



RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION 2018 SURVEY REPORT

NATIONAL ARCHIVES and RECORDS ADMINISTRATION
AGENCY SERVICES
OFFICE OF THE CHIEF RECORDS OFFICER
November 2018

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NARA RECORDS MANAGEMENT SERVICES CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Archives and Records Administration (NARA) conducted its eighth Records Management Services Customer Satisfaction Survey in 2018. This voluntary survey helps NARA improve records management services by identifying the most important factors affecting customer satisfaction.

NARA focused the 2018 survey on records scheduling, appraisal services, communications, and records management training. NARA sent a questionnaire to the Records Officer (or designated point of contact) of every Federal agency. Fifty-five percent of respondents reported they are satisfied with NARA's scheduling and appraisal services.

NARA customers provided a broad range of positive and negative feedback. Records Officers indicated that they had good relationships with their appraisal archivists and viewed them as both knowledgeable and helpful. Although agencies reported that they are generally pleased with the assistance that NARA offers, the records schedule approval process continues to be a source of frustration for many. For the 2018 survey results, please see *Appendix A*.

PURPOSE

The customer satisfaction survey helps NARA's National Records Management Program improve scheduling and appraisal services by identifying the most important drivers affecting customer satisfaction. This allows NARA to focus our resources on improving services to the areas that are most important to our customers.

METHODOLOGY

NARA conducted the survey in April and May of 2018, two years after the previous survey. It asks Records Officers, or their designee, how they feel NARA is doing in various areas. Respondents are asked about their overall satisfaction level as well as their satisfaction with various aspects of NARA's records management services.

NARA identified agency Records Officers and compiled and verified their contact information. Like previous customer satisfaction surveys, each Federal Records Officer (or designated point of contact) received the questionnaire by email. NARA staff followed up with regular email reminders throughout the survey period.

This year NARA continued to use one version of the survey questionnaire to access its entire customer base. The 2018 survey allows respondents to skip non-applicable questions.

For the purposes of this report, “satisfied” Records Officers are participants who indicated they were either satisfied or very satisfied with scheduling and appraisal services overall. “Dissatisfied” Records Officers indicated they are either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied overall.

The online vendor, Survey Monkey, was used to conduct the survey. Each agency’s records management contact received an individual link to the survey via the website. The responses are confidential, providing NARA a means to identify and view individual responses. The online tool provided an analysis of survey results as well as a statistical report (see *Appendix A*).

RESULTS

This report provides a comprehensive listing of the 2018 survey results. Percentages have been rounded to the nearest whole percent.

1. Response Rate

NARA distributed 273 questionnaires and received 68 surveys for a response rate of 25% and a completion rate of 100 % (68 surveys). The response rate is slightly lower than the 26% rate in 2016.

2. Demographic Questions (Questions 1-3)

Q1. What is your position?

Eighty-eight percent of survey respondents reported that they hold the position of Records Officer. This is an increase of 1% from the 2016 RMCSS.

Q2. How long have you worked in records management with the Federal Government?

Eighty-seven percent have been working in Federal records management for more than 3 years, which is similar to the 2016 response rate of 86%.

Q3. Is records management currently your primary or secondary responsibility?

The majority (69%) reported that records management is their primary responsibility which represents a decline of 9% from the 2016 RMCSS.

3. Records Scheduling (Question 4-15)

Q4. To the best of your knowledge, has your agency submitted a records schedule for approval to NARA in FY2016 or FY2017?

Seventy-one percent of respondents had submitted a records schedule for approval to NARA in FY2016 and/or FY2017. This represents a 10% increase from the 2016 RMCSS.

Q5. I personally have submitted a records schedule for approval to NARA in FY2016 and/or 2017]

Seventy-six percent had personally submitted a records schedule for approval to NARA in FY2016 or FY2017 in comparison to the 69% response in the 2016 RMCSS.

Q6. Please rate how satisfied you are with the time NARA took to approve the submitted records schedule:

Over 62% indicated that they were satisfied while just over 31% were unsatisfied. This represents a 14% increase in satisfaction from the 48% satisfaction reported on the 2016 RMCSS.

Q7. If you have personally used the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) to schedule records, how satisfied were you with the ease of ERA functions?

Forty-three percent of respondents were satisfied with the ease of ERA functions. This is a 12% decrease from the 55% 2016 RMCSS satisfaction rating.

Q8. My agency has not recently submitted records schedules to NARA because: (Please select all that apply.)

Forty-two percent of participants reported that their agency is working on a new comprehensive or big bucket schedule while 32% felt that their current records schedules were adequate. Three percent had difficulty understanding NARA's scheduling process and 10% reported difficulty using ERA. The majority of respondents selected *other* (45%) and the majority of those had either submitted or were working on a schedule in 2018. This compares to the 2016 RMCSS where 41% of respondents reported that their agency schedules were adequate. (See Appendix B)

Q9. I do receive the monthly Status Report of Records Appraisal Activity from my NARA Appraisal Archivist.

Fifty-nine percent of respondents who had submitted schedules in FY2016 or FY2017 received the monthly Status Report of Records Appraisal Activity while 27% did not. Sixty-two percent of 2016 RMCSS respondents reported receiving the monthly Status Report of Appraisal.

Q10. Is this report helpful?

The majority of respondents (87%) who did receive the monthly Status Report of Records Appraisal Activity reported that the report was helpful while 13% did not. The percentage of the 2016 RMCSS survey-takers who found the report helpful was 93%.

Q11. I have a good working relationship with my agency's NARA appraisal archivist.

Eighty-two percent of respondents felt that they had a good working relationship with their appraisal archivist while 3% responded negatively. Less than 2% knew who their appraisal archivist was and 14% had no comment. This compares to 84% of the 2016 RMCSS respondents who reported a good working relationship and 4% who did not know who their appraisal archivist was.

Q12. Tell us about your interactions with your NARA appraisal archivist. (Please do not mention your NARA appraisal archivist by name.)

Agencies reported that interactions with their NARA appraisal archivist were overwhelmingly positive. Comments frequently included the words *responsive*, *helpful*, *knowledgeable*, *prompt*, *professional*, and *helpful*. One respondent felt that their NARA appraisal archivist was too inexperienced. A few commented that interactions with NARA staff other than their appraisal archivist "...has room for improvement." One commenter suggested that NARA's appraisal archivist "...should take a proactive approach to meet with their new clients..." (See Appendix B)

Q13. *When I contact my agency's NARA appraisal archivist for assistance, I receive a timely response.*
When asked about their satisfaction with their agency's NARA appraisal archivist response time, over 96% replied that they received a timely response. This is an improvement of 3% over the 2016 RMCSS responses.

Q14. *Please rate how satisfied you are with NARA's scheduling and appraisal services.*
Agencies were also positive with their satisfaction with NARA's scheduling and appraisal services, with 74% reporting satisfied with less than 5% very unsatisfied. This represents a 19% satisfaction increase over the 2016 RMCSS responses.

Q15. *Do you have any comments about your satisfaction with NARA scheduling and appraisal services?*
While agencies were positive about their overall satisfaction with NARA's scheduling and appraisal services, they did comment that the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) was "challenging", "confusing", and "cumbersome". Others commented that the scheduling process was "...far too lengthy..." and that the process is "non-transparent". Suggestions included a "...checklist of the records schedule appraisal process..." and a web-published "time-line" of the process. Training, which was mentioned as a concern in the 2016 RMCSS, was not a significant issue, as only one agency wanted to see refresher training and another suggesting a "...NARA-certification course to be able to schedule/self-certify certain types of schedules...". (See Appendix B)

4. Communications (Questions 16- 17)

Q16. *Are the communications you receive from NARA's records management program clear (e.g., Records Express blog, RM communications email)?*

Eighty-four percent of respondents felt that the communications they received from NARA's records management program to be clear and less than 8% disagreed. This is a 4% decrease in satisfaction from the 2016 RMCSS.

Q17. *Please tell us how we can improve our communications.*

NARA's records management program communications were considered to be clear (84%). Individual commenters stated that NARA was "...doing a great job..." and found "...the Records Express Blog as an easier, alternative way to find RM new & info..." Commenters also felt that "[m]any of the communications lacked context..." and suggested that NARA be "...more clear and concise..." (See Appendix B)

5. Annual Move (Questions 18-21)

Q18. *My agency participates in the Annual Move process.*

Sixty-five percent of responding agencies participated in the Annual Move process while 29% did not. Over 6% did not know what the Annual Move process was. This is a new question in the 2018 RMCSS.

Q19. *Please rate how satisfied you are with the support you receive from NARA on the Annual Move process.*

Of those respondents that did participate in the Annual Move process, over 90% were satisfied. Less than 10% were unsatisfied or had no opinion. This is an increase in satisfaction over the 2016 RMCSS rating of 70%.

Q20. How satisfied are you with NARA communications on the Annual Move process?

Ninety-three percent of those respondents that did participate in the Annual Move process were satisfied. Less than 3% were unsatisfied and 5% had no opinion. This represents an increase of 17% over the 2016 RMCSS satisfaction rating.

Q21. Please tell us how we can improve the Annual Move process.

Over 90% of participants in the Annual Move process were satisfied or highly satisfied with the NARA support they received, and 93% were very satisfied or satisfied with NARA communications on the Annual Move process. Comments to improve the Annual Move process included “[m]aking the SF135s and the box inventory available...”, “...several months advance notice on what will be in [the] annual move”, “...a refresher/tutorial before the Annual Move process...”, reconfiguring the ERA system “...to make the process easier”, and a “...list of ERA Annual Move TRs with crosswalk to the FRC Transfer Numbers...” Other commenters had “no issues with the.... process” and thought the process “[w]orks great”. (See Appendix B)

6. Training and Guidance (Questions 22 – 27)

Q22. Have you taken any of NARA's records management courses in FY 2016 and/or FY 2017?

25% of respondents had taken NARA's records management courses in the reporting period while over 75% had not. Thirty-two percent of respondents had reported taking courses in the 2016 RMCSS.

Q23. Please rate how satisfied you are with NARA's records management training courses.

Over 81% of those respondents who had taken NARA's records management training courses reported they were satisfied, while 19% were unsatisfied. This is a slight decrease from the 2016 Survey, where eighty-three percent of the respondents reported that they were satisfied. 

Q24. Have you viewed any of the training materials available on NARA's records management website (e.g., such as briefings, web pages, publications, etc.)?

88% of respondents had viewed the training materials available on NARA's records management website while 12% had not. This is a decline from the 96% of 2016 RMCSS respondents who had viewed training materials on NARA's records management website.

Q25. Please rate how satisfied you are with the training materials available on NARA's records management website.

Of the respondents who had viewed any of the available training materials, 82% were satisfied. Thirteen percent were not satisfied. In the 2016 RMCSS, 89% reported that they were satisfied.

Q26. Please rate how satisfied you are with NARA's records management guidance products (e.g., bulletins, FAQs, and white papers)?

Eighty-three percent of respondents were satisfied with NARA's records management guidance products. Less than 10% were not satisfied and 8% had no opinion. This is a 5% improvement over the 2016 RMCSS results.

Q27. *If unsatisfied or very unsatisfied, how may NARA's records management guidance be improved?* Of the 25% of respondents who had taken any of NARA's records management courses in FY2016 and/or FY2017, over 81% rated their experience as satisfying. Training materials available via NARA's website were viewed by 88% of respondents and 82% of those viewers were satisfied with the training materials. NARA's records management guidance products were also rated as satisfactory by 83% of respondents. The 9% of respondents who rated the guidance products as unsatisfied suggested that NARA "[u]pdate the content to reflect current issues", "...use plain language...", and removing out-of-date web pages. Respondents did comment that NARA is "...making good improvements" and "...NARA embraces multiple models to get the word out." (See Appendix B)

7. General Comments (Question 28)

Q28. *Please share any general comments or suggestions you may have for NARA's records management program.*

General comments or suggestions for NARA's records management program covered a wide range of topics including ERA and ARCIS, NARA's appraisal staffing, the GAO approval process, scheduling electronic systems, NARA's website navigation, working groups between agencies, guidance for micro-agencies, NARA account managers, and the targeted resources program. Several respondents were pleased with NARA's records management program and training including the YouTube training videos. (See Appendix B)

Conclusion

The Records Management Customer Satisfaction Survey conducted in FY 2018 provided NARA with information about our customer's needs and perspectives, thus enabling NARA to continue to improve the services offered to agencies. The statistical questions allow NARA to broadly assess the opinions of agency Records Officers while the free text fields allow agencies the opportunity to address specific concerns. The mix of questions permits NARA to monitor the continuing needs of the agencies as well as uncover new or developing needs. The response rate of 25% varied little from the 26% FY 2016 Survey response rate.

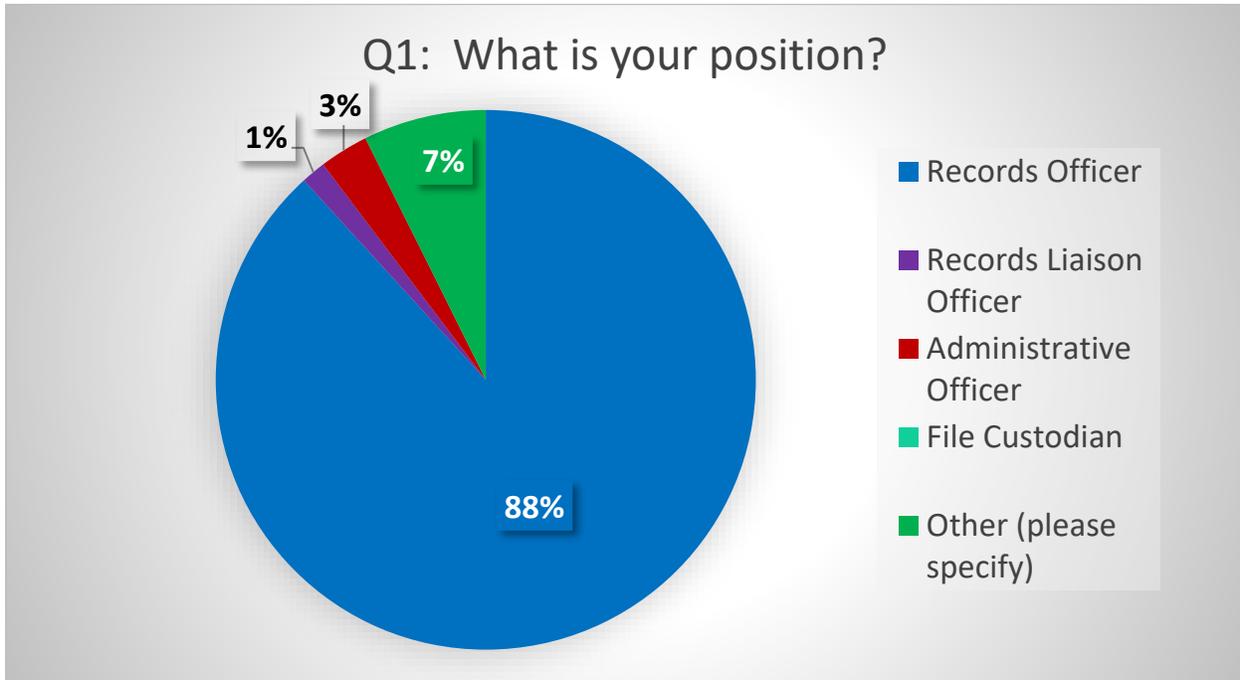
NARA is pleased to learn that our customers enjoy working with us and value our assistance. 90% of respondents reported satisfaction with the Annual Move process; 83% were pleased with NARA's Records Management Products, and Communications were rated at 90%.

