

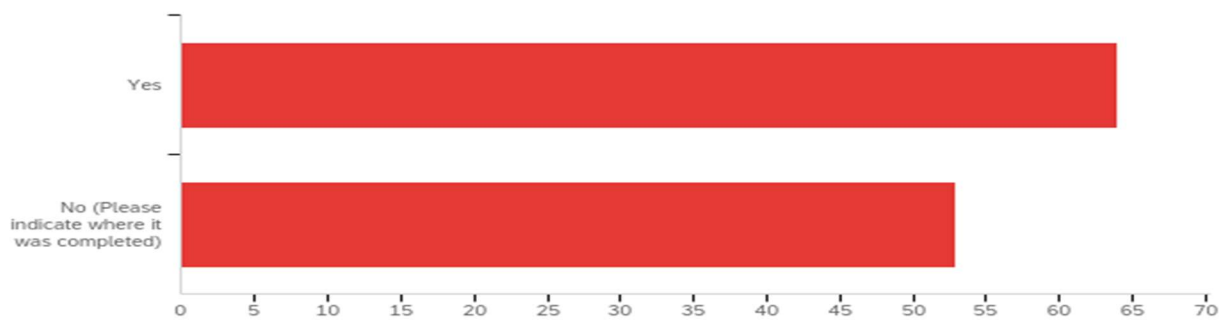
## The 2021 Association of VA Audiologists Survey Results

By the 2020-2021 AVAA Board

The Association of VA Audiologists (AVAA) conducts periodic membership surveys to identify the opinions and needs of our membership. The goal of the survey is to identify how AVAA can best meet the needs of its members and help contribute to the field of audiology. Each AVAA membership survey is independent of one another. Previous surveys are reviewed to determine if questions need to be reassessed and to determine what areas need to be addressed in future surveys. Ultimately the AVAA board will use this information to create several action items that will be used to help best serve our membership.

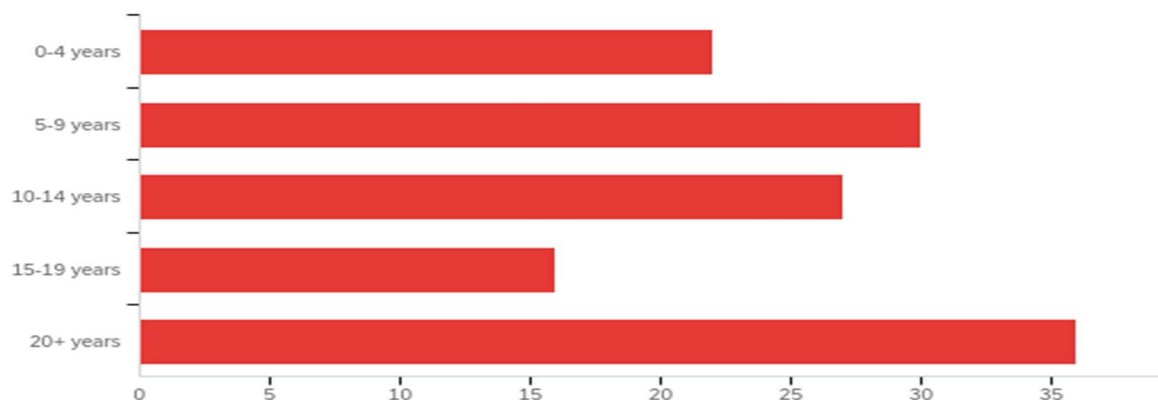
In our current survey, we received 136 responses with 125 from audiologists, 7 from audiology health techs (4 of whom are CAOHC certified), and 4 from current AuD externs. The rest of this article will focus on the responses from audiologists as a separate survey was created for AuD externs. The results from the AuD extern survey were used to create a special Externship Edition of the AVAA Amplifier (the AVAA newsletter) and can be found at [myavaa.org](http://myavaa.org).

The first question (figure 1) asked of the membership was “Did you complete your externship/CFY at the VA”? The results indicated a slight majority (65) did complete their externship/CFY at the VA, 52 did not, and 8 individuals did not respond to the question. Audiologists who did not complete their externship/CFY at the VA were asked to indicate what type of setting where they completed this training. There was a wide variety of responses comprising almost every clinical setting in the field of audiology.



(Figure 1 – Did you complete your externship/CFY at a VA facility?)

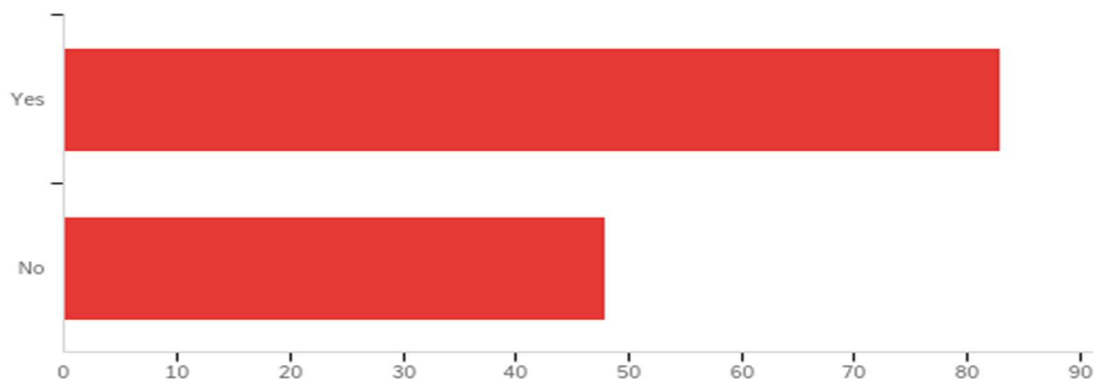
The next question focused on years of service with the VA (figure 2). Each years of service group was well represented in the survey with the 20+ years of service group having the most respondents.



