

A Longitudinal View of Political Science Doctoral Student Placement, 2009 – 2013

Source: APSA Graduate Placement Survey, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13

Summary: In this report, we add placement data from 2012-2013 to our longitudinal look at graduate placement since 2009. We also provide data on the perceptions of graduate directors on the state of the job market in political science. Overall, the data illustrate a consistent pattern in political science employment over time, with more than three-quarters of job candidates finding academic or nonacademic employment, and the majority of those placed in tenure track positions. And while the aggregate data illustrate a gradual decline over the last four years in academic – and tenure track – appointments, a closer look at differences in placement between PhD and ABD job candidates reveals a more stable academic placement landscape for those with their degrees in hand. Additionally, there continue to be small shifts in graduate placement among candidates of different demographic and subfield characteristics.

Overall Placement: Figure 1 illustrates the changes over time in the placement of all political science job candidates and of those with their PhD in hand. Table 1 presents the characteristics of candidates on the job market. While there have been fluctuations over the last several years, the overall picture is one of general consistency in placement even with increasing numbers of candidates on the market. And political science doctoral students were more successful on the job market than their counterparts in other social sciences, as reported by the National Science Foundation in the [Doctoral Recipients from U.S. Universities, 2012](#) (from AY 2011-12). While 69.9% of social science doctoral graduates secured some form of employment at the time of their graduation, 79.2% of political science job candidates were reported in the graduate placement survey as employed in 2012-13.

Still, there are important underlying patterns, particularly related to academic positions and the influx of ABDs on the market. The data clearly show a gradual decrease in academic (faculty) placements from 2009 to 2012, largely apparent in tenure track appointments (the solid lines in Figure 1). Significantly, however, this may be a function of the dramatic increase in the proportion of ABDs on the market. Perhaps a result of the economy and perceptions about the future of the job market, candidates without their degree were an important part of the political science employment landscape in 2010, increasing nearly three-fold from 2009-10 to 2010-11 and remaining at this relatively high level since then (Table 1). But the success of ABDs on the market has varied and this has distorted the aggregate placement picture. As the dotted lines in Figure 1 and the data in Figures 2.1 – 2.4 illustrate clearly, PhDs on the market have placed in tenure track positions at relatively high and steady rates over time even as their numbers have increased and despite the increase in ABDs (with the exception of 2011-12 when the competition for these jobs among degree and non-degree holders was high). Indeed, in 2011-12, we see the beginnings of a rebound in tenure track placements. PhDs on the market also have placed more often in nonacademic positions than their ABD colleagues. Not so for PhDs placing in non-tenure track positions, who seem to have competed with ABDs over time and who were surpassed by ABDs in these positions in 2012-13. Similarly, PhDs on the market appear to compete with ABDs for post doc positions as well. Importantly, though, the vast majority of the unemployed job candidates in each of the last four years have been candidates who had not completed their degrees when they went on the job market.

Gender and Placement: The proportion of women on the market has remained generally stable over time (Table 1). In 2012-13, female candidates were as successful as male candidates in achieving placement in academic faculty positions (Table 2), as they had been in previous years; the rates for both sexes were down a bit from the previous year, a pattern that may be explained in part by ABDs on the market. About 40% of male and female candidates who completed their degrees were placed in tenure-track positions, while 8.5% of male and 11.6% of female PhD job candidates were not placed. 17.6% of male and 24.3% of female ABD candidates were placed in tenure-track positions, to 33.7% of male and 26.1% of female ABD candidates. Additionally, in 2012-13 women earned tenure track appointments and non-tenure track appointments at the same rate as men (35.6% and 34.3%, and 20.9% for both, respectively). These academic placements for both female and male job candidates were down a bit from the previous year.

Race, Ethnicity and Placement: As noted in previous reports, we report data on race and ethnicity with care because U.S. candidates of color (African-Americans, Latina/os, Asian/Pacific Islanders, and Native Americans) compose a small proportion of all job candidates (11% of job candidates are reported as belonging to

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one or more of these groups) (Table 1). Still, the data indicate that more than a majority of most racial and ethnic minorities on the market in 2012-13 earned academic faculty appointments (Table 2), and African-Americans more than Caucasians. Additionally, African-American candidates were most likely to be placed in tenure-track positions (with Latina/os second in these appointments), while Asian-American tenure-track appointments were most likely in PhD-granting programs (Table 3).

