# National Athletic Trainers' Association

## 2026 Compensation and Workforce Study-White Paper

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## Introduction and Methodology

The National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) retained McKinley Advisors (McKinley) to conduct a salary survey to provide an up-to-date look at the athletic trainer field and provide professionals with important information regarding compensation and benefits.

NATA deployed an electronic survey to members and non-members. The survey was fielded for 25 days, from January 20, 2026, to February 13, 2026. The survey instrument was distributed to 28,281 valid email addresses belonging to current NATA members. Each invitation included a referral link that allowed participants to share the survey with colleagues or others who might also wish to participate. In addition, a separate survey link was shared via social media channels to reach non-members. The survey was completed or partially completed by a total of 8,167 individuals. More specifically, 5,503 members and 2,170 nonmembers participated in the survey, as self-reported through the survey. Of the contacts that were part of the email campaign, the member response rate was 6.1 percent, falling in line with what McKinley typically sees for members (5-8 percent). Pew Research Center indicates its response rates typically range between 5 percent and 15 percent, which is comparable to other major opinion polls.[1] The referral campaign generated an additional 956 responses, while social media outreach contributed 5,500 more.

| Total Responses | 8,167 |
|---|---|
| Member Responses | 5,503 |
| Non-Member Responses | 2,170 |

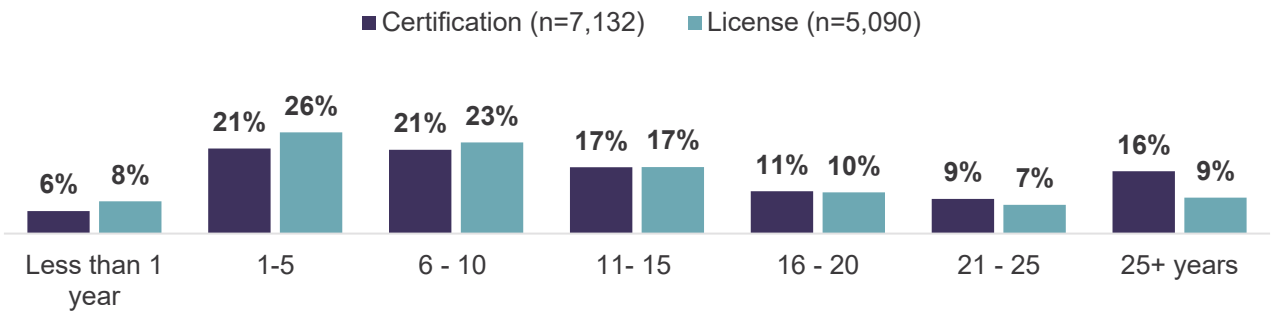
The following report summarizes the findings from the salary survey. Respondents had to be certified/licensed athletic trainers to participate in the survey. The report summarizes data for respondents who completed the survey and are employed full-time unless otherwise noted. The data presented has been analyzed according to various demographic factors, including work setting, age, gender, ethnicity, and level of education. Data was not included for any demographic segment with less than ten respondents. Additionally, data points were rounded to the nearest whole number; therefore, results may not sum to exactly 100 percent.

[1] Source: *http://www.pewresearch.org/methodology/u-s-survey-research/our-survey-methodology-in-detail/*

## Respondent Demographics

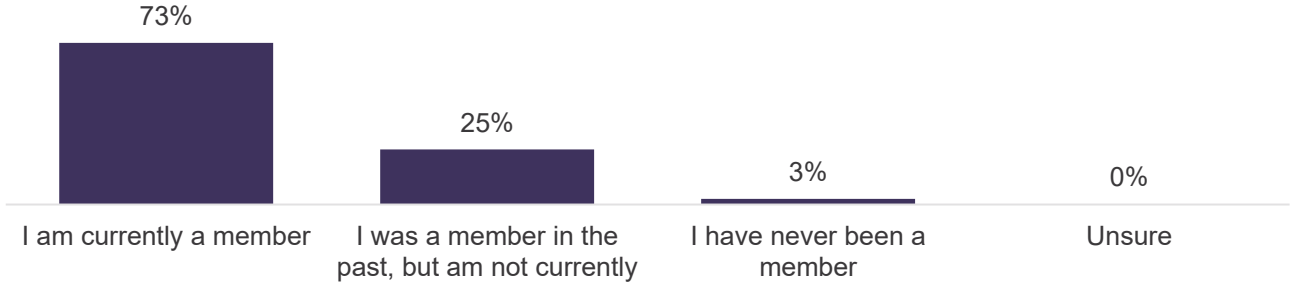
**Among full-time 2026 NATA survey respondents, 48 percent of certification holders and 57 percent of license holders have held their credentials for 10 years or less.** Meanwhile, 25 percent of certification holders and 16 percent of license holders have held theirs for more than 2 decades. These patterns reflect a relatively balanced distribution across career stages.

**How long have you held your certification/licensure?**



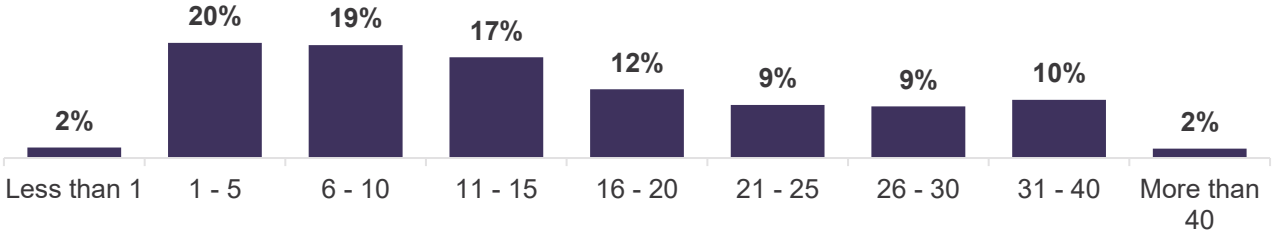

Most respondents (73 percent) described themselves as current NATA members, 25 percent indicated they were former members, and only 3 percent reported never having been affiliated with NATA. Among those who were members, the majority (80 percent) were Certified Professional members, while 15 percent held the status of Licensed Professionals. Additionally, less than 1 percent were certified students or Associates.

**Which of the following best describes your affiliation with NATA? (n=7,270)**




**59 percent have held membership in NATA for more than 10 years.** 22 percent have been members for 5 years or less.

**How many years have you been a member of NATA?**
(n=5,213)




**32 percent of respondents primarily work in college/university settings, while 30 percent work in secondary schools; the top setting overall is high schools with an athletic-only appointment**

**(18 percent), followed by NCAA Division I colleges/universities - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic (11 percent).** Clinic-based roles account for about 14 percent, and hospitals for 9 percent. Professional sports, military, and industrial/occupational settings each represent less than 2 percent individually.

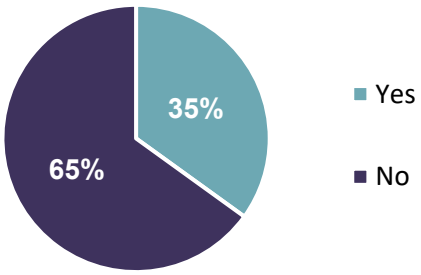
| Which of the following best describes your primary work setting? | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Position** | **Percentage** | **Count** |
| Secondary School - High School - Athletic only | 18% | 1,318 |
| College/University - NCAA Division I - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 11% | 822 |
| Secondary School - Middle and High School - Athletic only | 6% | 425 |
| College/University - NCAA Division III - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 5% | 365 |
| College/University - Faculty/Academic/Research | 5% | 364 |
| Hospital - Outreach | 5% | 353 |
| Secondary School - High School - Both Academic and Athletic | 4% | 275 |
| Clinic - Secondary School Outreach | 4% | 267 |
| College/University - NCAA Division II - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 3% | 248 |
| Clinic - Outpatient/Ambulatory/Rehabilitation clinic | 3% | 234 |
| College/University - NAIA - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 3% | 193 |
| Clinic - Hospital-based clinic | 3% | 185 |
| Clinic - Physician-owned clinic | 2% | 168 |
| College/University - Two-year Institution - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 2% | 149 |
| Other | 2% | 134 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Ergonomics | 2% | 122 |
| Hospital - Orthopedics | 2% | 115 |
| Secondary School - Middle and High School - Both Academic and Athletic | 1% | 93 |
| Military | 1% | 91 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Clinic | 1% | 90 |
| Professional Sports - Baseball | 1% | 81 |
| Clinic - Administration | 1% | 79 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Health/Wellness/Fitness | 1% | 76 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Other | 1% | 72 |
| Hospital - Administration | 1% | 72 |
| College/University – Administration (e.g., Division Chair, Dean, Vice President, etc.) | 1% | 71 |
| College/University- Hospital/Health System | 0.9% | 65 |
| Clinic - Other | 0.7% | 52 |
| Secondary School - Middle School - Athletic only | 0.7% | 50 |
| Professional Sports - Hockey | 0.6% | 46 |
| College/University - Campus Health/Recreation | 0.6% | 43 |
| Business/Sales/Marketing | 0.6% | 42 |
| Secondary School - High School - Academic only | 0.6% | 42 |
| Clinic - Other Outreach | 0.5% | 39 |
| Hospital - Other | 0.5% | 38 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Professional Sports - Soccer | 0.5% | 34 |
| Professional Sports - Football | 0.4% | 31 |
| Amateur/Recreational/Youth Sports | 0.4% | 28 |
| Professional Sports - Other | 0.4% | 27 |
| Professional Performing Arts | 0.3% | 22 |
| Health/Fitness/Sports Performance Enhancement Clinic/Club | 0.3% | 18 |
| Professional Sports - Basketball | 0.3% | 18 |
| Military Academy | 0.2% | 16 |
| College/University - NCAA Division I - Split Appointment | 0.2% | 16 |
| College/University - NAIA - Split Appointment | 0.2% | 13 |
| Independent Contractor | 0.2% | 12 |
| College/University - NCAA Division III - Split Appointment | 0.2% | 12 |
| College/University - NCAA Division II - Split Appointment | 0.1% | 10 |

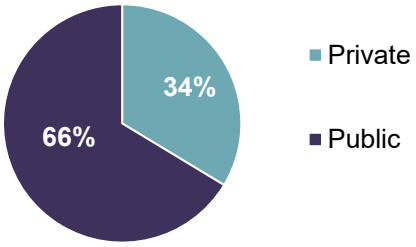
*Data for the following options are not shown due to low sample sizes: Secondary School - Middle School - Both Academic and Athletic, College/University - Two-year Institution - Split Appointment, Government, Clinic - Physician-owned clinic, College/University - Two-year Institution - Faculty/Academic/Research, College/University - Two-year Institution - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic, College/University - Two-year Institution - Split Appointment*

Consistent with prior years, primary work setting aligned with primary employer for 65 percent of respondents. Among those working in schools, colleges, or universities, 66 percent were public institutions.

**Is your primary employer (the organization or entity that compensates you) different than your primary work setting (the physical setting where you perform your job)?**
(n=7,130)




**Which of the following best describes the school, college or university where you work?**
(n=4,520)




Among the 33 percent of respondents whose primary employer differs from their work setting, 49 percent are employed by hospitals (led by hospital outreach at 35 percent), followed by 24 percent for

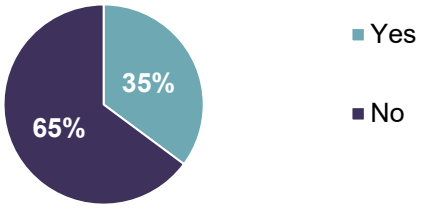
clinics of various types. Overall, respondents were most likely to describe their employer specifically as hospital outreach (35 percent) and hospital orthopedics (9 percent).

| Which of the following best describes your primary employer? | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Primary Employer** | **Percentage** | **Count** |
| Hospital - Outreach | 35% | 870 |
| Hospital - Orthopedics | 9% | 232 |
| Clinic - Outpatient/Ambulatory/Rehabilitation clinic | 6% | 161 |
| Clinic - Secondary School Outreach | 5% | 122 |
| Clinic - Physician owned clinic | 4% | 105 |
| Clinic - Hospital based clinic | 4% | 99 |
| Hospital - Other | 4% | 93 |
| Secondary School – High School – Athletic only | 4% | 91 |
| Other | 4% | 89 |
| Clinic - Other Outreach | 3% | 86 |
| Clinic - Other | 2% | 58 |
| Independent Contractor | 2% | 55 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Ergonomics | 2% | 46 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Clinic | 1% | 34 |
| Hospital - Administration | 1% | 33 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Other | 1% | 33 |
| College/University- Hospital/Health System | 1% | 30 |
| Secondary School - Middle and High School - Athletic only | 1% | 26 |
| Secondary School - High School | 1% | 25 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Health/Wellness/Fitness | 1% | 24 |
| College/University - NCAA Division I - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 0.9% | 23 |
| College/University - NCAA Division III - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 0.8% | 21 |
| Business/Sales/Marketing | 0.8% | 20 |
| College/University - Faculty/Academic/Research | 0.6% | 15 |
| Professional Sports - Baseball | 0.6% | 14 |
| College/University - NAIA - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 0.4% | 11 |
| Military | 0.4% | 11 |

*Data for the following options are not shown due to low sample sizes: College/University - Campus Health/Recreation, Government, Clinic - Administration, College/University - NCAA Division II - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic, College/University - Two-year Institution - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic, Professional Sports - Hockey, Health/Fitness/Sports Performance Enhancement Clinic/Club, Professional Sports - Other, Secondary School - High School - Academic only, Secondary School - Middle and High School - Both Academic and Athletic, College/University – Administration (e.g., Division Chair, Dean, Vice President, etc.), Professional Sports - Football, Professional Sports - Soccer, Amateur/Recreational/Youth Sports, College/University - NCAA Division I - Split Appointment, College/University - Two-year Institution - Split Appointment, Professional Performing Arts, Professional Sports - Basketball, Public Safety - Law Enforcement, Secondary School - Middle School - Both Academic and Athletic, College/University - NAIA - Split Appointment, College/University - NCAA Division II - Split Appointment, College/University - NCAA Division III - Split Appointment, College/University - Performing Arts, College/University - Two-year Institution - Faculty/Academic/Research, Military Academy, Professional Sports - Racing, Public Safety - Fire Department, Secondary School - Middle and High School - Academic only, Secondary School - Middle School - Academic only, Secondary School - Middle School - Athletic only*

**Similar to 2023, 35 percent of respondents reported having worked in a different setting within the previous 5 years, and 24 percent intend to work in a different setting over the next 5 years.** 31 percent of respondents who worked in a different setting in the past 5 years intended to work in a different setting over the next 5 years.

**Have you worked in a different setting within the previous 5 years?**
(n=6,772)




**Do you intend to work in a different setting over the next 5 years?**
(n=6,770)

Those working in College/University settings and Secondary-Middle-High School settings showed relatively low mobility, where 28 and 30 percent (respectively) worked in another setting in the past 5 years and similarly modest shares intending to change settings in the next 5 years (27 and 22 percent). In contrast, respondents working in Industrial/Occupational/Corporate settings (66 percent), as Independent Contractors (63 percent), and in Public Safety settings (62 percent) were the most likely to have worked in another setting within the last 5 years. Looking ahead, those in Health/Fitness/Sports Performance Enhancement Clinic/Club (50 percent) and Amateur/Recreational/Youth Sports (38 percent) reported the highest intentions to move to a different setting over the next 5 years. 25 percent of those from the 5 most common work settings intend to work in another setting.

**Previous and Future Work Setting by Current Work Setting,** *Consolidated*

| Current Work Setting (Consolidated) | Worked in another setting | Intend to work in different setting |
|---|---|---|
| College/University | 28% | 27% |
| Secondary - Middle - High School | 30% | 22% |
| Clinic | 43% | 26% |
| Hospital | 40% | 21% |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate | 66% | 22% |
| Professional Sports | 49% | 20% |
| Other | 50% | 20% |
| Military | 57% | 18% |
| Business/Sales/Marketing | 47% | 11% |
| Amateur/Recreational/Youth Sports | 43% | 38% |
| Professional Performing Arts | 52% | 19% |
| Health/Fitness/Sports Performance Enhancement Clinic/Club | 29% | 50% |
| Military Academy | 23% | 31% |
| Public Safety | 62% | 15% |
| Independent Contractor | 63% | 38% |

*Data for the following options are not shown due to low sample sizes: Government*

**As in 2023, the distribution of previous and intended work settings generally aligned with current work settings, with some exceptions.** Colleges/Universities, Clinics, and Hospitals were among the most popular current, previous, and intended work settings. While Secondary Schools

were among the most popular current work settings, they were not as commonly sought by those intending to change settings. A similar pattern was observed for the College/University setting, which was selected as an intended future setting at a lower rate than it was for current or previous settings. Conversely, findings point to a rising popularity of Clinics (22%) and Hospitals (15%) as intended future work settings. Other settings of rising interest include Professional Sports (9%), Business/Sales/Marketing (5%), and Independent Contractors (4%).

| **Current, Previous, and Intended Work Setting**, *Consolidated* | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Work setting** | **Current** | **Previous** | **Intended** |
| College/University | 33% | 37% | 20% |
| Secondary - Middle - High School | 31% | 18% | 8% |
| Clinic | 14% | 19% | 22% |
| Hospital | 8% | 9% | 15% |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate | 5% | 5% | 8% |
| Professional Sports | 3% | 5% | 9% |
| Other | 2% | 0.0% | 0.0% |
| Military | 1% | 2% | 2% |
| Business/Sales/Marketing | 0.6% | 0.6% | 5% |
| Amateur/Recreational/Youth Sports | 0.4% | 1% | 0.8% |
| Professional Performing Arts | 0.3% | 0.7% | 1% |
| Health/Fitness/Sports Performance Enhancement Clinic/Club | 0.3% | 0.8% | 3% |
| Military Academy | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.0% |
| Public Safety | 0.2% | 0.1% | 0.7% |
| Independent Contractor | 0.2% | 2% | 4% |

*Data for the following options are not shown due to low sample sizes: Government*

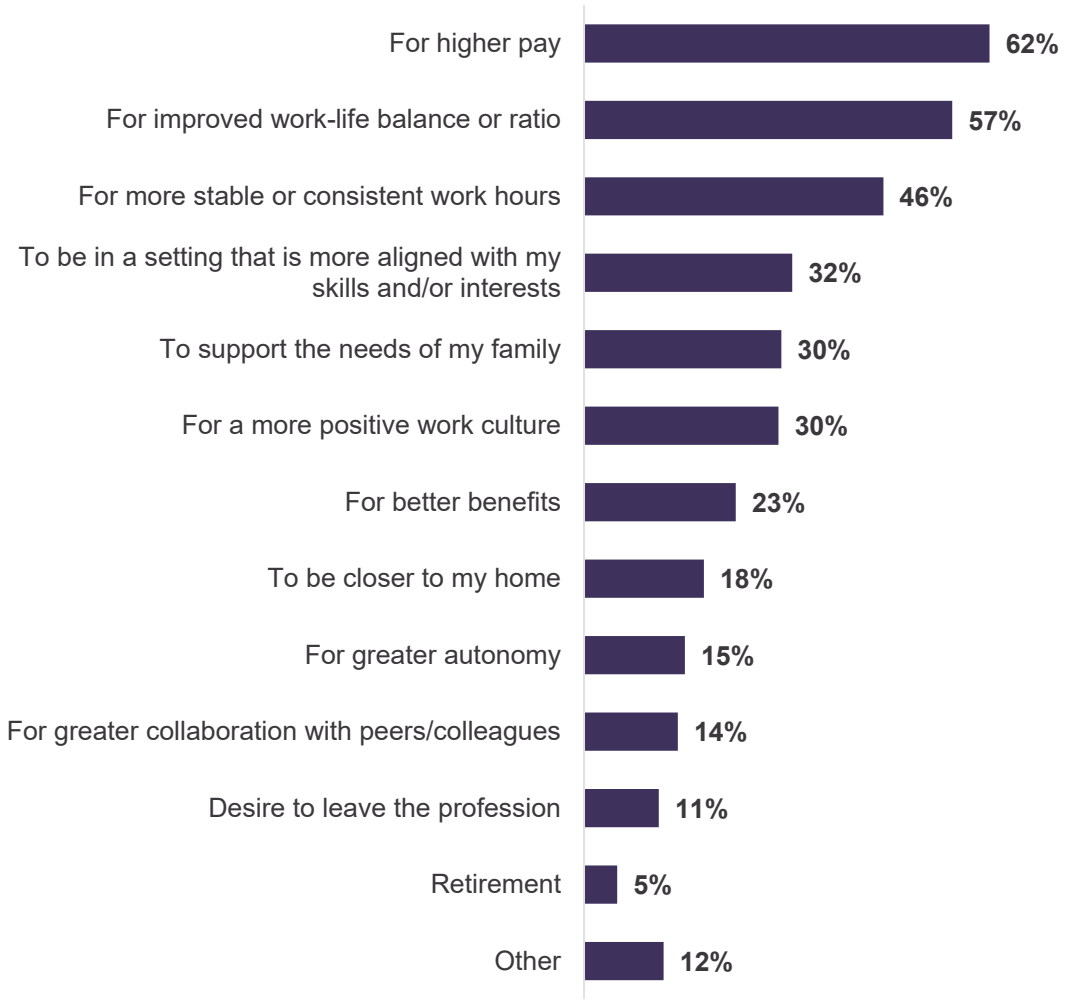
Of those who intended to change work settings, those working in College/University, Clinic, and Hospital settings at the time of the survey most commonly sought work in another department or sub-setting within their current setting. Secondary school employees who planned to change settings were most commonly interested in changing settings completely and moving to a College/University (20 percent), Clinic (20 percent), or Hospital (16 percent). Respondents in Industrial/Occupational/Corporate settings were most interested in Clinic (19 percent) and College/University (17 percent) settings. Those in Professional Sports largely intended to move to a College/University (25 percent, not shown).

