

# ASSESSING THE PUBLIC'S KNOWLEDGE OF THE U.S. PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICE

LCDR David Foss

June 9, 2017

# DISCLOSURE

- In compliance with continuing education requirements, all presenters must disclose any financial or other associations with the manufacturers of commercial products, suppliers of commercial services, or commercial supporters as well as any use of unlabeled product(s) or product(s) under investigational use.
- CDC, our planners, presenters, and their spouses/partners wish to disclose they have no financial interests or other relationships with the manufacturers of commercial products, suppliers of commercial services, or commercial supporters. Planners have reviewed content to ensure there is no bias.
- Content will not include any discussion of the unlabeled use of a product or a product under investigational use.
- The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and PHS Commissioned Officers Foundation are jointly providing the CNE for this activity.
- CDC did not accept commercial support for this continuing education activity.

# Presentation Objectives

---



# Background

- Mullan's (1989) seminal text was published the centennial year of the Corps
- “What does our history tell us about the past and – importantly – the future of public health in America?”



# Background

- In 1918, one-third of Corps was devoted to suppressing the Spanish Flu
- Impacted 5 million Americans and left half a million dead



# Background

- Though PHS had gone to sea with the Coast Guard since its early days, during WWII, PHS saw an expansion with the coast guard after November 1941.
- The Corps was never sent to Vietnam, which contributed to its expansion domestically.
- During the 1970's, PHS' focus of disease prevention shifted to what Mullan calls tackling the “agents of contemporary mortality – smoking, drinking, diet, sedentary living, etc. (p. 187)

# Background



# Background



- For us with the Corps, the impact is obvious.
- For the public, the impact may not be. Examples like the Spanish Flu, Anti-Smoking Campaign, AIDS, Katrina, and Ebola may contribute to people's recall of PHS, but before we began this study we were skeptical about the public's understanding of what the Corps' impact was historically or what it is today.



# Why this study?



- Aside from Mullan's book and a few peer-reviewed articles and reports, not much research has been conducted on PHS and its contribution to society.
- Wanted to see if the assumption about the public's knowledge was correct.
- How much does the public know about PHS and how might we go about measuring their knowledge?

# Methodology: Google Consumer Survey

- Google Consumer Survey was selected to yield a faster and higher response rate than a traditional survey.
- Using internet population data from all over the country, Google Consumer Survey ensures that each survey has a representative sample.
- To increase validity, Google employs extensive checks for fast clicks and removes invalid responses.

# Methodology: Google Consumer Survey

- The way the survey reaches the general public is when visiting a site, users choose to answer survey questions. This is what Google calls a “surveywall.”
- Bias was introduced into this study’s attempt to represent the U.S. public through an internet survey since Internet penetration in America is only 78% of adults.

## Fair Use Digital Circulation Strategy Information Overload

*The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*

Matthew Dodd from the January 16, 2013 issue

Jurgen Habermas R&D Android cops beat The Weekender mathewi Tim Carmody attracting young readers tweets, collaboration tags the medium is the message blog plagiarism horse-race coverage advertising the other longer Book Review....



Privacy put the paper to bed Fuego news.me photo source: proimos/flickr

Please complete the following survey to access this premium content.

Question 1 of 9 or fewer:

How many uniformed services are there in the United States?

Please enter a number.

NEXT

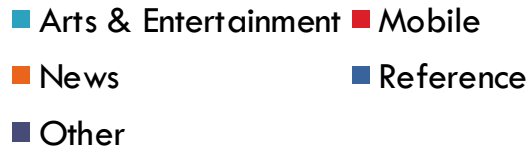
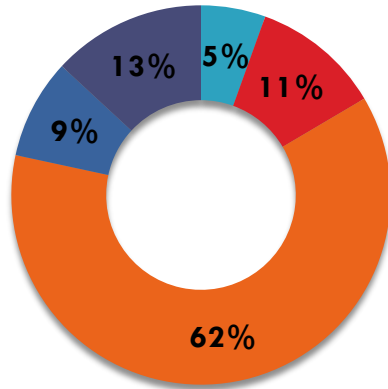
OR

