

The Young Academy of Europe (YAE)



Mental health and work-life balance after transition to independence

Gemma Modinos, PhD FYAE

Chair of YAE

EURODOC CONFERENCE 2021

Session #6: Mental health and work-life balance

chair@yacadeuro.org / gemma.modinos@kcl.ac.uk

[@yacadeuro](#) / [@g_modinos](#)

YAE - what it is



- Pan-European initiative of outstanding young researchers for networking, scientific exchange, and science policy
- YAE fellows demonstrate leadership (young principal investigators), their research is recognised at national and international levels, and have an interest in science policy
- Currently 168 fellows and 100 alumni



YAE - what it does



- Science for policy (e.g. participation in European scientific advice)
- Policy for science (e.g. work closely with ISE for open science, researcher evaluation and careers)
- Networking (among members and with senior academics from e.g. Academia Europaea)
- Science communication (e.g. online symposium/webinars, Science Outreach task force)
- Interdisciplinary exchange (among our members and e.g. Transdisciplinary Research task force)
- Equality, diversity and inclusion (unconscious bias declaration, CALIPER grant, EDI task force)



Webinar
12 April 13:00-14:00 CET

The Rights Retention Strategy and what it means for EU13 + Associated Countries

In partnership with ENYAs from EU13 + Associated Countries:

+ young scholar representatives from Croatia, North Macedonia, Serbia, and Turkey

EUROPEAN UNIVERSITY ASSOCIATION WEBINAR SERIES
UNIVERSITIES AND THE FUTURE OF SCHOLARLY PUBLISHING **eua20**

TODAY

- Jean-Pierre Finance, Chair EUA Expert Group on Science 2.0 and Open Science
- Astrid Söderbergh Widding, President, Stockholm University; Chair of the board for the Association of Swedish Higher Education Institutions; Chair, Bibsam Consortium
- Claire Redhead, Executive Director, Open Access Scholarly Publishing Association
- Moniek Tromp, Vice-Chair, Young Academy of Europe
- Jan Moss, Chief Executive Officer, International Association for Scientific, Technical and Medical Publishers
- Björn Brembs, Institute of Zoology – Neurogenetics, Universität Regensburg
- Lidia Borrell-Damián, Secretary-General, Science Europe



Research integrity: how can we support and protect early-career researchers in cases of scientific misconduct?



Relevance to this session



Young principal investigators are early- to mid-career researchers, and they are also under big pressures:

- Manage/oversee all ongoing research projects in group/lab
- Expand networks and collaborations, disseminate
- Build and grow own research group
- Teach
- Publish and attract more funding
- To be an 'all-round academic' while **many are still on fix-term contracts**
- Uncertainty about future, not just of the PI but of those in their research group
- Many people in the category of young PI have caring responsibilities at home



Relevance to this session



- Relatively good support in applying for funding that allows transition to independence (at least in certain parts of Europe), but often insufficient after transition is made
- Taking on PhD students is a responsibility
- An important driver of poor mental health of PhD students is bullying/harassment/neglect by supervisors
- New generations of young PIs have been looking for change, for betterment of research careers, to be inclusive leaders, to mentor the people in their groups to prepare them for life post-PhD/post-doc
- Leadership training, career development training, is available in some institutions, but these (like initiatives to support mental health of PhD students) place the emphasis on the person
- Emphasis should also be placed on the system



Researcher's mental health



Topic of increasing attention by funders and institutions



- Researchers are passionate and proud about their work, but have concerns about job security
- Poor research culture is leading to unhealthy competition, bullying and harassment, and mental health issues
- There's a disconnect between researchers' perception of their management skills and their abilities in practice
- The system favours quantity over quality, and creativity is often stifled

Researcher's mental health



Researcher's mental health and work-life balance is a topic of increasing attention by funders and institutions



Brussels, 28 May 2021
(OR. en)

9138/21

RECH 267
COMPET 424
EDUC 215
SOC 352
EMPL 261

OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 28 May 2021
To: Delegations

No. prev. doc.: 9009/21

Subject: Deepening the European Research Area: Providing researchers with attractive and sustainable careers and working conditions and making brain circulation a reality
- Council conclusions (adopted on 28/05/2021)

Work-life balance



nature

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CAREER COLUMN | 17 June 2019

‘I’ll work on it over the weekend’: high workload and other pressures faced by early-career researchers

Stress and long working hours are regrettably common among early-career researchers, reveals a survey by the Young Academy of Europe.

