

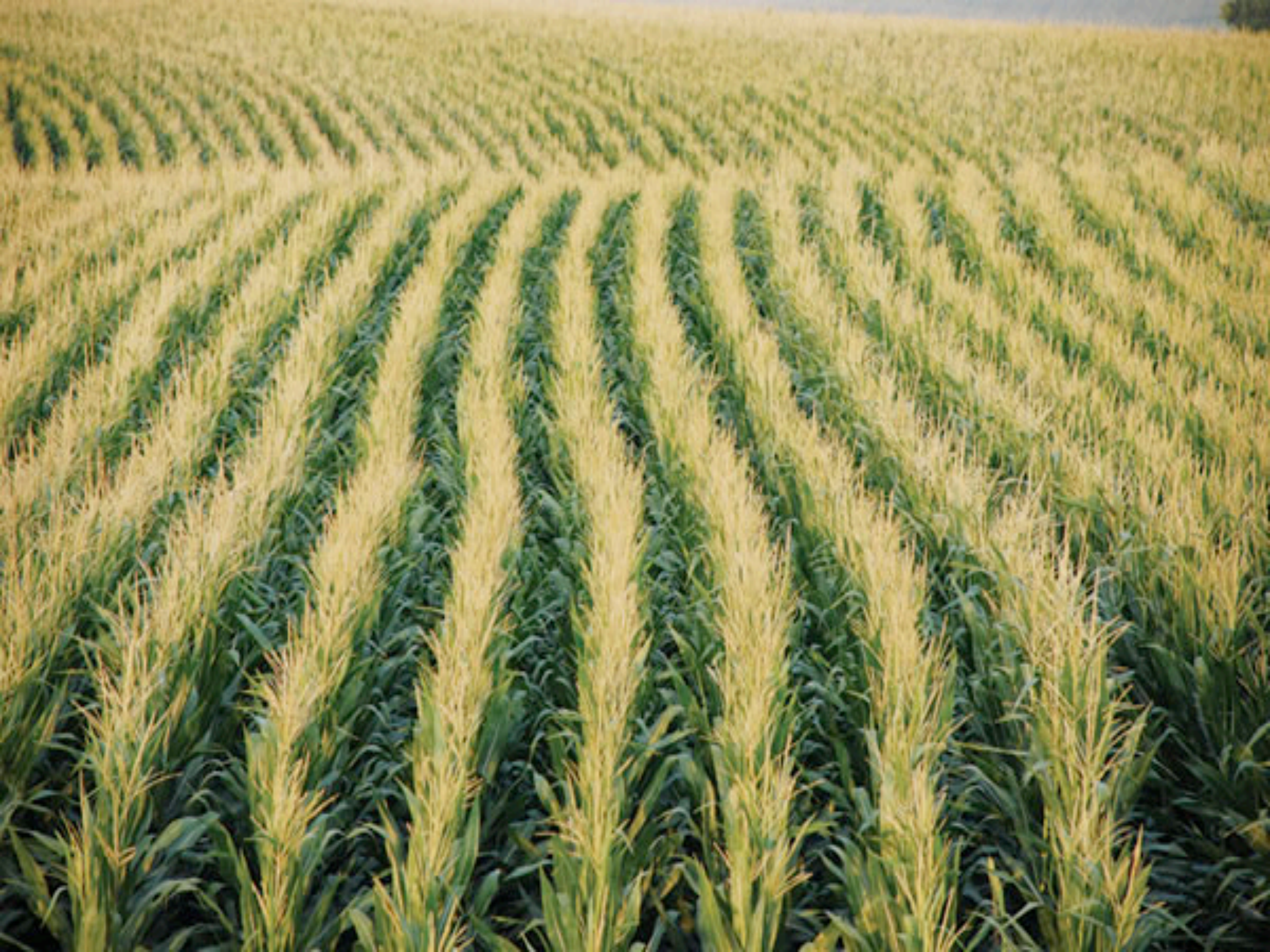
Science is Vital: a grassroots effort to improve the career structure of the UK academic research community



Dr Jennifer Rohn – 6 March 2013– University of Southampton







1918



1918



Winter Flu Jab Service

Book your **flu vaccination** in store today

Boots 0207 6378200 DISP CHKD
Tottenham Court Road (1532)

To book Your Flu Vaccination call:

Boots (Goodge Street)
211-212 Tottenham Court Road,
London W1T 7PP
Tel: 020 7637 8200

Keep out of reach and sight of children

Collect
points
with this
service*

6. Further information

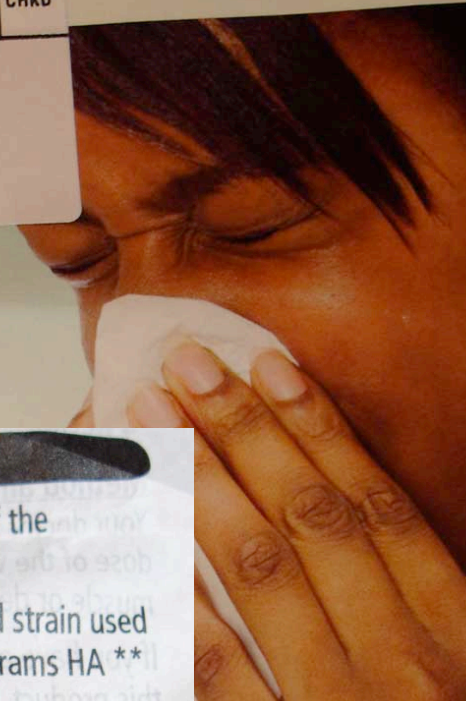
Influenza virus (inactivated, split) of the
following strains *:

A/California/7/2009 (H1N1)-derived strain used
NYMC X-181 15 micrograms HA **
A/Perth/16/2009 (H3N2)-like strain
used NYMC X-187 derived from
A/Victoria/210/2009 15 micrograms HA **
B/Brisbane/60/2008 15 micrograms HA **
per 0.5 ml dose

