

**FEDERACIÓN
DE JÓVENES
INVESTIGADORES**



**Precarity and
Instability in
Academia
Symposium**

**Leganés (Madrid)
December 13, 2024**

PRELIMINARY RESULTS OF THE SURVEY ON THE PREDOCTORAL RESEARCHERS OF THE “FEDERACIÓN DE JÓVENES INVESTIGADORES” FJI/PRECARIAS

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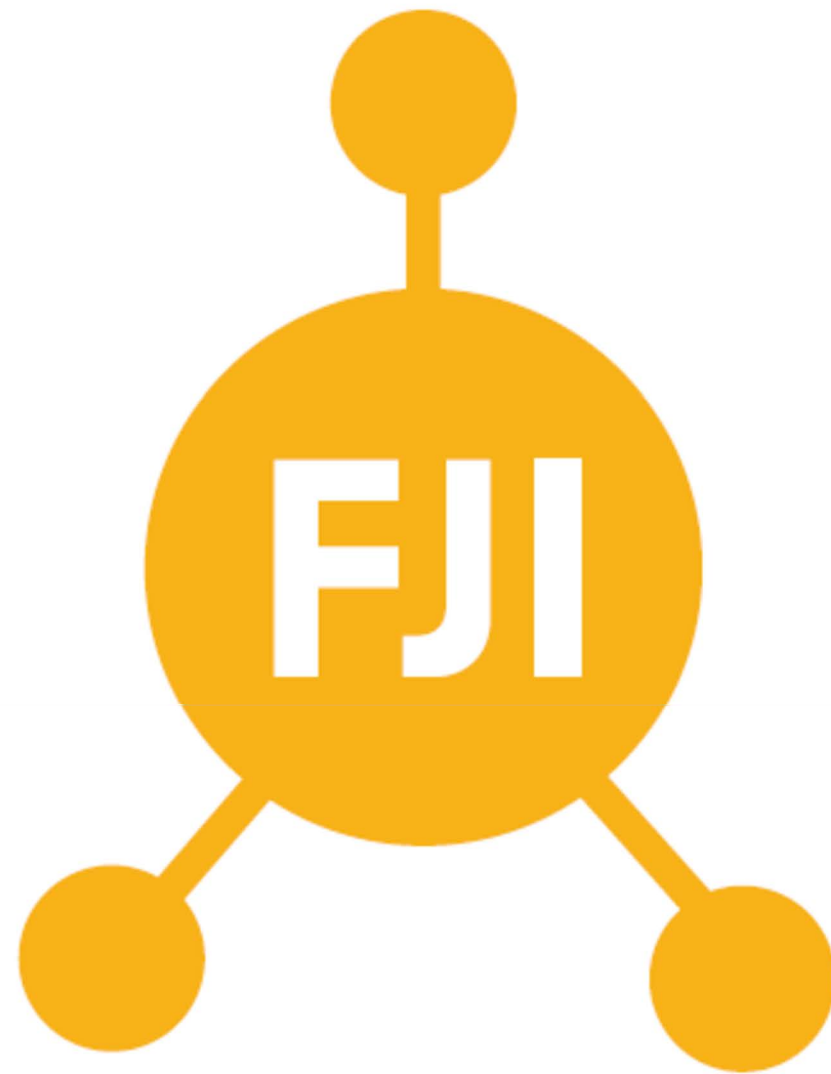
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ABSTRACT

- **Precarious working conditions in Academia: low salaries, lack of stability, conciliation problems (and so on)**
- **Consequences: mental health, lack of independent life project**
- **Solutions? --> Organizing within researcher associations and trade unions.**
- **To denounce the situation and demand improvements, we need up-to-date data ---> “Encuesta Situación Predocs y Postdocs”.**
- **Here are some preliminary results as the analysis is still in progress**

INTRODUCTION

Precarious working conditions in Academia: job insecurity, low salaries, lack of stability, conciliation problems, high stress levels (and so on) (Martínez-Nicolás & García-Girón, 2020)

Austerity politics and labor reforms have “normalized” precariousness, even for the most qualified sectors (Schwaller, 2019; Julià et al., 2016)

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Consequences: mental health, lack of independent life project

Up to 60% may experience psychological problems, making PhD candidates more vulnerable than general population (Estupiñá et al., 2024; Sorrel et al., 2020).