[Toma Susi](#) , [Shaul Shalvi](#) & [Mangala Srinivas](#)



Impact of COVID-19 pandemic



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CORRESPONDENCE | 07 April 2020

Support early-career researchers for post-pandemic prospects

[Arild Husby](#) ✉ & [Gemma Modinos](#)

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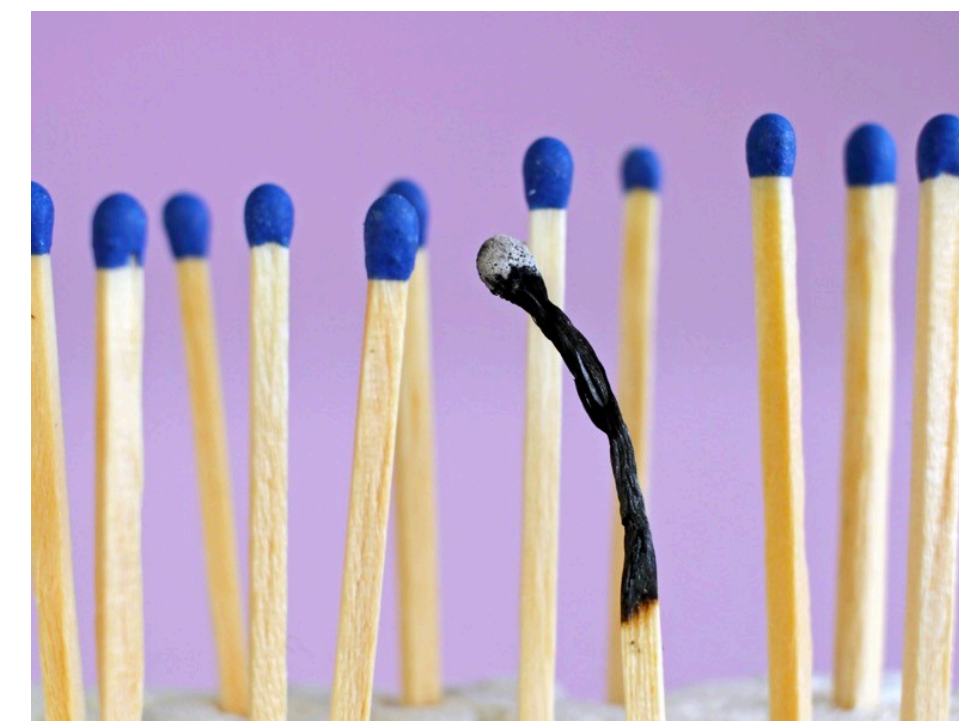
[nature](#) > [career feature](#) > [article](#)

CAREER FEATURE | 15 March 2021

Pandemic burnout is rampant in academia

Remote working, research delays and childcare obligations are taking their toll on scientists, causing stress and anxiety.

[Virginia Gewin](#)



Impact of COVID-19 pandemic



DUTCH SURVEY: Belle Derks, Lidwien Poorthuis,
Hester den Ruijter, Moniek Tromp

14 Dutch universities

August to September 2020

5,832 participating respondents (53% female)

Survey questions on:

- Division of time
- **Work-life balance**
- **Stress/burn-out**
- Future prospects (for temporary staff)
- Leadership



Impact of COVID-19 pandemic



DUTCH SURVEY: Belle Derks, Lidwien Poorthuis,
Hester den Ruijter, Moniek Tromp

Preliminary results (LNVH Spring Congress, June 11, 2021)

