

*Secondary School Athletic
Trainers:
A Data-Centric Overview of
Job Satisfaction and
Strategies for Risk Reduction,
Recruitment, and Retention*

By: National Athletic Trainers Association
Secondary School Athletic Trainers Committee



Objectives

- Interpret data from NATA members in the secondary school setting
- Recognize how to integrate Appropriate Medical Care Standards into the secondary school athletic training practice
- Identify compensation models for secondary school athletic trainers
- Summarize checklist and resources for school administration to assist in promoting a healthy environment
- Develop a path to aid in retention within the secondary school setting

Background

- COVID-19 pandemic reduction in United States workforce
- “Great resignation”
- Industries impacted the most were health care, education, and hospitality sectors
- Athletic trainers in secondary school setting fall within two of these sectors: health care and education

Survey

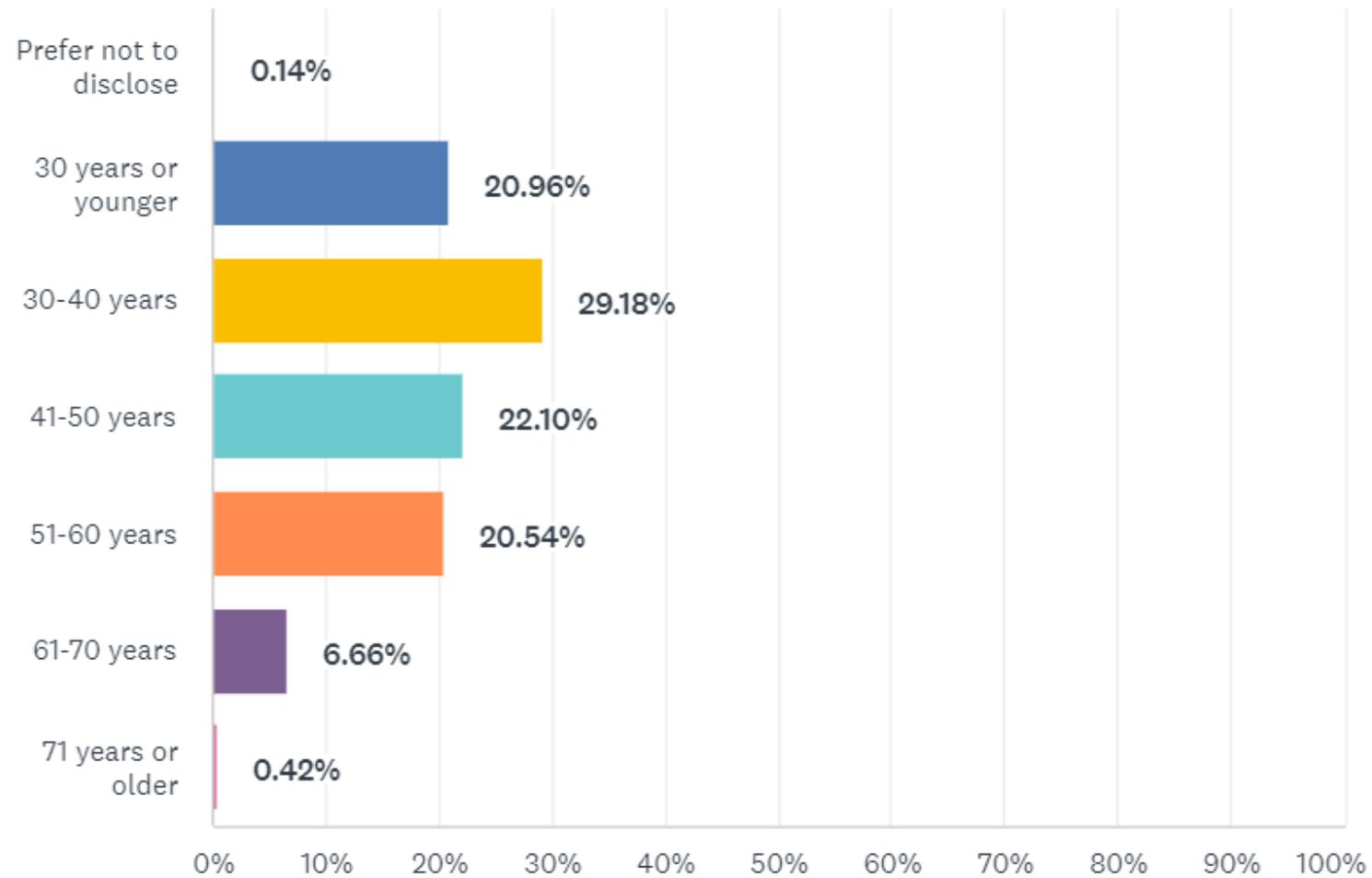
- Distributed by NATA in December 2023
- 706 participants (secondary school athletic trainers)
- 15% response rate