02

The Federación de Jóvenes Investigadores (FJI/Precarios) has promoted a survey to collect updated data on precariousness

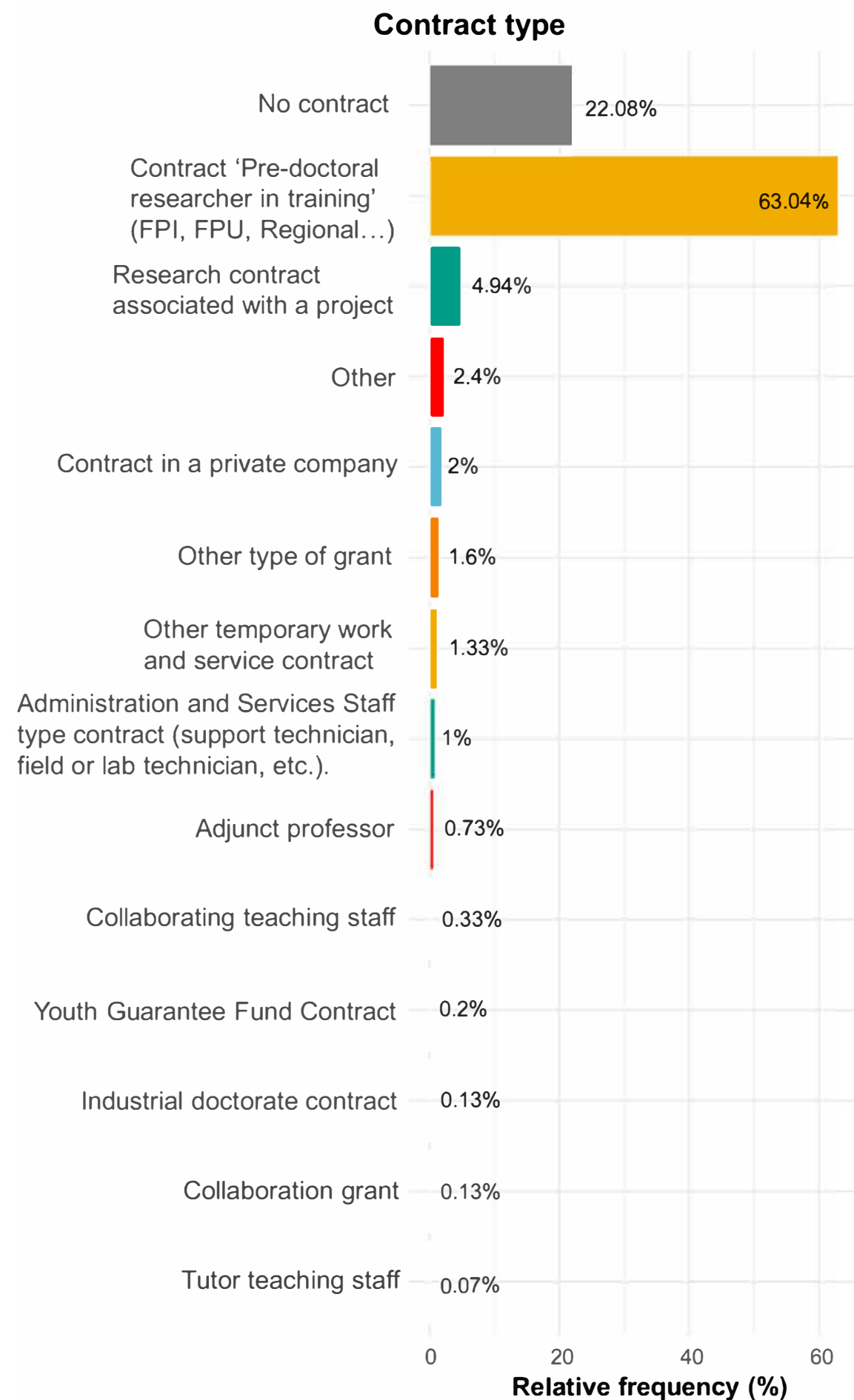
The availability of up-to-date data is the first step in the development of measures to be taken in response to the precarious situation of predoctoral researchers.

METHODS

- **A structured survey was designed with four distinct blocks for comprehensive analysis.**
- **The survey was conducted online, taking approximately 20-30 minutes to complete.**
- **A non-probabilistic convenience sample of 1499 predoctoral researchers was achieved via FJI social media.**
 - **Profile verification: When do you plan to read your doctoral thesis?**
- **Data analysis was performed using R, focusing on descriptive statistics and key issues.**

