



**To: Joint Legislative Information Technology Oversight Committee**

**From: Jill Remick, Director, Property Valuation and Review Division, VT Department of Taxes**

**Date: November 12, 2019**

**Re: Recent Municipal Technology Survey with VLCT**

Thank you for the opportunity to update your committee on the recent survey done in partnership with the Vermont League of Cities and Towns (VLCT) to collect data on what is currently available in Vermont municipalities regarding IT infrastructure and software systems.

The goal of this survey was to get a sense of the current state of each municipal office and their IT infrastructure. Many state agencies, including Tax, interact daily with and rely on municipal officials in order to carry out statutory requirements. However, we have learned that access to Internet Speed and Service, IT Security and updated software and hardware varies a great deal across the state.

As we at the Tax Department embark on a much needed upgrading of our Grand List software system, which is used by the State and each municipality to carry out the statewide education property tax system, it is imperative that we assess where our partner towns are at with regards to IT, but also just as imperative that we select and implement a system that can be used by and improve outcomes for towns, meeting them where they are.

VLCT agreed with this need and worked with our staff to design a 16-question survey, which was estimated to take about nine minutes, and was distributed this summer to all Vermont towns. The survey focused on four major topic areas: Internet Service, Internet Speed, Financial Systems, and Grand List Maintenance.

We are pleased to note that the survey had an 83% response rate, ensuring we got an excellent cross-section of Vermont towns, big and small, from all parts of the state, and representing the variety of municipal officials crucial to this work, from listers, assessors, town clerks, treasurers, financial officers and others.

To be clear, this was an informal, non-mandatory survey, and is just a jumping-off point to get us started and give us a sense of where more information is needed. As with any survey, there was varied expertise in the responses, depending on who took the survey in the town office, what work they did, and what their understanding was of concepts such as internet speed and terminology. Further polling should be done separately by role – many Vermont municipal officials carry out multiple roles concurrently. Thirty-five percent of the respondents were listers who also carried out at least one other formal municipal function. Only one response per town was allowed.

VLCT was able to tell a great deal about the individuals who took the survey. Obviously the start of the survey asks their town, contact information and their role. However VLCT's staff was also able to determine where they were when they took the survey, what kind of device they used (phone, Mac, PC,

etc), and what Internet browser they were using when they took it. This is all helpful as we move towards a new system that will need to work within these variables.

**Key Takeaways:**

- There is significant variability in resources and expertise regarding IT security and infrastructure.
- There is a significant need for training, consistency, awareness and understanding of best practices and managed IT services.
- Further surveying with more definitions, explanations and instructions on appropriate personnel to complete the survey is needed.
- Best practices such as individual profiles vs shared passwords; managed IT services vs unknown/none; appropriate cybersecurity tools vs unknown/none are sorely needed in pockets of the state.

**Relation to Grand List Software Project**

We are currently mapping each functional requirement needed in the new system by both Tax and town officials.

The data from the survey has been incredibly helpful in our decision regarding which Grand List software vendor we select. For instance, we will rely on the vendor to do a great deal of the training and rollout as we do not anticipate an influx of additional staff to carry out this work. We need a vendor who understands our rural nature and limited resources and provides a solution that can meet towns where they are and help bring them along to newer, better, more secure technology.

The data regarding financial software is also helpful as we work to clarify what is needed from us for the towns in relation to education property tax billing.

Our selected vendor must meet the standards and review by ADS regarding cyber security, disaster recovery, and user profile management. We have worked hand in hand with ADS to bid and select this system.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions.

