



UNIVERSITY OF HELSINKI
FACULTY OF SCIENCE

Survey Insights: Postdoctoral Researchers Report on the Struggle to Succeed in Academia

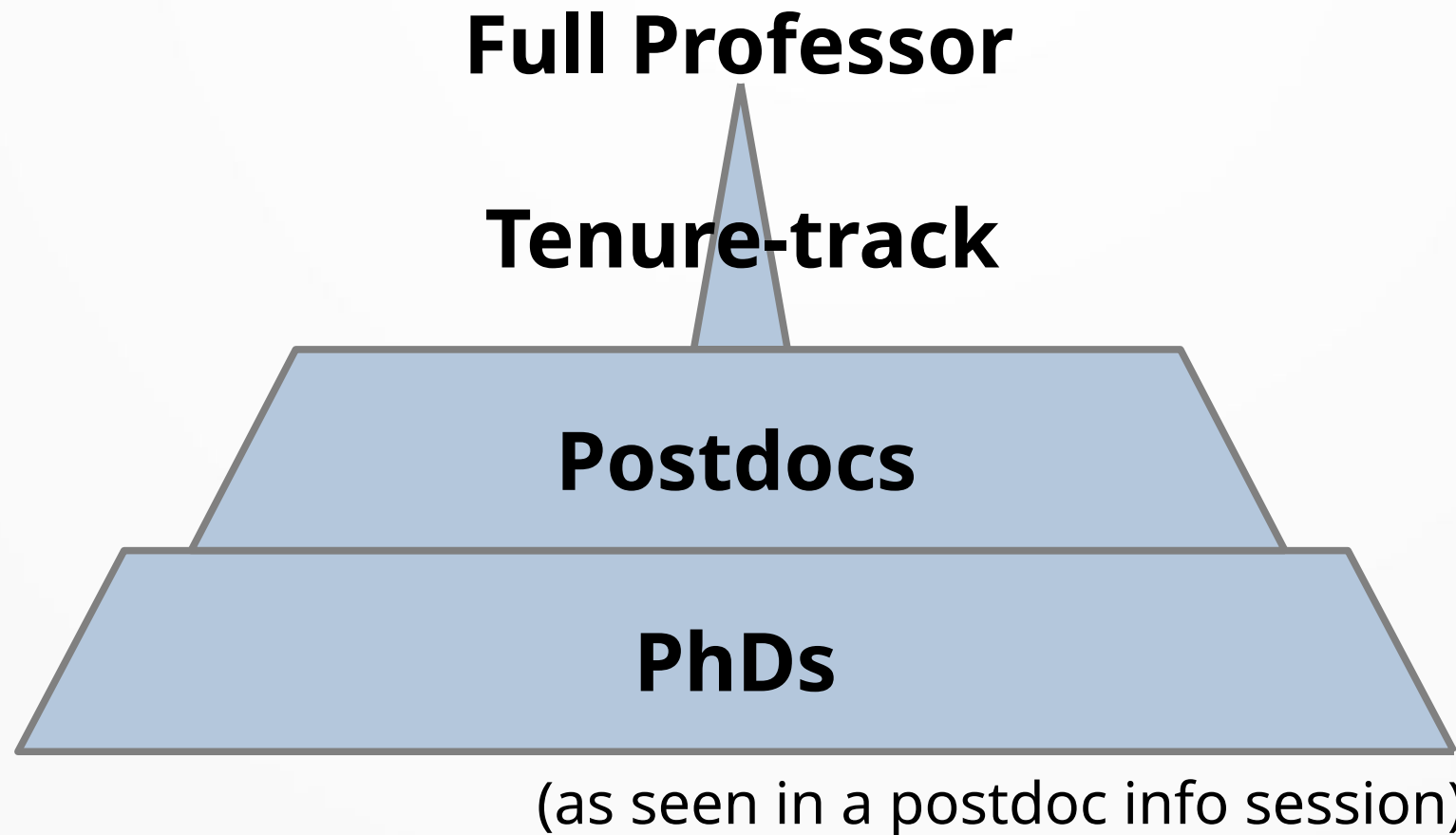
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AGU Fall Meeting 2024