**Intended Work Setting by Current Setting (Consolidated)**

| **College/ University** | **Secondary School** (Middle or High) | **Clinic** | **Hospital** | **Industrial/ Occupational / Corporate** |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| College/ University (25%) | College/ University (20%) | Clinic (28%) | Hospital (27%) | Clinic (19%) |
| Clinic (22%) | Clinic (20%) | Hospital (21%) | Clinic (22%) | College/ University (17%) |
| Professional Sports (14%) | Hospital (16%) | Industrial/Occ/ Corporate (11%) | Secondary - Middle – High School (13%) | Industrial/Occ/ Corporate (14%) |

**The most common reasons respondents changed or intended to change their work setting were for higher pay (62 percent) and improved work-life balance (57 percent).** Nearly half (46 percent) desired more stable or consistent work hours. Eleven percent wanted to change work settings to leave the profession, and 5 percent retired. Other reasons for changing settings included contract endings or job losses, relocation due to family or spouse moves, career advancement, and completing residencies or pursuing advanced degrees. Reasons for changing settings in the past generally aligned with reasons for intending to change settings in the future.

**Reasons for Changing Work Setting**
(n=3,222)

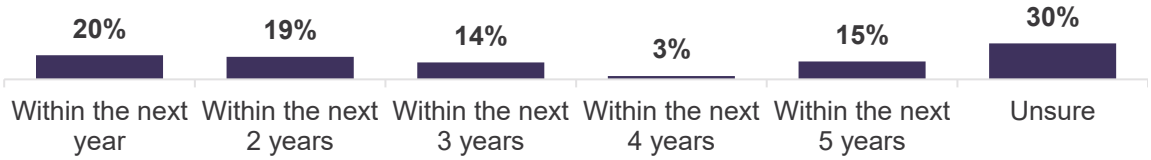



Higher pay was one of the top 2 reasons for changing settings for all intended work settings (consolidated) except Clinic (63 percent) and Public Safety (36 percent, not shown). Respondents who intended to move to a Clinic (70 percent), Secondary – Middle – High School (59 percent, not shown), Independent Contractor (65 percent, not shown), or Public Safety (73 percent, not shown) settings were more likely to be motivated by improved work-life balance over higher pay. Those in College/University (59 percent), Professional Sports (70 percent), and Professional Performing Arts (67 percent, not shown) were more likely to desire a setting that was more aligned with their skills and/or interests.

| Reason for Changing Setting by Intended Work Setting | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reason for Changing Work Setting** | **Clinic** (n=335) | **College/ University** (n=303) | **Hospital** (n=228) | **Professional Sports** (n=132) |
| For higher pay | 63% | 55% | 77% | 61% |
| For improved work-life balance or ratio | 70% | 42% | 65% | 24% |
| For more stable or consistent work hours | 67% | 32% | 61% | 15% |
| To be in a setting that is more aligned with my skills and/or interests | 19% | 59% | 21% | 70% |
| To support the needs of my family | 42% | 19% | 37% | 18% |
| For a more positive work culture | 24% | 24% | 28% | 22% |
| For better benefits | 15% | 20% | 25% | 19% |
| To be closer to my home | 13% | 18% | 11% | 14% |
| For greater autonomy | 10% | 19% | 13% | 14% |
| For greater collaboration with peers/colleagues | 10% | 29% | 13% | 26% |
| Other | 13% | 12% | 7% | 11% |
| Desire to leave the profession | 21% | 8% | 29% | 5% |
| Retirement | 5% | 3% | 4% | 4% |

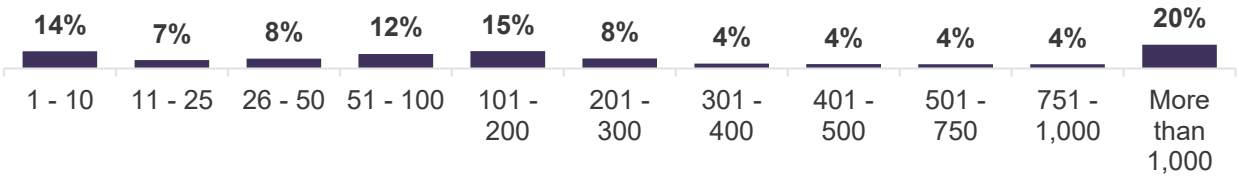
**Of the respondents who desire to leave the profession, 54 percent anticipate exiting within the next 3 years,** with 20 percent expecting to leave within the next year, 19 percent within 2 years, and 14 percent within 3 years, while an additional 18 percent plan to leave within 4 to 5 years and 30 percent remain unsure of their timeline.

**Please indicate below how soon you anticipate leaving the profession.**
(n=370)



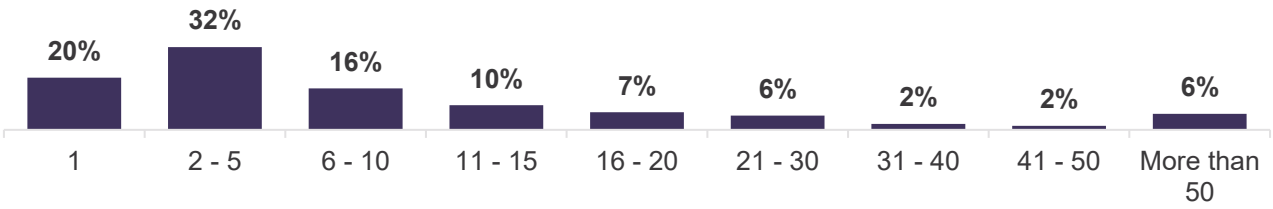

**Similar to 2023, 20 percent of respondents had more than 1,000 employees at their workplace.** 41 percent reported working with 100 or fewer other employees, while 31 percent work in settings with 101 to 500 employees, and 28 percent with 501 or more. This distribution shows a continued majority (72 percent) in organizations of 500 or fewer employees.

**What is the approximate number of total employees at your workplace?**
(n=6,953)



52 percent of respondents work at primary settings with just 1-5 athletic trainers. 33 percent are in settings with 6-20 athletic trainers, while 16 percent report 21 or more colleagues. 6 percent work in larger programs with more than 50 athletic trainers.

**What is the approximate number of athletic trainers employed at your workplace?**
(n=7,006)




72 percent of respondents identified an athletic trainer position as their primary job title (shown in the highlighted rows in the table below). **34 percent described their primary job title as Athletic Trainer,** while 38 percent listed more specific athletic trainer titles, with Head/Lead Athletic Trainer (15 percent) and Assistant Athletic Trainer (14 percent) as the most common. The top "Other" primary job titles included clinical/surgical athletic trainer or first assistant (often combined with AT), dean or academic leadership positions, physician extender, and outreach or industrial athletic trainer variants.

| Which of the following best describes your primary job title? | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Primary Job Title** | **Percentage** | **Count** |
| Athletic Trainer | 34% | 2,383 |
| Head/Lead Athletic Trainer | 15% | 1,016 |
| Assistant Athletic Trainer | 14% | 1,008 |
| Clinical Athletic Trainer | 5% | 327 |
| Other | 5% | 319 |
| Associate Athletic Trainer | 3% | 232 |
| Director of Sports Medicine | 2% | 167 |
| Injury Prevention Specialist | 2% | 130 |
| Manager | 1% | 94 |
| Assistant Athletic Director | 1% | 77 |
| Teacher | 1% | 73 |
| Associate Professor | 0.9% | 66 |
| Assistant Professor | 0.9% | 64 |
| Early Intervention Specialist | 0.9% | 64 |
| Assistant Director of Sports Medicine | 0.9% | 63 |
| Director of Athletic Training Services | 0.9% | 63 |
| Associate Athletic Director | 0.8% | 59 |
| Clinical Coordinator | 0.8% | 58 |
| Supervisor | 0.8% | 56 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Administrative Director | 0.7% | 47 |
| Associate Professor - Program Director | 0.7% | 47 |
| Full Professor | 0.7% | 47 |
| Senior Associate Athletic Trainer | 0.6% | 44 |
| Medical Office Staff | 0.6% | 40 |
| Full Professor - Program Director | 0.5% | 37 |
| Coordinator of Athletic Training Services | 0.5% | 33 |
| Sales/Marketing Professional | 0.4% | 29 |
| Coordinator of Sports Medicine | 0.4% | 27 |
| Durable Medical Equipment Coordinator/Specialist | 0.4% | 25 |
| Lecturer/Instructor | 0.3% | 24 |
| Physical Therapist | 0.3% | 23 |
| Intern Athletic Trainer | 0.3% | 21 |
| Administrative Coordinator | 0.3% | 20 |
| Clinical Administrator | 0.3% | 20 |
| Owner/Partner | 0.3% | 18 |
| Assistant Professor - Program Director | 0.2% | 16 |
| Associate Professor - Department Chair | 0.2% | 16 |
| Clinical Specialist | 0.2% | 16 |
| Athletic Training Resident | 0.2% | 13 |
| Clinical Director | 0.2% | 13 |
| Full Professor - Department Chair | 0.2% | 12 |
| Outreach Coordinator | 0.2% | 11 |
| Project Manager | 0.1% | 10 |

*Data for the following options are not shown due to low sample sizes: Outreach Director, Physical Therapist Assistant, Athletic Director, Consultant, Director of Rehabilitation, Assistant Professor - Department Chair, Educational Consultant, Wellness Coordinator, Coordinator of Rehabilitation, Graduate Student/Graduate Assistant Athletic Trainer, Wellness Director, Fitness Coordinator, Fitness Director, Graduate Assistant Athletic Trainer, Counselor, Physician Extender*

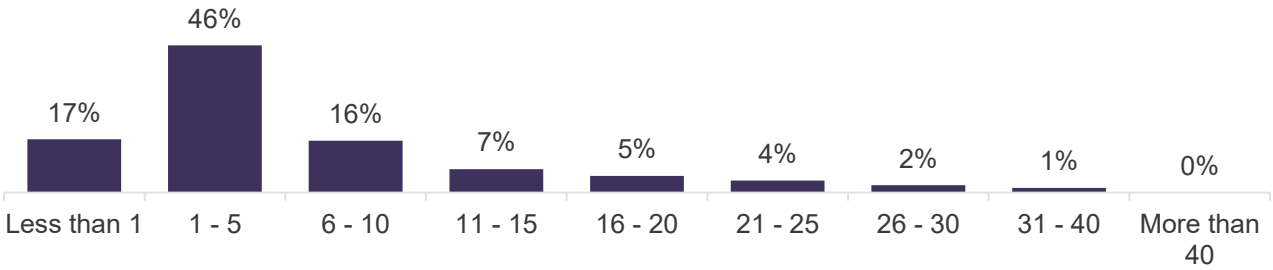
**Respondents were most likely to report directly to Athletic Directors (19 percent).** 26 percent report to other athletic training leadership such as head/lead athletic trainer (10 percent), athletic training manager/supervisor (9 percent), or director of sports medicine (7 percent). The most frequent "Other" reporting titles were industry managers or directors, team supervisors or leads, human resources personnel, fellow athletic trainers, presidents or owners, area/regional managers, nurse managers, and general managers

| Please indicate the position that you directly report to | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Position reporting to** | **Percentage** | **Count** |
| Athletic Director | 19% | 1,322 |
| Head/Lead Athletic Trainer | 10% | 650 |
| Athletic Training Manager/Supervisor | 9% | 585 |
| Director of Sports Medicine | 7% | 473 |
| Other | 5% | 334 |
| Director of Athletic Training | 5% | 333 |
| Clinic Manager | 4% | 270 |
| Department Head | 3% | 203 |
| Sports Medicine Manager | 3% | 189 |
| Academic Chair/Dean | 3% | 172 |
| Clinical Supervisor | 3% | 171 |
| Associate Athletic Director | 2% | 134 |
| Physician | 2% | 114 |
| Outreach Coordinator | 2% | 111 |
| Administrator | 2% | 104 |
| Program Director | 1% | 97 |
| Department Chair | 1% | 96 |
| Athletic Trainer | 1% | 94 |
| General Manager | 1% | 93 |
| Assistant Athletic Director | 1% | 88 |
| Principal/Head of School | 1% | 84 |
| Director of Operations | 1% | 83 |
| Physical Therapist | 1% | 80 |
| Administrative Director | 1% | 80 |
| Director of Rehabilitation | 1% | 77 |
| Vice President | 1% | 77 |
| Regional Director | 1% | 75 |
| Safety Manager | 1% | 68 |
| Clinic Director | 1% | 67 |

*Not shown: Less than one percent selected Dean, Associate Athletic Trainer, Executive Director, Company Owner, Chief Executive Officer, I do not report to anyone, Athletic Coordinator, Chief Operating Officer, Business Manager, Assistant Principal, Assistant Athletic Trainer, Center Manager, Director of Sports Science, Chief Medical Officer, Provost, Vice Principal, Deputy Athletic Trainer, Campus Coordinator, Teacher*

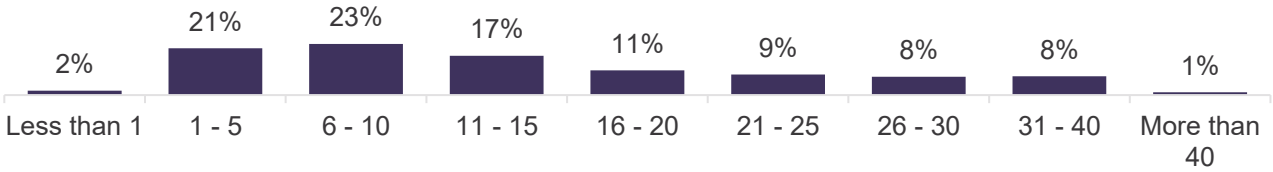
**Over 60 percent of respondents have worked in their current positions for 5 years or less,** including 17 percent that held their positions for less than a year. Another 16 percent have held their current positions for 6 to 10 years, and 12 percent have worked in their roles for 11 and 20 years. Only 7 percent have been in their current positions for over 2 decades.

**How many years have you worked in your current position?**
(n=6,227)




**23 percent had 5 or fewer years of experience in the athletic training profession.** About a quarter (23 percent) have worked in the profession for between 6 and 10 years. 28 percent had between 11 and 20 years of experience, and 26 percent had more than 20 years of experience.

**How many years have you worked in the athletic training profession (including years worked during graduate school)?**
(n=6,198)

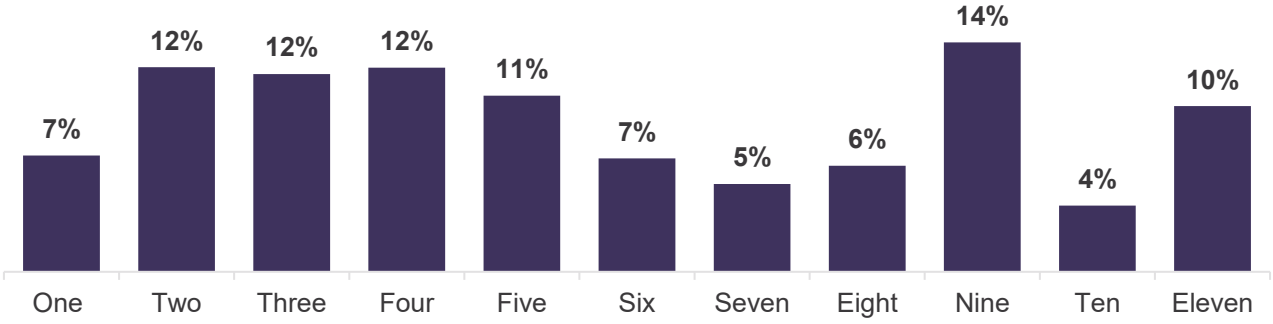



Respondents were most likely to select **Chicago**-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI Metro Area, **Philadelphia**-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD Metro Area, **New York**-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area, **Boston**-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH Metro Area, and "**None**" (3 percent each) as the major metropolitan areas that best represent their place of employment.

| Top 20 Nearest Major Metropolitan Area | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Major Metro Area** | **Percentage** | **Count** |
| Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI Metro Area | 3% | 184 |
| Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD Metro Area | 3% | 161 |
| New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area | 3% | 161 |
| Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH Metro Area | 3% | 147 |
| None | 3% | 137 |
| Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX Metro Area | 2% | 120 |
| Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA Metro Area | 2% | 111 |
| Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV Metro Area | 2% | 109 |
| Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI Metro Area | 2% | 108 |
| Kansas City, MO-KS Metro Area | 2% | 100 |
| Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA Metro Area | 2% | 98 |
| Indianapolis-Carmel-Anderson, IN Metro Area | 2% | 91 |
| Columbus, OH Metro Area | 2% | 87 |
| Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI Metro Area | 1% | 75 |
| Pittsburgh, PA Metro Area | 1% | 74 |
| St. Louis, MO-IL Metro Area | 1% | 72 |
| Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC Metro Area | 1% | 72 |
| Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN Metro Area | 1% | 64 |
| Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN Metro Area | 1% | 61 |
| Denver-Aurora-Lakewood, CO Metro Area | 1% | 59 |

The top districts in which respondents were employed were District Nine (14 percent), District Two (12 percent), District Three (12 percent), and District Four* (12 percent). Respondents were least likely to be from District Eight (6 percent), District Seven (5 percent), or District Ten (4 percent).

