

ISSUE BRIEF

MATRICULATING STUDENT SURVEY 2013

Demographics

METHODS

In 2013, the Physician Assistant Education Association (PAEA or the Association) developed and administered the Matriculating Student Survey (MSS). The MSS seeks information from entering physician assistant (PA) students to improve education, recruitment, and retention. The survey was based on a previous student survey administered in collaboration with the American Academy of Physician Assistants, as well as question items from the AAMC Matriculating Student Questionnaire and HERI's College Senior Survey. Human subjects review determined that the study was exempt.

The survey was sent to 170 PAEA member program directors via email containing instructions and an email and survey link to forward to students in September 2013. Two programs were sent the same materials closer to their October and November start dates. In order to achieve an adequate response rate, PAEA research staff sent reminder emails to non-respondents and conducted follow-up phone calls through December 2013. Following the identification of duplicate cases, the survey garnered 4,197 unique responses. Based upon program director class size responses and data from the 2013 Annual Program Survey, we estimate a response rate of 52%.

RESULTS

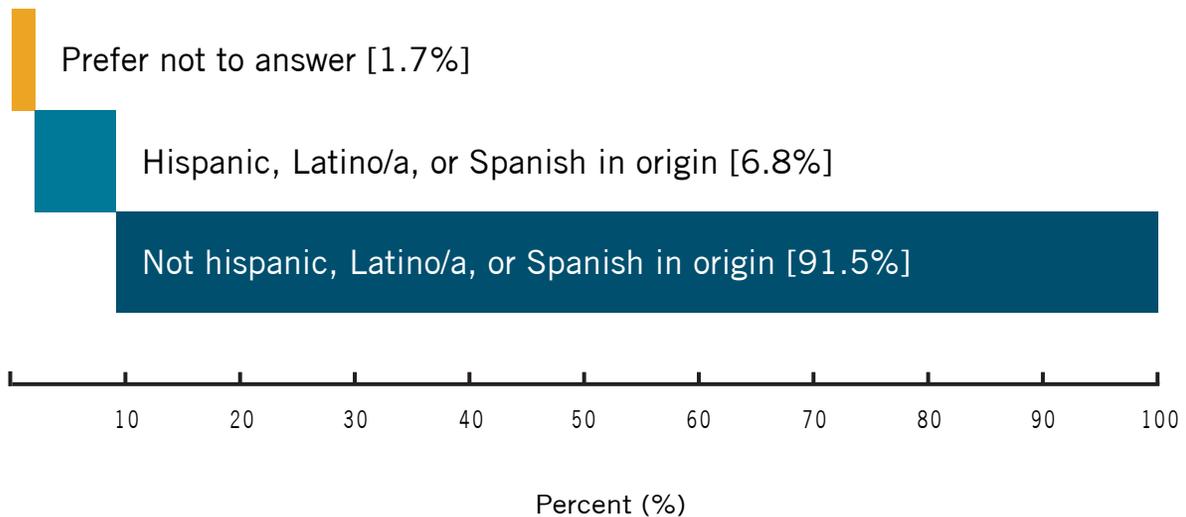
Most responding students entered PA education through a professional phase, with only 7.6% matriculating via a pre-professional track (typically freshman admission). The majority of students begin their professional studies in the month of August (31.8%), followed by May (25.7%), and June (13.1%).

Approximately three-quarters of the respondents were female (73.2%) and the average age of respondents was 26.8 years old. Most students were single (67.7%), though just over a quarter were married (26.4%). A little over two percent were divorced and over one percent were in a domestic partnership/civil union. Most students (85.1%) have no legal dependents. For the nearly 15% of students that reported having legal dependents other than themselves, the average number of dependents was 2.02, with a range of 1 to 7 dependents. Over 30% of respondents said they were considered a dependent of their parents.

As shown in Figure 1, only 6.8% of respondents were Hispanic, Latino/a, or Spanish in origin. Figure 2 shows the racial composition of the respondents. Eighty-three percent of responding matriculants were white and 7% were Asian. Figure 3 illustrates the geographic environments that students spent the most time in before entering PA school. Half of respondents reported spending most of their time in a suburban setting. One quarter of respondents reported spending most of their time in a rural environment, followed by 15% in an inner-city setting.

