

# PERCEPTIONS OF ENTRY-LEVEL HIRES IN NATURAL RESOURCES: A SURVEY OF EMPLOYERS AND EDUCATORS

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## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What skills do natural resource professionals value in recent graduates?
- What attributes do professionals believe will most ensure entry-level success?
- Do professionals believe there is a difference between the proficiency of past and current hires?
- How may we reconstruct the undergraduate curriculum in light of the results?

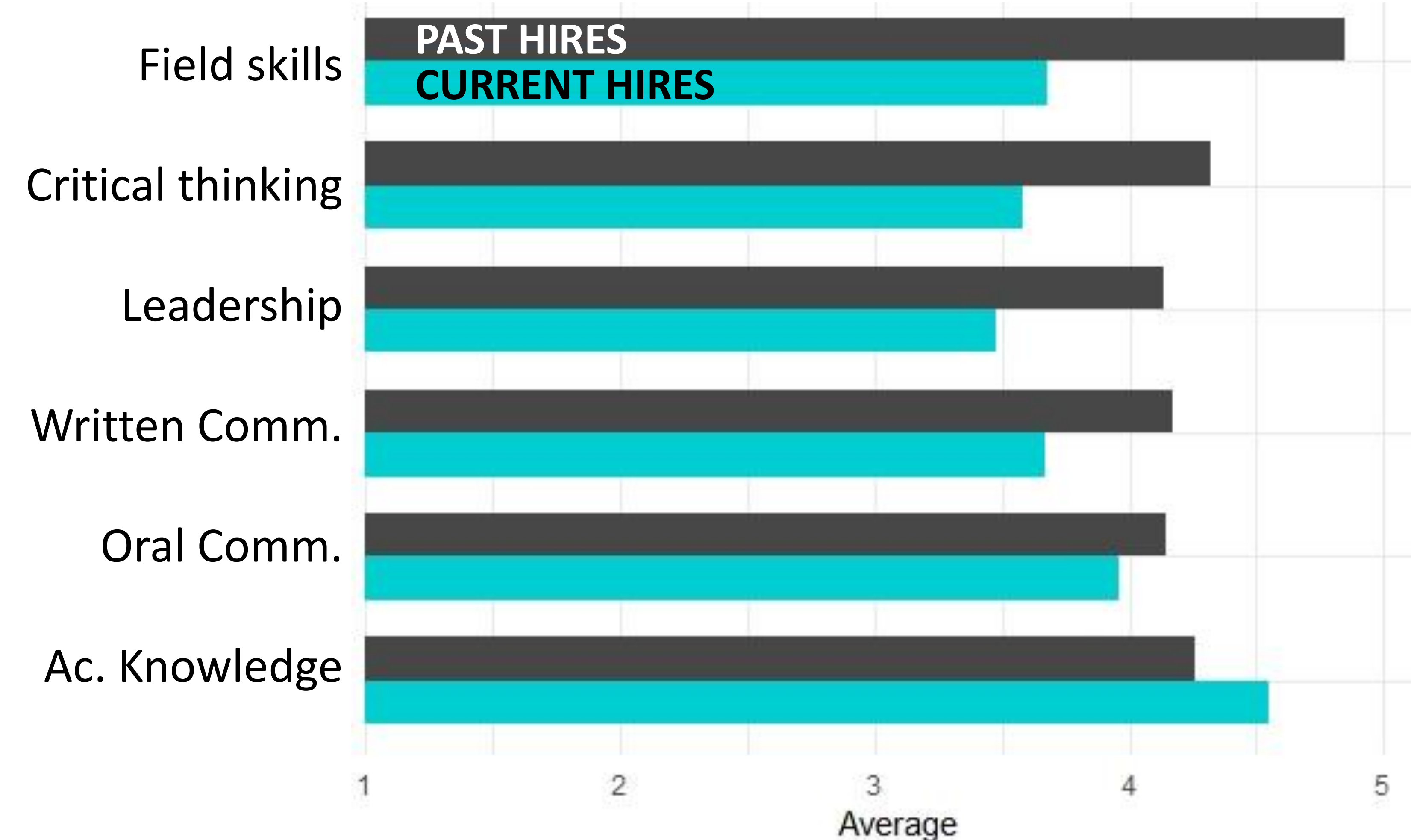
## METHODS & RESPONDENTS

- LSU IRB stated there was no harm inherent to completing the survey
- Designed a survey using Qualtrics software and distributed it to natural resource professionals occupying positions in state agencies, NGOs, universities, and federal agencies
- Response rate = 16.8% (~636 respondents received the survey, 107 surveys completed in full)
- 73% of respondents considered a permanent hire while completing the survey
- 58% of respondents worked in a state agency (NGO 18%, university 15%, federal agency 9%)

