

A survey on the actual living situation of patients who continuously use Free/Low-Cost Medical Care Program

Masahiro Nakano¹⁾ Yoshie Yuki¹⁾

1) Nishiyodo Hospital



1. Background and Objectives

The number of applicants for Free/Low-Cost Medical Care Program at Nishiyodo Hospital and Nozato Clinic continues to increase, and there are more and more inquiries about the program from business operators in the community and public institutions as well. Now that more than 10 years have passed since starting to practice the program, a survey was conducted in order to revisit the significance of continuing Free/Low-Cost Medical Care Program, and to find out the actual living situation of program users to further develop the program.

2. Research Method / Intervention

Survey period: From March 2020 to March 2021

Target: Patients of Nishiyodo Hospital and Nozato Clinic who applied for continuous use of Free/Low-Cost Medical Care Program in fiscal year 2020.

Method: a survey sheet was handed out at the time of application, and patients were asked to fill it out anonymously.

3. Conclusion / Lessons Learned

From the survey results, we learned following results. For status of applicants, about 80 percent were solitary or family of a couple only. About 90 percent were in their 60s or older. And, 80 percent were unemployed.

Most of the applicants were pensioners, but 10 percent of them lived on income in combination of pension and work salary or family support, which indicated that it was difficult to live on pensions alone.

Many of the applicants kept using the program for a long period of time, with 70 percent or more of them using it for 2 years or longer, and 20 percent for 5 years or longer.

Looking at the changes before and after using the Free/Low-Cost Medical Care Program, approximately 70 percent of the applicants refrained from seeing a doctor before using the program, while over 90 percent of the program users felt more comfortable with visiting medical institutions after application. As for health conditions after using the program, 70 percent mentioned improvement. On the other hand, 40 percent of the applicants answered that the overall financial situation had not changed in their daily lives, which made us realize that such challenges are too difficult to be solved only by healthcare alone, and it is essential to continue the counseling activities by medical social workers.

4. Relationship with HPH

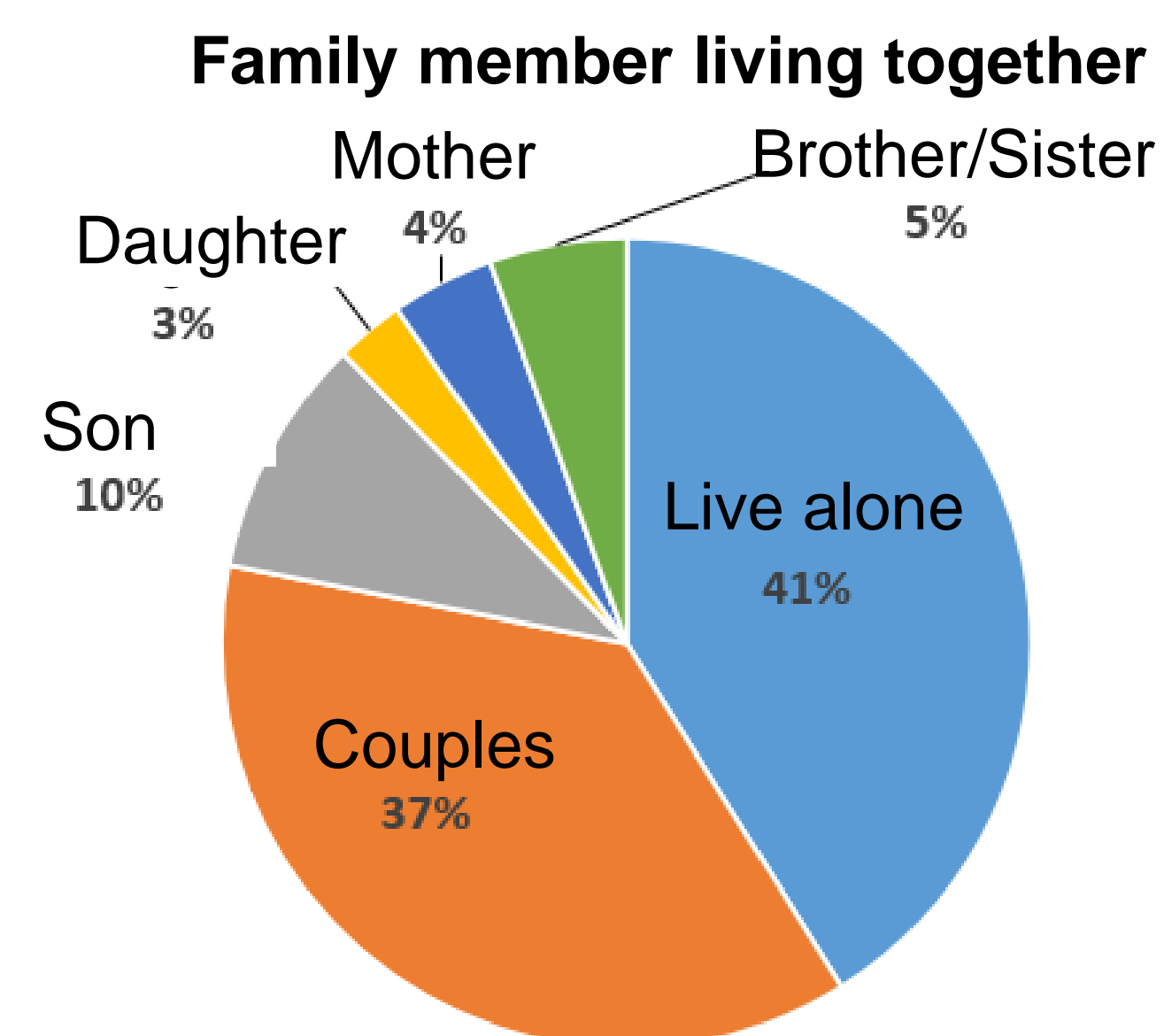
In a society where population is aging and health gap is growing, medical institutions are required to play their roles not only as provider of treatment but also to make contribution in building healthy communities. It seems that our Free/Low-Cost Medical Care Program has played a role in making such contributions.

