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# **Doctoral Student Experiences: Preliminary Results from the Ph.D. Completion Project Exit Surveys**

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**CGS Summer Workshop**

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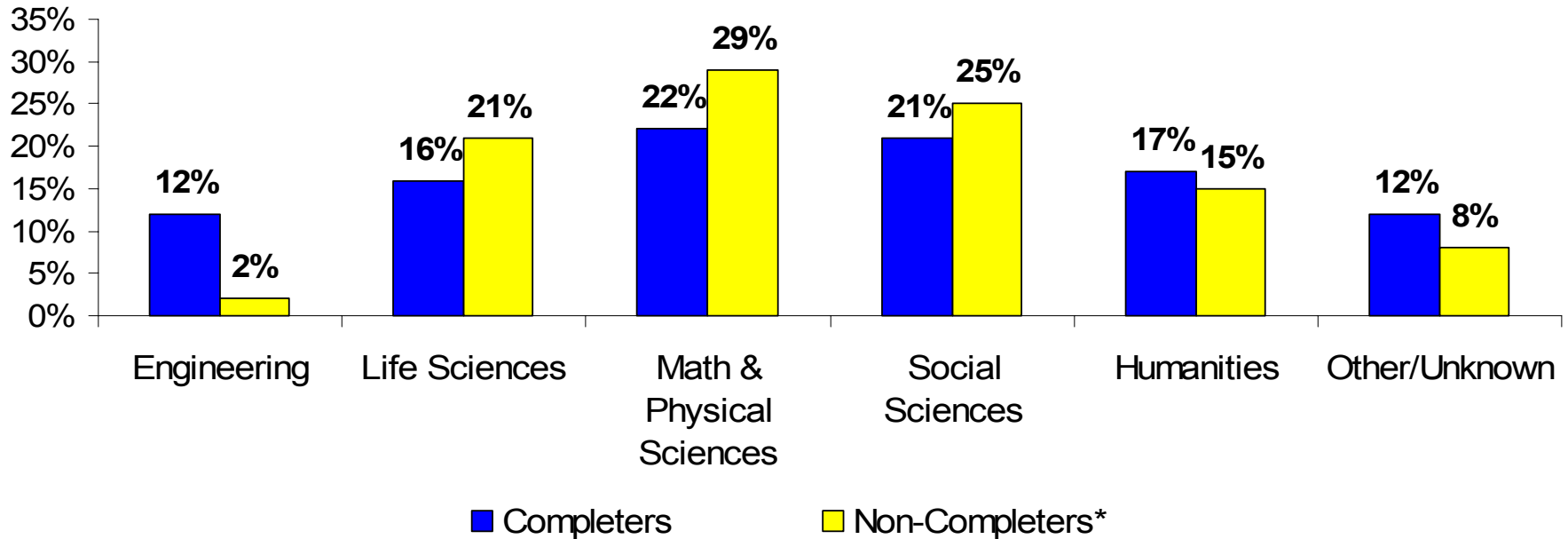
## The Exit Survey Results Examine the Opinions of Doctoral Completers and Non-Completers in Several Major Program Areas

- Financial support
- Family (non-financial) support
- Research experiences
- Professional/career guidance
- Mentoring/advising
- Program social environment/peer group support
- Program quality



