The ARMA Survey on Research Culture 2020

Source: Hans-Peter Gauster @sloppyperfectionist

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Contents

Executive Summary

The ARMA Survey on Research Culture 2020 aimed to explore the perspectives and experiences of the broad community of Research Managers and Administrators (RMAs) to better support the profession's needs.

This is the first ever survey to focus on the experiences of those who support, manage and design many of the polices, processes and strategies that inform research culture.

This report is the product of a collective community effort and captures a comprehensive range of perspectives on people's experience of Research Culture. We are grateful to both ARMA and non-ARMA members from across the sector who invested time in sharing their voice. Notably absent from this survey is the voice of early career RMAs and we will endeavour to proactively ensure these more 'hidden or quiet' voices are heard in the future. It is our firm belief that everyone contributes to, and benefits from, a positive, inclusive and creative research culture, and we want early career RMAs to feel that their experiences, perspectives and ideas are valued.

While promoting and supporting parity of esteem among the RMA community, we aim to collectively shape the future of a research environment that is inclusive, creative and supportive of all its stakeholders. To this end, we have highlighted comparisons to similar surveys in the sector (the Wellcome Trust *Reimagine Research Culture* survey), drawing attention to shared challenges and ambitions for the same culture. We are proud that many RMAs are committed to changing research culture for the better for everyone.

To help make visible the often invisible effort that goes into culture change and enriching activities, a number of additional questions were asked; including around the diversity ofareas covered by RMA roles, and additional and volunteer positions undertaken by these roles, which either directly or indirectly contribute to their environment.

ARMA's role is to empower all RMAs to be agents of change in research culture, regardless of role, seniority or experience. As the national membership body for the Research Management and Administration community, we have an important role to promote parity of esteem and to advocate for the interests of such a large component of the research ecosystem. We will do this through training, events and lobbying for change, and this survey is a benchmark of our progress on this journey.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank Hilary Noone, who has led on the development and analysis of this survey of behalf of ARMA – an inspired example of the active role that RMAs can play, not only in our professional association but in driving sector level change on important issues.

Jennifer Stergiou (ARMA Chair)

Approach

Survey design

Co-designed with colleagues from a diverse range of RMA roles and organisations, along with ARMA Board members including:

Stephanie Bales, Teesside University
Kieran Fenby-Hulse, Teesside University
Sam Lewis, University of Lincoln
Sapna Marwaha, Versus Arthritis
Hamish McAndrew, ARMA
Andrew Rawnsley, Teesside University
Jennifer Stergiou, Northumbria University
Nicole van der Westhuyzen, ARMA
Lorna Wilson, Durham University

Ethical review

Conducted by Teesside University and feedback actioned and approved.

Gathering Data

Data was gathered between 11th September and 25th September. The survey covered a range of areas, similar to those asked in comparable surveys, for consistency. Some questions covered personal or sensitive topics but respondents were under no obligation to answer and were able to progress through a question without answering. This explains the fluctuations between questions of the numbers of engaged respondents.

Analysis

The survey used both qualitative and quantitative approaches. Instances where further exploration would be required have been identified. EDI data is separated to minimise unconscious bias.

Comparison with Wellcome Trust Data

A number of other surveys of a similar type exist (e.g. Vitae CEDARS), indicating that work is being done in this sector, encompassing various perspectives. The ARMA survey most closely resembles the Wellcome Trust survey, which we will be making comparisons with throughout.

In order to compare some of our findings with the Wellcome survey findings, we have undertaken some light processing. For example, where Wellcome Trust asked a binary (agree/disagree) question, we have in some instances used a scale (strongly agree, slightly agree, etc.). In these cases, we simplified that data into two variables so that it could be easily compared with the equivalent data from the Wellcome survey.

Respondent information

281 respondents engaged with the survey, of which 170 were ARMA members. While the majority of responses came from Higher Education (HE) organisations, there was a broad geographical representation across the United Kingdom (UK) (**Fig 1.1** and **Fig 1.2**). Respondents were asked to share the disciplines and functional areas of work covered in their roles, both paid and unpaid, and their experience of their current, and ideal research culture. To determine the breadth and level of experience of the sector, respondents shared information on their years working in the sector, contract types and level of seniority.
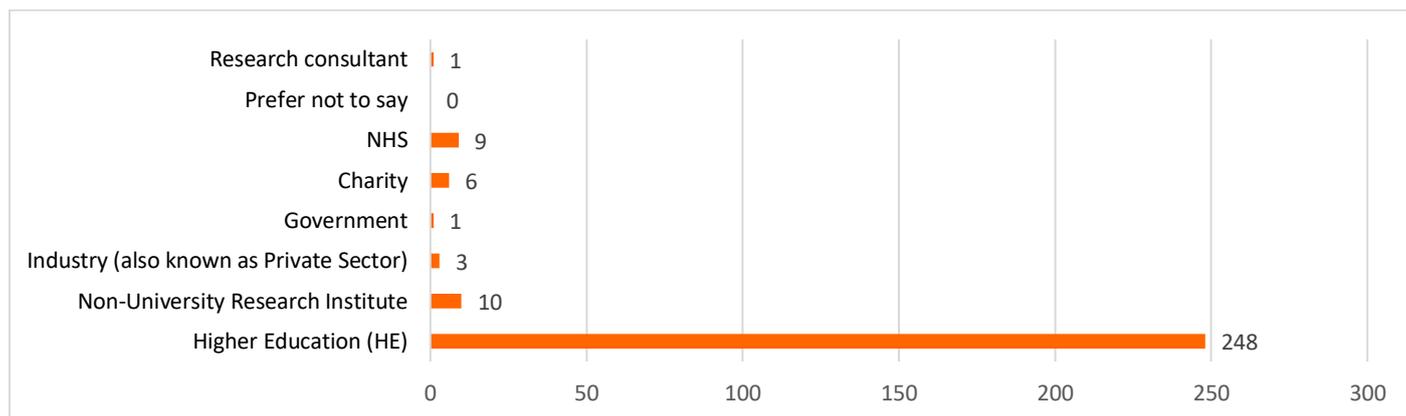

Figure 1.1: Type of organisation where respondents employed (n=278)
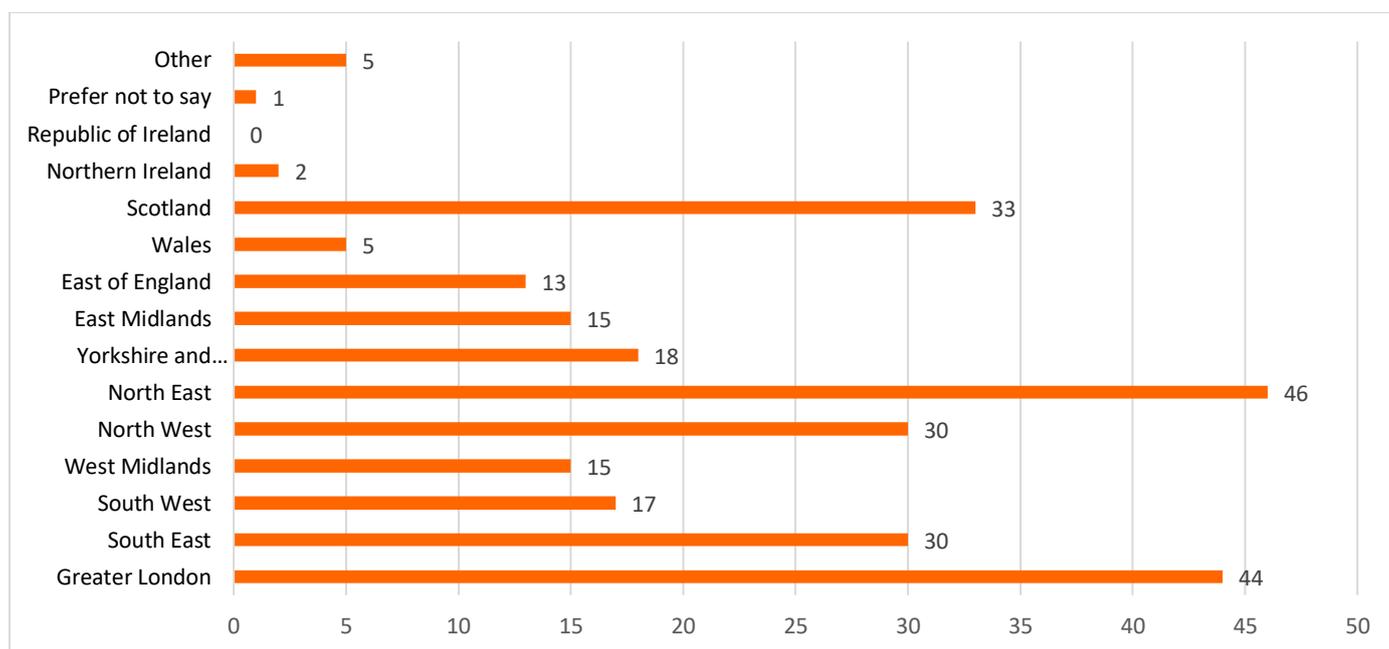
Figure 1.2: Geographical location of respondents (n= 274)

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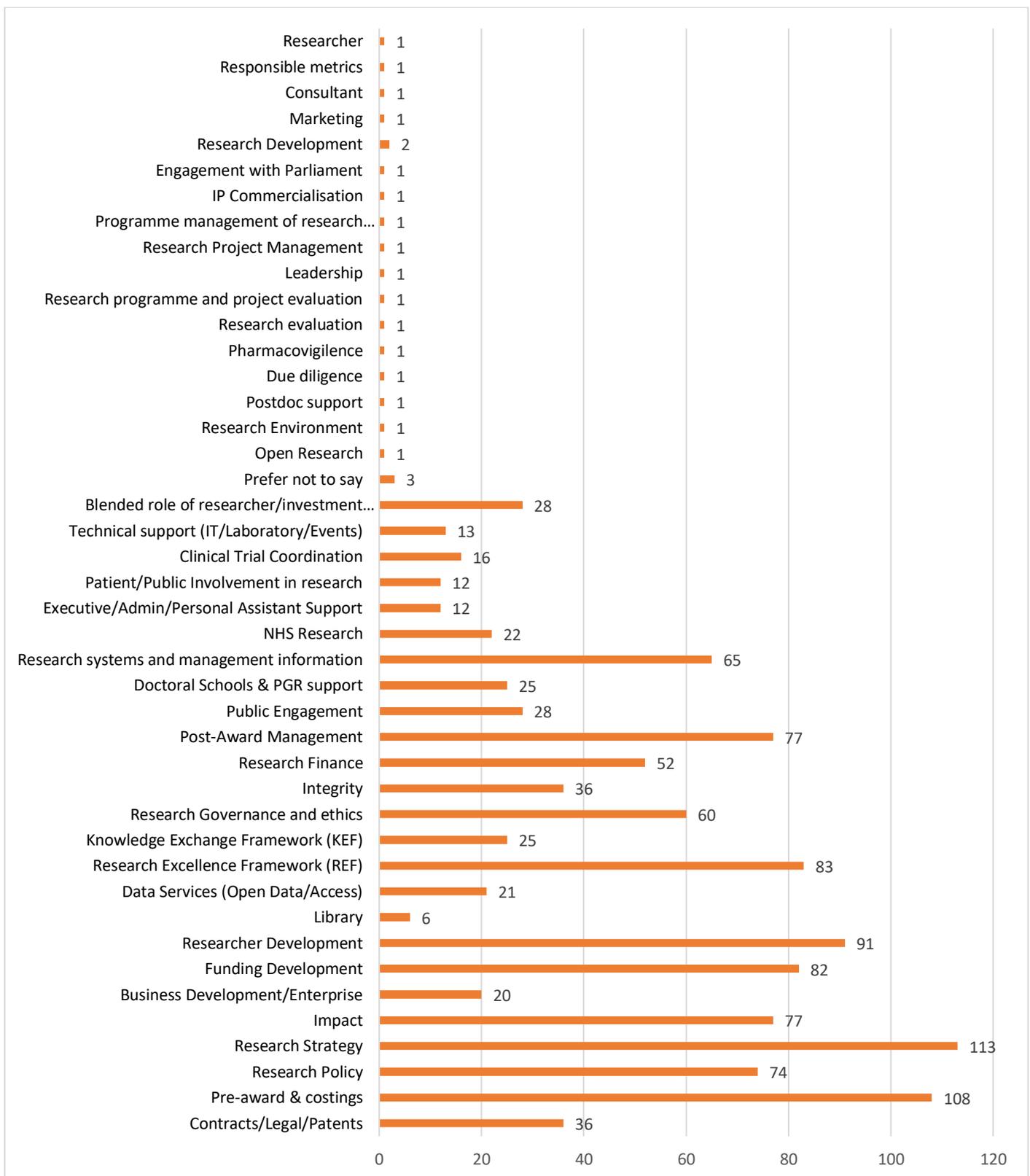
Figure 1.3: Job roles of respondents. n=279)

Respondents covered a diverse range of research management and support areas (**Fig 1.3**), including more niche posts, which are equally important to represent here. With 279 respondents covering 1205 data points, many cover several areas in their one role. This is indicative of the sector, as identified in ARMA's Research Office Survey 2020: Benchmarking UK Institutional Research Office.

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Figure 1.4: Disciplines supported by survey respondents (n=128)

Fig 1.4 illustrates the diversity of the disciplines where survey respondents work or support. This reflects a good cross section of the disciplines covered in research.

Fig 1.5 A broad range of RMAs were surveyed, not just ARMA members. Surveys that were returned came mainly from mid-level roles or higher. There was no engagement from administrative assistants, posts often seen as the 'entry' level to the sector. Their absence may indicate a number of things, including poor communication channels or a perception/narrative that people in more operational roles do not consider themselves (or are not considered) part of organisational culture. ARMA is committed to changing this perception.

