

## **CONTINGENT FACULTY REPORT**

Based on 2010 survey data collected by the  
Coalition on the Academic Workforce

Report prepared by  
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## INTRODUCTION

by Steven Shulman, Sue Doe, Natalie Barnes, and Mike Palmquist, Co-Directors

Center for the Study of Academic Labor

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In Fall 2010, the Coalition for the Academic Workforce surveyed non-tenure track faculty members (also called “contingent” faculty or “adjunct” faculty) in colleges and universities across the United States. 28,974 of these faculty members responded, making the CAW data set one of the largest sources of information available about the characteristics and work conditions of contingent faculty. CAW used its data set to write a report on part-time faculty members, which is viewable online at [http://www.academicworkforce.org/CAW\\_portrait\\_2012.pdf](http://www.academicworkforce.org/CAW_portrait_2012.pdf). The purpose of the present report is to extend that analysis to other categories of contingent faculty, and to generalize about contingent faculty as a whole

The CAW data comes in several files. The *demographic file* contains responses to questions about individual characteristics such as age, education, gender, race, location and income. It also contains responses to questions about work conditions such as office space and office resources, benefits, occupation and employer. The *course file* contains responses to questions about academic discipline, course level, credits, instructional mode, pay, benefits and unionization at institutions where each course is taught. The *respondent file* contains responses to questions about employment status, number of courses taught, number of institutions where respondents work, academic discipline and field of specialization and interest in a tenure-track position. The *institution file* matches the institutions at which respondents work with IPEDS data (see <http://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/>) on these institutions, such as state, sector, institution type, academic level, highest degree offered, etc. The *full-time non-tenure track file* that contains responses by this category of contingent faculty to questions about contract, courses taught, instructional mode, benefits and pay. Finally, there is a *supplemental file* that contains data on work conditions, benefits, employment status, occupation, household and personal income, location and individual characteristics.

Working with six different files that contained overlapping pieces of information proved to be challenging. Also, the documentation is incomplete, and many variables had to be interpreted from their names, which were not necessarily obvious. Most of the information in this report comes from the first four files. The CSAL website (<http://csal.colostate.edu/>) will maintain this report on its website and encourages other

researchers to make use of this unusually extensive set of data. All of the files can be obtained from CAW by contacting David Laurence at [dlaurence@mla.org](mailto:dlaurence@mla.org)

Certain decisions had to be made to focus the research and the results. Non-tenure track faculty members can be teachers, researchers, administrators or some combination. This report focuses on their role as teachers. In U.S. higher education, the expanding need for college teachers has been achieved by hiring more and more contingent faculty members, not by expanding the tenure-track. Almost two-thirds of all faculty positions are off the tenure-track (see the CSAL report at <http://csal.colostate.edu/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Faculty-Employment-Report-2013-Section-full.pdf>). At Colorado State University where CSAL is housed, two-thirds of undergraduate student credit hours are taught by contingent faculty members. This is typical. This evolution in academic labor markets and in the teaching mission of higher education cries out for additional data on contingent faculty members and their conditions of employment. That data has been in surprisingly short supply. The purpose of this report is to provide data, information, analysis and resources about non-tenure track faculty members in general, and those in the classroom in particular.

The respondents to the CAW survey specified their employment status as one of the following categories: part-time, full-time non-tenure track, graduate student employees – teaching, graduate student employees – research, post-docs – teaching, post-docs – research, full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty, full-time researchers (other than graduate student employees), and missing or unclassified. This report defines contingent faculty members as belonging to one of the first three categories: part-time faculty members, almost all of whom are non-tenure track instructors; full-time non-tenure track faculty members; and graduate student instructors. The other categories concern research (except for a very small number of post-docs), or concern tenured and tenure-track faculty (it is unclear why they are included in this survey at all), or are unknown. Thus contingent faculty members in this report are primarily instructors, although they may also conduct research or have administrative responsibilities.

By limiting contingent faculty members to the sum of part-time faculty members, full-time non-tenure track faculty members and graduate student instructors, the number of respondents falls to 19,661, still a very healthy number. The data in this report is presented for all of these contingent faculty members as well as for each sub-group.

So who are these people? They are mostly female (62%), mostly white (89%) and mostly between 26 and 55 years of age (69%). About one-third hold a masters degree and about another one-third hold a doctorate. Almost three-quarters of the respondents describe their primary occupation as teaching, with almost half teaching for ten years or more.

Almost half describe themselves as full-time, although some who work part-time in more than one institution may include themselves in this category. Almost three-quarters have personal income under \$55,000 per year, including about one-third with personal income under \$25,000 per year. Over half have household income below \$75,000.

