



# Report on Active Schools Survey of Physical Education Teachers' Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviors Related to Serving as a School Physical Activity Leader September 2019

## **Acknowledgment of Contributors**

Cassandra Boyd, Action for Healthy Kids  
Hannah Brewer, Slippery Rock University  
Charlene Burgeson, Active Schools  
Brian Dauenhauer, University of Northern Colorado Active Schools Institute  
Aaron Hart, OPEN  
Chris Hersl, SHAPE America  
Kristina Shelton, Action for Healthy Kids  
Lauren von Klingraeff, University of Northern Colorado Active Schools Institute

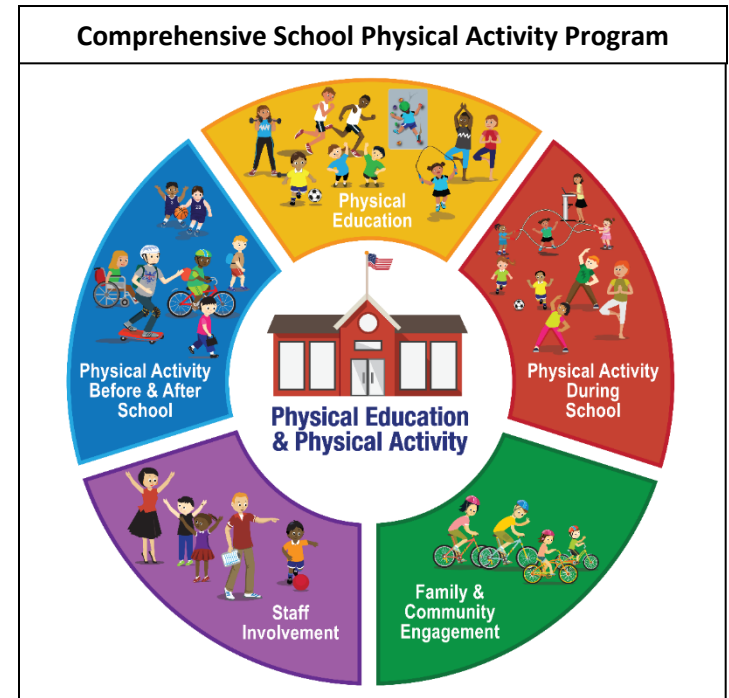
## **Suggested Citation**

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## INTRODUCTION

A Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) is a multi-component approach to providing physical activity opportunities in and around schools. By integrating physical activity through multiple strategies, the goal of a CSPAP is to increase the likelihood that K-12 students: obtain the recommended 60 minutes of physical activity each day (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2018), and develop physical literacy skills outside of physical education (Castelli, Centeio, Beighle, Carson, & Nicksic, 2014). CSPAP has been adopted as national framework for schoolwide physical activity (CDC, 2017) and is endorsed by many national organizations such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC, 2015), the Society of Health and Physical Educators of America (SHAPE America, 2015), and the Institute of Medicine (IOM, 2013). CSPAP also serves as the guiding framework for the Active Schools movement ([www.activeschoolsus.org](http://www.activeschoolsus.org)).

The concept of a physical education teacher serving as a school's physical activity leader (PAL) started being commonplace in professional discourse around 2010. In 2014, SHAPE America began offering their Physical Activity Leader Learning System training to prepare and support individuals to serve as champions for physical education and physical activity in schools.



In the Active Schools Survey of Physical Education Teachers' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors Related to Serving as a School Physical Activity Leader conducted in March 2019, the following definitions of a CSPAP and PAL were provided.

A comprehensive school physical activity program (CSPAP) is a multicomponent approach that provides opportunities for students to be physically active before, during, and after school. A CSPAP reflects strong coordination and synergy across all of the components: physical education as the foundation, physical activity during school (e.g., recess, classroom physical activity), physical activity before and after school (e.g., walking/biking to and from school, intramurals, physical activity clubs), staff involvement, and family and community engagement.

A school physical activity leader (PAL) is an individual who serves as a catalyst and coordinator for before, during, and after school physical activity programs/opportunities other than interscholastic sports. A PAL does not facilitate all programs/opportunities, rather, they are facilitated by a variety of individuals such as school staff, parents, and community members.

The purpose of the Active Schools Survey of Physical Education Teachers' Knowledge, Attitudes, and Behaviors Related to Serving as a School Physical Activity Leader was to gain knowledge to inform discussion and decisions by the physical education profession, individual professionals, and educational decision-makers (e.g., principals) about the concept of physical education teachers serving as a PAL.

## METHODOLOGY

The survey was hosted on the Survey Monkey platform and used convenience sampling. It was promoted through social media and newsletters of many Active Schools partner organizations and other organizations and individuals (e.g., state and district physical education coordinators, physical education teachers, university faculty). There were 1,258 respondents from all 50 states and the District of Columbia (see Q2 below). However, in the first question which served as a screener question for eligibility, 123 individuals reported that they were not currently a full-time physical education teacher at one school, so the survey ended for them. As such, 1,027 individuals continued with the survey.

Q1: Are you currently a full-time physical education teacher at one school?

Yes	81.6%	= 1,027
No, I am full-time PE teacher who teaches at more than one school	6.2%	Survey ended
No, I am a part-time physical education teacher	4.8%	Survey ended
No, I am a retired physical education teacher	1.6%	Survey ended
No, I am not currently employed as a physical education teacher	2.5%	Survey ended
Other	3.3%	Survey ended

There were respondents from all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

Q2: In which state do you teach?

AL	1.4%	GA	1.1%	MD	0.6%	NJ	1.6%	SC	5.5%
AK	0.5%	HI	0.2%	MA	1.6%	NM	0.3%	SD	0.1%
AZ	1.7%	ID	0.4%	MI	1.3%	NY	2.5%	TN	1.1%
AR	0.1%	IL	3.0%	MN	0.9%	NC	2.9%	TX	4.8%
CA	2.2%	IN	2.5%	MS	0.1%	ND	0.2%	UT	0.9%
CO	1.0%	IA	0.2%	MO	5.9%	OH	18.4%	VT	0.2%
CT	0.8%	KS	5.8%	MT	3.5%	OK	0.8%	VA	0.4%
DE	0.1%	KY	1.1%	NE	0.6%	OR	1.0%	WA	1.8%
DC	0.1%	LA	0.6%	NV	3.7%	PA	1.4%	WV	6.3%
FL	2.0%	ME	0.4%	NH	4.3%	RI	0.3%	WI	1.9%
								WY	0.1%

Q3: At what school level do you teach?

Elementary school	49.3%	49.3%
Middle or junior high school*	20.3%	39.4%*
High school*	15.9%	
Secondary school, such as grades 6-12*	3.2%	
K-8 school	6.4%	11.4%
K-12 school	3.5%	
Other	1.5%	

\*For the “by school level” cross tabulations conducted for this report, there were two groups used: elementary teachers and secondary teachers. The secondary teachers group was a combination of three school levels in the table directly above: middle or junior high school, high school, and secondary school.

Q4: How many students attend your school?

1-99	1.1%	18.7%
100-199	5.5%	
200-299	12.1%	
300-399	14.2%	31.2%
400-499	17.0%	
500-749	27.2%	39.3%
750-999	12.1%	
1000-1499	6.5%	11.0%
1500-1999	2.7%	
2000-2499	0.8%	
2500 or more	1.0%	

Q5: Including yourself, how many full-time physical education teachers are at your school?

0 (I am the only PE teacher and I am part-time)	7.3%
1	47.2%
2	26.0%
3	10.7%
4	3.3%
5 or more	5.5%

Q6: How many years have you been teaching physical education at any school?

1-4 years	11.6%	11.6%
5-9 years	18.0%	18.0%
10-14 years	14.9%	33.1%
15-19 years	18.2%	
20-24 years	12.7%	37.3%
25-29 years	12.5%	
30 years or more	12.1%	

All respondents who skipped question 6 (N=370) were dropped from the data set for the remaining questions 7-30 so there were a maximum of 888 respondents for each of questions 7-30.

The majority of questions, 7-29, were analyzed using one or more of these cross tabulations: (1) by school level, (2) by school size, and (3) by years of experience teaching physical education.

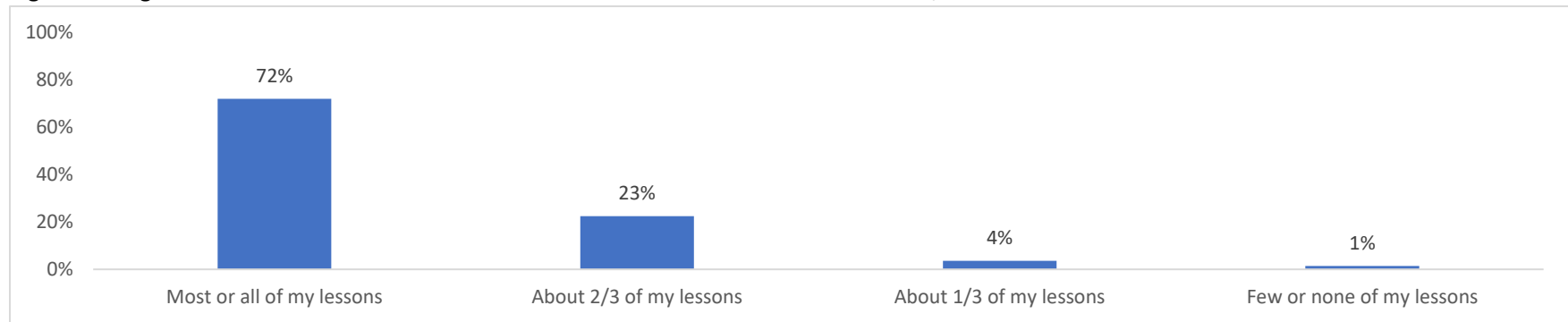
- By School Level
  - Elementary school
  - Secondary school – combination of middle or junior school, high school, and secondary school
  - Other – K-8, K-12 and “other”
- By School Size
  - Less than 300 students
  - 300-499 students
  - 500-999 students
  - 1000 or more students
- By Years of Experience Teaching Physical Education
  - Less than 5 years of experience
  - 5-9 years of experience
  - 10-19 years of experience
  - 20 or more years of experience

## RESULTS

*NOTE: On all figures, ES stands for elementary school teachers and SS stands for secondary school teachers.*

Q7: To what degree do you plan and deliver lessons with the goal of your students attaining grade-level outcomes based on the National Standards for Physical Education and/or your state's physical education standards?

