

How to Find and Evaluate Postdoc Positions

Lily R. Lewis, PhD
Director, Office of Postdoctoral Affairs &
Academic Affairs Communications
LilyRLewis@ufl.edu
@UFPostdocs

Sharonda Harris, PhD
Postdoctoral Associate
College of Medicine
ssharris@ufl.edu

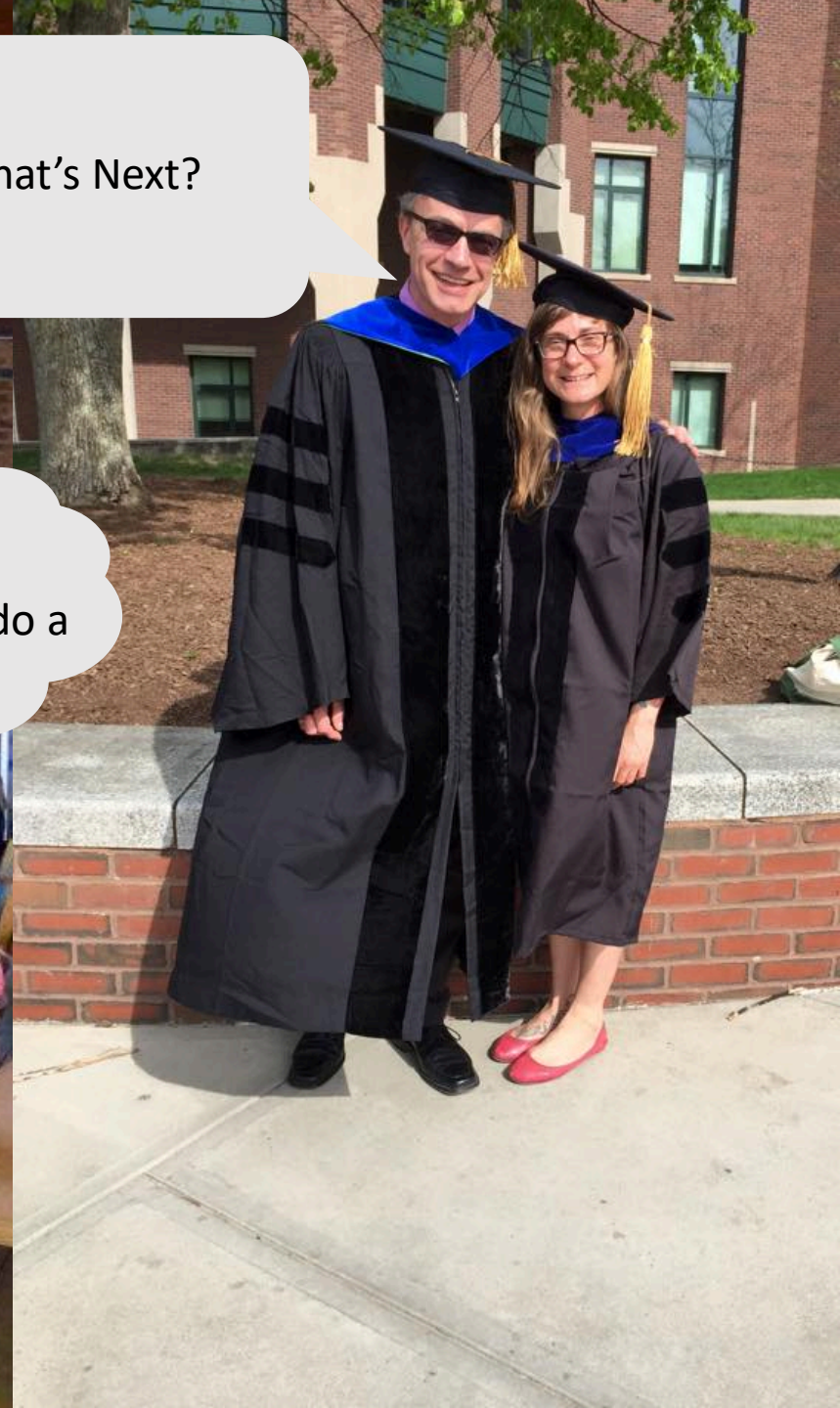




Moss species and their microbial communities show distinct responses to environmental change

If I get that grant, maybe she could do a postdoc in my lab

So what's Next?



**FACULTY AND POSTDOCTORAL**

Explore our faculty and postdoctoral openings and become a part of our unstoppable momentum.

A **postdoctoral position** (“postdoc”) is a temporary training appointment involving mentored research and/or scholarly training that further prepares an individual with a doctoral degree for their desired career.



