

Adjunct faculty

Who they are and what they experience on the job

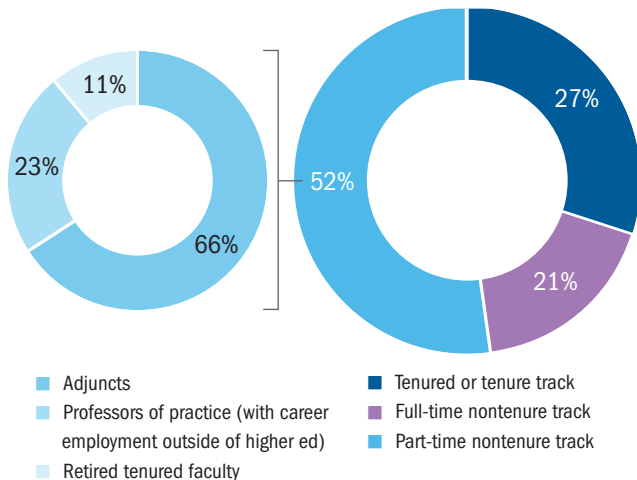
In the spring of 2018 the TIAA Institute surveyed more than 500 adjunct faculty members to examine who they are and their experiences in American higher education.

The *2018 Adjunct Faculty Survey* sheds light on adjuncts' demographics, employment experiences, and career satisfaction and preferences.¹

The part-time nontenure-track faculty workforce comprises three groups: two-thirds are adjunct faculty and instructors; nearly one-quarter are “professors of practice” and have career-employment outside higher education; and approximately 10% are professors who have retired from a tenured position.

Composition of the academic workforce

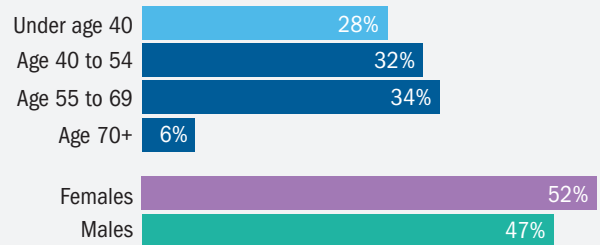
Faculty and instructors in part-time nontenure-track positions in 2016 comprised more than half the U.S. academic workforce.



Adjuncts are part-time nontenure-track faculty and instructors, distinct from professors of practice and those who have retired from a tenured position but continue to teach part-time.

Adjunct demographics

More than 70% of adjuncts are aged 40 or over, and a slight majority (52%) are female:



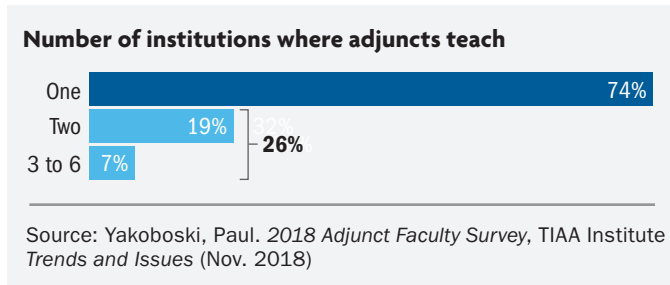
Note: Totals may not equal 100% due to rounding.
Source: Yakoboski, Paul. *2018 Adjunct Faculty Survey*, TIAA Institute *Trends and Issues* (Nov. 2018)

Source: Yakoboski, Paul. *2018 Adjunct Faculty Survey*, TIAA Institute *Trends and Issues* (Nov. 2018) (left chart); The American Association of University Professors. *Data Snapshot: Contingent Faculty in US Higher Ed* (Oct. 2018) (right chart).

Adjunct faculty

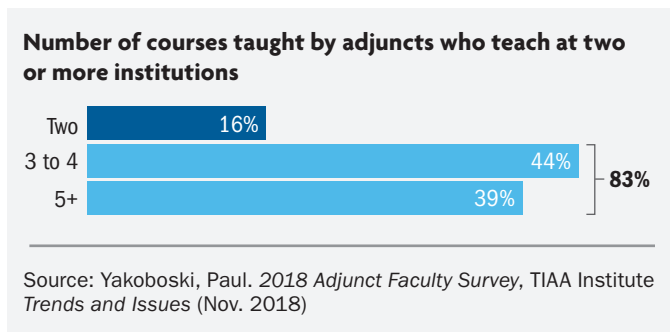
Adjunct work experience

Nearly three-quarters (74%) of adjuncts teach at a single college or university:



Of the 74% of adjuncts who teach at one institution, 35% teach one course, and 35% teach two courses there, meaning that 52% of *all* adjuncts teach one or two courses at a single institution.

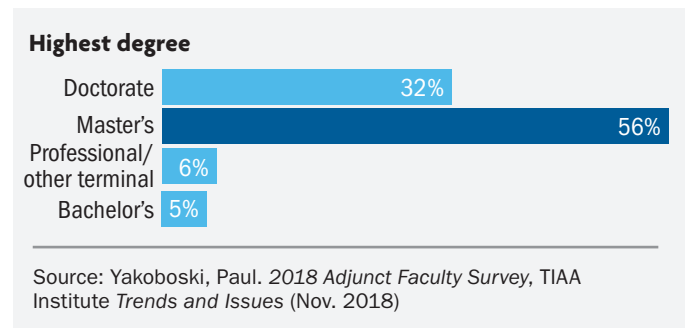
On the other hand, of the 26% of adjuncts who teach at two or more institutions, 83% teach three or more classes, meaning that of *all* adjuncts, 22% teach three or more classes at two or more institutions:



A common perception regarding adjunct faculty seems to be that they are relatively young, have recently attained their doctorate degree, and are teaching multiple classes at multiple colleges and universities while pursuing a tenure-track position. While such individuals certainly exist, they do not represent the norm.