5. Relationship with the main theme of the meeting

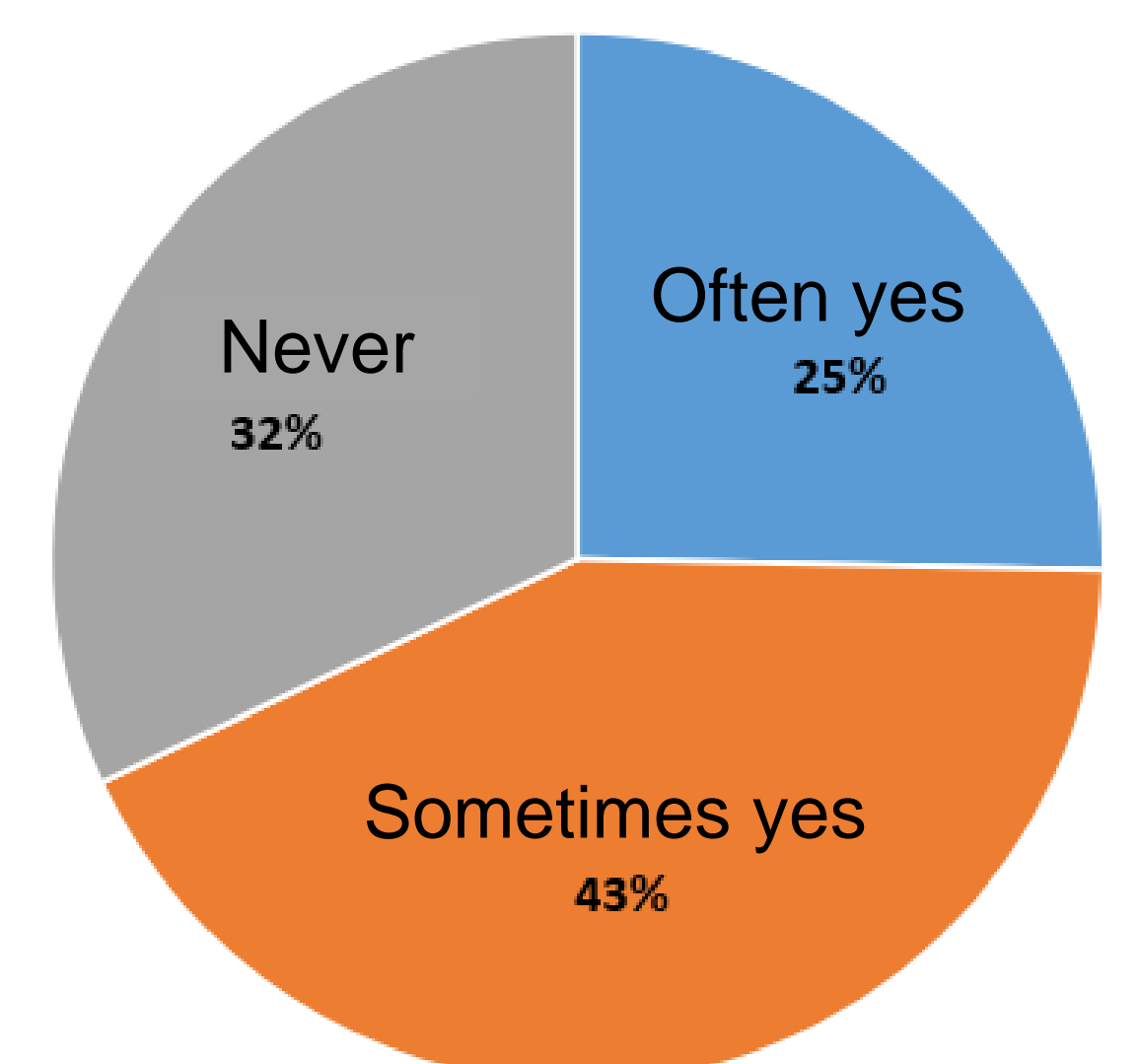
“Working for health equity -The contributions of health promoting hospitals and health services-”

