



**PH WINS**

PUBLIC HEALTH WORKFORCE  
INTERESTS AND NEEDS SURVEY

# 2021 SUMMARY REPORT:

## Environmental Health Workers

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENT & CITATION

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The Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey (PH WINS) was developed by the de Beaumont Foundation and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials to understand the interests and needs of the state and local governmental public health workforce in the United States, and was fielded in 2014, 2017, and 2021. For more information, visit [www.phwins.org](http://www.phwins.org).

**Citation:** de Beaumont Foundation and Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, *Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey: 2021 Dashboard*. August 3, 2022.

# ABOUT THIS REPORT

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This report summarizes key findings about **environmental health workers** from the 2021 Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey (PH WINS).

- Key findings are organized by the main sections of PH WINS 2021:
  - Demographics
  - Workforce Characteristics
  - Staying & Leaving
  - Training Needs
  - Engagement & Satisfaction
  - Well-being

# WHAT IS PH WINS?

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## *Public Health Workforce Interests and Needs Survey*

- PH WINS, a partnership between the de Beaumont Foundation and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO), was fielded in 2014, 2017, and 2021.
- **First and only nationally representative source of data** about the governmental public health workforce.
- Supports the governmental public health workforce in **understanding their strengths and gaps** and informs future investments in workforce development efforts.

# 2021 METHODS

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- PH WINS 2021 was distributed via web survey to **137,446 state and local governmental public health workers:**
  - 47 state health agencies
  - 29 big city health departments
  - 259 local health departments
- The PH WINS 2021 instrument had five domains: workplace environment, COVID-19 response, training needs, addressing public health issues, and demographics.
- One important change in 2021: non-permanent employees of centralized state health agencies were included in the nationally representative data set.

# WORKFORCE DEFINITION

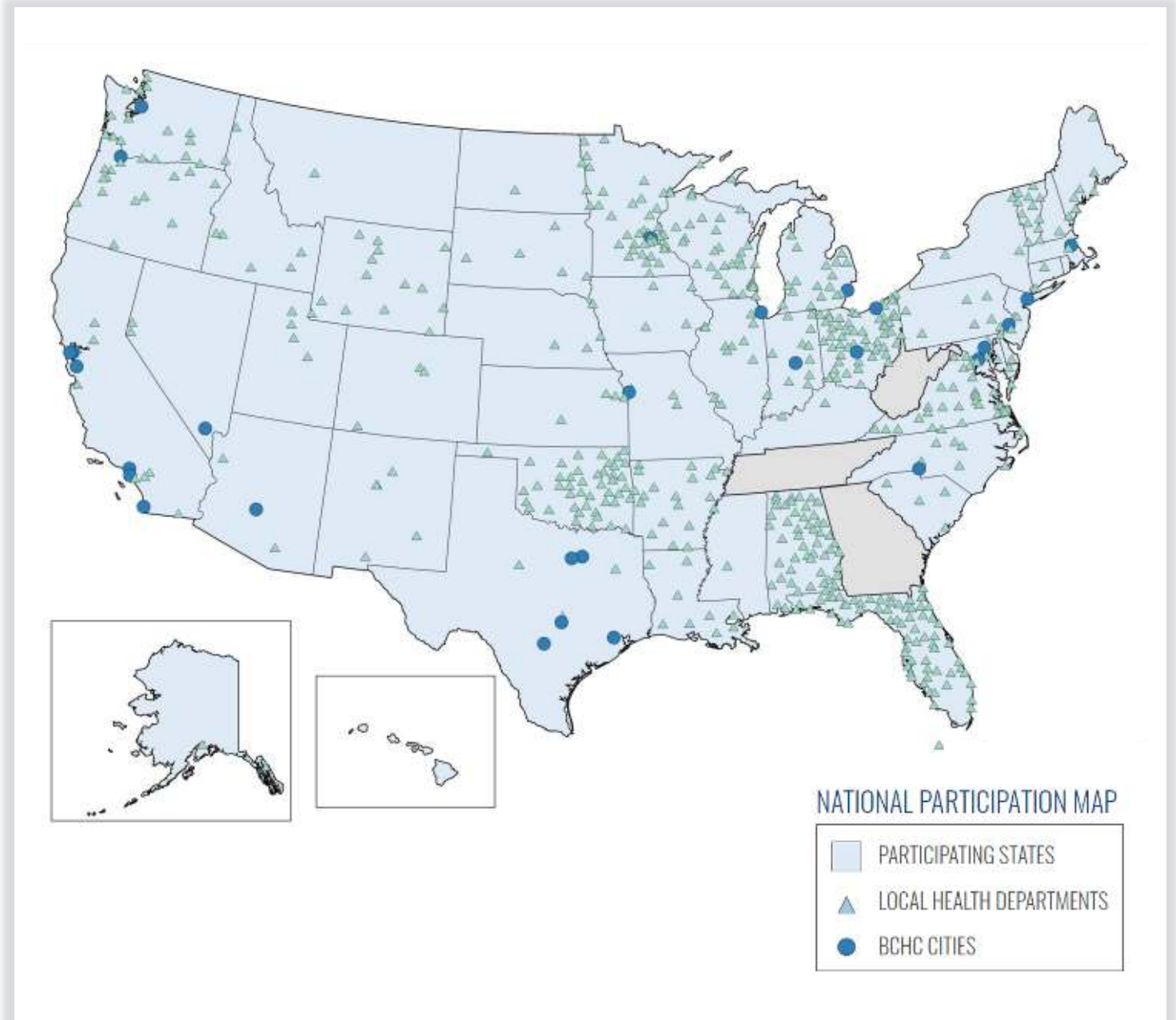
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- Workforce groups are defined by a combination of responses to PH WINS questions on program area, job classification, education, and certifications.
- **Environmental health workers** include PH WINS respondents who selected the following job classification(s) or program area(s):
  - Job classification: environmental health worker
  - Program area: environmental health

# NATIONAL PARTICIPATION

- Nationally, the survey was completed by 44,732 individuals, for a **35% response rate**.
- Response rates varied by frame:
  - **SHA: 34%**
  - **Big Cities: 28%**
  - **Other locals: 52%**
    - **Locals in Regions V and X\*: 56%**

\*HHS Regions V and X participated in the PH WINS for All pilot programming, recruiting all locals in those regions, regardless of size, to participate in PH WINS.



# NATIONAL PARTICIPATION

- Nationally, the survey was completed by 44,732 individuals, for a **35% response rate**.
- Response frame:
  - **State health departments: 20%**
  - **Local health departments: 25%**
  - **Other locals: 52%**
    - **Locals in Regions V and X\*: 56%**

\*HHS Regions V and X participated in the PH WINS for All pilot programming, recruiting all locals in those regions, regardless of size, to participate in PH WINS.

