SRA INTERNATIONAL
ANNUAL MEETING
SEATTLE 2023
OCTOBER 14-18

How May I Help You?

A study on how Research Administrators can better facilitate Researchers in Developing and Developed World!

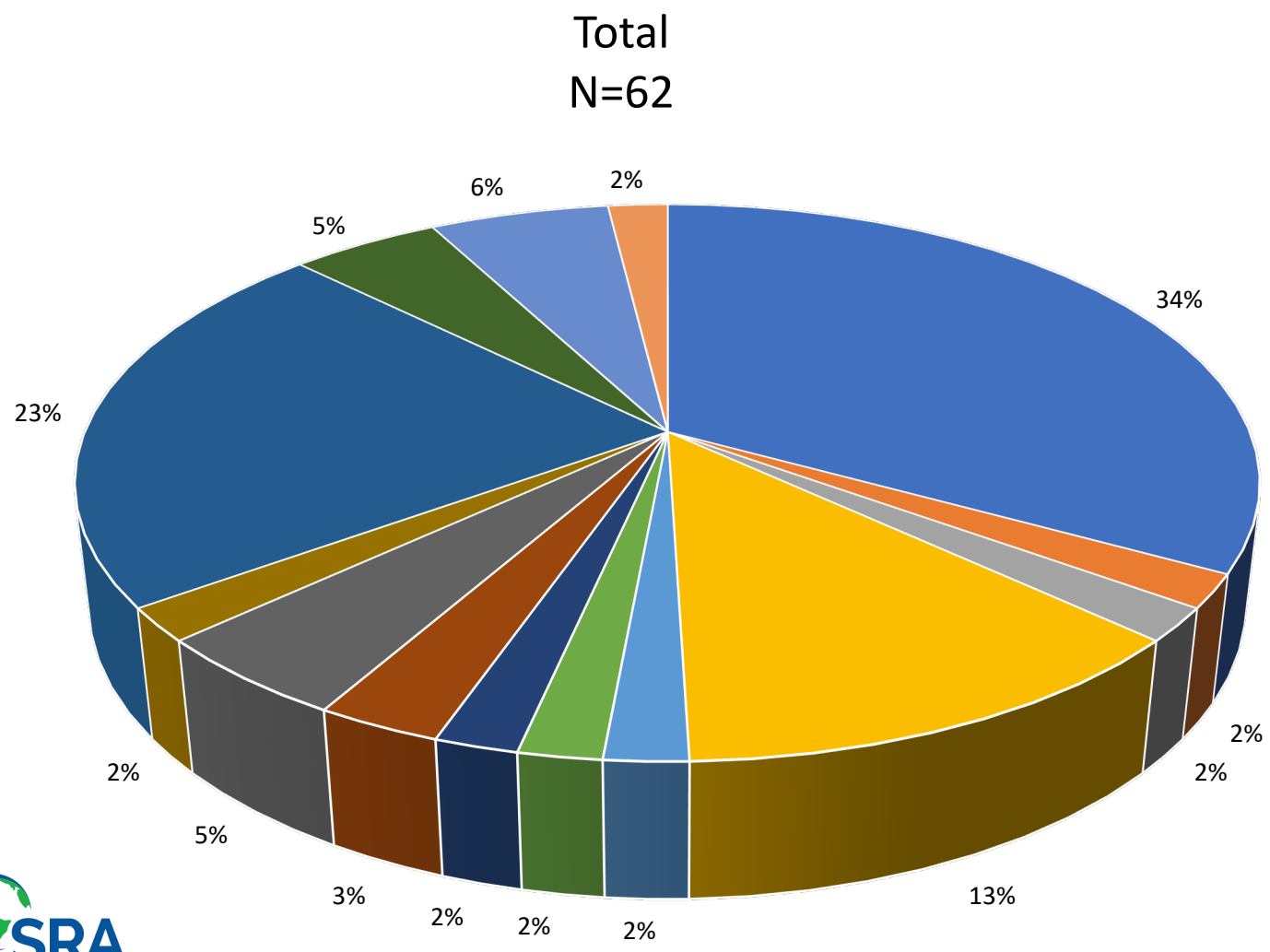
Mir Khan, Director Research, NICVD, Pakistan
Salima Panjwani, Manager, OSR, Aga Khan University, Pakistan
Sajjad Surani, Research Coordinator, University of Calgary, Canada

Setting the Stage!

The study through a survey collected feedback from researchers from a developing country (Pakistan) and a developed country (Canada) on how can research administrator help researchers do a better job. What aspects do researchers suggest we as administrators should develop or improve that helps in giving better services to PIs. The study showcases important findings and aims to help research administrators use those in their own institutions to enhance faculty satisfaction and hence improve their own performances.

For Developing side, the study was conducted at the Aga Khan University (campuses in Pakistan, East Africa and the UK); for Developed side, the study was conducted at the University of Calgary.

Position Title

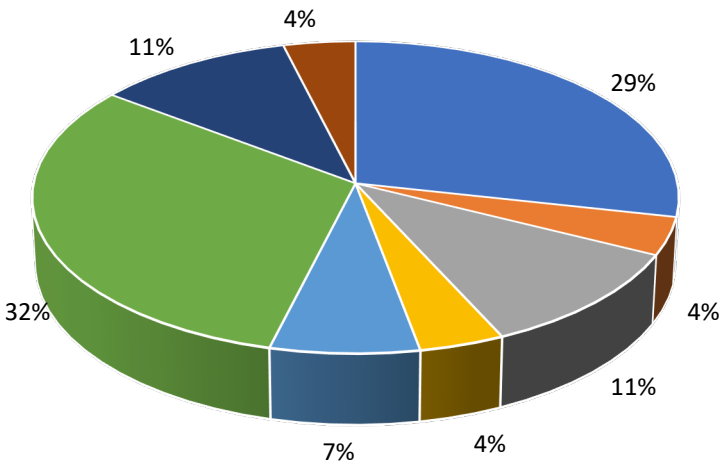


- Assistant Professor
- Assistant Professor, Consultant
- Assistant Professor, Senior Research Staff
- Associate Professor
- Associate Professor, Assistant Professor
- Clinical Associate Professor
- Community Engagement Training and Facilitation -AKU ARUSHA
- Grant Development Specialist
- Instructor
- Instructor, Fellow
- Professor
- Senior Instructor
- Senior Research Staff
- Specialist Research Administrator

SRA INTERNATIONAL

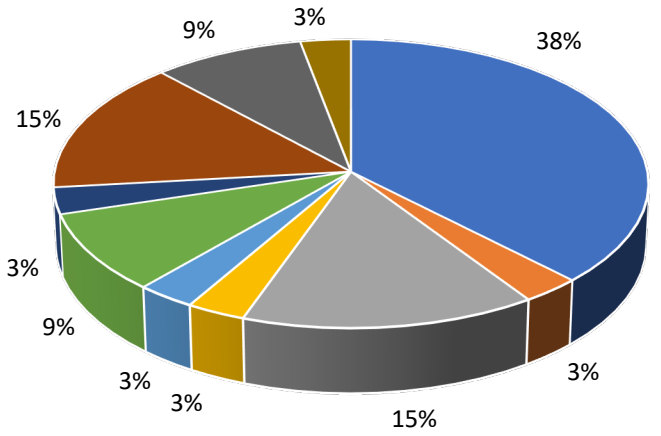
Position Title

Developed
N=28



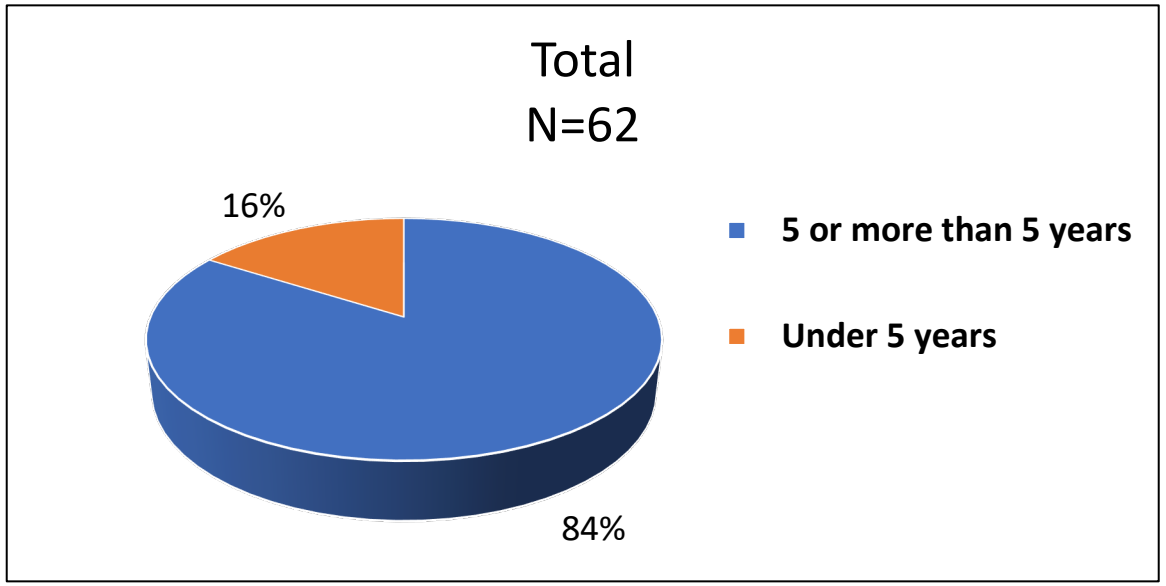
- Assistant Professor
- Assistant Professor, Consultant
- Associate Professor
- Clinical Associate Professor
- Grant Development Specialist
- Professor
- Senior Research Staff
- Specialist Research Administrator

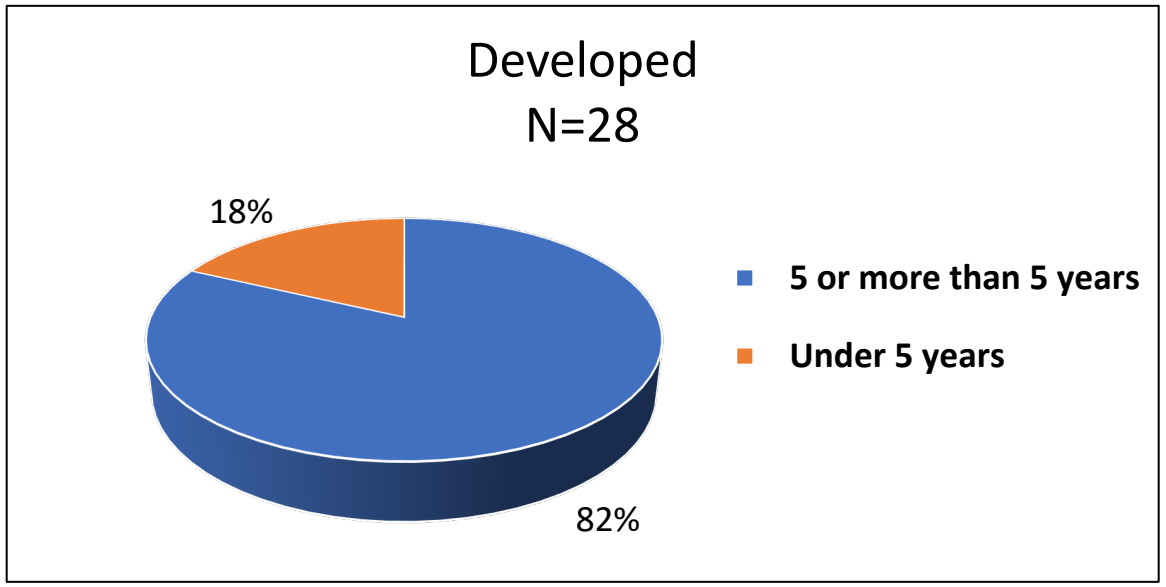
Developing
N=34

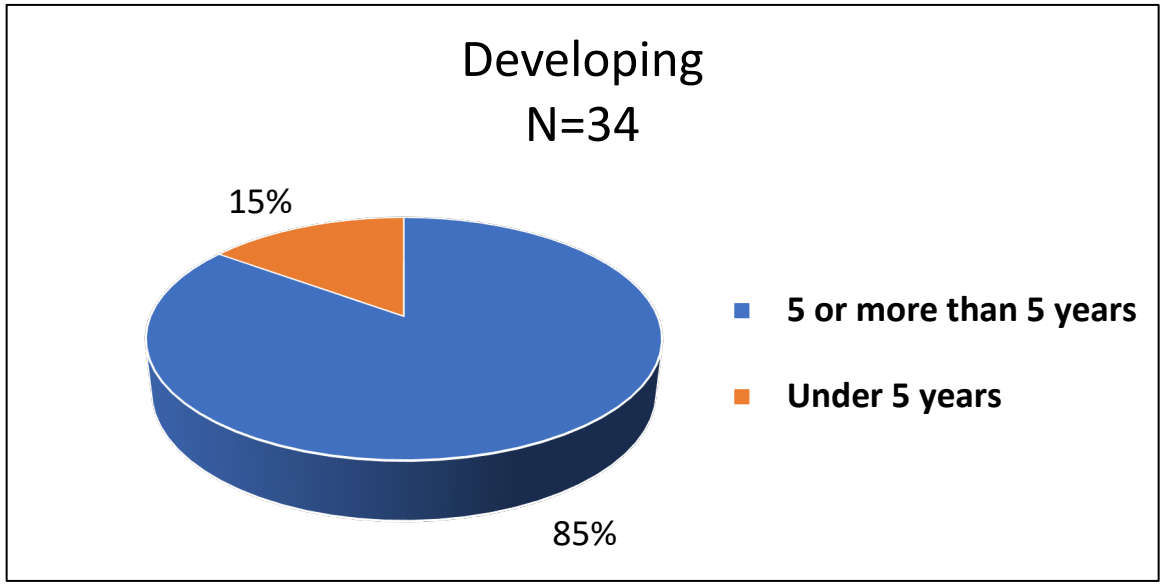


- Assistant Professor
- Assistant Professor, Senior Research Staff
- Associate Professor
- Associate Professor, Assistant Professor
- Community Engagement Training and Facilitation -AKU ARUSHA
- Instructor
- Instructor, Fellow
- Professor
- Senior Instructor
- Senior Research Staff

