

Junior Faculty at Karolinska Institutet Survey Report 2017

May 2018



**Karolinska
Institutet**

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Introduction

The Junior Faculty at Karolinska Institutet (KI) Survey was conducted in the spring of 2017 to gather information about KI's early career researchers' situation. This information is used by the Junior Faculty Steering Group at KI to advocate for conditions that allow present and future junior faculty to perform at their best. The survey questions cover three main areas: career systems at KI, funding situation, and equal opportunities.

The Junior Faculty Steering Group at KI has sent surveys to junior faculty members since 2012. Because there is no formal registration of junior faculty members, the survey has been sent to individuals based on their position titles. We define junior faculty as individuals having a PhD but not yet a permanent position as university lecturer or professor. Some people might fit this definition but not define themselves as junior faculty and thus may have opted out of completing the survey.

In the 2017 survey, there were 64 questions containing both closed and open-ended response options. Respondents were promised anonymity; therefore individual responses are not included in this report. Furthermore, to avoid identification of participants, results are reported on an aggregated level, and any results which include fewer than five responses are not reported.

Description of Survey Respondents

Our aim was to contact everyone at KI who has a PhD but not yet a permanent position as a university lecturer or professor to capture a sample of junior faculty members at KI. To do this, we requested a list of employees at KI from the Human Relations Department who had a PhD (BESTA code with a "1" in the 5th position). This was a broad inclusion criterion, with the goal of including as many people who consider themselves junior faculty as possible.

Five survey requests were sent out in February and March 2017. The questionnaire was sent to a total of 839 individuals of which 439 responded (response rate 52%). Among those who answered the questionnaire, 44% were men and 55% were women. Thirty percent identified as Swedish, 59% as non-Swedish and 10% as both Swedish and non-Swedish. Fifty percent had children younger than 19 years of age living at home, of whom, 70% had children who were under the age of five. Sixty-one percent of respondents were postdocs and 27% were Assistant Professors (Forskarassistent). Eighty-nine percent were not permanently employed. About half (52%) of the respondents completed their PhD in the last five years. Thirty-one percent obtained their PhD at KI and only 4% of respondents said that clinical work was part of their employment.

Summary of Results

Career questions

The career stage of respondents might significantly influence how they view their career potential and current situation. It is, therefore, useful to note that the majority of respondents (61%) were postdocs and only 31% were assistant professors or researchers according to their contracts. Overall, these percentages corresponded well with the type of work that the respondents reported that they actually do (57% reported they work as postdocs or senior postdocs, 28% as assistant professors). Most respondents answered that they spend little of their time outside research and mostly can focus on their own line of research.

Sixteen percent of all respondents work as an assistant professor under another principal investigator, and somewhat less (12%) as an assistant professor with their own external grants. It is difficult to judge from our survey if this is representative of the situation at KI in general or reflects the structure at specific departments. Of note, most respondents (66%) answered that the assistant professor positions should mainly be used for young researchers that are independent or on their way to becoming independent, whereas 24% answered assistant professors could also be used as a title for researchers under another principal investigator.

More worryingly, 40% of the respondents answered that they did not know that KI has a career system, and similarly 34% say they do not know how to use the KI career system to get to the next career step. In-depth analysis showed that postdocs were most unfamiliar with the KI career system (data not shown), suggesting KI might benefit from organizing more information seminars specifically targeted at postdocs. Eighty-seven percent of the respondents did not apply for a faculty-funded career position¹ last year. The major reason for not applying was because competition was too high as reported by 18% of the responders. Our survey shows that the majority of the respondents would like a career at KI. However only 9% strongly feel they have a good chance of a continuing their career at KI, possibly reflecting the high level of competitiveness at junior positions.

Most respondents would like a tenure-track system at KI, and a majority answered that KI should improve transparency during evaluations and implement a mentoring system in order to improve the current career system. Fifty-five percent agree that all career positions at KI should be announced with similar terms and conditions. An overwhelming majority did not know that KI has a common definition of a group leader.

Taken together, most young researchers are interested in continuing their careers at KI, but would like to see improvements in the transparency of evaluations and announcements as well as a mentoring program to improve their chances to succeed.

Funding questions

Junior faculty at KI spend a significant amount of time per year writing research grants; on average, five weeks. One fourth spend nine or more weeks writing grant applications, writing an average of four grants per year. Thirty-one percent were awarded one grant in the previous year and 33% reported that they were awarded no grants. The most common reasons that junior faculty felt they were not awarded grants were that grants were awarded to very few candidates (27%) and that they felt that they could not compete with more senior researchers (22%).

Thirty percent of respondents received feedback from senior colleagues on their grant applications and 24% did not receive any feedback. Of those who did not receive any feedback, the most common reason was that

¹ Faculty Funded Career Positions, also called Centrally Funded Career Positions, are advertised by the Board of Research to recruit leading junior researchers with outstanding scientific merits and future potential. These positions include Assistant Professor and Senior Researcher.

they did not know whom to ask for feedback. Over 80% of respondents who received feedback from KI Grants Office and other colleagues felt the feedback was satisfactory. Very few (8%) reported that they received feedback from grant organizations and they reported less satisfaction with the feedback received than other sources. These results indicate that feedback from KI Grants Office and other colleagues is highly appreciated and an increased awareness of these valuable resources would be beneficial to junior faculty.

The vast majority of junior faculty (74%) think that the external funding agencies in Sweden should coordinate their junior researcher funding to distribute the funding to several individual junior researchers, rather than a limited number of junior researchers receiving multiple junior researcher grants.

Equal opportunities questions

When asked whether in their experience, the recruitment for positions process at KI provides equal opportunity for all, close to 40% of respondents disagreed, while 24% agreed. Similarly, when asked whether, based on their experience, the KI nomination for positions process provides equal opportunities for all, 38% disagreed, while 22% agreed, and 23% answered that they do not know, which may indicate that they had not applied for positions at KI. It is difficult to pinpoint the reasons for considering the recruitment and nomination processes as not providing equal opportunities, but the subsequent questions provided some insight on the perceived opportunities for specific subgroups.

Forty-six percent of respondents felt that women and men do not have equal opportunities at KI, in contrast to 27% who considered the opportunities to be equal for both genders.

While almost half (47%) of respondents believed that Swedes and non-Swedes have equal opportunities at KI, over 20% of respondents did not believe that opportunities were equal for Swedes and non-Swedes.

When asked whether clinicians and non-clinicians at KI have equal opportunities, 38% agreed that they had equal opportunities, while 11% disagreed that the opportunities were equal. A large proportion - which is likely to represent non-clinicians - responded that they do not know (28%).

Regarding communication at KI, when asked about which languages should be used for all work-related communication at KI, the majority (44%) responded that it should be in both English and Swedish, 34% suggested English only, none suggested Swedish only, while just over 20% responded that it depends on the situation. Seventy-two percent of respondents agreed with the statement that since some communication at KI is done in Swedish only, it excludes non-Swedes from participating and integrating at KI. These responses reflect the nature of the diverse and international community of researchers at KI, and the importance of using a common language for all to have the opportunity to participate, integrate and contribute to the wider KI setting.

Finally, close to 10% reported that they felt discriminated against at KI, due to sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion, or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age. An additional 9% stated that they do not want to answer the question, while over 80% had reported no feelings of discrimination. It was concerning that only 26% contacted someone at work for help (whereas over 70% did not). The majority of those who did not seek help (43%) did not believe that they would receive any help, while 27% were afraid it would affect their work, around 14% did not know whom to contact and 16% did not want to provide a reason for not seeking support. Of those who asked for help, only 20% reported having received adequate help, while 80% reported not having received adequate help. It was also alarming that only 50% know whom to contact for help if they feel discriminated against. These responses clearly demonstrate the need for more information at KI on whom to contact in case of discrimination and better support for the individual discriminated against.

In summary, the responses indicate that further information is needed for the reasons underlying the perceptions of unequal opportunities regarding recruitment and nomination for positions at KI. Increasing the transparency in eligibility and evaluation criteria may improve these perceptions. Additional knowledge is also needed on the reasons behind the inequalities perceived for women and men, as well as clinicians and non-clinicians. Improving the opportunities for disadvantaged groups can aid in optimizing resources and retaining talent in the KI scientific community. Additionally, ameliorating the communication at KI by having all written communication in both English and Swedish, and having meetings in English may promote the integration of international researchers and increase the perception of equal opportunities among Swedes and non-Swedes. Finally, across KI, more information needs to be provided on what is considered discrimination, its potential consequences, the KI policies on discrimination, whom to contact in case of discrimination, and reassurance that help can be provided.

About the Junior Faculty Steering Group at Karolinska Institutet

The Junior Faculty Steering Group at KI, established in 2002, is an interest organization of and for researchers with a PhD but not yet a permanent academic position as university lecturer or professor. Junior faculty refers to a stage in the research career and includes postdocs, assistant professors and researchers (both short-term and permanently employed).

Our aim is to promote the development of a career system at all levels and to advocate for conditions that allow present and future junior faculty at Karolinska Institutet to perform at their best and to conduct independent research of a high academic quality and originality. The Junior Faculty Steering Group has a direct and continuous dialogue with KI leadership (thanks to representation in several KI boards at central and departmental levels), as well as funding agencies and government. The Steering Group voices the opinions of the junior faculty based on information from our yearly surveys and by having a broad representation at the majority of departments at KI. We provide support to early career academics through our website and by organizing seminars, workshops and hearings. We aim to integrate equal opportunities in all of our work.

The work carried out by the Junior Faculty Steering Group is divided into different focus areas, represented by Focus Groups. The number and the scope of the Focus Groups can vary and is dependent on the most prominent issues Junior Faculty at KI needs to tackle at a specific time point. As the Junior Faculty Steering Group is an interest organization, we do not have a member registry. Any junior faculty at KI is welcome to participate in the activities organized by Junior Faculty and to apply to become a member of the Steering Group. Please contact us at our email address below.

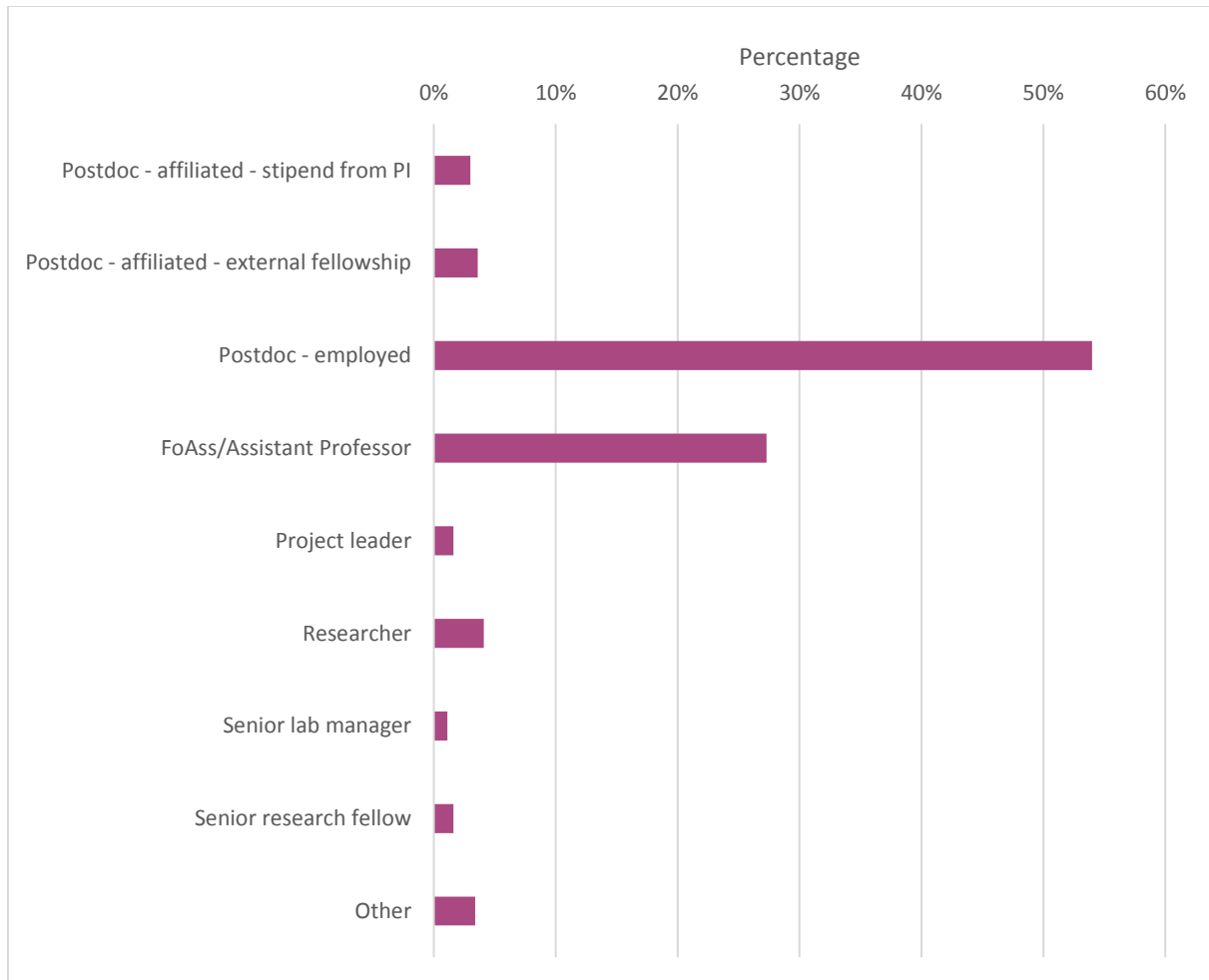
About the authors

This work is the culmination of the efforts of many members of the Junior Faculty Steering Group who contributed to writing the questions and administering the survey. The Communications Focus Group was an important driver of the success of this survey under the leadership of Louise Sjöholm. This report was authored by Elizabeth Arkema. The summary text was written by Carolina Hagberg, Elizabeth Arkema and Shireen Sindi.

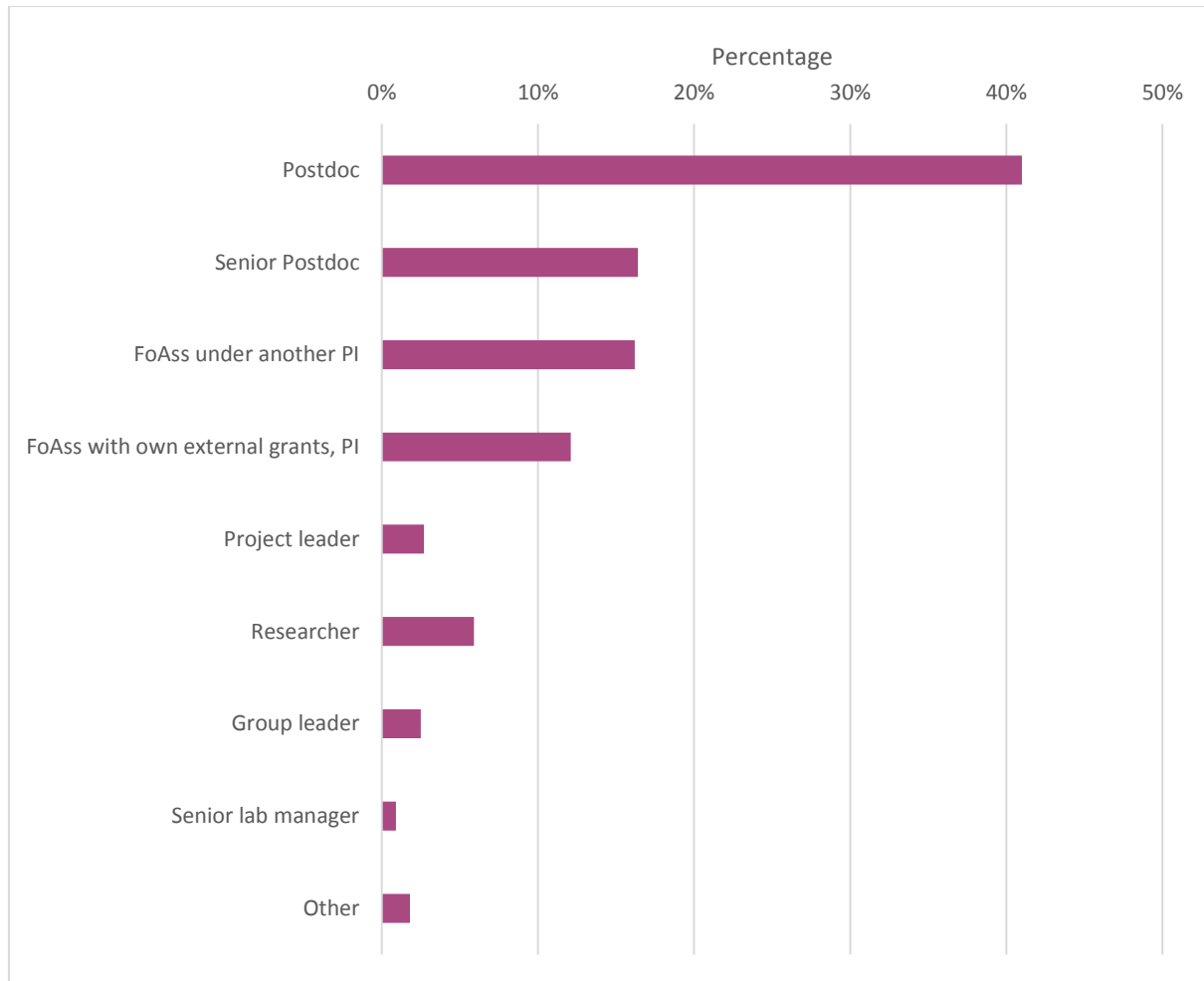
For further information: juniorfaculty@ki.se
www.ki.se/juniorfaculty

Career questions

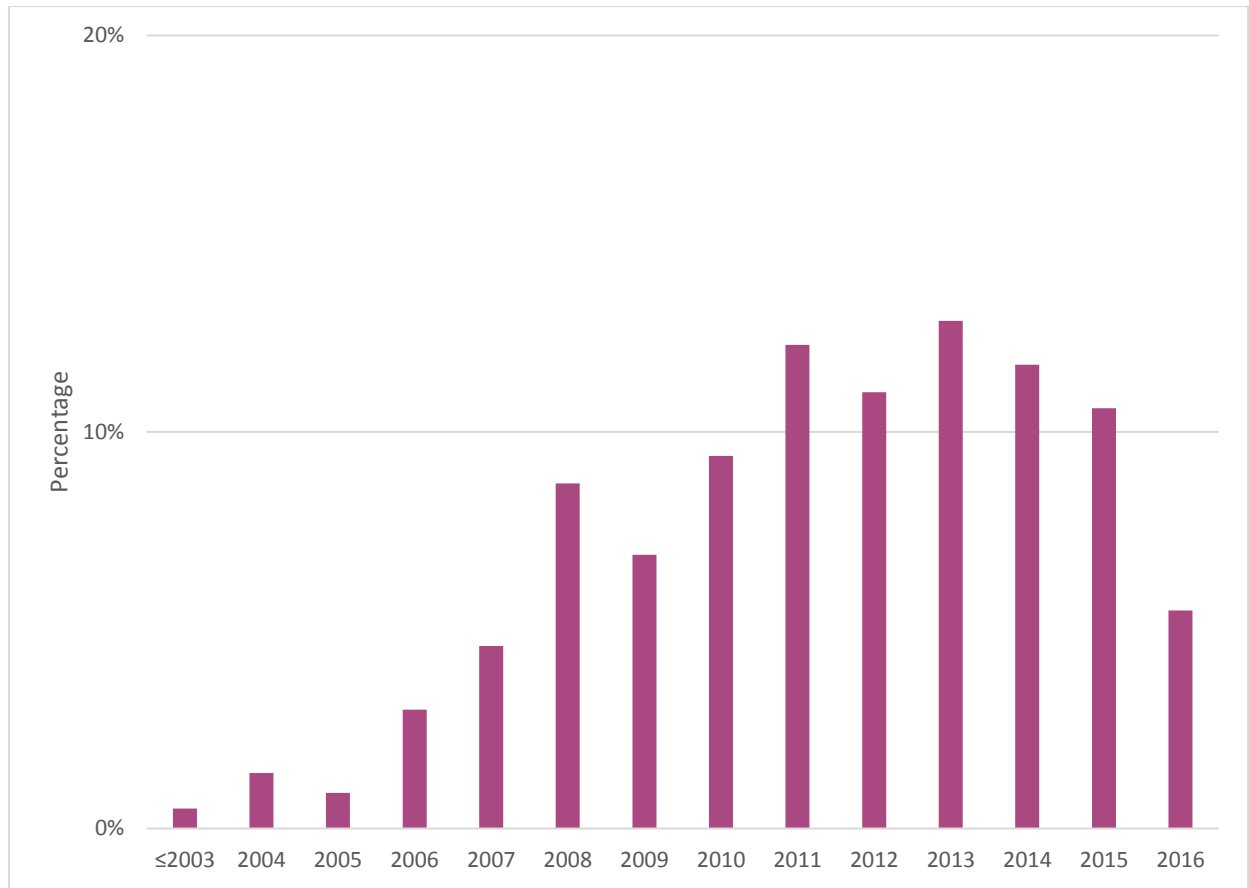
1. What is your current position according to your contract?



