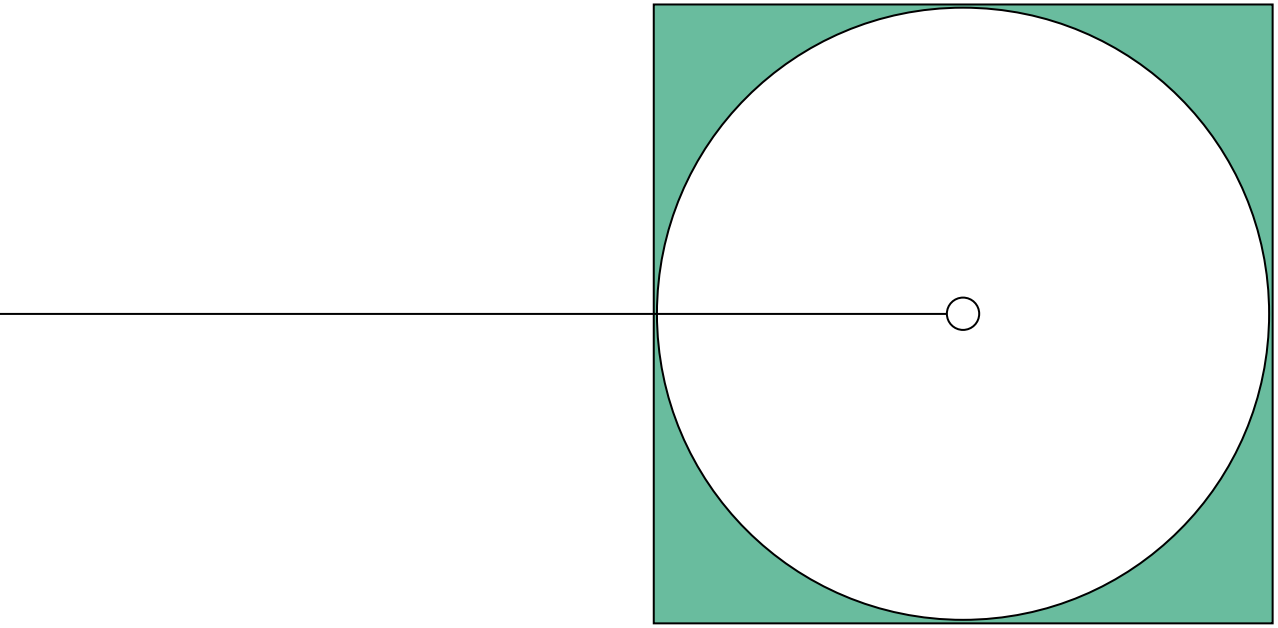


Evaluation Capacity at Kinshasa School of Public Health: Baseline Assessment Results

April 14, 2020

USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

DATA FOR impact

In the DRC, D4I will:

- Partner with Kinshasa School of Public Health (KSPH) on an evaluation of the Integrated Health Program (IHP)
- **Provide training or other support for evaluation capacity strengthening at the school**

Evaluation capacity strengthening can:

- Support the quality of educational programs
- Foster skills transfer to the next generation of program and research practitioners
- Reduce institutional reliance on external experts
- Build marketable skills for stakeholders
- Increase the quality and competitiveness of evaluation-related proposals

Steps in capacity strengthening:

- **Needs assessment**
- Capacity strengthening activity plan
- Implementation
- Follow-up assessment

Needs assessment includes:

- ✓ In-depth interviews in April 2019 with 12 KSPH administrators, including every department chair
- ✓ Structured survey (with online and paper-based options) for all current professors and students, from November 2019–March 2020
- → Results dissemination, with stakeholder feedback used to inform planning for capacity strengthening activities

Summary and recommendations:

- Professors are highly qualified and dedicated, with long average terms at KSPH and high levels of research activity.
- Collaboration on projects and grant proposals is common among professors within departments but relatively rare between departments.
- Pressure on professors to work as independent consultants leads to missed opportunities for institutional promotion and development.

Summary and recommendations (cont.):

- Technical opportunity areas for professors' individual capacity strengthening include proposal writing, mobile survey technology, gender integration, qualitative and inferential analysis.
- Non-technical individual capacity strengthening could target grant-seeking; non-technical institutional strategies could target pre- and post-award support.
- Network and partnership development as well as promotion and advocacy could be included as individual or institutional strategies.
- Professors prefer short-term and online learning forums for individual capacity strengthening.

Summary & recommendations (cont.):

- KSPH draws students from across the country, most of whom are already established clinicians.
- All degree-seeking students take basic courses in monitoring and evaluation (M&E) and research methods.
- Assistantships effectively strengthen individual evaluation capacity among future professors, but unstable funding undercuts this important mechanism.
- The thesis experience also supports individual research capacity strengthening but is likewise affected by funding shortages.

Summary & recommendations (cont.):

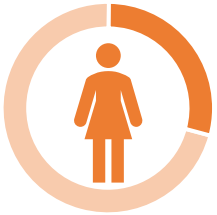
- Opportunity areas for individual capacity strengthening among PhD students include ethical approvals, sampling, and study design.
- MPH students may benefit from capacity strengthening for literature reviews, data dissemination & use, and results report writing.
- Economic evaluation and planning for epidemic response are also high-interest topics.
- Students would prefer individual capacity strengthening through weekly classes, short seminars, or online communities of practice.

RESULTS

Professor Survey

N = 21 professors (across all **5** departments)

71% have a medical degree



29% are female, average age is **57**

71% are former KSPH students

81% have studied abroad

3 out of ten professors earned a PhD at KSPH

6 out of ten professors earned an MPH at KSPH

90% worked as teaching assistants or *chefs de travaux* at the school

29% have held a professional job outside the DRC

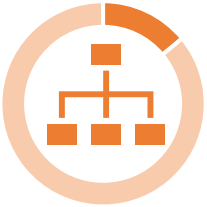
Respondents have **1 to 29** years experience as KSPH professors, **10.2** years on average

100% say they will “very likely” hold their current position in 12 months

Professeur ordinaire (24%)

Professeur titulaire (14%)

Associate professor (62%)



14% have served as department chair

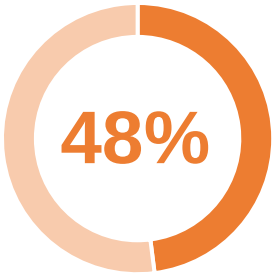
100% have full-time appointments

71% left full-time jobs to join KSPH

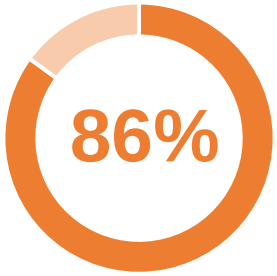
62% currently do other paid work

The average professor spends **39.8 hours** per week on work related to their KSPH position

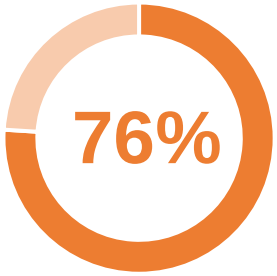
% who have taught or helped teach (course):



Monitoring & Evaluation

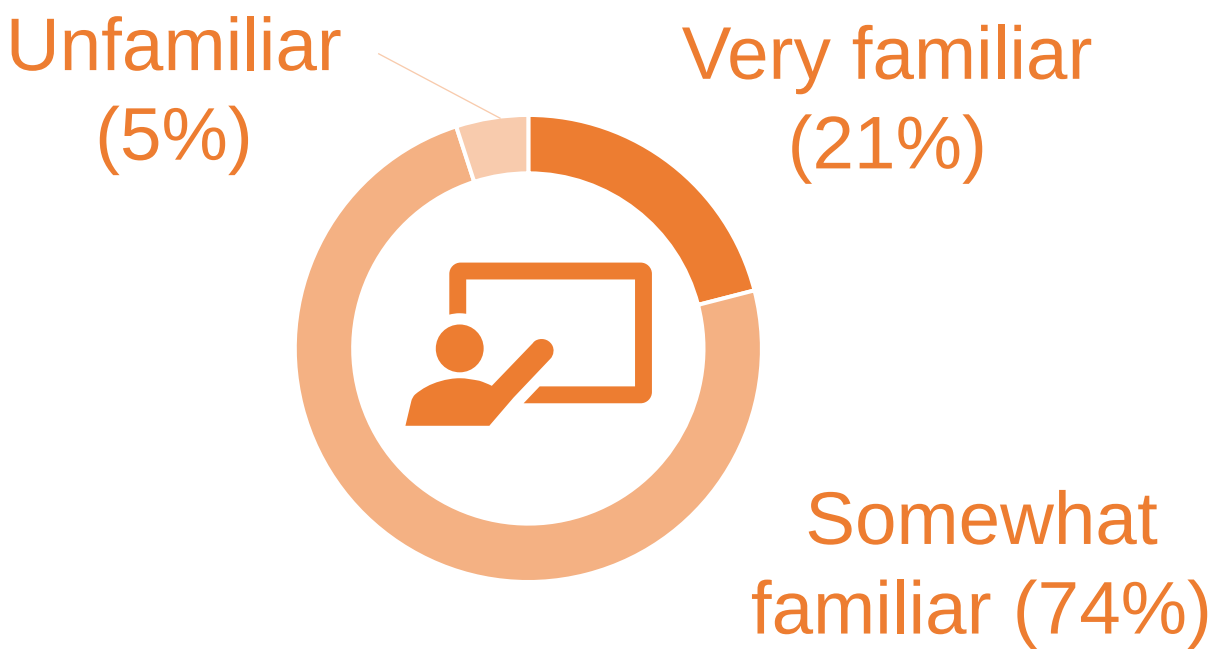


Research methods

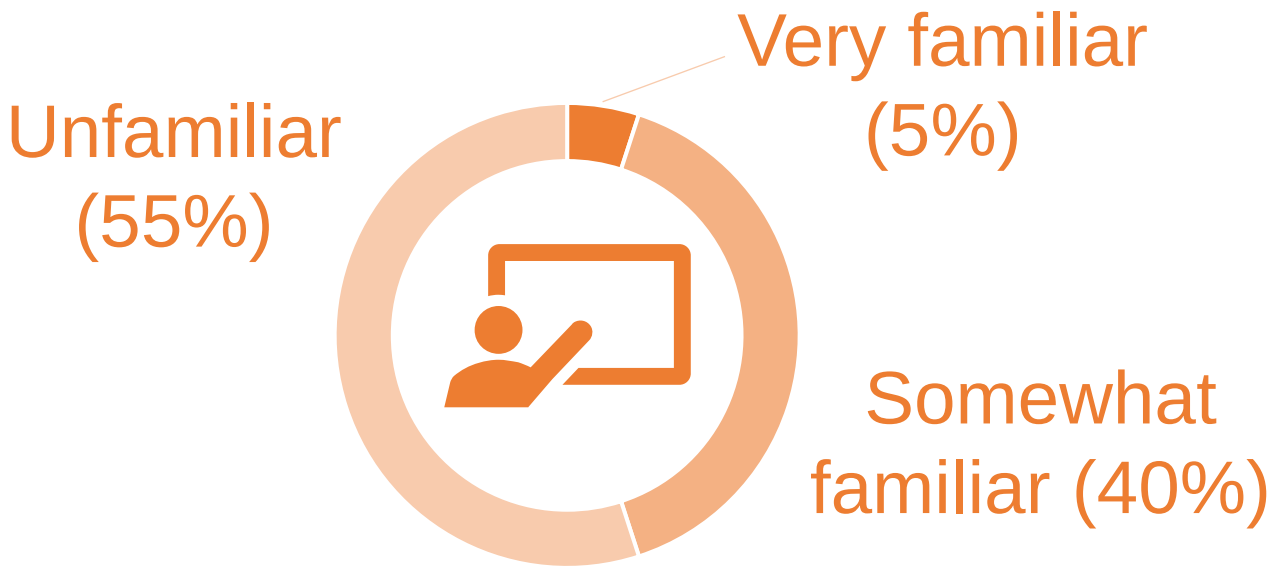


Other M&E or research course

“How familiar are you with the evaluation work being done by **others in your department**?”



“How familiar are you with the evaluation work being done by **those in other departments**?”

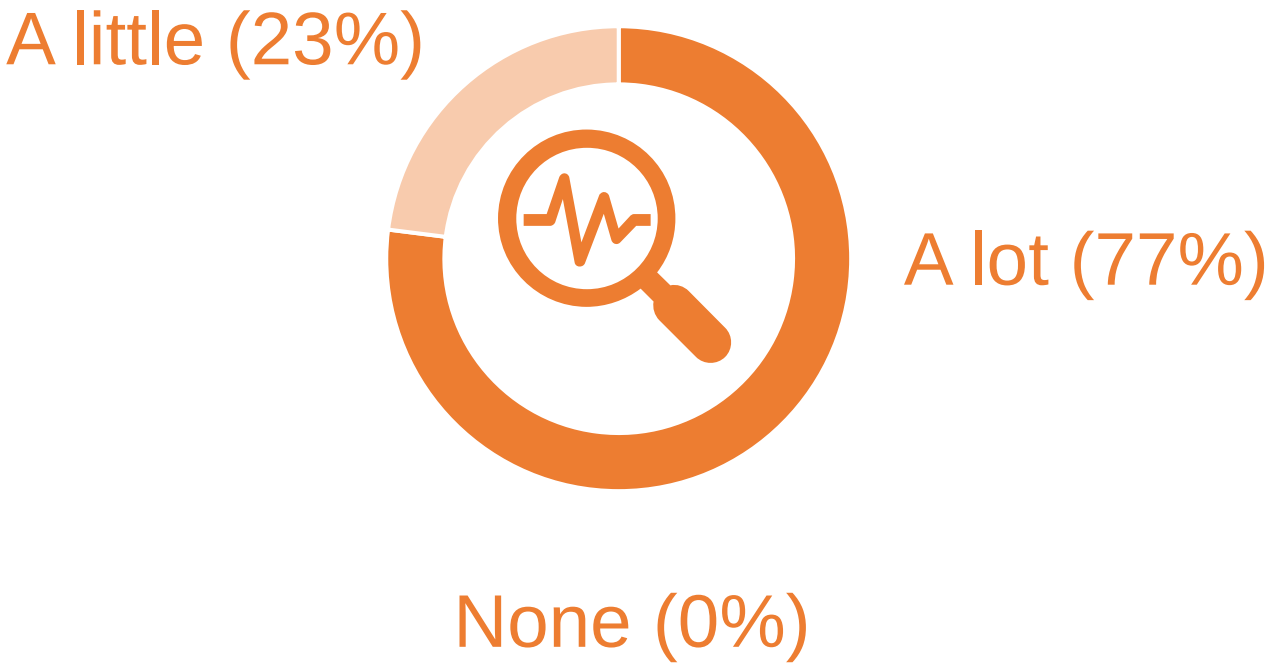


67% of professors say they currently mentor at least one KSPH student

Mentors have **1 to 12** mentees, and **5** on average

Mentors spend **1 to 25 hours** each week on mentorship, **7.2** on average

“How much of your mentorship is intended to support students’ development as researchers?”