Show me a different question

Skip survey

# Methodology: Google Consumer Survey

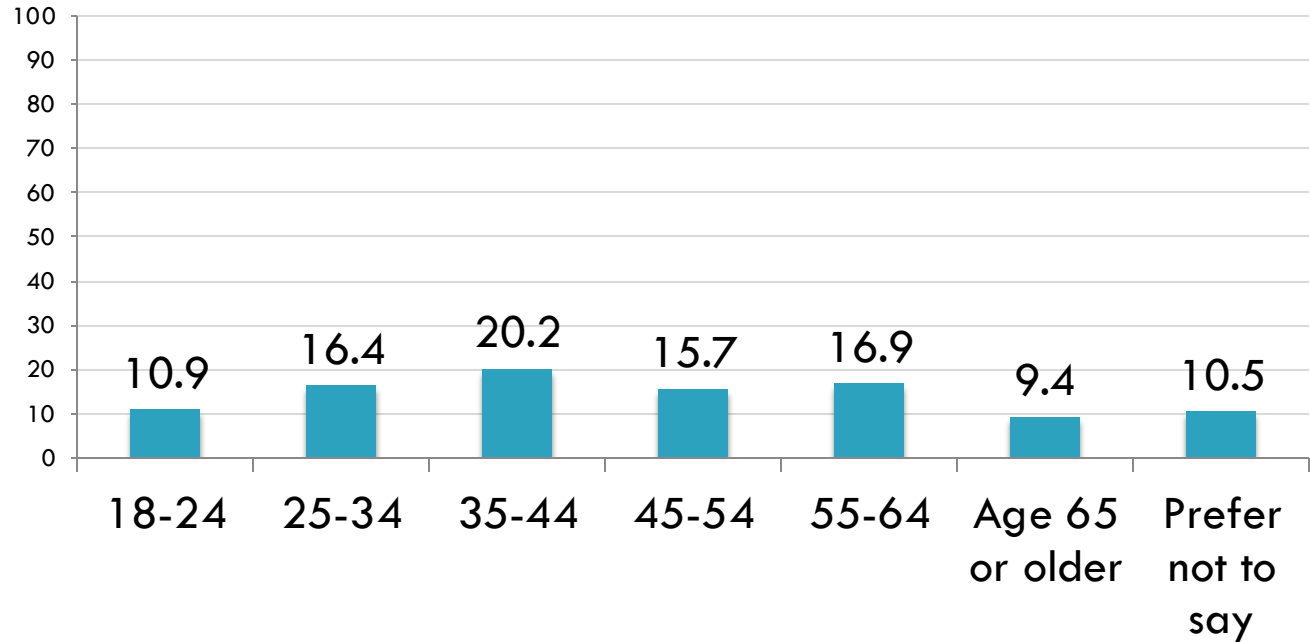
## Publisher Category



- Survey fielded from October 28-31, 2016
- Survey included 508 complete and 201 partial responses.
- More than half of respondents accessed this survey on News sites.

# Survey Demographics: Age (n=508)

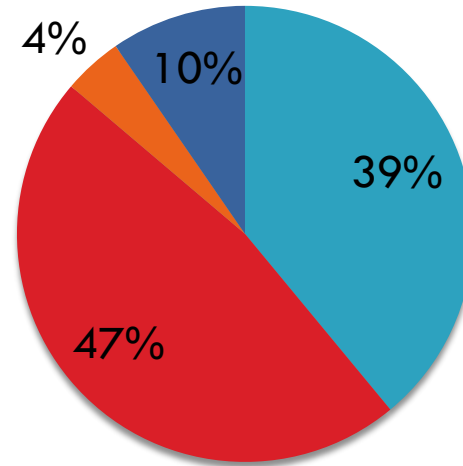
The survey respondents represented these age groups in an evenly distributed way.