* propagated in fertilised hens' eggs
from healthy chicken flocks

** haemagglutinin

2012



Number theory

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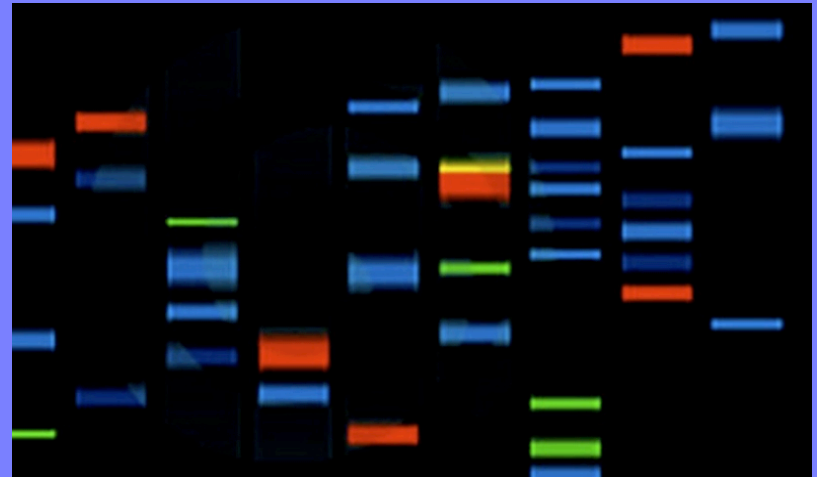
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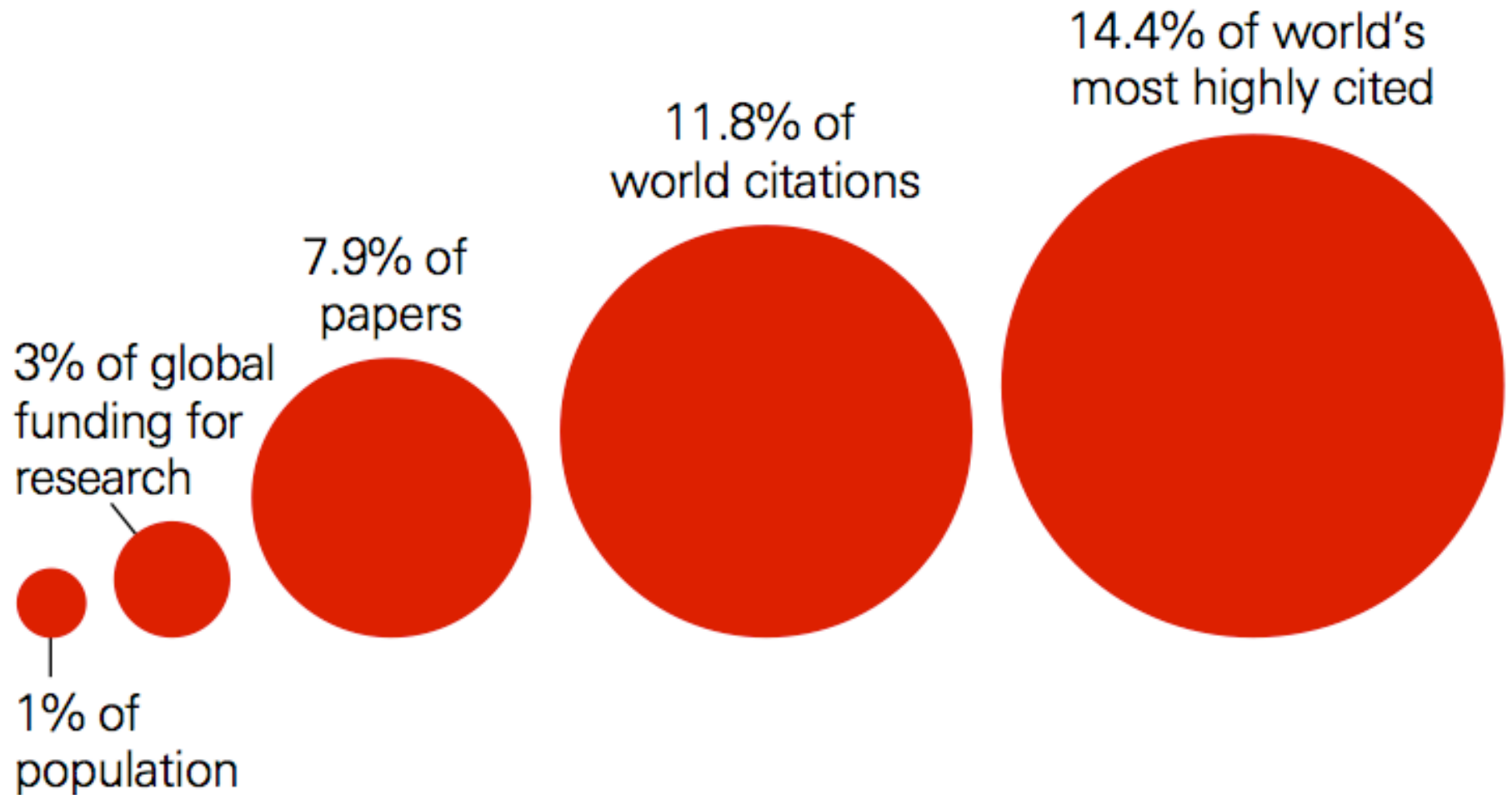
DNA biology



Nuclear, high energy and
condensed matter physics



Figure 1.2 The UK's share of global science



Someone needs to fight science's corner – who better than scientists?



Mind the Gap

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← In which the blind see

In which I notice a trend →

In which the great slumbering scientific beast awakens

Posted on [September 8, 2010](#) by [Jennifer Rohn](#)

Scientists in the UK today are starting to respond to governmental [noises](#) suggesting that, in a time when other countries are investing in science to rejuvenate the economy, funding for science and innovation here will have to be slashed. Only the best will be funded, and the rest can leave the country or flip burgers.

