

INTRODUCTION

Great Expectations On the Job Front

Life scientists in the United States love their work, despite long hours and what many regard as low pay. That sunny outlook shines through in *Science's* 2004 salary survey.

This second survey was an electronic polling of the 42,000 U.S. members of AAAS (which publishes *Science*) in the life sciences. It yielded 6124 usable responses. In particular, it's a distinctly younger crowd this time around than in 2001, our first survey, and it includes hefty representation from postdocs. Although gripes are not hard to find, discontent seems to be outweighed, even among struggling younger scientists, by the deep satisfaction many express with the work they have chosen. Indeed, most look forward to additional years on the job rather than view them as a necessary burden to preserve their financial health.

Certainly, there are problems with the profession. But when asked if they would do it all over again, 70% said yes. Some 22%

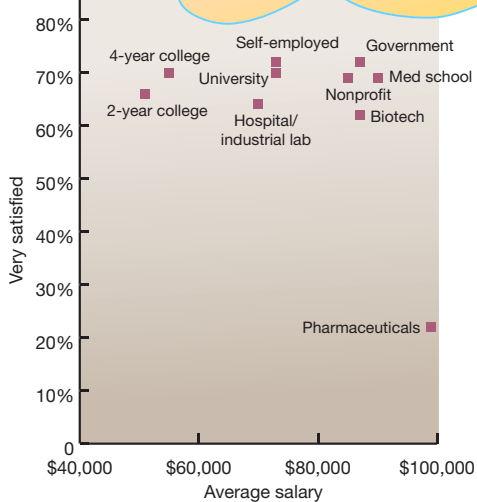
would have pursued a career in a different field of science. But only 8% said they wouldn't have chosen to be a scientist at all. And even then, it's not the subject they dislike; rather, it's the conditions under which they must toil. As one respondent wrote: "I should not have gone into science, even though I love it so much. I should have gone into my second love (music). At least there I would have anticipated the long hours and low compensation."

The analysis was carried out by Gary Heebner and his team at Cell Associates of Foristell, Missouri. Results of the 70-question survey, which covered not just compensation but also work attitudes and other career issues, are available at www.aaas.org/salariesurvey. Although the data are confidential, some respondents graciously agreed to be interviewed to supplement their questionnaires.

We invite your comments on this year's survey and suggestions on how to improve it the next time around.

—JEFFREY MERVIS AND CONSTANCE HOLDEN

Money and happiness. There doesn't seem to be the remotest suggestion of a linear correlation between the two factors for these respondents, most of whom are very satisfied with their jobs. Pharmaceutical employees are the outliers, possibly reflecting the job insecurities in the field.



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