

# NSCSS Cooperator Report and Results of a Recent Professional Practice Survey

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*Founded in 1987, the  
Society exists to support  
the professional practice  
of soil science as a  
business.*

--excerpted from website

[www.NSCSS.org](http://www.NSCSS.org)



# NSCSS works for its members primarily by:

- Promoting exchange Of ideas and information.
- Encouraging high standards of practice.



# The Consulting Soil Scientist

“...must utilize standards set forth by the National Cooperative Soil Survey in the conduct of field soil science consulting activities...”

--NSCSS bylaws



**NSCSS wants consulting soil scientists to be a larger part of the NCSS program. NSCSS leadership and members feel that this relationship still needs improvement.**



# Cooperating Soil Scientists

Should be informed directly of:

- Work planning conferences
- Training opportunities
- Updates posted on Web  
(Field Indicators, NSSH)
- NCSS newsletter
- Distribution of NCSS Technical Updates



# NSCSS Annual Meeting February 2008 Myrtle Beach SC



# Selected Annual Meeting Sessions

- SC Coastal Plain Geomorphology
- USDA-NRCS Coastal Land Use & TSP Programs
- New Undergraduate Soil Frontiers: Real Estate, Environment & Land Use
- SC On-Site Waste Water Program & Soils/Engineered Permit Program
- Soil Indicators for On-Site Waste Water Treatment & Current Technologies



# Selected Annual Meeting Sessions (continued)

- 404 Wetlands, Recent Federal Court Action Impacts , & Regional Guidelines
- Interpreting Soil Morphological Features, Hydrological Models & Applications
- Water Table Studies, Redoximorphic Indicators and Hydrology Modeling
- Annual Ethics Session

# Representative Meeting Speakers

- Bob Eppinette, Lowcountry Soil Consulting
- Dr. Pam Thomas, SC State Soil Scientist
- Dr. Leonard Gordon, SC DH Director On-Site Waste Water Program
- Dr. Dave Lindbo, NCSU
- Dr. Jim Gregory, NCSU
- Mr. Bill Fanning, PSMJ Consultants
- Dr. Mike Vepraskas, NCSU



# Professional Practice Survey



Are you a partner in the consulting  
business where you are employed or  
do you represent and owner or  
partner?

