

PI Administrative Burden Survey: Results

November 2015

Background and Purpose of Survey

From MIT's FY2012 survey on quality of life:

- MIT PIs reported that they spent about 29% of their time on “Scholarship, conducting research, creating or performing artistic work (including writing, attending professional meetings, writing and *administering grants*)”
- At least 30% of MIT's principal investigators (63% of survey respondents) indicated that their workload was “too heavy” or “much too heavy”
- 30% of faculty respondents reported “extensive” stress for securing support for research
- 22% reported “extensive” stress for managing their research groups or projects

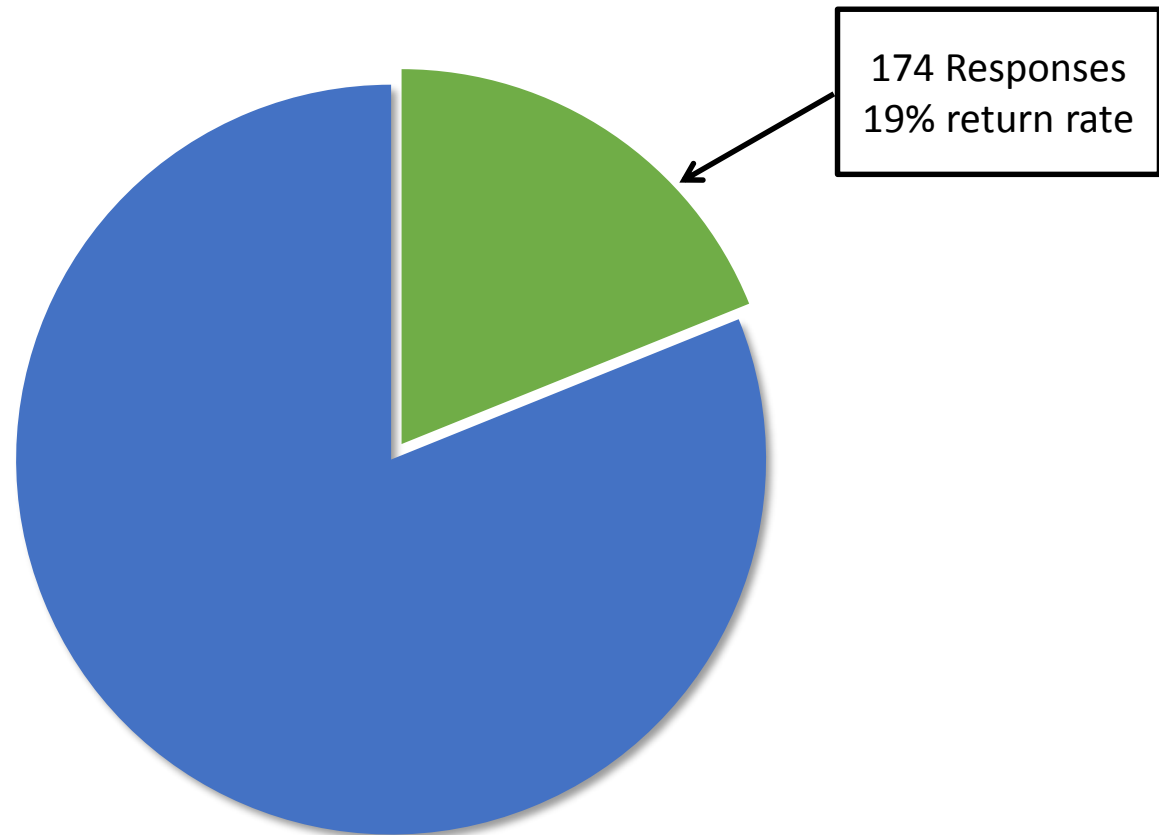
From FDP's 2012 Faculty Workload Survey

- “faculty spend about 43% of their research time doing administration” (43% of 50% \equiv 22% of time)

