

Analyst and Management Survey Results about Trace Evidence



Materials Subcommittee:
Outreach & Initiative
Task Group

Outreach & Initiative Task Group

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Mission:

To counteract the undervaluing of Trace Evidence (TE).

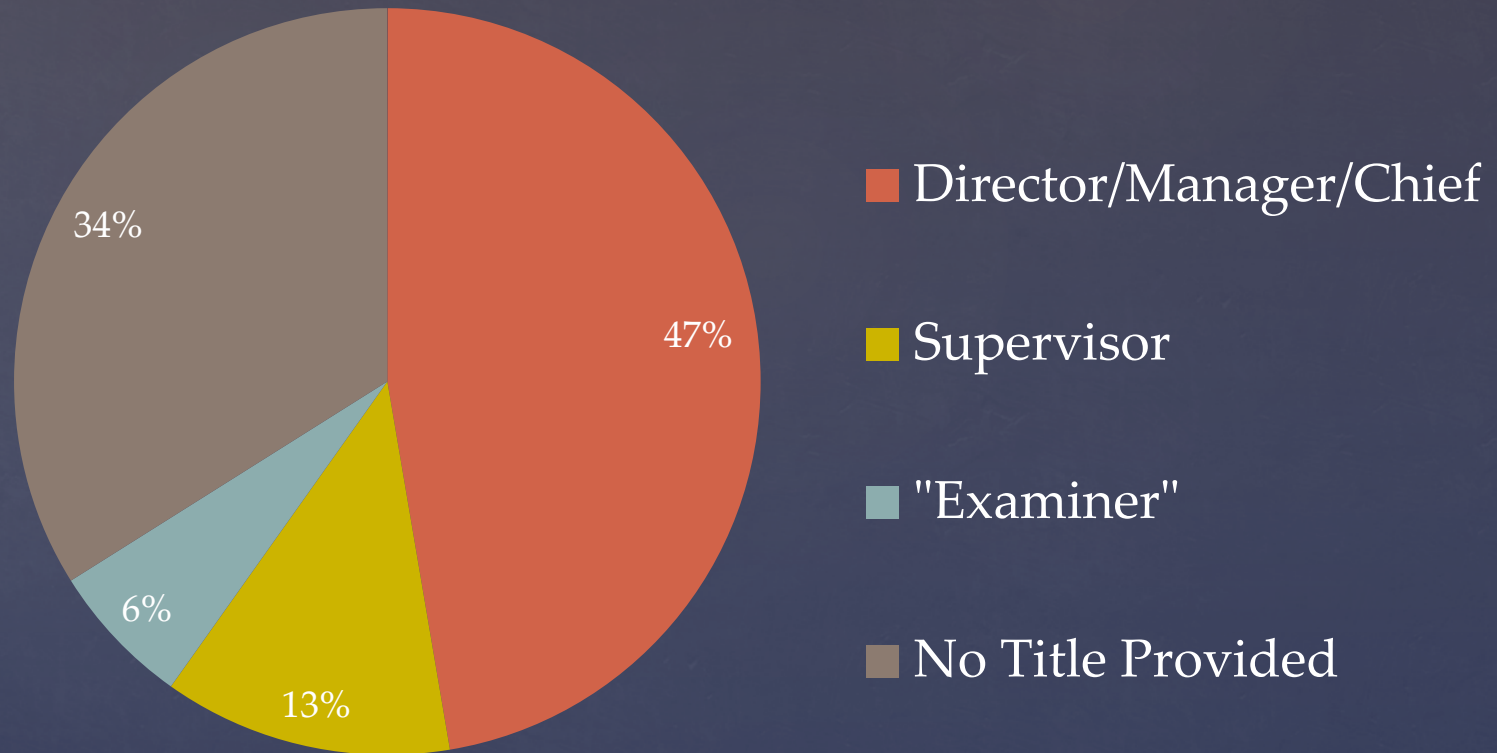
Surveys

- Identify the perception, reality, and needs of the TE community
- Help in determining task group's strategic plan goals