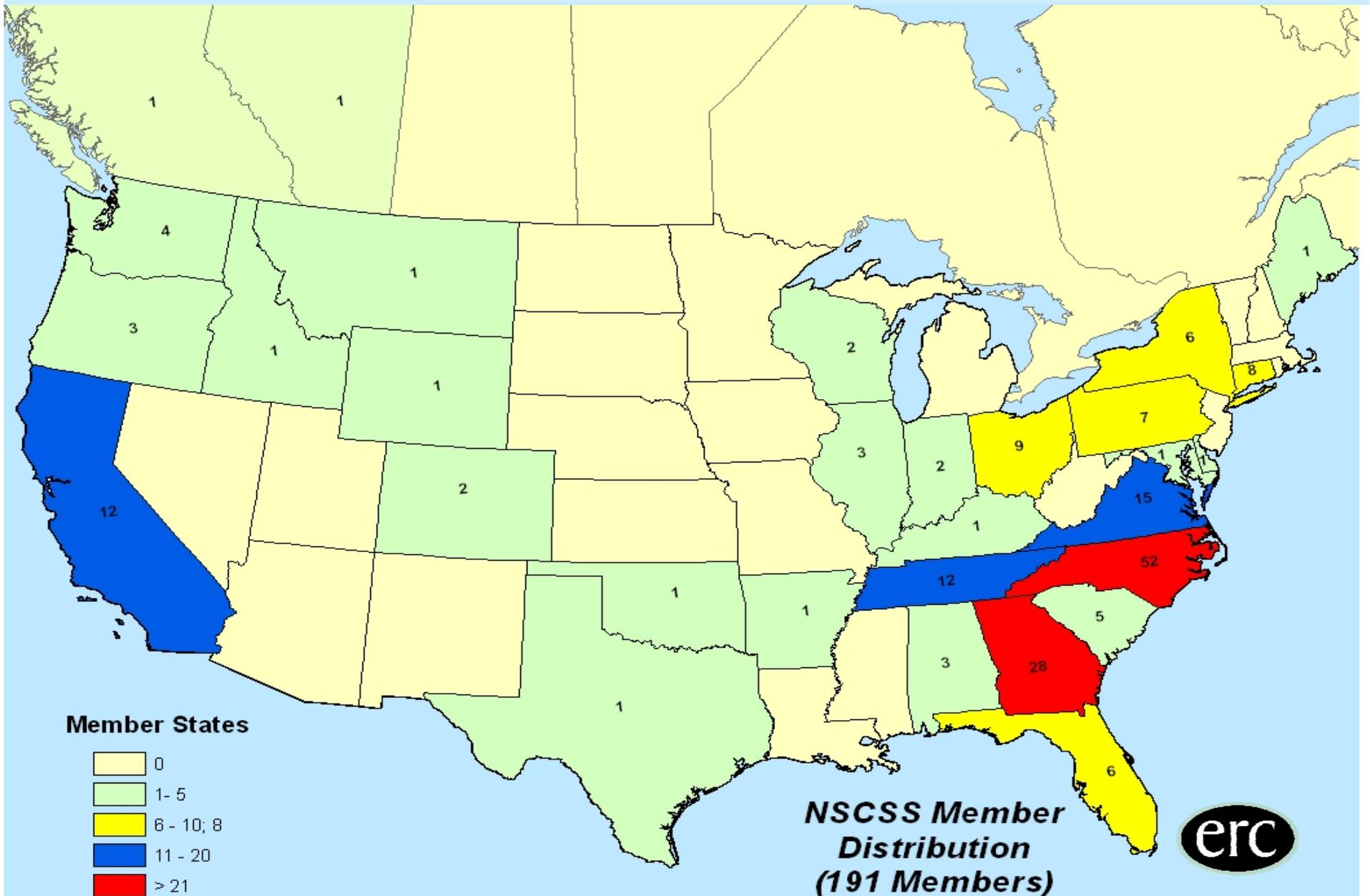


# Survey Respondents

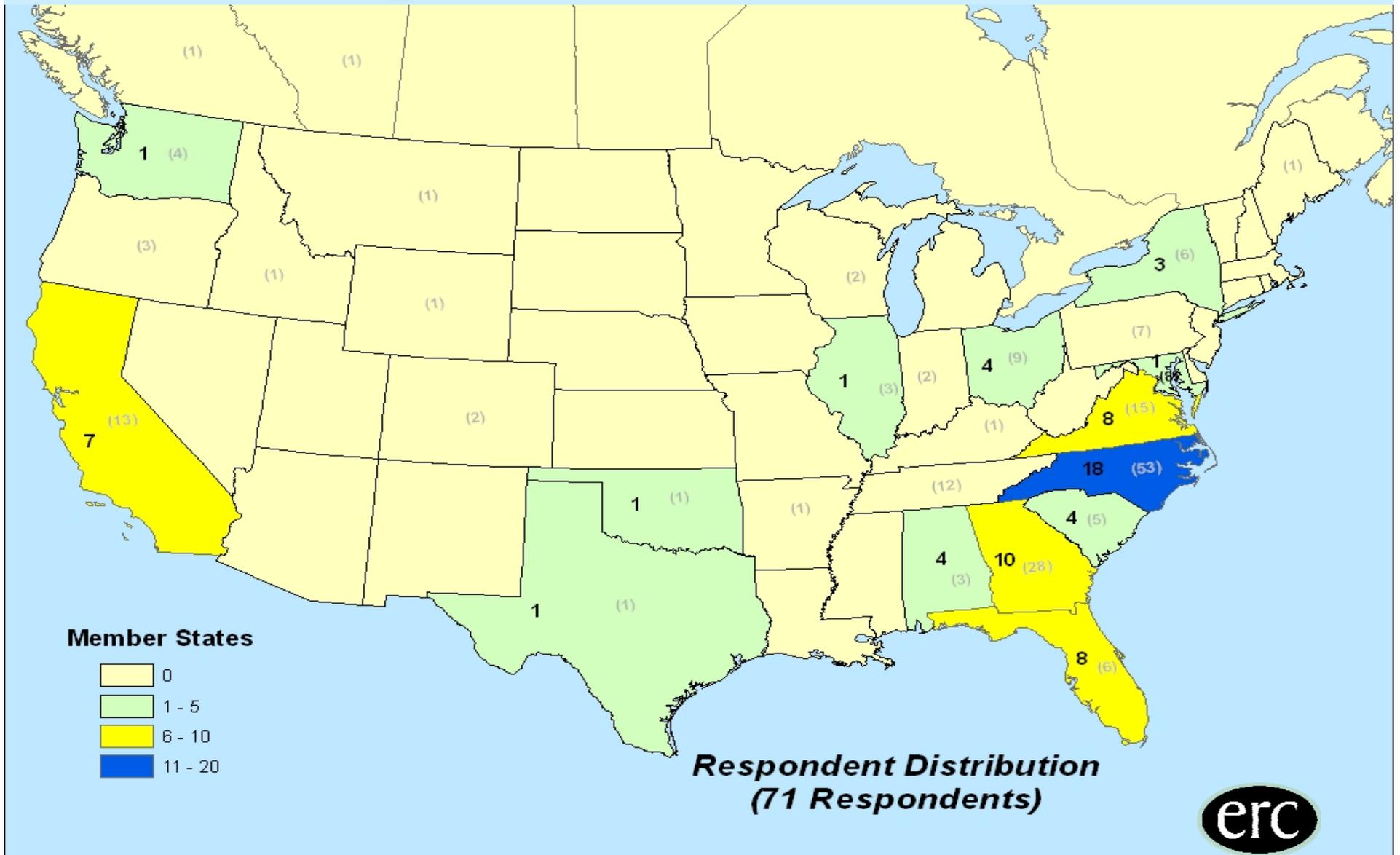
- 88 Respondents to Date
- 87 Respondents by 6/30/2008
  - 73 Owners or Partners
  - 71 Owners or Partners edited



# Map of NCSS Members



# Respondent Distribution



Is consulting your primary  
occupation?



Is consulting your primary  
occupation?

**Yes** 91.5%

**No** 8.5%



Is SOIL Consulting your primary  
field of practice?



# Is SOIL Consulting your primary field of practice?

- **Yes** 86%
- **No** 14%



**Do you have offices in more than  
one state?**



Do you have offices in more than one state?

