

The National Postdoc Survey



NPS



Sean C. McConnell, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Scholar, University of Chicago
National Academies of Science
Next Generation Researchers Initiative
San Francisco, CA, Sept. 14th, 2017

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

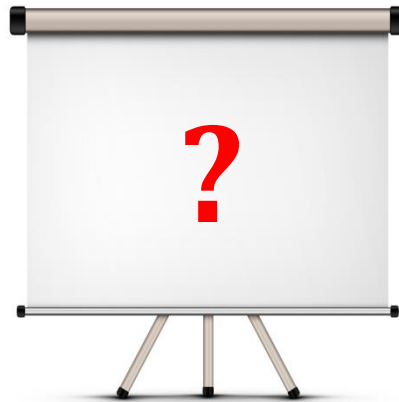
Postdoc policy recommendations from previous reports include (increasing):

- 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

The National Postdoc Survey

Questions based on prior longitudinal surveys conducted by postdocs at the University of Chicago.

Topics include:

- Basic demographics
- Role of mentoring relationships
- Professional development

The National Postdoc Survey

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

The National Postdoc Survey

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

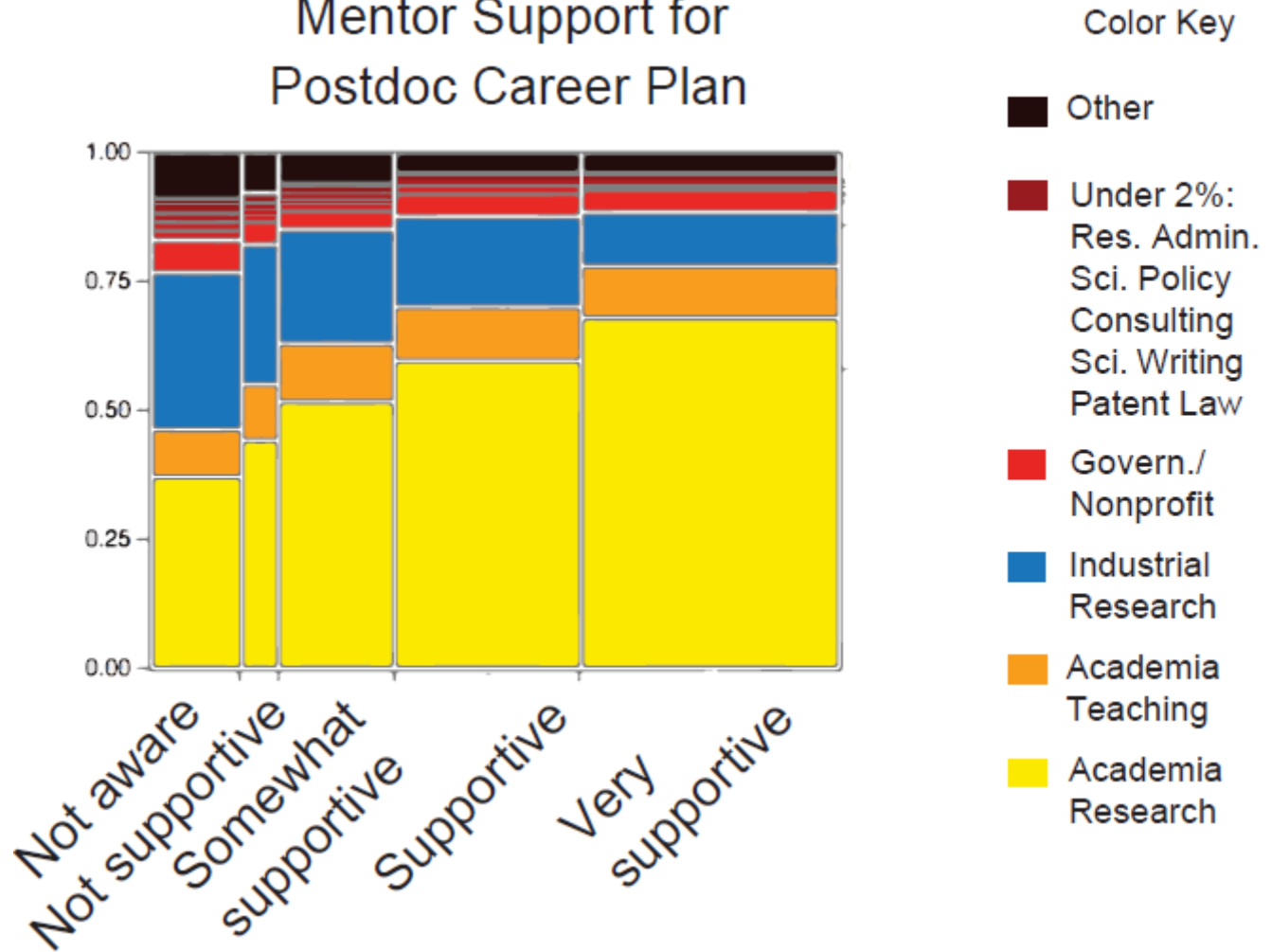
The National Postdoc Survey

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

Postdoc Primary Career Plans

Mentor Support for Postdoc Career Plan

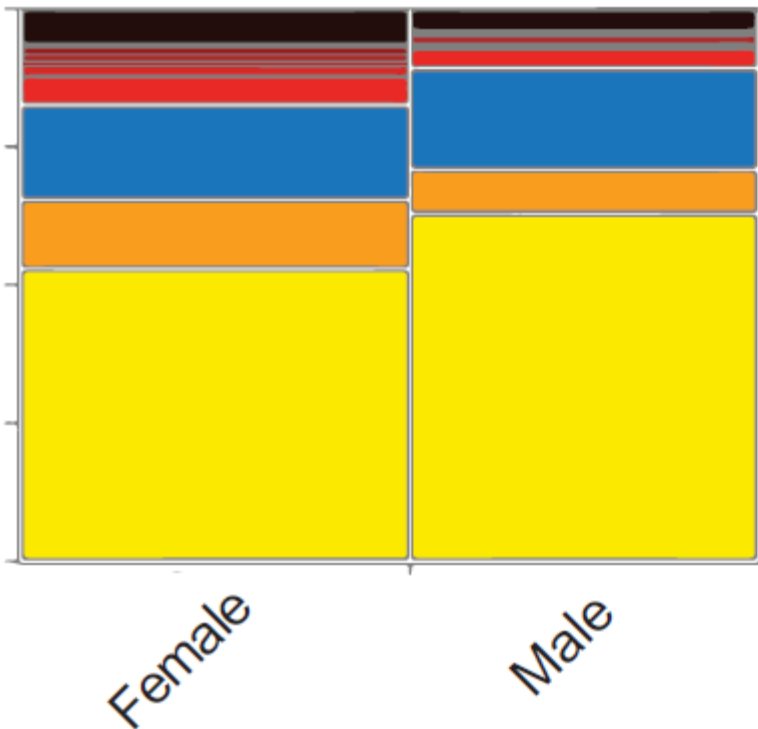


Postdoc Primary Career Plans

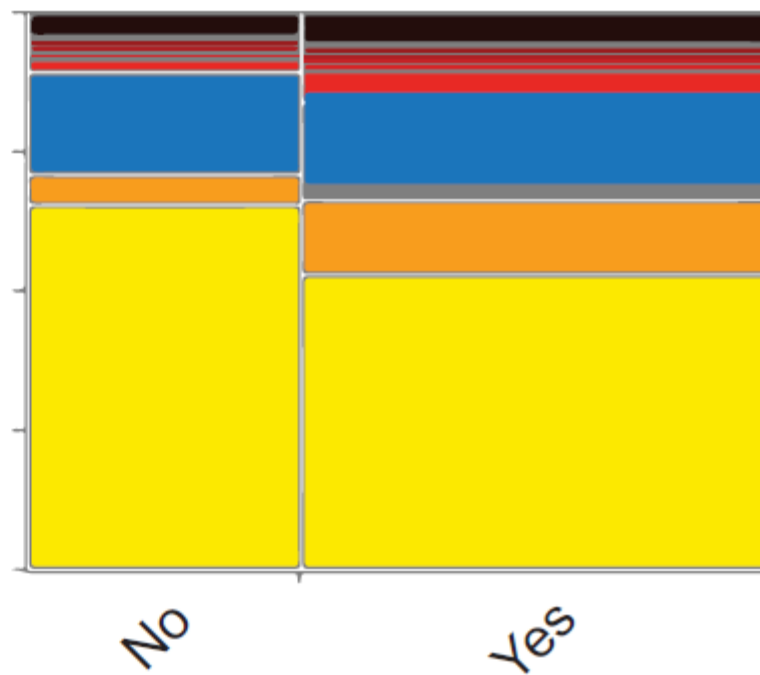
Color Key

- Other
- Under 2%:
Res. Admin.
Sci. Policy
Consulting
Sci. Writing
Patent Law
- Govern./
Nonprofit
- Industrial
Research
- Academia
Teaching
- Academia
Research