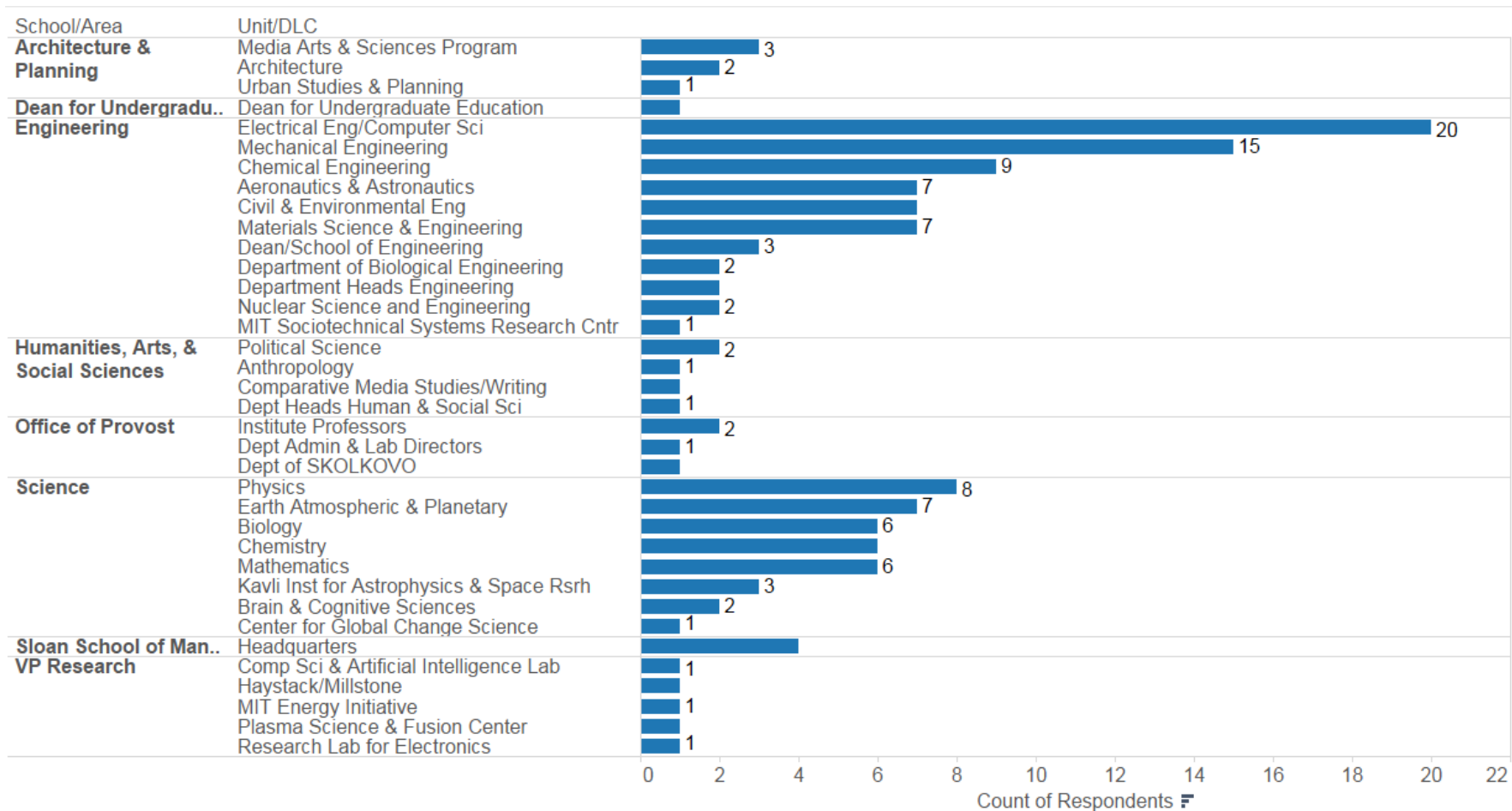
OSP surveyed all active PIs to learn about the most burdensome and frustrating aspects of securing and managing research at MIT and what we can do to help.

