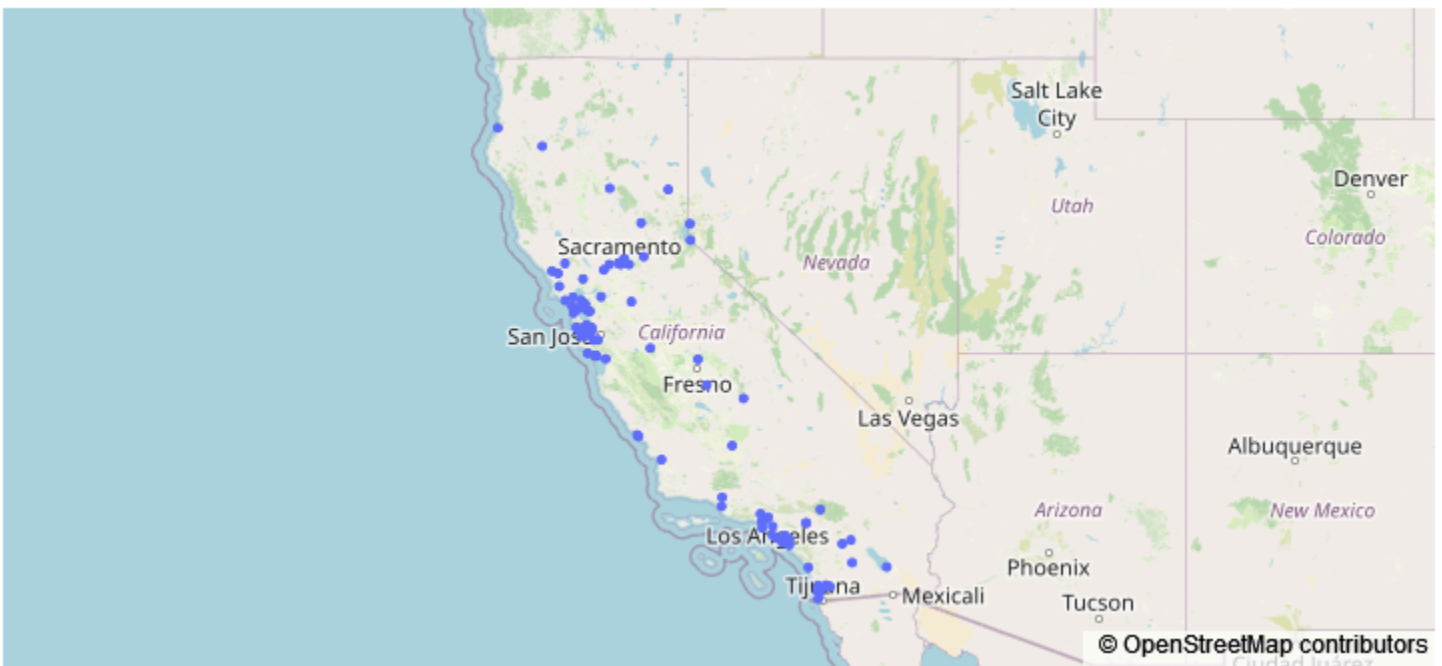




Environmental Education Provider Survey Analysis

In 2023, The Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (AEOE) conducted a state-wide survey to collect data from environmental education (EE) providers to demonstrate the collective impact of our industry and advocate for increased awareness, access, and resources for the field. The survey results can provide information about organizational structures, programming, and business models. To utilize survey responses effectively, it's important to understand what the data means and how it connects to the bigger picture of resource allocation and livable wages. The California eeGuidance for Equitable Pay and Hiring in Environmental Education highlights a wide variety of inequities that exist – especially regarding pay, compensation, and working conditions. For the 2023 AEOE survey, organizations from across the state shared organizational and programmatic information on staff demographics, areas of service, offerings, groups served, and hourly starting rates.



Map 1: Distributions of organizations that responded to the 2023 AEOE Survey in the state of California. The image is taken from the survey results dashboard (<https://aeoe-b42a1605794f.herokuapp.com/>).

Terms Used to Describe Work and Offerings

Out of 358 organizations who responded to the question about terms used to describe an organization's work, 30.4% describe their work as 'Environmental Education', 22.6% as 'Outdoor Education', 14.8% as 'Environmental Literacy', and 9% as 'Climate Education'. The remaining organizations (23.2% of

organization responses) describe their work as 'Education for Sustainability', 'Conservation', 'Environmental Justice', 'Children in Nature', 'Youth Development', 'Health and Wellness', 'Green Schools', or 'Social Justice'.

182 organizations responded to the survey question about environmental themes their programming covered include 'Conservation related to Wildlife and Habitat' (19%), 'Outdoor Learning' (15.5%), 'Climate Change' (12%), 'Water' (11.5%), and STEM (8%). The majority of offerings were categorized as 'Other' (34%), so the survey did not have a category that fit with an organization's offerings; the remaining ranged from 'Field trips', 'Direct teaching', 'Curriculum & instructional materials', 'Classroom presentations', 'Professional development for teachers', and 'Residential or overnight programs', and all organizations served predominantly rural communities across the board (Table 3).

Participants Served

Serving a range of audience age levels and groups in environmental education programs is essential for promoting lifelong learning and promoting a multidisciplinary approach to environmental education. Sustainable funding is essential support that can support the long-term facilitation of educational programs for a range of audiences and ensure high-quality programming. Organizations serve a range of audience levels across their programs that range from Pre-K to high school, pre-college, and even serve teachers and administrative staff. Of the 205 programs listed, 144 programs serve multiple audiences but the majority serve one to three different types of audiences (Figure 16 and 17). And only 30 programs serve all seven audience options: 'Pre-K/Early Childhood or Kindergarten', '1st Grade through 8th Grade Students', '9th Grade through 12th Grade Students', 'Pre-Service Educators or College Students', 'Teachers or Administrators', 'Informal Educators', and the 'General Public or Family'.

When these survey results are broken down, the majority of programs serve elementary to middle school level students and youth (1st to 8th Grade), then high school level (9th to 12th Grade), and 'Pre-K and Kindergarten' levels (Table 4). Only 43 programs serve Pre-College audiences, and 45 organizations serve 'Teachers or Administration' and 'Informal Education'. Serving non-traditional or non-formal audiences increases accessibility, inclusiveness, and community engagement by including groups that are typically not thought of for environmental education opportunities. However, prioritizing these identities and increasing funding for programming that supports their education and learning can result in wider community and intergenerational benefits.

Annual Budget

A pervasive stigma shrouds the professional workplace around discussions about pay, compensation, and annual budgets. The dedication of individuals within these sectors to noble causes, coupled with a passion for creating positive change, contributes to a systemic culture of silence around compensation. This is reflected in the responses seen in AEOE's survey. Of the 279 organizations that responded to the survey, 81 organizations (29% of all organizations) responded to the questions about the annual budget, all others either leaving the question blank or selecting "Unavailable/prefer not to share" (Figure 1). Sharing information about annual budgets and finances with the public is a key component of promoting transparency, accountability, and building trust within the EE field. There are many reasons why an organization may be hesitant or not want to share this information. Still, we're hoping

this and future surveys can start to change the stigma around financial transparency to ensure a more just and supportive working environment.

Of the organizations who shared the range their annual budget fell within, the majority of environmental education nonprofit organizations fell within the '\$500,000 - \$1 million,' '\$1 - \$2 million,' and greater than '\$2 million' range budgets (Figure 1). These organizations accounted for over 1,500 employees, 76% of whom are full-time and 23% part-time employees. It was interesting to see that all organizations that answered the survey question about languages offered in their programming did not answer the question on annual budget (Figure 4). Figure 2 shows the annual budgets for Nonprofit, Government, and Other organizations. The one Government organization has an annual budget of '\$250,000 - \$500,000', and the nonprofit and other organizations fall within the majority of \$500,000 or above. Across all organizations in this survey, the majority of organizations with budgets of greater than \$2 million serve at the Regional/Multi-county level (Figure 3). Being able to connect organizational budgets with programmatic offerings such as language accessibility is vital in the livable wages movement to ensure employees with these additional skills are being compensated for everything they bring to the table.

