



**2023 Research
Culture Survey
Report 1
Quantitative &
Qualitative
Findings
All Participants**

November 2024



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Executive Summary

The 2023 UCD Research Culture Survey was open from 6 November until 1 December 2023. All members of the research community were invited to participate including Graduate Research Students, Postdoctoral Research Associates, Research Scientists/Engineers, Research Fellows, Faculty, Technical Officers, and Research Managers and Administrators. The response rate declined from the previous survey in 2021 in correlation with the shorter window during which the Survey was open. While overall response rates were lower, including from Graduate Research Students, there was an increased response rate from Postdoctoral Research Associates. More than half of the responses came from Faculty.

Compared to the 2021 survey, more respondents now agreed that research culture at UCD has improved in the last two years. Although this is a positive trend, the percentage of participants who indicated that they do not know if research culture has improved remained the same, suggesting that awareness-raising continues to be a priority.

As a response to feedback received after the 2021 survey, new sets of questions focused on the research roles of the respondents and their perceptions about their careers in research. Results from these questions indicate that Early Career Researchers, defined as Graduate Research Students and Postdoctoral Research Associates, felt that the expectations placed on them were reasonable. Both Faculty and Professional Staff, defined as Technical Officers and Research Managers and Administrators, were less positive in their responses to this question. Furthermore, Professional Staff, overall, had the lowest satisfaction with the recognition provided for their work. Early Career Researchers were very positive regarding the mentor support available to them but less aware than faculty of opportunities to become involved in research activities beyond their school. In free-text responses, Early Career Researchers were more likely to identify research collaboration as a priority than Faculty whose top priority was workload and advancing research assessment. For Professional Staff, key themes were acknowledgement and professional development.

The 2023 Survey introduced another new set of questions about researcher wellbeing. Overwhelmingly, respondents agreed that careers in research can be fulfilling and that wellbeing is central to an effective research environment. While some participants indicated that isolation and loneliness were part of their experience of research, more than half agreed that colleagues at UCD are supportive of one another. Further research on researcher wellbeing at UCD will be conducted as part of the Wellcome Trust Institutional Funding for Research Culture project at UCD, and results will be published in due course.

Methodology

Our Survey, modelled with permission on one conducted at the University of Glasgow in 2019, comprised thirty-seven questions in four sections (see [UCD Research Culture Survey 2023 Questions](#)). It was designed to be finished in not more than fifteen minutes. SurveyMonkey software was used to design and administer this survey. The 2023 Survey extended the 2021 version by adding two new sections. One new section dedicated to researcher role used logic to direct respondents to customised questions. The other new section focused on researcher wellbeing.

Part 1	Part 2	Part 3	Part 4
Culture	Research Roles	Wellbeing	Demographics
8 questions	10 to 12 questions varying by role	11 questions	8 questions
Repeated from the 2021 UCD Research Culture Survey Ultimately based on University of Glasgow Research Culture Survey run in 2019 and 2021	Focused on the research roles of the respondents and their perceptions about their careers in research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wellcome Research Culture Survey in 2019. General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12) Generalized Anxiety Disorder Questionnaire (GAD-7) Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-8) World Health Organization Wellbeing Index (WHO-5) 	Modeled on UCD Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Survey pertaining to the school, research institute, administrative unit, gender, nationality and ethnicity

Part One repeated eight questions from the 2021 UCD Research Culture Survey. Two questions solicited responses on a Likert scale. The first asked how respondents perceived University support for programmes and positions that feed into positive research culture. The second gauged the individual experience of positive research culture in terms of support from colleagues and infrastructure and recourse to advice on best practice. The next set of questions inquired into the awareness of twelve elements of best practice in research, collecting multiple-choice responses that allowed the individual to select as many as appropriate. Respondents were asked if they knew where to go for information and support on these topics, and in the second question, they were asked which topics they would like to know more about. The final questions in this section focused on specifics of research culture at UCD, asking if research culture had improved at UCD in the last two years, and seeking qualitative feedback on practical solutions to enhance a positive research culture at the University in free-text responses.

Part Two introduced a new set of questions to the Survey. These focused on the research roles of the respondents and their perceptions about their careers in research. This set of questions was added in response to feedback from the previous survey in 2021, which indicated that some participants felt that the questions were not relevant to their role. It was anticipated that these customised questions would return more precise responses from each cohort. The number of questions for each role varied from ten to twelve. First, participants were asked to identify their role

at UCD. Choices were Graduate Research Student, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Research Scientist/Engineer, Research Fellow, Faculty, Technical Officer, and Research Manager and Administrator. From that point on, the questions in this section were tailored to the specific role. Data about full- or part-time work, contract type, and length of service at UCD were collected. Responses were solicited from participants about engagement with their local research community as well as with researchers from other Schools or Colleges, acknowledgement of their contributions, and mentorship. Additional comments were collected through free-text responses.

Part Three focused on wellbeing, soliciting responses to eleven new questions added to the Research Culture Survey in 2023. The first five questions were based on similar ones used in the Wellcome Trust Research Culture Survey in 2019. The next four questions asked participants to consider their experiences of depression, anxiety, stress, wellbeing, loneliness, and isolation using well-validated survey instruments: General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12); Generalized Anxiety Disorder Questionnaire (GAD-7); Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-8); and World Health Organization Wellbeing Index (WHO-5). The final set of questions inquired into their awareness of eleven Wellbeing Services available at UCD, collecting multiple-choice responses that allowed the individual to select as many as appropriate. The first question asked if the respondent knew where to go for information and support on these topics and the second asked which topics they would like to know more about.

Part Four solicited demographic information on a voluntary basis. The Survey was conducted anonymously; no email addresses, IP addresses, or other identifying data were collected. Instead, the final six questions of our Survey requested data pertaining to the school, research institute, administrative unit, and gender of the respondent. Two new questions in the 2023 Survey requested data on nationality and ethnicity. Each question gave the survey-taker the option to decline to answer.

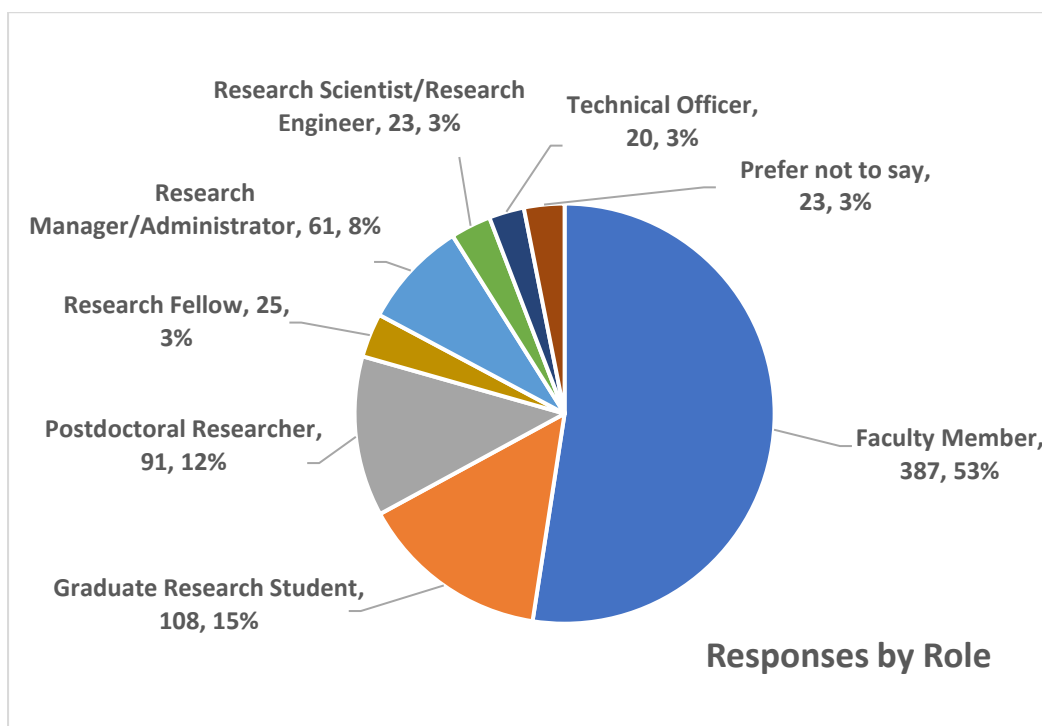
Who participated in the Survey?

Year	Surveys Started	Surveys Completed	% change	Weeks Open	% change
2021		1028		6 weeks	
2023	1081	740	↓28%	4 weeks	↓33%

On 6 November 2023, the second Research Culture Survey at UCD was opened and it ran until 1 December 2023. The Survey period was one third shorter than for the first Survey in 2021 which ran for six weeks. In addition, for the 2023 Survey, we were limited to recruiting survey participation from Graduate Research Students to a period of only two weeks. In total, the 2023 Survey received 740 completed responses.

Role

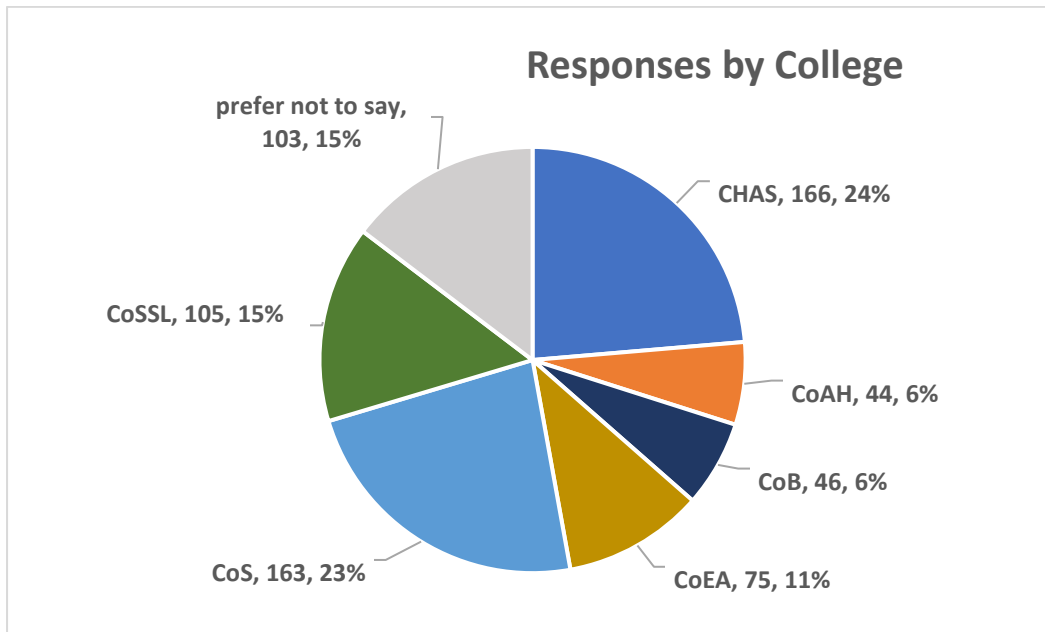
Answered: 738	Skipped: 2
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The Survey welcomed views from all those involved in research at UCD including Faculty, Technical Officers, Postdoctoral Researcher Associates, Research Fellows, Graduate Research Students, and Research Managers and Administrators. The majority of participants were Faculty, constituting 53% of the responses. There was a notable increase in participation by Postdoctoral Research Associates – 79 or 8% of responses in 2021 up to 91 or 12% of responses in 2023. There was a decrease in responses from Graduate Research Students – 286 or 27% of responses in 2021 compared to 108 or 15% of responses in 2023. This can be attributed to the restriction that limited recruiting Survey participation of Graduate Research Students to only two weeks.

