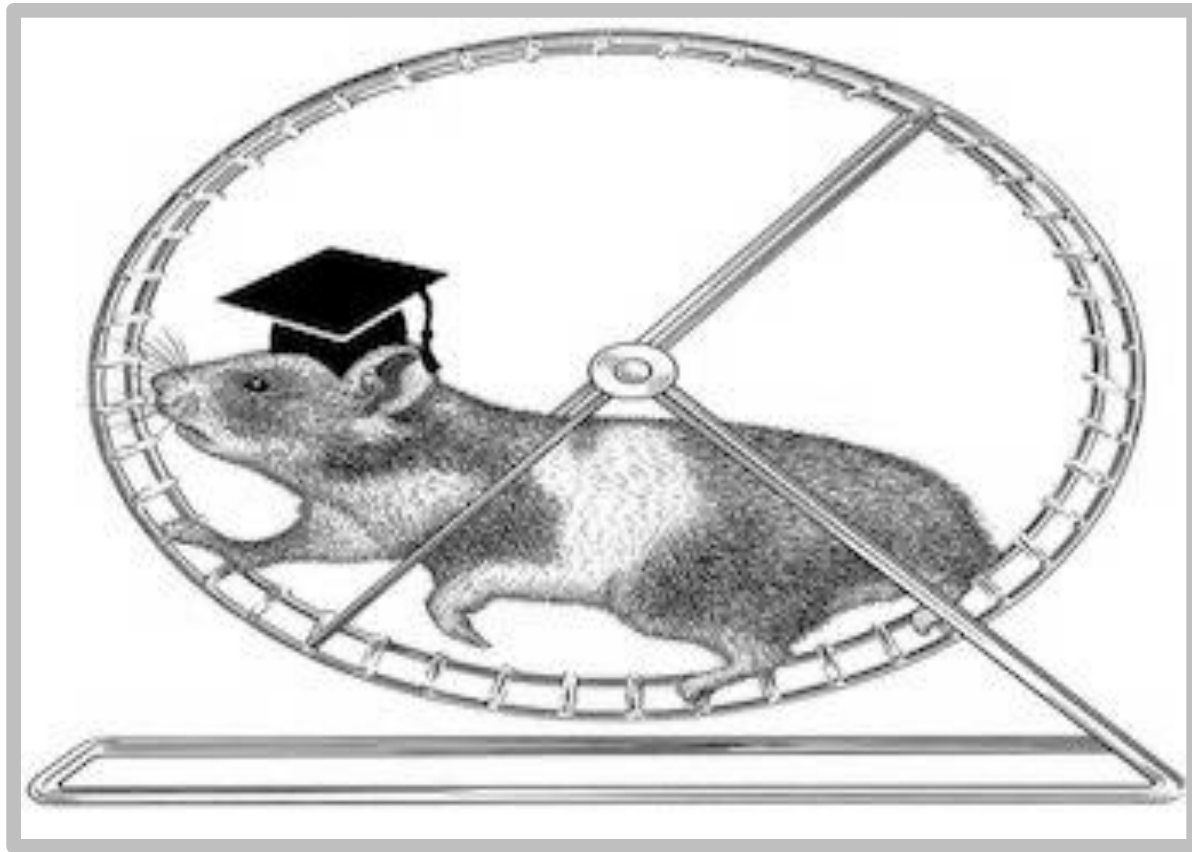


The Hamster Wheel of Precarity: invisible workers in the Irish higher education sector.



