

Helmholtz Juniors Update

PB HGF Meeting, 2. December 2025

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Introduction

Helmholtz Juniors



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- **Initiative of doctoral researchers (DRs)**
 - Representatives from each Center
 - Support from HGF HQ
- **Main goals:**
 - Monitor the quality of life of DRs
 - Advocate for improvements
 - Foster community as well as scientific exchange



Introduction

Tasks



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- **Survey**

- Assessment of situation & data collection
- General Helmholtz report
- Center-specific reports



- **Communication**

- Internal channels
- Social media



- **Working Conditions**

- Contractual matters
- Supervision & Power abuse
- Mental Health



- **Events**

- General assemblies
- Event organization

Co-op: HGF Head Office



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Annual meeting with the President (Feb 2025):

- Mental health
- supervision conflicts & power abuse
→ incidents must be brought to attention!
- time tracking

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Co-op: HGF Head Office



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30. Anniversary Celebrations



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Co-op: HGF networks



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PBHGF Personal- und Betriebsräte
in der Helmholtz-Gemeinschaft

HGF PhD Coordinators

HGF Ombudspeople



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- Promoting equitable, safe and diverse research environment
- Harmonized N² survey since 2019



Co-op: Unions



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- collaboration & support in preparation & distribution of Position Paper

GEW begrüßt Beschäftigten-Initiative

Helmholtz-Juniors fordern Tarifbindung für Promovierende

Die Interessenvertretung der rund 8000 Promovierenden der Helmholtz-Gemeinschaft fordert einheitliche Arbeitsverträge nach TVöD für alle Promovierenden. Die GEW unterstützt diese Forderung mit Nachdruck.



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Political Activities

Power Abuse @ Bundestag



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- new perspectives on WissZeitVG
- new cooperations
- gained and broadened visibility of Helmholtz Juniors
- shared Position Paper

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Political Activities Innovation @ Bundestag



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- exchange about working conditions of DRs & innovation
- contact to Research Policy Spokesperson of SPD Oliver Kaczmarek → WissZeitVG talks in January
- shared Position Paper

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Survey 2024 Key Facts



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- Bi-annual survey with **Max Planck PhDNet, Leibniz PhD Network**
- Center-specific and General Report, N² Report
- 3rd Survey (2019, 2021)

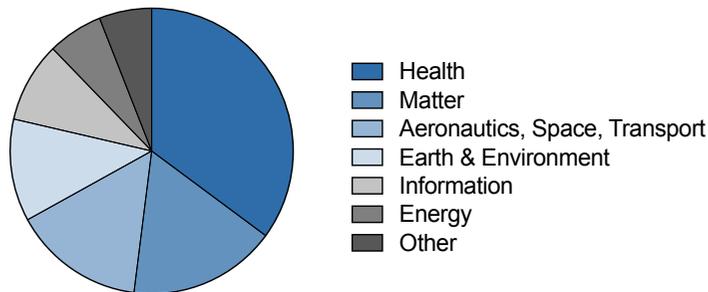
- 2024: **2317 DRs from 17 Helmholtz Centers** participated
- **9 Topics**
 - general, working conditions, satisfaction, mental health,
 - supervision, power abuse, integration & inclusion,
 - career development, family

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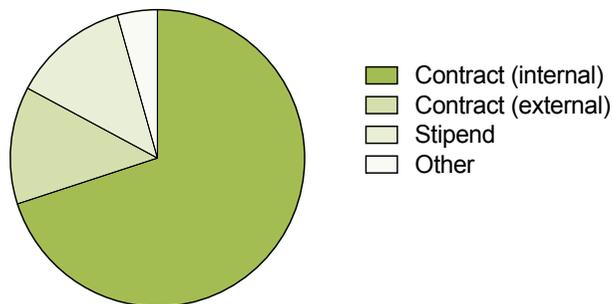
N² Survey Report
General Report



