

Boundaryless Work: The Impact of Covid-19 on Work-Life Boundary Management, Integration, and Domestic Labor for Academic Women in STEMM



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Introduction

- While Covid- 19 is not responsible for the job, work-home boundary blurring & domestic labor impacts on women academic scientists careers, the forced teleworking, & severe work-life boundary blurring has exacerbated them & made them more visible.
- Nearly all women academic scientists, esp. in STEMM fields- where significantly under-represented, have long juggled unequal family caregiving and domestic demands, & faced gender discrimination some of which can attributed to the unequal effects of nonwork demands on career equality.

Introduction

- Ironically, workplace flexibility, and the ability to control the boundaries between work and nonwork roles, work schedules, location, workload, time off, & boundary blurring can facilitate gender equality when implemented in ways that support boundary control and align with women's work and family life role demands and identities.

Report organization:

- What the research tells us pre-pandemic
- Preliminary trends: Post pandemic

Overview



- Work-Life personal and professional boundaries
- How gendered expectations of domestic labor, child & elder care demands have shifted or impacted professional labor and well-being for women
- Individual boundary management and family care coping strategies
- Current and desired organizational practices to support work life boundaries & integration
- Future Research: Opportunity for policy innovation & intervention research

Sources of Data

- **Literature Search**

- Academic Search Complete
- Psych Info
- Covid-19" "women" "faculty" "stem" Yielded 3,290 results
- "Covid-19" "women" "faculty" "stem" "U.S." 2,890 results
- Sample search terms: Covid 19 & faculty child care, elder care

- **Post Covid Work-Life Survey of STEMM women faculty**

- Purdue University IRB review
- List serves
- NSF Advance grant members
- American Society for Engineering Education (ASEE) list of Eng. Deans
- ACM Council on Women in Computing (ACM-W) & more

What the research tells us: Work-nonwork personal and professional boundaries & conflict

- Work-nonwork conflict – occurs when incompatible multiple role demands
- Early career scientists are often juggling partnering and starting a family, which harms their future career
- Some research suggests the rates for academic STEMM women leaving the profession after the birth of a first child were double the rates for men
- **Work-Life boundaries- permeability**
- **Merged work and personal roles & identities**
- **Overwork demands**

Types of Work-Nonwork Boundary Management Interruption Styles

Integrators



Separators



Work Firsters



Family/Personal Life Firsters



Cyclers



Individual.
Styles manage
to fit identities;
Work group
Organizational
cultures and
structures
shape
boundary
control context

Managing Work- Nonwork boundaries & Demographic Diversity

- Besides a way to handle conflicting role demands boundary management can involve managing workplace relationships & professional identities
- Personal identities (e.g. being a parent, being an ethnic minority) can conflict with accepted or desired norms for professionalism at work.
- When women work in male-dominated fields such as STEMM, often report feeling that their gender is seen as incompatible with their professional norms; boundary mgt. involves concealing aspects of their personal lives that highlight their gender or parental status if they are mothers.
- Racial minorities are also intentional in managing the boundary between personal and professional lives to preserve work relationships with dissimilar others; may refrain from disclosing personal information to their white coworkers due to concerns over career repercussions

Boundary Control

The degree to which a person **feels in control** over how to manage inter-role boundaries between work life & personal life.



