



Interest organization for PhDs and
Postdocs at the University of Oslo

PhD & PostDoc survey 2022-2023

Presented by UiODoc

Information Gathered

- Demographics

- position, faculty, age, gender, nationality (Norwegian or not), contract duration, etc.

- Satisfaction levels:

- onboarding, overall experience, social integration, work environment, project, salary

- Future career
- Training
- Areas of UiO support
- UiODoc

- Supervision problems

- Workload and teaching duties

- Mental health

- Open ended questions

- internationalisation, supervision problems, teaching duties, general comments

Presentation outline

1. Onboarding
2. Internationalisation
3. Work satisfaction (incl. supervision problems & mental health)
4. Teaching duties
5. Future career
6. Training and relevant courses
7. Areas of UiO support
8. UiODoc

Background information of respondents

- Survey results from 700 participants:
 - $\frac{2}{3}$ PhDs and $\frac{1}{3}$ PostDocs
- Balanced distribution between women and men
- Most respondents were under 35 years (72%)
- 57% of PhDs were Norwegian, 43% foreign
- 27% of PostDocs were Norwegian, 73% foreign.

Survey responses analysis

- Survey done with the help of Respons Analyse
 - Initial analysis done by Respons Analyse
 - Further analysis was done in the UiODoc board (especially analysis of free text comments)

Onboarding



Onboarding

- All in all the respondents were satisfied with onboarding as international researchers at UiO
 - 59% of all respondents reporting “satisfied” or “very satisfied”
 - PhDs were a little more satisfied than PostDocs (63% vs 54%)

Internationalization



Thoughts on Internationalization: majority positive

- 55% respondents expressed opinions

“I think it is positive. International students often have different experiences and skills (...). (...) helps expand the research and makes it more visible” (PhD)

“(...). Only if UiO manages to attract internationally competitive researchers it will be able to produce high quality research and implement high quality teaching” (PostDoc)

Internationalization thoughts: some critical

- About one in five expressed more negative opinions:

“It is easy to face norwegian colleagues (not all) that judge outcomers for not speaking Norwegian (...). There is a lot of social preasure and lack of empathy (...). People even gets angry when you don't speak Norwegian (...)” (PostDoc)

“Little support from the faculty to do research stays abroad” (PhD)

Internationalization: balancing the costs and benefits

- A similar number of respondents expressed “balanced” views, reflecting on the benefits and costs of internationalization:

“I think it is good to have some internationalisation, but it should not come at a negative cost for the Norwegian society (...)” (PhD)

“(...) great for UiO (...). (...) international researchers should learn to adapt to Norwegian customs and language. I feel the university does not support this enough (...). (...) why are there no free language courses for international researchers? (...) the ones that exist (...) are organized during work hours (...)” (PostDoc)

Internationalization: some differences

- **At times conflicting views:**

“Fairly good among the temporary employees, could be better among the permanent staff” (PhD)

“On the level of permanent staff, this is excellent at UiO. At the level of temporary staff, I'd say it's achieved to a satisfactory level” (PhD)

Internationalization: language dilemmas

- Several comments related to the need for greater Norwegian skills:

"It is a challenge that so many fellows do not speak fluent Norwegian. (...) An international approach to research is important, but I find it strange that a third of the fellows on the last course I attended do not speak Norwegian" (PhD) – translated quote

"UiO should demand more of international employees with regard to learning Norwegian upon arrival. Norway must be one of very few countries in Europe where no linguistic skill is required" (PostDoc)

Internationalization: language dilemmas

- Several comments related to the need for greater Norwegian skills:

"It is a challenge that so many PhD candidates don't speak fluent Norwegian. I work internationally, write parts of assignments in English and work with several foreign professors. An international approach in research is important, but I think it is strange that a third of PhD candidates on the last course I attended don't speak Norwegian" (PhD) – quote translated from Norwegian

"UiO should demand more of international employees with regard to learning Norwegian upon arrival. Norway must be one of very few countries in Europe where no linguistic skill is required" (PostDoc)