There has been a lot of hand-wringing on Twitter about what to do, but though we all feel we have to do something, nobody quite knows what.

Sod it. Let's march on London! No more Doctor Nice Guy, no more hiding behind our work, no more just taking things lying down like we take everything else in our profession — poor job prospects, poor funding, low pay, poor life-work balance. If they are going to bleed us dry, we might as well try to do something before it's too late. I reckon there are thousands of practicing scientists and their allies in the vicinity — let's make some noise.

Who's in?

About Jenny

By day: cell biologist at UCL. By night: novelist, broadcaster, science writer, sci-lit-art pundit and Editor of LabLit.com. I blog about my life in science, not the facts and figures.



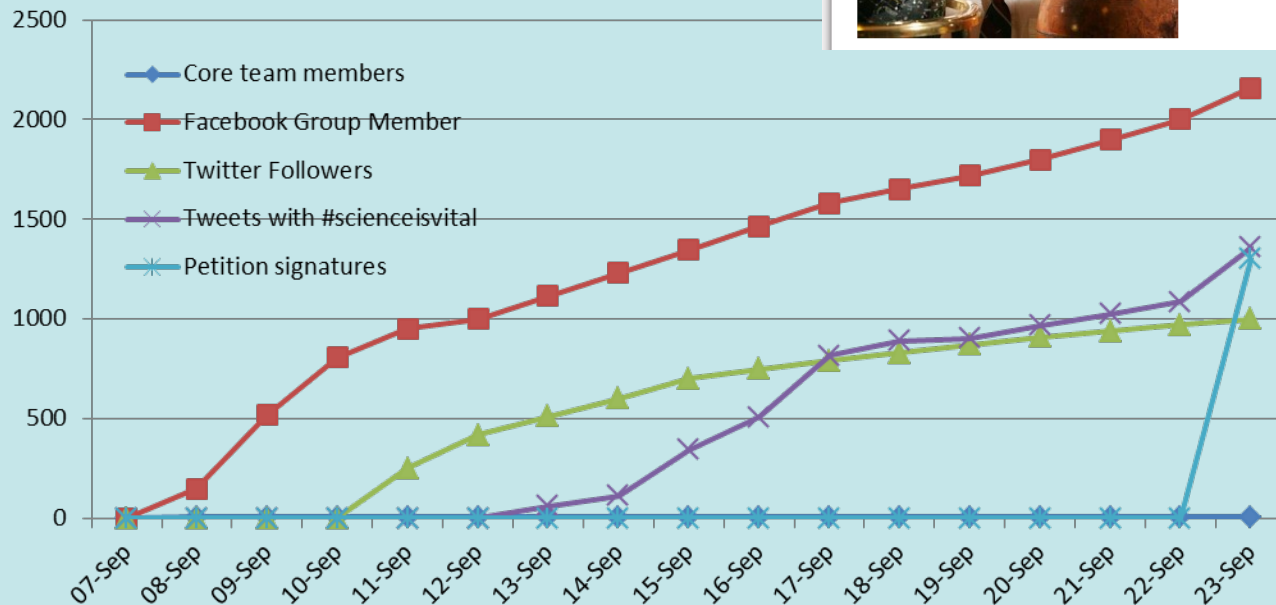
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23 September, 2010



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We are a group of concerned scientists, engineers and supporters of science who are campaigning to prevent destructive levels of cuts to science funding in the UK.

Why science?

Investing in research enriches society and helps drive the economy. It led to our preminent position in the 20th century, and will be vital in meeting the challenges of the 21st – whether they be in energy, medicine, infrastructure, computing, or simply humanity's primal desire for discovery.



Dara O'Briain, the comedian with a degree in mathematical physics, says,

"If I wasn't on tour I would be protesting in London with my fellow science geeks at Science is Vital – because it seems a good time to remind the Government that this country won't keep winning Nobel prizes if they start to cut Science Funding."



Sir Patrick Moore, CBE HonFRS FRAS, says,

*"If we cut funds for science we'll be shooting ourselves in the foot... I support the **Science is Vital** campaign 200%!"*



About

Who we are, and what we're doing

The Argument

Key points in the economic argument against cuts to science funding

The Petition

So far, 35908 people have signed!
[See all signatories.](#)

Donate to the campaign

Please help to keep Science is Vital going: every penny helps and we need your support!

[Donate](#)



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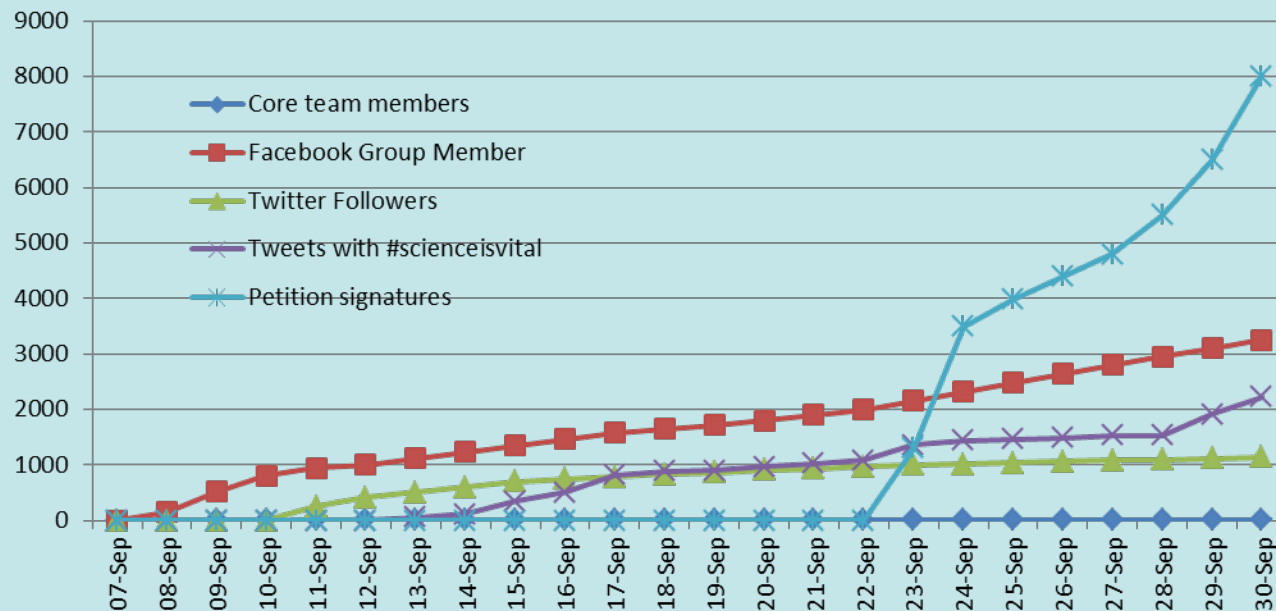
30 September, 2010