College (aggregated from School) and Unit

Answered: 728 | Skipped: 12

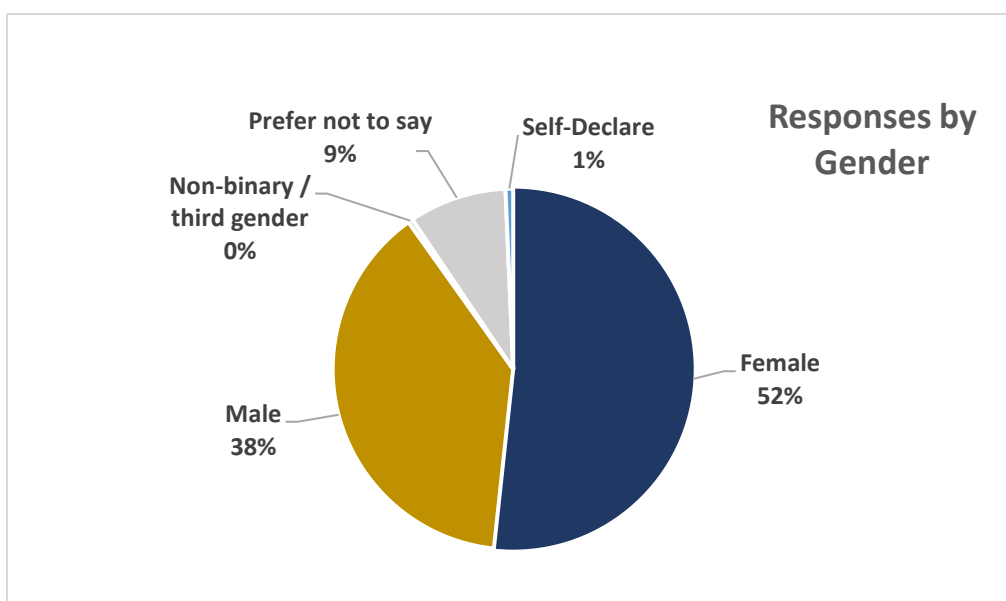


CoAH – College of Arts & Humanities; CoB – College of Business; CoEA – College of Engineering & Architecture; CHAS – College of Health & Agricultural Sciences; CoS – College of Science; CoSSL – College of Social Sciences & Law

Survey responses were received from every college with the highest percentage of responses coming from the two largest colleges, the College of Science at 23% and the College of Health and Agricultural Studies at 24%. The College of Business increased participation from 31 or 3% of responses in 2021 to 46 or 6% of responses in 2023. Participation from the College of Arts and Humanities decreased from 101 or 10% of responses in 2021 to 44 or 6% of responses in 2023.

Gender

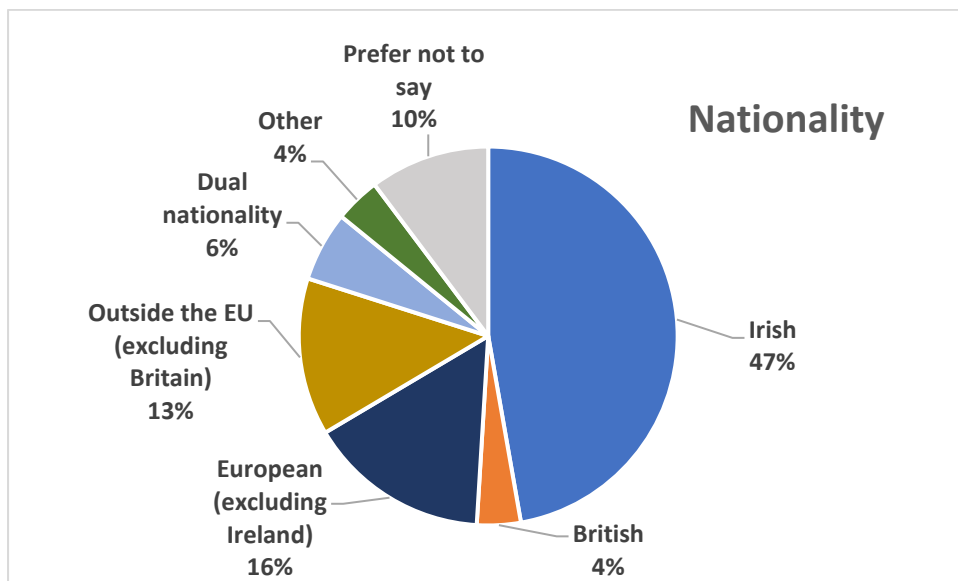
Answered: 726 | Skipped: 14



Responses to the Survey by gender in 2023 remained similar to responses in 2021.

Nationality

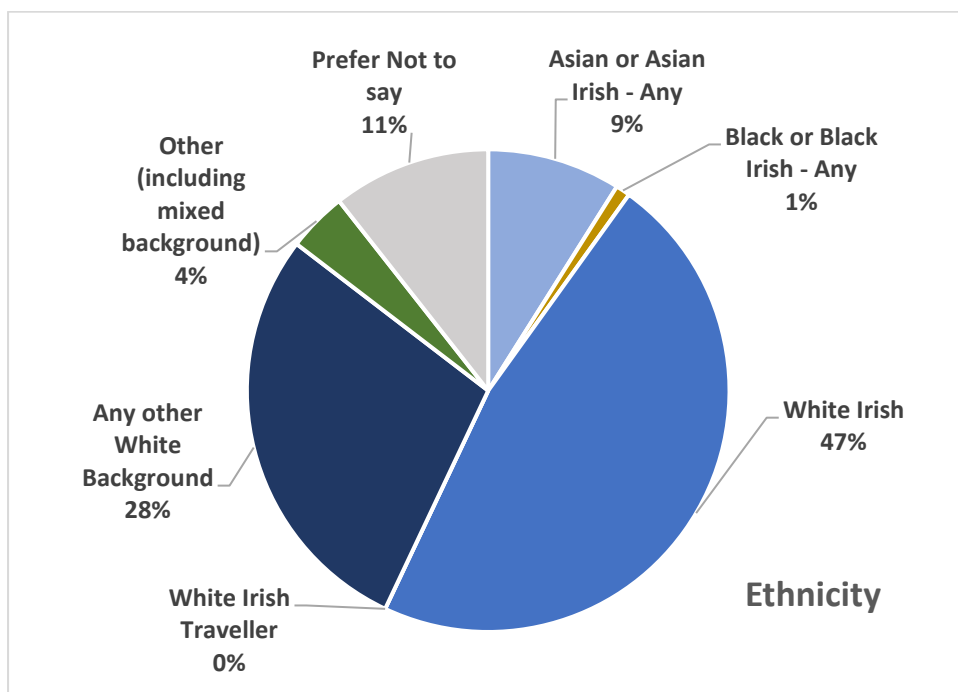
Answered: 722 | Skipped: 18



In 2023 the Survey introduced new demographic questions including nationality. More than two-thirds of respondents indicated Irish or European citizenship – a total of 67%.

Ethnic or Cultural Background

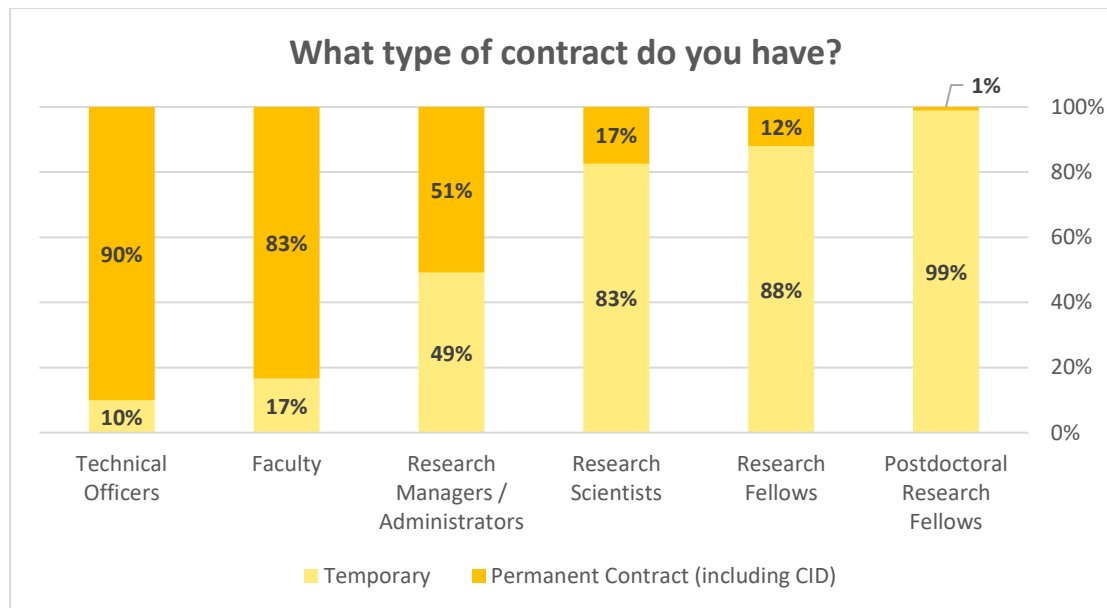
Answered: 726 | Skipped: 14



Another new demographic question introduced in 2023 was about ethnicity. Three-quarters of the respondents identified as White Irish or Any Other White Background.

What type of contract do you have?

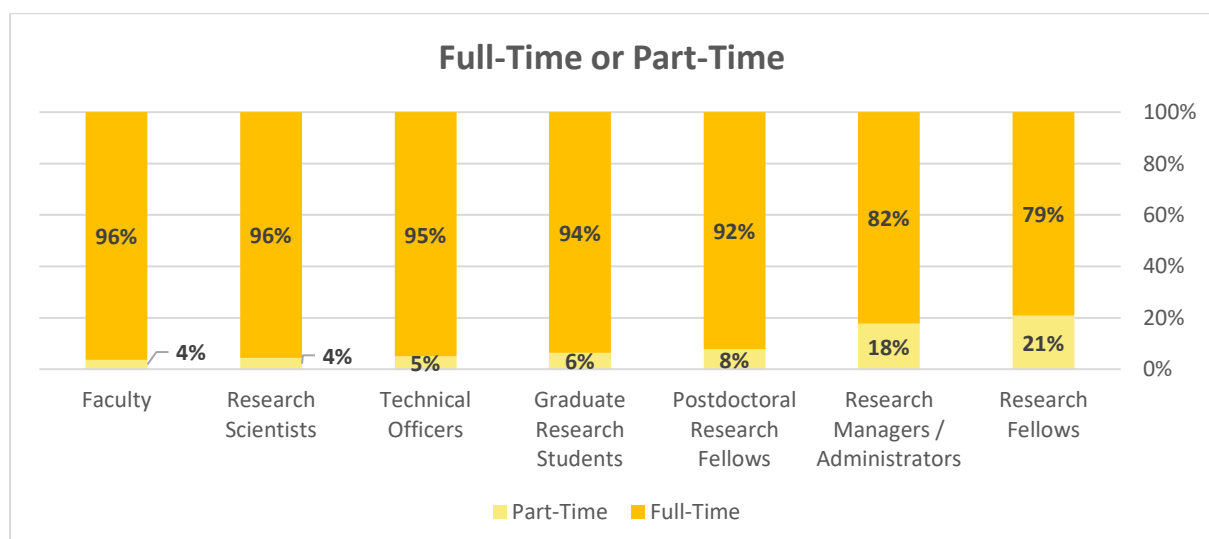
Answered: 604 | Skipped: 136



To gain further insights into the relative employment precarity of respondents, the 2023 Survey introduced a question about contract type – temporary or permanent (Graduate Research Students were not asked this question). The majority of participants who were Technical Officers or Faculty had permanent contracts. Research Managers and Administrators were nearly evenly distributed between the two contract types.

Are you employed Full-Time or Part-Time?

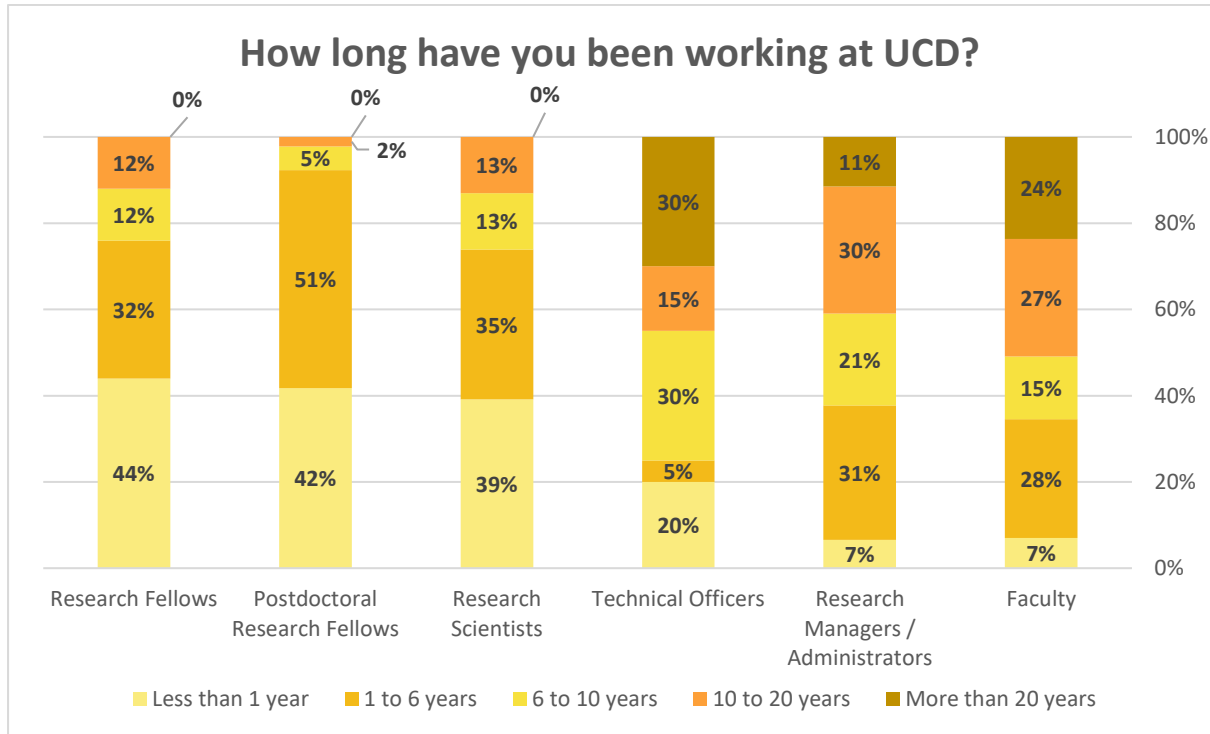
Answered: 714 | Skipped: 26



Another new question to the 2023 Survey asked if participants were employed at UCD Part-Time or Full-Time (Graduate Research Students responses reflect enrolment status). The majority of respondents work Full-Time. Research Managers and Administrators (18%) and Research Fellows (21%) were the most likely to hold Part-Time roles.