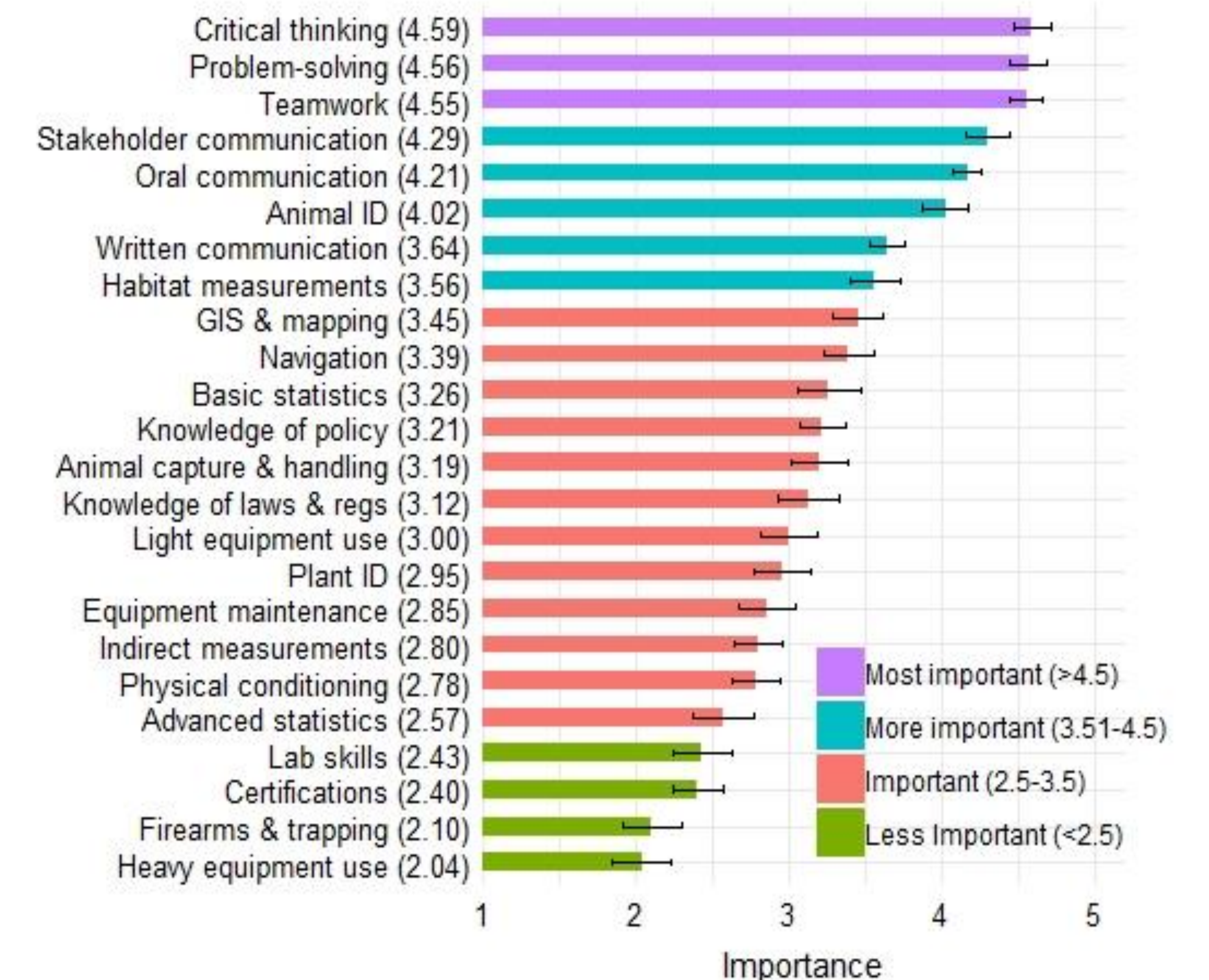
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## RESULTS