- **Yes** 11%
- **No** 89%



**Do you work in more than one  
state?**



# Do you work in more than one state?

■ **Yes** 56%

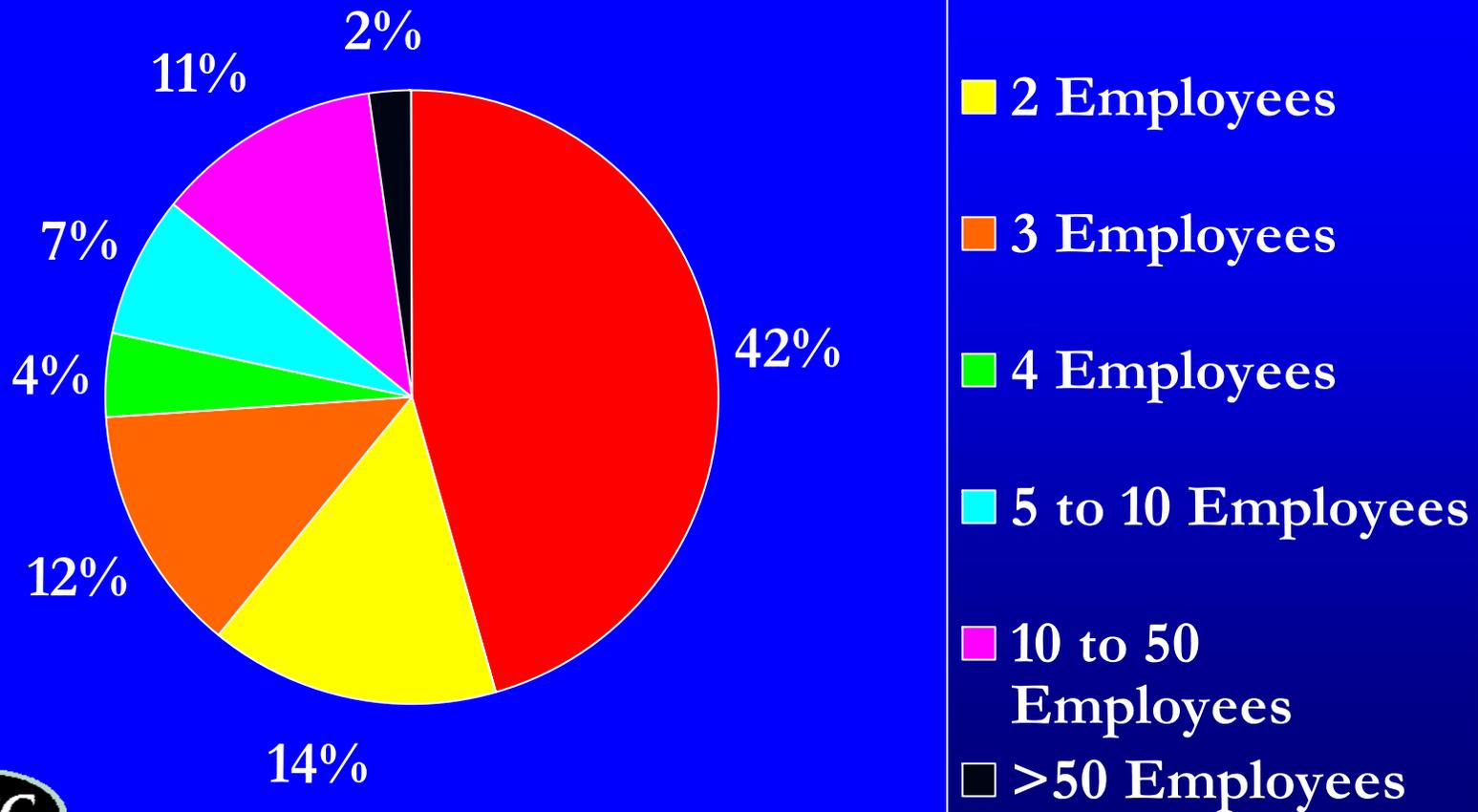
■ **No** 44%



How many people are employed  
at your company?



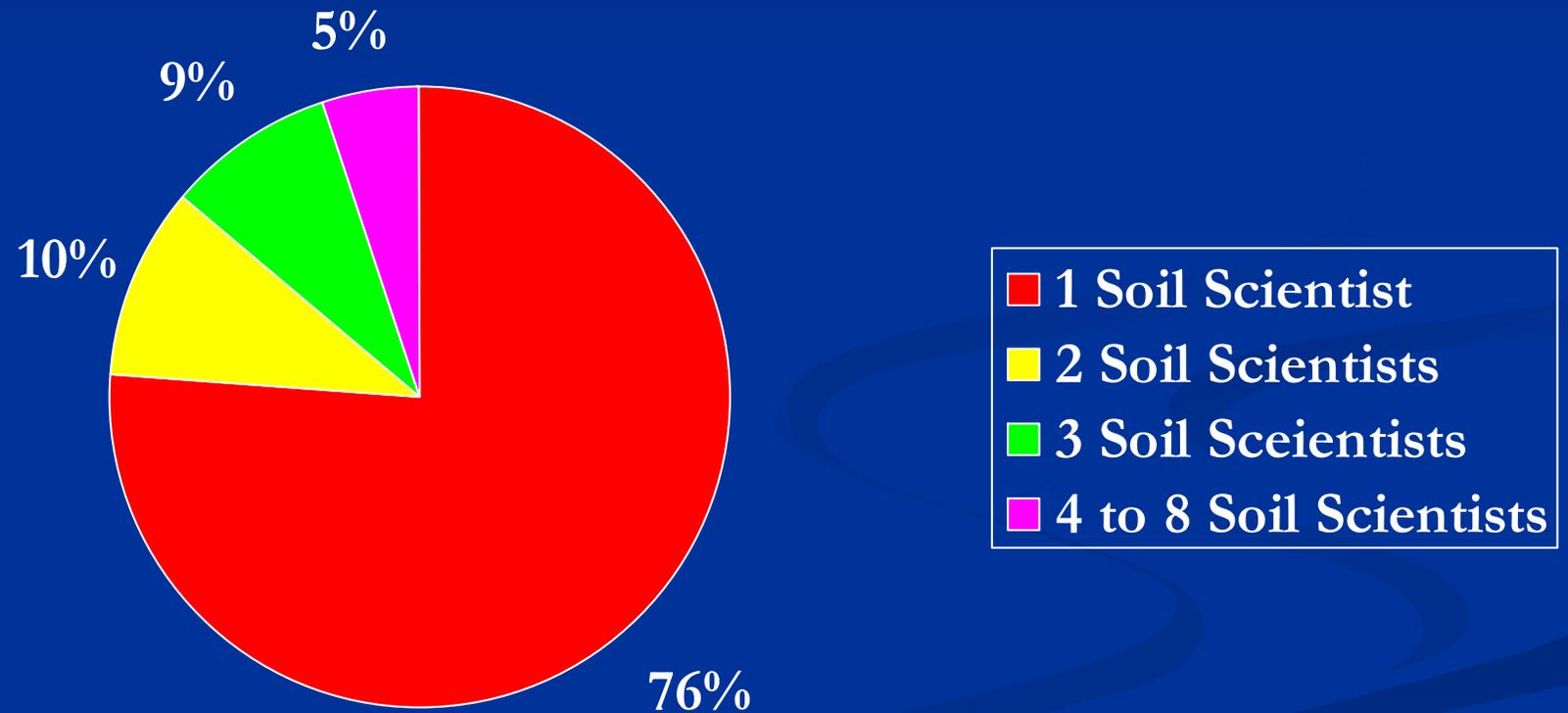
# How many people are employed at your company?



How many soil scientists are employed at your company?