Age

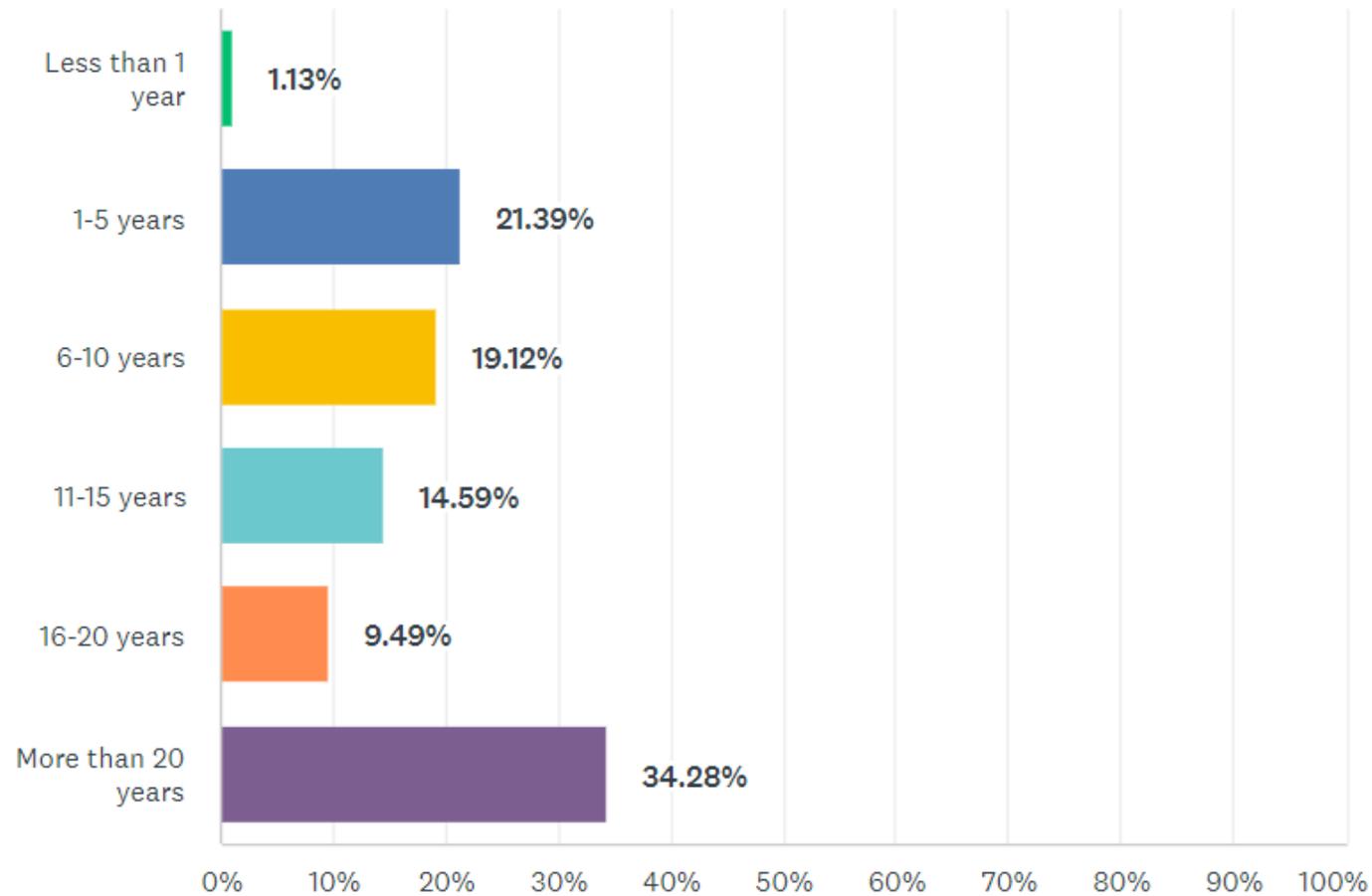
Answered: 706

Skipped: 0



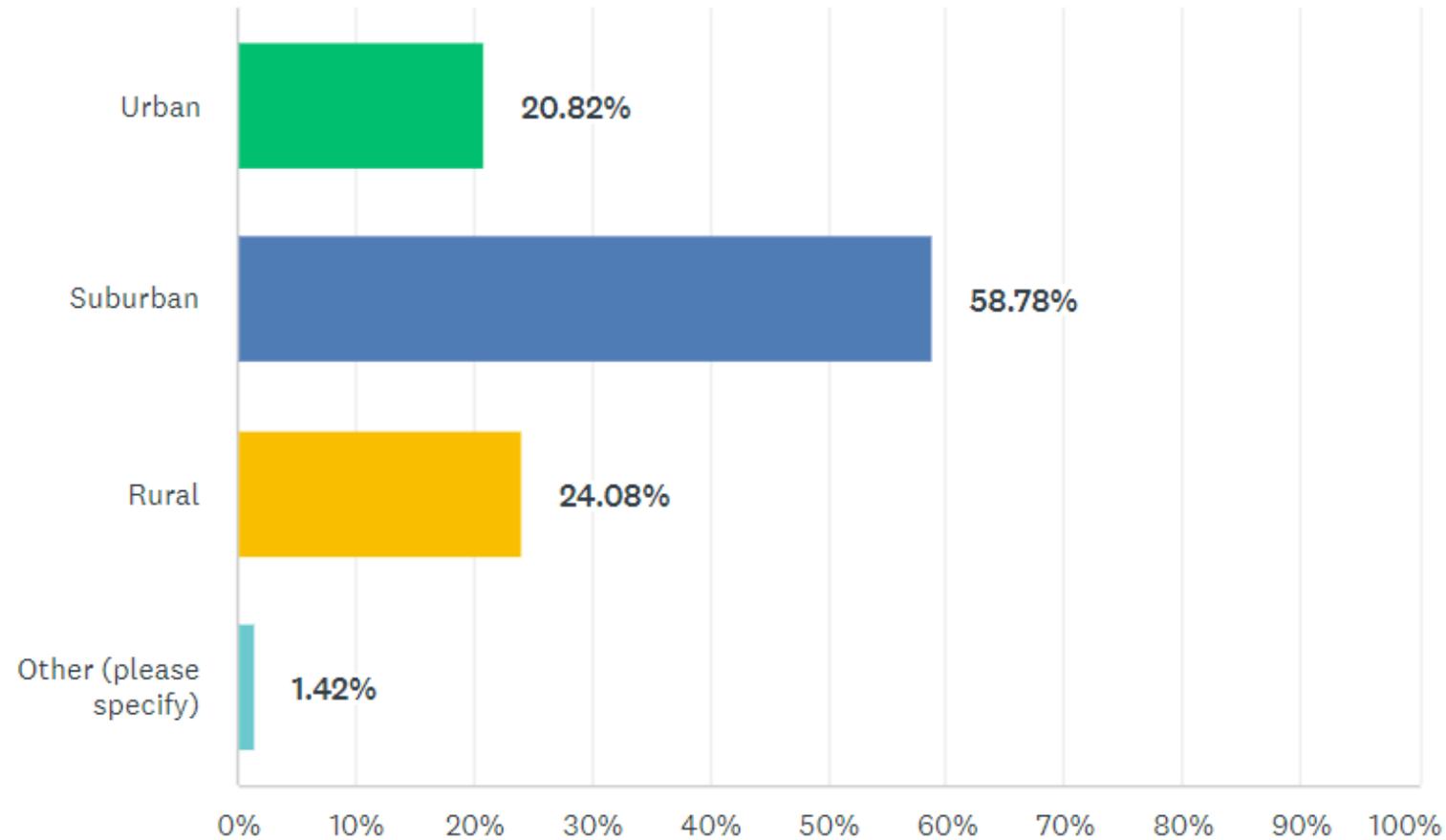
How many years have you been practicing in the Secondary School Setting?