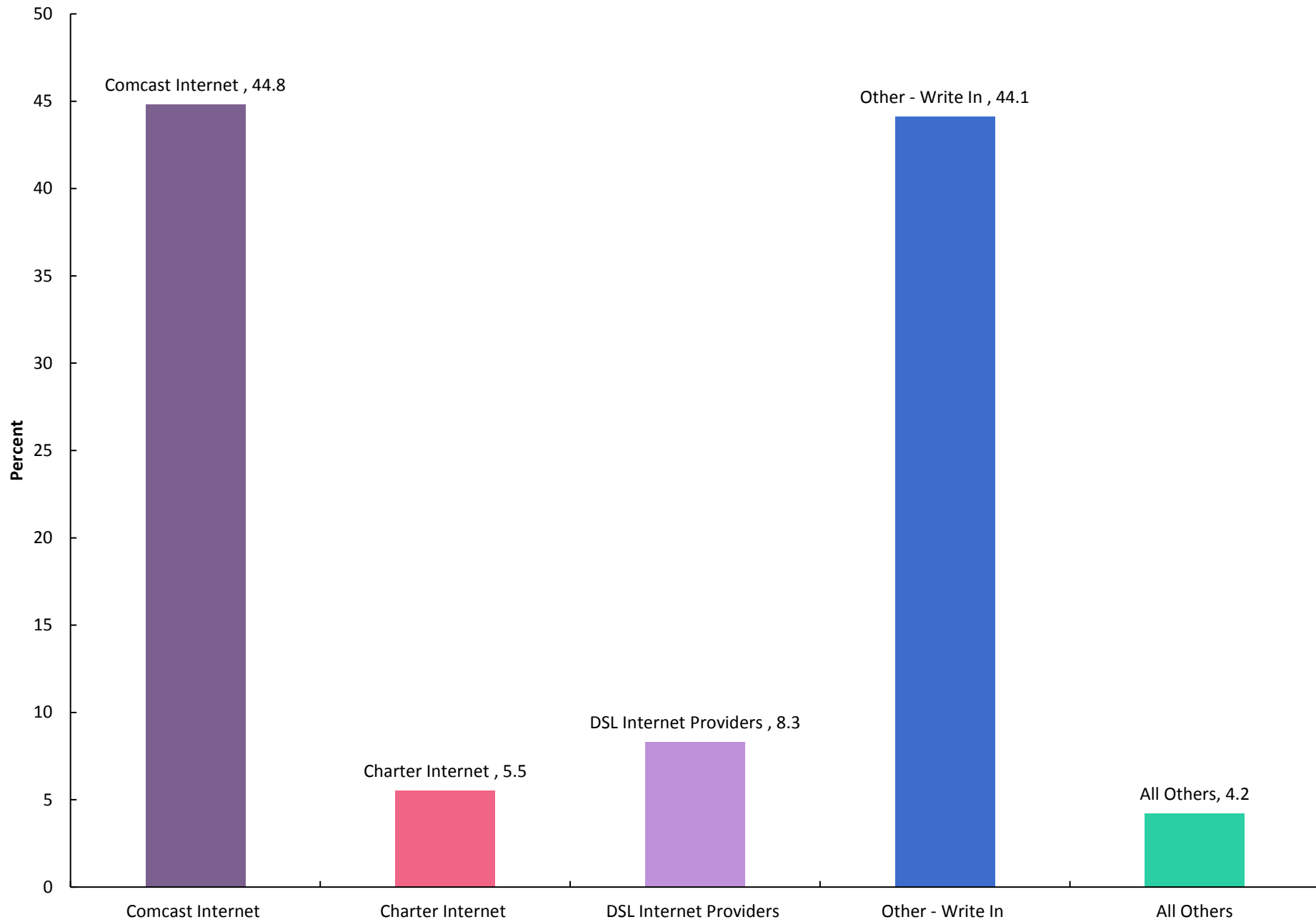
Jill Remick, Director

Property Valuation and Review, VT Department of Taxes

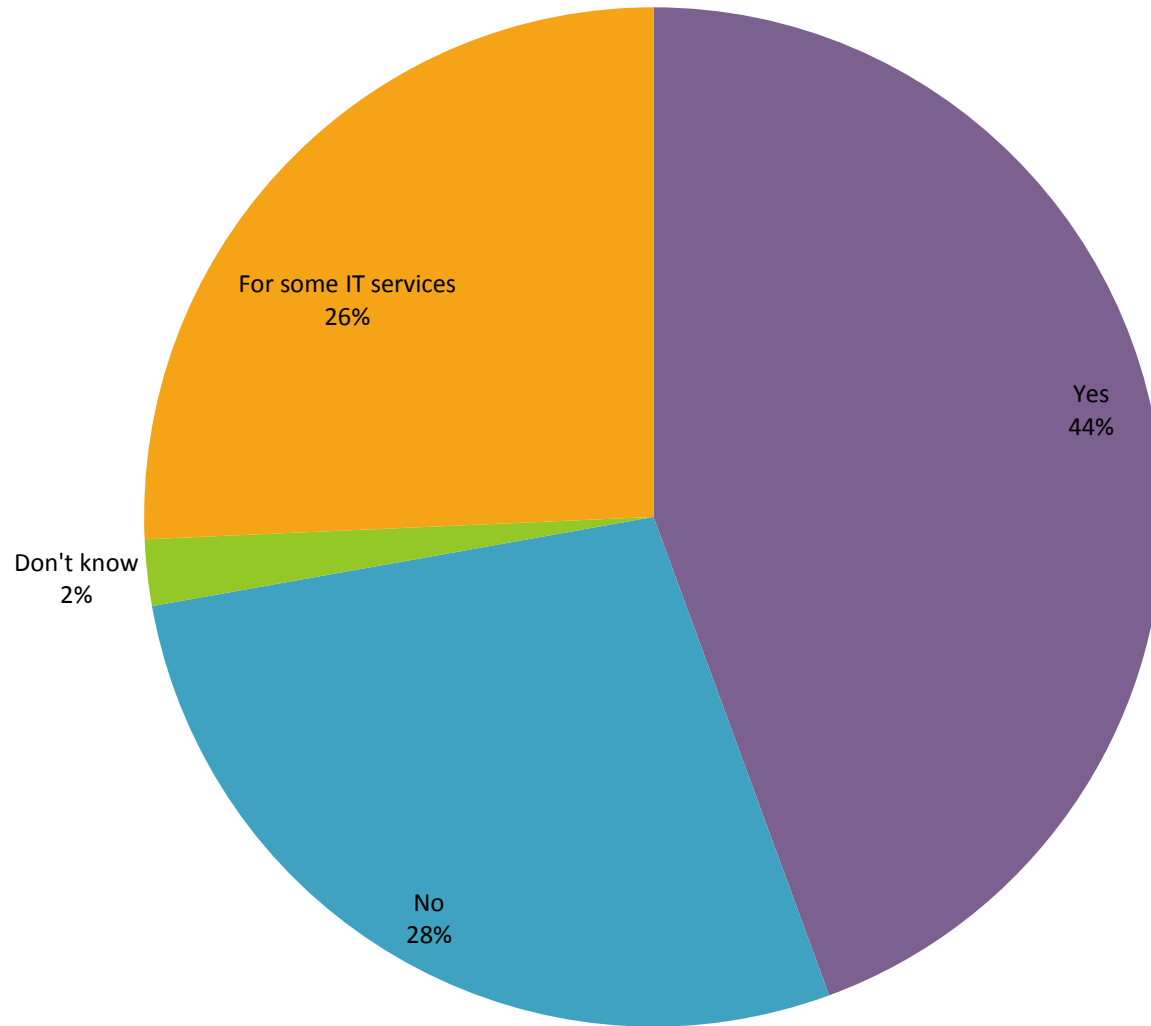
[Jill.remick@vermont.gov](mailto:Jill.remick@vermont.gov)