Figure A: Degree to which PE Teachers Plan and Deliver Lessons Based on National and/or State PE Standards



Q8: What level of respect do you feel that the curricular area of physical education receives from each of the following groups in your school and district? (Figures B-G)

Figure B: Perceived Respect from Principals for Physical Education as a Curricular Area

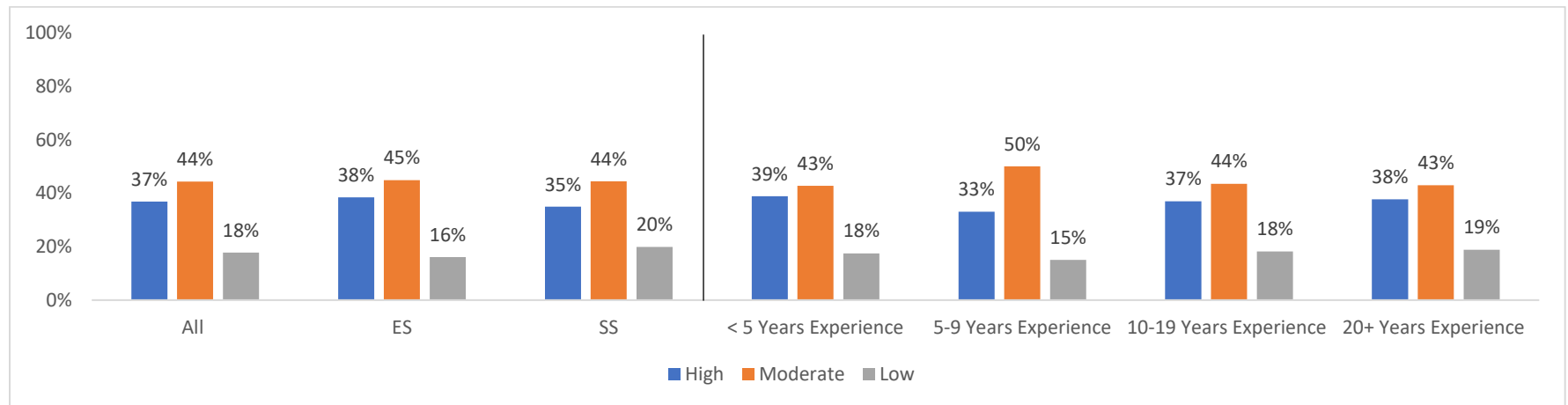


Figure C: Perceived Respect from Teachers for Physical Education as a Curricular Area

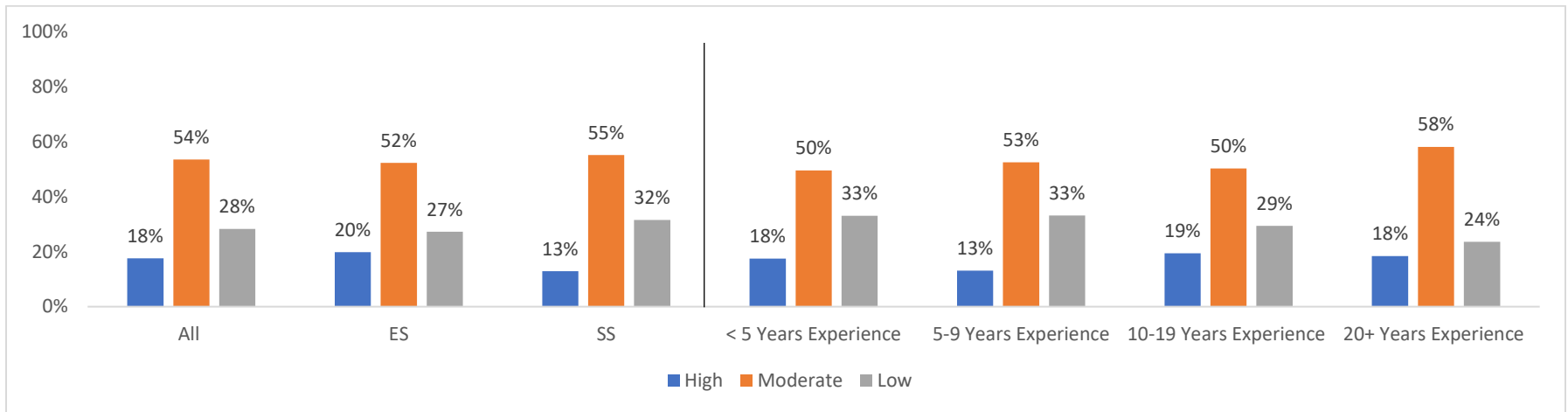


Figure D: Perceived Respect from School Staff Other Than Teachers for Physical Education as a Curricular Area

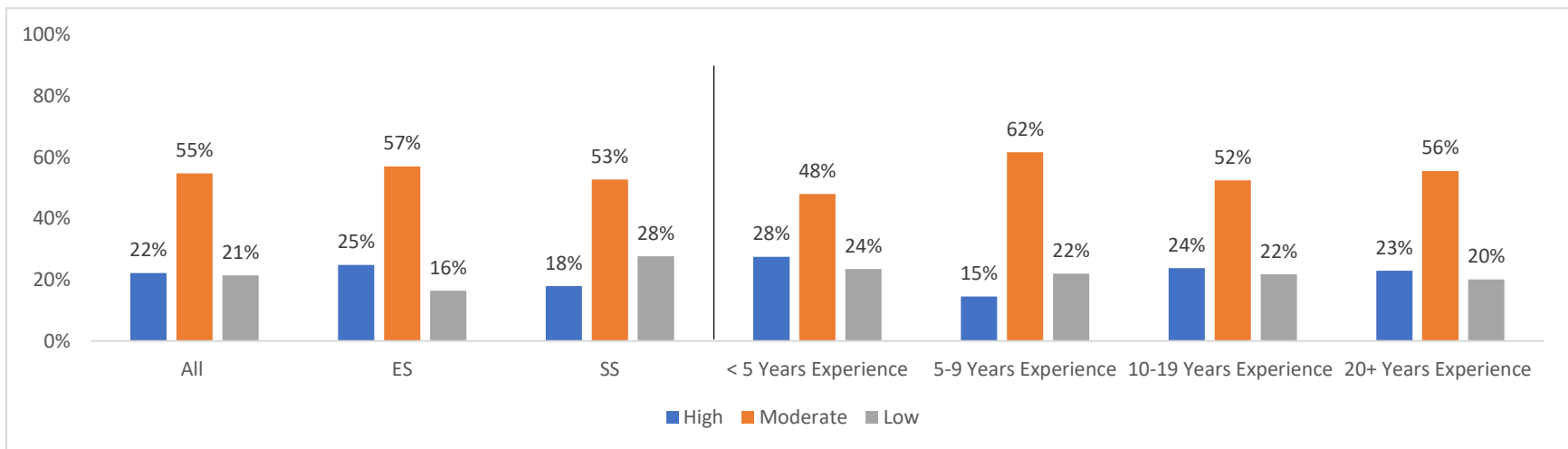


Figure E: Perceived Respect from Students for Physical Education as a Curricular Area

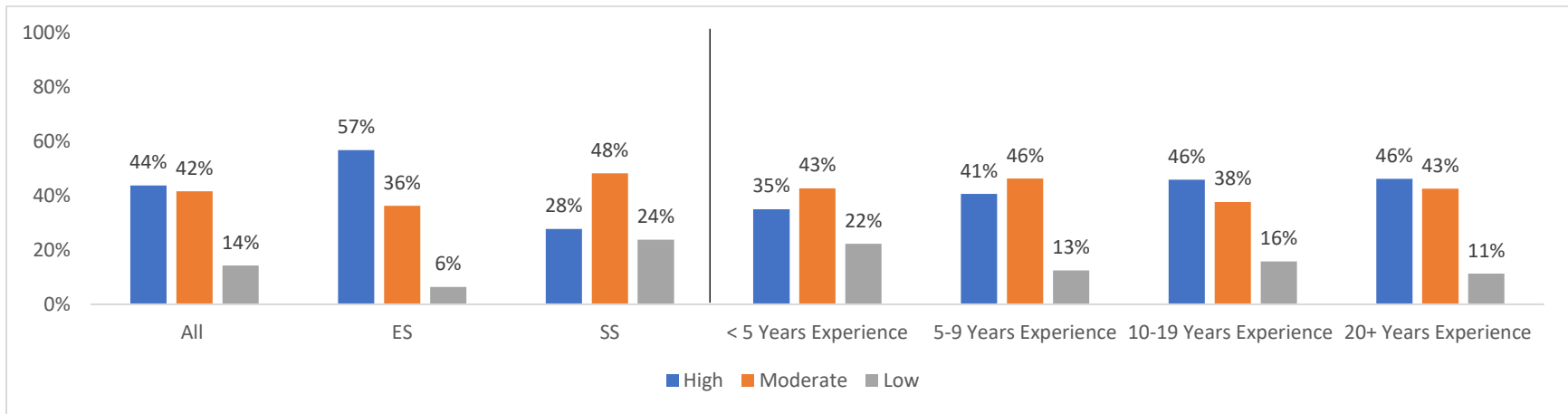


Figure F: Perceived Respect from Parents for Physical Education as a Curricular Area

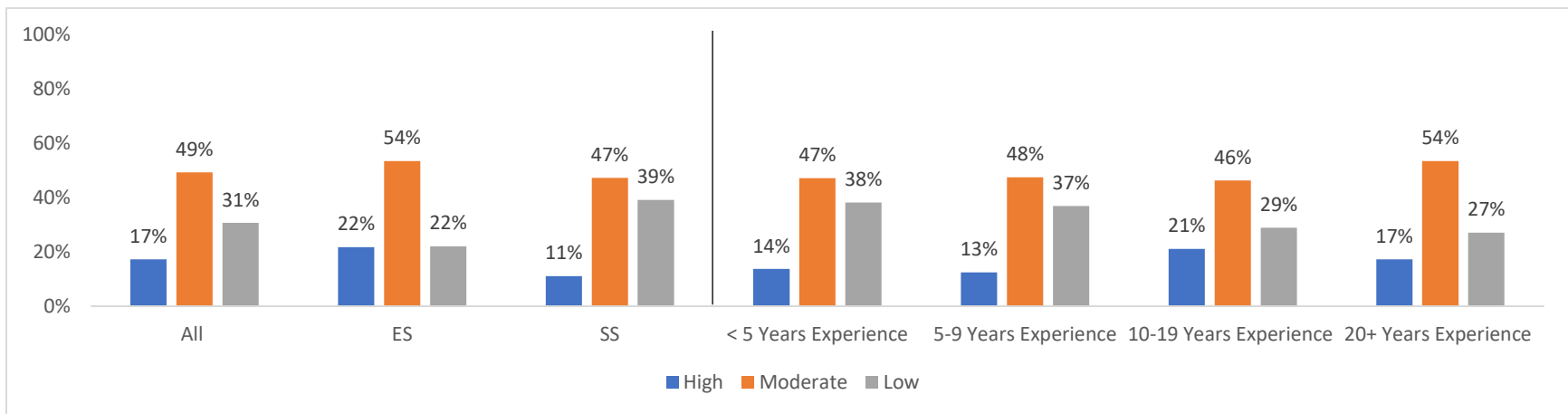
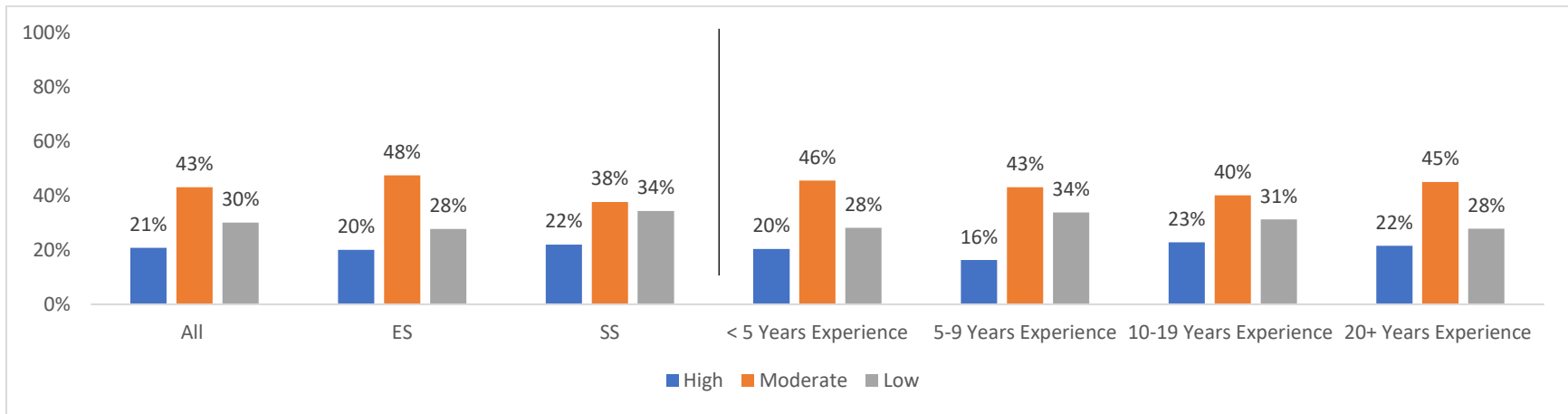




Figure G: Perceived Respect from District Administrators for Physical Education as a Curricular Area



Q9: What level of respect do you feel that you, personally, receive from each of the following groups in your school? (Figures H-L)

Figure H: Perceived Level of Respect from Principals for the Physical Education Teacher

