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2005 AICP Continuing Education Survey

A survey was recently conducted to learn the views and needs of AICP members, with the ultimate aim of encouraging and developing the kinds of professional development programs and requirements that will best support the profession.

[About This Research](#)[About This Report](#)[Findings: AICP Member Profile](#)

About This Research

This survey was conducted on behalf of the American Planning Association (APA) and its professional institute, the American Institute of Certified Planners (AICP). It was conducted to learn the views and needs of AICP members, with the ultimate aim of encouraging and developing the kinds of professional development programs and requirements that will best support the profession.

The research was conducted by MemberSurvey.com (division of Readex Research), an independent research firm.

The invitation to participate in the web-based survey was emailed (or mailed, as needed) to all 14,518 AICP members, domestic and international. Data were collected between December 6 and December 26, 2005.

A total of 4,077 sample members responded (28% response rate). Percentages based on all 4,077 responses are subject to a margin of error of $\pm 1.3\%$ at the 95% confidence level. Percentages calculated on smaller tabulation bases — for example, those supporting mandatory CE — are subject to more statistical variability.

About This Report

This report was prepared for APA/AICP by MemberSurvey.com in accordance with accepted research standards and practices.

Findings: AICP Member Profile

The typical (median) respondent to this survey of AICP members started AICP in 1997, with 36% starting in the year 2000 or later, and 8% starting before 1980. Compared to the population as a whole, survey results somewhat over-represent newer (2000 and later) and under-represent the oldest (before 1980) AICP members.

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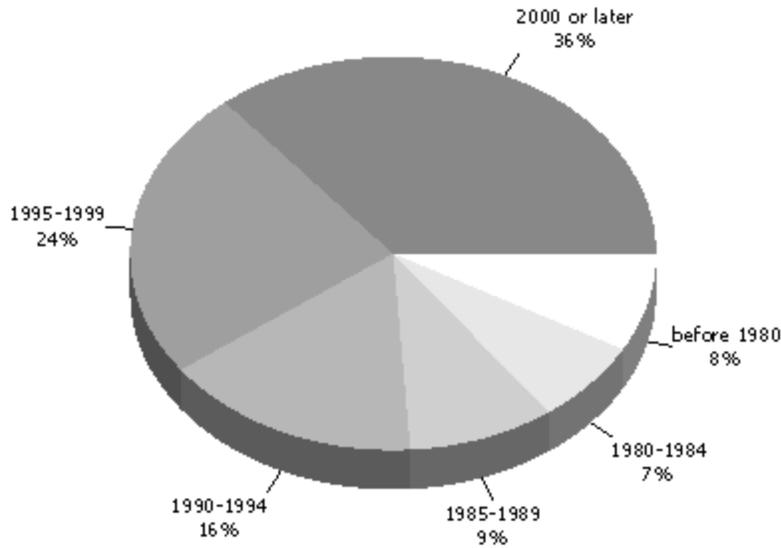
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October 2006

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November 2006

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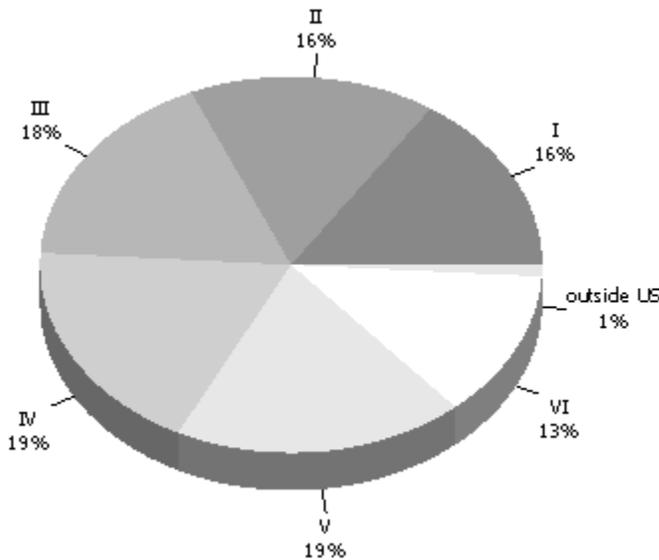
base: 4077 AICP members

96% of respondents are of type Member, slightly higher than their proportion in the population as a whole (91%).

Survey respondents, like the population of AICP members, are fairly evenly distributed across the six APA/AICP US regions. 1% of respondents come from outside the US.

