

# Who Works in Physical Activity? A National Physical Activity Society Survey

Pam Eidson, MEd, PAPHS, Executive Director, and Brett McIlff, PhD, PAPHS, 2014-2015 President

National Physical Activity Society



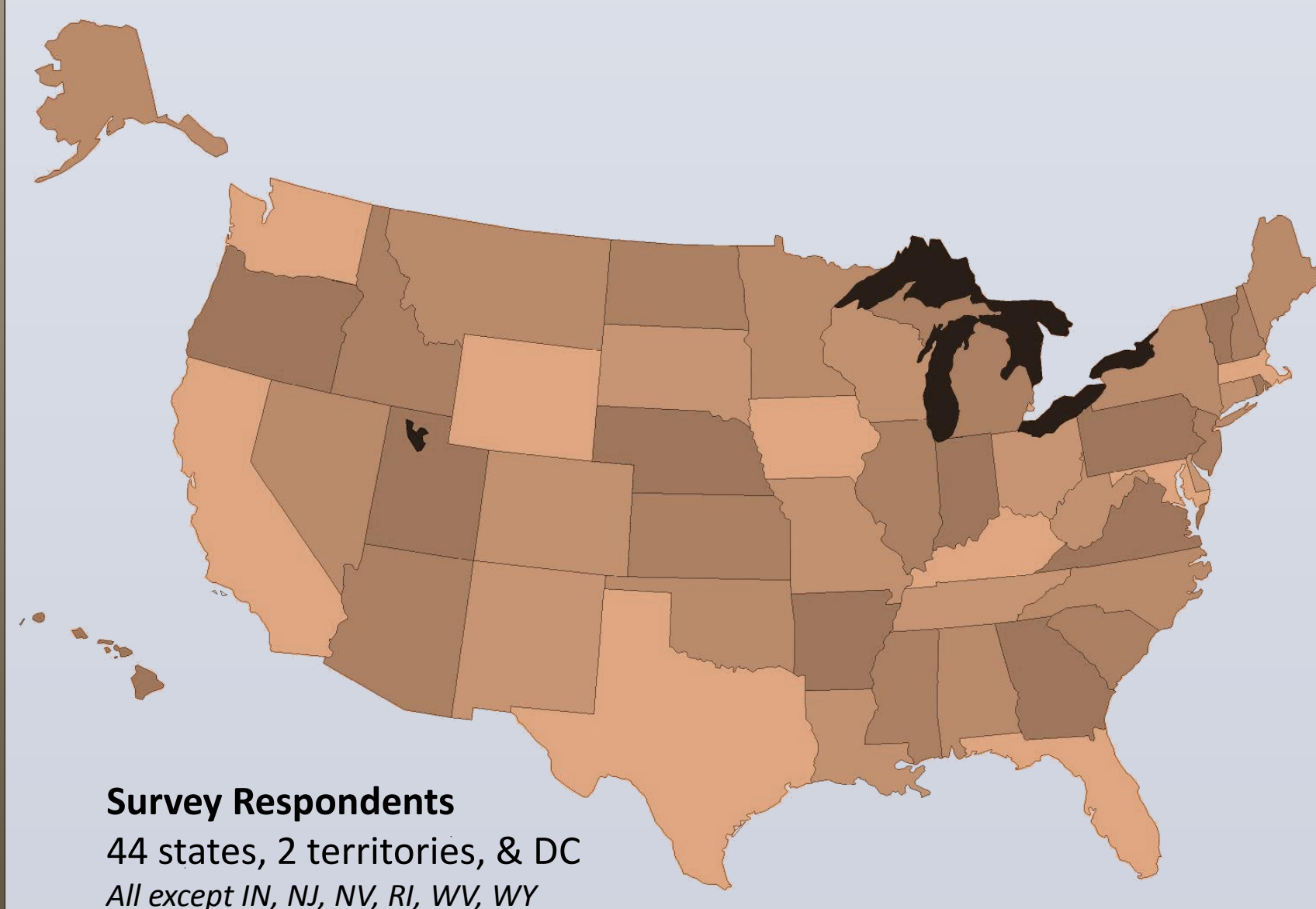
## BACKGROUND

Who are the professionals working in public health approaches to physical activity? The National Physical Activity Society (NPAS) surveyed its members and partners in spring 2014. One hundred seventy-three people completed the survey. The 2014 NPAS member survey is the fourth in a line of surveys conducted every two years and the first under the new organizational name. The previous surveys were conducted by the National Society of Physical Activity Practitioners in Public Health (NSPAPPH) in 2007, 2009, and 2012. NSPAPPH became the National Physical Activity Society in mid-2012.

## METHODS

The survey, constructed in Survey Monkey, contained 31 questions. Skip logic was included on several of the questions and response time averaged less than 20 minutes. After pre-tests, NPAS conducted the survey April 17 to May 7, 2014. Profile questions covered work setting level (community, state, national, or international), type of employer, education level, professional background, amount of work (full or part time) devoted to physical activity, number of colleagues, state, and length of service in the field. These questions were designed to give NPAS leadership a clearer picture of who members are. They also help determine target audiences for training.

The training section centered around competencies for the Physical Activity in Public Health (PAPHS) certification. Respondents were asked about integration with national efforts, including the National Physical Activity Plan. The National Physical Activity Plan Alliance was the only partner with whom the survey was discussed ahead of time. Only one question was devoted to the plan itself; however, many of the activities described in other questions and also in participants' comments relate to National Physical Activity Plan strategies and tactics. The survey was open to paid, student, and associate members, along with partners.