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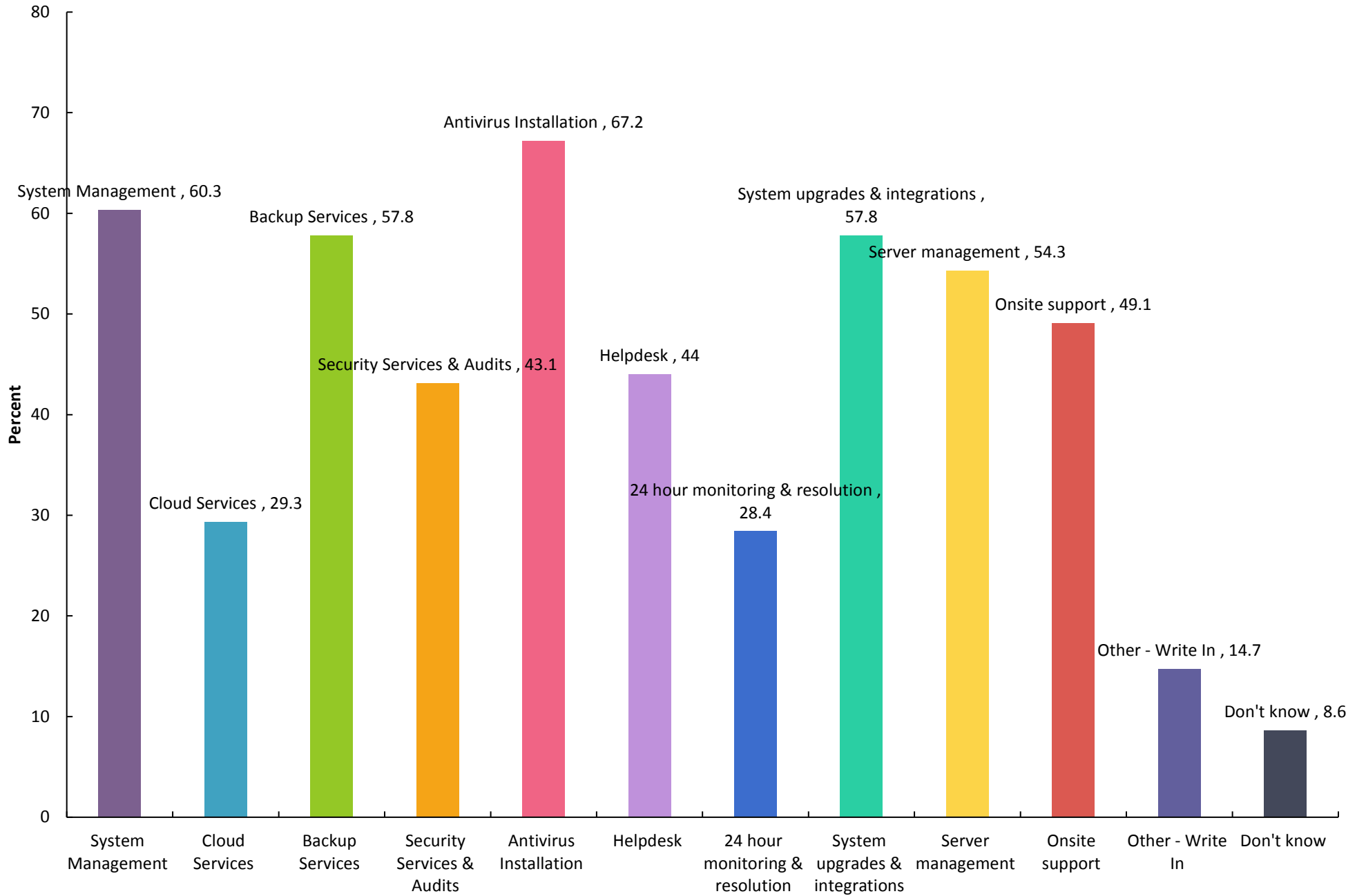
### 3. Please select your internet service provider (ISP)