NARA will continue to refine communications with agencies through briefings and meetings, web site and social media messages, training opportunities, and content development. We continue to

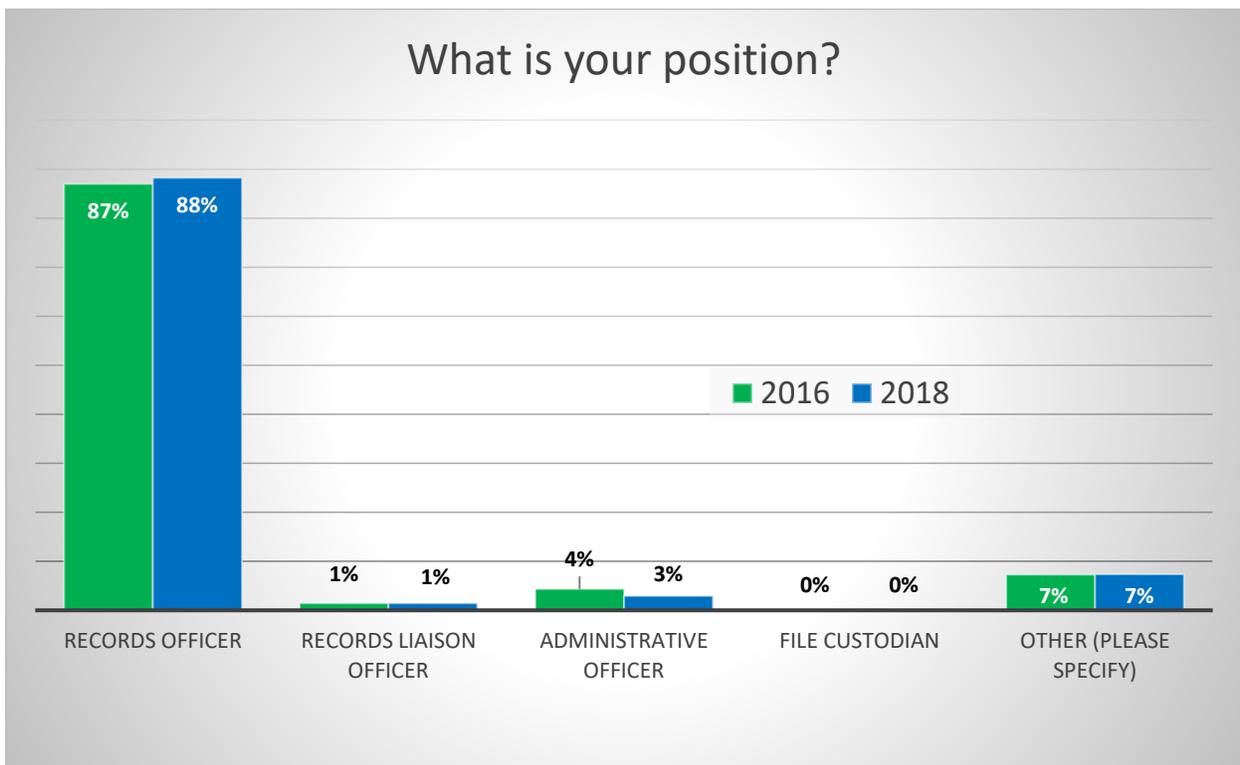
encourage agencies to complete the survey, as its results enable NARA to further assist agencies in meeting their goals.

Appendix A: Survey Questions and Results

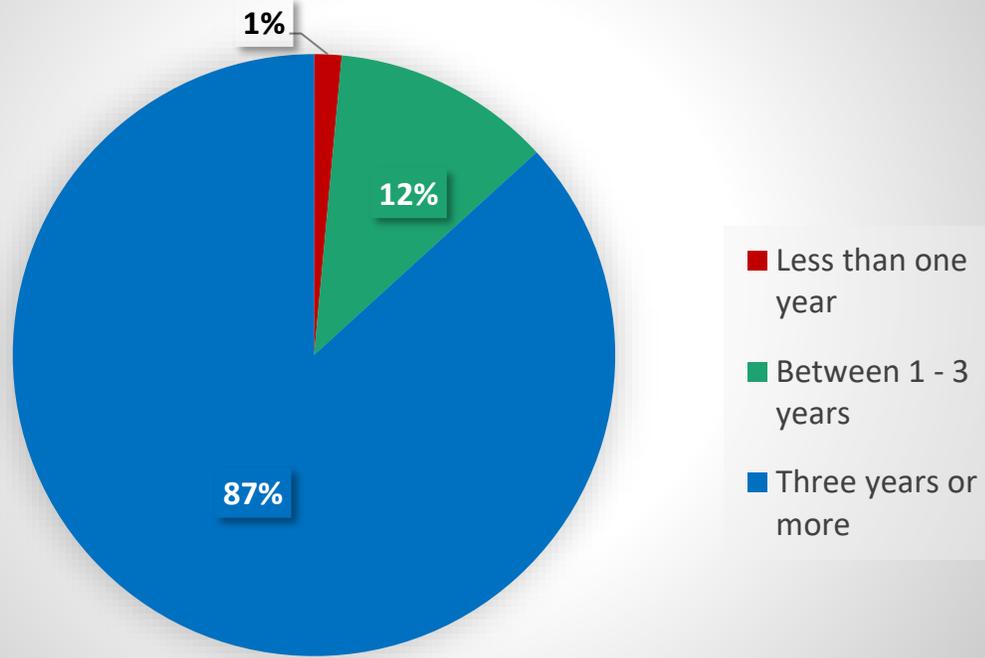
The survey questions and results are represented by graphs; the graphs are arranged with the 2018 RMCSS results first with the graph immediately following representing the 2016 RMCSS comparisons. Appendix B contains the responses to the free text questions and *other* responses.



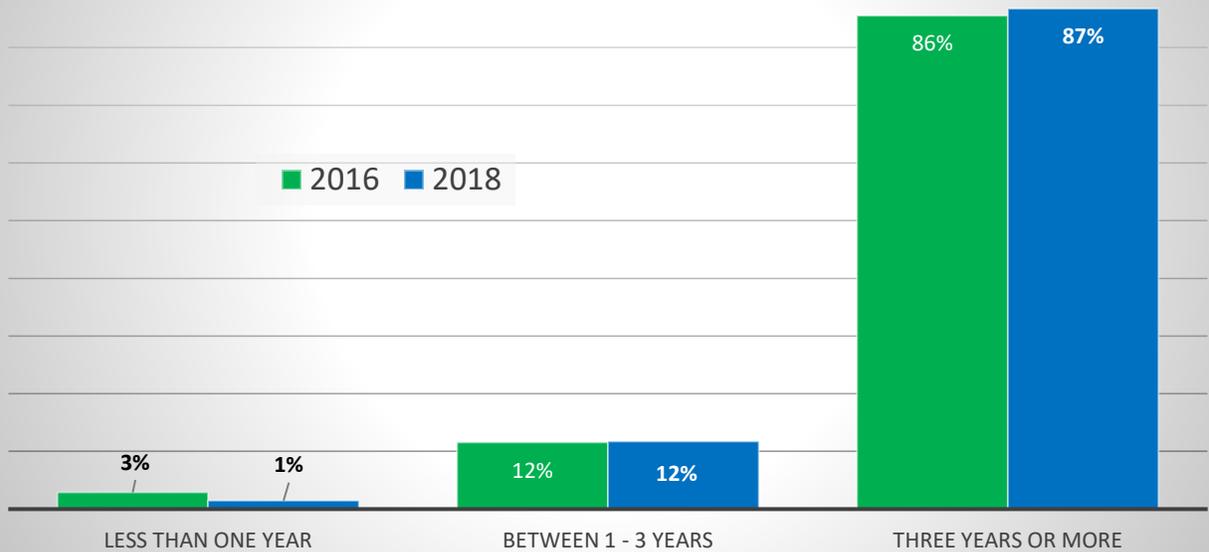
*For *Other (please specify)* responses see Appendix B



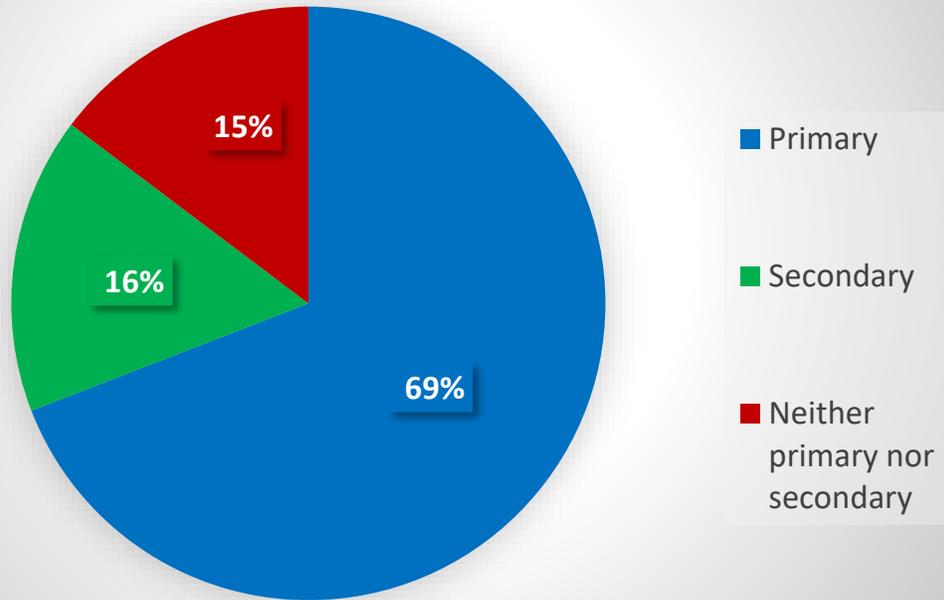
Q2: How long have you worked in records management with the Federal Government?



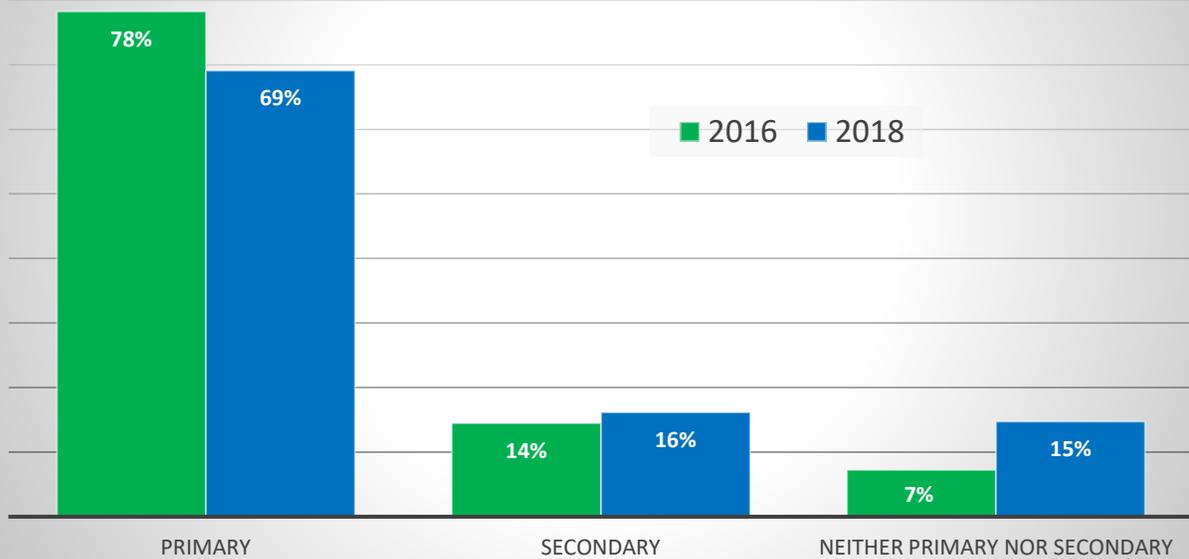
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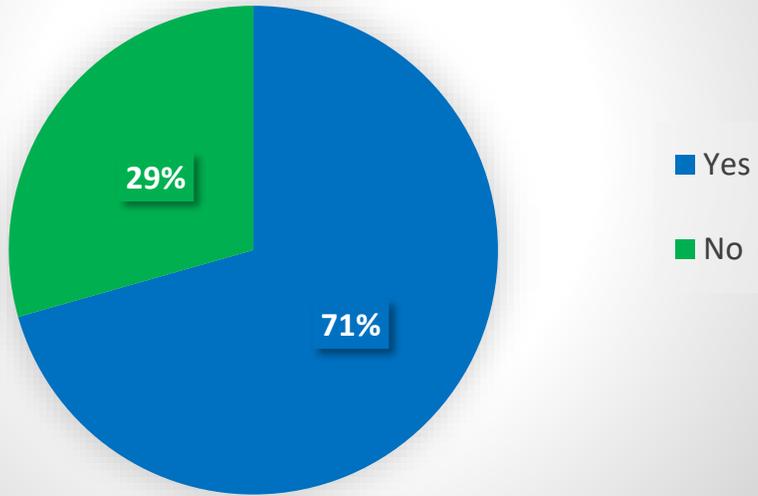
Q3: Is records management currently your primary or secondary responsibility?



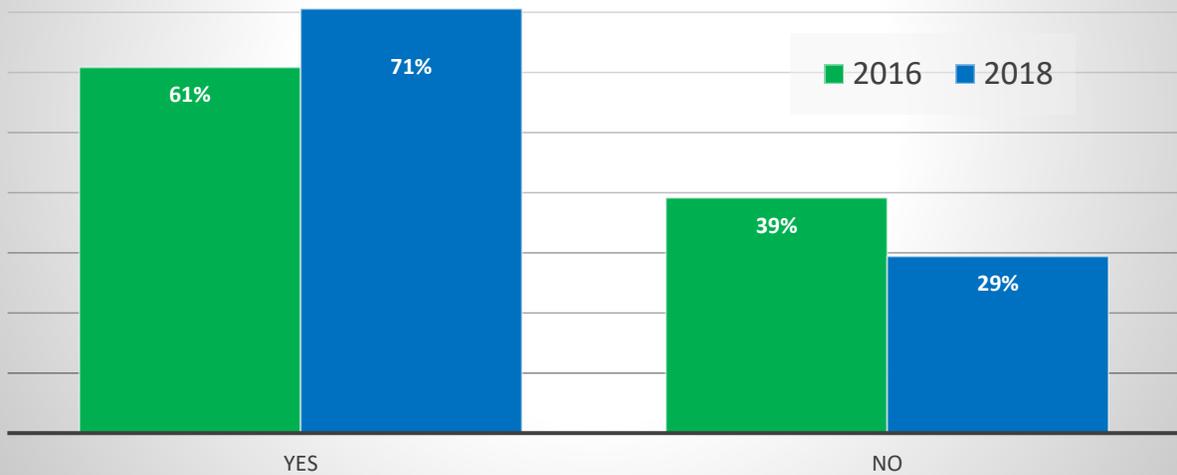
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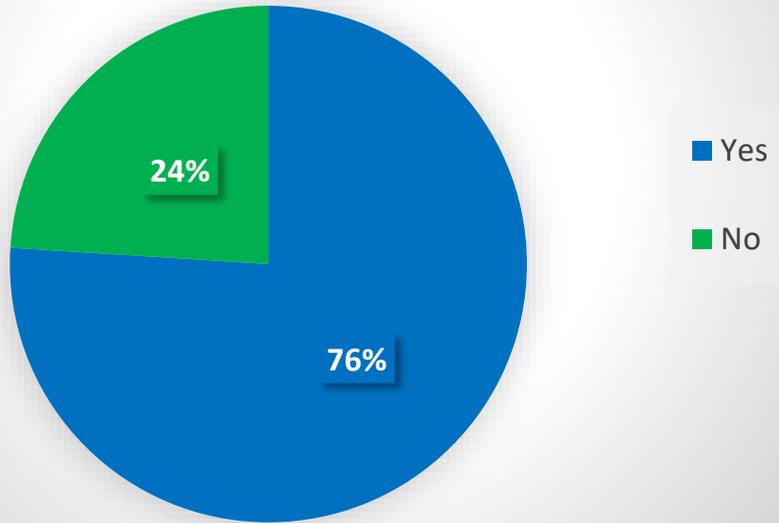
Q4: To the best of your knowledge, has your agency submitted a records schedule for approval to NARA in FY 2016 and/or FY 2017?