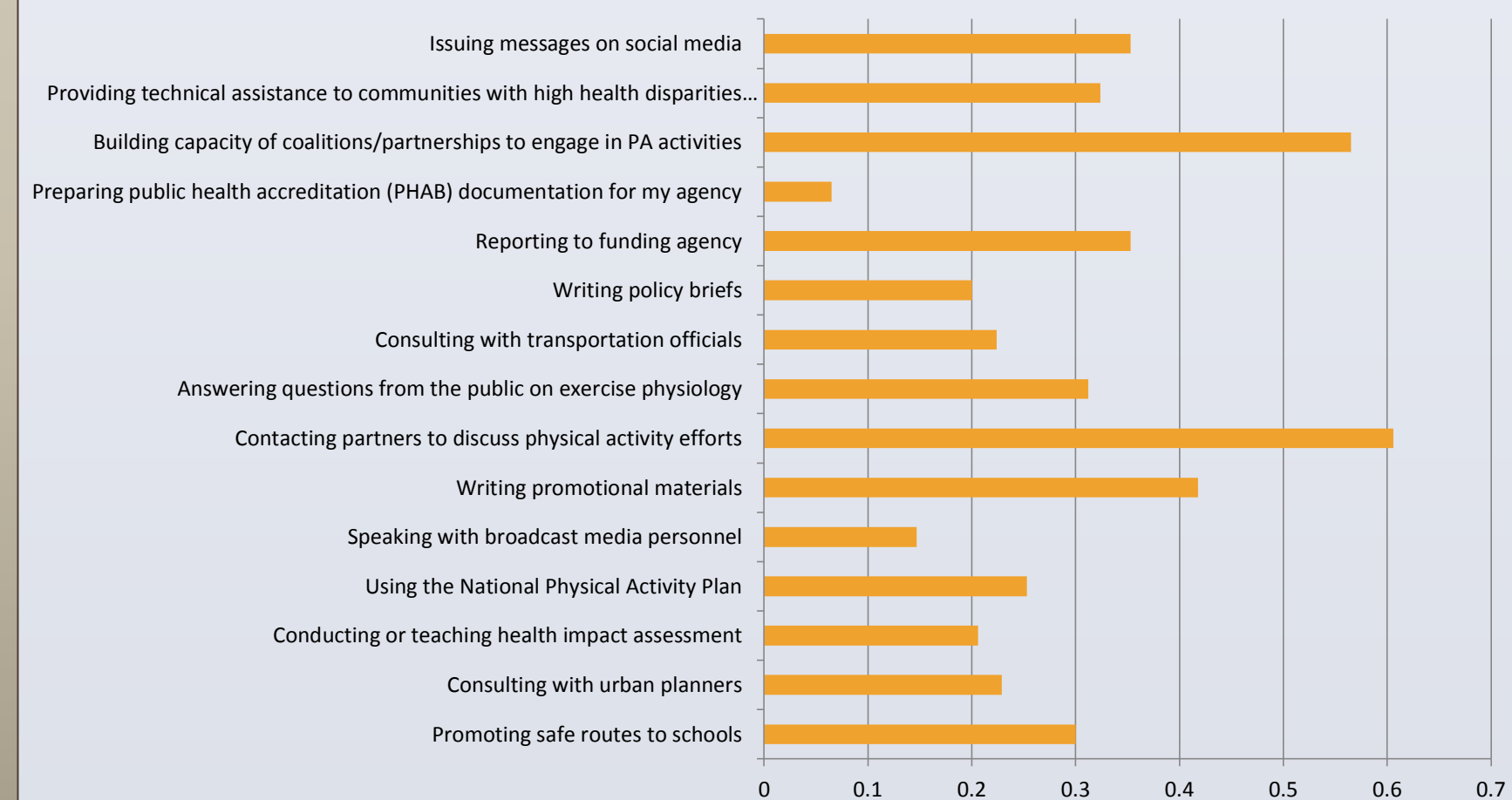
## PURPOSE

Intentions for the 2014 survey were to understand the NPAS membership, determine training needs, and provide direction to NPAS leadership. Leaders can then use answers to connect members and partners, provide training, and voice member needs on a national level.

## RESULTS

Respondents indicated activities they carry out frequently or sometimes (but not rarely). Results are shown here in two formats. The first figure reflects just the multiple choice activities. The second adds participants' comments of additional activities. In the second figure the larger words indicate more frequent answers.

