



Survey of Early Career Faculty in Israel 2023

Executive Summary

In the summer of 2023, the Israel Young Academy conducted a comprehensive survey, the third of its kind, among 971 senior staff members hired by Israeli universities during the previous decade. The survey aimed to reflect the academic experiences of early-career Israeli researchers, to identify strengths and weaknesses of the Israeli academic system in its hiring and absorption processes, and to recommend possible solutions for issues raised in the survey. The survey questionnaire included diverse topics, such as the processes of promotion and tenure, mentoring, research funding, teaching, and research infrastructure, as well as social issues such as discrimination and sexual harassment, gender and disciplinary gaps, coping with the COVID pandemic, and more.

In the period between the questionnaire's distribution and the publication of its findings, Israel was faced with several difficult and still ongoing national crises, including the controversy over the reforms to its legal system that the government has sought to enact and the outbreak of the "Swords of Iron" war following the October 7 attack. Although the survey could not have addressed these events, some of its findings are relevant to these events, and are addressed as such in our discussion of the survey's results. In particular, possibilities for academic collaboration between Israeli universities and their counterparts elsewhere in the world. These events raise serious concerns that the international dimension of Israel's universities will be hurt by the exclusion of Israel from the global academic community.

The survey's findings point toward critical and influential international channels where investments can be made to help strengthen the Israeli academic community's connection with the global academic community and mitigate the damage to the Israeli academic system. In this context, we recommend allocating resources and establishing diverse and flexible mechanisms for bringing high-quality faculty and research students to Israel, supporting international research, and cultivating international institutional ties. To maximize the number of high-quality candidates, we recommend that institutions improve their selection processes – for example, by allowing candidates to apply for positions throughout the year and not only in specific periods, and by maintaining ongoing and transparent communications with the candidates.

In addition, the survey's findings on how universities contended with the difficulties caused by the COVID pandemic can shed light on their deficiencies in preparing for times of crisis, especially with regard to the groups most vulnerable to detriment at such times. The findings indicate that the areas that were most adversely affected, and where the impact is also expected to be long-term, are all related to ongoing research, publication, and work with international entities. The majority of survey respondents reported receiving very little assistance from their institutions in coping with these problems during the pandemic.

We also found that greater harm was reported by women than by men, by researchers in the humanities and social sciences than by researchers in the life sciences and exact sciences, and by parents of young children than by those who do not have young children. Therefore, in addressing situations of uncertainty and crisis, the institutions ought to provide differential responses to different population groups within the academic faculty in accordance with their specific needs and the extent of the harm they suffer.

Along with these issues, the survey's findings reflect salient trends that have characterized Israeli academia for some time. For example, as in the findings of the previous survey conducted on behalf of the Israel Young Academy in 2019, the current survey's findings indicate complex challenges of transparency with regard to the processes of promotion and tenure.

In the current survey, we also wanted to check whether some researchers experience special difficulties on account of their gender, field of study, institutional affiliation, or other personal characteristics. In each section of the survey, when we identified clear and substantial disparities between sub-samples among the respondents, we noted the significance of these disparities in presenting the results of that section. For example, we found that women are more affected than men in non-research areas of academic work (regardless of the academic field) and that researchers in the humanities and social sciences are more affected by teaching loads in comparison to researchers in the life sciences and exact sciences.

We thank all of the researchers who took the time to fill in the questionnaire and the university officials who distributed the survey to the academic staff of their institutions. We hope the survey's findings will be useful to improving the academic system in Israel.

An additional survey is planned for 2027. Like the responses to the current survey, those of that survey will be compared to the previous surveys conducted on behalf of the Young Israel Academy.

For the full report in Hebrew: <https://doi.org/10.52873/Young.2023.Survey>

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