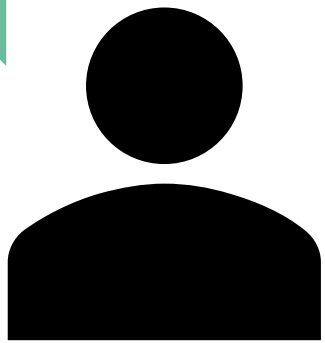
Professors spend the most time on **teaching and student support.**

Manuscripts and seeking or working on grants are also high on the list.

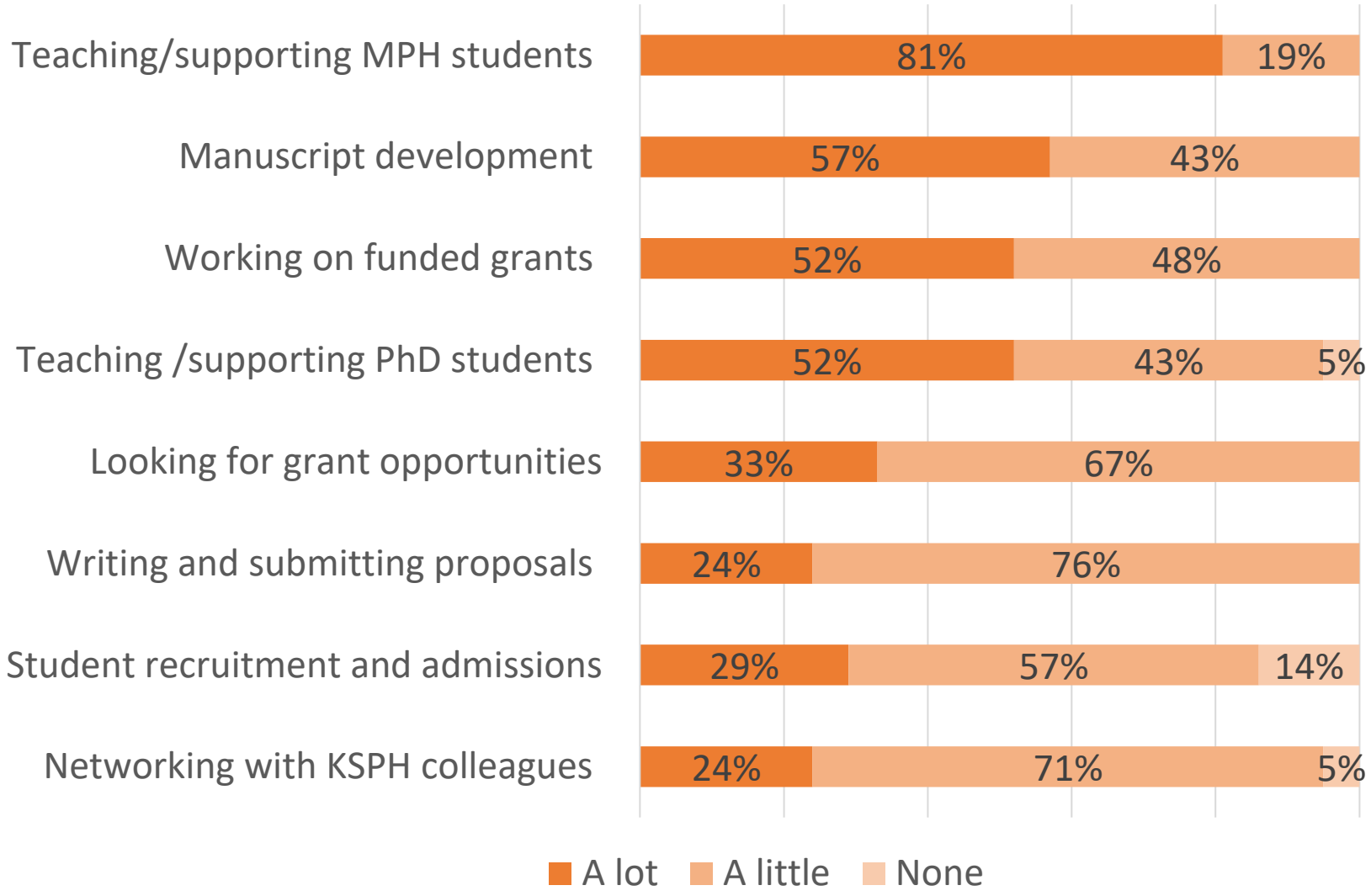
Networking and service activities take up relatively less of professors' time.

“The school has three missions: training, research and community service. We have many research projects with NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) and other partners.”

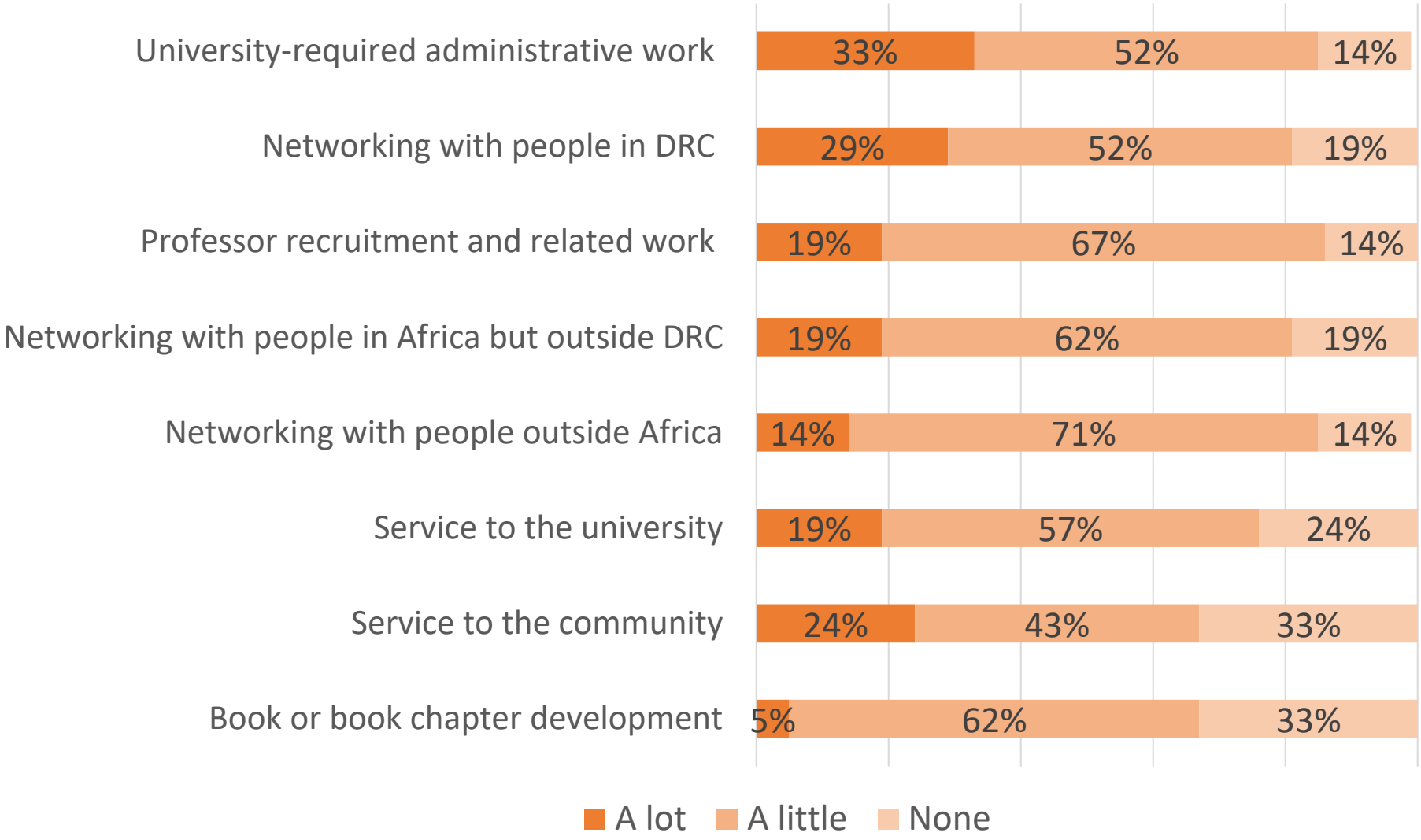
(School administrator)



Time use: “How much time do you spend on…?”

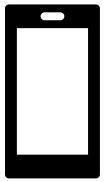


Time use: “How much time do you spend on…?”



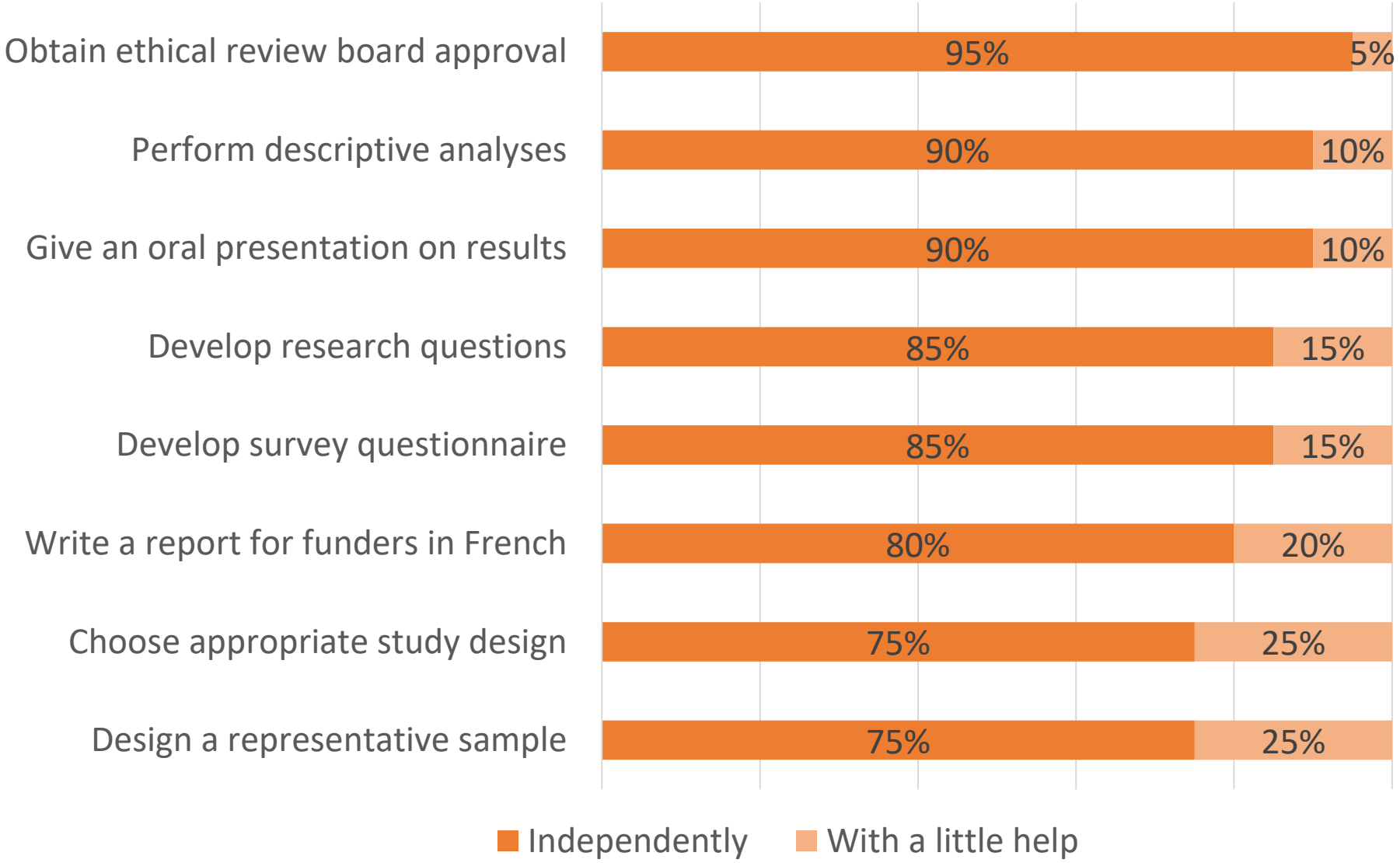
Self-efficacy is highest for **study development, research ethics, descriptive analyses and manuscript writing.**

Professors can also confidently direct **sampling, paper-based data collection, and data dissemination and use planning.**