Dr Aline Courtois
University College London
a.courtois@ucl.ac.uk

Dr Theresa O'Keefe
University College Cork
theresa.okeefe@ucc.ie

Researching Precarity

- Outreach exercise – online questionnaire
- **264** valid responses (**164** female respondents, 91 male)
- **181** were casual workers (**125** female, 56 male)
- **79%** from Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences



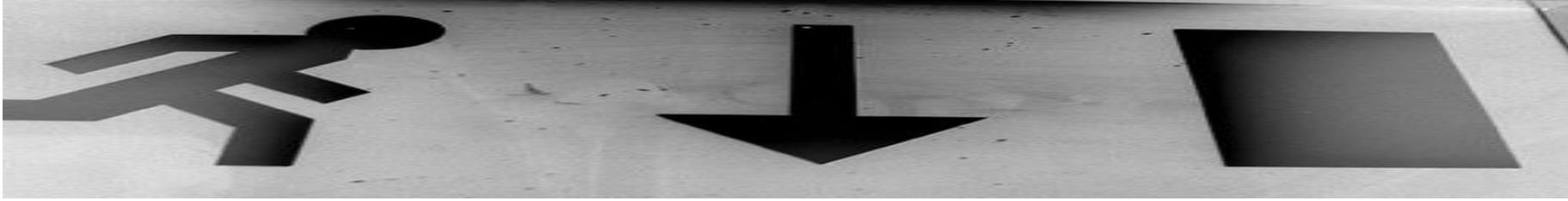
Difficulties in Charting Precarity

1. Access to information about research and teaching positions/contracts in departments not easily available
2. Individual situations differ greatly, as well as across departments and universities
3. Levels of unpaid work mean formal paid hours not always an accurate representation
4. Fear factor - people scared of 'coming out' because want to stay on side with department administration, keep their heads down.
5. The nature of precarious work – isolation, fatigue, just coping.
6. Many casual workers are invisible and hard to reach

Major Findings

- Casualisation is gendered.
- Casualisation predates 'austerity'.
- Normalisation of precarity.
- Few progression routes into secure work.
- Precarity is increasingly likely to be permanent.

Race to the Bottom



- Move to 9-month or hourly/sessional paid work
- Redefinition of roles
- Removal of research duties from replacement lecturing posts; research considered studentship/training.
- Rock-bottom salaries for contract workers; unpaid labour; disregard of employment law
- No progression in academic rank
- No workload model
- No standardised contracts or working conditions
- JobBridge scheme used extensively.

The Typical Precarious Academic

The precarious academic is often female



She has worked in HEIs for over 8 years



She works in Arts, Humanities, Social Science



She earns less than € 10,000 a year



Types of Precarious Academic Labour

- Contractual and non-contractual
- Hourly paid and sessional
- Zero hours (permanent and temporary)
- Mixed permanent/casual
- 9 and 6 month temporary replacement contracts.
- Full-time temporary
- Part-time pro-rata
- CID – on the basis of the conditions of the contract when CID awarded.

Types of Casual Academic Labour

Contract type	N	%
Full-time, temporary	47	26
Hourly paid, temporary	98	54
Mixed casual/Pro-rata	28	15
Unemployed	8	4
Total	181	100

Academic work in exchange for:

- ✧ Book Tokens –given in lieu of monetary pay for occasional lectures or research
- ✧ JobBridge- TCD alone has used 70 JobBridge posts since 2011
- ✧ No Pay- grading, consultation, prep are unpaid work for some.

