

Why are Great Museum Workers Leaving the Field?

Survey by
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Survey notes

- Conducted in September 2016
- Only distributed digitally
- Link was malfunctioning for first day of survey. Two known responses compromised.
- Job descriptions list was incomplete (no curator, mashed together separate jobs)
- Creator bias in question wording
- Creator bias in translating results of long form answers

Total Responses: n=1,067

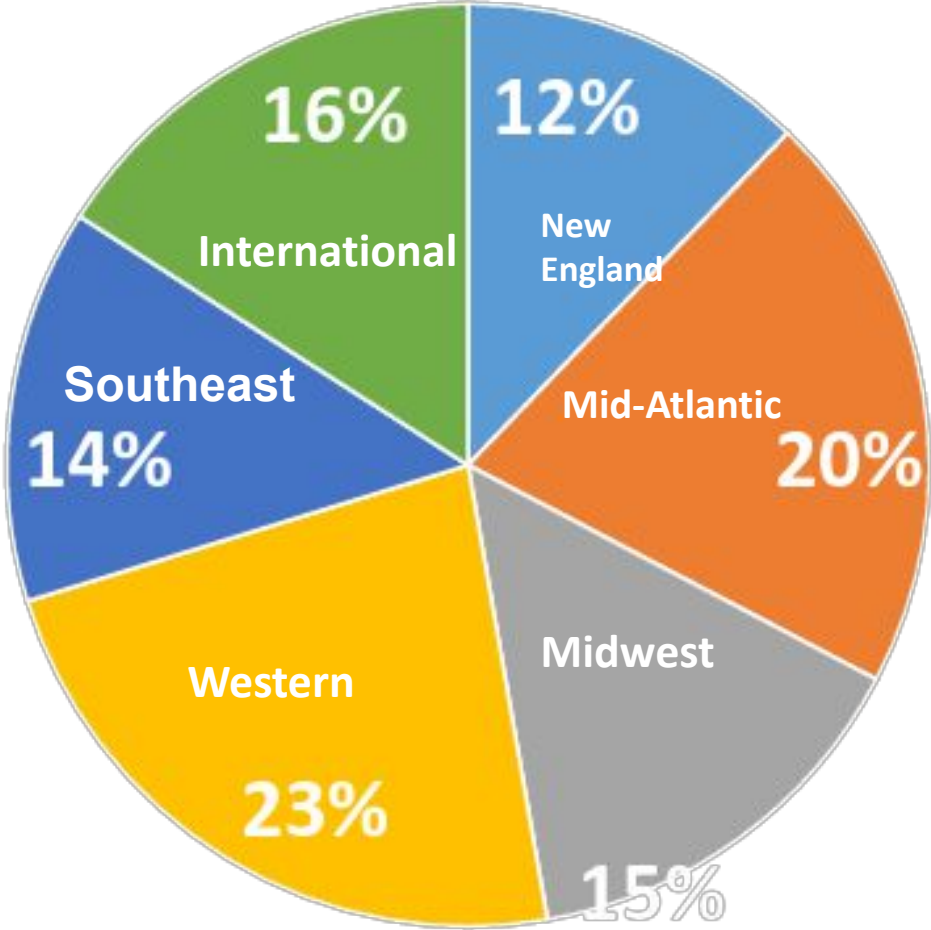
Currently working in Museum: 71%

Female: 86%
Male: 10%
Other: .5% (1 each of non-binary, Feminin, FemLE, Genderqueer)
N/A: 4%

Currently out of Museum: 29%

Female: 86%
Genderqueer Woman: (n=1)
Male: 10%
No Answer: 4%

“Where Are You Located?”



“Why did you enter the field?”