High



Medium

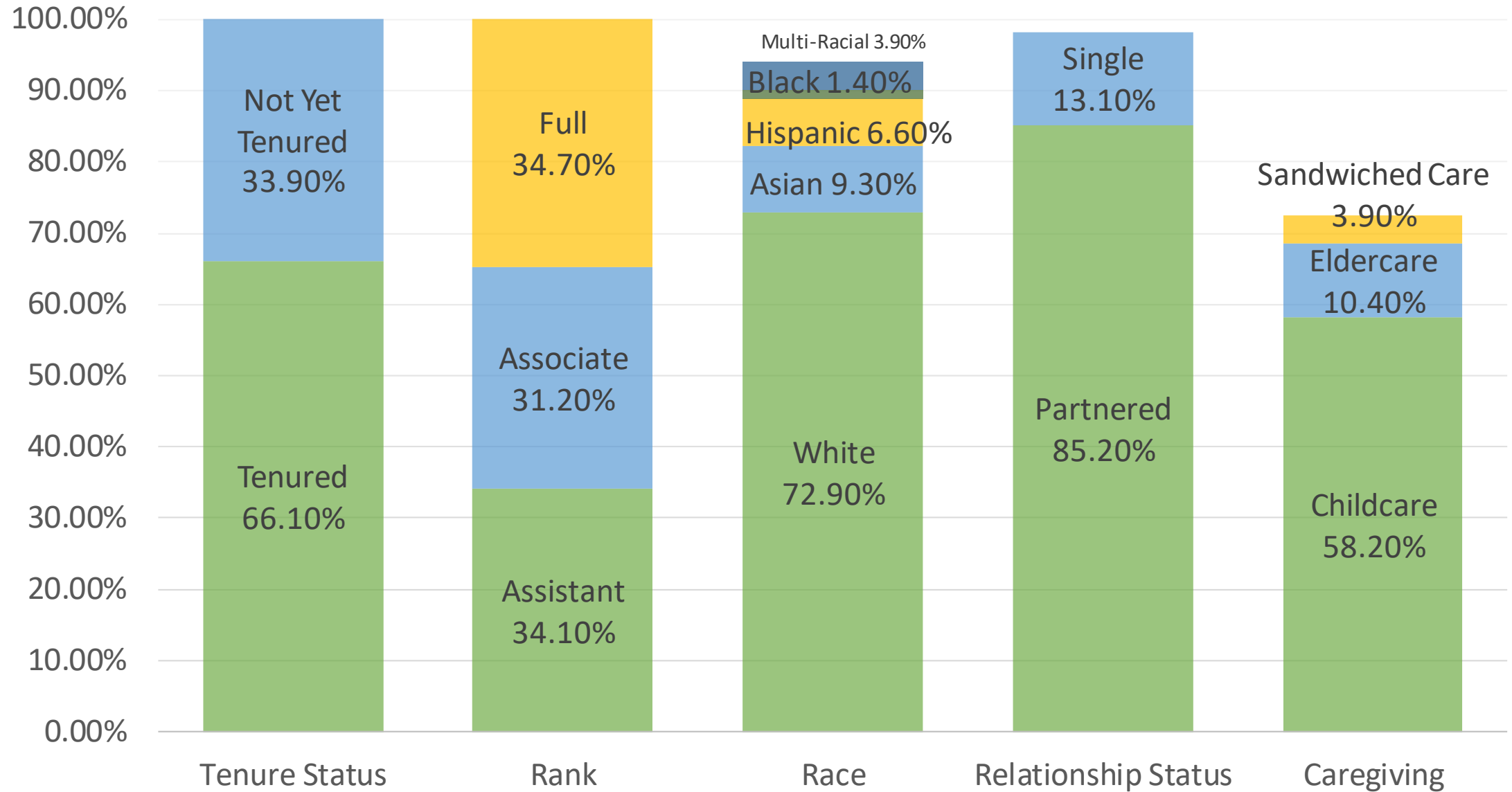


Low

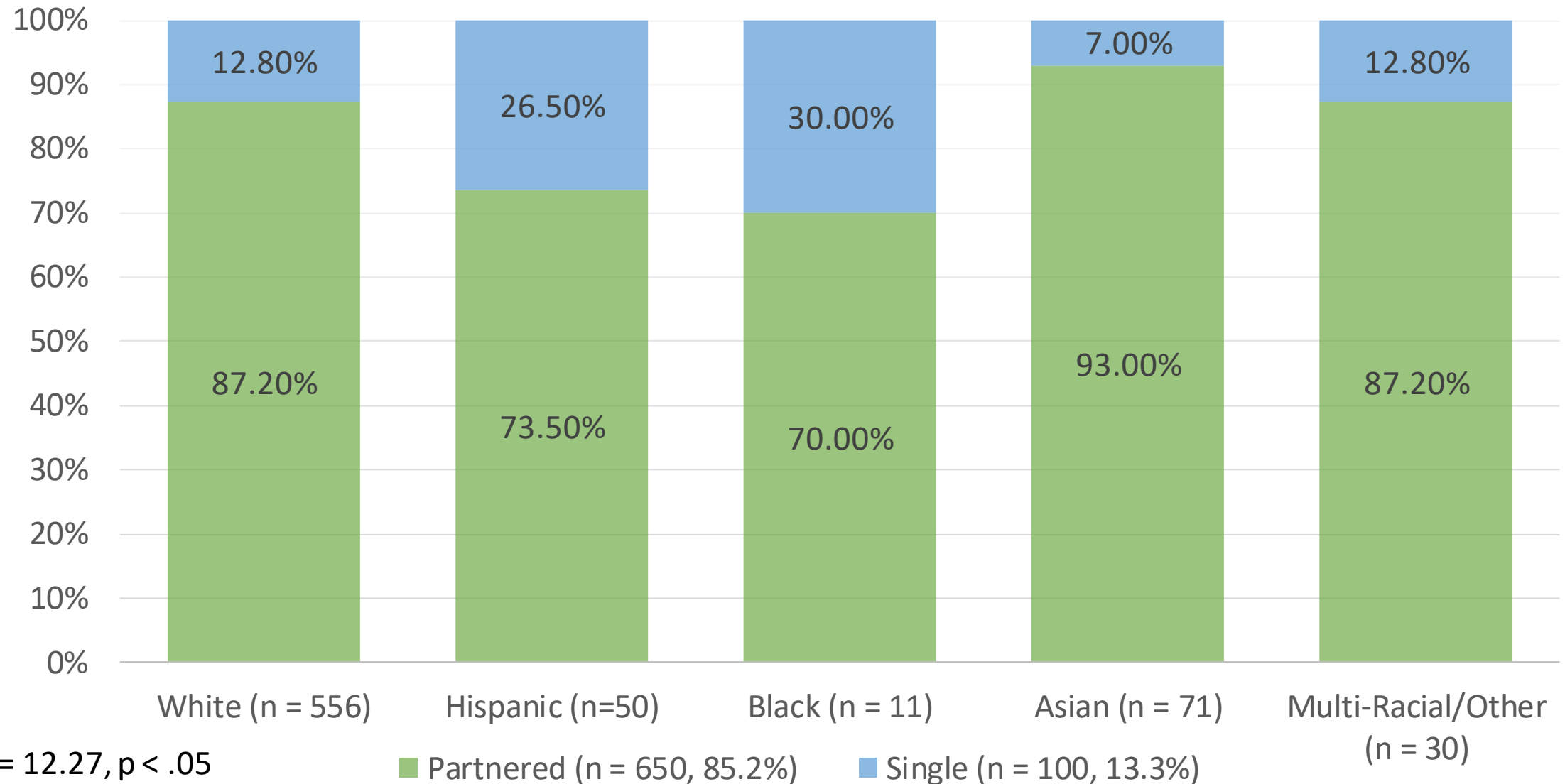
Organizations & Boundary Control

- Organizational policies and norms also shape the extent to which an individual employee can integrate or segment in the way that they prefer and their boundary control
- While organizational work-family policies and cultures influence the degree to which and employee perceives choices to access flexibility to manage boundaries, and the effectiveness of boundary management strategies in context.

Sample Description (n = 763)



Relationship Status by Ethnicity (%) sample



Effects on Boundaries & Domestic Labor-

Sample results

- 51% total respondents blurring boundaries challenges
(*Pre and post sample: (5pt .scale) Change $t = 33.42$, $p < .001$; 3.98 and 2.33*)
- 1/3 report increased mental stress
- 56.96 % with elders reported Elder care challenges
- 71.17 & with children reported Child care problems

Forced Teleworking and Work-Life Boundaries During a Pandemic

- *Because I work from home I have to hole up in my bedroom for work meetings, and because my husband and I both work full time jobs that require meetings with other people, we constantly have to switch back and forth between roles. I get an hour or two for some Zoom meetings, then it's my turn to play kindergarten teacher for two hours, then I might get another hour or two to work.*

