

SOFIA UNIVERSITY
ST. KLIMENT OHRIDSKI



2025 Bulgarian ECFA Early-Career Researchers Panel survey on career prospects and diversity

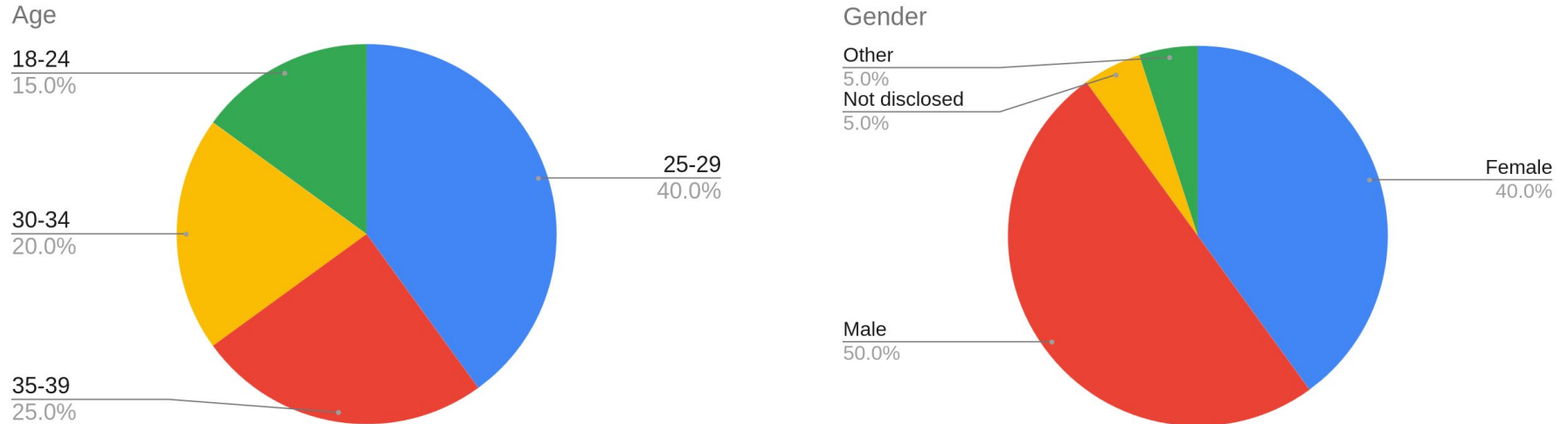
Mariana Shopova (INRNE-BAS, Plovdiv University)

Radoslav Simeonov (Sofia University)

Kalina Dimitrova (Sofia University)

General demographics

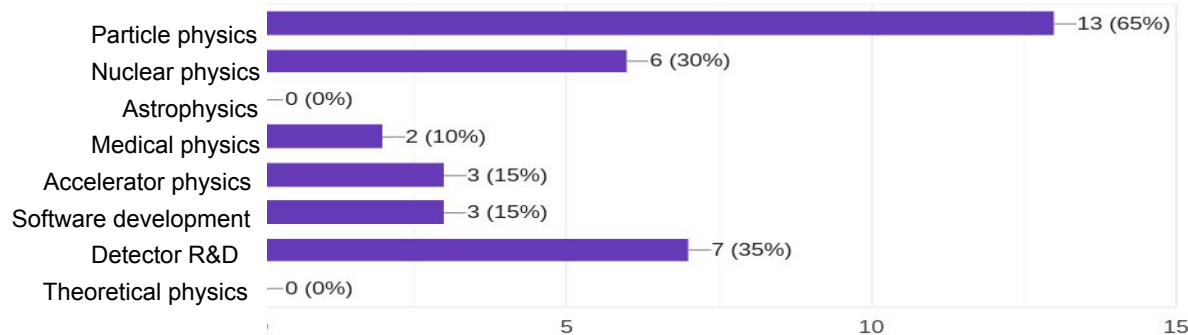
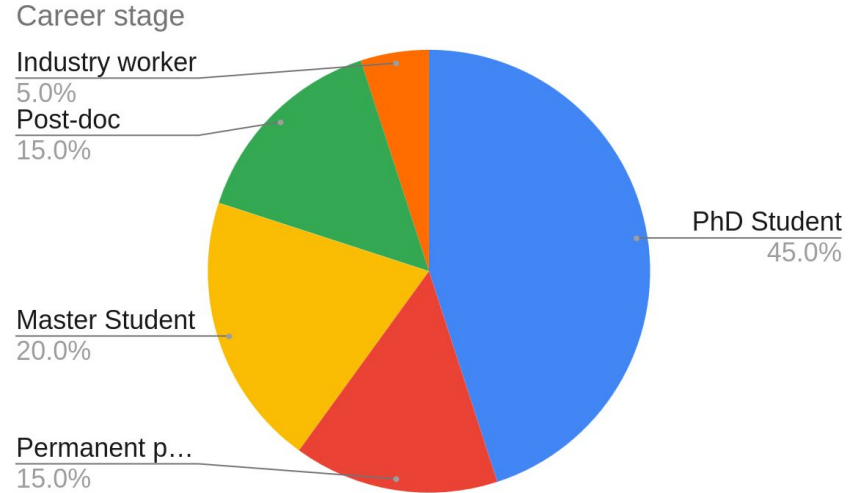
All participants are Bulgarian - 20 responses



16 live and work in Bulgaria, 1 in Switzerland, 1 in Russia, 2 haven't disclosed

Career

Out of 9 PhD students, 6 are also employed as researchers and one works as a teacher.