**District**
(n=5,814)

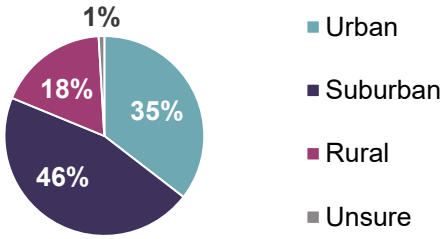



**Data reflect the shift of 3 states from District 4 (Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) to form District 11 in January 2022*

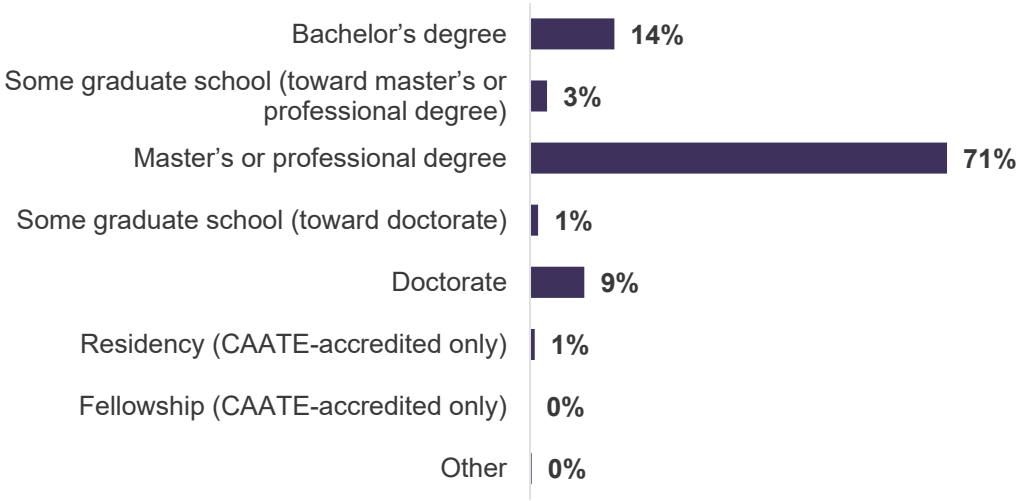
46 percent of all respondents were based in suburban areas, followed by more than 35 percent in urban areas and 18 percent in rural settings.

72 percent respondents held a master's degree or were working toward a doctorate. 17 percent had a bachelor's or were working toward a master's degree, while 9 percent held a doctorate.

**Which of the following best describes the area in which you work?**
(n=6,216)

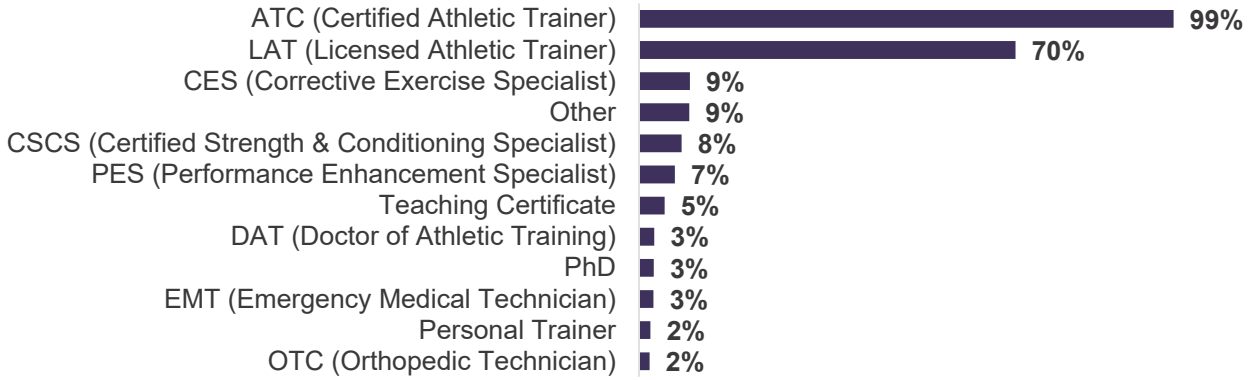



**Please select your highest level of education.**
(n=6,201)




Almost all respondents (99 percent) reported being Certified Athletic Trainers, and seven out of ten (70 percent) reported being Licensed Athletic Trainers. Nine percent reported being Corrective Exercise Specialists, eight percent Certified Strength & Conditioning Specialists, and seven percent Performance Enhancement Specialists. Five percent held a teaching certificate. Nine percent selected "other" credentials; the top credentials mentioned were ergonomics certifications like CEAS, orthotic fitting, dry needling, OPE-C, and MBAs, alongside surgical assistant designations (CSFA), and sports performance certs (CPSS).

**Which professional credentials do you hold? Select all that apply.**
(n=6,205)



72 percent of respondents selected Athletic Trainer* as their primary job title. 70 percent of respondents holding the following credentials also indicated their primary job title was Athletic Trainer*: LMT (81 percent), EMT (77 percent), LAT (75 percent), ATC (72 percent), and CES (70 percent).

| Credential by Athletic Trainer Job Title | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Credential** | **% selecting AT* as primary job title** | **Count** |
| ATC (Certified Athletic Trainer) | 72% | 6,162 |
| LAT (Licensed Athletic Trainer) | 75% | 4,339 |
| CES (Corrective Exercise Specialist) | 70% | 587 |
| Other | 60% | 579 |
| CSCS (Certified Strength & Conditioning Specialist) | 59% | 492 |
| PES (Performance Enhancement Specialist) | 66% | 414 |
| Teaching Certificate | 61% | 295 |
| DAT (Doctor of Athletic Training) | 58% | 176 |
| PhD | 9% | 170 |
| EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) | 77% | 166 |
| Personal Trainer | 66% | 131 |
| OTC (Orthopedic Technician) | 60% | 122 |
| EdD (Doctor of Education) | 21% | 84 |
| PTA (Physical Therapy Assistant) | 60% | 58 |
| PT (Physical Therapist) | 26% | 50 |
| DPT (Doctor of Physical Therapy) | 48% | 40 |
| LMT (Licensed Massage Therapist) | 81% | 32 |
| RN (Registered Nurse) | 55% | 11 |

*Data for the following options are not shown due to low sample sizes: PA (Physician Assistant), Paramedic, RN (Registered Nurse), Certified Cardiographic Technician, None of the above, LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse), OT (Occupational Therapist)*

**For the purpose of this analysis, AT includes the following job titles: Athletic Trainer, Head Athletic Trainer, Assistant Athletic Trainer, Clinical Athletic Trainer, Associate Athletic Trainer, Intern Athletic Trainer, Senior Associate Athletic Trainer, Athletic Training Resident, Graduate Assistant Athletic Trainer, Graduate Student/Graduate Assistant Athletic Trainer.*

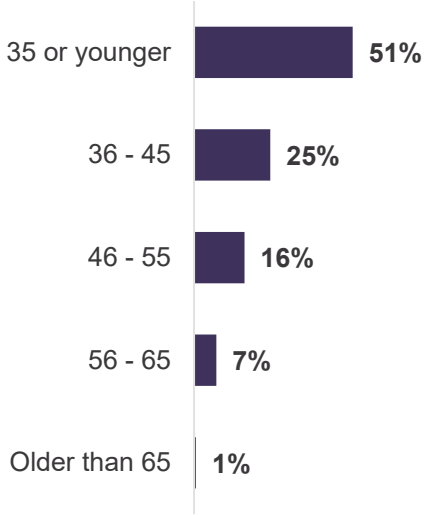
Credential holdings among respondents were nearly identical by geography for core ATC certification (99 percent across urban, suburban, and rural areas). LAT licensure showed the largest variation, with rural ATs at 74 percent versus 66 percent in urban areas. Secondary credentials like CES (11 percent urban vs. 7 percent rural) and CSCS (9 percent urban vs. 7 percent rural) trended slightly higher in urban settings.

| Top Five Overall Credentials by Geographic Area | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Credential** | **Urban** (n=2,196) | **Suburban** (n=2,832) | **Rural** (n=1,108) |
| ATC (Certified Athletic Trainer) | 99% | 99% | 99% |
| LAT (Licensed Athletic Trainer) | 66% | 71% | 74% |
| CES (Corrective Exercise Specialist) | 11% | 9% | 7% |
| CSCS (Certified Strength & Conditioning Specialist) | 9% | 7% | 7% |
| PES (Performance Enhancement Specialist) | 7% | 7% | 5% |

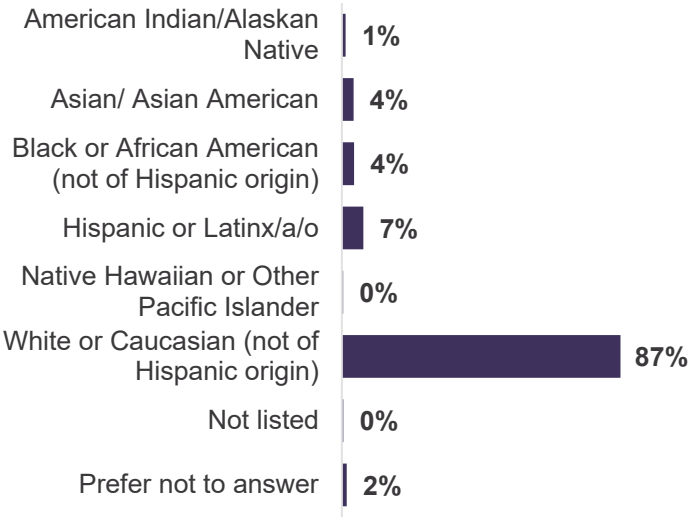
**51 percent were young professionals 35 or younger**, which is moderately less than the 58 percent of respondents in 2023**.** 25 percent were between 36 and 45, 16 percent were between 46 and 55, and only 8 percent were older than 55.

Most respondents (87 percent) reported their ethnicity as white or Caucasian. 7 percent identified as Hispanic or Latinx/a/o, 4 percent as Black or African American, 4 percent as Asian/Asian American, and 1 percent as American Indian/Alaskan Natives.

**Please select your age range.**
(n=6,208)

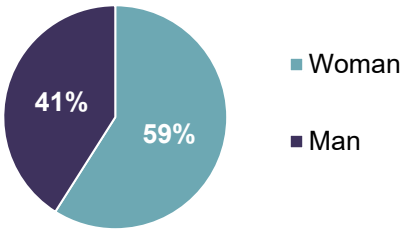



**Please select your ethnicity.**
(n=6,193)



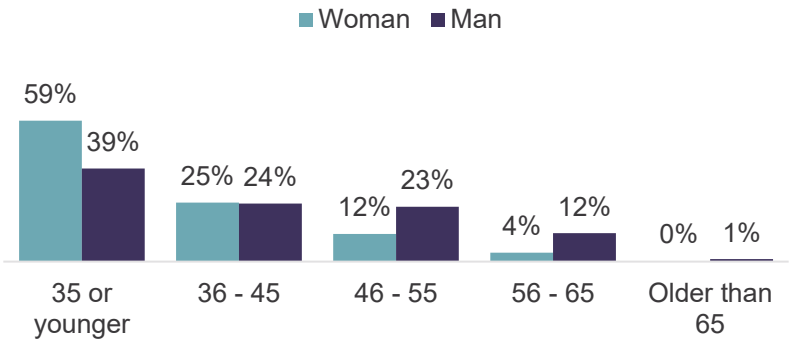

Most respondents (59 percent) identified as women, and 41 percent identified as men. Notably, women were more likely than men to fall within the 35 or younger age group. Fifty-nine percent of women were 35 years old or younger, compared to only 39 percent of men.

**Please select your gender.**
(n=6,198)




*Less than 1 percent selected the following options: Non-binary/gender non-conforming, Prefer to self-describe, or Prefer not to answer*

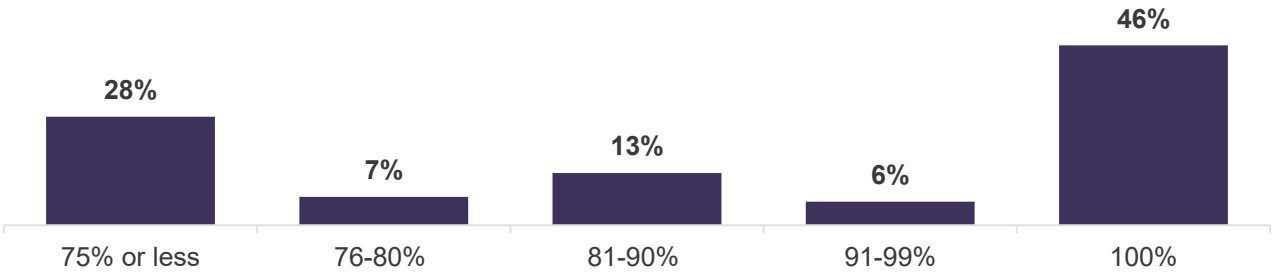
**Gender by Age**
(n=6,448)



## Workplace Data

Respondents were asked to report the percentage of time they spent performing athletic training work. Similar to 2021 and 2023, 72 percent of respondents spent more than 75 percent of their time on athletic training work, with nearly half (46 percent) spending all their time on it.

**Approximately what percentage of your time in this position is spent performing athletic training work?**
(n=6,801)

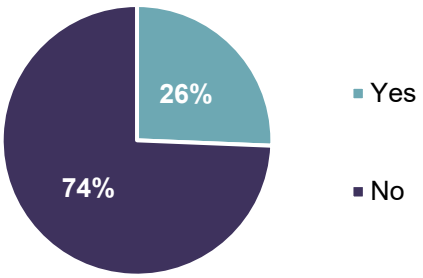



Respondents were asked how many hours they are *required* to work per week compared to how many hours they *typically* work per week. On average, respondents reported being required to work approximately 40 hours per week but typically working 49 hours per week (an average of 9 more hours per week than required. Compared with 2023, when respondents reported an average requirement of 39 hours per week but typically worked 51 hours (a 12-hour gap), the average required hours in 2026 remained similar while typical hours declined, narrowing the difference to 9 hours and suggesting a modest improvement in workload alignment.

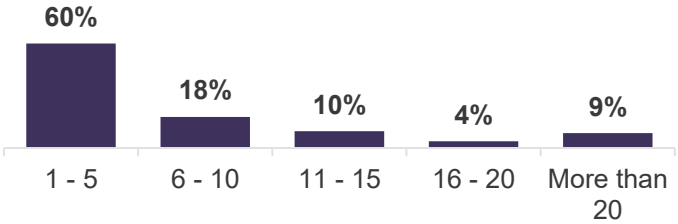
| Average Hours Required to Work and Hours Typically Worked | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Average Required Hours Per Week** | **Average Typical Hours Per Week** | **Average Difference** |
| 40 | 49 | 9 |

Similar to 2021 and 2023, most respondents (74 percent) did not supervise employees. Of the 26 percent who supervise employees, most (60 percent) reported supervising 1 to 5 employees. Eighteen percent supervised 6 to 10 employees, 10 percent supervised 11 to 15 employees, and four percent supervised 16 to 20. Only 9 percent supervised more than 20 employees.

**Do you supervise employees?**
(n=6,225)

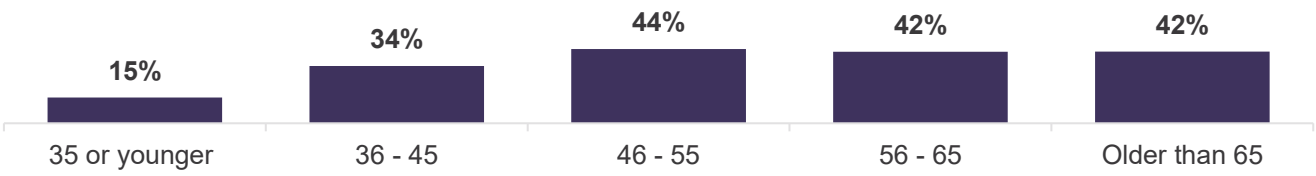



**How many employees do you supervise?**
(n=1,590)



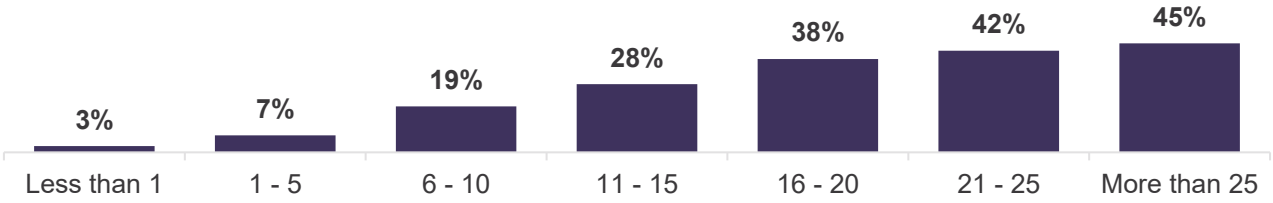
Supervisory responsibility increases with age. Only 15 percent of respondents age 35 or younger report supervising employees, compared with 34 percent of those ages 36 to 45 and 44 percent of those ages 46 to 55. Supervision remains common among older respondents, with 42 percent of those older than 55 overseeing employees.

**% Supervise Employees by Age**
(n=5,646)



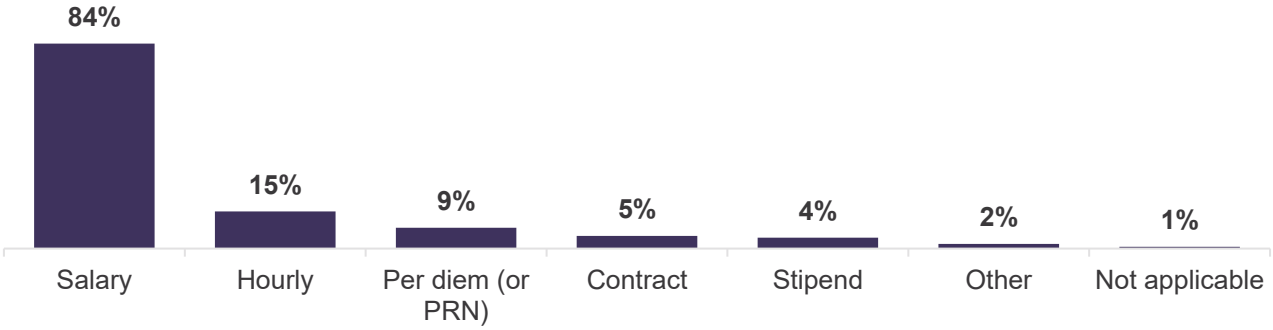

Supervisory responsibility increases steadily with years in the athletic training profession. Only about 3 percent of respondents with less than 1 year of experience supervise employees, rising to 7 percent among those with 1 to 5 years and 19 percent among those with 6 to 10 years. The share continues to grow with tenure, reaching its peak of 45 percent among those with more than 25 years of experience.

**% Supervise Employees by Tenure**
(n=5,640)




The majority (84 percent) of respondents were compensated for their athletic training work in the form of a salary, down 1 percentage point from 2023. 15 percent of respondents received hourly compensation; 9 percent were compensated through per diems or PRN, 5 percent through contracts, and 4 percent through stipends.