Women of Color and Placement: In 2012-13, women of color were 9.9% of all candidates on the market (108/1101), 25.7% of all female candidates on the market, and 88.5% of all candidates of color. Overall, women of color were not placed as well as the general female population, with 28.8% hired into tenure track faculty positions. Compared to the general population of female candidates, women of color were less likely earn academic faculty appointments (43.8% compared to 56.5%) and more likely to be placed in non-academic positions (18.1% compared to 11.6%) or not placed at all (23.7% 15.4%).

International Candidates and Placement: International candidates made up approximately 30.7% of all job candidates, second only to Caucasians on the job market (Table 1). In 2012-13, international students returned to their 2009-10 prominence in post doc positions, nearly tripling their placement to 23% from the previous year and accounting for nearly half (48.1%) of all post-doc placements (Table 2). Nearly a majority (48%) of international candidates earned academic faculty appointments; of those who placed in tenure track positions, nearly two thirds (65%) were at PhD-granting programs (Table 3). Still, international candidates experienced the highest rate of unemployment (not counting the two American Indian/Alaska Native candidates who were not placed). Fifty-three countries were represented on the job market, with Canada (9.3%), South Korea (8.8%), Turkey (8%), and China (7.1%) leading the field.

Field of Study and Placement: Looking first at the three largest fields, we continue to see a steady increase in the proportion of American politics candidates on the market over time, while the data show the opposite trend in comparative politics candidates (Table 1). The majority of candidates in all three fields found academic faculty jobs, although comparative politics candidates did less well than their American and international politics colleagues. Despite placing more often in tenure track positions, American politics candidates continued to decline in their overall faculty placements and fared least well among the three major fields in tenure track appointments to PhD-granting programs (Tables 2 and 3).

Political philosophy is consistently the next largest field in terms of the proportion of the job market (Table 1); the proportion of these candidates earning faculty positions has declined by about 10% in the last year (and steadily over the last few years), and the data indicate an almost equal increase in post doc positions in 2012-13 (Table 2). Among those who placed in tenure track positions, half were hired by PhD programs (Table 3).

Among the other notable findings is the high faculty placement – and as tenure track in PhD programs – among public administration candidates, and relatively high unemployment for public policy candidates.

Time in Program: Graduate directors were asked to provide program start dates for job candidates in 2010-11, 2011-12, and 2012-13. For job candidates in 2012-13, the average time in program for *all* job candidates was 6 years, a full year less than reported in the previous two years. Male candidates finished one year earlier than this average (5 years); the majority of their female colleagues finished in 6 years.