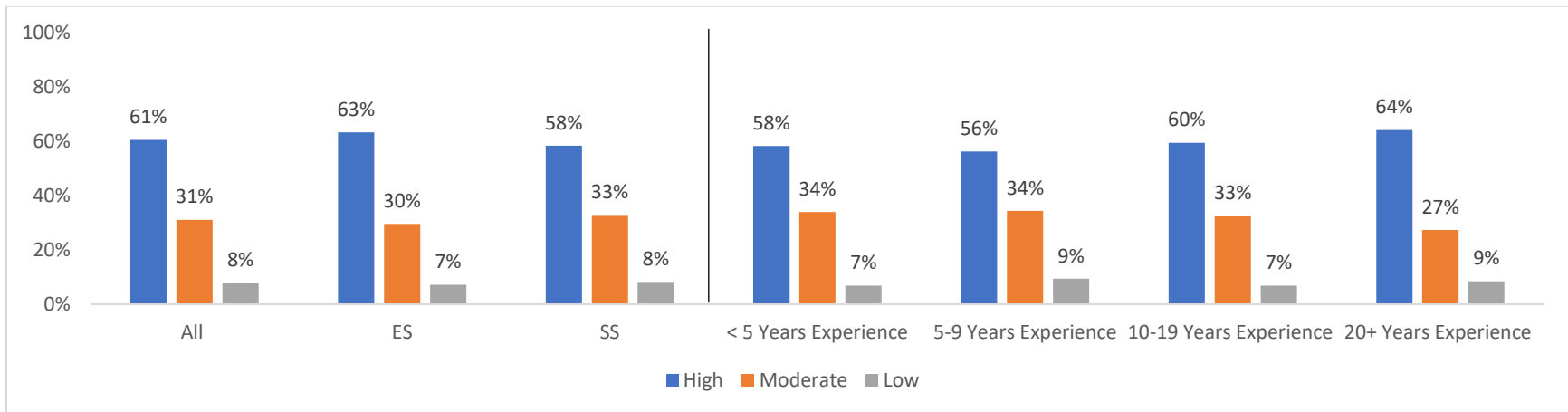


Figure I: Perceived Level of Respect from Teachers for the Physical Education Teacher

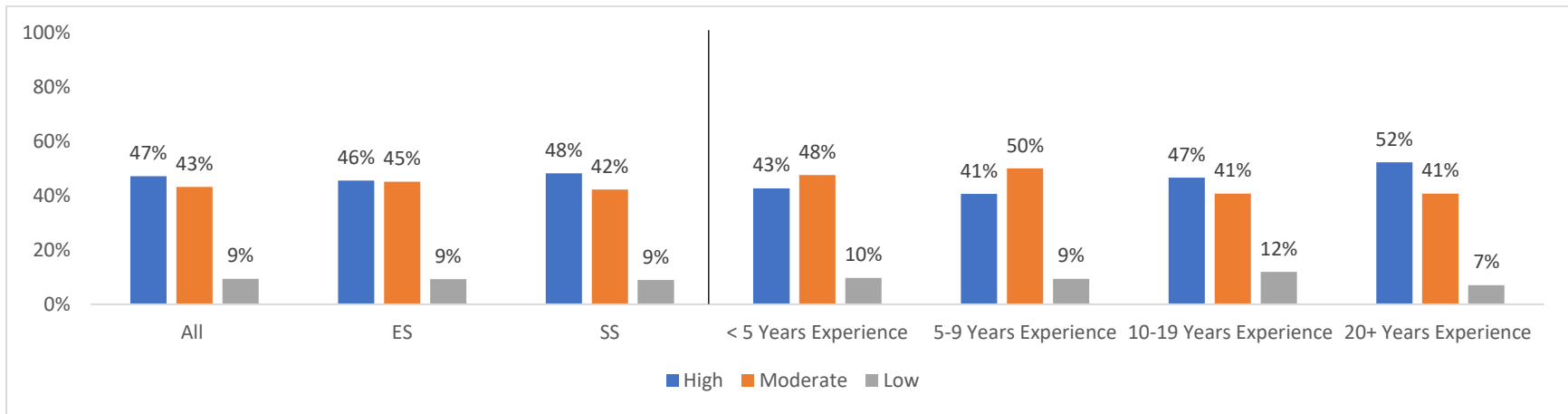


Figure J: Perceived Level of Respect from School Staff Other Than Teachers for the Physical Education Teacher

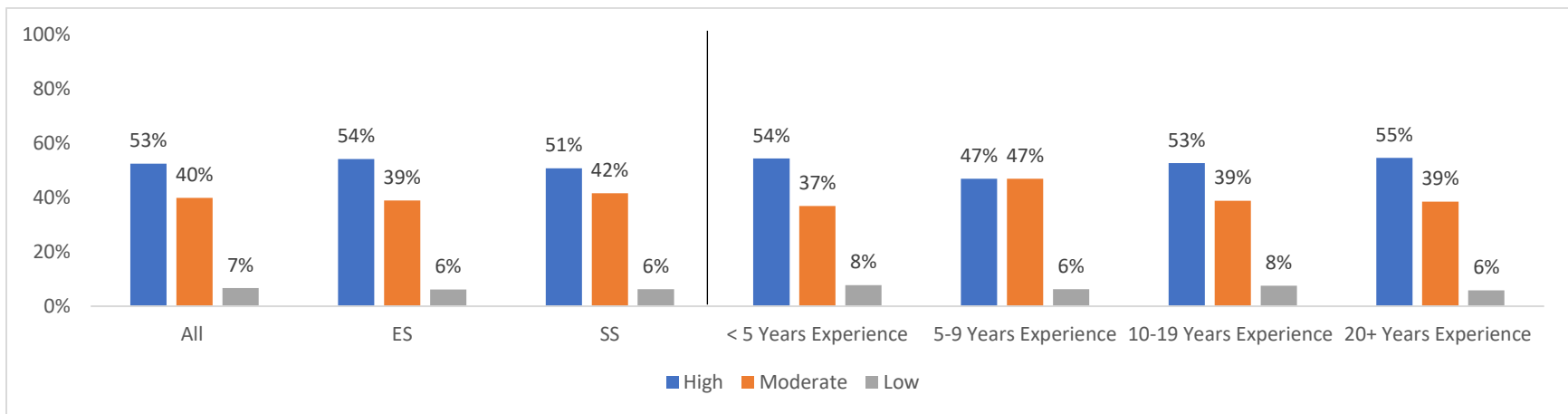


Figure K: Perceived Level of Respect from Students for the Physical Education Teacher

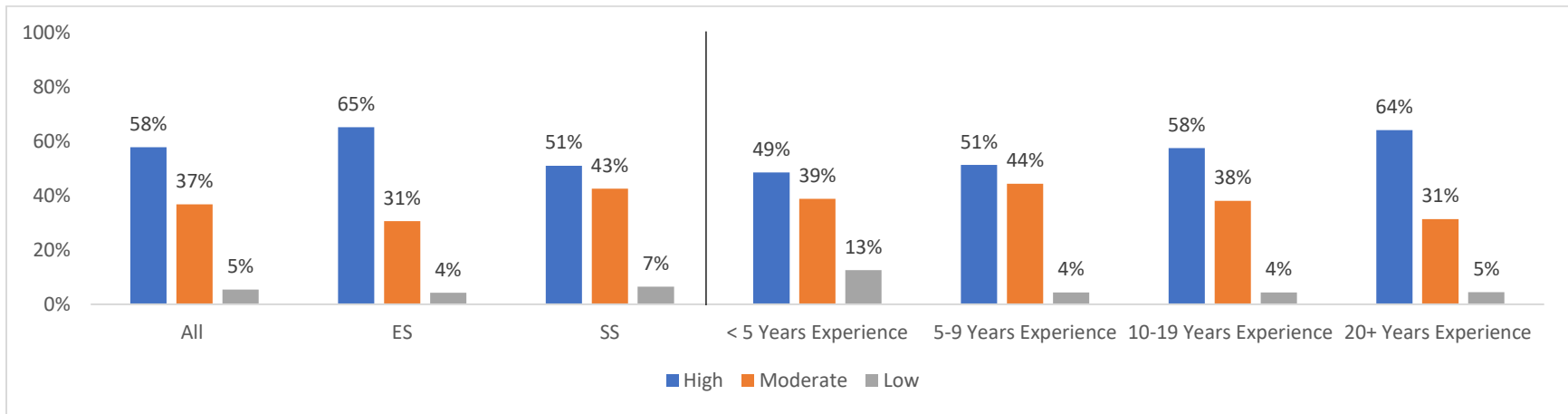
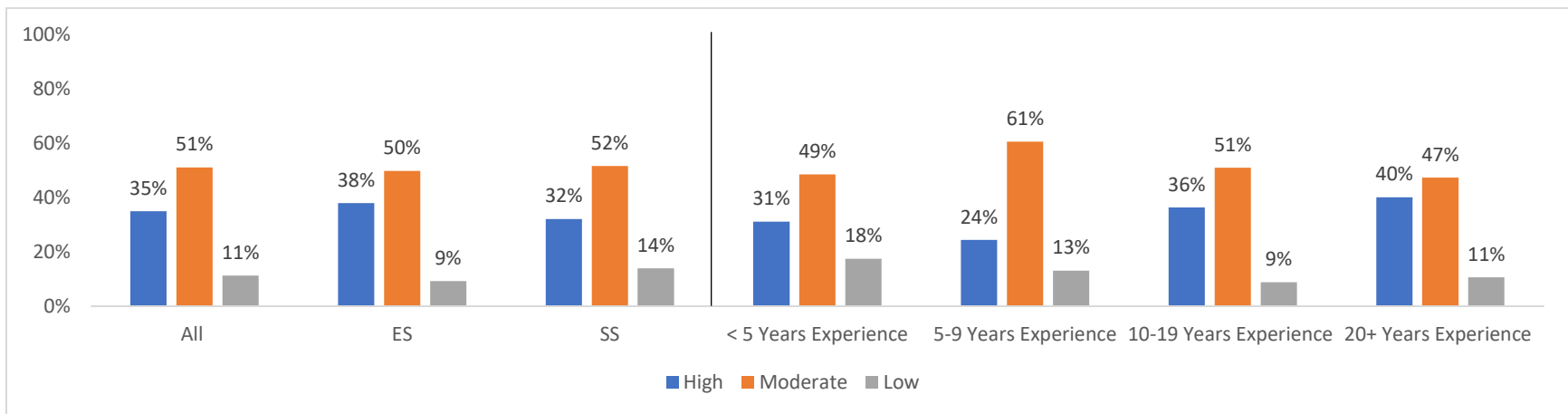
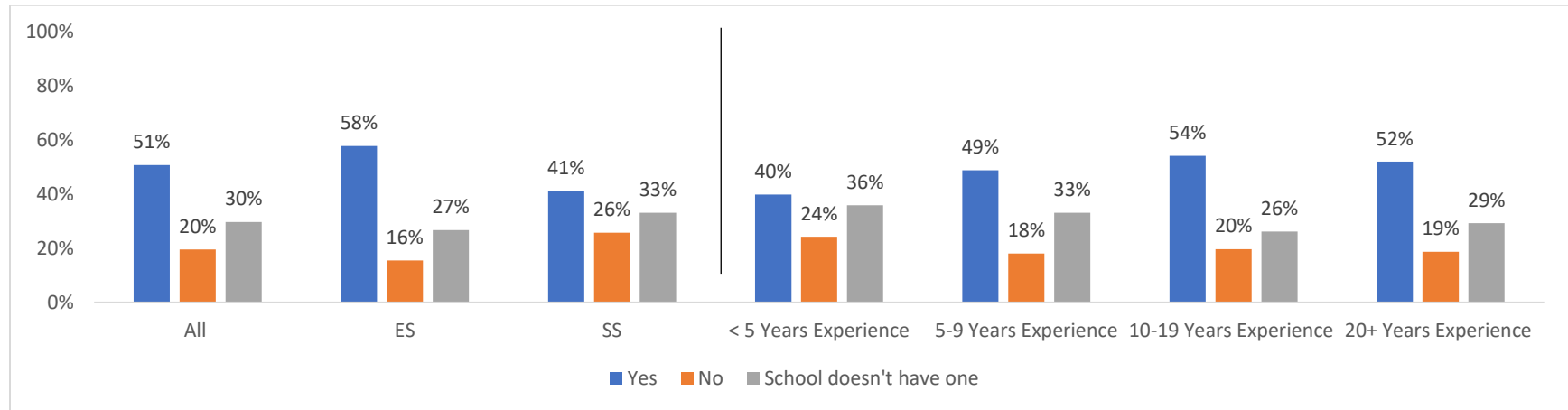