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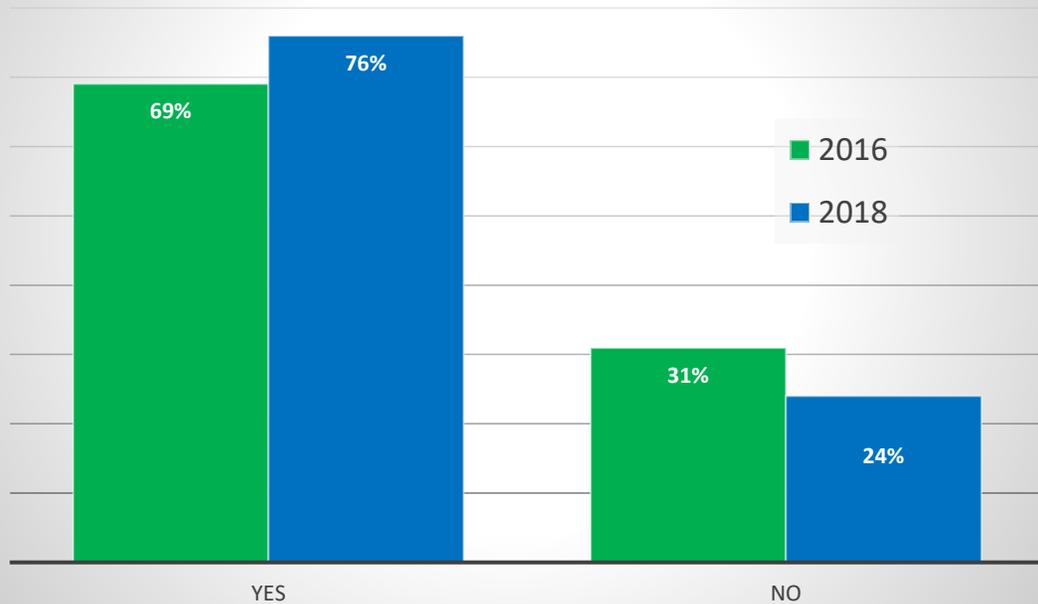


Q5: I personally have submitted a records schedule for approval to NARA in FY2016 and/or FY2017.

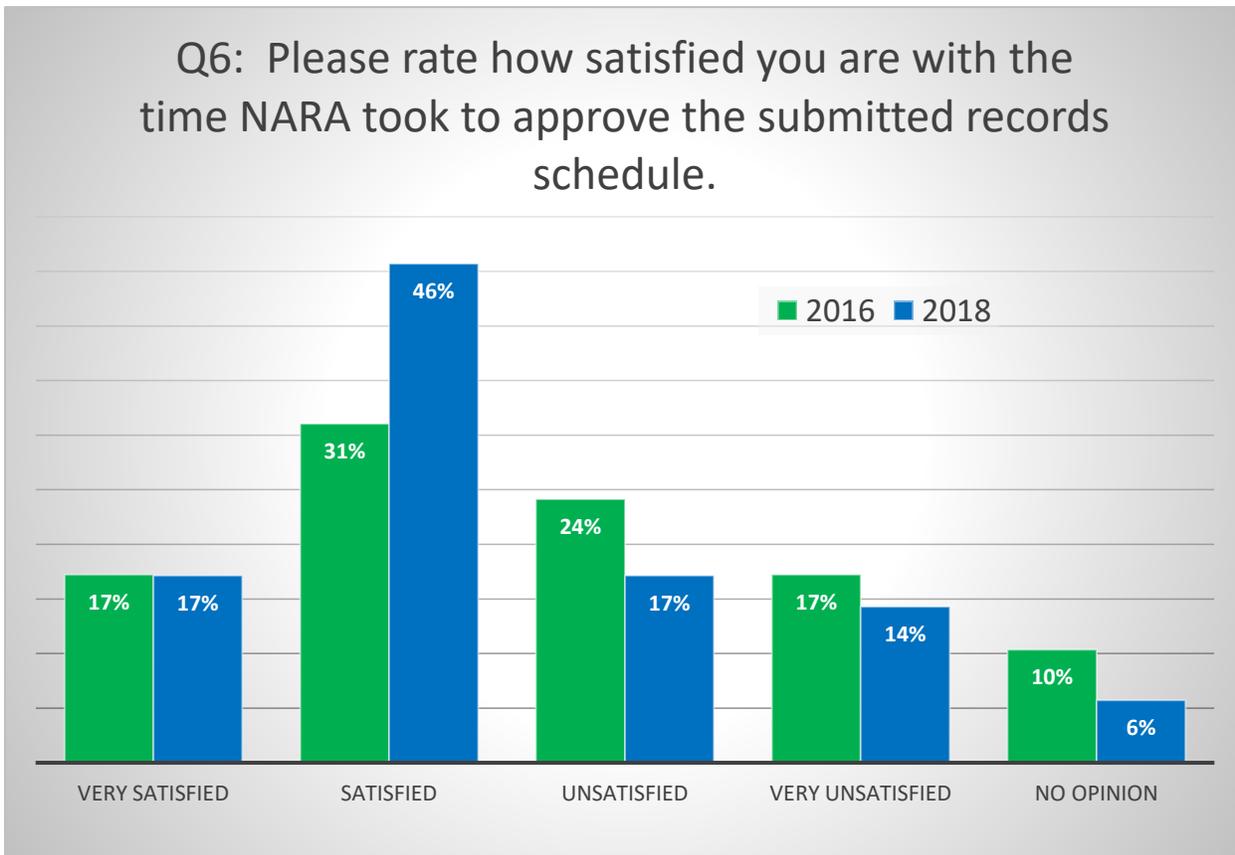
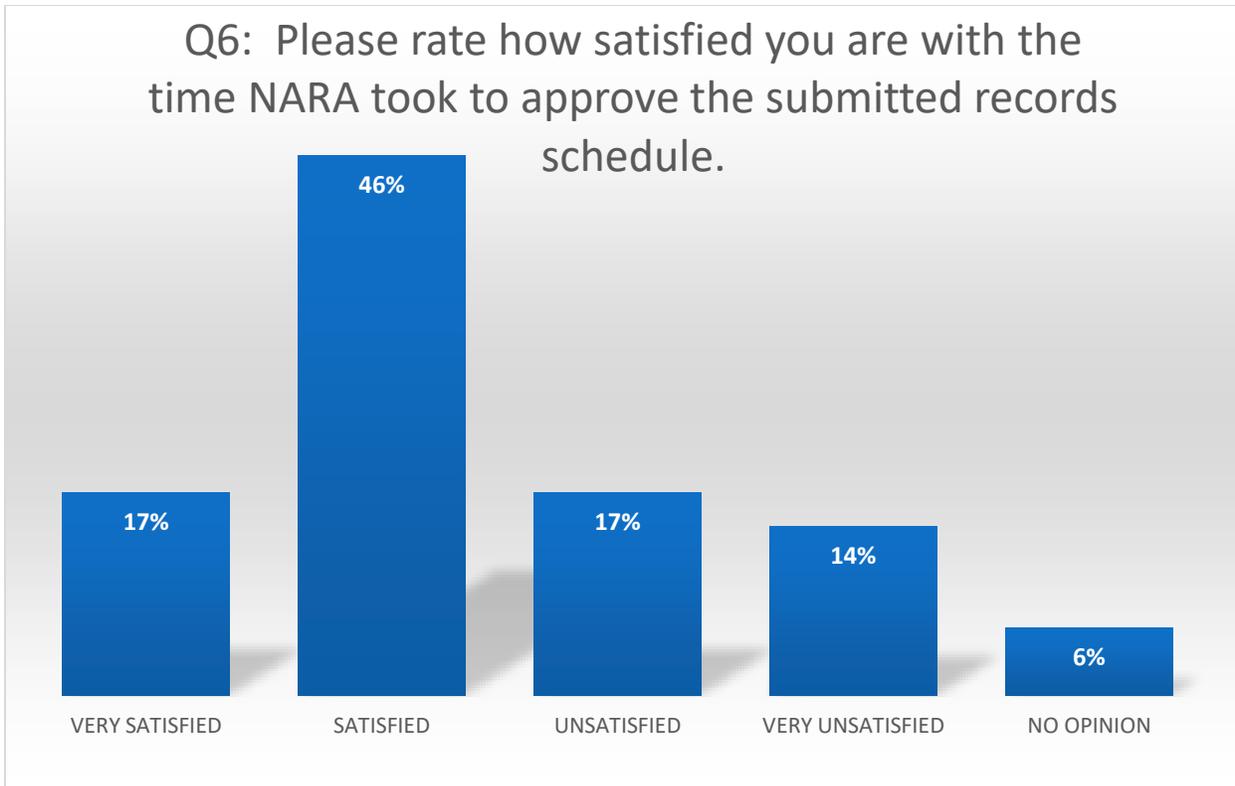


*The 2018 RMCSS added the word "personally"

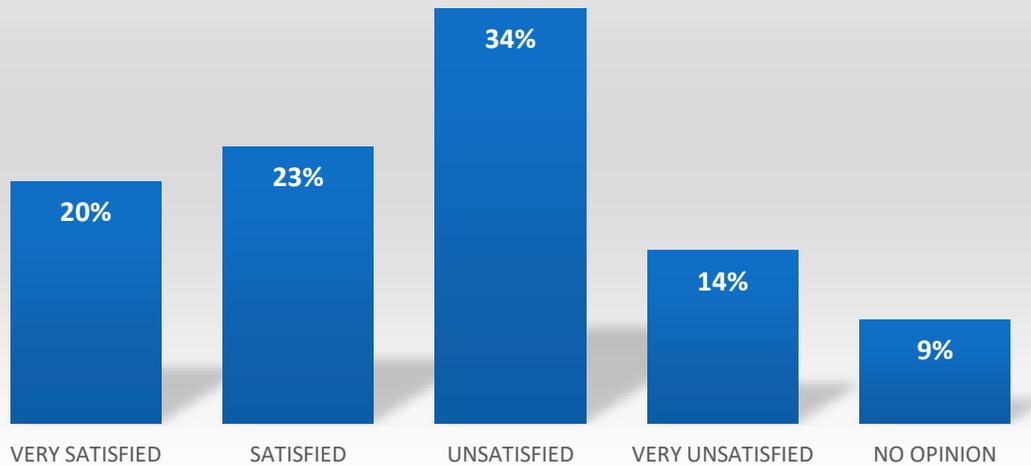
Q5: I personally have submitted a records schedule for approval to NARA in FY2016 and/or FY2017.



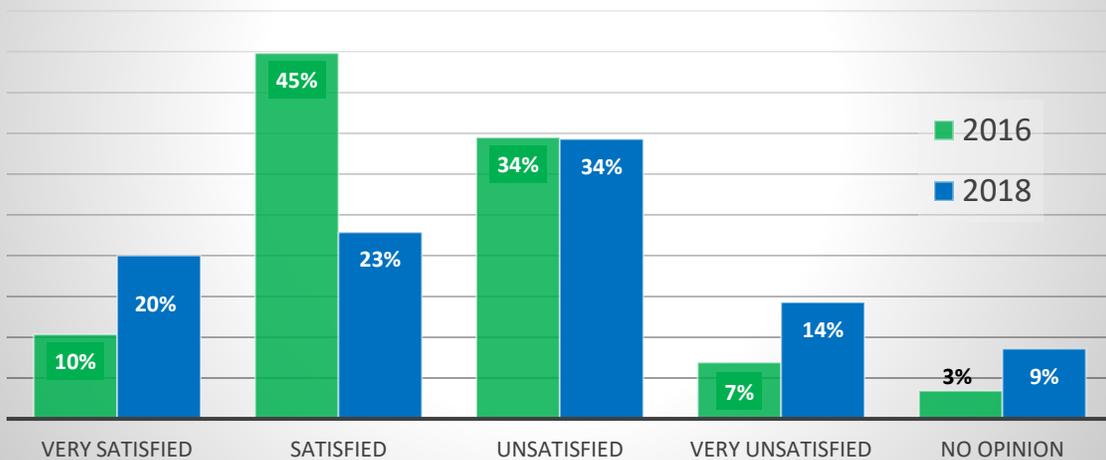
Appendix A: Survey Questions and Results



Q7: If you have personally used the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) to schedule records, how satisfied were you with the ease of ERA functions?

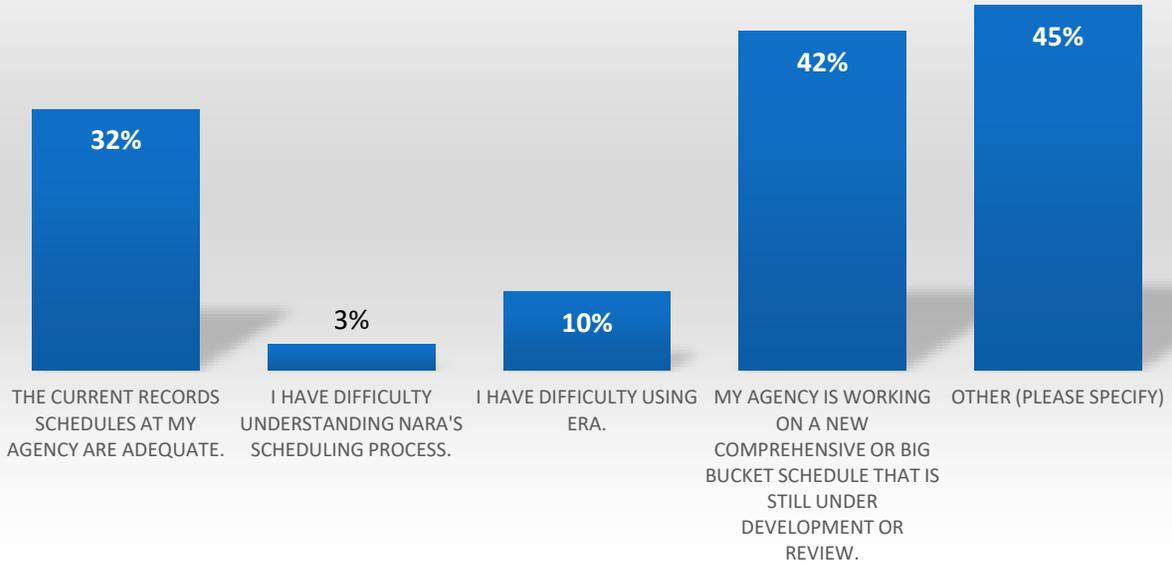


Q7: If you have used the Electronic Records Archives (ERA) to schedule records, how satisfied were you with the way that ERA functioned?



