

# Competencies and Trainability: The Rest of the Story

John Ford

International Personnel Assessment Council  
September 15, 2009

U.S. Merit Systems Protection Board  
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# MSPB Objectives and Functions

Objective	Function
Protect employees from abuse	Adjudicate appeals from personnel actions
Personnel decisions based on merit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Terminations</li><li>• Demotions</li><li>• Suspensions &gt; 14 days</li><li>• Reductions in pay</li><li>• Others</li></ul>
Freedom from prohibited practices	
Personnel policies and practices based on merit	Study OPM policies and agency practices

# Office of Policy and Evaluation (OPE)

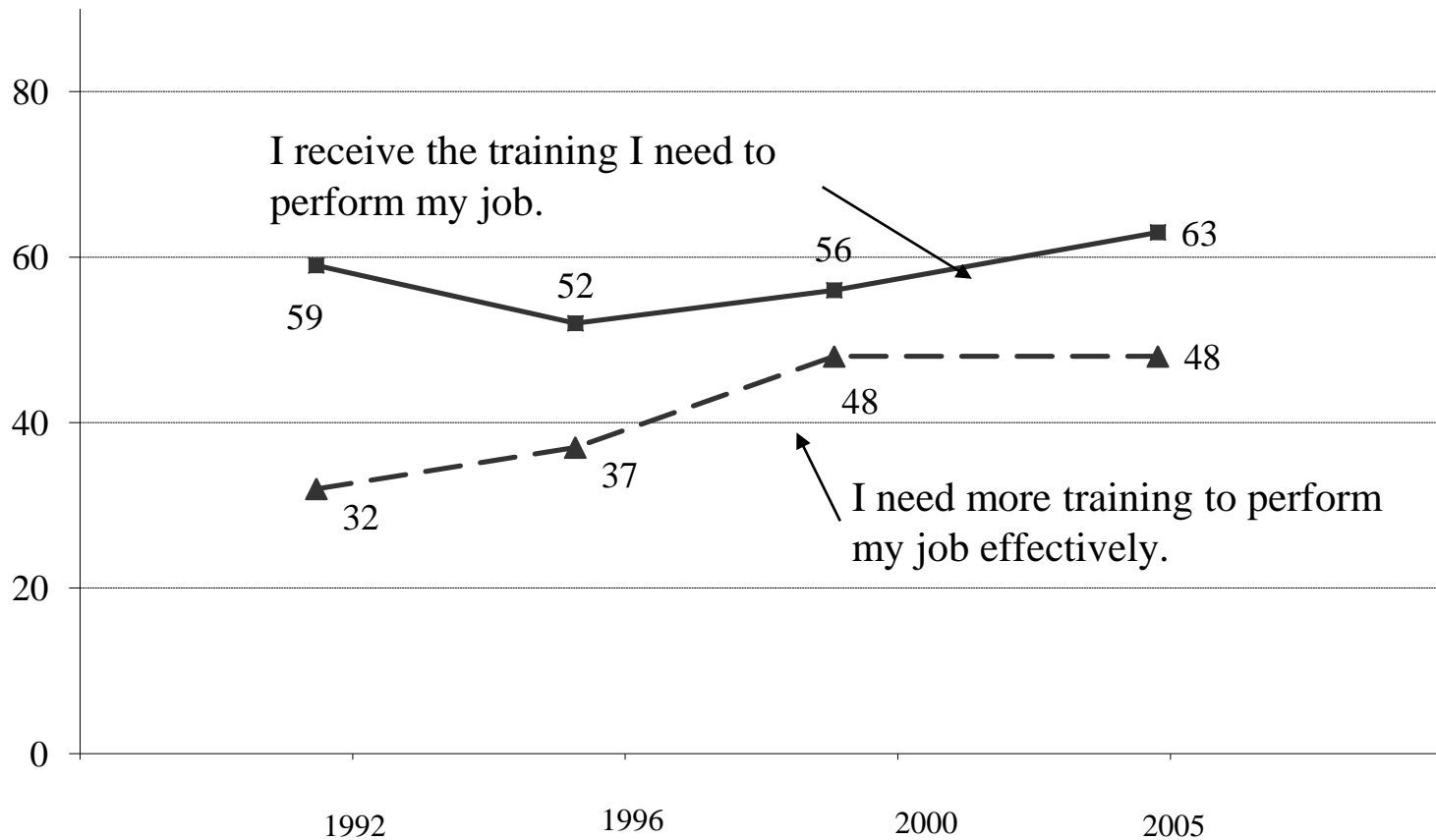
- An independent, nonpartisan perspective
  - Distinct from GAO (a Congressional agency)
  - Distinct from OPM
- Objective information on Federal human resources management (HRM) that –
  - Supports strategic, merit-based HRM
  - Educates, provides solutions, or recommends improvements
- Ensures the public's interest in a merit-based civil service

# MSPB's Perspective on Training

- Merit Principles  
(Section 2301, Title 5, United States Code)
  - Train employees for better organizational and individual performance
  - Select employees based on relative ability
  - Manage employees efficiently and effectively
  - Manage employees fairly and equitably
- Strategic Perspective
  - Not a substitute for training needs analysis or career development planning

# Federal Training Trends

**Percent of participants agreeing with two statements about their training needs in 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2005**



Source: MSPB, Merit Principles Surveys: 1992, 1996, 2000, and 2005, questions 15 and 16.

# Merit Principles Surveys

- MSPB's statutory responsibility to assess the "health" of merit systems
- Periodically for the past 20 years
- Questions determined by:
  - Are merit principles being followed?
  - How prevalent are prohibited personnel practices?
  - What are OPE's current research topics?
- Our focus: MPS 2005 & MPS 2007

# How to Describe Training?

## Question Form

- Closed-Ended
- Open-Ended

## Response Language

- Class Names
- Training Objectives
- Job Tasks
- Mental Abilities
- Competencies
- KSAs



# MPS 2005 Training Needs Question

“Briefly describe, in one or two sentences, the most important skill or ability you could learn to improve your performance in your current job.

Please describe this skill or ability well enough that a training specialist who does not know your job could understand what you need to learn.”

# OPM Executive Core Qualifications

- **Leading Change**

Continual Learning, Public Service Motivation, Creativity and Innovation, External Awareness, Flexibility, Resilience, Strategic Thinking and Vision

- **Leading People**

Integrity / Honesty, Conflict Management, Leveraging Diversity, Developing Others and Team Building

- **Results Driven**

Accountability, Customer Service, Decisiveness, Entrepreneurship, Problem Solving and Technical Credibility

- **Business Acumen**

Financial Management, Human Capital Management & Technology Management

- **Building Coalitions**

Written Communication, Oral Communication, Interpersonal Skills, Partnering, Political Savvy, and Influencing / Negotiating

# Executive Core Qualifications

## *Extended*

- Leading Change

*Learning Ability, Motivation, Creativity and Innovation, Context Knowledge, Flexibility, Resilience, Planning Work and Vision*

- Leading People

*Integrity / Honesty, Conflict Skills, Leveraging Diversity, and Teamwork*

- Results Driven

*Making Standards, Customer Skills, Decisiveness, Entrepreneurship, Analyzing & Solving and Job Knowledge*