(Figure 2 - How long have you worked at the VA?)

All VA audiologists are members of AVAA. The AVAA board was interested to see how many respondents considered themselves to be AVAA members (Figure 3). Approximately 37% of respondents reported that they do not consider themselves to be members of AVAA. For those who responded “no” to this question, a follow up statement was provided explaining that all VA audiologists are AVAA members. The individuals who reported they do not consider themselves to be AVAA members were asked if AVAA should promote this more frequently in our communications with

our membership. 89% of those who reported they did not feel they are members of AVAA indicated they would like to see this information be promoted more frequently by AVAA.

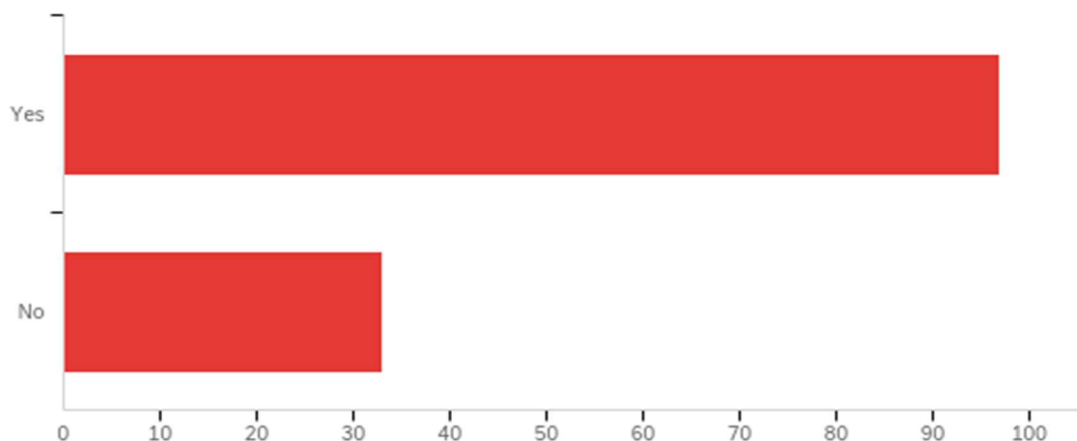


(Figure 3 – Do you consider yourself to be a member of AVAA?)

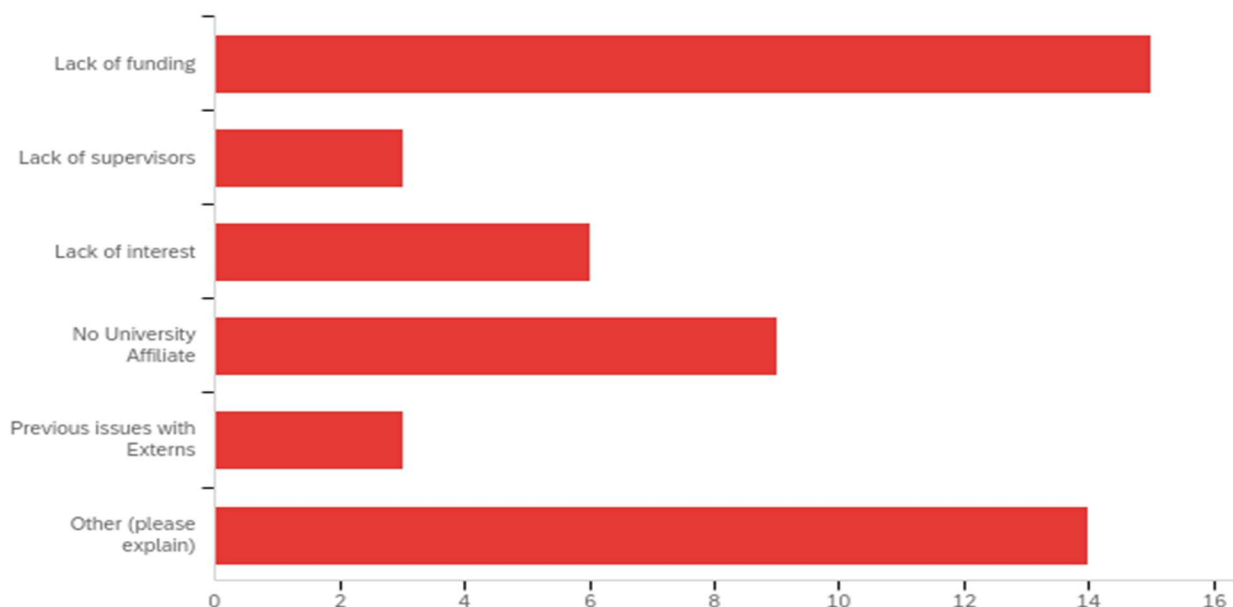
From here the 2021 AVAA survey switched to focusing on the respondent's facts and opinions regarding AuD externs. The purpose of these questions was to focus on one of the VA's four main missions; the mission "To educate for the VA and for the nation". As this is one of the VA's main missions, audiology clinics are expected to serve as a partner in helping train the next generation of audiologists and clinics that intentionally do not work with graduate students are failing in one of the four main VA missions.

