In the fall of 2023, the National Postdoctoral Association (NPA) collected data for the third annual iteration of the NPA member needs assessment survey. The results showed four key areas of postdoctoral concern highly consistent with past years. No major changes in the areas of high concern were identified.

First, survey data show concern by postdocs about the pathways to their next positions. The historic transition from postdoc to faculty position is only realized by a fraction of individuals, creating both uncertainty and a variety of career opportunities, requiring education about these new pathways.

The second area flagged, clarity and retention of the postdoc position, is closely related. Short-term contracts, research funding levels, and concern over career outcomes have created additional angst regarding the stability and viability of current postdoc positions, too often poorly and inconsistently defined.

Compensation and benefits continues to be a leading concern to postdocs. This complex area includes salary, health benefits, family-friendly policies, access to retirement plans, and affordable housing. For early-career researchers, proper compensation and benefits allow them to thrive today personally and professionally while building a more secure future.

Last, international issues, a special focus area of the NPA in 2023, remain of critical concern. Fifty-eight percent of the 72,000 postdocs in the U.S. are international, and continue to report high levels of concern around visa, immigration and related issues. The added layer of stress is significant for international postdocs but impacts the entire scientific and research enterprise.

All of these areas demand strategy across the greater postdoctoral community to achieve sustainable solutions. The NPA is committed to building resources to help alleviate these areas of concern through the work of staff, volunteers and partners, such as other nonprofit organizations, industry members, and government entities. Look for an expanding number of new and updated tools on the NPA website, including the NPA’s Resource Library.

There is a tremendous amount of work needed to address the dynamic needs of this critical and vulnerable population to ensure a vibrant, rewarding, and viable postdoctoral experience. The NPA invites individuals and organizations both to join the NPA and to volunteer at www.nationalpostdoc.org.
NPA MEMBERS
KEY AREAS OF CONCERN

JANUARY 2024

Compensation & Benefits
- Fair salary
- Equitable benefits
- Retirement plan
- Accessible housing

Responsibilities & Status
- Visa issues
- Job security
- Competition for funding
- Workload
- Clarity of role

Career Trajectory
- Clarity of pathway
- Mentoring
- Skills

Inclusive Work
- Wellness
- Bias
- Conflict resolution
2024 Member Needs Assessment
(level of concern - mode)

Career Trajectory
- Clarity of pathway to next position
- Opportunity/time for prof. skills beyond research area
- Effective mentoring

Compensation and benefits
- Accessible housing for postdocs
- Retirement plan participation
- Family, child care, and/or eldercare support
- Equitable benefits for all postdocs
- Fair postdoc salary and compensation

Your role, responsibilities, and organizational status
- Workload
- Transparency of expectations from PI or supervisor
- Job security
- Clarity on duration of time as a postdoc
- Clarity of role as a postdoc within the organization
- Visa or other immigration issues
- Competition for research funding

Equitable, inclusive, and healthy workplace
- Healthy workplace culture
- Mental & physical health / wellness
- Discrimination or bias based on gender, ethnicity...
- Clear policies on how to help settle conflicts

PDO Functions
- Attracting the best postdocs to the institution
- How to advocate for postdoc issues w/in the larger...
- Funding for operating a postdoc office
- Staffing for a postdoc office

No concern | Slight concern | Some concern | Strong concern | Significant concern
---|---|---|---|---
1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5
A POSTDOC'S GUIDE TO THE POSTDOC TIMELINE
A POSTDOC’S GUIDE TO THE POSTDOC TIMELINE PROVIDES POSTDOCS WITH A TEMPLATE TO MANAGE THEIR TIME AND HOPEFULLY LESSEN THE CONCERN OF JOB SECURITY WHILE IN THEIR POSTDOC POSITION.

NPA INSTITUTIONAL POLICY REPORTS
THE NPA INSTITUTIONAL POLICY REPORTS PROVIDE A SNAPSHOT OF HOW INSTITUTIONS ARE PROVIDING BETTER BENEFITS AMONG OTHER IMPORTANT POLICIES.

QUICK GUIDE TO VISAS
THE QUICK GUIDE TO VISAS GIVES HELPFUL INFORMATION FOR INTERNATIONAL POSTDOCS.

A POSTDOC'S GUIDE TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT
A POSTDOC’S GUIDE TO CAREER DEVELOPMENT TO HELP WITH CLARIFYING CAREER PATHWAYS.