

Postdocs Survey 2017 Summary

- Participation: 96 out of 221 as of July 27
- 76% has spouse/family
- Half of the total participants has children (46/out of 95)
 - 46% of them has 2 or more children
- Canadian+PR/International: 54%/46%

Q10. Gross salary of your current appointment:

- Overall 55% earns over the average salary of \$44,500; whereas it is 67% and 41% for domestics and international postdocs respectively.
- Significant differences between salary distribution of the international and domestics postdocs

	All		Canadian/PR		International	
Answer Choices	Responses		Responses		Responses	
< \$33,000	7.37%	7	1.96%	1	13.64%	6
\$33,001 - \$35,000	3.16%	3	0.00%	0	6.82%	3
\$35,001 - \$37,500	6.32%	6	5.88%	3	6.82%	3
\$37,501 - \$40,000	10.53%	10	5.88%	3	15.91%	7
\$40,001 - \$44,500	17.89%	17	19.61%	10	15.91%	7
> \$44,500	54.74%	52	66.67%	34	40.91%	18
	Answered	95	Answered	51	Answered	44
	Skipped	1	Skipped	0	Skipped	0

Q11. How did the extra charges (13% and 8%) affect your current PDA contract? The gross salary is the amount specified on your contract. (please read all the options and select one that is most relevant to your case)

- Among the 42 PDAs who responded: 31% got pay cut; salary remained same or increased for 28% and 33% are new at Western.
- Some of the PDAs who reported salary reduction earlier via email have not participated in the survey.
 - Which makes the total number greater than the 9 + 4 below, this can be compared with the 4% stated by the employer last time as people who had reductions (4% of 221 is 9 people, but there are more than 9 who had reduction..)

	All		PDA	
Answer Choices	Responses		Responses	
Gross salary was reduced to cover extra charges to my supervisor's grant	6.90%	6	14.29%	6
Gross salary was reduced, but I'm not sure whether it was due to extra charges	3.45%	3	7.14%	3
Did not get a raise that was planned, or received a raise less than the amount intended	4.60%	4	9.52%	4
Gross salary remains same	11.49%	10	19.05%	8
Gross salary was increased to cover deductions from my paycheque	2.30%	2	4.76%	2
Gross salary was increased for another reason	2.30%	2	4.76%	2
Not sure, as this is my first appointment at Western	22.99%	20	33.33%	14
N/A, as I am still a PDF	42.53%	37	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	3.45%	3	7.14%	3
	Answered	87	Answered	42
	Skipped	9	Skipped	4

Q12. If it is your first appointment as a PDA at Western, please compare your gross salary with other postdocs at your group or department.

	New at Western	
Answer Choices	Responses	
My gross salary is less than that of existing PDFs	16.67%	4
My gross salary is less than the average postdoc salary at Western (\$44,500)	29.17%	7
I am not sure about the salary of other postdocs	50.00%	12
N/A	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	4.17%	1
	Answered	24
	Skipped	2

Q13. Do you anticipate a gross salary reduction in a future appointment?

- Overall 68% are uncertain about their future salary and appointments
- PDFs and international postdocs are more worried about their future salary and appointments

	All		PDF		International	
Answer Choices	Responses		Responses		Responses	
Yes	27.27%	24	37.21%	16	35.90%	14
No	31.82%	28	20.93%	9	20.51%	8
May not get an extension	18.18%	16	20.93%	9	23.08%	9
Not sure	22.73%	20	20.93%	9	20.51%	8
	Answered	88	Answered	43	Answered	39

Q14. Low-wage postdocs face a significant financial burden in meeting basic family needs. Any reduction in salary during this transition will endanger many postdocs and their families. Western may agree to cover the extra costs for a limited period of time, rather than drawing from supervisors' budgeted grants. If Western were to cover these costs, what do you think is a reasonable transition period?

	All		PDF		International	
Answer Choices	Responses		Responses		Responses	
One year	21.69%	18	19.51%	8	14.29%	5
Two years	48.19%	40	41.46%	17	54.29%	19
Three or more years	20.48%	17	26.83%	11	22.86%	8
Other (please specify)	9.64%	8	12.20%	5	8.57%	3
	Answered	83	Answered	41	Answered	35

Q15. What is your view regarding the pay deductions for the employee's contribution to CPP/EI?