Response Rate

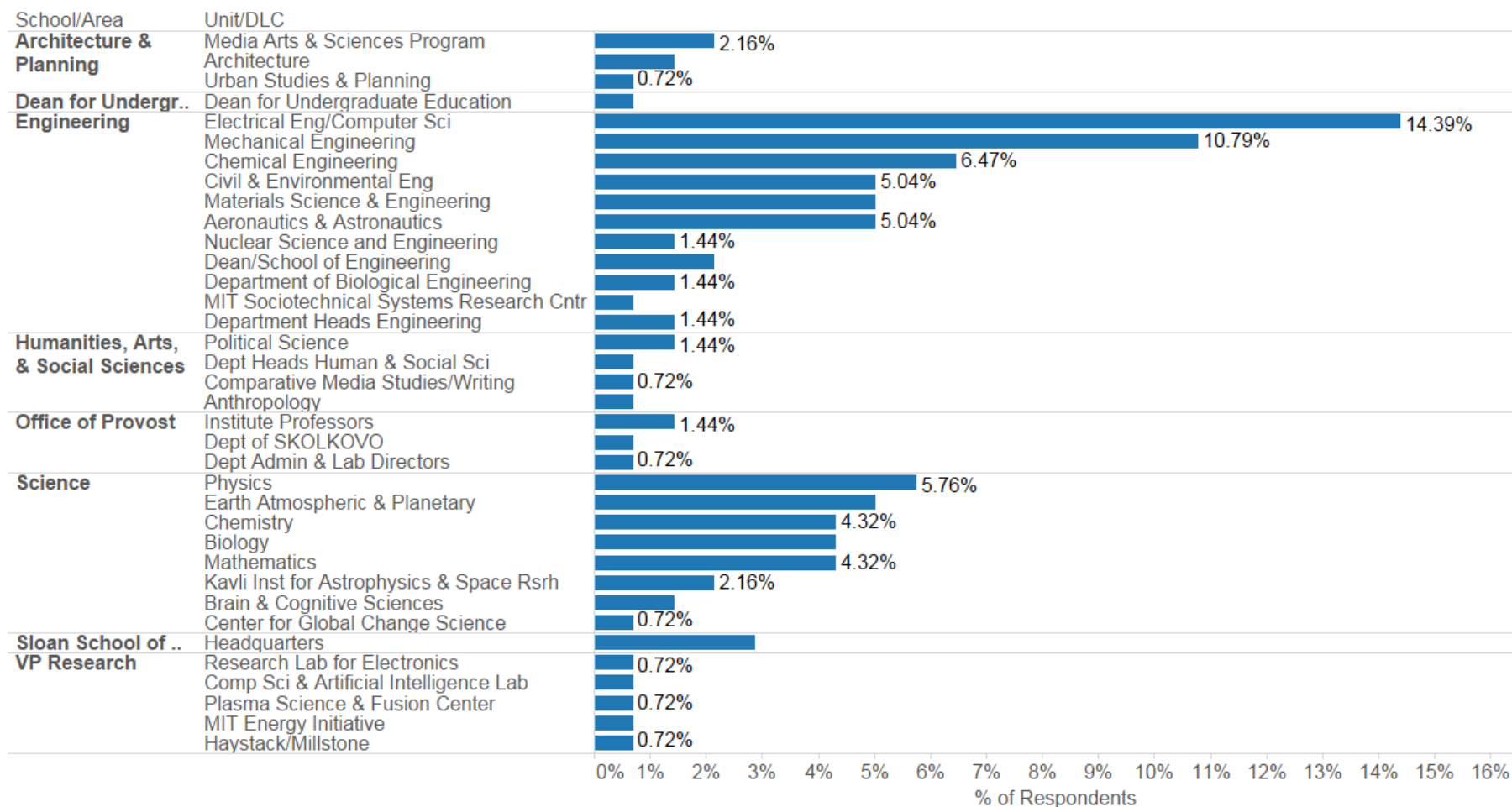
- Survey was sent to 921 active PIs



Respondent Count by Home Department

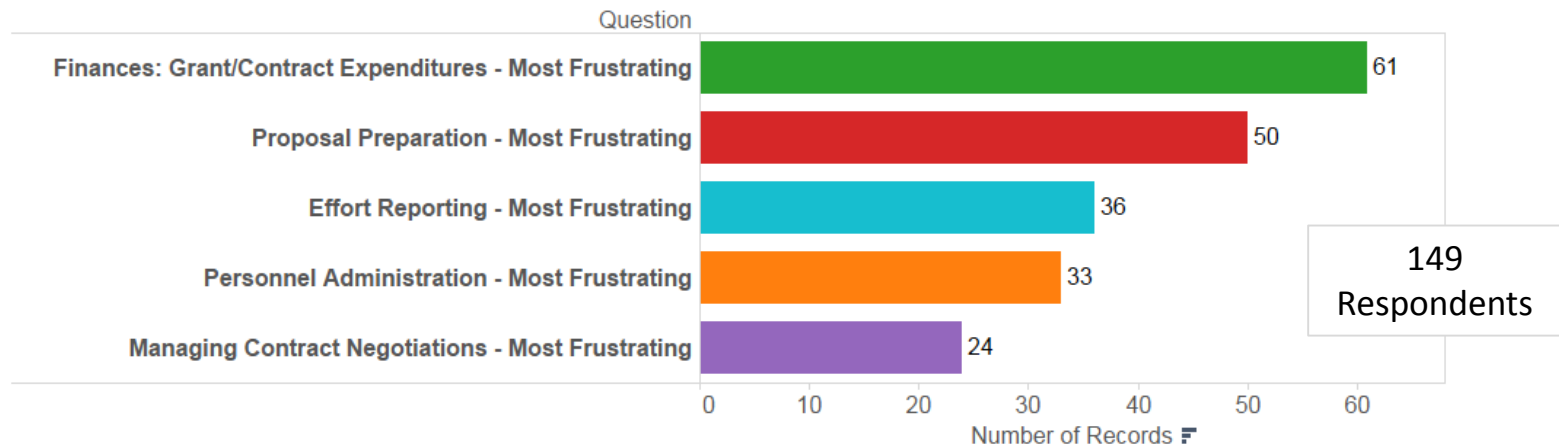


Respondent Distribution by Home Department

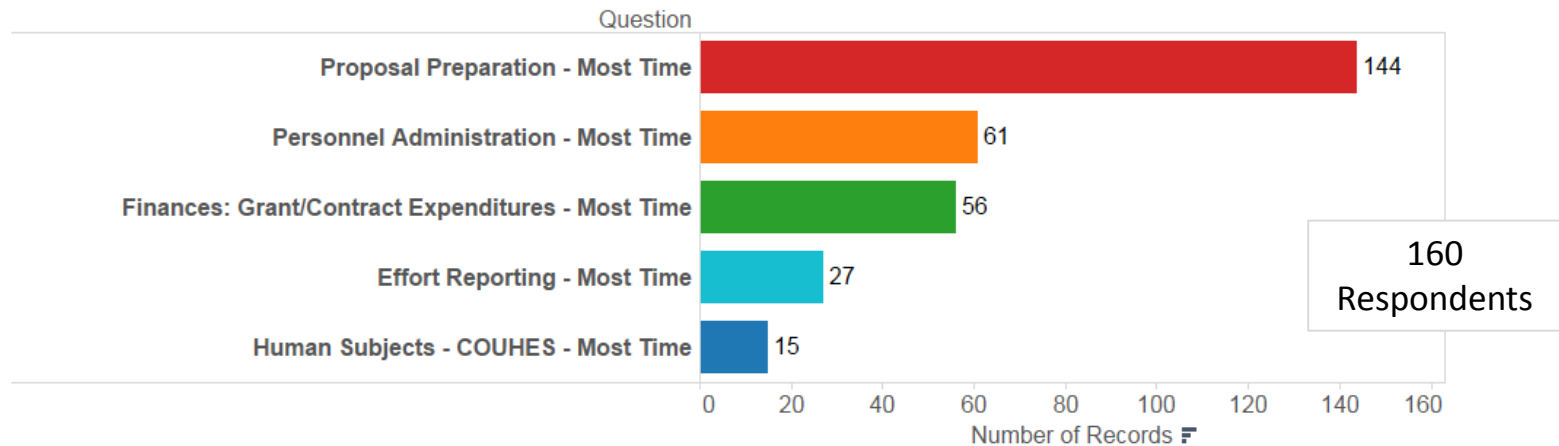


Top 5 – Most Frustrating/Most Time-Consuming

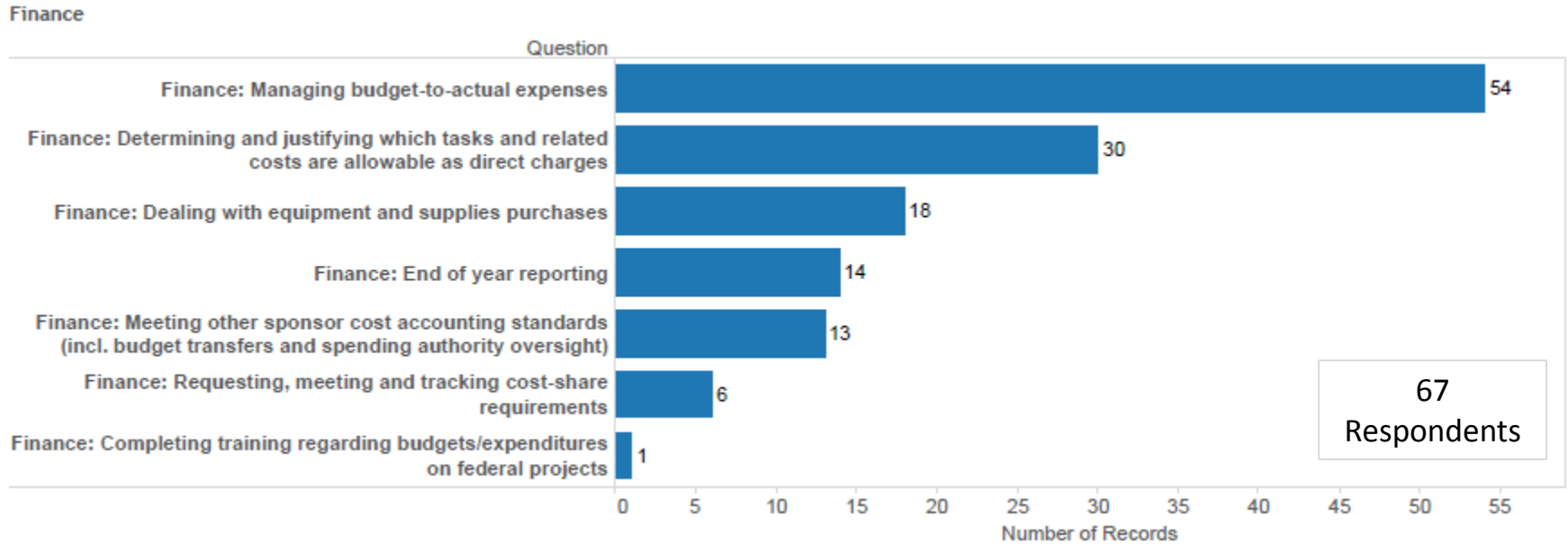
Most Frustrating - Top 5



Most Time - Top 5



Finance - Details



Finance – Comments and Suggestions

“There is no good software that a PI can use to manage expenses at MIT!”

“There is a delay between the time I make a purchase or charge and the time I see the effect on my budget, so I don't always have a good sense of my spending until much later. Would be great if we could see the effective charges (plus overhead) sooner.”

“There is no central software which allows us to track budgets and potential spending to see what we will have at the end of the year.”

“It would help to have an online resource/dashboard to easily handle these issues, rather than having to get them generated by people by hand every so often. The current web-based software is clunky and hard to use. Let's have something like the Mint website but for financial grants administration. Something pretty and easy to use.”



