Survey Development and Analysis

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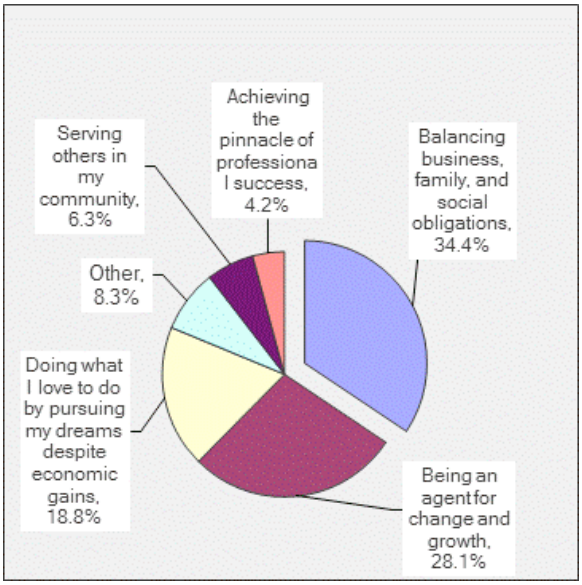
Question 1: What best describes success to you?



Analysis:

Before determining the keys to success among the Black Simmons College graduates, it was important to determine what "success" actually meant to each participant. Answers to this question revealed that achieving a balance in their lives (34.4%) was of foremost concern. In their opinion, being an agent for change/growth and doing what they love were other important measures of success. In general, they viewed achieving professional success and serving others as less important measures of success.

Question 2: When considering various groups of people in your life, how important were each of the following to your professional success?

	Weighted Average
Family	7.3
Educators	6.5
Friends	6.1
Other	5.9
Co-workers	5.6
Classmates	4.6
Neighbors	2.9

Analysis[1]:

Of all people in their lives, overwhelmingly respondents felt that family members were most influential to their achievement of professional success. Friends and educators were somewhat important, but neighbors and coworkers were not very important at all.

Other contributors included mentors, church-related acquaintances (leaders, members), God, and boyfriends/partners.

[1] For this question (and several others in the survey), a scale of 1-8 was used, with "8" representing the highest score, and "1": the lowest or "not applicable". A "weighted average was then calculated representing a blended score for each factor.

Question 3: When considering various factors in your life, how important was each of the following to your professional success?

	Weighted Average
A quality education	7.6
Parents that felt education was important	7.6
Continual learning	7.3
Having a strong family support system	7.0
Doing what you love	7.0
Getting good advice	6.9
Flexibility	6.8
Vision	6.7
Risk -taking	6.6
Networking	6.3
Having a mentor	5.9
Other	5.8
Economic stability in your formative years	5.7
Equal Opportunity laws	5.7
Being raised in a two-parent household	5.3
Being a member of a professional organization	5.0
Luck	4.2
A government program	3.8
An enrichment program	3.7

Analysis:

Their family contributed greatly to respondents' professional success, both the strength of their family support system and the importance that parents placed on education was very important. Respondents also viewed that getting a quality education was a strong contributing factor to their professional success.

Other important contributors to professional success included:

- Doing what they love
- Personal traits and characteristics
- Perseverance
- Exposure to new ideas and disciplines
- Determination
- Self confidence
- Timing

Question 4: How much do you think each of the following attitudes and character traits contributed to your professional success?

Weighted Average	
Work ethic	7.7
Persistence	7.6
High expectation for yourself	7.6
Integrity/honesty	7.6
Internal drive to succeed	7.5
Maturity	7.3
Intelligence	7.3
Open-mindedness	7.2
Ability to make good life choices	7.2
Optimism	7.2
Self-reliance	7.2
Attention to detail	7.2
Positive energy	7.2
Flexibility	7.0
Acceptance of change	6.9
Decisiveness	6.9
Curiosity	6.7
Faith	6.7
Joy	6.6
Other	5.6
Entrepreneurialism	4.9

Analysis:

By and large, respondents indicated that most of these factors were important contributors to their personal success.

Selected Quotes:

- *"The ability to prioritize life issues and concerns is important; and being able to have that opportunity."*
- *"Generosity/sharing/mentoring others."*
- *"Giving back."*
- *"May not need all of these at the same time, but available when the situation needs it."*

Question 5: When considering your family members, how important was each of the following to your professional success?