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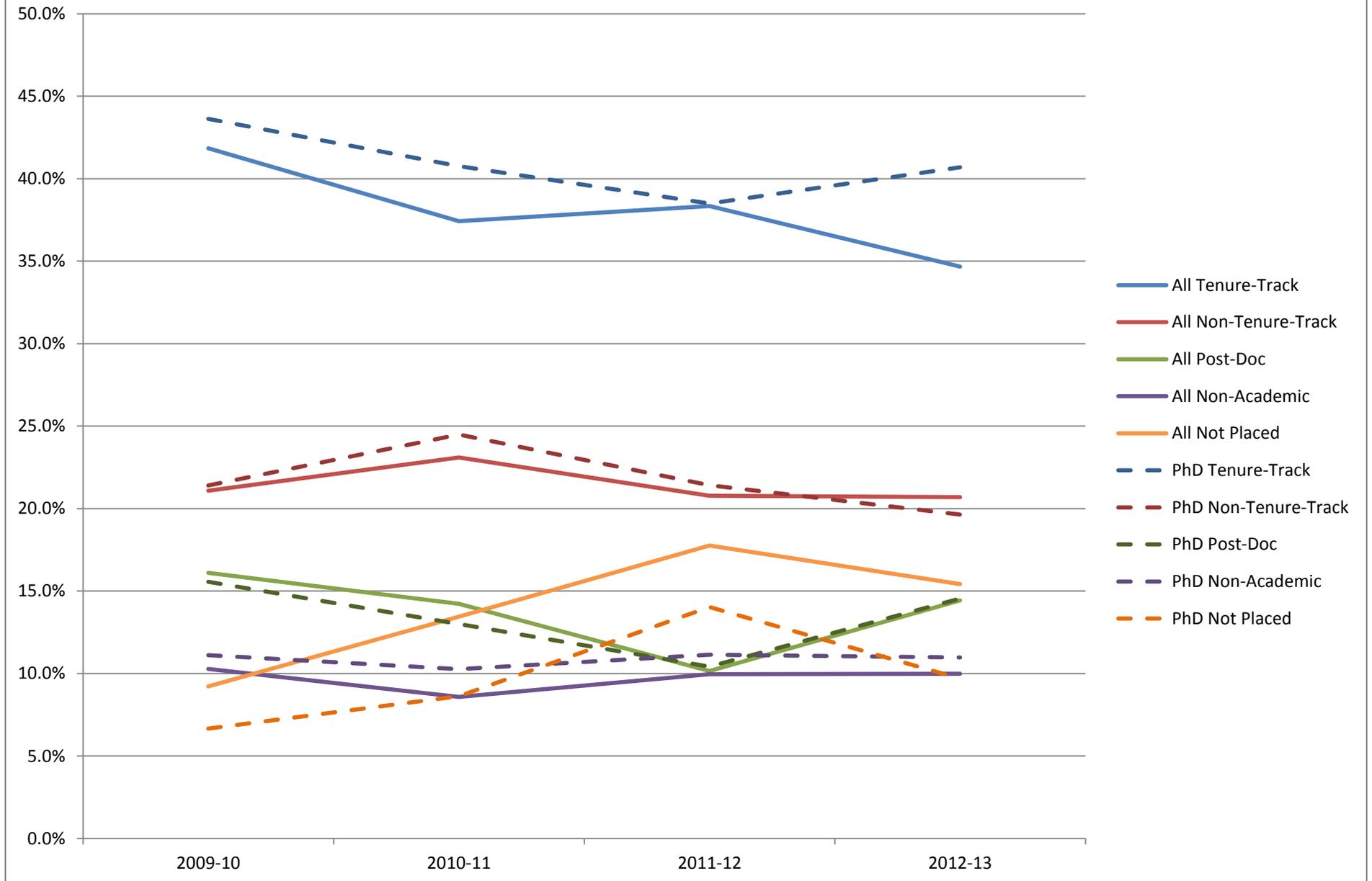
Job Market Perceptions: Graduate directors were asked about their perceptions of the current and future job market. Reflecting on the past year, about one-third of graduate directors said they believed the job market experienced “some improvement” in 2012-13 (Table 4.1). Nearly a quarter perceived only a “small improvement,” and a few more said there had been no improvement in the market in the last year. Looking forward, 29% expected some improvement in 2013-14, and another 29% thought there would be only small improvements (Table 4.2). Directors at public universities were more likely to have a favorable view of the current job market, and those at private universities were more likely to be positive about the future.

About the Data: These data come from the 2012-13 APSA Graduate Placement Survey. Directors of Graduate Studies provide individual level information about doctoral students in their programs if they (1) competed seriously for academic or non-academic jobs during the academic year, whether or not they were placed; (2) sought their first placement in the academic year, in either academic or non-academic positions; and/or (3) were repeat candidates on the market because they had *not* placed in previous years. In 2012-13, 80 programs (61%) reported 651 students. These data are weighted by department faculty size, yielding the results reported in Table 1. As a result of weighting, totals in other tables may not equal those in Table 1.

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Figure 1. Overall Placement Outcomes, AY 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13



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Table 1: Characteristics of Job Market Candidates, 2009-10, 2010-11, 2011-12, 2012-13