According to this survey, many of the program applicants used to refrain from visiting a hospital, because they were unable to pay medical expenses due to economic hardship. Although Japan has a so-called welfare system, eligibility requirements are quite strict, and the reality is that some people hesitate to apply because they are concerned about what others will think of them.

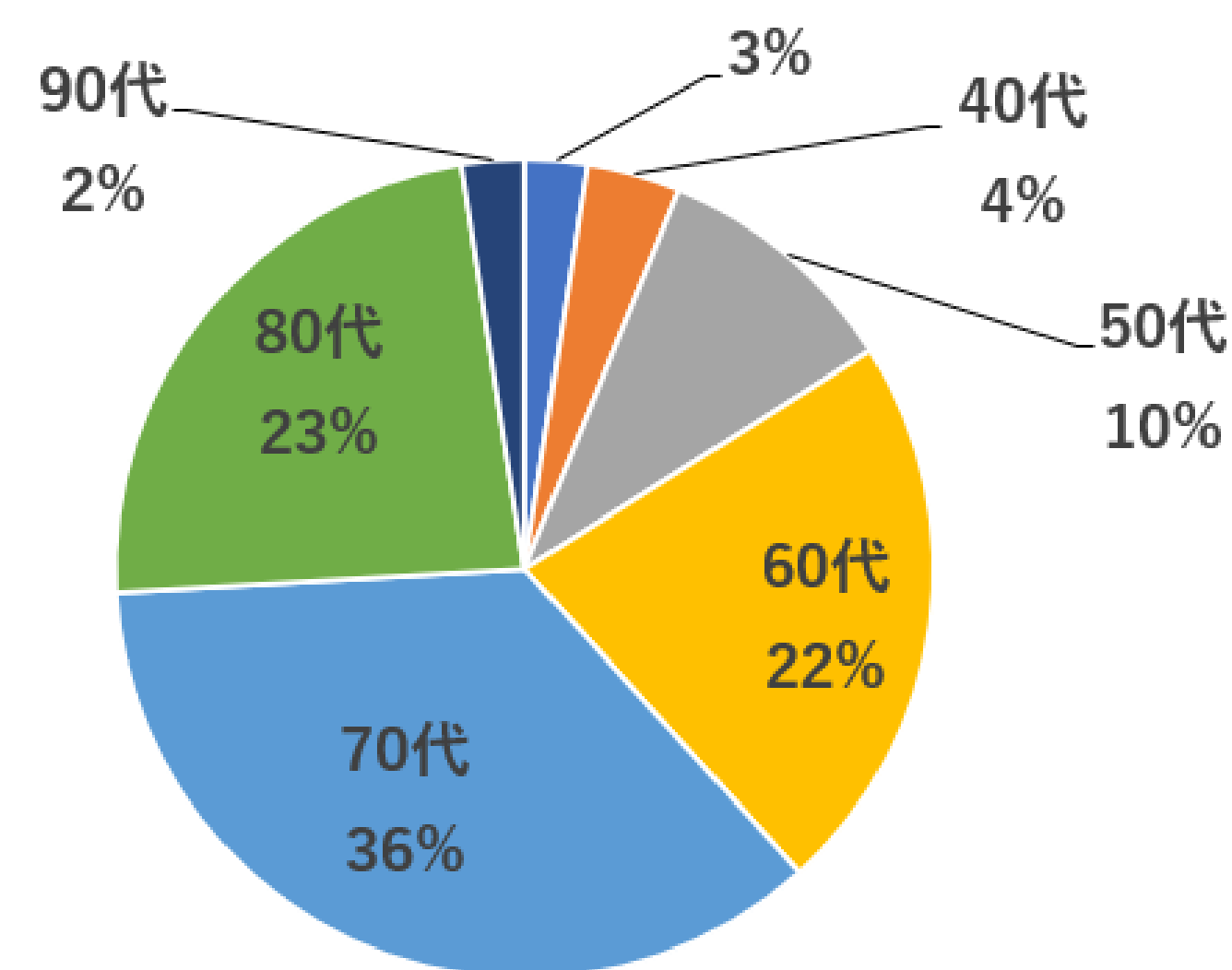
Therefore, it will be ideal if our hospital could enhance the Free/Low-Cost Medical Care Program and provide more in order to ensure health equity, the main theme of this year’s International Conference.