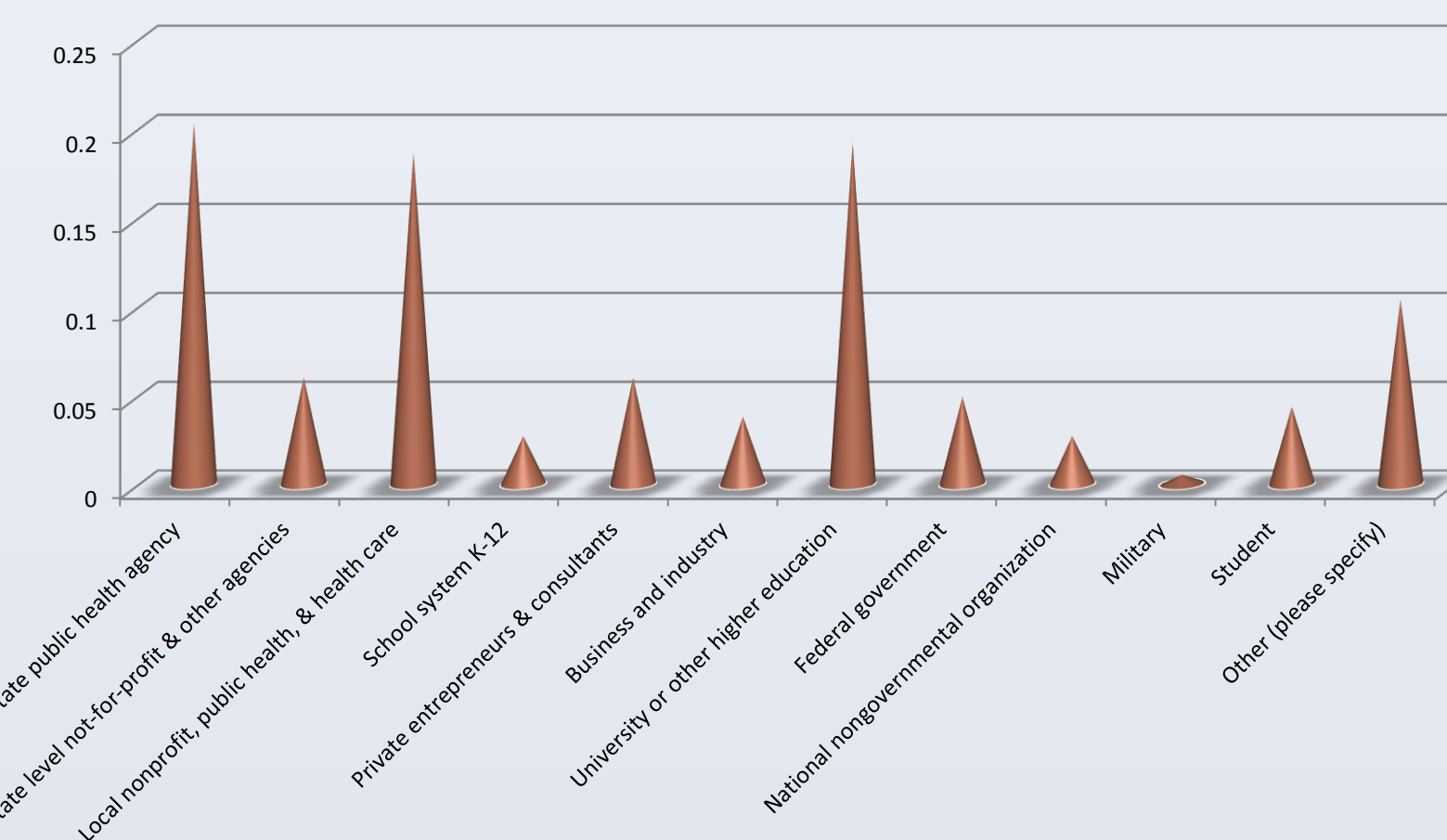
Frequent Activities of PA Professionals (n=170)



