



The 2017 Free Press Survey

of the International Underground Railroad Community

Commissioned by *Underground Railroad Free Press*
June 2017

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The Free Press Surveys

The annual *Underground Railroad Free Press* surveys are the only surveys of the international Underground Railroad community. Since 2007, the *Free Press* surveys have provided valuable information not available elsewhere on Underground Railroad knowledge, opinions, practices, economics, trends and specific topics.

Each year, full survey results are made available to the community and to executives of the major American and Canadian Underground Railroad organizations. Results also help *Free Press* in shaping its future content and programs.

A summary of 2017 survey results appears in the July, 2017 issue of *Free Press*. Full reports on this and all previous surveys may be viewed or downloaded at the Surveys page of our website.

How the Survey Measures

Mean (the average): the sum of observations divided by the number of observations

Median: the middle observation in a ranked series

Mode: the most frequent observation

In the one-to-ten rating scale below, average appears twice since mean and median of a 10-point scale are 5.5.

Ratings

1 Lowest possible

2 Very low

3 Low

4 Below average

5 Low average

6 High average

7 Above average

8 High

9 Very high

10 Highest possible

Trends

No change ↔

Improved ↑

Declined ↓

Summary of Main 2017 Findings

- *The Underground Railroad Community*
 - ✓ With modal age now in the 70s, the community might be “aging out.”
 - ✓ There are few young people among newcomers to the community.
 - ✓ Survey takers reflect more higher titles than rank and file.
 - ✓ Teaching the Underground Railroad in schools is now nearly universal.
- *Underground Railroad Organizations*
 - ✓ There are now over 160 identified Underground Railroad organizations.
 - ✓ Desire is very strong for an Underground Railroad exhibit, now lacking, at the National Museum of African American History and Culture.
 - ✓ Overall effectiveness ratings and public awareness of the 11 national Underground Railroad organizations remain low to very low.
- *Underground Railroad Free Press*
 - ✓ *Free Press* remains the best known and highest rated national Underground Railroad organization.



Underground Railroad Knowledge and Experience

How would you rate your overall knowledge of the Underground Railroad?

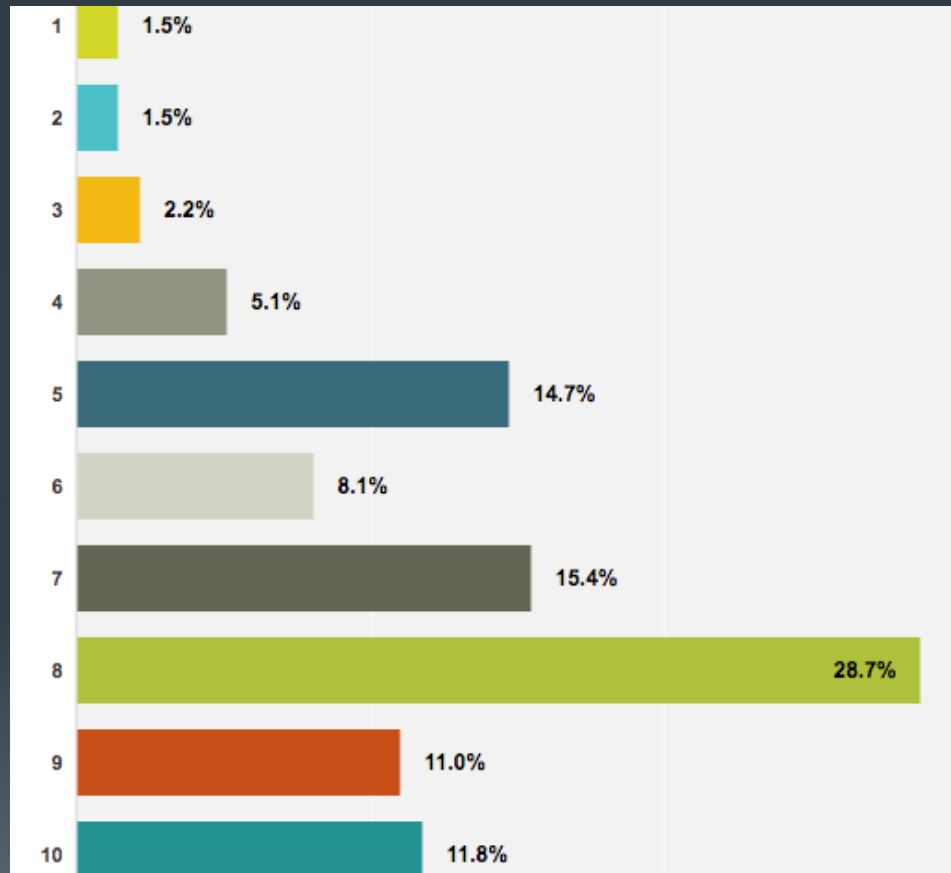
Mean rating: 7.1

Median rating: 8

Modal rating: 8

Year-to-year trend: ↑

The rise could be due to an Underground Railroad novel winning a 2017 Pulitzer Prize.



Have you ever visited
an Underground
Railroad safe-house
or route?

Year-to-year trend: ↓ by 7%

The drop could be due to
more newcomers who have
yet to visit an Underground
Railroad site.



Yes: 75.2%



No: 24.8%

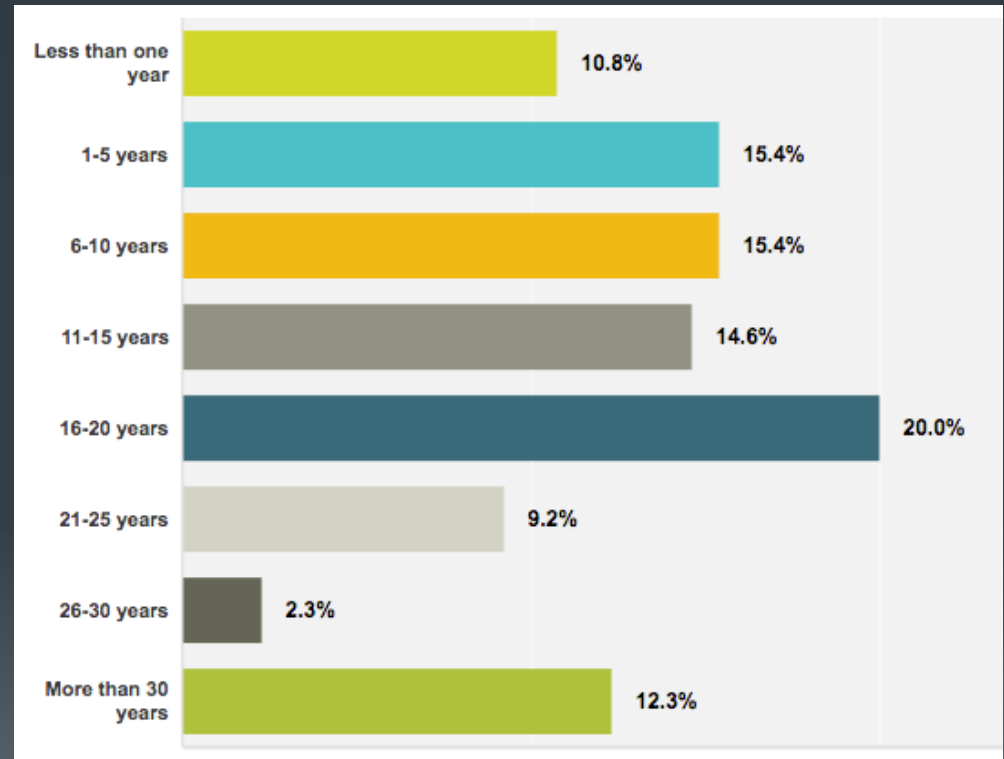
Other than pleasure reading, how long have you been involved with Underground Railroad matters?