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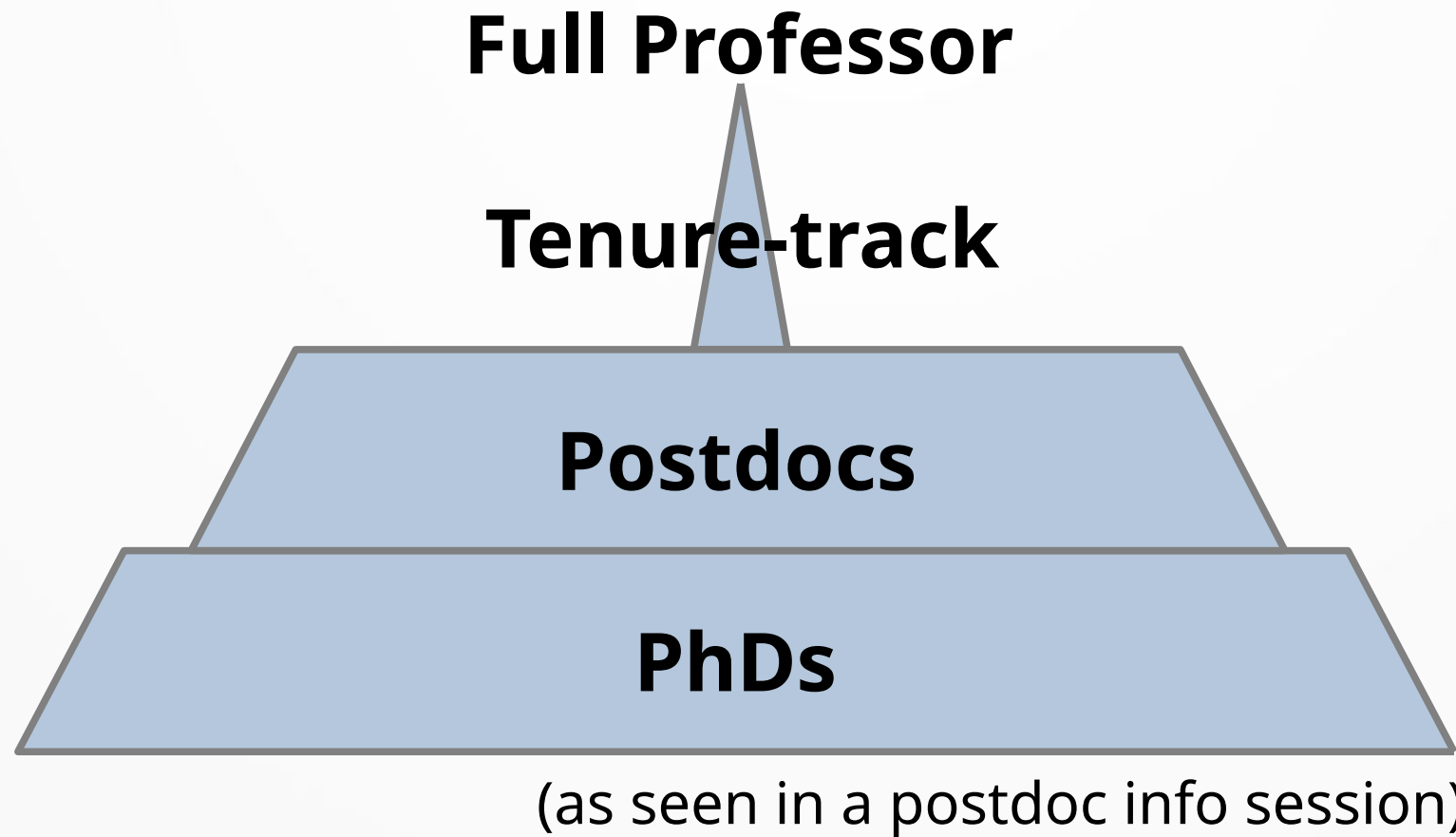
Motivation – Why a survey?

