Why Do People Work in Public Health? Results and Implications of a Worker Recruitment and Retention Study

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Between Academia and
Public Health Practice

Presenter Disclosures

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(1) The following personal financial relationships with commercial interests relevant to this presentation existed during the past 12 months:

No relationships to disclose

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› To improve public health practice, education, and research by:

> Fostering, coordinating, and monitoring links among academia and the public health and healthcare community;

> Developing and advancing innovative strategies to build and strengthen public health infrastructure; and

> Creating a process for continuing public health education throughout one's career.

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› **20 National Public Health Organizations:**

> American Association of Colleges of Nursing
> American College of Preventive Medicine
> American Public Health Association
> Association for Prevention Teaching and Research
> Association of Accredited Public Health Programs
> Association of Public Health Laboratories
> Association of Schools and Programs of Public Health
> Association of State and Territorial Health Officials
> Association of University Programs in Health Administration
> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
> Community-Campus Partnerships for Health
> Health Resources and Services Administration
> National Association of County and City Health Officials
> National Association of Local Boards of Health
> National Environmental Health Association
> National Library of Medicine
> National Network of Public Health Institutes
> National Public Health Leadership Development Network
> Quad Council of Public Health Nursing Organizations
> Society for Public Health Education

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Background

> Goal of strengthening the public health workforce

> Interest in mapping the pipeline of public health workers

> Focus on understanding recruitment and retention

> Desire to develop evidence-based strategies

> **BUT** little data

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Public Health Workers Survey

> Purpose: Explore how and why individuals enter and remain in public health and their satisfaction with the work environment

> Design:
>> 28 questions
>> Distributed online

> Audience:
>> Active US public health workers
>> Identified using TRAIN

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Survey Topics

> ## Demographics
>> Years employed, work settings, professional roles, and entry points

> ## Recruitment Factors
>> Organizational and personal

> ## Retention Factors
>> Organizational and personal

> ## Organizational Environment
>> Leadership, management, and professional development

Limitations

> Data are self-reported

> Not possible to identify all public health workers

> Findings may not be generalizable

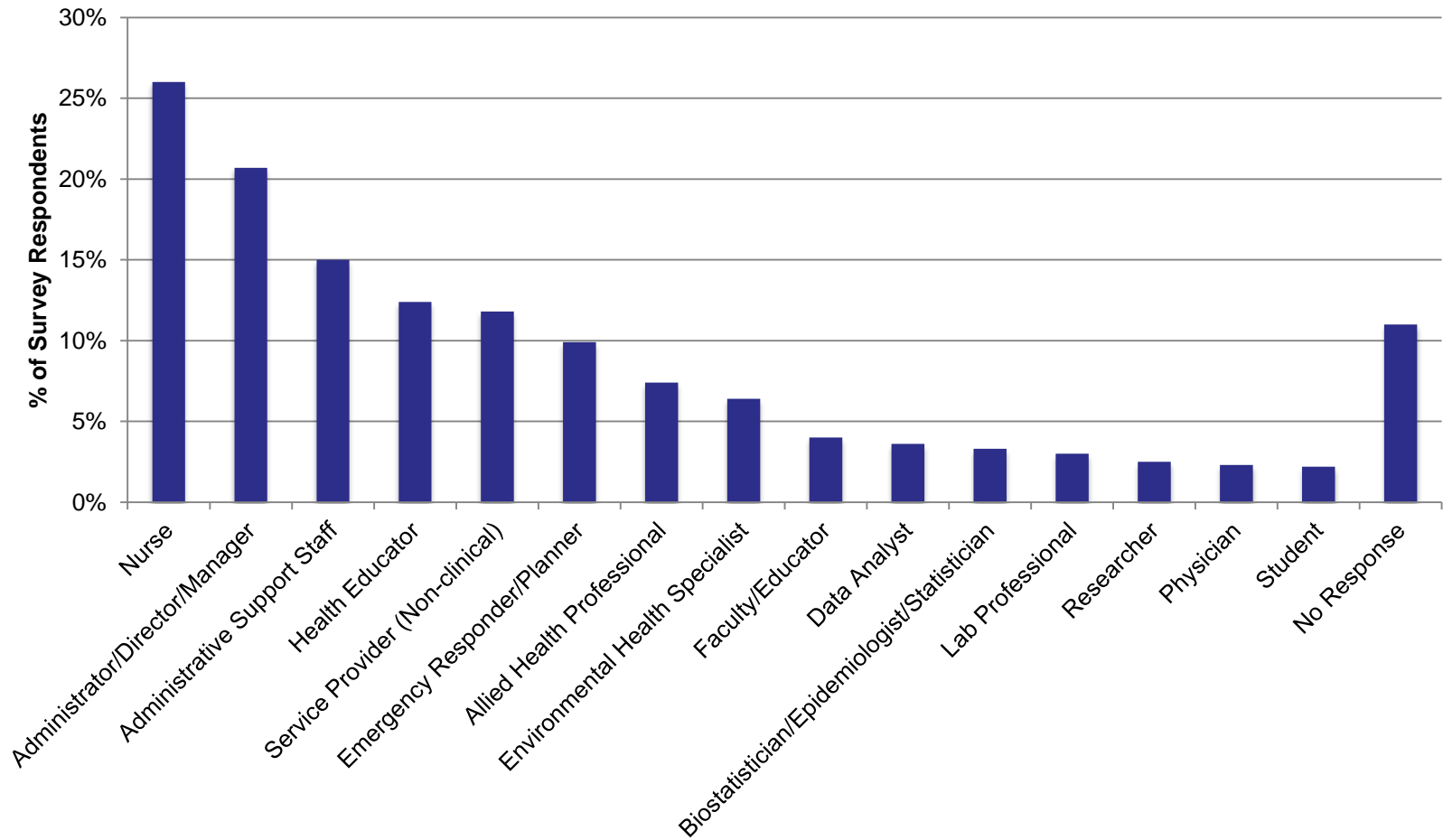> Did not survey people who left public health