Postdoc Gender



Obtained PhD in US



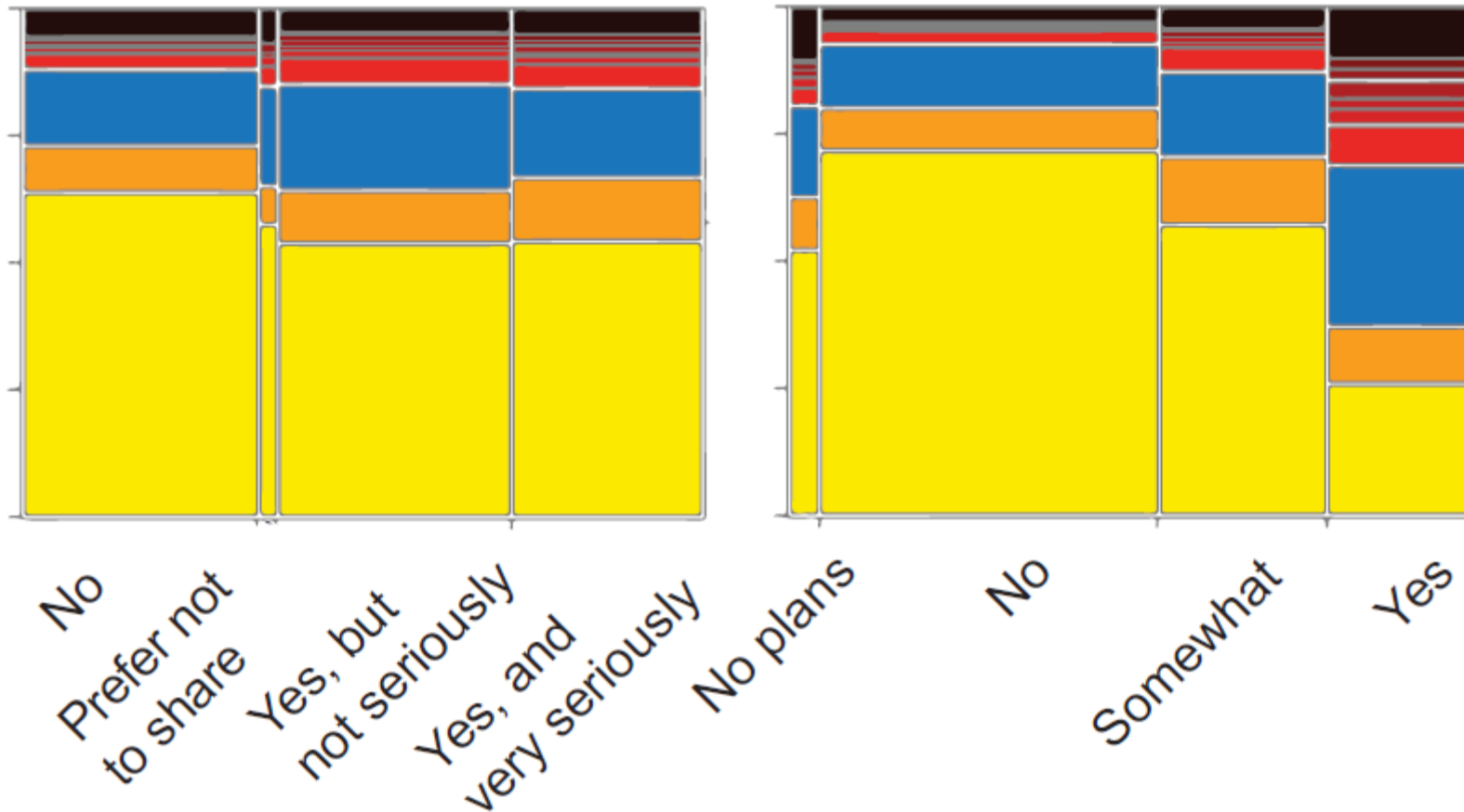
Postdoc Primary Career Plans

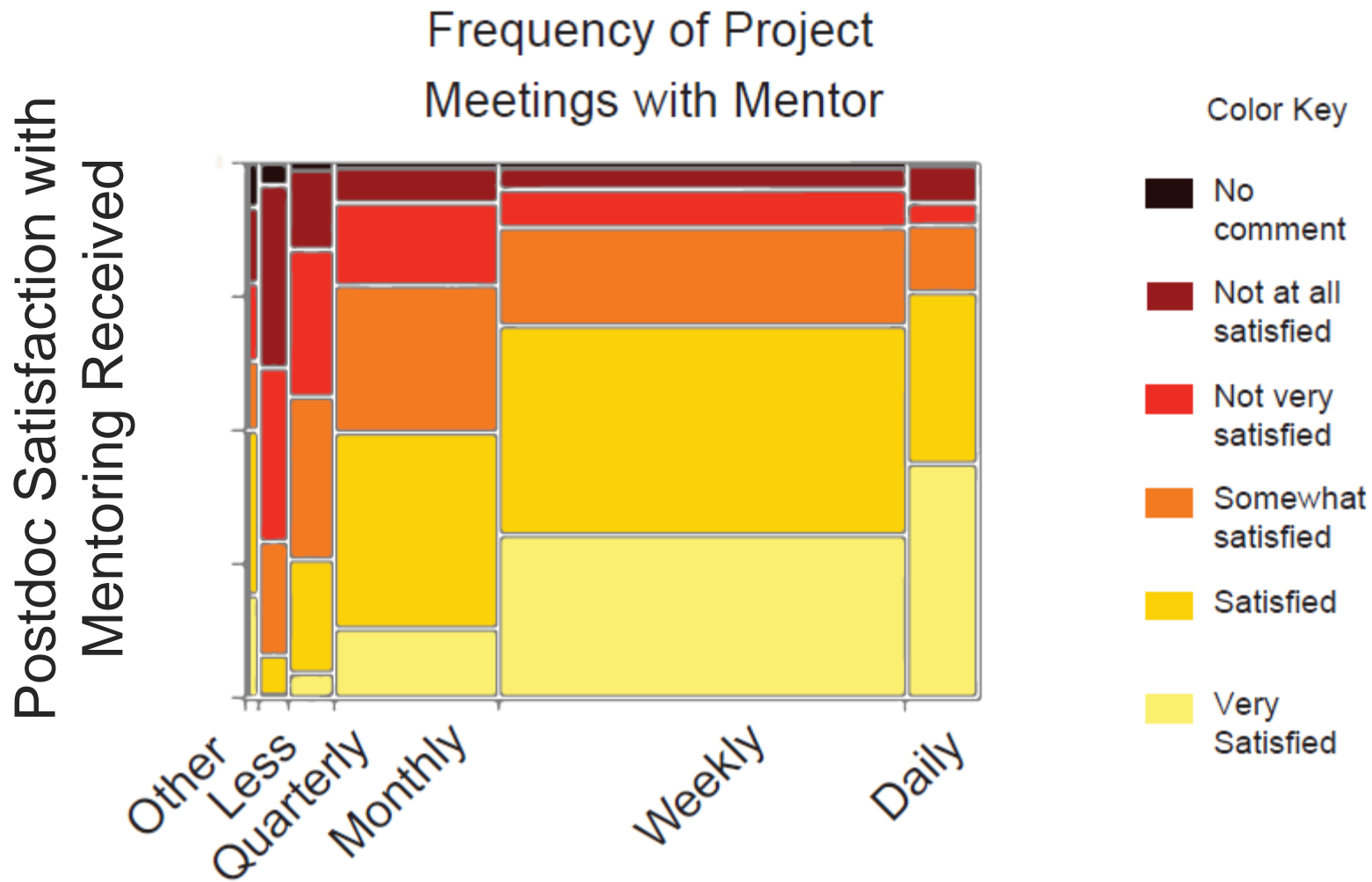
Looking for Permanent Position

Primary Career Plans Have Changed