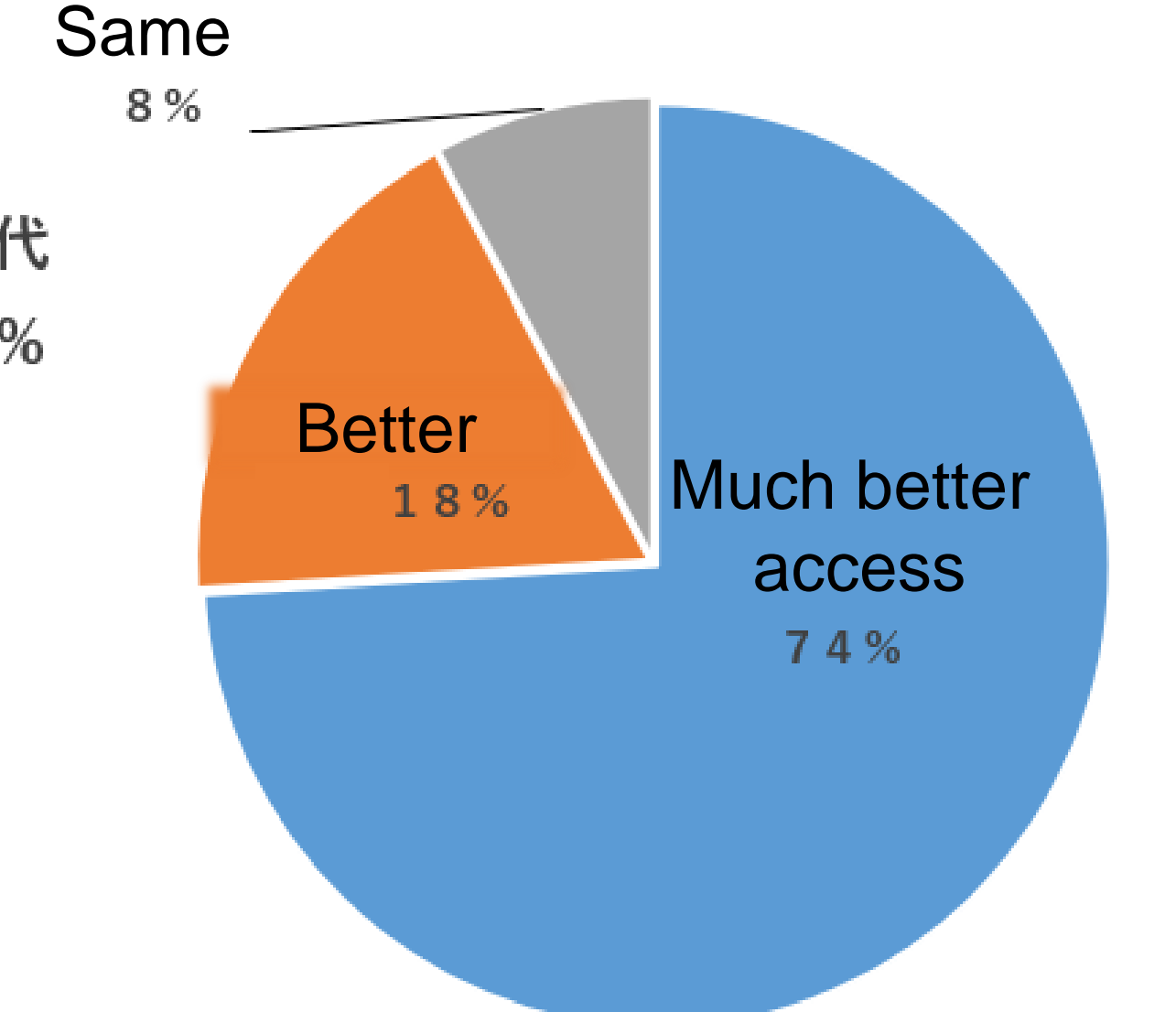
Ever Given up on hospital visit before



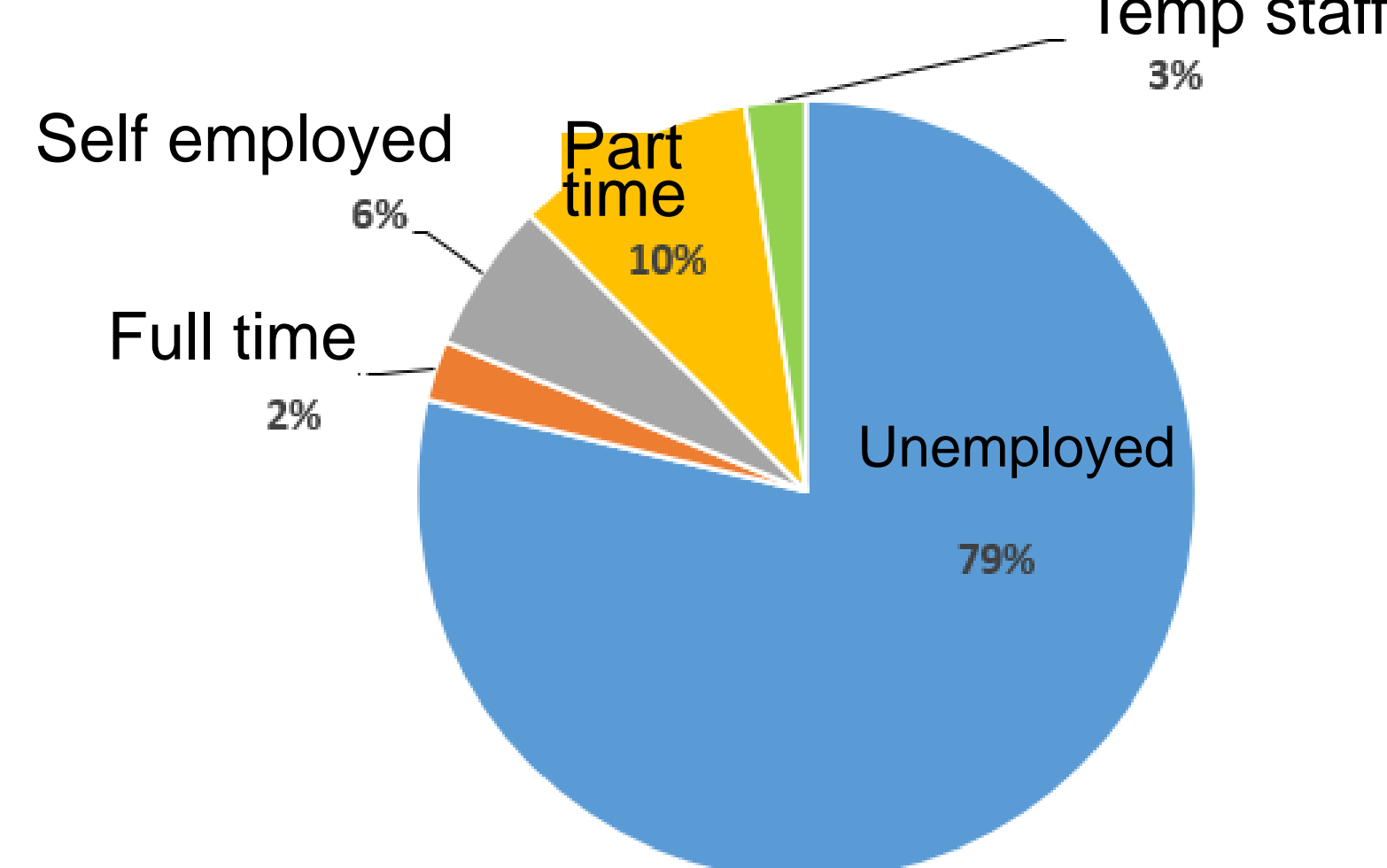