**How are you compensated for your athletic training work? Select all that apply.**
(n=6,733)



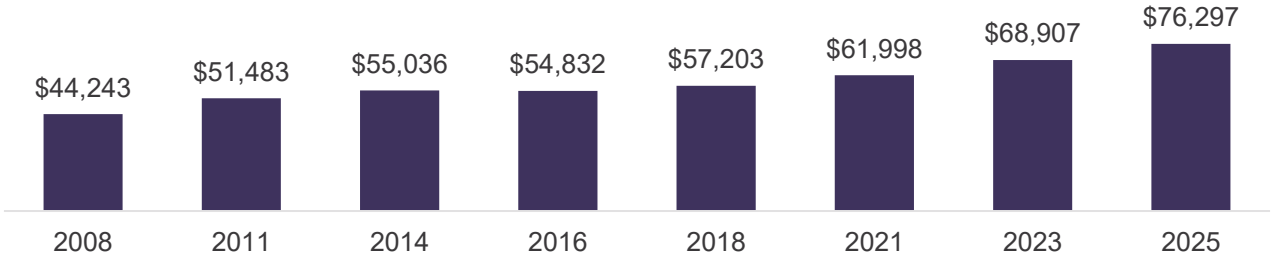
Similar to 2023, more than three-quarters of 2026 respondents who received compensation through a per diem or PRN (84 percent), stipend (80 percent), or contract (77 percent) also received a salary. “Other” compensation included responses like bonus, overtime, dues, commission, and benefits.

| Compensation for Athletic Training Work | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Compensation** | **Percent Also Receiving Salary 2018** | **Percent Also Receiving Salary 2021** | **Percent Also Receiving Salary 2023** | **Percent Also Receiving Salary 2026** |
| Per diem (or PRN) | 45% | 78% | 81% | 84% |
| Stipend | 40% | 69% | 79% | 80% |
| Contract | 54% | 78% | 77% | 77% |
| Other | 21% | 74% | 71% | 73% |

## SALARY

**Full-time employed certified/licensed athletic trainers in 2026 reported an average national salary of $76,297.** This reflects an 11 percent increase of $7,390 from the 2023 average of $68,907. Over the last 4 years (2021-2026), salary has increased by more than $14,000, and after adjusting for inflation, the 2026 average of $76,297 has slightly higher buying power than the 2021 and 2023 average salary[2]. The overall average bonus for full-time employed certified/licensed athletic trainers in 2026 was $4,690, up 32 percent from $3,550 in 2023.

**Average National Salary**



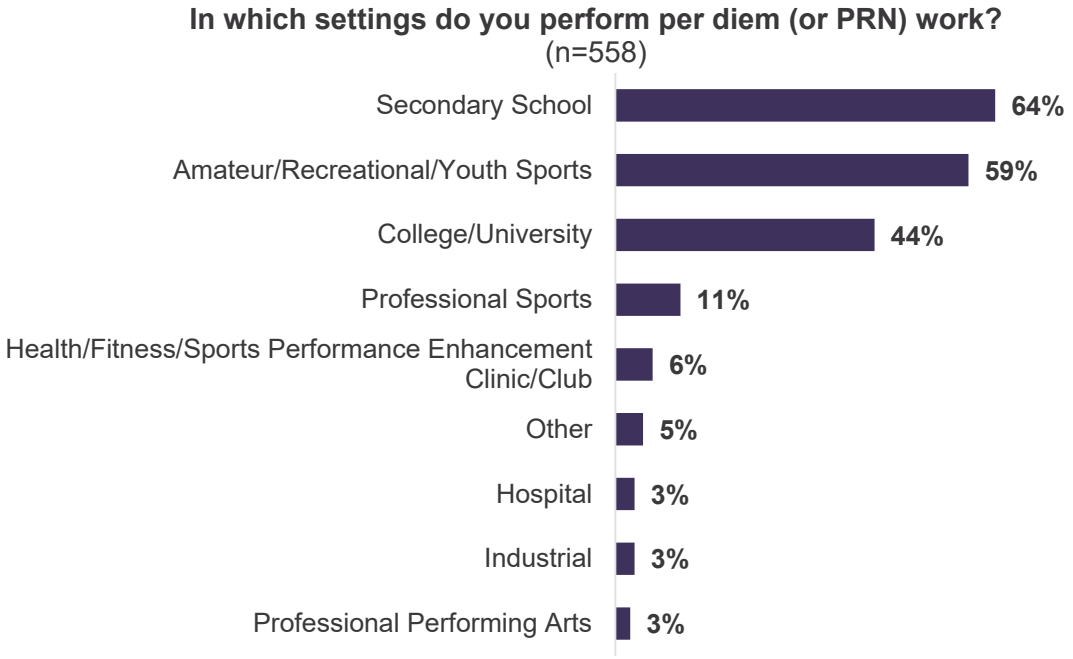

## HOURLY

**Certified/licensed athletic trainers employed full-time and compensated on an hourly basis reported an average hourly rate of $34 per hour, marking an increase of $4 since 2023 ($30).** Overtime pay rose from $40 to $44 per hour from 2023 to 2026.

## PER DIEM

**Up from 6 percent in 2023, 9 percent of 2026 respondents reported that they conduct per diem work**. 64 percent work in secondary schools, 59 percent in amateur/youth sports, and 44 percent in college/university settings.

[2] According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator: https://data.bls.gov/cgi-bin/cpicalc.pl

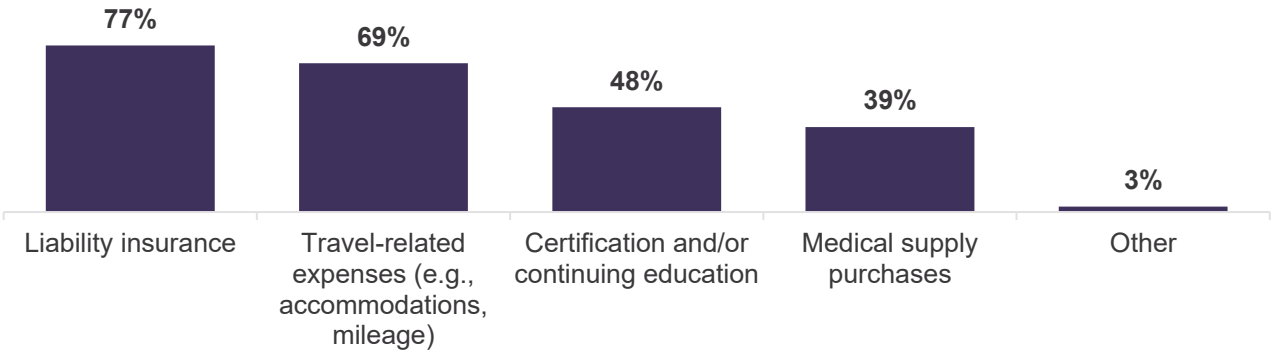



**Secondary school per diem hourly rates rose sharply to $56 in 2026—the highest rate across all settings and up significantly from $37 in 2023, moving secondary school to the top of the ranking list.** "Other" settings also rose sharply and include middle/high school extensions, youth/club sports, camps/clinics, events/outreach, telehealth, tactical athletes, and concierge medicine. Professional Sports averaged $50, while those in Professional Performing Arts averaged $49. The majority of respondents, who work in College/University, Health/Fitness/Sports Performance Enhancement Clinic/Club, Industrial, and Hospital settings, reported hourly rates ranging from $41 to $44. Respondents performing per diem work within the Secondary School and Other settings experienced the greatest percentage increase in hourly rates (51 percent and 37 percent, respectively) since 2023.

| Please enter the average hourly rate you receive for your per diem work in each of the following settings. | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Work Setting** | **2021 Avg. Hourly Rate** | **2023 Avg. Hourly Rate** | **2026 Avg. Hourly Rate** | **% increase from 2021** | **2026 Count** |
| Secondary School | $32 | $37 | $56 | 51% | 353 |
| Other | $32 | $38 | $52 | 37% | 24 |
| Professional Sports | $43 | $42 | $50 | 19% | 61 |
| Professional Performing Arts | $41 | $39 | $49 | 26% | 14 |
| Amateur/Recreational/Youth Sports | $31 | $39 | $44 | 13% | 330 |
| College/University | $32 | $38 | $43 | 13% | 243 |
| Health/Fitness/Sports Performance Enhancement Clinic/Club | $37 | $43 | $43 | 0% | 35 |
| Industrial | $32 | $41 | $41 | 0% | 18 |
| Hospital | $29 | $32 | $41 | 28% | 17 |

Respondents performing per diem work were asked if they incurred additional expenses not accounted for in their average hourly rate or covered by a client. The vast majority reported covering expenses related to liability insurance (77 percent) and travel (69 percent). 48 percent invested in certification and/or continuing education, and 39 percent made purchases of medical supplies.

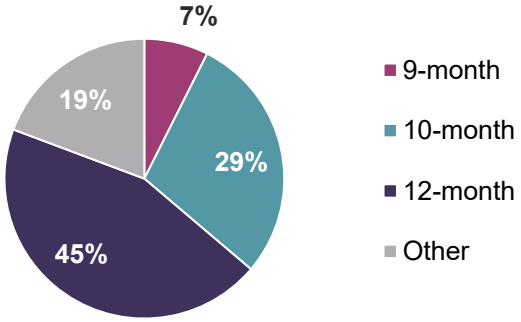
**Do you incur any of the following additional expenses related to per diem work that are NOT accounted for in your average hourly rate or covered by the client? Select all that apply.**
(n=438)




## CONTRACT

Similar to 2023, 5 percent of respondents reported conducting work through a contract. 45 percent indicated their contract length was 12 months, 29 percent reported a 10-month contract, and 7 percent indicated a 9-month contract. Respondents with "other" contract lengths (19 percent) reported a diverse range from 3 months to 5 years, with popular durations being 11 months and 24 months. This reflects a continued trend of a decrease in 12-month contracts (53% in 2021 and 51% in 2023). **However, the overall average hourly rate under contract remained $40.** Those on a 9-month contract reported a higher average hourly rate of $55 compared to 10-month ($40 per hour) and 12-month ($36 per hour) contract rates. Respondents with contract lengths other than 9, 10, or 12 months reported a rate of $43. In particular, respondents who specified an 11-month contract reported an average hourly rate of $44; they worked in a secondary school or College/University setting.

**Please indicate the length of your contract.**
(n=337)




## STIPEND

Similar to 2023, four percent of respondents reported conducting work through a stipend. These individuals were requested to provide details on the stipend, including the total amount, the duration in months, and the monthly hours of athletic training work the stipend encompasses. **On average, stipends totaled $10,693, spanned 9 months, and involved 99 hours of athletic training work per month.**

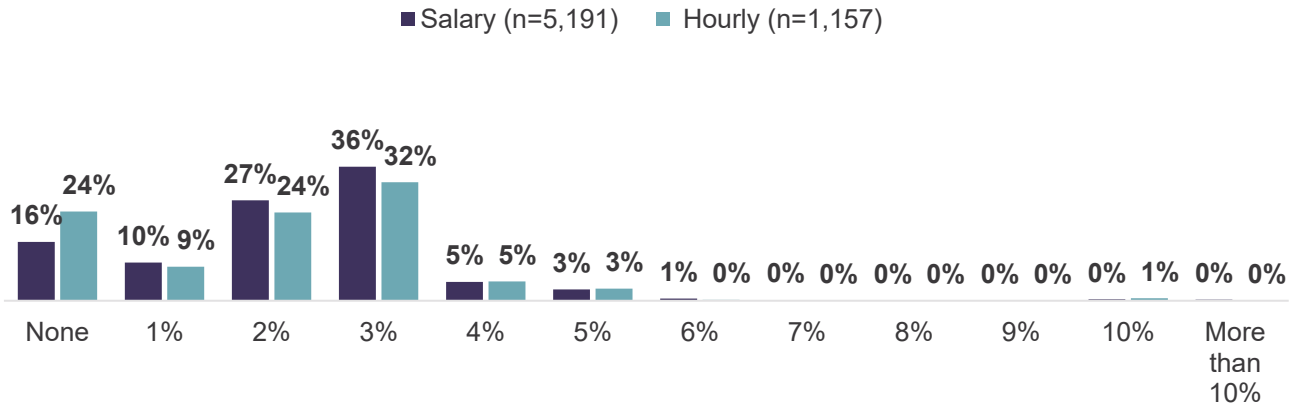
| Average Stipend Amount, Number of Months, and Hours per Month | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Average Stipend Amount | Average Number of Months | Average Number of Hours per Month |
| 2021 | $10,138 | 9 | 103 |
| 2023 | $10,517 | 9 | 115 |
| 2026 | $10,693 | 9 | 99 |

## PAY INCREASE

For salaried respondents, most (73 percent) reported an average annual salary increase between 1 and 3 percent. Within this group, 10 percent received a 1 percent increase, 27 percent received a 2 percent increase, and 36 percent received a 3 percent increase, up from 32 percent in 2023. 16 percent of salaried respondents reported receiving no annual salary increase. 5 percent of respondents were unsure of the size of their average annual salary increase.

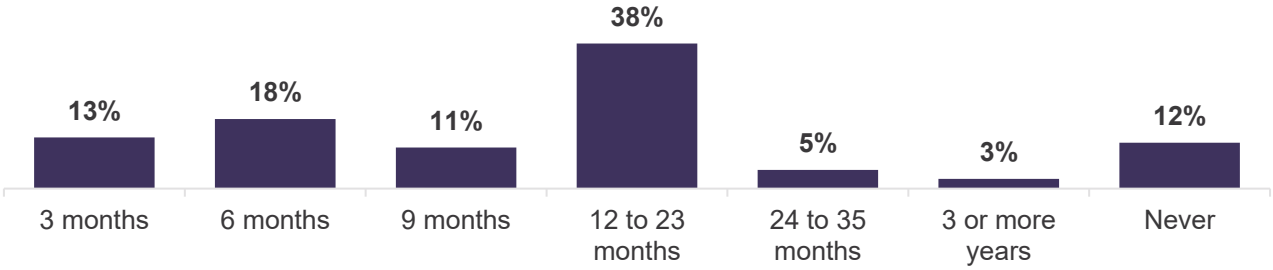
In contrast, respondents compensated on an hourly basis were less likely to receive an annual pay increase compared to their salaried counterparts. 24 percent of hourly respondents reported no annual pay increase, compared to only 16 percent of salaried respondents. However, this is a decrease from 26 percent of hourly respondents not receiving a rate increase in 2023. 65 percent of hourly respondents reported an annual pay increase ranging from 1 to 3 percent.

**On average, how much does your salary or hourly rate increase annually under your current employer(s)?**
*Unsure removed*



42 percent of 2026 respondents received a salary or hourly rate increase within the last year, compared to 51 percent in 2023. 38 percent of respondents indicated their previous increase was 12 to 23 months ago, and 20 percent had not received an increase within the last 2 years.

**When was your last salary or hourly rate increase? Within the last…**
(n=6,304)

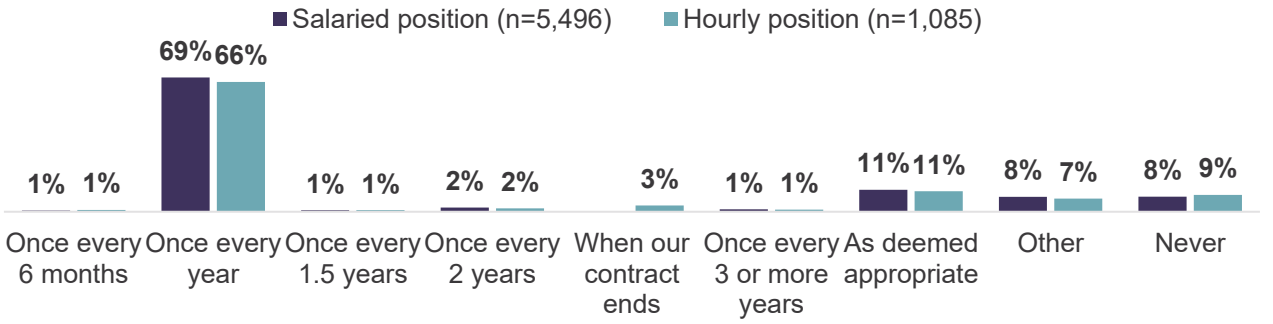



Once athletic trainers move beyond the earliest stage of their careers, salary increases are relatively common and typically occur within a 1 to 2 year timeframe. Among respondents with less than 1 year of experience, 84 percent report never receiving a raise, reflecting their recent entry into the field. In contrast, among those with 6 or more years of experience, the vast majority report a raise within the past 2 years, including just more than 40 percent who received an increase within the past year and about another 40 percent within the past 12 to 23 months.

| Last Salary or Hourly Rate Increase by Tenure | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Last Increase** | **Less than 1** | **1 - 5** | **6 - 10** | **More than 10 years** |
| < 1 year | 12% | 41% | 43% | 44% |
| 12 to 23 months | 4% | 29% | 39% | 42% |
| 24 to 35 months | 0% | 2% | 5% | 6% |
| 3 or more years | 0% | 1% | 2% | 4% |
| Never | 84% | 27% | 11% | 4% |

66 percent of respondents reported being given the opportunity for a salary (69 percent) or hourly rate (66 percent) increase once a year. 11 percent receive compensation increases “as deemed appropriate.” Other responses indicated that pay increases lack a consistent schedule, are often driven by contracts, budgets, or cost-of-living adjustments, and in some cases occur only when they personally request a raise or were unsure if increases would occur at all.

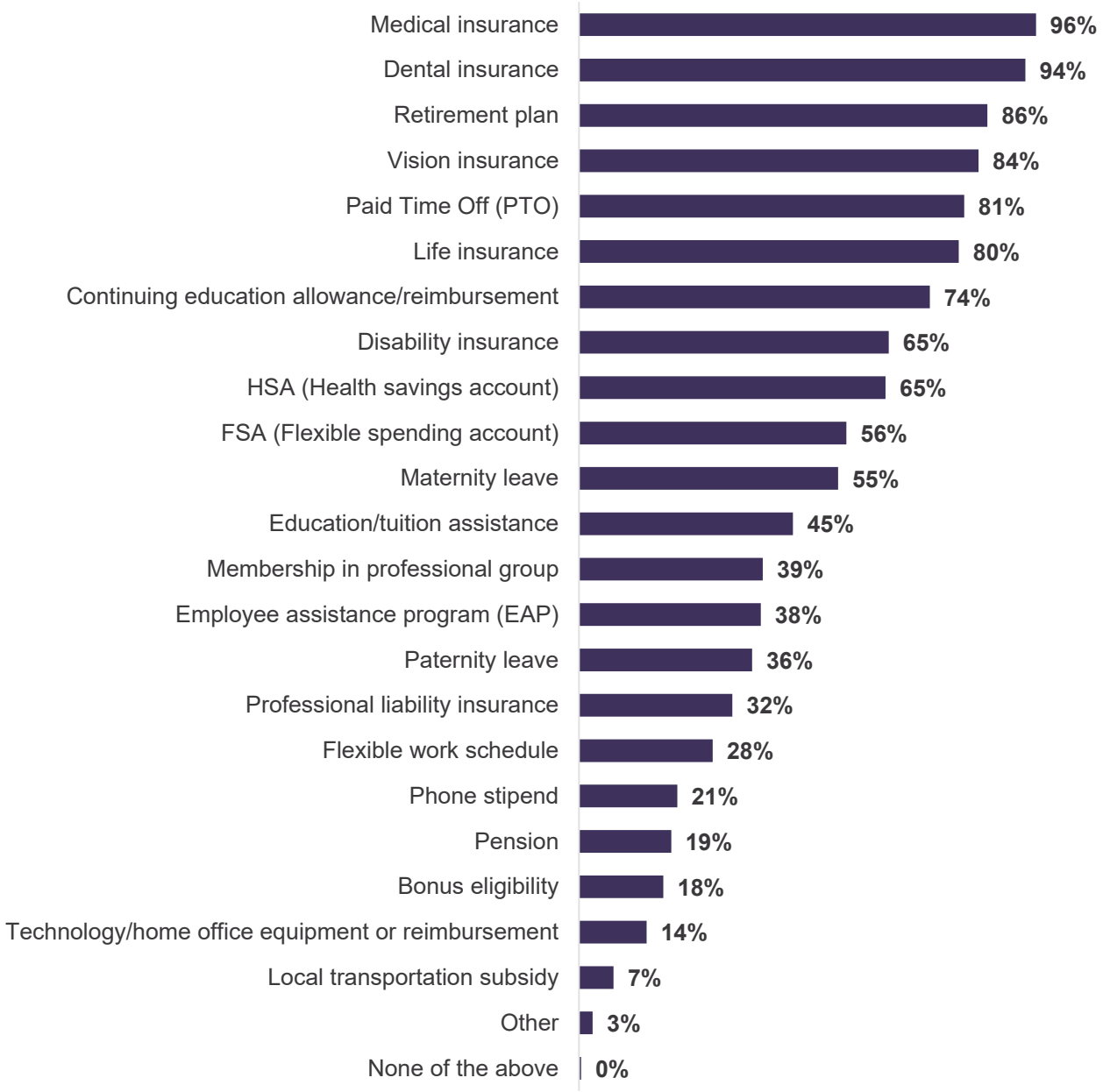
**How often are you given an opportunity for a salary or hourly rate increase under your current employer(s)?**




## BENEFITS

Respondents were most likely to report that their employer offers medical insurance (96 percent), dental insurance (94 percent), and access to a retirement plan (86 percent). 84 percent also reported receiving vision insurance, paid time off (81 percent) and 74 percent received a continuing education allowance or reimbursement. Respondents were least likely to receive local transportation subsidies (7 percent), technology or home office equipment or reimbursement (14 percent), or bonuses (18 percent). Maternity leave was available to 55 percent of all respondents (62 percent of women), while paternity leave was available to 36 percent of all respondents (49 percent of men).

