

doi:10.4085/1062-6050-0089.25

## **Salary Negotiation Dynamics for Athletic trainers: Insights from Employers on Expectations and Organizational Influences**

Julie M. Cavallario, PhD, ATC

Associate Professor, Master of Science of Athletic Training Program

School of Rehabilitation Sciences

Old Dominion University

Forrest Andrews, MSAT, ATC

Old Dominion University

Kendallyn Johnson, MSAT

Old Dominion University

Katherine Schalk, MSAT, ATC

Old Dominion University

Cailee E. Welch Bacon, PhD, ATC, FNATA, FNAP

Professor, Department of Athletic Training & School of Osteopathic Medicine in Arizona

A.T. Still University

Correspondent Author:

Julie M. Cavallario, PhD, ATC

Master of Science of Athletic Training Program

Associate Professor, School of Rehabilitation Sciences

Old Dominion University

3059 Health Sciences 2

Norfolk, VA 23529

Phone: (757) 683-4351

Fax: (757) 683-4410

Email: [jcavalla@odu.edu](mailto:jcavalla@odu.edu)

Readers should keep in mind that the in-production articles posted in this section may undergo changes in the content and presentation before they appear in forthcoming issues. We recommend regular visits to the site to ensure access to the most current version of the article. Please contact the *JAT* office ([jat@slu.edu](mailto:jat@slu.edu)) with any questions.

# Salary negotiation dynamics for athletic trainers: Insights from employers on expectations and organizational influences

## ABSTRACT

**Context:** While researchers have previously identified that most athletic trainers (ATs) do not negotiate their salary, little is known about employers' expectations and behaviors relative to establishing and negotiating salaries for the ATs they hire.

**Objective:** To examine employers' expectations and behaviors regarding AT salary negotiation.

**Design:** Cross-sectional.

**Setting:** Web-based survey.

**Patients or Other Participants:** 413 employers who are in a role that requires them to negotiate salary offers with prospective AT employees and who have minimally hired one AT into the organization they work for accessed the survey from a random sample of 7,000 ATs (6% access rate); 324 employers (age=43.8±10.6 years) completed the entire survey (78% completion rate).

**Main Outcome Measure(s):** A validated survey was used to collect employer demographics, employment organization characteristics, and employer perspectives on negotiation. Chi-square analyses with Bonferonni adjustments were used to determine relationships between organizational factors or employer demographics on employers' negotiation expectations and behaviors.

**Results:** 67.3% of employers expect the candidate to negotiate their salary, and 66.3% reported they are provided the salary range by someone else from their organization. More employers of rurally-located organizations offer in the upper 1/3 of the available range when compared to suburban or urban settings ( $p=.014$ ). Employers of public organizations also offer more in the upper 1/3 of the available salary range compared to private organizations ( $p=.025$ ). More

employers who were not healthcare providers have withdrawn an employment offer due to negotiation attempts ( $p=.005$ ).

**Conclusions:** The lack of organizational influence on negotiation expectations indicates that negotiation attempts do not need to be tailored to specific work settings. ATs may need to adjust expectations when negotiating with publicly-funded or rurally-located organizations, as the offer may already be towards the upper end of the available range. Employers expect ATs to negotiate their salary when offered a position.

**Word Count:**299 /300

**Manuscript Word Count:** ~4400

**Key Words:** Anchoring, Geographic Setting, Offer Withdrawal,

**Key Points:**

- Most employers expect athletic trainers to negotiate during the hiring process and there were no significant influences of organization factors on negotiation expectations.
- Most employers responsible for conducting negotiations did not have input into the available salary range prior to making the employment offer.
- Nearly 2/3 of employers make initial offers to prospective employees in the lower or middle 1/3 of the available salary range for a position. The use of a lower initial offer could provide an anchoring effect by which the prospective employee does not negotiate as aggressively, which results in a lower final salary amount.
- A larger proportion of employment organizations that were publicly funded or those in rural geographic locations make initial salary offers in the upper 1/3 of the available range.

- Employers that are not healthcare providers were more likely to offer in the lower 1/3 of the available range and were more likely to withdraw the offer due to attempted negotiations. ATs negotiating with non-ATs should consider a more educational approach to negotiations, establishing that the employer understand the role and value of the profession prior to presenting data to support requests.

Online First

## INTRODUCTION

Athletic trainers (ATs) have experienced relatively stagnant wages over the last three decades, despite more stringent and structured academic requirements in their professional preparation.<sup>1,2</sup> Researchers have established that the majority of clinically practicing ATs do not attempt to negotiate their salary during the hiring process, opting to accept the salary that is initially offered when taking a job.<sup>3</sup> For those that did negotiate, the decision to do so was influenced by factors including the number of previous full-time jobs and the current salary range of the respondent.<sup>3</sup> The primary reasons ATs identified for not negotiating were that they felt the offer they received was fair or that the employer clarified that the offer was not negotiable.<sup>3</sup> Some ATs identified that they were uncomfortable negotiating their salary out of fear of losing the job offer, offending someone they may work with or under the supervision of in the future, and in some cases ATs were deterred from negotiating due to their desperation to leave their current place of employment.<sup>2</sup>

The findings of this previous research insinuate that the employer may play an integral role in establishing and enforcing salary offers and engaging in negotiations when hiring an AT into their organization. Many people typically assume that employers intend to hire employees for the lowest possible starting salary, but human resources literature indicates that the role of agents that engage in negotiations on behalf of their employer have much more complex roles that are often tied to the hiring organization's strategy and goals.<sup>4,5</sup> Representatives who engage in negotiations on behalf of an organization often have role conflict relative to budget constraints, equity within existing and new hire salaries, expected return on investment, and, in some cases, competing with other job offers the prospective employee may have already received.<sup>4</sup> This requires the representative to fulfill the roles of *bargainer* (to hire an employee

for the lowest possible salary), *advocate* (to complete the hire by offering an attractive enough salary), *mediator* (to finalize an agreement to the benefit of both employee and employer), and *fact-finder* (to base salary decisions on sound evidence).<sup>4</sup>

To be successful in the negotiation process, both employer and employee often have to be willing to concede in areas to achieve a resolution that satisfies both parties.<sup>5</sup> This collaborative effort is necessary, as the tone and tenor of the negotiation process have the potential to influence the employee's interest in position, their perceptions and expectations of the employing organization, their job satisfaction and intent to stay within the position.<sup>4</sup> While researchers have established that ATs have not yet fully embraced salary negotiation as an expected aspect of the hiring process,<sup>2,3</sup> there have been no studies to date examining the expectations of employers of ATs relative to salary negotiations. Given the dichotomous nature of negotiations, the perspective of the employer of ATs is needed to fully understand the landscape of how salaries are established for athletic training positions. Therefore, with this study, we aimed to determine 1) how organizational factors might influence salary offers during the hiring process, and 2) employers' expectations for salary negotiation from prospective employees.

