

# Kansas Special Education Needs Assessment

Summary of Findings Across Special Educators,  
Transition Coordinators, and Paraprofessionals



# Kansas Needs Assessment Report Overview

This is a comprehensive project report of findings from a statewide survey on the views of Special Education Teachers, Transition Coordinators, and Paraprofessionals in Kansas related to serving transition-age students with disabilities. If you participated in this research, thank you!

In this report, we share a summary of findings from this research across all participants and by participant role. Additional analyses are planned, which will be reported with greater detail in future research manuscripts. We hope the findings of this research will be used to improve outcomes for transition-age students with disabilities across Kansas and improve the supports that their educators, coordinators, paraprofessionals, and service providers receive to serve these students well.

The Kansas Special Educator Needs Assessment was conducted by the Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities (KUCDD) in partnership with the Kansas State Department of Education and as part of the My Transition My Career projects funded through the Administration for Community Living. This report was prepared by Jennifer L. Bumble, Sheida K. Raley, Ashley Taconet, Baylee D. Kilburn, Evan E. Dean, Lindsay Rentschler, Brad Linnenkamp, Sean Swindler, and Karrie A. Shogren.

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We would also like to give a special thank you to our dedicated partners who helped develop and pilot test our survey including Gaye Callich (Rice County Special Services Cooperative), Tracie Flowers (Vocational Rehabilitation), Angelia Frazier (Kansas Department for Children and Families), Sue Grosdidier (Kansas Board of Regents), Kelly Grove (Kansas School for the Deaf), Leia Holley (Families Together), Amanda Honaker (Olathe Public Schools), Craig Knutson (Kansas University Center on Developmental Disabilities), Stacie Martin (Kansas State Department of Education), Richard Martinez (Kansas Hispanic and Latino American Affairs Commission), Bert Moore (Kansas State Department of Education), Chrisi Reif-Fuhrman (Reno County Education Cooperative), Sheila Vander Tuig (East Central Kansas Cooperative in Education), and the Kansas Transition Coordinating Council and our external research partners from Vanderbilt University including Dr. Elizabeth Biggs and the Biggs Lab.

**If you have any questions about this research, please contact:**

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# Table of Contents

Table of Contents	Page
Plain Language Summary	4-5
Participants	6-8
Education, Training, and Student Caseloads	9-12
Knowledge of Postschool Options	13-16
Postschool Expectations	17-20
Frequency of Instruction in Transition Domains	21-24
Frequency of College Preparation Activities	25-28
Special Education Collaboration	29-30
Mastery Across Transition Domains	31-34
Preferred Transition Domains for Future Learning	35-38
Preferred Format for Accessing Transition Information	39-42
Implications for Practice	43-46

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# Plain Language Summary

## **Special Educators, transition coordinators, and paraprofessionals in Kansas completed a survey on their transition needs. Key findings from the survey were:**

- About 30% of special educators, 43% of transition coordinators, and 85% of paraprofessionals had never completed coursework related to transition.
- About 18% of special educators, 18% of transition coordinators, and 45% of paraprofessionals had never completed professional development related to transition.
- Special educators were most knowledgeable about 2- and 4-year college degree programs. Transition coordinators were most knowledgeable about paid employment and 2-year college degree programs. Paraprofessionals were most knowledgeable about paid and volunteer employment.
- Special educators were least knowledgeable about sheltered workshops and day programs. Transition coordinators and paraprofessionals were least knowledgeable about inclusive postsecondary education programs and craft apprenticeships.
- Special educators, transition coordinators, and paraprofessionals identified paid and volunteer employment as the most likely postschool outcomes for their students with disabilities.
- Special educators, transition coordinators, and paraprofessionals identified 4-year college programs as the least likely postschool outcome for their students with disabilities.
- According to special educators, transition coordinators, and paraprofessionals the most frequent transition instruction students received was related to academic study skills, basic literacy and numeracy, and social skills. The least frequent areas of instruction were travel and community navigation, sexuality and health relationships, and civic engagement.
- The most frequent college preparation activities students engaged in were discussing higher education, or adult services with special educators, transition coordinators, or paraprofessionals.
- Special educators most commonly collaborated with other school professionals with few partners in the service system and community.

# Plain Language Summary

- Special educators reported the highest mastery related to basic literacy and numeracy instruction and student participation in IEPs and lowest mastery related to sexuality and health relationships instruction and culturally and linguistically diverse transition practices. Transition coordinators reported the highest mastery related to transition planning and IEP development and student participation in IEPs and lowest mastery related to culturally and linguistically diverse transition practices and sexuality and health relationships instruction. Paraprofessionals reported the highest mastery related to basic literacy and numeracy instruction and independent living skills instruction and lowest mastery related to student participation in IEPs and transition planning and IEP development.
- Special educators identified self-determination skills instruction and vocational skills instruction as areas they were most interested in learning more about. Transition coordinators identified transition assessment and interagency collaboration as areas they were most interested in learning more about. Paraprofessionals identified self-determination skills instruction and social and emotional skills instruction as areas they were most interested in learning more about.
- Special educators, transition coordinators, and paraprofessionals were most likely to access transition information through printed fact sheets and 3-5 page resource guides and least likely to access transition information through blogs, podcasts, and social media.

# Participants

374

**Special Educators**

68

**Transition Coordinators**

159

**Paraprofessionals**

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## Averages Across All Participants:

48 years of age (range 18-76)

10 years of Experience (range 0-42)

### Special Educators

- 46 years of age (range 22-76)
- 12 years of experience in the position (range 0-42)
- 18.4% supported students participating in the alternate state assessment
- 56.4% reported having a transition coordinator in their district

### Transition Coordinators

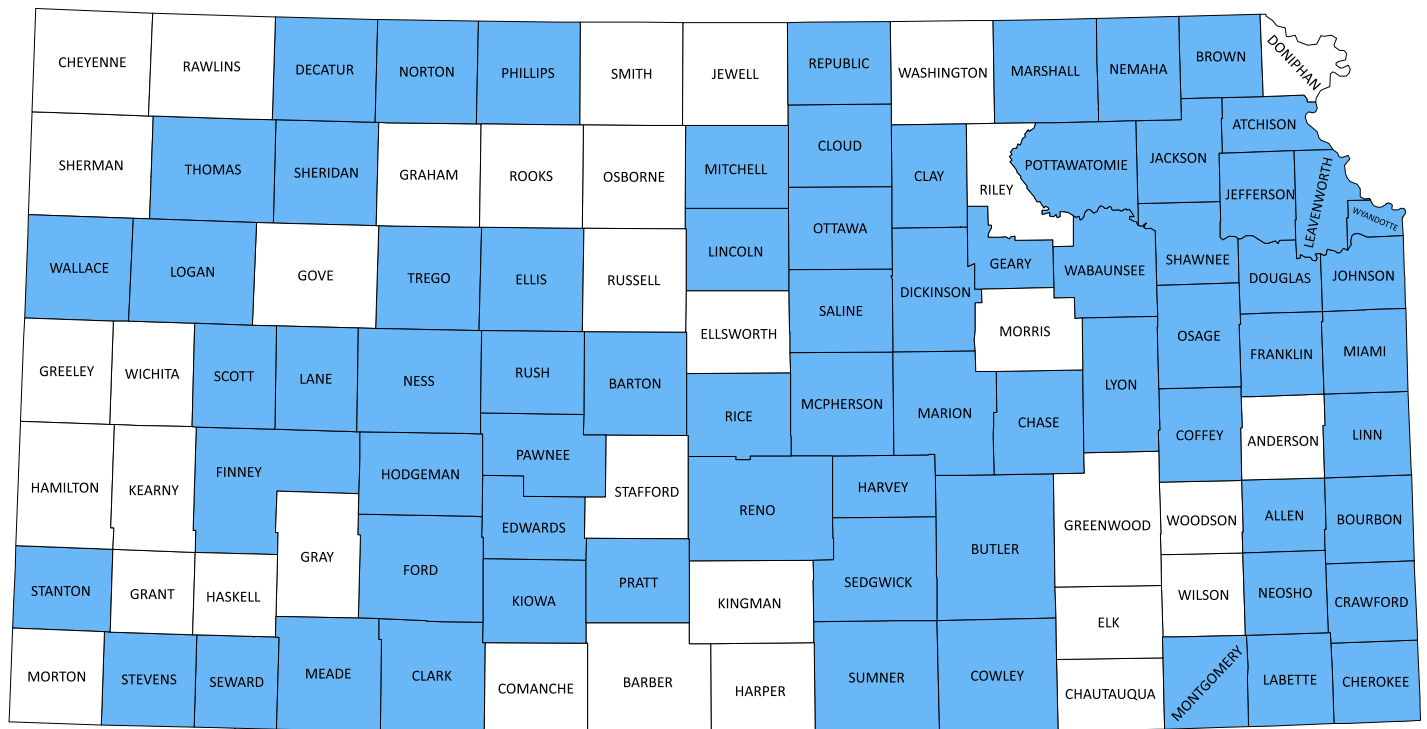
- 47 years of age (range 26-73)
- 6 years of experience in the position (range 0-33)

### Paraprofessionals

- 47 years of age (range 18-75)
- 8 years of experience in the position (range 0-29)

# Participants

## Representation Across Kansas Counties



The number of respondents from each county ranged from 1-70.

**70.5% of Kansas Counties Represented**

# Participant Demographics

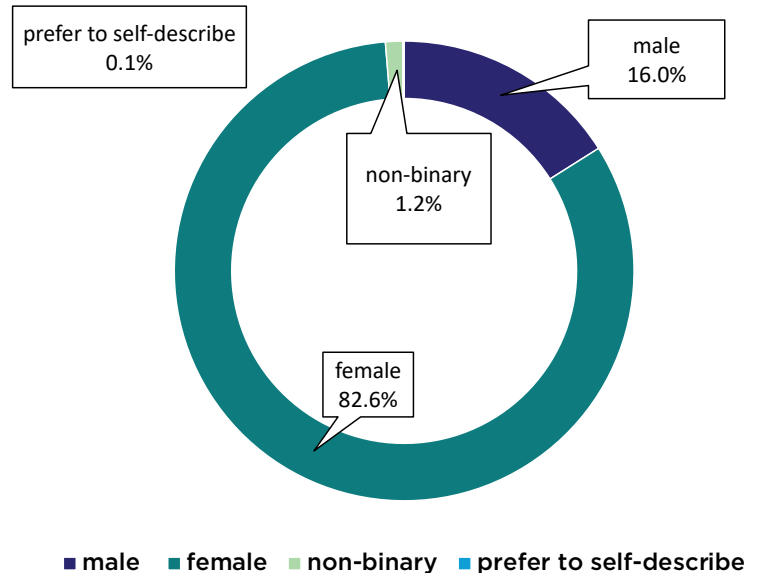
## Race of All Participants:

**0.5%** American Indian/Alaska Native  
**1.3%** Asian  
**1.8%** Black/African American  
**92.2%** White  
**2.5%** Multiple races  
**1.7%** Not listed or prefer to self-describe

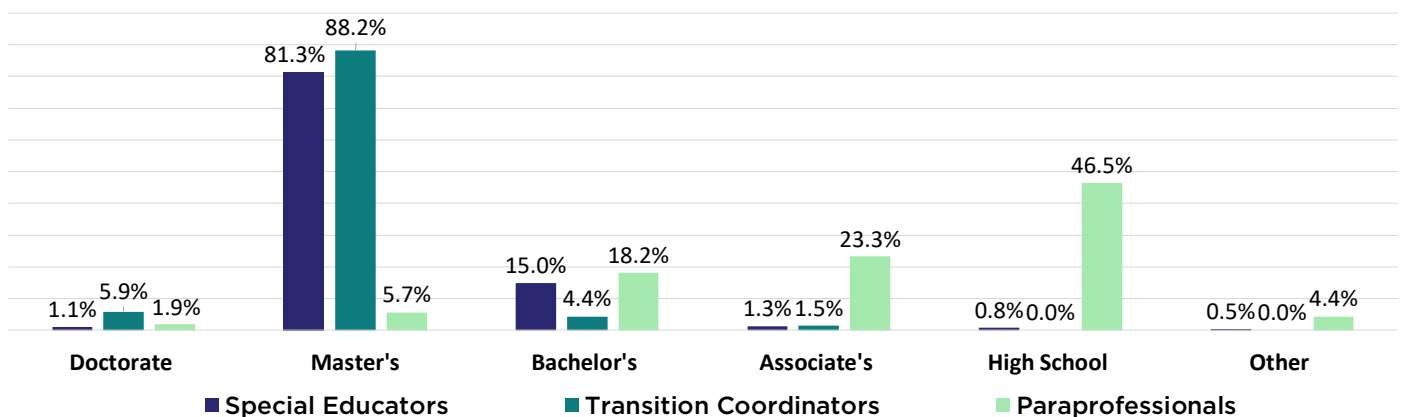
## Ethnicity of All Participants:

**4.0%** Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin  
**96.0%** Not Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish origin

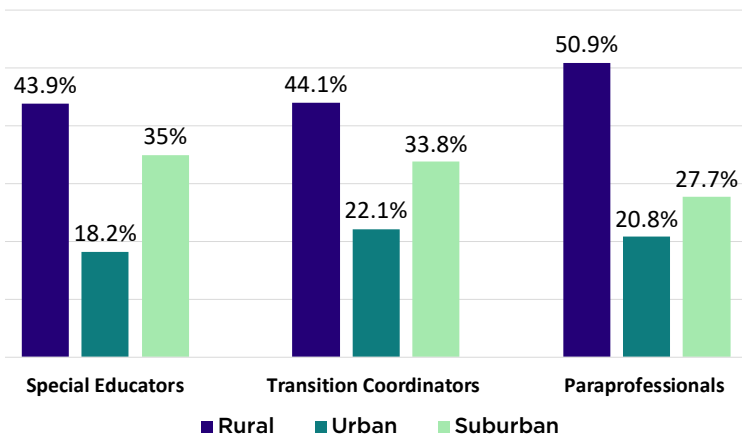
## Gender of All Participants



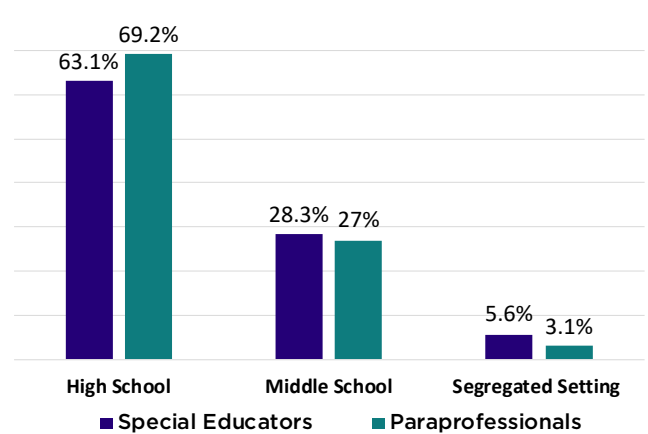
## Level of Education



## Geographic Location



## School Type



# Education Training and Caseloads: Overview

We asked participants whether they had completed formal coursework on transition or had received any professional development about transition or transition-age students. Most participants never had formal transition coursework on transition to adulthood across all groups. For special educators and transition coordinators, having professional development on transition within the last 3 years was most common. Paraprofessionals most often never had professional development on transition.

