

COUNTING DIVERSITY IN PRESERVATION

JENNIFER HAIN TEPER, MIRIAM CENTENO, & POOJITA RANI

LIBRARY PRESERVATION SERVICES, University Library, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign



INTRODUCTION

As caretakers of cultural heritage, there is intrinsic value in a diversity of experience and perspectives to better address the needs of our material culture. While there have been a great number of diversity efforts across many areas of library science and administration, there has been little focus on diversity within preservation.

Anecdotally, the field of preservation and conservation shows a significant lack of diversity. Recently, there has been an upsurge in interest in addressing this situation. However, without any hard statistics it is difficult to show where we are currently, to better project where the field should attempt to improve and how.

AIM

In order to collect relevant data on this important issue, we surveyed the field of library and archive preservation in order to attain a current picture of our field's demographics.

The goal of our research is to open discussion in the profession by presenting our findings. It is hoped that this will precipitate difficult but needed conversations about the current make up of our field, as well as illuminate possible paths forward to increase diversity at all levels.

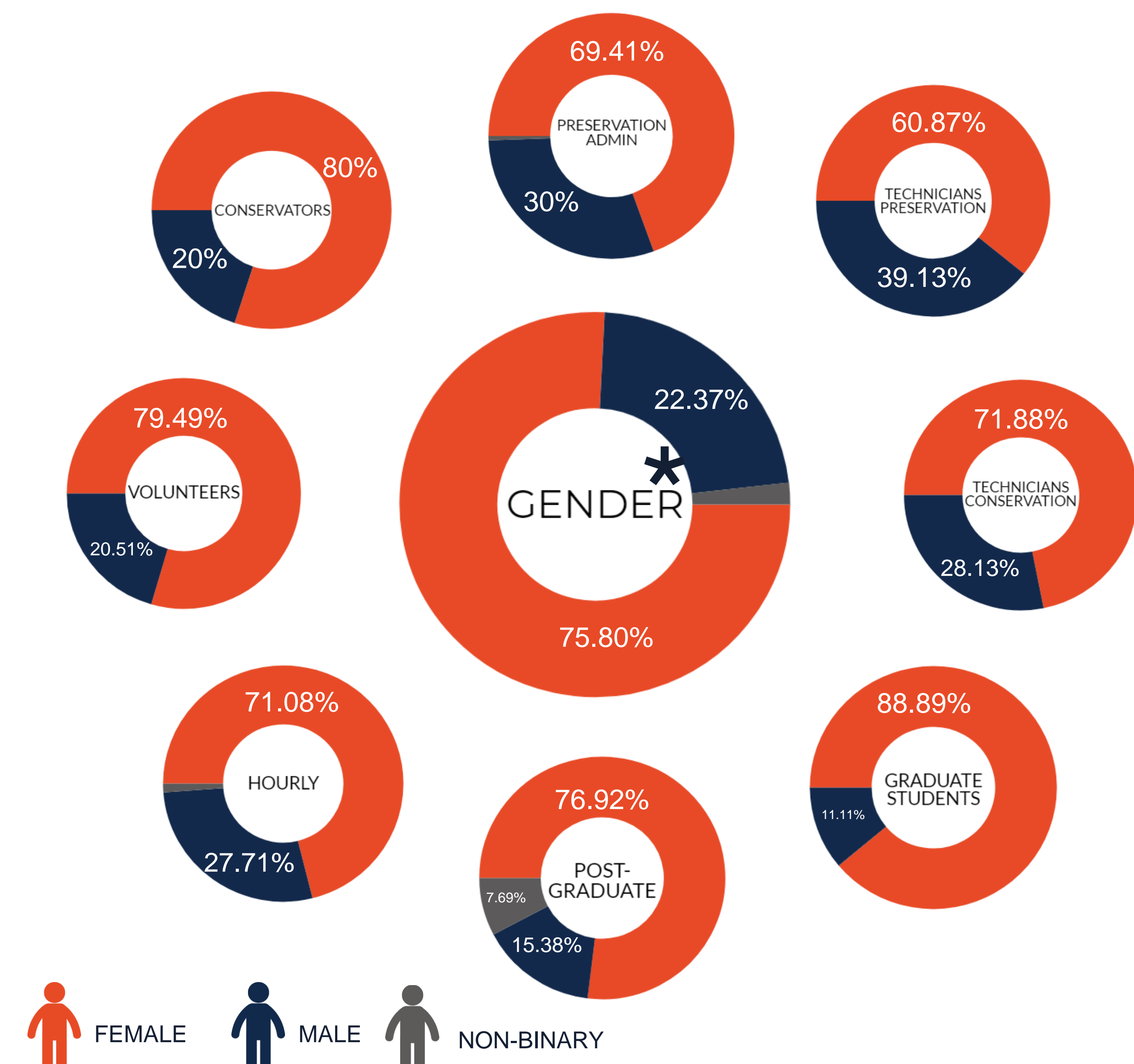
METHOD

Our survey was designed as a multi-tier/two-prong questionnaire. One survey (144 responses) collected data at an administrative level, while a second, shorter survey collected anonymous data from individuals at all levels in our field (265 responses). These surveys collected information on the current diversity (race, gender, disabilities, etc.) of the field of preservation and conservation, including professionals, pre-professionals/interns, staff, students, and volunteers.

By looking at all levels of staffing and diversity in each of these areas, we hope to be able to better focus on possible pipelines to encourage and mentor diverse persons to consider moving into professional careers in the field of preservation.

The * indicates that the data has been collected from individual level survey.

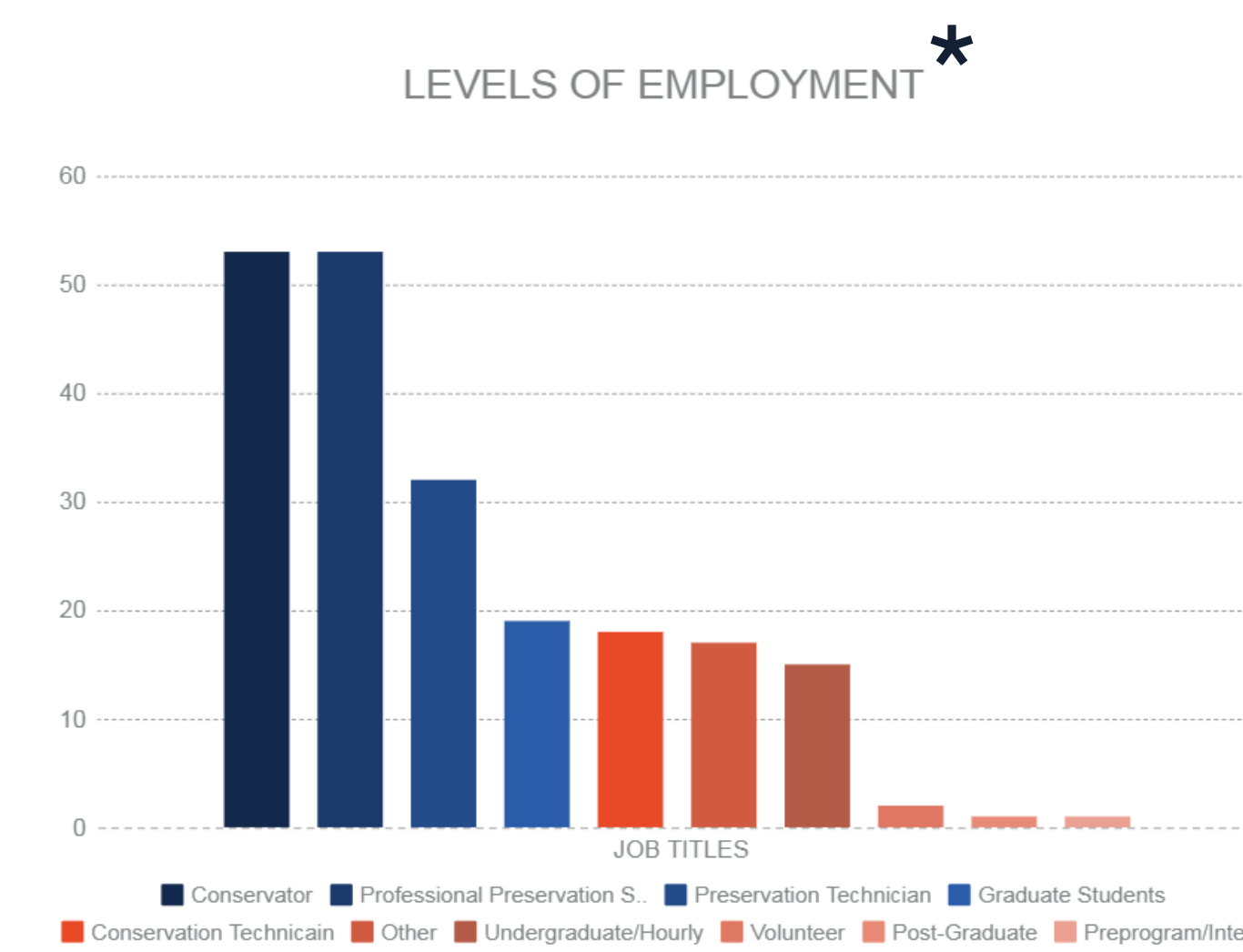
GENDER IDENTITY: The following data has been obtained from the administrative and individual level surveys. It can be seen that most of the positions within Library Preservation and Conservation are held by women. From the individual-level survey it is seen that 75.80% are female, 22.37% male, and 1.83% non-binary.