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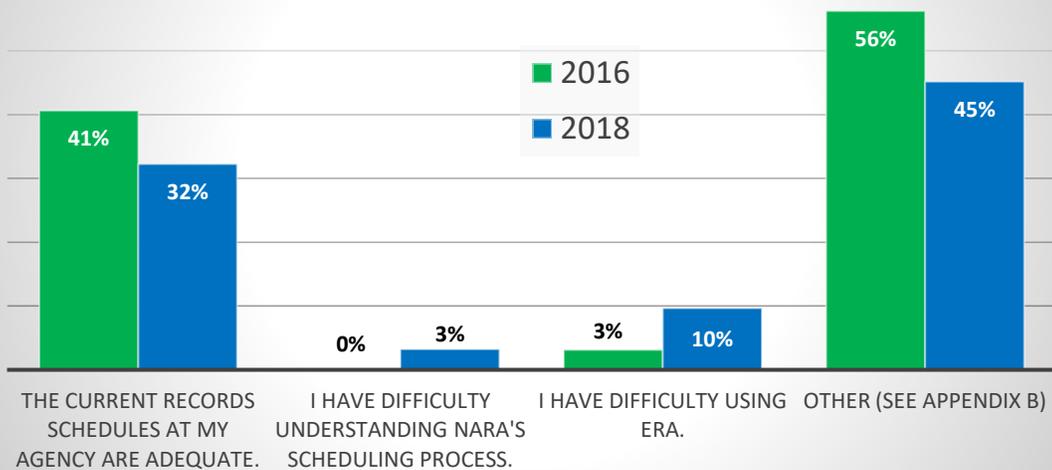
Q8: My agency has not recently submitted records schedules to NARA because: (Please select all that apply.)



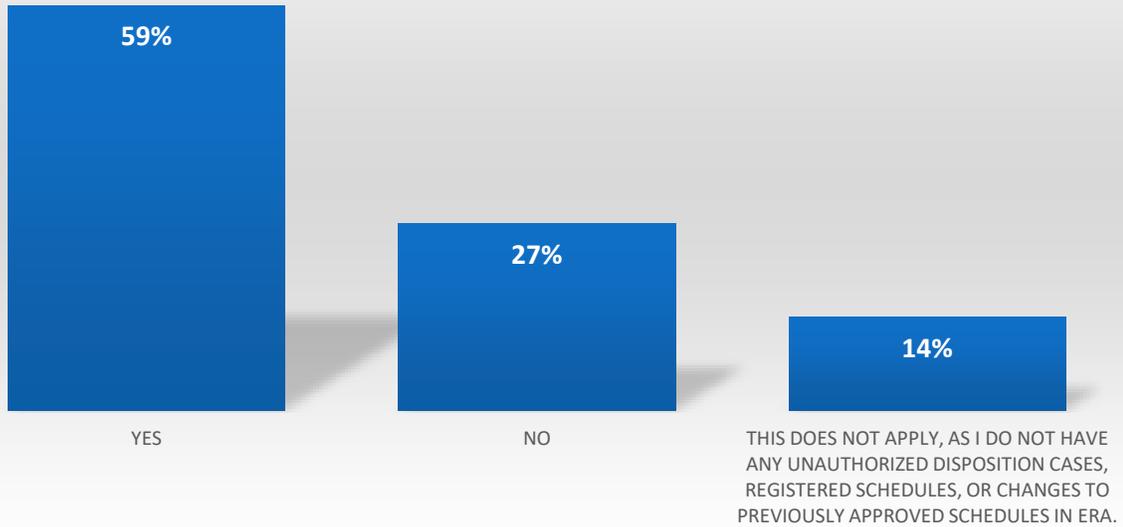
*My agency is working on a new comprehensive or big bucket schedule that is still under development or review is a new response on the 2018 RMCS

*For *Other* responses see Appendix B

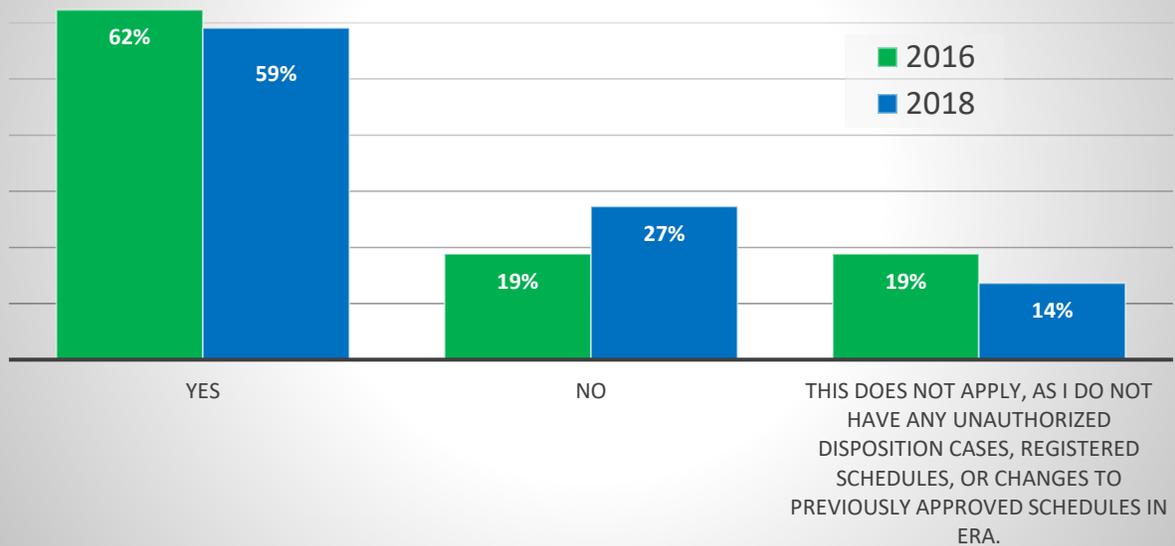
Q8: My agency has not recently submitted records schedules to NARA because: (Please select all that apply.)



Q9: I do receive the monthly Status Report of Records Appraisal Activity from my NARA Appraisal Archivist.

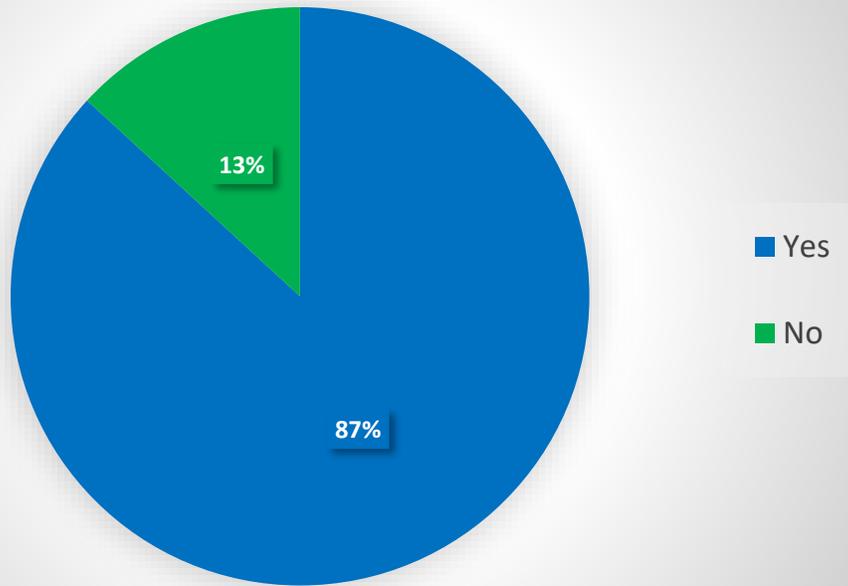


Q9: I do receive the monthly Report of Records Appraisal Activity from my NARA Appraisal Archivist.

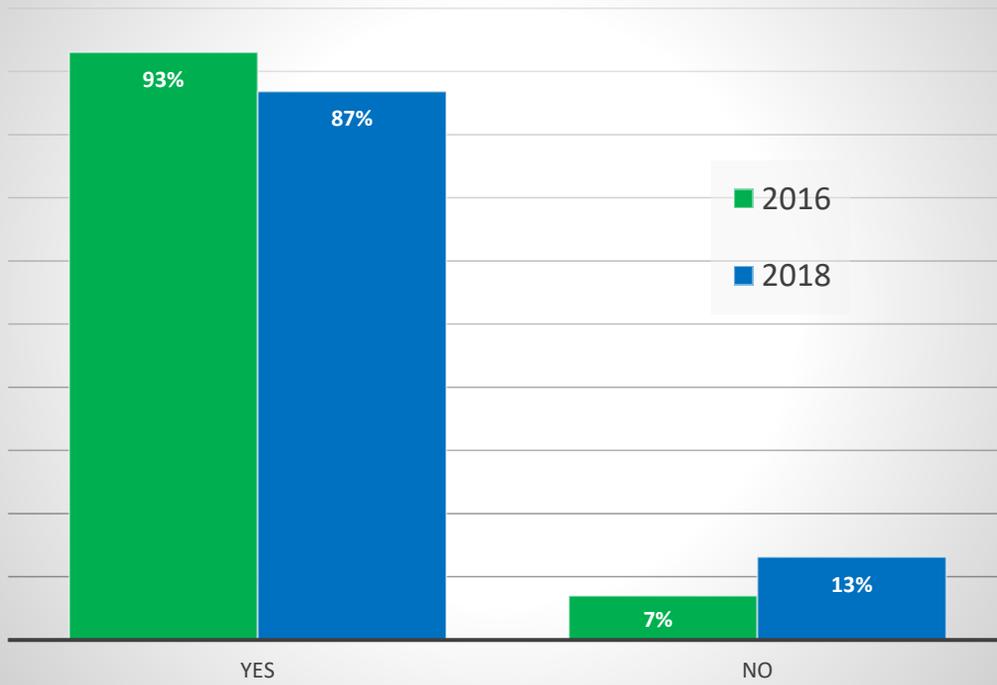


Appendix A: Survey Questions and Results

Q10: Is this report helpful?

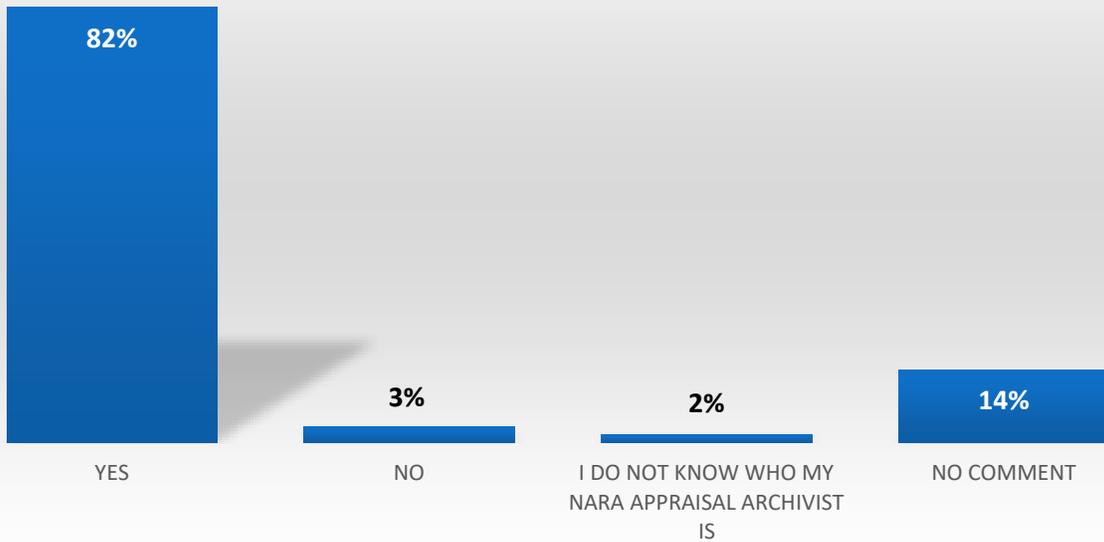


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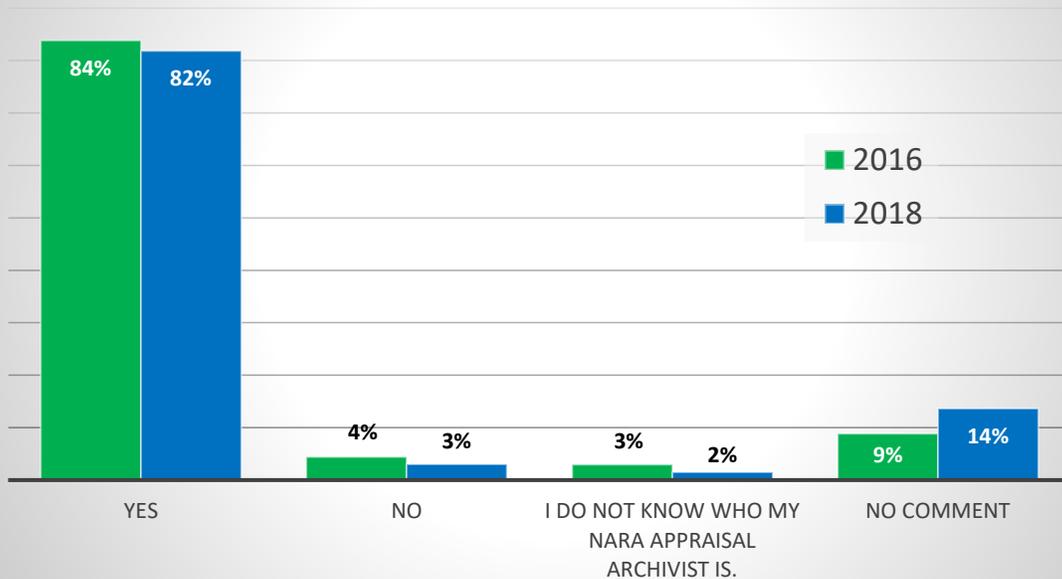


Appendix A: Survey Questions and Results

Q11: I have a good working relationship with my agency's NARA appraisal archivist.