How long have you been working at UCD?

Answered: 605 | Skipped: 135



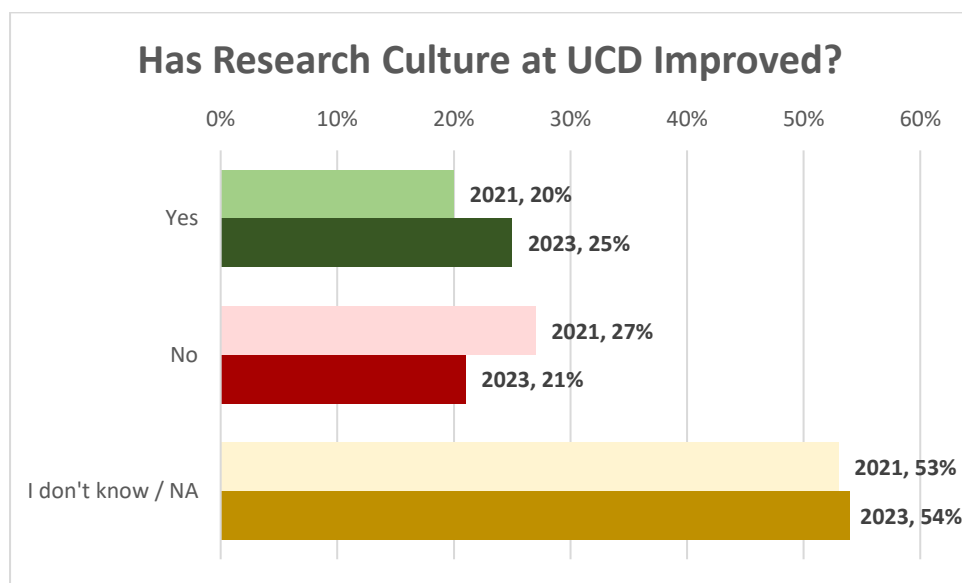
To assist in gauging experience of the research culture at the University, another question was introduced to the 2023 Survey regarding length of service at UCD (Graduate Research Students were not asked this question). Technical Officers who participated in the Survey have the longest service at UCD with 75% of respondents employed for more than six years and 30% for more than 20 years. Two-thirds of the Faculty who participated had been working at UCD more than six years, with 51% at UCD for more than 10 years. The majority of participants who were Research Fellows (76%), Postdoctoral Research Fellows (93%) and Research Scientists (74%) had been at UCD for six years or less.

What did participants say about Research Culture at UCD?

Questions repeated from 2021 Survey

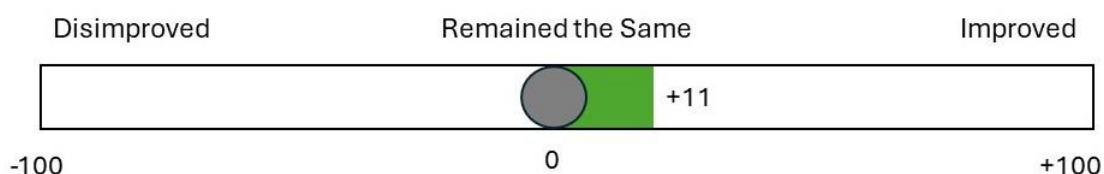
Reflecting on the past two years, do you think that research culture has improved at UCD?

Answered: 738 | Skipped: 2



To what extent has the research culture at UCD improved or declined in the past two years? (slider scale range = -100 to 100)

Answered: 424 | Skipped: 316

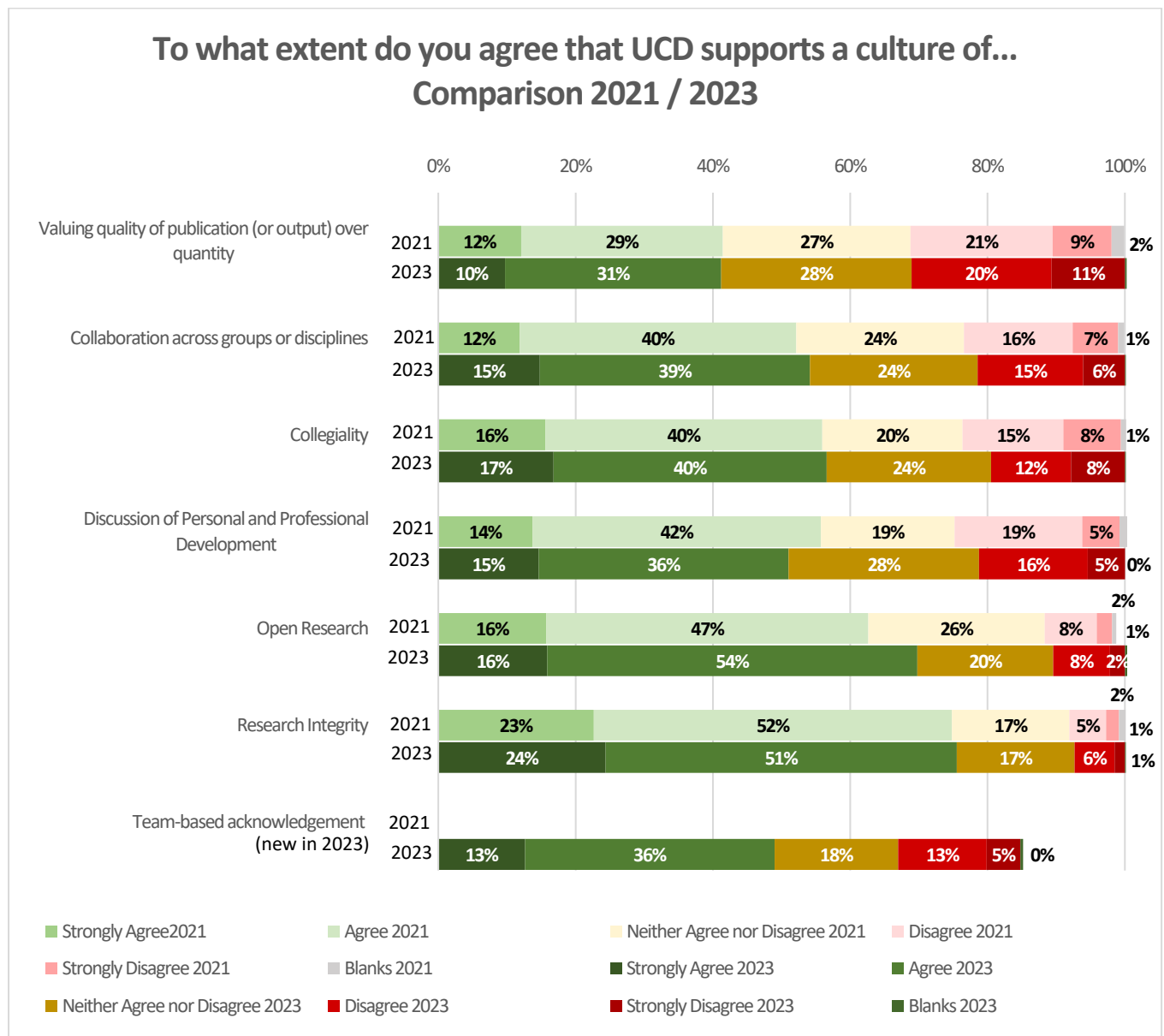


The 2021 Research Culture Survey established a baseline for the perceptions of the research culture at UCD held by the research community. When asked if research culture had improved in the previous two years, a little more than half (53%) responded in 2021 that they did not know. Responses remained the same in 2023 (54%), indicating a continuing need to raise awareness about what research culture means.

Of those who had an opinion in 2021 (47% of respondents), 43% indicated that the culture had improved. In 2023, of those who had an opinion (46% of respondents), 54% felt the culture had improved, an 11% increase in positivity. A new question in 2023 asked participants to indicate the degree of change in the research culture. The average change recorded was an increase of 11%.

To what extent do you agree that UCD supports a culture of...?

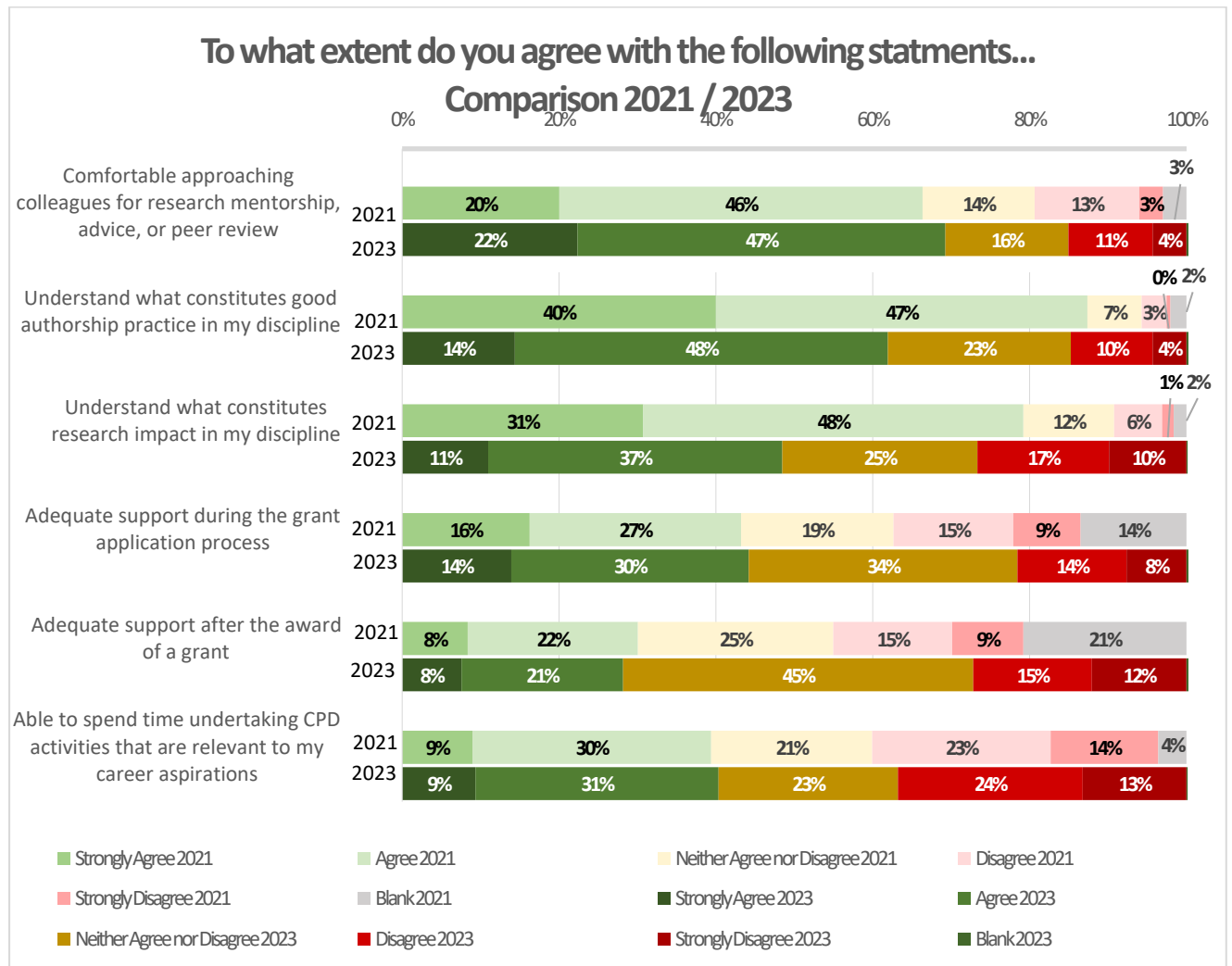
Answered: 740 | Skipped: 0



All of these metrics remained largely unchanged since 2021, with the exception that there was a marginal increase in the perceptions of Open Research in 2023.

