# Postdocs: tell us your academic age (e.g. PhD+5 as PhD5) Non Postdocs: tell us your role.

89 responses

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

Own time planning. No fault of working space.

finishing a paper

Experiments

to catch up with deadlines, occasional piling up of work and not necessarily very efficient work style

Deadlines

experiments, deadlines of calls

Too much work/too little time/too urgent stuff

Deadlines (self-imposed and real)

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

experiments, deadlines, too many tasks

to refine certain work to the level I feel finished

Social pressure

Experiment planning, working in a developmental neuroscience lab, making mice learn difficult tasks

to do reviews

Deadlines, working by task rather than by time

Deadlines, no time during the day due to meetings, peer pressure

experiments, deadlines of calls

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

work overload and survival in academia

experiments and deadlines of calls

deadlines, peer pressure

too much work load

- too many projects- project deadlines- too many students- meetings from the early morning until the evening- virtual conferences and meetings that are hosted in other parts of the world

I had only a contract for 60% position but expected to work full time.A lot of tasks to do in a certain time e.g. teaching, data collect.Reserach trips abroad with meetings, data collection, teach.

Finishing research project, publications

enjoying workgetting mroe results

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

* amount of tasks & deadlines* pressured by performing well to get the next contract

deadlines, pressure, experiments, not enough time to complete work on the day

pressure of publication

long experiments

feeling of being behind - catching up on tasks

complete project related work; create lectures; extra work assigned by PIs

Supervision

inapplicable

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

Deadlines

internal pressure to publish (finish lab experiments, working on manuscripts...)

Not applicable

Yes; in order to keep up with others, trying to secure a future job.

Meetings

Presentation due; Deadline for paper or grant proposal

Deadlines.

Deadlines, expectations from others, work overload ... you name it

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

Mismanagement

Field workLab workDeadlinesGood work flow

Because of the deadlines, or i want to get things done

Feeling of never being/doing enoughexpectations of supervisormanaging 100 things at the same time

primary data collection

deadlines

Supervisors expectations

feeling of never being enough

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

Deadlines (conferences, grants etc), equipment availability, public transport commute

Report deadlines

Too much work and too low contract; trying to make things work out fine

having 100 things on my agenda at once

Deadlines (for an article, for the opening of a museum exhibition), talks or other work activities in the evening or at weekends

didn't manage to finish work in time

Deadlines (for an article, for the opening of a museum exhibition)

he satisfaction of my own scientific curiosity; advancing my expertise, and building a professional profile in an uncertain work environment.

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

Too much work for individual projectTaking up tasks from workgroup leaderToo much administrative work (no support staff in project or institute)

I have never been a postdoc

Advancing my expertise, and building a professional profile in an uncertain work environment.

Giving a talk or other work activities in the evening or at weekends

It was necessary because of the experiments, but also was expected by supervisor/boss.

Yes! Pressure to meet deadlines and advance projects

project demanded it - the science!

finishing tasks

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

I never did a postdoc after my PhD - I left research right away

being unorganized

being unorganized

I did not

no

meetind deadline, task variety, own research

Yes, I did. The reason was too much to do.

own research, deadlines

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

Too much to do.

Too much to do

Yes, some protocols are longer and harder to fit into a 9-5 timeline.

Yes, protocols are often longer than 9-5.

experiments required it and was normal in the lab

Short contract and pressure to publish multiple publications

Minimal overtime (but on 80% contract)

Tight deadlines.

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

pressure to get things ready by a deadline (papers, abstracts, funding applications, slides for talk and for teaching etc.)

Yes - mostly for finishing things (presentations, publications etc) due to deadlines or fixed dates

covering for the professor

deadlines

experiments and deadline of calls

experiments and deadline of calls

to meet the deadlines

No

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

no option

Proposal deadline

Animal caretaking

yes

Yes. Need to generate results. Time to get work done on my own projects.