Demographics of Staff

Historically and in the present day, BIPOC communities are disproportionately marginalized and excluded from environmental education opportunities due to systemic barriers such as limited access to resources and discriminatory hiring and compensation practices. According to the 2020 US Census, 60% of the workforce in California are BIPOC individuals. However, according to the responses from this survey, the percentage of BIPOC employees overall is lower than the statewide average. 45.5% of all senior staff identify as BIPOC out of all organizations who responded, and 45.8% of senior staff in organizations that provide EE programming identify as BIPOC (Figure 5,6,7,8). The majority of organizations reported having fewer than 25 Full-time staff members, with most organizations having 5 Full-time staff members. 8 organizations had none (Figure 10).

JEDI

Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (JEDI) initiatives are increasingly more common in organizations to address concerns of inequity, systemic barriers, and underrepresentation. In the environmental education sectors in California according to AEOE's survey, 64 organizations implement "internal training provided for staff and/or board members" 57 organizations work on JEDI with "new partners," 53 for "program and curriculum revision," 52 for "staff and board diversification," and 50 for "mission, vision, and values revision."

Hourly Starting Rate

As seen in California's eeGuidance for Equitable Pay and Hiring in Environmental Education¹ and in other studies on starting salaries for similar fields, environmental education was found to be lower across the board. Results from the survey found that the average starting salary for environmental education was \$29,515 (\$14.19 per hour). Even though state minimum wages and the costs of living

¹ Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education (2024). [California eeGuidance for Equitable Pay and Hiring in Environmental Education](#).

for the East Coast tend to be relatively lower on average than California², there is still a significant need to increase wages for environmental educators because they face the same or similar issues as those living in California. Of the programmatic information collected through the AEOE survey, the starting hourly rate of employees for 73 programs was collected (Figure 11-15). The 2024 California Minimum Wage starts at \$16.00 per hour; 70 programs (96%) offer starting rates at the state minimum wage or higher (Table 1). The minimum wages within individual counties in the SF Bay Area differ up to \$2; 49% of organizations offer a starting hourly rate of \$21 or higher (Table 1 and 2). By comparison, for the entry-level job of a Forestry Technician³ in California, the starting salary range is \$33,693 - \$43,801 per year or \$16.20 - \$21.06 per hour.

Figure 12 shows no significant difference in the starting hourly rate between in-person and virtual programming. Most organizations offer in-person programming but the majority of these offer a starting hourly rate of \$16 to \$25 per hour. For virtual programming, the majority of organizations offer a starting hourly rate of \$16 to \$25 as well. This survey question about hourly starting rate does not consider other potential modes of compensation such as mileage reimbursement, housing, or benefits but it would be helpful to collect some level of this additional compensation to see how in-person and virtual programming staff are paid differently or not.

Language accessibility is essential for environmental education in California because of the diverse populations that organizations and programs serve. California is one of the most linguistically diverse states in the U.S. with people speaking a wide range of languages from English, Spanish, Mandarin, Cantonese, Vietnamese, and many others. There is also a lack of information and accessibility for American Sign Language (ASL) in environmental education programming and surveys like this one highlight the need for staff that can facilitate inclusive, culturally relevant, and engaging programming. Many organizations have started to compensate bilingual employees for this skill they bring to the table, though this is not seen in AEOE's survey (Figure 13). With further responses and dissemination of survey results, we can begin to see how starting hourly pay differs by the languages provided.

Conclusion

Addressing pay inequity, organizational structure, and programmatic offerings within the environmental education field for BIPOC individuals is a crucial step in advocating for equitable allocation of financial resources within the environmental movement. As organizations continue to embrace financial and business model transparency, we can further refine the findings and conclusions we can pull from this initial survey data. This is also a crucial step in breaking the stigma and barriers around these conversations so the EE field can effectively identify opportunities for livable wages.

Survey analysis provided by Gloria Desanker of Map Nerd Consulting [mapnerdconsulting.com](https://www.mapnerdconsulting.com).

²2024 National Conference of State Legislatures, State Minimum Wages:

<https://www.ncsl.org/labor-and-employment/state-minimum-wages>

³USA Jobs Department of Agriculture, Forestry Technician: <https://www.usajobs.gov/job/736309100>

Appendix

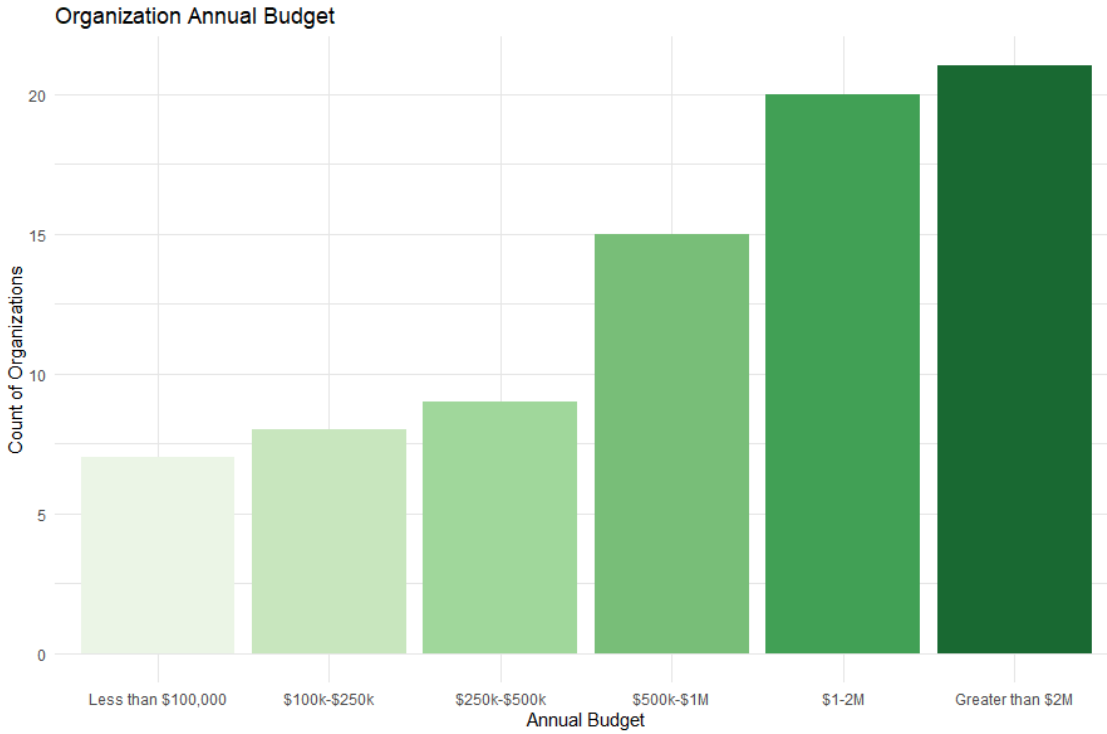


Figure 1: Bar chart showing the count of responses from organizations in each Annual Budget range.

