

**European Union of Medicine in Assurance and Social Security - EUMASS**

Fræðslufundur Samtaka evrópskra tryggingalækna og VIRK  
starfsendurhæfingarsjóðs

Foss Hotel, Reykjavik, Iceland

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**Challenges in Disability Assessment and Work Integration in Iceland**

# Work Integration – Supply & Demand

Jónína Waagfjörð MSc PT, Health Economist  
Department Head – Work Participation  
VIRK Vocational Rehabilitation Fund

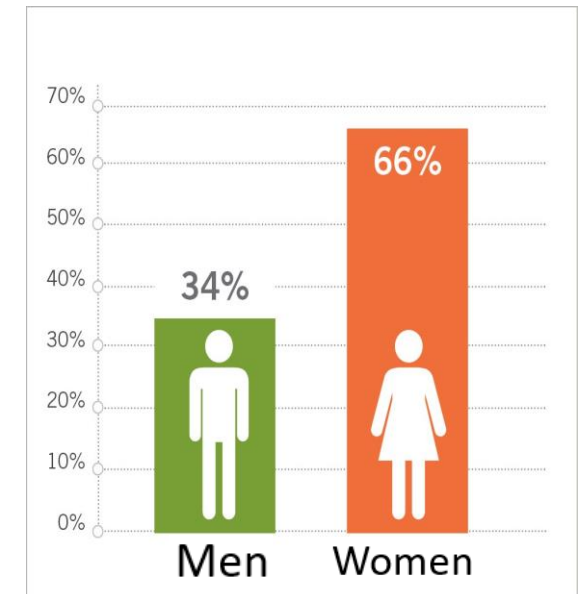
## Summary of topics

- **Virk Vocational Rehabilitation Fund**
  - ➔ **The Supply side**
- **Integrating work participation in vocational rehabilitation (VR)**
- **Icelandic Employers**
  - ➔ **The Demand side**
- **Changing attitudes in the labor market**