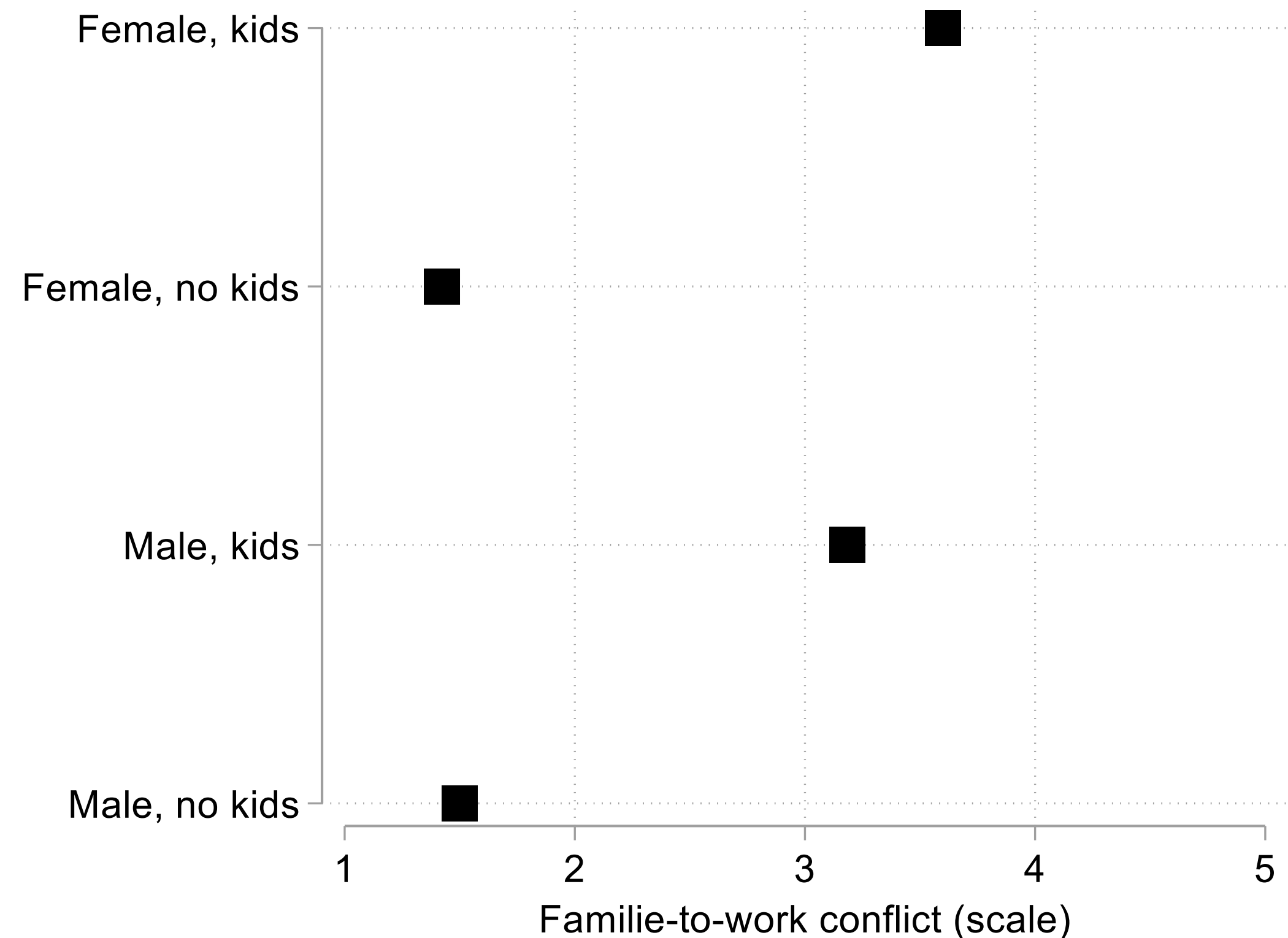
Impact of COVID-19 pandemic



DUTCH SURVEY: Belle Derks, Lidwien Poorthuis,
Hester den Ruijter, Moniek Tromp

Work-family conflict

Large gaps between those with children at home and those without



Impact of COVID-19 pandemic



