

2024 SRUK/CERU

BREXIT SURVEY



**Society of
Spanish Researchers
in the United Kingdom**

This report has been produced by

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Society of Spanish Researchers
in the UK (SRUK/CERU)

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INTRODUCTION

The Department of Science Policy of the Society of Spanish Researchers in the UK (SRUK/CERU) has conducted the seventh edition of its Brexit Survey among its members¹. The aim of this survey is to assess the impact of Brexit on the personal and professional lives of individuals within our community. This edition focuses on analysing the post-Brexit landscape from a broader perspective, now that Brexit has officially happened, with the transition period concluded and negotiations finalised.

Our previous surveys have proven to be important tools in shaping our Society's strategy and actions regarding Brexit, and have helped us have informed meetings with learned societies, Higher Education institutions, the British and Spanish government and other stakeholders and policymakers. We expect that the insights gathered through this survey will guide future initiatives, ensuring that our Society continues to be a leading voice within the European scientific diaspora in the UK and to advocate for the interests of our members.

This edition of the survey includes current issues and provides insights on recent developments. For instance, respondents were asked about the British government's new immigration policies. Since this and other aspects of the survey also hold relevance for the broader European context, we hope that the findings in this edition will not only benefit the community of Spanish researchers in the UK but also contribute to the broader conversation on the evolving relationship between the UK and the European Union.

BACKGROUND

With over 720 members, the Society of Spanish Researchers in the UK (SRUK/CERU) is an independent, non-profit, organisation officially established in 2012 that represents a large proportion of Spanish nationals working in R&D&i in the UK. Our members work and study in all disciplines and are at different stages of their career, ranging from undergraduate

¹ Including Regular Members, Associate Members and Friend Members. The latter are individuals who live outside the UK and would like to keep in touch with SRUK/CERU and any Spanish visiting student or staff who will be in the UK for less than six months.

students to professors. SRUK/CERU has been actively monitoring the challenges and opportunities associated with Brexit and their impact on Spanish researchers both in the UK and elsewhere. For this purpose, SRUK/CERU has conducted several surveys and produced evidence (including some submitted to the UK Parliament and to the Spanish Parliament).

Previous editions of the survey were released in 2017, 2018, 2020 and 2021 (on the impact of Brexit on the SRUK/CERU members), 2018 (on the impact of Brexit on Spanish researchers and scientists outside the UK), and 2019 (on the consequences of a no-deal scenario).

METHODOLOGY

The survey was coordinated and designed by the SRUK/CERU Department of Science Policy and subsequently approved by the Society’s Executive Committee. The survey targeted members of SRUK/CERU, including those who had already left the UK. It was distributed via

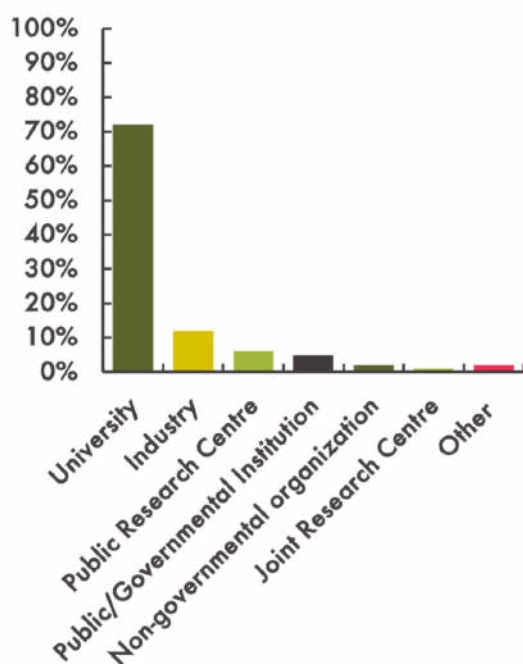


Figure 1: Affiliation of the respondents

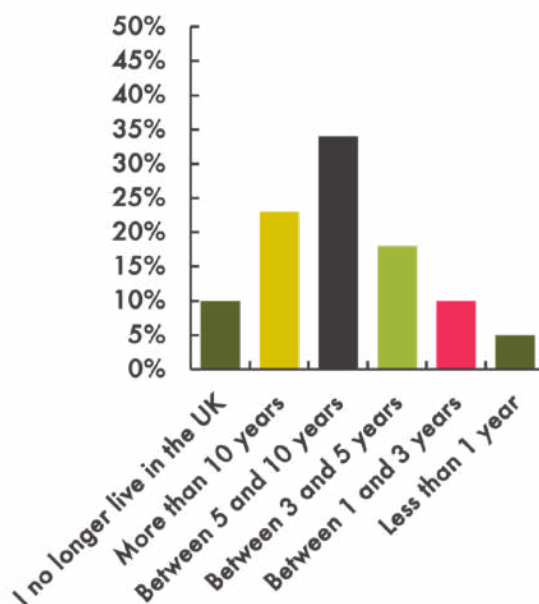


Figure 2: Length of the stay in the UK

corporate emails from the Society, accompanied by a campaign on social media and in the SRUK/CERU newsletter to increase awareness. Responses were collected online between April 12th and April 26th, 2024.