# How many soil scientists are employed at your company?



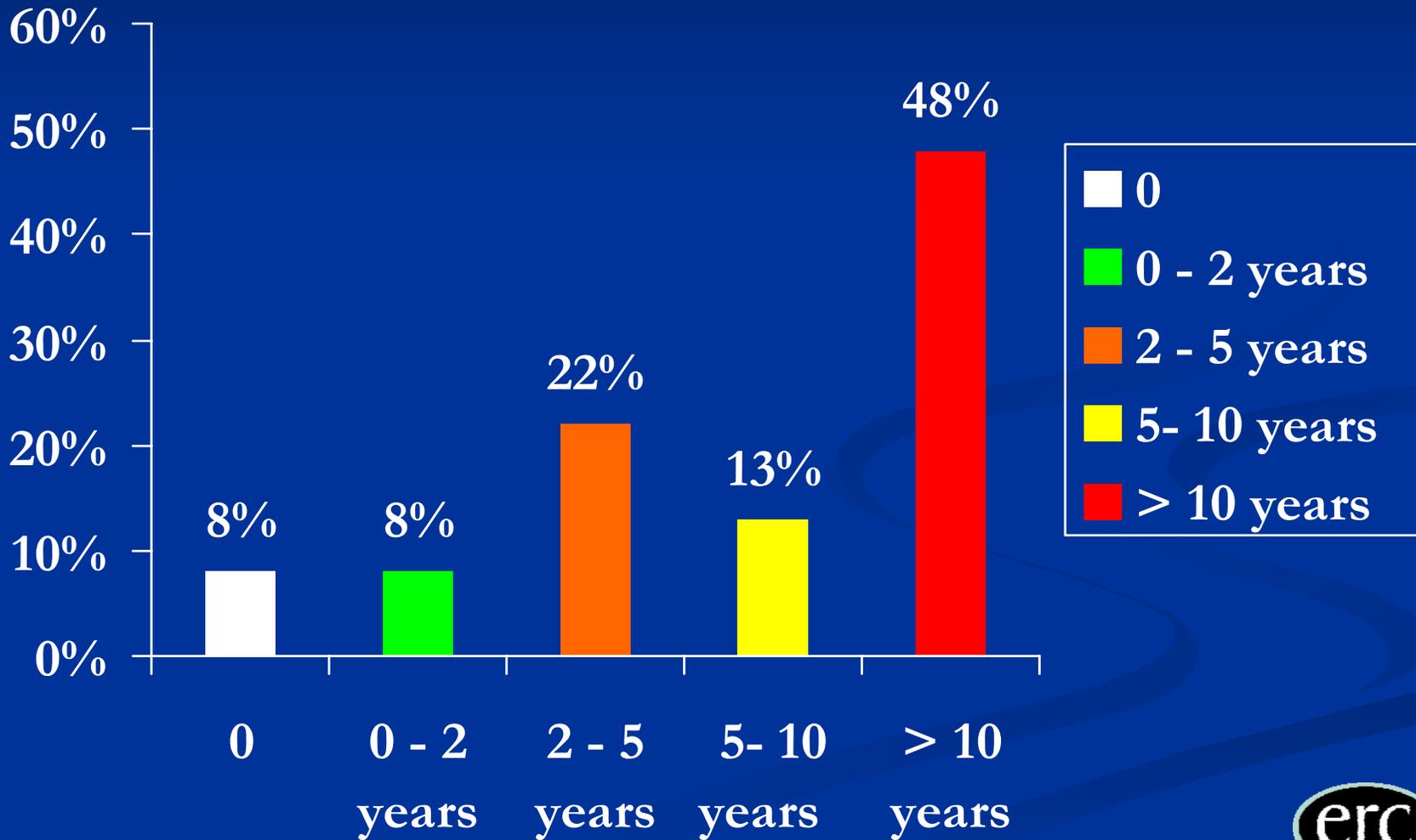
# The Principal



For how many years were you employed as a professional soil scientist before you started or joined your consulting firm?



For how many years were you employed as a professional soil scientist before you started or joined your consulting firm?



**Did you retire from another  
position before you started your  
consulting business?**



Did you retire from another position before you started your consulting business?

