

THE VALUE OF NEWS WRITING TECHNIQUES TO OKLAHOMA
COUNTY AGENTS AND VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS

By

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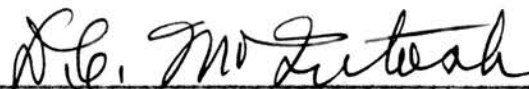
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THESIS AND ABSTRACT APPROVED:



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PREFACE

The farmer is an essential businessman to the economy of the world. On his shoulders rests a grave responsibility, that of feeding not only himself and his family but all of his millions of unknown friends in the city.

Not so many years ago when a farm lost its fertility the farmer and his family loaded into the wagon and headed West to a new frontier. But at last that western boundary has been reached and no longer do new lands exist. The farmer must now be content to live on his farm and apply scientific methods of farming.

If the cultivated lands of the United States, approximately four and one-half million acres, were divided among its people each person would have an estimated three acres.

Every citizen is responsible for conserving the nation's greatest natural resource--the soil. The author mentions the soil because soil is the basis of life itself. Everyone is responsible for better agricultural methods; the people, governmental agencies--federal, state and local.

In this study the primary interest is two key agricultural leaders--the county agent and the vocational agriculture teacher. They represent a living monument to the agricultural cause in their community.

Their job is an important one and they need every available tool at their disposal. With these facts in mind it seems only fitting that these two key figures should be called upon to supply information concerning one of the important tools--a fundamental knowledge of agricultural news writing.

Agricultural news is a detailed, unbiased, timely, public report of anything pertaining to agriculture or country life that is interesting, valuable, or important to a number of persons.¹

An effort is made in this thesis to (1) show the correlation between training in news writing and actual journalistic output, (2) to determine the percentage of county agents and vocational agriculture teachers in Oklahoma who have had journalism in high school or college, and (3) to determine if county agents and vocational agriculture teachers feel that they need more news writing training to perform their duty more adequately.

This study is based primarily on information received from a questionnaire mailed to the 77 white² Oklahoma county agents and 295 white vocational agriculture teachers.

¹Nelson A. Crawford and Charles E. Rogers, "Agricultural Journalism," p. 31.

²Only white county agents and vocational agriculture teachers were considered in this study because many of the percentages within are based on material furnished the local editor by the agent or teacher. Possibly colored agents and teachers would be handicapped in releasing news to the local press because the editors are dominantly white.

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The writer wishes to express his appreciation to the many county agents and vocational agriculture teachers in Oklahoma who made this study possible.

Thanks is expressed also to Claron Burnett and Miss Elsie Shoemaker, journalism staff members at Oklahoma A. & M. College, for their assistance beyond the call of duty.

This study marks the "finis" to four years of college for the author. He wishes to take this opportunity to thank his wife and son for their loyalty and steadfastness during many moments of uncertainty.

It is hoped that this study may be of value to those promoting a great American cause—the development and application of a better agriculture.

INTRODUCTION

Purpose of the Study:

Primary purposes of this survey and study as previously mentioned are (1) to show the correlation between training in news writing and actual journalistic output, (2) to determine the percentage of county agents and vocational agriculture teachers in Oklahoma who have had journalism in high school or college, and (3) to determine if county agents and vocational agriculture teachers feel that they need more news writing training to perform their job adequately.

Secondary purposes of the study are (1) to determine the percentage of county agents and vocational agriculture teachers writing a weekly column for the local paper, (2) the percentage writing a monthly column for the local paper, (3) the estimated average of news stories written each month by county agents and vocational agriculture teachers in Oklahoma, (4) to determine which is more effective in getting stories in the paper, verbal or written information given to editors, (5) the number of county agents and vocational agriculture teachers indicating that they would be interested in attending a short course for agricultural news writing, (6) the average length of service of Oklahoma county agents and vocational agriculture teachers, and if length of service has any bearing on the number of news stories released each month, (7) the college or university from which each was graduated and (8) the year in which each was graduated.

CHAPTER I

VALUE OF NEWS WRITING

The Printed Word--A Powerful Tool:

No doubt many county agents and vocational agriculture teachers have scratched their heads and asked themselves, "Just how does the agent or teacher in the neighboring county or school get so much recognition in the local paper?" These agents and teachers probably shift the blame to the editor of the local paper when the fault lies partially with them.

If the agricultural leader is fortunate enough to be stationed in a community blessed with a "livewire" newspaper then he probably has little trouble publicizing his program. But if on the other hand, he is in a community with a less progressive paper, he may be compelled to supply promotional material if any appears.

Some agents and teachers may not be publicity conscious; they may feel they are pushing themselves on the community by underhanded means. But actually those agents and teachers who publicize their program are doing a service to the community and state. It is not implied that the leader should publicize himself; the program that he is backing needs the publicity. Through this program he receives the good or ill will of the community.

Few agents realize the importance of telling the people about their work through the columns of the local paper. The most successful county agents realize this to some extent, but it is wondered how many county agents spend as much time on a news article as they would on a lecture to be given to an audience of some 200 people. Virtually thousands will read the article. There is no doubt in the writer's mind that more

people are reached by the press than any other way and it seems that far more can be reached and influenced if the agent involved realized the importance of giving his readers something of real educational value. The paper is the best medium by which the county agent can advertise a demonstration.¹

No single element in the county or community--none at all--is therefore so essential to winning and holding public good will as the local press. No outside publication, regardless of circulation, number of pages, or beauty of appearance, can match it in the thoroughness of reading or in influence concerning local problems and people. Because printed impressions are received through the eye, they are retained longer than those received through auditory media. Your message is not missed, as in the case of radio, if the prospect is not at a particular place at a particular time. Stories are not lost if interruptions occur. Each copy of the average paper is read by two to five persons.²

Perhaps many agricultural leaders do not take advantage of the local paper because they do not realize fully the power of the press. As Lipscomb pointed out in his "Grassroots Public Relations for Agriculture," "more than 1,700 dailies and nearly 9,000 weeklies, with aggregate circulation of some 62 million copies per issue, reach more people more often than any other medium."

With 62 million copies of papers going into the American home frequently, the effect of these papers upon their readers is assumed to be tremendous. Because these papers do find their way into the homes in the various communities, it is to the advantage of the agricultural leader to be on good terms with the local editor. The editor with his newsprint and machinery can do much toward the promotional goals of the county agent and vocational agriculture teacher.

¹James W. Kyle, "The Comparative Educational Value of Extension Methods in Oklahoma," p. 41.

²Ed Lipscomb, "Grassroots Public Relations for Agriculture," p. 67.

In promoting better agricultural methods the county agent and vocational agriculture teacher probably are interested largely in the rural population. Though rural people may have a wide variety of interests, they are united in a closely woven group. In many cases their life is a lonely one and news about their neighbors is welcomed. It is often those smallest items that mean the most to the rural reader.

Writing about agriculture deals with the farms, their operation and management, with rural and community life, with the farm home. People on farms include about one-third of our population. Count those who live in the rural community centers and in the smaller cities--agricultural capitals for surrounding farm regions--and who are directly dependent upon farming, and perhaps half our population has direct contact with agriculture.

So not only are the farmer and his family interested in any writing which relates to things agricultural or rural, but almost as vitally, the host of merchants and bankers of town and city and all those everywhere who have to do with the handling of agricultural products as they move from the farms to the ultimate consumers. Besides all these, in the cities are many men and women, country reared, who retain an active interest in rural affairs and agricultural problems.³

It is an advantage to the agricultural leader to have a basic know-how of news writing because editors are always looking for news of local interest. The editor holds an important key to the promotional goals of county agents and vocational agriculture teachers. These agents and teachers hold a key, too--the key to the surrounding agricultural area. Combine the agricultural knowledge of the agent and teacher with the editor's machinery, and the result is usually a thriving agricultural community.

County agricultural workers, soil conservation specialists, home demonstration agents, and club leaders have found that one of the most potent aids in reaching their constituents with the

³F. W. Beckman, Harry R. O'Brien, and Blair Converse, "Technical Journalism," p. 9.

material which they wish to emphasize is the writing of articles for the papers of their counties, both daily and weekly, and contributing an occasional article to the farm and other magazines.

More than one county agent will testify that one of the bug-bears of his job has been the writing of these articles. Often feeling himself unqualified, he has left this very important work to his secretary or the local reporter or editor. On the other hand, the county agent who has been fortunate enough to have had a course in agricultural writing while in college declares that it has made easy and much more effective the task of handling the publicity of his office.

In recent years the development of vocational teaching of agriculture, home economics, and industry has opened up another field for college graduates and another opportunity to write. The teacher of vocational agriculture, for example, is frequently called upon to write farm news or conduct a department in a local weekly or daily paper. The same is true of the teacher of vocational home economics.

The writing consists first of news dealing with the vocational work, the student projects, the special night classes, and work with adults. Often, too, it includes informational writing about current problems of the community farms and homes. The vocational teacher who has had some journalism training is likely to find that he or she is the only member of a high school staff who has had such training. In that event the vocational teacher may be called upon to write other school news and to supervise school publications.⁴

The county agent and vocational agriculture teacher do not need to be polished journalists. A fundamental knowledge of news writing will suffice because rural readers are interested primarily in the facts rather than "flowery" articles.

You do not have to have an expert, however, to write an acceptable news account. And you do not have to be one in order to do it yourself if and when necessary. What your paper wants are the facts--just plain unvarnished facts set down in the order of their relative importance.⁵

No doubt many editors would carry more farm news in their papers if they had adequate time and a sufficient staff. Most newspapers in Okla-

⁴Beckman, O'Brien, and Converse, Op. Cit., p. 13.

⁵Lipscomb, Op. Cit., p. 70.

homa carry a minimum number of staff members and for this reason agriculture in many cases plays a secondary news role in a community dominantly agriculture. Other reasons for small amounts of farm news are that many editors probably lack a writing terminology of agriculture and possibly do not realize the value of farming in their community.

The members of the staff of the weekly paper, whether they number one or three or four, work in much the same way as the staff of the city paper. They are fewer in number, of course, and do a greater variety of tasks than the members of the city staff, and they need the "volunteer" helpers who offer their services in every community.

Editors of country weeklies depend upon local correspondents who live in the various communities within the circulation field of the publication. These correspondents are the reporters of the happenings in their locality. The wise editor trains these reporters to write good news copy and to recognize news as it happens.⁶

It is assumed that the county agent is concerned primarily with a larger area than is the vocational agriculture teacher. County agents are generally responsible for promoting agriculture within a given county and the vocational agriculture teacher is interested in a certain locality, usually the area surrounding his school. However, as has been pointed out previously, the knowledge of news writing is important to both the county agent and vocational agriculture teacher.

County agents are usually located in a county seat town which generally supports at least one progressive newspaper. The vocational agriculture teacher, in many instances, will be located in a smaller community with a smaller paper.

Virtually every independent editor except the rare extremist is fundamentally pro-agriculture, whether he may

⁶Beckman, O'Brien, and Converse, Op. cit., p. 85.

agree with your organization in all of its positions or not. Like the farmer, he is at heart a free enterpriser. Like the farmer also, he is usually both capitalist and workman--a self-reliant natural champion of private initiative in business--an intense and articulate opponent of encroachment on personal life and freedom by big government, big business, or big labor.

In your first talk with the editor, admit frankly that you have come to him both because of the importance of his paper to your goals, and because of his ability as an individual to tell you how to do the best possible job. You will find that he wants to be friendly, and you may be surprised at how much more honest-to-goodness local agricultural news and interpretation he wants than he has been getting.⁷

Most editors are willing to cooperate with persons who wish to contribute occasional information to their paper. Naturally the editor will use material prepared in a readable style more readily and more quickly than that material which must be rewritten and polished. It is then that the agricultural student's journalism training reaps dividends.

Charles E. Rogers, former head of the Department of Technical Journalism at Iowa State college, Ames, made a survey to discover those publications interested in FFA news articles and which types of articles are most desired by editors. This information was gathered and published in his book, "Reporting FFA News."