Environmental health workers account for **7%** of the national governmental public health workforce.





# 2021 KEY FINDINGS: DEMOGRAPHICS

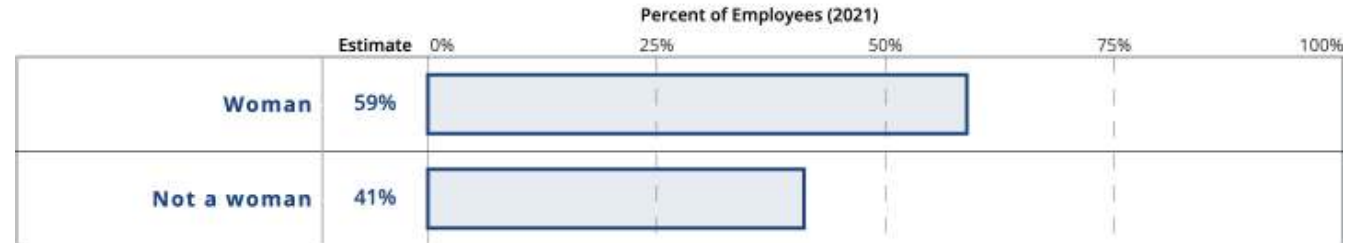
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- PH WINS respondents self-reported demographic (personal) characteristics like their gender, race/ ethnicity, and age.
- Respondents also self-reported the highest level of education attained and whether they have a specialized degree in public health.

# DEMOGRAPHICS

- **59%** of environmental health workers **self-identify as a woman.**
- **More than half** of environmental health workers **self-identify as White.**

## GENDER COLLAPSED ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



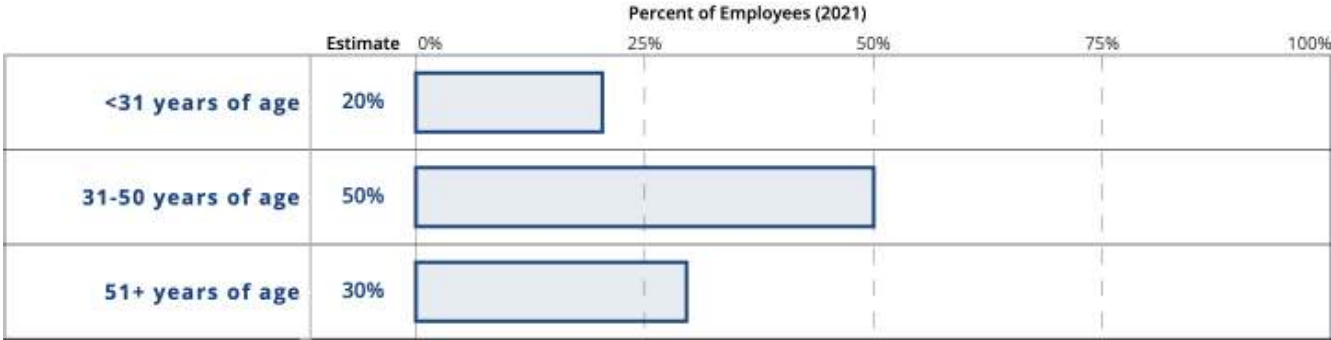
## RACE & ETHNICITY COLLAPSED ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



# DEMOGRAPHICS

- **Half** of environmental health workers are between the **ages of 31 and 50 years.**

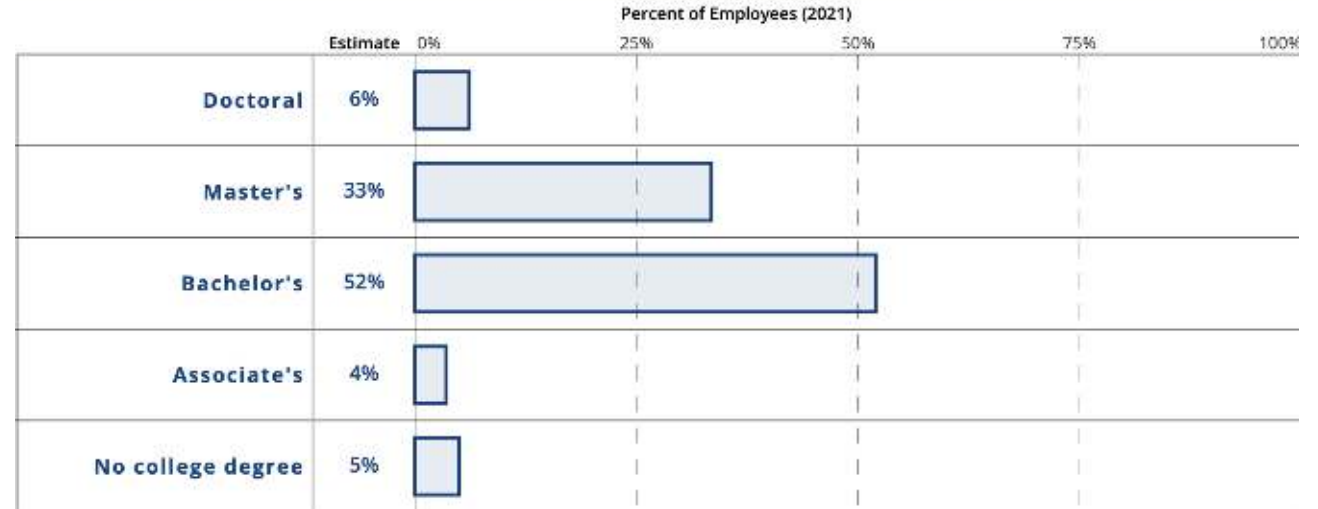
## AGE COLLAPSED ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



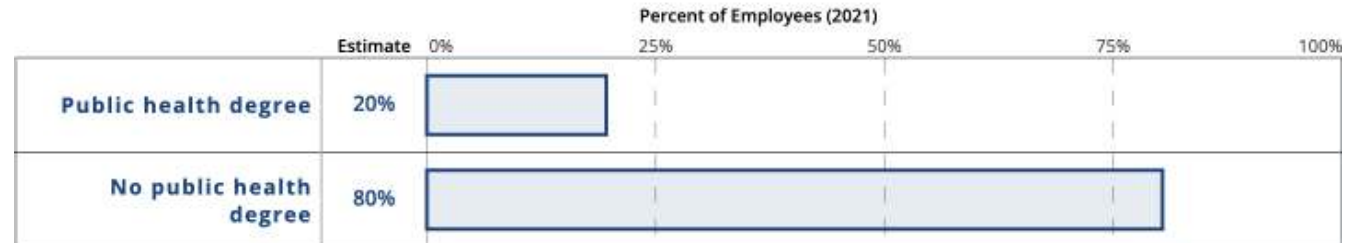
# EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

