

Empowering postdocs to be integral members of Mass General Brigham (MGB)

Research Oversight Committee (ROC) Meeting
23 May 2024

Postdoc Leadership Council (PLC)
Advocacy Committee

Kisha N Sivanathan, PhD
Chair of PLC Advocacy Committee



Brigham and Women's Hospital
Founding Member, Mass General Brigham

Agenda

- 2023 Annual Postdoc Survey: Key Findings
- Major concerns and Key Issues from the survey:
 - Financial Concerns
 - Career Insecurity and Mentorships
 - High Prevalence of Unprofessional Behaviors
 - Poor Onboarding Process
- Empowering Change: Proposed Actions



Survey Framework

2022 Annual Postdoc Survey

NEW! Take the First Annual Postdoc Survey! | BWH PDA

Advocacy Committee

Closes Monday, October 17

Take the Survey

BWH Postdocs - what are your worries? No time for family and friends? Cost of living in Boston? Next steps in your career? Need more mentoring opportunities? The PLC Advocacy Committee is here to listen and help you!

Fill out our first annual postdoc survey, designed to collect data on areas including finance, work environment, training quality, and visa sponsorship. The answers will help us work with hospital leadership to address the most urgent, unmet needs to create a better experience for the postdoc community. The survey is anonymous and all questions are optional.

Plus, enter a drawing after filling out the survey for a chance to win one of three prizes: a Keurig K-1500, a Samsonite wheeled carry-on, or a gift card!

[Changes announced on June 8, 2023 \(Email\)](#)

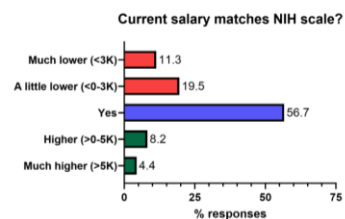
Subject: Research Fellow Compensation

Memo to Research Fellows

- Salary increase (no later than October 2024)
- No-cost Health Insurance
- 2% of pay into MGB 403(b) Retirement Savings Plan
- Additional Resources and Support: “We will work closely with MGB Postdoctoral Association and hold forums to maintain an open dialogue with our postdoctoral fellows to assess the needs and expectations of our research community and refine our policies and practices as necessary”.

30.8% of Postdocs Reported Being Paid Below NIH/ BWH Minimum

Postgraduate years of Experience (PGY)	NIH/BWH minimum (FY 2022)
0	\$54,840
1	\$55,224
2	\$55,632
3	\$57,852
4	\$59,784
5	\$61,992
6	\$64,296
7+	\$66,600



Improvements since 2022:

- Annual Career Review (21.4% to 50% completion)
- Underpaid (below BWH minimum) from 30.8% to 11%



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Timeline: 12/5/2023 – 1/31/2024



BWH Postdoctoral Association

2023 Annual Postdoc Survey

Closes Monday, Jan 1, 2024

Your Input Matters!

Calling All BWH Postdocs!

Participate in the 2023 BWH Postdoc Survey

Advocacy Committee
BWH Postdoctoral
Leadership Council

Closes Monday,
Jan 1, 2024



Why Participate?

- Make *YOUR* voice heard
- Improve postdoc life
- Help us advocate for *YOU*
- Plus, drawing for a \$50 gift card on completion!

2022 Survey Outcomes

- BWH commitment to salary increase
- No-cost health coverage
- Retirement savings plan
- Visa workshops
- and more!

Take the 2023 Survey Now

Survey Categories and Key Issues

Demographics

Financial Compensation and Benefits

Career Progress and Mentorship

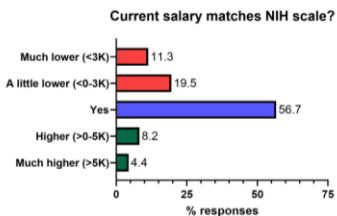
Work Environment and Culture

Onboarding, Visa, Immigration Concerns

Others Satisfaction Open Form

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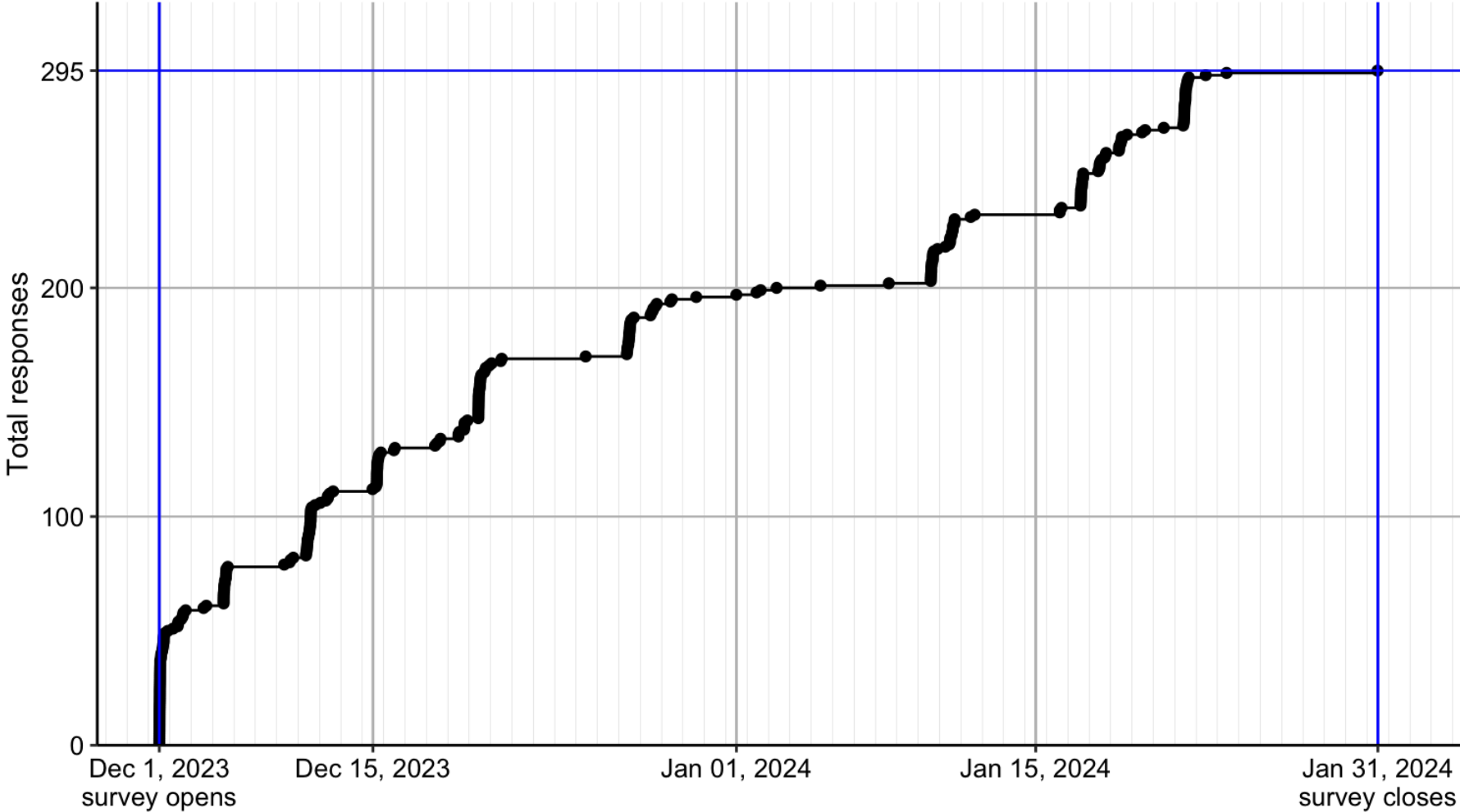
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295 Responses over the course of two months (37% response rate)

Timeline: 12/5/2023 – 1/31/2024

Background	
Year	2023 - 2024
Time	8 weeks
Format	Google Survey (47 questions; mixed format)
Respondents	BWH Postdocs
Responses	295
Response Rate	~37%

*Excluded Instructors





2023 BWH Annual Postdoc Survey: Key Findings



Survey Demographics:

Diverse and representative of the overall BWH postdoctoral community

Nearly 20% postdocs are 4-8+ years since primary degree

	Survey (N=291)
Gender	
Female	53.6%
Male	43.3%
Trans/nonbinary	0.3%
Not reported	2.7%
Race/ethnicity	
White	29.9%
Asian	44.7%
Hispanic/Latino	10.3%
Black/African American	3.4%
Other	5.5%
No response	6.2%
Primary degree	
PhD or equivalent	73.2%
MD or equivalent	21.0%
MD/PhD	5.2%
No response	0.7%
Research or Clinical	
Research fellow	94.8%
Clinical research fellow	3.8%
Other	1.0%

	Survey (N=291)
Years in postdoc	
< 2 years	58.4%
2 to 5 years	33.3%
> 5 years	8.2%
Years since primary degree	
< 1 year	51.5%
1 to 3 years	29.5%
4-7 years	8.6%
8+ years	10.3%
Visa type	
US citizen	23.4%
Permanent resident	5.6%
J1	52.8%
H1B	9.8%
F1/STEM OPT	5.6%
Other	1.4%