Mean duration: 15.8 years

Median duration: 15.0 years

Modal duration: 16-20 years

Year-to-year trend: ↔



Adventure Cycling's Underground Railroad Bicycle Route

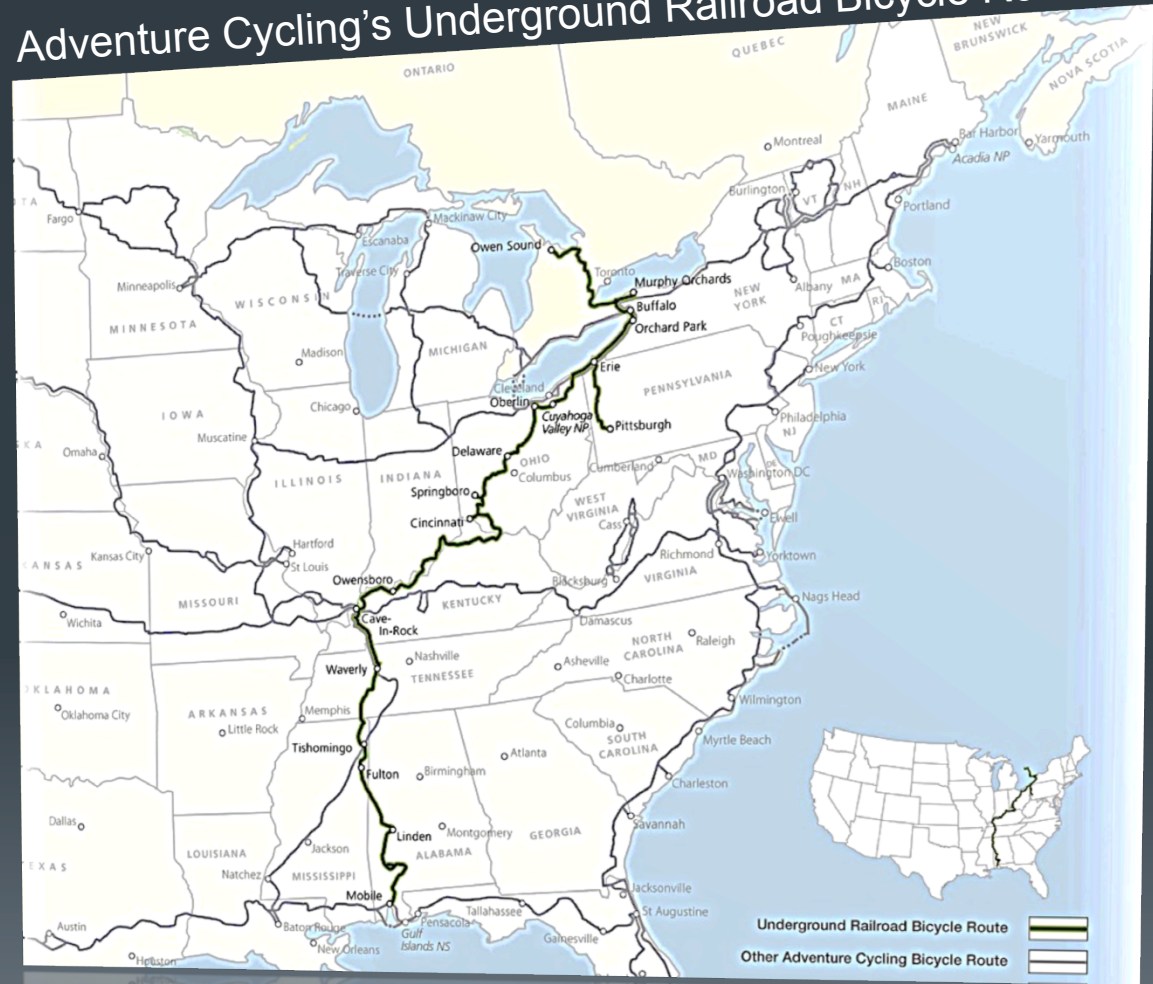
Thinking back, how did you first become aware that there was an Underground Railroad?

Grew up hearing it: 40.6%

In school (any level): 32.8%

Reading: 14.8%

All other: 12.8%



Underground Railroad Conductor and Safehouse
Operator William Whipper of Columbia, Pennsylvania

In a few keywords,
after you learned of
the Underground
Railroad, what was it
that kindled your
interest in it?

Intriguing topic: 32.0%
Moral imperative: 24.8%
Getting involved: 21.6 %
Particular figures: 12.0%
Particular stories: 5.6%
Particular places: 3.2%
Other: 0.8%



Were you ever taught about the Underground Railroad in school?

Trend:  by 17.8% since 2007.

This question is reprised from the 2007 *Free Press* survey. Ten years ago 51.9% of survey takers had received any instruction on the Underground Railroad through high school and 48.1% had not. Now only half that many have not.



Yes: 69.7%

The remaining 6.1% answered "not sure."

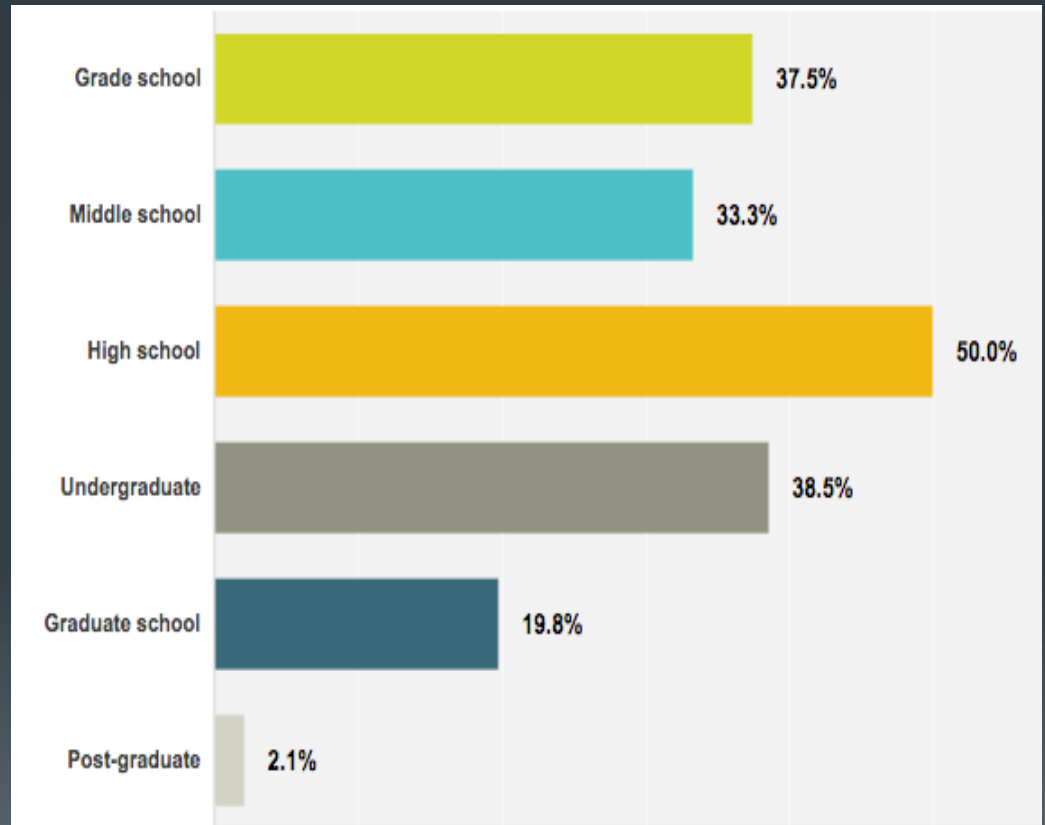


No: 24.2%

If you answered "yes" to the previous question, at what level or levels were you taught about the Underground Railroad? Select all that apply.

This is a first-time *Free Press* survey question in 2017.

By 2017, survey respondents had been taught about the Underground Railroad an average of 1.8 times during their formal education.

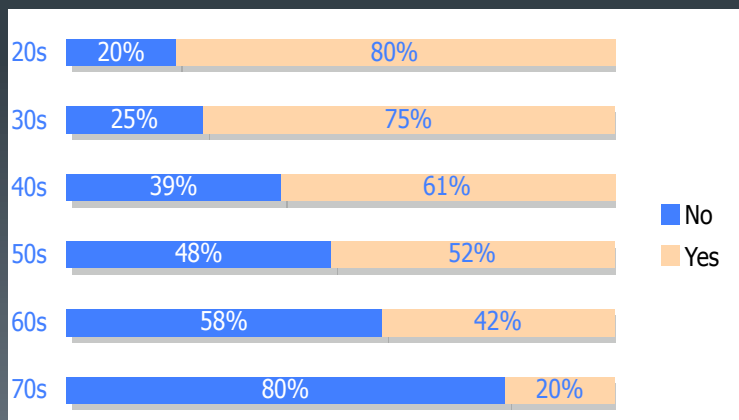


Underground Railroad Education Now Nearly Universal in Schools

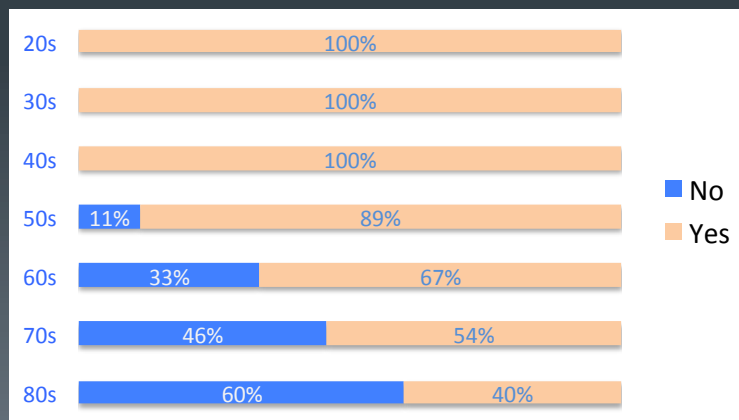
Ten years ago, *Free Press* surveyed the Underground Railroad community on having ever received instruction on the Underground Railroad through high school, results of which showed scant instruction until the 1960s. The 2017 survey reprised this question, revealing essentially universal Underground Railroad education for people age 49 and under (those born after 1967) among survey respondents.

