

LISTENING TO EARLY CAREER RESEARCHERS

DEMENTIA



April
2022



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REFERENCE

Smith, AM., Shaaban, C.E., Bartels, S.L., Welikovitsh, L., Brum, W., Folarin, R. (2022). *Listening to Early Career Researchers*. University College London, ISTAART PIA to Elevate Early Career Researchers. <https://www.dementiaresearcher.nihr.ac.uk/survey>

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INTRODUCTION



It is only through the undertaking of vital dementia research that we can understand Alzheimer's disease and other forms of dementia and neurodegenerative diseases - research to understand what is happening in the brain and how to prevent, better diagnose, treat, and care for people living with these diseases.

Behind every discovery are researchers, with the majority falling into the category of being at the early career stage. Early Career Researchers (ECRs) significantly contribute to the field, but from within, there are concerns about how supported individuals feel to thrive and remain within research. There are also questions around what actions research institutions, funders and policy makers are taking to address research careers issues.

To investigate researchers' experiences of their workplaces, fields, careers and support, University College London and The Alzheimer's Association International Society to Advance Alzheimer's Research and Treatment (ISTAART) Professional Interest Area to Elevate Early Career Researchers (PEERS) surveyed ECRs working in the field of dementia or those who had recently left the field.

This report provides the results of the survey conducted between the 1st September to 31st October 2021. Further details and the full data can be freely accessed at www.dementiaresearcher.nihr.ac.uk/survey

Note - the survey involved branching logic, as a result not every respondent was asked every question. Full details on responses to each question are included in the appendix.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

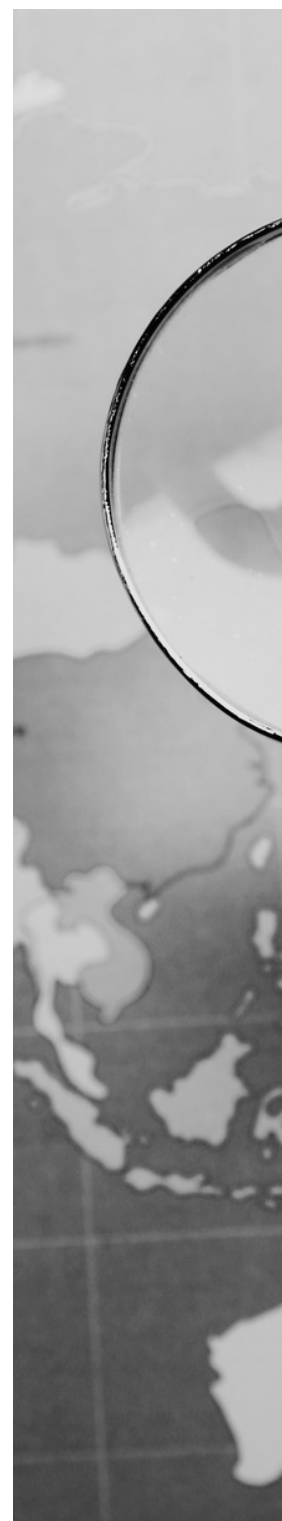
The findings of this survey will not come as a surprise to anyone working within the dementia research space. It paints a picture of a workforce who enjoy their jobs, are motivated, driven and care about the work that they do and the people that will benefit from their discoveries. However, it also highlights the challenges they face personally, professionally and culturally within the world of academia.

The uncertainty that comes with short-term contracts, comes through the survey as a clear concern to early career researchers. This is not an issue which is unique to people working in dementia research, however at a time when we need to encourage and retain people, it is a real concern. This position worsens when working in a part of the world that depends heavily on government funding to support dementia research. Over 85% of respondents believe that the nature of short-term funding was a major barrier to the advancements and discovery in dementia research, and that should come as no surprise when 48% of respondents had 2 years or less remaining on their current contract. Respondents highlight that beyond the personal uncertainty, much research time is taken writing grants, job hunting and trying to work out 'what next'.

Through the survey we also discovered that over 50% of respondents were considering leaving research. Losing researchers at a time when more are needed would be a devastating blow. However, if action is taken, to improve working conditions, particularly at the postdoctoral stage, the passion and enthusiasm for the topic is there in the community with over 50% of respondents stating that it is important for them to work in the field and they feel this is an important topic with many opportunities. Further analysis is needed to better understand the survey results, particularly around the questions asked about prejudice and experiences.

The numbers of respondents reporting negative experiences and discrimination is better than some other surveys have reported, but still higher than one would hope and there is significant variability across continents.

With a better understanding of the concerns and needs of the community we can now explore ways to address concerns and deliver the support needed.



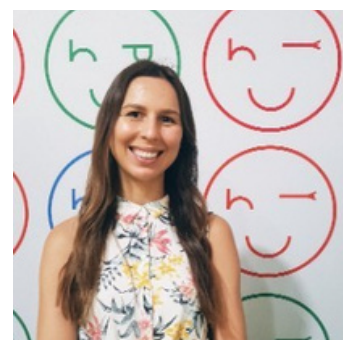
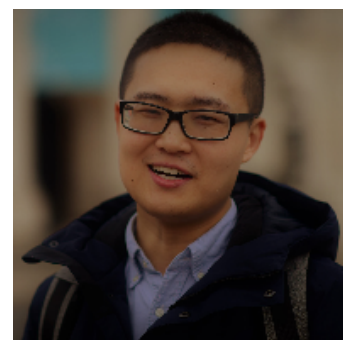
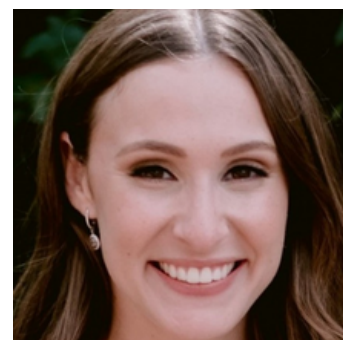
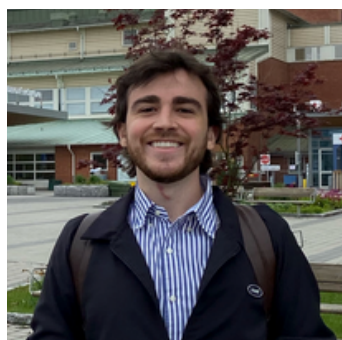
MESSAGE FROM THE PEERS EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Delivering this survey, is a major milestone for PEERS, a process started in late 2020. The findings will steer our work, and inform the decisions we make on how to offer support. It also gives us insights on where to lobby for change and improvements, working with funding bodies, policy makers and academic and health institutions. However, publishing these results, and making them freely available for further analysis, is just the first step.

We have a passionate community of dedicated ECRs, but they need more support if we are to rapidly deliver discoveries and much needed improvements in prevention, care, diagnosis, treatment and support for people living with dementia.

The results of the survey have reassured us that we have an enthusiastic, dedicated and thriving ECR community. However, there are also many areas for concern and areas which can be improved. PEERS will continue to undertake further analysis on the results of this survey, publish the findings and act on the next steps highlighted at the end of this report.

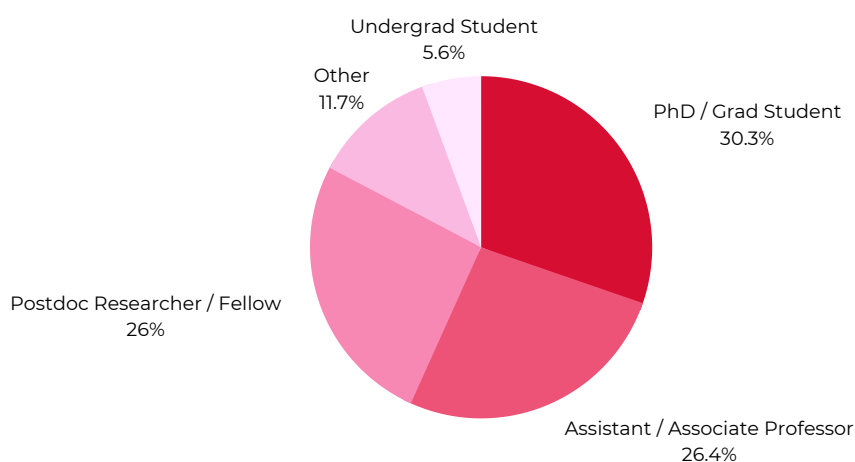
Adam Smith, Chairperson



Who took the survey

Who took the survey

Job title / Career Stage



584

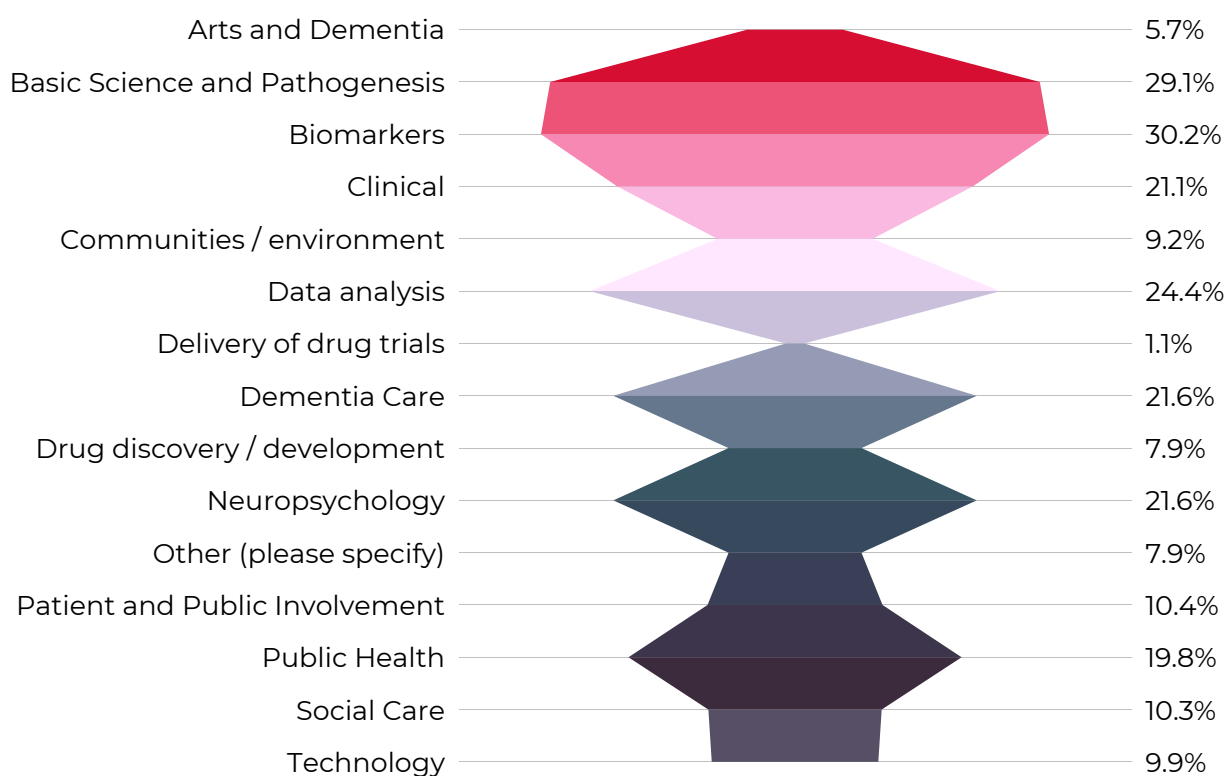
Total number of respondents

462

Respondants currently active in research

The survey was open from 1st September 2021 to 31st October 2021 and completed by a range of researchers from undergraduate through to faculty stages and across all dementia research fields. For the purposes of the survey we define an ECR as anyone pre-tenure.

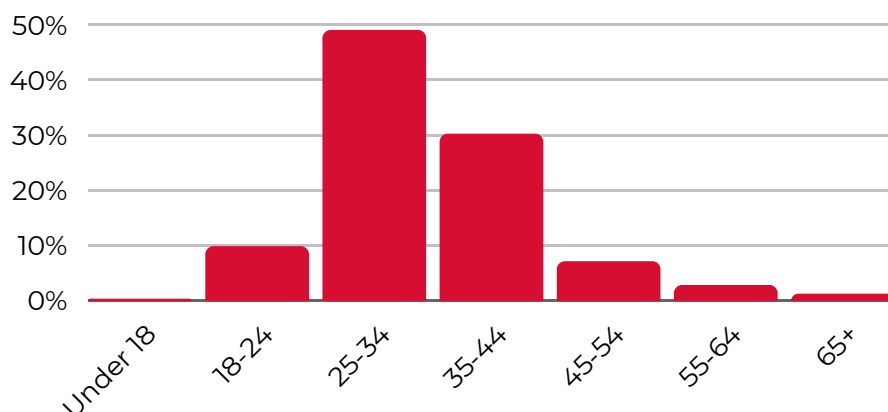
Research field



Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

Who took the survey

Age of respondents



*142 skipped this question

42

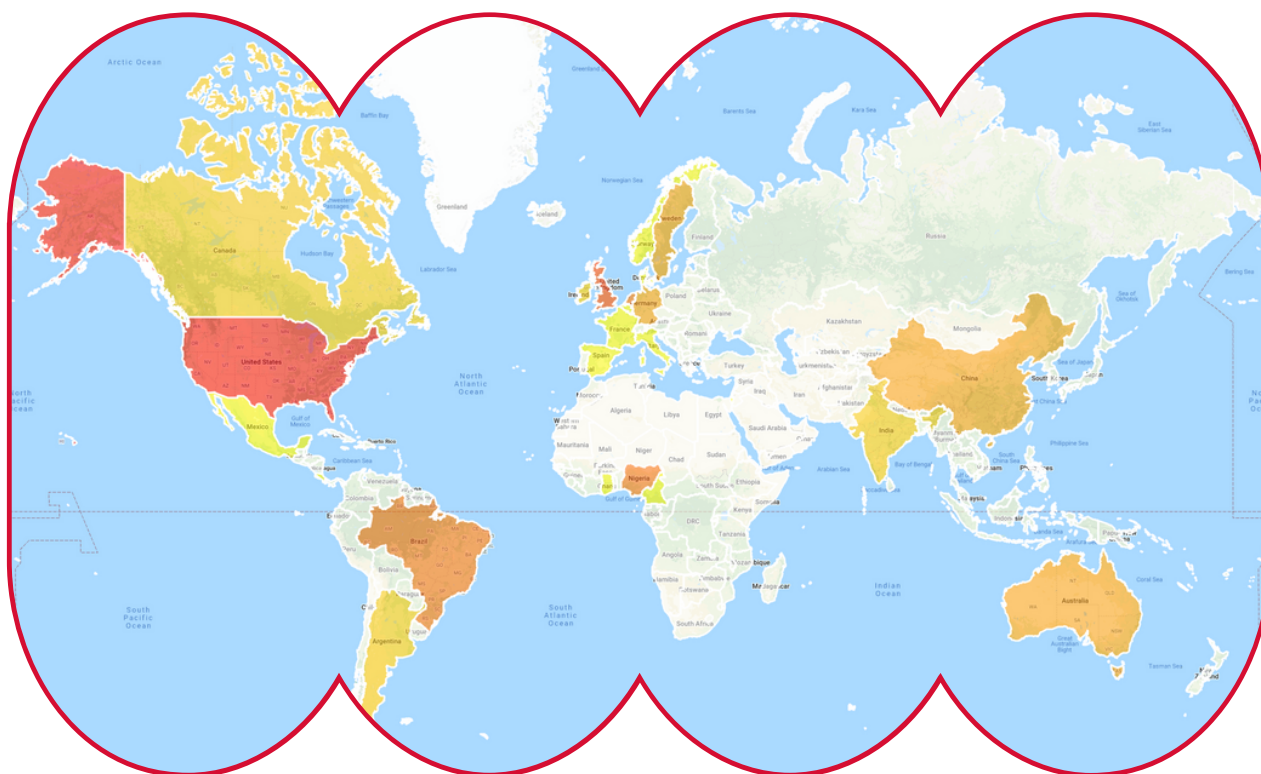
Countries with respondents

56

Nationalities represented

How people defined their gender - 66% of survey respondents were Women, 32% Men, 1% Genderqueer, non-binary, self-described, 1% preferred not to answer.

Countries respondents are currently working in



118

1

Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

Who took the survey

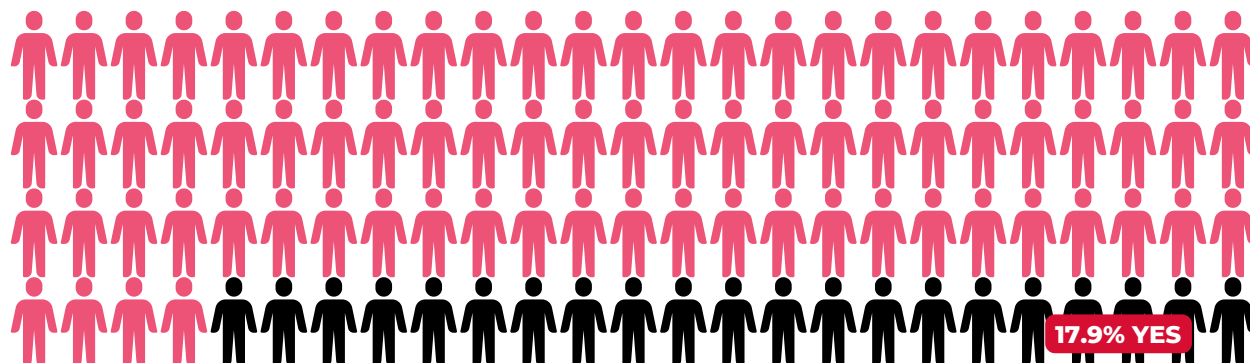
Do you receive any of the following work / study related benefits?

Benefit	Not sure	No	Yes
Accommodation / housing	3.9%	89.6%	6.5%
Food pantry	6.5%	83.2%	10.3%
Relocation allowance	14.9%	70.5%	14.6%
Travel benefits for commuting	7.7%	70.3%	22.0%
Workers union	13.5%	64.7%	21.8%
Gym / reduced cost membership	8.0%	55%	37%
Health insurance	3.5%	51.8%	44.7%
Paid parental leave	13.1%	39.5%	47.5%
Time off to care for someone	25.8%	36.8%	37.4%
Bereavement leave	28.5%	34.1%	37.4%
Paid sick leave	6.7%	26.4%	66.9%
Paid vacation	3.5%	26.1%	70.4%

Employee benefits vary from country to country, full data is available for further analysis. However, most respondents (around 2/3) do receive paid vacation / holidays and sick leave. Overall, the responses highlight how varied benefits are from institution to institution and by country.

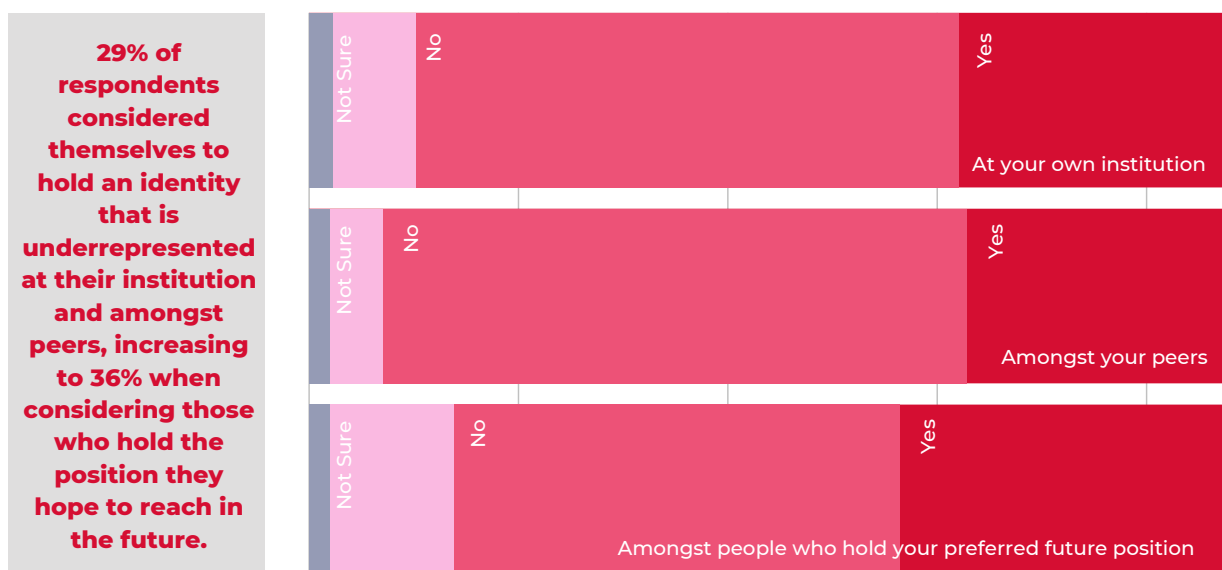
Who took the survey

Are you treated or perceived to be a racial minority or person of color where you currently live?