Internationalization: language dilemmas

- Conversely, some responses reflected difficulties due to communications being in Norwegian:

“lots of communication of events are in Norwegian, (...) employee section of UiO website are in Norwegian - this can make it hard to know your rights and duties (...)” (PhD)

“(...) our department is still very much divided between Norwegian and international staff. (...) many official events (julebords, seminars, etc) are very exclusionary due to the use of Norwegian language only” (PostDoc)

Internationalization: language courses

- **Comments on Norwegian language courses**

“(...) I wish UiO would improve language support for international staff who need to learn Norwegian and to make democracy accessible to everybody, especially international temporary staff” (PhD)

“Conflict about language. Not enough incentives to learn Norwegian, but at the same time not enough inclusion of international workers” (PhD)

Internationalization: language courses

- Comments on Norwegian language courses

Awesome to attract the best minds! The only problem is language. Staff coming in from abroad should in general have some proficiency in the Norwegian language asap because they miss out on important activities (teaching, meetings) if they don't. And that further excludes them from social relationships and collaborations that are formed through e.g. teaching. Everyone (also PhD, postdoc etc) should ideally join a language course when they start their employment, and ideally those hours could contribute towards their teaching hours. (PhD)

Work satisfaction



Work satisfaction

- 72% were satisfied with the overall experience of their research position, and 78% were satisfied specifically with their project
- 62% were satisfied with the integration into their social environment, and 64% were satisfied with their physical environment
- 17% stated, however, that they had encountered substantial problems regarding supervision of their project