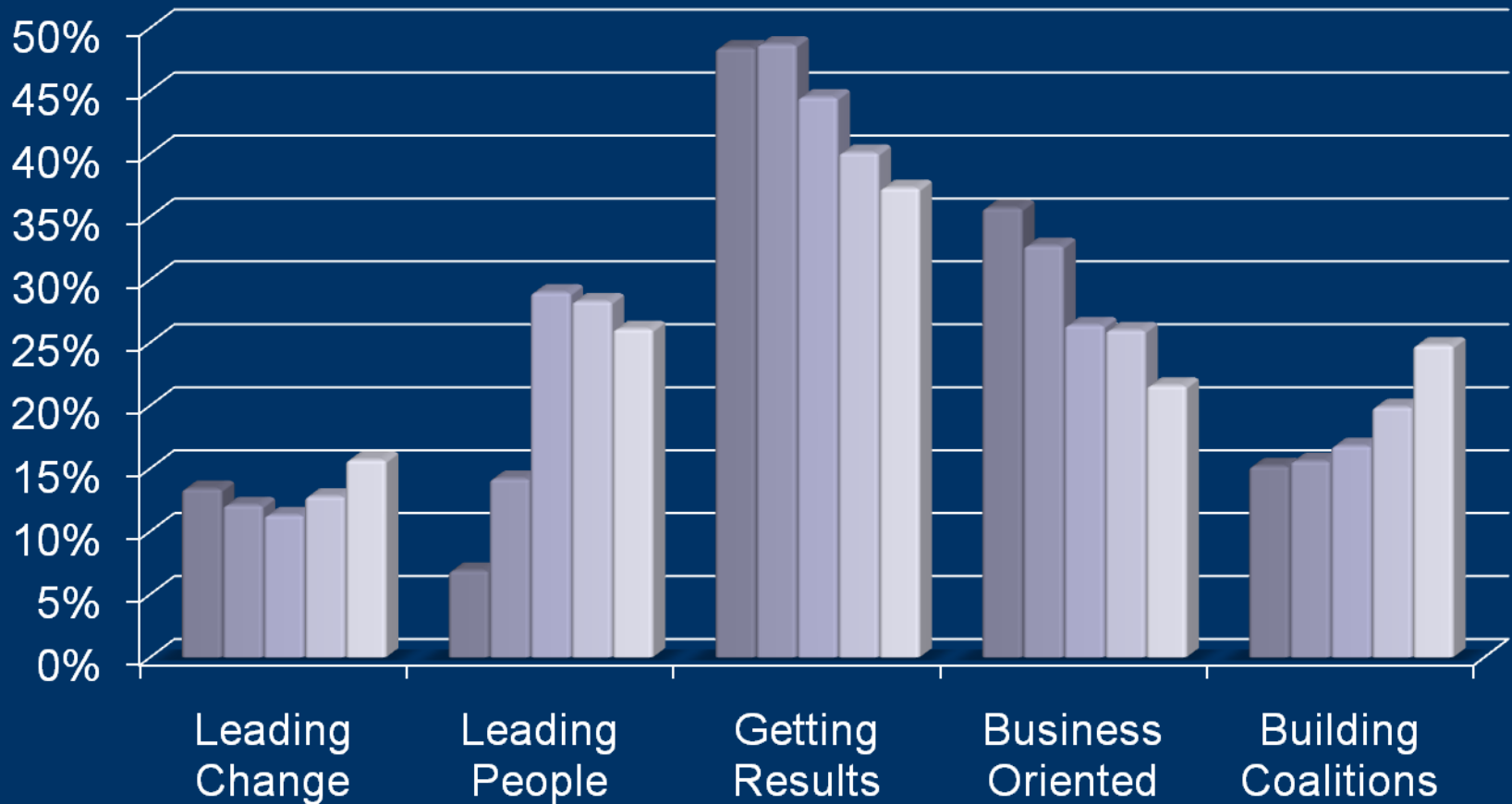
- Business Acumen

*Financial Calculation, HR Knowledge & Computer Skills*

- Building Coalitions

*Written Communication, Oral Communication, Interpersonal Skills, Partnering, Political Savvy, and Influencing / Negotiating*

# Most Needed ECQ by Leadership Level



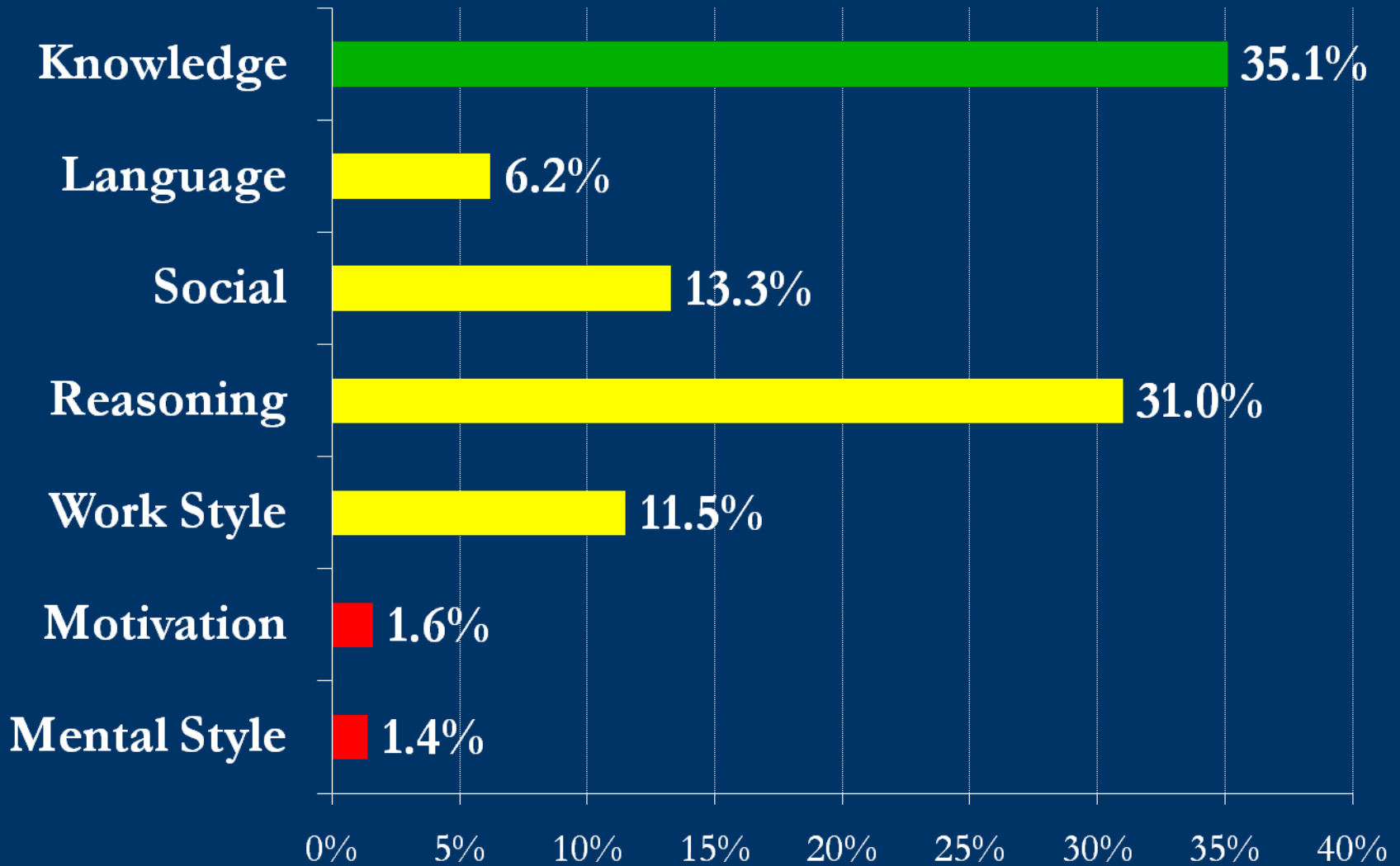
# Grouped by Human Abilities

- **Knowledge**  
Job Knowledge, Context Knowledge & HR Knowledge
- **Language**  
Oral Communication & Written Communication
- **Social**  
Interpersonal Skills, Teamwork, Conflict Skills, Diversity Skills, Customer Skills, Influencing & Negotiating, Partnering & Political Savvy
- **Reasoning**  
Analyzing & Solving, Financial Calculation & Computer Skills
- **Work Style**  
Planning Work & Making Standards
- **Motivation**  
Resilience, Work Motivation, Integrity & Vision
- **Mental Style**  
Flexibility, Creativity, Learning Ability, Decisiveness & Entrepreneurship

