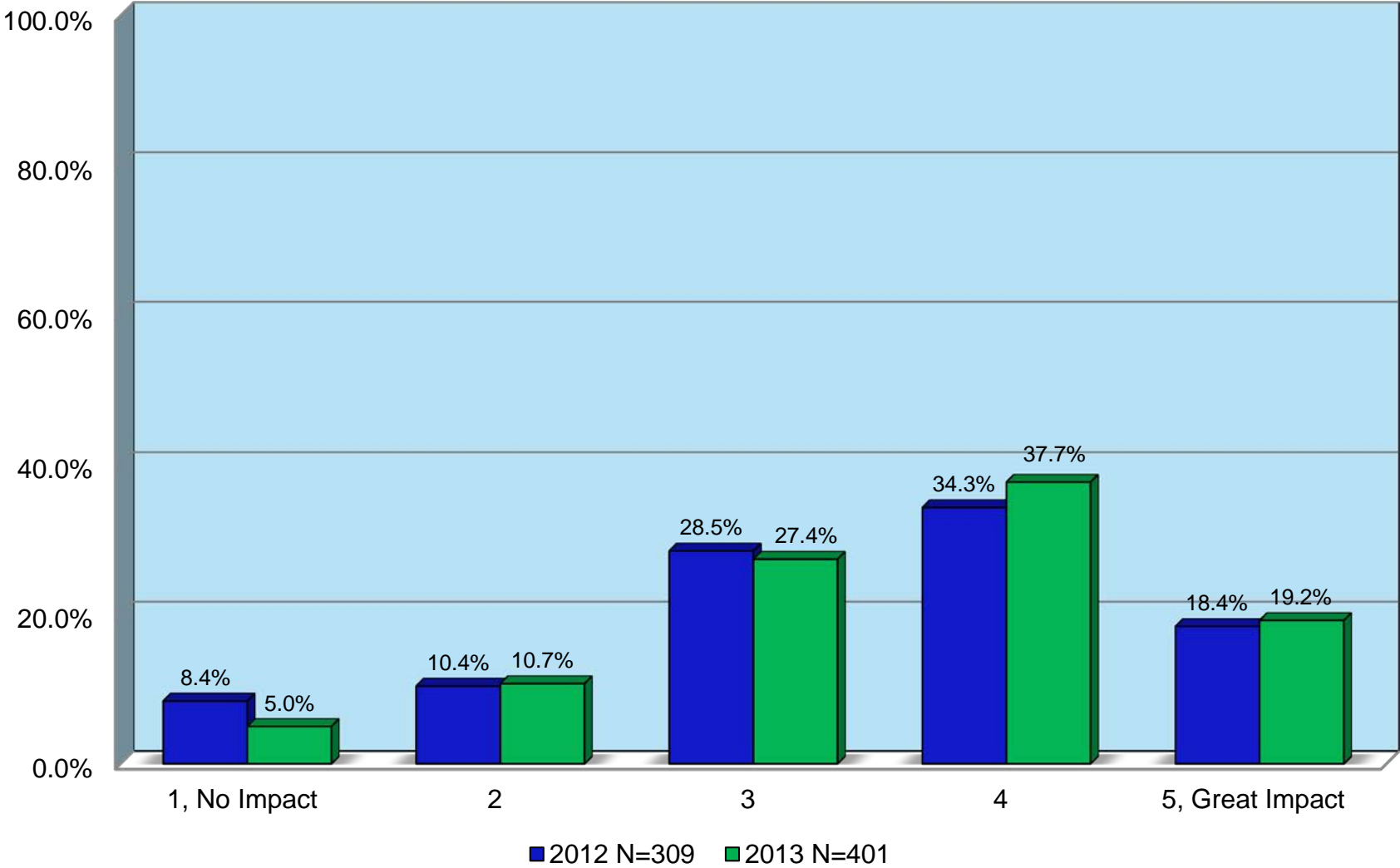
This year's findings are similar to last year's.

## **Comparison By Segments**

Once again, the younger the respondent, the less likely they are to consider appearance to be a detriment to the perception of one's ability.

# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace Assessment of Professionalism

## Impact of Attire/Appearance on Perception of Competence



# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace      Assessment of Professionalism

## **Mistakes During Interview Process**

The most frequently mentioned deadly mistake a candidate can make during an interview is inappropriate attire (44.8%). This reinforces the impact which appearance has on likelihood of being hired.

This is followed by not being prepared for the interview (30.1%) and being late (29.1%).

## **Trend Analysis**

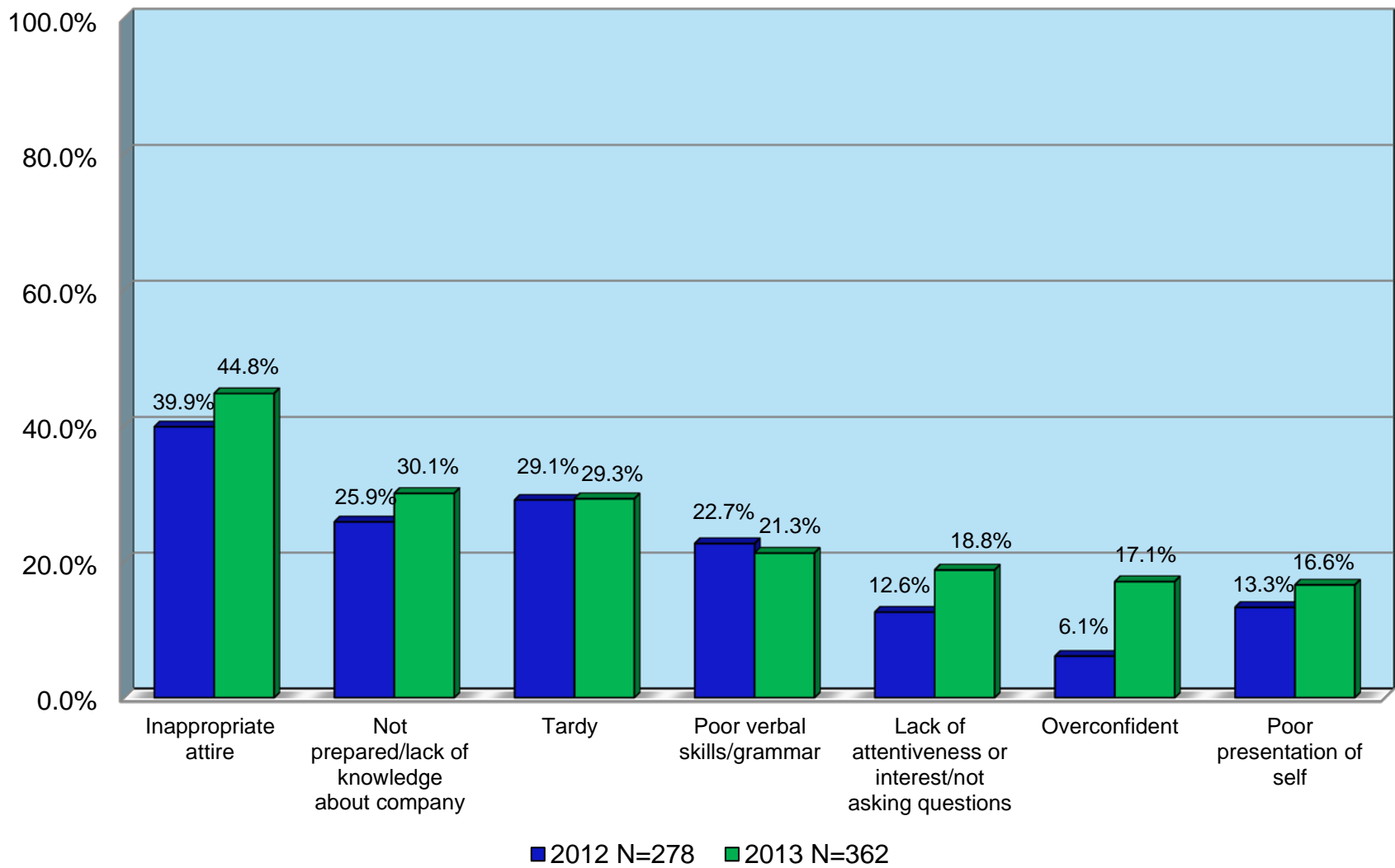
This year's findings are similar to the 2012 study. The increase in the percentage of respondents reporting that candidates being over confident can be a mistake is worth noting. This went from 6.1% in 2012 to 17.1% in 2013.

