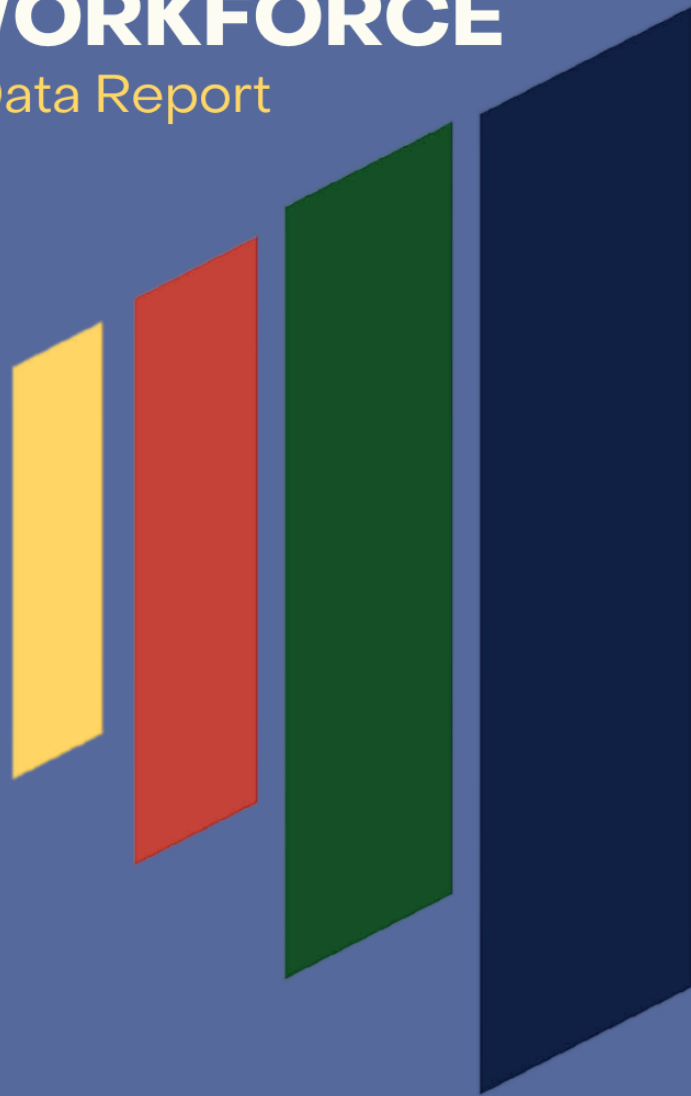


# UNDERSTANDING *the* PUBLIC HISTORY WORKFORCE

A Data Report



 **AASLH** AMERICAN ASSOCIATION  
*for STATE and LOCAL HISTORY*

March 2026

The American Association for State and Local History (AASLH), a nonprofit membership association, provides leadership and resources to help the history community thrive and tell a shared history in which everyone belongs.

### Research Team

**Project Director:** John Garrison Marks, Vice President of Research & Engagement, AASLH

**Project Manager:** Madeleine Rosenberg, Director of Research & Strategic Initiatives, AASLH



Data and research support was provided by **Kera Collective**, especially Stephanie Downey, Katie Chandler, and Amanda Krantz.

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- **Jessica Jenkins**, Litchfield Historical Society
- **Bill Peterson**, North Dakota State Historical Society
- **Cristen Piatnochka**, League of Historical Societies of New Jersey
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Pennsylvania  
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For more information about this and other AASLH research projects, visit: [aaslh.org/research](http://aaslh.org/research).

404 BNA Drive, Suite 105, Nashville, TN 37217 | (615) 320-3203 | [aaslh.org](http://aaslh.org)

## From the Project Director

Over the past several years, I've had countless conversations about workforce issues in the history field. Online and in person, at conferences and site visits, I've heard a growing number of practitioners at history museums, historic sites, and related organizations sounding the alarm about low pay, burnout, harassment, limited advancement, and the challenges of building truly inclusive workplaces.

What's struck me just as much as the frequency of these concerns is how rarely they've translated into sustained action. That's not because people don't care. I believe it's at least in part because these conversations have lacked a shared foundation. We've been relying on anecdotes, individual experiences, and vibes—all of which are real and meaningful, but they're also all too easy for funders, policymakers, board members, executive leaders, and others to dismiss or explain away.

That gap is what motivated the creation of the National Survey of History Practitioners.

In 2025, through American Association for State and Local History's (AASLH) Public History Research Lab, we launched the first national effort to systematically understand who works in the history field, how they're compensated, and how they feel about their work. We heard from nearly 3,700 practitioners across all 50 states—people working in organizations of every size and at every career stage.

This report presents what we learned. Some of the findings confirm what many practitioners already know from their own experiences. Others complicate the story in important ways. Together, the findings provide a picture of a field that is deeply passionate and committed, but also strained—by low pay, uneven workplace cultures, and systems that too often fail the people who make this work possible.

Our hope is that this research does more than describe the problem. We see our findings as a tool: something practitioners can use to advocate within their organizations, leaders can use to benchmark and reflect, and our field can use for advocacy and policy development as we chart the way forward.

This survey is not the end of the conversation. It's the beginning of a more informed one. And we at AASLH look forward to continuing this work alongside you—turning data into dialogue, and dialogue into meaningful change for the history field.

**John Garrison Marks, Ph.D.**

Vice President of Research & Engagement, AASLH



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The National Survey of History Practitioners provides the most comprehensive, up-to-date picture of the public history workforce in the United States. The survey collected voluntary responses from nearly 3,700 practitioners working in museums, historic sites, historical societies, archives, preservation organizations, and related institutions nationwide during the Spring of 2025—a time of particularly acute upheaval and uncertainty for our field. Thus, although these findings represent a snapshot of a very particular moment in our field, they nevertheless establish a critical baseline for understanding who works at public history organizations, how they are compensated, and how they feel about their work.

Overall, the data reveals a workforce that is deeply committed to its mission and motivated by the meaning of its work—but one that is also strained by low compensation, inequitable workplace experiences, limited advancement opportunities, and growing burnout. These tensions pose serious risks to equity, sustainability, and long-term capacity in the history field.

Our key findings are as follows:

- **Women comprise most of the workforce, yet gender equity remains an issue.** Women make up approximately 70 percent of the history workforce, yet they are underrepresented in senior leadership roles and are less likely than men to earn annual salaries above \$100,000.
- **The workforce lacks racial and ethnic diversity.** Among survey respondents, 89 percent identified as white. This lack of diversity is not just a pipeline issue. Black, Latino/a/x, and multiracial respondents also reported higher rates of discrimination and harassment, were more likely to say they need to hide parts of their identity at work, and were more likely to consider leaving the field because of workplace climate and low pay.
- **Practitioners overwhelmingly believe the work they do is meaningful. In our current moment, however, most also express feeling worried and frustrated.** Nine in ten respondents agreed that their work is meaningful, and many report that their work makes them feel inspired, excited, and connected to others. That is important and welcome news. Yet, when we asked respondents to select the emotions they most associate with their work, the two most popular responses were “worried” and “frustrated.”

- **The workforce is highly educated but underpaid.** Although more than two-thirds of practitioners have either a master’s degree or a doctorate, fewer than one-third of full-time staff members make more than \$80,000 per year—far less than is typical for workers in other sectors with advanced degrees. About one-quarter of history practitioners still have student loan debt, and only one-third agreed that they are paid fairly for the work they do.
- **LGBTQ+ practitioners face systemic challenges.** LGBTQ+ practitioners reported significantly higher levels of burnout, negative effects on their well-being, and limited support within their organizations. They were also more likely to feel unheard, undervalued, and unable to express their full identities, and they were less likely to recommend their workplace or feel satisfied with their career trajectory and compensation.

Greater detail on these key findings can be found in the subsequent section (and as a forthcoming stand-alone publication), which is followed by the full detail of the survey **background and methodology** (page 14) and findings related to **demographics** (page 17), **compensation** (page 43), and **worker sentiment** (page 50).

Taken together, our findings reveal that the history workforce is passionate, skilled, and deeply invested in public service, but current conditions may threaten the field’s long-term sustainability. Low compensation, inequitable advancement, uneven accountability, and hostile workplace environments collectively contribute to dissatisfaction, burnout, and potential attrition.

This research provides clear evidence that improving workforce conditions and building a stronger, more sustainable history community will require coordinated action by organizations, professional associations, funders, boards, and policymakers. Addressing compensation, strengthening workplace culture, expanding pathways to leadership, and supporting the well-being of practitioners—especially those from historically marginalized communities—are not peripheral concerns. They are central to the future of the history field itself.



# KEY TAKEAWAYS

**The National Survey of History Practitioners establishes a foundation of knowledge about history practitioner demographics and workforce conditions in the United States in 2025.** Importantly, the results serve as a baseline of knowledge about the state of the field for history practitioners. AASLH plans to use the results to spark conversations among practitioners and guide strategic efforts to improve workplace standards and equity.

<b>01</b>	The history field workforce is predominantly women, but women are underrepresented in leadership roles and experience pay disparity.
<b>02</b>	Racial and ethnic diversity is lower among history practitioners than other similar fields; many factors could be at play, but two that arose in this study are workplace harassment and workplace culture.
<b>03</b>	History workers are passionate and find deep meaning in their work; at the same time, they feel worried and frustrated about their work and the field.
<b>04</b>	History practitioners are highly educated, but their pay is not commensurate to that of other US workers with the same educational attainment. This has broad implications, as well as specific barriers to BIPOC practitioners.
<b>05</b>	Survey data reveals that LGBTQ+ history practitioners are facing vast challenges.

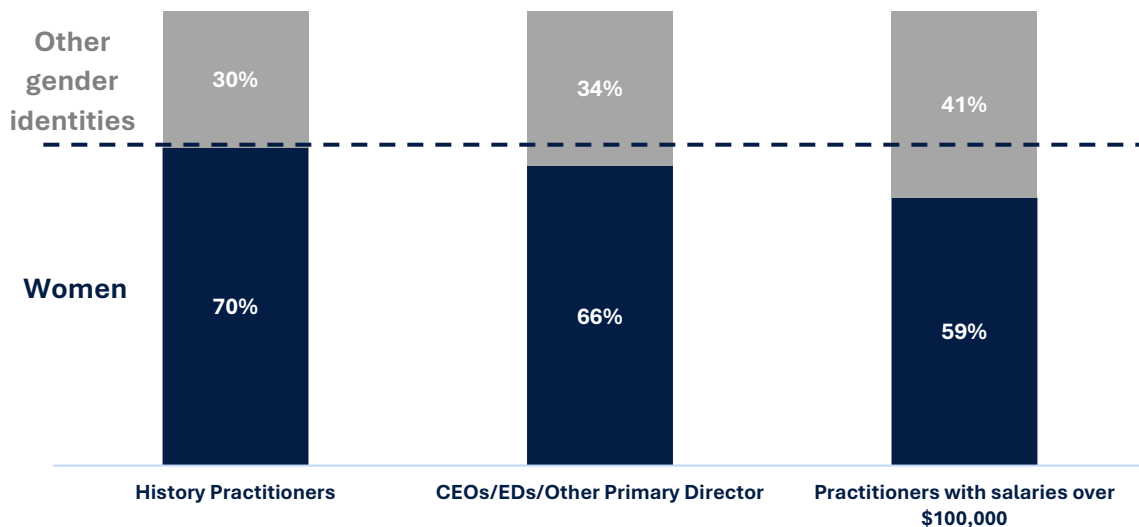
# 01

## The history workforce is predominantly women, but women are underrepresented in leadership roles and experience pay disparity.

The National Survey of History Practitioners found that over two-thirds (70 percent) of practitioners identify as women, one-quarter (26 percent) identify as men, and a small proportion identified as non-binary or another gender identity (2 percent). This gender breakdown is similar to recent findings for art museum practitioners (66 percent women) and archivists (71 percent women).<sup>1</sup>

While most history practitioners are women, the survey results show statistically significant underrepresentation of women in leadership roles, such as CEO, executive directors, or other primary director positions—where 66 percent are women. Moreover, women are statistically less likely than men to be paid over \$100,000 in annual salary, with women comprising just 59 percent of such earners. These two factors align with women’s two primary reasons for considering leaving the history field: low pay and lack of opportunities for growth and advancement.

**Women make up 70% of history practitioners but make up 66% of CEOs, EDs, and other primary directors, and 59% of practitioners with annual salaries over \$100,000.**



The disparity in women in leadership roles is not a problem unique to the history field, but it is concerning that, in a field otherwise dominated by women, leadership structures and

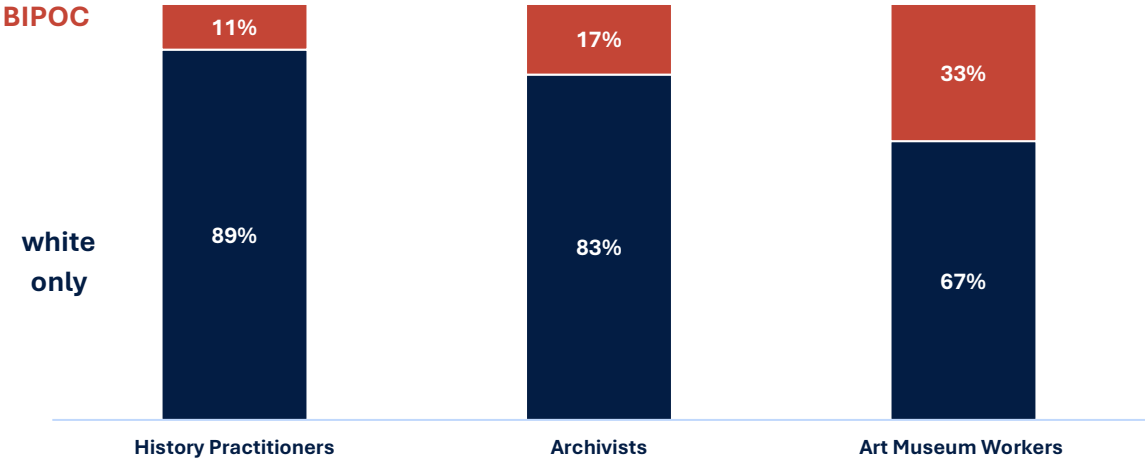
<sup>1</sup> Levine, Liz; Mia Locks; and Hannah Marshall. *Workplace Equity and Organizational Culture in US Art Museums: 2025 Report*. New York: Museums Moving Forward, 2025. [2] Skinner, Makala, and Ioana G. Hulbert. *ACENSUS II All Archivists Survey Report*. Ithaca S+R, August 22, 2022

compensation patterns do not reflect this reality.<sup>2</sup> Importantly, this data establishes a baseline we can use to measure change and progress as a field.

**02 Racial and ethnic diversity is lower among history practitioners than other similar fields; many factors could be at play, but two that arose in this study are workplace harassment and workplace culture.**

The National Survey of History Practitioners found that most practitioners (89 percent) identify as white, and 11 percent identify with other races or ethnicities or chose not to identify. Looking at workforce surveys in similar fields, the field of history practitioners is less diverse. Among art museum staff, 67 percent identify as white (–22 percent difference).<sup>3</sup> The history field is more aligned with racial and ethnic demographics among archivists, where 84 percent identify as white (–5 percent difference). However, among the younger generation (ages 13–28) there is more racial and ethnic diversity—83 percent identify as white, compared to 89 percent among practitioners 29 and older—suggesting perhaps the demographics may be shifting.