	2009-10 (n = 944)		2010-11 (n = 1025)		2011-12 (n = 1023)		2012-13 (n = 1101)	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender								
Female	374	39.6	441	43.4	388	37.9	421	38.2
Male	570	60.4	580	56.6	636	62.1	670	60.9
Not Reported	--	--	5	0.5	--	--	10	0.9
Race/Ethnicity								
African American	30	3.2	38	3.7	23	2.2	36	3.3
Am. Indian/AK Native	--	--	1	0.1	--	--	2	0.1
Asian/Pacific Islander	27	2.8	23	2.1	39	3.8	53	4.8
Caucasian	538	57.0	568	55.4	581	56.8	612	55.6
Latino/a	26	2.8	24	2.3	11	1.1	25	2.3
International	279	29.6	310	30.2	358	35.0	338	30.7
Two or More Races	--	--	2	0.2	7	0.7	6	0.6
Other	3	0.3	--	--	--	--	--	--
Not Reported	41	4.3	59	5.7	5	0.4	29	2.7
Major Field								
American Politics	178	18.8	214	20.9	210	20.5	257	23.3
Comparative Politics	290	30.7	341	33.3	276	26.9	275	25.0
International Politics	219	23.2	225	21.9	281	27.5	296	26.9
Methods	16	1.7	4	0.4	9	0.9	12	1.1
Political Philosophy	141	15.0	113	11.0	130	12.7	164	14.9
Public Administration	18	1.9	26	2.5	46	4.5	17	1.6
Public Law	7	0.7	27	2.6	24	2.3	8	0.7
Public Policy	30	3.1	30	2.9	19	1.8	32	2.9
Other	24	2.5	30	2.9	22	2.1	22	2.0
Not Reported	24	2.5	34	3.3	2	0.8	18	1.6
Degree Earned								
ABD	89	9.4	267	26.0	319	31.2	303	27.5
Ph.D.	855	90.6	730	71.2	690	67.4	785	71.3
Not Reported	--	--	28	2.8	12	1.4	13	1.2
Repeat Candidate								
No	606	64.1	744	72.6	669	65.3	750	68.1
Yes	270	28.6	225	22.0	237	23.2	294	26.7
Not Reported	68	7.2	56	5.4	93	9.1	57	5.2

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Figure 2.1. All Placements by Degree Status, 2009-10