## **Worst Mistake Experienced**

The most common worst mistakes experienced by the respondents are the candidate being tardy (13.8%) and inappropriate attire (13.2%).

<b>Most Common Mistakes</b>	
Tardy	13.8%
Inappropriate attire	13.2%
Not prepared/lack of knowledge about company	9.6%
Cell phone on or used	9.0%
	N=311

# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace Assessment of Professionalism Mistakes During Interview Process





# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace      Assessment of Professionalism

## **Behaviors Resulting in Being Fired**

Being absent too often and a lack of punctuality (57.9%) is the predominant reason for new college graduates being fired. The second most common cause for dismissal is poor performance and work quality (45.5%).

## **Trend Analysis**

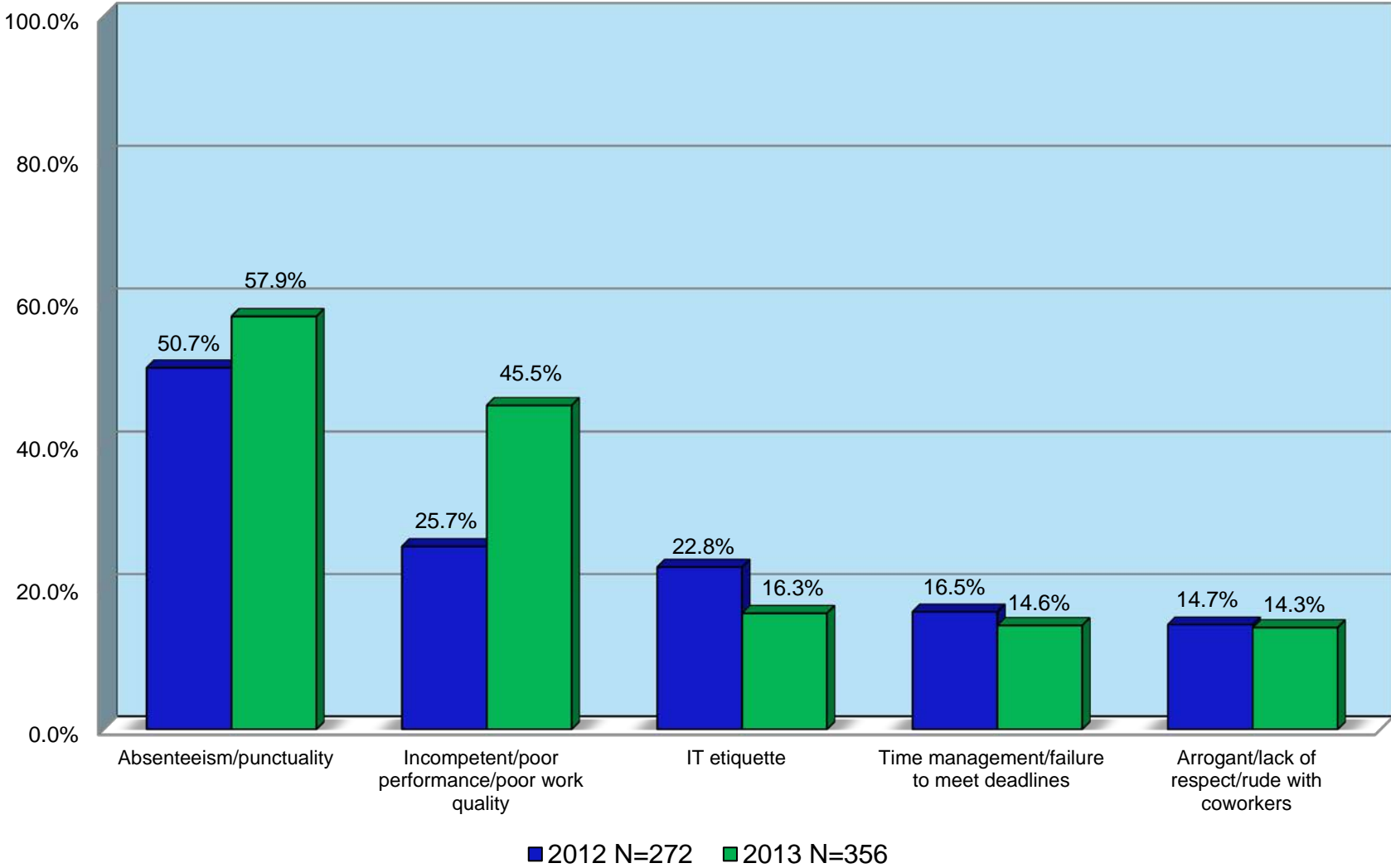
While the findings are similar to 2012, the large increase in the percentage of respondents citing poor quality work as a reason for being fired is noteworthy.