Free Press research has shown that it was individual teachers on their own who in the 1960s began inserting the Underground Railroad into their curricula, sparking the reawakening of the Underground Railroad in the national memory.

2007 Free Press Survey



2017 Free Press Survey





Environment of the International Underground Railroad Community

Are you directly involved with an Underground Railroad site, organization or program?

Year-to-year trend: ↓ by 12.9%

The drop was probably caused by a major expansion in 2016 of the *Free Press* subscriber base generally from outside of the international Underground Railroad community.



Yes: 39.5%

Includes 28.7% now involved and 10.8% previously involved.



No: 60.5%

In which of the following ranges is your organization's or site's current annual budget?

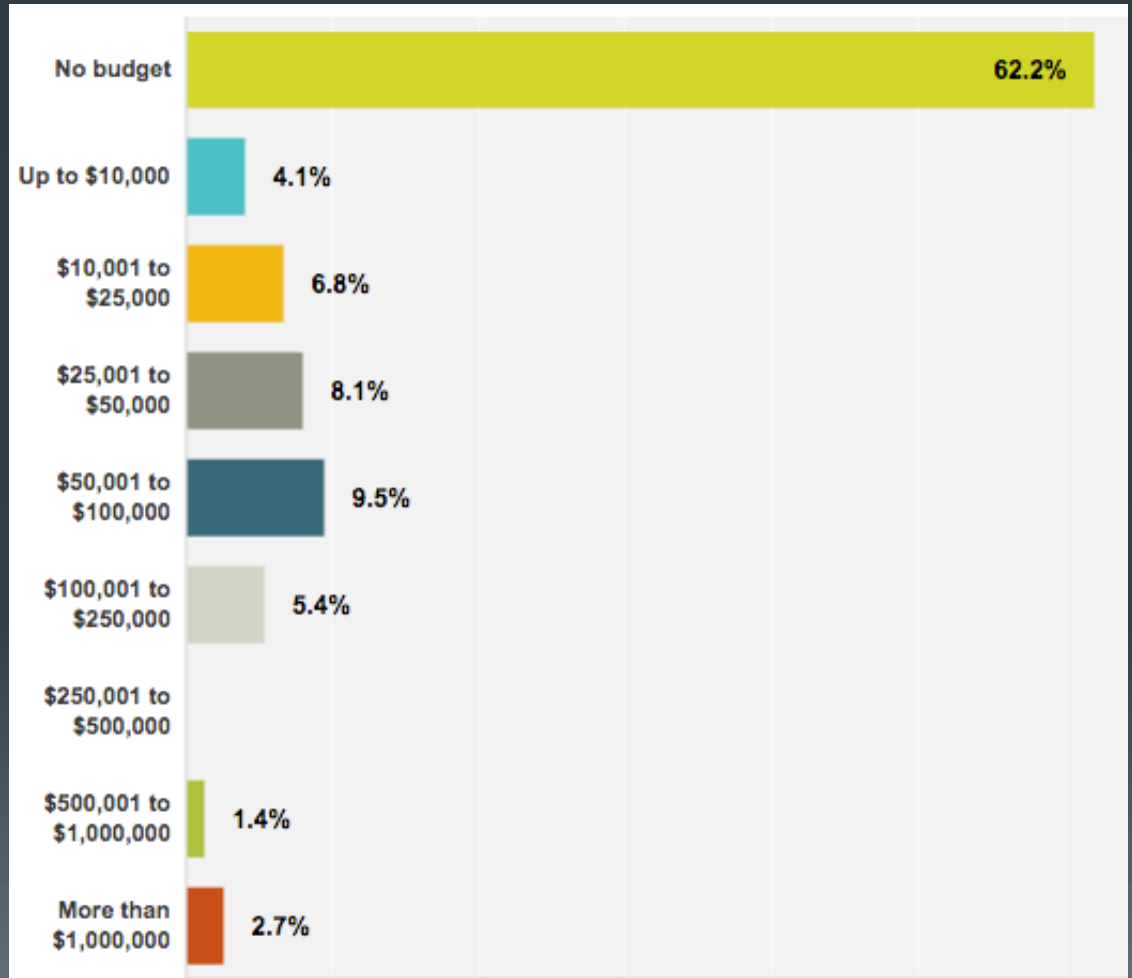
Year-to-year trend: ↑ by 14% for those with revenue

Mean budget: \$15,700

Mean budget of those with revenues: \$41,534

Median budget: No budget

Modal budget: No budget



How did the revenues of your organization change from 2015 to last year?

Year-to-year trend: ↔ More are growing than declining but not as many since peak growth in 2013.

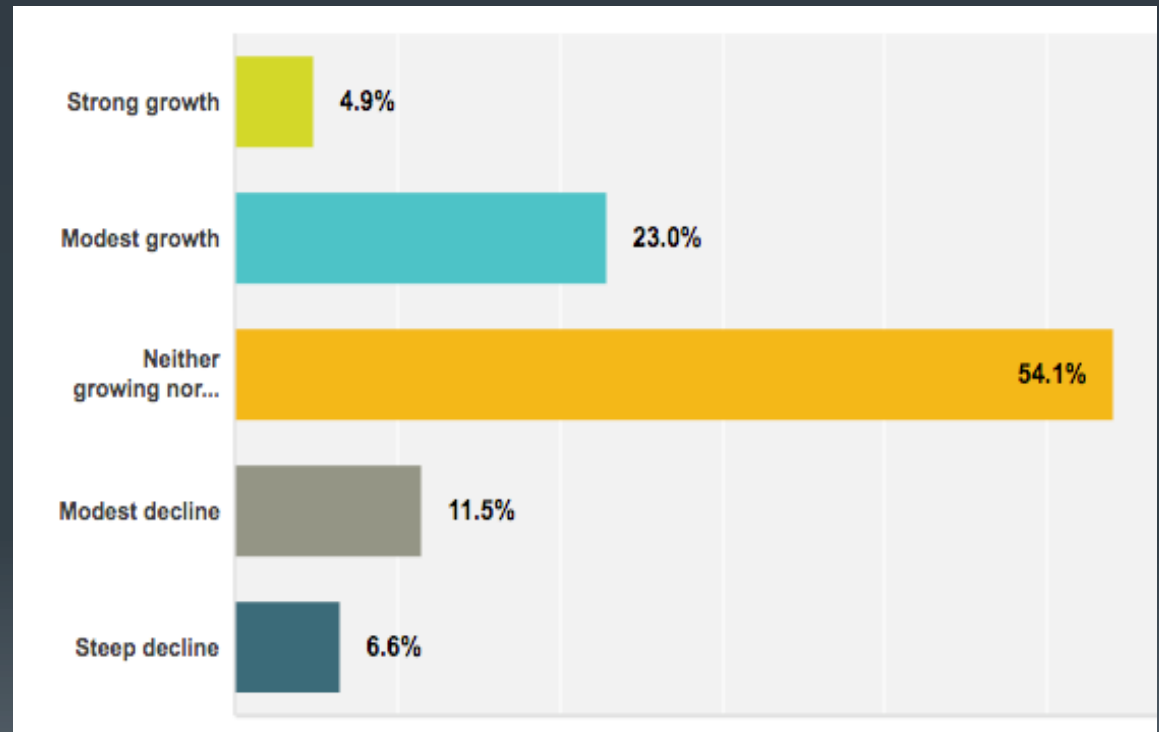
Growing: 27.9%

Declining: 18.1%

2016 growth/decline: 1.5 to 1

2015 growth/decline: 1.3 to 1

2014 growth/decline: 1.9 to 1





Opinions on Underground Railroad Free Press

Ratings on relevance of topics reported in *Underground Railroad* *Free Press*

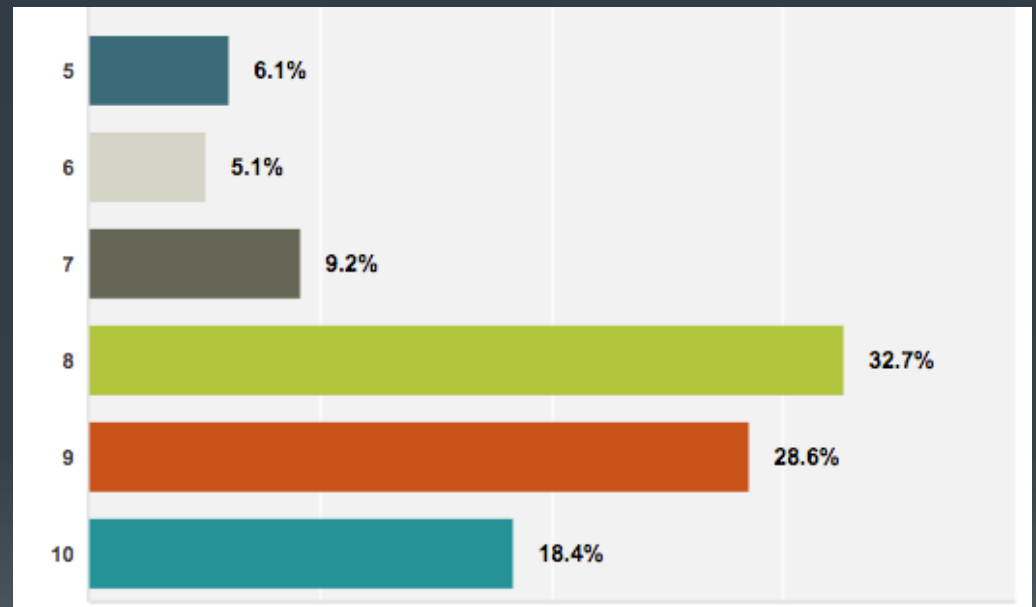
Mean rating: 8.3

Median rating: 8.9

Modal rating: 8

Year-to-year trend: ↔

(There were no ratings below 5.)



