

Background

- Human Trafficking (HT) is a crime that involves exploiting a person for labor, services, or commercial sex [1].
- HT can happen in any industry, to persons of any gender, age, economic status, religion, and nationality [2].
- In FY 2018, service agencies in the State of Vermont submitted over 180 reports of HT [3].
- HT has a profound negative impact on survivors' physical and mental health [4].
- 25-88% of HT victims interact with a healthcare professional while they are being exploited [5].
- Providers have cited a lack of confidence and knowledge on HT as a major barrier to proper care of potential victims, stemming from a lack of adequate training [6].
- There is a need to assess healthcare workers' knowledge in recognizing and providing appropriate care and options to potential victims of HT.

Objectives

- Assess awareness of University of Vermont Medical Center (UVMCC) and affiliated primary care staff and providers regarding the recent implementation of a UVMCC policy on providing support to victims of HT.
- Understand current behaviors of staff and providers when providing care to a patient suspected of being a victim of HT.

Methods

- Survey consisted of 11 questions, including 1 case-based scenario.
- Survey was administered to staff at UVMCC affiliated emergency department, urgent care, and primary care offices in Chittenden County.
- Survey was administered via email and responses were collected using LimeSurvey.
- We received 169 responses; 156 completed and submitted. Only completed responses were analyzed.

Results

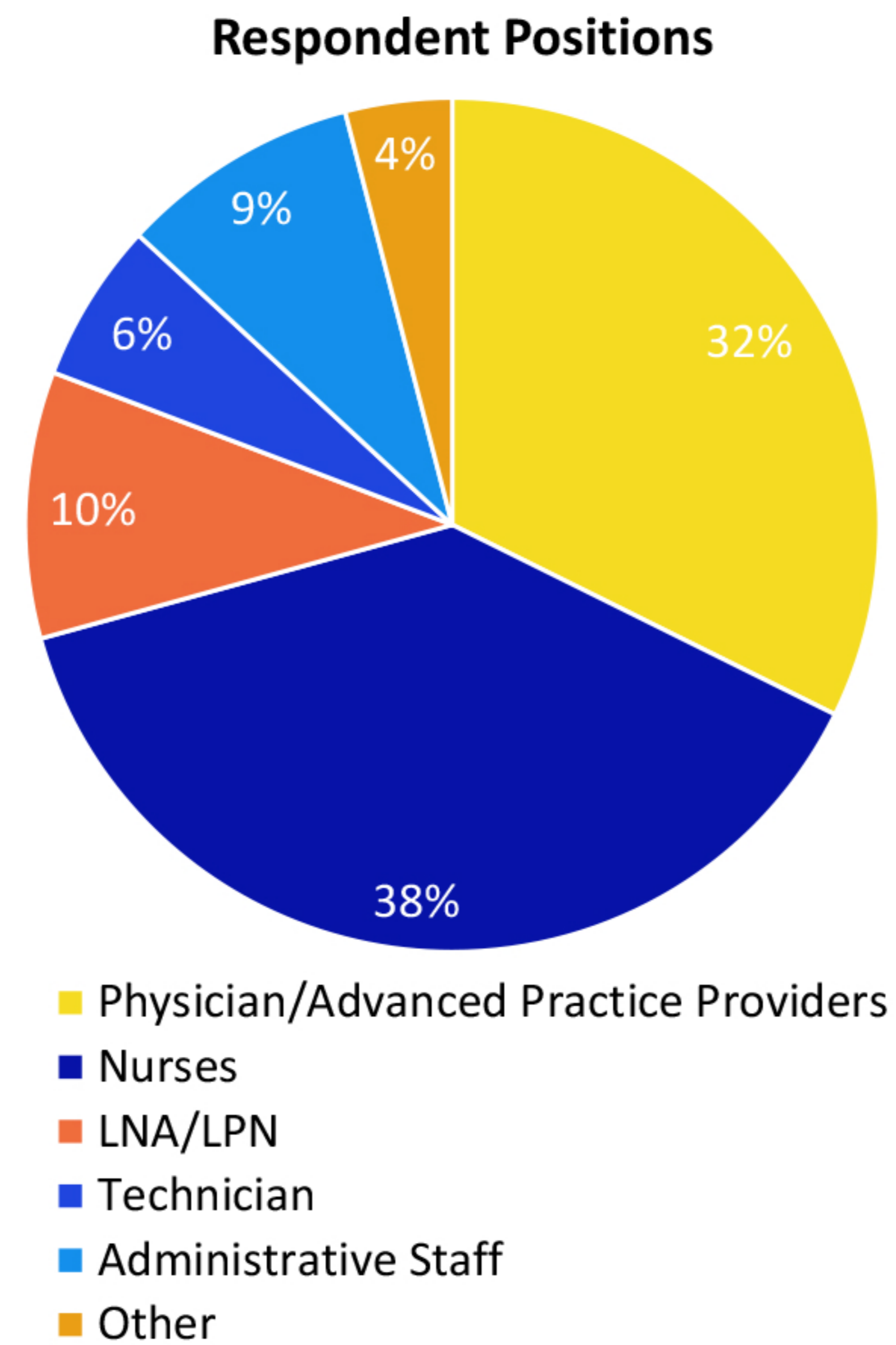


Figure 1. A diverse array of healthcare personnel participated.