# Exit Surveys Were Completed by Both Doctoral Program Completers and Non-Completers

**Figure 1. Distribution of Exit Survey Respondents by Degree Status at the Time of Completing the Exit Survey**



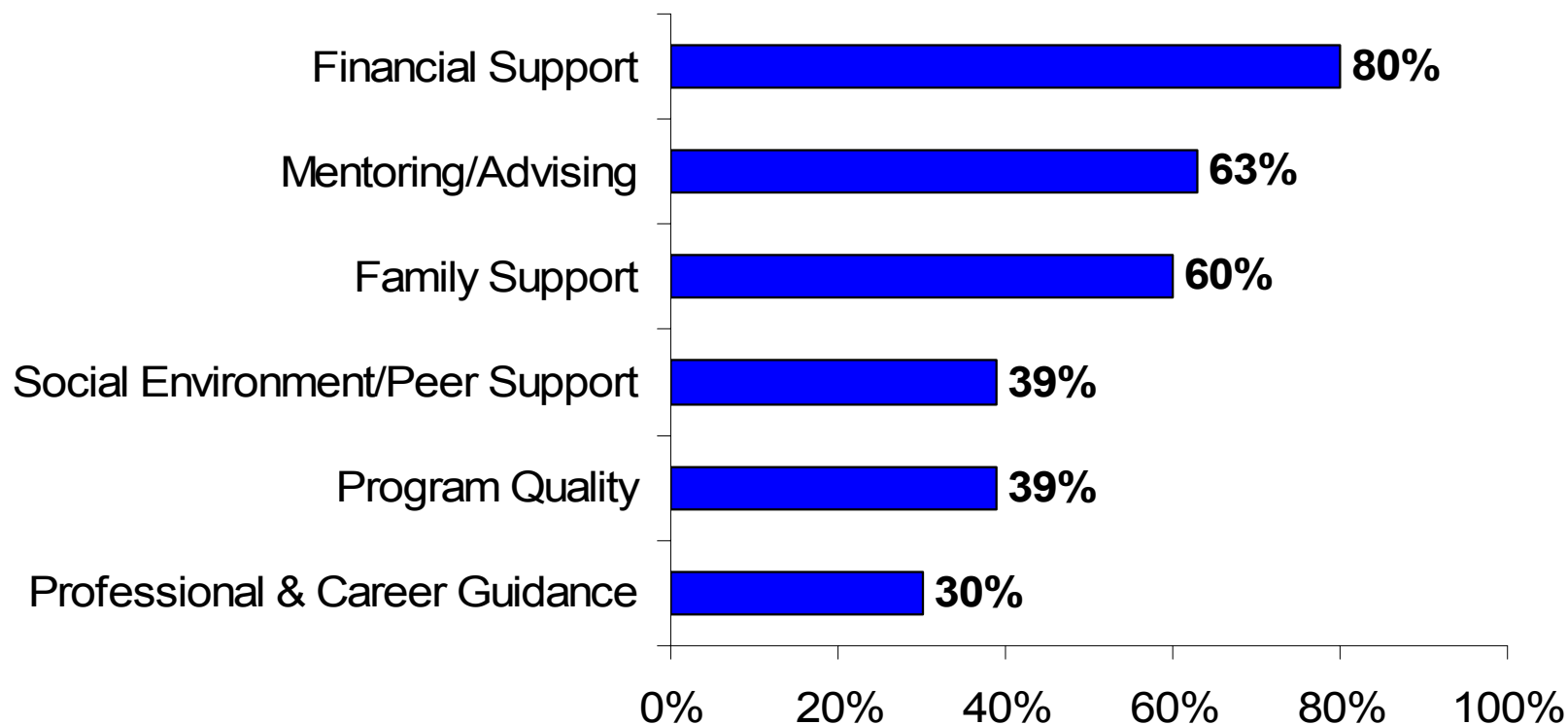
Source: Council of Graduate Schools, Ph.D. Completion Project, Exit Survey Database.

\*Includes students whose status was not known at the time of the survey.