**Please select the benefits your employer offers. Select all that apply.**
(n=6,454)




When asked about paid time off (PTO), respondents were almost evenly split between having separate allocations of vacation and sick days (49 percent) and having a combined PTO bank (51 percent). Those with separate allocations reported an average of 19 vacation days, 13 sick days, and

9 paid holidays, for a total of 41 days of paid time off, all increases from 2023. Respondents with combined allocations reported an average of 33 total PTO days, including 7 paid holidays and 26 combined sick and vacation days.

Among those with combined PTO, respondents were most likely to report 10 days of combined vacation and sick time per year (10 percent), while 2 percent reported having none, and 3 percent reported having unlimited PTO. More than half of respondents indicated at least some restrictions on time-off use, most commonly that vacation must be taken in the off-season or specific months, that time off requires advance approval and coverage for events, and that sick leave beyond a few days requires medical documentation or the prior use of PTO.

| Average Annual Paid Time Off | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **2023 Separate** | **2026 Separate** | **2023 Combined** | **2026 Combined** |
| Paid holidays | 8 | 9 | 7 | 7 |
| Sick days | 12 | 13 | 21 | 26 |
| Vacation days | 17 | 19 | | |
| **Total** | **37** | **41** | **28** | **33** |

*Respondents were asked to enter "365" if they received unlimited PTO. Unlimited PTO was not included in average PTO calculations.*

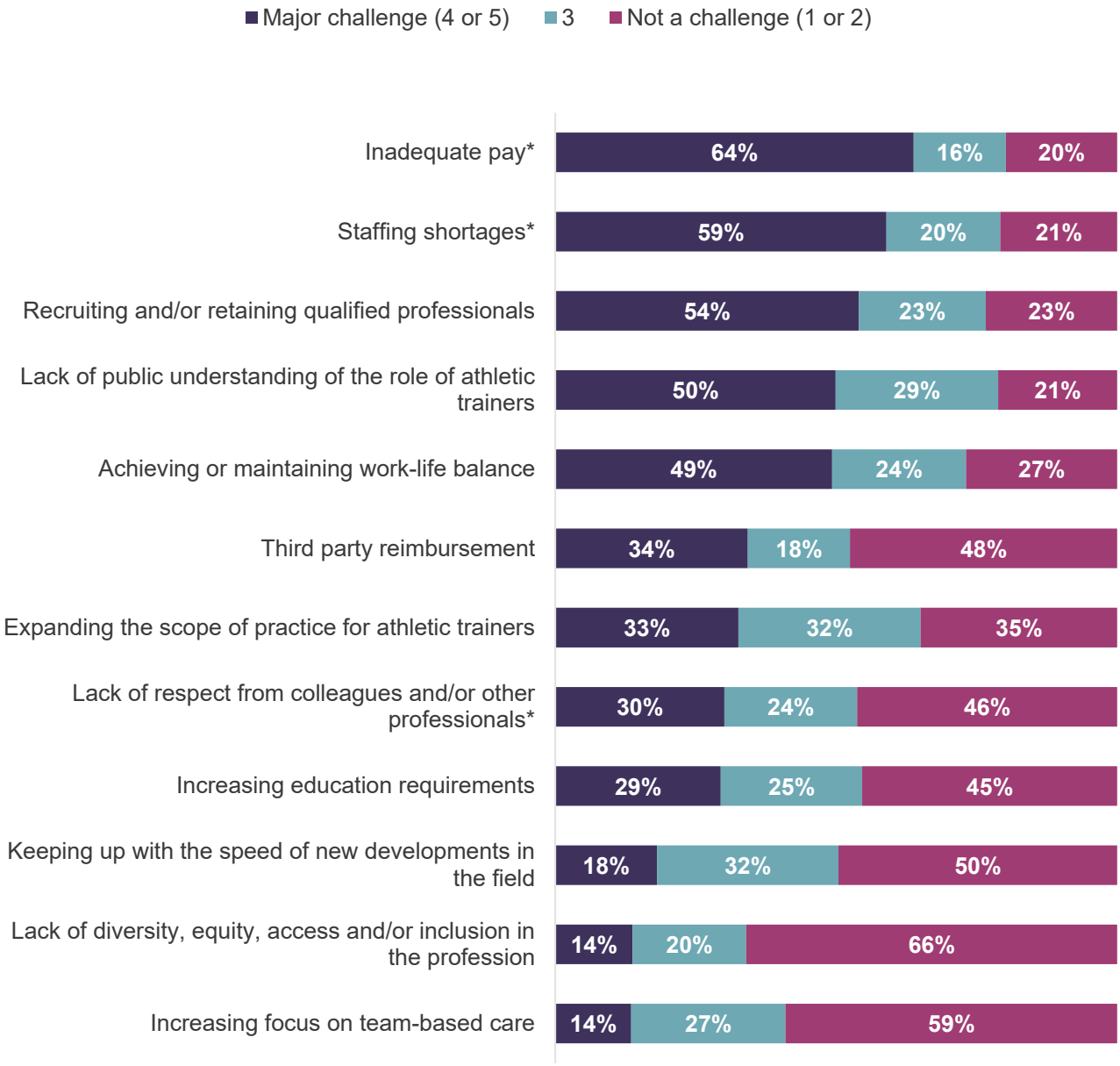
## Professional Challenges

Respondents were asked to evaluate how much of a challenge various trends and issues would present over the next 3-5 years. In 2026, respondents identified inadequate pay (64 percent) as their most significant challenge, followed closely by staffing shortages (59 percent) and difficulty recruiting or retaining qualified professionals (54 percent). The lack of public understanding of the role of athletic trainers (50 percent) and achieving or maintaining work-life balance (49 percent) were also commonly rated as major challenges.

By contrast, issues such as third-party reimbursement, expanding the scope of practice, increasing education requirements, keeping up with new developments, lack of diversity, equity, access and inclusion, and the growing focus on team-based care were less likely to be viewed as major challenges for most respondents.

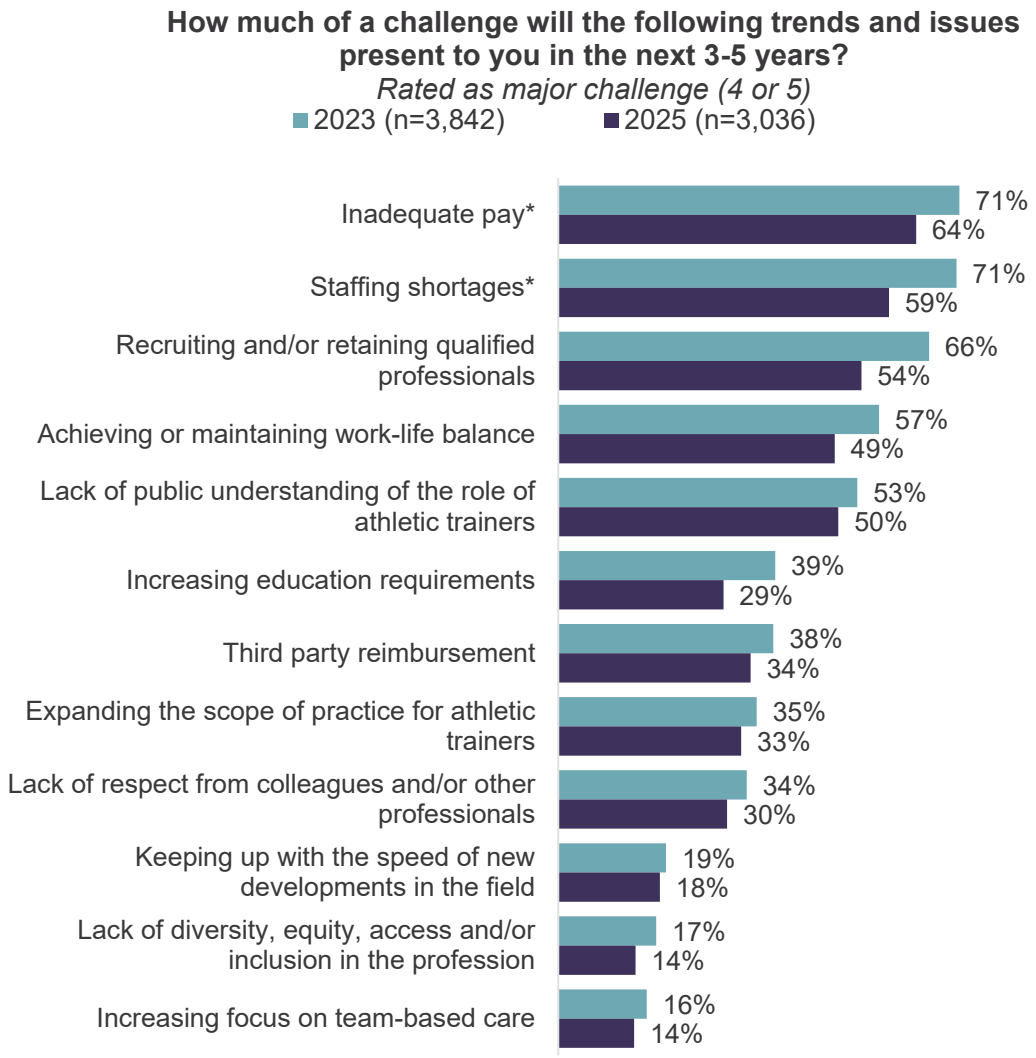
Though only 14 percent of all respondents identified lack of diversity, equity, access, and/or inclusion in the profession as a major challenge, 43 percent of Black or African American respondents and 25 percent of respondents who selected any ethnicity other than white viewed it as a major challenge.

**How much of a challenge will the following trends and issues present to you in the next 3-5 years?**
(n=3,036)




** Inadequate pay, staffing shortages, and lack of respect from colleagues and/or other professionals options added in 2023*

From 2023 to 2026, ratings of “major challenge” declined across every listed issue, indicating some easing of pressure on any single concerns and a more diffuse set of challenges even as concerns remain high. Inadequate pay, staffing shortages, and recruiting/retention all dropped 7 to 12 percentage points over this period, but still rank among the top challenges, and each remains below its peak 2021 levels when these issues were even more frequently viewed as major obstacles.




Among consolidated work settings with at least ten responses (not shown), inadequate pay is most likely to be rated a major challenge in College/University settings (74 percent) and Clinics (68 percent), compared with Secondary Schools (55 percent) and Hospitals (57 percent). Achieving or maintaining work-life balance is a particularly prominent concern in College/University settings (65 percent) and Professional Sports (63 percent), but much less so in Clinics (39 percent) and Hospitals (37 percent). Clinics and Hospitals also stand out for higher concern about third-party reimbursement (50 percent and 48 percent, respectively) and expanding the scope of practice for athletic trainers (37 percent and 38 percent), while lack of public understanding of the role of athletic trainers is most frequently rated a major challenge in consolidated Industrial/Occupational/Corporate and Health/Fitness/Sports Performance settings (both more than 60 percent).

Comparing the top 2 specific work settings, those working in College/University - NCAA Division I – Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic settings were more likely than those in Secondary School – High School - Athletic only settings to identify inadequate pay as a major challenge (78 percent vs. 57 percent). College/University respondents were also more likely to rate staffing shortages (73 percent vs. 56 percent), recruiting and/or retaining qualified professionals (69 percent vs. 47 percent), achieving or maintaining work-life balance (73 percent vs. 46 percent), and lack of respect from colleagues and/or other professionals (42 percent vs. 28 percent) as major challenges. These

patterns suggest that, despite similar salary levels, College/University - NCAA Division I – Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic roles perceive greater challenges related to staffing and work-life pressures, which may contribute to a stronger desire for higher compensation.

| Major Challenge (4 or 5) by Top 2 Work Settings | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Trend or Issue** | **Secondary School - High School - Athletic only** (n=561) | **College/University - NCAA Division I - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic** (n=357) |
| Inadequate pay | 57% | 78% |
| Staffing shortages | 56% | 73% |
| Recruiting and/or retaining qualified professionals | 47% | 69% |
| Achieving or maintaining work-life balance | 46% | 73% |
| Lack of public understanding of the role of athletic trainers | 47% | 52% |
| Increasing education requirements | 31% | 26% |
| Third party reimbursement | 31% | 29% |
| Expanding the scope of practice for athletic trainers | 26% | 31% |
| Lack of respect from colleagues and/or other professionals | 28% | 42% |
| Keeping up with the speed of new developments in the field | 15% | 20% |
| Lack of diversity, equity, access and/or inclusion in the profession | 11% | 16% |
| Increasing focus on team-based care | 13% | 20% |

Women were more likely than men to rate several issues as major challenges, particularly inadequate pay (68 percent vs. 58 percent), lack of public understanding of the role of athletic trainers (54 percent vs. 44 percent), and lack of diversity, equity, access and/or inclusion in the profession (17 percent vs. 9 percent).

| Major Challenge (4 or 5) by Gender | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Trend or Issue** | **Woman** (n=1,760) | **Man** (n=1,203) |
| Inadequate pay | 68% | 58% |
| Staffing shortages | 61% | 56% |
| Recruiting and/or retaining qualified professionals | 55% | 54% |
| Achieving or maintaining work-life balance | 51% | 47% |
| Lack of public understanding of the role of athletic trainers | 54% | 44% |
| Increasing education requirements | 30% | 28% |
| Third party reimbursement | 33% | 35% |
| Expanding the scope of practice for athletic trainers | 32% | 34% |
| Lack of respect from colleagues and/or other professionals | 33% | 27% |
| Keeping up with the speed of new developments in the field | 19% | 17% |
| Lack of diversity, equity, access and/or inclusion in the profession | 17% | 9% |
| Increasing focus on team-based care | 14% | 12% |

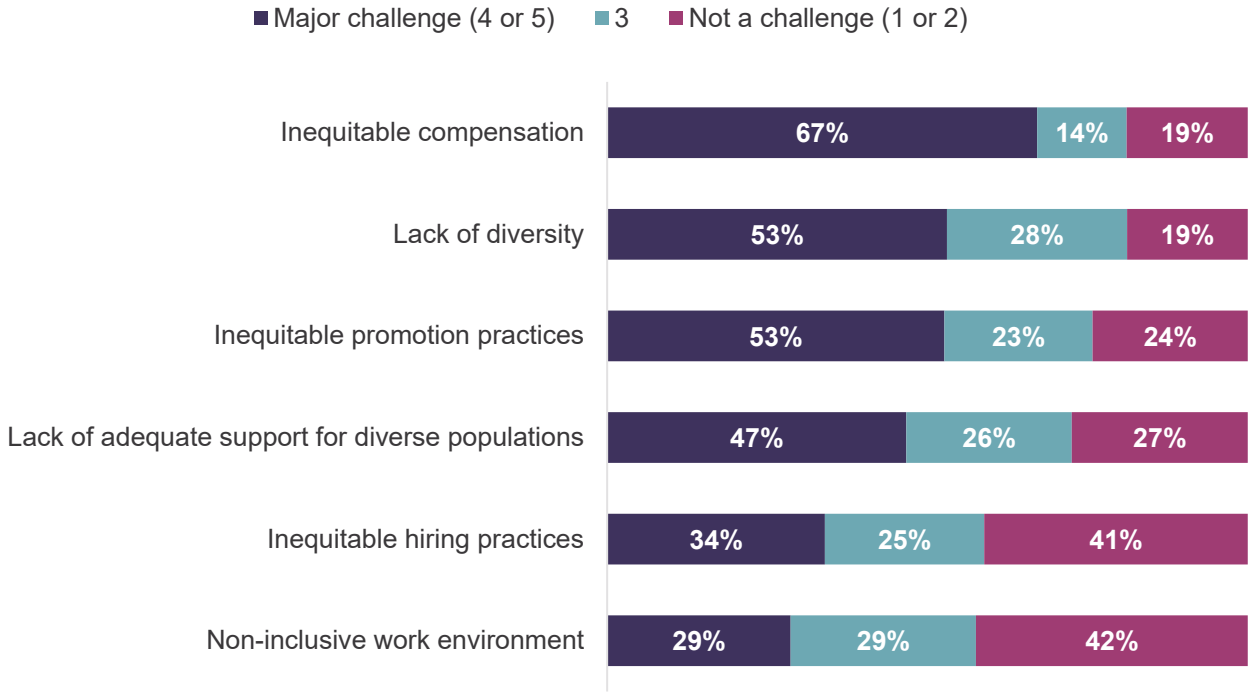
Respondents were allowed to identify any additional challenges not mentioned. Respondents most commonly mentioned low and inequitable pay, the financial strain of required graduate education and student loans, heavy workloads and burnout, shortages and uneven preparation of new athletic trainers, limited respect or understanding of their role, and weak structural or organizational support as key challenges facing the profession.

Diversity, equity, access and inclusion was more commonly rated as a major challenge by women (17 percent) and respondents who selected a race/ethnicity other than White (25 percent) compared to men (9 percent) and respondents who identified as White (12 percent). Respondents who rated diversity, equity, access, and inclusion as a major challenge were asked to indicate the significance of related challenges.

Inequitable compensation (67 percent) was most commonly rated as a major challenge. 77 percent of respondents 35 or younger rated inequitable compensation as a major challenge, compared to 26 percent of those over 55 (not shown). 53 percent identified lack of diversity, inequitable promotion practices (53 percent), and lack of adequate support for diverse populations (47 percent) as major challenges, while fewer rated inequitable hiring practices (34 percent) and non-inclusive work environments (29 percent) as major challenges.

When asked to elaborate on DEI challenges, respondents most often mentioned a lack of representation and diversity in hiring and leadership, financial and educational barriers (especially the entry-level master's requirement) that limit access for lower-income and minority students, and workplace inequities. Some respondents also described workplace inequities, including gender pay gaps and experiences of women working in male dominated athletic environments.