- **39%** of environmental health workers **have an advanced degree.**
  - 33% have a Master's degree.
  - 6% have a Doctoral degree.
- **20%** have a specialized **degree in public health.**

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



## PUBLIC HEALTH TRAINING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



# 2021 KEY FINDINGS: WORKFORCE CHARACTERISTICS

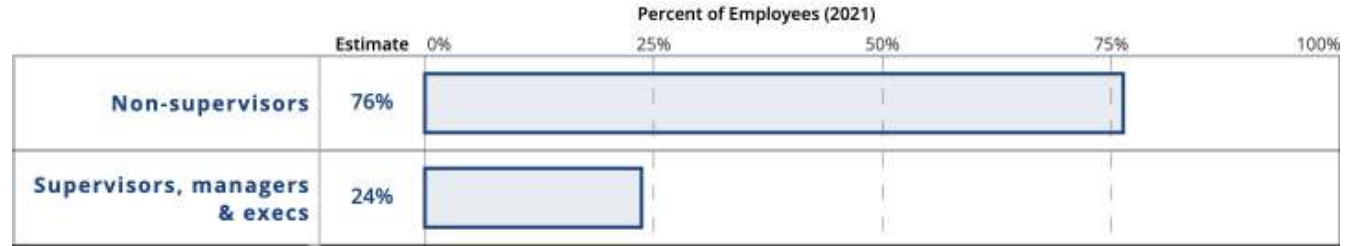
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- PH WINS respondents were asked a series of questions related specifically to their job and the work they do, including:
  - Supervisory status
  - Job role
  - Primary program area
  - Tenure in public health overall, at their agency, and in their current job.
- Respondents also reported full-time/part-time status and salary information.

# SUPERVISORY STATUS/JOB ROLE

- **3 out of 4** environmental health staff work in a **non-supervisory role**.
- **94%** of staff worked in a **public health sciences job role**, which includes program staff, epidemiologists, and contact tracers, among others.

## SUPERVISORY STATUS COLLAPSED ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



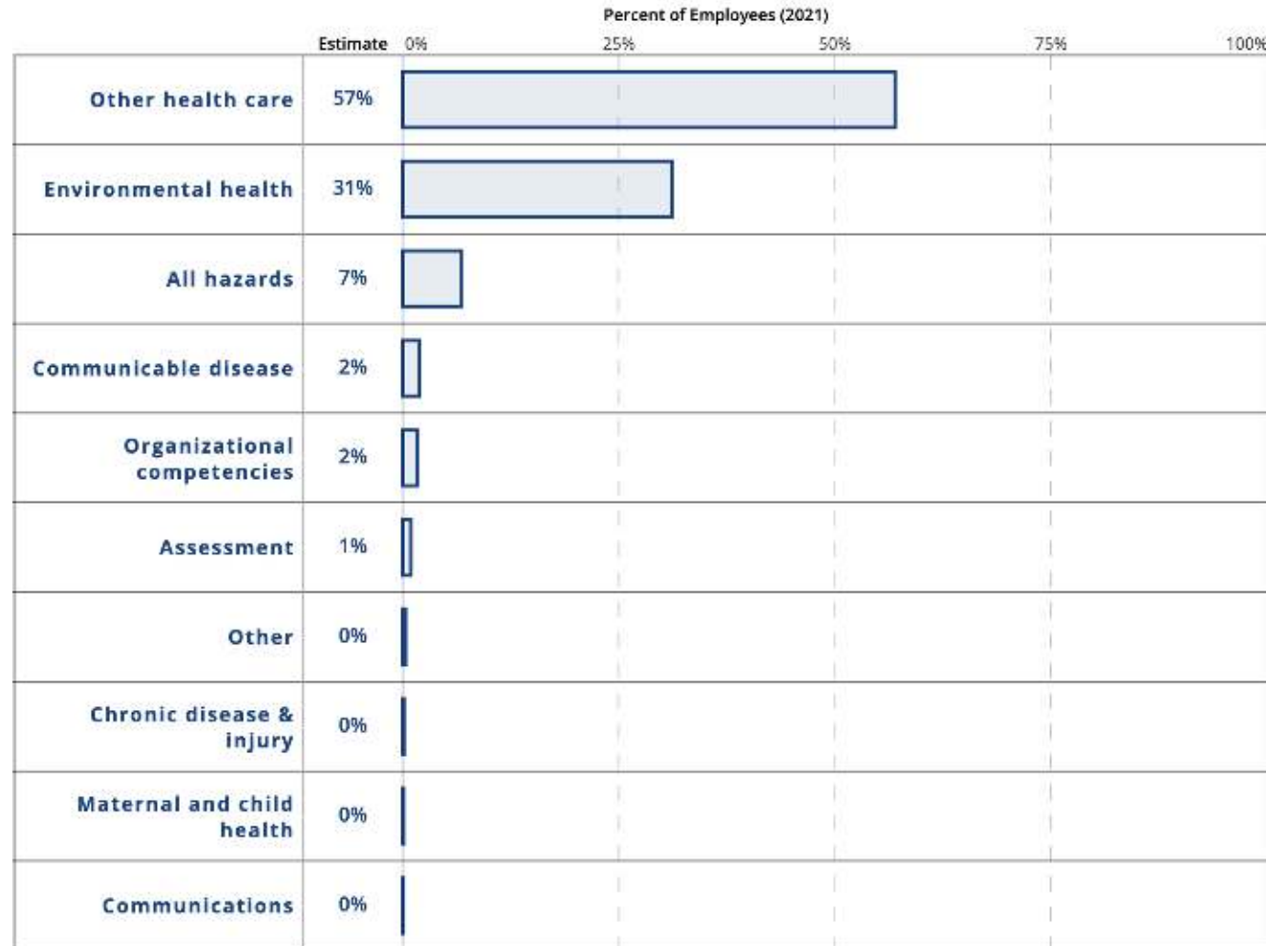
## JOB CLASSIFICATION ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



# PROGRAM AREA

- Two-thirds of environmental health workers are distributed across **three primary program areas**:
  - **Other Health Care**, including certain clinical services, immunizations, mental, oral, and school health, and substance misuse.
  - **Environmental Health**
  - **All Hazards**