## 80% of Exit Survey Doctoral Completers Said That Receipt of Financial Support Was the One of the “Main Factors” That Contributed to Their Doctoral Completion

**Figure 2. Exit Survey Respondents' Self-Identified "Main Factors" That Contributed to The Completion of Their Doctoral Programs\***

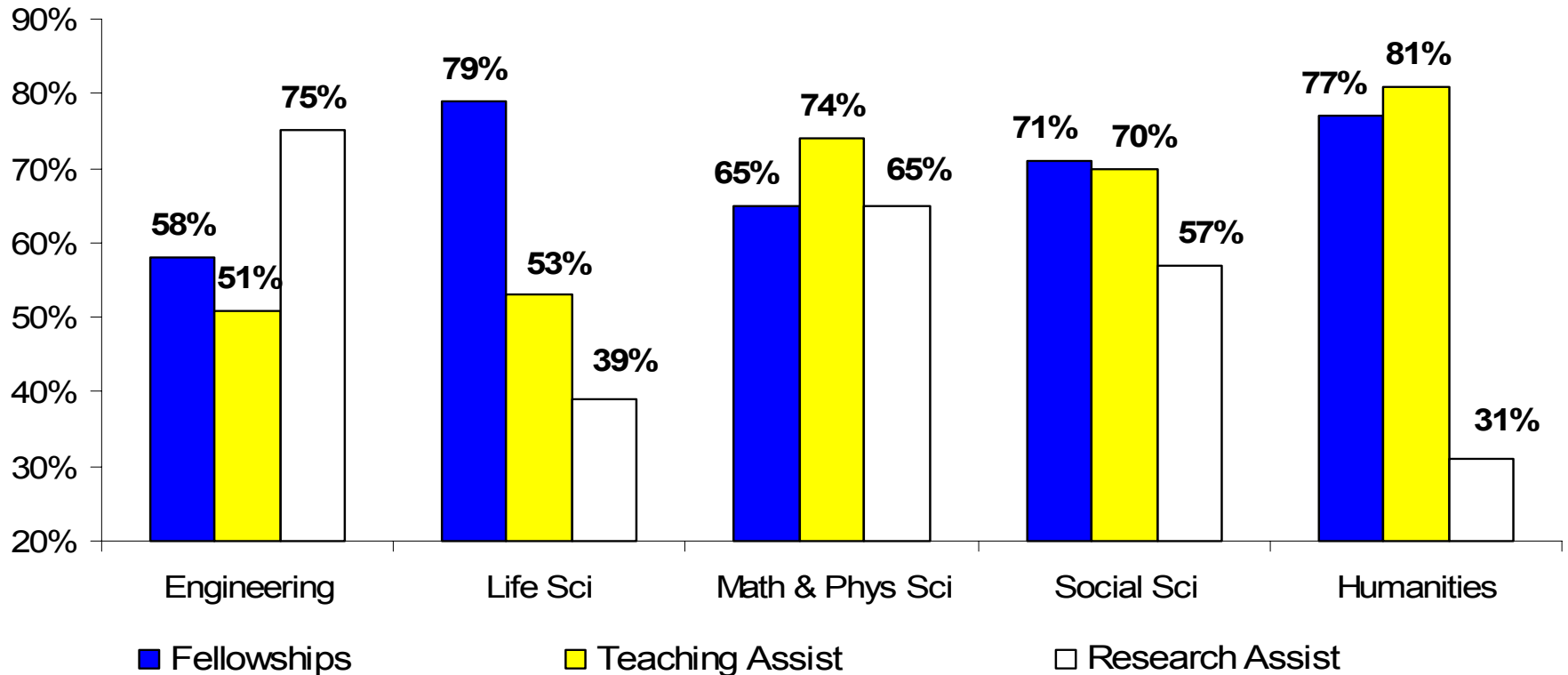


Source: Council of Graduate Schools, Ph.D. Completion Project, Exit Survey Database. \*Includes only respondents who completed their doctoral Programs.