**The history field is less diverse than similar fields, such as archives and art museums.**



There are some workplace challenges specific to BIPOC individuals that are worth paying attention to as the history field works toward building a more diverse and inclusive

<sup>2</sup> See, for example: Elsesser, Kim. “The CEO Gender Gap: What the Lack of Female Leaders Means for All Working Women.” *Forbes*, October 4, 2024. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/kimelsesser/2024/10/04/the-ceo-gender-gap-what-the-lack-of-female-leaders-means-for-all-working-women/>

<sup>3</sup> Before analysis, we transformed the race/ethnicity variables from a “select all” to a “select one” response, creating a new category for participants who selected more than one race or ethnicity. This data is from the “select one” response format, meaning 89% identified as only white (without selecting any other race/ethnicities).

workforce.<sup>4</sup> For example, Black or African American practitioners and Latino/a/x or Hispanic practitioners were more likely to report experiencing discrimination or harassment from others at their history organization and members of the public. Moreover, Black or African American participants were more likely to agree that they have to hide some of who they are in their organization. And, Latino/a/x or Hispanic practitioners were more likely to say that they are considering leaving the field in the next five years—over half (55 percent) said the reason they are considering leaving is low pay.

The data above suggests the lack of diversity in the history field is not just a recruitment pipeline issue. Changing workplace climate and culture will be key to any efforts to diversify the field.

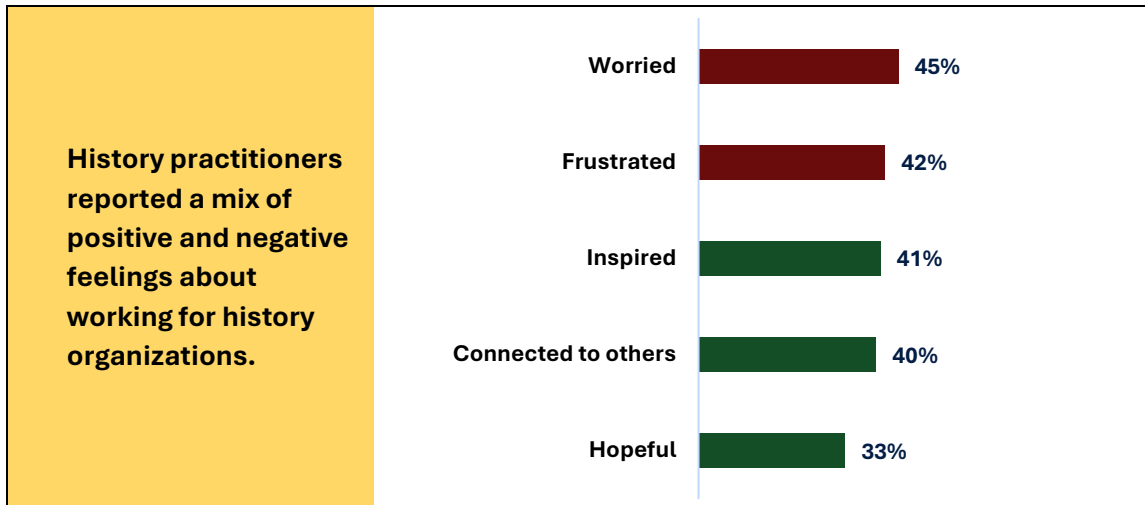
### **03 History workers are passionate and find deep meaning in their work. At the same time, they feel worried and frustrated about their work and the field.**

Many practitioners are drawn to the field by their passion for history. This is reflected in their perspectives about the personal value and meaning of their work. For example, 90 percent of practitioners agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I believe what I do here is meaningful,” and 86 percent agreed or strongly agreed with the statement “I am excited by the work that I do.” Moreover, “inspired,” “connected to others,” and “hopeful” were among the top five emotions practitioners associated with working for history organizations in the past 12 months. Together, this data suggests that in many ways, practitioners feel positive about the work they are doing at history organizations.

However, the data also shows that these positive aspects are in tension with negative perspectives and experiences. The top two emotions practitioners associated with working for history organizations in the past 12 months were “worried” and “frustrated.” Among the primary concerns for practitioners were low pay, burnout, and lack of opportunities for growth and/or advancement. These factors led 8 percent of practitioners to say they are considering leaving the field in the next five years while 29 percent said they were “not sure” if they will. For comparison, half of practitioners responded that they do not plan to leave, while 14 percent will leave due to retirement.

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<sup>4</sup> We use “BIPOC,” to refer to any participant who self-identified as Asian or Asian American; Black or African American; Latino/a/x or Hispanic; Middle Eastern or North African; Native American/American Indian/Alaska Native; Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander; or multiple races or ethnicities.

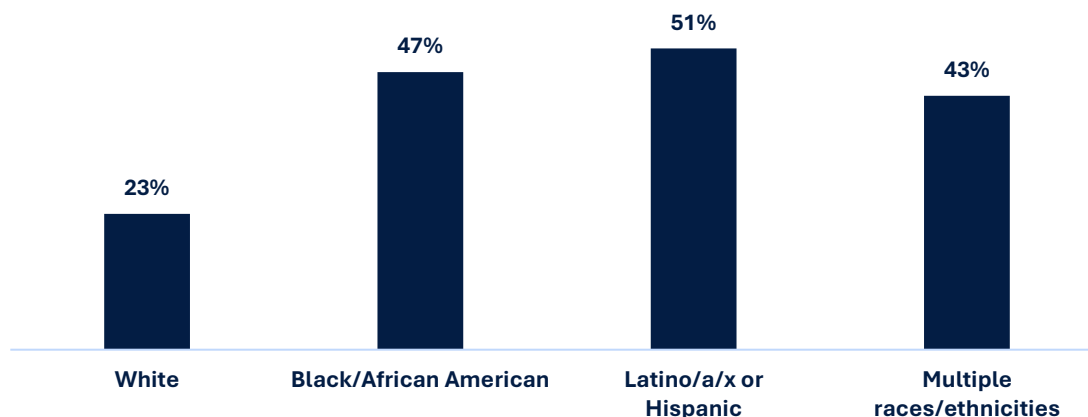


History practitioners are at a crossroads—they are deeply committed to their work, yet they are strained by challenges within their organizations and the field at large. The field needs to think carefully about ways to address the drivers of worry, frustration, and potential attrition and shift the balance toward a more positive and supportive work environment.

## **04** History practitioners are highly educated, but their pay is not commensurate to that of other U.S. workers with the same educational attainment. This has broad implications as well as specific barriers to BIPOC practitioners.

Over two-thirds (70 percent) of history practitioners have a master’s or doctoral degree. That education comes at a cost—nearly two-thirds of history practitioners (62 percent) took out student loans for their education, and one-quarter of practitioners (24 percent) still have current student loan debt to pay off. Student loan debt disproportionately affects BIPOC practitioners, with Black or African American, Latino/a/x or Hispanic, and practitioners who identify with multiple races and ethnicities more likely to hold current student loans.

## Student loan debt disproportionately affects history practitioners of color.



The ability to pay off student loans hinges in part on individuals' compensation. In the United States, the median annual salary across sectors for workers with a master's degree is about \$95,000.<sup>5</sup> In the history field, the majority of practitioners with a master's degree make an annual salary between \$40,000 to \$79,999, meaning history practitioners do not get the same financial return on their degree compared to other fields. This does not go unnoticed by practitioners. Only one-third agree that they are paid fairly for the work they do, and practitioners who are considering leaving the field cited low pay as the top reason.

Current compensation levels in the history field threaten both equity and workforce sustainability, given the field's apparent expectations for a master's degree. In what ways can AASLH, history organizations, funders, and practitioners work together to address the problem of low pay in the history field?

## 05 Survey data reveals that LGBTQ+ history practitioners are facing vast challenges.

When asked questions about their workplace culture and satisfaction, there were statistically significant *negative* differences in LGBTQ+ experiences compared to practitioners who do not identify as LGBTQ+. LGBTQ+ practitioners reported significantly higher levels of burnout, negative effects on their well-being, and limited support within their organizations. They are also more likely to feel unheard, undervalued, and unable to express their full identities, and less likely to recommend their workplace or feel satisfied with their career trajectory and compensation.

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<sup>5</sup> U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. "Education Pays, 2024." *Career Outlook*, May 2025. <https://www.bls.gov/careeroutlook/2025/data-on-display/education-pays.htm>

LGBTQ+ history practitioners are...	
<p><b>MORE LIKELY to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Feel burned out</li> <li>• Feel like they don't have a voice in decision making</li> <li>• Feel like their workplace negatively affects their mental/physical health</li> <li>• Feel that they have to hide some of who they are at their workplace</li> <li>• Believe that diversity and inclusion are not celebrated at their workplace</li> </ul>	<p><b>LESS LIKELY to:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recommend their workplace to friends/family</li> <li>• Agree that people in their organization are held accountable for discrimination/harassment</li> <li>• Feel valued by their employer</li> <li>• Feel satisfied with their career</li> <li>• Feel satisfied with their compensation/salary</li> </ul>

Collectively, these disparities point to clear issues in workplace culture, accountability, and support structures for LGBTQ+ practitioners that require further attention and action.

# FULL TECHNICAL REPORT





# STUDY BACKGROUND

## Project Overview

In Spring 2025, the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) launched the **National Survey of History Practitioners** to fill a critical knowledge gap in the field. Despite the importance of history work in civic life, there is no recent national dataset about the people who do this work at museums, historic sites, preservation organizations, and related institutions.

To address this gap, AASLH designed a survey to better understand who works in the public history field, how they are compensated, and how they feel about their work. Drawing inspiration—and, with permission, sometimes specific questions—from parallel surveys such as the [A\\*Census II: All Archivists Survey](#) and [Museums Moving Forward Survey](#), AASLH worked closely with a project advisory committee to finalize the questionnaire in early spring 2025. AASLH fielded the survey for eight weeks from April through June 2025 via its newsletter, cross-promotions with other history and museum organizations, and a targeted print mailing.

After collecting the data, AASLH contracted Kera Collective to analyze the responses and identify key takeaways. The insights generated by this data analysis can serve as a baseline of knowledge about the state of the field for history practitioners and a benchmark for comparison with other sectors and the US workforce at large. We also hope it will activate conversations and action related to the history workforce, as well as guide strategic efforts to improve workplace standards and equity.

## Research Objectives

The main objectives of the survey analysis were:

- **To create a baseline of information** about the roles, demographics, compensation, and perspectives of people working as employees or volunteers at history organizations, including history museums, historic sites, historical societies, and related organizations
- **To explore relationships among variables** that illuminate patterns, challenges, and opportunities in the history workforce, including issues of diversity and equity in the field (e.g., gender, race/ethnicity, etc.).

- **To contextualize and compare results to similar studies**, such as Museums Moving Forward and the A\*Census, which have relevant audiences and used a similar survey instrument, and other relevant studies.
- **To activate interest and conversation** in the field about the state of the history workforce that prompt action.

### Data Collection Context

AASLH launched the online survey in spring 2025, sharing it online through the AASLH mailing list and more broadly across history organizations' networks. The survey was open for eight weeks from April through June 2025 and collected 3,699 responses from staff, contractors, and volunteers in all 56 states and U.S. territories. As is typical for online surveys, most responses were collected at the beginning of the data collection window (49 percent of surveys were collected in April) and fewer each month thereafter (40 percent in May, and 11 percent in June).

### Analysis and Reporting

The select-response questions produced numerical data to be analyzed quantitatively. Open-ended responses produced qualitative data that was coded into categories by theme to allow for quantitative analysis. Quantitative data was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics.

Analyses include:

- Frequency distributions (e.g., percent of respondents by age)
- Inferential statistics such as:
- Cross-tabulations to show the joint frequency distribution of the variables, and the chi-square statistic ( $\chi^2$ ) to test the significance of the relationship. For example, perceptions of workplace culture were compared by gender identity to determine any gender differences.
- Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed, and the F-statistic was used to examine the statistical significance of the difference between categorical groups and continuous measures. For example, the number of benefits practitioners reported was compared by visitors' ratings on the survey scales were compared by age categories to determine whether responses differed by age.

A 0.01 level of significance ( $p$ ) was employed to preclude findings of little practical significance. When the level of significance is set to  $p = 0.01$ , any finding that exists at a probability ( $p$ -value)  $\leq 0.01$  is "significant." When a finding (such as a relationship between two variables) has a  $p$ -value of 0.01, there is a 99 percent probability that the finding exists; that is, in 99 out of 100 cases, the finding is correct. Conversely, there is a 1 percent

probability that the finding would not exist; in other words, in 1 out of 100 cases, the finding appears by chance.

Statistically significant findings from the quantitative data are reported in the Findings sections of this report. Data was analyzed for statistical significance against the following variables:

- Age
- Gender
- Race/Ethnicity<sup>6</sup>
- LGBTQ+ community
- Disability
- Education Level
- Field of Highest Degree
- Region

This section provides an initial analysis of all survey data, including summary statistics and inferential statistics to explore relationships among variables.

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<sup>6</sup> There were not enough cases in the sample to run inferential statistics on the following race/ethnicities: Middle Eastern or North African/Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander.



## RESEARCH FINDINGS

# Who works in the history field?

## DEMOGRAPHICS

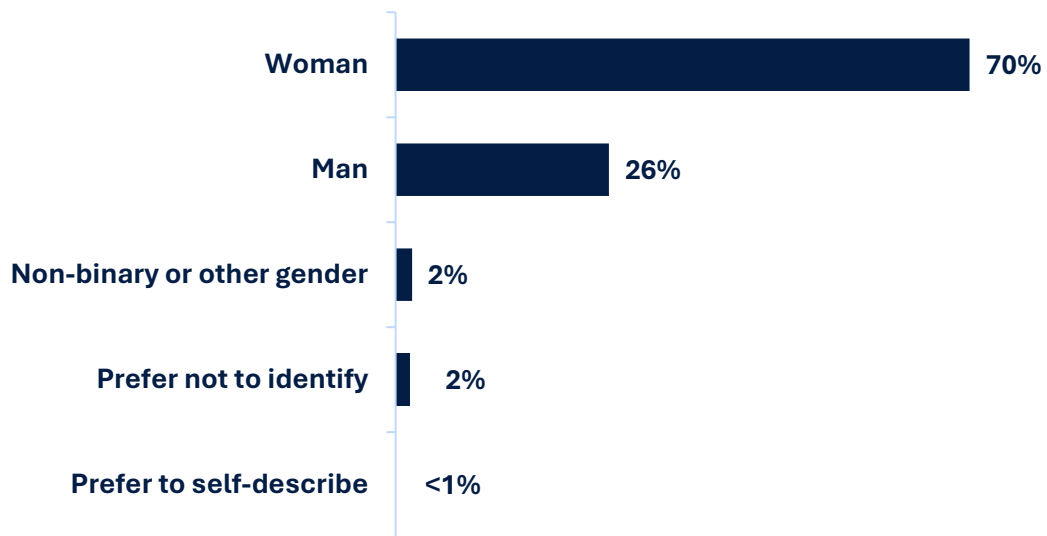
The survey asked respondents several questions about their individual identity and demographics, including age, gender, and race or ethnicity.