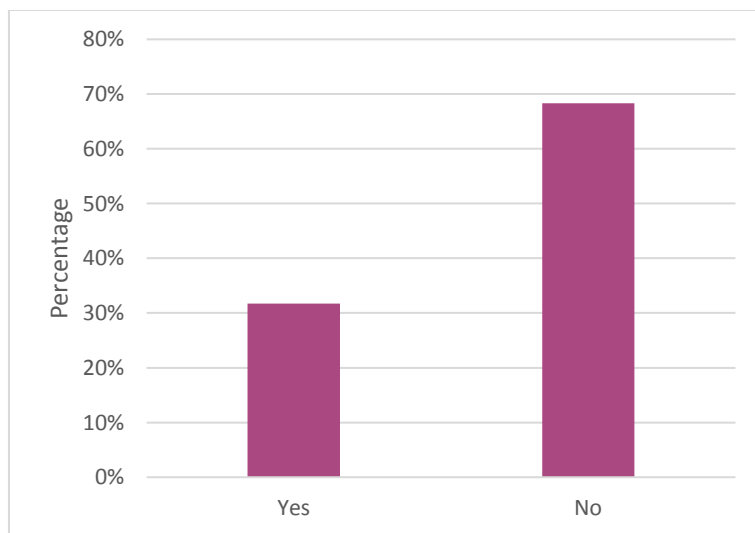
2. Which position best describes the work you do?



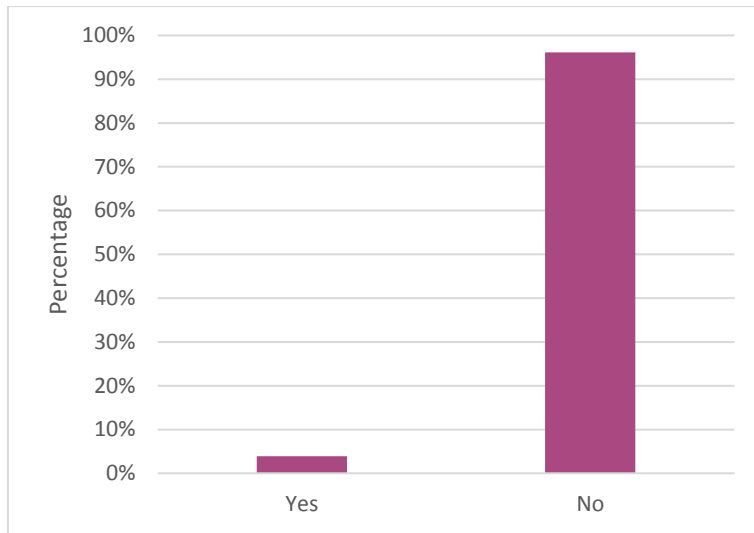
3. What year did you defend your PhD?



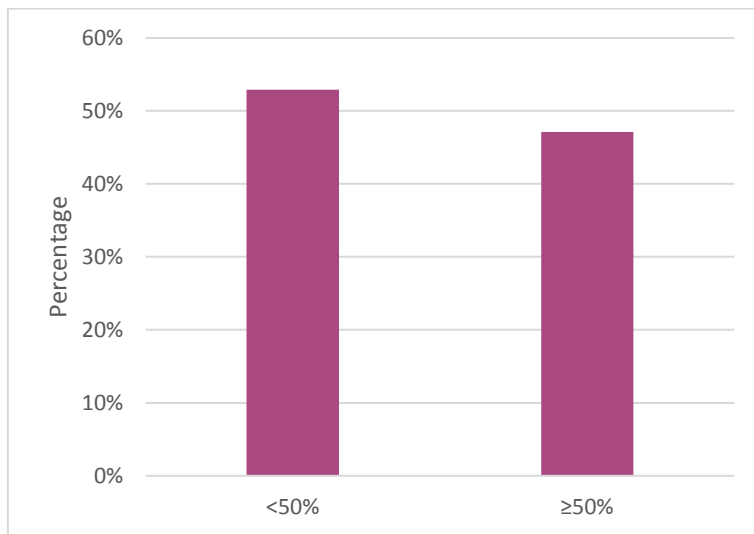
4. Did you obtain your PhD at Karolinska Institutet?



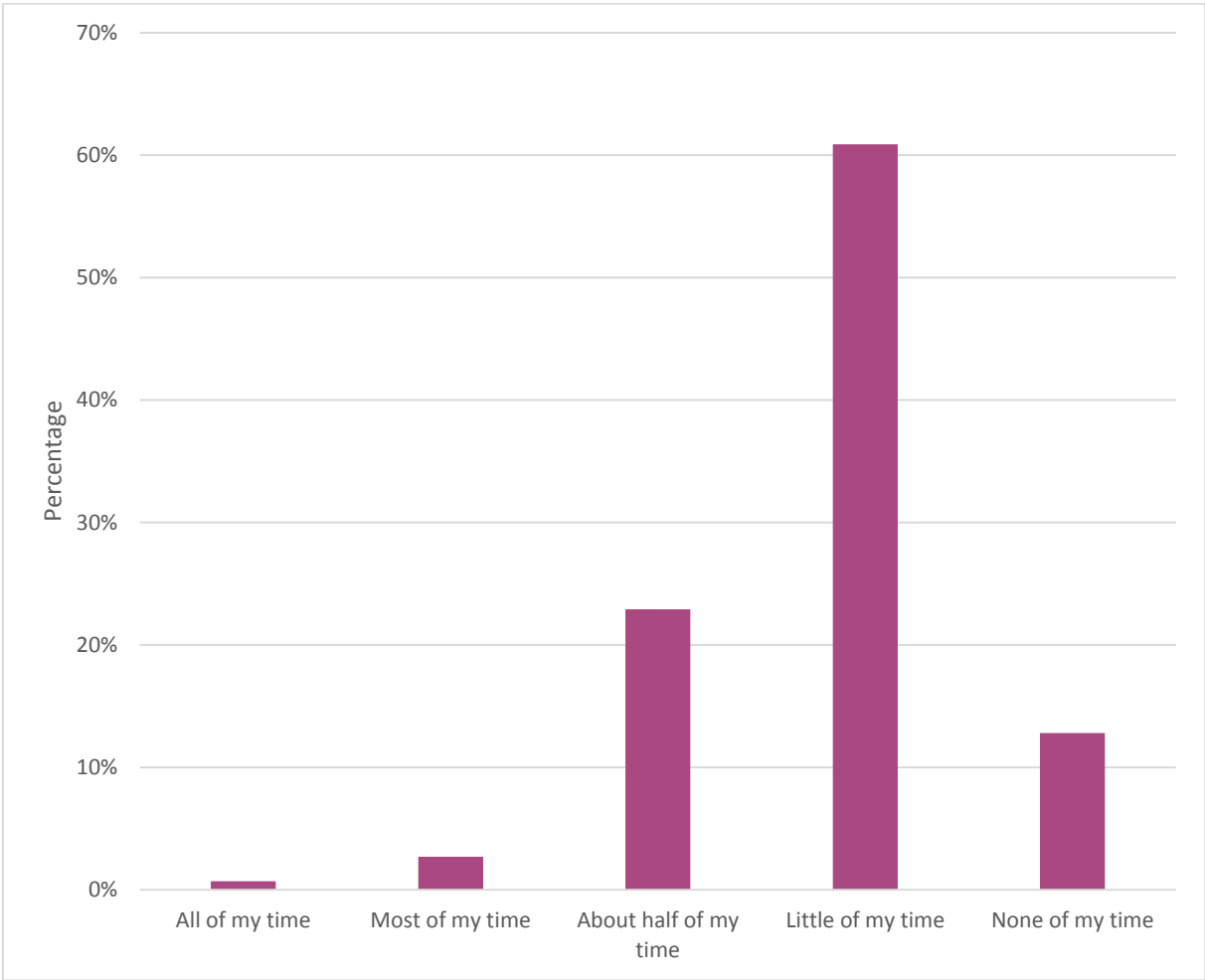
5. Is clinical work a part of your employment?



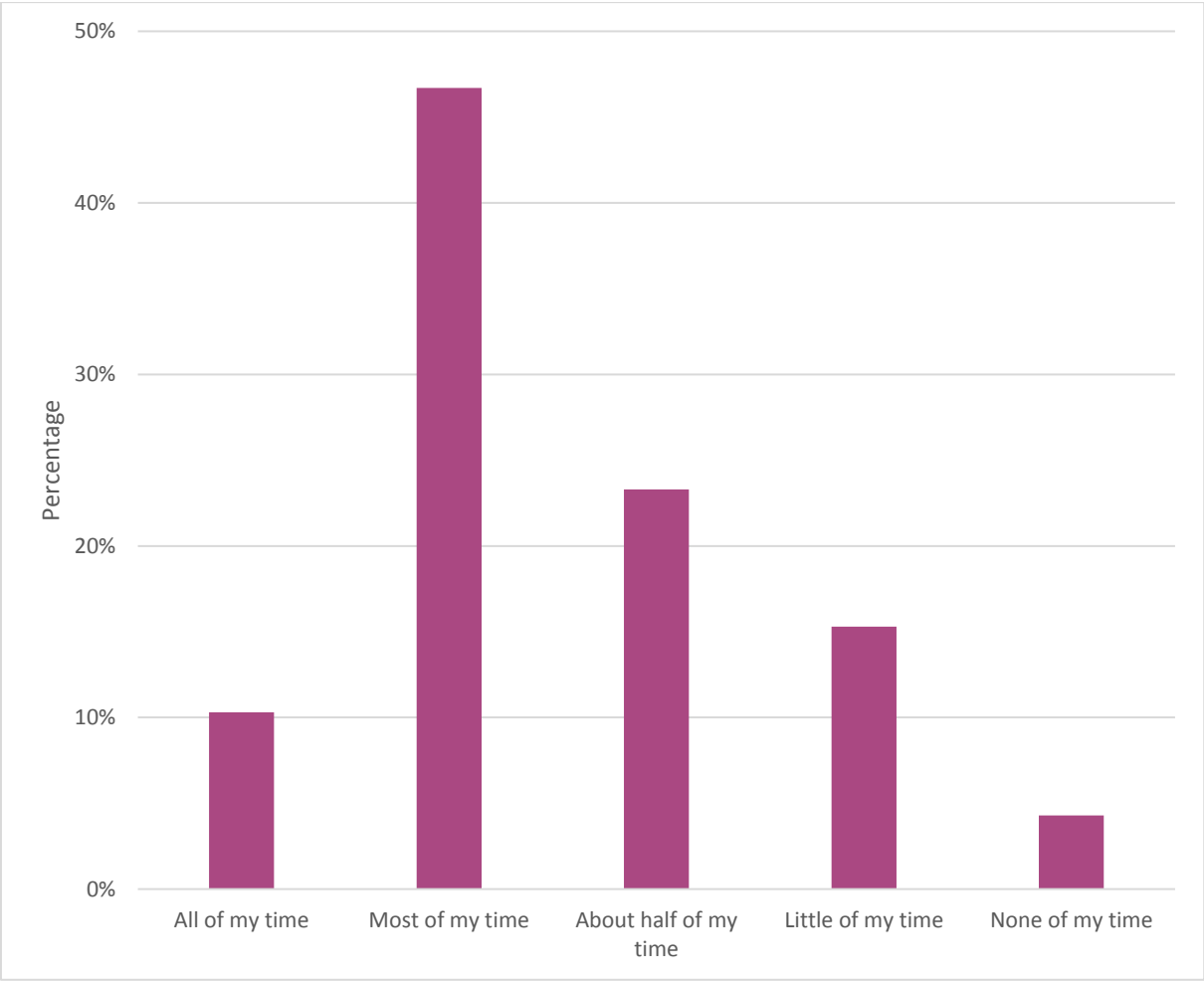
6. What percentage of your work was clinical in the past 12 months?



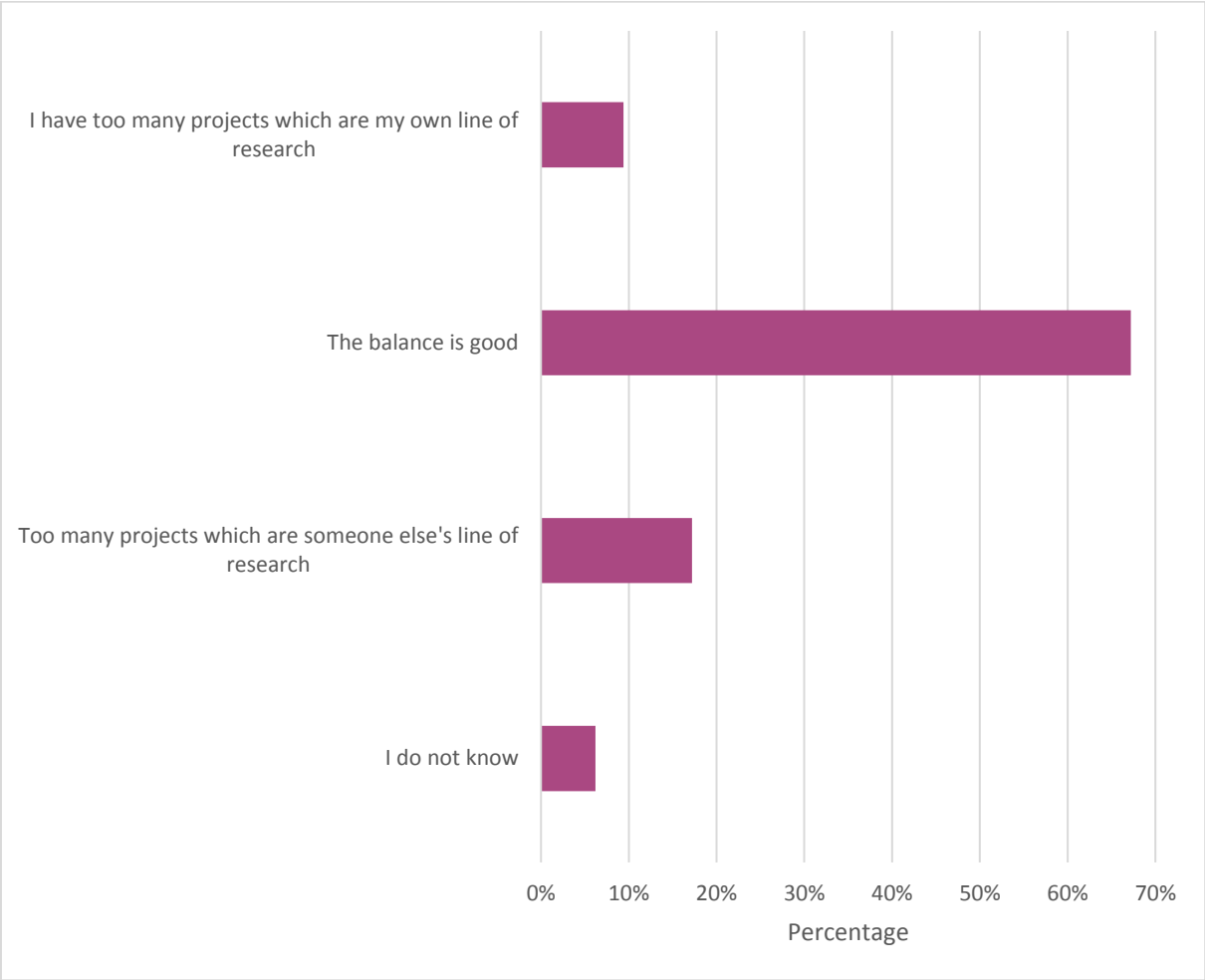
7. How much of your work time is spent on commitments other than research (for example, committee work, teaching, administrative work)?



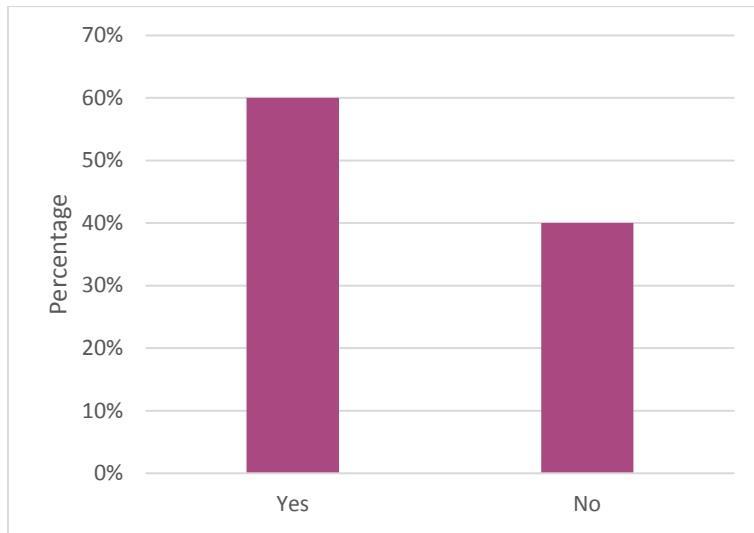
8. How much of your research time is spent on your own line of research?



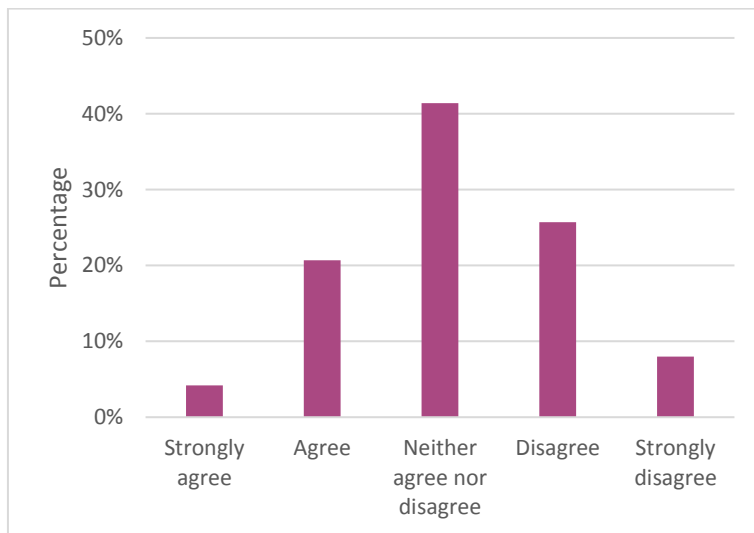
9. How do you perceive the balance between projects that are your own line of research and projects that are someone else's line of research?



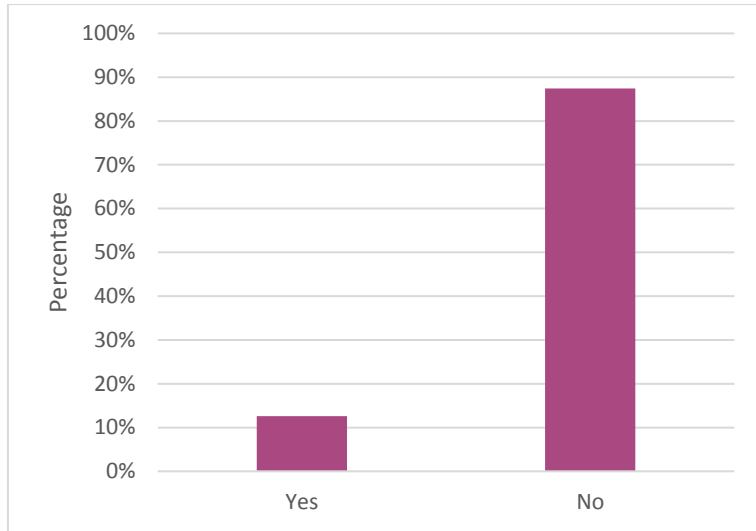
10. Did you know that KI has a career system?