## The Primary Sources of “Non-Loan” Financial Support for Doctoral Completers Varied by Broad Field

**Figure 3. Primary Sources of Financial Support for Doctoral Completers Who Responded to the Exit Survey, by Field of Study**

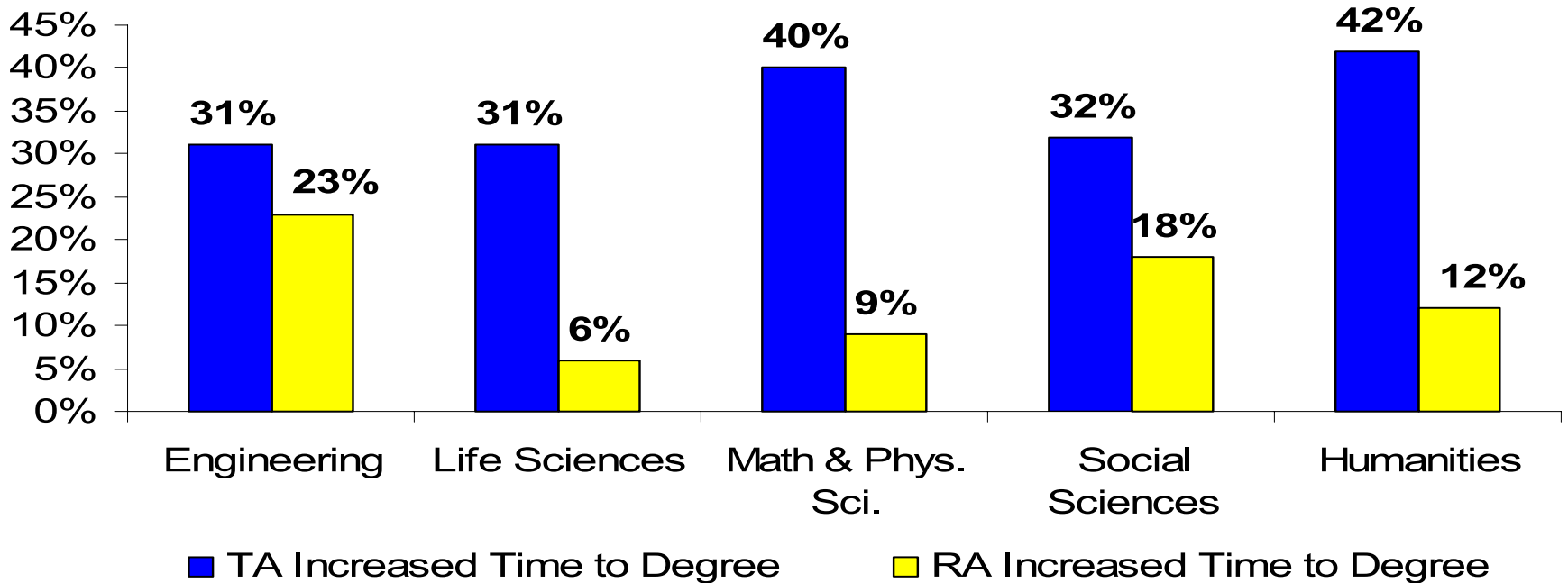


Source: Council of Graduate Schools, Ph.D. Completion Project, Exit Survey Database.



# Different Types of Financial Support Appears to Affect Doctoral Completers' Perceptions Regarding Time-to-Degree Completion

**Figure 4. Perceived Effects of Teaching Assistantships (TA) and Research Assistantships (RA) on Doctoral Students' Time to Degree Completion, by Field of Study**