*17.87% responded Yes - 154 respondents skipped the or preferred not to answer the question

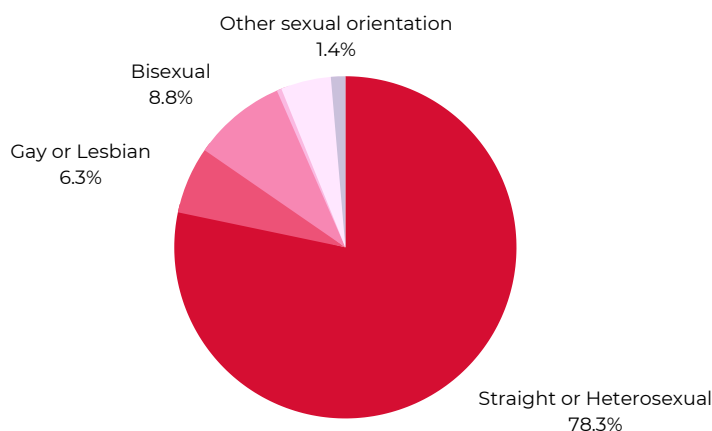
Do you consider yourself to hold an identity that is underrepresented?



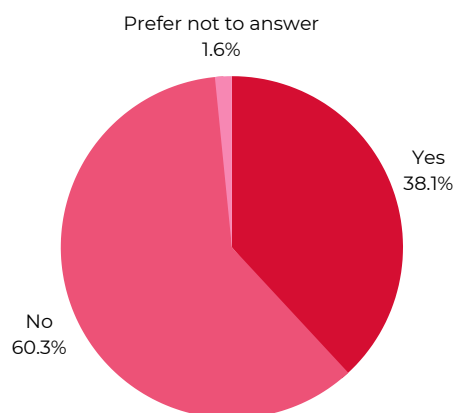
26.7% of respondents had dependants under the age of 18, and 24.6% identified themselves as being a primary care giver. Additionally 41.6% were the main or sole income providers in their household, and 7.4% identified as having a disability or learning difficulty.

Who took the survey

What is your sexual orientation?

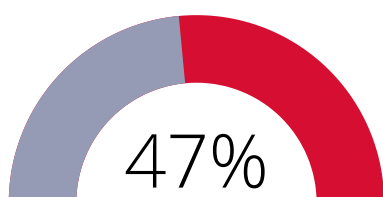


Would you consider yourself a 'first generation' student?

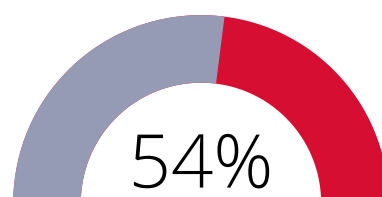


We asked respondents about the education level of their parents - 46% had at least one with a college or higher degree, and 20% had one with a doctorate. 6.5% didn't finish school, and 13% finished school but didn't go to University

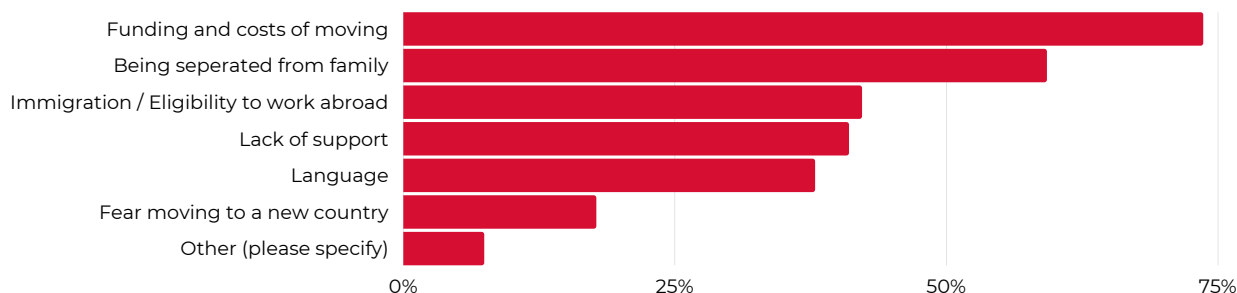
Proportion of respondents who moved country for their work / studies



Proportion of respondents who are dissatisfied / very dissatisfied with research funding in their home country



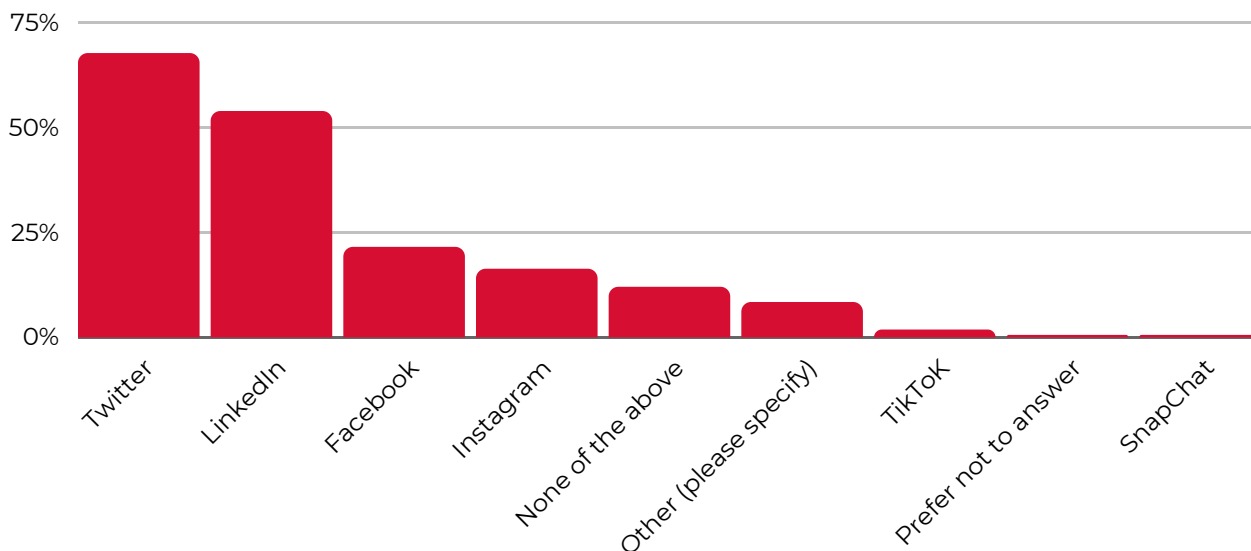
What do you think are the most significant challenges in moving internationally for work / study?



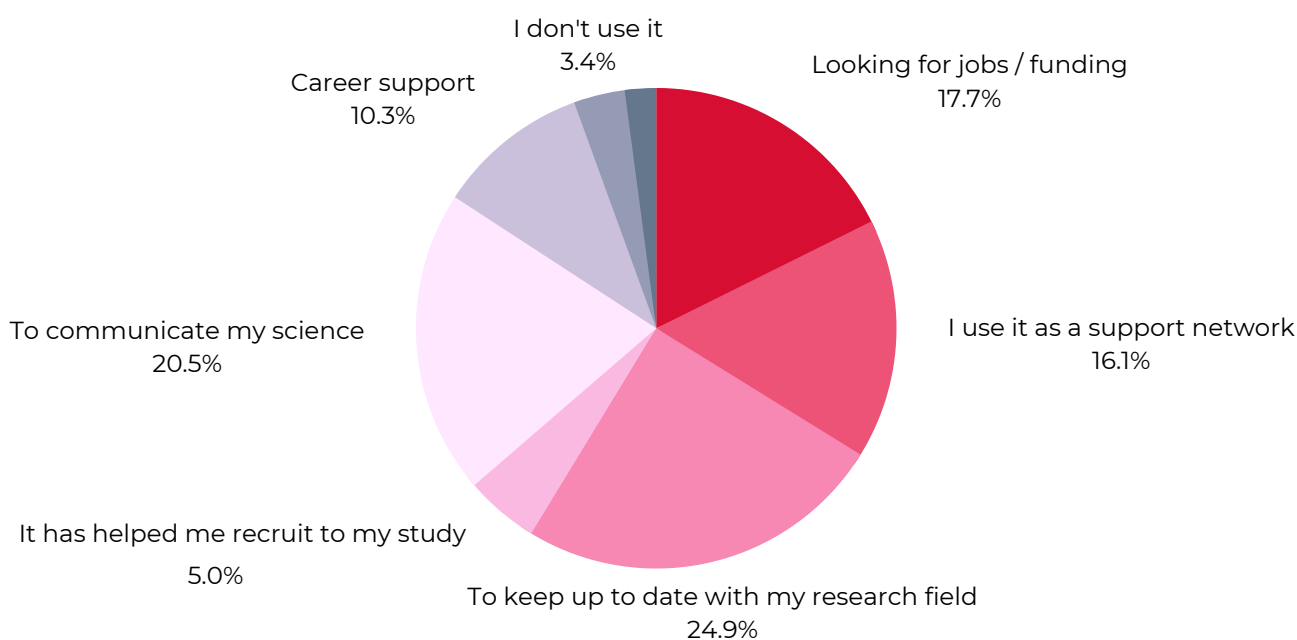
Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

Who took the survey

Which of the following social media platforms do you use for research / work / study related purposes?(select all that apply)



What do you use social media for?



27.4% of respondents have been offered communications training from their employer / institution, 60.2% have not and 12.2% responded maybe / not sure / can't remember

Who took the survey

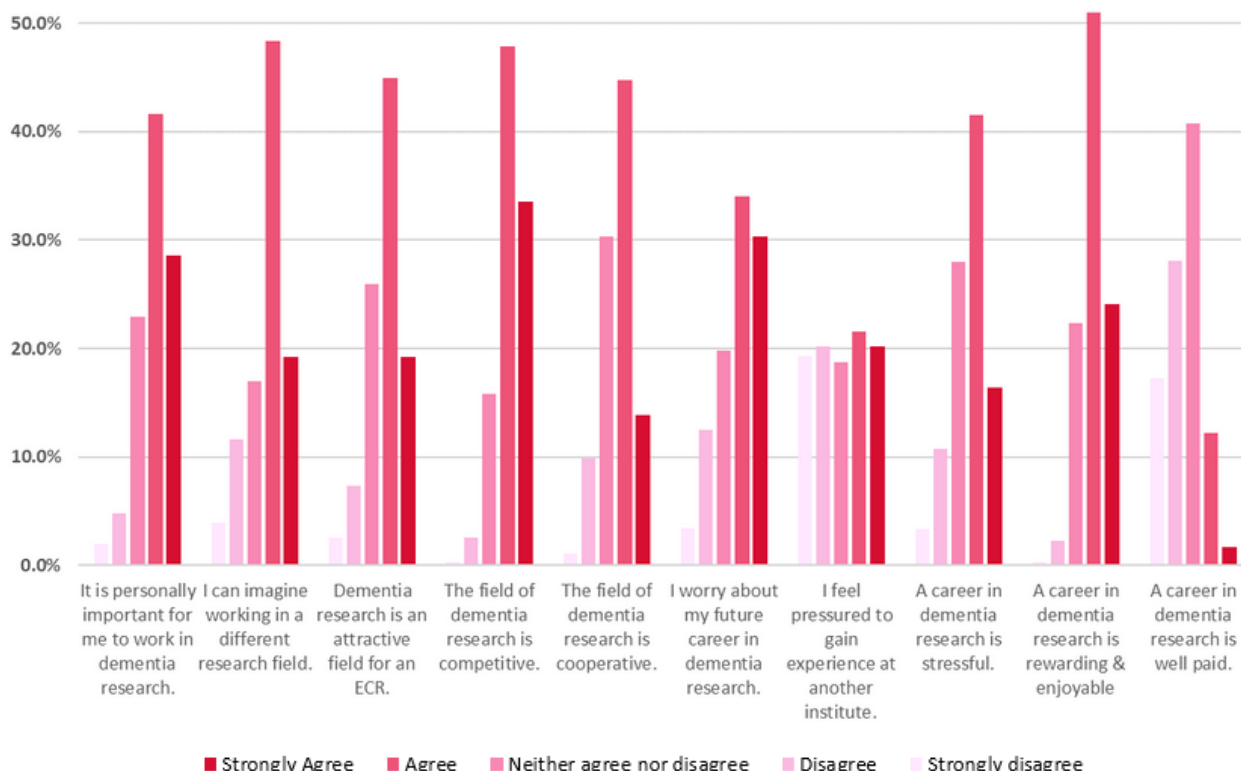
What inspired you to work in the field of dementia research?

Source of Interest	Not important at all	Low importance	Neutral	Important	Very important
Interest in research in general (not dementia)	3.0%	3.6%	7.8%	36.1%	47.3%
Personal / Professional curiosity	4.7%	3.3%	7.2%	34.6%	46.6%
A professor / lecture at university	14.0%	10.1%	9.3%	31.2%	27.8%
Personal experience of dementia	17.1%	11.8%	12.9%	19.7%	23.6%
Natural progression from a previous field of research	15.4%	5.9%	12.6%	30.0%	23.3%
It just happened / chance	14.7%	15.3%	17.2%	26.9%	11.9%
Appeared to be a field with lots of funding / opportunities	24.7%	15.9%	19.6%	20.2%	10.5%
Media/ news about the topic of dementia	31.4%	16.8%	18.8%	14.8%	5.4%
School teacher	40.5%	10.3%	12.6%	10.9%	5.1%

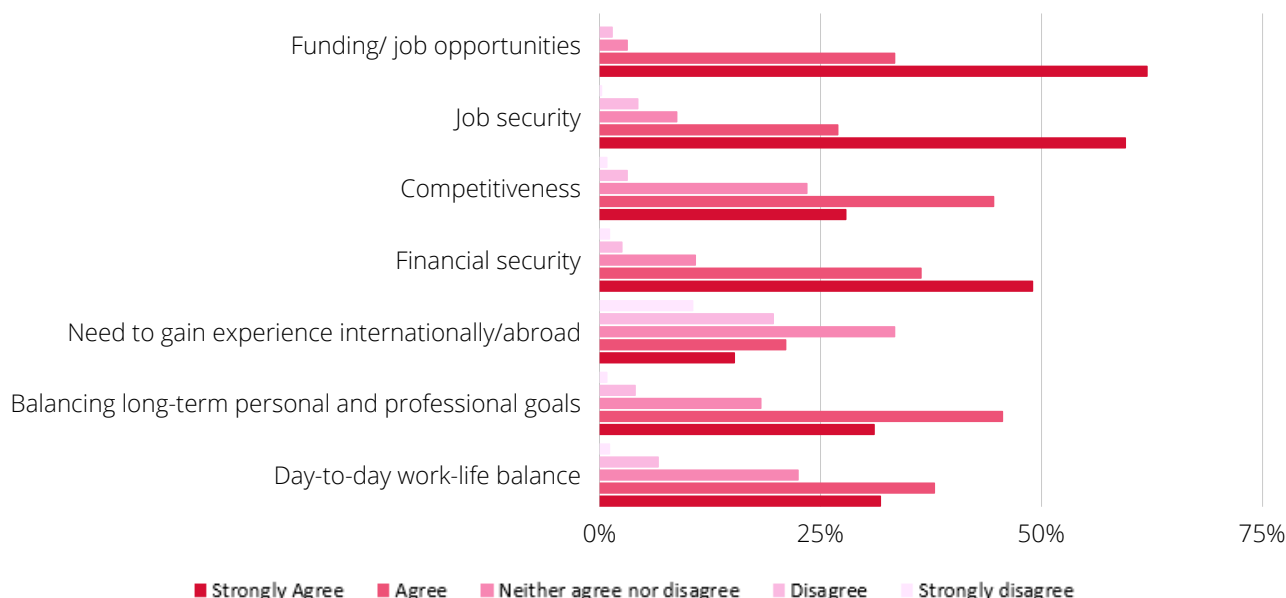
We also asked respondents to select which factor was the single most important. Personal curiosity scored highest with 20.7%, next was general interest in research with 19.5% and next was personal experience of dementia with 17.5%. News and media was lowest with less than 1%.

Who took the survey

What do you think about dementia research as a career?



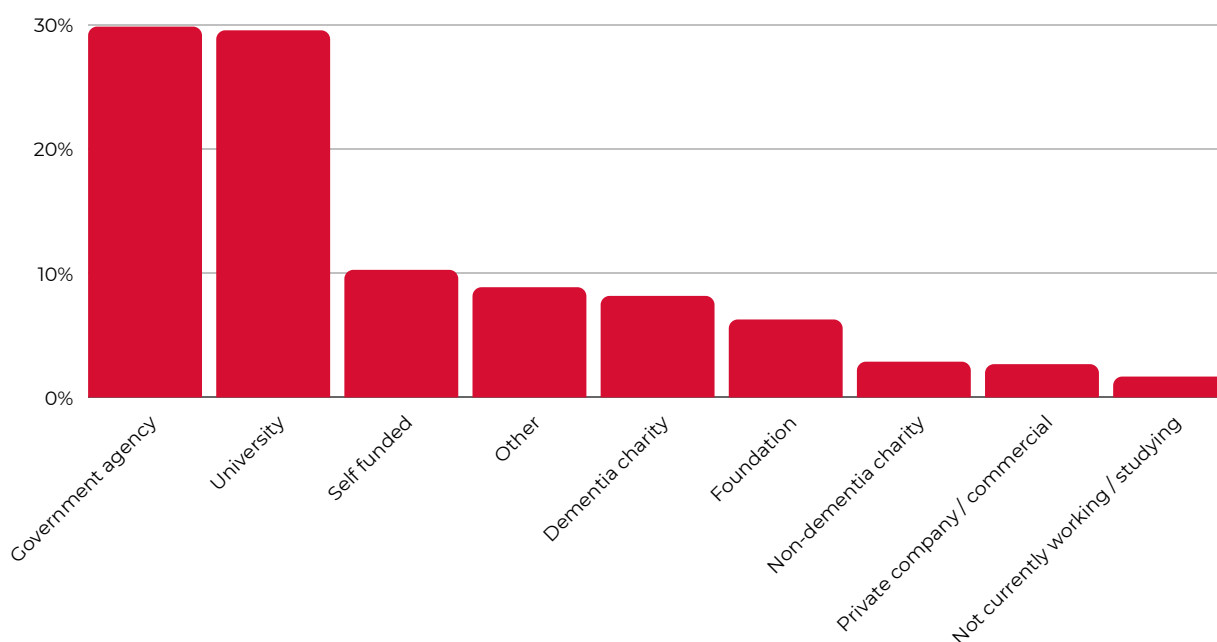
In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges for early career researchers to stay in academic dementia research?



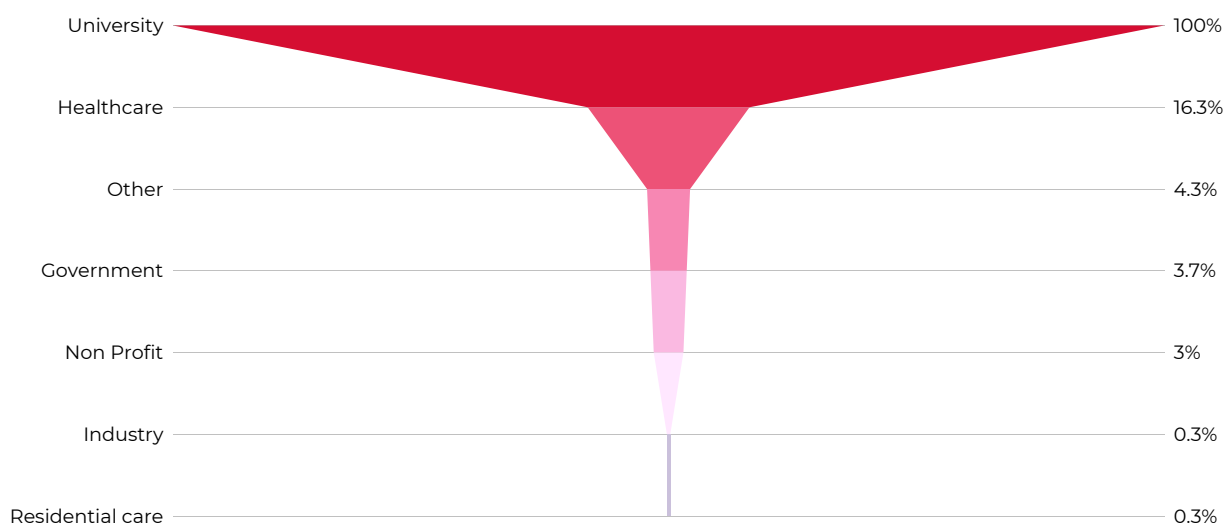
95% of respondents agree or strongly agree that funding and job opportunities are the biggest barrier to early career researchers, and 87% agree or strongly agree that job security is a significant issue.