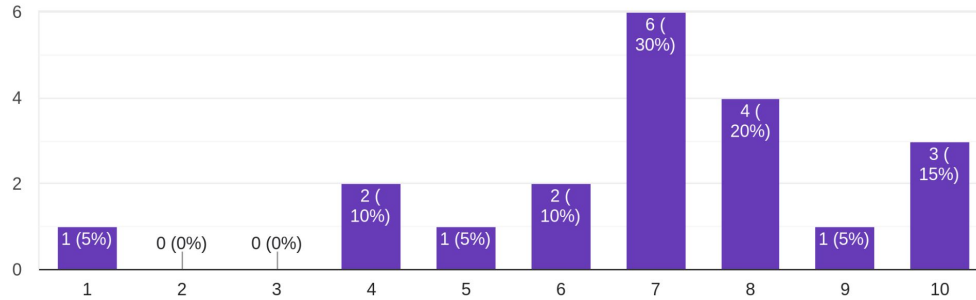


All master students are also employed at academic institutions.

Satisfaction and balance

Overall happiness with their work

(1 - not happy at all; 10 - extremely happy)



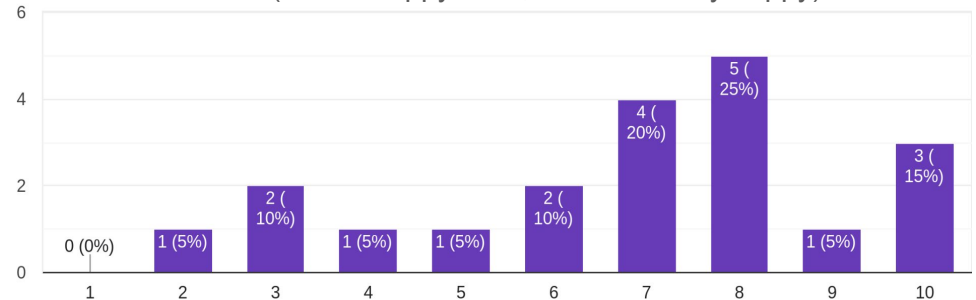
Most people cite **deadlines** and their **own personal motivation** as a reason to work too much.

Other reasons include:

- pressure from employers/supervisors and colleagues;
- grant writing;
- unclear workflow that leads to extra effort.

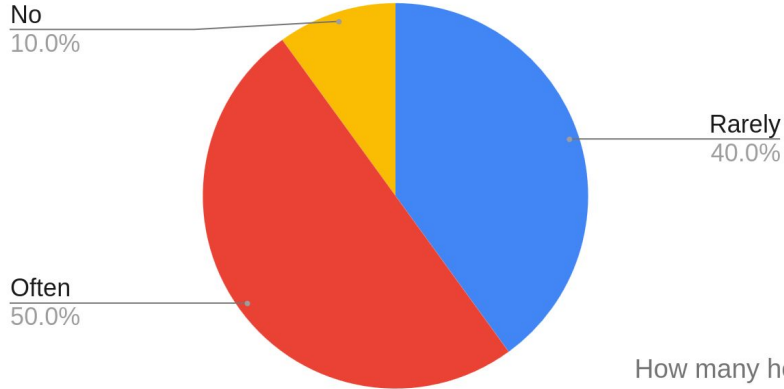
Happiness with work/life balance

(1 - not happy at all; 10 - extremely happy)

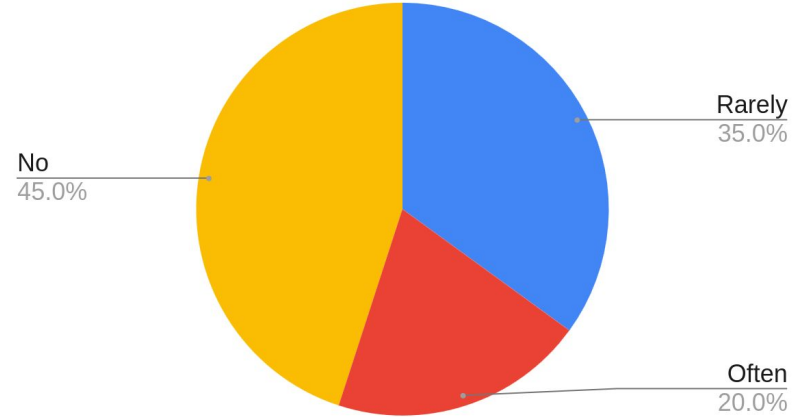


Satisfaction and balance

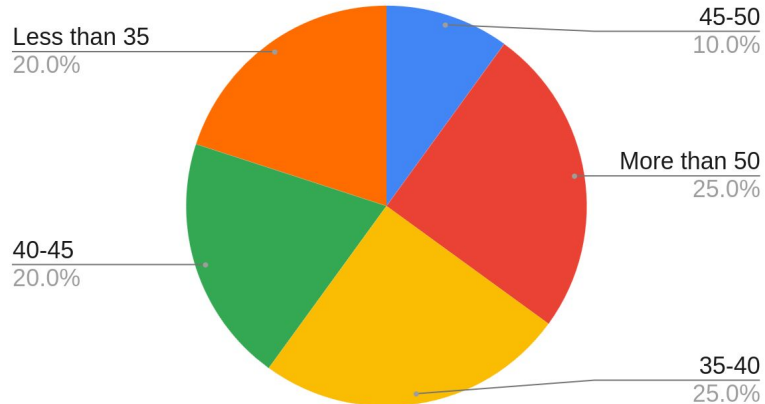
Do you need to work overtime (e.g. during weekends and holidays)?