Location

APA/AICP Region



base: 4077 AICP members



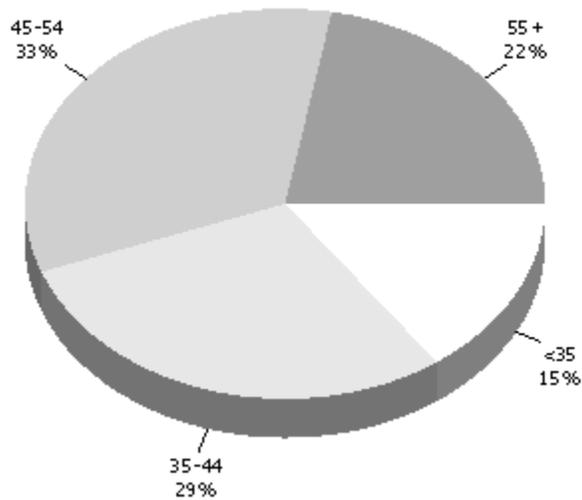
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Median age for responding AICP members ("members") is 47, with 22% 55 years or older, and 15% under the age of 35.

Age



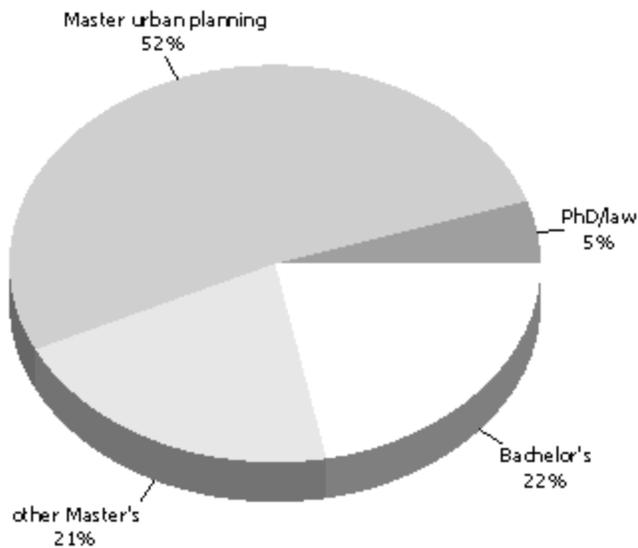
base: 4077 AICP members

66% of members are male, 3% Spanish/Hispanic/Latino, and 6% of a race other than White.

The typical member's education extends at least to a Master's degree, with 4% holding a Doctorate as their highest degree, 1% a law degree, 52% a Master's degree in urban planning, and 21% some other Master's degree. 22% report the Bachelor's is their highest level of educational attainment.

Education

Highest Degree Held



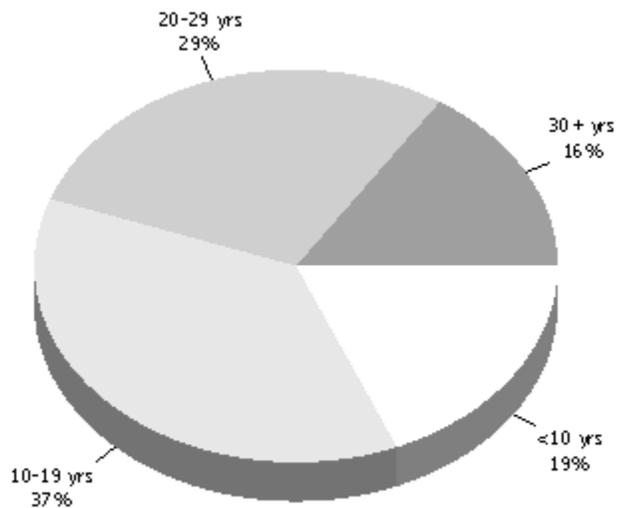
base: 4077 AICP members

17% indicate they have current valid licenses or professional certifications in fields other than planning. Most frequently these are in landscape architecture, architecture, or engineering.

The typical (median) member has 19 years of experience in the planning field, with 16% reporting 30 years or more, and 19% reporting fewer than ten years.