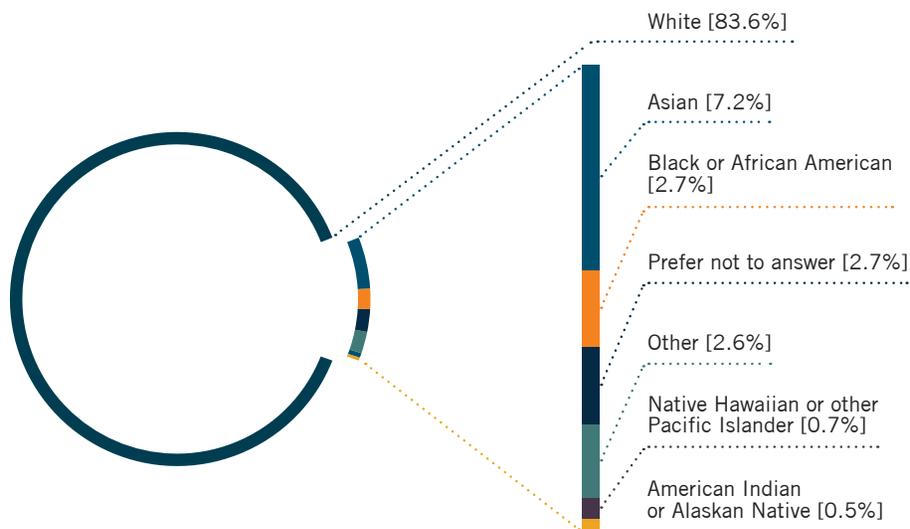
ethnicity

Figure 1: Responding Matriculants by Ethnicity



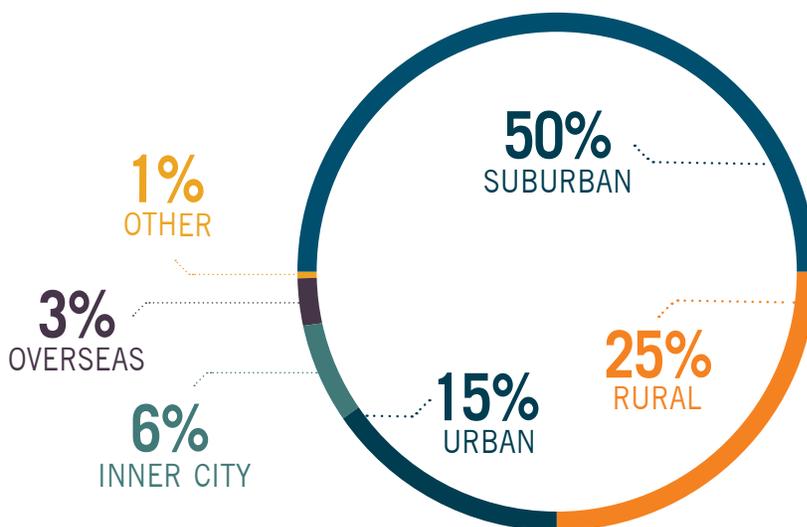
racial composition

Figure 2: Responding Matriculants by Race



geographic distribution

Figure 3: Geographic Environment of Responding Matriculants



A little over 4% of responding matriculants not enrolled in the military PA program reported that they are or have served in the military. Of those who reported military service, 60% have completed their commitment, with 20% still on active duty or in the active reserve. Nearly 77% of those with military experience reported that they received health care-related training or experience while in the military.

LIMITATIONS

Although there was a robust response rate, it is not certain that the data represents the entire PA student population for the 2013 cohort. However, key demographics are fairly similar to those obtained from programs via the Annual Program Survey. Due to delays in the release of the survey, most programs did not receive the survey at or near the time of matriculation. This has been corrected for the 2014 administration, which is being administered to programs in the month they matriculate a first-year class.