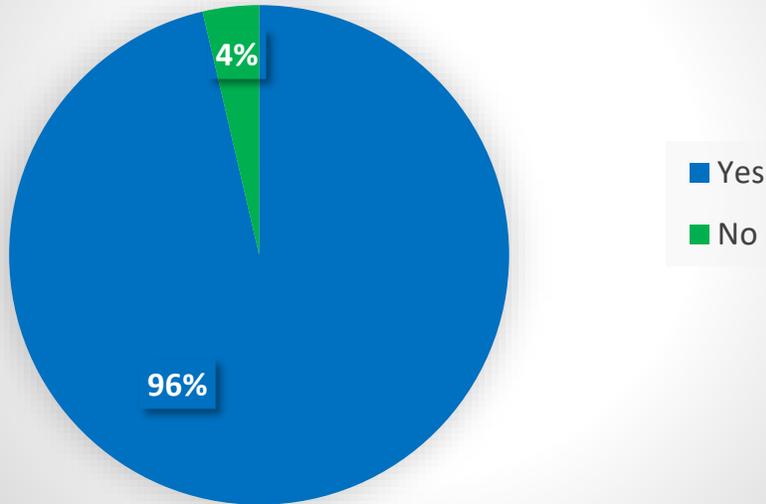
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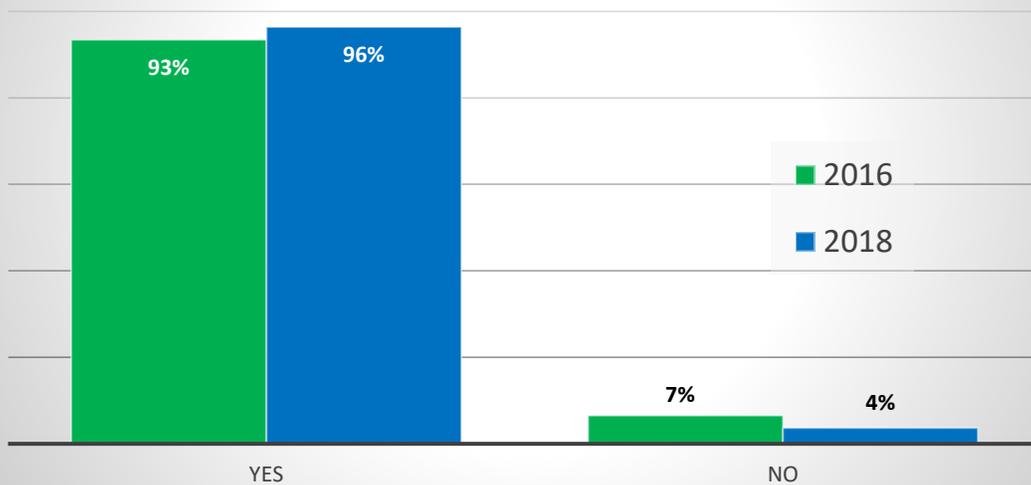
Appendix A: Survey Questions and Results

Q12: Tell us about your interactions with your NARA appraisal archivist. (Please do not mention your NARA appraisal archivist by name.) (See Appendix B)

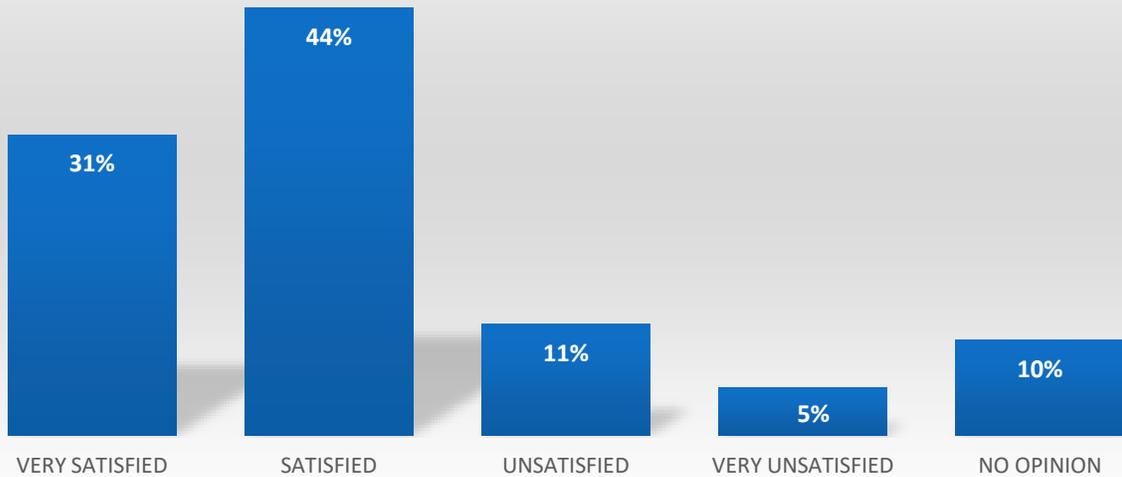
Q13: When I contact my agency's NARA appraisal archivist for assistance, I receive a timely response.



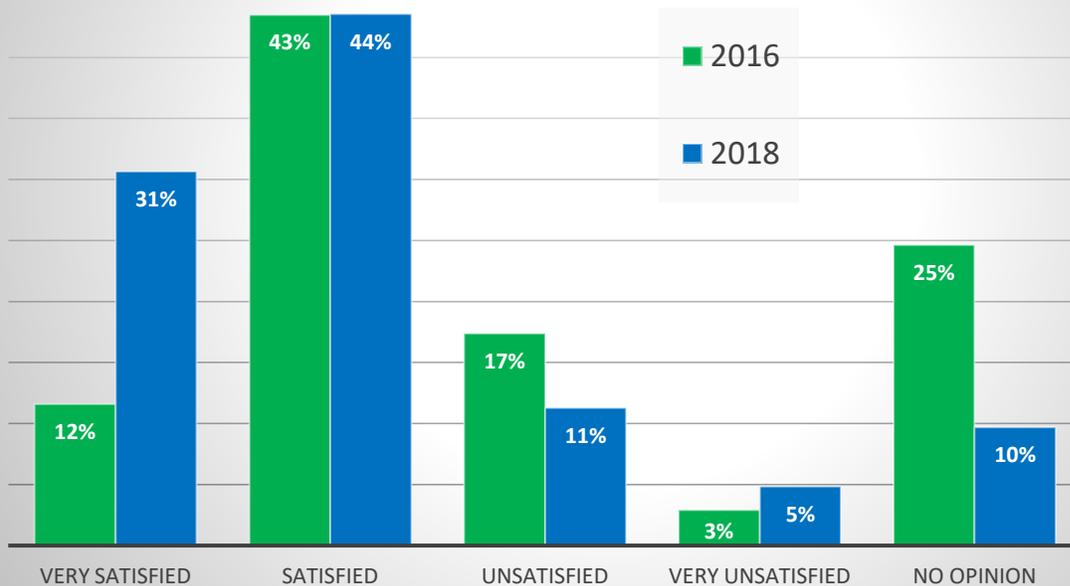
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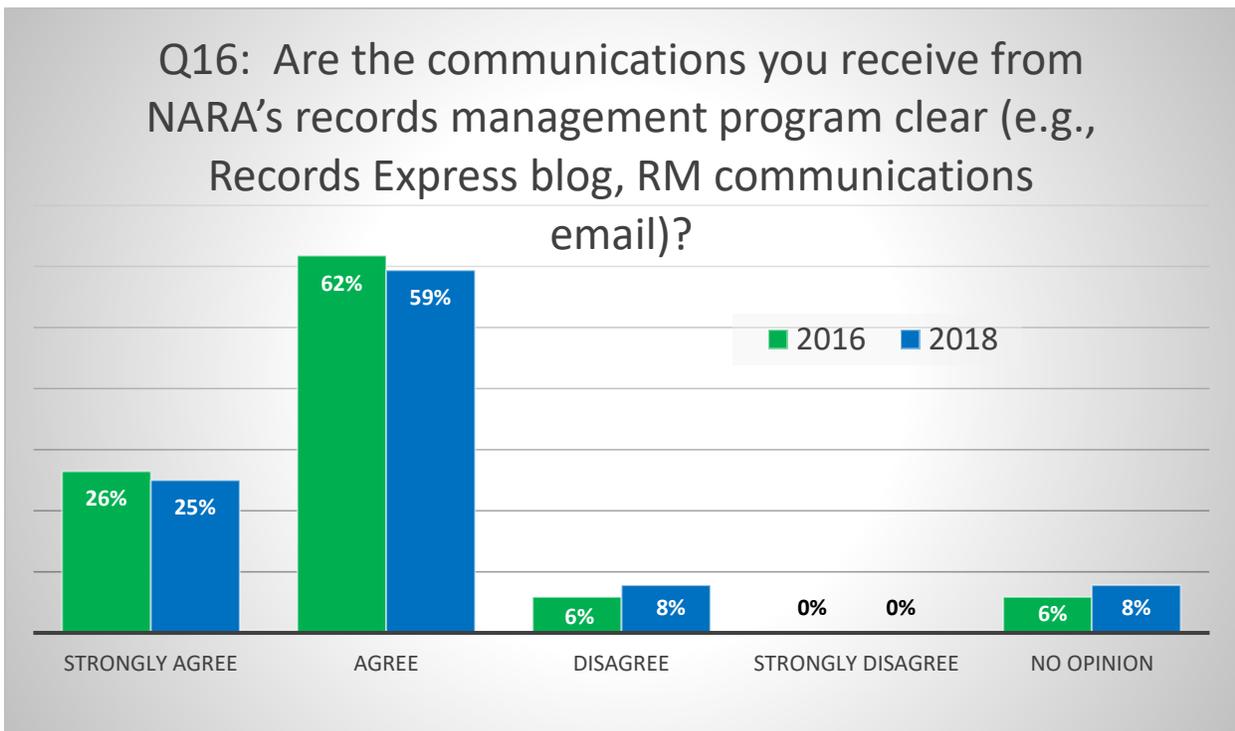
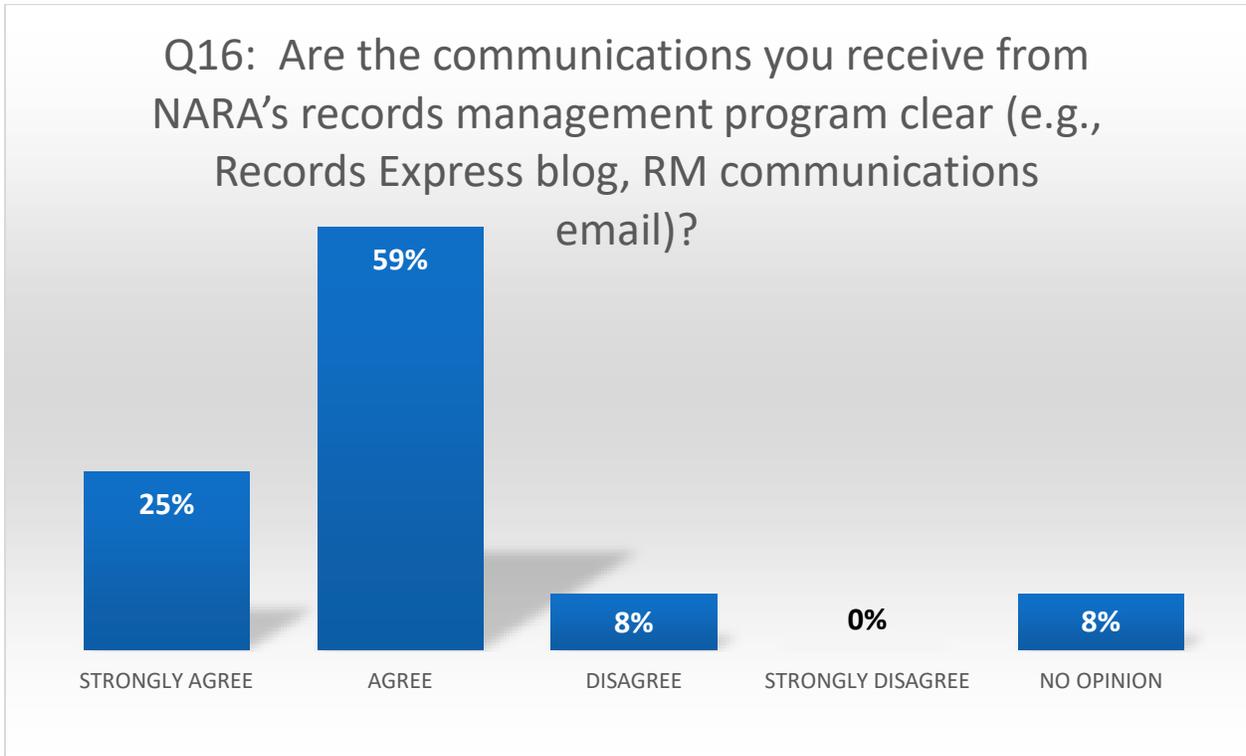
Q14: Please rate how satisfied you are with NARA's scheduling and appraisal services.



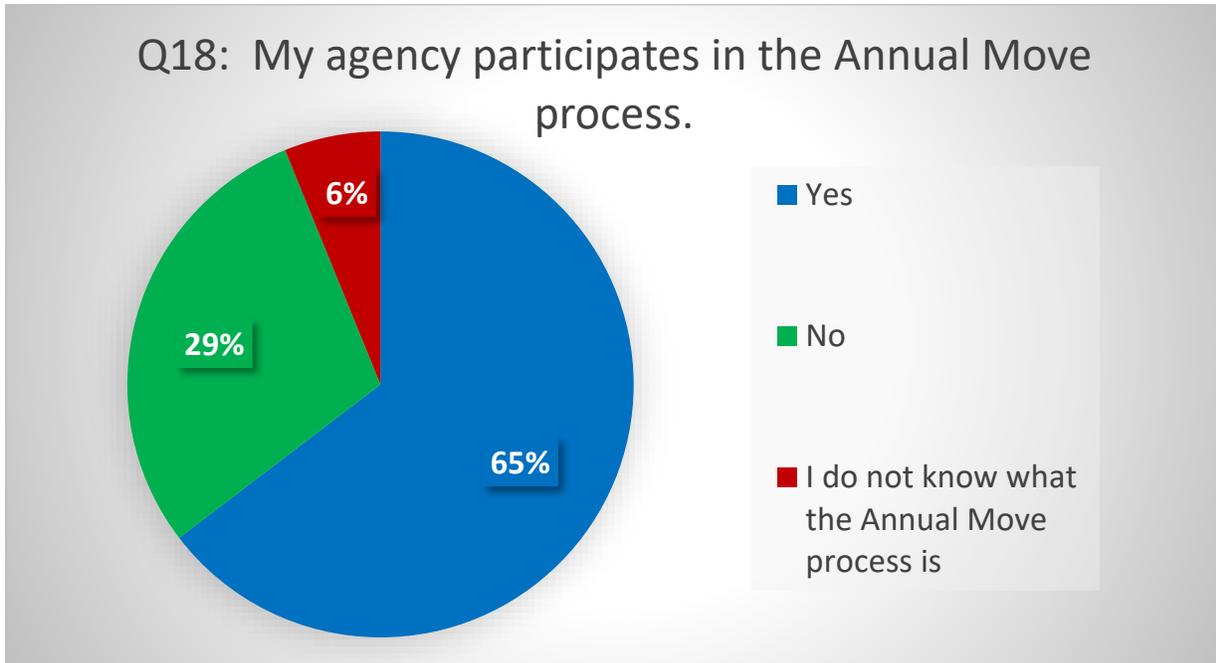
Q14: Please rate how satisfied you are with NARA's scheduling and appraisal services.



