

Young researchers in Norway

Career paths and ambitions



A report by **The Young Academy of Norway**

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Summary

Despite the fact that many young researchers have passion for their field and are willing to sacrifice a lot to work in research, a survey conducted by the Young Academy of Norway and UiODoc, indicates that recruitment into the research sector will remain a challenge in the years to come. Completed by more than 800 researchers under 38 at different stages of their careers, the survey supports earlier findings from the annual Career Barometer (*Karrierebarometeret*) and Candidate Survey (*Kandidatundersøkelse*).

The 2016 report, “**When uncertainty prevails. Research leadership and career paths for young researchers**” (Norwegian: *Når usikkerheten rår. Forskningsledelse og karriereveier for yngre forskere*), indicated that **only half of today’s young researchers would recommend a research career to young people – and women to a lesser extent than men**. Permanent employees are more likely to recommend a research career than researchers on temporary contracts (which represented almost 75% of the respondents). **Uncertain working conditions** are one of the main reasons that **fewer than 50% of the respondents believe they will be working in research in ten years**. Only 1 in 5 expect to get a permanent research position in the future, and women are more uncertain than men in this respect.

In this report we deepen the previous findings and broaden the survey’s scope of analysis. The report shows, among other things, that:

PhD students, postdocs and young researchers point to several of the same issues related to temporary employment, yet emphasize different aspects:

- Many PhD students are worried about taking on a career that has weak and uncertain prospects.
- Postdocs consider uncertain career prospects as a major problem in a phase of life where one wishes to establish a family and plan for the future.
- Postdocs and senior researchers in temporary positions feel like they have fewer rights and feel less appreciated than permanent researchers at the same institution. In addition, they emphasize the psychological and social burden associated with an uncertain job situation and the continuous stress associated with having to secure the next project or position.

One quarter of the young researchers that participated have experienced unwanted periods of unemployment, for example due to lack of research funding.

Temporary employment has negative consequences for research quality, as it makes it difficult to develop an independent research profile and to invest in long-term and innovative research projects.

Opportunities for exciting (and more stable) jobs outside academia are mainly a topic amongst PhD students. Several established researchers rather point to their being over-qualified for potentially relevant alternative positions and fear that their expertise may be a disadvantage when looking for a job outside of academia. Many also indicate that they lack knowledge on relevant options and opportunities outside of academia.

This uncertainty is further reflected in the fact that **1 out of 3 respondents feel either uncertain or ill-equipped to seek a job outside of research**. Again, this is more likely to be the case for women than for men. Norwegian researchers and postdocs also feel more uncertain compared to researchers of other nationalities or in other positions. However, young researchers working in research institutes are more optimistic than university employees and feel better prepared to seek a job outside of research.

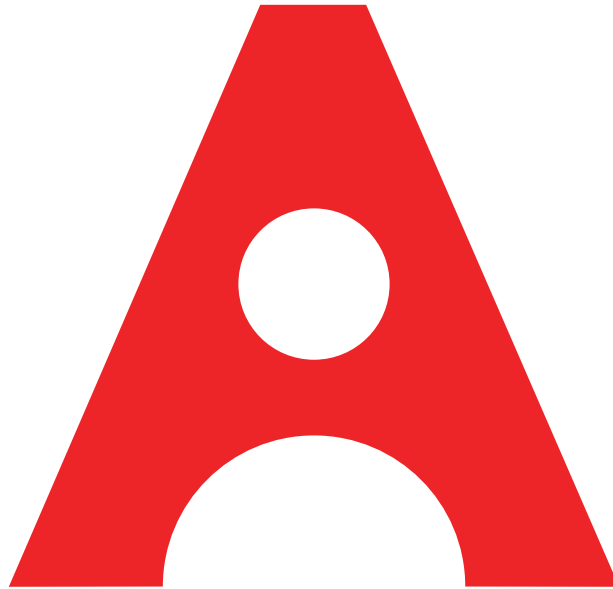
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Only one in four of the respondents believe they have received adequate training as a part of their research education in more generic and transferable skills that can be valuable for pursuing a career in other sectors. More than half of the respondents experience that they have acquired "some" such broader competences, but not to a sufficient extent.

More than 8 out of 10 respondents have never received career guidance at their institution. Among the PhD students, it is less likely for female candidates to have received such career advice than for their male counterparts.

There are several differences between disciplines/fields for several main topics addressed in the survey, as well as a number of communalities.

- Within HS, foreign citizens envision to still be working in research in ten years from now to a greater extent than Norwegian citizens do.
- Within MN (Mathematics and Natural Sciences, Technology, Medicine and Health Sciences, Agricultural and Fisheries and Veterinary Medicine), foreign citizens are more often temporarily employed than Norwegians.
- Female respondents from both HS and MN are less likely to recommend a research career to young people today than male respondents. Within MN, this gender effect is further amplified at the PhD student level.
- Women in MN feel that they are less well-equipped to apply for positions outside of research than men do.
- Within MN, almost 3/4 of respondents experience that they have not received sufficient training (or no training at all) in more generic skills. Within HS, this share is even higher (78%).



About the Young Academy of Norway

The Young Academy of Norway was founded on 29.10.2015. The Young Academy of Norway is open for talented, young researchers from all disciplines interested in working interdisciplinarily and dedicating time to work with broader issues such as policy development and innovative research dissemination.



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