*Please note: the analysis that follows highlights where the data revealed a “statistically significant” relationship between two variables. In this context, “significant” means that the correlation between two variables in our dataset is not due to random chance. Some of these relationships seem obvious, while others are more surprising—or puzzling.*

*Ultimately, determining how “significant” these statistical relationships are in the “real world” is a more subjective determination, one we hope will be a topic for conversation following the publication of this report. A list of all statistically significant relationships can be found in the appendix.*

## GENDER IDENTITY

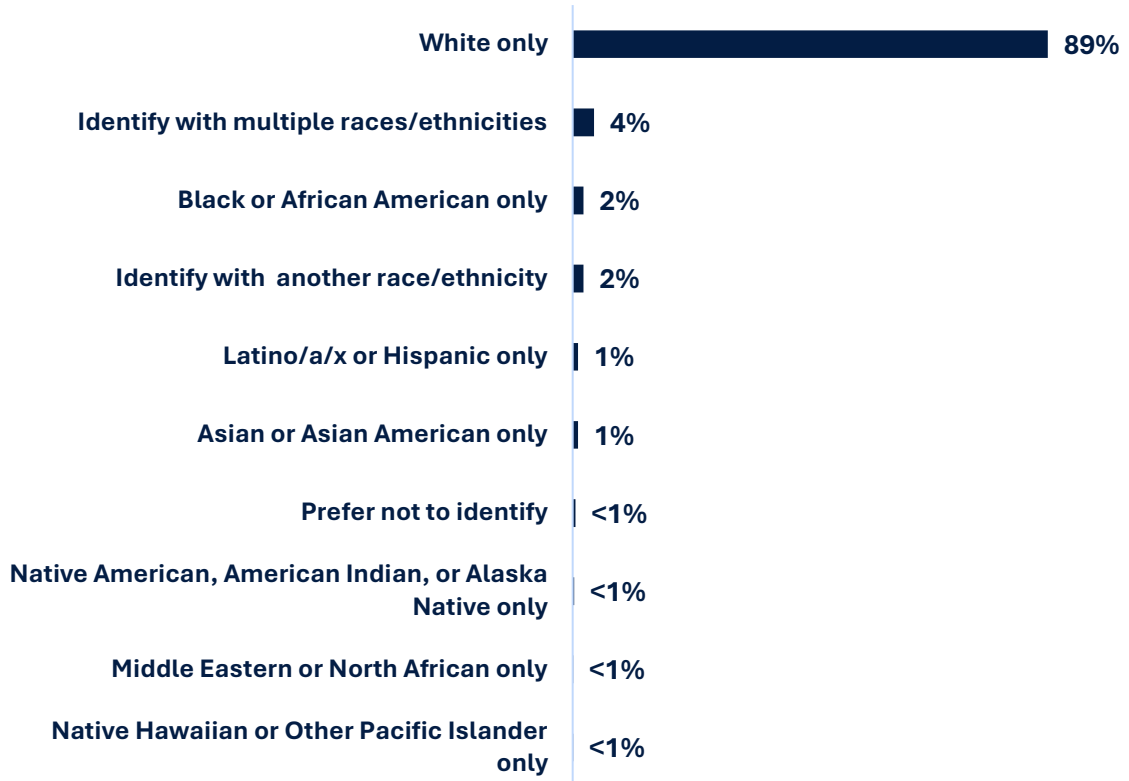
Nearly three-quarters of history practitioners identify as women. (n=3,699)



The survey asked participants about their gender identity; participants could choose one of five response options, including to self-describe or not identify. Most participants identify as women (70 percent), one-quarter identify as men (26 percent), smaller proportions identify as non-binary or another gender (2 percent), preferred not to identify (2 percent), or preferred to self-describe (less than 1 percent).

## RACE OR ETHNICITY

Most history practitioners identify as white. (n = 3,699)



The survey also asked participants about their race or ethnicity; participants could choose from eight response options, including to self-describe or not identify, and they were invited to select all that apply.<sup>7</sup> Most participants identify as white only (89 percent). A smaller proportion identify with multiple races/ethnicities (4 percent) or another race or ethnicity as presented below.

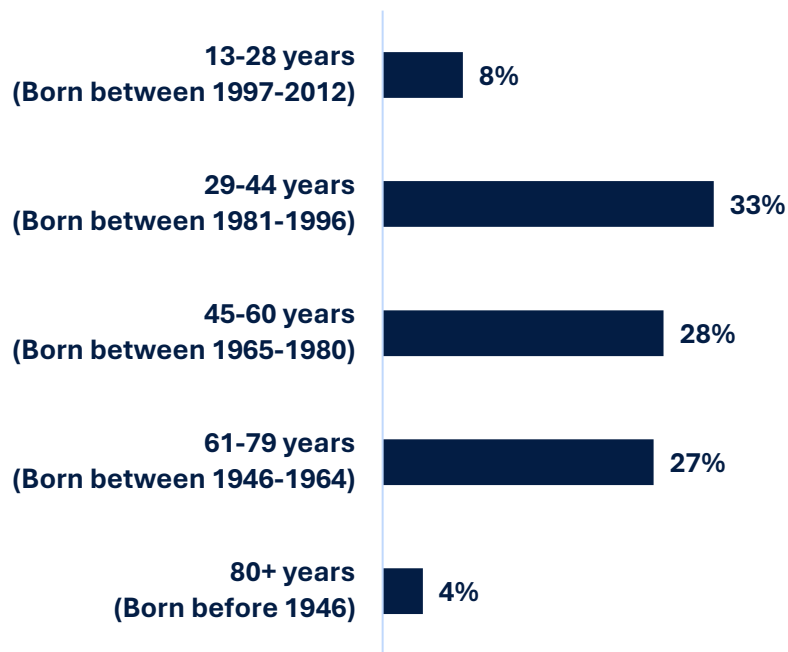
The data also revealed that respondents who identified as Latino/a/x or Hispanic were **more likely** to identify as non-binary or another gender identity, and **less likely** to identify as men.

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<sup>7</sup> Before analysis, we transformed the variable from a select all to a select one response, creating a new category for participants who selected more than one race or ethnicity. See the Appendix for results in select-all format.

## AGE

History practitioners vary widely in age. (n=3,699)



The survey asked participants to identify the year range they were born, and they were provided five response options by birth year. Participants vary in age, with most participants identifying their age in the middle age ranges (33 percent are 29–44 years, 28 percent are 45–60 years, and 27 percent are 61–79 years) and with few participants identifying in the youngest and oldest age categories (8 percent are 13–28 years, and 4 percent are 80+ years).

Two variables have a statistically significant relationship to age. First, men were **more likely** to be in an older age group (age 61–79), while participants who identify as women, non-binary, or another gender identity were **more likely** to be in a younger age bracket (under 45 years old). Second, Latino/a/x or Hispanic respondents were **more likely** to be under 45 years old.

The tables below provide more detail about these statistically significant relationships related to practitioner age. For example, it shows that 91 percent of respondents who identify as non-binary or a gender other than “man” or “woman” are under 45 years old. Likewise, 37 percent of all respondents who identify as men are between 61 and 79 years old. In viewing these tables, please note that cells shaded GREEN indicate a relationship that is “more likely” (e.g., practitioners who are aged 29–44 are more likely to identify as women, non-binary or another gender identity) and RED indicates a relationship that is

“less likely” (e.g., practitioners aged 29–44 years are less likely to identify as men). Cells without shading did not reach the bar required for statistical significance.

**Percentage of respondents in each age range, by gender identity**

*Example: “26 percent of respondents who identify as men are between 29 and 44 years old.”*

Age Range	Woman	Man	Non-binary or another gender
13–28 years	8%	6%	38%
29–44 years	35%	26%	53%
45–60 years	29%	26%	6%
61–79 years	24%	37%	4%
80+ years	4%	5%	0%

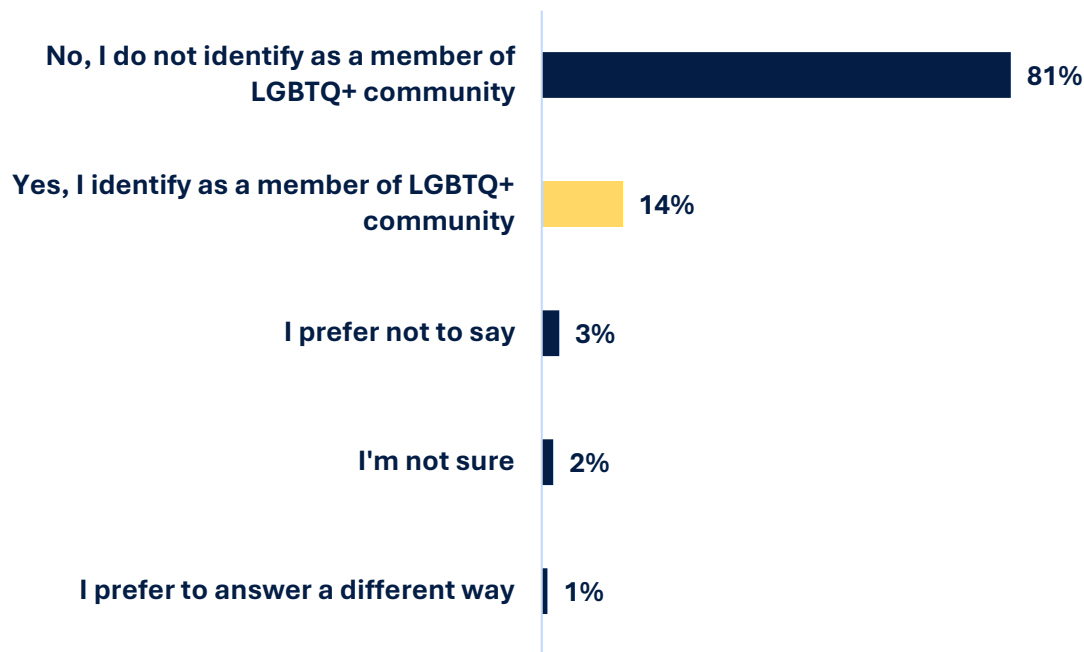
**Percentage of respondents in each age range, by race/ethnicity**

*Example: “20 percent of respondents who identify with multiple race/ethnicities are between 13 and 28 years old.”*

Age Range	white	Black/ African American	Latino/a/x or Hispanic	Asian/ Asian American	Multiple races/ ethnicities
13–28 years	8%	10%	23%	15%	20%
29–44 years	33%	29%	52%	39%	48%
45–60 years	27%	33%	18%	25%	17%
61–79 years	27%	26%	6%	15%	12%
80+ years	4%	2%	1%	6%	3%

## LGBTQ+ IDENTITY

About 1 in 7 history practitioners identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community. (n=3,699)



The survey asked participants if they identify as part of the LGBTQ+ community; they were invited to choose one response from five response options, including to self-describe or not identify. About 1 in 7 participants (14 percent) identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community,<sup>8</sup> and a few preferred not to say (3 percent), were not sure (2 percent), or preferred to answer a different way (1 percent).<sup>9</sup>

Analysis also found that practitioners under 45 years old were **more likely** to identify as a member of the LGBTQ+ community.

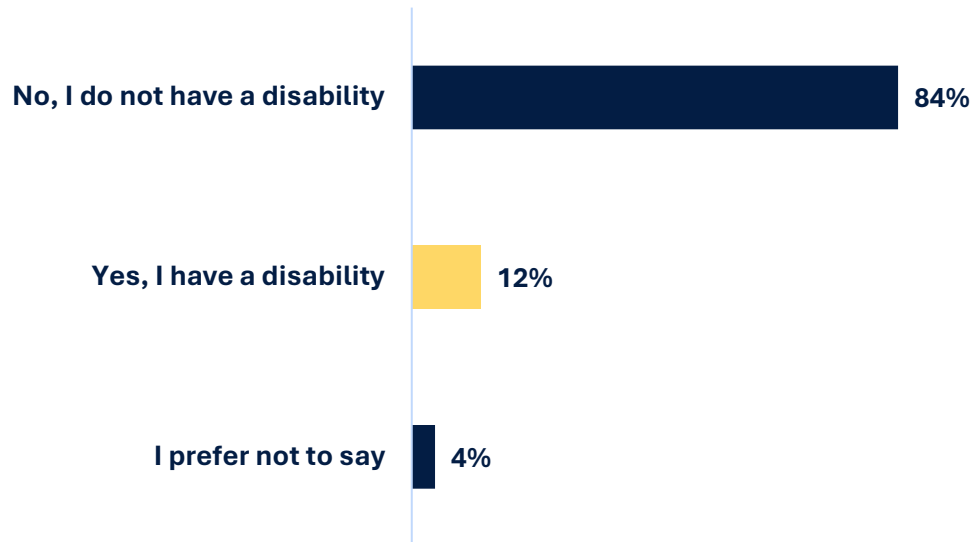
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<sup>8</sup> Note that a 2025 Gallup poll estimated that 9 percent of the US population identifies as LGBTQ. See: <https://news.gallup.com/poll/656708/lgbtq-identification-rises.aspx>

<sup>9</sup> Of those who selected "I prefer to answer a different way," responses were mainly a mix of those saying they identify as allies to the LGBTQ+ community, or they felt the question was irrelevant or inappropriate.

## DISABILITY

About 1 in 8 history practitioners identify as having a disability. (n=3,699)



The survey asked participants if they have a disability and invited them to choose from three response options, including to not identify. About 1 in 8 participants (12 percent) identified as having a disability. Most (84 percent) said they did not have a disability, and a small proportion (4 percent) preferred not to say.<sup>10</sup>

The data revealed three variables with a statistically significant relationship to disability. Practitioners who identify as **non-binary or another gender identity**, who are **under age 45**, or who identify as a **member of the LGBTQ+ community** all were **more likely** to report having a disability.

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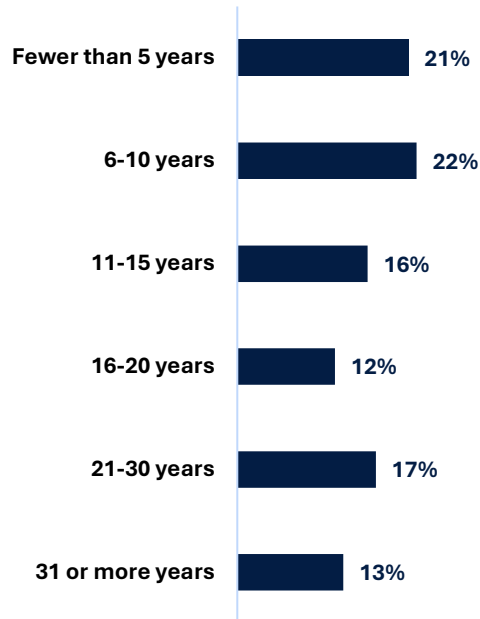
<sup>10</sup> Data collected by the US Census Bureau as part of the [2024 American Community Survey](#), indicate 14 percent of the [general population](#) identifies as having a disability. Employment statistics from the 2017 [US Census Bureau](#) and [2024 Bureau of Labor Statistics](#) indicate that 4-6 percent of all [workers](#) report having a disability. Ambulatory and hearing difficulties were the most reported type of disability. The percents in this survey are much higher, but are more aligned with the results from [Museums Moving Forward](#), in which 24% of workers reported having a disability, and many of these are Millennials. [Other research](#) points to a growing disability rate among young adults who identify as neurodivergent."

## WORK CONTEXT

The survey asked respondents about their work history and current job in the history field, including years working in the history field, work status, position type, position level, promotion history, and union membership.