“I have budgets spread across several different MIT offices If I had one single format that pooled ALL my MIT accounts that allowed us to view/manage/make projections, this would be a big help.”

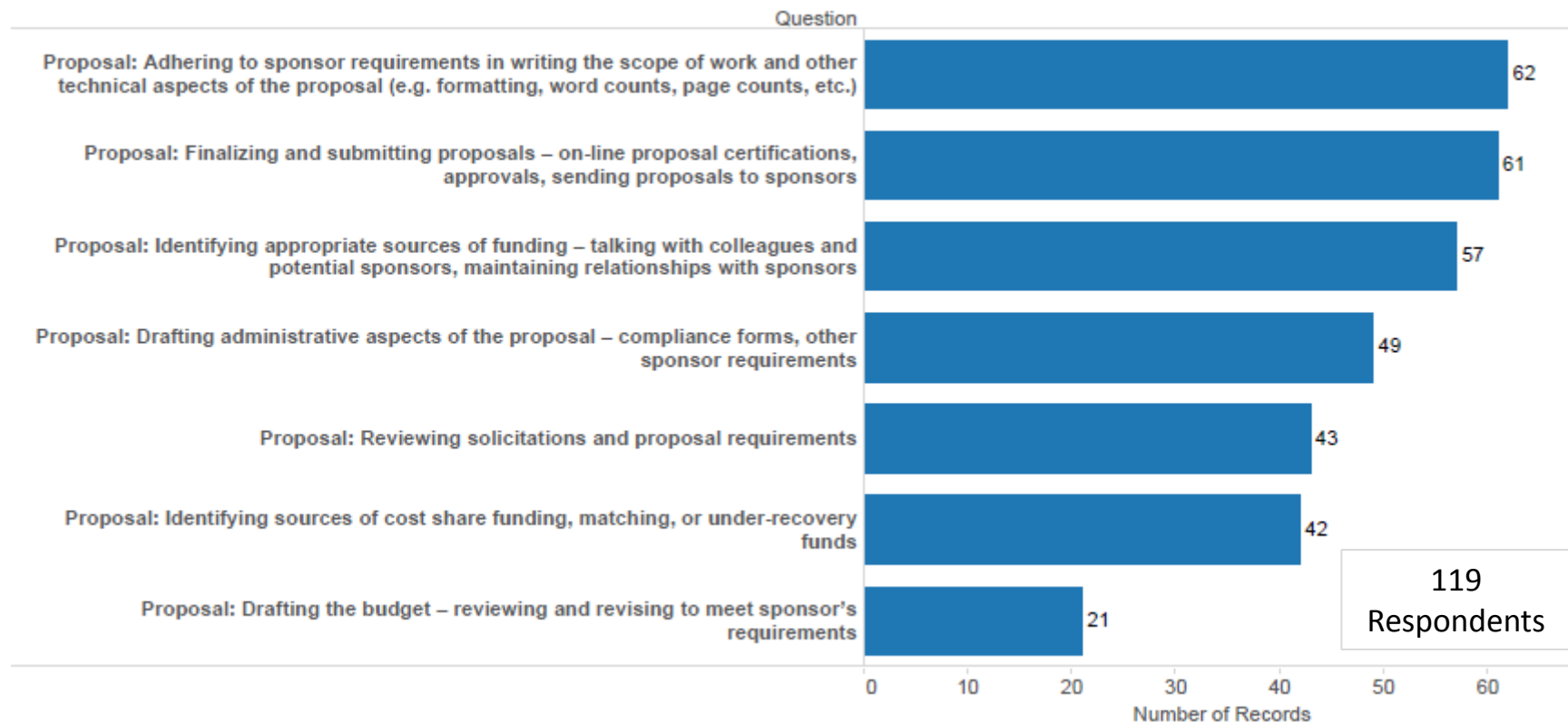
“There should be PI-level software tools available to give us easy access to financial planning. ‘Quicken for Professors’ or similar.”



“Mapping expense statements to the budget is extremely time consuming. Establishing some software for tracking monthly expenditures and mapping that onto the remaining annual budget would be helpful.”

Proposals - Details

Proposals



Proposals – Comments and Suggestions

“Overall - if PIs had better training on some of these, it would help.”

“Professional grant writers would help.”

“MIT OSP's policy of 5 business days to process a proposal is excessive.”

“Other universities have a central Database where announcements have already been collected, which would be fantastic. Right now is all on our own...”