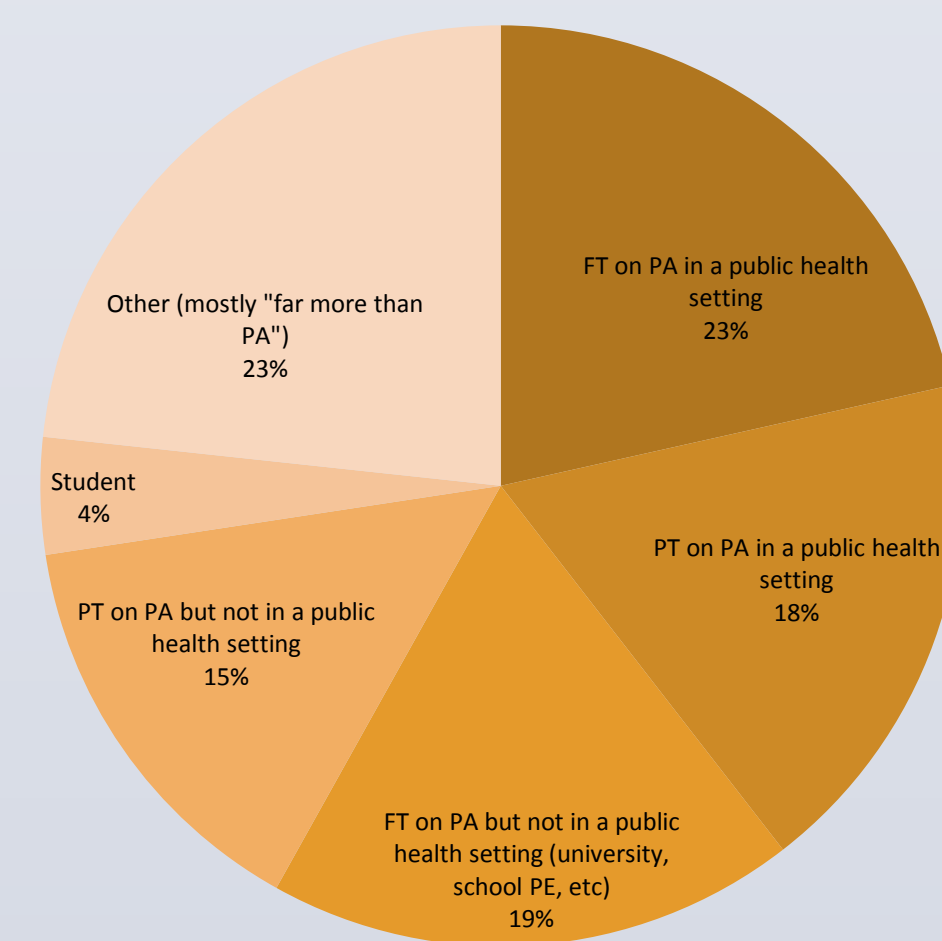
## RESULTS

One hundred fifty-three (153) respondents indicated working in a state or territory, with the responses representing 44 states, two territories (Puerto Rico, and Palau), and the District of Columbia. Fifty-seven percent (57%) of respondents work at the community level, 29% at the state level, 13% at the national level, and less than 1% at the international level. In raw numbers, 50 respondents indicated state level work, while 98 indicated community level.

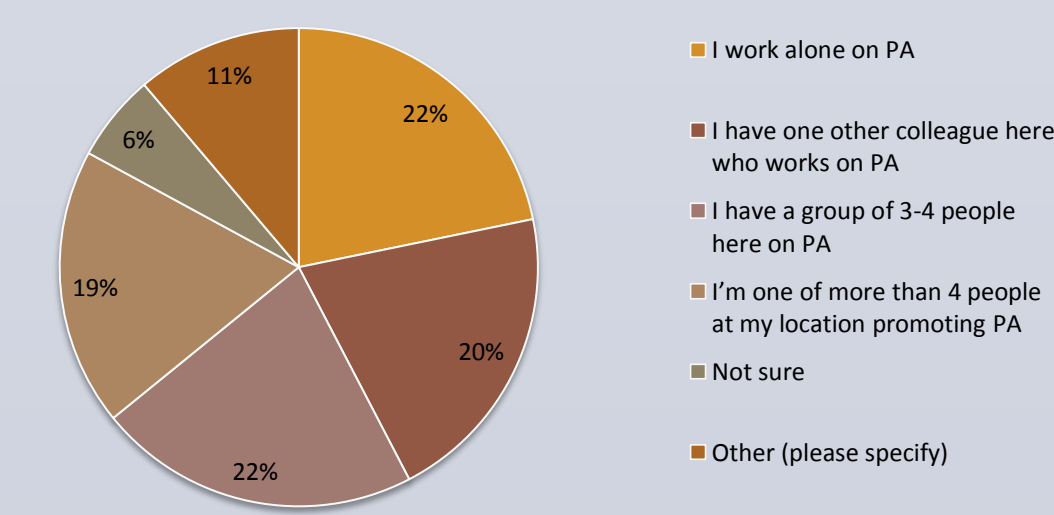
Type of Employer (n=182)



Full or Part Time? (n=172)



