



2023 Department of Bacteriology Climate Survey Results Summary

Results are summarized by category below. Key takeaways are at the end.

In this survey, rankings are out of 7 with 7/7 being the best.

Demographics

The 2023 Bacteriology Department Climate survey was distributed to the department May 1, 2023 and respondents were allowed until June 30th to complete the survey. A total of 83 people responded to the survey. This represents a 16% decrease in participation compared to 2022.

Of the 83 respondents, 49% identified as a trainee (undergraduate student, graduate student, research intern or postdoc), 49% as a faculty or staff member (professor, faculty associate, scientist, research technician, others), and the final 3% were outside these two groups. This represents an 11% increase in participation for faculty and staff, and a 10% decrease in participation for trainees.

44% of respondents identify as a man, an increase of 12% from 2022. 55% volunteered that they are a member of a marginalized or stigmatized group, a 7% increase.

Health and Well-Being

Respondents slept around 7 hours per night and rated their physical health at 4.82/7 on average. Trainees rated their physical health lower than faculty/staff (4.47/7 vs. 5.22/7). Marginalized and non-marginalized individuals rated their physical health similarly (4.82/7 vs. 4.83/7). Overall, respondents from all demographic groups reported greater physical health than last year (2022), and previously observed differences in physical health between marginalized and non-marginalized individuals were diminished.

Consistent with 2022 results, respondents in all demographic groups reported feeling stressed, overwhelmed, or exhausted in the two months prior to responding to the survey, but felt sad or depressed less often and worthless or isolated more rarely. Further consistent with 2022 results, the most frequently indicated source of stress was workload, with feelings of uncertainty, life outside of work, and finances being additional sources of stress for a number of respondents. Trainees also experienced feelings of anxiety, depression, and worthlessness to a greater extent than faculty/staff. However, in contrast to 2022 results, marginalized individuals reported similar mental health as non-marginalized individuals ($\leq 0.35/7$ difference in all categories).

2023 respondents felt the greatest sense of belonging to their labs, irrespective of whether they identified as faculty/staff or a trainee, as was observed for 2022 respondents. Non-marginalized individuals also reported a greater sense of belonging than marginalized individuals in each category; however, these differences were relatively modest when compared to 2022 ($\leq 0.35/7$ difference in all categories). More department members agreed that they have someone in the Department with whom they can discuss their problems in 2023 than in 2022 (4.81/7 vs. 4.70/7). Trainees and marginalized individuals were especially supported in this regard this year; on average, trainees more strongly agreed with this statement than faculty/staff (5.20/7 vs. 4.37/7) and a greater proportion of marginalized individuals reported that they “strongly agree” with this statement than non-marginalized individuals (9/33 vs. 5/24).

Work-Life Balance

The most commonly reported number of hours worked in a typical full week ranged from 40 to 60 hours, with about 90% of respondents reporting a value within this range (as compared to 60% in 2022). Within this group, about 20% reported a workload of 40 hours per week and another 20% reported a workload of 50 hours per week.

In terms of the percent of this time that was spent in the building (or other academic buildings), answers varied widely. About 40% of respondents reported that they spent over 75% of their work hours in the building (up from 30% in 2022), indicating that, while a large proportion of total work was still not done while on campus, respondents were generally on campus more often in this survey year than the previous year.

Of those who work in the summertime, responses were similar. Forty to 50 hours was the typical number of hours worked, with a majority of respondents indicating that they spent either about 40-50% of their time in the building, or that they spent nearly all of their time (90 to 100%) in the building.

Over the course of a full year, the most common response regarding the number of weekdays taken for vacation was 20 days (~18% of respondents), followed by 10 days (13%), 15 days (12%) and 14 days (9%). Last year, the most common response regarding the number of weekdays taken for vacation was 10 days (representing ~25% of respondents).

Supervisor, Performance Expectations and Evaluation

Consistent with 2022 results, ~50% (29/59) of respondents across all demographic groups agreed that they spend just the right number of hours on activities related to their work per week. However, a greater proportion of faculty/staff felt that they work too much than was observed for trainees (15/28 vs. 10/31). Similar proportions of non-marginalized vs. marginalized individuals reporting feeling like they work too much (11/25 vs. 14/34).

The vast majority of department members, regardless of demographic group, at least somewhat agreed that their supervisor’s expectations for how much work they should accomplish in a week is reasonable, with 38/51 respondents submitting a score of 5 or higher to this question on the 2023 climate survey (average = 5.55/7). Approximately 31% of respondents indicated that they “strongly agree” with this statement, while no respondents indicated that they “strongly disagree”. Department members also generally agreed that their supervisor genuinely cares about and supports various aspects of their work

experience, including their research, career development, work-life balance, and overall well-being. Respondents from all demographic groups felt most supported in their research and well-being, with ~69% (20/29) and ~52% (16/31) indicating that they “strongly agree” that their supervisor genuinely cares about and supports their research and overall well-being, respectively. Across all support categories, trainees and marginalized individuals felt more supported than faculty/staff and non-marginalized individuals.

