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PURPOSE OF STUDY

The purpose of this research is to examine influential factors in post-graduate employment of UKPA alumni in primary care practice through survey of UKPA graduates on their chosen specialty. This research aims to offer insight on steps towards bridging the gap of Primary Care growth and delivery in Kentucky.

INTRODUCTION

Kentucky continues to battle a persistent shortage of Primary Care providers. In response to this critical challenge, healthcare educational programs are facing increasing demands to produce a greater number of graduates seeking employment in Primary Care. It is imperative in the continued efforts to close this gap that we understand what elements are most influential to providers choosing to enter Primary Care. This research is designed to **better understand the influential factors that affect employment decisions for UKPA program graduates**, and to determine if there are trending factors that may persuade employment in specialized fields as opposed to Primary Care.

METHODS

Sixty-six UKPA graduates between the years 2018-2022 participated in the survey. This qualitative study was conducted via Qualtrics survey, created by the research team (available for viewing via QR code below). The study was reviewed and approved by the IRB (91146).

Graduate Year	# of Responses
2018	8
2019	6
2020	26
2021	18
2022	17
Prior to 2018	1



Qualtrics Survey

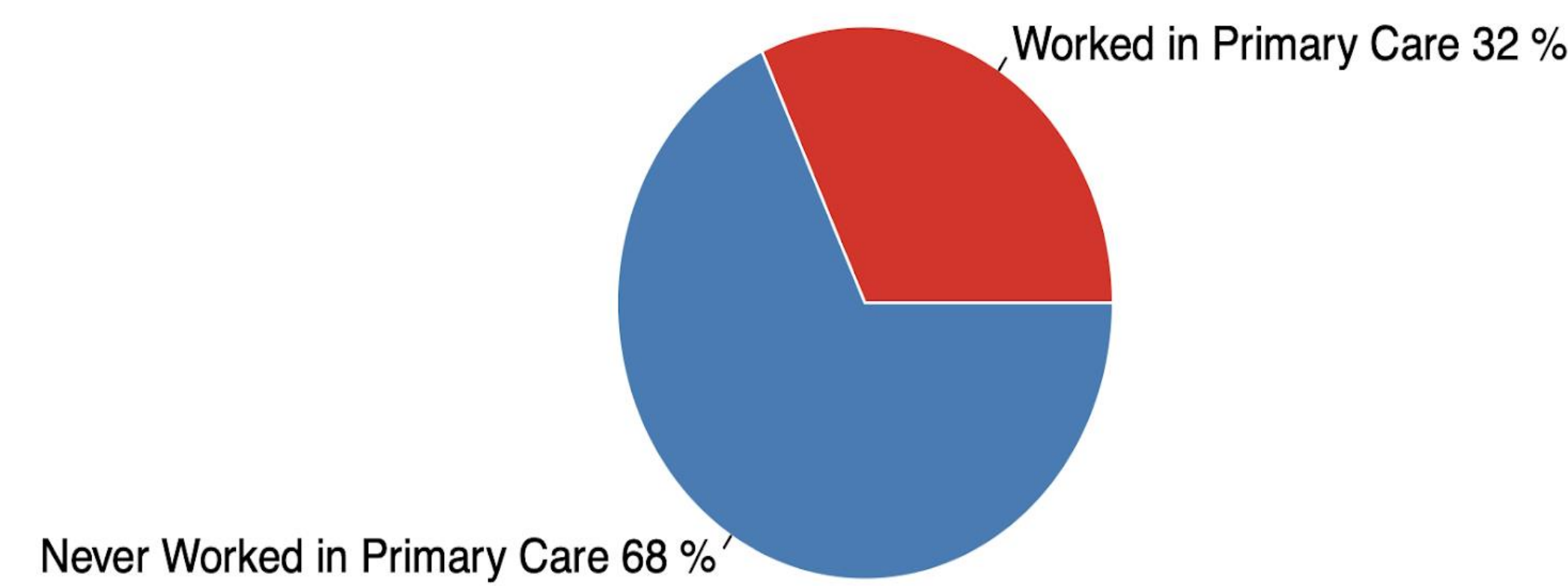
Participants were invited to complete the survey in three emails and an advertisement post on Facebook. Survey responses were summarized using counts, percentages, and graphical representations. Fisher's Exact Tests were used to assess relationships between the responses of interest. All analyses were performed using R, version 4.2.1 (R Foundation for Statistical Computing; Vienna, Austria).

