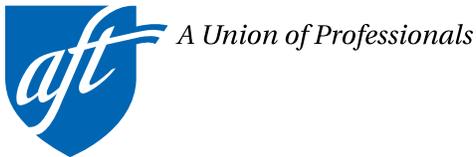


# An Army of Temps AFT Adjunct Faculty Quality of Work/Life Report







**Randi Weingarten**

PRESIDENT

**Fedrick C. Ingram**

SECRETARY-TREASURER

**Evelyn DeJesus**

EXECUTIVE VICE PRESIDENT

### **Our Mission**

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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# Executive summary

The latest adjunct faculty survey from the American Federation of Teachers continues to show the difficult economic reality faced by millions of contingent and adjunct faculty at America's colleges and universities. Nearly a quarter of adjunct faculty have an annual salary below the federal poverty line, while 38 percent report accessing government assistance. The report also shows that adjunct faculty did not receive the support they needed when moving their classes online during the pandemic.

"Army of Temps: AFT Adjunct Faculty Quality of Work/Life Report" details feedback from 1,883 respondents to a survey of contingent faculty at two-year and four-year institutions—both public and private. The 61-question survey, completed between May 21 and Aug. 18, 2020, follows up on our survey of contingent faculty conducted in 2019. Of the AFT's 240,000 higher education members, 85,000 are contingent and 35,000 are graduate employees—making the AFT the largest union of contingent academic workers.

The report illustrates how precarious academic work was even before the coronavirus pandemic, which has made a grave situation even worse. When campuses were shut down in March 2020, adjuncts were given only hours to move their classes online, often without sufficient training or technical support to make the transition successful. They faced an academic year of uncertain enrollments and employment prospects, compounded by the anxieties of being asked to return to the classroom amid a checkered public health response to the pandemic. As the survey shows, they entered the 2020-21 academic year already struggling with food insecurity, limited healthcare coverage and housing issues.

The survey paints a vivid portrait of how contingency plays out in the daily lives of millions of college and university faculty.

- One-quarter of respondents earn less than \$25,000 annually.
- Only 20 percent report being able to comfortably cover basic monthly expenses.
- Fewer than half of survey respondents have access to employer-provided health insurance, and nearly 20 percent rely on Medicaid.
- Nearly 45 percent of faculty members surveyed have put off getting needed healthcare, including mental health services, and 64 percent have forgone dental care.
- 48 percent struggle with job security, reporting that they don't know if they will have a teaching job until one month before the beginning of the academic year.

- For 3 out of 4 contingent faculty, employment is only guaranteed from term to term.
- A plan for a secure retirement is out of reach for most contingent faculty, with 37 percent reporting they don't see a path to retirement.

The decades-long crisis of contingent workers in our colleges and universities is, in many ways, the original "gig economy," with all its attendant woes: low wages, few benefits, little job security, and the expenses of work being shifted from the employer to the at-will employee while a new class of professional higher education "innovators" or "disruptors" find themselves executive positions with exploding compensation.

Over the last four decades, the academic labor pool has shifted dramatically: Forty years ago, 70 percent of academic employees were tenured or on the tenure track. Today, that figure has flipped; 75 percent of faculty are not eligible for tenure, and 47 percent hold part-time positions. Meanwhile, the number of management staff per full-time equivalent student at public institutions, and the salary outlays to management staff per FTE student at those institutions, have increased more than 18 percent and 24 percent respectively between academic years 2011-12 and 2018-19.<sup>1</sup>

The AFT and our affiliates are committed to using political advocacy and collective bargaining to improve the lives of contingent faculty and the communities they serve. Before the pandemic began, it would have taken federal and state investments of an additional \$15 billion in higher education funding to get back to pre-2008 recession levels of public investment in higher education. However, even with that decline in public investment, core revenues at public institutions—tuition and fees, government appropriations, government grants and contracts, and private gifts—rose significantly between 2009 and 2019, while student debt spiraled.<sup>2</sup>

Directing current resources plus additional public funds to instruction and to lowering tuition costs would start to move the needle away from contingency and toward security for students and the academic workforce, as would examining the administrative policies and decisions that have led to a poorly compensated academic workforce, students impoverished by student debt, and a managerial elite with salary growth far outpacing those who perform and support the actual work of education and research.

In light of the ongoing pandemic, the financial holes to be filled—both in public investment and in the lives of individual adjunct and contingent faculty—will be even bigger and more perilous.

<sup>1</sup> American Association of University Professors, "The Annual Report on the Economic Status of the Profession, 2020–21," July 2021, [www.aaup.org/file/AAUP\\_ARES\\_2020-21.pdf](http://www.aaup.org/file/AAUP_ARES_2020-21.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, "The Condition of Education 2021," 2021, [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/2021/cud\\_508c.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/pdf/2021/cud_508c.pdf).

There was help on the horizon. The Build Back Better Act would have been a first step toward a New Deal for Higher Education, with a \$22 billion investment in American colleges and universities, including funding for evidence-based student support programs, support for historically Black colleges and universities and other minority-serving institutions, and increases to the Pell Grant to make college more affordable for students. All of this would have provided much-needed resources for colleges and universities, which could have been used to improve the working conditions of contingent faculty.

Additionally, the Build Back Better Act aimed to strengthen the social safety net on which adjuncts and contingent faculty rely, with expanded access to healthcare, lower prescription drug prices, lower childcare costs, expanded paid parental leave, and a host of other improvements that would have directly benefited contingent faculty and other members of our community.

While this bill did not make it out of the Senate this year, there is hope that individual pieces of Build Back Better can be passed as either stand-alone bills or incorporated into the Higher Education Act reauthorization.

## Overview of the respondents

### Type of employment

- Full-time nontenure-track: 8.5 percent
- Part-time instructor, lecturer or adjunct: 88.0 percent
- Graduate employee: 0.05 percent
- Professional staff: 1.4 percent
- Other (other academic positions): 2.2 percent

**Type of institution** (Note: Respondents could report multiple places of employment, which explains why the total exceeds 100 percent)

- Four-year public: 30.4 percent
- Four-year private, not-for-profit: 7.3 percent
- Four-year private, for-profit: 3.4 percent
- Two-year public (community college): 76.4 percent
- Two-year private, not-for-profit: 0.3 percent
- Two-year private, for-profit: 0.3 percent

### Race

White, non-Hispanic: 73.5 percent  
Black, non-Hispanic: 3.8 percent  
American Indian or Alaskan Native: 0.7 percent  
Hispanic/Latinx: 5.9 percent  
Asian or Pacific Islander: 4.6 percent  
Multiracial: 2.6 percent  
Prefer not to answer: 9.0 percent

### Gender

Female: 63.8 percent  
Male: 31.3 percent  
Gender queer/nonconforming: 1.2 percent  
Transgender: 0.3 percent  
Prefer not to answer: 4.1 percent

### Level of education

High school: 0.1 percent  
Some college, no degree: 0.5 percent  
Associate degree: 1.0 percent  
Bachelor's degree: 6.0 percent  
Master's degree (not terminal): 39.3 percent  
Terminal master's degree (e.g., MFA, MLS): 17.2 percent  
Professional degree (e.g., J.D., MD, MBA): 5.4 percent  
ABD ("all but the Ph.D. dissertation"): 5.4 percent  
Doctoral degree: 23.0 percent  
Other: 1.9 percent

# Background

Today, most college and university instructors in the United States are contingent faculty, with nearly 75 percent of all instructors not eligible for tenure, and 47 percent holding part-time positions.

The erosion of tenure-line positions—and the protections they provide—is not a recent development; tenure-track faculty haven't made up the majority of faculty in the United States since the 1980s. But it is one of the most disturbing trends in American higher education. In place of stable jobs filled by long-term employees, colleges and universities have replaced tenured positions with an army of contingent faculty, including nontenure-track professors, adjuncts, lecturers, postdocs, teaching assistants, instructors and graduate employees. These employees, whatever their working conditions or career stage, have one important thing in common: They are all temps, working low-wage jobs while hiding in plain sight as a subordinate caste within a system that claims to value educational attainment above all.