Our first question asked if the respondent's facility accepted externs (Figure 4). Approximately 75% respondents answered yes to this question, however there are flaws in the responses to this question. We asked those who responded no to indicate why they did not take AuD externs (Figure 5). A lack of funding, no university affiliate, and lack of interest were the most common reasons provided.

Many who indicated their reason being "other" did so because they were at a CBOC location that does not have the staff, space, or ability to provide a well-rounded externship experience, but their main clinic site does accept externs. To provide anonymity in the survey, we can not separate responses from those at the same facility. Additionally, this question did not accurately capture the responses from audiologists working at CBOCs who may not take students but whose main clinic does accept students.



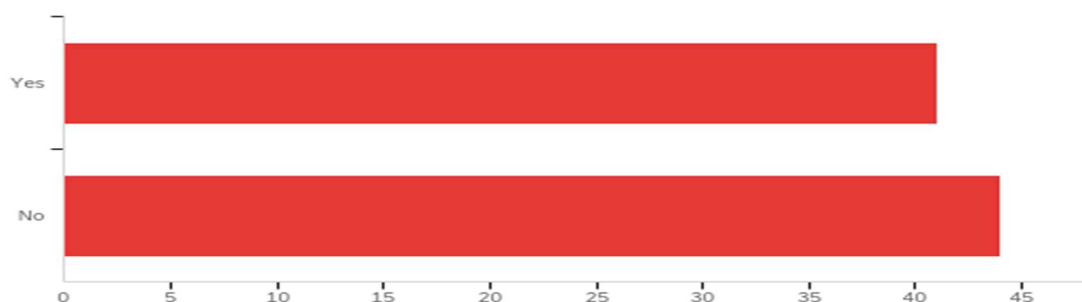
(Figure 4 – Does your facility accept AuD externs?)



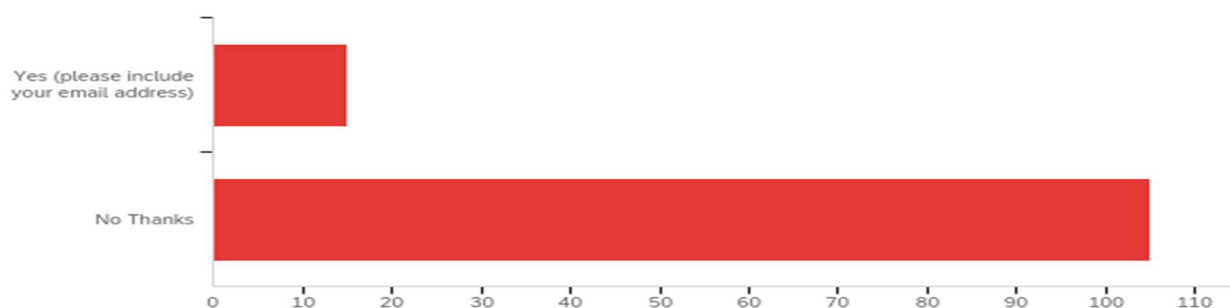
(Figure 5 – What is your reason for not taking AuD externs?)

Survey respondents who indicated they accepted AuD externs were then asked follow up questions. In 2020 AVAA launched our AuD externship site which we hoped would be a centralized location for AuD students to find available VA externships. This information was shared at JDVAC, in the AVAA Amplifier Newsletter, and sent to the VA audiology listserv and AVAA membership mailing list. The purpose of this question was to determine how successful our campaign was at educating and promoting audiologists to share their positions. This question suffered from similar issues as the one asking if facilities accepted externs because we are unable to separate responses by location to ensure anonymity.

The first question asked of those who reported their facility accepted externs was “Is your externship position(s) posted on the AVAA Externship Webpage (found at myavaa.org)” (Figure 6). A slight majority of respondents reported “no” (45 individuals). An error in survey design led to all respondents being asked if they would like to have their externship position posted on the AVAA externship site (Figure 7). This error led to most respondents indicating that they did not want to be contacted regarding posting of their externship position on the AVAA Externship Webpage. 15 individuals indicated they want to be contacted to have their externship posting included on the AVAA Externship Webpage.

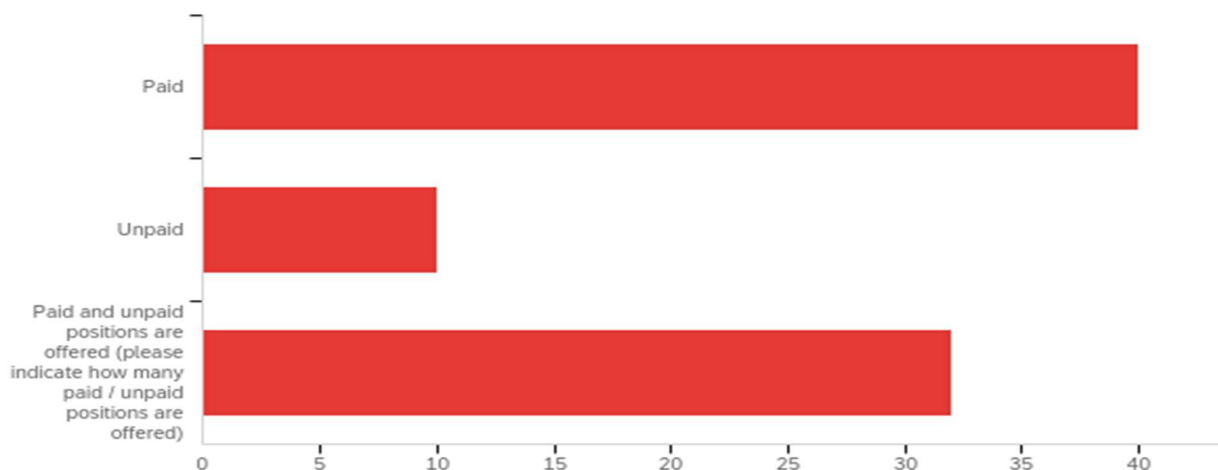


(Figure 6 – Is your VA externship position posted on the AVAA Externship Webpage?)