## Formal Transition Coursework: Most Frequent



## Professional Development on Transition: Most Frequent



# Education Training and Caseloads: Special Educators

We asked special educators whether they had completed formal coursework on transition or had received any professional development about transition or transition-age students.

## Prior to the Last 10 Years

- 18.7% of special educators have taken formal transition coursework.
- 1.6% of special educators have had professional development related to transition.

## Never

- 30.7% of special educators have never taken formal transition coursework.
- 27.5% of special educators have never had professional development related to transition.

## Within the Last 3-10 Years

- 22.2% of special educators have taken formal transition coursework.
- 10.2% of special educators have had professional development related to transition.

## Within the Last 3 Years

- 28.3% of special educators have taken formal transition coursework.
- 60.7% of special educators have had professional development related to transition.

The average transition caseload size was 9 students for special educators primarily supporting students on the alternative assessment and 16 students for special educators primarily supporting students on the standard state assessment.

# Education Training and Caseloads: Transition Coordinators

We asked transition coordinators whether they had completed formal coursework on transition or had received any professional development about transition or transition-age students.

## Prior to the Last 10 Years

- 17.6% of transition coordinators have taken formal transition coursework.
- 2.9% of transition coordinators have had professional development related to transition.

## Never

- 42.6% of transition coordinators have never taken formal transition coursework.
- 17.6% of transition coordinators have never had professional development related to transition.

## Within the Last 3-10 Years

- 26.5% of transition coordinators have taken formal transition coursework.
- 10.3% of transition coordinators have had professional development related to transition.

## Within the Last 3 Years

- 13.2% of transition coordinators have taken formal transition coursework.
- 69.1% of transition coordinators have had professional development related to transition.

Transition coordinators reported supporting an average of 33 teachers.

# Education Training and Caseloads: Paraprofessionals

We asked paraprofessionals whether they had completed formal coursework on transition or had received any professional development about transition or transition-age students.

## Prior to the Last 10 Years

- 5.7% of paraprofessionals have taken formal transition coursework.
- 1.9% of paraprofessionals have had professional development related to transition.

## Never

- 85.5% of paraprofessionals have never taken formal transition coursework.
- 44.7% of paraprofessionals have never had professional development related to transition.

## Within the Last 3-10 Years

- 5.7% of paraprofessionals have taken formal transition coursework.
- 11.9% of paraprofessionals have had professional development related to transition.

## Within the Last 3 Years

- 3.1% of paraprofessionals have taken formal transition coursework.
- 41.5% of paraprofessionals have had professional development related to transition.

Paraprofessionals were supporting an average of 15 students. 49.7% of paraprofessionals stated that they provide support to multiple students in general education classrooms. 32.1% of paraprofessionals stated that they provide support to multiple students in special education classrooms. 18.2% of paraprofessionals stated that they provide one to one support to 1-2 students across multiple settings.

# Knowledge of Postschool Options: Overview

The knowledge special educators have about the postschool options of their students likely determine the services, supports, and experiences students access during the transition to adulthood. We asked participants to rate their knowledge related to eight different postschool outcomes using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = Not at all knowledgeable to 5 = Extremely knowledgeable. Results for each group can be found on the following pages.

## Knowledge of Postschool Options: Most Knowledgeable

### Special Educators

1. 4-Year Degree Program
2. 2-Year Degree Program

### Transition Coordinators

1. Paid Employment
2. 2-Year Degree Program

### Paraprofessionals

1. Paid Employment
2. Volunteer Employment

## Knowledge of Postschool Options: Least Knowledgeable

### Special Educators

1. Sheltered/Day Program
2. Craft Apprenticeships

### Transition Coordinators

1. Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program
2. Craft Apprenticeships

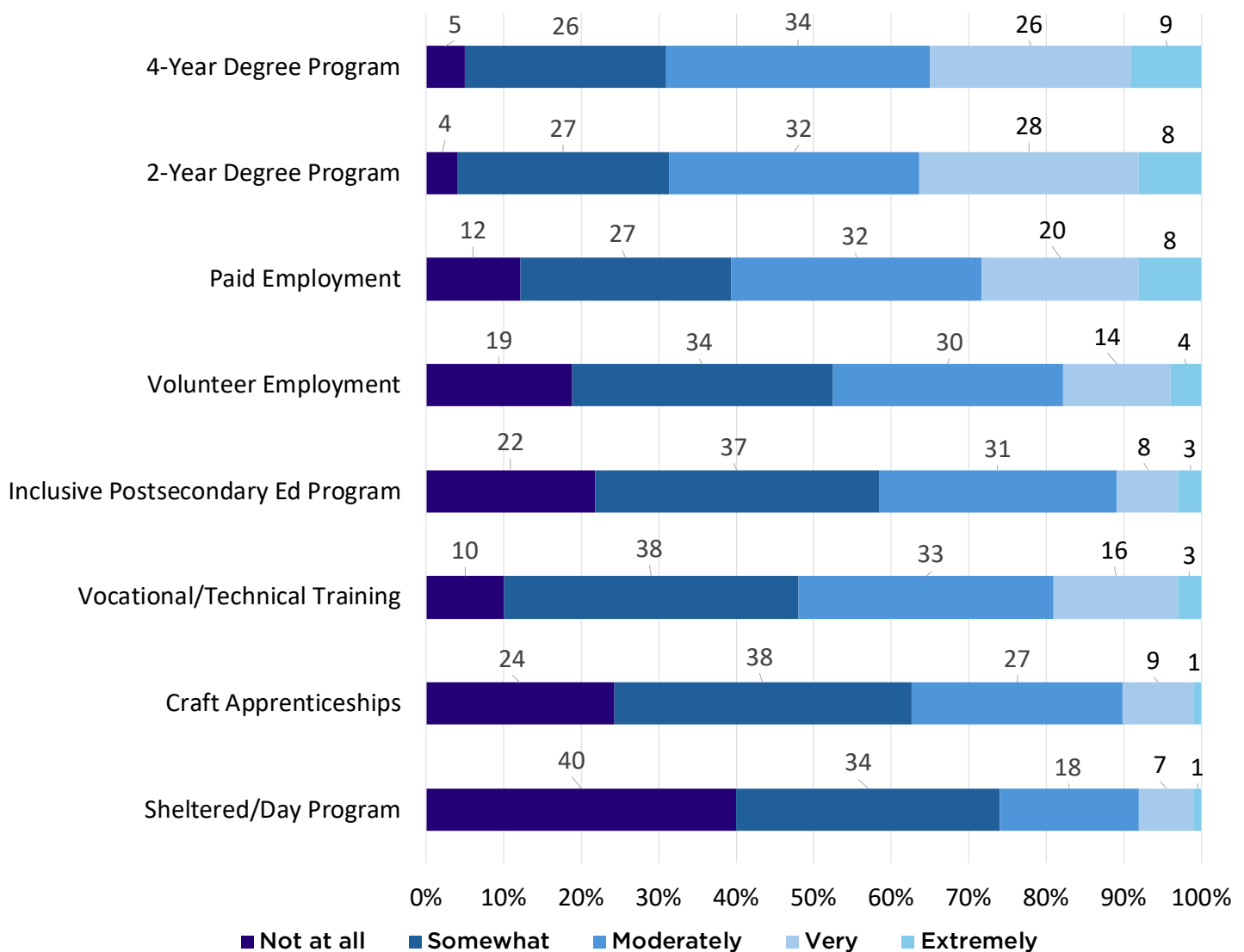
### Paraprofessionals

1. Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program
2. Craft Apprenticeships

# Knowledge of Postschool Options: Special Educators

We asked special educators to rate their knowledge related to eight different postschool outcomes using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = Not at all knowledgeable to 5 = Extremely knowledgeable. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Special Educator's Knowledge of Postschool Options: (Most to Least Knowledgeable)

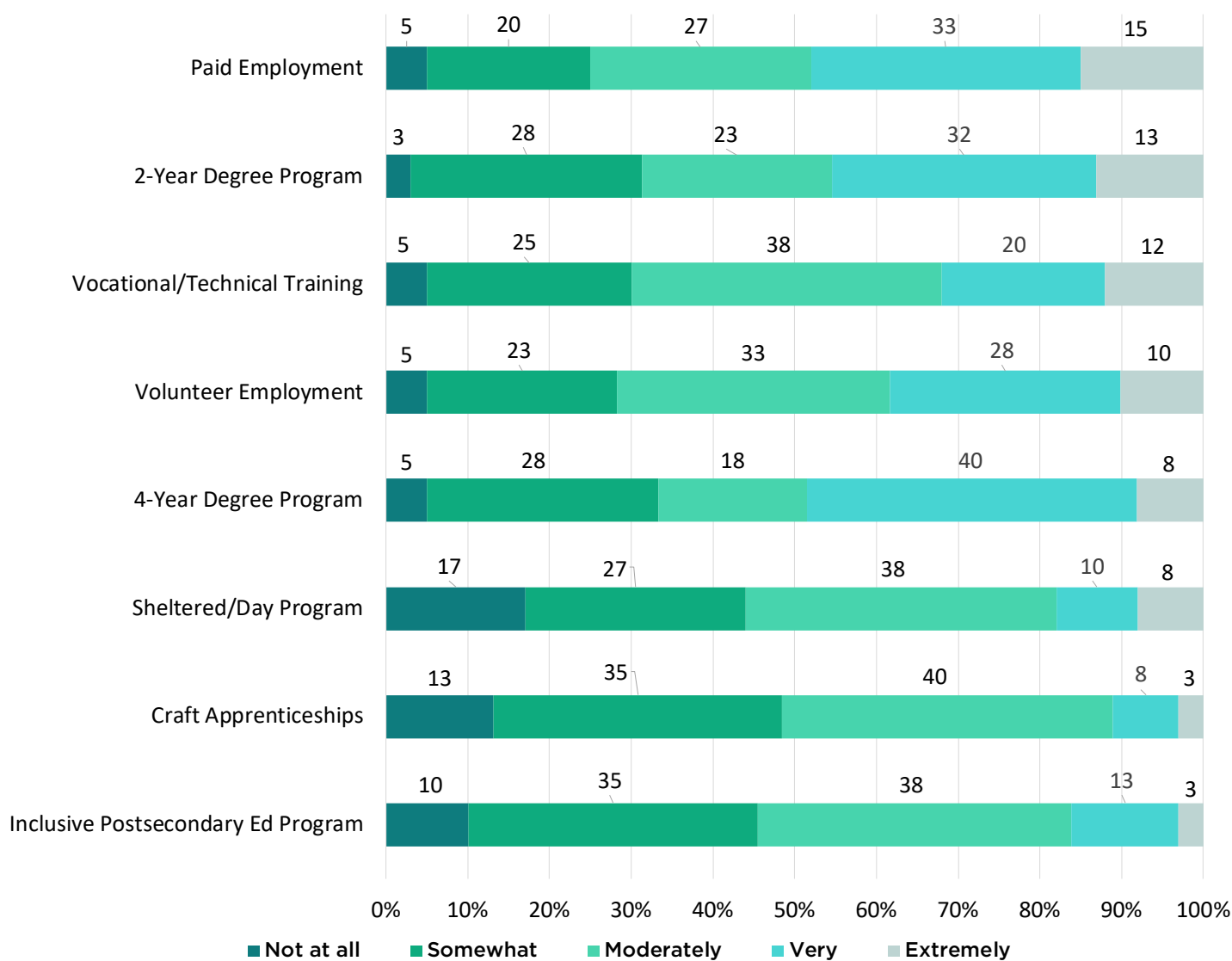


Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Knowledge of Postschool Options: Transition Coordinators

We asked transition coordinators to rate their knowledge related to eight different postschool outcomes using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = Not at all knowledgeable to 5 = Extremely knowledgeable. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Transition Coordinator's Knowledge of Postschool Options: (Most to Least Knowledgeable)

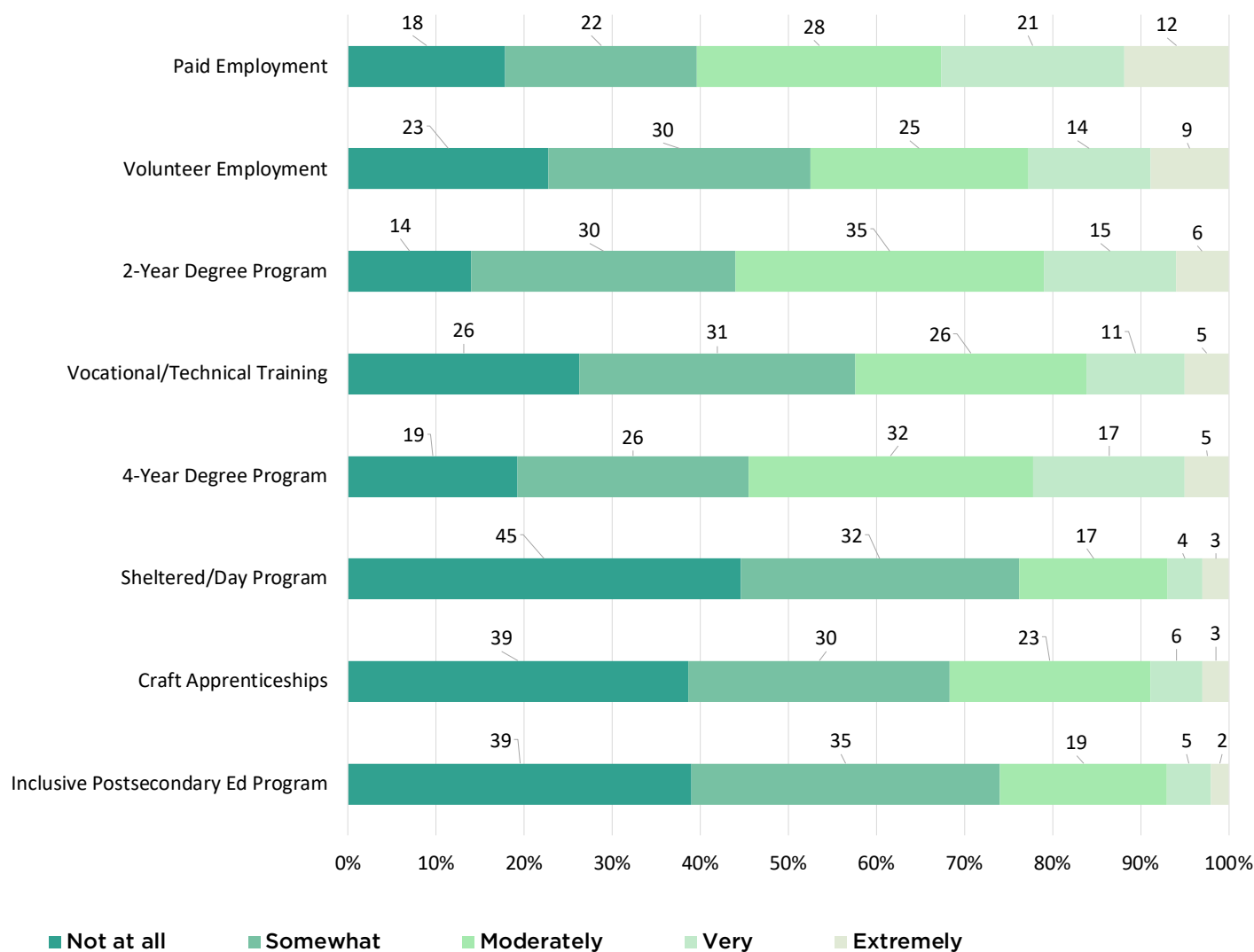


Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Knowledge of Postschool Options: Paraprofessionals

We asked paraprofessionals to rate their knowledge related to eight different postschool outcomes using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = Not at all knowledgeable to 5 = Extremely knowledgeable. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Paraprofessional's Knowledge of Postschool Options: (Most to Least Knowledgeable)



Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Postschool Expectations: Overview

The expectations educators, coordinators, and paraprofessionals hold about the postschool outcomes of their students matter. Prior research has found that teachers' expectations are a strong predictor of postschool outcomes in employment and higher education. Using this prior research as a guide, we asked participants to rate their expectations related to eight postschool outcomes using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = Not at all likely to 5 = Extremely likely. Results for each group can be found on the following pages.