STUDY LIMITATIONS

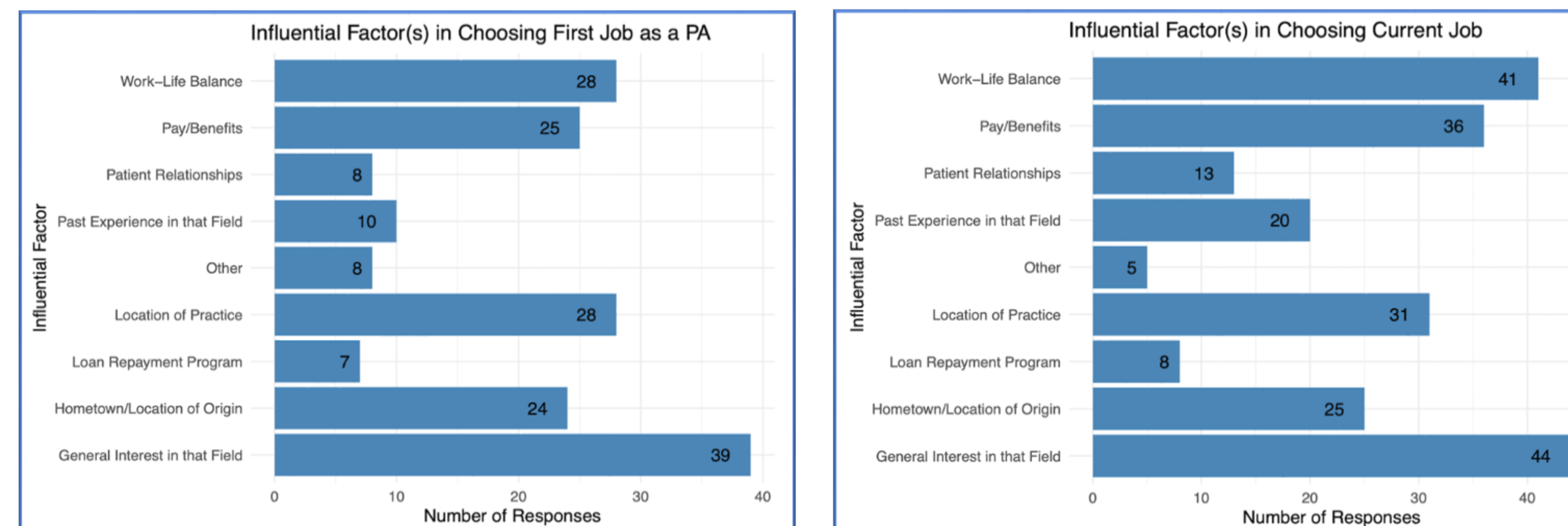
- Small sample size included, decreasing external validity
- COVID-19 pandemic as a potential confounding variable
 - 34% (n=26) of respondents graduated in 2020
- Potential survey response bias
- Inclusion criteria contained only matriculation dates of 2018-2022