Gender and Precarity

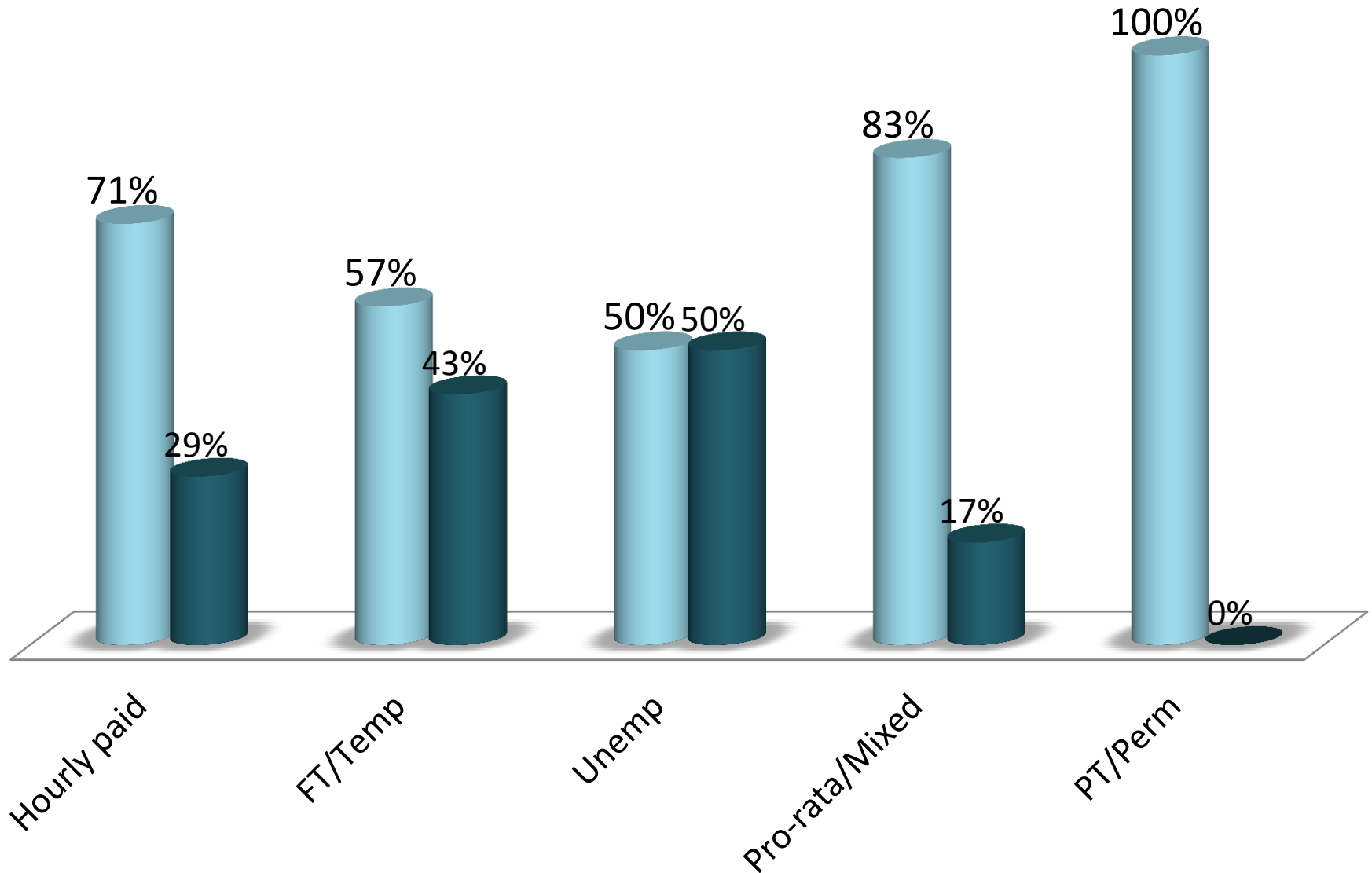
Women are more likely to:

- perform precarious labour
- be concentrated in the most exploitative, tenuous forms of precarious work
- stuck in precarity for longer periods of time