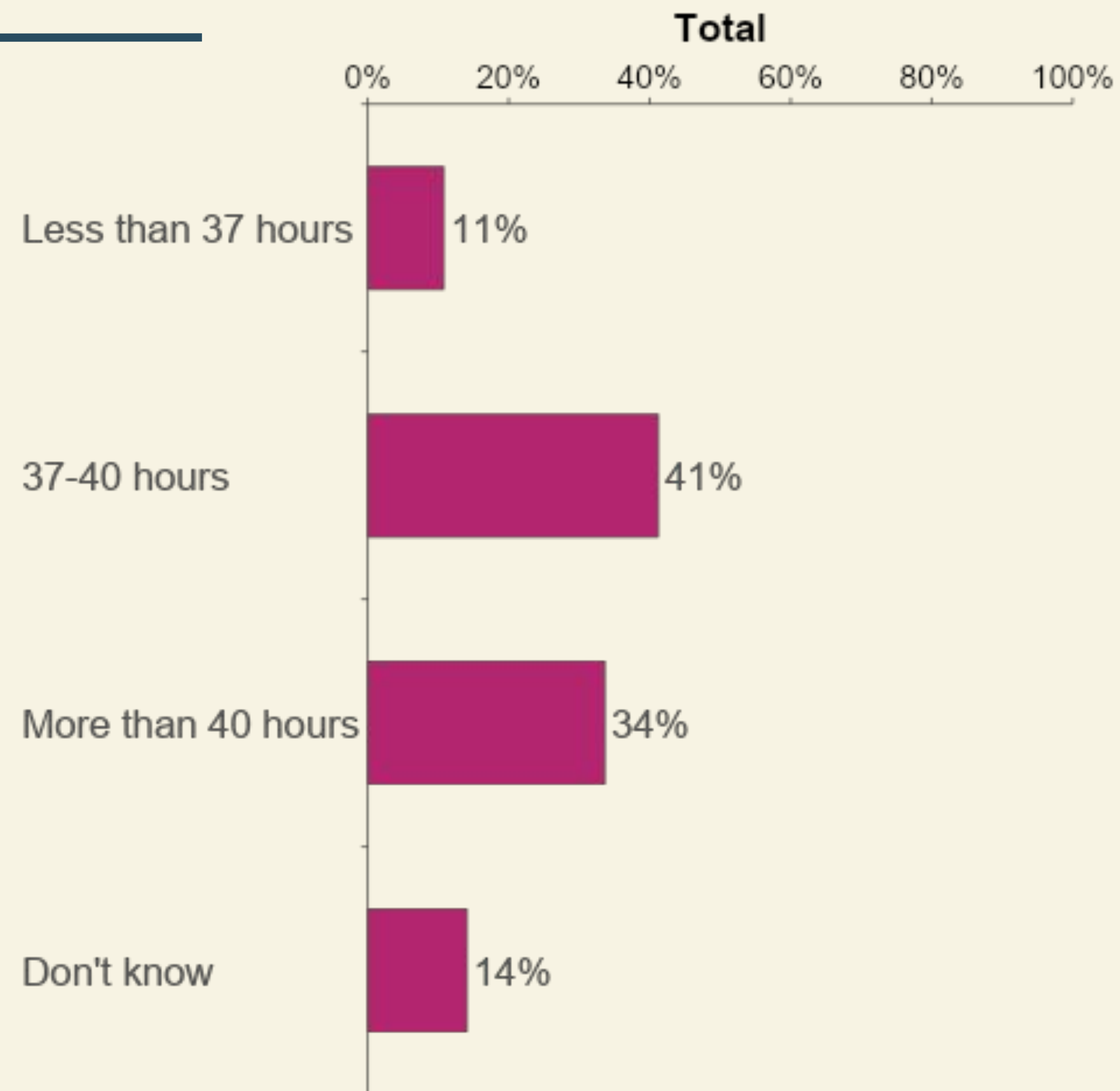
Supervision problems

Of the 17% of respondents who reported having encountered problems during supervision, 71% provided additional information. The main supervision problems raised were:

- Absent supervisor / insufficient levels of supervision
- Abuse of power (i.e. lack of acknowledgement of work, working hour expectations, demands)
- Communication deficit (no scheduled meetings, inadequate time frames, etc.)
- Abuse (harassment, gender imbalance, hostile communications).

Work hours

- On average respondents work 42.4 hours per week
- 9.6 hours per week is spent on non-research tasks on average