A **postdoctoral Scholar** (“postdoc”) is an individual holding a doctoral degree who is engaged in a temporary period of mentored research and/or scholarly training for the purpose of acquiring the professional skills needed to pursue a career path of their choosing.

Should you do a postdoc?

Why is this a hard question?

You need to know where you want to go before you can answer it.

Career Exploration



- Identify your skills, interests, and values
 - UF Career Connections Center
- Interpret and discuss these with your mentors (quick PSA!)





ISTOCK.COM/SOLSTOCK

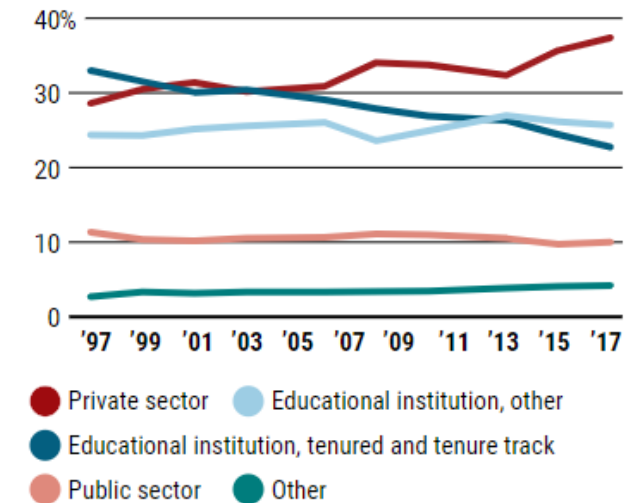
In a first, U.S. private sector employs nearly as many Ph.D.s as schools do

By Katie Langin | Mar. 12, 2019 , 5:45 PM

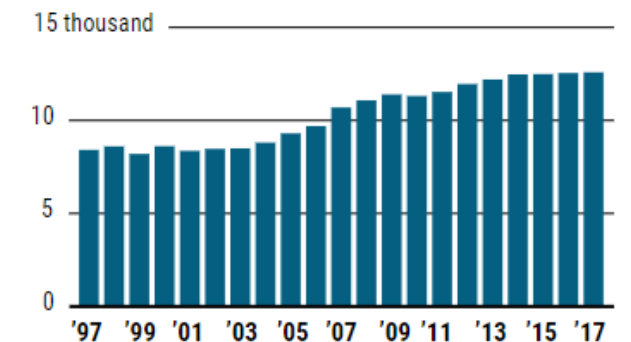
A changing career landscape

Over the past 20 years, the portion of U.S. life and health sciences Ph.D.s employed as tenured and tenure track faculty has declined—while the number of Ph.D.s awarded in these fields has grown.

Employment sector



Ph.D.s awarded



(GRAPHIC) K. LANGIN/SCIENCE; (DATA, TOP TO BOTTOM) SURVEY OF DOCTORATE RECIPIENTS/NSF; SURVEY OF EARNED DOCTORATES/NSF

Career Exploration



- Identify your skills, interests, and values
 - UF Career Connections Center
- Interpret and discuss these with your mentors (quick PSA)
- Research PhD career options
 - Academia: NCFDD
 - Humanities: UF Envision Humanities; Imagine PhD & Humanities Sims; Versatile PhD
 - STEM: Science Careers & MyIDP
 - All: Informational Interviews

Which Career paths might involve a postdoc?

- Academic Postdocs
 - Most common
 - Necessary for many academic tenure track positions
- Industry Postdocs
 - Typically higher paid than Academic & Government
 - Similar to an Internship for those seeking industry experience
- Government Postdocs
 - Higher paid than Academic
 - May help attain government or academic positions

Should you do a postdoc?

If you are interested in becoming an independent academic researcher (tenure track faculty member), industry researcher, or government researcher a postdoc position might be a good choice for you.



vision



TARGET



strategy



Choosing a postdoc haphazardly may
come at a cost in terms of finances,
wellbeing, and career success