## Expectation of Postschool Options: Most Likely

### Special Educators

1. Paid Employment
2. Volunteer Employment

### Transition Coordinators

1. Paid Employment
2. Volunteer Employment

### Paraprofessionals

1. Paid Employment
2. Volunteer Employment

## Expectation of Postschool Options: Least Likely

### Special Educators

1. 4-Year Degree Program
2. Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program

### Transition Coordinators

1. 4-Year Degree Program
2. Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program

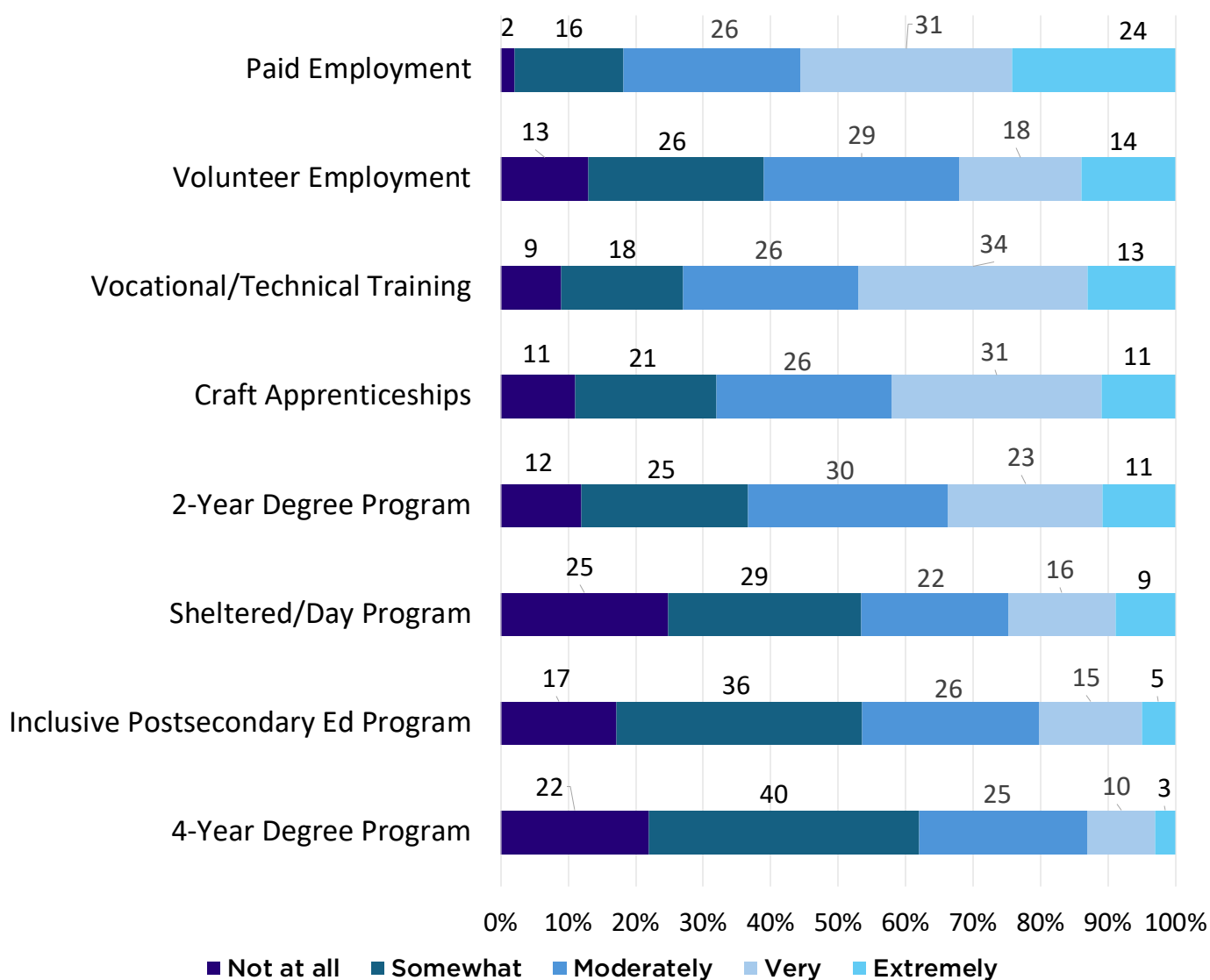
### Paraprofessionals

1. 4-Year Degree Program
2. 2-Year Degree Program

# Postschool Expectations: Special Educators

We asked special educators to rate their expectations related to eight different postschool outcomes using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = Not at all knowledgeable to 5 = Extremely knowledgeable. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Special Educator's Expectation of Postschool Options (Most to Least Likely)

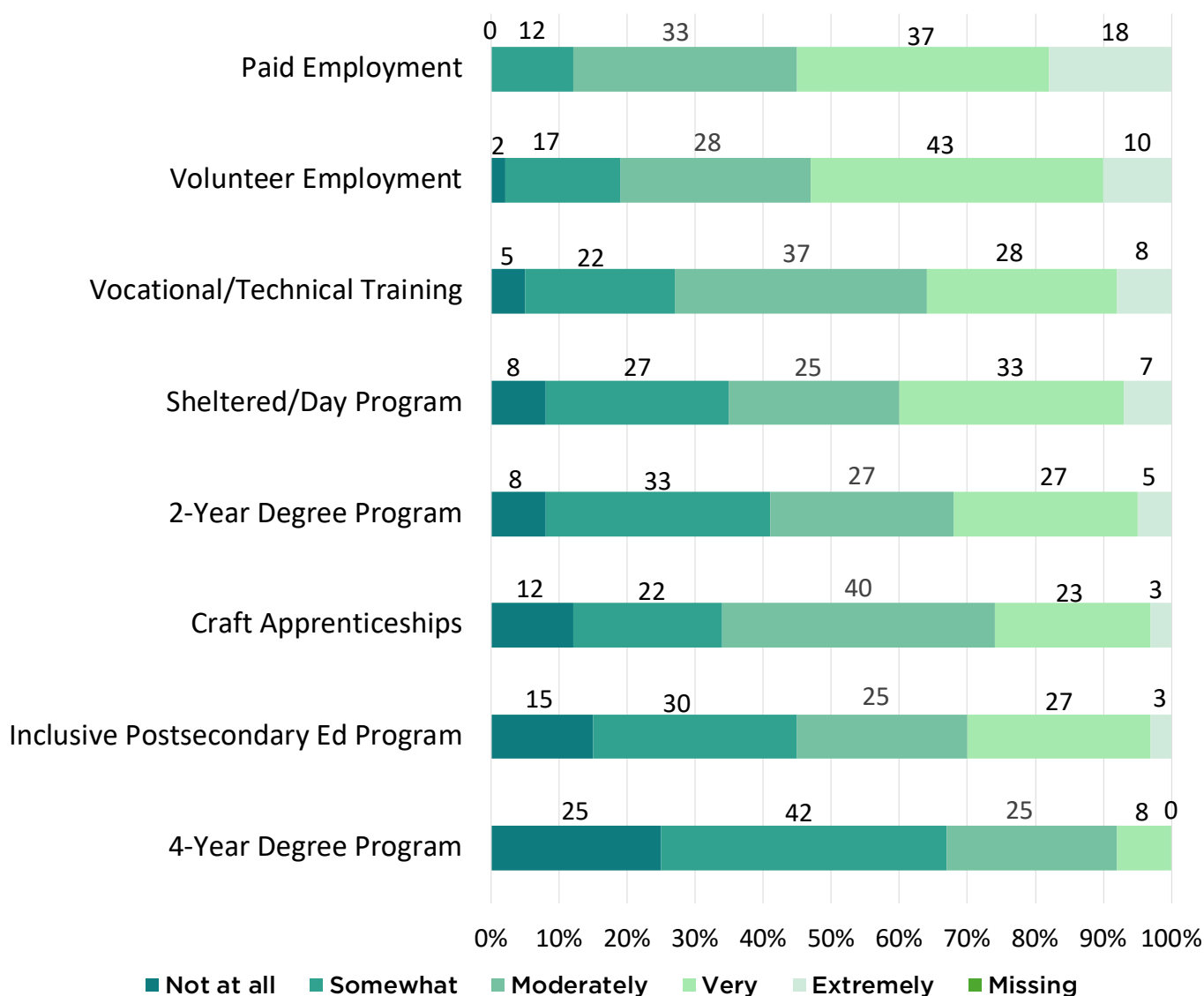


Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Postschool Expectations: Transition Coordinators

We asked transition coordinators to rate their expectations related to eight different postschool outcomes using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = Not at all knowledgeable to 5 = Extremely knowledgeable. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Transition Coordinator's Expectation of Postschool Options (Most to Least Likely)

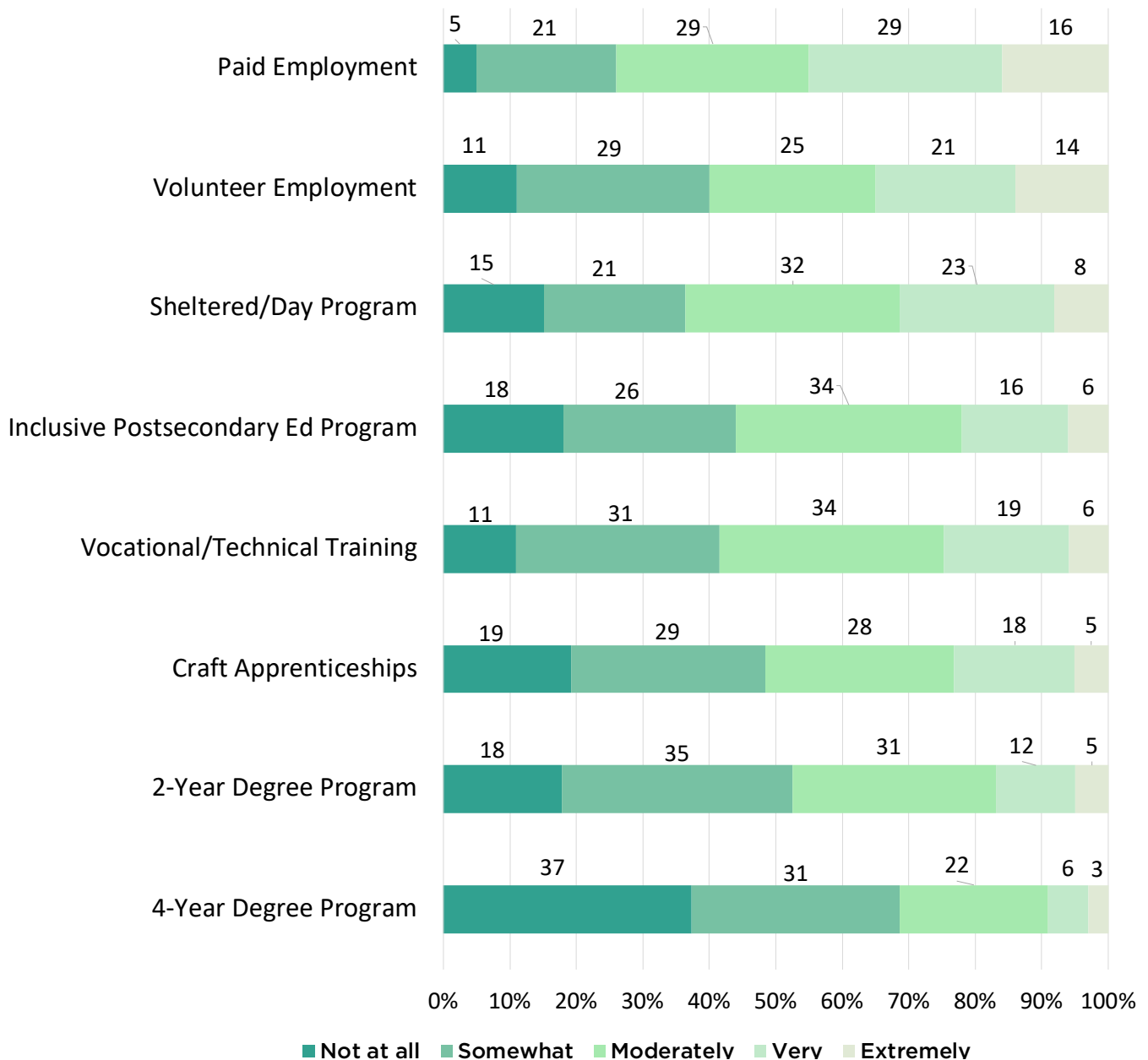


Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Postschool Expectations: Paraprofessionals

We asked paraprofessionals to rate their expectations related to eight different postschool outcomes using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 = Not at all knowledgeable to 5 = Extremely knowledgeable. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Paraprofessional's Expectation of Postschool Options (Most to Least Likely)



Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Instruction on Transition Domains: Overview

Special educator, transition coordinator, and paraprofessional knowledge and expectations impact the breadth and depth of the topics they address in their classroom as well as how often they address specific transition domains. We asked special educators, transition coordinators, and paraprofessionals how often the students they serve received instruction in key transition domains. They rated frequency of instruction on a 5-point scale of 0 = Never, 1 = A few times per year, 2 = Monthly, 3 = Weekly, and 4 = Daily. Results for each group can be found on the following pages.

