

## Purpose

The NIST Phish Scale, created in 2019, is a method to measure human phishing detection difficulties of phishing emails. The method provides context to click rates by considering the observable cues and premise alignment of a phishing email. However, as the NIST Phish Scale method is in the early stages of development, its wider use has yet to be evaluated.

## Research Question

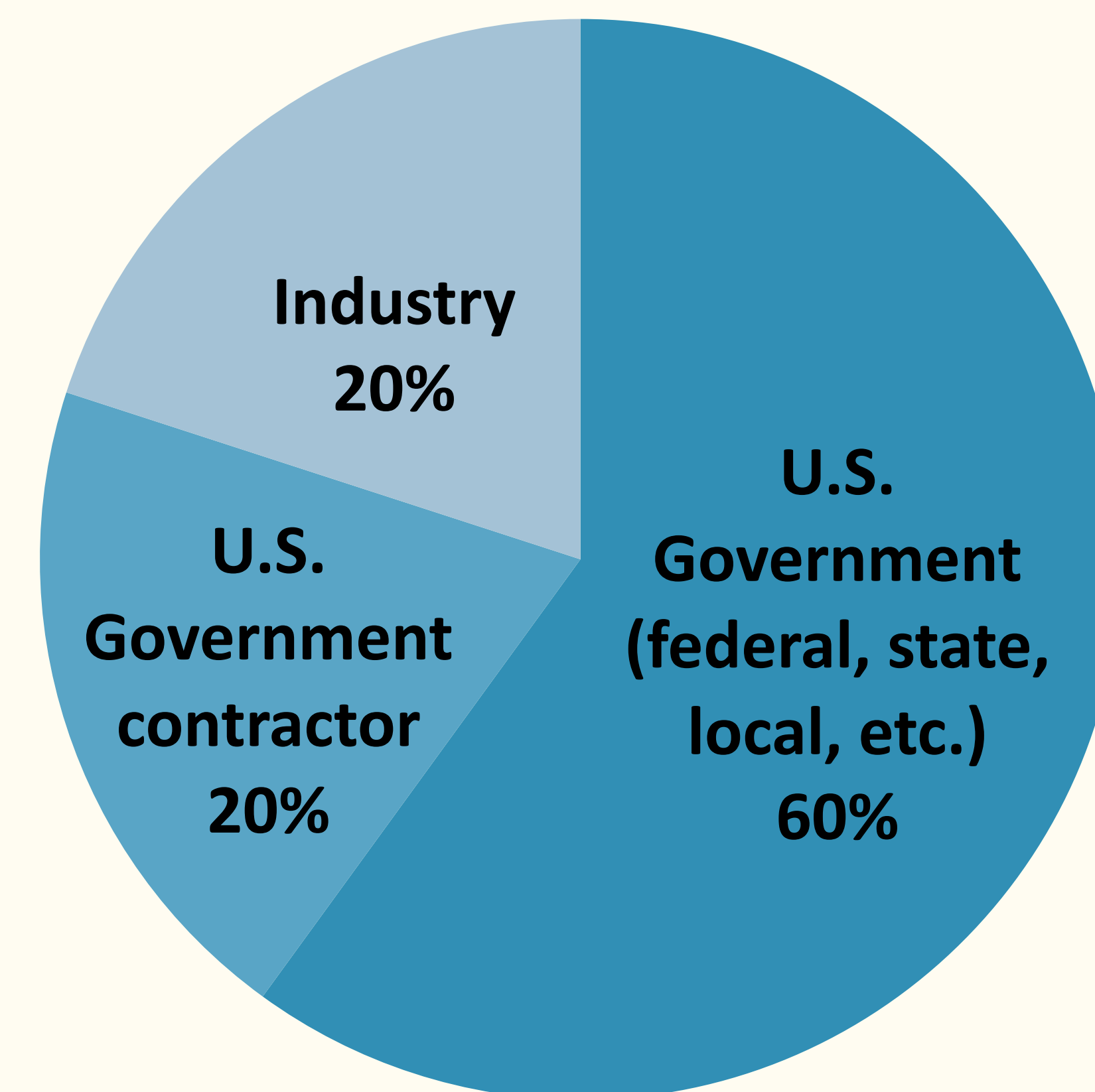
Are the NIST Phish Scale components – cues, premise alignment, and detection difficulty – easy to understand and useful to an organization?