Experiments

Yes

Catching up on cleaning

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

Seminar to give

you work alone, in many cases without proper supervision, so it is easy to work overtime

Peace and quiet

- too many parallel tasks and experiments- to get things done

engagement for the matter

we're marketing ourselves, to more input -> more output for yourself (opposed to working for an employer)

No one forces me, but it feels like my advisor's late working hours set an expectation that I, as a postdoc, should do the same.

not applicable

71

# If you ever worked overtime as a postdoc, what was the reason?

Deadlines

71

# What could your institution do to support your mental health?

tenure track

Mental Health First Aid persons

Pls asking about it during individual meetings

more events for connecting with peers

better project managementbetter focus on the career after the PhD

Provide safe space to share the burnout experiences and support by professionals both in health related aspect. and time management help.

make it more common to have breaks or to leave at a "normal" time. Often professors expect overwork.make it more common to take care of mental health

Show awareness

1

52

# What could your institution do to support your mental health?

provide safe space to hear us and share feelings.Mental health support with easy access and confidentiality Time management help

provide safe space to hear us and share feelings.Mental health support with easy access and confidentiality Time management help

provide safe space to hear us and share feelings.Mental health support with easy access and confidentiality Time management help

better management (more training for managers)

I don't have suggestions at the moment

Obligatory courses for higher-ups (on systemic issues, unconscious bias, power dynamics etc)

offer couseling, support from superiors

frame expectations regarding output according to agreed working hours

1

52

# What could your institution do to support your mental health?

Counselling for group leaders

mental health support from TUM

Enforcing good scientific practice

Raise awareness for pressures in early academic stages among the senior scientists who supervise or collaborate

Open communication

better structuring the work,more "Gestaltungsfreiheit" and better structures for collaboration

Provide coaching

show appreciation for the work, adequate pay

1

52

# What could your institution do to support your mental health?

Better feedback on research/work and career progression

There are talks offered by a company (but topics are predefined by I do not know who) and, at least during the pandemic, you can call a hotline or so offered by a company.

More support for relaxation (space, facilities, financial support)

1. Step: expect people to work according to their contracts (40 h/20 h/...)

better contract situations and career perspectives, uncertainty

Supportive and friendly corporate culture

Provide access to free mental health services, advocate for mental health at all institutional levels

Have an independent person to go to if something goes wrong.

1

52

# What could your institution do to support your mental health?

Administrative support

Establish peer support

Mandatory employee meetings!

Sportangebote

Support more home office / mobile work

more clear career future

be more flexible on rules for mobile work

resilience training, coaching

1

52

# What could your institution do to support your mental health?

Nothing

enforce less pressure from PIs

More info and support on career development opportunities

reducing pressure on publishing in high-ranking journals, alleviating internal competition and encourage and facilitate collaboration instead

Acceptance that mental health issues are pervasive in the system

Have avenues for people to share their experiences, talk to counsellors (sometimes realising others are going through the same thing might help feel less isolated)

Regular meetings with supervision

Reduction in work time

1

52

# What could your institution do to support your mental health?

offer workshops on handling stress

offer workshops for career planning (as uncertainty about this is a cause of stress)

Have better mentorship schemes or at least designate someone who I could ask questions (first point of contact), akin to a PhD supervisor.

as we have no workers council, we need at least somebody who can be contacted in case of issues.

Encourage time off for mental health, help international people find therapists and access to medication

Take less time to sort out issues related to my contract.