	Currently in Museums (n=756)	Currently out of museums (n=302)
Love museums	73%	76%
Love content area	70%	70%
Cross-discipline nature of field	61%	64%
Community-focused	40%	48%
Non-profit	25%	33%
Other	14%	10%

Analysis:

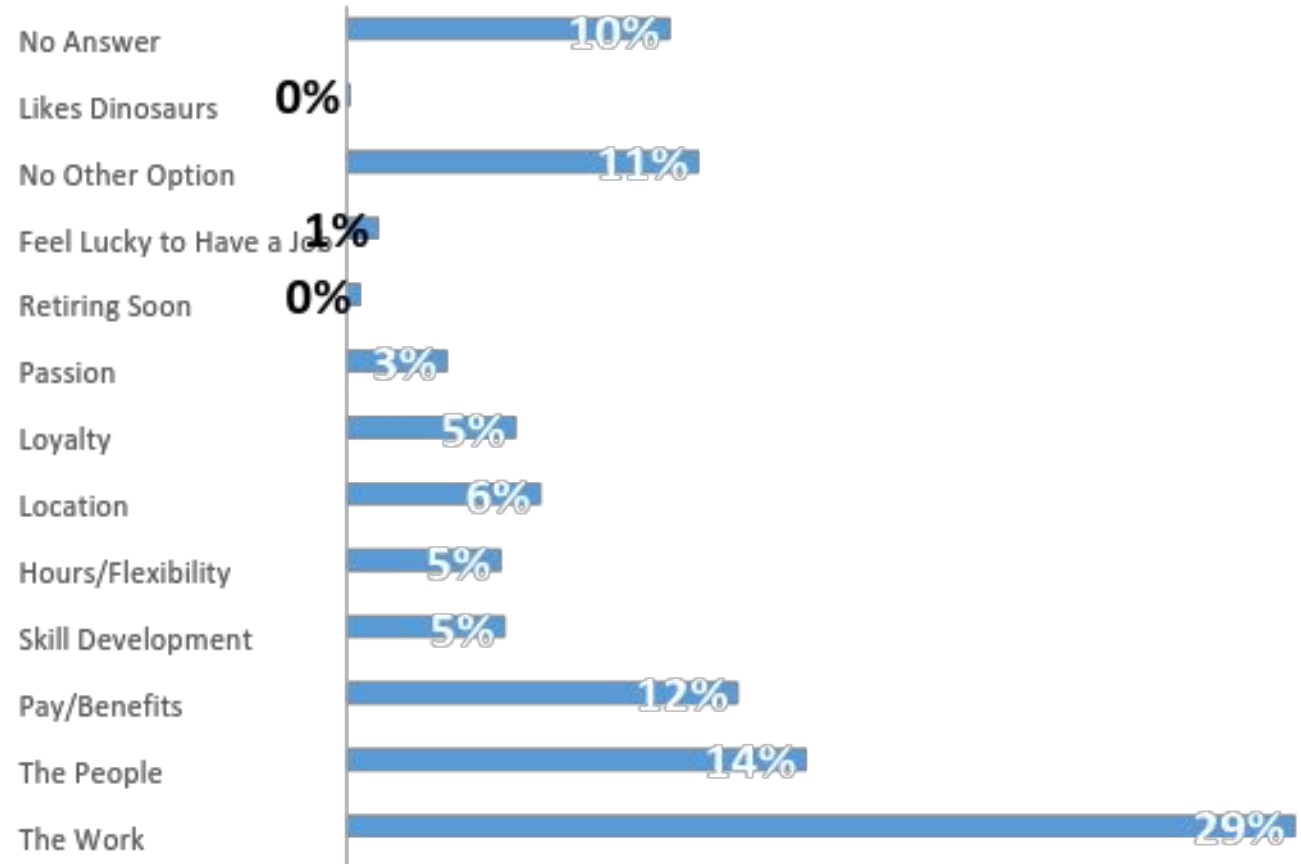
Reasons for entering the field are the same for those who are currently in it and those who have left it.