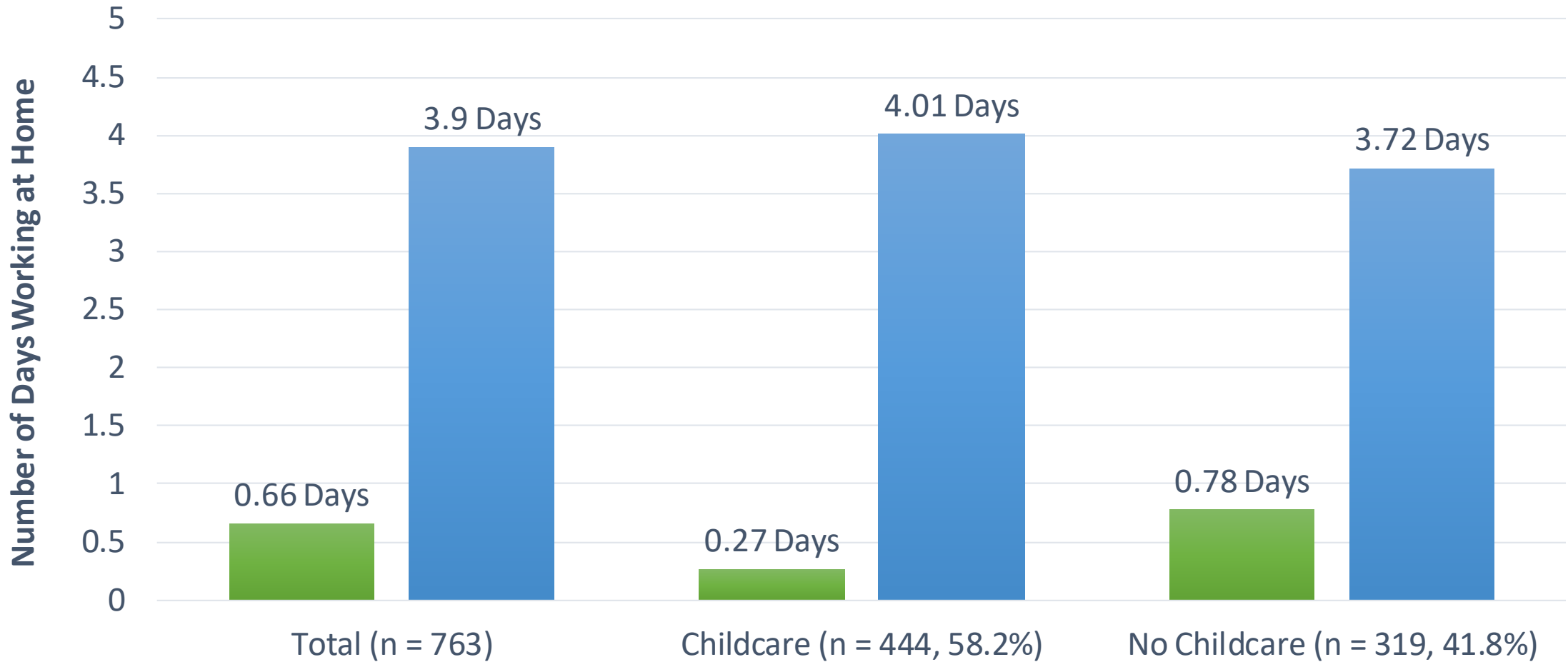


STEMM Associate Professor with young children on Covid-19 effects

- *The constant task switching is mentally challenging and makes it hard to dive deep into any work task or accomplish anything that requires sustained attention for a longer period of time.if I'm really lucky. There are no boundaries between personal and professional life anymore. I really miss going to my office for many reasons, but being able to compartmentalize work and homeis one of them.*