Figure L: Perceived Level of Respect from Parents for the Physical Education Teacher



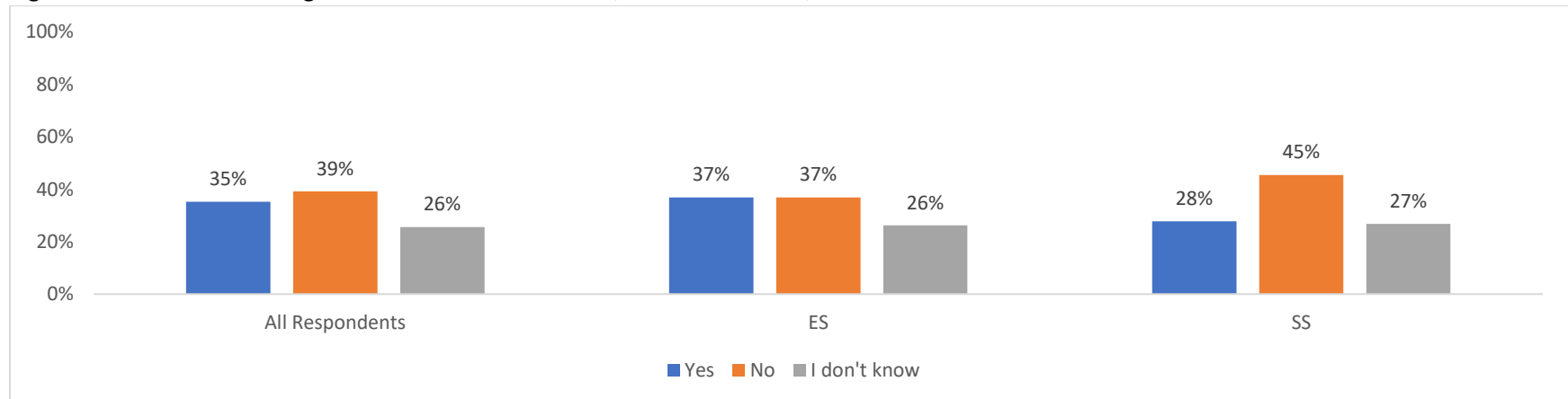
Q10: Are you a member of your school's health/wellness council/committee?

Figure M: Member of School Health/Wellness Council/Committee



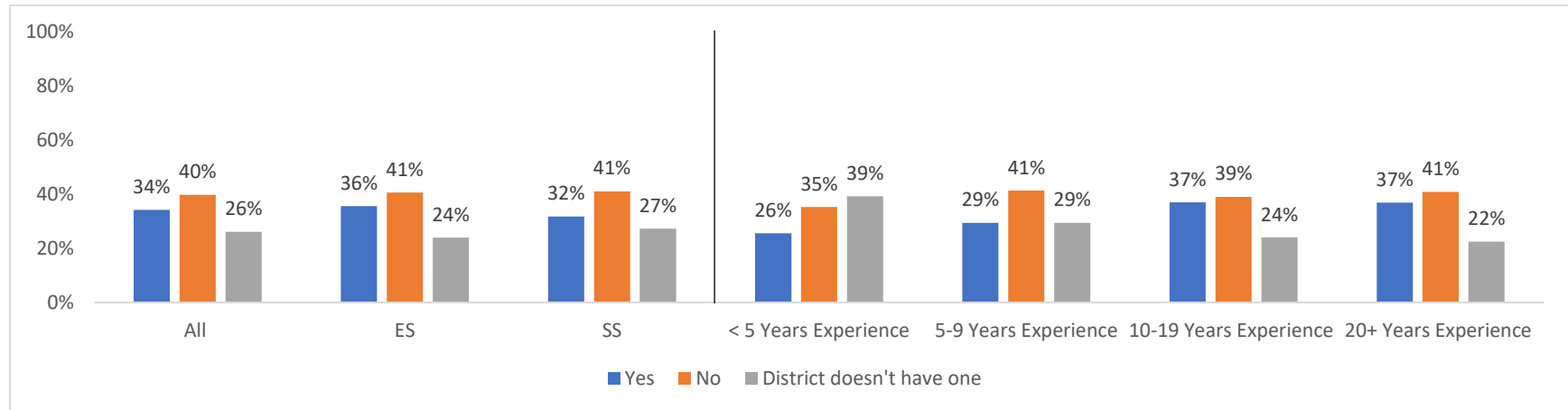
Q11: Are you interested in being a member of your school's health/wellness council/committee? *Asked only of those who said "no" to Q10.*

Figure N: Interested in Being a Member of School Health/Wellness Council/Committee



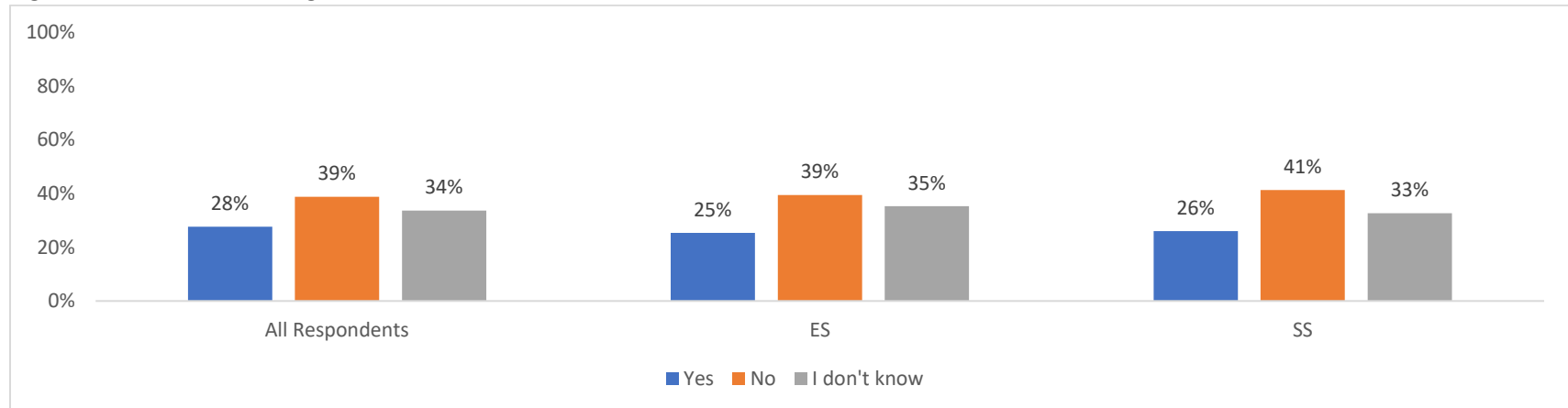
Q12: Are you a member of your district's health/wellness council/committee?

Figure O: Member of District Health/Wellness Council/Committee



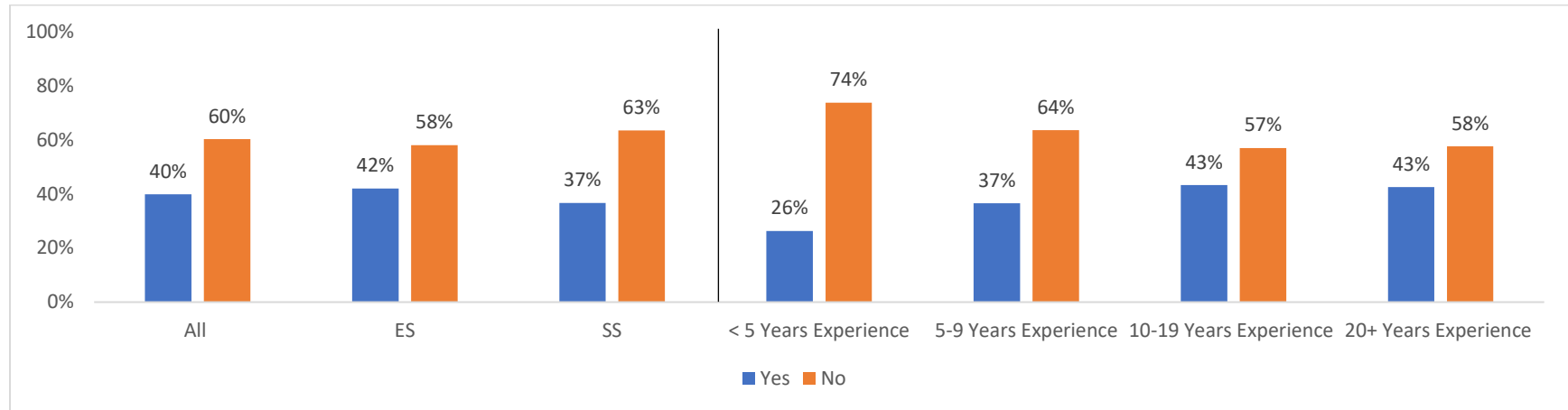
Q13: Are you interested in being a member of your district's health/wellness council/committee? *Asked only of those who said "no" to Q12.*

Figure P: Interested in Being a Member of District Health/Wellness Council/Committee



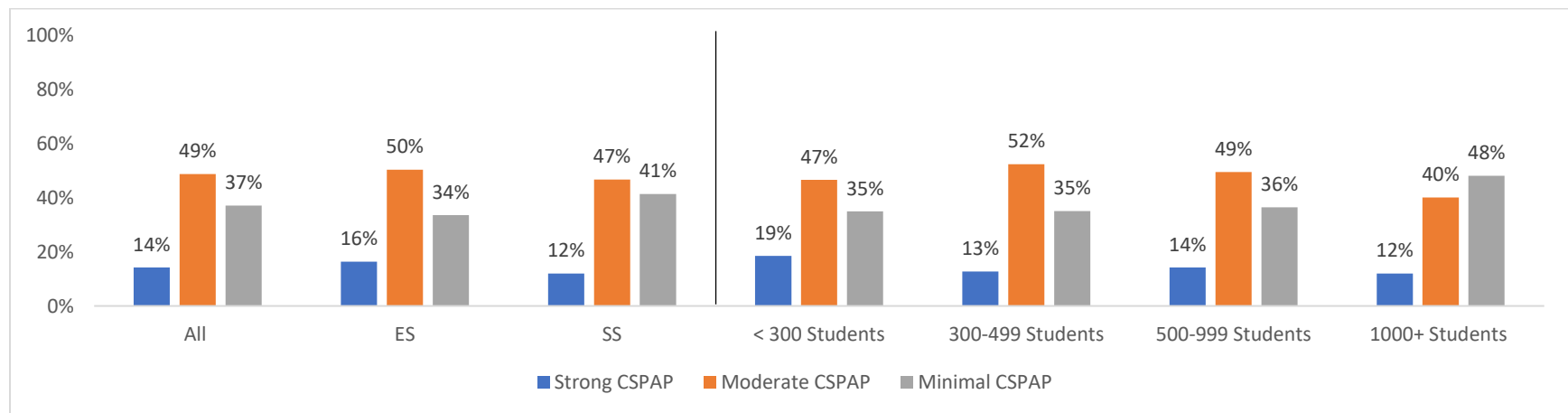
Q14: Prior to reading this definition\* of a comprehensive school physical activity program (CSPAP), did you know what a CSPAP is?  
 \*Definition on p.2 of this report

Figure Q: Knew What a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP) Is



Q15: Based on this definition\* of a comprehensive school physical activity program (CSPAP), to what degree do you believe that your school provides a CSPAP?  
 \*Definition on p.2 of this report