*Excluded Instructors

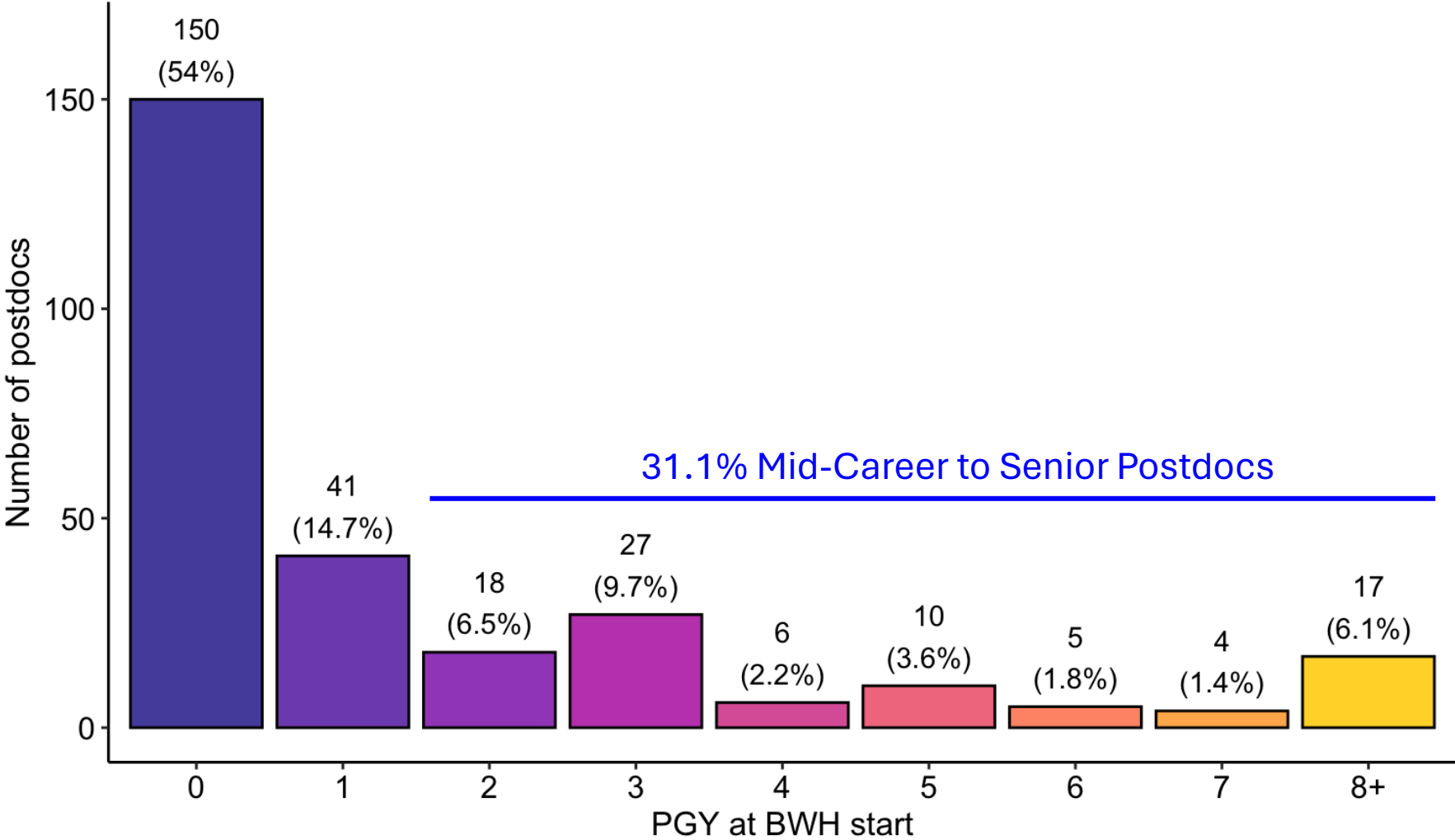
15 departments represented

- Medicine (17 divisions total) – 43.6%
- Neurology – 22.0%
- Pathology – 8.9%



Postdoc-Graduate Year (PGY) at the time of Recruitment / Start at BWH

31.1% postdocs have at least 2 to 8+ years of experience prior to BWH Hire



Key Issue 1

Financial Compensation and Benefits



Salaries have not been matched to the new MGB recommendations

Postdocs salaries are currently recommended at NSRA + 20% (mandatory starting 1 October 2024)

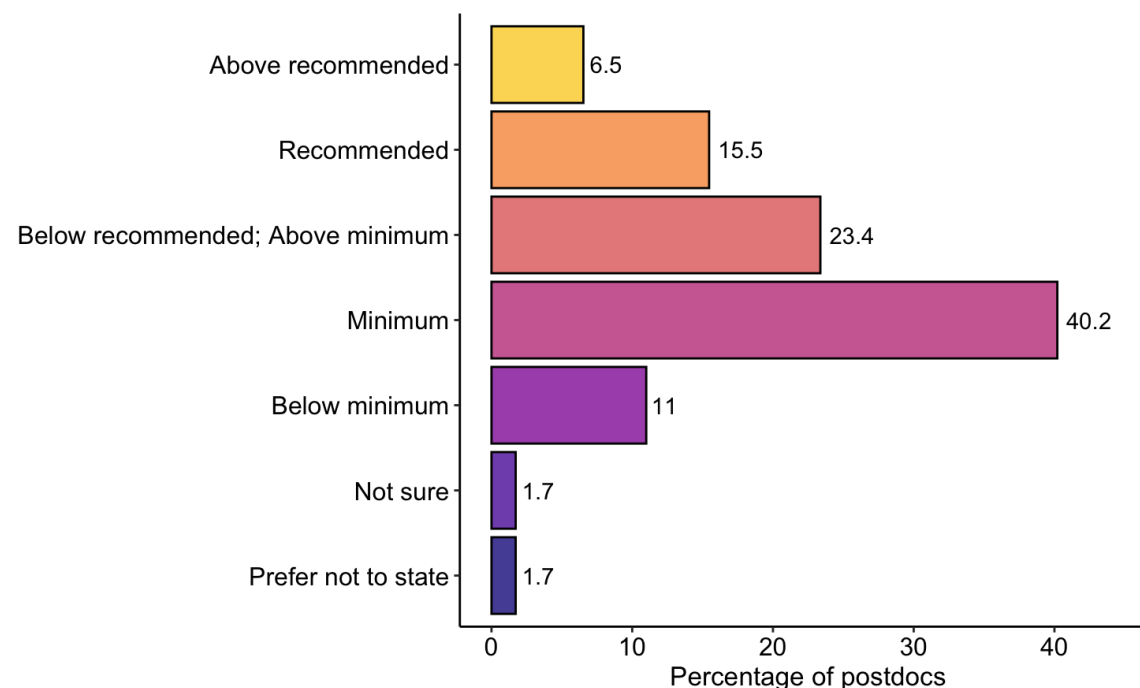
Years of Experience	NIH (2024-2025)	Announced 5/23/24	NIH+20%	HMS quad-based
0	\$61,008	\$70,000	\$73,209.60	\$72,000
1	\$61,428	\$71,750	\$73,713.60	\$74,000
2	\$61,884	\$73,544	\$74,260.80	\$76,000
3	\$64,356	\$75,382	\$77,227.20	\$76,000
4	\$66,492	\$77,267	\$79,790.40	\$76,000
5	\$68,964	\$77,267	\$82,756.80	\$76,000
6	\$71,532	\$77,267	\$85,838.40	\$76,000
>=7	\$74,088	\$77,267	\$88,905.60	\$76,000

Groups with generally higher salaries:

- Males vs females (p=0.005)
- MD/PhD vs PhD (p=0.043)
- Clinical research fellows (p<0.001)

No differences based on race/ethnicity, length of postdoc, years since primary degree, US residency status, or visa type.