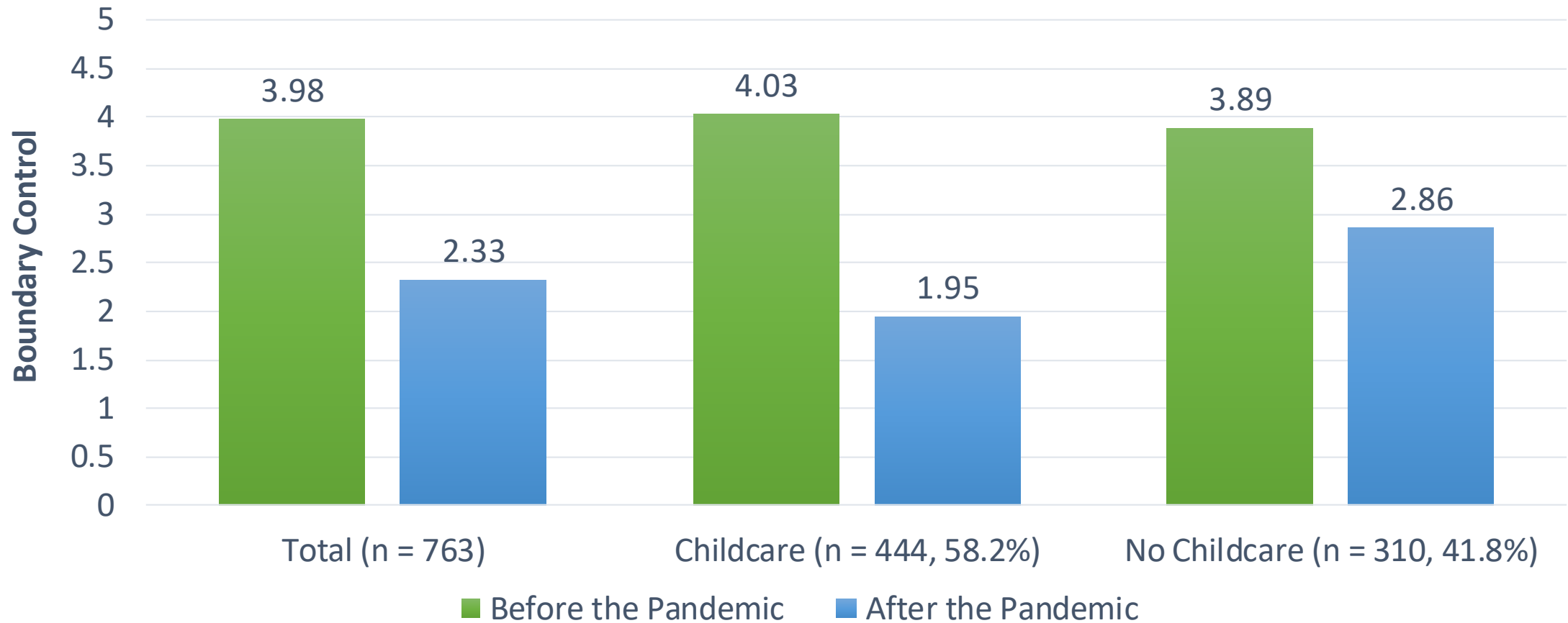
The Impact of Childcare Responsibilities on the Changes in the Number of Days Working at Home Before and After the Pandemic



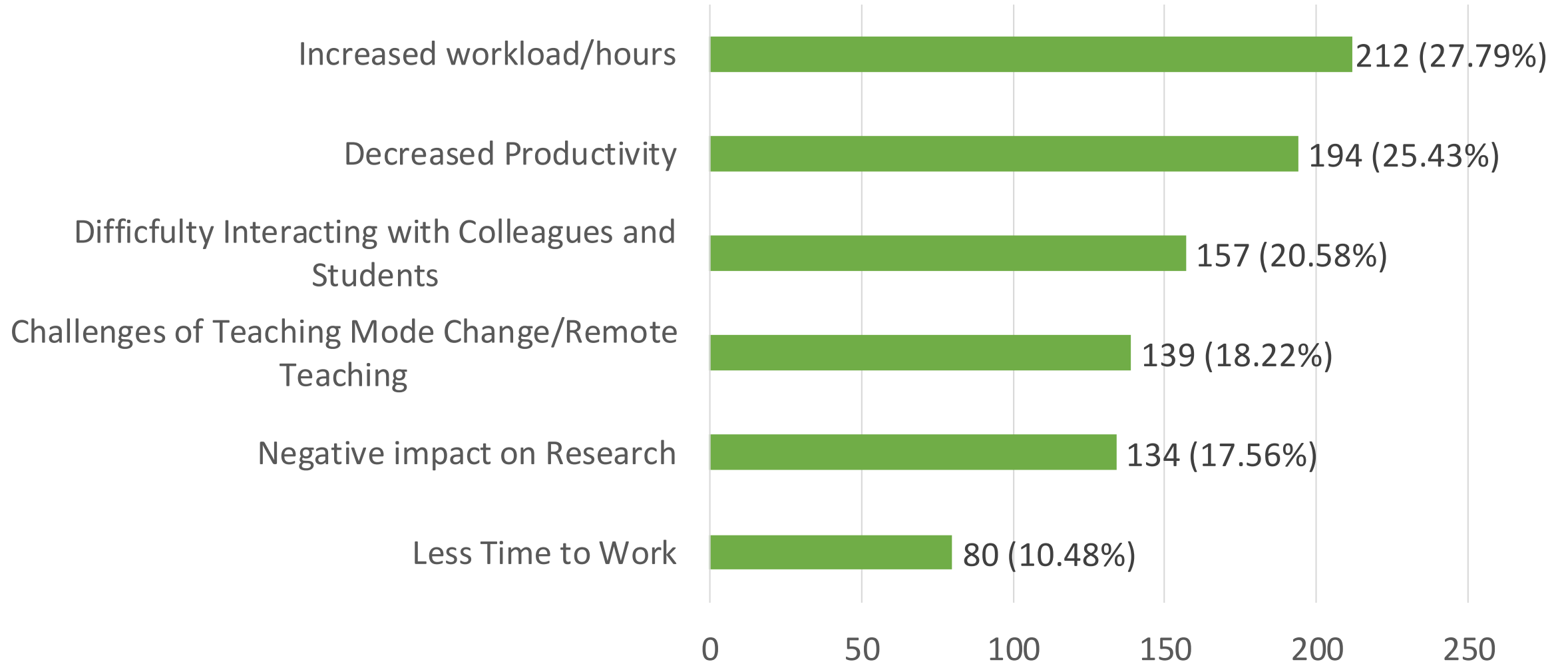
$t = 33.42, p < .001$; 3.98 and 2.33 respectively).