A few farm paper editors gave suggestions for the improvement in FFA press relations. A common criticism was that too little FFA material was received in their offices. One editor said that his relations with the FFA were "of the pleasantest, but the reporters elected are often boys with no bent toward writing or publicity." He suggested that some different method of selecting reporters for FFA chapters should be adopted. "In high schools where there is a journalism department, its head might help."

An original suggestion was that FFA members might undertake experience and opinion surveys among farmers in their communities on timely farming practices. "In doing this they could become

⁷Lipscomb, Op. cit., pp. 67, 68.

semi-Gallup polls, with greater constructive possibilities. If they developed adaptability for such work, farm papers might cooperate with them in planning such surveys or polls with mutual results."⁸

The influence of stories furnished the local press by county agents is exemplified by surveys conducted by state and federal workers.

In 1923-24 the Office of Cooperative Extension Work in the United States Department of Agriculture made four surveys in cooperation with four states, obtaining 3,954 records. These surveys were taken in counties which had had county agents six to ten years each and in some cases also home demonstration and club agents. The purpose of the surveys, according to Dr. C. B. Smith, chief of the Office of Cooperative Extension Work in the United States Department of Agriculture, who reported the results in a paper presented to the American Association of Agricultural College Editors, was to determine to what extent farmers were being influenced to change their practices and, so far as practicable, what method was responsible for such change. Seventy-four per cent of the 3,954 farms surveyed had made an average of 3.4 changes each. Changes in 63 per cent of the cases were traced back to so-called "propaganda methods," which include meetings, news service, bulletins, exhibits, and circular letters; in 44 per cent to demonstrations; in 41 per cent to meetings; in 21 per cent to bulletins and news; in 10 per cent to farm visits; in 5 per cent to office calls.

"Our survey shows us," commented Dr. Smith, "that the state that accompanies the demonstration with plenty of publicity reaches more farms and gets more practices changed than where publicity is weak. Demonstrations and publicity must go hand in hand. Bulletins and news seem to be about equally valuable, so far as records go."⁹

⁸Charles E. Rogers, "Reporting FFA News," p. 104.

⁹Crawford and Rogers, Op. cit., p. 47.

CHAPTER II

PROCEDURE

The Letter and Questionnaire:

The questionnaire which was mailed to 372 agricultural leaders in Oklahoma was accompanied by a letter of explanation and a self-addressed, stamped return envelope.

An attempt was made in the letter to explain that all information gathered from the questionnaire would be held confidential. It was feared that some leaders might "fudge" on some of the questions if they thought the material might eventually reach their employers. The writer wishes to point out here that individual information has or will not be discussed. Only an overall analysis appears in this study.

The questionnaire was composed of eight questions which were made as brief, concise and simple as possible. Question number three contained four parts, the longest question in the questionnaire; question number six and seven contained two parts each and the remaining questions could be answered simply by circling yes or no, or by filling in blanks with numbers or words.

The following quotation deals primarily with advertising questionnaires. However, the basic facts in conducting a survey are fundamentally the same.

Most questionnaires have far too many questions. After two pages of questions, fatigue sets in and answers become less valid. The questions of a questionnaire should not be phrased so that they are merely understood; they must be designed so that they cannot be misunderstood.¹

¹Harry W. Hepner, "Effective Advertising," p. 177.

Briefly stated, the steps in conducting a survey using the questionnaire interview method are as follows:

1. Statement of Purpose--State carefully the question or questions which the survey intends to answer.
2. Interview Design--Investigate the possible advantage of recognizing natural grouping of the interview subjects so that contrasting sets of data may be compared.
3. Sample Selection--If it is not possible to interview each member of the group under study, a plan must be devised to select a smaller group of subjects to serve as a sample of the whole.
4. Question Form--Decide on the physical form which the questions are to take.
5. Phrase and Pretest Questions--Carefully write the questions and conduct a trial run of interviews to determine if the objectives of the investigation (step 1) are being realized.
6. Interviewing--Select, train and supervise the interviewers.
7. Summarizing--Tabulate data and draw conclusions.²

Ordinarily the questions asked in an interview are arranged in one of the following forms: (a) dichotomous (yes-no), (b) multiple choice (cafeteria), or (c) open-end (free answer).

The dichotomous form measures the "either-or" type of response which, perhaps unwisely, dominates much of our thinking on issues, public or otherwise. If issues appear to be "two-valued," rather than "multi-valued," the dichotomous form is the popular choice.

In open-end questioning, the respondent answers the question in his own words without confronting to a list of stipulations.³

After the questionnaire had been revised several times it was checked by members of the Oklahoma A. & M. College journalism department; Oklahoma Agricultural Experiment station personnel, and members of the Extension Division's publications staff. Notable changes were suggested and made. When what was considered a workable questionnaire had been achieved it was tested on not less than five faculty members and five A. & M. students for effectiveness, simplicity and brevity

²Ralph O. Hefziger and Marcus M. Wilson, "Journalism Research," p. 177.

³Ibid., pp. 68, 69.

of time required to complete.

AGRICULTURAL JOURNALISM SURVEY

1. I had journalism in high school. YES NO (circle one)
2. In college I received _____ credit hours in Journalism.
3. I write an estimated average of _____ news stories each month for newspapers. I give verbal information to editors each month for an estimated average of _____ stories. I write a weekly column for the local paper. YES NO I write a monthly column for the local paper. YES NO
4. I believe that I get more stories in the paper through (circle one) VERBAL WRITTEN information given to the editors.
5. I would be interested in attending a short course for agricultural news writing if it could be worked out in connection with my annual conference. YES NO
6. I have been employed as county agent for _____ years or _____ months. I have been employed as vocational ag teacher for _____ years or _____ months.
7. I graduated from _____ COLLEGE UNIVERSITY in _____ (year).
8. If a student is preparing for county agent or vocational agricultural work, would you recommend that he take more than two hours of NEWS WRITING. YES NO

A copy of the mimeographed questionnaire mailed to 77 Oklahoma county agents and 295 vocational agriculture teachers.

Fellow Agriculturist:

I am attempting to find whether journalism training materially aids agricultural workers in their respective fields. Enclosed is a questionnaire which will help answer this question and serve as a basis for my master's thesis.

I realize that you are busy this time of year, and with this thought in mind, I have made the questionnaire as short as possible.

Please mark all questions correctly for none of the answers will lead to your embarrassment, since no names will appear in the final analysis.

I urge you to return the questionnaire in the enclosed envelope as soon as possible, since the study will be incomplete without your answers.

Sincerely yours,

Chat Frazier
Graduate Student
Department of Publications
Oklahoma A. & M. College
Stillwater, Oklahoma

A copy of the mimeographed letter mailed with the questionnaire to 77 Oklahoma county agents and 295 vocational agriculture teachers.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS OF SURVEY WITH REFERENCE TO OKLAHOMA COUNTY AGENTS

Information received from 74 of the 77 white county agents in Oklahoma showed that 79.8 per cent (59 agents) had had no journalism in high school; 16.2 per cent (12 agents) had had journalism in high school, and four per cent (three agents) failed to answer the question.

Questionnaire returns revealed that Oklahoma county agents had had an average of 1.96 hours journalism in college. Two county agents did not answer the question. Hours of journalism received in college ranged from eight hours to no hours.

Results showed that 19.2 per cent (14 agents) of the agents had had no journalism in college; 55.6 per cent (41 agents) had had two hours of journalism in college; 16.2 (12 agents) three hours; 2.7 per cent (two agents) four hours; 1.4 per cent (one agent) five hours; 1.4 per cent (one agent) six hours; 1.4 per cent (one agent) eight hours, and 2.7 per cent (two agents) did not answer the question.

County agents wrote an average of 9.62 news stories each month for newspapers and gave verbal information to editors each month for an average of 10.3 stories.

Stories written each month by agents for the local press ranged from 90 down to one, and the number of verbal stories released to editors ranged from 100 down to one. Two county agents did not list the number of stories written for papers each month, and three failed to indicate the number of stories released verbally.

It is significant to note that though the average number of stories released verbally was greater than written stories (10.3 to 9.62), 64.8

per cent (48 agents) of the county agents felt that written information was more important in getting stories in the local paper.

Only 31.1 per cent (23 agents) felt that verbal information was more important; 2.7 per cent (two agents) felt that written and verbal information were equal, and 1.4 per cent (one agent) gave no answer.

Weekly columns were written by 48.6 per cent (37 agents) of the 74 county agents who returned questionnaires. Fifty per cent (37 agents) of the agents did not write a weekly column and 1.4 per cent (one agent) did not answer the question.

Only four per cent (three agents) of the agents wrote a monthly column for the local paper; 71.6 per cent (53 agents) did not write a monthly column, and 24.4 per cent (18 agents) failed to answer the question.

The short course referred to in the questionnaire is in great demand as indicated by 77.2 per cent (57 agents) who said they would be interested in attending; 20.1 per cent (15 agents) showed that they would not be interested in attending the short course on agricultural news writing, and 2.7 per cent (two agents) did not answer the question.

Journalism training showed no bearing on the number of news stories written each month. One agent indicated that he had had eight hours of college journalism, yet he wrote only an average of four stories each month as compared with an agent with no journalism training in either high school or college who released an average of 25 stories each month.

Length of service, too, showed no marked bearing on the number of news stories written for the local press each month. The agent with the greatest length of service, 27 years, released an average of 10 stories per month as compared with an agent with 1.25 years of service who gave

an average of 12 stories to the local paper each month. One agent wrote an average of 90 stories each month and gave verbal information for an estimated 100 stories, yet he had been an agent for only five years.

Because journalism training and length of service showed no bearing on the number of written stories released each month by Oklahoma county agents, it is assumed that the number of stories released by agents depends largely upon the initiative of the agents. Initiative plus a knowledge of the mechanics involved in writing a news story probably accounts for one agent furnishing the press with more stories than another agent.

It is believed that the number of verbal stories released to the local press is influenced by the initiative of both the agent and editor. If the editor has the initiative and an adequate staff, then he probably contacts the agent for information and writes his own story. Of course if the editor fails to call on the agent, the agent could make it a point to contact the editor and release the information.

Though figures in this study showed that county agents release more verbal stories than written stories (10.3 to 9.62), the belief that written stories are more influential in getting space in the local press was substantiated by the 48 county agents who stated that written information was more important.

As could be expected 91.8 per cent (68 agents) of the agents were graduated from Oklahoma A. & M. College, Stillwater; 2.7 per cent (two agents) were graduated from Panhandle A. & M. College, Goodwell; 2.7 per cent (two agents) did not name their alma mater; 1.4 per cent (one

agent) were graduated from the University of Arkansas, Fayetteville, and 1.4 per cent (one agent) did not graduate.

The importance of news writing training to the county agent is emphasized by the 85.2 per cent (63 agents) of the agents recommending that a student preparing for county agent or vocational agriculture work take more than two hours of news writing training.