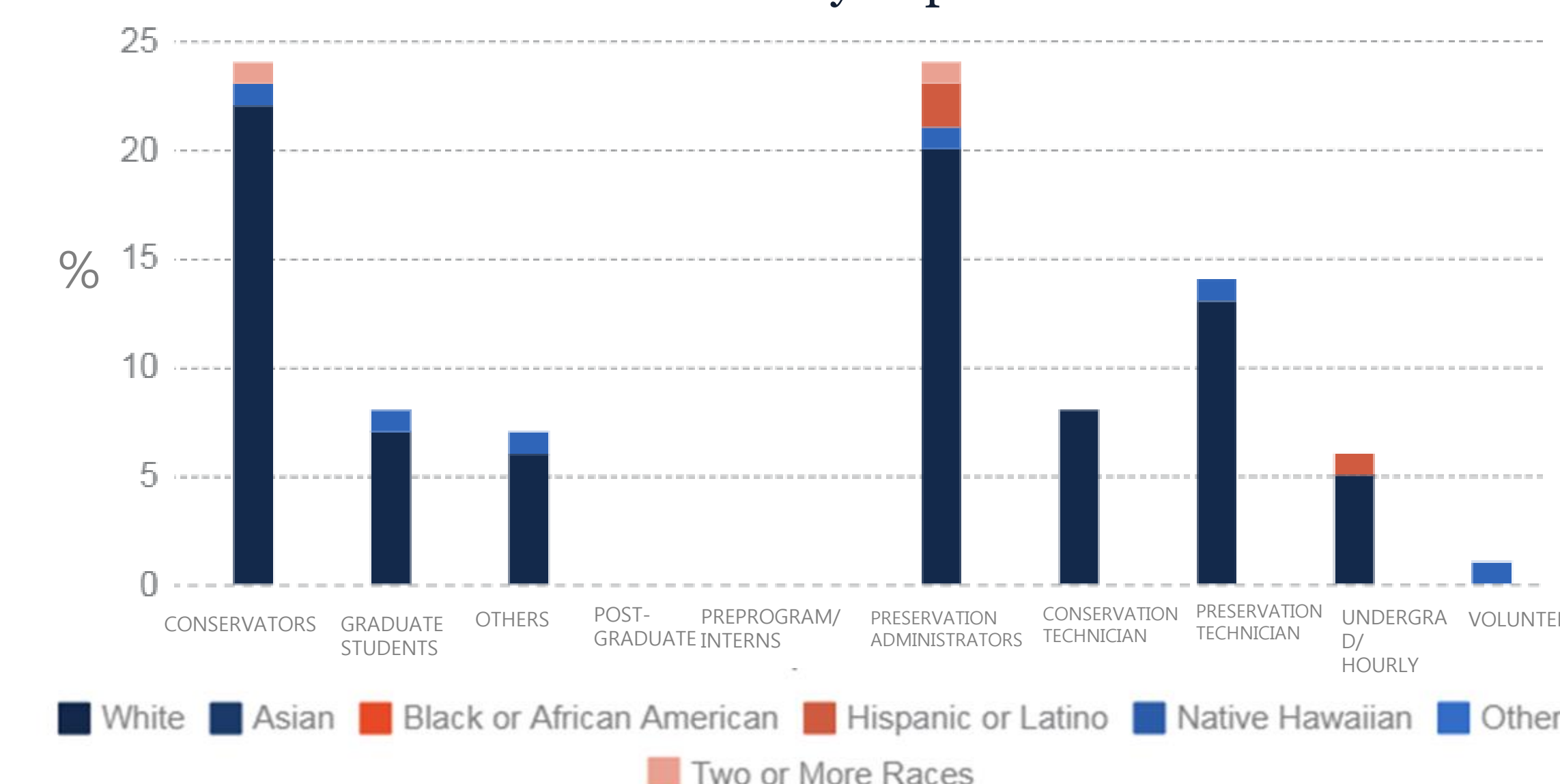
RACIAL AND ETHNIC IDENTITY: The data presented here is collected from the individual-level survey. Most of the people reporting are White and of European descent. 82.11% of the employees are White and 75.71% are of European descent. Significantly smaller percentages of people from other racial and ethnic backgrounds are evident, as shown.