Full time Contracts	83%
Part time contracts	16%
Hourly paid	1%
Fixed Term contract	24%
Open ended/permanent contracts	76%
Worked in RMA > 1 year	6%
Worked in RMA 1 - 3 years	23%
Worked in RMA 3 - 8 years	31%
Worked in RMA < 8 years	40%
Assistant Administrator	0%
Administrator	9%
Officer	26%
Assistant Manager	8%
Manager	46%
Assistant Director	5%
Director	6%

Figure 1.5: Data on contract type and term, length of time working in RMA roles and closet comparable level of seniority (n = 278)

Figure 1.6: Additional roles held alongside/outside main post in organisation (n=242)

To make visible the invisible work, respondents were asked if they held an additional role alongside/outside of their main position at their employing organisation. Additional roles are a common means by which many RMAs gain skills/experience/network contacts to help progress their careers, as the promotion and progression routes in HE and other sectors can vary for these types of posts. These are often volunteer roles, which directly or indirectly enrich an organisational culture, e.g. mentoring. **Fig 1.6** indicates the most common role held where respondents reported additional roles (35%).

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Those who noted 'other' included people who were also self-employed and members of internal or external organisational governance committees. How these roles are recognised varies; 27% are voluntary and 6% are informally acknowledged – not in a job description but asked to do the work and paid for it. Only 2% have such roles formally reflected in their job description, while a small number are allocated time from their employer to engage in this work – e.g. union casework. A large number of respondents (62%) did not hold additional roles and a few held multiple additional roles. All had worked in RMA roles in HE organisations for 8+ years and were at manager/assistant manager and director level.

Perceptions of the Current and the Ideal Research Culture
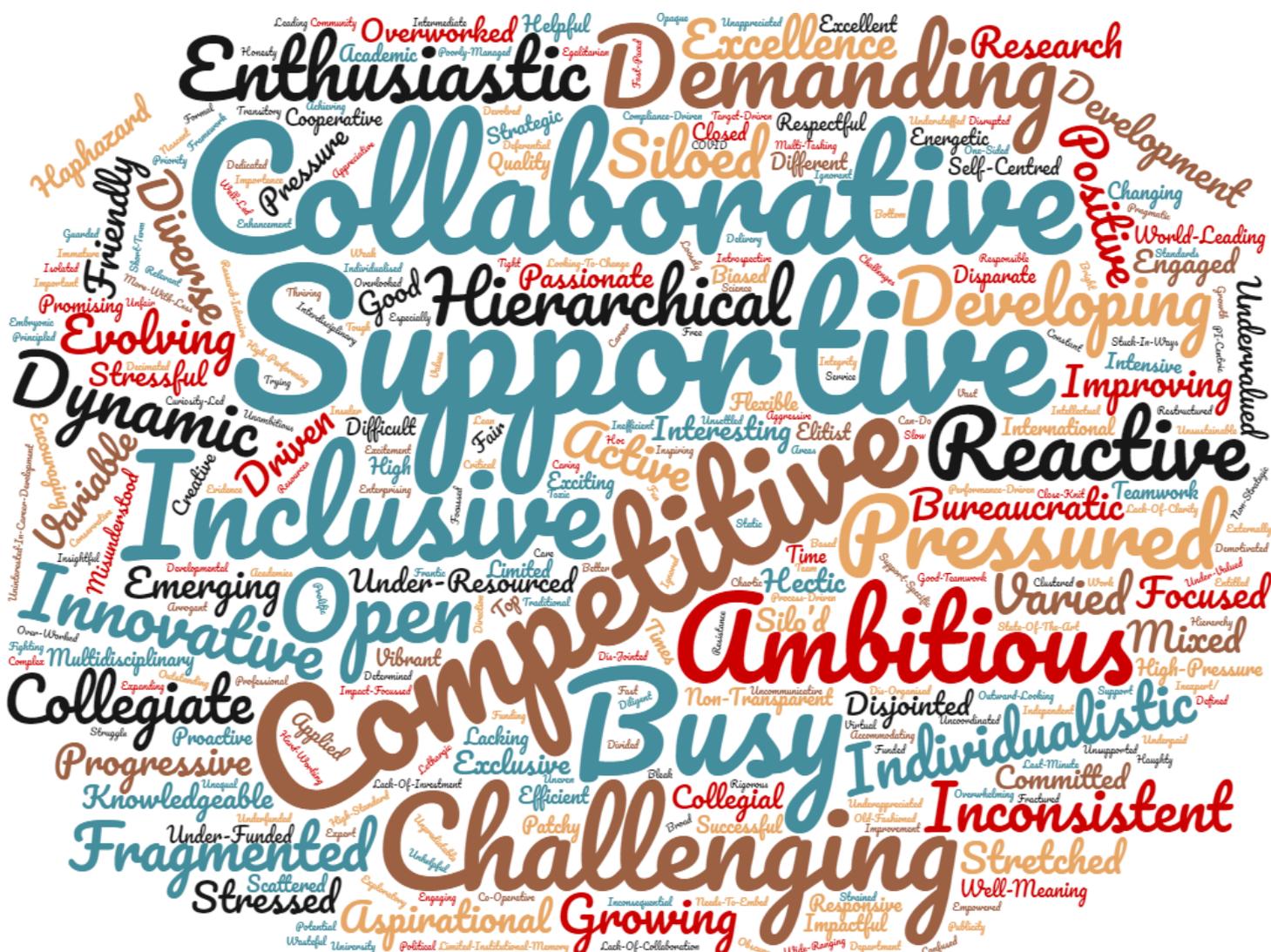
Figure 1.7: Word cloud of the three words survey respondents chose to describe their CURRENT local research culture (n=233)

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When asked for three words to describe their current and local research culture (their team/department), respondents gave a range of answers (see **Fig 1.7**). The most common word was 'supportive', which could mean a few things for RMAs, not least that these roles are supportive of research. What exactly is meant by this needs further investigation. Other common words included 'collaborative' and 'competitive'. These terms might be constructed as being mutually exclusive and in some cases create situations that require careful navigation. This also seemed to be the case among academics/researchers in the Wellcome Trust survey (see **Fig 1.8**).

Many respondents reflected that while they were experiencing a particular culture, other departments in the same organisation were much worse/better, and this variation depended on the institutional leadership and how it cascades to local leadership. There was a prevailing theme that institutions were felt not to value non-academic staff:

> *Feel very valued by my direct team but not by the university, which places little value on non-academic staff – (Manager)*

> *[At a local level], we are collaborative and supportive of each other. However, at senior level within the organisation, our roles are often ignored and our line management and development support is lacking – (Manager)*

This perpetuates the 'them vs us' culture between administrative staff (the job family to which RMAs commonly belong in HE) and academic staff.

> *There is a "them and us" culture between academic/researchers and professional services/research support – (Manager)*

A clear detachment between teams or job families that share a common value, aims or resources:

> *There is a disconnect between NHS service and research despite many of the resources being shared – (Manager)*

> *The research culture is a generally supportive one, which is improving. However, it's often one-sided in terms of what RMAs can do for researchers themselves, how they can improve the research culture for researchers etc. Support from RMAs largely comes from other RMAs rather than the community as a whole (including researchers and RMAs). There is rarely much generic focus on how to improve the research culture for RMAs independently from researchers – (Officer)*

And one where hierarchy and individual recognition rather than team achievement is common:

> *Culture is very focused on winning funding rather than delivering research. Senior group continually nominate themselves for prizes and awards, and appear not to know more junior staff. Lack of a sense of an organisation / team, more a collection of individuals – (Manager)*

> *World class work being done but drivers and rewards drive selfishness – (Manager)*

There were many comments on reactive and pressurised environments with excessive workloads and competing deadlines, with many noting how RMAs are trying to make things better for researchers:

> *In my institution, the research support staff are by and large very supportive and the culture is good, despite the pressures of workload. But researchers themselves do not always have that experience. Their*

culture is often discriminatory and pressurized, and expectations for performance are not realistic. Line management can also be very poor. All the extra expectations around REF, open access, impact etc. are poorly understood by line management and any time spent on them is, in many cases, regarded as wasted or has to be carved out of their own time. As staff numbers have reduced and student numbers increased, teaching has come to dominate, and timetabling leaves no consistent time for research (odd half hours in a lab are not productive). People have resigned over just this issue. Even time on external grants is not respected in many cases and most academics have a workload of more than 100% written into our workload model. This takes its toll on research culture overall. – (Manager)

The following comment exemplifies why those in supportive/administrative/technical roles may not see themselves as having a role in research culture:

We're a support team, the research culture is elsewhere – (Director)

Figure 1.8 Words used by Wellcome Trust respondents to describe their CURRENT research culture. Source: Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Report

How this compares to Wellcome Trust's Reimagine Research Culture Report

Similar experiences were reported by Wellcome Trust in January 2020; notably 'collaborative', 'supportive' and 'competitive'. This suggests that those who work in the research system are having shared experiences.

Figure 1.9 Word cloud of the three words survey respondents chose to describe their IDEAL local research culture (n=230)

When asked to use three words to describe their ideal local research culture, respondents gave a range of answers with the common terms illustrated in **Fig 1.9**. Respondents wanted a more diverse, inclusive and proactive culture where expertise was valued, regardless of the source. We note the reappearance of 'supportive', indicating that there is some distance between the current and the ideal situations. As observed previously, more questions are needed to unpack perspectives on what 'supportive' means in this context.

Within the additional comments, several themes emerged, including the want for visible contributions of all staff:

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A culture in which everybody is recognised for their contributions and where research is performed by well-functioning teams of individuals with different complementary strengths, not around a "star scientist" – (Officer)

For parity of esteem between job families:

A culture where supporting professional service colleagues are valued for their contribution as much as academics – (Manager)

I feel there is a lot of basis on post graduate qualifications and exclusion of other roles that are not directly academic, and may be seen as less important because their name is not going to be on a research paper – (Administrator)

That the culture must be organic to be sustainably embedded:

The culture can [sometimes] be forced upon staff and needs to become second nature – (Assistant Manager)

The need for more staff development support at all career stages:

To thrive an organisation needs people at the top of the organisation who set an example and hold their hands out to colleagues at other stages in their career, at all levels, helping them to progress and grow in an inclusive and supporting environment – (Manager)

We need to allow all individuals to develop fully within their role and opportunities to do this should be available to all – (Manager)

Ultimately, the culture should…**Counter some of the negative pressures organisations have limited control over (Manager)**

Figure 1.10 Words used by Wellcome Trust respondents to describe IDEAL research culture. Source: Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Report

Comparison with Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Culture Report

There are similarities in experience here, notably 'supportive', 'open', 'creative', and 'inclusive/diverse', again indicating shared ideals among those working in the research ecosystem.

Career experiences

A major feature of other surveys was how happy people were with their career experience. To ensure parity, the ARMA Research Culture Survey 2020 asked the same questions.

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
I am supported to have a healthy work-life balance	39	97	68	21	13	1
Additional work is discussed with me and is fairly assigned among the…	14	91	62	47	19	5
My contracted workload is manageable	12	87	66	48	24	1
I have access to opportunities for promotion and progression	9	51	82	68	23	6
I am paid fairly for my level of work	44	110	42	37	5	1
I have fair opportunities to participate in decision making processes (e.g.…	28	98	66	37	8	2
I have fair access to funding to attend conferences and external…	32	90	57	38	12	9
I feel my contributions are visible and appropriately credited in my working…	33	114	46	37	8	1
I feel my skills, knowledge, and experience are valued in my role	55	108	40	29	6	1
Creativity in all its forms is welcomed within my working environment	25	103	65	37	7	1
I have skill development /professional development options available to me	32	108	56	33	10	1
I am aware of a range of different career options (inside/outside of RMA)…	23	97	58	47	10	4
I am satisfied with my career prospects in RMA	17	96	69	45	8	4

Figure 2.1: Career experiences of respondents (n=240)

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Survey respondents are generally happy with their career experience but satisfaction with access to opportunities for promotion and progress was ranked the lowest. As most respondents were from the HE sector (89%), this may reflect the different way administrative/professional services staff, including RMAs/Technicians, can access career progression/promotion opportunities. Jobs must be applied for as they become available rather than promotions applied for, as is experienced within the academic job strand. Other low-scoring areas included workloads and career options. This aligns with comments about feeling valued by institutions, where support and resources are focused on academic colleagues' training and development opportunities, as these are seen as the investment strand to bring in more income into an organisation.

Some highlighted unfavourable behaviours, that made the participant feel belittled due to their knowledge or experience being undervalued:

The skills, expertise and experience of PSS and/or non-academic staff are often valued less than those of academic staff, even where the expertise of the former is more relevant than the latter. To give a recent example, the experience and professional skills of PSS colleagues with expertise in public engagement were trumped by the views of academic colleagues who - though they have experience and expertise in their research - had no prior experience of working with the public... For me it's an illustration that deference to academic expertise in all things is counterproductive. While academic research and excellence should be at the heart of what we do, academics are not always best placed to lead in some areas of activity – (Manager)

And the wider impact of this on the organisation:

I come from a research background [PostDoc]. Academic research culture valued the research pipeline so highly that young researchers are made to feel that they have failed in their career if they choose to change career paths to a more supportive role. These supportive roles are not valued and the ideas of the respective personnel are therefore not always considered, which is an ultimate loss for the research institution when they have good ideas – (Manager)

		Agree	Disagree
Creativity in all its forms is welcomed within my working environment	**ARMA** (n=240)	**53%**	**45%**
	Wellcome (n=4065)	**60%**	**23%**
I am aware of a range of different career options (inside/outside of RMA) that could utilise my skills	**ARMA** (n=240)	**50%**	**24%**
	Wellcome (outside of research) (n=4125)	**65%**	**24%**
I feel my contributions are visible and appropriately credited in my working environment	**ARMA** (n=240)	**61%**	**36%**
	Wellcome (The work I do is fairly and adequately recognised) (n=4065)	**60%**	**26%**

Figure 2.2: Comparison with Wellcome Findings on same questions. Source: Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Report

Comparison with Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Culture Report

Similar experiences are reported in Wellcome's survey findings from January 2020, notably in work being recognised. Again, this indicates that those who work in the research ecosystem have shared experiences and more can be done to recognise the skills and creativity of RMAs as compared to researchers.