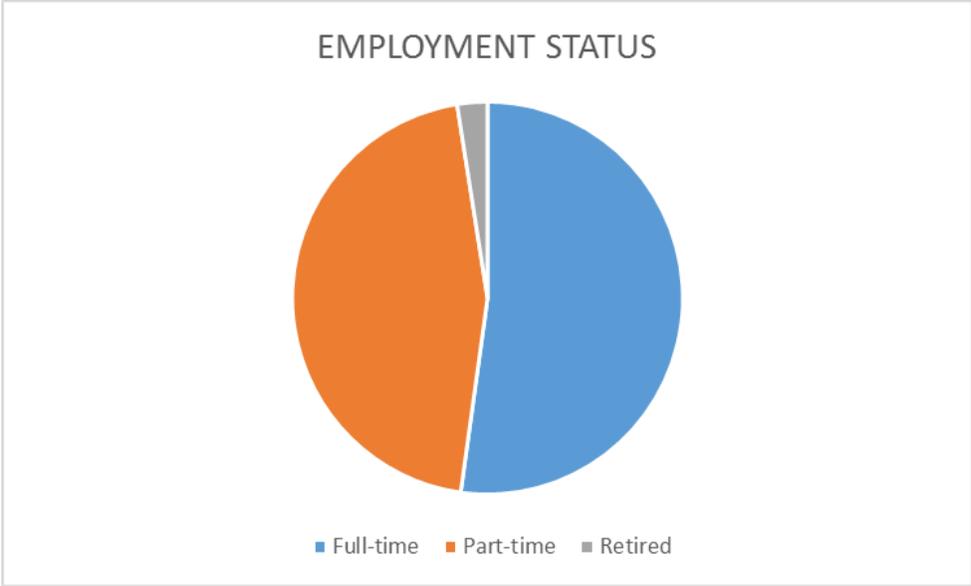
Over two-thirds of all contingent faculty members teach three courses or less. In terms of academic discipline, the largest number are in English literature and language, although that amounts to just 17% of all contingent faculty members. Over two-fifths are in the humanities in general. About one-quarter are seeking a tenure-track position, and over half say they would accept one if it were offered to them.

Because so many contingent faculty members work part-time at each institution (although they may work full-time overall), over 60% do not receive benefits. The largest fraction (42%) work in public colleges and universities offering the BA or above; fewer than one-third work in two year colleges. Less than 10% teach online.

Pay varies very little by teaching experience, making this one of the few professions where there is little return to experience. On the other hand, educational attainment has a discernable impact on pay: instructors with just a masters degree receive less pay per course than instructors who are ABD (all but dissertation), who in turn are paid less than instructors possessing the doctorate.

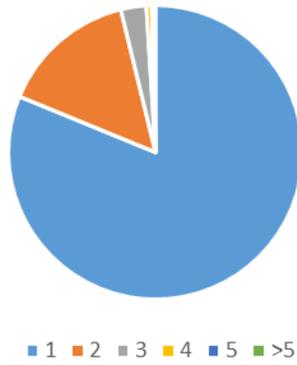
Median pay per course overall is \$3000. Institutions that offer higher degrees also offer higher pay: median pay per course at institutions that offer the doctorate exceeds pay at institutions that offer the masters degree, which exceeds pay at institutions that offer only a bachelors degree. However, institutions that offer only a bachelors degree pay just as much (or just as little) as institutions that offer just an associates degree. Union representation has a considerable impact on median pay: \$3245 per course with union representation versus \$2700 per course without union representation. However, unions represent a minority (42%) of all contingent faculty members.

These are just some of the interesting findings in this report. Many of them have long been known anecdotally, but it is important to be able to pin down the specifics. It is our hope at the Center for the Study of Academic Labor (CSAL) that these numbers will provide a valuable resource for those who seek to understand and to advocate for non tenure-track faculty, who are crucially important yet often invisible and mistreated members of the academy.