■ Before The Pandemic ■ After the Pandemic

The Impact of Childcare Responsibilities on the Changes in Boundary Control Before and After the Pandemic



The Negative Impact of COVID-19 on Work (n = 763)

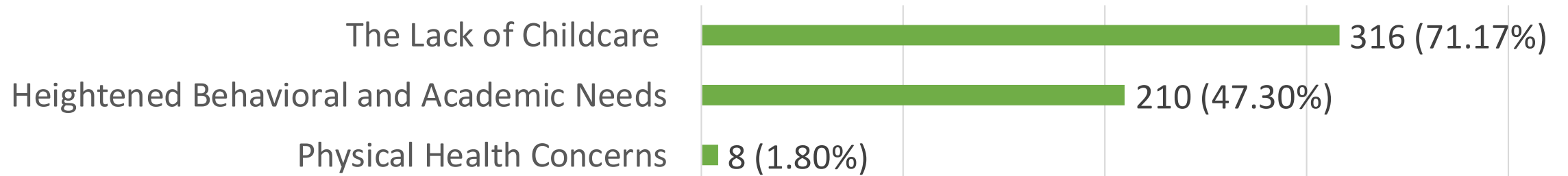


What the research tells us: Caregiving (on and off the Job and Domestic Labor

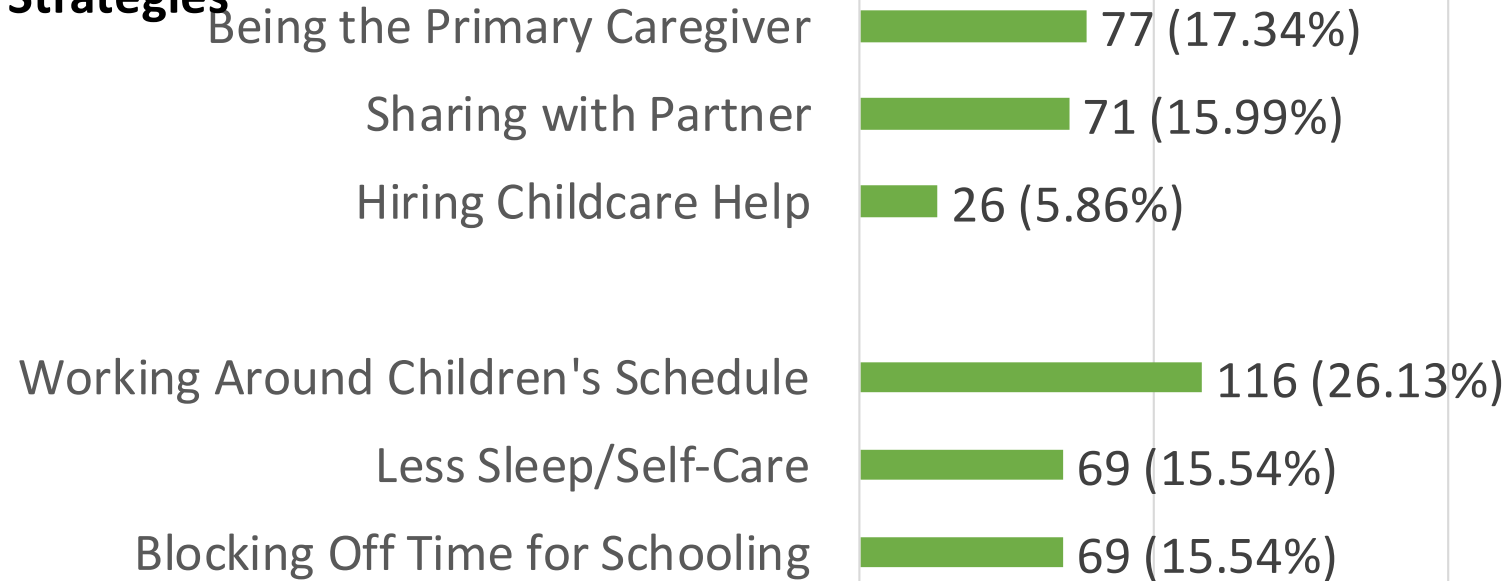
- **More caregiving on and off job**
- Time expenditure studies show that female faculty spend more time caring for children & domestic tasks (8.5 hours) than do their male counterparts.
- In dual-academic couples generally, male faculty are four times more likely to have a partner who provides full time domestic care than are female faculty
- Among STEMM faculty, women were more likely than men to have spouses/domestic partners who were employed full time