## **METHODS**

We employed both convenience and snowball sampling approaches to conduct a cross-sectional, web-based survey of employers of ATs. The [BLINDED] University College of Health Sciences Human Subjects Review Committee determined this research to be exempt.

### **Instrumentation**

Due to the lack of an applicable existing survey in athletic training, two researchers proficient in survey research methodologies and experience in researching the content area developed an original survey to achieve the aim of the study. Following initial development, the

survey was reviewed for content validity, using a content validity index (CVI),<sup>6</sup> by three ATs who serve in positions of hiring other ATs within their employment role. Reviewers were asked to assess validity relative to question clarity, relevance to the research aim, and importance to the research aim. Revisions were made based on reviewer feedback with the final instrument having a Scale-CVI score of 0.98 for clarity, 0.98 for relevance to the research aim, and 1.00 for importance to the research aim, indicating excellent content validity across the instrument.<sup>6</sup> The instrument was then pilot tested among non-eligible participants to determine time to completion and to test the survey question flow and logic. Pilot data were not included in the final analyses and no further changes were made to the survey instrument.

The final survey instrument contained items relative to organizational factors including location (US state or territory), geographic setting (urban, suburban, rural), setting and setting into which ATs are hired (provided settings list was identical to the National Athletic Trainers' Association (NATA) salary survey), organization type (public, private, unsure), number of ATs that work for the organization, and employment model (direct hire, outreach, both). Demographics of the respondent were collected, including whether they were BOC credentialed, and if so, for how many years, if they were credentialed in another health care profession, and if so, which profession, how many years they have been in a role to hire ATs, and how many ATs they have been involved with hiring. We also collected race, gender, and age of the employer. We asked if they, in their current role, have input into the salary range when hiring an AT, and if so, what data points they use to determine the appropriate range, whether they expect a prospective employee to negotiate salary when they extend a job offer, and where within the salary range (bottom 1/3, middle 1/3, or upper 1/3) they initially offer based on those negotiation expectations. We also inquired as to whether they have ever withdrawn a job offer based on the

prospective employee's attempt, or lack of attempt, at negotiation. Lastly, we provided a matrix question that asked the employer to identify at which salary range they would likely hire an AT for with a range of degree qualifications (Bachelors, Masters, Residency/Fellowship, Clinical Doctoral, Academic Doctoral) and years of experience (0, 1-5, 6-10, more than 10), given the following answer options for each combination of degree and experience: less than \$40,000, \$40000-\$49999, \$50000-\$59000, \$60000-\$69999, \$70000-\$79999, \$80000-\$89999, \$90000-\$99999, more than \$100000, or "We would not be likely to hire a person with these qualifications."

## **Procedures**

The survey was hosted on the Qualtrics platform and was distributed using the NATA Survey Service in January 2024. We sent the survey to 7000 athletic training members and asked them to forward the survey to whomever within their employing organization was responsible for the hiring of ATs. Follow-up emails were sent weekly for three additional weeks for a total recruitment window of 4 weeks.

## **Participants**

An *a priori* power analysis (G\*Power) was conducted to determine the necessary sample size. To achieve a moderate effect size ( $f=0.5$ ) and an alpha of 0.05, a minimum sample of 85 respondents was necessary. Inclusion criteria to complete the survey required the participant to be in a position within their employing organization to hire ATs, and to minimally have participated in one complete hiring process of an AT in that role. Of the 7000 emailed invitations, 413 participants accessed and started the survey (6% access rate) with 324 of those completing the survey (78% completion rate). Since we were unable to target employers of ATs specifically during recruitment, it is unclear how many of the 7,000 randomly selected ATs that received the



email invitation met the inclusion criteria and were eligible to participate. Therefore, while access rate was calculated based on the number of participants that accessed the survey by the total number emailed, it is possible that several individuals did not access the survey because they determined they were not eligible based on the email criteria alone. Regardless, the number of respondents that completed the survey in its entirety well exceeds the *a priori* sample size to detect meaningful differences.

## Data Analysis

Using IBM SPSS version 29, we calculated descriptive statistics to characterize the participant sample, organizational influences, and employer expectations. Multiple Chi-square analyses with Bonferonni adjustments were used to determine the relationships between organizational factors or employer demographics on the negotiation expectations and behaviors of employers. Due to the nature of survey research and the presence of survey logic that only presented some questions to each participant based on answers given on previous questions, not all participants answered all questions. Chi-square analyses were only performed on categorical data points that exceeded expected frequency counts of 5 and significance was determined *a priori* to be  $p < .05$ .<sup>7</sup> In some instances, when expected frequencies of categorical responses did not meet the threshold of 5, categories were collapsed or removed to allow for statistical analysis.<sup>7</sup>

To achieve expected categorical counts of 5 or higher to allow for chi-square analyses, we collapsed employment settings into five categories [1. Secondary School (outreach or direct hire) 2. Clinic (hospital, physician practice, rehabilitation clinic), 3. College/University – Clinical (NCAA Division 1, 2, or 3, split appointment, college recreation, college performing arts), 4. College/University Faculty/Academic/Research, 5. Other (Industrial, professional sports,

military, sports performance)]. Due to the small number of identified non-White race categories, race could not be analyzed. Due to the small number of employers indicating that they did *not* expect negotiations, we were not adequately powered to conduct analyses on this subgroup of respondents.

## RESULTS

### Employer Characteristic Descriptives

A total of 324 employers (86 men, 58 women, 180 prefer not to respond; age=43.8±10.6) submitted surveys. Our sample was overwhelmingly White (4 Asian, 8 Black, 5 two or more races, 123 White, and 184 prefer not to respond). Most respondents (n=227, 70.0%) were Board of Certification credentialed ATs (years of experience=16.8 ± 9.8) and 21 respondents (6.5%) were credentialed in another healthcare profession (years of experience=21.3 ± 10.2); 19 of which were dual credentialed as Board of Certification credentialed ATs and another healthcare profession. Respondents had an average of 9.68 ± 8.8 years of being a role to hire ATs at their organization and had hired an average of 10.3 ± 12.3 ATs for their organization at the time of survey completion.