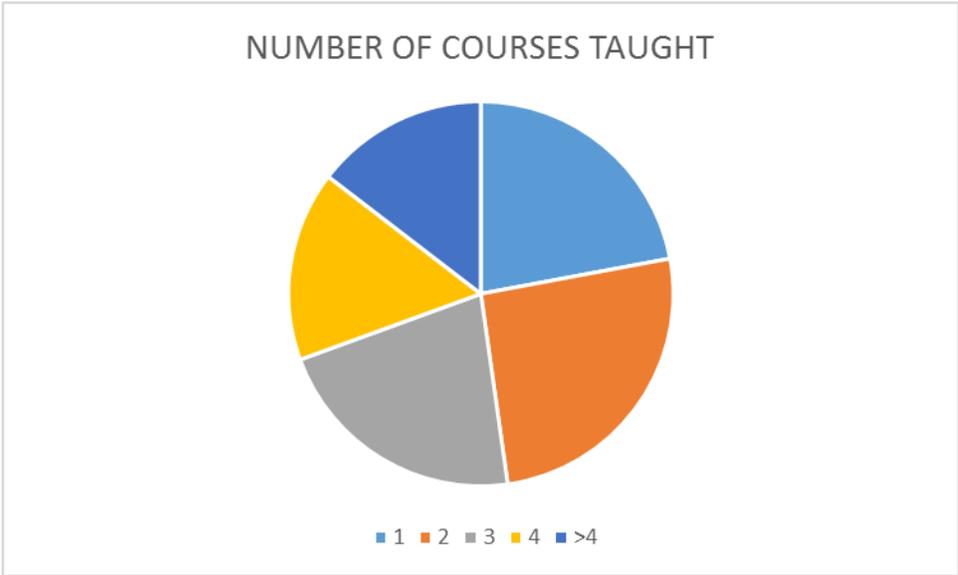


**More than half of all contingent faculty members worked full-time in 2010.**

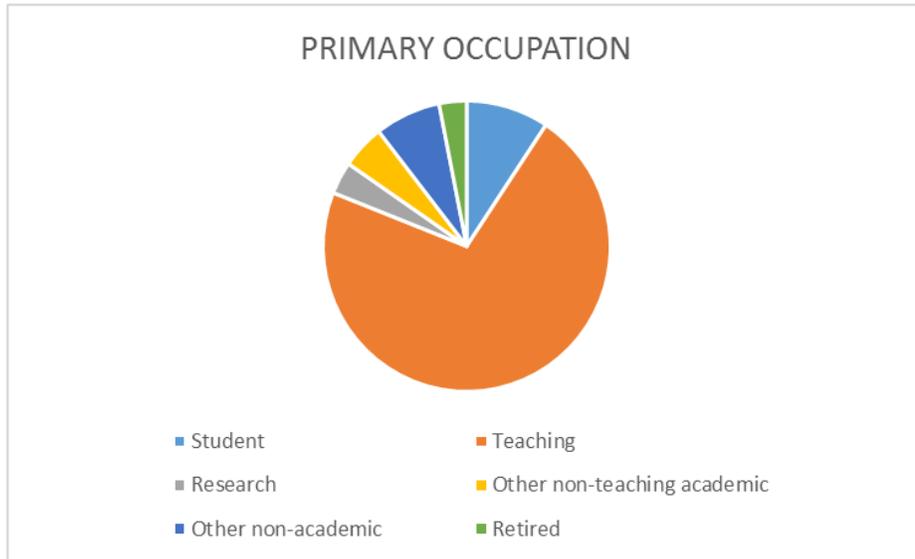
NUMBER OF INSTITUTIONS  
TEACHING AT



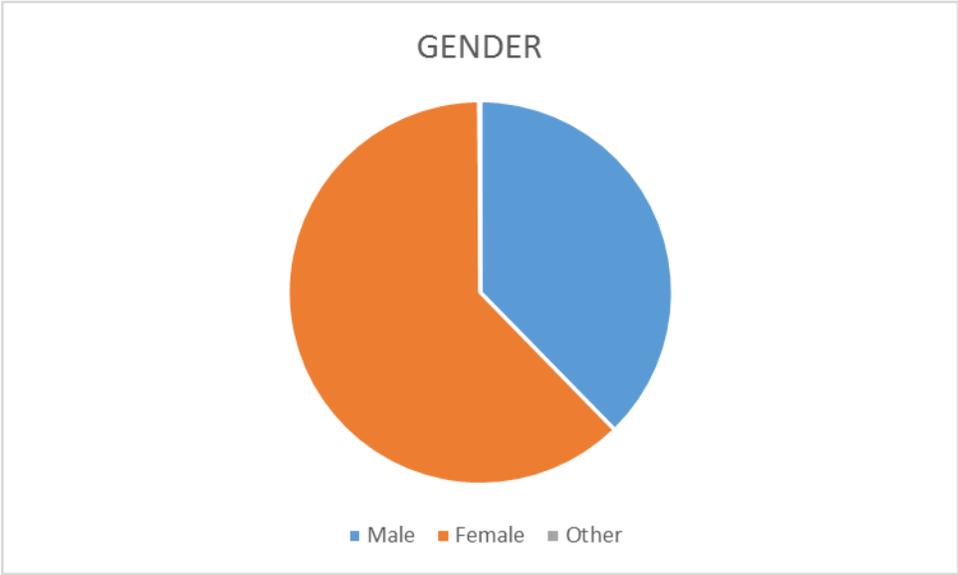
**Four-fifths of all contingent faculty members taught at one institution.**