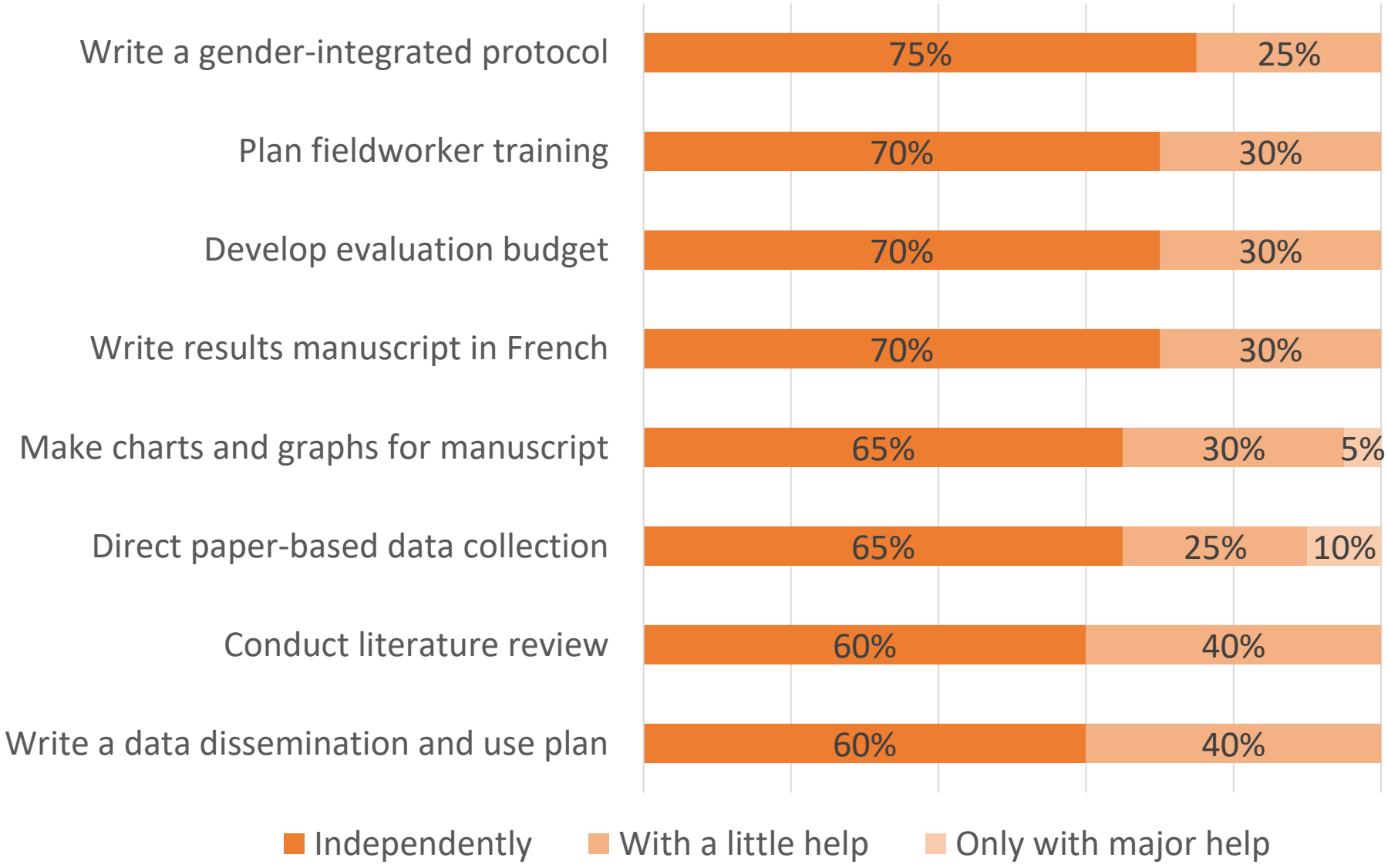


Mobile technology, gender integration and inferential analysis are growth areas.

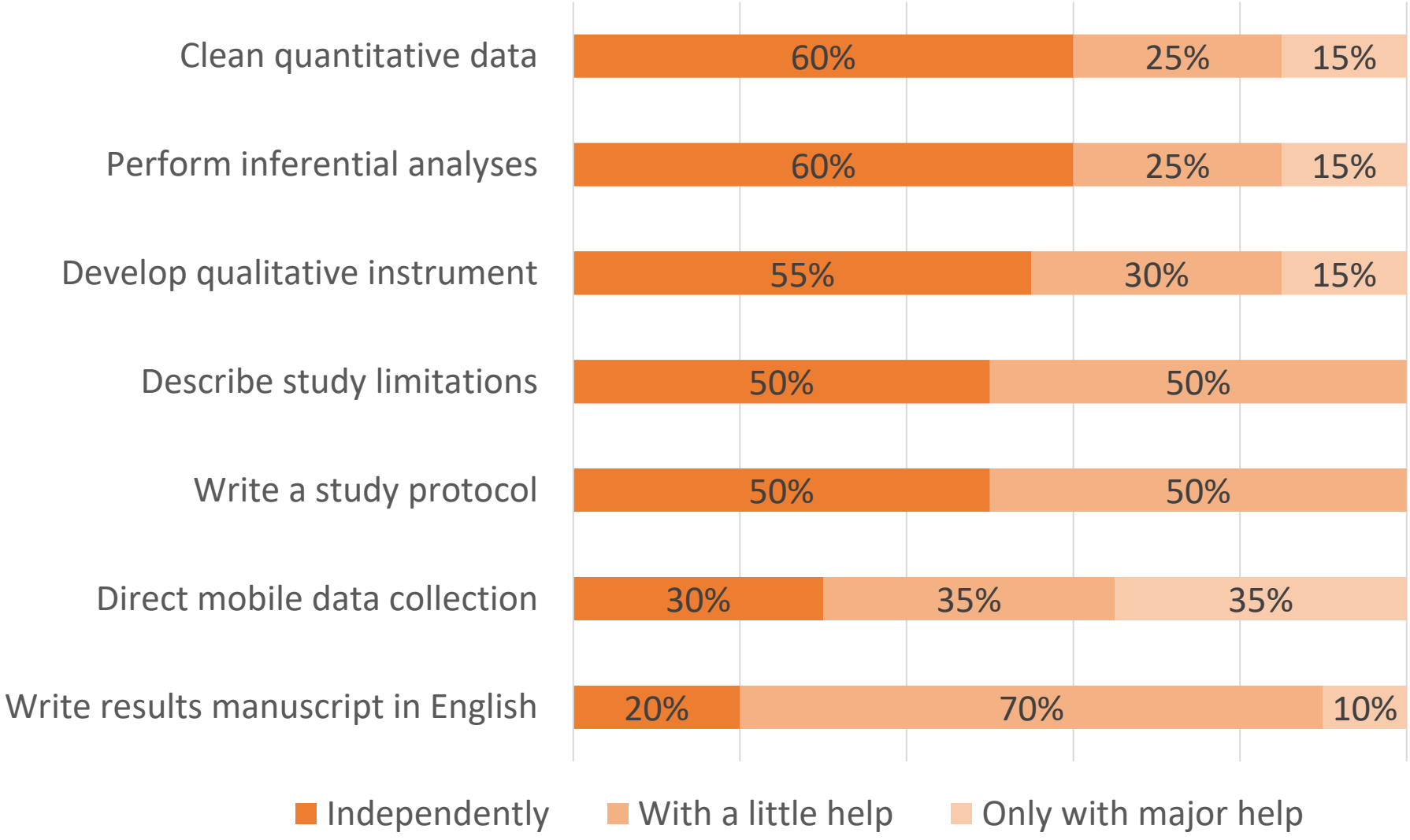
Task self-efficacy: “Could you…?”



Task self-efficacy: “Could you…?”

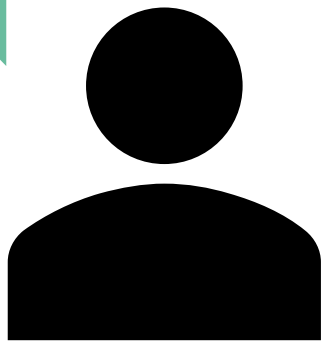


Task self-efficacy: “Could you…?”



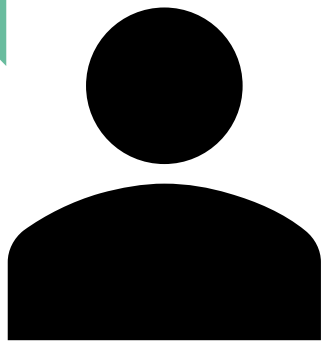
“We still have problems [accessing journal articles]…you can find the abstract but when you want the full text it is really a problem.”

(Department chair)



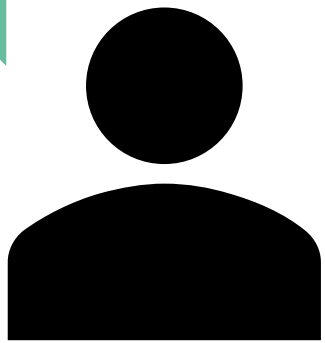
“In our department we have tried individually to learn ODK [Open Data Kit] or similar platforms…but we need capacity for that.”

(Department chair)



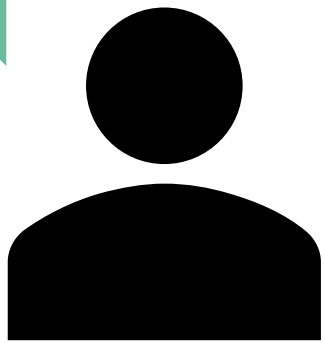
“We must increase the capacity at the school to learn and buy software like SPSS, SAS, Stata and others.”

(Department chair)



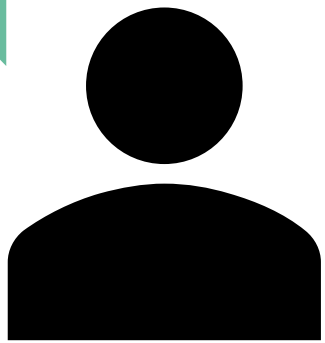
“Most of the professors and assistants can do basic analysis but when it comes to regression or multiple regression, we need a refresher or more capacity.”

(Department chair)



“Qualitative research is a big issue…there is not a lot of capacity here.”

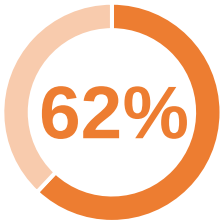
(Department chair)



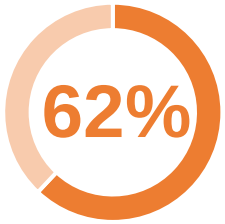
76% of professors have had professional (non-degree) training

31% of those have had training within the past 12 months

% with training in:

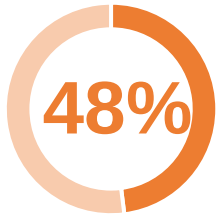


Research design



Research ethics

Grant writing



Research management

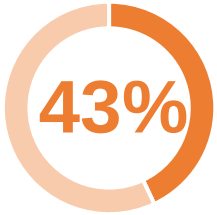
% of professors with (non-degree) training in:

Qualitative analysis

Quantitative analysis

Data presentation

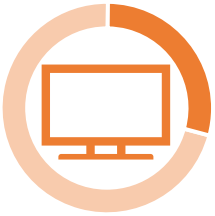
Gender integration in research



Data dissemination and use

67% have had research accepted for presentation at a conference, of whom:

57% presented their most recent accepted work in person



29% presented their most recent accepted work remotely

71% said their most recent acceptance was for a conference outside the DRC

54% said their most recent acceptance was for a conference in 2018 or later

Professors (co)authored **63** journal articles submitted in the last 12 months

The highest number of articles submitted by any professor was **nine**

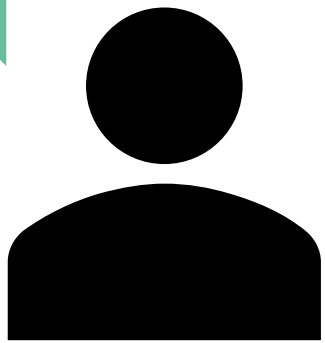
49 of these 63 submitted articles **(78%)** were accepted for publication

76% of professors submitted an article accepted for publication

Five professors are listed as first author on six of the accepted articles

“Yes, the school publishes, but we have a bit of difficulty. If we want to publish in a journal with an excellent impact factor, they will charge a lot.”

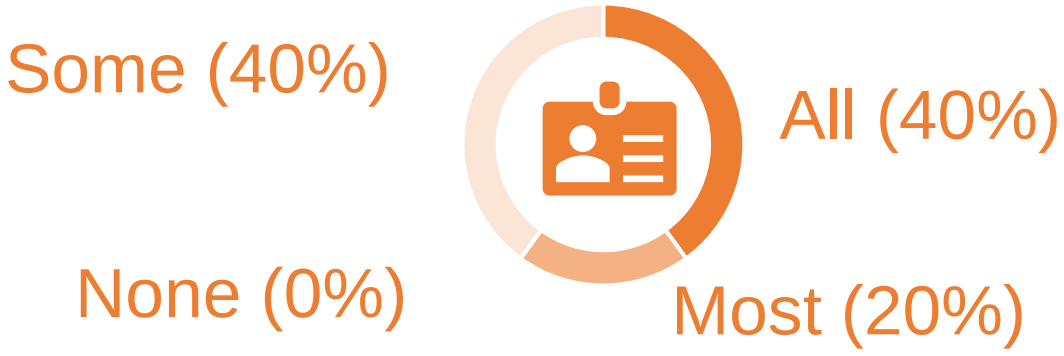
(Department chair)



85% of professors have done externally funded research since joining KSPH; **52%** currently do

88% of those doing external research have done it within the last 12 months

"In the last 12 months, how much of your externally funded research has been conducted through your KSPH affiliation?"