### YEARS IN HISTORY FIELD

**History practitioners vary widely in their years of experience.** (n=3,496)



The survey asked participants how long they have worked in the history field, and they were invited to select one response from six response options.<sup>11</sup> Nearly one-half (43 percent) have worked in the history field for 10 years or less. One-quarter (28 percent) have worked in the history field for 11 to 20 years. One-third (30 percent) have worked in the history field for over 20 years.

Many variables have a statistical relationship to years in the history field. For example, participants who have worked in the history field for **fewer than 10 years** were **more likely** to:

- Identify as women, non-binary, or another gender identity
- Identify as Asian or Asian American or Latino/a/x or Hispanic
- Be younger than 45 years old
- Report having a disability

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<sup>11</sup> Note that the way this survey question was worded, someone who has worked in the field for 5 would have had to choose between “fewer than 5 years” or “6–10 years” because no answer choice included 5 years.

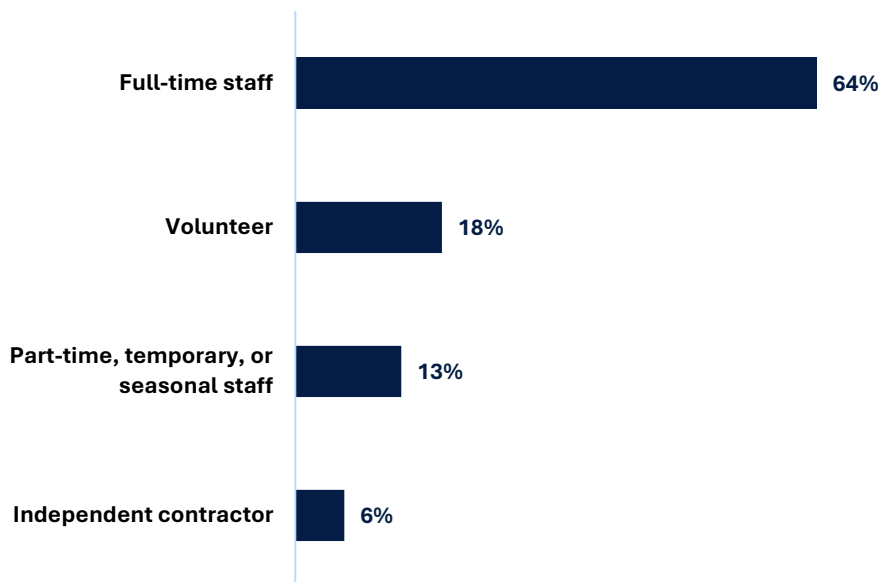
- Identify as LGBTQ+
- Have a bachelor’s degree
- Currently have student loans

Meanwhile, participants who have worked in the history field for **11–20 years** are **more likely** to be aged 29–44 and to have had their student loans paid off or forgiven. Finally, respondents who have worked in the history field for **over 20 years** are **more likely** to:

- Identify as men
- Identify as white
- Have a doctoral degree
- Have their highest degree in history
- Have their student loans paid off or forgiven or to have never had student loans

## WORK STATUS

**Most history practitioners work full-time positions.** (n=3,496)



The survey asked participants to identify their current role with a history organization, and they were invited to select one response from four response options. Two-thirds (64 percent) of participants reported they currently held a full-time position at their organization. One-fifth (18 percent) work in volunteer roles. Smaller proportions work in part-time, temporary, or seasonal positions (13 percent) or as independent contractors (6 percent).

Many variables have a statistically significant relationship to work status. For example, respondents who are **full-time staff** were **more likely** to:

- Identify as women
- Be aged 29–60
- Identify as LGBTQ+
- Have a master’s degree
- Have their highest degree in library and information science, museum studies, public history, or history
- Currently have student loans
- Work at an organization located in the South

Participants who are **volunteers** were **more likely** to:

- Identify as men
- Be over 60 years old
- Have a high school diploma, some college, associate’s degree, or bachelor’s degree
- Have never had student loans
- Volunteer at an organization in the West or Northeast

Participants who are **part-time staff** were **more likely** to:

- Identify as women, non-binary, or another gender identity
- Be aged 13–28
- Report having a disability
- Have a bachelor’s degree or below

Finally, participants who are **independent contractors** were more likely to:

- Identify as men
- Be over 60 years old
- Have a doctoral degree

## JOB CATEGORY

Over one-half of history practitioners report work that involves collections and research. (n=3,496)



The survey asked participants to identify the job category which their current position falls within, and they were invited to select all that apply from nine response options, including to self-describe. Note that nearly one-half (48 percent) reported that their role includes responsibilities across two or more categories. The most common job category was Collections and Research (56 percent), followed by Leadership and Administration (42 percent) and Education and Interpretation (41 percent). One-third (35 percent) work in Visitor Experience and Community Engagement, and one-quarter (23 percent) work in Marketing and Communications. One-fifth (19 percent) work in Membership and Development. Smaller proportions work in Operations and Facilities (15 percent), Field Services (7 percent), or selected the Other<sup>12</sup> category (5 percent). See the survey instrument in the Appendices for expanded descriptions of each job category.

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<sup>12</sup> Some of the most common job categories reported in the Other category include contractor or consultant, volunteer, retail or restaurant, or board member.

Many variables have a statistically significant relationship to job category. For example, respondents who are working in **Collections and Research** were **more likely** to:

- Identify as women, non-binary, or another gender identity
- Be aged 13–28
- Have a master’s degree
- Have their highest degree in library and information science or history
- Have a volunteer position

Respondents who are working in **Leadership and Administration** were **more likely** to:

- Identify as men
- Be 45 years or older
- Have a high school diploma, some college, or associate’s degree, or a doctorate (less likely to have a bachelor’s or master’s degree)
- Have their student loans paid off or forgiven or to have never had student loans
- Have a volunteer position

Respondents who are working in **Education and Interpretation** were **more likely** to:

- Be aged 13–44
- Have their highest degree in history
- Have a contractor position

Respondents who are working in **Visitor Experience and Community Engagement** were **more likely** to:

- Be aged 13–28 or 80 years and older
- Have a high school diploma, some college, associate’s degree, or bachelor’s degree
- Have never had student loans
- Have a part-time or volunteer position

Respondents who are working in **Membership and Development** were **more likely** to:

- Identify as women
- Be over 60 years old
- Have a high school diploma, some college, associate’s degree, or bachelor’s degree
- Have their highest degree in arts administration
- Have never had student loans
- Have a volunteer position

Respondents who are working in **Marketing and Communications** were more likely to:

- Have a high school diploma, some college, associate’s degree, or bachelor’s degree
- Have never had student loans
- Have a volunteer position

Respondents who are working in **Operations and Facilities** are more likely to:

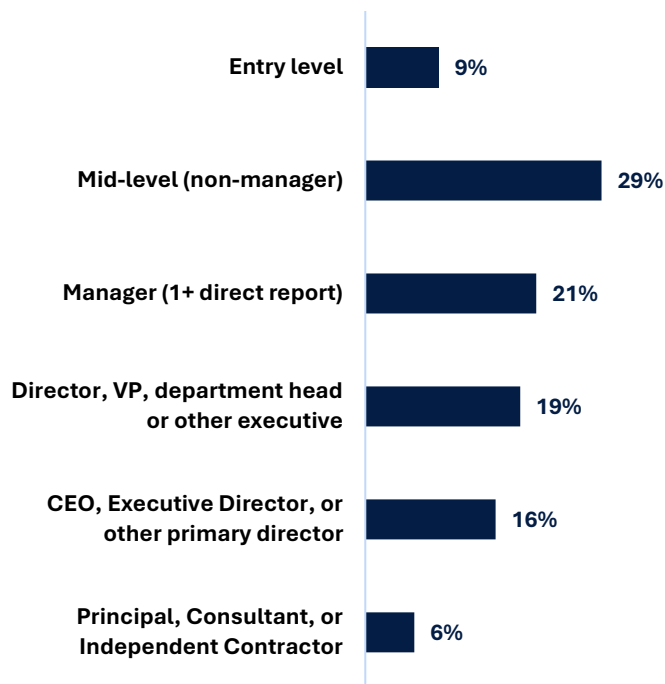
- Be aged 61–79
- Have a high school diploma, some college, associate’s degree, or bachelor’s degree
- Have never had student loans
- Have a volunteer or contractor position

Respondents who are working in **Field Services** are more likely to:

- Have a contractor position

## POSITION LEVEL

**One-half of history practitioners’ have mid-level or manager level positions.** (n = 3,496)



The survey asked participants to identify the level of their current position, and they were invited to select one of six response options. Over one-quarter (29 percent) of participants reported working in a mid-level, non-managerial position. One-fifth each work in managerial positions with at least one direct report (21 percent) or are a director, vice president, department head, or other executive (19 percent). Smaller proportions work in a CEO, executive director, or other primary director position (16 percent), in an entry level position (9 percent), or as a principal, consultant, or independent contractor (6 percent).

Our analysis also revealed many statistically significant relationships between position level and other variables. For example, practitioners working in **entry-level** positions were **more likely** to:

- Identify as non-binary or another gender identity
- Identify as Asian or Asian American
- Be aged 13–28
- Report having a disability
- Identify as LGBTQ+
- Have a bachelor’s degree
- Currently have student loans

Those working in **mid-level** positions were **more likely** to:

- Identify as women
- Be aged 29–44
- Identify as LGBTQ+
- Have their highest degree in library and information science or public history
- Currently have student loans

**Managers** were **more likely** to identify as women. **Directors, vice presidents, department heads, or other executives**, meanwhile, were **more likely** to be aged 45–60 and to have their student loans paid off or forgiven. **CEOs, executive directors, or other primary directors** were **more likely** to:

- Identify as men
- Be aged 61–79
- Have a doctoral degree
- Have their highest degree in arts administration
- Have their loans paid off or forgiven

Finally, **principals, consultants, or independent contractors** were **more likely** to:

- Identify as men
- Be over 60 years old
- Have a doctoral degree
- Have their highest degree in history
- Have never had student loans

**Percentage of respondents in each job position level, by gender identity**

*Example: “31 percent of respondents who identify as women reported having a “Mid-level” position.”*

Position Level	Woman	Man	Non-binary or another gender
Entry-level	9%	9%	29%

Mid-level	31%	25%	36%
Manager	22%	18%	18%
Directors, VPs, department heads, or other executives	19%	21%	9%
CEOs, executive directors or other primary directors	14%	20%	3%
Principals, consultants, or independent contractors	5%	8%	5%

**Percentage of respondents in each job position level, by race/ethnicity\***

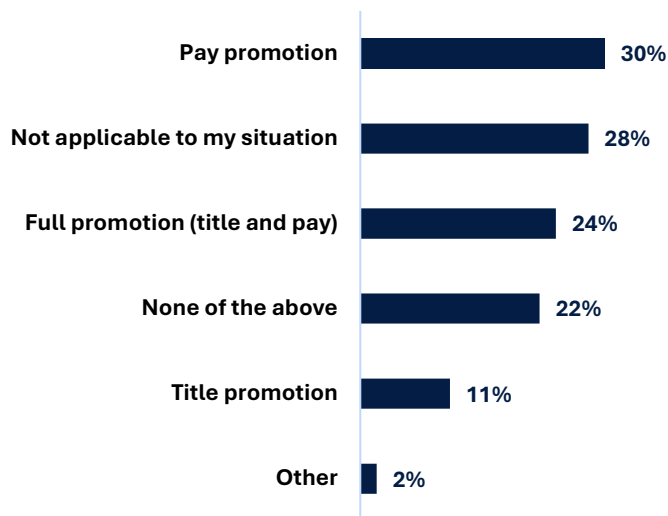
*Example: “20 percent of Asian/Asian American respondents reported having an “Entry-level” position.”*

<b>Position Level</b>	<b>white</b>	<b>Black/ African American</b>	<b>Latino/a/x or Hispanic</b>	<b>Asian/ Asian American</b>	<b>Multiple races/ ethnicities</b>
Entry-level	9%	14%	16%	20%	21%
Mid-level	29%	36%	27%	30%	26%
Manager	21%	12%	24%	18%	19%
Directors, VPs, department heads, or other executives	19%	19%	18%	21%	16%
CEOs, executive directors or other primary directors	16%	12%	12%	5%	9%
Principals, consultants, or independent contractors	6%	8%	3%	5%	9%

*\*For races/ethnicities accounting for at least 1%, excluding the “another race/ethnicity” category.*

## PROMOTION HISTORY

Promotion practices in the history field vary widely. (n=3,494)



The survey asked participants to select all circumstances that applied regarding their promotion history at their current organization from six response options, including to self-describe. One-third (30 percent) of participants reported that they had received a pay promotion (meaning they received a pay increase beyond cost-of-living adjustment but without a title change). One-quarter (24 percent) said they have received a full promotion (including a title change and pay increase beyond cost-of-living adjustment). A small proportion reported receiving a title promotion (title change but no pay increase beyond cost-of-living adjustment).

Over one-quarter (28 percent) said the question was not applicable to their situation; a few of these elaborated in the write-in section of the Other response with additional context, such as that their organization was volunteer-only and promotions were not possible, that they were a new employee not yet eligible for a promotion, or that they already held the highest position in their organization. Over one-fifth (22 percent) reported that none of the options listed applied to their situation—a few of these elaborated that, for example, they had taken on new responsibilities with no title or pay promotion, or that their pay increases were only cost-of-living adjustments or less. And, a small proportion selected Other and wrote in additional circumstances, such as changing from a part-time to a full-time position (i.e., more hours, but not a raise or title change), receiving a bonus but no raise or title change, or applying for new positions within their institution that have a higher salary and different title (but not a linear promotion from their previous position).