### Organization Factor Descriptives

Table 1 details the work settings the respondents hired ATs into. Employment organizations were represented from all 11 NATA districts including 43 different states and 1 international location. Specific to geographic setting, 33.5% of organizations were in urban settings, 44.6 % in suburban settings, and 21.9% from rural settings. About half (49.4%) of employing organizations were private, not-for-profit, and 46.7% were public; 4% of respondents were not sure if their organization was public or private. About a quarter (25.9%) of employing

organizations hired ATs into an outreach employment model, 62.0% directly hired ATs into their organization, and 12.2% of employing organizations used both employment models.

### **Salary Range and Negotiation Expectations Descriptives**

Two thirds (66.3%) of those responsible for hiring ATs and negotiating salaries are provided the salary range by someone else from their organization and have no input into the available range. 22.7% indicated that they typically have input into the salary range for a position, and 11.0% selected *other* in response to this question. We asked those that indicated that they did have input into the salary range to indicate which data sources they use to inform that input (Figure 1). The three most used data sources were peer organization data, the salaries of existing AT employees within the organization, and the NATA Salary Survey.

More than 2/3 (67.3%) of employers expect the prospective employee to negotiate their salary. Figure 2 and Figure 3 display employers' expectations for salary negotiation and the associated level within the available range that they offer salaries based on those expectations, respectively. Figure 4 displays the anticipated salary ranges an AT with varying education degrees and experience levels would be offered at the respondent's organization.

Lastly, we also asked respondents if they had ever withdrawn an offer due to a prospective employee attempting or not attempting to negotiate the initial salary offer. 6.2% of employers have withdrawn a job offer due to the employee attempting to negotiate, and 2.1% of employers have withdrawn a job offer due to the employee not attempting to negotiate.

### **Employer Expectations for Negotiation**

There were no significant influences of organization factors [geographic setting ( $p=.338$ ), employment setting ( $p=.481$ ), organization type ( $p=.171$ ), or employment model ( $p=.123$ )] or

employer characteristics [BOC credentialed ( $p=.564$ ), other credential ( $p=.572$ ), gender ( $p=.589$ ), or input into the salary range ( $p=.688$ )] on the employer's expectations for salary negotiation.

### **Offered Range**

Of the 72% of employers who did expect an employee to negotiate their salary, 21.5% place their initial offer in the lower 1/3 of the available range, 57% initially offer in the middle 1/3 of the available range, and 21.5% offer in the upper 1/3 of the available range. There were no significant differences for employment setting ( $p=.271$ ) or if the employer was BOC credentialed ( $p=.147$ ) on the initial offer range. A greater percentage of rurally located organizations offer in the upper 1/3 of the available salary range when compared to suburban or urban geographic settings ( $p=.014$ ). A greater percentage of public organizations also offer in the upper 1/3 of the available salary range compared to private organizations ( $p=.025$ ). A greater proportion of employers who were not credentialed healthcare providers offered in the middle and lower thirds of the available range ( $p=.040$ ). A greater percentage of employers who had input into the available range offered in the lower 1/3 of the available range, while a greater percentage of those who did not have input into the salary range offered in the middle 1/3 of the available range ( $p=.002$ ).

### **Offer Withdrawal**

There were no significant findings for organization factors [geographic setting ( $p=.481$ ), employment setting ( $p=.561$ ), organization type ( $p=.863$ ), employment model ( $p=.988$ )] or most of the employer characteristics [BOC credentialed ( $p=.726$ ), had input into salary range ( $p=.714$ ), or gender ( $p=.072$ )]. There was one significant employer characteristic influence, with a greater percentage of employers who were not healthcare providers having withdrawn an employment offer due to negotiation attempts ( $p=.005$ ).

## DISCUSSION

Our findings indicate that most employers expect ATs to negotiate the offered salary during the hiring process and offer in the lower to middle one third of the available salary range in anticipation of those negotiations. A minority of our respondents indicated having input into the salary and used specific data points to do so, and an even smaller percentage of respondents have withdrawn an offer due to the prospective employee attempting to negotiate. It is imperative that ATs understand and consider the perspectives of the employer relative to negotiations in order to be prepared to enter into negotiations during the hiring process.

### Determination of Salary Range

Respondents to our survey who had input into the available salary ranges of a position relied on specific data sources to support those range proposals. Interestingly, the most commonly used sources of data (i.e., NATA salary survey, salaries of existing employees, and peer organization employee data) to support salary ranges are all data that have aged by the time they are used. For example, the use of existing employee or peer organization data results in data points that represent a salary of someone who was hired in the past and may not reflect current market salary rates if pay raises have not kept pace with inflation or market value. This is especially true in years where inflation rates exceed average pacing, such as in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic shut-downs. One report from a colleges and universities human resources research center determined that in the 2021-2022 academic year, while inflation reached 6.8%, the associated professional staff salaries increased only 2.9%, and tenure-track faculty salaries increased a mere 1.6%.<sup>8</sup> Specific to market value, in an athletic training job advertisements posted on the NATA career center, the average salary of prospective positions increased by 15.3% from January 2024 to September 2024.<sup>9</sup> Employers using data from 1-2

years ago to establish salary ranges may report a shortage of applicants or have difficulty filling vacancies if the offered salary is not representative of other available salaries on the market at the time.

The issues associated with relying on past or existing employee wage data extend beyond the challenges of identifying the appropriate market rate for new hires; this practice also perpetuates existing pay discrepancies. While wage gaps vary state to state, specific, pervasive pay gaps exist for all women in the workforce, especially for women of color.<sup>10</sup> This perpetuation of discrepancies is the same reason that legislation containing salary history bans in hiring practices exists in 16 U.S. states and Puerto Rico. Salary history ban legislation prohibits the employer from relying on an individual's current or past salary when making hiring or salary decisions.<sup>11</sup> However, such legislation is not universal, nor does it prohibit the employer from using other peoples' salaries in the hiring and compensation decisions. Employers and prospective employees using existing salary data points to determine appropriate salaries for a position should make a point to avoid the use of gender, race, or ethnicity as filters for data on current salary rates to avoid perpetuating pay discrepancies in the workforce. Organizations, including the NATA, that publish salary data that includes gender, race, and ethnicity should clarify that these data points should be used to identify and advocate for the elimination of salary discrepancies, and should not be used to perpetuate such discrepancies.

When using existing data, employers are encouraged to use a combination of existing salary data points and current market analysis of available positions. Existing salaries that are not more than 24 months old can be mathematically manipulated to reflect current rates, although this is not recommended for data that is more than 2 years old.<sup>12</sup> This same recommendation can apply to ATs who are gathering data for positions they plan to apply to.

