

2025 NPA POSTDOCTORAL NEEDS ASSESSMENT REPORT

JANUARY 2025



— NATIONAL —
POSTDOCTORAL
— ASSOCIATION —

INTRODUCTION & SURVEY DETAIL

A **postdoctoral researcher** ("postdoc") is an individual holding a doctoral degree who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue a career path of their choosing.

The **National Postdoctoral Association (NPA)** was established in 2003 with the goal of fostering necessary improvements to the postdoctoral system in the United States.

Today, more than **70,000** postdocs working in academia, government, and industry are a core component of our nation's scientific and research workforce. Postdocs exhibit a variety of concerns that impact their ability to succeed. **The NPA needs assessment surveys are designed to better understand these concerns in order to help our member organizations, partners, and government agencies address them.**



ALABASTRO PHOTOGRAPHY

INTRODUCTION & SURVEY DETAIL

The NPA collected data in the fall of 2024 among its postdoc membership base, which extends to postdocs across more than 80% of R1 universities. In total, **607 postdocs** responded to the survey, an increase of several hundred over similar needs assessment surveys conducted by the NPA in recent years (366 in 2022, 279 in 2023). The cause of the increase in responses is unknown but may be due to an increase in the awareness of the survey and the NPA in general among the postdoc population.

Using a single-question prompt covering nineteen issue areas, the survey asked respondents to rate the level of concern caused by a variety of factors grouped into four categories:

- **career trajectory**
- **compensation & benefits**
- **equitable, inclusive & healthy workplace; and**
- **role, responsibilities & organizational status.**

For each of the nineteen issue areas covered in the survey, respondent postdocs selected answers using a five-point scale from “No concern” (1) to “Strong concern” (5).

In one question concerning visa and immigration issues, the survey directed only international postdocs to respond, recognizing the additional challenges they face. **This question was answered by 459 self-identifying international postdocs.**



ALABASTRO PHOTOGRAPHY

FINDINGS: AREAS OF GREATEST CONCERN

Of the four categories of issues, the survey found the highest average level of concern in **compensation and benefits** (3.2 average across all issue areas), followed by **career trajectory** (3.0), **role, responsibilities & organizational status** (3.0), and, lastly, **equitable, inclusive & healthy workplace** (2.5).

Of the nineteen issue areas queried, the top five areas of concern (shown with average scores) from this year's survey are:

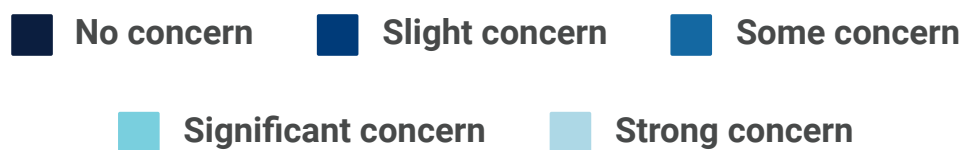
1. **Fair postdoc salary and compensation (3.6)**
2. **Clarity of pathway to next position (3.5)**
3. **Accessible housing for postdocs (3.3)**
3. **Job security (3.3)**
3. **Visa or other immigration issues (3.3)**

Past years show strong similarities to this year's results. Of past NPA needs assessment surveys, **only that used for the 2024 report uses the same response scale as in 2025 and is therefore directly comparable.**