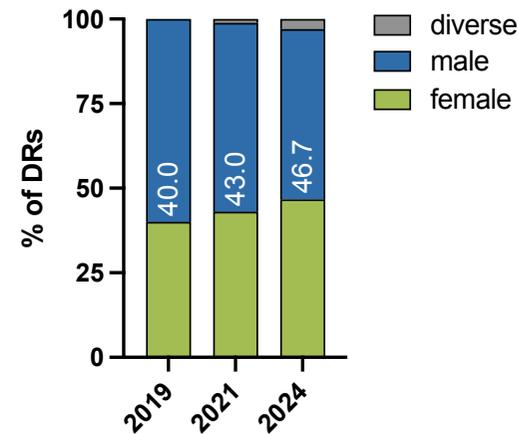
Research Field



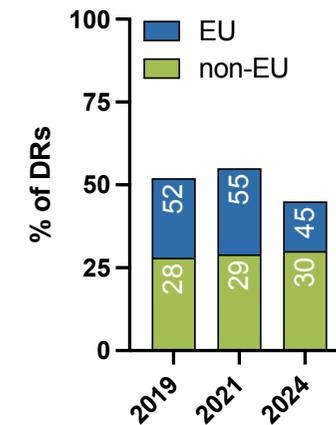
Contract Type



Gender



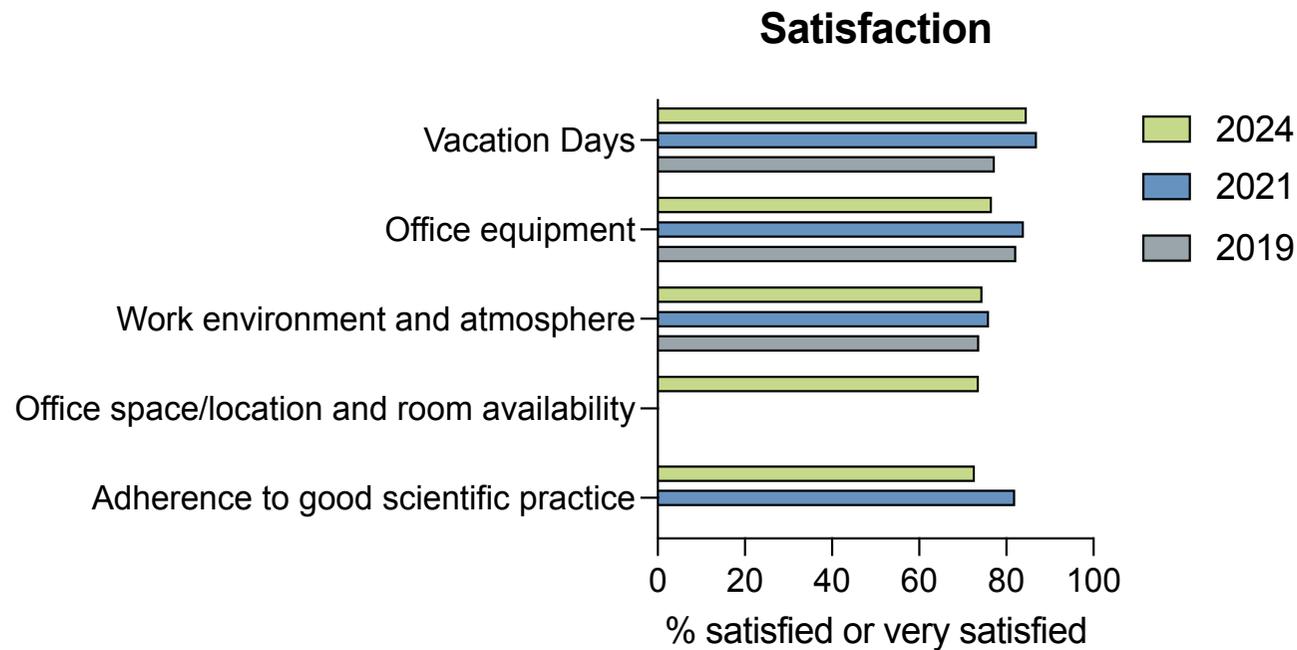
Internationals





Survey 2024

What was everyone satisfied with?





Survey 2024

What were we most dissatisfied with?