# Survey Demographics: Sex (n=508)

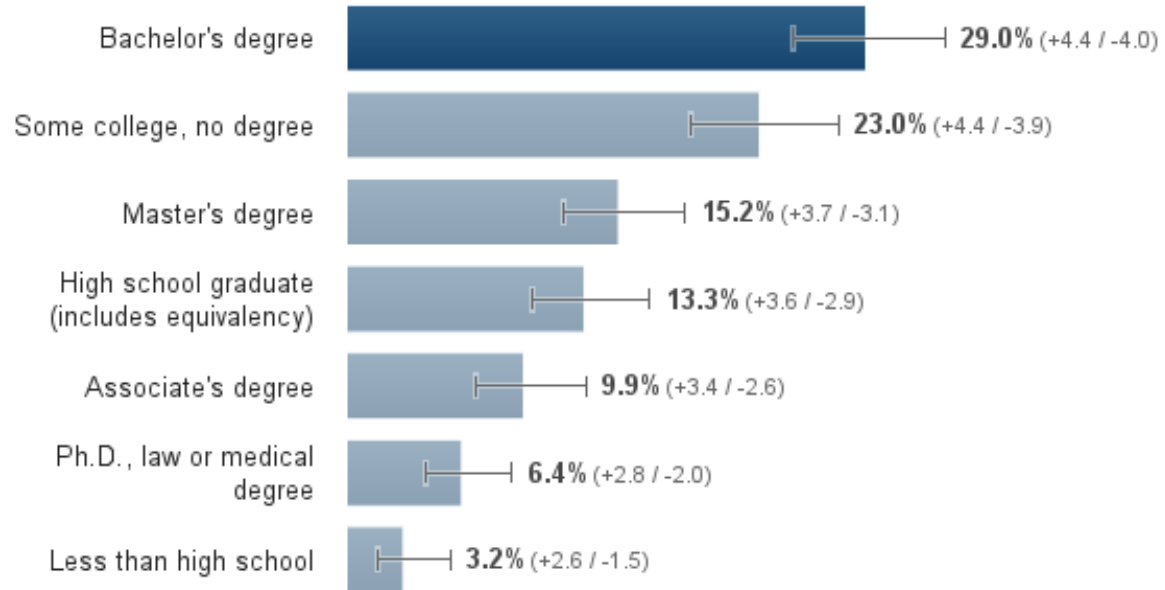
More men responded to the survey than women.

■ Female ■ Male ■ Other ■ Prefer not to say



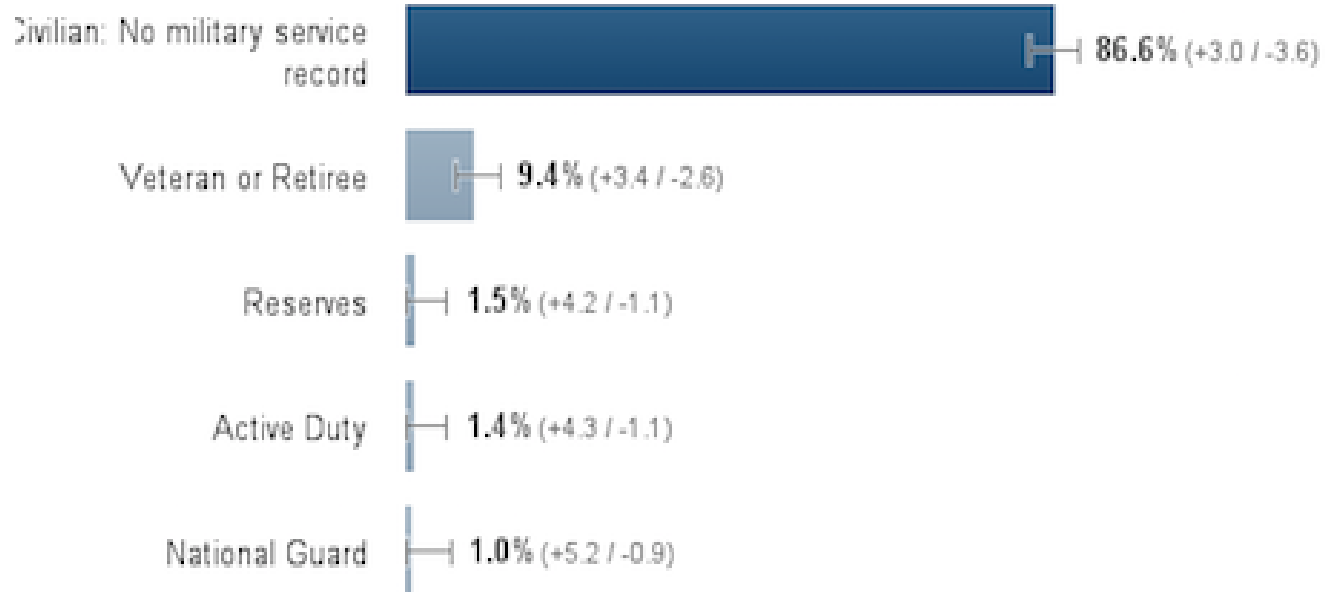
# Survey Demographics: Education Level (n=514)