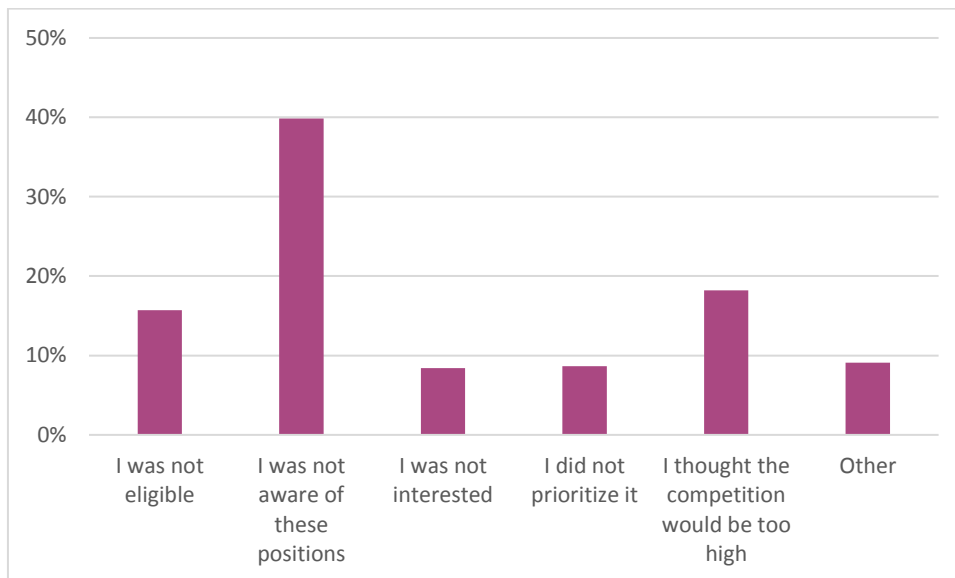
11. I understand how to use the KI career system to get to the next step in my career.



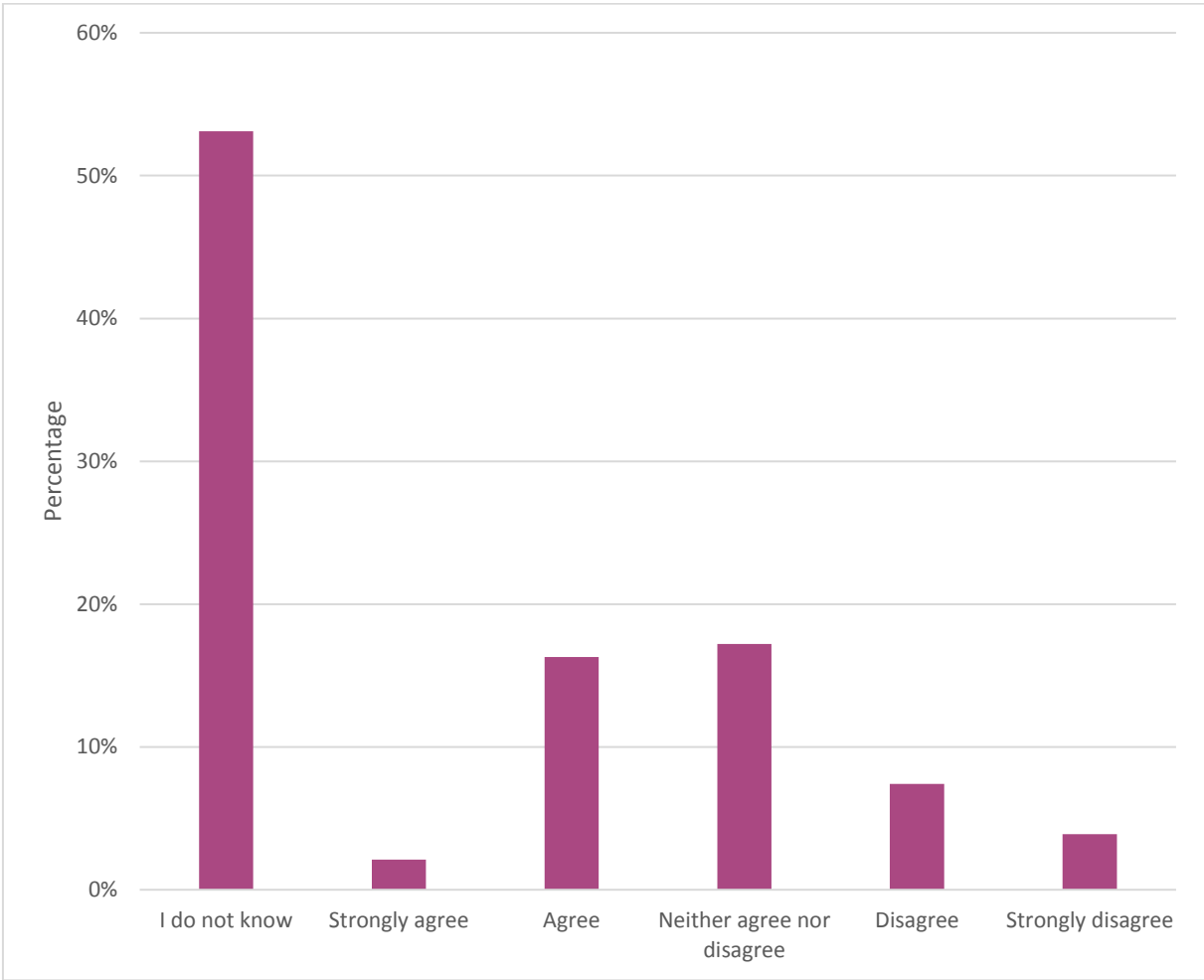
12. Did you apply for the KI centrally funded career positions in March 2016?



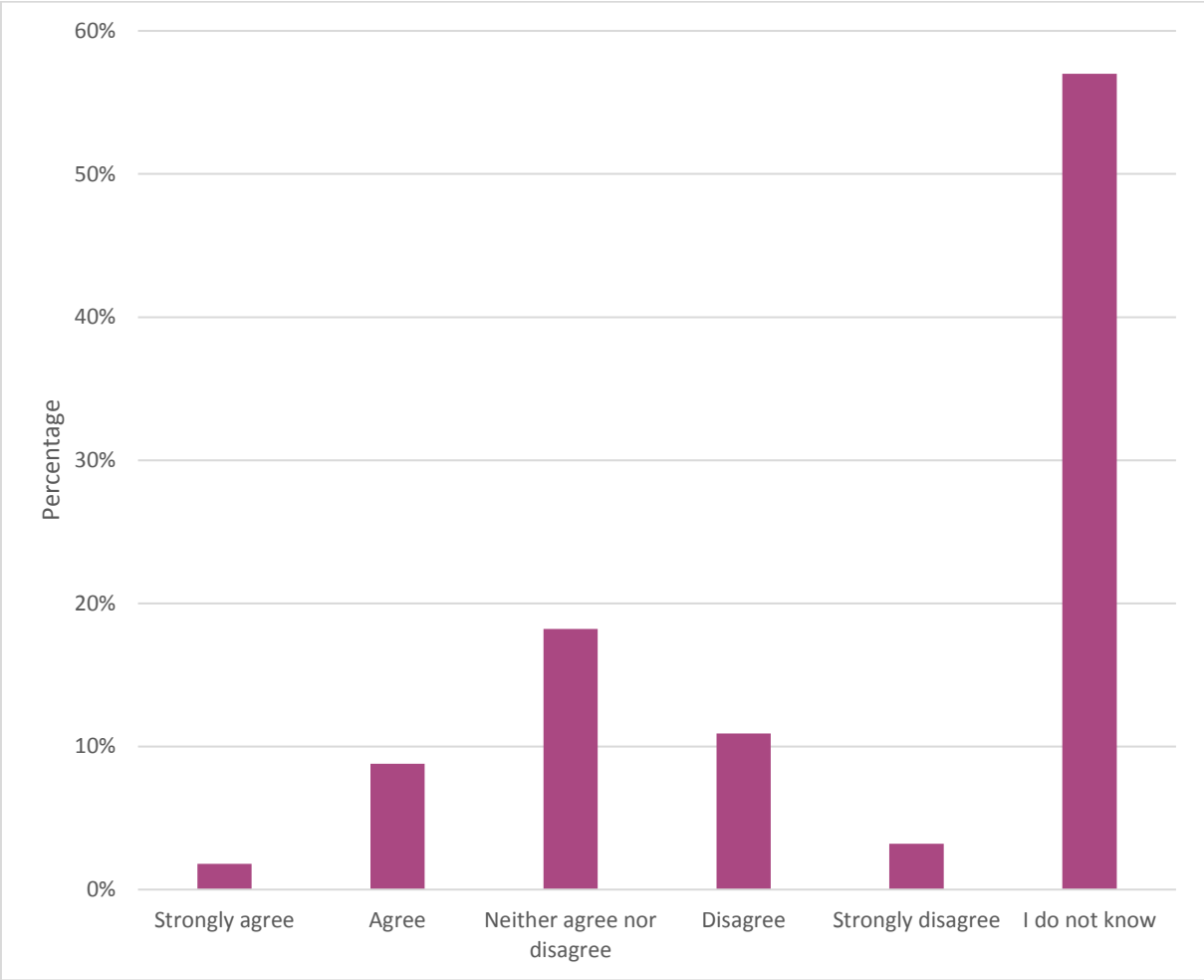
13. Why not? Please tick all that apply.



14. The eligibility criteria (requirements that need to be met in order to be allowed to apply) for the centrally funded positions were fair.



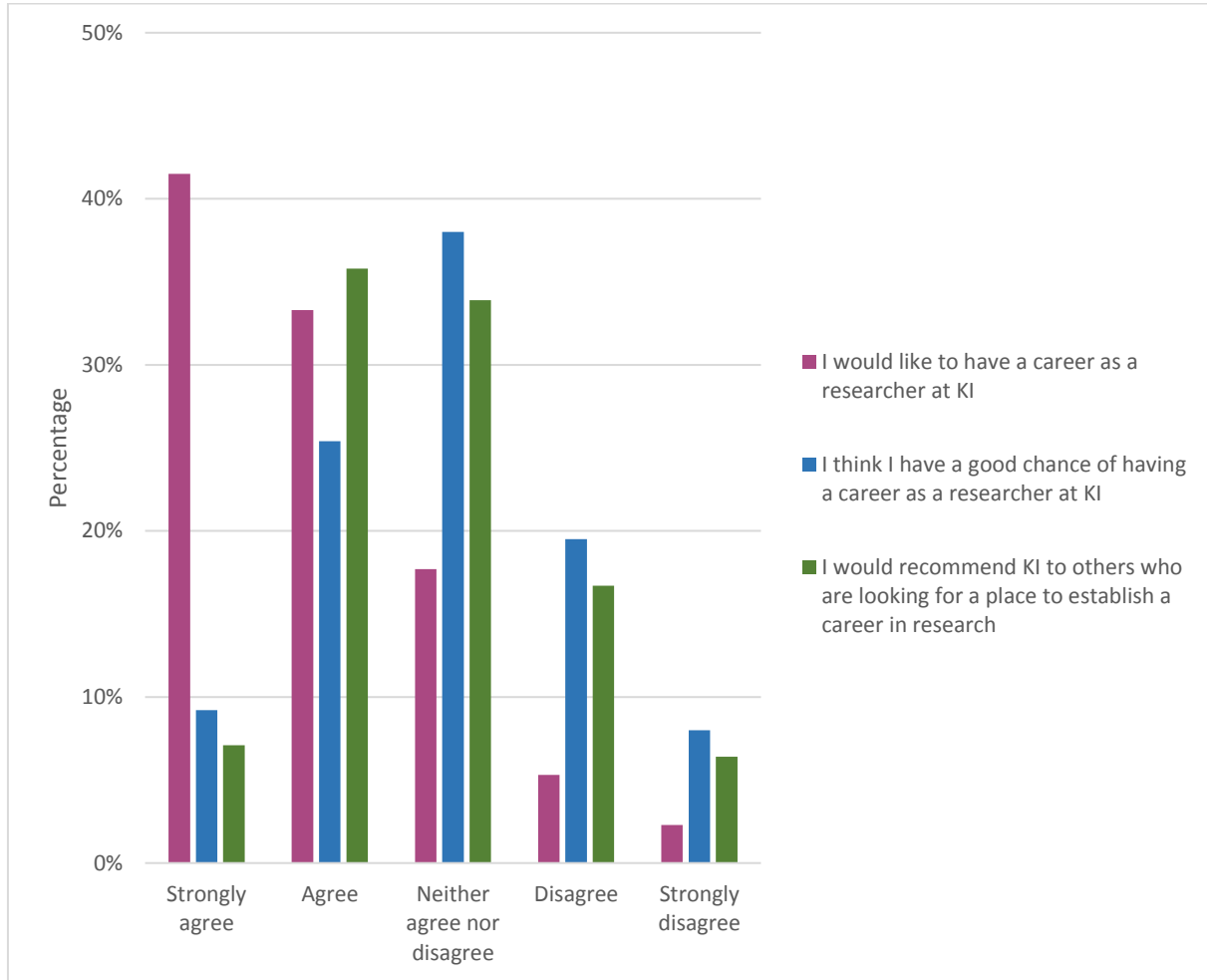
15. The evaluation criteria (criteria taken into account when evaluating applicants) for the centrally funded positions were fair.



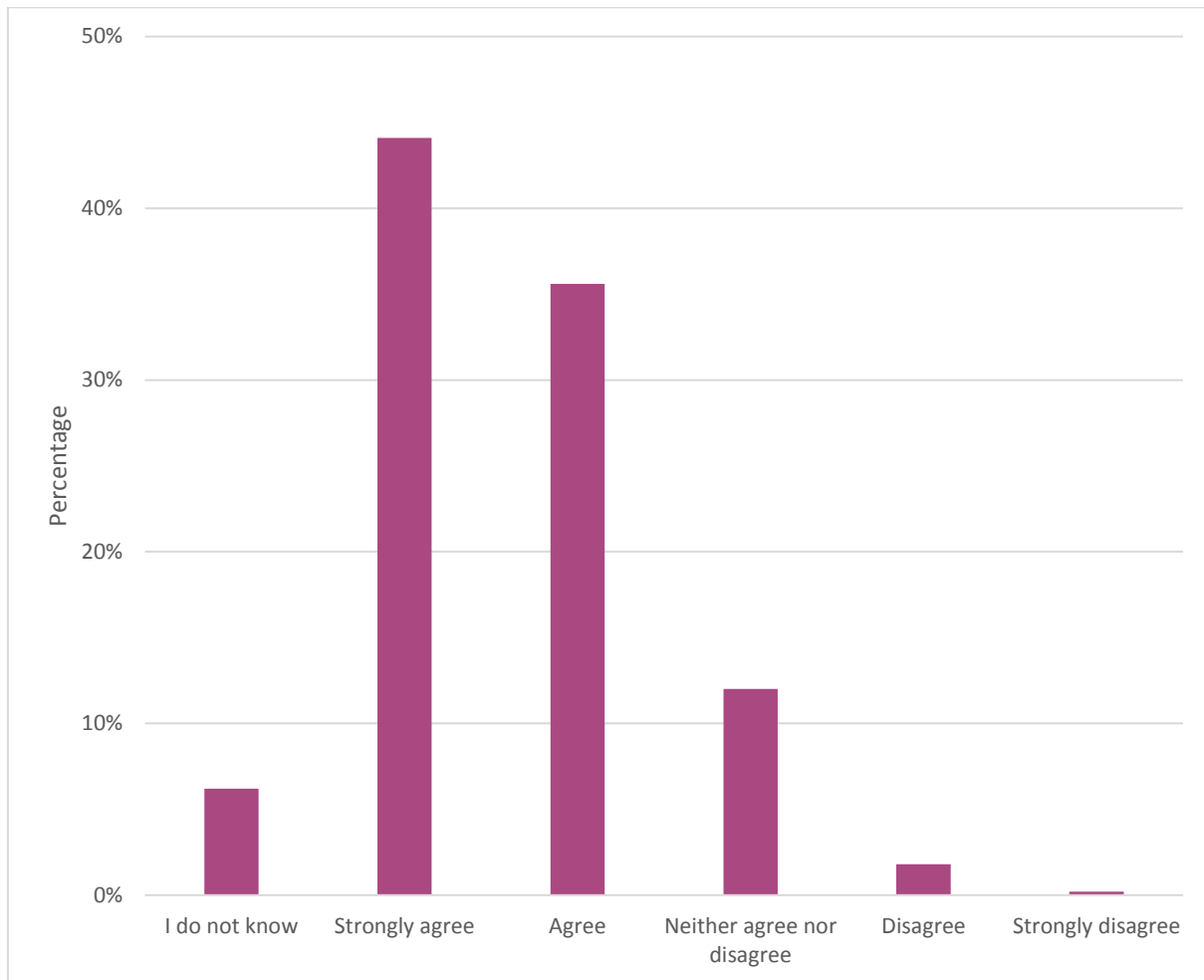
16. I would like to have a career as a researcher at KI.

I think that I have a good chance of having a career as a researcher at KI.

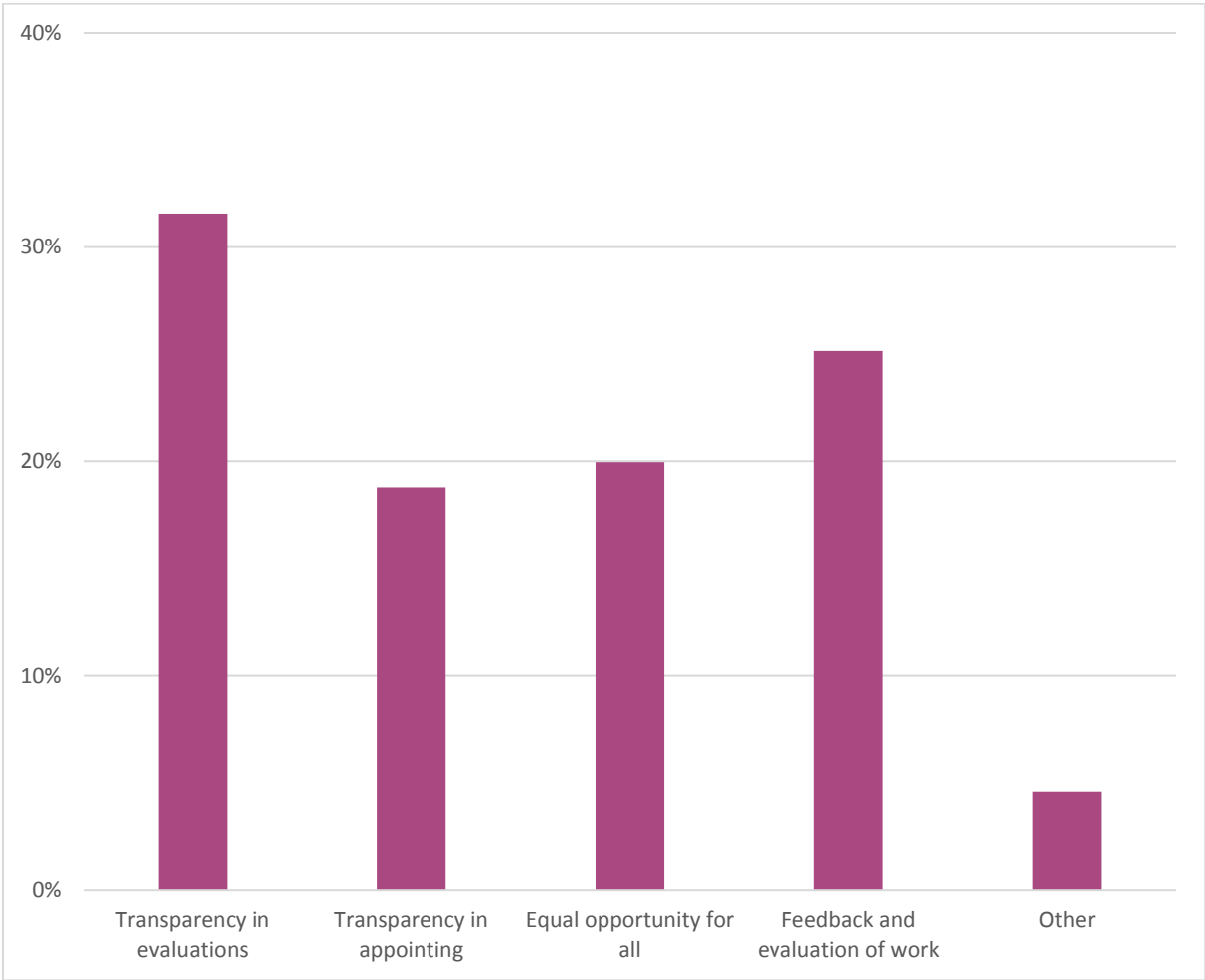
I would recommend KI to others who are looking for a place to establish a career in research.