Don't just do it because someone said you should

Don't do it because you think it will earn you more money

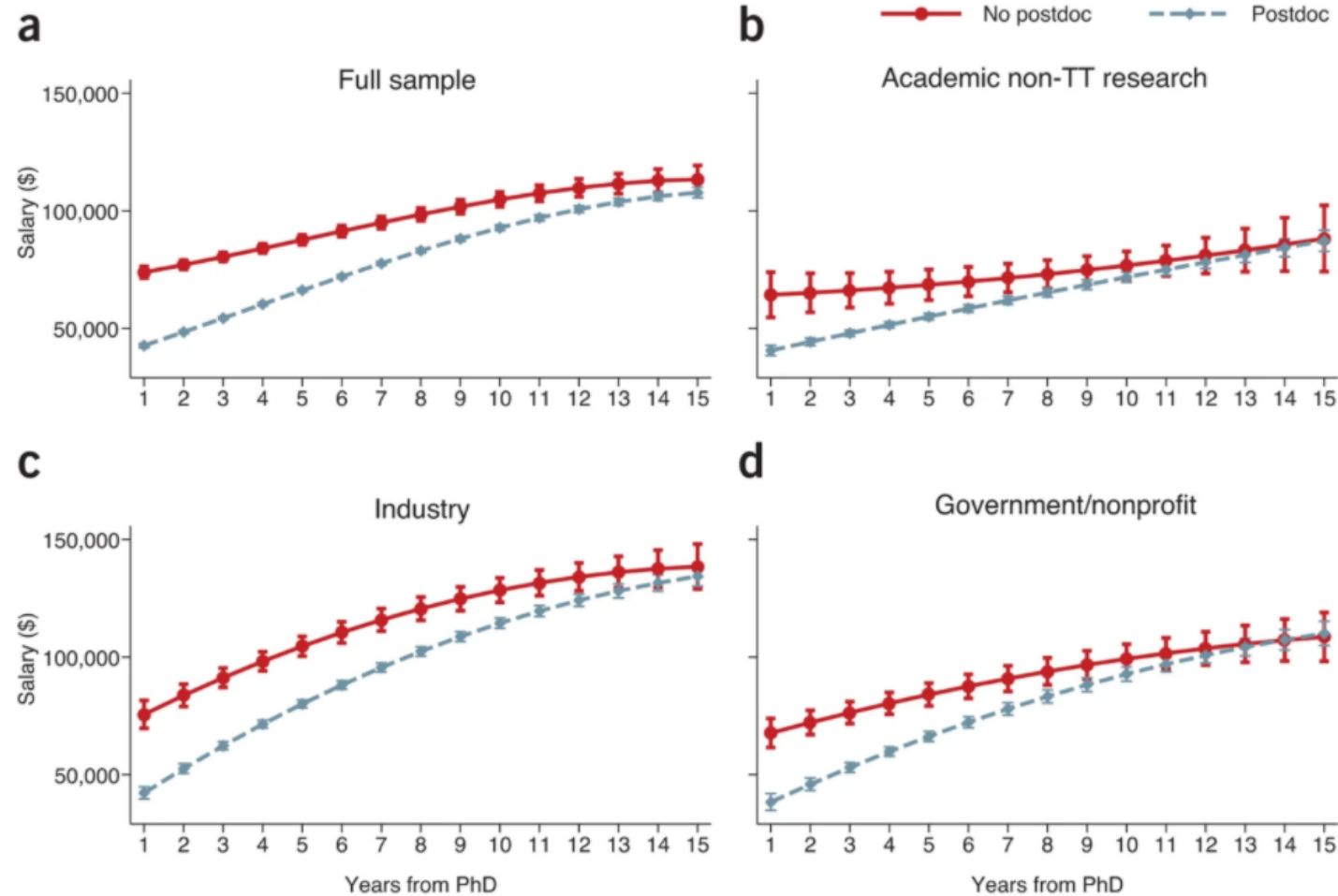
Don't do it because it's the "easiest" option

Figure 5: Predicted inflation-adjusted salary (2013 dollars) 1–15 years after PhD completion.

From: *The impact of postdoctoral training on early careers in biomedicine*

The impact of postdoctoral training on early careers in biomedicine

Kahn & Ginther,
2017 *Nature Biotechnology*, 35,
90-94



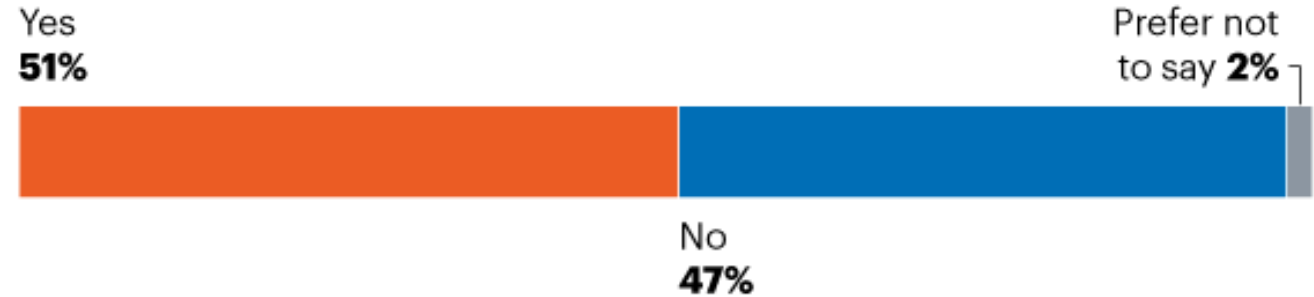
(a–d) Salaries shown for those with and without postdoc experience by 10-year sector (a), academic non-TT research (b), industry (c), and government/nonprofit (d). Shown with 95% confidence intervals.