TABLE I High School Journalism Training of County Agents

(Percentage)

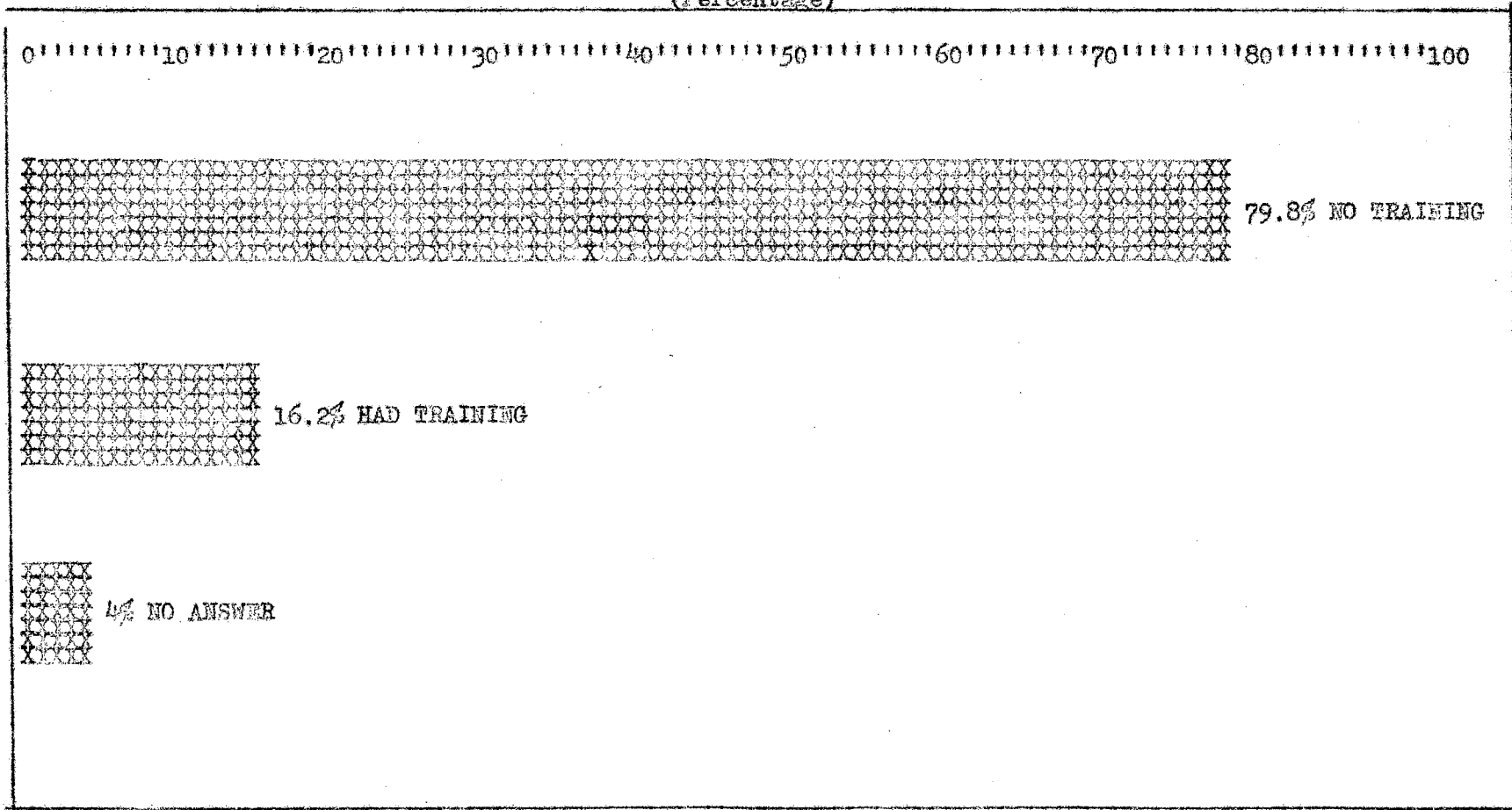


TABLE 2 College Journalism Credits Received by Oklahoma County Agents

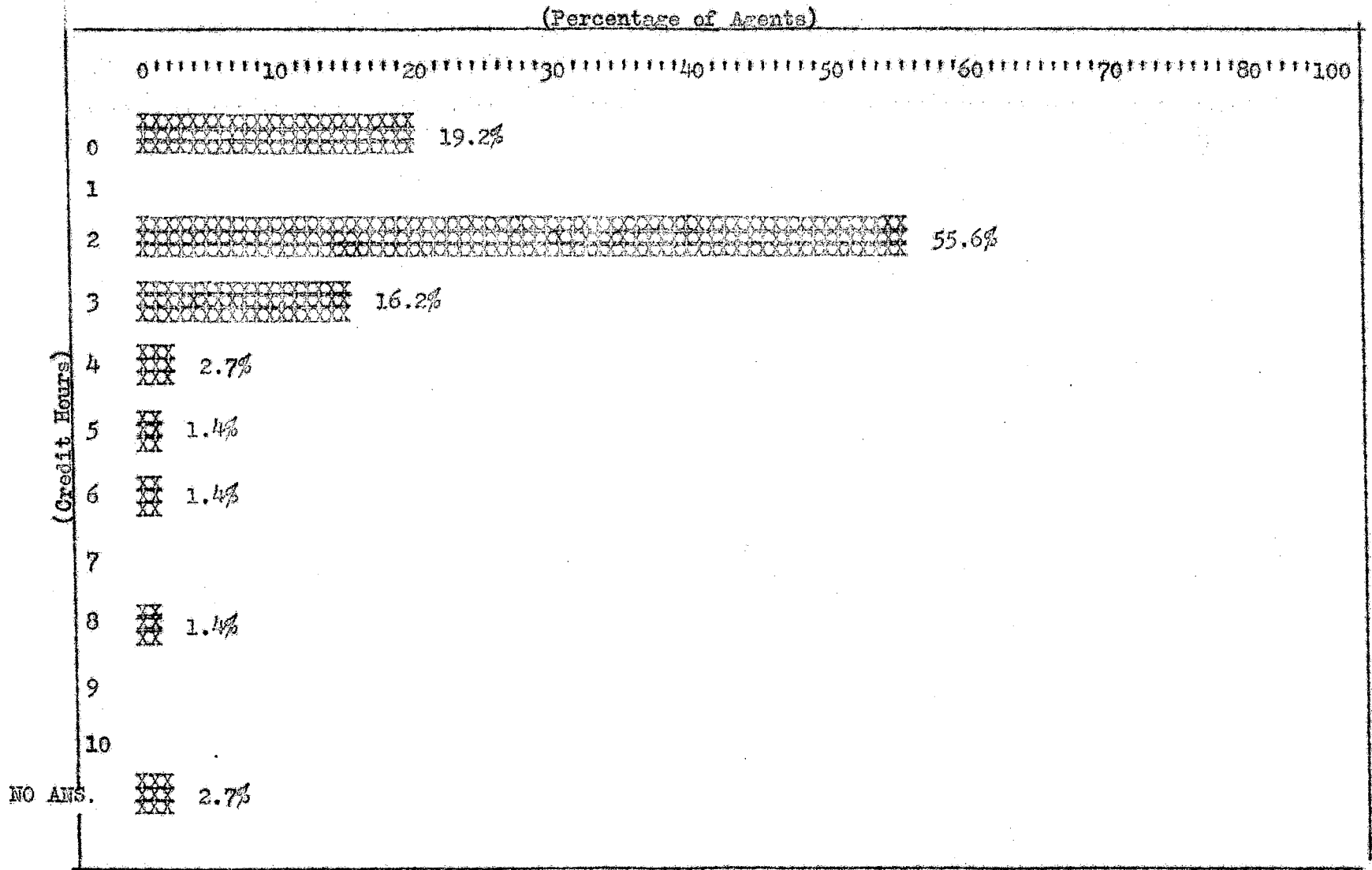


TABLE 3 Percentage and Number of Stories Written
Each Month by County Agents

(Percentage)

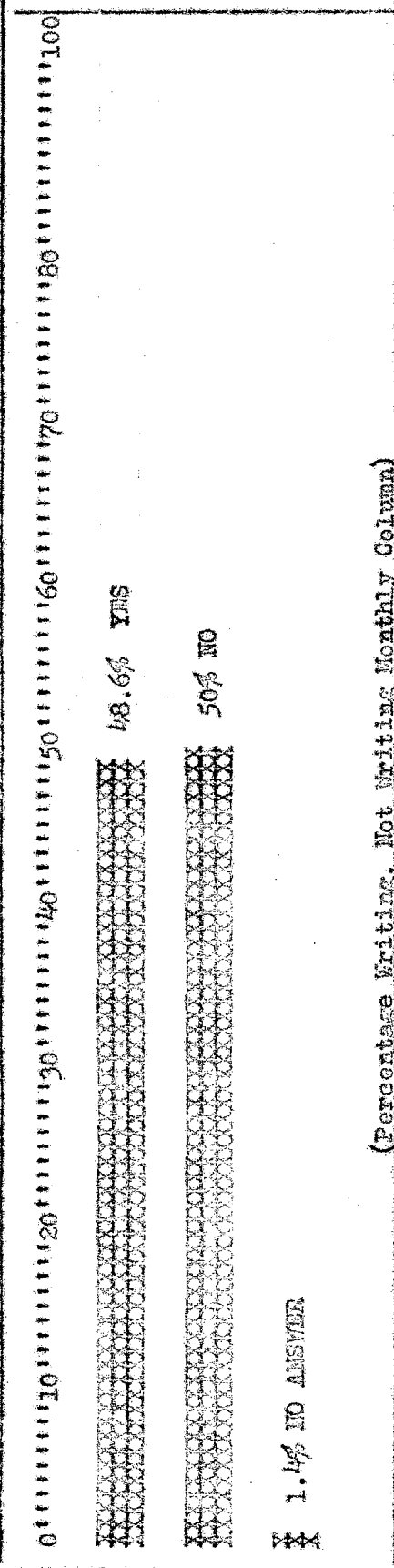
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3		XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX															
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5		XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX
6		XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX
7		XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX																	
8		XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX
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12		XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX
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20		XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX
25		XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX	XXXXXXXXXX
40		XXXXXXXXXX																		
90		XXXXXXXXXX																		
NO ANS.		XXXXXXXXXX																		

TABLE 4 Percentage and Number of Stories Released
Verbally Each Month by Oklahoma County
Agents

		(Percentage)																	
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Number of Verbal Stories)	1	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 5.4%																	
	2	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 8.1%																	
	3	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 5.4%																	
	4	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 9.5%																	
	5	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 5.4%																	
	6	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 9.5%																	
	7	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 2.7%																	
	8	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 8.1%																	
	10	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 10.8%																	
	20	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 5.4%																	
	50	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 6.8%																	
	100	XXXXXXXXXX 1.4%																	
	200	XXXXXXXXXX 1.4%																	
	500	XXXXXXXXXX 1.4%																	
1000	XXXXXXXXXX 1.4%																		
No Ans	XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX 4.1%																		

TABLE 5 County Agents Writing Columns for Local Paper

(Percentage Writing, Not Writing Weekly Column)



(Percentage Writing, Not Writing Monthly Column)

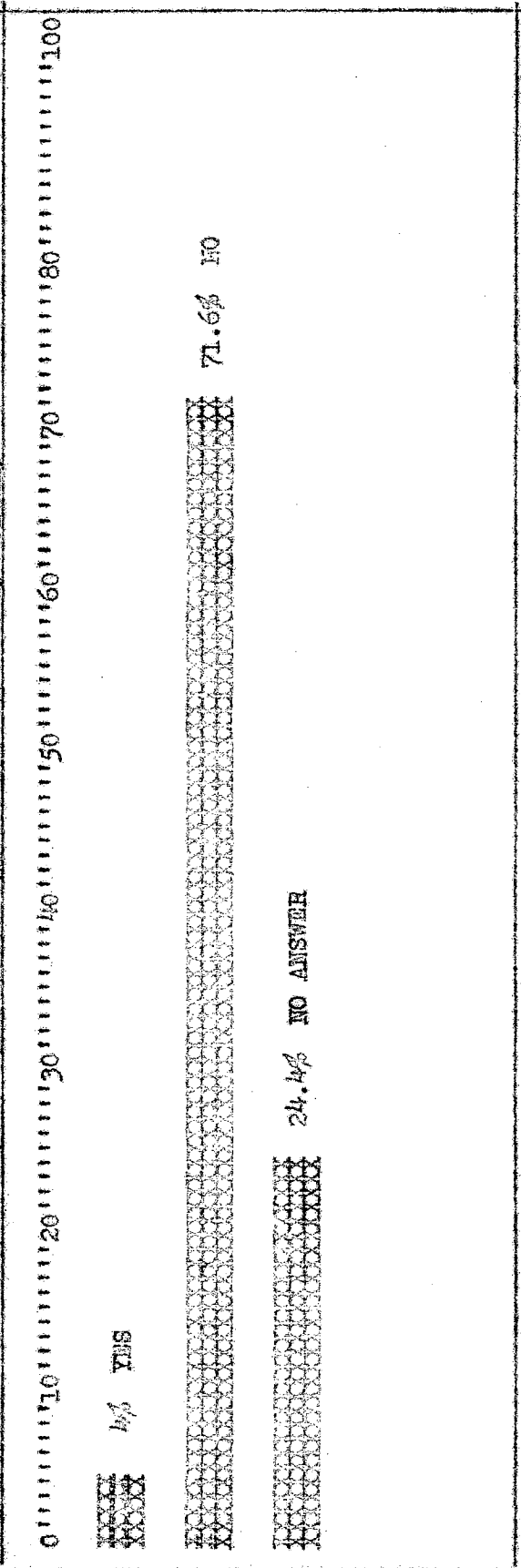


TABLE 6 Percentage County Agents Feeling that Verbal or Written Information More Important in Getting Stories in Paper