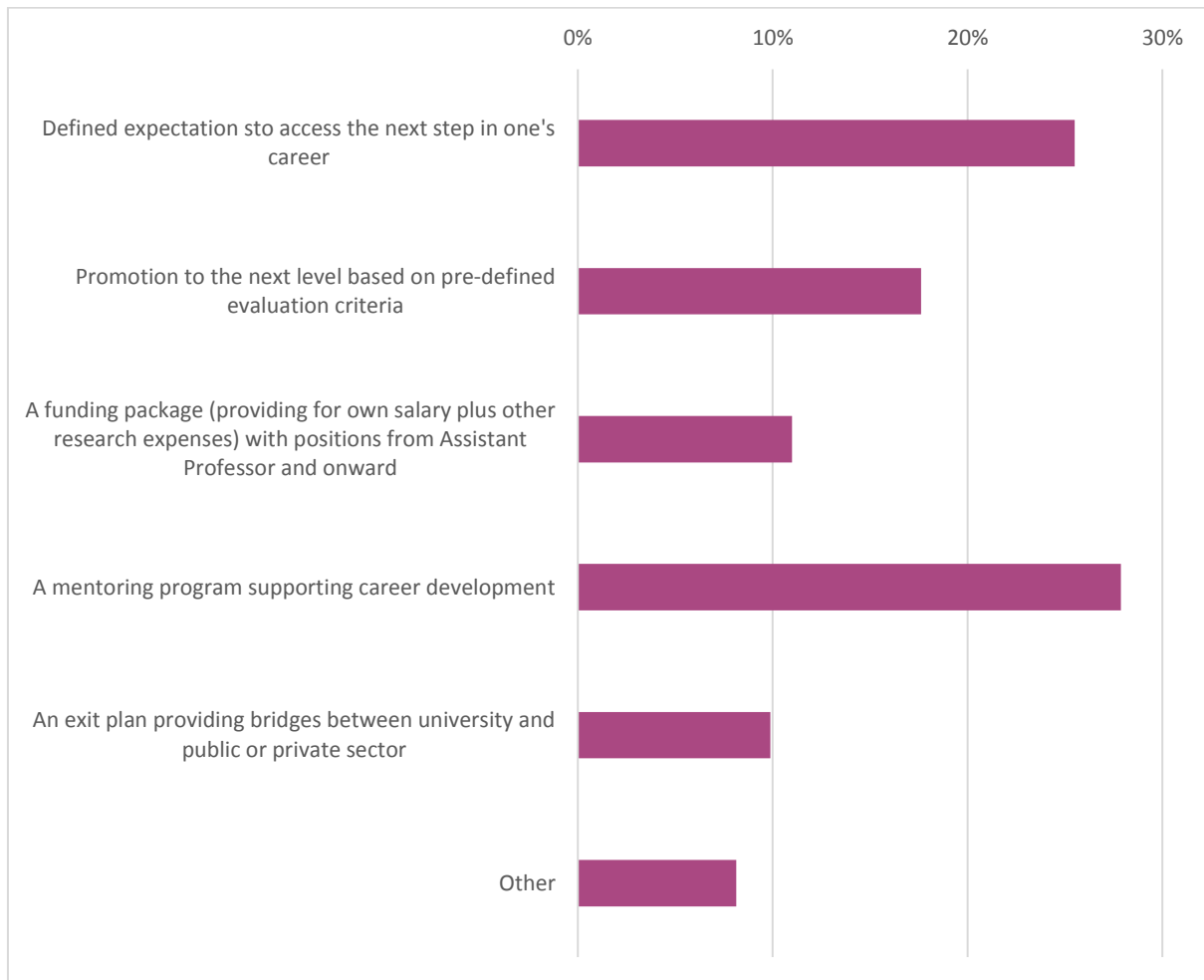
17. A tenure-track should be implemented at KI (Tenure track is a career system broadly defined as a fixed-term contract advertised with the perspective of a tenured, i.e., permanent, position at a higher level, subject to positive evaluation and without renewed advertising of any application for the next position)



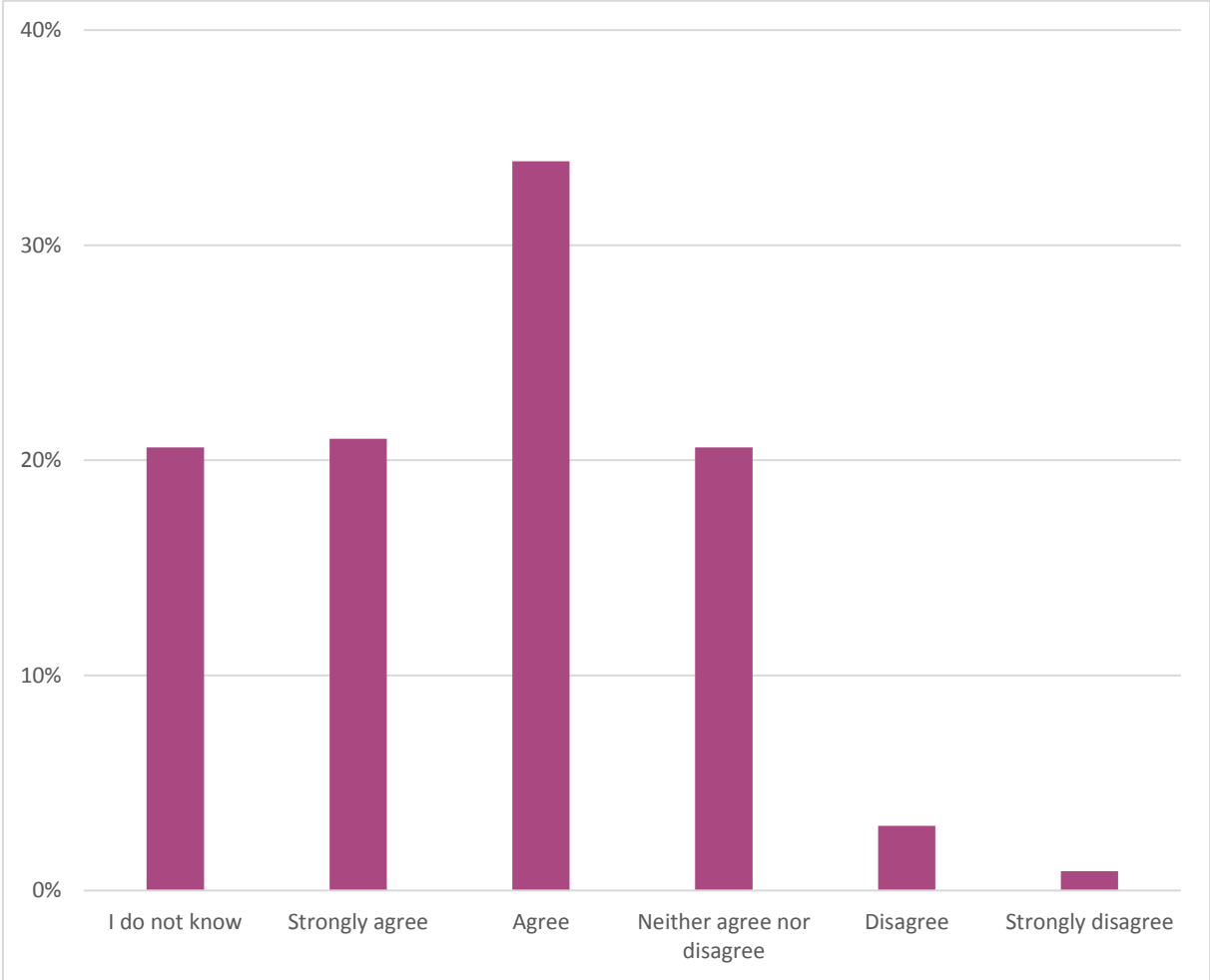
18. Which of the following factors need to be improved for a successful career system at KI? Please tick the two most important alternatives.



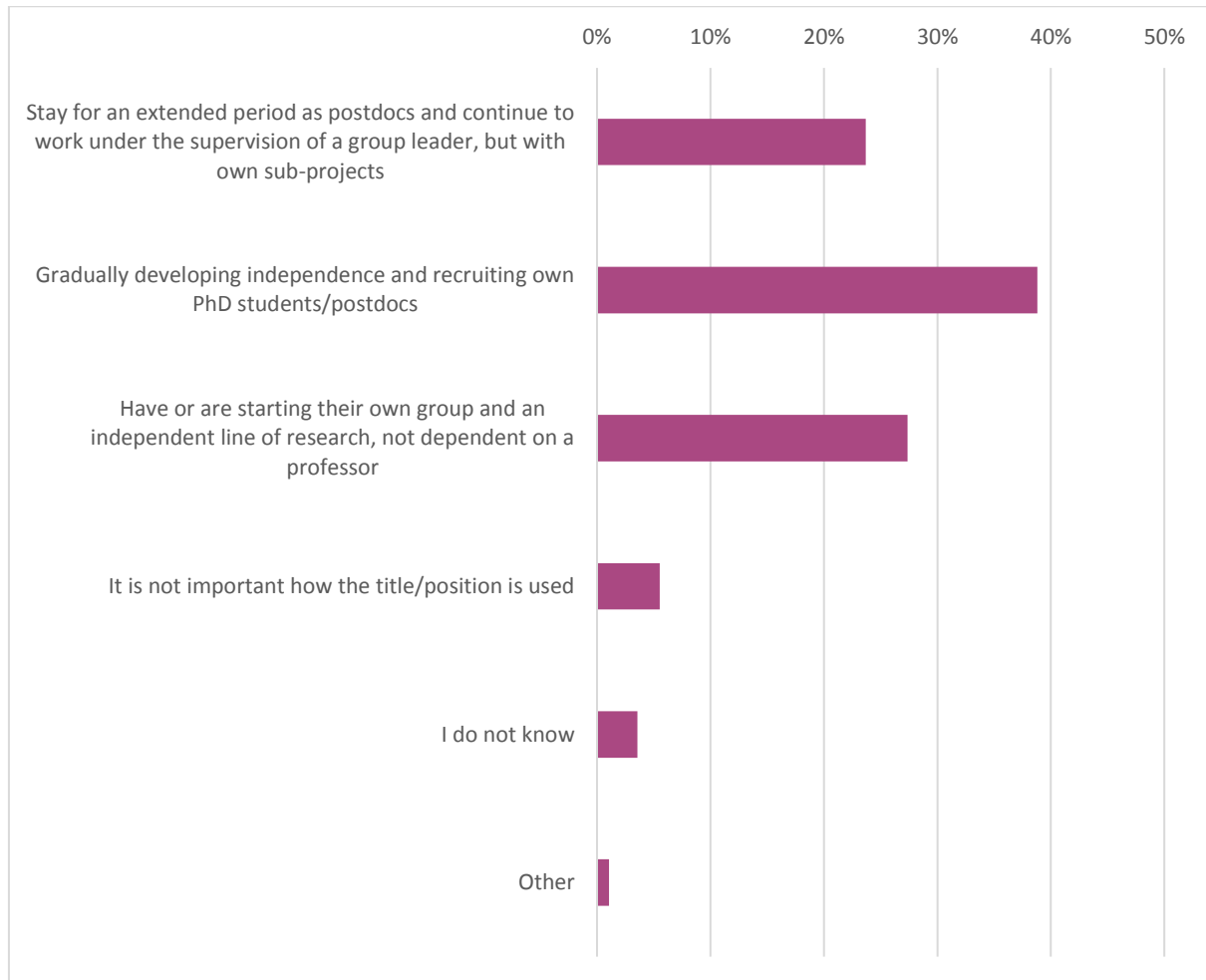
19. Which of the following factors need to be implemented for a successful career system at KI?



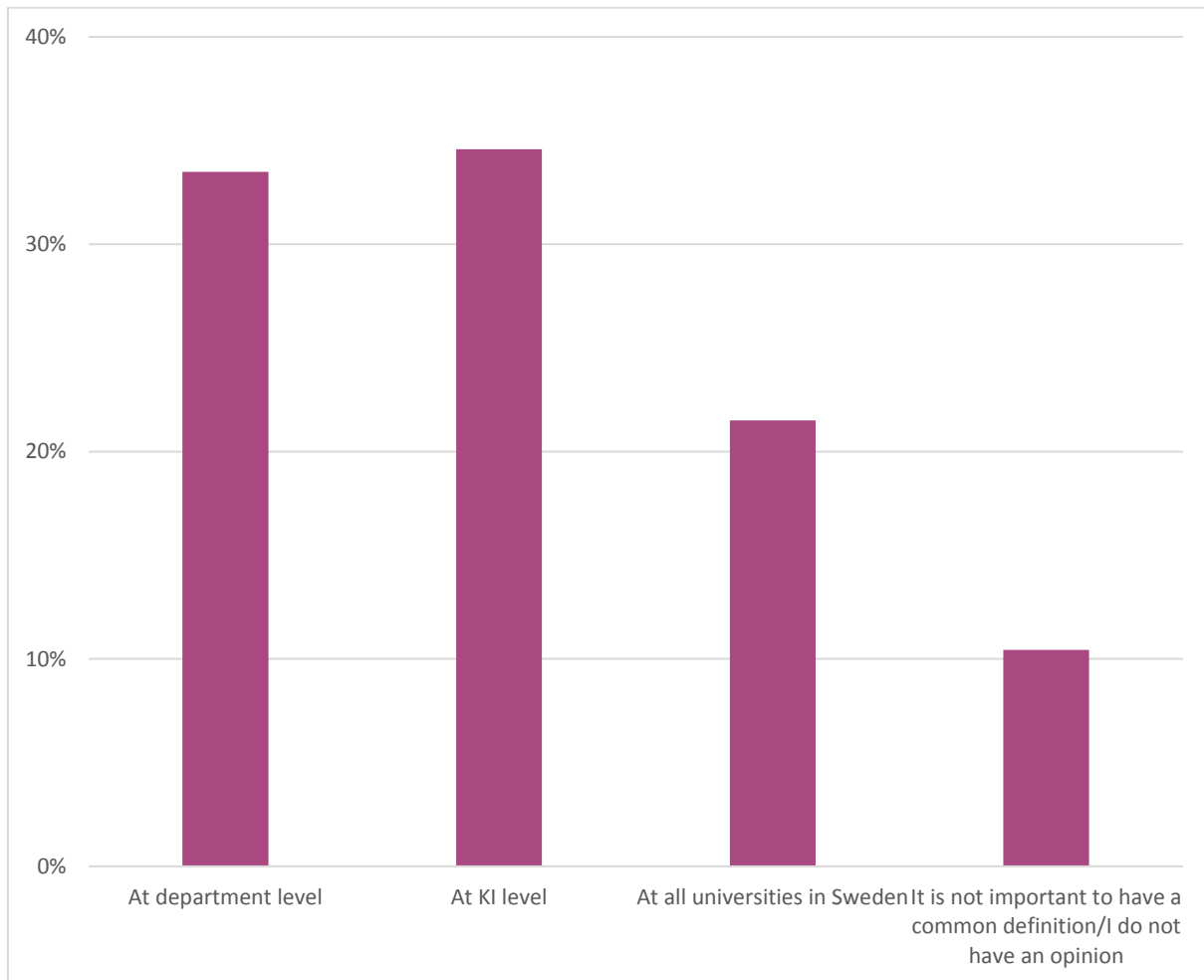
20. I think that all career positions at KI (including the ones at Departments, Strategic Research Programmes and TEMA centers) should be announced with the same terms and conditions as positions announced at KI central level.



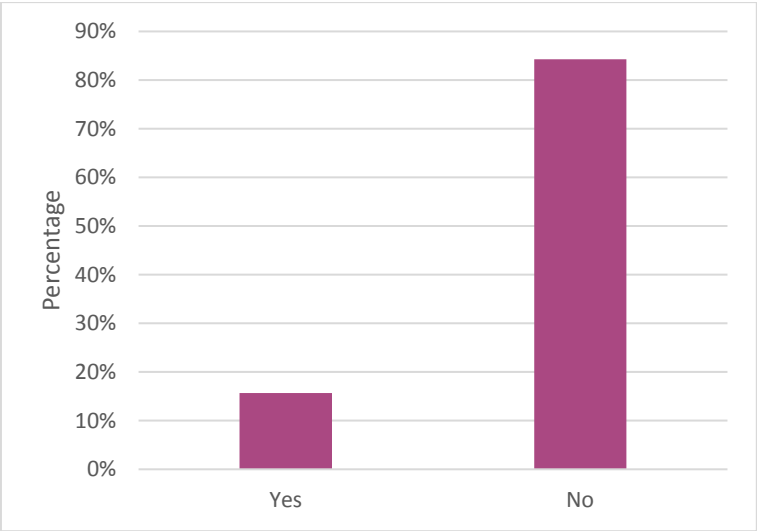
21. I think the Assistant Professor (FoAss/Forskarassistent) position* should be used for researchers who: *someone who is eligible for this position has a doctoral degree or corresponding competences.



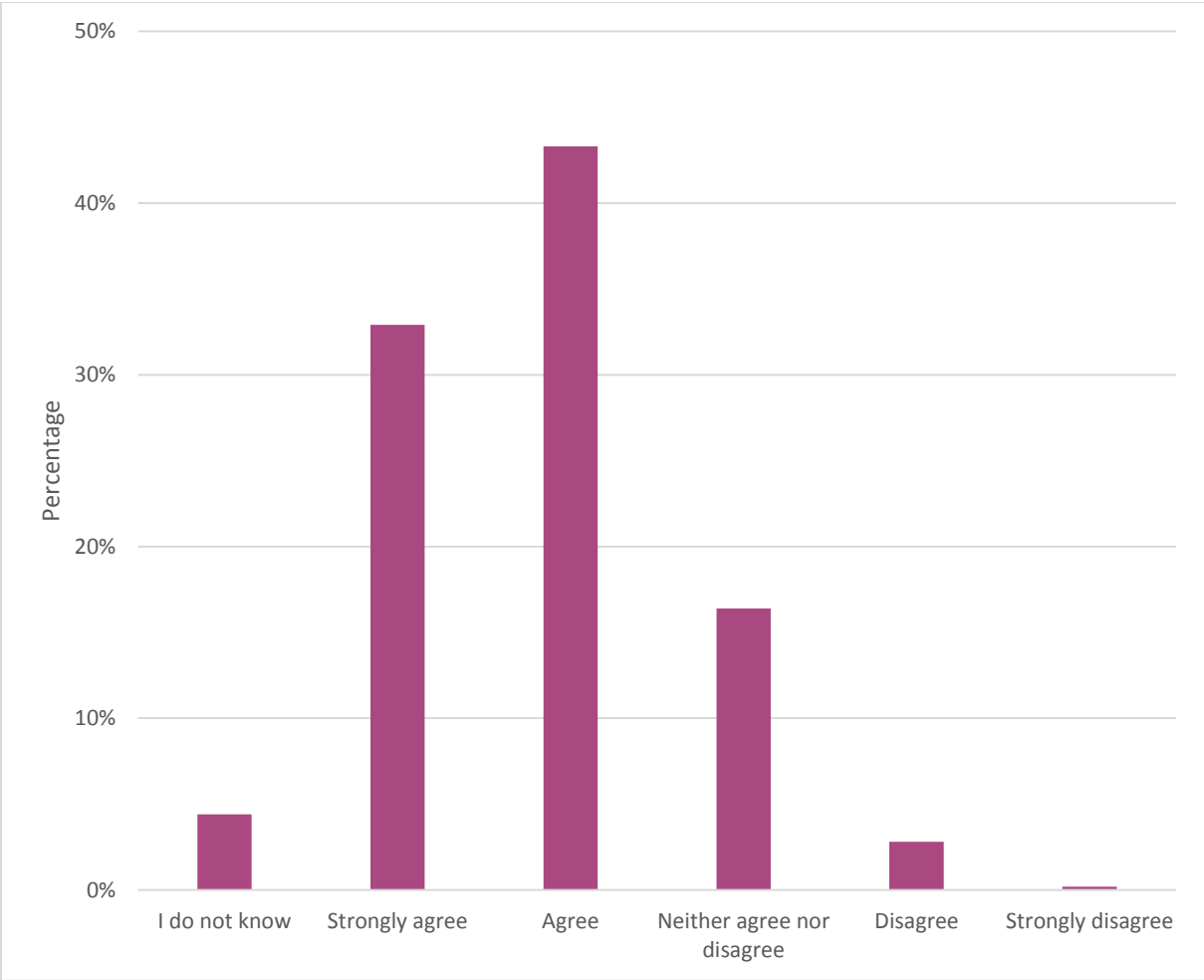
22. It is important to have a definition of a group leader's role: Please tick all that apply.