Leadership

A major feature of other surveys was respondents' experiences either of leadership, or as leaders themselves. To ensure parity, the ARMA Research Culture Survey 2020 asked the same questions.
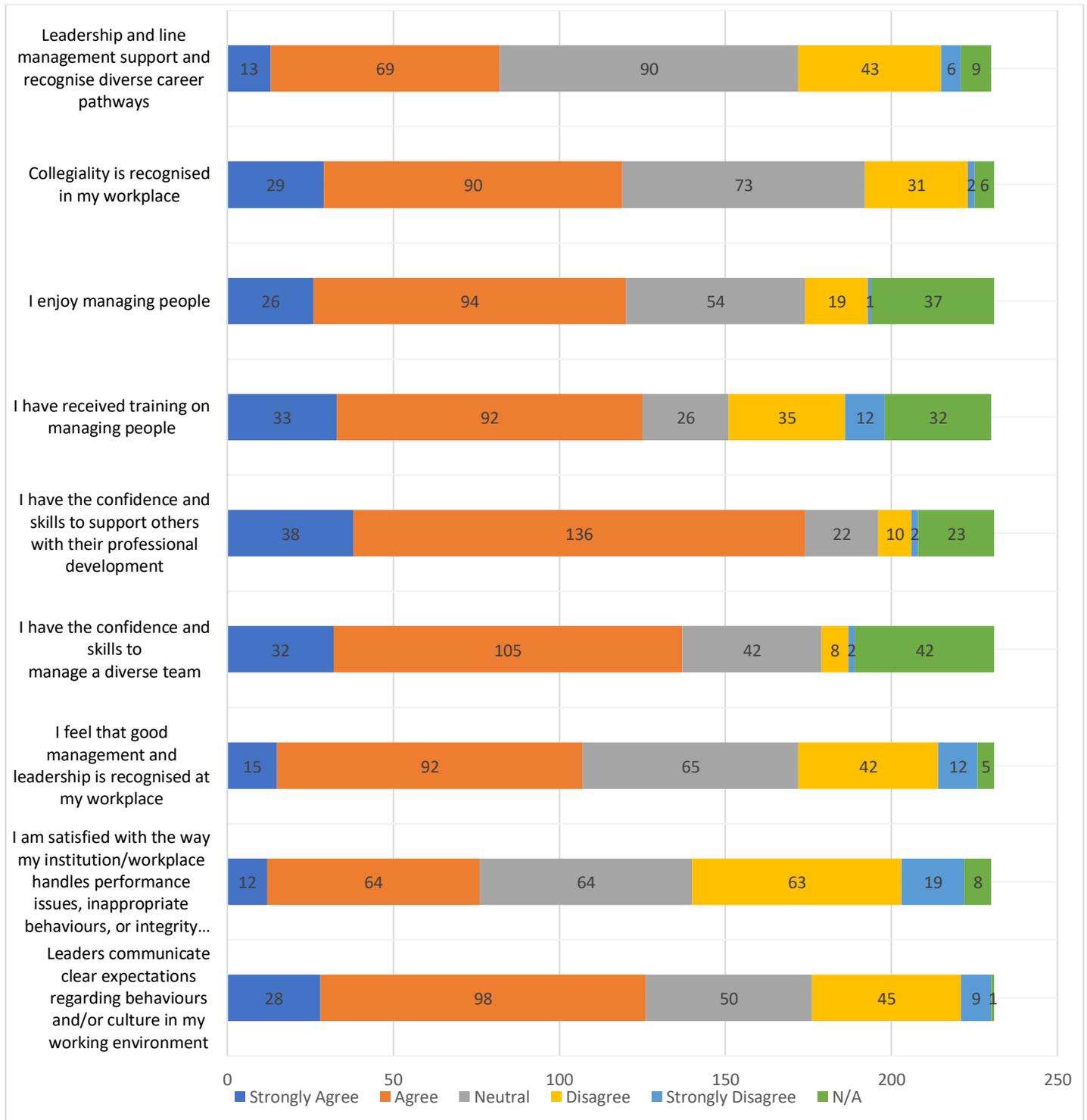

Figure 3.1 Leadership experiences (n=231)

Respondents reported positively on their experiences of leadership or as leaders themselves. The most unsatisfactory responses are recorded in how diverse career pathways are valued and in how issues of performance or inappropriate behaviour or research integrity are handled. This echoes perceptions on the training of managing staff; how leaders communicate expectations of behaviour and culture, and how good management and leadership is valued. Disparity between clear guidance and trust in actions being taken on poor performance/issues is apparent.

		Agree	Disagree
I have received training on managing people	ARMA (N=231)	54%	20%
	Wellcome (N=1934)	48%	42%
I enjoy managing people	ARMA (N=231)	52%	9%
	Wellcome (N=1934)	79%	10%
Leaders communicate clear expectations regarding behaviours and/or culture in my working environment	ARMA (N=231)	54%	23%
	Wellcome (N=3885)	41%	40%

Figure 3.2: Comparison with Wellcome Findings on same questions. Source: Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Report

How this compares to the Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Culture Report

Some of these questions were asked in the Wellcome Trust survey. **Fig 3.2** shows there are disparities in the leadership experience, e.g., receiving training on managing people, and clear communication regarding expectations around behaviours and culture. This may be attributable to the different cultures between academic and non-academic role management and requires further exploration.

Behavioural experiences

A major feature of other sector surveys was people's experiences of bullying and harassment, or discriminatory behaviours at work. By including these questions in this survey, it was not the intention to elicit negative comments, but to ensure parity in capturing the perspectives and experiences of all those in the research ecosystem. As such the ARMA Research Culture Survey 2020 asked the same questions.

Witnessed bullying/harassment/discrimination (B/H/D)	30%
Experienced B/H/D	13%
Both witnessed and experienced B/H/D	31%
None of the above	26%
Where witnessed or experienced B/H/D - current organisation	44%
Where witnessed or experienced B/H/D - previous organisation	19%
Where witnessed or experienced B/H/D – both current and previous organisation	25%
Prefer not to say	12%

Figure 4.1 Part 1: Respondents that experienced or witnessed bullying/harassment/discrimination (B/H/D) (n=224). Part 2: Where this happened (n=188)
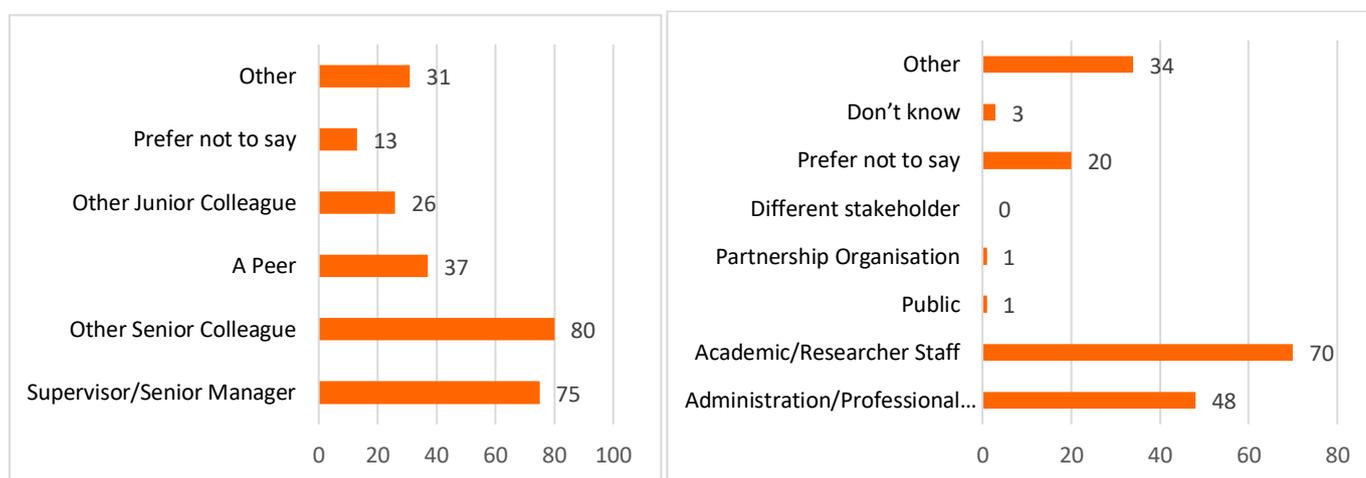
Figure 4.2 Perpetrators relationship where B/H/D WITNESSED (n=177)   Fig 4.3 Job family of perpetrators where B/H/D WITNESSED (n=177)

As **Fig 4.1** demonstrates, 74% of respondents either witnessed or experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination, with 44% reporting that this was experienced at their current organisation and 19% at both past and present organisations. This raises further questions which require exploration.

Where respondents had witnessed bullying, harassment or discrimination, dominant acts of bullying were senior > junior colleague (30%) with supervisor/senior manager (29%) as a close second. This corresponds with the power dynamic of such relationships. Among the 'other' category, respondents detailed cases of academic staff and directors of professional services departments being the perpetrators. While **Fig 4.2** was completed by 177 respondents, there were 262 data entries via multiple choice indicating multiple types of perpetrators of unwelcome behaviour:

> *There has not just been one perpetrator because the culture within a specific department I am associated with is toxic and it's learned and accepted behaviour because no one challenges it –*
> *(Manager)*

Where job families of the perpetrators were known, 39% were attributed to academic/research staff and 27% to administration/professional services.
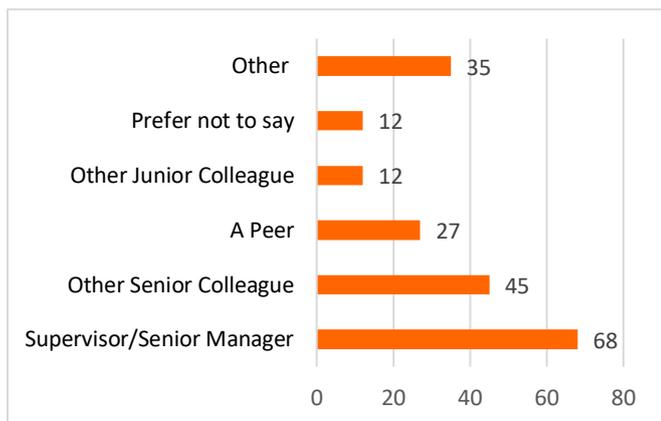
Fig 4.4 Perpetrators relationship where B/H/D EXPERIENCED (n=155)   Fig 4.5 Job family of perpetrators where B/H/D EXPERIENCED (n=155)

Where respondents had experienced bullying, harassment or discrimination, the dominant perpetrators again corresponds with the power dynamic of hierarchical relationships (34% supervisor/senior manager and 22% other senior colleague). Among the 'other' category, most respondents said they had not experienced these behaviours directly themselves. **Fig 4.5** shows this behaviour is experienced within a range of job families:

Both professional staff and academic staff and corporate research partners – (Manager)

Where the job family of the perpetrators was known, these were attributed to 32% administration/professional services and 30% academic/researcher staff

Pressure from academic colleagues, external stakeholders, students, has resulted in occasional inappropriate behaviour, PS colleagues and 'office politics' can be extremely negative - ironically, the latter has been temporarily removed by COVID remote working – (Manager)

While the negative aspects of office politics may have diminished with increased remote working as a result of COVID-19, other bullying mechanisms such as abusive emails have been mentioned, suggesting that the problem has metamorphosed.
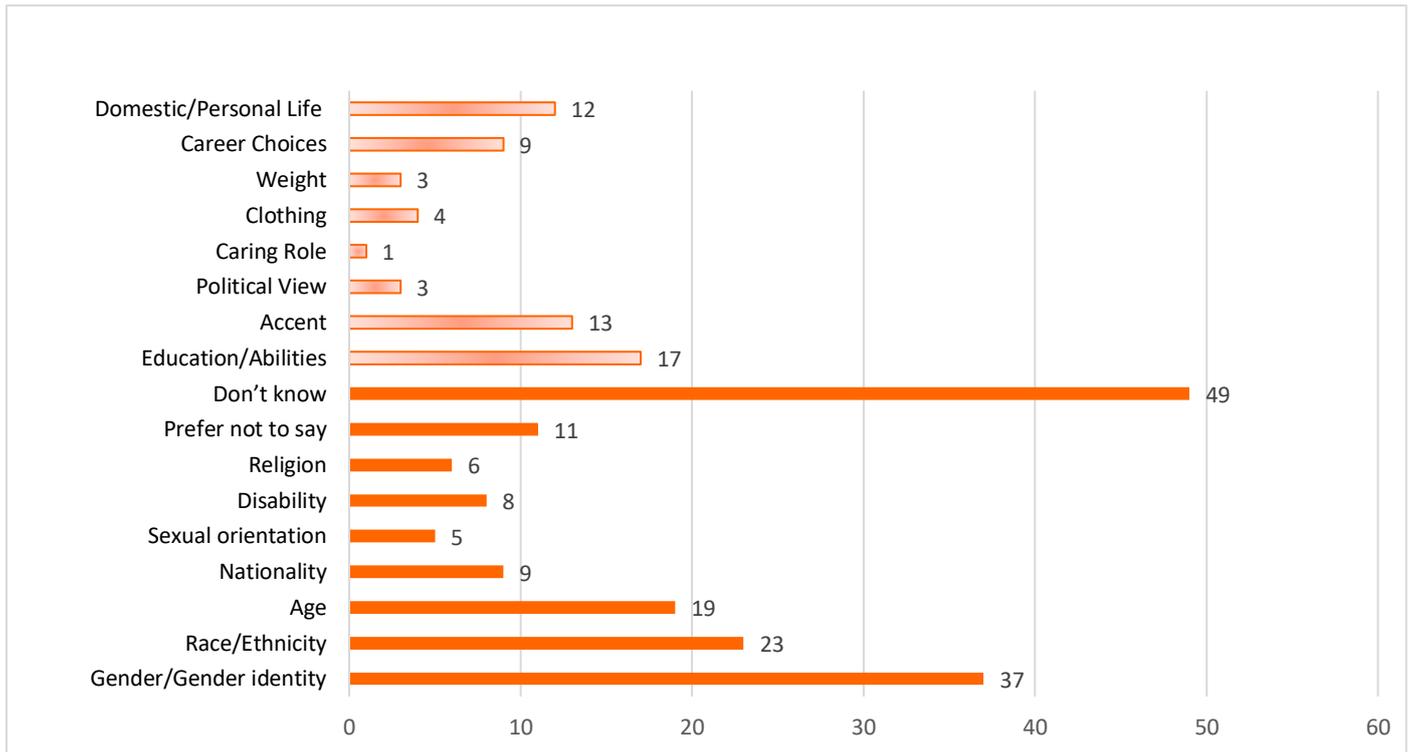
Fig 4.6 Where B/H/D witnessed or experienced, was it related to a protected characteristic? Responses from 'Other' in shaded data (n=167)

Where respondents had experienced/witnessed bullying, harassment or discrimination, the majority (21%) said they 'don't know' when asked whether this was related to a protected characteristic. It is possible that those who have witnessed this behaviour did not know the protected characteristics of the victim.