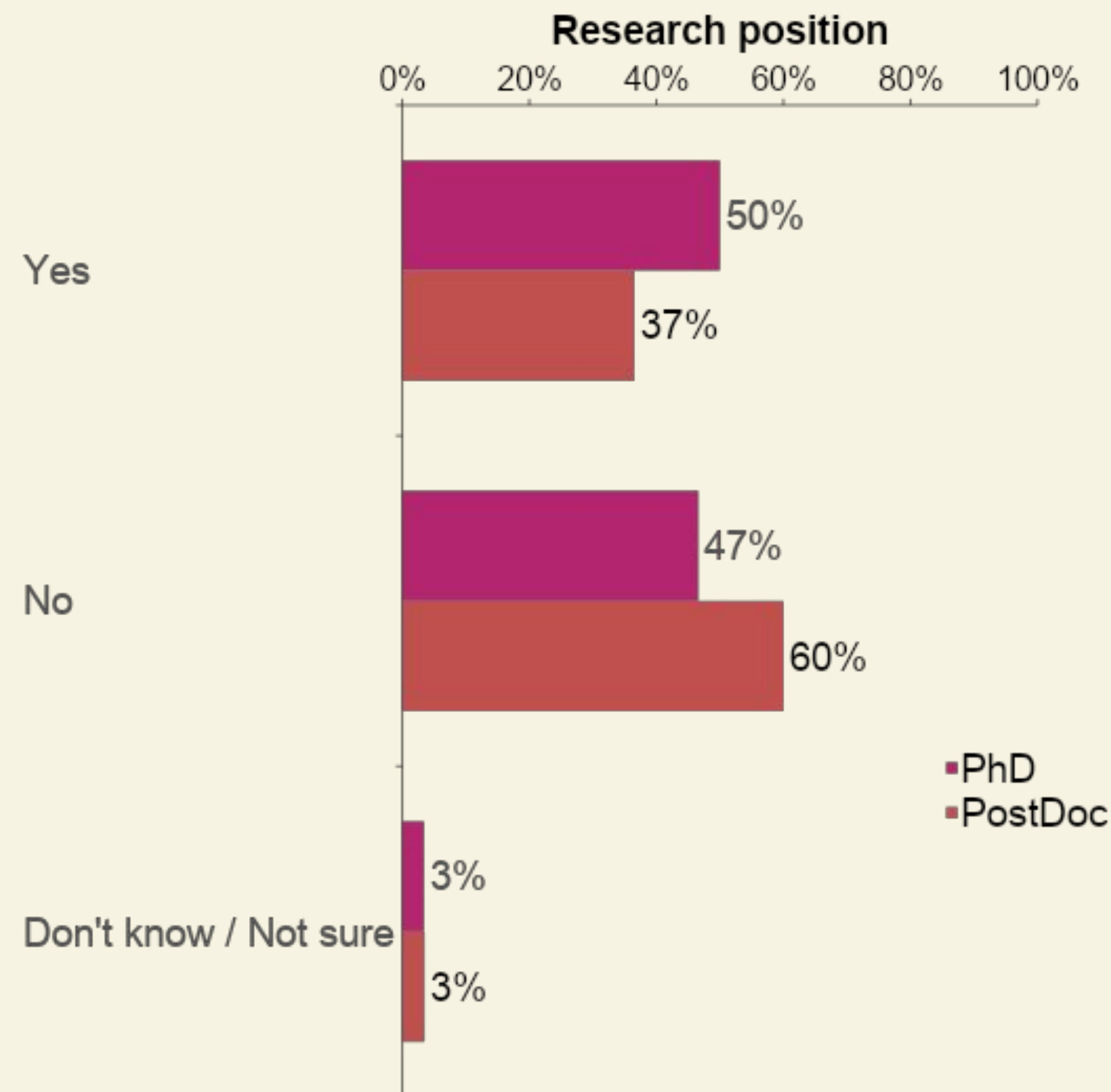


Salary satisfaction

- The respondents were somewhat divided in relation to salary satisfaction
- 41% were satisfied, and 37% were unsatisfied
- **Only 25% of Norwegians** were satisfied with their salary, compared to **54%** of non-Norwegian

Mental health

- **46%** of respondents had sought **mental health support** in the **previous 12 months**.
- This was more common among PhDs than PostDocs



Teaching duties



Teaching duties

- 52% of PhDs and 37% PostDocs have contracts with teaching duties
- **53%** with teaching duties are **satisfied**, and spend an average 11.3 hours teaching per week
- 49% PostDocs and 32% of PhD fellows without teaching duties **would prefer to teach**



Teaching duties comments

Of 47% of respondents with teaching duties, 53% elaborated on these duties, resulting in 153 comments