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Rank	2019	2021	2024
1	Psychological support	Psychological support	Level of administrative digitization
2	Support for international DRs	Bureaucracy and administrative support	Communication by management
3	Administrative support	Social Life at the institute	Psychological support offered
4	Career development	Workload	Workload
5	Workload	Support for international DRs	Salary/Funding

Survey 2024 Key issues



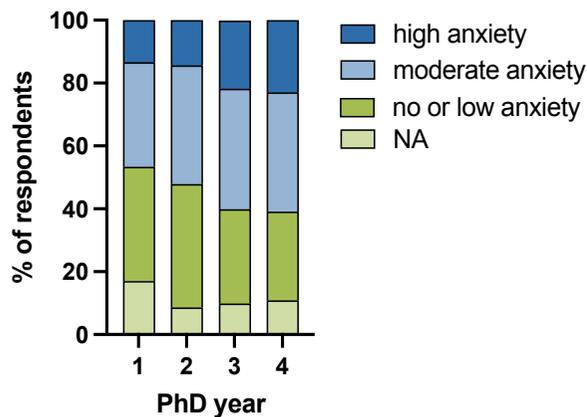
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- level of administrative digitization
- communication by management
- **psychological support offered**
- **workload**
- **salary/funding**
- career development
- **power abuse/conflict reporting**
- **discrimination/integration**

