

Fast and Present Danger: In-Home Study on Broadband Security Among American Consumers

Conducted for the National Cyber Security Alliance by America Online, Inc.
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Project Overview

Objective

The purpose of this study was to explore broadband consumer perceptions of their online security and compare those perceptions to the actual security protections of their current computer configuration and Internet connection. Factors examined in the course of the study included subject awareness and comprehension of online security issues, steps the subjects believed they were taking to protect themselves, and the effectiveness of any currently implemented security measures on the subjects' computers.

Methodology

- 120 in-home studies were conducted in various regions of the United States
- Average length of each interview and systems evaluation was roughly two hours.
- Subjects were questioned on various aspects of online security to assess their awareness and understanding of the subject
- The subjects' computers were then examined for viruses, spyware, and other potential security risks
- A firewall test was performed using grc.com's "Shields Up!" website
- A virus scan was performed with the subjects' current antivirus software using updated virus definitions
- In the case of subjects who did not already have antivirus software, Norton Antivirus 2003 was installed, updated, and used to perform the scan
- A spyware scan was performed with Lavasoft Ad-Aware 6.0 using the latest spyware definitions available

Executive Summary

Overall Vulnerability

- The vast majority of subjects (86%) said they felt their computer was very or somewhat safe from online threats
- However only 11% of subjects had a safe broadband connection -- with a properly and safely configured firewall, recently upgraded anti-virus protection, and, if children were present in the household, parental controls
- Despite that clear and present vulnerability, 86% said they kept sensitive information on their computer, and 79% said they used their computer for sensitive transactions over the Internet

Firewall

- 67% of the subjects did not have properly and safely configured (PSC) firewalls
- Many of the subjects who did not have firewall protection were very surprised to see how vulnerable their computer was after viewing the test results
- The majority of firewall protection was purchased and installed by the subjects themselves

Executive Summary

Antivirus

- 62% of the subjects did not have recently updated antivirus software
- A fair number of subjects received antivirus software with their computer, but the majority actually purchased the software themselves
- Almost none of the subjects received antivirus software through their broadband ISP, and even those who did were not using software that integrated with their ISP's online experience

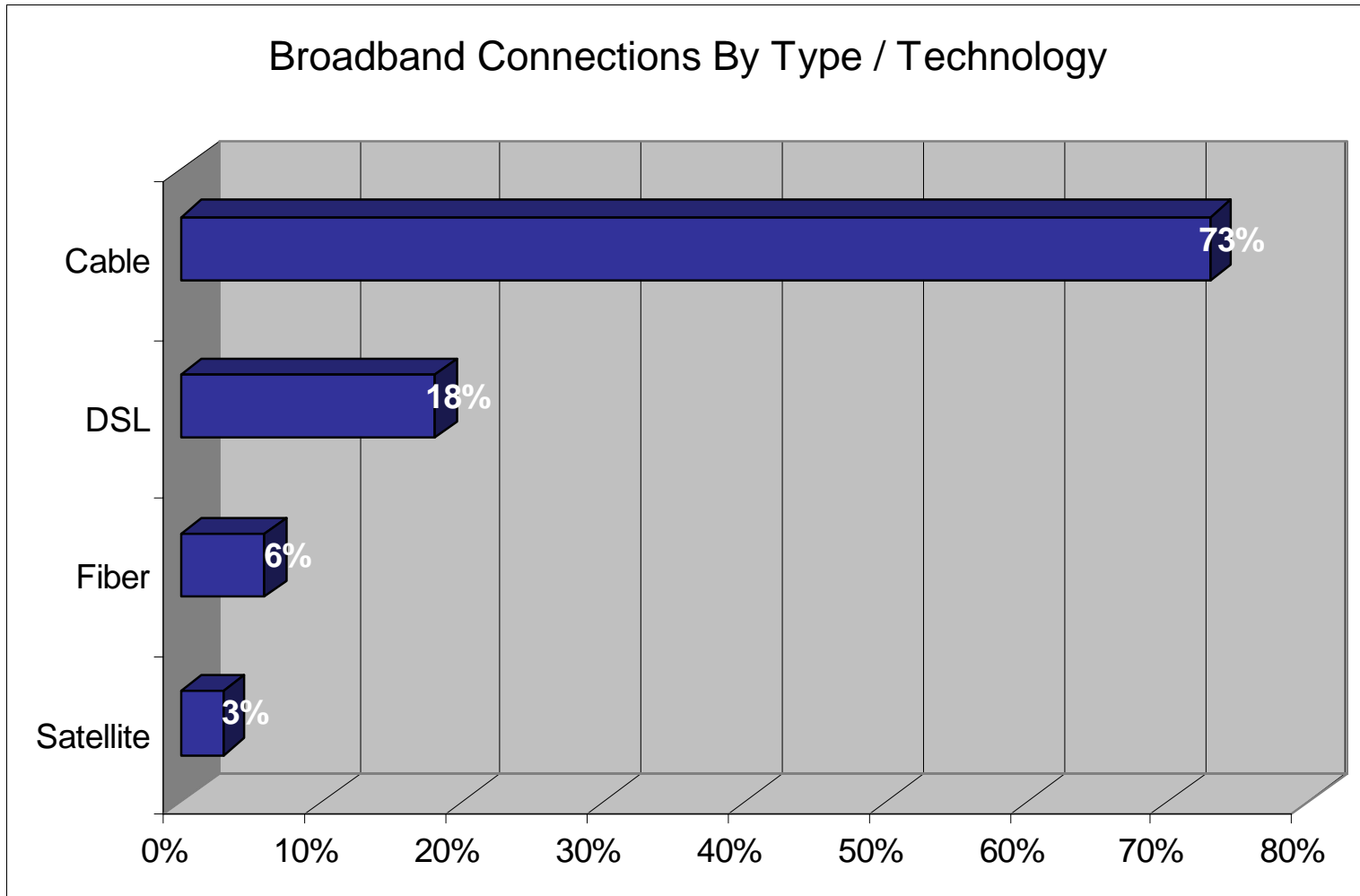
Spyware

- 91% of the subjects had spyware on their computers
- Almost none of the subjects understood that spyware would be installed with various music and file sharing programs

Parental Controls

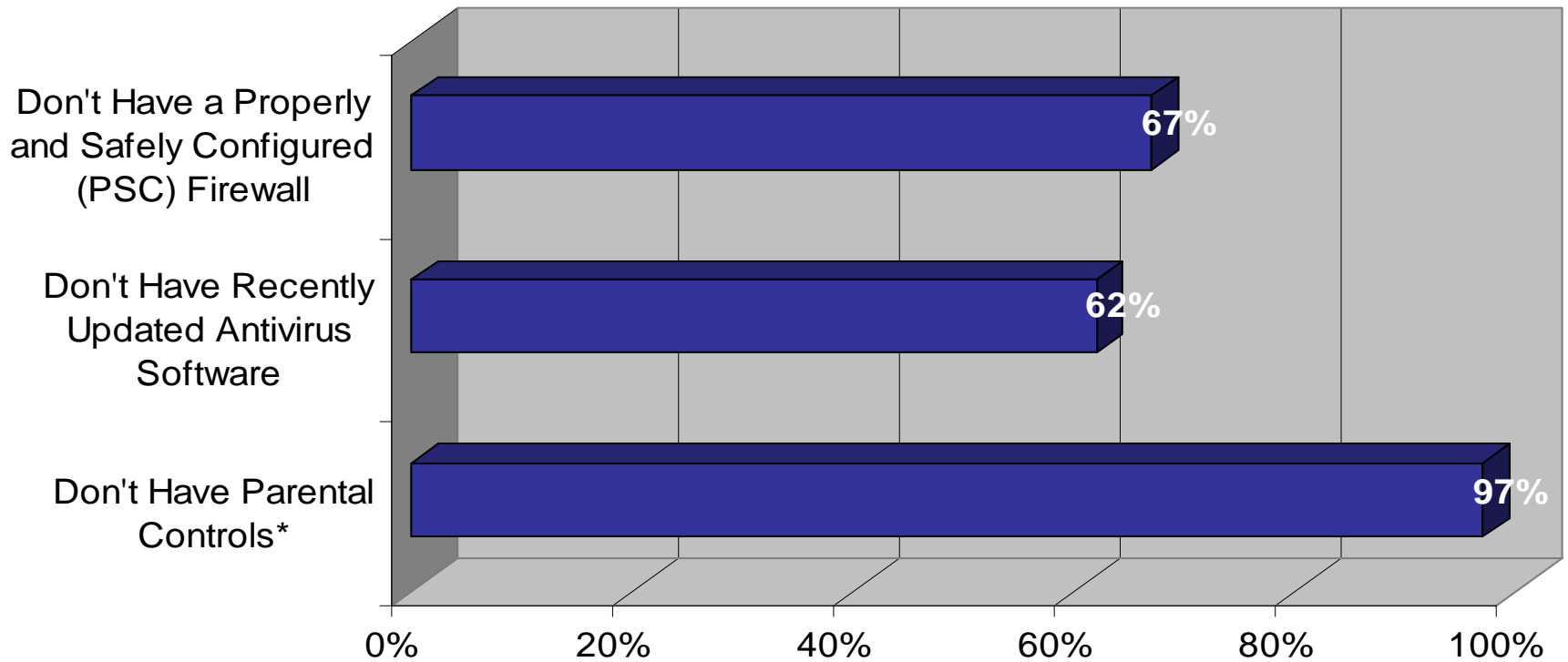
- Nearly half of the subjects in this study had children, but only 3% of those parents were using parental control software
- Even those that had parental control software were often not taking advantage of the custom settings and other features offered

Executive Summary



Executive Summary

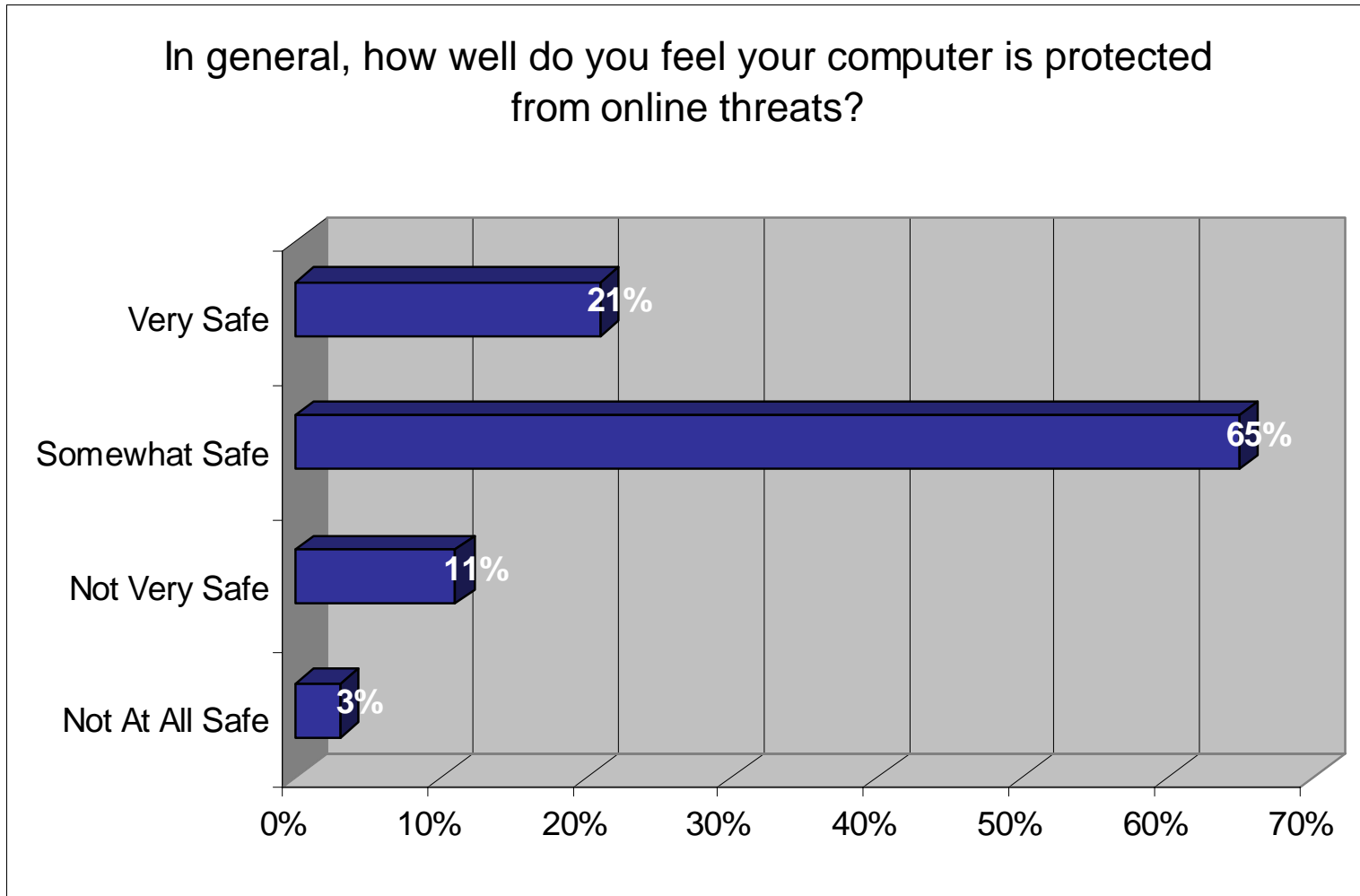
Subjects Without Critical Security Features