Who took the survey

How is your current position funded?



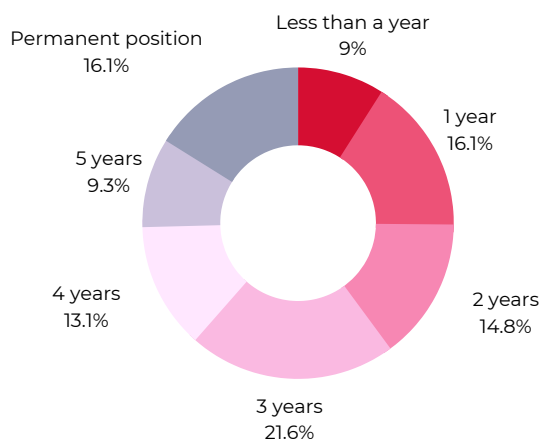
How would you categorise your primary place of work / study?



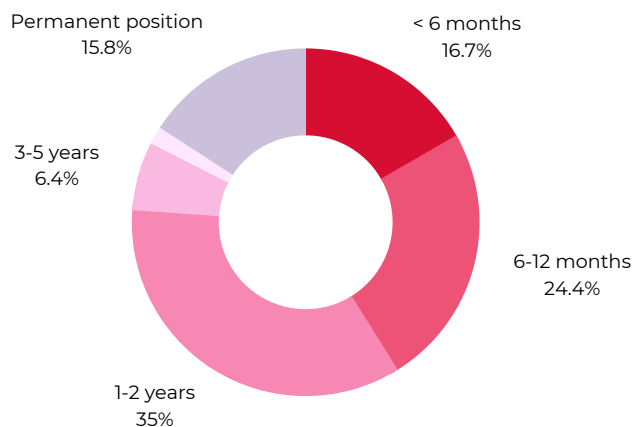
We asked how many organisations respondents worked for / had a contract with. 49.7% were with one, 16.7% with two, 3.4% with three, and 3.2% with four or more.

Who took the survey

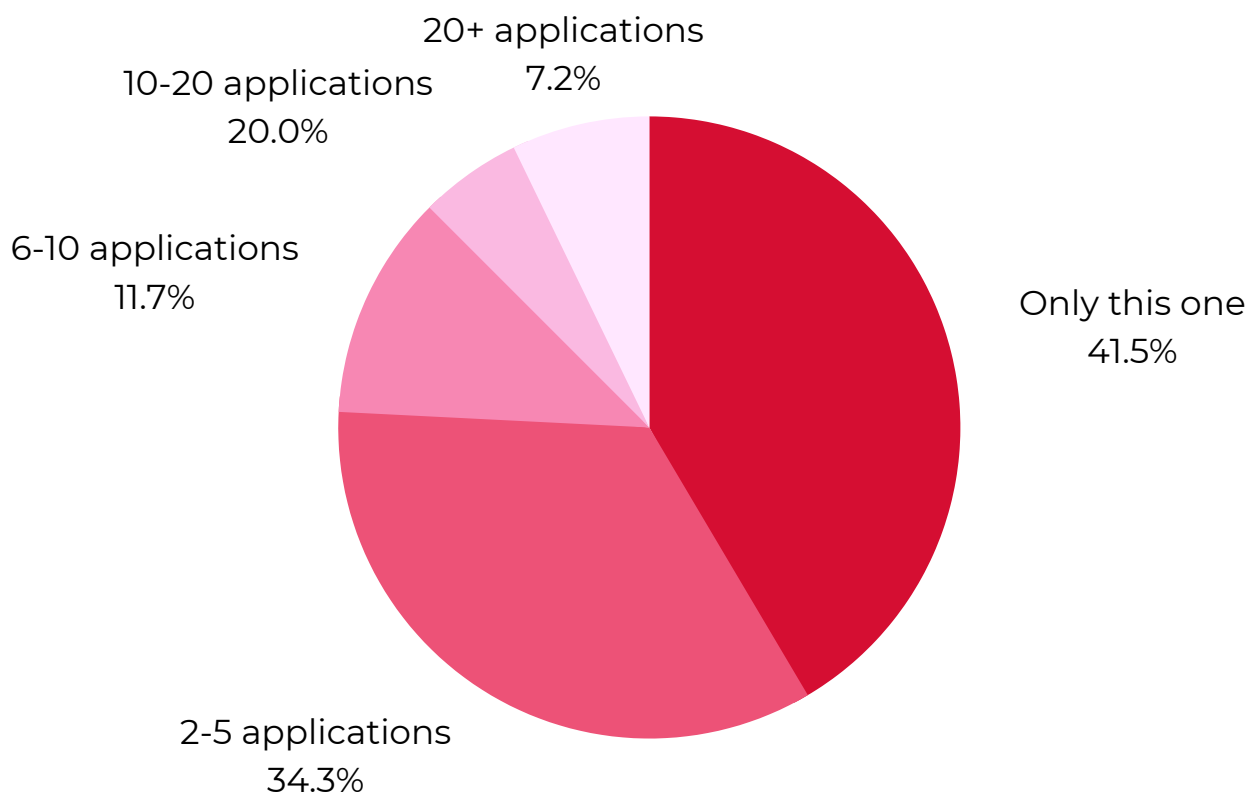
How long is your current contract?



How long left on your current contract?

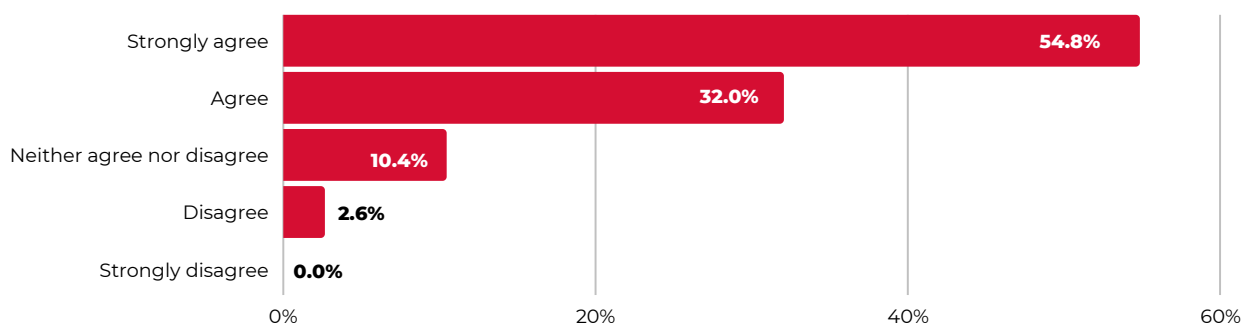


How many job / position applications did you send to get the position you currently hold? (if employed in an advertised position)

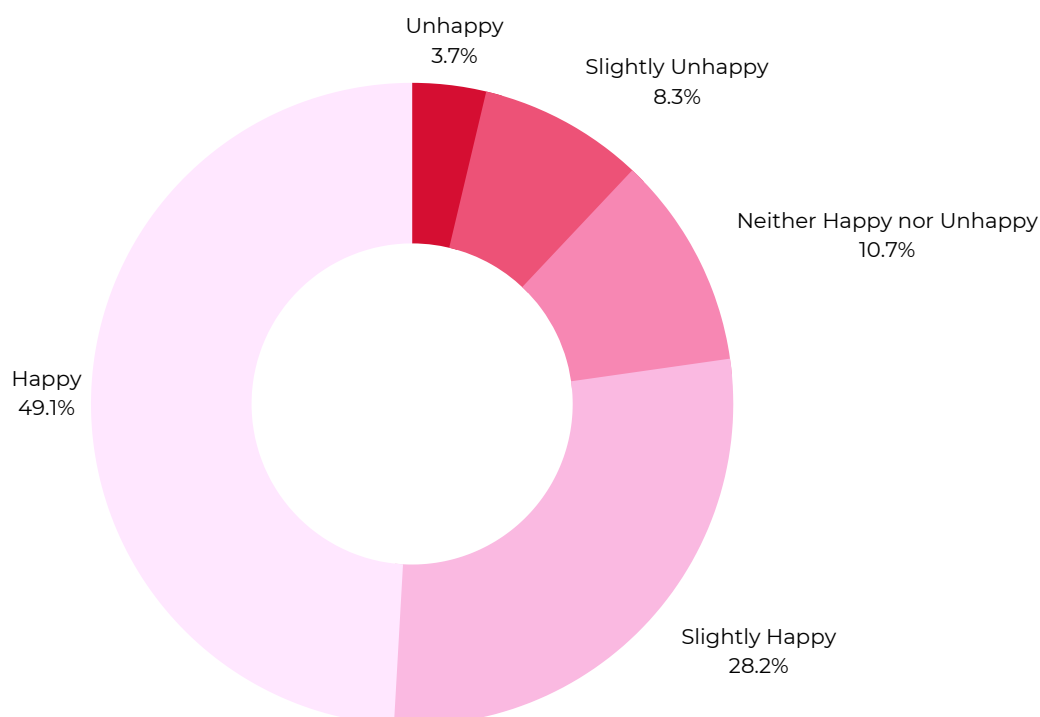


Who took the survey

How do you feel about the following statement *"The short-term nature of research contracts and funding is a barrier to making advancements and discoveries in dementia research"*



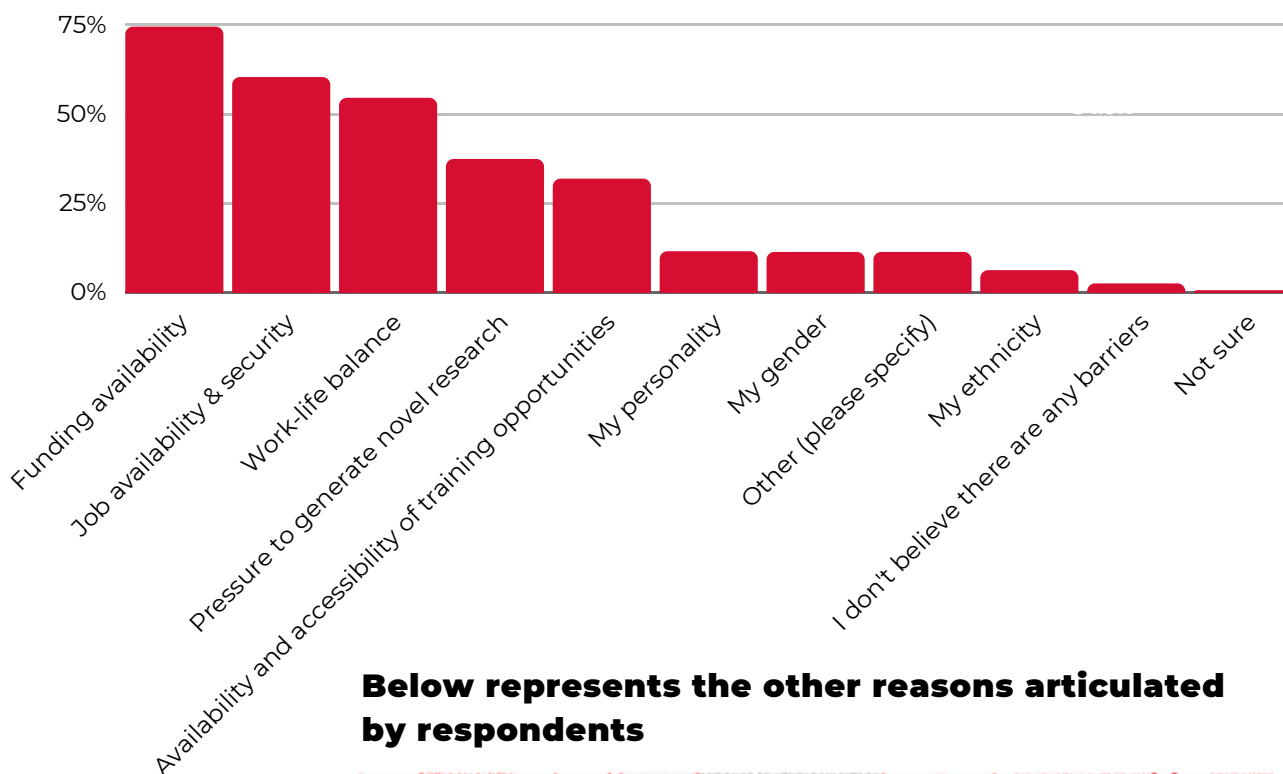
How happy are you in your current role?



We asked respondents if they were thinking of leaving dementia research; 375 people replied, 209 skipped - 32% replied Maybe, 19.7% replied Yes, 48.2% responded No.

Who took the survey

What do you believe to be the most significant barriers to career progression?



Below represents the other reasons articulated by respondents

58%

Do not think dementia research is sufficiently funded

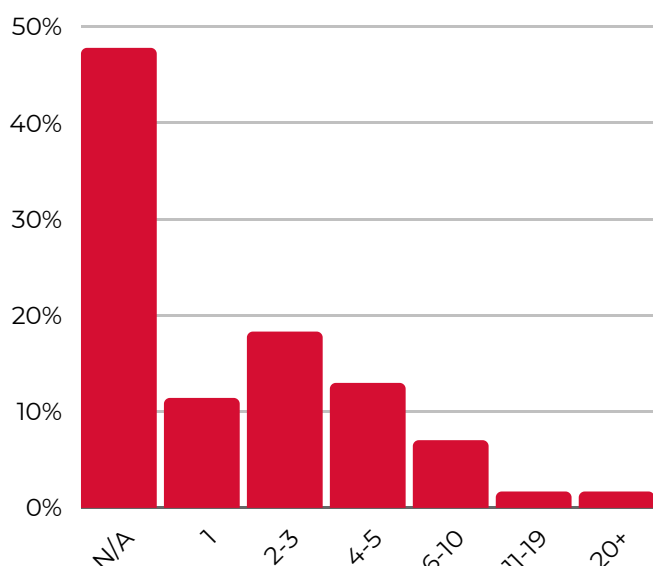
48%

Do not think they have sufficient resources to carrying out their research



Who took the survey

If funded via research grants, how many grant applications did you make before receiving your current funding?



We asked 'How many different funders contribute to the costs of your work / salary?'

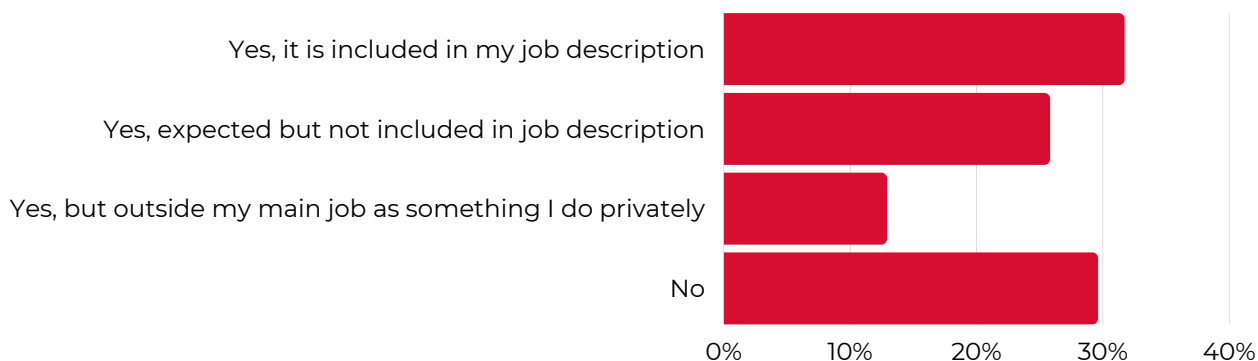
33% indicated one, however 21% indicated 3 or more, and of those 4% were funded by 5 or more organisations / charities.

The survey sought the views of people who consider themselves dementia researchers but who are currently between roles / not working. This part of the survey received 68 responses. From those eligible 55% had been looking for a position for under 6 months, 20% for more than six months and less than twelve months, 16% for one to three years and 9% for more than five years. This could include people returning to work after a period of absence, or those who left research and are looking to return. **We also asked this group of people if employers offered to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications without you needing to ask.** From the responses 2% replied always, 8% replied usually, 17%, replied sometimes, 35% replied rarely, **38% replied never.**

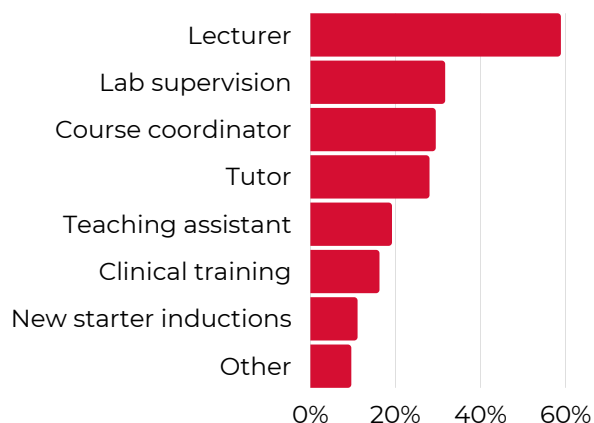
For this part of the survey, we also asked "When approaching the end of your contract / funding, were you offered support from your employer / institution to find your next position?" **42% replied that they were and 58% were not.**

Who took the survey

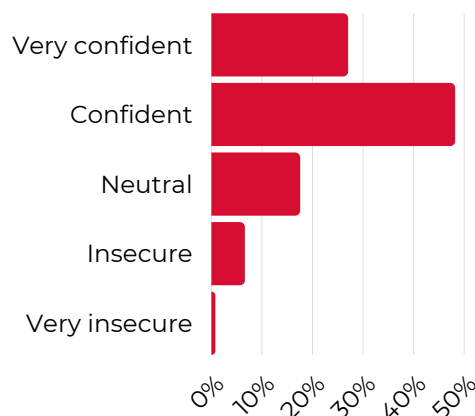
Are you involved in teaching, in a classroom or workplace setting?



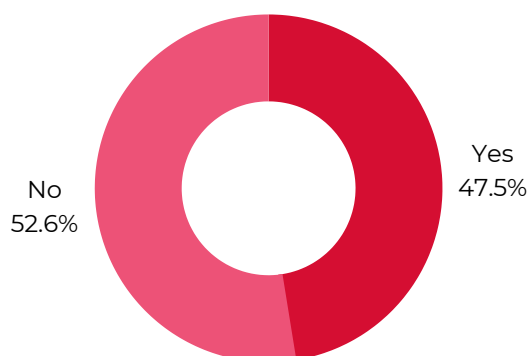
If you are involved in teaching, please describe your teaching activities?



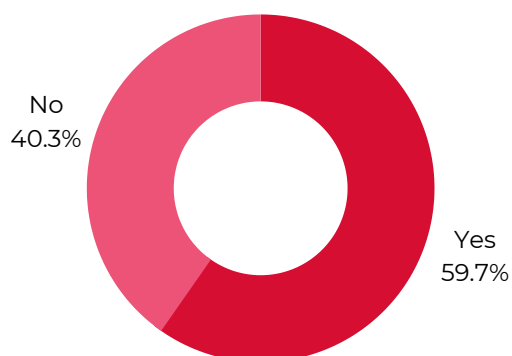
How confident do you feel in your teaching activities?



Have you had any formal institutional support or training to prepare you for teaching activities?