Q15: Do you have any comments about your satisfaction with NARA scheduling and appraisal services? (See Appendix B)



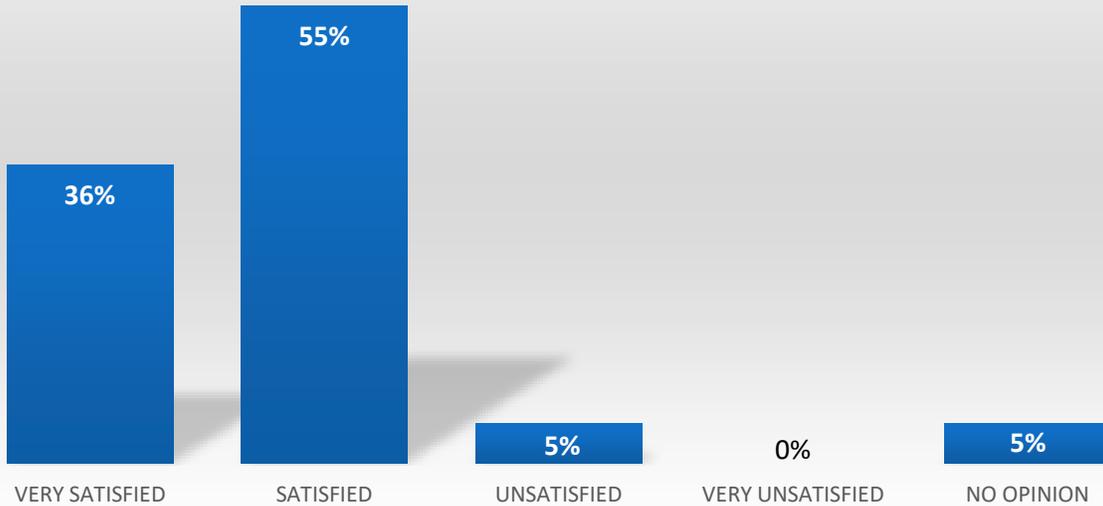
Q17: Please tell us how we can improve our communications. (See Appendix B)



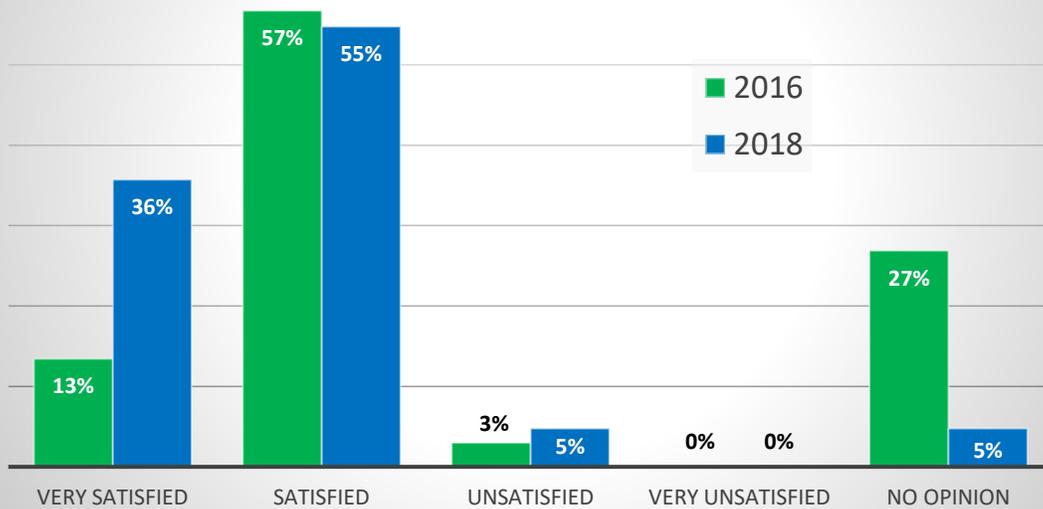
*This is a new question on the 2018 RMCSS.

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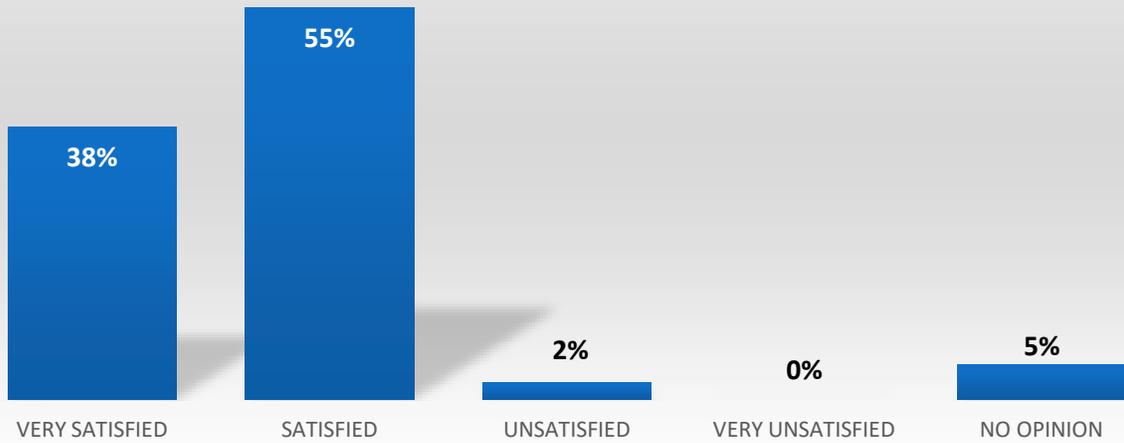
Q19: Please rate how satisfied you are with the support you receive from NARA on the Annual Move process.



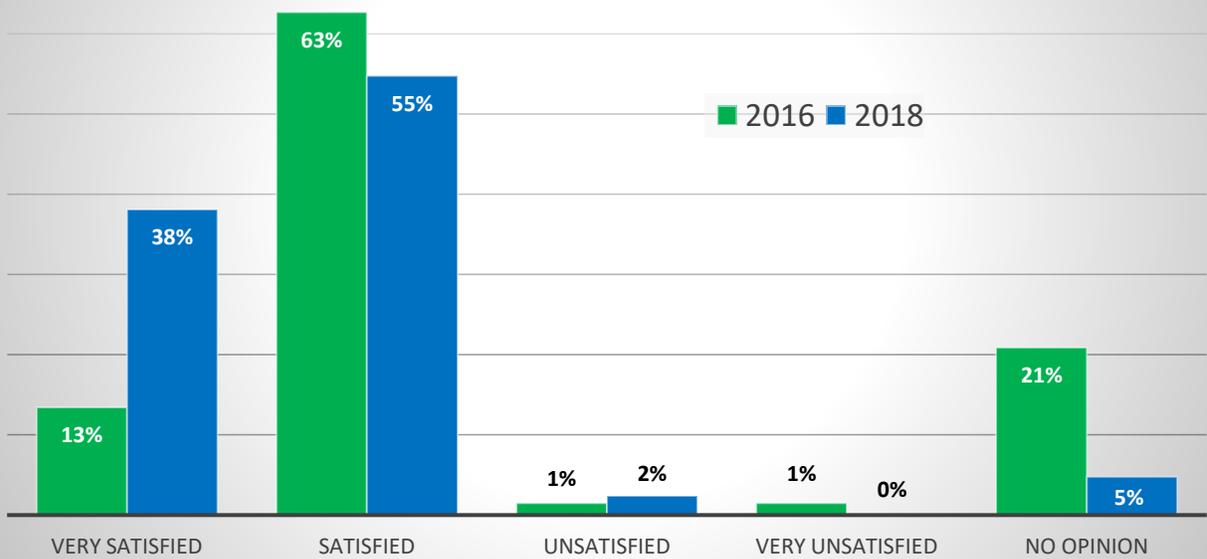
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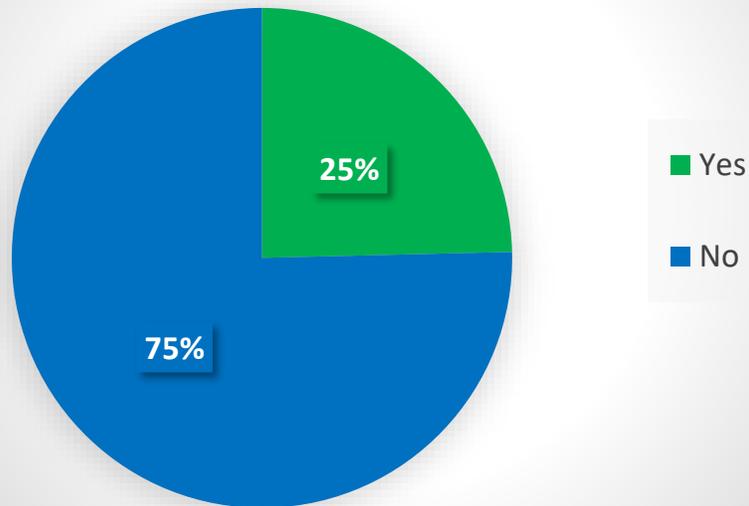


Q20: How satisfied are you with NARA communications on the Annual Move process?

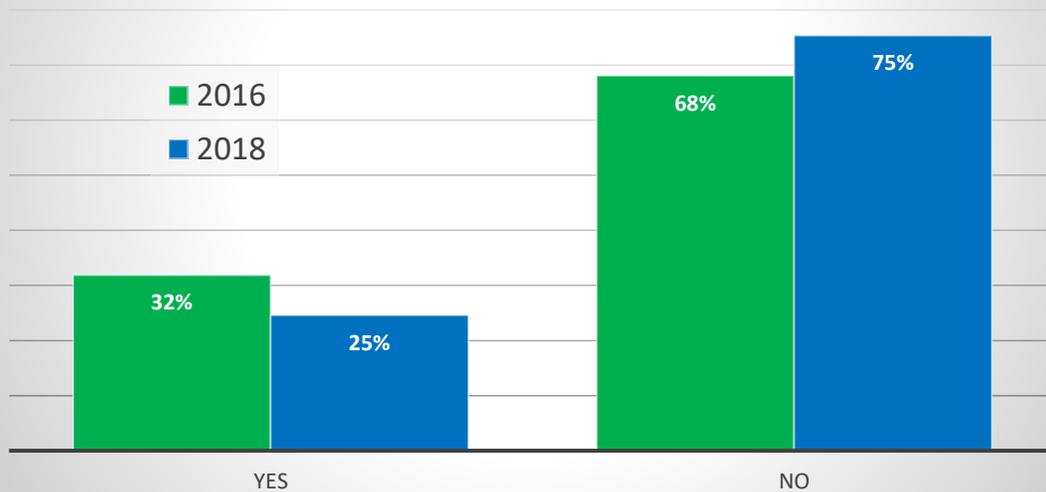


Q21: Please tell us how we can improve the Annual Move process. (See Appendix B)

Q22: Have you taken any of NARA's records management courses in FY 2016 and/or FY 2017?

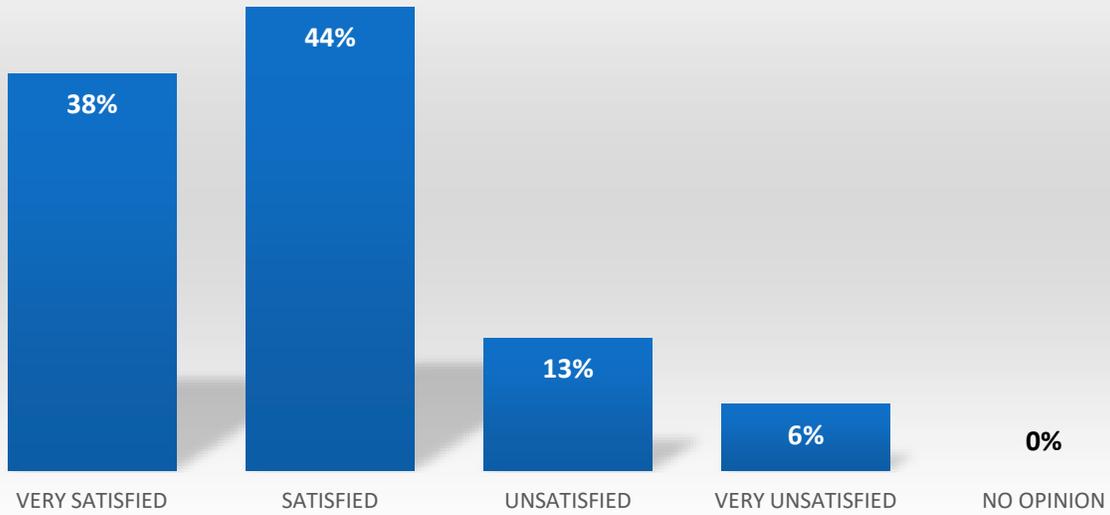


Q22: Have you taken any of NARA's records management courses in FY 2015 or FY 2016?/FY 2016 or FY 2017?

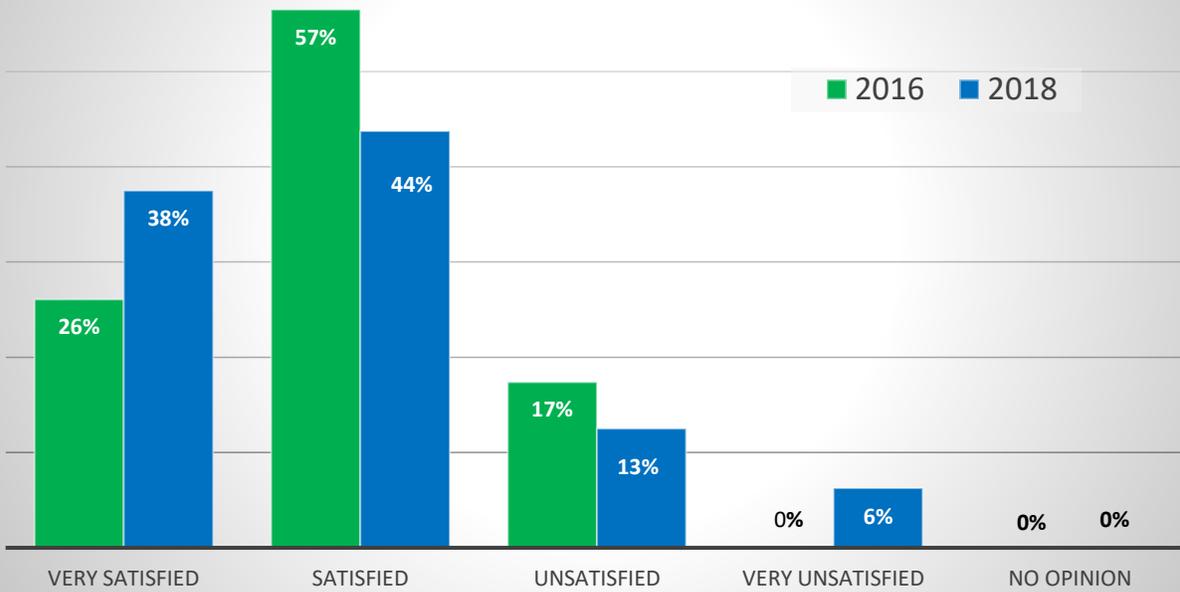


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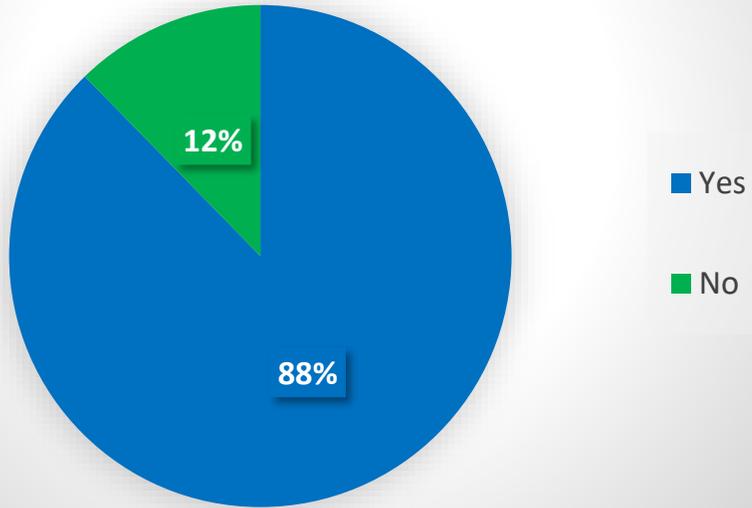
Q23: Please rate how satisfied you are with NARA's records management training courses.