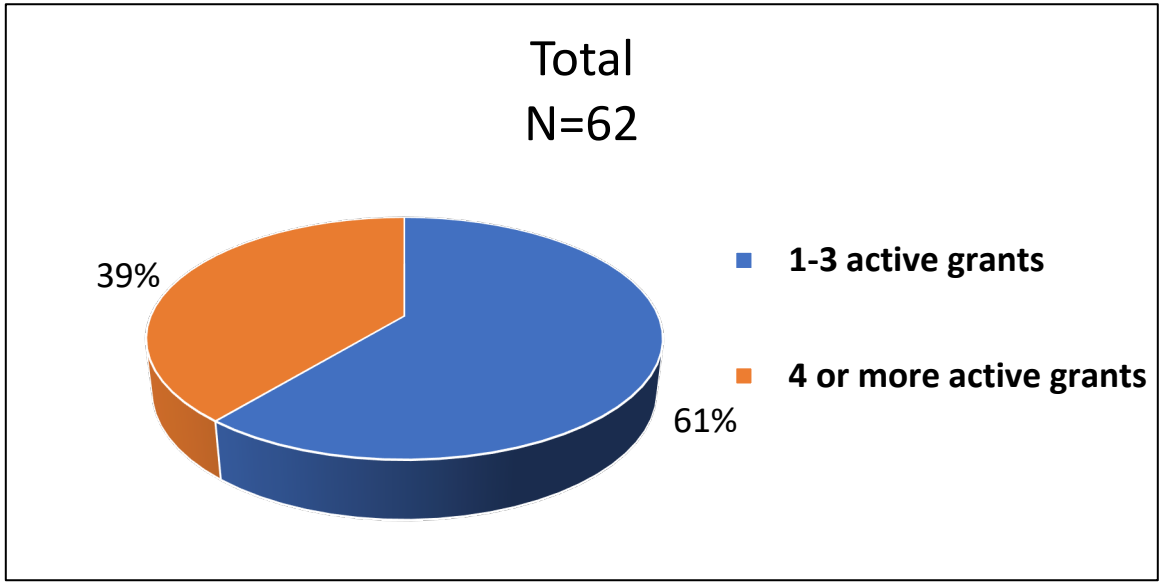
Years of experience in research

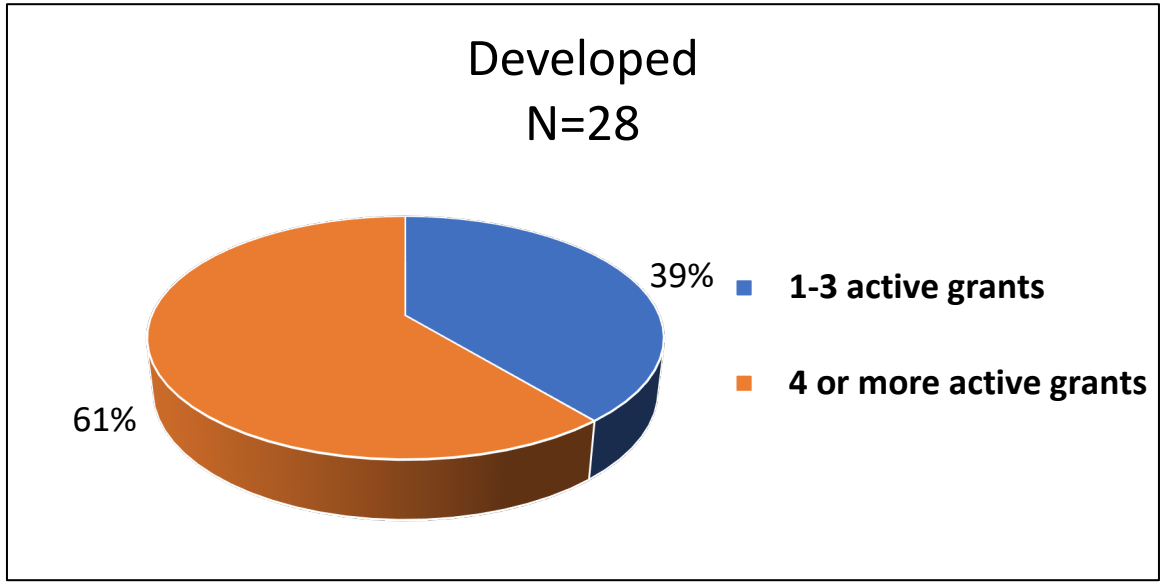


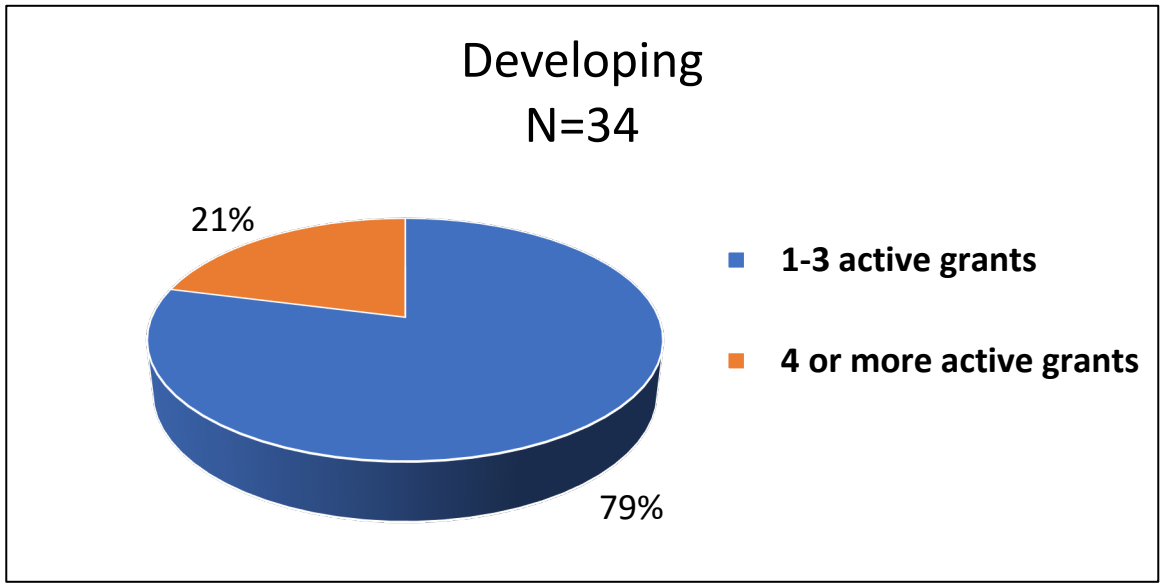




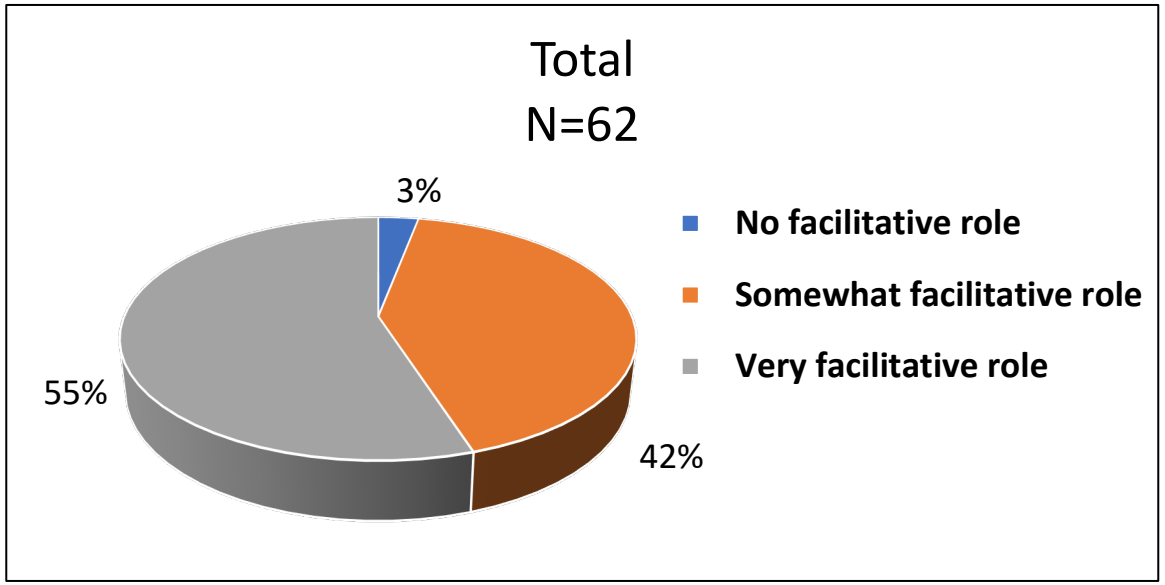
Active research grants

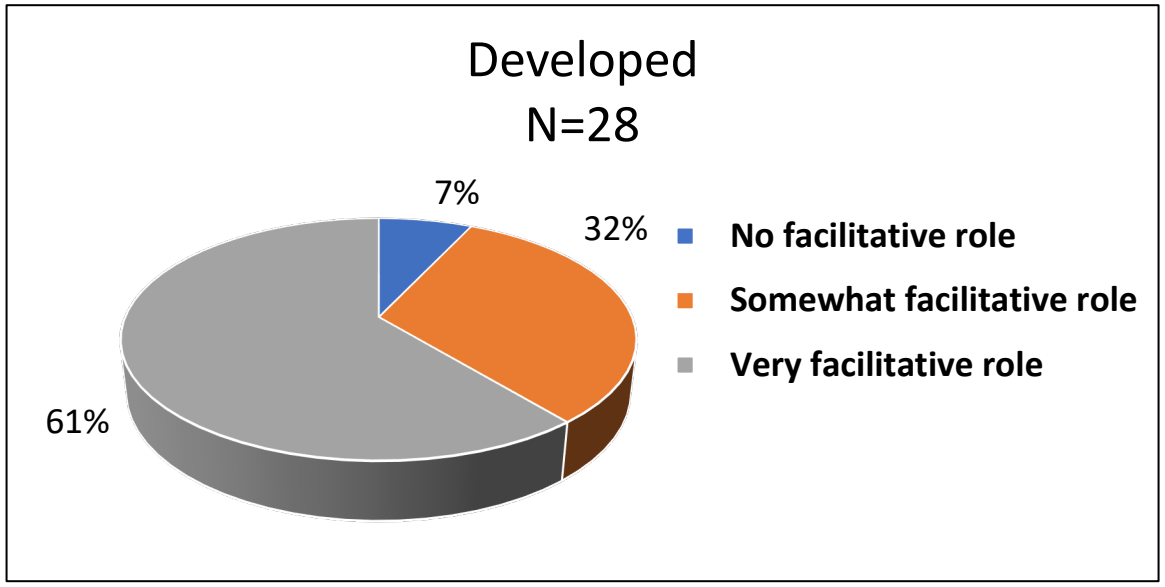


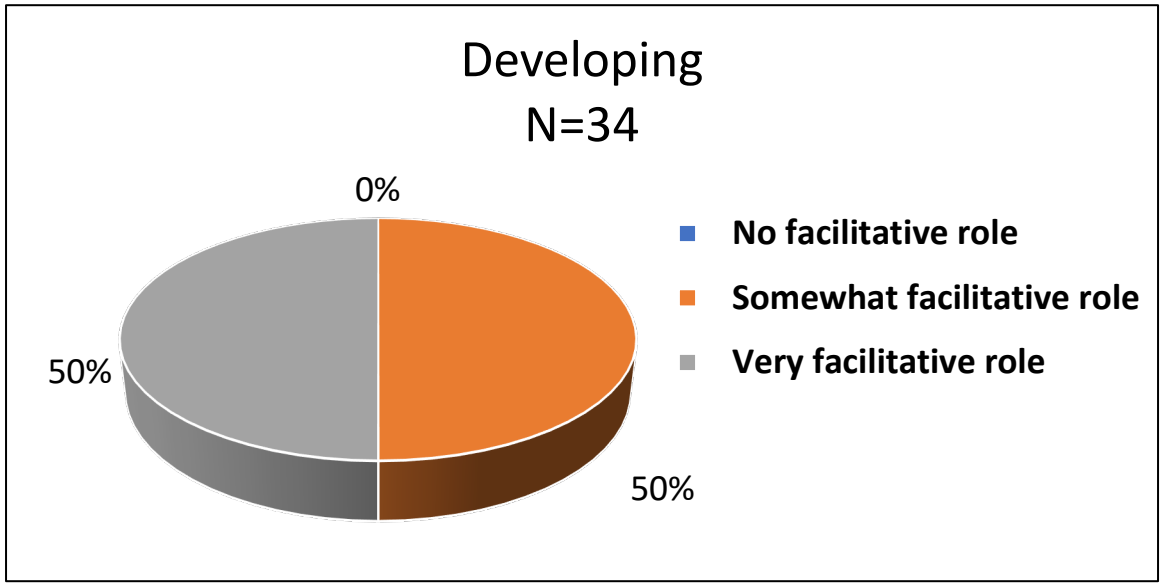




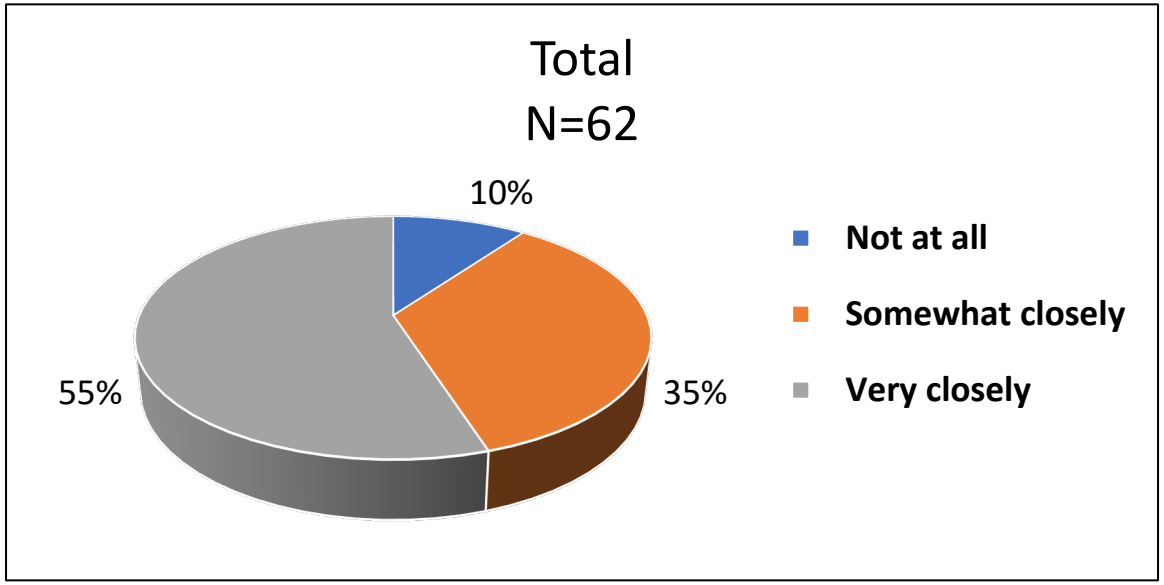