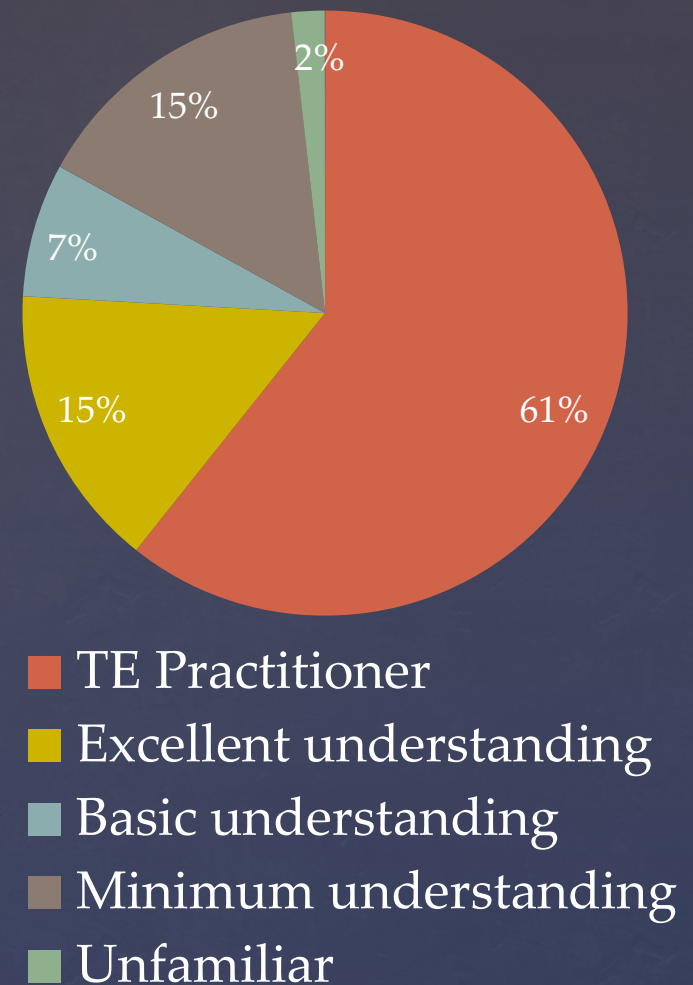
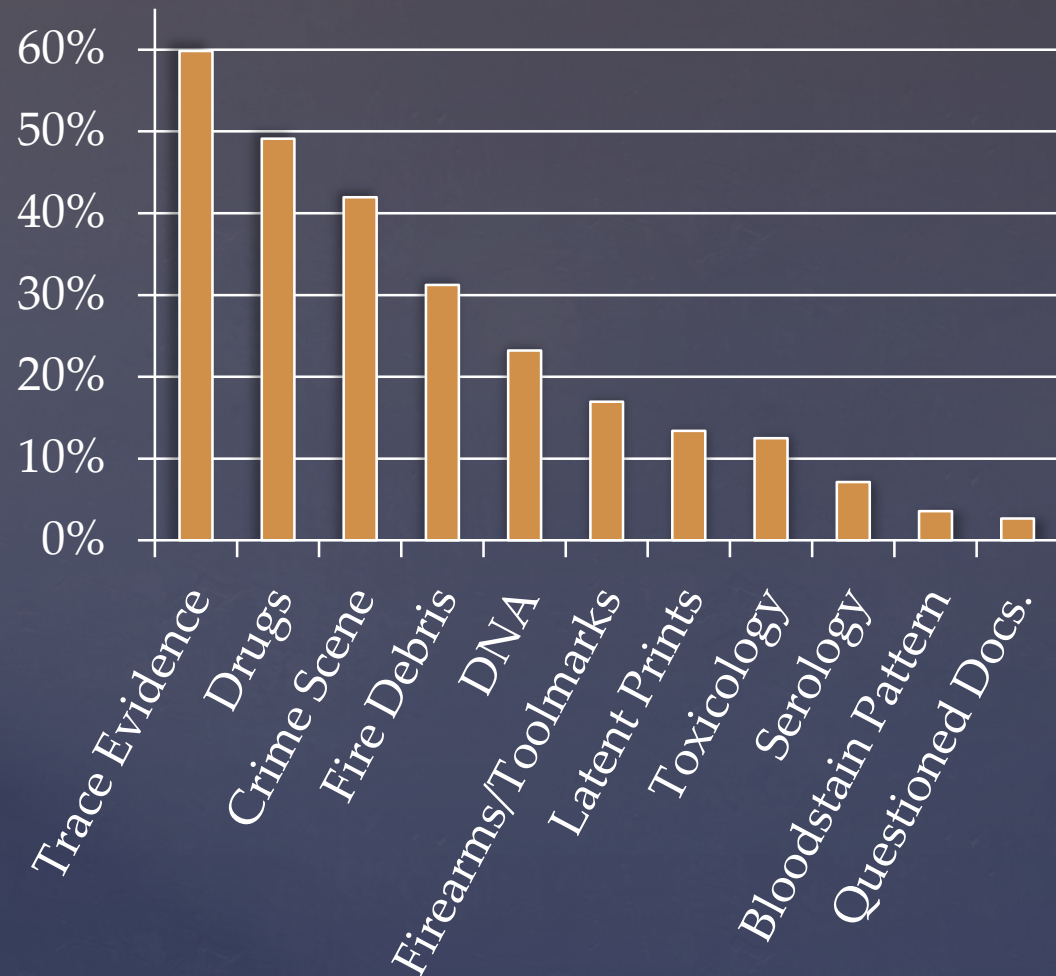
- July 2015 – Lab Manager Survey
- December 2015 – TE Examiner Survey
- June 2016 – Legal Community Survey (results pending)