@ProfBrianCox
Brian Cox

Wear your lab coat to #scienceisvital
demo at the Treasury 9th Oct
<http://bit.ly/dodge3> to urge no funding
cuts! Please RT

30 Sep via TweetDeck ☆ Favorite ↻ Retweet ↩ Reply





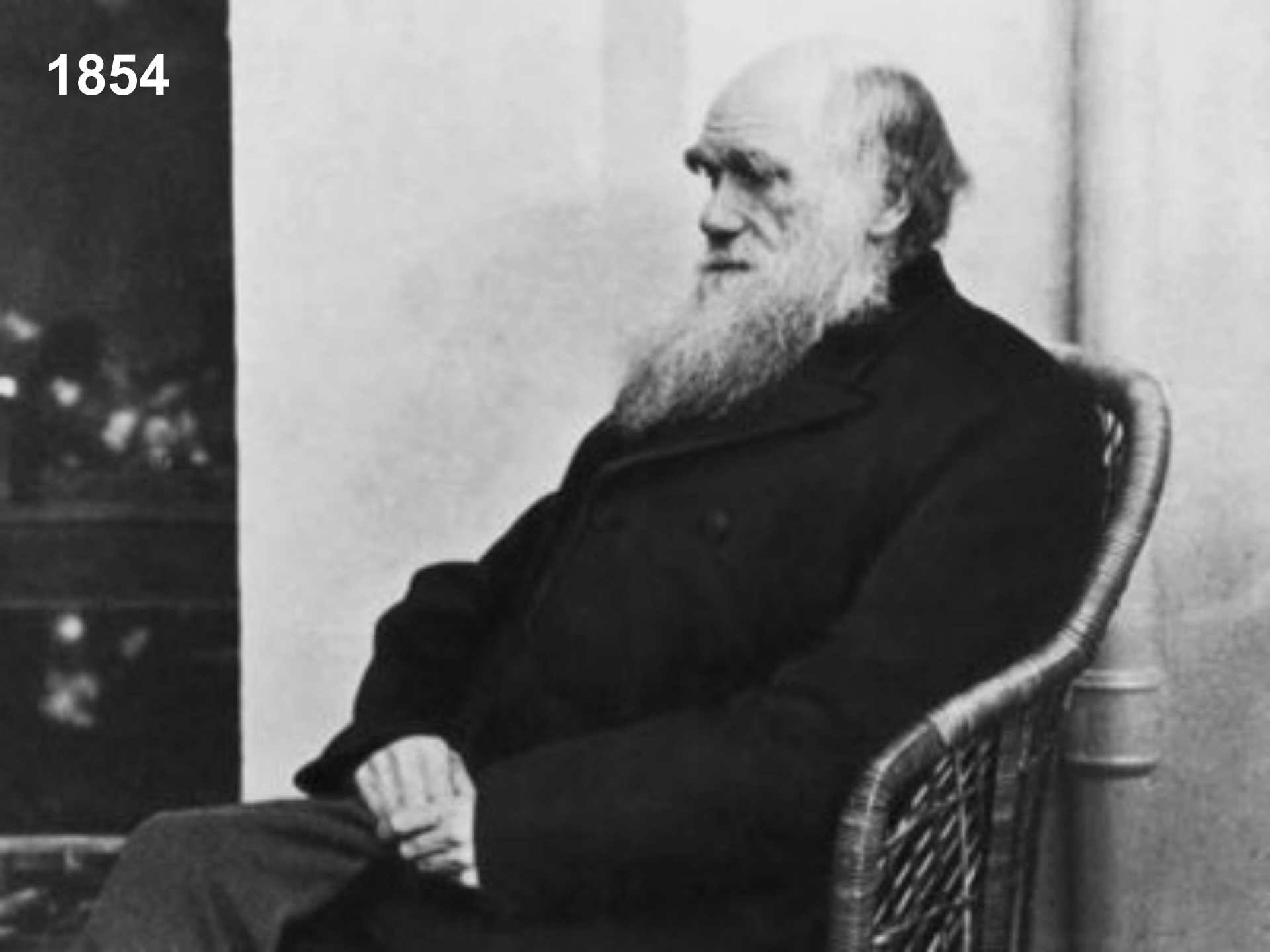
Scientists hold rally over spending cuts in London