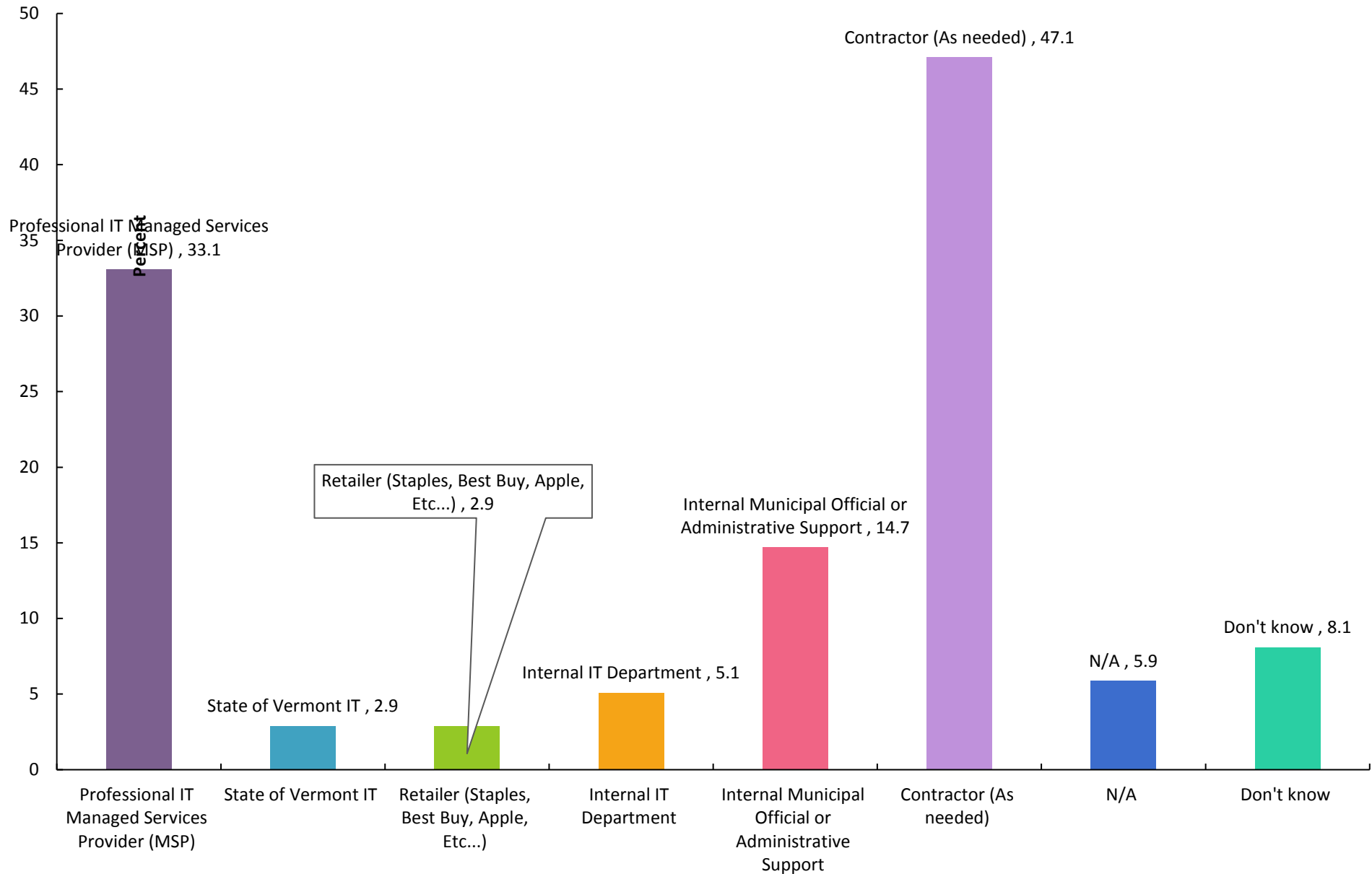
4. Do you have a managed IT (information technology/security) services provider for your organization?