“What Keeps You at Your Current Job?” - *Workers In Museums*

(n=919), multiple responses allowed

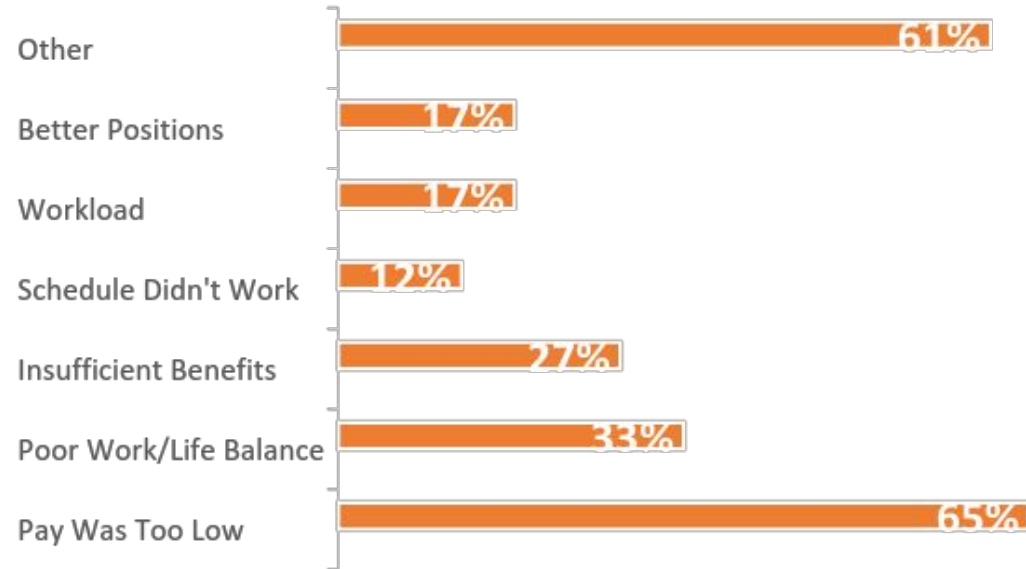
Analysis:

- #1 reason workers stay in their jobs **because of their work**
- #2 reason is the **people** at their workplace
- **Pay and having no other option** closely follow as reasons people stay

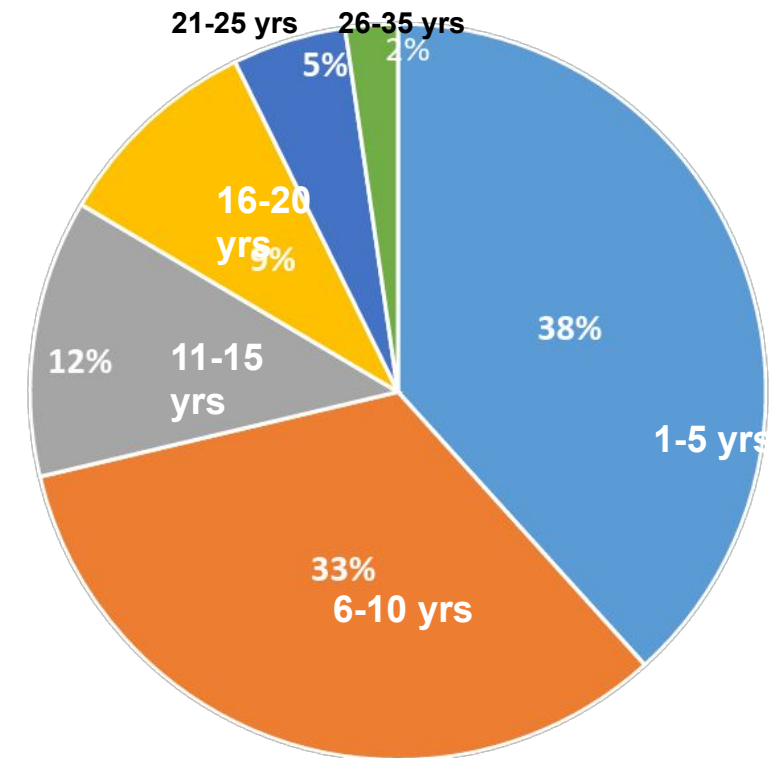


Workers Out of Museums

“What Made You Leave the Field?”
(n=301, open-ended responses)



“How Many Years Did You Work
in the Museum Field?”
(Including Unpaid volunteer/internship)



