

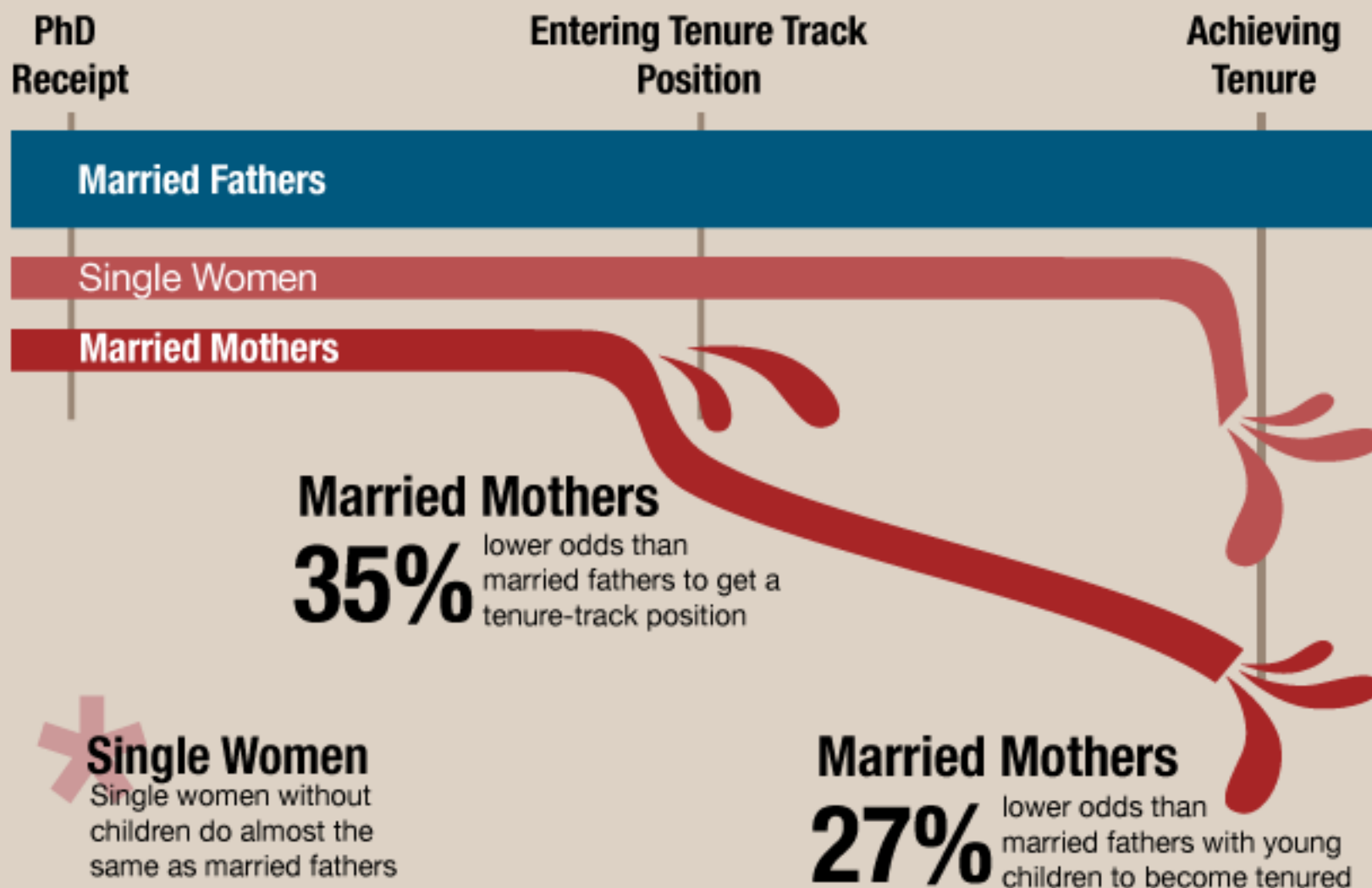
Surviving and Thriving in the Workplace: *Postdoc Parents*

