2025 Division II Membership Survey:
Athletics Healthcare on Campus Results

May 2025

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Methods

- Division II governance collaborated with NCAA Research to gather feedback from Division II presidents and chancellors, athletics directors, athletic trainers, commissioners, conference staff, and other athletics staff about the current state and future of Division II.

- Individuals at all active Division II institutions and those in the membership process (304 institutions) were invited to complete the online survey via a Salesforce email invitation. Those as schools transitioning out of Division II were not invited to complete the survey.

- The survey was designed using Qualtrics survey software and took 30-60 minutes to complete. It opened January 22 and closed February 21. Due to a lower than desired response rate among presidents and chancellors, the survey reopened for that group of individuals and closed March 7, 2025.

Overall Responses

- N = 2,234

- Individuals from 302 (99%) institutions and conference staff representing 23 (100%) conferences responded.

Institutional Characteristics

	Division II	Survey Respondents
Public/Private	**50 % / 50%**	**46% / 54%**
HBCU/Non-HBCU	**10% / 90%**	**5% / 95%**
MFB/No Football	**54% / 46%**	**55% / 45%**
Midwest	**22%**	**25%**
Northeast	**17%**	**17%**
South	**45%**	**44%**
West	**16%**	**14%**

Midwest: IL, IN, MI, OH, WI, IA, KS, MN, MO, NE, ND, SD
Northeast: CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT, DE, DC, MD, NJ, NY, PA
South: AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, SC, TN, VA, WV, AZ, NM, OK, TX
West: CO, ID, MT, UT, WY, AK, CA, HI, NV, OR, WA

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Responses by Key Analysis Groups

Title	N
President/Chancellor	106
Director of Athletics	230
Conference Staff	61
Athletic Trainer*	179
Coach**	1,003
FAR	96
Other Athletics Administrator	480

*Athletic Trainer: 152 head, 27 assistant/associate
**Coach: 953 head, 44 assistant, (6 indicated being both a head and assistant coach)

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Key Findings

- Nearly 40% of athletic trainers report they are "always" or "frequently" consulted on legislative and/or policy changes, while fewer than 10% indicate they are "always" or "frequently" consulted about the scheduling of practices and competitions.

- About 20% of ADs and athletic trainers believe the trainer to athlete ratio is appropriate on their campus.

- Salary and working 40 or more hours and on weekends were the top cited reasons for athletic trainer departures from schools.

- Athletic trainers rated salary and staff culture as the most important variables when searching for their current position.

- 50% of athletic trainers report receiving less than 24-hours notice for changes to practice and competition.

Who has the autonomous, unchallengeable authority to make medical decisions on your campus?
(Select all that apply.)

	Athletic Trainer (N=169)	AD (N=216)
Head Athletic Trainer / Director of Sports Medicine	91%	84%
Team Physician	86%	75%
Assistant Athletic Trainer	72%	48%
Other, please specify	5%	1%
Director of Athletics	4%	7%
Head Coach	1%	0%

Note: Those who selected 'Other, please specify' indicated campus medical oversight, assistant AD for sports medicine, or all athletic trainers (including associate) as also having autonomous, unchallengeable authority to make medical decisions on campus.

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Who on your campus has the authority over athletic training room hours?
(Select all that apply.)

	Athletic Trainer (N=169)	AD (N=216)
Head Athletic Trainer / Director of Sports Medicine	98%	95%
Assistant Athletic Trainer	37%	13%
Director of Athletics	19%	31%
Other, please specify	8%	3%
Head Coach	3%	<1%
Team Physician	2%	7%

Note: Those who selected 'Other, please specify' indicated associate AD, associate athletic trainer, management roles such as associate vice president, vice president of athletics or provost.