Answered: 706 Skipped: 0



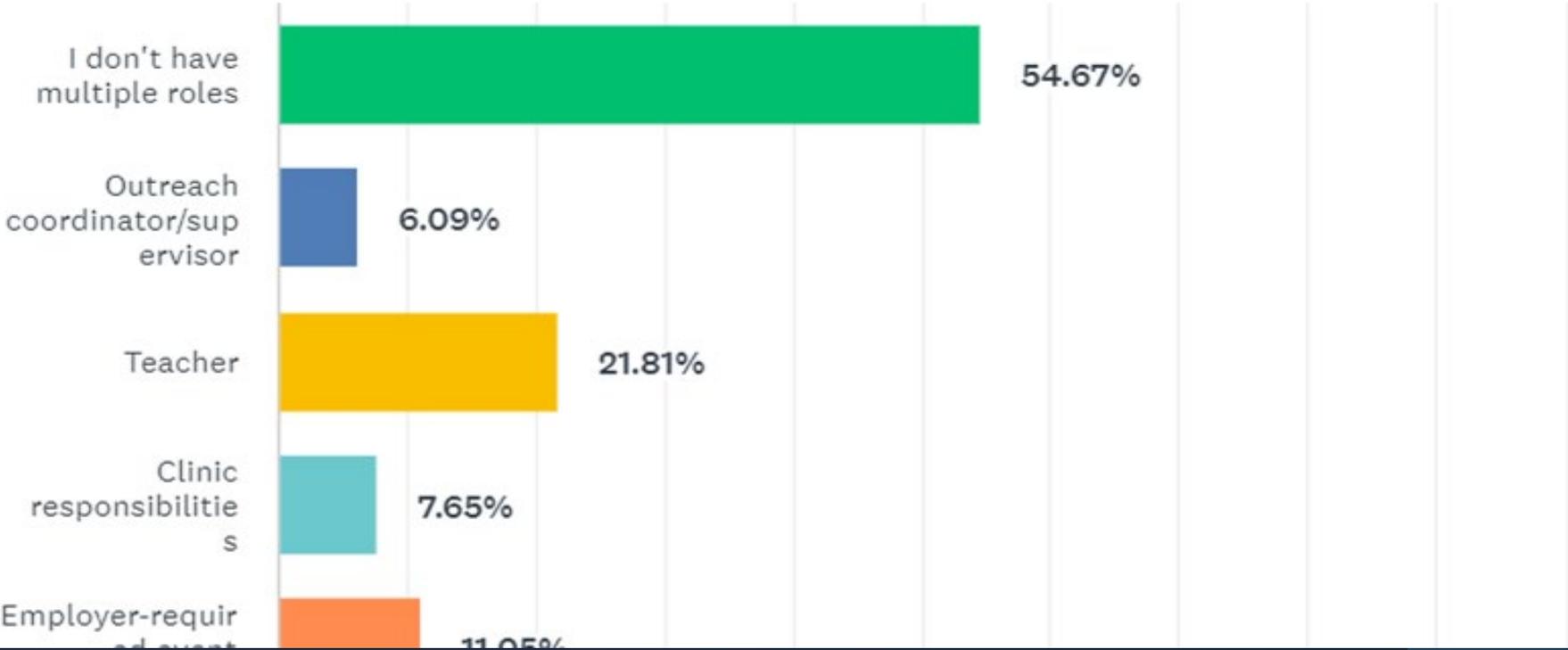
What best describes your school(s)? Select all that apply.

Answered: 706 Skipped: 0



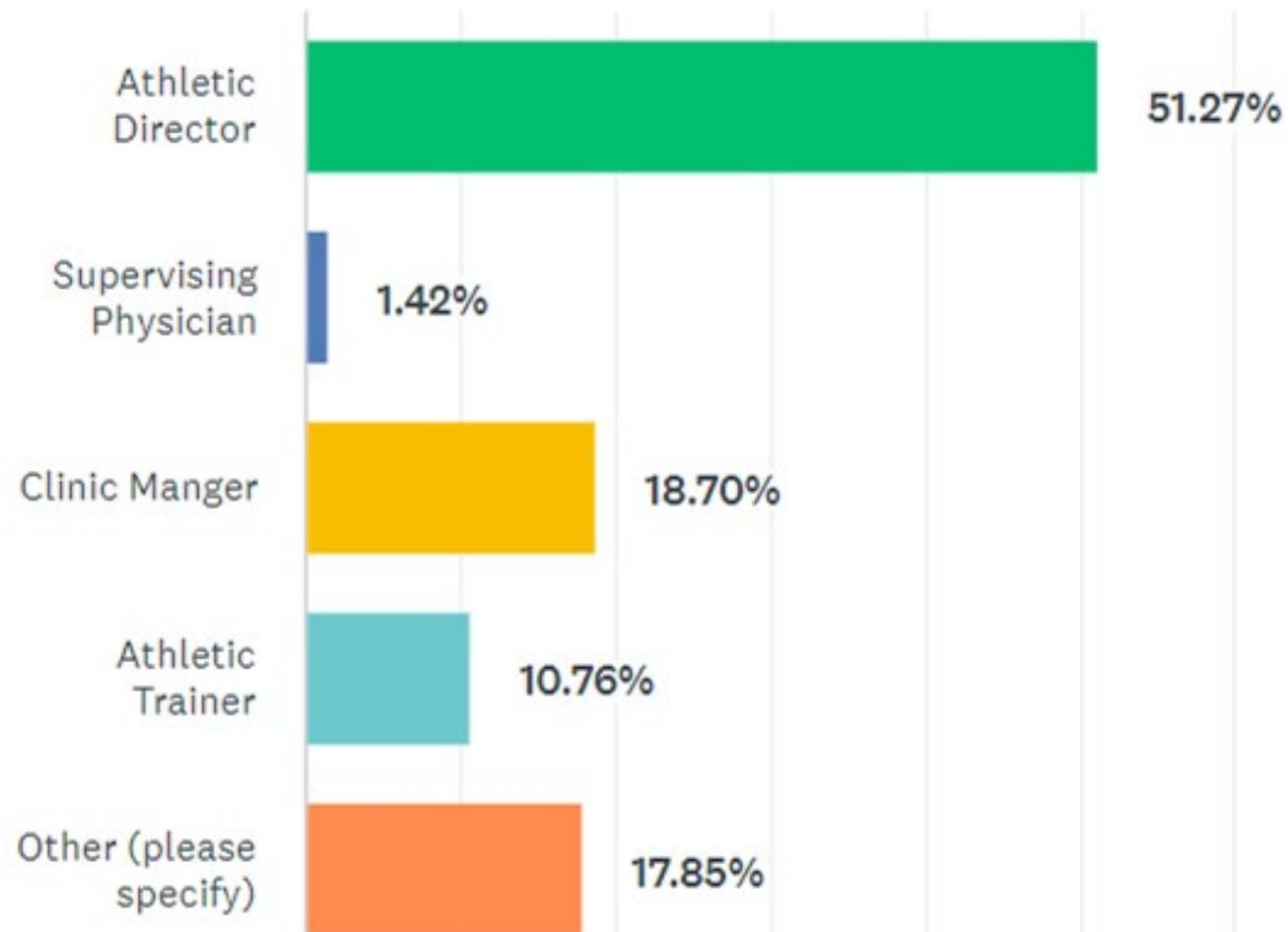
If you have multiple employer roles what are those roles? Select all that apply.