Many variables have a statistically significant relationship to promotion history. For example, participants who report a **pay promotion** were more likely to:

- Be aged 29–60

Participants who report a **full promotion (pay and title)** were more likely to:

- Be aged 29–60
- Identify as white
- Have a master’s degree
- Have a highest degree in public history or history

Participants who report **no type of promotion** were more likely to:

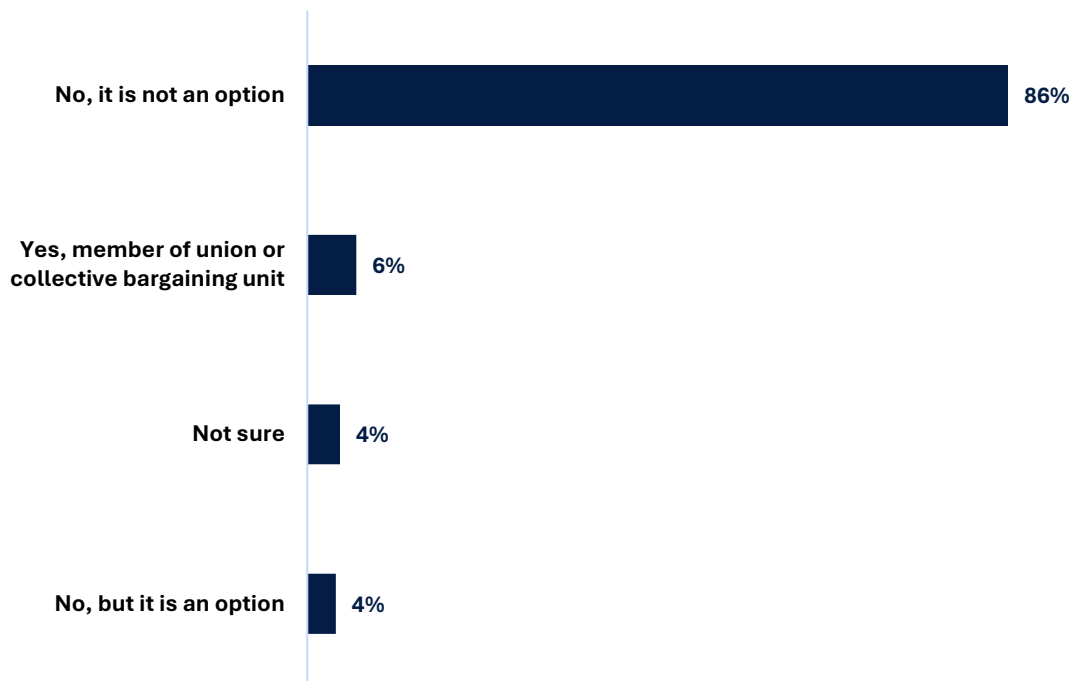
- Be aged 13–44
- Reported having a disability
- Identify as LGBTQ+
- Have a highest degree in museum studies

Participants who report a **title promotion** were more likely to:

- Identify as non-binary or another gender identity
- Be aged 29–44
- Identify as LGBTQ+
- Have a bachelor’s degree

## UNION MEMBERSHIP

**Union membership is not an option for most history practitioners.** (n=3,496)



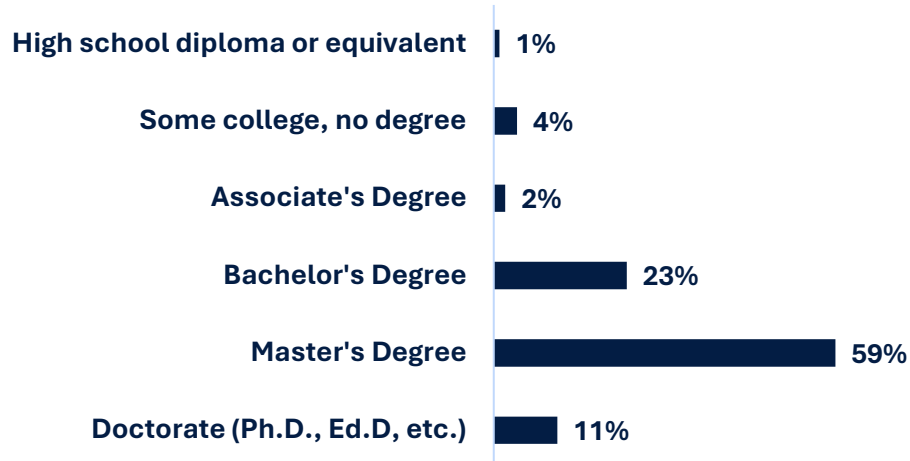
The survey asked participants if they are a union member or if their position is part of a collective bargaining unit, and they were invited to select one response from four response options. Most (86 percent) participants said they do not have the option of being a member of a union or part of a collective bargaining unit. A small proportion (6 percent) are members of a union or part of a collective bargaining unit. Others are not sure (4 percent) or have the option of being members of a union or part of a collective bargaining unit but have chosen not to (4 percent).

Among the statistically significant relationships we identified between union membership and other variables, the data revealed that practitioners who are members of a union or collective bargaining unit were more likely to be aged 19–44, identify as LGBTQ+, and be located in the West.

# EDUCATION

## HIGHEST LEVEL OF EDUCATION

7 in 10 history practitioners have a master's degree or higher. (n=3,699)



The survey asked participants to identify their highest level of education from six response options. Nearly two-thirds (59 percent) of participants have a master's degree. One-quarter have a bachelor's degree (23 percent). Smaller proportions have a doctoral degree (11 percent), some college but no degree (4 percent), an associate's degree (2 percent), or a high school diploma or equivalent (1 percent).

Several variables have a statistical relationship to education level:

- **Gender identity:** Women were **more likely** to have a master's degree (**less likely** a doctorate), while men were **more likely** to have a doctorate (**less likely** a master's).
- **Race/ethnicity:** Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native participants were **more likely** to have a high school diploma, some college, or an associate's degree
- **Age:** Overall, older participants have higher educational attainment than younger participants (participants 45–60 are **more likely** to have a doctorate, whereas participants 29–44 were **more likely** to have a master's degree, and participants 13–28 were **more likely** to have a bachelor's degree). However, given generational relationships to education, the eldest participants report lower levels of educational attainment (participants 61–79 were **more likely** to have a bachelor's degree and participants over 80 were **more likely** to have a high school diploma, some college, or an associate's degree).
- **LGBTQ+:** Participants who identify as LGBTQ+ were more likely to have a bachelor's degrees (**less likely** to have a high school diploma, some college, or associate's degree).

**Percent of respondents in each age range for whom a master’s degree is their highest level of education.**

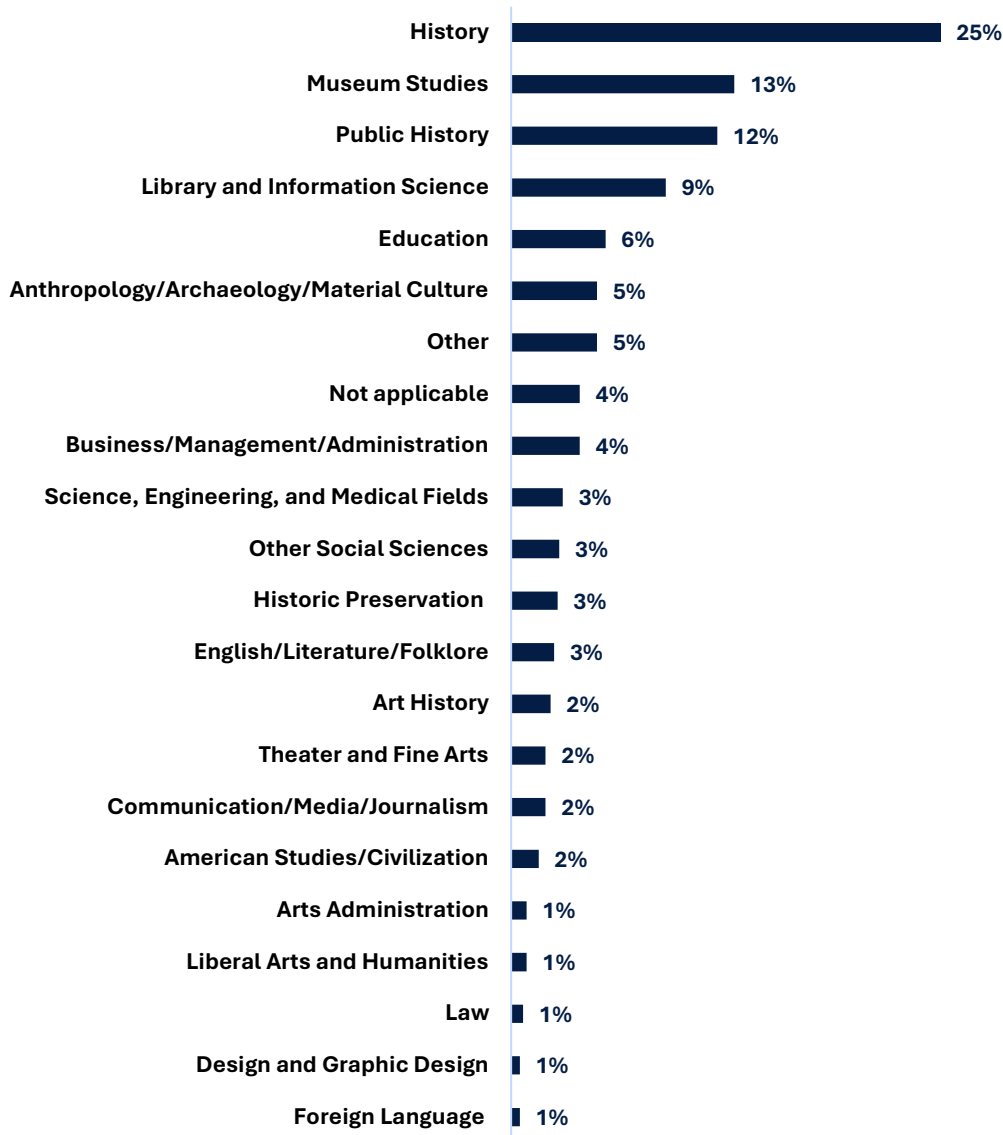
*Example: “71 percent of respondents aged 29–44 have a master’s degree.”*

<b>Age Range</b>	<b>% with Master’s Degree</b>
13-28 years	50%
29-44 years	71%
45-60 years	62%
61-79 years	47%
80+ years	43%

## FIELD OF STUDY

**History is the most common field of study for most practitioners' highest degree.**

(n=3,699)



The survey asked participants to indicate the field in which they held their highest degree, and they were invited to select one response from seven response, including to self-describe. Many participants choose to self-describe, and the researcher categorized these written responses. History is the most common field for participants (25 percent), followed by museum studies (13 percent) public history (12 percent), and library and information sciences (9 percent). Note that some participants have received multiple degrees, so totals exceed 100 percent.

Several variables have a statistically significant relationship to field of highest degree. Note that our analyses only considered the provided field degree categories from the survey (not any categories generated from the “other field” responses).

Participants whose highest degree is in **history** were more likely to:

- Identify as men
- Have either a bachelor’s degree or doctorate

Participants whose highest degree is in **museum studies** were more likely to:

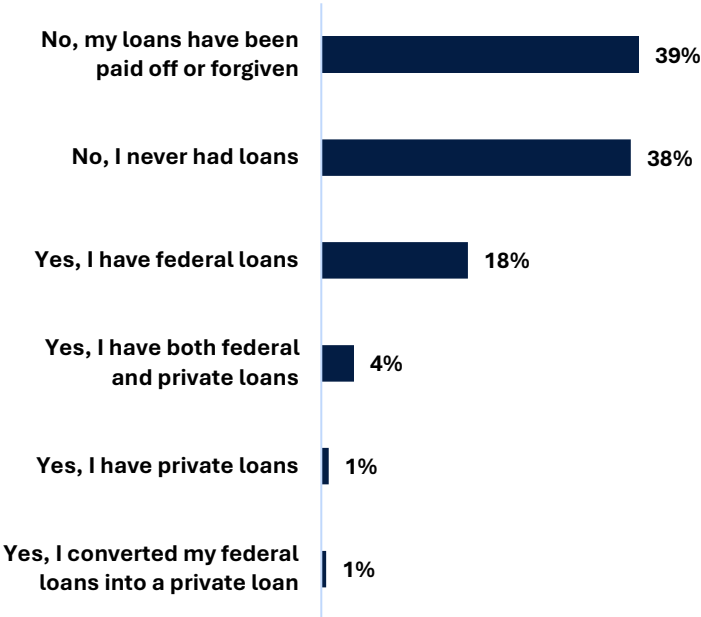
- Identify as women
- Have a master’s degree

Participants whose highest degree is in **public history** were more likely to:

- Identify as LGBTQ+
- Have a master’s degree

### STUDENT LOAN DEBT

**About one-quarter of history practitioners currently have student loan debt.**



The survey asked participants if they had student loan debt, and they were invited to choose one response from six response options. Many participants said they do not currently have any student loan debt (76 percent), either because their loans have been paid off or forgiven (39 percent) or because they never had loans (38 percent). About one-quarter of participants have active student loan debts (24 percent), most commonly federal loans (18 percent).

Statistically significant relationships between student loan debt and other survey variables reveal the inequitable distribution of debt within the field. Practitioners who **currently have student loans** were more likely to:

- Identify as women, non-binary, or another gender identity
- Identify as Black or African American, Latino/a/x or Hispanic, or Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native
- Be under 45 years old
- Identify as LGBTQ+
- Report having a disability
- Have a master's degree

Practitioners whose **student loans have been paid off or forgiven** were more likely to:

- Be 45 years or older
- Identify as white
- Have a master's degree

Practitioners who have **never had student loans** were more likely to:

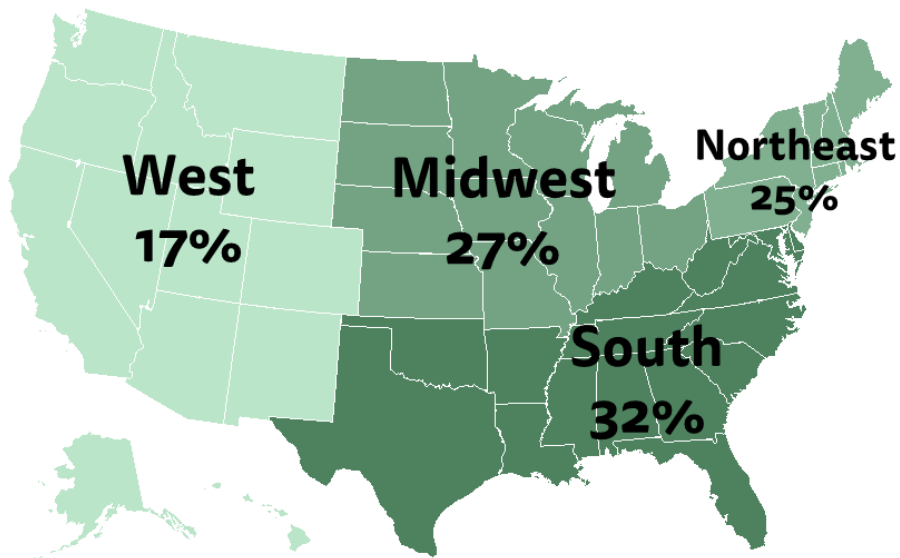
- Identify as men
- Be aged 60 or older
- Have a high school diploma, some college, associate's, or bachelor's degree

## ORGANIZATION CHARACTERISTICS

The following section presents participants' responses about the characteristics of the organization where they work, including its location and annual budget.

### LOCATION

**History practitioners are relatively evenly spread across U.S. regions, with lower concentrations in the West.** (n=3,397)



The survey asked participants to identify the state or territory their history organization is located, including an option for working in more than one state and an option to not disclose their organization's location. Nearly all participants live in the United States; less than one percent live in another country. Two percent work in more than one state, and less than one percent preferred not to disclose the location of their workplace.

States and territories were assigned to a region based on U.S. Census region definitions.<sup>13</sup> Of those who live in the United States, one-third (32 percent) of participants live in the South, one-quarter (27 percent) live in the Midwest, one-quarter (25 percent) live in the Northeast, and a smaller proportion (17 percent) live in the West.