## Methodology

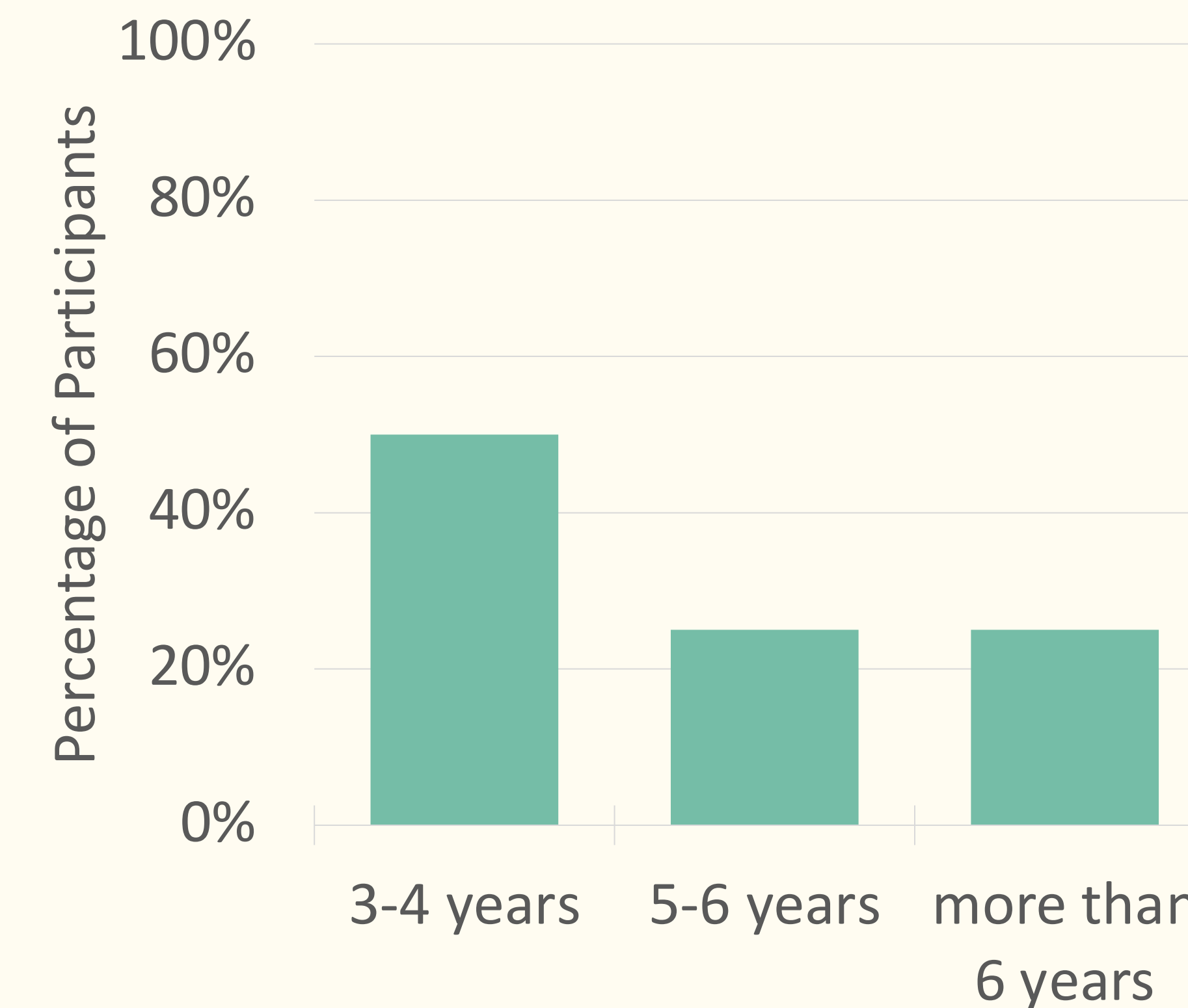
- Study designed to collect empirical data on how phishing awareness training implementors use the NIST Phish Scale; designed for participants to incorporate NIST Phish Scale into existing phishing awareness training programs.
- Participants were provided NIST Phish Scale User Guide with step-by-step instructions on applying the NIST Phish Scale to a phishing email.
- Post-exercise survey captured experiences using NIST Phish Scale and perceived usefulness of NIST Phish Scale.
- Recruitment from multiple sectors within U.S. and international organizations.