Answered: 706 Skipped: 0



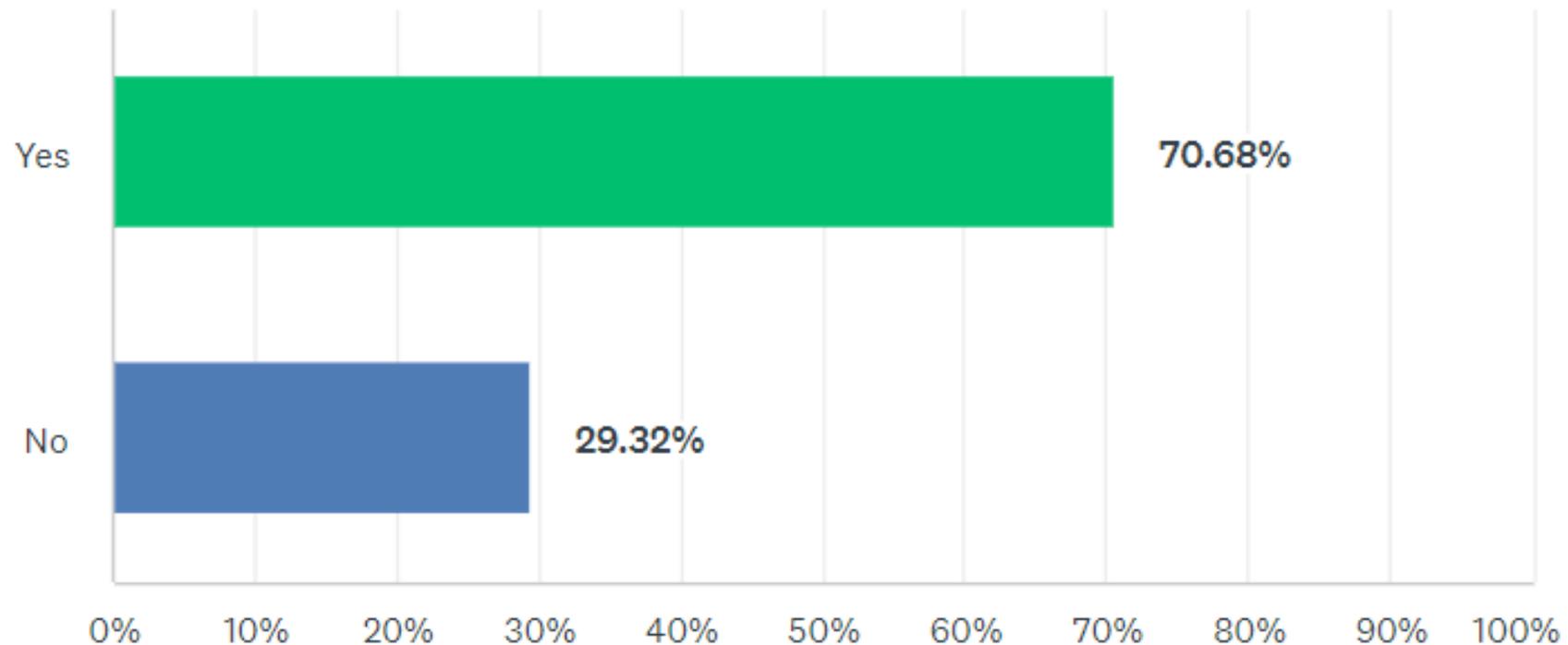
Who is your immediate supervisor?

Answered: 706 Skipped: 0



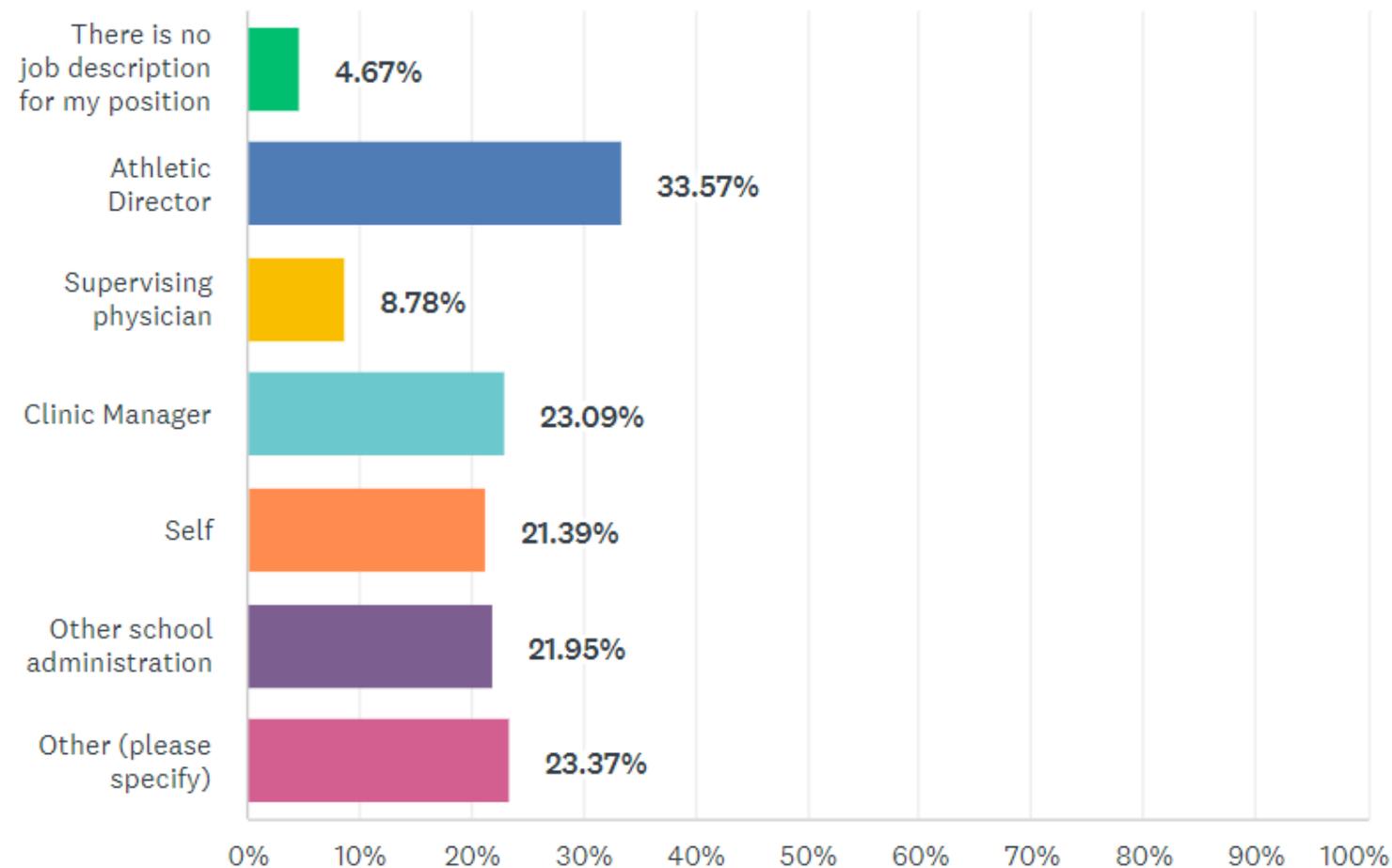
Do you feel that you are you able to set and maintain appropriate work boundaries with respect to your work/life ratio?