RESULTS

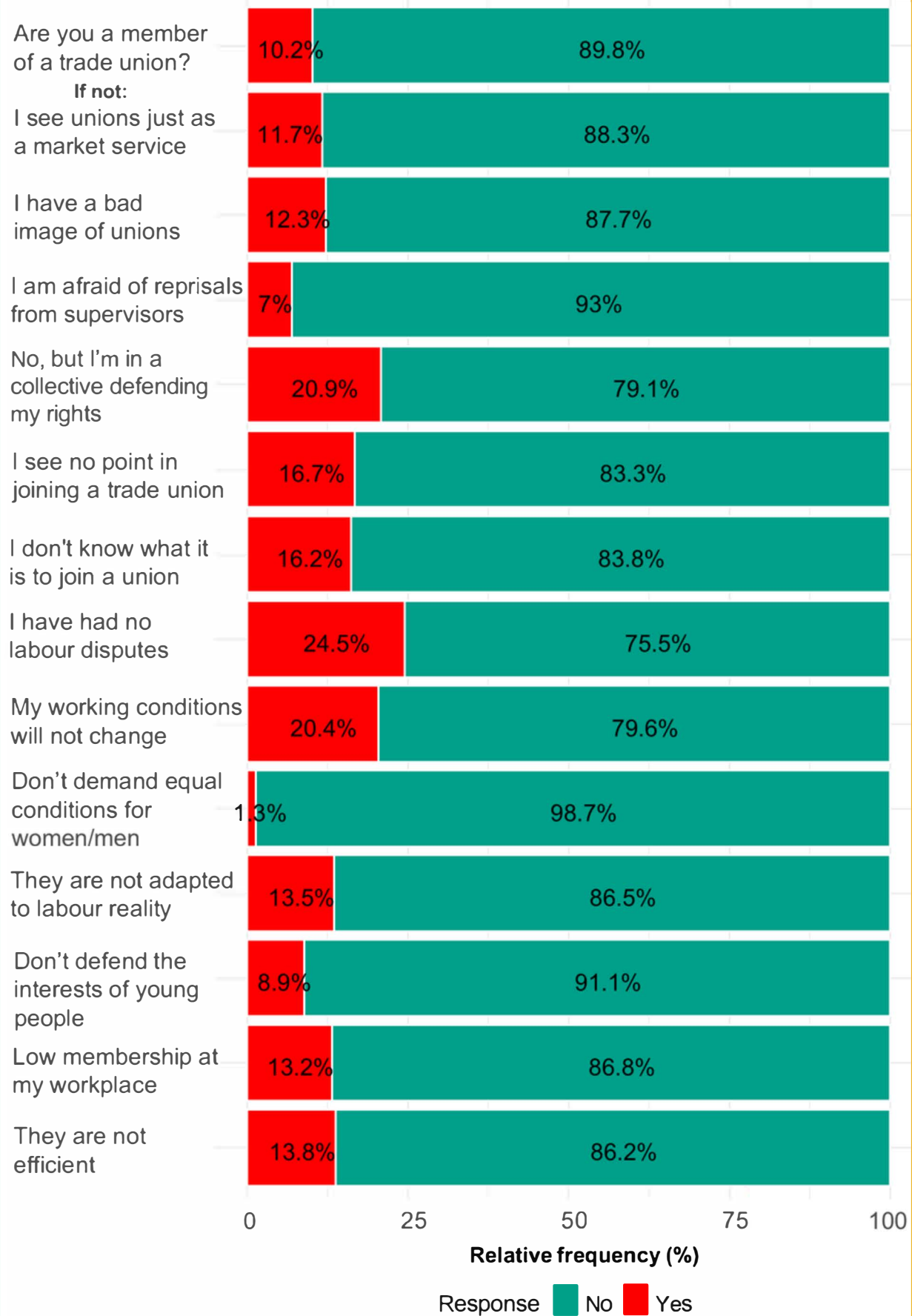
- **The mean age of surveyed PhD candidates was 29.1 years (Mdn = 28, SD = 5.47; min = 22; max = 64).**
- **Women comprised 58.3% (n = 874) of the total sample of PhD candidates surveyed.**
- **The majority of candidates hail from the Catalonia, Madrid, and Andalusia regions.**
- **36.2% Life and Health Sciences; 30.5% in Social and Legal Sciences.**
- **A significant portion of candidates attended public schools, with 73.4% reported. Approximately 40% of their parents hold university degrees.**



CONTRACT TYPE

- A significant **77.9%** of respondents hold a predoctoral contract.
- Predoctoral contracts are most common in Life and Health Sciences fields.
- The 'predoctoral researcher in training' contract is the most frequently held type.
- Nearly all respondents (**96.8%**) work on their thesis full-time.