The survey comprised 17 questions in total, with varying sets of questions depending on whether the respondent was residing in the UK at the time of completion. The initial questions covered basic information such as affiliation, position, and time since arrival in the UK. The

subsequent questions explored the impact of Brexit in various areas. The final three questions were open-ended, allowing respondents to share their views on the main challenges they faced and the negative or positive aspects that Brexit might have brought to their lives.

BACKGROUND OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The survey received responses from 100 participants. Regarding their affiliations, the majority of respondents (72%) were from universities, 12% were in industry, and 6% were associated with public research centres. Additionally, 5% worked in public or governmental institutions, 2% in non-governmental organisations and 1% in joint research centres (see Figure 1). In terms of their residency time, 90% of respondents were living in the UK when they answered the survey, while the remaining 10% had already left the country; out of those still in the UK, approximately two thirds arrived before the effective exit of the UK from the EU in 2021 (see Figure 2). The survey also reflected a diverse range of career stages and roles. Among the respondents, 22% were postdoctoral researchers, 20% were PhD students, 18% were permanent faculty staff (including Lecturers, Senior Lecturers, Assistant Professors, Associate Professors, Readers, and Professors), and 14% were Scientific Specialists. Additional roles included 11% Research Fellows, 9% Principal Investigators, 2% Research Assistants, 4% Administrative Staff and 1% classified as Teaching Fellow. This breakdown shows a comprehensive representation of affiliations and career stages among the survey participants (see Figure 3).

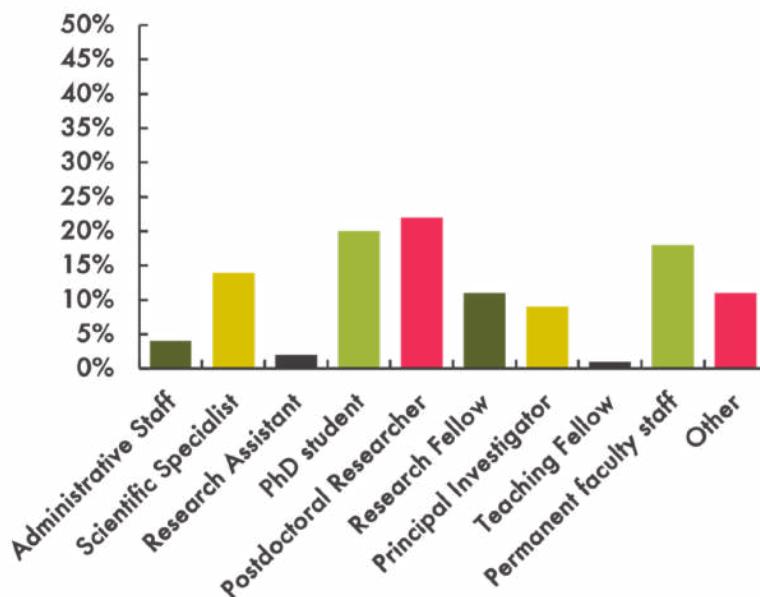


Figure 3: Career stages and positions

MAIN FINDINGS

The survey explored the impact of Brexit on the community of Spanish researchers in the UK and on those having already left the country, focusing on various aspects of their personal and professional lives. This section details the most significant findings, highlighting areas where Brexit's impact has been most strongly felt and outlining the key concerns and considerations that have emerged from our respondents' feedback.

1. When asked about the overall impact of Brexit —past, present, and future— 46% of respondents said they had been considerably affected, 34% said they had been affected, and 19% said they had been affected somehow, with an average score of 2.25 (scale: 0 = no impact, 1 = some impact, 2 = impact, 3 = considerable impact). Thus, a large majority of respondents (80%) reported experiencing considerable or significant impact from Brexit.
2. Respondents were asked about the impact of Brexit in various areas (see Figure 4). The areas with the greatest impact were the British economy, with an average score of 2.87 (scale: 0 = no impact, 1 = some impact, 2 = considerable impact, 3 = high impact, 4 = dramatic impact), changes in the rights of European residents in the UK (average 2.81), bureaucracy and the cost of living in the UK (average 2.59), the ability to hire team members or host international students (average 2.57), and academic fees of undergraduate or postgraduate students (average 2.55). Conversely, the areas with the least impact were changes in the regulation of the respondent's research field (average 1.43) and discrimination and social tension (average 1.35).
3. Among the respondents who had already left the UK (10%), 90% answered it was unlikely or very unlikely that they would return to the country in the future.
4. The 26% of the participants indicated that they were considering leaving the UK in the short term (6-12 months). Notably, among these respondents, 74% stated that Brexit influenced this decision. Of those considering leaving the UK, 52% said they would return

to Spain, 30% would move to another European Union country, and 17% would choose a non-EU country.