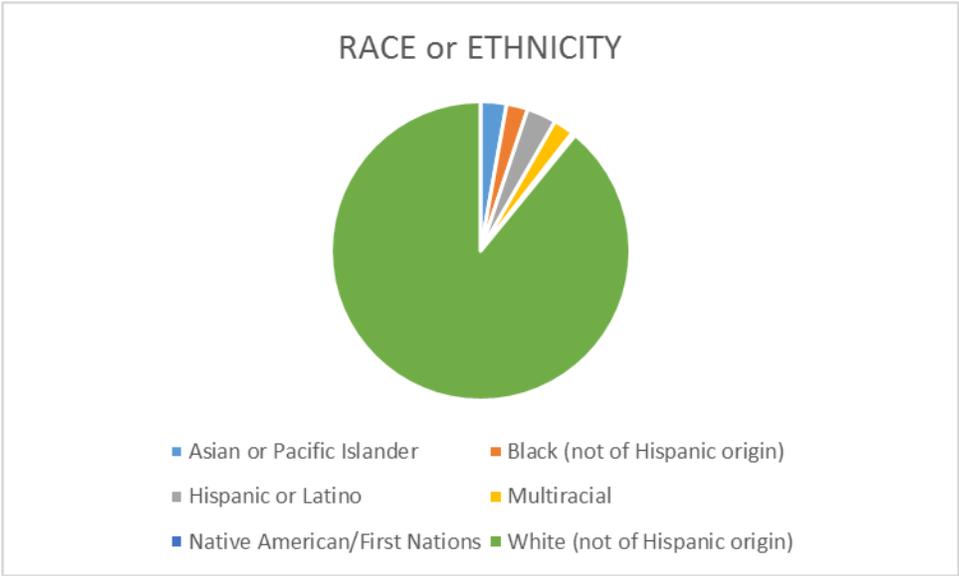
**One-quarter of all contingent faculty members taught two courses.**



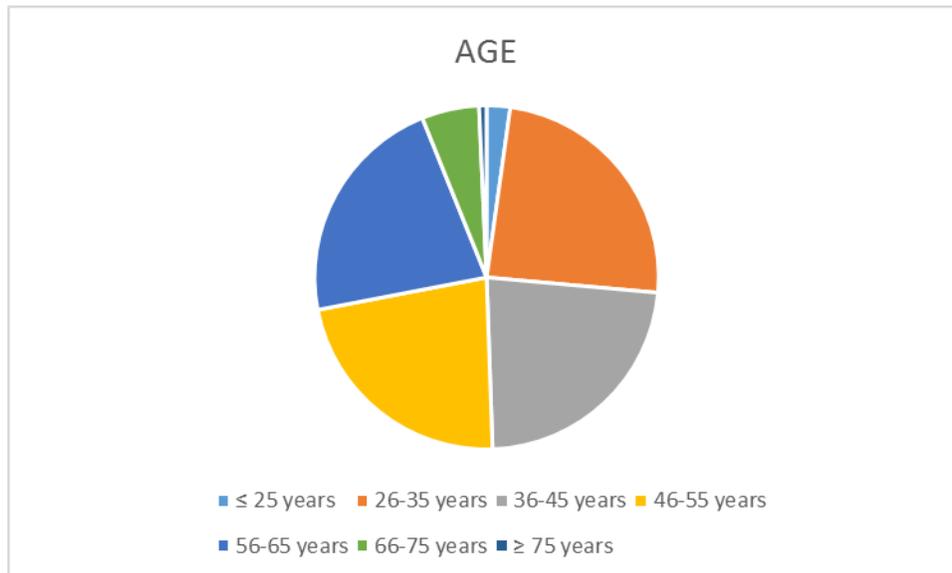
**Nearly three-fourths of contingent faculty members said that teaching was their primary occupation.**



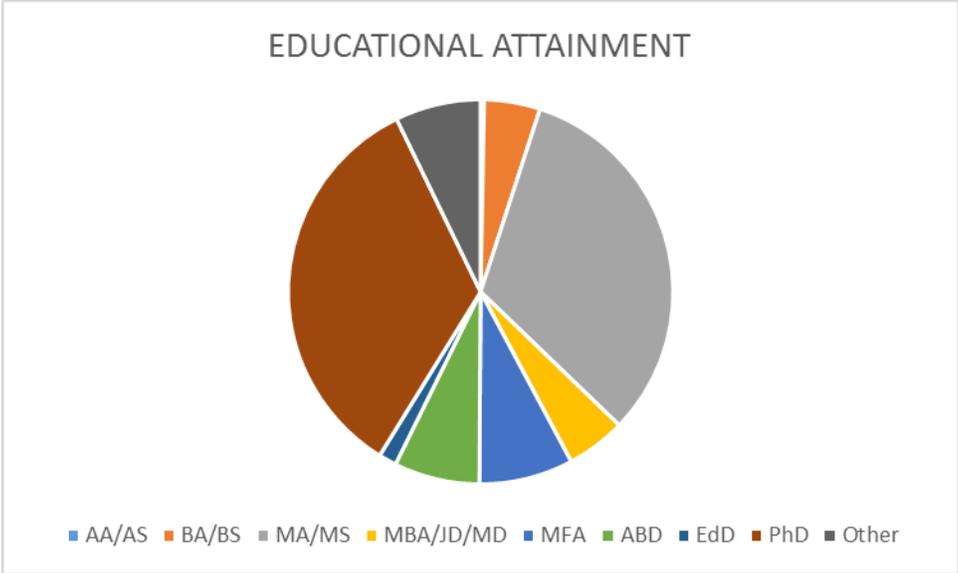
**Almost two-thirds of all contingent faculty members were female.**