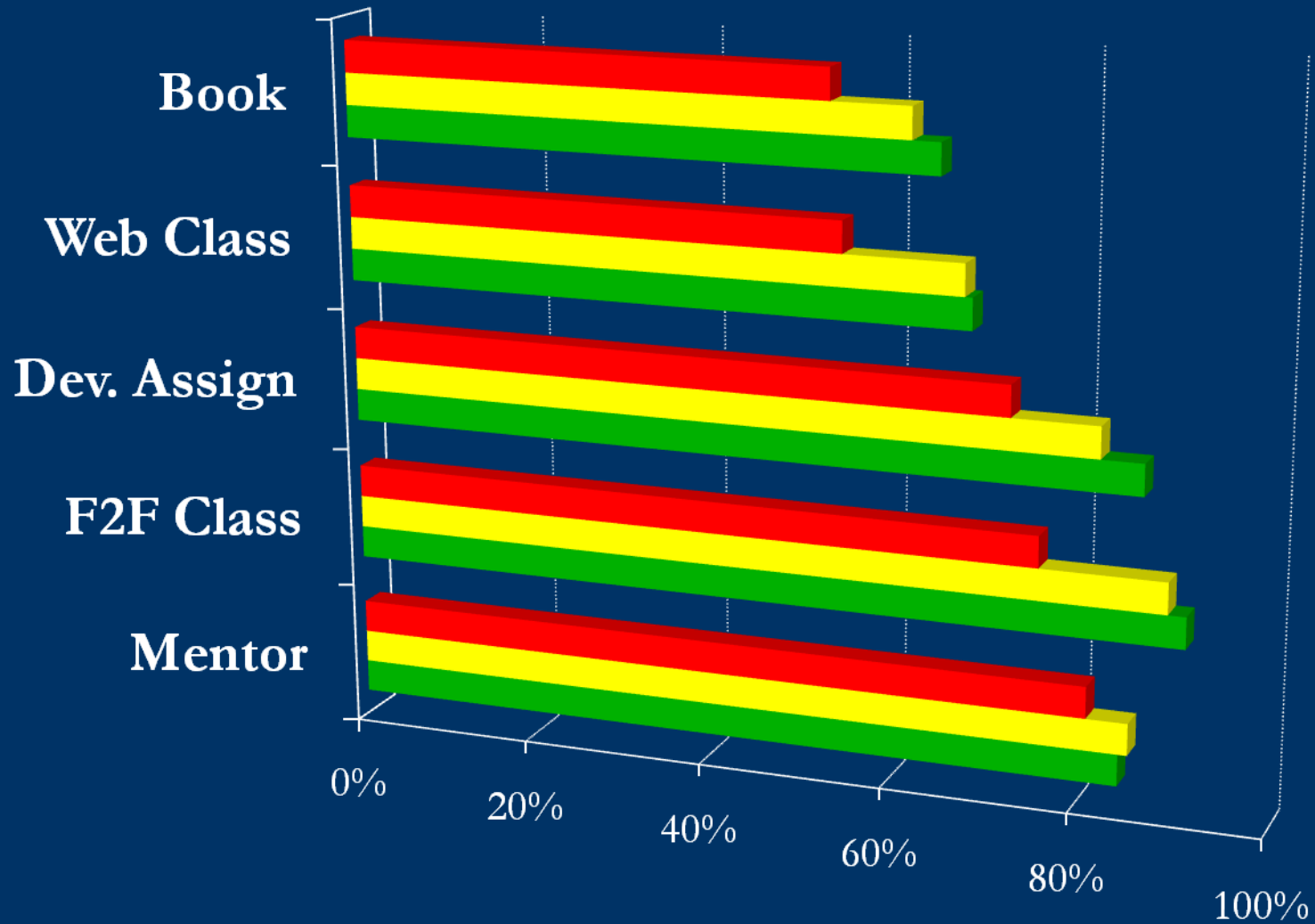
# ...and by Trainability

- **Knowledge (+)**  
Job Knowledge, Context Knowledge & HR Knowledge
- **Language ( $\approx$ )**  
Oral Communication & Written Communication
- **Social ( $\approx$ )**  
Interpersonal Skills, Teamwork, Conflict Skills, Diversity Skills, Customer Skills, Influencing & Negotiating, Partnering & Political Savvy
- **Reasoning ( $\approx$ )**  
Analyzing & Solving, Financial Calculation & Computer Skills
- **Work Style ( $\approx$ )**  
Planning Work & Making Standards
- **Motivation (-)**  
Resilience, Work Motivation, Integrity & Vision
- **Mental Style (-)**  
Flexibility, Creativity, Learning Ability, Decisiveness & Entrepreneurship

