

# EVALUATION OF THE PRESENCE AND ROLES OF CHWS IN OREGON POST GRADUATION FROM OSU'S CHW ENTRY-LEVEL TRAINING

Lydia Bastian; Sandi Phibbs, PhD, MPH; Allison Myers PhD, MPH; Oralia Mendez, MPH

## BACKGROUND

The OSU CHW Training program is an 85-hour in-person and online "blended" entry-level CHW training course, which has received Oregon Health Authority approval as a registered training provider. Since its launch in 2016, the program has trained 270+ participants and added four continuing education courses. Recruitment focus was originally on Eastern Oregon communities and recently (in the last 2 years) shifted to expanding training access to more rural and frontier CHWs across the state.

## OBJECTIVES

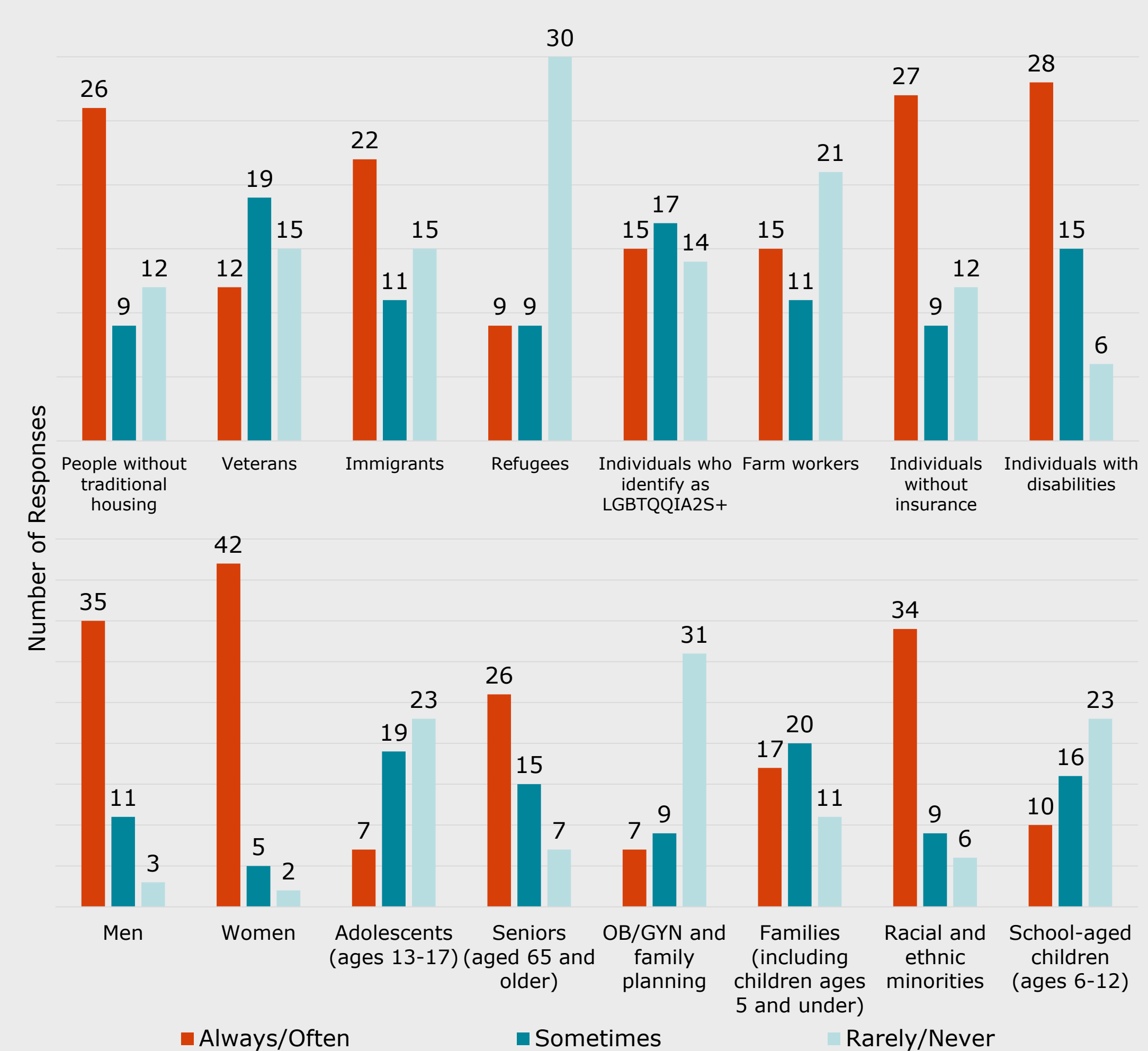
Evaluation objectives were to:

- Assess the geographical reach of the OSU CHW Training Program;
- Describe the career paths of graduates;
- Identify training and professional needs that should be included in the training curriculum.

## METHODS

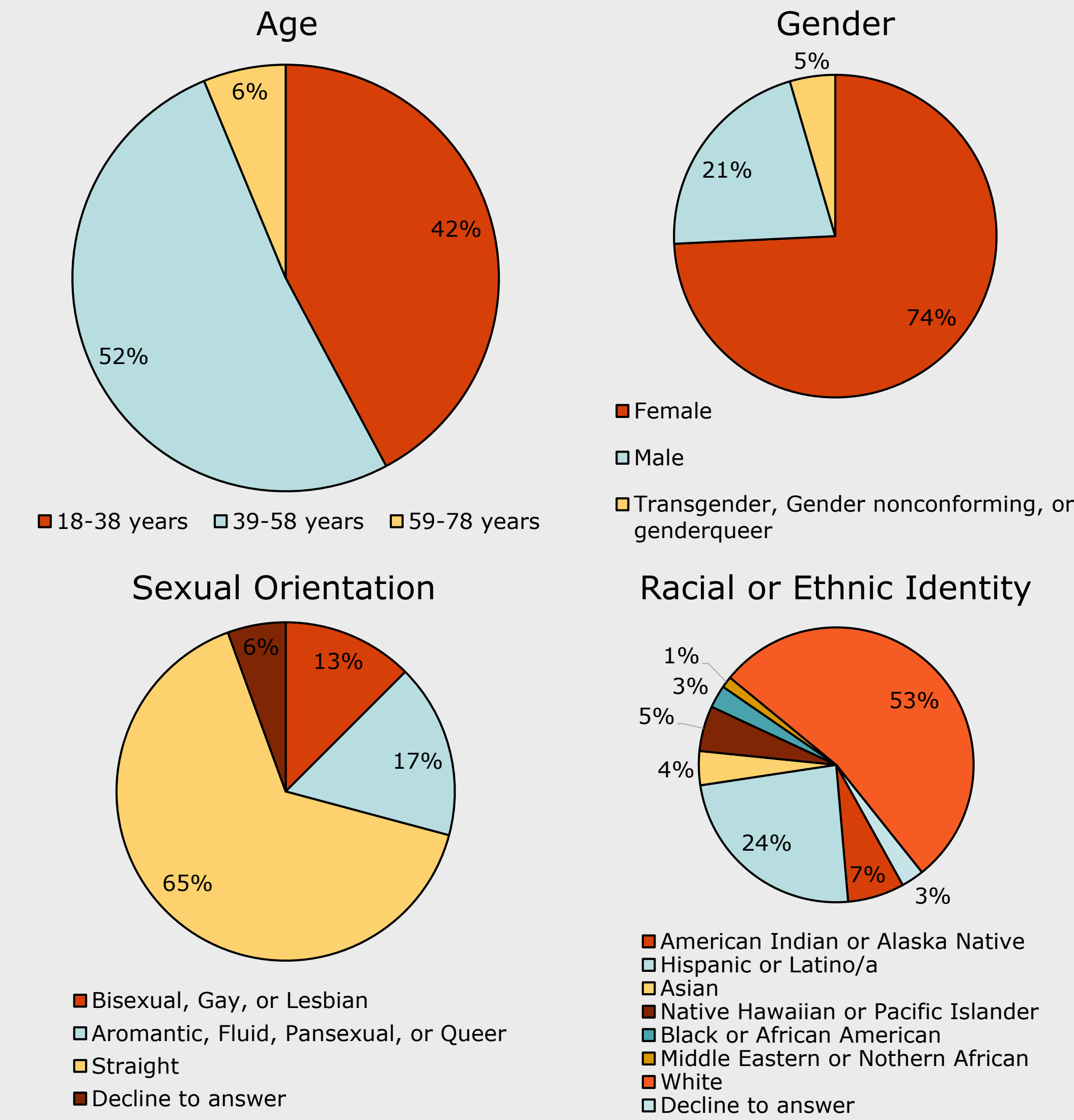
A web-based questionnaire was developed and pre-tested, then administered via Qualtrics for a total of 6 weeks between July and September 2022. OSU CHW graduates since 2016 (239) were invited to participate. The questionnaire assessed training history and needs, work history, and participant demographics. We calculated frequencies and percentages for all numeric and categorical survey items.