* Of households with children under age 18

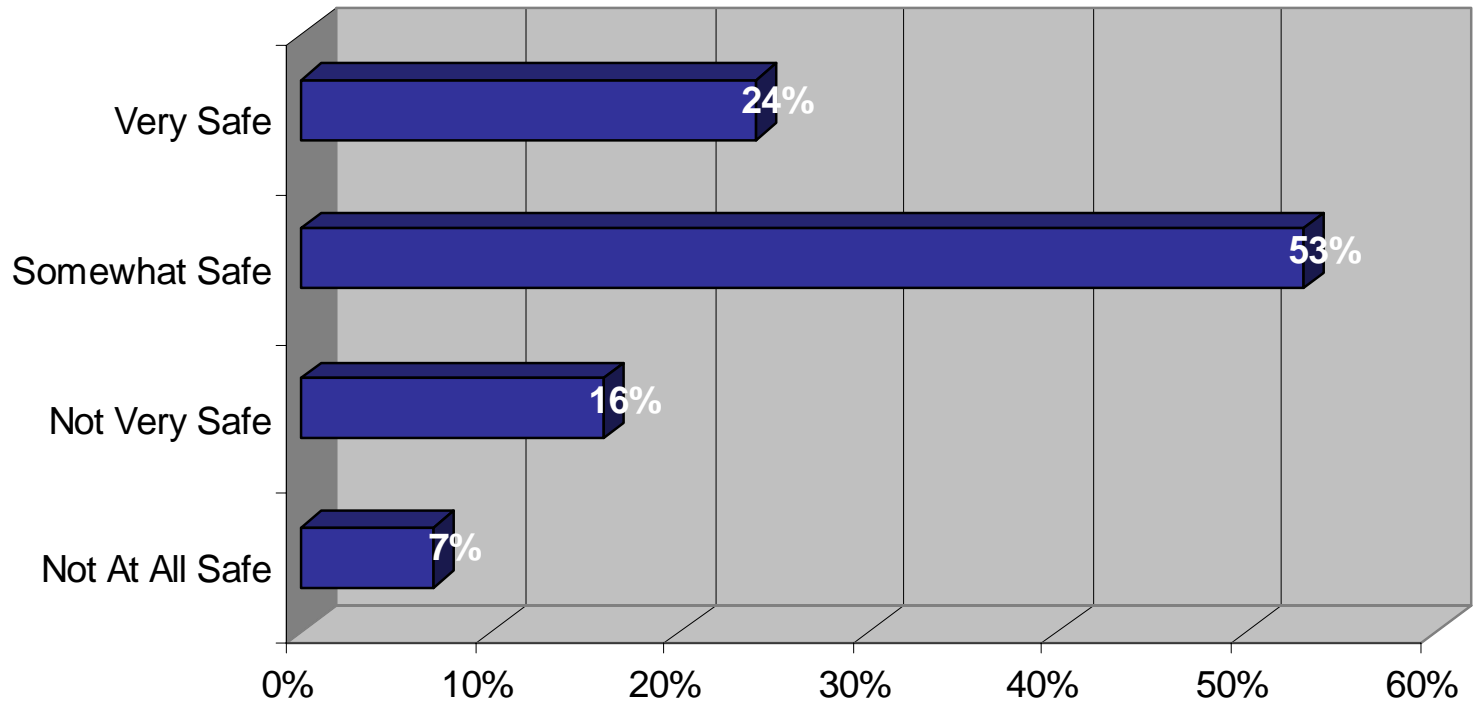
Awareness and Perceptions

Awareness and Perceptions

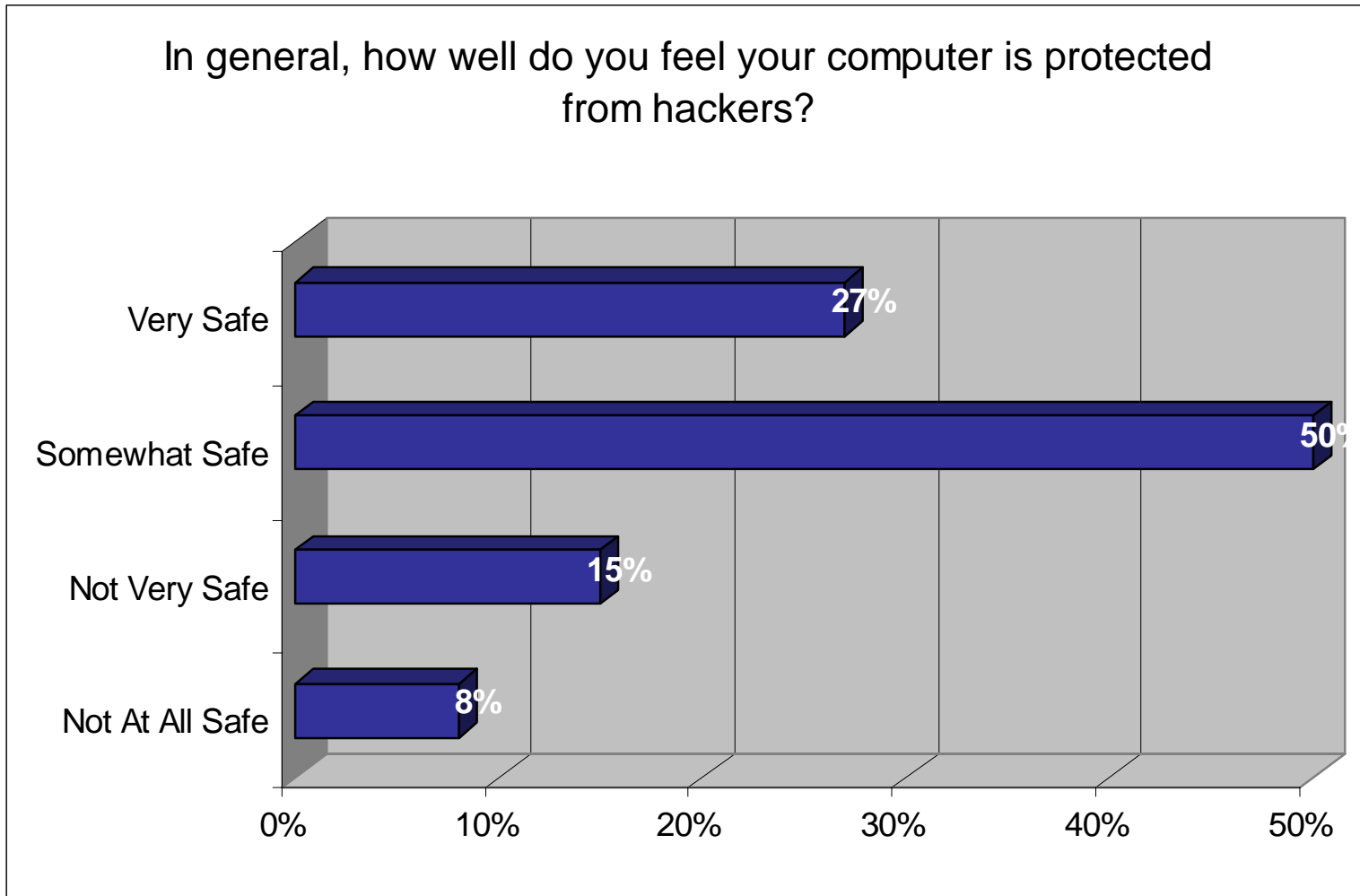


Awareness and Perceptions

How well do you feel your computer is protected from viruses and Trojan Horse programs?