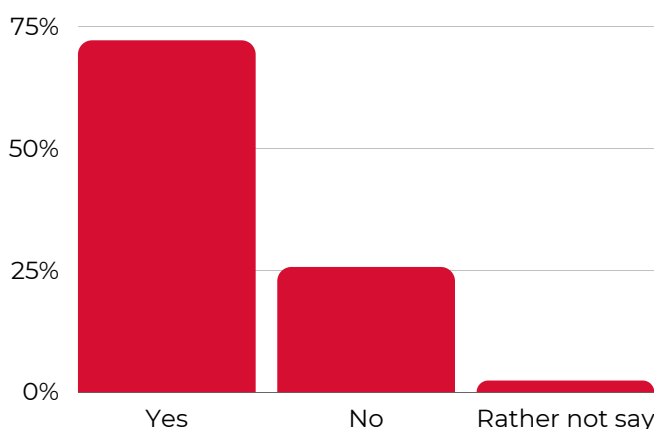
Do you feel your organisation / supervisor should have provided more training / support to enable you to deliver your teaching?



Experiences

Experiences - Imposter Syndrome

Have you ever experienced Imposter Syndrome?



41%

Of respondents say their employer / institution was helpful

53%

Of respondents say they are managing well or very well

33%

Of respondents say their employer / institution was not helpful

18%

Of respondents say they are managing unwell or very unwell

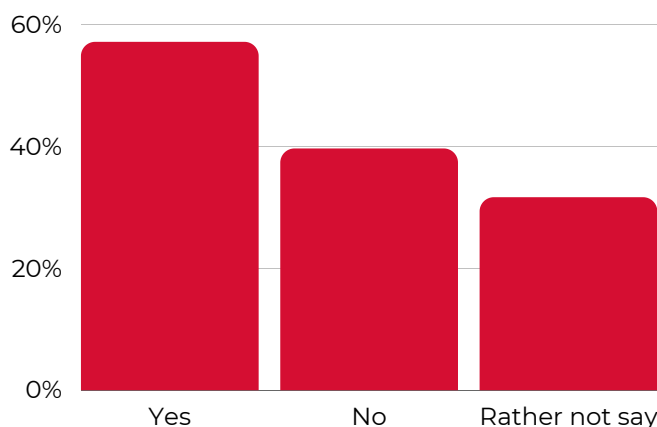
We asked 'What have you found to be the most helpful in managing your Imposter Syndrome?' Respondents highlight mindfulness and reframing thoughts as being helpful (59.6%). However talking with friends and colleagues (82.6%), non-work friends (57.0%) and mentors, advisors and supervisors (52.2%) emerged as the most helpful. Many respondents found social media perspectives and ideas unhelpful / very unhelpful (29.8%).

How has your Imposter Syndrome affected you?

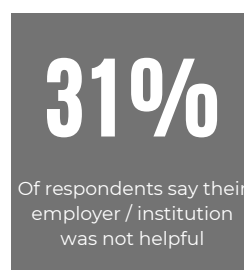
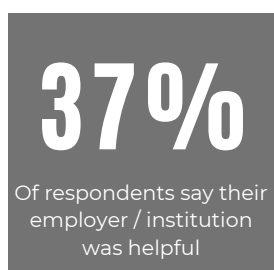
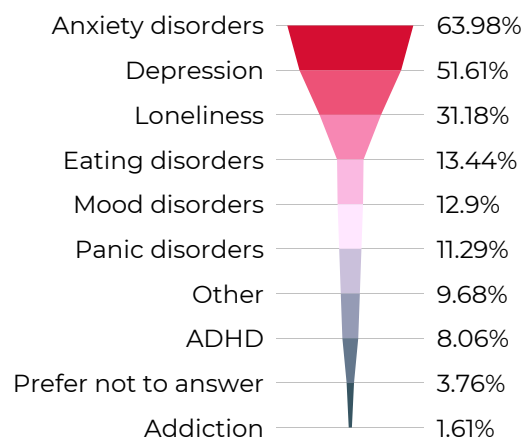


Experiences - Mental Health

Have you ever experienced a Mental Health issue?



Types of Mental Health issues experienced



We asked, 'What have you found to be helpful in dealing with your Mental Health issues?' Respondents highlight exercise being helpful / very helpful (83.5%), and reframing thoughts (67.0%). Talking is also seen as being helpful / very helpful - counsellor (57.9%), non-work friends (70.8%). Perspectives from social media scored lowest (36.9%) find this unhelpful / very unhelpful.

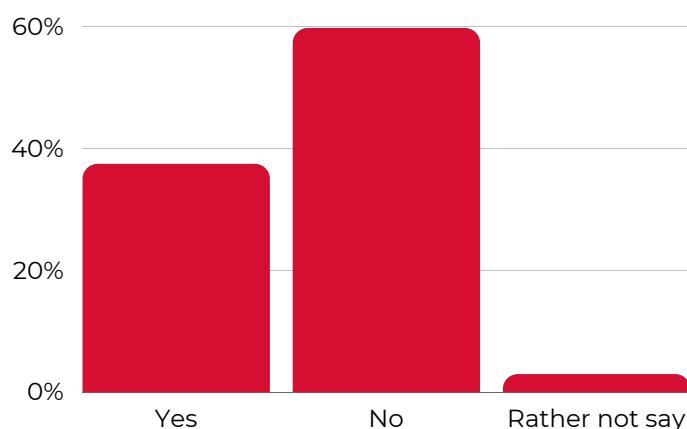
How has your Mental Health Issue affected you?



Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

Experiences - Financial Problems

Have you ever experienced Financial problems?



7%

Of respondents say their employer / institution was helpful

33%

Of respondents say their employer / institution was not helpful

43%

Of respondents say managing well or very well

26%

Of respondents say they are managing unwell or very unwell

We asked, 'What have you found to be helpful in dealing with their financial difficulties?' Talking with a family member (60.3%) scored highest, and talking to human resources (6.6%) had the lowest response. Only 11.5% spoke with a financial expert. To understand how the issues manifested, 70.4% had difficulty paying monthly bills, 32.0% student loans. Challenges were worsened due to delays in getting paid or reimbursed for expenses (59.0%).

61%

Changed their lifestyle to help manage their difficulty

49%

Have relied upon borrowing money from a family member / friend

33%

Rely on a partner to fully or partly provide financial support

23%

Have taken out bank loans short / longterm to help manage their financial difficulties

How has your experience of Financial problems affected you?



Experiences

As an Early Career Researcher have you ever personally experienced any of the following forms of discrimination or prejudice?

Source of Interest	Rather not answer	No	Yes
Sexism	2.6%	60.5%	37.0%
Ageism	2.6%	73.1%	24.4%
Racism	3.2%	85.4%	11.5%
Religion / faith	3.7%	90.3%	6.0%
Homophobia	2.3%	92.6%	5.2%
Ableism	4.0%	91.1%	4.9%

This question needs to be considered alongside other questions e.g. 11.5% overall have experienced racism, however this increases to 50.6% of those who identify as being an ethnic minority in the place they work, and 64.0% of those who identified as being Gay or Lesbian.

We asked respondents 'What changes would you like to see to address these forms of prejudice / discrimination? (Ableism, Ageism, Homophobia, Racism, Religion / Faith, Sexism). We received over 140 comments from respondents with their views on what changes would help improve the situation. Common themes to emerge were:

- More training for senior staff and Principal Investigators
- Continued efforts to raise awareness and funding to support campaigns
- Improved and regular policy reviews and enforcement
- More flexibility around contracts and support to enable diversity e.g. funding for people to return to work after starting families
- More people who are likely to understand and have experienced these forms of prejudice in senior positions e.g. gay people / women / people of colour

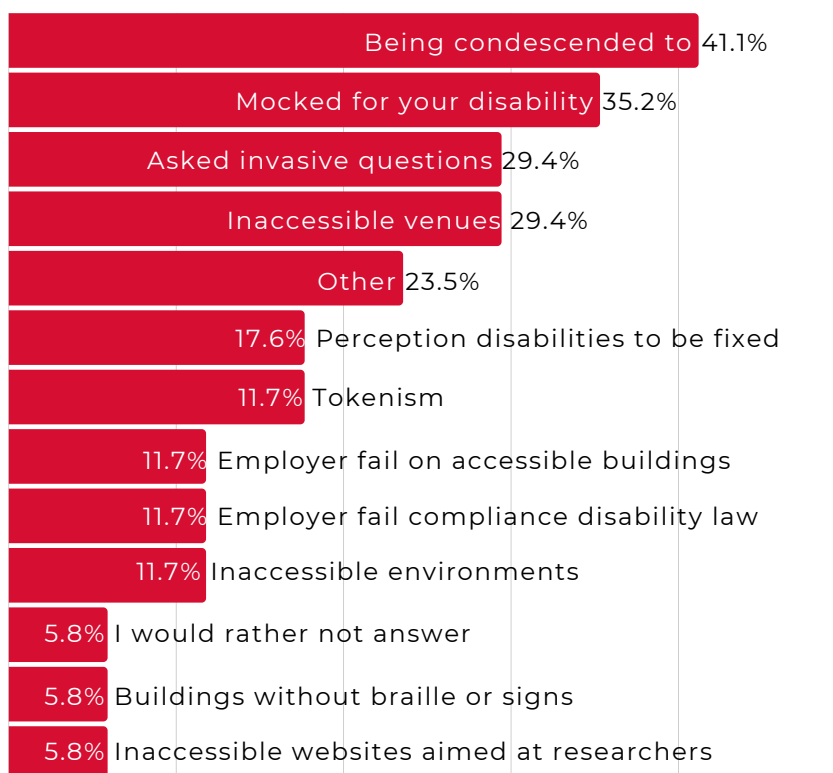
Experiences - Ableism

50%

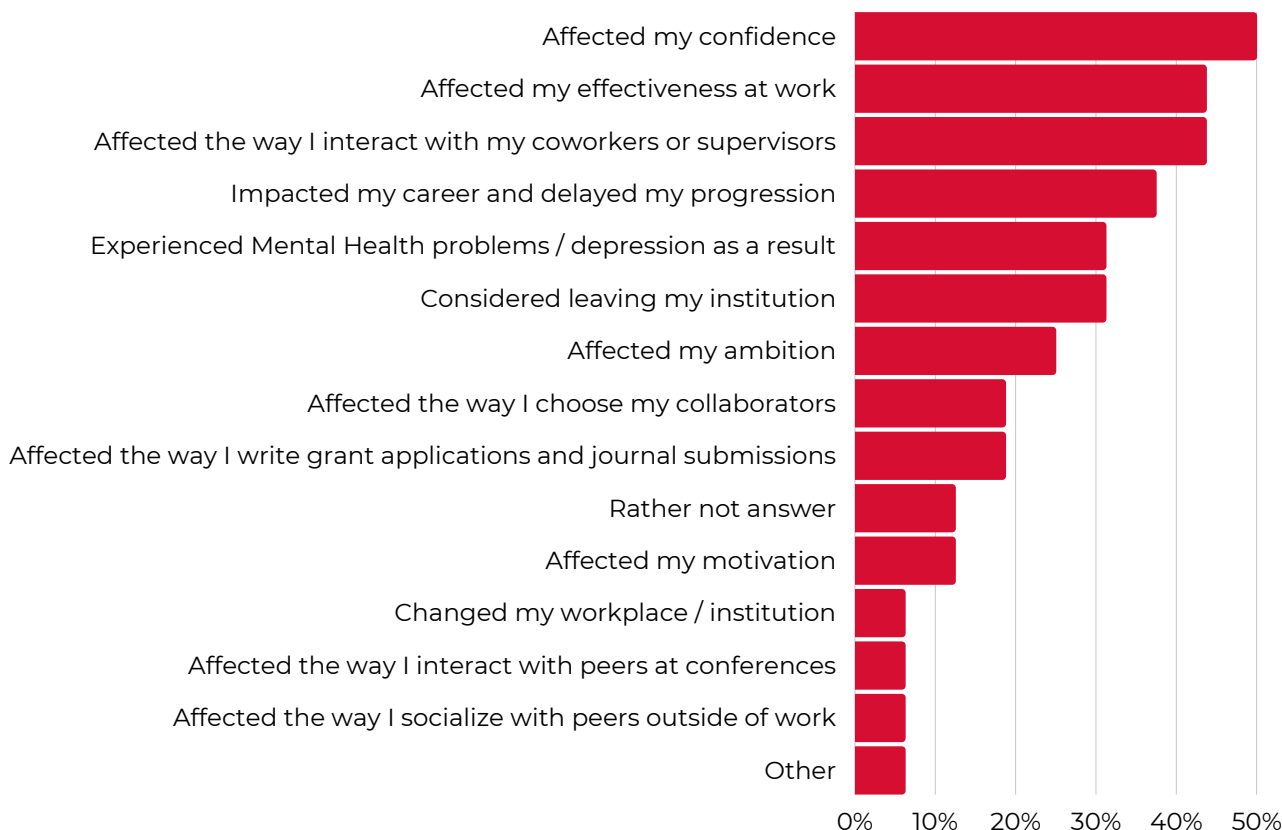
Of respondents with a disability including learning difficulties have experienced ableism. Overall this is 2% of everyone who completed the survey.

We asked how helpful employers / institutions had been if issues were raised. 0% found them extremely helpful, 29.4% very / somewhat helpful and 35.3% found them not so helpful / not helpful at all

In what ways have you experienced ableism?



How has your experience of Ableism affected you?



Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

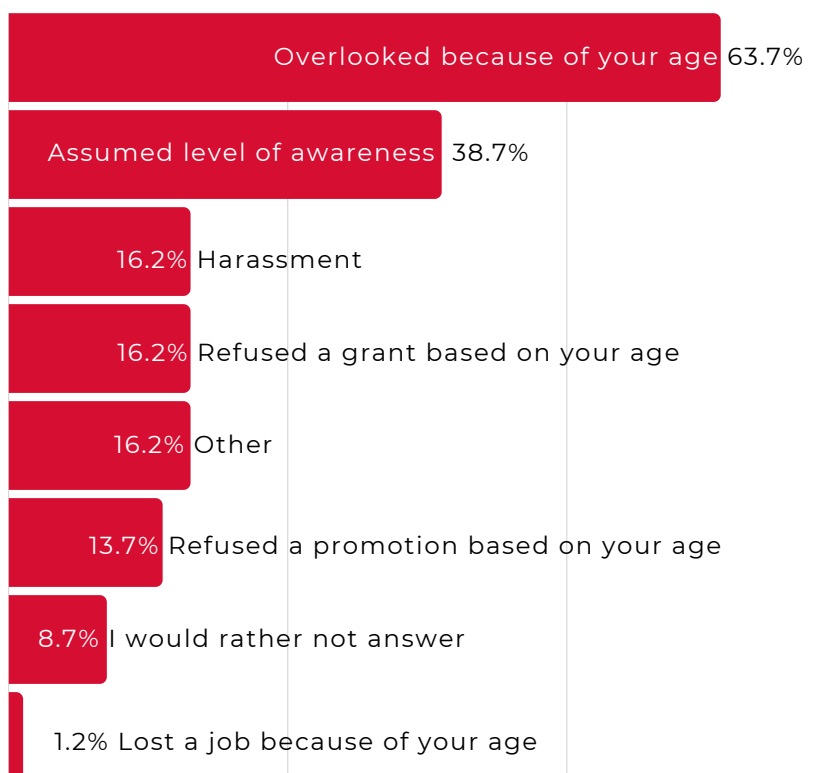
Experiences - Ageism

24%

Of respondents have experienced ageism - with some being discriminated against for being perceived as too old and others for being perceived as too young.

We asked how helpful employers / institutions had been if issues were raised. 1% found them extremely helpful, 26.4% very / somewhat helpful and 22.2% found them not so helpful / not helpful at all.

In what way have you experienced Ageism?



How has your experience of Ageism affected you?



Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

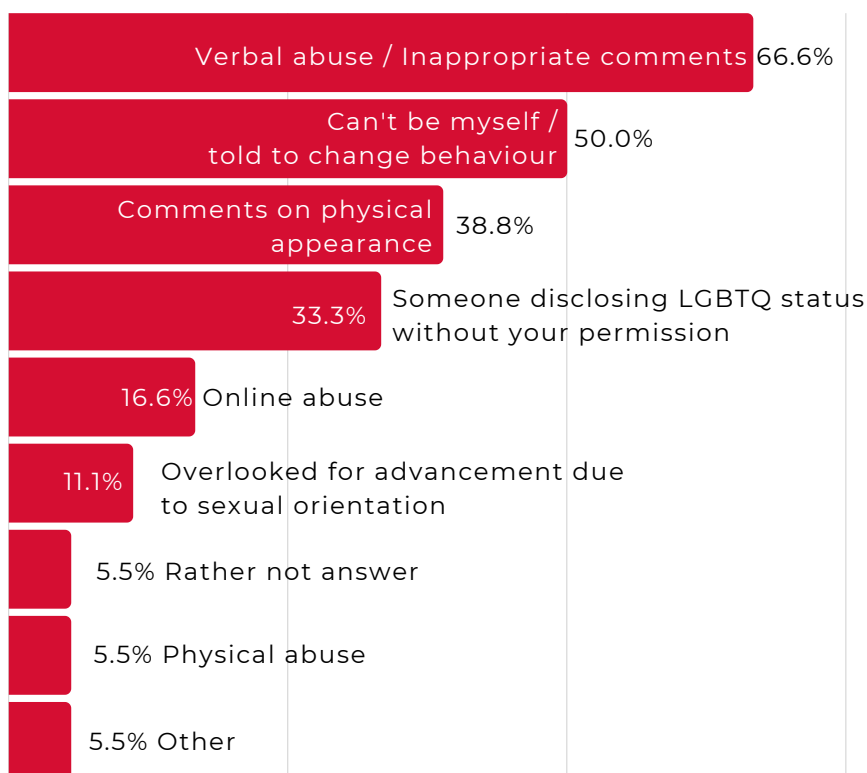
Experiences - Homophobia

64%

Of respondents who identify as Gay, or Lesbian (% is 25% if including Bisexual + Other) indicated they experienced homophobia - 5.2% of everyone who completed the survey.

We asked how helpful employers / institutions had been if issues were raised. 0% found them extremely helpful, 11.1% very helpful and 22.2% found them not helpful at all.

How have you experienced Homophobia?



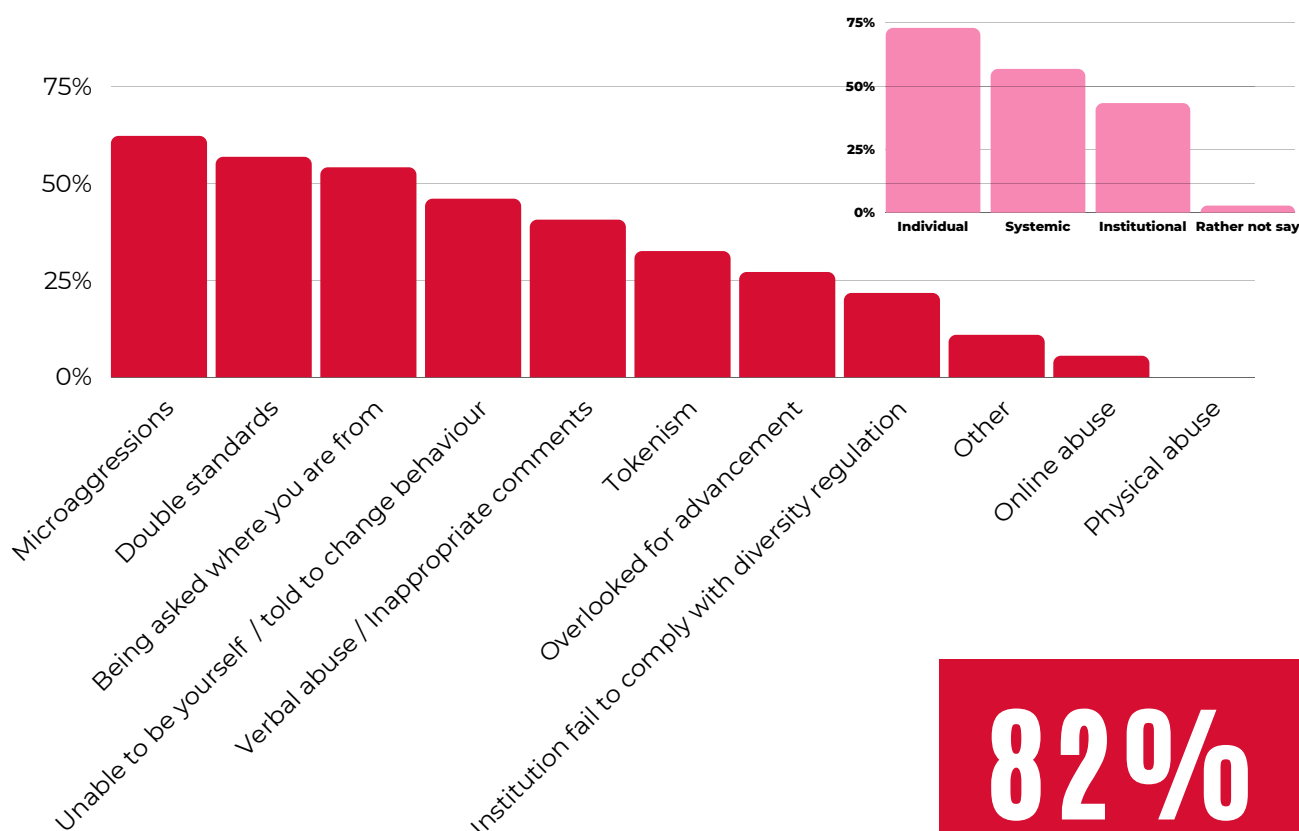
How has your experience of Homophobia affected you?



Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

Experiences - Racism

In what way have you experienced Racism?



We asked how helpful employers / institutions had been if issues were raised. 0% found them extremely helpful, 16.2% very / somewhat helpful and 40.5% found them not so helpful/ not helpful at all.

82%

Of respondents who identify as a minority in the place where they work / study have experienced racism - 13.5% of everyone who completed the survey.

How has your experience of Racism affected you?



Experiences - Religion & Faith (R/F)

6%

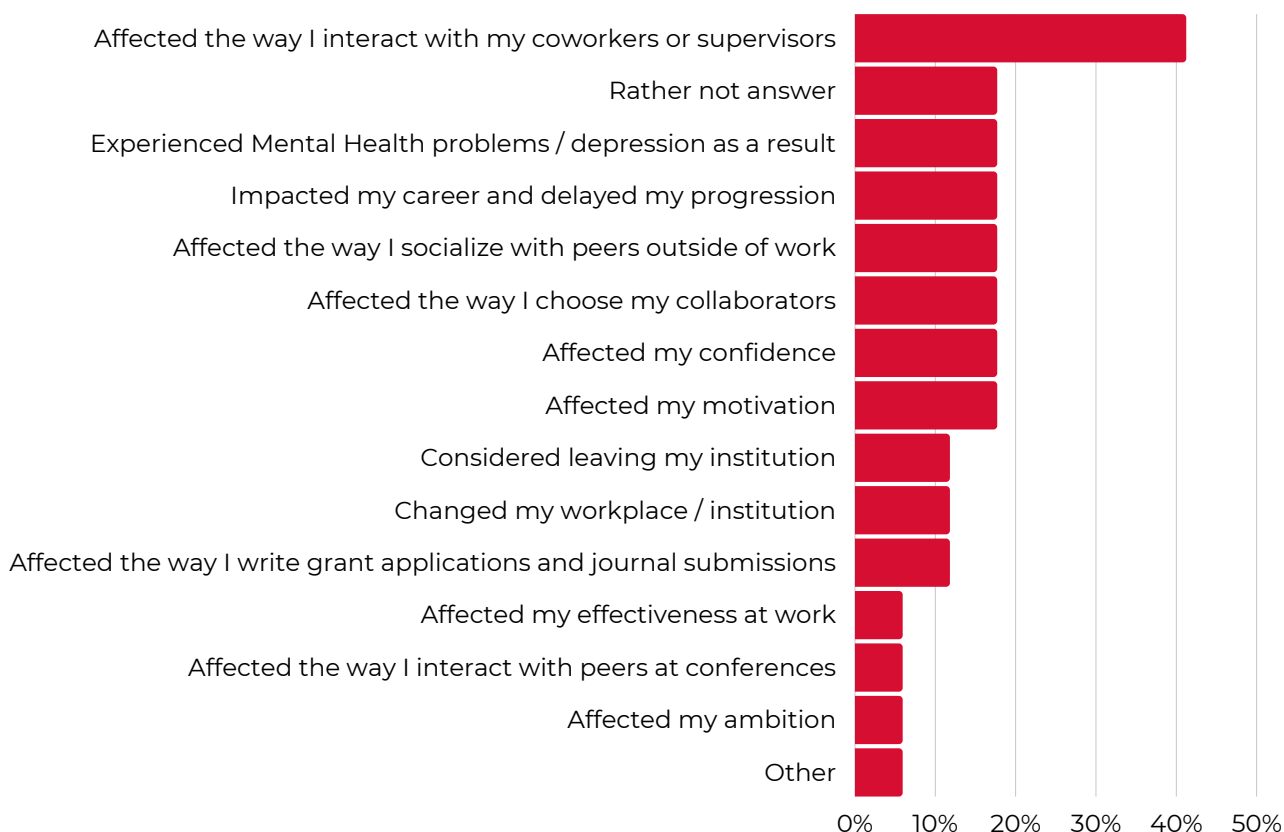
Of respondents indicated that they had experienced discrimination based on their Religion, Faith or Beliefs

We asked how helpful employers / institutions had been if issues were raised. 5.3% found them extremely helpful, 10.5% somewhat helpful, 31.6% found them not so helpful / not helpful at all. 52.6% would rather not answer.

In what way have you experienced discrimination based on your Faith / Religion?



How has your experience of R/F discrimination affected you?



Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

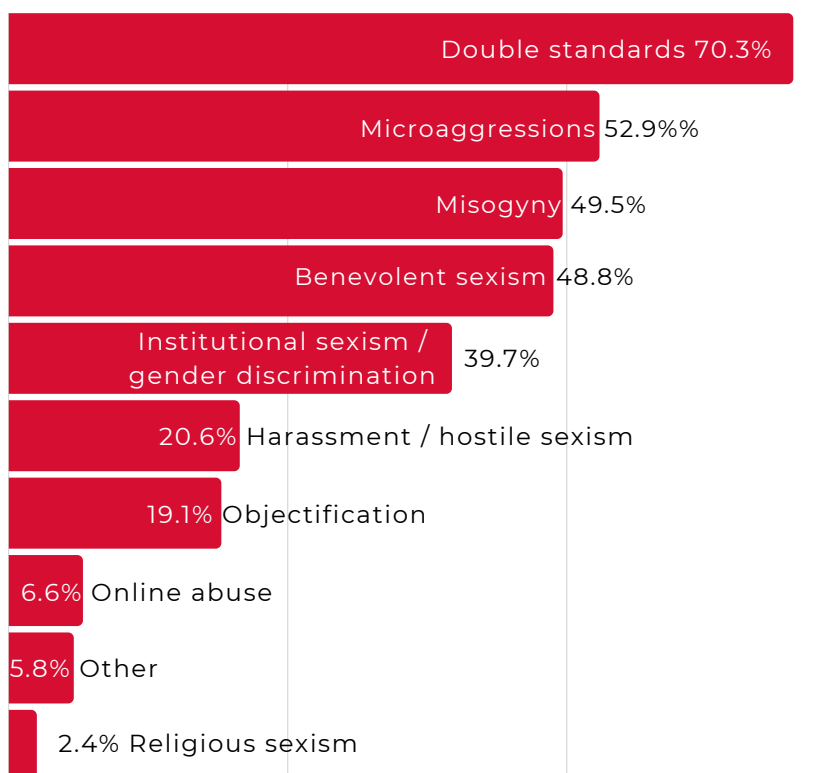
Experiences - Sexism

41%

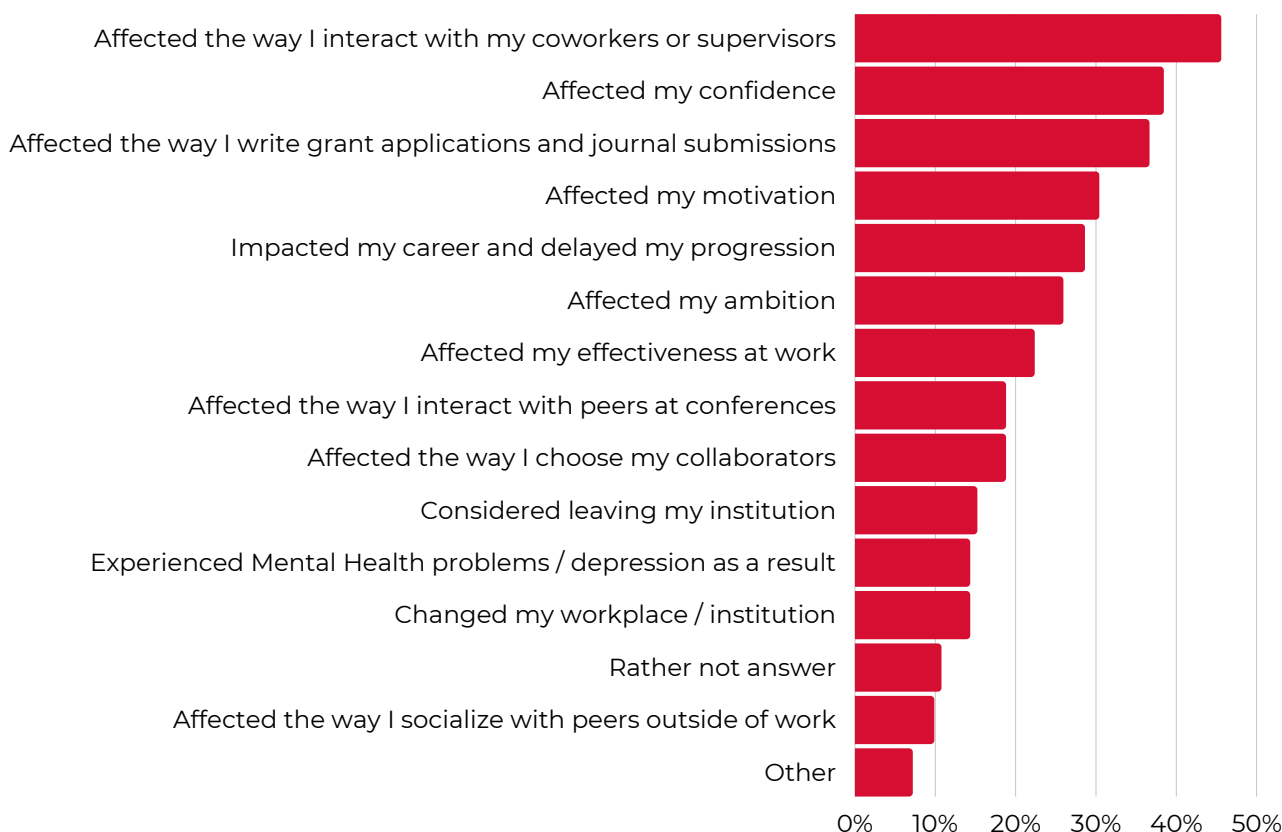
Of Female / Genderqueer / Non binary respondents have experienced Sexism. 20% of all respondents have experiences Sexism.

We asked how helpful employers / institutions had been if issues were raised. 3.3% found them extremely helpful, 9.3% very / somewhat helpful and 31.3% found them not so helpful / not helpful at all and 55% preferred not to answer.

In what way have you experienced Sexism?



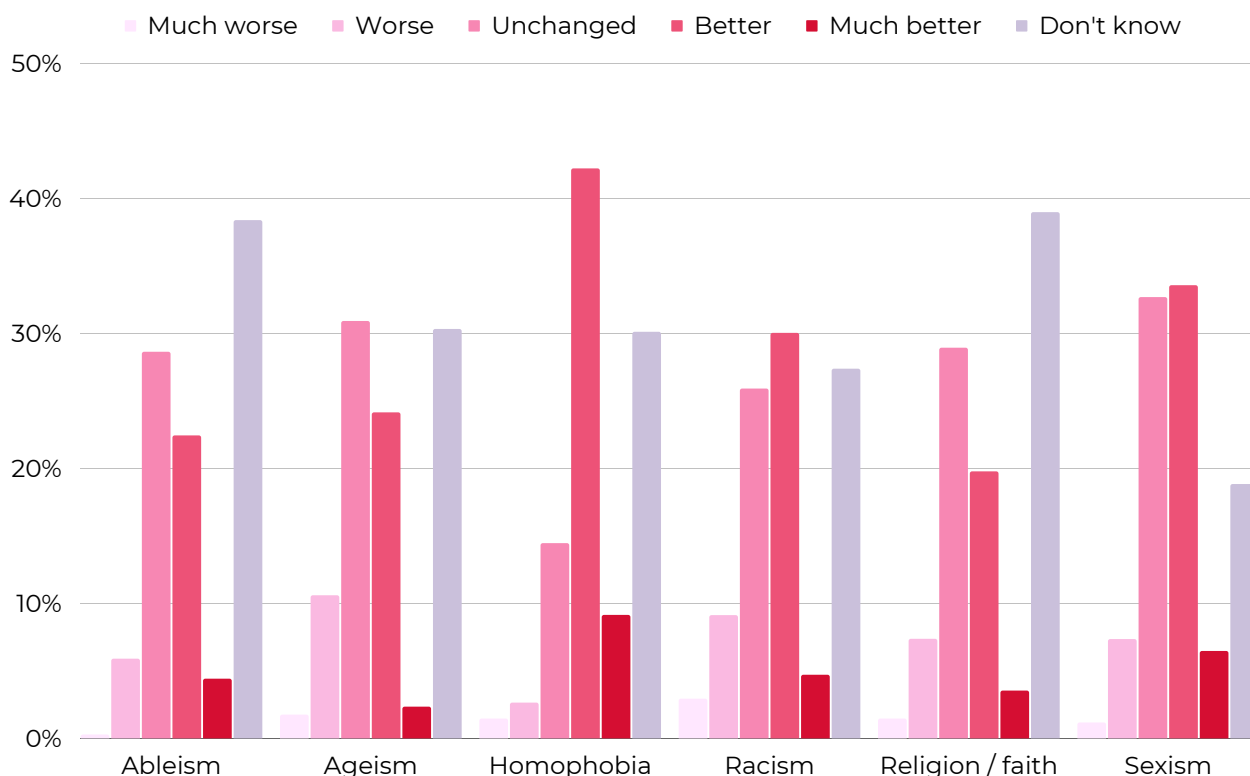
How has your experience of Sexism affected you?



Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

Experiences

In the context of academia / your professional life, and recognising that you may or may not have been affected. Do you personally feel that the different forms of discrimination / prejudice are getting better or worse?



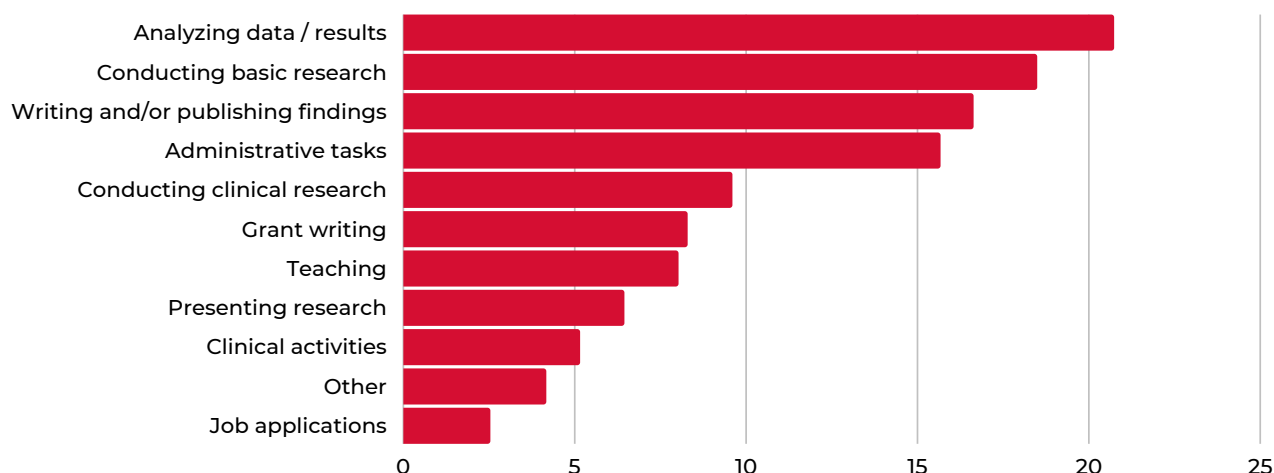
	Much worse	Worse	Unchanged	Better	Much better	Don't know
Sexism	1.5%	2.7%	14.5%	42.2%	9.1%	30.1%
Ageism	1.2%	7.4%	32.7%	33.5%	6.5%	18.8%
Racism	2.9%	9.1%	25.9%	30.0%	4.7%	27.4%
Religion / faith	1.8%	10.6%	30.9%	24.1%	2.4%	30.3%
Homophobia	0.3%	5.9%	28.6%	22.4%	4.4%	38.4%
Ableism	1.5%	7.4%	28.9%	19.8%	3.5%	38.9%

Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

Your job and workplace

Your job and workplace

In your research setting, what % of your time do you spend undertaking the following tasks?



Do you feel you spend an appropriate amount of time engaged in each activity you noted on the previous question?

Task	Too little time	The right amount of time	Too much time
Administrative tasks	6.0%	39.8%	46.3%
Conducting basic research	31.0%	35.1%	2.3%
Conducting clinical research	24.3%	25.2%	2.4%
Clinical activities	9.5%	16.0%	4.9%
Analyzing data / results	42.0%	47.7%	7.1%
Writing and/or publishing findings	49.7%	39.4%	8.6%
Presenting research	35.0%	55.4%	5.0%
Teaching	23.8%	35.1%	11.9%
Grant Writing	34.6%	24.6%	17.3%
Job applications	16.3%	12.2%	4.1%
Other	3.3%	11.4%	3.3%

Your job and workplace

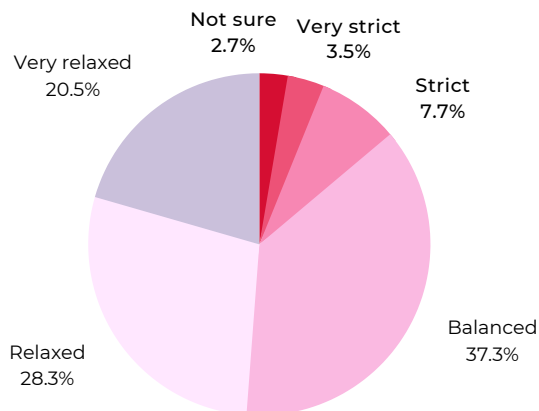
How would you rate your employer / institution on the following issues?

Task	Very poor	Poor	Neutral	Good
Focus and interest in Dementia	7.5%	13.1%	18.4%	31.3%
Support for independent thinking and innovation	5.6%	10.7%	22.9%	42.3%
Provision of research equipment	6.3%	16.3%	26.3%	33.9%
Support to networking locally and internationally	8.5%	14.7%	23.2%	38.6%
Provision of training	7.1%	12.1%	22.4%	43.5%
Cares about its staff / students	6.9%	16.0%	30.8%	33.0%
Support for career progression	6.6%	19.1%	25.1%	36.1%
Overall support for early career researchers	8.1%	14.0%	19.9%	47.2%
Provision of mentoring schemes	10.0%	20.6%	30.0%	29.7%
Not sure	2.0%	4.0%	78.0%	8.0%
Proactively working to improve research culture	12.9%	32.0%	29.8%	18.5%
Provision of individual support / pastoral care	10.6%	22.5%	34.7%	25.6%

We asked if the management style of respondent's managers / supervisors suited them: 60% responded positively, 23% indicated a moderate amount, 17% were unsure or negative.

Your job and workplace

How would you describe your manager / supervisor's management style?