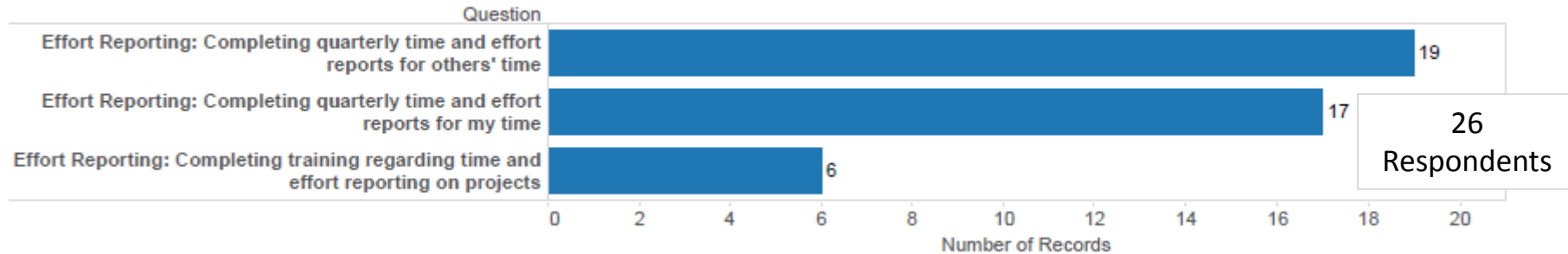
“I would be interested in a system in which staff are available with expertise in particular sponsors/sponsor types. I find that local departmental staff are often only experienced in certain sponsor requirements”

“It would be great if MIT provided 'cheatsheets' for common grant applications. Lots of postdocs apply for NIH fellowships (for example) and each person should not have to read the entire 172 page guide from NIH. The postdoc and advisor should be given a list of items needed for the proposal and a brief example of each item.”

“We need to support better faculty who are writing large proposals. Other schools e.g. provide cost matching etc. for large NSF centers, even pay summer salary for faculty working on those proposals.”

Effort Reporting – Detail, Comments and Suggestions

Effort Reporting

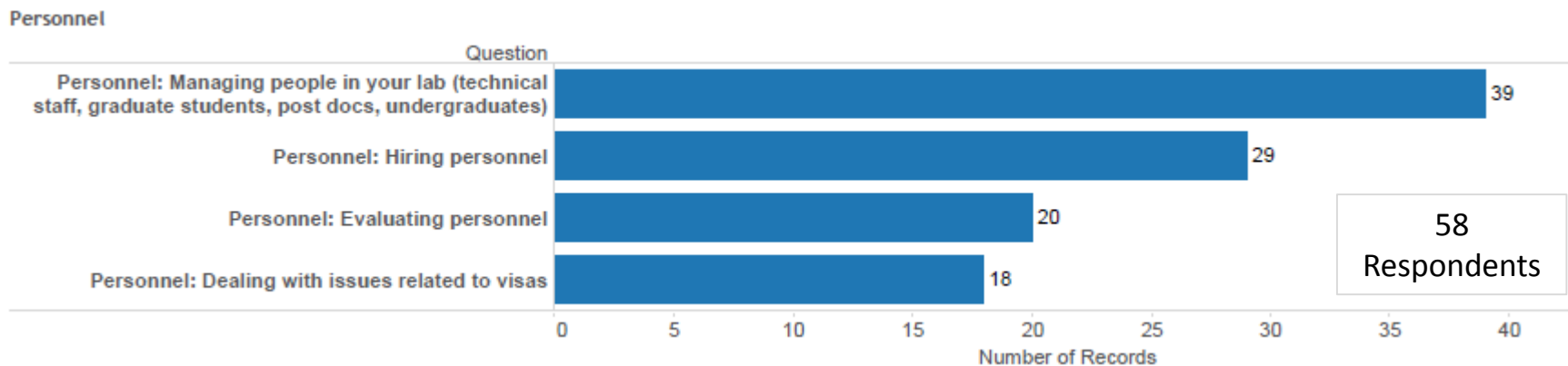


“Reporting requirements keep changing and are sometimes confusing. This is not an MIT related problem.”

“I ignore the time and effort reporting stuff and leave it to my admin. I don't see why PIs should have to worry about this.”

“I have to sign DACCA forms every once in a while. It would be nice to do that electronically, so I should figure out why we aren't using eDACCA for that.”

Personnel – Details, Comments and Suggestions



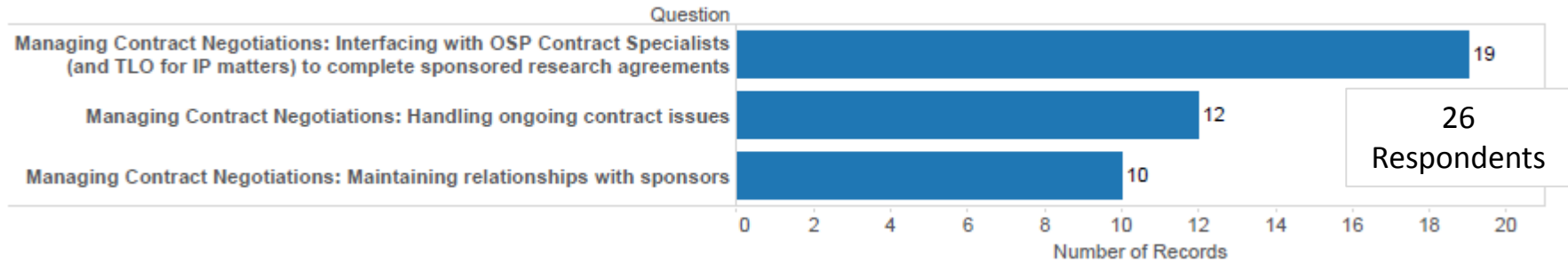
“Increasingly complex personal needs, issues, and effects on work performance. Perhaps a handbook or template of norms and expectations for personnel of different types that can be applied and adapted to specific needs.”

