

# SAA 2020 Member Needs Assessment

## Executive Summary

The Society for American Archaeology administered its 2020 Member Assessment with the goals of better understanding the needs and attitudes of members. As with the 2003, 2010, and 2015 member needs assessments, the full survey findings are available at [saa.org](http://saa.org), behind the member login portal.

The electronic survey was hosted by Strategies 360 (“S360”). All 2019 members and 2020 members as of December 20, 2019, were invited to participate, a total of 7,238. The survey was conducted from January 27 to February 12, with social media reminders and email reminders issued on February 7 and February 11.

In total, 839 members responded, for a response rate of 11.6%.

746 respondents were from within the US. Full demographics are available at the end of this document. All respondent information has been kept confidential, and no individual respondents are identified in the course of this report.

The survey was administered with the assistance of S360. S360 is a full-service research, public affairs, and communications firm, bringing deep outreach and education expertise and providing a wide range of public communications services.

SAA will use this information to inform its programming and communications moving forward and will continue to engage members in discussion about the goals and objectives of the Society.

### On response

The response rate for this survey was substantially lower than for historical surveys (2003, 2015 and 2010). Several factors likely contributed to this, including

- Shorter time in the field
- No incentive for completion
- Respondent exhaustion from prior membership votes (annual election in January 2020 & bylaws referendum in November 2019)

Both the election and bylaws referendum had turnout rates of 27.3% and 22.7%, respectively.

The 10% threshold still provides enough data for statistically-significant results to be extrapolated, but may not capture all the nuances that a survey of a larger share of membership would reveal.

Key findings include:

## Satisfaction

- The most consistent levels of satisfaction with SAA were 5 & 6 across all groups (with 1 being “Extremely Unsatisfied” and 7 being “Extremely Satisfied.”)
- 70% of respondents (n=594) report a positive overall satisfaction with SAA, and 18% (n=153) indicate overall negative satisfaction. While the number of members who are very dissatisfied with the Society has increased since the Member Needs Assessment of 2015, the number of members who are very satisfied with the Society has also increased (from 16.7% in 2010 to 23.2% in 2015 to 37.3% in 2020).
- Members from the CRM sector appear to have higher percentages who are dissatisfied with the Society (as was true in 2010 and 2015 surveys). As with those earlier surveys, approval ratings are lower among those who have been members for fewer than 10 years (5% of these members indicated they were extremely dissatisfied); members who gave their ages as between 18-34 (5% are extremely dissatisfied) and 35-54 (4% were extremely dissatisfied). Unlike past years, students also had a disproportionately higher percentage of respondents who expressed dissatisfaction with the Society; 4% of student respondents indicated they were extremely dissatisfied.
- 38% (n = 319) of the respondents felt that the Society was *not* effectively serving all constituencies. This figure is inclusive of:
  - 44% of women and 51% of ages 18-34
  - 48% of members less than 10 years, 38% of 10-30 year members, and 28% of 30+ year members
  - 51% of 18-34 year old members, 44% of 35-54, 33% of 55-64, and 23% of 65+
  - 38% of respondents with BA/MA/MS degrees, 39% of PhD+
  - SAA’s highest approval by industry (after retired at 38%) is academic at 25%; the lowest is students at 11%
  - Non-academic professionals are rated highly as underserved by those who believe SAA is doing enough to address systems of power (35%), those who work in government (31%), and those who did not join as students (27%)

## SAA Job Performance

Among specific responses to the questions, some populations were particularly overrepresented. In the interest of helping understand groups within the Society and how they responded, we are providing more description of who answered the questions. All cross-tabulated data is available at the end of this document.

- Improving the practice of archaeology and promoting archaeological ethics
  - 51% rate good
    - Highest rate (excellent): 79% of those satisfied with SAA, 78% of those who believe SAA is doing enough to address power/retired/65+
    - Lowest rate (poor): 22% of those who do not believe SAA is effective in serving diverse constituencies ; 19% of 18-34
- Creating & sharing knowledge about the archaeological past
  - 51% rate good
    - Highest rate: 89% of students
    - Lowest rate: 12% of unsatisfied rate poor, 8% of those who do not believe SAA is serving the entire community

