



Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on faculty members

Digging into emotions, career plans, job responsibilities and attitudes

Higher education faculty (and students) have had their worlds turned upside down since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in early 2020. Recent survey results underscore the major impact that COVID-19 has had on professors, adjunct instructors, and other college and university faculty members.

Due to COVID-19, faculty members' workloads have increased while job satisfaction has declined. Faculty are more stressed than ever before, and many are considering career changes and early retirement.

These results¹ came to light from recent online survey responses of 1,122 faculty at two- and four-year colleges and universities across the U.S.

The pandemic has forced all higher education institutions to fundamentally re-evaluate the way they deliver value to students, while also ensuring that faculty and staff have the resources and support they need to perform their jobs safely and effectively.

Read on for some of the key findings from the Fidelity Faculty Research study, conducted in partnership with the Chronicle of Higher Education.





Faculty are feeling more stressed and less hopeful

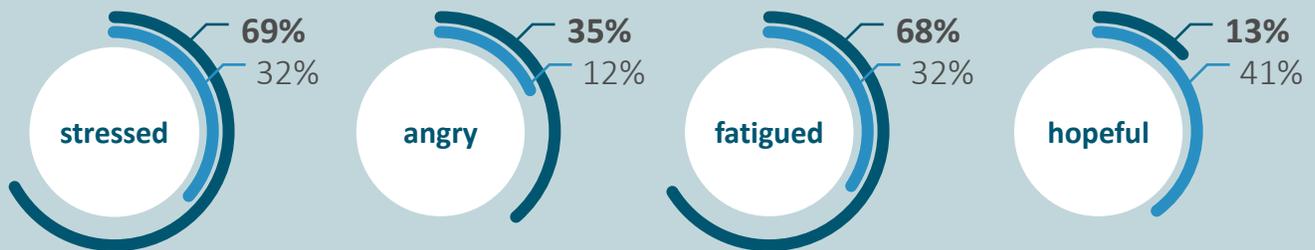
Levels of stress, frustration, and helplessness have increased significantly since pre-pandemic.



The emotional toll of the pandemic on faculty members:

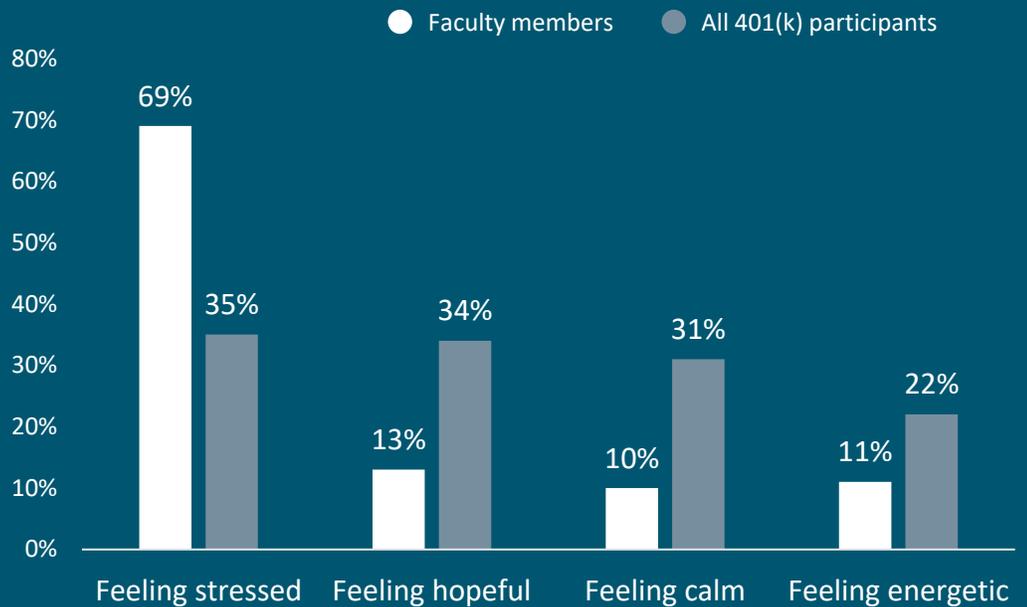
Reported feeling "very" or "extremely..."

● End of 2019 ● September 2020



When compared to a general population of defined contribution (DC) plan participants surveyed² by Fidelity, it appears that higher education faculty members are experiencing higher levels of stress and negative emotions.

*Percent who reported experiencing each emotion over the past month (top 2 box—extremely/very)



Faculty members in their own words:



"Drained, it's hard to sit, in such an isolated manner, in front of my computer, at home, for every work-related activity. Every. Single. Day."*



"Work from home has paradoxically made me feel guilty about working rather than interacting with my kids, while also feeling guilty about interacting with my kids rather than working."*

*The experience of this customer may not be representative of the experience of all customers and is not indicative of future success.