The Impact of COVID-19 on Childcare (N = 444)

Challenges



Coping Strategies



0 100 200 300 400

The Impact of COVID-19 on Eldercare (N = 79)

Challenges (n = 45, 56.96%)

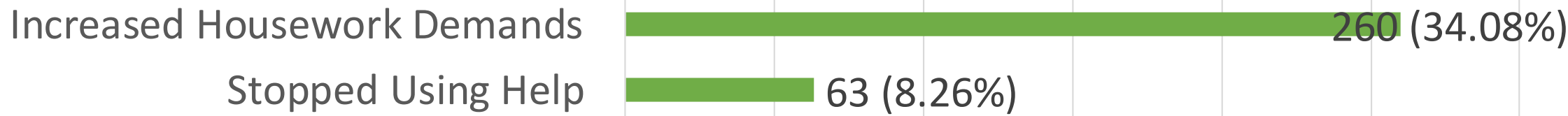


Coping Strategies

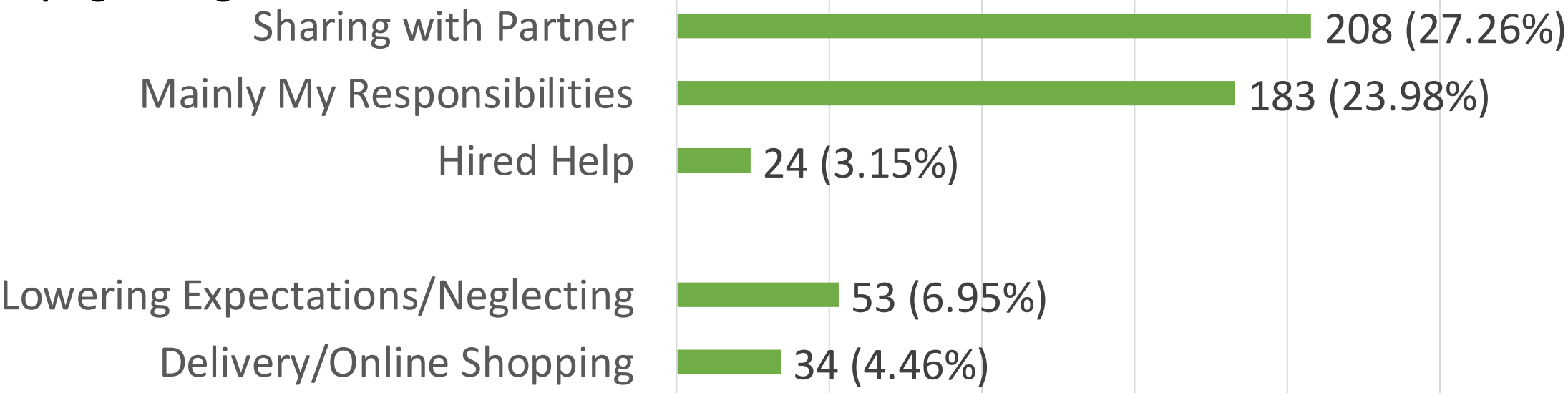


The Impact of COVID-19 on Housework Demands (N = 763)

Challenges (n = 260, 34.08%)



Coping Strategies



Boundary Management Tactics

Spatial Boundary (n = 343, 44.95%)

Separate Work Space

261 (34.21%)

Video Meeting Background to Protect Home Privacy

148 (19.40%)

Temporal Boundary (n = 250, 32.77%)

Recovery Time

143 (18.74%)

Creating Schedule/Cordinating with Partner

123 (16.21%)