■ **Yes** 27%

■ **No** 73%



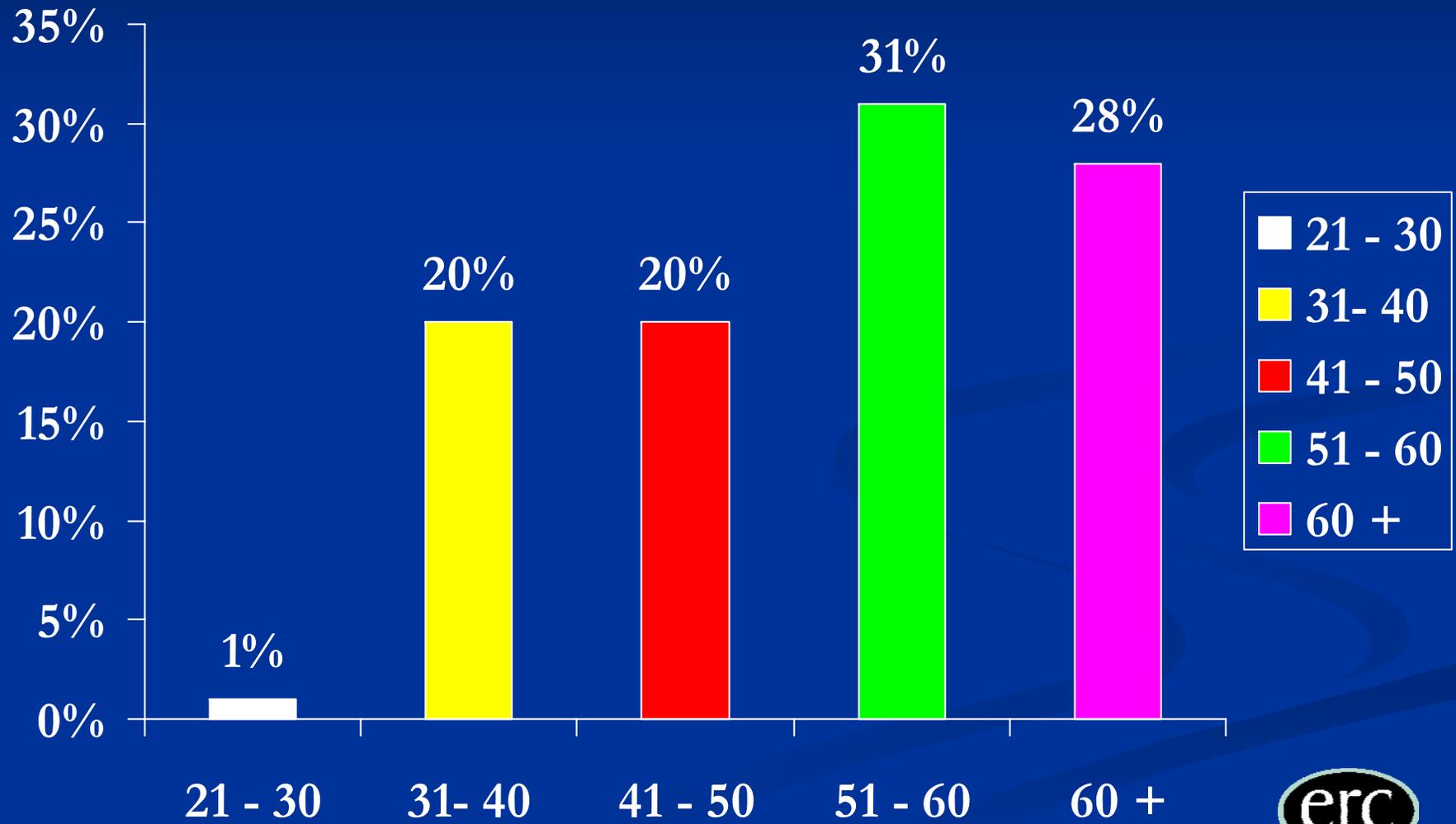
**What is your age?**



**More than 60 percent of all soil  
consultants reported that they are  
“as old as dirt”**



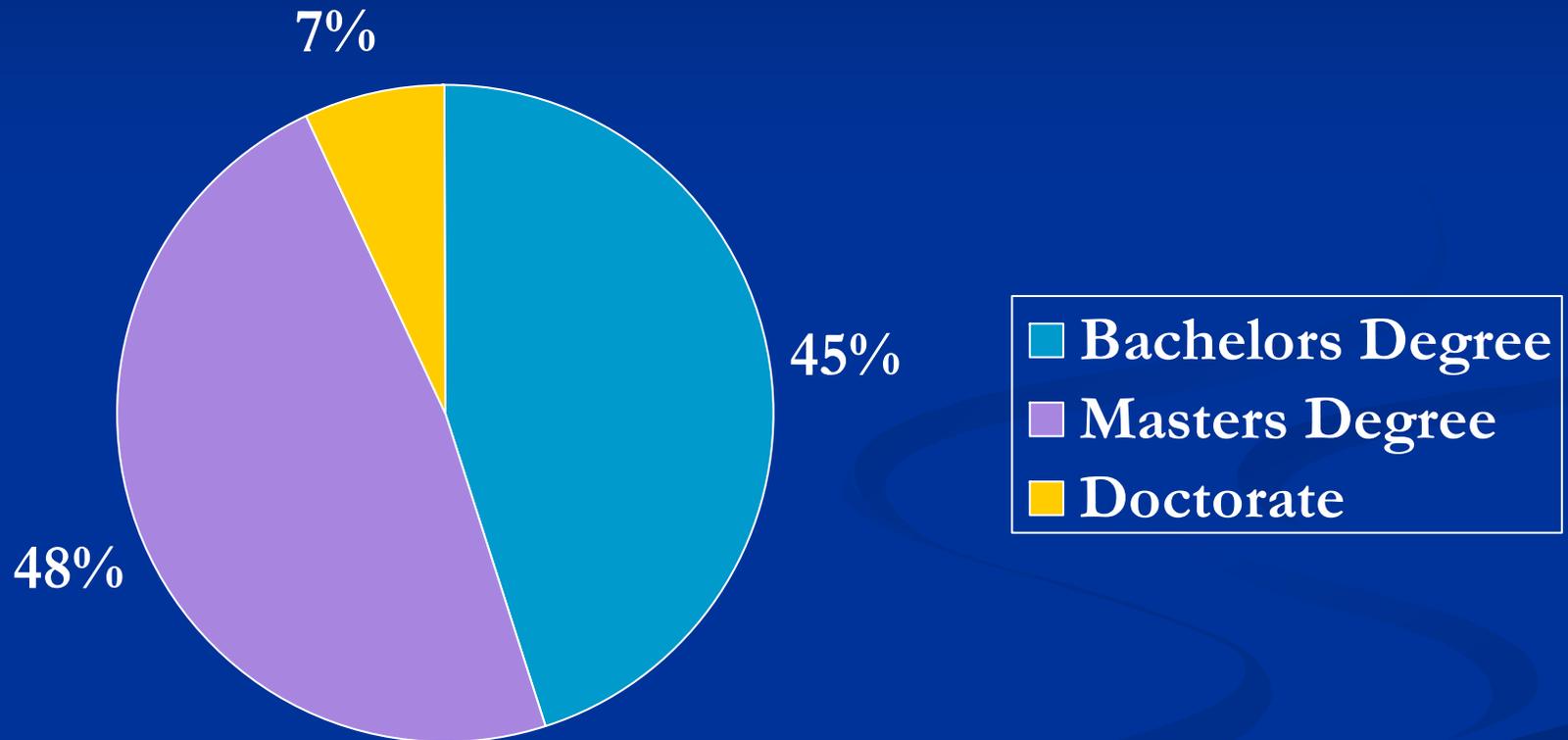
# What is your age?