20%

See their supervisor only once every 2 months or less often

39%

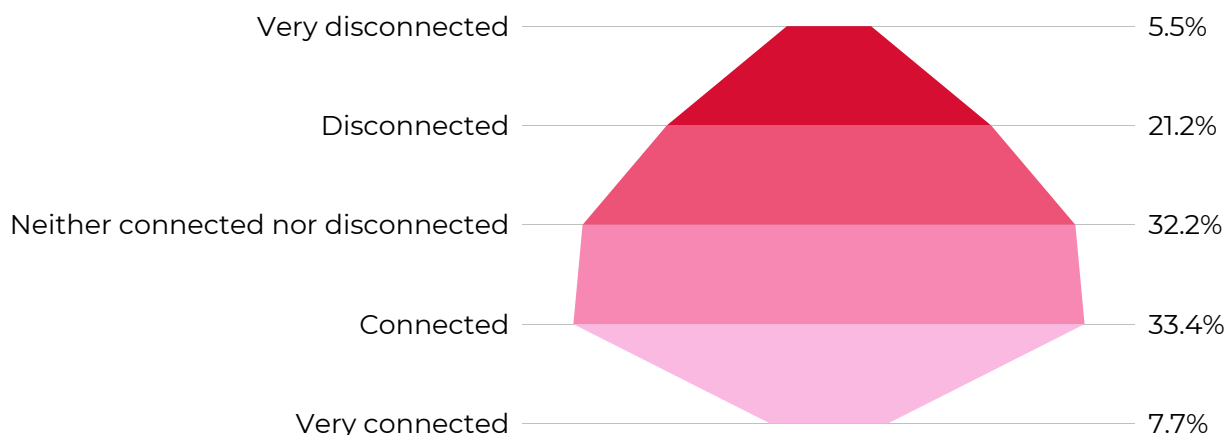
See their supervisor every week

Collaborations

Considering collaborations, **60.6%** of respondents have not received training on how to collaborate with other researchers. Despite this **11.4%** feel very prepared to collaborate with non co-workers, **44%** feel prepared, **19.0%** neutral & **25.5%** unprepared or very unprepared.

We asked how frequent are international collaborations in the research group you are a part of (or spent majority of your training)? **54.7%** of respondents responded frequently or very frequently, **30.4%** said rarely, **9.8%** responded never and **4.9%** didn't know. These reply averages did not change when considering research areas, except in clinical research who were less likely to internationally collaborate.

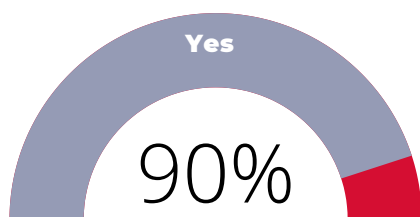
Generally speaking, how connected do you feel with the global research community?



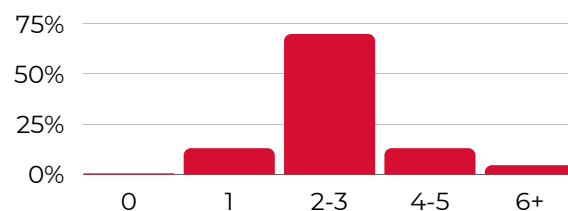
Thoughts on conferences

Thoughts on conferences

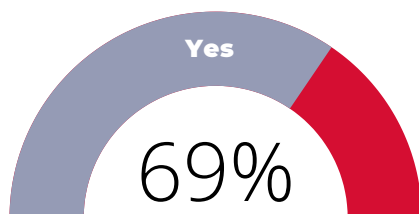
Do you participate in scientific conferences?



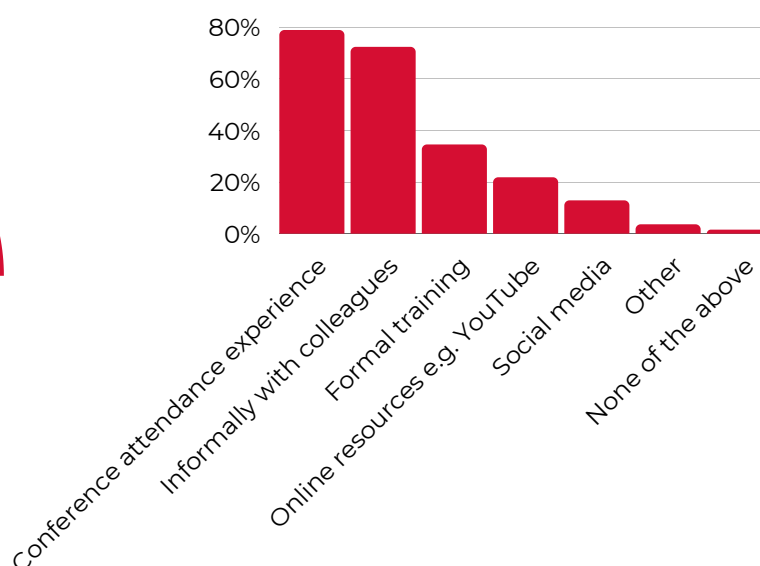
How many conferences do you attend per year?



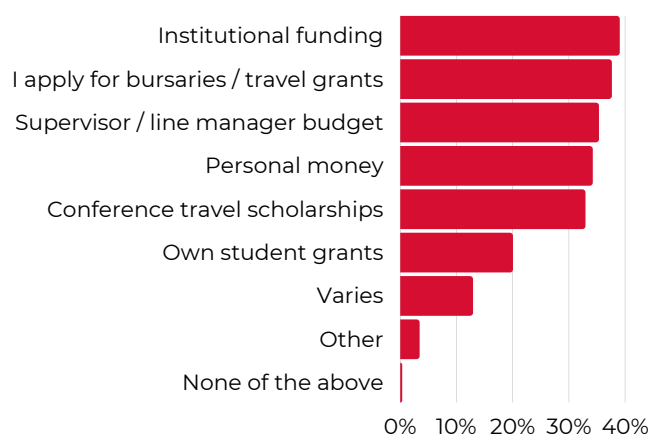
Are you supported to attend conferences when not presenting?



What were the most important training resources for producing posters and presentations?



How is the cost of your conference attendance usually funded?



86%

Of respondents would attend more conferences if they were free / cost not a factor

83%

Of respondents flag cost of travel as being a major factor in conference attendance

46%

Of respondents flag lack time as a major factor in deciding on conference attendance

13%

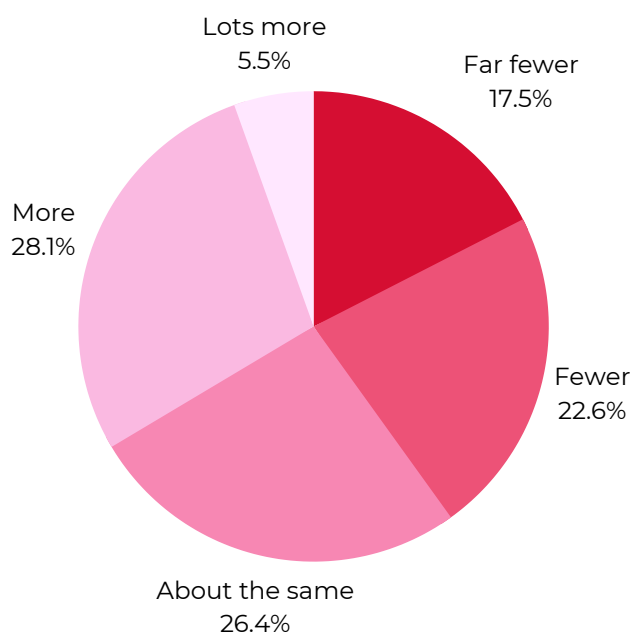
Of respondents flag environmental impact as a factor in deciding on conference attendance

Thoughts on conferences

How much do you think is reasonable for someone of your career stage, to pay for different types of conference?



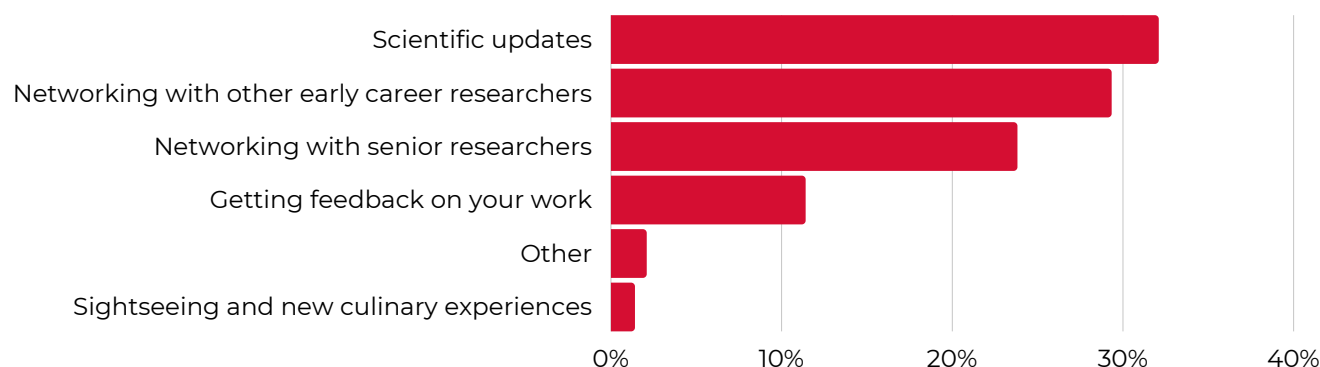
Have you attended more conferences or fewer conferences since the COVID-19 pandemic began?



What are the most most beneficial elements of conference attendance? (1-7)



There are multiple benefits that come from conference attendance. However, what do you see as the main reason to attend?

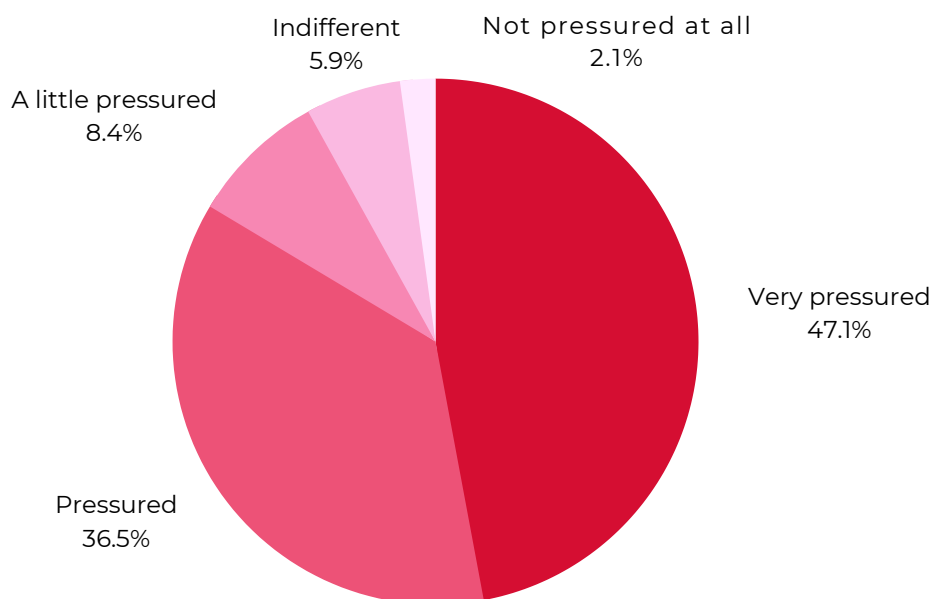


Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

Thoughts on publishing

Thoughts on publishing

How pressured do you feel to publish results of your research?



44%

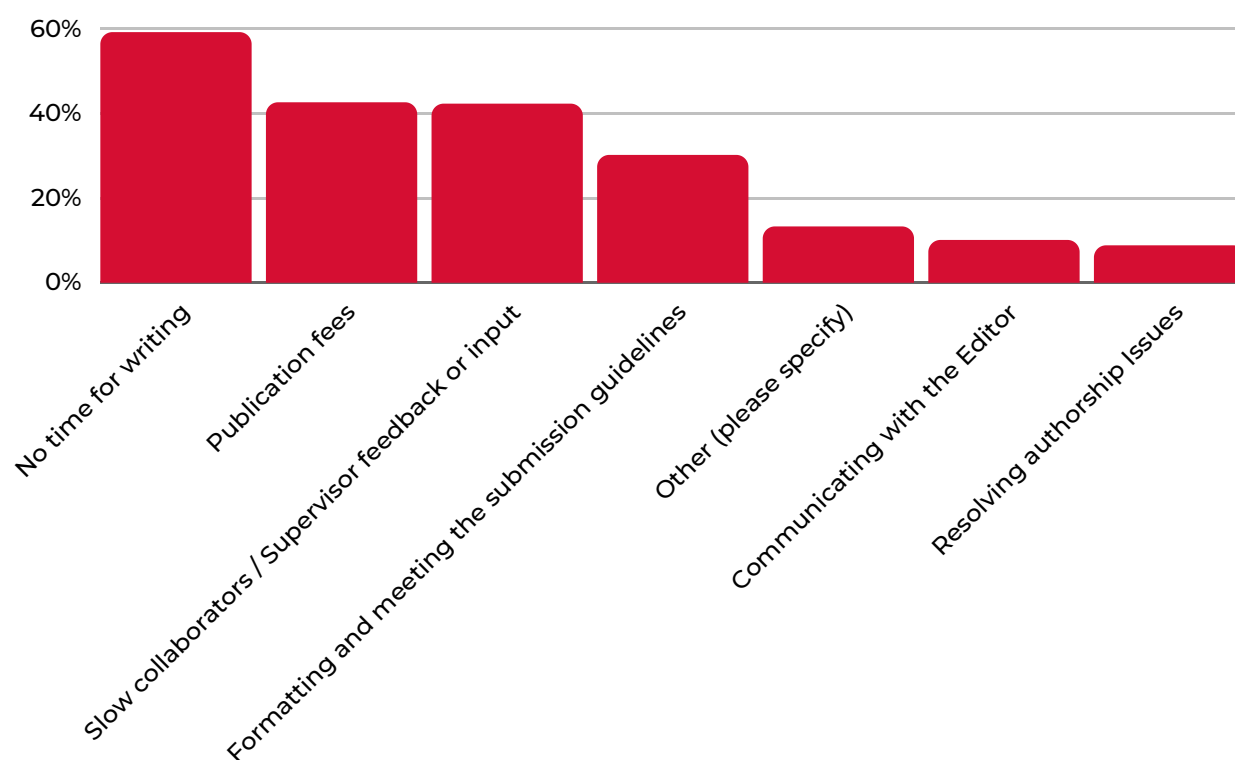
Of respondents feel it is getting harder / much harder to publish results. 11% felt it was getting easier / much easier

60%

Of respondents have not received any formal training on scientific writing from their employer / institution

We asked how respondents paid for publication fees. 24.3% replied that they try not to publish in journals which charge, 33.2% replied that their University / Institution pays, 27.2% have included the costs in their grants, 8.2% have used their own money, 6.9% other.

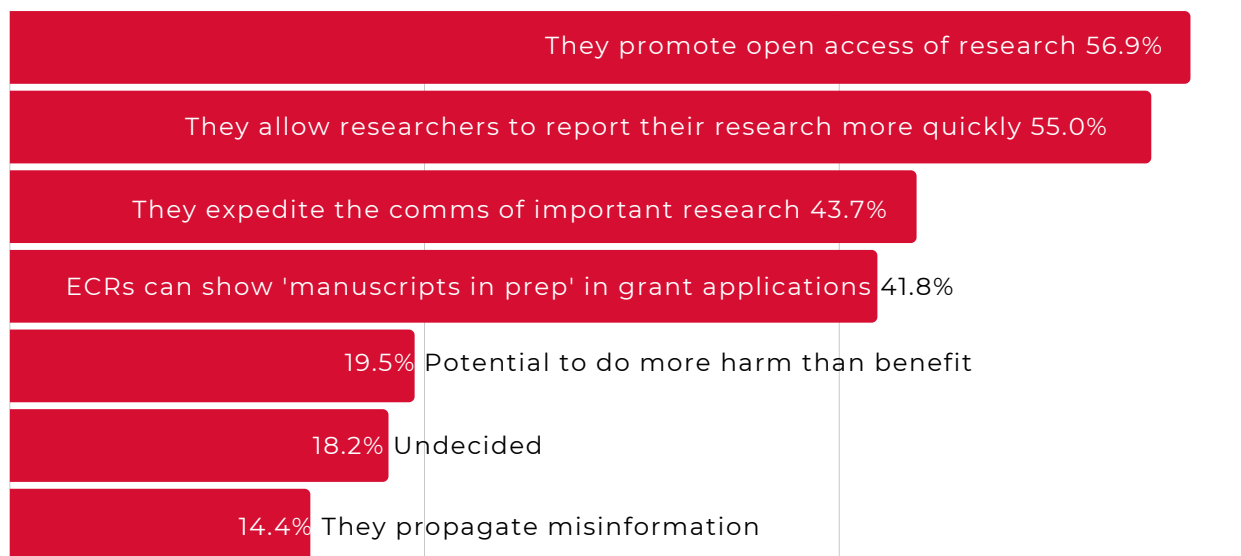
What are the main problems you face in publishing your research?



Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

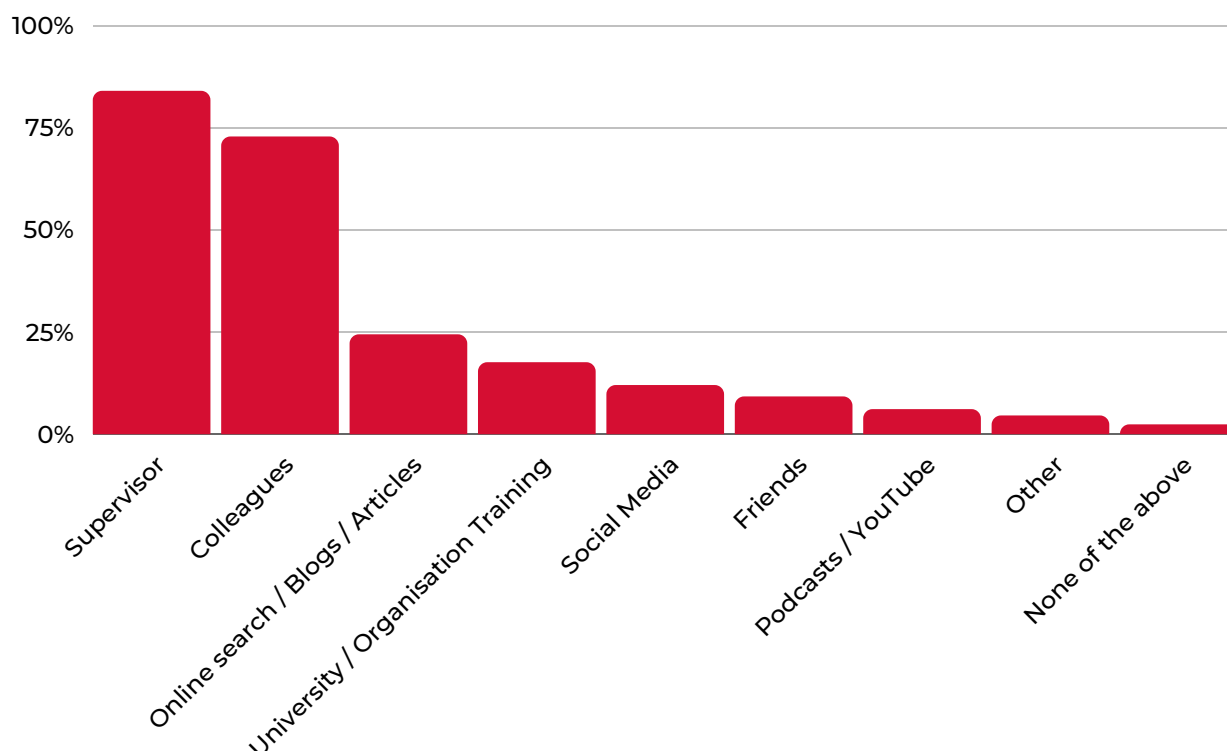
Thoughts on publishing

How do you feel about the growing number of pre-prints?



We asked, 'To the best of your knowledge, have any of your publications ever influenced policy, practice or (if clinical / interventional), been implemented?' 61.3% responded no, 19.3% yes, 19.3% none of the above. Qualitative / Care researchers were more likely to respond positively over lab-based researchers.

Where do you get your advice and guidance, in preparing a journal submission?



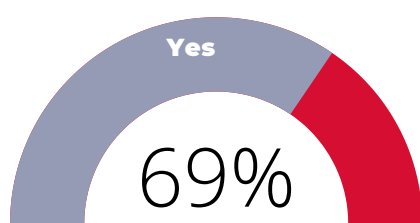
Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

Thoughts on publishing

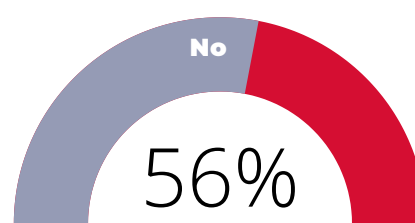
Do you feel the current peer review publication system is effective, and the best way to undertake the task of ensuring rigor and trust in science publishing?



Have you undertaken a peer review for a journal?



Did you receive training on how to undertake a Peer Review?



What changes, if any, would you make to the current peer review system?