More flexible work from home

I don't know

# What could your institution do to support your mental health?

transparent career conditions

nothing as far as I know, only child support

facilitate more social events

Provide any mental health service

encourage group leaders to be more involved in their labs day-to-day

Being proactive, not reactive

support from councellors

professional counseling

1

52

# What could your institution do to support your mental health?

Nothing!

transparent rules for (scientific) misconduct & punishment of misconduct instead of just "telling people off" (mostly professors who can sometimes act like dictators witout fear of consequences)
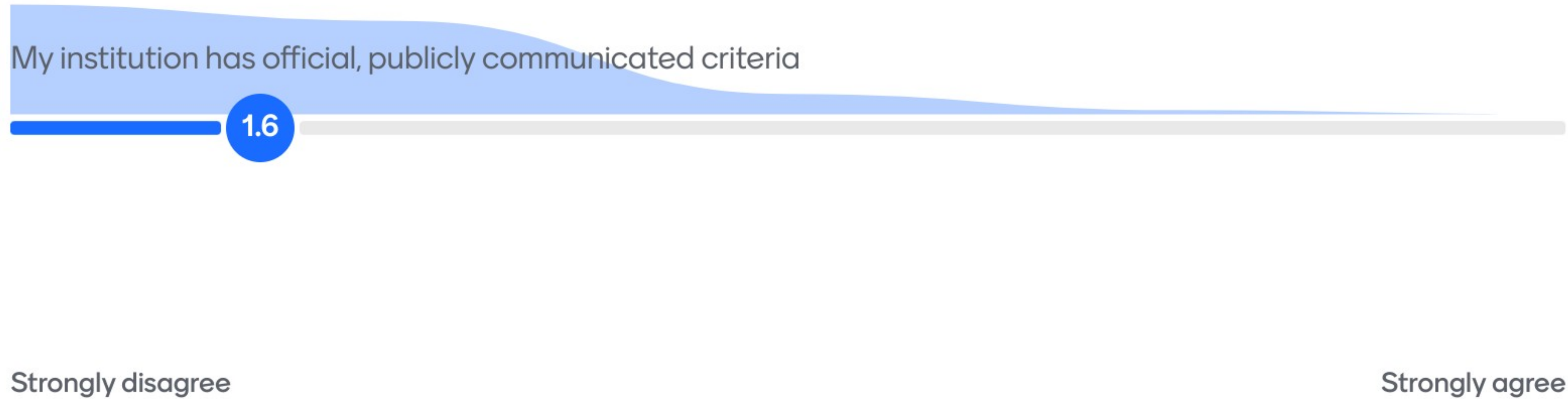
'NA

offer soft-skills workshops to empower postdocs

For people taking care of sick relatives: introduce similar options (flexible work hours, days of, extra time in career stages) as they are offered to parents

1

52
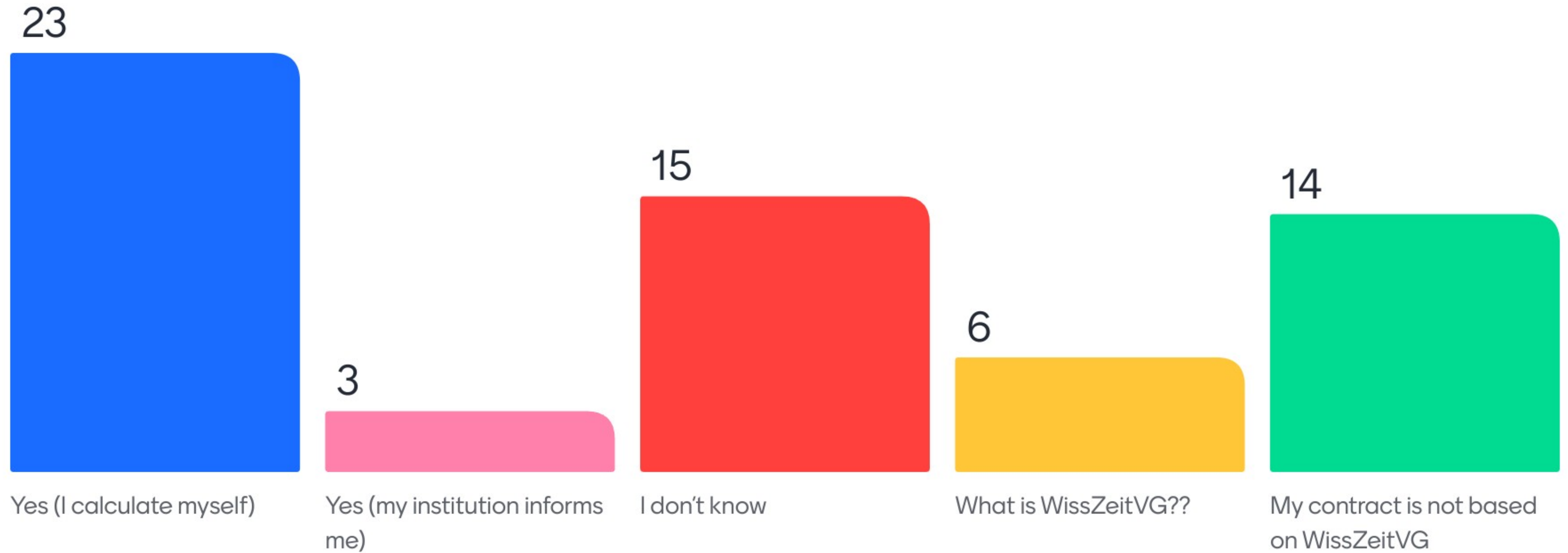
# Does your institute have transparent criteria for postdocs to move on to permanent positions (e.g. staff scientist / professor)?