- Serving as a bond among archaeologists worldwide in all segments of the archaeological community.
  - Plurality: 50% rate good
    - Highest rate: 68% of retired, 84% of those who believe SAA is effectively serving the whole community
    - Lowest rate: 33% of unsatisfied, 22% who believe SAA is not effectively serving whole community
- Advocating for archaeology in the legislative and public policy arenas
  - Plurality: 45% rate good
    - Highest rate: 54% of those extremely satisfied with SAA, 45% of those who believe SAA is effectively serving whole community, 44% of CRM
    - Lowest rate: 13% of those unsatisfied with SAA
- Educating the general public about the value of cultural heritage
  - Plurality: 45% rate fair
    - Highest rate: Those extremely satisfied with SAA (19%), past leaders & those who did not join as student (8%)
    - Lowest rate: 30% of those who feel SAAA is not effectively serving whole community, 32% of those who believe SAA is effectively serving diverse constituencies 32%, 26% of 18-34 and those who believe SAA must do much more to address power
- Serving the needs of the diverse constituencies that comprise its membership
  - Plurality: 38% rate good
    - Highest rate: 14% of retired, 21% of those who believe SA is effectively serving whole community, 32% of those extremely satisfied with SAA
    - Lowest rate: 63% of those unsatisfied with SAA, 41% of 18-34, 44% of those who believe SAA must do much more to address power
- Is SAA effectively serving all constituencies and segments of the archaeological community?
  - 38% no, 38% not sure, 23% yes
    - Highest for yes
      - 62% of extremely satisfied, 42% of “doing enough to address power”, 38% of retired/65+
    - Highest for no
      - 80% of unsatisfied, 51% of 18-34
    - Highest for unsure
      - 65% of “not sure if serving diverse constituencies effectively”, 51% of “need to do somewhat more to address power”
- Open-ended: What groups or constituencies are not being effectively served by the Society for American Archaeology? In your opinion, what can the SAA do to better serve these groups? Please be specific.
  - Highest 3: People of color (33%), women (28%), tribal/indigenous peoples (26%)
  - 6% (51) of respondents suggested new rules and policies
  - 5% (42) requested change in leadership/staff

- How effective is the SAA in including diverse perspectives and approaches to our discipline, especially those that have historically been discriminated against?
  - Plurality: 46% somewhat effective
    - Highest rate (extremely effective): 25% of those who feel SAA is serving the archaeological community well, 24% of those extremely satisfied with SAA
    - Lowest rate (not at all effective): 31% of those unsatisfied with SAA

## Membership

- Historical data
  - In 2015, 68.7% of members reported continuous membership. 52.1% rejoined in order to present a paper, and 30.2% rejoined for economics.
  - In 2010, 76.1% of members reported continuous membership. 37.2% rejoined in order to present a paper, and 34.5% rejoined for economics.
- 71% of the 2020 respondents have had continuous membership in the Society, a slight increase since 2015.
- 26% of respondents have considered cancelling their membership due to cost (n = 175). 23% considered cancelling due to the events of the Albuquerque meeting. (n = 155).
- As with the 2010 and 2015 member needs assessment surveys, members rejoin to present a paper (49.8%) and because of economics (45.1%) and a job change (28.1%). The ranking is consistent with prior surveys.
- Continuous membership was highest among those who had been members for 30+ years (89%)
- Discontinuous membership highest among those “neither satisfied or dissatisfied with SAA” (42%) and ages 35-54 (41%)
- 90% of those who said SAA should be doing much more to address power first joined as a student.
- 29% of members outside US did not join as students; 17% of overall survey respondents did not join as students.

## Communication

- This member needs assessment folded Social Media analysis into broader questions about how members like to receive news about the Society.
- Members prefer print and email contact over social media, with 63% of all members ranking email newsletters first (n = 529).
- 64% of members have never visited the SAA Twitter account, and 91% have never visited the Facebook page.
- Every measured demographic prefers email.
  - By age, 66% of 18-34 respondents ranked it first, 67% of 35-54, 65% of 55-64, and 56% of 65+.
  - Students rank the highest out of industries, with 73% putting it first as their preferred method. CRM and retired respondents both place it at 66%.

- The lowest email preference is among non-white respondents and those who didn't join SAA as students, at 55% each.
- No question was asked about often respondents would like to be contacted, only how often they currently receive information from SAA.
- The highest preference for social media was amongst those who identified themselves as unsatisfied with SAA, ranking social media first 16% of the time (but ranked social media last 35% of the time, still in line with the overall results)

## Products and Services

As with the 2015 Member Needs Assessment survey, over half of respondents (55%) state they read *American Antiquity* at least once a month making it one of the most important member benefits. Emails like the Government Affairs Update also ranked very high, as it did in 2015.

