



The University of Texas at Austin

Institute on Domestic Violence & Sexual Assault

Steve Hicks School of Social Work

VOICE:

VICTIM SERVICES OCCUPATION,
INFORMATION, & COMPENSATION
EXPERIENCES SURVEY

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The VOICE survey examined the occupational stressors & workplace wellness of those working in the field of intimate partner violence & sexual assault services in Texas. The research project was a collaboration with state coalitions & community stakeholders.

A total of **530** interpersonal violence (IPV) & sexual assault (SA) professionals completed the VOICE survey.

Organization

- 66% worked at organizations focusing on both IPV & SA
- 12% worked at organizations focusing only on IPV
- 10% worked at organizations focusing only on SA

Position

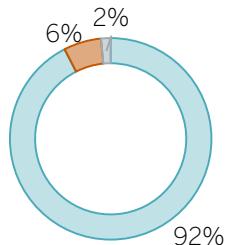
- 65% worked in direct service
- 35% worked in leadership & administration
- The most frequent job title was "Advocate"
- Average annual salary was \$43,800

Individual

- Average age of participants was 40.4 (with a range 21-73)
- Average number of years in the field was 8
- Average length of employment at current agency was 5.7 years

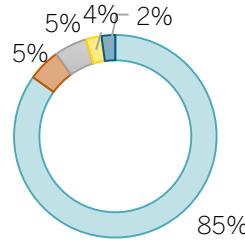
► Respondent Demographics¹

Gender (n = 530)



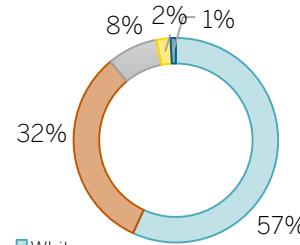
■ Female ■ Male ■ Another Gender Identity

Sexual Orientation (n = 518)



■ Heterosexual ■ Bisexual ■ Other or Unsure
■ Gay/ Lesbian ■ Pansexual

Race/Ethnicity (n = 526)

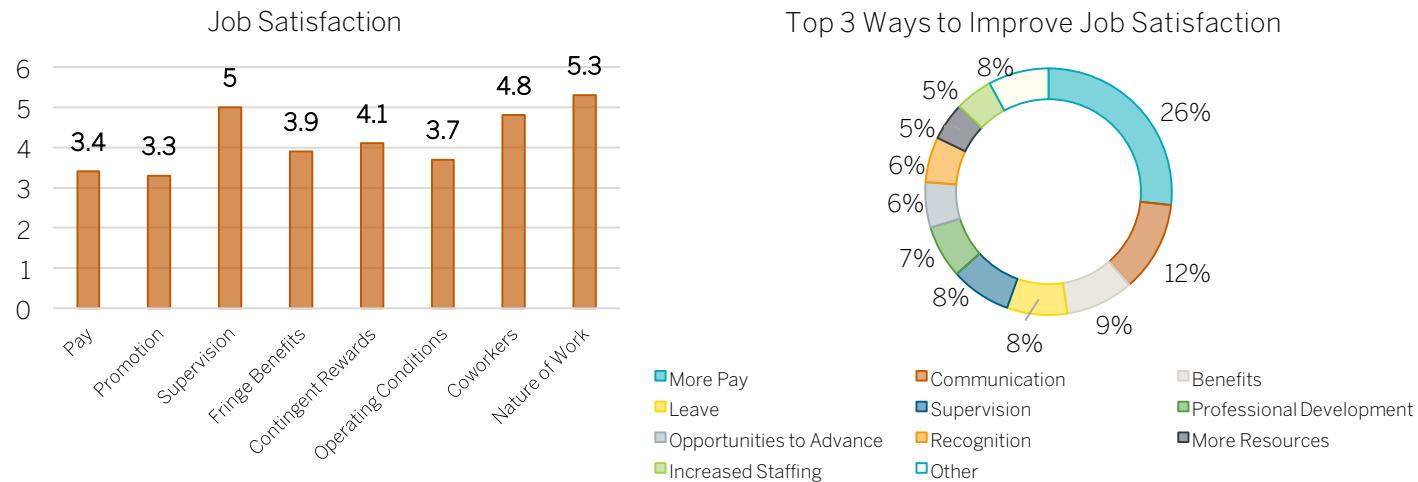


■ White ■ Latina/o ■ Black or African American ■ Asian ■ American Indian or Alaskan Native

¹ Percentages may not total 100 due to rounding.

How did participants feel about their positions & organizations?

Job satisfaction refers to the extent a person is fulfilled by their professional role. The first table below reports the mean scores of respondents' job satisfaction with various aspects of their employment. Higher scores indicate higher satisfaction. The second table summarizes participants' "top 3" suggestions for improving job satisfaction.



Voices from the Field: How can we improve job satisfaction?

"More team building opportunities, greater communication from executives, & greater opportunity to chat with fellow advocates to create a supportive environment"

"More staff, higher pay, & more resources"

"To be fair across the board. Competitive wages. Respect all employees"

"Ending all domestic violence so I could retire without any regrets"

Organizational Climate

Organizational climate captures the extent to which employees feel safe and respected at their workplace. Survey participants were asked to rate how much they agreed or disagreed with a number of statements related to organizational climate. The table below reports their mean scores, with higher scores reflecting more agreement and lower scores reflecting disagreement.