Results – Basic Demographics

> 11,640 participants

> 54% aged 45-64 years

> 72% female

> 78% white

> 81% non-Hispanic

> 78% employed full-time
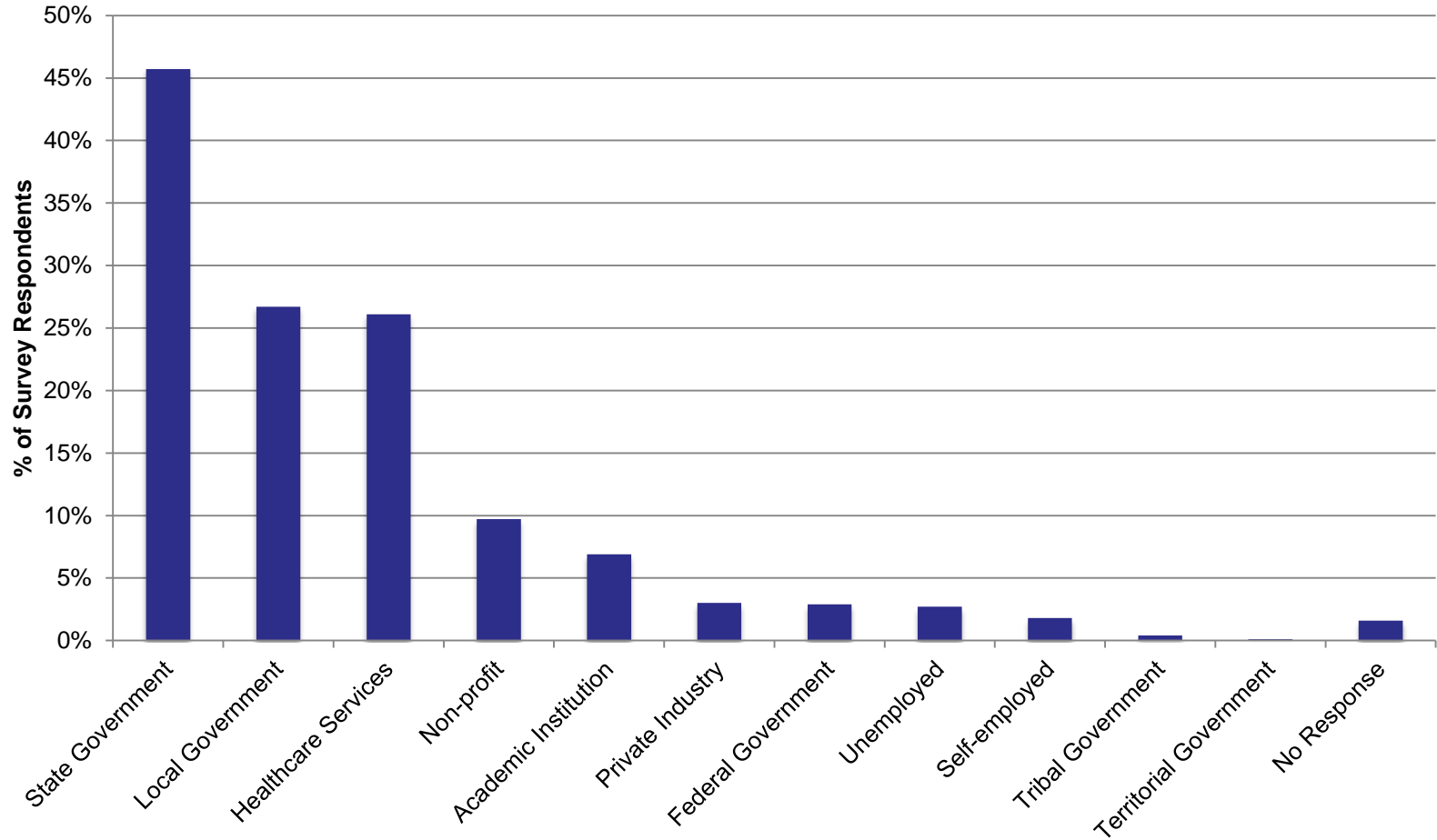
> 49% employed in public health for >10 years

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Results – Education

	Entry into Public Health	Time of the Survey
Highest Degree Completed		
High School or Associate's	33%	28%
Bachelor's	37%	32%
Master's or Higher	22%	31%
Public Health Degrees	9%	11%

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Results – Professional Roles

Results – Work Settings

Results – Employment in Governmental Public Health

Previously employed, 5%

Never employed, 35%

Currently employed, 60%

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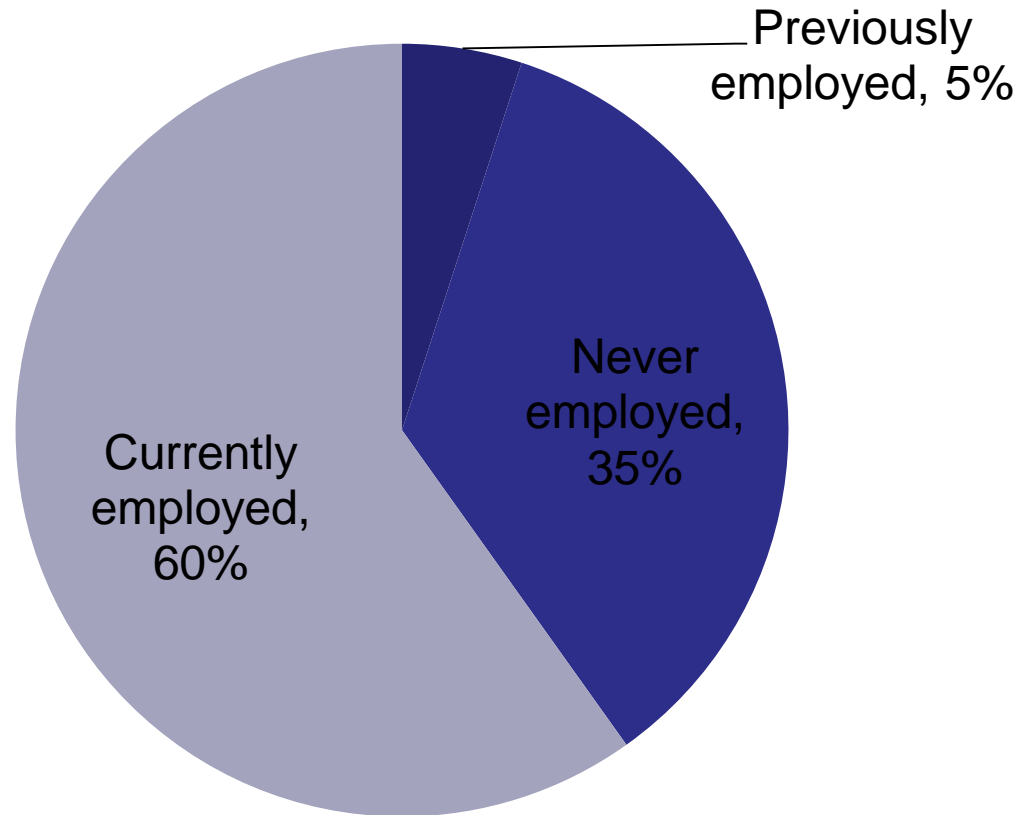
Results – Entry into Governmental Public Health