The lived experience of the people holding these temporary positions, and particularly part-time positions, is difficult: They are highly trained professionals in a skilled profession whose compensation doesn't allow them to meet basic expenses; they get limited job security that lasts a few months at a time at most; they are offered minimal or nonexistent benefits; and they experience a pervasive lack of institutional support, beginning with not being provided office space or a computer, and extending to their systematic exclusion from campus safety planning, which even the U.S. Department of Education says should engage all stakeholders.<sup>3</sup>

These poor working conditions compound the psychological toll that contingent work takes on faculty, and particularly on faculty who entered the profession hoping for tenure-track employment: They cite a lack of access to mental health care and being treated as second-class institutional citizens by administrators; they experience their work being devalued simply due to their title; and they wrestle, usually privately, with constant worry and fear over reappointment.

While a college degree is increasingly considered an economic necessity, state and local governments continue to dramatically decrease their levels of public investment in public colleges and universities. At the end of the 2016 academic year, overall state funding for public two- and four-year colleges was more than \$15 billion below its 2008 pre-recession level in real dollars (adjusted for inflation). Colleges and universities are relying more and more on contingent faculty to do the bulk of

undergraduate instruction, justifying this shift due to shrinking state appropriations, even while institutional revenues per FTE student grow and high-level, highly paid administrator positions rapidly expand.

At the same time, public disinvestment has led to skyrocketing tuition costs that have left students and their families borrowing to cover the costs of college at rates they will never be able to pay back and that have prevented many others from enrolling or completing their studies.

The AFT believes that the continued disinvestment in public higher education is having disastrous consequences for our nation, our members and the communities they serve. Faculty who are not free to engage in controversial searches for new knowledge because they fear losing their temp jobs are faculty who are hamstrung in filling the role academics play in a free society. Students are not receiving the best possible education when the instructor in front of them is struggling to decide whether to buy food or medicine, and students' futures are jeopardized when an inspiring professor who could provide a recommendation or further mentorship is let go as soon as the academic term ends. To secure the economic and social prosperity and justice that our members, our students and our nation deserve, we must address the problems afflicting higher education. This means immediately seeking to restore and enhance funding for high-quality, affordable, accessible higher education, and reducing institutions' reliance on contingent faculty premised on poverty wages and exploitation. Or, if we want everything—these institutions and the democracy they serve—to go downhill faster, we can instead continue to ignore this perilous state of affairs.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Office of Safe and Healthy Students, "Guide for Developing High-Quality Emergency Operations Plans for Institutions of Higher Education," 2013, [https://rems.ed.gov/docs/IHE\\_Guide\\_508C.pdf](https://rems.ed.gov/docs/IHE_Guide_508C.pdf).

# Survey results

## Low pay and public assistance

*What is your estimated total individual income annually, across all teaching and nonteaching positions?*

Less than \$25,000.....	24.8 percent
\$25,001 – \$50,000.....	35.3 percent
\$50,001 – \$75,000.....	22.5 percent
\$75,001 – \$100,000.....	10.1 percent
More than \$100,000.....	7.4 percent

*About how much do you earn, on average, for a typical credit-bearing unit (for a 3-hour, 4-hour or 5-hour credit course) from your anchor teaching position?*

\$2,000 or less.....	18.3 percent
\$2,001 – \$2,500.....	11.1 percent
\$2,501 – \$3,000.....	9.4 percent
\$3,001 – \$3,500.....	10.5 percent
\$3,501 – \$4,000.....	9.2 percent
\$4,001 – \$4,500.....	9.3 percent
\$4,501 – \$5,000.....	8.4 percent
\$5,001 – \$5,500.....	5.3 percent
\$5,501 – \$6,000.....	3.5 percent
\$6,001 – \$6,500.....	1.8 percent
\$6,501 – \$7,000.....	1.5 percent
More than \$7,000.....	4.8 percent
Not applicable.....	6.9 percent

- Nearly one-quarter of respondents earn less than \$25,000 a year, placing them below the federal poverty guideline for a family of four. Another one-third earn less than \$50,000, which keeps them just above the poverty line but trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty—never earning enough to reach financial security and not earning a low enough income to receive the assistance that would enable them to plan for their future.
- This low annual income is a consequence of the low pay for instruction. Nearly 50 percent of respondents told us they are paid less than \$3,500 a course. Contingent work is not only temp work; it is piecework. As described in the 2014 House Committee on Education and the Workforce report “The Just-in-Time Professor,” contingent faculty usually are paid a fixed amount of compensation for each unit produced, regardless of how much time it takes to produce. For these workers, the unit of production is a

college course.<sup>4</sup> Teaching a “four-four” load (four courses in each of two semesters), as the typical respondent to this survey does, would lead to only \$28,000 in income before taxes and other deductions.

- Contingent faculty members want their contributions recognized with equitable compensation: More than 51 percent indicated that they believe they should be paid at least \$5,000 a course. An increase in the per-course minimum would immediately benefit the vast majority of contingent faculty today.

*What would you consider fair and adequate compensation, on average, for a typical credit-bearing unit (for a three-hour, four-hour or five-hour credit course) from your anchor teaching position?*

\$2,000 or less.....	1.4 percent
\$2,001 – \$2,500.....	4.1 percent
\$2,501 – \$3,000.....	7.2 percent
\$3,001 – \$3,500.....	8.9 percent
\$3,501 – \$4,000.....	7.6 percent
\$4,001 – \$4,500.....	9.6 percent
\$4,501 – \$5,000.....	7.2 percent
\$5,001 – \$5,500.....	9.9 percent
\$5,501 – \$6,000.....	7.0 percent
\$6,001 – \$6,500.....	8.4 percent
\$6,501 – \$7,000.....	8.1 percent
More than \$7,000.....	18.0 percent

- Contingent faculty are not the only ones affected by the poverty wages they are being offered. As when Amazon CEO Jeff Bezos’ employees collect food stamps or enroll in Medicaid instead of receiving employer-paid benefits, taxpayers bear a significant portion of the hidden costs of low-wage faculty work in their respective states. Among those who participated in the survey, a substantial minority subsidized their low wages with public assistance: Thirty-nine percent of respondents reported applying for one or more public assistance program listed. (Respondents were asked about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program; Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children; Temporary Assistance for Needy Families; Supplemental Security Income; Unemployment Insurance; governmental housing assistance; and Medicaid.)<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> House Committee on Education and the Workforce Democratic Staff, “The Just-in-Time Professor,” January 2014, <https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/1.24.14-AdjunctEforumReport.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> This finding is in line with the April 2015 “The High Public Cost of Low Wages” report by the UC Berkeley Labor Center, which found that 25 percent of part-time college faculty received some form of public assistance. Ken Jacobs, Ian Perry, and Jenifer MacGillvary, “The High Public Cost of Low Wages: Poverty-Level Wages Cost U.S. Taxpayers \$152.8 Billion Each Year in Public Support for Working Families,” UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education, April 2015, <https://laborcenter.berkeley.edu/pdf/2015/%20the-high-public-cost-of-low-wages.pdf>.

## Basic needs and food security

Which of the following best describes your ability to cover month-to-month basic nonhousing, nonmedical expenses?

Household can comfortably cover basic costs.....	20.0 percent
Household has other income (from spouse/partner, investments, trusts, etc.) that helps cover expenses .....	45.0 percent
Household is usually fine but struggles during summer or winter breaks when I am not working .....	25.9 percent
Household is struggling (e.g., either must borrow money, do without, or not pay some bills) .....	9.0 percent

- When asked about the ability to cover nonhousing, nonmedical expenses, 35 percent of respondents reported struggling at points throughout the year when they're not actively teaching. Some struggle year-round. Because so many contingent faculty members work term to term, we find the same problems that affect other forms of temporary contingent work.<sup>6</sup>

Which of the following best describes your household's ability to cover month-to-month food expenses in the past 12 months?