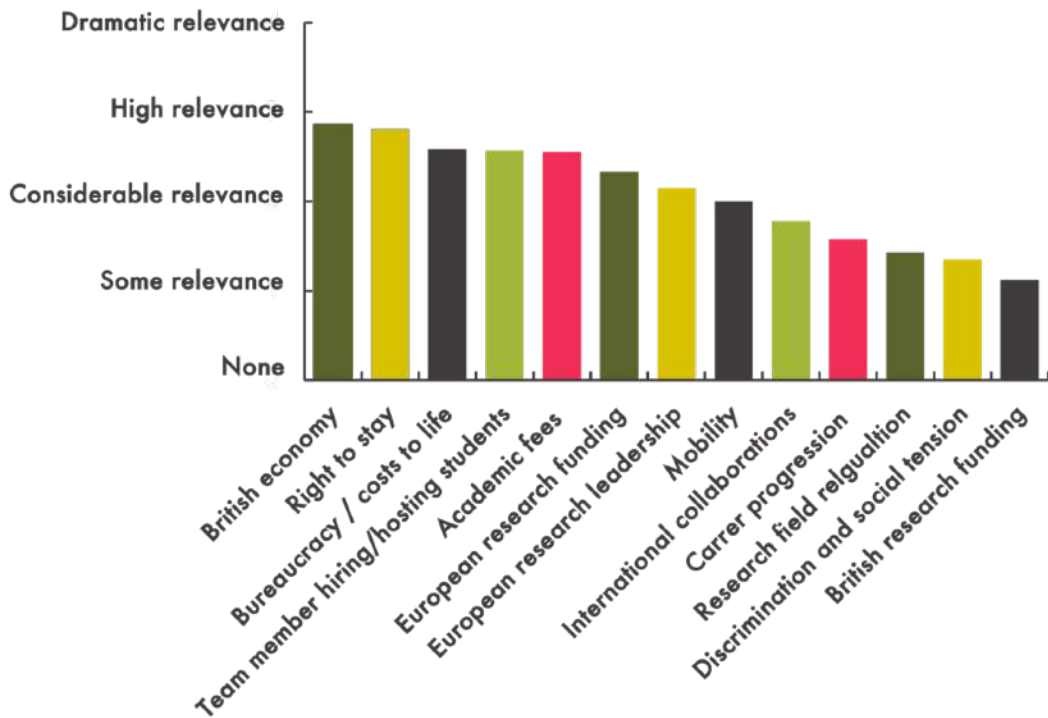


Figure 4: Areas affected by Brexit

- Respondents found the UK less attractive in 2024 compared to when they first arrived in the country, with an average score of -2.02 (scale: -3 = less attractive, +3 = more attractive). A cross-analysis of this rating based on length of stay in the UK revealed that

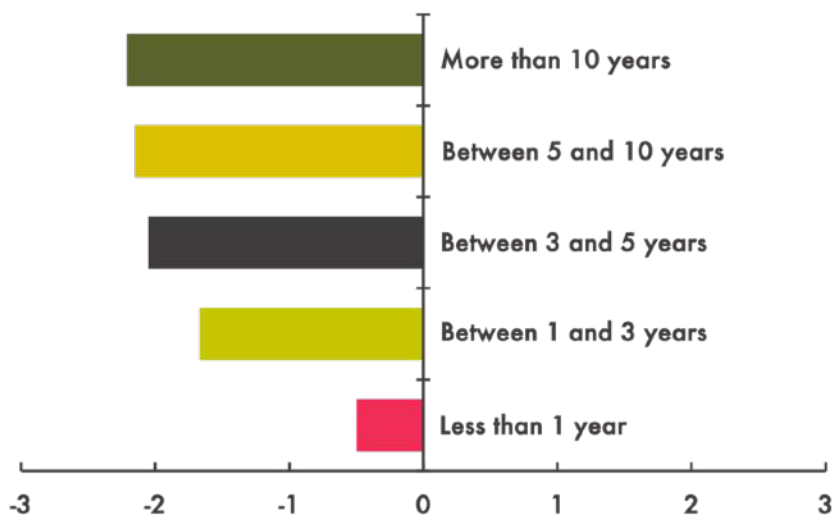


Figure 5: Attractiveness of the UK in 2024 compared to the time of arrival categorized by length of residency in the UK

those who had lived in the UK longer found it less attractive than those who had arrived more recently (see Figure 5): >10 years (average -2.21), 5-10 years (average -2.15), 3-5 years (average -2.05), 1-3 years (average -1.67), <1 year (average -0.5). When asked about the reasons for this negative perception, more than 80% of respondents pointed to UK immigration policies towards EU citizens and the political and economic situation in the UK as the main factors

contributing to this view, followed by access to British public services (59%) and access to research funding (34%).

6. Participants also found the UK's research ecosystem less attractive in 2024 compared to when they first arrived in the country, although the intensity of this negative perception was lower than in the broader context, with an average score of -1.06 (scale: -3 = less attractive, +3 = more attractive). The main reasons for this perception were economic and salary conditions (65.06%), career progression opportunities (51.81%), and access to research funding (49.40%).

7. Respondents were also asked about the latest measures adopted by the British government on immigration policy (see Figure 6), which will take effect in the spring of 2024. The measures that generated the most concern included the increase in the Immigration Health Surcharge from £624 to £1,035, with an average score of 2.27 (scale: 0 = no impact, 1 = some impact, 2 = considerable impact, 3 = high impact, 4 = dramatic impact). Similarly, the increase in the minimum salary required to obtain the Skilled Worker Visa, which will rise from £26,200 to £38,700, also caused significant concern among respondents, with an average score of 2.03.