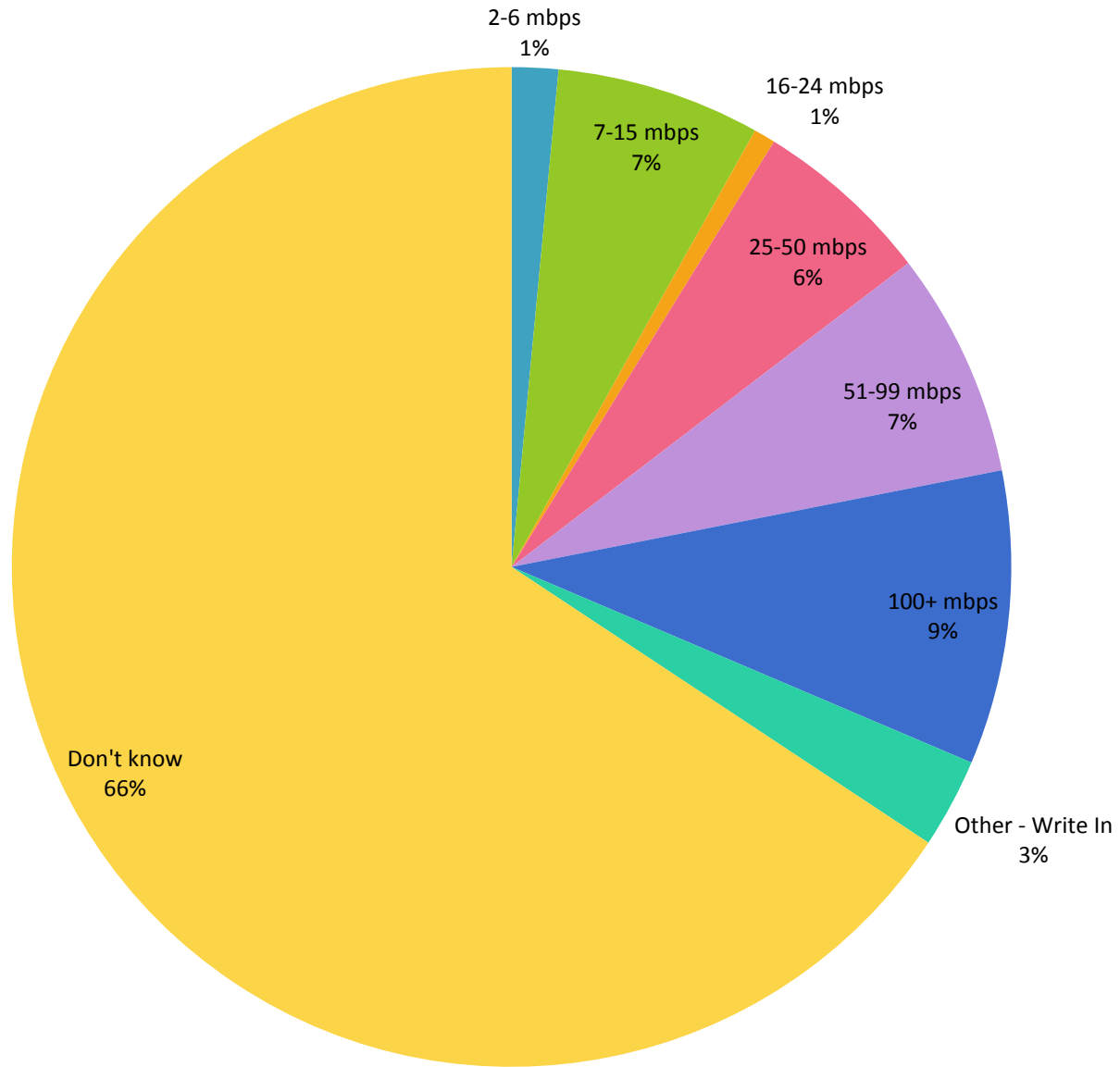
5.What services do your IT MS (Managed Services) provider or providers supply your organization? (select all that apply)