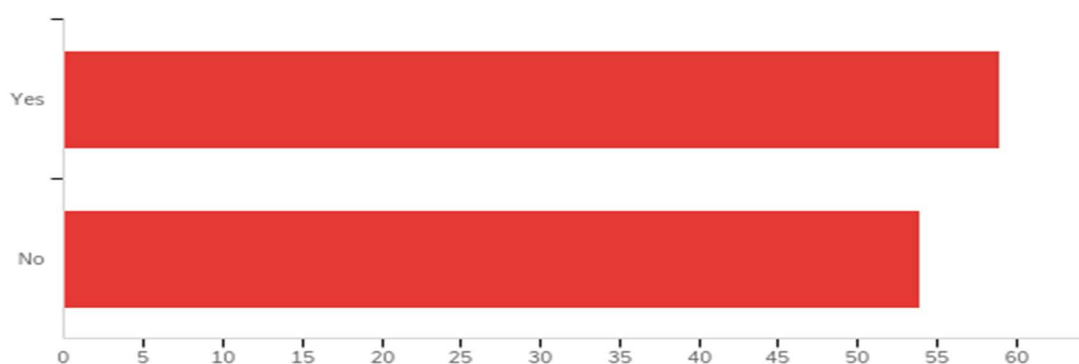
(Figure 7 – Would you like to be contacted to have your position posted on the AVAA Externship Webpage?)

The funding announcements for VA audiology positions are shared with all VA audiologists and are public record. In the last two funding cycles, the maximum number of funded positions per facility has dropped from 3 (2018) down to 2 (2021). We were interested to see how facilities handled these funding changes by asking if the available externship positions were paid or unpaid (Figure 8). Those who reported having both paid and unpaid positions were asked to indicate more specifically how many were paid or unpaid. The most common responses to that question were 1 or 2 paid externship positions and 1 or 2 unpaid externship positions.

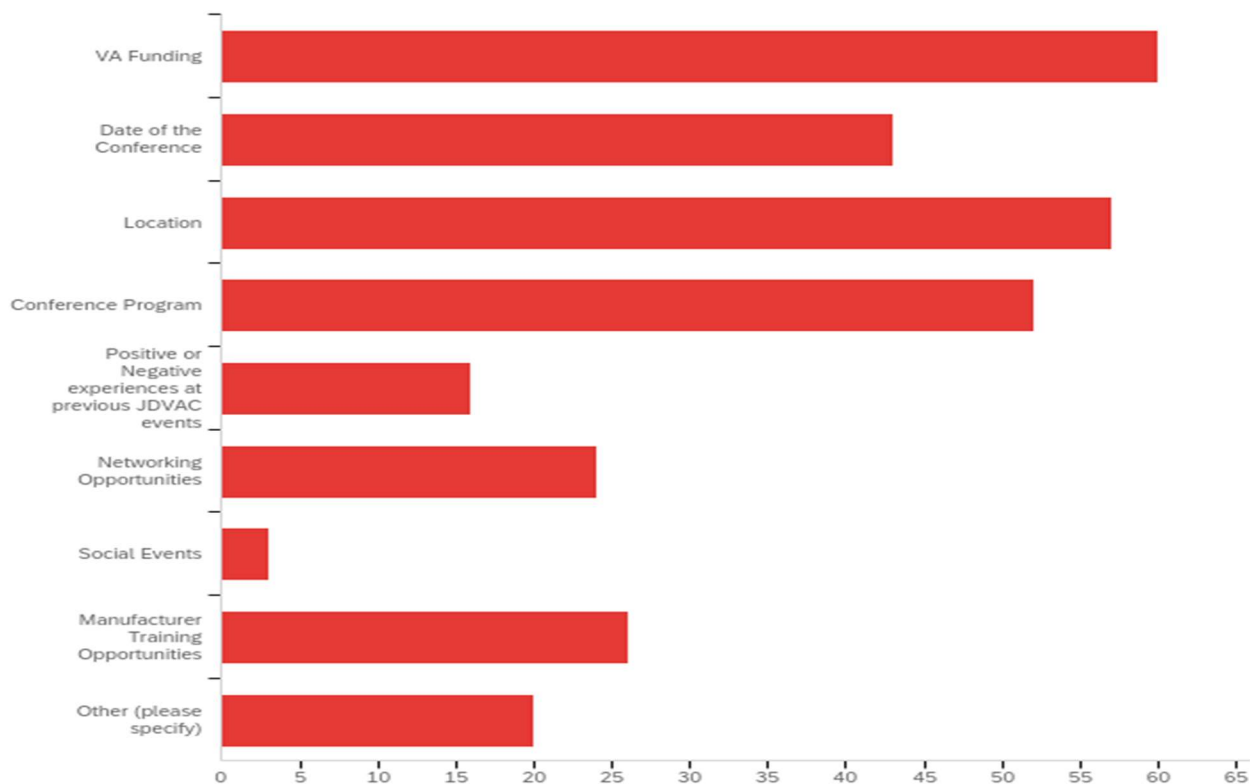


(Figure 8 – Are your externship positions paid, unpaid, or both paid and unpaid?)