299 Lastly, it may be helpful for prospective employees to request an Employee Value  
300 Proposition (EVP) from a prospective employer to fully evaluate the total value of the offered  
301 position beyond the initially offered salary. An EVP is a form of organizational quality  
302 improvement that relies on feedback from existing and exiting employees, as well as recruitment  
303 and retention feedback, to present a comprehensive overview of the value provided by the  
304 organization to the employee.<sup>13,14</sup> EVPs typically include an overview of compensation that  
305 explains salary scales, timelines for promotions and raises, and how employees are evaluated in  
306 addition to descriptions of the workplace culture, the work environment and how work-life  
307 balance is supported, the types of training and education provided to employees in support of  
308 career goals, and the totality of the benefits package offered by the employer.<sup>13-15</sup> While not  
309 currently widespread in athletic training employment settings, we believe the use of EVPs would  
310 benefit both the employer and employee in determining appropriate salary levels against the  
311 backdrop of the other components of an employment offer.

### 312 **The Initial Offer**

313 Most employers, regardless of whether they expected the prospective employee to  
314 negotiate salary, make their initial salary offers in the lower or middle 1/3 of the available range,  
315 indicating room for negotiations for the majority of job offers in athletic training. The concept of  
316 anchoring effect is the likely explanation for the low-end offers made when hiring an  
317 employee.<sup>16-18</sup> An anchoring effect in salary negotiations is the psychological propensity to be  
318 over reliant on the initial salary offer (the anchor), which results in the subconscious adjustment  
319 in expectations, and subsequent adaptation in a proposed counteroffer, even if the prospective  
320 employee recognizes that the initial offer was unreasonable, and impacting the final salary  
321 agreement.<sup>16-18</sup> For example, if a prospective employee is hoping to be paid \$55,000, and the

322 employer initially offers \$40,000, the prospective employee might be more likely to counter at  
323 \$48,000 instead of their preferred salary because the initial offer has anchored the perception of a  
324 reasonable salary for the position. By strategically offering a low anchor (initial offer), the  
325 employer can potentially sway the negotiation towards the lower range of the salary, thus  
326 achieving their objective of hiring the employee for a lower salary.<sup>16-18</sup>

327 To mitigate the influence of the anchoring effect, prospective employees can implement  
328 several recommendations ahead of engaging in salary negotiations. First, the applicant should  
329 thoroughly research market rates for the geographic location, setting, and type of organization  
330 that they are applying too.<sup>18</sup> Of note, when interpreting this research, please refer back to the  
331 aforementioned recommendations regarding updating data based on its age. One mechanism to  
332 mitigate a low anchor effect is to address unreasonable anchors directly by stating that the offer  
333 they have proposed is not in line with market value or the area's cost of living.<sup>19</sup> This approach  
334 should be supported with data, as objective information is essentially the antidote to low  
335 anchors.<sup>20</sup> If the approach of calling out the anchor and providing data is implemented,  
336 prospective employees should complete this process by proposing an appropriate salary range,  
337 thereby establishing a new anchor for the position.

338 We did find that there were some influences of the employing organization and employer  
339 that impacted the initial salary offered. Rural and publicly funded employing organizations were  
340 more likely to make salary offers in the upper 1/3 of the available range. The existing literature  
341 relative to salary ranges of rural employers focuses almost exclusively on the payment of migrant  
342 workers in agricultural positions, and therefore the existing body of evidence does not provide  
343 much insight into this finding. However, one hypothesis is that rural employers understand that  
344 they may need to put forth greater effort to woo prospective employees to move to a rural



location, and therefore offer in the upper limit of the available range to entice a candidate to take the position. Alternatively, another hypothesis may serve to explain both the rural and public organization findings. Public entities often pay less than private ones, specifically in the collegiate setting. Since public organizations are funded through state and federal government mechanisms, and tuition prices are lower, therefore capping the budgetary available of such groups, whereas private institutions can generate and address budget needs through increased tuition prices and fees.<sup>21</sup> When we asked participants about where in the available salary range the initial offer was typically provided, we did not ask about what the available range was. Therefore, it is also possible that both rural and public organizations had lower available ranges and offered on the higher end of that available range to compensate for how low the lowest available part of the range was.

Employers who did have input into the salary range were more likely to offer in the lower end of the available range, while those who did not have input into the salary range were more likely to offer in the middle of the available range. Again, there is a dearth of literature regarding how initial salary offers are determined in healthcare professions. One theory would be that those who had input into the range were successful at increasing the available range prior to making an offer, and offered at the lower end of the elevated range and those that did not have input may have offered in the middle of the range to compensate for a perceived low available range. If this is the case, employing organizations should be encouraged to include the input of the individual who will be making the initial offer when establishing the available salary range, as the resulting level at which they make the offer might offset perceived cost savings of keeping salary ranges lower. It is important to note that the lack of literature in some of the areas discussed in this

section has resulted in relying on conjecture to interpret some of the findings and that more research is needed to definitively understand these results.

### **Expectations for Negotiation and Offer Withdrawal**

The majority of our participants indicated that they expect prospective employees to negotiate their salary during the hiring process. Unfortunately, most ATs do not negotiate when receiving an offer of employment.<sup>3</sup> Researchers have determined that when ATs do not negotiate, they are often driven by fear: of the employer withdrawing the job offer, of offending a future colleague or supervisor by negotiating, or of not negotiating correctly because they did not know how to negotiate.<sup>2</sup> This is consistent with findings outside the field of athletic training with job applicants identifying their most common fears about negotiation: 1) fear of the employer's perception of them, 2) fear of the offer being withdrawn, 3) fear of conflict, 4) fear of the employer's superior power, 5) fear of the negotiations becoming emotional, and 5) fear of negotiating poorly.<sup>22</sup>

As our findings indicate that employers expect prospective employees to negotiate, fears of offending an employer should be assuaged. If an offer is not negotiable, the employer should indicate so when providing the offer, and if that is not established, the employee should proceed with negotiating. Notably, as fear of offer withdrawal is one of the reasons ATs choose not to negotiate,<sup>2</sup> our participants overwhelmingly indicated that they do not withdraw offers due to the prospective employee attempting to negotiate. However, we did find that when the employer was not an AT, they were more likely to offer in the lower 1/3 of the available salary range and were more likely to withdraw the offer due to attempted negotiations. It is likely that when the employer is not an AT, they may not fully understand the role of the AT or the scope of their skillset. When ATs find themselves negotiating with someone outside of the profession, they

should be encouraged to spend time discussing the role and ensuring the person they are negotiating with understands what ATs are and do before discussing comparative data points.<sup>23</sup> After providing this information, then the prospective employee should proceed with a data-driven requests that provide justification for salary targets.<sup>23,24</sup>