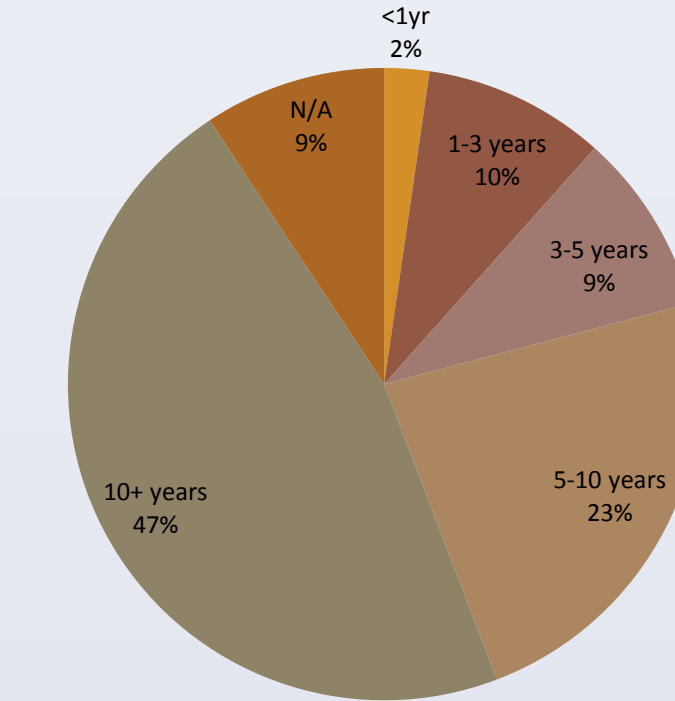
Alone or With Others? (n=170)



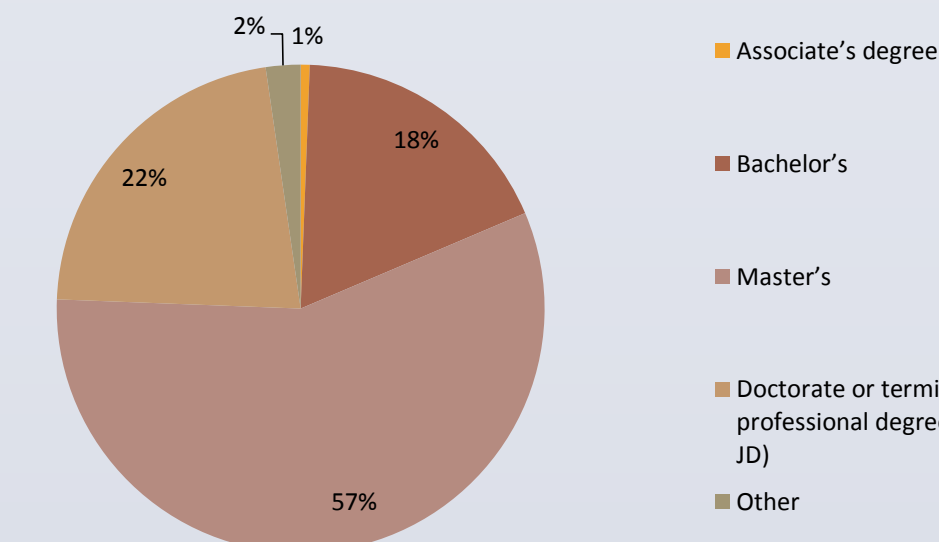
## RESULTS

About 46% of respondents answered they had been in the physical activity field ten years or longer. Close to 70% had been in the field five years or more. About 20% had worked in physical activity one to five years. The most common response for highest level of education attained was Master's degree (57%), followed by doctorate or terminal professional degree (22%). A selection of competencies for physical activity in public health practitioners describes self-reported levels of experience.

