

Diversity in Physics

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**Focusing on Gender because that is what I know most about...
But Diversity is far broader than gender!**

Athena Swan: Silver (Data from 2014/2015)

Department also holds
Institute of Physics Juno
Champion Status

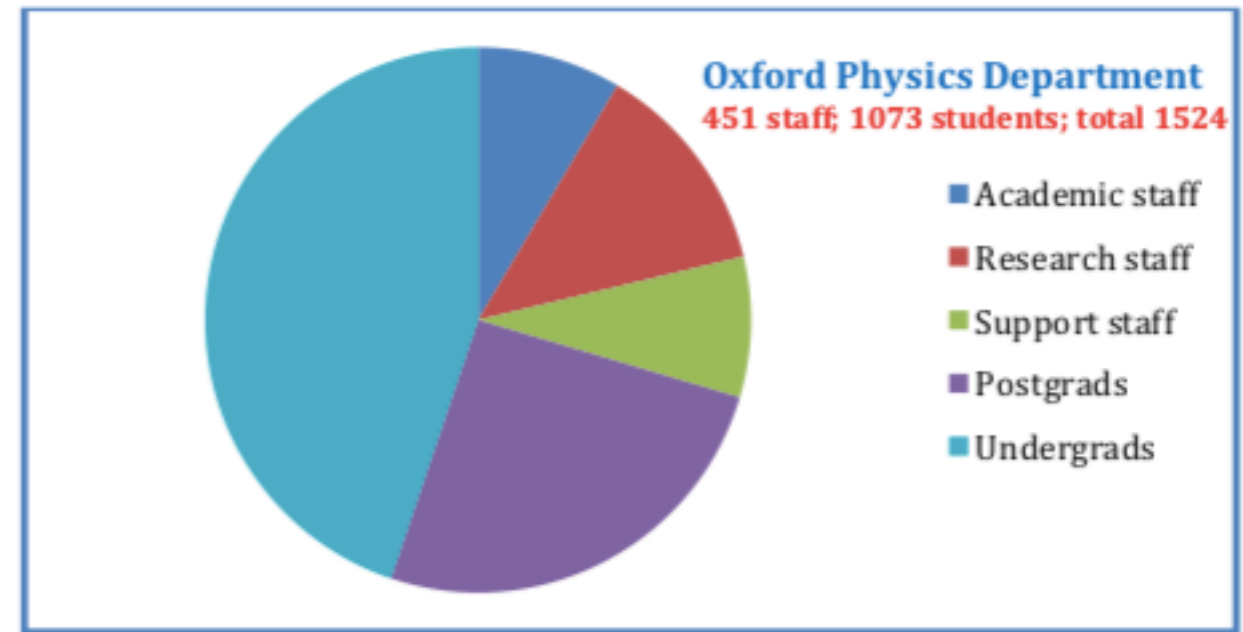
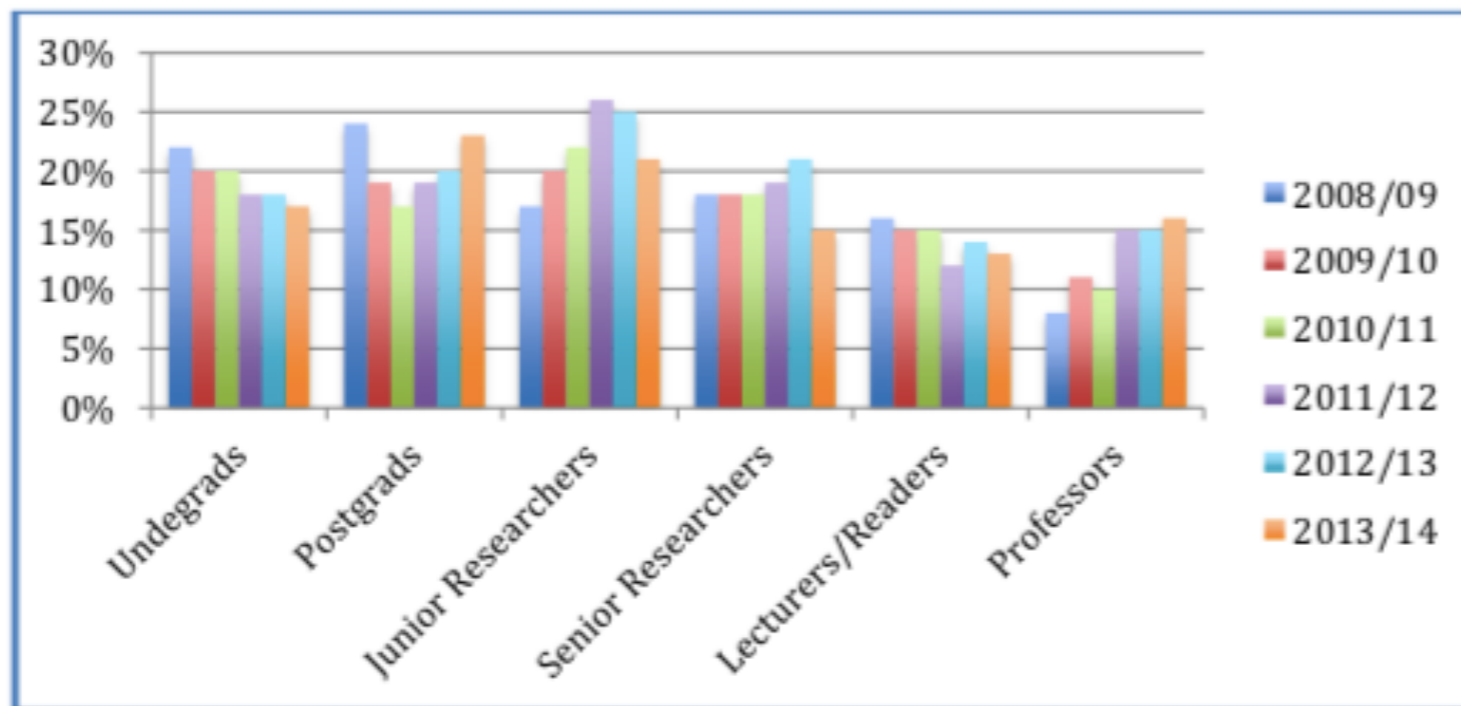