Ratings of how well topics are reported in *Underground Railroad Free Press*

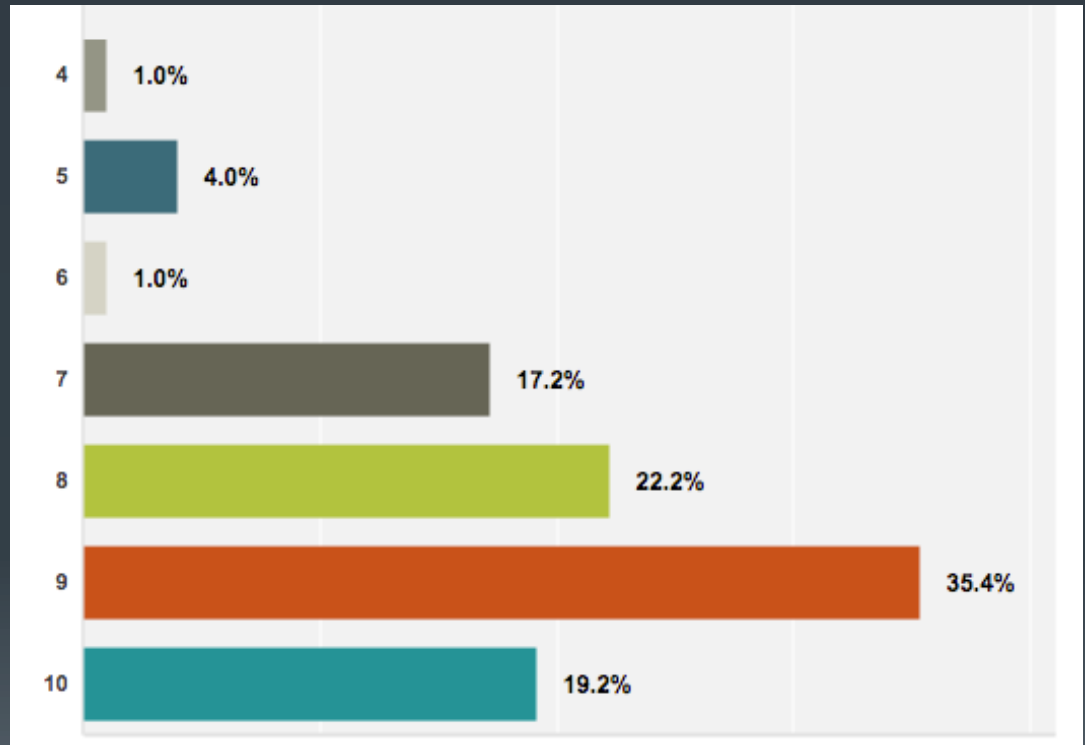
Mean rating: 8.4

Median rating: 9

Modal rating: 9

Year-to-year trend: ↔

(There were no ratings below 4.)



Overall ratings of *Free Press* as an Underground Railroad news publication

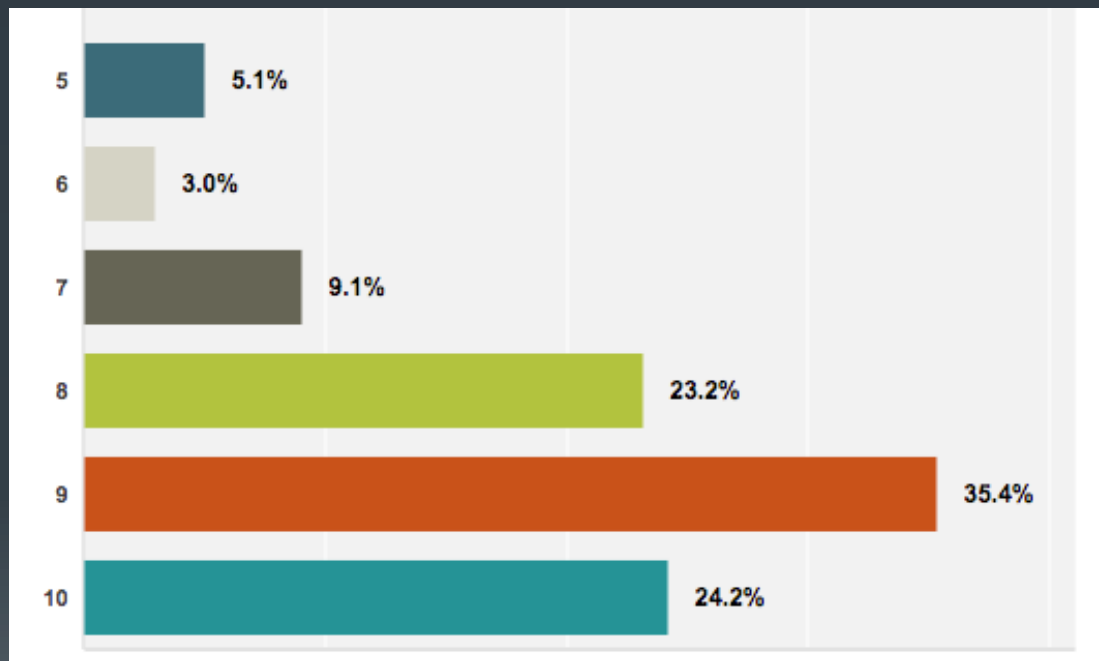
Mean rating: 8.5

Median rating: 9.3

Modal rating: 9

Year-to-year trend: ↔

(There were no ratings below 5.)



Overall ratings of the usefulness to the Underground Railroad community of *Free Press* programs

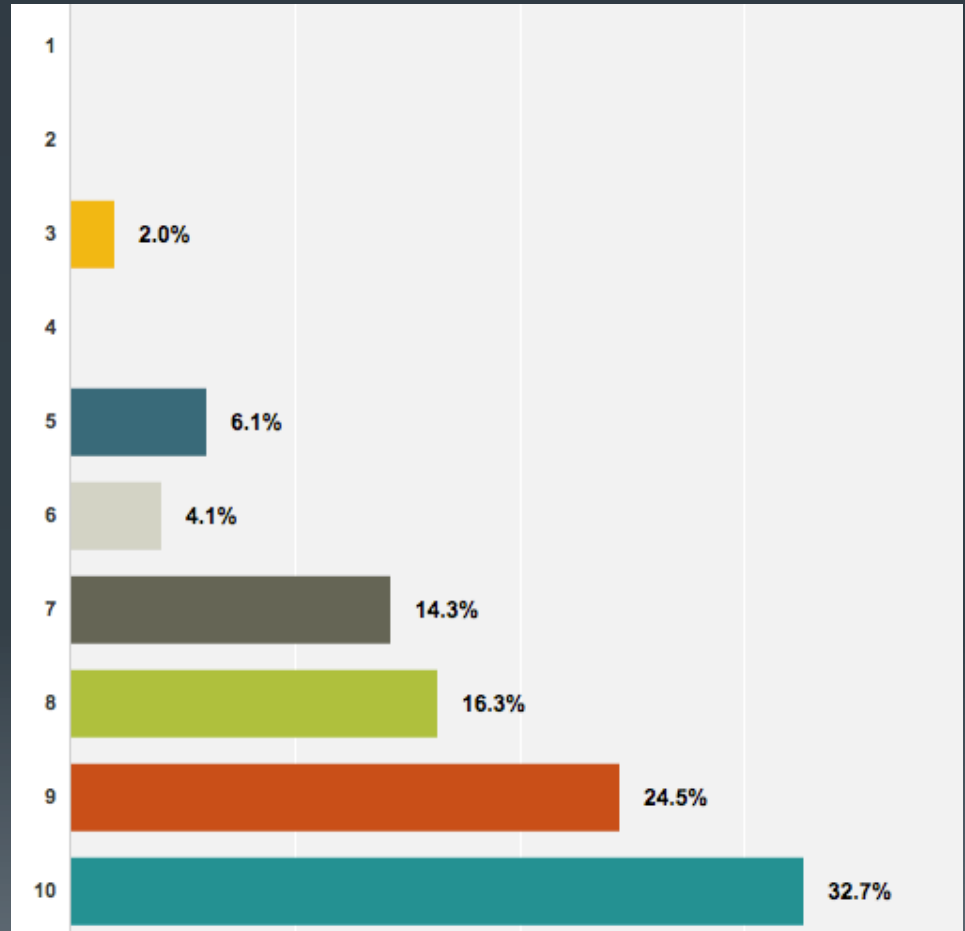
Mean rating: 8.1

Median rating: 8.9

Modal rating: 8

Year-to-year trend: ↓ slightly

Programs include the Free Press Prizes, Lynx, Datebook, Free Press Books, the annual surveys, archives, advertising, advocacy and the newsletter.