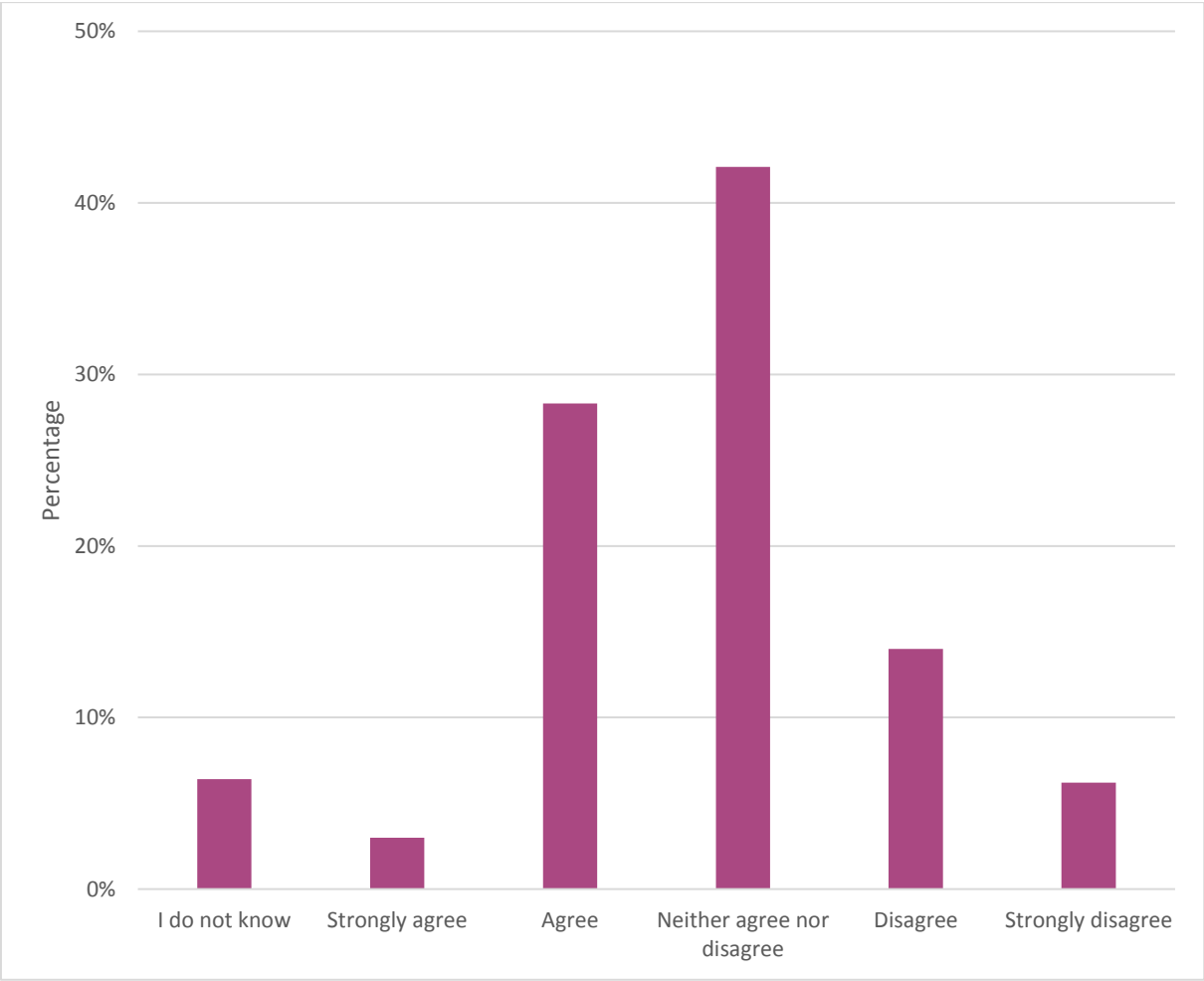
23. Did you know that KI has a common definition of a group leader?



24. I think KI should have a formal mentorship program for junior faculty



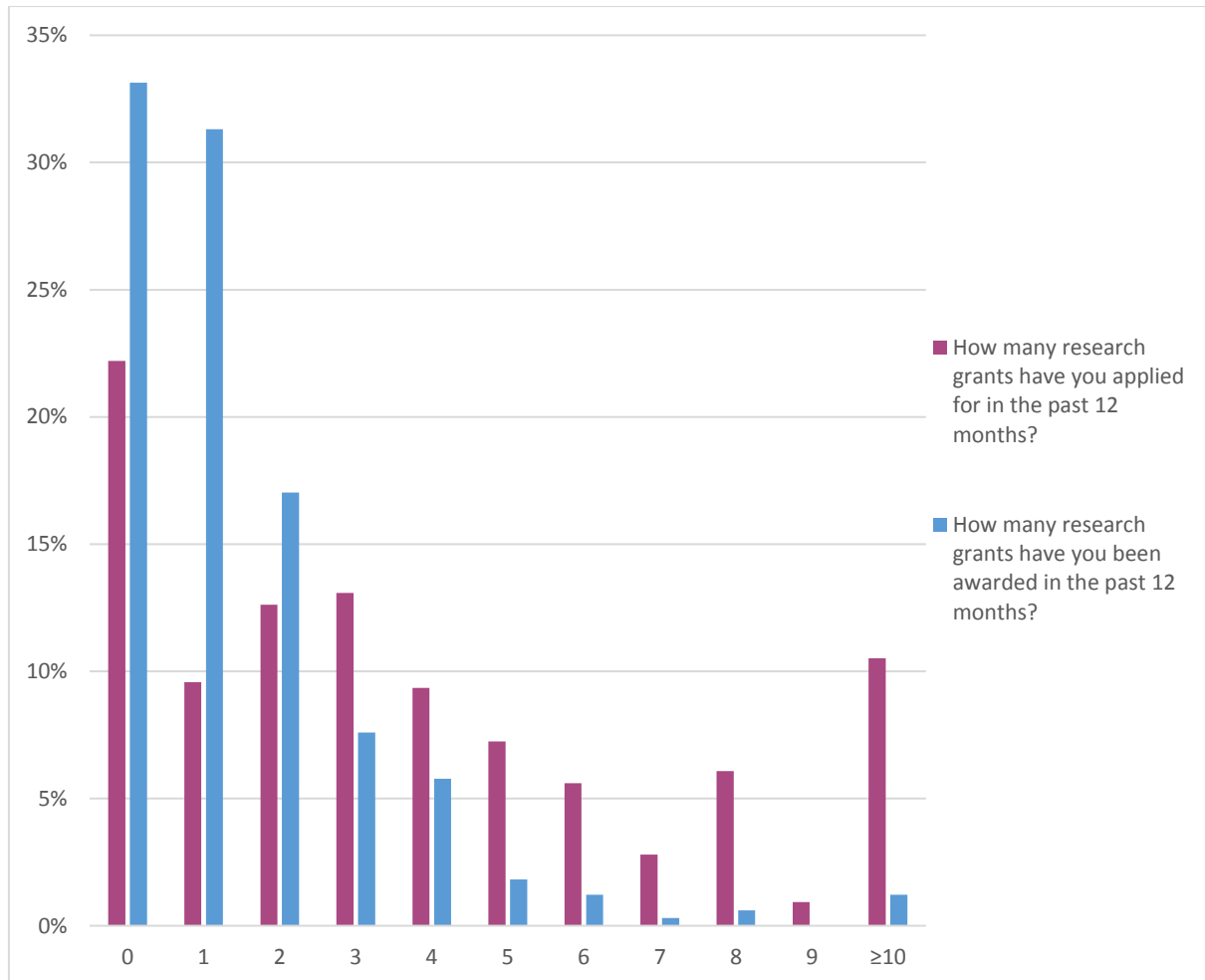
25. I have confidence in the central leadership at KI.



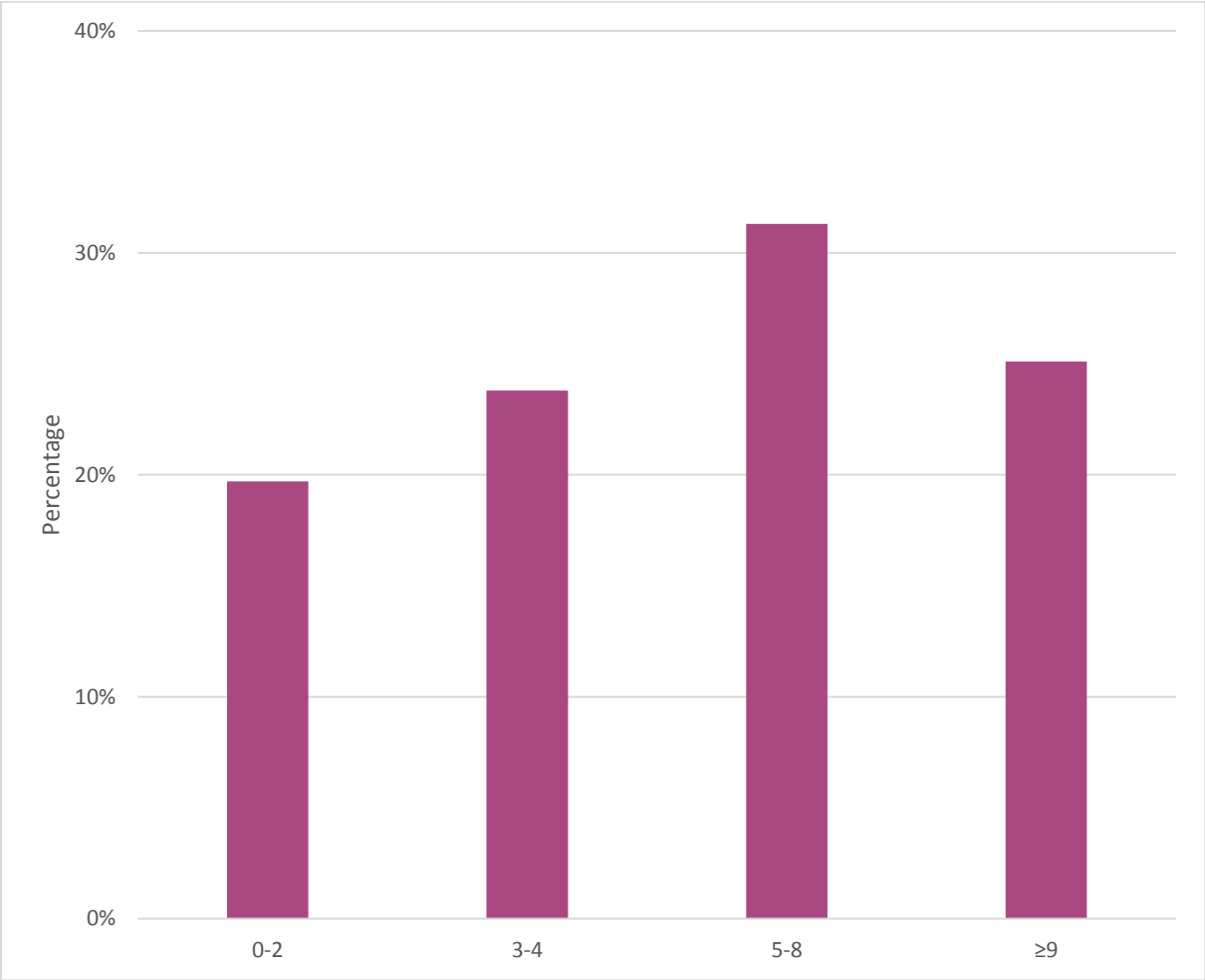
Funding questions

26. How many research grants have you applied for in the past 12 months as either main or co applicant?

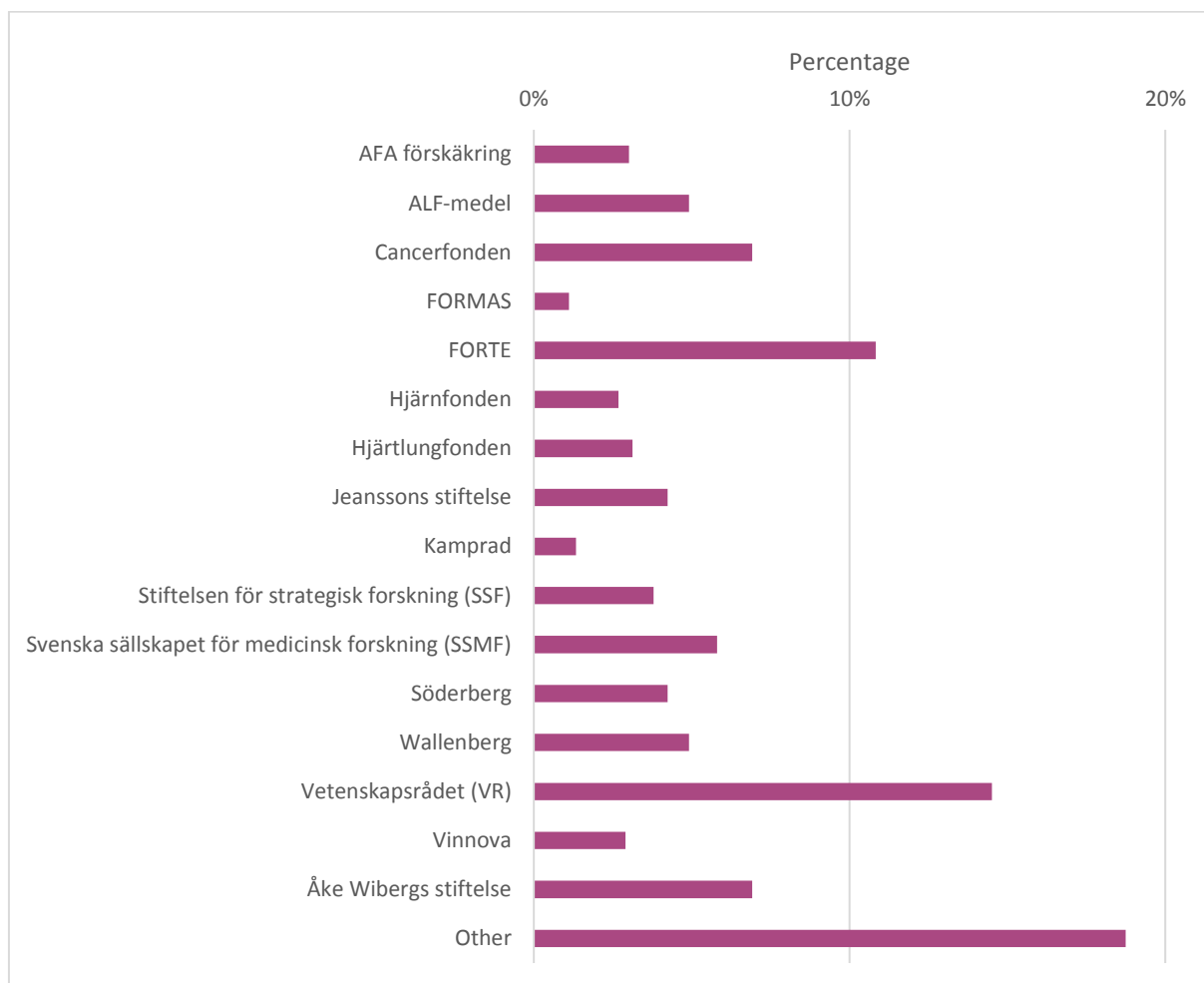
How many research grants have you been awarded in the past 12 months as either main or co applicant?



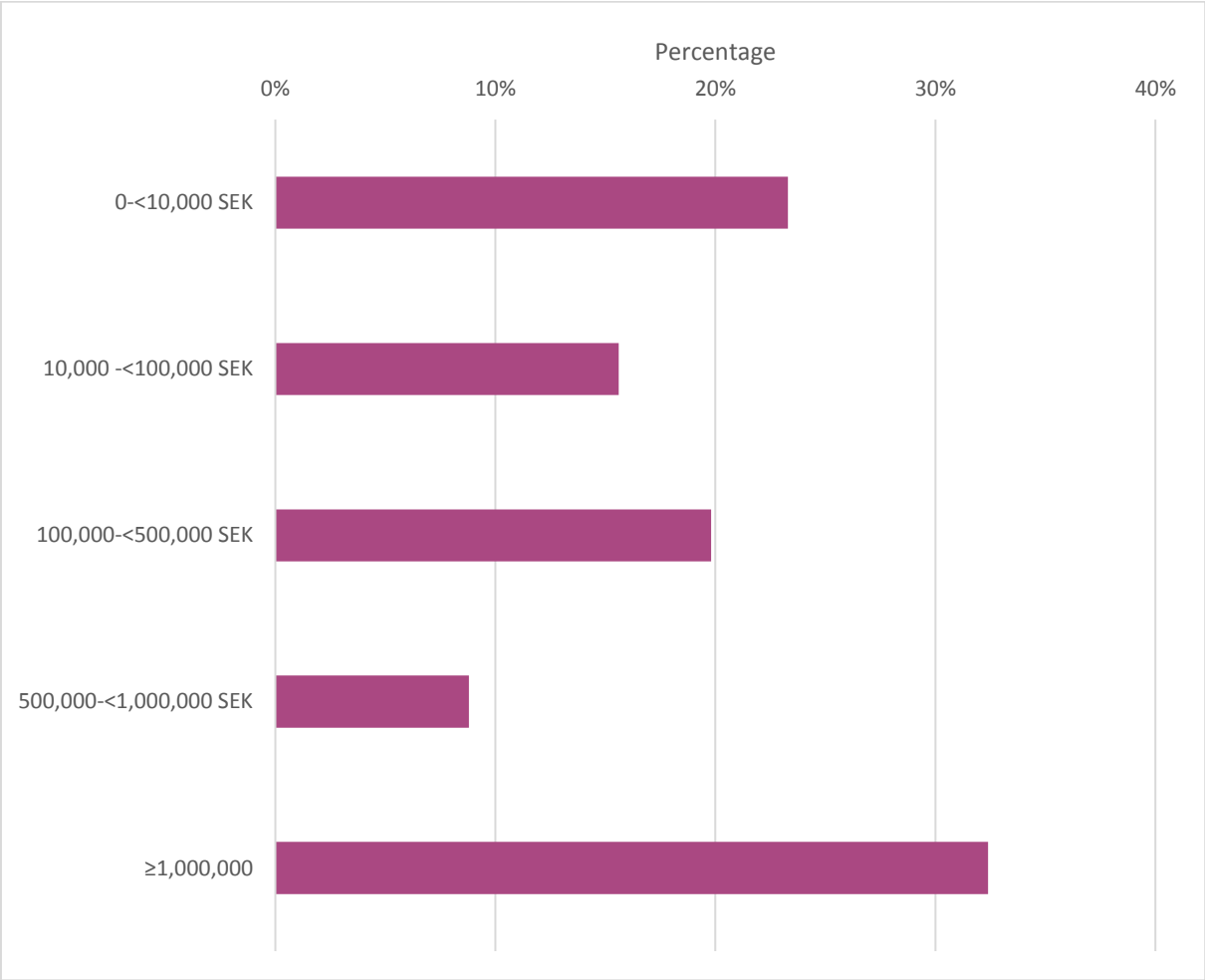
27. How much of your work time have you spent writing research grants? Please make an estimation of total weeks you have spent in the past 12 months.