Household had no problem or anxiety about consistently accessing adequate food.....	74.0 percent
Household at times had problems or anxiety about accessing adequate food, but meals were not substantially reduced .....	14.0 percent
Household reduced the quality and desirability of diets, but the quantity of food intake and normal eating patterns were not substantially disrupted .....	8.3 percent
At times during the year, eating patterns of one household member (or more) were disrupted and food intake reduced because the household lacked money or other resources for food.....	3.8 percent

- The low pay that contingent faculty face has also led to food insecurity among some faculty members and their families, with 22 percent saying they had problems accessing adequate food or opted to reduce the quality of the food they eat to get by, and 4 percent reporting they've had to eat less to get by in the last year.

## Lack of job security

How many years have you been teaching in higher education/postsecondary education, including time as a graduate employee?

1-3 years.....	9.3 percent
4-6 years.....	12.8 percent
7-9 years.....	12.9 percent
10-15 years.....	24.6 percent
More than 15 years .....	40.4 percent

For your most recent contingent appointment, how far in advance of the first day of classes did you receive an appointment (or appointment renewal) letter or contract from the institution?

Less than 1 week prior .....	7.1 percent
1 to 2 weeks.....	13.2 percent
3 to 4 weeks.....	18.2 percent
5 to 6 weeks.....	10.3 percent
7 to 8 weeks.....	12.9 percent
More than 2 months prior .....	28.5 percent
After semester started.....	5.1 percent
Did not receive .....	4.7 percent

- Job security remains elusive for contingent faculty, regardless of the number of years of experience they have in the classroom. Most respondents indicate they have been teaching for more than 10 years but often don't know until days or weeks before an academic term whether their employment contract will be renewed. Forty-eight percent reported not knowing whether they would be appointed to teach a class until a month before the academic term began, and 5 percent learned of reappointment after the term had already begun.

<sup>6</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Contingent Workforce: Size, Characteristics, Earnings, and Benefits," April 20, 2015, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/670/669766.pdf>.

*What is the length of your average employment contract?*

Less than an academic term.....	8.9 percent
Academic term.....	72.9 percent
Academic year.....	12.6 percent
Multiple academic years.....	9.5 percent

- For 3 out of 4 contingent faculty members, employment is only guaranteed academic term to academic term. This leaves instructional faculty in a perpetual state of anxiety and uncertainty about whether they'll be employed in six months, and this anxiety affects every decision they make, in and out of the classroom. This can mean delays in starting families and buying homes, but it can also mean being unsure of their ability to support and mentor students they're teaching. Only 10 percent of the survey-takers had contracts across multiple years.

## Healthcare

*Where do you get your health insurance?*

Your employer.....	44.0 percent
Spouse's or domestic partner's employer .....	26.5 percent
Purchasing individual or family coverage.....	13.2 percent
Medicare/Medicaid.....	18.5 percent
I don't have health insurance .....	4.2 percent

- Less than half of the survey respondents currently access health insurance through their employer. The low coverage is likely the result of the Internal Revenue Service guidance to colleges and universities on employer obligations to provide full-time employees with health coverage under the Affordable Care Act. For contingent faculty, the guidance suggests using a multiplier for classroom hours taught that rarely results in contingent faculty being considered full-time, even if they're working more than 30 hours a week.
- This dependence on partners' earnings/benefits also creates tremendous pressure on relationships, leaving people vulnerable to economic imperatives to get or stay in relationships that don't serve them well in other ways.

*Have you had to do any of the following in the past 12 months because of the cost of healthcare?*

Put off/postponed getting dental care/checkups.....	63.7 percent
Put off/postponed getting healthcare (including mental health services) that you needed.....	43.3 percent
Did not go to see a doctor .....	43.3 percent

Did not fill a prescription for medicine .....	17.6 percent
Did not get a medical test/treatment that was recommended by a doctor .....	27.2 percent
Chose a less expensive treatment than the one your doctor recommended .....	21.0 percent
Cut pills in half/skipped doses of medicine .....	9.9 percent
Skipped/postponed rehabilitation care that your doctor recommended .....	15.7 percent

- It's shockingly common for contingent faculty to put off seeing a doctor because of costs not covered by their insurance. Despite the survey covering a period of several months in which the COVID-19 pandemic forced many people to reconsider seeking routine or non-urgent medical care, the number of contingent faculty who have forgone medical treatments remains remarkably similar to the findings in our 2020 report.<sup>7</sup>

*Does your employer provide or offer any of the following benefits as part of employment?*

Paid parental leave .....	16.4 percent
Paid family leave.....	20.4 percent
Paid sick leave .....	62.6 percent
Disability insurance .....	24.0 percent
Life insurance .....	26.0 percent
Paid holidays.....	30.0 percent
Sabbatical .....	10.0 percent
Access to professional development.....	64.2 percent

- When family crises arise, contingent faculty are often out of luck. Only 20 percent report being offered paid family leave by their employer; 16 percent report having paid parental leave. This is a stressor for any employees who have a sick family member or relative, often forcing them to choose between their students and their family.

## Retirement

*How secure do you feel about your retirement plan? (Check all that apply)*

I and/or my spouse/domestic partner put money into a retirement plan every month.....	42.8 percent
I and/or my spouse/domestic partner put money into a retirement plan on a yearly basis .....	8.9 percent
I and/or my spouse/domestic partner have an employer that puts money into a retirement plan every month .....	26.4 percent

<sup>7</sup> American Federation of Teachers, "An Army of Temps: AFT 2020 Adjunct Faculty Quality of Work/ Life Report," February 2020, [https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/adjuncts\\_qualityworklife2020.pdf](https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/adjuncts_qualityworklife2020.pdf)

**I and/or my spouse/domestic partner have an employer that puts money into a retirement plan on a yearly basis..... 6.1 percent**

**I and/or my spouse/domestic partner are relying on Social Security to cover most of our expenses in retirement..... 14.7 percent**

**I cannot imagine how I'll retire ..... 36.5 percent**

- A plan for secure retirement remains out of reach for most faculty today. Even with a large number contributing to their own retirement (43 percent report monthly contributions) and employer contributions (27 percent), we were shocked to find that 37 percent said they cannot imagine how they'll retire. Clearly, low wages, lack of job security and high medical bills have created a situation in which a significant percentage of contingent faculty feel that retirement is out of reach even when they are actively saving for it.

*How old are you?*

<b>Under 25 .....</b>	<b>0.1 percent</b>
<b>25-29.....</b>	<b>2.4 percent</b>
<b>30-39.....</b>	<b>14.6 percent</b>
<b>40-49.....</b>	<b>21.0 percent</b>
<b>50-59.....</b>	<b>27.0 percent</b>
<b>60-69.....</b>	<b>24.8 percent</b>
<b>70 or older.....</b>	<b>10.2 percent</b>

- The idea that contingent faculty cannot imagine how they'll retire is even more disturbing when the age of survey-takers is considered: Sixty-one percent are 50 or older. Faculty members who should be preparing for retirement, with some considerable progress toward retirement security, are instead wondering how long they'll be able to stay in the classroom, continuing to focus on just getting by.

# The impact on students

What students experience once they enter college matters. It matters more to students who are the first in their families to attend college, because first-generation prospective students are less likely to enroll in college and more likely not to complete their degrees unless they have strong academic support.<sup>8</sup> Robust student support services are crucial to the success of every college student, but it is the faculty who are the linchpin of student success. It's not just the professor leading a classroom that makes a difference—it's the conversations during office hours, the opportunities for collaboration on research, and the ongoing mentorship throughout college that not only breed academic success in the classroom, but also produce the innovative thinkers and engaged citizens a thriving democracy requires. The continuing trend of contingency undermines the faculty role in student success.