Over half of the respondents indicated having attended some college or having a college degree.



# Please indicate your current military service status. (n=529)

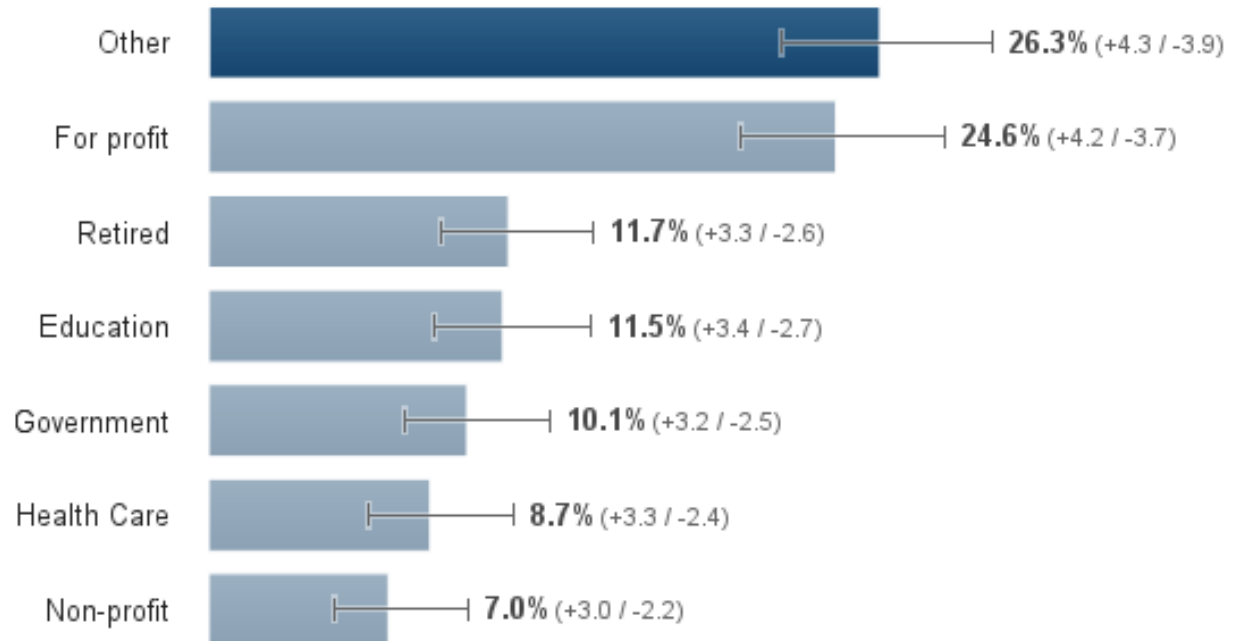
Most respondents were civilian and had no military record.