Some products and services reported very low usage. Over six in ten members do not use the e-Communities and more than 50% of the membership reported not using *Latin American Antiquity*.

- Website
  - 54% access website a couple of times a year
    - Highest access rate: 11% of current leaders access a few times a week
    - Lowest access rate: 5% of retired have never accessed website
- Online Seminar Series
  - 75% access once a year/never
    - Highest access rate: 13% of current leaders, 13% of those extremely satisfied with SAA, & 11% of Outside US access monthly+
    - Lowest access rate: 60% of those unsatisfied with SAA have never accessed
- SAA Press Archives
  - 76% access once a year/never
    - Highest access: 9% of those extremely satisfied with SAA, 7% of 18-34 access monthly+
    - Lowest access: 65% of those unsatisfied with SAA have never accessed
- *The SAA Archaeological Record* (online & print)
  - Plurality: 47% access a couple times/year
    - Highest access: 51% of 30+ year members access monthly+
    - Lowest access: 12% of those unsatisfied with SAA & 11% of <10 year members have never accessed
- *American Antiquity* Journal
  - 53% access monthly+
    - Highest access: 64% of 30+ year members access monthly+
    - Lowest access: 9% of members outside US have never accessed, 9% of those who believe SAA is not effective in serving diverse constituencies have never accessed

- *Latin American Antiquity Journal*
  - 66% access once a year/never
    - Highest access: 35% Outside US access monthly+, 33% of students access monthly+
    - Lowest access: 72% of CRM never access
- *Advances in Archaeological Practice Journal*
  - Plurality: 45% access once a year/never
    - Highest access: 31% of current leaders, 24% academics, 23% of those who think SAA should be doing much more to address power, 23% of men, 23% of unsatisfied access monthly+
    - Lowest access: 38% of retired never access
- Interest Group activities or reports
  - Plurality: 48% access once a year/never
    - Highest access: 25% of current leaders, 19% of extremely satisfied
    - Lowest access: 39% of those not sure if SAA is effective at serving diverse constituencies never accessed
- SAA e-communities
  - 75% access once a year/never
    - Highest access: 16% of extremely satisfied, 12% students/current leaders
    - Lowest access: 75% of those not sure if SAA is effective at serving diverse constituencies never accessed
      - All demographics except current leaders were in 3<sup>rd</sup> quartile (50-75%)
- SAA Online member directory
  - 72% access once a year/never
    - Highest access: 20% of current leaders, 13% of 30% members access monthly+
    - Lowest access: 66% of members <10 years never access
- Emails from SAA (Notes from HQ and Government Affairs update)
  - 55% access monthly+
    - Highest access: 68% of past leaders, 62% of retired access monthly+
    - Lowest access: 23% of students, 19% of those unsatisfied with SAA never access

## Mission

- There is little consensus on a single mission for SAA. When the three potential mission statements were placed in contention with one another, none achieved a clear majority and most were within 1-2 points of one another.
- In general, members under the age of 45 preferred a mission centered around improving the practice and promoting archaeological ethics in comparison to the other options presented. By contrast, members over 65 preferred a mission statement that focuses on creating and sharing knowledge about the archaeological past. Middle-aged members held a stronger preference for a SAA that connects members.

- The survey had a specific question to understand how members see the Society's role in relation to the question of addressing power. The question text read: *Overall, do you think the Society for American Archaeology should put more of a priority on addressing systems of power in the archaeological community that limit member participation and potential for success, or are the SAAs current efforts already meeting expectations?*
  - 34% answered "much more of a priority"
    - Highest rate (much more of a priority): 18-34 (65%)
  - Lowest rate (less of a priority): Those who believe SAA is serving the community well (19%)
- Head to head matchups of mission statements
  - Create & share knowledge (47%) vs. Connect members & foster academic discourse (48%)
    - Highest for 1: retired (58%), 65+ (55%)
      - Highest for "strongly 1": past leaders (30%), those extremely satisfied/retired (27%)
    - Highest for 2: 18-34 (60%)
      - Highest for "strongly 2": Students (26%)
  - Create & share knowledge (44%) vs improve practice of archaeology (51%)
    - Highest for 1: retired (65%)
      - Highest for "Strongly 1": past leaders (30%)
    - Highest for 2: 18-34 (64%), women (62%)
      - Highest for "Strongly 2": 18-34 (28%), those who believe SAA must do much more to address power (28%)
  - Connect members and foster academic discourse (45%) vs improve practice of archaeology (47%)
    - Highest for 1: Those who believe SAA is effectively serving community (58%), those extremely satisfied with SAA (57%)
      - Highest for "strongly 1": those extremely satisfied with SAA (23%)
    - Highest for 2: US Midwest (58%), 18-34 (54%)
      - Highest for "strongly 2": CRM (25%), non-white (25%)
- Ranking of missions
  - When asked to rank missions, "improving practice and ethics" was ranked highest by every group except 55-64 (who ranked "conservation of record" highest), 65+ (same), retired (same), those who preferred knowledge vs. ethics (same), those who preferred discourse vs. ethics (ranked "serving as a bond in community" highest)
  - Engaging members in leadership was consistently ranked the lowest of all missions
- Open Ended mission definition
  - 31% of answers included phrasing about representing and promoting archaeological practice
    - Highest among CRM and those unsatisfied with SAA (37% each)
  - 28% of answers included phrasing about preserving and disseminating the archaeological record, techniques & knowledge
    - Highest among those who did not join as students (33%)