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Consultation with Athletic Trainer on Key Issues

	Scheduling practices and competition		Legislative / policy changes considered by the NCAA / conference	
	Athletic Trainer	**AD**	**Athletic Trainer**	**AD**
Yes, always	1%	24%	9%	53%
Yes, frequently	8%	44%	28%	36%
Sometimes	28%	26%	36%	9%
Rarely	37%	6%	18%	1%
Never	25%	1%	10%	0%

Note: Athletic Trainer N=169; AD N=216

Scheduling prompt: Does the person responsible for scheduling practices consult with the head athletic trainer (for ATs, are you consulted) about the scheduling of student-athlete practices and competition?
Legislative prompt: Do you consult with the head athletic trainer (for ATs, are you consulted) on legislative and/or policy changes considered by the NCAA and/or your conference?

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On average, how many student-athletes is each full-time trainer on your staff responsible for with regards to their health care?

	Athletic Trainer (N=169)	AD (N=216)
1-25	0%	1%
26-50	7%	13%
51-75	21%	26%
76-100	37%	37%
More than 100	35%	23%

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Opinion on Athletic Trainer Model and Ratio
(Percentage responding "Agree" or "Strongly Agree")

	Athletic Trainer (N=169)	AD (N=216)
I feel our trainer to athlete ratio is appropriate.*	**20%**	**23%**
I feel that the student-athlete healthcare model on my campus is appropriate.	**34%**	**40%**

*Note: Responses on a 6-point scale (strongly agree to strongly disagree). *There was typo in the version of the question that appeared for athletic trainers (i.e., I feel our student to athlete ratio is appropriate). Some respondents pointed out the error in their open responses and indicated they interpreted the intended question to read as 'I feel our trainer to student-athlete ratio is appropriate.*

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Reasons for Athletic Trainer Departure
(Select all that apply.)

	Athletic Trainer (N=158)	AD (N=213)
Salary	72%	73%
Working 40+ hours and weekends	65%	70%
Staffing Volume	48%	37%
Career change within athletic training	46%	37%
Value and support from admin., coaches & co-workers	33%	5%
Career change outside of athletic training profession	30%	41%

	Athletic Trainer (N=158)	AD (N=213)
Location	21%	19%
Spouse or significant other professional job change	21%	8%
Professional advancement opportunity	19%	25%
Benefits or benefit package	11%	15%
Other, please specify	9%	7%
COVID-19 staffing/benefit changes	6%	2%

Note: Question specific to those who separated from "your institution" within the last three years. Those who selected 'Other, please specify' indicated retirement, work life balance, poor leadership or culture in department as additional reasons.

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How many open athletic trainer positions are there currently at your institution?

	Athletic Trainer (N=168)	AD (N=213)
0	57%	41%
1	21%	26%
2	11%	10%
3	4%	6%
4	1%	7%
5 or more	7%	10%
Median	0	1

Note: The maximum number of open positions indicated was 11.

How many open athletic trainer positions has your institution had in the last three years?

	AD (N=213)
0	4%
1	16%
2	22%
3	23%
4	19%
5 or more	16%
Mean	3
Median	3

Note: The maximum number of open positions indicated was 12.

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Athletics Director: Challenges with <u>Recruiting</u> New Athletic Trainers

- **Small applicant pool, fewer qualified candidates**
  - *Finding qualified ATs since the min. qualifications changed has been extremely challenging; not enough qualified to go around.* – Director of Athletics, Gulf South Conference

- **Offer low, non-competitive salary and not enough to support cost of living**
  - *The private sector/corporate market for ATs in our area is high and pays more than collegiate or HS. The cost of living in our area post-COVID is high.* – Director of Athletics, Lone Star Conference

- **Schedule of long, irregular hours and workload conflict with work-life balance**

- **Location, particularly for rural institutions**
  - *Recruiting athletic trainers who want to live in our town and have a competitive salary.* – Director of Athletics, Rocky Mountain Athletic Conference

- **High turnover in AT leadership, inexperience of potential trainers**
  - *The interim nature of key positions and the inexperience of recent hires have created instability, requiring more oversight and mentorship to ensure proper athlete care and operational efficiency.* – Director of Athletics, Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference

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Athletics Director: Challenges with <u>Retaining</u> Athletic Trainers