Postdocs under pressure: 'Can I even do this any more?'

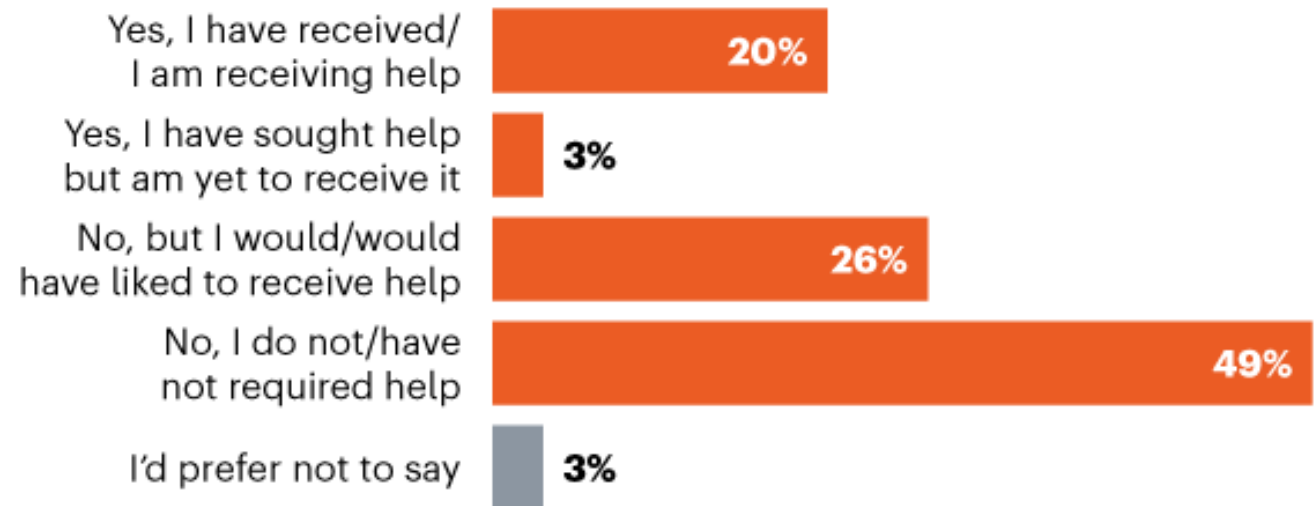
Woolston Nov. 2020

Nature's inaugural survey of post-doctoral researchers attracted more than 7,600 respondents from across the world.

Have you considered leaving science because of depression, anxiety or similar issues related to your work?



Have you sought or received professional help for depression or anxiety related to your work?*



Postdoctoral mentorship key to career success

Woolston Nature Career News 2019



A skilled and experienced mentor can boost a junior scientist's chances of success. Credit: Maskot/Getty

“Researchers who incorporate ideas and techniques from multiple mentors while still forging their own paths are the most likely to succeed in academia, according to a study of 18,865 biomedical researchers published in *Nature Communications*¹.”

“The authors also suggest that mentoring received during postdoctoral training had a bigger impact than mentoring received during graduate school.”

How to identify & evaluate a postdoc position

Goal: Identify a postdoc position that will benefit you professionally based on your specific career goals.

What new skill or opportunity will the postdoc position provide?

- What are your long-term research interests?
- Do you want to develop new skills or a new research area?
- Are there additional skills you want to develop?



Will you be able to carve out your own niche?

- The point is to become an independent researcher - think forward to your future job talks and research statements – how will you define your novel research program*?
 - *Make sure your niche can be developed into your first years as an assistant professor
- Identify tangible outcomes that are feasible in the short term (i.e. during a postdoc appointment)
 - Discuss first authorship opportunities while interviewing and before You Start
- Strive to Get Your Own Money
 - When interviewing, ask about postdoc PI and co-PI eligibility

What Are your mentorship expectations & needs?