Weighted Average	
Mother	7.2
Father	6.6
Other	5.1
Spouse	4.9
Aunt	4.8
Grandmother	4.6
Sister	4.5
Brother	4.4
Uncle	4.0
Son	3.2
Daughter	3.7
Grandfather	3.5

Analysis:

By far, respondents felt that their mother was the family member who was most responsible for their professional success. “Father” and “other” were the next most influential family members.

Other important family members who were cited by respondents included godmother, step-father, and cousins.

Question 6: For the highest rated family member, how did this person influence you?

Analysis:

In general, respondents felt that these family members helped them most by:

- Providing a stable family environment
- Teaching by example – specifically, by demonstrating strong faith, excellent work ethic, respect for others, commitment to education, financial and emotional support
- Seeking opportunities for growth and enrichment
- Demonstrating unconditional love that fostered confidence and self-reliance
- Setting high expectations

Question 7: When considering your pre-college educators, how important was each of the following to your professional success?

Weighted Average	
High school teacher	6.0
Elementary school teacher	5.5
Middle school teacher	5.2
Other	4.7
Guidance Counselor	3.4
Coach	2.2

Analysis:

Both elementary and high school teachers were identified as the most influential on respondents.

Other educators that respondents cited were predominately church-affiliated (i.e., church leaders and Sunday school teachers).

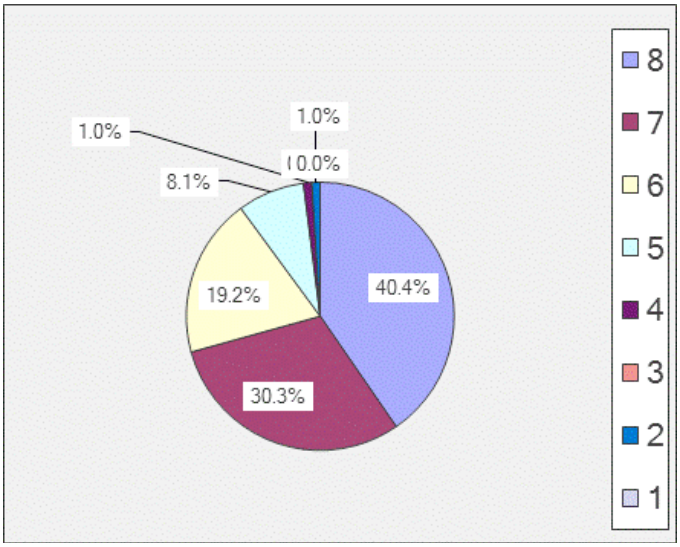
Question 8: To what extent did the following issues challenge your ability to achieve professional success?

Weighted Average	
Racial discrimination	4.9
Gender discrimination	4.2
A feeling of isolation	3.9
Economic limitations	3.7
Lack of guidance after college	3.2
Lack of information	3.0
Lack of guidance during college	3.0
Lack of guidance prior to college	3.0
Other	2.8
Inadequate education	1.6
Lack of parental motivation	1.6
Poor reading or math skills	1.5

Analysis:

- Racial and gender discrimination clearly represented the most significant challenges for respondents.
- Other important factors included feelings of isolation and economic limitations.
- Of lower significance were lack of information and guidance (before, during and after college).
- Respondents also cited a number of "other" factors that were important, most notably lack of a role model.

Question 9: To what extent did Simmons College contribute to your professional success?



Analysis:

Respondents felt that Simmons College was a very strong contributor to their professional success. Specifically, they felt that Simmons provided:

- A solid education
- Opportunity for personal growth
- Experiences that fostered self-confidence and professionalism (internships and practicums)
- Strong educational environment that fostered strategic thinking, leadership, creativity, and a broader world view

Selected quotes:

- "Simmons forced me to think for myself and make my own decisions."
- "Simmons helped prepare women to be leaders and catalysts of change in the 21 century."
- "Simmons taught me a world view and the reality of the working community juxtaposed to my living community. I learned valuable skills and an intellectual integrity in my studies and work."
- "Simmons College experiences gave me the poise and professionalism to deal with many situations and circumstances that I have encountered in my professional career. I am a stronger woman in the workplace because of the Simmons experience."

Question 10: How important was each of the following employees of Simmons College to your professional success?

