

School Counseling Practices Survey Spring 2021

Review of Findings: A Conversation with Principals

**Hosted by the Vermont Agency of Education and the Regional Educational Laboratory
Northeast and Islands**

Survey Context and Background

Survey objectives

To provide the Vermont Agency of Education (AOE) with information that would help the agency to:

- prioritize policies and activities that improve the landscape for school counseling in the state;
- help counselors more fully connect students' personalized learning plans with flexible pathway options;
- promote best practices in counseling in alignment with American School Counselor Association (ASCA) standards; and
- assess the needs of counselors and students related to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to target supports effectively.

Sample

Target population

- All elementary and secondary school counselors currently employed in Vermont
- Includes counselors serving students in technical centers and independent schools

Response rate

- 176 valid responses, which represents:
 - 25% of 715 individuals holding a school counseling license
 - 39% of 452 school counselors identified through a 2020 school website scan as currently serving in a school counseling position
 - Responding counselors had similar characteristics to the population of licensed counselors on record

Survey implementation

Survey platform:

- AOE hosted the survey on the Cognito Forms platform

• Survey link distribution:

- AOE emails to individual counselor emails identified on school websites
- Vermont School Counselor Association (VSCA) messages to membership
- AOE request to school administrators to distribute to appropriate staff

• Survey dates:

- February 10-26, 2021

Survey respondents had similar characteristics to licensed school counselors on the state's roster.

Characteristics	Survey Respondents	State-level Data
Total number of licensed counselors (active and inactive)	176	715
By type of counseling license		
School counselors	96%	99%
CTE school counseling coordinators	7%	5%
By years of experience		
Up to 5 years	29%	38%
5–9 years	19%	24%
More than 10 years	52%	40%
By school type		
Public school	98%	98%
Others	2%	2%
Ethnicity		
Hispanic/Latino	2%	1%

Note: None of the difference above between proportions in the two groups were statistically significant based on a chi-square test.

Grade levels served

	Frequency	Percentage (n=176)
Elementary grades	60	34%
Secondary level grades	138	78%
-- Middle grades	61	35%
-- High school grades	85	48%
-- Students in technical center programs	22	13%

Counselors could select more than one level. Ten percent of respondents served K-8; one percent served K-12.

Caseload across all schools served

	Total	
	Frequency	Percentage
1–50 students	6	3%
51–100 students	123	70%
101–250 students	21	12%
251–325	14	8%
325 or more	12	7%
Total	176	100%