Organizational Climate Informal Mean Score	
I would recommend working at my current workplace / agency to others.	4.1
I feel emotionally safe working at my current workplace / agency	4.0
I feel physically safe working at my current workplace / agency	3.9
My spiritual or religious background is respected at my current workplace / agency	4.3
My cultural or ethnic background is respected at my current workplace / agency	4.3
My gender identity is respected at my current workplace / agency	4.4
My need for a paycheck determines my honesty & feedback to upper management	4.5
My agency considers the demands of family/kids & work responsibility	2.6
I feel that I can be my authentic self at the workplace (ex. to freely express my first language, gender, sexual orientation, ideas, real hair, etc.)	3.9
	4.0

Microaggressions

A microaggression is a verbal or nonverbal slight or snub that communicates negative or stereotypical messages based solely on a person's marginalized status². Participants were asked if they had witnessed or experienced microaggressions at work.

Race or Ethnicity Microaggression	30.7%
Sexual Orientation Related Microaggression	15.3%
Gender Identity Related Microaggression	17.6%
Disability Related Microaggression	13.5%
Sexism Related Microaggression	20.6%
I have access to diversity training	80.0%
I would like more diversity training	76.0%

Voices from the Field: How can we improve inclusion?

"Just more transparency & honesty regarding cultural differences, microaggressions, & unconscious bias (both intentional & unintentional) & how those affect any workplace."

"People of color need to be in senior management or board leadership roles. Real inclusion & real diversity isn't going to be part of our work until everyone has an equal seat at the table--not just white, heterosexual, non-transgender women with college educations."

Findings Highlights

What characteristics are associated with turnover intention?

Turnover intention is an employee's plan to leave a position or job. The analysis revealed that identifying as African-American, having higher burnout scores, & lower satisfaction with supervision predicted higher turnover intention. Higher salary predicted lower turnover intention.

What characteristics are associated with job satisfaction?

Higher compassion satisfaction, use of coping skills, & increased match of community & control at work were predictive of increased job satisfaction. Lower rates of secondary traumatic stress were predictive of higher job satisfaction. Lower satisfaction with paid & unpaid leave were associated with decreased job satisfaction.

What characteristics are associated with resiliency?

Resiliency is the process of adaptation in the face of trauma and stressful life events. Specifically, being in a relationship, increased age, greater use of coping skills, increased control at work, & greater value match were predictive of higher scores on the resiliency measure.

What characteristics are associated with burnout?

Burnout is a type of psychological, emotional, and sometimes physical exhaustion due to long-term job stress. Higher levels of burnout were associated with having experienced recent traumatic events in the last 12-months, having lower levels of resiliency, lower use of coping skills, supervising others, & having mismatch with workload. Lower rates of burnout were associated with higher age, Latina ethnicity, work at a dual-focus agency, & increased workload match. Individual & position-level factors accounted for most of the factors predicting burnout.

What characteristics are associated with secondary traumatic stress?

Secondary traumatic stress (STS) is the symptomatic response that sometimes occurs when exposed to other peoples' experience of trauma. Being a younger age, spending more than 41% of the time providing direct service, witnessing or, experiencing microaggressions, having lower resiliency, childhood trauma experiences, & mismatch with workload were predictive of higher secondary traumatic stress scores.

² Sue, D. W. (2010, November 17). Microaggressions: More than just race. *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from: <https://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/microaggressions-in-everyday-life/201011/microaggressions-more-just-race>

Recommendations

The following recommendations are based on the VOICE survey findings, previous research, and consultation with experts from the field.

Organizational Considerations

Improve compensation, benefits, & leave. Develop strategies not only to increase pay, but also to provide flexible & creative benefit & leave packages.

Foster community among staff. Social support among coworkers & the ability to discuss occupational stress & experiences improves job satisfaction.

Leadership should increase quality communication & transparency. Help improve worker understanding & satisfaction with agency functioning by increasing transparency on decision-making, agency needs, & policy-making.

Focus on organizational climate. Training, policies, recruitment, & retention of diverse staff, & increased representation of diverse identities among leadership, are potential solutions to improving workforce climate.

Live the mission - promote fairness & shared values. Improve staff experiences by using management approaches that share power, & “talk the talk, & walk the walk” of organizational values.

Improve the quality & access to supervision. Participants indicated a desire for more frequent & increased quality supervision to reduce burnout and turnover intention.

Support those in direct service roles. Client caseload by volume & complexity should be carefully considered. Quality, regular supervision will help direct-service staff develop strategies to manage workplace stress.

Design positions with balance in mind. Positions should be balanced not only by client contact, but also by amount of duties & people supervised. Job sharing & shared leadership strategies are options for traditionally stressful positions. Supervision should address workload and areas for creating balance.

Facilitate wellness & coping. Professional forms of coping include stress management training for staff, professional self-care plans, & quality supervision. Offer personal mental health days, flexible scheduling, sabbaticals, & recognition of the stressful work content.

Adapt individualized coping strategies. Use of self-care or coping skills, such as engaging in hobbies, social connections, & intentional activities to reduce stress is associated with increased resiliency, job satisfaction, & decreased burnout.

Get support. Everyone has a right to a safe & harassment-free work environment. This study suggests a need for increased organizational and staff cultural sensitivity and inclusion.



Research Team

Leila Wood, PhD, LMSW

Karin Wachter, PhD, MEd

Alex Wang, MS

Matt Kammer-Kerwick, PhD

Noël Busch-Armendariz, PhD, LMSW, MPA