# Most Important KSA for Me

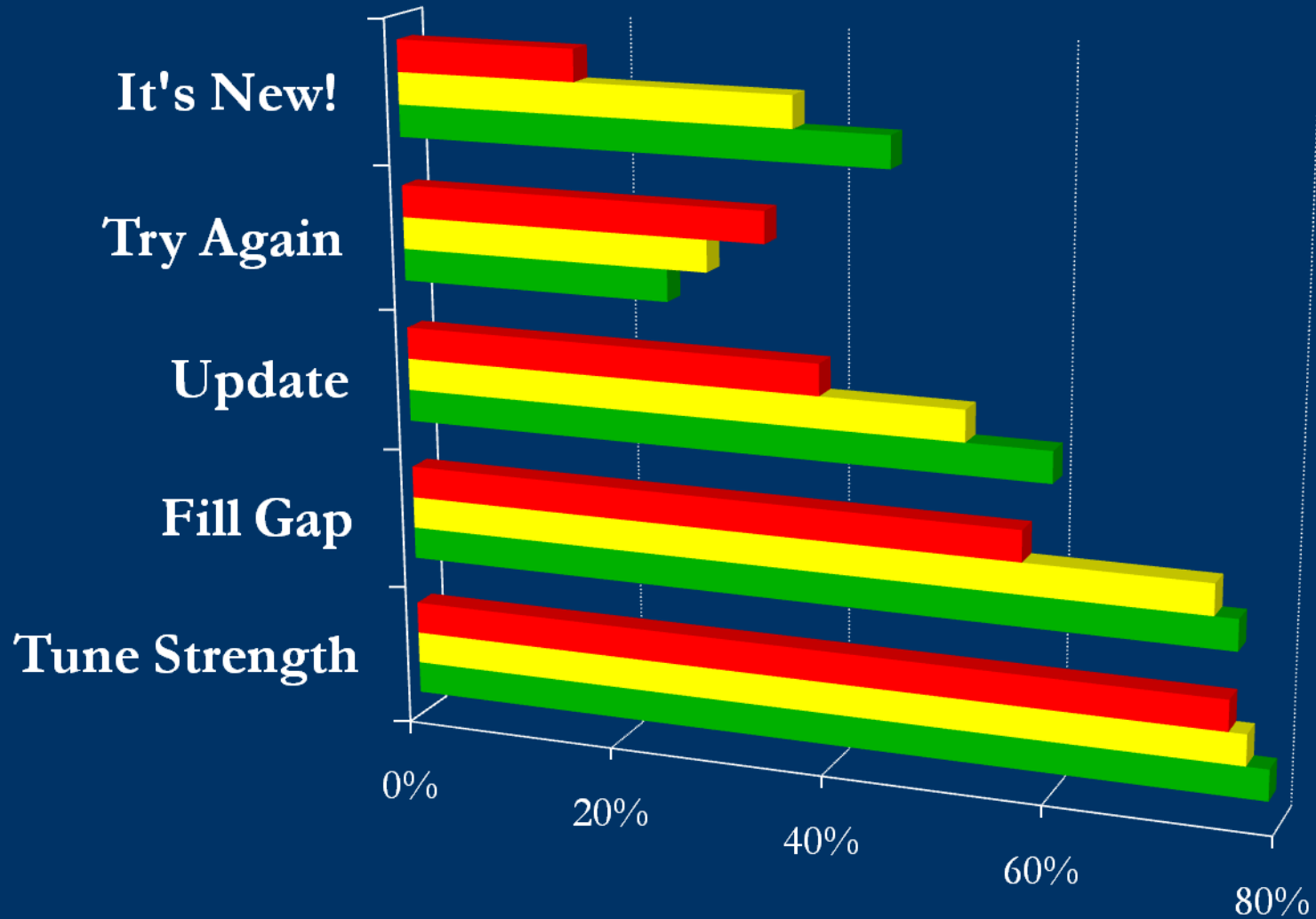


# “Could I learn it from a...?”





# "Why should I learn this?"

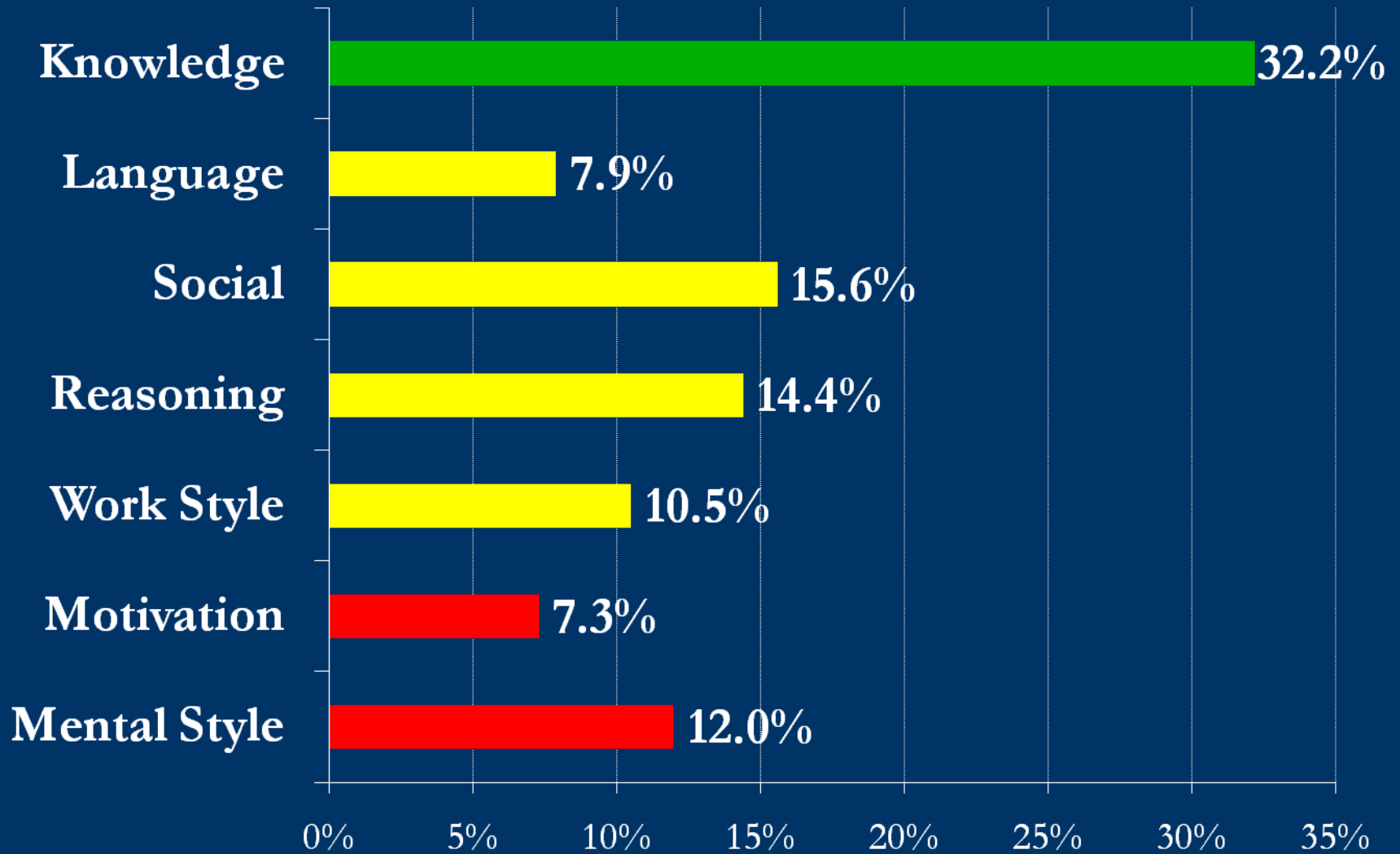


# MPS 2007 Critical KSA Question

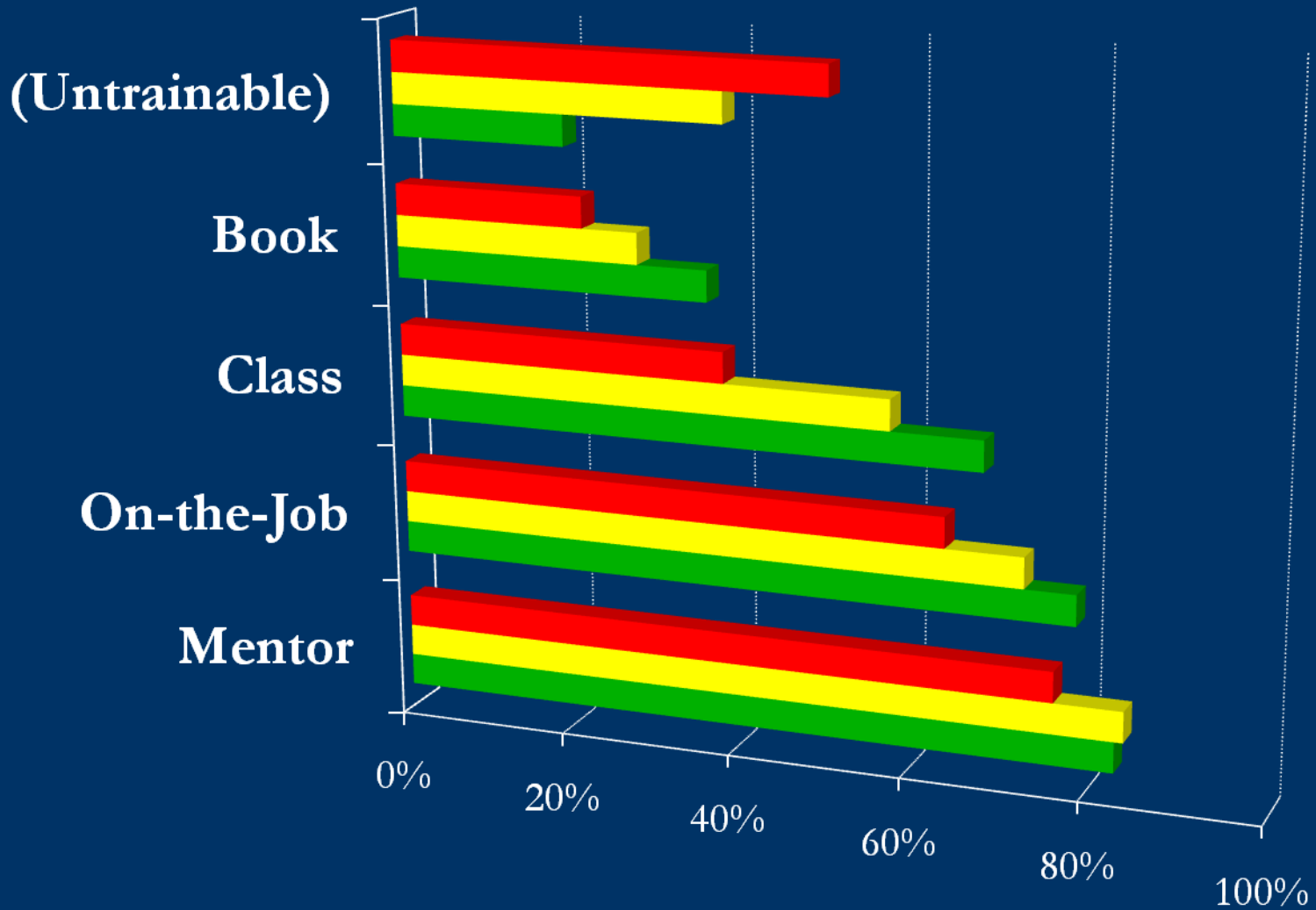
“Your agency is hiring more staff as a result of increased funding and expansion of its mission. You have been asked to help