78% of postdocs are below recommended salary levels



Most postdocs report high levels of Anxiety, Stress and Low Sustainability of postdoc training due to Financial Situation

>40% are highly stressed about their financial situation



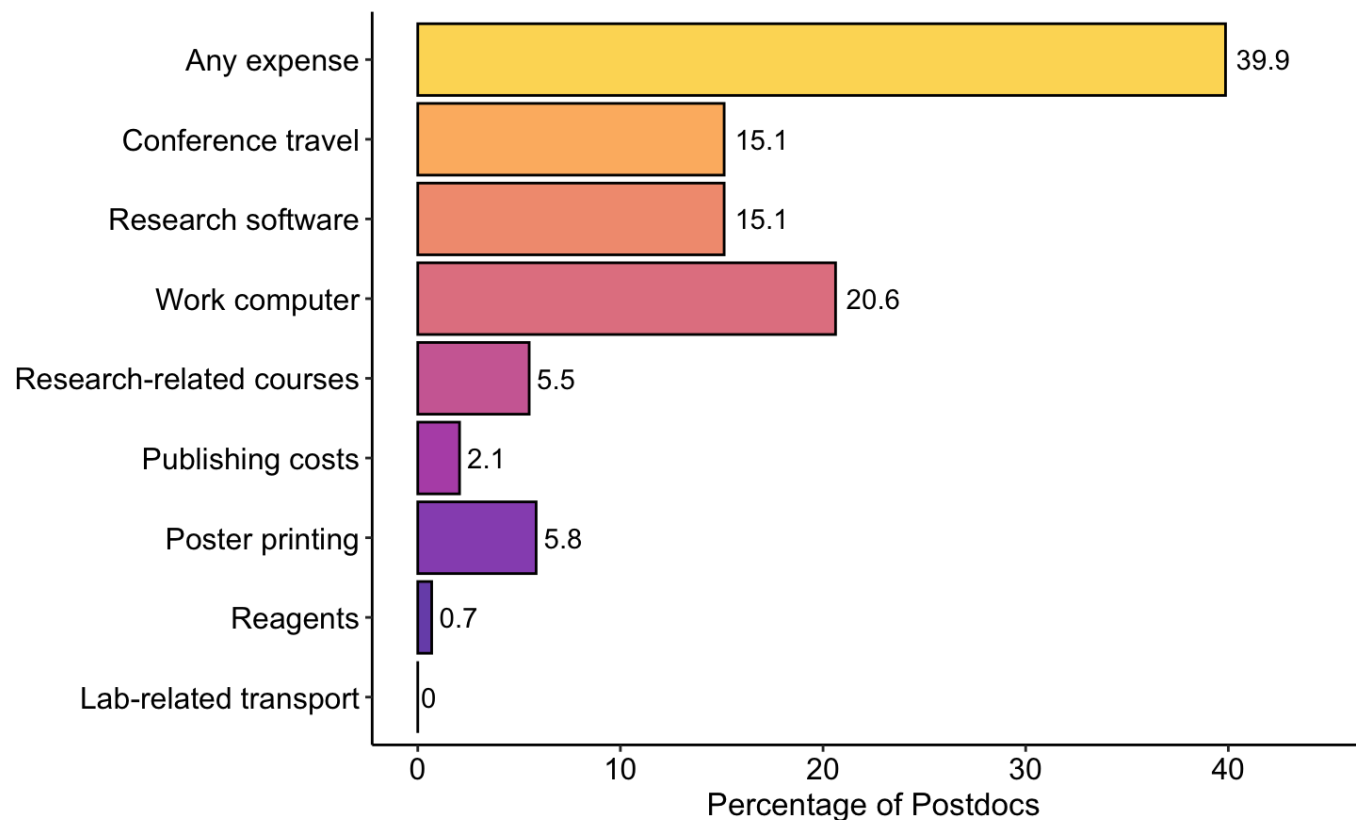
Postdocs more comfortable with their salary if they are on:

- Above recommended salary ($p < 0.001$)
- Earlier in their postdoc ($p = 0.019$)

No differences based on gender, race/ethnicity, US residency status, visa type.

A considerable number of postdocs pay for research-related expenses out of their own pocket

Nearly 40% of postdocs pay out of pocket for research-related expenses

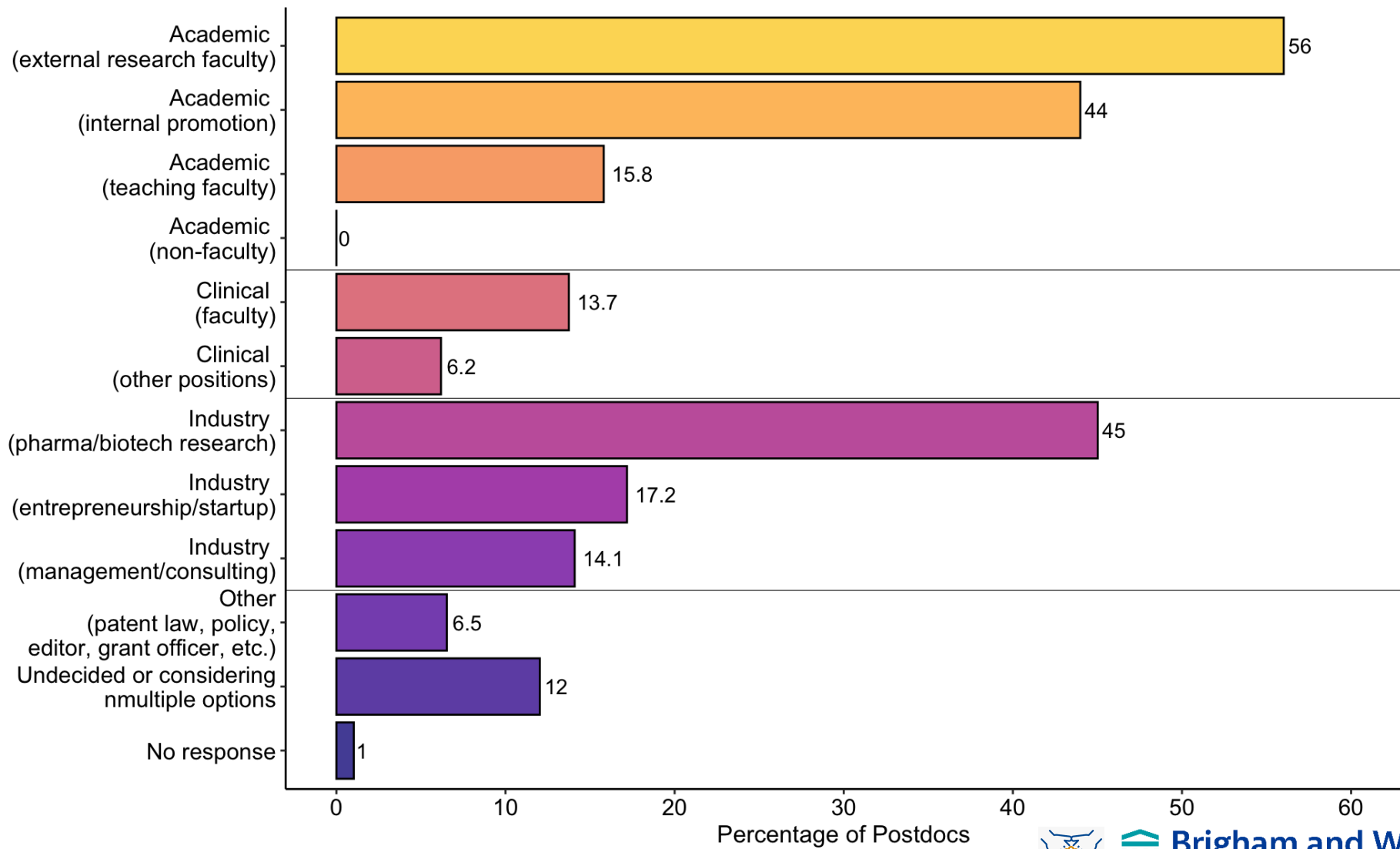


Key Issue 2

Career Progress and Mentorship

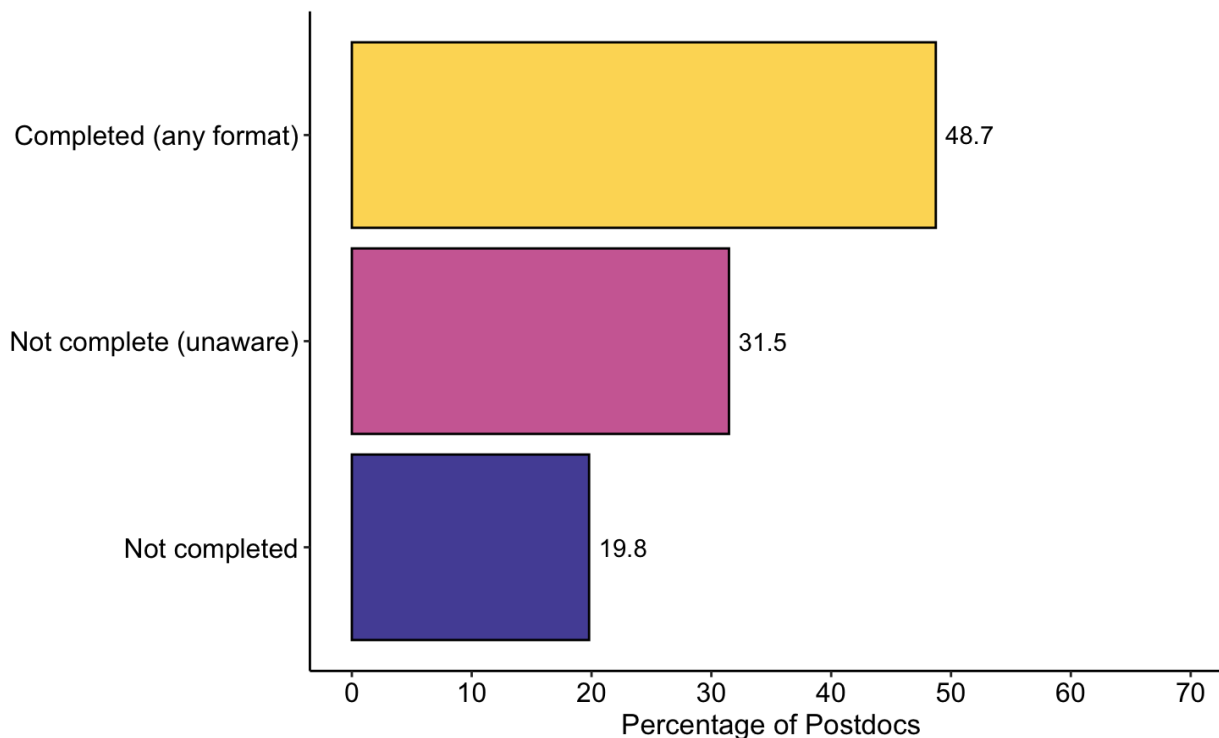


Most postdocs are interested in pursuing academic career tracks despite lack of positions