In your opinion what role do Research Administrators play in Project Outcomes?

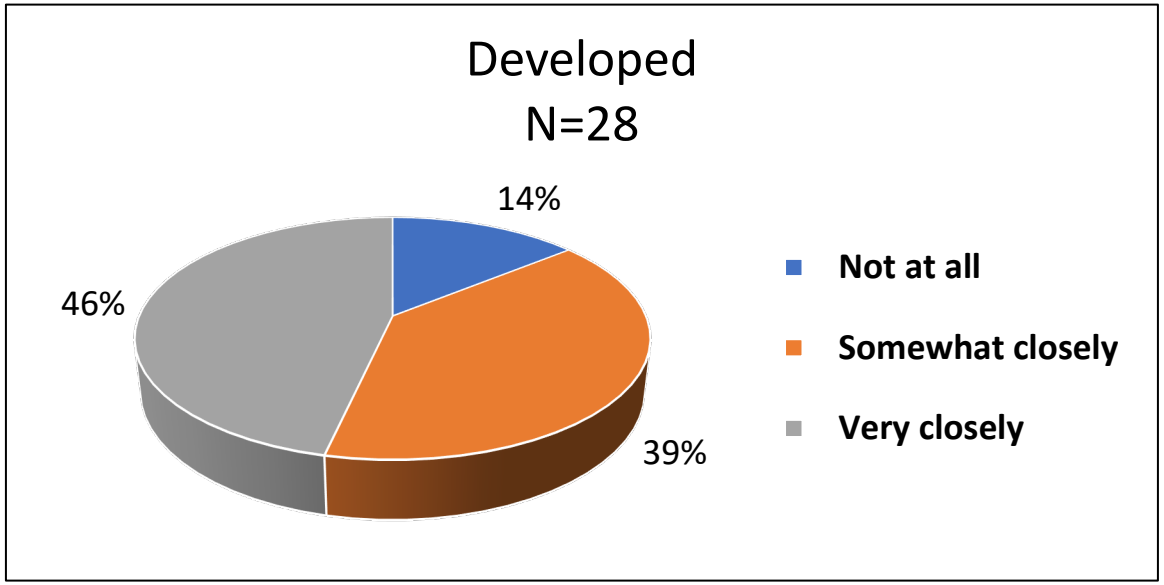


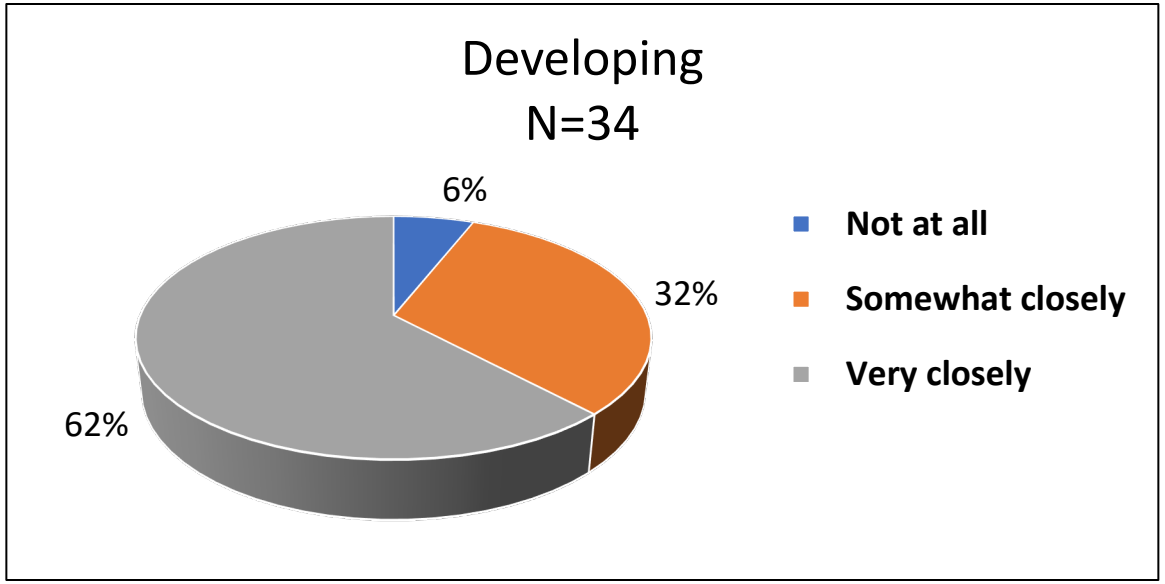




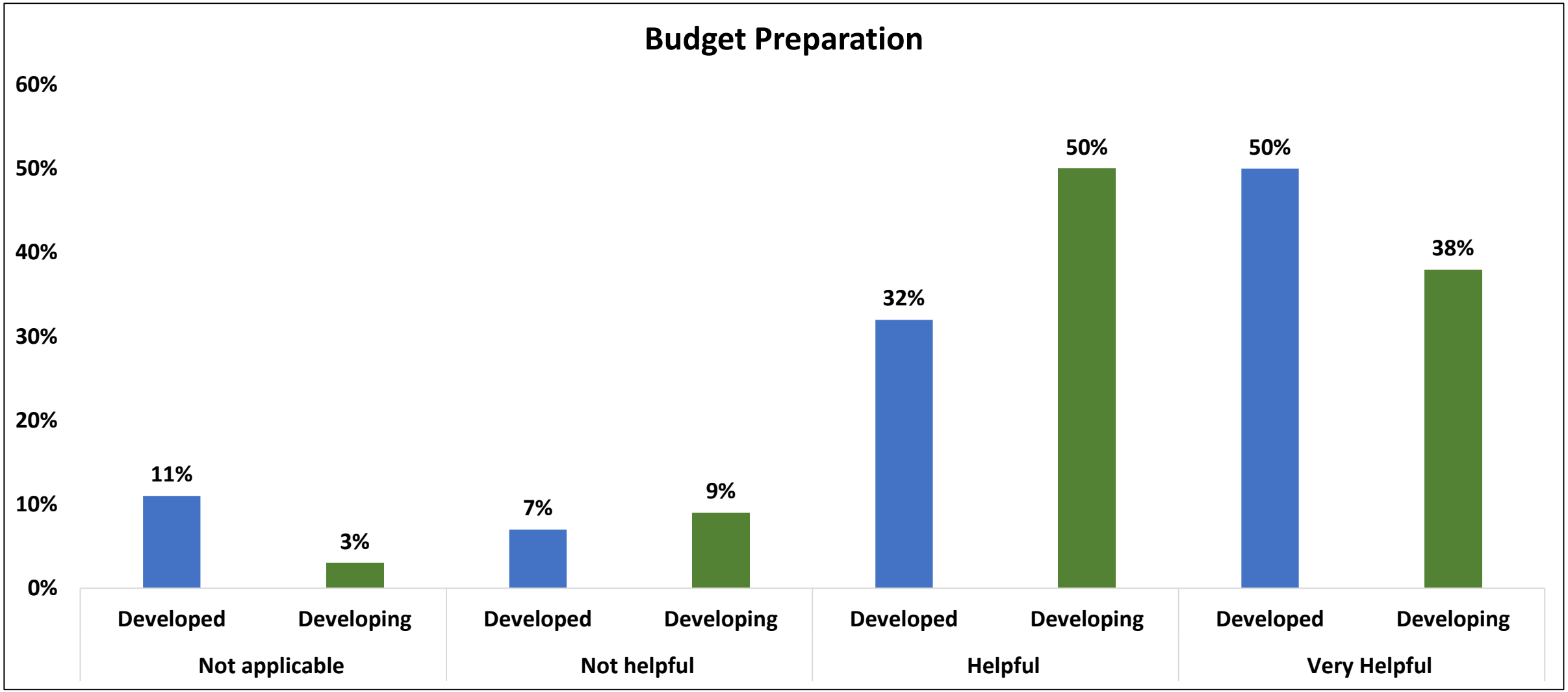
How in your opinion should research administrators be involved in Project's technical meetings and discussions?