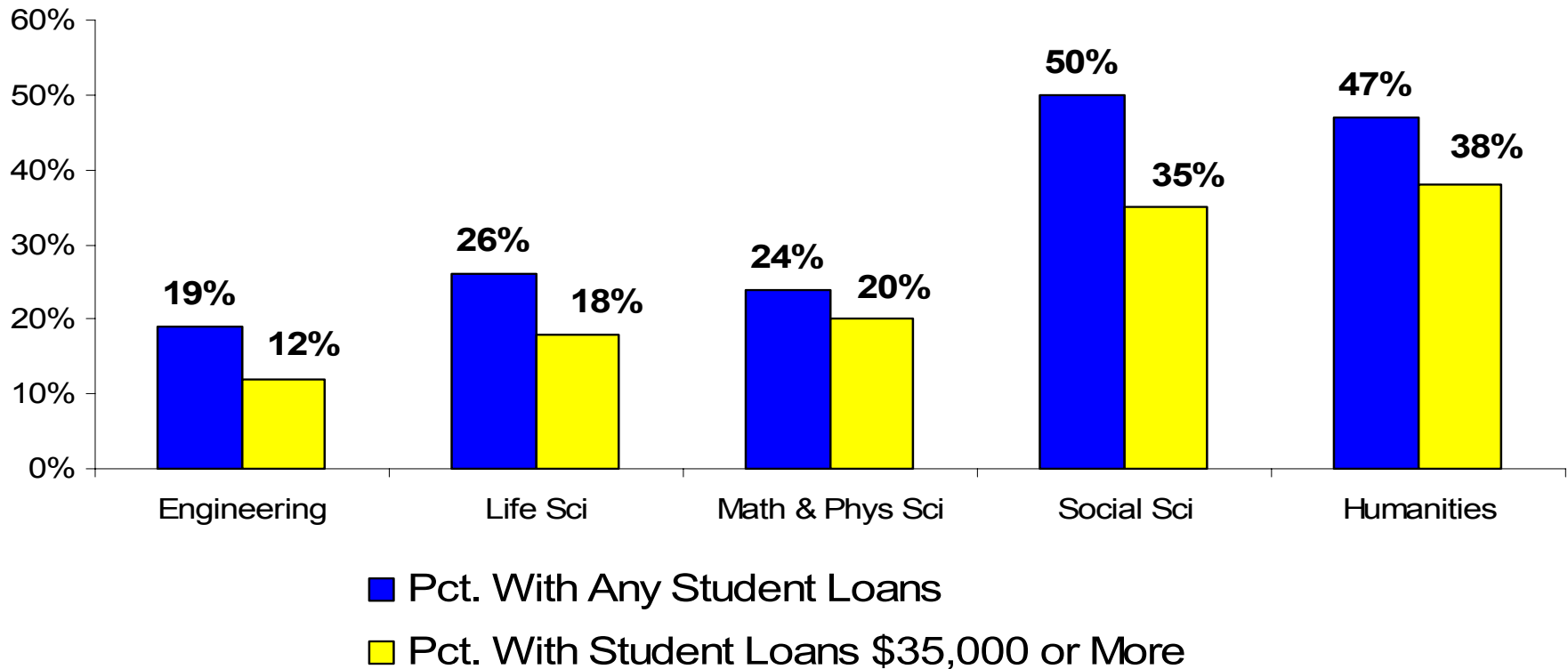


Source: Council of Graduate Schools, Ph.D. Completion Project, Exit Survey Database. \*Includes only survey respondents who said they completed their doctoral programs.