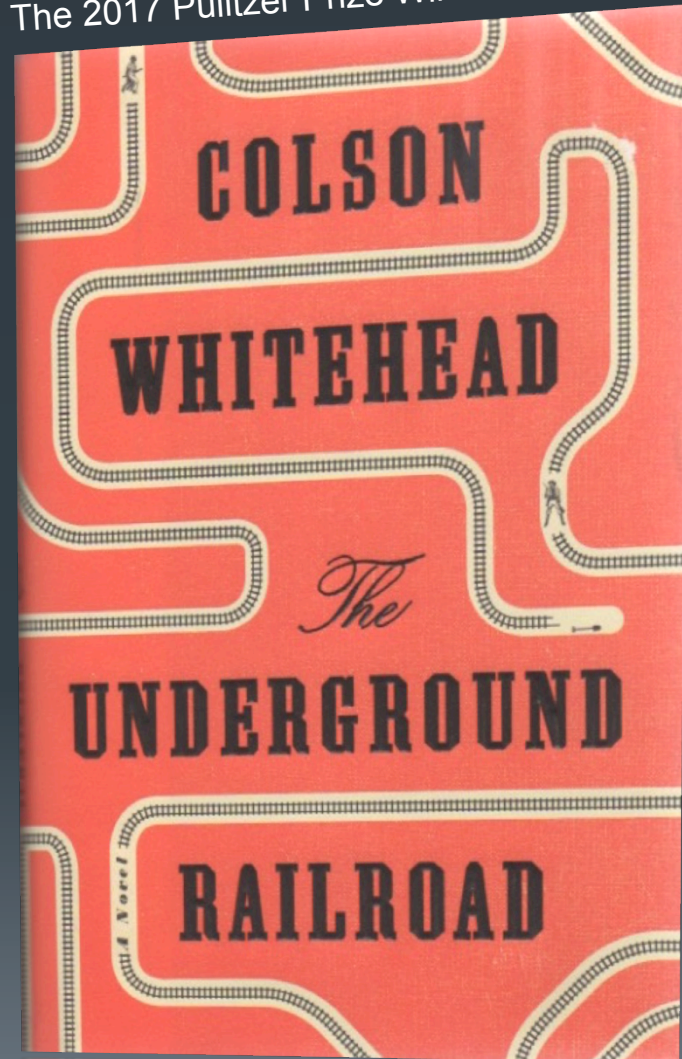


If you would like your or some other organization listed on the *Free Press Lynx* registry, please provide name, web address and description of the organization.

New Lynx Listings

Underground Railroad sites and organizations submitted by 2017 survey respondents have been listed at Lynx, the central registry of the international Underground Railroad community, now totaling over 160 of today's Underground Railroad entities in the United States and Canada.

The 2017 Pulitzer Prize Winner in Fiction

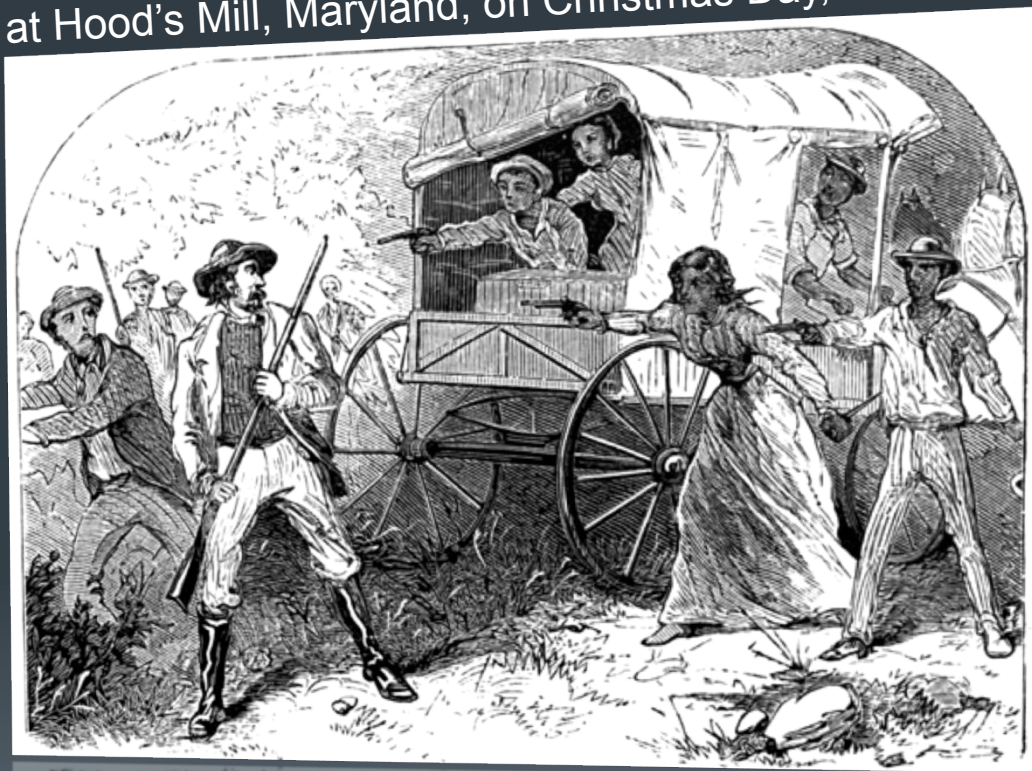


If you would like your or some other organization's event listed at the *Free Press Datebook*, please provide, dates, sponsoring organization name, event description, venue and email address.

Free Press operates Datebook, the free central calendar of events of Underground Railroad programs.

Events submitted by 2017 survey respondents were added to Datebook.

The Frank Wanzer Party Fends Off Slave Catchers at Hood's Mill, Maryland, on Christmas Day, 1855



If there are friends or others you would like to receive *Underground Railroad Free Press*, please provide their email addresses to begin receiving *Free Press*.

Free Press thanks the many survey respondents for those they have added as new *Free Press* subscribers who we have welcomed, given life-time subscriptions and provided the current *Free Press* issue.

Harriet Tubman's Gravestone in Auburn, New York





Free Press Readership

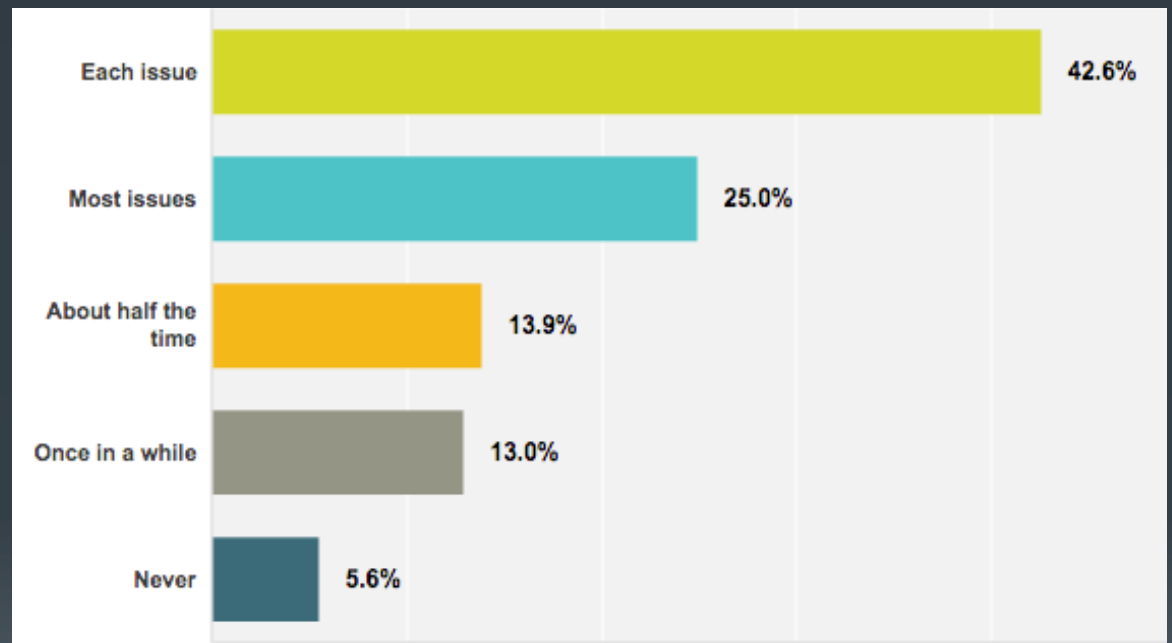
How often do you read *Underground Railroad Free Press*?