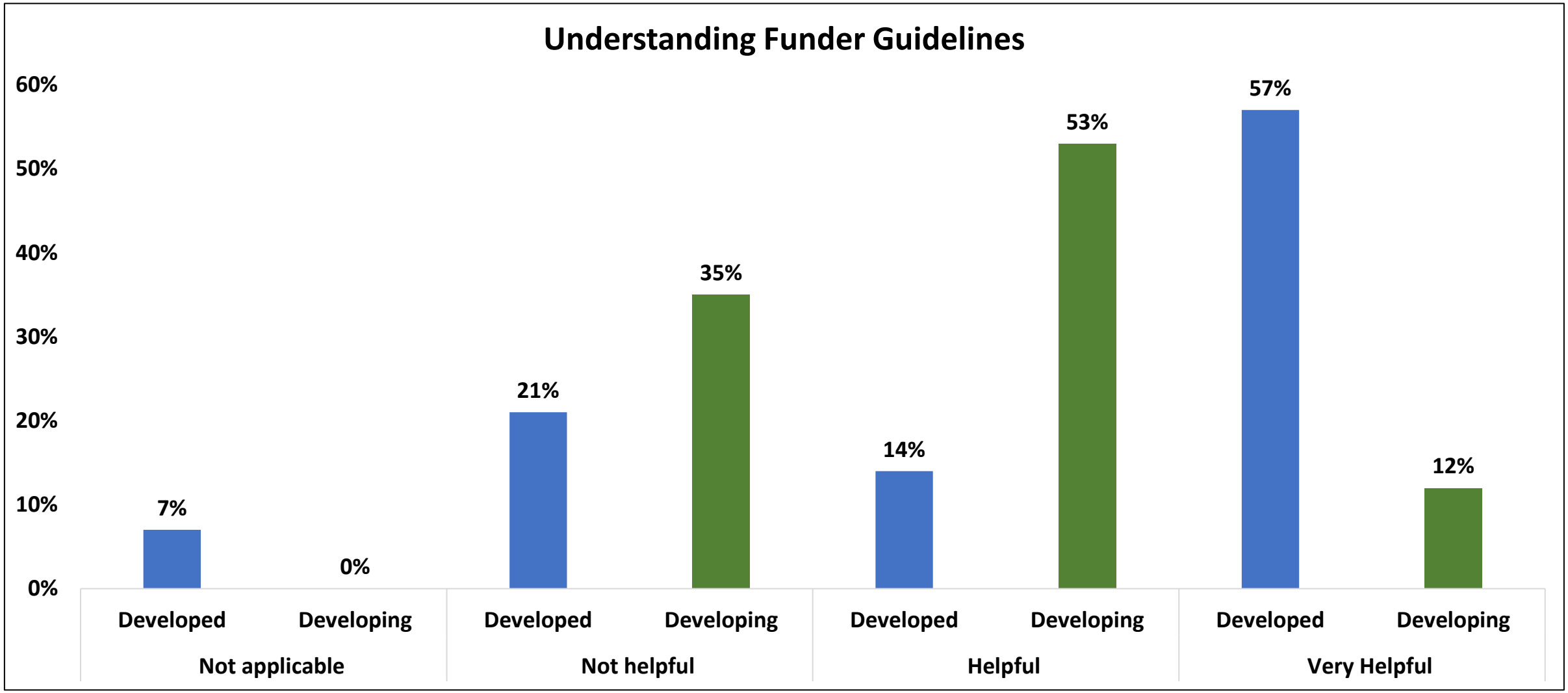




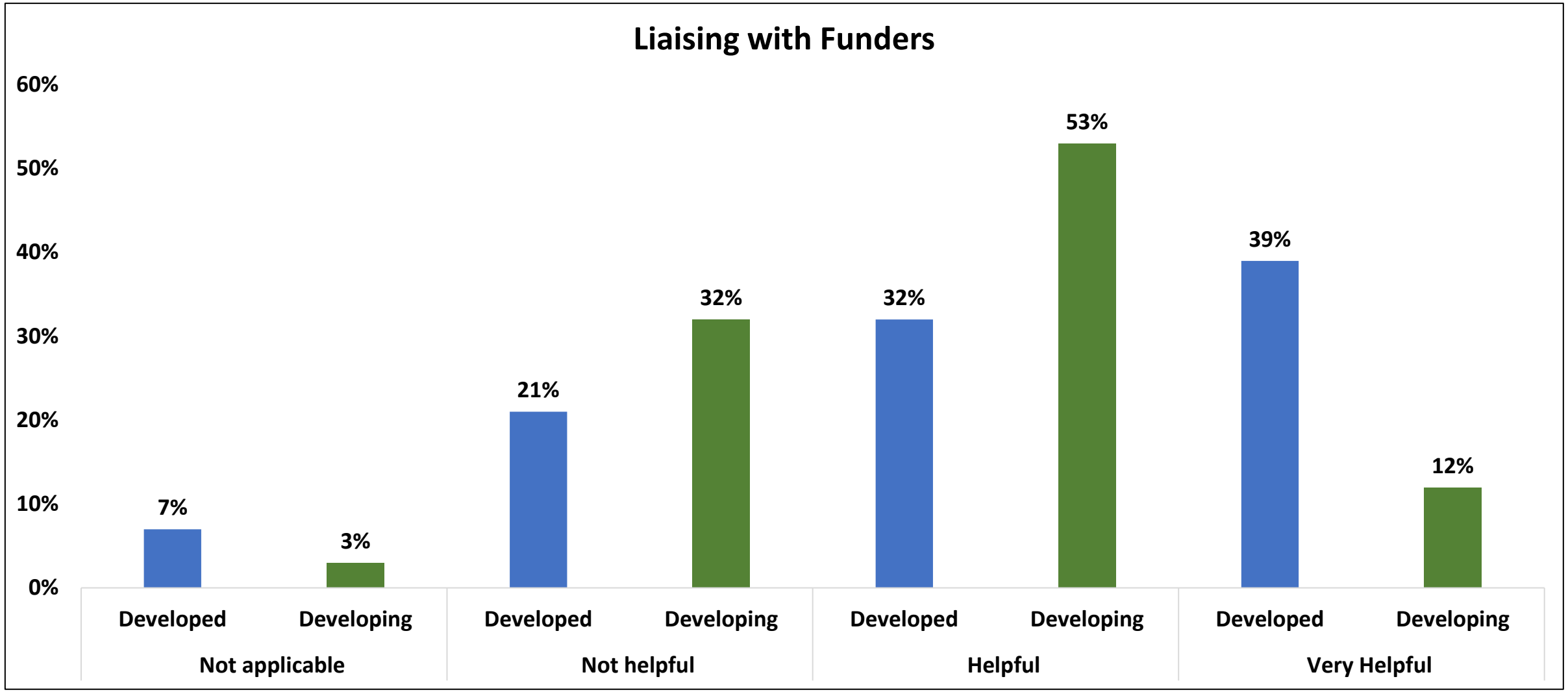
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



How helpful do you find research administrators in:

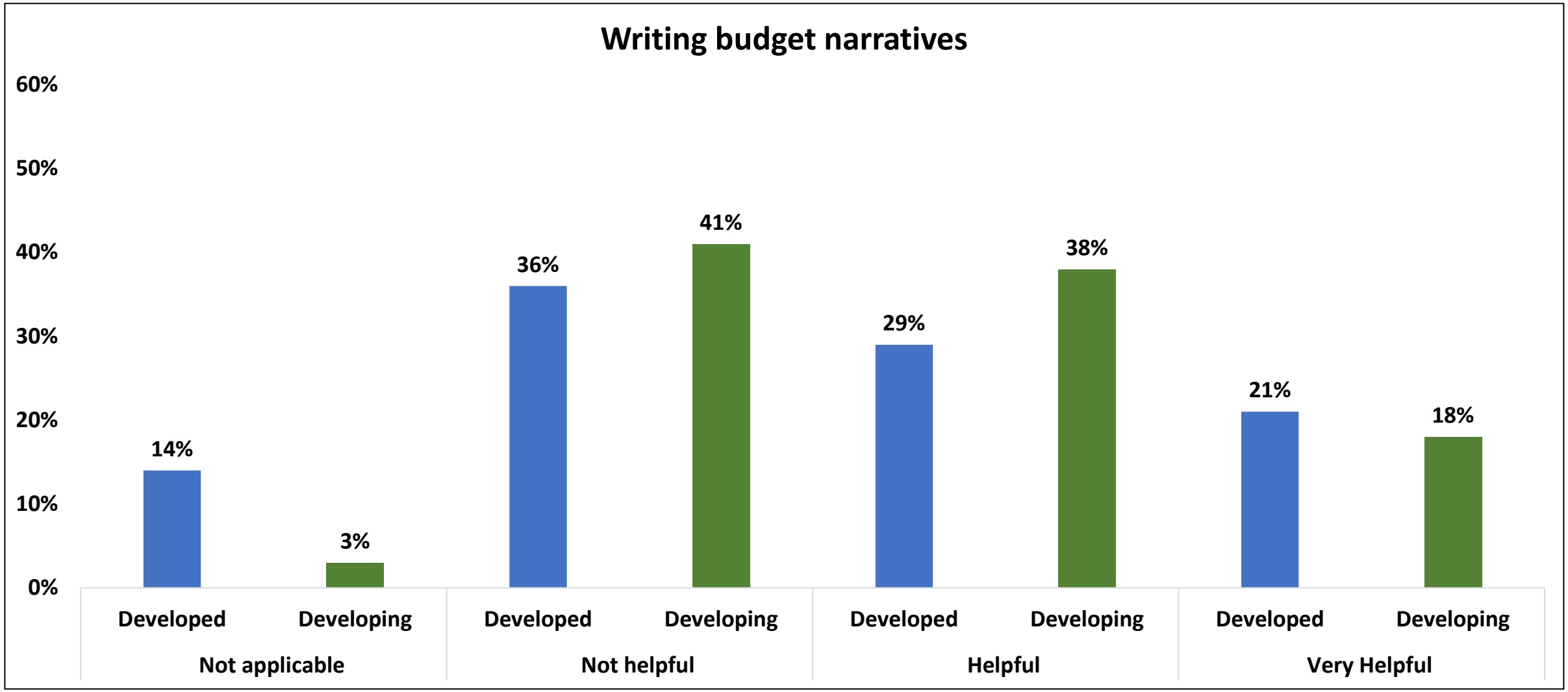


How helpful do you find research administrators in:

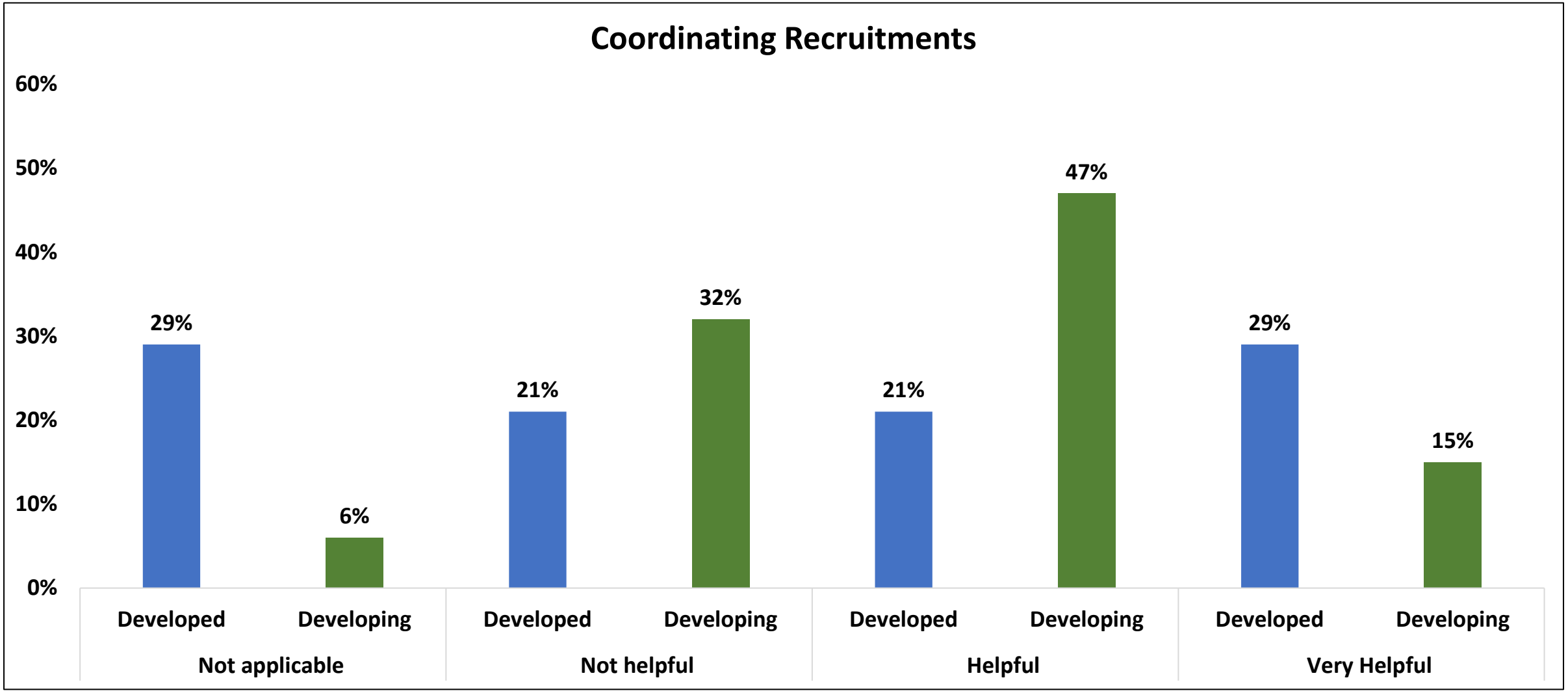


How helpful do you find research administrators in:

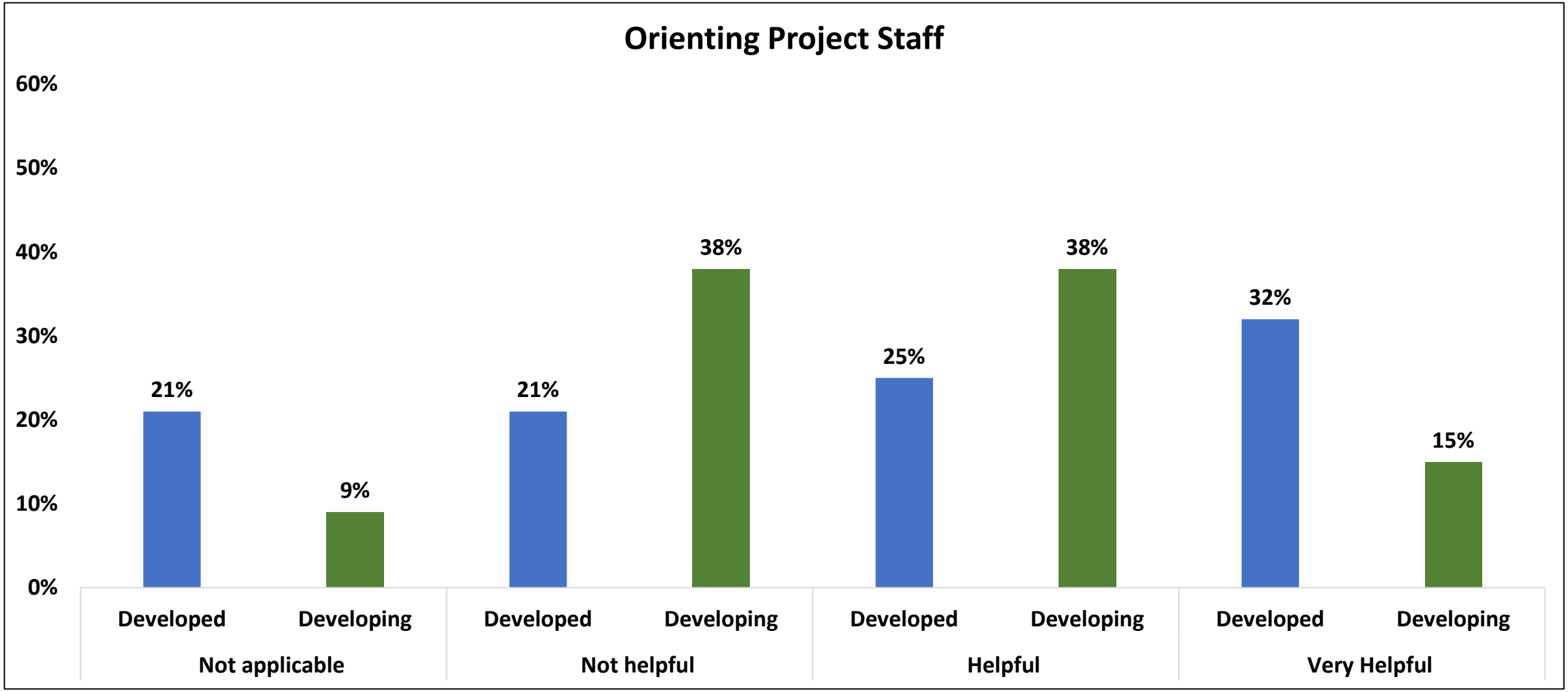
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



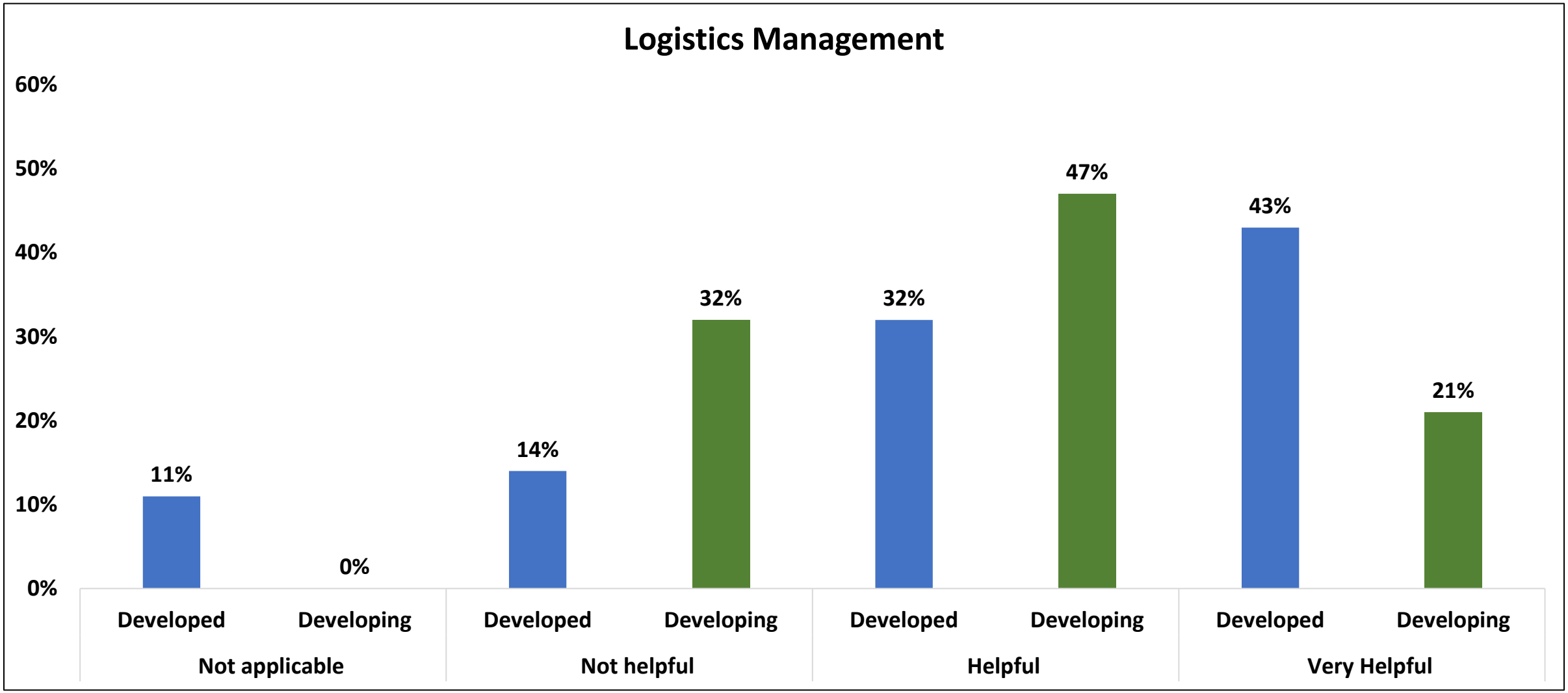
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



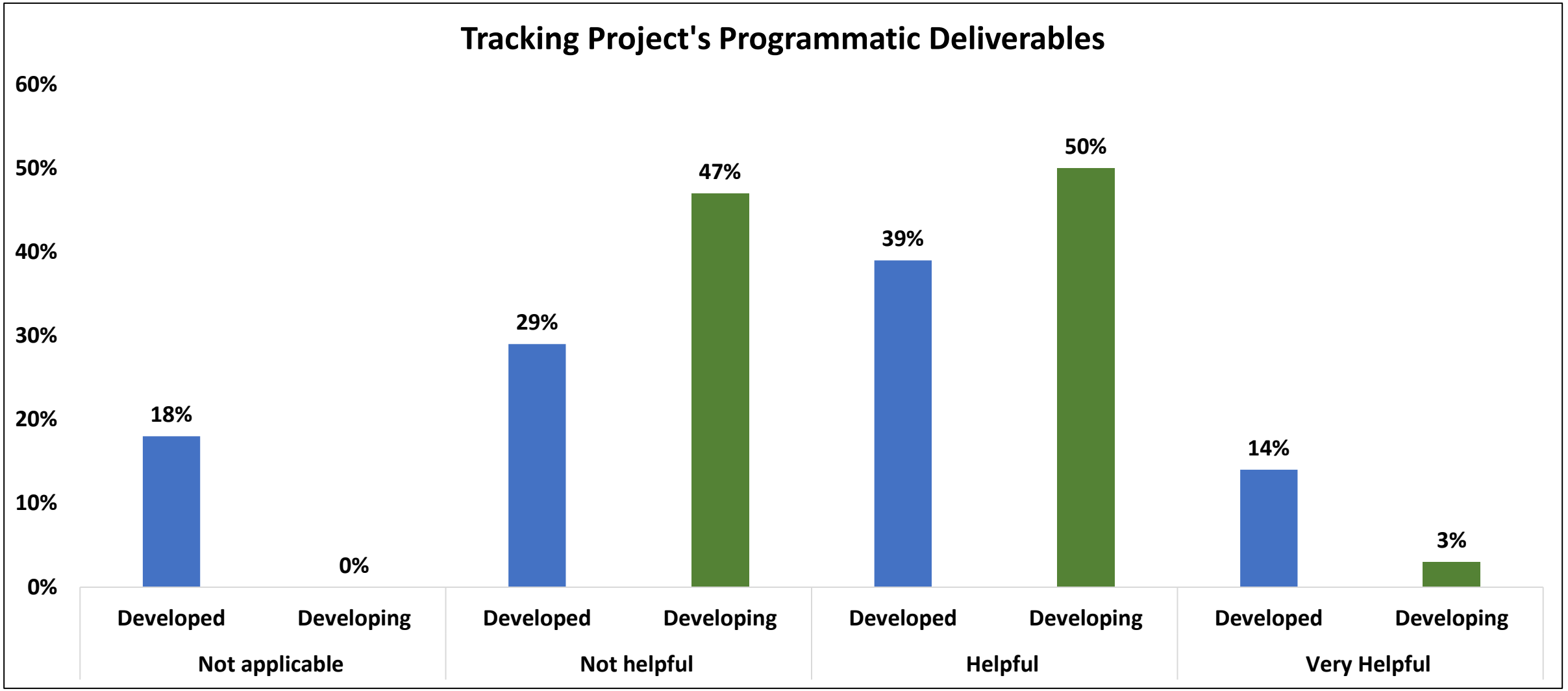
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