(Percentage)

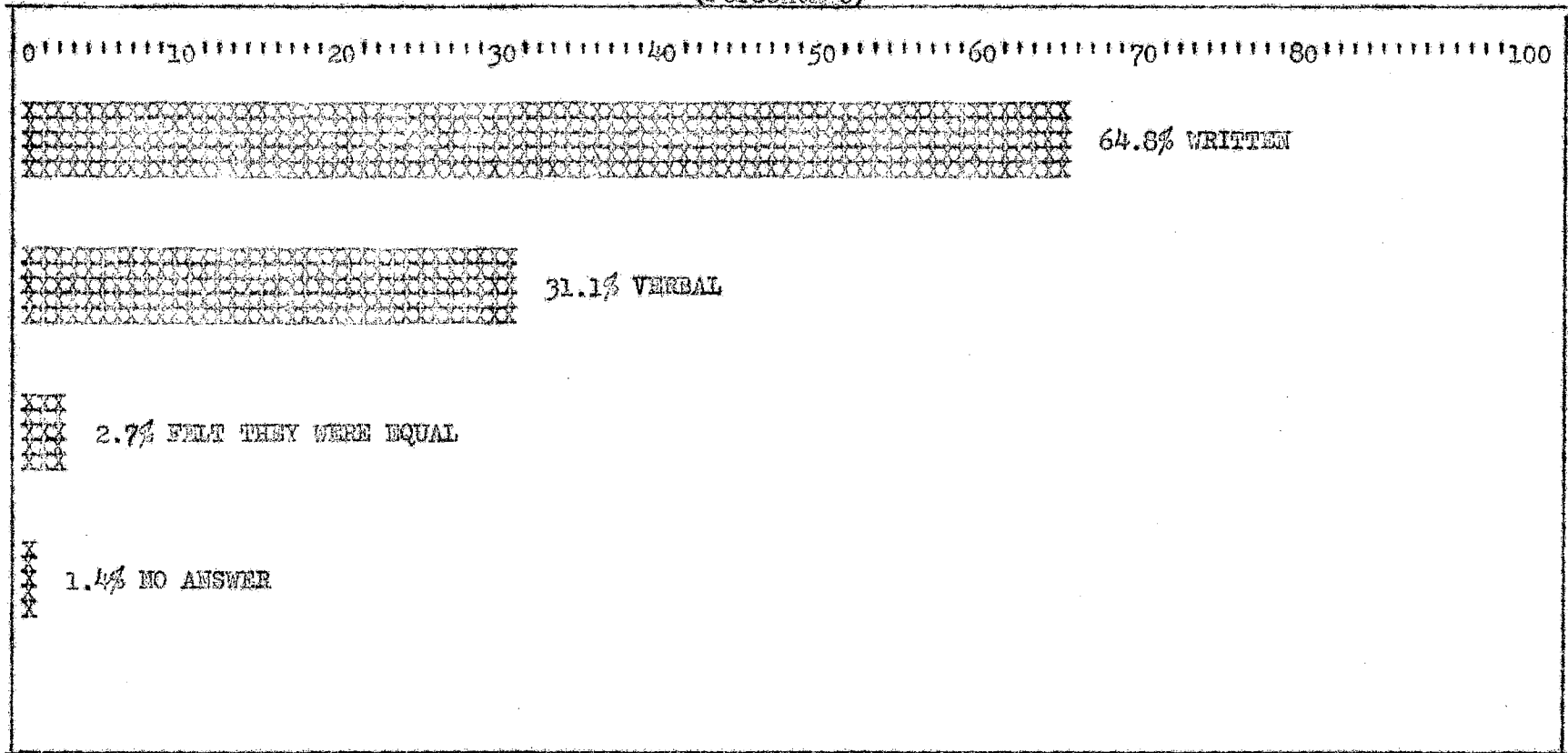


TABLE 7__Percentage County Agents Interested in Attending a
Short Course on Agricultural News Writing

(Percentage)

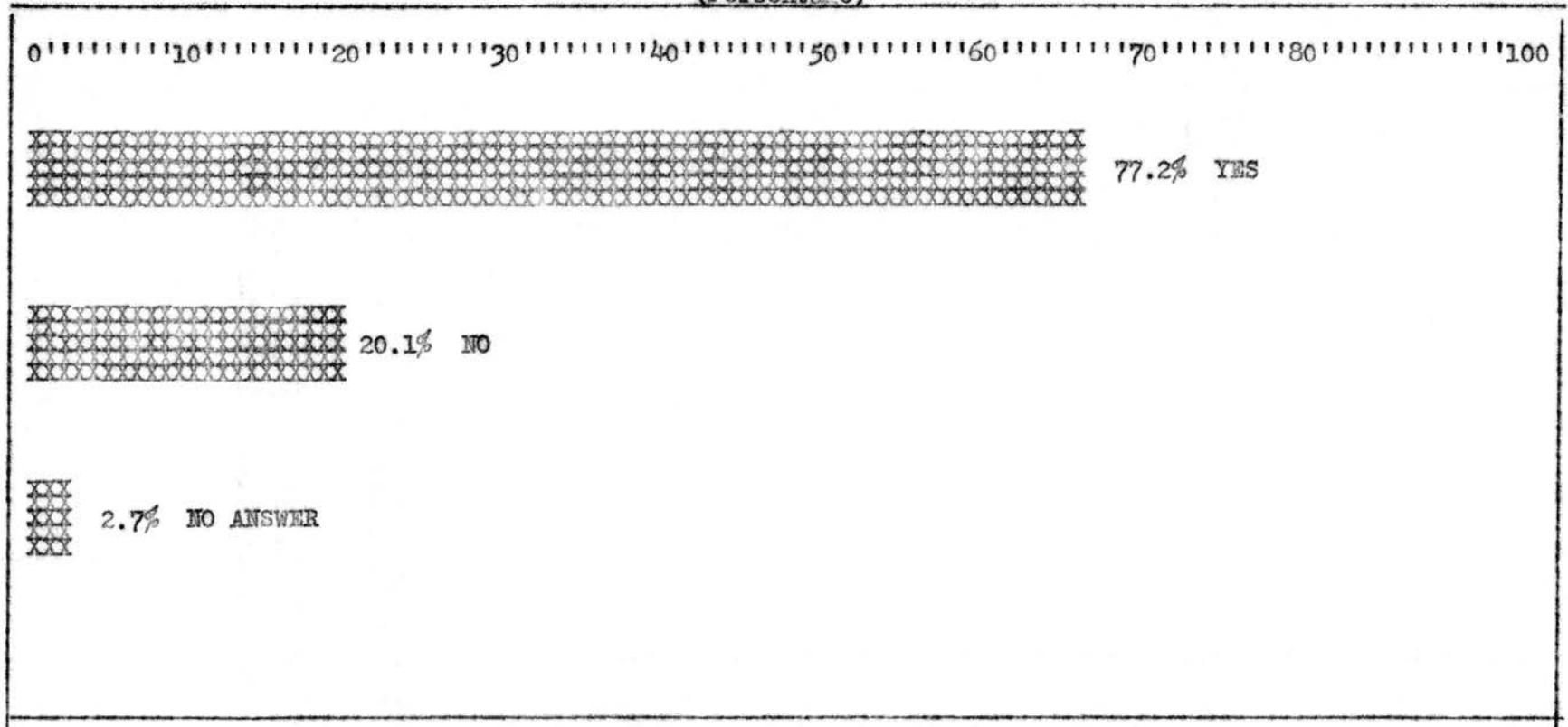


TABLE 8 Percentage of County Agents Graduating from
Oklahoma A. & M. College

(Percentage)

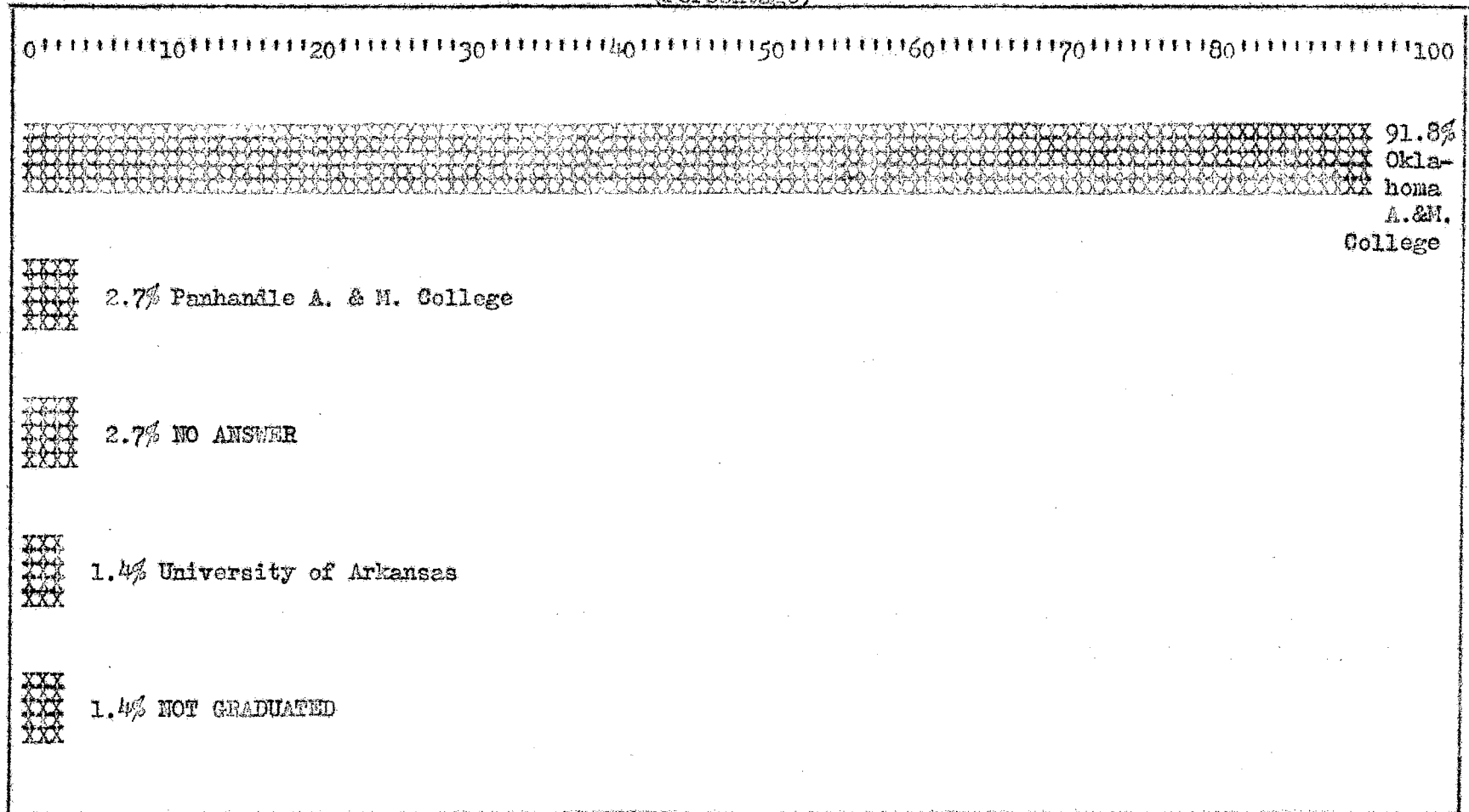
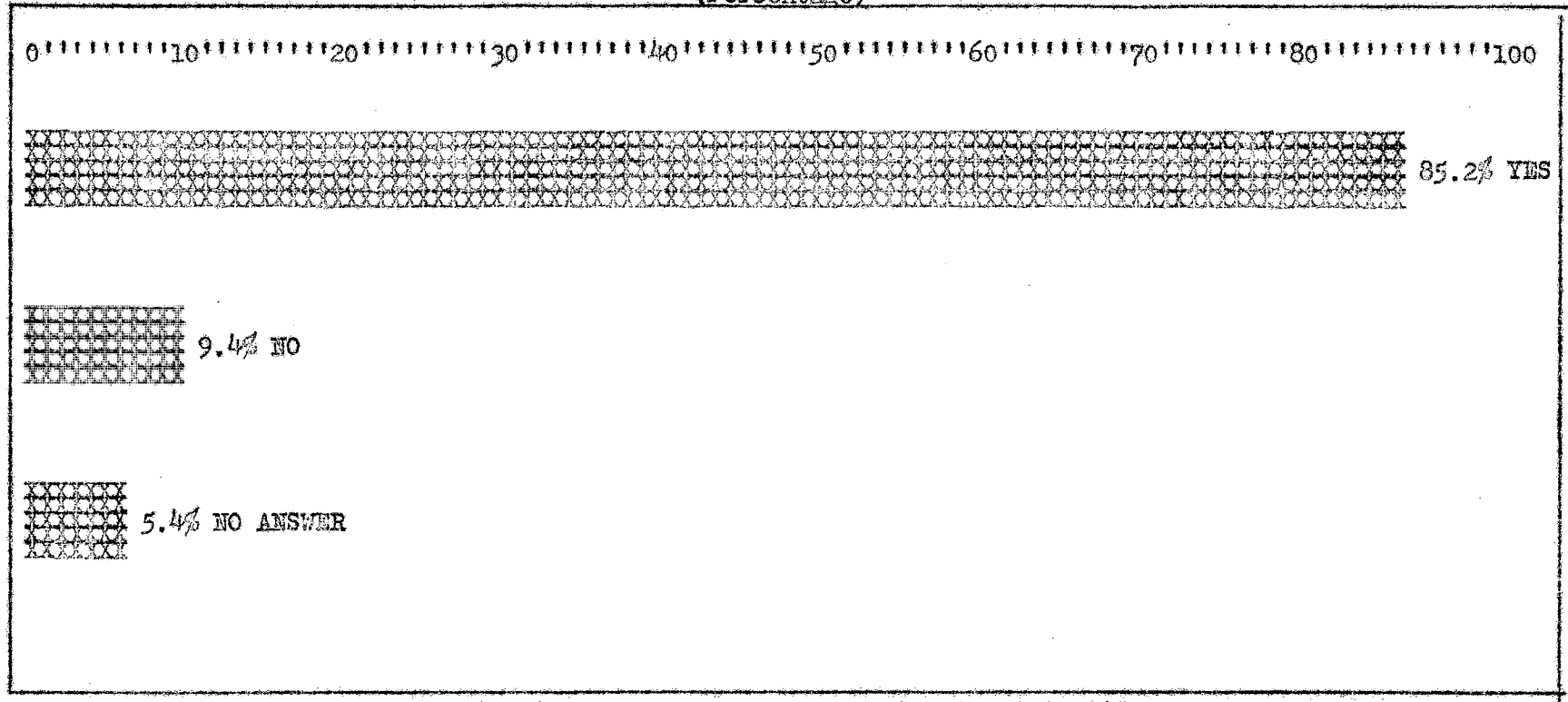