In general, the comments reflect a frustration with the current system, particularly in terms of the time taken, the costs of publishing, unprofessional reviews and a lack of support and recognition for those who contribute their time. Suggestions include:

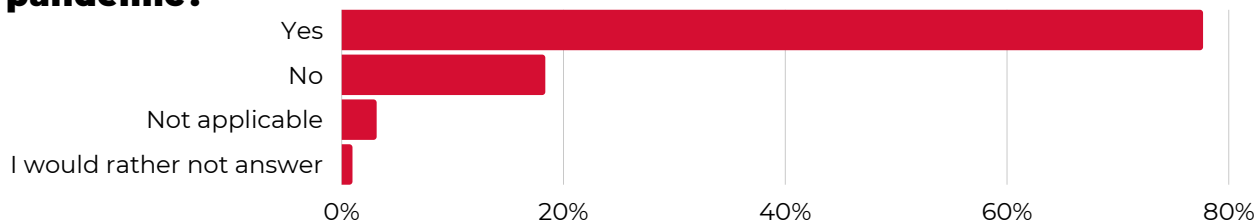
- Do not allow reviewers to see name of authors / blinded
- Pay reviewers / offer discount publication fees
- Insist on training for reviewers
- Accountability for poor reviewer comments / review of the review
- Improve the speed, and reduce time taken to review
- Not to bombard individuals for reviews
- Improve access for ECRs to become involved in peer review

Payment for reviewers and speedier review and publication turn-around were highlighted the most.

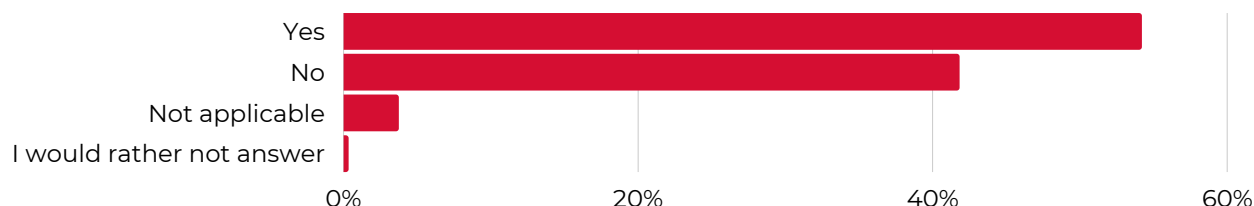
Impact of the pandemic

Impact of the pandemic

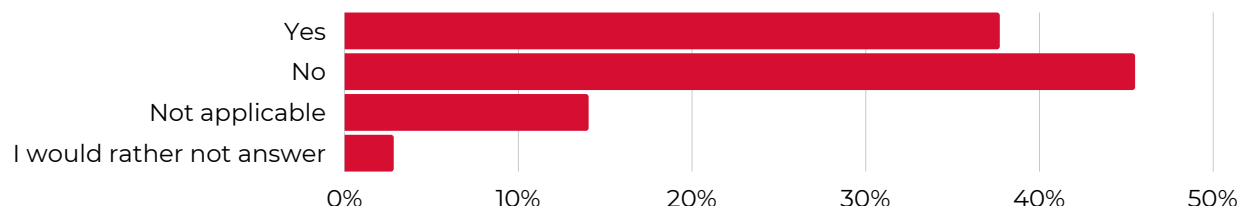
Have your research projects been delayed as a result of the pandemic?



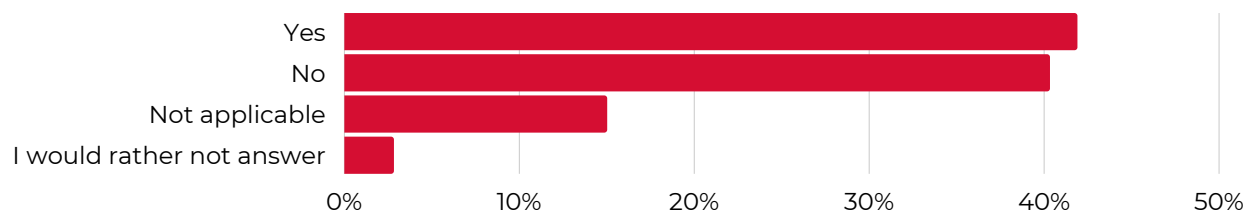
Did you have to rethink or change your research project as a result of the pandemic?



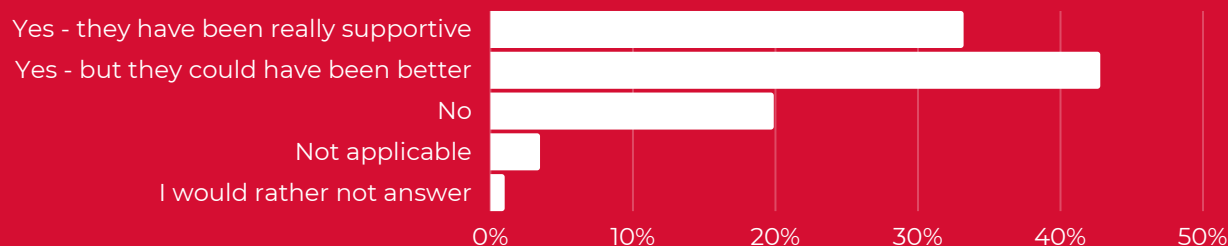
Did you need to secure an extension or additional funding to enable you to finish your current research?



Has the pandemic impacted your career progression, due to a lack of jobs / funding?



Do you feel your institution / employer has effectively supported you during the pandemic?



Moving countries

Moving countries

139 respondents indicated that they had moved countries as part of their studies / research (23%). The most respondents moved from and to the USA and UK (64 of the 139 people who moved countries came to the UK and USA).

Which country did you move from?



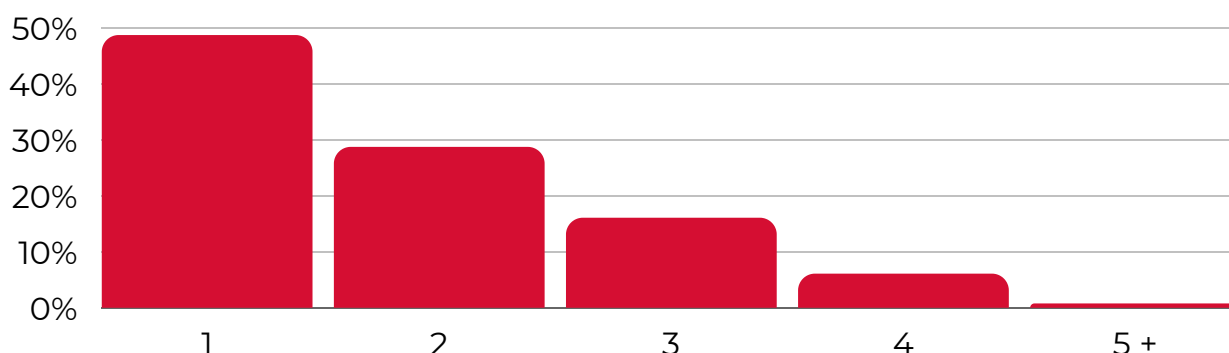
Which country did you move to?



Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

Moving countries

How many times have you moved to a different country for you work / studies?



What were your reasons for moving?

Your reason	%
Viewed as essential to progressing my career	53.6%
To experience life outside of my home country	53.0%
It was a placement provided as part of my education	27.2%
Lack of funding / opportunities in my home country	22.5%
Unable to find the job / course in my own country	17.2%
Personal reasons	15.9%
Other	9.3%
Moved for my partner / spouse	8.0%

On a scale of 1-10 how important do you consider it to have international research experience?

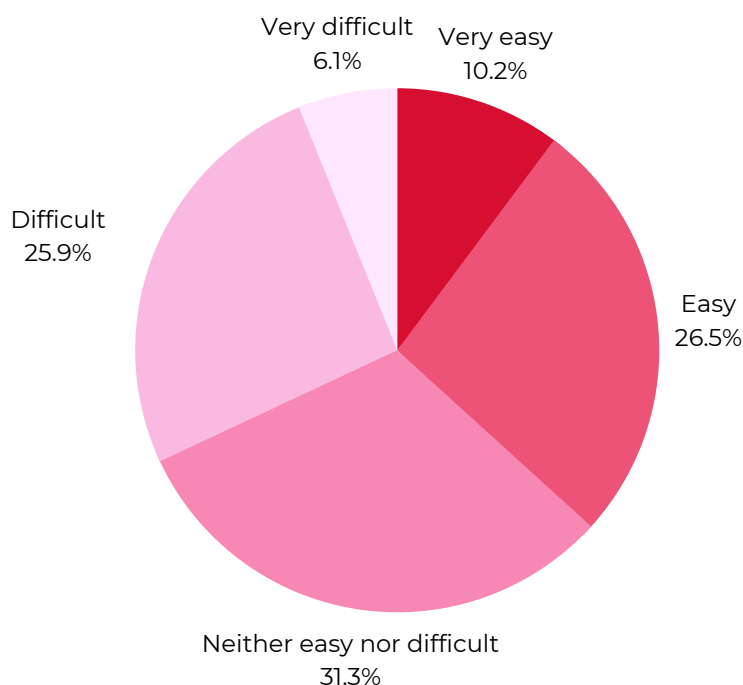
Average response 7.4

Moving countries

Did you find a position before you moved?



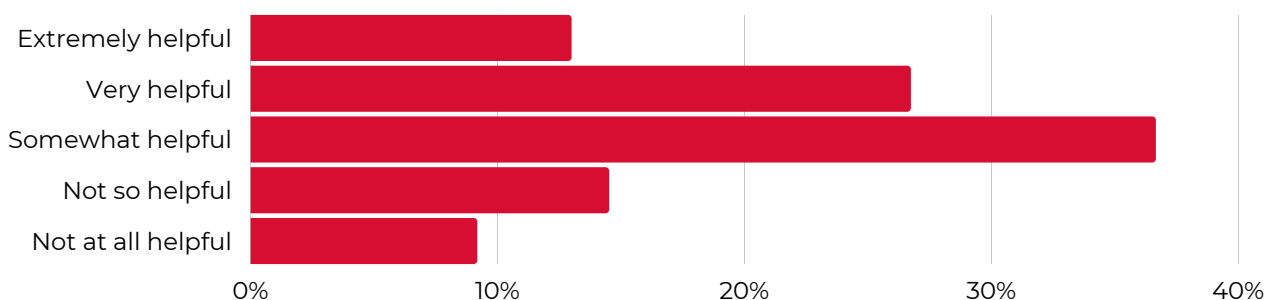
How easy was the process of moving to the country?



66%

Of respondents did not receive any financial support from their new employer / institution to assist with their move.

If you found your new position in advance of the move, how helpful was your new employer / institution in supporting you during the move?

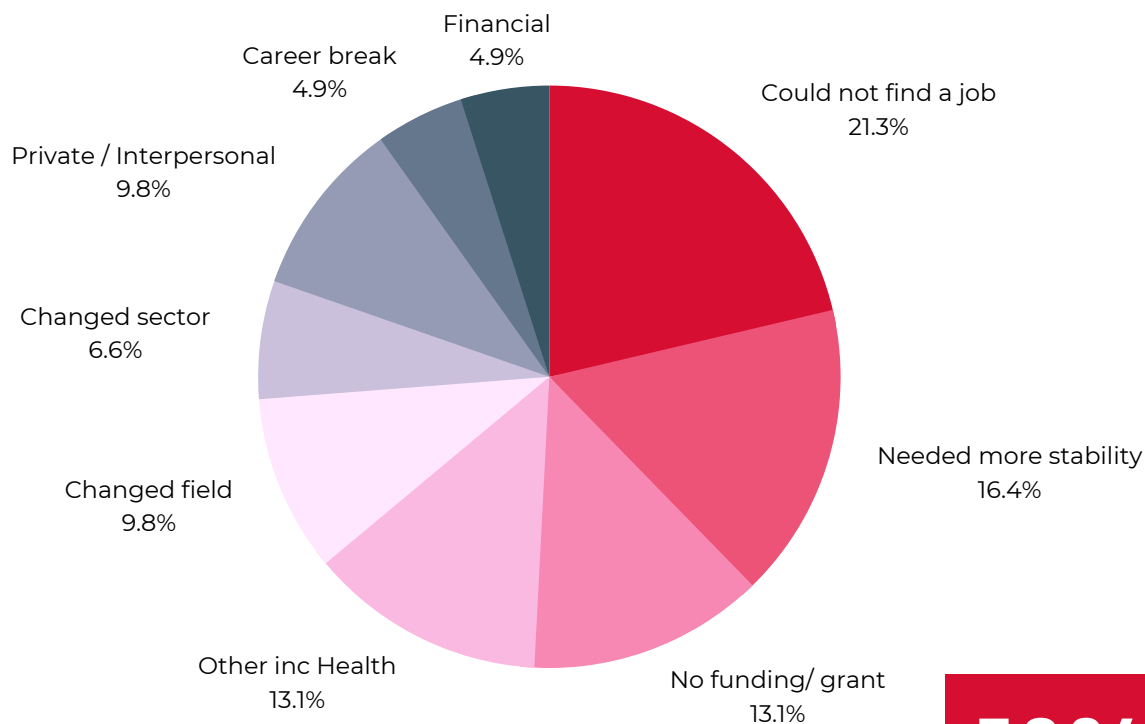


Leaving academia

Leaving academia

The survey sought views from people who had left dementia research within the last two years. A total of **61 people** who responded to our survey were eligible to answer questions in this section of the survey.

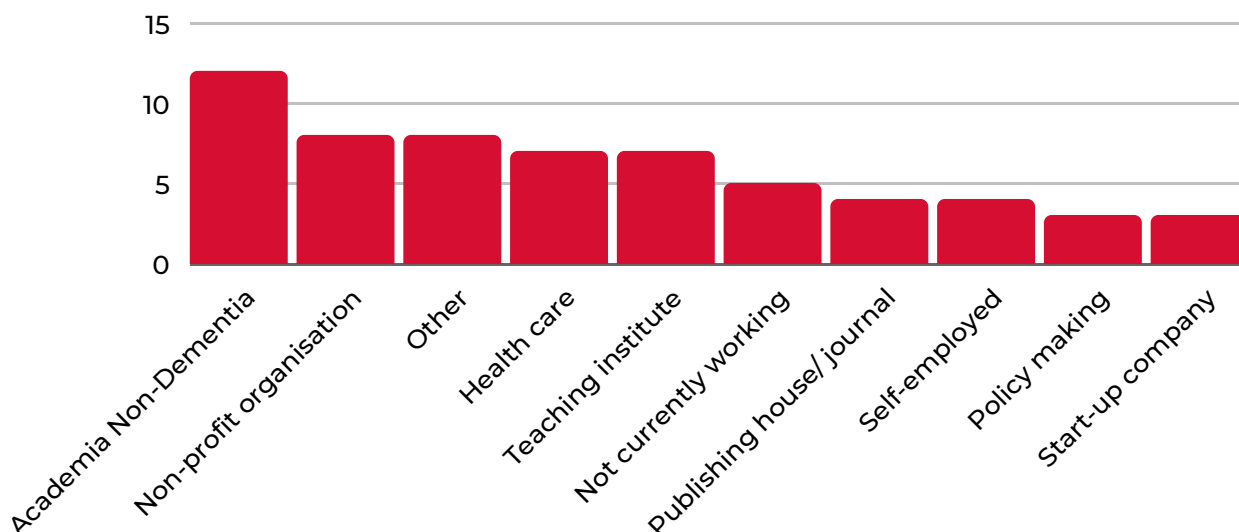
Why did you leave academic dementia research?



58%

Remain associated with dementia research

Where do you work now?



Leaving academia

We asked respondents 'What would it take to bring you back to academic dementia research?' **28%** said they would not return to dementia research, **72%** said they would return under certain conditions. The top five common themes to emerge were **1. Improved stability / permanent position** **2. Opportunity to work part-time** **3. Increased funding** **4. More jobs particularly at a senior level** **5. Improved geography e.g., positions which were not in major cities / closer to home.**

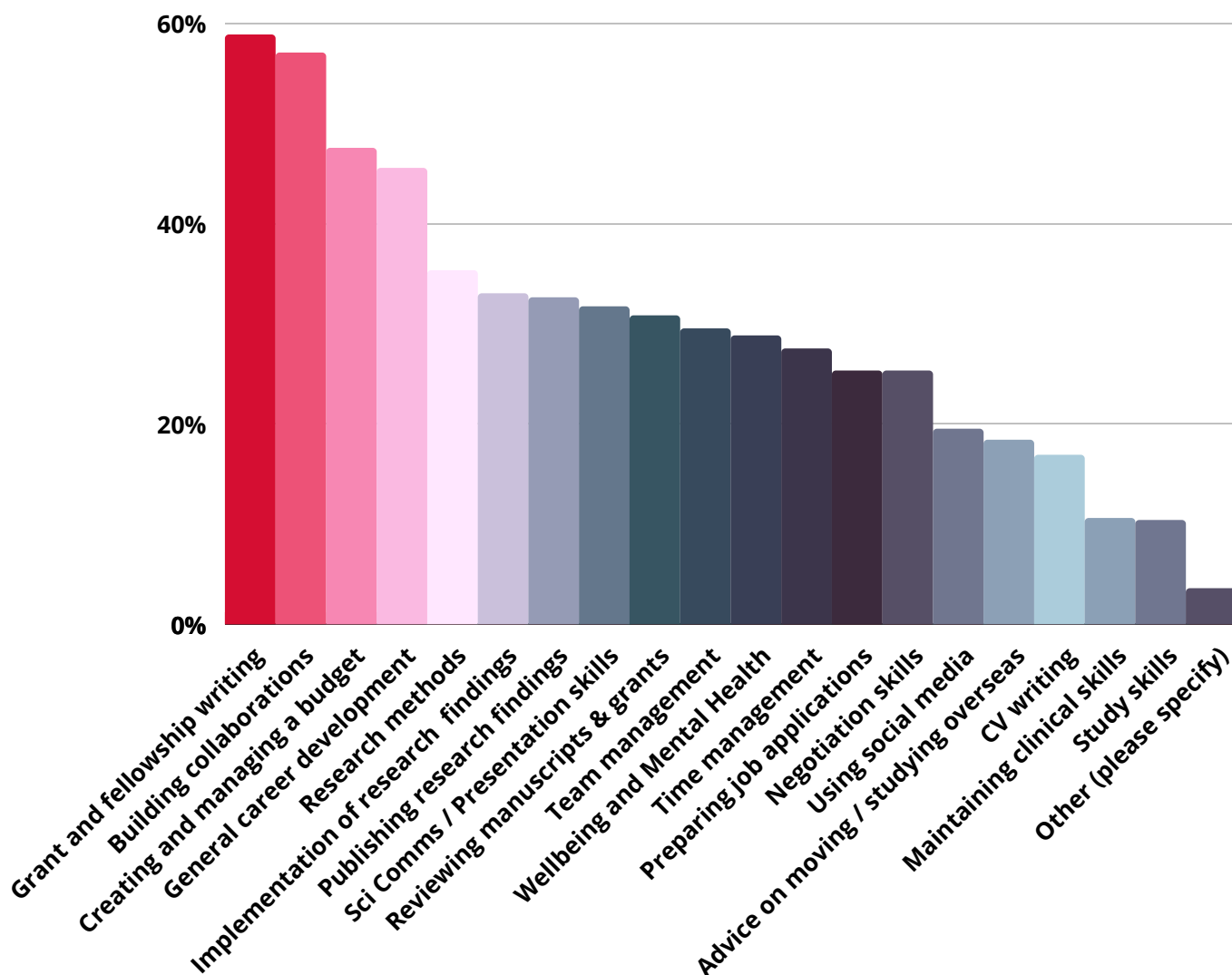
What are your thoughts on your current position?

