

Faculty Satisfaction at the University of Wisconsin-Madison

Joseph Anderson, Undergraduate Research Scholar

Introduction

This study investigates the job satisfaction of tenured and tenure-track faculty members at UW-Madison and factors contributing to their satisfaction. It uses data from the larger *Study of Faculty Worklife at UW-Madison*, which was undertaken as part of a broader effort to support the advancement of women in academic science, medicine, and engineering. Envisioned as a means of quantitatively measuring the workplace experiences of faculty, the survey has been administered to all tenured and tenure-track faculty at the University of Wisconsin - Madison three times during the spring semesters: 2003, 2006, and 2010. The survey has been administered by the Women in Science and Engineering Leadership Institute (WISELI).

In addition to other questions, respondents were asked to indicate how satisfied they are with being a faculty member at UW-Madison, and what factors contribute to their satisfaction. Data presented for this study will show comparisons by gender and by academic division.

Methodology

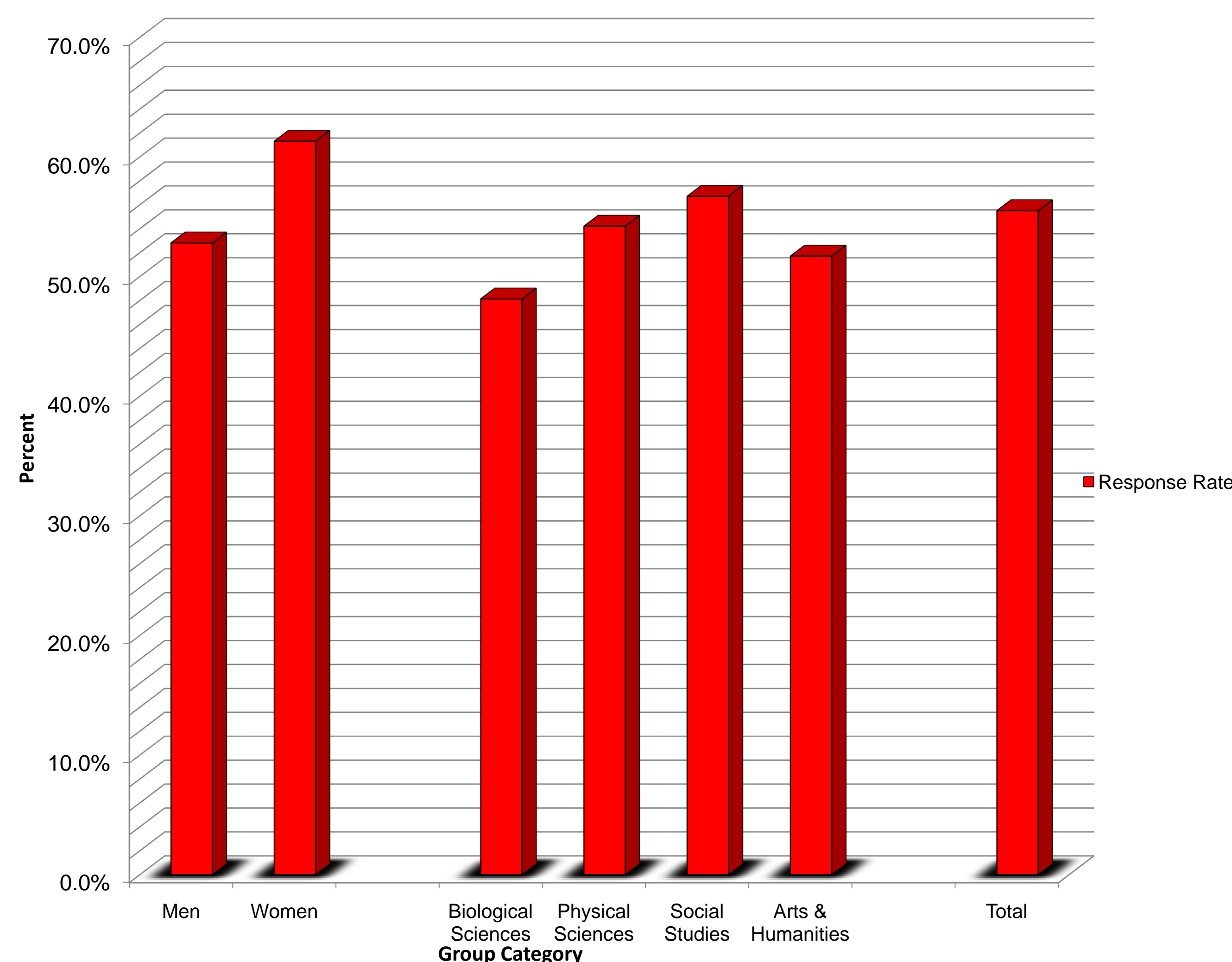
The UW-Madison Survey Center has administered the *Study of Faculty Worklife* survey in each round using paper surveys mailed to the homes of the faculty respondents.