The next highest (16%) was based on gender, or how someone may identify, although some noted ambiguity:

> *Bullying has often been men being aggressive with or dismissive to women; it's hard to know whether this is because the recipient is a woman or not. A lot of bullying takes place in unequal power dynamics – (Manager)*

While the major focus of EDI relates to protected characteristics such as racism/sexism/ableism, some comments highlighted that some stereotyping continues to fly under the radar, e.g. *'men are bad at admin...'(Manager)*

Although there were 167 respondents, **Fig 4.6** shows 229 data points, as people had selected all that applied – i.e. they had witnessed or experienced many types of bullying, harassment and discrimination. Sixty-two respondents selected 'other' and provided details that highlighted emerging areas of mistreatment, issues that if left unchecked could become entrenched. These are detailed in the shaded data at the top of **Fig 4.7**. with individual traits such as pronunciation and personal life being one of the most prominent:

> *I've experienced strong teasing about my accent and domestic arrangements – (Manager)*

Classism:

> *There is a huge unspoken classism in academic institutions between academic and PS staff groups. Most (if not all) PS have experience of being spoken down to (sometimes publicly), condescended, shouted at, intimidated, insulted, received abusive emails telling them they are stupid, etc., in the course of their duties – (Manager)*

Many comments suggested that bullying, harassment or discrimination did not always relate to a protected characteristic but included:

> *"Abuse of power, bad management" (Manager)* or *"just general cruelty" (Manager)* or *"cutting people down to size or putting them in their place if senior colleagues and their lackeys think they are raising issues (e.g. bullying, nepotism, unethical behaviour) that shouldn't concern them – (Officer).*

Perceptions around social class, educational background or career choices were also dominant themes:

> *Discrimination against those who don't have an academic background – (Assistant Manager)*

> *There is prejudice about academic level and towards professional support staff. Some are held in higher regard due to seniority but not knowledge of the topic – (Manager)*
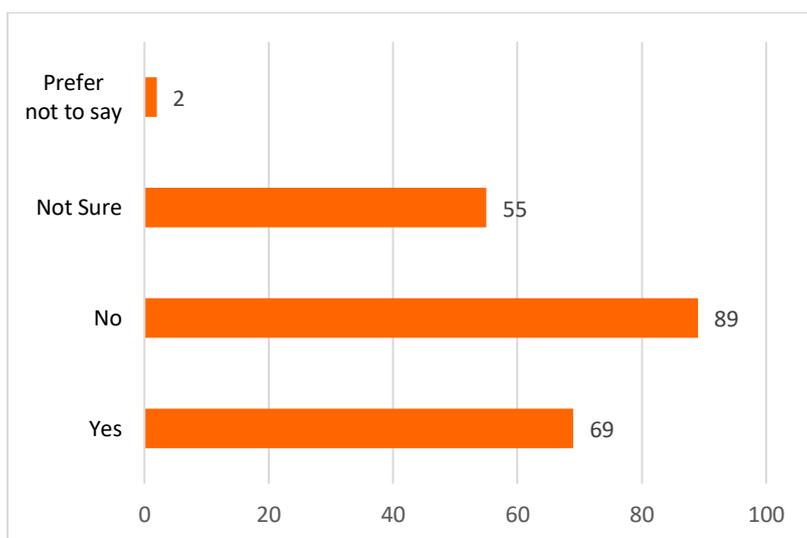
Figure 4.7: Respondent experience of microaggressions (n=215)

Microaggressions are indirect, subtle, or unintentional discrimination against members of a marginalized group. 'Not sure' and 'no' are the strongest themes here. This could be taken at face value, but may indicate a lack of awareness of what constitutes a microaggression. It is common for people not to realise a comment or a behaviour may be a microaggression because they are so accepted/entrenched. Some examples included:

> *Mainly past prejudices that have festered and then people are bullied to not be able to speak up. Disempowered – (Manager)*

> *A peer labelled a woman a 'lesbian' to mock her choice of computer – (Officer)*
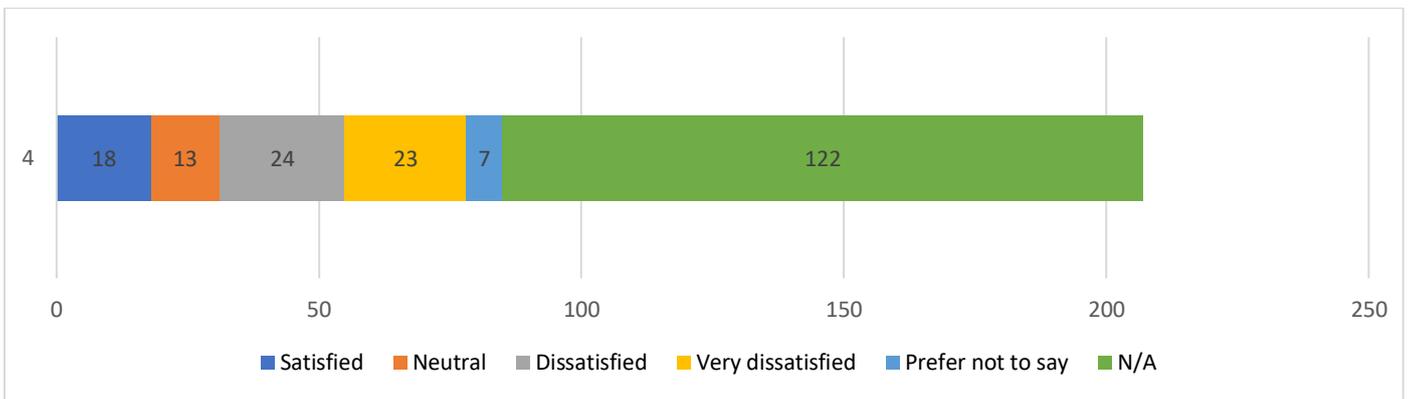
Fig 4.8 Where respondents reported an incident or a complaint, how satisfied were they with how it was handled by their workplace? (n=209)
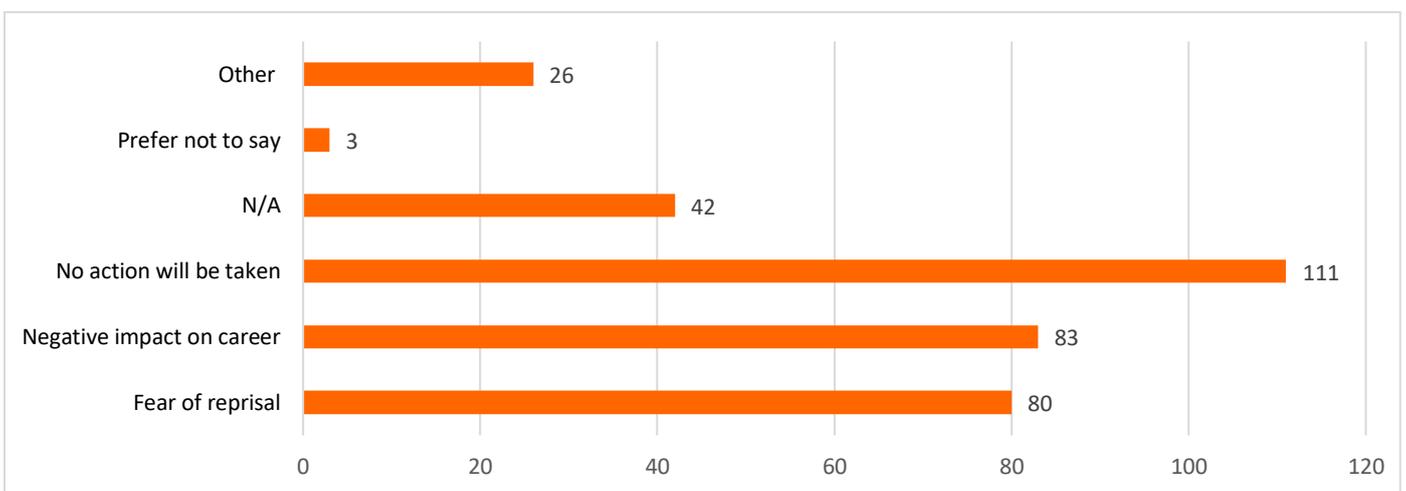
Figure 4.9 What would prevent respondents from reporting incidents at work? (n=214)

52% of respondents felt no action would be taken by their organisation, with additional comments indicating a range of reasons for this, including lack of support or trust in the safeguarding policies and processes:

It's very difficult if, for example, in formal disciplinaries, HR ignore this behaviour. Where do you go? – (Manager)

Lack of support by others or generally being made to feel there is little point, i.e. think about your wellbeing; do you want to put yourself through this (something actually said to me). Many people end up putting in complaints when they leave because know that nothing will change whilst they are there – (Manager)

There was a theme that the perpetrators are often repeat offenders or are seen as someone who performs well and is therefore 'untouchable'.

Academics who perform well in research are seen as (and are) untouchable – (Manager)

The data show that people often do not report due to fear of negative consequences, be it on their career; creating a bad working environment; being labelled as a 'problem' member of staff; or reputational damage:

Being seen as a troublemaker, not being seen as being able to 'handle' situations – (Assistant Director)

Action taken would be so open that it would taint other relationships – (Manager)

Being seen as 'oversensitive' because misogyny is so normalised that it is invisible to most people – (Officer)

It's a small world and it's awkward – (Assistant Director)

Several respondents noted that the reporting process was unclear, and how, or whether, the matter had been addressed was not transparent. Some noted that they would be reluctant to report an incident in case they had misjudged the situation and accused someone unfairly, potentially causing problems for someone else.

		ARMA	Wellcome
Experienced bullying/harassment/discrimination (B/H/D) (ARMA: includes 'experienced – 13%' and 'both witnessed and experienced 31%' figures)	**ARMA** (N=224) **Wellcome** (N=4167-4169)	44%	43%
Where perpetrators of B/H/D experienced were Supervisor/Manager	**ARMA** (N=155) **Wellcome** (N=1804)	34%	59%
Where bullying/harassment/discrimination was related to gender, as witnessed and experienced by respondents	**ARMA** (N=167) **Wellcome** (N=2260-2863)	16%	52%

Figure 4.10: Comparison with Wellcome Trust Findings on same questions. Source: Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Report

How this compares to Wellcome Trust's Reimagine Research Culture Report

Some of these questions were asked in the Wellcome Trust survey. Fig 4.10 shows there are similarities in the levels of people experiencing bullying/harassment and discrimination. There are variations between the experiences of perpetrators of unfavourable behaviour, which may in part be attributable to the different cultures between academic and non-academic roles, and that some survey respondents noted that academics are sometimes the sources of this behaviour. Further variations in the reporting of discrimination related to protected characteristics. Some comments suggest that this is underreported in the RMA cohort because of not wanting to be *seen as 'oversensitive' – (Officer)*.

Wellbeing experiences

How wellbeing is valued in the workplace is a major feature of an organisation's culture. Increasingly, there is a link between organisational culture and the positive and protective impact it can have on health and wellbeing. This can encompass everything from the overuse of digital devices to the mental effects of burnout generated by a culture that encourages presenteeism or overworking.