Figure 1.



https://www2.physics.ox.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2012-03-01/oxford_university_physics_silver_as_application_no_78981.pdf

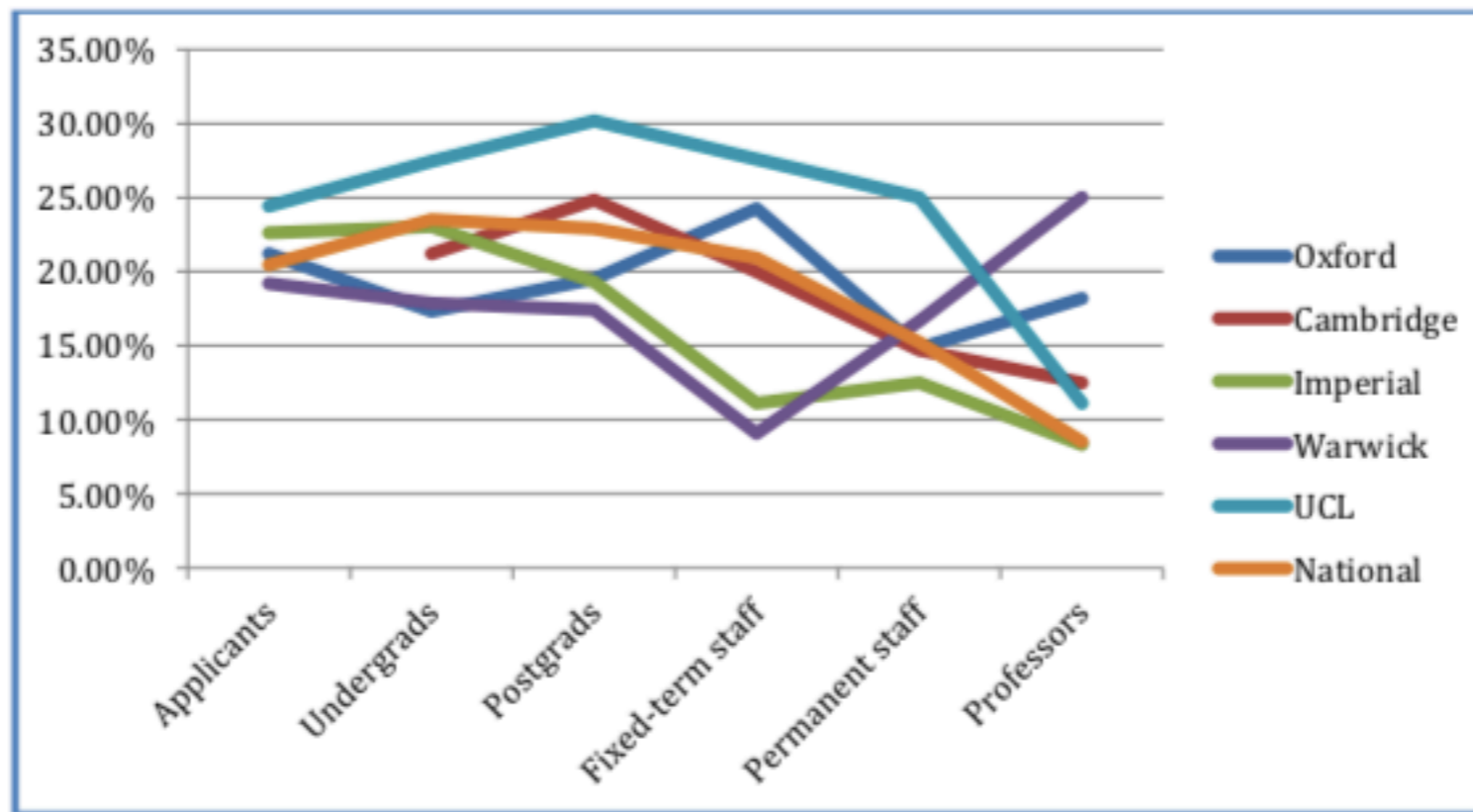


Figure 6: Percentage of females in Oxford Physics Department at various stages of their career compared with similar UK institutions. Data are for 2012/13 from HESA. Staff categories are determined by HESA entries: 'Fixed-term staff' roughly equates to Junior Postdocs in table 1; 'Permanent staff' roughly equates to Lecturer / Reader / AP plus Professor in table 1.

Biases - don't pretend they don't exist

1. Prove-it-Again. Two-thirds of the women interviewed, and two-thirds of the women surveyed, reported having to prove themselves over and over again – their successes discounted, their expertise questioned.

2. The Tightrope. Women need to behave in masculine ways in order to be seen as competent—but women are expected to be feminine.

3. The Maternal Wall. When professional women have children, they often find themselves running into a wall: their commitment and competence are questioned, and opportunities start drying up.

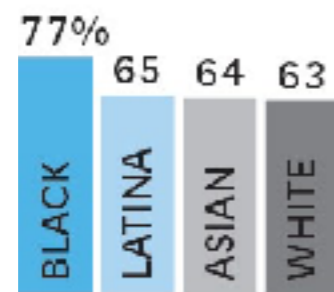
4. Tug-of-War. **Studies show** that women who have encountered discrimination early in their careers often distance themselves from other women.

5. Isolation: 'Oh, she's going to be the only black person/woman there... just don't invite her, she won't feel comfortable.'

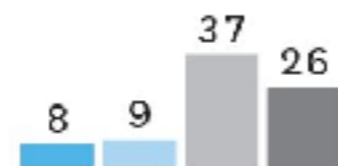
<https://hbr.org/2015/03/the-5-biases-pushing-women-out-of-stem>

PERCENT OF U.S. WOMEN IN STEM WHO REPORT...

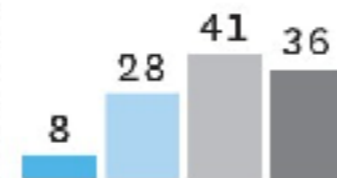
having to provide more evidence of competence than others to prove themselves.



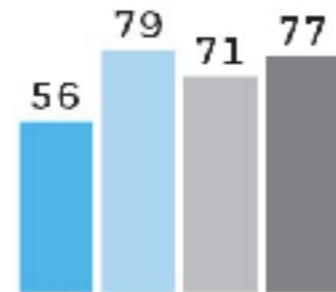
that colleagues have suggested they should work fewer hours after having children.



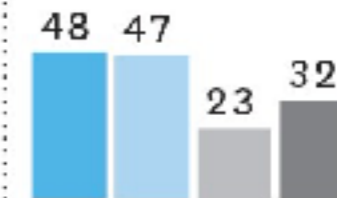
that at work, they find themselves pressured to play a stereotypically feminine role.*



that women in their work environments support one another.



they've been mistaken for either administrative or custodial staff.



*SUCH AS "OFFICE MOTHER" OR "DUTIFUL DAUGHTER."

SOURCE JOAN C. WILLIAMS, KATHERINE W. PHILLIPS, AND ERIKA V. HALL

HBR.ORG

<https://hbr.org/2015/03/the-5-biases-pushing-women-out-of-stem>

Small positives, which were big battles...

'Anti-harassment policy' instigated at major conferences in my field. (Took 2 years)

Change of acronym from 'FFAG' (offensive) to 'FFA'. (Took 11 years)

The advice I would give an aspiring female physicist... (Things that have helped me...)

- **It's not your job to be an expert on gender. It's your job to be an expert in physics. But learning more about the topic will allow you to see what is 'you' and what is 'society/bias'.
(Recommend: books by Cordelia Fine and Lise Eliot)**
- **It's OK to disengage with 'women in physics'. I've had periods of being involved and periods of being disengaged. Don't try to be superwoman.**
- **Build a good support network. Mentors, supporters, friends, family.**
- **Share experiences (if you can) and ask (male) colleagues to be involved in handling situations.**
- **Work on 'standard responses' to instances of bias/sexism to help you curb it in the moment. (Example...)**
- **Take holidays. Look after your mental and physical health. Encourage others around you to do the same.**

Tips for Engaging with Female Academic Physicists (sorry for the cynicism... but all of these have happened...)

“I need a female speaker to encourage girls in physics. Please let me know when you’re available in the next 2 years...”

“Please thank the lovely ladies for coming to visit today...”

“My students are doing an assignment where they have been asked to ‘reach out’ via email/twitter to female physicists to interview them”

“You’re such a great role model, you’re a physicist AND you’re feminine and a nice/normal person!”

“Your work is inspirational, so tell us, what’s it like being a woman in physics?”

Do's and don'ts for encouraging girls in Physics:

https://www.iop.org/education/teacher/support/girls_physics/action_pack/file_41741.pdf

Resources - Women in Physics @ Oxford

<https://www2.physics.ox.ac.uk/equality-and-diversity/women-in-physics-society/resources>