8. The survey also included an open ended question on the primary challenges faced by the respondents in relation to Brexit (Figure 7 contains the topics indicated more frequently by the respondents). Out of the 75 answers, the highlighted challenges included mobility (mentioned by 55% of the respondents), followed by Brexit's impact in their careers (41%) and the country's overall economy (31%). The high cost of visas and the bureaucracy this process entails, along with the further restrictions for partners and families to move countries have highly complicated the mobility of researchers. In terms of their employment, participants noted the loss of talent and quality in universities. This is due to the issues accessing European funding and establishing collaborations, the job uncertainty, and the problems to recruit European candidates at PhD and postdoc level, as well as to retain leadership in the UK. The country's high living costs, inflation, loss of

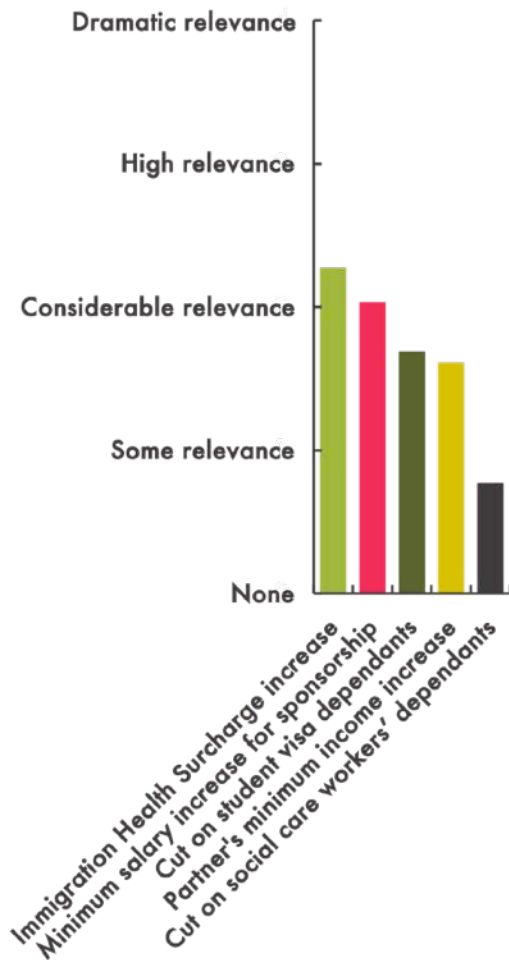


Figure 6: New immigration policies

skilled workers, and financial uncertainty are perceived as clear consequences of Brexit. The issues with importing and exporting goods, which affect the participants both at a personal and professional level due to the increased paperwork and costs to ship reagents, biological goods and personal items are also mentioned amongst their concerns. There is a clear economic impact of Brexit that links all these challenges. In addition, the participants noted more discrimination and racism post-Brexit.



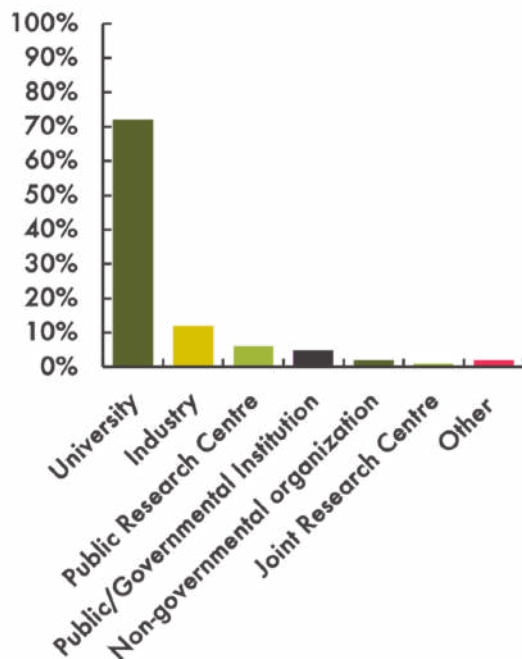
Figure 7: Concept cloud based on most commonly mentioned Brexit-related challenges

9. As a result of Brexit, members of SRUK/CERU want the Society to advocate for international mobility by promoting collaboration, networking, and funding opportunities, rejoining European programs such as Erasmus+ and creating a universal system that recognises the researcher's experience and titles regardless of the country. In addition, participants request further support with immigration, by disseminating information and advice regarding moving to the UK, and pushing for better and more flexible regulations.
10. Finally, the survey included an open ended question asking if participants could identify any positive impact caused by Brexit. Of all respondents who answered this question, the majority (76%) said they found no positive aspect resulting from Brexit. Among those who did identify positive elements, the most common responses were related to increased flexibility in legislation. Specific examples mentioned included the areas of agriculture, genome editing, genetically modified crops, biomedical products, animal research, and independence from EU regulation. Another notable point was the change in the job market, with several participants stating that Brexit had reduced competition and made it easier to find jobs for those already residing in the UK.