Age group 30代



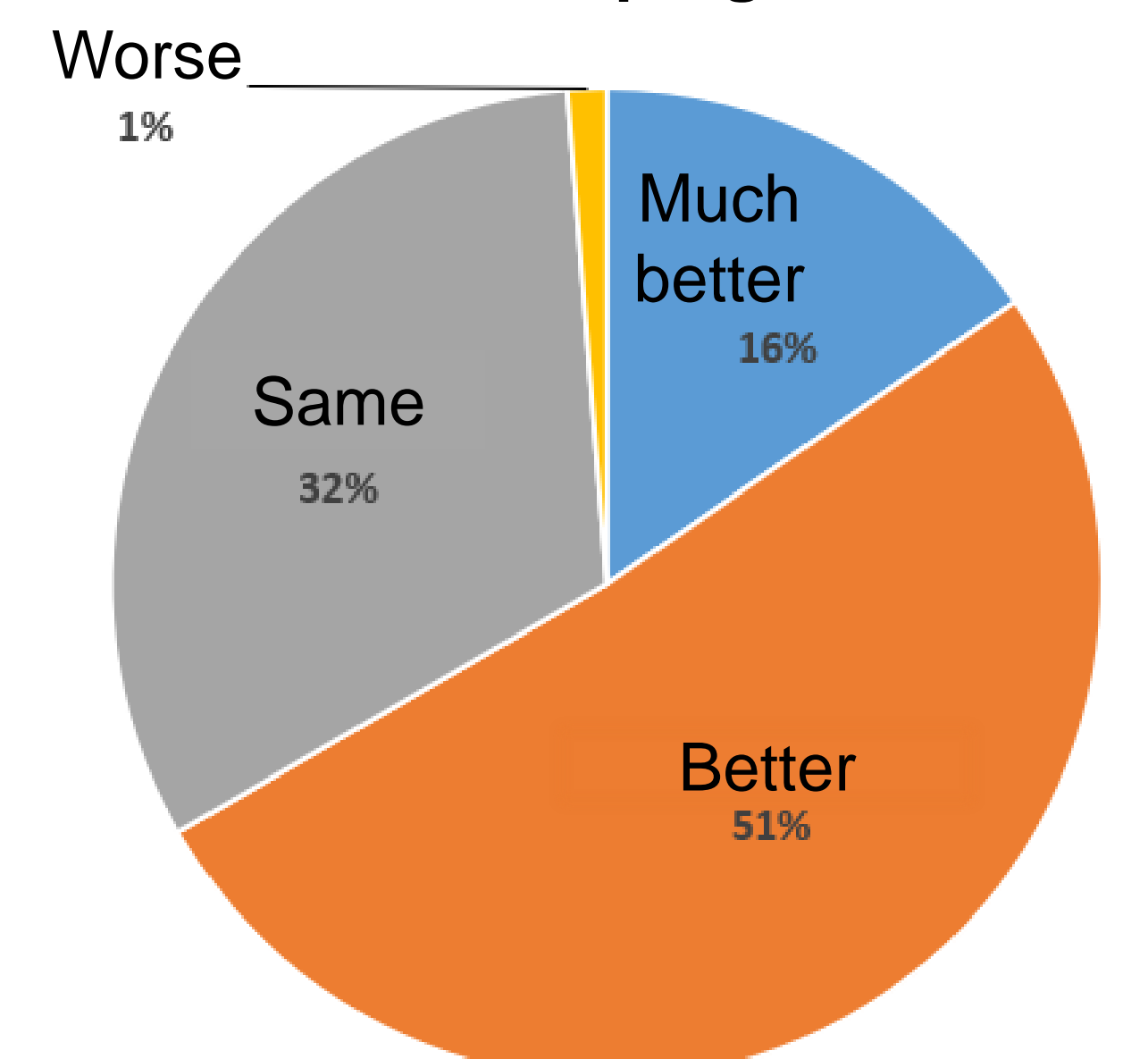
Improvement in healthcare access with the program