## Frequency of Instruction in Transition Domains: Most Frequent

### Special Educators

1. Basic Numeracy and Literacy
2. Problem-Solving

### Transition Coordinators

1. Social Skills/Soft Skills
2. Basic Numeracy and Literacy

### Paraprofessionals

1. Communication Skills
2. Social Skills/Soft Skills

## Frequency of Instruction in Transition Domains: Least Frequent

### Special Educators

1. Travel/Navigation
2. Inclusive Postsecondary Education Program

### Transition Coordinators

1. Civic Engagement (e.g., Voting)
2. Sexuality/Healthy Relationships

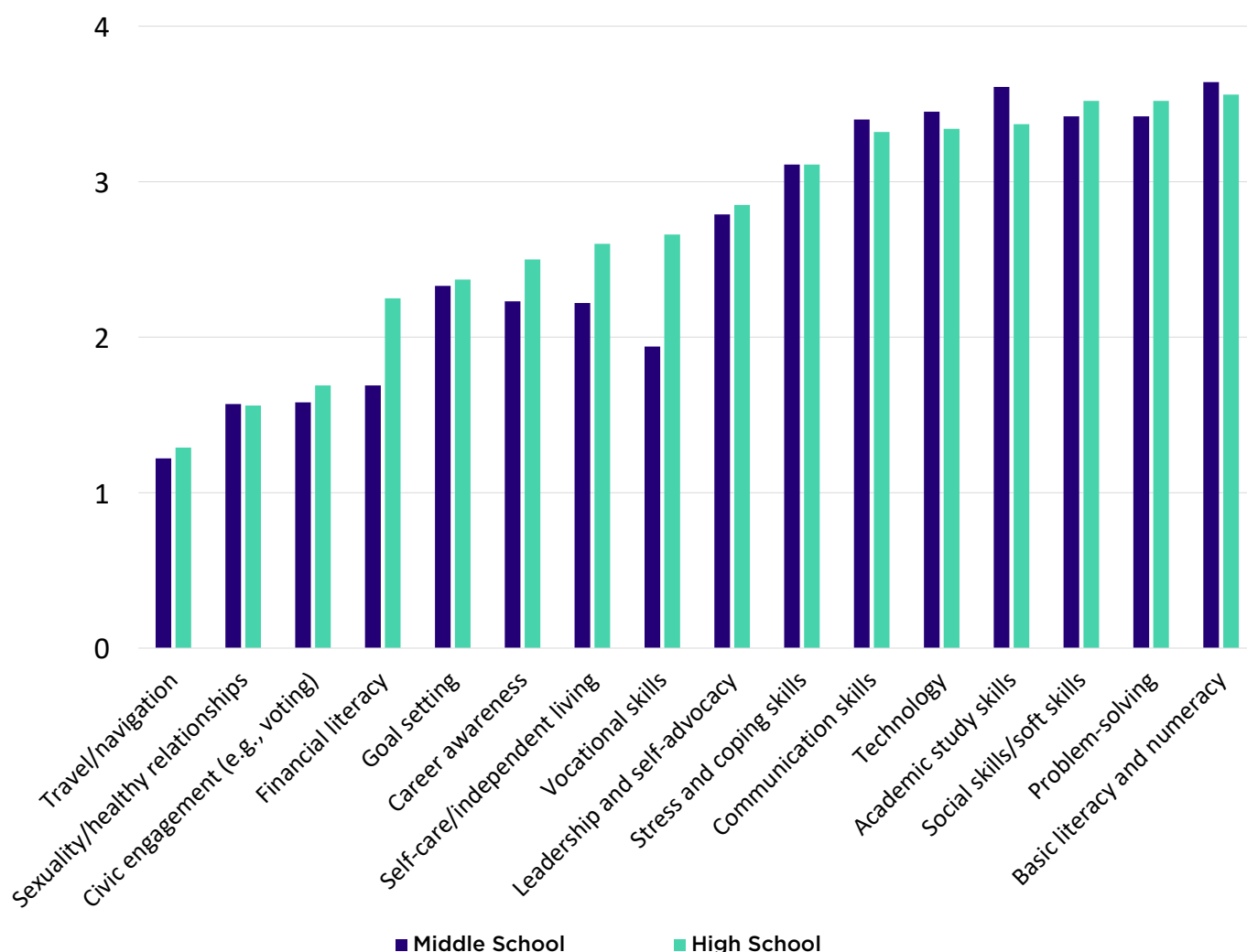
### Paraprofessionals

1. Sexuality/Healthy Relationships
2. Civic Engagement (e.g., Voting)

# Instruction on Transition Domains: Special Educators

We asked special educators how often the students they serve received instruction in key transition domains. They rated frequency of instruction on a 5-point scale of 0 = Never, 1 = A few times per year, 2 = Monthly, 3 = Weekly, and 4 = Daily. Below we compare frequency of instruction across middle and high school special educators. Note: this question did not address if the educators themselves provided instruction, but, rather, how often the transition-aged students they support received instruction from any school professional.

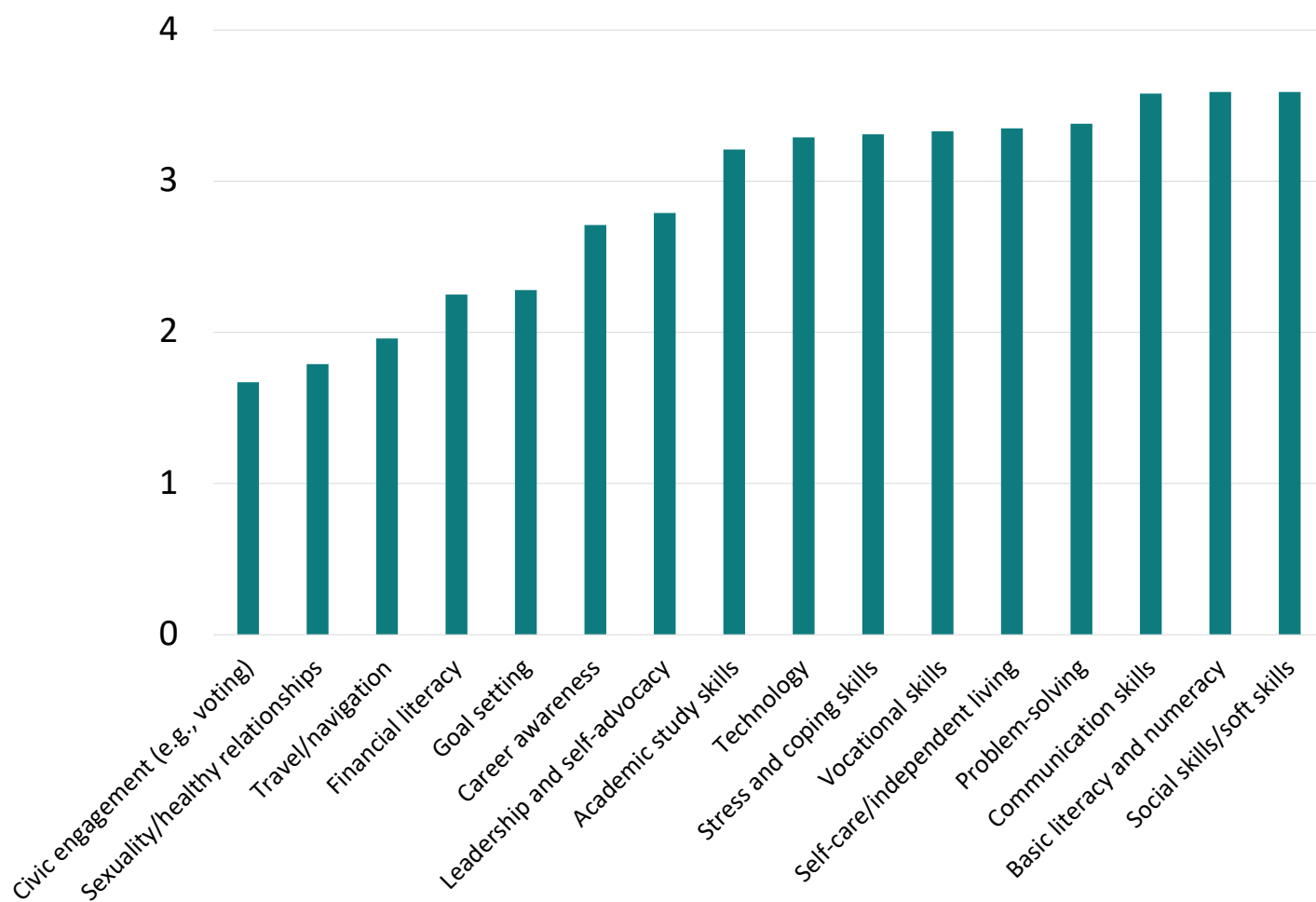
## Special Educator's Average Frequency of Instruction in Each Transition Domain



# Instruction on Transition Domains: Transition Coordinators

We asked transition coordinators how often the students they serve received instruction in key transition domains. They rated frequency of instruction on a 5-point scale of 0 = Never, 1 = A few times per year, 2 = Monthly, 3 = Weekly, and 4 = Daily. Below we compare frequency of instruction across transition coordinators. Note: this question did not address if the educators themselves provided instruction, but, rather, how often the transition-aged students they support received instruction from any school professional.

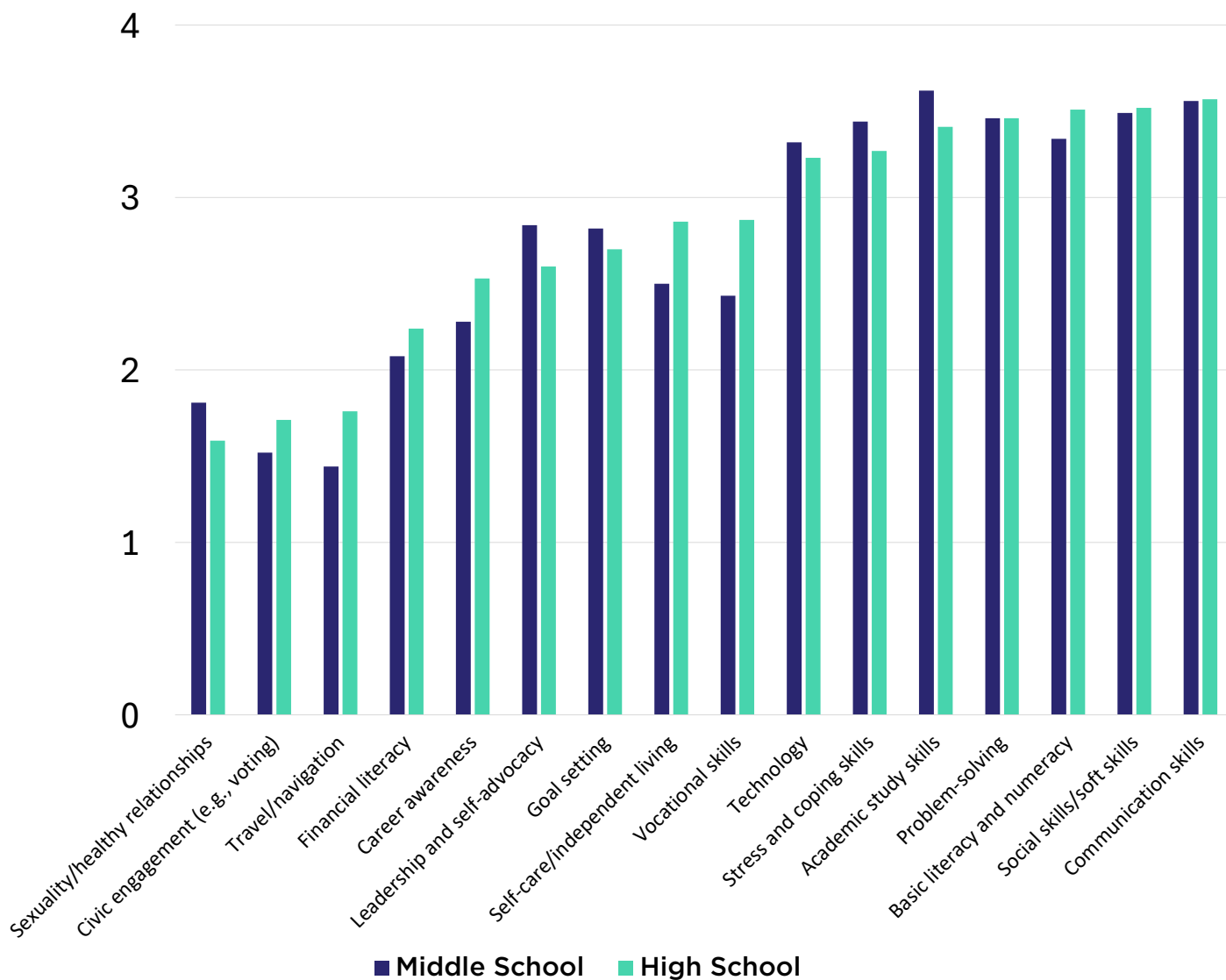
## Transition Coordinator's Average Frequency of Instruction in Each Transition Domain



# Instruction on Transition Domains: Paraprofessionals

We asked paraprofessionals how often the students they serve received instruction in key transition domains. They rated frequency of instruction on a 5-point scale of 0 = Never, 1 = A few times per year, 2 = Monthly, 3 = Weekly, and 4 = Daily. Below we compare frequency of instruction across middle and high school paraprofessionals. Note: this question did not address if the educators themselves provided instruction, but, rather, how often the transition-aged students they support received instruction from any school professional.

## Transition Coordinator's Average Frequency of Instruction in Each Transition Domain



# College Preparation Activities: Overview

In the last 10 years, college supports and programs for students with disabilities have emerged across the country. However, some students may not have access to college preparation activities or opportunities to explore college options in their state. We asked special educators, transition coordinators, and paraprofessionals how often THEY complete common college preparation activities with their transition-age students. The proportions of our sample did not allow for comparisons between students with and without extensive support needs. Results for each group can be found on the following pages.