DUTCH SURVEY: Belle Derks, Lidwien Poorthuis,
Hester den Ruijter, Moniek Tromp

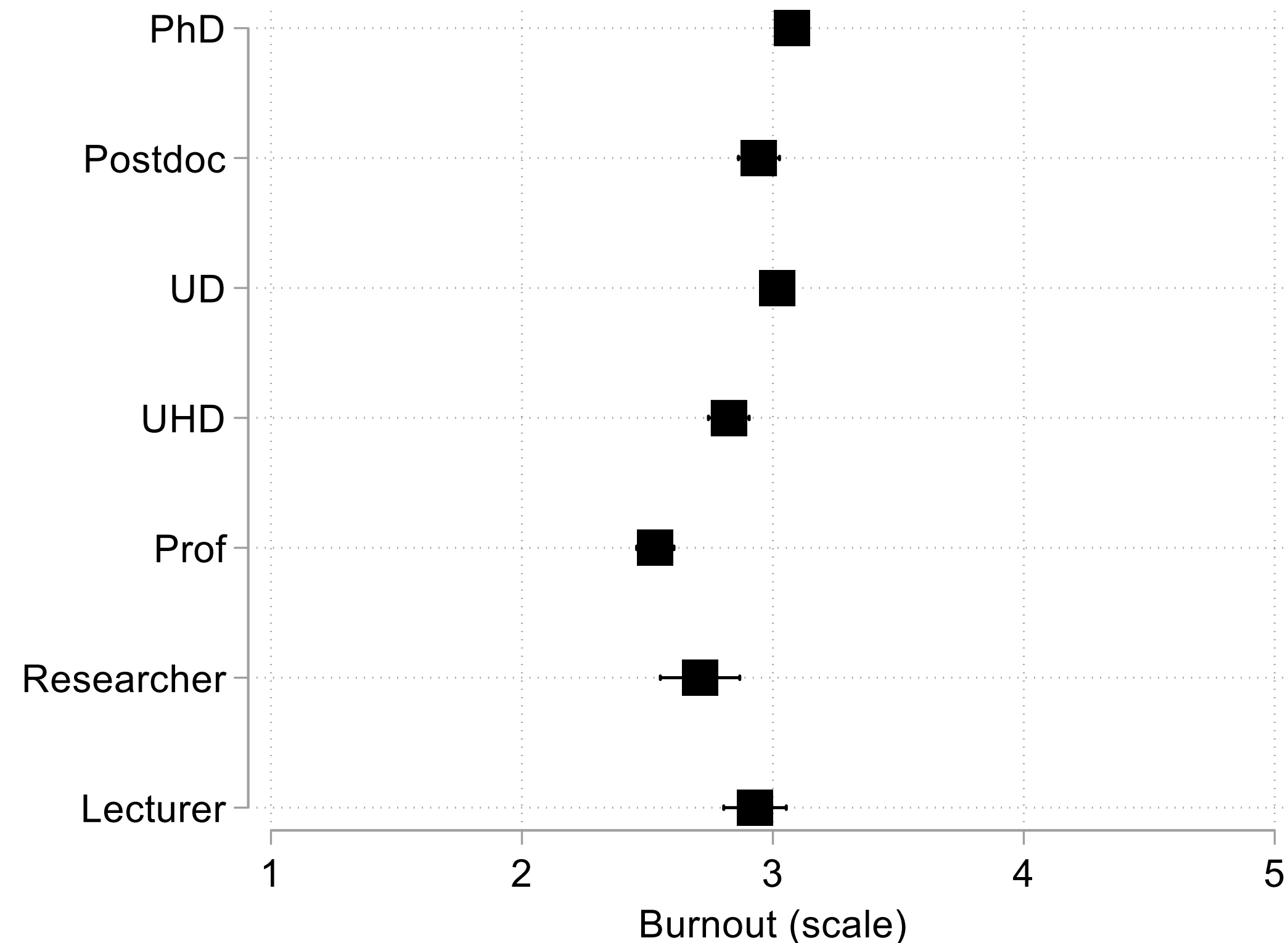
Burn-out symptoms

High scores (4 or 5) mostly found among:

- PhD Students (22%)
- Postdocs (20%)
- Lecturers (24%)
- UD's (23%)

Far less common among:

- Full professors (11%)