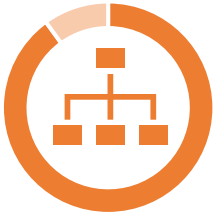


Among those doing recent external research:

87% say KSPH assistants or *chefs* were paid study team members

73% say other KSPH professors were paid study team members

73% served as principal investigator (PI) on any of these studies



91% who served as PI were named as the lead PI

Among those ever doing external research:

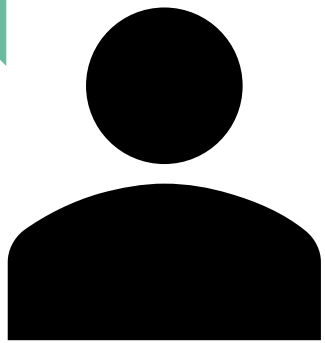
41% say the largest of these grants was worth USD $1m+ across all partners

65% say their work on the largest grant was done through their KSPH affiliation

90% prefer to do external research through their KSPH affiliation, mainly because **it benefits KSPH financially** and **some funders prefer it**

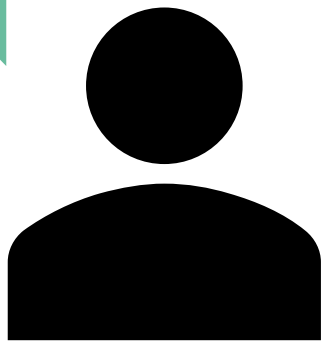
“Even though the evaluation involved many professors, they were independent consultants…and the report has the name of [foreign NGO], not the school.”

(Department chair)



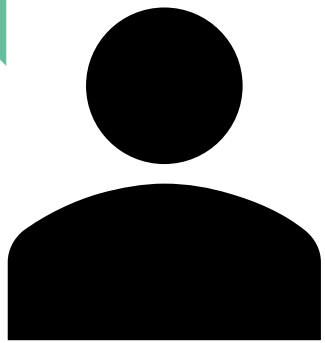
“Even here in town, they don’t know the school of public health, they only know the person – professor x, y, or z – this is a weakness for us.”

(School administrator)



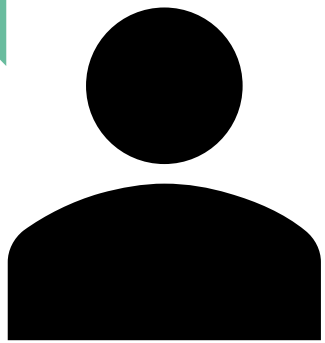
“There are many projects led by professors at the school, but because they are led by an individual [professor working as a consultant], we have no report of the results of the process or protocol...”

(School administrator)



“I see funders very often [contracting professors as consultants], and I tell my colleagues to turn it down because we as a school aren’t gaining anything from that.”

(Department chair)



Among those ever doing external research:

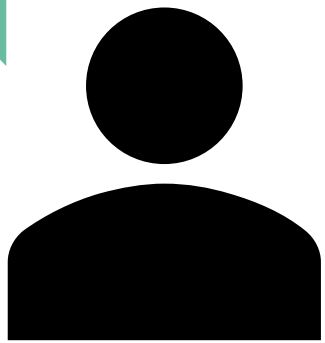
1 in 3 say KSPH received 12% in indirect costs (IDC) on the largest grant run through the school

IDC received on the largest grants to KSPH was 0%-15%, and 8.5% on average

"The largest research grant I have worked on during my time at KSPH…"

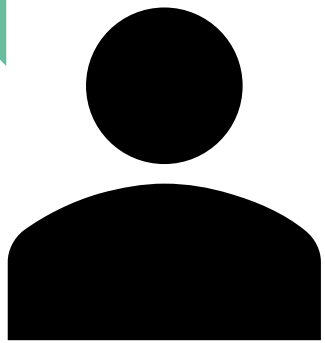
“We charge 12% (in indirect costs)…but sometimes less because you are negotiating, and they say 12% is too high.”

(Department chair)



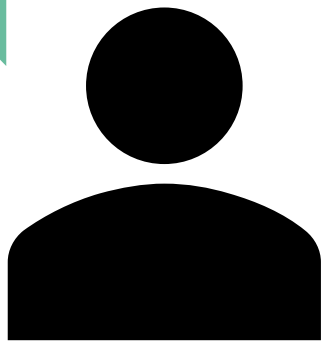
“I can say, ‘you should pay around 12% to the school,’ but they say no, we have already worked with some professors and we paid them directly, so why are you asking us for indirect costs?”

(Department chair)



“Organizations say, ‘We do not have money for overhead, but we can work with you as an independent consultant.’ Sometimes at the end they ask, ‘Can we just mention that you are from the school of public health?’”

(Department chair)



Professors contributed to **30** external research proposals submitted in the past 12 months

8 proposals (27%) are pending decision, and **12 (40%)** were awarded to **8** professors

The 8 awards exceed **$11.8m** in funding for all partners (**$75k-$6m** per award)

KSPH manages or will manage **0% to 100%** of the awarded funds, a total of **$924.4k**

Professors most often cite these factors as the biggest obstacles to applying for more research grants:

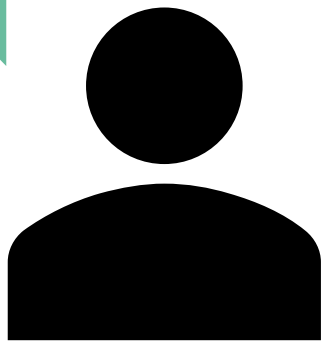
Limited time to write research proposals
(**57%** when asked to check all that apply)

Limited administrative support at KSPH
(**38%** when asked to check all that apply)

Too few research opportunities of interest
(**29%** when asked to check all that apply)

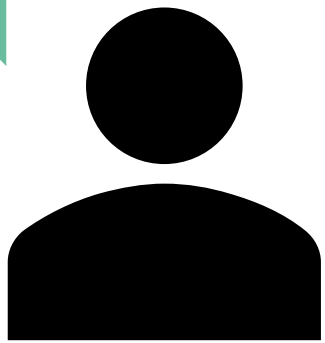
“People are very busy, and they don’t have time to look for research opportunities on the internet.”

(Department chair)



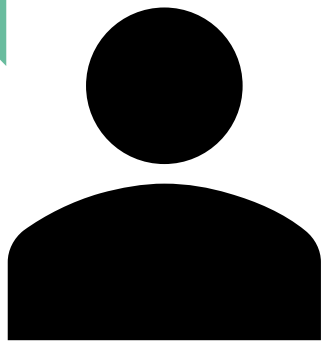
“The first [barrier to submitting proposals] is language, because many must be written in English. It’s a big problem.”

(School administrator)



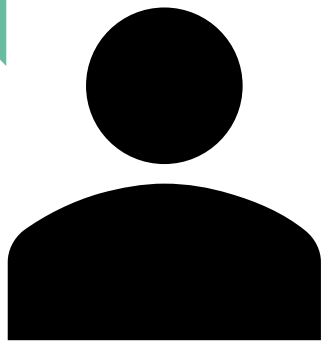
“We have only the [KSPH] website, and the website is static…we have no materials, no brochure, no pamphlet.”

(School administrator)



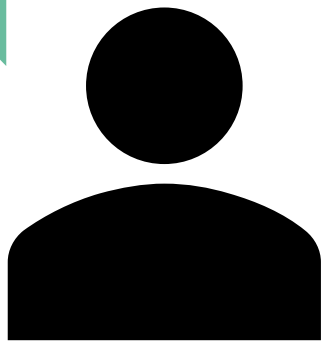
“You can have a research project and they say, ‘this will involve a large amount of money,’ so you have to prove you have managed research before at that level. This can really be a limiting factor.”

(Department chair)



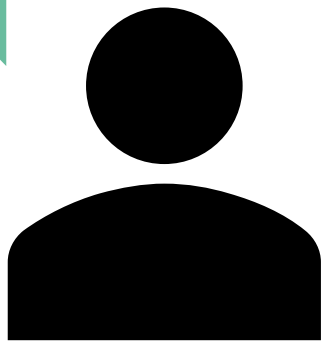
“When we were applying for [name of project], they said we should have five hundred thousand dollars in the account to apply, but we didn’t have it. So we didn’t apply…You will not apply for something you cannot win.”

(Department chair)



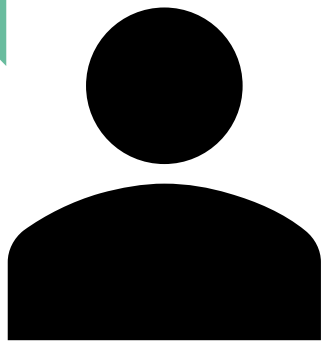
“To write a proposal, I must first hear about it. We are not in a network where that information is [available], because we don’t have an office to look for projects for us.”

(School administrator)



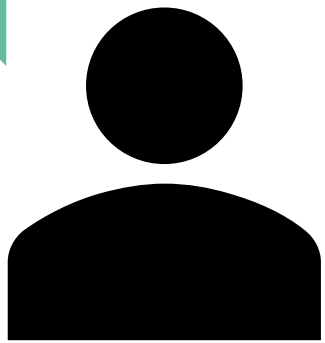
“What we need is an office for research support…in charge of seeking different opportunities and informing the staff.”

(Department chair)



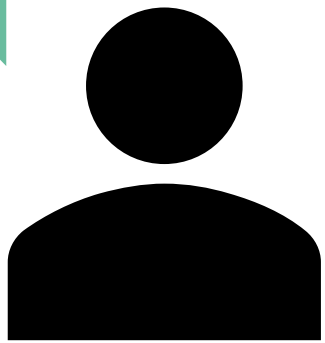
“[Former partner organization] helped us create an office just for research opportunities…but it didn’t work. I didn’t hear about any grant we gained from it. The idea was good, but one person was not enough.”

(Department chair)



“We only have two people working on the (grants) accounting system, and this is not enough.”

(Department chair)

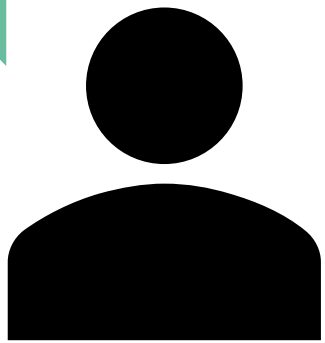


If you could choose to increase your capacity in **one thing** related to evaluation, what would it be?

- **Grant writing**
- **Finding grant opportunities online**
- **Networking with international funders**
- **Complex analyses, such as time series**
- **Mobile data collection**
- **Economic evaluation**

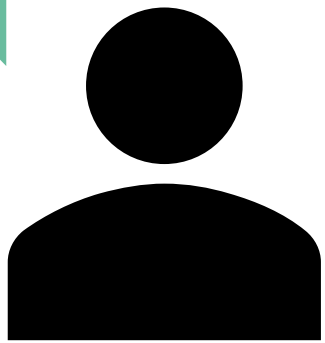
“[I would prioritize]…how to write a proposal, and fund mobilization, and advocacy.”

(School administrator)



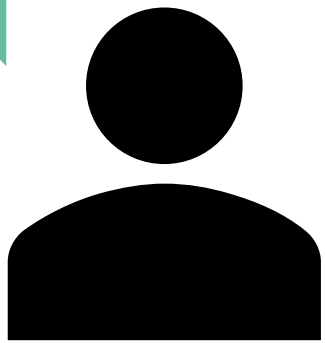
“I think we are a bit weak because in our department we have [written] many grant submissions that have not been successful, and we are looking for some ways to build our capacity in grant writing.”

(Department chair)



“If I could choose a skill [for capacity strengthening], it would probably be analyzing data, or building data entry forms.”

