

Understanding Community-Based Organization Capacity to Engage in Research that Supports Their Mission to Improve Community Health (Abstract ID#: 266015)

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Background

- Community-based organizations (CBOs) are vital to understanding community health needs and developing health improvement efforts to address those needs, but little is known about the research capacity of CBOs
- Research capacity is defined as the capacity to systematically compile new or existing information to inform programs or policies
- Challenge in research capacity building efforts is the difficulty of defining and measuring research capacity; currently no assessment tool exists

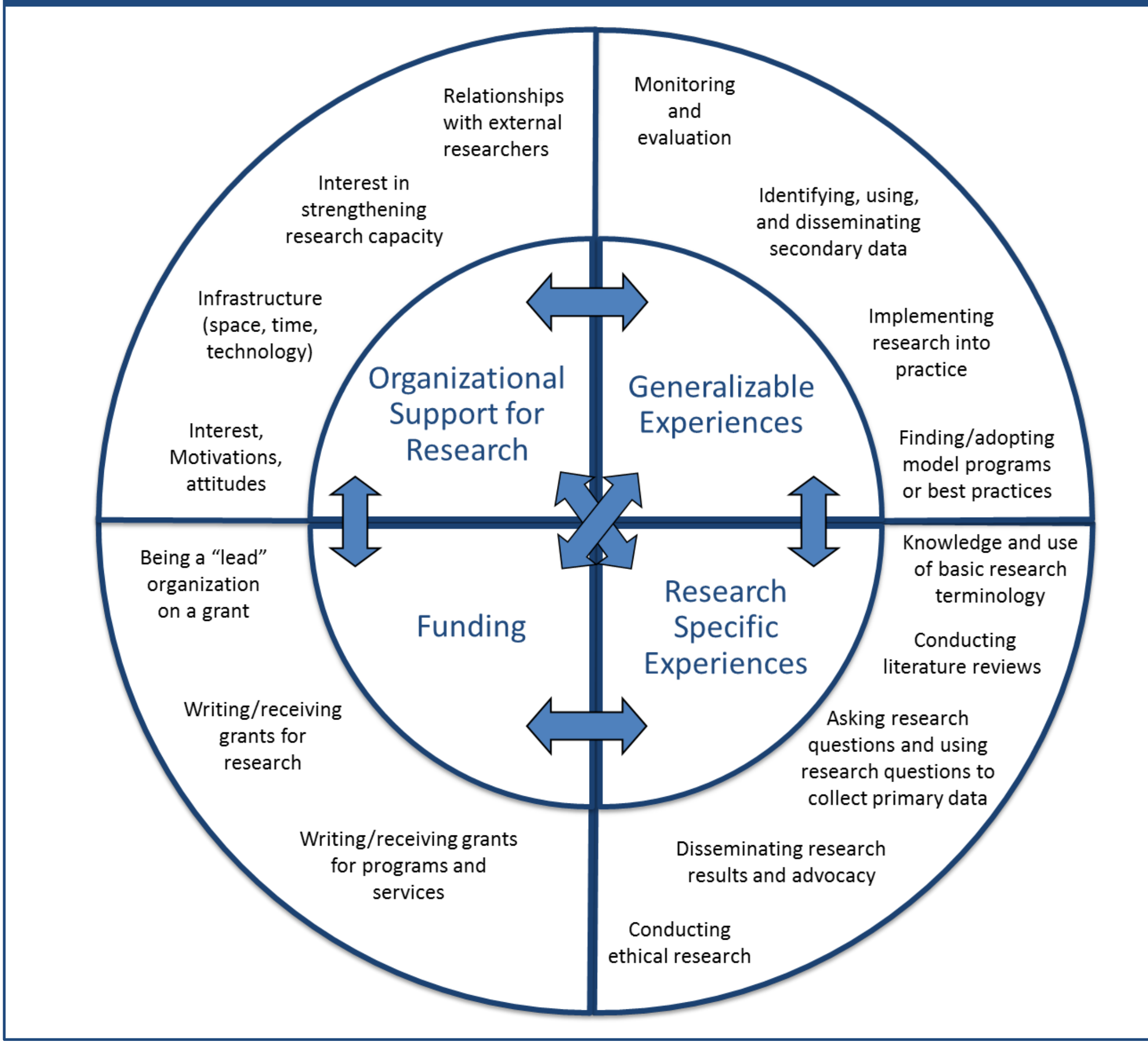
Objective

To develop and pilot a multi-domain CBO research capacity assessment survey designed to explore associations between organizational experience and characteristics with different levels of research activities and needs