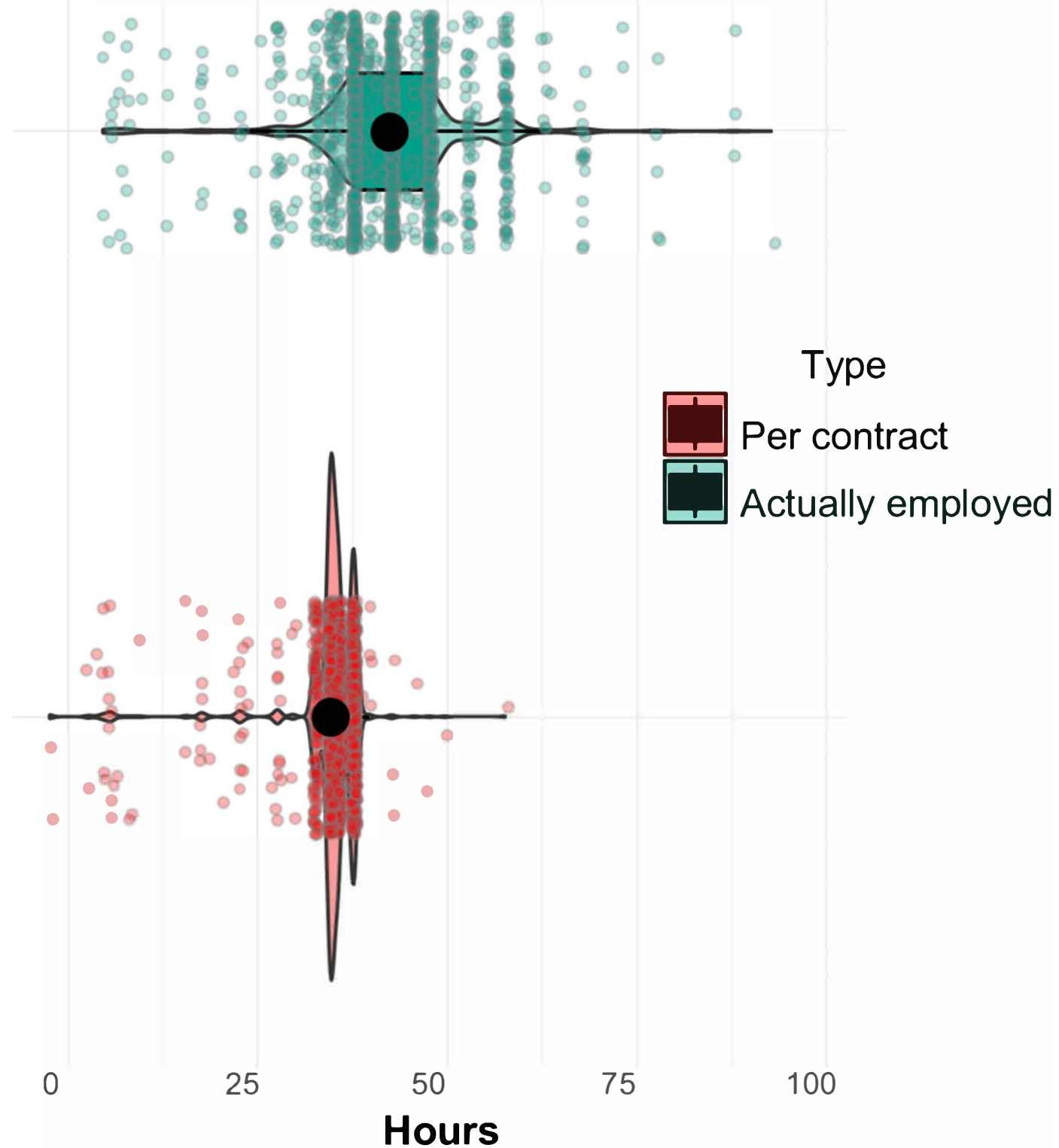
Predoctoral researchers' reasons for not joining a trade union



UNION MEMBERSHIP

- Only 10.2% of respondents reported being members of a union.
- 18.7% of participants indicated affiliation with a research organization or collective.
- Respondents cited lack of time as a primary reason for not joining unions.
- Many expressed uncertainty about how to engage with unions effectively.

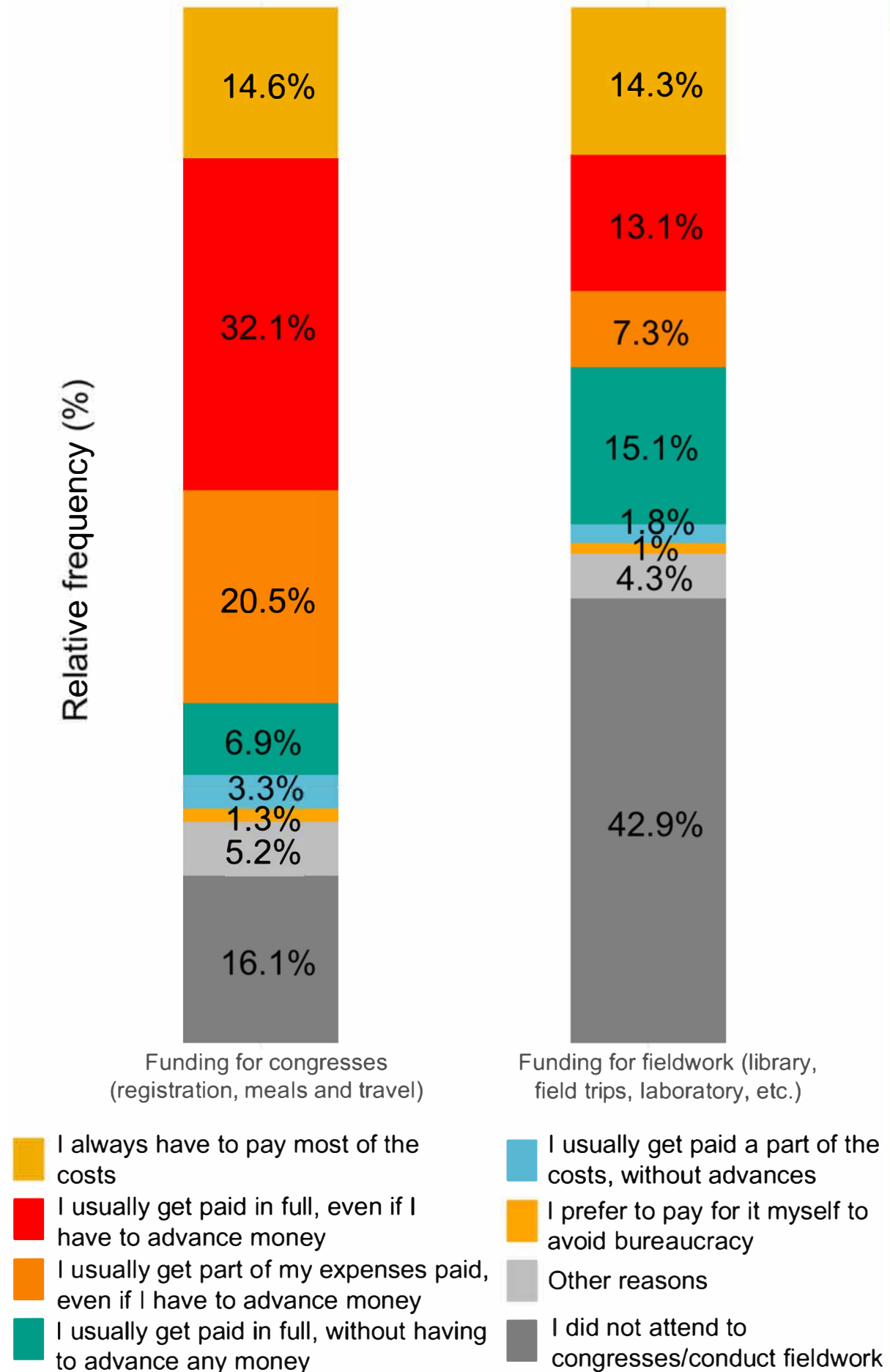
Weekly working time in hours established by contract and actually employed