Survey Results – Management

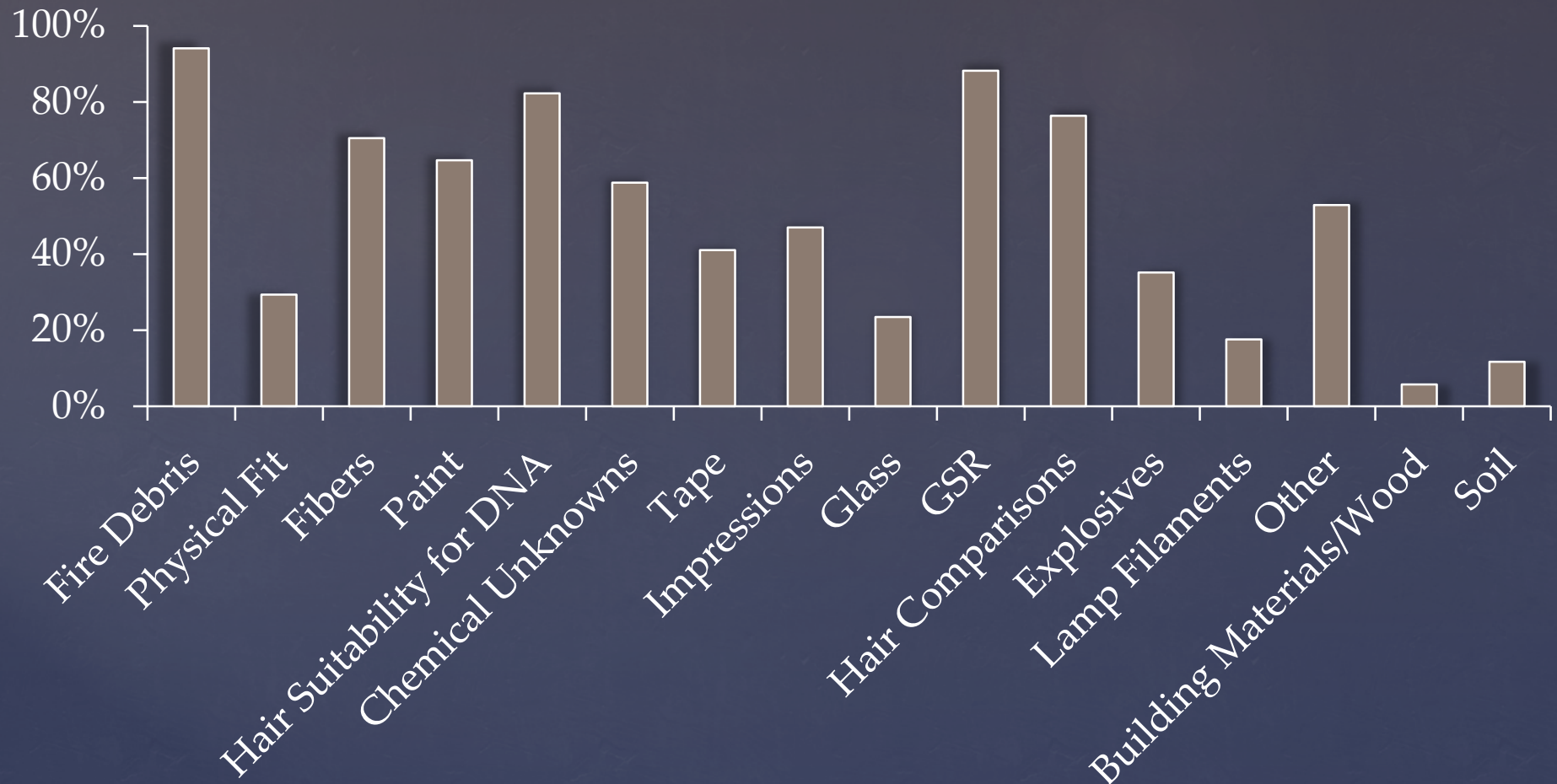
➤ 112 Responses



“Manager” Background



Relative Cases Submitted Per Year By Sub-discipline



Did _____ impact your TE section?

➤ NAS Report

- No – 68%
- Yes – 32%

- ⌘ Report language
- ⌘ Procedures
- ⌘ Documentation (training, case work)
- ⌘ Developing quantitative support for conclusions

➤ FBI Hair Review

- No – 74%
- Yes – 26%

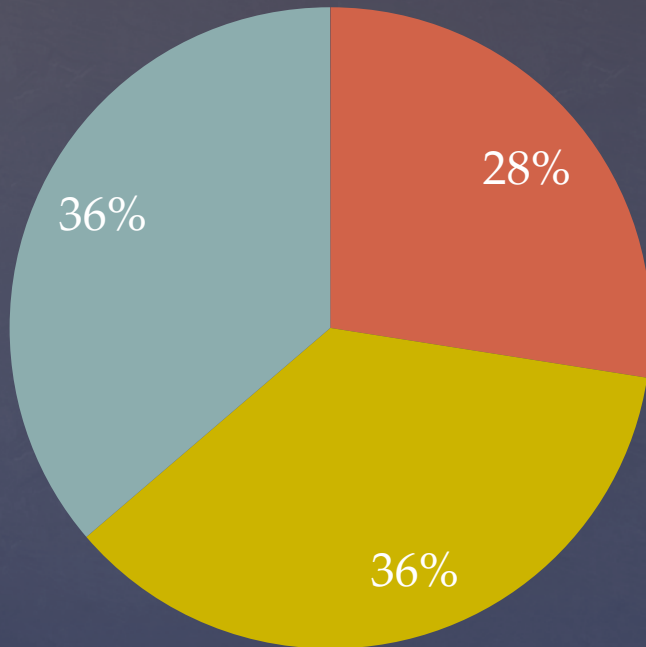
- ⌘ Own hair review
- ⌘ Stopped hair comparisons
- ⌘ Documentation
- ⌘ Additional questions, testimonies
- ⌘ Verifications

Manager Perception of Significant Issues Facing TE

1. Perception as “of no value” or “junk science”
 - “Facing extinction”
 - “Over-reliance on DNA”
2. Reduction of submissions, analysts
3. Less money - budget cuts; grant funding; for training, staff, or equipment
4. Training, outreach, education
5. Interpretation of significance

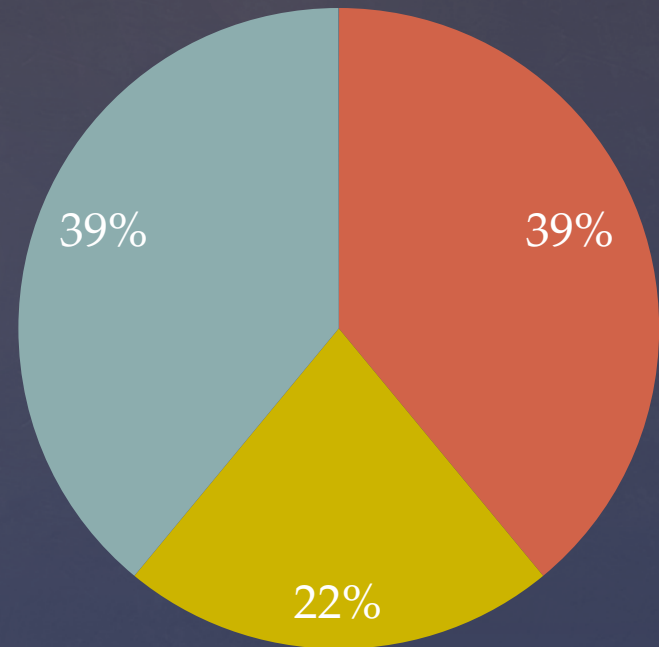
In the past 5 years, the number of TE cases submitted to lab:

➤ 2015 Survey



■ Increased ■ Decreased
■ Stayed the same

➤ 2009 Survey



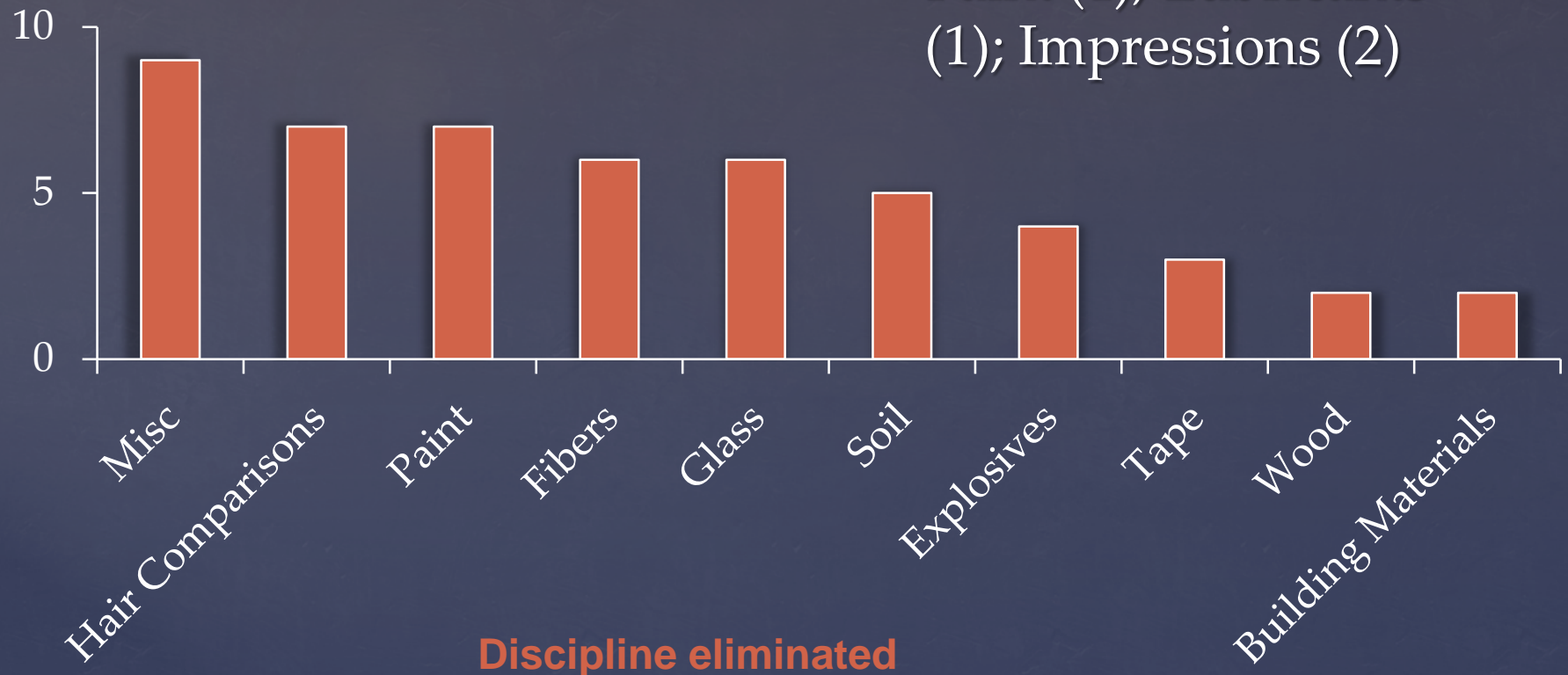
■ Increase ■ Decrease
■ Stayed the Same

In the past 5 years, the types of exams offered by TE:

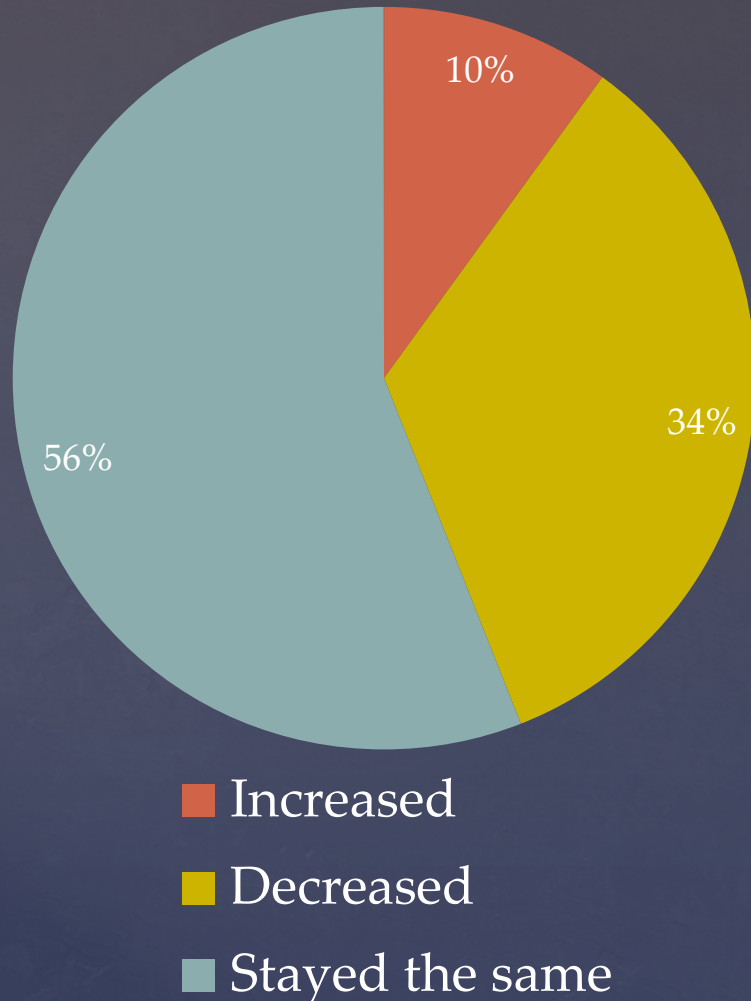
➤ Decreased – 22%

➤ Increased – 8%

- Paint (1); Lubricants (1); Impressions (2)



Number of TE analysts in the last 5 years



- Reasons for Decrease
1. Retirements without refilling positions
 2. Reduced submissions
 3. Moved positions or examiners to other sections with greater demand
 4. Consolidation of TE within lab system