Weighted Average	
Professor	6.2
Other	5.2
Advisor	4.6
Department chairperson	4.1
College admissions officer	3.9
Official Mentor	2.3

Analysis:

Respondents clearly indicated that professors were the most influential type of Simmons College employee. They also identified "Other" as an important category, specifically identifying:

- Informal mentors
- Black Student Organization advisors and faculty
- Journalism teacher Alden Poole
- President
- African American professors
- Mrs. Erma Brooks
- Mrs. Rawlins and Irma Brooks
- A Simmons Librarian
- An administrator

Question 11: For the highest rated Simmons employee, how did this person influence you?

- Provided emotional support, motivation, and encouragement
- Championed student causes
- Helped students identify strengths and talents
- Challenged students to challenge themselves
- Fostered strong bonds with students and encouraged them to network with college staff
- Helped students win internships
- Fostered creativity
- Gave sound advice – both personal and academic
- Exemplified integrity and high standards
- Supported intellectual and community activism

Question 12: To what extent did the following students of Simmons College contribute to your professional success?

Weighted Average	
Fellow classmate	5.4
Upper classman	4.9
Other	4.3
Big Sister	3.1
Sorority sister	1.2

Analysis:

For respondents, three categories of Simmons College students contributed most to their professional success, fellow classmates, upper classmates, and other (consisting of roommates and alumnae.

Question 13: For the highest rated Simmons student, how did this person influence you?

Analysis[2]:

[2] For this question and question #15, "Text Analysis" was used to capture and summarize the many free form responses to these open-ended questions.

Question 14: When considering workplace acquaintances, how important was each of the following to your professional success?

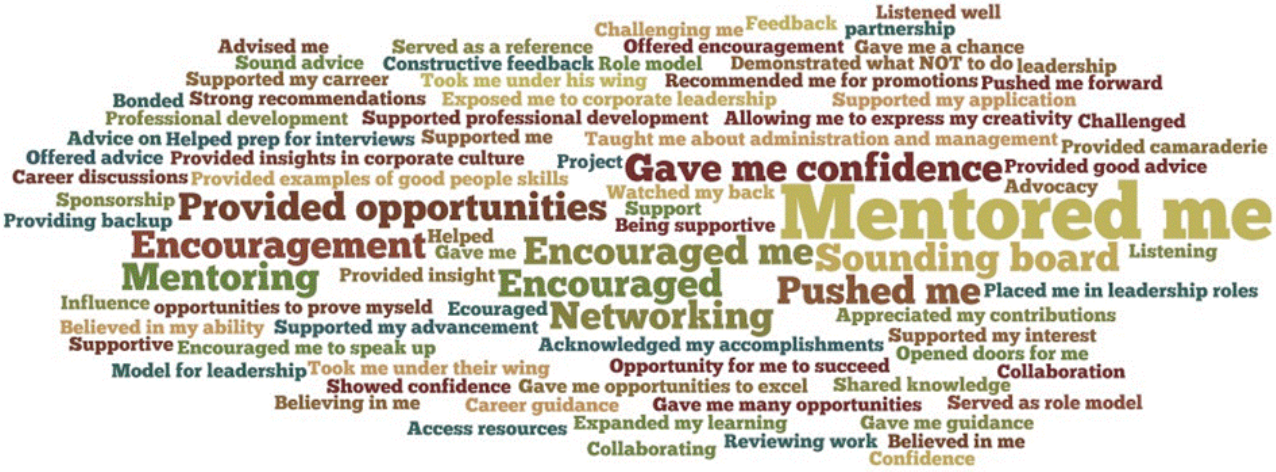
Weighted Average	
Direct manager	5.7
Co-worker	5.7
Member of upper management	5.5
Subordinate	4.0
Employee of another company	3.8
Official mentor	3.3
Other	1.9

Analysis:

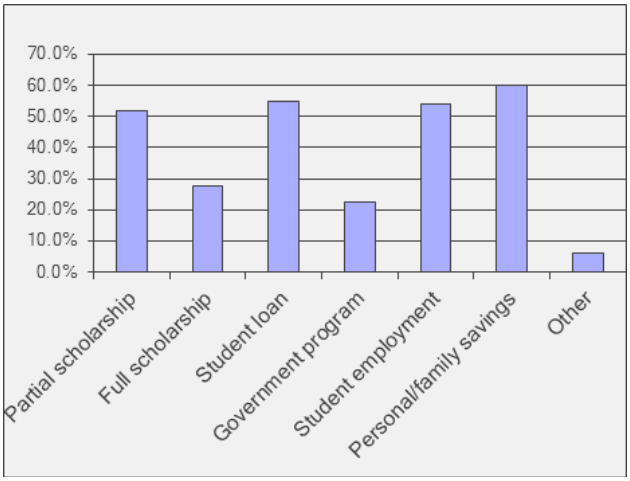
Respondents indicated that co-workers were as important to their professional success as their direct management. They viewed members of upper management as almost as important. Interestingly, official mentors were far less important influences.

Question 15: For the highest rated workplace acquaintance, how did this person influence you?

Analysis:



Question 16: How did you pay for your college education?



Analysis:

The most common means with which respondents paid for their college education were personal/family savings, partial scholarship, student loans, and/or employment. Far fewer mentioned a government program or full scholarship.

"Other" responses included work**-s**tudy grants, faculty-child scholarship, loans, part- and full-time work (including student employment).

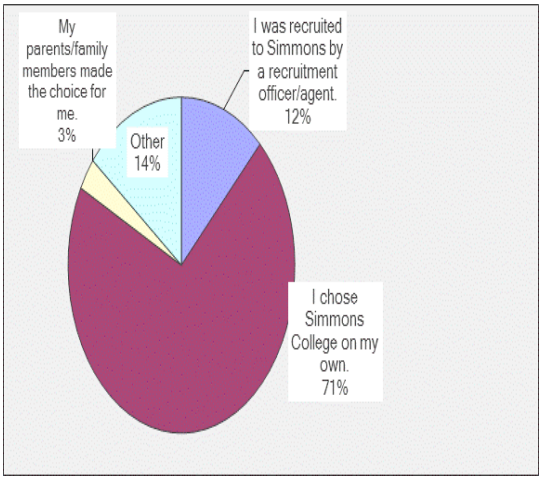
Question 17: What year did you graduate from Simmons College?

1965	0.0%
1966	2.9%
1967	1.0%
1968	1.0%
1969	4.9%
1970	2.0%
1971	6.9%
1972	5.9%
1973	12.7%
1974	12.7%
1975	22.5%
1976	9.8%
1977	7.8%
1978	4.9%
1979	4.9%

Analysis:

Most respondents were more recent graduates. The average year of graduation was 1974 and 1975 was the most represented class among respondents.

Question 18: Why did you choose to attend Simmons College?

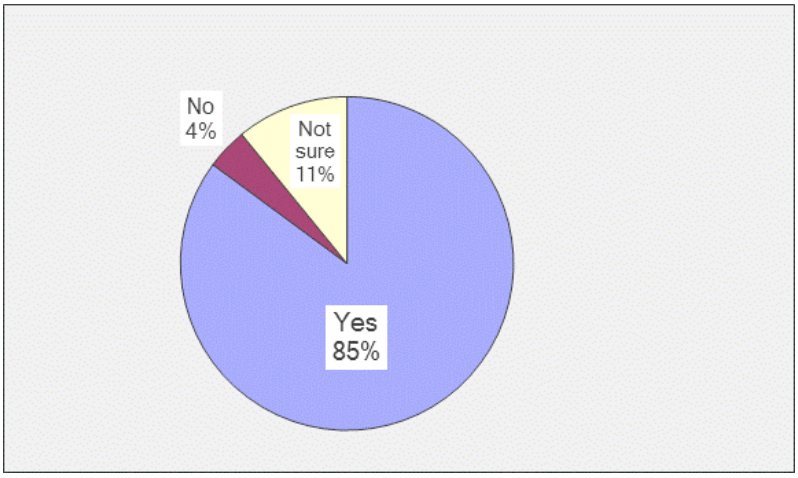


Analysis:

The vast majority of respondents chose Simmons on their own. Fewer were guided by parents/family members or recruited by the college. A few were influenced by financial

aid/scholarships or recommendations from high school teachers, guidance counselor, family and/or friends.