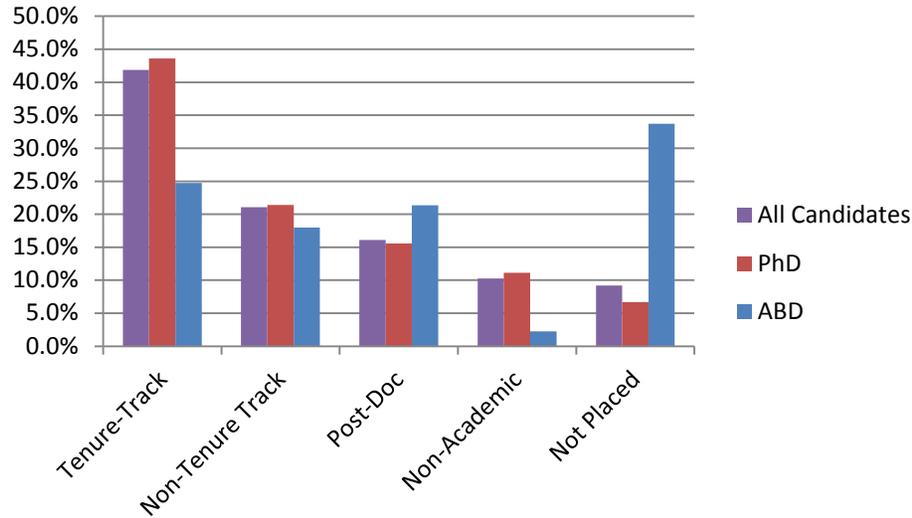


Figure 2.2. All Placements by Degree Status, 2010-11

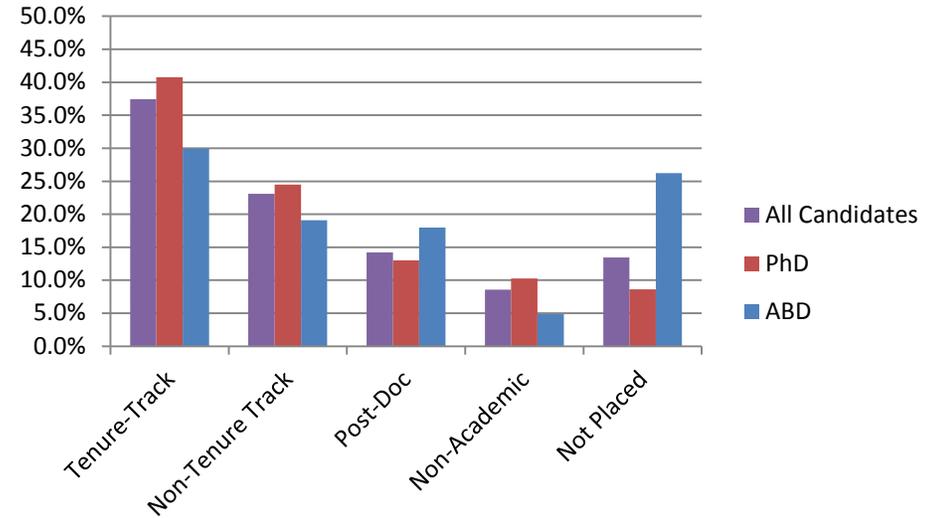


Figure 2.3. All Placements by Degree Status, 2011-12

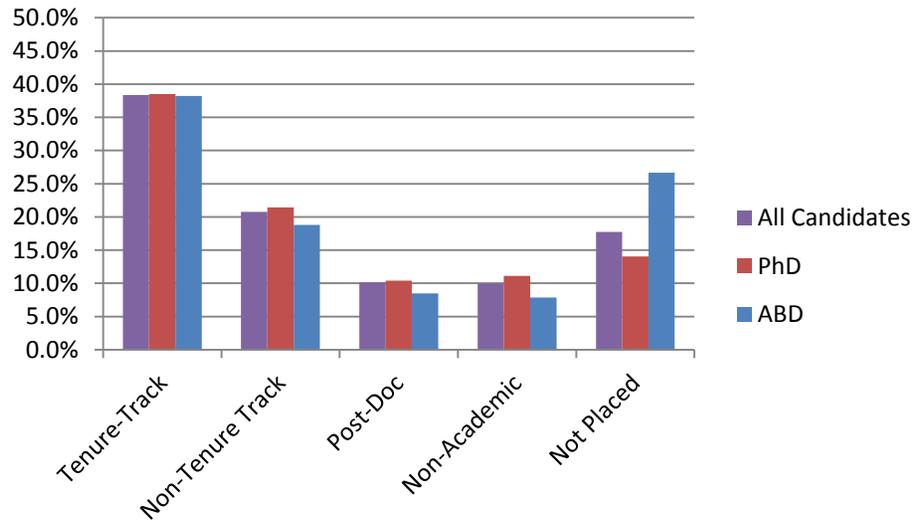
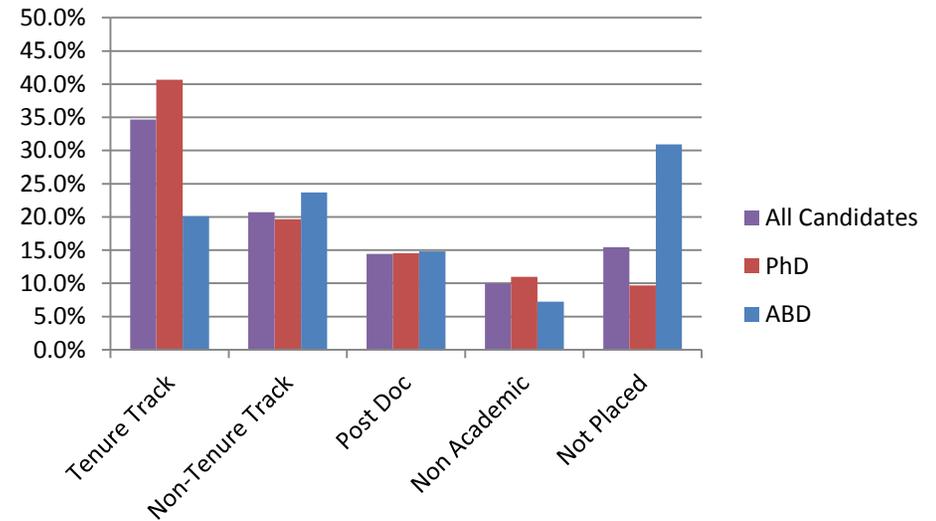


Figure 2.4. All Placements by Degree Status, 2012-13



Note: Excluded from these figures are placement outcomes not reported by departments. As a result, percentages may not add to 100.