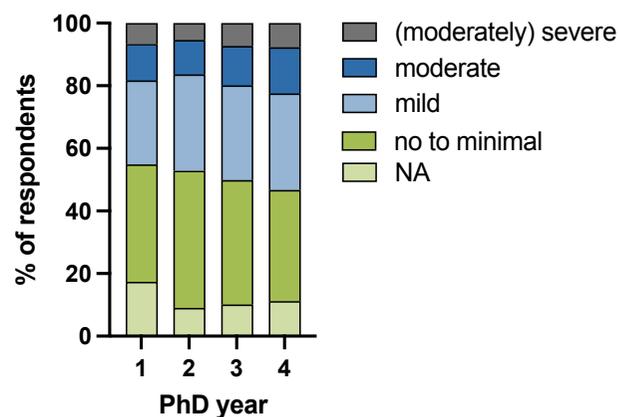
*forward to administration

- Mental health and psychological support**

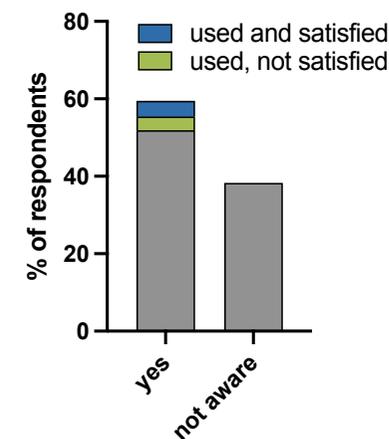
State anxiety score



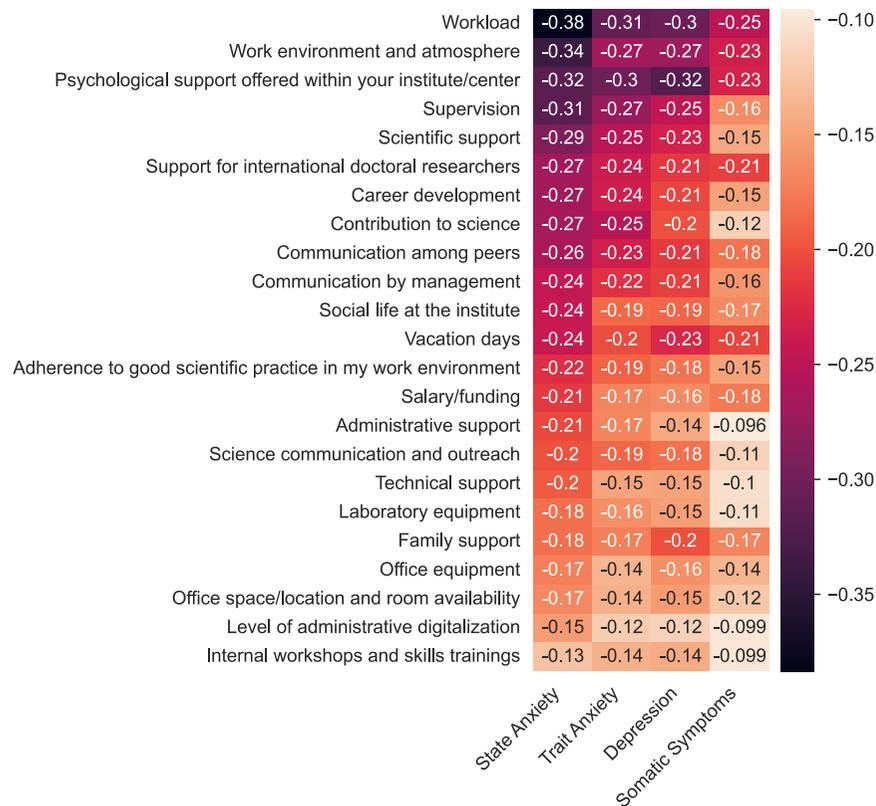
Depression score



Awareness of mental health resources



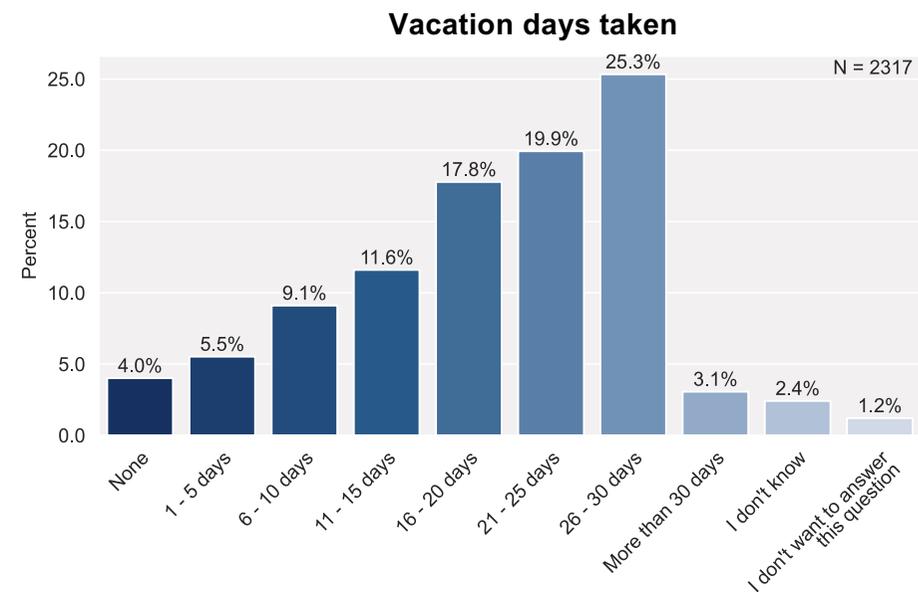
- Mental health and psychological support**



- better advertisement
- awareness days/events
- address workload

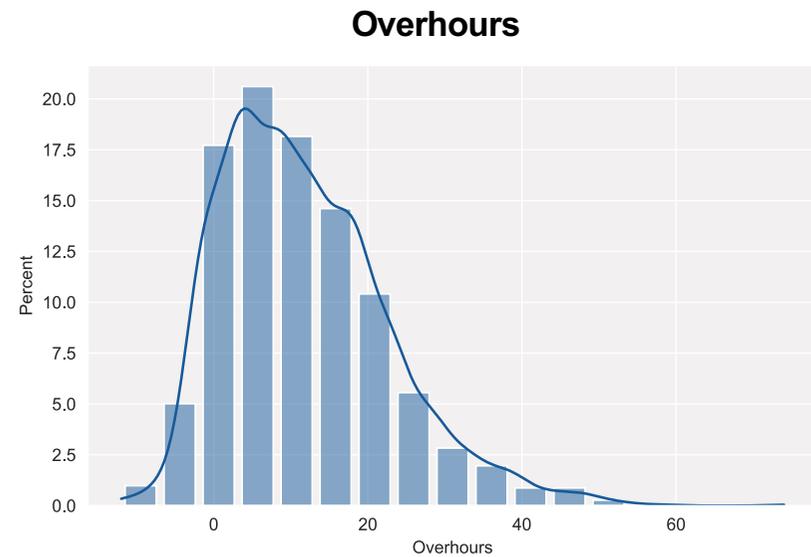
- **Workload**

- 86.3% have 26-30 vacation days, while...
- main reasons for not taking vacation days:
 - pressure to finish (24.6%)
 - high workload (20.8%)

