The National Postdoc Survey

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Who are postdocs?

Here defined as classical postdoctoral research fellows and scholars, as well as others beyond doctoral work, including research associate/assistant professors and research professionals, and any others working in scientific training and/or temporary positions, post-PhD or equivalent.

- Dozens of different titles, classifications
- Recent growth among non-traditional fields
Postdoc policy recommendations from previous reports include (increasing):

• Proportion of postdocs funded by fellowships
• Salary
• Benefits (e.g. health coverage, savings plans)
• Professional development opportunities
• Structured oversight (IDPs, etc.)
How do we know...

- when such goals have been reached
- what policy changes are effective

given the lack of comprehensive data regarding postdoctoral experiences?
The National Postdoc Survey

Conceived and designed by postdocs, to address critical need for data on postdoctoral experiences.

• Survey length of 15 min
• Anonymous responses
• Secure REDCap database
• UChicago IRB Protocol 15-1724
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Questions based on prior longitudinal surveys conducted by postdocs at the University of Chicago.

Topics include:

• Basic demographics
• Role of mentoring relationships
• Professional development
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For dissemination, a database was assembled and updated to provide current contact information for putative institutional representatives of postdocs.

- 500 distinct sets of putative representatives of postdocs were contacted by email

- Survey link disseminated by representatives via email

- Survey website and social media used to provide additional information
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Survey data was collected from Feb. to Sept. 2016.

- 7600 U.S. postdoc respondents
- 350 academic and non-academic research institutions
- 50 U.S. states represented in response data
- 3100 respondents were from the 46 institutions that participated in the 2005 Sigma Xi survey
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Main findings include:

• Mentoring matters!

• Postdoc career choice also tied to many other factors

• Gender differences in postdoctoral experiences

• Postdoc salaries remain low relative to recommendations, particularly significant for those in large cities, when adjusted for cost of living
Mentor Support for Postdoc Career Plan

NPS Preliminary findings (under Peer Review)
Postdoc Primary Career Plans

NPS Preliminary findings (under Peer Review)
Postdoc Primary Career Plans

Looking for Permanent Position

Primary Career Plans Have Changed

NPS Preliminary findings (under Peer Review)
Postdoc Satisfaction with Mentoring Received

Frequency of Project Meetings with Mentor

NPS Preliminary findings (under Peer Review)
Postdoc Satisfaction with Mentoring Received

Received Mentor Training

Looking for Permanent Position

NPS Preliminary findings (under Peer Review)
NPS Preliminary findings (under Peer Review)
Differences in Salary by Gender by Year of Ph.D.

NPS Preliminary findings (under Peer Review)
Preliminary findings (under Peer Review)
The National Postdoc Survey Research Team

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