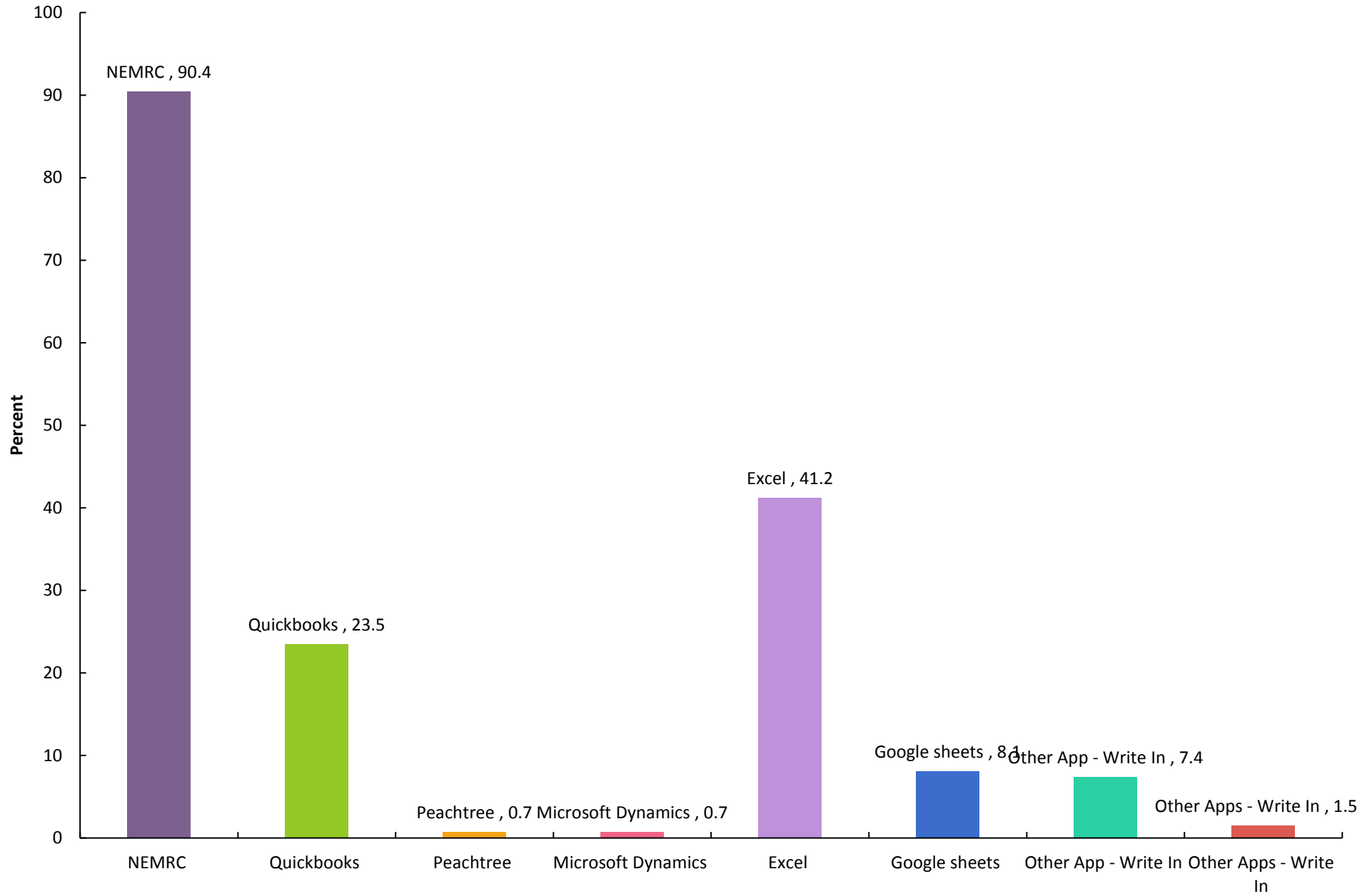
6.What type of service provider do you use for computer security or IT issues? (Check all that apply)