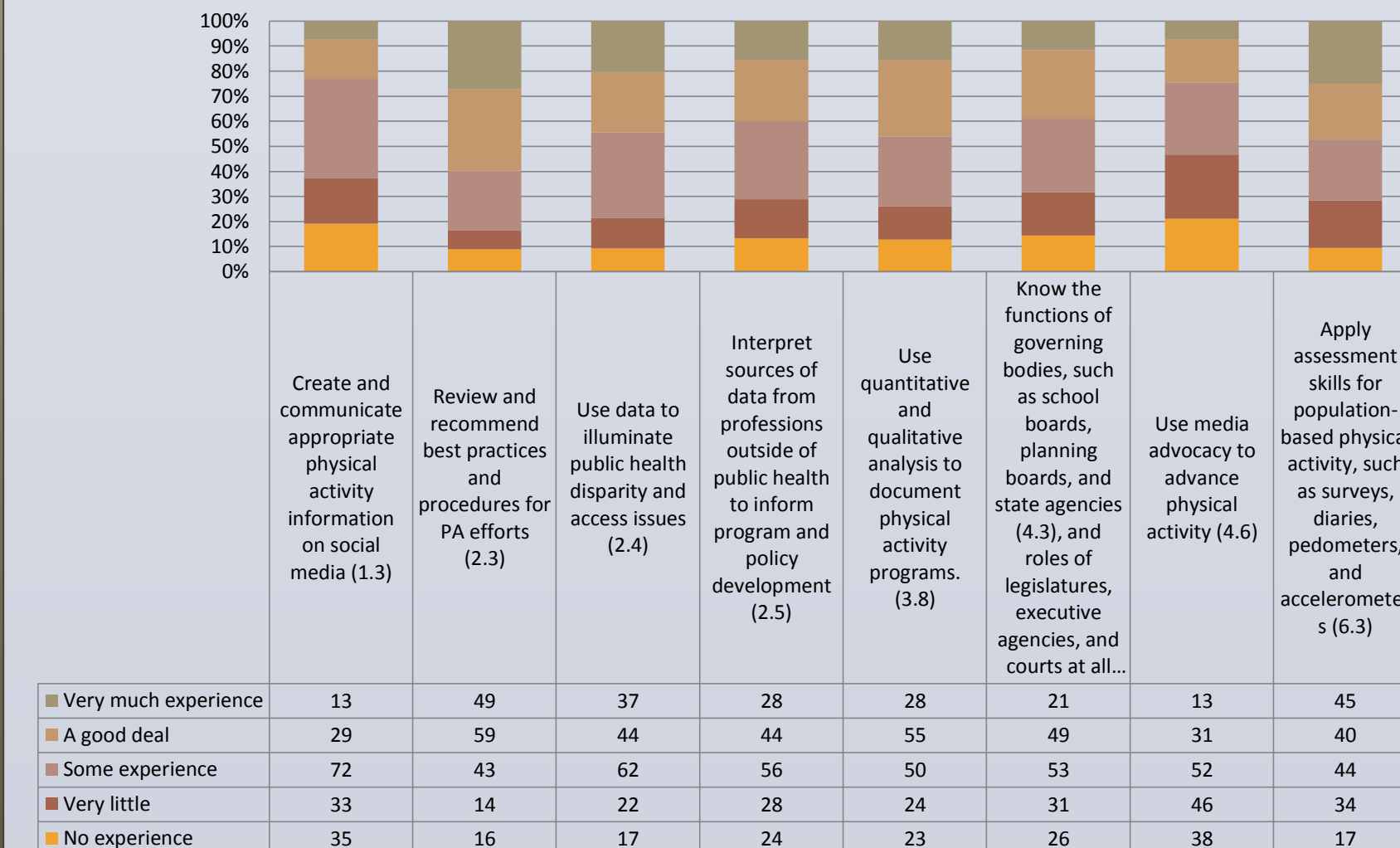
How Long Have You Worked in Physical Activity? (n=172)



Highest Level of Education (n=172)