hire a new employee who will be doing the same type and level of work that you do, but will be part of a different work team.

Please describe in a few words or phrases the *most important knowledge, skill, or ability* this new employee needs to do his or her job well.”

# Most Important KSA for Job



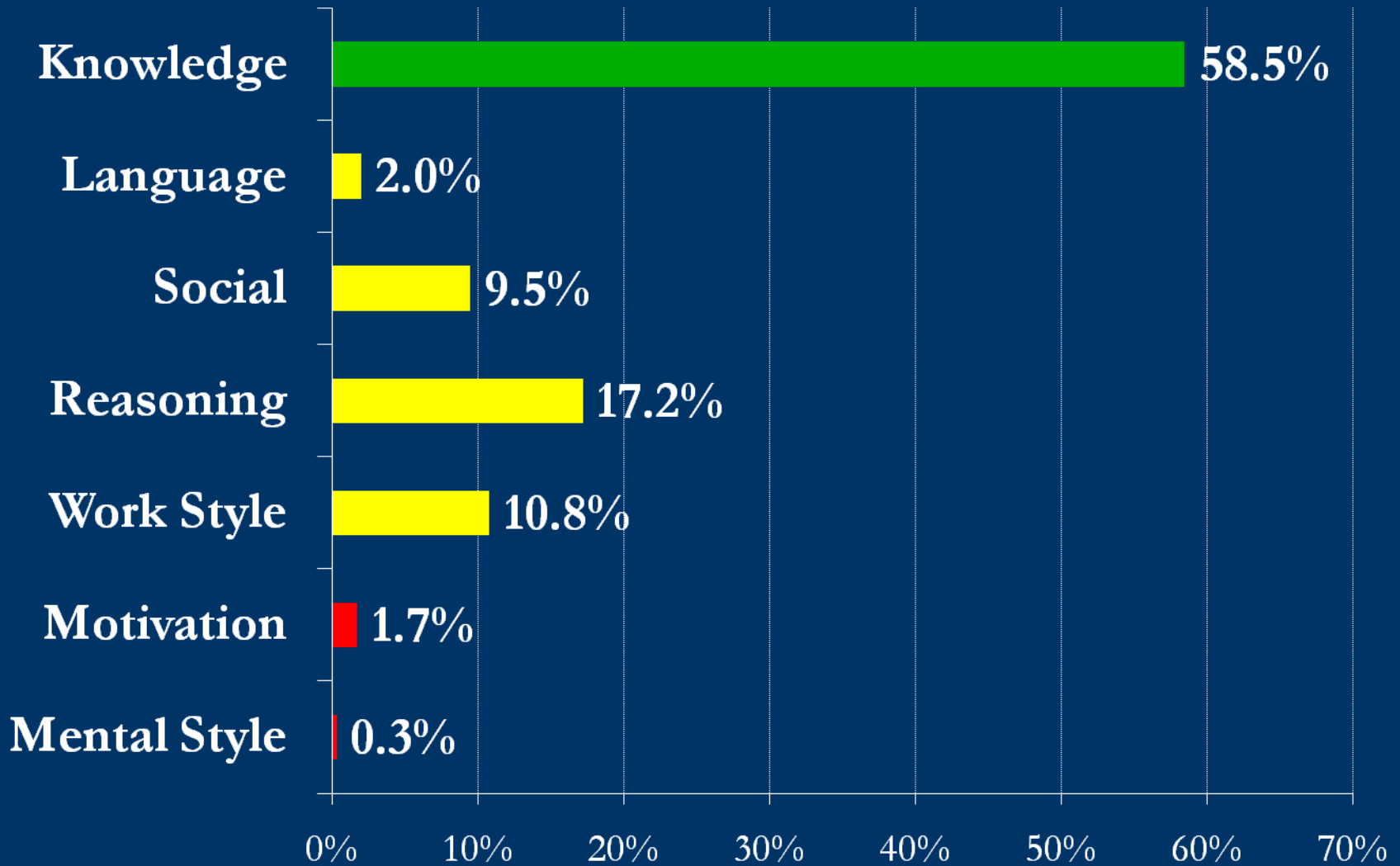
# “Could you learn it from...?”