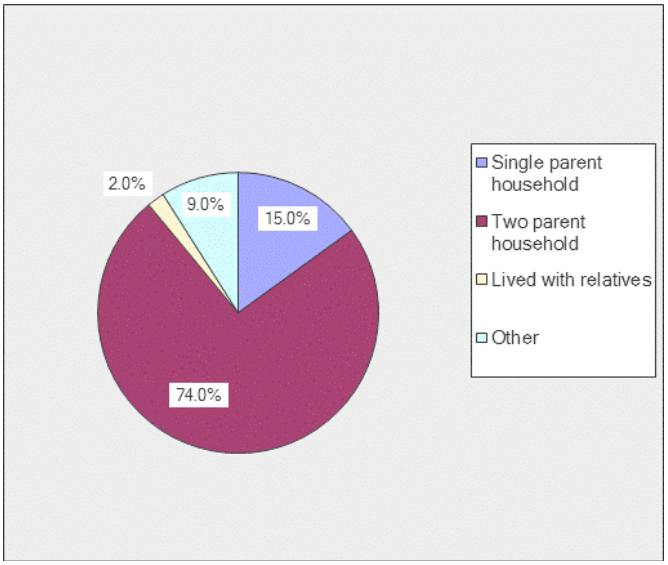
Question 19: If you could go back in time, would you attend Simmons College?



Analysis:

The overwhelming majority of respondents would attend Simmons College if they had the decision to make over again. Only a very small percentage would definitely not.

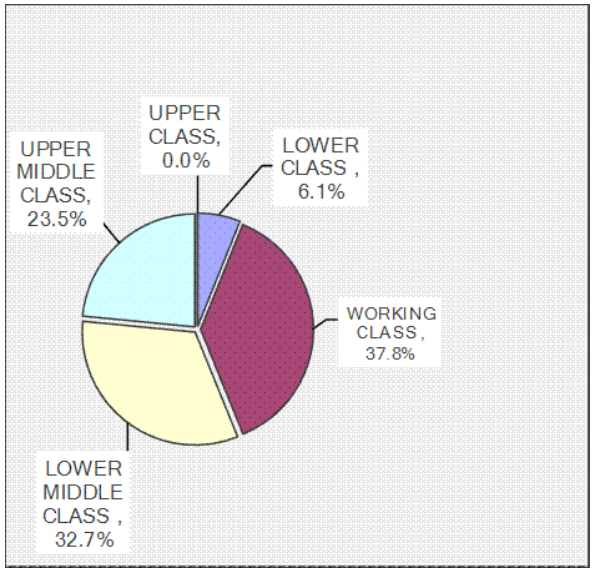
Question 20: Which of the following best describes your childhood household?



Analysis:

The vast majority of respondents were raised in a two parent household. Only 15 percent were raised with one parent. Other living situations included aunt, grandparents and great-grandparents.

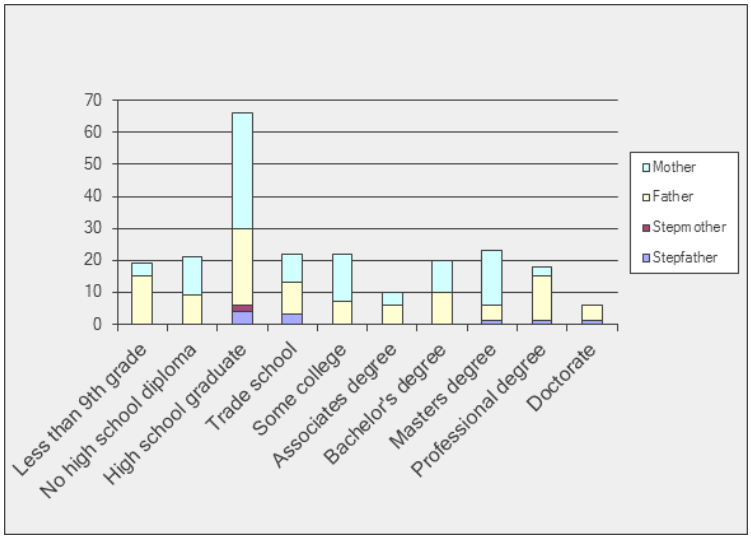
Question 21: Which of the following economic classes best describes your childhood household?



Analysis:

Almost 75 percent of respondents were raised in *working class* or *lower middle class* households. Nearly 25 percent were raised in *upper middle class* households. Only 6 percent were raised in *lower* class households. NO respondents were raised in *upper class* households.