Experience by Select Competencies

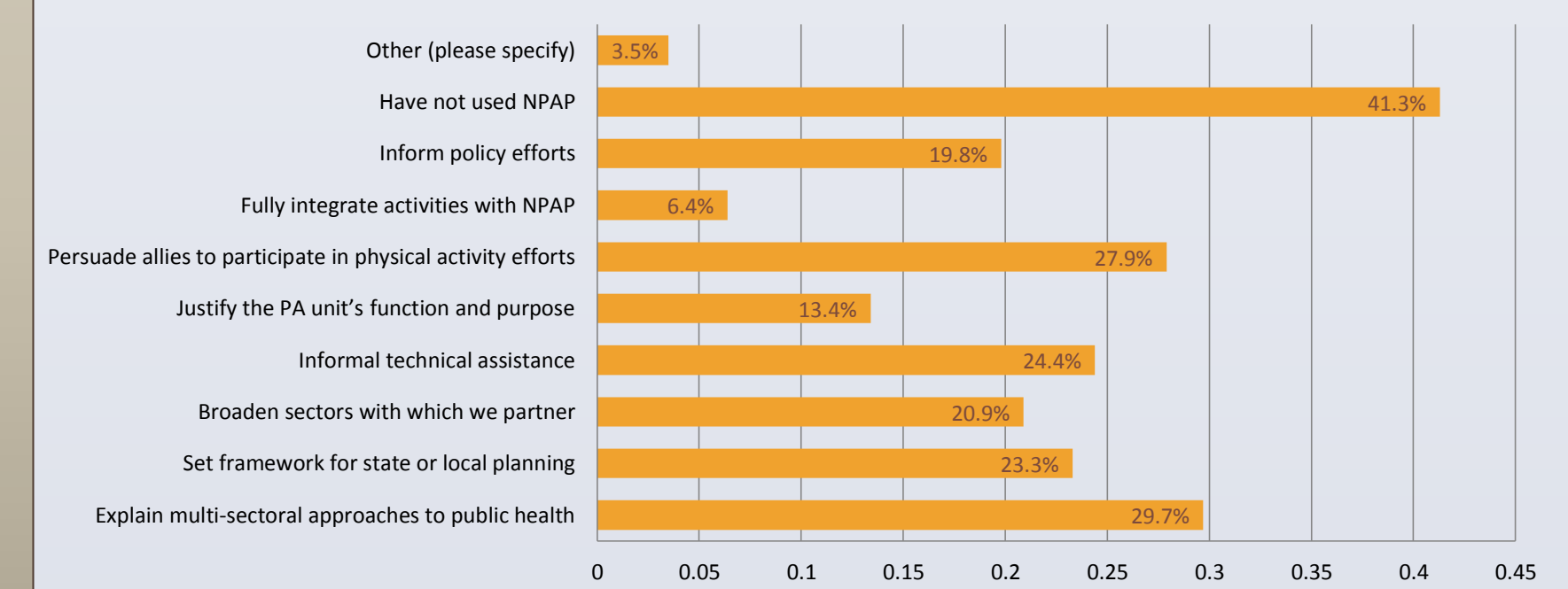


## RESULTS

One hundred and one survey respondents have used the National Physical Activity Plan in their work. Common uses include explaining multi-sectoral approaches to public health and persuading allies to participate in physical activity efforts. A third have used it for broadening the sectors with which they partner and informing policy efforts. Nearly a quarter (23%) used the plan to justify a unit's function and purpose. Eleven respondents fully integrate their activities with the NPAP.

State health department employees were likely to use the National Physical Activity Plan for informal technical assistance, to set a framework for state or local planning, to inform policy efforts, and to explain multi-sectoral approaches to public health. A third of the state employees, however, had not yet used the NPAP.

In what ways have you used the U.S. National Physical Activity Plan (NPAP) in your work? (n=172)



## CONCLUSIONS

The 2014 membership survey presents a snapshot of people working in public health approaches to physical activity. The survey demonstrated a range of sector involvement, extensive experience, areas for advanced training, and capacity of NPAS members to promote physical activity through such frameworks as the National Physical Activity Plan.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Thanks to NPAS board member Hillary Hanson, Flathead City/County Health Department (Montana) for assistance with cross-tabulations.

No federal funds were used in conducting or analyzing this survey.

## For more detail

The full report is available on the NPAS web site at <http://physicalactivitysociety.org>.

National Physical Activity Society  
Collaborating to create active communities