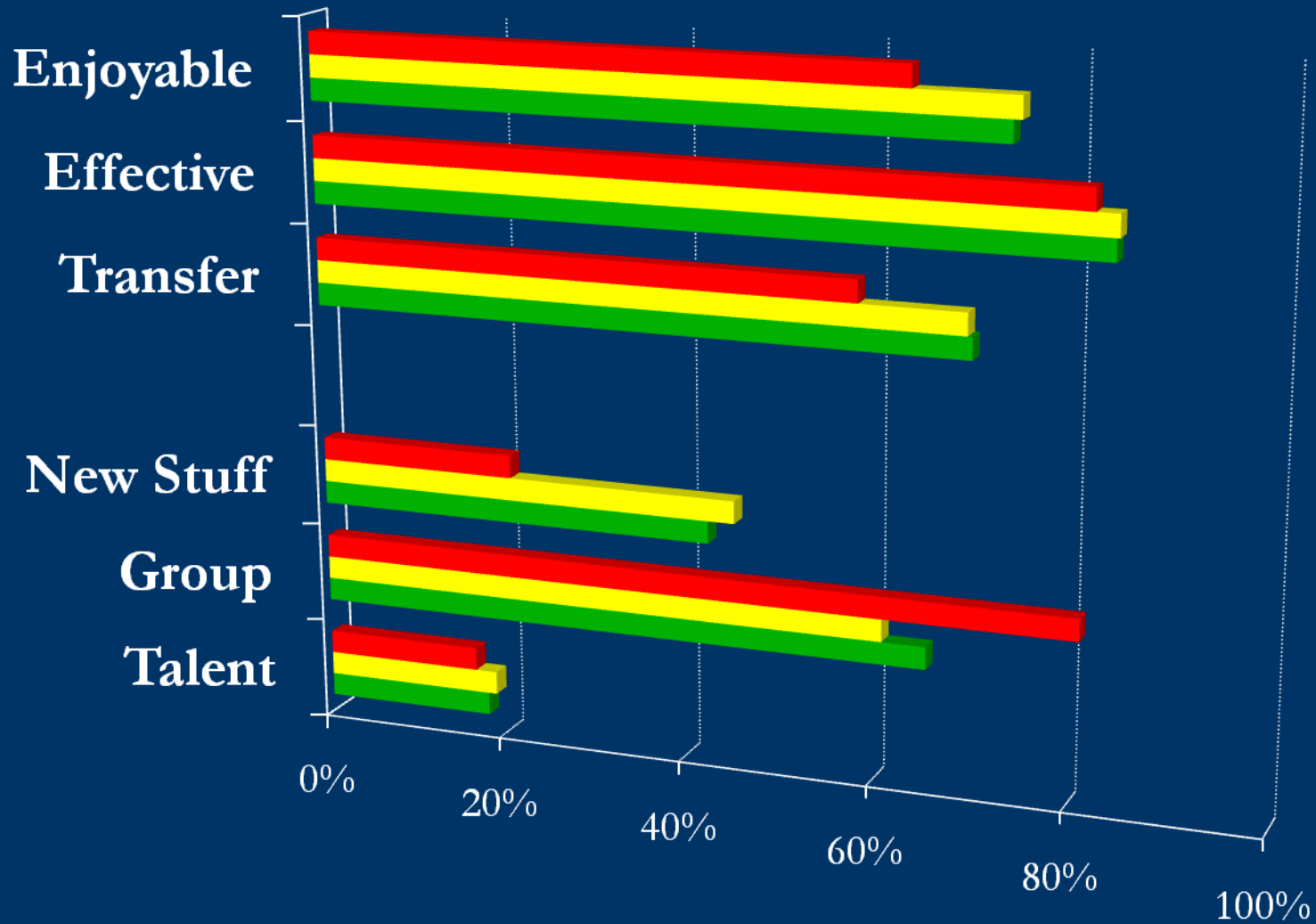
# MPS 2007 Recent Training Question

“Please describe in a few words (no more than a sentence) the topic of the *most recent formal training closely related to the duties of your current job* you received that was paid for or otherwise provided by the Federal Government.”

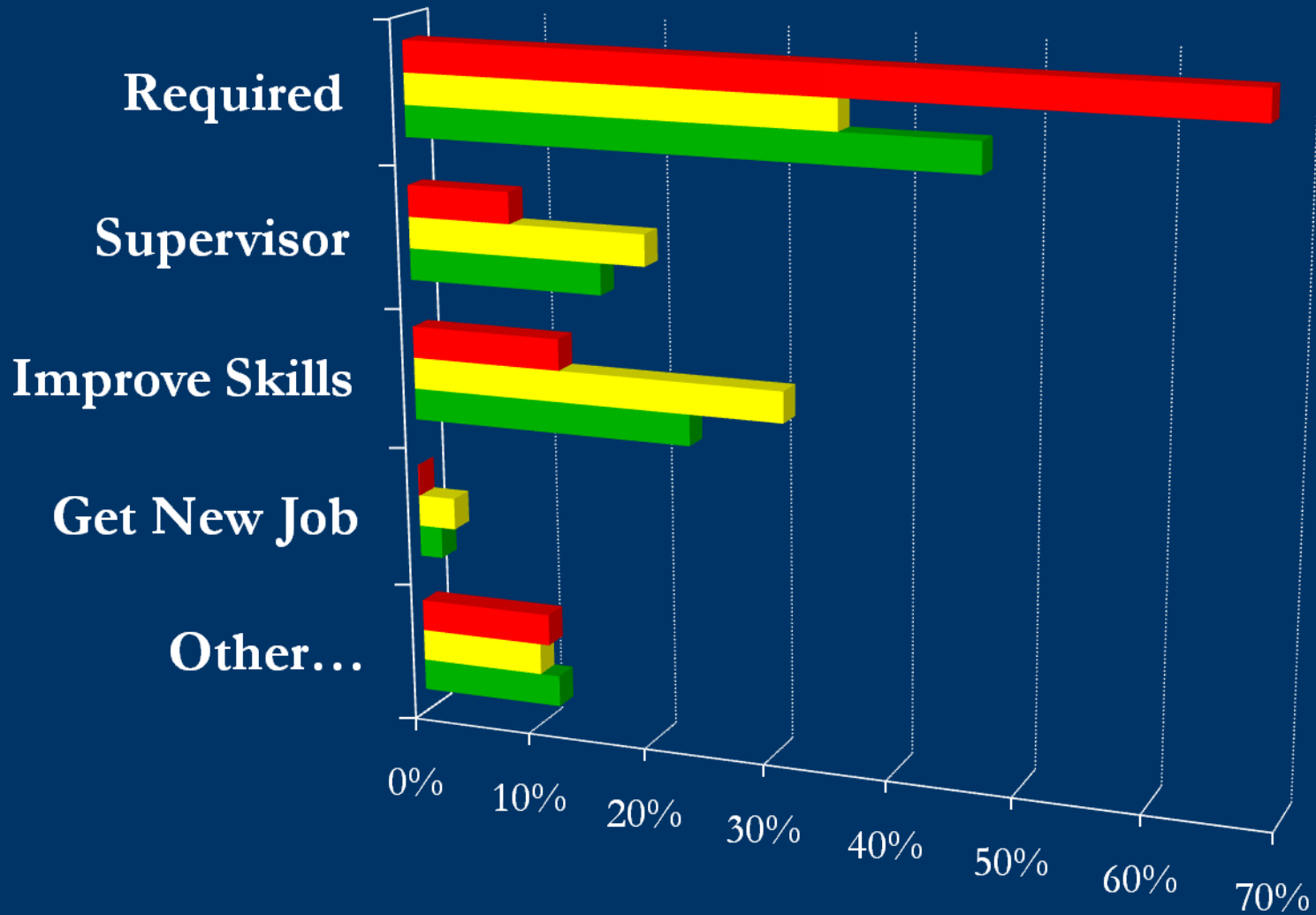
# Most Recent Training Experience



# “About that training...?”



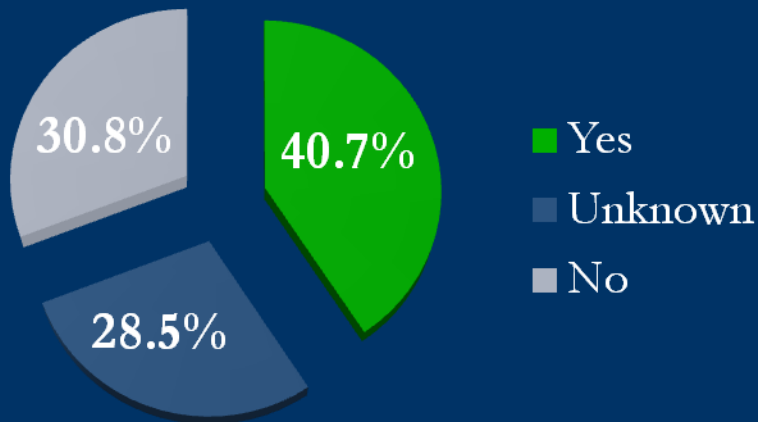
# “Why did you go to training?”