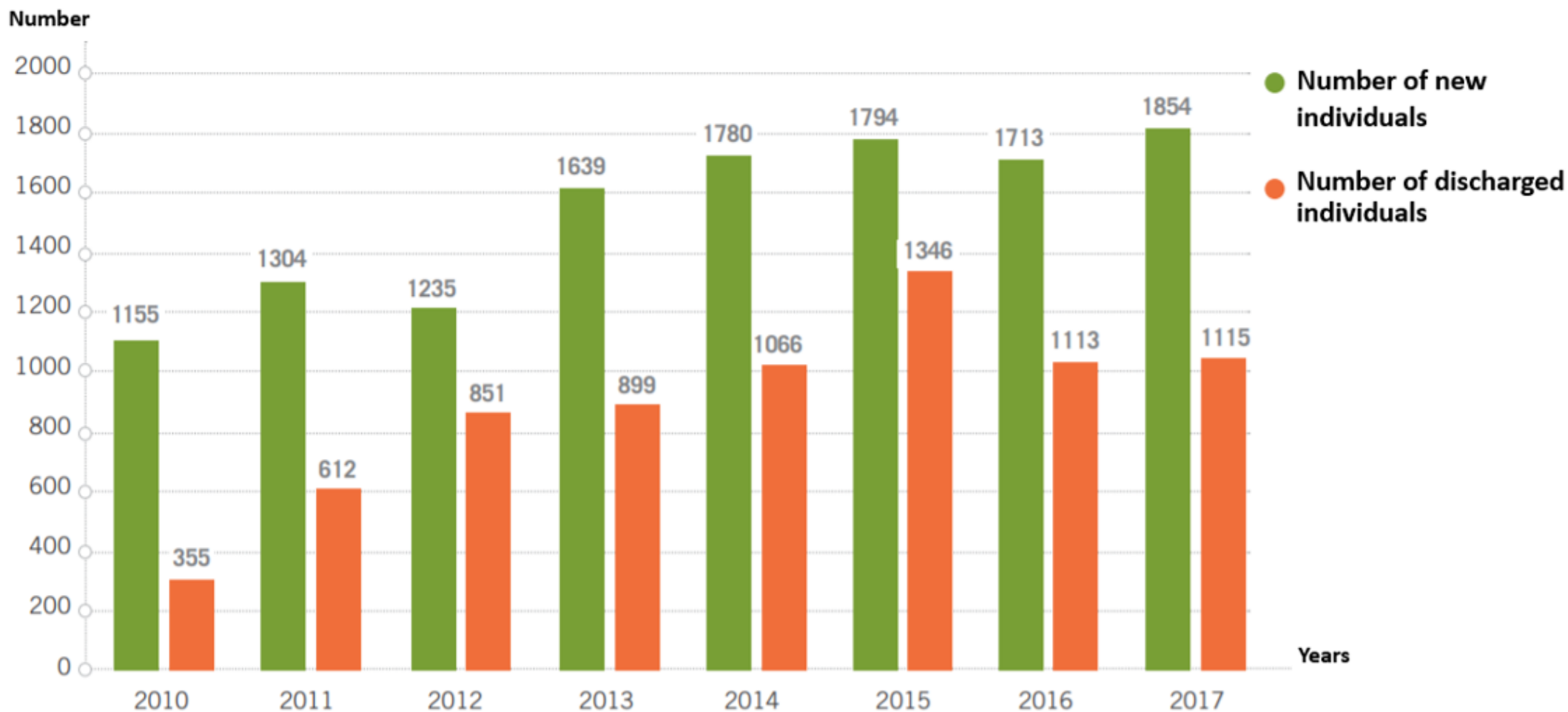


## Virk vocational rehabilitation fund

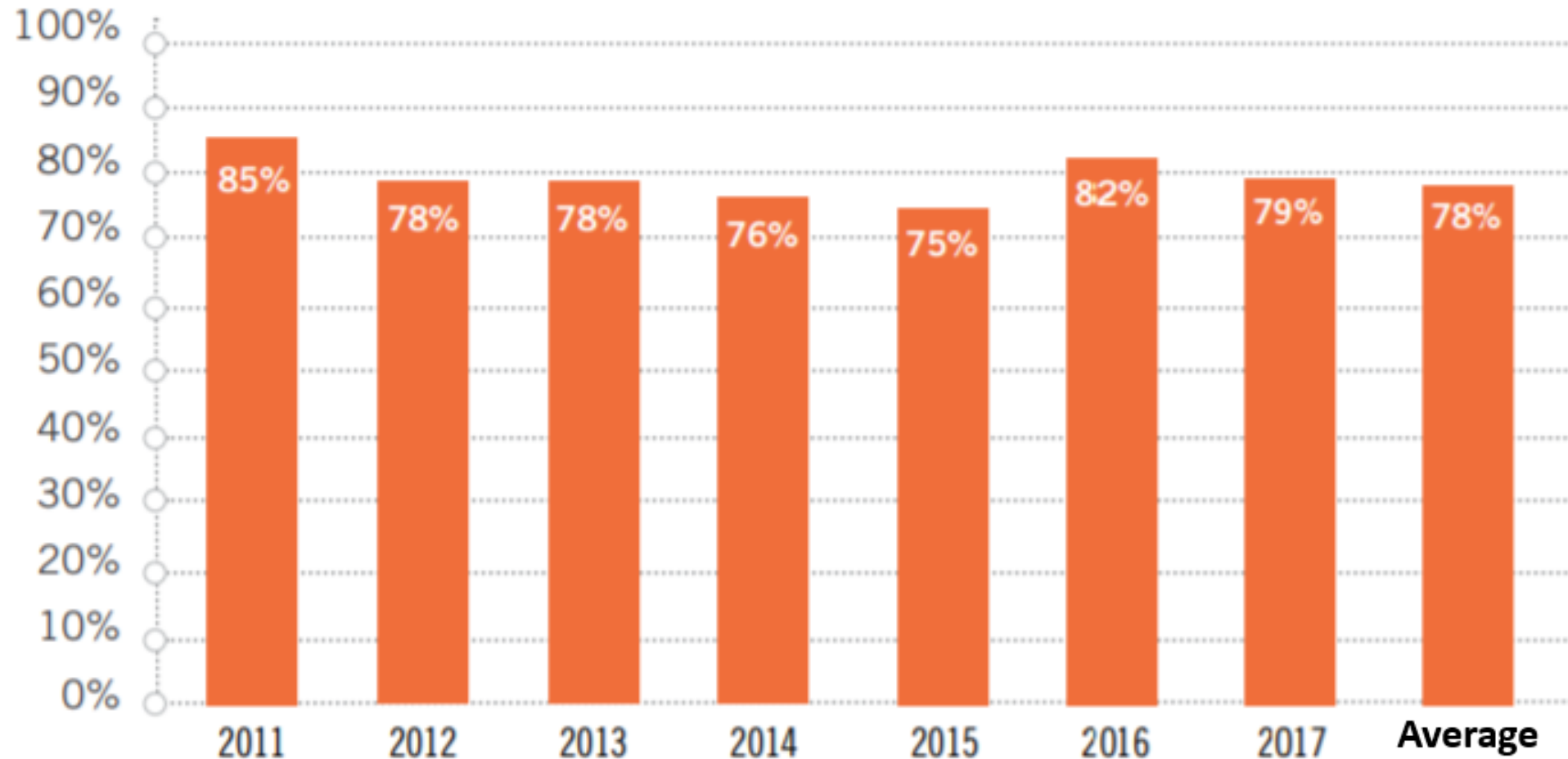
Individuals receiving service 15th May 2018	VIRK
Total from the beginning	13.493
Number in regular interviews and follow up	2.332
Number who have finished services	7.768
Number who quit (left the services)	3.393