Given the correlation between behavioural experiences – especially as they relate to bullying, discrimination and harassment – and wellbeing, and trust in safeguarding frameworks, it was important to give focus to this area.
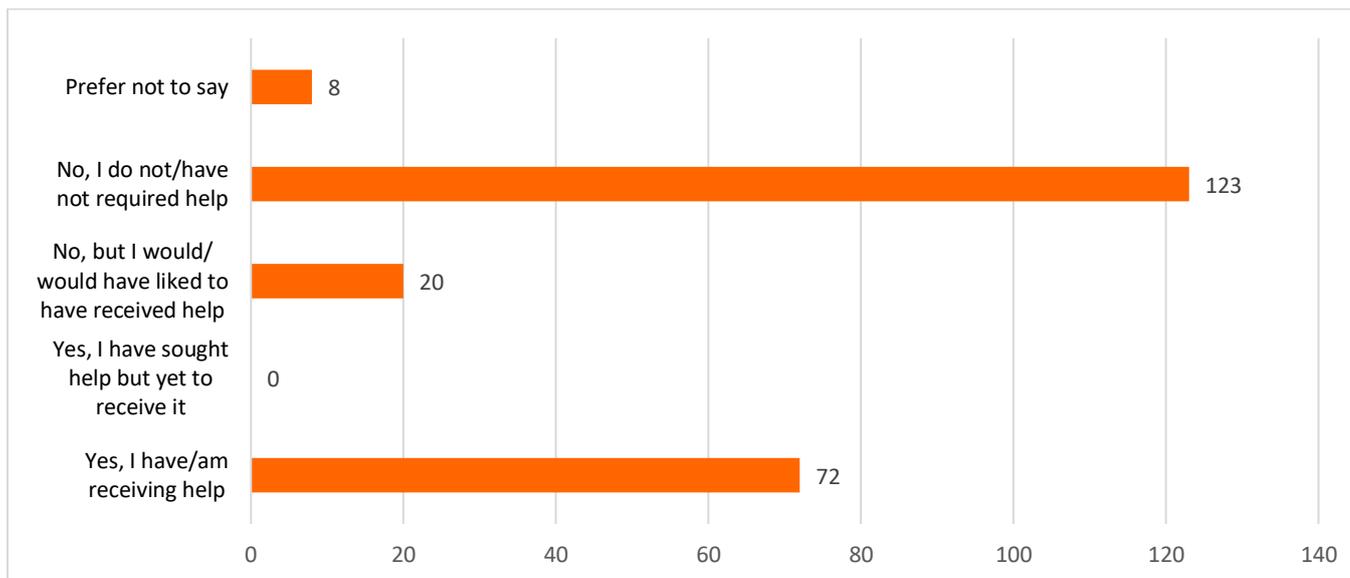
Figure 5.1 Sought/received professional help for depression/anxiety during RMA career (n=222)
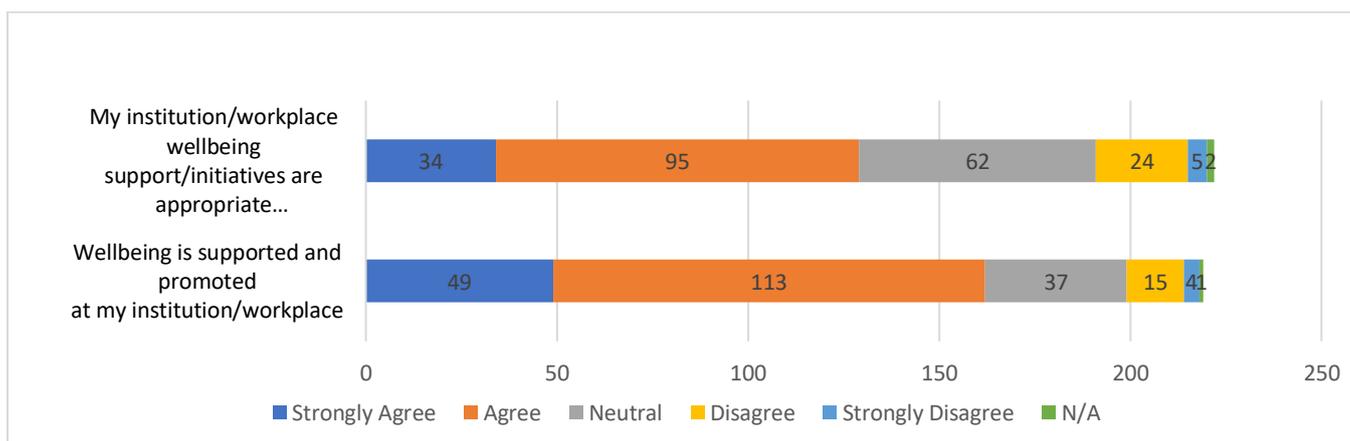
Figure 5.2 Perceptions of how wellbeing at work is valued/supported (n=222)

The data reflect a positive impression of how wellbeing is valued and supported in institutions/workplaces. 41 respondents opted to provide more detail, giving a more nuanced picture and insight into a range of experiences. In particular, people noted that much of their positive experience was from the local line management rather than the institution as a whole:

I requested to work part time when I joined and this was agreed instantly. I also requested flexible start and end times to my day due to childcare arrangements, which was also met with no negativity – (Officer)

The support on offer by the organisation is very generic but my manager is supportive – (Manager)

When I arrived in my role, I was receiving help for anxiety but this is no longer needed partly because the new environment is so supportive – (Officer)

I feel more supported in my immediate department than I do by the University as a whole – (Administrator)

A prevalent theme was that support or initiatives were viewed as 'lip service' and did not address the cause of the issues, which seem to be unrealistic workload expectations, deadlines and poor management:

Chronic understaffing leads to high workloads, which negatively affect work-life balance. Understaffing is not addressed, in fact quite the opposite – (Manager)

There are courses and support available but they focus on being resilient not on the underlying issue of overwork and poor management – (Manager)

All [Higher Education] wellbeing initiatives are window-dressing for an unmanageable research and teaching culture – (Administrator)

There is lots of talk about supporting wellbeing but the fundamental issues around workload etc., which are causing distress are largely left ignored. Waiting times for support are long. I have a private counsellor to help me with anxieties arising from a personal issue and chose to pay private to avoid a long waiting time for the university's services. I have tried to use the University's Employee Assistance Programme website but found it to be generic and useless - a sticking plaster, which smacks of a tick-box exercise. It would be more effective to invest in high quality training for managers who are the front line of support for most people – (Manager)

		Agree	Disagree
Wellbeing support is well-promoted at my institution/workplace	ARMA (N=222)	72%	8%
	Wellcome (N=4065)	49%	30%
My institution/workplace wellbeing initiatives are appropriate for my needs	ARMA (N=22)	72%	13%
	Wellcome (N=4065)	37%	28%
Respondents sought or received professional help for depression or anxiety during their career	ARMA (N=222)	32%	64%
	Wellcome (N=4162)	33%	63%

Figure 5.3: Comparison with Wellcome Trust Findings on same questions. Source: Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Report

How this compares to Wellcome Trust's Reimagine Research Culture Report

Some of these questions were asked in the Wellcome Trust survey, and as Fig 5.3 demonstrates there are similarities in the mental health needs of both RMAs and Academics, however the wellbeing experience in the workplace is very different, suggesting inconsistent experience across the job families, warranting further exploration.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion experiences

As wellbeing and behavioural experiences are a key feature of organisational/sector culture, so too is the experience of diversity, inclusion and equality (or equity). Equality Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) is a foundational component of the research ecosystem, often determining what research is undertaken, who is involved and what is valued.
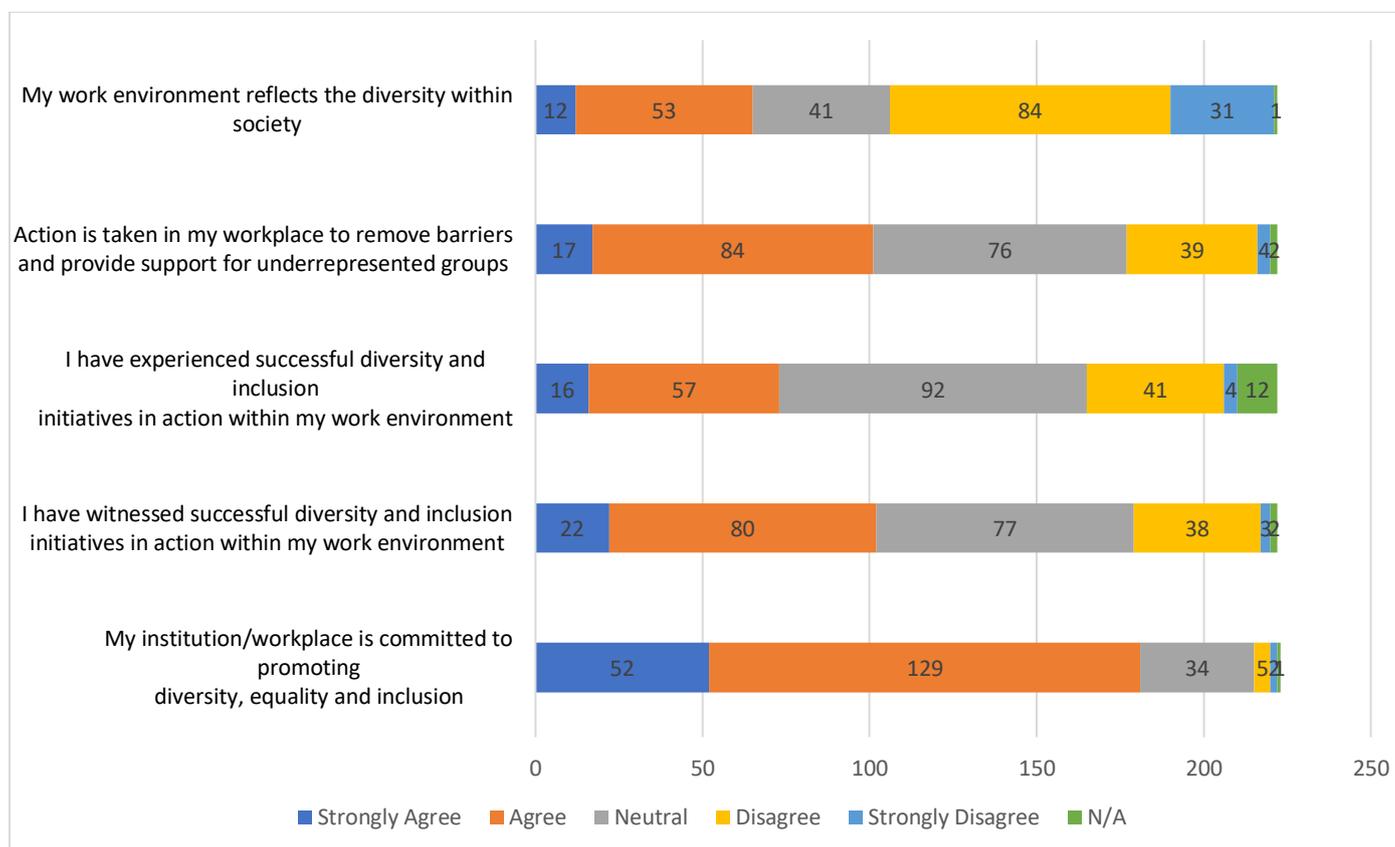

Figure 6.1 Experiences of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in their workplace (n=223)

The prevalence of neutral responses (41%) in the EDI experience may be because respondents are not some of the groups/intersections that EDI initiatives are designed to target. Of note is that 51% of respondents said that their work environment does not reflect the diversity in society.

Many noted local/disciplinary variation, e.g. some professions, such as administrative roles, are more 'female' than society. There is considerable focus on the gender aspects of EDI, compared with broader features of diversity or intersectionality. Many feel their institution's student population was more diverse than their staff, and some organisations were more diverse than their local public population. A number reflected that a lot of ***efforts [to improve EDI] are poorly constructed and alienate significant groups in our workforce (Manager)***, and that ***the follow through and commitment to projects causing tangible change are missing (Officer)***. This could be a result of a lack of diverse role models and those in management and influential positions, with one respondent noting that ***There appears to be a significant lack of socio-economic diversity in HE leadership (Manager).***

		Agree	Disagree
My institution/workplace is committed to promoting diversity and equality	ARMA (N=223)	81%	3%
	Wellcome (N=4065)	66%	15%
Action is taken in my workplace to remove barriers and provide support for underrepresented groups	ARMA (N=223)	45%	19%
	Wellcome (N=4065)	40%	29%
My working environment reflects the diversity within society	ARMA (N=223)	29%	51%
	Wellcome (N=4065)	37%	51%

Figure 6.2: Comparison with Wellcome Trust's Findings on same questions. Source: Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Report

How this compares to Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Culture Report

Fig 6.2 shows that there are disparities in perceptions and experiences of EDI. Some of these may be attributable to the experiences of different job families in a Higher Education setting – e.g. the experience of minority/caring groups on the academic career pathway is often likened to a 'leaky pipeline' because of the high loss along the career pathways. Conversely, both job families of academics and professional service reported similar perspectives on whether their working environment reflected the diversity within society. More research is needed on the experiences of EDI from different job family perspectives, to ensure that EDI initiatives are effective for all groups/intersections/or hybrid careers.

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Awareness of guidance/concordats

To determine the knowledge of best practice and policies, respondents were asked about their level of awareness of a range of different sectoral guidance, concordats and institutional frameworks.
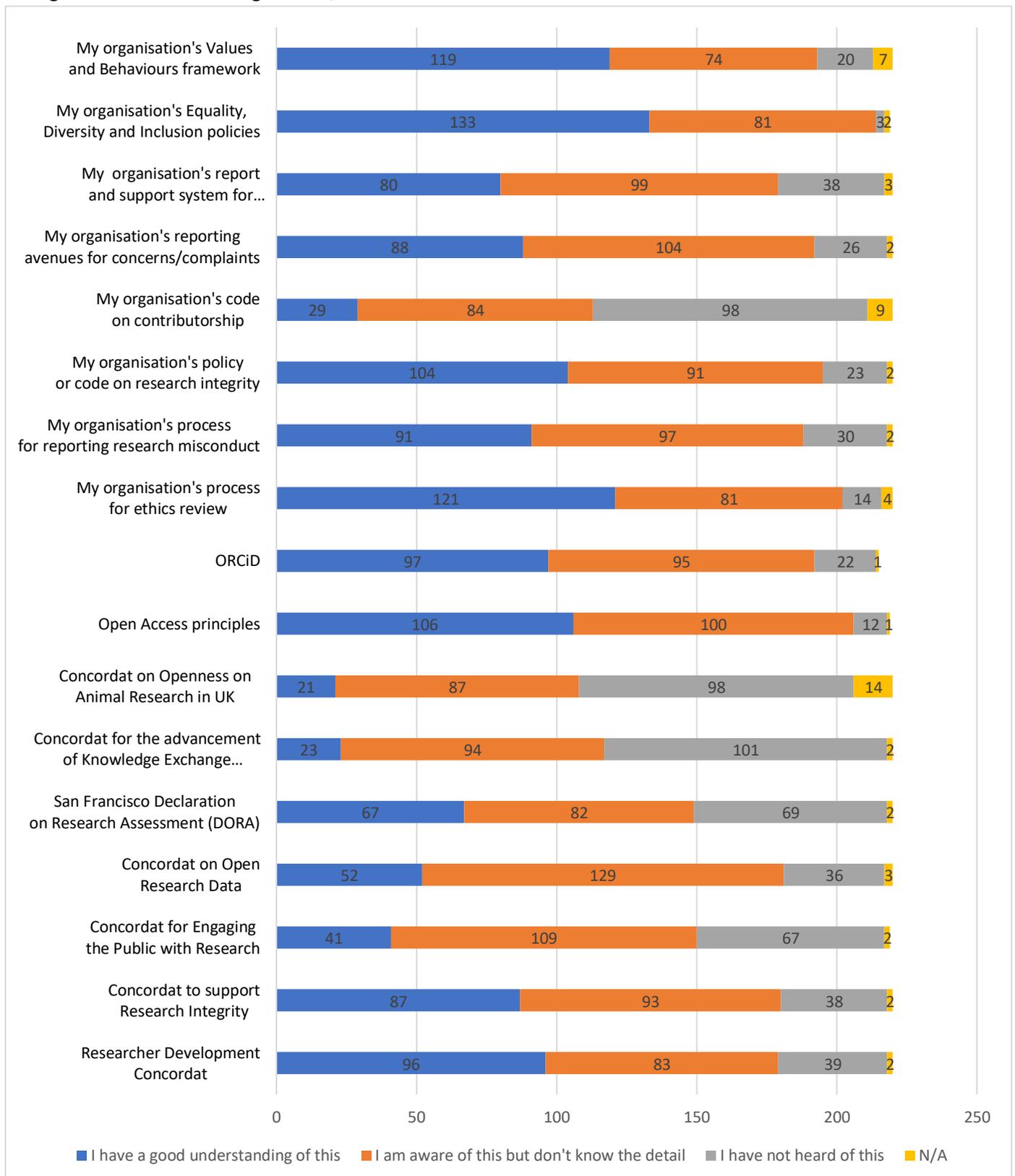
Figure 7.1 Awareness of guidance /concordats (n=220)

Generally, there is good awareness, with variations attributable to different disciplines, e.g. someone supporting arts research may not need to be familiar with the Concordat on Openness on Animal Research in the UK. However, 11 to 17% have not heard of routes to report incidents of concern (bullying/harassment/discrimination) or misconduct, which echoes comments made earlier. It is not surprising that 44% did not know their organisation's code on contributorship, as this practice is not yet widespread in the sector.