Knowledge and Perceptions of Working Conditions

- A significant majority, **59.6%**, are unaware of the EPIF regulations.
- Among those aware of EPIF, **51.8%** believe it is applied correctly.
- A majority, **64.2%**, are unfamiliar with their workplace's collective agreement.
- **32.5%** find their salaries inadequate for basic living expenses.
- **36.9** hours per week versus actual **44.6** hours (**45.2%** works on weekends).

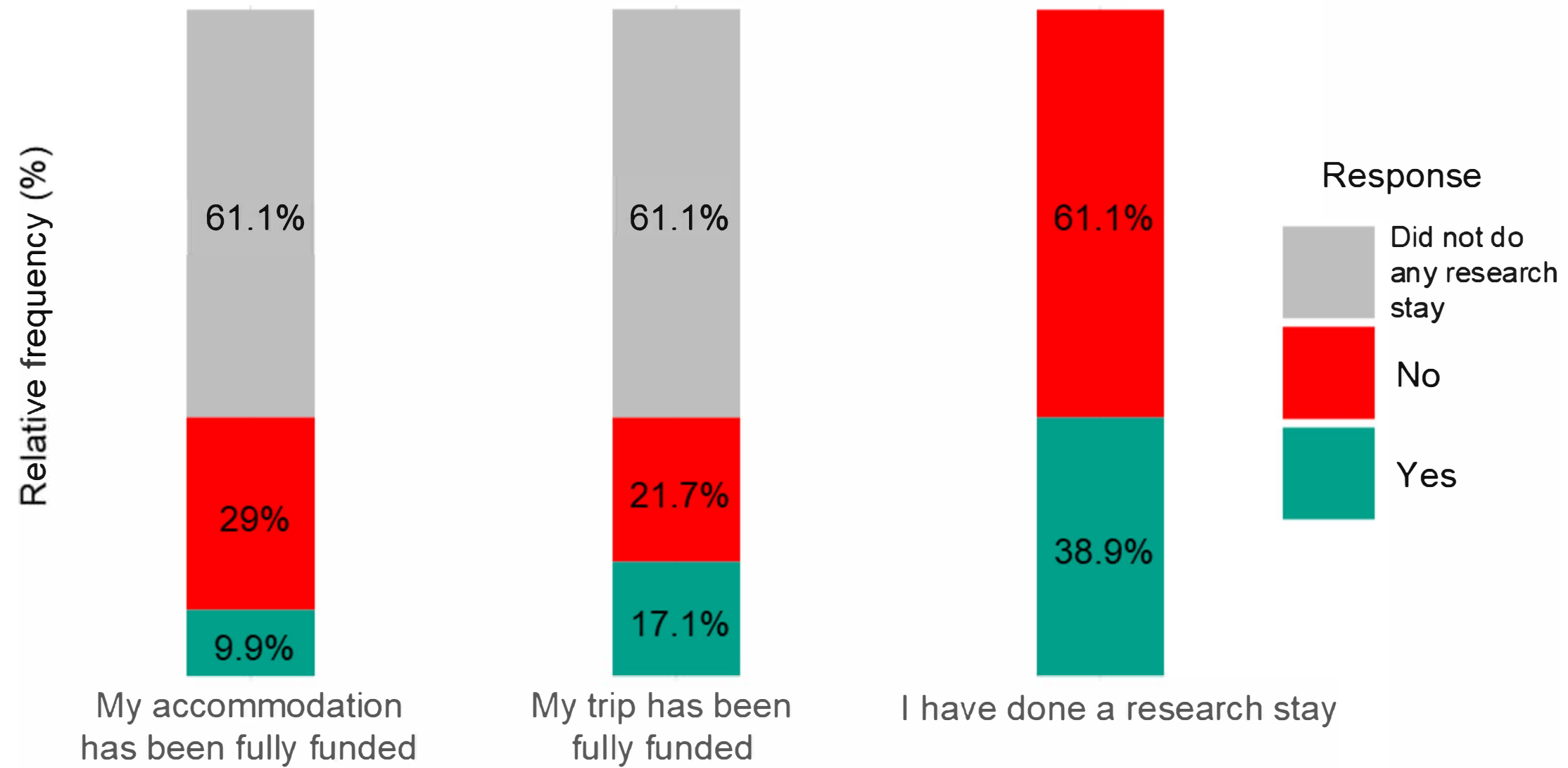
Financing of expenses in the pre-doctoral collective