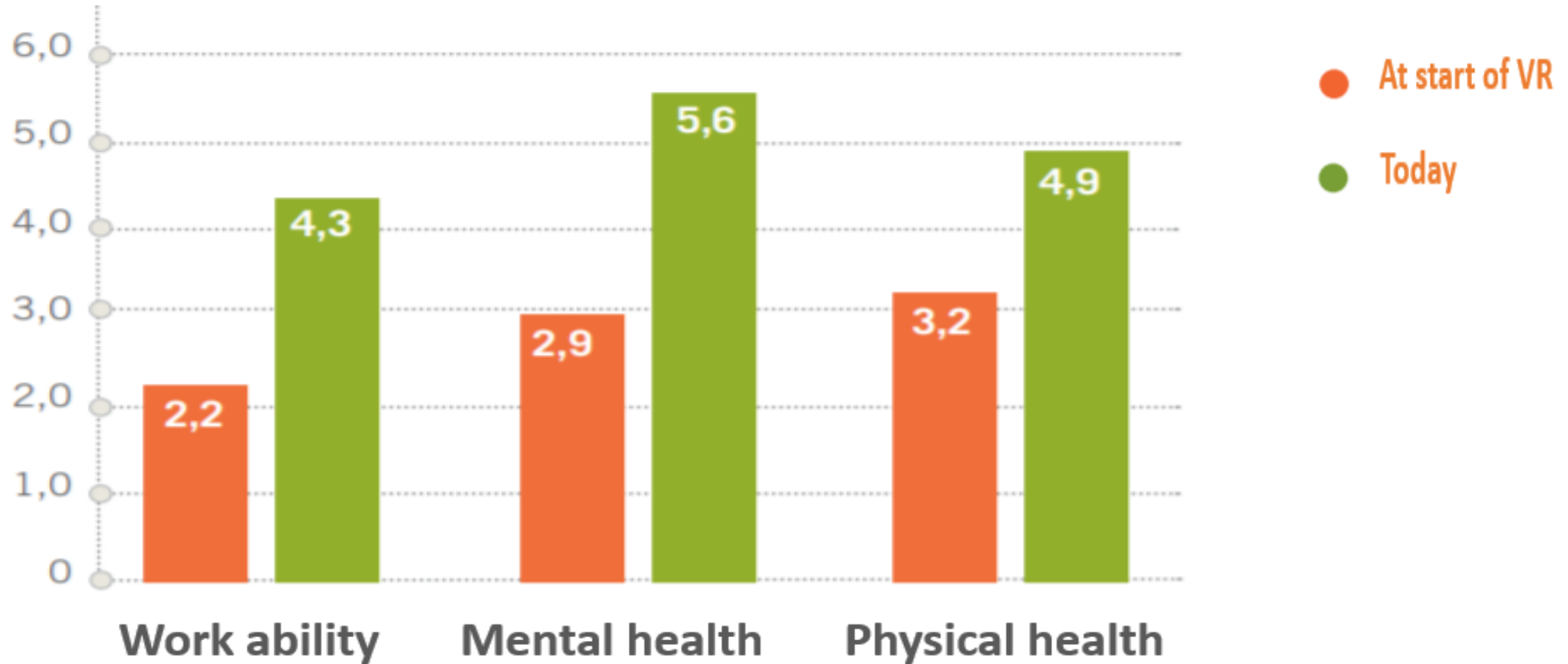
## New and discharged individuals from VR Years 2010 – 2017