SURVEY RESULTS

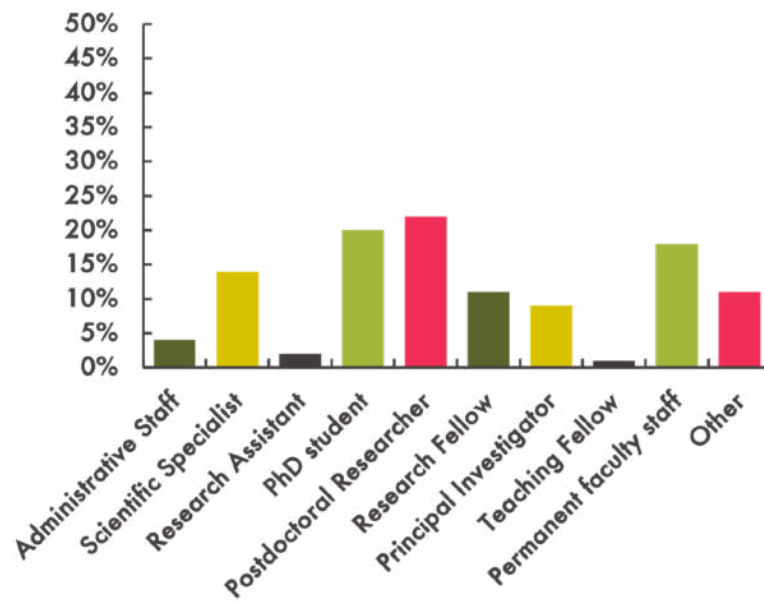
This section contains the complete results of the survey collected from respondents regarding the impact of Brexit. The information is presented in a straightforward manner without interpretation or analysis. It covers key topics such as changes in personal circumstances, career impacts, and shifts in UK policies affecting Spanish researchers in the UK. The survey consisted of 17 questions in total, with varying sets of questions depending on whether the respondent was residing in the UK at the time of completion, as indicated below. Complete open-ended responses are excluded to ensure the privacy of participants.

1. Please indicate your work affiliation



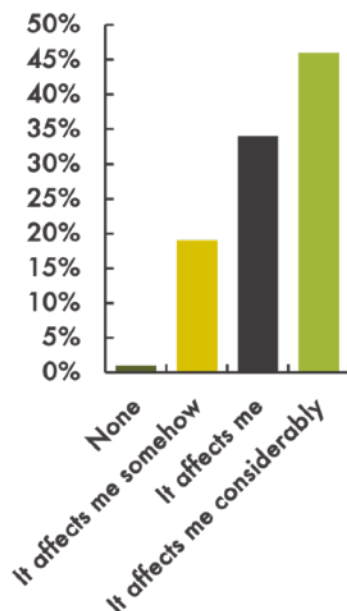
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
University	72.00%
Public Research Centre	6.00%
Public/Governmental Institution	5.00%
Joint Research Centre	1.00%
Non-governmental organization	2.00%
Industry	12.00%
Other	2.00%

2. Please indicate your position(s)



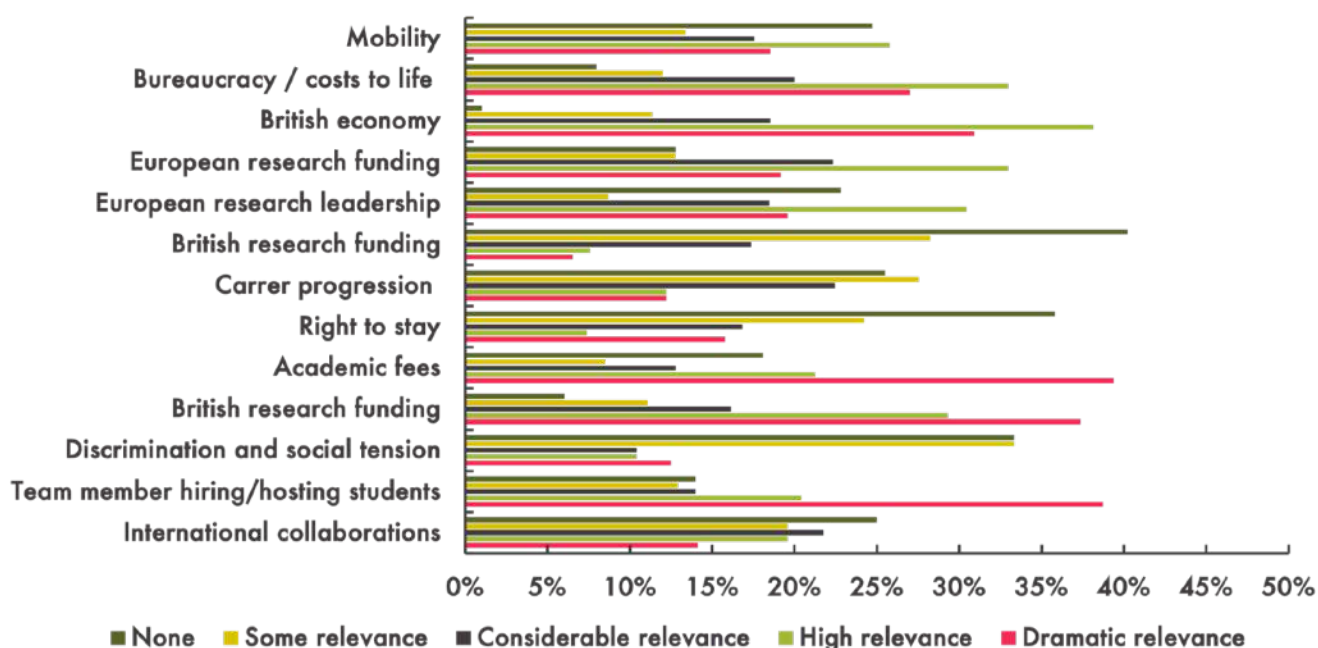
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Permanent faculty staff	18.00%
Teaching Fellow	1.00%
Principal Investigator	9.00%
Research Fellow	11.00%
Postdoctoral Researcher	22.00%
PhD student	20.00%
Research Assistant	2.00%
Scientific Specialist	14.00%
Administrative Staff	4.00%
Other (please specify)	11.00%