## SUPPORTED POPULATIONS



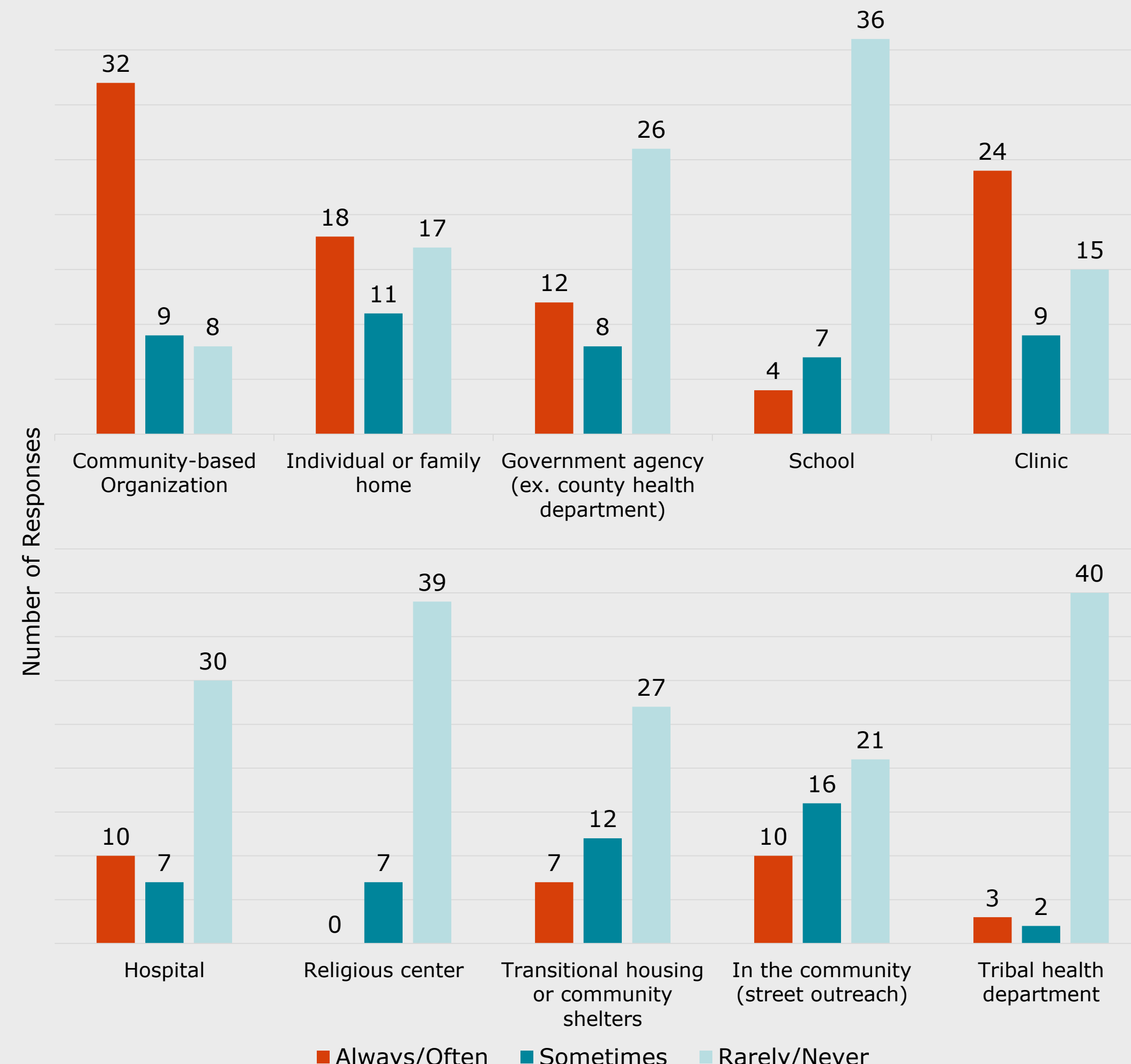
**From the questionnaire:** How often do you work with the following populations of people? Please note: on this scale, Never indicates that the option is within the scope of your work, but you happen not to do it.