My institution has official, publicly communicated criteria

**1.6**

Strongly disagree

Strongly agree

61

# Give us some examples of challenges or good practices regarding transparency of criteria for career development

There is no education about it, only word of mouth (for academic careers)

- for habilitation: criteria to pass- for others: difficult....

good practice:: having clear career development guidelines

main challenge is availability of permanent jobs

Fewer positions available

another challenge is making project work compatible with own career development

Publishing the permanent research positions regularly

Vitamin B

35

# Give us some examples of challenges or good practices regarding transparency of criteria for career development

challenges- short term contracts and supervisor does not include in networking etc.good practive-supervisor includes postdoc in own network. Gives longer contract

Shortage of Tenure Track positions or organised systems

There are no options for a career at my institution (i.e., no professorships, no permanent positions).

Challenge: Institutions are either not informed or do not care about WissZeitGesetz

No one seems to be interested in the career development of postdocs, so there are no activities or criteria.

Challenge: Institution expects PostDocs to basically create their own jobs by acquiring Drittmittel while not offering support

individual development plan (IDP)

i.e. Medical University of Vienna & Medical University of Graz -> they have an "Internal Career Path" one can apply to, which equals a tenure track position with clear goals that need to be met

35

# Give us some examples of challenges or good practices regarding transparency of criteria for career development

ZALF has a tenure track system, to which the criteria are made publicly available

Equal opportunity for all employees regardless of background and research topic

Rules are written down but not enforced as given

In my field, people are transferred to a permanent position, when there is money. The criteria are completly intransperant and subjective.

Positions are allocated by the dean's office and prioritize the development of the faculty. They are not designed to focus on retaining talented young researchers who one might wish to keep and flori.

No information on WissZeitVG at the start of the contract

Genuine annual feedback on job perfromance

Calculation of WissZeitVG is not the same across institutions

35

# Give us some examples of challenges or good practices regarding transparency of criteria for career development

It has to be made transparent that it's my head of department who can negotiate a permanent position for me

Inviting alumni with several different career paths as examples of which directions we can take and who to contact

Use a goal and expectation alignment software and have regular appraisal meetings. Identify clear benchmarks for promotions, e.g. number of publications, teahcing time, service and outreach time

Relying on these benchmarks in a systemic way rather than mentor's opinion/judgement

Uni-wide presentations, explaining the options for post-docs

there is basically no active career development plan in our institute

safety

No communication from the admin/management board on criteria, rumors/environment that suggests postdocs will not get a position at their current center

35

# Give us some examples of challenges or good practices regarding transparency of criteria for career development

More transparent involvement in hiring process

better future planning

Our institute officially declared that no permanent positions are given, due to financial issues of the institute

-much information is conveyed verbally not to everyone but to certain better-connected individuals.