## Frequency of College Preparation Activities: Most Frequent

### Special Educators

1. Discuss Higher Education
2. Complete Transition Assessments

### Transition Coordinators

1. Discuss Adult Services
2. Discuss Higher Education

### Paraprofessionals

1. Discuss Higher Education
2. Discuss Adult Services

## Frequency of College Preparation Activities: Least Frequent

### Special Educators

1. Tour College Campus
2. Review FAFSA

### Transition Coordinators

1. Review FAFSA
2. Tour College Campus

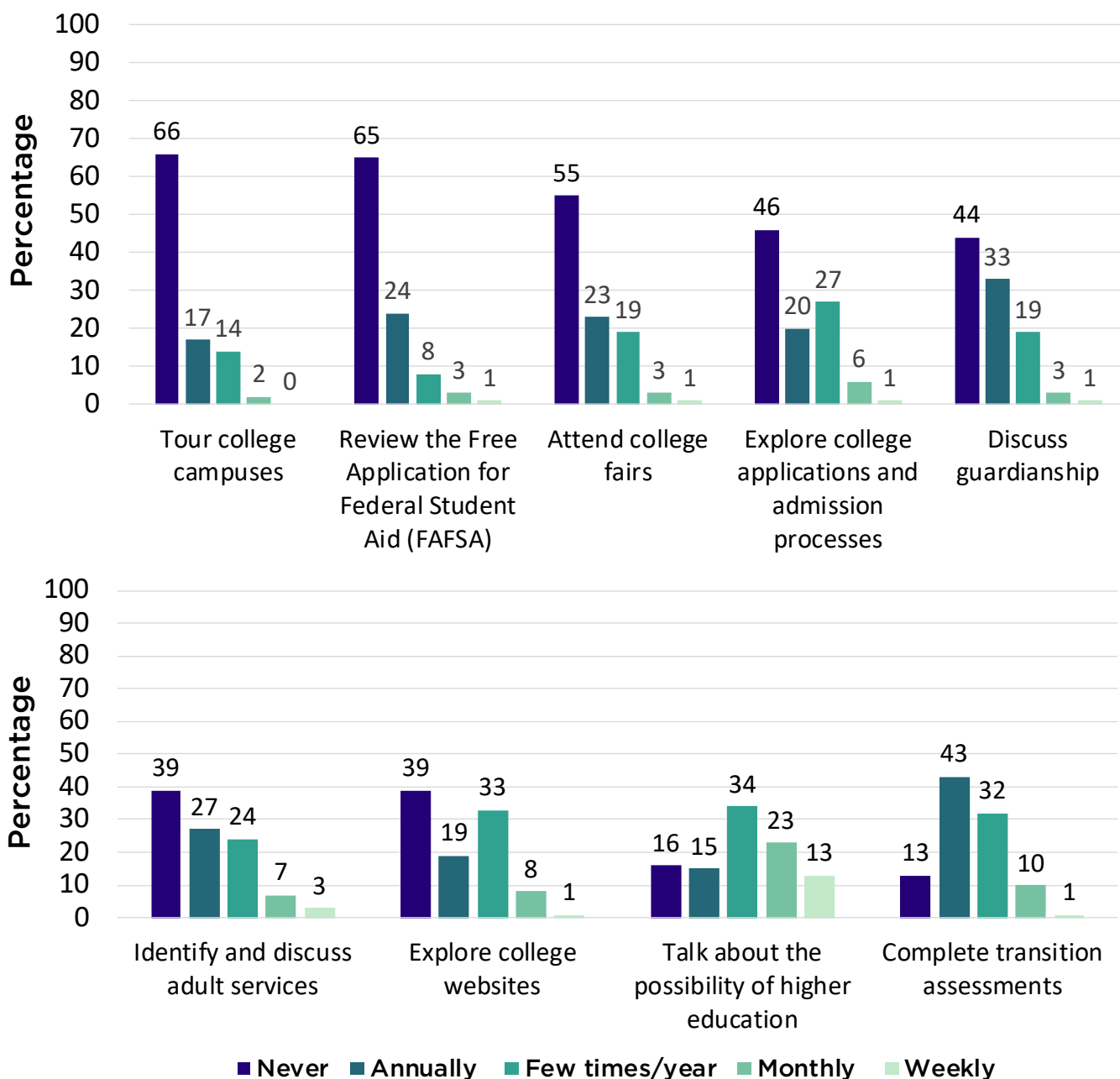
### Paraprofessionals

1. Tour College Campus
2. Review FAFSA

# College Preparation Activities: Special Educators

We asked special educators how often **THEY** complete common college preparation activities with their transition-age students. Below are the percentage of respondents reporting each frequency across activities.

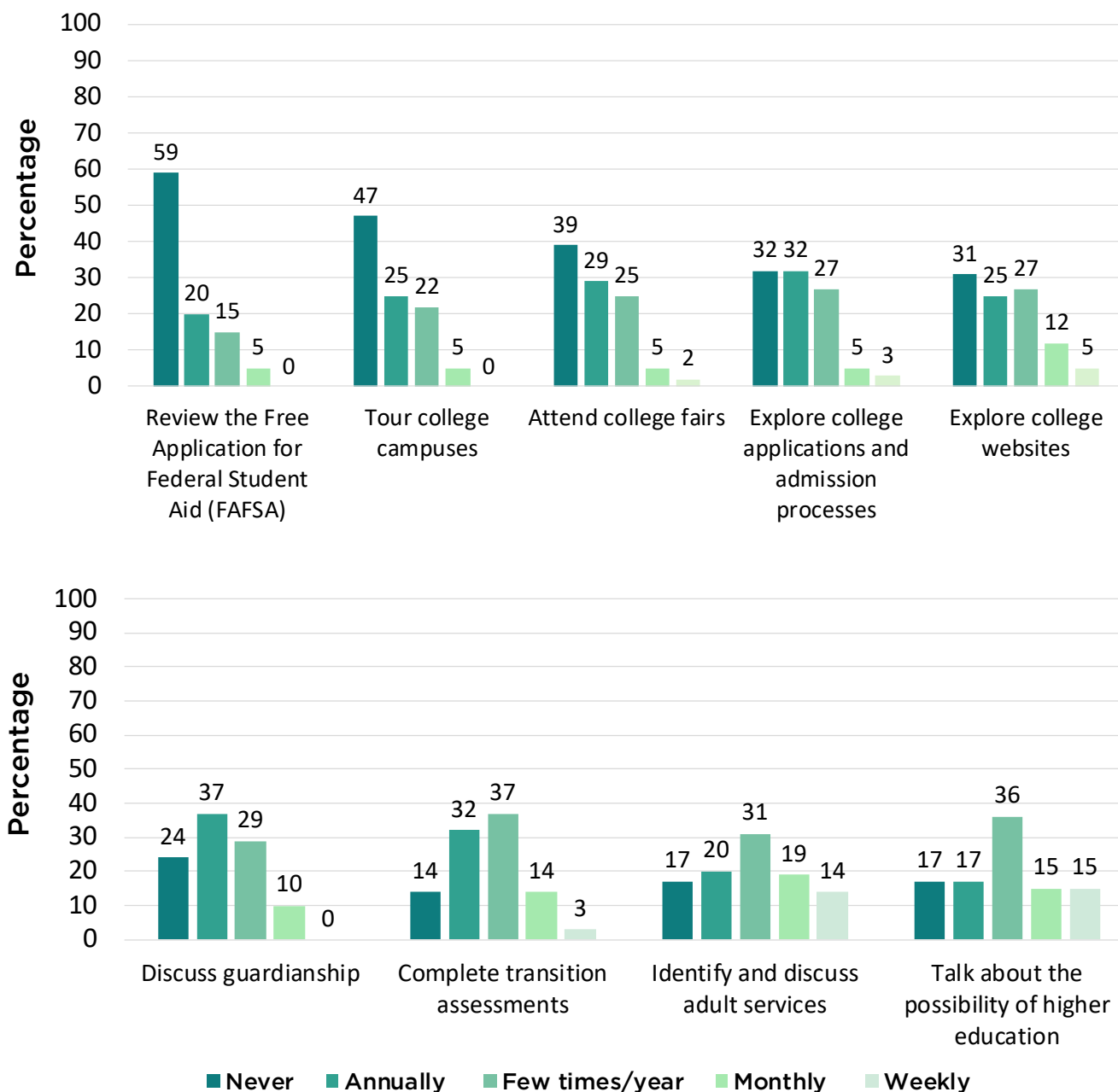
## Frequency of Special Educators Completing College Preparation Activities



# College Preparation Activities: Transition Coordinators

We asked transition coordinators how often **THEY** complete common college preparation activities with their transition-age students. Below are the percentage of respondents reporting each frequency across activities.

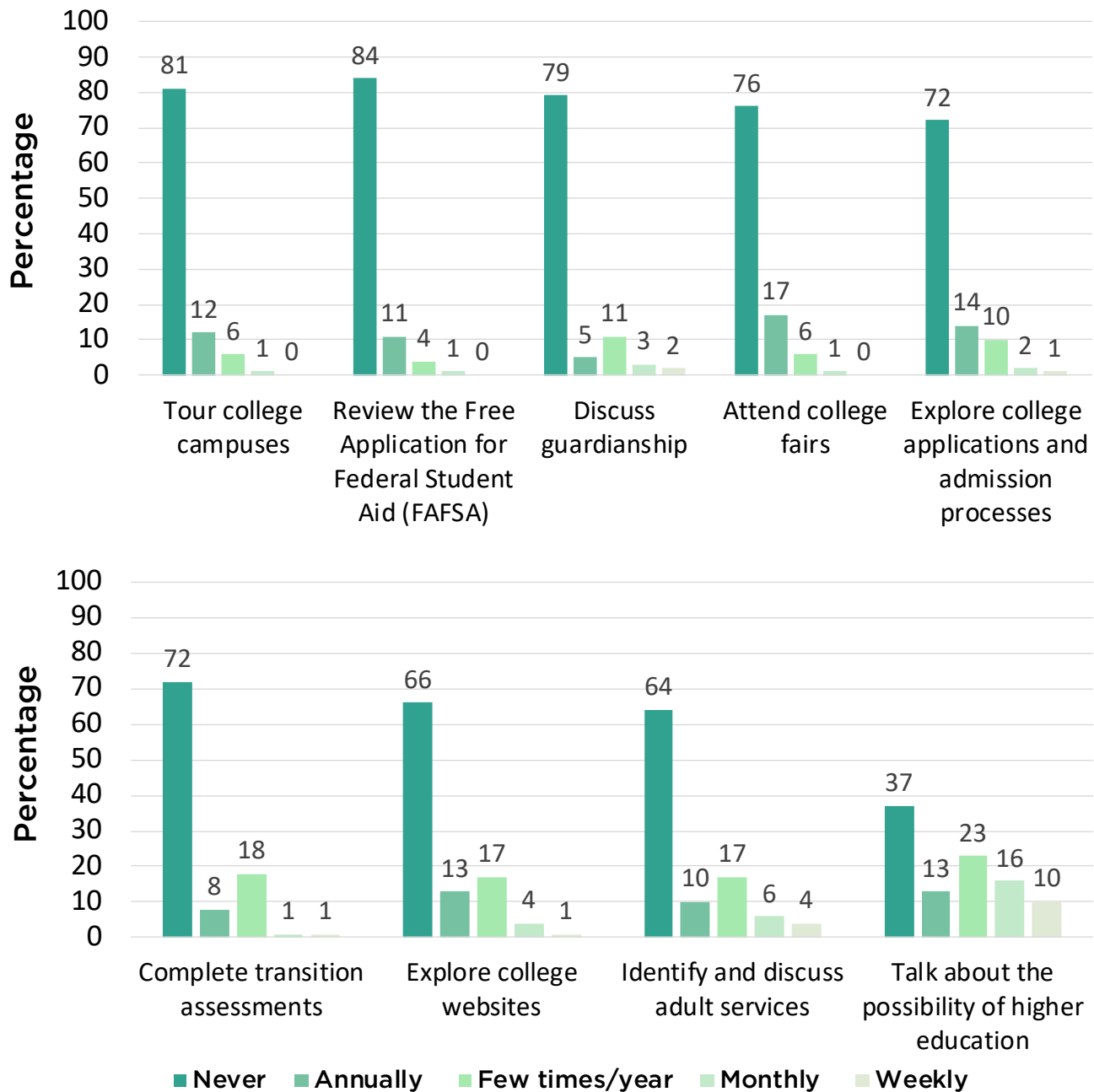
## Frequency of Transition Coordinators Completing College Preparation Activities



# College Preparation Activities: Paraprofessionals

We asked paraprofessionals how often THEY complete common college preparation activities with their transition-age students. Below are the percentage of respondents reporting each frequency across activities.

## Frequency of Paraprofessionals Completing College Preparation Activities



# Special Educator Collaboration

A primary focus of our survey was to learn about the social networks of special educators. A social network is a group of people with ties or links between them. We did this by providing a list of potential collaborative partners (below) and asking survey participants if they collaborated with a person in this role, **specifically about transition in the last 2 years**. If participants indicated they did collaborate with a person in this role, we asked them follow-up questions about the person in this role that they communicated with the most. These follow-up questions included things like how often they communicate, the supports they exchanged, and their level of trust.

Social network researchers often use different ways of visualizing network data, particularly because social networks can be difficult to understand without such visualizations. In this report, we model composite egocentric social networks of special education teachers. Specifically, we address: (a) the percentage of school personnel in each role who reported collaborating with each potential collaborative partner, (b) the frequency of communication (e.g., daily, weekly, monthly, a few times per year) that was reported most often, and (c) the extent to which the partner was someone they could rely on and trust.

## A Key to Collaborative Partners

### ○ School-Based Partners

- Special education supervisor
- School administrator
- Other special educator
- General educator
- Guidance counselor/school psych
- Interpreter (e.g., ASL, Spanish)
- Career and technical education teacher (CTE)
- School social worker
- Physical or occupational therapist (PT/OT)
- Speech language pathologist (SLP)
- Orientation and mobility specialist (OMS)
- Paraprofessional (Para)

### □ Disability Service System Partners

- Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)
- Vocational Rehabilitation Pre-Employment Transition Services (VR Pre-ETS)
- Center for Independent Living (CIL)
- Supported employment providers
- Group homes or supported living providers
- Mental and behavioral health providers
- Adult day programs and sheltered workshops
- Recreational services and supports for youth with disabilities
- Disability advocacy groups
- Support group and training providers for family members of people with disabilities (Family support)

### ⬠ Community Partners

- U.S. Armed Forces
- Local employers
- Child protective services or foster care services (CPS)
- 2-year colleges
- 4-year colleges
- Local transportation providers
- American Job Centers or Job Corps (AJC)
- Faith communities
- Leadership and advocacy groups
- Vocational training programs and craft apprenticeships (e.g., plumbing, carpentry)



# Mastery Across Transition Domains: Overview

Teacher mastery of transition domains carries strong implications for teacher preparation and professional development from districts and state agencies. We asked special educators, transition coordinators, and paraprofessionals to rate their level of mastery across 12 transition domains on a 4-point scale of 0 = No mastery, 1 = Limited mastery, 2 = Intermediate mastery, 3 = Advanced mastery, and 4 = Expert mastery. Results for each group can be found on the following pages.