Gender & Type of Work

Female Male



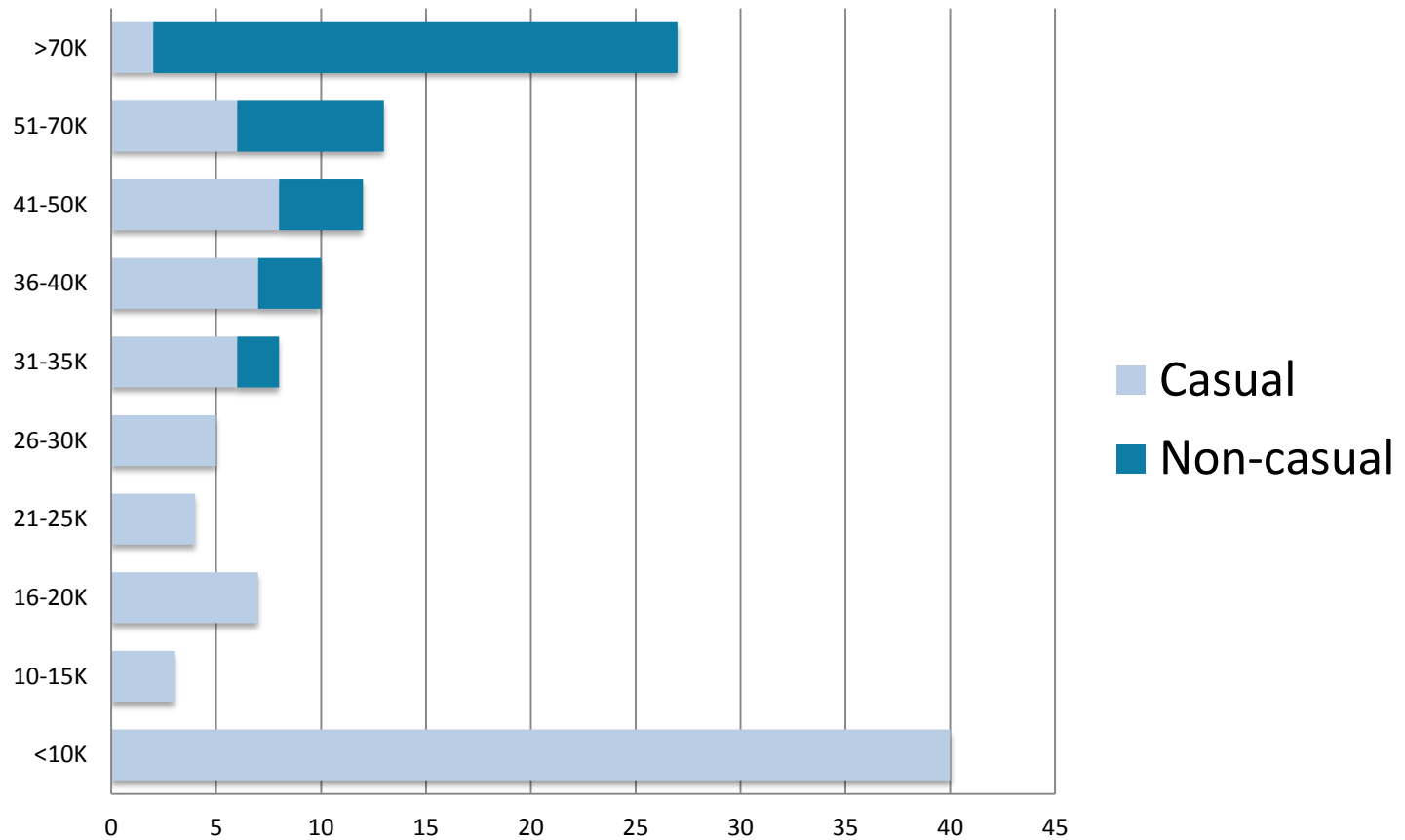
Characteristics of Pay

- ❖ Pay unknown/unclear at start of work
- ❖ Pay unstandardised within departments, across departments, across institutions.
- ❖ Pay not commensurate with years experience.
- ❖ Some not making the minimum wage