Color Key

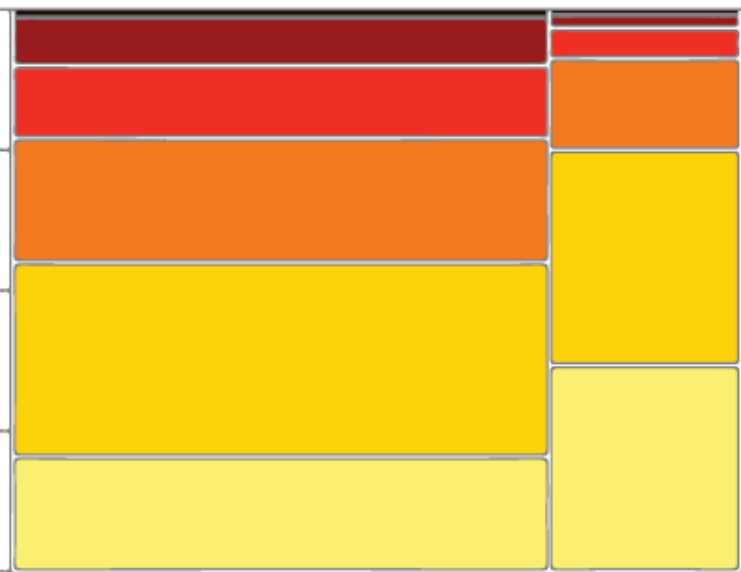
- Other
- Under 2%:
Res. Admin.
Sci. Policy
Consulting
Sci. Writing
Patent Law
- Govern./
Nonprofit
- Industrial
Research
- Academia
Teaching
- Academia
Research