Experience

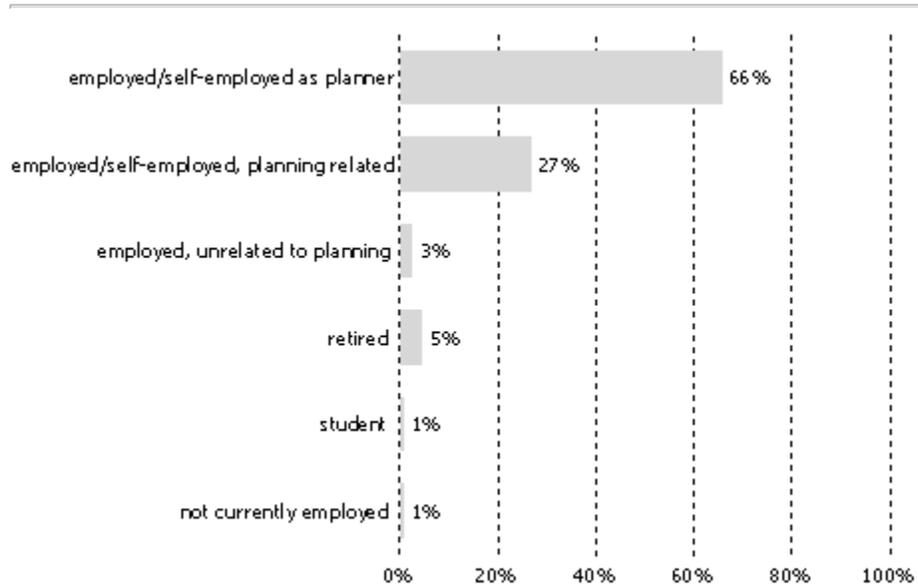
Years In Planning Field



base: 4077 AICP members

91% of members are currently "planners" — that is, employed or self-employed as planners or in planning-related positions. The balance are employed elsewhere, retired, students, or not currently employed.

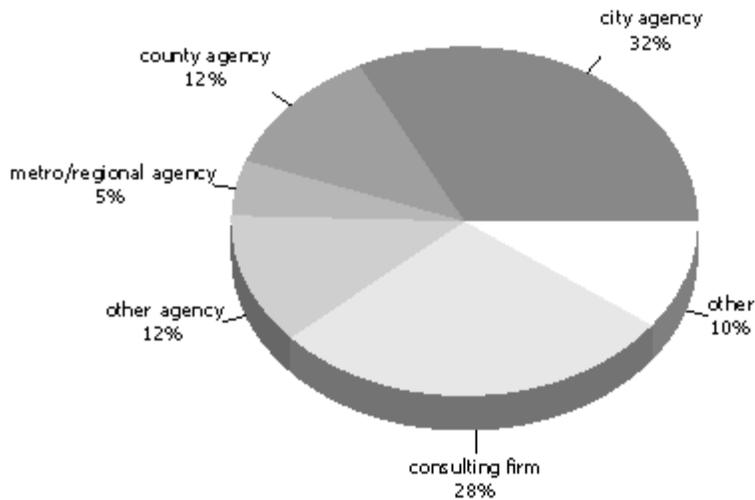
Employment Status



base: 4077 AICP members (multiple answers)

Planners work in a wide variety of settings. 32% are in city planning agencies, 12% in county planning agencies, 5% in metropolitan or regional planning agencies, and 12% in other public agencies (state, federal, economic development, etc.). 28% work for private consulting firms.

Work Setting



base: 3730 planners

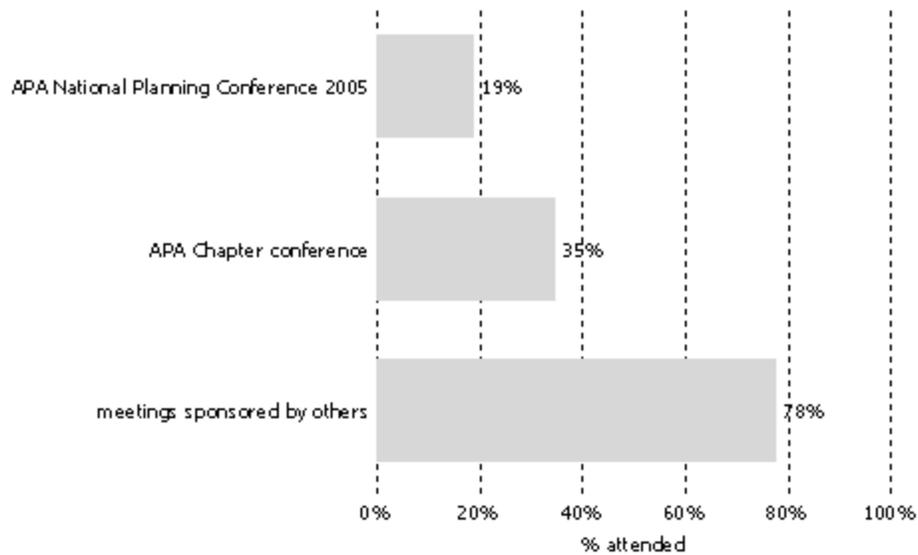
Of the 62% of planners working in a public agency, 14% report their jurisdictions' populations to be 1 million or more, while 5% report populations smaller than 10,000. Median jurisdiction population for those working in public agencies is 100,000.

All but 9% of members report spending time in the past 12 months attending continuing education (CE) workshops or conferences (whether sponsored by APA/AICP or not). 20% attended for five or more days (with each day being the equivalent of 8 hours); the mean is 3.3 days.

The vast majority (78%) attended conferences or workshops sponsored by organizations other than APA/AICP, while 19% attended the APA National Planning Conference in San Francisco in March 2005, and 35% attended their APA Chapter conferences.

Conference/Workshop Attendance

Past 12 Months



base: 4077 AICP members (multiple answers)

Reasons given most often for not attending the APA National Planning Conference include the costs of travel (63%), job responsibilities (54%), and registration costs (42%). Also named by at least one in five non-attendees are family responsibilities (23%) and choosing to attend other CE programs (22%).