- **Low, non-competitive salary not enough to support cost of living**
  - *Corporate industry now hiring "athletic trainers" for their staff at a higher rate than what schools can pay and for fewer hours worked.* – Director of Athletics, Pacific West Conference

- **High turnover, constant staff shortage/not enough additional trainers to ease workload**
  - *Our current staffing shortage increases the workload, which creates stress and makes the situation untenable long-term. Because of the nationwide shortage, opportunities are ample and moving on is easy.* – Director of Athletics, Conference Carolinas

- **Time commitment, travel requirements and workload too demanding**
  - *Many athletic trainers are opting for PT clinics or industrial AT positions that offer predictable Monday-Friday, 9-5 schedules, rather than the long, irregular hours required in collegiate athletics.* – Director of Athletics, Southern Intercollegiate Athletic Conference

- **Athletic training incompatible with work-life balance**
  - *Trainer [departures] have been due to growing families, so hours are not conducive to life changes, or [they are] moving to be closer to family/partners.* – Director of Athletics, Great Lakes Valley Conference

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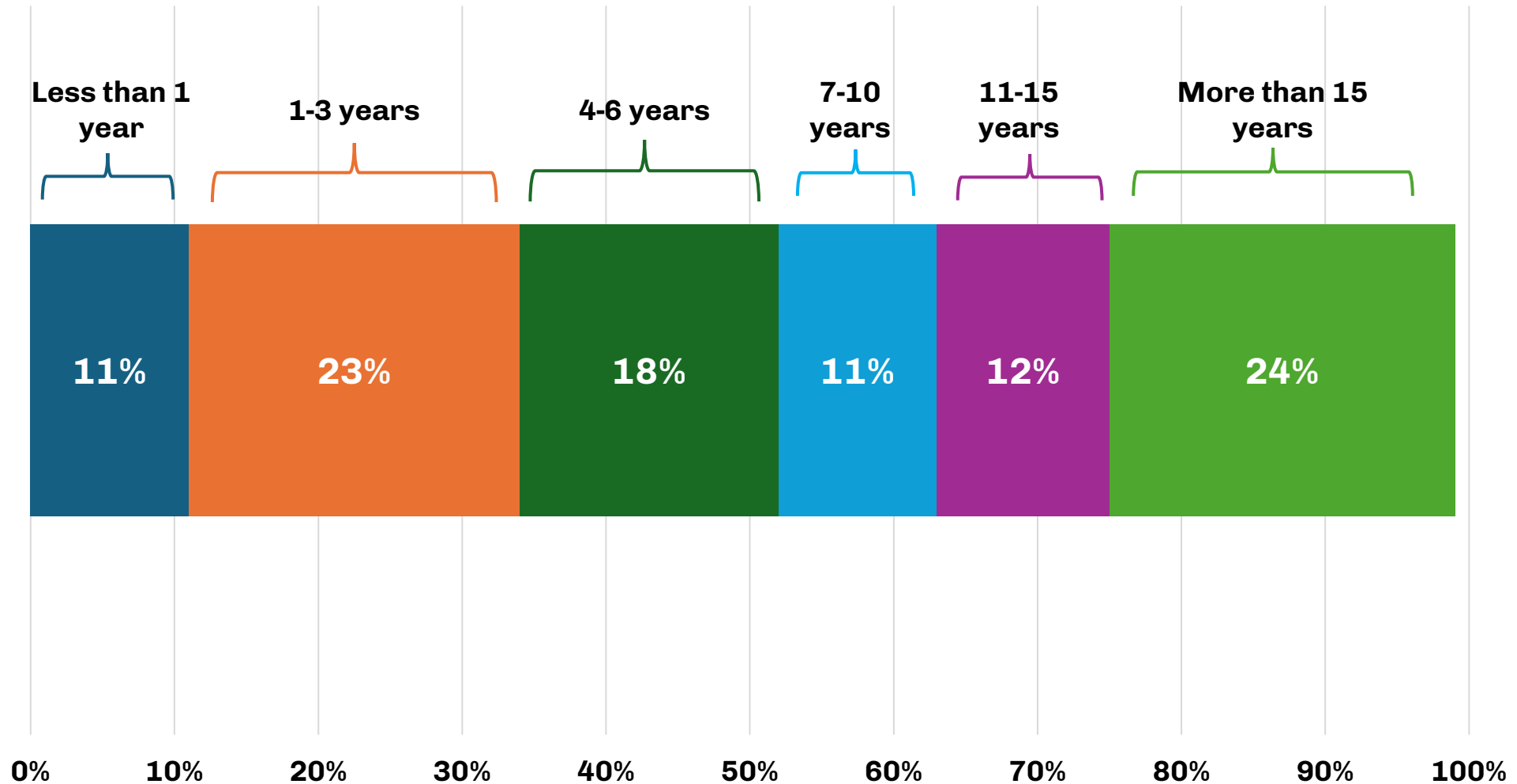# Athletic Trainer: What is your current position title or closest equivalent?

