

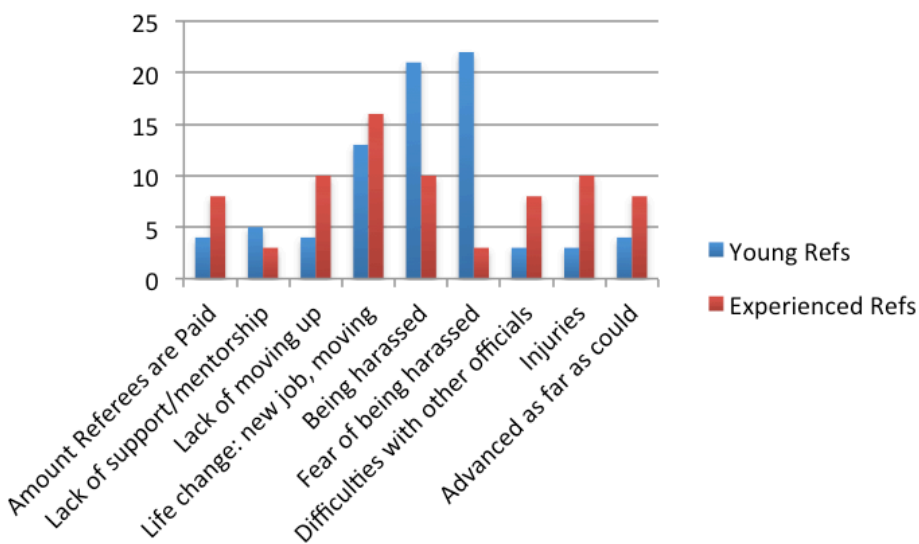


## Why referees think referees quit: Results from APHA & SJAMHA

Referees in Canada number in the 10s of thousands. For example, Hockey Canada published the following numbers: 13,000 level 1s, 10,000 level 2s, and 5000 level 3s each season. According to an article in 2007<sup>1</sup>, about 10,000 officials quit each year with those that continue refereeing being “particularly hardy people” who are just “thick-skinned.”

Indeed, a Google search of “Why hockey referees quit” provides hits focused on referee harassment almost exclusively. The conversation will turn to “not paid enough” but only as an extension of referee harassment. Google also provides numerous individual stories as well about attacks in parking lots and the “crazy hockey parent who spends the entire game yelling at the 14 year old referee”. However, there is limited information about reasons other than harassment.

One question that needs to be asked is: why do referees think that referees quit? Therefore, in APHA & St. James, referees were asked to identify different reasons a referee may quit and then identify the number one reason they think a referee would quit. The chart to the right shows the responses for

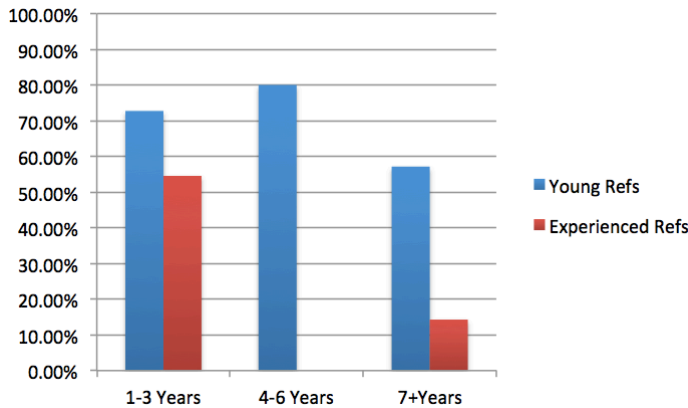


“Select all the reasons that you feel would lead to a young (or experienced) referee quitting. According to officials in APHA and SJAMHA, the most likely reason for a young official to quit (blue bars) would be “being harassed” or “fear of being harassed”. Interestingly, the respondents felt that life changes would be more likely than harassment to lead to an experienced referee quitting.

The officials were also asked to identify the number one cause of referees quitting: the number one cause for young referees quitting was harassment and life change for the older referees.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ctvnews.ca/study-to-probe-why-so-many-hockey-referees-quit-1.231632>

Next, the respondents were divided into three groups based on experience: 1-3, 4-6 and 7+ years of experience. The percentage of respondents stating that harassment is a reason for



referees quitting are shown to the left. All three groups felt that young referees were likely to quit due to harassment. However, the group with 1-3 years experience felt that being harassed would cause both young and experienced referees to quit equally (i.e. both the red and blue bars are very close). However, the group of officials with either 4-6 or 7+ years of experience said that being harassed would be a likely cause of having a young referee quit but not an experienced

referee.

Finally, respondents were given the opportunity to give any other thoughts about why referees quit. For respondents who left additional information, they talked about: Not enough games, referee harassment, referee support and unpredictable pay schedules

The conclusions from this survey are:

- 1) Referees in APHA and SJAMHA believe that harassment is the main reason that young officials quit.
- 2) Experienced officials are more likely to quit when life and priorities change.
- 3) There is a shift in perspective of why referees quit as referees gain experience:
  - a. Officials with 1-3 years of experience: believe that referees who quit do so due to harassment regardless of experience level.
  - b. Officials with 4+ years of experience believe that young referees who quit do so due to harassment and experienced referees do so due to reasons other than harassment.

**“...harassment is the main reason young officials quit...experienced officials quit because life and priorities change...”**

#### Thoughts for further research

This survey is limited by its sample; a larger sample that includes officials from all over the city would be very useful. The sample also focused on active referees; further research needs to be done to ask referees who have quit about the factors leading to that decision.

Finally, one particular point of interest; junior officials in this survey believed that harassment equally leads to both young and experienced officials quitting. What changes as officials gain experience to explain this change in perspective from referees with 1-3 years to 4+ years of experience?