



the Australian Society *for*
Medical
Research

THE ASMR WORKPLACE SURVEY

INTRODUCTION

In March this year, the Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR) commissioned a “Workplace Survey”. The Workplace Survey was sent to all members of the society and the 37 affiliate societies of the ASMR. It was designed to collect hard data on how Australian biomedical researchers regard their workplace conditions and to gain information on various aspects of the perceived “brain drain” of Australia’s best biomedical researchers to overseas laboratories..

The Workplace Survey has clearly identified areas of concern to Australian biomedical researchers. The results of the survey are summarised below. The ASMR will use the survey results to focus our advice to the NHMRC, government and industry on strategies to improve conditions within the health and medical research sector and provide incentives for our best Australian-trained investigators to establish a long-term career in research in Australia.

who responded?

A total of 266 people responded to the survey, including 32 Australian researchers based overseas. 54% of the respondents were male, 46% female. The age of the respondents ranged from 20 to 64 years old, the average age was 36. Clearly some of the members of the ASMR had passed copies of the survey form to colleagues who were non-members, as only 65% of the respondents were members of the society.

Their qualifications

66% of the respondents held a Bachelor of Science degree and 58% held a PhD. 31% of the respondents held other degrees including MD, MBBS, Diplomas, Masters or other Bachelor Degrees.

The majority of the respondents (87%) had completed their highest degree in Australia and 22% were currently studying full-time. Over half of the respondents had done their highest degrees in either Victoria or New South Wales; approximately one third had completed their studies in South Australia or Queensland.

Their current position

Most of the respondents (94%) carried out research in the field of biomedical sciences; however a small number were doing clinical or public health research. Research in Australia was carried out fairly evenly between universities, hospitals and research institutes.

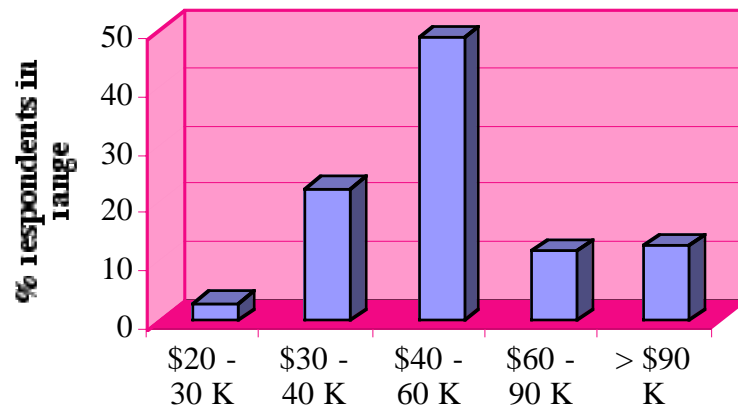
The majority of Australian-based respondents were in either a tenure-track/tenured position (38%) or a limited-term position (39%); 23% of the respondents were in fellowship positions. The NHMRC provided funding for 55% of these positions, 30% being sourced from other granting bodies. A small number of people were supported by industry, university sources, trust funds or hospital sources.

Most of the Australian researchers based overseas were working in either limited-term positions (38%) or fellowship positions (42%); the majority of these were funded from non-Australian sources.

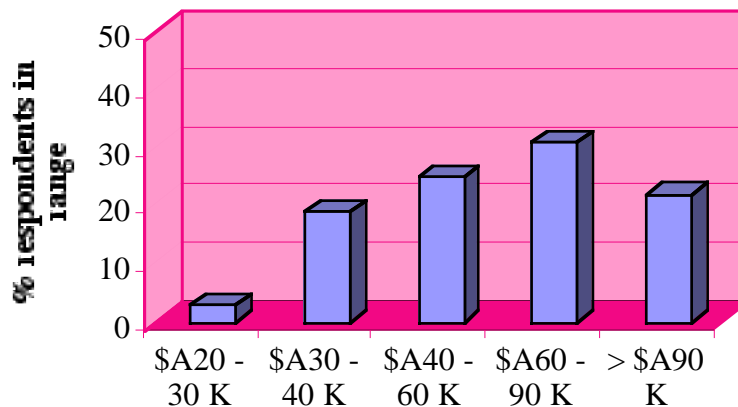
Their annual salary range

Most of the researchers within Australia (49%) had an annual salary range of \$40,000 - \$60,000; 28% had an annual salary over \$60,000. By contrast, the majority of Australian researchers based overseas (53%) had an annual salary over \$60,000.