Mean frequency: Most issues

Median frequency: Most issues

Modal frequency: Every issue

Year-to-year trend: ↑



How many others do you notify when *Free Press* issues become available, or provide *Free Press* to, or send the link to the latest issue to?

Nearly 60 percent of subscribers forward *Free Press* or notifications of new issues to others. Those doing so notify an average of 7.5 nonsubscribers, reaching 36,000 additional readers beyond the *Free Press* subscriber base.

Thank you!

Home of American Underground Railroad Freedom Seeker Josiah Henson in Dresden, Ontario, Canada

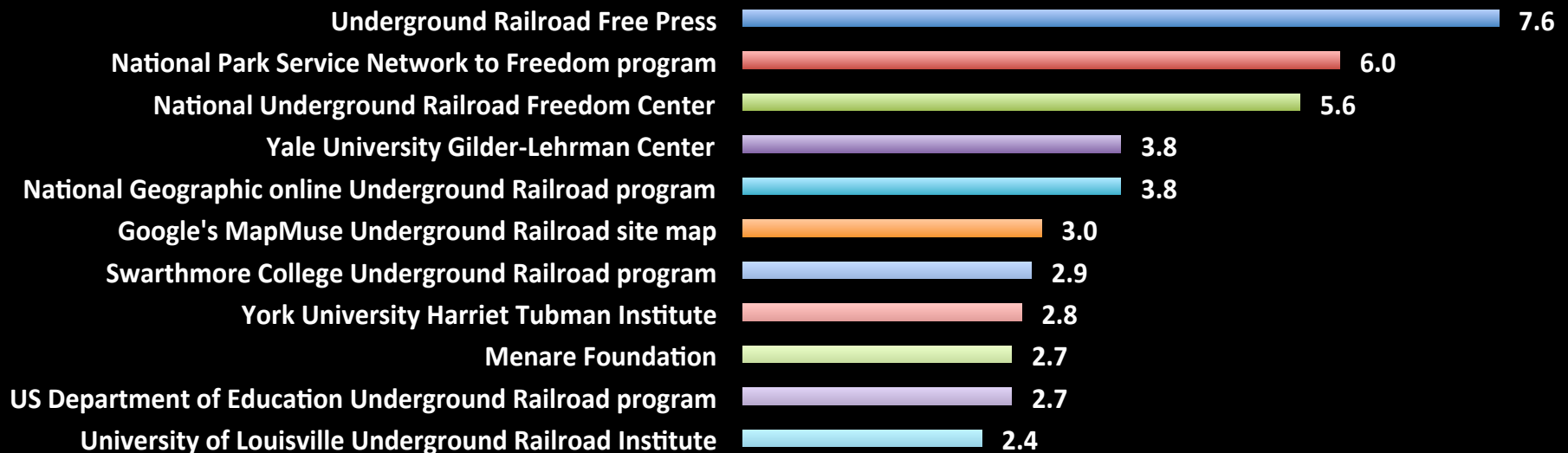




Contemporary Underground Railroad Institutions

How familiar would you say you are with the following national Underground Railroad institutions?

Mean Familiarity Ratings

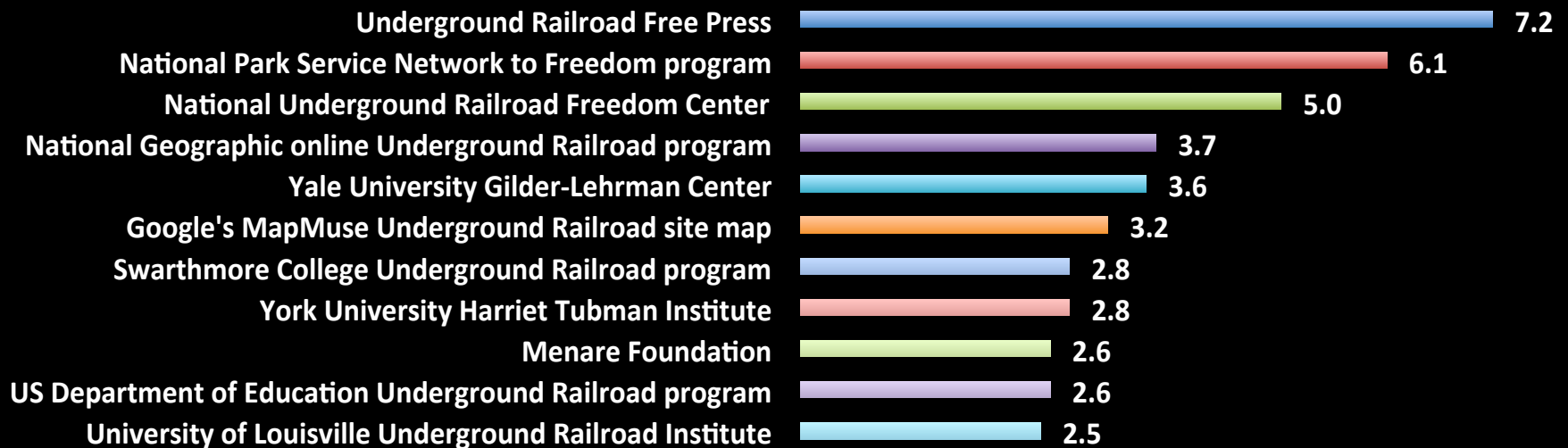


- Mean familiarity overall: 3.9, low
- Median familiarity overall: 3.0, low
- Modal familiarity overall: 2.x, very low
- Year-to-year trend: ↓

The likely cause of the drop in familiarity is the large influx of Underground Railroad newcomers to the *Free Press* subscriber database.

How effective in promoting and building awareness of the Underground Railroad would you say are these national Underground Railroad institutions?

Mean Effectiveness Ratings



- Mean effectiveness overall: 3.8, low
- Median effectiveness overall: 3.2, low
- Modal effectiveness overall : 2.x, very low
- Year-to-year trend: ↓

The new National Museum of African-American History and Culture does not have an Underground Railroad display or program. Should the museum tell the story of the Underground Railroad or are current displays and programs sufficient without much mention of the Underground Railroad?

Citing this survey result and other appeals, *Underground Railroad Free Press* has written to National Museum of African-American History and Culture CEO Lonnie Bunch and to selected Members of Congress urging that the Museum mount a permanent meaningful Underground Railroad exhibit.



Tell the story: 95.7%



OK as is: 4.3%



Community Demographics

In which category is your age?