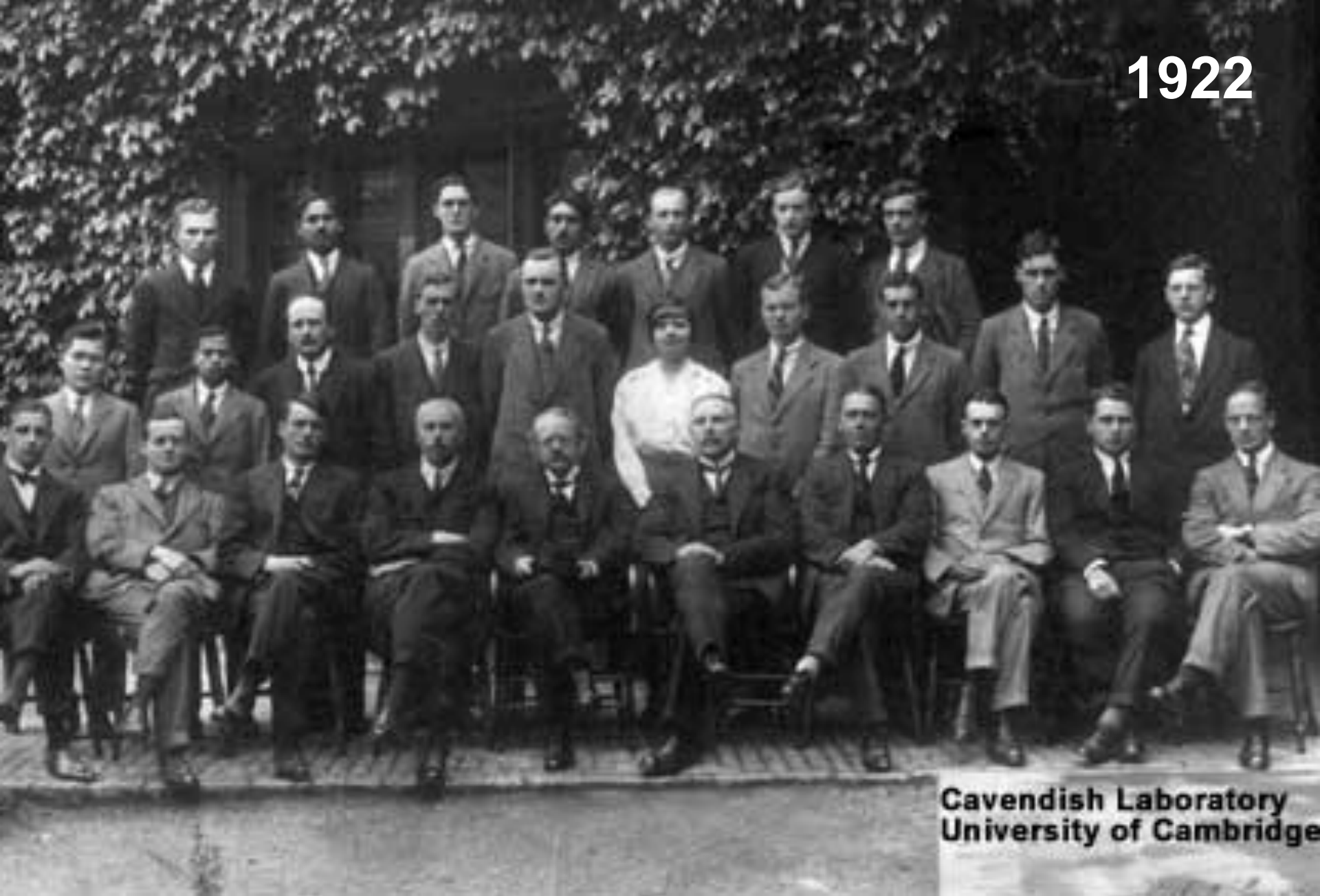


Photo: rpg

1854