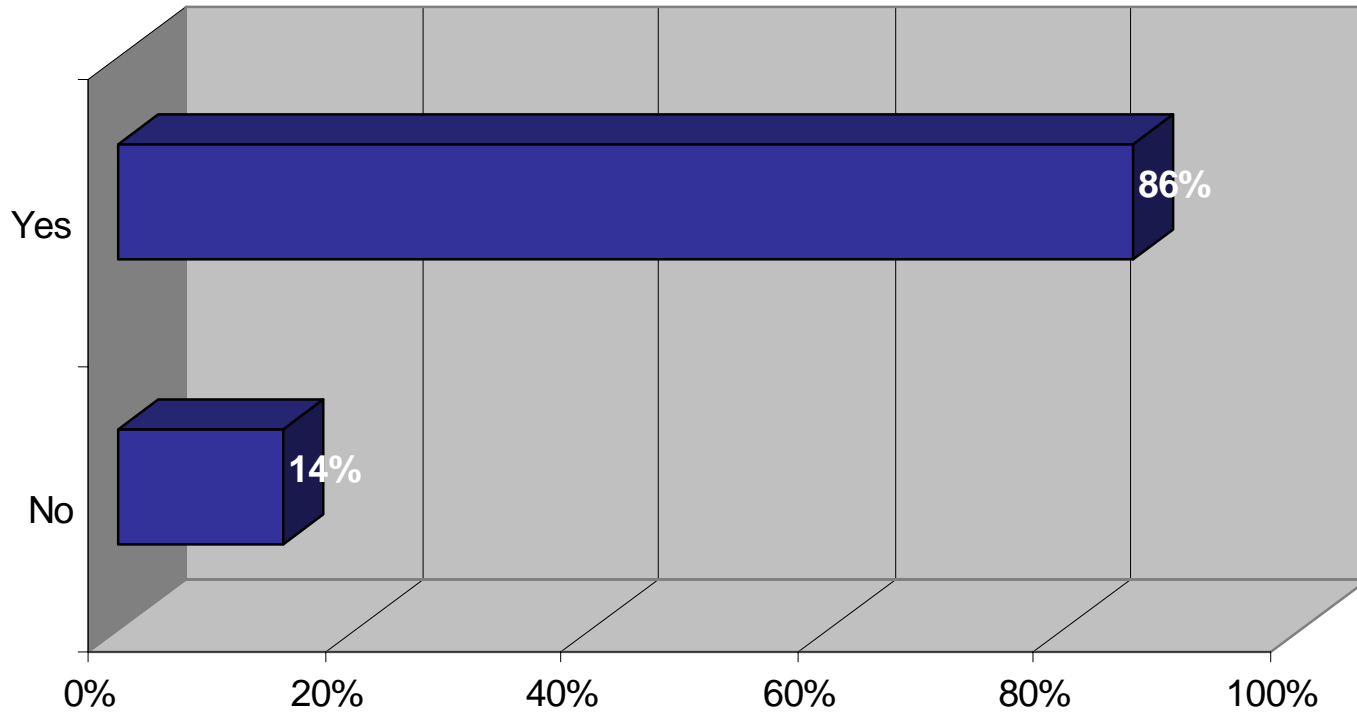


Awareness and Perceptions



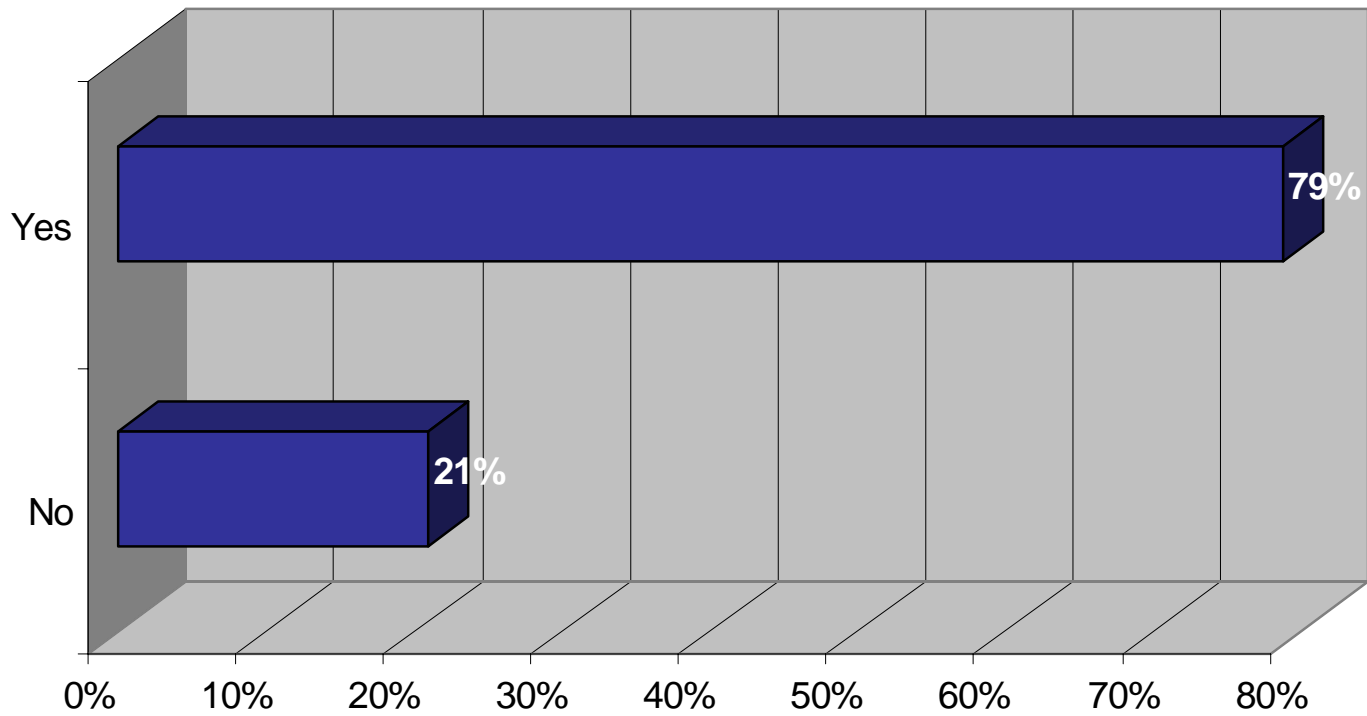
Awareness and Perceptions

Do you keep any "sensitive" information on your home computer, such as personal correspondence, resumes or professional records, or health or financial information?



Awareness and Perceptions

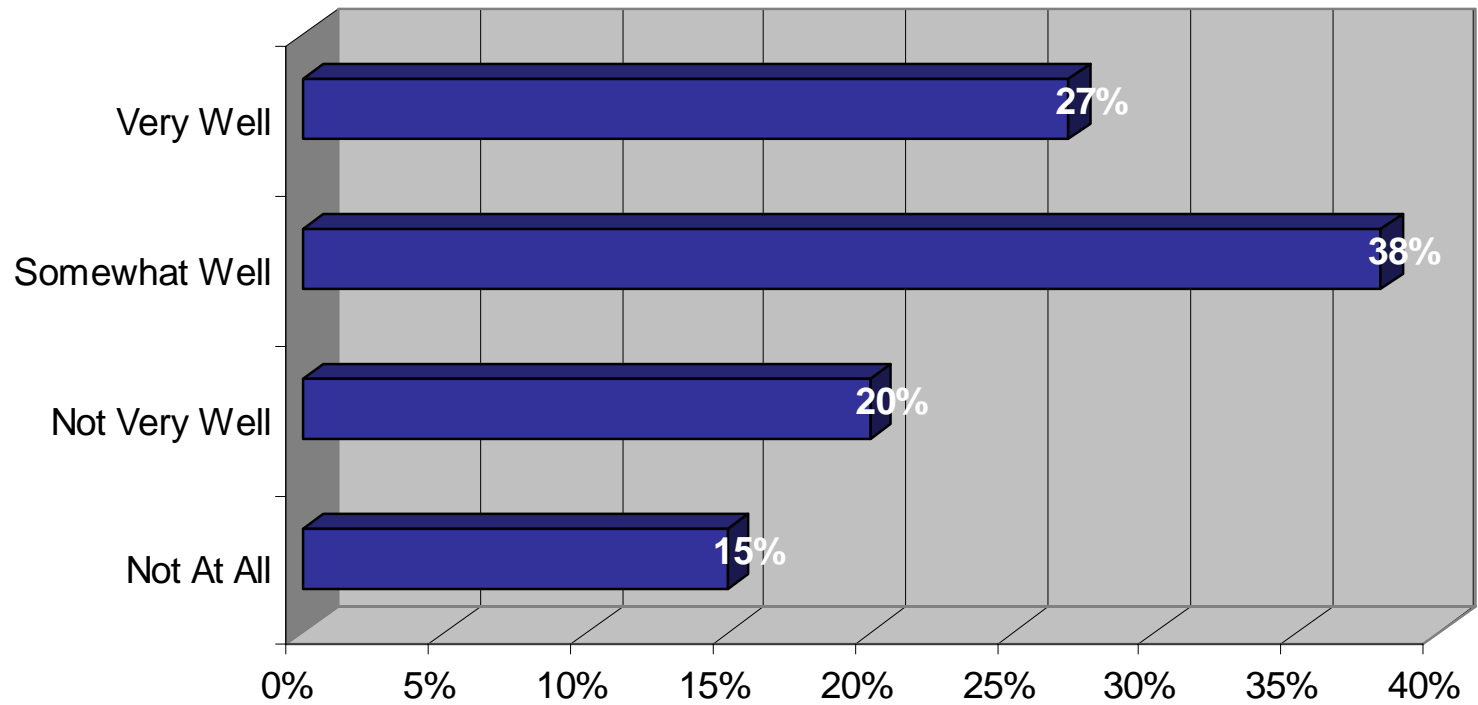
Do you use the Internet for "sensitive" transactions from your home computer, such as banking, stock trading, or reviewing personal medical information?



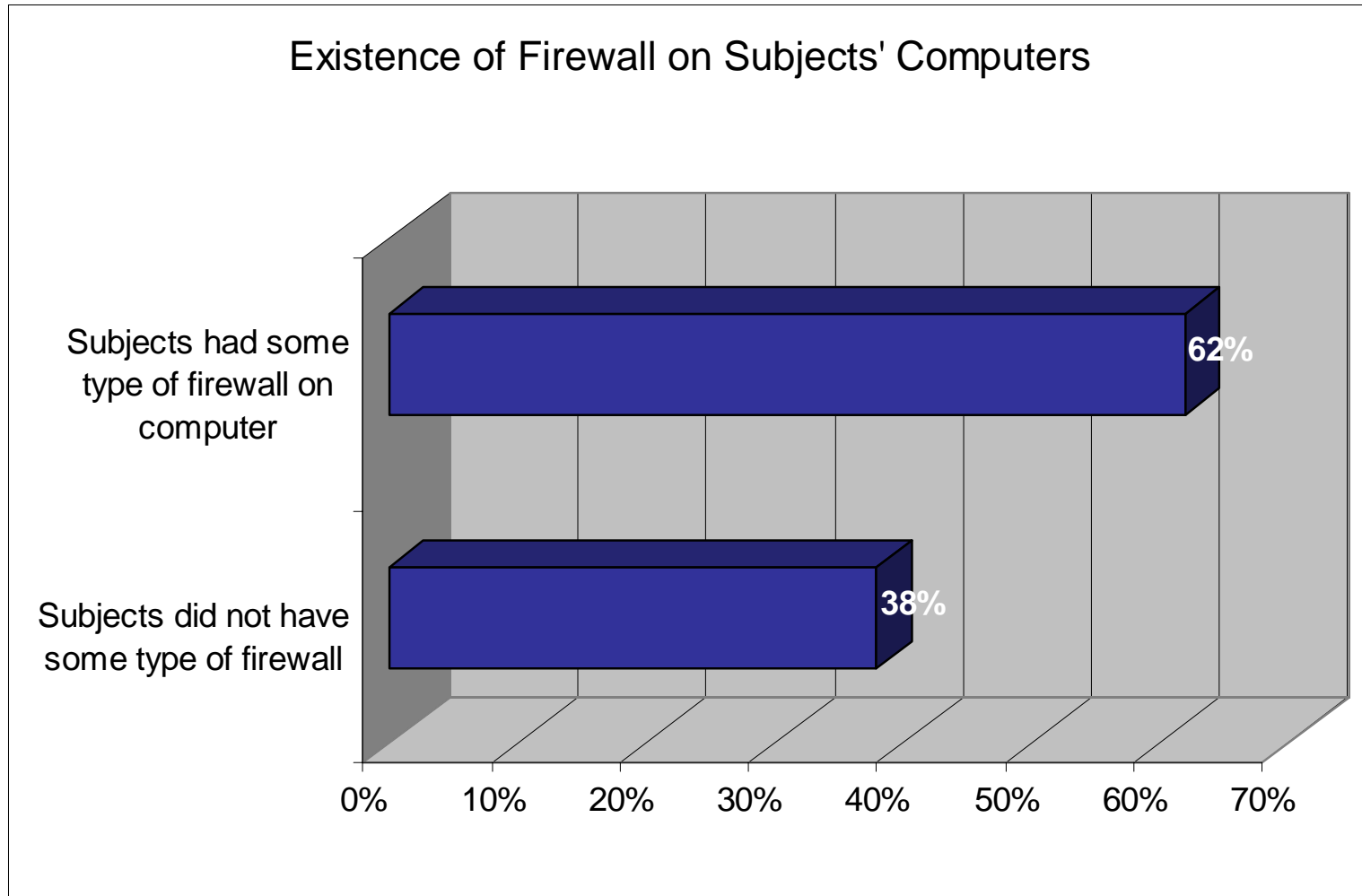
Firewall

Firewall

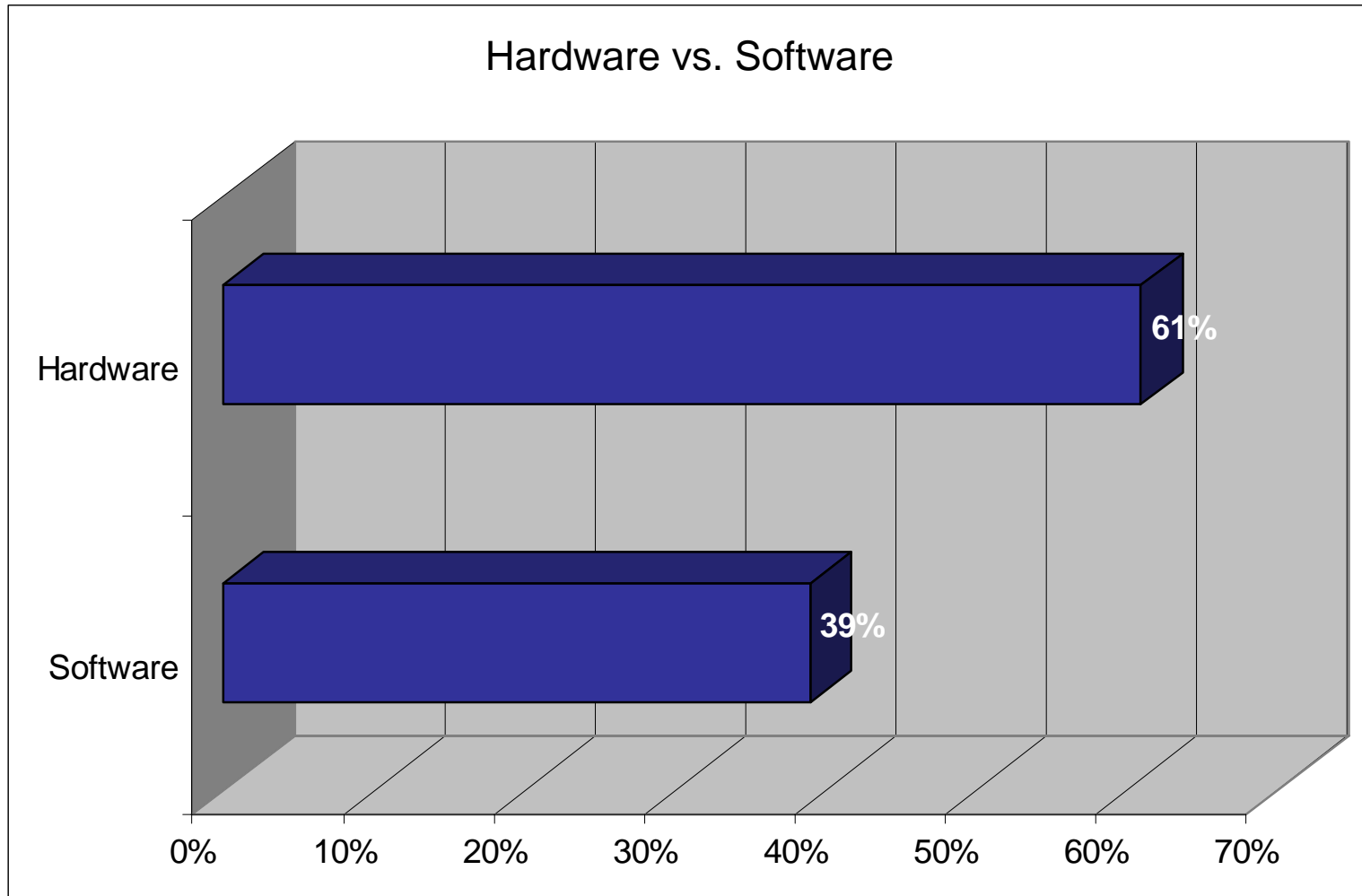
How well the subjects believed they understood what a firewall is and how it works