**Regarding diversity, equity, access and inclusion in the profession, please rate the significance of each of the following challenges in your workplace.**
(n=377)




Similar to the previous question, women and those who identified as a race/ethnicity other than White were generally more likely to rate specific DEI challenges as "major." Women were particularly more

likely to rate inequitable compensation (71 percent) as a major challenge compared to men (54 percent).

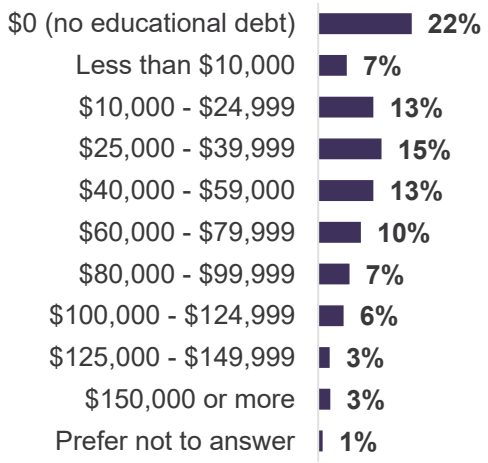
| **Major Challenge by Gender** *(selected 4 or 5)* | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Challenge** | **Woman** (n=230) | **Man** (n=89) |
| Inequitable compensation | 71% | 54% |
| Lack of diversity | 51% | 60% |
| Inequitable promotion practices | 54% | 48% |
| Lack of adequate support for diverse populations | 46% | 46% |
| Inequitable hiring practices | 34% | 32% |
| Non-inclusive work environment | 31% | 20% |

Among racial and ethnic groups, non-white respondents reported higher levels of major DEI challenges than white respondents across all items, including inequitable compensation (75 percent vs. 64 percent), lack of diversity (63 percent vs. 50 percent), inequitable promotion practices (60 percent vs. 51 percent), lack of adequate support for diverse populations (56 percent vs. 43 percent), inequitable hiring practices (42 percent vs. 31 percent), and non-inclusive work environments (38 percent vs. 25 percent).

| **Major Challenge by Ethnicity** *(selected 4 or 5)* | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Challenge** | **Selected Ethnicity Other Than White** (n=92) | **White or Caucasian (not of Hispanic origin)** (n=233) |
| Inequitable compensation | 75% | 64% |
| Lack of diversity | 63% | 50% |
| Inequitable promotion practices | 60% | 51% |
| Lack of adequate support for diverse populations | 56% | 43% |
| Inequitable hiring practices | 42% | 31% |
| Non-inclusive work environment | 38% | 25% |

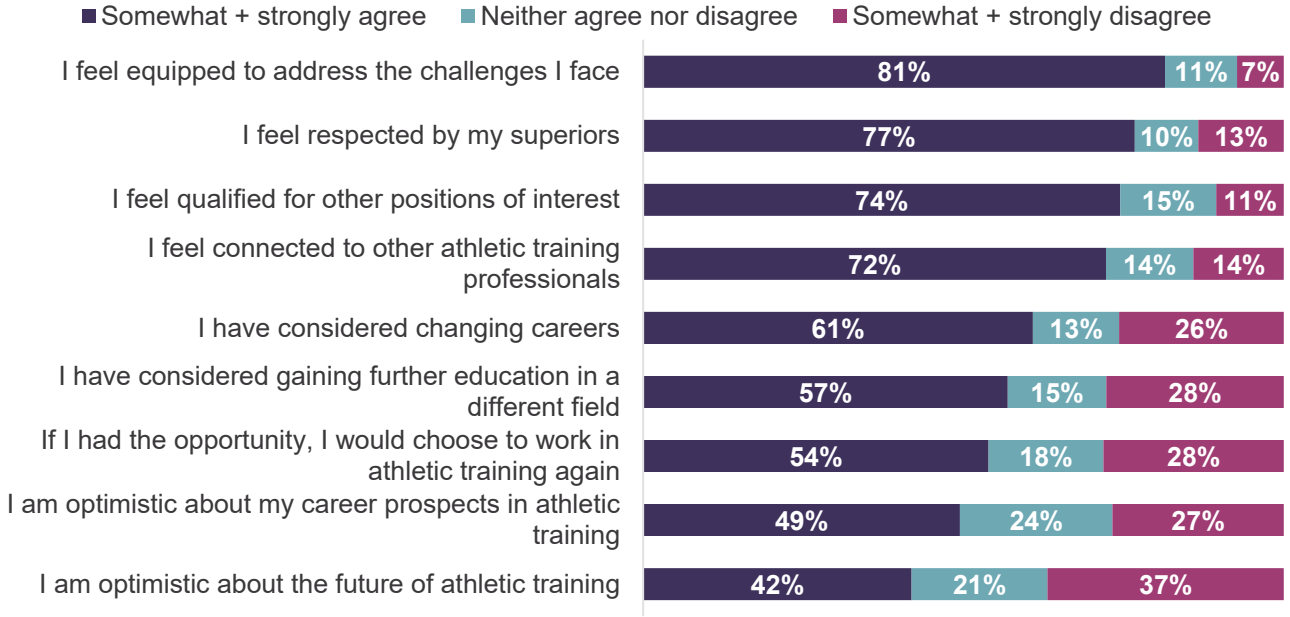
To better understand the financial realities of pursuing an athletic training career, respondents were asked about the educational debt they carried at the time they completed their highest degree. Most respondents carried substantial educational debt at the time they completed their highest degree, with 57 percent owing $25,000 or more, while only 22 percent reported no educational debt.

**Approximately how much total educational debt did you have at the time you completed your highest level of education? Please include student loans only do not include credit cards or other personal debts.**
(n=3,219)




Respondents were also asked about their sentiments regarding their workplace, future, and the athletic training profession as a whole. Most respondents expressed confidence and connection in their current roles but showed mixed optimism about the profession's future. A large majority agreed they feel equipped to address challenges (81 percent), respected by their superiors (77 percent), qualified for other positions (74 percent), and connected to other athletic training professionals (72 percent). At the same time, many have considered changing careers (61 percent) or pursuing further education in a different field (57 percent), and less than half are optimistic about their career prospects (49 percent) or the future of athletic training overall (42 percent).

**Please rate your level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements concerning the athletic training profession.**
(n=3,207)



Respondents 45 and younger were more likely to have considered changing careers (64 percent agree) and gaining further education in a different field (62 percent agree) compared to respondents older than 45 (51 and 39 percent agree, respectively). Half (50 percent) of respondents older than 65 agreed that they are optimistic about the future of athletic training, compared to 40 percent of respondents aged 45 and under.

**Career Perceptions by Age**
*somewhat + strongly agree*

| Statement | 45 and younger (n=2,415) | Older than 45 (n=748) |
|---|---|---|
| I feel equipped to address the challenges I face | 80% | 87% |
| I feel qualified for other positions of interest | 74% | 76% |
| I feel respected by my superiors | 75% | 83% |
| I feel connected to other athletic training professionals | 70% | 78% |
| I have considered changing careers | 64% | 51% |
| I have considered gaining further education in a different field | 62% | 39% |
| If I had the opportunity, I would choose to work in athletic training again | 52% | 59% |
| I am optimistic about my career prospects in athletic training | 48% | 53% |
| I am optimistic about the future of athletic training | 40% | 50% |

Women and men reported broadly similar levels of agreement across most sentiment items, with only modest differences. Men were slightly more likely than women to feel equipped to address challenges (84 percent vs. 80 percent), feel qualified for other positions (77 percent vs. 73 percent), feel respected by their superiors (79 percent vs. 75 percent), and be optimistic about their career prospects (53 percent vs. 47 percent), while women were somewhat more likely to have considered changing careers (63 percent vs. 57 percent) and pursuing further education in a different field (60 percent vs. 52 percent).

**Career Perceptions by Gender**
*somewhat + strongly agree*

| Statement | Woman (n=1,845) | Man (n=1,293) |
|---|---|---|
| I feel equipped to address the challenges I face | 80% | 84% |
| I feel qualified for other positions of interest | 73% | 77% |
| I feel respected by my superiors | 75% | 79% |
| I feel connected to other athletic training professionals | 71% | 74% |
| I have considered changing careers | 63% | 57% |
| I have considered gaining further education in a different field | 60% | 52% |
| If I had the opportunity, I would choose to work in athletic training again | 55% | 53% |
| I am optimistic about my career prospects in athletic training | 47% | 53% |
| I am optimistic about the future of athletic training | 42% | 43% |

42 percent of respondents agreed that they are optimistic about the future of athletic training, a slight decrease from 44% in 2023. Optimism tends to be higher among those working in traditional sports environments. Respondents working in Professional Sports are the most optimistic, with 65 percent agreeing they feel positive about their career prospects. A majority of those in Secondary - Middle - High School (54 percent) and College/University (53 percent) also report optimism. In contrast, optimism is lower among respondents in settings such as Clinic (37 percent), Business/Sales/Marketing (38 percent), Military (39 percent), and Hospital and Industrial/Occupational/Corporate (both 41 percent).

| Optimistic about the future of athletic training: Somewhat agree + Strongly agree | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Work Setting (Consolidated)** | **% optimistic** | **Count** |
| Professional Sports | 65% | 113 |
| Secondary - Middle - High School | 54% | 966 |
| College/University | 53% | 1,053 |
| Other | 43% | 59 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate | 41% | 145 |
| Hospital | 41% | 271 |
| Amateur/Recreational/Youth Sports | 40% | 10 |
| Military | 39% | 41 |
| Business/Sales/Marketing | 38% | 21 |
| Clinic | 37% | 436 |

*Data for the following options are not shown due to low sample sizes: Health/Fitness/Sports Performance, Enhancement Clinic/Club, Professional Performing Arts, Independent Contractor, Public Safety, Military Academy, Government*

More specifically, among settings with at least ten respondents, optimism was highest in professional sports and college/university roles, including Professional Sports – Football (81 percent) and Baseball (71 percent), and College/University – Hospital/Health System (72 percent) and College/University – Faculty/Academic/Research (69 percent). In contrast, respondents in many clinic and hospital-based roles reported lower optimism, particularly those in Clinic – Physician-owned clinic (27 percent), Hospital – Other (24 percent), and Hospital – Orthopedics (23 percent), suggesting that practice-setting conditions strongly shape how positive athletic trainers feel about their long-term career prospects.

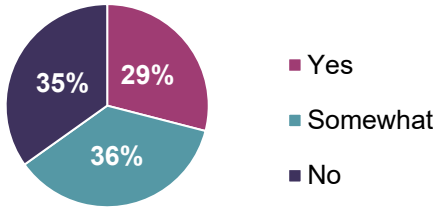
| Optimistic about the future of athletic training: Somewhat agree + Strongly agree | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Work Setting** | **% optimistic** | **Count** |
| Professional Sports - Football | 81% | 15 |
| College/University- Hospital/Health System | 72% | 28 |
| Professional Sports - Baseball | 71% | 38 |
| College/University - Faculty/Academic/Research | 69% | 173 |
| Professional Sports - Soccer | 64% | 14 |
| Secondary School - Middle and High School - Both Academic and Athletic | 59% | 42 |
| Secondary School - High School - Both Academic and Athletic | 59% | 108 |
| College/University - NCAA Division II - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 56% | 105 |
| Secondary School - Middle and High School - Athletic only | 55% | 201 |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Professional Sports - Hockey | 54% | 24 |
| Professional Sports - Other | 54% | 12 |
| Secondary School - High School - Athletic only | 53% | 574 |
| College/University - Campus Health/Recreation | 53% | 15 |
| College/University - NAIA - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 52% | 82 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Health/Wellness/Fitness | 52% | 31 |
| Clinic - Secondary School Outreach | 50% | 111 |
| College/University - NCAA Division I - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 48% | 367 |
| College/University – Administration (e.g., Division Chair, Dean, Vice President, etc.) | 48% | 27 |
| College/University - Two-year Institution - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 48% | 60 |
| Hospital - Outreach | 47% | 164 |
| College/University - NCAA Division III - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | 46% | 157 |
| College/University - NCAA Division I - Split Appointment | 45% | 11 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Other | 45% | 29 |
| Hospital - Administration | 45% | 38 |
| Secondary School - High School - Academic only | 44% | 16 |
| Other | 43% | 59 |
| Secondary School - Middle School - Athletic only | 40% | 20 |
| Amateur/Recreational/Youth Sports | 40% | 10 |
| Military | 39% | 41 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Ergonomics | 39% | 48 |
| Business/Sales/Marketing | 38% | 21 |
| Clinic - Other | 38% | 20 |
| Clinic - Other Outreach | 38% | 16 |
| Clinic - Administration | 36% | 39 |
| Clinic - Outpatient/Ambulatory/Rehabilitation clinic | 33% | 105 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Clinic | 32% | 37 |
| Clinic - Hospital-based clinic | 31% | 73 |
| Clinic - Physician-owned clinic | 27% | 72 |
| Hospital - Other | 24% | 17 |
| Hospital - Orthopedics | 23% | 52 |

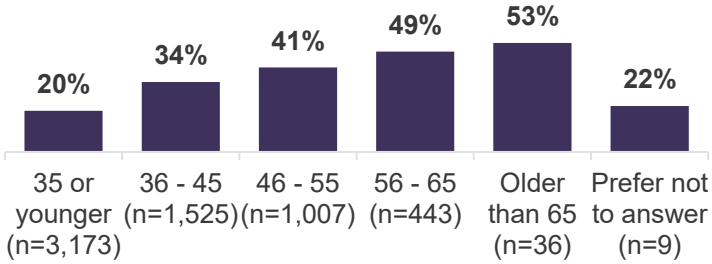
*Data for the following options are not shown due to low sample sizes: Professional Sports - Basketball, College/University - NAIA - Split Appointment, Professional Performing Arts, Health/Fitness/Sports Performance Enhancement Clinic/Club, Military Academy, College/University - Two-year Institution - Split Appointment, College/University - NCAA Division III - Split Appointment, Government, Independent Contractor, College/University - NCAA Division II - Split Appointment*

29 percent of respondents feel fairly compensated. From 2023 to 2026, perceptions of compensation improved slightly: the share who feel fairly compensated rose from 25 percent to 29 percent, while those who say “no” dropped from 40 percent to 35 percent, and “somewhat” remained 35 percent of respondents. The likelihood of feeling fairly compensated increased with age. 20 percent of respondents 35 or younger felt fairly compensated, compared to 53 percent of respondents older than 65.

**Currently, do you feel that you are fairly compensated for the amount of work that you do? Consider both your salary/pay and benefits in your response.** (n=6,193)

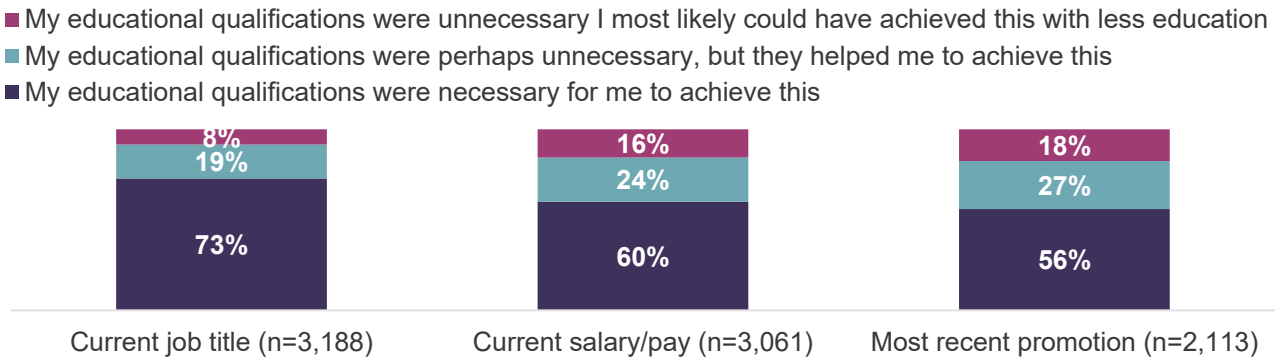



**Fair Compensation by Age**
*% selecting "yes"*



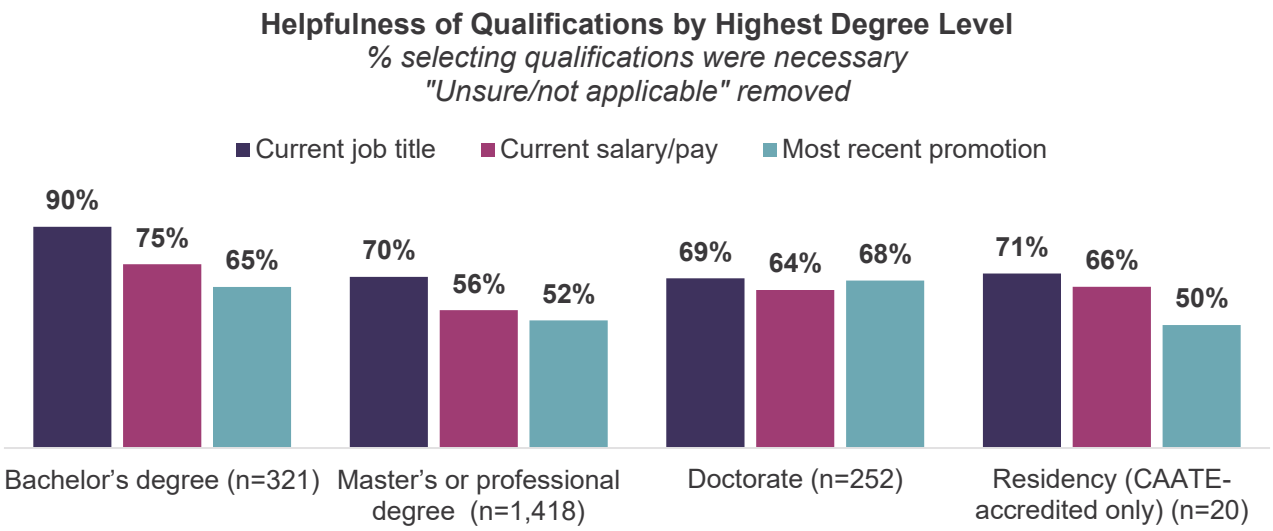

**Most full-time respondents in 2026 felt their educational qualifications were necessary for key career outcomes**, including their current job title (73 percent), current salary (60 percent), and most recent promotion (56 percent), with the remaining respondents typically viewing their education as helpful but not strictly required or unnecessary for these achievements.