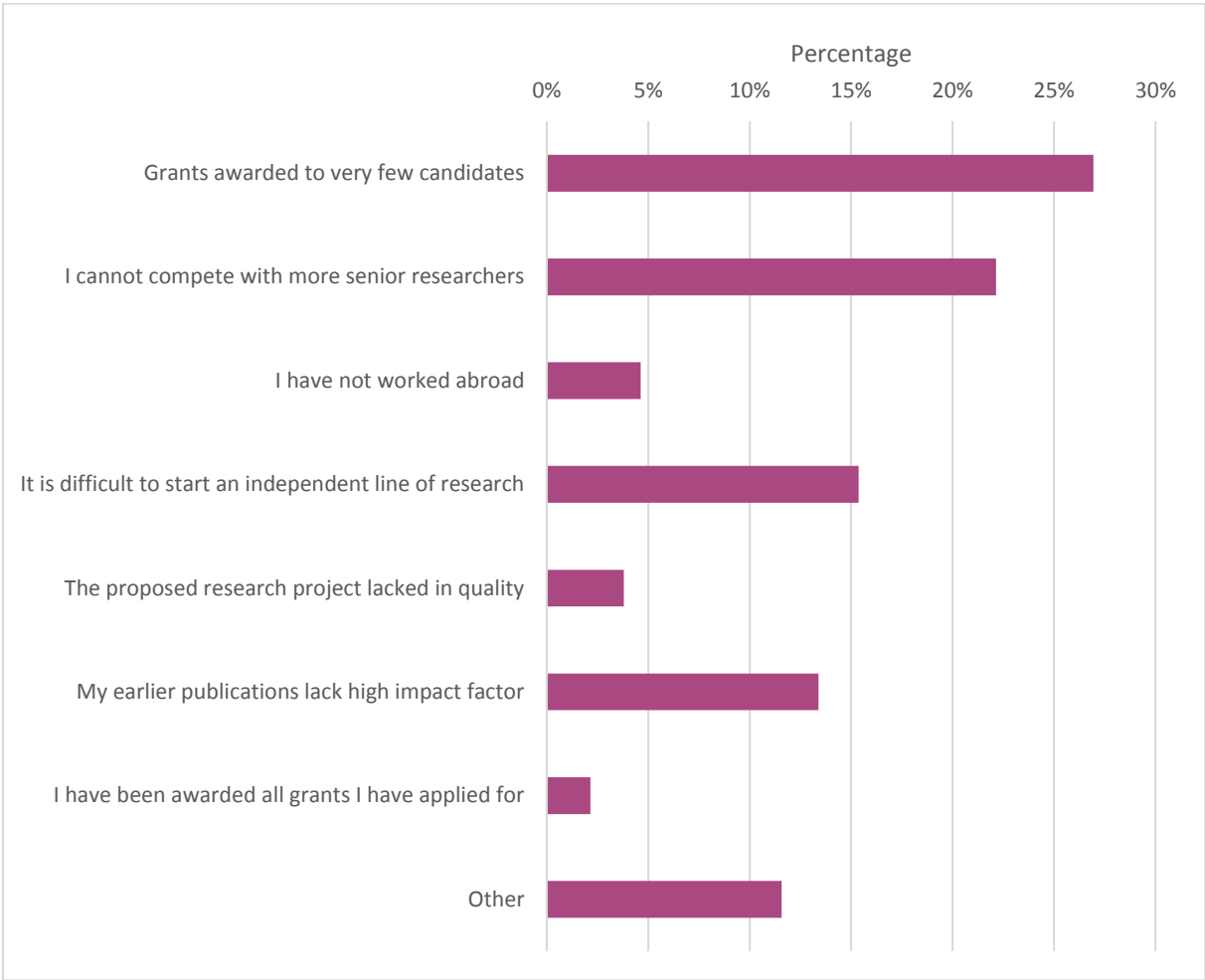
28. Which funding agencies have you applied for in the past 12 months as either main or co-applicant?



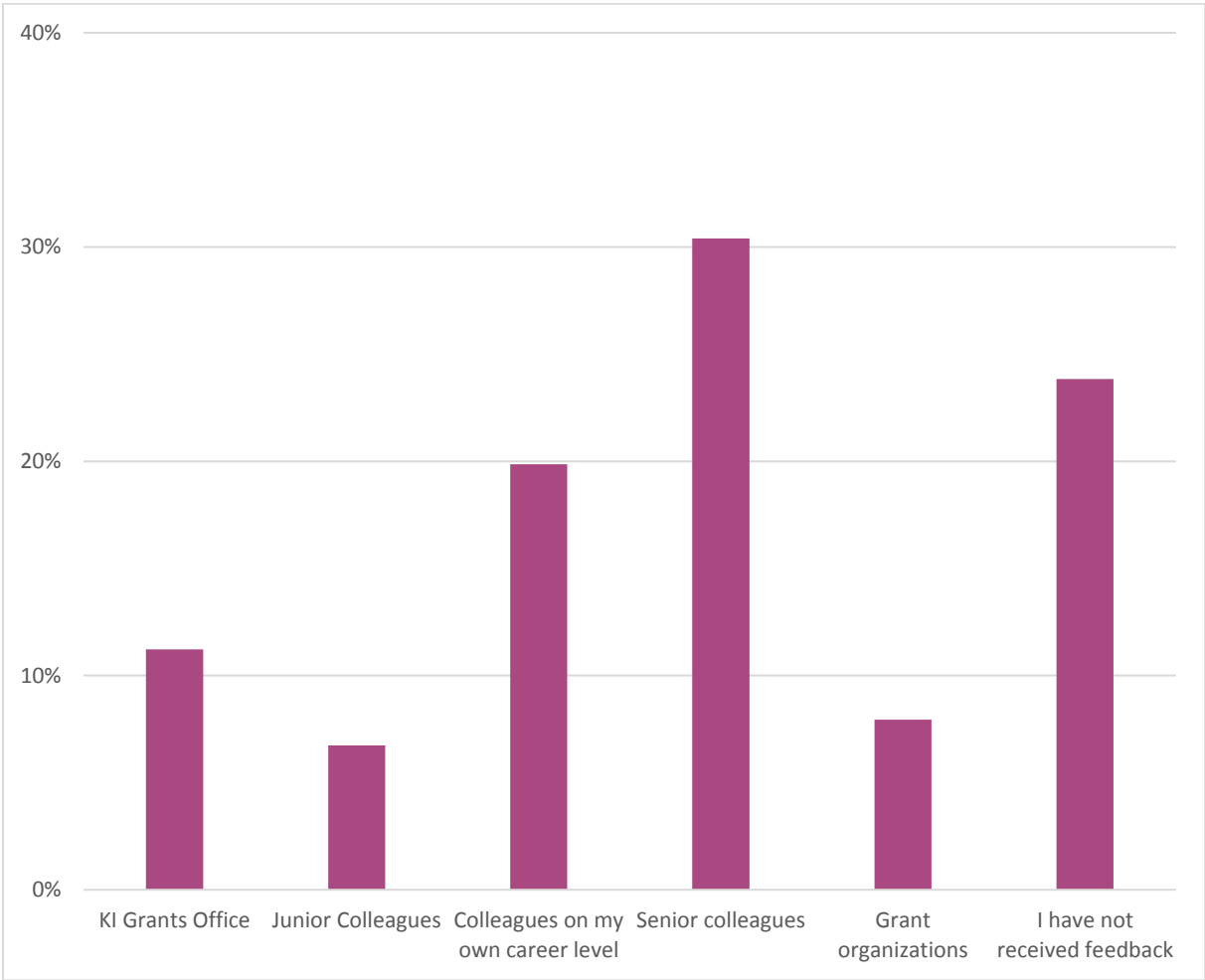
29. How much funding (in SEK) were you and your co-applicants awarded totally in the past 12 months?



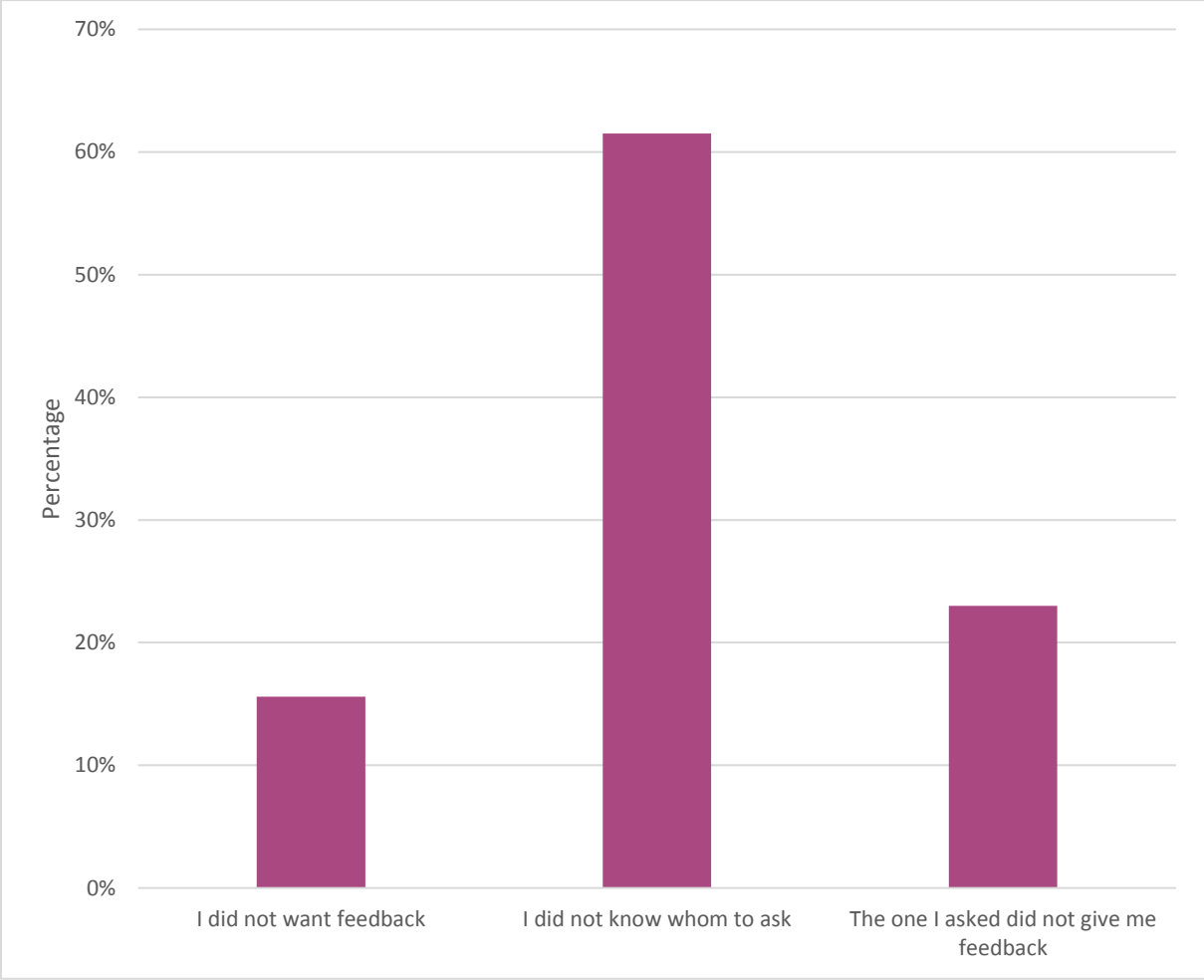
30. I perceive I have not been awarded research grants I have applied for in the last 12 months because: (Please tick all that apply)



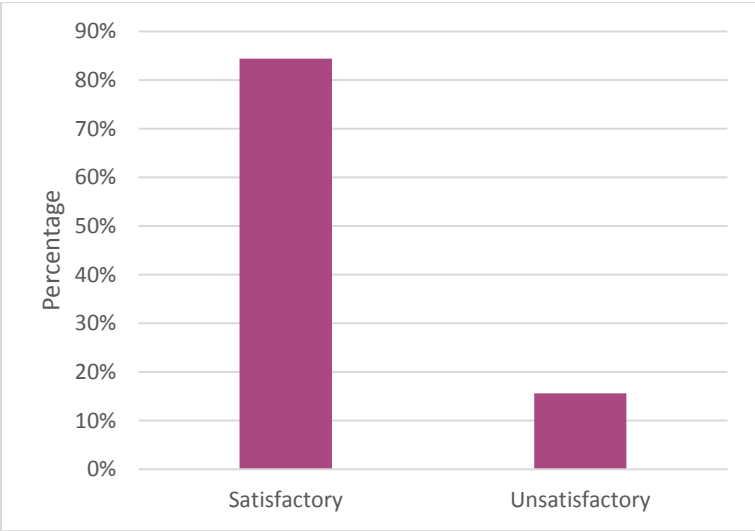
31. In the past 12 months I have received research grant application feedback and/or help from: (please tick all that apply)



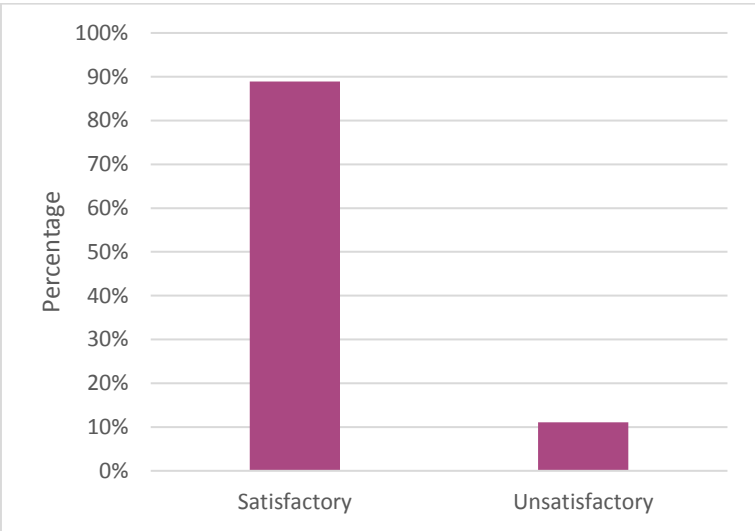
32. Why did you not receive feedback?



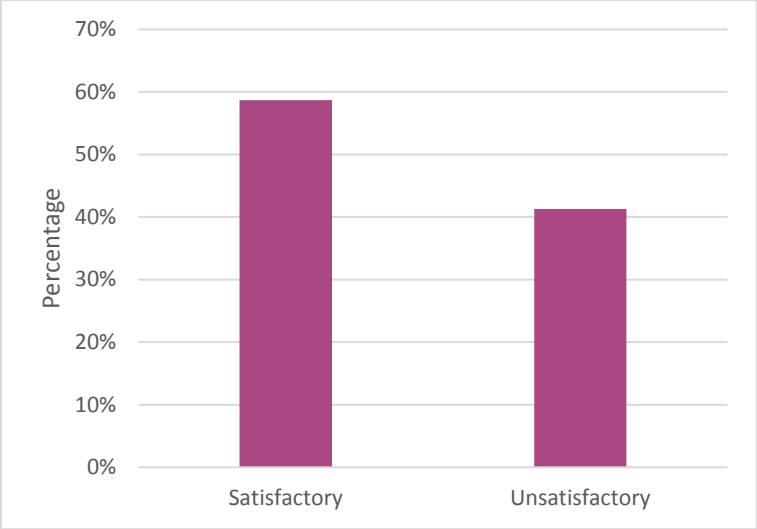
33. The feedback/help I received from KI grants office was:



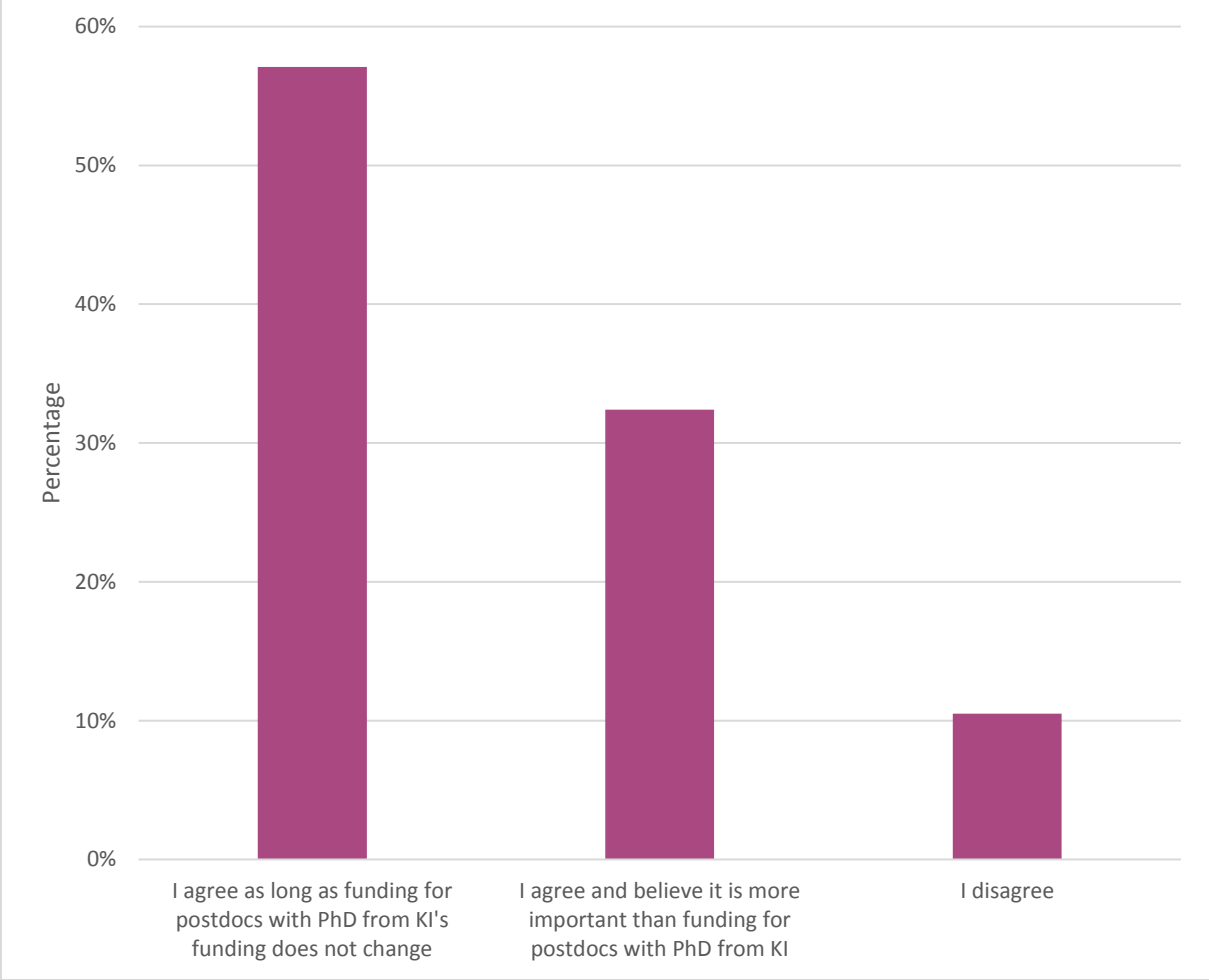
34. The feedback/help I received from colleagues was:



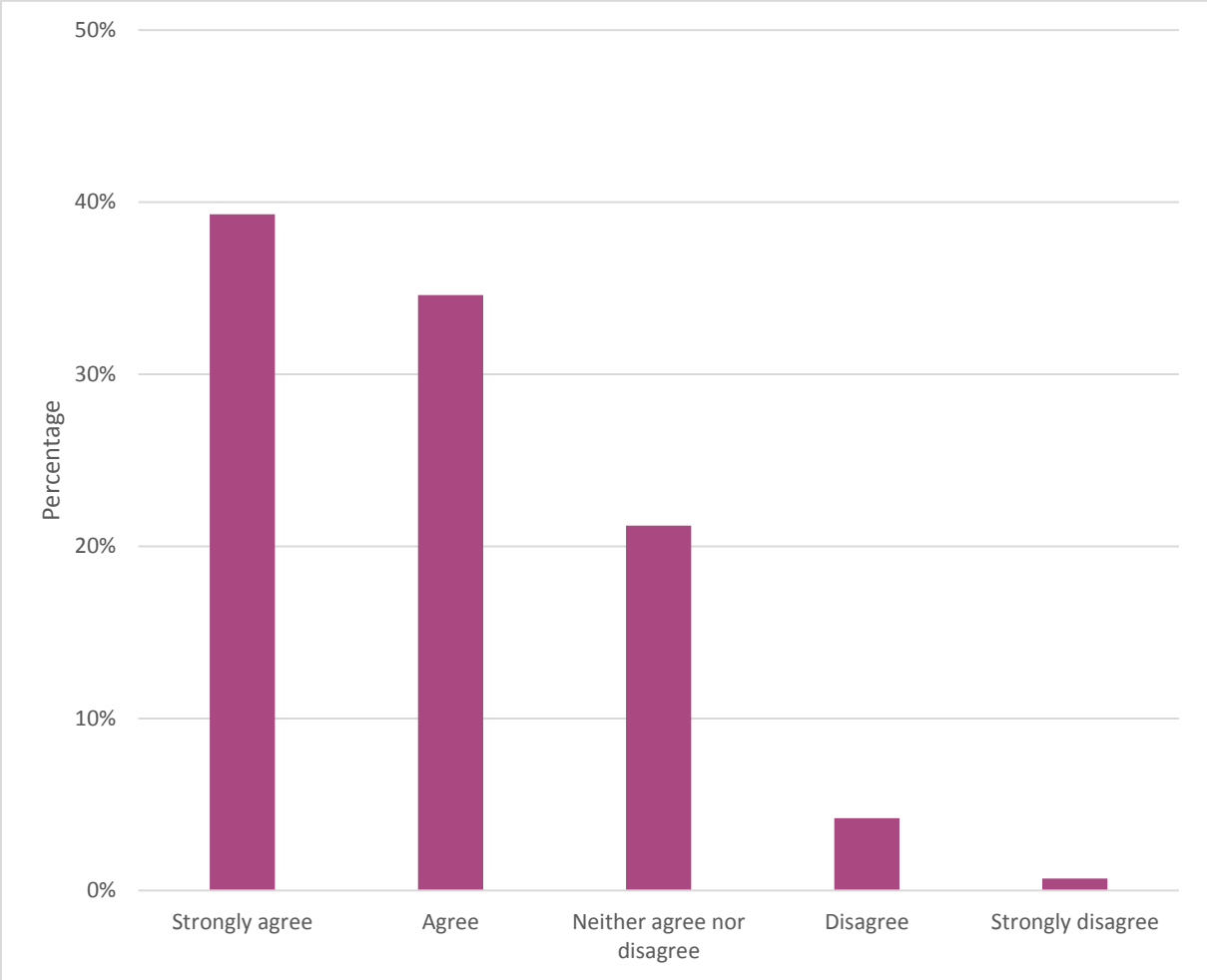
35. The feedback/help I received from grant organizations was:



36. I wish there was more funding for incoming postdoctoral fellows students available (An incoming postdoctoral student is one who has not received their PhD at KI).

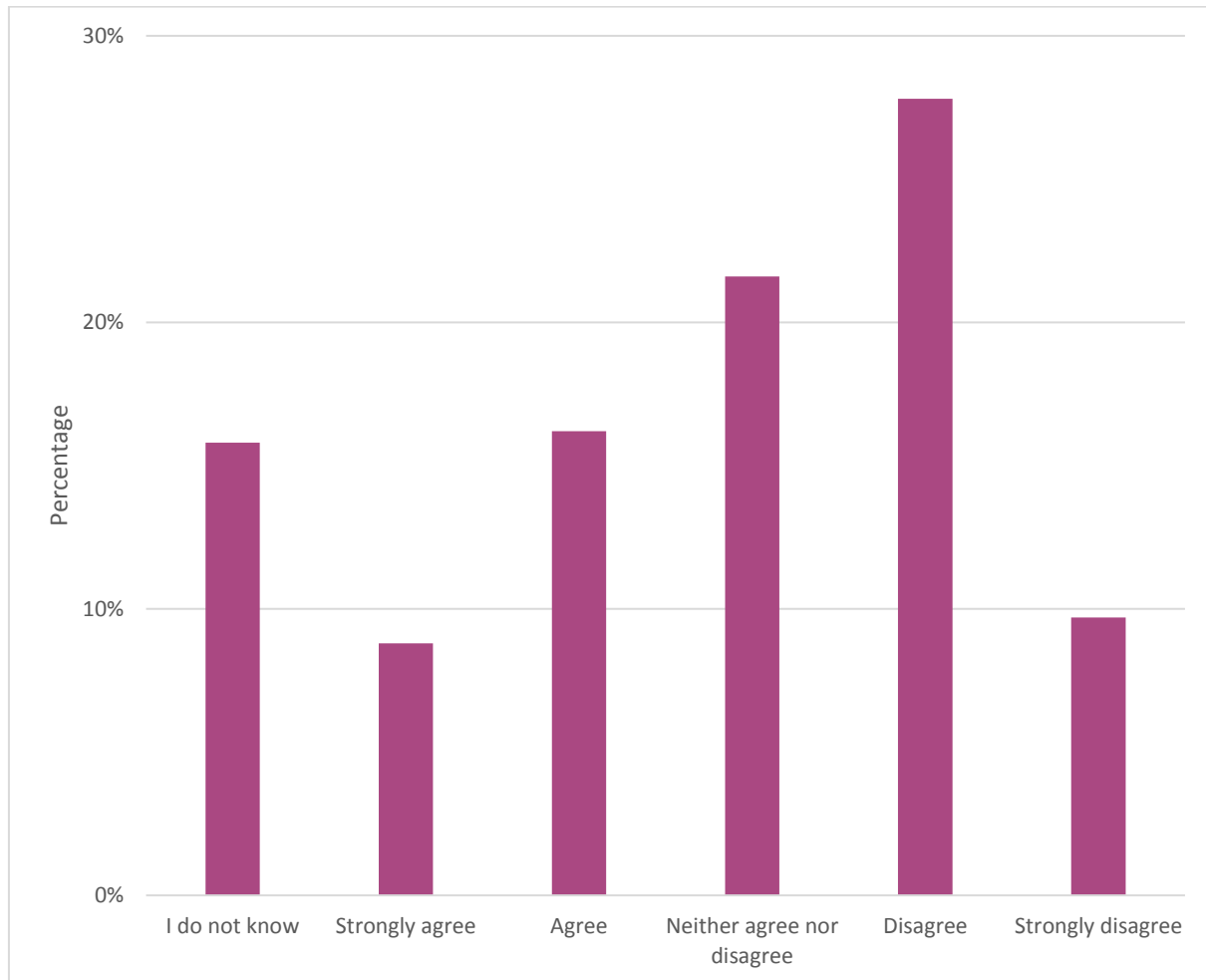


37. I think the external funding agencies in Sweden should coordinate their junior researcher funding to distribute funding to several individual junior researchers, rather than a limited number of junior researchers receiving multiple junior researcher grants.

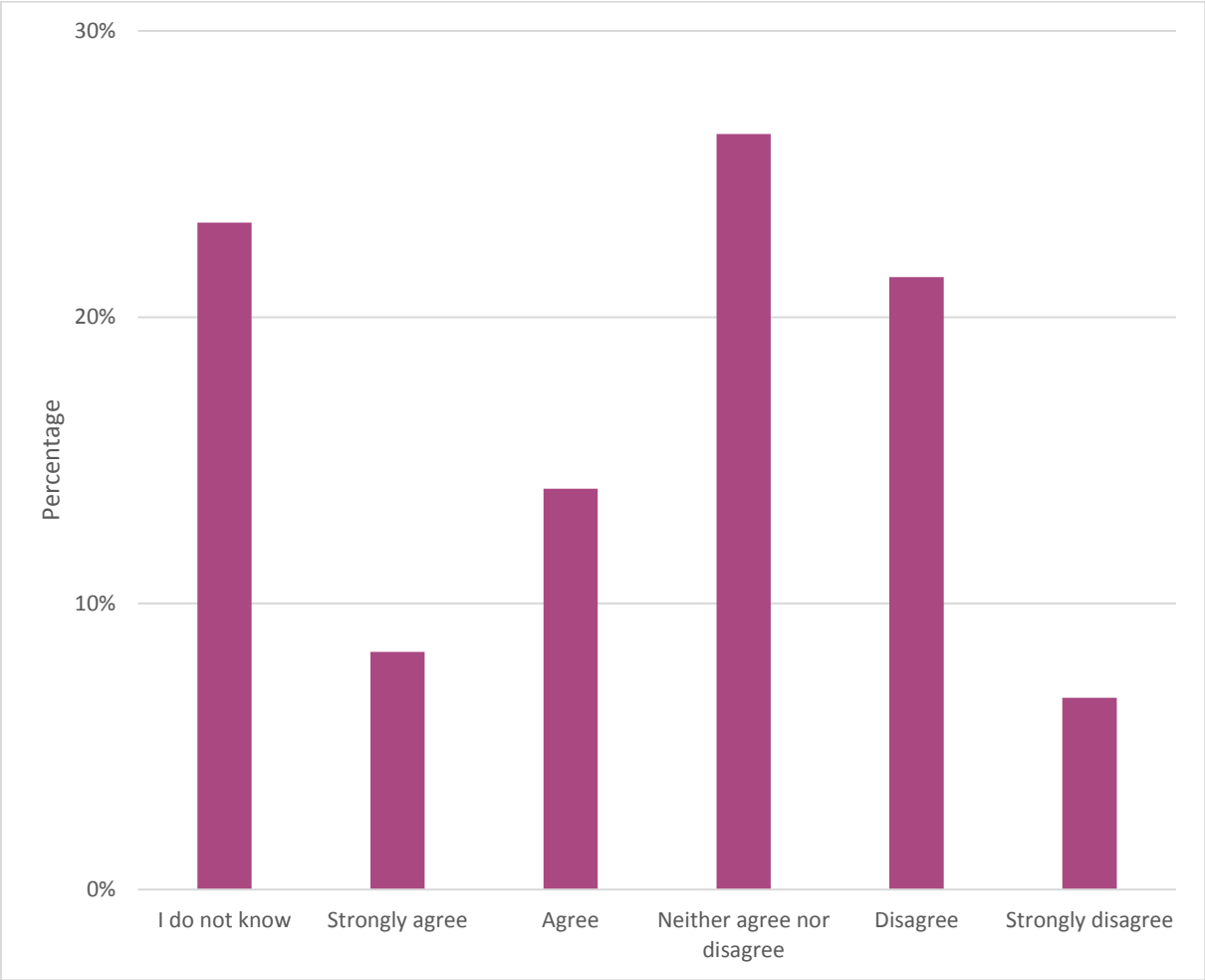


Equal opportunities questions

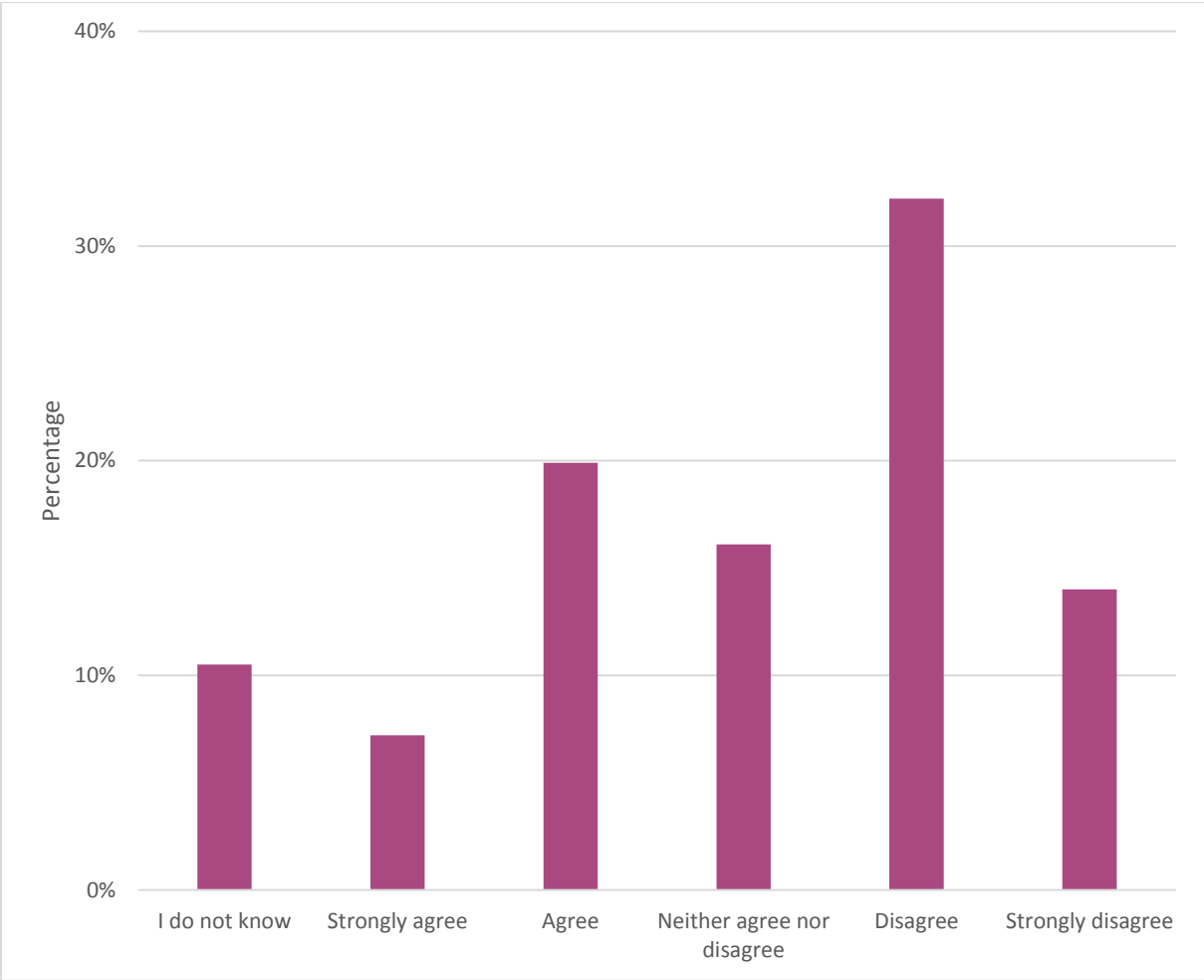
38. In my experience the processes for recruitment for positions at KI provide equal opportunity for all



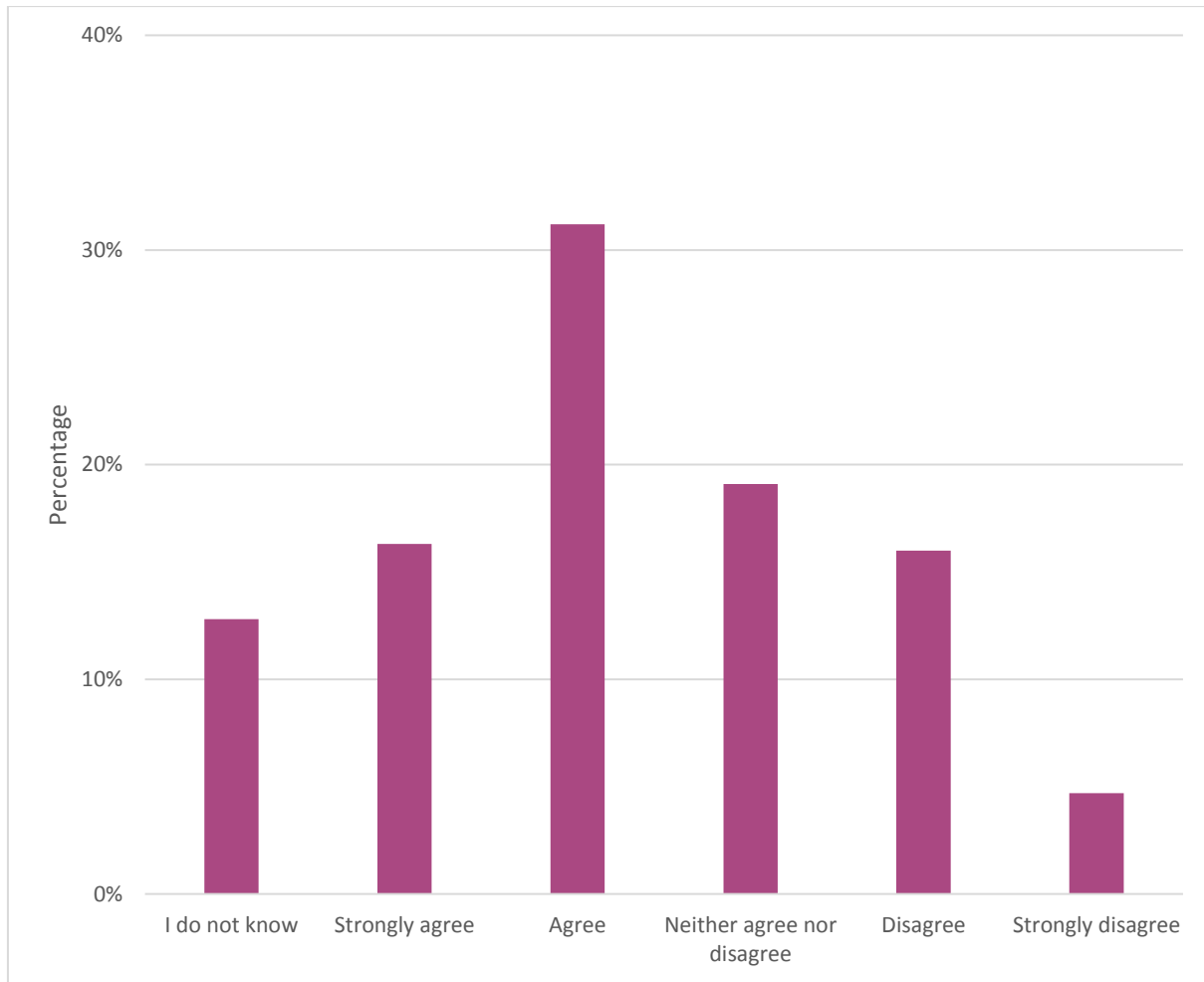
39. In my experience the processes for nomination for positions at KI provide equal opportunity for all.