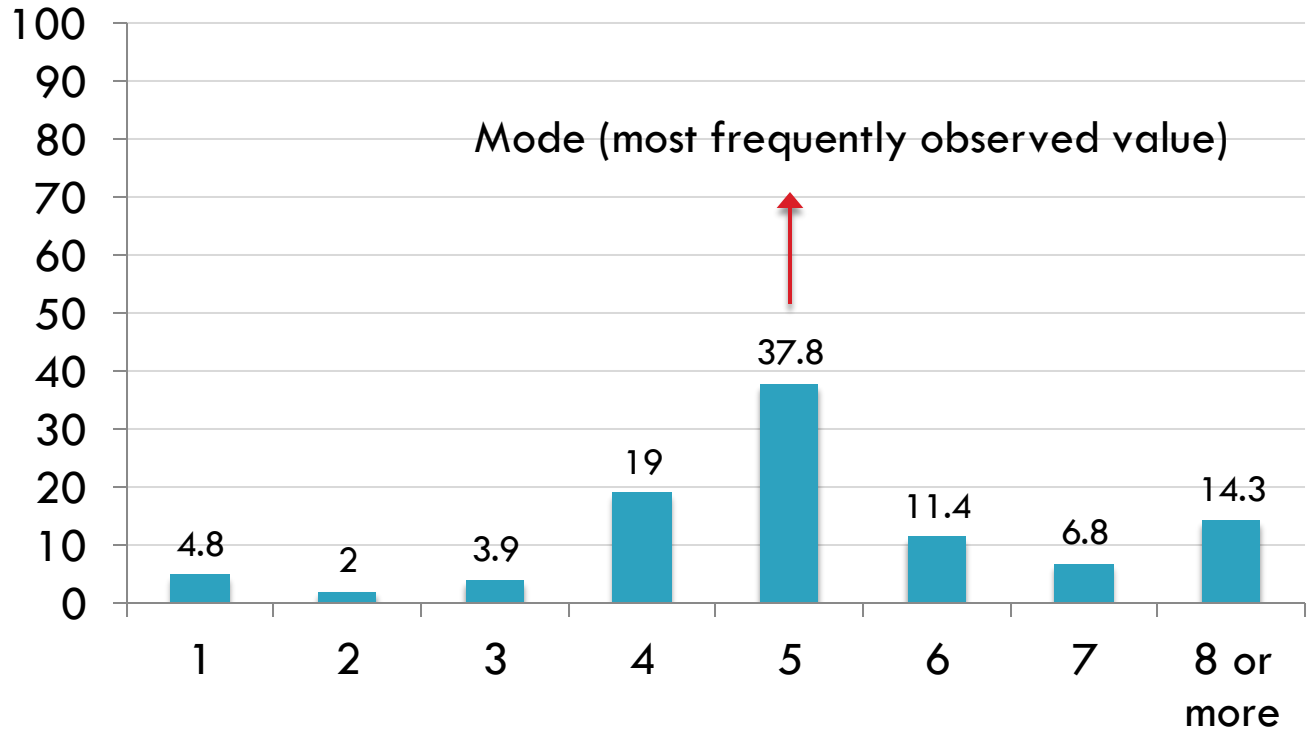
# What best describes the type of organization you work for? (n=521)

Half of respondents worked for a for-profit or “other” entity. We were unable to ask respondents to elaborate on “other” responses.