JOB TITLES: The data presented here has been collected from the individual-level survey and gives us the broader picture of the different levels of employment present in the responses. While 25.12% of the employees are conservators and professional preservation administrators, less than 1% of the staff is volunteers, preprogram/interns, and post-graduates.

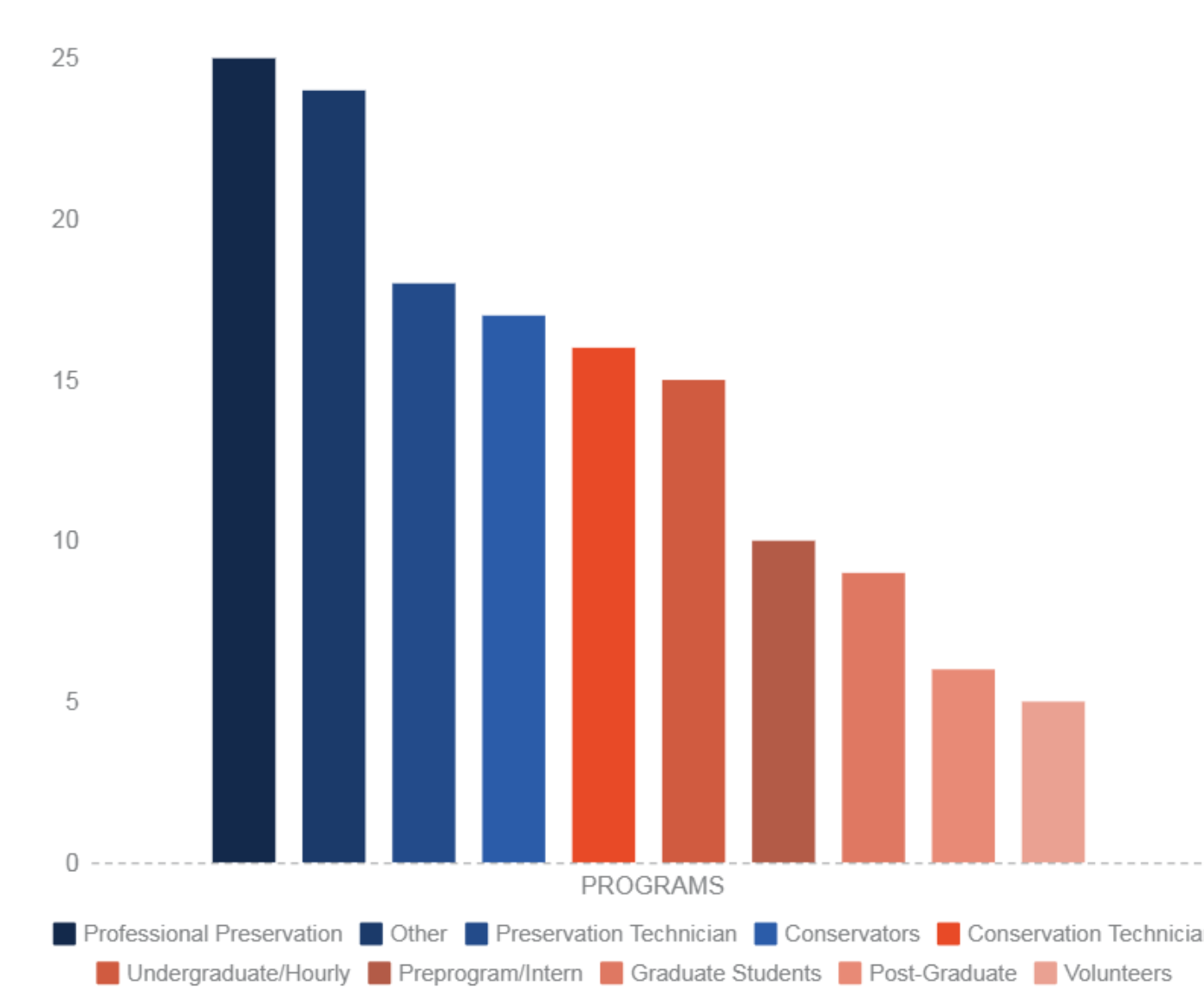
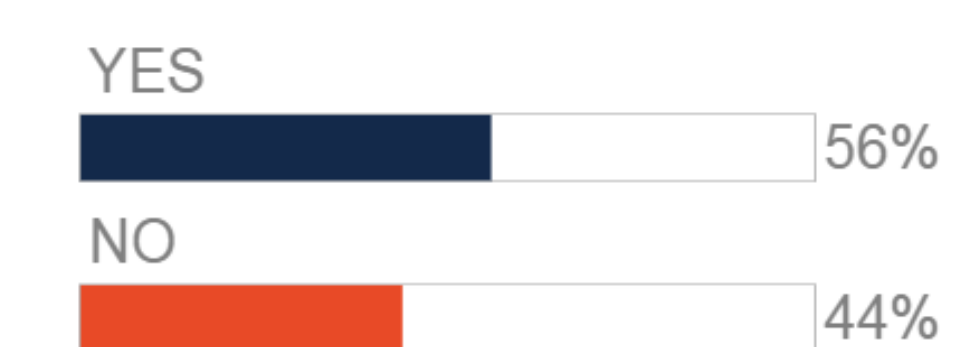


CROSS ANALYSIS OF DATA: Using the data collected in the individual-level survey, we can cross-compare the responses for level of employment and race, thus illustrating that racial diversity decreases with increase in seniority of position.