Disinvestment by state legislators, and budgetary decisions directing institutional resources toward financing institutional debt and a growing class of highly paid executives, have led to financial pressure on public colleges and universities to treat the people who most often interact with the newest and most vulnerable students as temps. As a result, the majority of college educators are without the professional supports they need to provide the highest-quality education to their students. Faculty who are not assigned office space or given compensated time to meet with students cannot readily hold office hours; in fact, 44 percent of respondents said they are not compensated for office hours, and nearly 70 percent offer more office hours than they are paid for. Faculty who are not paid to design or adjust their syllabuses—who may not even be permitted to do so—cannot change their reading lists to adapt to developments or questions that arise during a semester, cannot modify assignments to incorporate new research, and cannot adapt their modes of instruction to meet students' needs.

The growth of contingency has exacerbated other trends in higher education that have a direct impact on the quality of education provided to students. The American Association of University Professors noted numerous threats to the quality of education in its statement titled "In Defense of Knowledge and Higher Education"<sup>9</sup>—the movement to accede to employer demands to focus curriculum on job training at the expense of broad general knowledge, the attacks on faculty by those who seek to politicize research and teaching, and the subversion of the very concept of "expert knowledge" by political leaders. Faculty have been on the frontlines in resisting these trends, but they are only able to do so with the protections of academic freedom. The lack of meaningful job security means that

contingent faculty are often put in the position of placing their expertise on the shelf and toeing the line in order to keep their jobs. The result is a college experience in which students are not pushed to think critically or exposed to controversial or innovative ideas.

Faculty in contingent positions are often cut out of departmentwide and institution-wide planning, though they may teach the majority of some types of courses, especially in community colleges and at the introductory and developmental levels in four-year institutions.

When this happens, the knowledge that they have about their students, and the strengths and weaknesses of the courses they teach, are not taken into consideration. In short, while many contingent faculty members are excellent teachers, their expertise and commitment are not adequately developed or deployed by their departments or institutions.

In treating contingent faculty as temporary workers rather than as employees, colleges and universities are undermining the well-being of the campus community. Instructors who are hired just weeks or days before classes begin are often unable to receive institutional trainings meant to ensure campus health and safety, trainings their colleagues with no employment end date are routinely provided. Faculty members, whether contingent or not, are the first to see and respond to problems as they arise for students—but often they are not prepared to put this information to use for the protection of everyone on campus.

<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, "First-Generation Students: College Access, Persistence, and Postbachelor's Outcomes," February 2018, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2018/2018421.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> American Association of University Professors, "In Defense of Knowledge and Higher Education," January 2020, <https://www.aaup.org/file/DefenseofKnowledge.pdf>.

Has your institution provided you with adequate training and/or information to prepare you for the following?

	Yes	No	Don't know
A natural disaster occurring during a class on campus	32.3%	57.9%	10.0%
An emergency situation on campus	48.2%	44.5%	7.4%
Directing students who come to you and have been victims of crimes on campus	52.7%	39.0%	8.3%
Directing students who come to you and have been targets of prejudice/discrimination on campus	51.9%	40.1%	8.0%
Directing students who come to you and have witnessed an act of bias/intolerance on campus	48.4%	42.1%	9.5%
Taking steps if a student comes to you with signs of depression or other mental health issues	60.2%	34.7%	5.1%
Taking steps if you feel a student is a threat to themselves or others	55.3%	38.6%	6.1%
Taking steps if a student or colleague sexually harasses you	58.9%	34.5%	6.6%
"Taking steps if a student comes to you and reports experiencing unwanted sexual advances from another campus employee"	57.6%	34.8%	7.6%
Teaching online in an emergency	56.7%	38.4%	4.9%
Teaching online as the planned method of delivery	59.7%	34.4%	6.1%

- While faculty interact with students most frequently and are often the ones students come to with issues, an alarmingly large minority did not feel that their institutions had adequately trained them to direct students to the proper channels when they were victims of crimes (39 percent) or targets of prejudice or discrimination (40 percent). Faculty also did not feel that they knew the proper steps to take if a student had mental health issues (39 percent) or was being sexually harassed (35 percent).

How many office hours are you required to hold per course?

0 hours	32.9 percent
1-4 hours	52.9 percent
5-8 hours	4.0 percent
9-12 hours	3.6 percent
13-15 hours	2.7 percent
More than 15	3.9 percent

If you hold office hours, are you compensated for those office hours in your base course pay, or separately?

My compensation for office hours is included in my overall pay ..... 35.4 percent

I am compensated at an hourly instructional rate ..... 10.8 percent

I am compensated at a nonhourly instructional rate ..... 9.7 percent

I am not paid for office hours ..... 44.1 percent

Do you work more office hours than you're compensated for?

Yes ..... 68.6 percent

No ..... 31.4 percent

- Office hours are important to student success, especially for first-generation college students, yet one-third of respondents were not required to hold office hours. Of the faculty who did hold office hours, whether or not they were required to hold them, 44 percent were not compensated for that work.

## COVID-19 Pandemic

Were you teaching at least one college or university course or section on Feb. 15, 2020?

Yes ..... 93.2 percent

No ..... 6.9 percent

Which statement best describes the course(s) or section(s) you were teaching on Feb. 15, 2020?

Primarily in-person on-campus class(es) ..... 78.7 percent

An even mix of in-person on-campus and online classes ..... 11.3 percent

Primarily online ..... 10.0 percent

Were you teaching at least one college or university course or section on April 1, 2020?

Yes ..... 90.4 percent

No ..... 9.6 percent

Which statement best describes the course(s) or section(s) you were teaching on April 1, 2020?

Primarily in-person on-campus class(es) ..... 16.0 percent

An even mix of in-person on-campus and online classes ..... 4.1 percent

Primarily online ..... 79.9 percent

*If you were teaching classes in person and on campus on Feb. 15, 2020, and had those classes moved online by April 1, 2020, which of the following statements apply to you?*

<b>I was provided access to the hardware that I may have needed to teach online (e.g., computer, internet router, web camera, etc.) by my employer .....</b>	<b>14.9 percent</b>
<b>I was provided with tech tools necessary to teach online (e.g., institutional Zoom account, other online learning platforms, etc.).....</b>	<b>62.0 percent</b>
<b>I was provided with technical support in moving my course online .....</b>	<b>56.3 percent</b>
<b>I was compensated for the time and training required to move my course online.....</b>	<b>7.0 percent</b>
<b>I received clear guidelines about what was expected for moving my course online.....</b>	<b>19.9 percent</b>
<b>I had to personally cover costs associated with moving my course online.....</b>	<b>32.8 percent</b>
<b>I was provided with fewer supports than the tenure-track faculty with whom I work .....</b>	<b>12.2 percent</b>
<b>None of the above occurred .....</b>	<b>9.2 percent</b>

- When the COVID-19 pandemic hit in March 2020, nearly all instruction moved online. All faculty were expected to move their courses to an online format immediately, with little or no time and little or no compensation. Only 57 percent of faculty felt adequately prepared to teach online during the emergency transition, and 60 percent felt adequately prepared to teach online in general.
- Only 15 percent received hardware they needed to continue teaching their courses online, meaning they had to use or purchase personal devices to finish their courses. Sixty-two percent received technology tools to continue teaching their courses online, and 56 percent received technical support. This left one-third of faculty to their own devices while transitioning to an online environment during a pandemic. Shockingly, only 7 percent were compensated for the time it took to transition in-person courses to online courses. And 33 percent had to cover all costs for moving their courses online.
- While institutions of higher education attest regularly to their commitment to student success, only 20 percent of faculty felt they were given clear guidelines about what was expected for the abruptly created online courses they had to teach in the second half of the first pandemic term. This lack of guidance made it very likely that students had no idea what would be expected either, and/or that the expectations and directions of their professors would vary dramatically.