Methods

- Preliminary survey tool creation:
 - Reviewed literature of existing tools on research capacity building
 - Developed a framework that incorporated four research capacity domains: organizational support for research; generalizable experiences; research specific experiences; and research funding (Figure 1)
 - Developed questions through an iterative process to incorporate feedback from representatives from CBOs and community researchers
- Piloted tool with executive directors of 27 CBOs and 3 local health departments affiliated with an HIV/AIDS community-academic partnership program (>95% response rate)
- Performed descriptive and bivariate analyses of the pilot study results in STATA and SPSS v.20

Figure 1: CIRA Community Research Capacity Framework



Results: Organizational Characteristics

- Participating organizations covered a range of organizational budgets, size, and organizational life span, with most being 501(c)3 organizations and providing direct care (Table 1)
- Organizations reported a high prevalence of research activities, so results for generalizable activities are not presented here

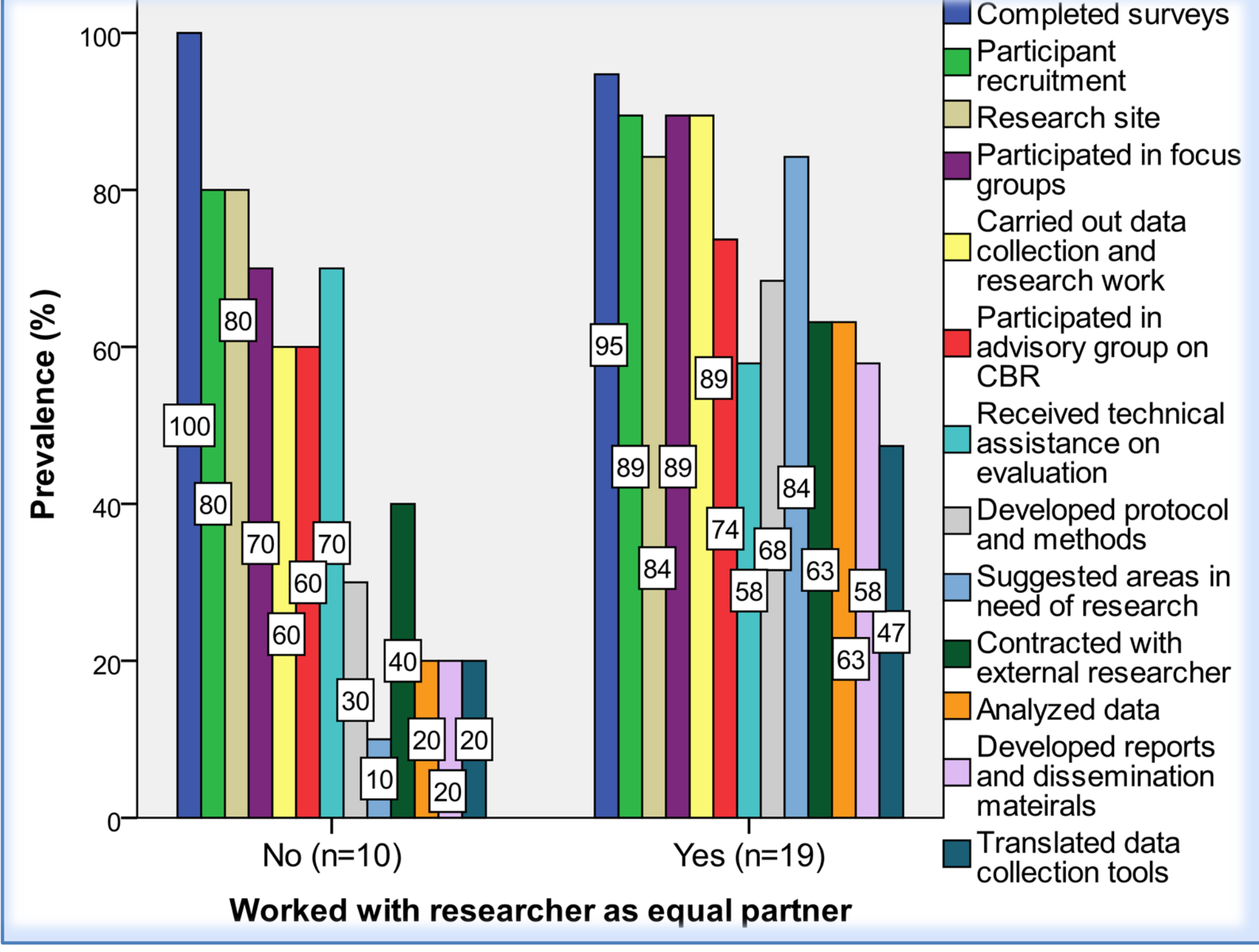
Table 1: Organizational Characteristics

	Mean (SD) or n (%)
CRPP-funded	8 (17%)
Large budget (>\$5million/yr)	11 (37%)
Large organization (>50 staff)	16 (53%)
Has research policies & procedures	15 (50%)
Number of years in existence	32.6 (22.7)
Direct care or service org	22 (73%)
Community-based or grassroots org	25 (83%)
501(c)3	27 (90%)
Health department	3 (10%)

Results: Organizational Support for Research

- Strong organizational support for research:** 87% of respondents stated that research is important to the work of the organization and 60% believed their organization was very interested in strengthening research capacity
- Positive attitudes towards usefulness of research activities:** 97% felt research activities can be helpful in improving the quality of programs
- Existing relationships with researchers:** 97% of respondents reported having worked with external researchers. Types of researchers included academics (83%), researchers from non-profit research firms (62%), private research firms (59%) and researchers from another non-profit (48%)
- Ongoing collaborations:** many (79%) reported ongoing collaborations with researchers; 65% worked with researchers as equal partners (Figure 2)
- Infrastructure:** 62% reported having full text access to most journal articles, with 95% accessing journal articles from work