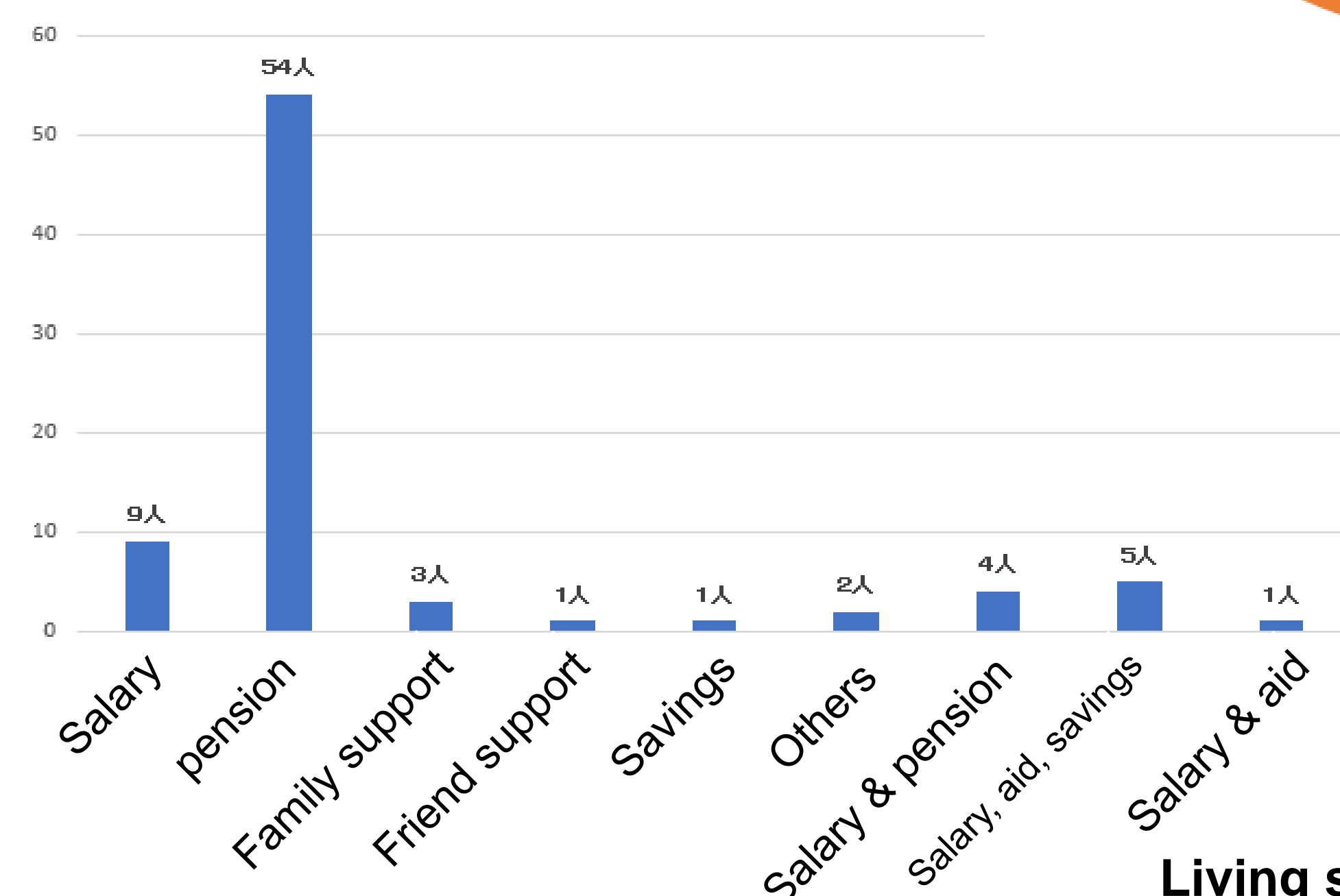
Job status