- Does the PI have a clear vision for training postdocs?
 - Ask about professional development planning and protected time
- Speak with other lab members
- Do they give feedback
- Ask about networking support

Be clear about your expectations

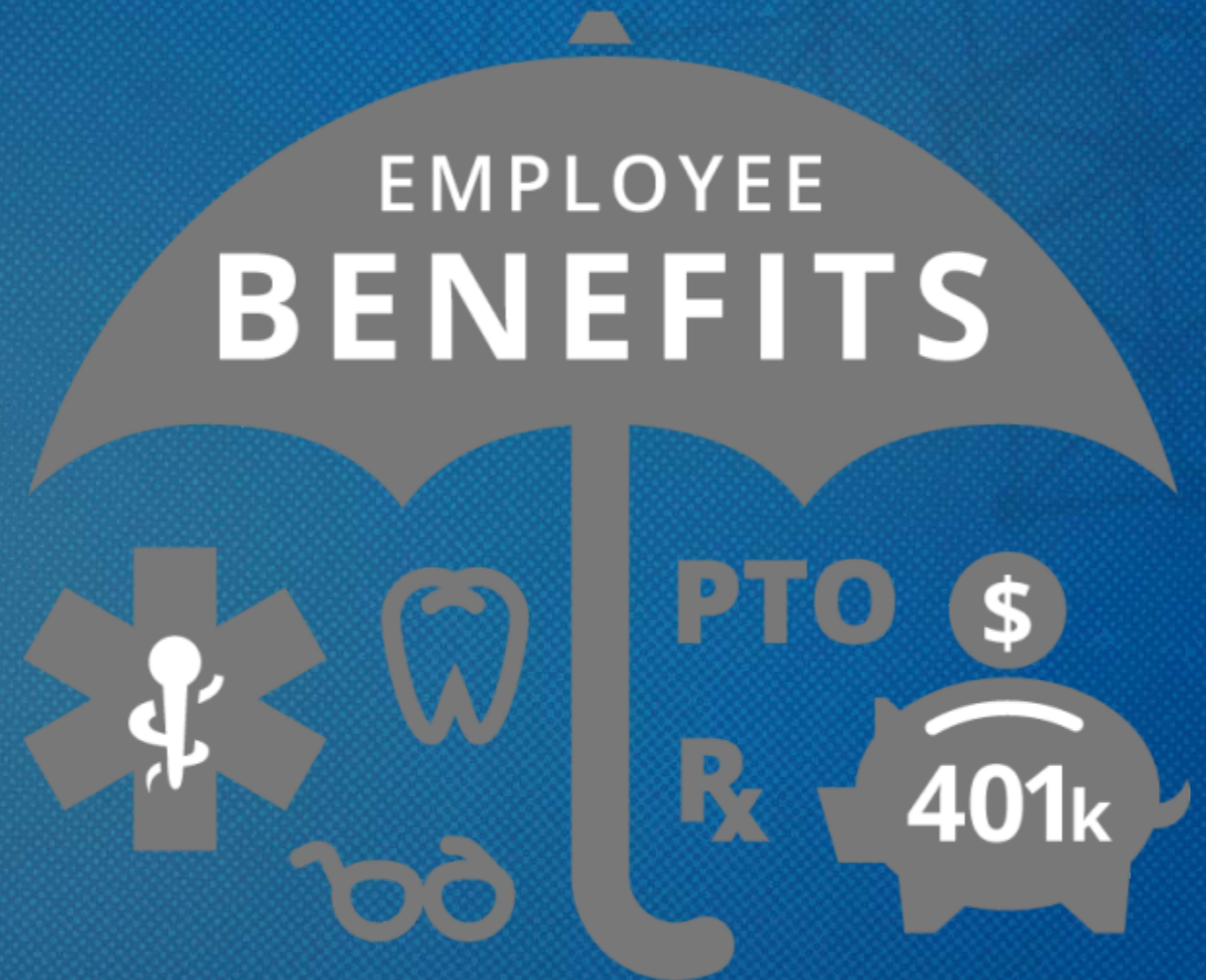
What type of Lab Environment do you want to work in?

- Small or Large?
- Lab culture-collaborative or independent?
- Lab atmosphere and morale



Compare benefits and resources

- Pay and Benefits may vary significantly across institutions
- Contact the institution's human resources, Office of Postdoc Affairs, and Postdoc Association
- Ask about pay scales



Finding a good postdoc position requires being proactive from the start – The search

- Postdoc offers may find you – Flattering; possibly easy, or no transition
 - “transitional postdoc” – in the same lab while you find another opportunity – these should be as short as possible and in most cases a last resort.
- It's better to step out – take the time to search and network
 - Academic: Conferences, Twitter, Professional Societies
 - Industry: Industry Websites, National Postdoc Association
 - Governmental: USAJobs

Self advocate This is your career.

Please fill out the evaluation survey – Link in Chat