- 27% of answers included phrasing about connecting members and fostering academic discourse
  - Highest among those who preferred a discourse-focused to ethics-centered mission (36%)

#### Inclusion and Marginalization

The SAA board has forwarded the raw data to the Intersectionality Task Force, to analyze respondents' demographics in more detail. That task force will produce a separate report of their findings, which will also be disseminated to SAA members.

- 51% of members feel that the Society is doing only a “fair” or “poor” job including members in the Society’s governance. 55% feel the same about efforts to serve the diverse constituencies of SAA’s members.
- 39% of respondents (n = 326) report experiencing marginalization within the discipline of archaeology based on their identity.
  - 61% of those unsatisfied with SAA, 60% of women
- Contributing factors of marginalization were reported as
  - Gender (77%), Class (23%), other (19%), ethnicity (13%)
- Location of marginalizing incident
  - Fieldwork (73%), workplace (61%), classroom (44%), SAA Annual Meeting (31%)

#### Other Findings

- Past & present leaders have much higher approval of SAA committees (87 & 90%) than those who have never held leadership (56%)
- 18-34 approve of committees at 56%, staff at 42%, Board at 26%
- Approval for all SAA groups increases over length of membership
- No group interacts with SAA communications once a week more than 25%
- SAA’s Instagram is consistently the most “never” interacted-with communication (all groups in high 80s/low 90s)
- No group reported using any SAA service once a week or more at greater than a 25% rate
- 77% of 18-34 interact with SAA email newsletters at least once a month (next highest is current leaders at 78%)
- 50-75% of all demographics (except current leaders at 45%) have never used the e-communities
- Website preference is highest for non-white respondents, at 21%
- Students & academics are the most likely to use Latin American antiquity at least once a month (33% and 28%)

#### Conclusions and Recommendations

There is room for improvement in many key areas, but SAA has enough engaged members to make significant progress with a well-defined plan.



Members consistently prefer email as a communication method and deprioritize social media. There may be many reasons for this, including the general dominance of email in personal and professional life, but SAA will still face pressure to retain a social media presence due to the needs of reaching unsatisfied members, and the expectations of a 21<sup>st</sup> century organization.

Older members consistently show higher approval for SAA and a greater appreciation for the status quo, while younger members tend to be less satisfied with the current state of the organization and its efforts to serve the community.

Presenting a paper continues to be one of the primary reasons that members join or re-join the Society. This suggests there is room for SAA to expand its utility to members while preserving this core value.

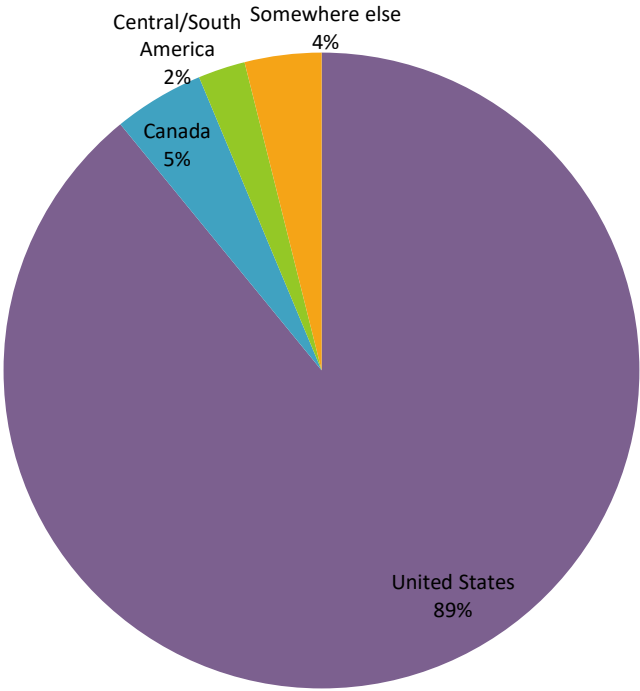
Members who are generally less-satisfied with their membership correlate with members who report very low use of the various products and services. It will be important for the Society to come up with ways to help membership learn more about the benefits of membership and help introduce members to specific products and services.