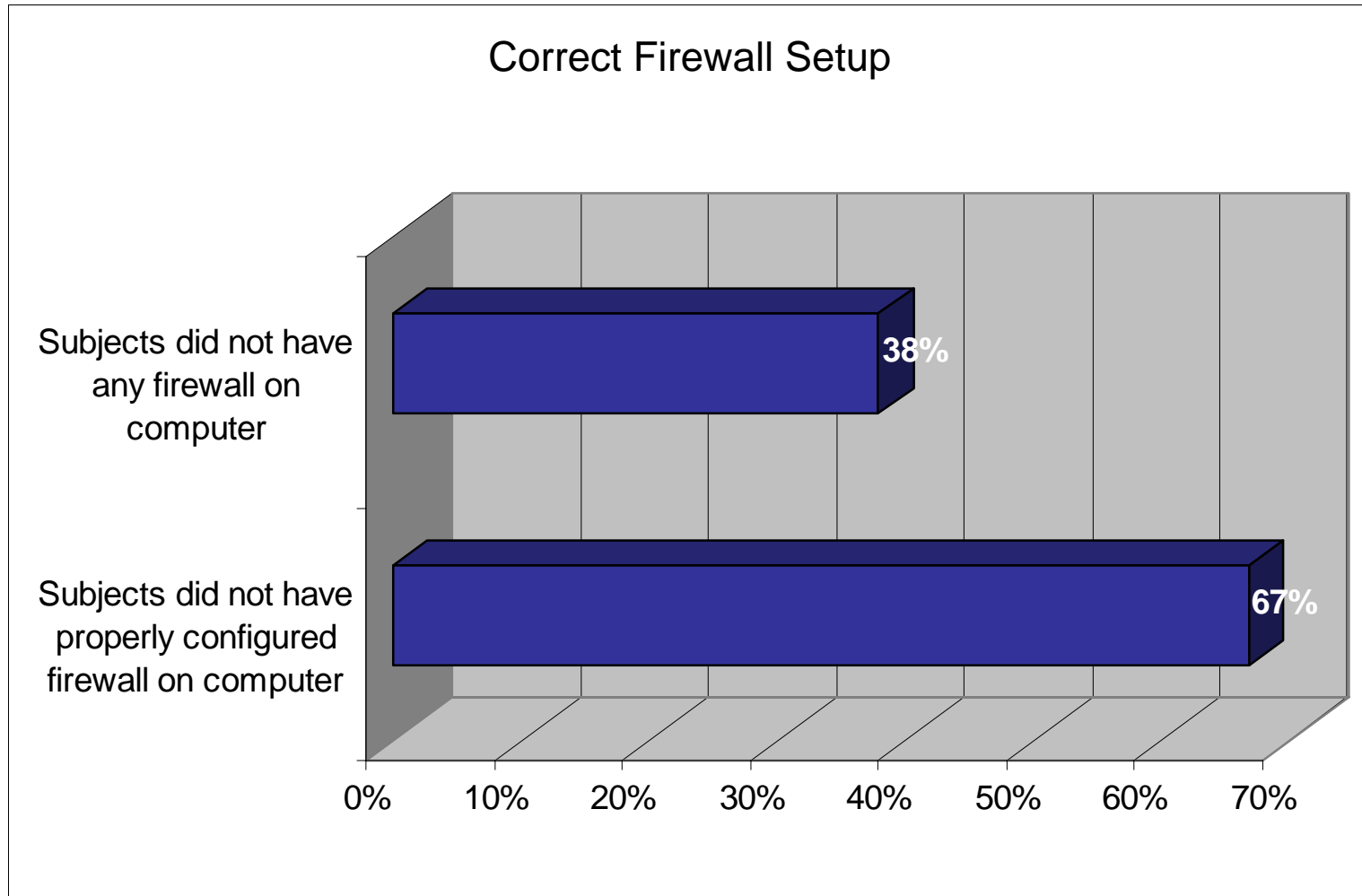
Firewall



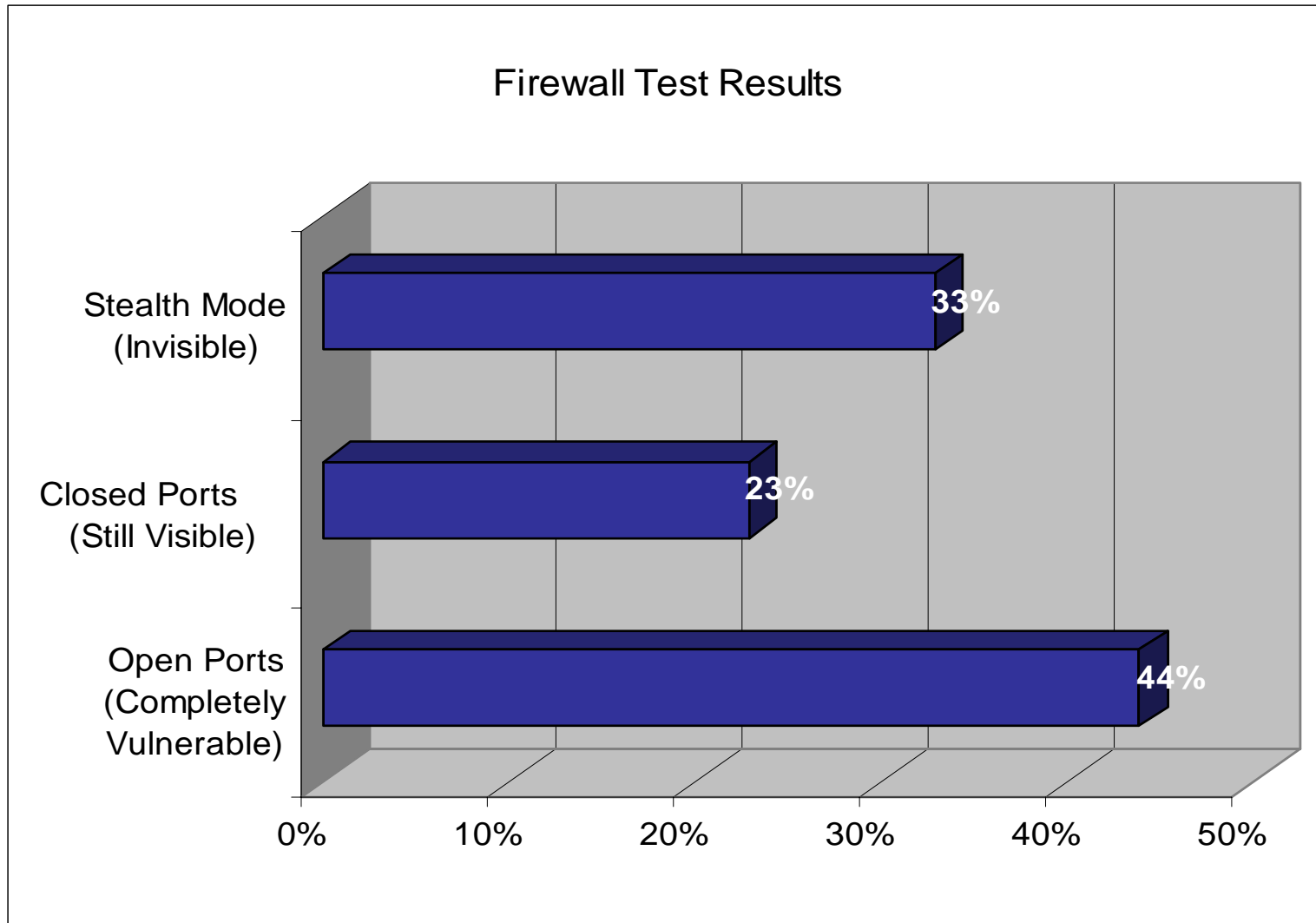
Firewall



Firewall

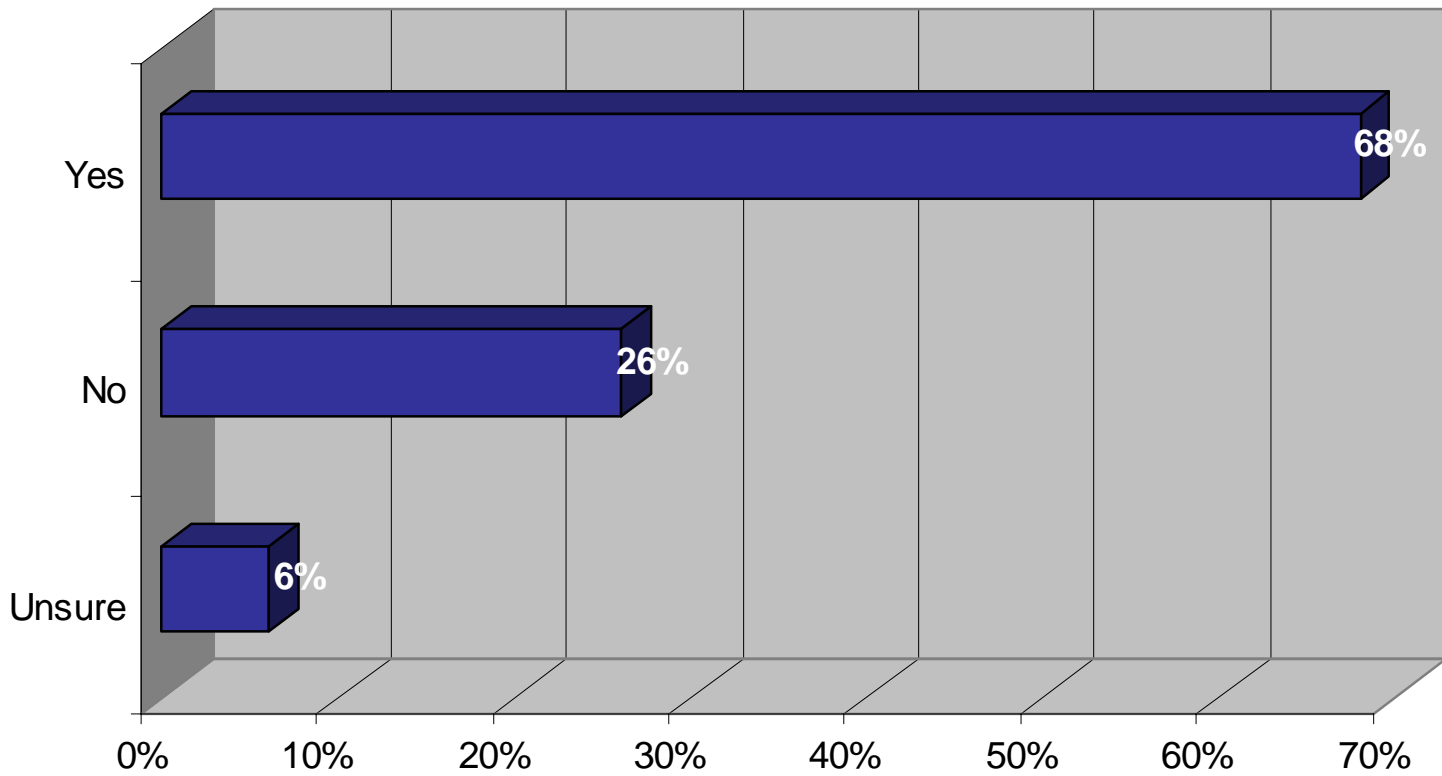


Firewall