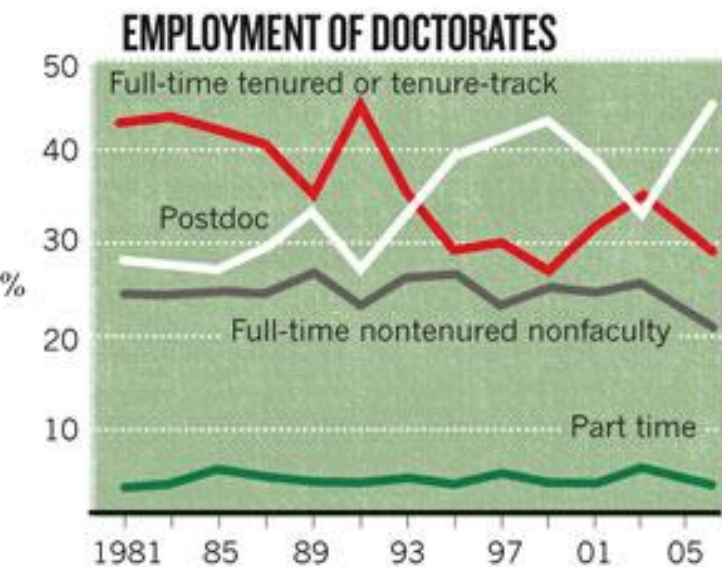
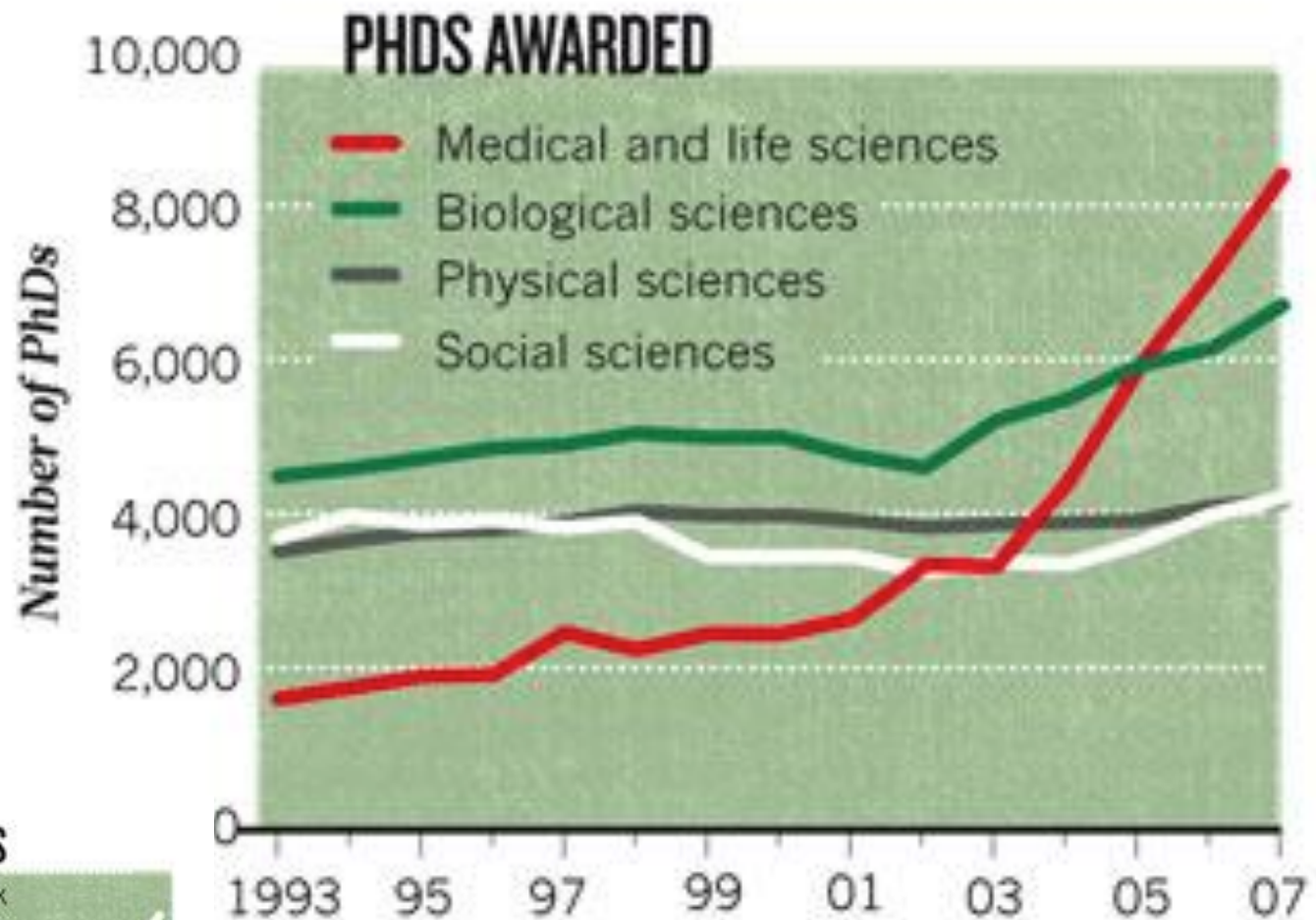
1922