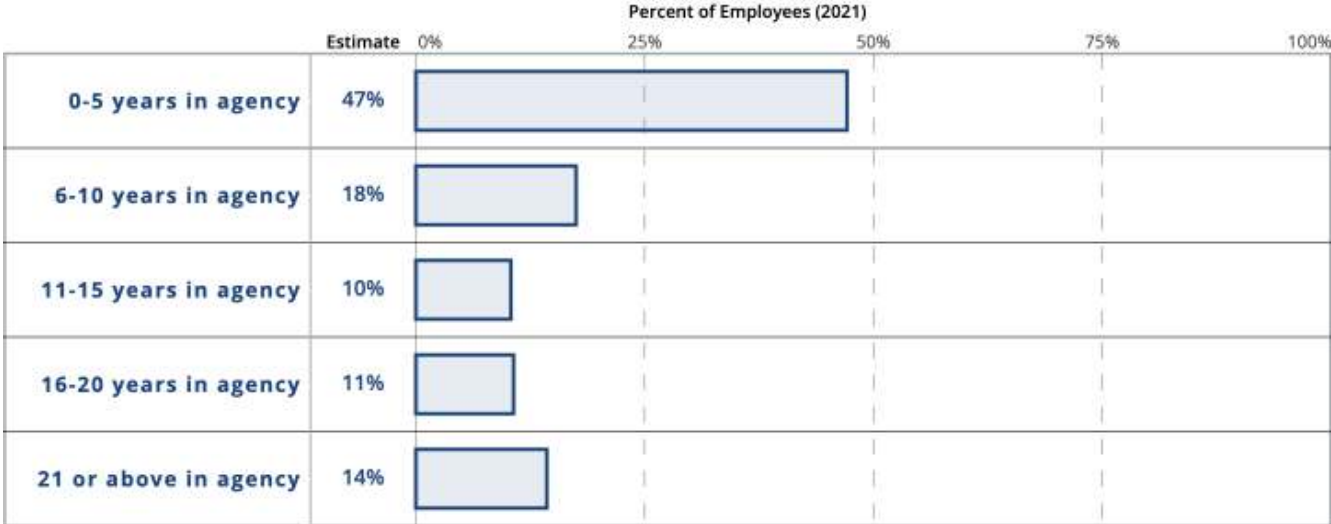
## PROGRAM AREA ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



# TENURE AT AGENCY

- **Nearly half of environmental health workers** in 2021 had served at their agency **for 5 years or less.**
- 14% had served 21 or more years.

## AGENCY TENURE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES





# 2021 KEY FINDINGS: STAYING & LEAVING

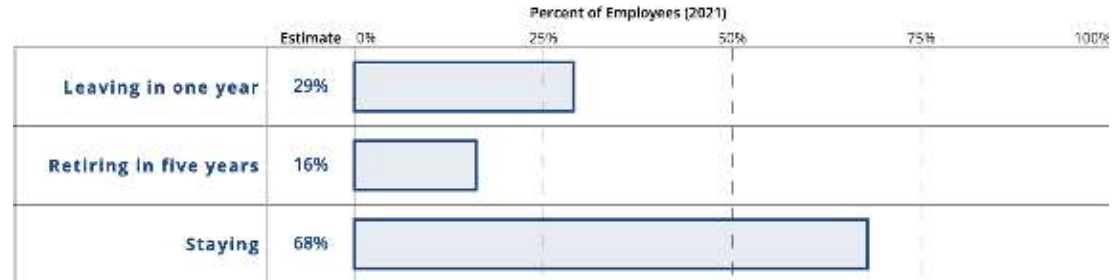
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- PH WINS respondents were asked a series of questions related to their intent to leave or stay at their agency and whether the COVID-19 pandemic affected their decision.
- Respondents were also asked to select reasons why they intend to stay or leave.

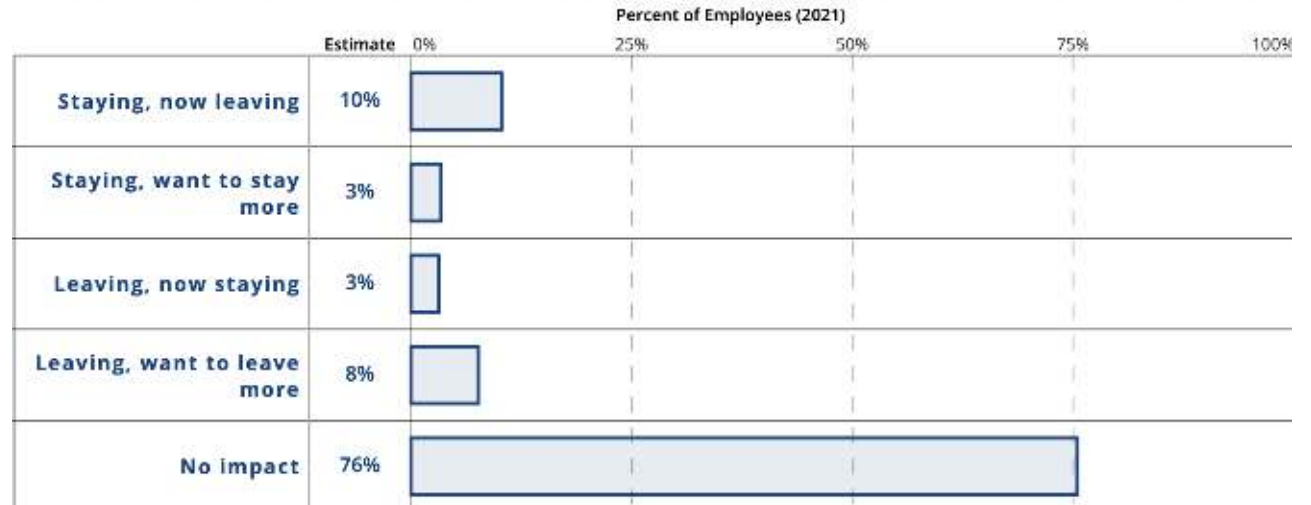
# INTENT TO LEAVE/STAY

- **More than a quarter** of environmental health workers **are considering leaving** their organization within the next year.
- 24% reported that the **COVID-19 pandemic impacted their decision** to stay or leave.
  - Among those who intend to leave, 41% said the pandemic impacted their decision (*data not shown*).