Do you feel like you work too much?



How many hours a week do you work on average?

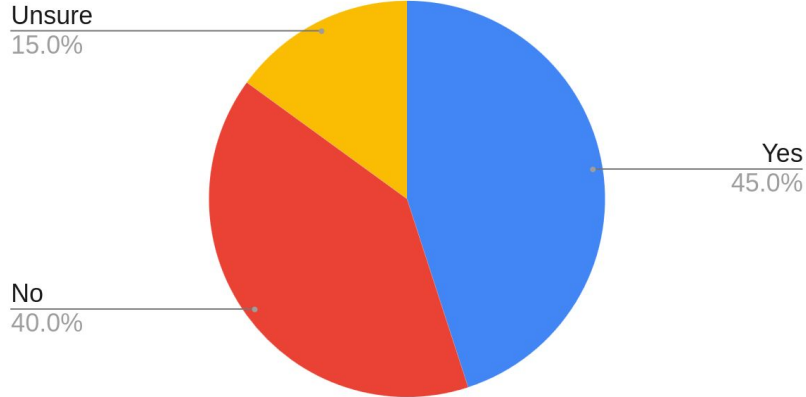


Most people admit they often have to work overtime.

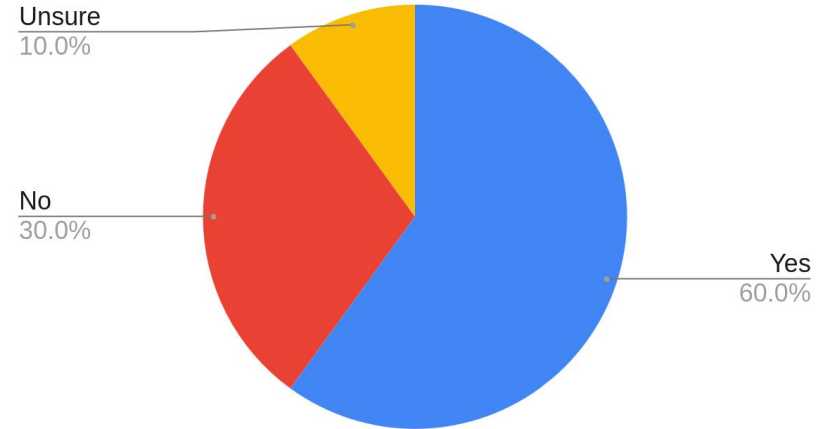
Free time and interests

Too many **administrative tasks** and **meetings** are the main reasons not to develop enough research.

Do you think you have enough time to develop research topics that interest you?



Do you think you have enough free time?

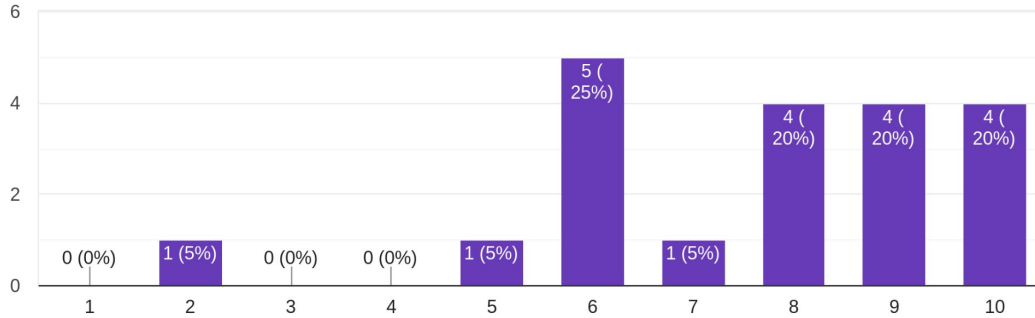


Other common reasons are having to **teach classes and/or advise students**, as well as having to **work a second a job**.

Work environment

Overall work-environment happiness

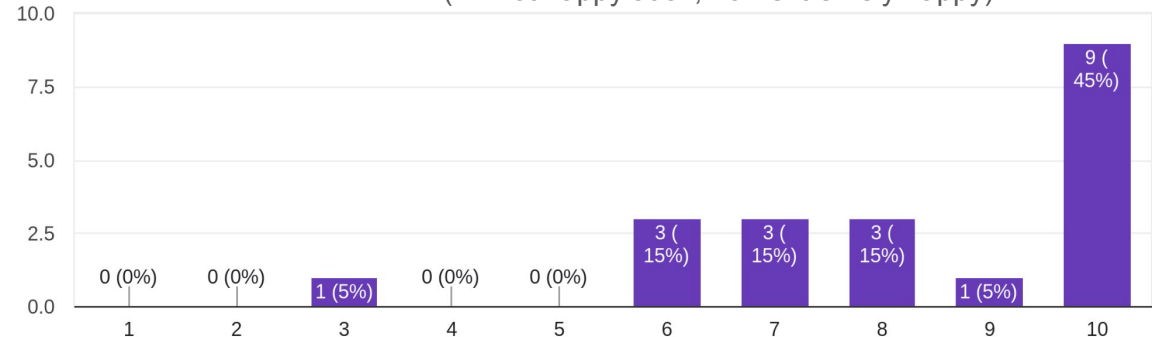
(1 - not happy at all; 10 - extremely happy)



Most people are **rather happy** with their work environment, management and the groups they work in.