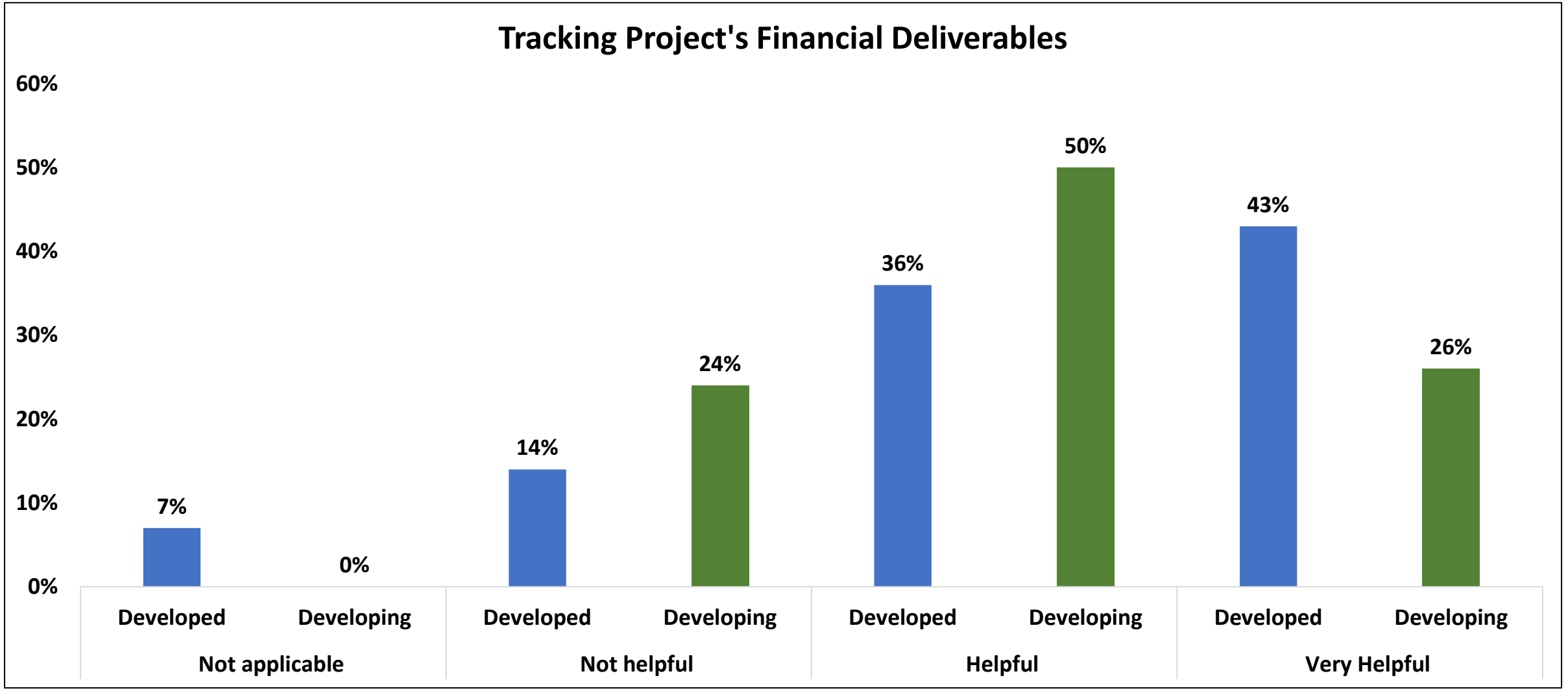
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



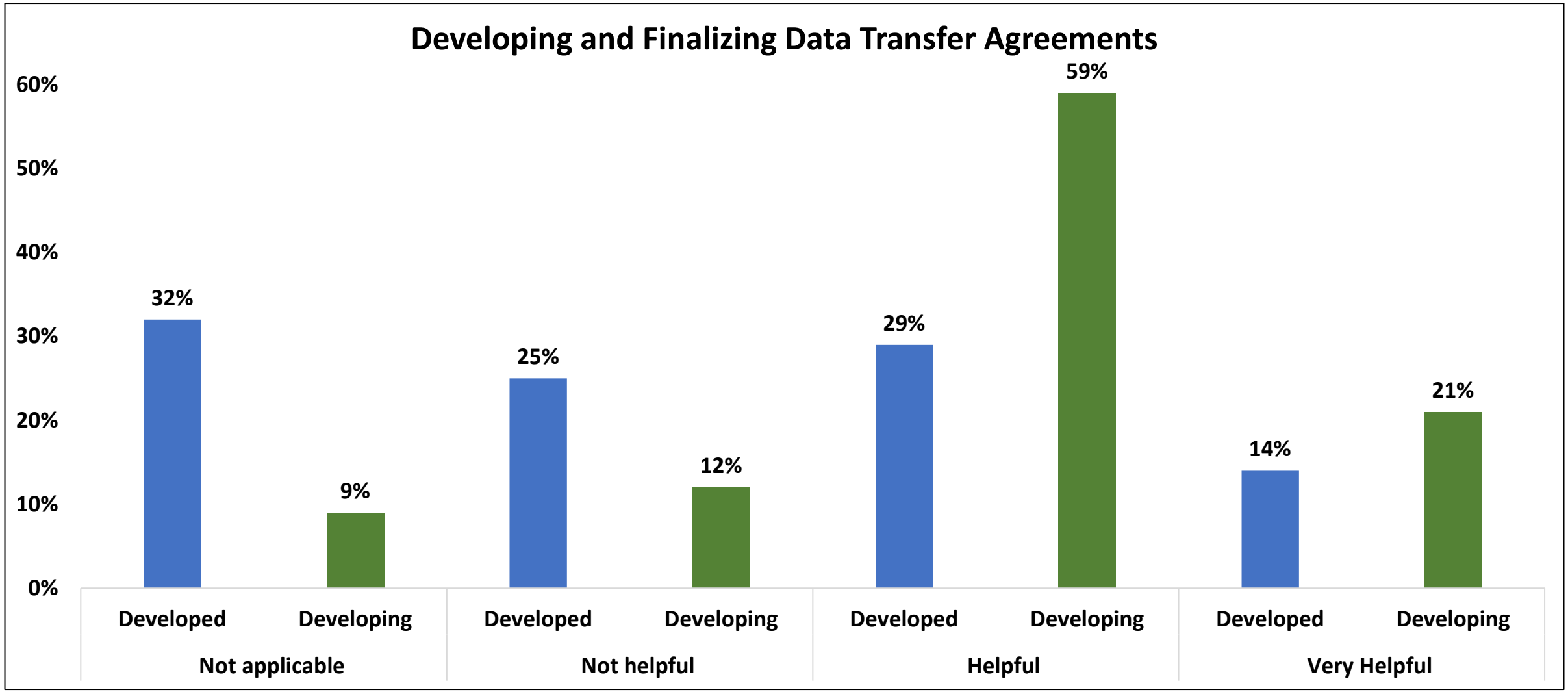
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



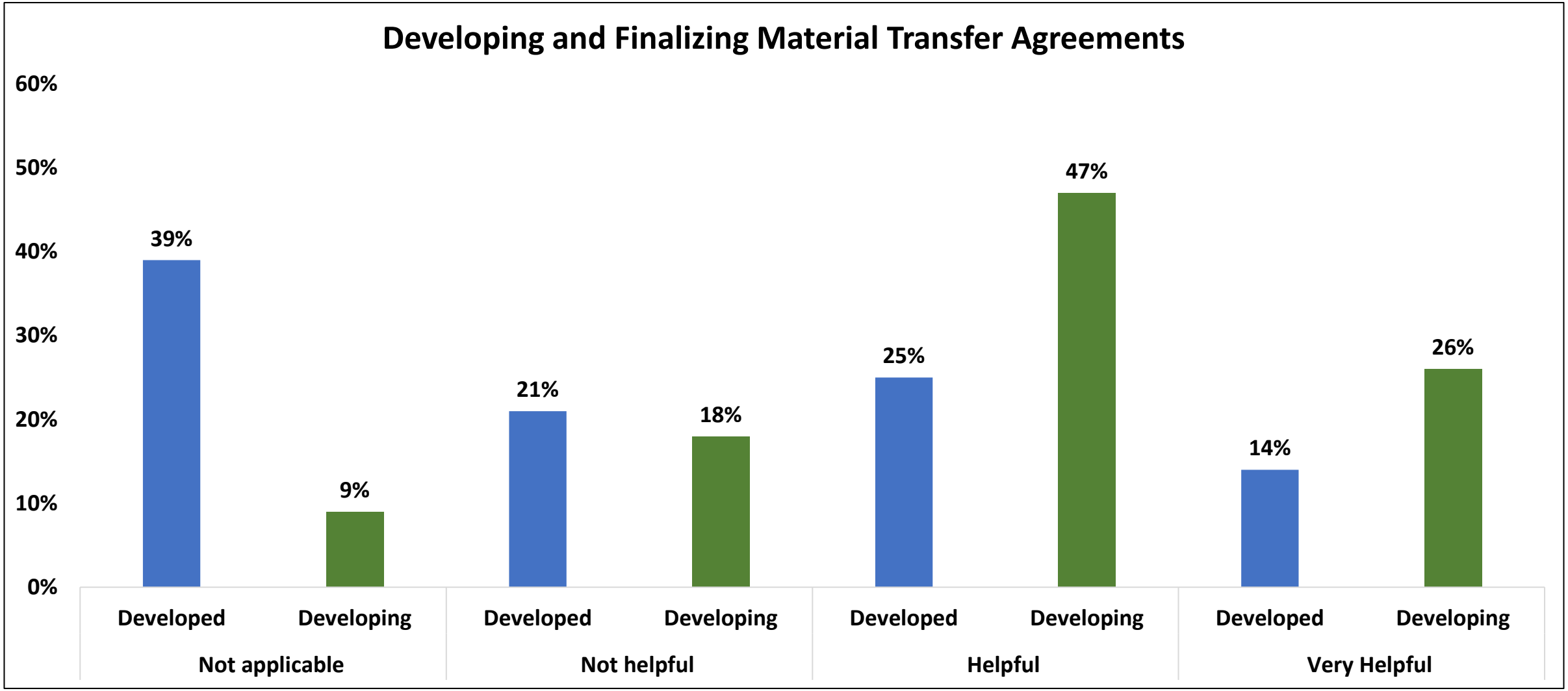
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



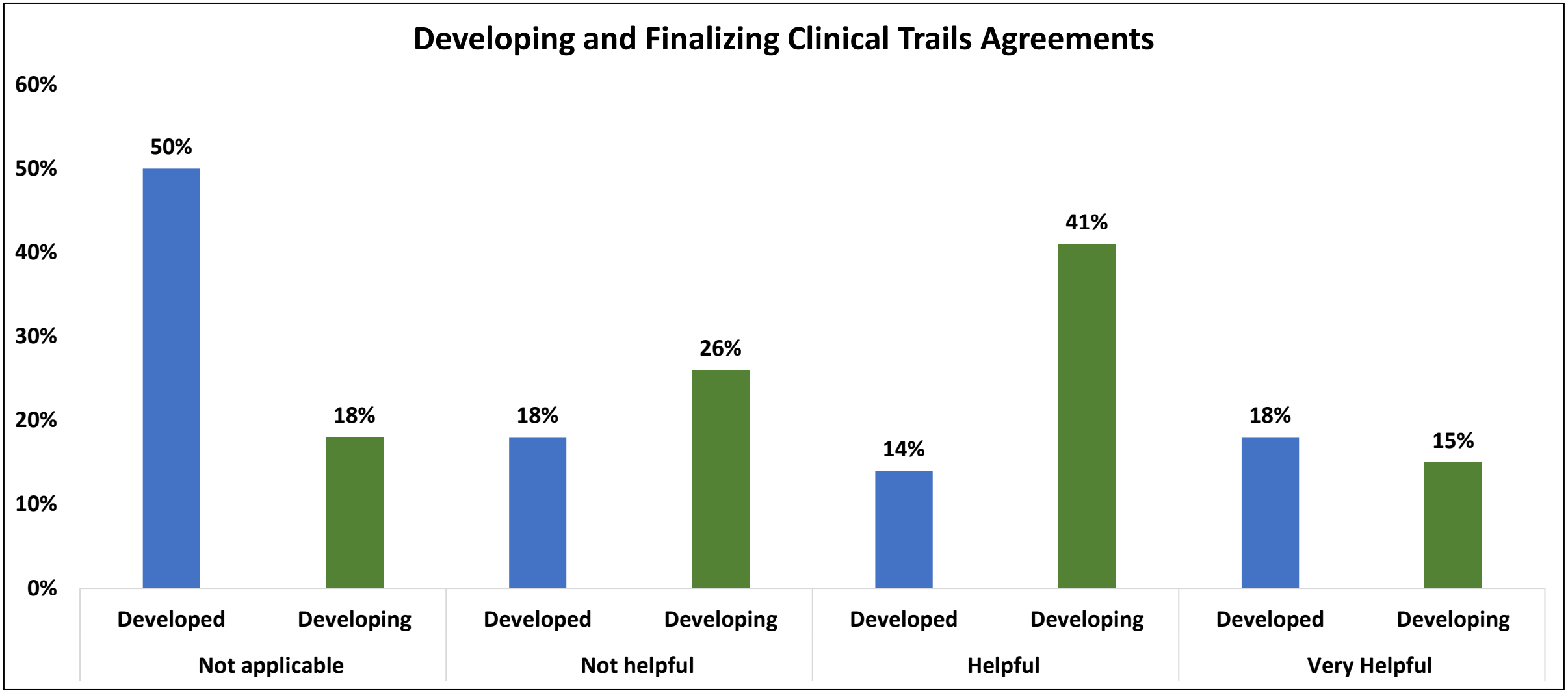
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