Many variables have a statistically significant relationship to organization location. Participants who work at an organization located in the **South** are more likely to:

- Identify as Black or African American

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<sup>13</sup> A map of US Census regions is available here: [https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us\\_regdiv.pdf](https://www2.census.gov/geo/pdfs/maps-data/maps/reference/us_regdiv.pdf)

- Be aged 29–44
- Have a bachelor’s degree, master’s degree, or doctorate
- Have their highest degree in public history or history
- Have current student loans (and less likely to have their student loans paid off or forgiven)

Participants who work at an organization located in the **Midwest** are:

- More likely to identify as white
- More likely to be aged 13–28
- Less likely to have a doctoral degree

Participants who work at an organization located in the **Northeast** are more likely to:

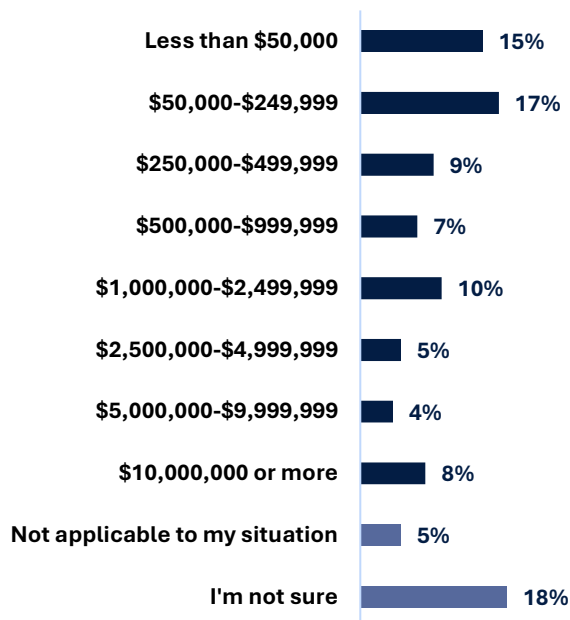
- Identify as white
- Be over 60 years old
- Have their student loans paid off or forgiven

Participants who work at an organization located in the **West** are more likely to:

- Identify as women
- Identify as Asian or Asian American, Latino/a/x or Hispanic, or Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native
- Have a high school diploma, some college, or an associate’s degree

## ORGANIZATION BUDGET

**History practitioners work at organizations with a wide range of budgets.** (n=3,496)



The survey asked participants to describe the annual budget of the history organization with which they are affiliated, and they were invited to select one of 10 response options,

including not applicable and not sure. Nearly one-fifth of participants (18 percent) were unsure of their organization's annual budget, and 5 percent said the question was not applicable to their situation. Over one-third (41 percent) of participants work at an organization with an annual budget of under \$500,000. A small proportion work at an organization with an annual budget between \$500,000 and \$999,999 (7 percent) or between \$1,000,000 and \$4,999,999 (15 percent). And, a small proportion (12 percent) work at an organization with a budget of \$5,000,000 or more.

Many variables have a statistical relationship to organization budget. For example, participants who work at an organization with a budget of **under \$50,000** were more likely to:

- Identify as Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native
- Be aged 60 or older
- Have an associate's degree or below
- Have never had student loans
- Work at an organization located in the Northeast

Participants who work at an organization with a budget of **\$50,000-\$249,999** were more likely to:

- Be aged 61–79
- Have a bachelor's degree

Participants who work at an organization with a budget of **\$250,000 - \$999,999** were more likely to:

- Be aged 29–44
- Have their highest degree in public history

Participants who work at an organization with a budget of **\$1,000,000 or more** were more likely to:

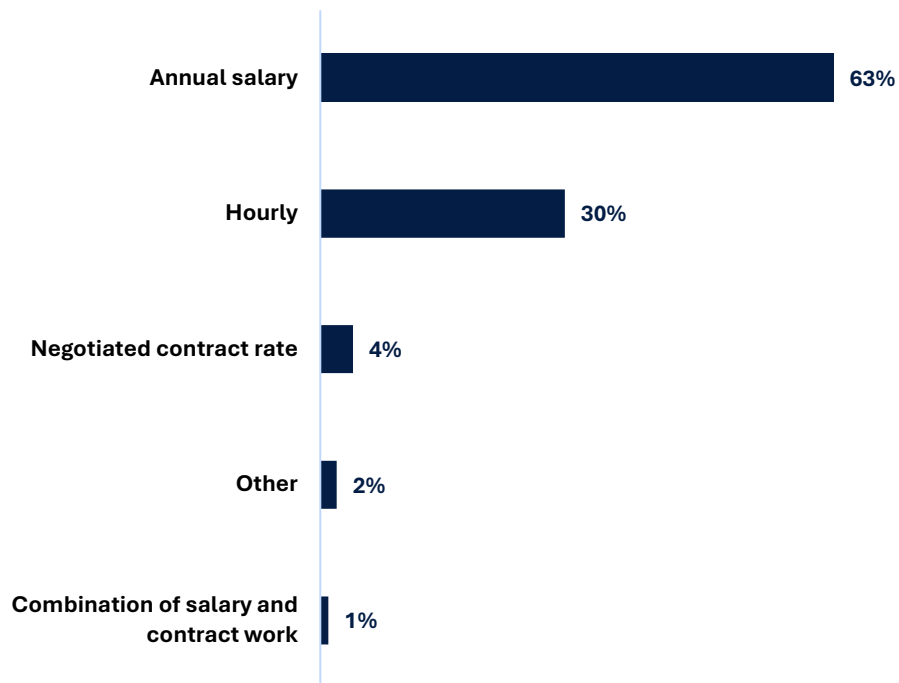
- Be aged 29–60
- Identify as LGBTQ+
- Have a master's degree
- Have their highest degree in museum studies or public history
- Have their student loans paid off or forgiven
- Work at an organization located in the South

# How are history practitioners compensated?

The survey asked practitioners about their compensation, including compensation type, annual salary range, benefits, and perceptions of their compensation. Note that respondents who responded that they were in an unpaid role, such as volunteers, were not asked to answer these questions about compensation, resulting in a smaller total response number.

## COMPENSATION TYPE

**Most respondents are paid an annual salary. (n=2,832)**



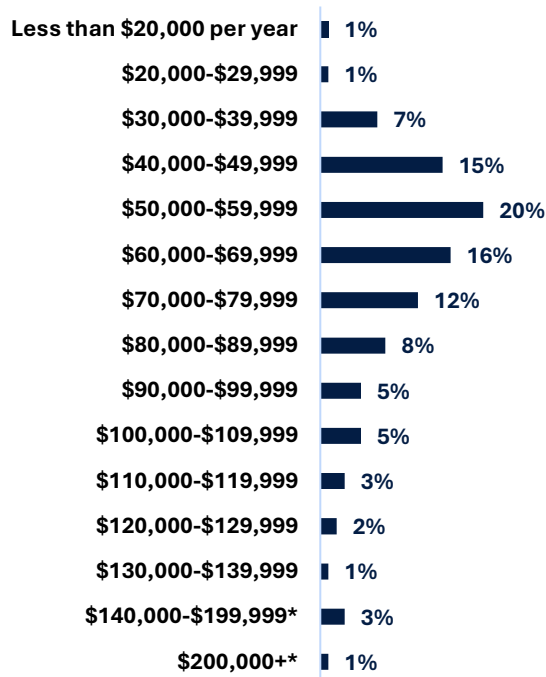
The survey asked participants to indicate how they were compensated, and they were invited to choose from five response options, including to self-identify. The most common way participants reported being paid is through an annual salary (63 percent) followed by hourly compensation (30 percent). A small proportion are paid using a negotiated contract

rate (4 percent), a combination of salary and contract work (1 percent), or the participant selected Other (2 percent).<sup>14</sup>

Several variables have a statistically significant relationship with compensation type. Most notably, practitioners who are paid **hourly** are **more likely** to identify as non-binary or another gender identity, be under 28 years old, identify as LGBTQ+, and report having a disability. Those paid through a **negotiated contract rate**, as many consultants are, are **more likely** to identify as men, be older than 60 years old, and have a doctorate.

## ANNUAL PRE-TAX EARNINGS FOR FULL-TIME HISTORY PRACTITIONERS

The largest proportion of full-time history practitioners make between \$50,000 and \$60,000 per year. (n=2,203)



The survey asked participants to indicate their pre-tax annual earnings, and they were invited to select from a series of 24 pay bands. The chart above presents responses only from those who hold full-time positions. A small proportion of participants (9 percent) make under \$40,000 annually. One-third (35 percent) make between \$40,000 and \$59,999 annually. One-quarter (28 percent) make between \$60,000 and \$79,999 annually. A small proportion (13 percent) make between \$80,000 and \$99,999 annually or over \$100,000 annually (15 percent).

<sup>14</sup> Of those who selected Other, common responses included that they were a volunteer or in an unpaid position, paid by stipend, their form of compensation varies, or other miscellaneous circumstances.

An analysis of the statistically significant relationships with other variables reveals inequities in pay distribution for the field. Analyzing alongside gender, for example, reveals that men are more likely to earn more than \$80,000 per year, while those who identify as women or non-binary were less likely to earn that much.

**Annual earnings for full-time history practitioners, by gender**

*Example: “25% of Women respondents reported earning \$80,000 or more per year.”*

Annual Earnings	Non-binary or another gender		
	Woman	Man	
Under \$80,000	75%	60%	94%
\$80,000 or more	25%	40%	6%

Other statistically significant relationships are as follows:

Participants who report being paid **less than \$40,000** were more likely to:

- Identify as non-binary or another gender identity
- Be aged 13–28 years
- Have a high school diploma, some college, associate’s or bachelor’s degree

Participants who report being paid **\$40,000–\$59,999** were more likely to:

- Identify as women
- Be younger than 45 years
- Identify as LGBTQ+
- Report having a disability
- Have a bachelor’s degree
- Work at an organization located in the Midwest

Participants who report being paid **\$60,000–\$79,999** were more likely to:

- Be aged 29–44 years
- Have a master’s degree

Participants who report being paid **\$80,000–\$99,999** were more likely to:

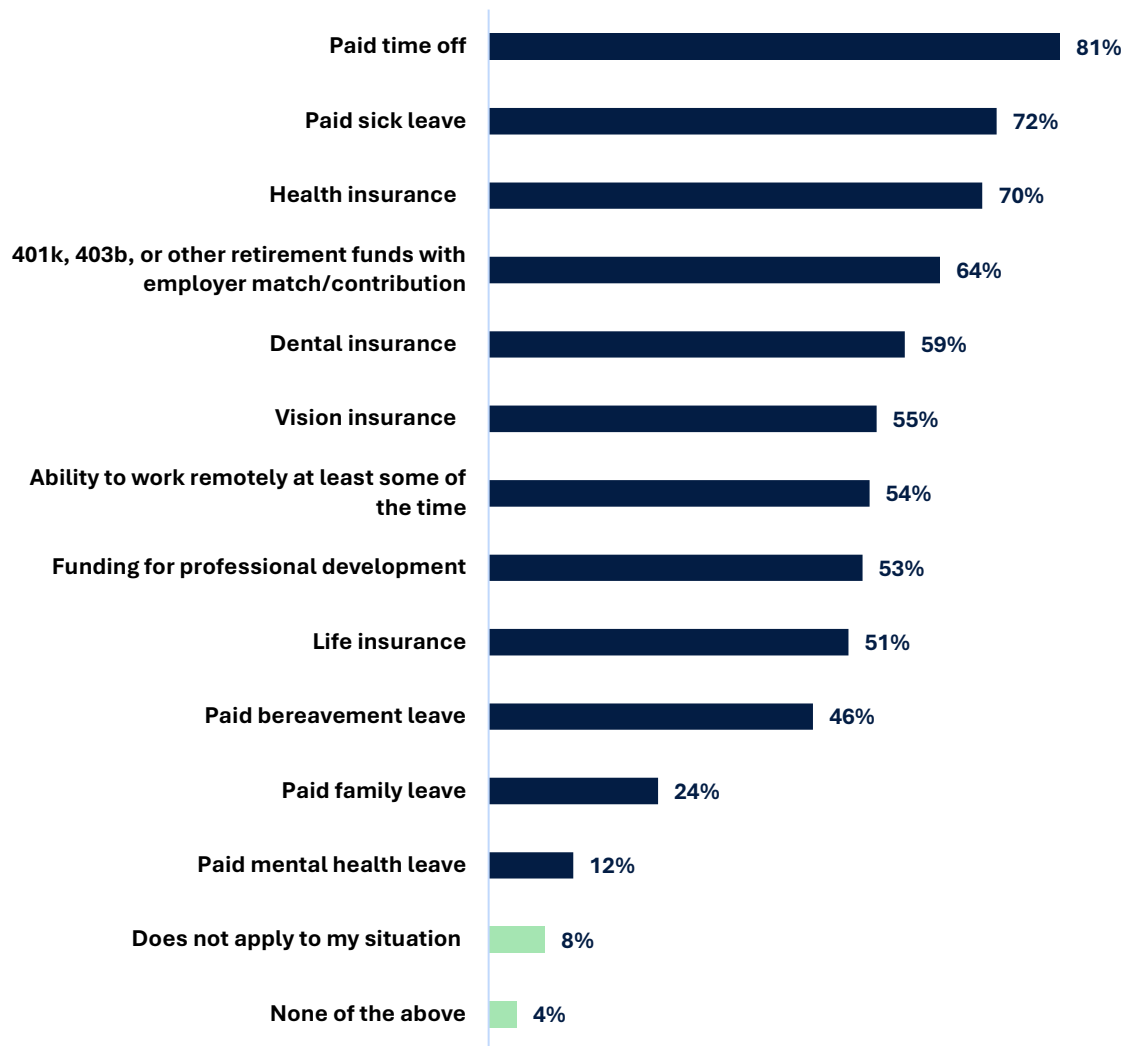
- Be aged 45–79
- Less likely to identify as LGBTQ+
- Have a doctoral degree
- Work at an organization located in the West

Participants who report being paid **\$100,000 or more** were more likely to:

- Identify as men
- Be aged 45–79
- Less likely to identify as LGBTQ+
- Have a doctoral degree

## BENEFITS

The most common benefit for history practitioners is paid time off. (n=2,611)



The survey asked participants to indicate what benefits are available to them at their workplace, and they were invited to select all responses that apply from 14 response options, including “Does not apply” and “None of the above.”<sup>15</sup> The most common benefits available were paid time off (81 percent), paid sick leave (72 percent), health insurance covered at least partially by the employer (70 percent), and 401k, 403b, or other retirement funds with employer match or contributions (64 percent). The least common benefits were paid mental health leave (12 percent) and paid family leave beyond what is required by law (24 percent).

Among the statistically significant relationships the research revealed:

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<sup>15</sup> Note that there may have been some confusion among participants about whether to select “Does not apply to my situation” or “None of the above.”

Participants who received a **lower number of benefits** were likely to be:

- Participants aged 13–28 or over 60 years
- Report having a disability
- Have a high school diploma, some college, an associate’s degree, or bachelor’s degree

Participants who received a **higher number of benefits** were likely to be:

- Aged 29–60 years
- Identify as LGBTQ+
- Have a master’s degree.
- Have their highest degree in library and information science, museum studies, and public history
- Work at an organization located in the South

## PERCEPTION OF COMPENSATION

**Nearly equal numbers of practitioners feel their compensation is either below or about the same as others in similar roles.** (n=2,832)



The survey asked participants how they think their compensation compares to others in similar roles at other institutions in areas with similar cost of living. Over one-third (38 percent) feel they are paid about the same as others in comparable roles. Over one-third (37 percent) feel they are paid below others in comparable roles. A smaller proportion (16 percent) said they feel they are paid more than others in similar roles, or they were not sure (9 percent).

This analysis also revealed that respondents who reported having a **disability**, and those who **currently have student loan debt** both are **more likely** to feel they are compensated below others in similar roles.

The survey also asked participants to what extent they agree with the statement “I am paid fairly for the work I do,” and they were invited to select one of three responses. Responses were split relatively evenly, with approximately one-third each reporting that they agreed (34 percent), neither agreed nor disagreed (32 percent), or disagreed (34 percent).