Happiness with management

(1 - not happy at all; 10 - extremely happy)

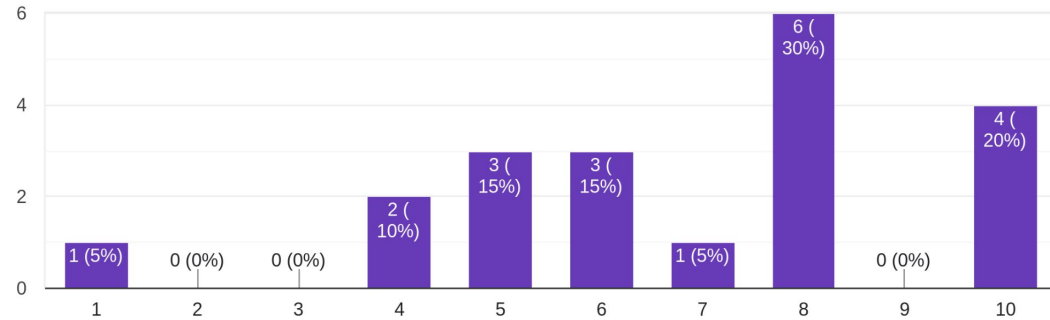


Work environment

Various results on whether one's voice is heard when making decisions and work is appreciated by fellow colleagues.

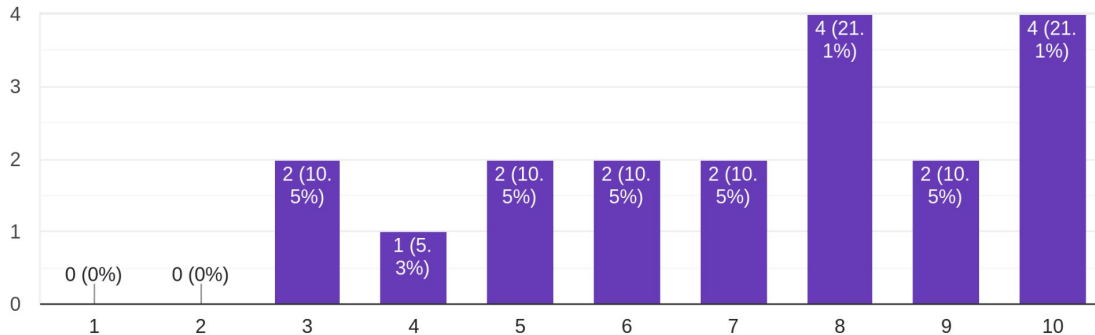
My voice is heard in decision making

(1 - not happy at all; 10 - extremely happy)



My colleagues appreciate my work

(1 - not happy at all; 10 - extremely happy)

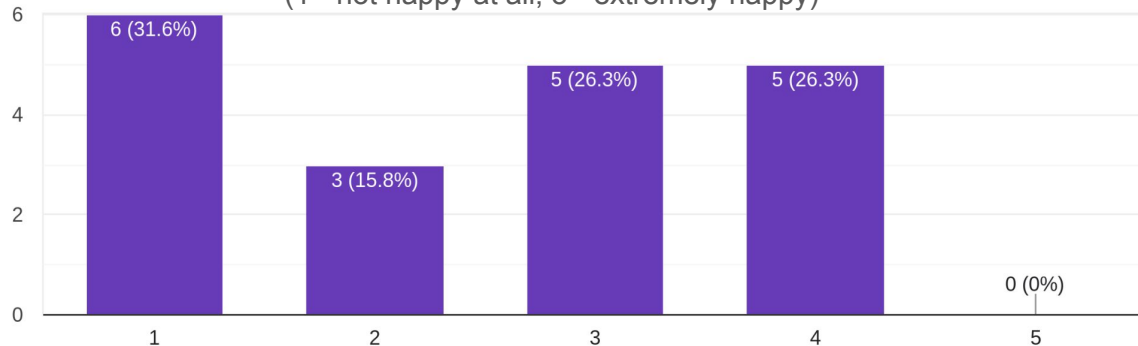


Most people are rather satisfied with their own work, however **30% of people don't believe their work is beneficiary to the field.**

Satisfaction with the salary

How happy are you with your salary?

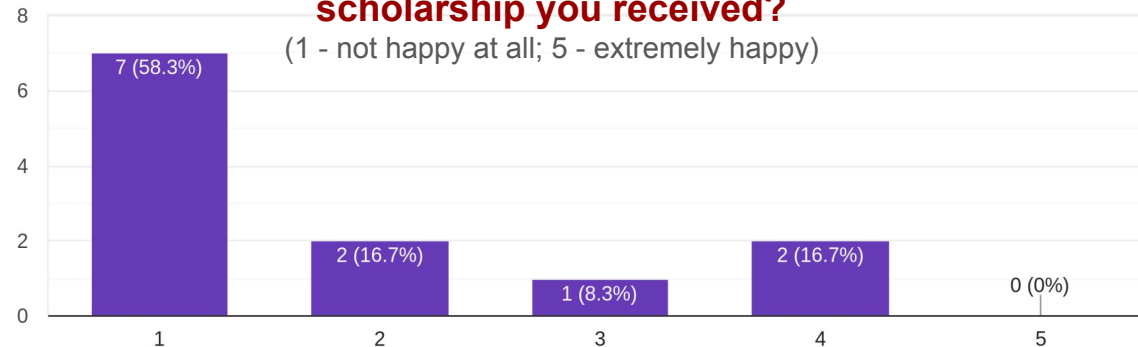
(1 - not happy at all; 5 - extremely happy)



Satisfaction with the salary varies: **most people are dissatisfied**, however **there are also positive results**.