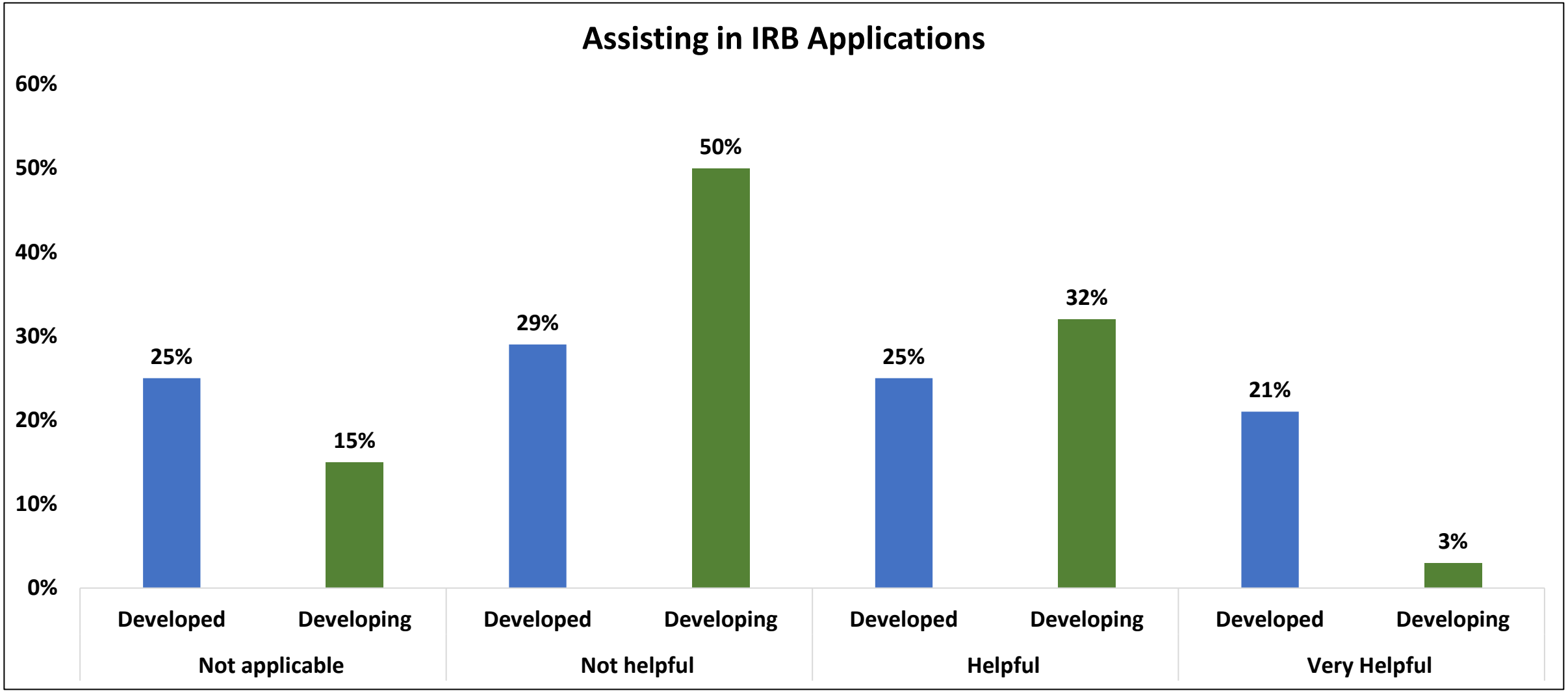
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



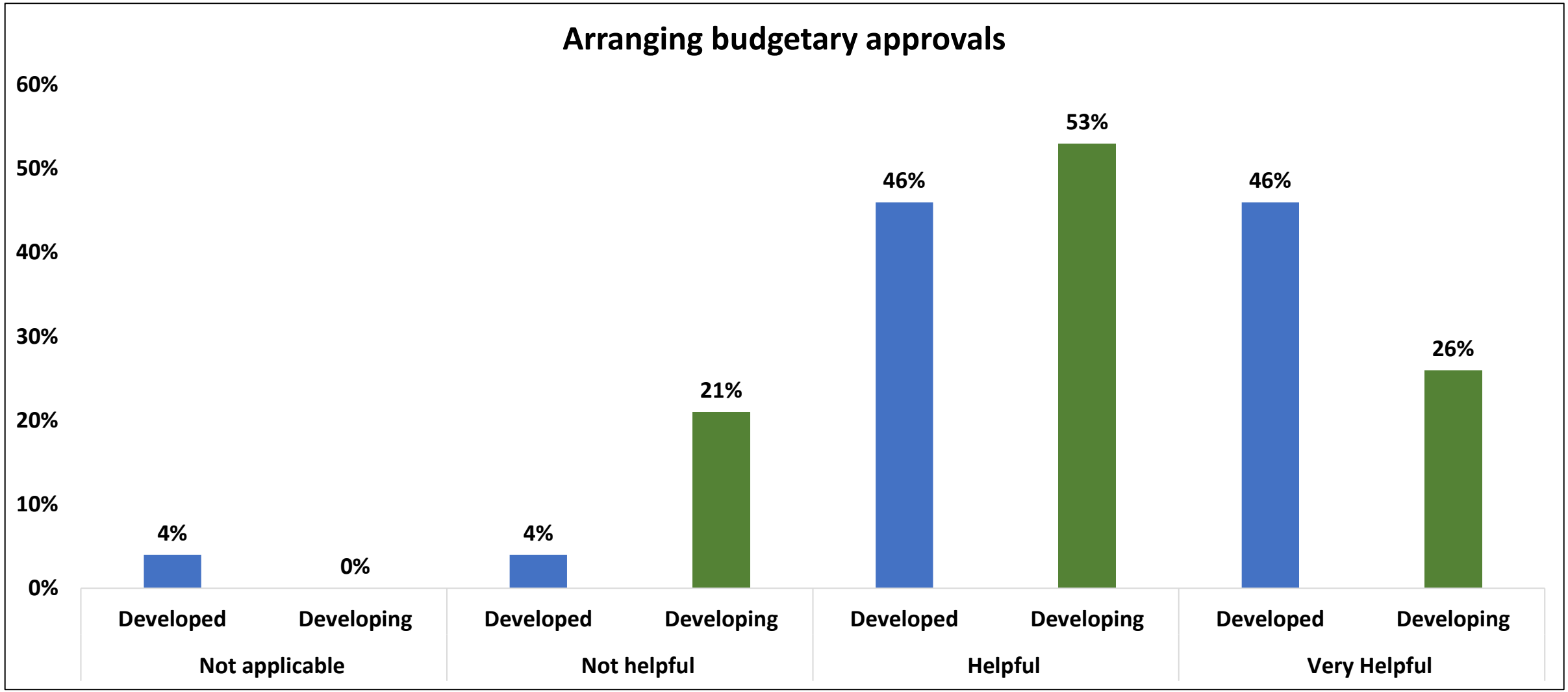
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



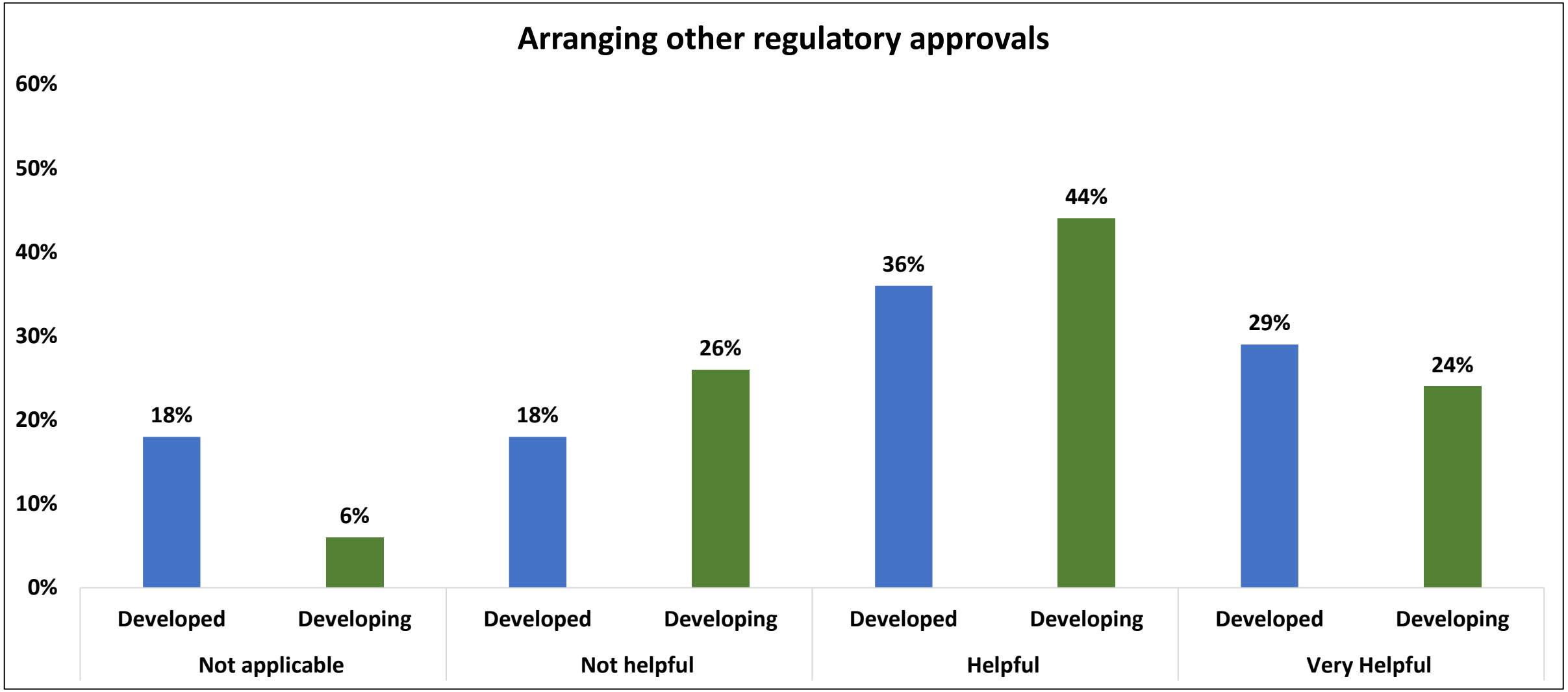
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



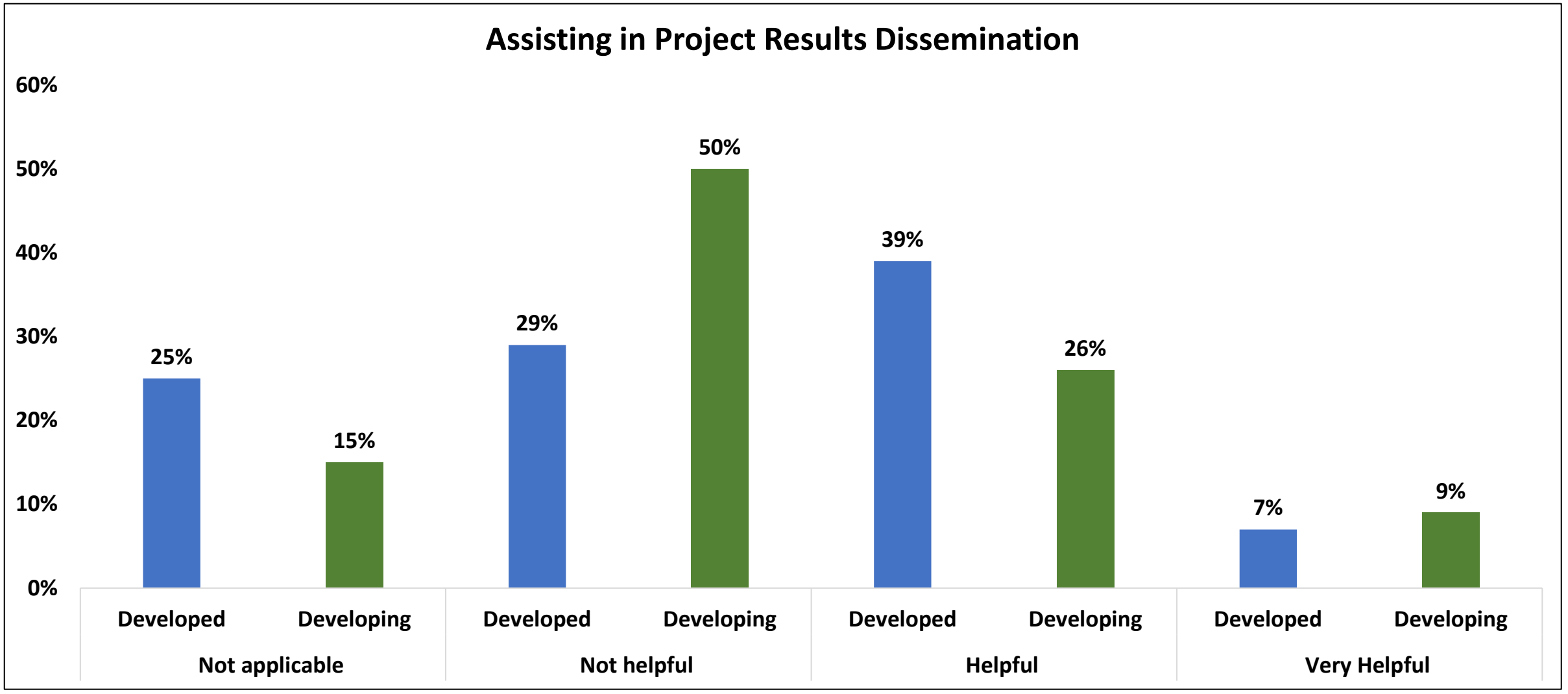
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