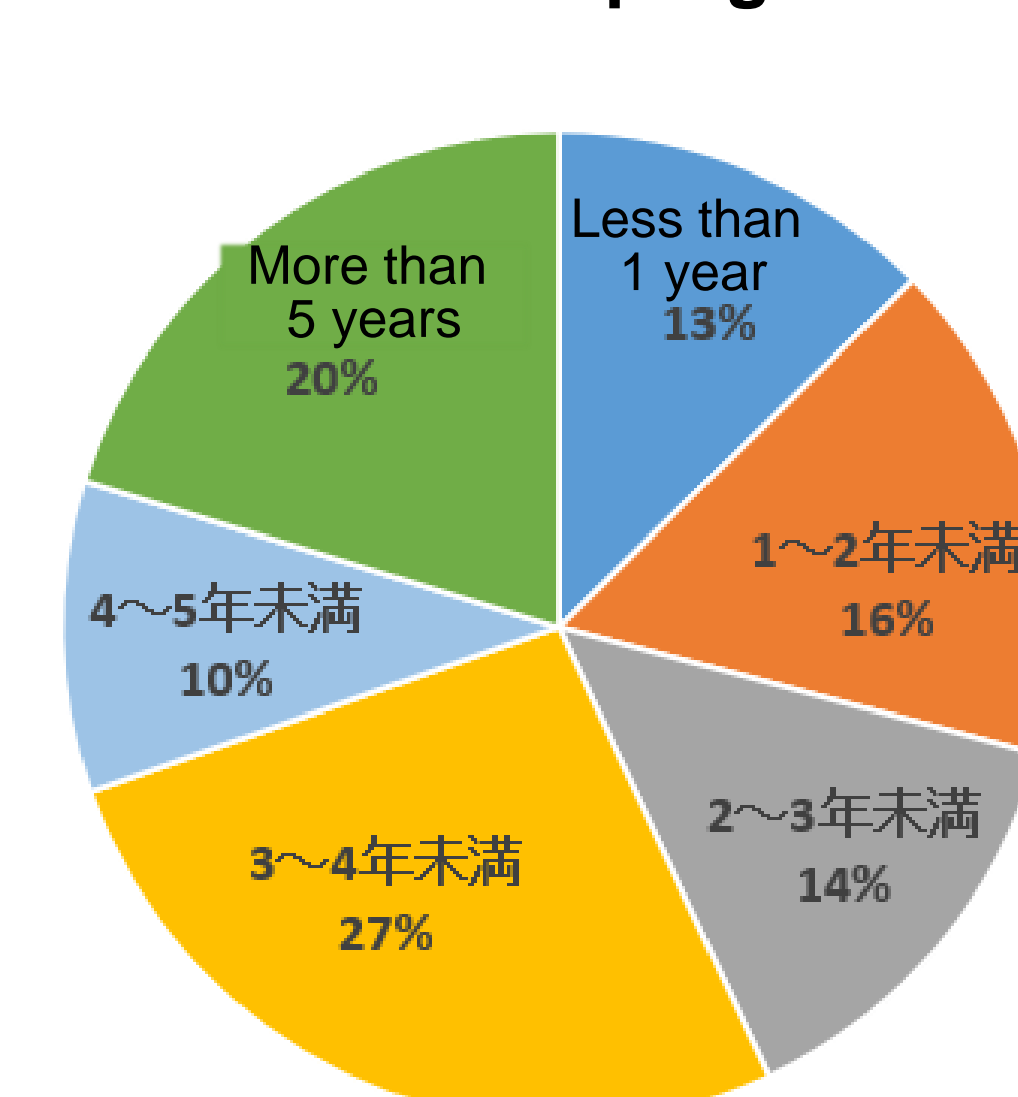
Improvement in health status with the program