The multiplicity of missions identified and rated by respondents shows that SAA is expected to fulfill a variety of roles simultaneously, and that there is enough support for each major listed mission to justify continued investment.

Overall, the results of the survey show that the longer an individual has been a member, and the more that they have served in leadership or interacted with SAA, the higher approval they have toward SAA as a whole. The younger members (N=136) who completed the survey were less satisfied with SAA than individuals who had been members longer and/or had served in leadership or interacted with SAA. We don't know the reasons for the low response rate to this survey, which complicates extrapolating from the results. SAA should consider how to more effectively incorporate younger members into the organizational structure without imposing a burden early in their careers. SAA also has to be concerned about the low response rate to this survey and how future surveys should be conducted to draw participation levels comparable to historic levels.

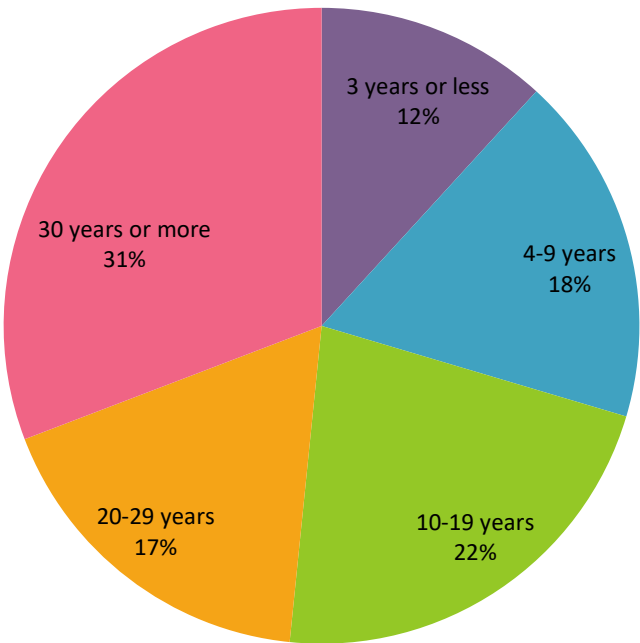
Demographics

In which country or region do you currently reside?



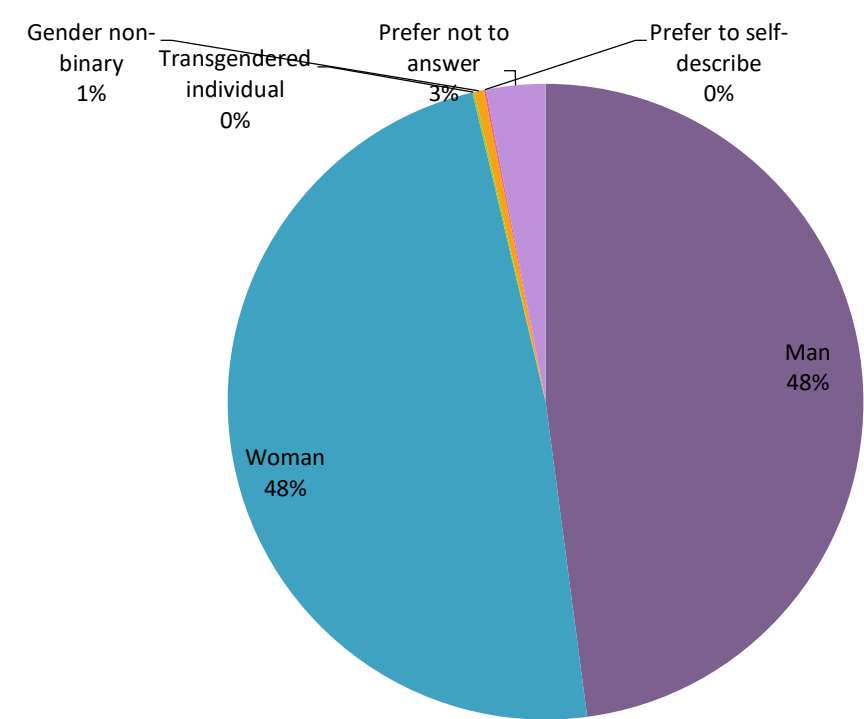
Value	Percent	Count
United States	89.1%	732
Canada	4.6%	38
Central/South America	2.4%	20
Somewhere else	3.9%	32
	Totals	822

How long have you been a member of the Society for American Archaeology?