Key Findings

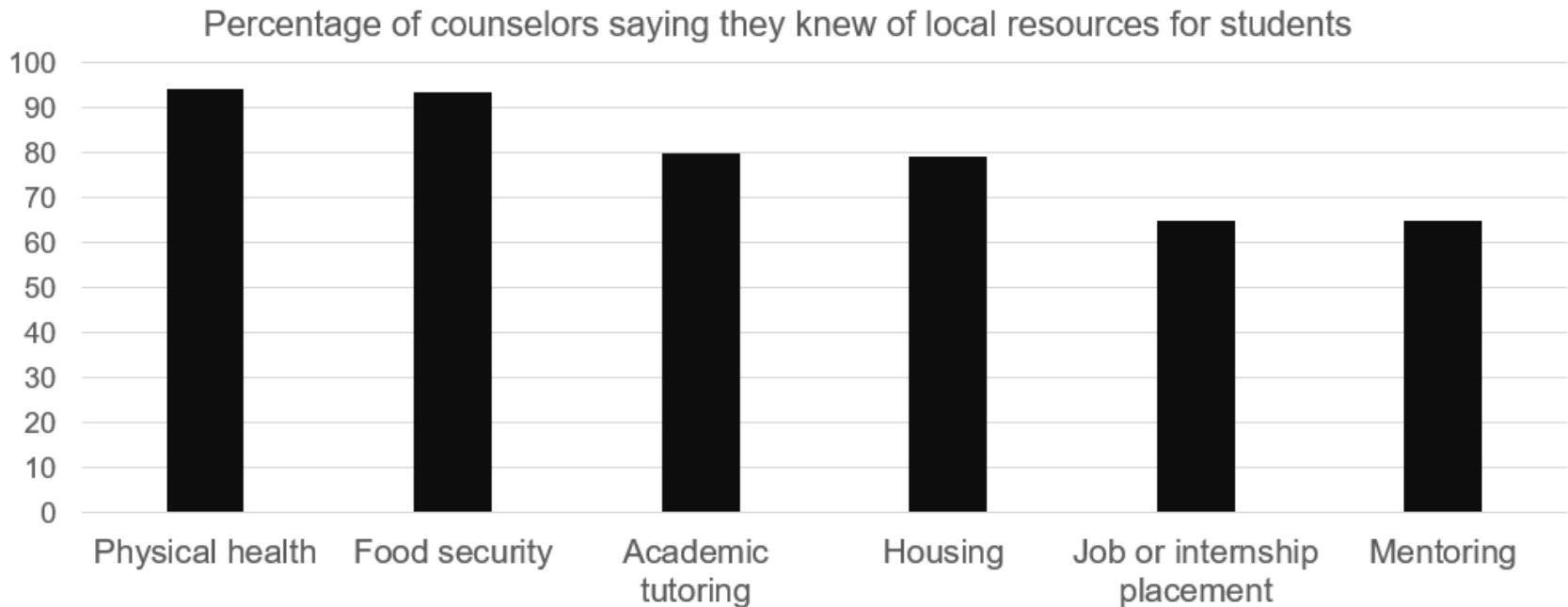
Many secondary school counselors said they wanted more training and resources to help them advise students on college and career options.

Only 12% of secondary school counselors said their district had offered training on career exploration in the past 24 months, and several cited this topic as one on which they wanted more training.

	Secondary school counselors (N = 138)	
	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Working with students on personalized learning plans	35	25.36
Supporting students' career exploration	16	11.59
Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS)	61	44.20
Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS)	34	24.64
Supporting students' social-emotional needs	91	65.94
Using data to guide counseling	12	8.70
None of the above	20	14.49

Note: Respondents could select more than one answer

At least three-quarters of secondary-level counselors knew where to refer students for social support resources, while 65 percent knew where to send students for job/internship placement or mentoring. Some counselors said a tool to identify job opportunities and labor market information would be useful.



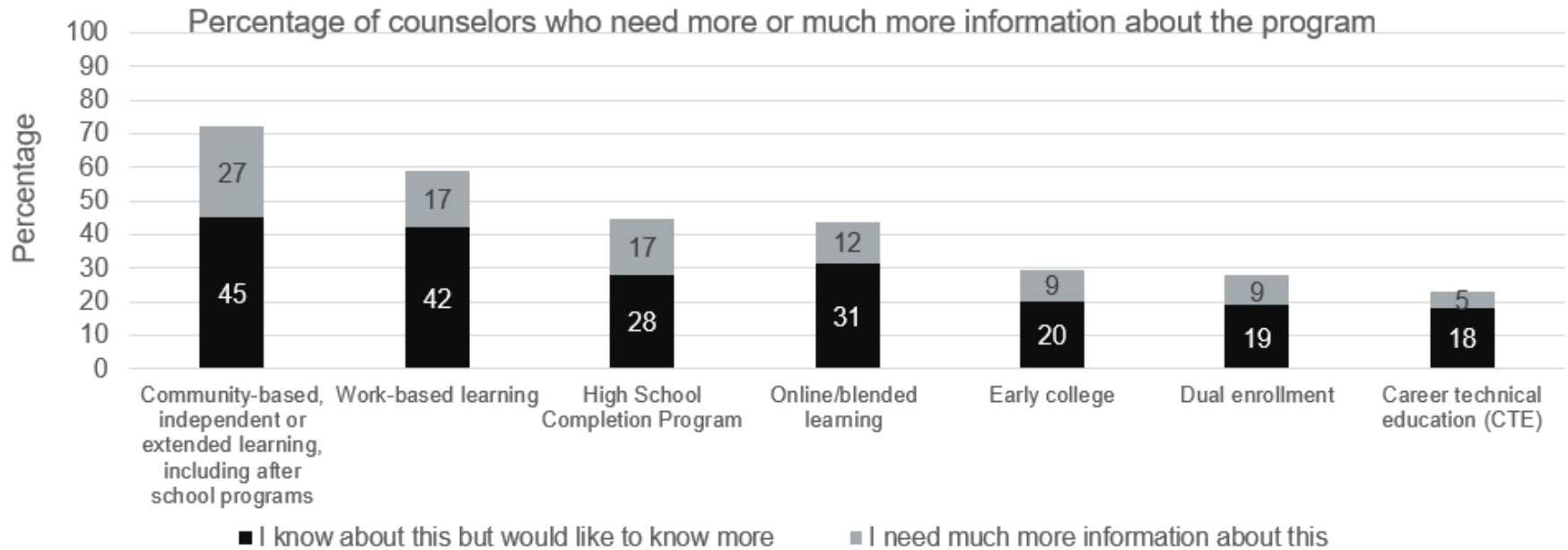
Note: N= 138 counselors serving secondary grade levels.