## INTENT TO LEAVE ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



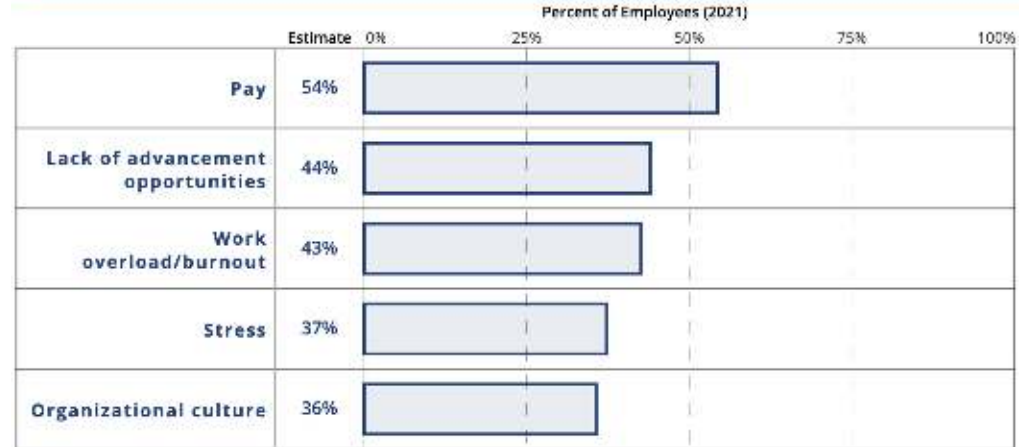
## IMPACT OF COVID ON STAYING & LEAVING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



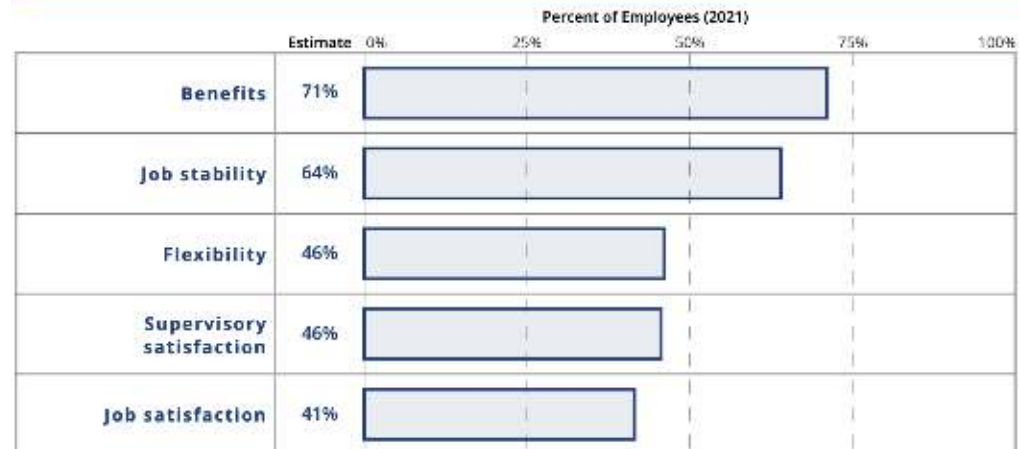
# REASONS FOR LEAVING/STAYING

- Understanding employees' reasons for leaving is critical for improving recruitment and retention.
- **Top reasons for leaving** among environmental health workers who intend to leave include:
  - **Work overload/burnout** (reported by 43%)
  - **Stress** (reported by 37%).

## REASONS FOR LEAVING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



## REASONS FOR STAYING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



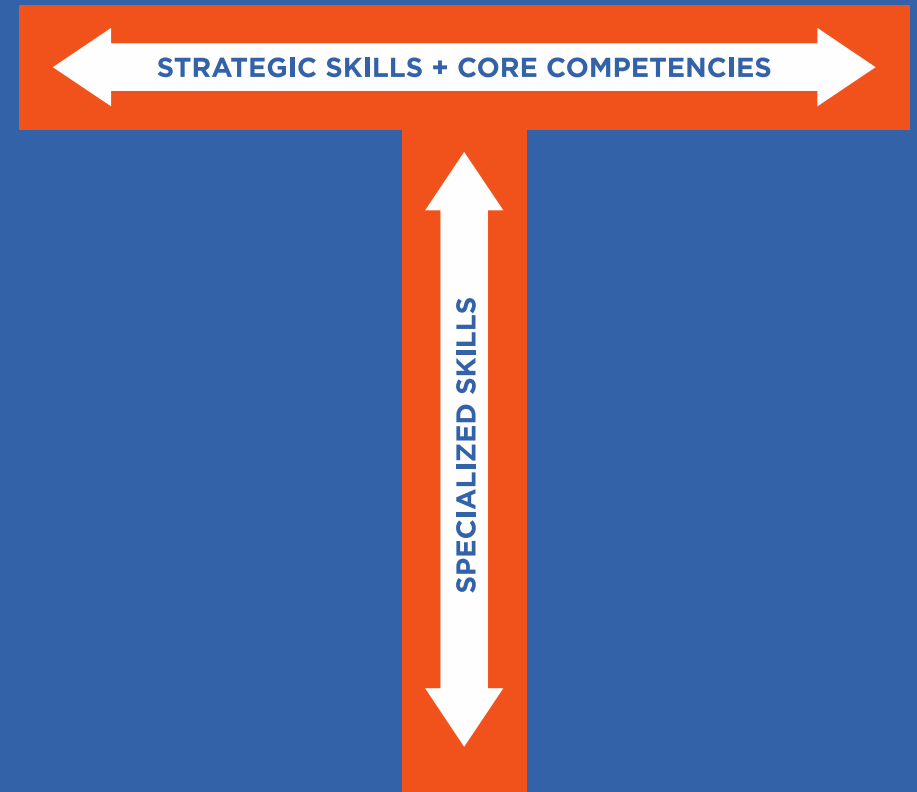
# 2021 KEY FINDINGS: TRAINING NEEDS

- PH WINS respondents were asked to rate the day-to-day importance of and their own proficiency with 25-26 skill items, tailored for their supervisory level.
- Skills were collapsed into 10 strategic skill categories.
- A **training need** is a skill item reported as having **high importance, but low proficiency**.
- Identifying training needs can help support strategies to produce T-employees, or those who have depth in technical skills and breadth in strategic skills.

**FIGURE 2.**

**The Public Health T:**  
Complementing  
Specialized Skills  
with a Cohesive  
Cross-Cutting Skill  
Framework

Note: T-shaped employees have depth in specialized skills related to a specific program or topic area (e.g., communicable disease control, environmental public health, etc.) and breadth in cross-cutting skills that include the Strategic Skills and Core Competencies.