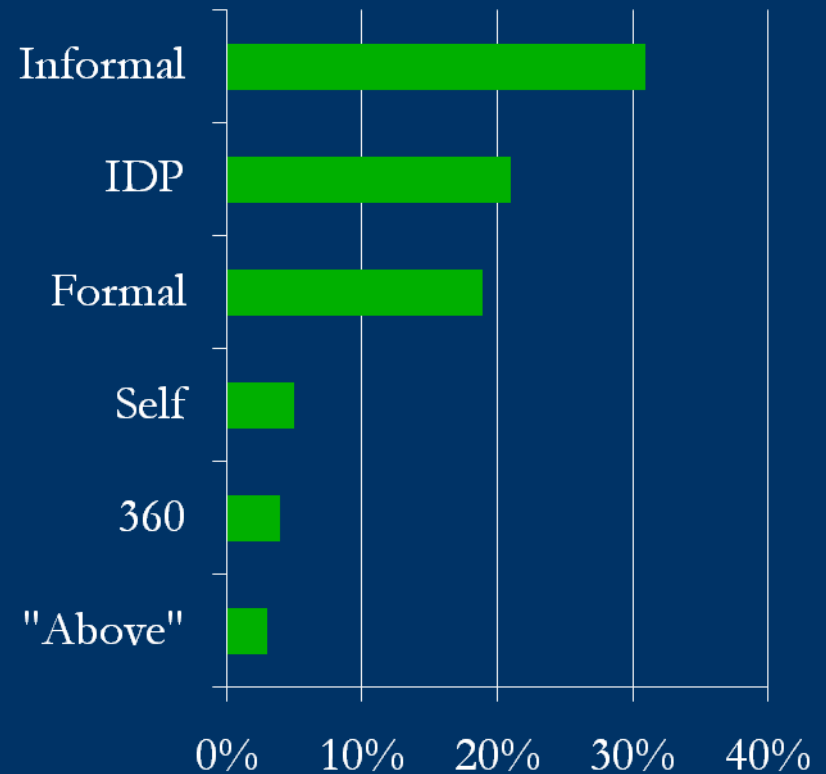


# Training Needs Analysis

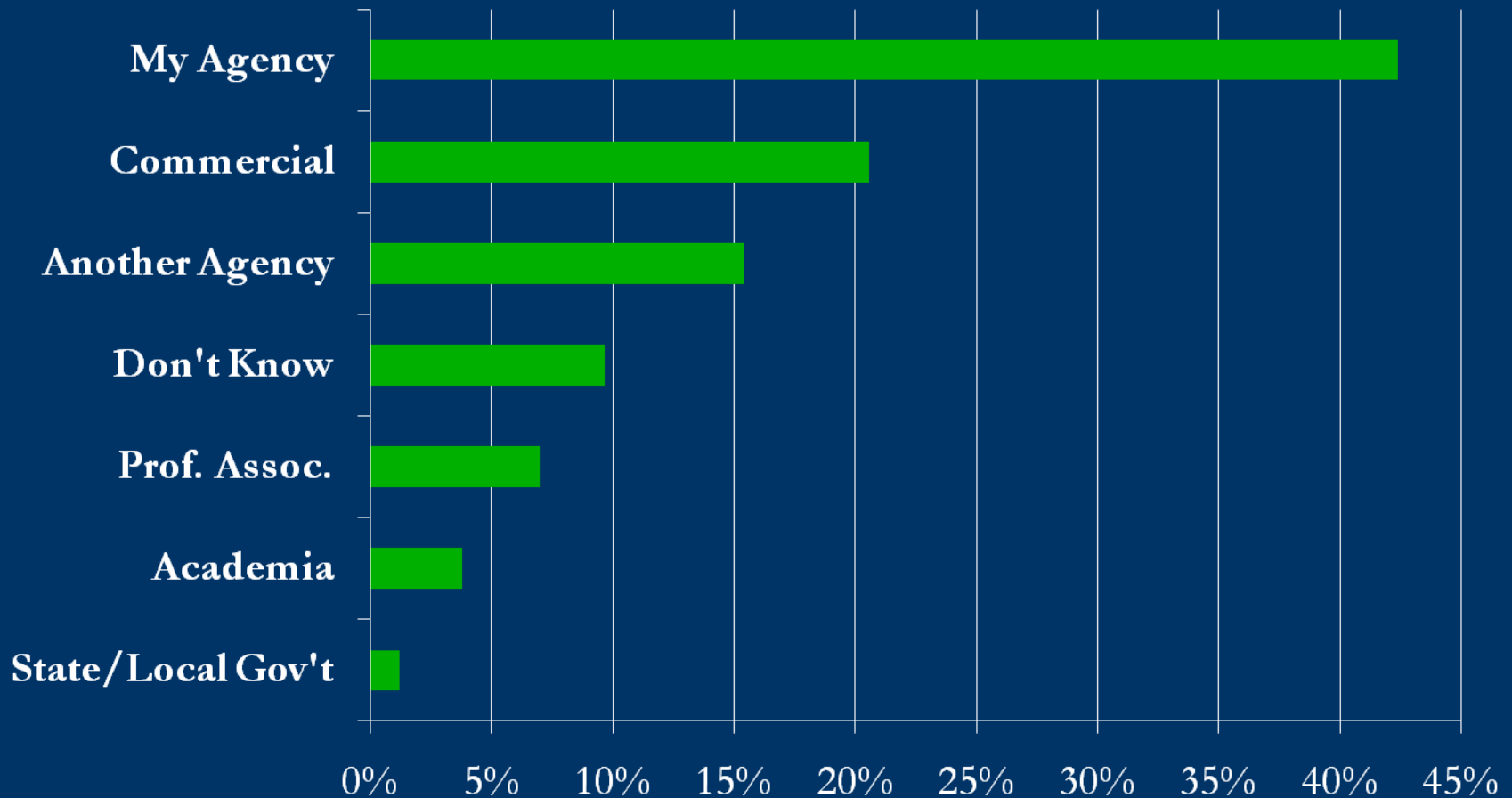
## Training needs assessed?