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Leaks in the Pipeline to Tenure for Women PhDs in the Sciences



Mothers Often Make Their Decisions Earlier

**Twice as many
women then men
are likely to change their
career goal away from
being a research
professor when they
have babies as post docs**



Postdoc Parent Study

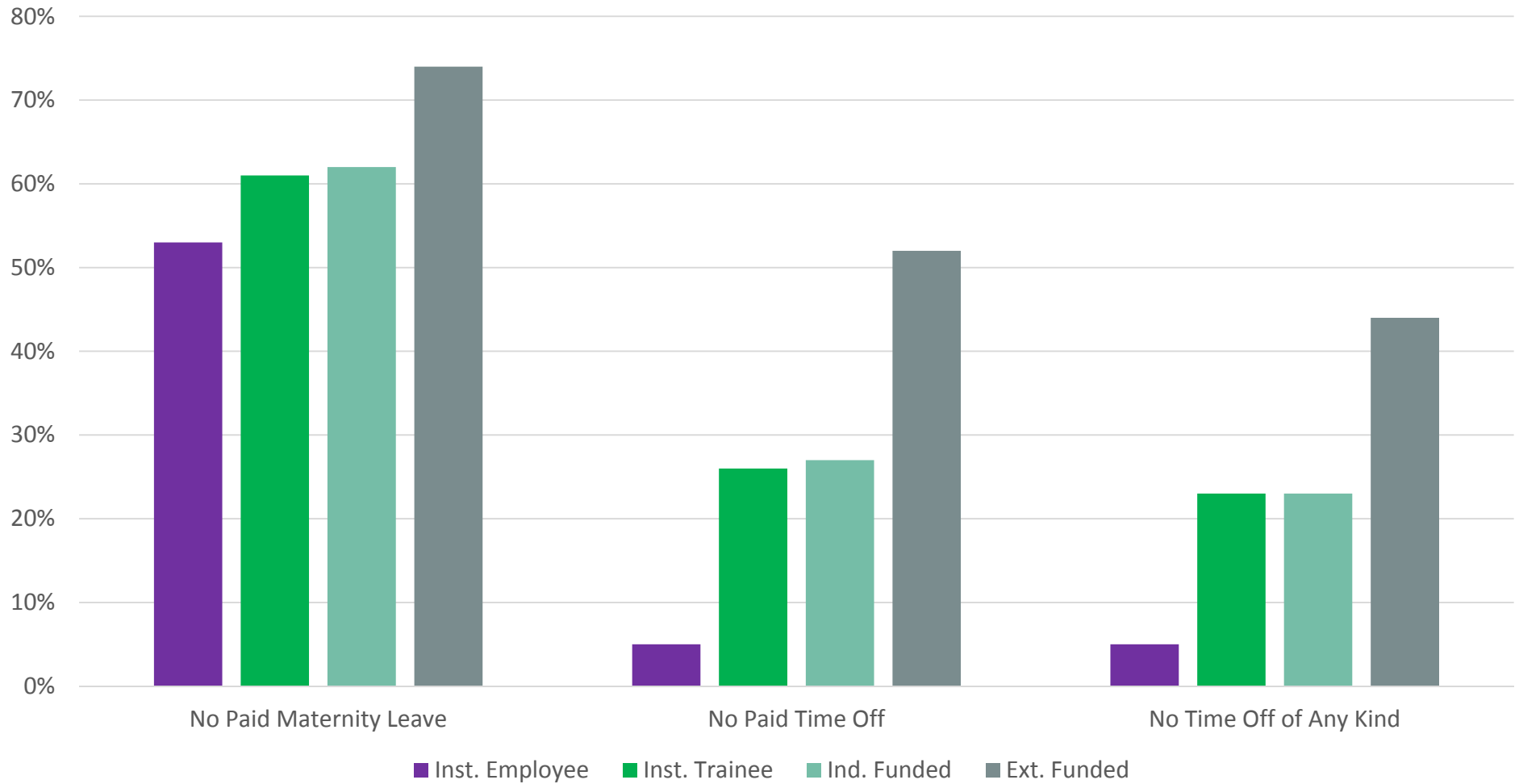
Two surveys:

- 66 institutions
- 800+ births or adoptions

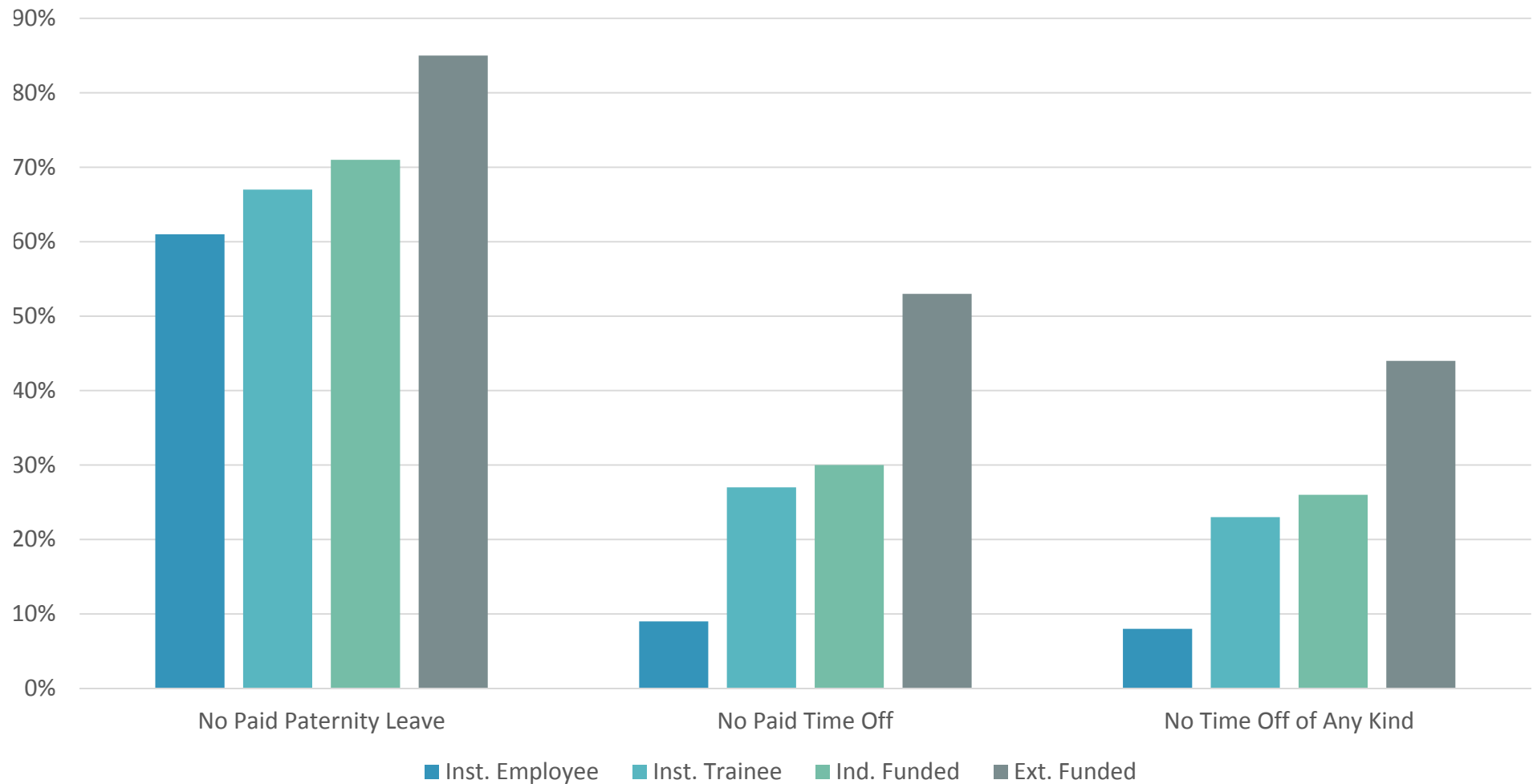
Parental Leave

What does leave look like in practice?