*Which word best describes your feelings about the prospect of teaching online during the pandemic?*

<b>Excited .....</b>	<b>9.2 percent</b>
<b>Happy .....</b>	<b>6.5 percent</b>
<b>Content .....</b>	<b>29.0 percent</b>
<b>Concerned .....</b>	<b>42.5 percent</b>
<b>Confused.....</b>	<b>4.5 percent</b>
<b>Fearful.....</b>	<b>3.4 percent</b>
<b>Opposed.....</b>	<b>5.0 percent</b>

*Which statement best describes your feelings about the prospect of teaching in person during the pandemic?*

<b>Excited .....</b>	<b>5.9 percent</b>
<b>Happy .....</b>	<b>5.8 percent</b>
<b>Content .....</b>	<b>9.4 percent</b>
<b>Concerned .....</b>	<b>37.3 percent</b>
<b>Confused.....</b>	<b>1.8 percent</b>
<b>Fearful.....</b>	<b>19.5 percent</b>
<b>Opposed.....</b>	<b>20.3 percent</b>

- While the majority of respondents (more than 50 percent) had negative feelings about teaching online during the pandemic, even more respondents had negative feelings about teaching in person during the pandemic. One-third responded that they were concerned about teaching in person, 20 percent were fearful, and another 20 percent opposed teaching in person during the pandemic. Only one-third of respondents felt content to teach online during the pandemic, and only 20 percent had positive feelings about teaching in person during the pandemic.

# Institutional Support

*To perform the functions of your job, do you have access to the following?*

Private space on campus to work ..... 44.4 percent

Private space to meet with students..... 40.7 percent

- Tenured and tenure-track instructors usually have private offices, personal office extensions, a personal printer, stability and paid professional development; nontenure-track faculty often do not have any of these benefits. By not providing these resources to adjunct faculty, the institution is communicating that they are not a valued part of the campus. Only 44 percent of faculty had access to a private space to work on campus, which meant they prepared for classes, graded papers and did other work for the university in public spaces or in their homes. Fewer (41 percent) had a private space to meet with students, which meant private conversations, such as those touching on academic performance or personal challenges, happened in a public space—if students felt comfortable enough to have those conversations in spaces where others could hear.
- While more than 90 percent of respondents had a master’s degree or higher, 60 percent of them made less than \$50,000 per year. The message that is communicated about the value of higher education when such low wages are paid to people with such advanced educational credentials is clear; this is a national scandal. It would take relatively little to start moving the needle toward inclusion and fair treatment of adjuncts: In one study,<sup>10</sup> even a one-day orientation for part-time faculty made those faculty members feel that the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill saw them as valuable and worthy of investing in professionally.
- In this survey, respondents’ answers to questions about their job functions and how they are perceived as part of their campus community reflect the poor state of relationships between most of the teaching workforce and the institutions that employ them.

<sup>10</sup> Kimberly Strom-Gottfried and Katherine Dunlap, “Assimilating Adjuncts: Strategies for Orienting Contract Faculty,” *Journal of Social Work Education* 40, no. 3 (2004): 445-452, <https://doi.org/10.1080/10437797.2004.10672299>.

*In a typical academic term, do you perform any of the following job functions without monetary compensation?*

	Once per day	Once per week	Once per month	No, I receive monetary compensation	No, because that isn't part of my job
Advise students formally assigned to you	7.7%	16.9%	9%	6.2%	60.3%
Informally advise students	16.5%	39.3%	25.3%	4.1%	14.9%
Help students with other course content/material (not your assigned courses)	5.4%	18.1%	44.8%	3.4%	28.4%
Review dissertations/theses	1.4%	2.1%	6.8%	2.1%	87.5%
Develop your own course materials	34.8%	34.9%	15.6%	6.5%	8.2%
Design department- or college-wide curriculum	2.8%	3.4%	16.1%	6.7%	71.1%
Participate in faculty meetings	1.5%	8%	44.2%	11.7%	34.6%
Participate in departmental events (e.g., social, symposia, etc.)	1.7%	3.9%	42%	7%	45.4%
Participate in governance (senate) meetings	0.9%	2.2%	10.7%	4.9%	81.4%
Receive training/mentoring (informal or formal)	2.5%	6.6%	40.1%	10.6%	40.2%
Provide training/mentoring to colleagues (informal or formal)	2.9%	7.8%	26.3%	5.8%	57.2%
Write letters of recommendation	2.1%	9.8%	64.6%	3.7%	20%

*To what extent do you agree with the following statements for part-time faculty at your college or university?*

	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
There are protections for academic freedom.	15.8%	26.5%	24.4%	8.6%	4.9%	6.8%	13%
Class-size loads are manageable.	17.7%	20.8%	32.7%	14%	7.5%	5.9%	1.4%
Workload is manageable.	13.9%	19.9%	36.1%	13.2%	8.7%	7.3%	1%
The evaluation procedures for promotion are fair.	9.3%	11.3%	20.8%	11.4%	7.4%	15.6%	24.3%
The evaluation procedures for retention are fair.	9.4%	12.4%	23.9%	10.4%	7.9%	10.5%	25.5%
There is clear communication from the administration.	12.9%	17.3%	27.8%	15.4%	11.4%	13.1%	2.1%
There is clear support from the administration.	12.2%	16.9%	24.3%	15%	12.4%	15.2%	4%
There are ample opportunities for professional development.	16.2%	15.4%	28.1%	13.4%	7.9%	14.1%	4.9%
There is job security from term to term.	4.8%	10.4%	15.7%	18.4%	11.9%	34.8%	4.1%
There is job security from year to year.	4.1%	10.7%	13.6%	18.6%	12.5%	36%	4.6%
Everyone has a voice in the decisions that affect them.	2.9%	8.3%	11.4%	21.7%	14.6%	33.4%	7.8%
There is adequate space for conducting student office hours.	8.4%	10.7%	20.8%	18%	12.3%	24.3%	5.5%
There is financial support for conducting student office hours.	5.5%	7%	14.9%	19.3%	9.3%	32.7%	11.4%
There are ample opportunities to obtain full-time, permanent teaching positions.	1.1%	1.8%	3.6%	16%	6.3%	60.3%	10.8%

*Do you feel like you are treated as a member of the faculty at your institution(s)?*

Yes..... 59.0 percent  
No..... 41.1 percent

*Do you feel like you are treated as a member of the faculty by you colleagues at your institution(s)?*

Yes..... 73.6 percent  
No..... 26.4 percent

*Do you feel like you are treated as a member of the faculty by the administration at your institution(s)?*

Yes..... 52.7 percent  
No..... 47.3 percent

*To what extent do you agree with the following statements for contingent faculty at your college or university when positions become available? (Check all that apply.)*

**Adjunct-contingent faculty are adequately informed..... 83.1 percent**

**Full consideration is given to adjunct-contingent faculty working at the institution(s) ..... 25.6 percent**

**The hiring process is transparent ..... 16.8 percent**

**Current onsite adjunct-contingent faculty believe they can secure a full-time tenure-track position..... 8.2 percent**

*Does your employment contract contain any kind of seniority-based rehire preference language?*