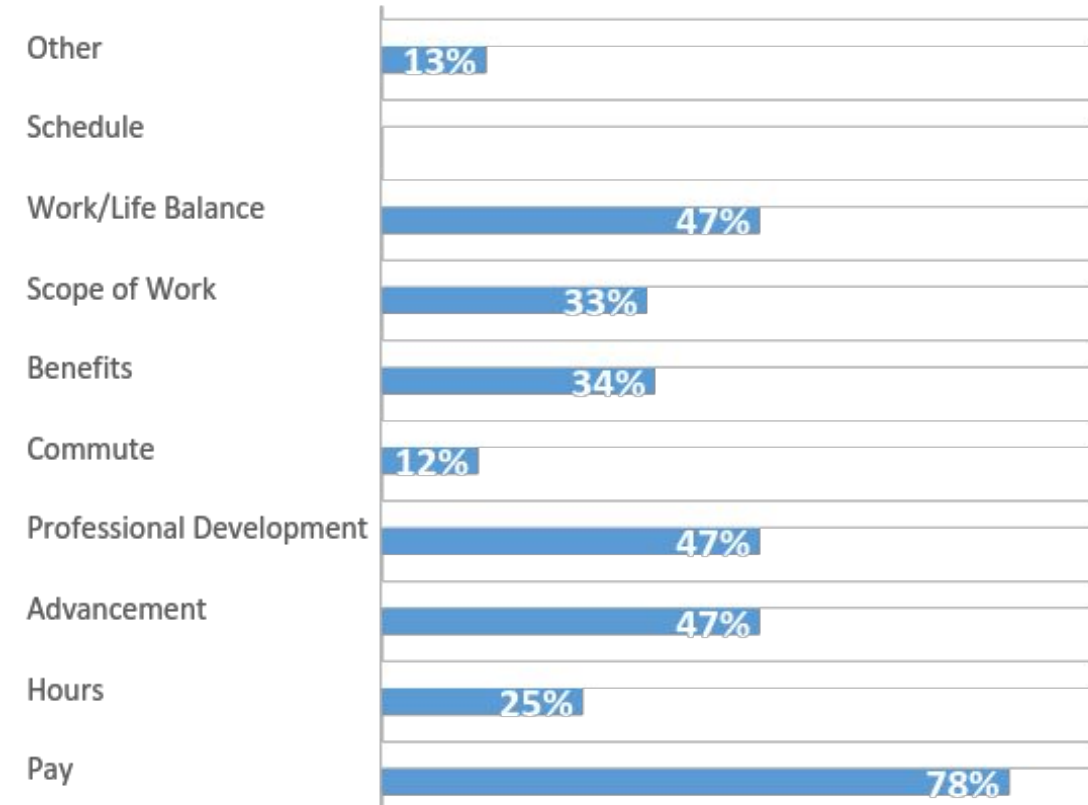
Analysis/Lingering questions:

- People leaving the field seem to exit when they are early- to mid-career professionals.
- Is it a generational issue? Do Boomers stay in the game longer?
- Did they survey respondents skew towards Emerging and Mid-Career professionals?