“Best practices for managing a large group are not widely known or understood - every faculty member has to figure this out for him/herself.”

“Visas are most frustrating because information about how to contend with students and researchers questions is not clear. Sources of information and assistance with visas is often not apparent to me or my research assistants.”

Contract Negotiations – Detail, Comments and Suggestions

Contract Negotiations



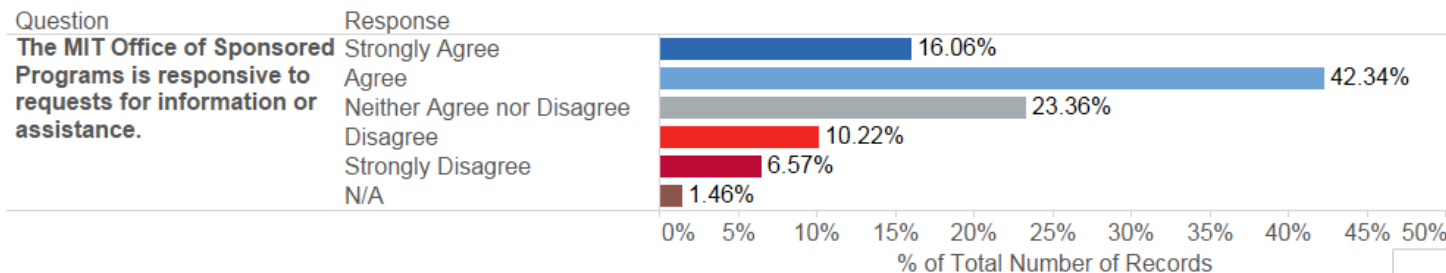
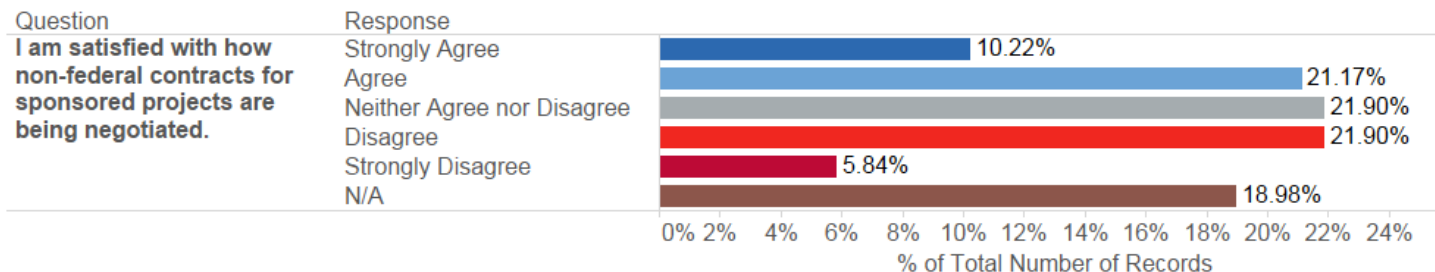
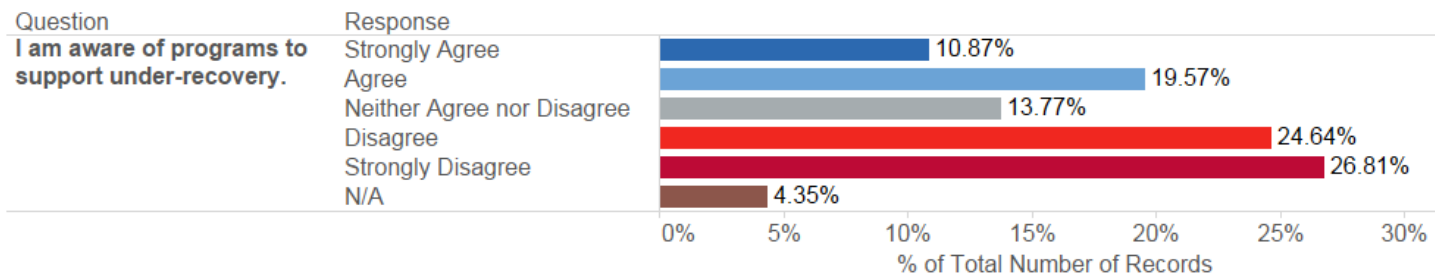
“OSP has some phenomenal people in a tremendously under-resourced organization. As a result, I'm often the one negotiating the terms of agreements to get them through...This removes me from actually doing research, and makes me frustrated with the system. I wish we had an OSP that was properly resourced, so the good folks could actually shoulder the burden of contract negotiation.”