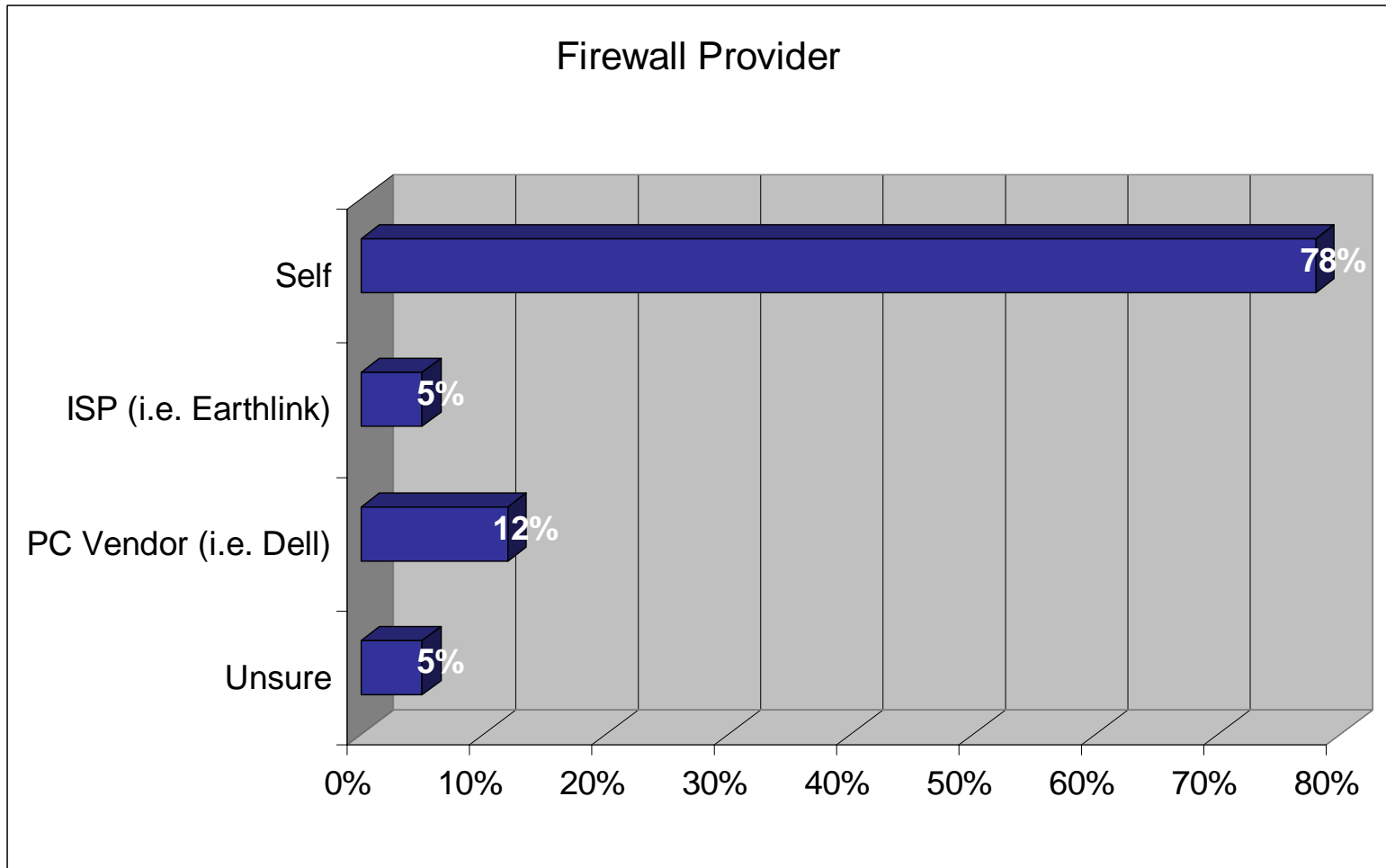


Firewall

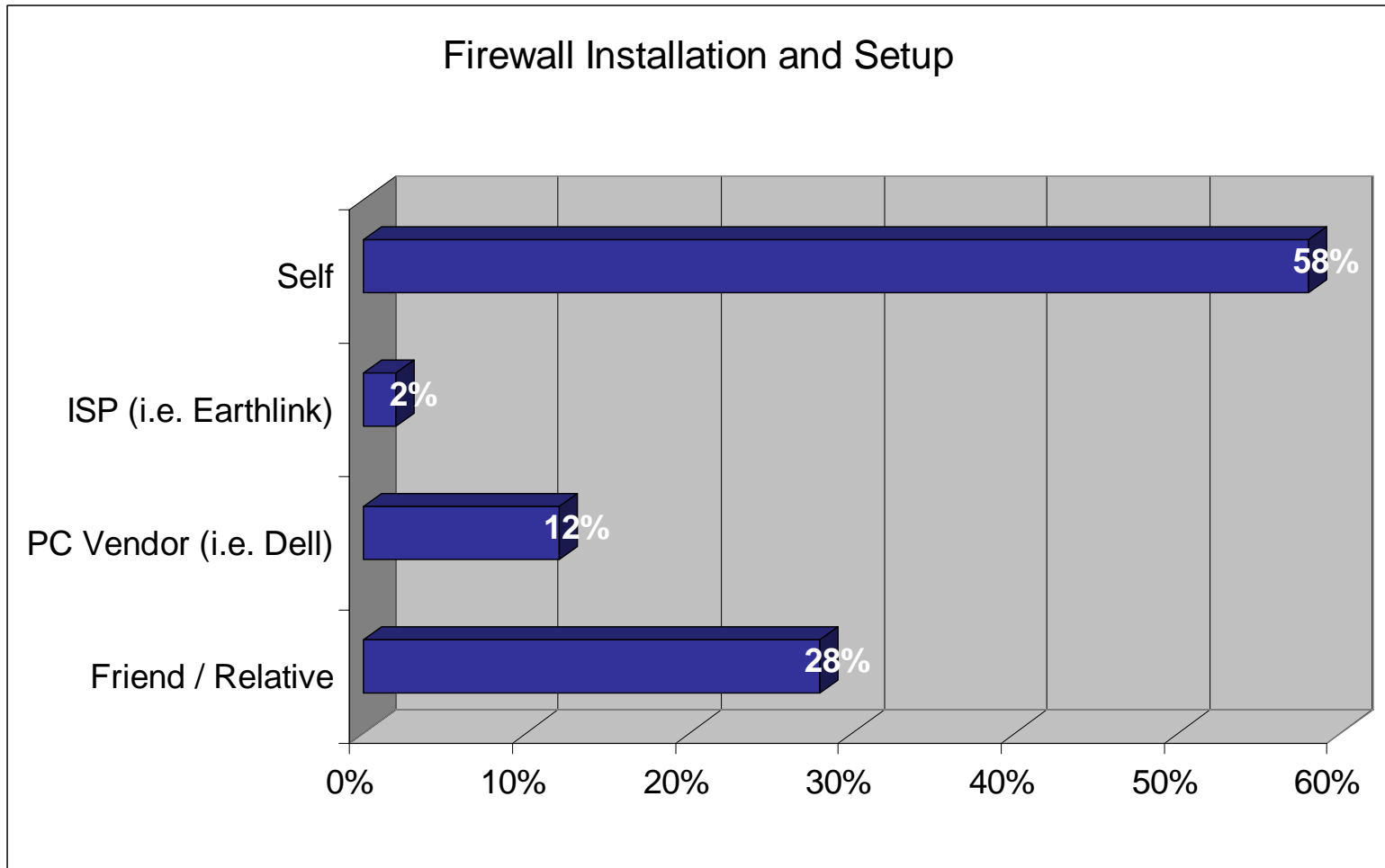
Subjects with firewall protection thought their firewall would provide comprehensive protection for their computer