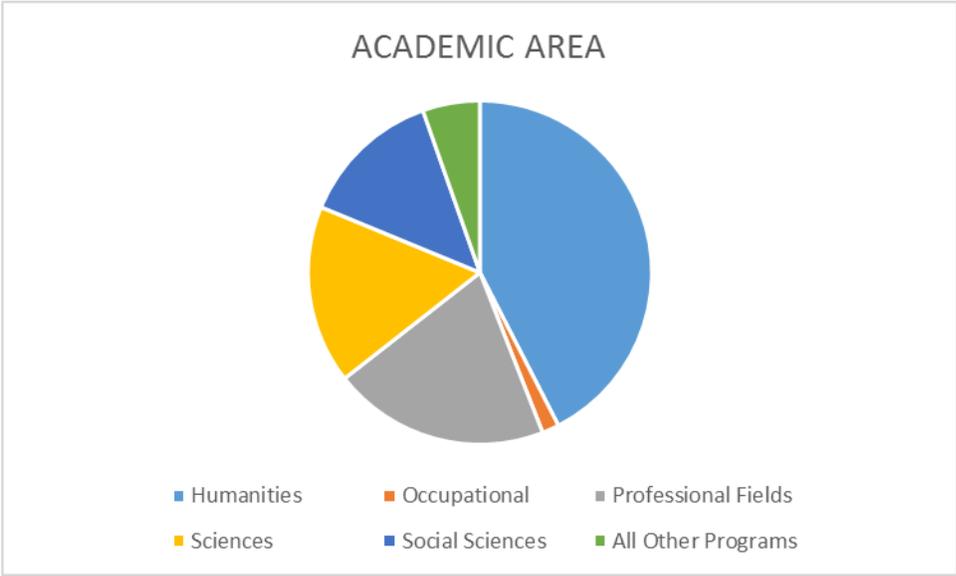
**Almost nine-tenths of all contingent faculty members were white.**



**Almost three-quarters of all contingent faculty members were of prime working age (25-54 years old) and nearly equally distributed among ten-year age groups. Notably, at both ends of that spectrum, nearly equal numbers were entering the profession as were approaching retirement age.**



**Half of all contingent faculty members held the terminal degree (PhD, EdD, MFA, JD or MD).**



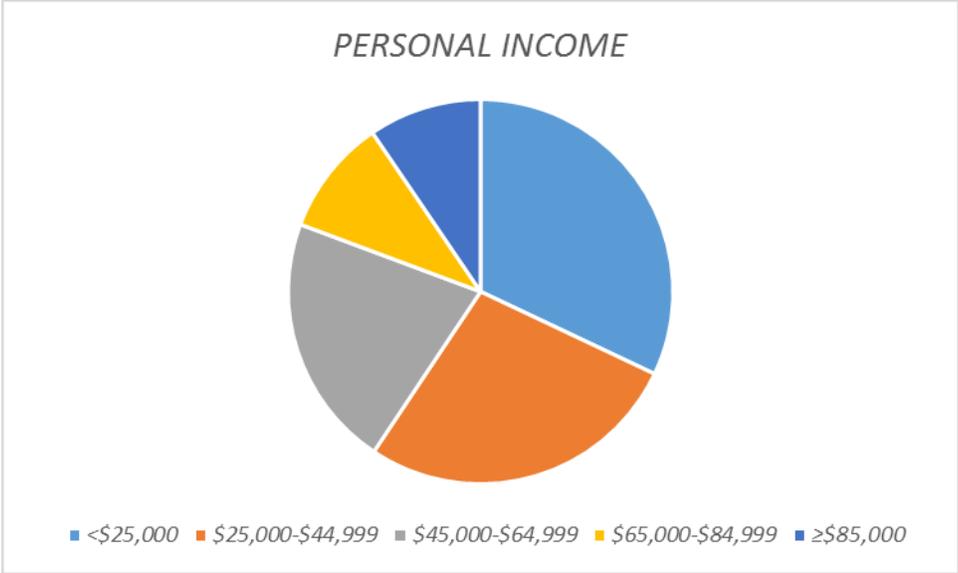
**Two-fifths of all contingent faculty members taught in the humanities.**