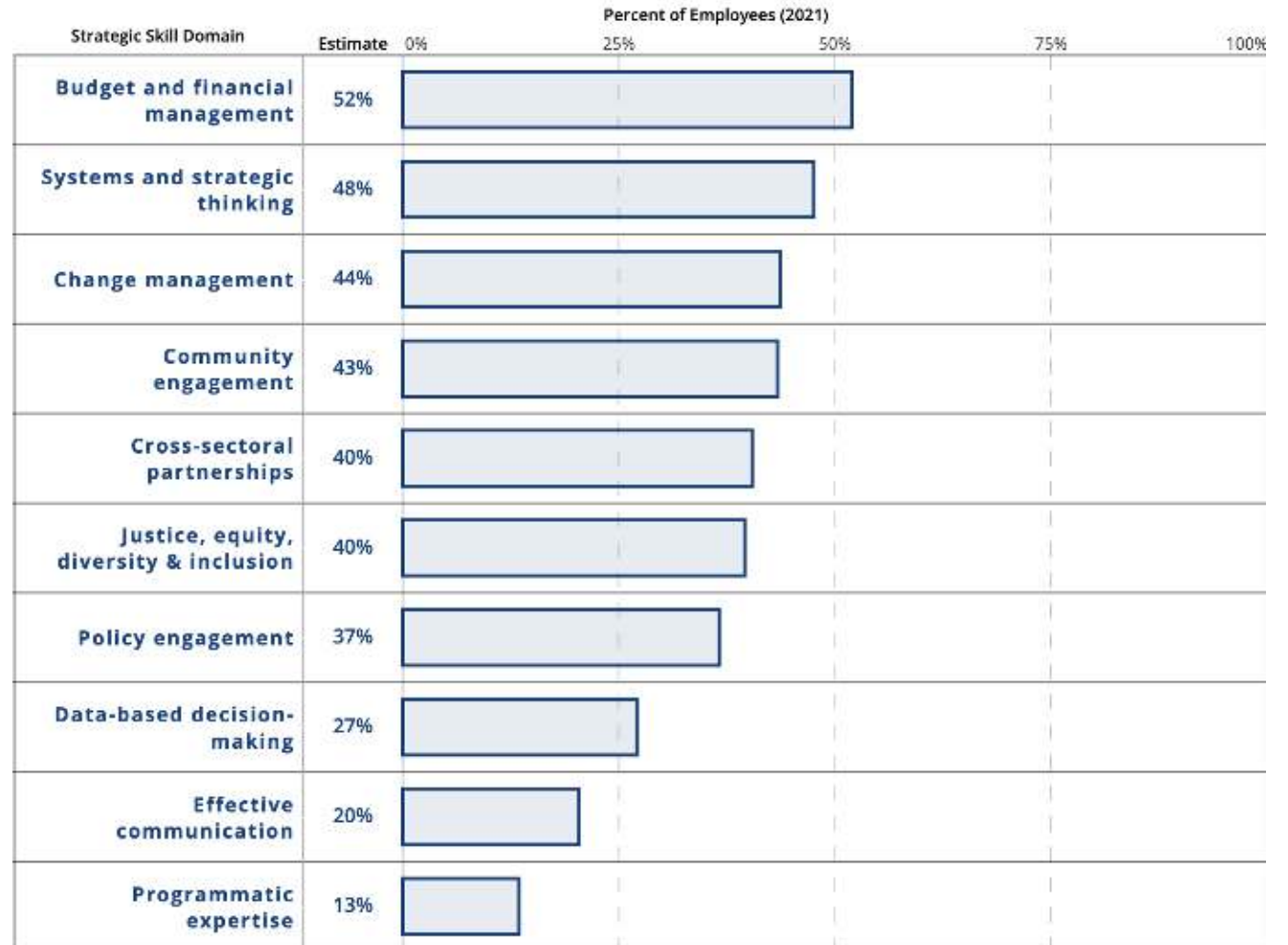
Source: de Beaumont Foundation. "Adapting and Aligning Public Health Strategic Skills,". March 2021.

# TRAINING NEEDS: OVERALL

The top 5 areas of training needs **across all supervisory levels** are:

- Budget and financial management
- Systems and strategic thinking
- Change management
- Community engagement
- Cross-sectoral partnerships

