

UK PPAN talent pipeline: early-career researchers are losing confidence

Survey of 457 early-career researchers in Particle Physics, Astrophysics and Nuclear science

8% would now recommend a career
in UK PPAN

Before January 2026, 74% would have recommended it.

89%

have (very) low confidence
in UK postdoc opportunities

74%

of postdocs are considering
leaving the UK

79%

are less reassured by
recent announcements

**This is loss of confidence, loss of reassurance, and a measurable risk
that trained researchers leave the UK research system.**

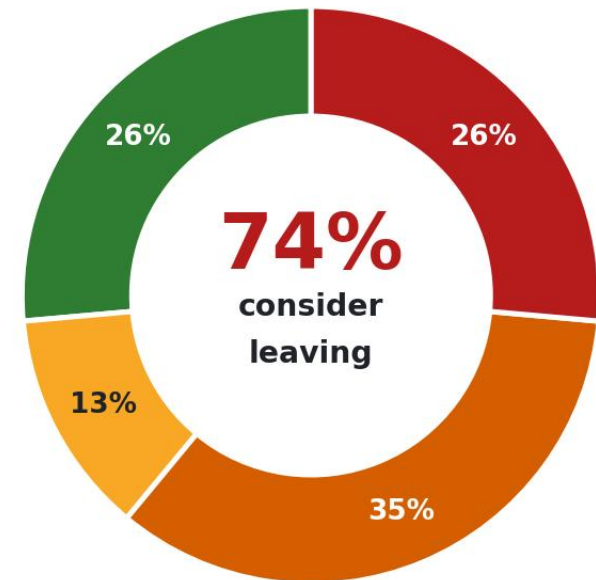
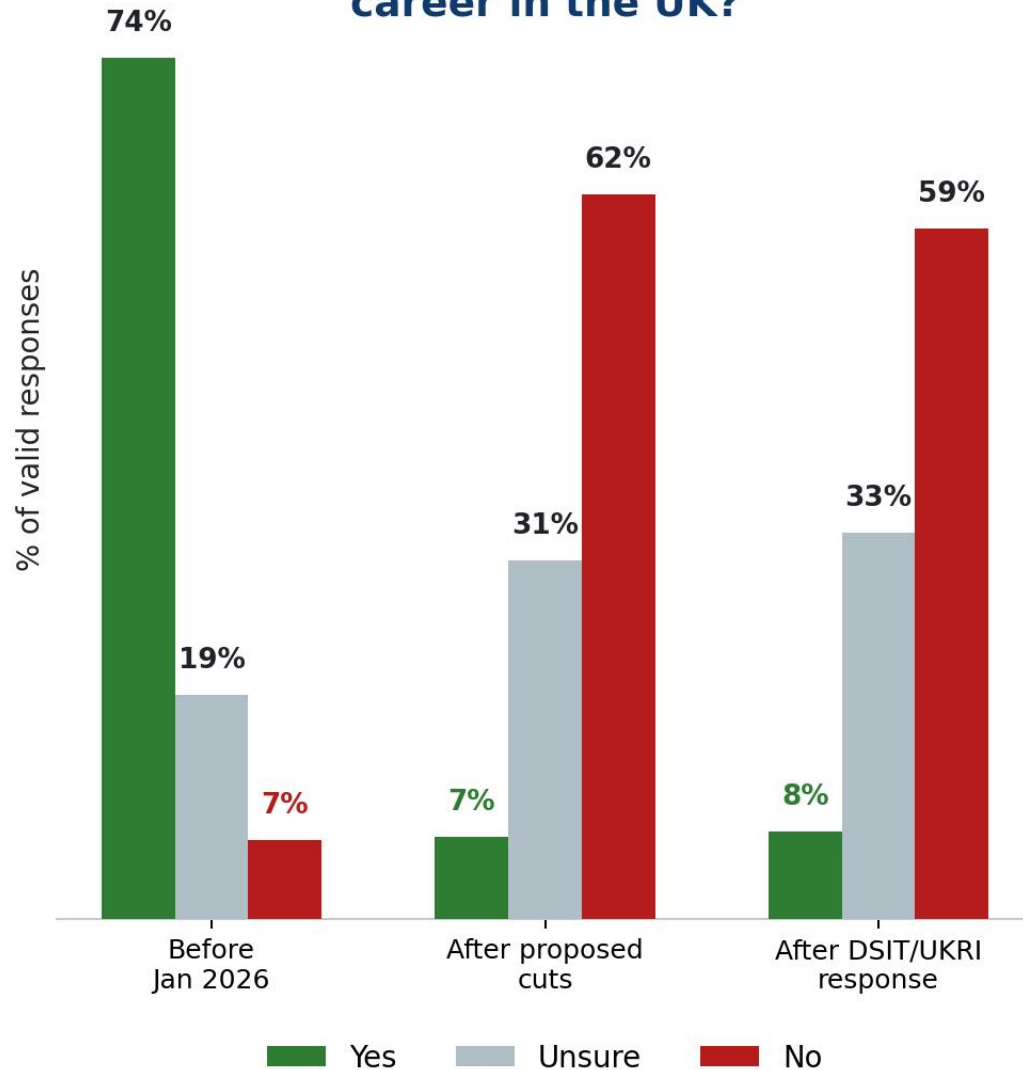
Note: postdoc mobility is calculated among current-UK postdoc/recent-postdoc respondents for whom the question was applicable (n=159).