The main reason given most often for not attending Chapter conferences is job responsibilities (55%). Others, named by between 12% and 20% of non-attendees, include programs not meeting education needs, attendance at other CE programs, family responsibilities, travel costs, registration costs, and lack of support for continuing education from employer.

Those attending conferences/workshops sponsored by organizations other than APA/AICP most often attended conferences sponsored by local or regional planning agencies (31%), state agencies (30%), non-profit organizations other than associations (24%), and university programs (21%).

Respondents were asked to reflect on their recent experiences with continuing education workshops/conferences and then rate their agreement/disagreement with a series of statements, using a five-point scale where -2 = strongly disagree and +2 = strongly agree. The chart shows the percentage disagreeing (-1, -2) and the percentage agreeing (+1, +2); not shown are those rating themselves neutral (0) or not answering.

A majority of members agree, and virtually none disagree, with these four statements:

- I acquired a new perspective on a planning problem
- I shared and discussed my analysis or reflections with other planners
- I was inspired and energized in my work
- I acquired new useful skills

Members were more evenly divided with respect to these two statements:

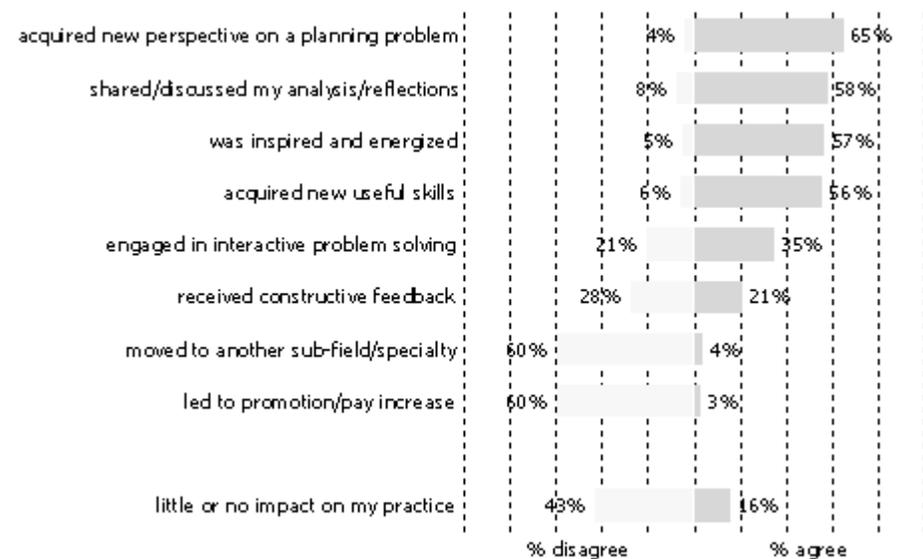
- I engaged in interactive problem solving with other planners or professionals
- I received constructive feedback on a project or program in which I have been involved

A majority *disagreed* with these:

- I decided to move into another sub-field or specialty
- my participation led to a promotion or increased pay

16% agreed that "there was little or no impact on my professional practice," while 43% disagreed, and 24% neither agreed nor disagreed.

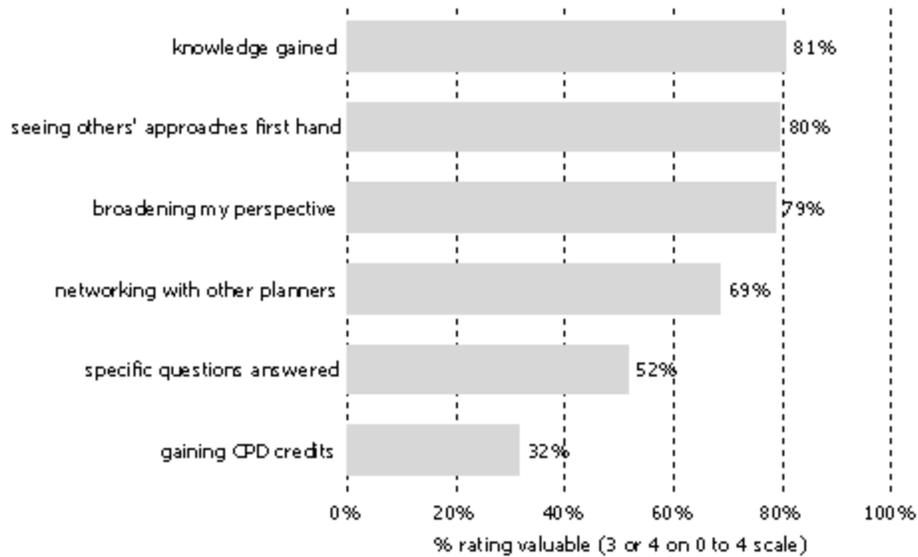
Opinions Of Recent CE Experience



base: 4077 AICP members

The greatest proportions of AICP members highly value these outcomes of attending workshops or conferences: knowledge gained (81%), seeing planning approaches in other communities at first hand (80%), broadening my practice (79%), and networking with other planners (69%). Only 32% of members rated gaining Continuing Professional Development (CPD) credits as a valuable outcome of attendance.