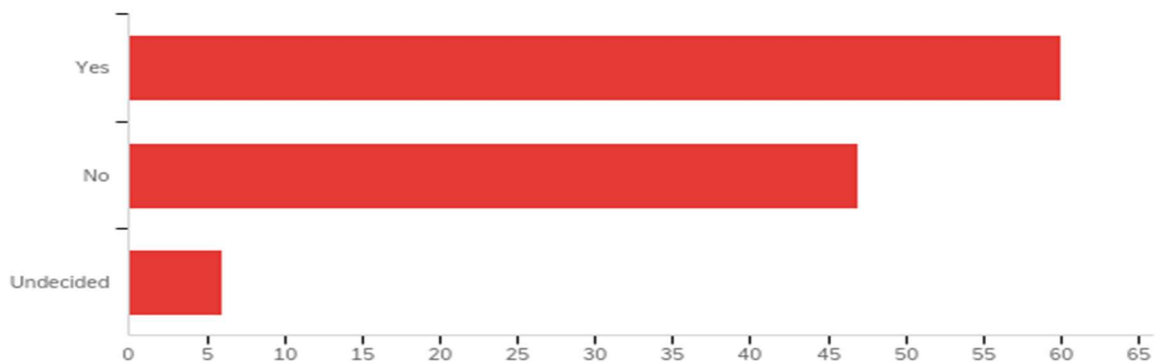
The survey was conducted while JDVAC Virtual was being completed. As this was our first time offering a virtual conference, we wanted to obtain our members opinions on several items related to JDVAC. We were interested in seeing how many respondents attended JDVAC in the past (Figure 9), what influenced their decision to attend (Figure 10), did they attend JDVAC Virtual (Figure 11), and how they would like to see JDVAC be offered in the future (Figure 12). We also included two free type questions regarding JDVAC. The first question asked what locations members preferred for JDVAC. Not surprisingly, most respondents indicated they preferred easy to travel to cities in warmer climates. We are glad to share that JDVAC 2022 will be held in April 2022 at Harrah's Atlantic City which should meet the warm and easy travel preferences of our members. JDVAC 2023 and 2024 will also feature warm locations that will be announced at a later date. The second free type question asked what topic areas they would like to see covered at JDVAC. There were no clear answers to this question as essentially all areas of audiology (except pediatrics) were reported.



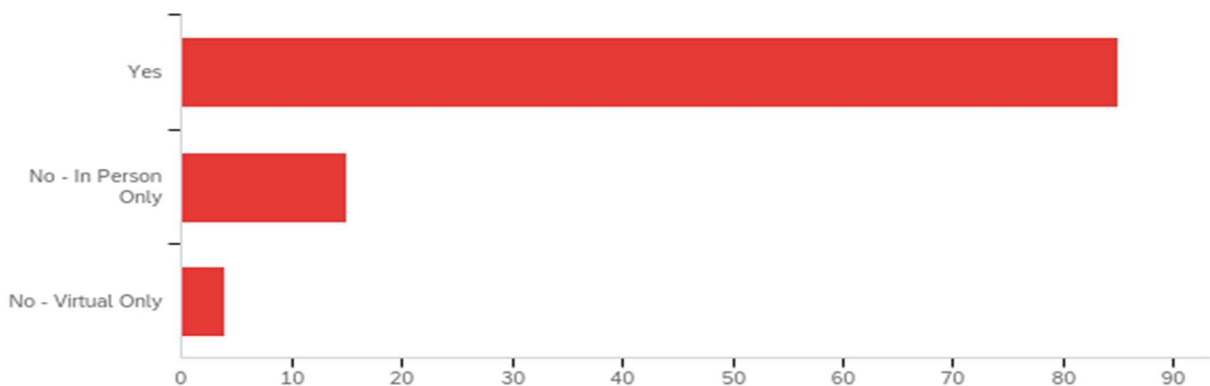
(Figure 9 – Have you attended JDVAC in the last 5 years?)



(Figure 10 – What influences your decision to attend JDVAC (select all that apply)?)



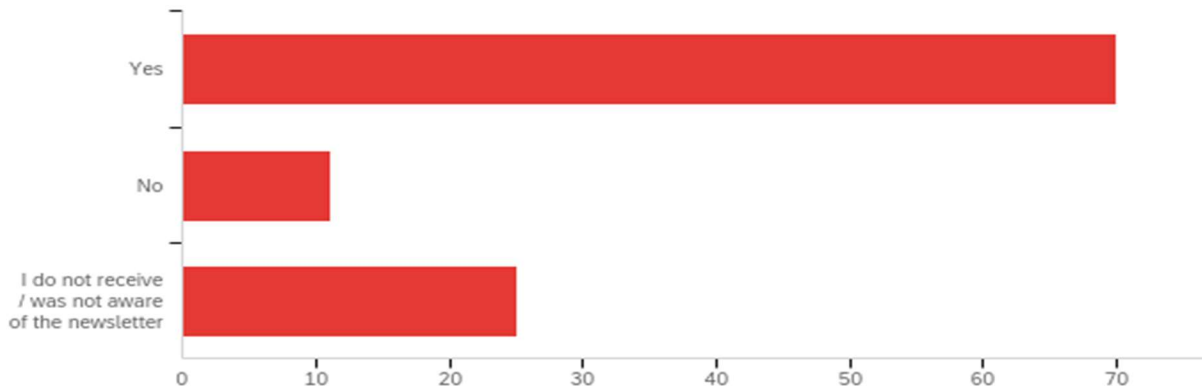
(Figure 11 – Will you be attending/did you attend JDVAC Virtual?)