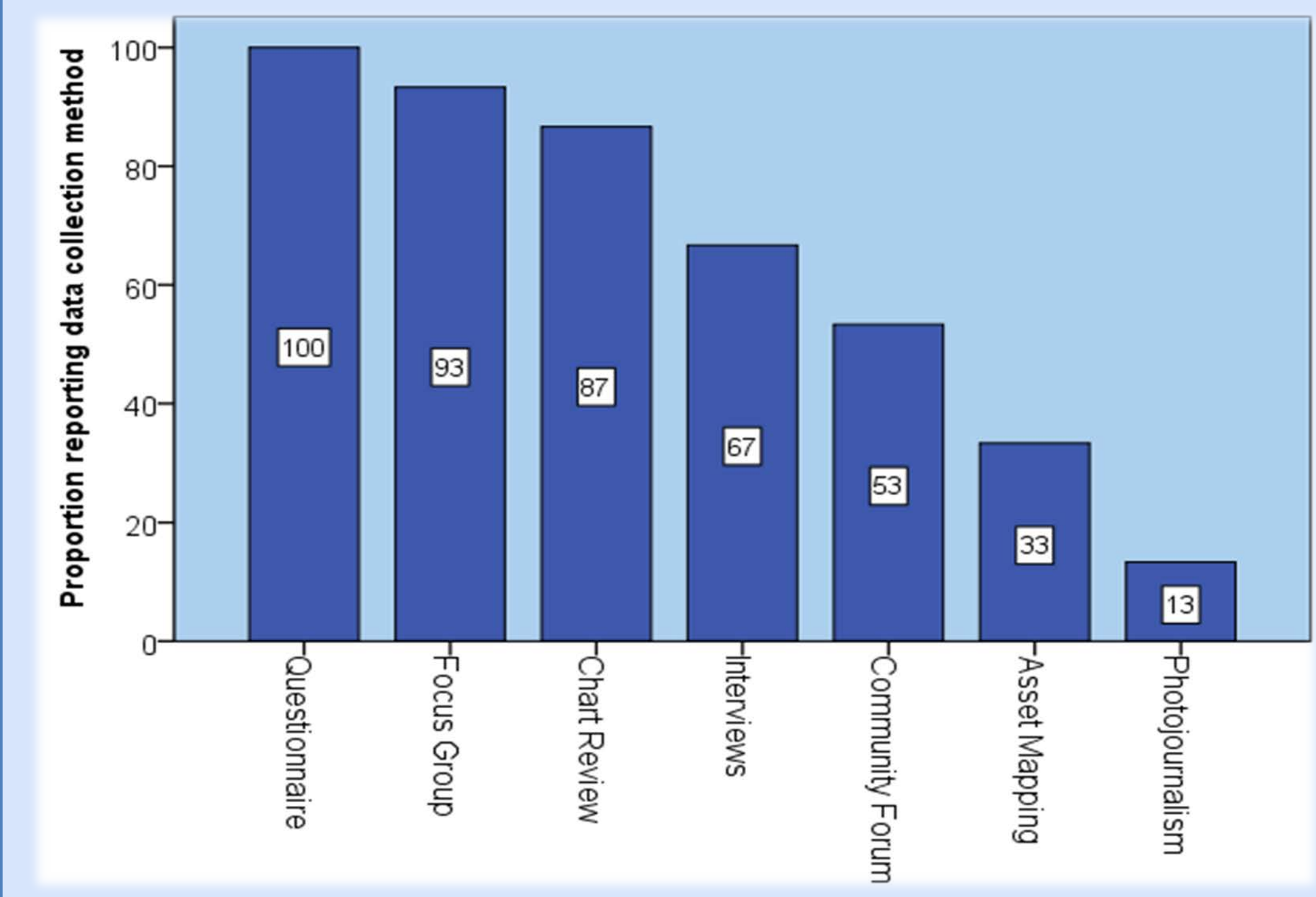
Figure 2: Types of Collaborative Research Activities by Experience Working as an Equal Partner in Research