Economic Costs Incurred

- **83.9%** of predoctoral researchers attended conferences, indicating high engagement in academic events.
- **Only 1.5%** prefer self-funding to avoid bureaucratic processes for conference expenses.
- **84%** of respondents needed to advance conference expenses, highlighting financial challenges faced.
- **74.6%** of researchers received no accommodation support during research stays, increasing financial burden.

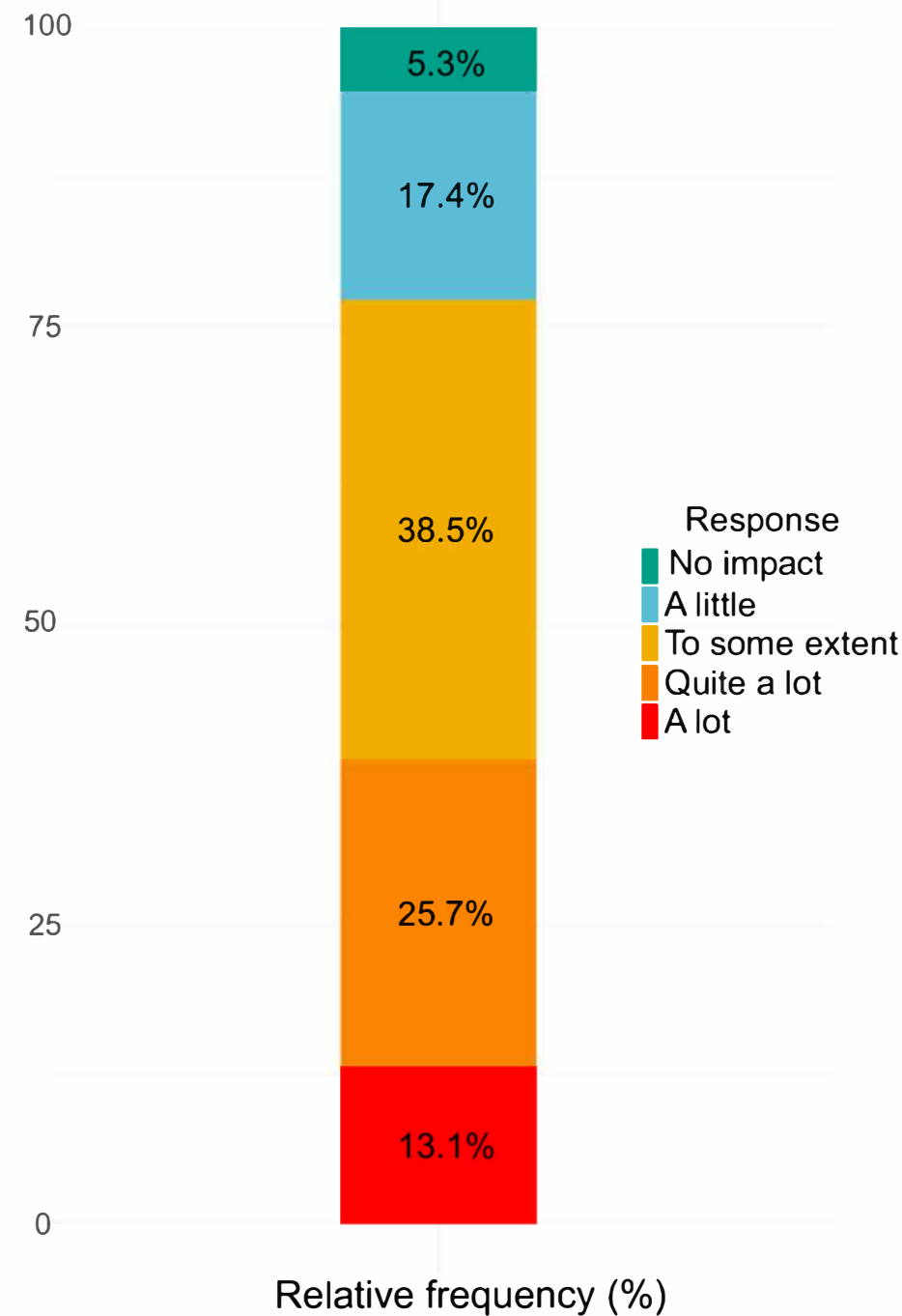
Financing the cost of research stays



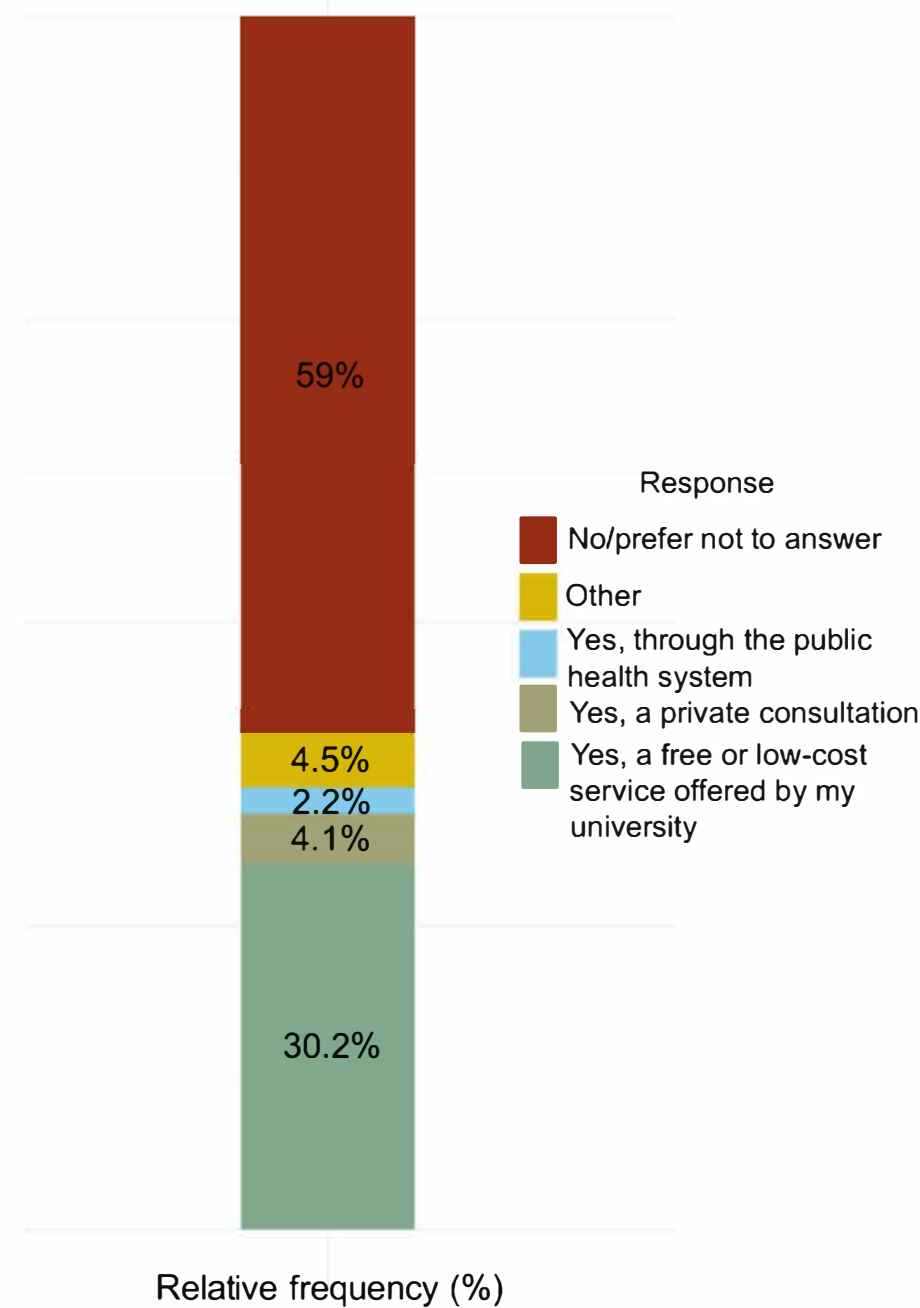
- **36.5%** of respondents sought psychological support for work-related issues.
- **Women** were more likely to utilize private psychological care services for support.
- **94.7%** of respondents reported that research work impacted their health to some degree.
- **22.2%** of respondents reported low to no compatibility between work and life balance.