Manager Perception of Top Need of TE Staff

Continuing education

Training to become qualified

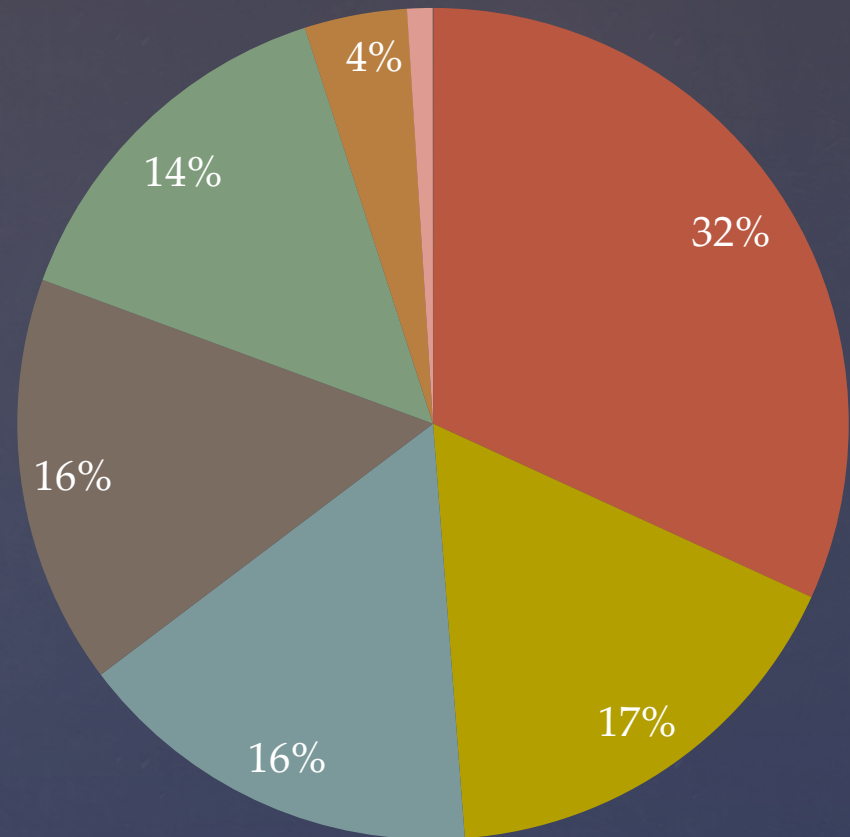
More outreach

New or updated instrumentation

More analysts

More submissions

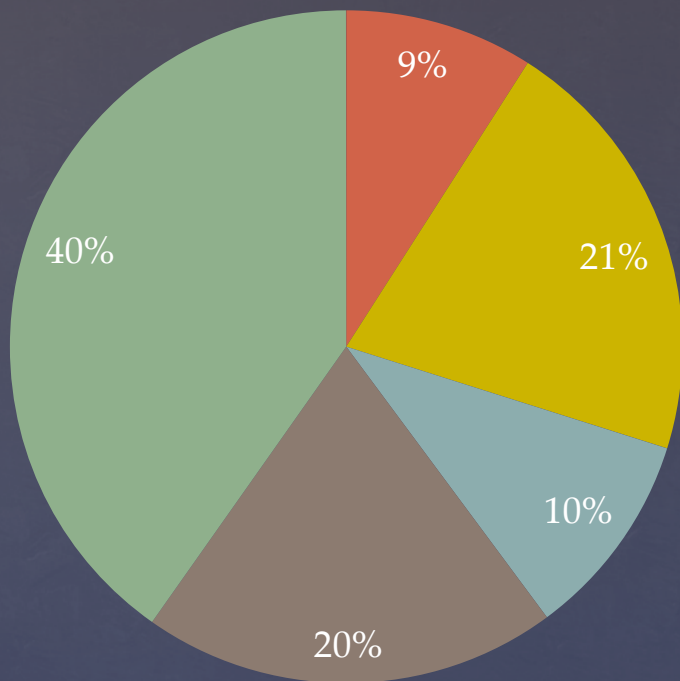
Money (grants, travel)



Prediction for TE section changes in the next 5 years

- Loss/Gain of sub-disciplines
 - Subset: Focus on GSR/fire debris only
- Closing or consolidating TE
 - Subset: Divide TE under other “sections”
- No change
- Losing staff (retirements)
- Increase/Decrease case submissions
- Improve instrumentation

Paperless?



■ Yes, paperless note taking & report delivery

■ Yes, paperless report delivery

■ Somewhat paperless

■ No, but transitioning

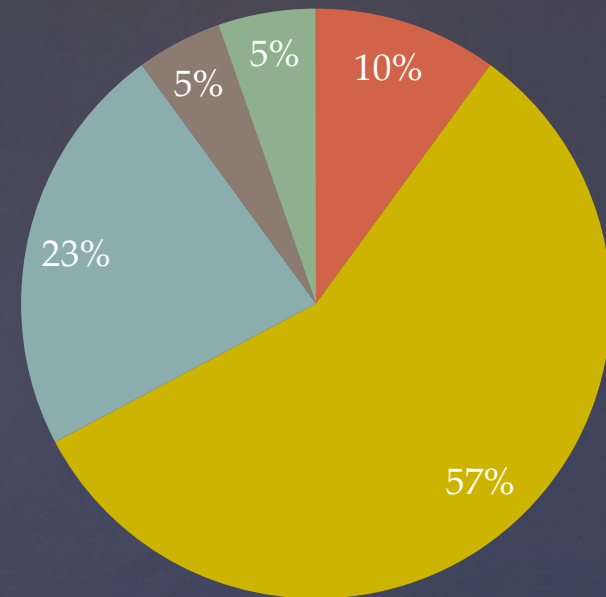
■ No

What do “Managers” want from OSAC?