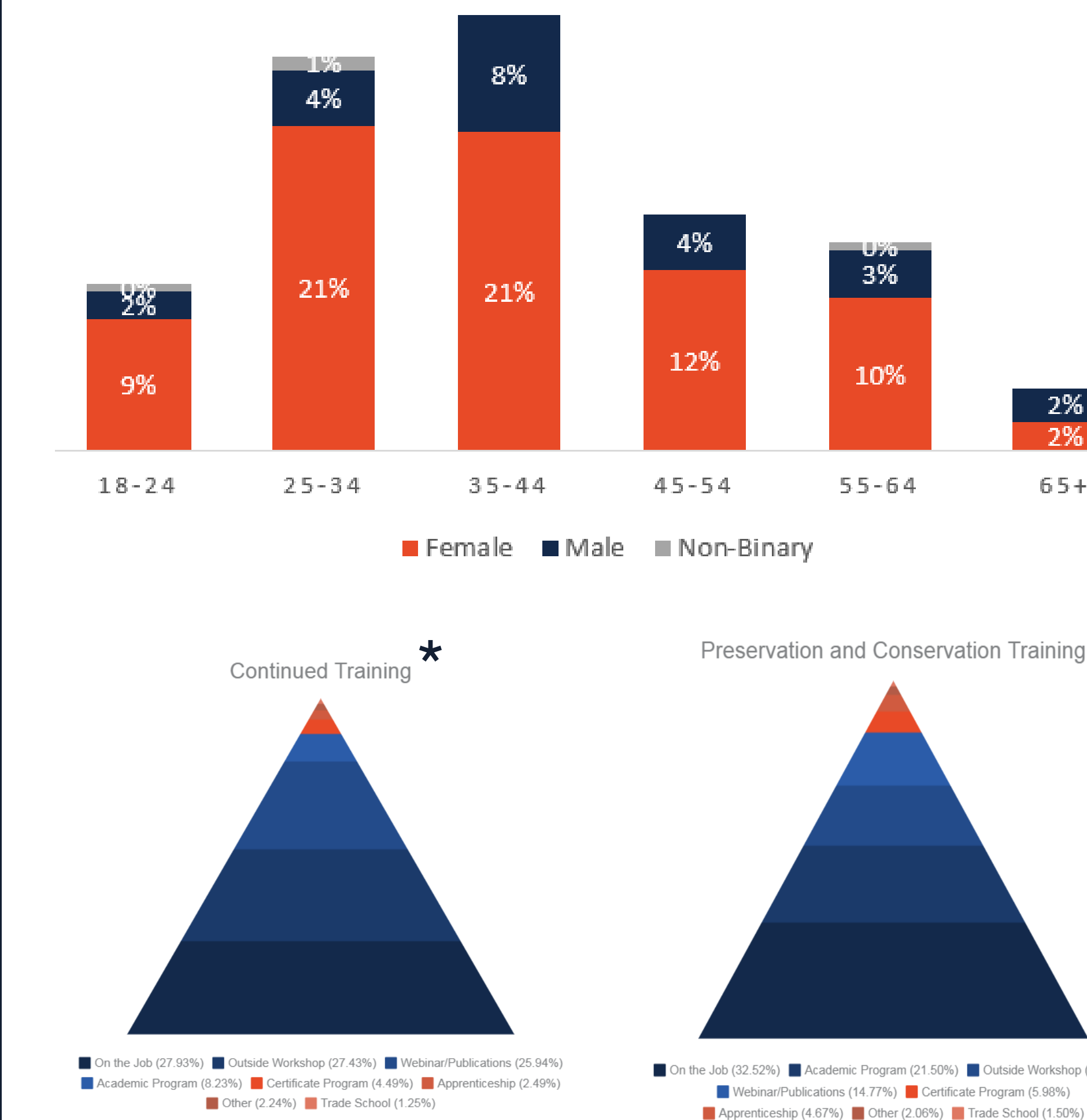


INSTITUTIONAL DIVERSITY INITIATIVES WITHIN THE LAST 5 YEARS: The data presented here has been collected from the admin level survey and gives us an overview of whether institutions have diversity initiatives and if so, which areas they have concentrated on. 56% of the institutions claim that they have diversity initiatives present which focus on professional-level positions and have the least emphasis on post-graduates and volunteers.

DIVERSITY INITIATIVES



AGE IDENTIFICATION: There is a drastic decrease in the number of female as the age group increases.



PRESERVATION AND CONSERVATION TRAINING:

Most employees have received training through on the job/internal workshop and would like to receive additional training by the same means in the future. Least preference is given to training via trade schools.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data collected from the survey, we have noticed that there is a lack of diversity from racial and ethnic backgrounds, particularly at higher levels of seniority. In addition to this, we have found that the percentage of women in the field dramatically decreases after the age range of 35-44.

Our next steps in analyzing and promoting our findings will be to complete a full cross-analysis of our data to better illustrate areas of improvement and potential opportunities.

We will present our findings more widely at the ALA Annual Conference in New Orleans as well as publish our findings and recommendations in an upcoming article. More information on our research can be found at: <https://tinyurl.com/countdiversity>

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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