Key Findings

Many secondary school counselors said they lacked information about some flexible pathway options.

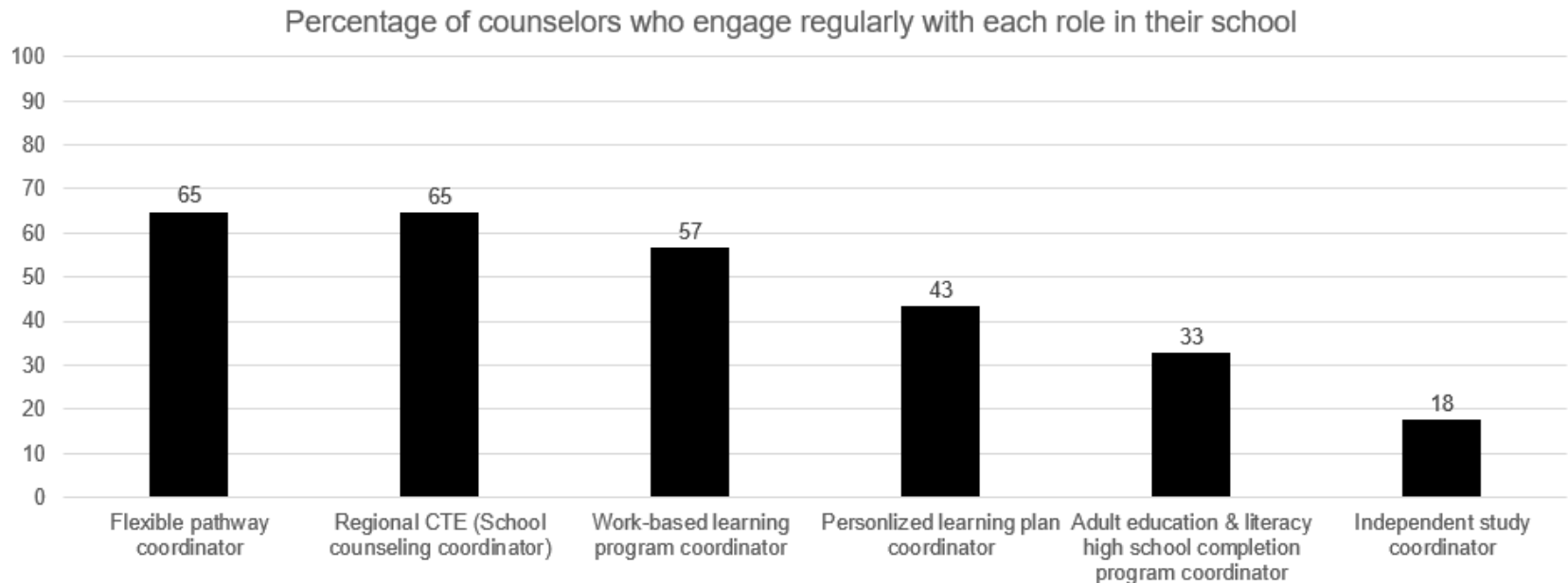
However, counselors reported engaging with staff in other roles who may be serving this function, such as flexible pathway counselors and CTE regional coordinators.