(Department chair)

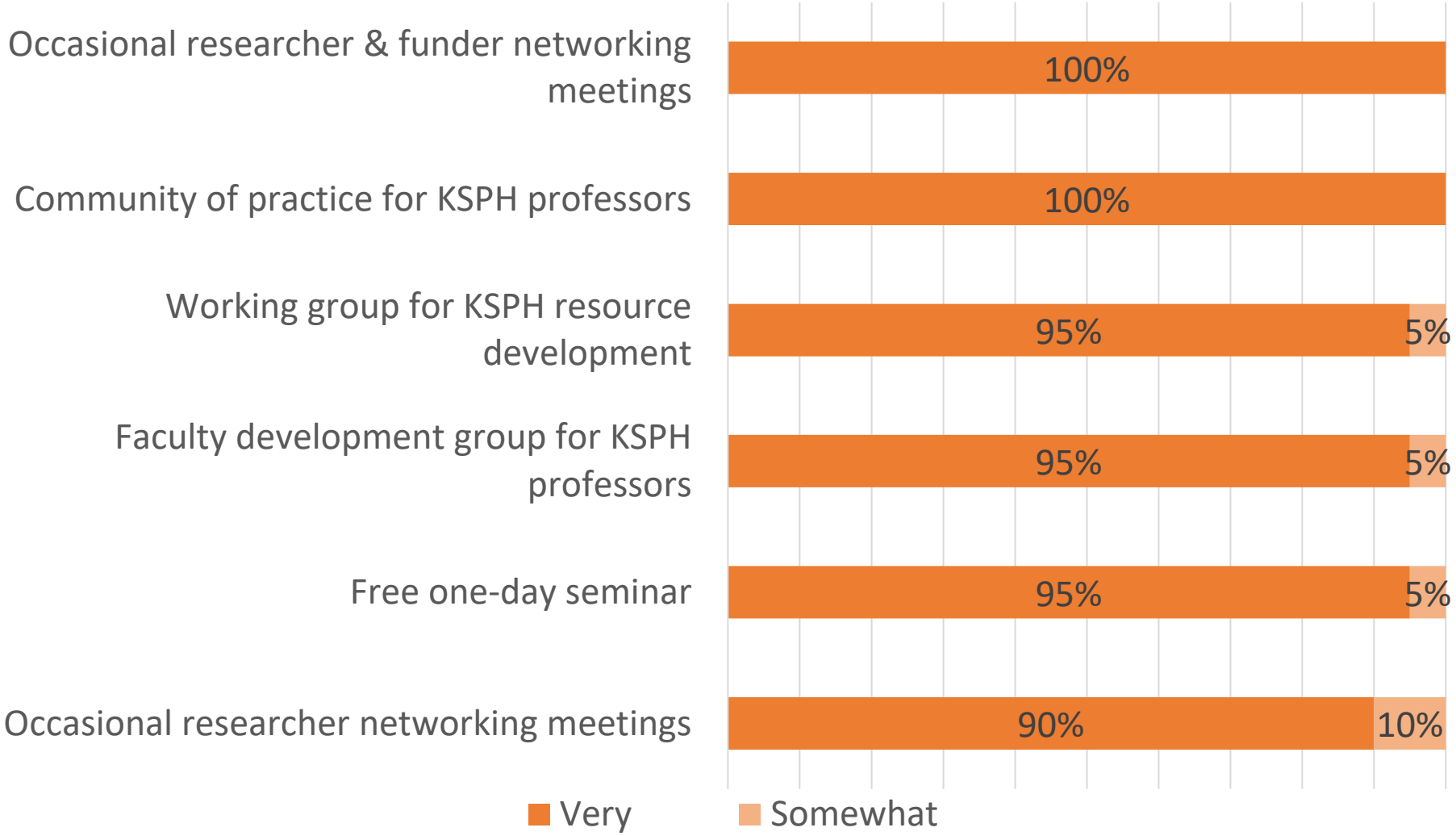


Interest is highest for **networking forums with funders** and an internal online research **community of practice.**

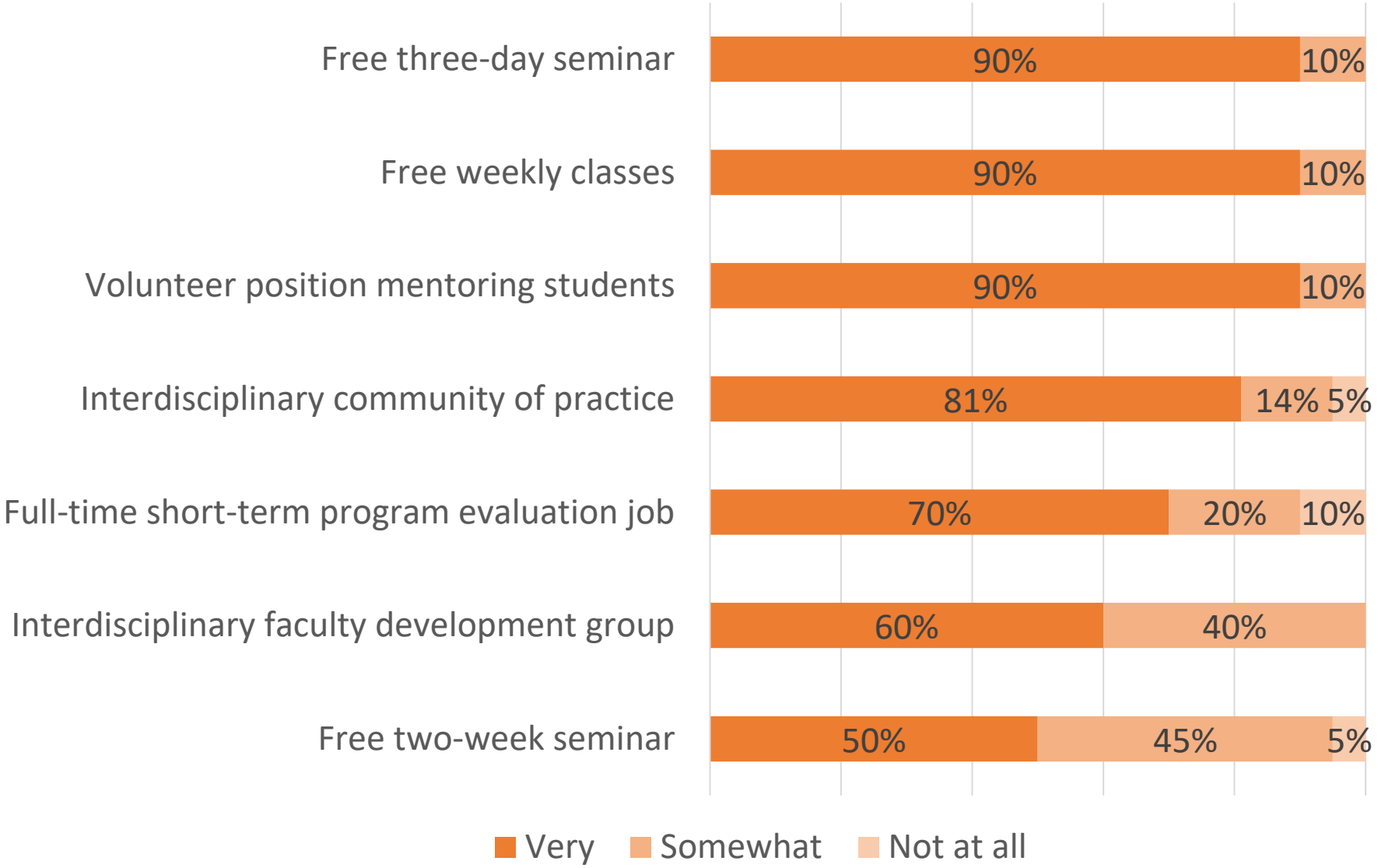
Working groups for faculty and school resource development and **short-term classes or workshops** are popular.

Forums open to professors outside KSPH and **learning opportunities with longer timelines** were less popular.

Learning forums: “How likely would you be to participate in...?”

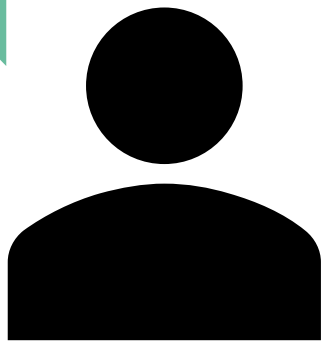


Learning forums: “How likely would you be to participate in...?”



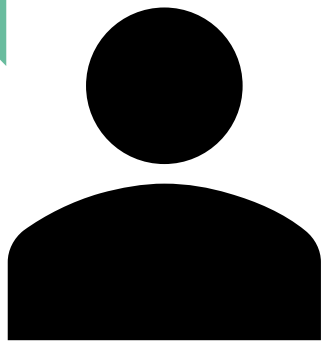
“We have been discussing organizing short [refresher] courses for professors.”

(Department chair)



“What I proposed to the department is that when we have [a proposal to write], we must do it in a workshop.”

(Department chair)



RESULTS

Student Survey

N = 123 students (**12** PhD, **107** MPH, **4** other)

22% of students are female and the average student is **42** years old.

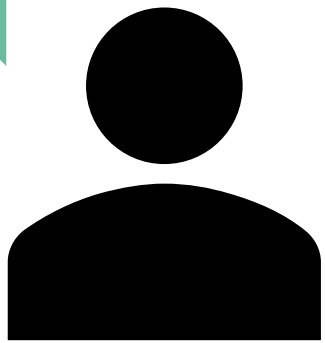
Students come from **25** provinces (Kinshasa, Kwilu, Kongo Central are the most common).

70% have a medical or nursing degree.

42% of PhD students and **21%** of MPH students have had their studies interrupted at some point for lack of funds or other reasons.

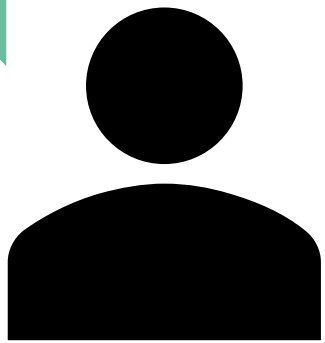
“Assistants’ salary is very low. If we hire an assistant now, for [them] to start getting paid it may take two or three years – or else there are no resources at all.”

(Department chair)



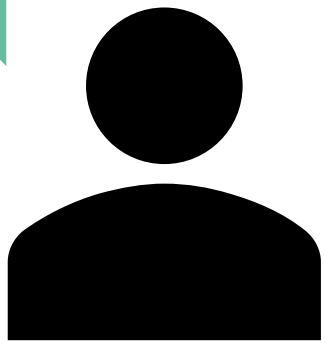
“There are many interruptions [in a PhD student’s progress] because when there is no funding, they can’t continue… they work, and it takes longer.”

(Department chair)



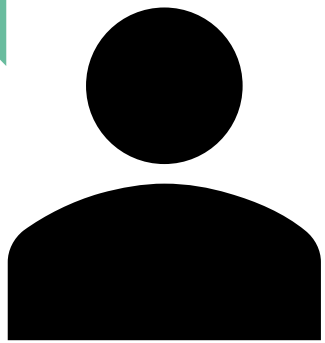
“I found a student who was very smart, and I said, will you be my assistant in [the course]? He agreed, but when he realized what the salary was, he said it wouldn’t be possible.”

(Department chair)



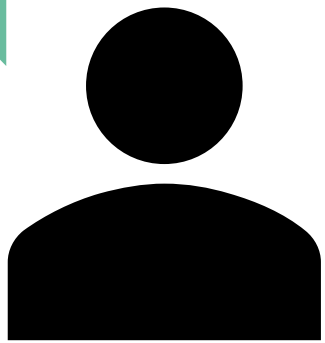
“I did have three assistants, but they were not paid, and I couldn’t keep giving them work without being paid.”

(Department chair)



“We have 22 assistants but half of them are not active, because there is no funding, so now they are working [so they can] survive.”

(Department chair)



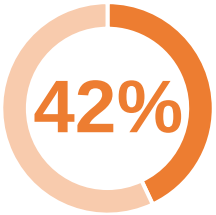
PhD students are affiliated with four departments: **community health, environmental health, epidemiology, and health systems.**

MPH students are affiliated with **community health, environmental health, and the FELTP (laboratory specialty) program**

20% of non-FELTP MPH students are enrolled in the *décale* (alternate shift schedule) program

% who have completed…

all or most coursework:



PhD students

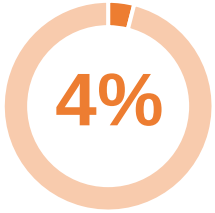
MPH students

Overall*

all or most dissertation work:

PhD students

MPH students



Overall*

*includes non-degree students and those who did not specify a program

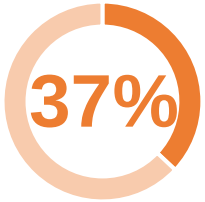
% who have received any thesis-related funding:

PhD students

MPH students

% who say that funding problems have had "a big effect" on thesis progress:

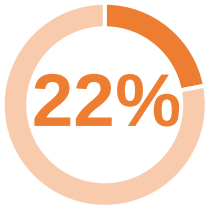
PhD students



MPH students

Students who currently receive scholarship funds:

PhD students



MPH students

Without scholarship funds, how likely would these students be to continue in their program?

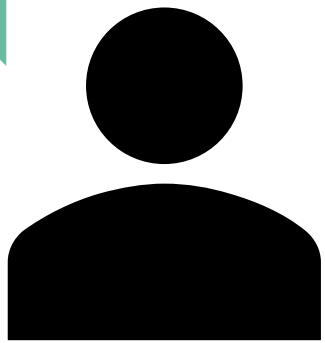
Very likely (26%)

Somewhat likely (30%)

Not likely at all (44%)

“Usually, we were able to get money to offer scholarships for the MPH students…but this year we are not able to offer scholarships.”