## TRAINING NEEDS ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES

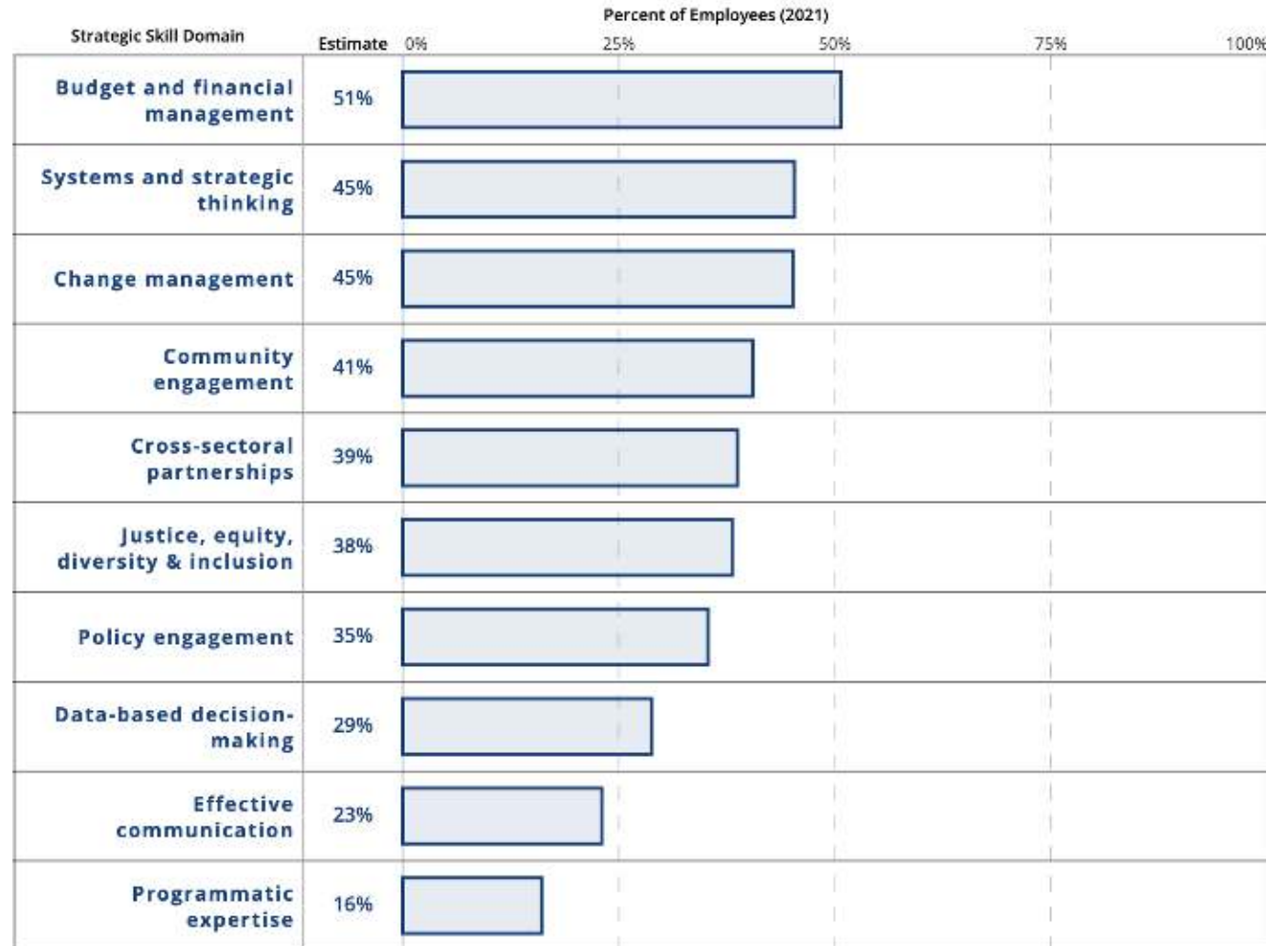


# TRAINING NEEDS: NON-SUPERVISORS

The top 5 areas of training needs **among non-supervisors** are:

- Budget and financial management
- Systems and strategic thinking
- Change management
- Community engagement
- Cross-sectoral partnerships

## TRAINING NEEDS: NON-SUPERVISORS ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



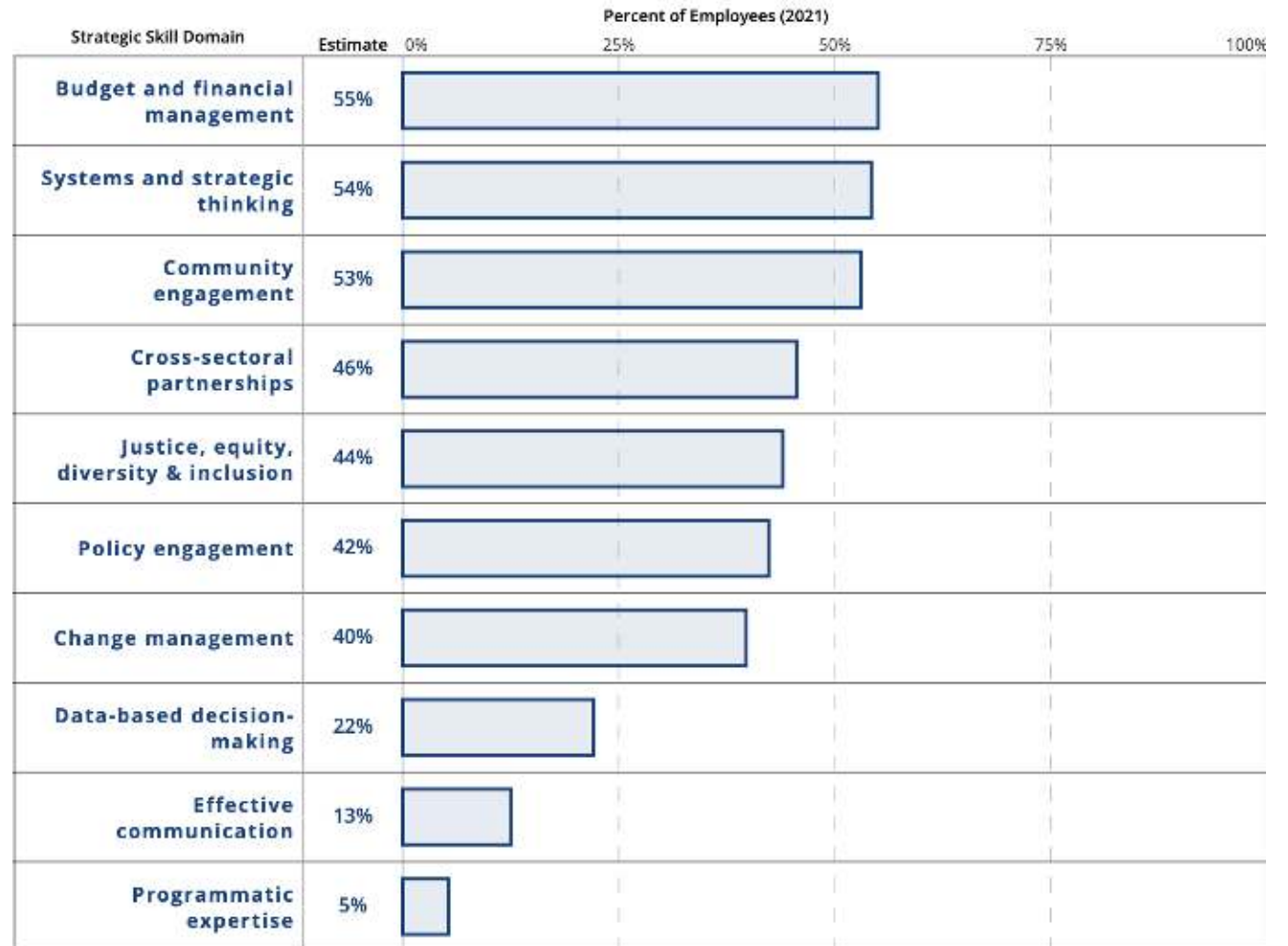


# TRAINING NEEDS: SUPERVISORS, MANAGERS, & EXECUTIVES

The top 5 areas of training needs **among supervisors, managers, & executives** are:

- Budget and financial management
- Systems and strategic thinking
- Community engagement
- Cross-sectoral partnerships
- Justice, equity, diversity, & inclusion

## TRAINING NEEDS: SUPERVISORS, MANAGERS, & EXECUTIVES ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



# 2021 KEY FINDINGS: ENGAGEMENT & SATISFACTION

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PH WINS respondents were asked to rate their agreement with several statements related to:

- Job, organizational, and pay satisfaction
- Perceptions about their workplace
- Perceptions about their supervisors
- Perceptions about their organization



# SATISFACTION

- Environmental health workers are **largely satisfied** with their **job** (75%) and **organization** (64%).
- Less than half (47%) are satisfied with their pay.