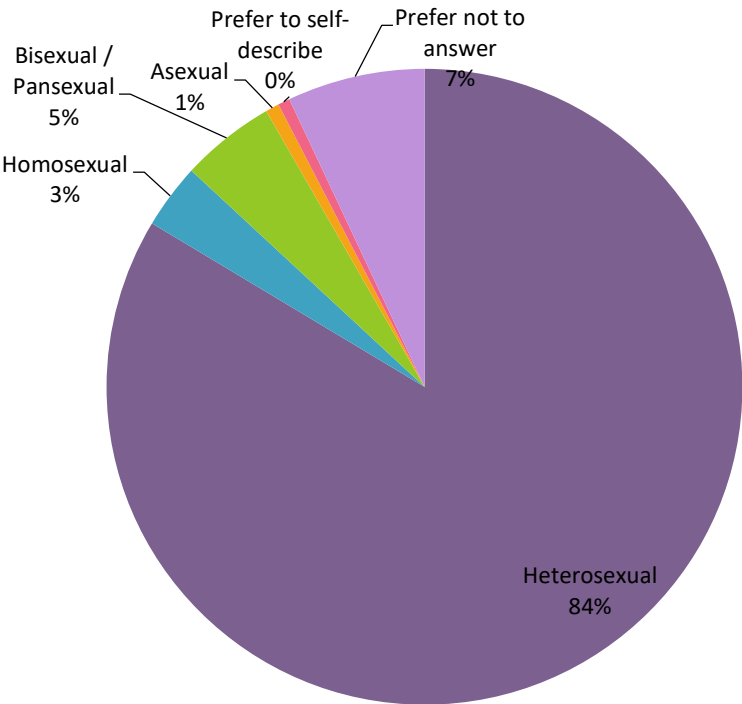
Value	Percent	Count
3 years or less	11.8%	97
4-9 years	17.8%	146
10-19 years	22.0%	181
20-29 years	17.6%	145
30 years or more	30.8%	253
	Totals	822

How would you describe your gender?



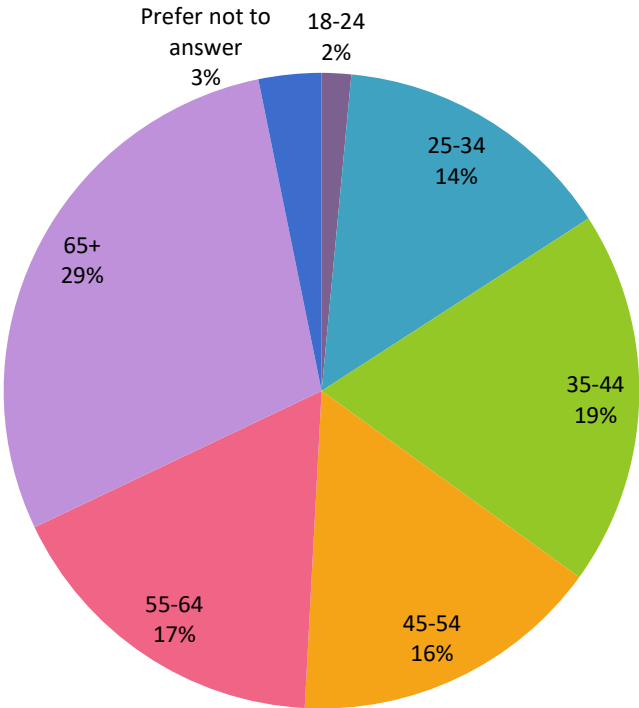
Value	Percent	Count
Man	47.9%	393
Woman	48.4%	397
Transgendered individual	0.1%	1
Gender non-binary	0.5%	4
Prefer to self-describe	0.1%	1
Prefer not to answer	3.0%	25
	Totals	821

How would you describe your sexual orientation?