Salary ranges of researchers in Australia



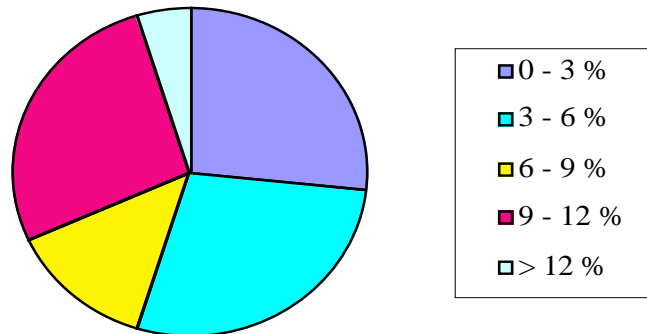
Salary ranges of researchers overseas



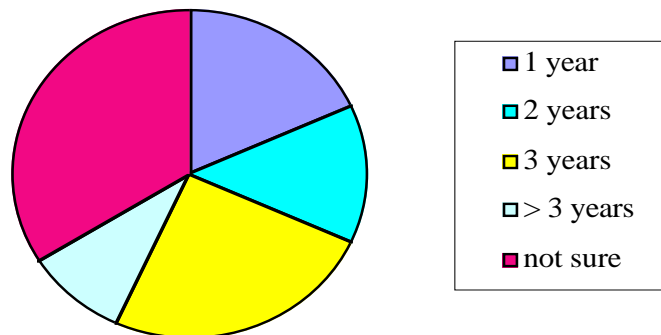
enterprise bargaining

Researchers within Australia were asked whether their current position was covered by an enterprise bargaining(EB) agreement: 53% responded yes to this question and 47% no. The variations between enterprise bargaining agreements nation-wide were highlighted by the variable pay increases and agreement terms, as illustrated below.