### **Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research**

As with all research, ours is not without limitations. The nature of survey research relies on honest responses from participants, and it is possible the acquiescence and response biases could have influenced the respondents' answers. We do not know the percentages of employers that are not ATs across the profession, and as such are not able to describe the representativeness of our sample to the total population, which could limit the applicability of our findings. It is also possible that provided answer options on the survey could be interpreted differently by employers, which might also limit the generalizability of our findings. Lastly, the closed-ended nature of our survey, while allowing for comparison across groups, does not present the totality of the employers' expectations and experiences. Future researchers should aim to collect qualitative data to characterize the employers' experiences and perspective more completely. Ideally, researchers should study both the employer and employee experiences following a negotiation to allow for triangulation and comparison of the interaction. Notably, future researchers should aim to study employers of ATs who are not healthcare providers to better understand their perception of athletic trainers and how to best approach salary negotiations with this population of employers.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The findings of this study suggest that there is no need to tailor different negotiation approaches for different employment settings as most employers, regardless of setting, had

similar approaches to identifying salary ranges and had similar expectations for salary negotiation. When negotiating with public or rural entities, prospective employees should anticipate that the offer being made might already be in the upper half of the available range and anticipate a potential ceiling on how much the offered salary can be increased. Due to the time between data collection and publication, available data to support salary offers and requests requires updating to address inflation and market value variance prior to its use. Previously identified fears of offer withdrawal or upsetting future employers due to salary negotiations are largely unfounded; most employers expect prospective employees to negotiate, so ATs should do so.

Online First

## REFERENCES

1. Arnold BL, Perrin DH, Vanlunen BL, Szczerba JE, Mattacola CG, Gansneder BM. 1994 athletic trainer employment and salary characteristics. *J Athl Train.* 1996;31(3):215-218. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/16558401>
2. Cavallario JM, Detwiler KR, Jones LE, White IB, Bacon CEW. Athletic trainers' experiences with and perceptions of salary negotiation decision-making during the hiring process. *J Athl Train.* 2024;59(8):868-883. doi:10.4085/1062-6050-0313.23
3. Cavallario JM, Campbell BL, Jones BC, Bacon CEW. Negotiation Practices of Athletic Trainers Employed in the Clinical Setting. *J Athl Train.* 2023;58(5):458-482. doi:10.4085/244.22
4. Rau BL, Feinauer D. The role of internal agents in starting salary negotiations. *Hum Resour Manag Rev.* 2006;16(1):47-66. doi:10.1016/j.hrmr.2006.02.002
5. Sebenius JK. Negotiation analysis: A characterization and review. *Manage Sci.* 1992;38(1):18-38. doi:10.1287/mnsc.38.1.18
6. Polit DF, Beck CT, Owen SV. Is the CVI an acceptable indicator of content validity? Appraisal and recommendations. *Res Nurs Health.* 2007;30(4):459-467. doi:10.1002/nur.20199
7. Field A. *Discovering Statistics Using IBM SPSS Statistics Ed. 5.* SAGE publications; 2017.
8. 2022 Data: Changes in Higher Ed Pay and Workforce Size. CUPA-HR. Accessed November 15, 2024. <https://www.cupahr.org/blog/2022-data-changes-in-higher-ed-pay-and-workforce-size/>
9. Welch Bacon CE, Cavallario JM, Starkey C. *January-September 2024 Athletic Training Jobs Report.* AthleticTrainingData.com; 2024.

- 459 [https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/03c69830-ad5c-4c5d-9d14-](https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/03c69830-ad5c-4c5d-9d14-24345ca11a27/downloads/7db32289-52d6-4fc1-a288-00f746fdfae7/January%20through%20September%202024%20Athletic%20Traini.pdf?ver=1731610883483)
- 460 [24345ca11a27/downloads/7db32289-52d6-4fc1-a288-](https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/03c69830-ad5c-4c5d-9d14-24345ca11a27/downloads/7db32289-52d6-4fc1-a288-00f746fdfae7/January%20through%20September%202024%20Athletic%20Traini.pdf?ver=1731610883483)
- 461 [00f746fdfae7/January%20through%20September%202024%20Athletic%20Traini.pdf?ver=](https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/03c69830-ad5c-4c5d-9d14-24345ca11a27/downloads/7db32289-52d6-4fc1-a288-00f746fdfae7/January%20through%20September%202024%20Athletic%20Traini.pdf?ver=1731610883483)
- 462 [1731610883483](https://img1.wsimg.com/blobby/go/03c69830-ad5c-4c5d-9d14-24345ca11a27/downloads/7db32289-52d6-4fc1-a288-00f746fdfae7/January%20through%20September%202024%20Athletic%20Traini.pdf?ver=1731610883483)
- 463 10. Institute for Women’s Policy Research. *Gender and Racial Wage Gaps Worsened in 2023*
- 464 *and Pay Equity Still Decades Away.*; 2024. [https://iwpr.org/wp-](https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/IWPR-National-Wage-Gap-Fact-Sheet-2024.pdf)
- 465 [content/uploads/2024/09/IWPR-National-Wage-Gap-Fact-Sheet-2024.pdf](https://iwpr.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/09/IWPR-National-Wage-Gap-Fact-Sheet-2024.pdf)
- 466 11. Dalrymple A. *Equal Pay in the United States: Salary History Bans*. United States
- 467 Department of Labor; 2023.
- 468 [https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/equalpay/WB\\_Brief\\_Equal\\_Pay\\_Salary\\_History](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/equalpay/WB_Brief_Equal_Pay_Salary_History_Bans_03072023.pdf)
- 469 [\\_Bans\\_03072023.pdf](https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/WB/equalpay/WB_Brief_Equal_Pay_Salary_History_Bans_03072023.pdf)
- 470 12. Morse M. How to Update Aging Salary Data for Your Organization’s Jobs. HR Daily
- 471 Advisor. April 7, 2017. Accessed November 15, 2024.
- 472 <https://hrdailyadvisor.blr.com/2017/04/07/update-aging-salary-data-organizations-jobs/>
- 473 13. Rounak S, Misra RK. Employee value proposition: an analysis of organizational factors –
- 474 the way to enhance value perception. *Dev Learn Organ Int J*. 2020;34(6):9-12.
- 475 doi:10.1108/dlo-09-2019-0216
- 476 14. Mortensen M, Edmondson AC. Rethink Your Employee Value Proposition.
- 477 <https://lcfconference.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Employee-Value-Proposition.pdf>
- 478 15. Employee Value Proposition (EVP). Blog. May 6, 2024. Accessed January 17, 2025.
- 479 <https://www.talentlyft.com/hr-glossary/employee-value-proposition-evp>
- 480 16. Dealmaking and the Anchoring Effect in Negotiations. PON - Program on Negotiation at
- 481 Harvard Law School. October 3, 2024. Accessed November 22, 2024.