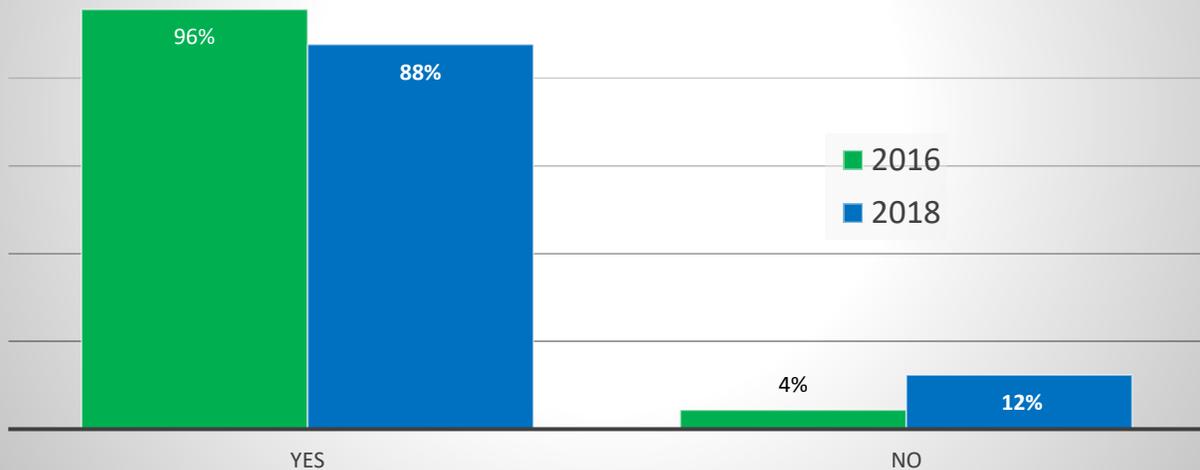
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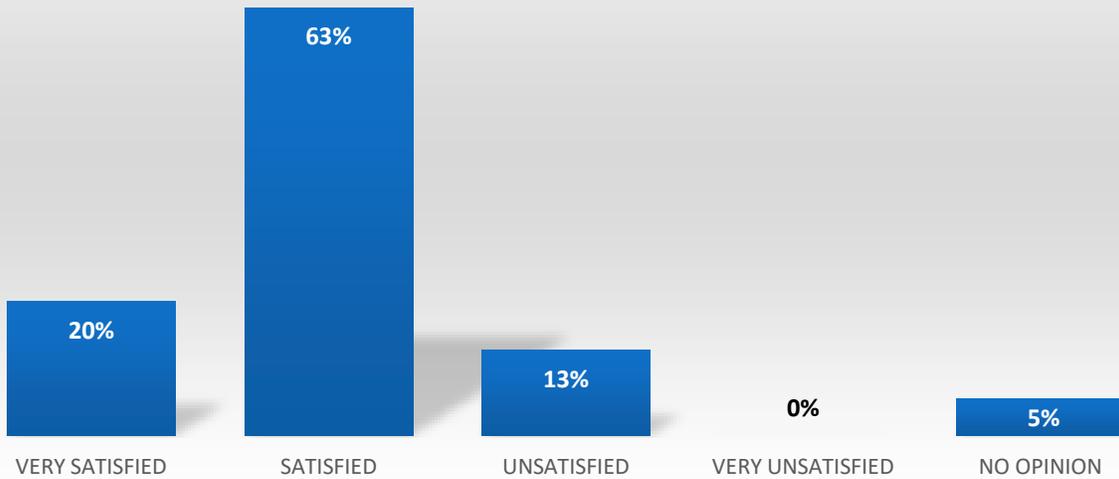
Q24: Have you viewed any of the training materials available on NARA's records management website (e.g., such as briefings, web pages, publications, etc.)?



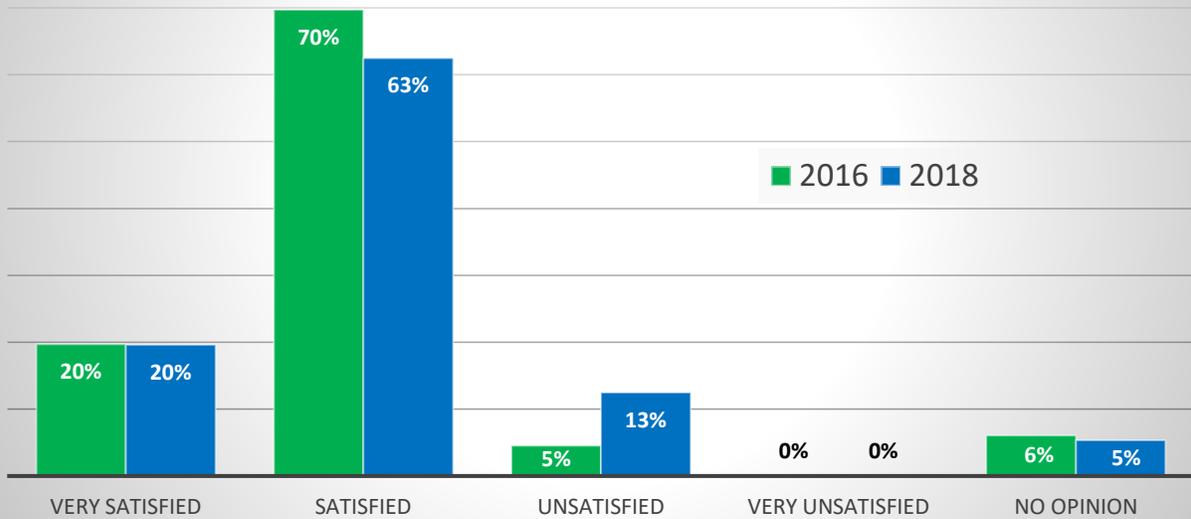
Q24: Have you viewed any of the training materials available on NARA's records management web site (e.g., such as briefings, web pages, publications, etc.)?



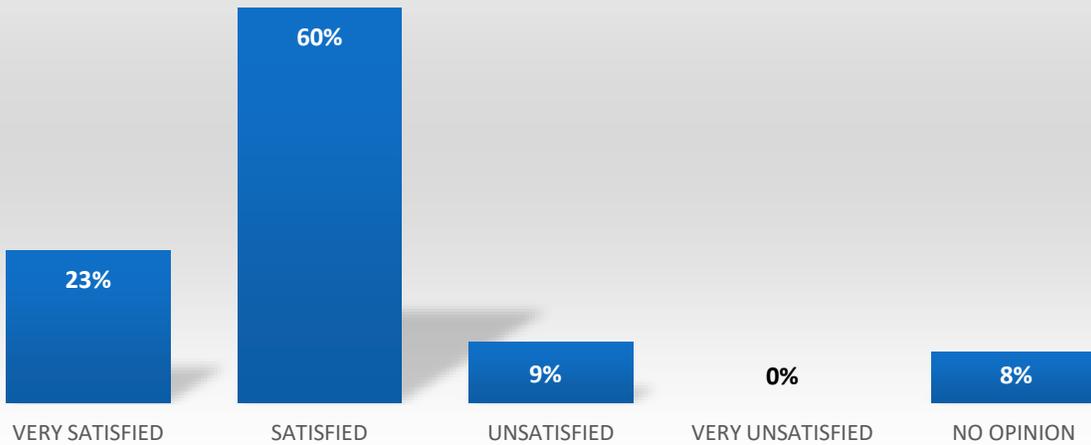
Q25: Please rate how satisfied you are with the training materials available on NARA's records management website.



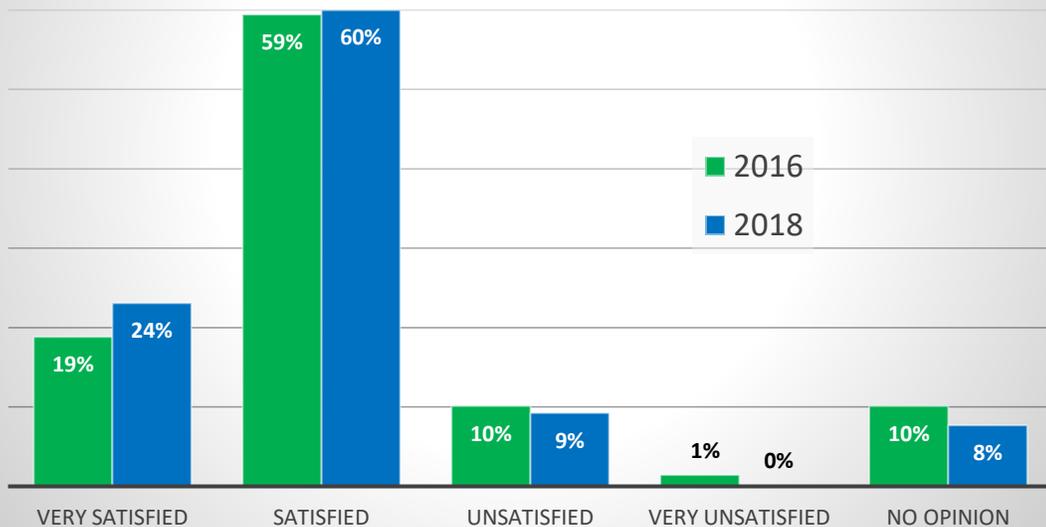
Q25: Please rate how satisfied you are with the training materials available on NARA's records management website.



Q26: Please rate how satisfied you are with NARA's records management guidance products (e.g., bulletins, FAQs, and white papers)?



Q26: Please rate how satisfied you are with NARA's records management guidance products (e.g., bulletins, FAQs, and white papers)?



Appendix A: Survey Questions and Results

Q27: If unsatisfied or very unsatisfied, how may NARA's records management guidance be improved? (See Appendix B)

Q28: Please share any general comments or suggestions you may have for NARA's records management program. (See Appendix B)

Q29: If you would like to speak to someone about anything mentioned in this survey, please include your email address and a brief description of the topic you would like to discuss. Note that this is purely optional. (See Appendix B)

Appendix B: Detailed Responses

Q1: What is your position? Other:
Division Chief
Unit Chief of the Records Management Unit
Branch Chief-American Indian Records Repository
National Records Manager
Acting ARO

Q8: My agency has not recently submitted records schedules to NARA because: Other:
Not applicable; we currently have a pending schedule under review.
I have to take a refresher class on how to use the ERA
As a Legislative Branch agency, NARA does not review/approve our schedules.
The Albuquerque office does this task.
I am drafting authorities for my bureau
We are currently identifying unscheduled records and reaching out to stakeholders. The last schedule that was submitted was for Capstone.
We submitted a schedule for approval in FY18.
We have a draft but it has not been submitted
We have submitted record schedules in FY 18
My agency is currently work with the NARA archivist to ensure all schedules and donation materials are correctly submitted to NARA.
The Department (DOI) submits schedules for Bureaus
currently reviewing and updating our records program
NARA does not make available an official source for all records schedules that I have inherited. NARA has historically not managed schedules as active or retired, so the status of old schedules can be ambiguous.
FWS is submitting all new big bucket schedules through DOI

Q12: Tell us about your interactions with your NARA appraisal archivist. (Please do not mention your NARA appraisal archivist by name.)
very knowledgeable, responsive, professional, willing to visit us in person at meetings we sponsor
My interactions are with the Senior Records Analyst who is very helpful and responsive when I need to make changes to the records schedule; etc.
The archivist is always available to provide insights and is generally helpful, had good customer service skills, etc.
very active and helpful
The person is too inexperienced in appraisal and records management. Should have been accompanied by an experienced person.
My interaction is very professional and our exchanges are cordial and informative. We work well together in addressing a range of RM issues, and he is a valued resource and subject matter expert.

Appendix B: Detailed Responses

The interaction with the Appraisal Archivist is good. However, neither the Archivist nor next level supervision has a good grasp on the agency's mission.
The appraisal archivist assigned to our agency is the very best!! He is always accessible, responds quickly, professionally and if necessary to comes to our agency in person to discuss and view records. We have been very please[d] by the service we have gotten and feel fortunate to have the very best of the best.
Very helpful in providing advice and giving guidance
Very thorough, returns emails and telephone calls in a timely manner, very responsive, good at referring us to proper NARA personnel if he is not able to help
Very responsive to my questions and has a great understanding of the issues facing my agency
They come to the FRC in Lenexa to appraise our federal trust records and make sure the schedule is appropriate.
We always get quick answers, assistance, and access to other points of contact for technical questions from our archivist.
I've had a few conversations. They are very helpful.
Reporting lost records and appraisals
I reach out for any type of assistance or guidance I may not be sure of, follow up on the status of our Capstone schedules pending approval and other agency schedules.
When I have a question or need assistance, our appraisal archivist has been very responsive.
Our appraisal archivist sends me our monthly status report and we have been in contact to discuss updating our legacy schedules. They are always helpful and responsive.
She is very responsive to my questions and helps me find the information I need.
We have worked with multiple archivists at NARA with our schedules. They have been very courteous and prompt in their responses to our questions and concerns.
I HAVE NOT SPOKEN WITH MY ARCHIVISIT IN OVER A YEAR, BUT A AT ONE TIME WE SPOKE REGULARY. MY ARCHIVISIT WAS VERY HELPFUL IN THE PAST.
Very responsive and helpful; has good questions
We communicate via email as needed. I also just met with my AA at the last BRIDG meeting in DC on 4/24/2018.
Requested guidance drafting records schedule of uncommon type records. NARA support was excellent.
Professional, friendly, extremely helpful beyond what is required and expected.
I don't personally interact with my NARA appraisal archivist, but my staff does. The archivist is responsive and helpful.
My Appraisal Archivist is very knowledgeable and available to meet with the agency leadership, always providing what's necessary to get the job done. Very good at providing the monthly reports and assisting with issue when creating records schedule in the ERA. My appraisal archivist provides timely responses on a consistent basis.
I have occasional requests for information and/or clarifications on records issues.
The archivist has been available for the Inspection as well as training the Administrator of our organization. The archivist and I have a good working relationship and a good relationship overall. We communicate at least once or twice a month depending on the work load. When speaking to my superiors she speaks highly of me and is quite informative about the things we have worked together on for the betterment of the organization.

Appendix B: Detailed Responses

During position changes, archivist should take a proactive approach to meet with their new clients or reach out for issues or concerns to address to develop a good relationship.
My appraisal archivist is wonderful. I have had many throughout my years as a Records Officer and he is one of the most responsive and thoughtful I have had.
-Questions about approval in between reporting time -Questions about potential new schedule or existing schedules -Questions about audits by NARA due to potential deliberate destruction of records -Request a visit to look at potential permanent records or speak to management.
They are available and responsive
[Name removed] is GREAT and is always eager and quick to assist.
She is very helpful and knowledgeable and she responds quickly to emails or phone calls.
They have been responsive, helpful and willing to work with us on our records management questions.
I have a relatively good working relationship with my primary appraisal archivist. The relationship with the others who assist him has room for improvement.
The archivist is friendly, responsive, timely and motivated
To discuss records management related issues and update us on current records management priorities.
Our archivist goes out of her way to provide guidance and support in all areas of records management. The records management function is a very small portion of my collateral responsibilities (we are a very small bureau within our department) and our archivist has helped fill in our records management "knowledge gaps".
[Name removed] is excellent to work with! He's extremely knowledgeable, timely, supportive and helpful when our agency needs anything. He's always open to email, phone and in-person interaction and always offers to stop by if needed when he is in the area on other site visits. CNCS considers our appraisal archivist to be a great asset.
Very helpful
Wonderful appraisal archivist. Very knowledgeable and also has great advice.
Contact is usually by email. Sometimes by telephone. A few times in person.
My archivist is always available to discuss issues with my me and my team
When I have contacted NARA for help, I am contacted by my Records Manager for my Agency who always comes and assists me - They go out of their way to make sure I understand the entire process. The training has been so wonderful and they have given me a wealth of knowledge and good information I can use daily. Super thankful for My NARA!
Prompt response to records concerns. Provides adequate solutions to issues.
In FY2016-17, Appraisal Archivist very responsive to questions, highly interactive. Very positive experience.