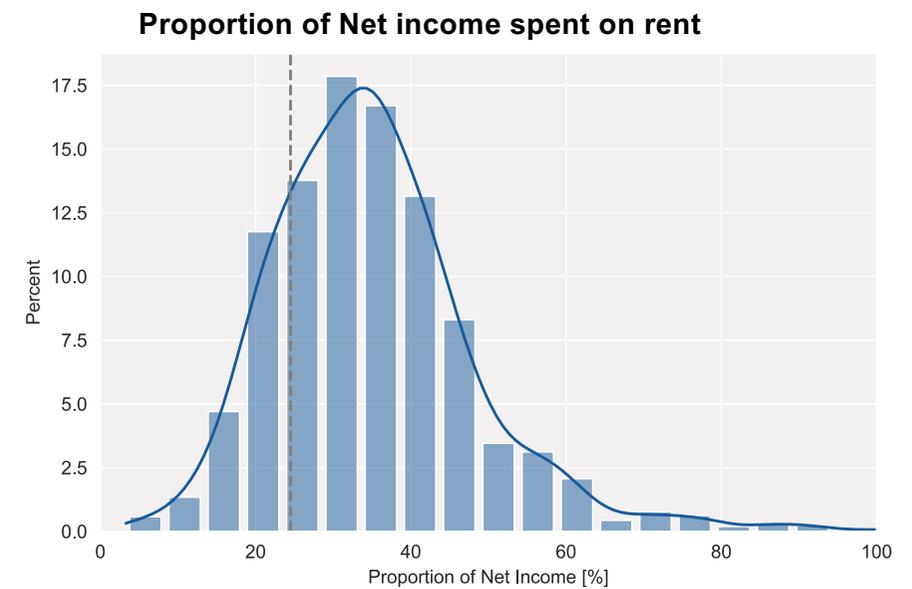
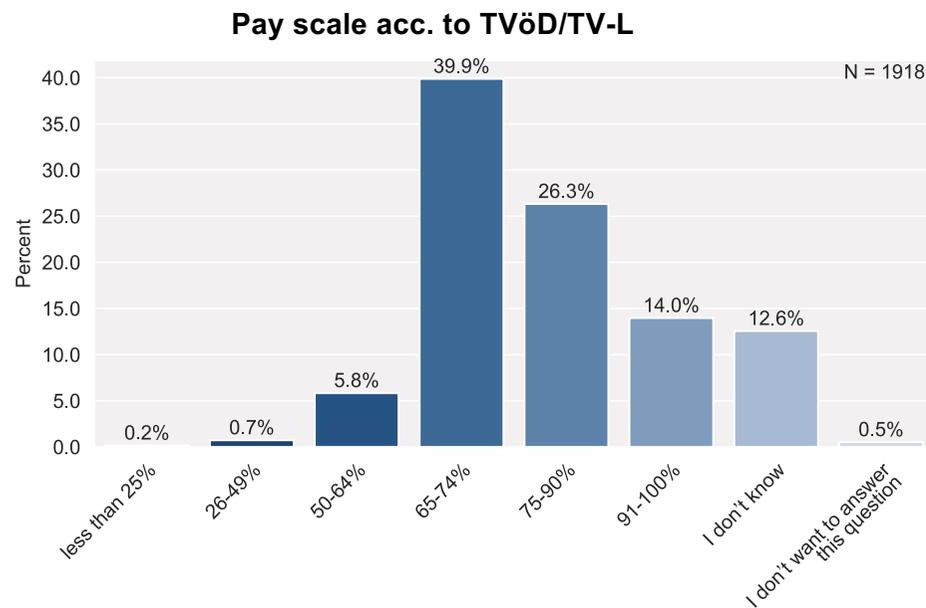


- **Workload**

- 67.2% do overhours
- 59.6% generally work more than 40h/week
- time tracking?