Improvements observed in Annual Review Compliance, but key gaps in training remain for Teaching, External Talks and Mentorships

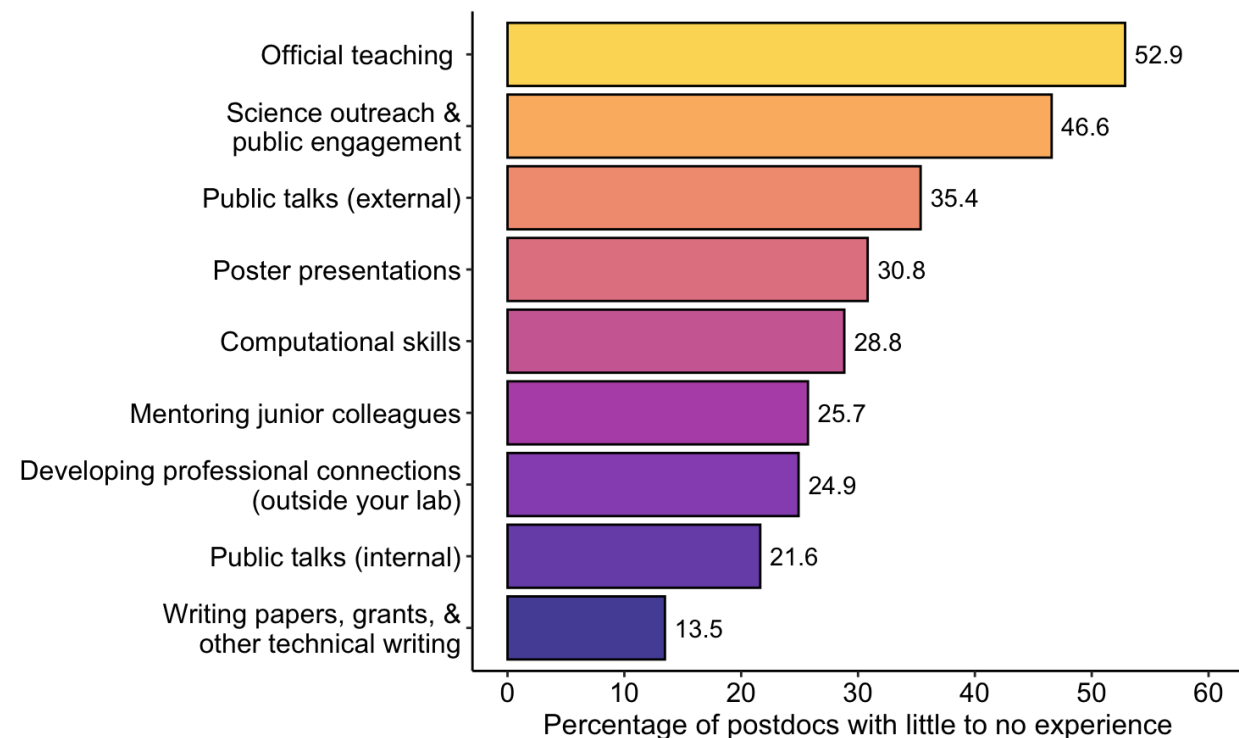
Only 50% postdocs complete their annual career review



*Excluded First Year Postdocs

Gaps remain for postdoc training, with 30% of postdoc lacking experience for key academic skills

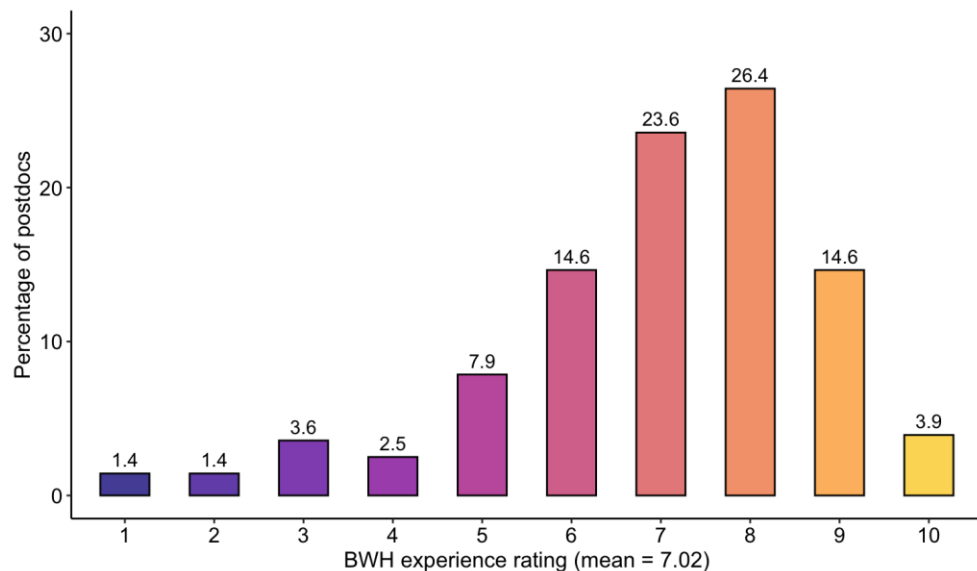
*% of postdocs who reported "Little or None"



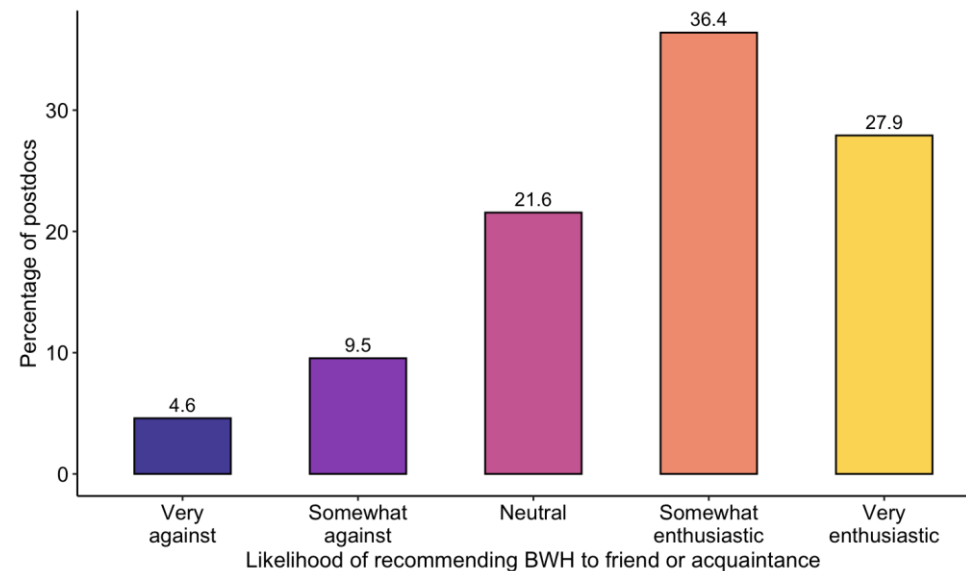
Quality of Training and Satisfaction:

Many postdocs would Not Recommend BWH as a place for postdoctoral training

31.4% of respondents rate their experience as 6 or lower (median=7)