Mean age: 62.1

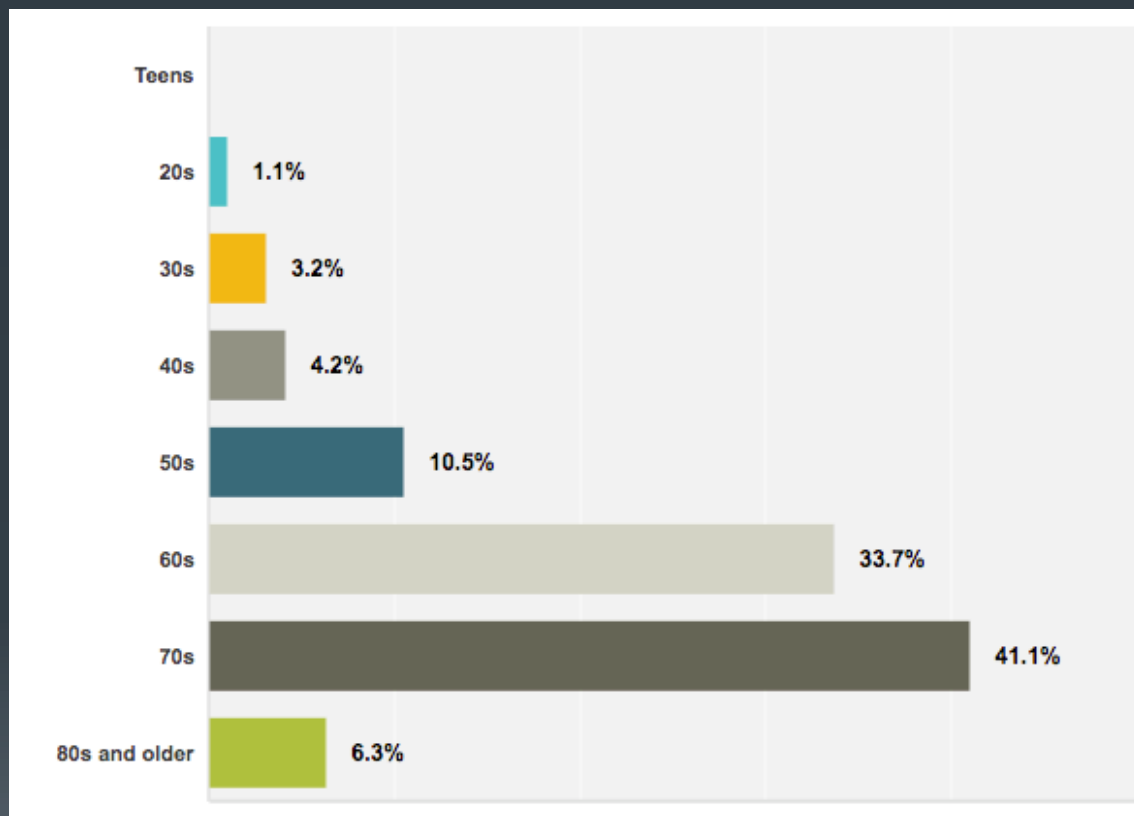
Median age: 69.2

Modal age category: 70s

Year-to-year trend: ↔

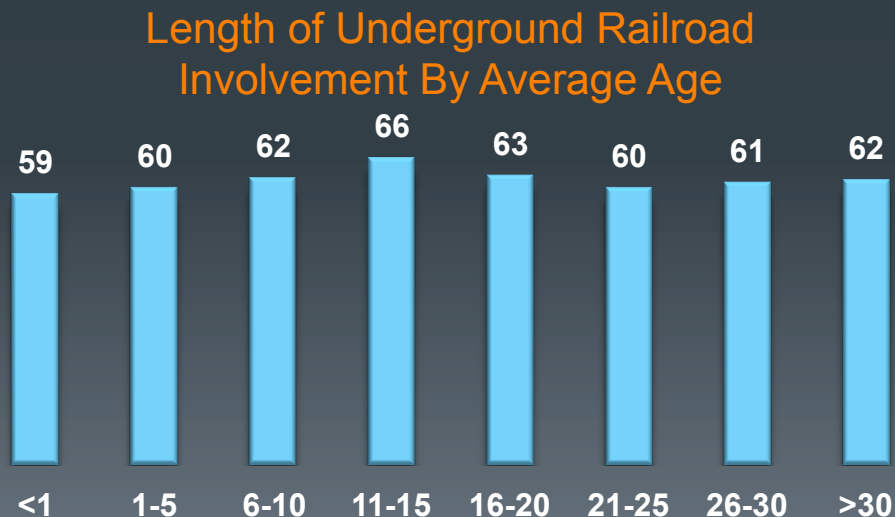
81% of the international Underground Railroad community is 60 or older.

The community is “aging out” and needs to attract more younger people.



There Aren't Many Young Newcomers to the Underground Railroad Community

To see how many Underground Railroad newcomers who took the 2017 survey might be younger, we examined length of Underground Railroad involvement versus age of respondent in the hope that newcomers turned out to be younger fresh blood to the community. However, as in the chart here, those with less than a year of involvement are only 3 years younger than the average respondent age of 62.1, while those with 1 to 5 years of involvement are 2 years younger than that on the average.



We Need to Get Younger: A Special Appeal

Please join *Free Press* in letting younger people know of the pleasures and benefits of taking part in today's Underground Railroad community, and to encourage their getting involved. Younger in this case means 40s on down!

What you can do:

- ✓ For people of all ages, take them on a **visit** to an Underground Railroad site, especially one with docents or explanatory material. For a site near you, see the *Free Press* website Lynx page or find.mapmuse.com/map/underground-rr.
- ✓ For people of all ages, suggest **volunteering** at an Underground Railroad site.
- ✓ For students, **reinforce** what they are learning in school by talking to them about the moral imperative that the Underground Railroad stood for.
- ✓ **Introduce** teens and younger to the *National Geographic* Underground Railroad website at nationalgeographic.com/features/99/railroad/j1.html.
- ✓ Give family and friends **free subscriptions** to *Free Press*, or forward your bimonthly email announcement of new issues or your downloaded issues to them.

Thank You

Which is your gender?

Year-to-year trend: more men than women

This is first among the eleven annual *Free Press* surveys in which men have outnumbered women among respondents, a trend that has been in effect for the past four years.



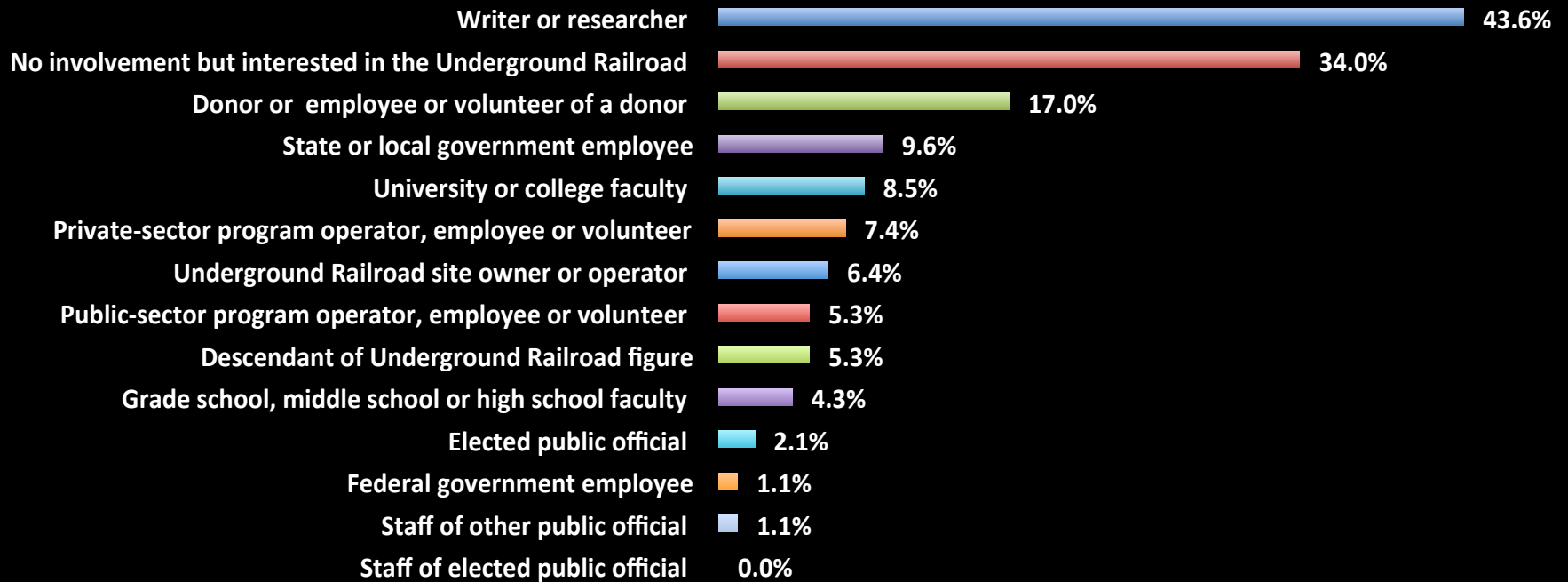
Women
49.0%



Men
51.0%

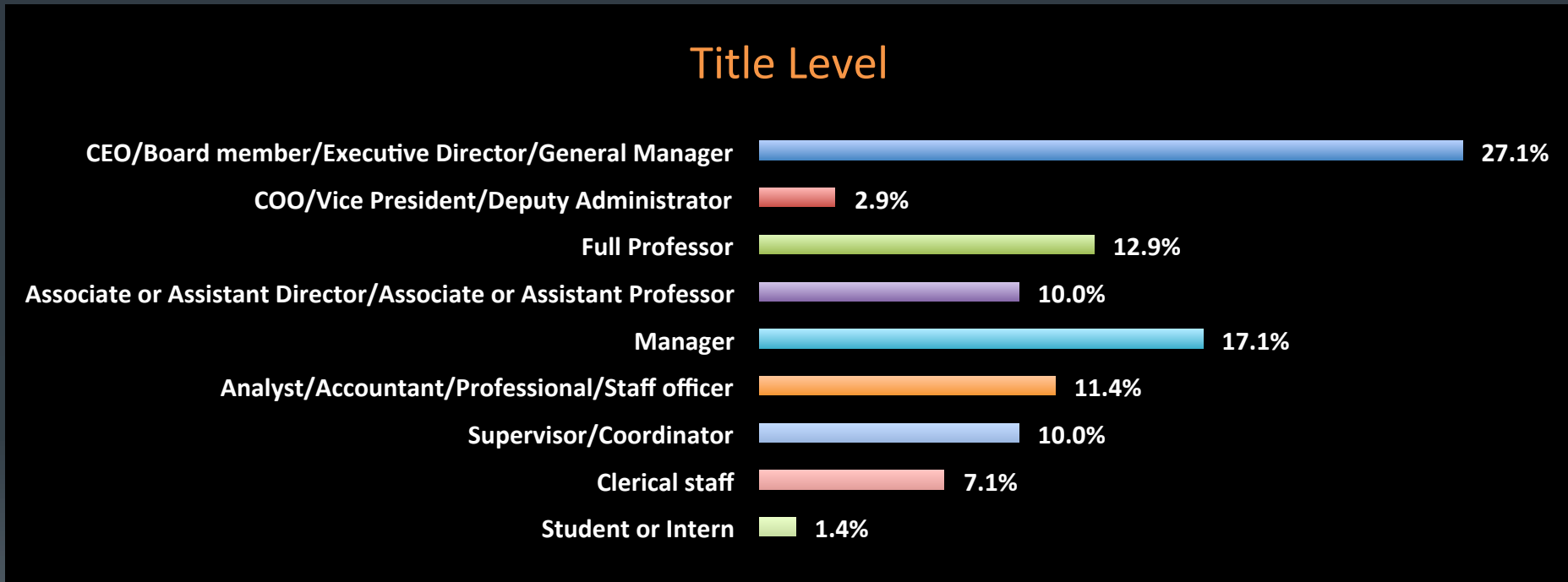
Types of Underground Railroad Involvement