The Academic Pyramid



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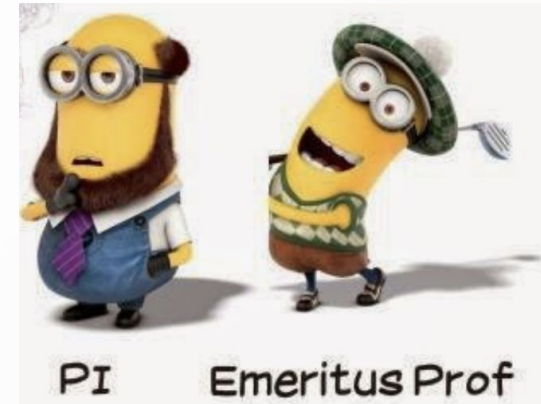
Full Professor

Tenure-track

Postdocs

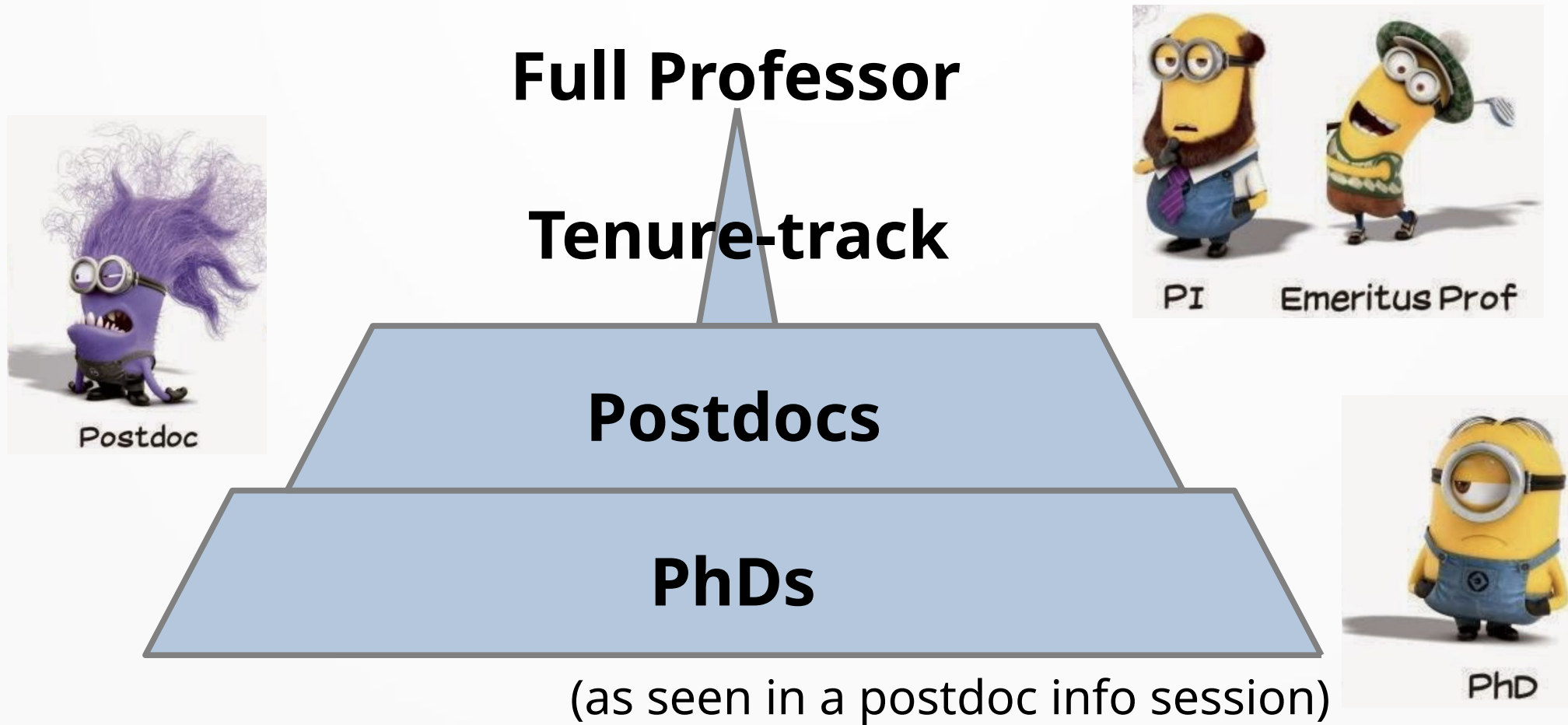
PhDs

(as seen in a postdoc info session)



