

Number of postdocs declines for first time, new study shows

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After more than 30 years of steady growth, the number of postdocs in the biological and biomedical sciences is on the decline in the United States, according to a new paper in *The FASEB Journal*. The study shows that despite continuing increases in the number of PhD students, there was a 5.5 percent loss in the postdoctoral population from 2010-13, the most recent survey year. The findings have important implications for the biomedical workforce.

The authors, Howard H. Garrison, PhD, Louis B. Justement, PhD, and Susan A. Gerbi, PhD, found that the number of postdoctoral fellows in the biological or [biomedical sciences](#) at doctorate-granting institutions in the United States increased annually from 1979 through 2010. However, the postdoctoral population decreased from 40,970 in 2010 to 38,719 in 2013. Although the authors found declines in postdoctoral fellows among men and women as well as among U.S. citizens and foreign postdocs, U.S. men experienced the sharpest decline, dropping by 10.4 percent.

The decrease in the postdoctoral population did not correlate with reductions in graduate [students](#) or visas for foreign workers. But the findings may be consistent with reductions in the number of research grants, independent laboratories, and job announcements during the same time period.

"For some newly minted PhD students, eschewing a postdoc may reflect a rational response to a tight academic labor market with low

compensation and uncertain prospects for success," said lead author Howard Garrison.

More information: *The FASEB Journal*,
www.fasebj.org/content/early/2015/10/21/15-280552.abstract

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