Who is responsible for research culture?

Respondents were asked about who they believe is responsible for research culture. To ensure parity, the ARMA Research Culture Survey 2020 asked the same questions as had been asked in comparable sector surveys.
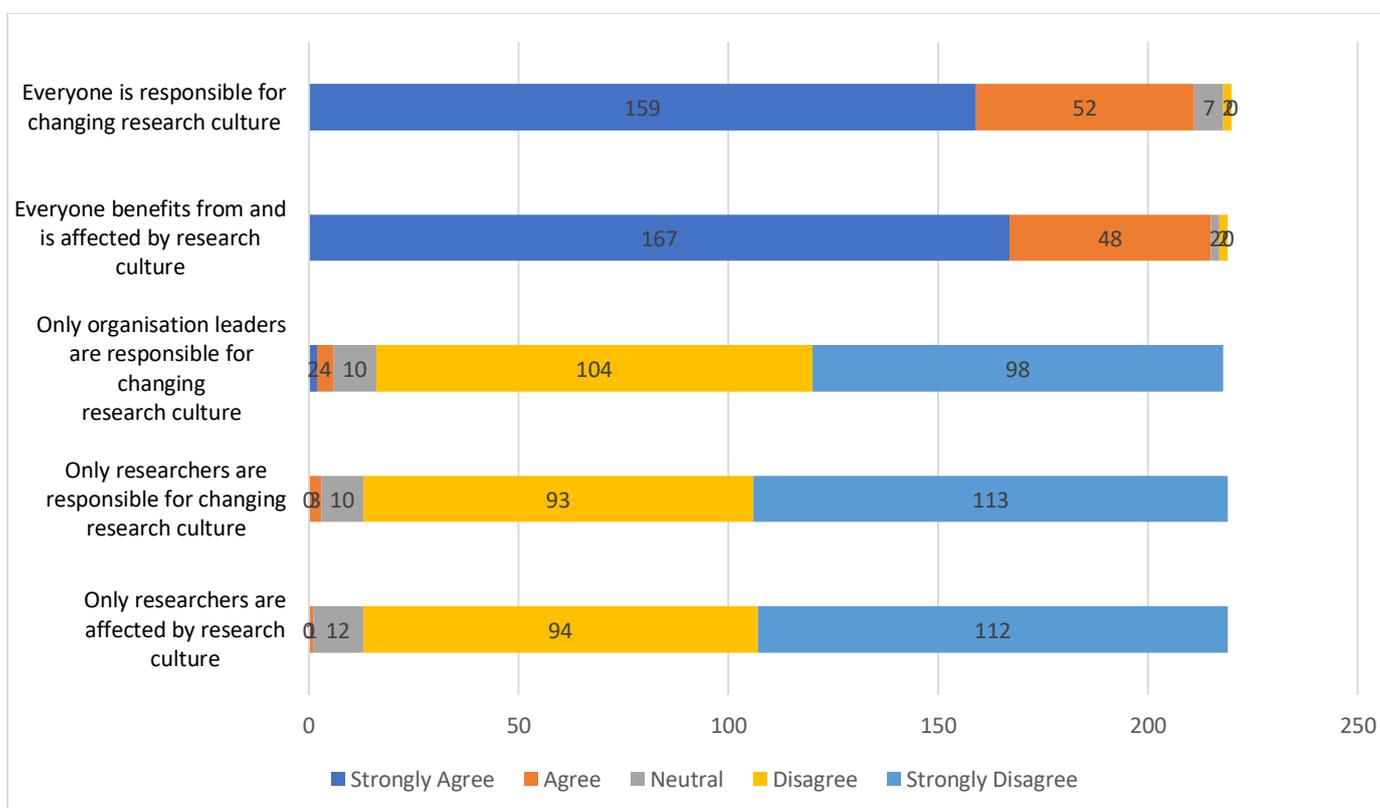
Figure 8.1 Respondents view on who is responsible for research culture (n=220)

96% of respondents agree that everyone is responsible for changing research culture, and 98% believe everyone contributes to and benefits from research culture, indicating a collective endeavour. A small number of respondents (1-3%) agreed that only organisation leaders or researchers are responsible for changing research culture and a large number (94%) believe it is not just researchers who are affected by research culture.

What factors impact research culture?

Respondents were asked for their views on what factors impact research culture and whether this was positive or negative.
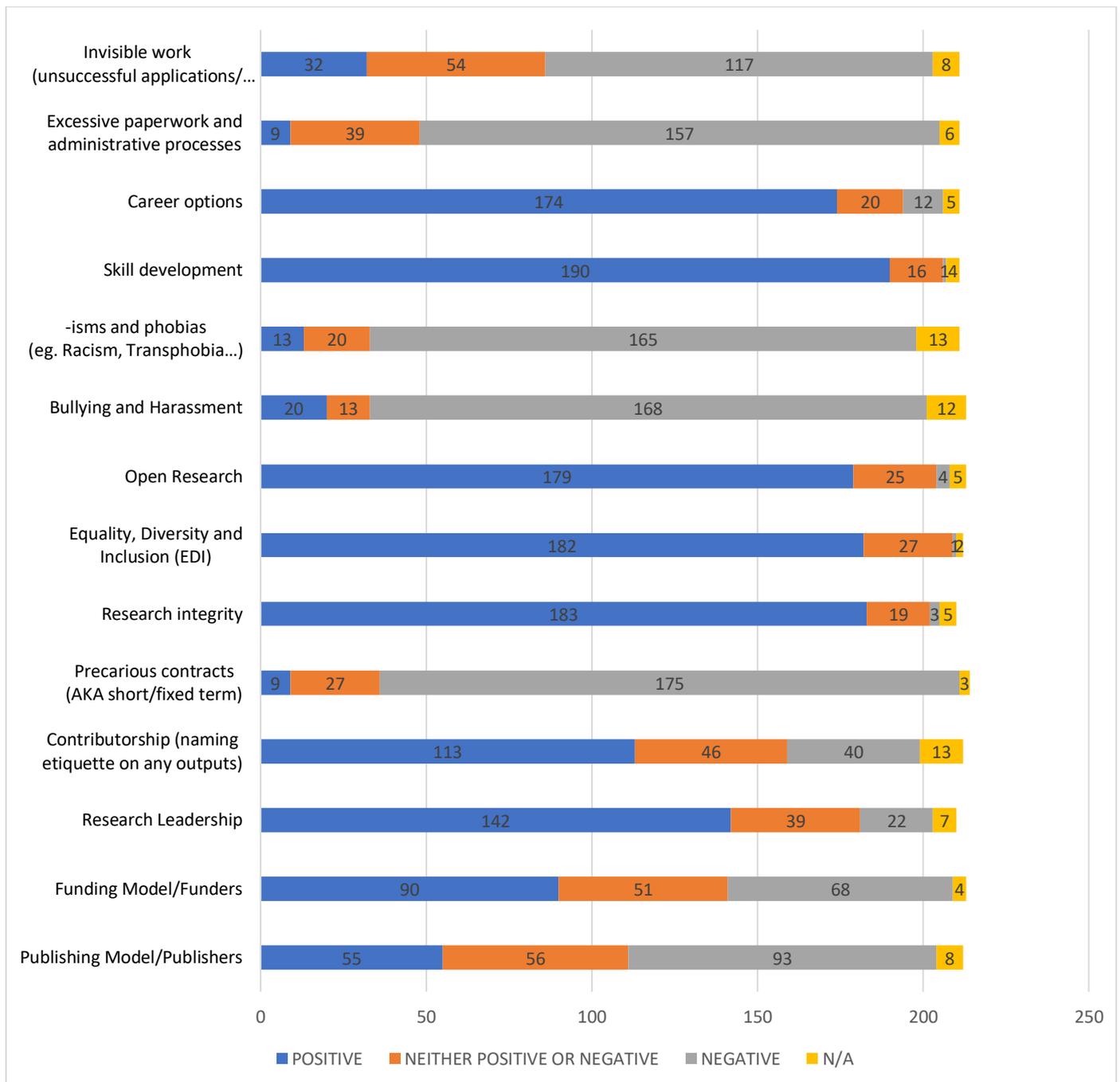
Figure 9.1 Respondents view on what impact different factors have on research culture (n=214)

Most respondents believe skill development (88%) and EDI (85%) has a positive impact on research culture. These are closely followed by research integrity, open research and career options. Conversely, short term contracts were believed by the majority (75%) to have a negative impact on research culture, closely followed by bullying and

harassment (78%) and '-isms' and phobias (77%). Responses to do with the funding/publisher models warrant further investigation.
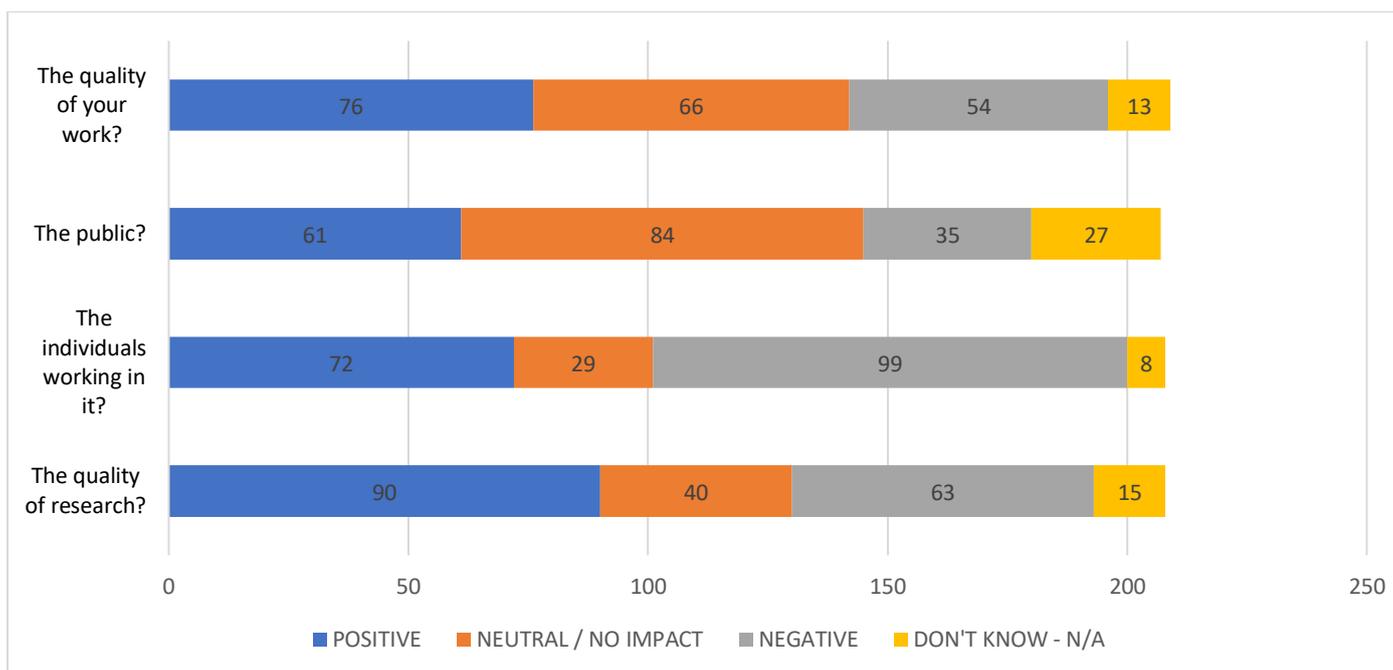
Figure 9.2 What kind of impact has the current research culture got on...? (n=209)

While the 43% reported that the current research culture has a positive impact on the quality of research undertaken, a higher majority (47%) reported that it had a negative impact on the individuals working in it. This could be a result of different job families and the proximity to the research itself. Interestingly, 40% felt that the current research culture had marginal impacts on the public, or the quality of their own work. Public engagement varies between disciplines and roles, which may partially explain this.