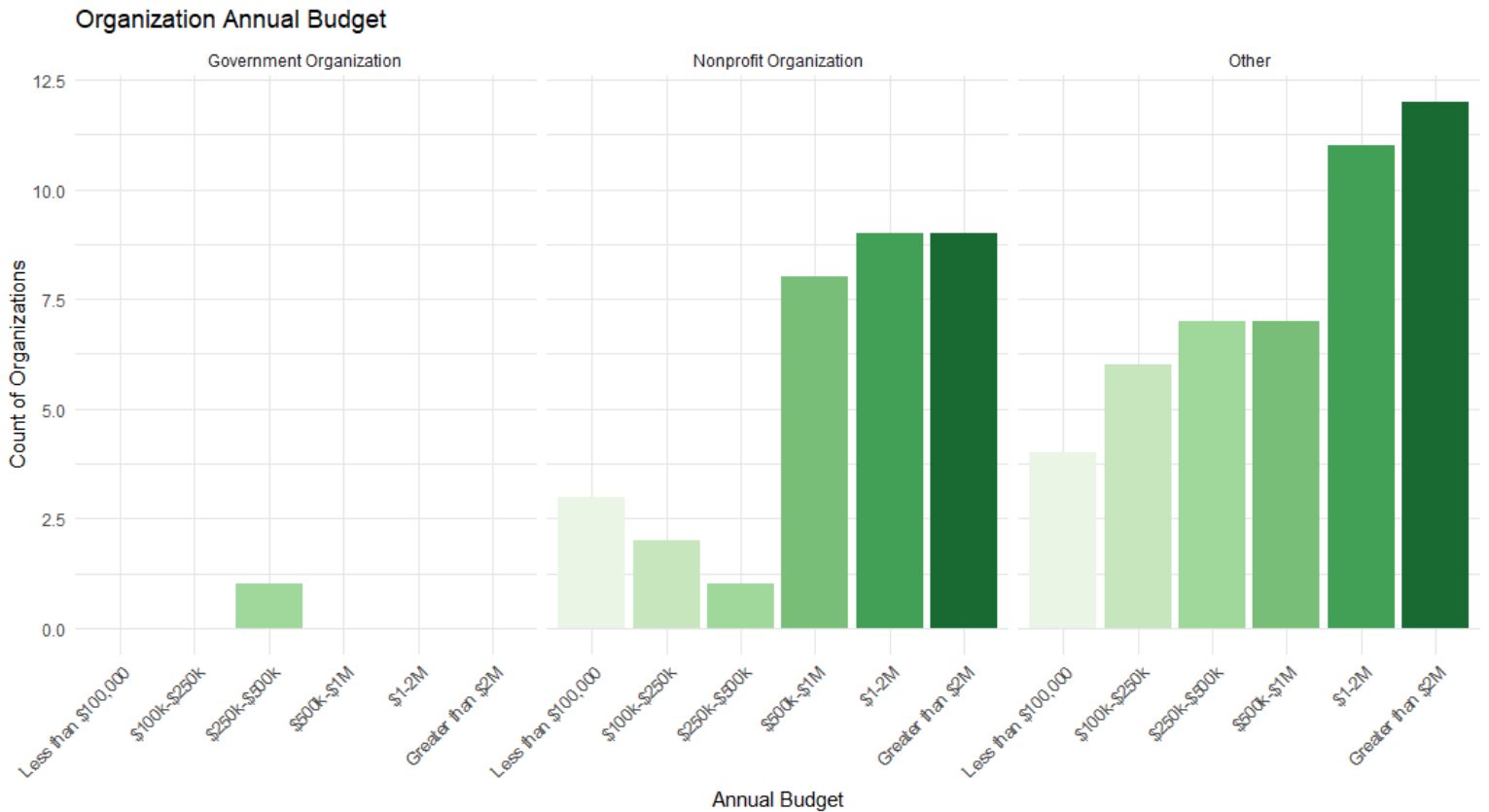


Figure 2: Annual Budget of organizations by Sector types: Government Organization, Nonprofit Organization, and Other. The majority of organizations fall under the category of Nonprofit and Other.

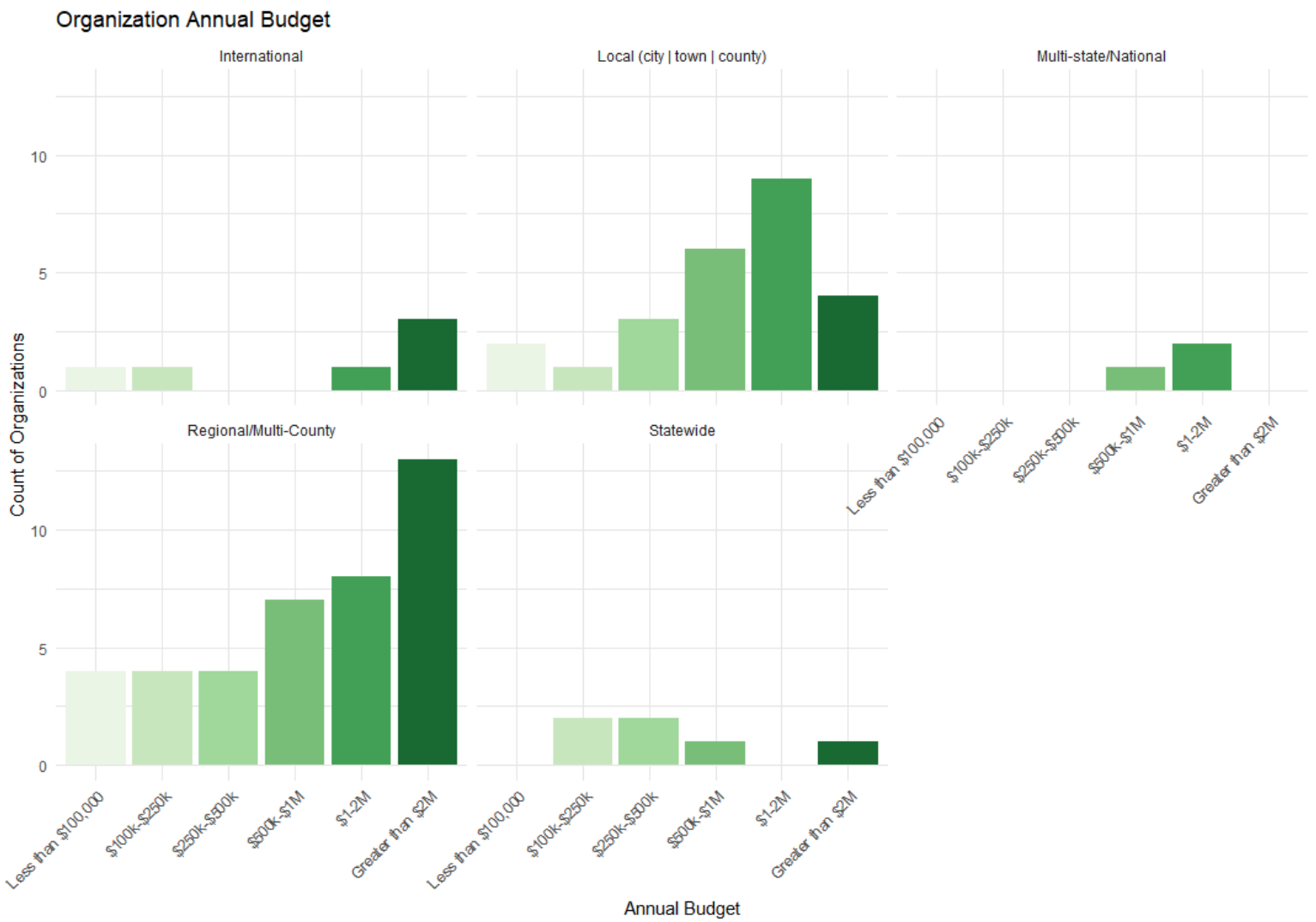


Figure 3: Annual Budget of organizations by Service Locations: International, Local, Multi-state, Regional/Multi-county, and Statewide. The majority of organizations provide Regional/Multi-county programming.