TABLE 10__Percentage County Agents Recommending That a Student
 Preparing for County Agent or Vocational
 Agriculture Work Take More Than
 Two Hours News Writing

(Percentage)



CHAPTER IV

RESULTS OF SURVEY WITH REFERENCE TO VOCATIONAL AGRICULTURE TEACHERS

Results from 180 of the 295 white vocational agriculture teachers in Oklahoma showed that 91.1 per cent (164 teachers) had had no journalism training in high school; 3.9 per cent (seven teachers) had had journalism training in high school, and five per cent (nine teachers) failed to answer the question.

Thirty-four and four-tenths per cent (62 teachers) showed that they had had no journalism training in college; 1.1 per cent (two teachers) received one hour credit; 52.2 per cent (94 teachers) two hours; 6.7 per cent (12 teachers) three hours; 3.9 per cent (seven teachers) four hours credit; .6 per cent (one teacher) six hours, and 1.1 per cent (two teachers) failed to answer the question.

Oklahoma vocational agriculture teachers had an average of 1.40 hours of journalism training in college.

Vocational agriculture teachers wrote an average of 2.7 news stories for the local paper each month and gave verbal information each month for an average of 2.9 stories. However, 60 per cent (108 teachers) felt that written information was more influential in getting material in the paper; 33.3 per cent (61 teachers) felt that verbal information given to editors was more influential; five per cent (nine teachers) gave no answer, and 1.1 per cent (two teachers) felt that written and verbal information were equal.

Eighty-five per cent (153 teachers) did not write a weekly column for the local paper; 11.7 per cent (21 teachers) wrote a weekly column, and 3.3 per cent (six teachers) gave no answer. A monthly column was

written by 12.9 per cent (23 teachers); 82.1 per cent (148 teachers) did not write a monthly column, and five per cent (nine teachers) did not answer the question.

Almost three-fourths, 71.7 per cent (129 teachers), of the teachers indicated that they would be interested in attending a short course on agricultural news writing; 25.5 per cent (46 teachers) said they would not be interested, and 2.8 per cent (five teachers) gave no answer.

Length of service ranged from 27 years down to three months with the average length of service being 5.9 years.

Ninety-four per cent (169 teachers) were graduated from Oklahoma A. & M. College, Stillwater; 1.7 per cent (three teachers) were graduated from Kansas State college, Manhattan; 1.1 per cent (two teachers) from Colorado State college, Fort Collins; 1.1 per cent (two teachers) from Mississippi State college, Starkville; .6 per cent (one teacher) from Alabama Tech, Auburn; .6 per cent (one teacher) from Texas A. & I., Kingsville; .6 per cent (one teacher) from East Central State college, Ada, and .6 per cent (one teacher) from Panhandle A. & M. college, Goodwell.

The greatest percentage of teachers were graduated in the years 1947, 1948, and 1949. Eight and nine-tenths per cent (16 teachers) were graduated in 1947; 16.1 per cent (30 teachers) in 1948, and 28.3 per cent (51 teachers) in 1949.

The importance of news writing training to the vocational agriculture teacher was stressed by the 61.2 per cent (110 teachers) recommending that a student preparing for county agent or vocational agriculture work take more than two hours news writing training in college. Only 32.9 per cent (59 teachers) stated that more than two hours were not needed, and 5.9 per cent (11 teachers) gave no answer.

Three of the teachers had served as county agents prior to their present positions, one for eight years, one for two years, and the other for two and one-half years.

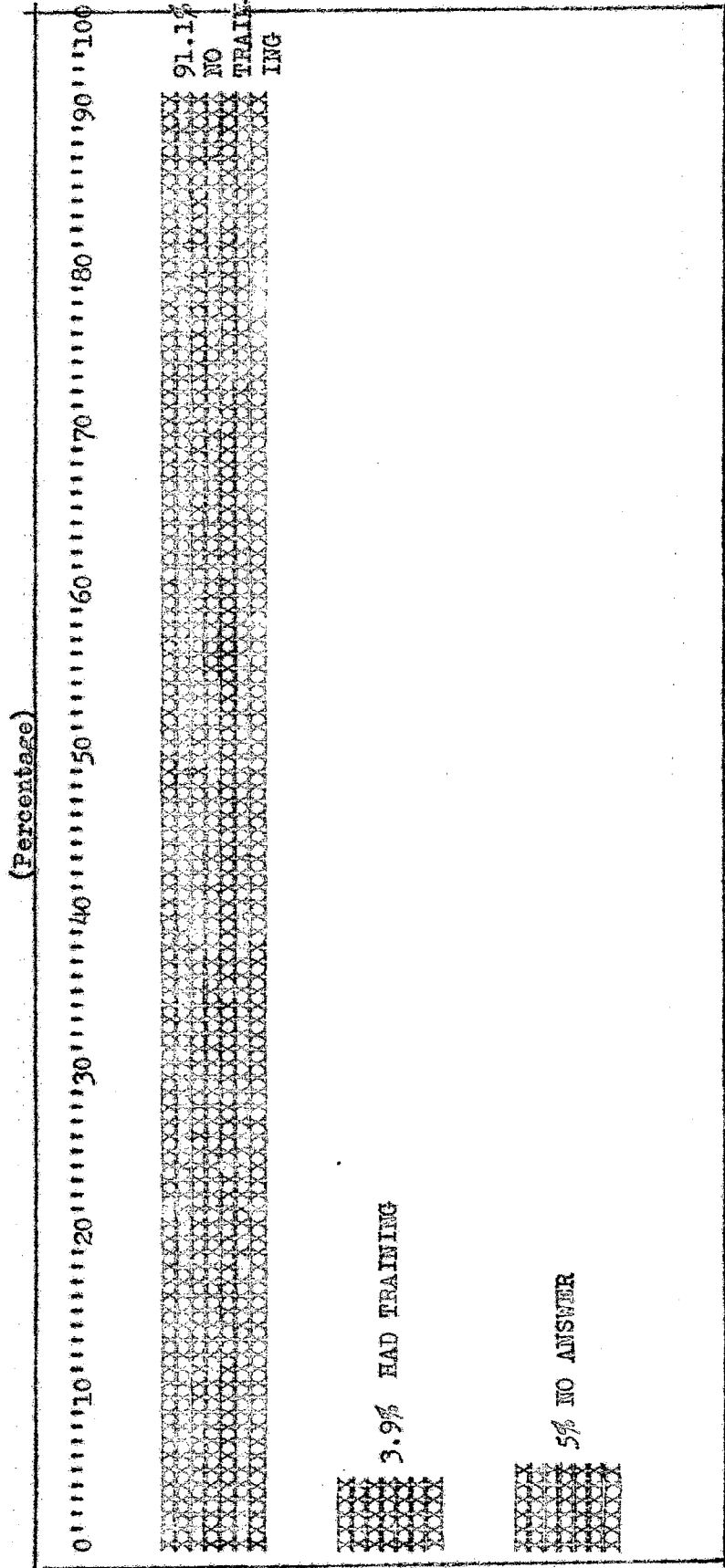
The study showed that the teachers with from one to five years of service released more written stories than verbal stories. Those teachers with over five years of service slackened on the number of written stories but released more verbal stories. This indicates that those teachers with from one to five years service believed stronger in the written material than verbal material. It is possible, however, that the local editor never bothers to call them for verbal information, making written information compulsory.

Because Oklahoma vocational agriculture teachers wrote more stories during the first five years of service could mean also that they were busy promoting their program and found the need for the press greater. This naturally would stimulate the need for more written stories.

Possibly it could mean that vocational agriculture teachers are more enthusiastic in their work during the first five years or that they feel a greater need for written stories because they are fresh from college.

The fact that more verbal stories were released after a teacher had served five years could mean that the teacher had become well acquainted with the personnel on the local paper. This might influence the editor or his reporters in contacting the teacher regularly for information.