## History practitioners have mixed feelings about the fairness of their pay. (n=2,832)

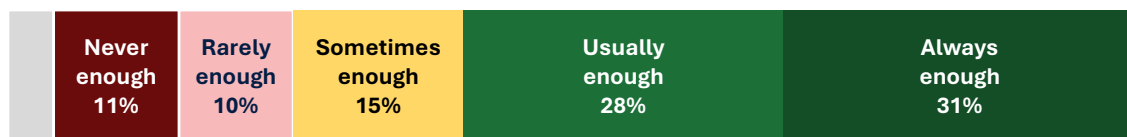


Participants who **agree** they are paid fairly were **more likely** to identify as men, to be aged 61–79, and to have their student loans paid off or forgiven. Meanwhile, participants who either **disagree** or **neither agree nor disagree** they are paid fairly were more likely to:

- Identify as women
- Be aged 13–44
- Identify as LGBTQ+
- Report having a disability

## COMPENSATION RELATIVE TO COST OF LIVING

**One-third of history practitioners said their compensation is not usually enough to cover essential living expenses.** (n=2,832)



I'm not sure  
4%

Finally, the survey asked participants how well their current compensation covers essential living expenses such as food, housing, and childcare, and they were invited to select one of six response options. Over one-half (59 percent) reported that their compensation usually or always is enough to cover essential living expenses. One-third (36 percent) reported that their compensation is only sometimes, rarely, or never enough to cover essential living expenses. A small proportion (4 percent) were unsure.

**Practitioners with student loan debt are more likely to say their compensation is insufficient to cover essential living expenses.** (n=2,832)

*Example: “49 percent of respondents who currently have student loans reported their compensation is sometimes, rarely, or never enough to cover essential living expenses.”*

How well your current compensation cover essential living expenses such as food, housing, and childcare?	Never had student loans	Loans paid off/forgiven	Currently have student loans
Usually or always enough	62%	69%	51%
Sometimes, rarely, or never enough	38%	31%	49%

This analysis also revealed that practitioners who said their compensation **usually or always** essential living experiences were **more likely** to identify as men, have had their student loans paid off or forgiven, and live in the Midwest. Those who reported their compensation only **sometimes, rarely, or never** covers their essential living expenses were **more likely** to:

- Identify as women
- Be aged 13–44
- Have a disability
- Have a high school diploma, some college, or an associate’s degree
- Currently have student loans
- Live in the Northeast

# How do history practitioners feel about their work?

The survey asked practitioners about their feelings on a wide variety of topics related to working at a history organization, including workplace culture, experiences with discrimination and/or harassment, and outlook on working in the history field.

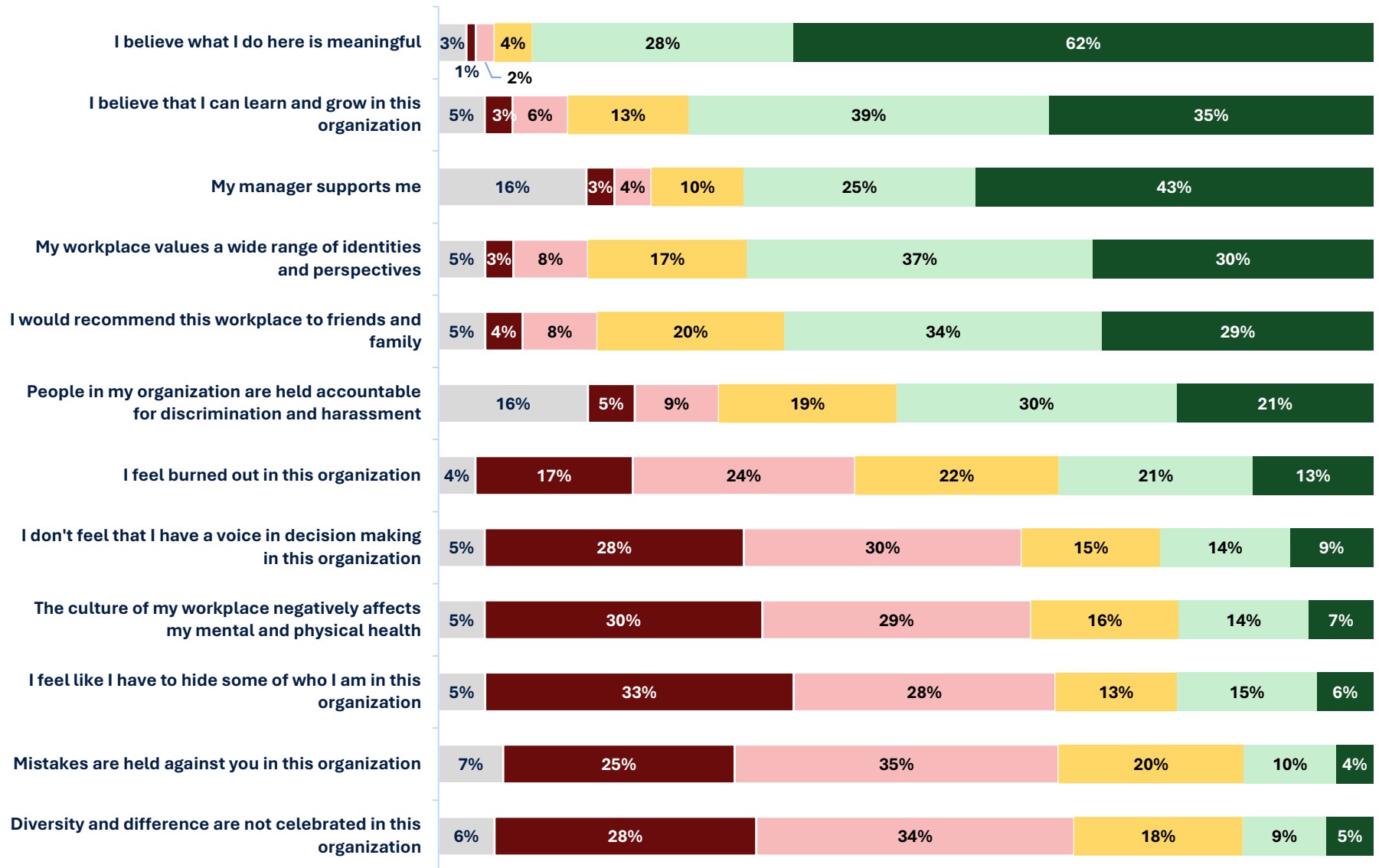
## WORKPLACE CULTURE

The survey asked participants to rate a series of statements about workplace culture on a scale with six response options: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, or not applicable. Positively, participants most strongly agreed that the work they do at their organization is meaningful (90 percent agreed or strongly agreed), that they could learn and grow at their organization (74 percent agreed or strongly agreed), that their manager supports them (68 percent agreed or strongly agreed), and that their workplace values a wide range of identities and perspectives (67 percent agreed or strongly agreed).

On the other hand, only one-half (51 percent) agreed that people in their organization are held accountable for discrimination and harassment. One-third said they feel burnt out at their organization (33 percent agreed or strongly agreed).

Note that half of the statements are **positive** (e.g., “I believe what I do here is meaningful”) and half are **negative** (e.g., “I feel burned out in this organization”).  
**For positive statements**, a response of “agree” or “strongly agree” (green and dark green) reflects positive aspects of workplace culture.  
**For negative statements**, a response of “disagree” or “strongly disagree” (red and maroon) reflects positive aspects of workplace culture.

N/A – Strongly Disagree – Disagree – Neutral – Agree – Strongly Agree



There are a large number of variables that have a statistically significant relationship to the statements gauging perceptions of workplace culture. They are reflected below in levels of agreement with the following statements. Participants who were **more likely to agree or strongly agree** with the following statements are presented below. Instances of *less likely to agree* are italicized and noted below.

- **I believe what I do here is meaningful.**
  - Aged 61–79
- **My manager supports me.**
  - *Reported having a disability (less likely to agree or strongly agree)*
- **My workplace values a wide range of identities and perspectives.**
  - Men
  - Over 60 years old
  - Work at an organization located in the West
- **I would recommend this workplace to friends and family.**
  - Men
  - Over 60 years old
  - *Identify as LGBTQ+ (less likely to agree or strongly agree)*
  - Work at an organization located in the West
- **People in my organization are held accountable for discrimination and harassment.**
  - Men
  - Over 60 years old
  - *Identify as LGBTQ+ (less likely to agree or strongly agree)*
- **I feel burned out in this organization.**
  - Identify as women, non-binary, or another gender identity
  - Latino/a/x and Hispanic participants
  - Aged 29–44 more likely
  - Identify as LGBTQ+
  - Reported having a disability
  - Have a master’s degree
- Have their highest degree in museum studies or public history
- **I don’t feel that I have a voice in decision-making in this organization.**
  - Identify as non-binary or another gender identity
  - Aged 13–44
  - Identify as LGBTQ+
  - Reported having a disability
  - Have a bachelor’s degree or above
- Have their highest degree in library and information science
  - Participants who work at an organization located in the South

- **The culture of my workplace negatively affects my mental and/or physical health.**
  - Women and participants who identify as non-binary or another gender identity
  - Aged 29–44
  - Identify as LGBTQ+
  - Reported having a disability
- Have their highest degree in museum studies
  - Work at an organization located in the South
- **I feel like I have to hide some of who I am in this organization.**
  - Identify as non-binary or another gender identity
  - Black or African American participants
  - Aged 13–44
  - Identify as LGBTQ+
  - Reported having a disability
  - Have a bachelor’s degree or above
- Have their highest degree in public history
  - Work at an organization located in the South
- **Mistakes are held against you in this organization.**
  - Aged 29–44
  - Work at an organization located in the South
- **Diversity and difference are not celebrated in this organization.**
  - Aged 29–44
  - Identify as LGBTQ+
  - Reported having a disability

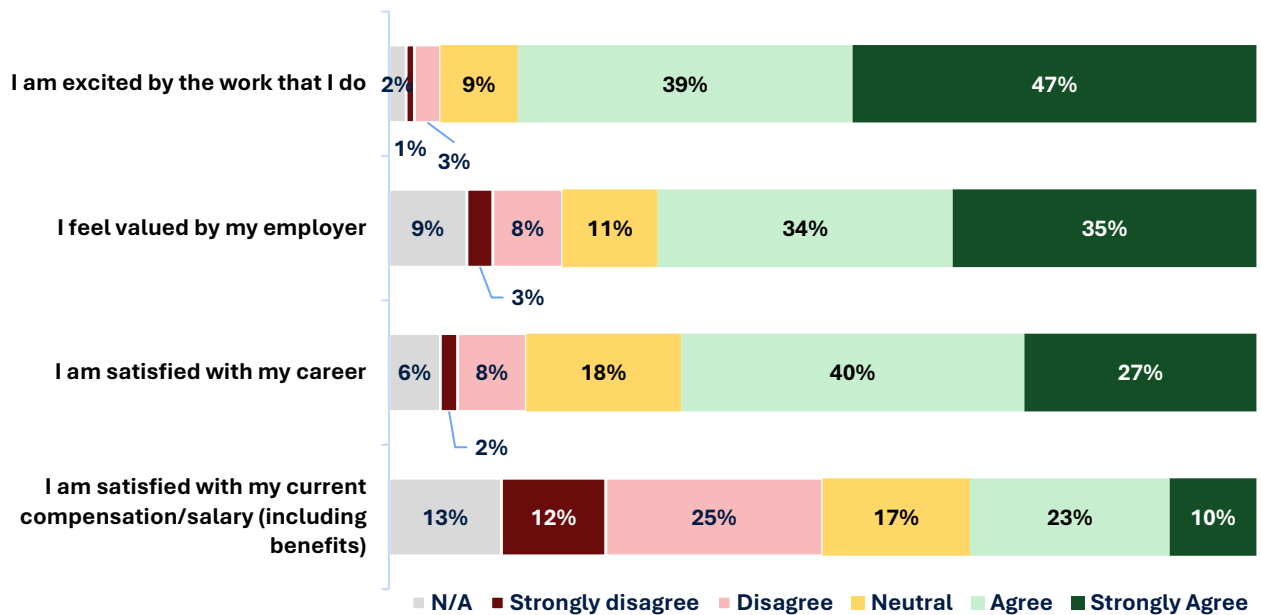
Additionally, separating those who do and do not identify as members of the LGBTQ+ community reveals that LGBTQ+ history practitioners were more likely to report a negative response for nearly every aspect of workplace culture on the survey. The table below shows that LGBTQ+ practitioners were **less likely** to agree with positive statements and **more likely** to agree with negative statements than their non-LGBTQ+ counterparts.

**LGBTQ+ practitioners were more likely to report negative feelings about their workplace culture.**

*Example: “61% of practitioners who identify as LGBTQ+ agree or strongly agree that they would recommend their workplace to friends/family.”*

<b>Statement</b>	<b>% of those who identify as LGBTQ+ who Agree/Strongly Agree</b>	<b>% of those who do not identify as LGBTQ+ who Agree/Strongly Agree</b>
I believe what I do here is meaningful	92%	93%
My manager supports me	80%	81%
I believe that I can learn and grow in this organization	77%	78%
My workplace values a wide range of identities and perspectives	67%	71%
I would recommend this workplace to friends/family	61%	68%
People in my organization are held accountable for discrimination and harassment	53%	62%
I feel burned out in this organization	44%	33%
I feel like I have to hide some of who I am in this organization	37%	20%
I don't feel that I have a voice in decision-making at this organization	34%	22%
The culture of my workplace negatively affects my mental and physical health	30%	20%
Diversity and difference are not celebrated in this organization.	21%	14%
Mistakes are held against you in this organization	14%	19%

## SATISFACTION WITH WORK



The survey asked participants to rate a series of statements about workplace culture on a scale with six response options: strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly agree, or not applicable. Overall, participants are excited by their work (86% agreed or strongly agreed). Many also feel valued by their employer (69 percent agreed or strongly agreed) and feel satisfied with their career (67 percent agreed or strongly agreed). However, only one-third are satisfied with their current compensation or salary (33 percent agreed or strongly agreed).