3. Assess the overall impact that Brexit has had/has/will have in your life.



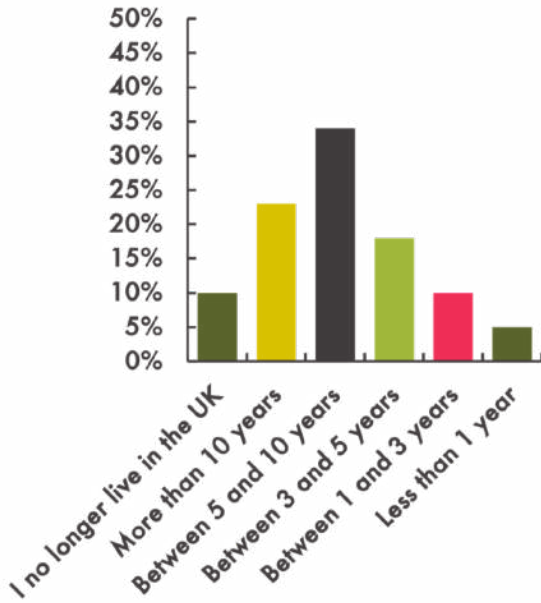
ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
It affects me considerably	46.00%
It affects me	34.00%
It affects me somehow	19.00%
None	1.00%

4. Please assess the impact of these changes (if any) in the following areas after Brexit.



	NONE	SOME RELEVANCE	CONSIDERABLE RELEVANCE	HIGH RELEVANCE	DRAMATIC RELEVANCE
Movement of relatives with skilled workers	24.74%	13.40%	17.53%	25.77%	18.56%
Bureaucracy and costs to live and work in the UK	8.00%	12.00%	20.00%	33.00%	27.00%
British economy	1.03%	11.34%	18.56%	38.14%	30.93%
Access to European research funding	12.77%	12.77%	22.34%	32.98%	19.15%
Opportunity to lead on European research programmes	22.83%	8.70%	18.48%	30.43%	19.57%
Access to British research funding	40.22%	28.26%	17.39%	7.61%	6.52%
Opportunity to progress in your career	25.51%	27.55%	22.45%	12.24%	12.24%
Changes in regulation in your research field	35.79%	24.21%	16.84%	7.37%	15.79%
Academic fees of undergraduate and postgraduate students	18.09%	8.51%	12.77%	21.28%	39.36%
Change in the rights of European residents in the UK	6.06%	11.11%	16.16%	29.29%	37.37%
Discrimination and social tension	33.33%	33.33%	10.42%	10.42%	12.50%
Hiring members of your team and/or hosting international students	13.98%	12.90%	13.98%	20.43%	38.71%
Establishing or keeping international scientific collaborations	25.00%	19.57%	21.74%	19.57%	14.13%

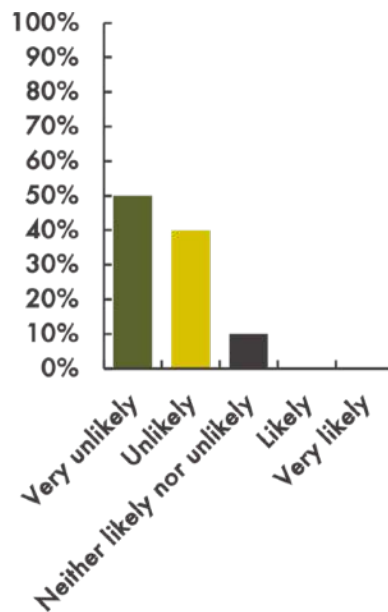
5. How long have you been living in the UK?



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Less than 1 year	5.00%
Between 1 and 3 years	10.00%
Between 3 and 5 years	18.00%
Between 5 and 10 years	34.00%
More than 10 years	23.00%
I no longer live in the UK	10.00%

6. Would you consider returning to the UK to work as a researcher or scientist in 2024?

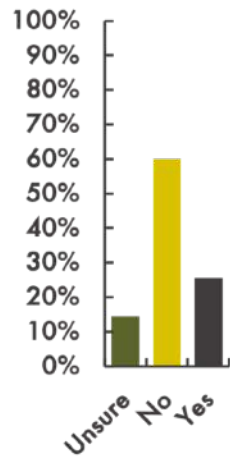
This question was asked exclusively to participants who had left the UK.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Very likely	0%
Likely	0%
Neither likely nor unlikely	10.0%
Unlikely	40.0%
Very unlikely	50.0%

7. Are you considering leaving the United Kingdom in the near future (6- 12 months)?

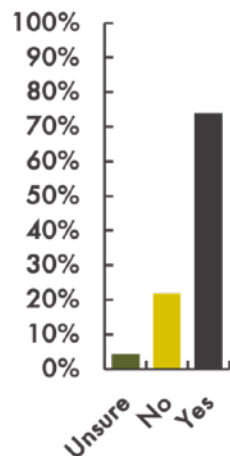
This question was asked exclusively to participants who were still living in the UK.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	25.56%
No	60.0%
Unsure	14.44%