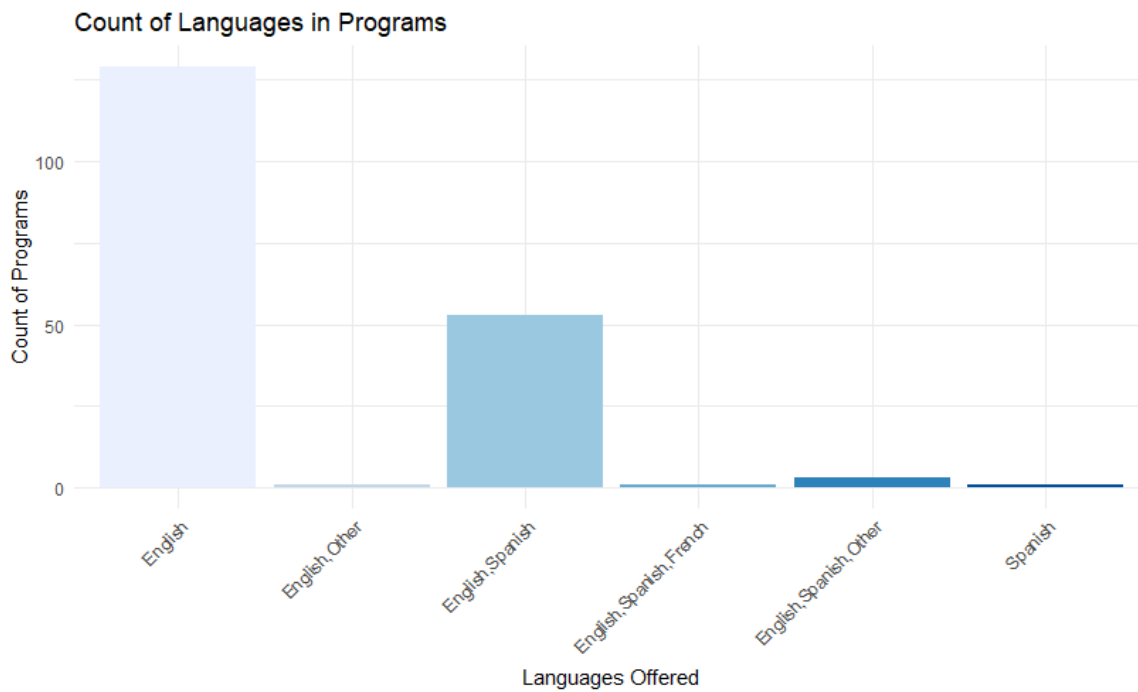


Figure 5: Bar chart showing the count of programs offering a language or variety of languages. 129 programs offer programs in English, 53 programs offer programs in English and Spanish, and 6 programs offer programs in English and at least another language.

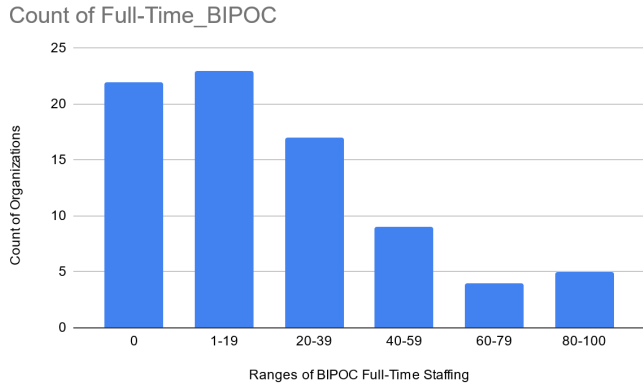


Figure 6: Bar chart showing the distribution of BIPOC full-time staff. The majority of organizations have fewer than 20 or no BIPOC full-time staff.

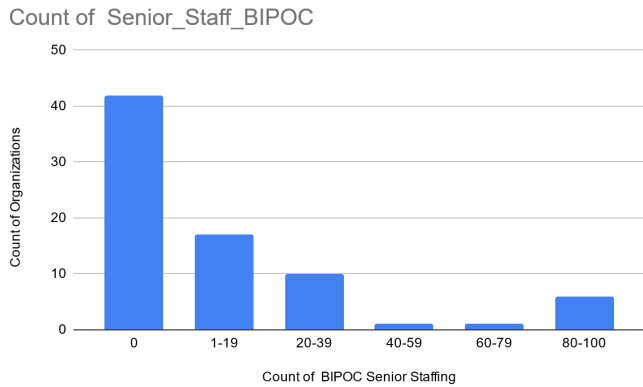


Figure 7: Bar chart showing the distribution of BIPOC senior staff. The majority of organizations have no BIPOC senior staff.

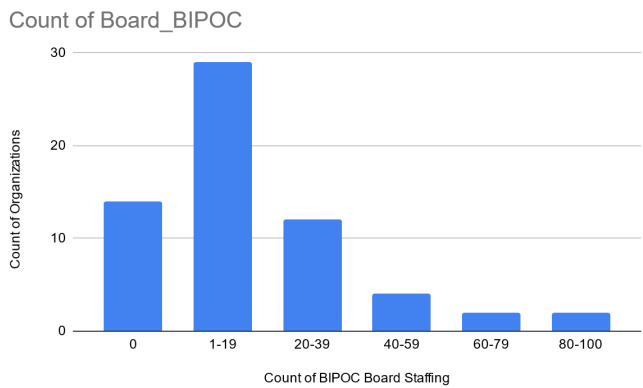
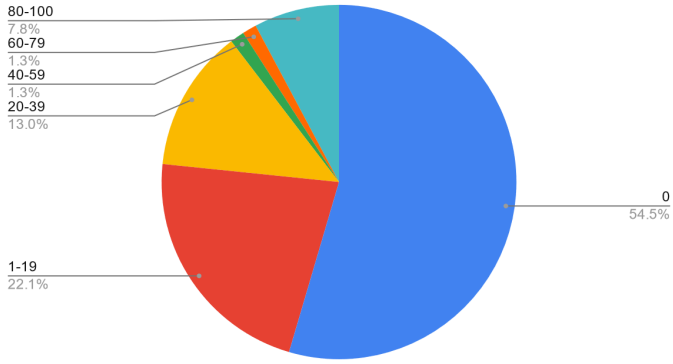


Figure 8: Bar chart showing the distribution of BIPOC board staff members. The majority of organizations have fewer than 20 BIPOC board members.

Count of Senior_Staff_BIPOC



Count of Senior_Staff_BIPOC In EE Organizations

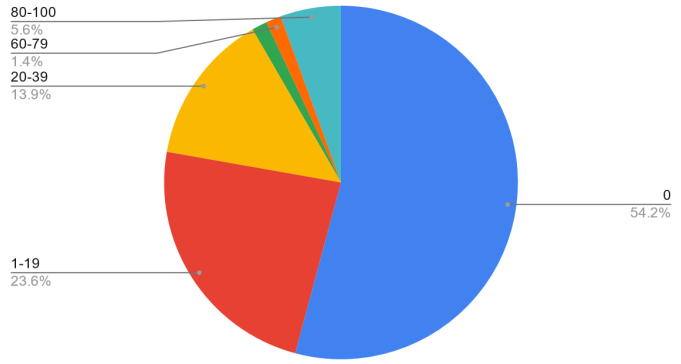


Figure 9: Pie charts showing the percentages of BIPOC senior staff in all organizations and EE organizations.