Many variables have a statistical relationship to perceptions of workplace culture, reflected in levels of agreement with the following statements. Participants who were **more likely to agree or strongly agree** with the following statements are presented below:

- **I am excited by the work that I do.**
  - Aged 61–79
- **I feel valued by my employer.**
  - Men
  - Over 60 years old
  - Work at an organization located in the West
  - *Identify as LGBTQ+ (less likely to agree or strongly agree)*
- **I'm satisfied with my career.**
  - Men
  - Over 60 years old
  - *Identify as LGBTQ+ (less likely to agree or strongly agree)*
  - *Reported having a disability (less likely to agree or strongly agree)*
- **I am satisfied with my current compensation/salary (including benefits).**

- Men
- Over 60 years old
- Have a doctoral degree
  - *Identify as LGBTQ+ (less likely to agree or strongly agree)*
  - *Reported having a disability (less likely to agree or strongly agree)*
  - *Latino/a/x or Hispanic participants (less likely to agree or strongly agree)*

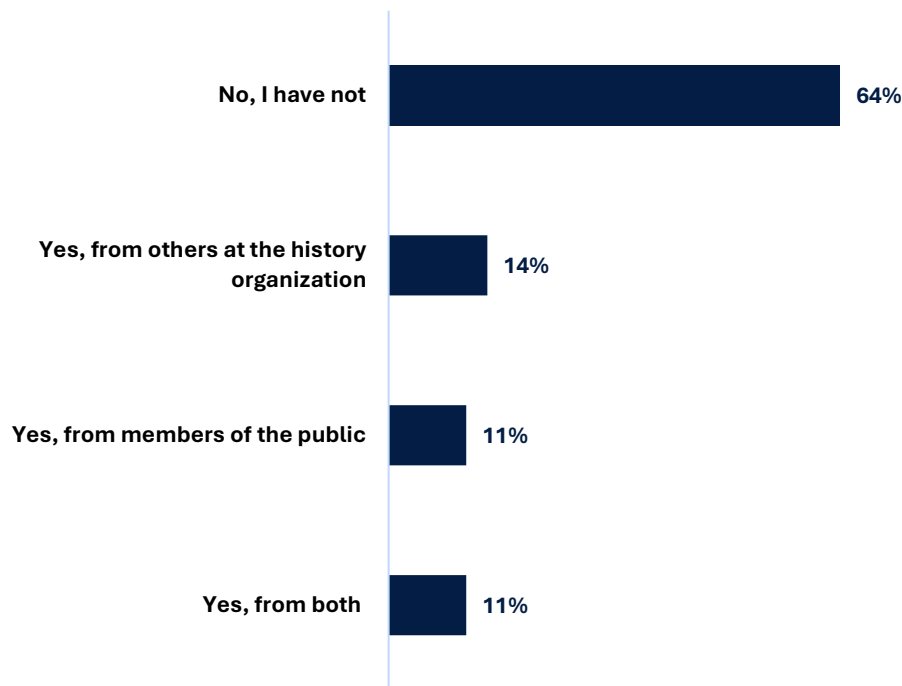
**LGBTQ+ practitioners were significantly more negative in their assessments of satisfaction with the work and career.**

*Example: “69 percent of LGBTQ+ practitioners agreed that they feel valued by their employers.”*

Statement	% of those who identify as LGBTQ+ who Agree/Strongly Agree	% of those who do not identify as LGBTQ+ who Agree/Strongly Agree
I am excited by the work I do	86%	88%
I feel valued by my employer	69%	77%
I am satisfied with my career	63%	72%
I am satisfied with my current compensation/salary (including benefits)	30%	40%

## DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

**One-third of history practitioners have experienced some type of discrimination or harassment.** (n=3,251)



The survey asked participants whether they experienced discrimination and/or harassment in their work with history organizations, and they were invited to choose one of four response options. One-third (36 percent) of participants reported experiencing discrimination or harassment from others at their organization, from members of the public, or from both.

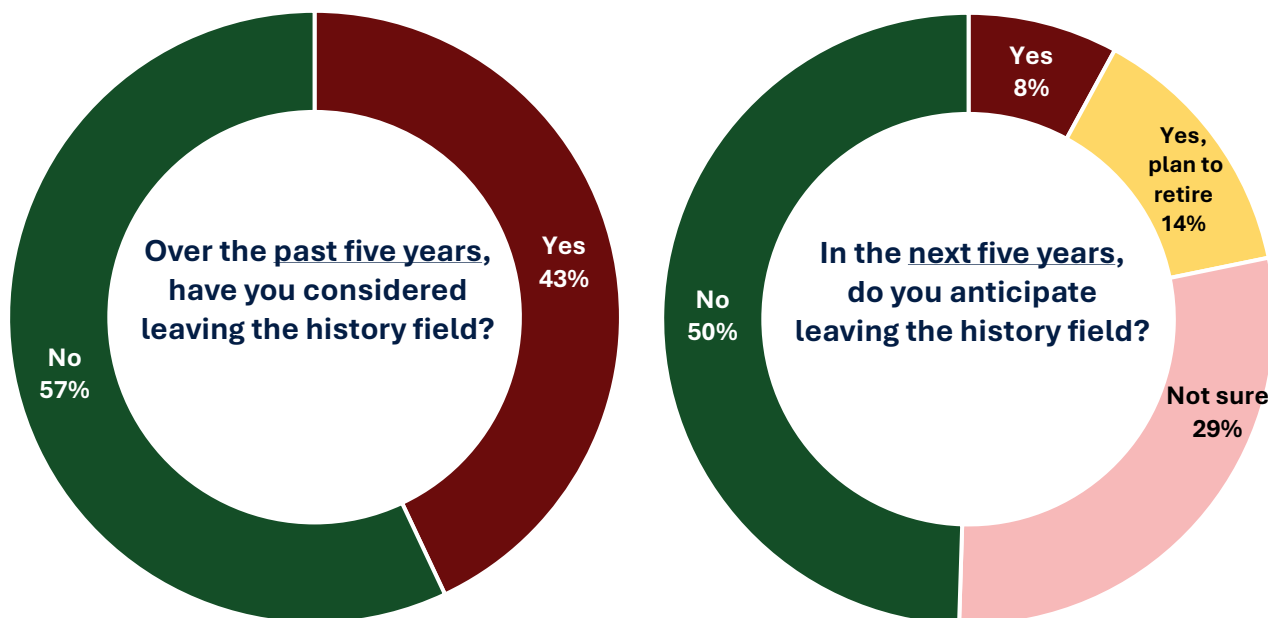
Many variables have a statistical relationship to discrimination and harassment in the workplace:

- Participants who have **experienced discrimination or harassment from others at their history organization** were more likely to:
  - Identify as women
  - Have a master's degree
- Participants who have **experienced discrimination or harassment from members of the public** were more likely to:
  - Identify as women, non-binary, or another gender identity
  - Identify as Latino/a/x or Hispanic
  - Be aged 13–44
  - Identify as LGBTQ+
  - Report having a disability

- Participants who have **experienced discrimination or harassment from both others at their history organization and members of the public** were more likely to:
  - Identify as women
  - Identify as Black or African American or Latino/a/x/ or Hispanic
  - Be aged 29–44
  - Identify as LGBTQ+
  - Report having a disability
- Have their highest degree in museum studies or public history
- Participants who have **not experienced discrimination or harassment** were more likely to:
  - Identify as men
  - Identify as white
  - Be over 60 years old

## CONSIDERING LEAVING THE FIELD

Nearly half of history practitioners have considered leaving the field over the past five years. (n=3,251)



The survey asked participants whether they have considered leaving the field during the past five years (yes or no), as well as if they anticipate leaving the field in the next five years (from four response options). Nearly one half (43 percent) said they had considered leaving the field in the past five years. When asked about the future, one-fifth (22 percent) said they anticipate leaving the field in the next five years, although the majority of these were because of plans to retire. Over one-quarter (29 percent) are unsure of whether they will leave the field in the next five years.

### Practitioners with student loans were more likely than those without to say they have considered leaving the field.

*Example: “54 percent of practitioners with student loans said they had considered leaving the history field over the last five years.”*

Over the past five years, have you considered leaving the history field?	Never had student loans	Loans paid off/forgiven	Currently have student loans
Yes	34%	45%	54%
No	66%	55%	46%

Many variables have a statistical relationship to consideration to leave the field:

- Participants who have **considered leaving the field in the past five years** are more likely to:
  - Identify as non-binary or another gender identity
  - Be aged 13–44
  - Identify as LGBTQ+
  - Report having a disability
  - Currently have student loans
- Participants who **anticipate leaving the field in the next five years or are not sure** are more likely to:
  - Identify as women
  - Identify as Latino/a/x or Hispanic
  - Identify as LGBTQ+
  - Report having a disability
  - Currently have student loans

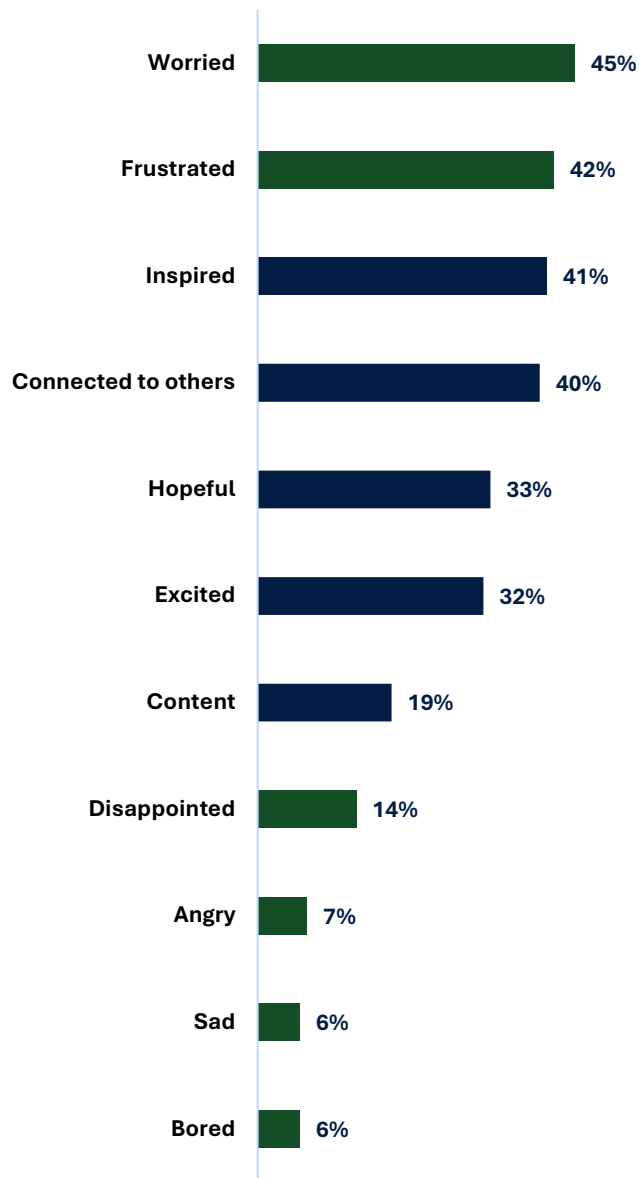
The survey also asked participants about the reasons they had considered leaving the field, and they were invited to select all that apply from a list of 16 response options. One-third (36 percent) said the low pay was a reason they were considering leaving the field. One-quarter each said challenges related to the current political climate (26 percent), lack of opportunities for growth and/or advancement (25 percent), or burnout in the history field (24 percent) were reasons they were considering leaving the field.

**Low pay is the top reason practitioners consider leaving the field. (n=3,251)**



## AFFECTIVE ASSOCIATIONS WITH WORKING IN THE HISTORY FIELD

History practitioners feel worried and frustrated, but they are also inspired and connected to others. (n=3,251)



The survey asked participants to select up to three emotions they associate with working for history organizations based on their past 12 months of work from a list of 11 response options. The top responses for participants were a mix of negative and positive emotions—worry (45 percent) and frustration (42 percent), as well as feeling inspired (41 percent) and connected to others (40 percent).

Many variables have a statistical relationship to emotions they associate with working for a history organization (based on their past 12 months of work):

- **Gender identity:**
  - **Women** were **more likely** to select **worried** or **frustrated**.
  - **Men** were **more likely** to select **excited** or **hopeful**.
  - Participants who identify as **non-binary or another gender identity** were **more likely** to select **angry**.
- **Race/ethnicity:**
- **Native American, American Indian, or Alaska Native** participants were **more likely** to select **hopeful**.
  - **Asian or Asian American** participants were **less likely** to select **inspired**.
- **Age:**
- Participants aged **13–28** were more likely to select **bored**.
  - Participants aged **29–44** were more likely to select **worried, sad, or frustrated**.
  - Participants aged **45–60** were more likely to select **worried or disappointed**.
- Participants aged **61–79** were more likely to select **excited, connected to others, hopeful, or inspired**.
- Participants aged **80 years or older** were more likely to select **excited or connected to others**.
- **LGBTQ+:** Participants who identify as LGBTQ+ were **more likely** to select **worried, angry, or frustrated**.
- **Disability:** Participants who **reported having a disability** were more likely to select **angry**.
- **Education level:**
- Participants with a **high school diploma, some college, or an associate’s degree** were more likely to select **excited** or **hopeful**.
  - Participants with a **bachelor’s degree** were more likely to select **connected to others**.
  - Participants with a **master’s degree** were more likely to select **worried** or **frustrated**.
- Participants with a **doctoral degree** were more likely to select **sad** or **angry**.
- **Degree field:**
- Participants who have their highest degree in **museum studies** were more likely to select **worried, bored, angry, or frustrated**.
- Participants who have their highest degree in **public history** were more likely to select **worried or frustrated**.
- **Organization region:** Participants who work at an organization in the **South** were more likely to select **angry** or **frustrated**. Participants who work at organizations located in the **West** were less likely to select **worried**.

**Younger respondents reported more negative emotions than their older colleagues.**

<b>Statement</b>	<b>13–28 years</b>	<b>29–44 years</b>	<b>45–60 years</b>	<b>61–79 years</b>	<b>80+ years</b>
Worried	51%	55%	50%	28%	18%
Frustrated	45%	53%	46%	27%	17%
Inspired	39%	34%	39%	50%	47%
Connected to others	42%	35%	34%	50%	64%
Hopeful	32%	30%	32%	38%	37%
Excited	34%	24%	29%	42%	46%
Content	15%	21%	17%	20%	21%
Disappointed	12%	16%	18%	9%	9%
Angry	9%	8%	8%	5%	2%
Sad	3%	8%	6%	5%	1%
Bored	11%	7%	6%	2%	1%

## CONCLUSION

The findings in this report paint a clear and complex picture of the history workforce in the United States. History practitioners are deeply committed to their work and motivated by a strong sense of purpose. Overwhelmingly, the people who work in this field report that they love what they do. At the same time, however, many are navigating low pay, uneven workplace cultures, burnout, and structural barriers that may present challenges for both individual well-being and the long-term sustainability of the field.

There are few simple solutions to the challenges outlined above. Indeed, this report should be viewed as the beginning of a much-needed conversation within our field. There is more to do to contextualize the information from this report to compare it to other sectors, place it in conversation with broader trends in the US workforce, and identify promising areas for institutional or field-wide interventions. Still, this report establishes a shared, evidence-based foundation for conversations the field has been having—often urgently, sometimes uneasily—for years. By grounding those conversations in data, this report provides a clearer basis for reflection, accountability, and action across organizations of all sizes and types. We hope readers of this report will embrace this opportunity to consider how we collectively can use this data to build a stronger, more inclusive, more sustainable field.

For AASLH, these findings will shape our work in the years ahead. We will use this research to inform professional development and leadership programming, support peer learning among history organizations, and guide conversations with funders, partners, and policymakers about what it will take to build a healthier, more equitable history workforce. The data will also help us ask better questions—about compensation standards, career pathways, workplace culture, and the systems that structure opportunity and exclusion in the field. That work will be challenging, and it is only just beginning.

Just as importantly, this survey marks the beginning of a longer-term research agenda. As a baseline, it allows the field to track change over time and to assess whether collective efforts are making a meaningful difference. Future research, deeper analysis, and continued dialogue will be essential as the history field navigates a period of significant social, political, and economic change.

In closing, AASLH views this report not as an endpoint, but as an invitation—to practitioners, leaders, boards, funders, and allies—to engage with the data, reflect honestly on what it reveals, and participate in shaping what comes next. The strength of the history field has always rested in its people. Ensuring that those people are supported, valued, and able to thrive is essential to the work ahead.