**To what extent were your educational qualifications necessary for achieving the following aspects of your career?** (n=3,976)
*"Unsure/not applicable" removed*



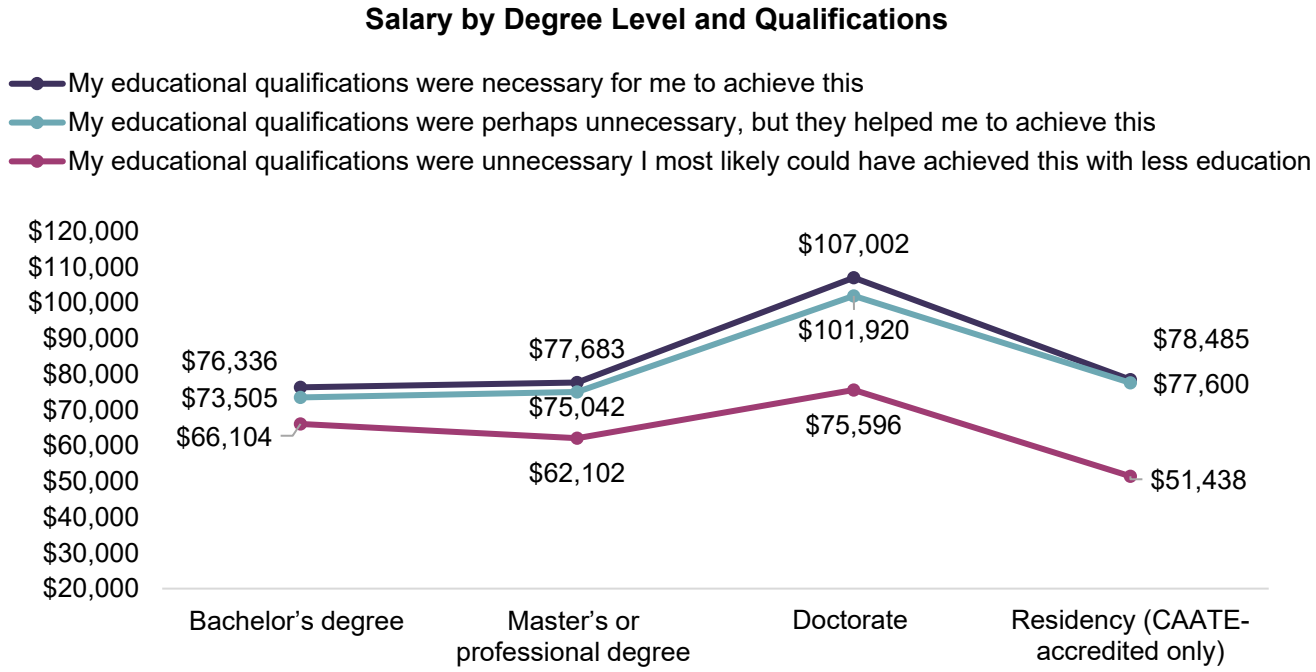

*Full question text: “Please consider your current educational qualifications (e.g., highest degree earned, certifications, etc.). To what extent were your educational qualifications necessary for achieving the following aspects of your career?”*

**Perceptions of the necessity of education were strongest among those with a bachelor’s degree**. Respondents whose highest level of education was a bachelor’s or some graduate school toward a master’s were most likely to say their education was necessary for their current job title (90 percent), salary (75 percent), and most recent promotion (65 percent), while those with master’s or professional degrees reported lower “necessary” ratings for title (70 percent), salary (56 percent), and promotion (52 percent), and those with doctorates fell in between on salary (64 percent) and promotion (68 percent).




*Data for the following options are not shown due to low sample sizes: High school, Some college, Associate degree (two-year degree), Other, Fellowship (CAATE-accredited only)*

**In 2026, higher perceived educational necessity and higher credential levels both align with higher pay, especially for promotions.** Respondents who believed their education was necessary for their current salary averaged $81,058, compared with $78,431 when it "helped" and $63,845 when it was viewed as unnecessary. Those who saw their qualifications as necessary for their most recent promotion reported the highest average pay at $86,372. By degree level, this premium increases with additional education—doctorate holders who said their degree was necessary earned $107,002 versus $75,596 who said it was unnecessary, compared to bachelor's holders who said their degree was necessary and earned $76,336 versus earning $66,104 for those who said it was unnecessary.



**Across roles in 2026, perceived educational necessity remains highest in faculty and senior academic leadership positions and lowest in administrative, office, and commercial roles.** Among the top 7 titles, Associate and Full Professors (including Program Directors) report near-universal views that their education is necessary for their role (92–100 percent), with similarly high levels among Senior Associate Athletic Trainers and Associate Athletic Directors. In contrast, respondents in Sales/Marketing (24 percent), Medical Office Staff (38 percent), and Administrative Director roles (48 percent) feel their education is required. Early Intervention Specialists show a disconnect between seeing their education as necessary for the job (58 percent) versus needed for their most recent promotion (25 percent), reinforcing that the strongest alignment between education and job requirements is concentrated in academic and senior sports-medicine leadership rather than in support or external-facing positions.

**Necessity of Educational Qualifications by Job Title, Top 10**
*Showing % selecting qualifications were necessary*

| Primary Job Title | For current job title | For most recent promotion | Count |
|---|---|---|---|
| Associate Professor - Program Director | 100% | 56% | 23 |
| Full Professor | 100% | 91% | 22 |
| Assistant Professor | 97% | 100% | 26 |
| Senior Associate Athletic Trainer | 95% | 92% | 19 |
| Full Professor - Program Director | 94% | 68% | 18 |
| Associate Professor | 92% | 89% | 31 |
| Associate Athletic Director | 92% | 88% | 19 |
| Assistant Director of Sports Medicine | 89% | 84% | 22 |
| Physical Therapist | 85% | 52% | 11 |
| Teacher | 79% | 82% | 18 |

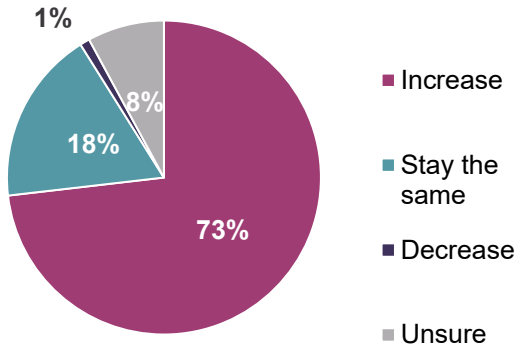
**Necessity of Educational Qualifications by Job Title, Bottom 10**
*Showing % selecting qualifications were necessary*

| Primary Job Title | For current job title | For most recent promotion | Count |
|---|---|---|---|
| Coordinator of Athletic Training Services | 65% | 67% | 15 |
| Clinical Athletic Trainer | 65% | 53% | 92 |
| Manager | 62% | 50% | 48 |
| Other | 60% | 48% | 91 |
| Supervisor | 58% | 48% | 23 |
| Early Intervention Specialist | 58% | 25% | 16 |
| Clinical Specialist | 54% | 67% | 12 |
| Administrative Director | 48% | 36% | 22 |
| Medical Office Staff | 38% | 25% | 12 |
| Sales/Marketing Professional | 24% | 29% | 14 |

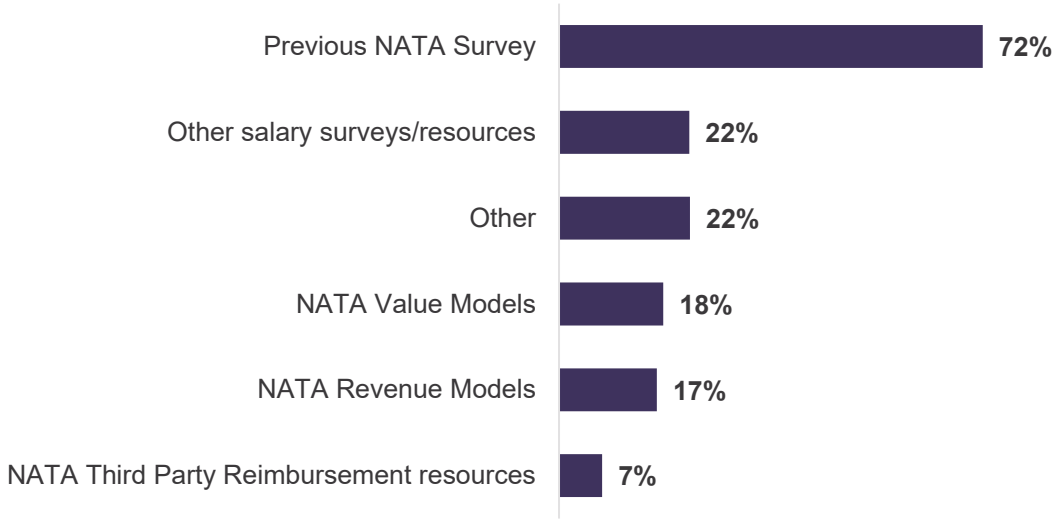
Most respondents anticipate an increase in pay, 50 percent (not shown) expecting their compensation to increase over the next year and nearly 73 percent expecting an increase over the next 3 years, while only about 1 percent expect a decrease, and 18 percent largely expect pay to stay the same.

Most respondents relied on the previous NATA Salary Survey (72 percent) to advocate for increased compensation over the past 3 years, while smaller shares used NATA Value Models (18 percent) and NATA Revenue Models (17 percent). 22 percent drew on “other salary surveys or resources”, including conference and league surveys, market analyses, cost-of-living tools, public salary databases, and sites like Glassdoor and Indeed. “Other” (22 percent) responses indicated that respondents either had not advocated for increased compensation or that they relied on union contracts, competing job offers, tracking their own hours and productivity, or locally gathered salary and ROI data.

**Do you expect your compensation from athletic training to increase, decrease or stay the same over the next 3 years?**
(n=6,245)




**Which of the following strategies have you used to effectively advocate for increased compensation over the past 3 years?**
(n=5,064)



## Salary Data by Segment

The average national salary for all respondents who are full-time, employed certified/licensed athletic trainers in 2026 was $76,297, which represents an 11 percent increase since 2023. The following section reports the average salary by various demographic and workplace factors.

**The average salaries across different work settings ranged from $57,059 to $205,553.** Respondents working in professional sports reported the highest average salaries in 2026, with football, basketball, and hockey roles all well above the overall average salary. Within professional sports, respondents in football reported an average salary of about $205,500, followed by basketball at about $157,400 and hockey at about $105,100, while baseball and other professional sports roles also remained substantially above the overall average. Administrative positions in hospital and college or university settings were the next highest-earning non-sports roles, with hospital administration and college or university administration both exceeding $110,000 in average salary. Academic and business-oriented roles such as college or university faculty/academic/ research and business/sales/marketing also ranked near the top of the distribution, with average salaries around $99,400 and $101,500. Of the 4 most prominent work settings[3], individuals working in College/University - Faculty/Academic/Research settings reported the highest average salary of $99,367.

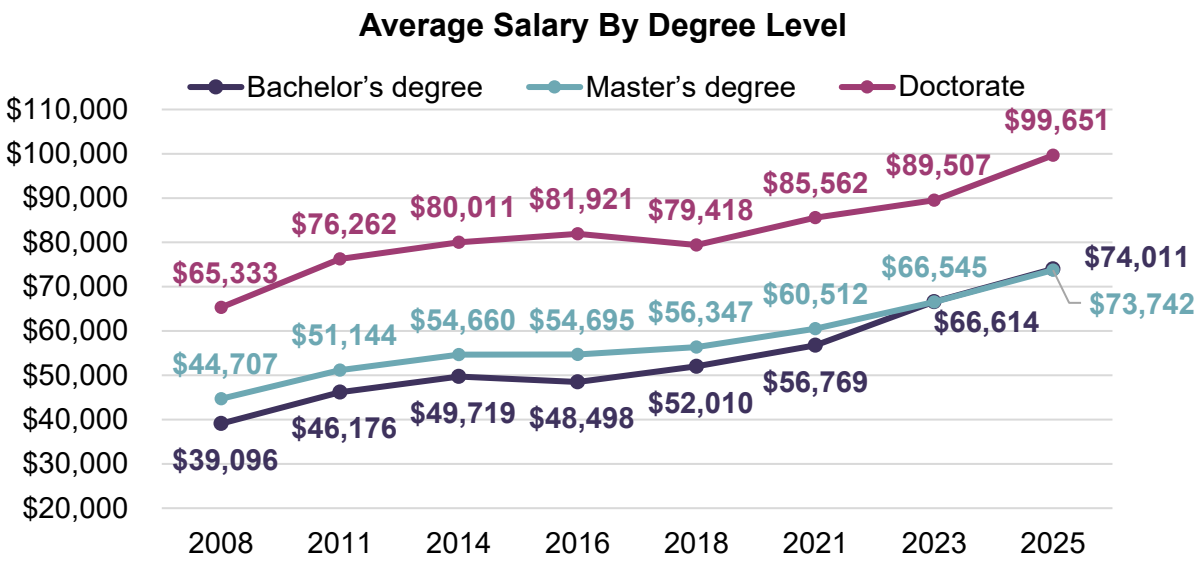
| Average Salary by Work Setting | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Work Setting** | **Average Salary** | **Count** |
| Professional Sports - Football | $205,553 | 17 |
| Professional Sports - Basketball | $157,387 | 15 |
| College/University - NCAA Division II - Split Appointment | $138,500 | 10 |
| Hospital - Administration | $114,522 | 57 |
| College/University – Administration (e.g., Division Chair, Dean, Vice President, etc.) | $110,558 | 59 |
| Professional Sports - Hockey | $105,102 | 43 |
| Clinic - Administration | $102,557 | 54 |
| Business/Sales/Marketing | $101,520 | 25 |
| College/University - Faculty/Academic/Research | $99,367 | 323 |
| Secondary School - High School - Academic only | $98,899 | 28 |
| Hospital - Other | $92,354 | 24 |
| Professional Sports - Baseball | $92,071 | 70 |
| Professional Sports - Other | $90,796 | 24 |
| Other | $86,450 | 73 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Other | $84,969 | 46 |
| Professional Sports - Soccer | $83,176 | 28 |
| Secondary School - Middle and High School - Both Academic and Athletic | $81,136 | 69 |
| Clinic - Outpatient/Ambulatory/Rehabilitation clinic | $80,432 | 125 |

[3] The 4 most common work settings were 1) Secondary School - High School - Athletic only, 2) College/University - NCAA Division I - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic, 3) Hospital – Outreach and 4) College/University - Faculty/Academic/Research.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Health/Wellness/Fitness | $79,970 | 41 |
| Hospital - Orthopedics | $79,291 | 46 |
| Professional Performing Arts | $78,886 | 17 |
| College/University - Two-year Institution - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | $78,258 | 115 |
| Military | $78,237 | 74 |
| Clinic - Other | $78,194 | 24 |
| Military Academy | $78,154 | 10 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Ergonomics | $77,607 | 78 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate - Clinic | $76,414 | 54 |
| Hospital - Outreach | $75,557 | 268 |
| Secondary School - High School - Both Academic and Athletic | $75,525 | 195 |
| College/University - NCAA Division I - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | $73,120 | 747 |
| Secondary School - Middle and High School - Athletic only | $73,095 | 341 |
| Clinic - Physician-owned clinic | $71,891 | 67 |
| Secondary School - Middle School - Athletic only | $71,411 | 38 |
| Clinic - Hospital-based clinic | $70,923 | 95 |
| Secondary School - High School - Athletic only | $70,192 | 1,075 |
| College/University - NCAA Division I - Split Appointment | $69,992 | 15 |
| Clinic - Secondary School Outreach | $69,330 | 175 |
| Health/Fitness/Sports Performance Enhancement Clinic/Club | $68,709 | 11 |
| College/University - NCAA Division III - Split Appointment | $68,426 | 11 |
| College/University - NAIA - Split Appointment | $68,236 | 13 |
| Clinic - Other Outreach | $66,827 | 28 |
| Amateur/Recreational/Youth Sports | $66,648 | 18 |
| College/University- Hospital/Health System | $66,106 | 49 |
| College/University - Campus Health/Recreation | $64,900 | 38 |
| College/University - NCAA Division III - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | $63,336 | 334 |
| College/University - NCAA Division II - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | $62,885 | 230 |
| College/University - NAIA - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic | $57,059 | 174 |

*Data for the following options are not shown due to low sample sizes: Government, Secondary School - Middle School - Both Academic and Athletic, Independent Contractor, College/University - Two-year Institution - Faculty/Academic/Research, College/University - Two-year Institution - Split Appointment, College/University - Two-year Institution - Professional Staff/Athletics/Clinic, Clinic - Physician owned clinic*

**Master's degrees appear to function primarily as a gateway to higher-earning doctoral roles rather than as a strong stand-alone salary differentiator, as bachelor's-prepared respondents earned slightly more on average than those with a master's degree in 2026, while respondents with a doctorate earned substantially higher salaries than both groups**. Respondents holding a bachelor's degree have experienced the fastest percentage growth in salary since 2016, and by 2026 their average salary exceeded that of respondents with a master's degree by $269. Respondents who completed Residency (CAATE-accredited only) earned an average salary of $70,624 in 2026, which is slightly lower than the average salaries of respondents with either a bachelor's or a master's degree (not shown).




73 percent of all respondents held a master's degree, 57 percent of whom felt it was necessary for their current salary/pay. A master's degree was most likely to lead to a higher-paying position in the following work settings: Hospital, Professional Sports, and Military. Of those working in a Hospital setting, respondents with a master's degree outearned those with a bachelor's degree by almost $15,000. Conversely, respondents with a bachelor's degree outearned those with master's degrees Professional Performing Arts by more $45,000; however, the dataset for this work setting was small.

| Degree Qualifications and Salary | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | **Hold Master's or professional degree** (n=5,369) | **Master's Degree necessary for current salary/pay** (n=2,178) | **Master's salary minus Bachelor's salary** |
| College/University | 75% | 58% | $3,971 |
| Secondary - Middle - High School | 71% | 59% | $4,631 |
| Clinic | 70% | 52% | $179 |
| Hospital | 72% | 57% | $14,963 |
| Industrial/Occupational/Corporate | 71% | 44% | $2,274 |
| Professional Sports | 73% | 63% | $13,498 |
| Other | 61% | 47% | $2,359 |
| Military* | 80% | 56% | $7,451 |
| Business/Sales/Marketing* | 86% | 30% | -$22,312 |
| Amateur/Recreational/Youth Sports* | 76% | ** | -$2,418 |
| Professional Performing Arts* | 79% | ** | -$45,418 |
| Health/Fitness/Sports Performance Enhancement Clinic/Club* | 82% | ** | -$180 |
| Military Academy* | 100% | ** | $29,770 |
| Public Safety * | 55% | ** | -$2,462 |

** Bachelor's degree salary reported by less than 10 respondents in each setting*
***less than 10 respondents*

Athletic trainers reported earning more as their years of experience increased, ranging from an average of $53,419 for those with less than 1 year of experience to $101,127 for those with more than 25 years of experience. On average, there is an 11 percent increase in salary every 5 years of experience, with the largest increase of 14 percent for those moving from 1-5 years of experience to

6-10 years of experience and those moving from 6-10 years to 11-15 years. Across all experience brackets, average salary increased between 2023 and 2026; those with 25 or more years of experience saw the greatest average salary increase of $11,839 from 2023.

| Average Salary by Years of Experience | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 2008 | 2011 | 2014 | 2016 | 2018 | 2021 | 2023 | 2026 |
| Less than 1 | $29,749 | $34,623 | $38,214 | $38,825 | $38,651 | $43,924 | $48,931 | $53,419 |
| 1 - 5 | $34,436 | $37,106 | $41,568 | $42,320 | $44,400 | $47,575 | $53,969 | $58,166 |
| 6 - 10 | $41,677 | $44,505 | $49,204 | $48,786 | $52,099 | $55,040 | $60,929 | $66,444 |
| 11 - 15 | $49,238 | $54,012 | $60,329 | $56,020 | $59,635 | $63,992 | $69,791 | $75,652 |
| 16 - 20 | $53,498 | $62,143 | $66,860 | $65,752 | $65,338 | $70,564 | $78,382 | $81,932 |
| 21 - 25 | $59,688 | $66,030 | $66,626 | $71,005 | $71,833 | $76,504 | $83,803 | $91,969 |
| 25+ | $63,409 | $75,202 | $82,180 | $79,191 | $79,558 | $84,313 | $89,288 | $101,127 |

As with years of experience, the average salary increased with membership tenure. On average, there is a 12 percent increase in salary every 5 years of membership.

| Average Salary by Years as NATA Member | | |
|---|---|---|
| Years as a NATA Member | Average Salary | Count |
| Less than 1 | $52,415 | 69 |
| 1 - 5 | $57,542 | 739 |
| 6 - 10 | $65,945 | 816 |
| 11 - 15 | $75,817 | 668 |
| 16 - 20 | $82,814 | 434 |
| 21 - 25 | $94,976 | 406 |
| More than 25 | $103,161 | 845 |