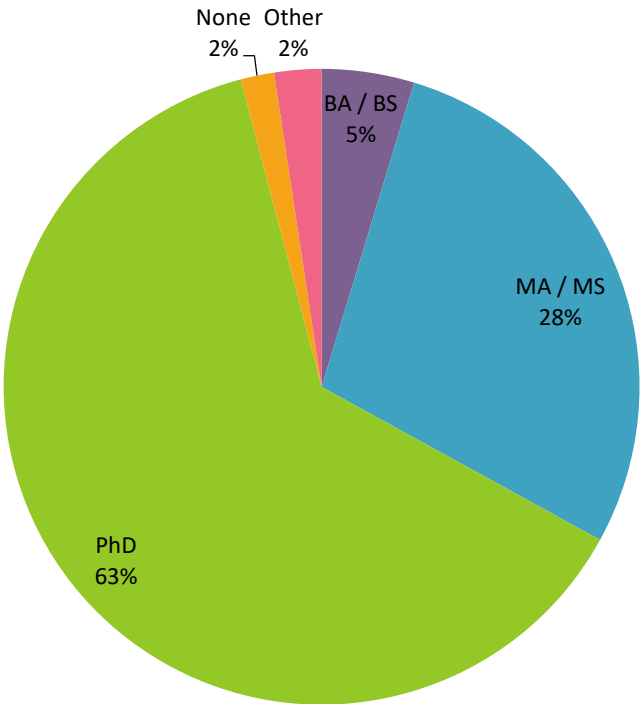
Value	Percent	Count
Heterosexual	83.6%	682
Homosexual	3.3%	27
Bisexual / Pansexual	4.8%	39
Asexual	0.7%	6
Prefer to self-describe	0.6%	5
Prefer not to answer	7.0%	57
	Totals	816

Which of the following best describes your age?



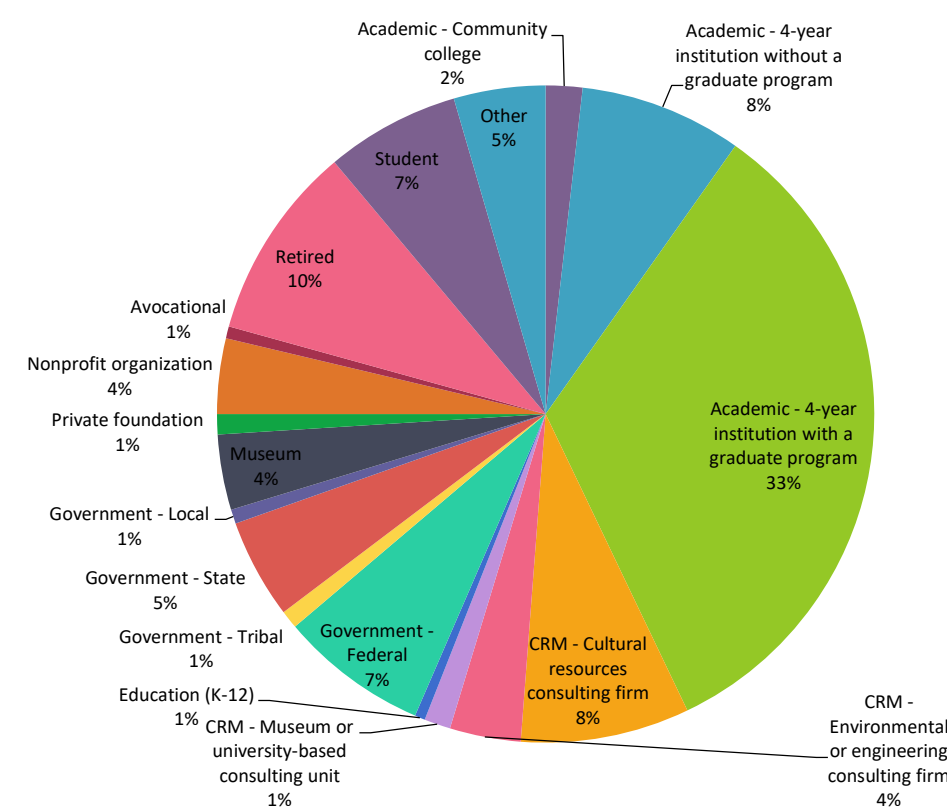
Value	Percent	Count
18-24	1.5%	12
25-34	14.4%	118
35-44	19.1%	156
45-54	15.9%	130
55-64	17.1%	140
65+	28.9%	236
Prefer not to answer	3.2%	26
	Totals	818

What is your highest degree in Anthropology / Archaeology?