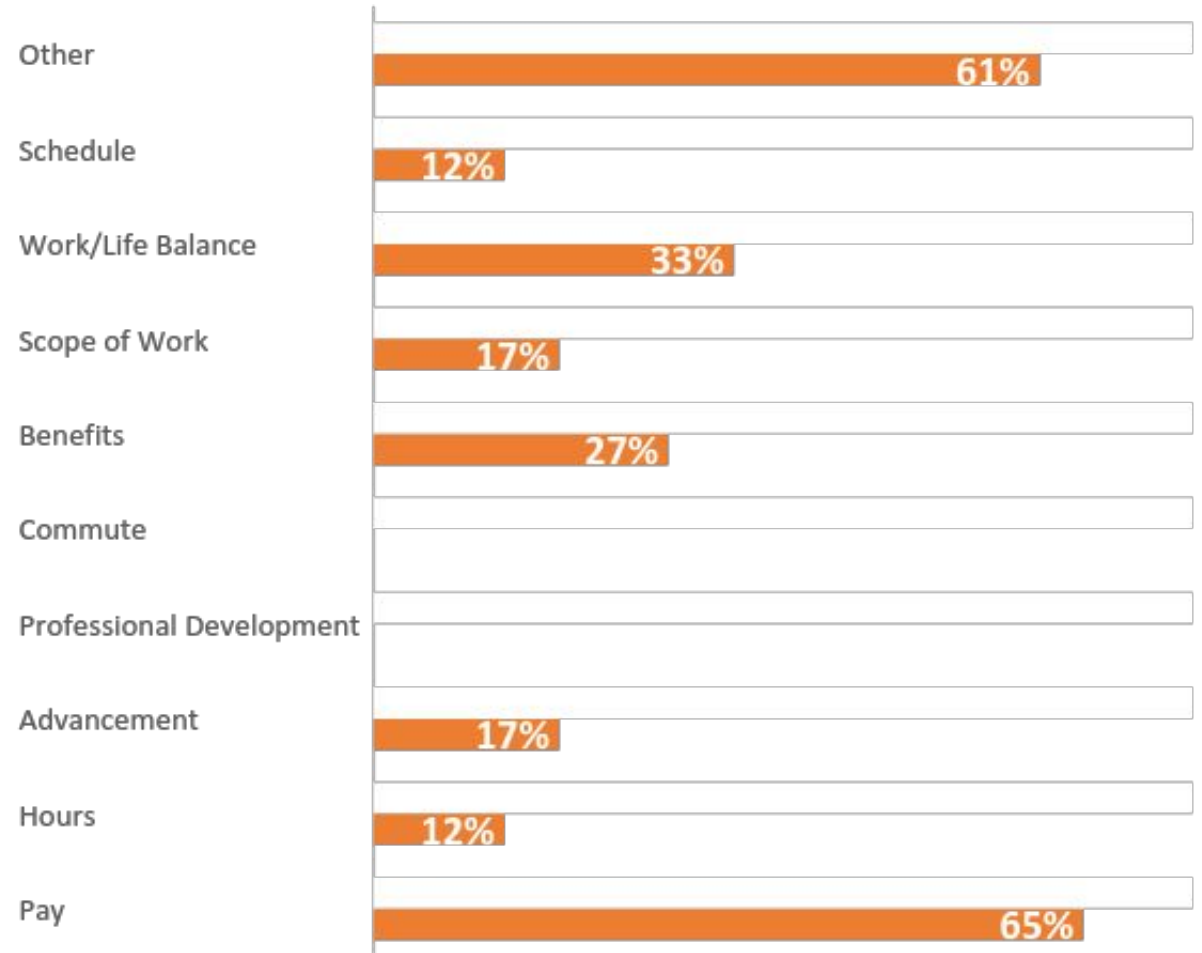
Some of the “Other” responses...

- ❖ *The pay was too low. Too few job openings, even in an area rich with museums.*
- ❖ *Was unable to advance beyond entry level despite earning an advanced degree. Left because another nonprofit offered me a higher level position.*
- ❖ *Had a child. Didn't make enough for childcare.*
- ❖ *The pay was too low, I felt I wasn't effectively serving the community and couldn't find museum opportunities where I could accomplish that.*
- ❖ *The pay was too low., The work/life balance was not there (more work than life)., The workload was too intense., No maternity leave/FMLA*
- ❖ *My "advanced" age seems to be a problem. I entered the field late in life, after returning to grad school.*
- ❖ *The pay was too low., Racism- Too many white people hiring other white people and too many white people using the white savior approach when doing community outreach in underserved communities.*
- ❖ *Unable to secure job: overqualified and underexperienced, with only very loose connections.*
- ❖ *I was on a project-based position and once the position ended I was not fortunate enough to find another job in the field.*
- ❖ *Every position I applied for, I was beaten out by PhD candidates for entry level positions.*
- ❖ *Chronic illness, unsure if I could physically perform tasks regularly.*
- ❖ *The pay was too low., My position was contracted out, and hustling as a consultant didn't work for me.*

“What would entice you to leave the field?” (n=751)



“What made you leave the field?” (n=301)



Analysis:

- Pay is a strong motivator to entice people to leave and what enticed those who already left.

Some of the “Other” responses to “What would entice you to leave the field?”

- ❖ *Financially, I am able to stay. Otherwise I would leave for a better salary and title.*
- ❖ *Professionalism, The climate is harsh on staff of color like me and staff who have a nontraditional path to this profession.*
- ❖ *Nothing.*
- ❖ *Pay, The opportunity to advance the use of art museums in health and human services, mindfulness or another area of interest. Also retirement!*
- ❖ *Advancement, More opportunity to grow in this position.*

Unpacking the reasons for leaving...