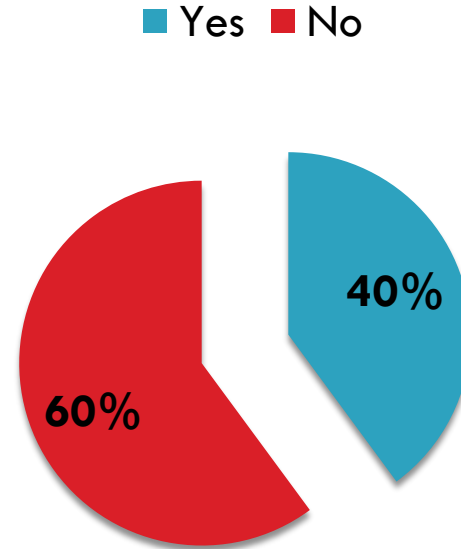
# How many uniformed services are there in the United States? (n=709)

Five was the most frequent number listed. Only 48 respondents indicated a correct number of uniformed services.

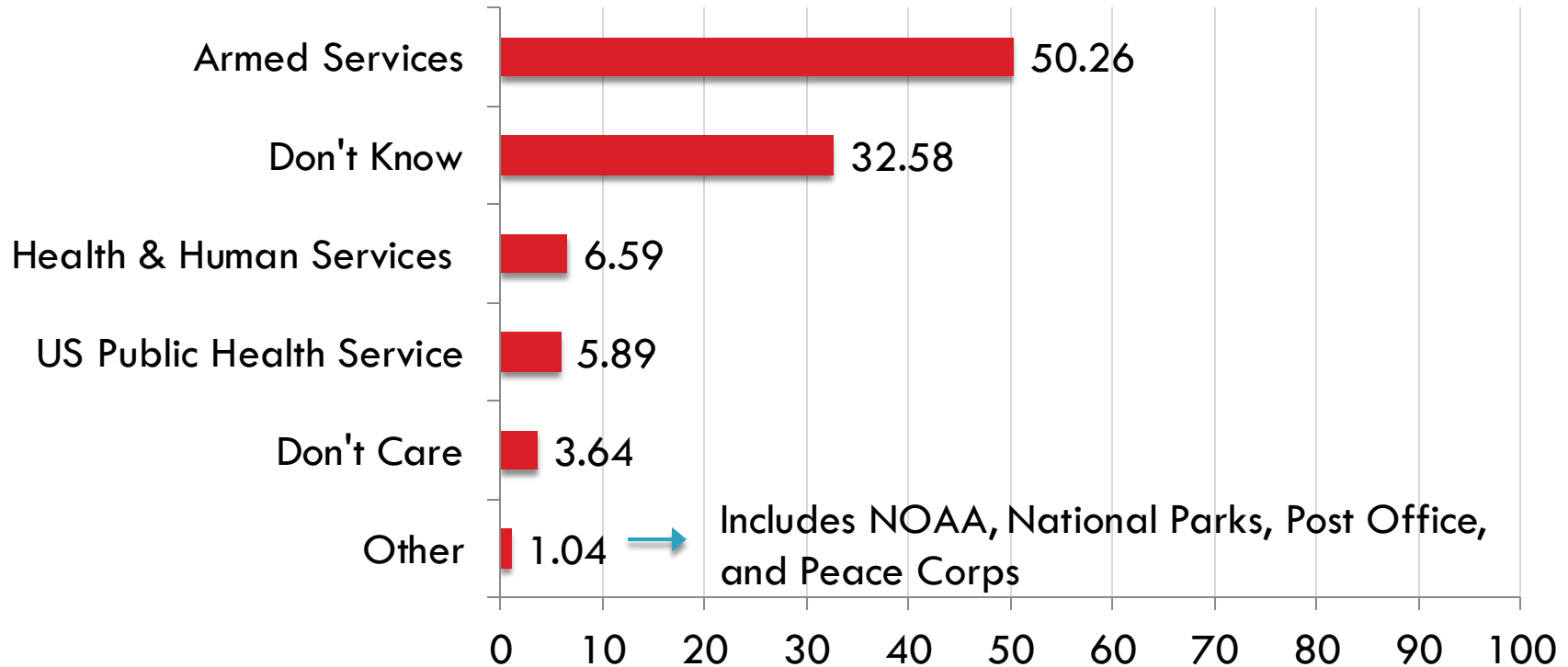


# Do you know what branch of uniformed service the Surgeon General is in? (n=692)

60% of the respondents did not know which uniformed service the Surgeon General is in.