	Athletic Trainer (N=169)
Head Athletic Trainer / Director of Sports Medicine	78%
Associate / Assistant Director of Athletics	7%
Staff / Assistant Athletic Trainer	7%
Associate Athletic Trainer	5%
Associate Director of Sports Medicine	2%
Other, please specify	2%

Note: Those who selected 'Other, please specify' indicated assistant AD for sports medicine, professor and athletic trainer or assistant AD and director of sports medicine/head athletic trainer as additional titles.

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Athletic Trainer: How long have you been at your current place of employment?

Less than 1 year

1-3 years

4-6 years

7-10 years

11-15 years

More than 15 years

| 11% | 23% | 18% | 11% | 12% | 24% |

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

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Athletic Trainer: How many student-athletes is the athletic training staff responsible for on your campus?

	Athletic Trainer (N=169)
100 – 300	22%
301 – 500	46%
501 – 700	24%
701 or more	8%
Median	410

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Athletic Trainer: How many sports is the athletic training staff responsible for on your campus?

	Athletic Trainer (N=169)
8 - 13	24%
14 – 19	40%
20 – 25	26%
26 or more	10%
Median	17

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Athletic Trainer: How many different locations/venues are used for your institution's athletic practice or competition?

Median: 8

- 5 or less: 23%
- 6 – 9: 51%
- 10 – 13: 21%
- 14 – 17: 3%
- 18 or more: 2%
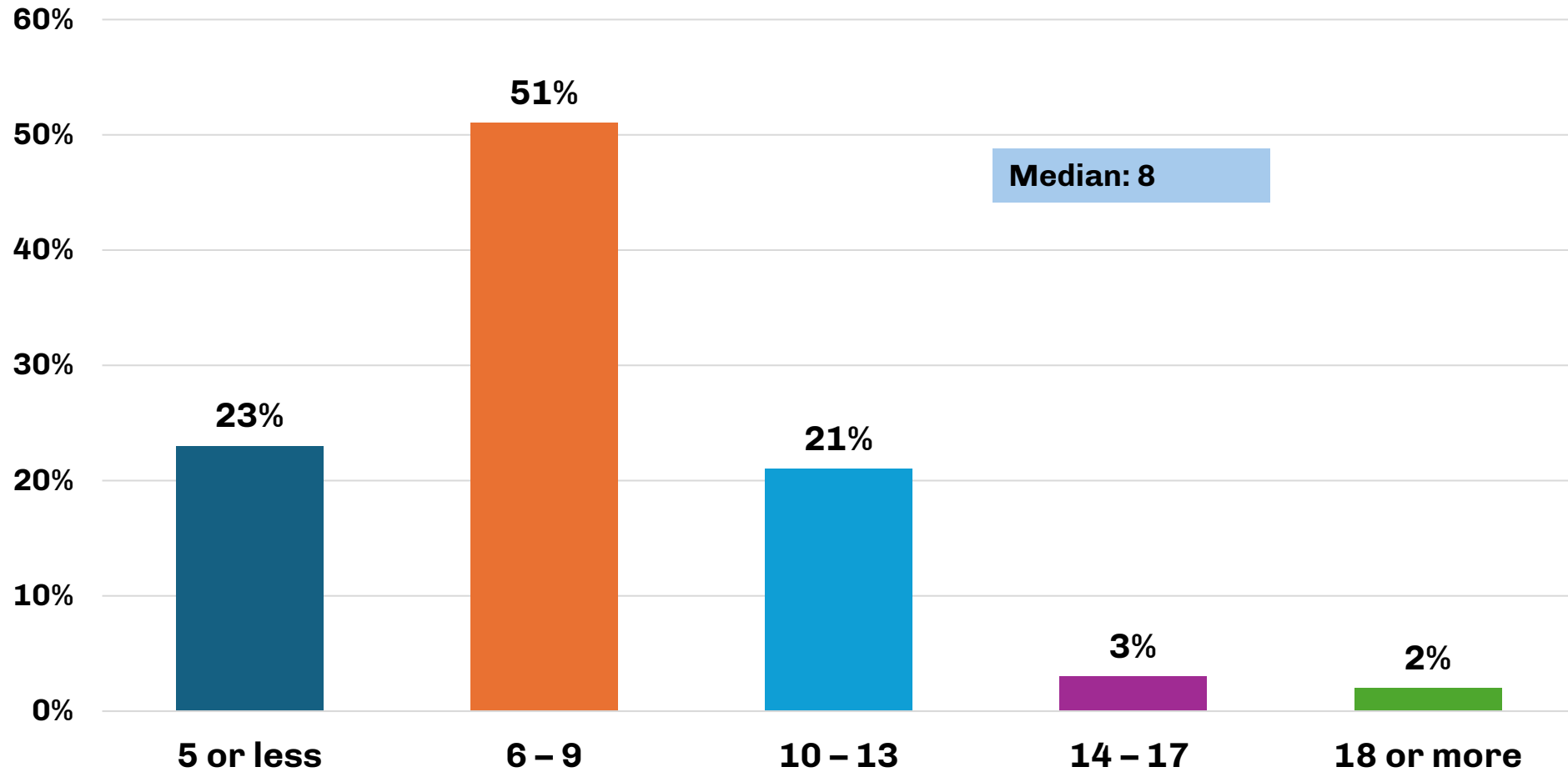
Note: Athletic Trainer (N=169)

Athletic Trainers: What is the current employment model at your institution for your role?