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

Answered: 740 | Skipped: 0



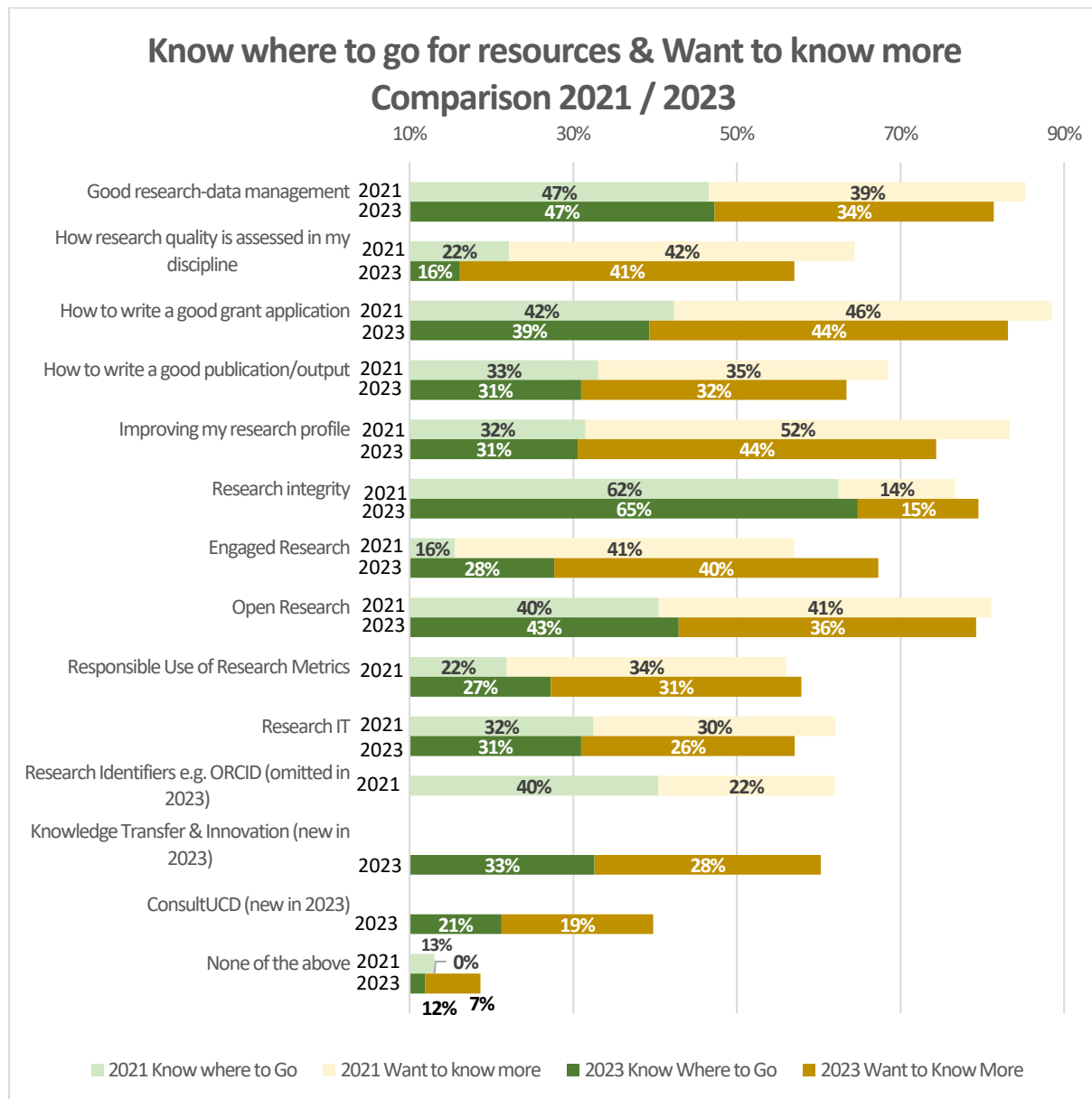
Metrics remained largely the same as they were in 2021 across most categories. Two exceptions were the topics of research impact and authorship practice. In both categories, the responses that strongly agreed that UCD understands what constitutes research impact in their disciplines declined from 31% to 11% and what constitutes good authorship practice in their disciplines declined from 40% to 14%.

I understand where in the University I can go for information or support on the following topics.

Answered: 730	Skipped: 10
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Which of the following areas would you like to know more about?

Answered: 712	Skipped: 28
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Survey participants in 2023 indicated similar levels of knowing where to go for information on topics and/or wanting to know more about them as they did in 2021. One exception was Engaged Research which saw an increase from 16% of Survey participants who knew where to go for information on the topic in 2021 to 28% in 2023. There was a small increase in respondents who know where to go for information about the responsible use of research metrics (RURM) a slight decrease in respondents who know where to go for information on how research quality is assessed in their disciplines.

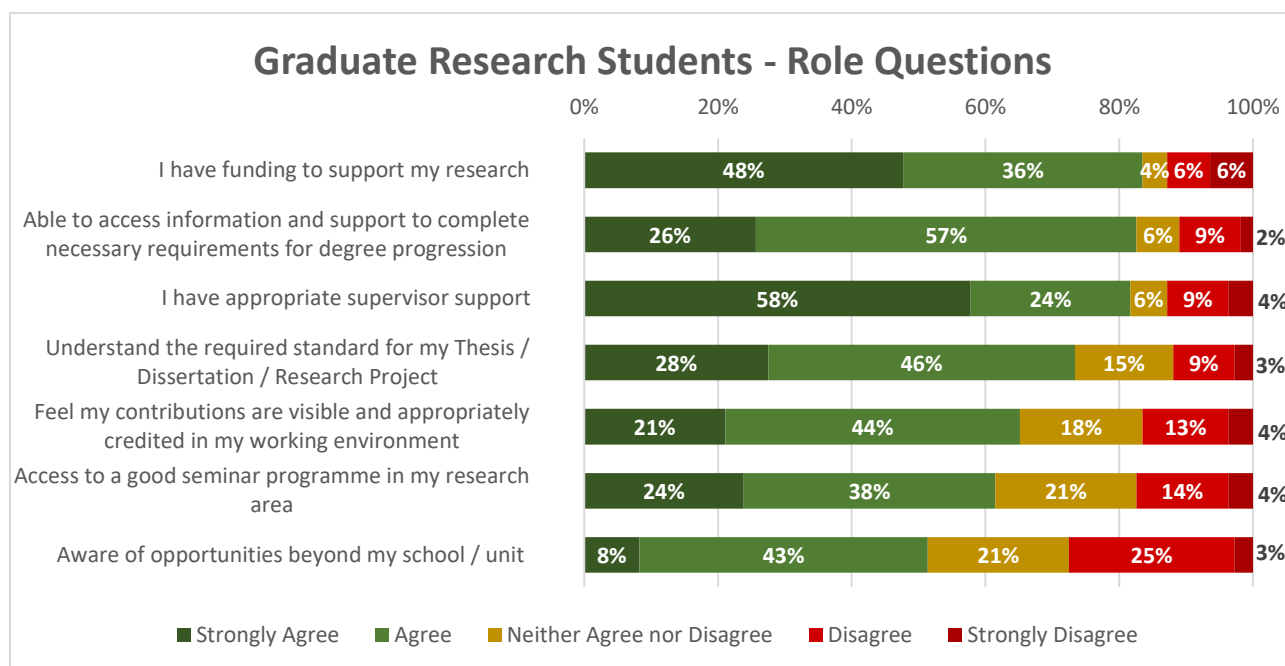
What did participants say about their Roles and Careers?

New Questions in the 2023 Survey

This set of questions was introduced to the Survey in 2023 and focused on the Roles of the respondents and their perceptions about their careers in research. The sets of questions posed for the various cohorts differed, depending on the cohort, as a response to feedback received after the 2021 survey.

Graduate Research Students

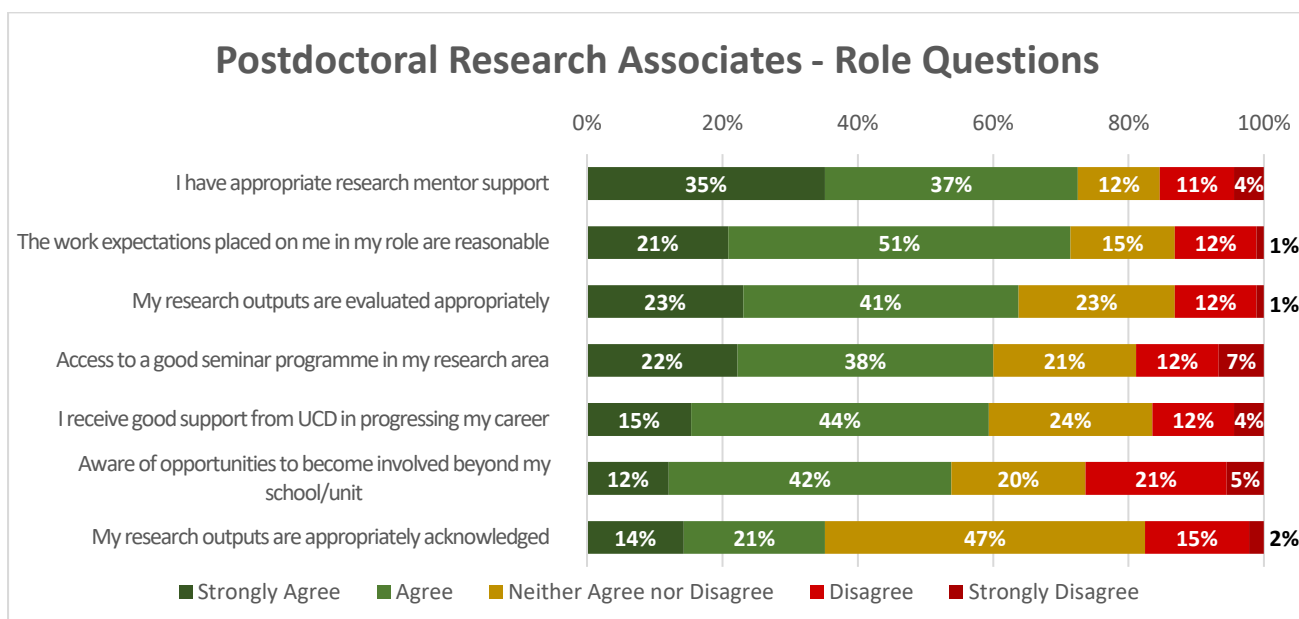
Answered: 108



Graduate Research Students indicated strong positivity around all the topics. Respondents were least positive about opportunities to engage with research outside of their School/Unit.

Postdoctoral Research Associates

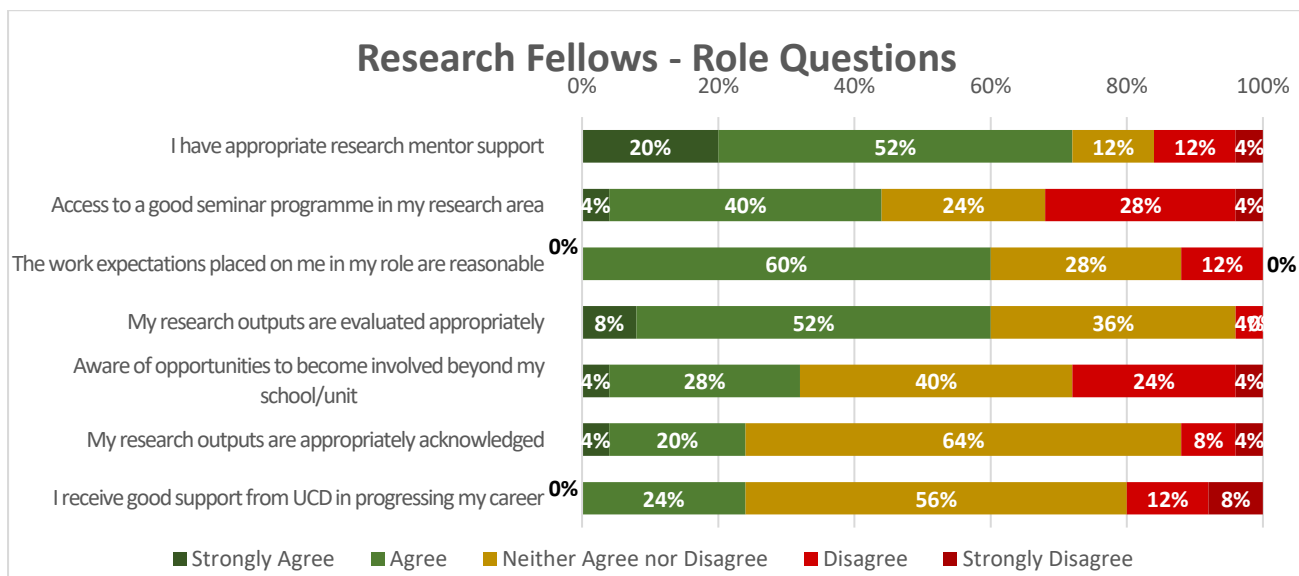
Answered: 91



Postdoctoral Research Associates responses were positive about most topics, particularly regarding mentoring and expectations of their role. Opportunities to engage with research outside of the School and acknowledgement were viewed least positively.