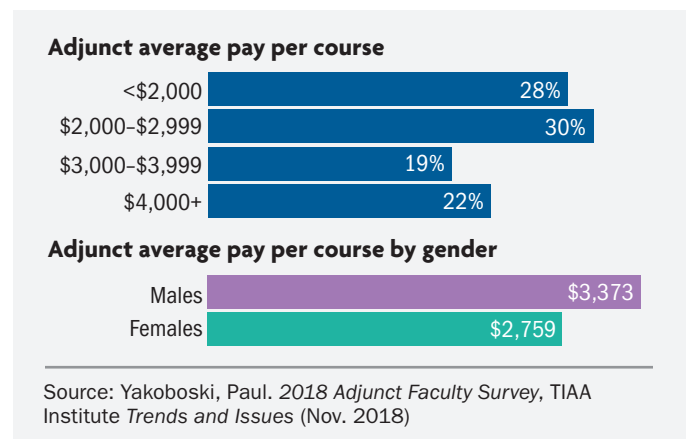
Adjunct education

The highest degree among most adjunct faculty is a Master's.



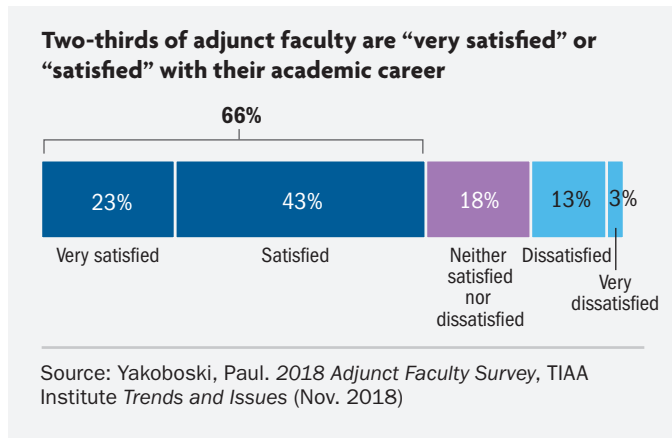
Adjunct pay

Adjunct faculty are paid an average of \$3,000 per course, but almost 60% receive less than that on average. Male adjuncts tend to earn more per course than their female peers: \$3,373 on average compared with \$2,759.



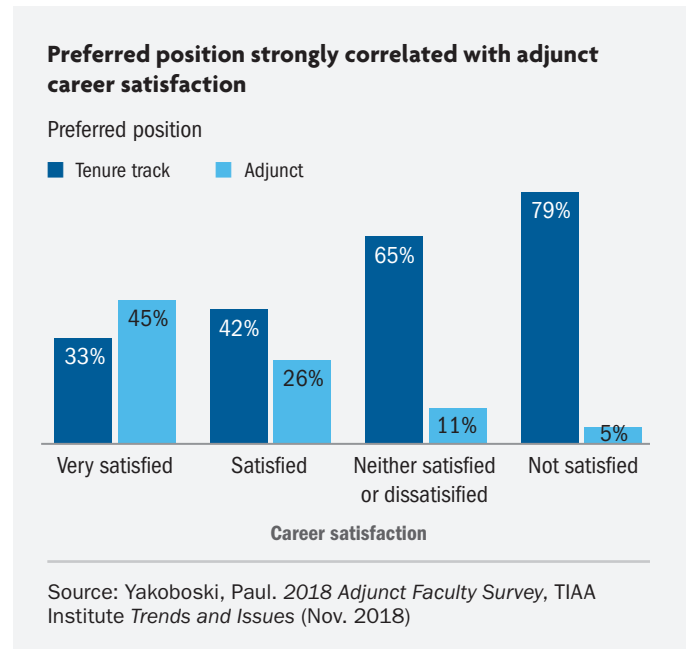
Adjunct career satisfaction and preferences

Survey respondents were asked, “Overall, are you satisfied or dissatisfied with your academic career?”



Adjunct career satisfaction is positively correlated with household income (but not with average pay per course). Age and highest degree attained also are linked with career satisfaction: adjuncts under age 40 are more likely to be dissatisfied with their academic career, as are those who have earned a doctorate degree.

Preferred position type—tenure track or adjunct—is also strongly correlated with career satisfaction. Nearly 80% of adjuncts “not satisfied” with their academic career would prefer a tenure-track position; on the other hand, just one-third of adjuncts who are “very satisfied” with their career would prefer such a position. Analogously, 45% of adjuncts who are “very satisfied” prefer their adjunct position, but only 5% of those “not satisfied” do so.



Read more

[*Adjunct Faculty: Who They Are and What is Their Experience?*](#)



¹A second report stemming from the 2018 Adjunct Faculty Survey will focus on adjuncts’ personal finances.