36% neutral or would Not Recommend BWH to a friend or acquaintance



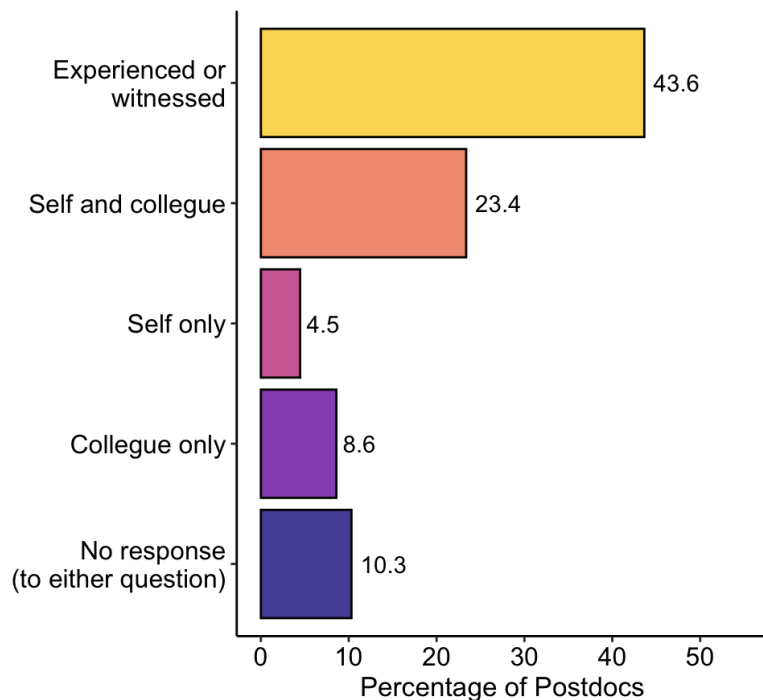
Key Issue 3

Work Environment and Culture

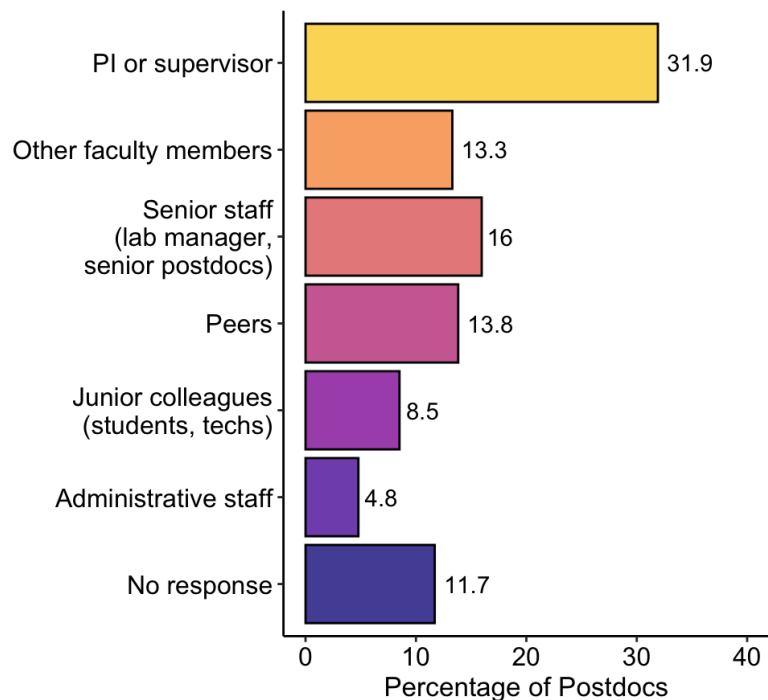


Unprofessional workplace behaviors are severely Underreported

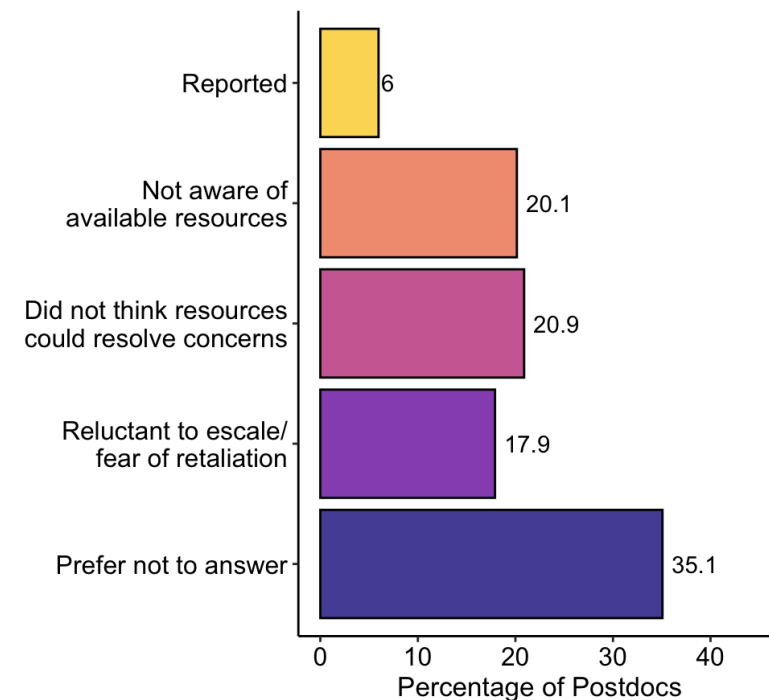
44% of postdocs experienced or witnessed behaviors



45% of behaviors come from faculty members (supervisor or other)



Less than 10% of postdocs report these incidents



Open Form: Broadly describe any Unprofessional Behaviors you have Experienced or Witnessed: Quotes



- “Unequal expectations of work depending on employee, women often being the ones asked to work harder and not believed when they do work hard...”
- “...supervisor creates a hostile work environment where trainees are afraid to ask questions, trainees are strongly chastised for mistakes and negative results, and important resources are withheld from certain trainees who are not deemed “favorites.”
- “Administrative staff sexually harassing a lab consisting of entirely female post docs and lab technicians”
- “Microaggressions occur daily and fall under the umbrella of issues like racism, sexism, and lack of inclusivity.”
- “Senior postdoc/instructor bullying multiple female lab members, including yelling, sabotaging experiments, and relaying false information to the PI about those lab members”
- “yelling and cursing in the lab about data in a way that is personally targeted and racist microaggressions”



Key Issue 4

Onboarding,
Visa,
Immigration
Concerns

Key Issue 5

Others
Satisfaction
Open Form



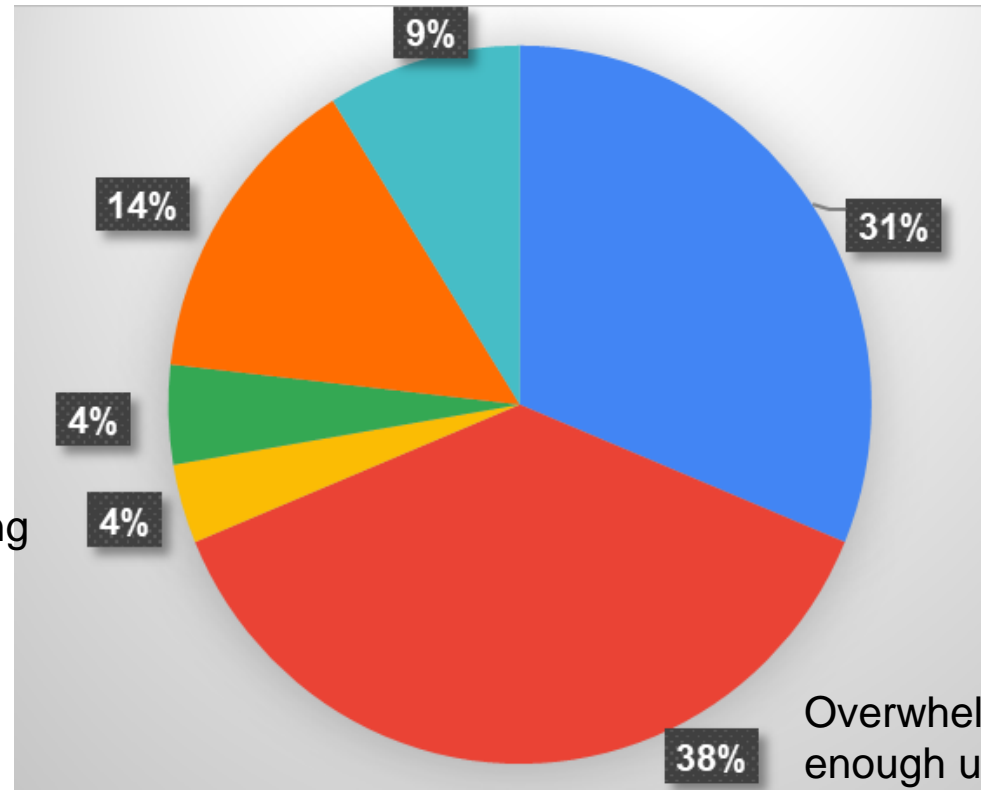
Open Form on Onboarding Experience

> 50% rate their onboarding experience as Slow, Difficult and Not Helpful

International Postdocs-
Hard to contact GPS,
Eluding to need for
resources!