## Results

### Organizational Demographics



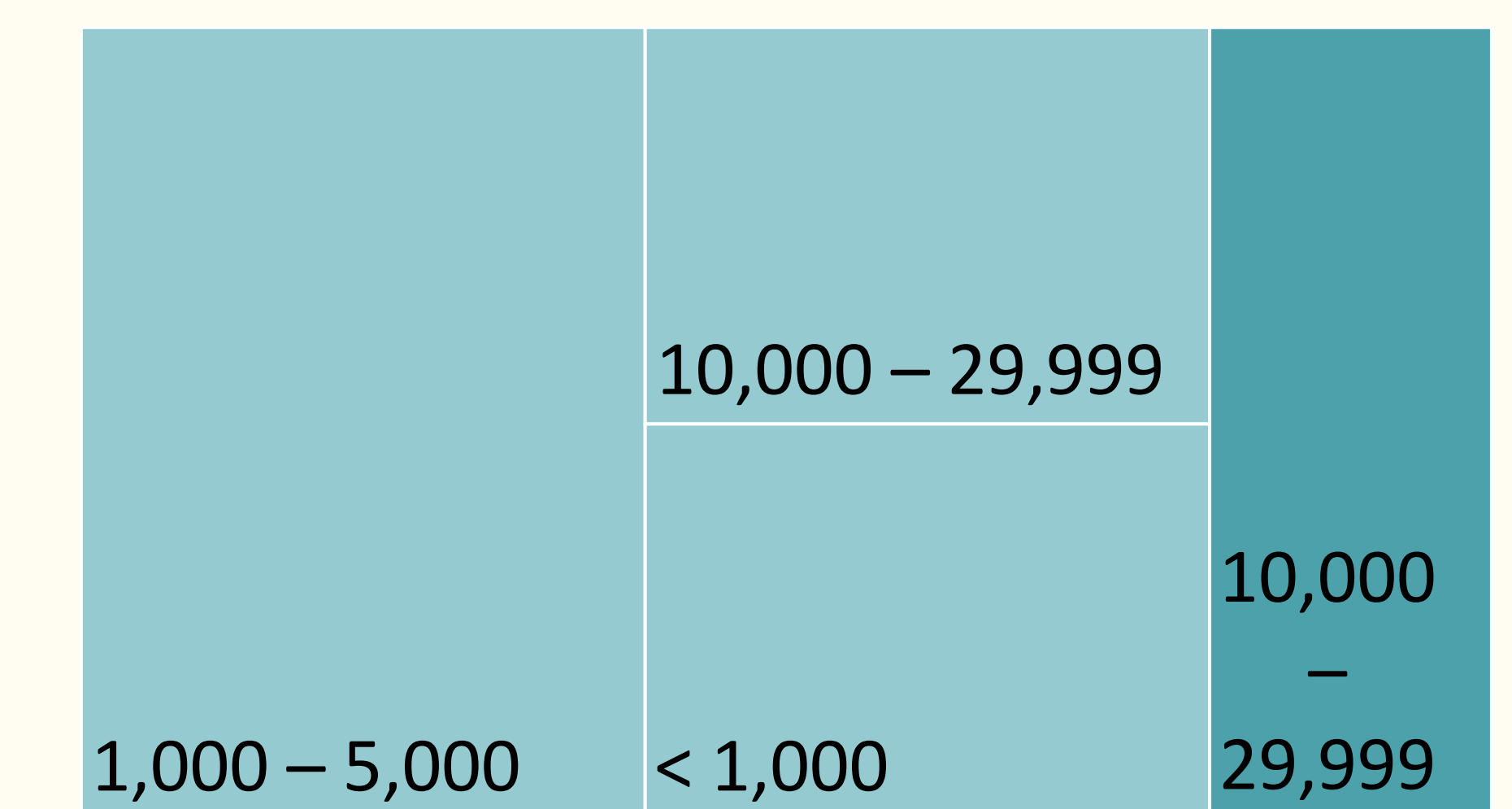
Type of organization (n=5)



Organization phishing awareness training experience (n=4)

### Organization Phishing Exercise

- click rates did not align with detection difficulty as expected
- click rates aligned with detection difficulty as expected



Number of people in target audience (n=5)

### Applying the NIST Phish Scale

How easy or difficult it was to apply seven aspects of the NPS to their phishing exercise email?

**72%** of items were “easy” or “very easy” to apply for at least 75% of participants.

**40%** of participants indicated items related to premise alignment were “difficult” or “very difficult” to apply.

“It was hard to tell how the [numerical scores for the] first three categories differed substantially from each other.”  
–Participant F108

“Elements 1 and 2 could be differentiated a little more clearly.”  
–Participant F102

Despite challenges applying premise alignment:

**80%**

thought the NIST Phish Scale was useful or very useful and that it was appropriate for their organization (n=5)