Figure 1 shows the response rates for the total tenured and tenure-track group, for gender, and for the divisions. The overall response rate was 55.5%. Women faculty responded at higher rates than men, and faculty in the Social Studies division responded at higher rates than faculty in other divisions.

The 'Satisfaction' section of the instrument utilizes a five-point Likert scale, asking respondents to convey their degree of satisfaction with a range of topics and overall. The scale response choices included "very dissatisfied", "somewhat dissatisfied", "neither dissatisfied nor satisfied", "somewhat satisfied", and "very satisfied".

Statistical t-tests were used to assess the significance of group differences, including gender and broad academic division. Coding of open-ended survey questions was then performed in order to classify respondent answers into meaningful categories.

Figure 1: Response Rates by Gender and Academic Division



Results

Overall, faculty were somewhat satisfied to very satisfied with being faculty members (mean score of 4.07; standard deviation of 1.13). Women were significantly less satisfied with being faculty members (mean score of 3.94, standard deviation of 1.19) than men (mean score of 4.13, standard deviation of 1.09). While there were differences between the academic divisions, they were not significant. Figures 2 and 3 show the distributions of responses to the question "In general, how satisfied are you being a faculty member at UW-Madison?" by both gender and academic division, in addition to the distributions for the total response group (Figure 2). The response distributions are displayed to capture the level of detail in the question and response choices.