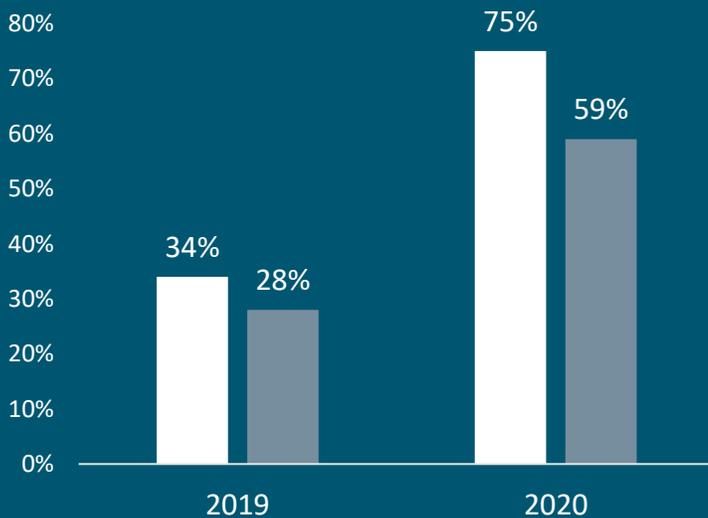
Women are bearing more of the brunt of pandemic-era multi-tasking

Research has consistently found that women do more of the family caregiving, whether it be for children or other relatives. The pandemic has severely impacted all the forms of assistance in this area: day-care and senior centers are shut down in many parts of the country; school-age children are at home, needing attention and help with learning; and informal but crucial help, such as grandparents who can pitch in, might have disappeared due to the health risks of spreading the coronavirus.



Feeling of "stress" by gender

● Women ● Men



Women faculty more likely to report:



Higher workloads
(82% vs. 70% of men)



Increased deterioration of work-life balance
(74% vs. 63% of men)



They feel they have done a worse job meeting their responsibilities in research and publication
(66% of tenured women vs. 58% of male professors)

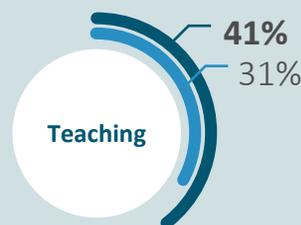
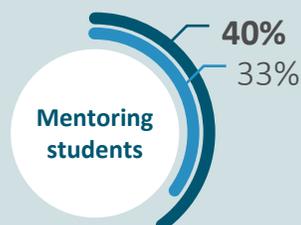
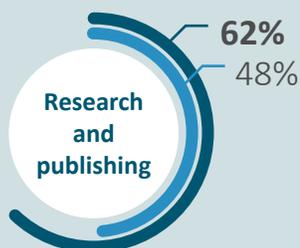


The impact on faculty members' ability to meet their responsibilities

Many faculty members said their ability to research and publish, mentor students, teach, and provide service was the same or worse in 2020. However, the difference was most noticeable among tenured faculty versus all other faculty.

Reported feeling "worse":

● Other ● Tenured





Major impacts on faculty attitudes about teaching

Since the start of 2020, many faculty members said their workloads have increased while their enjoyment of teaching has decreased.

36% viewed the switch to online or hybrid classes negatively



76% said their workload has increased



50% said their enjoyment of teaching has decreased, including 57% of tenured faculty



40% said their relationships with students have deteriorated



69% said their work-life balance has deteriorated



The verdict on how institutions have responded has been positive overall



50% of faculty described their institution's effort to support faculty as "very or somewhat good"



53% felt that safety was a top priority for their institution



67% say their institution's response to Covid was "very" or "somewhat" good



Faculty are reassessing their career and retirement plans

Since the start of 2020, a significant percentage of faculty have seriously considered major career changes, including early retirement:



55% of faculty are considering leaving academia: either 'retiring' or 'changing career' and leaving higher education

"Feel like giving up and leaving my career. With so much uncertainty and so many responsibilities, managing a career and my family has become overwhelming and left me questioning whether it is really worth it to continue my career in academia."*



38%

of faculty have seriously considered changing careers and leaving the field of higher education



29%

of faculty considered changing jobs within the field of higher education



27%

of faculty considered retiring: Tenured faculty (38%)

Of the 27%, 71% say the pandemic has accelerated their retirement plans with even higher numbers for tenured faculty (73%)



We're here to help

For more than 30 years, Fidelity has served those who work in higher education through their workplace benefits programs and by providing planning and advice to help them achieve financial well-being. Fidelity stands ready to help meet the evolving needs of all higher education employees, no matter what changes or new challenges the future may bring.

Next steps

Helping employees through periods of uncertainty is a priority for many benefits leaders.

Reach out to your Fidelity Managing Director to ensure you and your employees are taking full advantage of all the tools and assistance Fidelity provides, including:



Data-driven insights

Helping you:

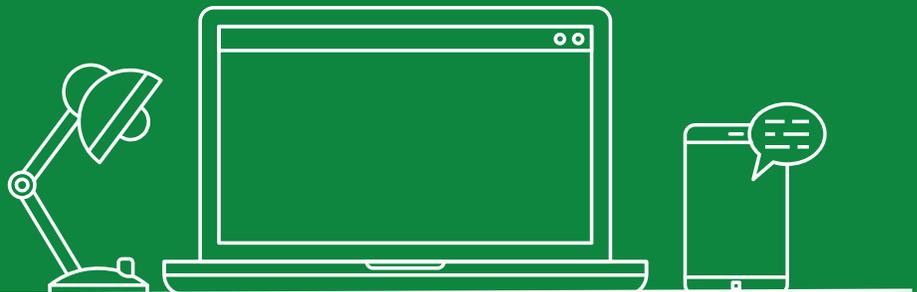
- Better understand your retirement plan and make more informed decisions
- Identify participant trends and behaviors to help your employees build financial strength and retirement readiness



Help designing employee engagement programs

Supporting your employees' total well-being through:

- Holistic planning and education experiences to meet all employee's needs, via the channels and formats they prefer
- Fully integrated and targeted communications to engage faculty on financial health and retirement readiness



1. Based on 1,122 online survey responses from faculty at two- and four-year colleges and universities across the U.S between October 13, 2020 and October 29, 2020. Of these, 48% were tenured faculty, 11% were tenure-track, 16% were non-tenured, and 25% were part-time or adjunct faculty.

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