Feeling there are no permanent positions outside of PI available

Availability of information on institute intranet.

Open discussion at town hall meetings

inform Postdocs about WissZeitVG

35

# Give us some examples of challenges or good practices regarding transparency of criteria for career development

becoming a professor is like a black box. Sometimes -if the first two on "the list" refuse the professorship, people with little qualification are hired; or even no one is hired

There is a lack of transparency, as these topics are rarely discussed openly. Those of us coming from outside often feel that opportunities for permanent positions are not as accessible or welcoming.

leaders wants to keep "flexible" while making the decision to keep someone in a permanent position

Challenge: lack of funds

guidelines or an established process should be made available to all employees

The practice that you need a "Ruf" from somewhere else if you want a (better) position at your home institution is harmful for everyone; costs a lot of time and benefits no one

Good practice: institute-wide call for permanent positions, evaluated by a committee

Challenges: often dependent on preferences of group head / institute lead, which introduces strong biases

35
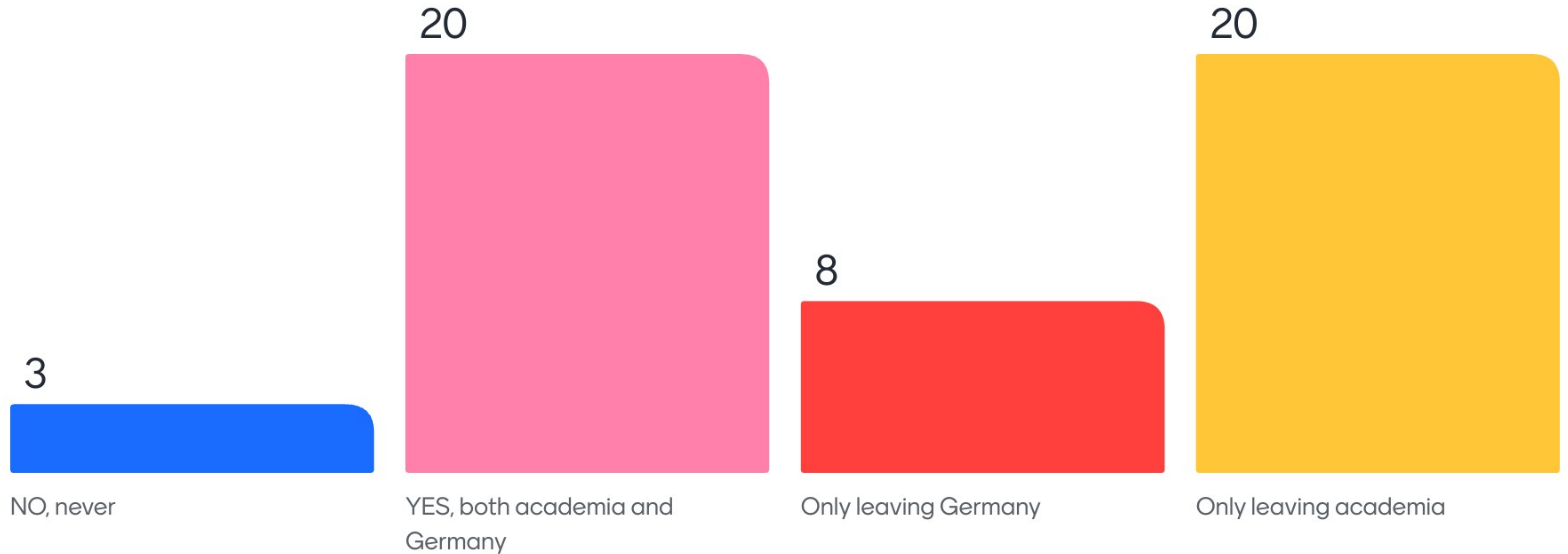
# How are you feeling about your future in academia right now?

| | |
|---|---|
| uncertain | Not for me |
| not secured for newcomers | yes |
| uncertain | very uncertain |
| Bad | Uncertain |

46

# How are you feeling about your future in academia right now?

Anxious

about 98% sure that I'll leave academia after my current project and very much considering doing so before

Not sure if it is possible to combine family and academic career.