Research Fellows

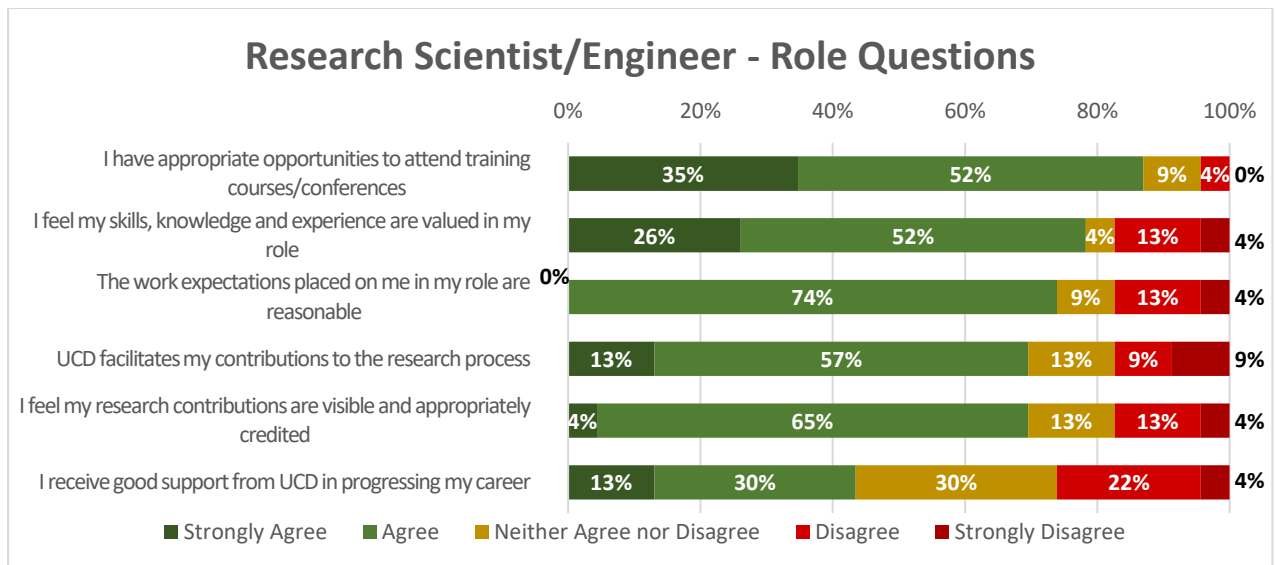
Answered: 25



Research Fellows responded with ambivalence to most questions. They were most positive about mentor supports and least positive about support for career progression.

Research Scientist/Engineer

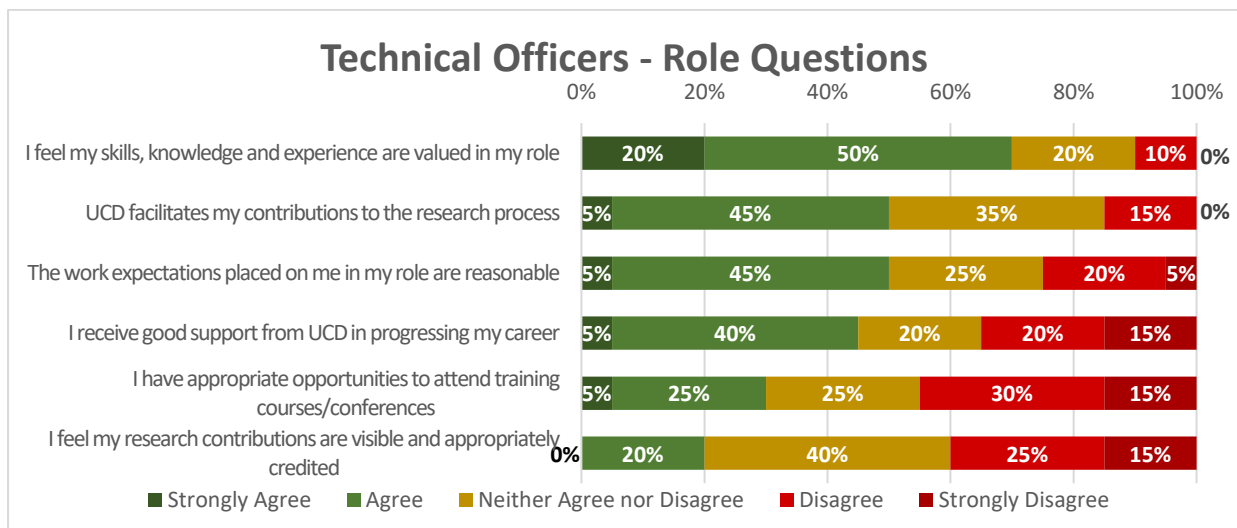
Answered: 23



Research Scientists/ Engineers were strongly positive in their responses to most of the Survey questions about their role. They were least positive about support for progressing their careers.

Technical Officers

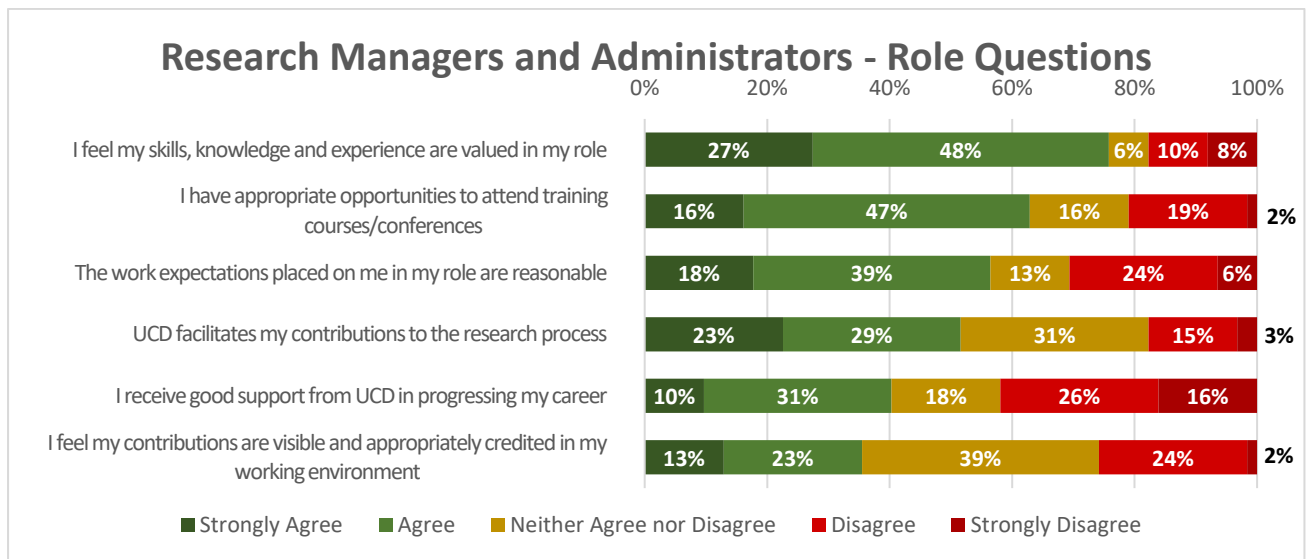
Answered: 20



Technical Officers were most positive about how their skills, knowledge and experience are valued in the workplace. They were least positive about career progression, training opportunities, and acknowledgement of their contributions.

Research Managers and Administrators

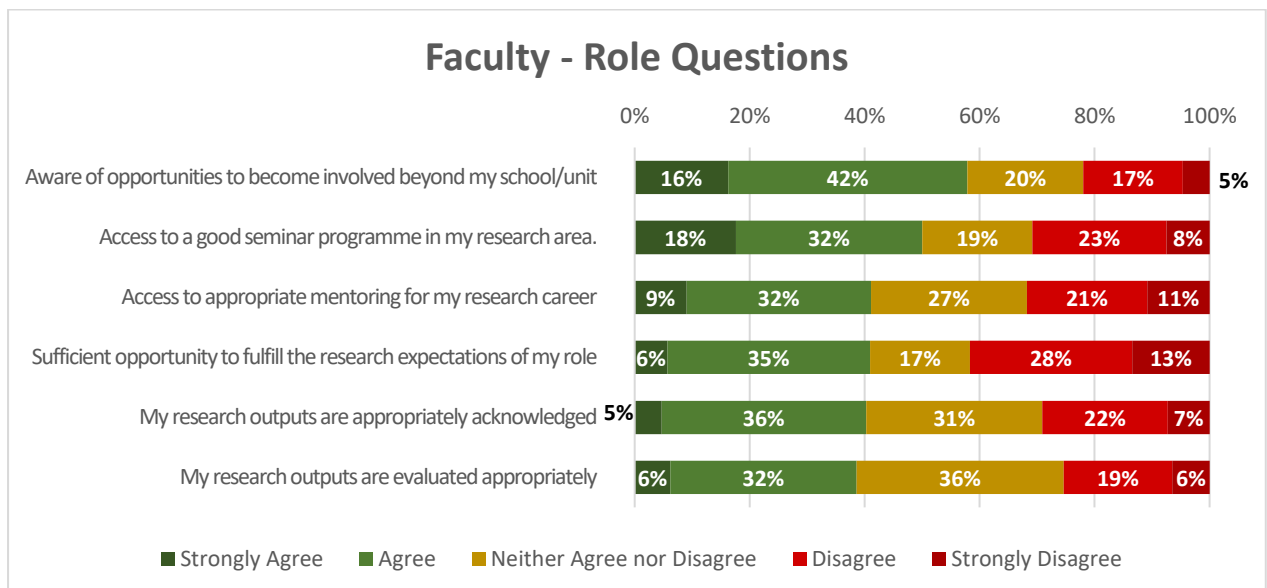
Answered: 61



Like Technical Officers, Research Managers and Administrators were least positive in their responses about career progression and acknowledgement of their contributions. They were also somewhat ambivalent about how UCD facilitates their contributions to the research process.

Faculty

Answered: 387



Faculty responses leaned towards ambivalence or negativity for most of the questions. The most negativity was in response to the question about sufficient opportunity to meet research expectations.

What did participants say about Wellbeing?

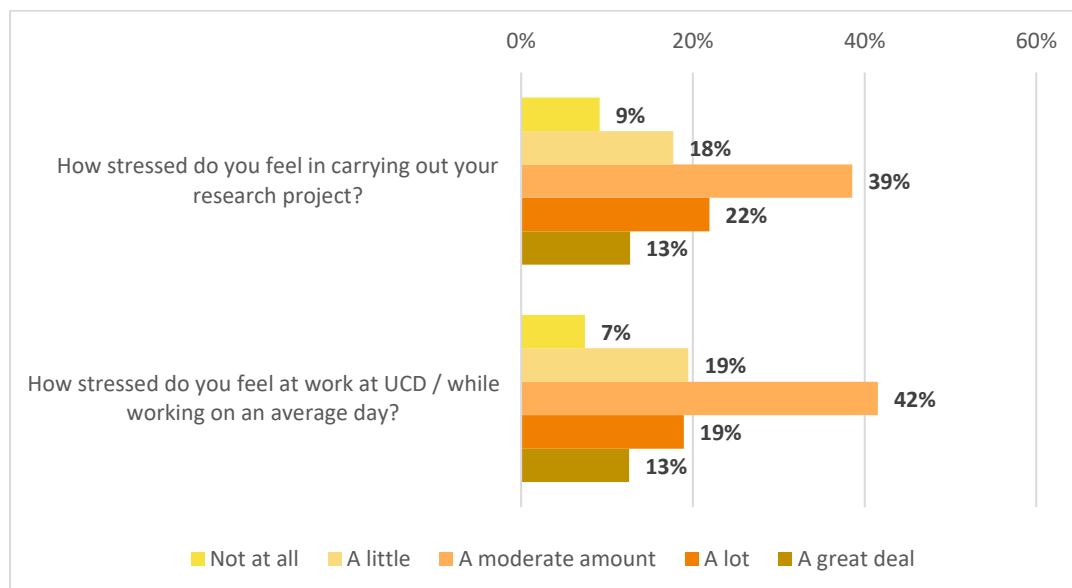
New Questions in the 2023 Survey

This section contains a selection of findings from responses to questions about research community wellbeing. Questions marked (WT) were based on similar ones used in the Wellcome Trust Research Culture Survey in 2019. To facilitate publication of further analysis and research, findings from the General Health Questionnaire (GHQ-12); Generalized Anxiety Disorder Questionnaire (GAD-7); and Patient Health Questionnaire (PHQ-8) are not reported here. The World Health Organization Wellbeing Index (WHO-5), reported below, will also be analysed in more depth in the research publication. In general, there were good response rates for all of the questions in the Wellbeing section of the Survey.