**What is your level of education?**



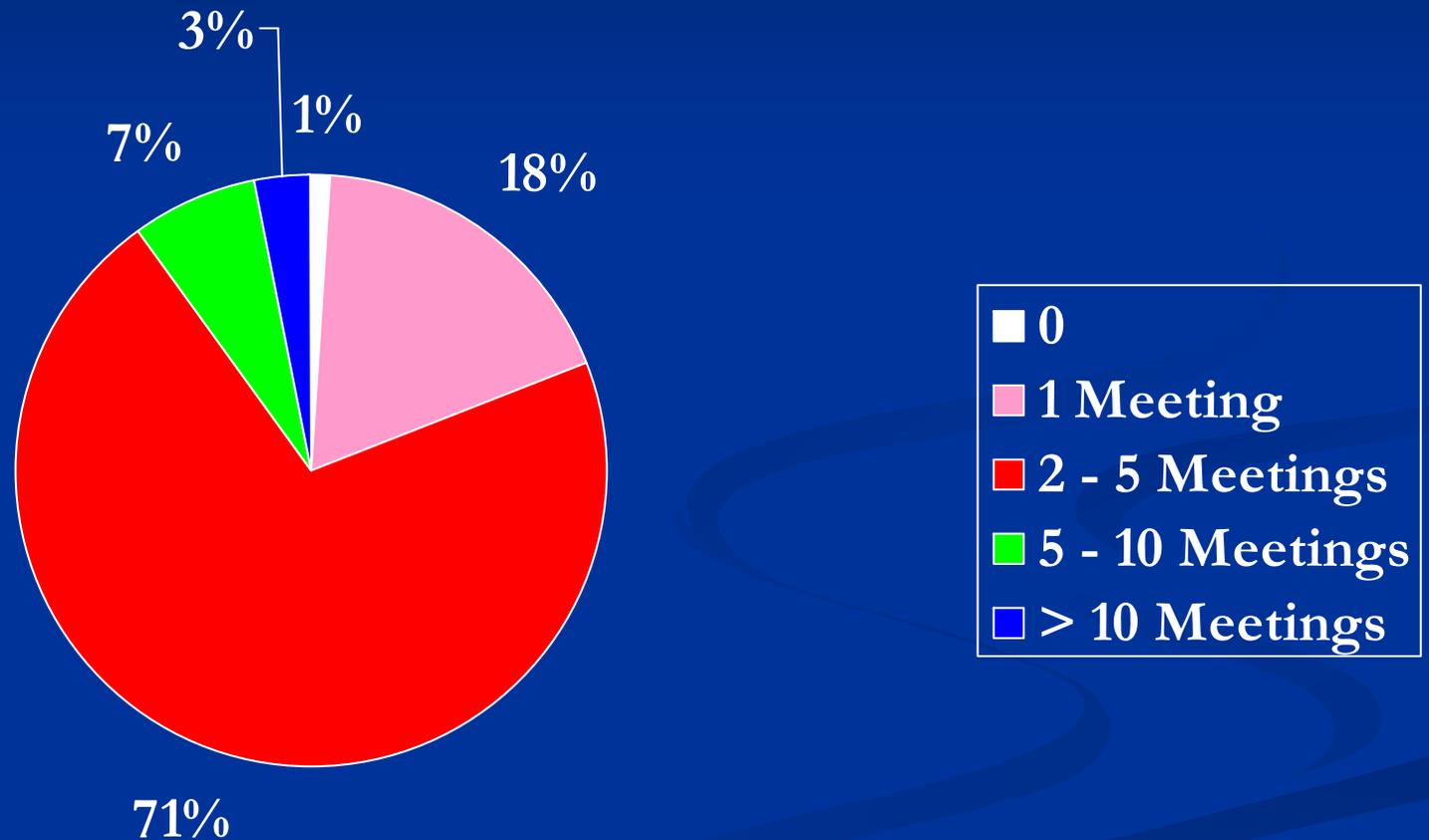
# What is your level of education?



How many professional society meetings do you attend each year?



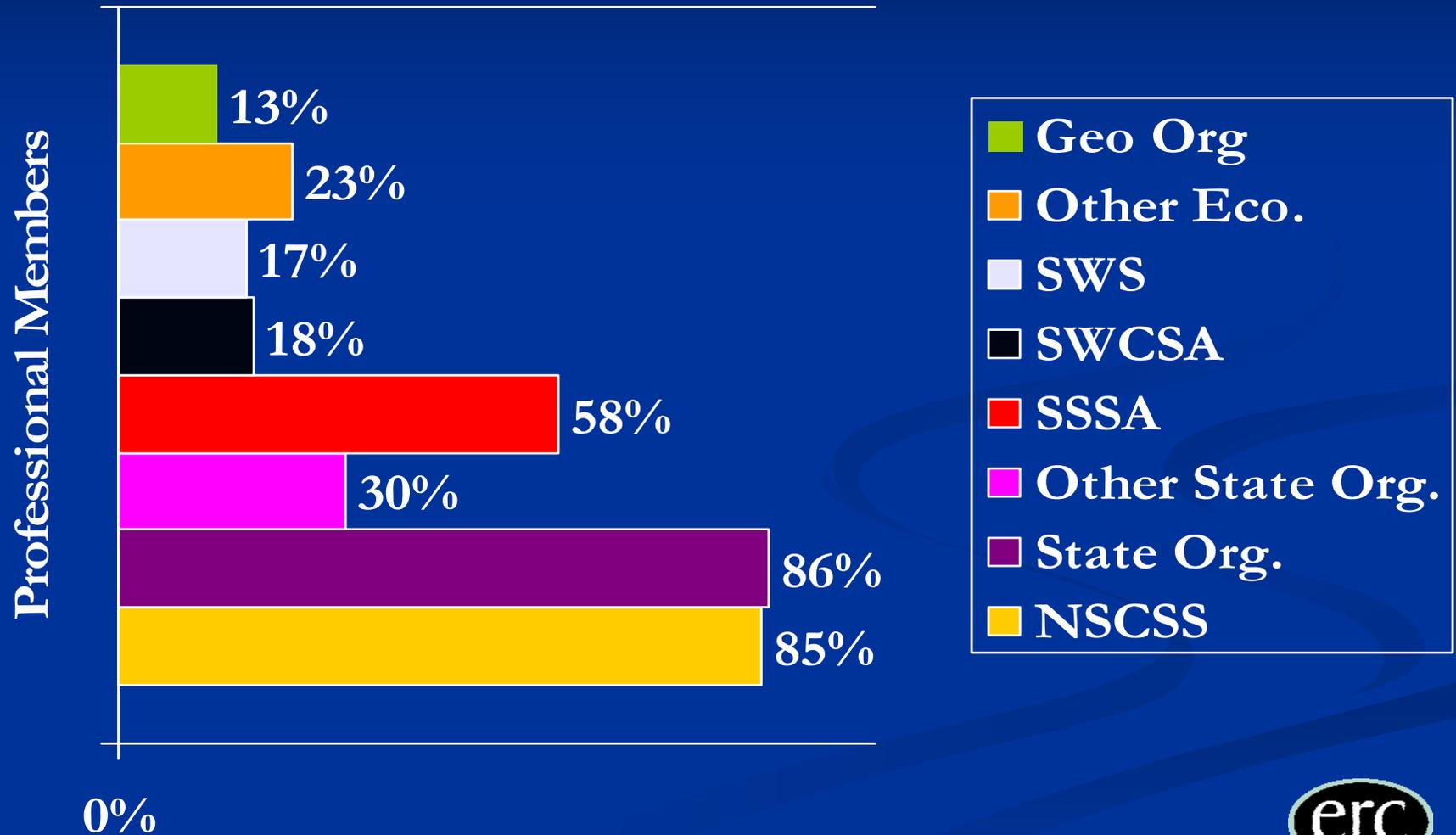
# How many professional society meetings do you attend each year?