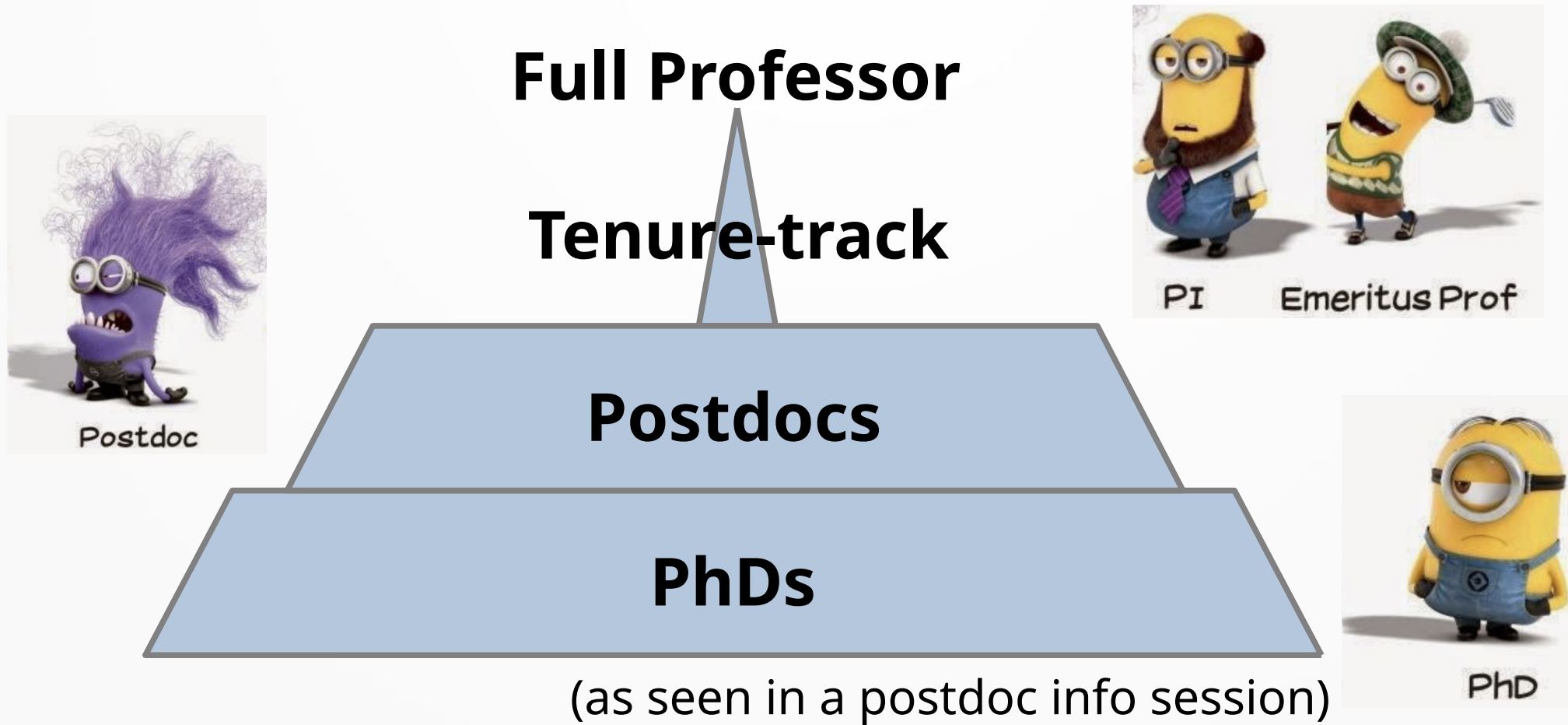
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Survey is a tool to **quantify issues** and **promote change**

A survey dedicated to the space physics community

- The survey targets **postdocs & non-permanent researchers** (with a PhD degree)
- **Topics:**
 1. General Information
 2. Wellbeing
 3. Postdoctoral Support
 4. Career Development
 5. Systemic Reform

72 respondents in four days!



Scan QR to take the survey!