The career path is no longer recommended by those inside it

This is a direct measure of whether the UK PPAN pipeline still looks viable to those currently in it.

Current-UK postdocs: are you looking abroad?

Would you recommend a PPAN career in the UK?



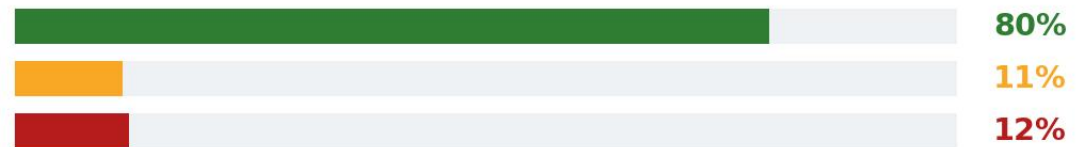
Confidence fell sharply after January and has not recovered

Share of respondents reporting Moderate, High or Very High confidence/outlook

Confidence in UK postdoc opportunities



Confidence in a UK PPAN academic career



Clarity and predictability of funding decisions



Optimism about the future of UK PPAN science



Before Jan

After proposed cuts

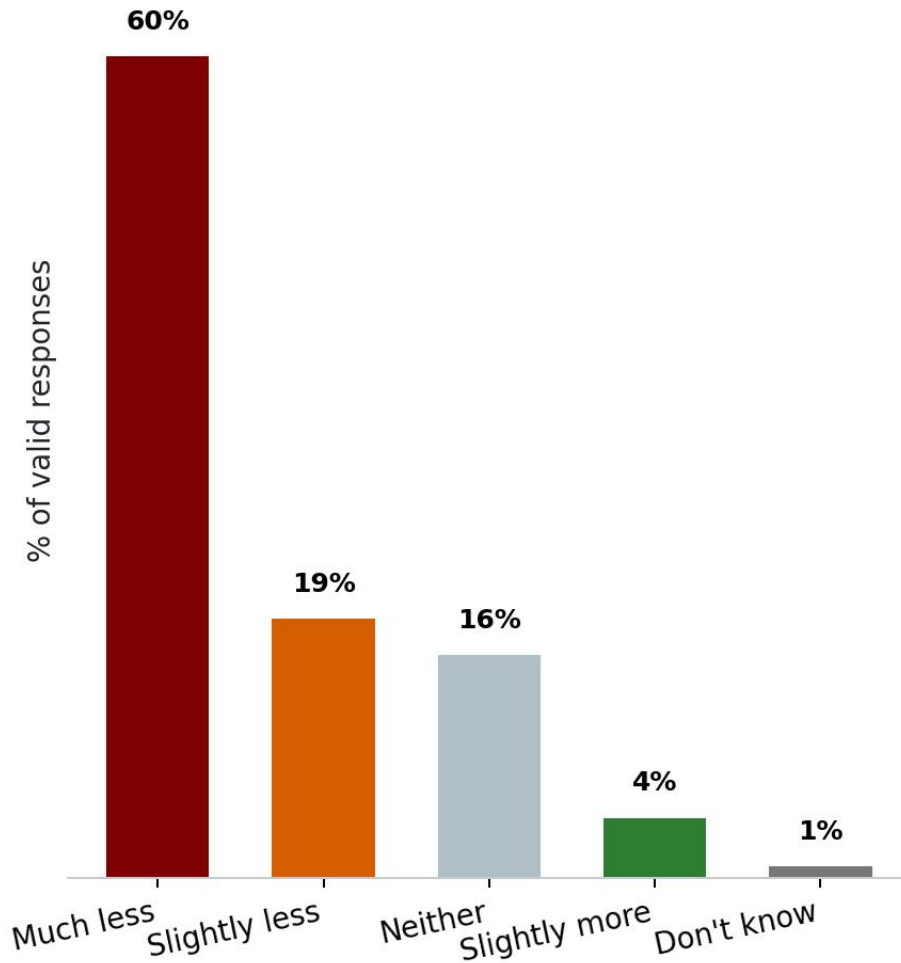
After response

In every case, the share expressing at least moderate confidence dropped sharply after January and did not return to pre-January levels.