Answered: 706 Skipped: 0



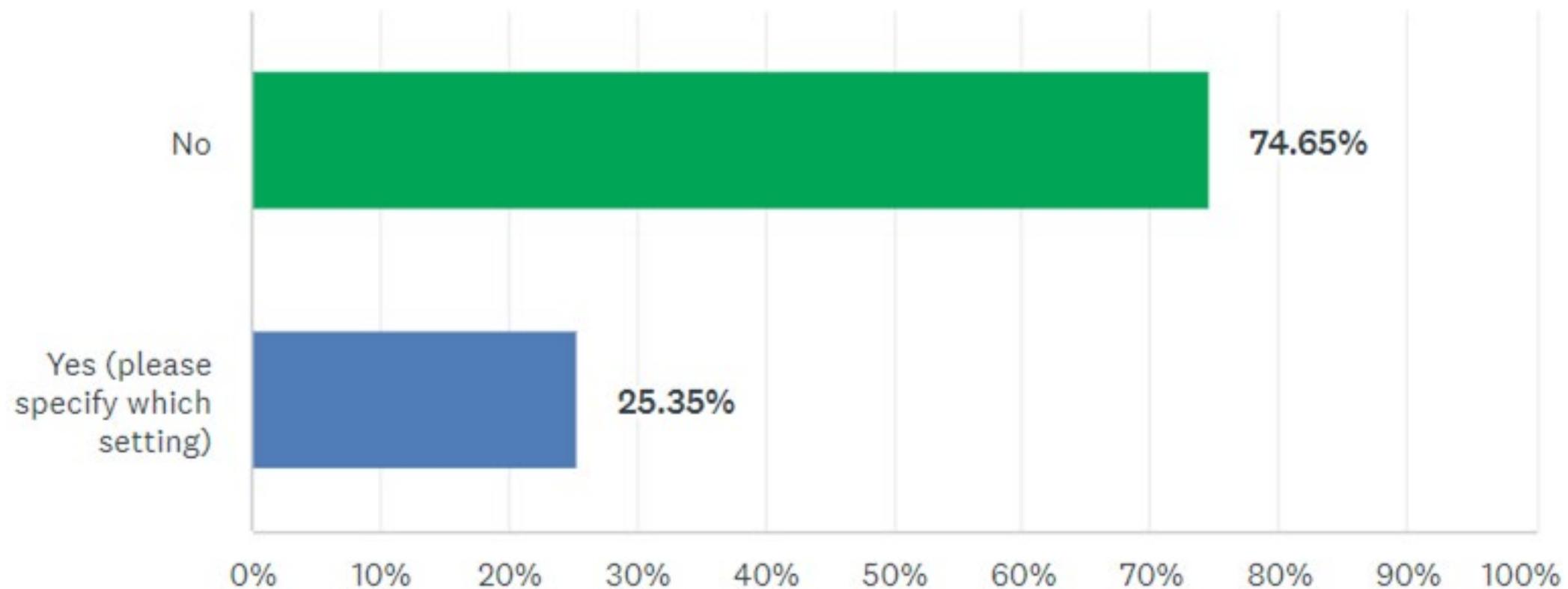
Who wrote/writes your job description? Select all that apply.

Answered: 706 Skipped: 0



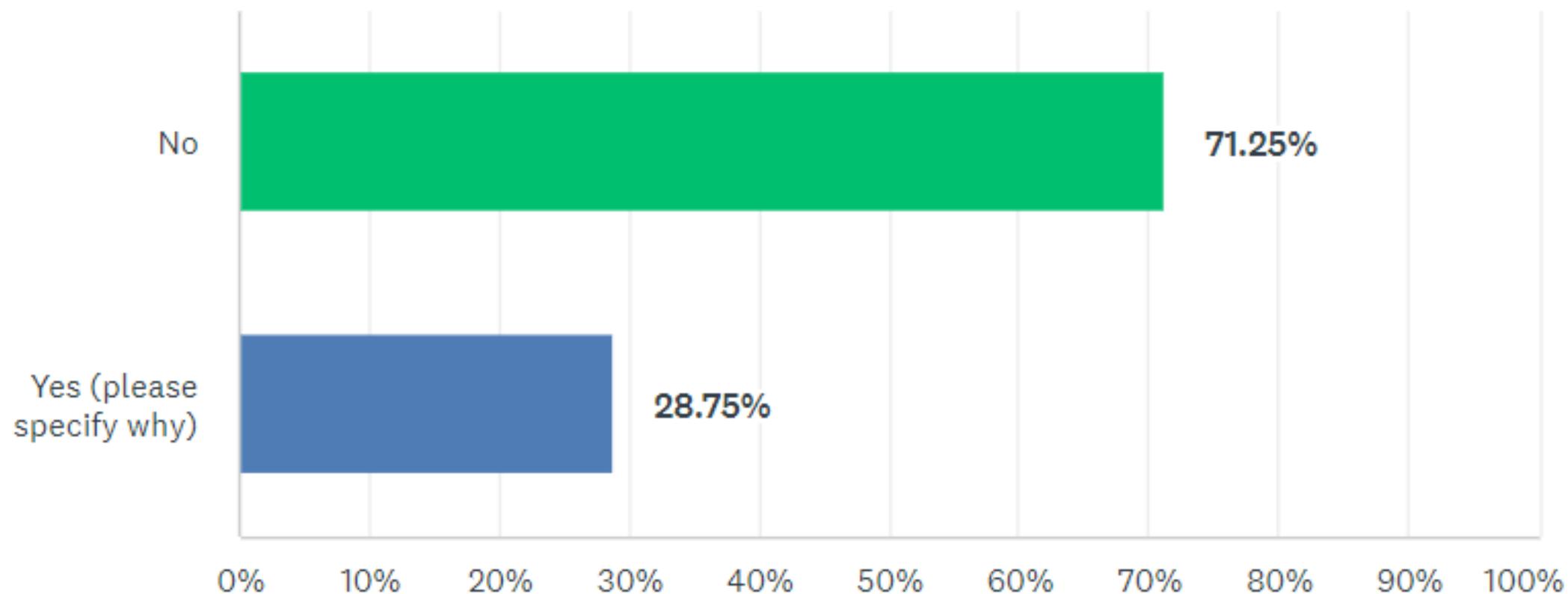
Are you considering leaving the secondary school setting for another athletic training setting?