- Guidelines and Standards
 - Sub-disciplines
 - Training
 - Interpretation
- Educational Materials
- Research
- Databases
- Other

Survey Results – Analysts

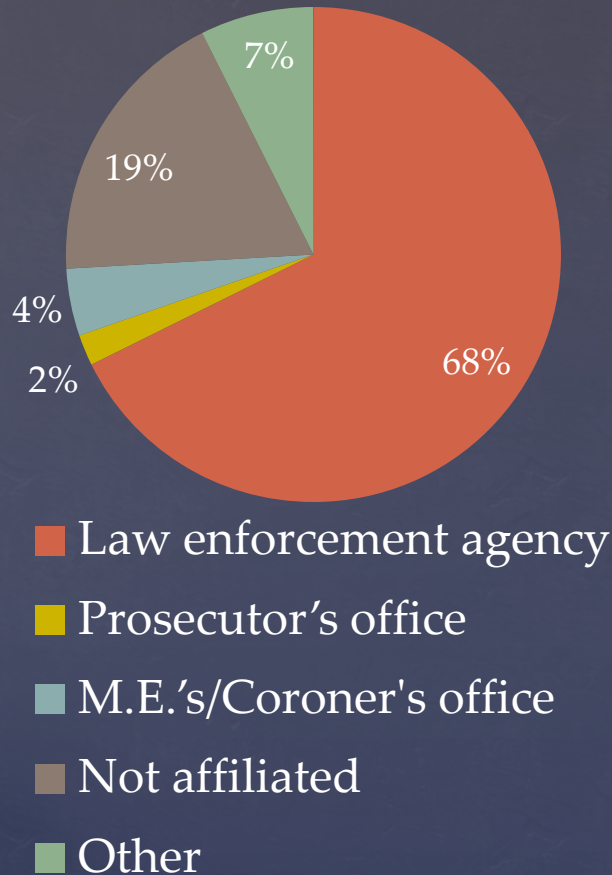
- 300 Responses
 - 75% examiners
 - 18% supervisors
 - 7% other
- Does lab admin understand your needs as TE staff?
 - Yes – 43%
 - Minimally – 40%
 - No – 17%



- Federal Lab
- State Lab
- Local Lab
- Private Lab
- Other

Survey Results – Analysts

➤ Lab affiliated with:



➤ 91% in labs with dedicated TE section/unit

➤ 96% from accredited labs

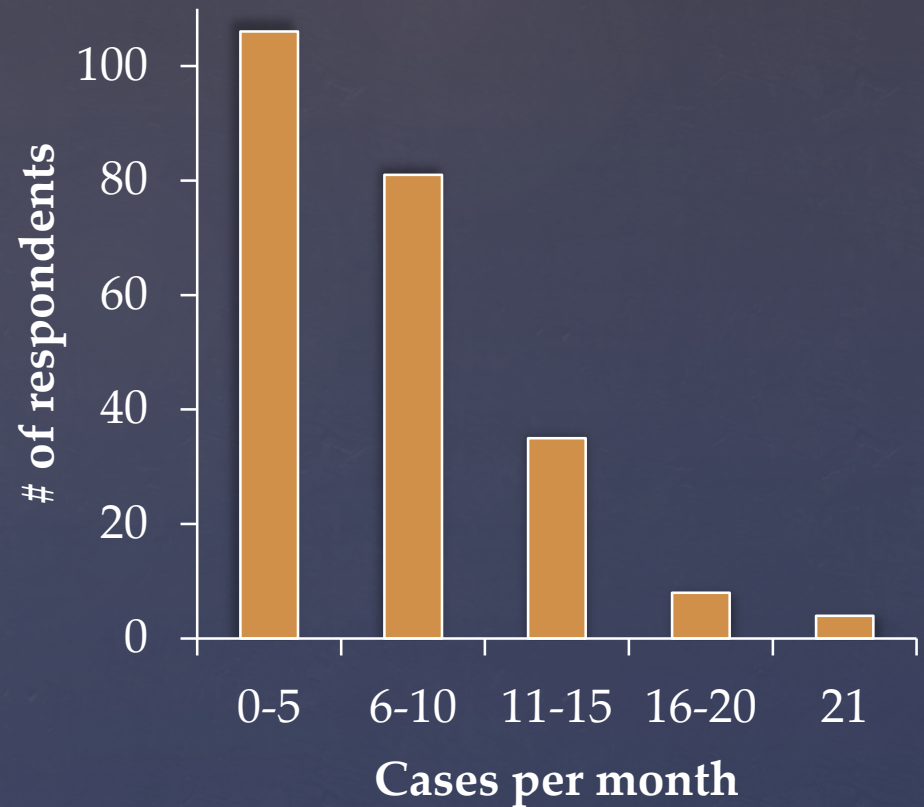
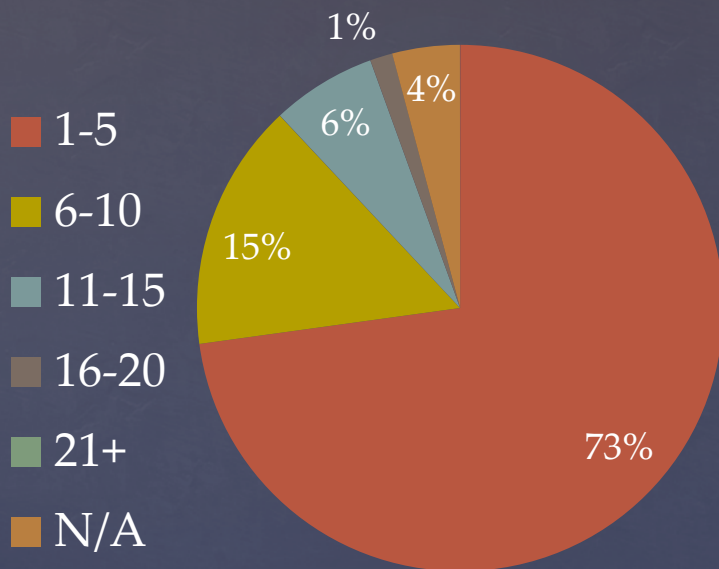
Strengths of TE Community Today

1. Passionate people
 - “The people who do the work and their dedication to the science.”
 - “Small determined group, passionate about their discipline.”
2. Can answer questions other than “who”
 - “Can fill in details where other areas cannot...or help explain how something happened, not just the who.”
3. Sharing of ideas
 - “The TE community is very open to sharing their expertise with other TE examiners.”