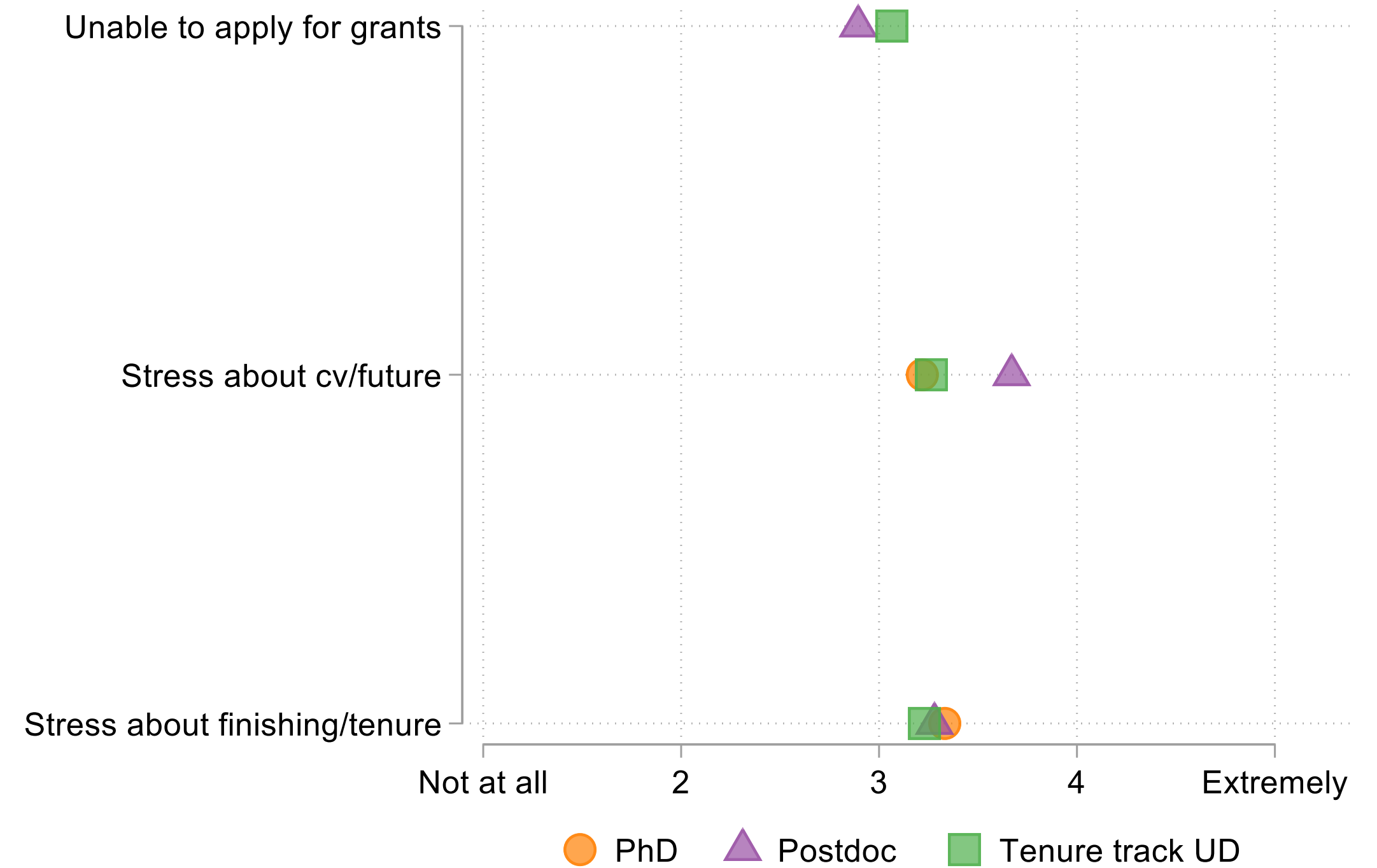
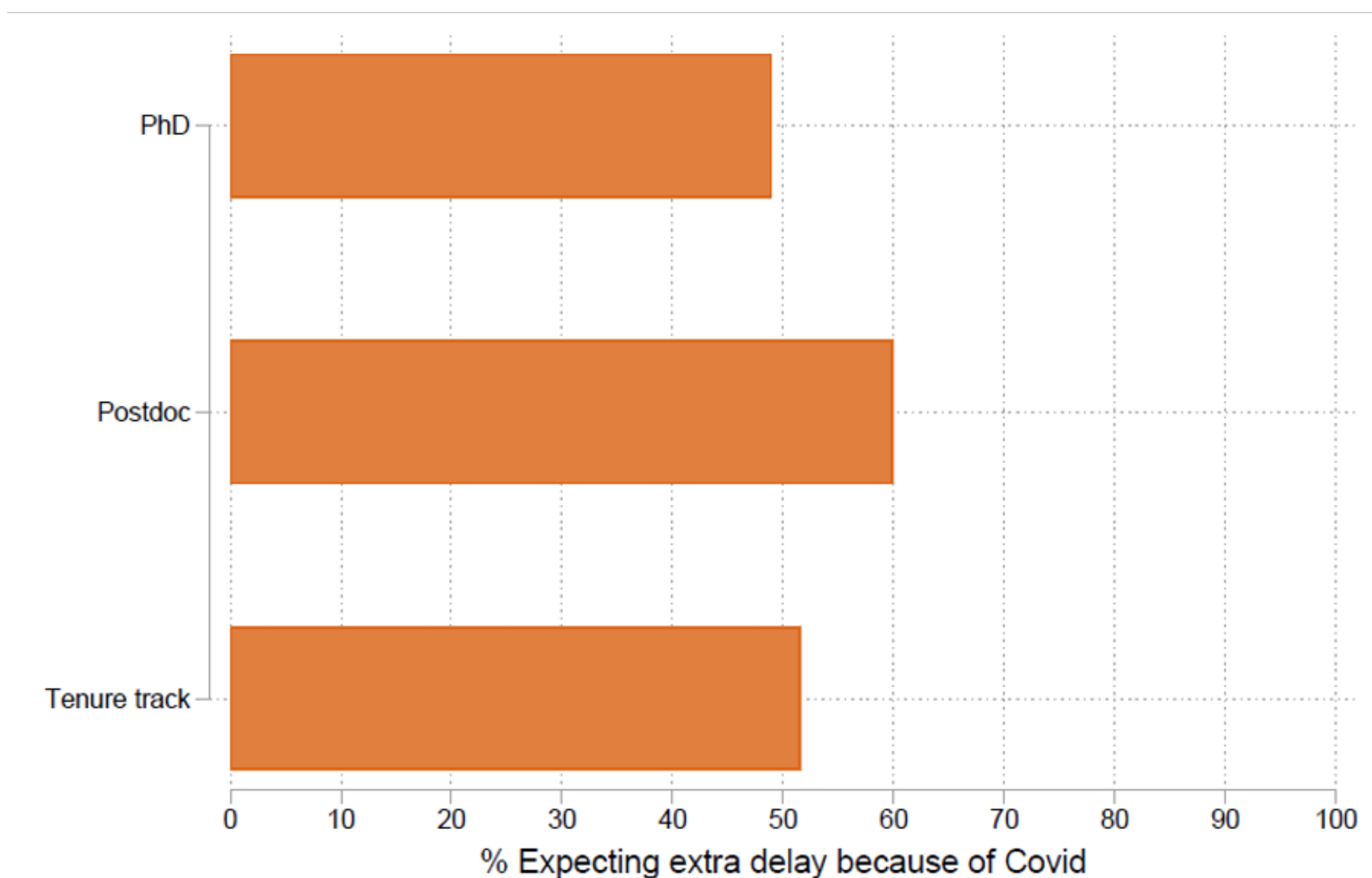