Answered: 706 Skipped: 0



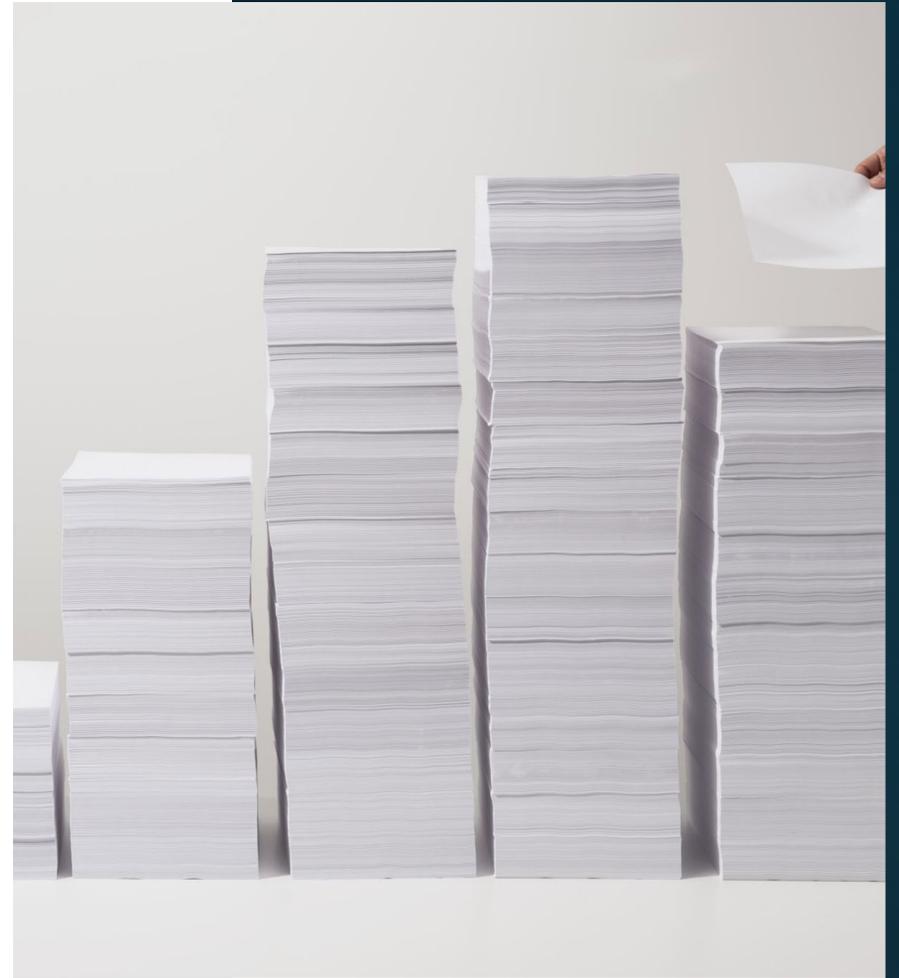
Are you considering leaving the profession?

Answered: 706 Skipped: 0



White Paper

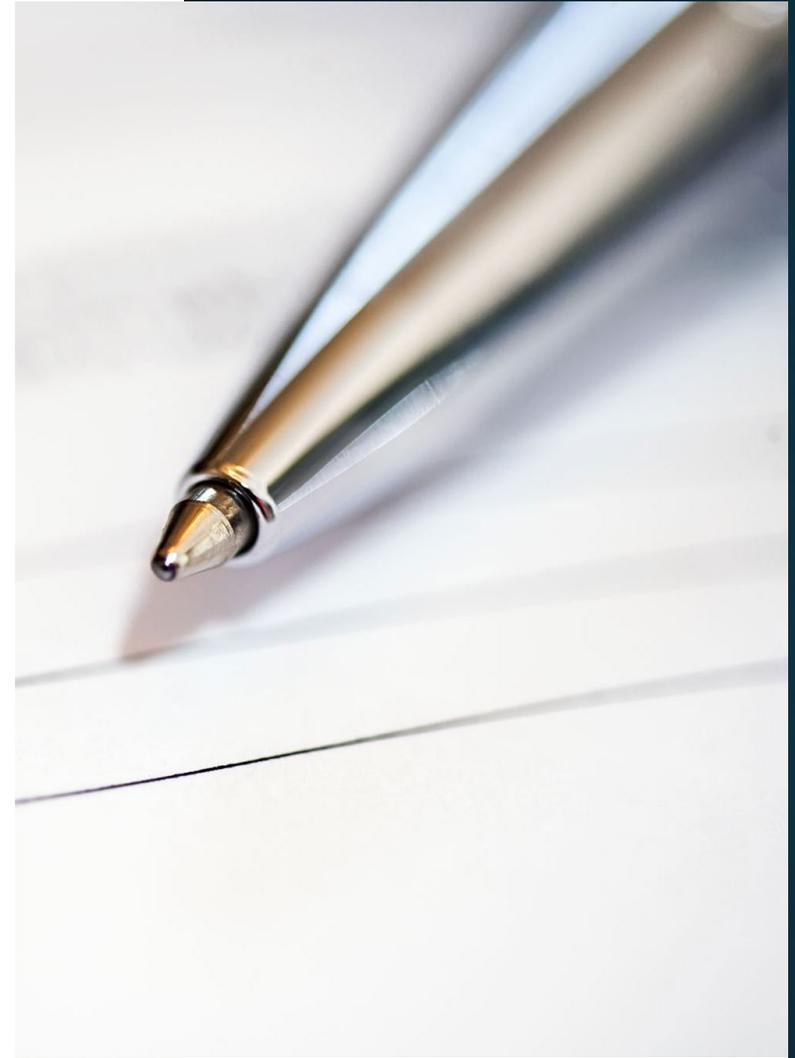
- Informational document used to generate interest
- Understand issues, solve problem, or make decision
- Describe problem, advocate a position, and propose solutions





SSATC White Paper Sections

- Problem
- Employment
- Value
- Compensation
- Support from Administration
- Conclusion
- Checklist for Administration
- Resources





Problems we identified

Nearly 30% of athletic trainers in secondary school setting were considering leaving the profession

More than 26,000 public and private secondary schools in U.S

8 million high school students participate on sports team

Over 1.4 million athletes ages 14-18 will sustain some type of sports-related injury annually



Employment

- Nearly 60,000 ATs credentialed by the Board of Certification
 - Employment of ATs in secondary schools is largest (24%) setting followed by Clinic/Hospital (18%) and Collegiate setting (16%)