### SEEKING A TENURE TRACK POSITION

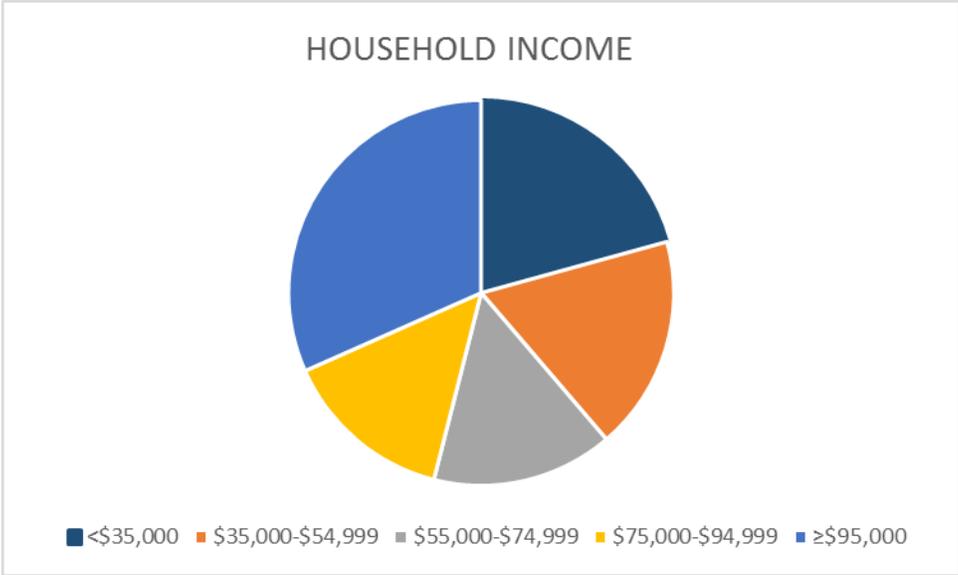


- Yes
- No, but I have sought a position in the past
- No, but I intend to seek a position in the future
- No, I prefer non-tenure to tenure-track employment

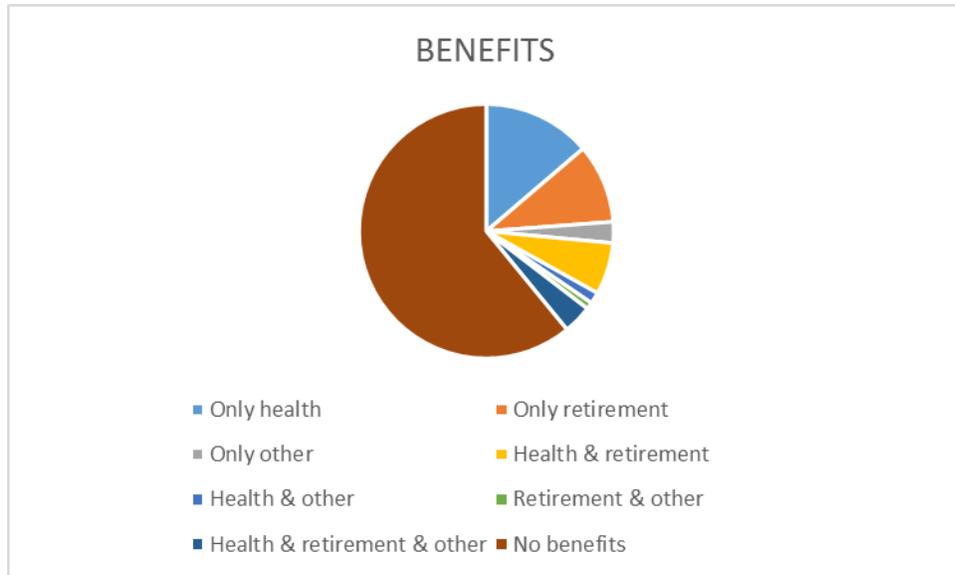
**Three-quarters of all contingent faculty members were seeking, had sought, or intended to seek a tenure-track position.**