## Percentage of individuals who are either working, looking for a job or studying at end of VR

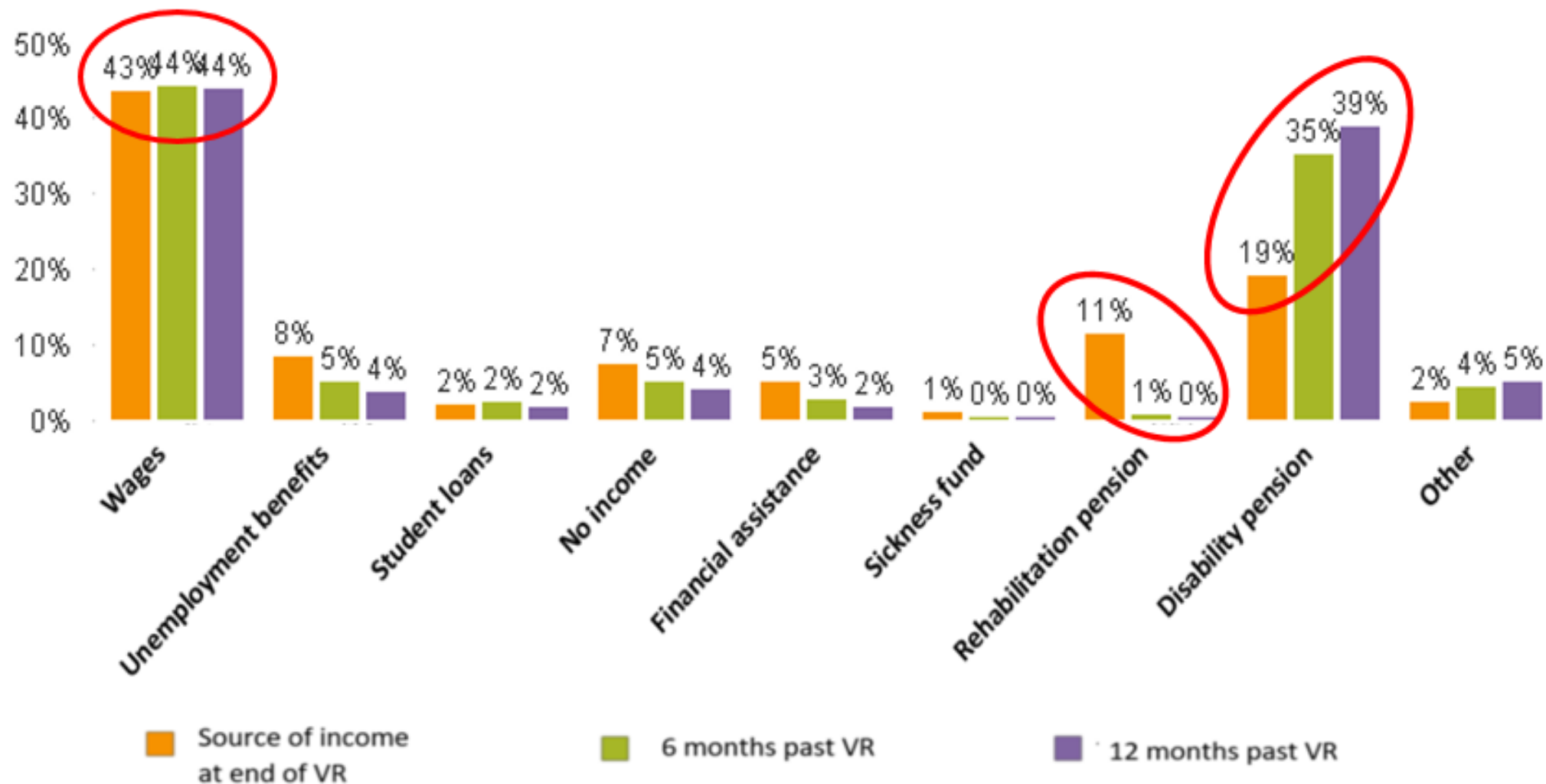


## How was your health and work ability at start of VR and how is it today? (Scale 0 – 10)



## Sources of income at discharge and 6 and 12 months past discharge

All individuals finishing VR (% FTE positions)