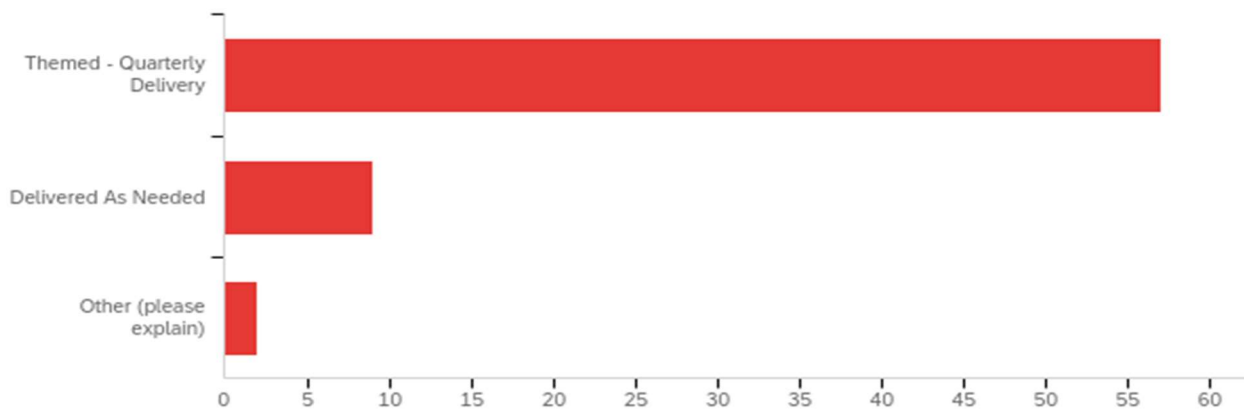
(Figure 12 – Would you be interested in JDVAC offering combined in-person and virtual education opportunities in the future?)

AVAA has received feedback from members in the past that they wanted to have better and more frequent communication from the board keeping them up to date on VA audiology issues as well as other issues in the general field of audiology. In 2020 the AVAA board redesigned the newsletter. Previously it was a short document that was only sent out as needed. To meet the needs of our members, the AVAA board decided to name the newsletter the AVAA

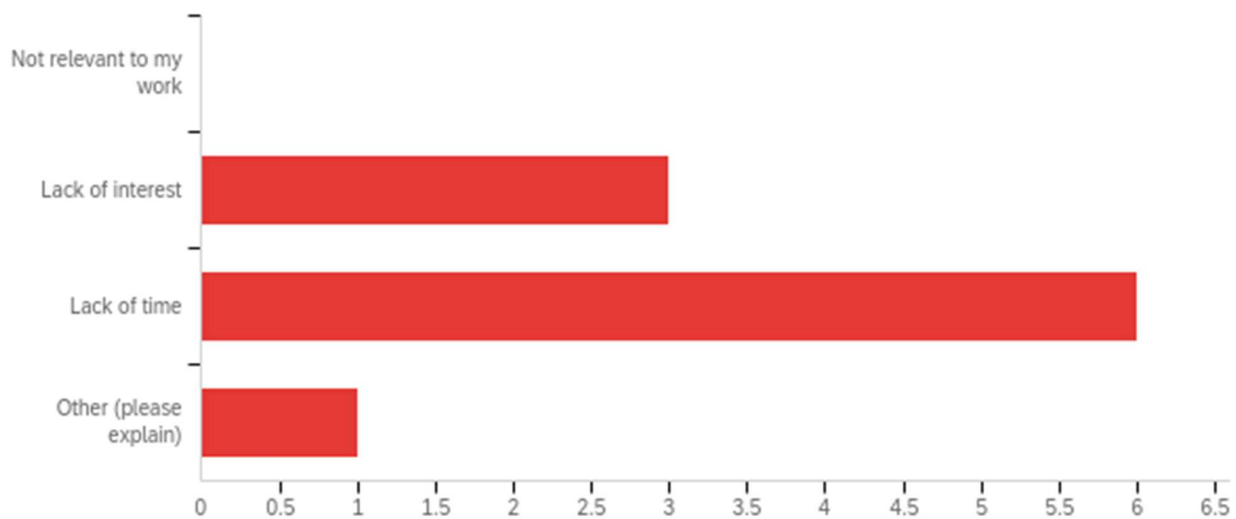
Amplifier and to publish the newsletter quarterly rather than as needed. Additionally, each edition of the AVAA Amplifier is themed and features articles from experts in and outside of the VA. Due to the big changes that were made to the newsletter, we wanted to gather our members' feedback regarding the newsletter. We asked our membership if they read the quarterly newsletter (Figure 13) and were delighted to find most respondents are reading our publication. We followed up by asking if they preferred the new themed format or the old deliver as needed model (Figure 14) and again were excited to find 84% preferred the new format. For those who indicated they did not read the newsletter, we wanted to understand why, so we asked what the reason was for not reading the newsletter (Figure 15). Most respondents indicated a lack of time while 3 individuals reported a lack of interest in AVAA audiology content.



(Figure 13 – Do you read the AVAA Amplifier Newsletter?)