TABLE 11. High School Journalism Training of Vocational
Agriculture Teachers



3.9% HAD TRAINING

5% NO ANSWER

91.1%
NO
TRAINING

TABLE 12__College Journalism Credits Received by Oklahoma
Vocational Agriculture Teachers

(Percentage of Teachers)

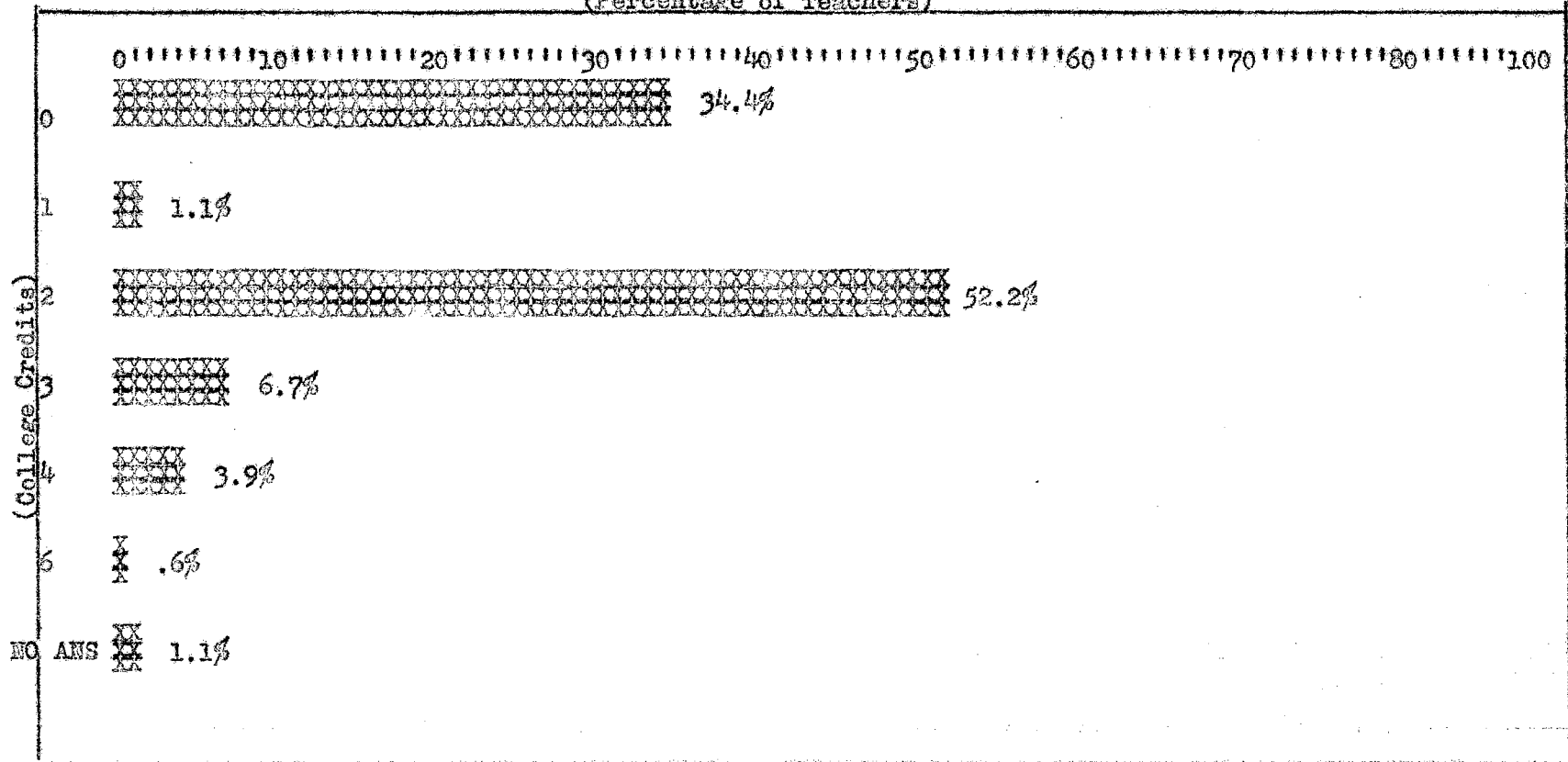


TABLE 13. Percentage and Number of Stories Written Each Month by Vocational Agriculture Teachers

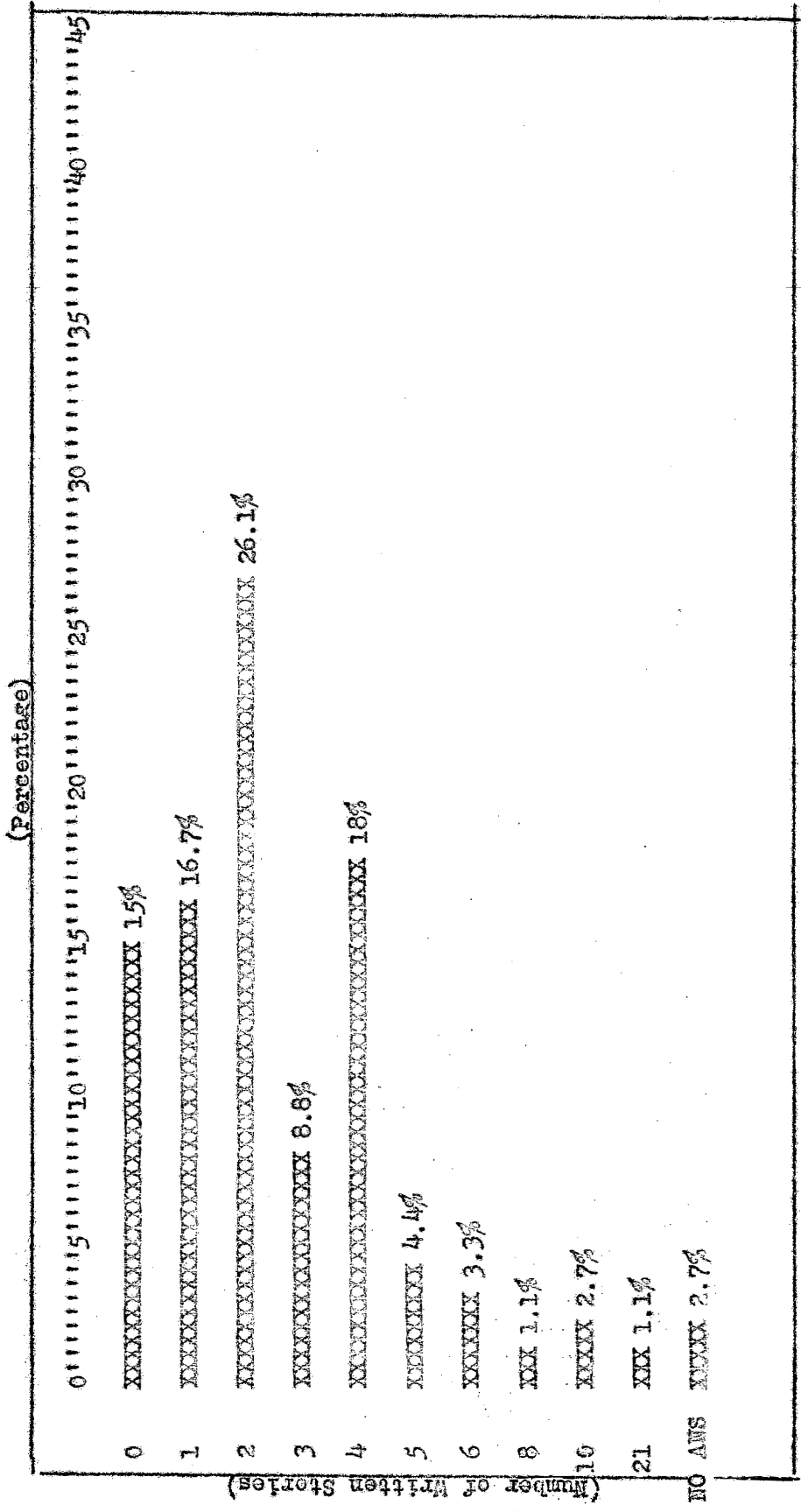


TABLE 14 Percentage and Number of Stories Released
Verbally Each Month by Oklahoma Vocational
Agriculture Teachers

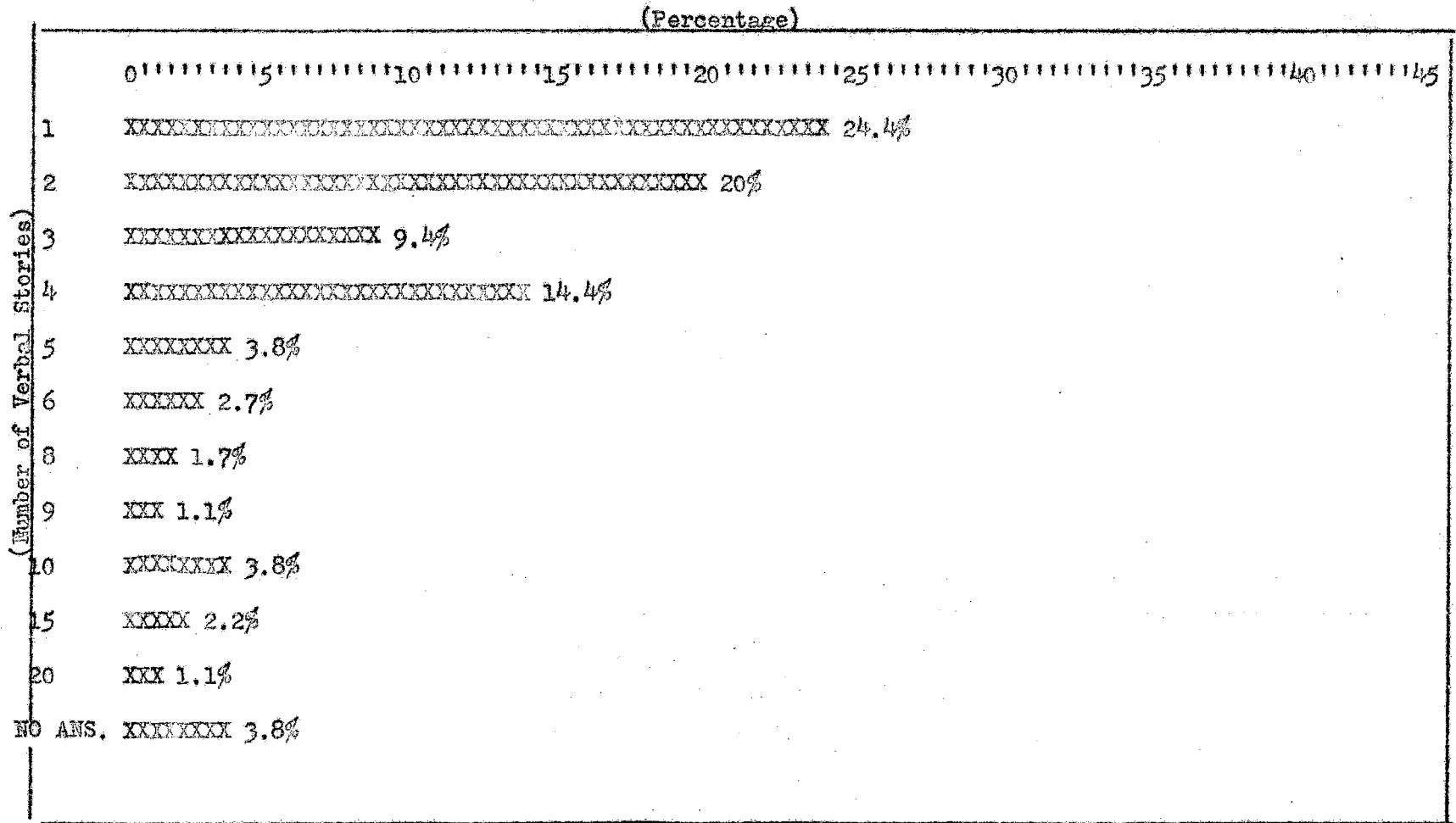
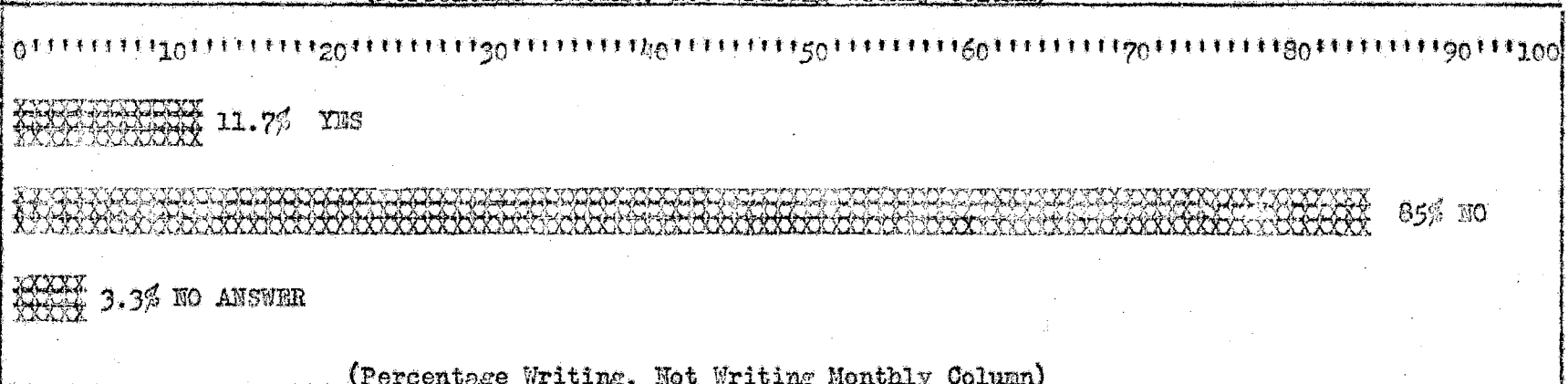