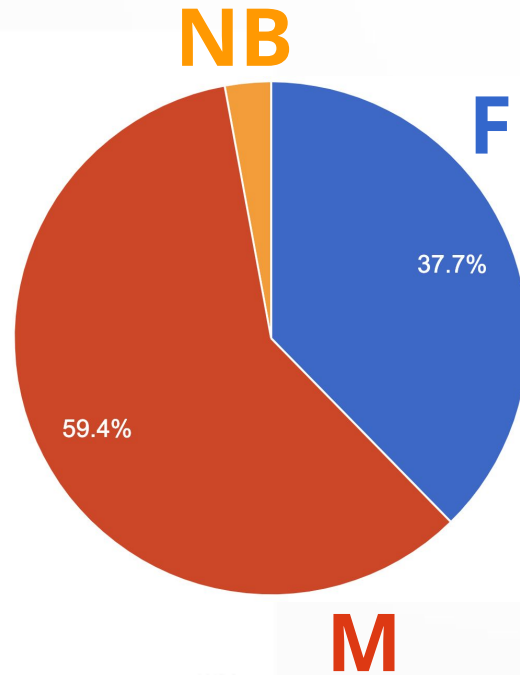
RESULTS

(so far)

General information



Age & gender distribution (N=68)



The respondents:

- Typical **age 31-35** (5-year mode)
- Obtained PhD 1990s-2024 (median: 2021, mean: 2019) **skewed distribution**
- Mostly men (60.3%)

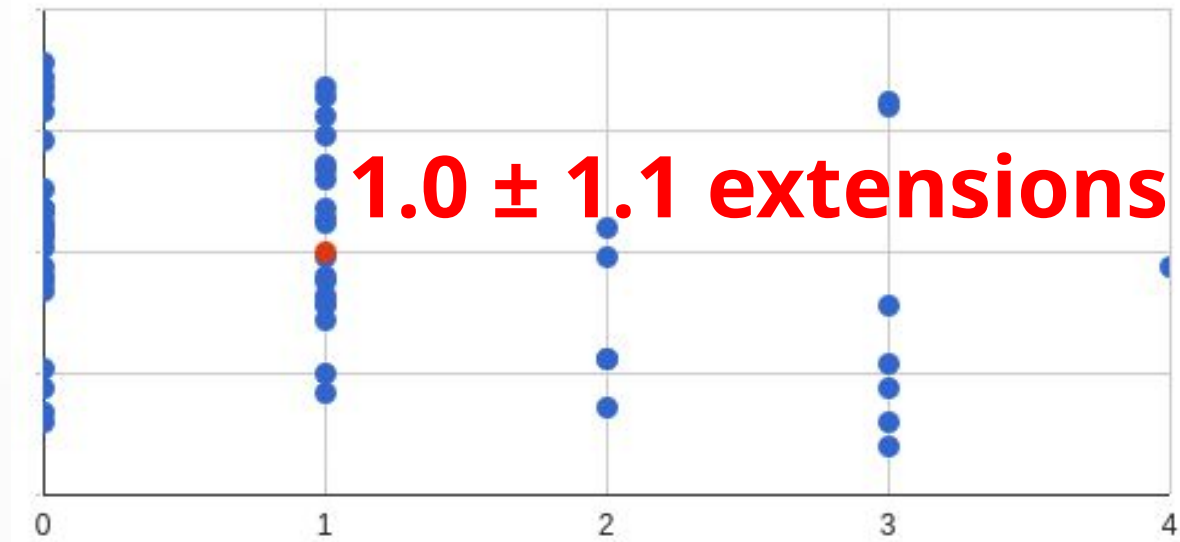
Contracts duration and extensions



How long was your contract, when you first signed it?

2.0 ± 1.1 years

How many **contract extensions**?



1.0 ± 1.1 extensions

Average duration of the extensions?

1.5 ± 1.0 years

Workload



How many hours are you *contractually obligated* to work per week?

36.9 ± 6.0

How many hours do you *actually* work each week, on average?

43.7 ± 13.1

**18% overtime
(+1 day of work!)**

Workload



How many hours are you

obligat

ACADEMIA

PRO

YOU CAN WORK WHENEVER
YOU WANT! EVERY DAY
IS A SATURDAY!



CON

YOU WORK ON SATURDAYS.