Total responses n= 303

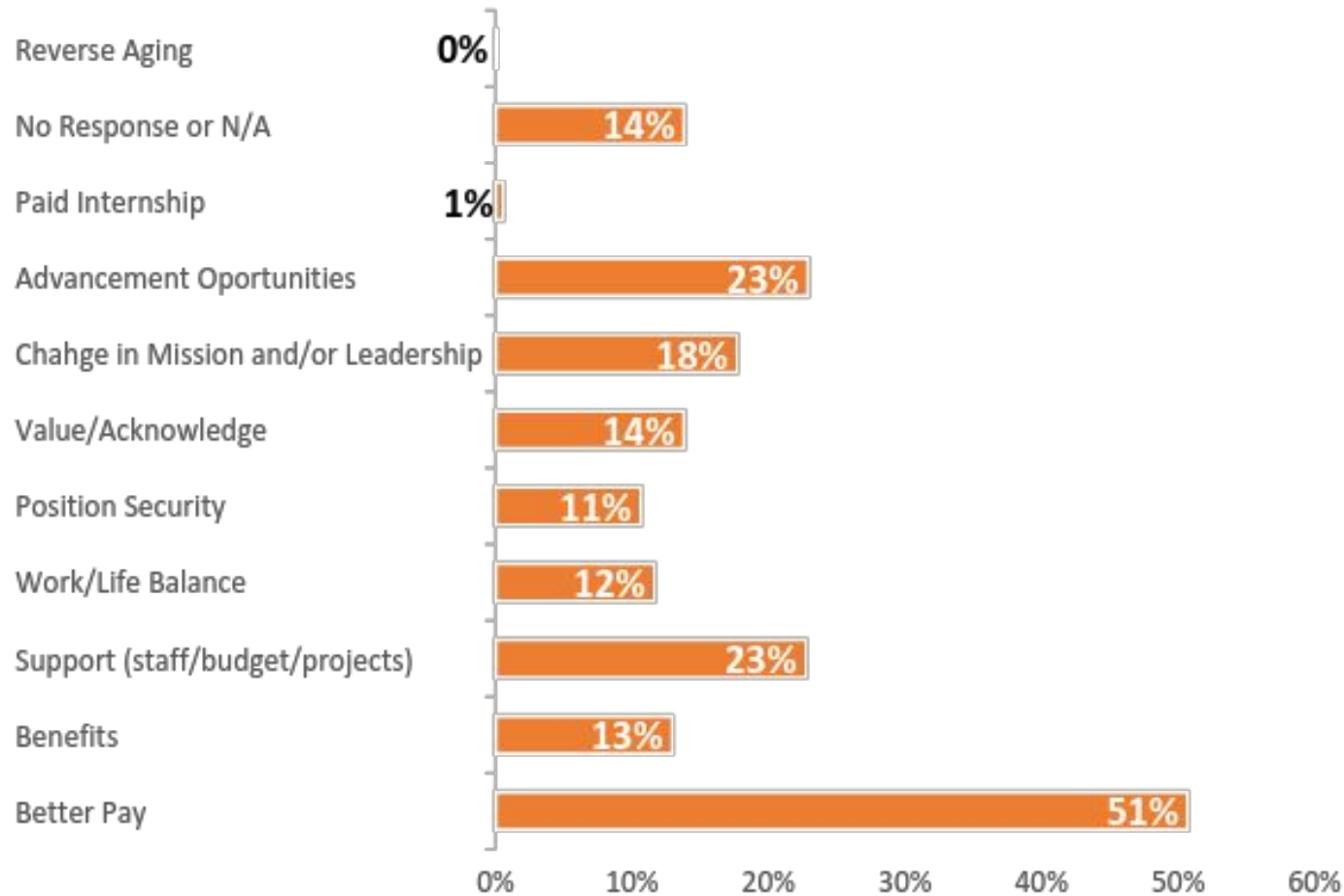
Number of years in the field	Percentage that listed "low pay" as primary reason left the field
1-5	71%
6-10	75%
11-15	59%
16-20	32%
21-25	33%
26-35	42%

Number of years in the field	Percentage that listed "work-life balance" as primary reason left the field
1-5	0
6-10	0
11-15	0
16-20	18%
21-25	20%
26-35	0

Analysis:

- Leaving because of low pay is an issue no matter how long you've worked in the field
- Work-life balance becomes more of a reason to leave for people who have worked 16-25 years in the field

“What Could Museums Do to Get You to Stay?” (n=694, open-ended responses)

