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## Postdoc journal

## Fight or flight?

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The main career problem for most 30-something Italian scientists like myself — PhDs with a knack for research — is logistical: should they stay in their home country or try their luck abroad? Heading to another country could greatly improve the chance of securing a good position, but there are often strong reasons to stay in the *Bel Paese* — apart from climate, food and art — such as keeping the family together.

I am fortunate in that my wife shares my passion for research — although she cultivates it in a different city, which requires us to spend much time apart. We have just had our first child, so we now have an extra mouth to feed. This has meant an additional part-time job for my wife and some intense parenting for us both. We welcome the challenge, but we couldn't have taken it on without help from family and friends — help that is available only in our home country. So we'd rather stay, if possible.

Sound familiar? Making a living in research is hard in most countries, and family is a priority everywhere. With a PhD in cognitive science and two postdocs behind me, I'm looking for a better research position. My work focuses on people's preferences between present and future outcomes and how much delay they will tolerate to get what they want — 'an egg today or a hen tomorrow?' goes the expression. But no matter how much I learn in the lab about such temporal inclinations, my own geographical preferences elude me: home sweet home or the vastness beyond?

A leap of faith will solve the dilemma, but which way should I jump — into the ravine of the struggling Italian job market or the chasm of a new life abroad? This year I'll weigh my options and place my bets.

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