Maternity Leave: Practice



Paternity Leave: Practice



“I felt guilty/like I was putting my advisor out by taking extra time. If there was an official policy for leave or unpaid leave while keeping insurance, I would have taken more time to recover.”

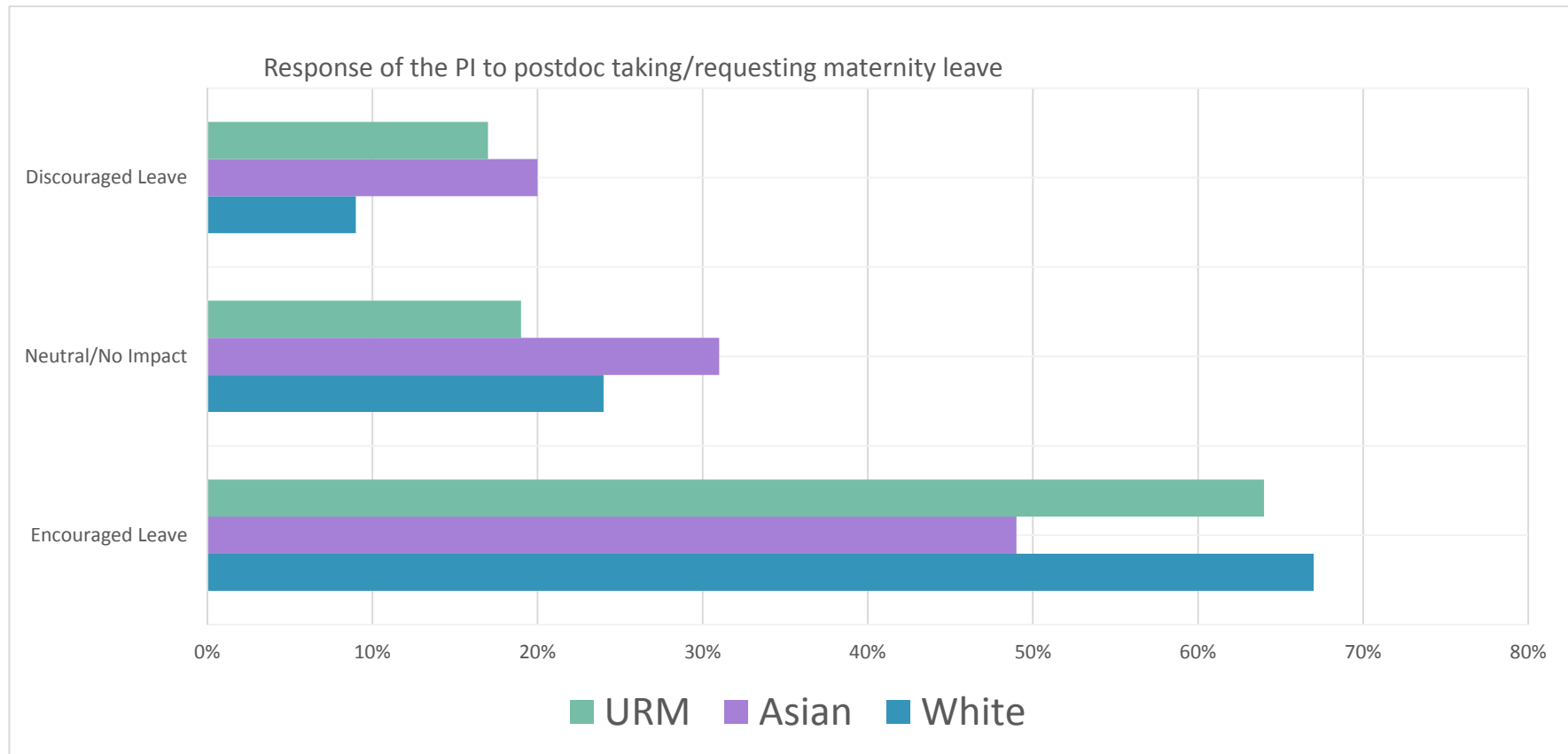
Postdoc Mother

Who asks for leave?