How happy are you with the PhD scholarship you received?

(1 - not happy at all; 5 - extremely happy)



Generally people think the **PhD scholarships are insufficient**.

(According to the Bulgarian laws for higher education, PhD scholarships should be at least 150% from the minimum wage for the last 12 months)

Trainings, funding and presentation

Most participant are able to present their work at various scientific events.

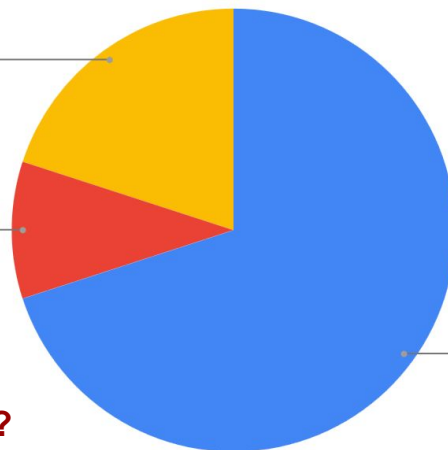
Yet, they are **not fully aware of all funding opportunities for their research.**

Do you have enough opportunities to present your work at scientific events?

No
20.0%

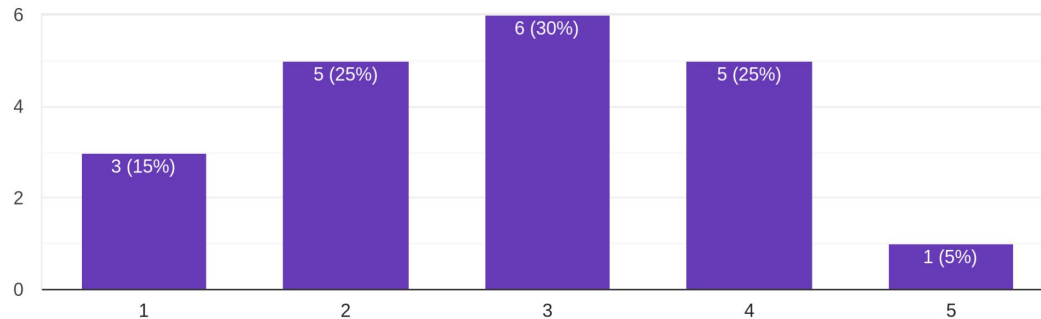
Not applicable...
10.0%

Yes
70.0%



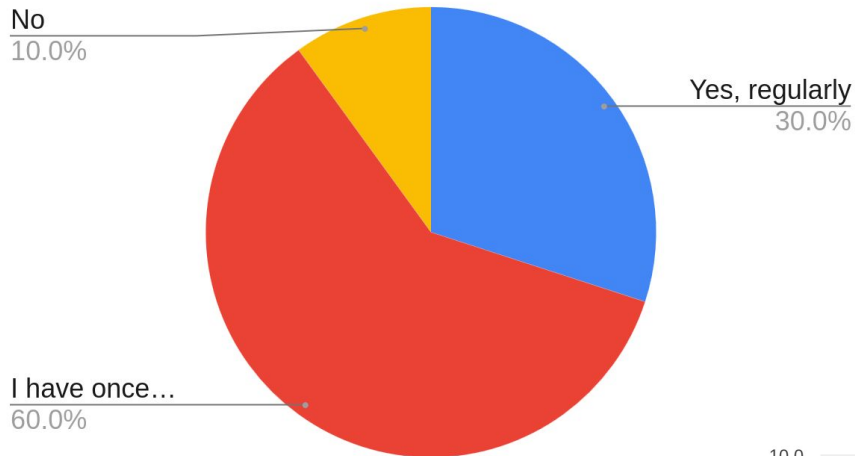
How informed are you about funding opportunities for your research?

(1 - not informed at all; 5 - fully informed)



Trainings, funding and presentation

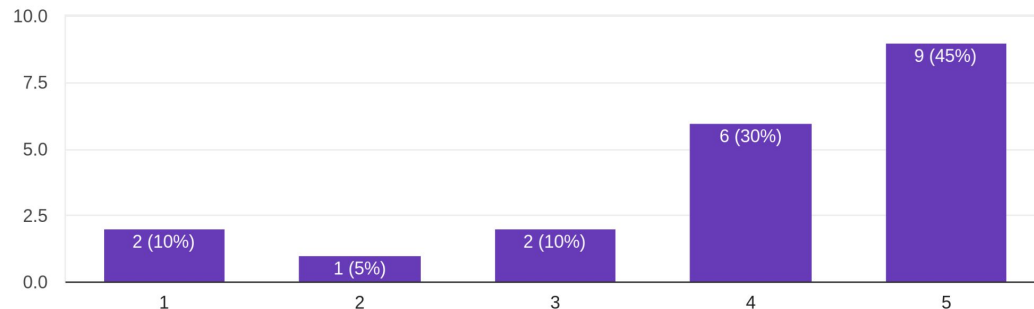
Do you participate in outreach activities?



Despite realizing the **great importance of outreach activities**, most participants do not participate regularly in such events.