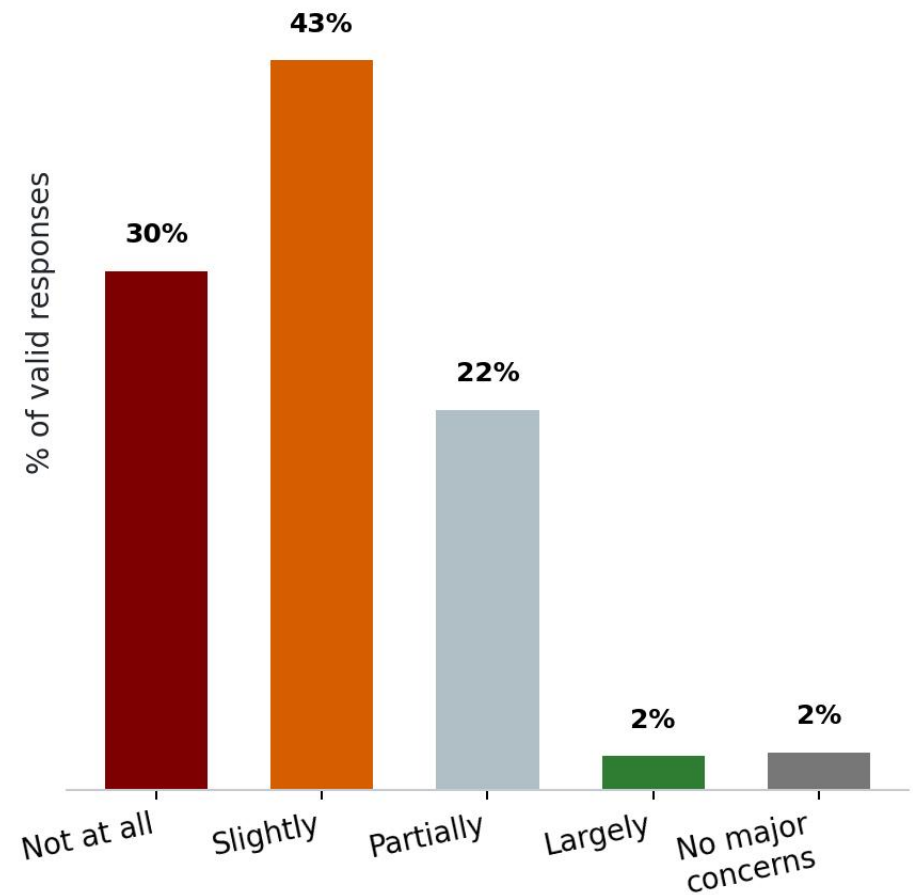
Recent announcements have not reassured respondents

Announcements made by UKRI and DSIT since January 2026 to the public and select committees have not reassured researchers, but in

Do you feel more or less reassured by these announcements?