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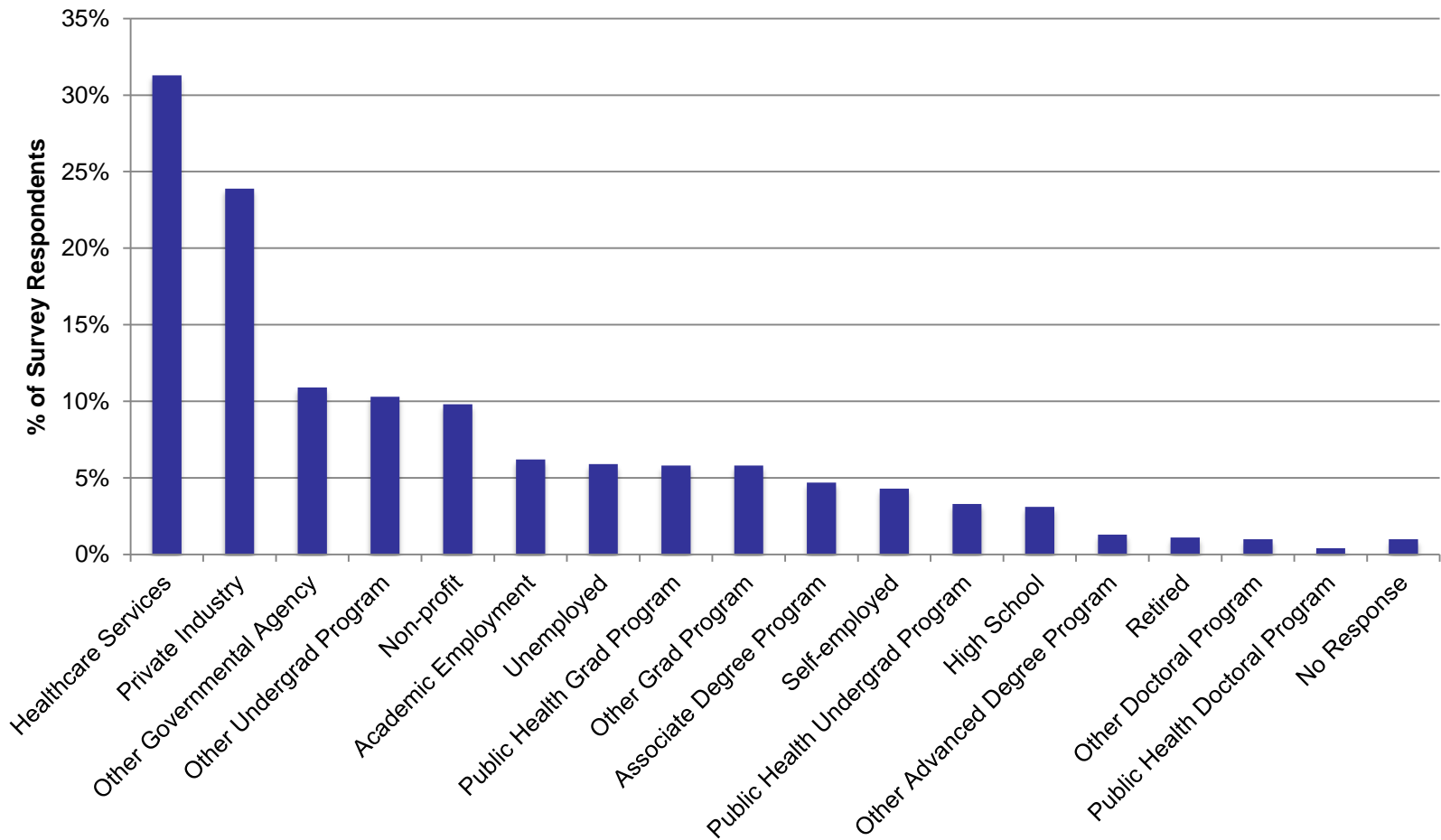
Results – Recruitment & Retention Factors

Recruitment

› Specific work activities

› Job security

› Competitive benefits

› Identifying with mission

› Enjoy living in the area

…

› Ability to telecommute

Retention

› Job security

› Specific work activities

› Competitive benefits

› Identifying with mission

› Public service commitment

…

› Family member/role model working in public health

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Results – Organizational Environment

> **Leadership:**
>> High: Employees held to high professional standards
>> Low: Atmosphere of trust and mutual respect

> **Management:**
>> High: Addressed concerns about safety and security
>> Low: Addressed concerns about leadership issues

> **Professional Development:**
>> High: Opportunities to learn from one another
>> Low: Sufficient funds and resources for professional development

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Implications and Opportunities

> Strategies to ensure a sufficient workforce

> Career opportunities to move between healthcare, private industry, and governmental public health

> Emphasis on continuing education and training to build skills and competence for public health practice

> Focus on activities, job security, and benefits in recruitment and retention

> Build leadership and management skills

Additional Information

> Council on Linkages: www.phf.org/councilonlinkages

> Public Health Workers Survey:
www.phf.org/resourcestools/Documents/Public_Health_Worker_Survey.pdf

> Questions: kamos@phf.org

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