## **Worst Lack of Professionalism Experienced**

Respondents gave a number of examples of the worst lack of professionalism they experienced. The most frequently mentioned ones are shown below.

Insubordination	8.3%
Excessive cell phone/texting	8.3%
Arrogant/lack of respect/rude with coworkers	7.0%
Absenteeism	6.6%
Poor quality work	6.3%
Dishonesty	6.3%
	N=301

# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace Assessment of Professionalism Behaviors Resulting in Being Fired



# **2013 Professionalism in the Workplace      Assessment of Professionalism**

## **Responsibility to Expose Graduates to Professionalism**

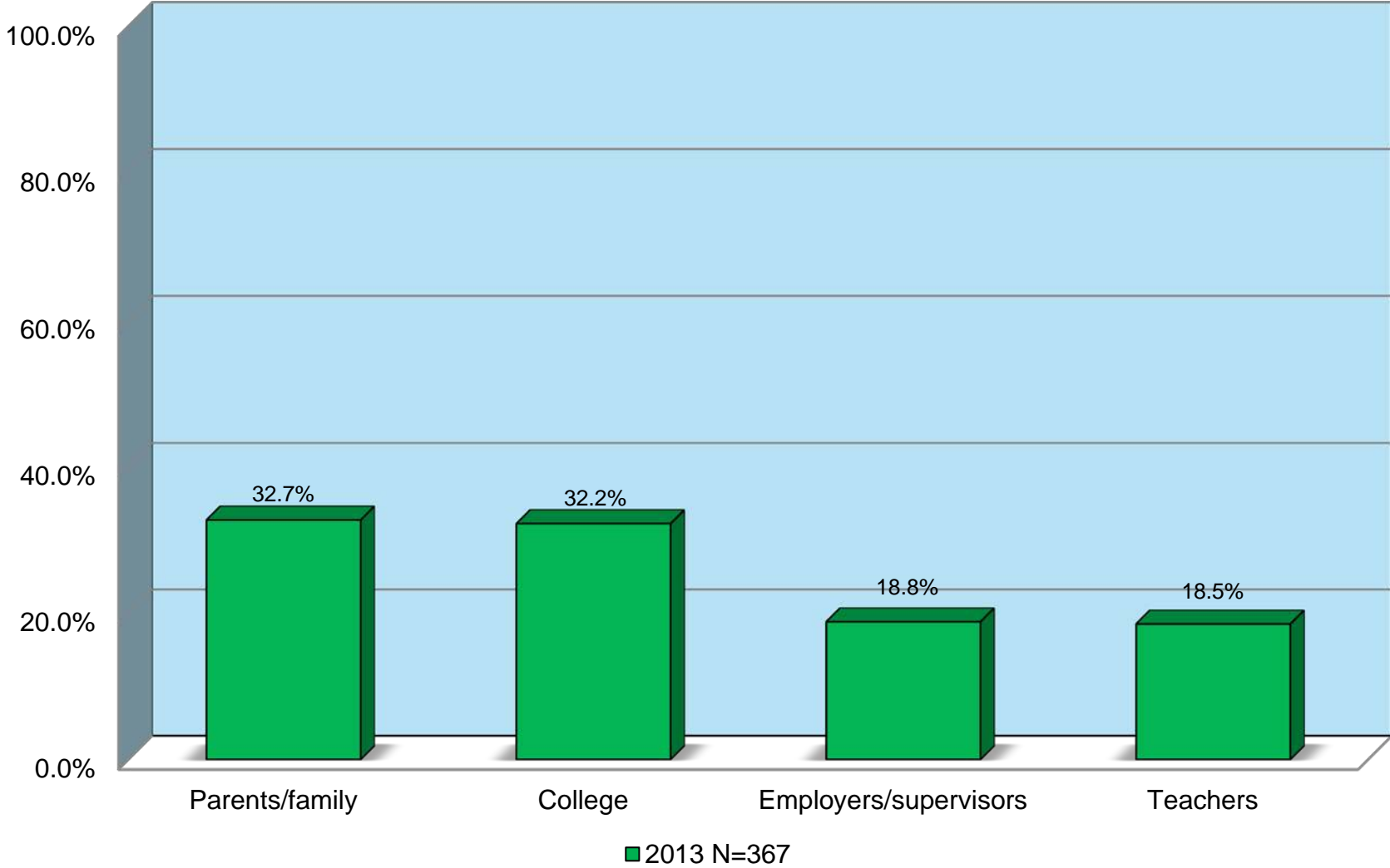
Respondents most often point to parents (32.7%) and college (32.2%) when asked who should expose new college graduates to the meaning of professionalism.