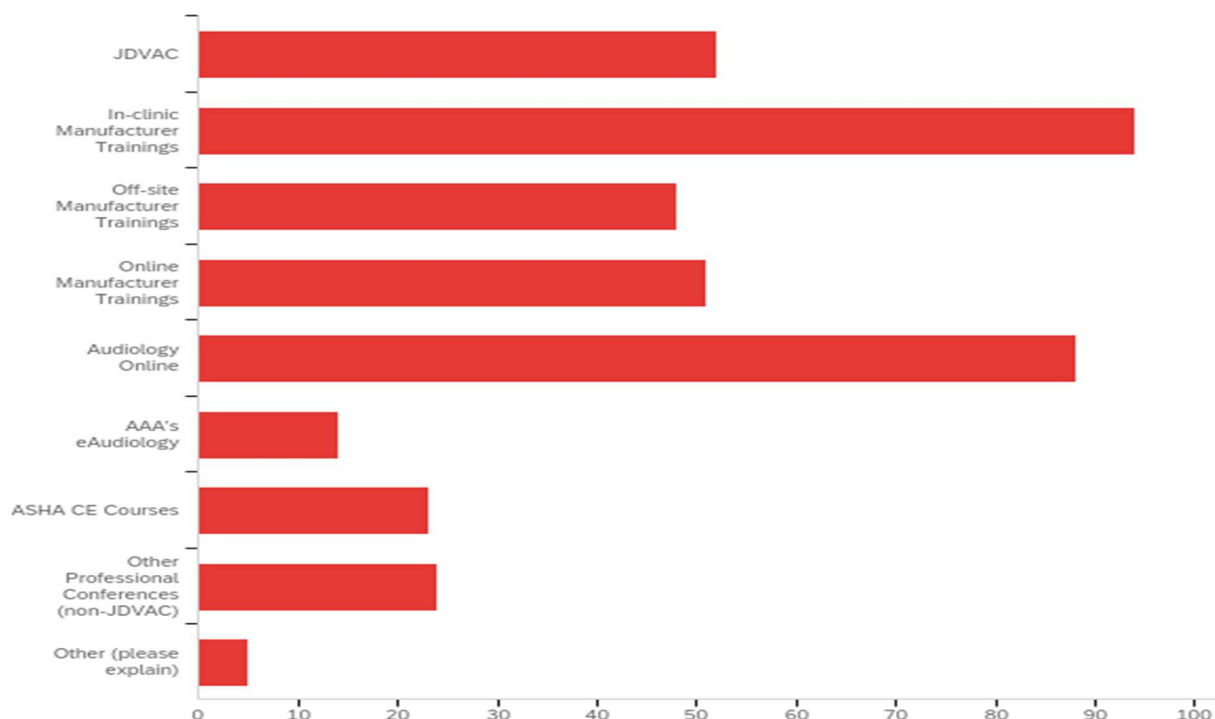


(Figure 14 – Do you prefer the new quarterly format or the old deliver as needed newsletter format?)

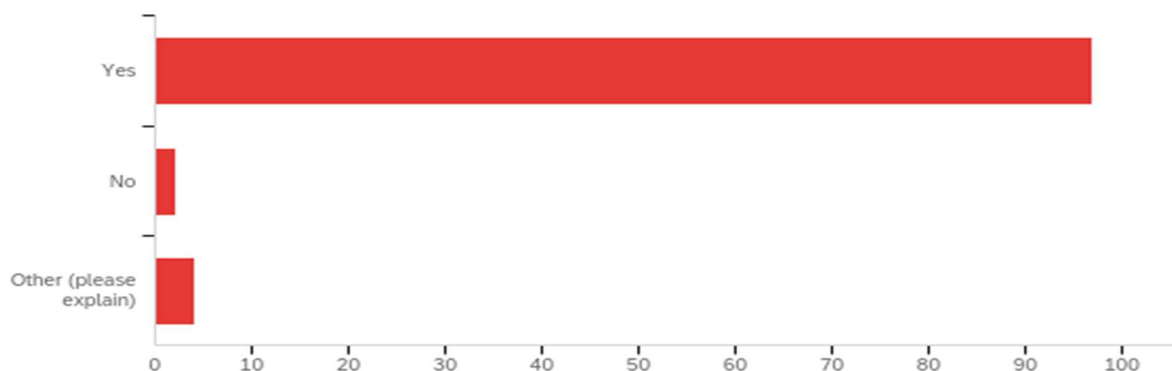


(Figure 15 – What is your reason for not reading the AVAA Amplifier?)

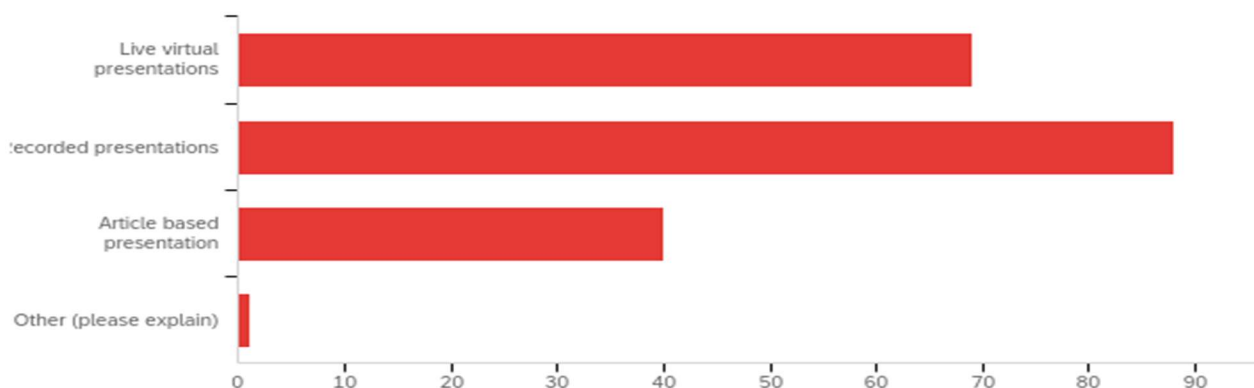
During our term, the AVAA board has discussed the possibility of providing CEU eligible content to our members. The board felt that the survey would provide us with the opportunity to better understand where our members currently obtain CEUs (Figure 16) and to determine if our membership has an interest in AVAA providing CEU opportunities (Figure 17). We asked a follow up question regarding how members prefer to obtain CEUs to ensure that if CEU offerings are something our membership wants us to provide, we know they should be delivered (Figure 18).