(Department chair)



PhD students	MPH students	Overall*
50%	34%	36%

…have taken the M&E course

83%	77%	77%

…have taken the research methods course

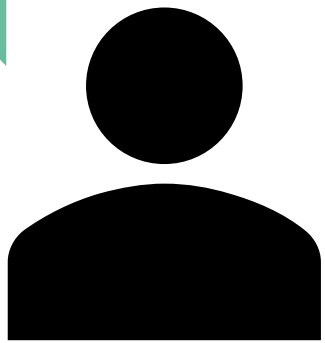
58%	56%	55%

…have taken another course in research or evaluation

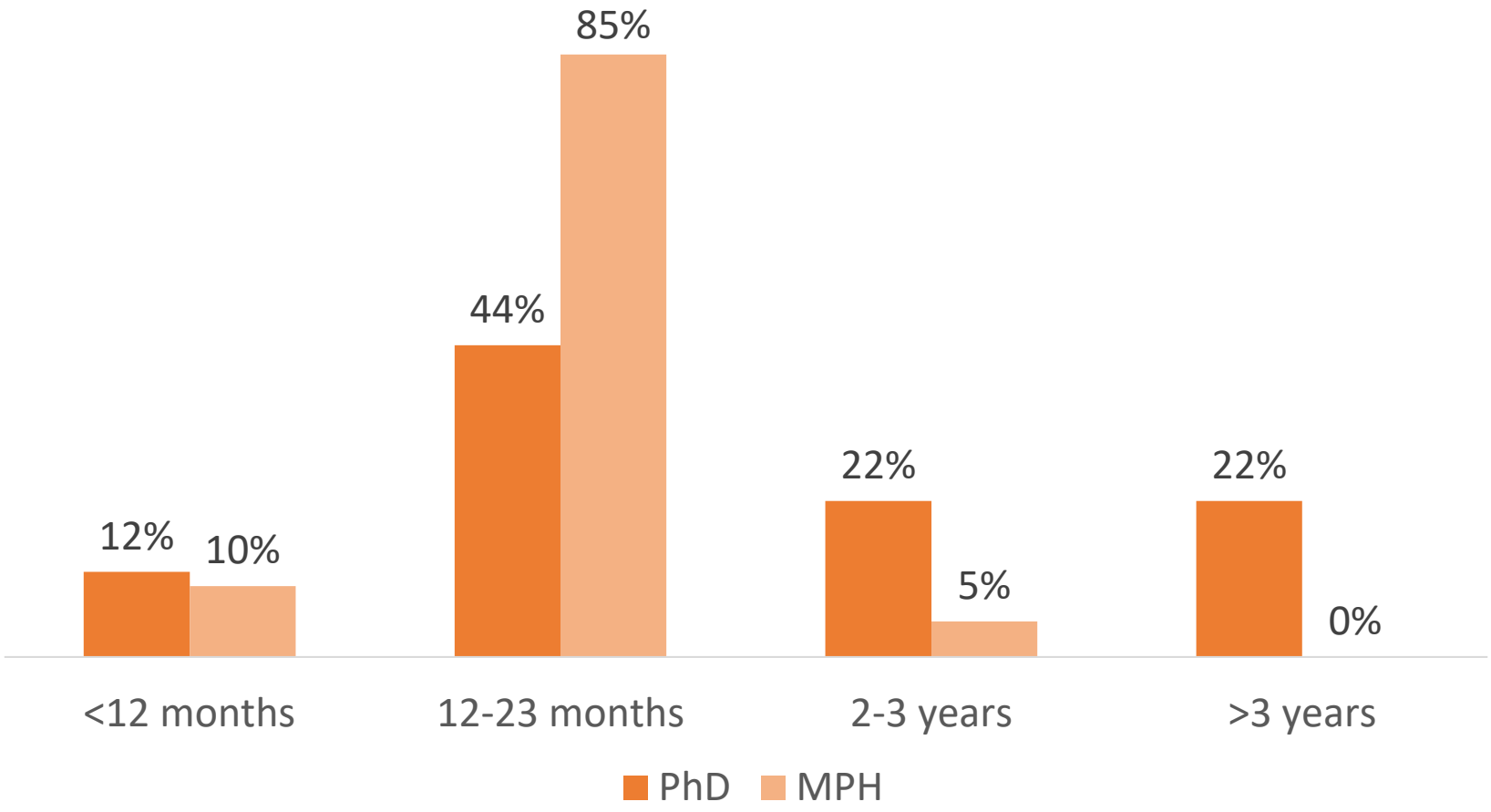
*includes non-degree students and those who did not specify a program

“The problem is we only have one course for evaluation.”

(School administrator)

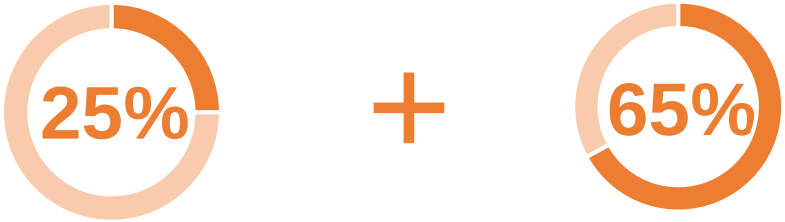


Nearly half of PhD students and 5% of MPH students expect to be in the program for at least two more years.



95% of degree-seekers think they will “definitely” receive their degree

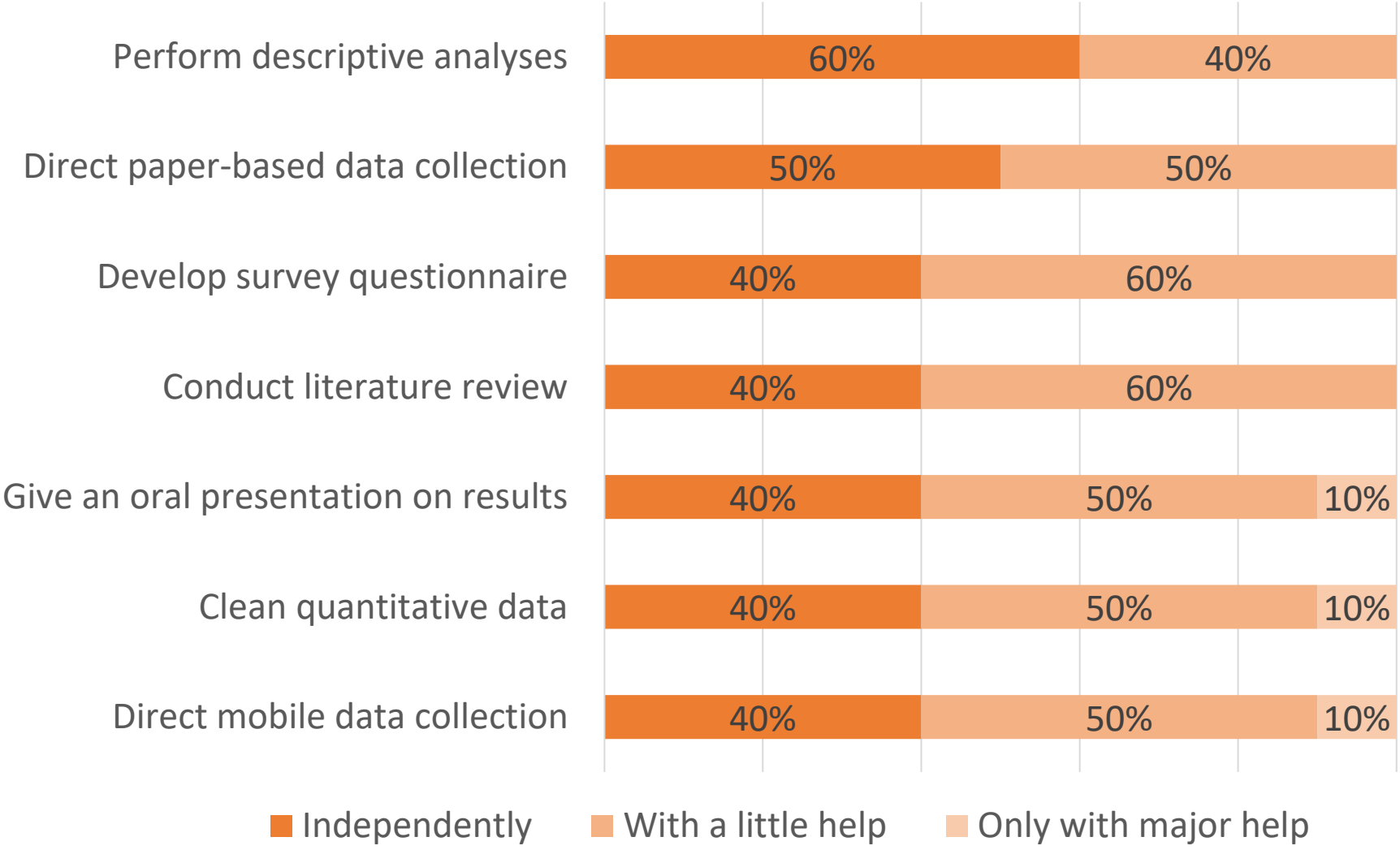
59% of students expect to return to a job they held before enrolling at KSPH:



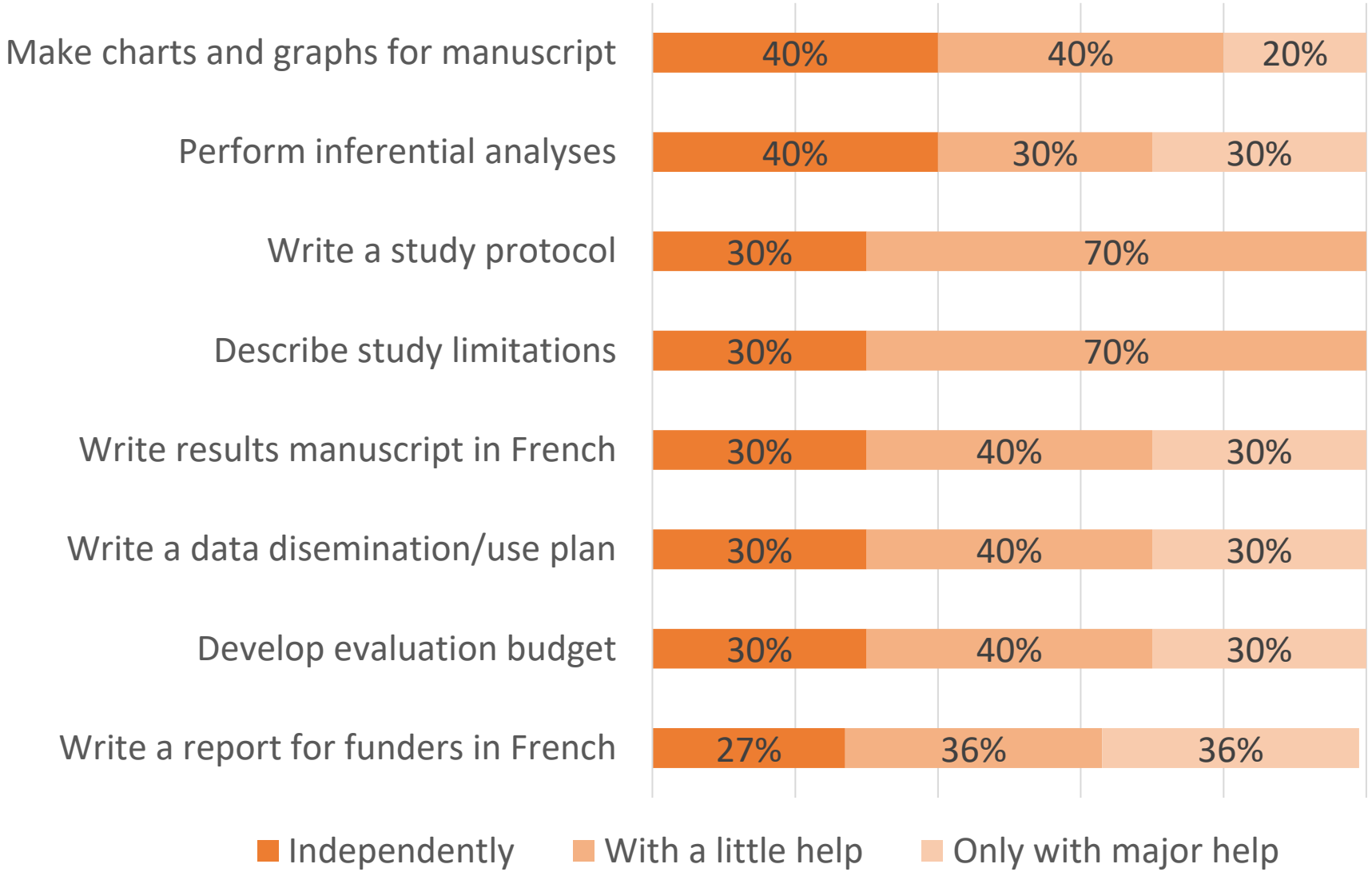
of PhD students of MPH students

100% of these jobs are in health professions

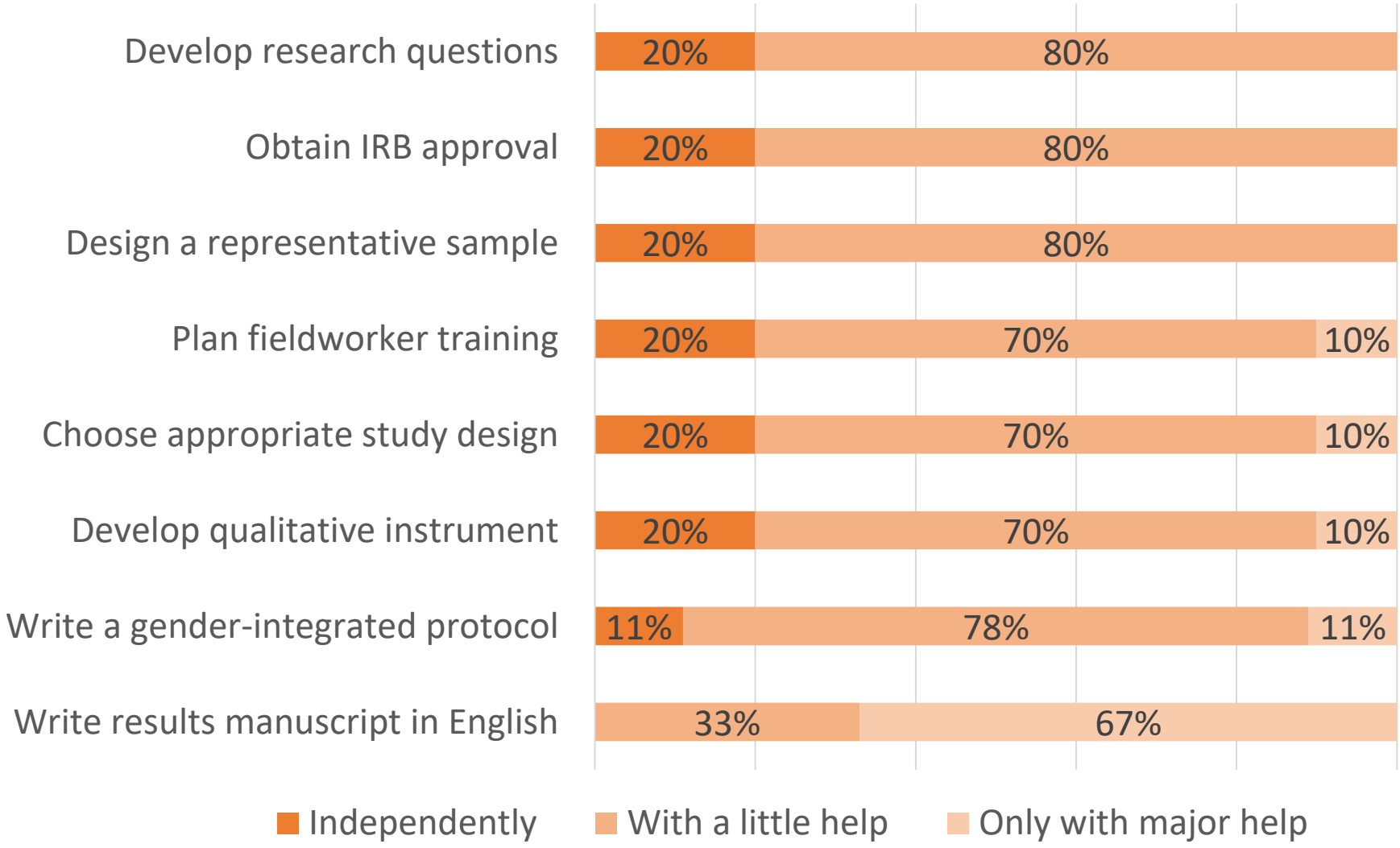
PhD students' task self-efficacy: "Could you…?"