Employment

- Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) projects athletic training faster than average job growth (14%) over the next decade
- Between 2022 and 2023, there was a decrease of 1,960 ATs in employment in hospitals, non-physician health care offices, and secondary/elementary schools



Employment Opportunities for Athletic Trainers

ATs are now employed in more than 40 settings

Rapid employment in industrial, military, and hospital settings

Predictable work schedules

Work-life balance

Secondary School Setting



Nights and weekends



Six to seven days a week of athletics (practices/games)



Various models for employment (school-based and outreach)



Multiple modes of employment (teacher, adjunct professor, PRN)

Statistics



Sports-related injuries ~\$33 billion in health care costs annually



Average emergency room visit \$1,233



ATs routinely prevent costly and unwarranted visits to ER

Statistics

01

Sports-related injuries account for ~20 million absentee days from school

02

32% of parents miss work due to minor injuries to their children

03

On-site medical care from SSATs can aid in reducing cost, academic time lost by student athletes, and parents missing time at work

Value

- SSATs are responsible for comprehensive health care
- Inherent risk in sports
- ATs are a key component of mitigating risk
- Pediatric patients have unique injuries/illness



Pediatric Injuries/Illnesses

- Concussions (Evaluation, Return to Learn, Return to Play)
- Growth Plate Fractures
- Mental Health (Anxiety, Depression, Suicide attempts)
- Osgood Schlatter Disease
- Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS)
- Ulnar Collateral Ligament (UCL)



Research



Appropriate Medical Care Standards for Organizations Sponsoring Athletic Activity for the Secondary School Age Athlete



NATA Published in 2019

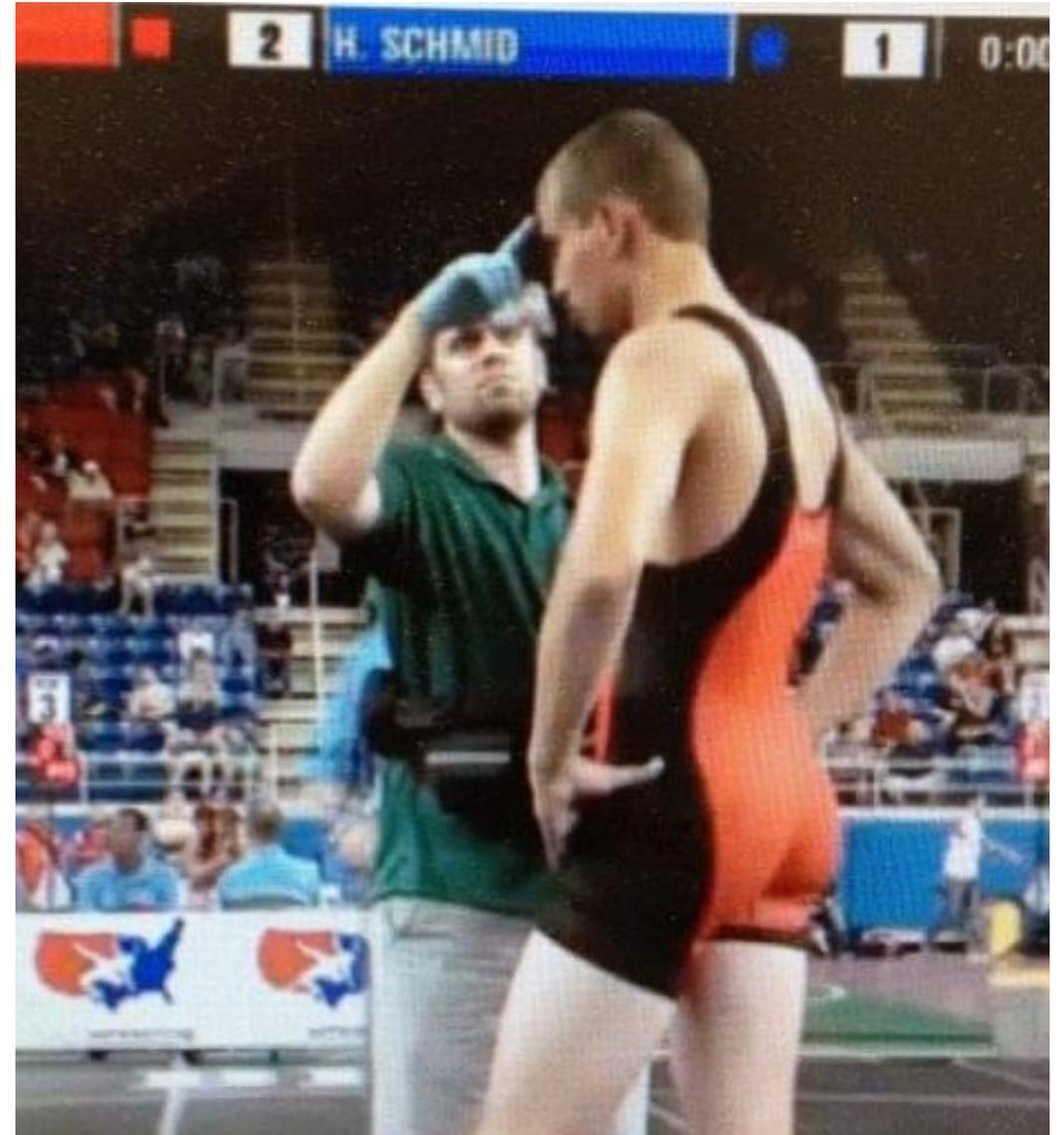
Appropriate Medical Care Standards

- Pre-participation physical exam
- Safe and clean athletic care facilities
- Properly fitted equipment
- Protective materials and products
- Environmental Policies
- Education & Counseling on nutrition/hydration/dietary supplementation



Appropriate Medical Care Standards

- Wellness programs
- Venue specific EAPs
- On-site immediate care of athletic injuries/illnesses
- Therapeutic interventions
- Preparedness for athletes with psychological conditions
- Athletic health care administration



Athletic Trainers

- Emergency Action Plans
- Emergency care for heat illness
- Concussion management





Program Assessment for Safety in Sport (PASS)



Developed to assist secondary schools and organizations with prioritizing health and safety



Review of organizational preparedness



Emphasizes the depth and breadth of services an AT provides

Program Assessment for Safety in Sport (PASS)



Framework for schools and organizations to benchmark success and opportunities



Compare the 12 standards for appropriate medical care for secondary school-aged athletes to the current infrastructure

Athletics

- Athletics deserve a qualified health care practitioner
- ATs provide skilled medical services in facilities and on sidelines
- If AT is not present, coaches become responsible