Ambiguous. Living from Drittmittel project to Drittmittel project will burn me out

Uncertain and scared

the longe my time in academia lies behind me, the more I'm glad I made that decision

Very optimistic that I will leave academica.

Since I started as Postdoc abroad in EU with a supervisor who cares about my career, I have more opport. (larger network) and longer contract. I hope it allows me to have a better future in Germany

46

# How are you feeling about your future in academia right now?

seeing the time in Germany just as a career step (PhD in Austria), towards a position in a country that has better long-term perspectives (i.e. Denmark)

Unsecure

I recently left academia after almost 7 years as a postdoc in Germany and am now an ECR Coordinator at a Leibniz Institute

Really find - after having left research but not the academic environment

uncertain

uncertain

uncertain

uncertain

46

# How are you feeling about your future in academia right now?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| no future | A future career in academia is very unlikely | I'm already out of academia | Not likely to go further than postdoc |
| Uncertain | no straightforward path | doing my best and hoping for the best | very uncertain |

46

# How are you feeling about your future in academia right now?

Quite uncertain

Looking at the short-term image and not overthinking

I feel managed out of academia at my MPI because of highly competitive and toxic work culture and would leave academia to focus on my mental health and happiness

unsafe, due to politics

insecure; rather consider my current position as a postdoc in a research institute as a job for a certain period of time, I might leave academia/scientific research for my next job

Still precarious, uncertain

not applicable for me

Low due to the work pressures, advancement potential

46

# How are you feeling about your future in academia right now?

| Fine | Uncertain | Concerned | Anxious |
|------|-----------|-----------|---------|

| Worried | mid | Mixed. I love research and working related to it. But I hate the system and feel it is getting worse. personally, I might switch out of academia at some point. | It will be possible only if I leave Germany |
|---------|-----|----|----|

46

# How are you feeling about your future in academia right now?

not very hopefull

scared and unsure

Disappointed

In short, uncertain.

I left academia and became a coordinator and I´m not planning to go back

ambivalent. Still trying to change the system, but feeling more and more that the system needs to "crash" before it can get better

looks like: either fixed-term contracts on own third-party money until retirement or leave academia (chances to get permanent: close to zero)

46

# Any further comments, thoughts?

Thanks for organizing this event!

Better compensation in comparison to industry

Better working hours

Realistic expectations

Thank you for your work! Having a network helps

Better idea of my chances in staying academia would make the life easier

Postdocs are the engnine that keeps research in our institute running. This is not recognised by anyone.

After starting as postdoc abroad and difficult work context in Germanzy, I realized there can be so much better conditions as postdoc (mental health etc.) with a caring supervisor and other context.

2

17

# Any further comments, thoughts?

The German academia is making postdocs' life more difficult

At a recent ECR conference organised by UA11+ one of the key messages was that due to the current economic climate, structural changes will be slow, so universities are focusing on cultural changes

Proper/unbiased assessment of previous work experience needs to be undertaken and clear explanation of why/why not experience is counted needs to be given

It is hard to fill out forms while listening to a presentation!!

Thank you for sharing your results!

I have worked in academia in 3 countries and in general, found gender and cultural bias awareness more lacking in Germany and many international colleagues feeling this way

Not really

We are all generally aware of the issues, but the focus should be on discussing practical approaches to address them.

2     17

# Any further comments, thoughts?

no

My institute has 0 support for post-docs looking for 3rd party funding, where else can I get this information/support to remain on equal footing with other post-docs?

Thanks for organising this!

2

17