Yes..... 34.4 percent  
No..... 27.5 percent  
Don't know ..... 34.1 percent

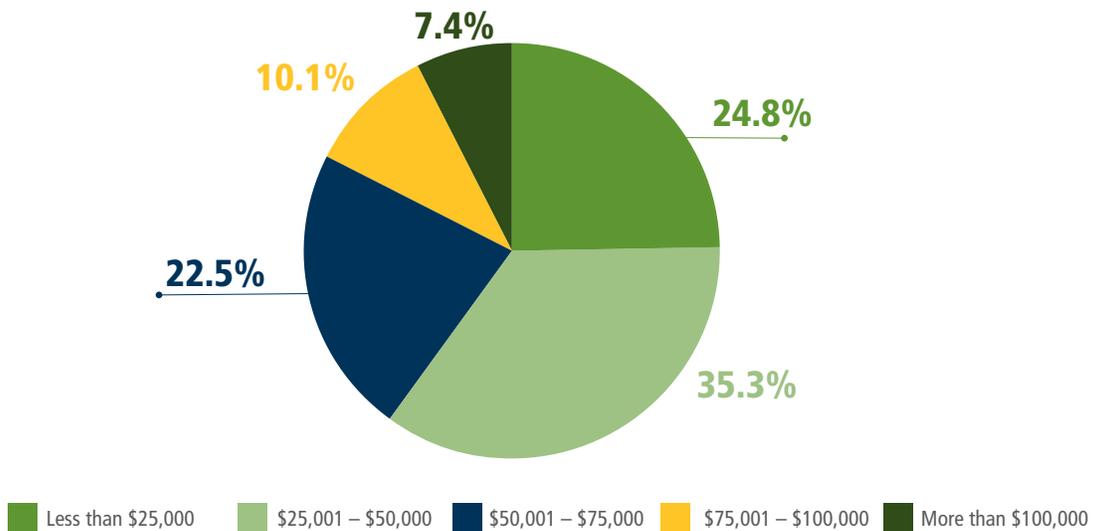
- Despite all of this, adjunct and contingent faculty members continue to prioritize students—sometimes even at their own expense. More than 80 percent of respondents advised students informally at least once a month without monetary compensation, and 68 percent helped students with class content that was not from the course they were assigned to teach. Students do not know the difference between tenured and contingent faculty, they just know which faculty members they feel most comfortable with. Institutions of higher education are creating and perpetuating a system of exploitation at the expense of their faculty, hiding this fact in plain sight from the students and families whose tuition dollars pour into that system each year.



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## LOW PAY AND PUBLIC ASSISTANCE

*What is your estimated total individual income annually, across all teaching and nonteaching positions?*



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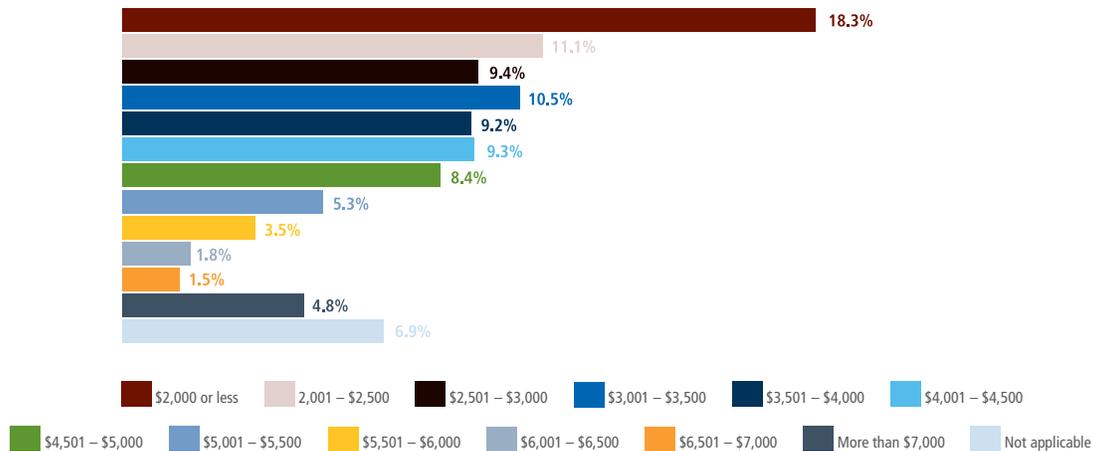
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About how much do you earn, on average, for a typical credit-bearing unit (for a 3-hour, 4-hour or 5-hour credit course) from your anchor teaching position?



- Nearly one-quarter of respondents earn less than \$25,000 a year, placing them below the federal poverty guideline for a family of four. Another one-third earn less than \$50,000, which keeps them just above the poverty line but trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty—never earning enough to reach financial security and not earning a low enough income to receive the assistance that would enable them to plan for their future.
- This low annual income is a consequence of the low pay for instruction. Nearly 50 percent of respondents told us they are paid less than \$3,500 a course. Contingent work is not only temp work; it is piecemeal. As described in the 2014 House Committee on Education and the Workforce report “The Just-in-Time Professor,” contingent faculty usually are paid a fixed amount of compensation for each unit produced, regardless of how much time it takes to produce. For these workers, the unit of production is a college course.<sup>1</sup> Teaching a “four-four” load (four courses in each of two semesters), as the typical respondent to this survey does, would lead to only \$28,000 in income before taxes and other deductions.
- Contingent faculty members want their contributions recognized with equitable compensation: More than 51 percent indicated that they believe they should be paid at least \$5,000 a course. An increase in the per-course minimum would immediately benefit the vast majority of contingent faculty today.

<sup>1</sup> House Committee on Education and the Workforce Democratic Staff, “The Just-in-Time Professor,” January 2014, <https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/1.24.14-AdjunctForumReport.pdf>.

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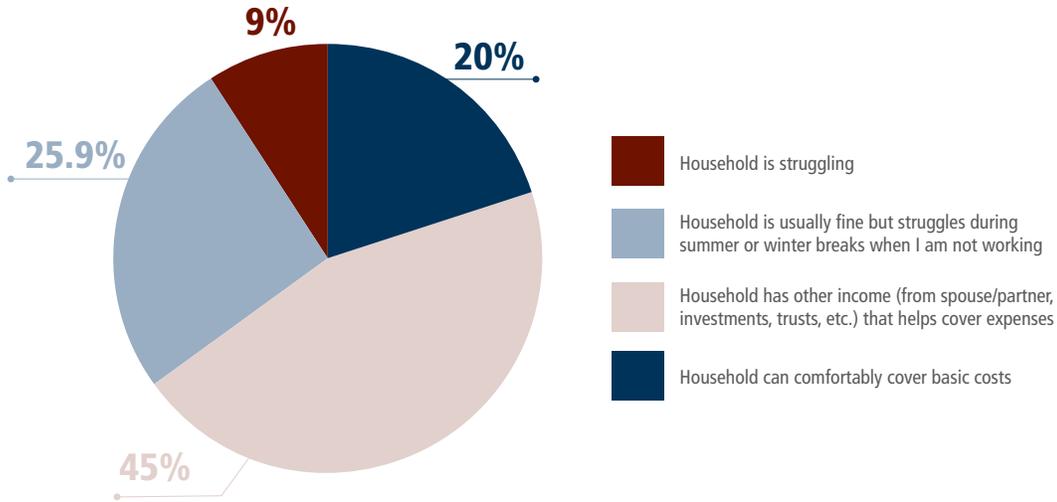




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## BASIC NEEDS AND FOOD SECURITY

Which of the following best describes your ability to cover month-to-month basic nonhousing, nonmedical expenses?



- When asked about the ability to cover nonhousing, nonmedical expenses, 35 percent of respondents reported struggling at points throughout the year when they're not actively teaching. Some struggle year-round. Because so many contingent faculty members work term to term, we find the same problems that affect other forms of temporary contingent work.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Government Accountability Office, "Contingent Workforce: Size, Characteristics, Earnings, and Benefits," April 20, 2015, <https://www.gao.gov/assets/670/669766.pdf>.