		Positive	Negative
Quality of research	**ARMA** (N=209)	**43%**	**30%**
	Wellcome (N=4065)	**42%**	**25%**
Individuals	**ARMA** (N=209)	**34%**	**47%**
	Wellcome (N=4065)	**30%**	**40%**
Society/Public	**ARMA** (N=209)	**29%**	**17%**
	Wellcome (N=4065)	**53%**	**14%**

Figure 9.3: Comparison with Wellcome Trust's Findings on same questions. Source: Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Report

How this compares to the Wellcome Trust Reimagine Research Culture Report

Fig 9.3 shows there are similarities in perspectives on the impact research culture has on the quality of research (42-43% positive). Those who support research/RMAs reported that research culture has a higher negative impact on the individual (47%) than Wellcome respondents (40%). The disparity between the perceived positive impact of research culture on society/public by RMAs (29%) and Wellcome respondents (53%), could be attributable to understanding amongst RMAs about how research impacts the public, perhaps because they are more removed from it. Thloration.

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How can ARMA help?

Respondents were asked to tick all the ways in which ARMA could help to improve research culture.

A horizontal bar chart showing responses for how ARMA can help:
- Other: 33
- Provide training for research leadership: 146
- Provide more wellbeing training: 63
- Provide more sector-leading training: 136
- Lobby for change: 147
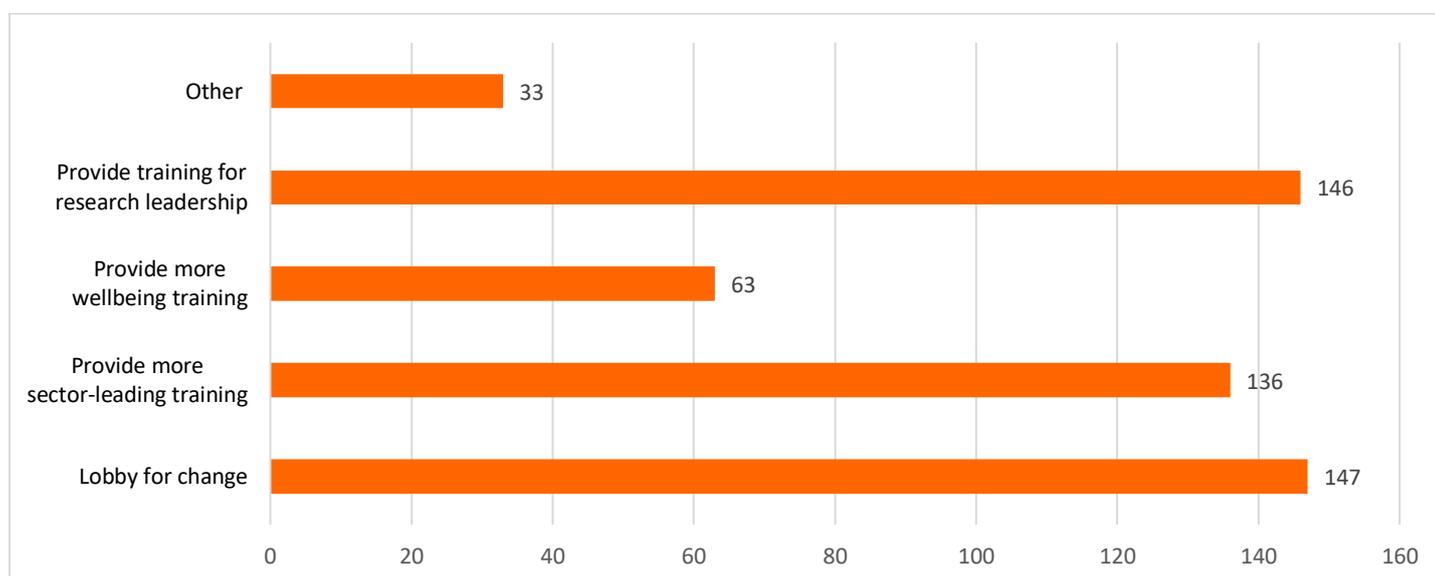
Figure 10.1 How respondents feel ARMA can help with research culture (n=201)

201 individuals engaged with this question, eliciting 525 data points, indicating that the respondents want help in many ways. More training (99%), lobbying for change (73%) and research leadership training (72%) are the biggest priorities for respondents. Many felt awareness of the value of Research Management and Administration (RMA) was lacking and asked ARMA to help raise the visibility, importance and credibility of these roles so they can access funding for development and have their contribution to research acknowledged.

> *Having training courses is one thing, getting access to them is another. We need major support to change the views held about Research Management as a career – (Manager)*

> *Raise the profile of the work research managers and administrators do and formally include them as collaborators in research (submissions, awards, publications, team website) – (Manager)*

A diversity of issues were raised. Some respondents raised the issue of isolation due to working from home because of COVID-19, hindering the sharing of best practice and innovation, seeking ARMA's help in this area. Another area which respondents asked for ARMA help is on the issue of fixed term contracts:

> *Encourage a shift away from fixed term contracts to manage uncertainty around contracts and career planning – (Administrator)*

Generally, respondents welcomed ARMA's involvement in the research culture agenda and wanted more advocacy for those who support research.

> *The impact on research support staff in the UK research culture debate has so far been largely overlooked. We need a voice that also co-creates new solutions to help improve research culture for everyone working in this area, along with the major stakeholders. Can ARMA please be that voice? – (Assistant Director)*

Further Research and Recommendations

A survey can only offer so much insight, and the need for specific research to explore key areas has been identified throughout this report. For example, what attributes make for a 'toxic' and 'supportive' HE culture? How many people have chosen to go into RMA related roles because they didn't want to go the academic route due to the culture? Some of these are identified in Wellcome Trust's reports but more needs to be done to explore this from the perspective of all within the research ecosystem.

Based on the comments and reflections in this survey and in combination with other available data (e.g., The Wellcome Trust survey), we make the following recommendations to the sector as a whole, including managers, organisations and research adjacent institutions.

- Promoting parity of esteem between job families to move away from the 'Them vs Us' mind set between different roles, eg academics and administrators

- Integrate other job family expertise in the research experience
  Role of technicians is often constrained - institution doesn't allow participation in research / supervision of students, cannot be leading on grants, even though their expertise is often vital to projects – (Officer)

- Recognise a broad range of qualifications and professional experiences within RMA careers and value different perspectives, knowledge and skills that can apply in the professional support/RMA career pathways. Reduce reliance on PhDs to do RMA roles and instead lobby for professionalisation of the community. Value diverse career pathways and experiences.

  It is hard to progress in the research admin world without a PhD – (Officer)

- Having the difficult conversations to address unwelcome behaviour, regardless of who it is (e.g. an academic 'celebrity')

- Make visible the invisible work of those who support research. Adopt transparent contributorship models e.g. CRediT – Contributor Roles Taxonomy

  RMs are active contributors to the success and quality of research and should be acknowledged as co-investigators and collaborators in all parts of the research pipeline – (Manager)

- Reduce the use of short term/fixed term contracts for RMA roles

- Raise visibility with academics of the activity of RMAs to facilitate two-way appreciation. Shadowing of people in different job families, e.g. academics shadowing RMAs and vice versa, to generate mutual understanding of their roles and functions.
  Help to engage academics with administrative issues – (Manager)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) monitoring of respondents

This data relating to respondents was separated from the main survey before any analysis was undertaken to minimise any potential for unconscious bias.
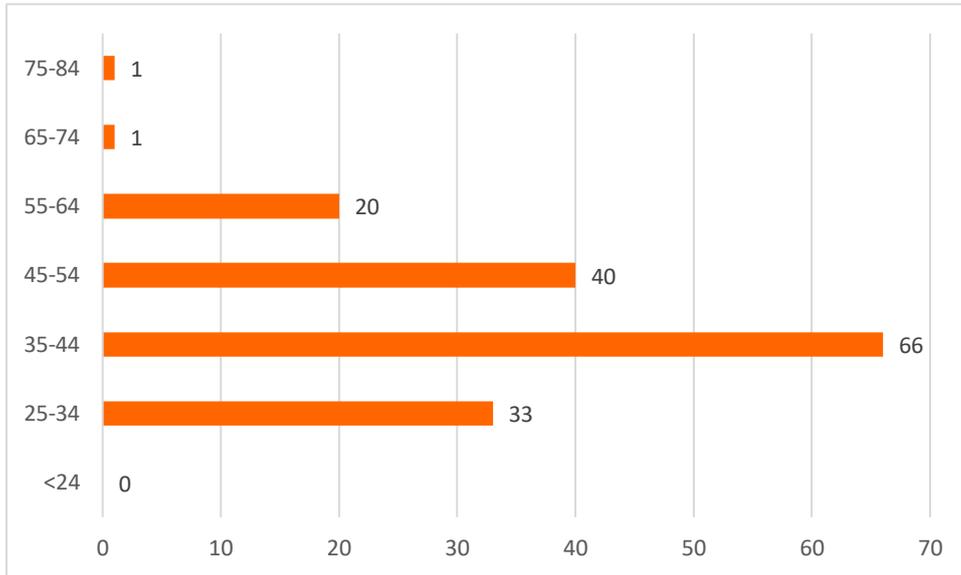

Figure 11.1 Average age of respondents (n=166)

Of the 161 respondents who provided data, the average age of was 43.
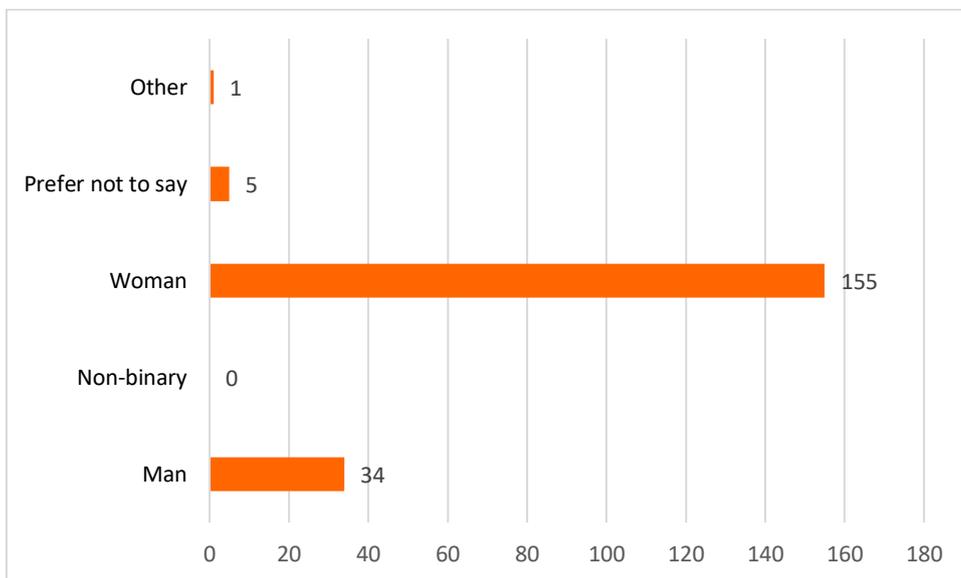
Figure 11.2 Gender/identity of respondents (n=195)

Of the 194 respondents who answered follow up question on gender, 97% have the same gender/identity as assigned at birth. The remaining of the respondents (3%) selected not to say.
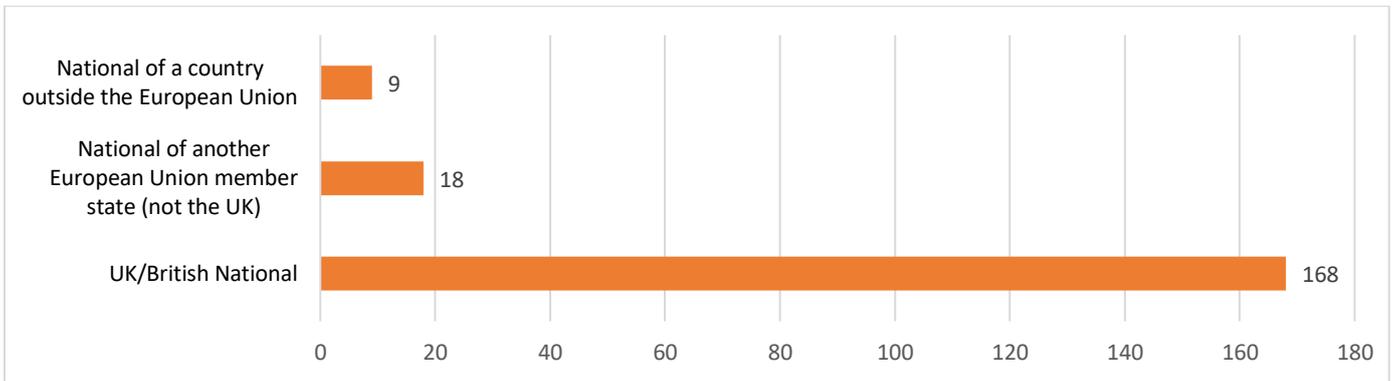
Figure 11.3 Nationality of respondents (n=195)
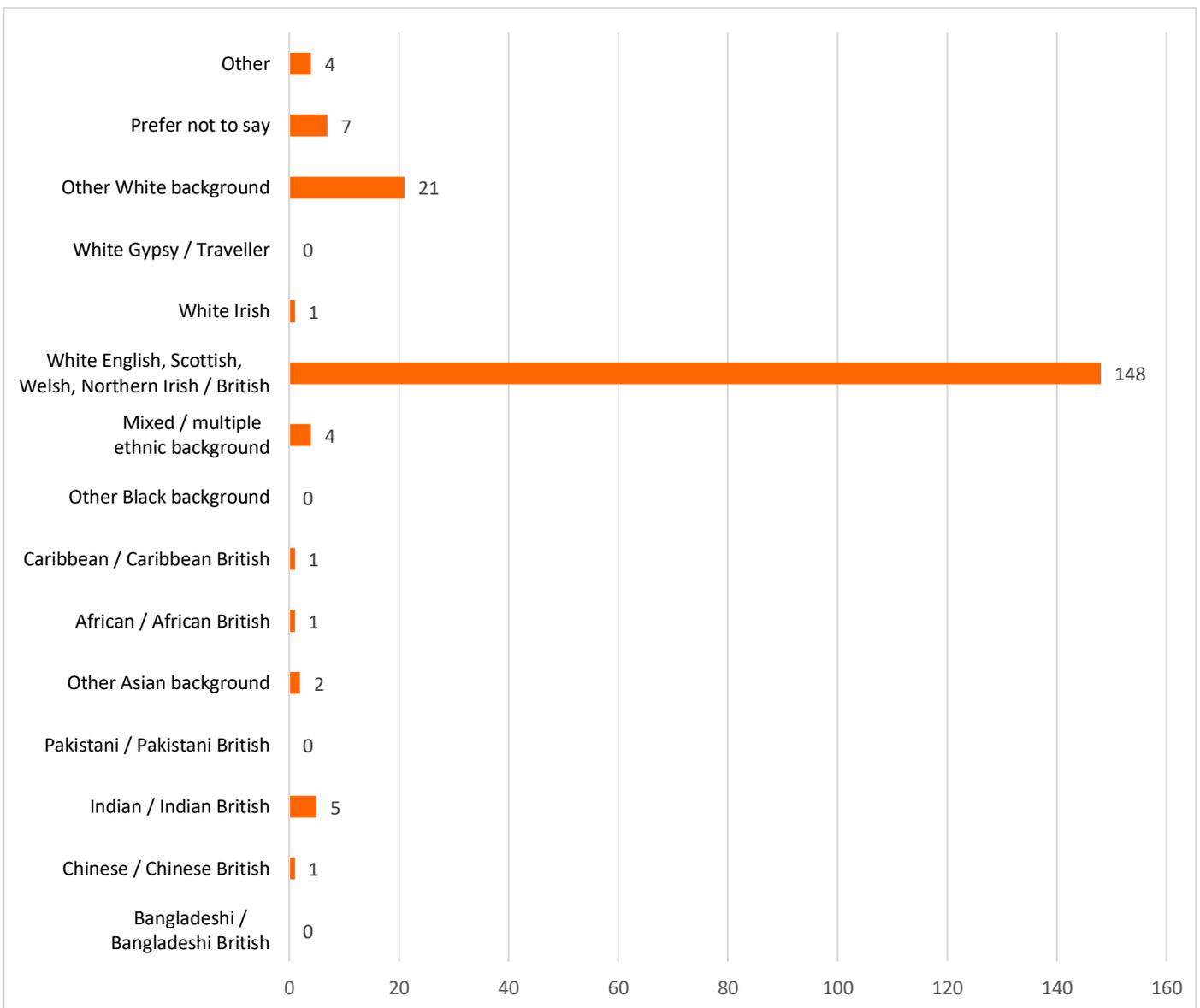
Figure 11.4 Ethnicity of Respondents (n=195)

