A Global comparison: How stressful is the Life of a Research Administrator?
RA Stress Perception Survey “RASPerS”

A study with members of EARMA and the BESTPRAC Network

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Study details

- Study performed on SurveyMonkey
- April – May 2016
- Mailings to EARMA and BESTPRAC members

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Population Name</th>
<th>Survey Population Number</th>
<th>Participants needed for 95% confidence</th>
<th>Current number of surveys collected</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BESTPRAC</td>
<td>355</td>
<td>185</td>
<td>218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EARMA</td>
<td>846</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>273</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
BESTPRAC - Targeted Network

Main objectives
- establish a network for the administrative, finance and legal services in universities, research organizations and related entities supporting researchers in European funded projects
- exchange experiences and share and develop best practices, encourage knowledge sharing, knowledge transfer and increased efficiency.

Target group
- Research administrators involved in the administration and management of European projects; Early stage administrators and applicants from institutions in so-called COST inclusiveness countries.
The typical RA in RASPerS (i)

- The average RMA that responded to the survey is a female academic,
  - around 40 yrs old, married or partnered.

- She holds a full time job with 45 hrs work
  - as a senior officer focusing on pre and post-award functions,
  - with 5-10 years experience and probably as team leader.
  - Her annual income is around 45,000 - 68,000 €.
The typical RA in RASPerS (ii)

- She likes fruits and veggies,
  - is normal weight
  - a non-smoker
  - drinks no more than one glass of alcoholic beverages /day
  - engages in moderate physical activity a few days every week
  - largely makes use of available predictive medical check-ups (mammography, test, cholesterol screening).

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## Differences between EARMA and BESTPRAC cohorts

### More pre-award

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>EARMA</th>
<th>BESTPRAC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PRE AND POST AWARD</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RESEARCH ETHICS AND...</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>POST-AWARD</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRE-AWARD</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DEPARTMENT</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### More experience (yrs in RA)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Experience</th>
<th>EARMA</th>
<th>BESTPRAC</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>&gt;20</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10&lt;20</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5&lt;10</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1&lt;5</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt;1</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Differences between EARMA and BESTPRAC cohorts

- **More senior**
  - INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR (COORDINATOR, SPECIALIST, ...): 30% EARMA, 37% BESTPRAC
  - SENIOR LEVEL INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR (MANAGER/OFFICER, ...): 29% EARMA, 27% BESTPRAC
  - ASSOCIATE OR ASSISTANT DIRECTOR (TEAM LEAD, SUPERVISOR, OR ...): 32% EARMA, 28% BESTPRAC
  - DIRECTOR (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DIRECTOR): 9% EARMA, 8% BESTPRAC
  - EXECUTIVE (PROVOST, VICE PRESIDENT, ASST VP/PROVOST, ETC.): 0% EARMA, 1% BESTPRAC

- **Higher wage (€/year)**
  - € >91,400: 4% EARMA, 3% BESTPRAC
  - € 68,600-91,400: 21% EARMA, 6% BESTPRAC
  - € 45,700-68,600: 40% EARMA, 28% BESTPRAC
  - € 32,000-45,700: 20% EARMA, 18% BESTPRAC
  - UNDEFINED: 16% EARMA, 46% BESTPRAC

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Perceived Stress
In both cohorts 90% agree (strongly) that “Over the past few years, my job has become more and more demanding.”

Feelings of anxiety due to competing demands of work and home:
- Extremely high: 6%
- High: 22%
- Moderate: 37%
- Minimal: 35%

Amount of stress at home due to demands of work:
- Extremely high: 1%
- High: 24%
- Moderate: 25%
- Minimal: 50%

Your perceived level of work related stress:
- Extremely high: 5%
- High: 25%
- Moderate: 40%
- Minimal: 50%
Stressor: workload

Tasks waiting after absence ...

- Virtually all: 56% BESTPRAC, 71% EARMA
- Somewhat more than half: 23% BESTPRAC, 19% EARMA
- Somewhat less than half: 17% BESTPRAC, 19% EARMA
- None, or only a small proportion: 8% BESTPRAC, 4% EARMA

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**Frequency of stressors at work**

**Q33 How often ....**

*can you use the skill from your previous experience and training?*

*are you given a chance to do the things you do the best?*

*is there a marked increase in how fast you have to think?*

*is there a marked increase in the amount of concentration...*

*is there a great deal to be done?*

*does your job leave you with little time to get things done?*

*does your job require you to work very hard?*

*does your job require you to work very fast?*
Influencing working conditions

Q34 How much influence do you have over...

- the decisions concerning which individuals in your work unit do...
- the arrangement and decoration of your work area?
- the quality of the work that you do?
- the pace of your work, that is how fast or slow you work?
- the amount of work you do?
- the order in which you perform tasks at work?
- the availability of supplies and equipment you need to do your...
- the variety of tasks you perform?

Much  Little  Moderate  Very little
Coping with stress

To cope with the demands, RA tend to neglect physical more than mental health (e.g. working sick). Private life is protected.

For demands of your job, have you ...

- **neglected your family or social relationships?**
  - Never: 10%
  - Only on rare occasion: 18%
  - Yes, but not often: 36%
  - Yes, frequently: 35%

- **neglected your mental or spiritual health?**
  - Never: 13%
  - Only on rare occasion: 25%
  - Yes, but not often: 38%
  - Yes, frequently: 24%

- **neglected your physical health?**
  - Never: 13%
  - Only on rare occasion: 23%
  - Yes, but not often: 32%
  - Yes, frequently: 32%

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Relying on others
Relying on people

The private social network is the key support also for work-related matters, but colleagues get close.

Q 39. How much can each of these people be relied on when things get tough at work?
Q 37. How much does each of these people go out of their way to do things to make your work life easier for you?

- Your spouse, friends and relatives
  - BESTPRAC
  - EARMA
- Other people at work
  - BESTPRAC
  - EARMA
- Your supervisor
  - BESTPRAC
  - EARMA
- Your immediate supervisor (boss)
  - BESTPRAC
  - EARMA
Time strain – family-related

20-30% feel that family related demands interfere with work obligations.

- Family-related strain interferes with my ability to perform job-related duties.
- My home life interferes with my responsibilities at work such as getting to work on time,…
- Things I want to do at work don’t get done because of the demands of my family or spouse/partner.
- I have to put off doing things at work because of demands on my time at home.
- The demands of my family or spouse/partner interfere with work-related activities.

Disagree  Neutral  Agree
Due to work-related duties, I have to make changes to my plans for family activities.

My job produces strain that makes it difficult to fulfill family duties.

Things I want to do at home do not get done because of the demands my job puts on me.

The amount of time my job takes up makes it difficult to fulfill family responsibilities.

The demands of my work interfere with my home and family life.

Up to 50% feel that work related demands interfere with family obligations
I feel that I am making an important contribution
I am constantly learning something new
I enjoy the university environment
I enjoy doing something different every day
I enjoy working with brilliant people
I find it interesting
I love the challenge
Other (please specify)
I enjoy my co-workers
I enjoy working with faculty
It is too late for me to change careers
I don't know how to do anything else for this…
...actually I'm not staying, I am looking for…

Still, lots of reasons to stay in RA!

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THANK YOU – Questions?