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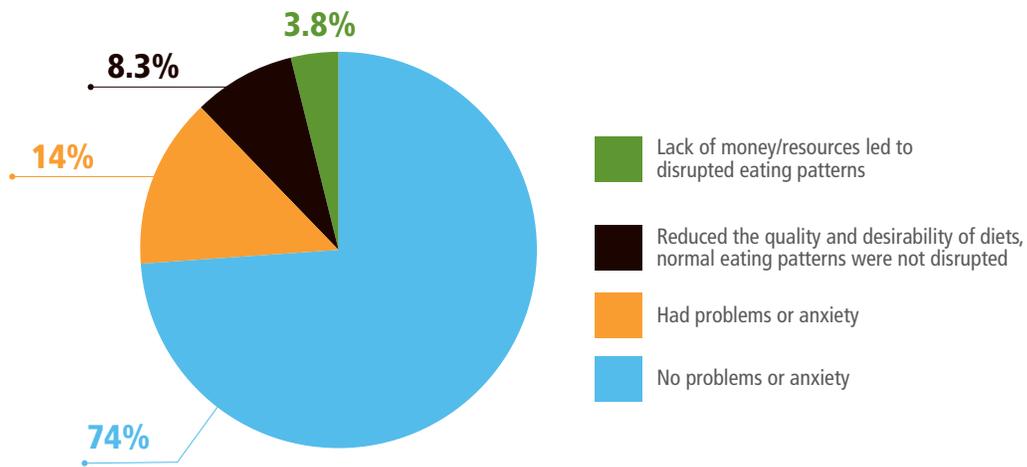
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Which of the following best describes your household's ability to cover month-to-month food expenses in the past 12 months?



- The low pay that contingent faculty face has also led to food insecurity among some faculty members and their families, with 22 percent saying they had problems accessing adequate food or opted to reduce the quality of the food they eat to get by, and 4 percent reporting they've had to eat less to get by in the last year.

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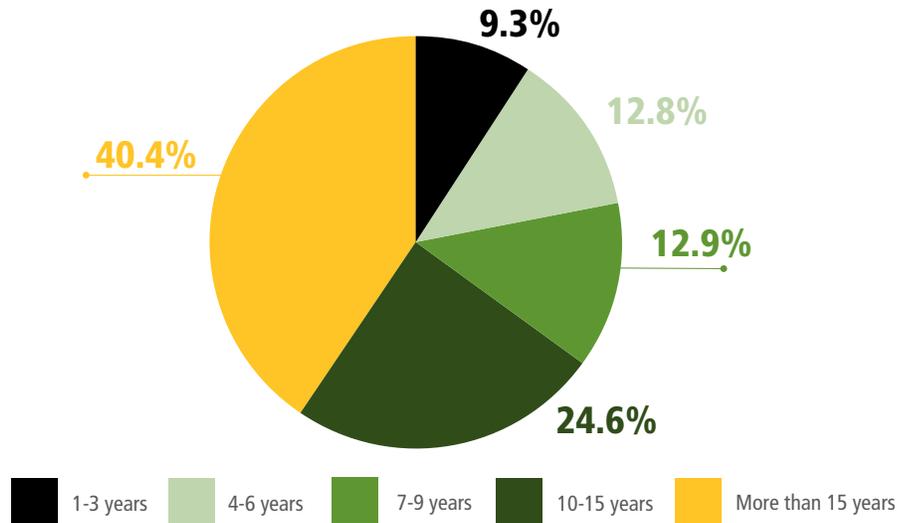




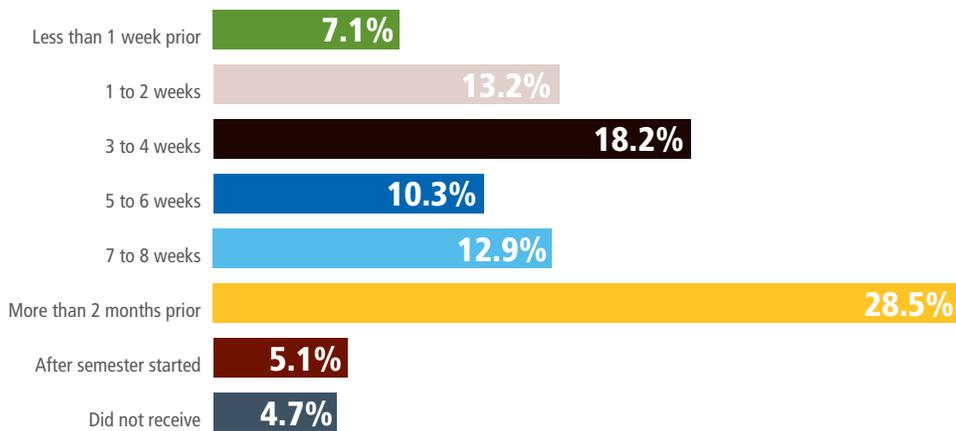
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## LACK OF JOB SECURITY

How many years have you been teaching in higher education/postsecondary education, including time as a graduate employee?



For your most recent contingent appointment, how far in advance of the first day of classes did you receive an appointment (or appointment renewal) letter or contract from the institution?



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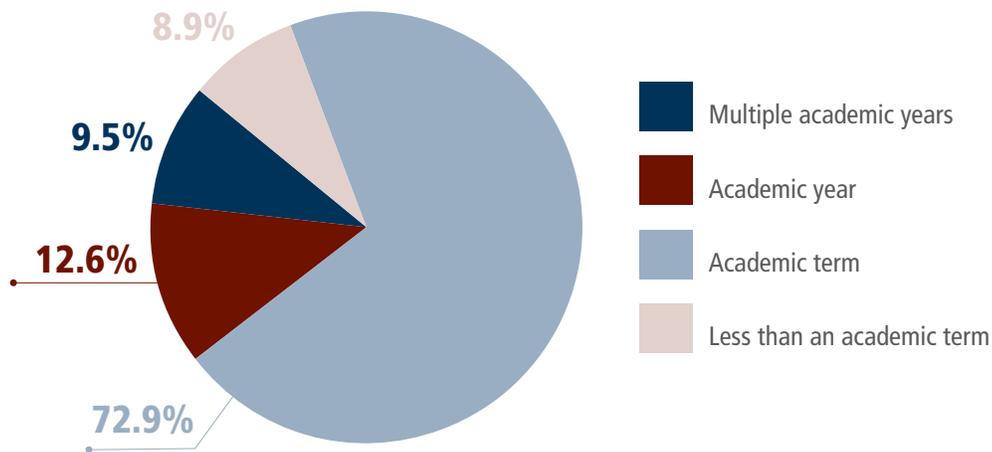




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- Job security remains elusive for contingent faculty, regardless of the number of years of experience they have in the classroom. Most respondents indicate they have been teaching for more than 10 years but often don't know until days or weeks before an academic term whether their employment contract will be renewed. Forty-eight percent reported not knowing whether they would be appointed to teach a class until a month before the academic term began, and 5 percent learned of reappointment after the term had already begun

What is the length of your average employment contract?



- For 3 out of 4 contingent faculty members, employment is only guaranteed academic term to academic term. This leaves instructional faculty in a perpetual state of anxiety and uncertainty about whether they'll be employed in six months, and this anxiety affects every decision they make, in and out of the classroom. This can mean delays in starting families and buying homes, but it can also mean being unsure of their ability to support and mentor students they're teaching. Only 10 percent of the survey-takers had contracts across multiple years.