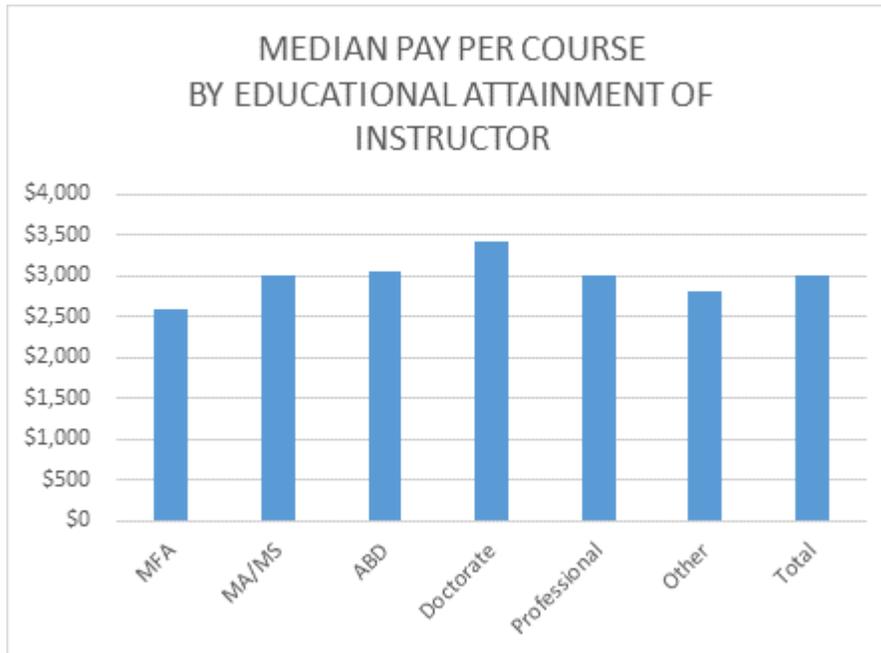
**Nearly one-third of all contingent faculty members made less than \$25,000 per year.**



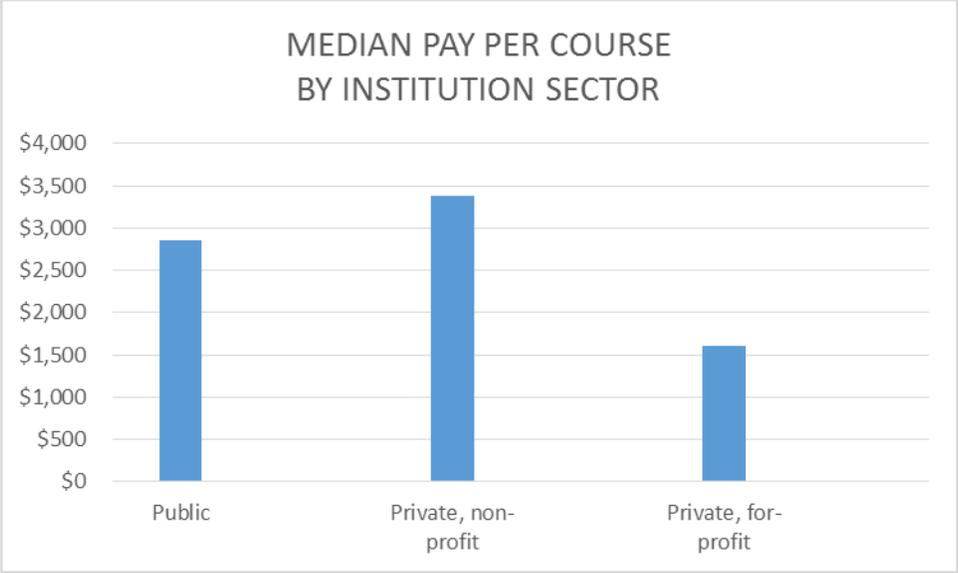
**Two-fifths of all contingent faculty members lived in households with incomes under \$55,000 per year.**



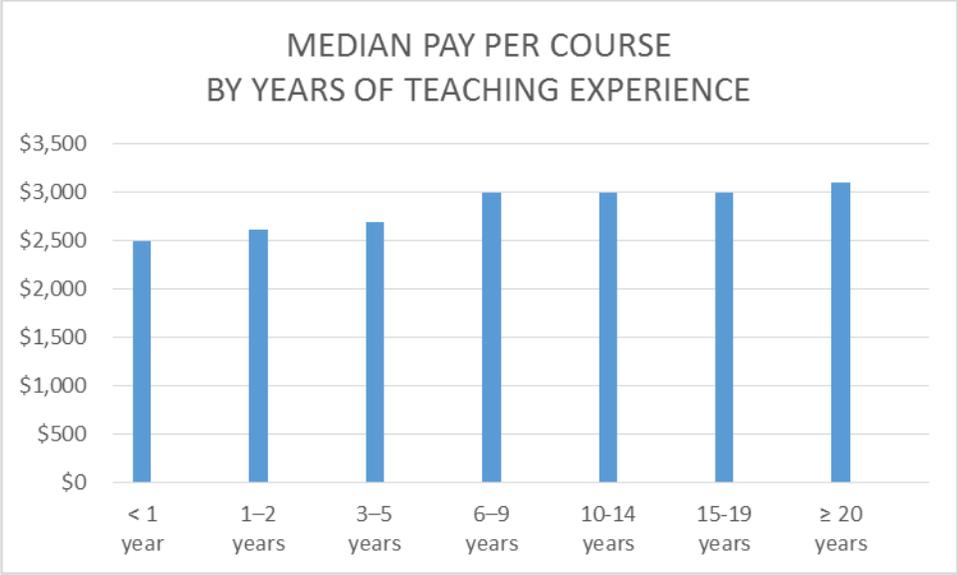
**Almost two-thirds of all contingent faculty members received no benefits. Less than one in twenty had full benefits.**