**Which of the following  
professional societies are you a  
member of?**



# Which of the following professional societies are you a member of?



# The Practice



Please indicate which of the following areas of practice in which soil scientists employed by your company are routinely engaged.



Please indicate which of the following areas of practice in which soil scientists employed by your company are routinely engaged.

- Septic Tank 74%
- Hydric soils / Wetlands 65%
- Soil Mapping 65%
- Homesite Eval. 61%
- Other Sewage 54%



Please indicate which of the following areas of practice in which soil scientists employed by your company are routinely engaged.

- Other NR permit 41%
- Wetland Mitigation 40%
- Site Suitability (not Homesite) 38%
- Erosion 30%
- Ag 26%
- Habitat Mapping 20%
- Forestry 20%
- Ecosystem Restoration 20%



Please indicate which of the following areas of practice in which soil scientists employed by your company are routinely engaged.

- EIS / DRI 17%
- 404 Permitting 16%
- Site Remediation 16%
- Geophysical 15%
- Archaeology 12%



Please indicate which of the following areas of practice in which soil scientists employed by your company are routinely engaged.

- Sub aqueous Soils 10%
- Pollution Control 7%
- Mine Rec. 7%
- Natural Resource Banking 6%



# Business and the Economy



Is the majority of your business related to homesite evaluation, septic tank site evaluations, or some other aspect of the housing/development industry?



Is the majority of your business related to homesite evaluation, septic tank site evaluations, or some other aspect of the housing/development industry?

■ **Yes** 70%

■ **No** 30%



**Has the recent economic  
downturn significantly affected  
this aspect of your business?**



Has the recent economic downturn significantly affected this aspect of your business?

■ **Yes** 81%

■ **No** 19%



**Has the recent economic  
downturn affected your business  
overall?**



# Has the recent economic downturn affected your business overall?

- **Yes** 67%
- **No** 33%

**Have you taken any steps to  
diversify your business in the last  
12 months?**



Have you taken any steps to diversify your business in the last 12 months?

■ **Yes** 59%

■ **No** 41%



**Has the recent economic  
downturn influenced your  
decision to diversify?**



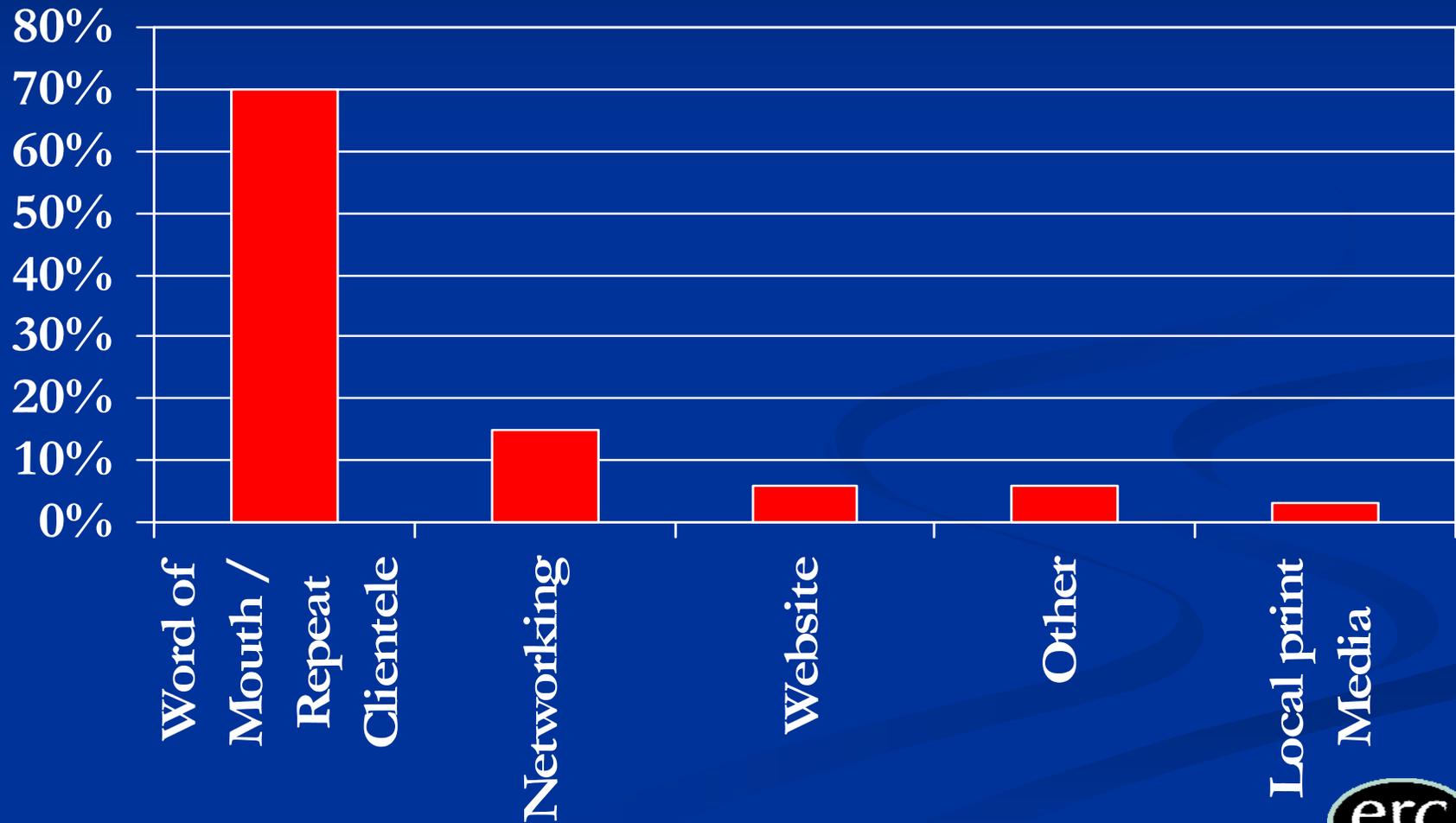
# Has the recent economic downturn influenced your decision to diversify?