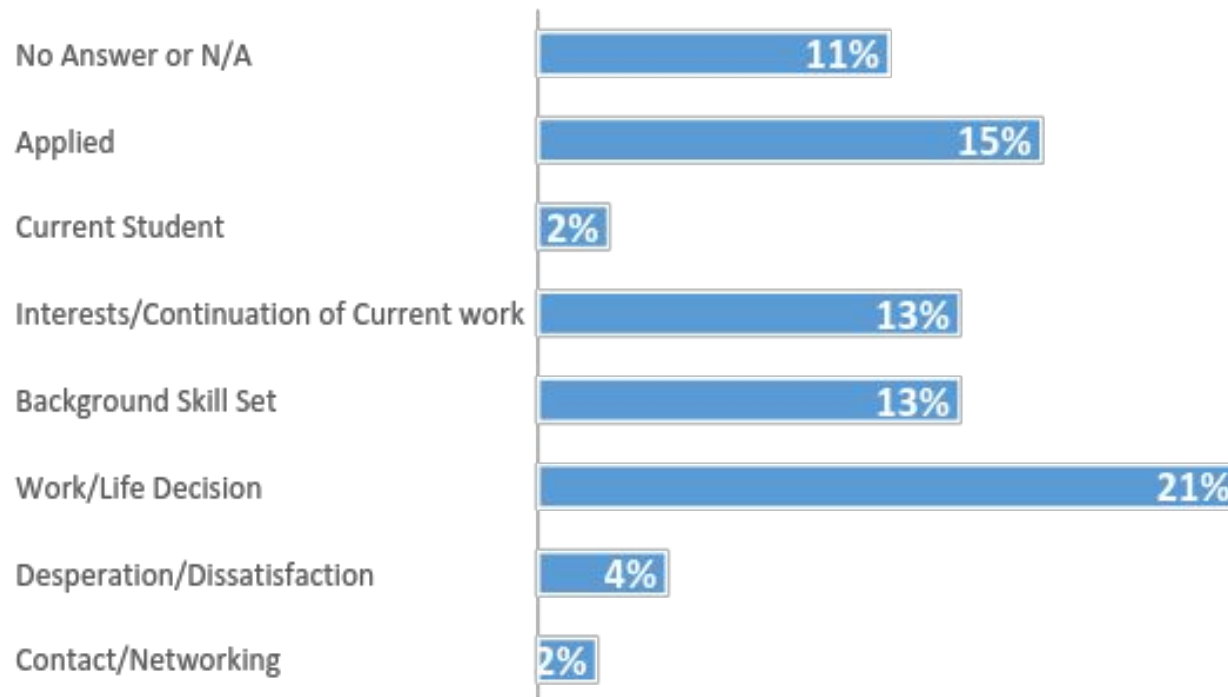


Analysis:

- Besides increasing pay, museums could better support staff’s projects/budget and advancements opportunities as enticements to stay in the field

Getting New Jobs

For Current Museum Workers –
“What Led to Your Current Job?”
(n=285, open-ended response)

