



National Center for Science and
Engineering Statistics

Survey

Postdocs at Federally Funded Research and Development Centers | 2023

The FFRDC Postdoc Survey collects aggregate information on the demographic characteristics and fields of research of postdoctoral researchers employed at federally funded research and development centers as of 1 October of the survey year.

Survey Description

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Survey Overview (2023 Survey Cycle)

Purpose

The Survey of Postdocs at Federally Funded Research and Development Centers (FFRDC Postdoc Survey) is intended to identify all FFRDCs that employed postdoctoral researchers (postdocs) as of 1 October of the survey year and to collect aggregate information on the demographic characteristics and fields of research of the postdocs employed at each FFRDC. The survey is conducted as part of the Survey of Graduate Students and Postdoctorates in Science and Engineering, which is sponsored by the National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics (NCSES) within the U.S. National Science Foundation (NSF) and the National Institutes of Health.

Data collection authority

National Science Foundation Act of 1950, as amended, and the COMPETES Reauthorization Act of 2010. The Office of Management and Budget control number is 3145-0062, expiration date 30 August 2026. The disclosure review number is NCSES-DRN24-021.

Major changes to recent survey cycle

None.

Key Survey Information

Frequency Periodic.

Initial survey year 2005.

Reference period 1 October 2023.

Response unit Establishment.

Sample or census Census.

Population size 42 FFRDCs.

Sample size Not applicable.

Key variables Key variables of interest are listed below.

- Sex and citizenship
- Source of financial support
- Ethnicity and race for U.S. citizens and permanent residents
- Field of research
- Administrative type of the FFRDC (university, nonprofit, industry)

Survey Design

Target population

The survey target population includes all FFRDCs that employed postdocs as of 1 October 2023.

Sample frame

The survey is a census of all FFRDCs in the Master Government List of FFRDCs in the United States as of March 2023. The list is maintained by NSF (<https://www.nsf.gov/statistics/ffrdclist/archive/ffrdc-2023.xlsx>).

Sample design

Not applicable.

Data Collection and Processing

Data collection

The survey data are collected via a Web instrument. Before data collection begins, prior survey coordinators at each FFRDC are contacted via e-mail to confirm their status as the most appropriate contact person. Directors at the FFRDCs are notified about the survey launch and those at newly established FFRDCs are asked to designate a contact person for the survey. The FFRDC Web survey access information is then e-mailed to the appropriate contact person.

Data processing

All data submitted by the FFRDCs are reviewed to ensure that all data fields were completed and that data are internally consistent. Data from any FFRDC that differ from the prior year data at that FFRDC by more than 20% are flagged for review by the survey staff. If additional information or data corrections are needed, FFRDC respondents are contacted by telephone or e-mail and asked to provide additional information or to correct data.

Estimation techniques

The survey is a census of all eligible FFRDCs. No FFRDCs required imputation in 2023.

Survey Quality Measures

Sampling error

Not applicable.

Coverage error

There is no coverage error for this survey other than that, if any, from the Master Government List of FFRDCs maintained by NSF.

Nonresponse error

The survey typically has high response rates. For the 2023 cycle, 100% of FFRDCs provided complete or partial data.

Measurement error

Potential sources of measurement errors include incomplete administrative data or data misreported by the respondent.

Data Availability and Comparability

Data availability

Postdoc data from FFRDCs are available for 2005–07, 2009–10, 2012–13, 2015, 2017, 2019, and 2021. The FFRDC Postdoc Survey data were first published in 2010.

Data comparability

The FFRDC postdoc counts in 2012 and subsequent years are not comparable with the counts reported in 2010 and prior years because the Frederick National Laboratory for Cancer Research (FNLCR) revised its postdoc reporting to include only FFRDC contract employees after it was reorganized and renamed from the National Cancer Institute at Frederick in 2012. Consequently, the total number of postdocs reported by FNLCR dropped from 286 in 2010 to 25 in 2012. All comparisons of FFRDC postdoc data spanning this period need to account for this difference.

Data Products

Publications

NCSES releases the data from this survey through data tables and analytic products available at the survey homepage (<https://nces.nsf.gov/surveys/ffrdc-postdocs/>).

Electronic access

To obtain data files, contact the Survey Manager.