While more than 70 percent of secondary-level counselors were well-informed about early college, dual enrollment, and CTE programs, the majority needed more information about work-based learning and community-based programs.



Note: N= 138 counselors serving secondary grade levels.

More than half of secondary-level counselors said they engaged regularly with coordinators of flexible pathways, career and technical education, and work-based learning.



Note: Response options were "regularly," "seldom," "I have no reason to engage with these personnel," and "This role is not present in my school." Percentages shown exclude respondents indicating that the role was not present. N= 138 counselors serving secondary grade levels.

Key Findings

Secondary school counselors reported spending less time on the career development component of their jobs as social/personal student needs and school support activities required an increasing share of time during COVID.

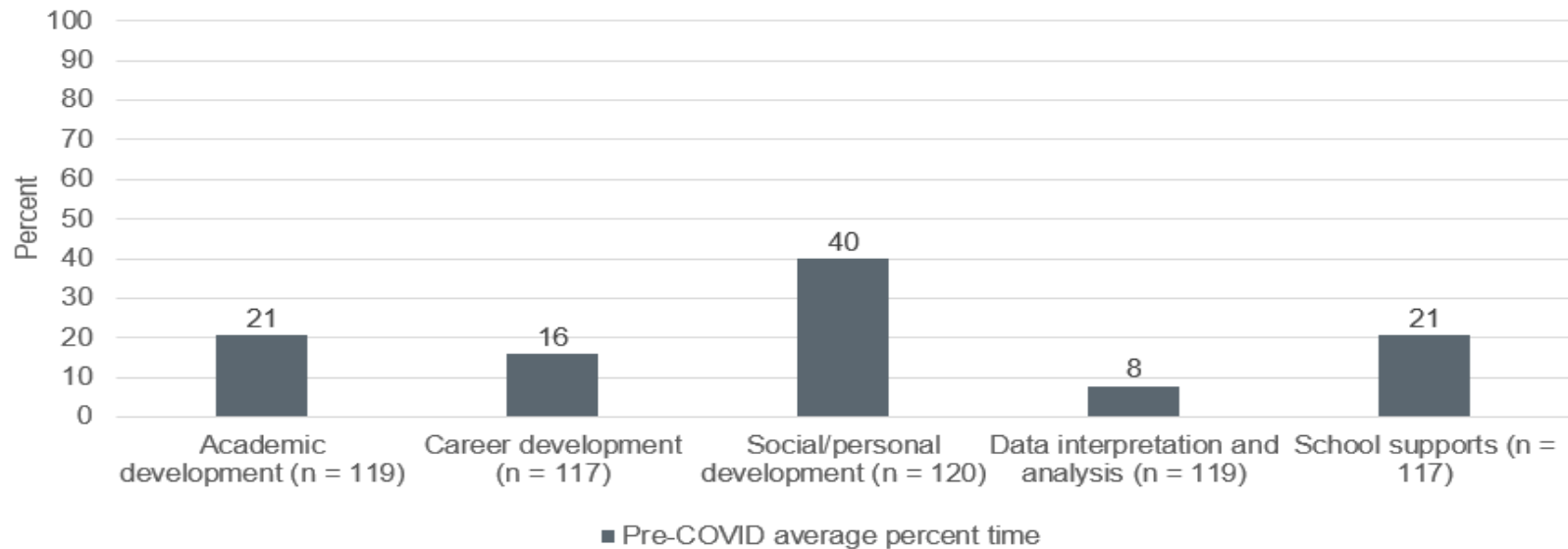
Counselors said they would like more clarity and training on standards and the counselor's role.