# Nearly Half of the Exit Survey Respondents in Social Sciences and Humanities Received Student Loans

**Figure 5. Percentage of Ph.D. Completers Who Received Student Loans\*, by Broad Field**



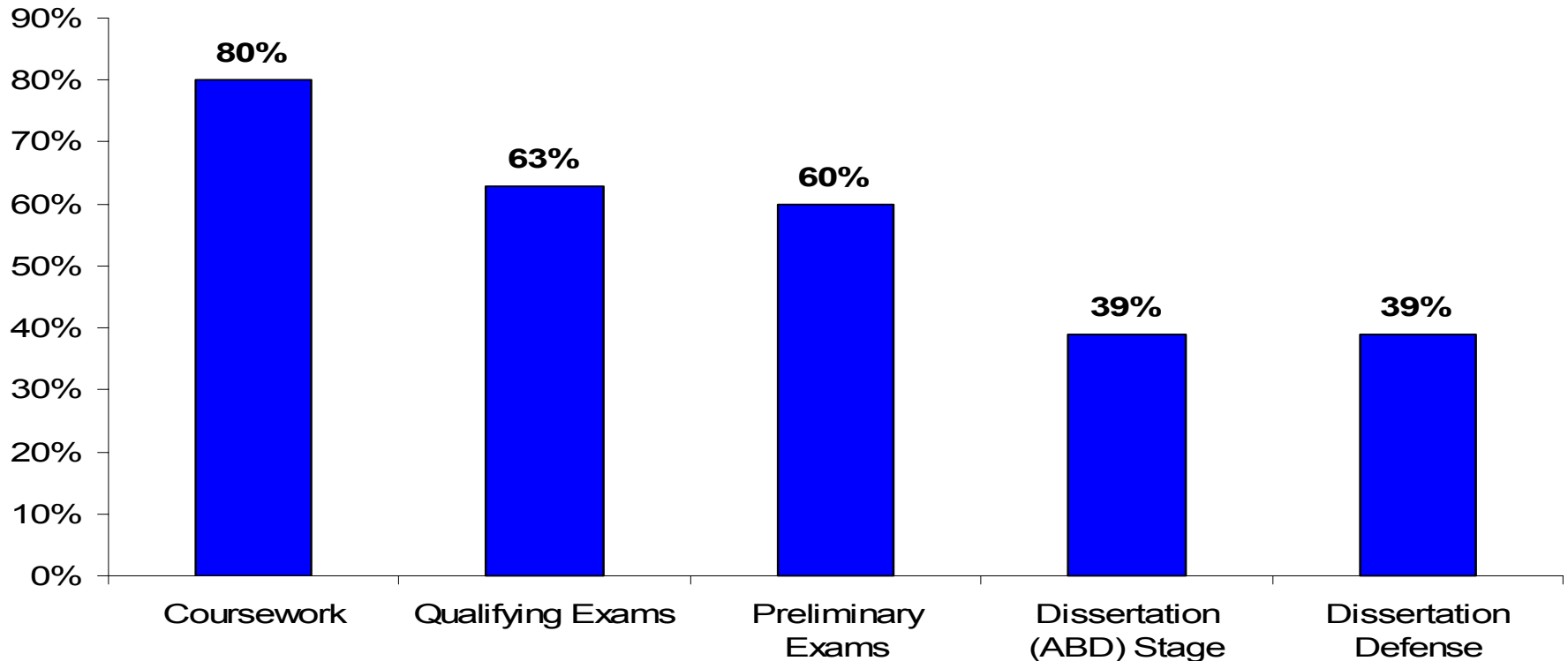
Source: Council of Graduate Schools, Ph.D. Completion Project, Exit Survey Database.

\*Includes loans for doctoral study exclusively. Includes only students who completed their doctoral programs.



## Most Doctoral Completers Said They Had “Ready Access” to Academic Advisors During Their Coursework and Preliminary Exams But Less Access During Their Dissertations

**Figure 6. Percentage of Doctoral Completers Who Thought Their Academic Advisors Were “Readily” Available to Meet With Them During Their Doctoral Careers, by Career Stage**