TABLE 15 Vocational Agriculture Teachers Writing Columns

(Percentage Writing, Not Writing Weekly Column)



(Percentage Writing, Not Writing Monthly Column)

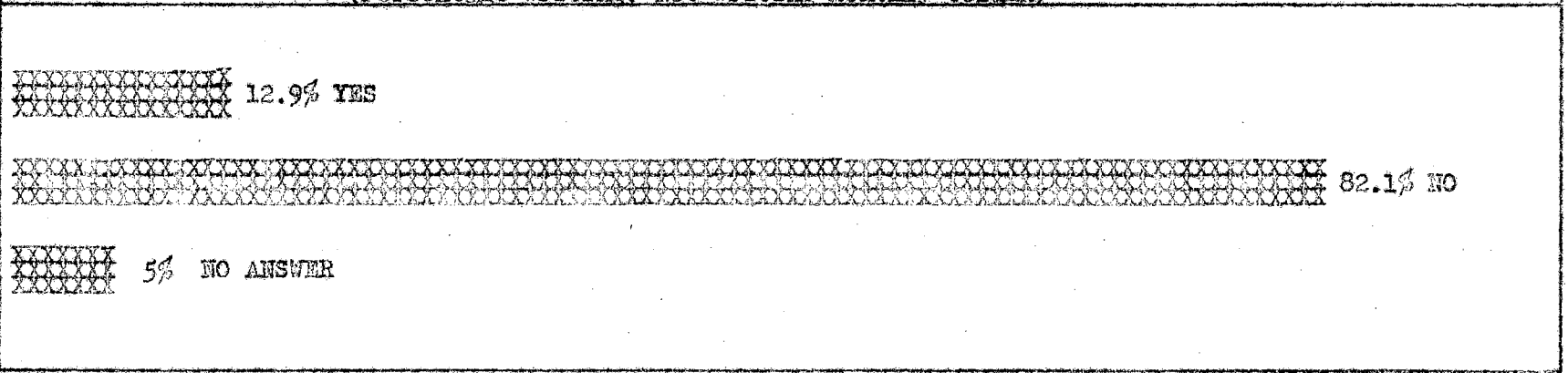


TABLE 16 Percentage Vocational Agriculture Teachers Feeling
 that Written or Verbal Information More Influential
 in Getting Stories in the Local Paper

(Percentage)

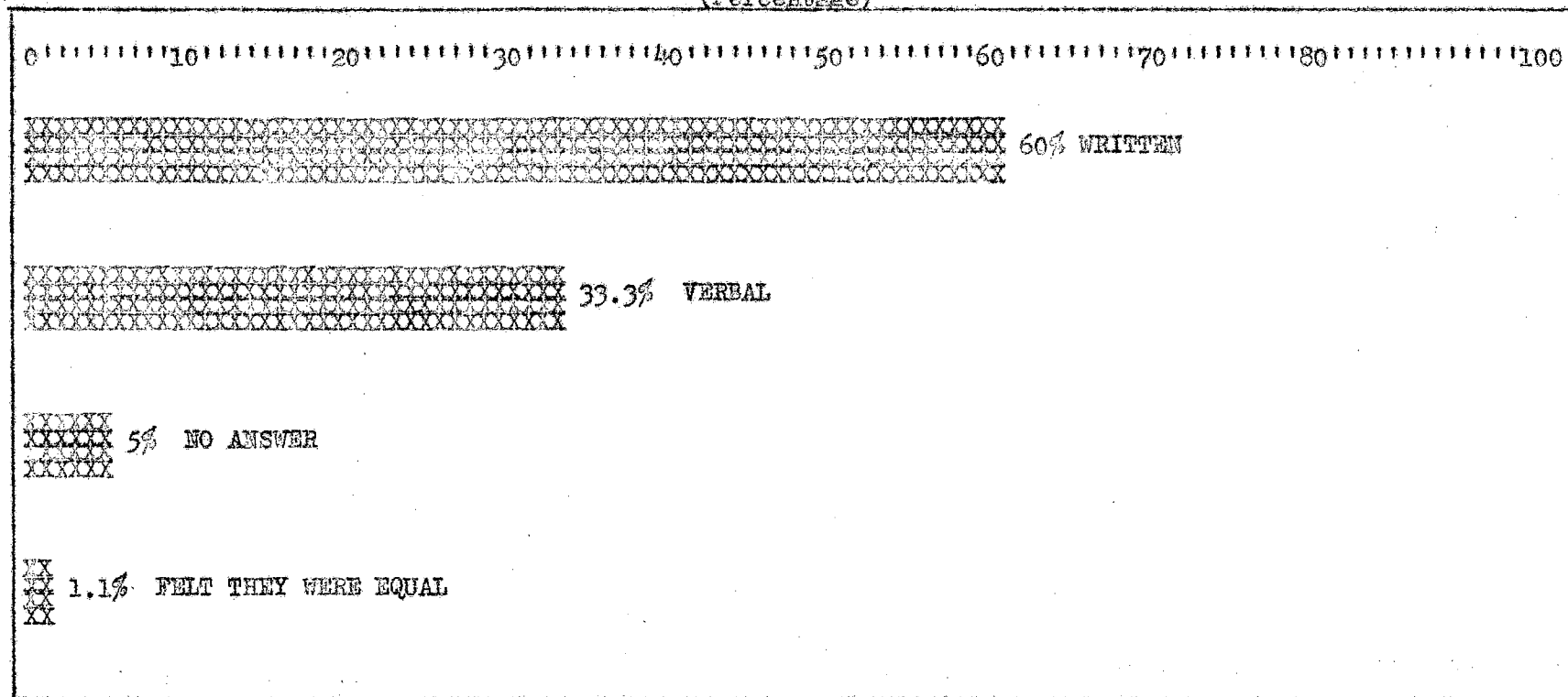


TABLE 17. Percentage Vocational Agriculture Teachers
Interested in Attending a Short Course
on Agricultural News Writing

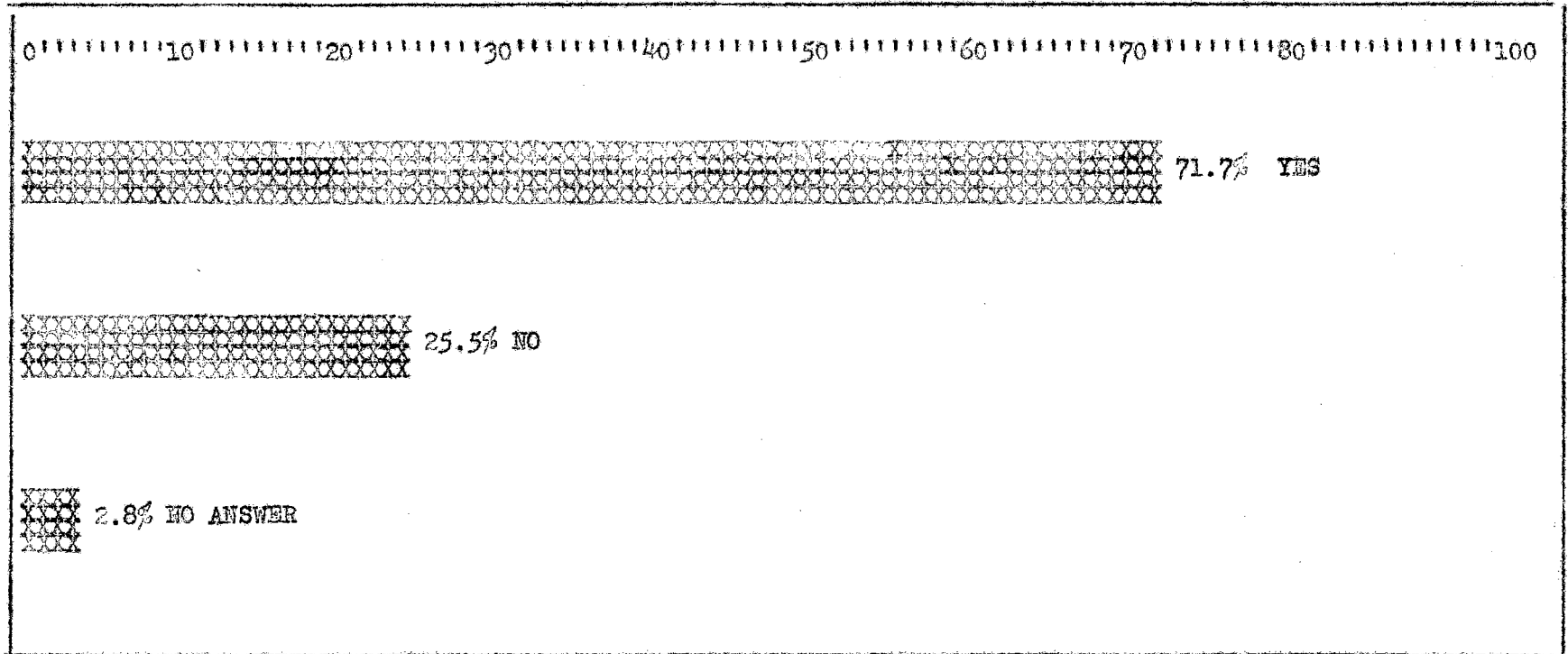


TABLE 18 Percentage of Vocational Agriculture
Teachers Graduating from Oklahoma
A. & M. College

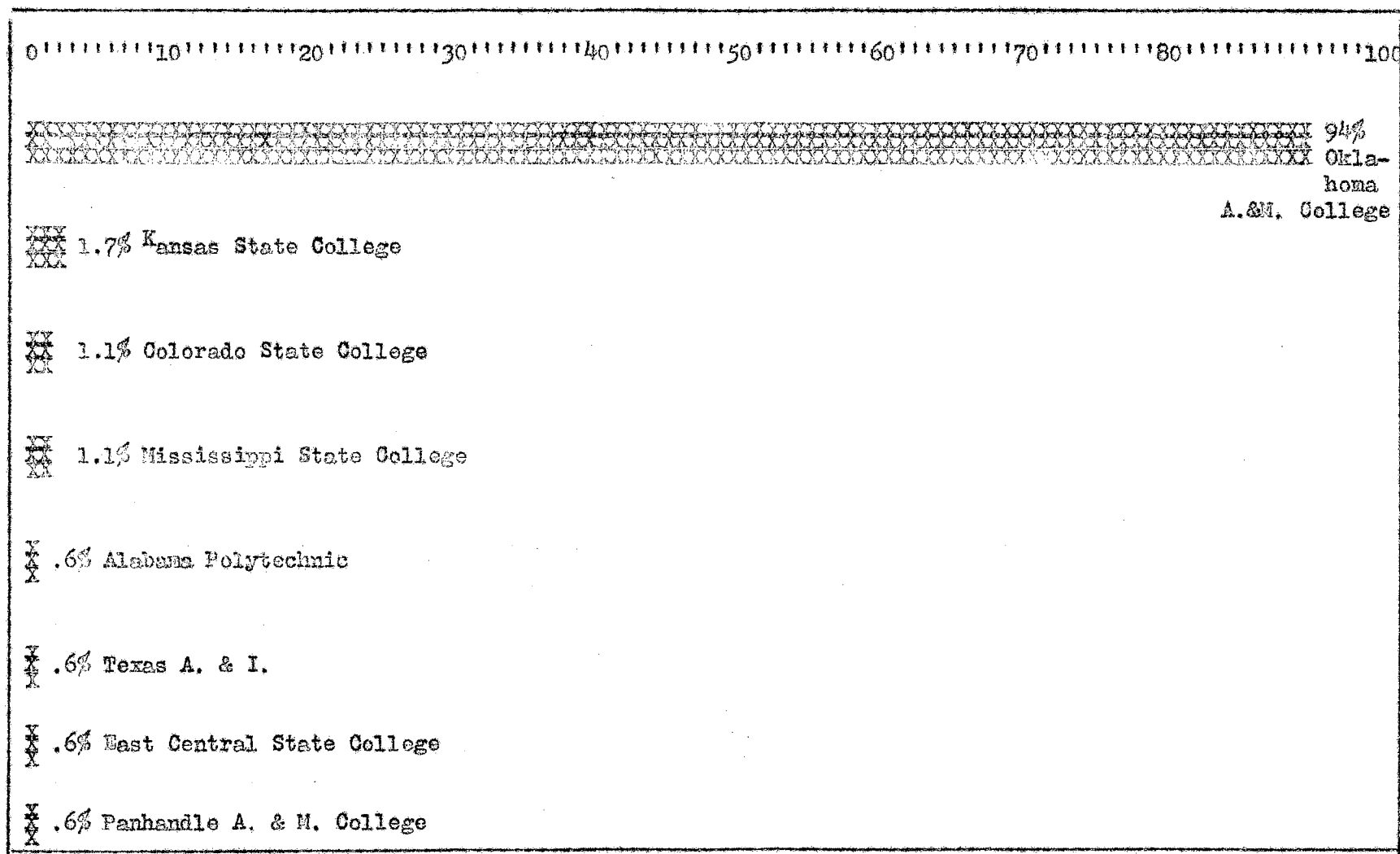


TABLE 19 Year in Which Vocational Agriculture Teachers Were Graduated and the Percentage Graduating