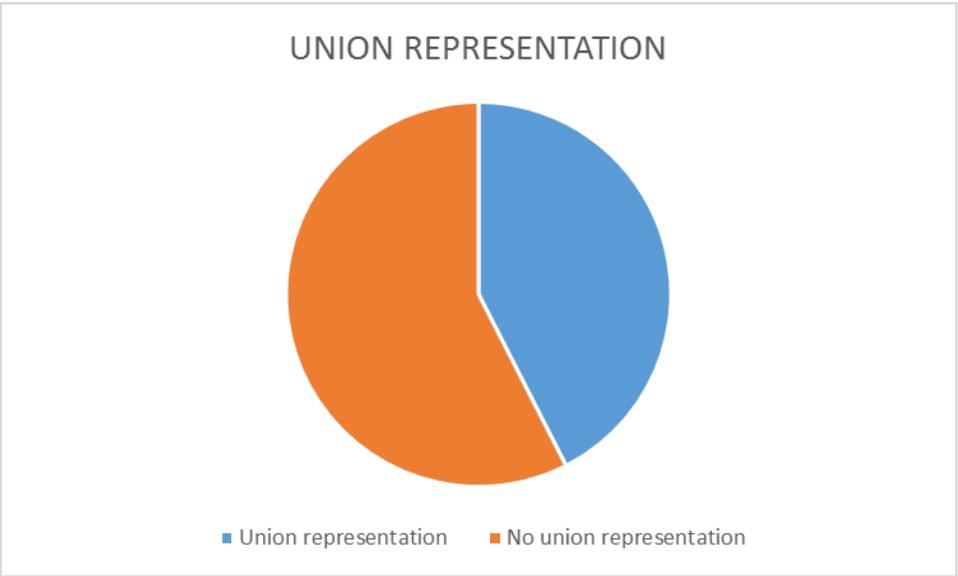
**Among all contingent faculty members, pay and educational attainment were inconsistently associated.**



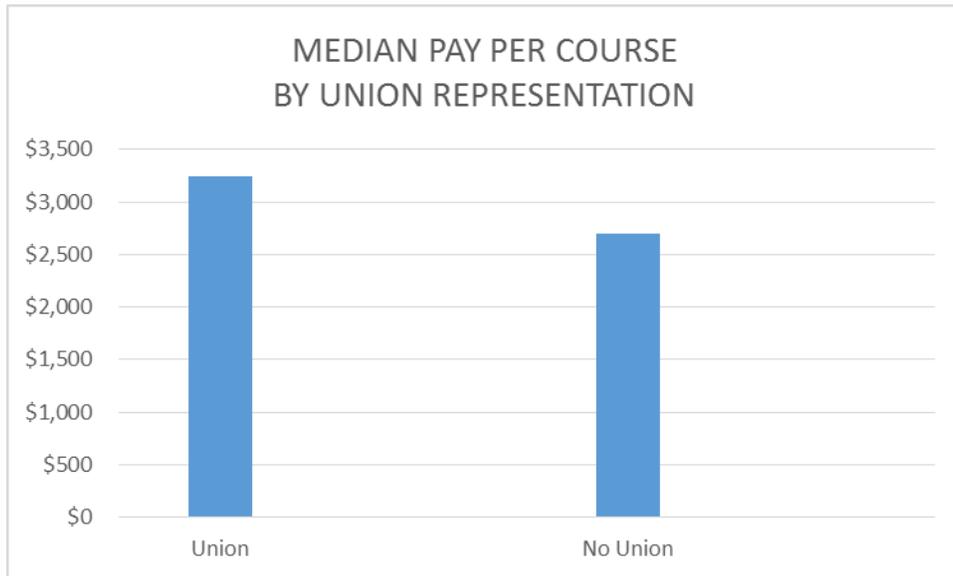
**Contingent faculty members who taught in private, non-profit college and universities were paid more per course than other contingent faculty members.**



**Among all contingent faculty members, there was little return on experience.**



**Most contingent faculty members were not represented by a union.**



**Contingent faculty members who were represented by a union were paid significantly more per course than their non-unionized counterparts.**