Analyst Stats

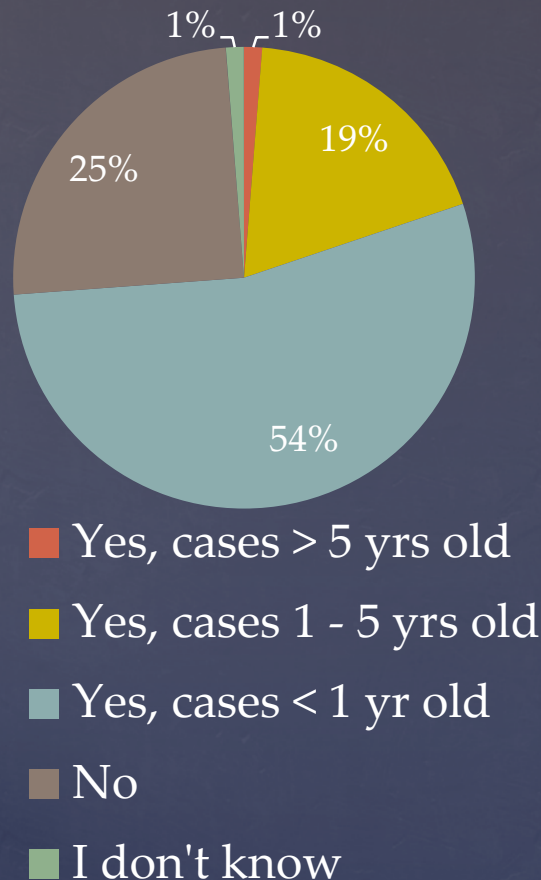
➤ Testimonies / Year

➤ Cases Done / Month



Case Requests

➤ Backlog?



➤ Most Requested

1. Fire Debris
2. GSR
3. Hairs/Fibers

➤ Least Requested

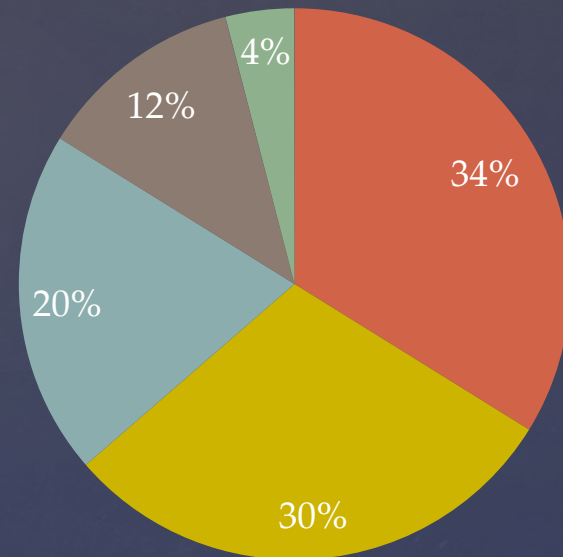
1. Filaments
2. Glass
3. Tape

Interpretation Scale Used?