Postdoc Satisfaction with Mentoring Received

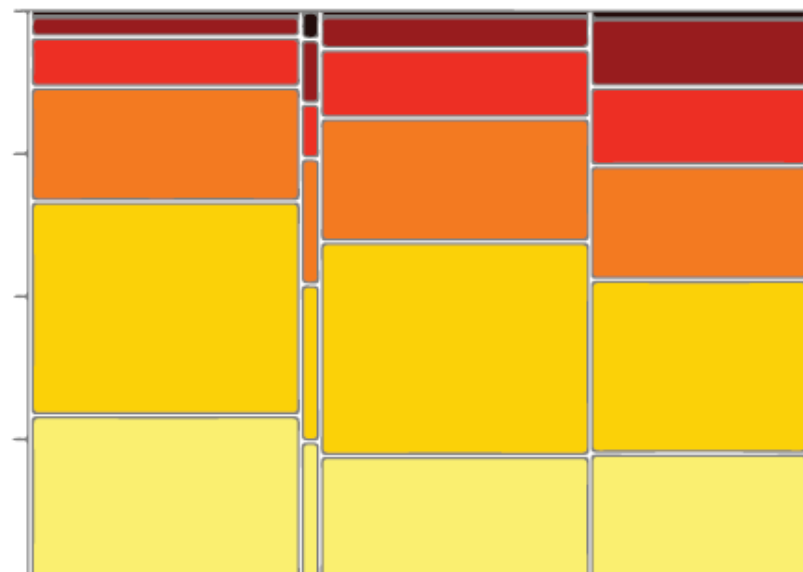
Received Mentor Training



No

Yes

Looking for Permanent Position