**Cavendish Laboratory
University of Cambridge**

2009

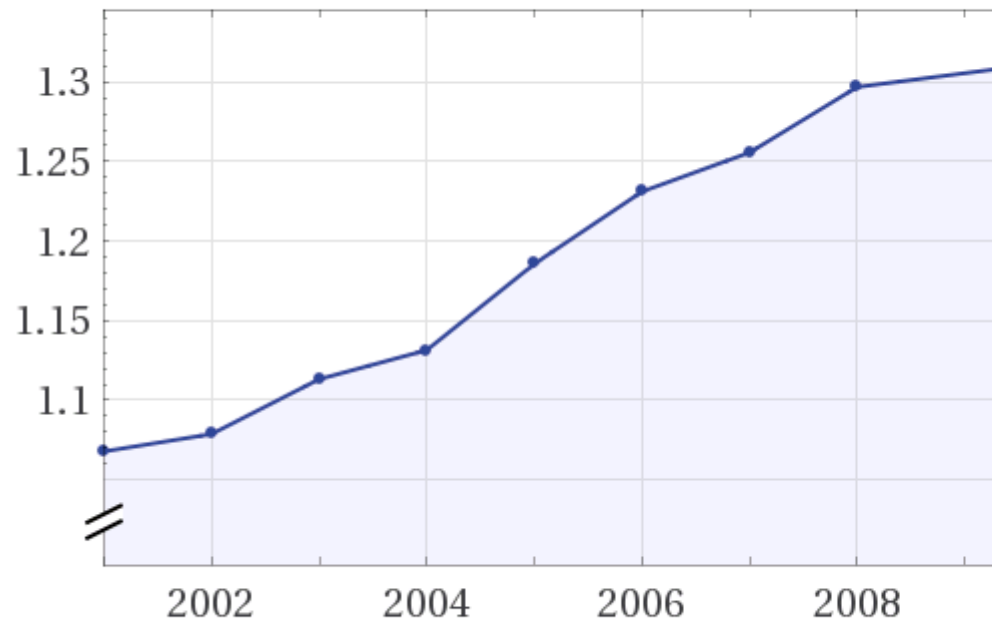




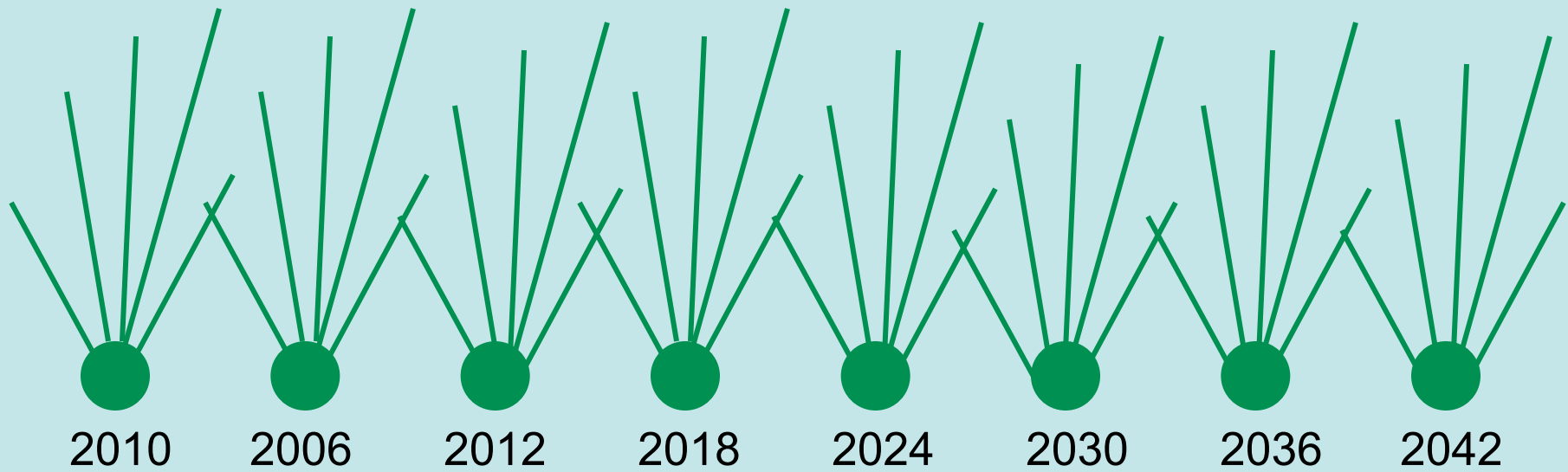
Total: 41,000

US data - source: *Nature* doi:
10.1038/472276a

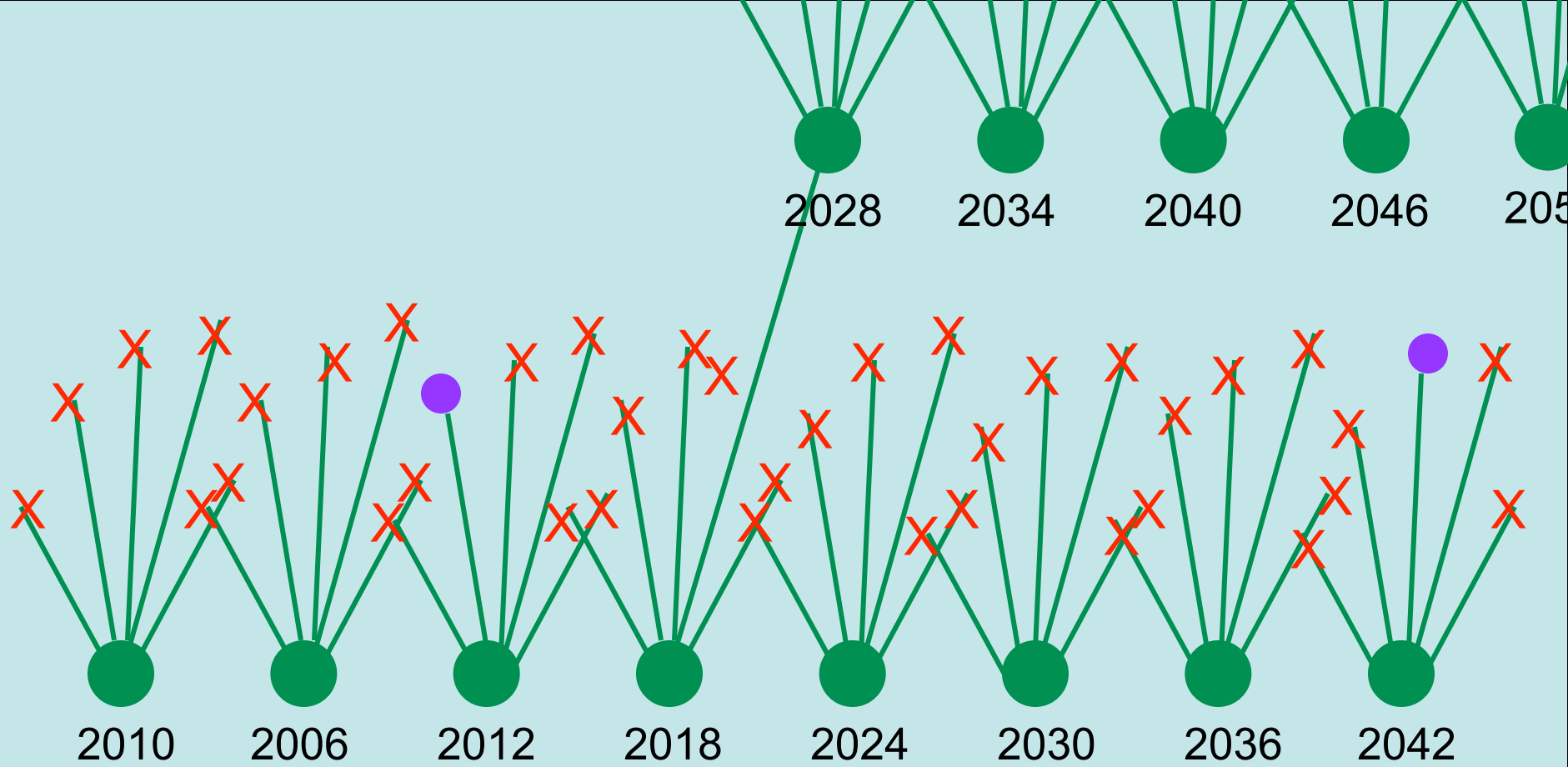
Employment history



(from 2001 to 2009)
(in millions of people)

