



# Survey of Early Career Faculty in Israel: 2019

---

## Executive Summary

In the spring of 2019, the Israel Young Academy conducted a comprehensive survey among academic faculty who started a tenure-track position in Israeli universities between 2009 and 2018. This survey, the second of its kind, was completed by nearly one thousand early career faculty. It aimed to map the state of early career faculty in Israeli academia, to test the validity of existing policies, and to identify strengths as well as areas for improvement. The survey covers multiple domains: post-doctoral training prior to hiring, hiring processes, institutional support, recruitment of research students, securing of research funding, administrative support, research infrastructure, teaching, promotion and tenure processes, demographics and institutional treatment of various marginalized and underrepresented populations. This executive summary presents the chief conclusions from the survey results. It should be noted that the survey was conducted before the Covid-19 pandemic. Nevertheless, the results remain very relevant.

When compared to the survey carried out six years ago, among early-career faculty hired between 2004 and 2013, the present results show **a trend of moderate improvement in the hiring process of tenure-track faculty**. In most of the participating academic institutions awareness of this issue seems to have increased in the past decade, and efforts to improve the hiring process have been productive: the hiring process has become more systematic, and new faculty members enjoy more comprehensive guidance and mentoring, more significant workload reductions, and larger

start-up funds. Nevertheless, **new faculty still face many obstacles**, including a significant load of teaching and administration tasks in the first few years of their academic career, and limited support from the administrative system in relation to both research and teaching. Early career faculty receive limited training in leadership and management necessary for running research groups, and many of those requiring a research laboratory receive it only following long delays.

The findings also raise several central issues that require special attention:

**There are significant disparities between the academic experience of early career faculty in the humanities and social sciences (HSS) relative to their counterparts in the natural sciences, life sciences and engineering (STEM+LS). The disciplinary difference is striking, and it is arguably the most important finding of this survey.**

The disciplinary disparity affects almost every aspect of academic life and is far more pronounced than the disparities observed when results are dissected by any other category, such as by institution or gender. The overall picture indicates that two very different academic cultures coexist within the academic institutions. In comparison with their HSS counterparts, STEM+LS faculty benefit from more substantial resources, a research infrastructure better suited to their needs, and greater support from their young colleagues and from the administrative system. In addition, STEM+LS faculty receive more significant teaching-load reductions and report more transparent promotion procedures. The problem is widespread and manifests not only in the distribution of resources, but also in hiring rank : about 50% of HSS respondents were hired at the Lecturer rank (and 50% as Senior Lecturer) despite having completed post-doctoral studies, compared to only 10% STEM+LS early career faculty who were hired as Lecturers.

**A large majority of young researchers feel disappointed and frustrated by the way in which the tenure and promotion procedures are handled, and a significant proportion found the process distressing.**

Respondents' chief complaints were that the promotion process lacks efficiency, transparency, and clarity regarding requirements and criteria for tenure and promotion. Even the process' impartiality and professionalism received a low rating from approximately a quarter of the respondents. These results are consistent across institutions and disciplines. Promotion and tenure processes leave many faculty members feeling harmed, negatively impacting the willingness of many to contribute to their department and university. Systemic action is required to improve the tenure and promotion experience of early-career faculty. In Section 3 we suggest possible courses of action, which do not require major investment of resources, and which we believe may considerably improve the situation.

Gender representational disparities are much more significant in STEM+LS than HSS. This, alongside the large disciplinary disparities, **requires discipline-specific analyses to avoid misinterpretation of disciplinary disparities as related to gender. Although the survey was not designed to systematically evaluate hiring rank, findings raise the possibility that in disciplines where many faculty are hired as lecturers, predominantly humanities and social sciences, more women than men were hired as lecturers.**

This disparity, though observed only in some institutions and disciplines, was not accounted for completion of post-doctoral studies. We therefore urge all universities, which have access to their institutional hiring data, to examine the entry-level rank of faculty by discipline and gender.

The survey also revealed small but consistent differences between the responses of women and men early career faculty in HSS with regard to support from young and senior colleagues, treatment received from the administration, and financial support. In contrast, among early career faculty in STEM+LS these disparities were not observed.

---

By Prof. Amit Bernstein, Prof. Avi Zadok,  
Prof. Yossi Yovel and Prof. Ehud Nakar  
Present and past members of the Israel Young Academy

**The Israel Young Academy**  
Albert Einstein Square. P.O. Box 4040, Jerusalem 9104001  
Email: [IsraelYoungAcademy@academy.ac.il](mailto:IsraelYoungAcademy@academy.ac.il)  
[www.young.academy.ac.il](http://www.young.academy.ac.il)