“Working with Craig Newfield from OSP is incredible. He is extremely responsive and on top of issues.”

“Slow response by MIT often delays industrial contracts. Negotiations on contracts and intellectual property take too long.”

“OSP specialists are very busy people, and it's often tough to get timely interaction. I find this especially difficult for the small - yet strategically important - contracts I sometimes have. This is not a complaint about OSP staff, but rather I think the OSP workload is so high they can't satisfy demands.”

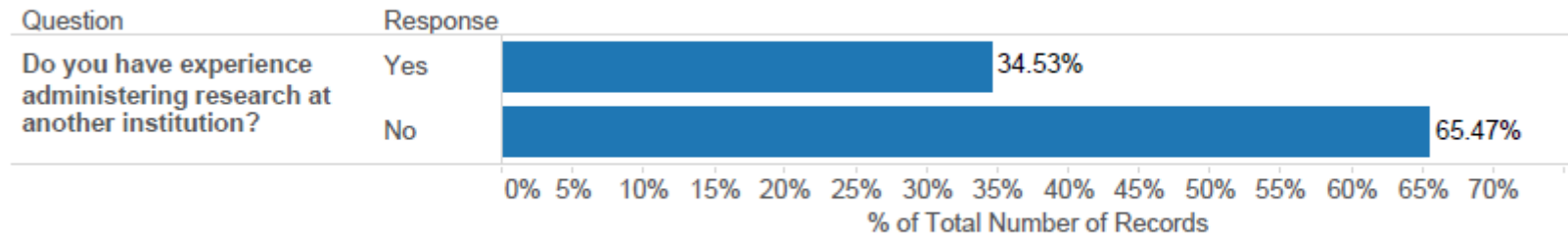
Additional Questions



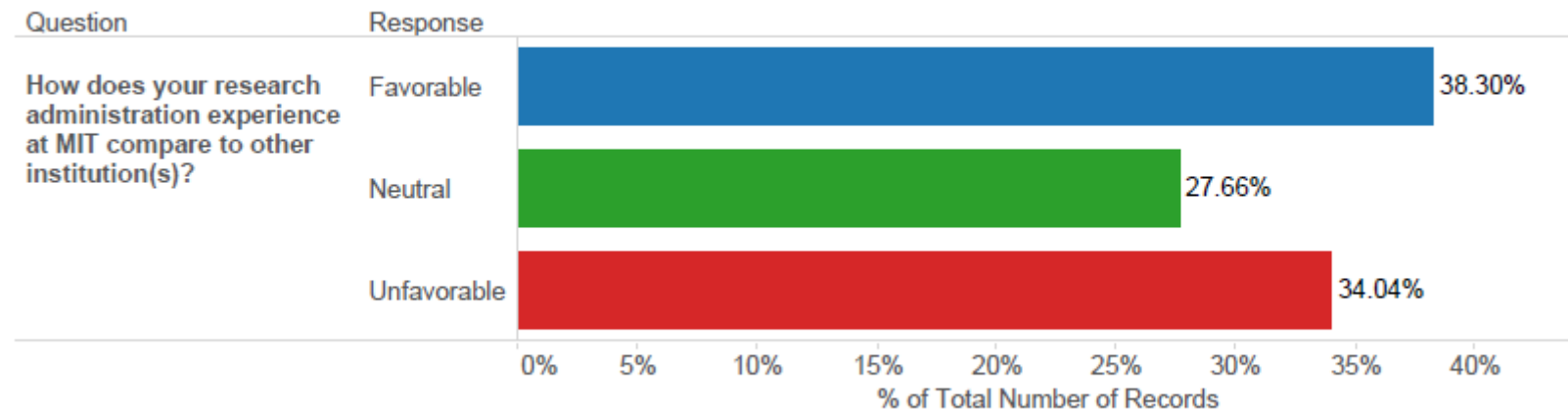
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Respondents

Research Administration at MIT vs. Other Institutions

RA Experience



MIT vs. Others



MIT vs. Other Institutions - Comments

“I find MIT central OSP very able and reasonable to work with. I have found a lot of variability in departmental staff (in multiple departments). I have the impression that some institutions seem to be able to provide stronger services at the departmental level.”

“The pre-proposal financial assistance provided by RLE is better than at Stanford. However, the purchasing and other administrative burden is greater at MIT (more rules, e.g., if one federal agency has certain additional requirements for justifying purchase, then these requirements are extended to all grants, even if they do not have these requirements). There seems to be substantially increased bureaucracy (more rules and requirements) regarding financial matters at MIT in recent years.”

“Some things supported better (budgets, contracting, etc. are more centralized). Some things are worse: lack of admin support, lack of funds for things that can not be purchased on a research account.”

“MIT is far more rigid and inflexible with timelines and more demanding of expectations of faculty.”

“I haven't been a PI at Harvard, but I do know that folks at Harvard hospitals have access to professional grant writers. Helps a lot, especially with NIH.”