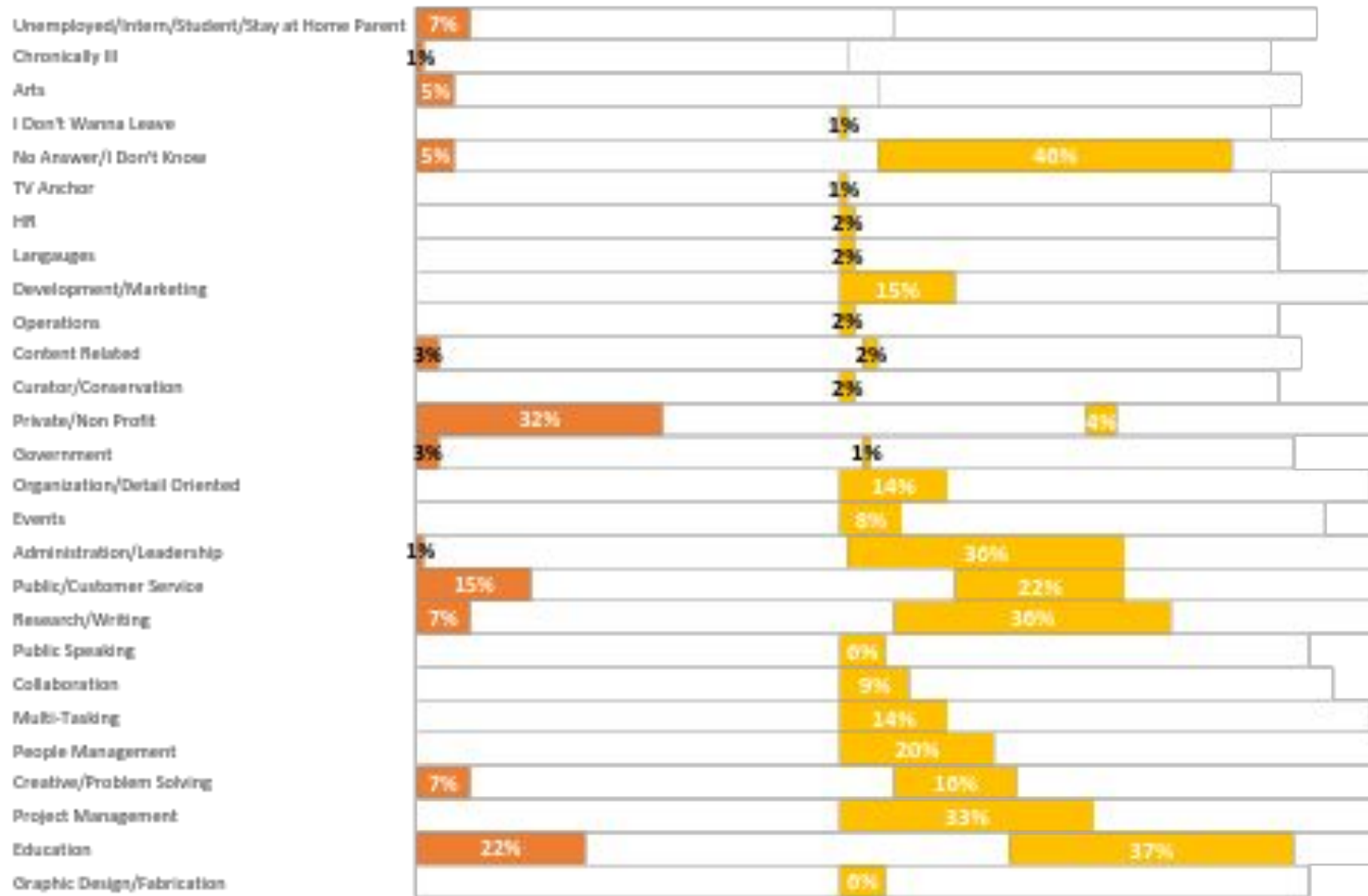


Analysis:

- Almost ¼ of people were led to their job because of its work-life balance and issues related to schedule and amount of work/responsibilities, etc.
- 15% of people applied to get their current job
- Skill set and background were important factors in getting their job
- Desire to continue current type of work and pursue interests led to current job

“Where Are you Working Now (If Working)?”
(n=292, open-ended responses)

“How is it linked to museum work (think skills, knowledge)?”
(n=287, open-ended responses)



Analysis:

- Most people who left museum field are working in private/non-profit sector
- Many of those who left museum work went into the Education field
- More than 1/3 of respondents said research and writing skills, project management, and education skills carried over to their current jobs

“What advice would you give to the museum field
to prevent more people like you from leaving it?”
(n= 295)

Increase Pay: **31%**

Support workers entering field/changing
jobs (mentor, diversity, prof. Assoc. etc):
18%

Respect your employees: **16%**

Change/Update/Revisit: Board/Leadership and
Mission: **16%**

Leaving isn't bad!: **1%**

Just don't: **1%**

“Prepare Yourself, it's a hard field” [advice to individuals rather
than institutions]: **11%**

Improve work/life balance: **9%**

Make room for new ideas: **8%**

Ax unpaid internships and requirements for upper level
degrees: **4%**

Respect Each Other (Break down silos): **2%**

Thank you to all who contributed their thoughts to this survey.

We're working on next steps for sharing this information and helping to make change in our field.

Comments? **Email us!**

Fired up and want to help? **Get in touch!**

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