Wellcome Trust Questions

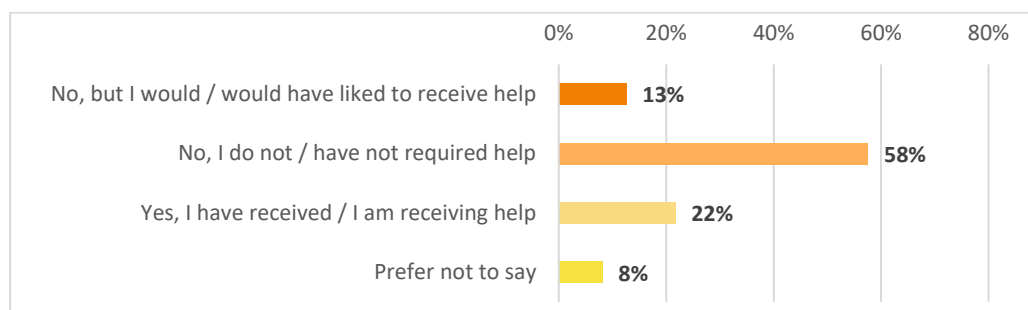
(WT) How stressed do you feel at work at UCD / while working on an average day / carrying out your research project?

Answered: 738	Skipped: 2
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(WT) Have you sought or received professional help for depression and/or anxiety during your research career?

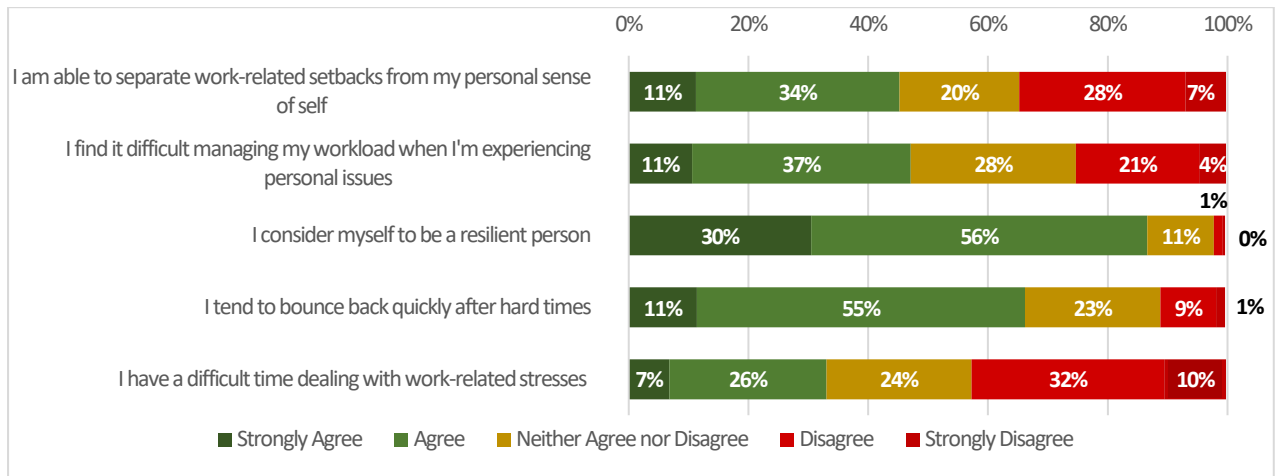
Answered: 738	Skipped: 2
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Most Survey respondents reported a moderate amount stress when working at UCD (42%) or on research projects (39%) and that they do not or have not required professional help for depression and/or anxiety in their research careers (58%).

(WT) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

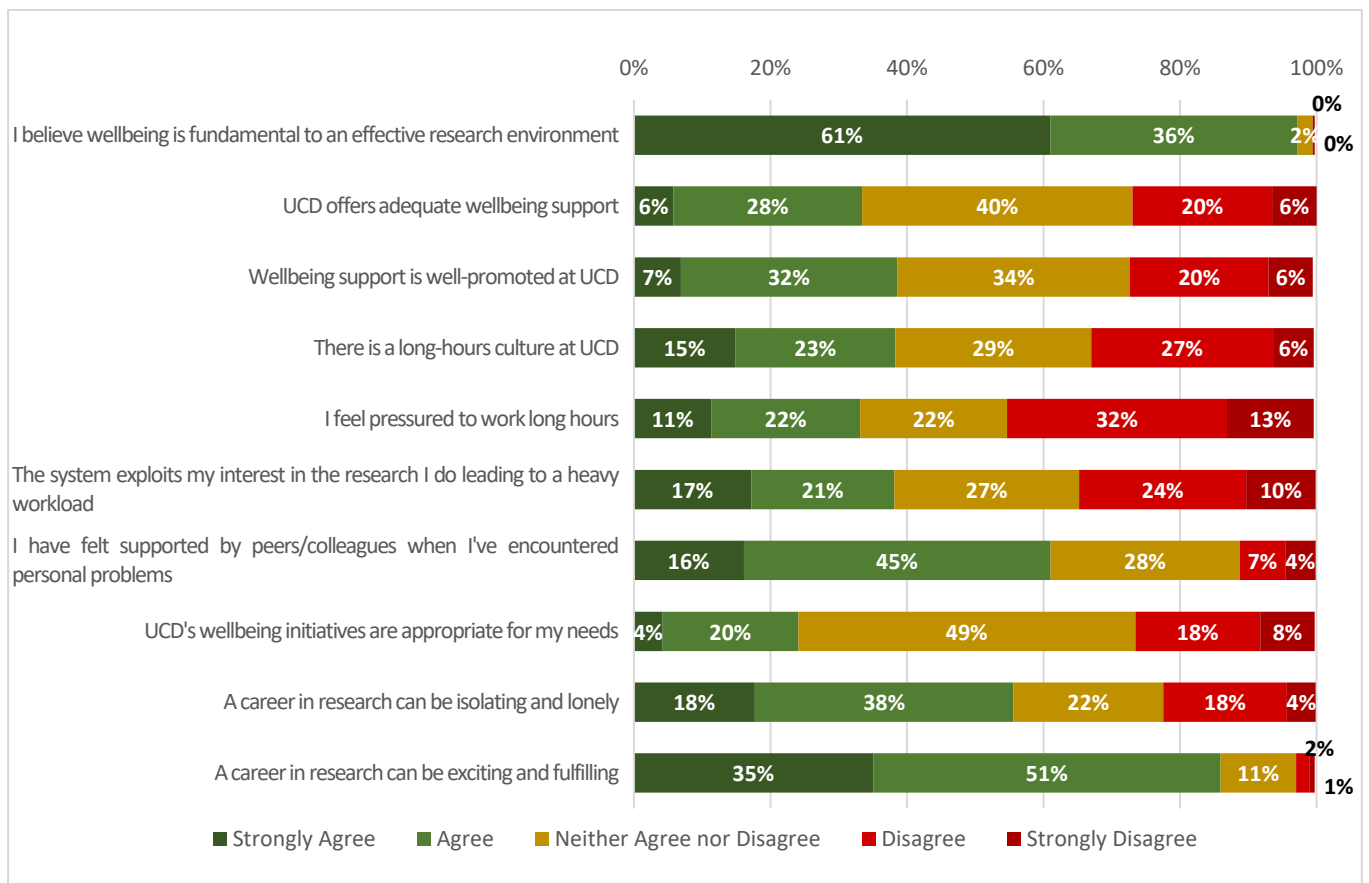
Answered: 739 | Skipped: 1



Participants responded with most positivity to the question about their own resilience. The least positivity was in response to the question about separating work setbacks from personal identity. Dealing with work-related stresses received similar responses across the scale with most respondents indicating they are able to manage these stresses.

(WT) To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

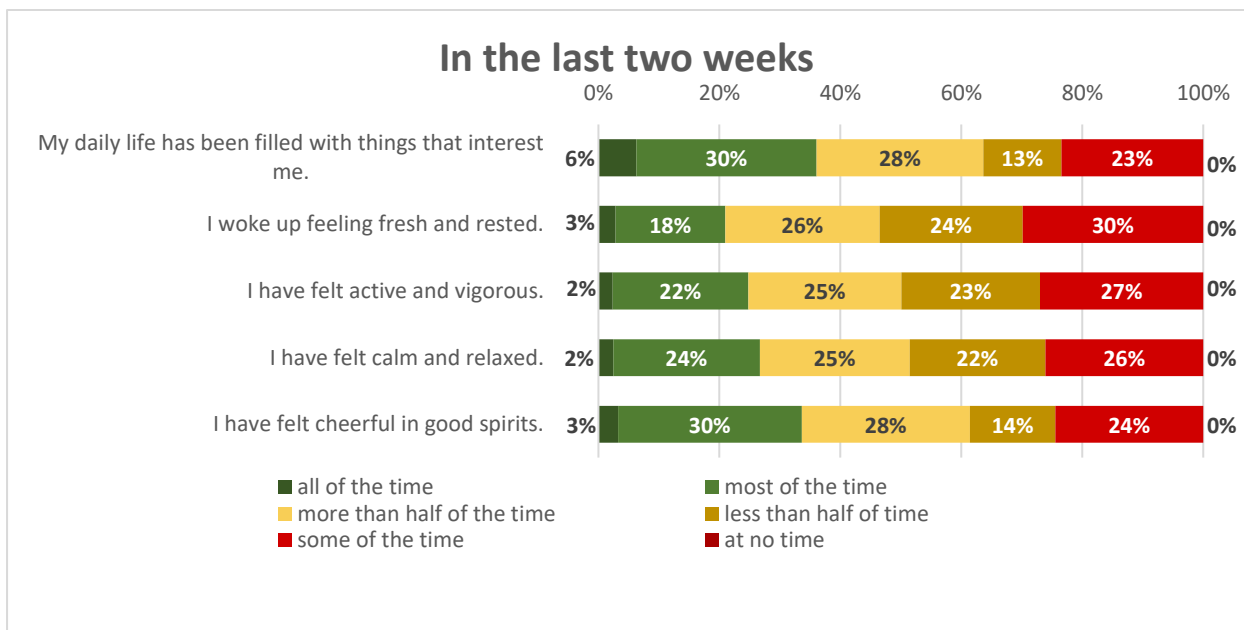
Answered: 739 | Skipped: 1



Participants agreed most strongly that careers in research can be fulfilling and that wellbeing is central to an effective research environment. There was also agreement that colleagues at UCD are supportive of one another. More than a third of respondents agreed that the system exploits their interest in research leading to heavy workloads. The greatest ambivalence (neither agree nor disagree) was in response to the two questions about the provision of wellbeing support (40%) and appropriateness of initiatives for the needs of respondents (49%) at UCD.

World Health Organization Five Wellbeing Index (WHO-5) In the last 2 weeks

Answered: 722	Skipped: 18
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Survey participants indicated a general sense of wellbeing as evidenced by feeling cheerful, active, rested and that their lives are filled with interesting things more than half of the time.