Your thoughts	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree or Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
My academic training prepared me for the position I currently hold	7.7%	2.6%	2.6%	38.5%	33.3%
I feel I am making a difference	0.0%	2.6%	15.4%	41.0%	23.1%
I am an individual contributor	2.6%	7.7%	10.3%	43.6%	20.5%
I have a more manageable workload	5.1%	20.5%	20.5%	15.4%	15.4%
Outside of academia, I feel more appreciated	2.6%	7.7%	18.0%	12.8%	12.8%
Outside of academia, my employer is more supportive	5.1%	5.1%	20.5%	10.3%	12.8%
I prefer this position over a position in academia	10.5%	10.5%	21.1%	5.3%	10.5%
Outside of academia, I have a better salary	5.1%	5.1%	20.5%	18.0%	10.3%
I am leading a team	10.8%	24.3%	10.8%	24.3%	8.1%
I have time to keep up to date with developments in my field	5.1%	18.0%	12.8%	35.9%	7.7%

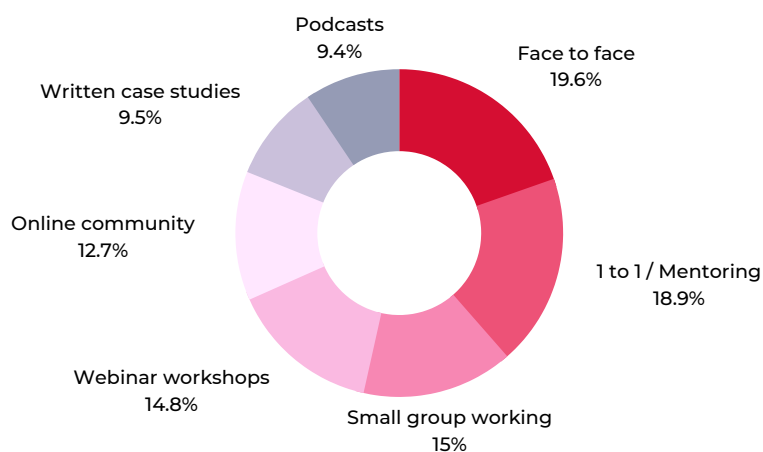
Getting the help you need

Getting the help you need

In which areas would you like further support?



How would you like to receive the support / training?



Considering the research culture in the country what are the challenges?



Note: not every respondent answered every question, and some questions asked for multiple responses and may not = 100%. See appendix.

Next steps

NEXT STEPS

Where do you go from here? Surveys and reports like this are not just about taking a snap-shot of how the ECR dementia research community feel at a moment in time, but also looking forward. This survey work started by ISTAART PIA to Elevate Early Career Researchers is a continuous work in progress - a way to track our and others' impact and improvements over time. Below is an outline of the next steps for continuing to keep in touch with the community and act on what has been learned.



01. Support

The ISTAART PIA to Elevate Early Career Researchers will work to deliver support in the priority areas identified by respondents to this survey and respond to regional needs.

02. Analysis

The ISTAART PIA to Elevate Early Career Researchers will undertake analysis on the survey results and work towards publishing the findings in open access journals.

03. Ongoing Work

The ISTAART PIA to Elevate Early Career Researchers will undertake further survey work to continue to monitor and further explore the topics explored in this survey, including at a continent level.

04. Communications

The ISTAART PIA to Elevate Early Career Researchers work to share these results with research funders, institutions, policy makers and those who can support addressing the issues raised.

05. Partnerships

The ISTAART PIA to Elevate Early Career Researcher will seek out partnerships with organisations to deliver support and encourage delivery of improvements.

The following individuals and organisations are thanked for their contribution to this report and the survey work which informed it - this was delivered in collaboration.

- *Study Lead: Adam Smith, University College London*
- *Study Team & Co-authors: Dr C. Elizabeth Shaaban, University of Pittsburgh - Dr Sara Laureen Bartels, Maastricht University - Dr Lindsay Welikovitsh, Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School - Wagner Brum, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul & University of Gothenburg - Dr Royhaan Folarin, Olabisi Onabanjo University.*
- *ISTAART PEERs Executive Committee*
- *Alzheimer's Association & ISTAART*
- *UCLH / UCL NIHR Biomedical Research Centre*
- *Survey respondents*

This report was facilitated by the Alzheimer's Association International Society to Advance Alzheimer's Research and Treatment (ISTAART), through the PIA to Elevate Early Career Researchers. The views and opinions expressed by authors in this publication represent those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect those of the PIA membership, ISTAART or the Alzheimer's Association.

Contact:

ISTAART PIA to Elevate Early Career Dementia Researchers
www.alz.org/istaart
 @istaart / #ECRPIA

University College London
www.dementiaresearcher.nihr.ac.uk
 @dem_researcher

Leader Comments

Leader Comments



DR MARIA C. CARRILLO

CHIEF SCIENCE OFFICER, ALZHEIMER'S ASSOCIATION

"This survey sheds light on the challenges faced by early career Alzheimer's researchers, and we look forward to gleaning insights that will help us better support them and their work. This next generation of researchers are crucial to the future of Alzheimer's research and treatment, and will ultimately lead us to understand even more about the biology of Alzheimer's and dementia, develop new tools for earlier and more accurate diagnoses, and establish novel avenues for treatments."



MARTIN ROSSOR

PROFESSOR OF CLINICAL NEUROLOGY AT UNIVERSITY COLLEGE LONDON

"This is an important piece of work, bringing attention to the challenges faced by early career researchers across the world. Increasing funding and improving research culture will help ensure we can attract and retain people and this work will help identify how to prioritise and deliver those improvements."



DR ROSA SANCHO

HEAD OF RESEARCH, ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH UK

"Early Career Researchers (ECRs) play significant roles in delivering the projects that we fund. They are central to creating a rich and diverse research culture and connecting the dementia research field through the networks they form. It is critical that we listen to the needs of ECRs and support career pathways that can be challenging and vulnerable to loss of talent. Our vision of a world without dementia is only possible through nurturing talented and dedicated ECRs to become future leaders."

Leader Comments



MALÚ GÁMEZ TANSEY

PROFESSOR OF NEUROSCIENCE AND NEUROLOGY,
UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA

"As a female scientist of color, I see my responsibility as a leader who has a voice to give early-stage researchers an opportunity to share their ideas by speaking at conferences so they can start making an impact from very early on in their scientific training; and to network and become connected with others who can help them accomplish whatever career outcomes their hearts desire. To make this happen, I work with allies who believe in the importance of multicultural work and training environments because it is the richness of diverse backgrounds and life experiences that will lead us to solve the most challenging problems facing science this century."



GILL LIVINGSTONE

PROFESSOR OF PSYCHIATRY OF OLDER PEOPLE, UNIVERSITY
COLLEGE LONDON

"Currently, I find that many of the most brilliant and creative people are choosing a career in dementia research. The funding and job uncertainty means they often have to change their path, so that we will make less progress. This makes no sense for people with dementia, their families and the wider economy. It is imperative that governments, universities and charities act on this now."



SIR JACKIE STEWART OBE

FOUNDER AND CHAIRMAN RACE AGAINST DEMENTIA

"I firmly believe that the best way to beat dementia will be by attracting and retaining fresh new minds into the field of dementia research. We need them to challenge the existing ways in which research is carried out and to encourage researchers to think outside the box. We must do everything we can to support these early career researchers - by ensuring their well-being, providing different types of training as well as financial support and allowing them enough time to focus on their research. We need to strive for change, to improve the environment for our researchers as well as working hard, as a research community, to provide more funding to beat this devastating disease."

Leader Comments



DR NATASHA KRISHNADAS

RESEARCH FELLOW, FLOREY DEPARTMENT OF NEUROSCIENCES & MENTAL HEALTH, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

"Dementia research can be challenging, but very rewarding. From the perspective of an early career researcher, this comprehensive survey clearly highlights that while early career researchers are often highly motivated and passionate about our work, there remain practical barriers that impact on our ability to stay working in this field, that affect our research productivity, and personal wellbeing. Addressing these factors is vital in order to support and retain future generations of dementia researchers."



PAULO CARAMELLI

PROFESSOR OF NEUROLOGY, FEDERAL UNIVERSITY OF MINAS GERAIS

"Early-career researchers play a fundamental role in the advancement of science and this also applies to the field of dementia research. However, students and young investigators face many challenges in their activities, including project funding, job availability, salaries, balance between work and personal life, and pressure to generate original/impactful data. Cultural and linguistic differences represent additional barriers for many individuals. In this sense, the survey conducted by the University College London and the ISTAART PIA to Elevate Early Career Researchers constitutes a timely and great initiative to understand the needs of these colleagues and might contribute to develop support programs for their activities, aiming at short- and long-term benefits to improve their lifework."



DR RICHARD OAKLEY

ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH, ALZHEIMER'S SOCIETY

"These survey results reiterate what we already know – the commitment and passion of early career researchers are key in changing the lives of people affected by dementia. However, we need to acknowledge and address the challenges and barriers they face in building a career in dementia research. This study shows much more needs to be done to improve equality, diversity and inclusion and provide a more secure funding environment to support the next generation of dementia research leaders. Alzheimer's Society provides vital training, support and funding for early career researchers to ensure those changes happen, along with calling for the Government to follow through on its dementia moonshot promise."

Appendix - response count

Note - the survey included logic which resulted in features that change survey behaviour, appearance and content based the answers participants give. As a result, not every respondent needed to answer every question. In addition, respondents were only mandated to respond to a small number of questions that influenced the logic, all other questions were non-mandatory and could be skipped.

This appendix provides the detail on the number of actual responses for each question asked.

Appendix 1 - response count

Question	Number of responses
Q1. I have read and understood the information provided and are happy to proceed.	584
Q2. What is your current position / title / training level?	546
Q3. Do you currently work in the field of dementia research?	546
Q4. Which of the following fields most align with your work? (select all that apply)	546
Q5. In which of the following areas would you find further training useful? (select all that apply)	451
Q6. How would you prefer to receive support / training? Please rate the following in order of preference	404
Q7. Considering the research culture in the country where you work, what changes would you like to see implemented?	220
Q8. What is your age?	442
Q9. What is your nationality?	428
Q10. Are you treated or perceived to be a racial minority or person of color where you currently live?	442
Q11. Do you consider yourself to hold an identity that is underrepresented?	442
Q12. How would you describe your gender?	442
Q13. What is your sexual orientation?	442
Q14. Do you have a disability or learning difficulty?	442
Q15. Do you have any dependents under the age of 18?	442
Q16. Are you a primary caregiver?	442
Q17. Are you the main or sole income earner in your household?	442
Q18. What is the highest level of education achieved by any of your parents / guardians?	442
Q19. Would you consider yourself to be a 'first generation' student?	441
Q20. Which of the following social media platforms do you use for research / work / study related purposes?	442
Q21. What do you use social media for?	440
Q22. Which country are you currently studying / working in?	435
Q23. State / Province	317
Q24. Have you ever relocated to a different country for your studies / work?	435
Q25. What do you think are the most significant challenges in moving internationally for work / study?	417
Q26. How is your current position funded?	419
Q27. How would you categorise your primary place of work / study?	384
Q28. How long is your current contract?	371
Q29. How much time do you have left on your current contract?	369
Q30. How many organisations do you work for / have a contract with?	376
Q31. How many job / position applications did you send to get the position you currently hold?	376
Q33. How happy are you in your current role?	373
Q34. In your research setting, how much time (%) do you spend doing each of the following?	347
Q35. Do you feel you spend an appropriate amount of time engaged in each activity you noted on the previous question?	356
Q36. How would you describe the management style of your current or most recent supervisor / manager?	375
Q37. How does your supervisor / manager's management style suit you?	375
Q38. How frequently do (or did) you meet one-on-one with your current or most recent supervisor / manager?	374
Q39. What do you believe to be the most significant barriers to career progression?	376
Q40. How do you feel about the following statement "The short-term nature of research contracts and funding is a barrier to making advancements and discoveries in dementia research"	374
Q41. Are you thinking of leaving dementia research?	375
Q42. Have you been offered Science Communications Training at your current or previous place or work?	375
Q43. Overall, do you think dementia research is sufficiently funded?	322
Q44. How satisfied are you with the current research funding in your home country?	321
Q45. Do you consider you have sufficient resources for carrying out your research project?	320
Q46. How many applications did you make before receiving your current funding / grant?	319
Q47. How many different funders contribute to the costs of your work / salary?	312
Q48. How many applications have you made so far?	116
Q49. How long have you been looking for a position?	115
Q50. Have employers offered to provide feedback on unsuccessful applications without you needing to ask?	115

Appendix 1 - response count

Question	Number of responses
Q51. When approaching the end of your contract / funding, were you offered support from your employer / institution to find your next position?	116
Q52. What support would be useful in helping find your next position?	37
Q53. What inspired you to work in the field of dementia research? Please indicate how important the following factors were in your decision	362
Q54. Of the options above, which was the single most important factor?	342
Q55. What do you think about dementia research as a career?	357
Q56. Why did you leave academic dementia research? (select all that apply)	40
Q57. Where do you work now?	38
Q58. What would it take to bring you back to academic dementia research?	39
Q59. Does your current position still relate to dementia research?	39
Q60. We would like to hear your thoughts about your current position	39
Q61. In your opinion, what are the biggest challenges for early career researchers to stay in academic dementia research?	344
Q62. Do you receive any of the following work / study related benefits?	341
Q63. Have you ever experienced any of the following? Imposter syndrome, Mental Health issues, Financial problems	350
Q64. As an Early Career Researcher have you ever personally experienced discrimination or prejudice due to: a physical or learning disability (ableism); your age (ageism); your sexual orientation (homophobia); your race (racism); your gender (sexism) or your religion / faith? In the context of academia / your professional life	350
Q65. Recognising that you may or may not have been affected, do you personally feel that the issues mentioned above are getting better or worse? In the context of academia / your professional life	341
Q66. What changes / interventions do you think have had the biggest impact on combating the different forms of discrimination listed above?	144
Q67. What changes would you like to see to address these forms of prejudice / discrimination?	140
Q68. What have you found to be the most helpful in managing your Imposter Syndrome?	247
Q69. How well do you feel you are managing your Imposter Syndrome?	245
Q70. How helpful was your employer / institution in dealing with this challenge?	244
Q71. How has your Imposter Syndrome affected you?	235
Q72. Do you have additional comments on this issue, that would help inform future guidance that we may provide to institutions and research funders?	46
Q73. Please indicate if any of the following, common Mental Health issues affect you?	186
Q74. What have you found to be the most helpful in dealing with your Mental Health issues?	190
Q75. How well do you feel you are managing with your Mental Health issues?	189
Q76. How helpful was your employer / institution in dealing with this challenge?	189
Q77. How have your problems with Mental Health affected you?	186
Q78. Do you have additional comments on this issue, that would help inform future guidance that we may provide to institutions and research funders?	29
Q79. Please indicate if any of the following, Financial Problems have affected you.	125
Q80. How well do you feel you are coping with your Financial Problems?	126
Q81. Did you seek advice / support from any of the following, with your financial difficulties?	121
Q82. Please indicate if you have used any of the following short / long-term solutions to help improve your financial problems	124
Q83. If you raised this with your employer / institution. How helpful were they in addressing it?	121
Q84. How have your experience of Financial Problems affected you?	121
Q85. If you would like to add anything that you think should be considered for inclusion in guidance to address Financial Problems in research careers, aimed at research funders / research institutions, let us know here.	30
Q86. In what way have you experienced ableism?	17
Q87. If you raised this with your employer / institution. How helpful were they in addressing it?	17
Q88. How has your experience of ableism affected you?	16
Q89. Do you have additional comments on this issue, that would help inform future guidance that we may provide to institutions and research funders?	3
Q90. In what way have you experienced ageism?	80
Q91. If you raised this with your employer / institution. How helpful were they in addressing it?	72
Q92. How has your experience of ageism affected you?	80

Appendix 1 - response count

Question	Number of responses
Q93. Do you have additional comments on this issue, that would help inform future guidance that we may provide to institutions and research funders?	14
Q94. In what way have you experienced homophobia?	18
Q95. If you raised this with your employer / institution. How helpful were they in addressing it?	18
Q96. How has your experience of homophobia affected you?	17
Q97. Do you have additional comments on this issue, that would help inform future guidance that we may provide to institutions and research funders?	3
Q98. Generally, in what way have you experienced racism in your research career?	37
Q99. Specifically, in what way have you experienced racism?	37
Q100. If you raised this with your employer / institution. How helpful were they in addressing it?	37
Q101. How has your experience of racism affected you?	37
Q102. Do you have additional comments on this issue, that would help inform future guidance that we may provide to institutions and research funders?	2
Q103. In what way have you experienced discrimination or prejudice based on your religion or faith?	18
Q104. If you raised this with your employer / institution. How helpful were they in addressing it?	19
Q105. How has your experience of religious or faith-based discrimination / prejudice affected you?	17
Q106. Do you have additional comments on this issue, that would help inform future guidance that we may provide to institutions and research funders?	1
Q107. In what way have you experienced sexism?	121
Q108. If you raised this with your employer / institution. How helpful were they in addressing it?	118
Q109. How has your experience of sexism affected you?	112
Q110. Do you have additional comments on this issue, that would help inform future guidance that we may provide to institutions and research funders?	9
Q111. How would you rate your employer / institution on the following issues?	323
Q112. Have you had access to any training (through your institution or externally) on how to collaborate with other researchers?	325
Q113. How prepared do you feel to engage in a research collaboration with someone who isn't a co-worker?	325
Q114. How frequent are international collaborations in the research group you are a part of (or spent majority of your training)?	325
Q115. Generally speaking, how connected do you feel with the global research community?	326
Q116. Are you currently involved in teaching, in a classroom or workplace setting?	240
Q117. Please describe your teaching activities:	136
Q118. How confident do you feel in your teaching activities?	137
Q119. Have you had any formal institutional support or training to prepare you for teaching activities?	137
Q120. Do you feel your organisation / supervisor should have provided more training / support to enable you to deliver your teaching?	137
Q121. If you would like to add anything that you think should be considered for inclusion in guidance to improve support for teaching, aimed at research funders / research institutions, let us know here.	16
Q122. Do you participate in scientific conferences?	333
Q123. How many conferences do you attend per year?	296
Q124. How many times per year do you present at conferences?	295
Q125. Does your supervisor / manager support you attending conference even when you are not presenting?	293
Q126. What were the most important training resources for producing posters and presentations?	291
Q127. If a conference charged an entrance fee. How would the cost of your conference attendance usually funded?	295
Q128. Would you attend more conferences if they were free / cost was not a factor?	296
Q129. What factors influence your ability to attend conferences?	293
Q130. How much do you think is reasonable for someone of your career stage, to pay for the following?	243
Q131. Have you attended more conferences or fewer conferences since the COVID-19 pandemic began?	292
Q132. Recognising that there are multiple benefits that come from conference attendance. However, what do you see as the main reason to attend?	290
Q133. Of the following options, please select and rank in order of most beneficial elements of conference attendance?	282

Appendix 1 - response count

Question	Number of responses
Q134. If you could only attend one conference this year, which would it be and why?	141
Q135. How pressured do you feel to publish results of your research?	323
Q136. What are the main problems you face in publishing your research?	314
Q137. Do you feel it is getting easier or harder to publish your research?	323
Q138. How do you usually pay for publication fees?	316
Q139. How many PubMed indexed publications do you currently have?	321
Q140. Have you had any formal training at your institution on scientific writing for publication?	322
Q142. To the best of your knowledge, have any of your publications ever influenced policy, practice or (if clinical / interventional), been implemented?	321
Q143. How do you feel about the growing number of pre-prints?	318
Q144. Do you feel the current peer review publication system is effective, and the best way to undertake the task of ensuring rigor and trust in science publishing?	320
Q145. Have you undertaken a peer review for a journal?	319
Q146. If you answered Yes, to the previous question, did you receive any training on how to undertake a Peer Review, prior to doing the work?	294
Q147. What changes, if any, would you make to the current peer review system?	104
Q148. Have your research projects been delayed as a result of the pandemic?	322
Q149. Did you have to rethink or change your research project as a result of the pandemic?	323
Q150. Did you need to secure an extension or additional funding to enable you to finish your current research?	321
Q151. Has the pandemic impacted your career progression, due to a lack of jobs / funding?	320
Q152. Do you feel your institution / employer has effectively supported you during the pandemic?	323
Q153. Which country did you move from?	135
Q154. Which country did you move to most recently?	139
Q155. How many times have you moved to a different country for you work / studies?	150
Q156. What were your reasons for moving?	151
Q157. How important do you consider it to have international research experience?	146
Q158. Did you find a position before you moved?	148
Q159. How easy was the process of moving to the country you mentioned earlier?	147
Q160. If you found your new position in advance of the move. How helpful was your new employer / institution in supporting you during the move?	131
Q161. If you found your new position in advance of the move. Did you receive financial support from your employer / institution?	134



PIA TO ELEVATE EARLY CAREER
RESEARCHERS (PEERS)
PROFESSIONAL INTEREST AREA