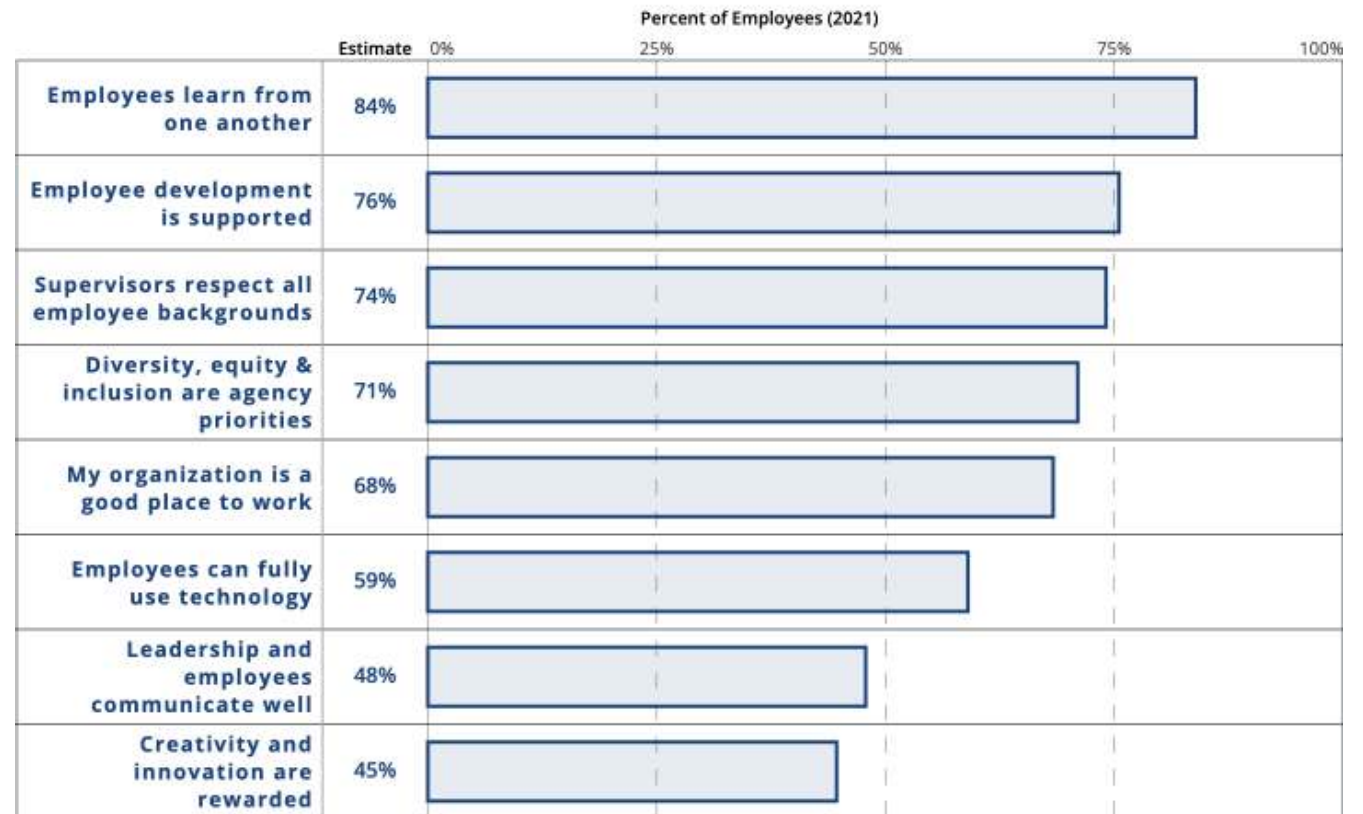
## EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



# PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ORGANIZATION

- Environmental health workers' **overall perceptions of their organizations are positive.**
- However, there is room for improvement:
  - Less than half (48%) of the workforce agrees that leadership staff and employees communicate well.
  - 45% agree that creativity and innovation are rewarded.

## PERCEPTIONS ABOUT ORGANIZATION INJURY/SUBSTANCE MISUSE: ALL EMPLOYEES



# 2021 KEY FINDINGS: WELL-BEING

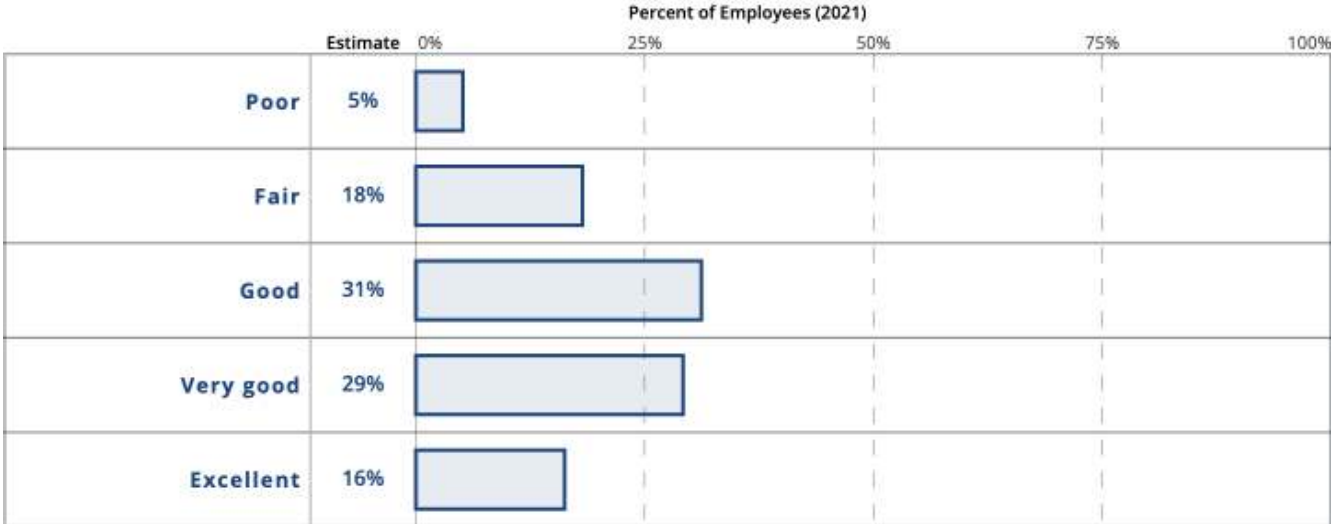
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- The 2021 PH WINS survey included questions specifically about employees' mental and emotional well-being.

# WELL-BEING

- More than 1 in 5 environmental health workers rate their mental health as either “poor” or “fair.”

## OVERALL MENTAL & EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH: ALL EMPLOYEES



# FIND OUT MORE *(delete this slide before printing or presenting!)*

- **Looking for more data and graphs?**

- This report represents only a small portion of the data that are available from the 2021 PH WINS.
- Go to the **national PH WINS Dashboard** to view more data, download graph images, and more. You can find the dashboard at [www.phwins.org/national](http://www.phwins.org/national)

- **Want to learn more about the survey?**

- Go to <https://debeaumont.org/phwins/2021-findings/> for more information about PH WINS 2021, including key findings, links to publications and survey methods.

- **Have questions?**

- Contact the PH WINS team at: [phwins@debeaumont.org](mailto:phwins@debeaumont.org)

**Click the image to go to the national PH WINS Dashboard.**