Legal Cases

- Cristian Navarro- 15 years old, \$9 Million wrongful death from exertional heat stroke (2022) California
- Imani Bell- \$10 Million settlement, heat stroke during after school basketball drills (2022) Georgia
- Isiah Turner- 17 years old, \$12 Million settlement, sickle cell crisis (2023) Philadelphia



State Funding for Secondary School ATs

- Athletic Trainer Secondary School Incentive Program in Alabama
 - Approved for 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years
 - Grants up to \$7,500 directly to ATs employed in rural and/or Title I secondary schools
- Athletic Trainer Professional Development Program in Louisiana
 - ATs employed in rural secondary school a loan repayment of \$6,000 if AT obtained Master of Athletic Training (MAT) within the state
 - \$4,000 if degree was obtained outside of Louisiana



Compensation 2023 NATA Salary Survey

- Average salary for secondary school athletic trainer is \$65,653
 - National average salary for athletic trainers is \$68,907
- AT salaries steadily on the rise since 2008
 - Largest increase (\$7,000) in average national salary came in 2021-2023
- Secondary school ATs with academic and athletic training roles had average salary of \$70,609
- Clinic outreach ATs average salary \$58,330



Recruitment and Retention

- Comprehensive benefit package
- Competitive salaries (market rates, NATA salary survey)
- Insurance (health, dental, vision, prescription, life etc.)
- Paid time off, sick leave, retirement plans
- Continuing education allowances
- Professional membership
- State license/regulation

Support From Administration

- Healthy organizational structures and work environments
- Communication with regularly scheduled meetings
- ATs workload analyzed with data
- Encouragement to work as team with colleagues and coaches
- Autonomy to practice within full scope
- Support to facilitate healthy work-life integration
- Advocate for higher salaries and additional staff

Checklist for Administrators



1. Job Descriptions
and Work Hours



2. Benefits and
Compensation



3. Administrative
Support



4. Staff
Development and
Training



5. Facility
Evaluation and
Improvement

Resources for Athletic Trainers

1. Athletic Training Location and Services (ATLAS)
2. Appropriate Medical Care Standards for Organizations Sponsoring Athletic Activity for the Secondary School-Aged Athlete: A Summary Statement
3. Secondary School Value Handout: A Safer Approach to Secondary School Sport



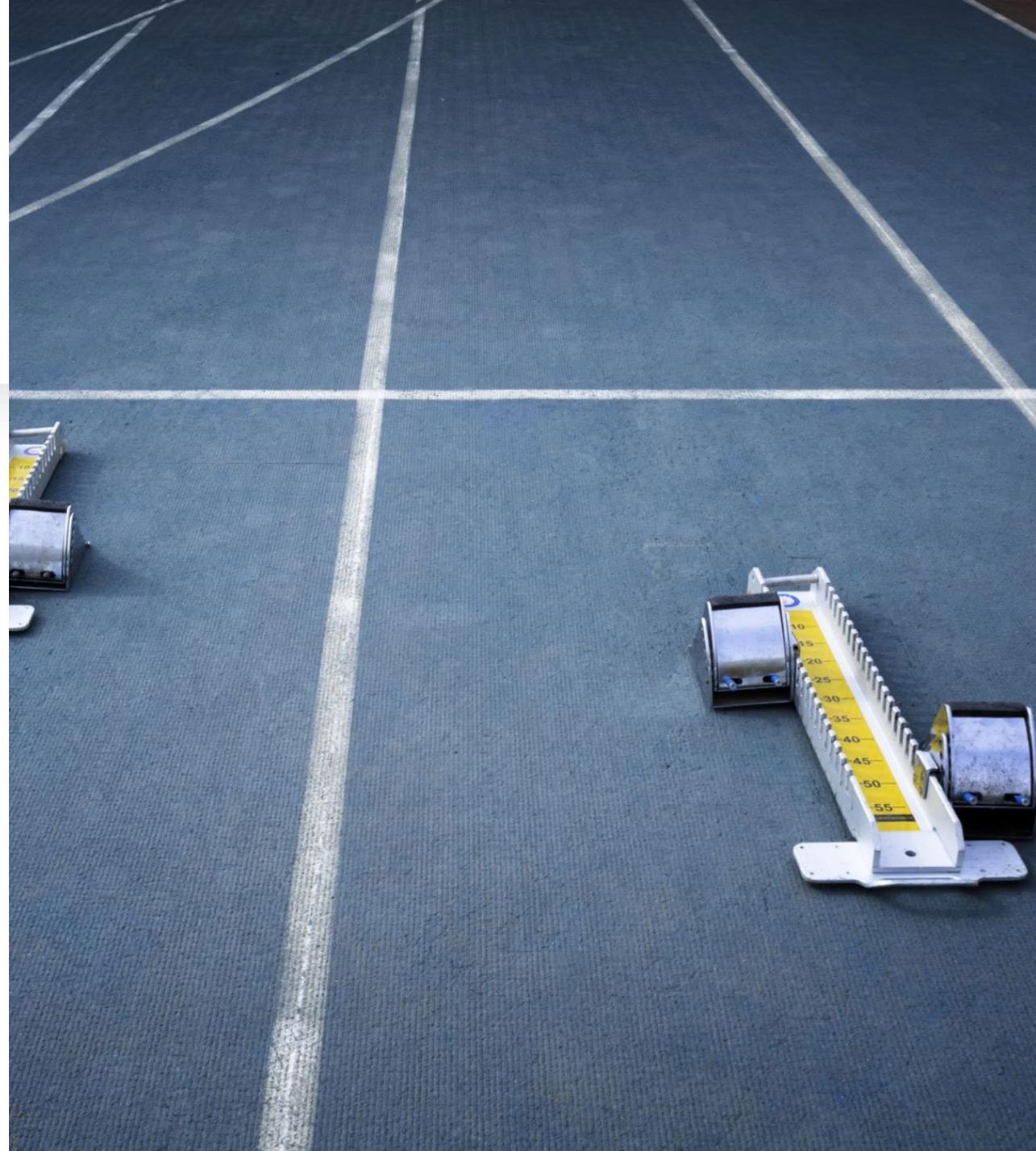


Resources for Athletic Trainers (continued)

4. Secondary School Value Model

5. Safer Sidelines

6. RIO



Conclusion

- ATs are healthcare providers skilled in prevention strategies, acute injury management, post injury care, and rehabilitation
- On-site immediate care; valuable service for communities
- ATs are essential for planning, guidance, and expertise
- Emergency action planning, concussions, heat illnesses



Conclusion (continued)

- Recent trends show ATs are leaving the SS setting
- Student athletes are exposed to greater risk and compromised access to care
- ATs want to feel valued, supported, and compensated appropriately
- If you cannot afford the cost of healthcare for your athletes, then you cannot afford the cost of athletics

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Thank You

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