+ Many enjoy teaching and find it positive

+ Collect important experiences



- Limited teaching possibilities

- Too much time allocated for tasks / too little credit for work



- Feel “abandoned” in planning

- Foreign PhD fellows find it difficult to get teaching duties

Future
career



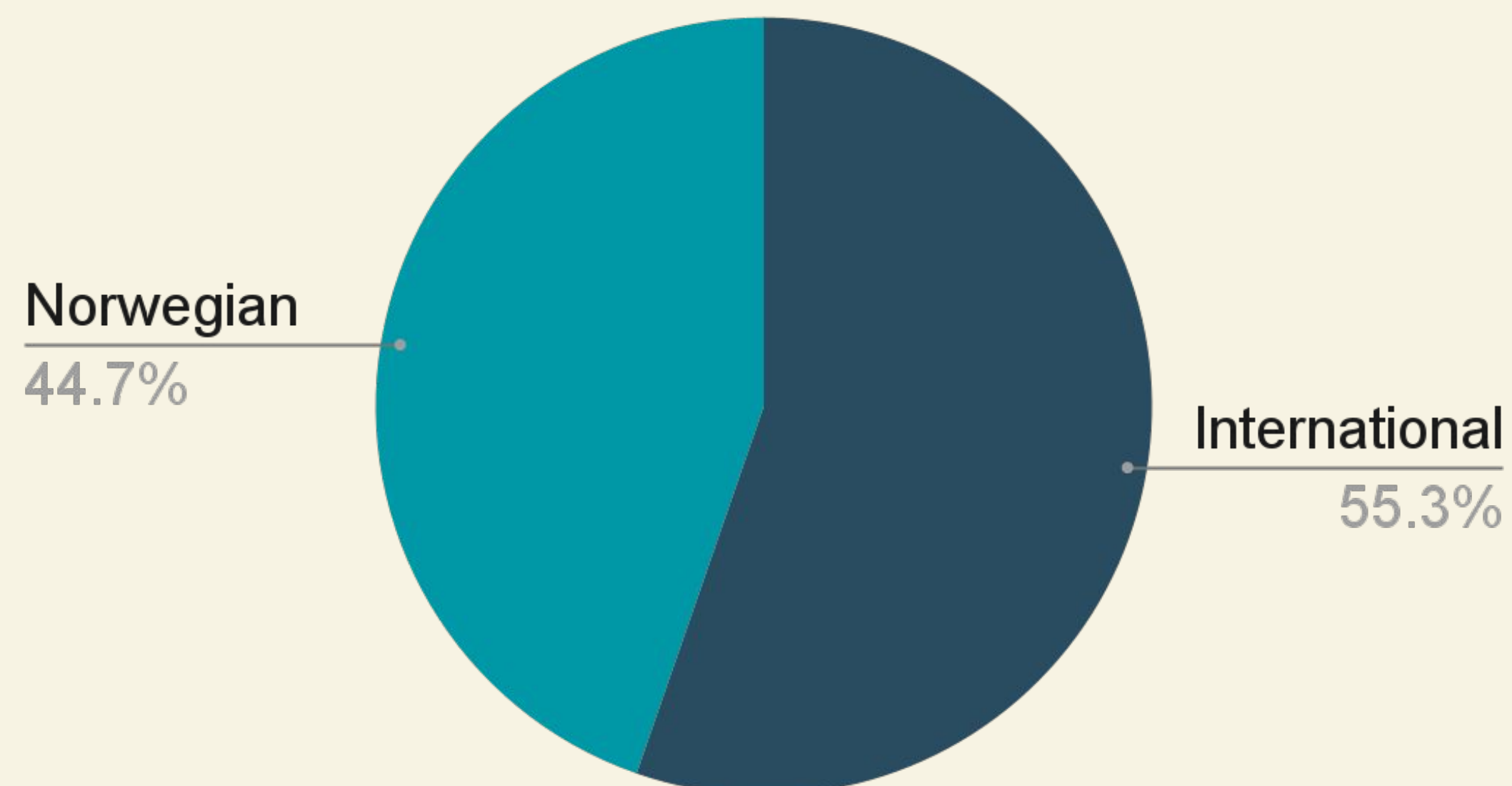
Future career

- **47%** of respondents would like a **career in academia**, while 11% will pursue a career in public sector outside academia, and 10% will pursue a career in private sector.
- 24% were undecided.
- International researchers were slightly more likely to pursue a career in academia than Norwegians (52% vs 42%)
- Postdoctoral fellows were more likely to pursue a career in academia than PhD fellows (63% vs 39%)