The Pay Divide

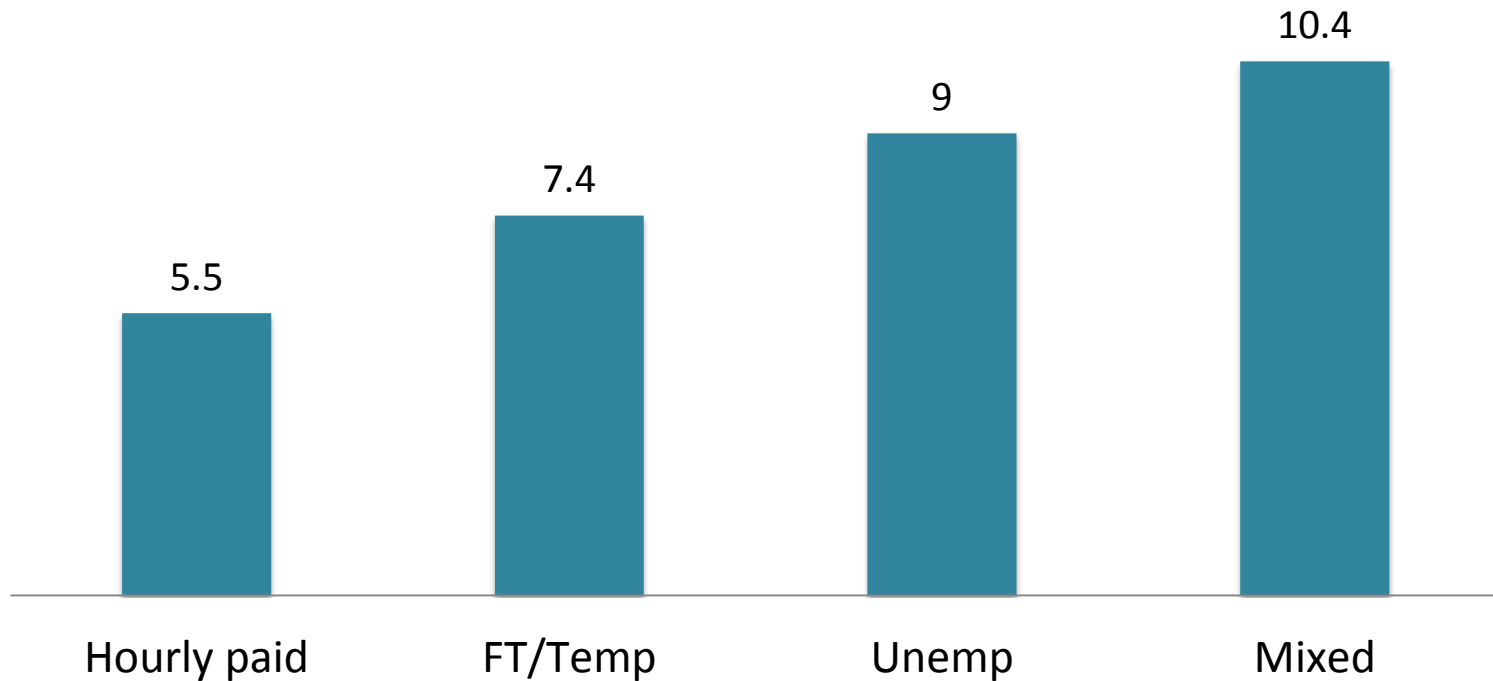
Employment type by annual pay



The Pay Divide

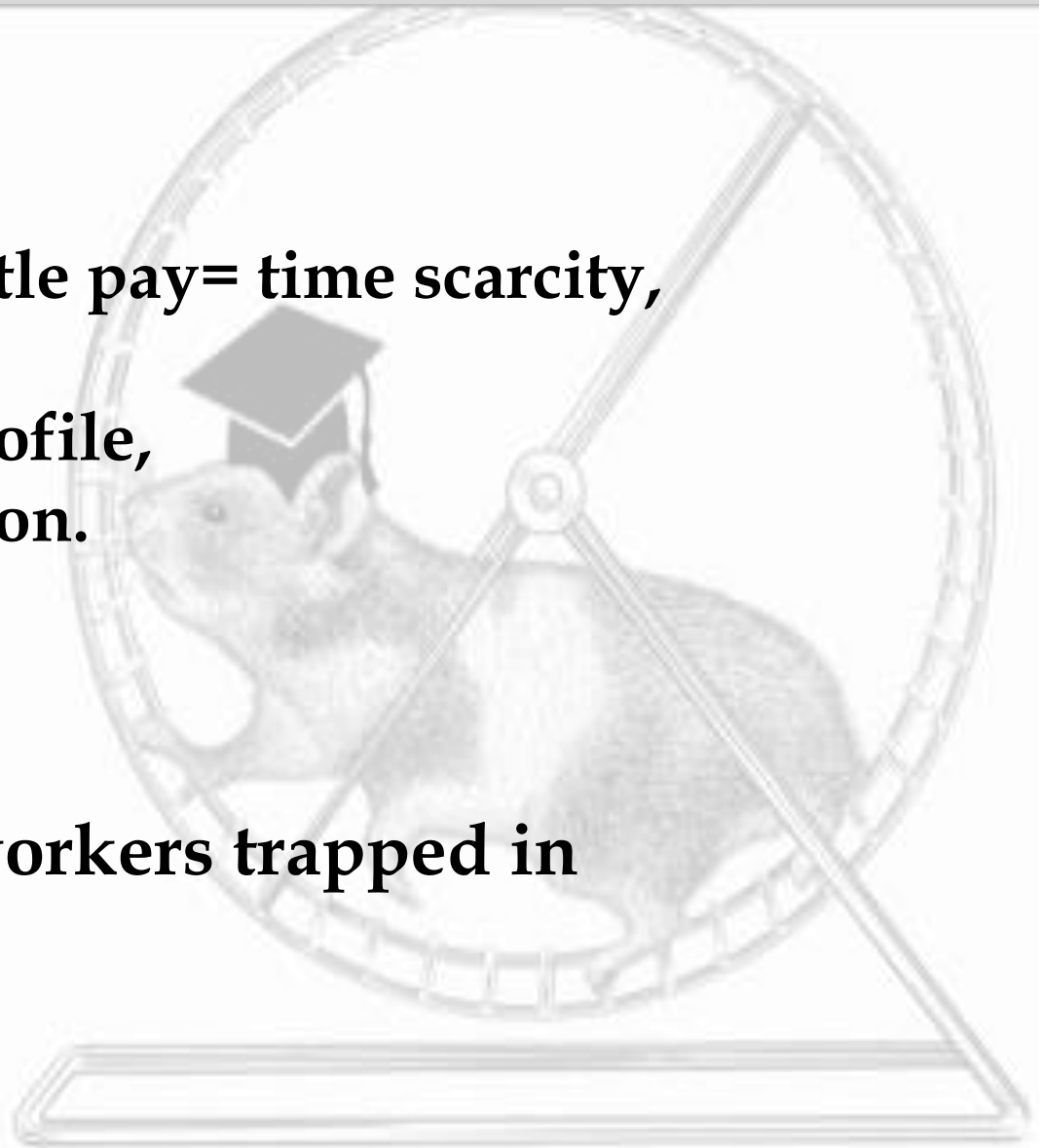
*“I think it is disgusting. There is such a disjuncture between full-time permanent staff on €80000 or so and they cannot be touched. I **do their donkey work**.....Very grim. I got saddled with corrections recently by two people on bloated salaries. It hurts being judged by these people who know nothing about my financial struggles and never will.”*