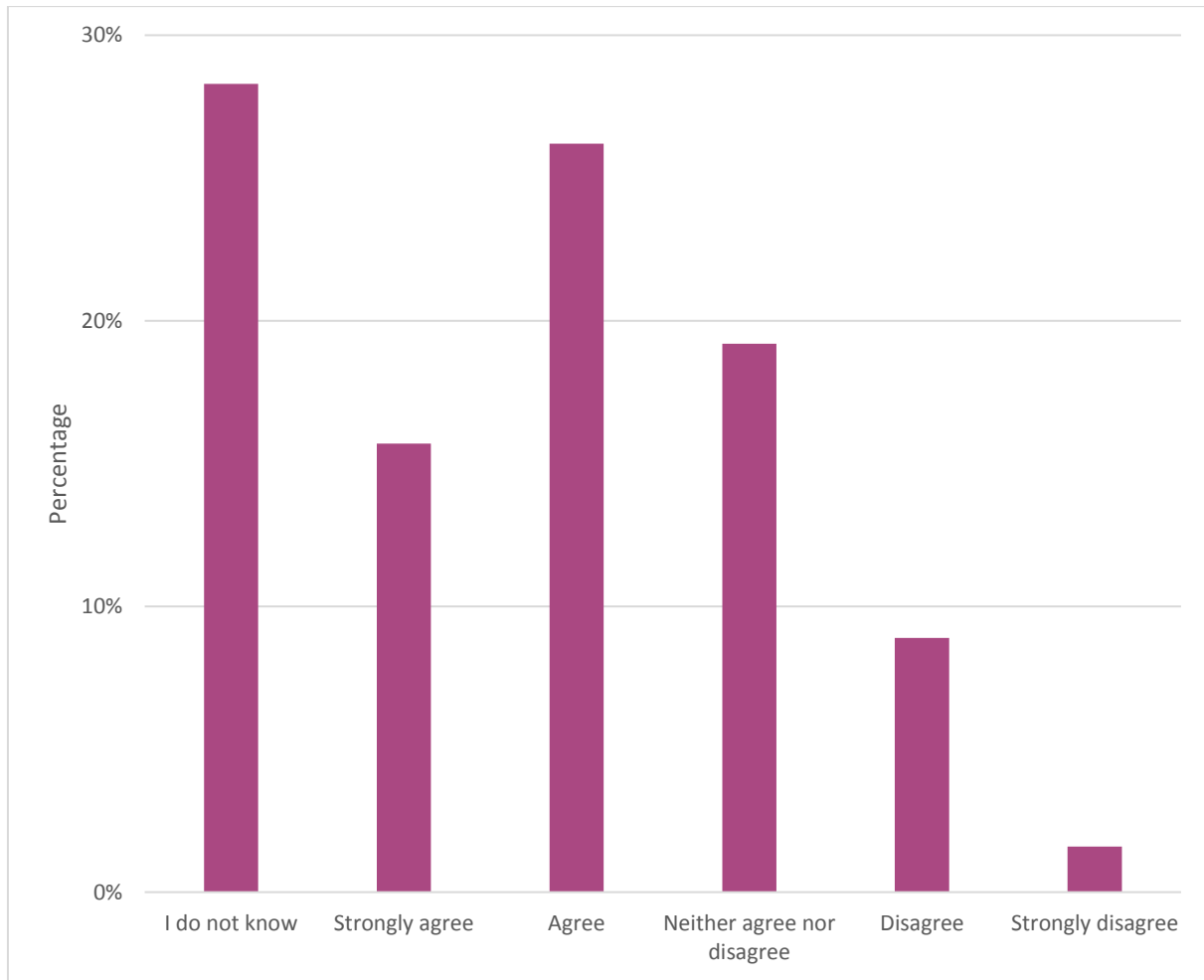
40. In my opinion, women and men have equal opportunities at KI



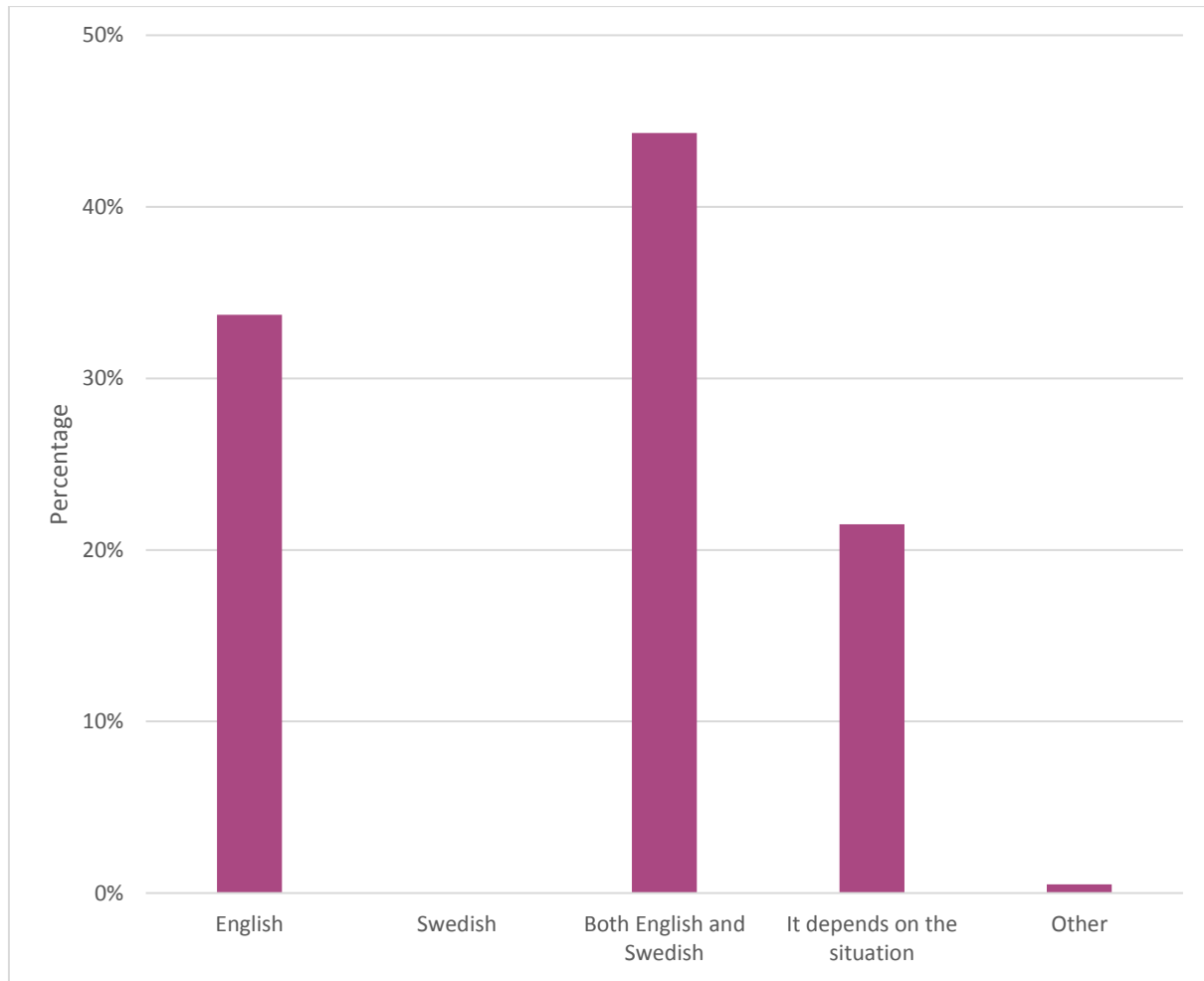
41. In my opinion, Swedes and non-Swedes have equal opportunities at KI.



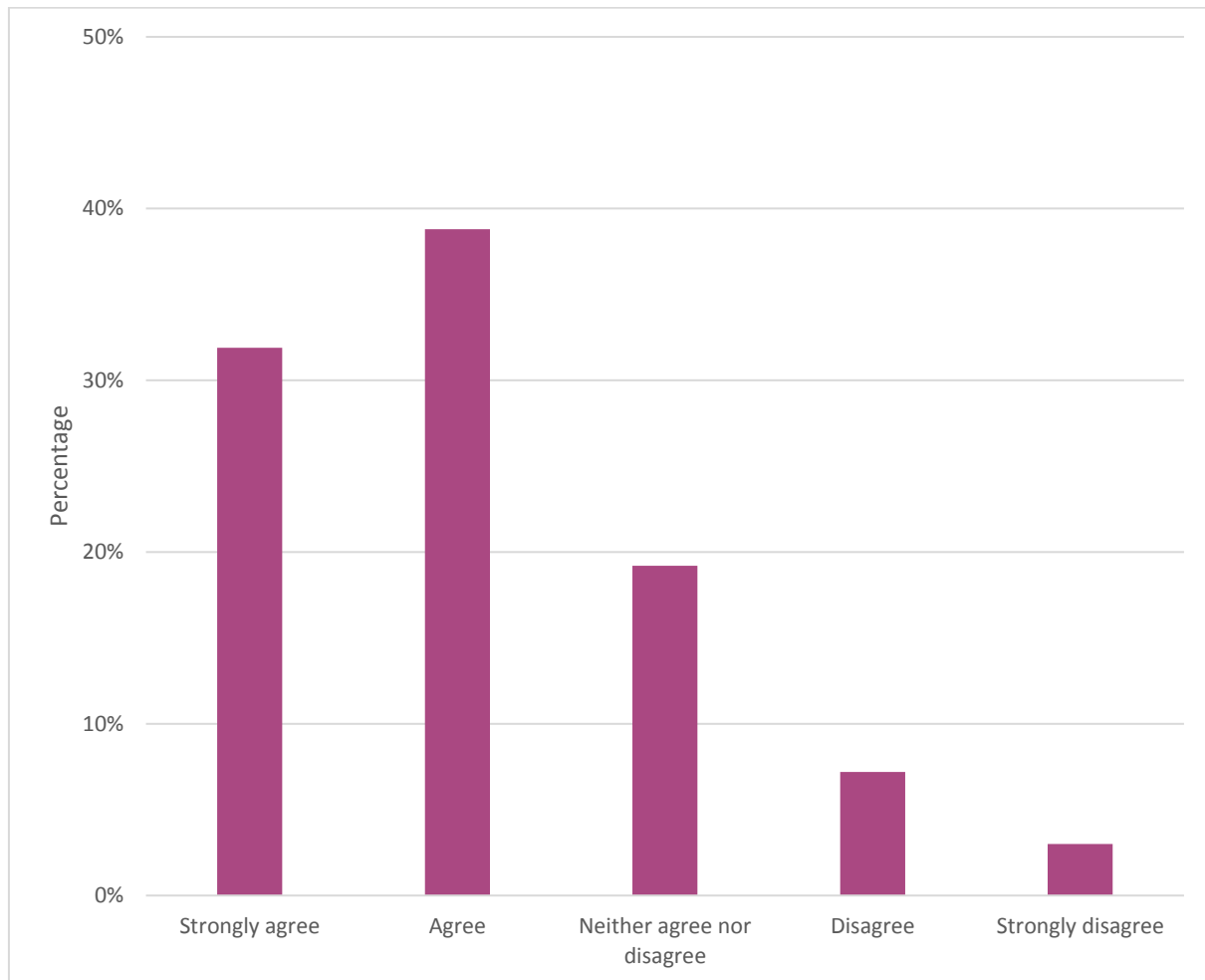
42. In my opinion, clinicians and non-clinicians have equal opportunities at KI.



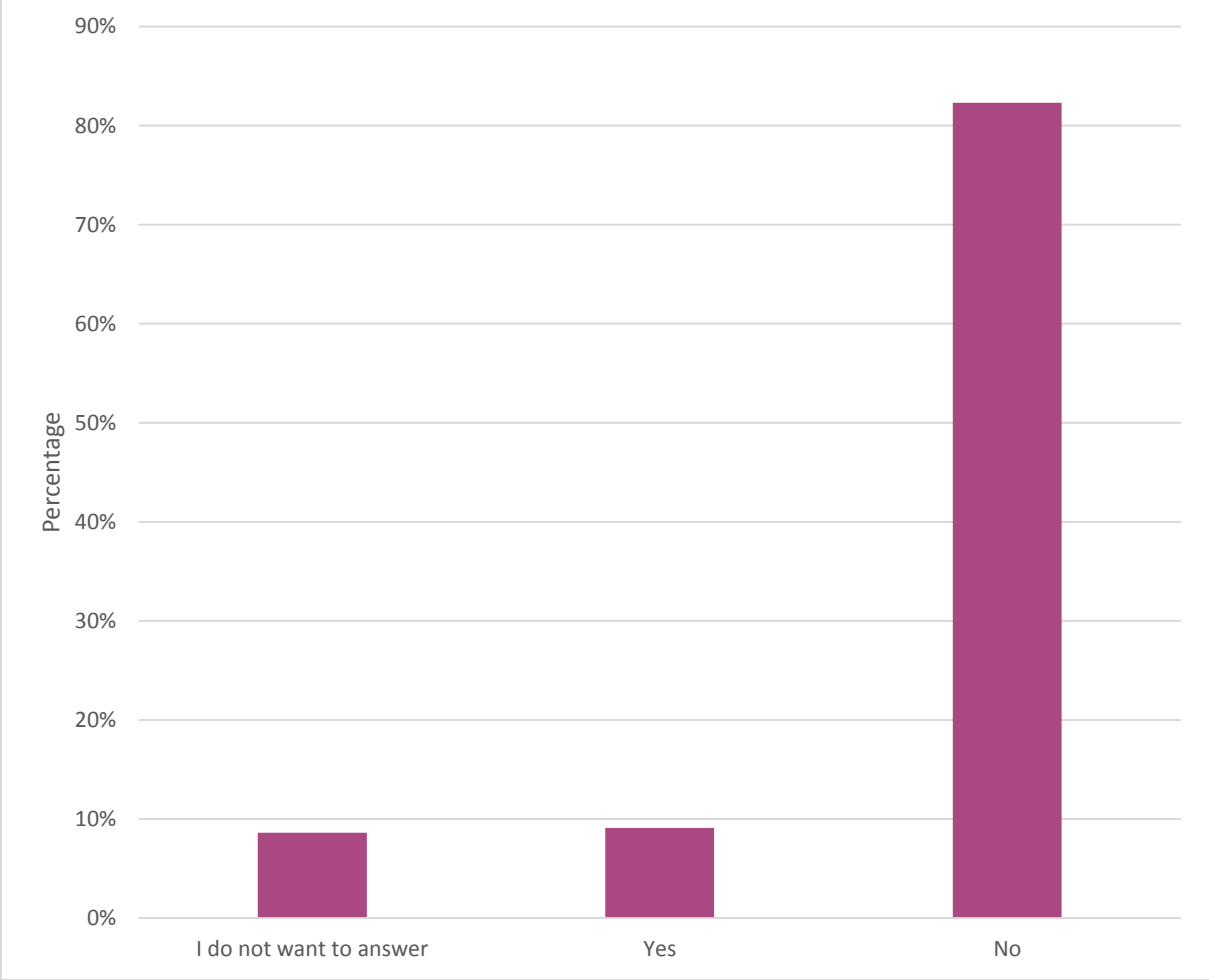
43. All work related communication at KI should always be done in:



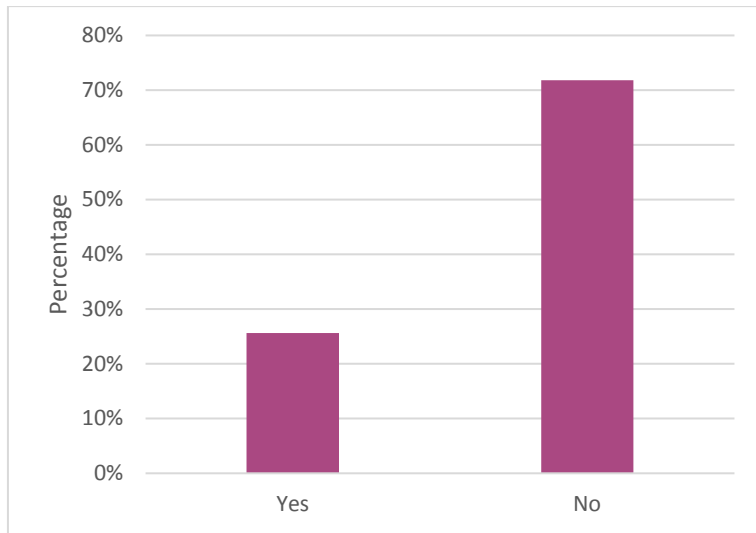
44. I think that the fact that some of the communication is done in Swedish excludes non-Swedes to participate and be integrated at KI.



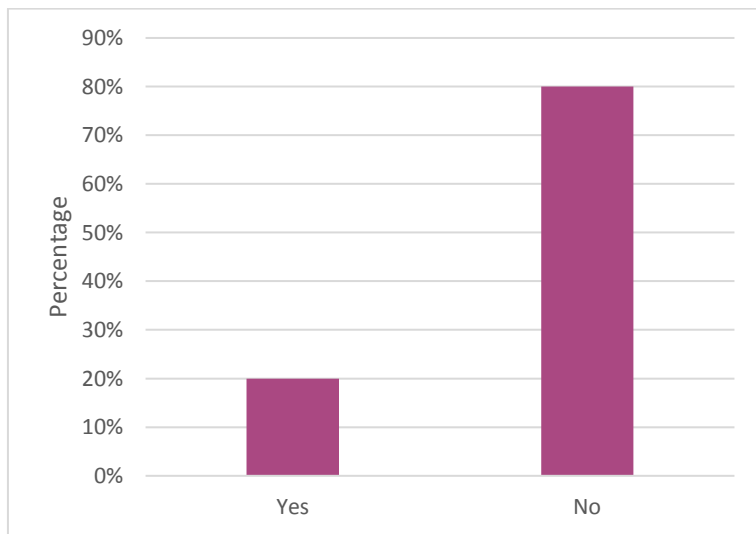
45. I have felt that I have been discriminated against at KI, due to sex, transgender identity or expression, ethnicity, religion or other belief, disability, sexual orientation or age.



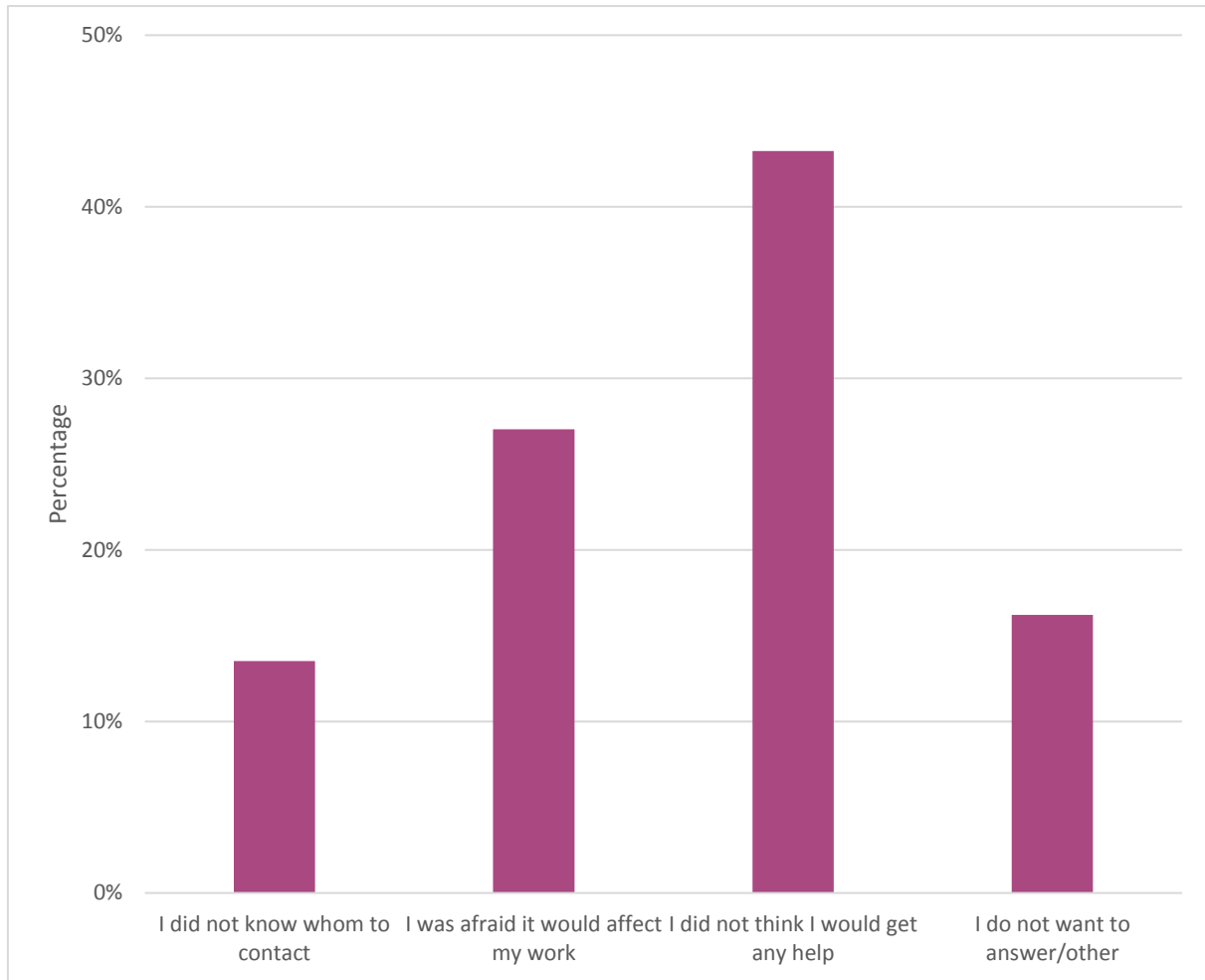
46. Did you contact someone at work for help?



47. Did you receive adequate help?



48. Why not? Please tick all that apply.



49. Do you know whom to contact for help if you feel that you are being discriminated against?