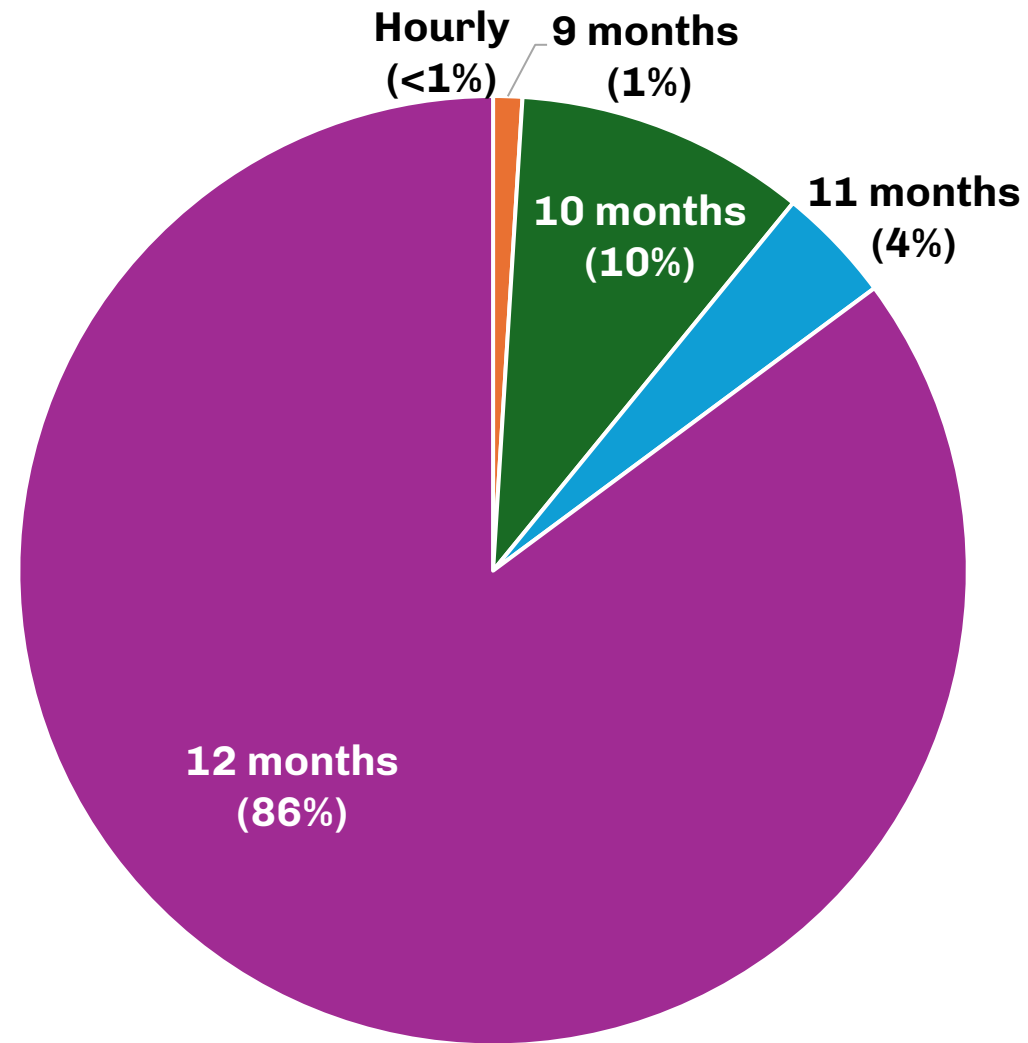|	Athletic Trainer (N=169)
Employed by and report to an athletics dept.	82%
Other (e.g., hybrid), please specify	10%
Employed by and report to hospital system	3%
Employed by hospital system and report to athletics dept.	2%
Employed by outside allied health prof. group; report to athletics dept.	2%
Employed by and report to outside allied health prof. group / office	1%
Employed by and report to student health services	1%
Employed by student health services; report to athletics department	0%