Harvard ID access

Secondary Onboarding
by Division



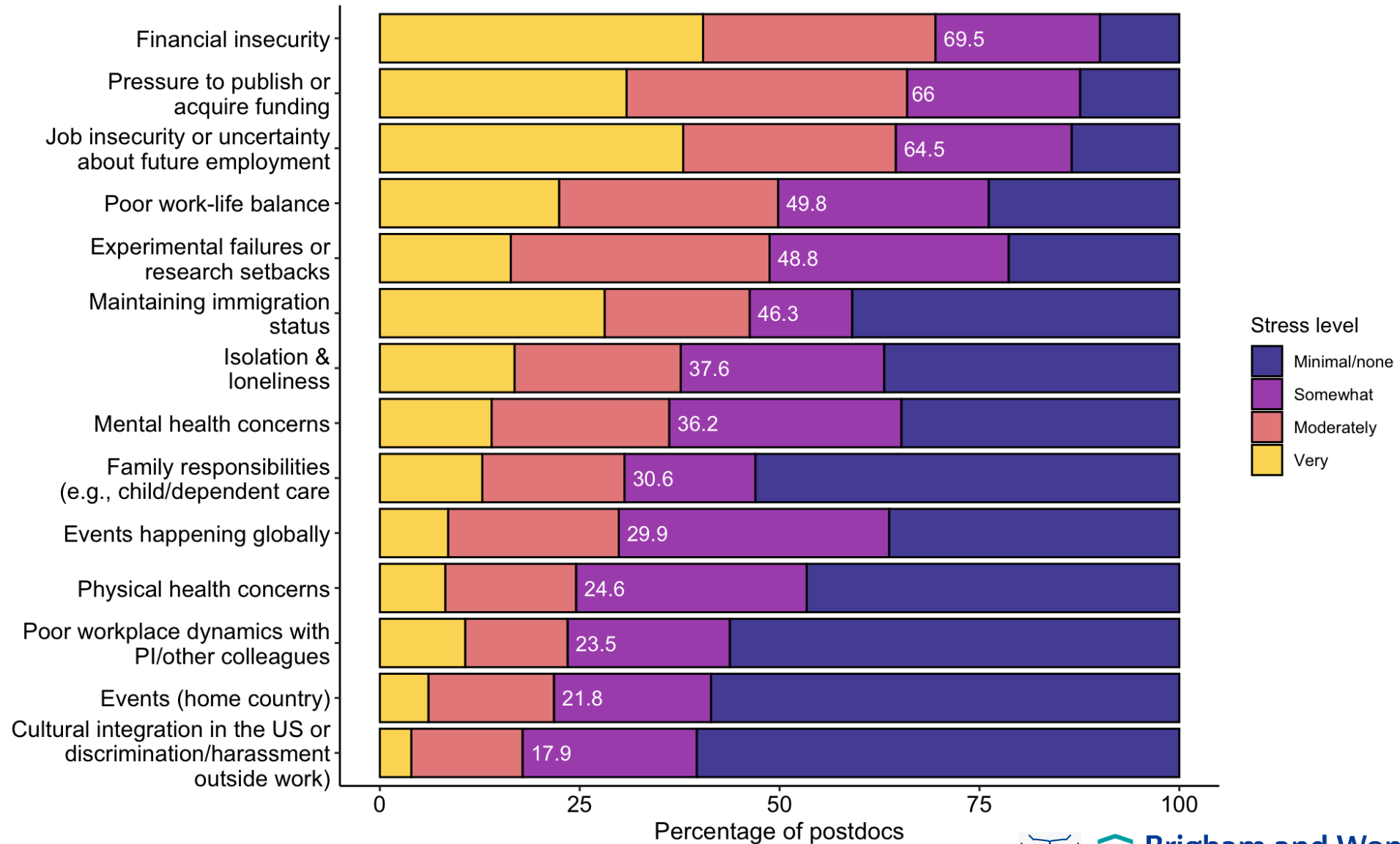
PLC introduction,
MCP, Meet and
Greet event
information

Overwhelming yet not
enough useful
information, slow, not
helpful

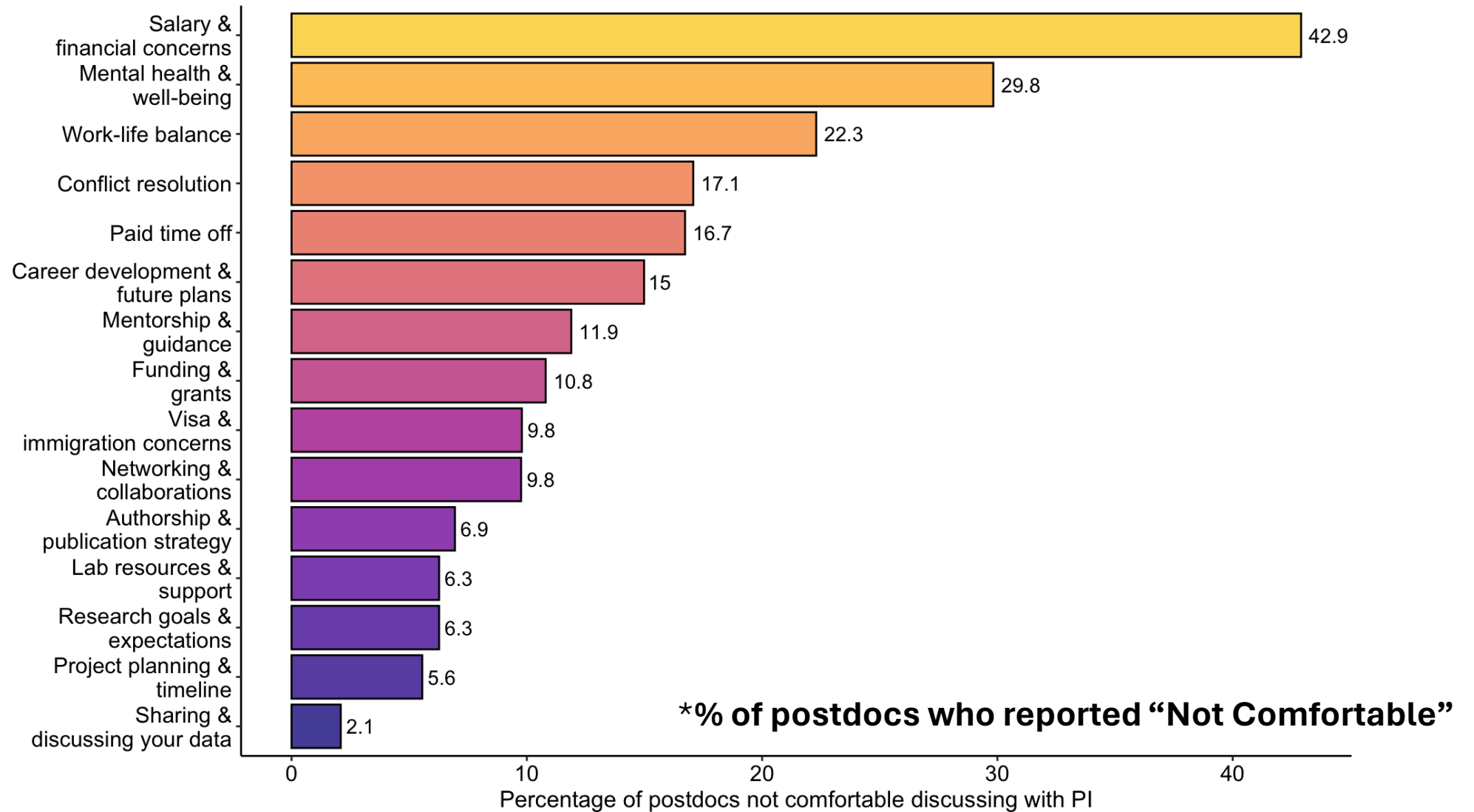
- Overwhelming, Too much information, minimal follow up
- MGB ID access to Harvard and affiliation-ID card takes quite long
- Discrepancy on MGB onboarding and PI recommended start date which in turn affects pay start date



Largest contributors to postdoc Stress: Financial Insecurity, Job Uncertainty, Pressure to Publish and Visa Concerns



Postdocs are uncomfortable discussing Finances, Mental Health, and Work-Life Balance with their advisors





Empowering Change: Proposed Actions



Proposed calls of action plans by MGB: Immediate, Short-term, Long-Term

Financial Compensation and Benefits

- 78% BELOW recommended
- 11% UNDER minimum
- 40% pay out of pocket
- Anxiety, Stress, Unsustainable

Timely and Efficient implementation of **FAIR** salary and automated annual increase

Expand and Improve Research Infrastructure

Career Development and Mentorship

- 50% not completed ACC
- 30% lack key academic skills
- Poor overall satisfaction
- Poor recommendation for BWH

Revise the Annual Career Conference Template (Mandate)

Improved Career Development Resources/Guidelines for Transitioning

Work Environment and Culture

- 44% experienced/witness unprofessional behaviors (from faculty)
- <10% report these incidences
- Poor work-life balance

Annual Leadership and Management training for Faculty

Mentor Program (Secondary Mentorship)

Onboarding, Visa, Immigration Concerns Others

- Poor Onboarding processes
- Other stressors: job uncertainty, visa concerns

Improvement to Onboarding Affairs and Services

Improvement to VISA International Postdoctoral Affairs and Services

Establish a BWH Office of Postdoctoral Affairs (OPA)



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Harvard Medical School / Harvard School of Dental Medicine
Office for Postdoctoral Fellows

Beth Israel Lahey Health
Beth Israel Deaconess Medical Center

Home > Medical Education > Center for Career Development > Postdoc Resources

Office of Postdoctoral Scholars

 **Dana-Farber**
Cancer Institute

Postdoc Resources and Services



Boston Children's Hospital


Research

Office of Postdoctoral Affairs

 **Massachusetts General Hospital**
Founding Member, Mass General Brigham

CFD - OFFICE FOR RESEARCH CAREERS

Postdoctoral Division

 **Professional Development & Postdoctoral Affairs**

Tufts Office of the Vice
Provost for Research

< Support Functions & Programs



Postdoctoral Scholars

 **Office of the Vice President for Research**
Postdoctoral Services

 **CENTERS AND PROGRAMS**
OFFICE OF POSTDOCTORAL AFFAIRS AND
RESEARCH TRAINING

Stanford | Office of Postdoctoral Affairs
All Postdocs. All the Time.