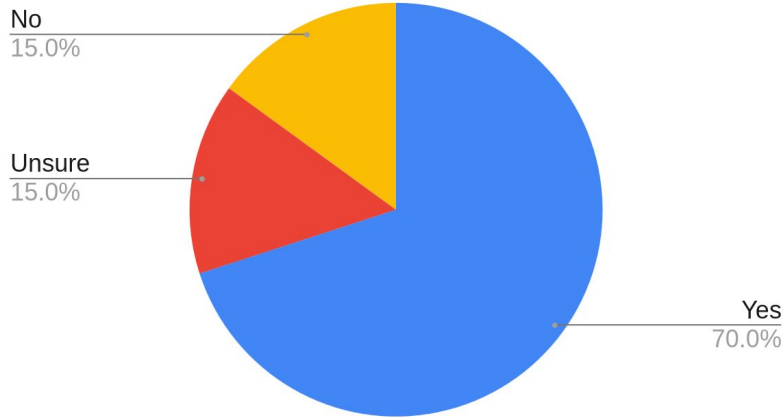
How important do you find outreach activities?

(1 - not informed at all; 5 - fully informed)



Stress, mental health and discrimination

Do you think your work has impact on your mental health?



A large number of people (15 out of 20) cite the **uncertainty about the future** as their main source of stress.

The **short deadlines and lack of time** is the second most common problem (12 out of 20).

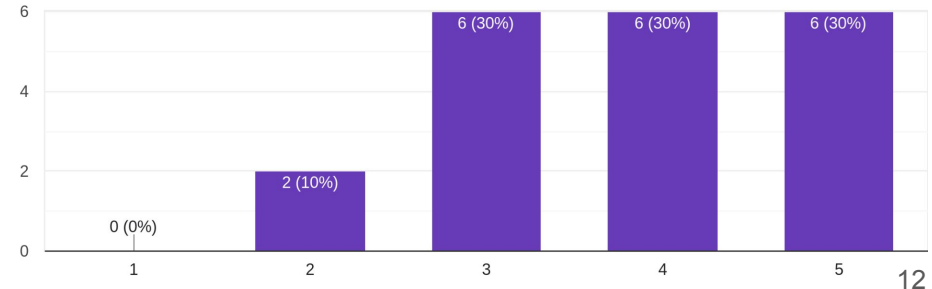
Other common reasons are **too much work and too many different tasks**.

A small amount of people also cite **communication (and lack thereof)** with their colleagues and management as a source of stress.

2 out of 20 people claim to have experienced or witnessed discrimination of any sort at the workplace.

How stressed are you?

(1 - not stressed at all; 5 - extremely stressed)

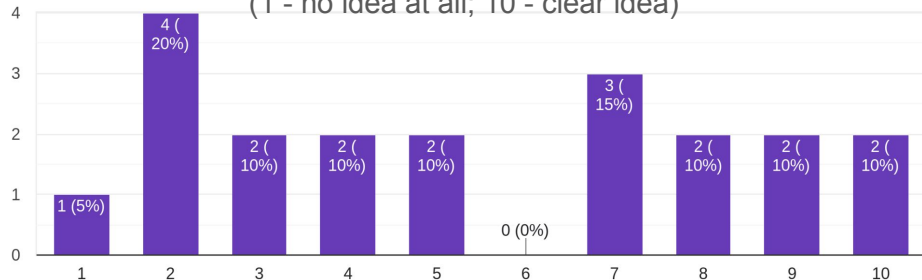


Prospects about the future

55% of the people **would choose the same career path** if given the chance.

“I have a clear idea about the future of my career”

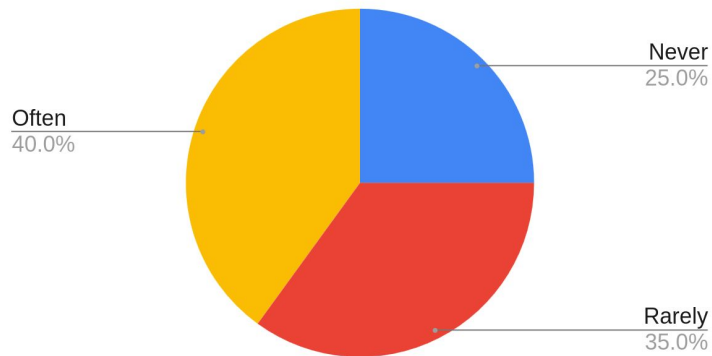
(1 - no idea at all; 10 - clear idea)



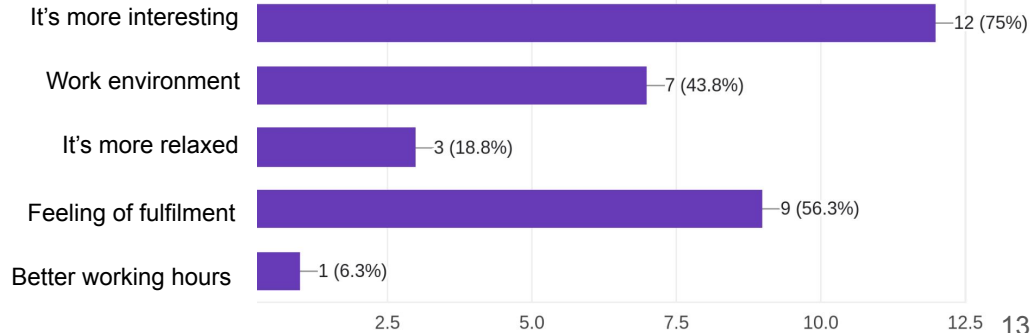
4 out of 20 people **plan to go work in the industry**, 1 already has. Everyone else plans to stay in academia.

The main reason to switch to industry is higher salaries and secure positions.