## REPRESENTED DEMOGRAPHICS



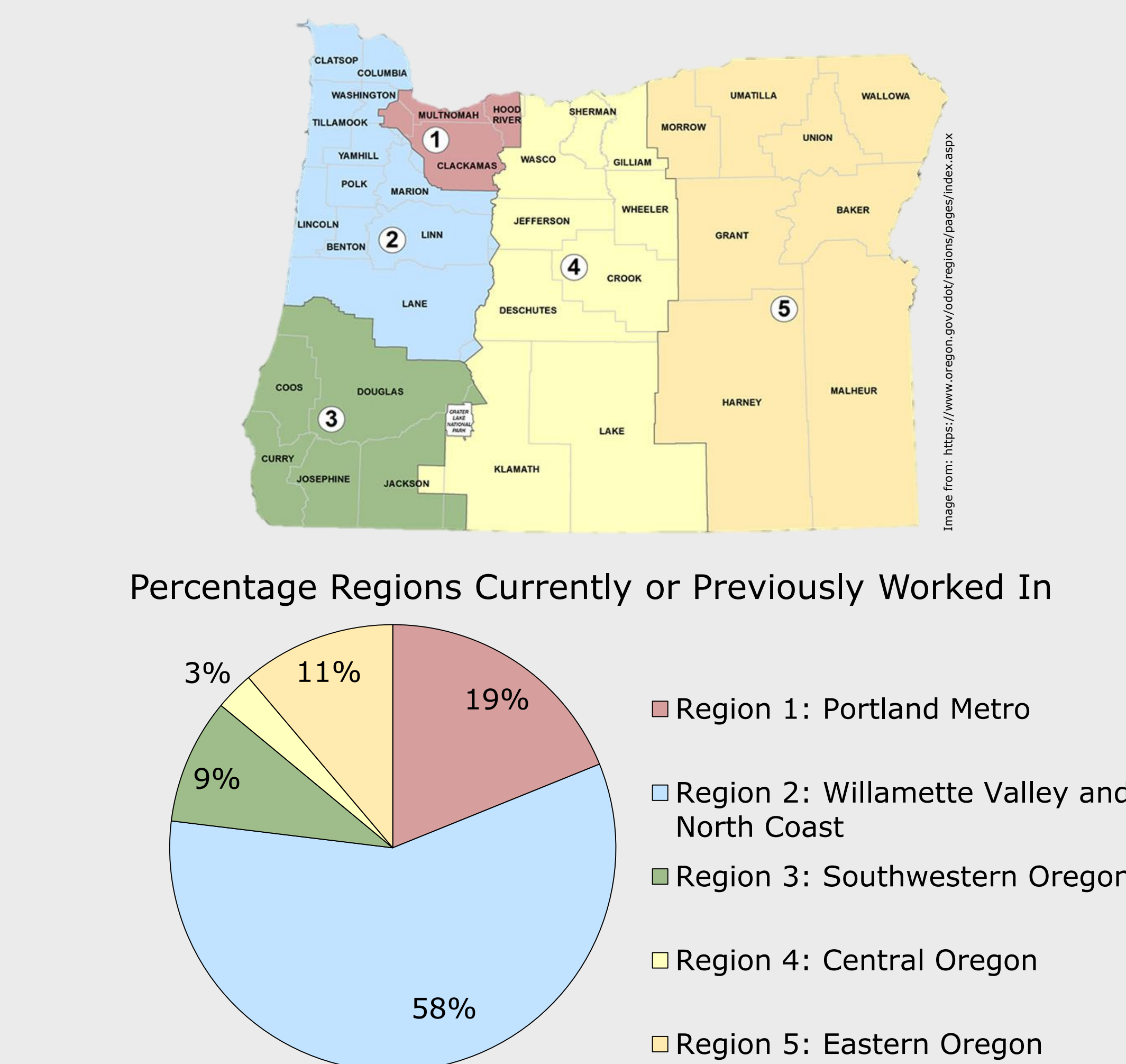
The questionnaire had a response rate between 27% and 32%, varying by question.