Years Working in Academia



Hamster Wheel of Precarity

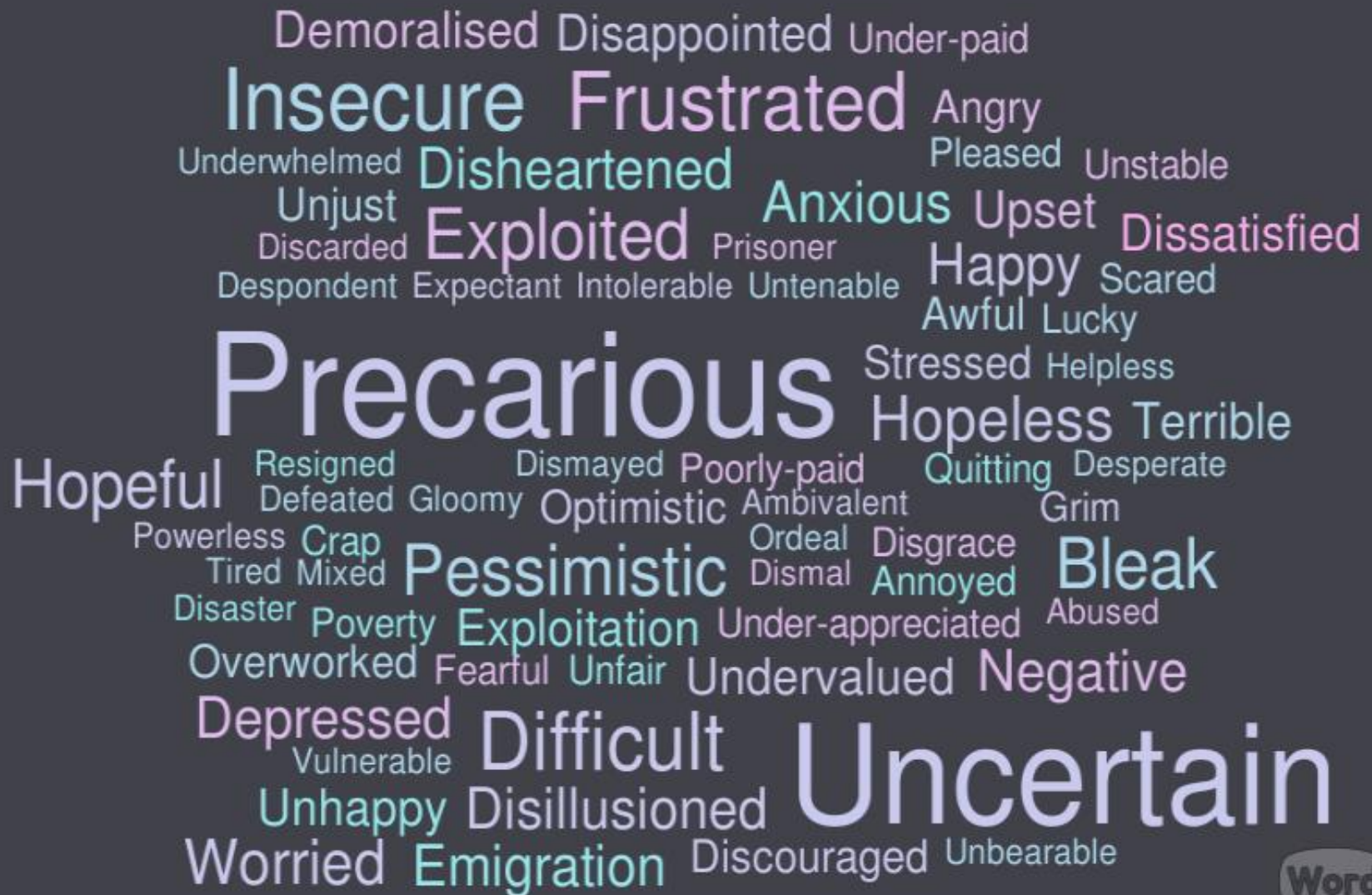
- ❖ **Cyclical process:**
 - overworked for little pay= time scarcity,
 - truncated roles,
 - limited research profile,
 - no career progression.
- ❖ **No exit points – workers trapped in precarious work.**



Consequences of Precarity

- Marginalisation and isolation: lack of union representation; collegiality; belonging and networking.
- Insecurity in work brings insecurity in other areas: economic, food, housing, future planning, life precarity
- Poverty
- Health and well-being issues
- Delay or forgo starting a family
- Institutional strain
 - especially felt by junior staff with more security and
 - effects on research, teaching and learning (our working conditions are your learning conditions)
 - two-tiered academic workforce.

The Precarious Experience



The Precarious Experience

“Underpaid and unappreciated. I currently work 4 jobs to make a living.”