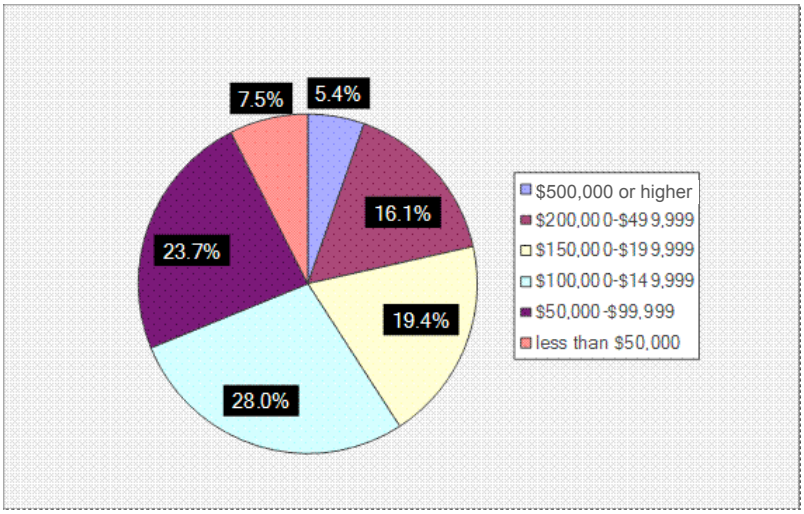
Question 22: What is the highest level of education your parents achieved?



Analysis:

Almost 67 percent of respondents' parents graduated high school. Seventy percent of respondents' parents did not graduate from college.

Question 23: What is your current household income?

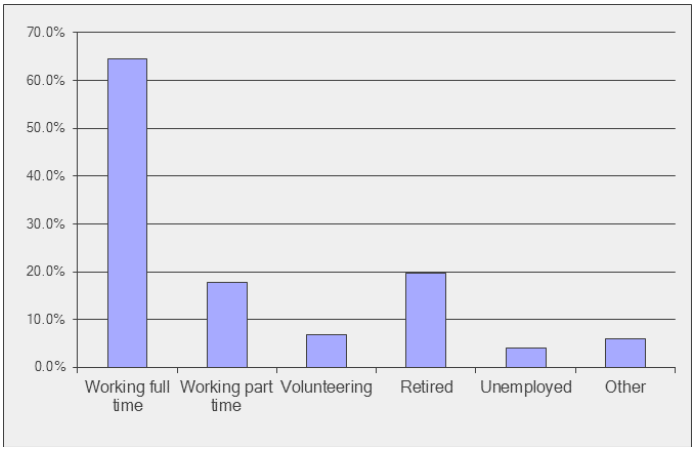


Analysis:

Generally, Simmons College graduates enjoy a comfortable lifestyle.

Most respondents reported having a household income of between $50,000 and $150,000 annually. Two in five respondents reported belonging to a household that earns $150,000 to $500,000 per year.

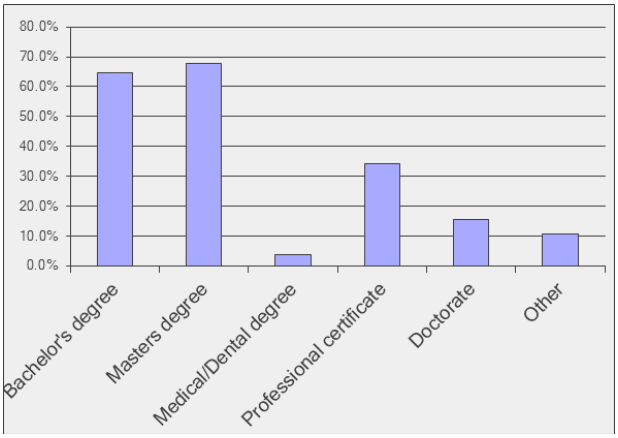
Question 24: What is your current employment status?



Analysis:

Most respondents still work full time. The "Other" category lists board members, self-employed/ entrepreneur, job searching, pursuing hobbies, adjunct instructors.

Question 25: What degrees or certificates have you earned?



Analysis:

Most respondents continued their education by earning various professional and other advanced degrees.

More than 67% of respondents have earned a Master's degree. One in five holds a doctorate degree, and more than 33% have professional certificates. Approximately 5% have a medical or dental degree.