

# INOMICS



## Academic Institutions Report 2015

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# I. Introduction & Methodology

As a comprehensive online resource for academics, researchers and students **INOMICS** provides information on [employment positions](#), research opportunities, advanced [study programs](#), [funding](#) and upcoming [conferences](#). We aim to provide helpful, relevant and up-to-date information to help academic professionals and students make the most of their careers and to support them in finding new opportunities. As part of this aim, we conduct research surveys to find out more about the challenges and opportunities which are available in participants' institution and country of residence. We share these results in order to provide information and guidance for academics around the world and at various stages of their career.

Having been working with academics and researchers since its inception in 1998, **INOMICS** has built up a diverse network of academic professionals as its audience. In order to leverage the career insights of this wide network we conducted a survey, the **INOMICS Academic Institutions Report 2015**. This survey investigated the top institutions and top countries for academics to work in, as indicated by ratings given by each respondent for the current institutional employer. Questions were designed to highlight the facets of employment and position that are most relevant to those seeking advice on career development and possible international relocation. The issues raised are those of importance to job seekers and applicants, addressing information which may be hard for outsiders to access – for example, questions regarding the work/life balance currently experienced by the respondents, and regarding the quality and friendliness of their working environment. We share this insider perspective to help those who are seeking advice and information on the experience of working in academia, as provided by both junior and senior academics.

The survey was made available on our website during a two-week period in February 2015. In order to invite participants, the authors of around 27,000 papers were emailed and requested to complete the survey. Over one thousand academics responded to the survey, and between them they represent nearly one hundred different countries of residence. The diverse backgrounds of the respondents make for an impressively broad scope of information about working conditions for academics around the world. Nearly a quarter of respondents were full professors, which is indicative of the high level of knowledge and experience that is represented by the survey data.



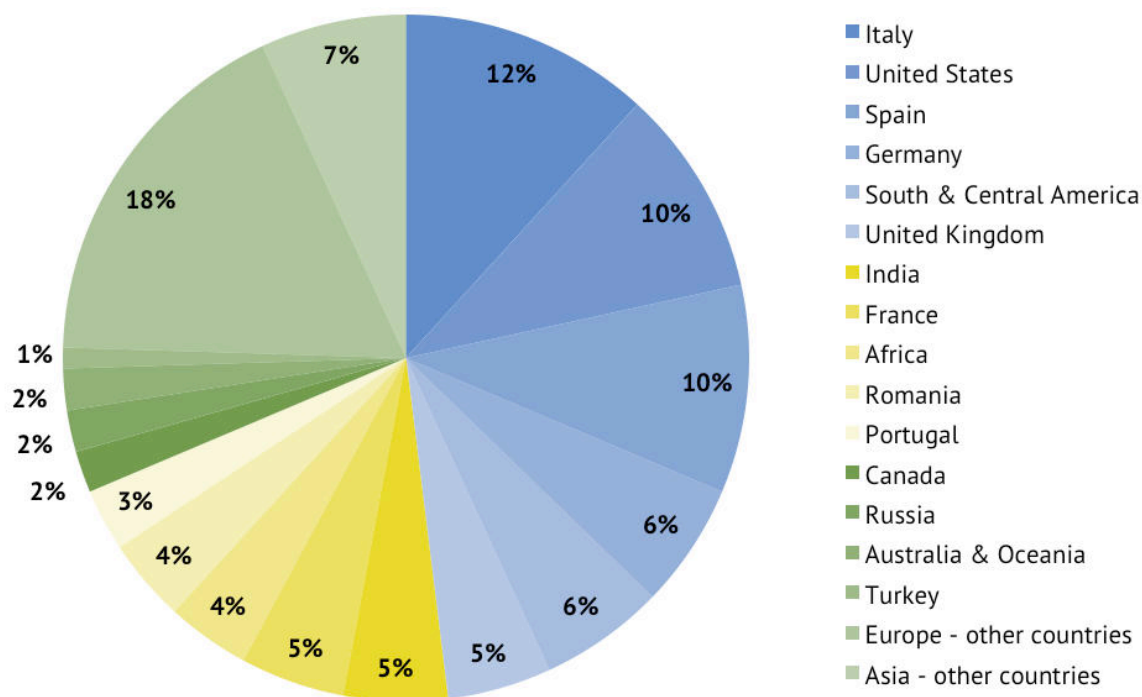


## II. Methodology & Profile of Respondents

### a. Countries of Respondents

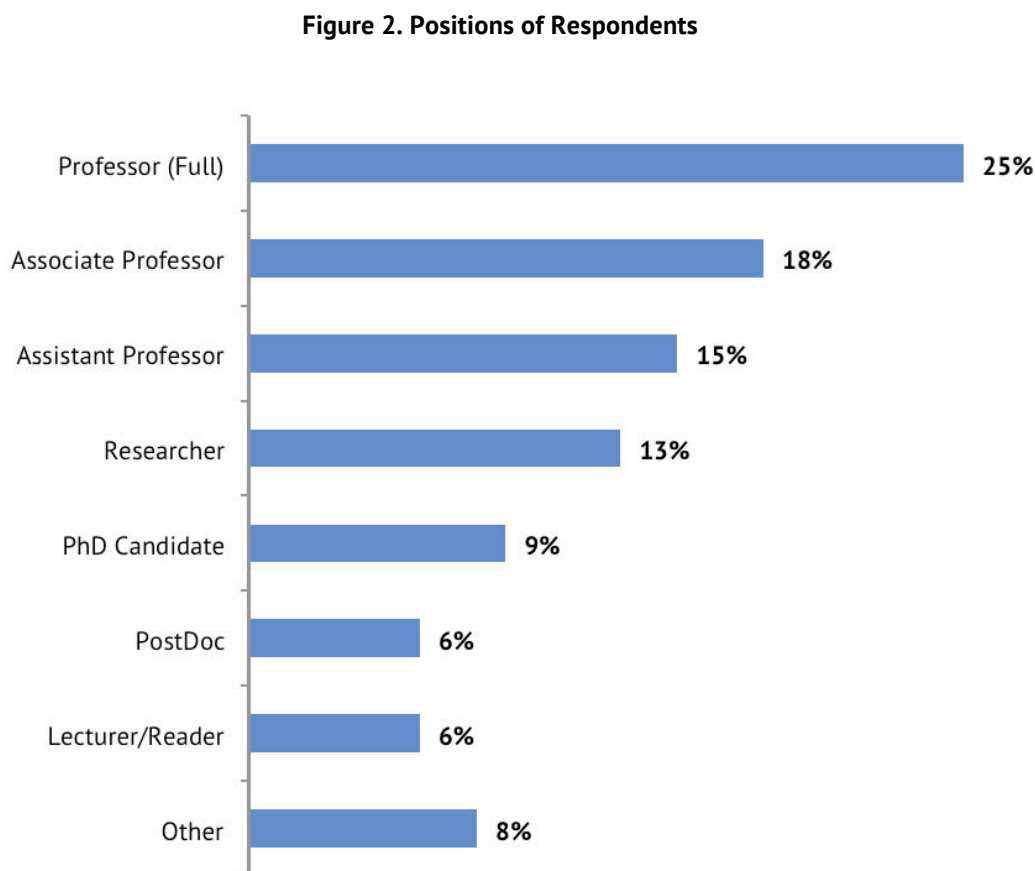
Survey respondents were asked in which country they currently resided. They represented nearly **100 different countries** from across the world, including Europe, North America, South America, Asia, Australia, and Africa. The largest groups of respondents (at 12 percent) came from Italy, following by the United States (at 10 percent), Spain (at 8 percent) and Germany (at 6 percent). All other countries were represented at a rate of 5 percent or below, showing good diversity across the sample. The large number of countries represented demonstrates the broad scope of not only this survey, but also of academia and research generally, which is an increasingly globalized affair. The results for the countries with the largest number of respondents can be seen in [Figure 1](#).

Figure 1. Countries of Respondents



**b. Positions of Respondents**

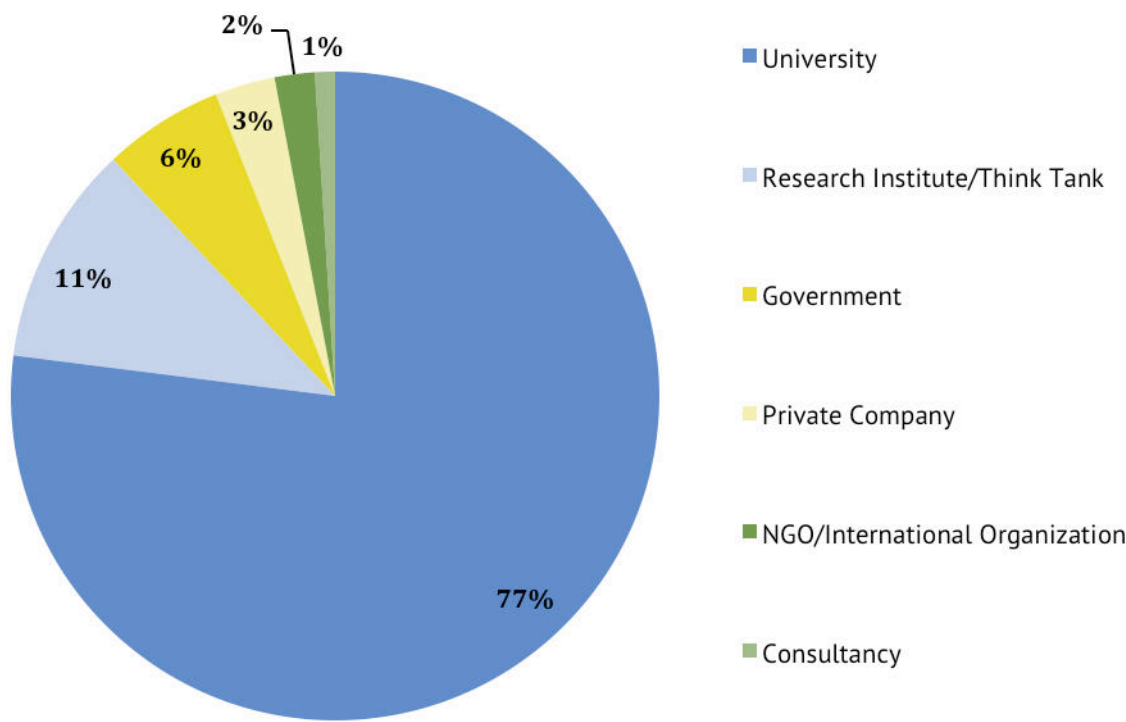
Participants were asked what position they currently hold. The largest group represented was **full professors**, who comprised 24 percent of the respondents. Associate professors and assistant professors were the next largest groups, at 17 percent and 15 percent respectively. Next were researchers at 13 percent, PhD candidates at 9 percent, postdocs at 6 percent, and lecturers or readers at 6 percent. Full results can be found in [Figure 2](#).



### c. Employers of Respondents

Respondents were asked to identify the type of **institution** that best represents their current employer. A large majority, at 77 percent, were currently employed within a **university**. Other employers represented included research institutes or think tanks, at 11 percent; the government, at 6 percent; private companies at 3 percent; NGOs or international organizations at 2 percent; and 1 percent of respondents worked in consultancy. The fact that more than three-quarters of respondents worked in a university institution reflects the hugely central role that universities play in research. For those who consider themselves researchers or academics, the university remains the default employer. This data can be seen in pie chart form in **Figure 3**.

Figure 3. Employers of Respondents

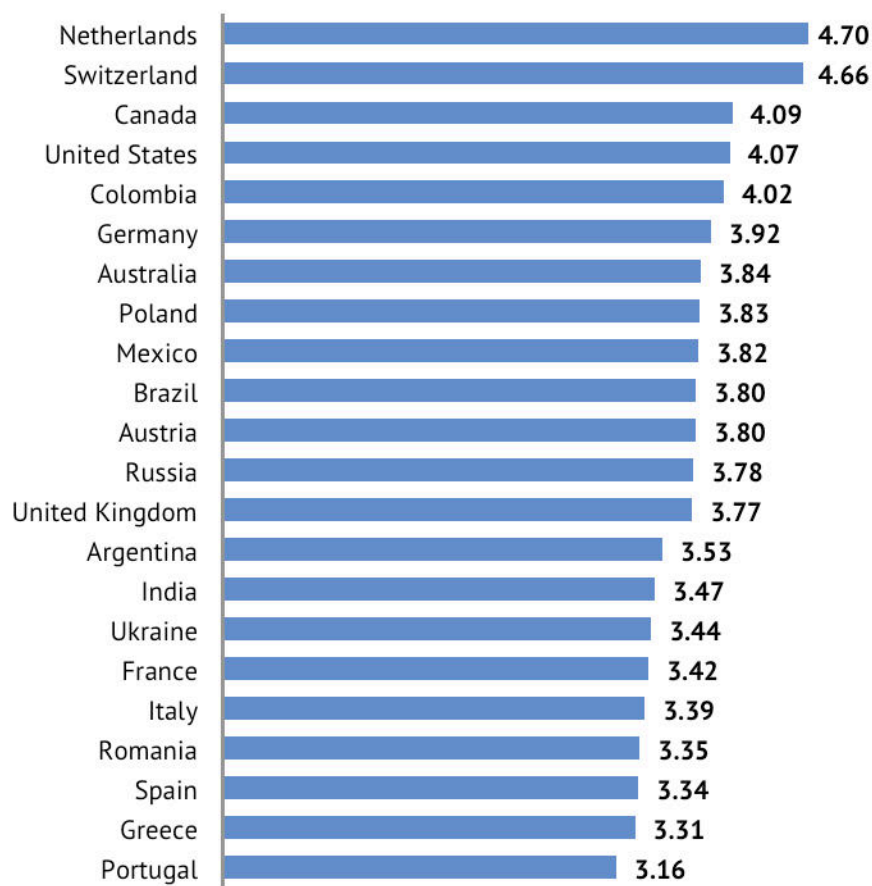


# III. Top Institutions and Countries for Academics to Work in

## a. Countries Rated by Academics as Best to Work in

To gain an impression of overall satisfaction with their institutions, respondents were asked to rate their current institution on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being the highest. Ratings were averaged across countries, and countries were then ranked by these ratings (see [Figure 4](#)). The countries with the best ratings by a notable margin were the **Netherlands** and **Switzerland**, followed by Canada, the United States, then Colombia and Germany. The countries that averaged the lowest were Romania, Spain, Greece and Portugal, showing low overall satisfaction of academics with their institutions in these countries.

Figure 4. Highest Rated Countries among Academics to Work in



**b. Work/Life Balance in Academic Institutions**

In order to gain an impression of the work/life balance of the respondents, they were asked to rate the amount of their time spent working compared to the amount of free time that was available to them, and the degree of consideration that was given to non-work needs. Higher scores indicate a greater satisfaction with one's work/life balance, while lower scores indicate a lower satisfaction with the amount of free time available. Those countries in which employees rated their work/life balance as the best included **Switzerland, the Netherlands, Colombia** and **Canada**. The countries in which respondents indicated that they had a less satisfactory work/life balance included Romania, Portugal and Ukraine. Respondents in Germany and the United States considered their work/life balance as middling. Full results can be seen in [Figure 5](#).

**Figure 5. Work/Life Balance in Academic Institutions**

Country	Work/Life Balance
Switzerland	4.71
Netherlands	4.50
Colombia	4.50
Canada	4.38
Australia	4.20
Germany	4.16
United States	4.15
Brazil	4.14
Poland	4.07
Mexico	4.00
Austria	4.00
Spain	3.96
Argentina	3.88
Russia	3.85
United Kingdom	3.85
France	3.85
Italy	3.78
India	3.76
Greece	3.67
Romania	3.59
Portugal	3.58
Ukraine	3.44



c. Working Environment

Next, respondents were asked to rate how they felt about the quality of the working environment where they were employed. The working environment covers topics such as office space and administrative support, the personal qualities of colleagues and the outlook of the department, the facilities available on-site and access to required materials. Higher scores indicate greater satisfaction with the working environment, whilst lower scores indicate less satisfaction. The country rated as having the best working environment was **the Netherlands**, followed by **Switzerland** and **Colombia**. Once again, Germany and the United States were rated in the middle of the pack for working environment, after Austria and Canada. Those countries in which the working environment was rated as least positive were France, Spain and Portugal. Find the complete results in [Figure 6](#).

Figure 6. Working Environment

Country	Working Environment
Netherlands	4.83
Switzerland	4.71
Colombia	4.30
Austria	4.17
Canada	4.15
United States	4.10
Germany	4.05
Mexico	4.00
Brazil	4.00
Ukraine	4.00
Poland	3.93
Russia	3.85
United Kingdom	3.81
Romania	3.77
Argentina	3.75
Greece	3.67
India	3.59
Italy	3.43
Australia	3.40
France	3.40
Spain	3.33
Portugal	3.11

d. Research Autonomy

The next topic which respondents were asked to rate was research autonomy – that is, the amount of freedom they feel they have to direct the themes and methodologies of their research. Of those surveyed, the respondents from **Switzerland** and **Brazil** indicated that they felt they had the highest degree of research autonomy, with both receiving the same average rating. Next in line in terms of research freedom was the Netherlands, followed by the United States and Germany. Rated as having the least amount of autonomy in research were India, Ukraine and Romania, as displayed with further results in **Figure 7**. These three countries also fared badly in the work/life balance question, suggesting a possible relationship between very high expectations regarding workload from employers, and a lack of freedom in one's research.

Figure 7. Research Autonomy

Country	Research Autonomy
Switzerland	4.86
Brazil	4.86
Netherlands	4.83
United States	4.68
Germany	4.58
Austria	4.50
Poland	4.47
Russia	4.46
Italy	4.43
United Kingdom	4.41
Australia	4.40
Canada	4.38
Argentina	4.38
Spain	4.33
France	4.30
Portugal	4.26
Mexico	4.18
Colombia	4.10
Greece	4.00
India	3.88
Ukraine	3.78
Romania	3.64

e. Career Prospects

In addition to questions about their current employment situation, respondents were also asked how they perceived their future career prospects. Did they feel confident in their ability to develop and grow in their career, to find new employment positions in the future, and to make contacts that would help them secure opportunities in the future? These considerations are particularly important to mid-level researchers, who can be overlooked in institutional support. Rated top for potential for career growth by a wide margin was **the Netherlands**, and **Switzerland** was also rated highly. Next were Poland, Russia and the United States. Ukraine, Canada and Mexico were ranked above Germany and the United Kingdom in career prospects, showing a large potential for individual career development in these countries. Despite having strong academic institutions, France, Italy and Portugal were rated lowest in career prospects, reflecting a need for better career support within these areas. Full results are displayed in table form in **Figure 8**.

Figure 8. Career Prospects

Country	Career Prospects
Netherlands	4.83
Switzerland	4.14
Poland	3.93
Russia	3.92
United States	3.83
Ukraine	3.78
Canada	3.77
Mexico	3.55
Germany	3.53
United Kingdom	3.48
Colombia	3.40
Australia	3.40
Romania	3.18
Austria	3.17
Brazil	3.14
India	3.12
Greece	3.00
Spain	2.78
Argentina	2.75
France	2.75
Italy	2.66
Portugal	2.37

f. Salary & Funding

The next criterion that respondents were asked to consider and provide ratings for was the salary and funding that was available to them. They indicated the degree to which they felt satisfied with both their own salary and the funding available to them for their research. **Switzerland** was rated highest in this area. Also rated well in terms of satisfaction with salary and funding were the Netherlands, Colombia, and Australia, closely followed by Canada. More results can be found in [Figure 9](#).

Figure 9. Salary & Funding

Country	Salary & Funding
Switzerland	4.86
Netherlands	4.50
Colombia	3.80
Australia	3.80
Canada	3.77
United States	3.58
Mexico	3.36
United Kingdom	3.30
Germany	3.26
Austria	3.17
India	3.00
Argentina	2.88
Brazil	2.86
Russia	2.85
France	2.80
Poland	2.73
Italy	2.66
Romania	2.59
Portugal	2.47
Spain	2.30
Ukraine	2.22
Greece	2.22

Perhaps surprisingly given their research reputations, the United States, United Kingdom and Germany were rated only middling in terms of financial incentives. Those rated least well for salaries and funding were Spain, Ukraine and Greece, likely related to recent cuts in public spending, which hit these countries particularly hard. With great dependence on funding from government and industry, academic institutions can struggle to provide sufficient funding during economic downturns.

It is important to note though that the rating was given by academic employees themselves and reflects their own assessment of their financial and finding situation. It does not necessarily correlate with their income in absolute terms.

g. Advantages and Disadvantages when Working in Academic Institutions

Having completed the ratings, respondents were asked for further information on the advantages and disadvantages of working in their respective academic institutions. They were invited to provide their own answers, and their responses were then categorised into thematic groupings. The most commonly mentioned advantages and disadvantages are shown in [Figures 10](#) and [11](#), respectively.

Figure 10. Top Advantages of working in an Academic Institution

Top Advantages	Number of respondents	%
research environment; resources & infrastructure	169	31%
working environment; colleagues & staff	168	31%
flexibility, freedom, autonomy, independence	117	21%
Location (weather, big city)	77	14%
reputation, top institution	55	10%
salary/funding	37	7%
young/new	29	5%
students	28	5%
low teaching load	26	5%
great library/access to data/resources	21	4%
international	19	3%
big size of an institution	18	3%
small size of an institution	16	3%

Figure 11. Top Disadvantages of working in an Academic Institution

Top Disadvantages	Number of respondents	%
salary & funding	124	21%
research environment: funding, resources, incentivization, lack of freedom	107	18%
no career opportunities	89	15%
bureaucracy/administration procedures and admin staff	47	8%
unfriendly environment/colleagues/envy & competition	39	7%
high teaching load	31	5%
small size	24	4%
bad students	23	4%
location (bad weather, high living costs)	21	4%
time/pressure/influence	20	3%
low level of internationalization	19	3%
unqualified faculty	13	2%
too young	6	1%

Two themes were identified as the most positive aspects of working in an academic institution: **the research environment** and **the working environment**, with 31 percent of respondents mentioning each of these as positive factors. The research environment refers to the space for research and the institutional support given to each researcher, and to the resources and infrastructure available to support research endeavours. A further positive mentioned by 21 percent of respondents was flexibility, freedom, autonomy and independence, referring to the freedom to direct one's own workload and topics of interest, which indicates an importance of research autonomy and freedom for academics' professional satisfaction. Other advantages mentioned include the location and situation of the institutions (that is, the advantages of the big cities in which institutions are generally located, and the local area and weather) and the reputation of the institution at which they work (that is, the benefits of working at an institution with a well-known name and a reputation for excellence). **Low teaching load was also marked as an advantage in an academic institution.** A more extensive list of the advantages mentioned by respondents can be found in [Figure 10](#).

The respondents' perceptions of negative aspects of working in their respective academic institutions are shown in [Figure 11](#). The mostly commonly mentioned negative aspect was **salary and funding**, identified as a disadvantage by 21 percent of respondents. This discrepancy may result not only from variation in salary and funding between institutions, but also a divergence in opinions on how much salary is expected – for example, whether a salary should be enough to cover the costs of raising a family as well as one's own personal expenses. The next most commonly mentioned disadvantage was the **research environment**; covering issues with funding, resources, investigations, and lack of freedom. Other commonly mentioned drawbacks were the lack of opportunities for **career development, having to deal with bureaucracy and administrative procedures, and unfriendly environments and colleagues**. These issues reflect common concerns among many academics: that their future is uncertain and may not be financially secure, and the stress of having to deal with time-consuming administrative tasks and navigate potentially jealous or difficult co-workers.





### h. Institutions Rated by Full Professors Only

The final question was asked only of full professors, to gauge whether their responses diverged from the responses of more junior staff members such as associate professors, researchers, or postdocs. The full professors were asked to give a general rating for the institution at which they worked, and results were averaged by country of residence (see [Figure 12](#)). The country with the highest average ratings for academic institutions was **the Netherlands**, followed by **Colombia** and **Canada**. This reflects the generally high ratings given to institutions within these countries by all respondents. Absent from the professorial list is Switzerland, which was also rated highly in many categories by all respondents. However, this is due to a lack of responses from full professors in Switzerland, and hence sufficient data is not available to draw a confident conclusion. Notable is the high placement of Mexico on the professors' list; a country whose institutions were generally rated as middling by all respondents considered together. This suggests that Mexico may be an acceptable place of work for an early career researcher but an excellent place for a more senior professor.

The countries where institutions were rated lowest by the professors were Romania, Spain and Portugal, which was in line with relatively low ratings of these countries on other criteria by all respondents. Portugal particularly was rated as fairly low on some criteria when all respondents' ratings were considered, but even more so when looking only at the ratings of the professors. This suggests that Portugal may be lacking in the funding, institutional support, and reputation that is of importance to senior academics.

Figure 12. Institutions Rated by Full Professors Only

Country	Average Rating
Netherlands	4.53
Colombia	4.25
Canada	4.04
Mexico	4.03
United States	4.03
Malaysia	4.00
Brazil	3.88
Germany	3.87
United Kingdom	3.80
France	3.63
India	3.49
Italy	3.49
Romania	3.36
Spain	3.14
Portugal	2.93

## IV. Concluding Remarks

In conclusion, our survey has revealed valuable insights about the working experience and career progression of over one thousand academics from across the globe.

It is unsurprising that **more than three quarters of respondents were employed by a university**. The dependence of researchers upon the university system is still clearly in place. While the respondents were relatively similar in terms of the type of employer, there was much greater variation in terms of the position currently held. The largest group represented was full professors, but also represented were associate and assistant professors, researchers, postdocs and PhD candidates.

A series of questions was used to extract rankings of each country, for different criteria important to a career in academia. The criteria considered were work/life balance, the working environment, research autonomy, career prospects, and salary and funding. **Consistently ranked highly (always in the top three) in all of these criteria were Switzerland and the Netherlands**. A high ranking was also given in many criteria to Colombia, representing a developing academic system outside of the United States-Europe academic structure. While Colombia was ranked highly for work/life balance, working environment, and salary and funding, it was ranked significantly lower in research autonomy and career prospects, suggesting limitations to career opportunities and the free choice of research topics

Typically found in the middle of the ranking tables were countries such as Germany, the United States, and the United Kingdom. Whilst these countries all have strong academic reputations and a large number of academic institutions, ratings for working environment and work/life balance, as well as funding were not generally as high. The salary and funding available in these countries, for example, is not

necessarily commensurate with what a skilled researcher could earn in another field or in industry. However, these countries do represent safer options for career prospects, as they are known quantities with strong international reputations that can be important for career progression.

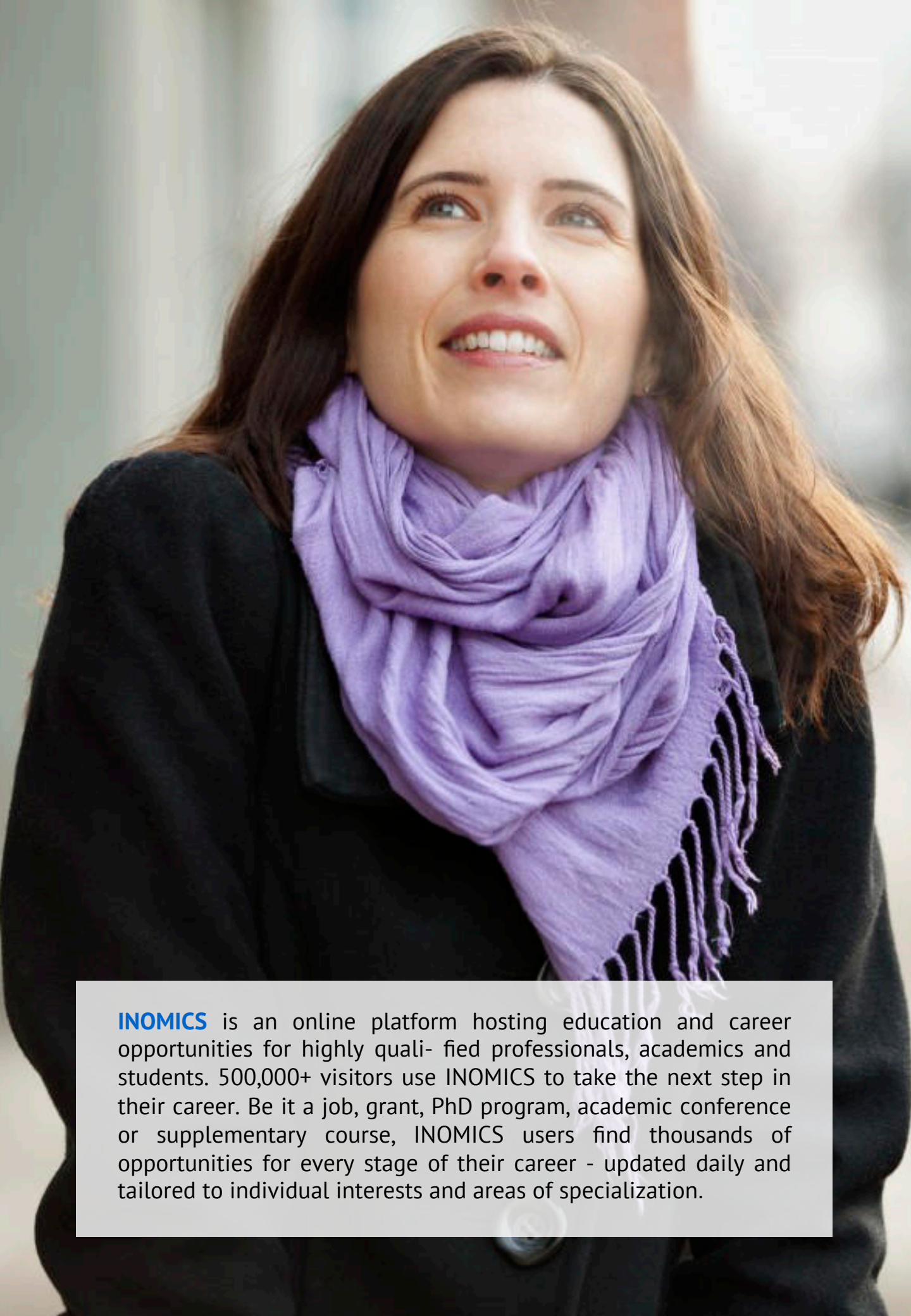
Countries that performed poorly on the rankings include Portugal, Romania and Ukraine, although despite a generally low rating, Romania performed much better on measures of working environment and career prospects. This demonstrates that even in less well-known or less well-ranked countries, there are still exciting positives, such as friendly colleagues or the possibility of fast progression.

These rankings were also consistent with the results from full professors, who, similarly to their more junior colleagues, rated the Netherlands and Colombia highly, the United States, Germany and the United Kingdom in the middle, and Romania and Portugal at the bottom. This suggests a consistency between the experiences of junior and senior academic systems in terms of which countries' institutions are preferable under these criteria.

Respondents were also asked to indicate **advantages and disadvantages of working in their respective academic institutions**. Perhaps surprisingly, the research environment was mentioned as positive by 31 percent of respondents, but as a negative by 21 percent of respondents. This shows the amount of variation found between institutions, and the importance of experiencing the research environment in person if possible before accepting a position in a new institute. Other positives mentioned were the working environment and the flexibility offered by an academic career, whilst further negatives included issues with salary, career advancement, and with having to deal with bureaucracy.

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