## Mastery of Transition Domains: Most Mastery

### Special Educators

1. Basic Literacy and Numeracy Instruction
2. Student Participation in the IEP Process

### Transition Coordinators

1. Transition Planning/ IEP Development
2. Student Participation in the IEP Process

### Paraprofessionals

1. Basic Literacy and Numeracy Instruction
2. Independent Living Skills Instruction

## Mastery of Transition Domains: Least Mastery

### Special Educators

1. Sexuality and Healthy Relationships Instruction
2. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Transition

### Transition Coordinators

1. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Transition Practices
2. Sexuality and Healthy Relationships Instruction

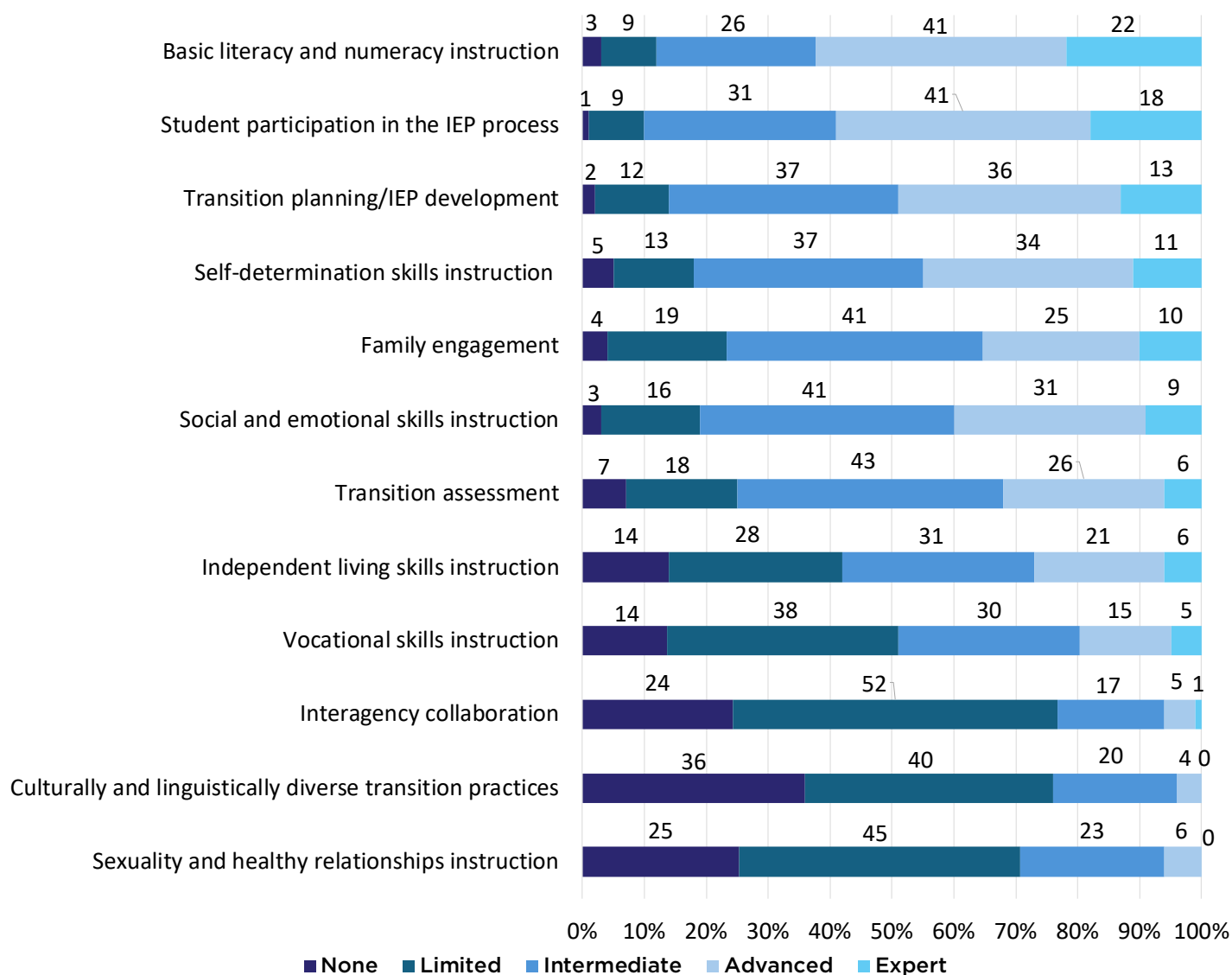
### Paraprofessionals

1. Student Participation in the IEP Process
2. Transition Planning/ IEP Development

# Mastery Across Transition Domains: Special Educators

We asked special educators to rate their level of mastery across 12 transition domains on a 4-point scale of 0 = No mastery, 1 = Limited mastery, 2 = Intermediate mastery, 3 = Advanced mastery, and 4 = Expert mastery. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Special Educator's Mastery of Transition Domains (Most to Least Mastery)

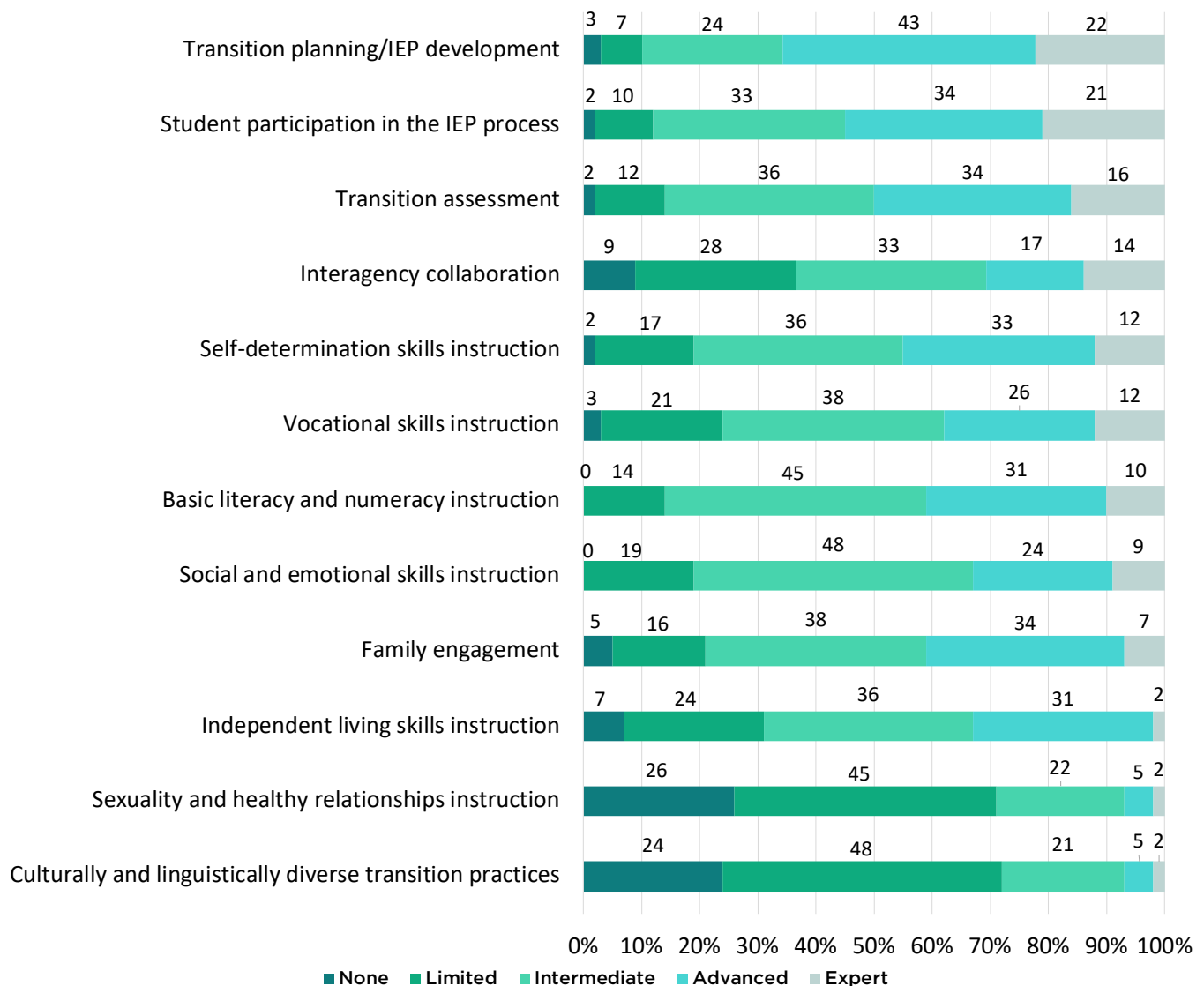


Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Mastery Across Transition Domains: Transition Coordinators

We asked transition coordinators to rate their level of mastery across 12 transition domains on a 4-point scale of 0 = No mastery, 1 = Limited mastery, 2 = Intermediate mastery, 3 = Advanced mastery, and 4 = Expert mastery. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Transition Coordinator's Mastery of Transition Domains (Most to Least Mastery)

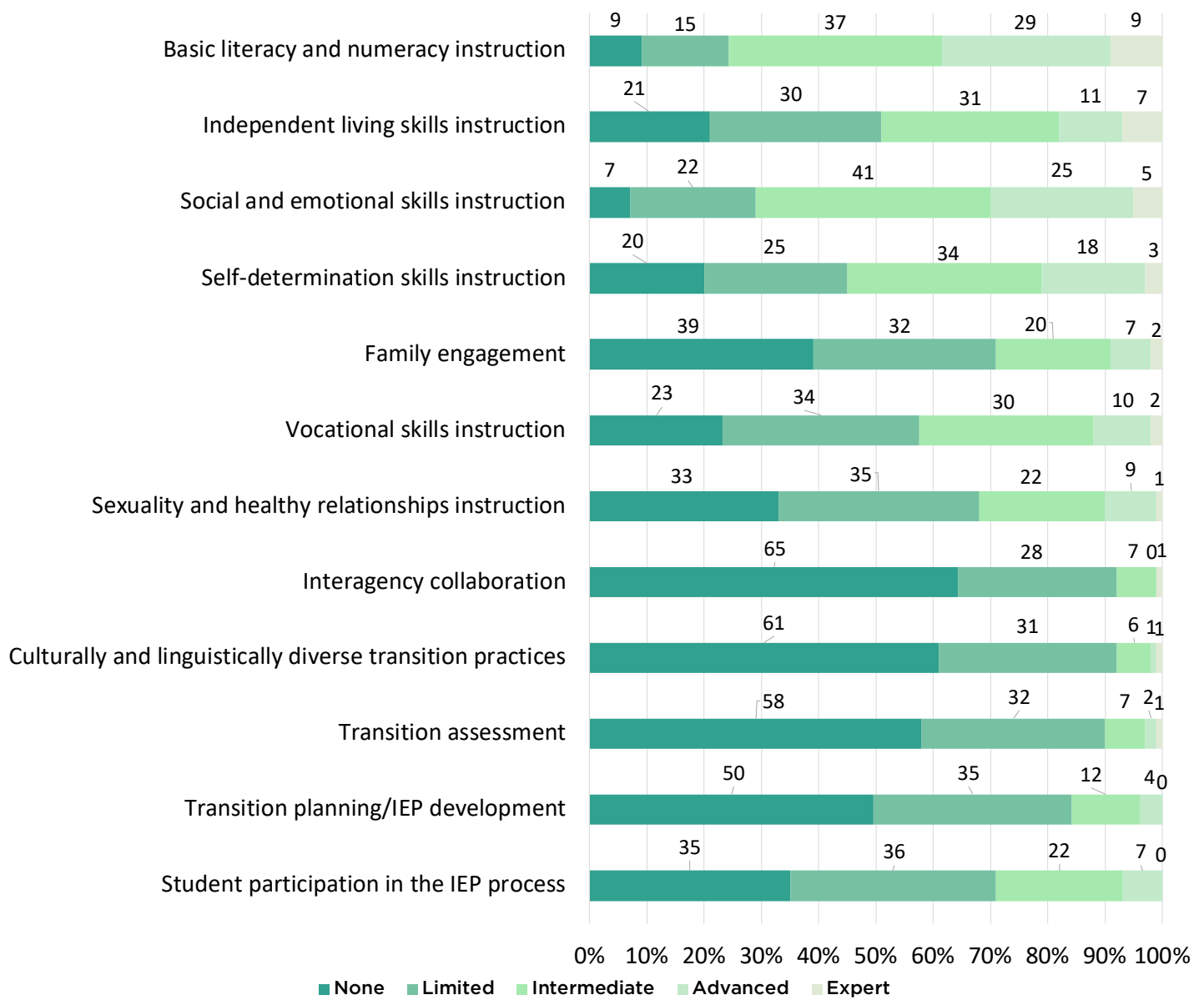


Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Mastery Across Transition Domains: Paraprofessionals

We asked paraprofessionals to rate their level of mastery across 12 transition domains on a 4-point scale of 0 = No mastery, 1 = Limited mastery, 2 = Intermediate mastery, 3 = Advanced mastery, and 4 = Expert mastery. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Paraprofessional's Mastery of Transition Domains (Most to Least Mastery)



Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Interest in Learning About Transition Domains: Overview

When exploring what areas to target for professional development and teacher preparation courses, it is important to consider educator, coordinator, and paraprofessional preferences and the topics they consider most pressing based on their experiences in the field. We asked special educators, transition coordinators, and paraprofessionals to rate their level of interest in learning about 12 transition domains on a 5-point scale of 0 = Not at all interested to 5 = Extremely interested. Results for each group can be found on the following pages.