(Percentage)

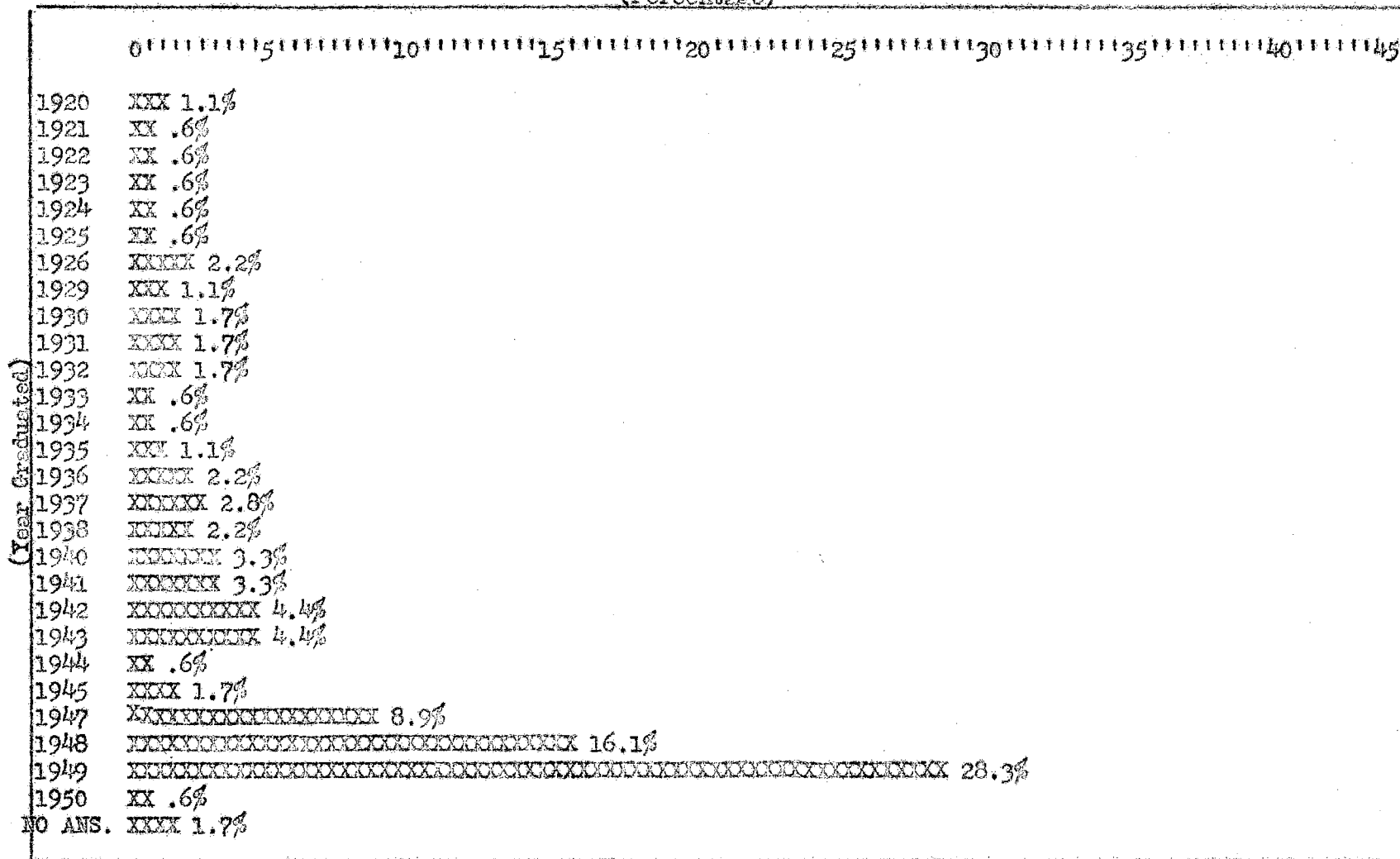
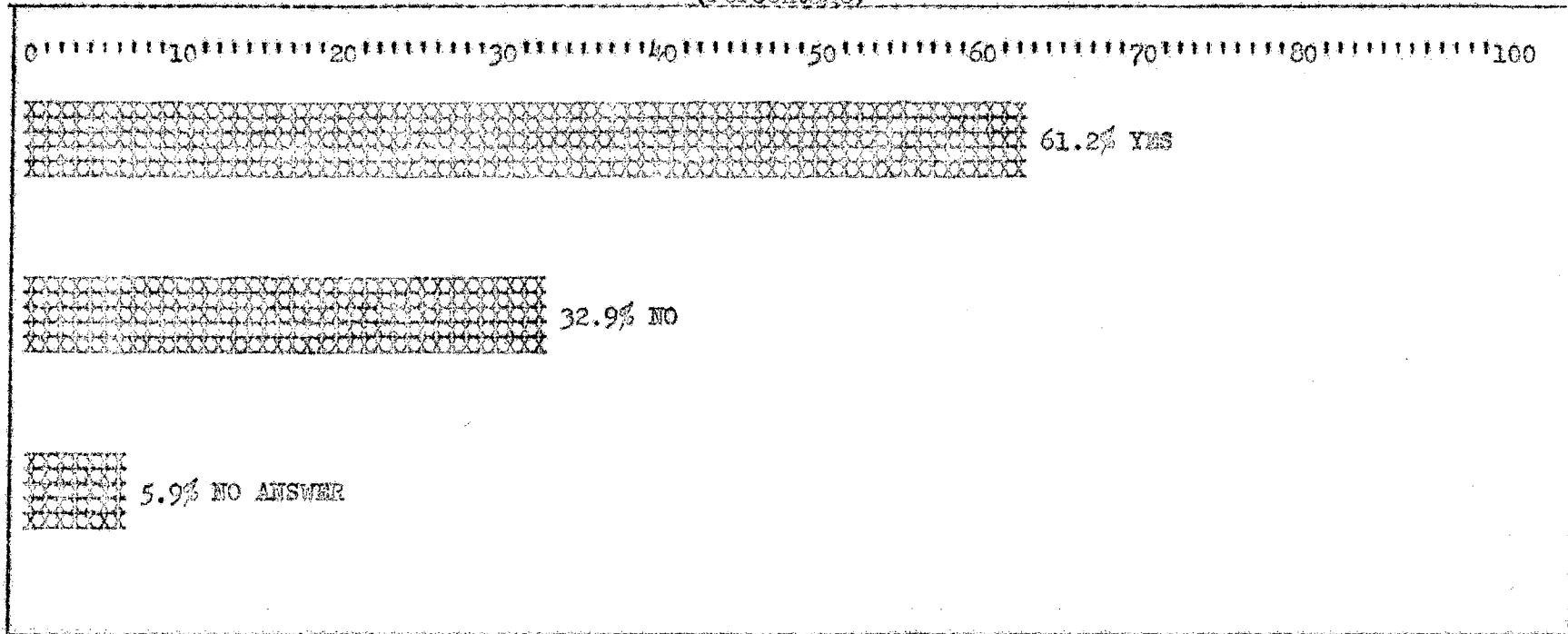


TABLE 20 Percentage Vocational Agriculture Teachers Recommending
 That a Student Preparing for County Agent or
 Vocational Agriculture Work Take More
 Than Two Hours News Writing

(Percentage)



CHAPTER V

MISCELLANEOUS COMMENTS

Remarks from County Agents and Vocational Agriculture Teachers:

In the questionnaire upon which this study is based many of the county agents and vocational agriculture teachers made remarks, though no place for them was provided. The writer feels that many of the comments received from agents and teachers are worthy of mention and pertinent to this study.

One agent remarked that the number of hours of news writing training needed by county agents and vocational agriculture teachers depends largely upon the locality where they are working. "This depends on the locality where he is working. In my present locality a reporter comes by the office every-day for stories because they want to write their own stories. In another county that I worked in a few years ago I had to write all the stories for the paper," he explained.

"A two-hour course giving the fundamentals should be sufficient. The rest would depend upon the individual's interest in news writing or in his ability to know a good story when it happens. The county agent's office in Norman is writing four radio programs a week for local use," an agent commented in regard to the amount of journalism training needed by county agents and vocational agriculture teachers.

In connection with the influence of written or verbal information in the local paper, one agent wrote: "We happen to get more stories in this county by verbal information because the reporter rewrites all stories. One other newspaper in the county requires written stories."

An agent with five years experience said, "I hope courses in journalism have been changed to make them more practicable, workable, and more down to earth. I think this would help more than any one thing."

An agent who was graduated from Oklahoma A. & M. College in 1917 summed up the agent's need for news writing training in this way: "I don't recall the hours credit I received in journalism but I think it was near two hours. But I studied a lot of journalism in English, especially under Harry R. O'Brien.¹ I think county agents need more journalism, more English, more letter writing, and more public speaking than they get in the regular agricultural courses."

This comment will be appreciated by most Oklahoma A. & M. College graduates. "The local newspaper representatives are University of Oklahoma men and don't understand agricultural terms. You can imagine the result."

Another agent recommended that a student preparing for county agent or vocational agriculture work should take more than two hours news writing training. This agent said, "The courses might have some revisions with particular emphasis on agriculture. For example, solid news versus flash news theory."

In explaining why he gave no verbal stories an agent remarked: "Reason for no verbal stories is that this county has only weekly papers which have no reporters. All stories published must be furnished the paper in written form."

A 1924 Aggie graduate said, "You need some English in addition to

¹It is significant to note that O'Brien is used as a reference quite extensively in Chapter I of this study.

news writing."

"Refresher courses would help more," a vocational agricultural teacher believed when he didn't recommend more than two hours news writing training for the student preparing for county agent or vocational agricultural work.

Another vocational agriculture teacher explained his belief in this manner: "He might need more than two hours of journalism, but if he just takes two hours they should teach him how to write stories. If the course is taught right you could write better stories for the paper which would be a great help in your work. They should teach the basic steps for writing stories. They should try to explain what news items should look like."

"Journalism is a wonderful thing to take if properly taught, but in the course I took it wasn't worthwhile," a teacher said.

A very interested teacher expressed his feelings this way: "I think we need more journalism in our agricultural courses--special courses if you please. Talk to Dr. Bennett and get them started."

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THESIS TITLE: THE VALUE OF NEWS WRITING TECHNIQUES TO
OKLAHOMA COUNTY AGENTS AND VOCATIONAL
AGRICULTURE TEACHERS

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