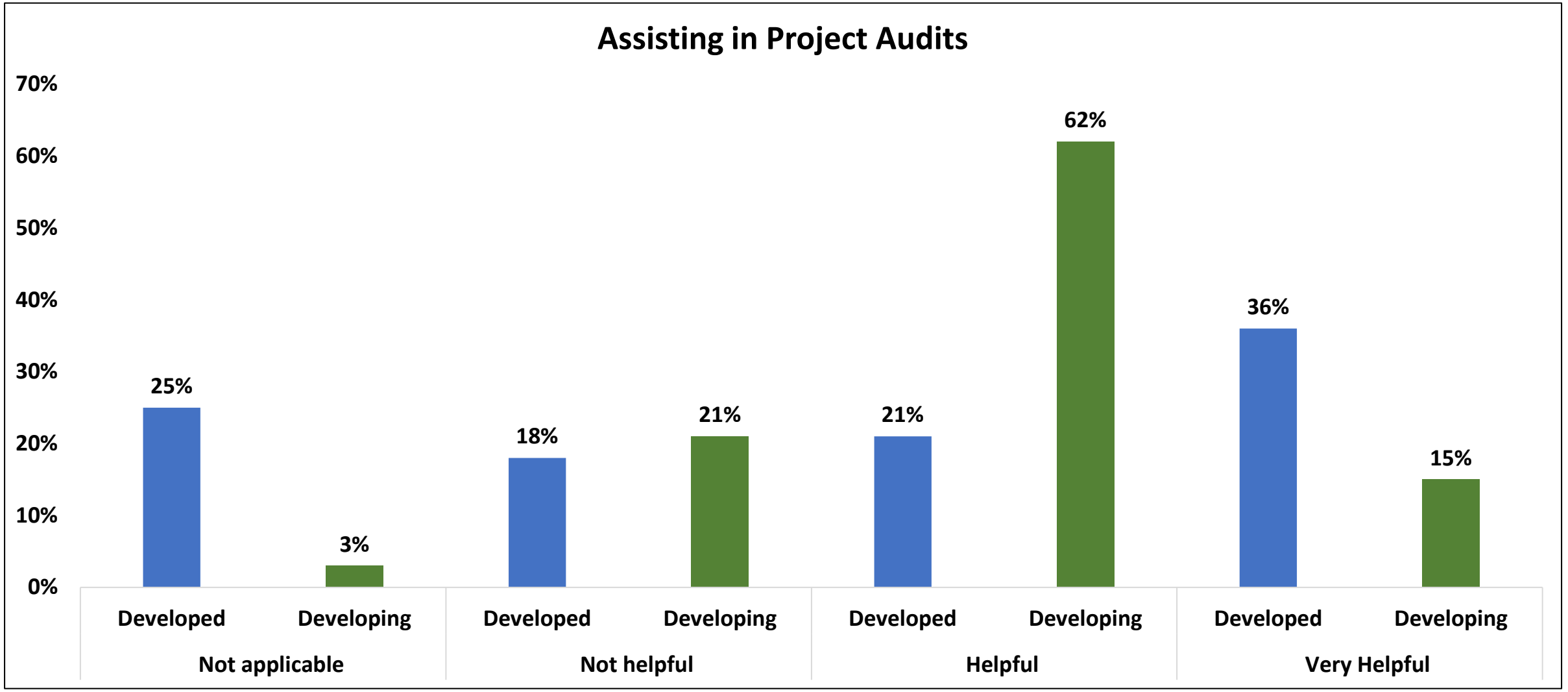
How helpful do you find research administrators in:



How helpful do you find research administrators in:



How helpful do you find research administrators in:



What specific skill do you think research administrators need to develop? (Developed; N=28)

A trend we are seeing is the requirement to support the administrative demands of an ever-growing research portfolio while keeping the admin support to minimal FTE counts. There has never been more demand for tech-savvy admins who are masters of time management. Competing priorities constantly require RAs to switch gears and shift focus. Being able to track and monitor the mountain of admin work in all it's stages of development and progress is challenging. Proficiency with data-sharing tools like MS Planner, MS Lists, Smart sheets, and Power BI dashboarding can alleviate some of the admin burden by enabling PIs/Researchers to access at-a-glance information and data that would otherwise result in manually prepared ad hoc and recurring monthly/quarterly reports and updates can be a game-changing investment. IT resources are not always available to Research portfolios so being able to develop and manage these tools would be quite advantageous and give back hours of time that can be reallocated to higher priority demands (or at least allow RAs to catch their breath from time to time).

Any of the above would be helpful. I don't currently have support for any of those roles.

Better understanding of the landscape so they can get things done with minimum direction.

What specific skill do you think research administrators need to develop? (Developed; N=28)

Organizational and efficient time management. Grant applications and annual reporting processes. Financial reporting, business or accounting skills. To take on a more active role in IRB applications as well as project audits, suggest GCP training.

A stronger understanding and appreciation of the actual research areas linked to investigators. They also require a strong working knowledge of institutional operations relating to HR, finance and legal operations.

Communication skills to share the information regarding the grant.

Liaising w/ international stakeholders.

Understanding of project administration.

Project management and finance.

Creative communication skills.

Understanding what is on the critical path for a project - what needs to be done to move things forward.

Attention to detail, not skimming documents.

Integration into a research team environment.

Assisting with sex and gender and EDI narratives.

All the above that have been checked.

Liaison skills, writing skills.

Project Management (2)

Organizational skills.

What specific skill do you think research administrators need to develop? (Developed; N=28)

This is a bit of a tough question to answer as I currently have not relied on any appointed administrative professionals in a lot of the tasks mentioned above, as I have done things like budget preparation and budget narratives myself, but it is helpful to know that these are areas that they could assist with.

Awareness about research funding agency use of funds policies, budget justifications, hiring staff and trainees, ordering process (comparing quotes from different vendors), communications, arranging collaborative calls and meetings, documenting minutes of meetings from research collaborative group calls.

Understanding of the grant's submission process of US-based granting agencies.

Ability to make appropriate contacts and knowledge of the grant process.

Supporting grant submission, being a source of lists of potential grants, supporting post award hr and budgeting, supporting ethics submissions, helping manage training, helping with recruitment and dealing with institution Human resources, dealing with equipment and trial regulatory requirements.

Unsure - overall, I do not feel like we get much support from research administrators other than formatting and submitting the grant, then setting up accounts later.

Helping with grant applications and funding liaisons.

The above.

What specific skill do you think research administrators need to develop? (Developing; N=32)

1. **Explaining donor guidelines to PIs** and assisting them to fill the grant applications.
2. **Proactively undertaking analysis of the variance (budget allocation VS actual expenditure**) and helping PIs to understand the reasons.

Be able to fetch the grant that matches with faculty expertise and be able to develop all other aspects of grant submission other than the concept.

Being proactive in bringing PI and team together to meet the deliverables. Should be like alarms in prioritization for the research team.

First investigators should be informed about the JD of grant administrators. Asp er my understanding, they can only help in budget and running GC.

Follow up on spending of the grant budget will be a big help.

Overall grant management from announcement till award.

Financial and regulatory.

Communication (2)

What specific skill do you think research administrators need to develop? (Developing; N=32)

Research administration should also share the research opportunities which are provided, specifically for which funding agencies to be applied in particular.

Project management, budgeting, effective communication skills.

Proper training through online modules.

Project management and planning.

Research administrators should have training to understand managing the research grants with periodical refresher trainings.

Searching for appropriate funding opportunities for social sciences.

Tracking of finances and deliverables and keeping the team on track.

To further speed up the process.

What specific skill do you think research administrators need to develop? (Developing; N=32)

Technical Proficiency: Proficiency in relevant software tools and systems for grant management, financial reporting, data analysis, and communication is beneficial and Data Management: With the growth of digital research data, research administrators should have a grasp of data management principles and practices.

Understanding the specific requirements of funding agencies. at least the most common ones.

Understanding of Research Outcomes/Objective achievable within the stipulated timeframes.

Understanding basic research fundamentals/international exposure.

Budget development, progress reports and closeout facilitation.

They do a great job, but they need to take an active role and take a pre-emptive approach. Ideally, they should partner and work with the research team in finding ways to help achieve the objectives timely and also following the institutional and funder guidelines.

Understanding and correction of **scientific writing**.

Grant management and application skills.

Help in building research management.

Verbal and written communication skills.

Depends on their JD and TORs.

Any comments you would like to give that will help research administrators improve their facilitation towards your projects? (Developed; N=10)

Overall, I have found it incredibly helpful that administrative staff have been able to help navigate institutional processes and systems relating to accounting and finance. I think it could be beneficial that research administrators become more well-versed in some of the AI task management/project management tools that are coming out rapidly as this can help streamline all of our work/tasks, and the landscape of AI-assisted technology has immense potential to augment our work in ways that allows us to be more effective and efficient.

As above. I haven't really had the opportunity to work with an admin that helps with research related activities.

Training and development in line with upcoming AI interventions within the processes.

I'm not clear who you define as a research administrator in this survey.

Any comments you would like to give that will help research administrators improve their facilitation towards your projects? (Developing; N=26)

It will be best to provide feedback on administrative processes and provide input to continuously improve your facilitation (like provide them the **Specialized Training opportunities . There should be some mechanism of Acknowledgement and celebrate project milestones and achievements. Positive reinforcement boosts morale and motivation among employee** .This can create a conducive environment for successful project facilitation and contribute to researchers' achievements.

The need to learn to find ways to make faculty concentrate on the concept and actual research. And take all other burden on their shoulder. How can we be agile to respond to quick calls?

Senior Research Administrator: 1) They should take the responsibility of **communicating with funding agency. 2) They should keep track of spending in real time.** Also finance folks should report within 24hrs as took how much price was paid for a specific item within 24hrs of its delivery.

Junior Research Administrator: 1) Getting quotes from purchase at the time of ordering. 2) Follow up on delivery of items ordered. 3) Follow up with import section on release of items delivered at the airport.

Engaging communities and training to understand the community informed research.

Any comments you would like to give that will help research administrators improve their facilitation towards your projects? (Developing; N=26)

In my view, not important as long as it is clear to all who is doing/supporting/leading what, based on clear SOPs and guidelines.

Their workload should be regulated because they are already over burdened.

Try to more proactive rather than everything expected from PI.

Reduce the bureaucratic bottlenecks especially HR HIRING.

Increasing engagement would be encouraged.

They should take every project as urgent.

So far it is going very well.

SRA INTERNATIONAL
ANNUAL MEETING
SEATTLE 2023
OCTOBER 14-18

SRA INTERNATIONAL

Thank you for your attention

Mir Khan, Director Research, NICVD, Pakistan mir.Asghar@nicvd.org
Salima Panjwani, Manager, OSR, Aga Khan University, Pakistan salima.sherali@aku.edu
Sajjad Surani, Research Coordinator, University of Calgary, Canada sajjad.Surani@ucalgary.ca