“At the moment it's just about enough to pay the bills, but I'm never certain from one semester to the next how much work I'll be able to get”

“I have sleepless nights trying to figure out how to pay bills; I'm getting into debt and the only option now is to emigrate – again.”

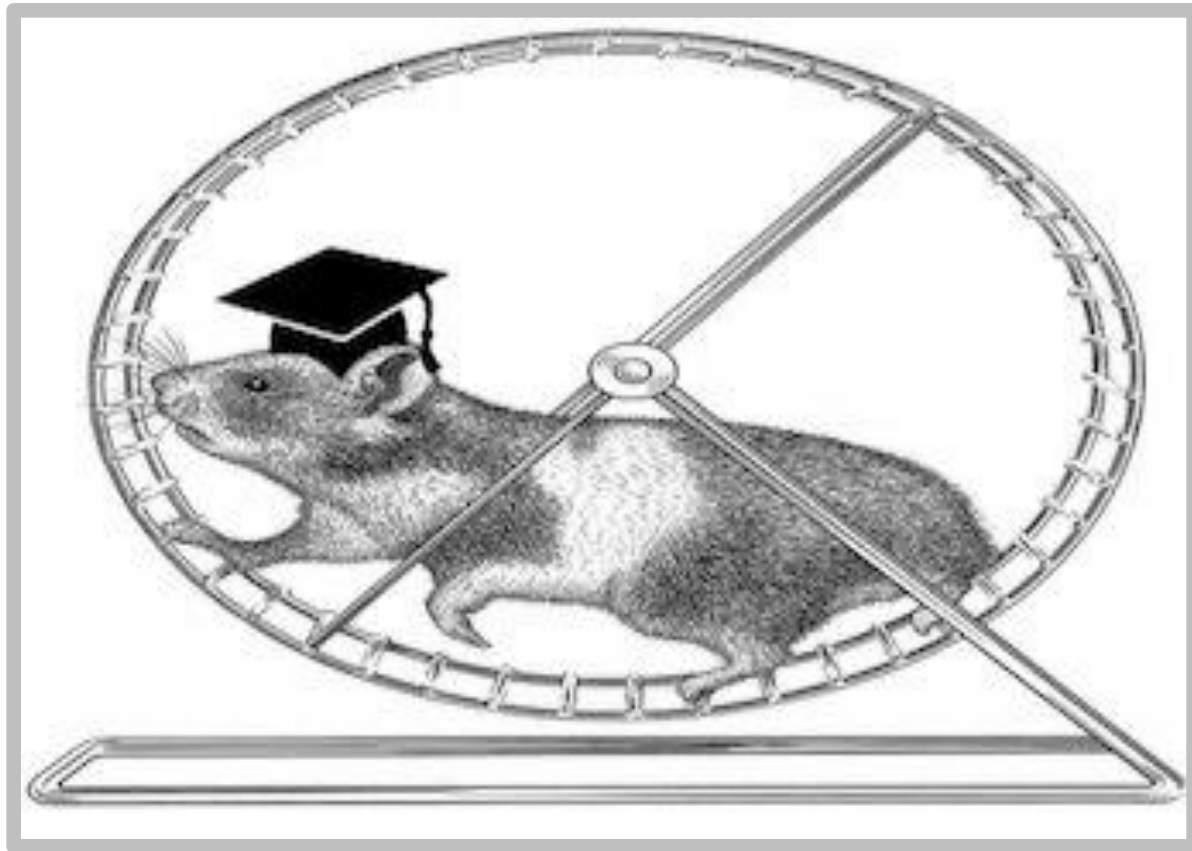
“I could not afford to work if my partner did not earn what he does as childcare costs more than my salary.”



The two-tiered academic workplace means young academics:

- have very different working conditions to the previous generation
- expected mobility
- more vulnerable to housing crisis, austerity budgets, and growing social inequality
- will not have the same life benchmarks (buying a house, children, marriage as evidenced in recent CSO data).

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