

# Job insecurity in academia harms the mental wellbeing of non-tenure track faculty

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Non-tenure-track academics experience stress, anxiety, and depression due to their insecure job situation, according to the first survey of its kind published in the open-access journal *Frontiers in Psychology*.

There were 1.4 contingent faculty workers in the USA, according to a report by the American Association of University Professors. These faculty members, such as research adjunct faculty, lecturers and instructors, are off the so-called "tenure track". They work under short-term contracts with limited health and retirement benefits, often part-time and at different institutes simultaneously. Among them, women, African Americans, Hispanics, and Native Americans are overrepresented.

Gretchen Reevy from California State University and Grace Deason from the University of Wisconsin-La Crosse, USA, used extensive self-report questionnaires to survey almost 200 non-tenure-track academics – mainly from medium-sized universities in the USA, and of whom around two-thirds were women. Questions focused on work-related sources of [stress](#), mental wellbeing, and coping mechanisms, as well as about their background, [family situation](#), and income.

Almost one-third of the participants (31%) replied that the lack of job security was among the most stressful aspects of their work. Other frequently named sources of stress were a high workload; lack of support and recognition; low and unequal pay; and feeling excluded from the infrastructure and governance at their institute .

Non-tenure track faculty who wished for a permanent position, or whose family income was low, were more prone to depression, anxiety, and stress. They were also more likely to suffer from these if they felt personally committed to the institution where they worked. On average, women reported encountering more sources of stress at work than men.

The authors call on universities to attend more to the specific needs of their non-tenure-track faculty to avoid negative outcomes for institutions, students, and faculty. Suggestions include alleviating the sources of stress listed above and considering increasing the rate of hiring into more secure, tenure-track positions.

**More information:** *Frontiers in Psychology*, Predictors of depression, stress, and anxiety among non-tenure track faculty, Gretchen M. Reevy and Grace Deason, [DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00701](https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2014.00701)

Provided by Frontiers

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