No

Prefer not to say

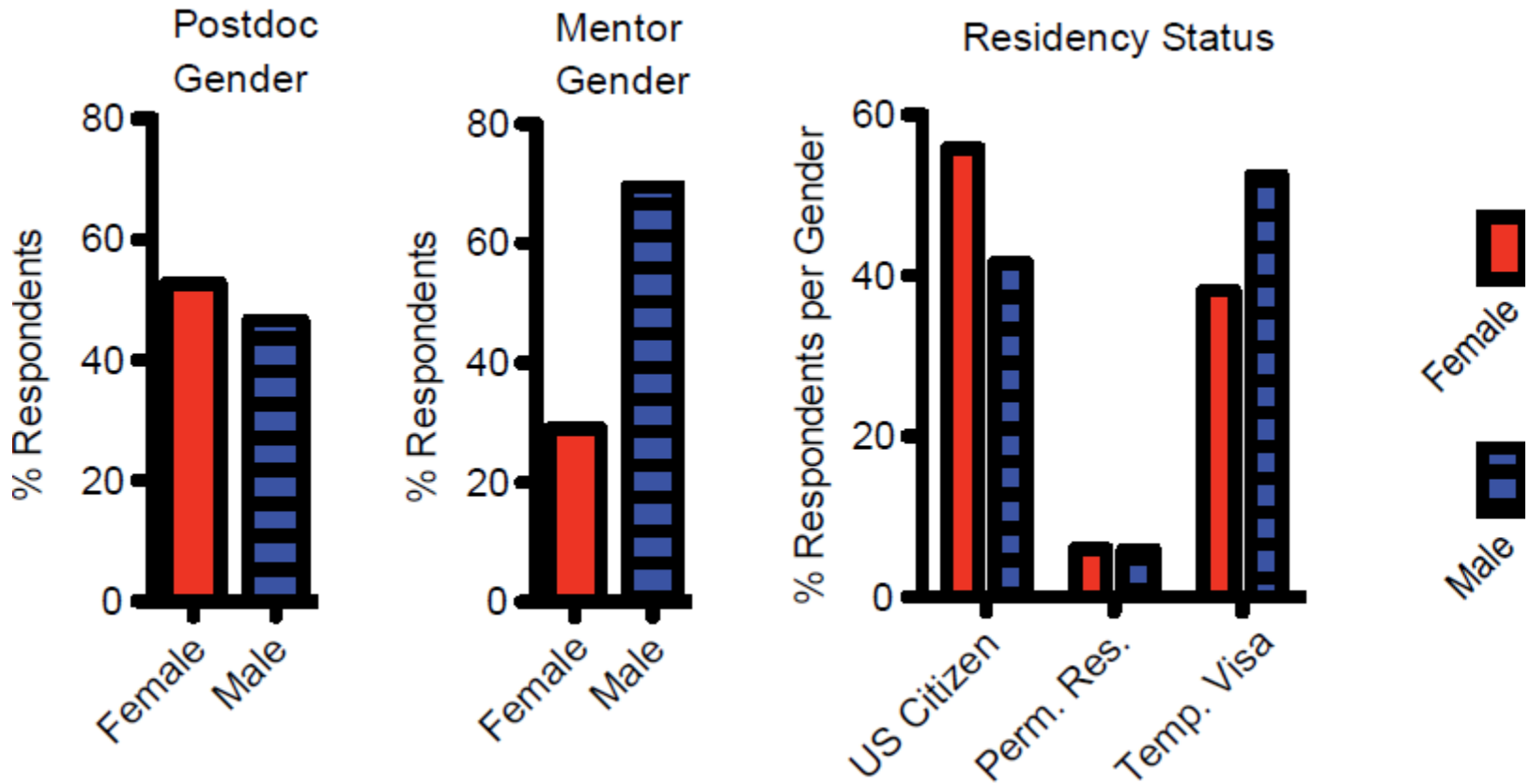
Yes, but not seriously

Yes, and very seriously

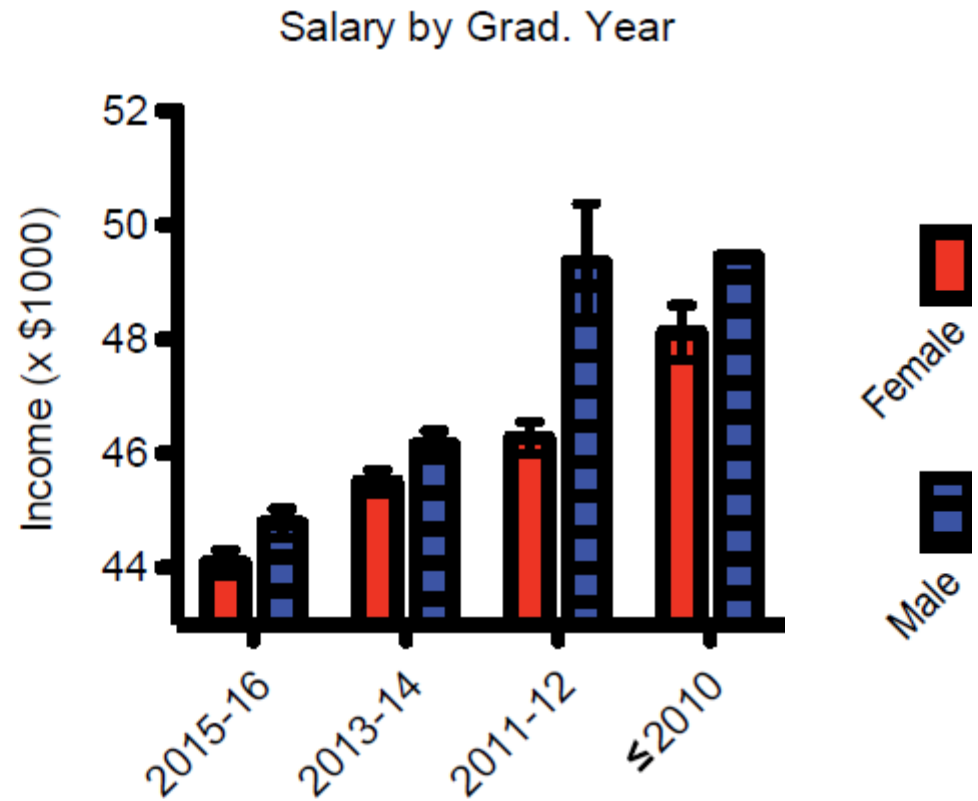