The percentage mentioning educational institutions is higher when responses of teachers (18.5%), internships (6.5%), and high schools (3.8%) are included with the answer of college.

This reinforces the 2012 study in which 91.9% of the human resource respondents felt colleges should play a role in preparing students to be professional.

# 2013 Professionalism in the Workplace Assessment of Professionalism

## Responsibility to Expose Graduates to Professionalism



# Profile of Respondents

**Introduction**

The characteristics of the respondents and their companies are presented below.

**Number Of Employees  
At All Locations**

# Employees	
Under 10	37.9%
10 to 50	21.2%
51 to 100	11.9%
101 to 250	9.3%
251 to 500	5.3%
Over 500	14.4%
	N=396

**Number Of Employees  
In HR Department**

# HR Employees	
1 to 2	67.9%
3 to 5	16.2%
6 to 10	5.3%
Over 10	10.6%
	N=396

**Type Of Industry**

<b>Industry</b>	
Service	22.8%
Manufacturing	12.3%
Financial/banking	11.5%
Retail	10.3%
Medical/healthcare	5.5%
Business/consulting	5.5%
Advertising/media	5.0%
Non-profit	4.8%
Construction	4.0%
Education	4.0%
Other	14.3%
	N=399

**Respondent's Age**

<b>Age</b>	
Under 35	11.3%
35-55	48.4%
Over 55	40.4%
	N=399

**Respondent's Level Of Education**

<b>Education Level</b>	
High school graduate or less	2.8%
Some college/technical school	20.1%
Undergraduate degree	33.8%
Graduate degree	43.4%
	N=399

**Respondent's Position**

<b>Position</b>	
Owner/President/CEO/CFO	42.7%
GM/Manager	18.0%
Director	10.2%
Vice President/Sr Vice President	7.5%
Administrative	4.6%
Account Executive	4.0%
	N=372



Position Of Person To Whom Report

Position	
President/CEO	35.4%
Self	24.9%
Board of Directors	12.7%
VP of Administration	8.7%
Director/Manager	5.5%
Business owner/Partner	4.0%
CFO	3.7%
COO	3.0%
Other	2.0%
	N=401

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