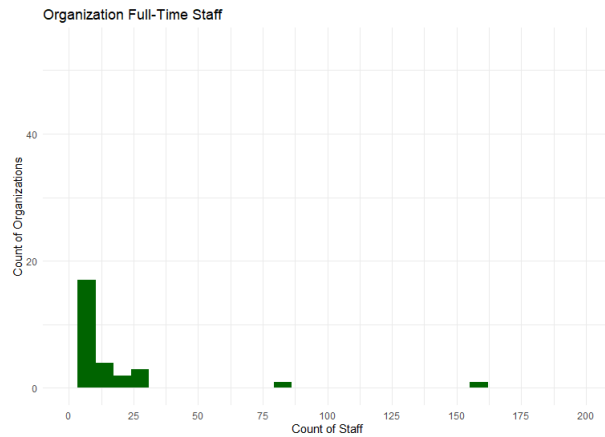
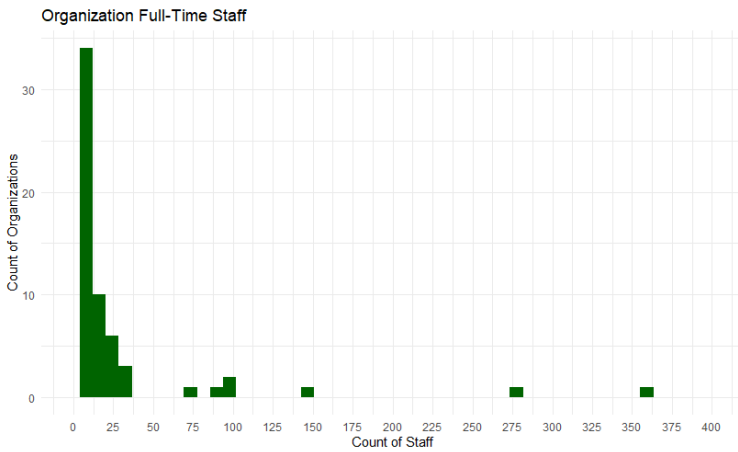


Figure 10: Histograms showing the distribution of all full-time vs part-time staff.

Program Hourly Starting Rate

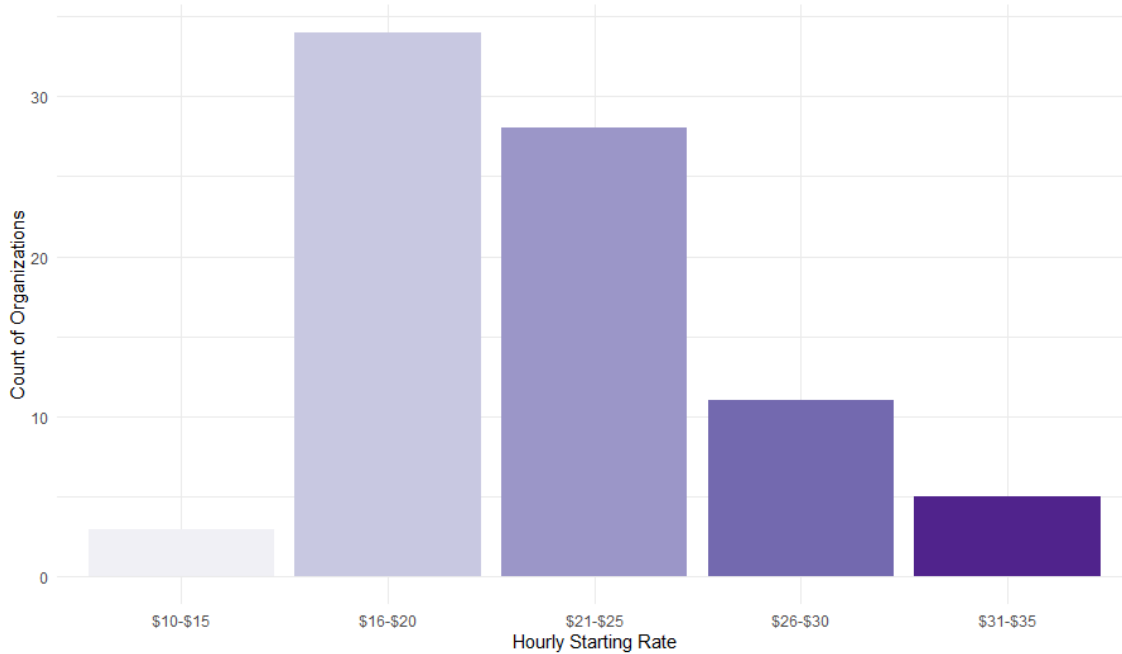


Figure 11: Bar chart showing the hourly starting rate for programs. 12 Programs did not share the hourly starting rate, not shown in this chart.

Program Hourly Starting Rate

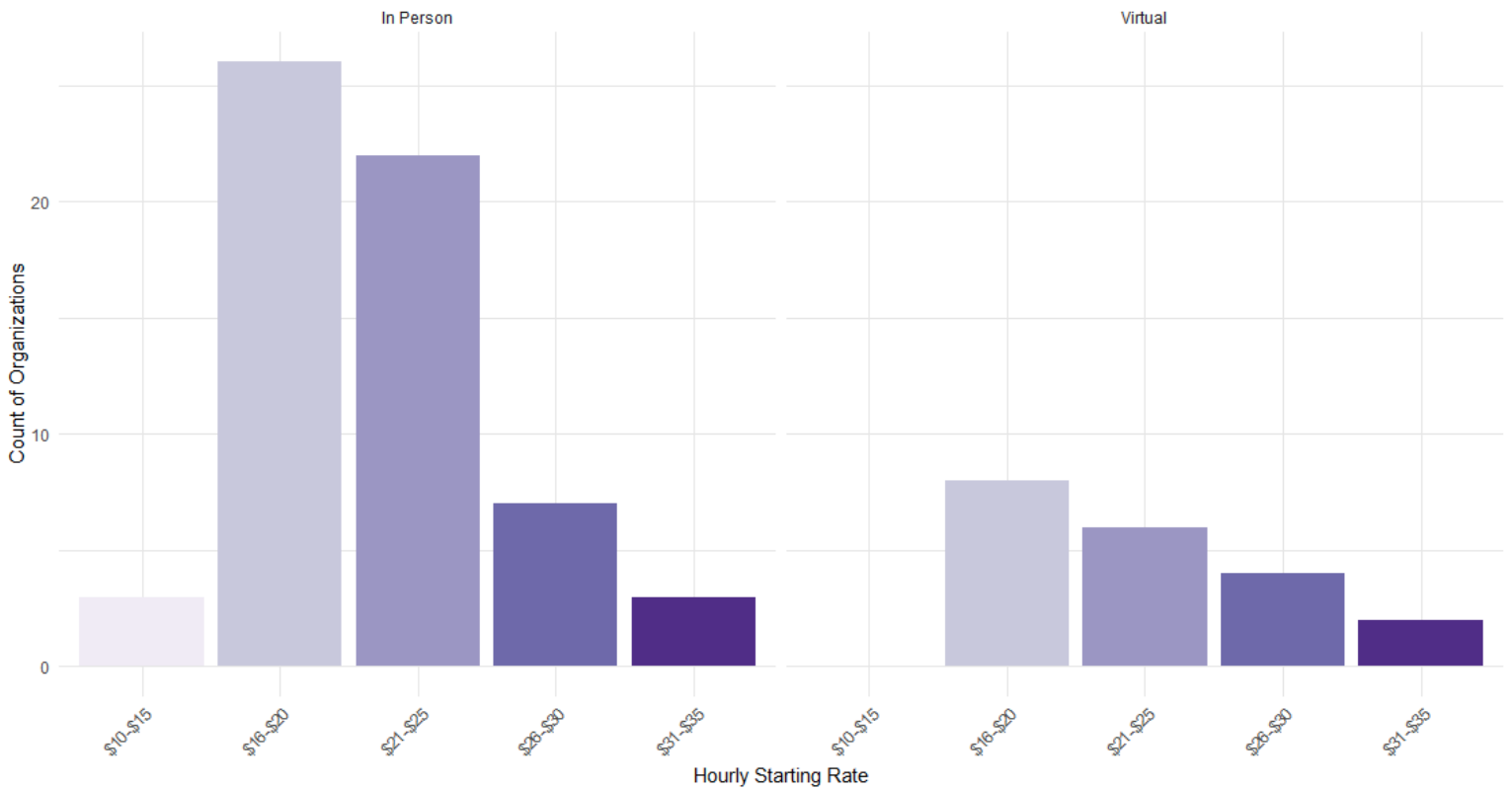


Figure 12: Hourly Starting Rate of organizations by service location: in-person and virtual. The majority of organizations provide in-person programming.

