

# Returning to EMS: Why Providers Leave and Characteristics Associated With a Desire to Return

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## BACKGROUND

- Inadequate staffing of agencies, increasing career attrition rates, and frequent turnover of personnel make employee retention an ongoing concern for EMS.
- Most research has focused on intention to leave EMS versus those who have exited the profession.

## OBJECTIVES

1. Describe the individuals that left EMS and their likelihood of returning to the profession
2. Compare demographic and employment characteristics of individuals who reported being likely to return to EMS versus those who reported being unlikely to return
3. Assess the prevalence of key factors contributing to the decision to leave EMS

## METHODS

- Study Design & Setting: A cross-sectional census survey was administered in October 2014 to nationally-certified EMS providers.
- As part of a larger survey, respondents not currently performing EMS work were directed to a subsection of items regarding leaving the profession.
- Outcome: Likelihood of returning to EMS, dichotomized to likely to return (definitely will return, probably will return) and unlikely to return (probably will not return, definitely will not return).
- Data Analysis: Descriptive and comparative statistics were calculated.

## RESULTS

- The overall response rate for the full survey was 10.4% (n=32,114). A total of 1,247 (4%) respondents reported leaving the profession and completed the exit survey.
- The majority of respondents reported that they will definitely/probably return to EMS (72%).
- Males (70%) and females (72%) equally reported a likelihood of returning (p = 0.58).

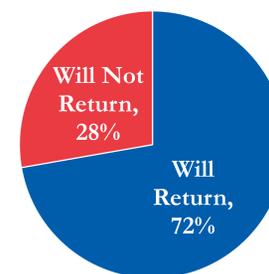


Figure 1: Self-reported likelihood of returning to EMS.

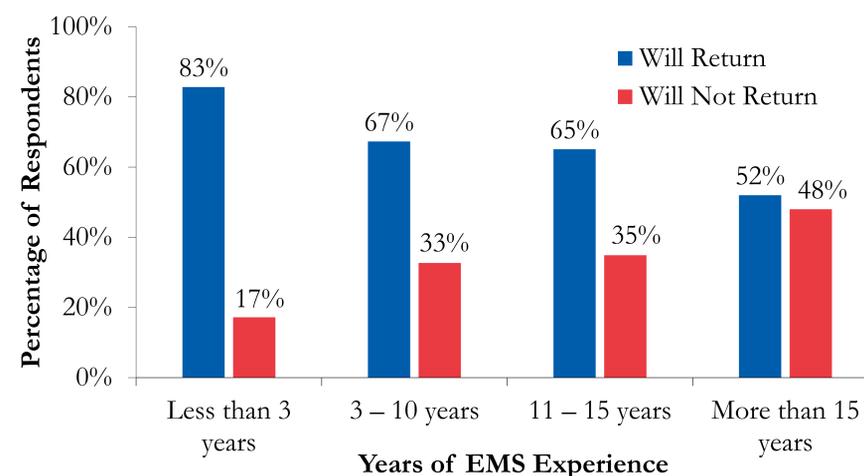


Figure 2: A stepwise decrease in the reported likelihood of returning to EMS was seen for increasing years of experience (p-trend <0.001).

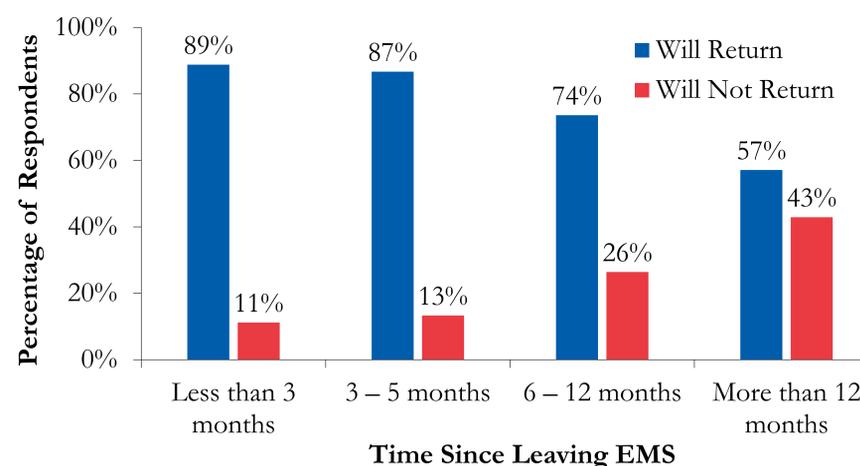


Figure 3: A stepwise decrease in the reported likelihood of returning to EMS was seen as time away from EMS increased (p-trend <0.001).

## RESULTS

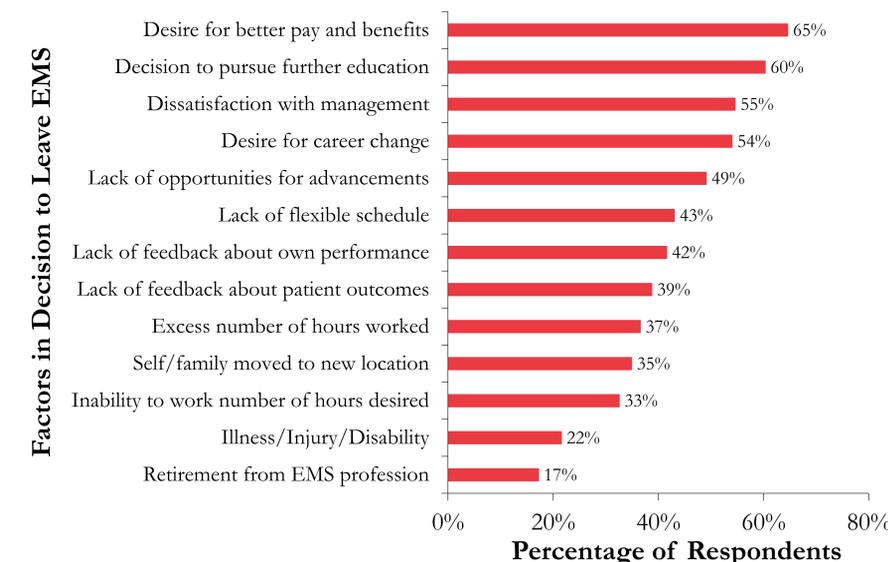


Figure 4: Percentage of respondents reporting that each factor was important in their decision to leave EMS.

## LIMITATIONS

- Selection bias possible as only EMS professionals who held national certification in October 2014 were sent the survey.
- Data were self-reported and assessed after leaving the profession.
- Respondents were not asked to rank decision factors against one another.

## CONCLUSIONS

- **Despite leaving EMS, many respondents reported that they would likely return to the profession.**
- **Reported likelihood of returning decreased with years of experience and time away from EMS.**
- **Key factors in the decision to leave were related to compensation, educational advancement, and job dissatisfaction.**