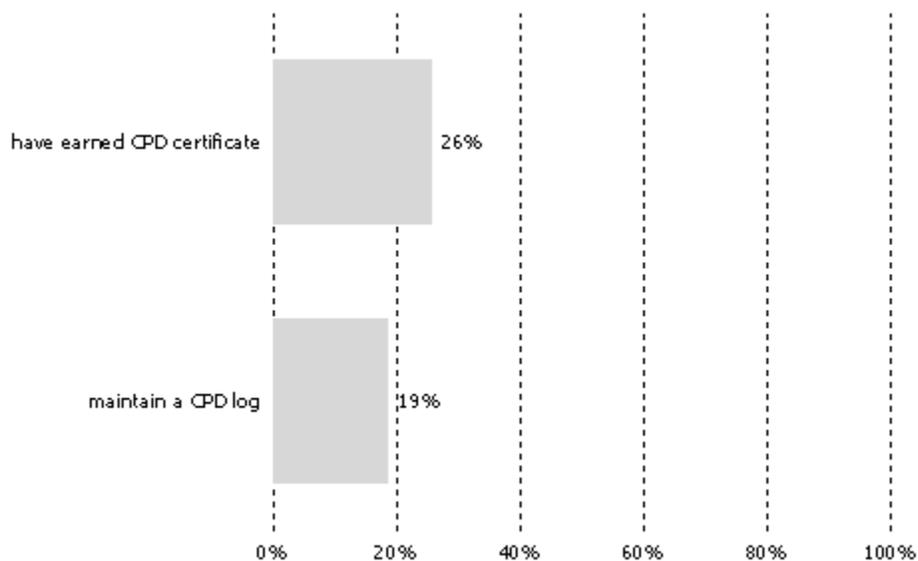
Valuable CE Outcomes



base: 4077 AICP members (multiple answers)

26% of members have earned a Continuing Professional Development (CPD) certificate (previously referred to as the CPDP certificate). 19% currently maintain a CPD log. Of those maintaining a log, almost half (45%) say it is not complete and up to date. Of those *not* maintaining a log, the primary reason (given by 43%) is "there is little or no value in doing so," following by "I don't know what that is" (24%) and "I don't know how to do this" (23%).

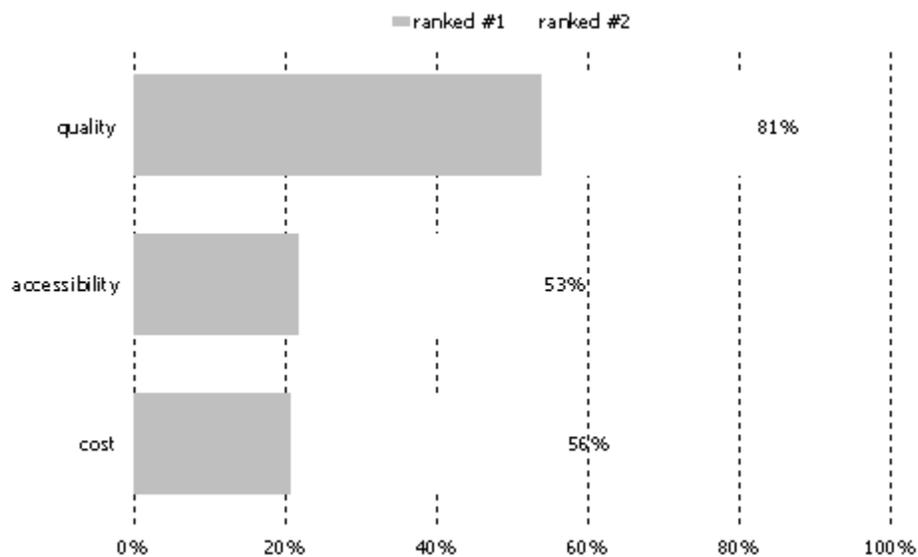
CPD Status



base: 4077 AICP members (multiple answers)

Asked which of three criteria is their #1 consideration in choosing among CE offerings, 54% of members said quality, 22% accessibility, and 21% cost. Adding in those ranking each item #2, we see that quality is a top two consideration for 81%, compared with 53% saying accessibility, and 56% saying cost.