PhD students' task self-efficacy: "Could you…?"

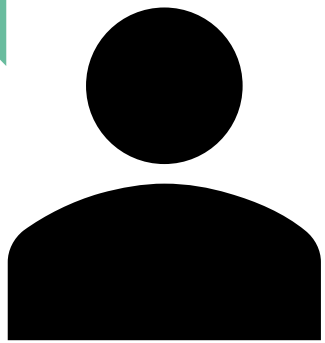


PhD students' task self-efficacy: "Could you…?"



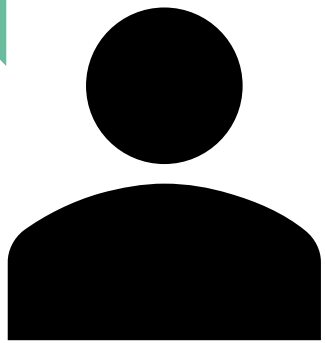
“When the protocol is coming from an assistant, it can have a lot of weaknesses in the design. Sometimes they don’t do a literature review to see what knowledge is already there.”

(Department chair)

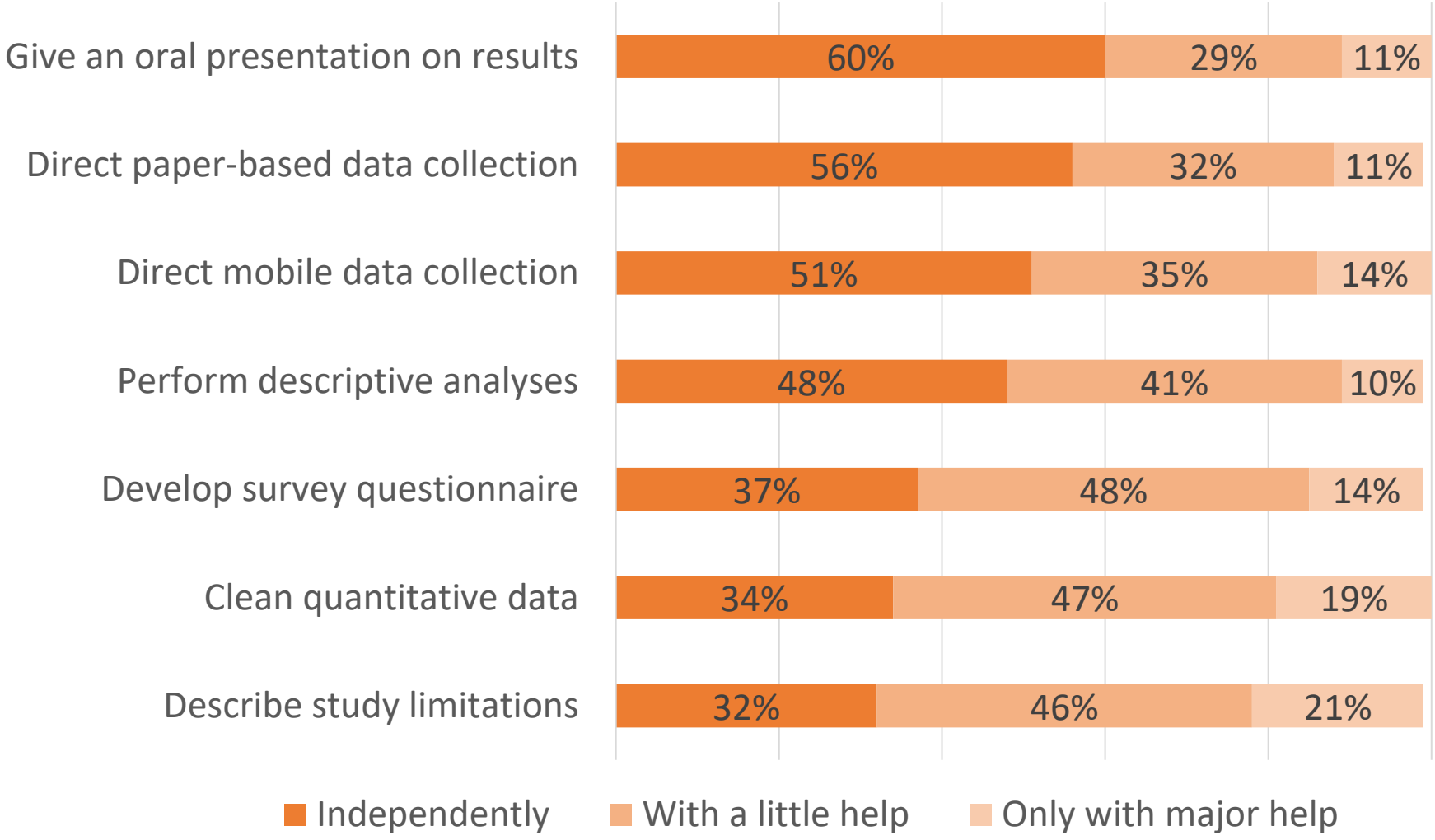


“Accessing literature is not a problem, because we have access to everything…[but assistants don’t know] how to do it...one might say ‘I don’t have access to journals’ but that’s no longer true…”

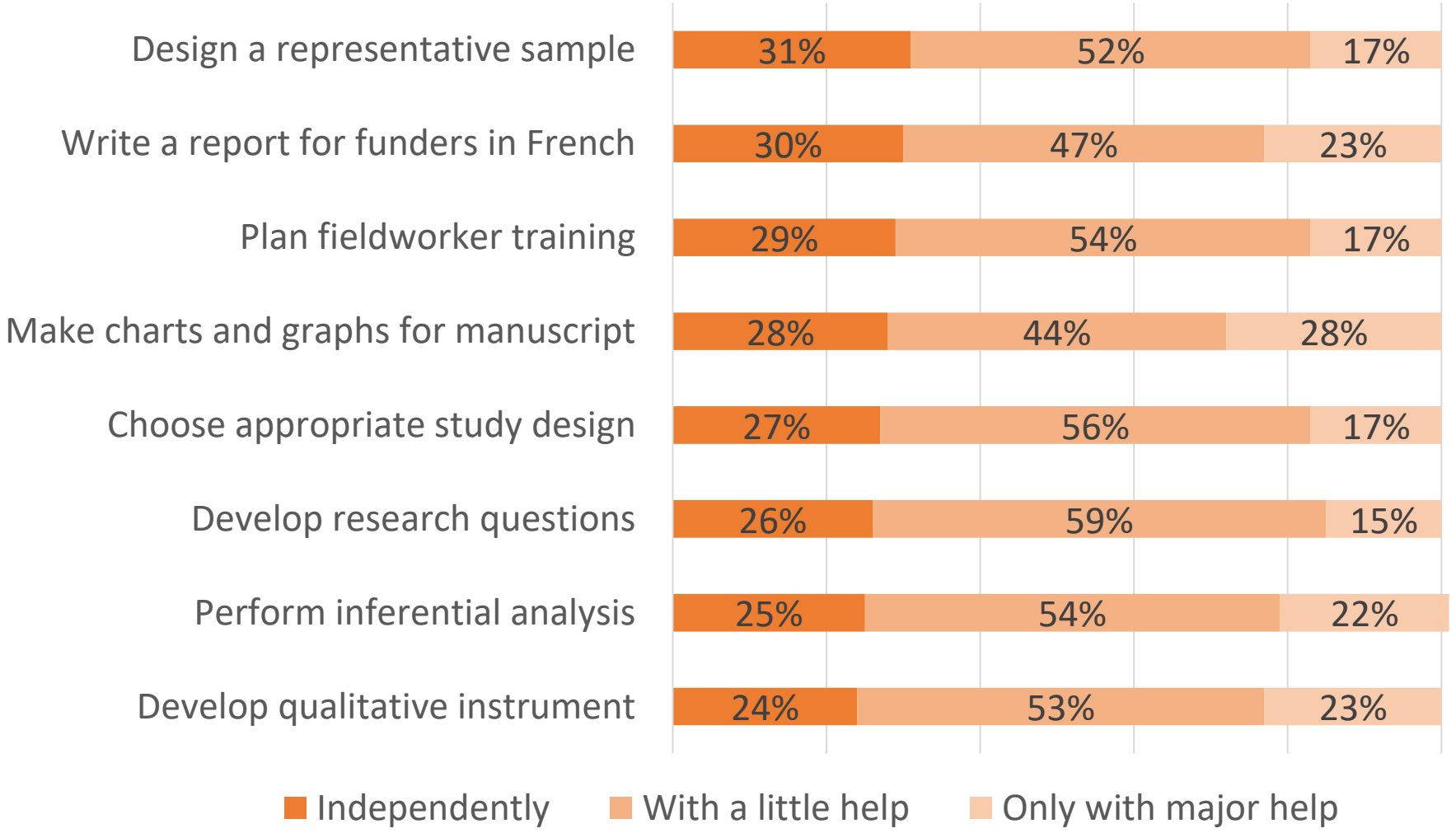
(Department chair)



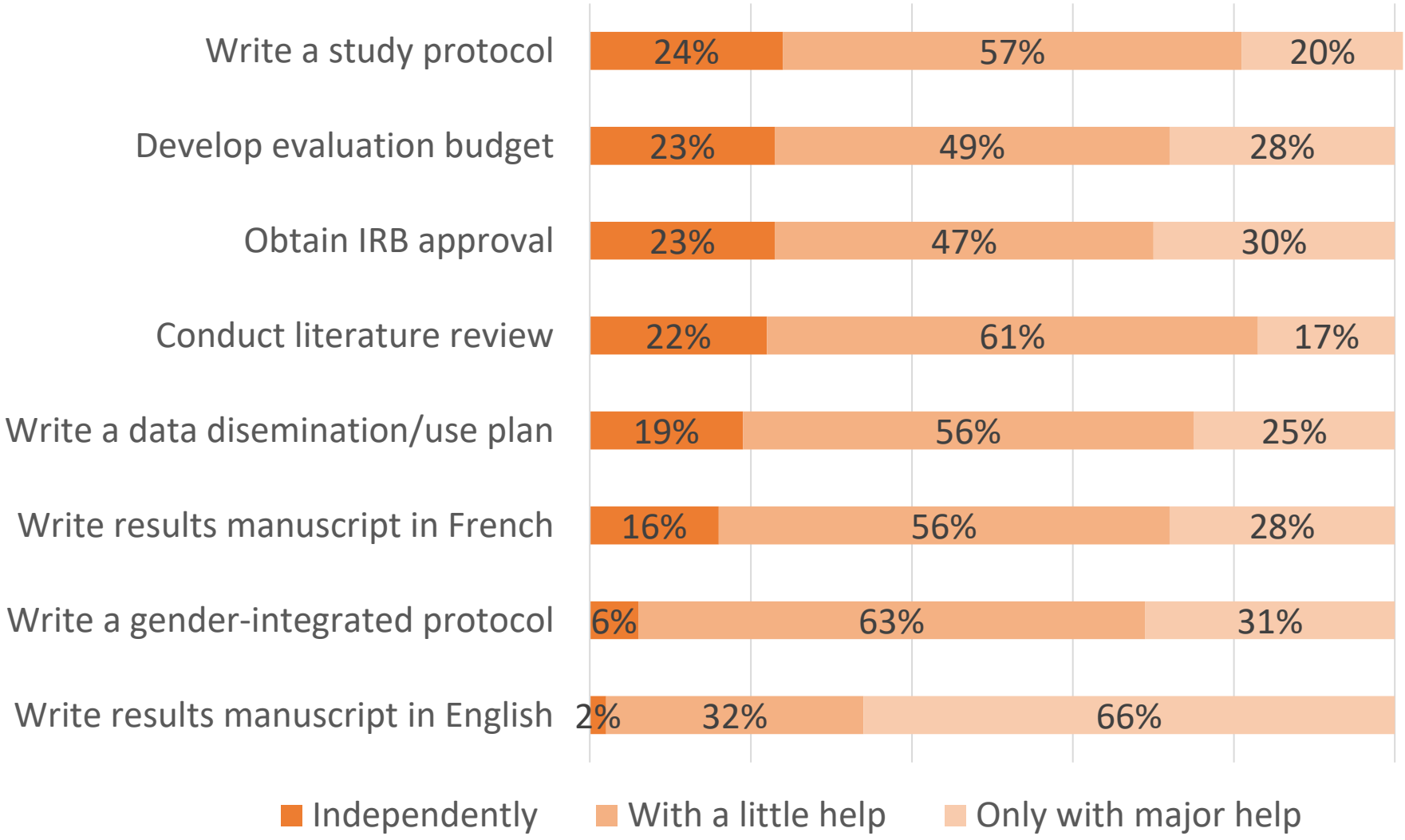
MPH students' task self-efficacy: "Could you…?"