Survey Questions	Respondents n=156
Do you know that UVMCC has established guidelines for providing care to suspected victims of Human Trafficking?	
Yes	37% (57)
No	63% (99)
Have you ever been trained on what to do if you are concerned that a patient is a victim of Human Trafficking?	
Yes	26% (41)
No	74% (115)
I have been in a situation where I was concerned that a patient was a victim of Human Trafficking.	
Agree	27% (42)
Disagree	73% (114)
Which UVMCC location do you work at?	
Emergency Department or Urgent Care	52% (81)
Primary Care	48% (75)

Table 1. Summary of relevant survey questions.

Barriers to Care of Human Trafficking Victims (respondents could select all that applied)

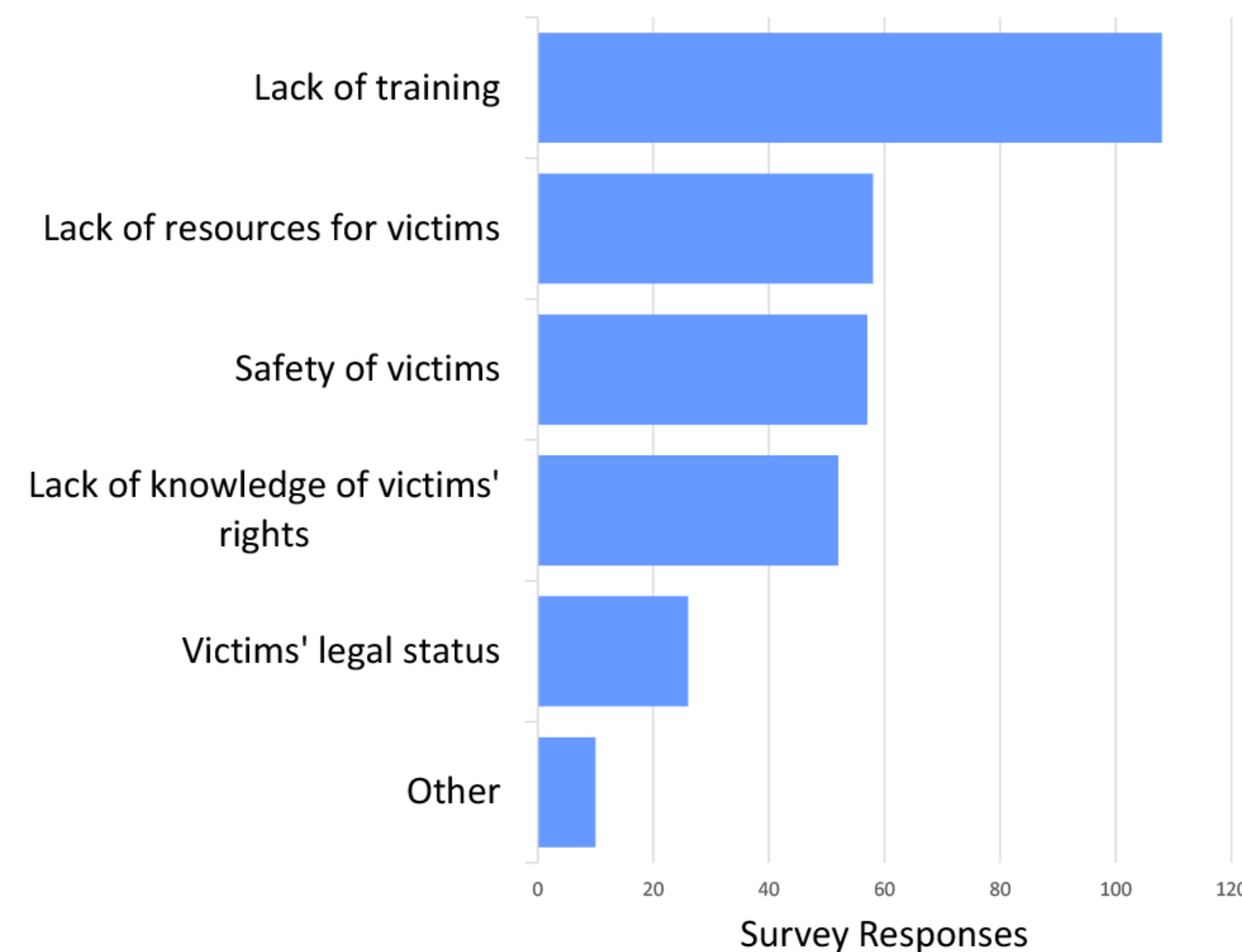


Figure 2. Lack of training was the most reported barrier to administering care to victims of HT.