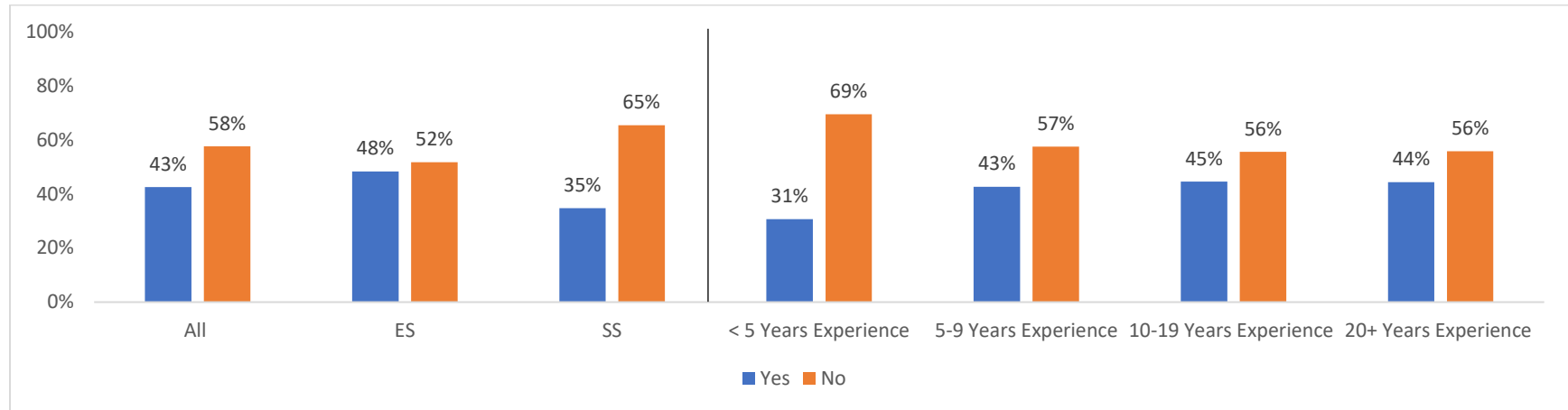
Figure R: Degree to Which the School Provides a Comprehensive School Physical Activity Program (CSPAP)



Q16: Prior to reading this definition\* of a physical activity leader (PAL), did you know what a PAL is?

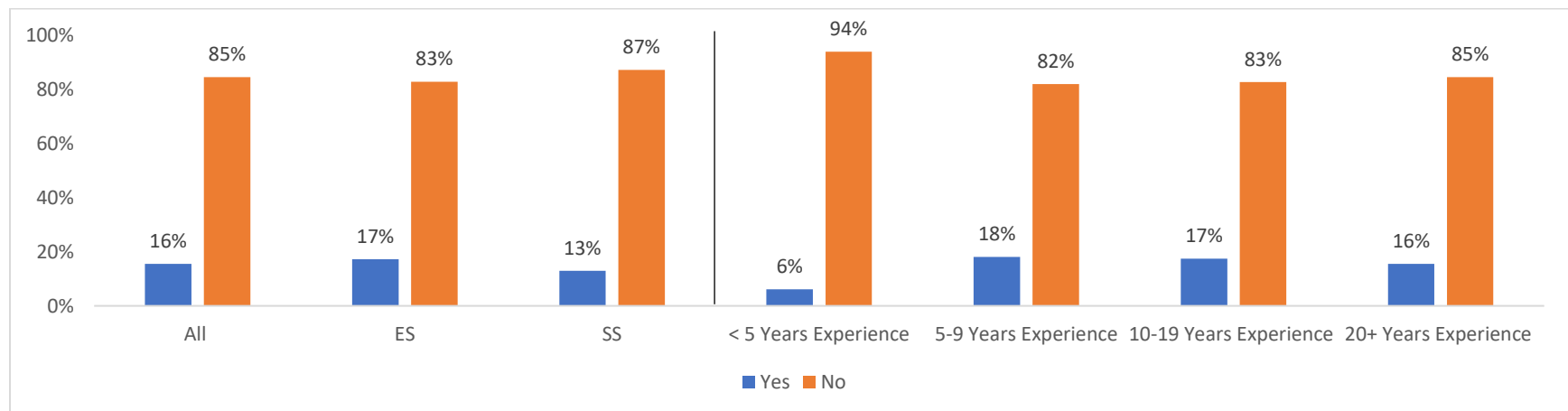
\*Definition on p.2 of this report

Figure S: Knew What a Physical Activity Leader (PAL) Is



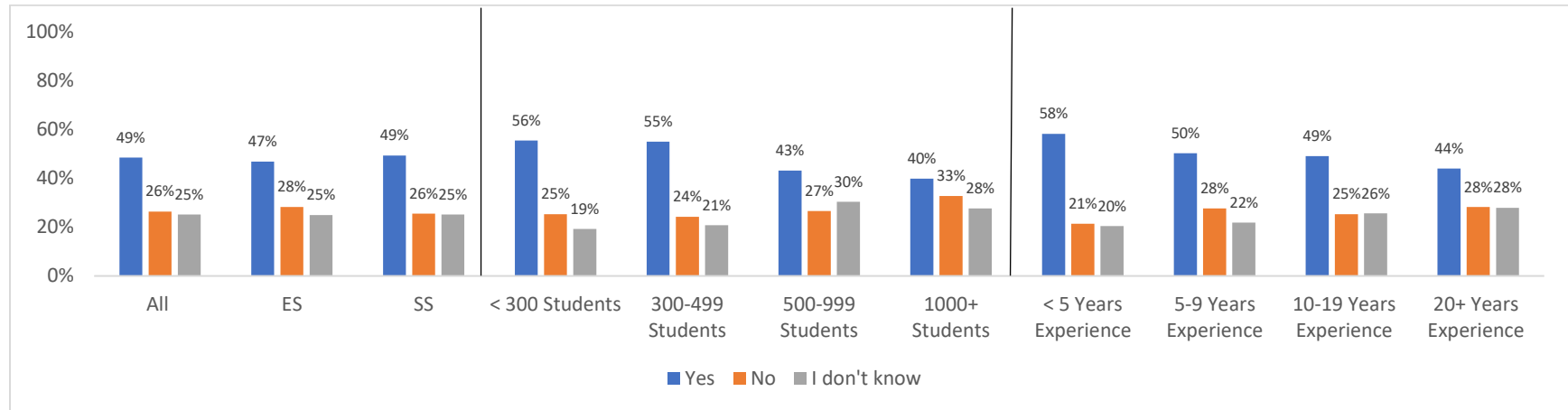
Q17: Have you ever used the term physical activity leader (PAL)?

Figure T: Have Used the Term Physical Activity Leader (PAL)



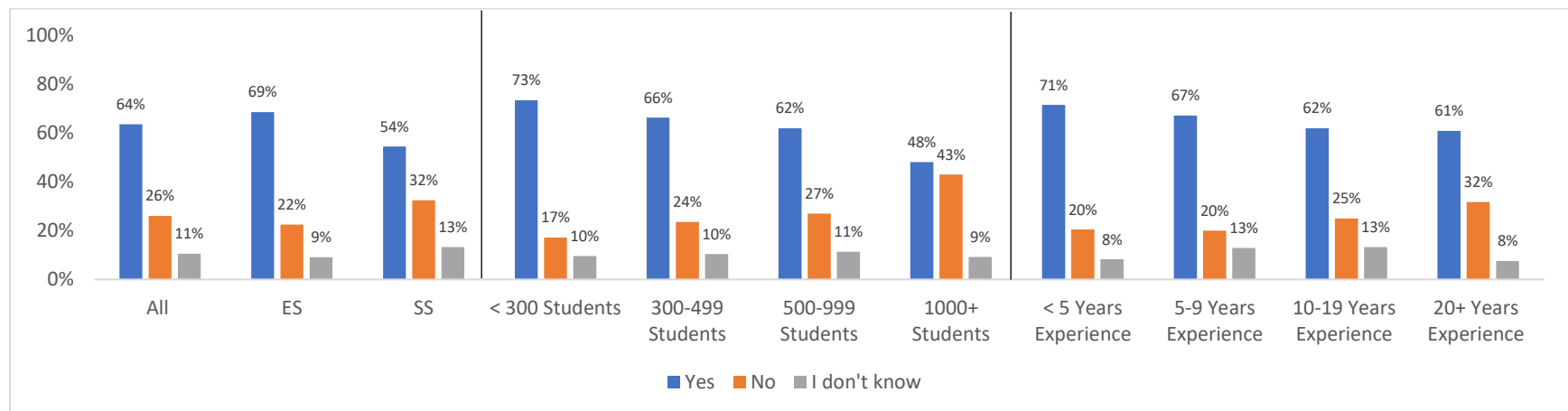
Q18: Do you believe that a physical education teacher should be expected to serve as a physical activity leader (PAL)?

Figure U: Physical Education Teacher Should be Expected to Serve as a Physical Activity Leader (PAL)



Q19: Do you believe that you currently serve as a physical activity leader (PAL) for your school, even if you have never used the term physical activity leader (PAL) to describe your role?

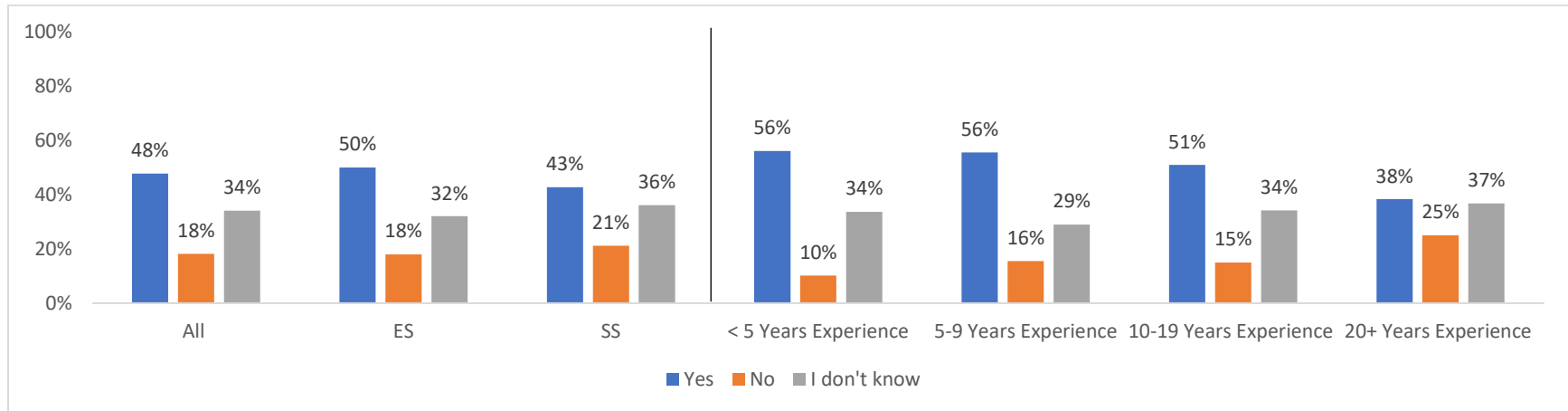
Figure V: Currently Serves as a Physical Activity Leader (PAL)





Q20: Do you want to serve as a physical activity leader (PAL)?