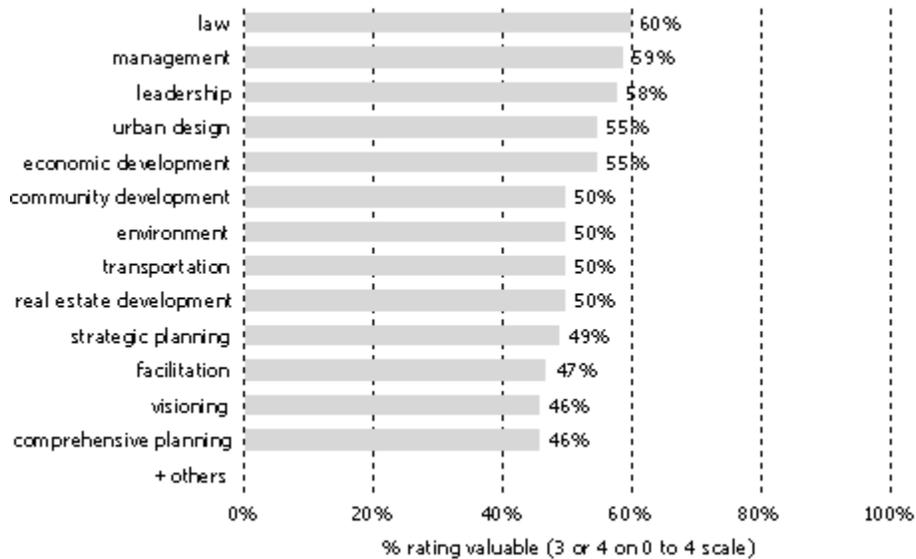
CE Offering Considerations



base: 4077 AICP members

Asked to rate how valuable learning in each of 22 knowledge/skill areas would be to improving their practice at this stage in their career, most respondents indicated multiple areas of high value (rated 3 or 4 on a 0 to 4 scale). Rated valuable by a majority of members are law, management, leadership, urban design, and economic development. Rated valuable by 46%-50% are community development, environment, transportation, real estate development, strategic planning, facilitation, visioning, and comprehensive planning. Rated valuable by fewer than 45% (not shown on chart) are information technology, regional planning, neighborhood planning, citizen participation, budgeting, housing, historic preservation, advocacy planning, and international development. The latter three were rated valuable by fewer than one in four members.

Valuable Knowledge/Skill Areas



base: 4077 AICP members (multiple answers)

In recent years, controversy has surrounded the consideration of requiring mandatory continuing education as a condition for maintaining AICP certification. This survey sought to gauge support and opposition to that possibility, and to better understand how people come to those views.

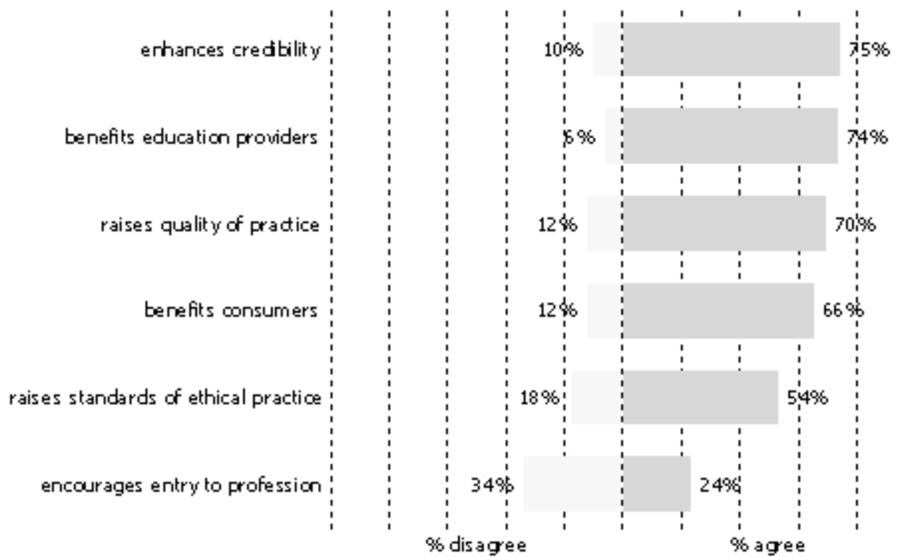
Considering all fields (not only planning), 64% of members believe that being a professional in your field and maintaining your professional certification requires pursuit of continuing education while actively practicing, while 19% disagree, and 15% are not sure.

Respondents were also asked to rate their agreement/disagreement with a series of statements about CE and professions in general, using the same five-point scale previously described. A majority of members agrees with each of these statements: Mandatory continuing education ...

- enhances the credibility of professions
- benefits providers of educational offerings
- raises the quality of professional practice
- benefits consumers of professional practice
- raises the standards of ethical practice

More disagree than agree with the statement "mandatory continuing education encourages individuals to enter professions."