Confidence in Identifying Human Trafficking Victims by Position & Training Status

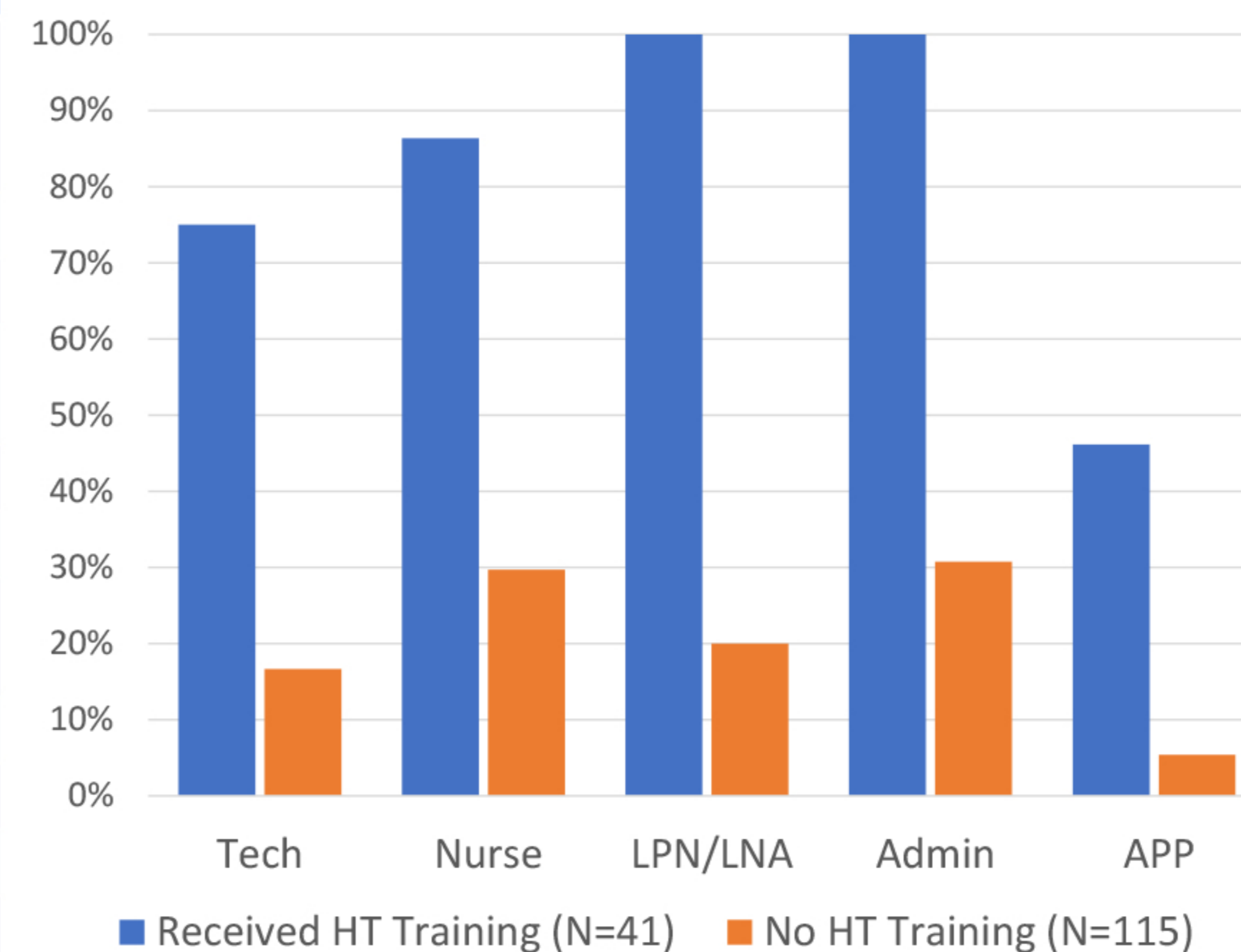


Figure 3. Across all positions, individuals who received HT training were more confident in identifying HT victims. P-value = 0.01

Discussion

- The majority of Primary Care Professionals (89%) surveyed from the UVMCC and its affiliated practices did not feel like they had ever been in a situation where they were concerned that a patient was a potential victim of HT, despite up to 88% of victims in the United States indicating that they have interacted with healthcare providers [4].
- Training was the best predictor of confidence in an individual's ability to identify patients who are potential victims of HT. Awareness of the UVMCC policy, however, was not a predictor in identifying potential victims.
- Training also predicted respondents' awareness of a situation where they suspected a patient was a potential victim of HT.
- Despite low levels of training and low awareness of the UVMCC policy, there was no significant difference in respondents' ability to manage a known victim of HT.

Future Directions

- Increasing awareness of Human Trafficking among healthcare professionals in Vermont is paramount.
- All healthcare personnel should receive training on identifying and managing victims of Human Trafficking.
- Evaluating how policies and procedures are implemented and distributed at UVMCC should be explored.
- A similar Vermont statewide study should be conducted to assess the knowledge and awareness of first-responders and other healthcare professionals to identify and assist victims of Human Trafficking.

References

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