Firewall

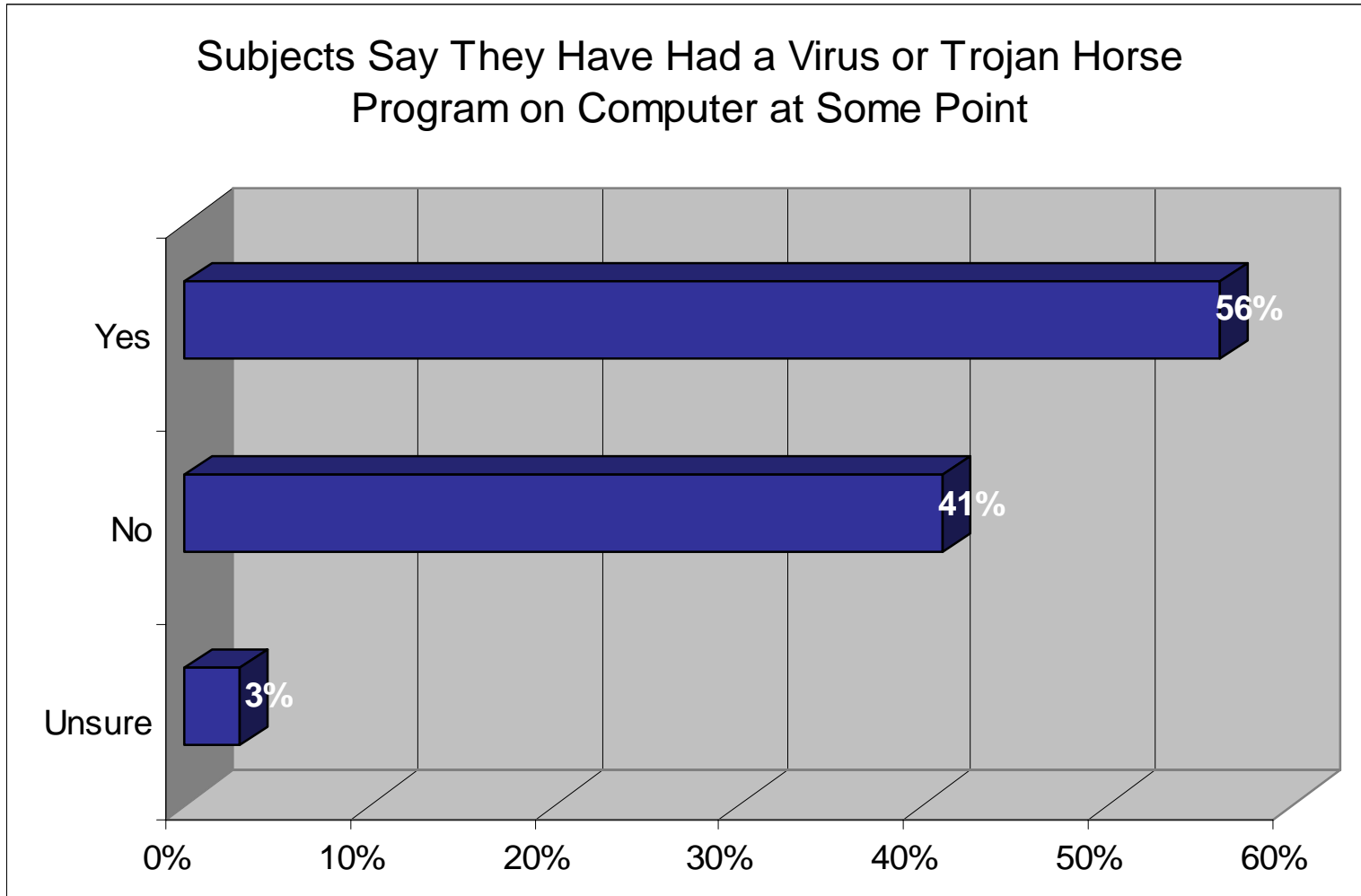


Firewall

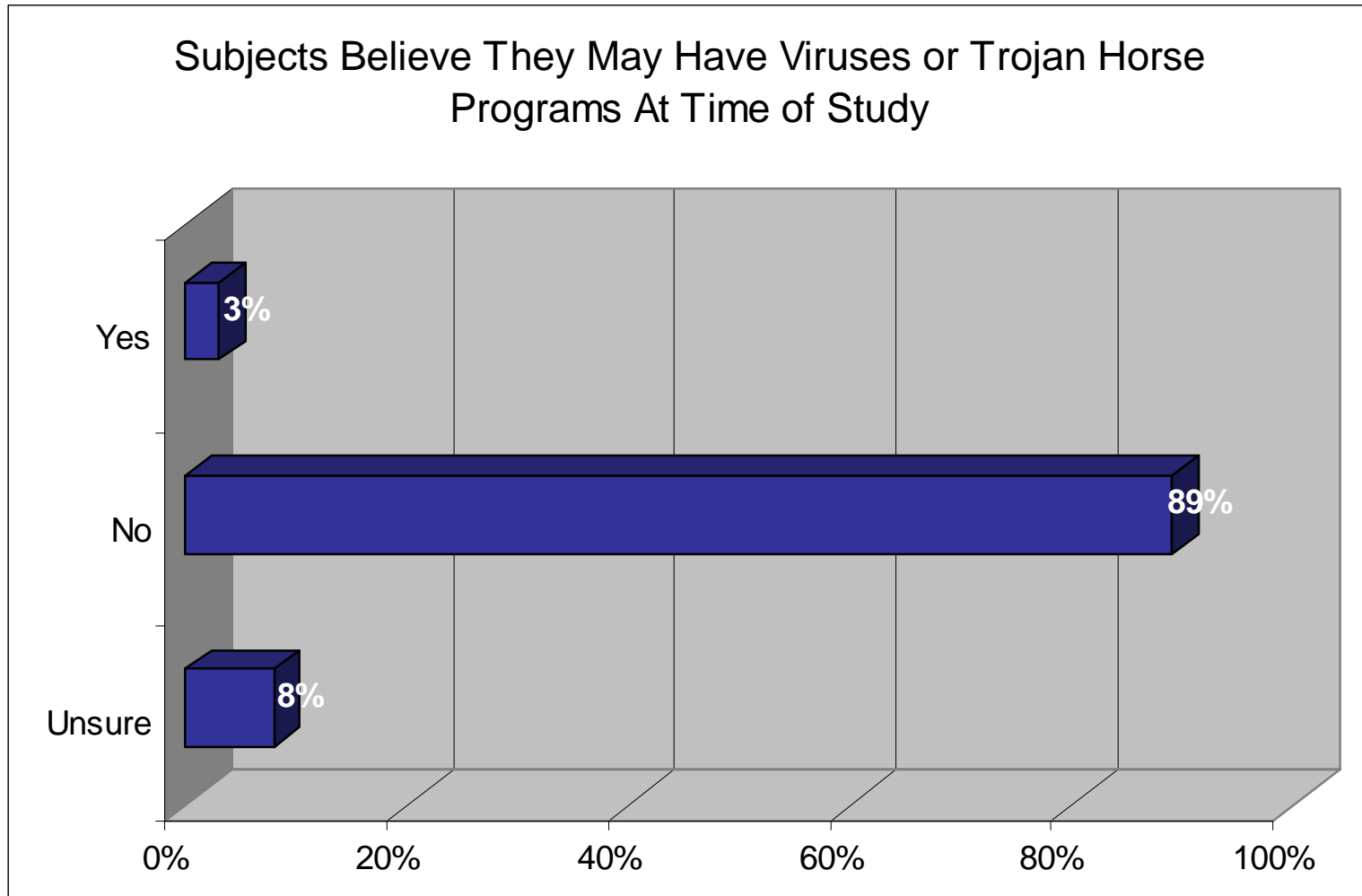


Antivirus

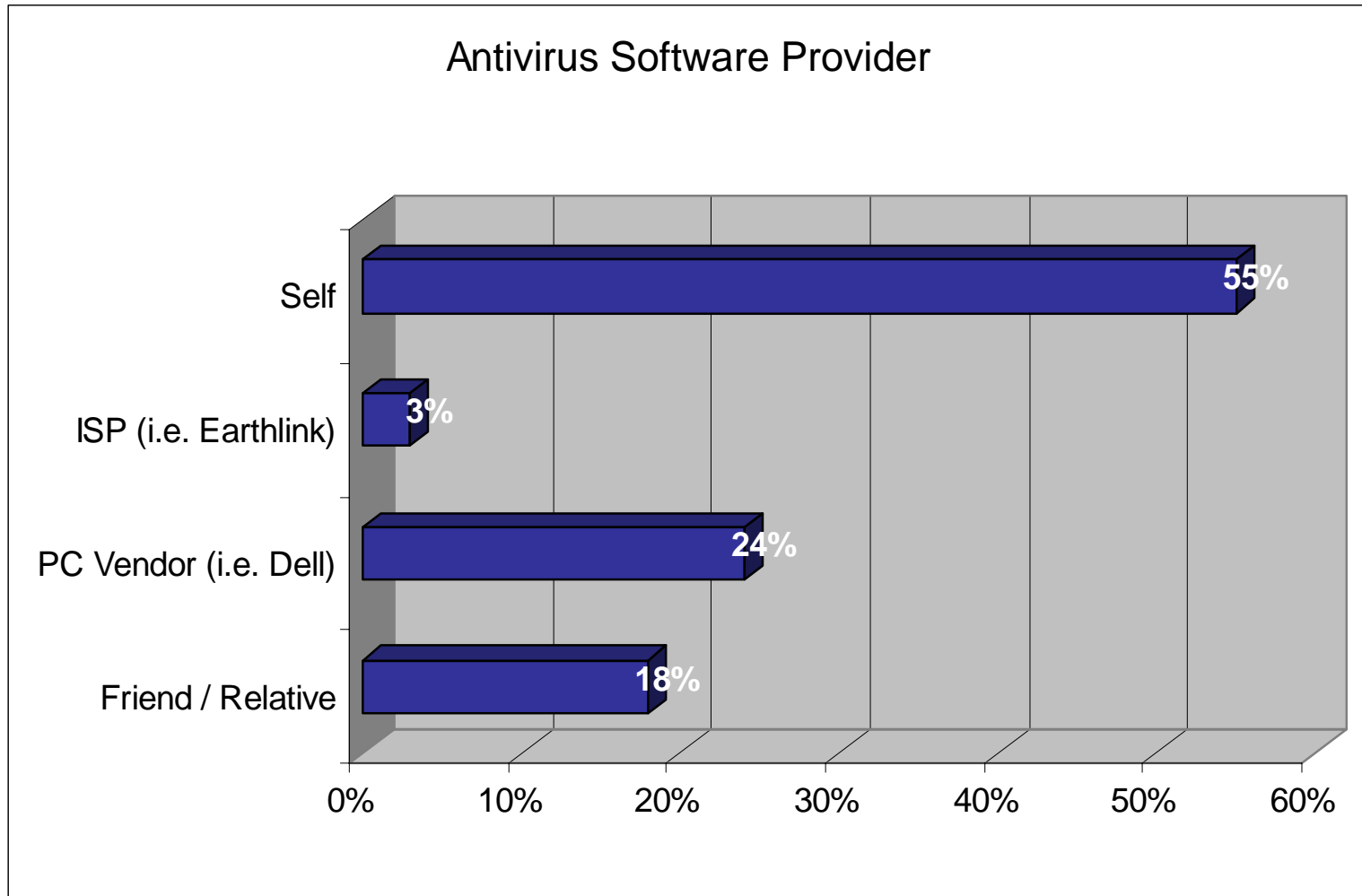
Antivirus



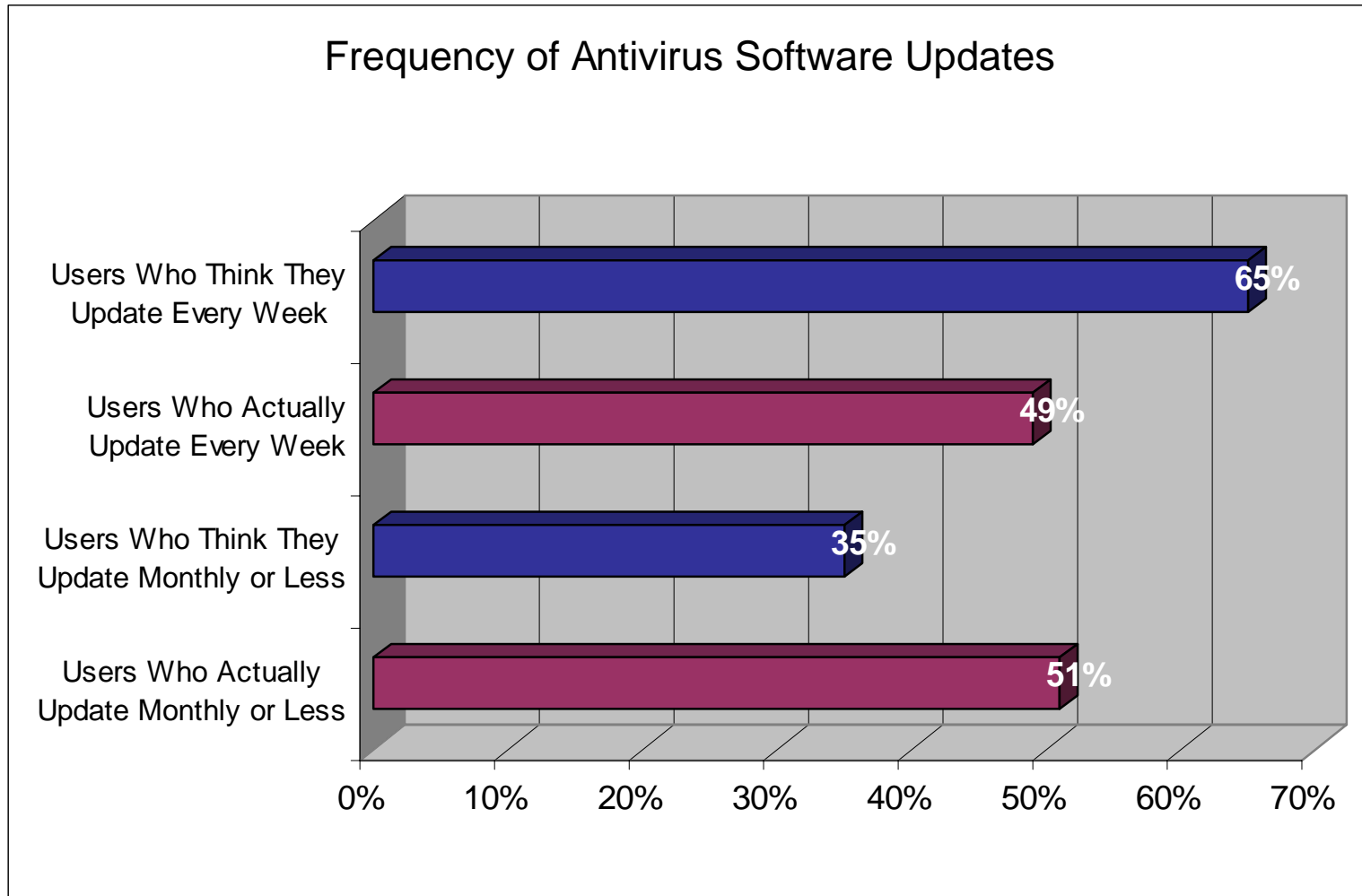
Antivirus



Antivirus

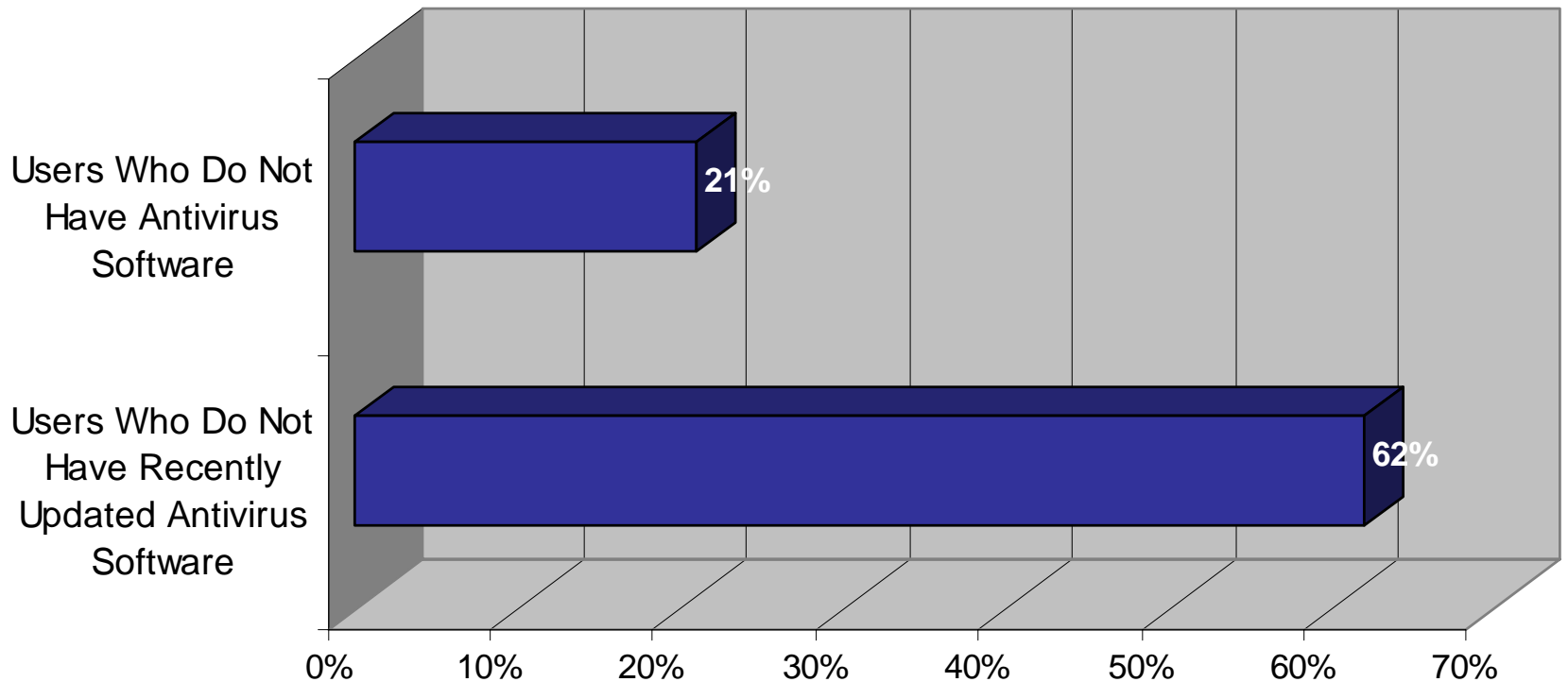