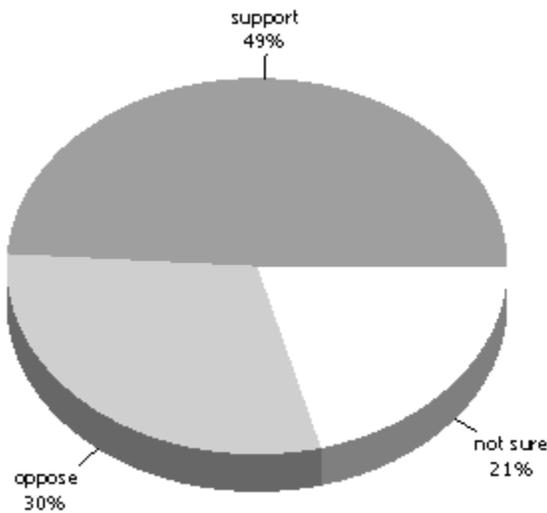
Opinions Of Mandatory CE For Professionals



base: 4077 AICP members

In the context of these general attitudes, it is then perhaps not surprising that a near-majority (49%) of AICP members support making continuing education mandatory for members, while 30% oppose that idea, and 21% are not sure.

Support For AICP Mandatory CE



base: 4077 AICP members

Major reasons cited most often by *supporters* of mandatory CE include:

- it will update knowledge, skills and abilities in planning (82%)

- it will provide more credibility to planners (75%)
- it will improve the quality of planning practice (71%)

Only about one in five supporters think mandatory CE would be valued by either peers or employers.

Major reasons cited most often by *opponents* of mandatory CE include:

- I don't need a requirement to keep current (56%)
- there will be no perceived value by my employer (48%)
- it will not enhance my credibility (42%)
- too costly (41%)

Reasons named major by 20%-33% include there will be no perceived value by my peers, not enough accessible continuing education offerings available to me, and my employer does not let me take the time away for continuing education. 21% of mandatory CE opponents also wrote in something other than the listed choices.

Supporters and opponents of mandatory CE differ somewhat from each other with respect to some of the various characteristics asked about in this survey. Education levels and other demographics are virtually the same; however, 5% fewer supporters than opponents hold some license or other certification outside of planning.

Supporters tend to be somewhat less experienced: 40% started AICP in 2000 or later, and 27% have 25 years or more planning experience, compared with 31% and 34% for opponents, respectively.

Supporters are somewhat more likely than opponents to be employed as planners, and to work in public agencies. Conversely, a small fraction more opponents are found in consulting firms.

Where the groups differ most is in their actual involvement with continuing education activities. 24% of supporters but only 12% of opponents attended the APA 2005 National Conference; 42% of supporters but only 24% of opponents attended their Chapter conference; and 81% of supporters compared with 75% of opponents attended workshops or conferences sponsored by other organizations. 14% of supporters say their attendance at CE events had little or not impact on their planning practice, while 21% of opponents hold that opinion.

30% of supporters have earned CPD certification, and 26% currently maintain a log. For opponents, those percentages are 21% and 11%, respectively.

Characteristics Of Supporters/Opponents



base: 4077 AICP members (multiple answers)

*base: 3730 planners (multiple answers)

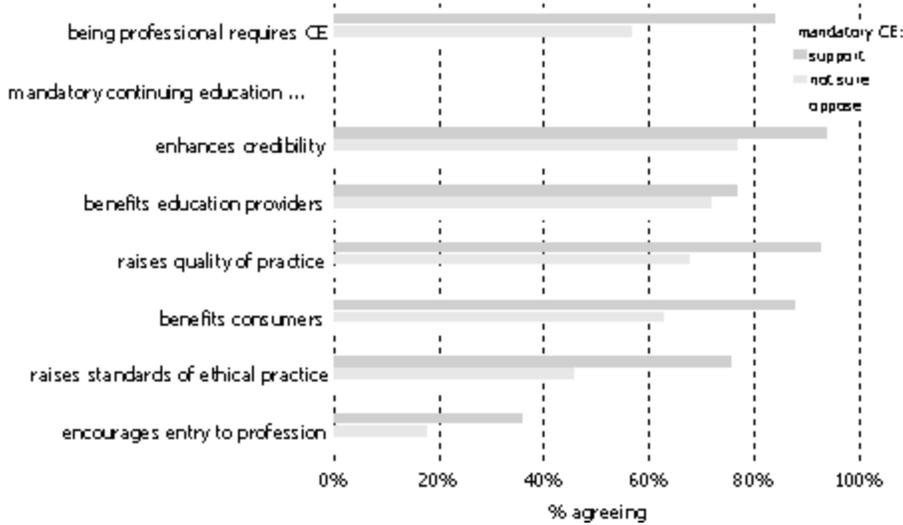
The biggest differences between supporters and opponents of mandatory CE are seen in their attitudes toward continuing education and the professions generally. Where 84% of supporters believe that being a professional in your field and maintaining your professional certification requires you to pursue continuing education while you are actively practicing, only 36% of opponents agree.