Program Hourly Starting Rate

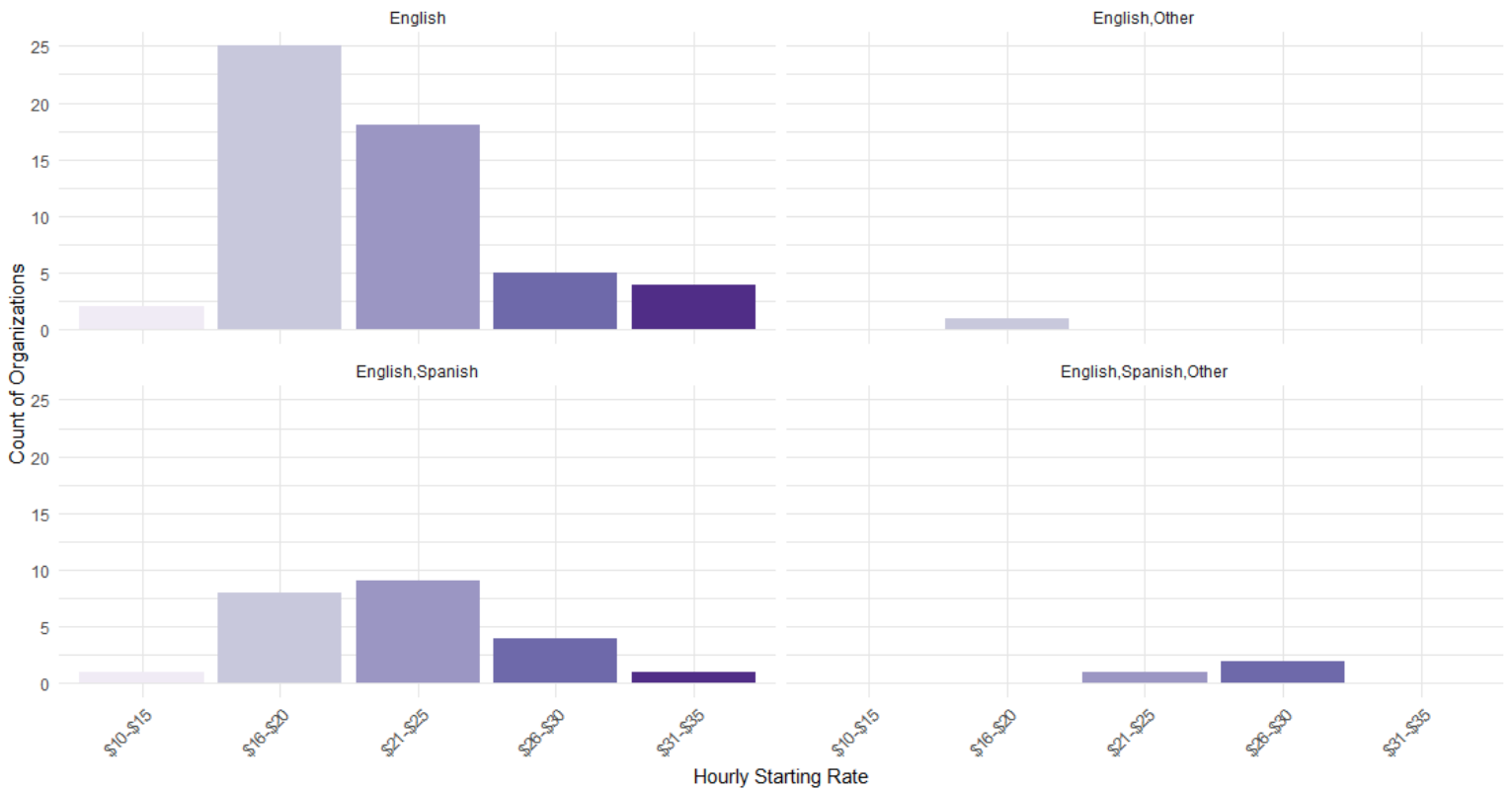


Figure 13: Hourly Starting Rate of organizations by Language programs are offered in. The majority of programs are offered in English or English and Spanish. The highest hourly starting rates are for programs that are offered in English and English and Spanish.

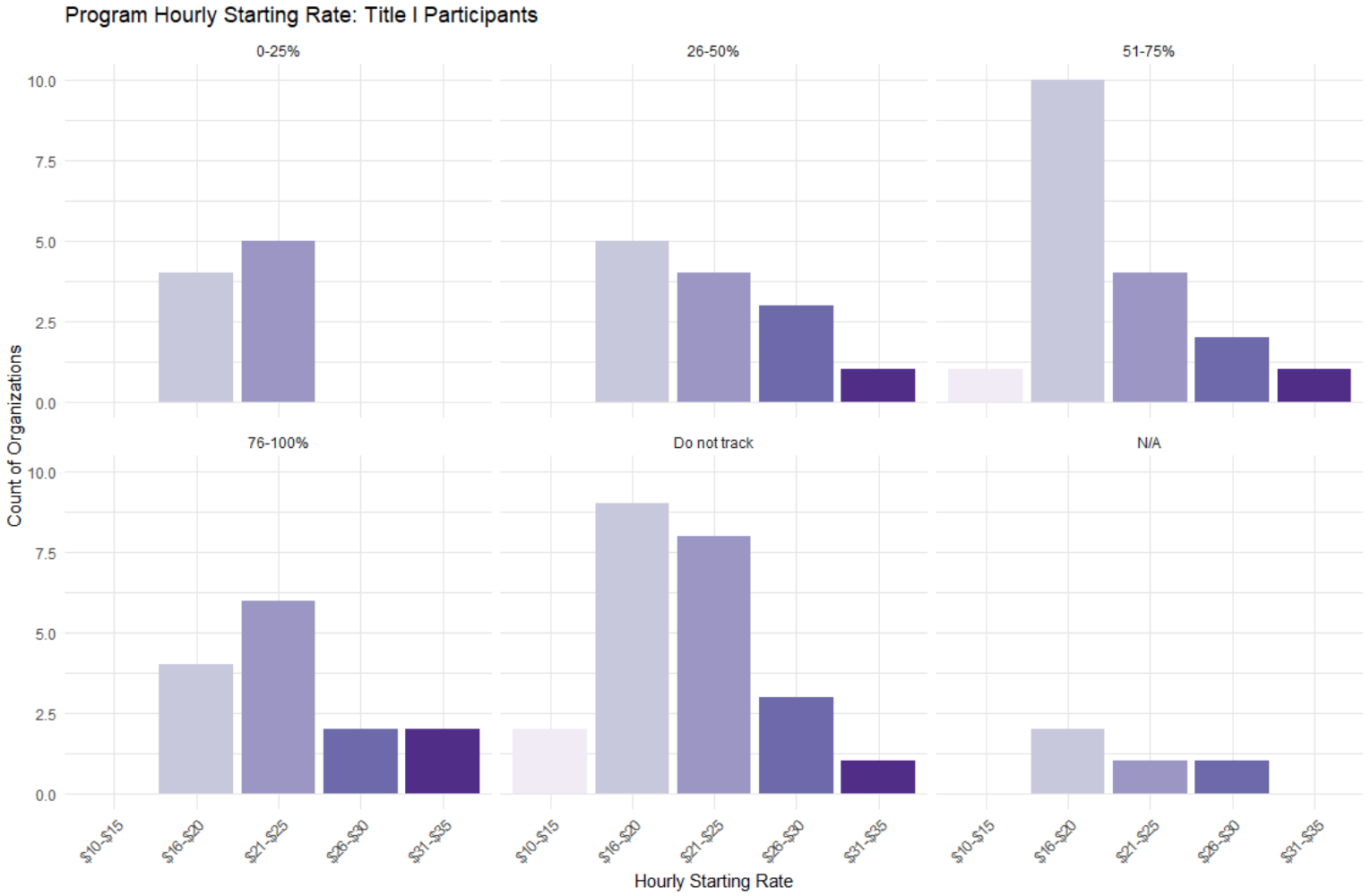


Figure 14: Hourly Starting Rate of organizations by Title I Participants.