Figure W: Want to Serve as a Physical Activity Leader (PAL)



Q21: Please rank the top 5 reasons you want to serve as a physical activity leader (PAL). *Asked only of those who said “yes” to Q20.*

Figure X1: Reasons Why Physical Education Teachers Want to Serve as a Physical Activity Leader (PAL) – *combined #1 and #2 rankings*

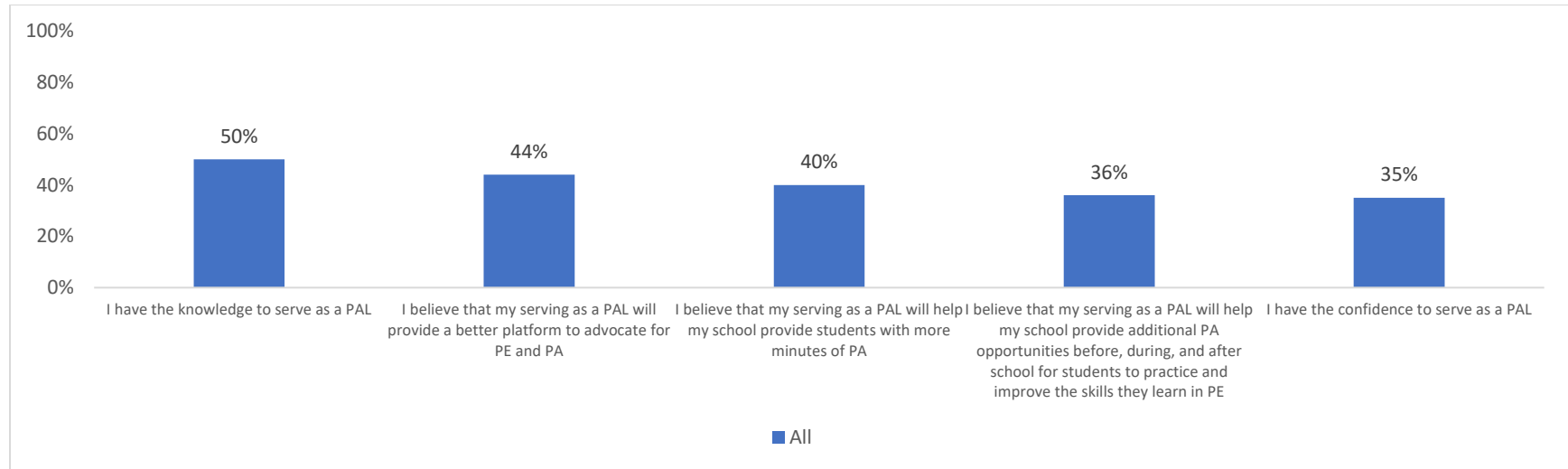
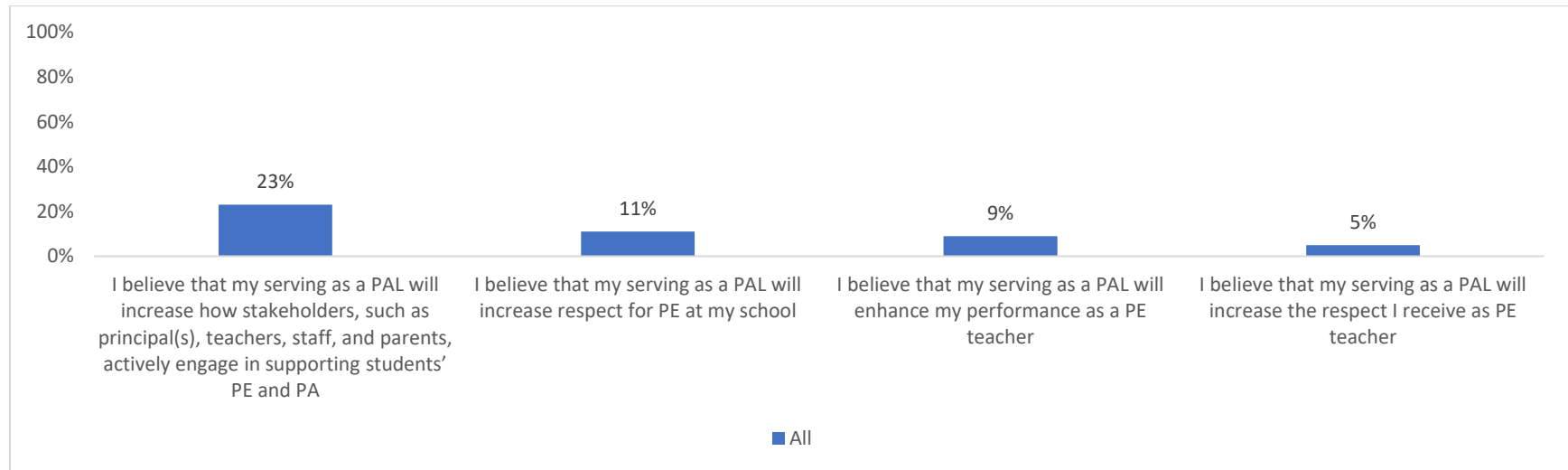
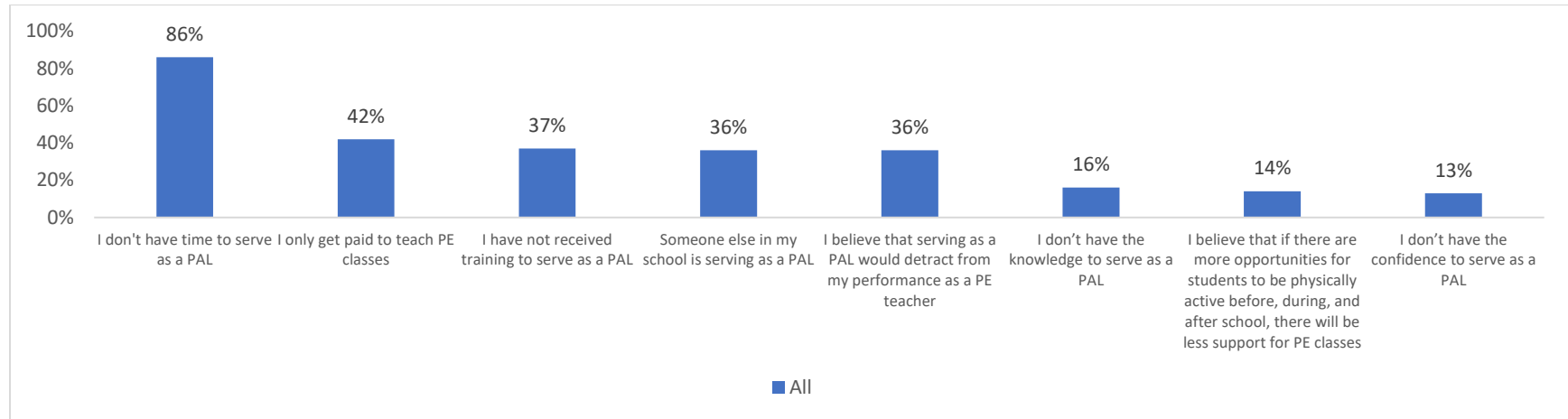


Figure X2: Reasons Why Physical Education Teachers Want to Serve as a Physical Activity Leader (PAL) – *combined #1 and #2 rankings*



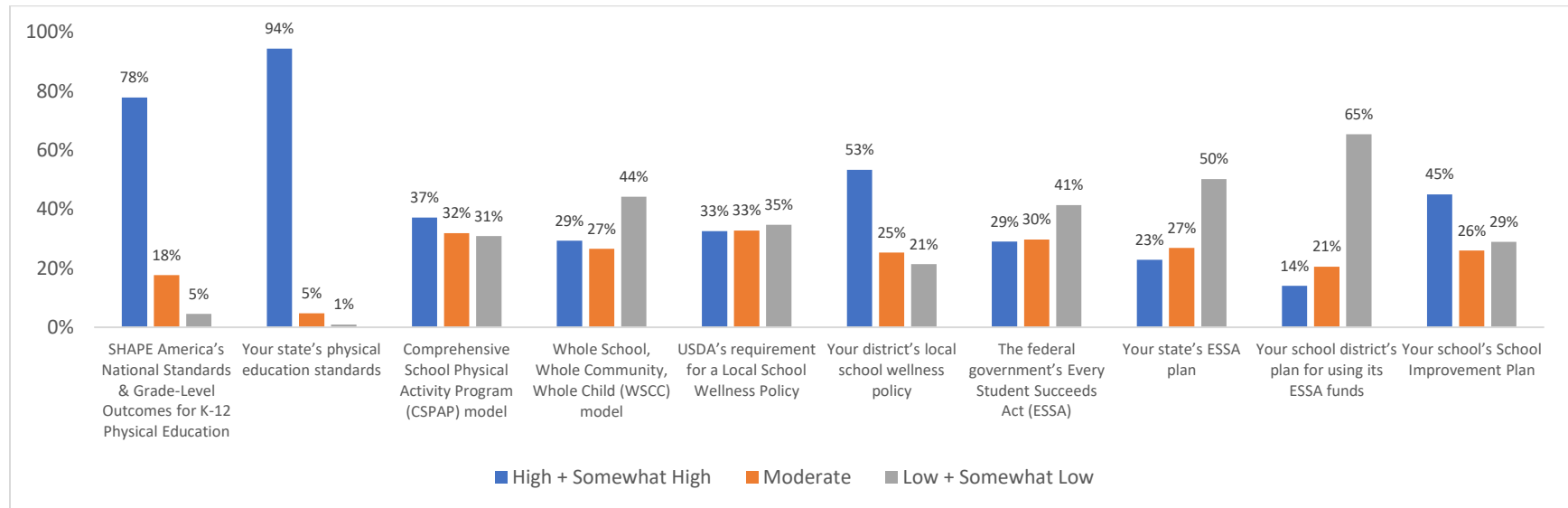
Q22: Please rank the top 5 reasons you don't want to serve as a physical activity leader (PAL). Asked only of those who said "no" to Q20.

Figure Y: Reasons Why Physical Education Teachers Don't Want to Serve as a Physical Activity Leader (PAL) – combined #1 and #2 rankings



Q23: Please rate your current level of understanding of the following items.

Figure Z: Current Level of Understanding of Key Documents and Initiatives



Q24: Please rate your current skills that help schools provide a comprehensive school physical activity program (CSPAP).

AND

Q25: Please rate your interest in professional development or training on each of the following skills that help schools provide a comprehensive school physical activity program (CSPAP).

Figure AA1: Current Level of Skills for Providing a CSPAP and Interest in Professional Development for Each Skill