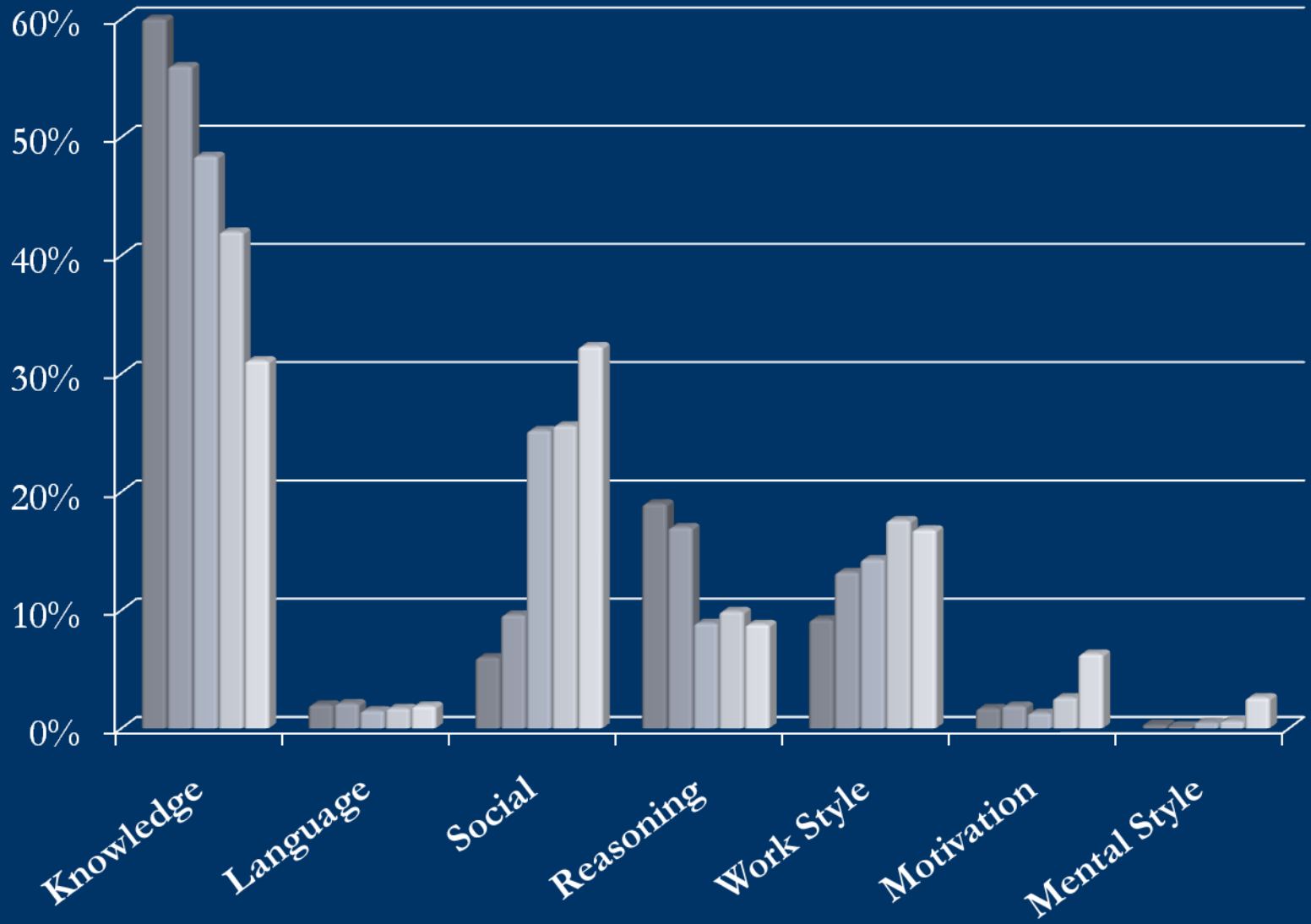
## If so, how?



# Who develops the training?



# Training by Supervisory Status



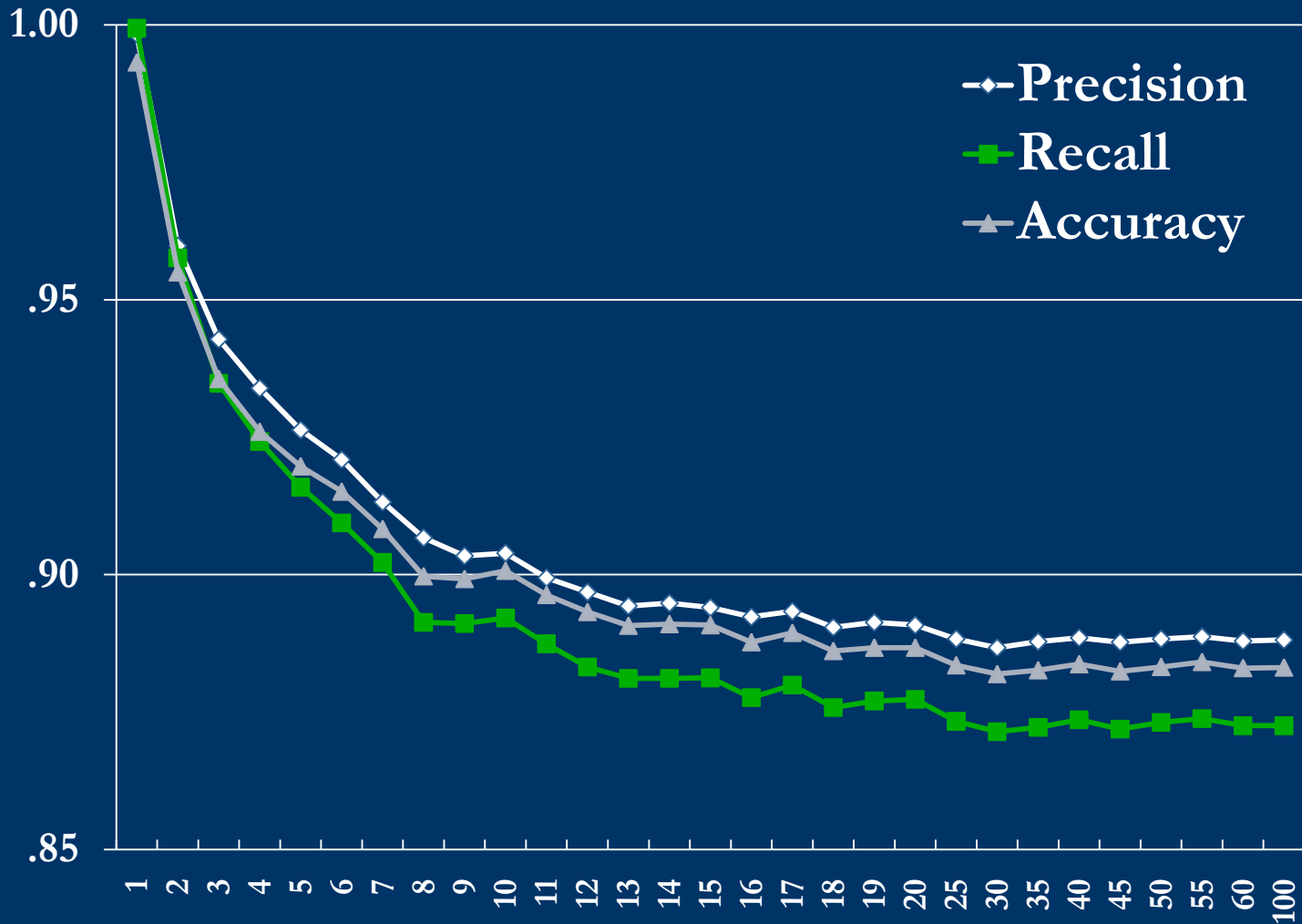
# Implications

- *Job analysis, training needs analysis, and training prerequisites* should include consideration of competency trainability
- Agencies should consider whether large-scale training will produce results for all participants
- As most training is developed by agencies, improvements can begin “in-house”
- Employee training expectations should be set appropriately

If there is time...?



# Validity and Response Length





# For More Information

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<b>On the Web:</b>	<u><a href="http://www.mspb.gov/studies">www.mspb.gov/studies</a></u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Studies</li><li>• Newsletters</li><li>• List server</li><li>• Comments</li></ul>