Both faculty/staff and trainees felt their supervisor uses fair practices when assessing performance and progress (faculty/staff mean: 5.57/7, trainee mean: 6.29/7) and that the Department’s expectations of department members are reasonable (faculty/staff mean: 5.32/7, trainee mean: 5.70/7), although a much greater proportion of trainees indicated that they “strongly agree” with these statements than faculty/staff (supervisor fairness: 21/31 vs. 6/23, department expectations: 11/30 vs. 6/28). Similar proportions of non-marginalized vs. marginalized individuals indicated that they “strongly agree” with both statements (supervisor fairness: 11/22 vs. 16/32, department expectations: 7/25 vs. 10/33). No department members indicated that they “strongly disagree” with either statement.

Fewer department members from all demographic groups indicated that they “strongly agree” that the Department’s expectations of department members are clear, and a greater proportion of faculty/staff and marginalized individuals indicated that they feel “neutral” about this statement than trainees and non-marginalized individuals (faculty/staff: 9/27, trainees: 6/31, non-marginalized individuals: 5/25, marginalized individuals: 10/33). No department members indicated that they “strongly disagree” with this statement.

Sexual Harassment, Hostile and Intimidating Behavior, Discriminatory Practices

A similar percentage of respondents reported personally experiencing or witnessing sexual harassment, hostile and intimidating behavior, or biased/discriminatory behavior in the Department in 2023 as in 2022 (3.57-23.21% vs. 3-25%). Further consistent with 2022 results, non-male and marginalized individuals were more likely to report experiencing or witnessing these behaviors than respondents overall (non-male: ~18%, marginalized individuals: ~19%, overall: ~15% on average). Faculty/staff were also more likely to report experiencing or witnessing these behaviors than trainees (~18% vs. ~12% on average). Overall, the vast majority of cases (either personally experienced or witnessed) pertained to hostile/intimidating or biased/discriminatory behavior, and not sexual harassment (>91% vs. ~8%).

In ~63% cases of hostile and / or intimidating behaviors and ~53% of discriminatory practices, the perpetrator was reported to be a faculty / staff member (down from >65% in 2022). For the reported occurrences of sexual harassment, the perpetrator was equally likely to be a trainee or a faculty/staff member, consistent with results in 2022.

Consistent with 2022 results, ~11% of respondents reported to have personally intervened as a bystander or witnessed bystander intervention in the department. However, in reported incidents involving personal intervention as a bystander, the perpetrator was more likely to be a faculty / staff member than a trainee (~43% vs. 29%), which differed from 2022 results where the perpetrator was equally likely to be a faculty/staff member or trainee.

A subset of respondents continued to suggest having training to increase general awareness in these areas, with specific emphasis being placed on training being administered in-person (e.g., during the Department's weekly seminar time) rather than online. Additional resources to support transparency, reporting, and intervention to reduce occurrences of these behaviors within the Department were also requested.

Sense of Value

Overall, those who responded to the survey felt that faculty and other departmental members treat them in a welcoming and inclusive way. Responses varied from disagree to strongly agree, with a majority (~43%) of respondents strongly agreeing with being treated inclusively. However, some felt that the department does not produce a welcoming environment for members of their identities, especially for individuals who come from financially disadvantaged backgrounds and individuals with strong and/or underrepresented religious groups. Most, but not all, respondents felt that faculty and trainees have generally positive attitudes towards members of social groups and identities outside their own.

30% of responses indicated that, within the last year, they have considered leaving the department for reasons other than degree completion (down from 40% in 2022). Reasons given for this largely focused around a lack of support and job/financial security within the department and reasons for these individuals remaining in the department despite this were largely tied to either finding the support elsewhere or familial roots. In order to improve the departmental climate, responses indicated that spaces should be created for transparent conversations between faculty and trainees, as well as a space for trainees to communicate with each other.

Note: Questions within this section should be reviewed for clarity and potentially edited prior to release of the 2024 survey.

Key Takeaways

Overall, when considering 2023 results as compared to 2022 results, respondents reported spending more time working on campus, better alignment of expectations between supervisors and trainees, better work-life balance, perceptions of more fair practices for assessing performance and practice, and a stronger sense of community amongst department members. While we received fewer total responses to this year's survey, faculty/staff were better represented across respondents, resulting in survey responses that more equally reflected trainee and faculty/staff perspectives.

Efforts should continue to focus on improving communication and awareness amongst department members and reducing the occurrence of sexual harassment, hostile and intimidating behavior, and discriminatory practices to zero. The former could be achieved by opening additional avenues for resource sharing, especially as it pertains to options for reporting and associated outcomes. Building improvements, including the creation of new physical spaces for networking between different department members, would also be helpful. Toward the latter goal, relevant trainings should continue to be offered at least annually, and should include opportunities for all members of the department to participate.