Pay increases in EB agreements



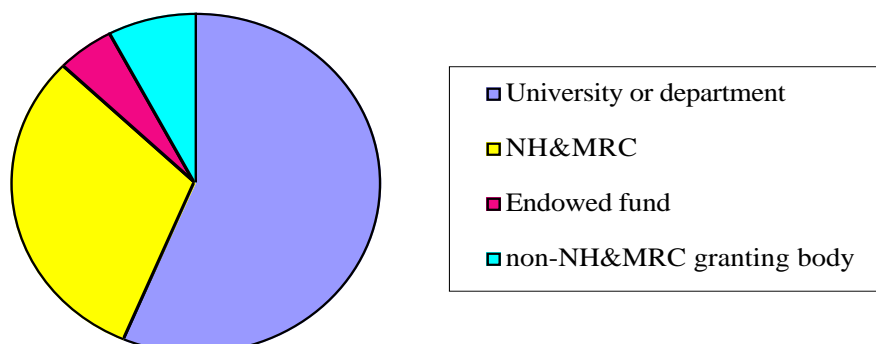
Terms of EB agreements



the students

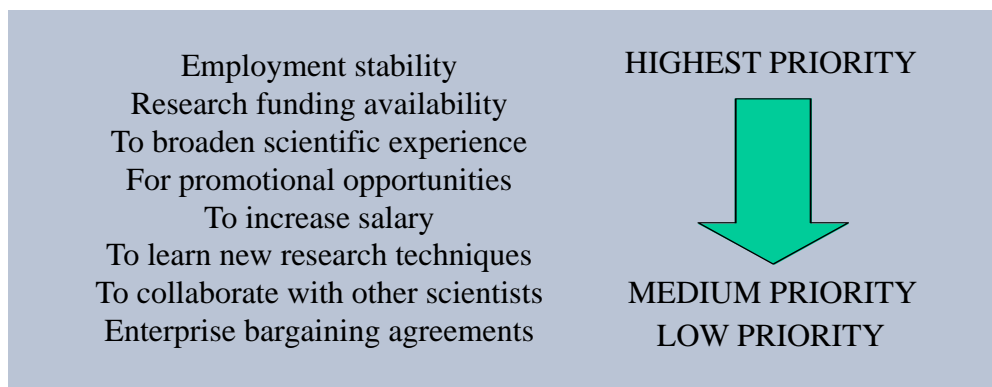
The students that responded to the survey were studying full-time; most (> 90%) were studying for their Ph.D. Over 60% of the students expected to finish their studies in the next 2 years. Surprisingly, 40% of the students were carrying out their studies in South Australia. The remainder were fairly evenly distributed between New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland with a small number from Western Australia. Most students had obtained their scholarship/ stipend from either their university or the NHMRC.

Source of student stipends



future plans

Many of the biomedical researchers (35%) in Australia were planning on changing positions in the next 6-12 months, with the majority seeking another research position either locally or overseas. The major reasons given for these decisions are listed below in order of priority.



the international experience

Most of the Australian researchers working overseas were based in either the United Kingdom or the USA; a small number were in Canada or Germany. Most had left Australia less than 2 years ago, however 25% had been away from Australia for 5 years or more. The majority had travelled overseas to broaden their scientific experience. Listed below are the major reason given for researchers leaving Australia, in order of priority.



Most Australian researchers working overseas did want to return to Australia to a research position. However, considerable concern was expressed about the availability of research funds, poor job security and lack of career structure and opportunities in the Australian research sector.

The Internet

66% of respondents were aware of information on research funding (success rate, grant deadlines, fellowships available etc) that was available on the Internet.

Frequently accessed websites
NHMRC, ARC

Regularly accessed websites
Anti-Cancer Council
ASMR
Australian University Websites
DETYA
Grantnet
NARF
National Heart Foundation
National Institutes of Health
SPIN, SPIRT and SMART Grant websites

Many of the respondents felt they would like to be able to access additional information on the Internet including a central registry of funding bodies and grants/fellowships available (including timetables for submission) and also advice on writing grants.

Information required for future career moves

Researchers were asked what information was most important to them for future career moves. Listed below, in order of priority, is how the majority of respondents rated current available information.

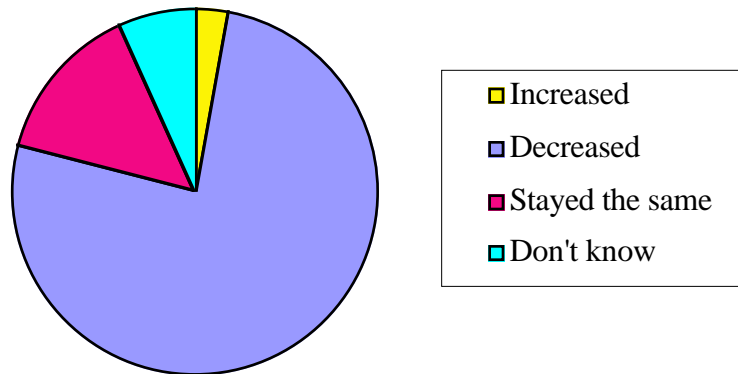
Current status of NHMRC funding	HIGHEST PRIORITY
Job, scholarship & fellowship advertisements	
Current political party platforms on research	
Annual publications from	
research institutes & universities	
Recent high profile research in Australia	
Updates on enterprise bargaining agreements	MEDIUM PRIORITY



perception of the current research environment

An overwhelming majority of researchers felt that funding for biomedical research and employment opportunities in Australia had decreased in the past five years.

Perception of employment opportunities for medical researchers in Australia in the past 5 years



Perception of funding for medical research in Australia in the past 5 years