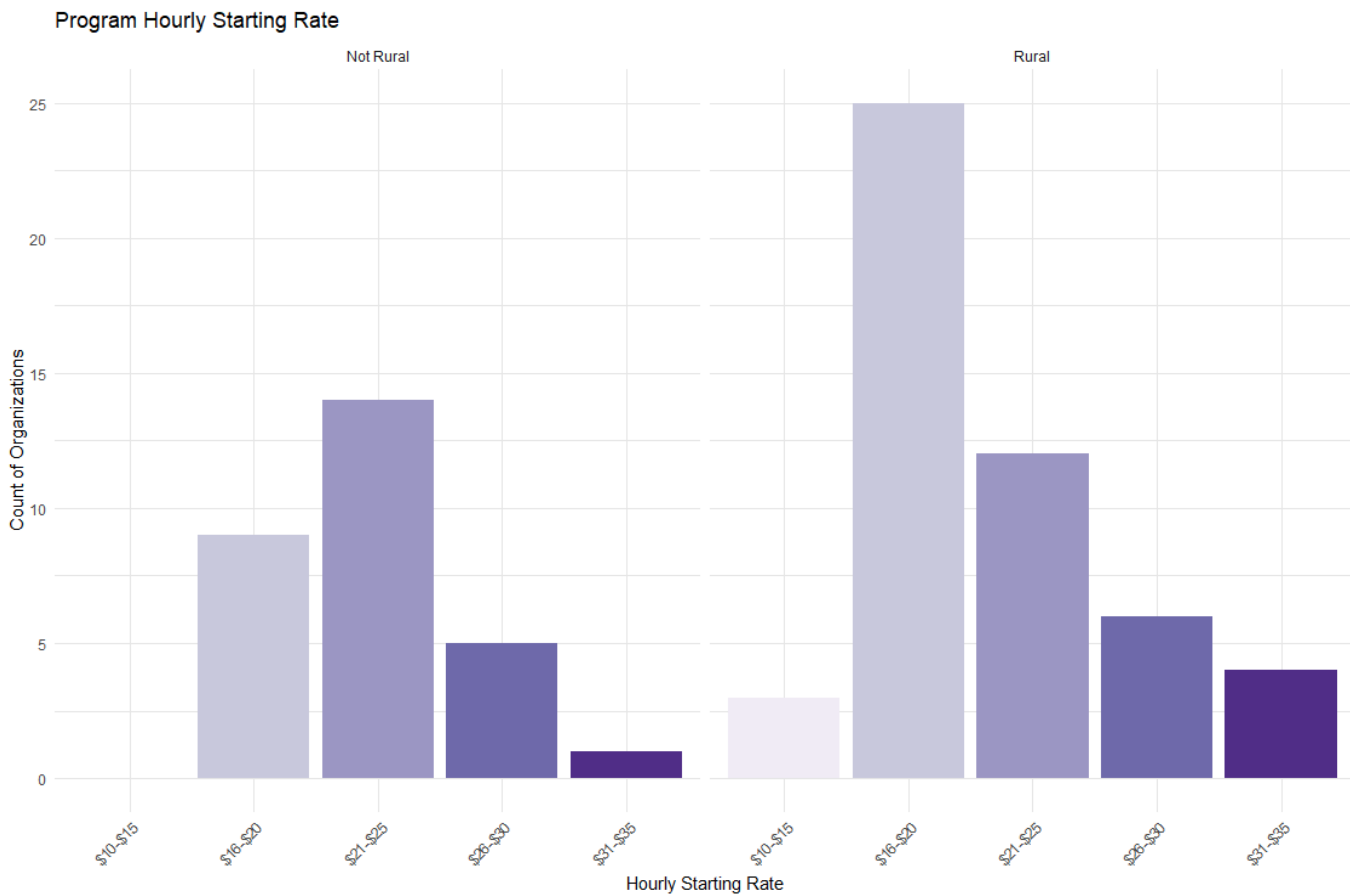


Figure 15: Hourly Starting Rate of organizations that serve rural and non-rural communities. The majority of programs service non-rural communities.