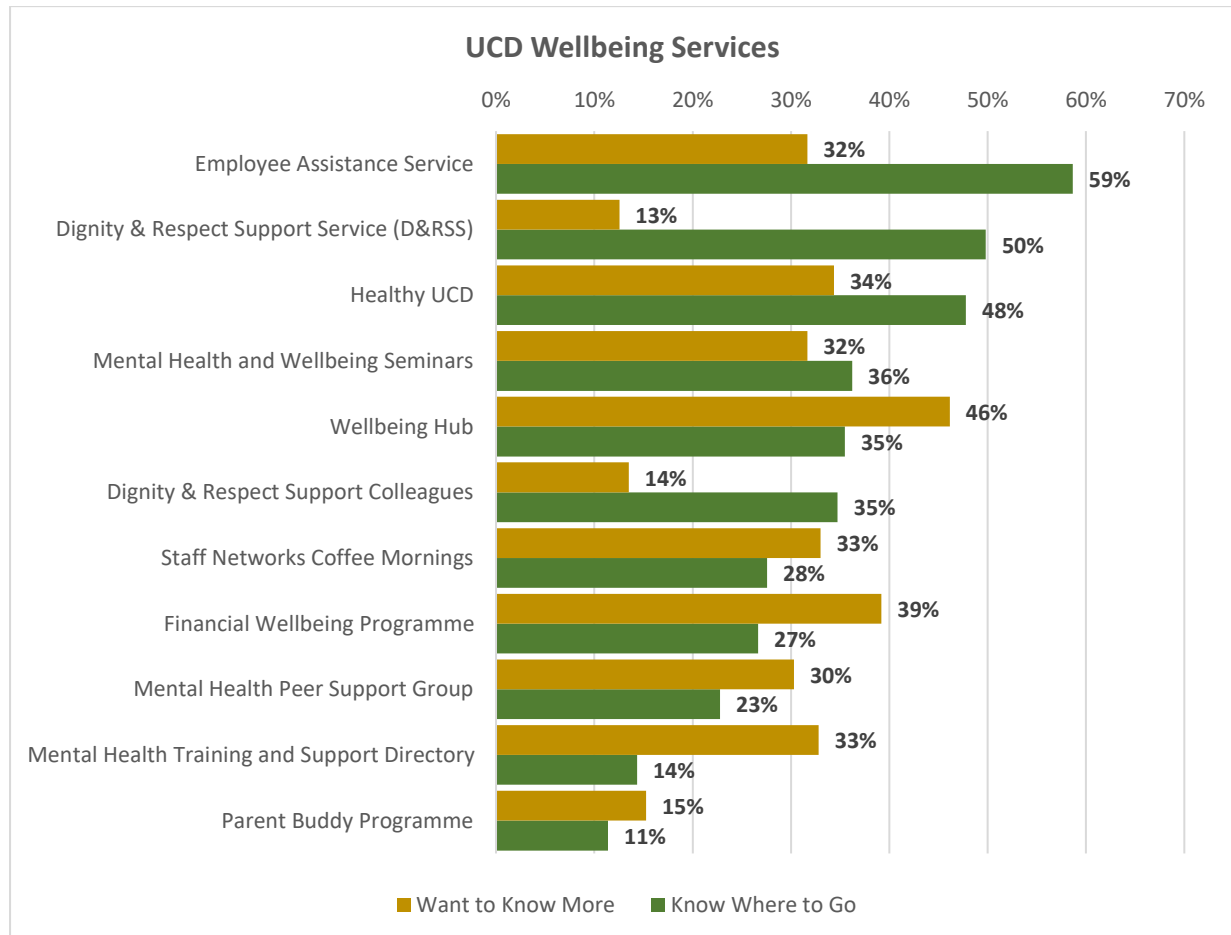
UCD Wellbeing Services

(UCD) I understand where in the University I can go for information or support on the following topics.

Answered: 544	Skipped: 196
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(UCD) Which of the following areas would you like to know more about?

Answered: 518	Skipped: 222
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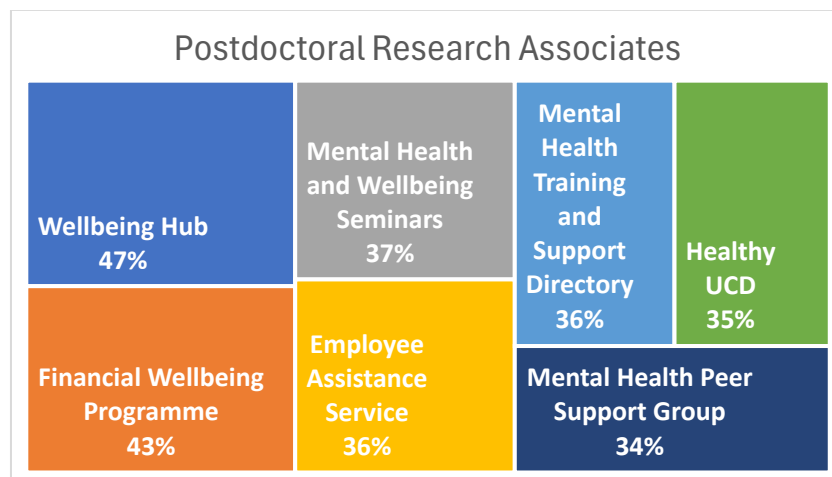
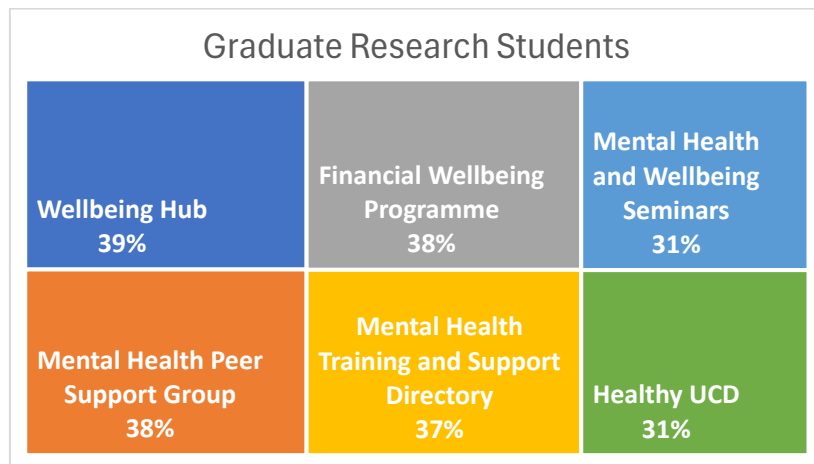


Participants indicated that they know where to go for Employee Assistance Services, Dignity & Respect Services, and Healthy UCD. Respondents want most to know more about the Wellbeing Hub, the Financial Wellbeing Programme, and the Mental Health Training and Support Directory.

Priorities for Wellbeing & Mental Health Services by Role

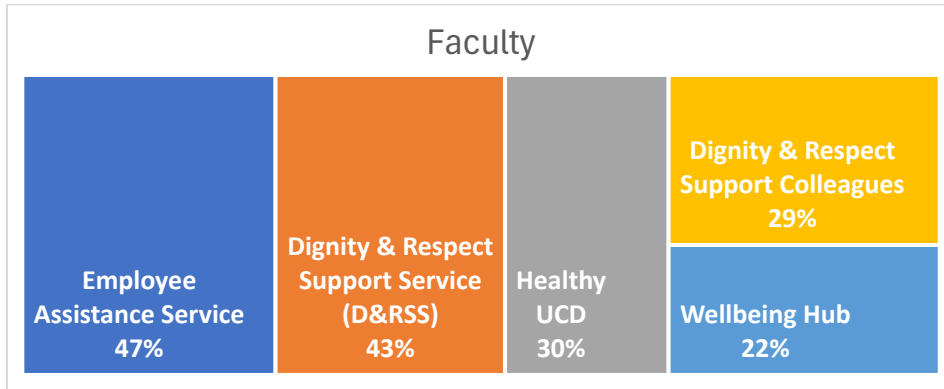
Early Career Researchers

This category includes Graduate Research Students and Postdoctoral Research Associates. The two top priorities common across both groups are the **Wellbeing Hub** and the **Financial Wellbeing Programme**. The next highest priorities are the **Mental Health Peer Support Group** and the **Mental Health and Wellbeing Seminars**.



Faculty

This category includes Faculty of every rank of professor. The three top priorities for these participants are **Employee Assistance Service**, **Dignity & Respect Support Service (D&RSS)**, and **Healthy UCD**.

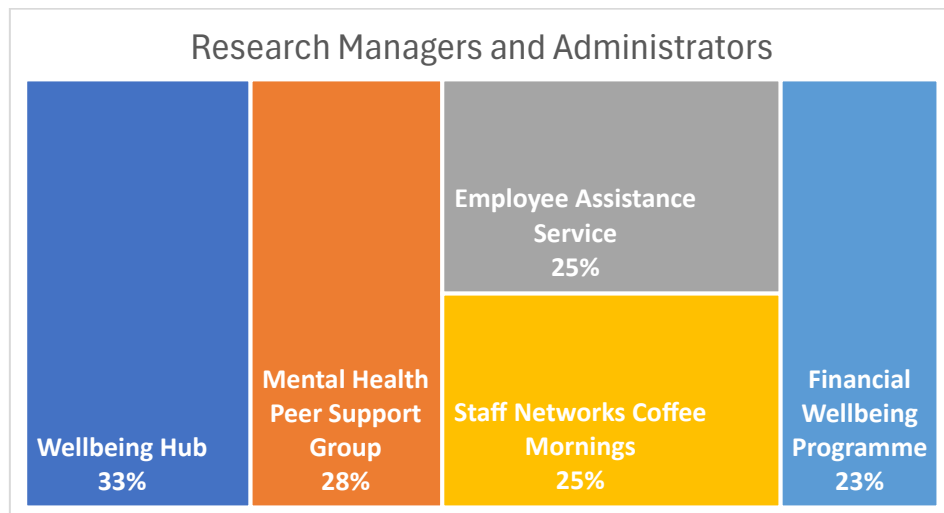
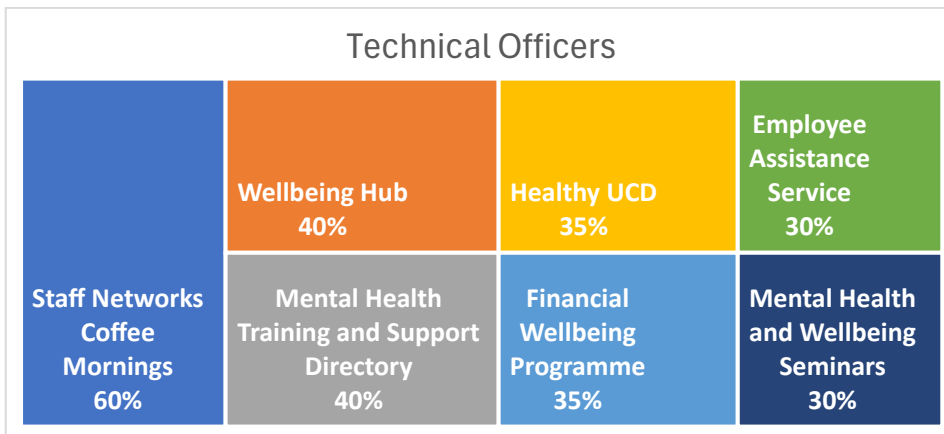


Professional Staff

This category includes Technical Officers and Research Managers and Administrators. While there is an overlap in the top categories for each cohort, priorities are different. Both groups identify the **Wellbeing Hub** as a top priority.

For **Research Managers and Administrators**, the next most important services to learn more about are the **Mental Health Peer Support Group** and the **Employee Assistance Service**.

For **Technical Officers**, **Staff Networks Coffee Mornings** are the top priority, and the **Mental Health Training and Support Directory** is a topic they want to know more about.



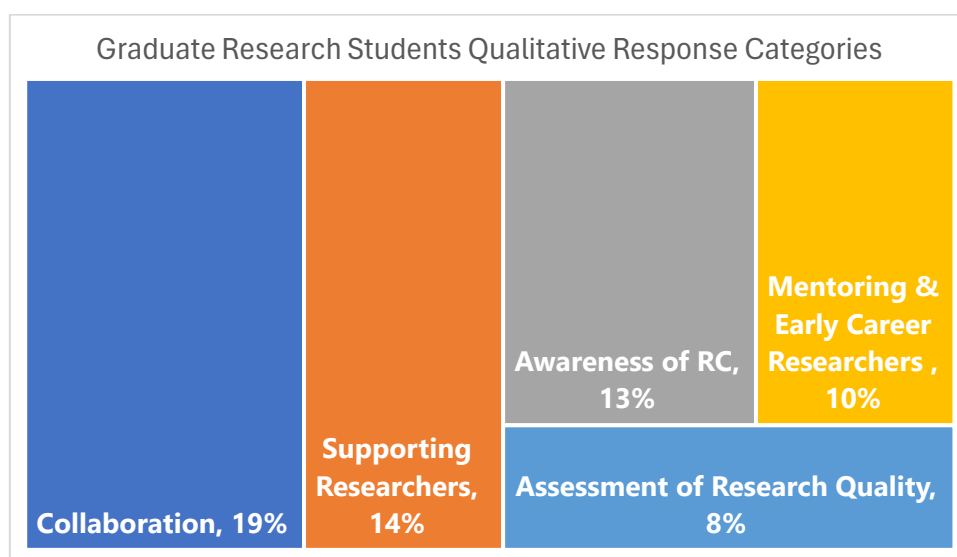
What did participants say in free-text responses?