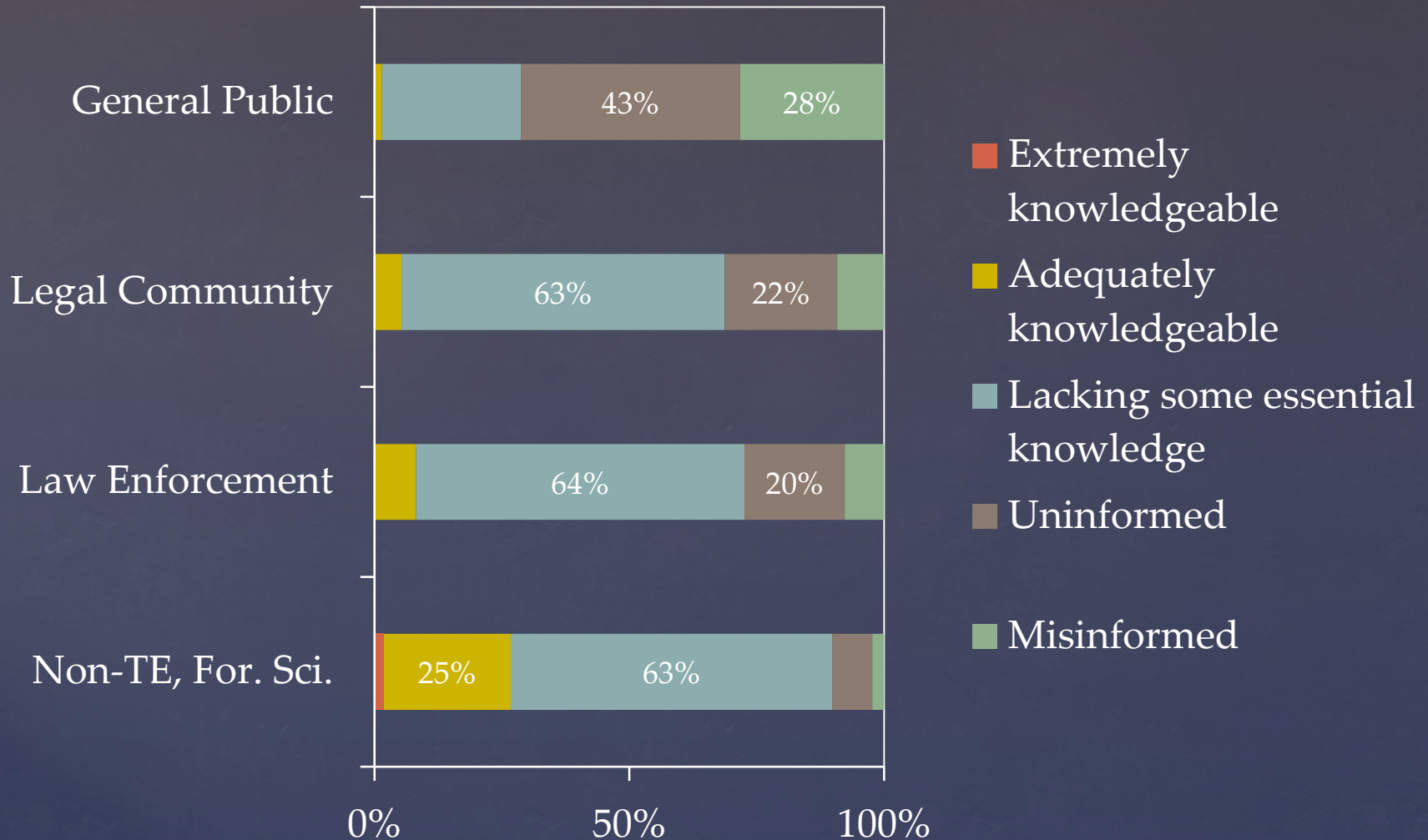
➤ No – 71%

➤ Yes – 29%

- Not Applicable
- Awaiting guidance from OSAC before incorporating
- Subject to too much interpretation and/or likely to get misinterpreted
- Not enough available data to use a scale
- We have a better approach

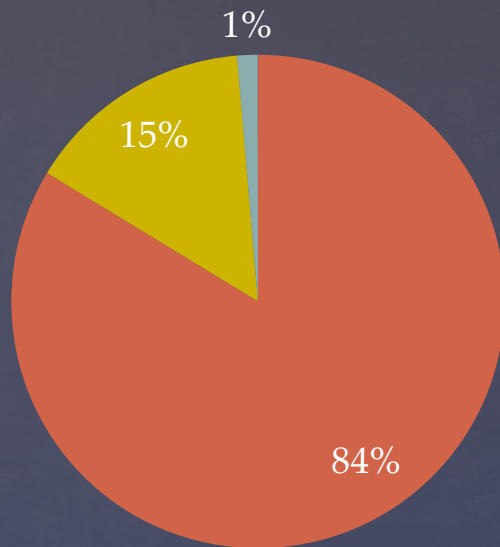


Knowledge of TE



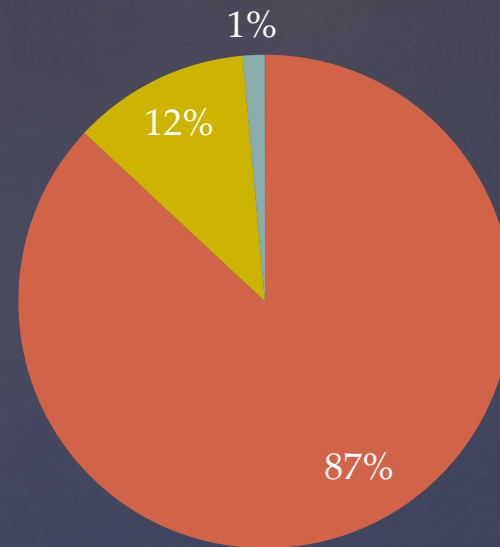
Utilization of TE

➤ “Analysts”



- Under utilized
- Appropriately utilized
- Over utilized

➤ “Managers”



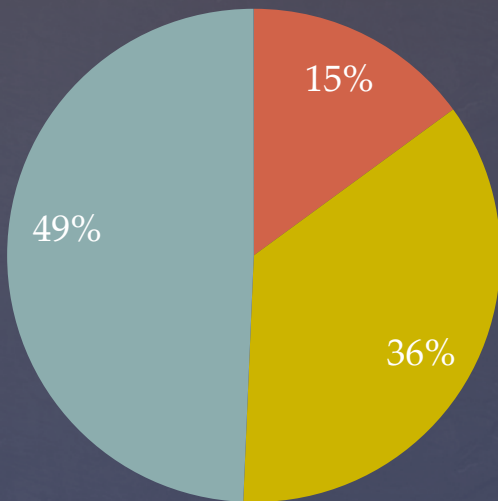
- Under utilized
- Appropriately utilized
- Over utilized

Who would benefit most from TE education?

1. Law Enforcement
2. Crime Scene Personnel
3. Legal Community
4. First Responders
5. Other Forensic Lab Scientists
6. SANE Nurses
7. General Public
8. Students

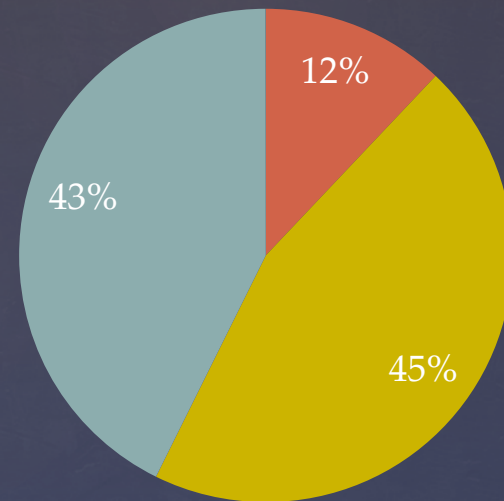
In the past 5 years,

➤ TE sub-disciplines



■ Increased
■ Decreased
■ Remained the same

➤ TE staff



■ Increased
■ Decreased
■ Remained the same

Analysts Perceptions of Top Issues Facing TE

1. Need to educate law enforcement, legal community, public, etc.
2. Undervaluing of TE
3. Losing support from Management
4. Funding
5. Significance Interpretation

What do TE “Analysts” want from OSAC?

- Education for law enforcement, legal, community, public, etc.
- Interpretation of significance
- Provide training
 - “More training opportunities such as what the FBI used to offer.”
 - “Train non-trace examiners” on TE
 - “...available online”

Outreach & Initiatives

Task Group Plans:



- Make survey results available
 - Request: “Please keep the TE community informed and continue to ask for our input.”



- Trace Evidence Awareness Workshop



- Produce educational materials
 - CSI Field Guide – in progress!

Questions?

Comments?

Suggestions?

{ Thank you!