Figure 2: Satisfaction with Being a Faculty Member, by Gender

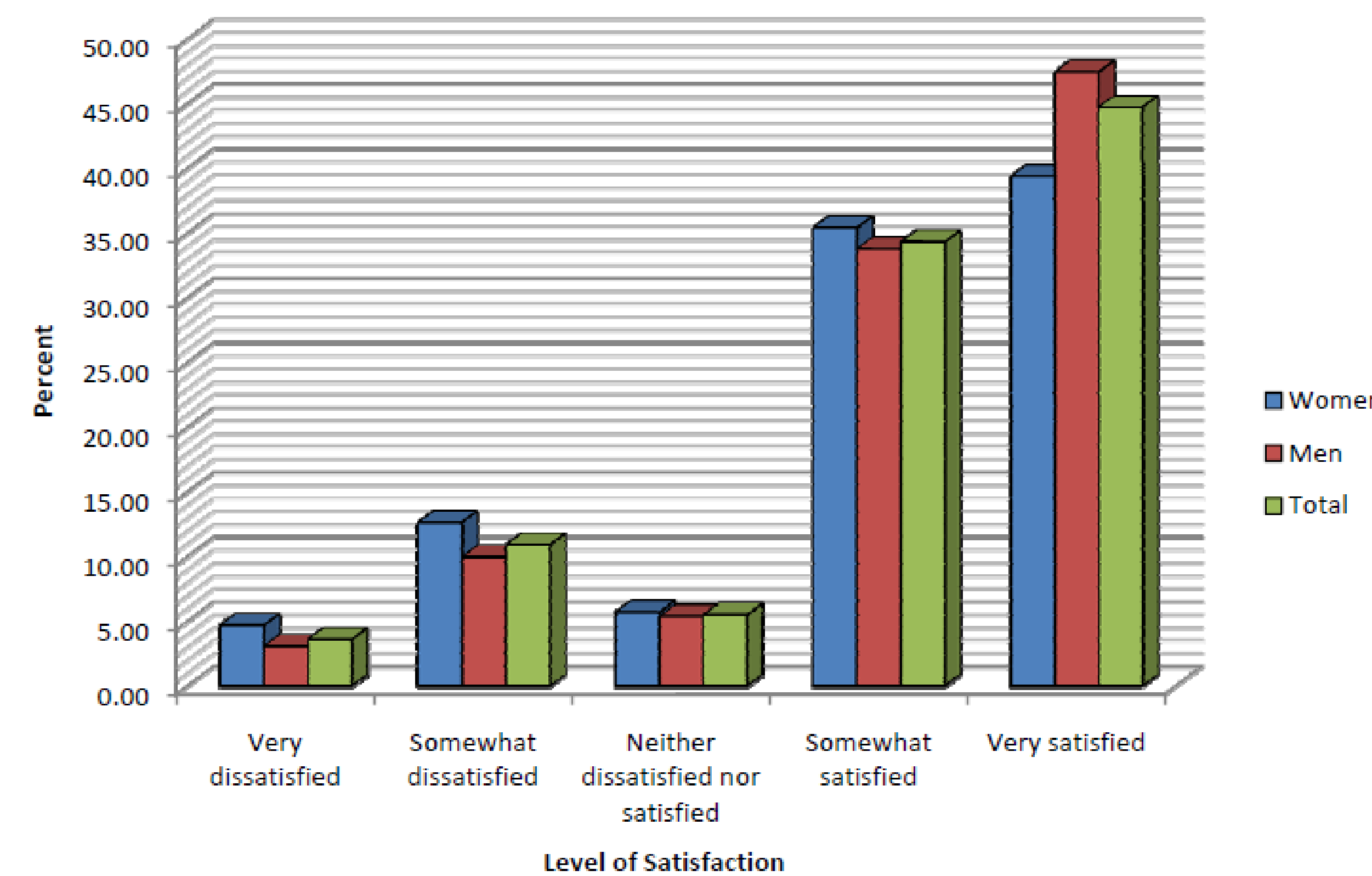
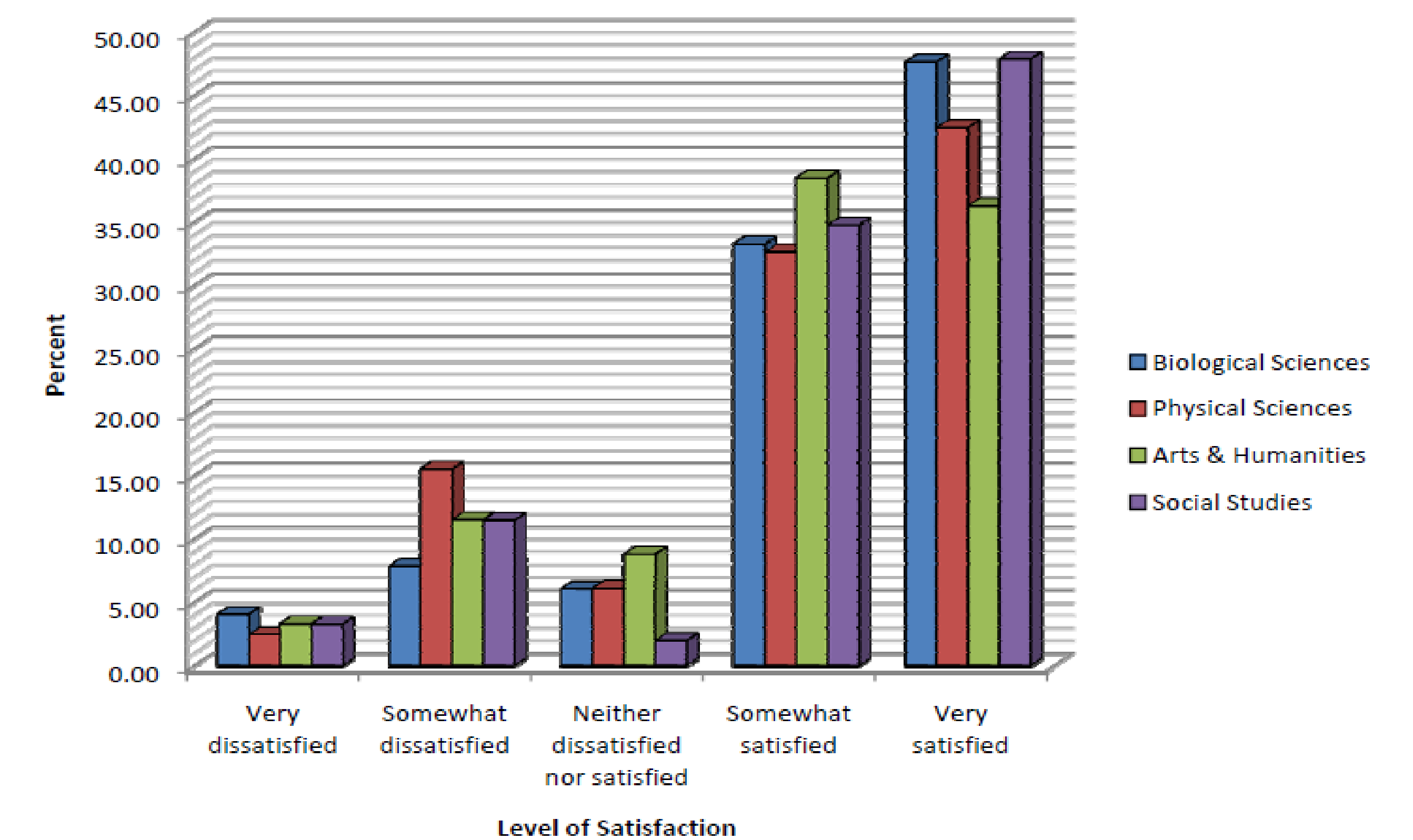