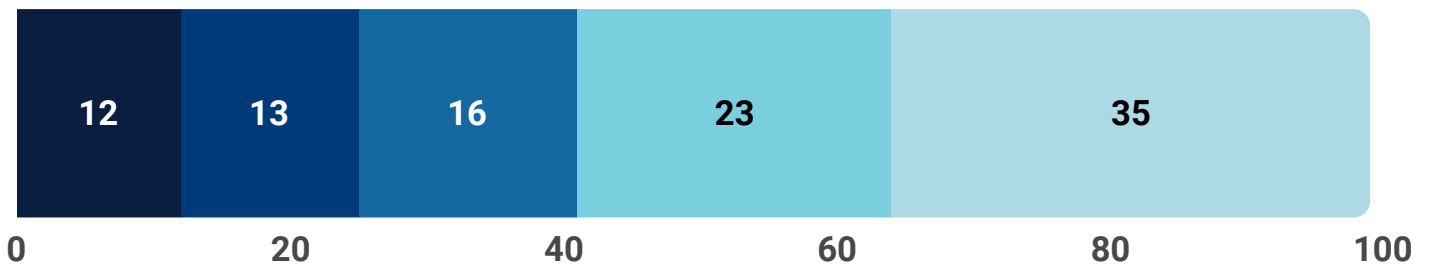


FIGURES

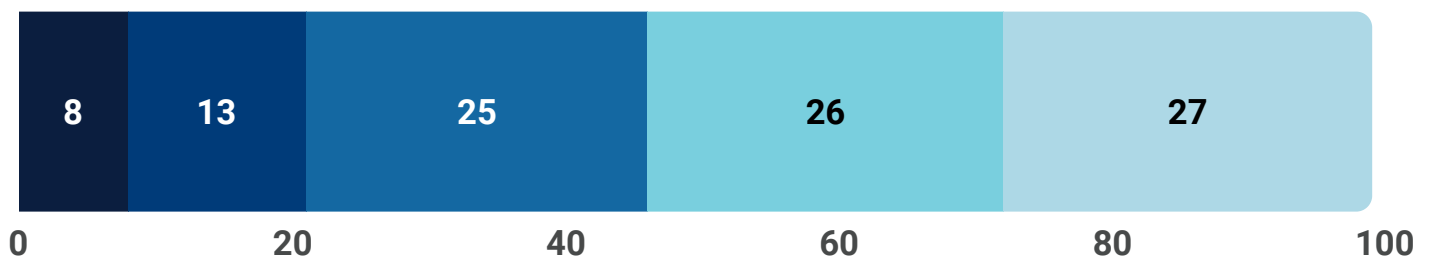
The following figures illustrate the breakdown in responses to the top five areas of concern in 2025 as determined by respondents. In four of the five areas, a majority of postdocs stated that the issue area was of “Significant concern” or “Strong concern.” In the fifth area, a near majority (48 percent) shared these high-level concerns.