8. If your answer to the above question was "Yes", has Brexit impacted your decision-making process?

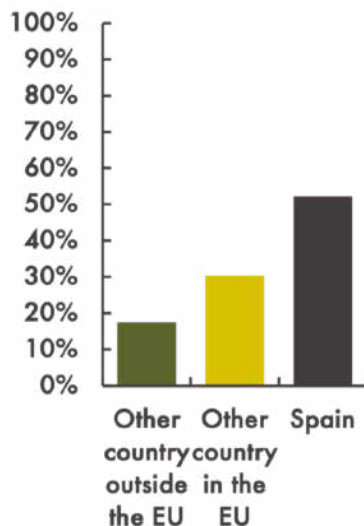
This question was asked exclusively to participants who answered "Yes" in Question 7.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Yes	73.91%
No	21.74%
Unsure	4.35%

9. If you move to another country, where would you go?

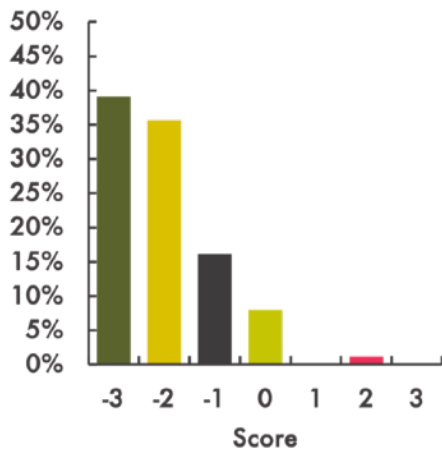
This question was asked exclusively to participants who answered "Yes" in Question 4.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Spain	52.17%
Other country in the EU	30.43%
Other country outside the EU	17.39%

10. How attractive is the UK in 2024 compared to when you last moved to the country?

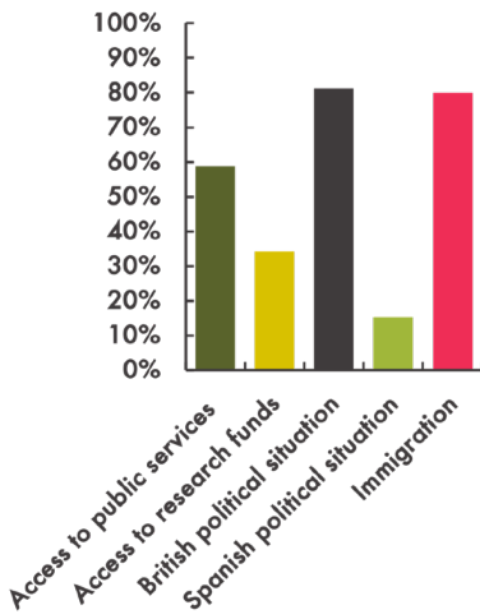
This question was asked exclusively to participants who were still living in the UK.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
-3	39.08%
-2	35.63%
-1	16.09%
0	8.05%
1	0.00%
2	1.15%
3	0.00%

11. What would be the main reasons for the above answer?

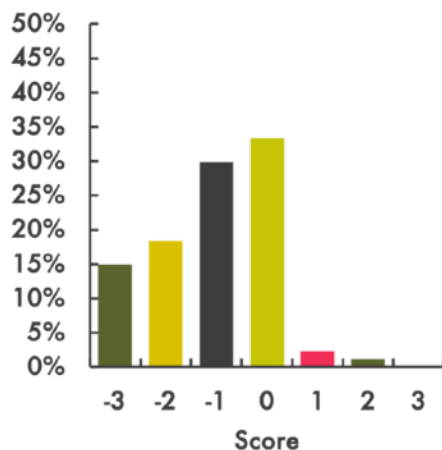
This question was asked exclusively to participants who were still living in the UK.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
New immigration policies/new immigration status for EU citizens	80.0%
The political and economic situation in Spain	15.29%
The political and economic situation in the UK	81.18%
Access to research funds, both domestic and international/European	34.12%
Access to public services in the UK (NHS, education, pension...)	58.82%

12. How attractive is the UK research environment in 2024 compared to when you last moved

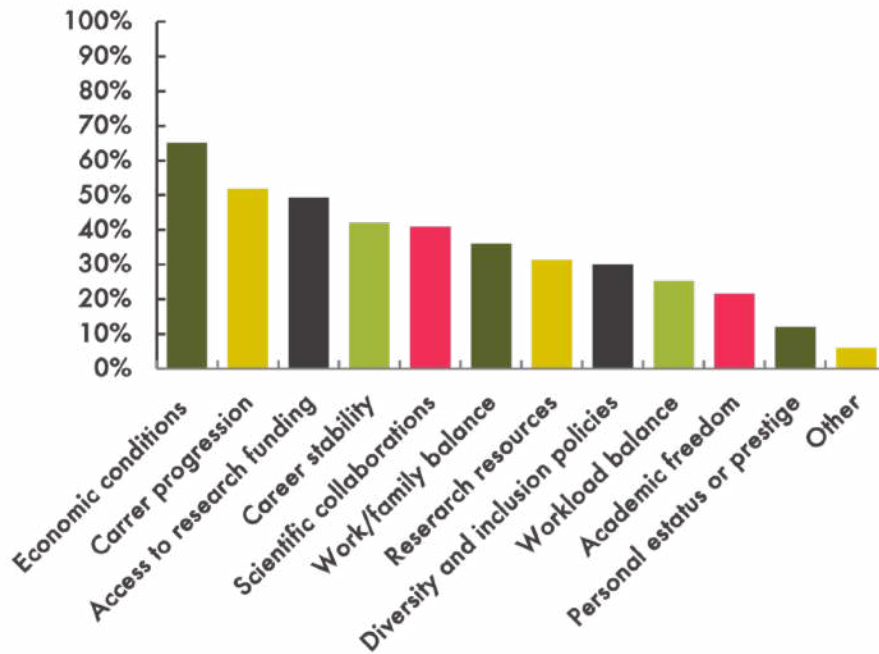
This question was asked exclusively to participants who were still living in the UK.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
-3	14.94%
-2	18.39%
-1	29.89%
0	33.33%
1	2.30%
2	1.15%
3	0.00%