Occupational Health

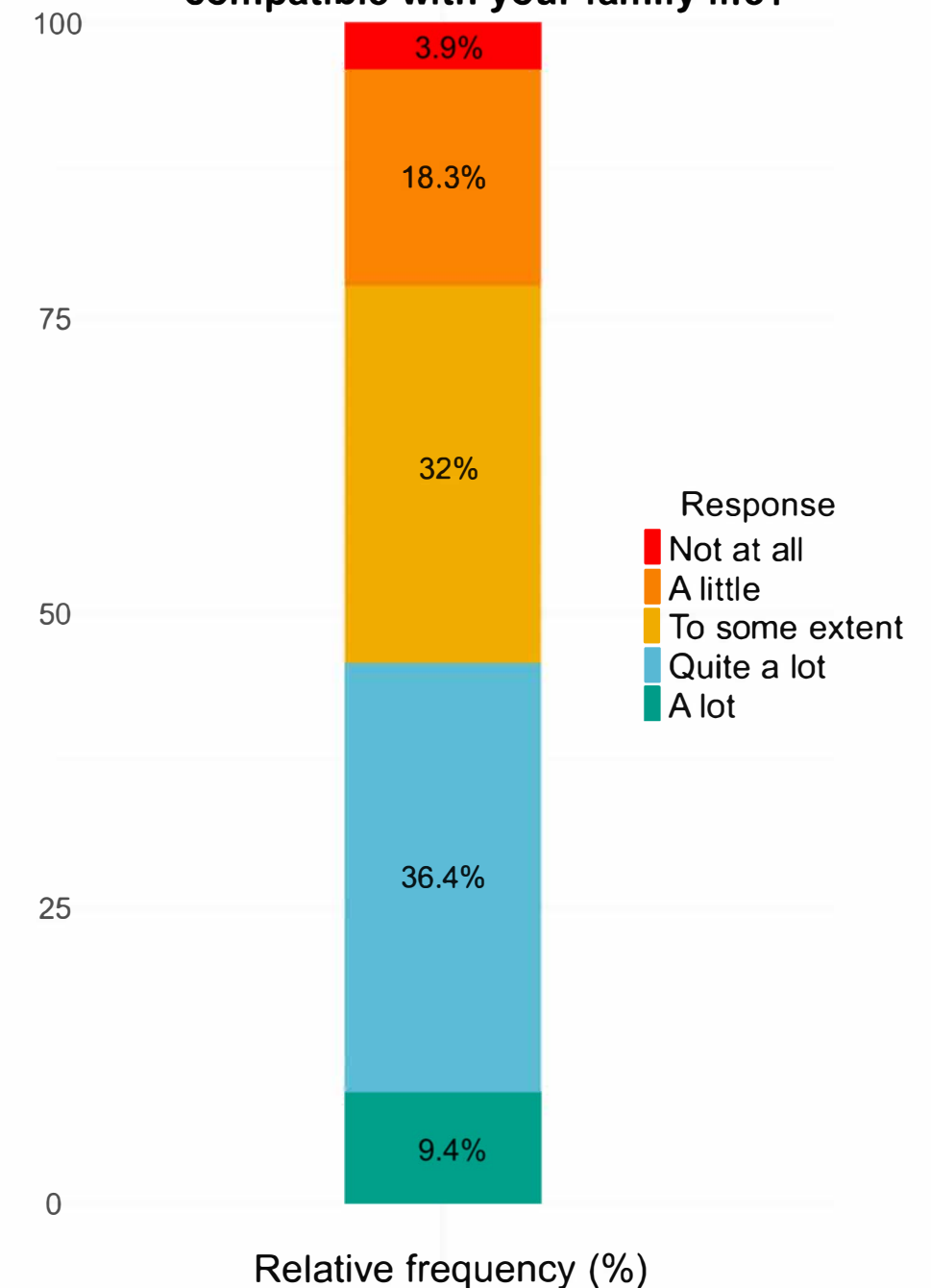
Negative impact of research work on health



Have you attended psychological care service?



Is your research activity compatible with your family life?



CONCLUSIONS

- **High prevalence of precarious conditions affects PhD candidates' health and quality of life.**
- **Respondents report inadequate pay and excessive workloads beyond contractual hours.**
- **Limited awareness of labor protections and low union membership among early-career researchers.**
- **40% of respondents highlight academic schedule flexibility as beneficial for balancing work with personal life, while 60% find it problematic: need clear boundaries and agreements for working hours**

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FUTURE WORK

- **Further data analysis is crucial to assess demographic differences in funding levels.**
- **Administering the questionnaire to thesis students without predoctoral contracts is valuable.**
- **Comparing predoctoral and postdoctoral data can enhance understanding of career trajectories.**
- **Understanding precariousness across research stages is essential for future policy development.**



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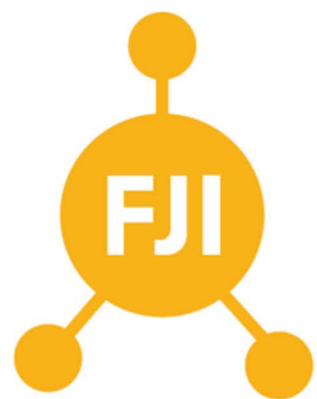


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asegurando los derechos
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THANKS!

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