## SUPPORTED WORK SETTINGS



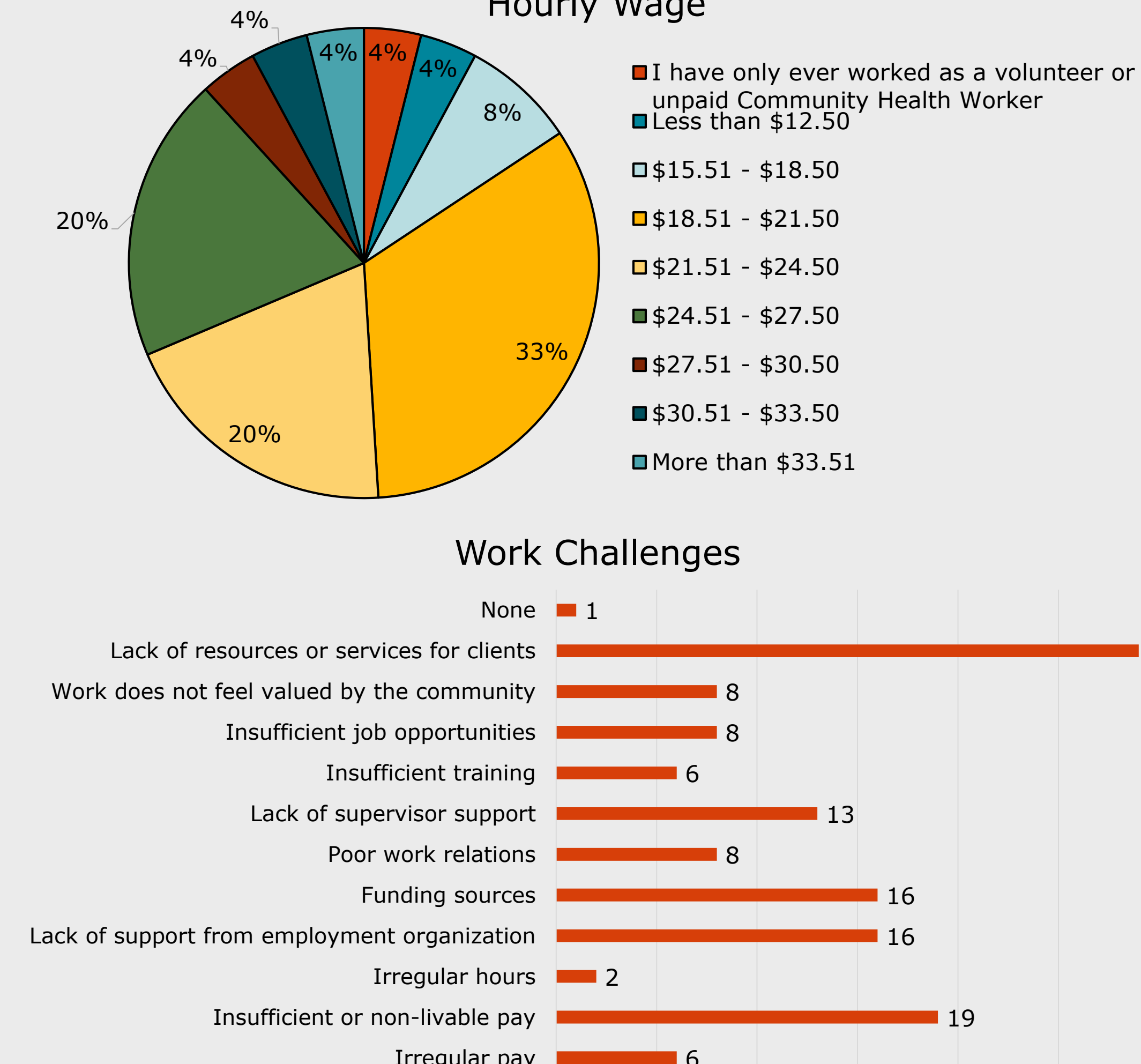
**From the questionnaire:** How often do you work in each of the following settings? Please note: on this scale, Never indicates that the option is within the scope of your work, but you happen not to do it.