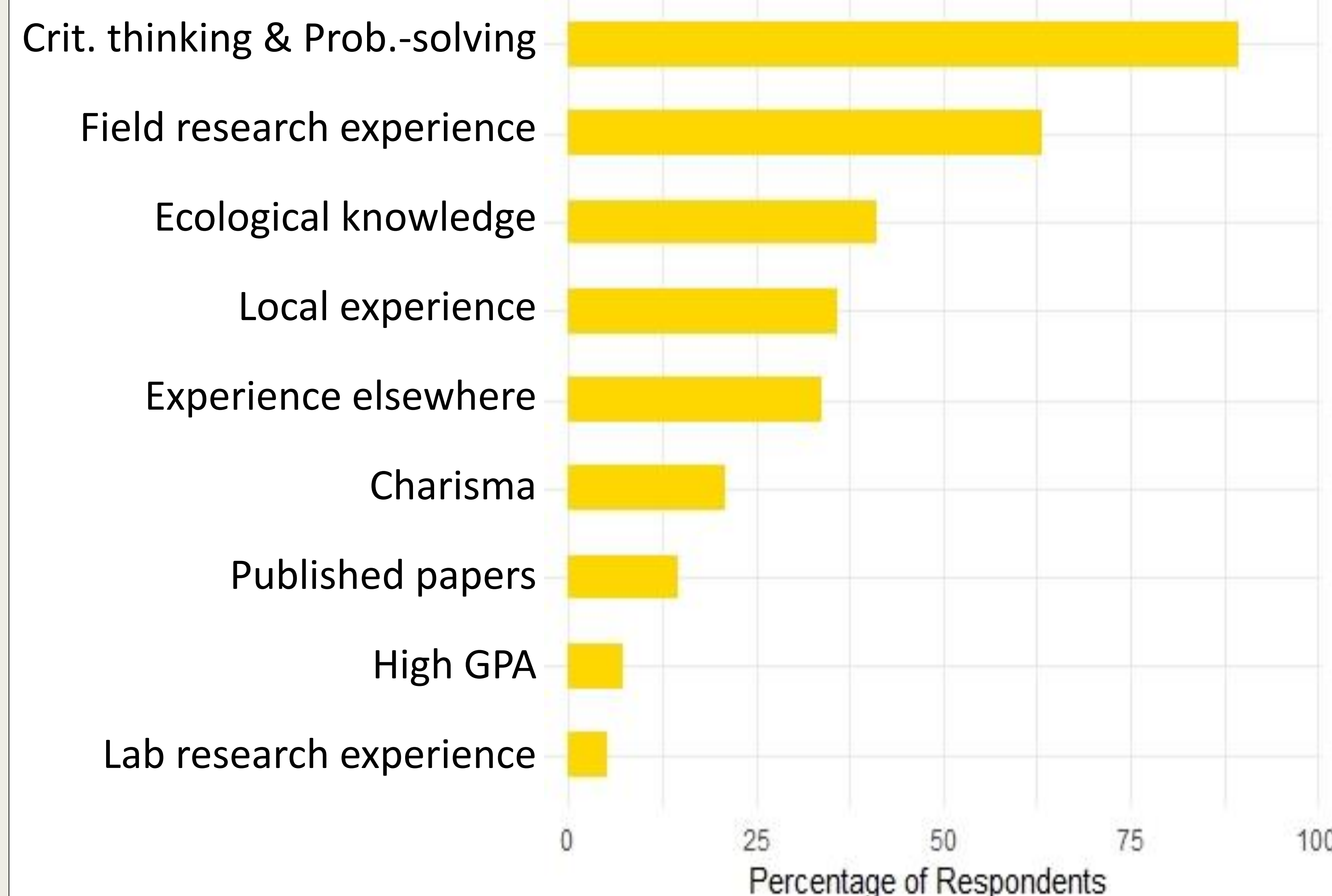
### Perceived Proficiency of Past and Current Hires



### Natural Resource Skill Importance



### Desired Attributes for Entry-Level Hires



## DISCUSSION

Respondents appear to value practical skills (like field experience and critical thinking) over more academic skills (like a high GPA). This may communicate to students that it is vital to attain field experience while progressing through the undergraduate curriculum.

The differing perceptions of proficiency between past and current hires may be multiply interpreted. It may be true that today's hires, who are generally less familiar with working outdoors, may lack field skills and critical thinking. It may also be true that respondents tend to overestimate the abilities of past hires. Either way, respondents may want field skills to be emphasized more heavily in the curriculum.