Figure 3: Satisfaction with Being a Faculty Member, by Division



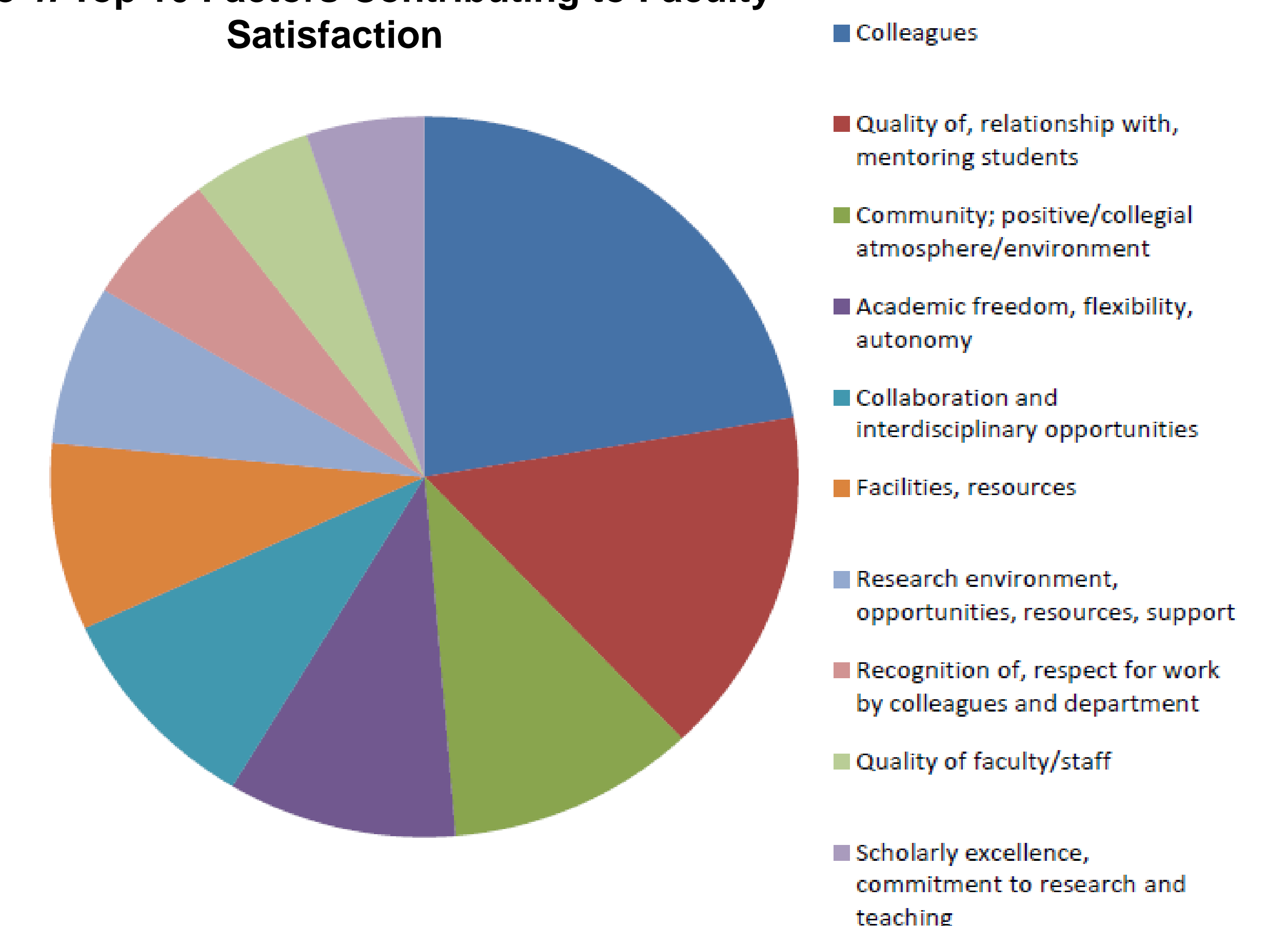
"I love the colleagues I work with (faculty + staff). I love the opportunities I have had & I have respect for many of the Campus leaders."

Figure 4 shows the top 10 factors that faculty members reported as contributing the most to their satisfaction at UW-Madison. Open-ended coding also revealed a number of additional factors, but they are not displayed here.

Numerous times, faculty mentioned that they had the opportunity to conduct research that aligned with their interests and that the opportunities to collaborate on interdisciplinary research were plentiful.

Colleagues and students were identified in very high frequency, indicating their importance to many faculty members. Research resources and support, and general resources (libraries, facilities) were identified numerous times as well in playing a role in faculty satisfaction at UW-Madison.

Figure 4: Top 10 Factors Contributing to Faculty Satisfaction



Conclusions

The study's findings showed that on the whole, UW-Madison tenured and tenure-track faculty were somewhat satisfied to very satisfied with being faculty members. Women were significantly less satisfied than men and there were no significant differences in responses between academic divisions. Faculty identified collegial and student relationships as among the most important factors contributing to their satisfaction.

These findings shed light on how faculty members at UW-Madison feel about their jobs, and can be used to inform campus initiatives and implementation of programs to ensure workplace satisfaction. The top factors of faculty satisfaction may serve as a rubric by informing campus leaders on how and where to implement campus initiatives.

More detailed findings related to faculty satisfaction will be reported in the forthcoming WISELI report on the 2010 *Study of Faculty Worklife*.

Sponsored By:

