

# Analysis of employment levels of post-docs at GIUZ

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## 1 Background

The employee analysis conducted in summer 2022 disclosed discontent among post-docs working at the GIUZ regarding the length of their employment contracts, the percentage of their employment and the corresponding workload. InVers tasked the Better Science Initiative to follow up on these concerns and suggest solutions.

A first discussion of solutions in the professorium (on a possible a self-commitment to full-time employment, if funding allows and the post-doc agrees) led to the conclusion that we need more data to know who actually works part time and why.

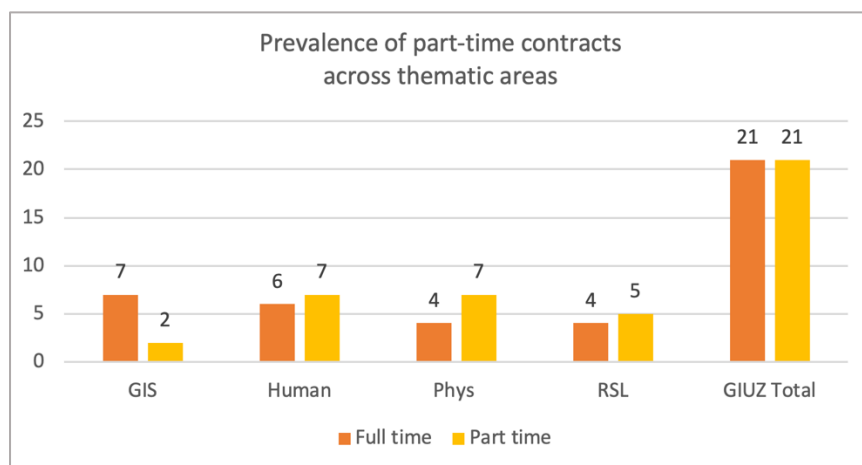
For this, we conducted a quantitative analysis of the employment contracts of post-docs at GIUZ (including ‘Oberassistenten’) and qualitative analysis through brief oral interviews with all post-docs employed on part-time contracts to gain insights into the reasons for their reduced employment and the discontent voiced in the 2022 survey.

As we are analysing a rather small cohort, we have to interpret the results with some caution. It would take only few new hires or people leaving to change the results.

## 2 Results

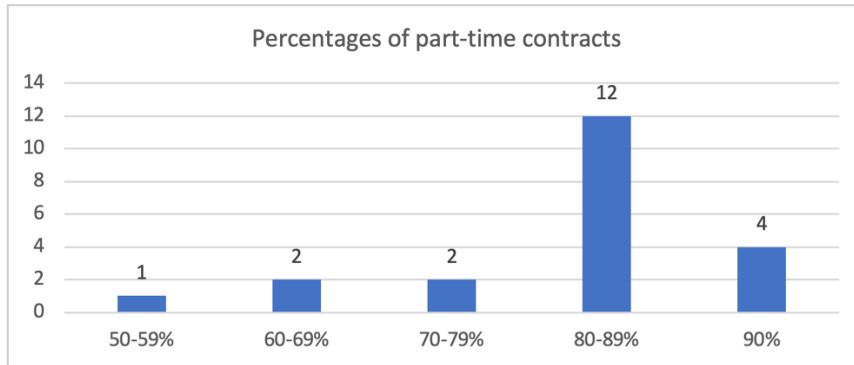
### Prevalence of part-time contracts

On 1 July 2023, GIUZ counted 42 employees at the post-doc level with their main employment at the department (excluding 4 post-docs with employments of 25% and less who have their main employment elsewhere.) Exactly half of them (21 post-docs) are employed part-time at GIUZ (4 of these have a second employment elsewhere – see analysis below). Part-time contracts are common across all thematic areas:



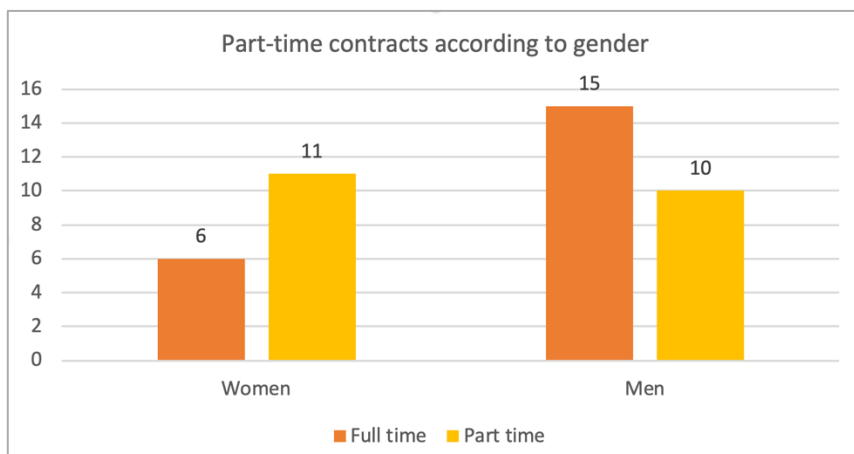
### Work-time percentages

The part-time contracts we analysed range between 50% and 90% of a full time equivalent. Most part-time employees are employed at 80% or more:

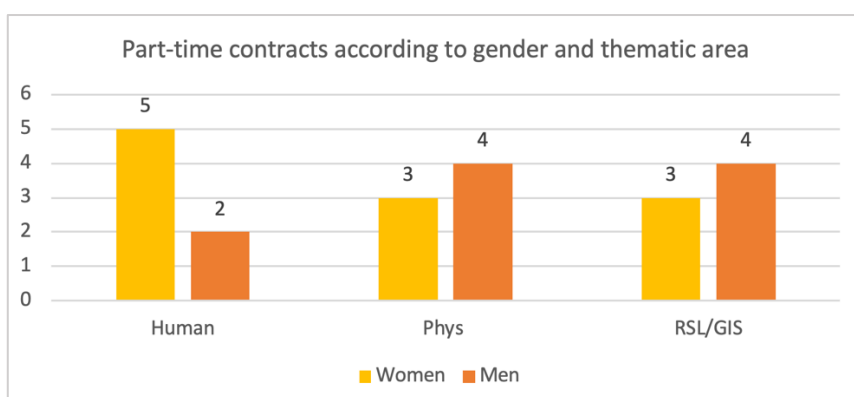


### Gender differences

When differentiating according to gender, we find that women are overrepresented among employees with part-time contracts. The share of women in full-time employment is 28%, the share of women in part-time employment is 52%.



When disaggregating according to thematic areas, we find that all thematic areas offer part-time contracts to women as well as to men. However, women with part-time contracts are most prevalent in human geography. (RSL & GIS are combined in this graph for anonymity reasons, i.e. to prevent singling out individual people.)



### Reasons for part-time work

In the interviews (with 10 women and 8 men), the post-docs gave the following reasons for their part-time contracts:

Reason given for part-time contract	Women	Men
Child care	2	
Other employment outside GIUZ	1	3
Allows for other activities outside of work	1	3
Funding does not allow higher percentage	6	2

Only two interviewees give child care as a reason for their part-time employment. The majority of men either holds a second employment elsewhere (hidden full-time labour) or argues that they work reduced hours to have time for other activities outside of work. The majority of women reports that their part-time work is involuntary, as their funding does not allow for a higher percentage.

### Prevalence of overwork

Of all 18 interviewees, 12 stated that the hours they were paid corresponded more or less to the hours they worked. 6 interviewees (5 of them women) stated that their working hours regularly exceeded the hours they are paid. They argue for instance:

*«It's impossible to do my job in a 4-day-week. I even do some work every weekend. An academic career is not possible in a 4-day-week.»*

*«I find it hard to limit my working hours to the percentage I am paid, because I have the same job as the people who are employed full time. People expect a performance of 100%.»*

*«I always work full time. I have to, to move forward with my work and with my career.»*

### Short-term contracts

Although this was not the topic of our interviews, 9 out of 18 interviewees brought up their short-term contracts as key issue that was bothering them. They perceive it as one of the main hurdles for their career advancement in academia. They argued for example:

*«My contract lasts only until the end of the year. And this worries me quite a bit. I am thinking about leaving academia, because it only ever offers these short-term contracts. There is no security. I have been doing this for many years now. The projects are super-interesting, but I need to feel more secure with the family now.»*

*«The knowledge that this is not a permanent position and that I should be applying for other jobs puts me under a lot of additional strain.»*

*«I invested so much in this job and then in the end after more than 5 years it just ends and I have to leave. As postdocs, we don't need higher salaries, but a long-term perspective.»*

### 3 Conclusions

In summary, the data suggest the following conclusions:

- First, we have a tendency to employ male post-docs on full-time contracts and female post-docs on part-time contracts. No matter the underlying reasons for this, we need to be aware of this tendency, as it hinders women in advancing in academia.
- Particularly for women, these part-time contracts are not always voluntary, but due to the acquired or offered funding that does not allow for a full-time employment. These involuntary part-time contracts frequently lead to overwork, thereby creating a hidden gender pay gap.

**We can improve this by offering our cantonal positions as full-time jobs and requesting full-time positions for post-docs when applying for third party funding.**

- Second, the interviews disclose a high level of dissatisfaction and anxiety of post-docs about their short-term contracts.

**We can improve this by**

- offering contracts that correspond to the full time of a project's duration from its start;
- applying for projects with longer duration;
- lobbying for more jobs with a longer-term perspective, e.g. TRFs (Teaching and Research Fellows) or APTTs (Assistant Professors with Tenure Track);
- lobbying to rework our funding options so that they offer longer stipends, e.g. UFO ('Universitäre Forschungsförderung', formerly 'Forschungskredit').

### 4 Discussion

What further measures could we take to address these issues?