Time on tasks before and during the pandemic

Counselors said they had several non-counseling responsibilities *before* the pandemic

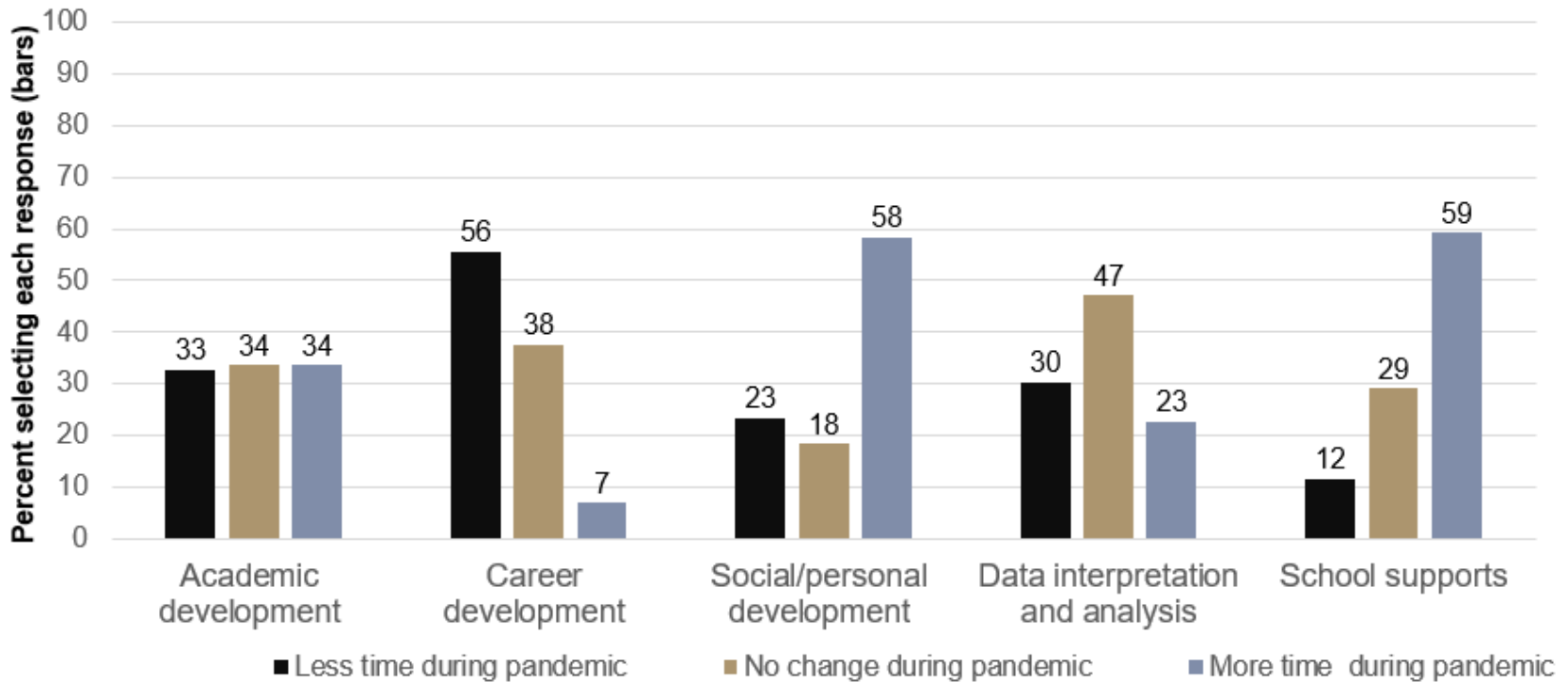
- The most commonly-cited activities were core counseling functions: education support team (82 percent) and individually-based advising (62 percent)
- However, many counselors were also assigned to school support activities:
 - testing coordination: 53 percent
 - lunch duty: 38 percent
 - serving as remote site coordinator, substitute back-up teacher or anti-bullying coordinator: 30-40 percent

Career development was already an activity with one of the lowest time allocations *pre-pandemic*; more than half of secondary-level counselors said they spent even less time on it *during* the pandemic. (1)