13. What would be the main reasons for the above answer?

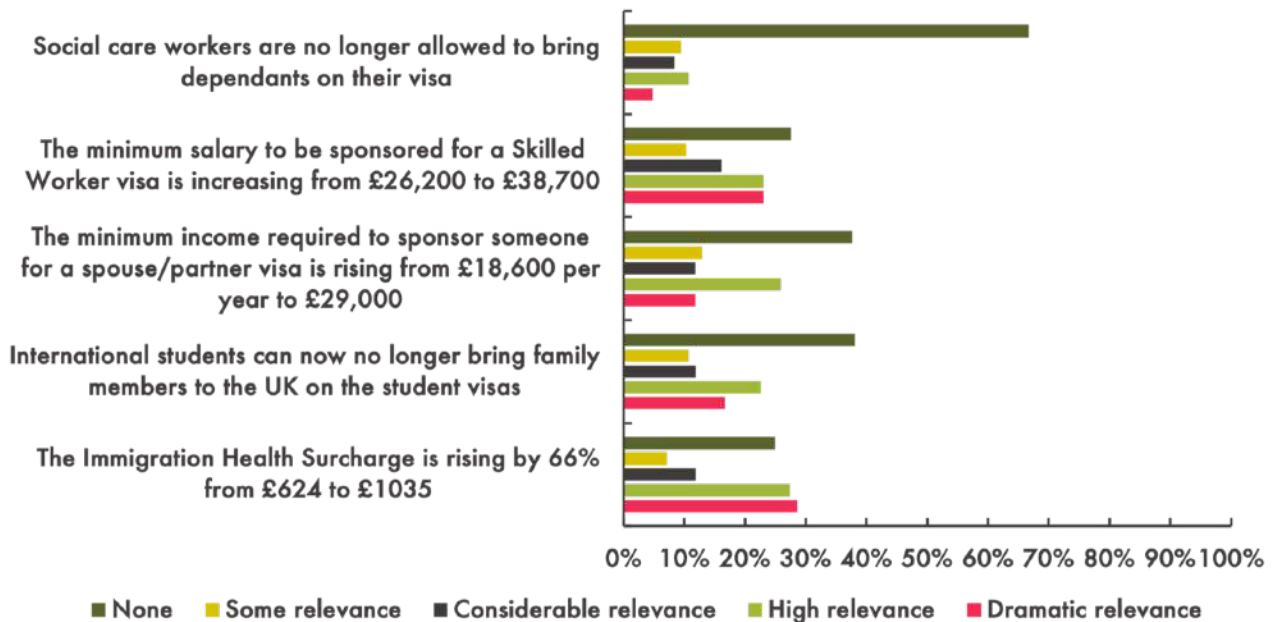
This question was asked exclusively to participants who were still living in the UK.



ANSWER CHOICES	RESPONSES
Access to research funding	49.40%
Academic freedom	21.69%
Economic conditions (salary, other complements)	65.06%
Material conditions (equipment, facilities, laboratories)	31.33%
Research, admin and teaching workload balance	25.30%
Career stability	42.17%
Opportunity to progress in your career	51.81%
Opportunity to establish scientific collaborations	40.96%
Personal estatus or prestige	12.05%
Flexibility and work/family balance	36.14%
Diversity, equity, and inclusion policies	30.12%
Other (please specify)	6.02%

14. As of spring 2024, further changes are being made to the UK migration rules. Please assess the impact (if any) of the following changes considering your work position or current family situation.

This question was asked exclusively to participants who were still living in the UK.



	NONE	SOME RELEVANCE	CONSIDERABLE RELEVANCE	HIGH RELEVANCE	DRAMATIC RELEVANCE
Social care workers are no longer allowed to bring dependants on their visa	66.67%	9.52%	8.33%	10.71%	4.76%
The minimum salary to be sponsored for a Skilled Worker visa is increasing from £26,200 to £38,700	27.59%	10.34%	16.09%	22.99%	22.99%
The minimum income required to sponsor someone for a spouse/partner visa is rising from £18,600 per year to £29,000	37.65%	12.94%	11.76%	25.88%	11.76%
International students can now no longer bring family members to the UK on the student visas	38.10%	10.71%	11.90%	22.62%	16.67%
The Immigration Health Surcharge is rising by 66% from £624 to £1035	25.00%	7.14%	11.90%	27.38%	28.57%