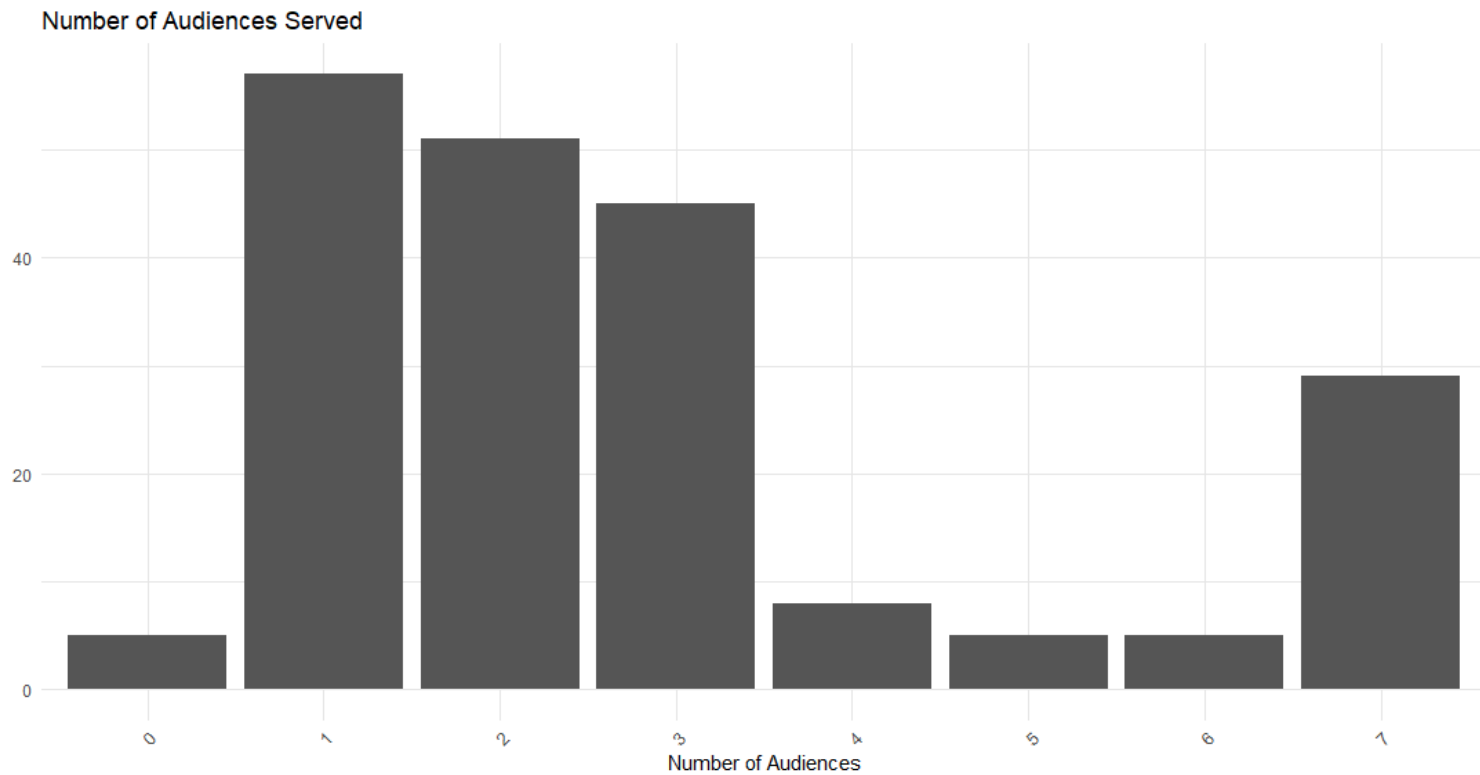


Figure 16: Histogram showing the frequency of organizations that serve multiple audiences.

Number of Audiences Served: Rural Communities

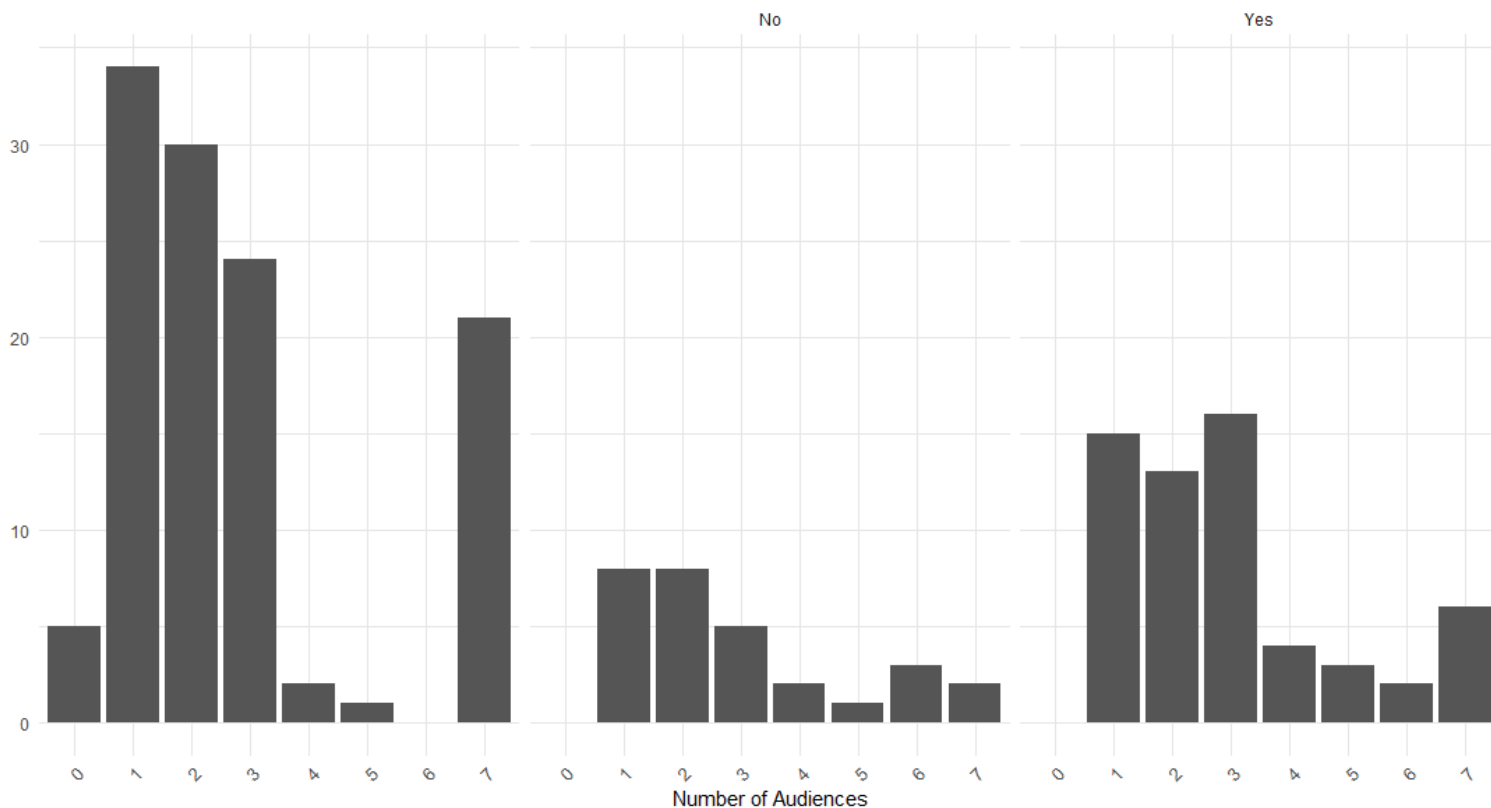


Figure 17: Histogram showing the frequency of organizations that serve multiple rural and non-rural communities.

Hourly Starting Rate	Count of Organizations
\$10 - \$15	3
\$16 - \$20	34
\$21 - \$25	28
\$26 - \$30	11
\$31 - \$35	5

Table 1: The number of organizations in each hourly starting wage range shared in the survey.

	When minimum wage went into effect/Description	Minimum Wage	Amount about CA Minimum Wage
State of California⁴	1-Jan-24	\$16	-

⁴ State of California Department of Industrial Relations: https://www.dir.ca.gov/dlse/minimum_wage.htm

San Francisco⁵	All employees, including part-time and temporary employees	\$18.07	\$2
Alameda County⁶	1-Jul-23	\$16.52	\$1
San Mateo County⁷	For unincorporated San Mateo County	\$17.06	\$1
Marin County⁸	Calculated 'living wage rate' for the county; most up-to-date number for 2022	\$16	\$0
Santa Clara County⁹	1-Jan-24	\$17.75	\$2

Table 2: The state of CA and SF county minimum wages.

	Schools Served	Students Youth Served	Educators Administrators Served	Other Participants Served
Not Serving Rural Communities	581	60,334	1,740	8,426
Serving Rural Communities	7,413	358,723	14,509	75,353
Other	8,106	425,271	16,543	83,840

Table 3: Total participants served in rural and non-rural communities.

	Count of Organizations	Percent of Total
Pre K/Kindergarten	96	16%
1st to 8th Grade	174	30%
9th to 12th Grade	107	18%
Pre-College	43	7%
Teachers/Administration	45	8%
Informal Education	45	8%
General/Family	74	13%

⁵ City and County of San Francisco, Minimum Wage Ordinance: <https://www.sf.gov/information/minimum-wage-ordinance-0>

⁶ Alameda County: <https://www.alamedaca.gov/Departments/Base-Reuse-and-Economic-Development/Minimum-Wage>

⁷ County of San Mateo, Minimum Wage Rises to \$17.06 Hour Beginning New Years Day in Unincorporated San Mateo County: <https://www.smcgov.org/ceo/news/minimum-wage-rises-1706-hour-beginning-new-years-day-unincorporated-san-mateo-county>

⁸ County of Marin, Living Wage: <https://www.marincounty.gov/departments/executive/living-wage>

⁹ City of Santa Clara, Minimum Wage Ordinance: <https://www.santaclaraca.gov/our-city/government/governance/city-initiatives/minimum-wage-ordinance>

Total	584	100%
--------------	------------	-------------

Table 4: Number and percent of Organizations serving each Audience.