

How are doctoral students doing?

Summary

The report "How are doctoral students doing?" is a cooperation between Fackförbundet ST, the union of civil servants, the biggest union within the state sector with over 100 000 members, Fackförbundet ST's department within the university sector and Sveriges förenade studentkårer (later mentioned as SFS), which represents over 400 000 students and doctoral students across Swedish universities.

The report is a continuation of previous reports from Fackförbundet ST and SFS with the same name, the most recent one in [2021](#). This year's survey shows that the work environment keeps doctoral students under pressure. The unsustainability of the doctoral students work environment is reflected in the fact that one in three doctoral students works overtime multiple times every week. The same number are also experiencing work related sleep problems at least once a week and over 60 percent report stress related to their work/doctoral studies. Another worrying result is that almost two thirds of the respondents are hesitant towards a continued academic career, because of the uncertain employment conditions in academia.

Furthermore, problems related to harassment and discrimination continue to pose concern, with women being more likely than men to be subjected to such experiences. Yet, most of victims of harassments or discrimination choose not to report it. Of the once who do, only 25 % percent feel like their report is taken seriously. This is a worrying result, even though the number of respondents is low. In addition to harassment and discrimination, women in general experience worse work environment than men. Except for working overtime, which is more common among men.

Knowledge about decision making responsibilities regarding employment and who safeguards the rights of doctoral students is still lacking. Results indicate that supervisors are regarded as responsible for safeguarding doctoral students' rights, while relatively few identify the trade union or student and doctoral student unions as important sources of support and representation.

Doctoral students who are out of funding report some of the most negative results across a wide range of the survey questions. They report significantly higher levels of work-related sleep problems, difficulties to focus on other things than their PhD studies (such as their private life) and a higher prevalence of experiencing harassment or discrimination.

The results also reveal differences across research fields. Doctoral students in the Humanities and Social Sciences report poorer outcomes on a range of survey questions, along with doctoral students in Natural Sciences and Technology.

This year's survey also indicates some positive results compared to the previous survey. Especially when it comes to the use of vacation days, which has increased since 2021. Doctoral students are also more satisfied with the quality of the supervision they receive compared to the last survey.