Note: *Those who selected 'Other, please specify' indicated hybrid model of employment by and report to a combination of hospital system, athletics department and/or university.*
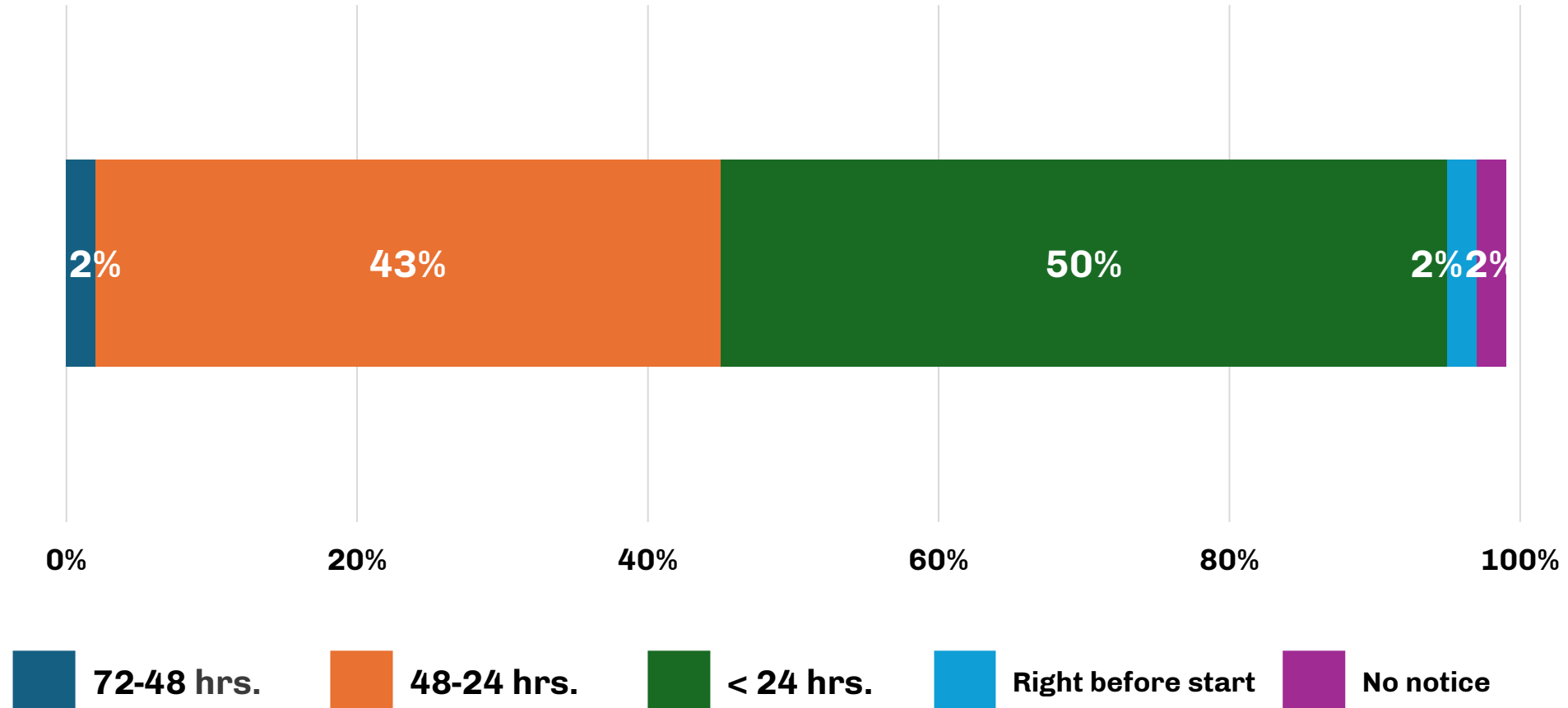
Athletic Trainer: What is your employment term?

Note: Athletic Trainer (N=168)

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Athletic Trainer: How much notice are you given regarding changes to practice and competition schedules that are **<u>not</u>** due to inclement weather?

2%   43%   50%   2% 2%

0%   20%   40%   60%   80%   100%

- 72-48 hrs.
- 48-24 hrs.
- < 24 hrs.
- Right before start
- No notice

Note: Athletic Trainer (N=169)

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Athletic Trainer: Important Variables When Searching for Current Position
(Select all that apply.)

	Athletic Trainer (N=169)
Salary	**83%**
Staff culture	**74%**
Paid CEUs	**59%**
Retirement (401k, Pension, etc.)	**58%**
Unchallengeable medical autonomy	**54%**
Sport(s) assignment	**50%**
Advancement opportunities	**43%**

	Athletic Trainer (N=169)
Flexible schedule	**40%**
Extra benefits and allowances	**32%**
Employment contract	**24%**
Model of care clearly defined reporting lines, salary / positional advancement	**24%**
Organized regular time off	**20%**
Mentorship	**16%**
Other, please specify	**10%**

Note: Those who selected 'Other, please specify' indicated location or lack of required travel, proximity to family, sufficient staffing/trainer to athlete ratio, paid professional membership fees and emphasis of medical model and development of clinical skills as important variables in their search for their current position.

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Athletic Trainer: Reasons for Staying at Current Institution
(Select all that apply.)

	Athletic Trainer (N=169)
Sports medicine culture-staff morale	61%
Location	50%
Salary	42%
Overall department culture	39%
Sports coverage	38%
Retirement benefits	36%
Family dynamics (job of significant other, school district, etc.)	34%
Healthcare benefits	33%
Continuing education opportunities	31%
Work-life balance	31%

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Athletic Trainer: Reasons for Staying at Current Institution
(Select all that apply.)