# Integrating work participation into vocational rehabilitation

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- Preparation for the project **started in 2015/2016** – first individual entered the project in fall of 2016
- Primarily **for individuals with reduced work ability** finishing VR in 3 – 4 months
- In the early days of the project the emphasis was on **introducing the project** and **educating companies/workplaces** about disability and reduced work ability and return to work
- We visited companies/workplaces and offered them to sign a **partnership agreement** with VIRK with **no obligations** → we established a **contact person** at the worksite → this **facilitated interaction** with the companies when we contacted them with a possible candidate
- We recruited **employment specialists**
- Today, over **100 companies** have signed the partnership agreement and we have active connections with **over 300 companies**





# Integrating work participation into vocational rehabilitation

## Goals:

- Ensure **successful return to work** for individuals finishing vocational rehabilitation
- Incorporate **graded return to work** concurrently with rehabilitation
- Encourage **support** for the individuals in the workplace in the RTW-process.
- Increase knowledge of the **importance of cooperation** between the workplace and vocational rehabilitation



# Return To Work Plan



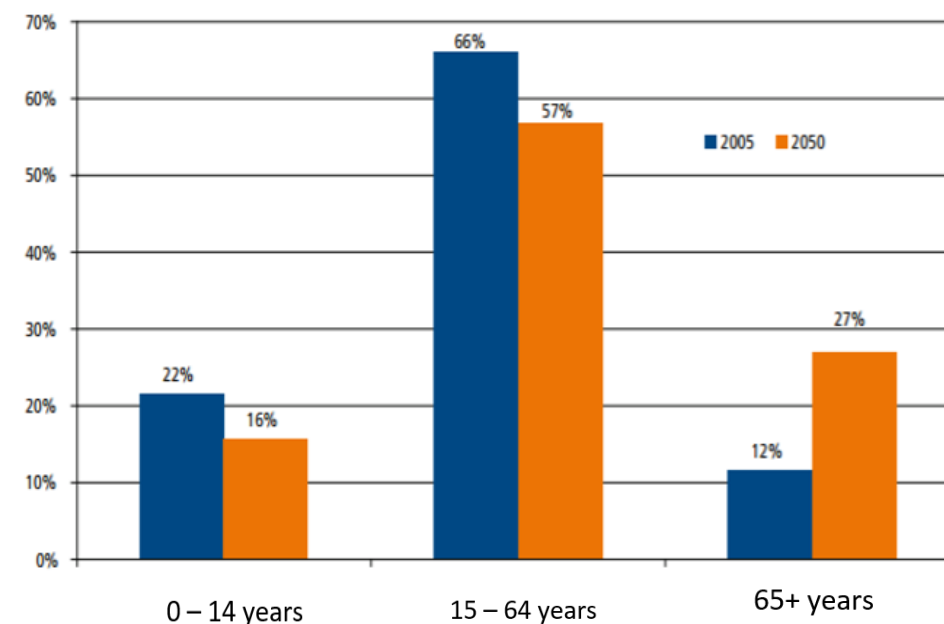
- **Provide an employee** with knowledge and experience
- **Employee specialist** is in cooperation with the employee and the workplace to make a **graded RTW-plan** that takes into account tasks, work processes and working hours
- **Monitoring/reviewing** with the employee in the workplace in cooperation with management / workplace
- Assists in the **resolution of problems and obstacles** in the RTW process
- **Education and counseling** for managers and coworkers

## Working is an intervention

- Major **demographic changes** are expected to occur in our society in the next few decades
- **Rising age** of the workforce
- Health problems associated with **chronic diseases** will become an increasingly common reason for absences from work
  - ➔ Increased pressure on businesses to allow for **adaptation** in the workplace
  - ➔ Implementing certain **processes** that will reduce employees' absences