### 9.What is the contract rate of speed for your internet?

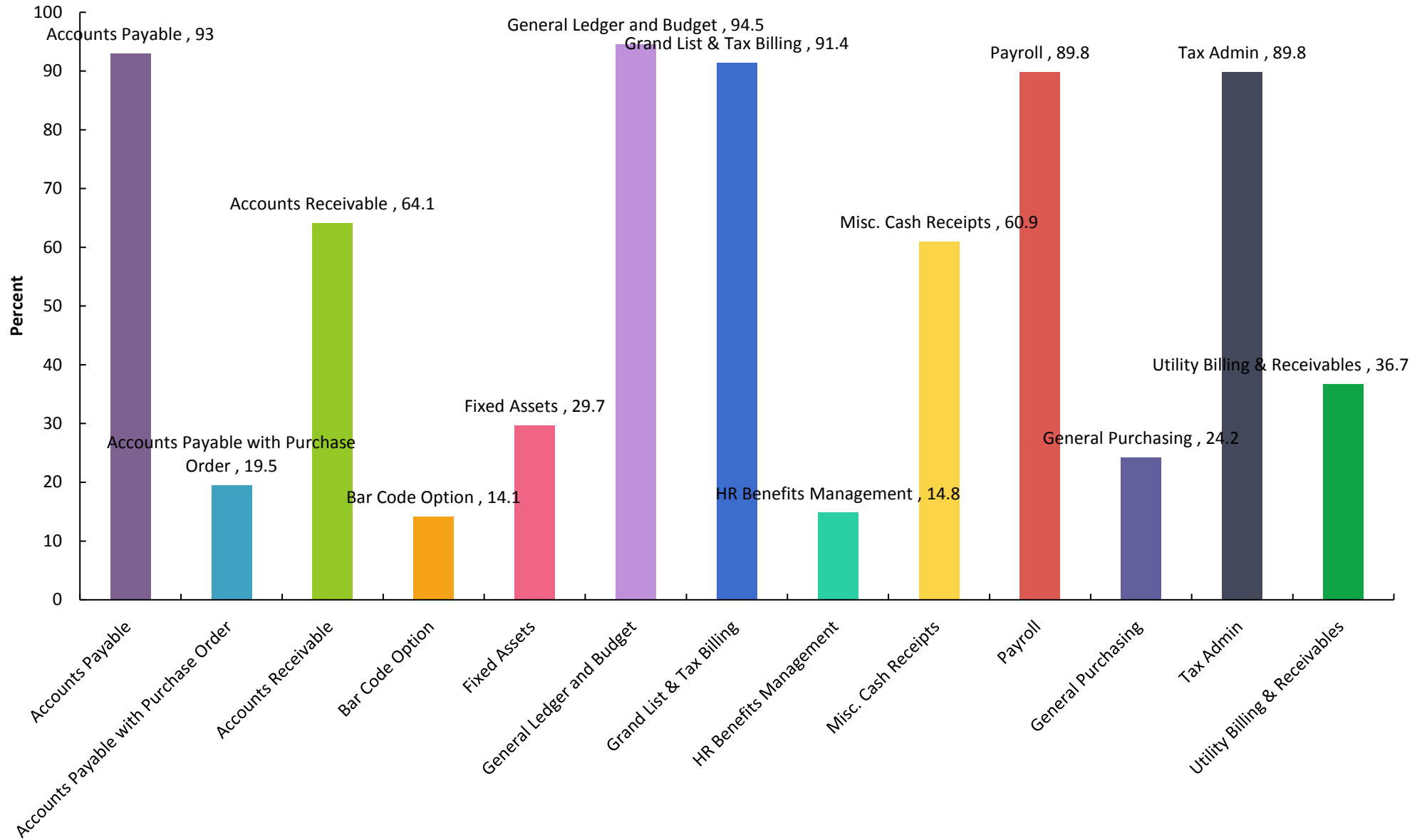


10. What financial software systems does your organization use (all departments). Check all that apply.

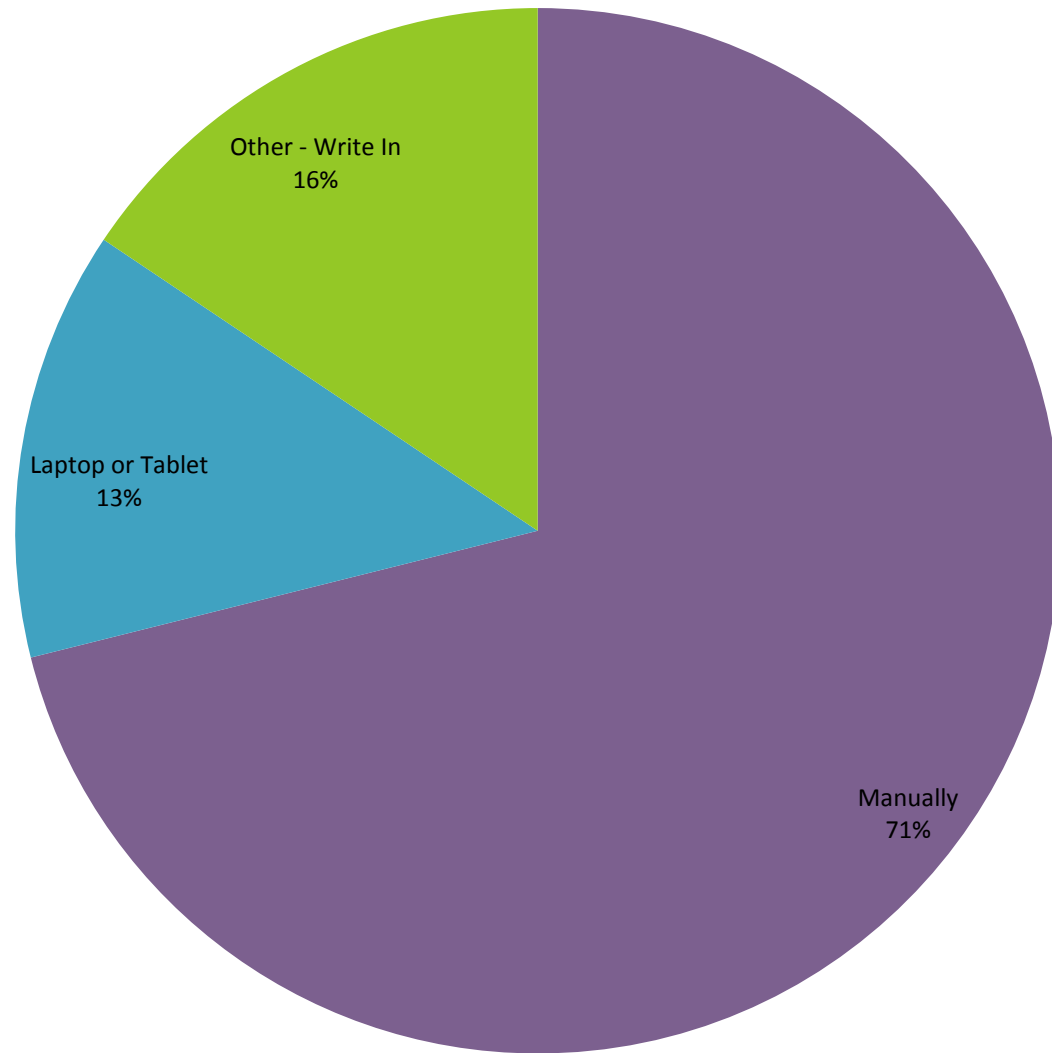




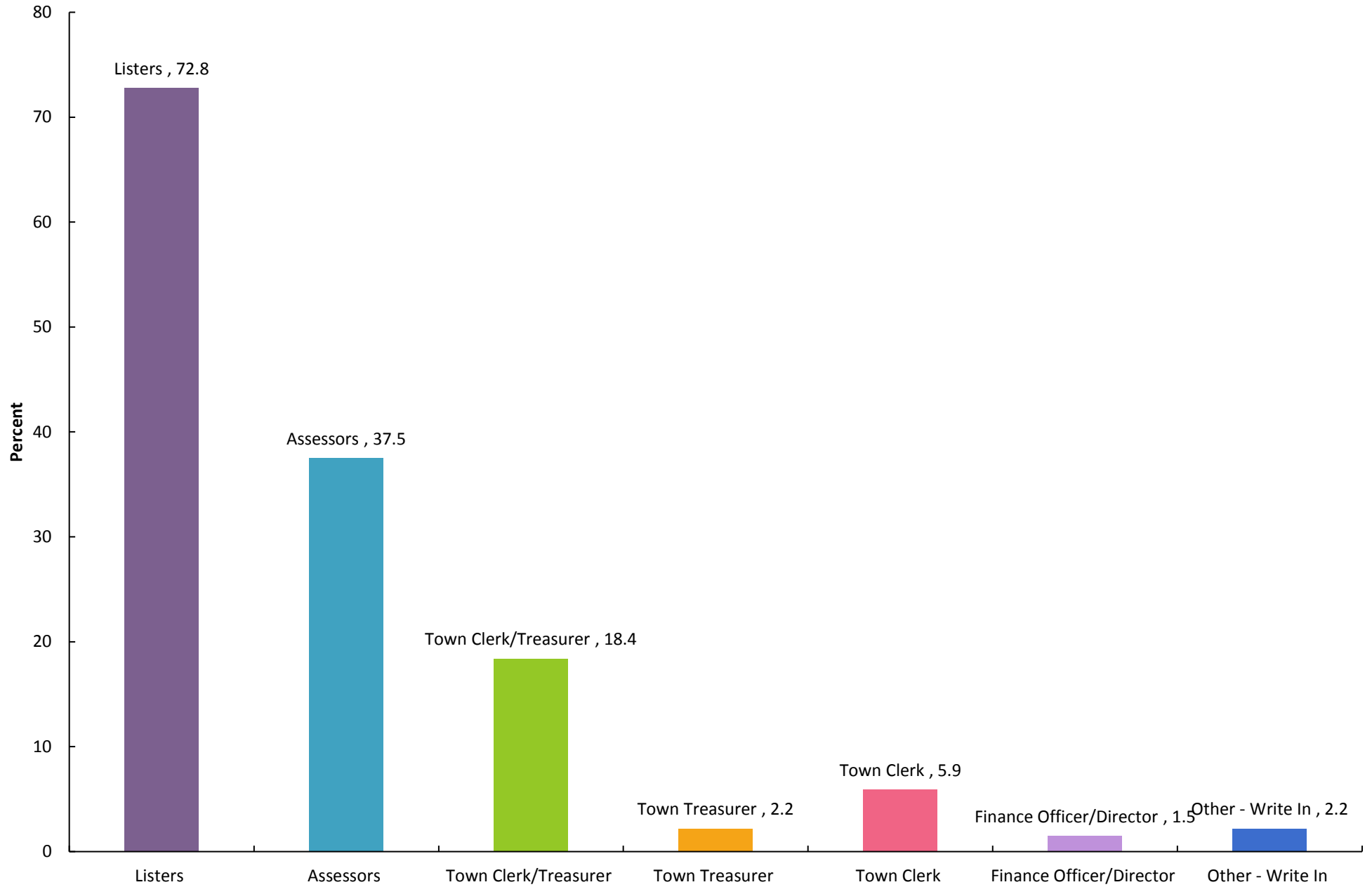
**13.If your municipality is currently using financial software please select all capabilities currently used by your organization (inside or outside of your department)**



#### 4.How is grand list data initially recorded?



15. Who maintains your grand list data? Check all that apply.



### 17. When was your last reappraisal? (MO/YY)

Reappraisals By Year 2003-2019