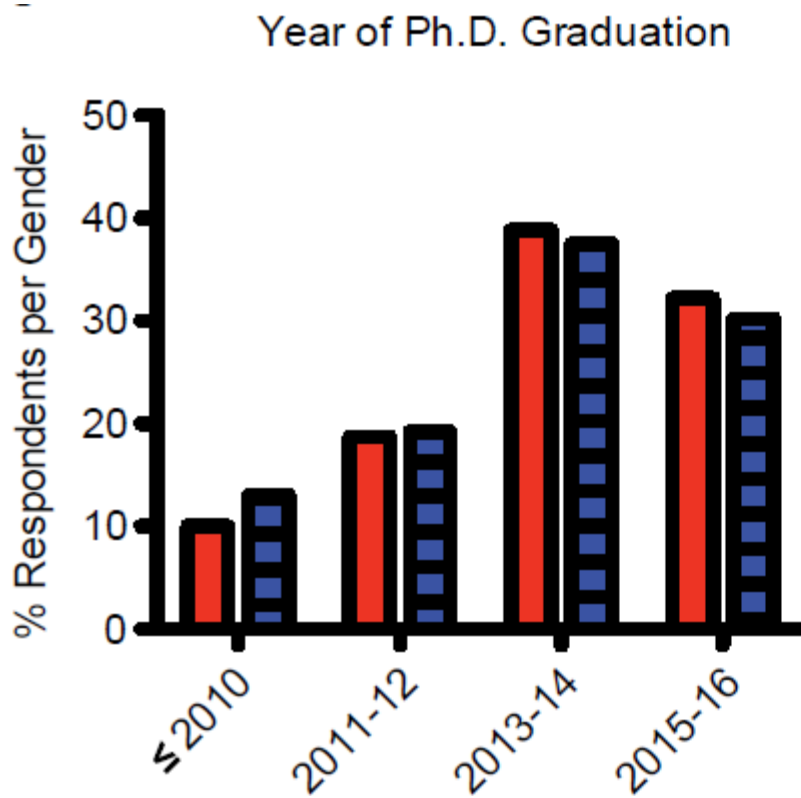
Color Key

- No comment
- Not at all satisfied
- Not very satisfied
- Somewhat satisfied
- Satisfied
- Very Satisfied