Antivirus

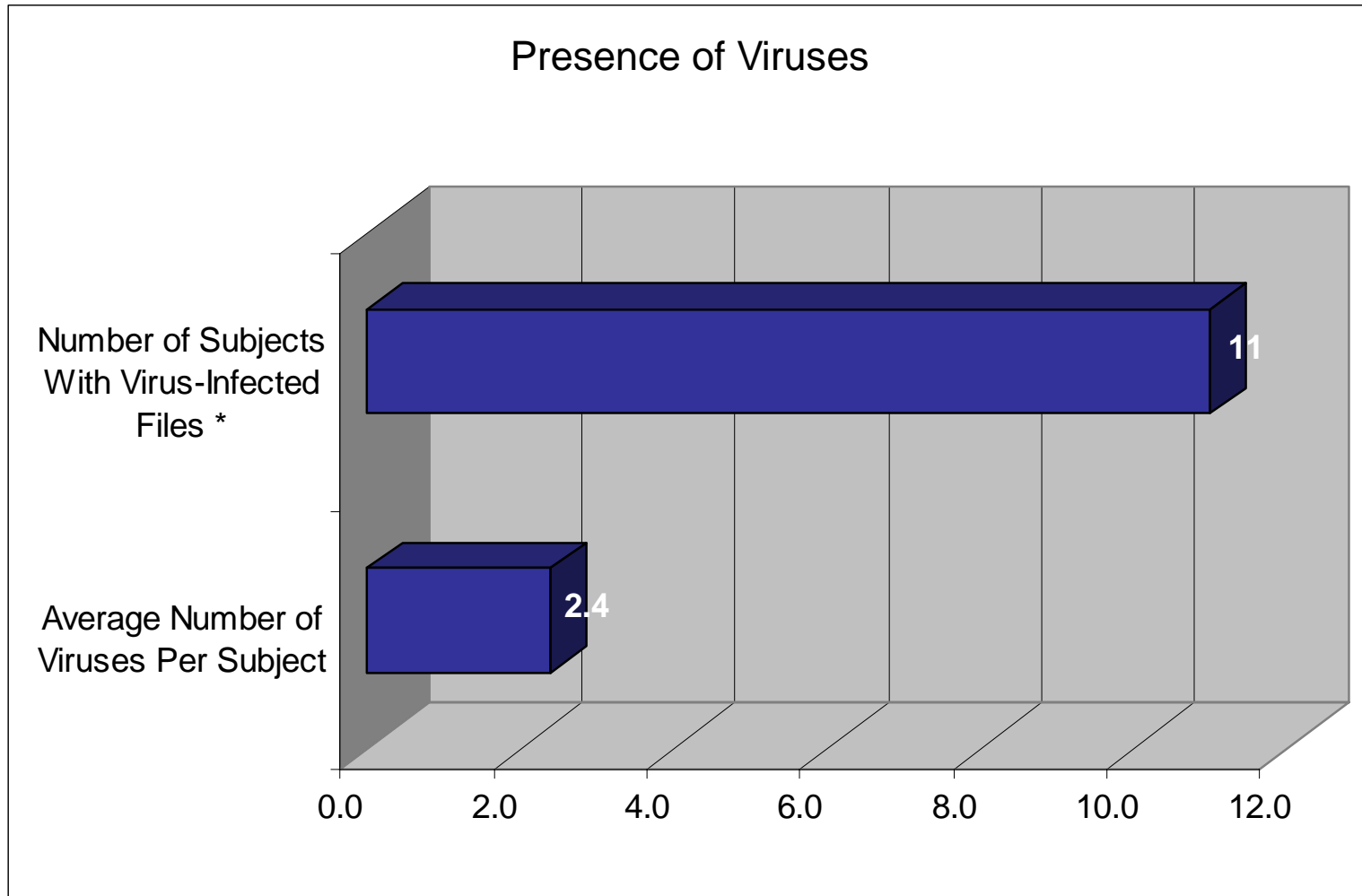


Antivirus

Existence of Antivirus Software On Subjects' Computers



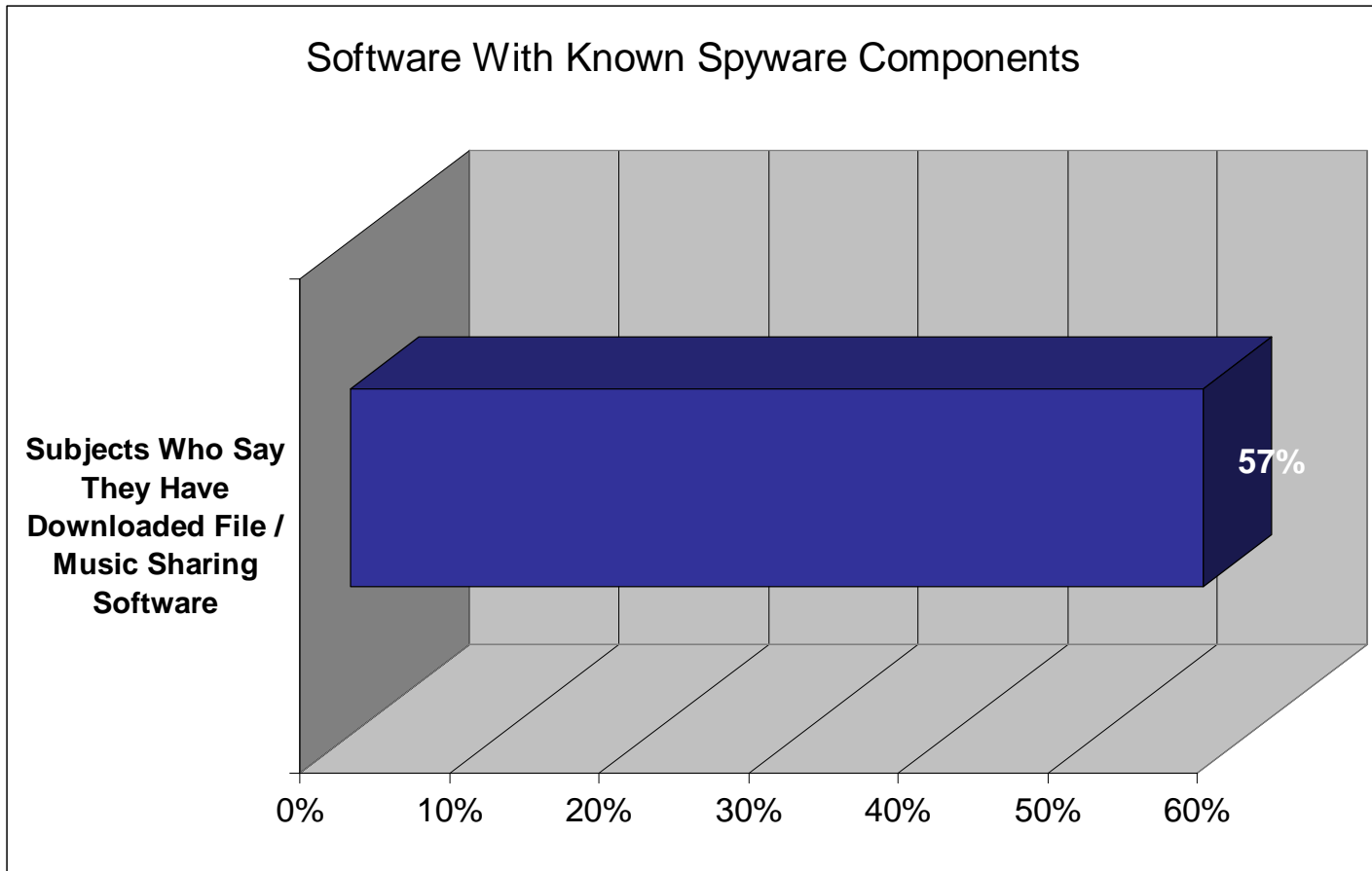
Antivirus



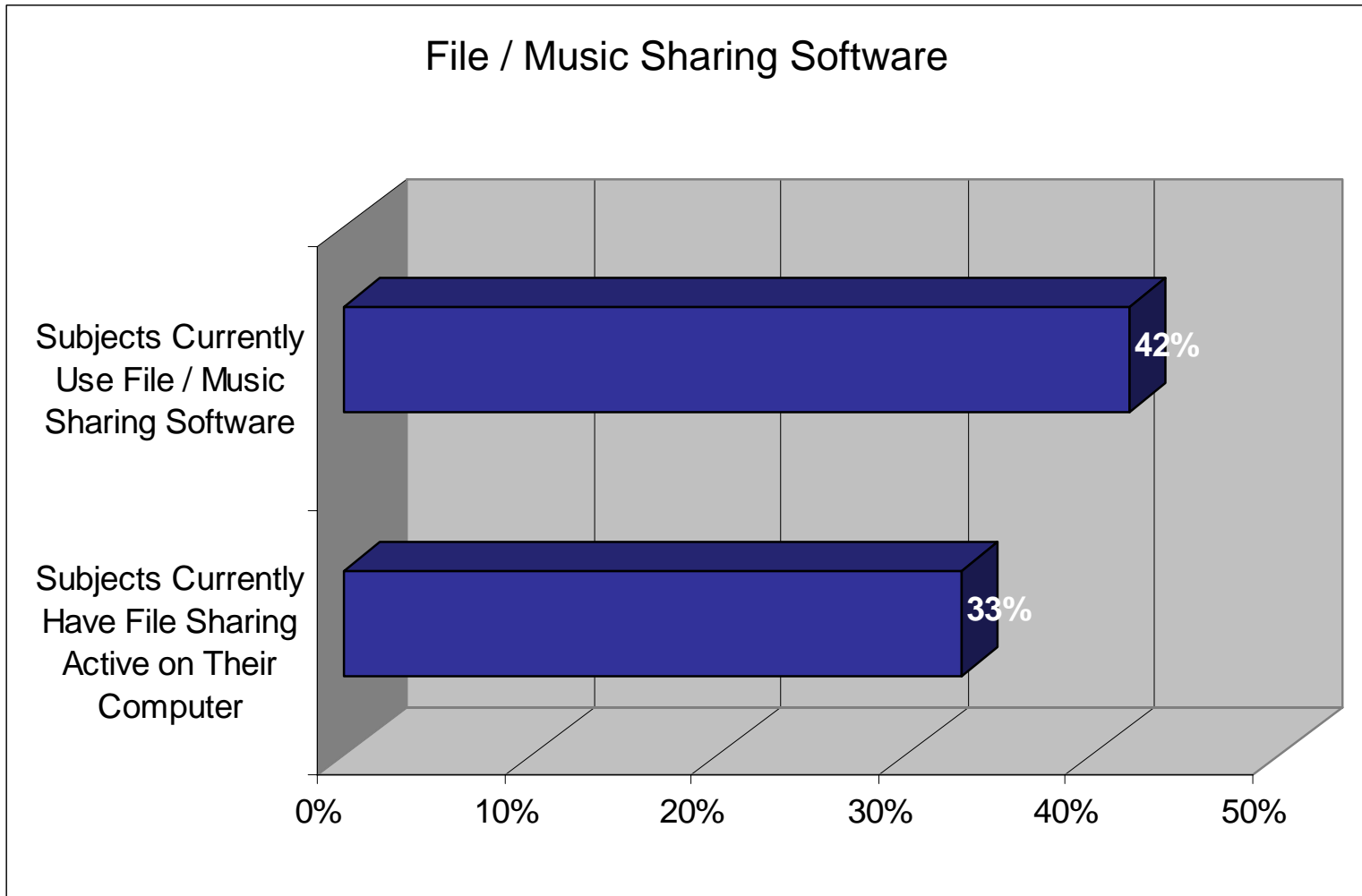
* 11 subjects out of 120, or 9% of the total subjects surveyed