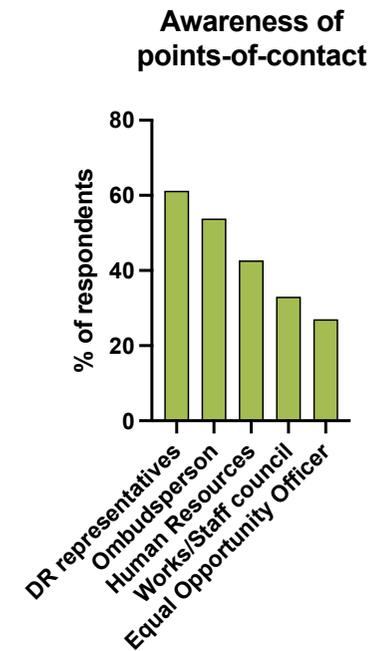
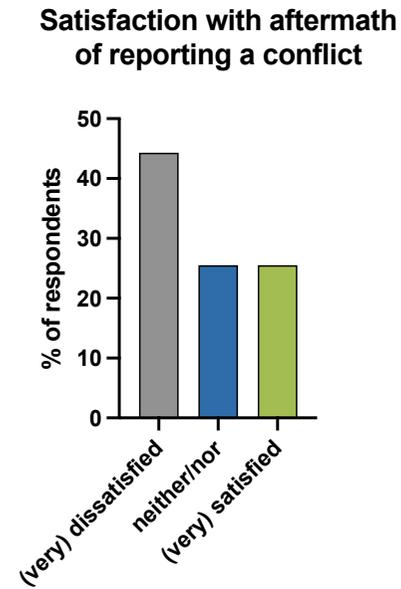
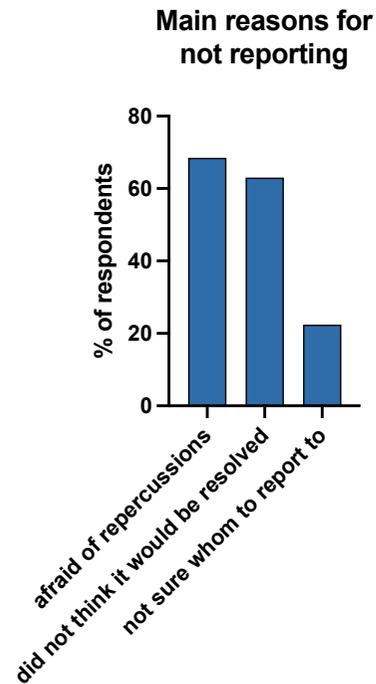
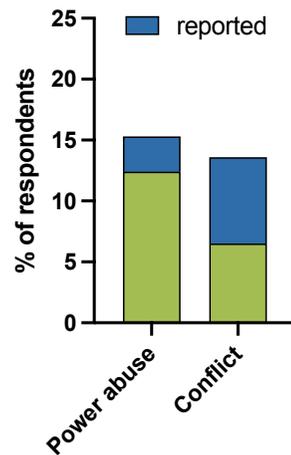