Impact of COVID-19 pandemic



DUTCH SURVEY: Belle Derks, Lidwien Poorthuis, Hester den Ruijter, Moniek Tromp

Early-career researchers



Impact of COVID-19 pandemic



**DUTCH SURVEY: Belle Derks, Lidwien Poorthuis,
Hester den Ruijter, Moniek Tromp**

MAIN FINDINGS

- Everyone lost time, mostly in research
- Unequally divided: on average, parents are hit harder - Both mothers and fathers
- Large work-to-family conflict
- High levels of stress, but different for early and late career researchers/academics
- Challenging time for leadership

Impact of COVID-19 pandemic



YAE Survey: Edyta Swider-Cios, Katalin Solymosi, Mangala Srinivas

- June to October 2020
- 151 respondents (68% female)
- Different fields and multiple countries in Europe
- Roughly half were members of a Young Academy
- Aim: To better understand the impact of pandemic-related lockdowns and associated relief efforts on them

nature

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CAREER COLUMN | 15 July 2021 | [Correction 19 July 2021](#)

Why science needs a new reward and recognition system

Researchers with children or carer roles have struggled more than others during the pandemic, amplifying existing inequalities, argue Edyta Swider-Cios and colleagues.

[Edyta Swider-Cios](#), [Katalin Solymosi](#) & [Mangala Srinivas](#)



Impact of COVID-19 pandemic



YAE Survey: Edyta Swider-Cios, Katalin Solymosi, Mangala Srinivas

KEY FINDINGS

1. Reconciling work obligations with childcare responsibilities was particularly challenging
2. Stress levels increased in comparison to pre-pandemic times
3. Academic scientist-mothers appeared to have been hit harder than their male or non-parent counterparts
4. Some people found the lockdowns beneficial for their productivity



Ways forward



- We are in this together
- Institutional/structural changes are needed, shift responsibility
- Clear and transparent pathways for people on fix-term contracts
- Wellcome 2020 report: “80% of researchers who manage people say they have the knowledge and skills to manage a diverse team, but only 48% have received training” - make group management training widely available
- COVID-19 impact:
 - Blanket extensions have limited impact
 - Working from home has allowed extra flexibility and increased representation at online conferences
 - Call for accelerating the development of new ways to recognise and reward academic researchers - researchers should be appraised on their efforts and progress in light of their personal circumstances





Young Academy of Europe