Results: Research Specific Experiences

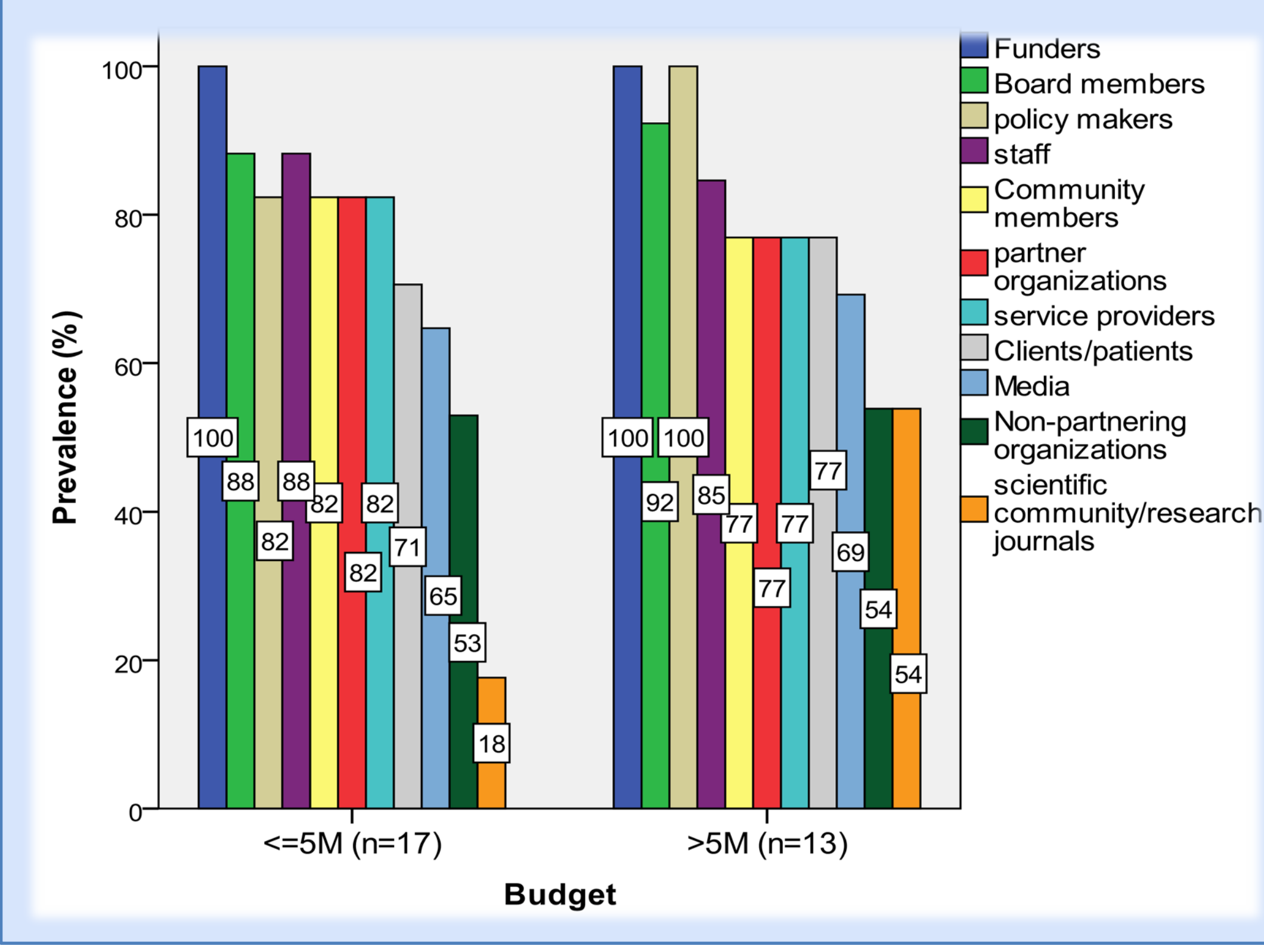
- High prevalence of research specific activities:** All had experience collecting primary data, 70% had conducted literature reviews, and 83% routinely use research terminology (83%)
- Primary data collection:** Two-thirds of the organizations collected primary data at least weekly, using a variety of data collection methods (Figure 3)
- Research collaborations:** organizations who worked with researchers as equal partners were significantly more likely to suggest areas in need of research (p<0.001), and perform more research activities (Figure 2)
- Training in ethical research:** 93% had completed HIPPA training and 62% had human subjects research training

Figure 3: Data Collection Methods



- Dissemination of research results:** Funders were a dissemination audience for all respondents (Figure 4). The scientific community was identified as an audience for dissemination by 33% of the organizations overall, and by 18% of respondents from small budget organizations (p=0.056) (Figure 4)
- Organizations with budget greater than \$5M disseminated more findings (Figure 4)

Figure 4: Audiences for Dissemination by Organizational Budget



Results: Funding

- Key research funding challenges:** Main challenges reported for obtaining research grants include having staff time to write and submit proposals (88%), having staff time to look for and prioritize (83%), and having staff with skills to write proposals (67%)
- Small organizations were more likely to identify limited staff time as an issue (p=0.045)
- Existing grant funding:** All organizations had experience writing program grants, and major sources of program funding include federal grant monies (83%), state grant funds (93%), and funds from local foundations (90%)

Conclusions

- The tool developed is called the Community REsearch Activity Assessment Tool (CREAT)
- Results from our study of 30 CBOs demonstrated variability in experience yet revealed that CBOs with non-research missions report frequent use of research and data to support their community health work
- Several barriers were identified to using research more effectively in their work, including staffing, funding, organizational support, and needed skills
- Larger organizational size and budget, and positive research attitudes were associated with high levels of research activities
- Research capacity is critical for improving health services and programs. The availability and use of this tool will facilitate careful assessment of research capacity for more equitable research partnerships and the development of targeted training and capacity building activities for CBOs

Limitations

Participant organizations had previously expressed interest in engaging in collaborative research, and so cannot be considered to be representative of all community organizations. A larger sample size, with additional diversity of organizations, will be needed to further characterize CBOs.

Acknowledgement & Contact Information

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