- **Yes** 69%
- **No** 31%

What is the primary way in which  
you advertise your services?



# What is the primary way in which you advertise your services?



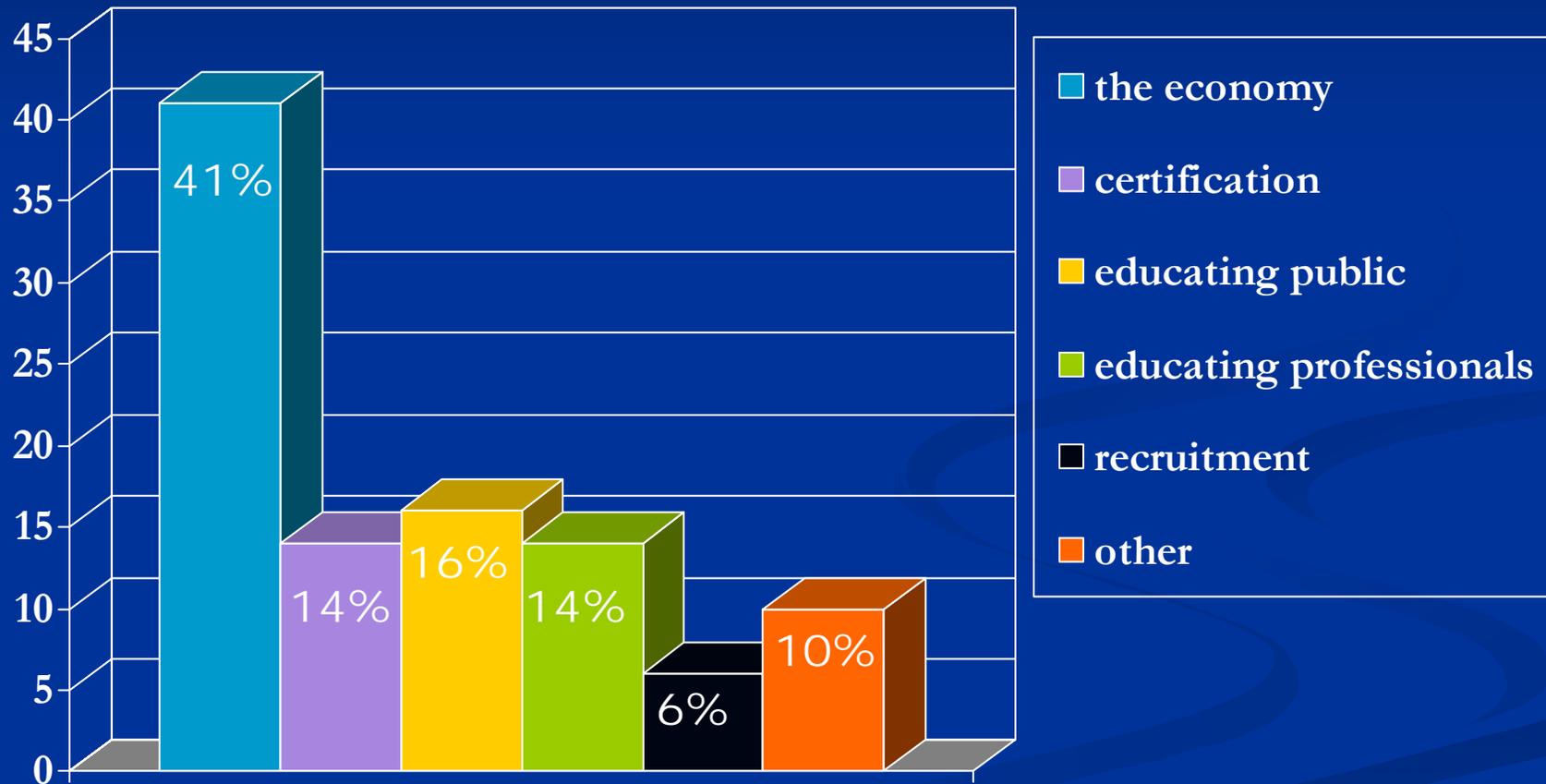
# The Issues



# Which of the following is your greatest concern as it affects your business?

- The economy
- Professional certification/registration/licensing
- Educating the public regarding value of services
- Educating environmental professions re value
- Recruiting qualified, reliable employees
- other

# Which of the following is your greatest concern as it affects your business?



**19 firm principal respondents  
provided additional comments**



# 19 firm principal respondents provided additional comments

- 2 comments critical of engineers practicing soil science
- 2 comments concerning the need for state certification (CA and FL)
- 2 comments regarding the need to educate others about soil science
- 2 comments that state agencies need to be aware of the benefits of hiring soil scientists

# 19 firm principal respondents provided additional comments

- 1 comment regarding government employees who consult; they have an unfair competitive advantage and this is counterproductive to the business of soil consulting
- 1 comment regarding universities and agencies: they should not dictate science and methods without consulting professional practitioners

# Thank You.

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