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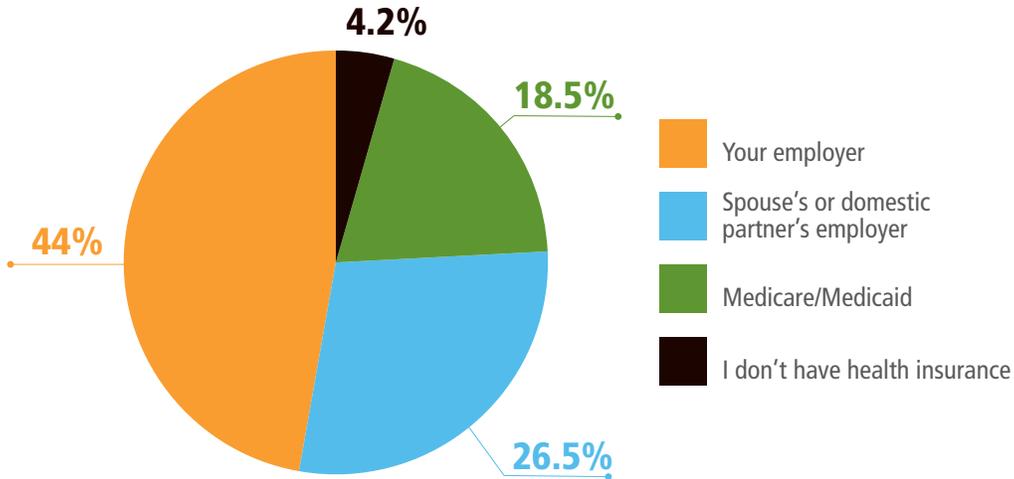




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## HEALTHCARE

Where do you get your health insurance?



- Less than half of the survey respondents currently access health insurance through their employer. The low coverage is likely the result of the Internal Revenue Service guidance to colleges and universities on employer obligations to provide full-time employees with health coverage under the Affordable Care Act. For contingent faculty, the guidance suggests using a multiplier for classroom hours taught that rarely results in contingent faculty being considered full-time, even if they're working more than 30 hours a week.
- This dependence on partners' earnings/benefits also creates tremendous pressure on relationships, leaving people vulnerable to economic imperatives to get or stay in relationships that don't serve them well in other ways.

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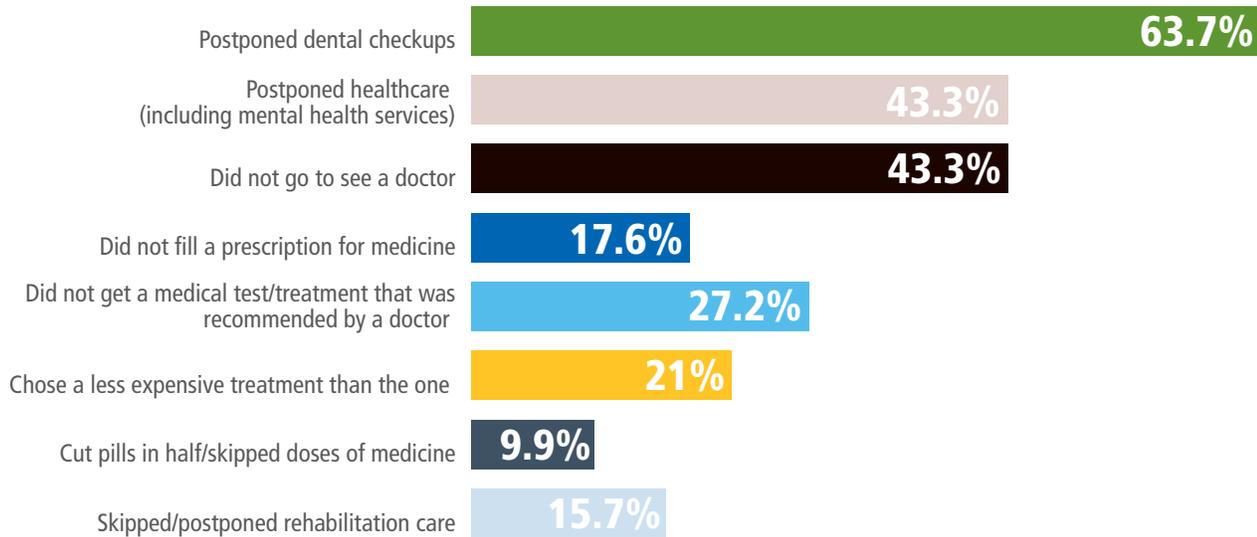
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*Have you had to do any of the following in the past 12 months because of the cost of healthcare?*



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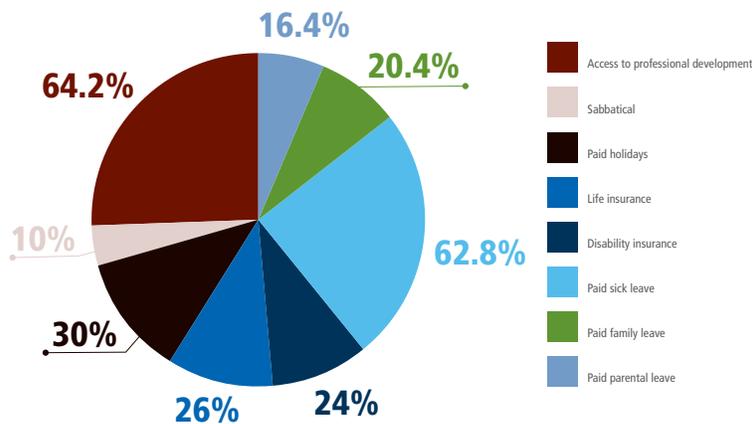


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## HEALTHCARE

- It's shockingly common for contingent faculty to put off seeing a doctor because of costs not covered by their insurance. Despite the survey covering a period of several months in which the COVID-19 pandemic forced many people to reconsider seeking routine or non-urgent medical care, the number of contingent faculty who have forgone medical treatments remains remarkably similar to the findings in our 2020 report.<sup>4</sup>

*Does your employer provide or offer any of the following benefits as part of employment?*



- When family crises arise, contingent faculty are often out of luck. Only 20 percent report being offered paid family leave by their employer; 16 percent report having paid parental leave. This is a stressor for any employees who have a sick family member or relative, often forcing them to choose between their students and their family.

<sup>4</sup> American Federation of Teachers, "An Army of Temps: AFT 2020 Adjunct Faculty Quality of Work/ Life Report," February 2020, [https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/adjuncts\\_qualityworklife2020.pdf](https://www.aft.org/sites/default/files/adjuncts_qualityworklife2020.pdf)

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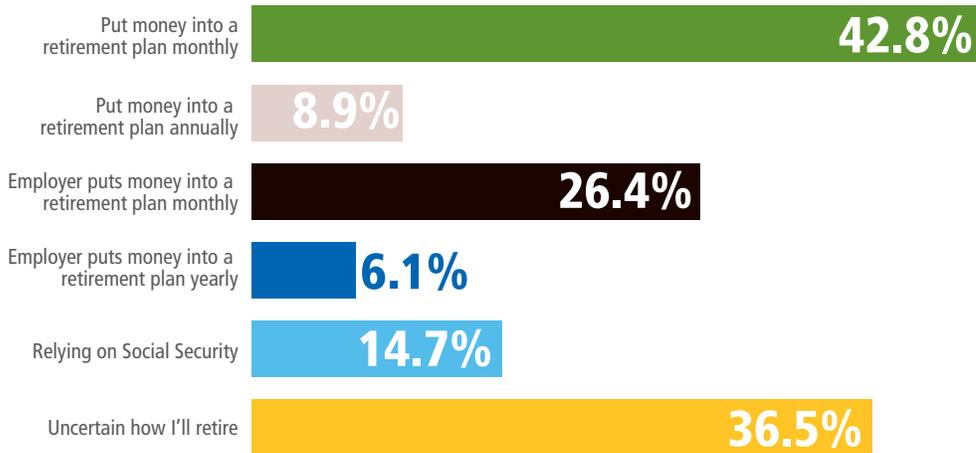




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## RETIREMENT

How secure do you feel about your retirement plan? (Check all that apply)



- A plan for secure retirement remains out of reach for most faculty today. Even with a large number contributing to their own retirement (43 percent report monthly contributions) and employer contributions (27 percent), we were shocked to find that 37 percent said they cannot imagine how they'll retire. Clearly, low wages, lack of job security and high medical bills have created a situation in which a significant percentage of contingent faculty feel that retirement is out of reach even when they are actively saving for it.

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