RESULTS

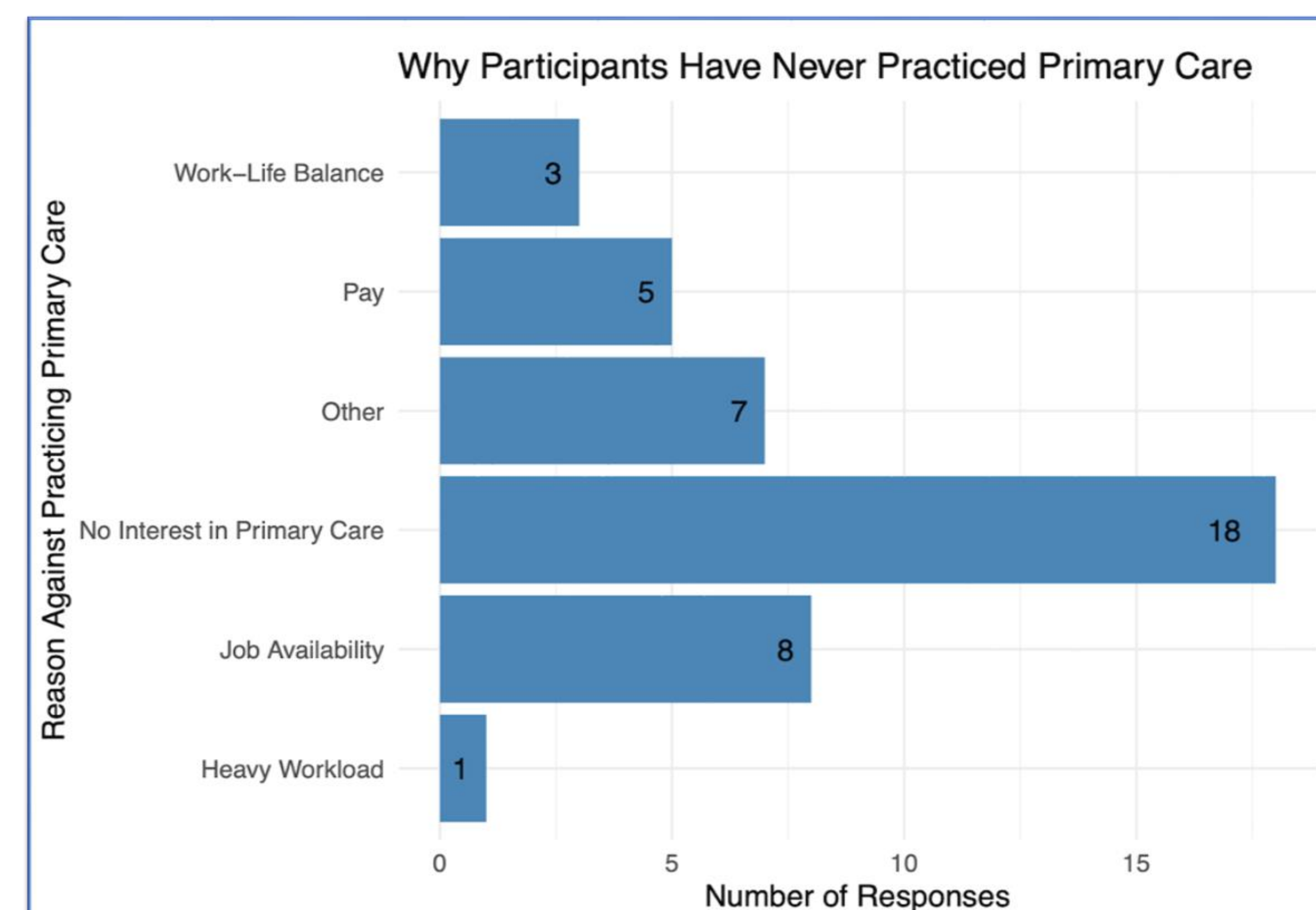
Percent Worked in Primary Care



Participants were asked to select the most influential factors in choosing their first and current job as a PA, regardless of specialty. The most frequently selected factor among both questions was **General Interest in the Field** (n=39, n=44). However, it was found that Work-Life Balance and Pay/Benefits was more frequently selected as being an influential factor in choosing current job (n=41, n=36) compared to choosing first job (n=28, n=25). Location of Practice remained constant as an influential factor in choosing first job (n=28) and current job (n=31).



Participants that reported they had never worked in primary care were asked to briefly describe why not. The written responses were compiled into common themes as displayed in the table above. The highest number of participants (n=18) listed **No Interest in Primary Care** as a reason they have never practiced in primary care. Participants listed Job Availability second most commonly (n=8), and Heavy Workload was listed the least (n=1). Interestingly, participants listed Pay (n=5) the third least.



DISCUSSION

No Interest in Primary Care was the most common factor that study participants selected when asked why they had not practiced in Primary Care, with 42.9% (n=18) of participants selecting this response. Based on prior research, requiring residencies and clinical sites in Primary Care settings might lead to greater interest in the field. But, as most residencies and clinical sites are commonly located in hospitals, this leads to decreased Primary Care clinic exposure. There is also a cultural stigma suggesting that Primary Care providers are not as skilled as subspecialist providers, leading to decreased interest in the field.

The second most selected factor in why graduates don't want to practice in Primary Care was **Job Availability** with 19% (n=8) of participants selecting this response. PAs currently require two supervising physicians in order to be able to practice, limiting job availability across all specialties for PAs in rural areas.

CONCLUSION

Importance of Primary Care

- Kentucky is one of the lowest-ranked states for healthcare in the nation
- 35 out of 50 in healthcare accessibility
 - 45 out of 50 in healthcare quality
 - 48 out of 50 in public health

Legislature in Kentucky

Legislative changes might be able to increase availability of and interest in primary care jobs in Kentucky

- Supervising Physician Requirements (KRS 311.854): Eligibility to practice requires both a supervising physician and alternate supervising physician
- Prescribing Rights (HB-135, 2020): PAs can prescribe schedule III-IV controlled substances
- Addition of Physician Assistant Advisory Board Member to State Board of Medical Licensure (HB-361, 2024, *bill currently pending*)

FUTURE STUDIES

Provider distribution across AHEC regions

- Investigate potential relationship between economically disadvantaged areas and practicing PAs

Broaden study population

- Expand matriculation inclusion criteria
- Incorporate other PA programs in Kentucky

Influence of UKPA mission + curriculum focus on practice/location

- Differences in Lexington vs. Morehead campus matriculates

REFERENCES & ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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References