- 91% of white postdocs
- 84% of Asian postdocs
- 80% of URM postdocs



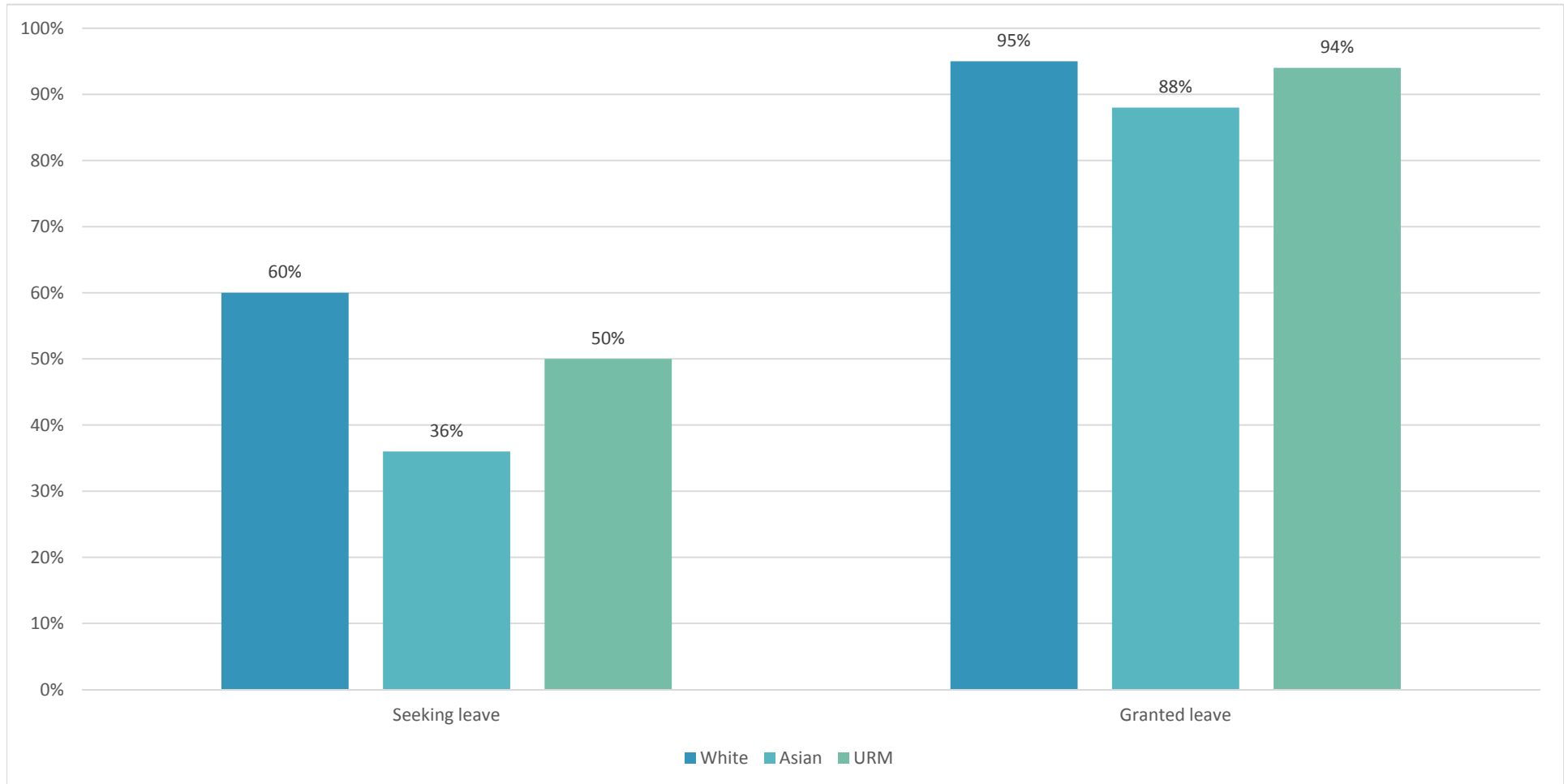
What is the response to leave request?