- Most do not find CPP/EI contributions are beneficial (especially the international postdocs); most want an equivalent wage raise/benefits

	All		Canadian/PR		International	
Answer Choices	Responses		Responses		Responses	
CPP and EI benefits are worth the deductions	22.99%	20	32.65%	16	10.81%	4
I prefer an equivalent amount of benefits	16.09%	14	18.37%	9	13.51%	5
I prefer an equivalent amount of raise	56.32%	49	42.86%	21	72.97%	27
Other (please specify)	4.60%	4	6.12%	3	2.70%	1
	Answered	87	Answered	49	Answered	37

Q16. Postdocs can negotiate a salary above the minimum set in a collective agreement. The minimum salary is \$31,840 as per the expired PDA collective agreement and the average postdocs salary at Western is approx. \$44,500. Please prioritize the following measures to protect salary and benefits of postdocs in the future (1 being the most preferred). You may also propose other measures here; please specify those in the following question. (86 participated)

- Higher score means the measure is more preferred (i.e. Western taking responsibility > Salary Protection >> Greater benefits > increase in minimum salary)

	1		2		3		4		Score
Preservation of your current salary (it may risk your future appointments if your supervisor does not have extra fund).	41.56%	32	15.58%	12	19.48%	15	20.78%	16	5.69
Increase in minimum salary (currently \$31,840) (it may risk your future appointments).	15.94%	11	23.19%	16	23.19%	16	27.54%	19	4.91
Securing greater benefits (it may increase benefit cost to supervisors)	12.12%	8	22.73%	15	31.82%	21	25.76%	17	4.97
Western taking responsibility to provide fair and equitable compensation in line with postdocs' valuable contribution to the university	41.56%	32	27.27%	21	11.69%	9	11.69%	9	5.78
Other #1	12.50%	2	25.00%	4	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	4.25
Other #2	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	7.69%	1	0.00%	0	2.31
Other #3	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	8.33%	1	1.25

Q17. Please specify your other options in the previous question:

- All benefit costs to come directly from Western, not grants!
- Secure some of the \$700 million in endowment funds for postdoc fellowships and benefits
- Mandatory yearly salary increases when renewing/signing a new postdoc contract, eg. 2% each year up to the 5 year maximum.
- Yearly salary increases, possibly tied to inflation
- My opinion of ranked 4 is that the question is written to elicit a biased answer

Q18. Please describe any difficulties and struggles you have faced as a result of salary reductions. Your personal stories can serve as strong basis in the collective bargaining.

19 responded

Q20. With the current allocation of \$1,200/yr in the HCSA, are you able to meet your necessary family medical expenses throughout the year?

	All		Family with no Children		Family with Children	
Answer Choices	Responses		Responses		Responses	
Yes	35.53%	27	26.09%	6	30.30%	10
No	43.42%	33	47.83%	11	51.52%	17
Other (please specify)	21.05%	16	26.09%	6	18.18%	6
	Answered	76	Answered	23	Answered	33
	Skipped	20	Skipped	3	Skipped	13

Others:

- "NA, am still PDF"
- "Yes: If I don't need to go to the hospital, only cover basic expenses"
- "For a 2 adult household, NO. Glasses, dental, prescriptions exceed this amount."
- "I don't need this account."
- "Just joined Western about a month and a half back"
- "unknown"

Q22. Are you enrolled in the SOGS Health and Dental plan?

- 13.33% yes

Q23. If your response to the previous question is No, why did not you buy the SOGS Drug and Dental plan using HCSA (check all that apply)?

- Timing – "The SOGS plan is ONLY the period from Sept to Aug in a year. A NEW post doc can ONLY opt in within the first 2 months and the plan will STILL expire Aug 31 (even if you opt in for April). Since post docs start in different time frames this is not practical"
- Not comprehensive enough, esp. for families
- Preference to use HCSA than buy the plan
- The cost of the plan in more than our typical health care costs.
- I did not have enough salary to have extra plan.
- Expensive for the coverage I would receive! The plan is so limited that the math did not add up, and in my opinion is a waste of money

Q24. Please let us know the average annual health and medical expenses for your family including yourself (in Canadian dollars).