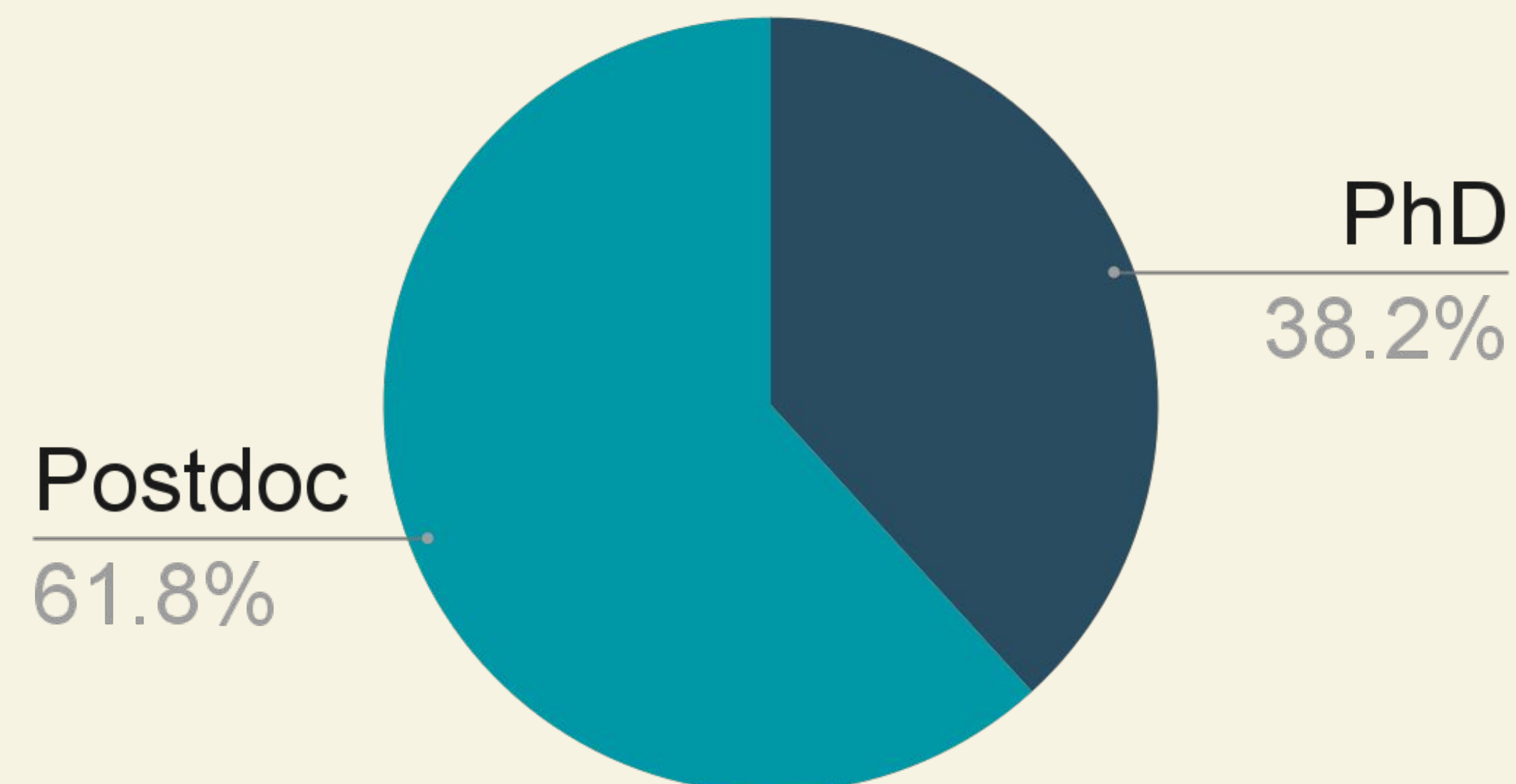
Future career

Desire to pursue career in academia:

Future career in academia (by nationality)



Future career in academia (by position)