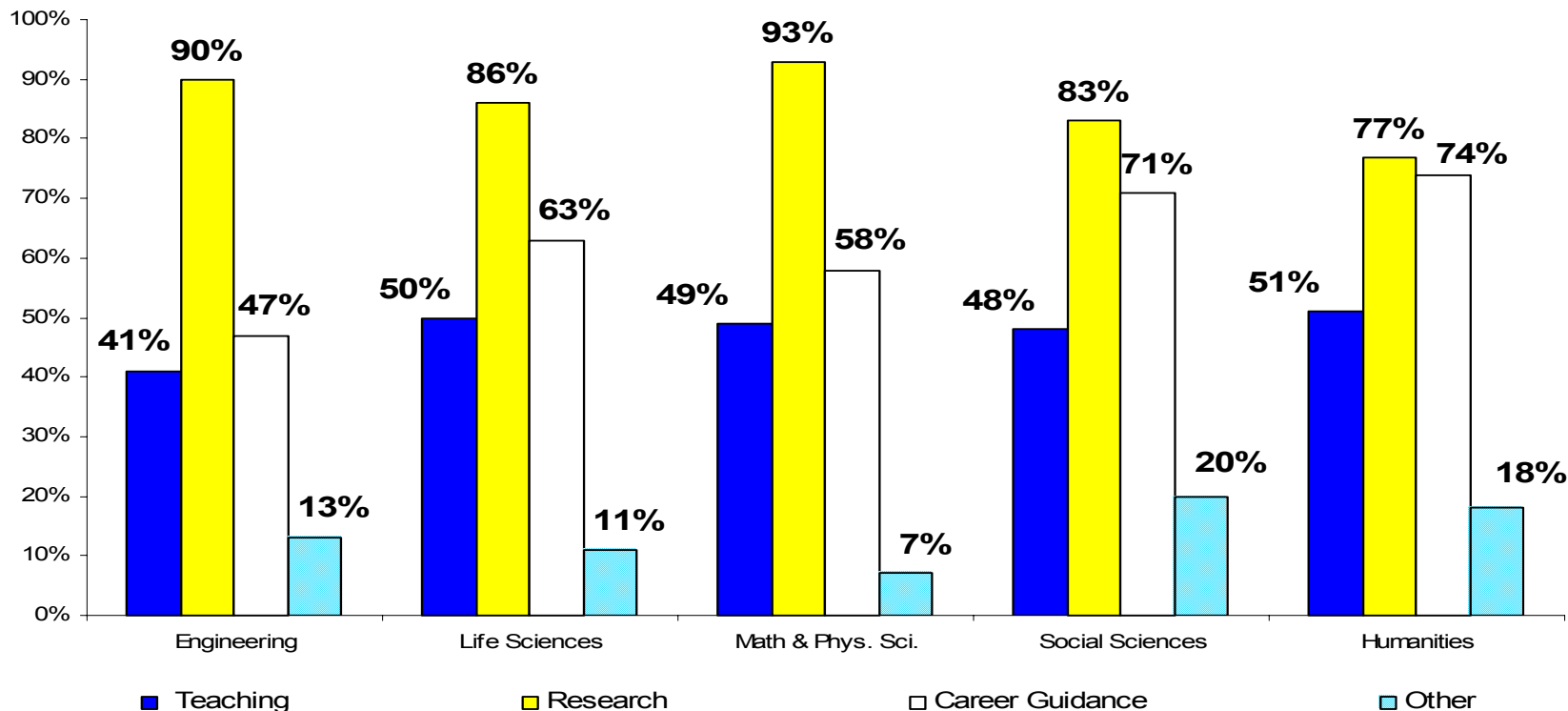
Sources: Council of Graduate Schools, Ph.D. Completion Project, Exit Survey Database.





# In All Broad Fields, Mentors' Most Valuable Advice to Doctoral Completers Came in the Area of Research

**Figure 8. Most Valuable Advice Given by Mentors to Doctoral Completers Who Responded to the Exit Survey, by Broad Field**



Source: Council of Graduate Schools, Ph.D. Completion Project, Exit Survey Database.



# Initial Summary of Exit Survey Results

- Doctoral recipients who completed the Exit Survey believe that financial support is one of the “main factors” in their ability to finish their doctorates.
- The types of financial support may affect Ph.D. completers’ perceptions on time to degree completion.
  - Teaching assistantships are perceived to lengthen time to degree.
- Ph.D. recipients in the humanities and social sciences were more likely to receive student loans and to borrow higher amounts than those in science and engineering fields.
- Doctoral completers’ perceptions about access to advisors may decline as their progress toward a doctoral degree increases.
- Mentors appear to help most with advice on research.