The Survey offered three opportunities for participants to submit open-ended responses. First, participants were asked to elaborate on their evaluation of whether UCD Research Culture had improved in the last 2 years. Next participants were asked to offer suggestions for one practical thing to promote a positive research culture at UCD. Finally, in the Role & Career section of the survey, participants were offered the opportunity to provide additional comments at the end of the section.

Preliminary analysis has categorised the qualitative responses using the same coding employed for the 2021 Research Culture Survey.

Graduate Research Students

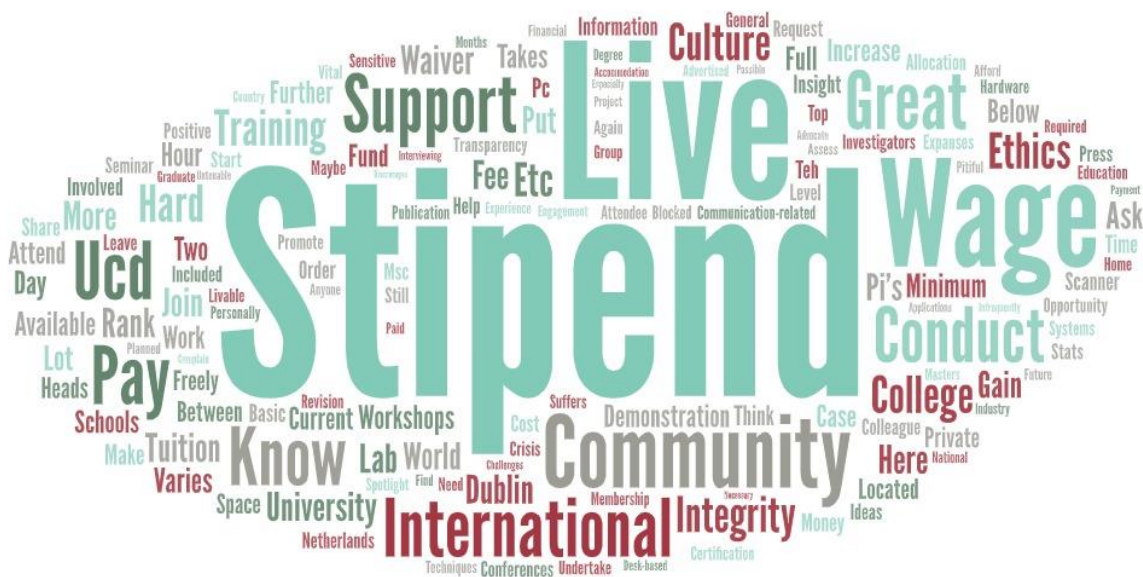
A total of 110 qualitative responses were made by Graduate Research Students. The highest number of comments from this group related to the theme of Collaboration.



Comments from Graduate Research Students indicated that they are interested in research collaboration and feel that better communication could facilitate connections leading to collaboration. Some suggested that showcasing interdisciplinary research projects could serve as models for research collaboration.

- 'In my experience there ... is barely any collaboration between schools that I know of and when there is a need for collaboration, it is very hard to set up.'
- 'There is not a lot of communication between groups even within schools. It would be very helpful if PIs are more aware of who's working on what and promote collaborations between researchers.'
- 'UCD All Discipline Seminar Day - Schools nominate [researchers] to present, particularly people with interdisciplinary applications so the whole University can easily engage with other disciplines and showcase work.'
- 'It would be reassuring for students to know they are incentivized to work together across disciplines rather than treat everyone as a rival.'

Supporting Researchers was the category in which the second highest number of comments were made by Graduate Research Students. Among the issues raised by Graduate Research Students were training, communications, and precarity.



Although some Graduate Research Students indicated that they have not been at UCD long enough to evaluate the quality of the research culture, others perceived improvement, 'I already thought it was quite good but I think I've been exposed to more opportunities and resources in the last two years so that would be why from my point of view its slightly better.'

Postdoctoral Research Associates

Postdoctoral Research Associates submitted a combined total of 82 qualitative responses. The highest number of comments from this group pertained to Awareness of Research Culture. Many respondents noted that they had not been at UCD for long and did not feel qualified to assess the culture. Better informing and raising awareness among Postdoctoral Research Associates about what is meant by the term Research Culture may give this group more confidence to evaluate their experience of it.

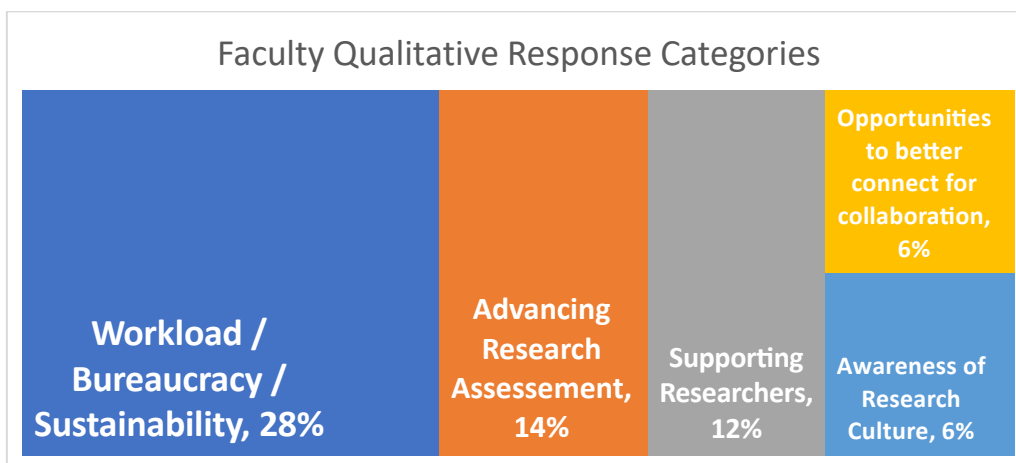


Collaboration and Transdisciplinarity was the category of topic raised second most often by Postdoctoral Research Associates:

- 'Promotion of interdisciplinary research [has] helped improve the research culture at UCD.'

Faculty

Faculty participants provided a total of 570 qualitative responses across the three free text questions, the greatest number of comments from a group of respondents. The highest number of comments from this group pertained to Workload / Bureaucracy / Sustainability, followed by Advancing Research Assessment.



The word cloud below represents Faculty text responses categorised as Workload / Bureaucracy / Sustainability. Time poverty as a result of teaching and administration responsibilities were frequently cited as barriers to doing research.



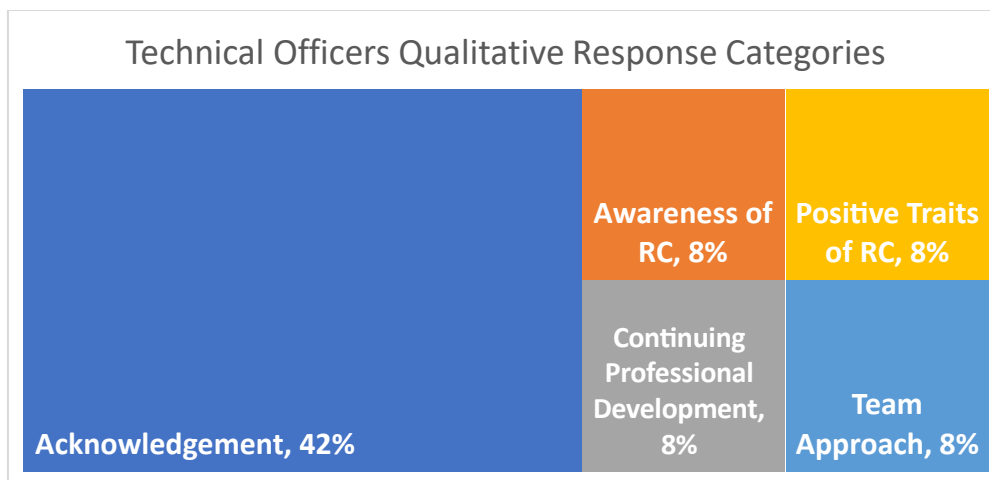
The second highest number of responses from Faculty were categorised under the theme of Advancing Research Assessment. Comments below are representative of typical feedback:

- ‘If research culture is undermined it is generally because the institute rewards specific metrics - that drives bad behaviour in a small number of staff.’
- ‘Creation of research integrity unit has been a significant and positive move and is slowly having an impact.’
- ‘Be more transparent on the promotion assessment for evaluating the candidate's research contributions.’
- ‘Status of new forms of publication need to be kept under review.’
- ‘Research outputs are generally weighted according to funding and respective publications. However, funding availability is not considered, thus your area of research can dictate your success rather than your quality and quantity of research.’

Technical Officers

Technical Officers submitted a total of 26 qualitative responses. The highest number of comments from Technical Officers pertained to Acknowledgement. Representative comments include:

- ‘As a member of the technical staff I am often help with the writing (technical aspects) of grant especially when it comes to instruments but often get very little recognition for doing so.’
- ‘Technical staff are often not credited with authorship (when deserved) on papers and this has to change in my opinion. It’s often a thank you at the end of the paper only unfortunately.’



Some responses linked acknowledgement to career advancement as in this comment:

- ‘Not kept up to date with grants available for TOs. Not given credit on publications. Promotions from STO [Senior Technical Officers] not available in my school...’

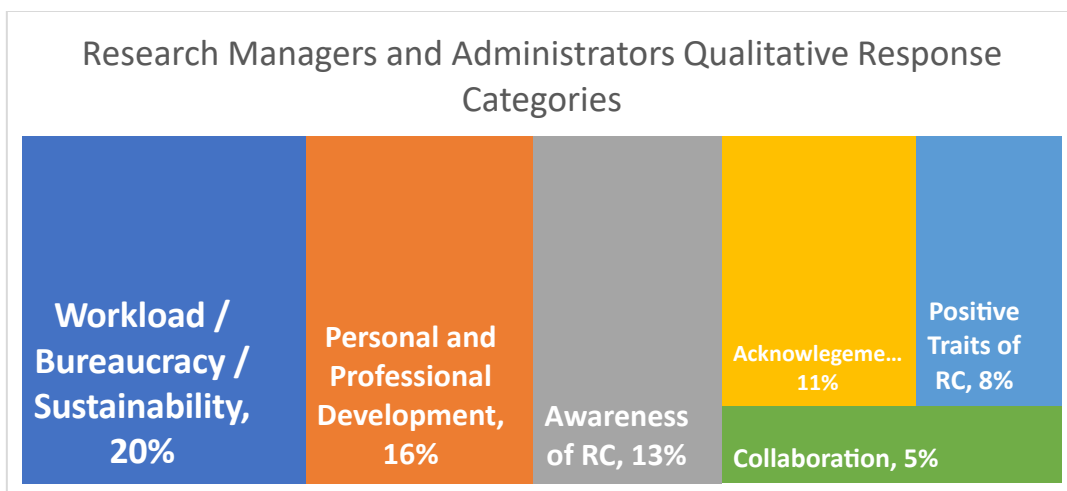
The word cloud below represents Technical Officers text responses categorised as Acknowledgement. Recognition for specialist skills and contributions to research through authorship and other forms of acknowledgement were indicated as key priorities for this group.



Research Managers and Administrators

Research Managers and Administrators submitted a total of 59 qualitative responses. The highest number of comments from Research Managers and Administrators pertained to Workload / Bureaucracy / Sustainability. Representative comments include:

- ‘There is more awareness around research culture and its importance in organisations such as ours; however, there was a decline in work-place culture during/post-covid which we as a community haven’t recovered from. Colleagues appear to be struggling with workload and work-life balance which is having a knock-on effect on all other activity...’
- ‘Dealing with central administration has gotten far worse over the last three years to such an extent that it is like banging your head against a brick wall. Significant mistakes are being made centrally which have to be rectified locally.’



Personal and Professional Development was the second most mentioned topic which some participants linked to Workload / Bureaucracy / Sustainability:

- ‘Career consists of annual contract renewal if funding available. No defined career progression possible.’
- ‘Extremely high pressure which does not match career level and little room to progress.’

The word cloud below represents Research Managers and Administrators text responses categorised as Personal and Professional Development. Respondents identified a sense of precarity in consideration of the limitations for career progression resulting partially from temporary, research-funded contracts.