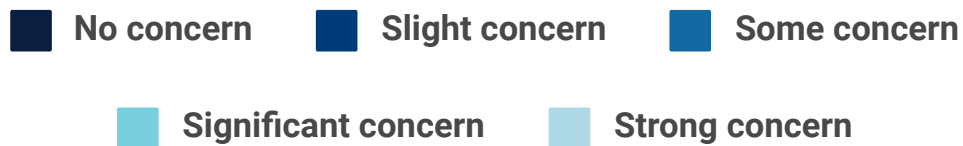
FAIR POSTDOC SALARY AND COMPENSATION



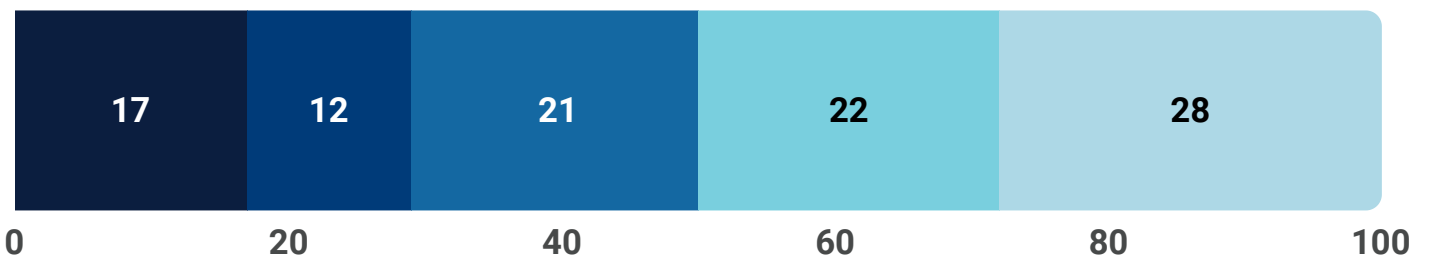
CLARITY OF PATHWAY TO NEXT POSITION



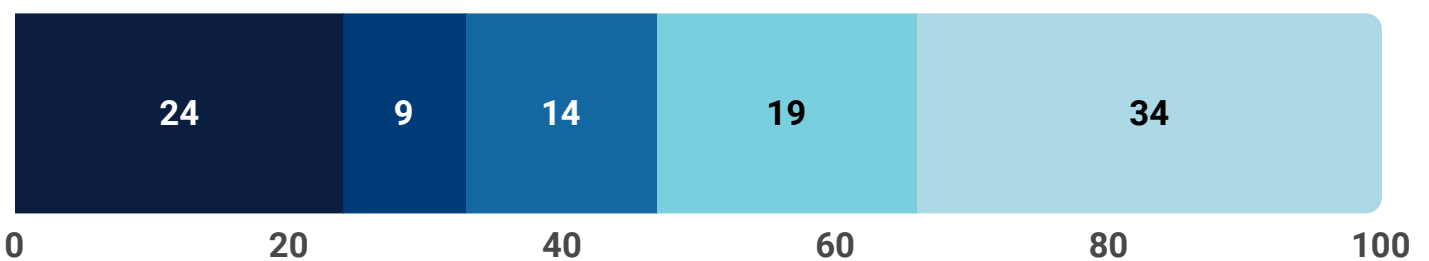
FIGURES



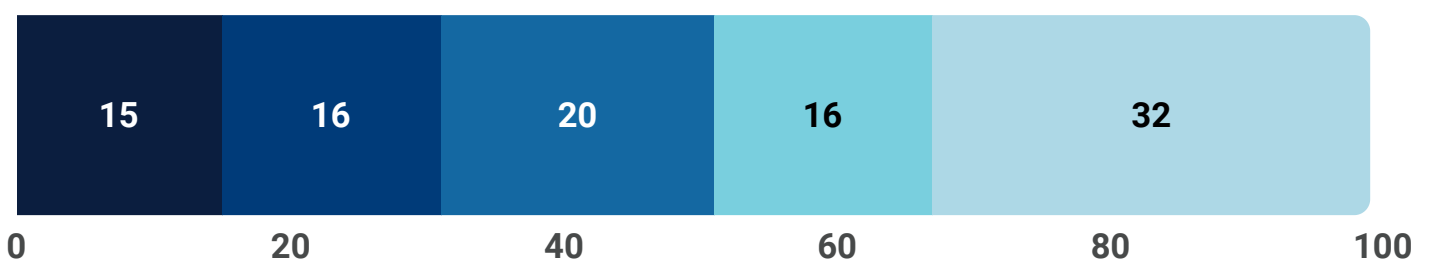
ACCESSIBLE HOUSING FOR POSTDOCS



VISA OR OTHER IMMIGRATION ISSUES



JOB SECURITY



PAST FINDINGS



2024 Report

1. Fair postdoc salary and compensation (3.6)
1. Clarity of pathway to next position (3.6)
3. Accessible housing for postdocs (3.4)
3. Visa or other immigration issues (3.4)
5. Family, child care, and/or eldercare support (3.3)
5. Retirement plan participation (3.3)
5. Competition for research funding (3.3)

2023 Report¹

1. Additional vulnerabilities as an international postdoc
2. Salary
3. Clarity of pathway to next position
4. Unclear duration of your time as a postdoc
5. Lack of transparency of supervisor/ PI expectations

¹ Survey data from the 2023 NPA needs assessment report are presented only to show prioritization of responses internal to those survey results, but not scoring averages, as the language of the responses and scales differ from those contained in the 2024 and 2025 reports.

CONCLUSION

Overall, out of nineteen issue areas queried, the data show the top concerns of postdocs in this survey are fair postdoc salary and compensation, clarity of pathway to next position, accessible housing, job security, and visa or other immigration issues. In four of these five areas, a majority of respondents felt “Significant concern” or “Strong concern” over the topic. The top-level results of this 2025 report echo the 2024 NPA needs assessment report and are similar to those in the 2023 report, but with a larger number of respondents than in past efforts. Going forward, it will be important to monitor the needs of postdocs through this survey mechanism on a regular basis to detect any changes in severity as well as in priority. The NPA encourages institutions hosting postdocs as well as funding agencies to review these findings and to work independently and with the NPA to implement appropriate actions to address them. Adoption of the **NPA Recommended Postdoctoral Policies and Practices (2024)** can create meaningful steps toward resolution of many concerns raised by postdocs.



APPENDIX

Survey Question: The NPA acts based on your needs. Your opinions matter. Please indicate your current level of concern over each of the following issues. (Scale of 1-5, 1 lowest & 5 highest)



n=607	Mean
COMPENSATION AND BENEFITS Compensation and benefits: Fair postdoc salary and compensation	3.6
Compensation and benefits: Equitable benefits for all postdocs	3.2
Compensation and benefits: Family, child care, and/or eldercare support	2.9
Compensation and benefits: Retirement plan participation	3.0
Compensation and benefits: Accessible housing for postdocs	3.3
CAREER TRAJECTORY Career Trajectory: Effective mentoring	2.6
Career Trajectory: Opportunity / time to gain professional skills beyond research area	2.9
Career Trajectory: Clarity of pathway to next position	3.5
EQUITABLE, INCLUSIVE, AND HEALTHY WORKPLACE Equitable, inclusive, and healthy workplace: Clear policies on how to help settle conflicts	2.4
Equitable, inclusive, and healthy workplace: Discrimination or bias towards postdocs based on gender, ethnicity, race or other identity characteristic	2.3

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Survey Question: The NPA acts based on your needs. Your opinions matter. Please indicate your current level of concern over each of the following issues. (Scale of 1-5, 1 lowest & 5 highest)



Equitable, inclusive, and healthy workplace: Mental & physical health / wellness	2.8
Equitable, inclusive, and healthy workplace: Healthy workplace culture	2.6
ROLE, RESPONSIBILITIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL STATUS Your role, responsibilities and organizational status: Competition for research funding	3.2
Your role, responsibilities and organizational status: Visa or other immigration issues	3.3
Your role, responsibilities and organizational status: Clarity of role as a postdoc within the organization	2.6
Your role, responsibilities and organizational status: Clarity on duration of time as a postdoc	2.8
Your role, responsibilities and organizational status: Job security	3.3
Your role, responsibilities and organizational status: Transparency of expectations from PI or supervisor	2.7
Your role, responsibilities and organizational status: Workload	2.8