Value	Percent	Count
BA / BS	4.7%	38
MA / MS	28.3%	231
PhD	62.9%	514
None	1.7%	14
Other	2.4%	20
	Totals	817

Please indicate your primary work setting from the following list:

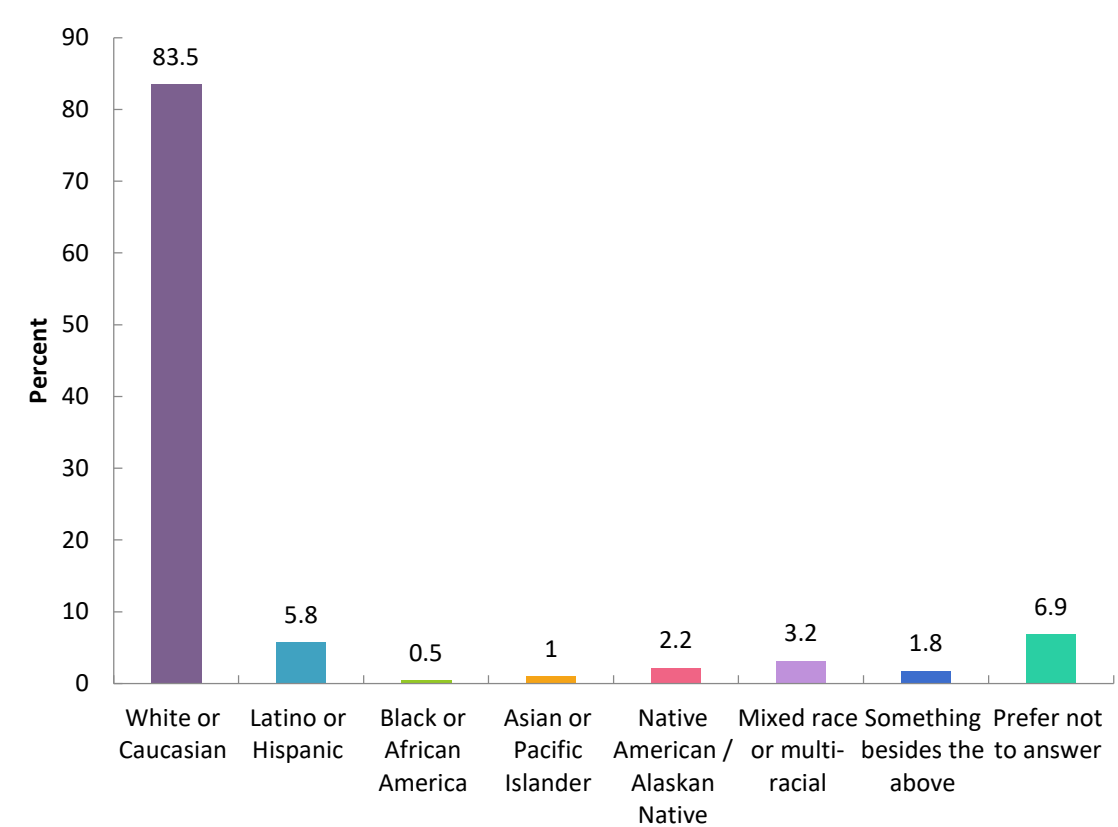


Value	Percent	Count
Academic - Community college	1.8%	15
Academic - 4-year institution without a graduate program	8.0%	66
Academic - 4-year institution with a graduate program	33.1%	272
CRM - Cultural resources consulting firm	8.3%	68
CRM - Environmental or engineering consulting firm	3.5%	29



CRM - Museum or university-based consulting unit	1.3%	11
Education (K-12)	0.5%	4
Government - Federal	7.3%	60
Government - Tribal	0.9%	7
Government - State	4.9%	40
Government - Local	0.7%	6
Museum	3.7%	30
Private foundation	1.0%	8
Nonprofit organization	3.7%	30
Avocational	0.6%	5
Retired	9.6%	79
Student	6.6%	54
Other	4.5%	37
	Totals	821

Which of the following best describes your race? Please check all that apply



Value	Percent	Count
White or Caucasian	83.5%	686
Latino or Hispanic	5.8%	48
Black or African America	0.5%	4
Asian or Pacific Islander	1.0%	8
Native American / Alaskan Native	2.2%	18
Mixed race or multi-racial	3.2%	26

Something besides the above	1.8%	15
Prefer not to answer	6.9%	57