*Prevention → Adaptation → Support*

Icelanders 2005 and 2050



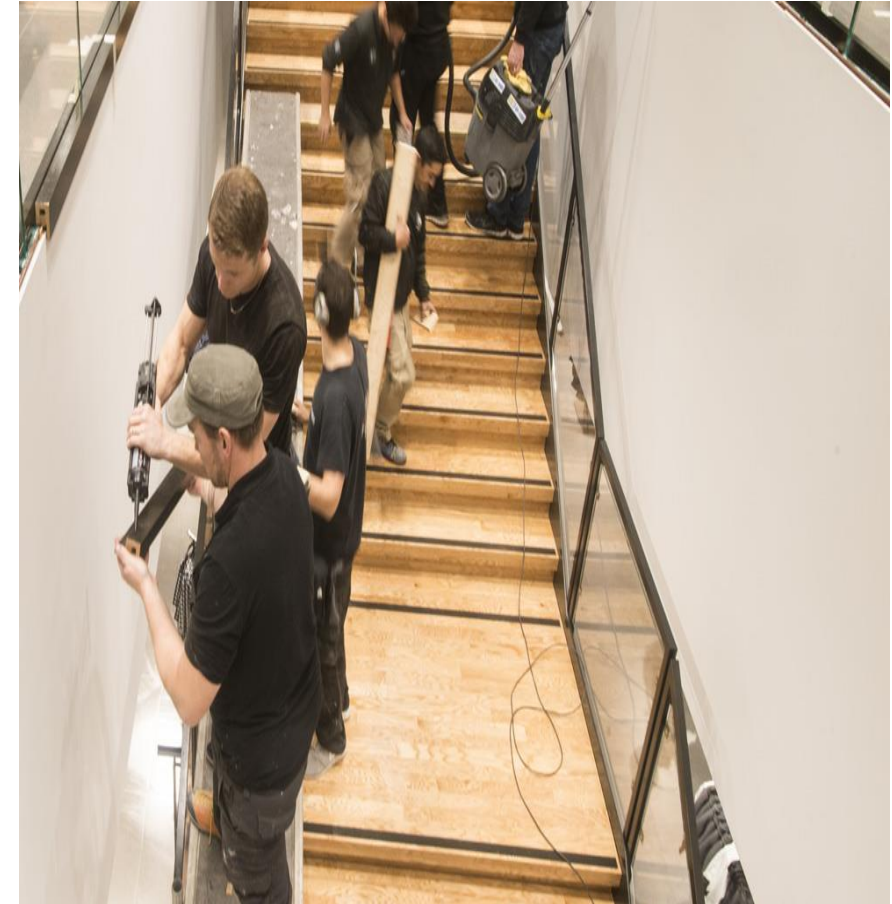
## Working is an intervention

- It is well known that **working is good** for your health and well being
- Those who are unemployed tend to experience a higher prevalence of **depression and anxiety** and report lower scores on **self esteem and quality of life** measures
- Successful return to work can **speed up recovery** and prevent various complications from being out of work



## Icelandic Labor Market

- People of working age (16 – 74 years) total 241.500 - active labor force total **199.500** people (82.6%)
- Inactive total **42.100** (17.4%) and 34% of those are disabled or ill/temporarily unable to work
- Employment rate for the disabled **61%** compared to 82% for non-disabled people
- Disabled people are **more likely to work part time jobs** compared to the non-disabled (19% vs. 7%)
- 76% of all jobs in Iceland are full time jobs – only **24% part time jobs**



# Employers – The Demand side

- For meaningful employment outcomes **organizational behaviors, employer needs,** and the **changing labor economy** needs to be taken into account
- The organizational chart is now **flatter and team-based**, emphasis is on **flexibility, productivity,** and workplace **socialization skills**
- Employers attach importance to **knowledge and information** about disabilities, and a good and stable **communication** with experts/employment specialists for contacts in case of problems arising at the workplace







## Employers – The Demand side

Research has demonstrated:

- Employers with **prior experience** of employing individuals with disabilities are **more likely** to have a positive attitude towards future recruitment
- Employers have **concerns** and **misperceptions** about the barriers to hiring and retaining people with disabilities
- Employers are often **not aware** of the workers' need and **how to accommodate** them at work
- Employers are concerned about the **quantity** and **quality** of work done and fear **low flexibility** and high levels of absenteeism

# Icelandic Employers

- Research into **employer perceptions and attitudes** toward hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities is needed in Iceland
- VIRK is one of the participants with the Ministry of Welfare in a study of **employers' attitude** towards hiring individuals with disability and examining factors that are **motivating and hindering** their ability to do so
- VIRK is looking especially at employers that have **signed the partnership** agreement with VIRK