## SUPPORTED AREAS



**From the questionnaire:** In which Oregon county/ies do you currently work as a Community Health Worker? In which Oregon county/ies have you previously worked as a Community Health Worker?

## SUPPORTING CHWS



**From the questionnaire:** What is your current hourly wage working as a Community Health Worker? What challenges do you face in your work as a Community Health Worker?

## CONCLUSIONS:

- **Represented Demographics:** Responses indicate that most graduates are between the ages of 39 and 58, and primarily identify as female, straight, and white. This data indicates that OSU's training program should consider expanding their recruitment efforts to train more individuals who are representative of underserved and underrepresented communities.
- **Supported Areas:** Most respondents have worked or are working in the Willamette Valley and the North Coast regions of Oregon. Stronger recruitment efforts and the establishment of stronger relationships with current CHWs may be important in other regions, especially Central Oregon, in order to support more parts of Oregon through OSU's training program.
- **Supported Populations:** Responses indicate that some populations, like individuals without traditional housing or individuals without insurance, seem to be strongly supported by CHW graduates from OSU. Further training specific to these and other populations or networking opportunities with individuals associated with these populations may be important to provide CHWs with the skills and resources to best support these populations.
- **Supported Work Settings:** Respondents seem to work mostly in Community-based Organizations (CBOs) and clinics. We see that places like schools, religious centers, and tribal health departments are lacking in CHW graduates from OSU's program. The program may need to improve their outreach and recruitment efforts in places where trainees may be more likely to work in these settings after graduation.
- **Supporting CHWs:** Respondents said that the biggest challenge to doing their job is the lack of resources and services available to connect their clients, followed by insufficient wages and lack of support from their employers. Increasing wages and advocating for the wellbeing of CHWs, as well as advocating to prioritize the funding and resources CHWs utilize to help their clients effectively may be necessary for creating a positive and functional work atmosphere for CHWs.

## FUTURE DIRECTIONS:

- OSU's training program plans to develop continuing education training opportunities for CHWs working with specific populations.
- OSU's training program plans to expand their recruitment efforts to reach more people at both ends of the age spectrum.
- OSU's training program plans to enter new collaborations with Coordinated Care Organizations and other funders to offer scholarship opportunities for foundational training and continuing education participants.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Funding for Oregon State University's Community Health Worker training program is provided by Eastern Oregon Coordinated Care Organization.