## Interest in Learning About Transition Domains: Most Interested

### Special Educators

1. Self-Determination Skills Instruction
2. Vocational Skill Instruction

### Transition Coordinators

1. Transition Assessment
2. Interagency Collaboration

### Paraprofessionals

1. Self-Determination Skills Instruction
2. Social and Emotional Skills Instruction

## Interest in Learning About Transition Domains: Least Interested

### Special Educators

1. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Transition Practices
2. Family Engagement

### Transition Coordinators

1. Basic Literacy and Numeracy Instruction
2. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Transition Practices

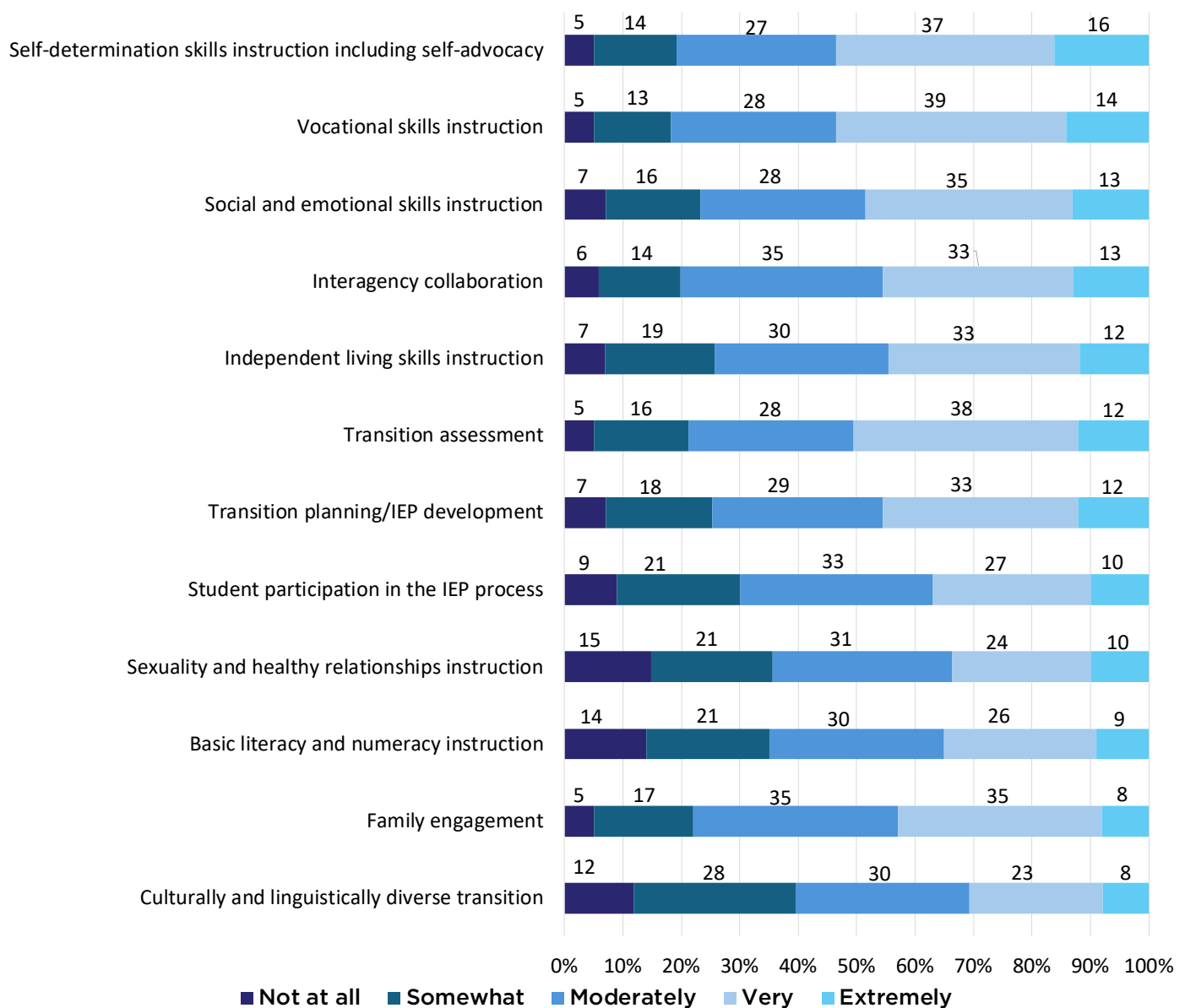
### Paraprofessionals

1. Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Transition Practices
2. Family Engagement

# Interest in Learning About Transition Domains: Special Educators

We asked special educators to rate their level of interest in learning about 12 transition domains on a 5-point scale of 0 = Not at all interested to 5 = Extremely interested. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Special Educator's Interest in Learning About Transition Domains (Most to Least Interested)

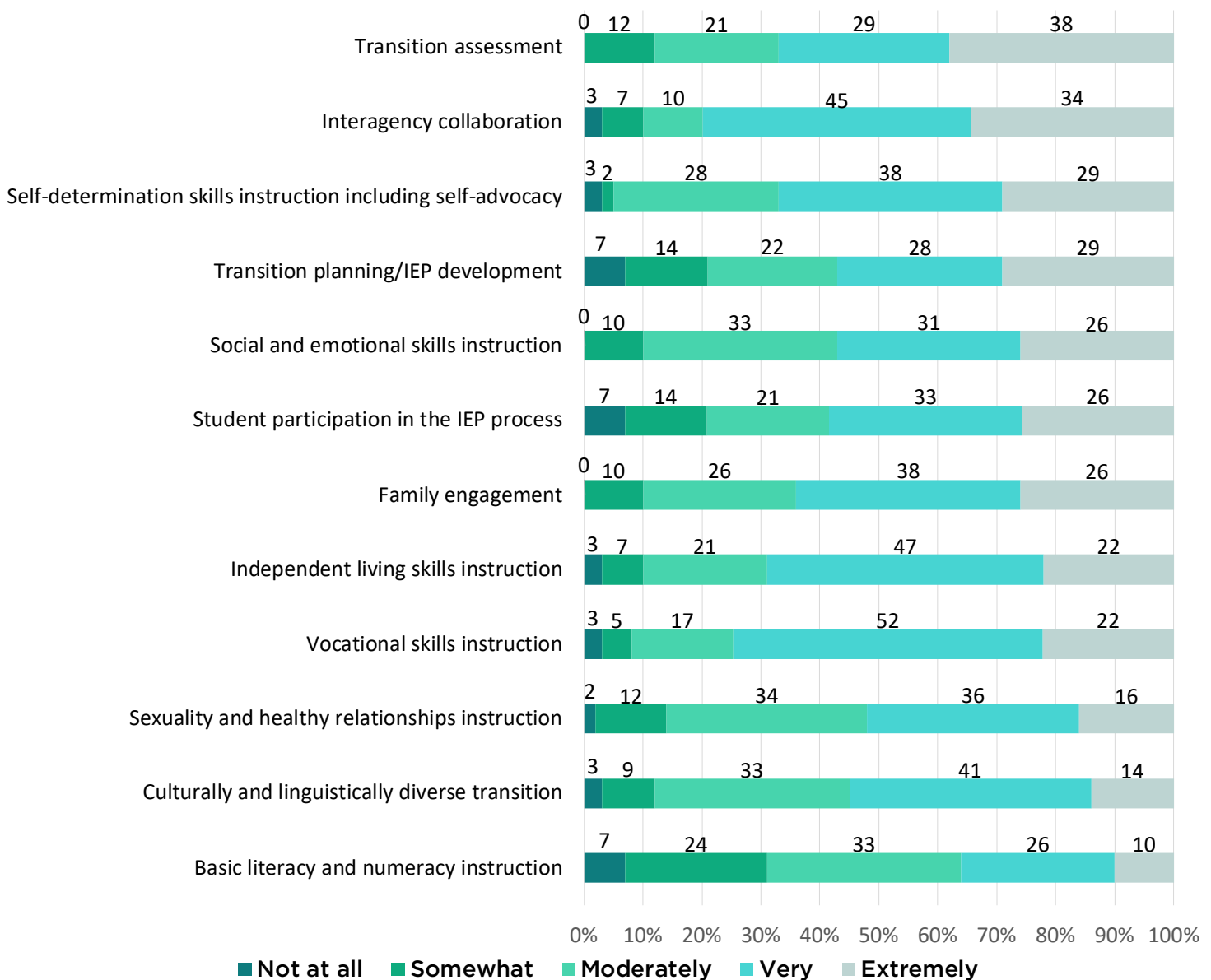


Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Interest in Learning About Transition Domains: Transition Coordinators

We asked transition coordinators to rate their level of interest in learning about 12 transition domains on a 5-point scale of 0 = Not at all interested to 5 = Extremely interested. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Transition Coordinator's Interest in Learning About Transition Domains (Most to Least Interested)

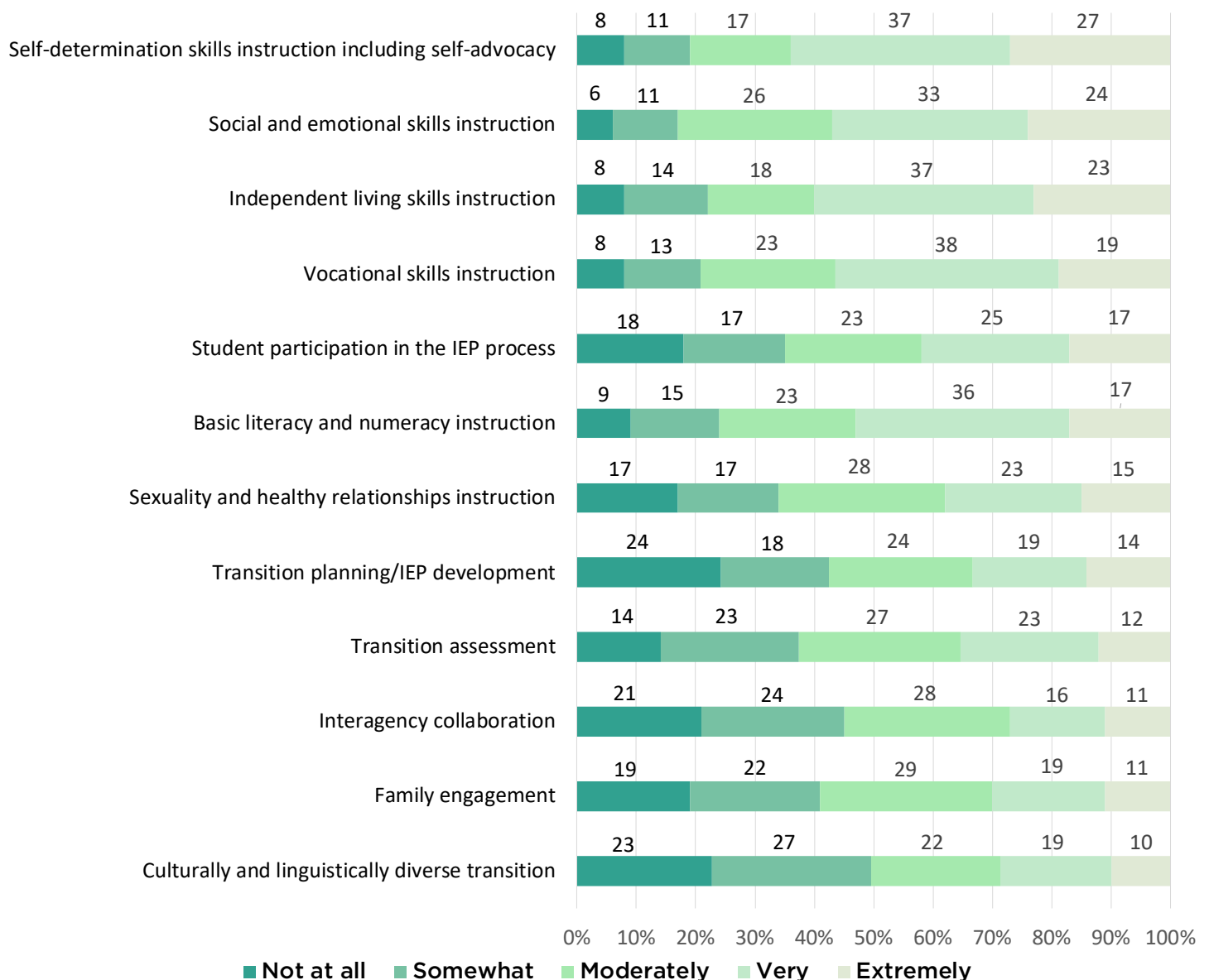


Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Interest in Learning About Transition Domains: Paraprofessionals

We asked paraprofessionals to rate their level of interest in learning about 12 transition domains on a 5-point scale of 0 = Not at all interested to 5 = Extremely interested. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Paraprofessional's Interest in Learning About Transition Domains (Most to Least Interested)



Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Preferred Formats for Accessing Transition Information: Overview

Understanding educator, coordinator, and paraprofessional's preferences for how they choose to access ongoing training and information related to transition domains is critical to effective dissemination efforts. We asked special educators, transition coordinators, and paraprofessionals to rate the likelihood they might access transition content across 12 common formats on a 5-point scale of 0 = Not at all likely to 5 = Extremely likely. Results for each group can be found on the following pages.

## Likelihood to Access Different Learning Formats: Most Likely

### Special Educators

1. Printed Fact Sheets or Tip Sheets
2. 3-5 Page Resource Guides

### Transition Coordinators

1. Printed Fact Sheets or Tip Sheets
2. 3-5 Page Resource Guides

### Paraprofessionals

1. 3-5 Page Resource Guides
2. In-Person Workshops

## Likelihood to Access Different Learning Formats: Least Likely

### Special Educators

1. Blogs
2. Other Social Media (e.g., Twitter, Tiktok, Pinterest, Discord)

### Transition Coordinators

1. Podcasts
2. Blogs

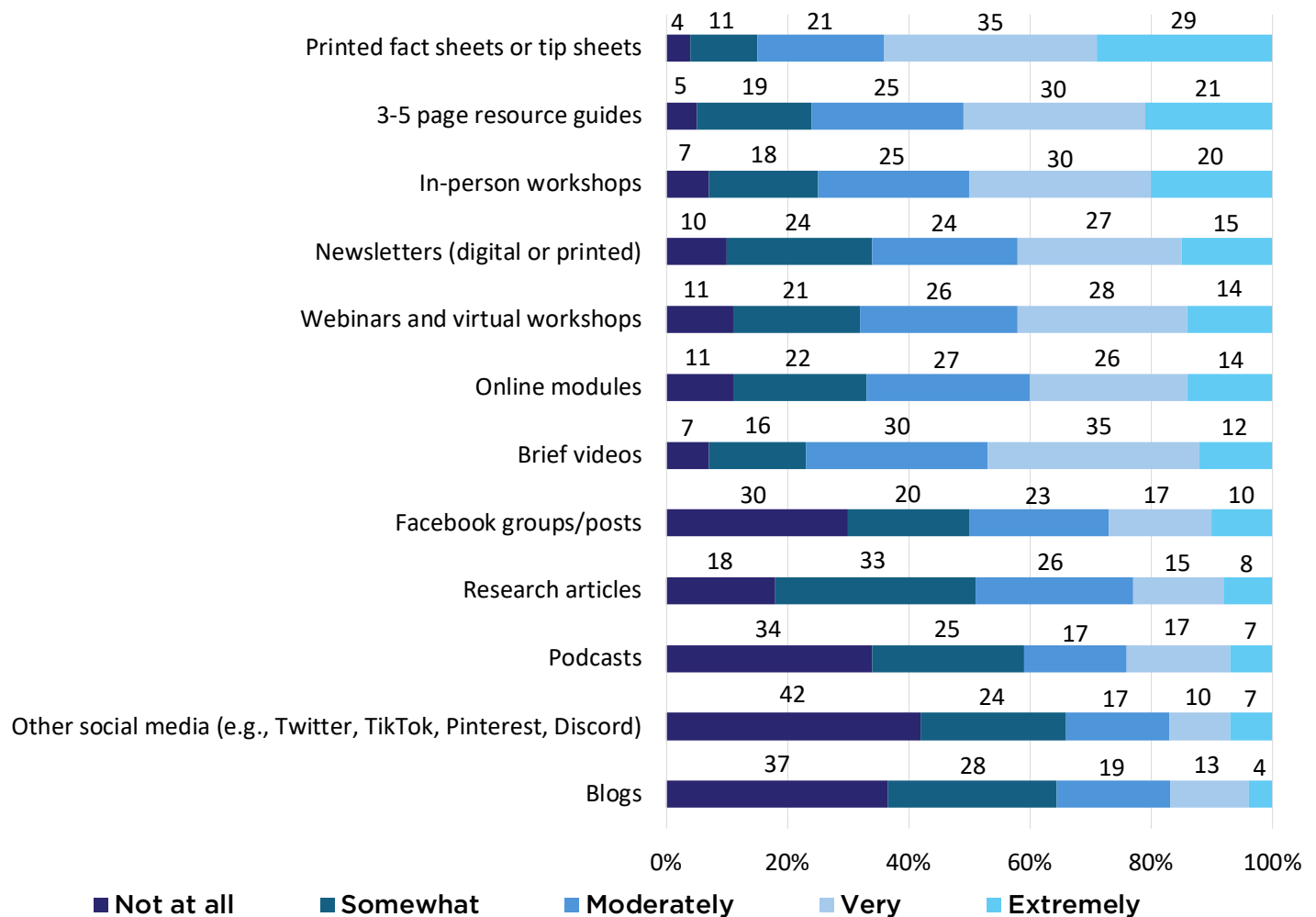
### Paraprofessionals

1. Blogs
2. Podcasts

# Preferred Formats for Accessing Transition Information: Special Educators

We asked special educators to rate the likelihood they might access transition content across 12 common formats on a 5-point scale of 0 = Not at all likely to 5 = Extremely likely. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Likelihood of Special Educators to Access Different Learning Formats (Most to Least Likely)