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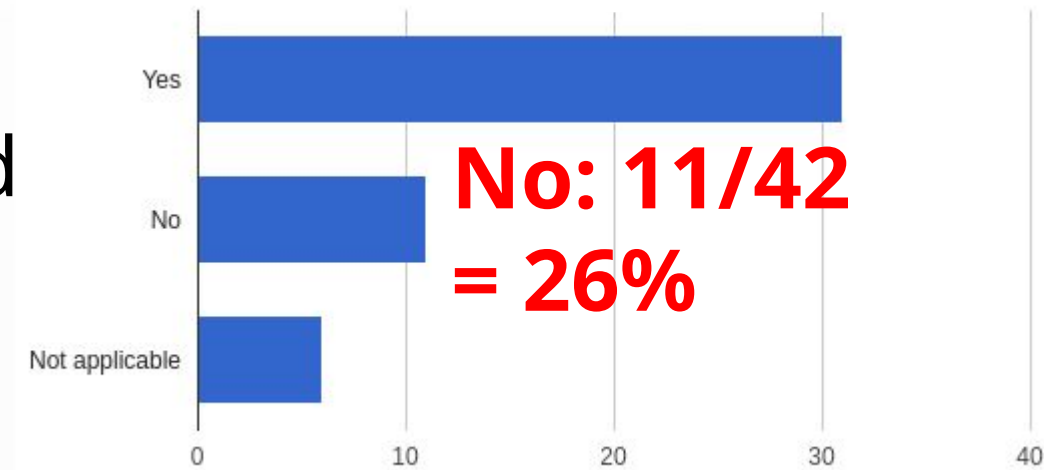
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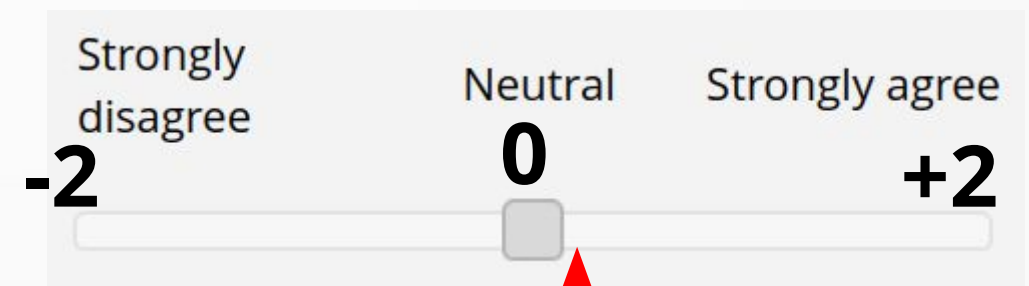
Supervision



Are you **encouraged** to use your paid working hours to develop and submit **research proposals**?



My supervisors are open and **willing to negotiate pay raises** and other **promotion opportunities**.



Harassment (N=53)



Since obtaining your PhD, have you experienced any of the following types of harassment or academic bullying?

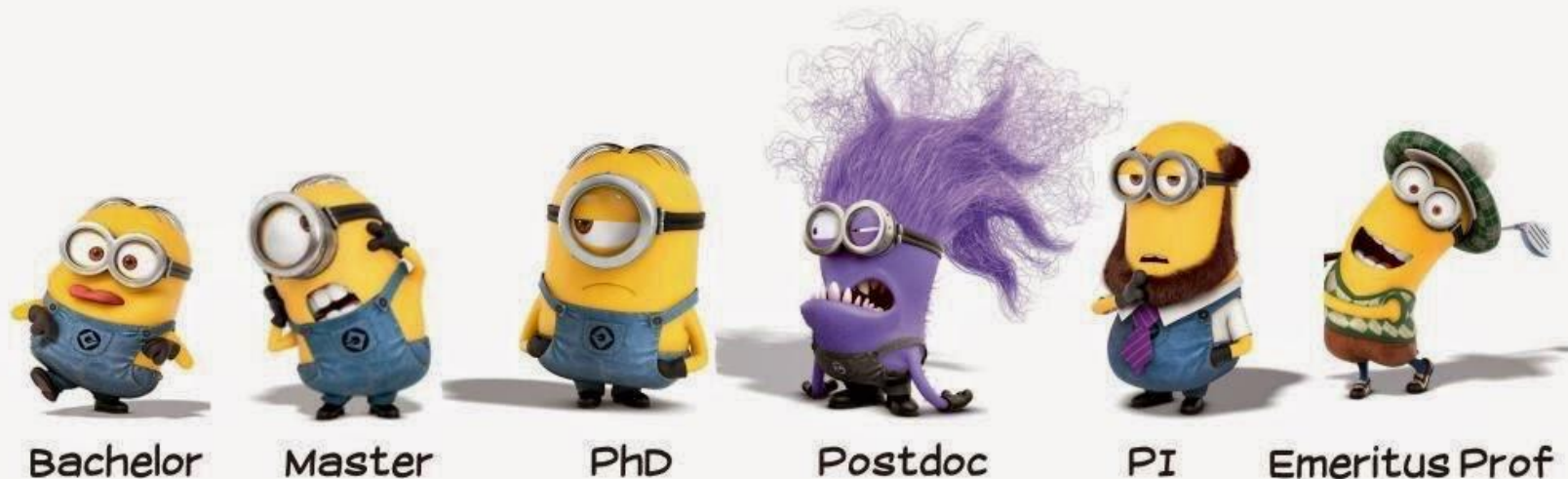
- **Hindering of one's career advancement (20, 37.7%)**
- Exclusion (18, 34.0%)
- Power harassment (16, 30.2%)
- Belittlement (16, 30.2%)
- Manipulative behaviour (14, 26.4%)
- Withholding information (13, 24.5%)
- Offensive conduct (12, 22.6%)
- **None of the above (15, 28.3%)**