- <https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/dealmaking-daily/dealmaking-grappling-with-anchors-in-negotiation/>
17. Thorsteinson TJ. Initiating salary discussions with an extreme request: Anchoring effects on initial salary Offers<sup>1</sup>: Anchoring and salary. *J Appl Soc Psychol*. 2011;41(7):1774-1792. doi:10.1111/j.1559-1816.2011.00779.x
18. Qin J. Anchoring effect and salary negotiation. *Interdisciplinary Humanities and Communication Studies*. 2023;1(1). doi:10.61173/53aaq763
19. Negotiation Techniques: The First Offer Dilemma in Negotiations. PON - Program on Negotiation at Harvard Law School. November 4, 2024. Accessed November 22, 2024. <https://www.pon.harvard.edu/daily/dealmaking-daily/resolving-the-first-offer-dilemma-in-business-negotiations/>
20. Ellevest. The Anchoring Effect In Negotiation, And How To Eliminate It. Forbes. January 31, 2020. Accessed November 22, 2024. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/ellevest/2020/01/31/the-anchoring-effect-in-negotiation-and-how-to-eliminate-it/>
21. Cuellar J, Carlton G. Private vs. Public Colleges: What's the Difference? February 14, 2021. Accessed November 22, 2024. <https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/private-vs-public-colleges/>
22. Pinkley RL, Northcraft GB. *Get Paid What You're Worth: The Expert Negotiators' Guide to Salary and Compensation*. St Martin's Press; 2000. Accessed November 22, 2024. [https://books.google.com/books/about/Get\\_Paid\\_What\\_You\\_re\\_Worth.html?id=bwmBqgKIiXUC](https://books.google.com/books/about/Get_Paid_What_You_re_Worth.html?id=bwmBqgKIiXUC)

23. Wray R, Williams R. Negotiating a Salary: Showing—not just telling—your worth. *Am J Nurs*. 2002;102(2):71. Accessed January 17, 2025.  
[https://journals.lww.com/ajnonline/abstract/2002/02000/negotiating\\_a\\_salary\\_\\_showing\\_no\\_t\\_just.27.aspx](https://journals.lww.com/ajnonline/abstract/2002/02000/negotiating_a_salary__showing_no_t_just.27.aspx)
24. Malhotra D. 15 Rules for Negotiating a Job Offer. *Harvard Business Review*. Published online April 1, 2014. Accessed April 28, 2023. <https://hbr.org/2014/04/15-rules-for-negotiating-a-job-offer>

Online First



Figure 1: Data sources used to determine salary range

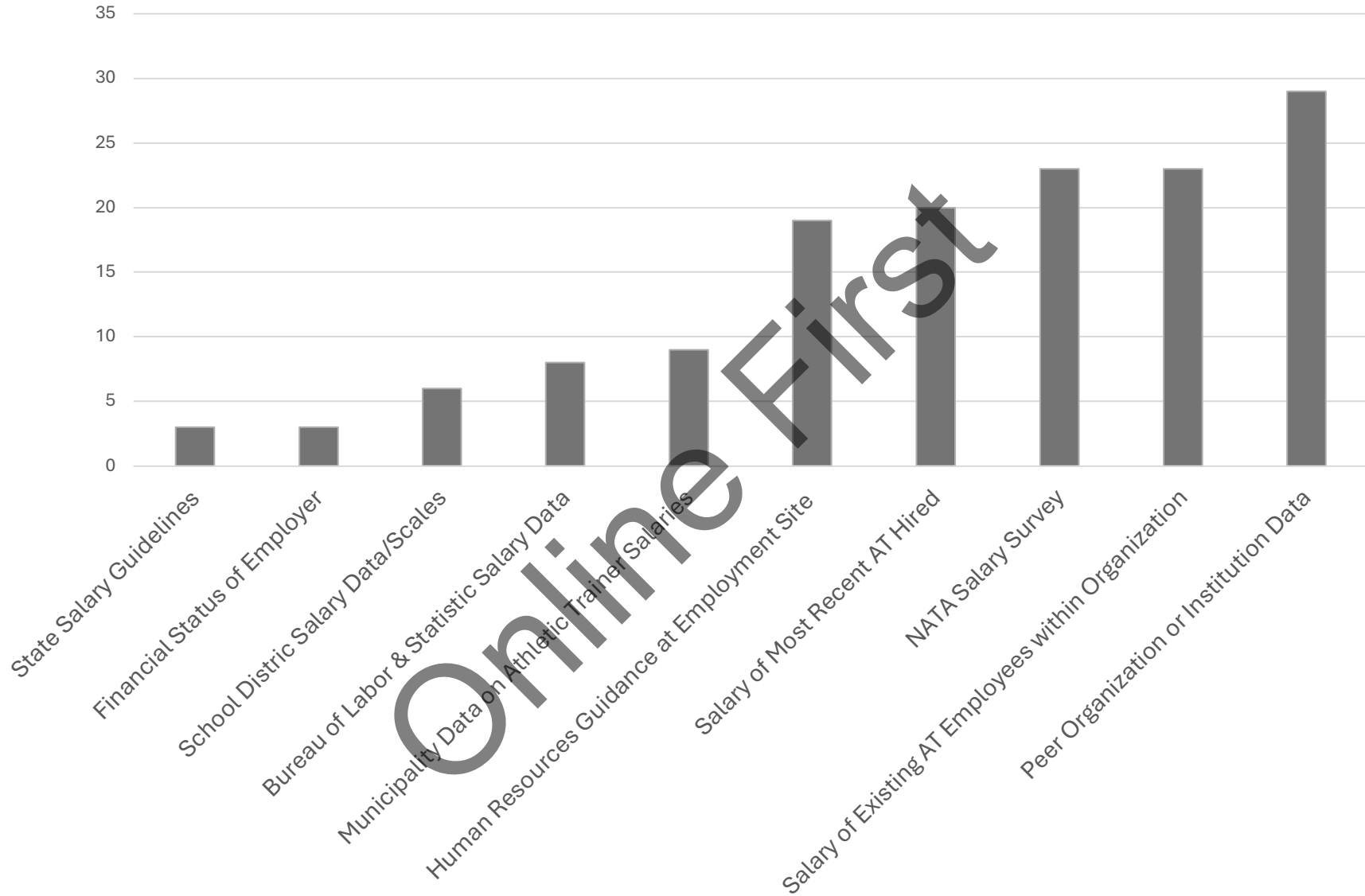


Figure 2: Employers' expectations for salary negotiation during the hiring process