“He visited me at the hospital and said ‘So what about 2-3 weeks and you will be back?’”

Postdoc Biologist

Who asks for and is granted leave?



“my boss said that he had no more funding and said so sorry about that. [...] I was actually fired and could not come back after the delivery.”

Postdoc Mother

Parental Leave

What is the law on leave?

Maternity Leave: The Law on Leave

For Trainees

- Title IX governs
- Leave for at least “as long as medically necessary” or,
- Leave given to others with temporary disability

For Employees

- Title IX or Title VII governs
- Leave for “reasonable period of time” (Title IX) or,
- Leave given to others with temporary disability (Title IX and Title VII)

For eligible employees:

- FMLA 12 weeks of unpaid leave
- State protections

For either:

No penalty, retribution, or threats of retribution for taking leave

Title IX (trainees and employees), Title VII (employees), FMLA (eligible employees), ADA/Section 504

Paternity Leave: The Law on Leave

For Trainees

- No discrimination (Title IX)

For Employees

- No discrimination (Title IX, Title VII)

For eligible employees:

- FMLA 12 weeks of unpaid leave
- State protections

For either:

No penalty, retribution, or threats of retribution for taking leave related to sex stereotyping *Title IX (trainees and employees), Title VII (employees), or for taking FMLA (eligible employees).*

Institutional Supports: Childcare

How does childcare accessibility impact
the postdoc experience?

29% of postdocs reported
being eligible for on campus
childcare

6% reported having access to
some form of childcare
funding assistance



Child Care: Accessibility

“Well over 75% of my NIH-level salary went to pay childcare expenses. This is outrageous, and it's really no mystery why so many mothers in biology quit.”

“A child care subsidy would be a nice gesture. Currently, to put my child in the university daycare would cost 90% of my take home salary.”

Child Care: Impact on Work

40% requested flexible schedules

26% requested occasional work from home

Without the family-friendly accommodations, an engineer would “strongly consider leaving”, a neuroscientist “would not have been able to continue” and a biochemist “would just have to quit.”