Respondents with longer NATA membership reported substantially higher average salaries than non-members, especially beyond 20 years of membership. For respondents with less than 1 year of membership, non-members reported slightly higher average salaries than members ($55,728 versus $52,415), and this pattern persisted through 10 years of membership. From 11 to 15 years, member and non-member salaries were roughly comparable (about $75,800 versus $75,100). However, among respondents with 16 or more years in the profession, members reported notably higher salaries than non-members, with the gap widening from about $4,300 at 16 to 20 years ($82,814 versus $78,498) to nearly $22,700 among those with more than 25 years of membership ($103,161 versus $80,670).

| Membership Comparison | | |
|---|---|---|
| Years of Experience | Average Members' Salaries | Average Non-Members' Salaries |
| Less than 1 | $52,415 | $55,728 |
| 1 - 5 | $57,542 | $59,491 |
| 6 - 10 | $65,945 | $67,649 |
| 11 - 15 | $75,817 | $75,114 |
| 16 - 20 | $82,814 | $78,498 |
| 21 - 25 | $94,976 | $75,471 |
| More than 25 | $103,161 | $80,670 |

**Those from District Eight continued to earn the highest average salary, followed by those from District Seven, Ten, and Six.** All four of these districts are above the national average of $76,297, with District Eight reporting an average salary of approximately 28 percent higher than average. District Eight also saw the greatest increase in average salary from 2021 (over $21,000). The lowest average salaries were reported by Districts Four, Five, Eleven, and Nine.

| Average Salary by District | | |
|---|---|---|
| **District** | **Salary** | **Count** |
| One | $73,694 | 360 |
| Two | $75,912 | 628 |
| Three | $75,530 | 588 |
| Four | $72,513 | 587 |
| Five | $70,180 | 527 |
| Six | $77,539 | 358 |
| Seven | $82,656 | 261 |
| Eight | $97,379 | 298 |
| Nine | $72,282 | 669 |
| Ten | $82,519 | 152 |
| Eleven | $71,167 | 415 |

**Salary figures reflect the shift of 3 states from District 4 (Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) to form District 11 in January 2022*

Across all districts in 2026, NATA members continued to earn higher average salaries than non-members, with the largest gaps observed in Districts Seven, Five, Nine, and Two. In 2026, member salaries exceeded non-member salaries in every district, reversing the small exceptions seen in 2021 and 2023 when non-members in Districts One and Ten slightly out-earned members. Members in District Eight reported the highest district-level average salary at $97,849, followed by members in Districts Seven and Ten, while non-members in District Eight and Ten remained the highest-earning non-member groups at $94,516 and $70,098, respectively.

| District Membership Salary | | |
|---|---|---|
| **District** | **Average Members' Salary** | **Average Non-Members' Salaries** |
| One | $74,517 | $70,098 |
| Two | $77,622 | $68,890 |
| Three | $77,191 | $70,683 |
| Four* | $75,055 | $67,200 |
| Five | $71,612 | $61,811 |
| Six | $78,815 | $72,954 |
| Seven | $87,053 | $69,926 |
| Eight | $97,849 | $94,516 |
| Nine | $75,075 | $65,472 |
| Ten | $83,573 | $78,234 |
| Eleven | $73,721 | $65,093 |

**Salary figures reflect the shift of 3 states from District 4 (Illinois, Minnesota, and Wisconsin) to form District 11 in January 2022*

Below are the average annual salaries for the top 20 cities based on major metropolitan areas. Salaries ranged from $65,017 in St. Louis to $102,903 in Los Angeles-Long-Beach. Respondents were most commonly from the Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, New York-Newark-Jersey City, and Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington areas.

| Top 20 Nearest Major Metropolitan Area | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Major Metro Area** | **Percentage** | **Count** |
| Chicago-Naperville-Elgin, IL-IN-WI Metro Area | $73,568 | 148 |
| New York-Newark-Jersey City, NY-NJ-PA Metro Area | $87,236 | 147 |
| Philadelphia-Camden-Wilmington, PA-NJ-DE-MD Metro Area | $77,362 | 145 |
| Boston-Cambridge-Newton, MA-NH Metro Area | $78,310 | 121 |
| None | $71,303 | 111 |
| Dallas-Fort Worth-Arlington, TX Metro Area | $78,392 | 107 |
| Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV Metro Area | $83,410 | 101 |
| Los Angeles-Long Beach-Anaheim, CA Metro Area | $102,903 | 89 |
| Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI Metro Area | $72,915 | 79 |
| Indianapolis-Carmel-Anderson, IN Metro Area | $69,424 | 79 |
| Kansas City, MO-KS Metro Area | $77,870 | 77 |
| Columbus, OH Metro Area | $79,725 | 76 |
| Atlanta-Sandy Springs-Roswell, GA Metro Area | $70,561 | 69 |
| Pittsburgh, PA Metro Area | $65,219 | 67 |
| Charlotte-Concord-Gastonia, NC-SC Metro Area | $69,412 | 62 |
| Detroit-Warren-Dearborn, MI Metro Area | $81,619 | 60 |
| St. Louis, MO-IL Metro Area | $65,017 | 59 |
| Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN Metro Area | $69,865 | 59 |
| Houston-The Woodlands-Sugar Land, TX Metro Area | $78,692 | 57 |
| Cincinnati, OH-KY-IN Metro Area | $68,882 | 52 |

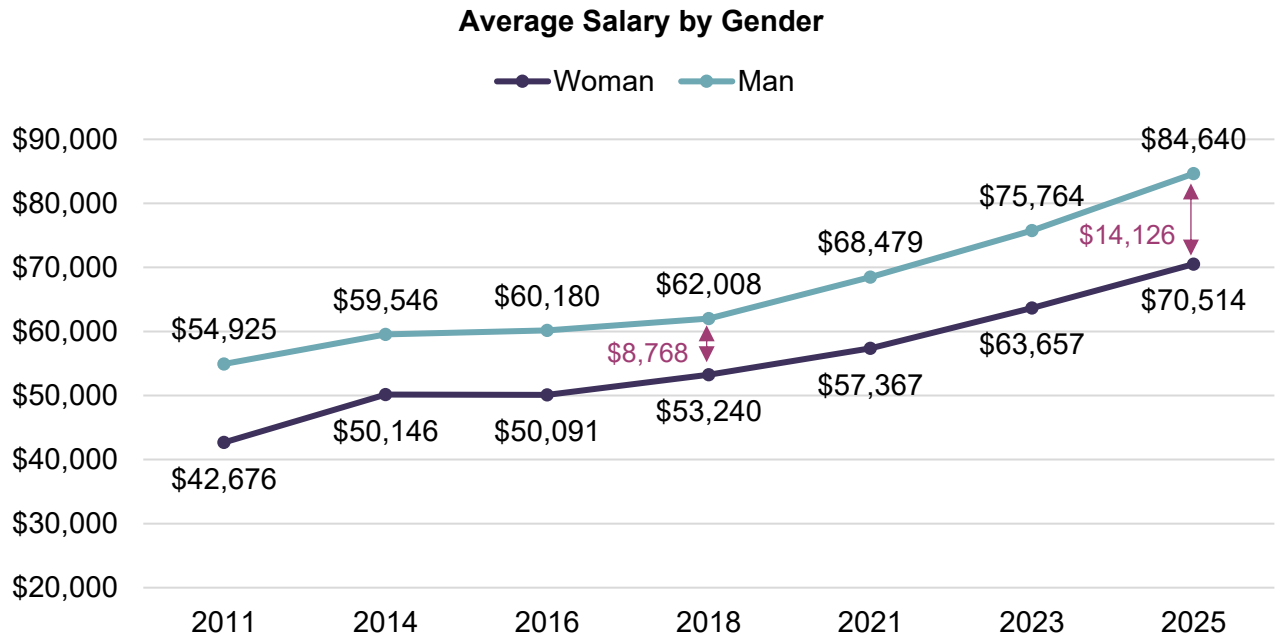
Urban workers earned an average of 11 percent more than rural workers, reflecting a difference of nearly $8,000 annually. Respondents working in an urban area reported an average salary of $79,976, while those in a rural area earned just $72,005. Despite urban areas having the highest average salary, respondents working in rural areas saw the greatest increase from 2021. Rural salaries went from $64,163 to $72,005, a 12% increase. Urban and suburban salaries increased by 11% and 10%, respectively.

| Average Salary by Geographic Area | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Geographic Area** | **Average Salary** | **Count** |
| Urban | $79,976 | 1,845 |
| Suburban | $75,107 | 2,350 |
| Rural | $72,005 | 940 |

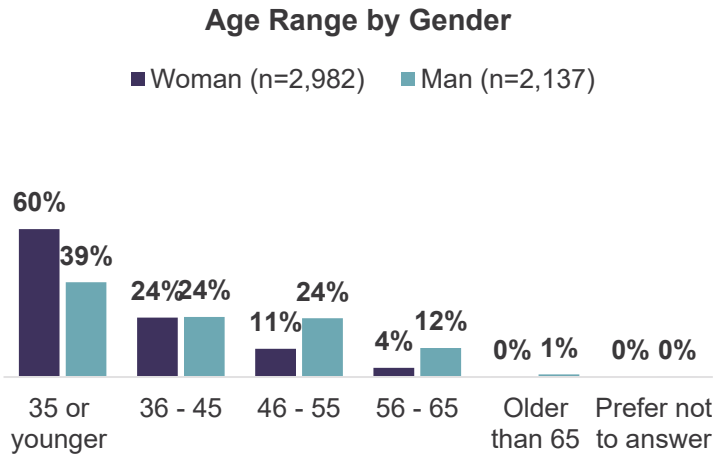
As in previous years, young professionals (ages 35 and under) made up the majority of survey respondents, and respondents 36 and older earned approximately 41 percent more (+$26,012) than those under the age of 35.

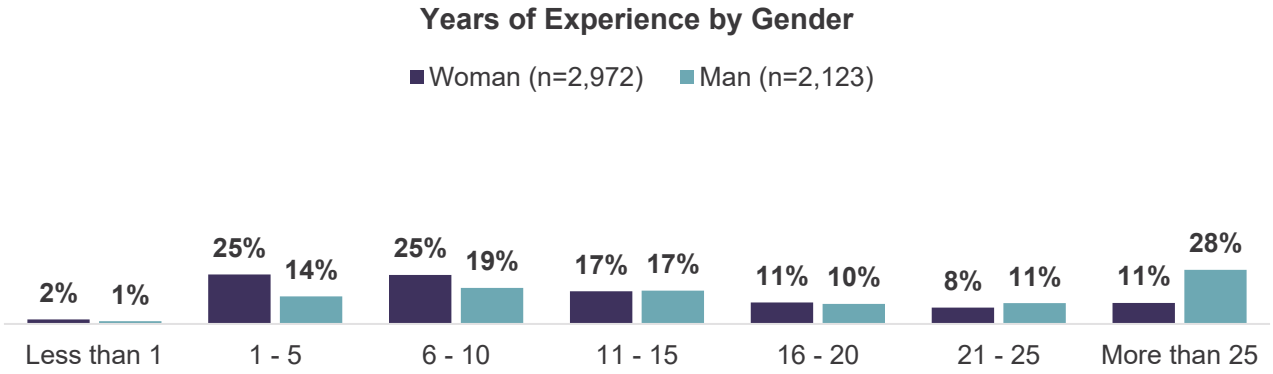
| Average Salary by Age | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Age** | **Average Salary** | **Count** |
| **35 or younger** | **$63,751** | **2,651** |
| **36 and older** | **$89,763** | **2,512** |
| 36 - 45 | $80,461 | 1,253 |
| 46 - 55 | $97,222 | 858 |
| 56 - 65 | $101,148 | 370 |
| Older than 65 | $123,445 | 31 |

Women athletic trainers continue to earn less than men. From 2023 to 2026, **men's average salaries increased by nearly $8,900 compared to just $6,900 for women athletic trainers, creating a disparity of over $14,000 in average salary.** Women reported an average salary of $70,514, while men reported an average salary of $84,640.



Women tended to be younger, with 60 percent aged 35 or younger, compared to only 39 percent of men. Women were also less likely to supervise employees, with only 23 percent in supervisory roles compared to 36 percent of men. Additionally, women had less experience, with 27 percent having less than 6 years of experience, as opposed to 15 percent of men with similar tenure.




**Similar to 2023, women with less than 1 year of experience again earned slightly more than men, but the gap narrowed to about $1,575.** After the first year, women consistently earned less than men at every experience level, with the gap generally widening as tenure increased, with the largest dollar differences for those with more than 20 years of experience.

| Average Salary by Years of Experience and Gender | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Years of Experience** | **Woman (n=2,972)** | **Man (n=2,123)** | **Difference** |
| Less than 1 | $53,497 | $51,922 | $1,575 |
| 1 - 5 | $57,459 | $59,961 | -$2,502 |
| 6 - 10 | $64,616 | $70,060 | -$5,444 |
| 11 - 15 | $73,501 | $78,581 | -$5,080 |
| 16 - 20 | $80,397 | $84,217 | -$3,821 |
| 21 - 25 | $86,014 | $98,731 | -$12,716 |
| More than 25 | $91,272 | $106,599 | -$15,327 |

Women who supervise employees earned $18,629 less on average than men who supervise others.

| Average Salary by Supervising Employees and Gender | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Supervise** | **Woman** | **Man** | **Difference** |
| Yes | $82,920 | $101,549 | -$18,629 |
| No | $65,869 | $73,766 | -$7,897 |

Women aged 36 and older earn an average of $12,513 less per year than men aged 36 and older.

| Average Salary by Age and Gender | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Average** | **Woman** | **Man** | |
| **35 or younger** | **$62,185** | **$67,158** | **-$4,974** |
| **36 and older** | **$83,173** | **$95,685** | **-$12,513** |
| 36 - 45 | $78,331 | $83,459 | -$5,128 |
| 46 - 55 | $91,800 | $100,878 | -$9,078 |
| 56 - 65 | $87,761 | $106,843 | -$19,082 |
| Older than 65 | * | $136,088 | * |

**Salary data for the following options are not shown due to low sample size: Woman older than 65*

In 2026, 87 percent of respondents were white or Caucasian and reported an average salary of $76,327. Hispanic or Latino respondents comprised 7 percent of respondents and reported an average salary of $75,752.

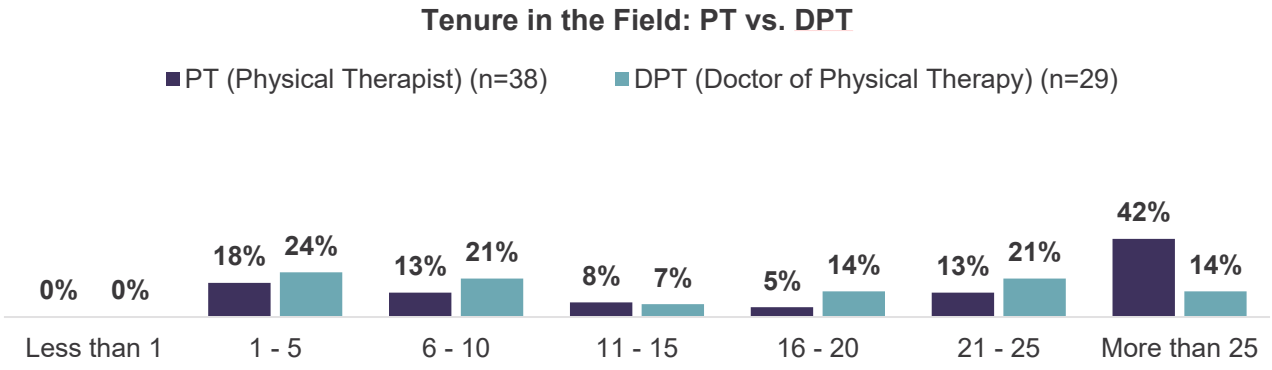
| Average Salary by Ethnicity | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Ethnicity** | **Average Salary** | **Count** |
| American Indian/Alaskan Native | $71,109 | 59 |
| Asian/ Asian American | $76,675 | 190 |
| Black or African American (not of Hispanic origin) | $71,790 | 195 |
| Hispanic or Latinx/a/o | $75,752 | 347 |
| Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander | $68,407 | 22 |
| White or Caucasian (not of Hispanic origin) | $76,327 | 4,492 |
| Not listed | $81,334 | 24 |
| Prefer not to answer | $84,599 | 81 |

Respondents in supervisory roles reported an average salary of $92,404, which is 34 percent more than those who do not supervise employees, who reported an average salary of $68,884. Respondents supervising larger teams overall (more than 10, more than 15, or more than 20 employees) also reported six-figure average salaries, ranging from about $112,600 to $119,700. Respondents supervising more than 20 employees reported a slightly lower average salary ($115,530) than those supervising more than 15 employees ($119,693), suggesting that beyond a certain team size, additional supervisory responsibility does not translate into higher pay.

| Average Salary by Number of Employees Supervised | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Number of Employees Supervised** | **Average Salary** | **Count** |
| 1 - 5 | $82,605 | 839 |
| 6 - 10 | $100,934 | 249 |
| 11 - 15 | $103,861 | 135 |
| 16 - 20 | $128,329 | 54 |
| More than 10 | $112,593 | 301 |
| More than 15 | $119,693 | 166 |
| More than 20 | $115,530 | 112 |

In 2026, respondents with a PT credential reported the highest average salary at $128,525, and those with a Doctor of Physical Therapy reported $116,941, but these salaries decreased by 1 percent for PTs and ten percent for DPTs from 2023. Over the same period, average salary increased more than $10,000 for respondents holding PhD, EdD, Physical Therapy Assistant, CSCS, and PES credentials.

| Credentials | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Average** | **Salary** | **Row n** |
| PT (Physical Therapist) | $128,525 | 38 |
| DPT (Doctor of Physical Therapy) | $116,941 | 29 |
| PhD | $106,399 | 156 |
| EdD (Doctor of Education) | $100,350 | 80 |
| PTA (Physical Therapy Assistant) | $98,207 | 37 |
| CSCS (Certified Strength & Conditioning Specialist) | $89,873 | 428 |
| PES (Performance Enhancement Specialist) | $87,630 | 346 |
| Teaching Certificate | $83,437 | 236 |
| DAT (Doctor of Athletic Training) | $82,478 | 157 |
| CES (Corrective Exercise Specialist) | $79,990 | 509 |
| Other | $76,972 | 464 |
| OTC (Orthopedic Technician) | $76,830 | 81 |
| ATC (Certified Athletic Trainer) | $76,276 | 5,133 |
| EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) | $74,945 | 144 |
| LMT (Licensed Massage Therapist) | $74,863 | 24 |
| Personal Trainer | $73,021 | 101 |
| LAT (Licensed Athletic Trainer) | $71,544 | 3,642 |

*Data for the following options are not shown due to low sample sizes: RN (Registered Nurse), Paramedic, PA (Physician Assistant), None of the above, Certified Cardiographic Technician, NP (Nurse Practitioner), LPN (Licensed Practical Nurse), OT (Occupational Therapist), COTA (Certified Occupational Therapist Assistant), IFS (Integrated Flexibility Specialist), MD (Medical Doctor), DO (Doctor of Osteopathic Medicine), LVN (Licensed Vocational Nurse), OTA (Occupational Therapy Assistant)*

When comparing the professional tenure of physical therapists against those holding a Doctor of Physical Therapy, 42 percent of DPTs had more than 25 years of experience compared to just 14 percent of physical therapists.