(Figure 16 – Where do you obtain CEUs?)



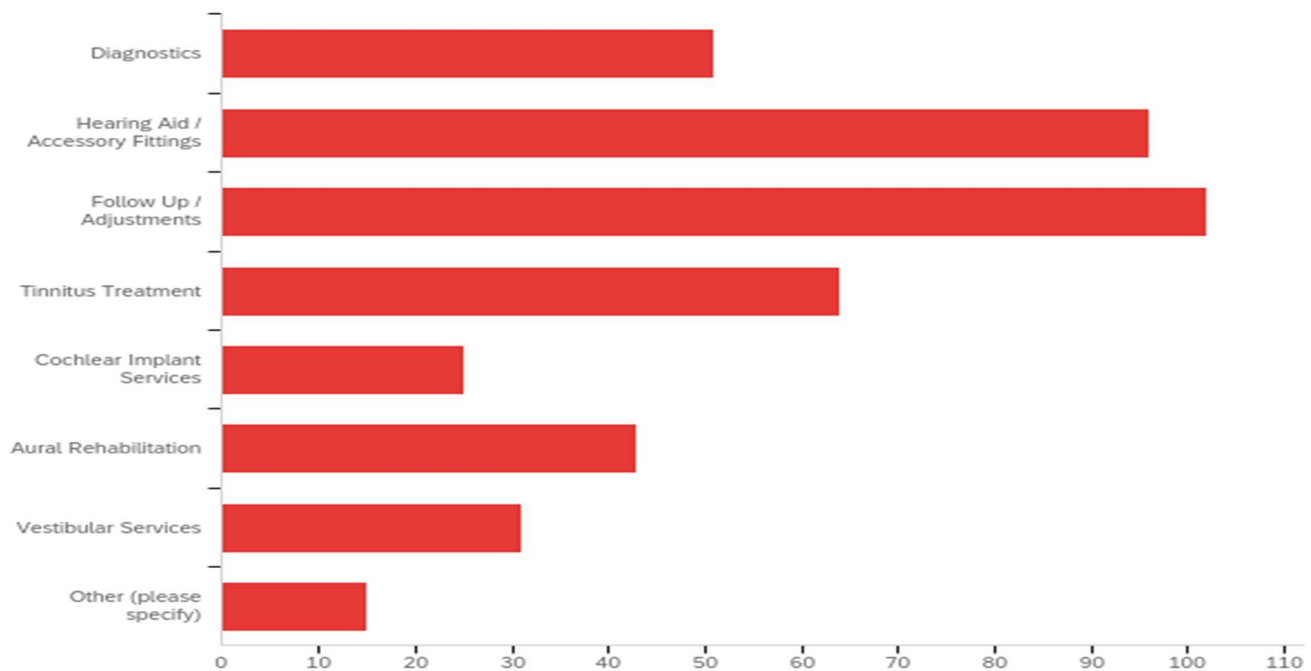
(Figure 17 – Would you like to see AVAA provide CEU offerings?)



(Figure 18 – In what format do you prefer to obtain online CEUs?)

Due to the overwhelming response from our members that they would like to receive CEUs from AVAA, we are happy to share that we have partnered with other organizations to provide VA specific CEU opportunities. AVAA first partnered with eAudiology to provide a session titled “Cochlear Implants for the non-CI audiologist”. This is available for free to anyone who attended AAA Virtual 2021 or anyone with an eAudiology Membership. Additionally, AVAA has partnered with Audiology Online to deliver quarterly talks from 2021-2022 focusing on VA specific topics. The VA represents the largest share of Audiology Online subscribers due to the fully paid or discounted memberships that are offered annually to VA Audiologists. Our first AVAA sponsored Audiology Online session will occur in September 2021. We will share more information about these sessions as we approach the presentation date.

Lastly, we were interested to see how VA audiology practices were incorporating telehealth into their services. Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, VA audiologists were pioneers in developing and implementing telehealth based care. Some audiologists may have been hesitant to incorporate telehealth services into their practice until the pandemic created a need for adaptation to provide audiology telehealth services. The results show that most respondents are providing telehealth based care across a wide range of service areas.



(Figure 19 – What services are you providing via telehealth?)

Overall, the AVAA board feels that the information received through this survey provided us with valuable information that can be used to help us better meet the needs of the AVAA membership. Our goal is to best serve the members and to do so we need to stay aware of the thoughts and opinions of our membership which is what this survey has allowed us to do. Additionally, we are thrilled to see that based on the survey results our previous initiatives to help improve the AVAA member experience and improve communication between the board and our members has been successful. We could not achieve these goals without your input and we would like to sincerely thank everyone who participated in this survey, for sharing their time, their thoughts, and providing suggestions on how we can continue to improve moving forward.

### The AVAA Board

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