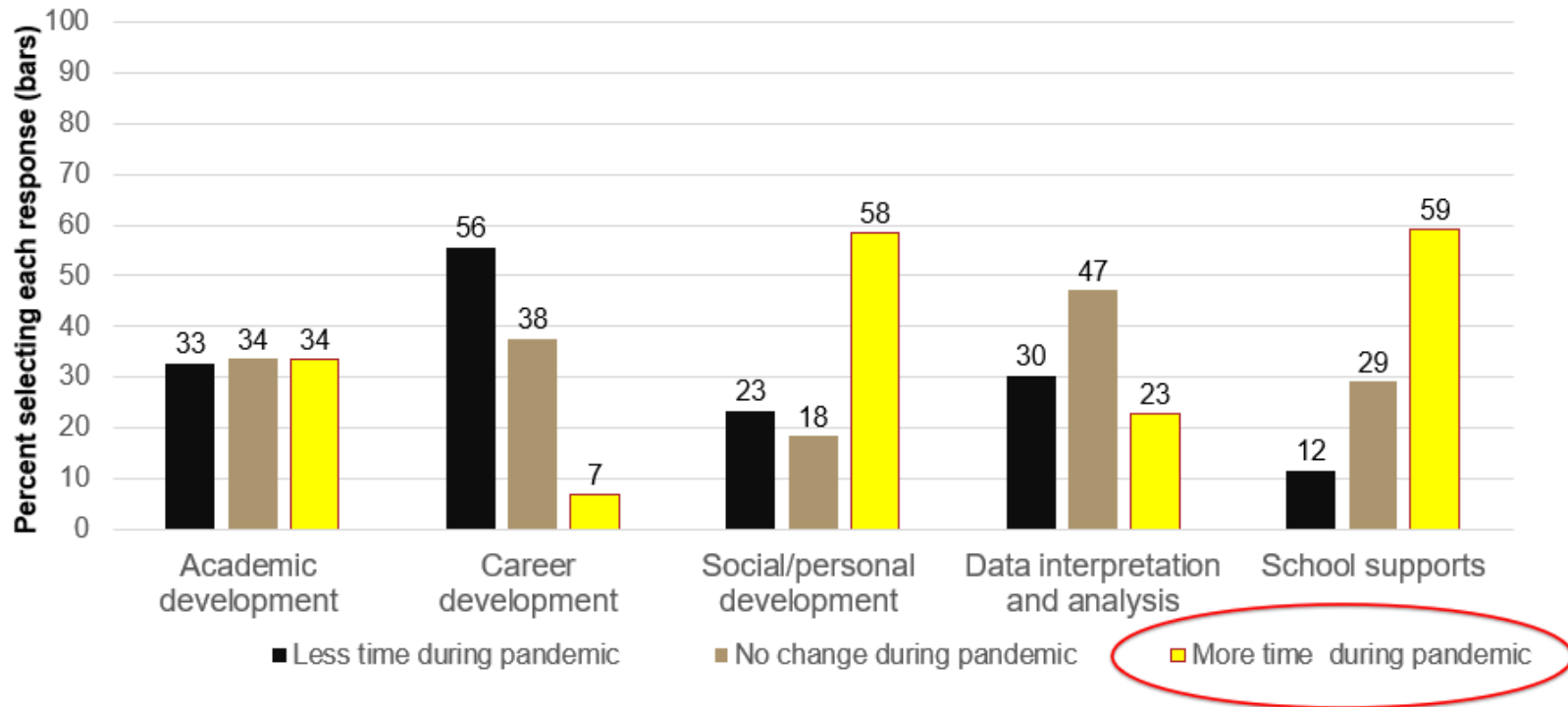
Note: N= 138 counselors serving secondary grade levels.

*During the pandemic, secondary-level counselors said they spent additional time on **social/personal development** and **school support activities** (2).*



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Again - *During* the pandemic, secondary-level counselors said they spent additional time on **social/personal development** and **school support activities** (2).



Note: N= 138 counselors serving secondary grade levels.

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