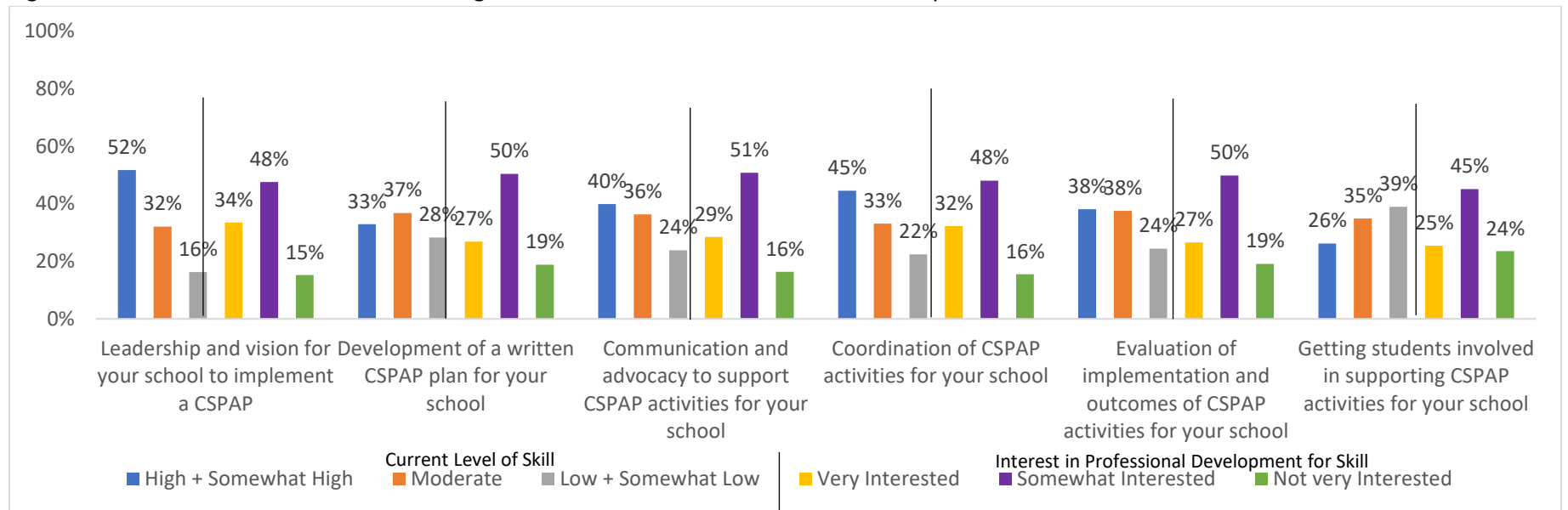
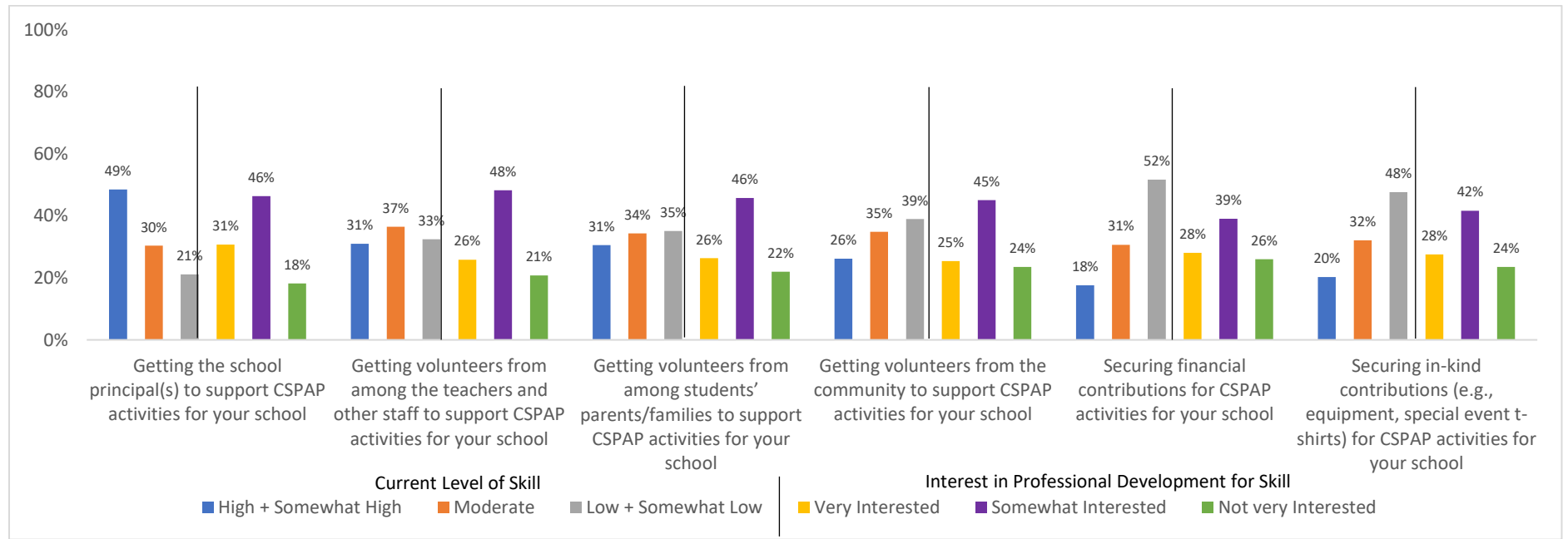
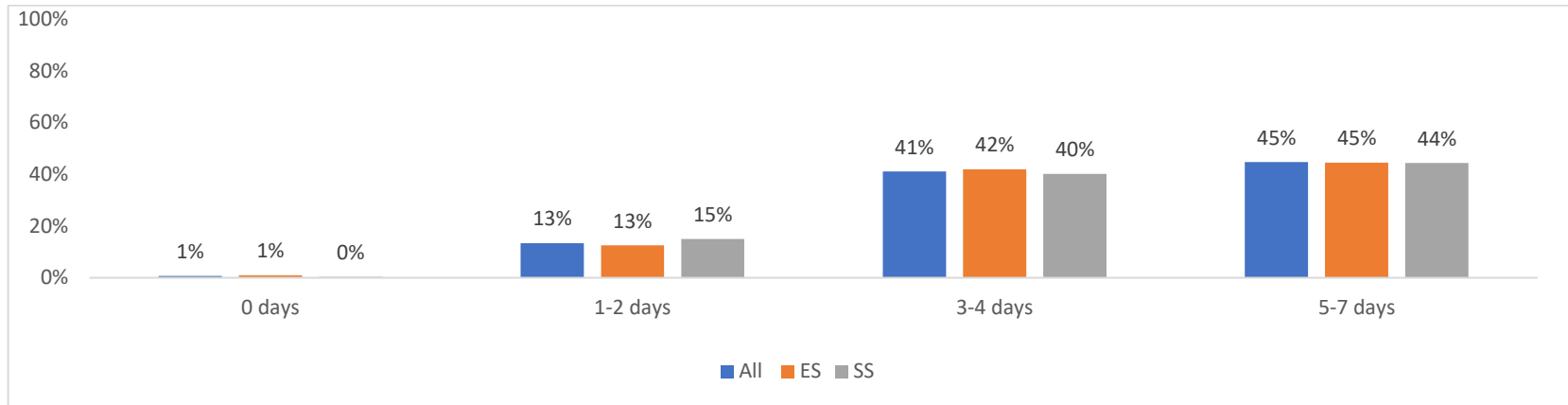


Figure AA2: Current Level of Skills for Providing a CSPAP and Interest in Professional Development for Each Skill



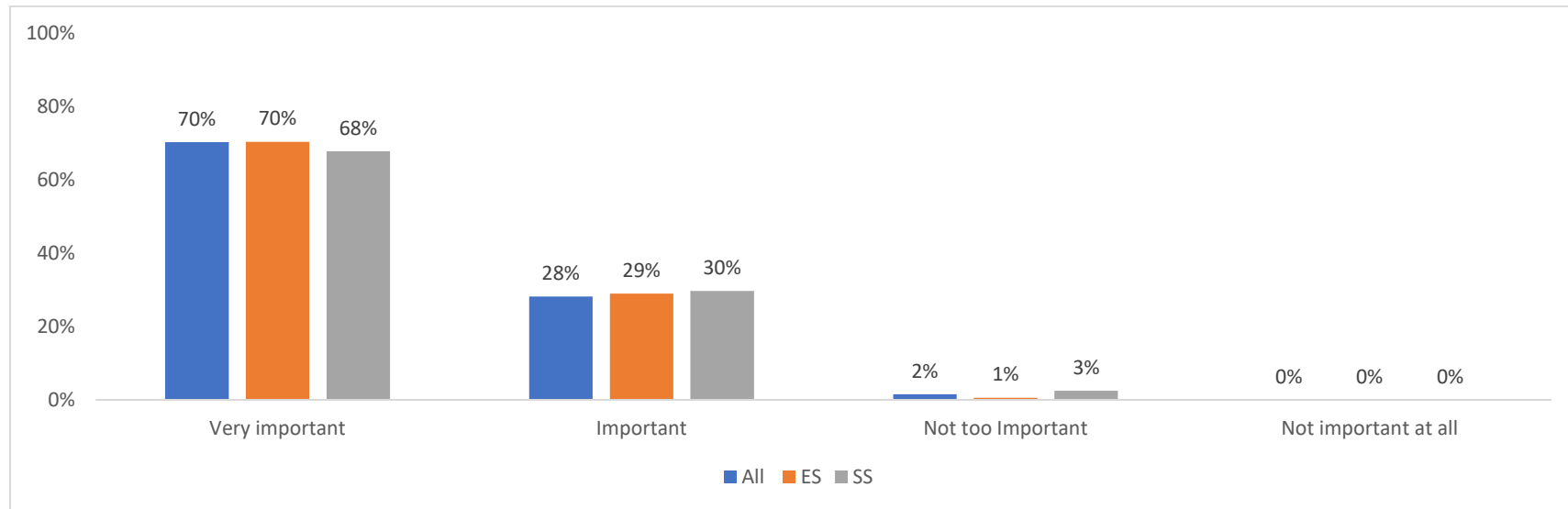
Q26: In a typical week, how many days are you, personally, moderately to vigorously physically active for at least 30 minutes?

Figure BB: Physical Education Teachers Engage in Moderate to Vigorous Activity for 30+ Minutes a Day



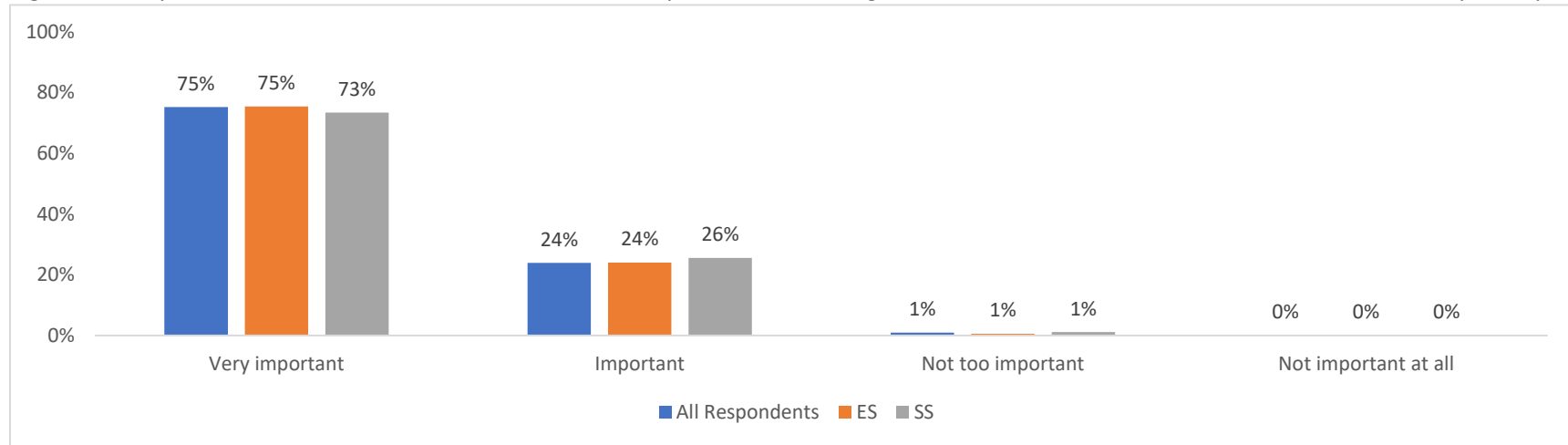
Q27: What level of importance does your own health, physical activity, and well-being have in your life?

Figure CC: Importance of Health, Well-Being, and Physical Activity in the PE Teacher's Life



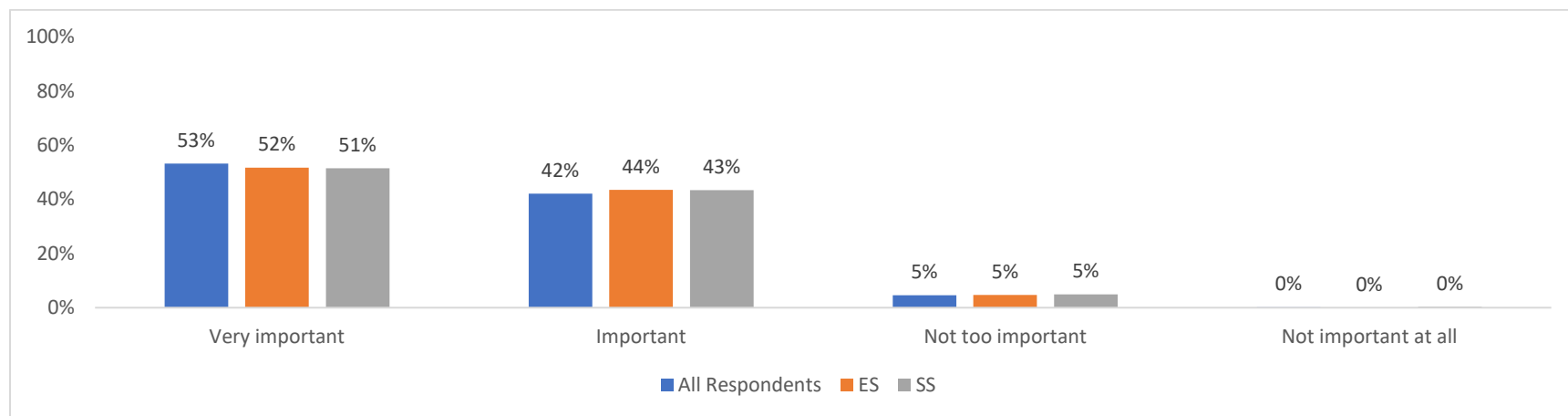
Q28: How important is it to you that you serve as a role model to students for an active and healthy lifestyle?