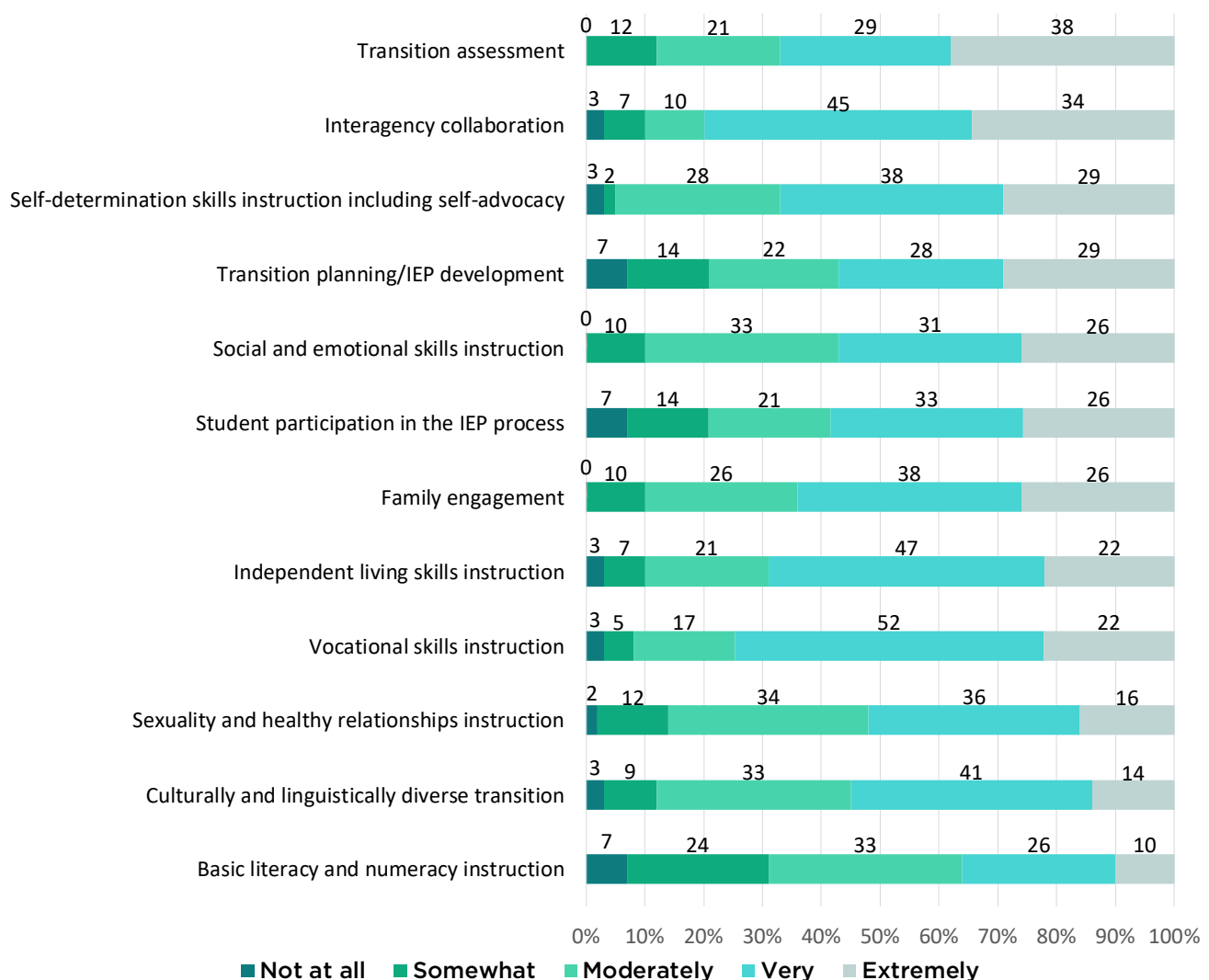


Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Preferred Formats for Accessing Transition Information: Transition Coordinators

We asked transition coordinators to rate the likelihood they might access transition content across 12 common formats on a 5-point scale of 0 = Not at all likely to 5 = Extremely likely. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Likelihood of Transition Coordinators to Access Different Learning Formats (Most to Least Likely)

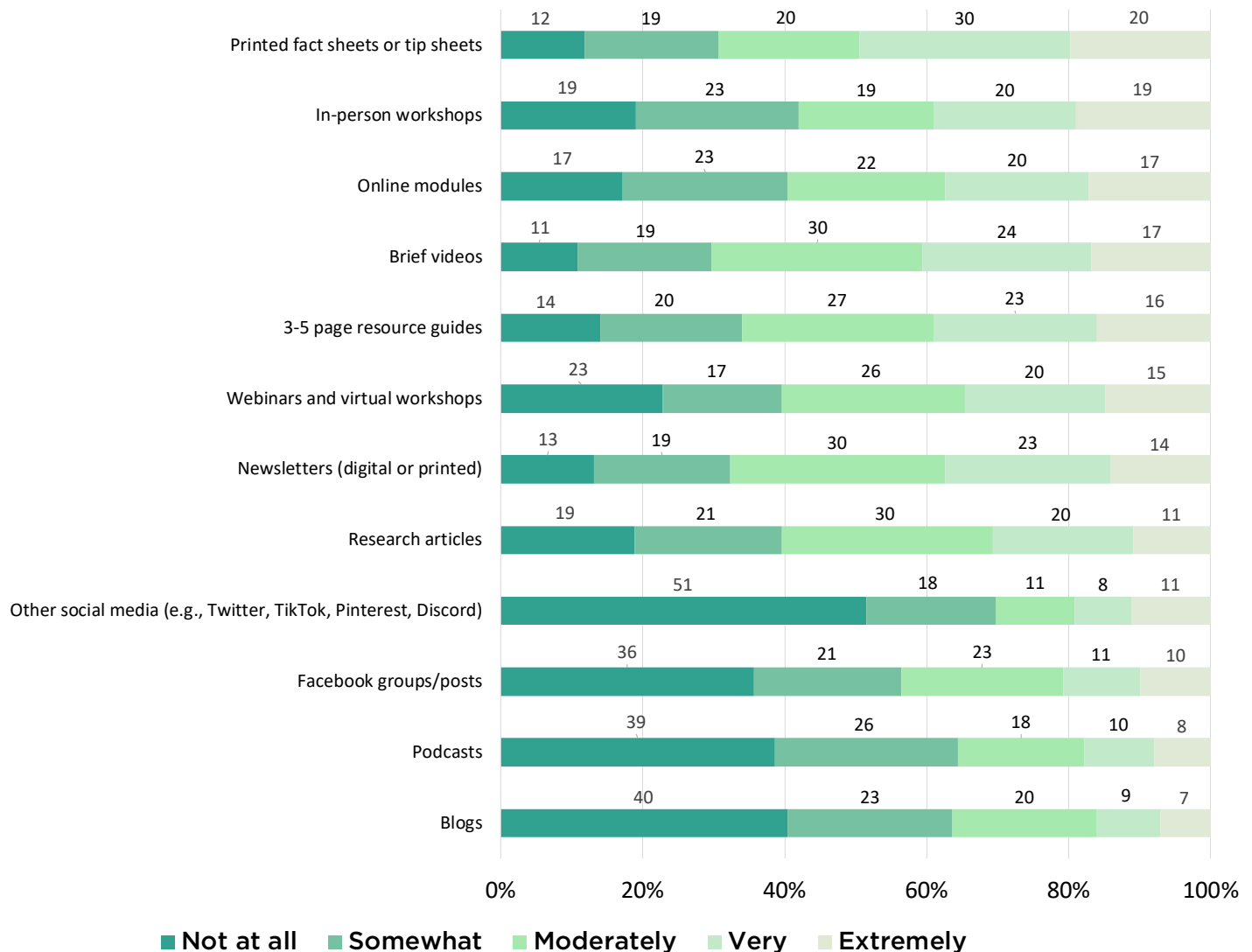


Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Preferred Formats for Accessing Transition Information: Paraprofessionals

We asked paraprofessionals to rate the likelihood they might access transition content across 12 common formats on a 5-point scale of 0 = Not at all likely to 5 = Extremely likely. Below are the percentages of participants who selected each rating.

## Likelihood of Paraprofessionals to Access Different Learning Formats (Most to Least Likely)



Percentages may exceed 100% due to rounding.

# Implications for Practice



**Preparation**



**Collaboration**



**Instruction**

## Expectations and Preparation



The perspectives, knowledge, and expertise of special educators, transition coordinators, and paraprofessionals completing this survey varied widely. It is also important to note that the sample lacked racial and ethnic diversity. The majority of respondents reported paid and volunteer employment as the most likely postschool outcomes for students. Yet, some hesitations still persist surrounding higher education. The least likely outcomes respondents had for students were inclusive postsecondary education programs and 4-year degree programs. While the limited number of higher education programs for students with intellectual disability—Connect at Johnson County Community College and KU’s Transition to Postsecondary Education (a fully inclusive 2-year program offering federal financial aid as an approved comprehensive transition program)—may explain these lower expectations, we found that about 78% of special educators and 90% of transition coordinators were at least somewhat knowledgeable about college options for their students with intellectual disability.

Ongoing professional development through state agencies and school districts should focus on the full range of student postschool options to ensure educators are equipped with the knowledge they need to support students and their families in achieving their vision for the future. We should also focus on highlighting more success stories across the state so that families, educators, policymakers, and service providers might envision higher education as a realistic and meaningful option for young people with disabilities.

# Implications for Practice



When asked about levels of mastery across transition domains, special educators consistently rated high mastery in areas of transition planning and IEP development, student-led IEPs, and basic literacy and numeracy instruction, while transition coordinators rated high mastery in transition planning and student-led IEPs, and paraprofessionals rated high mastery in basic literacy and numeracy instruction, and independent living skills instruction.

Special educators rated low mastery in culturally and linguistically diverse (CLD) transition and sexuality and healthy relationships instruction, while transition coordinators rated low mastery in CLD transition and sexuality and healthy relationships instruction and paraprofessionals rated low mastery in student-led IEP and transition planning. Yet, these domains of lowest mastery were the domains educators and coordinators were least interested in learning more about.

School districts and state agencies need to find alignment between training needs and educator, coordinator, and paraprofessional preferences (e.g., pairing a high-interest area such as self-determination instruction with a high-need topic such as CLD transition), and design professional development plans based on new needs that might emerge throughout the school year.

When asked about learning formats, educators, coordinators, and paraprofessionals were most likely to access transition information through more traditional routes including printed fact sheets, 3-5 page resource guides, and in-person workshops. This trend seems to run counter to recent initiatives to develop content through social media, podcasts, and blogs. It may be helpful for school districts and state agencies to conduct smaller surveys at the local level to see what works best for educators, coordinators, and paraprofessionals in their area.

# Implications for Practice

## Building and Utilizing Collaborative Networks



Other important findings from this survey project relate to the collaborative social networks of special educators. Social network analysis, which was used in this study, is a practical approach to measuring relationships and connections between individuals, and operates under the primary assumption that an individual's actions and beliefs are influenced by the perspectives of others with whom they collaborate, how often they collaborate, and the types of resources they receive from these collaborative networks.

Our preliminary analyses of these collaborative social networks for transition vary widely. The average network size was 12 partners, and some respondents reported no partners outside the school system (15.4%). On average, communication occurred rarely across partners (about 1-2 times per year). The percentage of special educators who reported network members as trusted partners (i.e., rating of agree or strongly agree when asked if the partner was someone they could depend on and trust) varied across partners, but percentages were highest among the school partners (range 64.5% to 92.3%) and lowest among the disability service providers (range 32.6% to 56.9%).

Administrators should develop opportunities for educators to learn about, meet, and deepen relationships with providers and community partners. Coordination across school systems, service systems, and communities is essential to effective transition planning and postschool success for students with disabilities.

# Implications for Practice

## Instruction



These research findings also speak to the instruction educators, coordinators and paraprofessionals provide to their students and the frequency with which they complete college preparation activities. Although we might expect instruction and levels of college preparation to differ across students with and without extensive support needs, the proportions of our sample did not allow for these comparisons. However, we found that instruction frequency across transition domains was pretty similar for middle and high school special educators and paraprofessionals, with the most frequent instruction related to academic study skills, social skills, literacy, and numeracy. The largest differences were between financial literacy skills instruction and vocational skills instruction, which were more likely to happen at the high school level.

Domains we expected to see addressed more frequently were travel/ navigation and healthy relationships. One way to address this issue is leveraging stage agencies and service providers to build capacity in these areas educators, coordinators, and paraprofessionals may not have the time or resources to address within the school day. With college programming and opportunities on the rise, we expected that more students would have access to college preparation activities to ensure they were aware of and well-equipped for higher education. Some of these activities would likely only happen once or twice per year like reviewing the FAFSA and touring college campuses. At the same time, almost half of respondents reported they had never discussed guardianship, or explored college websites with their students. These conversations and exploration activities should be a regular part of transition planning and occur at multiple times throughout the school year.

Further, without opportunities to learn about higher education and visit college campuses, many students with disabilities across Kansas are missing out on this primary pathway to personal growth and a meaningful career in the community. The development of additional inclusive postsecondary education programs is critical to making college an option for all Kansans with disabilities. School districts and state agencies should also ensure their transition trainings address the full spectrum of postschool options and the services and supports that can help students attain competitive employment, higher education, and a full life in the community.

# Kansas Special Education Needs Assessment

Summary of Findings Across Special Educators, Transition Coordinators, and Paraprofessionals



**For questions about this research or this report, please contact Evan Dean ([evan.dean@ku.edu](mailto:evan.dean@ku.edu)) or Baylee Kilburn ([baylee.kilburn@ku.edu](mailto:baylee.kilburn@ku.edu)).**