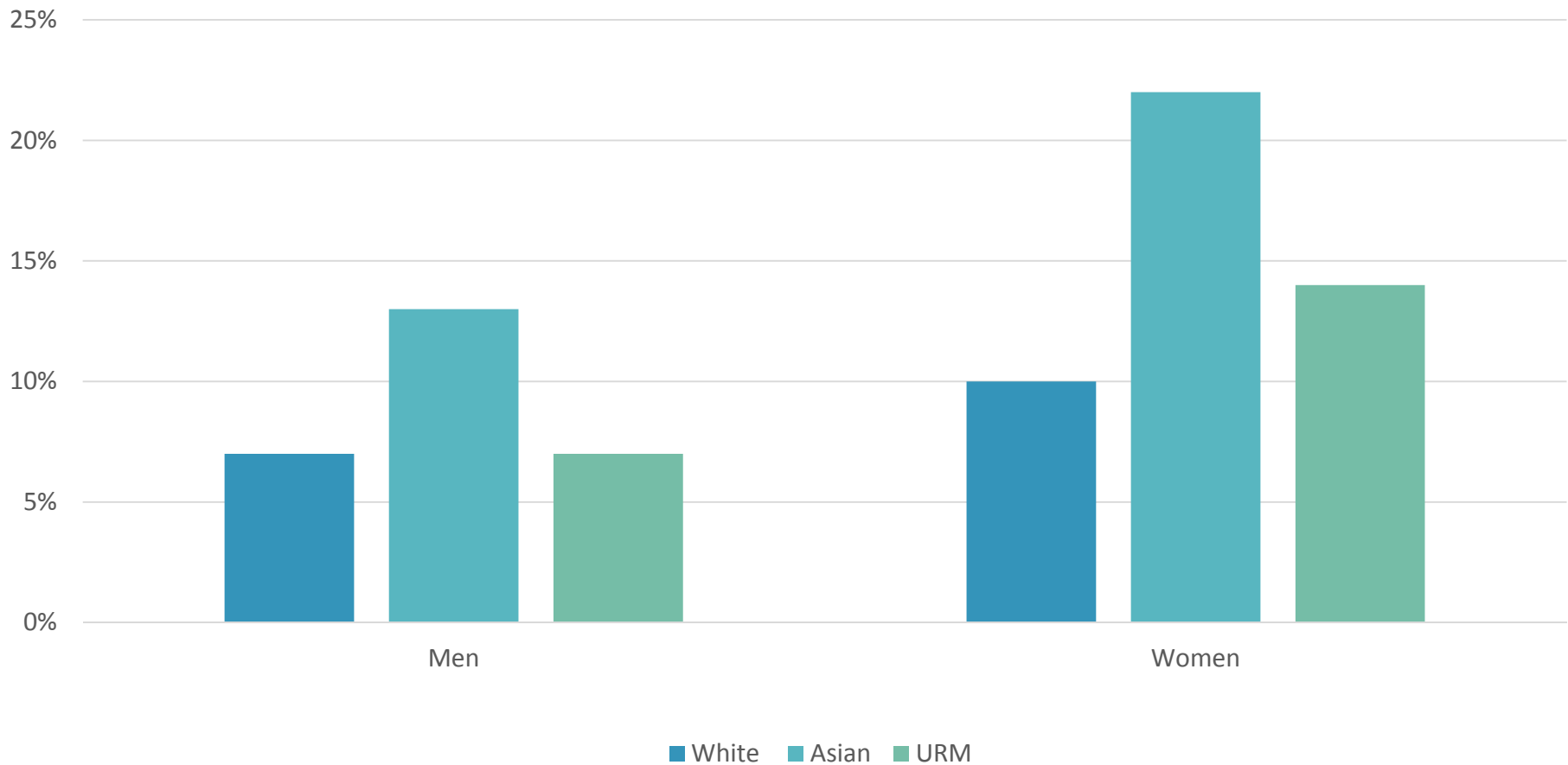


Institutional Supports: PI Response

What was the PI response to postdocs' new parenthood, and how did it impact the appointment?