Answer Choices	All		Family with no children		Family with children	
	Average (\$)	Responses	Average (\$)	Responses	Average (\$)	Responses
Prescription drugs	518	40	355	11	769	21
Dental care	1051	38	757	11	1540	20
Vision care	347	36	286	11	468	19
Accidents & emergencies	150	22	175	4	208	13
Physiotherapist	212	25	317	6	223	13
Others	370	23	363	8	392	13
SUM	2648	43	2252	13	3601	22
		53		13		24

Other (e.g. therapist/counsellor, chiropractor, medical equipment, etc.):

Q25. Do you have access to any other health benefit program (e.g. spousal plan)?

- 29% yes

Q28. How much do you annually spend from your pocket for.....?

Answer Choices	Average Number	Responses
registered childcare per child	\$5,676	40
child development programs per child	\$1,493	37
health and wellness (e.g. gym and sports membership, trainer, equipment etc.)	\$656	45
professional expenses (e.g. attending meeting and conferences, professional development programs, etc.)	\$629	35
	Answered	48
	Skipped	48

Q.30 What is the most you would be willing to pay annually for a comprehensive benefit plan for yourself, if it required a fee or reduction in your salary?

- As per Q29, a comprehensive benefit plan includes full health, drug, dental, vision, travel, and pension benefits, as well as the spending accounts that may be used for personal needs.
- Majority does not afford more than \$250/year
- 36% can not pay anything; 64% can pay up to \$250/year

Answer Choices	Responses	
\$0	36.36%	28
\$250	19.48%	15
\$500	23.38%	18
\$750	6.49%	5
\$1,000	11.69%	9
\$1,250	0.00%	0
\$1,500	0.00%	0
Other (please specify)	2.60%	2
	Answered	77
	Skipped	19

Q31. What is the most you would be willing to pay annually for a comprehensive benefit plan for yourself and your family, if it required a fee or reduction in your salary?

- As per Q29, a comprehensive benefit plan includes full health, drug, dental, vision, travel, and pension benefits, as well as the spending accounts that may be used for personal needs.
- Majority does not afford more than \$500/year
- 32% can not pay anything; 68% can pay upto \$500/year

Answer Choices	All		Family		Family with Children	
	Responses		Responses		Responses	
\$0	32.00%	24	28.57%	16	36.36%	12
\$500	28.00%	21	28.57%	16	27.27%	9
\$1,000	20.00%	15	23.21%	13	15.15%	5
\$1,500	9.33%	7	8.93%	5	9.09%	3
\$2,000	5.33%	4	7.14%	4	6.06%	2
\$2,500	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
\$3,000	0.00%	0	0.00%	0	0.00%	0
Other	5.33%	4	3.57%	2	6.06%	2
	Answered	75	Answered	56		33
	Skipped	21	Skipped	16		13

Q32. Please prioritize the following benefits (1 is the most important and 8 is the least important). You can also add other desired benefits to the list.

- All participants:
 - 1) Comprehensive health and dental,
 - 2) Health and Wellness account,

- 3) Professional expense,
- 4) Childcare,
- 5) Pension plan

- o 3,4,5 are almost equally weighted/ranked

	1		2		3		4		5		Weighted Average
Comprehensive Health and Dental Plan	68%	43	19%	12	5%	3	5%	3	2%	1	1.57
Childcare subsidy	18%	11	21%	13	10%	6	13%	8	18%	11	3.82
Professional Expense Account	4%	2	12%	7	30%	17	28%	16	23%	13	3.67
Health and wellness Account	4%	2	27%	15	38%	21	21%	12	9%	5	3.11
Western's Pension Plan	7%	4	22%	13	13%	8	25%	15	22%	13	3.78
											66
											30

- Family with children
 - 1) Comprehensive health and dental,
 - 2) Childcare,
 - 3) Health and Wellness account,
 - 4) Professional expense,
 - 5) Pension plan

- o Again, 3,4,5 are almost equally weighted/ranked

Q33. Please rank the following options as benefit plan (1 being the most preferred). You may also propose other options here; please specify those in the following question. Details of Western Flex Credits is available [here](#).

- Employer paid health and dental plan far preferred; then flex credits spending account
- Similar to the findings of Q30 & Q31, cost shared option is not preferable
- Postdocs with children preferred flex credits almost as much as the employer paid plan

	All	Family with Children
	Score	
Employer paid comprehensive health and dental plan	5.5	5.29
Cost shared comprehensive health and dental plan	4.22	4.10
Flex credits with option to allocate funds for health and dental, childcare & development, professional expense, health & wellness	5.02	5.24
	67	30