How often do you think about quitting physics and switching your occupation entirely?



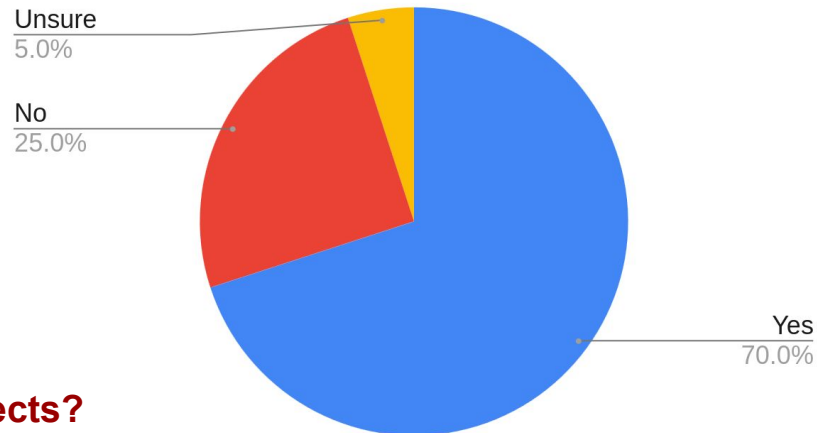
Reasons to choose academia



The future of HEP

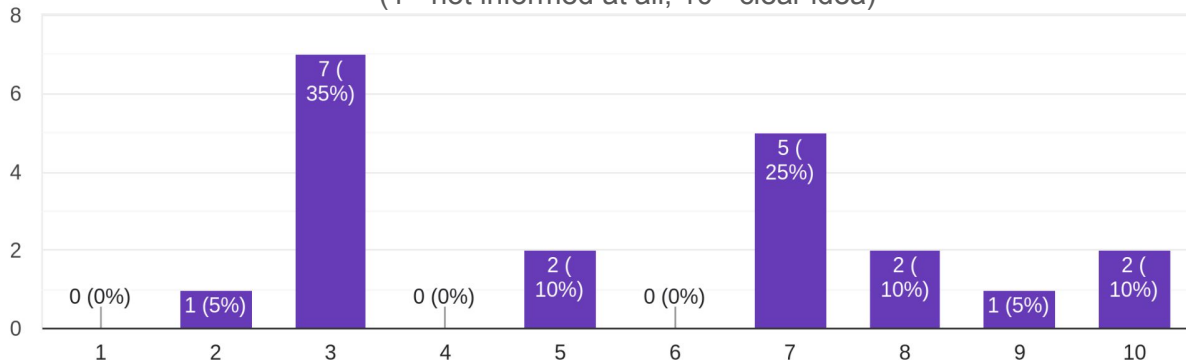
12 out of 20 participants are interested in future collider projects, though half of all are **not well informed** on the subject.

Are you interested in future collider projects?



How informed are you about future collider projects?

(1 - not informed at all; 10 - clear idea)



The future of HEP

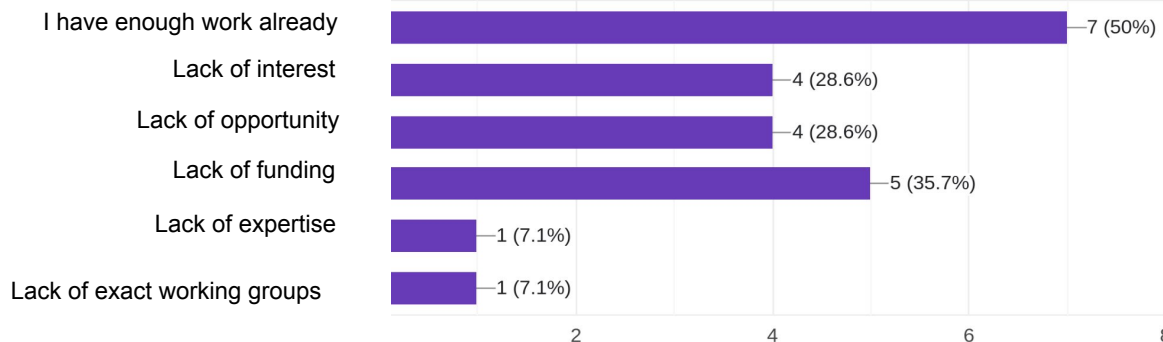
Would you dedicate your time to developing future collider projects?



● Yes, but it's not my top priority ● Yes, a big amount of time ● No

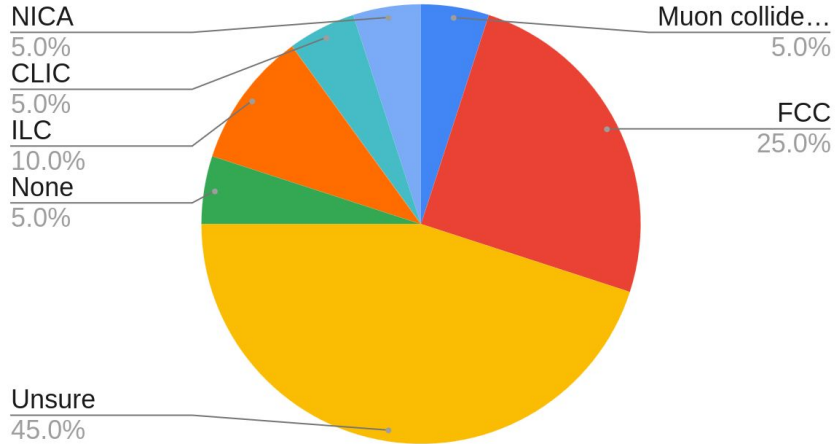
Though all participants point out **their busy schedules** and **lack of funding**, they **would like to dedicate time and effort to development of future collider projects.**