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2023 Postdoc Survey - Acknowledgements

BWH PLC Advocacy Committee



Kisha
Sivanathan



Lien Nguyen



Kanupriya
Kusumakar



Eshaani Mitra



Samer Salem



Alexandre Lussier (MGH)
(Survey Analysis)

Similar trends at BWH and MGH

PLC Advocacy Committee Initiatives

- Survey Executive Summary
- Comprehensive Survey Report and Proposed Actions
- Collaboration with MGH – joint BWH and MGH survey analysis (n=676)

BWH leadership & organizations

- **Charles J Jennings**
- Allison Moriarty
- Rowan Potter
- Sara Yohannes
- Susannah Murray



BWH PLC Leadership

- Stecia-Marie Fletcher
- Kanupriya Kusumakar
- Frederike Kramer

Advocacy Committee Alumni

BWH Departmental Leadership

BWH Postdoc Community





Questions Discussions





Additional Slides



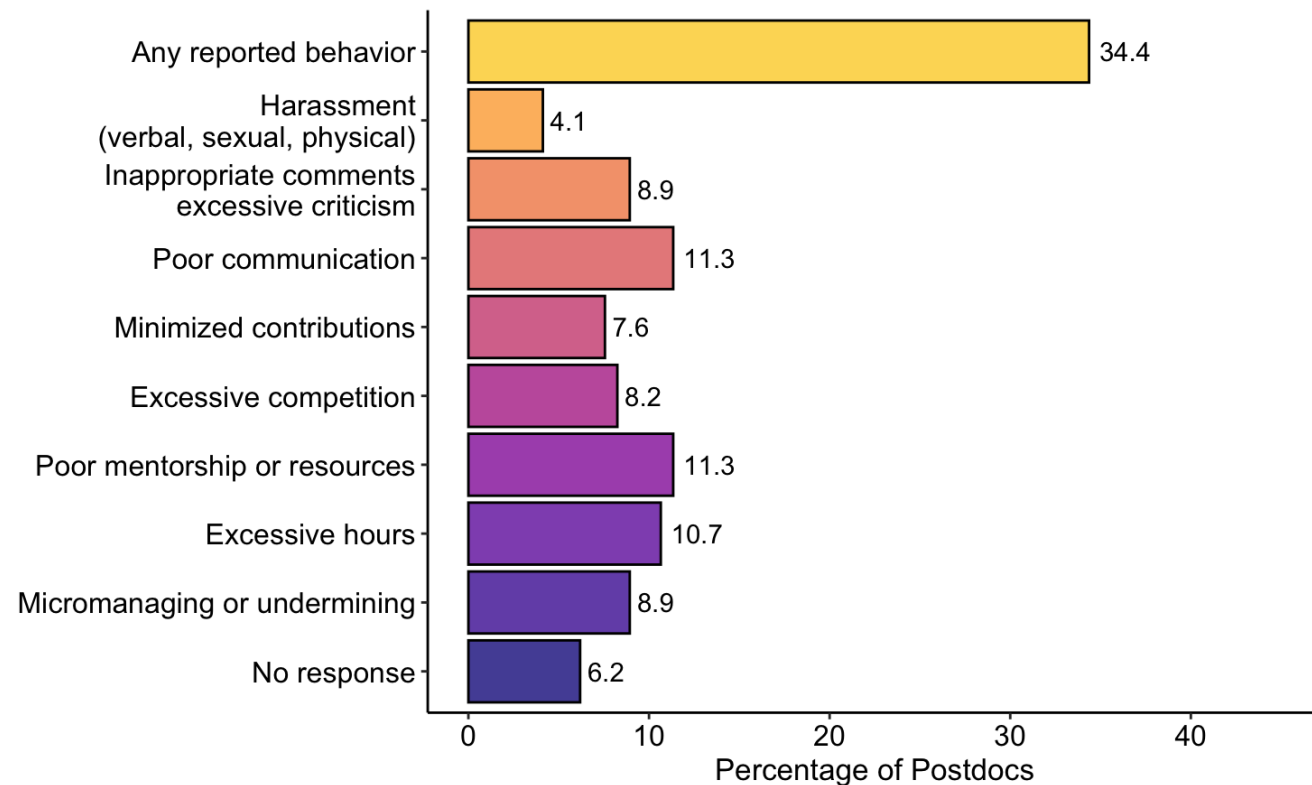
Open Form: Broadly describe any Unprofessional Behaviors you have Experienced or Witnessed

- Verbal, physical, or psychological harassment based on gender, race, nationality, age, or other personal characteristics.
- Inappropriate jokes, offensive comments, aggressive behaviors, or excessive criticism
- Poor communication, including withholding information, ignoring emails and messages, and avoiding meetings
- Contributions are not properly acknowledged or minimized, including authorship dispute in papers or grants.
- Excessively competitive atmosphere that discourages teamwork and cooperation.
- Supervisors failing to provide the necessary resources, guidance, and mentorship.
- Supervisors pressures postdocs to work excessively long hours without regard for work-life balance.
- Supervisor excessively micromanages and undermines postdoc's autonomy.