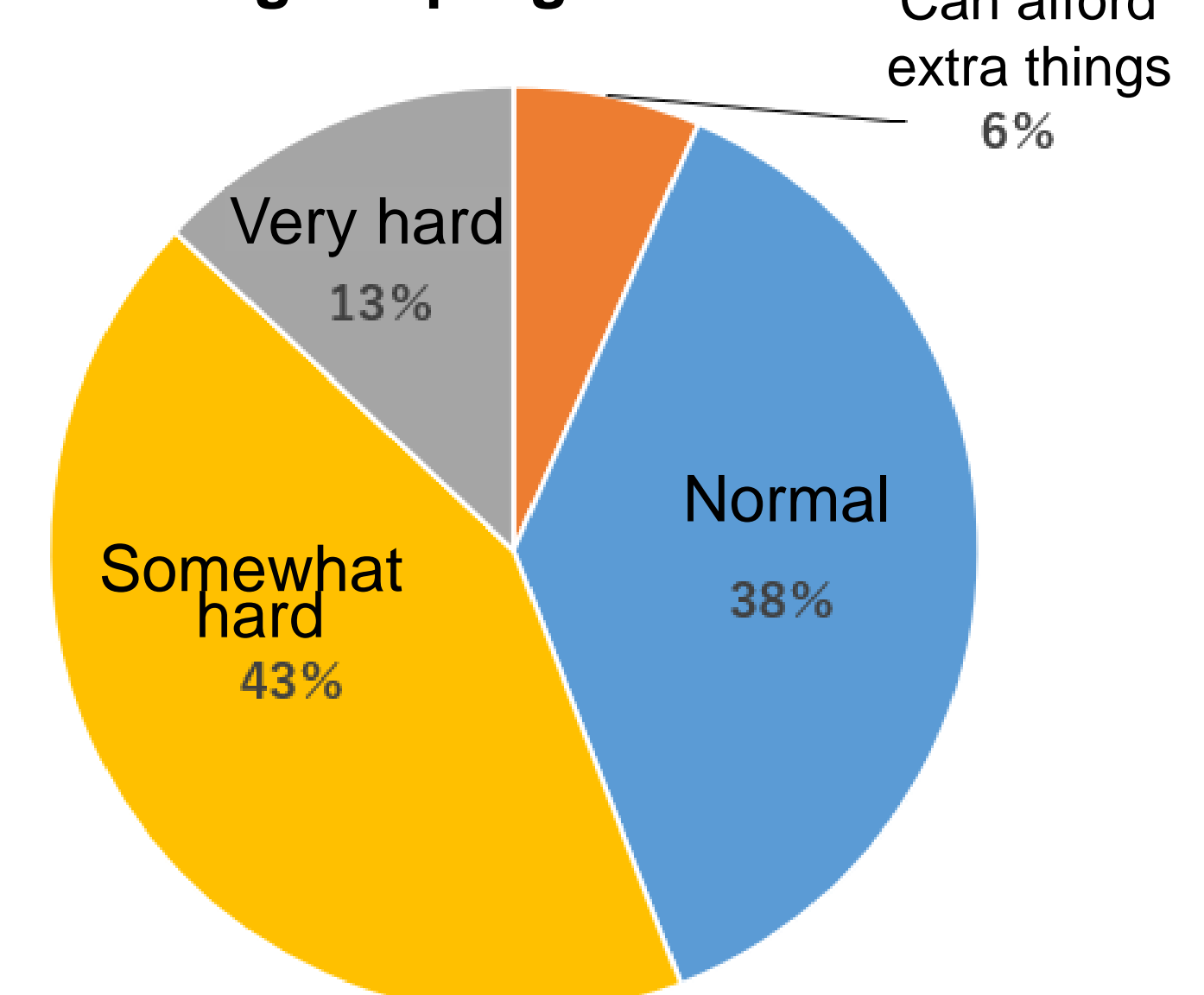
Income status



Years on program



Living status after using the program



COI Disclosure Information
Masahiro Nakano
 I have no financial relationships to disclose