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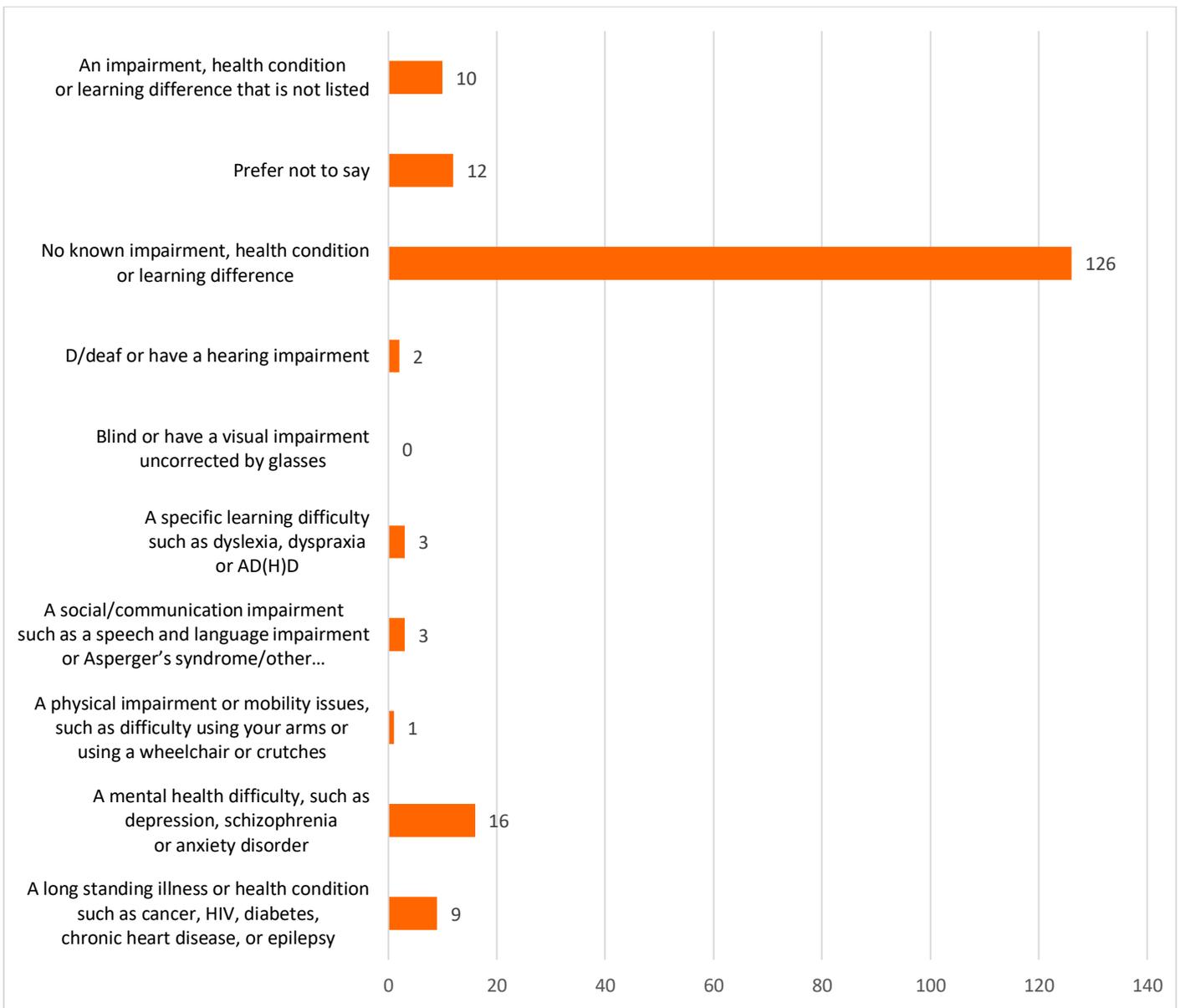
Figure 11.5 Respondents impairment, health conditions, or learning differences which may have a substantial or long term impact on abilities to carry out day to day activities (n=170)

Of the respondents who said other, these included neurological conditions such as Joint Hypermobility Syndrome, Multiple Sclerosis, Migraines and Sciatica, and respiratory concerns such as asthma, autoimmune disease and conditions requiring significant life management.

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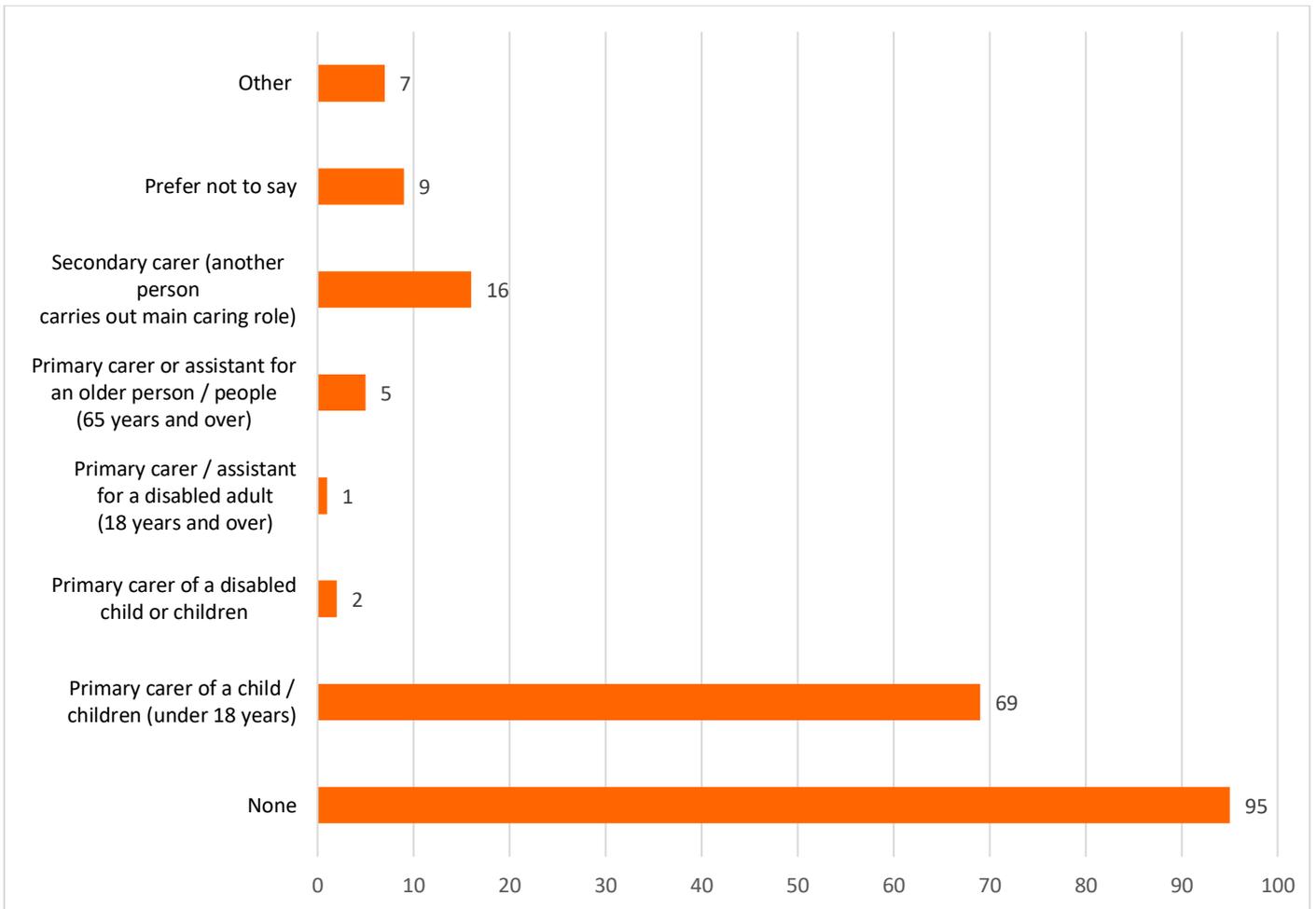
Figure 11.6 Caring responsibilities of respondents (n=196)

Of the respondents who said 'other' these included joint carers of children under 18, and carers of children with additional needs. Some respondents chose multiple caring responsibilities (204 data points), indicating multiple care roles, often for both young and elderly.

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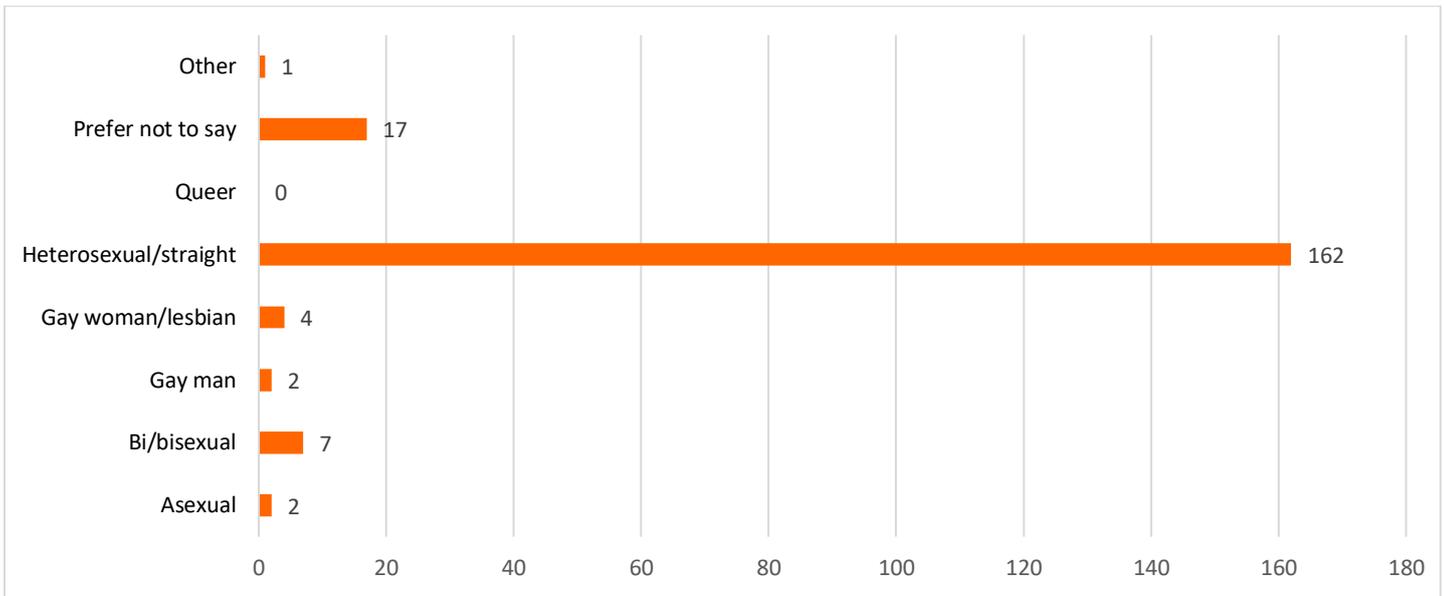
Fig 11.7 Sexual Orientation of respondents (n=195)

'Other' included pansexual. While this question could be skipped, a number noted that they would 'prefer not to say'. This could be due to a persistent stigma associated with sexual orientation.

**Figure 11.8 Relationships Status of Respondents (n=194)**

**Figure 11.9 Highest Education Level of Respondents (n=194)**

Figure 11.10 Religion or belief of respondents (n=192)

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Acknowledgements

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