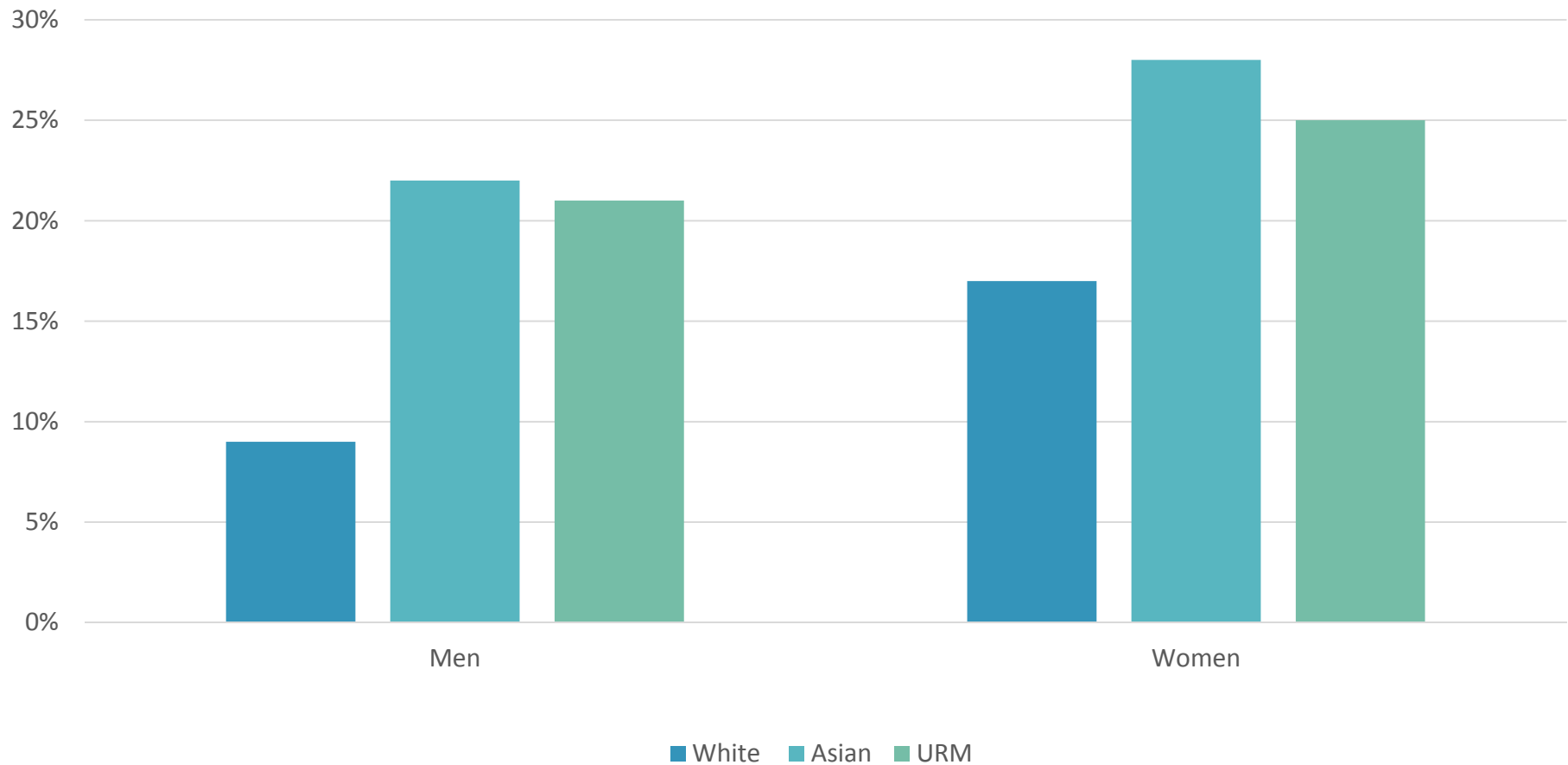
PI Response: Overall Impact

Characterized PI Response as “Unsupportive”



PI Response: Overall Impact

Negative Impact of PI on Overall Experience



A Tale of Two Postdocs

“[PI] prematurely withdrew funding from my contracted position to fund another postdoc soon after I returned from work. To this day, he continues to refer to my children as my “constraints.”

“My PI's response made me feel like I could stay in science while having a family. He told me I could, over and over again; even when I doubted myself”

Recommendations

Do Your Research!

Before accepting an appointment:

- Ask around—what is the PI's reputation?
- Identify colleagues—are there women in the lab? Are there parents? How long have they been there?



Postdocs: Do Your Research, Part II

- Research childcare options
- Use “cost of living” calculators and include child
- Request information on institutional and funder leave and disability policies
- Request information on sick days and other short paid time off
- Make a timeline for best, average, and worst-case scenario



- Identify funding opportunities:

National Institutes of Health (NIH):

60 days (8 work weeks) of time off for parental leave. NIH grantees are also eligible to adjust the amount of work completed on their program.

National Science Foundation

3 months of additional funding to cover a temporary researcher, capped at a salary of \$12,000 (plus the cost of benefits). (Funding for you *and* a temp.)



When expecting a child:

- Request information on leave policies from the responsible office, including paperwork requirements
- Request pregnancy accommodations if you need them
- Apply for funding opportunities
- Sign up for childcare waitlists ASAP
- Make a plan for alternate childcare
- Make a plan for revised schedule
- Know your rights BEFORE you engage



Managing PI Relationship and “The Talk”

1. Have a plan for expected, best, and worst case scenario
2. Stress your commitment AND preparation, and build their faith in the plan
3. Follow up on conversations with written notes, emails
4. Use your PDA, PDO, HR, or funder as a resource. Title IX office, if necessary.

Managing PI Relationship

Beware of guilt and imposter syndrome...

Resources



- Guides for faculty and administrators
- Best Practice examples
- Funder information
- Guides for postdocs and students
- Full postdoc parents report

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