	Athletic Trainer (N=169)
Administrative responsibilities	27%
Advancement opportunities	22%
Reporting line structure	20%
Tuition benefits	14%
Other, please specify	11%
Philosophical / financial administrative support	7%
Technology benefits (phone, tablet, etc.)	3%
Childcare benefits	1%
Housing benefits	1%
Vehicle benefits	0%

Note: Those who selected 'Other, please specify' indicated location, lack of required travel, proximity to family, the student-athletes they work with, loyalty to/belief in institution and its mission as additional reasons for staying at their current institution.

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Athletic Trainer: Have you separated from a collegiate institution in the past three years?

	Athletic Trainer (N=169)
Yes	17%
No	83%

Athletic Trainer: Why did you separate from your previous institution?
(Select all that apply.)

	Athletic Trainer (N=28)
Career change within athletic training	32%
Professional advancement opportunity	32%
Value and support from administration, coaches and co-workers	32%
Other, please specify	32%
Staffing volume	25%

	Athletic Trainer (N=28)
Location	21%
Benefits or benefit package	18%
Working 40+ hours and weekends	18%
Spouse of significant other professional job change	4%
COVID-19 staffing / benefit changes	9%
Career change outside of athletic training profession	0%

Note: Response from athletic trainers (N= 28) who selected 'Yes' to 'Have you separated from a collegiate institution in the past three years' only. Those who selected 'Other, please specify' indicated school closure, end of assistantship, unhealthily work culture, salary/financial stress and disinterest in continuing to work with assigned sport as additional reasons.

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Incentives to Retain Athletic Trainers

- **Increase staff size and hire more support staff (e.g., insurance coordinators, physical therapists)**
  - *Increase the number of ATs on staff to help decrease the amount of stress and obligations each athletic trainer feels in caring for their 4-5 teams. This would also increase the level of care we are able to provide to the student-athletes.*– Head Athletic Trainer, Northeast-10 Conference

- **Encourage athletic trainer work-life balance by:**
  - providing more stable and consistent schedules
  - limiting work on nights and weekends
  - decreasing total weekly hours
  - limiting the scheduling of out of season events and competitions
  - setting realistic expectations concerning practice coverage and availability
  - restricting practice times
  - limiting multiple in-season sport coverage

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Incentives to Retain Athletic Trainers

- **Provide additional compensation and benefits such as:**
  - more vacation time
  - support for professional development (e.g., cover professional membership dues, conference travel) and Continuing Education Units
  - a guaranteed or mandatory day off per week
  - non-salary related benefits such as a work phone or tablet, local housing options, parking, meals, clothing stipend or funds for medical kits

- **Improve schedule reporting system and require notification of practice and competition changes.**
  - *Require coaches to communicate effectively with the sports medicine staff. Providing the sports medicine staff with opportunities to review schedules in advance (competition and practice) and provide feedback.* – Head Athletic Trainer, South Atlantic Conference

- **Upgrade rehabilitation equipment, practice and training facilities.**
  - *Provide full-time mental health position within athletics, improve facilities to allow for better practice times, improve training room facilities.* – Head Athletic Trainer, Northern Sun Intercollegiate Conference

Prompt read: *Outside of a salary increase, what could your athletics department do to retain athletic trainers?*
Note: *Athletic trainer (N=164) response only.*

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Incentives to Retain Athletic Trainers: Improve Athletic Department Culture

- **Encourage athletics staff to recognize athletic trainers as healthcare professionals, not as coaching support staff**

- **Foster an environment where coaches and staff <u>respect</u> athletic trainers**

- **Acknowledge and validate athletic trainers' frustrations and time demands**

- **Support athletic trainers when conflicts arise and address when coaches overstep training policies and procedures**

    - *Be more supportive of the sports medicine policies in place, give the athletic trainers more overall value, understand the value of time off, understand that we are being spread thin...* – Assistant or Associate Athletic Trainer, Mid-America Intercollegiate Athletics Association

- **Involve athletic trainers in discussions concerning roster sizes, scheduling, policy and procedure creation**

    - *Better communication, support from administration on Athletic Training decisions, inclusion in scheduling, inclusion in policy and procedure making.* – Head Athletic Trainer, Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association

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