Appendix B: Detailed Responses

Q15: Do you have any comments about your satisfaction with NARA scheduling and appraisal services?
Speed at which the formal approval process takes for a proposed records disposition schedule
It takes quite a while to get an approval.
N/A
none
While very satisfied within the constraints that exist, including the use of ERA and the access to Appraisal Archivist support, I propose that NARA consider streamlining aspects of records scheduling via a "certification" course to enable knowledgeable, skilled, and experienced records and information management specialists/RM officials to become perhaps collateral Appraisal Archivists once they complete and pass requirements as part of a NARA-certification course to be able to schedule/self-certify certain types of schedules - e.g., revisions for media neutrality, establishing select administrative items - to be able to fast-track the scheduling process (not bypass it) to secure NARA approval process. The model for this approach for "records scheduling" is the OPM delegated examining unit (DEU) authority and "position classification" authorities to classify position duties and pay levels. This would help further professionalize the 0308 occupational series.
I would like to see more refresher records management training
The review of schedules by GAO has become an impediment to the swift and efficient processing of proposed schedules. Clearly, GAO has a basis to weigh in on deviations from the GRS that will result in a shorter retention. But to ask for their approval for disposal of ANY program records (< 3 years) unnecessarily duplicates the work of the appraisal archivist. At a minimum, NARA should send the info to GAO directly, rather than asking the agency to do so, or build it into some sort of electronic workflow within ERA.
Please conduct research on the history of the agency's schedules, and leave clear and concise decision reports on the process of the scheduling decisions.
Our appraisal archivist works quickly to find the fastest solution, but is accurate based on our record type. Very pleased.
NA
ERA 2.0 cannot come fast enough. Please extend the login timeout in ERA
Not clear on whether policies such as "media neutral notification" or the 'pre-accessioning' policies are still active. I can't get anything approved as 'pre-accessioned' so why is there a policy for it?
In my prior experience (not applicable to current agency or this survey), was satisfied.
My appraisal archivist has been working with the Department primarily, went on extended leave, and her backup didn't bring an issue to me regarding my agency. I have pending questions waiting for her to return to get responses to them. I don't feel like NARA is including bureaus on communication instead working only with the department.
Very helpful and professional
It seems the process has gotten slower.
None.
It would be helpful if NARA posted its timeline of activities in scheduling/appraisal in a location on the website that was more accessible.
I believe that the potential for waiting up to two years for approval is too long.
N/A
It takes too long for a new or revised schedule to be approved. Now that NARA is going to start charging for retaining records past their retention period, agencies should not be charged if the agency has submitted a revision to the retention prior to the end of the retention period.
It would be helpful to know when required formats have changed when submitting record schedules.

Appendix B: Detailed Responses

It would be great is NARA would provide a checklist of the records schedule appraisal process, since it takes so long for a records schedule to be approved. At least, we will know where the schedule is in the process.
no
I believe my archivist is the reason behind the CAPSTONE schedule being approved so quickly.
The ERA system is not user friendly and couldn't get good advice to uploading creating new schedules in the system.
I would still like to see the time to approve schedules shortened further.
n/a
It's ERA. I avoid scheduling and archiving whenever I can because ERA is so confusing and redundant.
-
process is too Long
I am having to revise schedules from permanent to temporary after just a few years. Differing opinion from original appraisals.
There are times I find ERA to be a bit challenging however I don't use it often so I can be a bit rusty when the time comes.
Not at this time
The people at NARA are wonderful to work with. However, NARA works within an archaic framework that is quickly not meeting the needs of the electronic age. The whole pipeline of records from creation, to records schedule, to accession, to in the hands of researchers needs to be remapped. This re-mapping should be done BEFORE NARA re-engineers the ERA system. This re-engineering may mean changes to the structure of NARA, which may be good for you in the long run.
I am unsatisfied because the process is far too lengthy, bureaucratic and non-transparent. In my experience, the relationship between archivist and submitter is one in which the archivist assigns a task and an end date for completion and then schedules that end date for completion as the next time that he or she will check in with you. No matter how fast I completed the assignment (because some of them are really simple and don't require much time), it would not speed up the process. Then there is the part of the process in which you are told that (some always in the background but invisible) stakeholders are weighing some aspect of your submission and they'll get back to you... eventually. Then there is the unnecessary meeting when the stakeholder has to come in to personally examine the analog photos and films that you have when you've said repeatedly that there are no analog photos or films but they want to talk to the public affairs division persons anyway just to make sure. My concept of the process is that it should be agile and efficient. Records Managers should be encouraged to constantly identify unscheduled records and run them through the process quickly. And if the schedule has problems and needs tweaking it should be easy to do. NARA follows the opposite approach in that schedules should be endlessly debated and constantly stuck in one of the cogs of one of the wheels in order to make sure that everyone on the committee is satisfied that the result is perfect. This is just not workable for the increasingly fast paced information management world.
No.
If a region/program requests direct services with NARA, not every time am I aware. All Bureau RO's should be contacted if NARA will be providing any services within a bureau.
No
ERA is cumbersome. Takes a while to learn, but after working through it a few times it started to make sense.

Appendix B: Detailed Responses

Q17: Please tell us how we can improve our communications.
When a BRIDG meeting concludes, the NARA website mentions slides are available on request. Be more proactive and make them available on say, OMB MAX, the FRON website on OMB MAX, etc. Also, for training at the WNRC and other FRCs, send periodic reminders (e.g., a month before the actual training date).
N/A
provide executive summaries
It would be better if NARA would have one electronic system across the board.
Identify the agency records schedules affected by the GRS, especially if there are significant changes to the retention.
NARA needs to engage with agencies who are not honoring or storing another agencies forward deployed Capstone positions emails. NARA needs to be more of a driving force to make the change happen.
NA
no issues with communications
I like the Records Express blog as an easier, alternative way to find RM news & info, since navigating the nara.gov/records site can be interesting.
Basically, missing details for application
Too many redundant and confusing overlaps of policies. Back to basics approach would be helpful.
The more communications the better.
I think you all are doing a great job.
Sometimes the communications assume all recipients understand terminology and past issues.
NARA seniors should commonly contact SAO's and agency Directors and provide direction/guidance.
One of my contractors frequently requests clarification; she would like them to be more clear and concise, but I don't have that problem (maybe because I've been in the business a lot longer than she?).
Use plan language and be brief and to the point
I concur with how NARA communicate to the RM community.
No ideas
Customer Service Account Representatives should reach out to their clients on a routine basis to see how they can help the organizations.
Communications are good
Keep doing the good work in Records Management
<p>1) Timeliness: Do not change the criteria after a deadline, especially if it changes the fundamental nature of 'the ask.' For example, NARA required agencies to have digital training implemented NLT December 31, 2016. After the deadline, in January 2017, NARA issued criteria that requires agencies to modify our training programs. Worse yet, NARA advertises that for a fee to NARA, they will update our digital training to meet your own criteria.</p> <p>2) Hidden Agenda: NARA has on occasion set rules with enforcement or oversight, that result in the agencies providing a funding stream for NARA. For example, the aforementioned training enforcement mentioned above, which has resulted in a funding stream for NARA's training program</p>

Appendix B: Detailed Responses

Inspections that result in hiring NARA as consultants to fix the problems NARA identified. The 2022 deadline, which will result in sending enormous amounts of paper to FRCs prior to 2022 for storage over many years, as an agency provided funding stream for the FRCs. It has the appearance of a NARA practice of obtaining funding through the use of gentle nudges, force or threats.
Emails are usually very lengthy.
I would like to see more FAQ on electronic records management
Sometimes it's always nice to have the Records Management team leader actually see the types of records you have and are dealing with daily. My agency records manager came to look at what types of files I have in order to best serve my agency and me as the records officer and to help me with my records schedule completion.
As a RO I was not aware that ERA will have a new version issued soon. I assume once the new version is released NARA will provide training to Bureau RO's.
Many of the communications lack context, as if we're picking up a conversation that had been on hold. As the records officer, with subordinate levels of management handling the day-to-day operational minutiae, such communications are unhelpful and somewhat confusing.
Subject lines are too long. Messages too wordy. Have to search through messages to find the important parts.

Q21: Please tell us how we can improve the Annual Move process.
Making the SF 135s and the box inventory lists available by some means would be helpful for Federal Agency Records Professionals and members to determine what was packed 25-30 years ago.
N/A
no issues with annual move process
The ERA system needs to be configured to make the process easier.
Thank you!
It's clear what needs to be done to complete this process.
Create a refresher/tutorial before the Annual Move process for organizations that don't use the system daily
No comment at this time
Works great
I don't have a need to move the records. This is not something I need to track. As long as they exist somewhere, it doesn't really matter to me where you have them.
Give agencies several months advance notice on what will be in annual move. Preliminary list should come out in May/June, allow agencies to work with NARA to refine list and review holdings for inclusion in transfer, then NARA send out final list on 9/1. Also, list of ERA Annual Move TRs with crosswalk to FRC Transfer Numbers should be provided to the Agency Records Officer.
N/A

Appendix B: Detailed Responses

Q27: If unsatisfied or very unsatisfied, how may NARA's records management guidance be improved?
Update the content to reflect current issues. Developing guidance that doesn't conflict with basic tenants of records management (all email maintained as a record instead of filing with related records for a complete record)
Again, too much redundancy and too many layers. Simple is best. Back to basic approach. Policies are old and outdated and not applicable to today's records. Retention schedules are not clear and concise. Suggest a 'cheat sheet' or a basic spreadsheet showing generic GRS and RS.
again, use plain language and be brief and to the point, provide actual instruction
<p>NARA is making improvements in this area - good improvements! However, by adding more volume, the resources tend to be in many locations. This means:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Users are required to visit many web locations to piece the whole picture together. We all know that if users are required to piece a picture together, they will inevitably piece it together different than their colleagues. 2) Web pages are out of date, but not removed, which the user may inadvertently incorporate into their version of the whole picture. 3) Sometimes it is difficult to tell the difference between mandatory policy and optional guidance. <p>It is good that NARA embraces multiple modes to get the word out. The recommendation would be to paint one picture in one place and maintain it ... then use the many modes to point to the 'one place.'</p>

Q28: Please share any general comments or suggestions you may have for NARA's records management program.
Make ARCIS and ERA more user friendly. It would be nice if there was a central NARA webpage that would show/scroll/display an updated list of forthcoming list[s] of upcoming NARA training events (formal training, training at the WNRC and other FRCs, informal webinars, etc.) instead of having to receive and forward separate emails to interested individuals.
N/A
Make ERA easier to use
Recommend universal requirements and standards that agencies can apply - adapt or adopt - similar to the universal ERM requirements. Also recommend NARA consider credentialing appropriately trained/NARA-certified RM officials to secure Archivist-signed and Chief Records Officer for US Government-signed credentials (w/ photo) so RM officials like certified records officers and certified 0308 RM officials can gain ready access to records similar to auditors and inspector general (IG) officials. Consider proposal to realign RM programs under the IG to help advance activities, efforts and initiatives from a compliance perspective where such emphasis may not be readily or consistency applied or support in such organizations like a CAO or CIO where other competing program interests are deemed more important than RM even when they all involve records.
It seems to me that the appraisal unit needs more staff and needs experienced staff.

Appendix B: Detailed Responses

<p>The review of schedules by GAO has become an impediment to the swift and efficient processing of proposed schedules. Clearly, GAO has a basis to weigh in on deviations from the GRS that will result in a shorter retention. But to ask for their approval for disposal of ANY program records (< 3 years) unnecessarily duplicates the work of the appraisal archivist. At a minimum, NARA should send the info to GAO directly, rather than asking the agency to do so, or build it into some sort of electronic workflow within ERA.</p> <p>We need support with Capstone positions forward deployed to other agencies as the lead for our agency there. Those agencies won't collect and provide those positions emails back to us... Please assist. Thanks</p>
<p>NA</p>
<p>Please remove agency's obsolete/superseded approved records schedule from your web site.</p> <p>Please put all approved records schedules into a database with the identifying agency so one could search on one's own agency's schedules or other agencies' schedules with similar records.</p> <p>Need updated guidance on scheduling electronic systems.</p> <p>Hard to find specific guidance on the NARA web site; perhaps you need a better search engine?</p> <p>Put back the high-level records management course for management; it was very valuable for those who need to support the AROs.</p>
<p>More guidance on electronic records in general, i.e., SharePoint, shared drives, systems</p>
<p>NARA is very helpful, sometimes we need clarification with all our litigation holds, and it can become complex.</p>
<p>It would be helpful to have more working groups between agencies as we are all facing similar challenges and we don't all need to be inventing the wheel.</p>
<p>The Department of Interior has/is going to Big Bucket Schedules. With the new disposition authority at the DOI level, Bureaus can no longer submit Direct Offers in ERA.</p>
<p>No comment.</p>
<p>Records Management Certification should be available online.</p>
<p>[names removed] have all been very helpful. [name removed] has also been very helpful with ARES and ARCIS issues. It would be helpful if those two systems would work better together.</p>
<p>More guidance for micro-agencies with limited resources would be very helpful.</p>
<p>It would be useful to provide guidance on subsets of processes - digitization, for instance - to the RIM community.</p>
<p>I am eager to see how the new training curriculum, 2.0 will help to meet the needs of customers. Thank you!</p>
<p>NARA should clarify with all Federal Agencies the need for a SAO also includes Bureaus, Components, Sub-Agencies not just at the higher level.</p>
<p>Splendid job!</p>
<p>None at this time.</p>
<p>great program</p>
<p>The YouTube Training Videos are a good source I use them on my blog but I could use more word of the day videos. Maybe on things like media neutral what that means. Perhaps break down the importance of training points from your updated list.</p>
<p>PLEASE conduct AUDITS of agencies especially a lot of purposeful mismanagement is done to deliberately not track FEDERAL records which is intentional destruction.</p>

Appendix B: Detailed Responses

The YouTube videos are a great resource and very helpful. I would like to have more webinars or remote-access courses for staff with limited travel budgets
Some of the courses are way too long and some of the instructors need to be cycled out. They make the classes VERY hard to tolerate. However, [names removed] are fantastic and they make the class enjoyable, they give real life examples and make the information relate-able
The support materials provided online are very detailed and helpful. Sometimes, it is a bit hard to find what you are looking for on NARA's website.
the search tool on the archive's website could be improved
N/A
No comments at this time...
Customer service in the records center program area has declined over the last few years. WNRC sometimes takes 10 days to process new transfers when they used to process and approve within a 2-3 days. Also, I'm frustrated that I'm having to reschedule permanent records to temporary after I have already been sending permanent records to NARA custody.
Just to make clear, I was neither satisfied nor unsatisfied with NARA class that I took (that middle option wasn't available). The reason why I am so lukewarm is because I find that material wasn't presented in the most logical way but I don't actually think it's totally (or even, mostly) the fault of the instructor but more a function of the fact NARA regs are somewhat confusing and evolving.
Recommend for NARA account managers to check-in with Bureau RO's at a minimum quarterly to address any concerns. NARA account managers should inform Bureau RO's if there is a NARA project or etc. going on in their agency.
NARA should provide "How-To" guidance when issuing plans, bulletins and etc.
I most agencies are strapped for resources and could benefit from revamping of the targeted resources program to assist with records management compliance
NARA records management program and training is beyond and above what I ever dreamed. Some of the best classes I've ever taken were at NARA on the entire 6-part KA1- KA6 series in DC and Adelphi NARA Locations. Amazing!!!! the absolute best. I recommend everyone going to this training once in their lives or annually.