Reasons not to engage in future collider projects

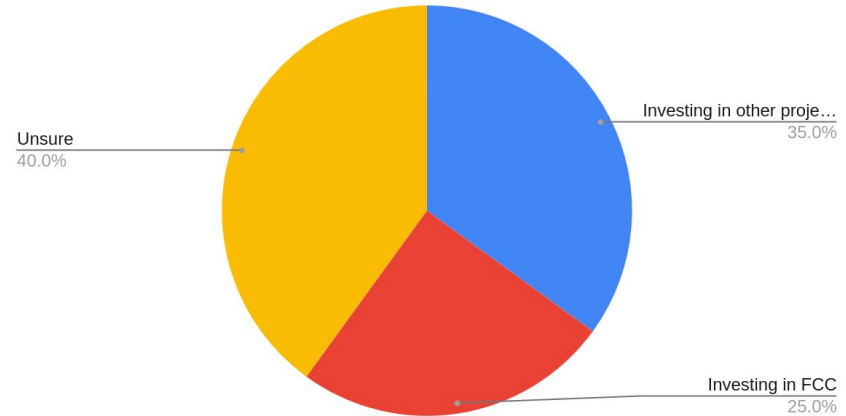


Opinions about future projects

Favorite future projects



Do you support building the FCC or do you prefer investing in other rechnologies (plasma accelerators, fixed target experim...)

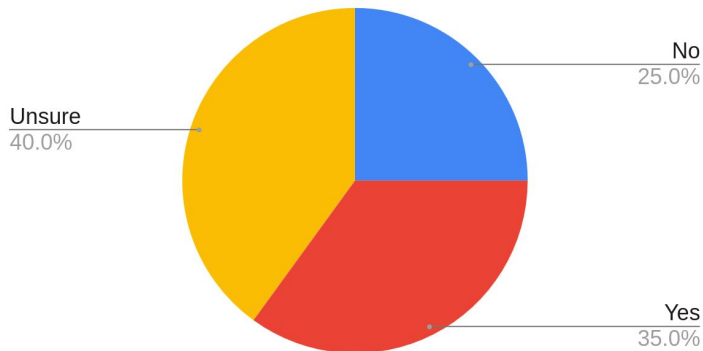


There is a **high percentage of participants** interested in other projects than FCC.

Yet, there is a high fraction of participants **unsure on the best possible future scenarios**.

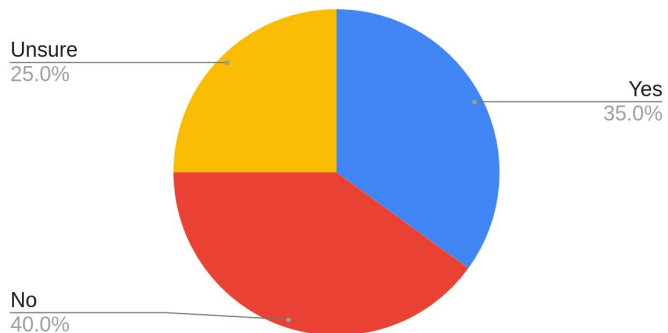
Opinions about future projects

Do you think there are enough physics grounds for building FCC (Future Circular Collider)?

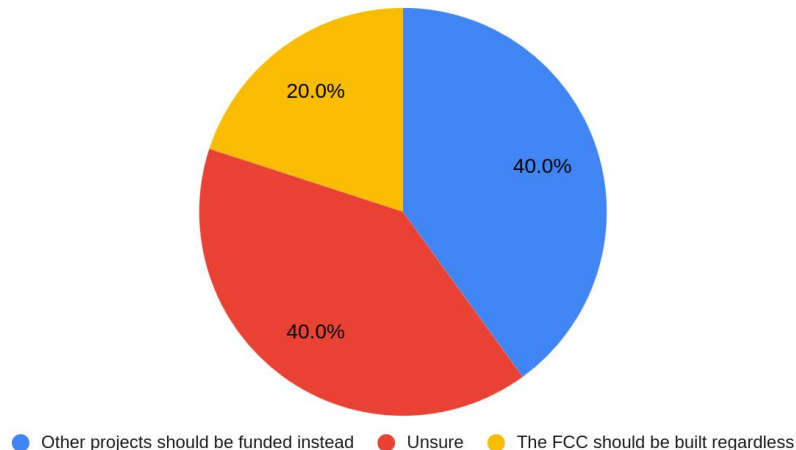


All participants have expressed great interest in doing research in Europe, despite some being unsure about the specific future HEP project.

Are you afraid building FCC would take away funding from other projects?



If the CEPC is built before the FCC construction starts:



Summary

Workplace

- Majority of the participants are **happy with their work/life balance**.
- Most participants often **work overtime**.
- Most people are rather satisfied with their own work, however 30% of people **don't believe their work is beneficiary to the field**.

Stress and mental health

- Main source of stress are the **uncertainty about the future, deadlines and lack of time, as well as too many tasks**.
- **Only a small fraction** of participants have been subjected to or witnessed discrimination at their workplace.

The future of HEP

- Most participants **are interested in the future collider projects**, though half are **not well informed on the subject**.
- There is a high percentage of participants interested in other projects than FCC.
- All participants have expressed **great interest in doing research in Europe**.