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Table 2. Overall Placement by Gender, Race & Ethnicity, and Major Field, 2012-13

	Academic		Post Doc		Non-Academic		Not Placed	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender								
Female	238	56.5%	56	13.3%	49	11.6%	65	15.4%
Male	370	55.1%	104	15.5%	60	8.9%	104	15.5%
Not Reported	2	20.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Race/Ethnicity								
African-American/Black	23	63.9%	2	5.6%	7	19.4%	3	8.3%
American Indian/Alaska Native	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	2	100.0%
Asian/Pacific Islander	28	52.8%	6	11.3%	9	17.0%	10	18.9%
Caucasian/White	363	59.4%	69	11.3%	69	11.3%	87	14.2%
International	163	48.2%	77	22.8%	16	4.7%	66	19.5%
Latino/a (any race)	13	50.0%	5	19.2%	4	15.4%	2	7.7%
Two or More Races	6	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Not Reported	13	43.3%	2	6.7%	3	10.0%	0	0.0%
Major Field								
American Politics	156	60.9%	25	9.8%	36	14.1%	36	14.1%
Comparative Politics	153	55.6%	48	17.5%	19	6.9%	38	13.8%
International Politics	180	60.8%	30	10.1%	23	7.8%	52	17.6%
Methods	6	50.0%	3	25.0%	3	25.0%	0	0.0%
Political Philosophy	64	39.0%	49	29.9%	14	8.5%	32	19.5%
Public Administration	16	88.9%	0	0.0%	2	11.1%	0	0.0%
Public Law	6	75.0%	0	0.0%	2	25.0%	0	0.0%
Public Policy	16	48.5%	2	6.1%	5	15.2%	7	21.2%
Other	7	30.4%	3	13.0%	5	21.7%	5	21.7%
Not Reported	5	26.3%	0	0.0%	2	10.5%	0	0.0%

Note: Excluded from this table are placement outcomes not reported by departments. As a result, percentages may not add to 100.

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Table 3. Department Type for Tenure-Track Appointments by Gender, Race & Ethnicity, and Major Field, 2012-13

	PhD		MA		BA	
	n	%	n	%	n	%
Gender						
Female	74	49.3%	33	22.0%	40	26.7%
Male	139	60.7%	41	17.9%	31	13.5%
Race/Ethnicity						
African-American/Black	3	21.4%	8	57.1%	3	21.4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	14	77.8%	0	0.0%	4	22.2%
Caucasian/White	121	53.3%	44	19.4%	49	21.6%
International	65	64.9%	21	20.7%	8	8.3%
Latino/a (any race)	3	27.3%	2	18.2%	2	18.2%
Two or More Races	1	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Not Reported	7	58.3%	0	0.0%	5	41.7%
Major Field						
American Politics	53	46.9%	30	26.5%	22	19.5%
Comparative Politics	53	55.2%	16	16.7%	25	26.0%
International Politics	72	63.7%	15	13.3%	14	12.4%
Methods	3	75.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Political Philosophy	11	50.0%	5	22.7%	6	27.3%
Public Administration	8	57.1%	4	28.6%	2	14.3%
Public Law	0	0.0%	3	100.0%	0	0.0%
Public Policy	7	100.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%
Other	3	60.0%	0	0.0%	2	40.0%

Note: Excluded from this table are placement outcomes not reported by departments. As a result, percentages may not add to 100.

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Table 4.1. Graduate Director Perceptions of Changes in Job Market Since 2011-2012

	n	%
Great Improvement	1	1.3%
Some Improvement	26	32.9%
Small Improvement	19	24.1%
No Improvement	23	29.1%
Don't Know	10	12.7%
Total	79	100.0%

Table 4.2. Graduate Director Perceptions of Changes in Job Market for 2013-2014

	n	%
Great Improvement	0	0.0%
Some Improvement	23	29.1%
Small Improvement	23	29.1%
No Improvement	12	15.2%
Don't Know	21	26.6%
Total	79	100.0%

Table 5 . Graduate Director Perceptions of Employment Preferences for Doctoral Students, 2012-13

	TT in Doctoral Institution		TT in Undergrad Institution		NTT in Any Institution		Non-Academic	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Most Students	50	64.9%	20	27.8%	5	7.2%	2	2.8%
Some Students	21	27.3%	40	55.6%	12	17.4%	10	14.1%
Few Students	5	6.5%	10	13.9%	24	34.8%	49	69.0%
No Students	1	1.3%	2	2.8%	28	40.6%	10	14.1%
Total Depts	77	100.0%	72	100.0%	69	100.0%	71	100.0%