Figure DD: Physical Education Teachers' Beliefs about the Importance of Serving as a Role Model to Students for an Active and Healthy Lifestyle



Q29: How important is it to you that the teachers, staff, and administrators at your school serve as role models to students for an active and healthy lifestyle?

Figure EE: Physical Education Teachers' Beliefs about the Importance of Teachers, Staff and Administrators at Their School Serving as Role Models to Students for an Active and Healthy Lifestyle



Q30: Please share any additional thoughts about the role of a physical education teacher, and/or any teacher or staff member, serving as a school physical activity leader (PAL).

**Lack of time; getting paid; need a staff position for this role**

1. I'm spread so thin teaching health K-12 and teaching PE K-12 and I have had some coaching positions I really don't have time to add to my plate, although I think this program is important.
2. I know we are the "experts" but are already often worn out from large classes and coaching after school. I think it's appropriate but sometimes physically impossible to fit it all in.
3. I would be willing to learn more and be on a team to explore some of what this survey is about but am apprehensive to add any more to my plate. Teachers are maxed out with hours and our responsibilities to our students and families.
4. Time is important and I have very little time to do anything more outside of my normal day.
5. To do this job... I would need more TIME. I am already overly committed to so many other things in the building and community. It would definitely have to be a paid position to add incentive to be away from my family for more time than I already am doing other commitments.
6. I feel it is important for PE teachers to also be PALs but when you are the only one it makes the work load seem impossible. I do what I can now and would love to help facilitate this program in the future.
7. Time is critical and finding the right time to create the most impact is not easy.
8. At this point in my career I ask myself - Why should I work and coordinate activities when I do not get paid for all the extra things I am already doing?
9. We are so many different people all wrapped into one. I am serving on many committees - school wellness, Social Emotional Committee, School Leadership and more. There is a huge push for the PE teachers to be a part of SEL learning/training.
10. I just feel that with a full teaching load and little planning time we are asked to do to many things and we do not have time to get it all done.
11. Collaboratively the duties and expectations of a designated PAL could be effectively met with the insertion of an additional staff member. In theory the use of a ESSP (TA) specifically assigned to the physical education teacher/department may be an effective tool. Collaboratively the plan of action would be implemented and its effectiveness measured, as it relates to your stated goals.
12. Where are we going to find the time to coordinate and implement the duties of a PAL if we are full time teaching? The school should hire a support person to do this and allow them to actually be outside during recess and visit teachers' classrooms.
13. Not sure about the (PAL) implementation at my school because I have personal responsibilities before and after school, so it will create a conflict with what I need to do before and after school. Program sounds great. Enjoyed survey.
14. In my experience, paid and not voluntary positions work best.
15. The biggest challenge is TIME!! I, and my PE colleagues, are already leading extra activities before and after school, as well as providing additional activities during recess. Speaking for myself, I am a "do-er" and my weakness is finding others to provide these active opportunities.
16. I would volunteer being a PAL in my school, but I have two very young children at home, so time is limited.
17. We have a before and after school coordinator for our school. We communicate regarding physical activities to implement during the times those students are in those programs, but she is in charge of everything that goes with those programs.



18. I love the IDEA of it. I personally have my own small children and am unable to stay after school or come before school to implement ANY programs. The programs that currently exist at our school are lead by other teachers. I am on board for the idea, feel skilled in the content, but do not have before and after school time to devote.
19. Typically physical education teachers have over-crowded classes and no planning time. It will be a tremendous task to try and take on. It's a great idea, but not realistic for many schools.
20. We have a resource coordinator in our school. I wonder how much of his time should be used to help serve as the PAL.
21. We currently have students that provide the role of PAL leaders during our recess.
22. PE teachers in the inner city are completely MAXED out on conducting the state mandated testing, lesson planning, and providing interim grades and grades for kids we only see only one time a week. I cannot even imagine trying to provide/coordinate a program like this. There is NO WAY I would have the time (or energy) to devote to collecting donations, coordinating volunteers and promoting this program to my students. Now... take me out of my full-time teaching responsibilities and pay me \$100,000 to coordinate something like this... I am in.
23. Being a PAL should not be an "extra" thing added to the teacher's role within the school. It should be included in what they already do. Teachers are already not compensated for duties beyond the classroom. I do an after-school running program but it is a volunteered thing 16 weeks, two days a week, during the school year.

**Lack of space/facilities; scheduling issues**

1. Scheduling is the main problem for plans at times. The student schedule is not rigid and doesn't allow for special activities.
2. Our community isn't large enough to have both after school sports and before/after school activities. We lack the building space as well as the number of volunteers to make it worthy.
3. It sounds like a great program, but we do not have the gym space for intramurals or activities after school and our school day starts at 7 AM so it would be difficult to organize something before school.
4. No facilities to do so. Sports already use the facilities after school and before school.
5. Before and after school activity is also hard with the winter months and lack of space available due to sports activities. In the past, I ran an activity program during the middle of the day but lack of other staff support eventually caused the program to come to an end as well.
6. Seems like the logical choice within a school. I believe our student population is too large and our facilities are too lacking to implement something like this.
7. Our district is one of the biggest geographically and bus transportation is an issue with respect to developing after school programs. Additionally, the facilities are being used almost every night. After that the building has to be cleaned to prepare for the next day. We really don't have additional space for anything until we build more facilities at this time.

**Lack of respect and/or support for PE**

1. I do, one day, hope that a regular teacher will again respect us as physical educators. To date, I am more looked at as a break or planning time for teachers.
2. In my school, related art teachers are basically the school baby sitter so regular classroom teachers can have their planning period.
3. PE is just as important as the core classes and is not just planning time for the classroom teachers.
4. We serve as support for core subjects.

5. More respect to the profession and not putting students in class to put them somewhere. Making classes over 30 is too many to handle and keep an eye on.
6. Doubt I will ever see it happen; nobody cares about PE.
7. At my current school I am not untested in doing anything extra because I cannot get support or respect from anyone. Maybe at another school!
8. I would love to do more but unfortunately my principal has voiced her opinion that PE teachers do not need planning periods. If we need planning time it is before or after school. If I had two planning periods during the school day, I would be happy to provide before and after school activity times.
9. With all the emphasis on math, English and science there is not much of anything for physical education.
10. I used to be the athletic director of my school and have initiated many activities for students and teachers. Unfortunately, my work wasn't recognized and now I am focusing more on myself and my family.
11. I think there is too much going on with classroom teachers/support staff/admin to get support and help with this in my district. Teachers/admin already have so many tasks to worry about and just simply don't have the time. For example, I just started a "Mile Club" this year for my K-5 students and none of my teachers/admin offered to help/volunteer and I had 150+ students in the club. Luckily for us we have a great PTO and parent volunteers.
12. I love the idea of making physical activity available to students before, during, or after school but the organization and support seems like a daunting task. Often, I feel stretched thin as it is.

**Only PE teacher; feels like I'm going it solo; lack of help**

1. It is a great position to be in but often times it feels like a solo position. I facilitate meetings and work to get administrators and staff awareness of its importance but wish there was more training for staff and more buy-in from them.
2. If I had another PE teacher at my school, we would be much more on track to offering all of the activity we need to offer!

**Whether PE teachers should be expected to serve as PALs**

1. The physical education teacher as well as the other teachers in the building should take active roles in promoting physical activity.
2. To have a physical education teacher as a PAL would be a great way to encourage the students, staff and community to become more physically active and involved in the physical education program.
3. I think having a PAL is important, but I don't agree that it should be expected of the PE teacher. That puts extra work on the PE teacher. Without the extra work involving a stipend or leadership project credit I feel it degrades the PE teacher ... giving other teachers the assumption that a PE teacher has time in addition to their teaching responsibilities that teachers of other subjects are not expected to have time for.
4. I don't believe that it should be expected for physical education teacher to be a PAL, unless the financial burden or the stress associated to it, doesn't fall on the PAL, but on the institutions.
5. As a PE teacher, I am expected to lead after school activities and coach sports teams. I don't think it should be expected but I am glad to be able to provide these opportunities for our students.
6. I think a physical education teacher would be a good candidate for a PAL, but I don't think it should be required or expected. Each teacher has different roles outside of school that can prevent them from stepping up as a PAL.
7. I think it is important for the physical education teacher to serve as a school physical activity leader to lend their support and knowledge to assist classroom teachers in being PALs for their classes.

8. I believe the PE teacher should be involved but for total buy in, other staff and community should be involved.
9. It shouldn't be required but they should have the first chance to be the PAL if they wish to be.

**PE teachers and all school staff as role models**

1. As PE teachers, we have to continuously model what we teach.
2. Healthy lifestyle choices should be model by all adults in the building.
3. I always teach, talk and show my students that I am the epitome of what I expect from them and make it a habit to be intentional to share my passion!
4. PE teachers should exhibit the lifestyle they are teaching.
5. To have a physical education teacher as a PAL would be a great way to encourage the students, staff and community to become more physically active and involved in the physical education program.
6. There are so many teachers that teach the subject but do not take it to heart in their own lives. Role model = success.
7. It is important that a PAL is a role model. You cannot ask a student to do something that you yourself are not willing to do. You also have to show them the correct behavior.
8. I truly believe we need to practice what we preach in order to be taken seriously. Additionally, we need to ensure we are providing students with capability to lead a healthy and active life once they leave our school.
9. Now that I have taken this survey, I am embarrassed not to have taken my own health seriously. I will begin to make a better plan for my own activity level.
10. Although, I feel very strongly that we are role models for our kids and schools, I do have very little time to exercise as much as I would like.
11. Those serving as a PAL should be physically active and physically fit or work towards better fitness and more active.
12. Physical activity is important for everyone!
13. Schools/teachers are uniquely equipped to motivate students to be physically active within the time frame of the school day plus before & after school programs. We can serve as role models and examples to children about the importance of physical activity & healthy living. Many of my students do not have active adults in their lives...so my role and the role of other teachers is so important! I believe someone on staff should be the PAL because we know the school and the children well. The kids, teachers, parents and administration will have greater buy in if a teacher or staff member is the PAL!
14. At our school, we have a culture of do as I say and not as do. Teachers don't value healthy activity and eating and don't buy into having a school wide philosophy to address it. Makes it difficult to get everyone on board.

**As a PAL, I've had great experiences and outcomes**

1. I have served as my school's PAL for the last five years. Our school has grown, accepted and loves physical activity and wellness.
2. Being a PAL has enabled me to help increase physical activity for ALL of our students at our school throughout the day...not just during PE class.
3. Being a PAL helped mold me into the teacher I am today!
4. I did not complete the PAL training until last summer which was my 9th year of teaching. I believe since becoming a PAL that my access to best practices has increased greatly. The training has allowed me to network with other like-minded educators and gather the knowledge and information needed to deliver a CSPAP.

**PAL training; want to learn more**

1. I believe in this program and want to learn more.
2. Sign me up for training!
3. Communication, recruiting new people to get involved, welcoming personality are weak points for myself. I'd certainly contribute in developing and working to put together a comprehensive CSPAP but as a leader, I'd be hesitant.
4. I am very invested in educating our children to establish a great foundation for physical activity and good nutrition for a well-rounded individual who is ready to learn and grow.
5. Be positive and be the change.
6. This individual needs to have the time, interest, energy and knowledge to be able to motivate students in the area of health and wellness.
7. It would be great if it could become a reality!

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