- Salary/Funding



- 2025 Position paper on Tariff contracts
- DFG: funding period duration

- Power abuse/ conflict reporting



- External evaluation of Center
- FZJ Supervision conflict council

- **Discrimination**

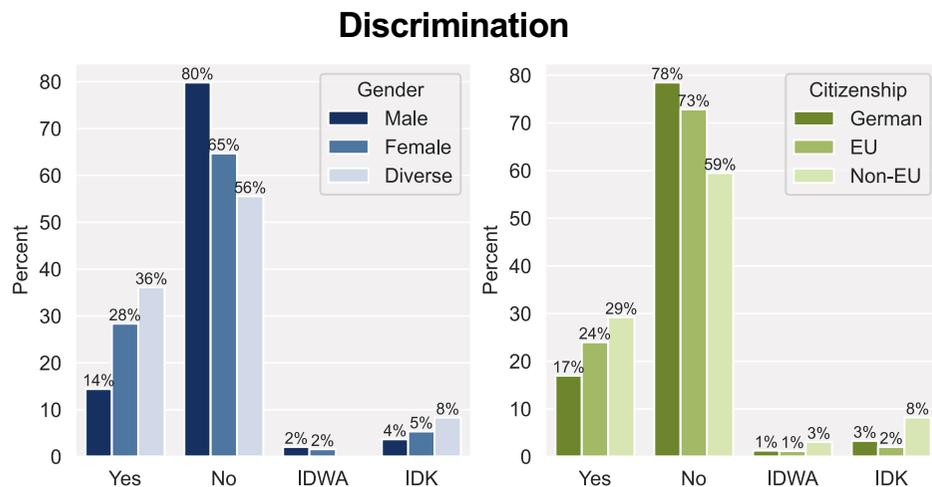


Figure 7.10: Did DRs experience *any* kind of discrimination? The data was grouped by gender (left) and citizenship (right).

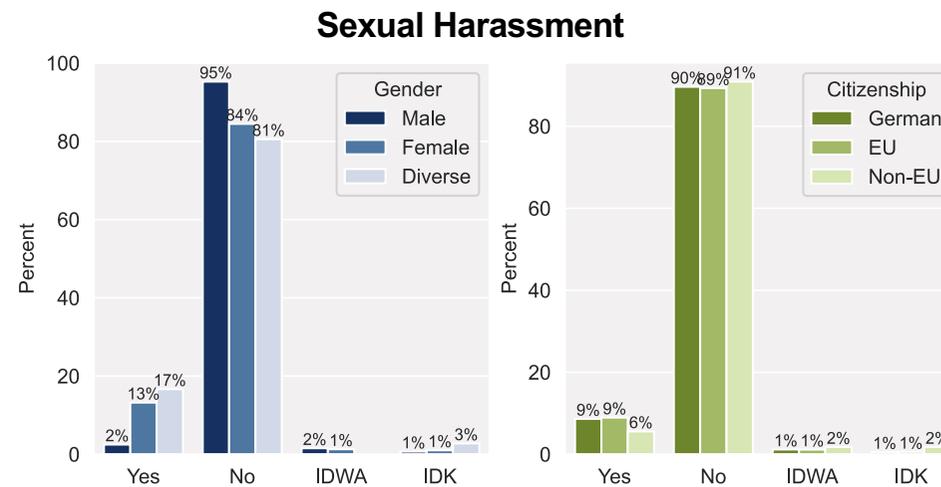


Figure 7.6: Did DRs experience *any* kind of sexual harassment? The data was grouped by gender (left) and citizenship (right).

- Mandatory trainings
- Raising awareness

Thanks to the survey team of 2024 & 2025!



Position Paper

Fair Working Conditions



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Contractual situation in HGF

Contract length

initial contract ranges
from 1 year to up to 4
years

Payment percentage

55 - 100% of EG13
most: 65%

Collective agreement (TVöD) vs. individual contracts

10 Centers: collective
agreement
8 Centers: individual
contracts

Position Paper

Fair Working Conditions



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“Sustainable Cutting-Edge Research through Fair Working Conditions: The Necessity of Transparent Collective Agreements for Doctoral Researchers in the Helmholtz Association”

Main aim:

Call for **binding, uniform application** of the **collective agreement TVöD (E13)** to all doctoral researchers in HGF

Position Paper

Fair Working Conditions



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Main arguments

- Transparency through standardized contracts
- Equal opportunity
- Increased attractiveness & satisfaction
- Reduced bureaucracy
- Promotes innovative spirit

Position Paper

Fair Working Conditions



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Current status & time-line

- February 2024:** Meeting with ver.di (Sonja Staack)
→ pro's & con's collective agreement (TVöD) contracts vs. individual contracts
- June 2024:** Meeting with ver.di & PB HGF
→ presentation draft position paper, feedback & strategic planning
- July 2025:** Submission to:
- all Centers: Directors, equal opportunity offices, works councils
 - Helmholtz President Prof. Wiestler
- August 2025:** Joined answer from all Centers: "No"
- January 2026:** Meeting with Centers
→ aiming to go into discussions again

Thanks for your Attention!



Contact us:

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