MPH students' task self-efficacy: "Could you…?"

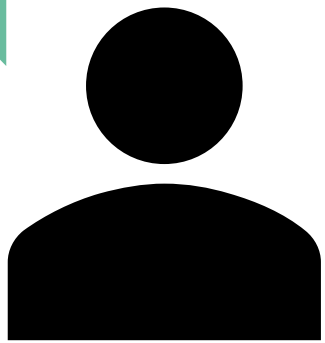


MPH students' task self-efficacy: "Could you…?"



“We have an ethics committee here, but for students we only spend like two hours talking about ethics in the research methods course.”

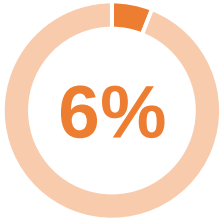
(Department chair)



8% of students have worked on research at a KSPH-run demonstration site:

of 12 PhD students

+



of 107 MPH students

17% of students have worked on other KSPH-supervised research:

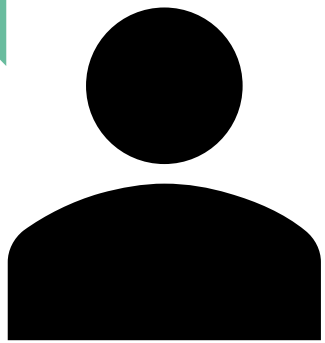
of 12 PhD students

+

of 107 MPH students

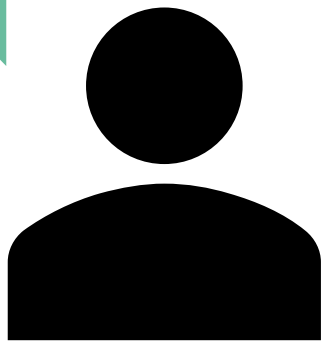
“When we have an [evaluation] contract, we say ‘let me put an assistant in’…I might be the PI, but I recruit an assistant to work with me on the process.”

(Department chair)

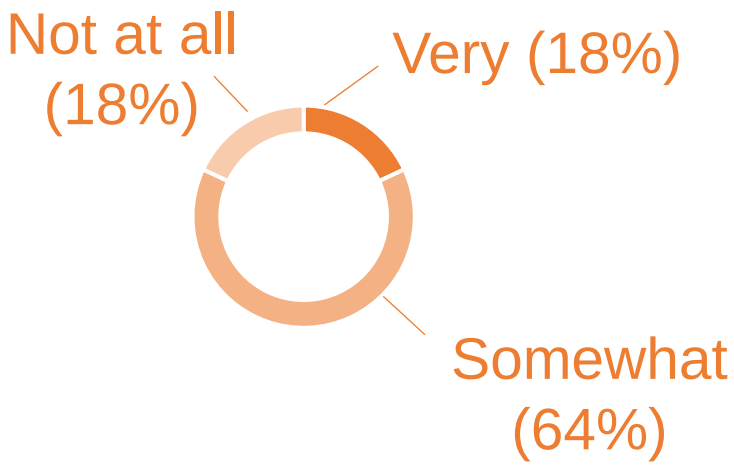


“In our department, the first year is theoretical, and in the second year we send them to the field for a practicum. We are very much interested in them gaining practical skills…”

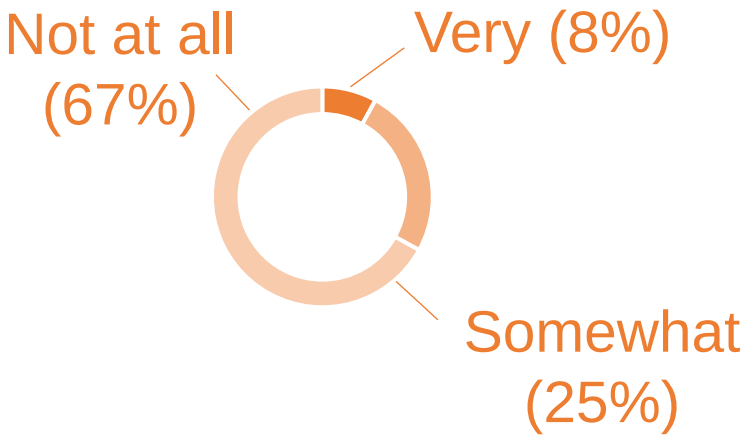
(Department chair)



“How familiar are you with research projects led by professors in your department?”



PhD students



MPH students

83% of PhD students and **23%** of MPH students are mentored by at least one KSPH professor

These students each report having between **1 and 5** mentors at KSPH, **2** on average

PhD students average **3.2** mentorship hours per week, MPH students average **2.2** hours

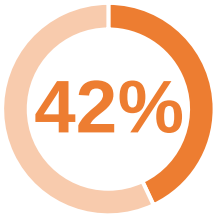
For **70%** of PhD mentees and for **48%** of MPH mentees, at least some mentorship is devoted to their development as researchers

Currently appointed as assistants:

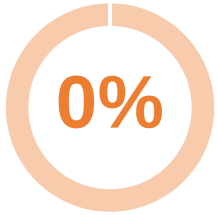
PhD students

MPH students

Currently appointed as *chefs de travaux*:



PhD students

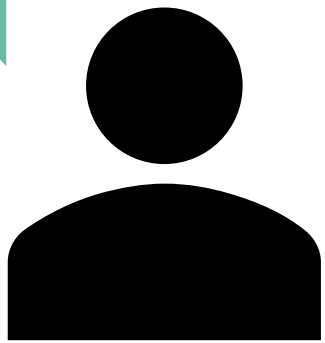


MPH students

71% say their work involves research supervised by a professor

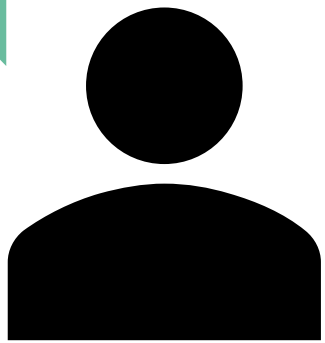
“Before becoming a professor, you are an assistant. You work under a professor…It’s a period of learning…you do research for your thesis, but this process is to reinforce your capacity to investigate.”

(Department chair)



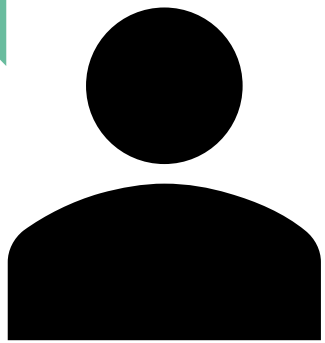
“That’s one of our priorities, reinforcing the [applied research] capacity of the assistants and senior lecturers. We want to encourage them…to become professors.”

(Department chair)



“All the professors who were strong and had a lot of capacity because they were trained by [foreign partner] are now old. Now we have very young professors and assistants who need capacity building.”

(School administrator)



Current students working as assistants or *chefs de travaux* spend the most time on **coursework, teaching and their theses.**

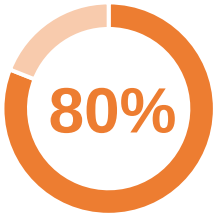
These student workers spend relatively less time on **networking, service, and funded research.**

of current & former workers say their work increased their skills in…**research design**

…**research planning**

…**research implementation**

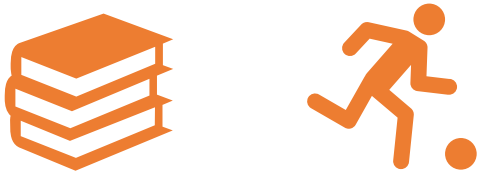
…**data analysis**



…**report or manuscript writing**

MPH students spend **6–110** hours a week on campus for academics, **37** hours on average

MPH students spend **0–10** hours for social purposes, **9** on average



PhD students spend **8–91** hours a week on campus for academics, **38** on average

PhD students spend **0–80** hours for social purposes, **3** on average

67% of PhD students and **7%** of MPH students have ever applied to present at a conference

94% had presentations accepted

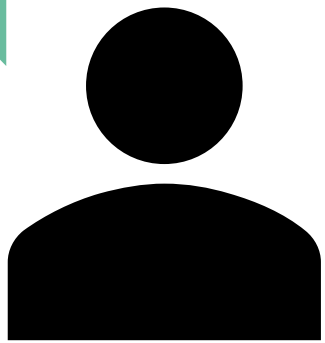
87% presented their most recently accepted work in person at the conference

56% said their most recent acceptance was for a conference outside the DRC

63% said their most recent acceptance was for a conference held in 2018 or later

“Last year we sent students to a conference and we got the impression our students did well…it was an international conference in English.”

(Department chair)



92% of PhD students and **8%** of MPH students have ever submitted an article to an academic journal

These students submitted **29** articles in the past 12 months, **14** pending decision and **14** accepted for publication

8 students (7 of them PhD students) were 1st author on **7** recently accepted articles

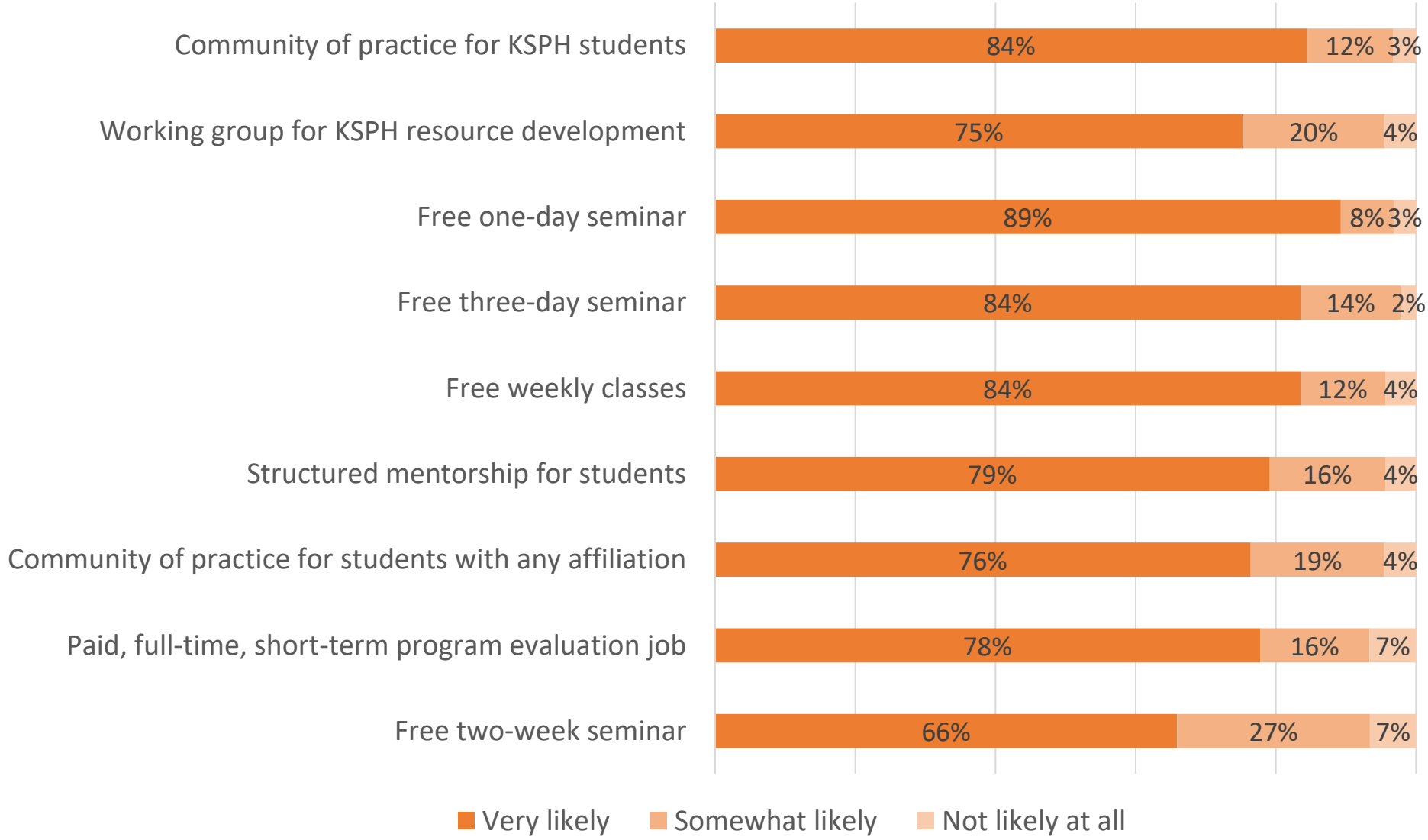
"If you could choose to increase your capacity in **one thing** related to evaluation, what would it be?"

- **Biostatistics**
- **Economic evaluation**
- **Epidemic response planning**
- **Research management**
- **Community dynamics**
- **Sustainability**
- **Human resource development**
- **Health systems management**
- **M&E project design**

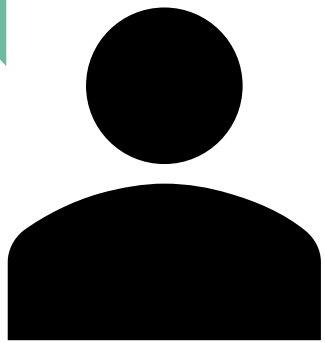
Interest is highest for **weekly research skills classes, 1–3-day seminars, and an evaluation community of practice.**

Longer seminars, structured mentorship, evaluation working groups, and short-term, fulltime evaluation jobs are slightly less popular options.

“How likely would you be to participate in...?”



“In the research methods class, we don’t spend enough time on questionnaire development…it would be good to have a short course for three or four days on that.” (Department chair)



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