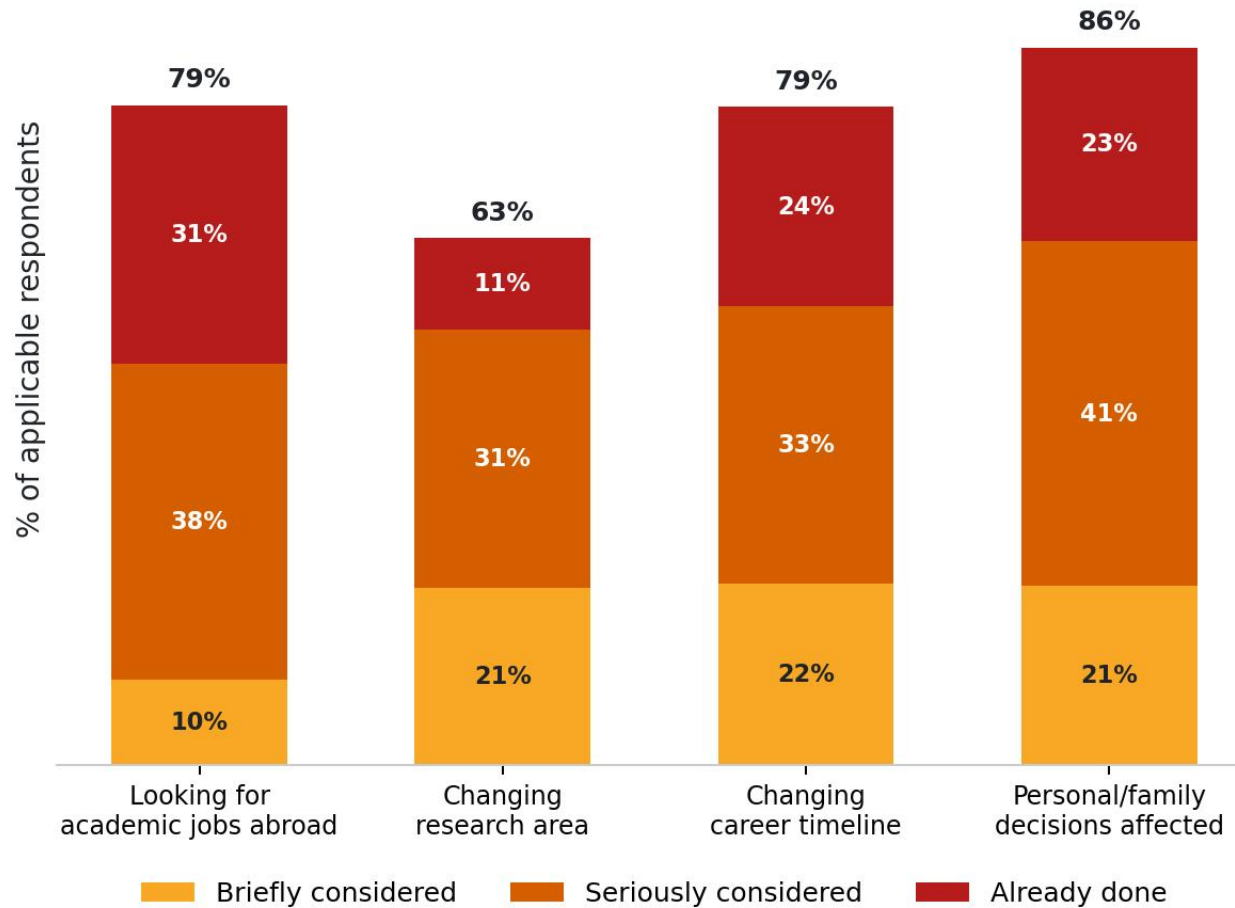
Did the announcements address your concerns?



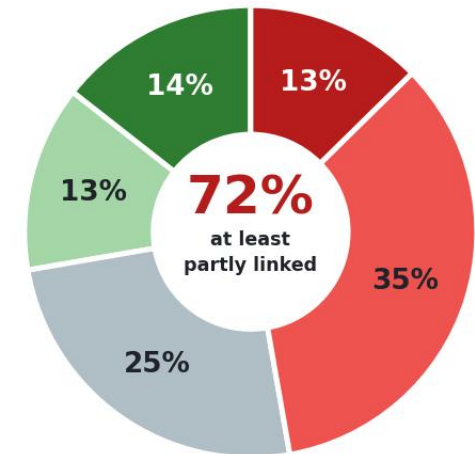
Funding uncertainty is already changing career decisions

The key policy question is talent retention: are trained researchers staying in UK PPAN research?

Actions considered or taken since January 2026



Were these decisions affected by funding announcements?



- Not at all
- Slightly
- Partially
- Largely
- Completely

Survey statistics and interpretation notes

The survey was circulated broadly among early-career researchers in the UK PPAN community.

457

voluntary
responses

429

currently
in the UK

234

PhD
students

220

postdocs /
recent postdocs

Merged research areas

Experimental particle physics / accelerator	143
Astronomy / astrophysics	163
Theory / cosmology / astroparticle	118
Nuclear physics	21
Other PPAN disciplines	12

Interpretation notes

Results are descriptive statistics for this respondent sample, not weighted estimates of all UK PPAN early-career researchers. Percentages may not sum to 100 because of rounding. Mobility statistics exclude respondents selecting 'Not applicable'.