Types of Involvement



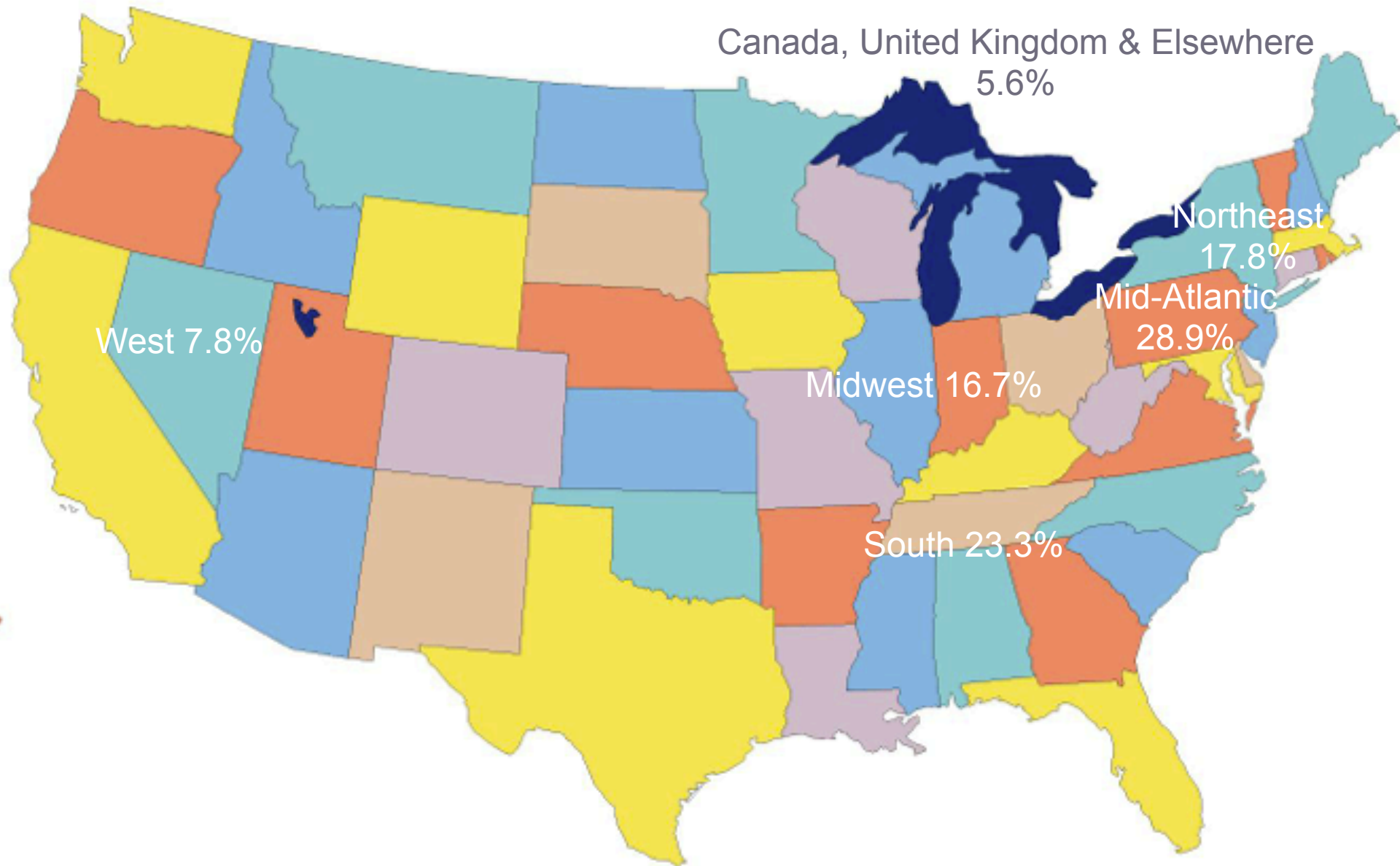
- Since respondents could select multiple involvements, the total sums to more than 100%.
- “No involvement” rose 15.4% because of 2017 subscribers new to the Underground Railroad.
- Multiple involvements are the experience of 46% of respondents.

Which occupational title level best describes your primary position in employment whether or not it involves the Underground Railroad?



Retirees were asked to select the title best describing their highest position before retiring.

Geographical Distribution of Survey Respondents

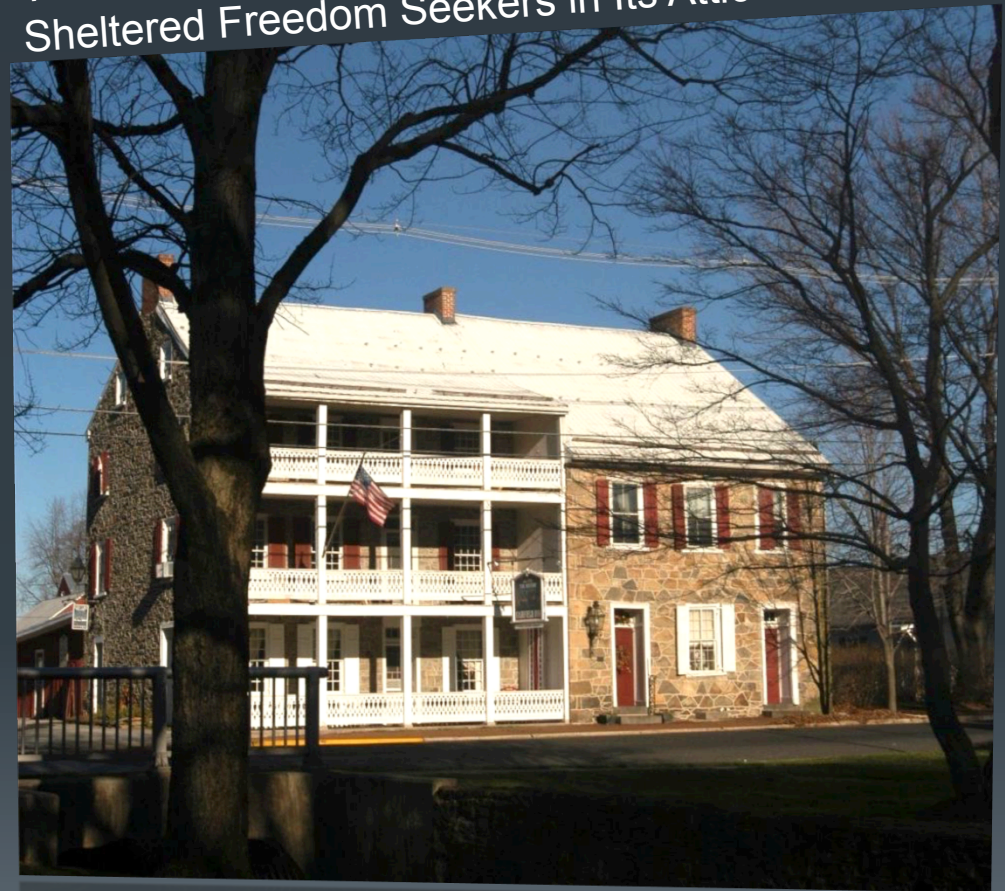


Survey background, reliability, and degree of confidence in survey results

Survey invitations were emailed to *Free Press* subscribers who could forward the invitation to others as some did. Later a reinvitation was issued to boost sample size and survey reliability.

- Survey dates: June 5-18, 2017
- Sample size: 136
- Completion rate: 70.6%
- Sampling error reduction: 1.4%
- Maximum random error: $\pm 8.3\%$
- Confidence interval: 95%
- General confidence: Caution

The Fairfield Inn in Fairfield, Pennsylvania Sheltered Freedom Seekers in Its Attic





Thank You

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