## Results from the survey

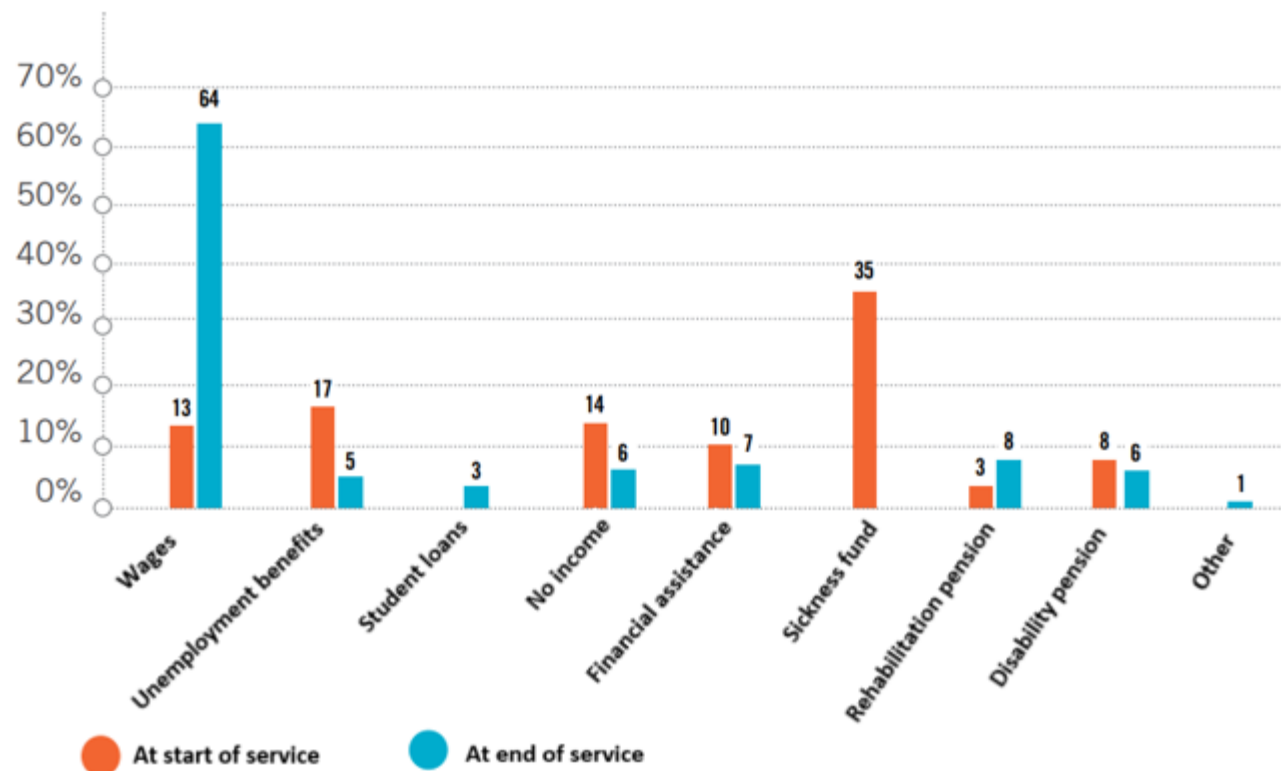


- Will **increase our knowledge** of the Icelandic labour market
- Information about what employers would consider **most motivating** and would improve their ability to hire individuals with reduced work ability
- Results can be **guiding** for the government regarding what **government interventions** could improve employers' possibility to hire individuals with reduced work ability
- Results can be **guiding for VIRK** for continued development of the RTW-project

## RTW- Project

- **68 individuals** have found work since start of the year
- About 50% entered the labor market with **graded-RTW** or other types of assistance
- Jobs ranging from **20% - 100%** participation
- **Examples of types of work:**  
Book keeping, Library, CCP Games, Bauhaus, Reykjavik Art museum, Duty free, Pharmaceutical sales

Source of income at start and end of VR services  
Individuals referred to employment specialists



# Changing attitudes in the labor market

- This year VIRK is focusing on **changing attitudes** in society and drawing attention to employment of individuals with disabilities and reduced work ability.
- **Focusing on employers**
- Directing employers to the ***verumvirk.is*** site
- Registering **jobs available** or requesting **information**









Thank you!