Two to three times as many supporters as opponents agree with each of these statements about mandatory continuing education for the professions:

- it enhances the credibility of professions
- it raises the quality of professional practice
- it benefits consumers of professional practice
- it raises the standards of ethical practice
- it encourages entry into the profession

The one area that all (supporters, opponents, undecideds) agree equally on is that mandatory CE would benefit providers of educational offerings.

Attitudes Of Supporters/Opponents

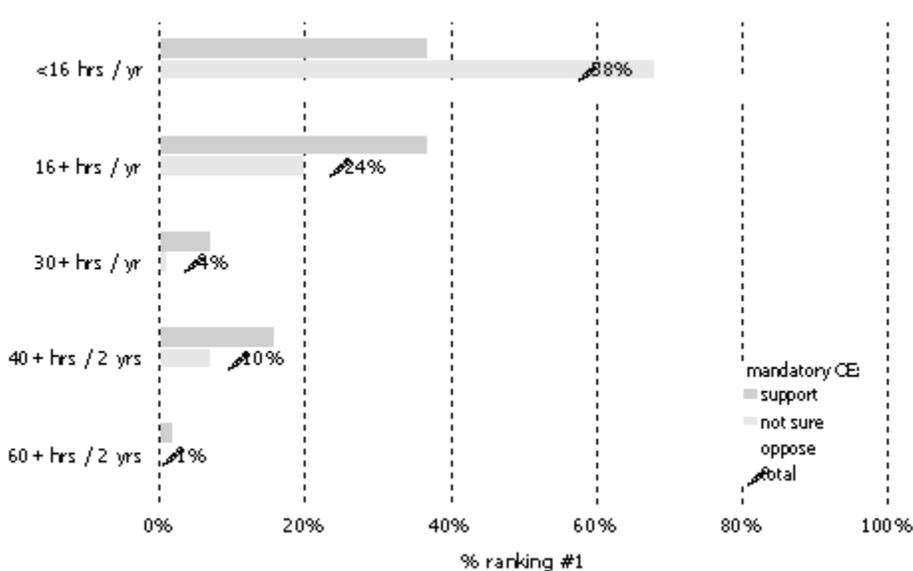


base: 4077 AICP members (multiple answers)

Asked to rank choices regarding how a mandatory CE requirement might be structured (if adopted), a majority of all members (58%) choose the least demanding option presented: less than 16 hours per year. 24% of all respondents select 16 or more hours per year, followed by 10% selecting 40 or more hours every 2 years. More demanding options were selected by fewer than 5% each.

Mandatory CE opponents are virtually unanimous in wishing such a requirement (if adopted) to be as undemanding as possible — 88% said less than 16 hours per year.

CE Requirement Structure Preferences



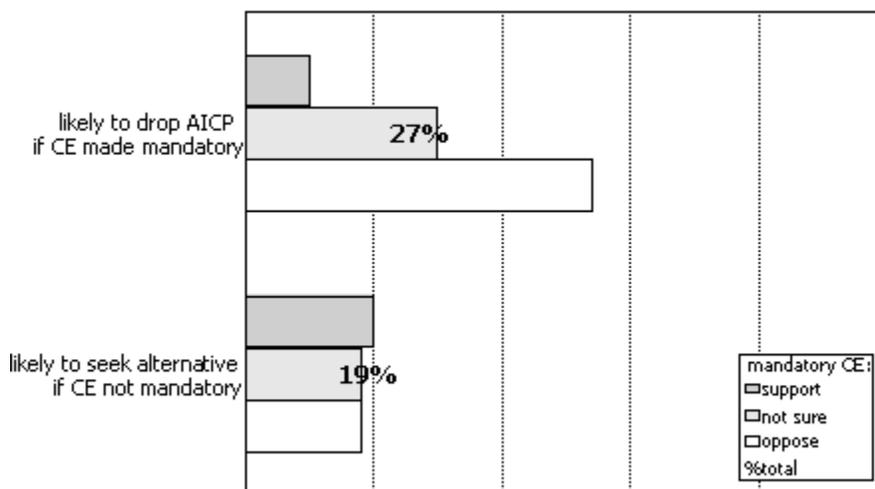
base: 4077 AICP members

Two questions try to gauge likely outcomes of mandatory CE. In both cases, respondents rated their likelihood of acting using an 11-point scale where 0 = definitely would not and 10 = definitely would. Rescaled by a factor of 100, the resulting means can be interpreted as estimates how many members will actually follow through.

If AICP were to *require* mandatory continuing education, these data estimate that 27% of all members would drop their memberships, including 54% of the mandatory CE opponents (who make up 30% of all members) .

Results are more uniform *without* mandatory CE. Here 19% of members overall are likely to seek certification or licensing in another field, should AICP choose that course. All three segments — supporters, opponents, undecideds — are within a point of that 19% figure.

Likely Outcomes



base: 4077 AICP members