Conclusions



- **Fundamental issue: Career uncertainty**
- **Fill out the survey before January 11, 2025!**

If you could **change one thing** about being a postdoc, what would it be?



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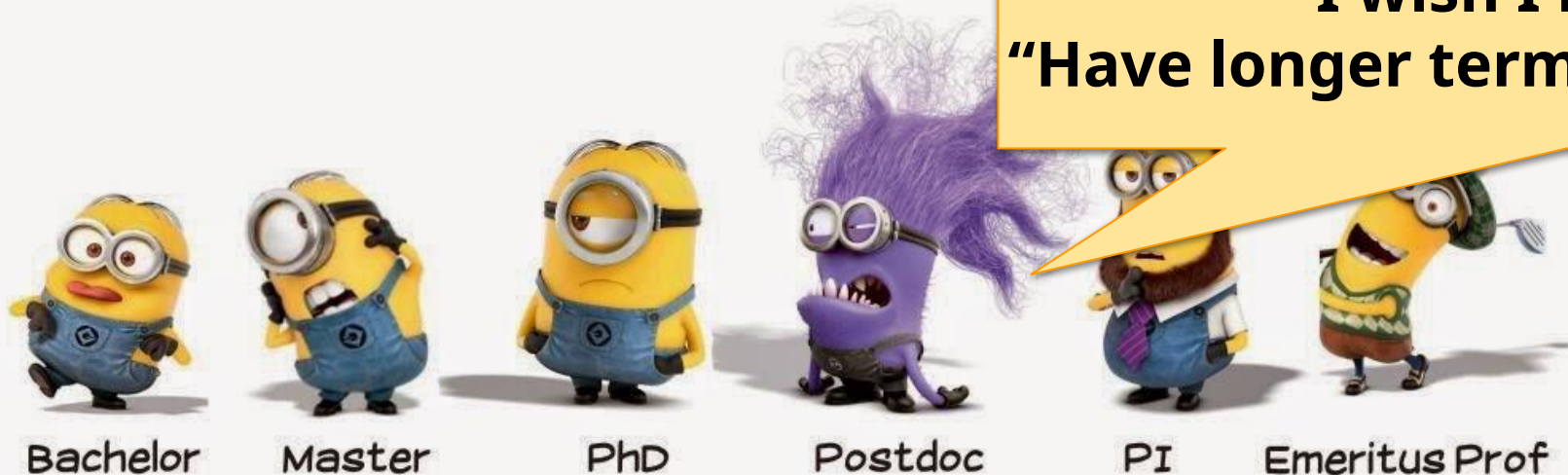
Conclusions



- **Fundamental issue: Career uncertainty**
- **Fill out the survey before January 11, 2025!**

If you could **change one thing** about being a postdoc, what would it be?

"Longer contracts"
"More pay!"
"Stability"
"Work life balance"
"I wish I had clearer career goals"
"Have longer term vision on postdoc staff"



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