Spyware

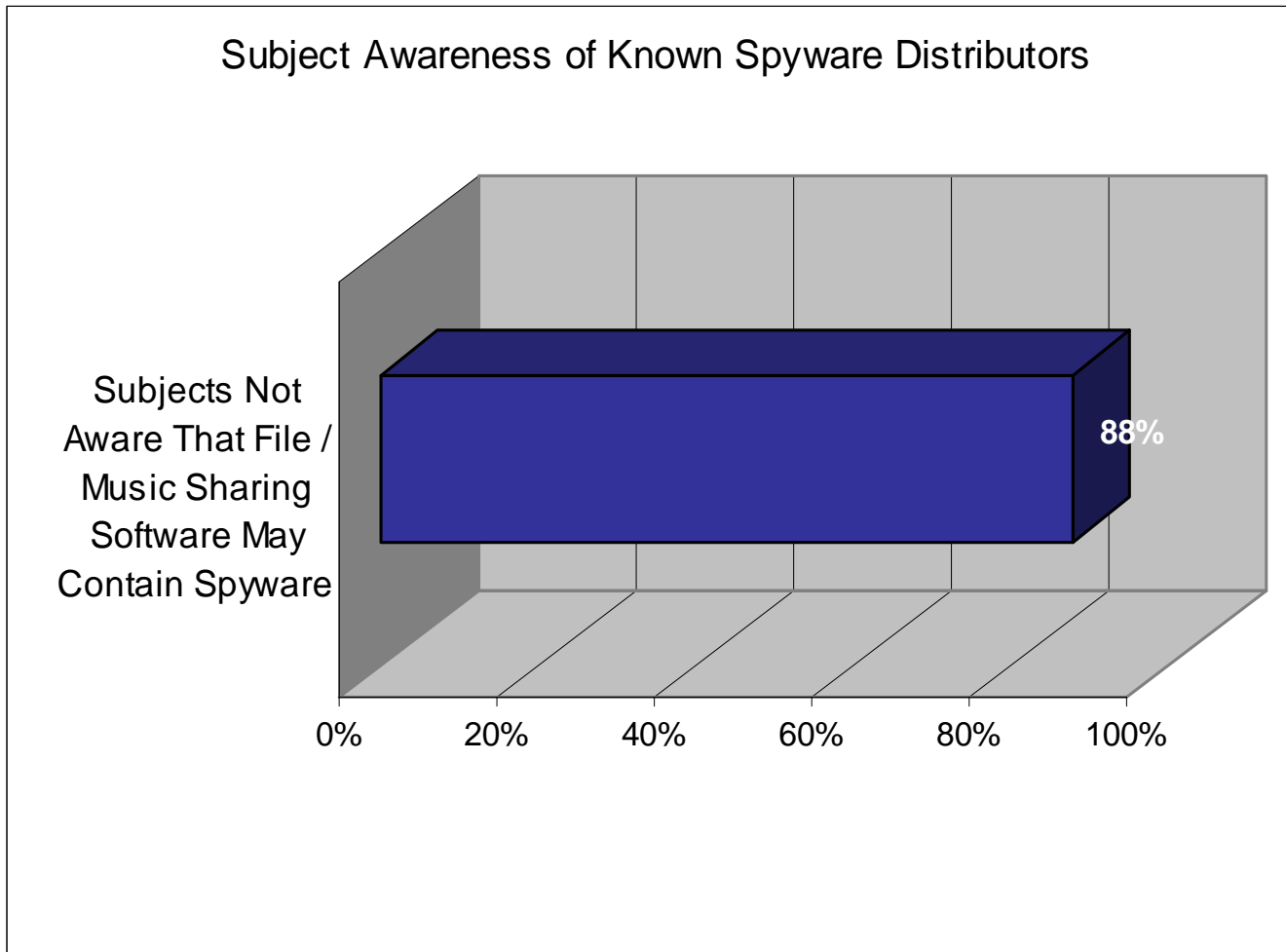
Spyware



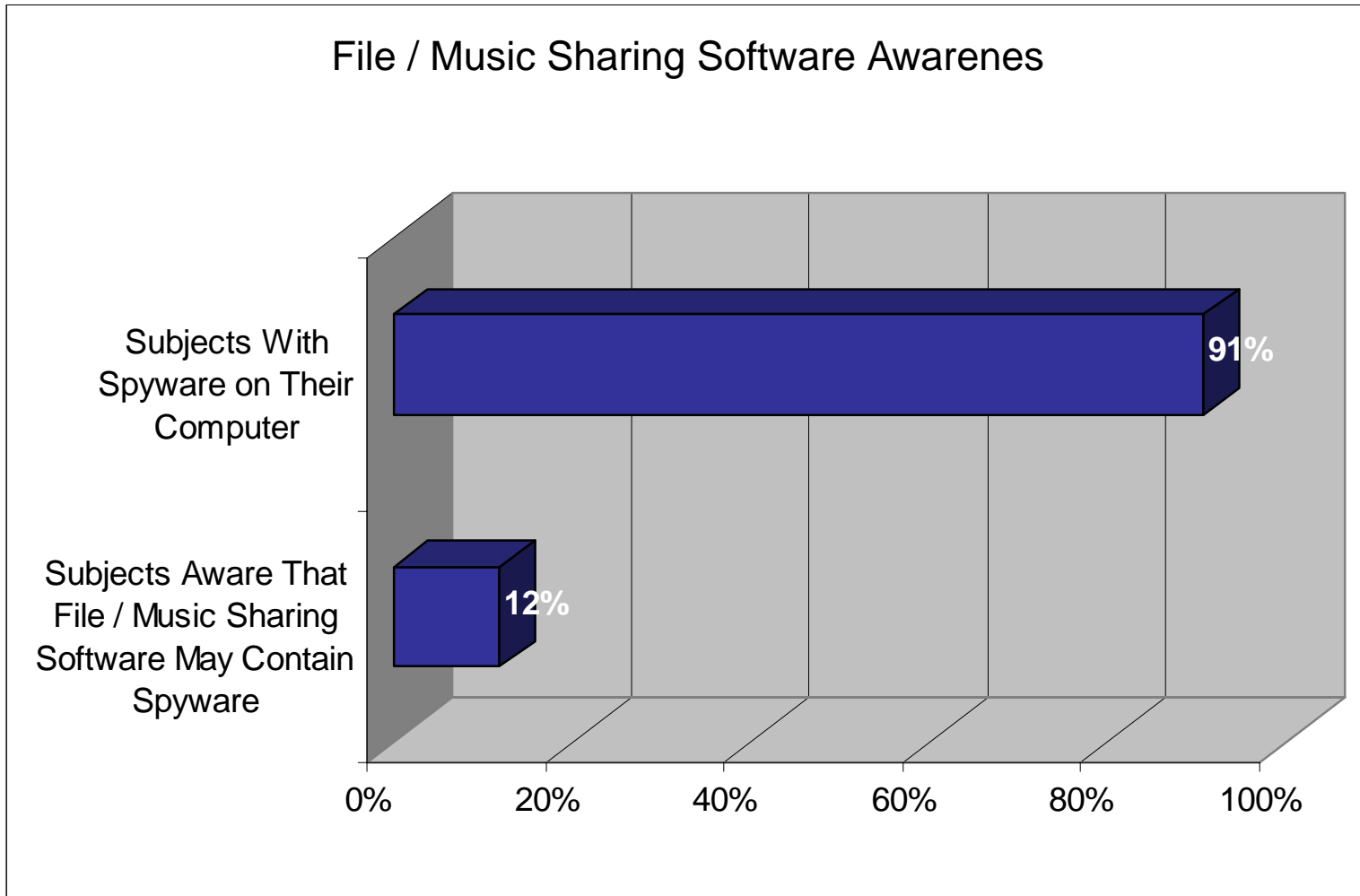
Spyware



Spyware

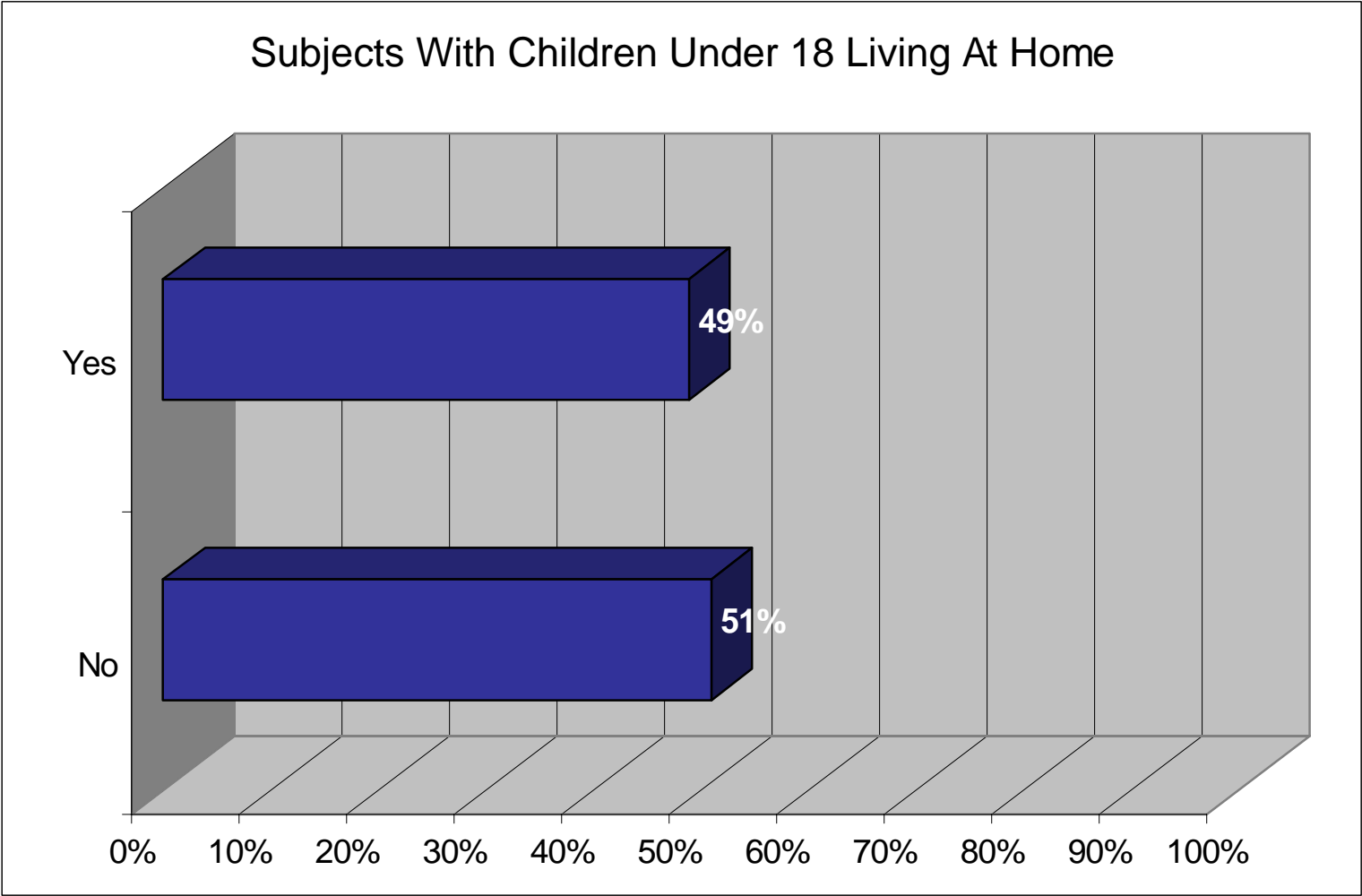


Spyware



Parental Controls

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