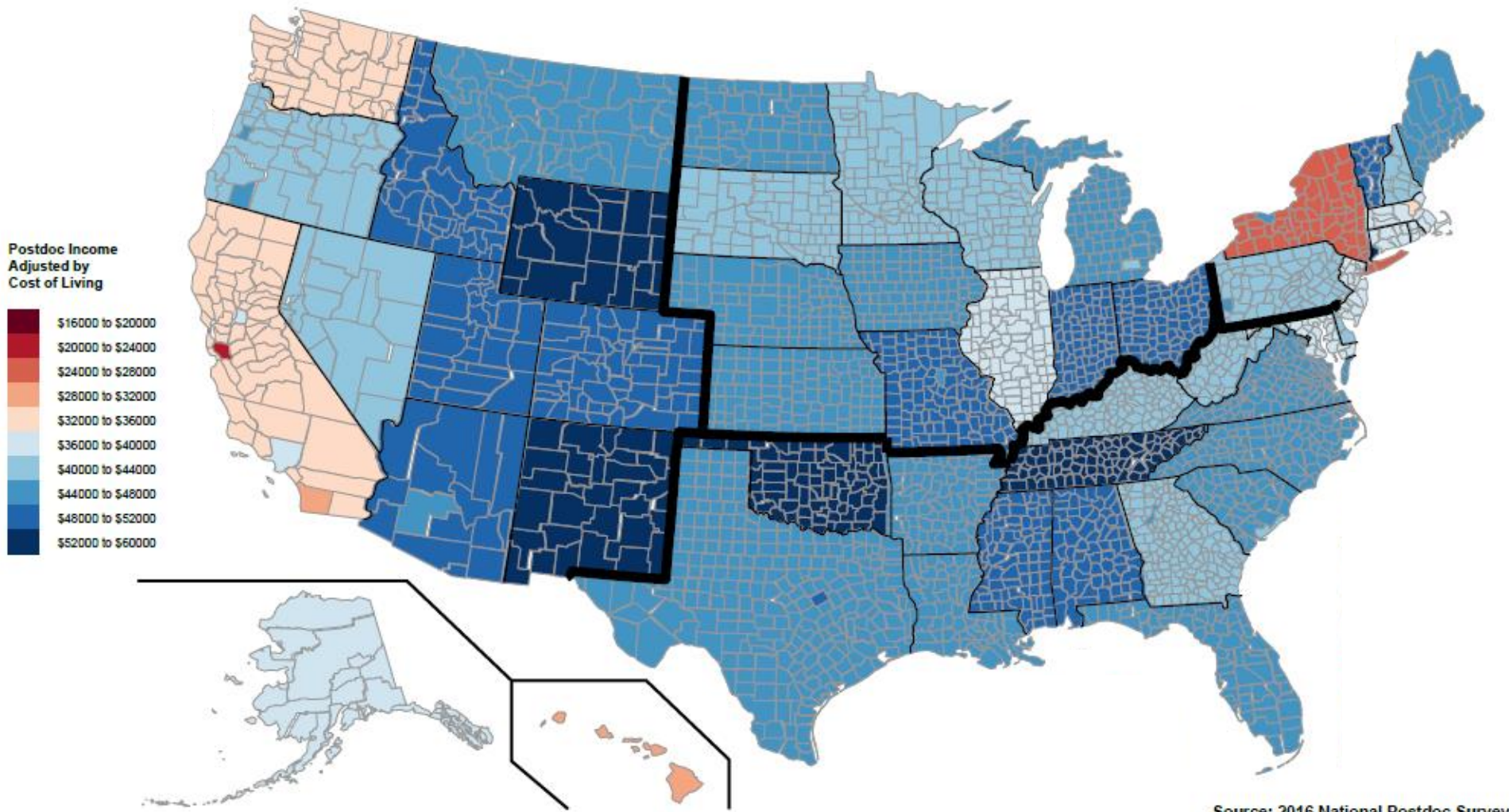
Postdoc Gender and Residency Status



Differences in Salary by Gender by Year of Ph.D.



Map of Postdoc Incomes, Cost of Living Adjusted



Preliminary findings (under Peer Review)

The National Postdoc Survey Research Team

Sean C. McConnell, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Scholar, University of Chicago

Erica L. Westerman, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, University of Arkansas

Joseph F. Pierre, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, University of Tennessee Health Sciences

Erin J. Heckler, Ph.D.
Postdoctoral Affairs Administrator, University of Chicago

Nancy B. Schwartz, Ph.D.
Professor and Dean of Postdoctoral Affairs, University of Chicago

We gratefully acknowledge assistance from Heather Titley, Ph.D.,
Giorgio Grasselli, Ph.D., and Laurie Risner, Ph.D., from UChicago