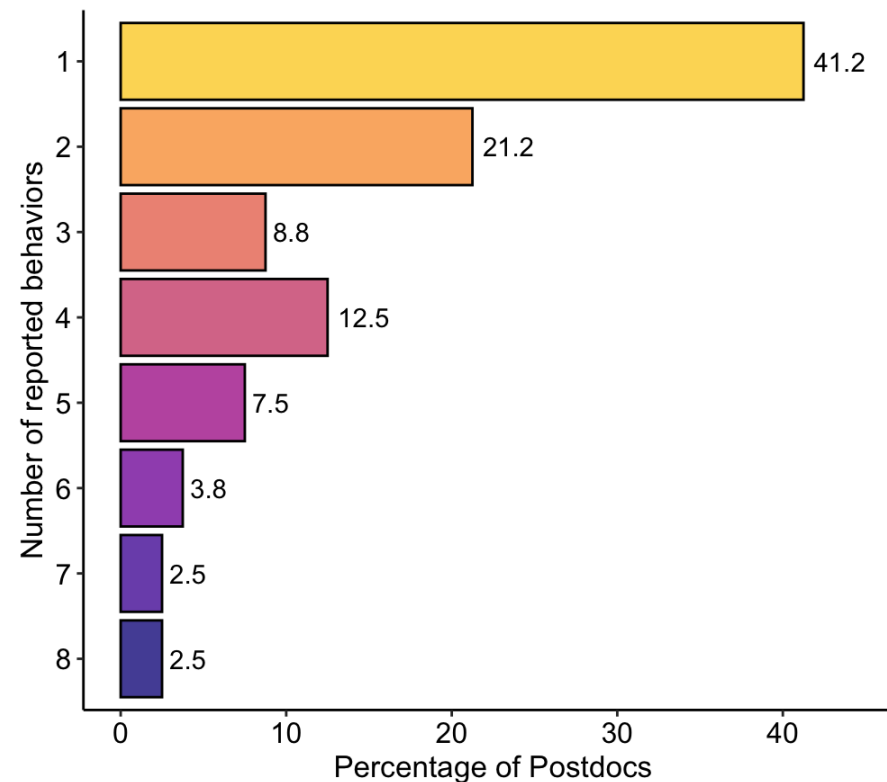


Many postdocs Experience inappropriate workplace behaviors

Nearly 35% of postdocs experience at least one inappropriate workplace behavior

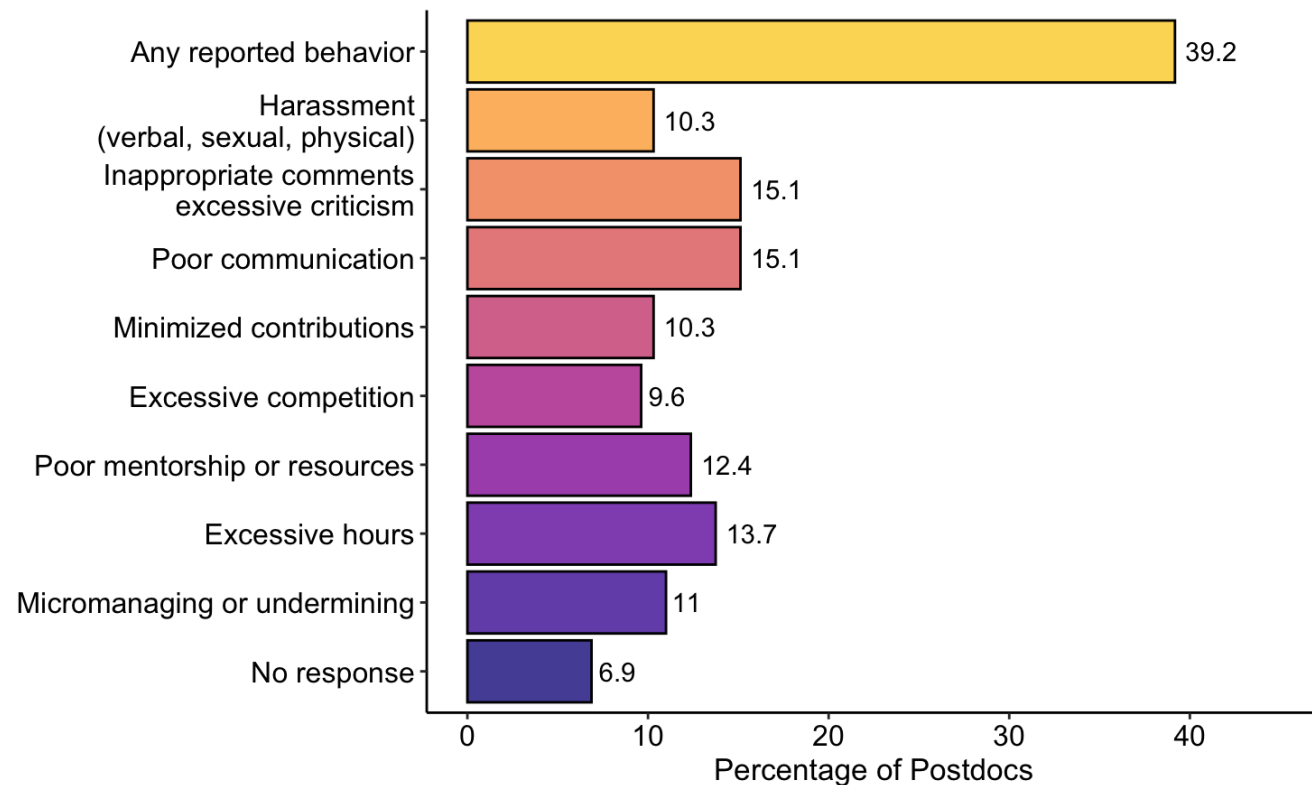


Among those postdocs, 38% experienced 3 or more of these behaviors

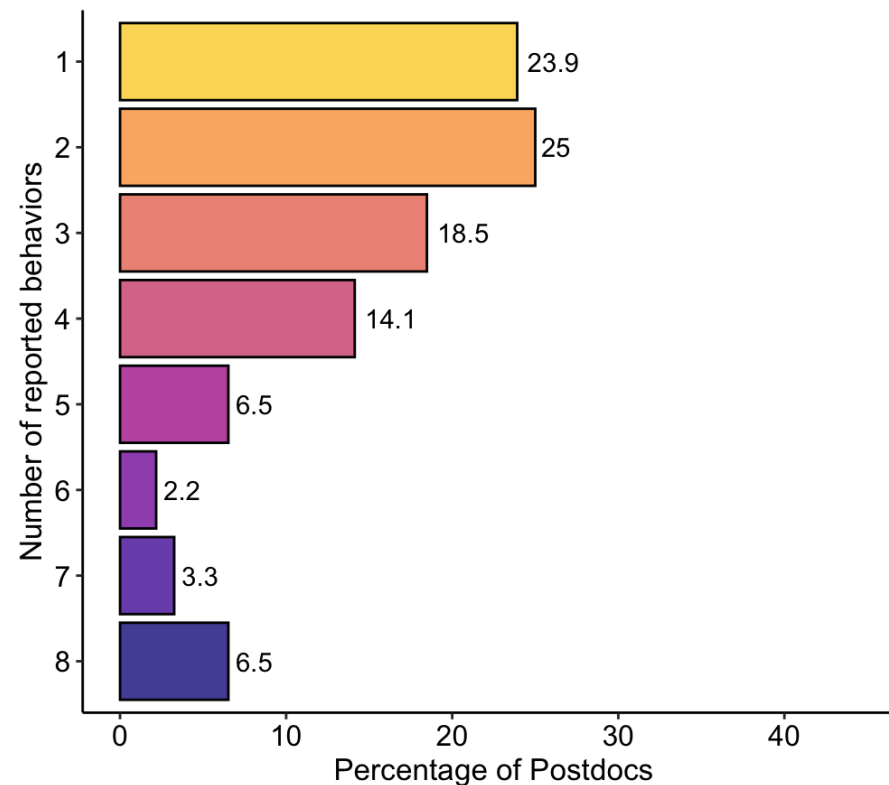


Behaviors Witnessed by postdocs show similar patterns to experiences

Nearly 40% of postdocs witnessed at least one inappropriate workplace behavior



Among those postdocs, 51% witnessed 3 or more of these behaviors



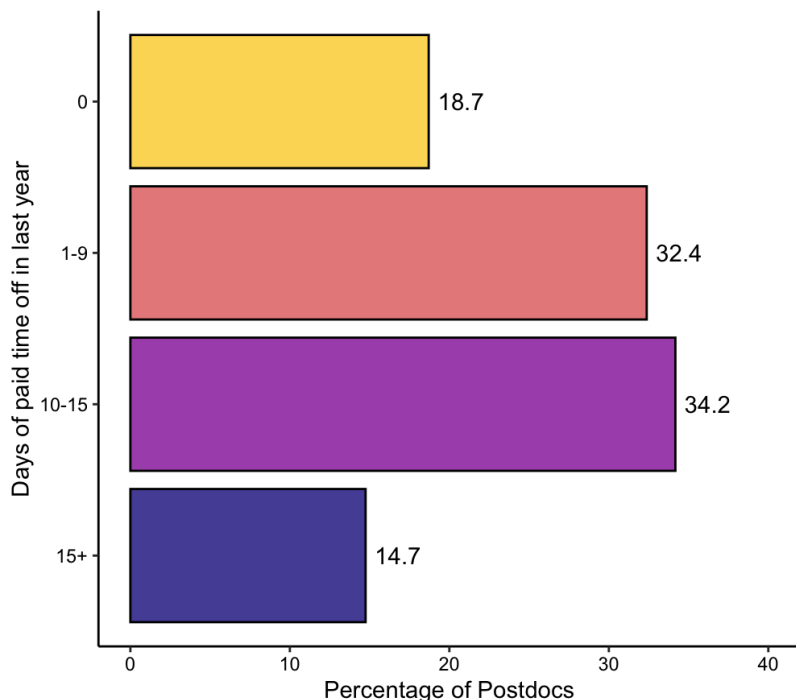
People seem to recognize more of these than they experience (38%)



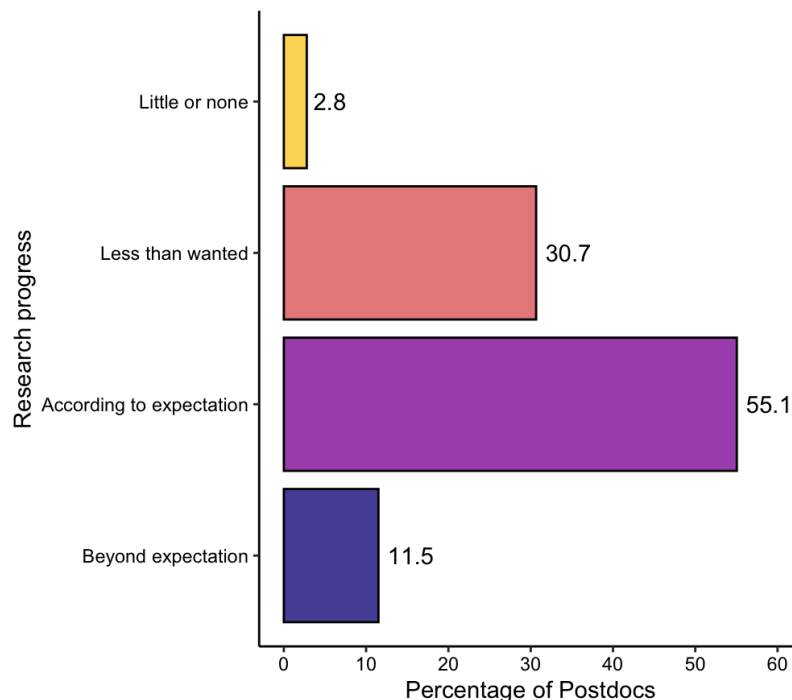
Other metrics of Postdoc Quality of Life:

A few are taking time off and many are making less progress than expected

85% of postdocs take less than their minimum 15 days off/year



34% of postdocs are making less progress than they expected



18% of postdocs spend more than 1 day/week on lab maintenance