Technological Boundary (n = 180, 23.91%)

Email Boundary Management

148 (19.40%)

Separate Device

47 (6.16%)

0

100

200

300

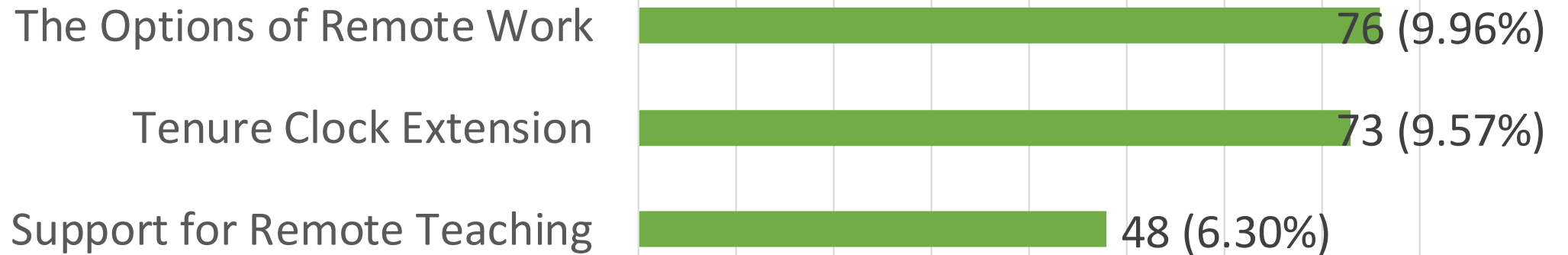


What the research tells us

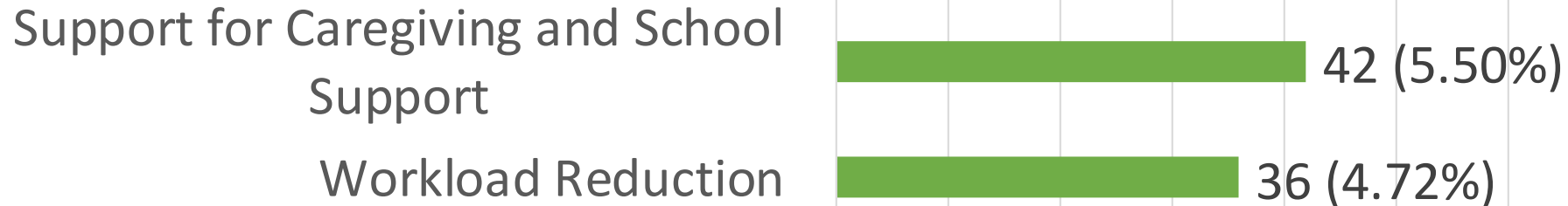
- Peer and supervisor work- family support behaviors can reduced work-family stress
- Organizational climate and work-life sacrifice cultures can increase can stress and make it difficult to manage boundaries
- University child and elder care supports viewed merely as benefits but not well linked to a talent management strategy, emphasized as a diversity and inclusion retention issue and long term investment in infrastructure

Post-COVID University Supports (n = 763)

How Universities are Helping



What Faculty Want



Flexible Work arrangements are a necessary but insufficient condition to have work-life well-being & productivity. Must have boundary control

- Work-life boundaries for women those with family more permeable than for men
- Women may be in greater ongoing regulation of “states of work-nonwork connectivity” heightening w-l technostress, lowering identity alignment, well-being?
- Increased pressures for ongoing connectivity to both work-nonwork communications and tasks does the growth of virtual work and the opportunity for increased self regulation of organization of flexplace and creating differential overwork tensions that are exacerbated by ideal worker norms?

Summary of Pandemic Work-Life Boundary & Care Challenges for future study

- **Changes in boundary control**
- **Switching costs and the lack of ability to focus in a family or work role.**
- **Lack of time buffers between role transitions.**
- **Difficulties detaching from work**
- **Lack of control to control timing of work and nonwork scheduling**
- **Not having a large enough home to create physical boundaries**
- **Increased child and elder care challenges & housework – little support**

Future Research

- **Pilot and identify organizational policies that work in experimental studies.**
- **Consider the gendered productivity impact of using COVID flexibility accommodations, and other unintended use consequences.**
- **Effectiveness of individual boundary management strategies.**
- **Long-term health and wellbeing and piloting comparing work support, family support and peer support interventions.**
- **Covid -Career cohort, turnover and career success studies.**