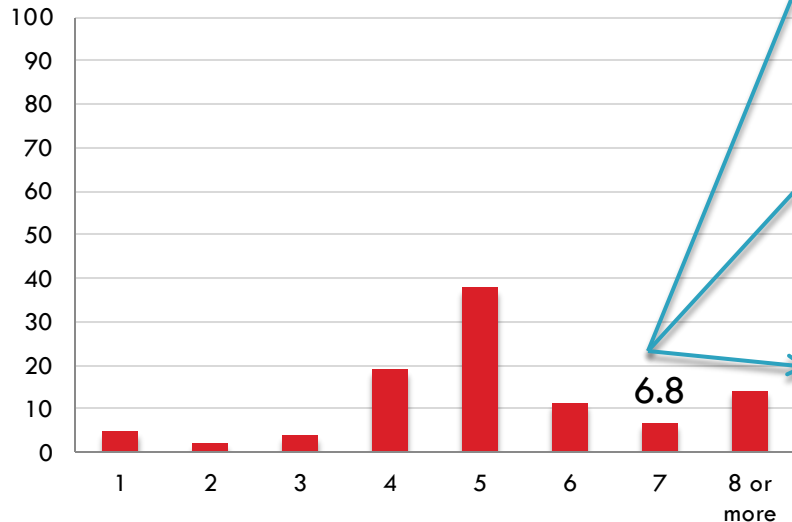


# Which branch of the uniformed services does the Surgeon General lead? (n=577)



# Uniformed Services & Corps Knowledge

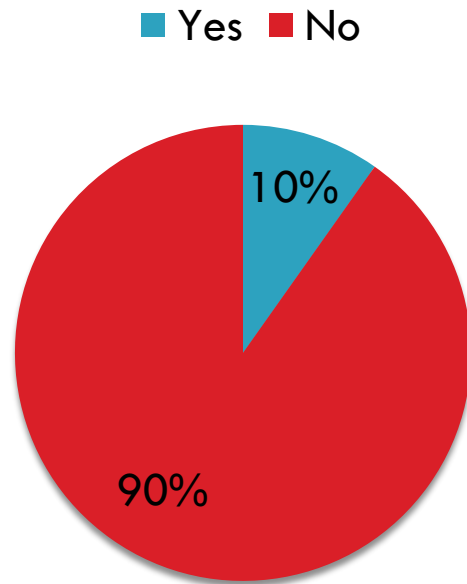
How many uniformed Services are there in the United States? (n=709)



- 50% of the respondents who reported the correct number of uniformed services said they knew which service the Surgeon General led (yes or no question).
- In taking a closer look at these 48 respondents, when asked to name the uniformed service that the Surgeon General leads, only 11 answered correctly.
- Only one of the respondents who worked in education answered both questions correctly.

# Are you a Commissioned Officer or do you know an officer in the U.S. PHS? (n=565)

One out of ten respondents either knew of an Officer or were an Officer in the Corps.



# Discussion

- In this study, only one educator out of the 55 knew how many uniformed services there were and which uniformed service the Surgeon General leads.
- It is important that educators know about the USPHS in order to teach young people about it.
  - ▣ This will raise the awareness levels of the USPHS.

# Discussion



- We need to find a way to make people aware of USPHS outside of epidemics and natural disasters.
  - ▣ One example: K-12 Curriculum
  - ▣ Another example: Popular culture
  - ▣ Additional research across fields



# Discussion



## SERVICE

With **duty stations in over 20 federal departments or agencies**, the Commissioned Corps provides officers the ability to pursue an exciting and fulfilling career.

Officers deploy nationally in support of public health responses to man-made and natural disasters.

# Reference

---

Mullan, F. (1989). *Plagues and Politics: The Story of the United States Public Health Service*. New York, NY: Basic Books.