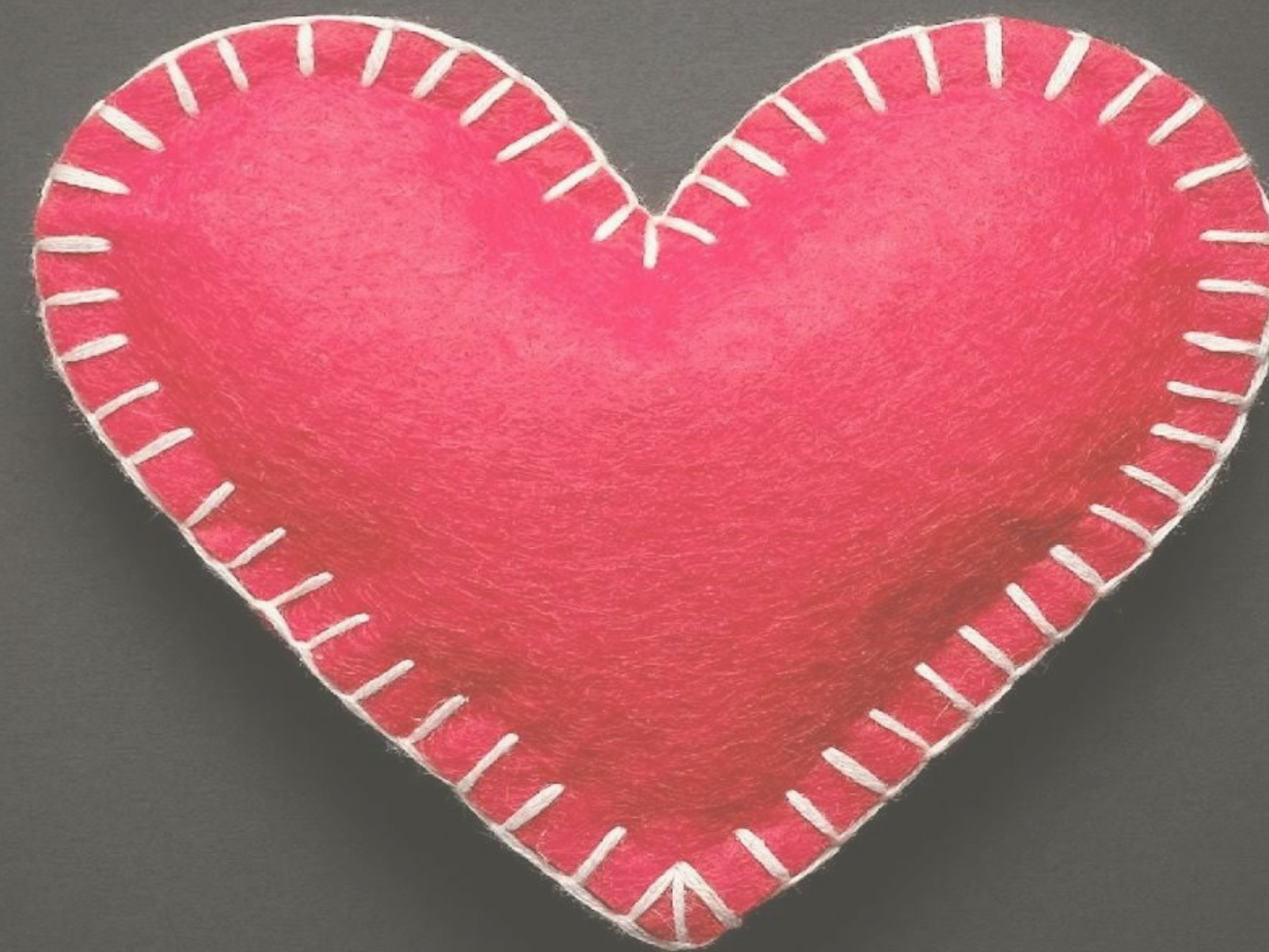


Training and relevant courses



Training and relevant courses

- **64%** of the respondents stated that they **have access to training and relevant courses**. 14% reported that they do not
- **Only 25%** find it **easy** to **find relevant courses**. A higher percentage (32%) find it difficult, and 43% find it neither difficult nor easy
- **74%** would consider taking **courses** at **other institutions** or universities in Norway



Areas of UiO support

Areas of UiO-support

76% respondents were aware of one+ area of UiO-support. Career development (45%), employment conditions (42%), and Mental health (37%), were the areas they were most aware of

- **Employment conditions** was important for 84% and most important for 37%
- **Career development** was important for 80% and most important 36%
- **Mental health** was important for 64% and most important 15%



UiODoc

UiODoc

- 67% of respondents stated that they have heard of UiODoc.
- 28% stated the organisation was important for them, while the organization was not important for 15%.
- UiODoc was far more important for non-Norwegians (36%) than Norwegians (19%)
- 42% of respondents had attended a UiODoc-event
- 54% non-Norwegian students had attended such events, compared to 30% of Norwegians
- 10% had interacted with UiODoc other than through attending events (reached out by email, Social Media, etc.)

Thank you!

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