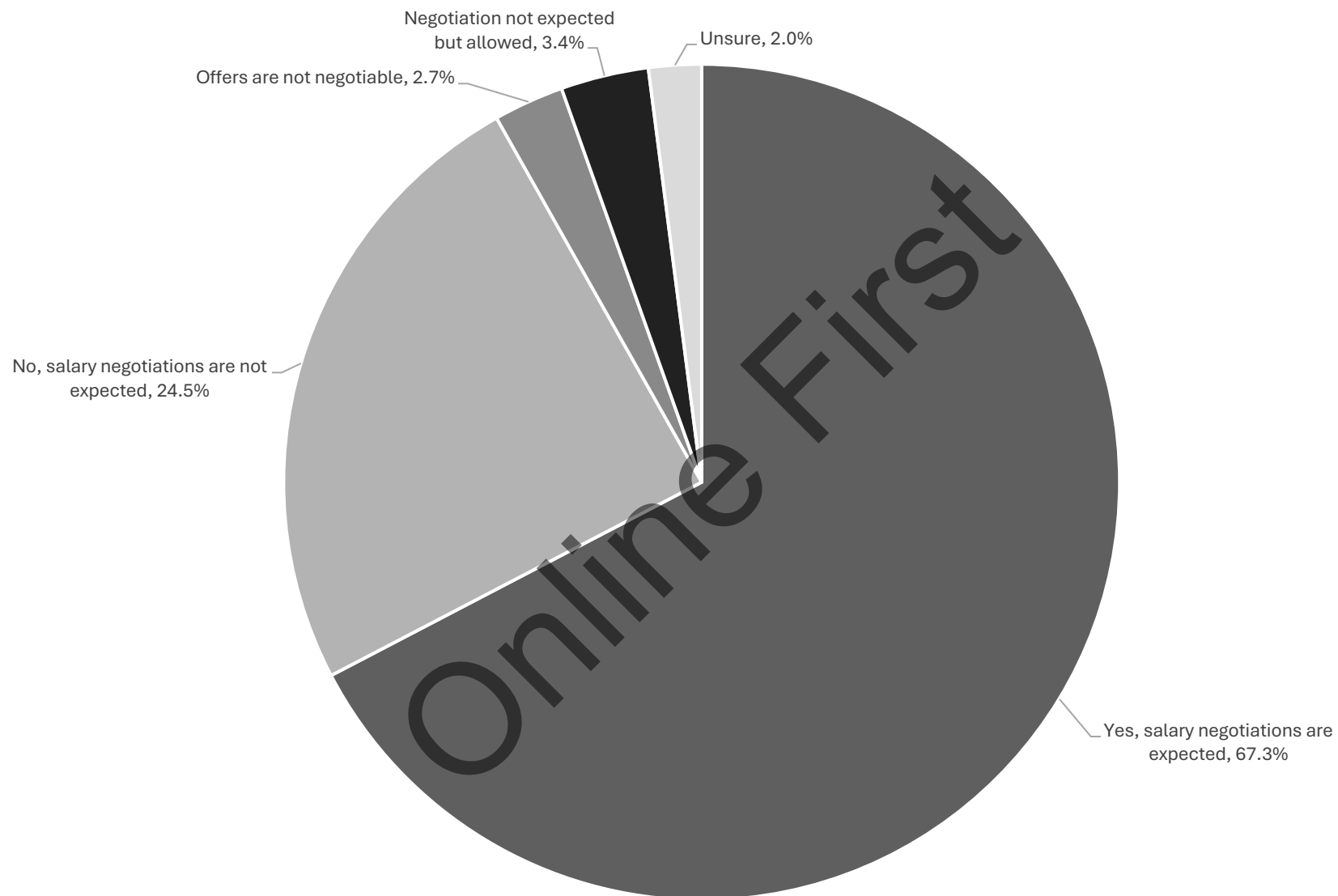


Figure 3: Initial salary offer based on employer expectations for negotiation

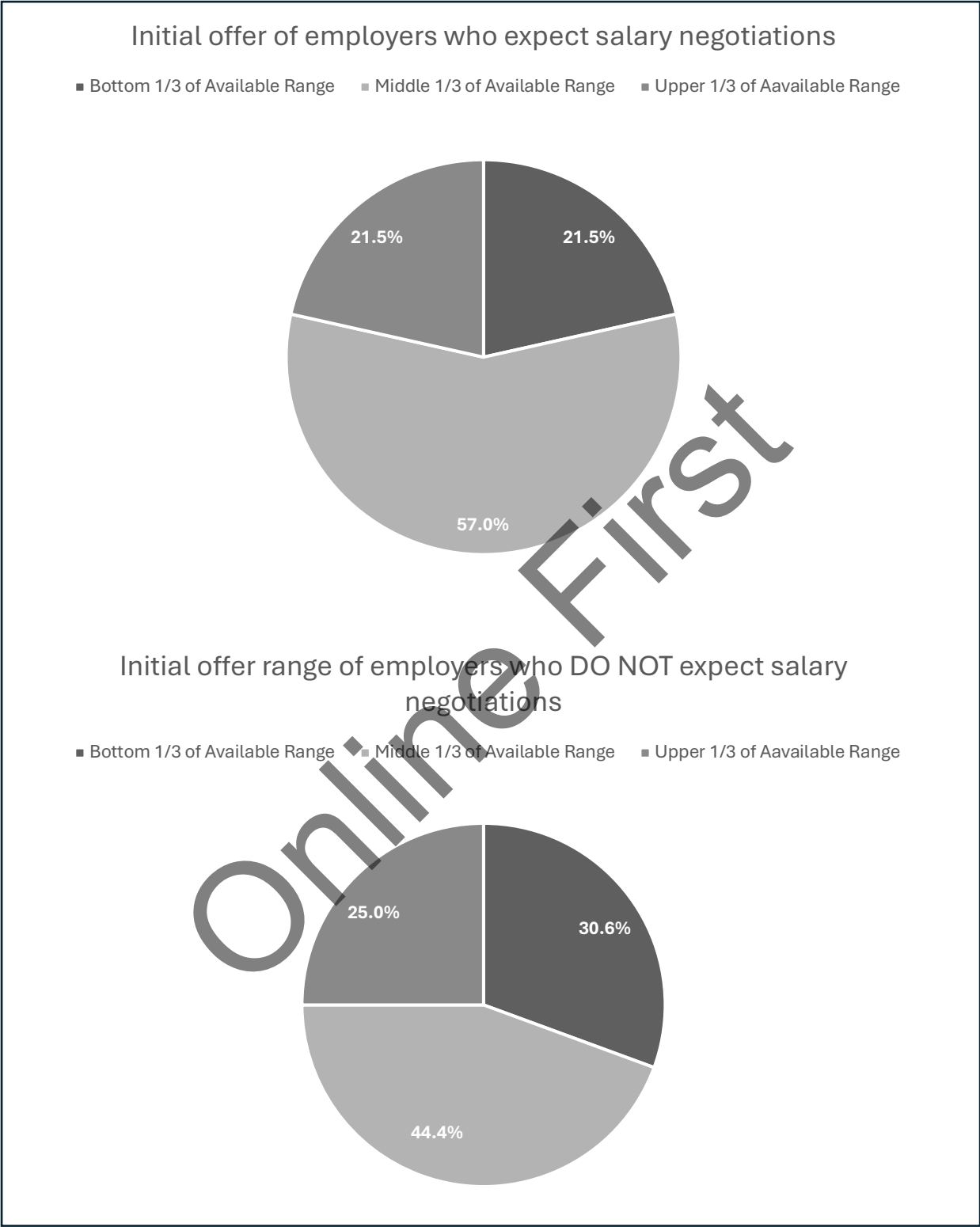
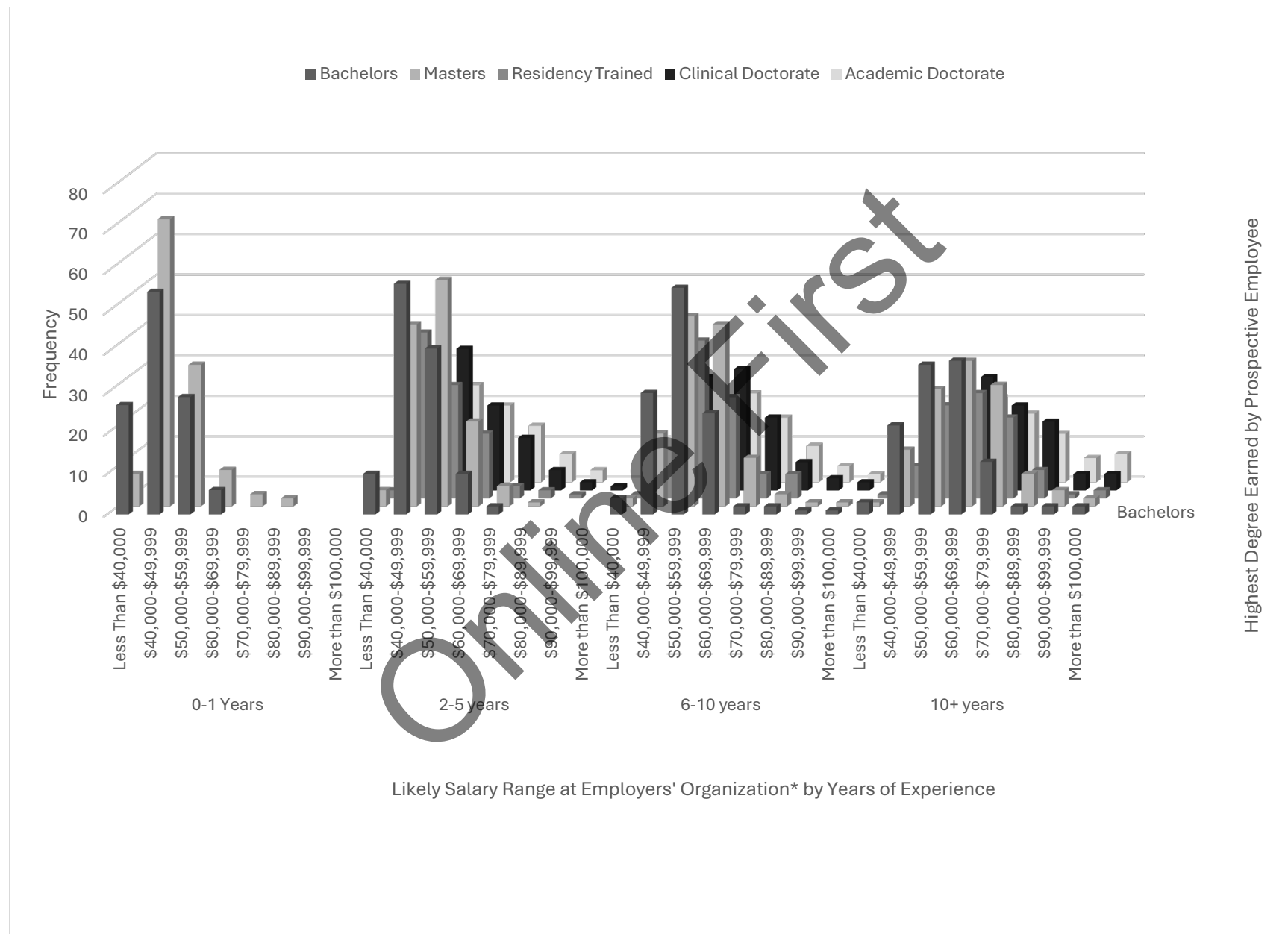


Figure 4: Likely salary range offered to a hired AT at the respondents' employing organization based on degree and experience levels



\*Responses of "we would not hire someone with these qualifications" were removed from this Figure

Table 1: Employment Settings Employers Hired Athletic Trainers Into

Setting	N* (% of Sample)
Amateur/Recreational/Youth Sports	1 (0.4)
Clinic – Hospital Based	3 (1.2)
Clinic – Outreach (secondary school or other outreach)	33 (12.7)
Clinic – Outpatient Rehabilitation	6 (2.3)
Clinic – Physician Practice	16 (6.2)
College/University – Student Health/Recreation	7 (2.7)
College/University – Faculty/Academic/Research	39 (15.0)
College/University – Profession Clinical Staff (NCAA Div. I, II, or III)	59 (22.7)
College/University – Split Appointment (academic and clinical)	4 (1.5)
College/University – Performing Arts	1 (0.4)
Government Contract	1 (0.4)
Health/Fitness/Sports Performance Enhancement Clinician	3 (1.2)
Industrial/Occupational/Corporate	9 (3.5)
Military	4 (1.5)
Professional Sports	6 (2.3)
Secondary School (Middle & High School) – Academic Only	2 (0.8)
Secondary School (Middle & High School) – Athletic Only	41 (15.8)
Secondary School (Middle & High School) – Dual Academic & Athletic Appointment	16 (6.2)
Other	9 (3.5)
N=260 who answered this question	