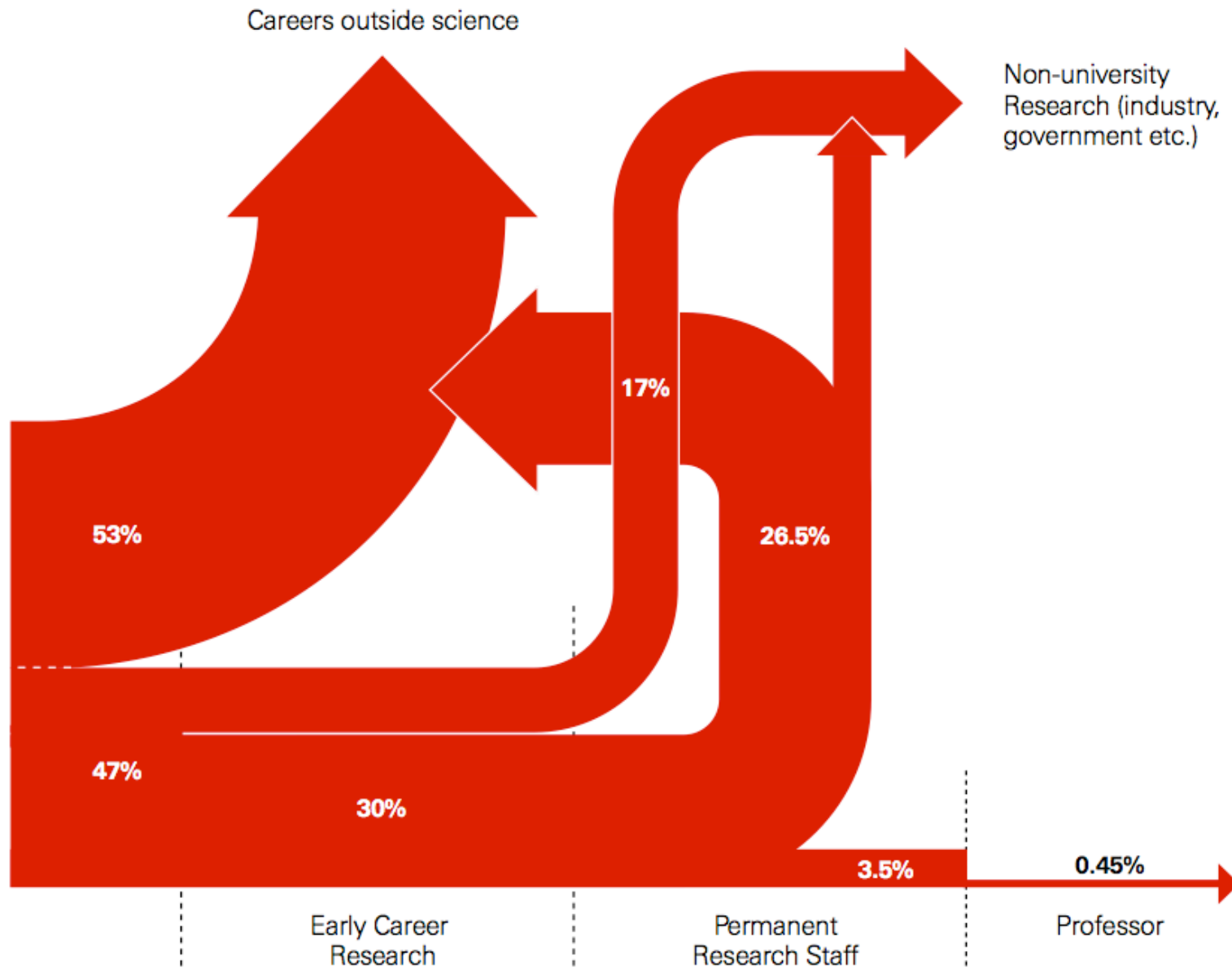


A stunning and successful career?



Or a shocking waste of disposable talent?

Figure 1.6 Careers in and outside science



The current science career structure is broken

THE POSTDOC APOCALYPSE

HOW IT BEGINS

STAGE 3

ONCE GATHERED IN NUMBERS
POSTDOCS WILL SEEK OUT SUSTENANCE



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Published online 2 March 2011 | *Nature* **471**, 7 (2011) | doi:10.1038/471007a

Column: World View

Give postdocs a career, not empty promises



To avoid throwing talent on the scrap heap and to boost prospects, a new type of scientific post for researchers is needed, says Jennifer Rohn.

Jennifer Rohn

The career structure for scientific research in universities is broken, particularly in the life sciences, my own overcrowded field. In coffee rooms across the world, postdocs commiserate with each other amid rising anxiety about biology's dirty little secret: dwindling opportunity. Fellowships are few, every advertised academic post draws a flood of candidates, and grants fund only a tiny fraction of applicants.

The scientific job market has been tight for decades, but the recent

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Naturejobs

Faculty Positions in the Department of Biomedical Engineering of Carnegie Mellon University
Carnegie Mellon University

Faculty Positions in the Department of

Royal Institution, 24 May 2011

“Science careers: has the science establishment let down young researchers?”



A broader online consultation, June-Sept 2011
(emailed 17K scientists from petition database, amplified via social media)

“Careering out of control: a crisis in the UK science profession?”

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Nature **478**, 277 (12 October 2011) | doi:10.1038/nj7368-277c;

Science careers unstable

UK scientists are concerned about career instability and lack of research positions, says a poll by an advocacy group, Science is Vital. It surveyed 700 science PhD students and researchers in September at the behest of UK science minister David Willetts, who met group leaders on 6 October and is arranging a discussion with government and funding representatives.

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Vital signs of an unhealthy future for UK science

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6 October 2011

By [Paul Jump](#)

Short-term contracts and a lack of permanent openings risk causing long-term damage to UK academic science, a report prepared for David Willetts warns.

The report, by the lobby group Science is Vital, is based on a survey of students, postdoctoral researchers and principal investigators.

Of the 750 respondents, 68 per cent named job security as a concern, while 49 per cent cited the impact of short-term contracts - such as unstable personal lives and the loss of expertise from labs - as the biggest problem facing university science.

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Big Wide World

Real scientists, real lives

Post-doc: Career uncertainty is wearing us down

17:31 7 October 2011

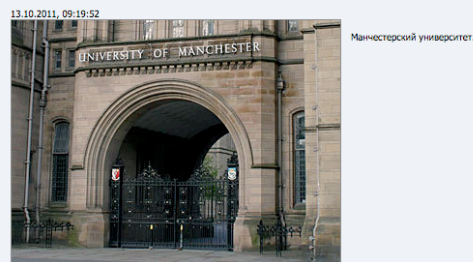
[Getting a Job](#) | [Research](#)

[Lewis Dartnell](#), astrobiology post-doc

The most common feeling I experience during my working day is one of discomfort. I feel stupid.

LENTA.RU воскресенье, 16.10.2011, 14:46:48
издание Rambler Media Group

Серьезные
ВОЗМОЖНОСТИ



13.10.2011, 09:19:52

Манчестерский университет

Не смешно
Британские ученые предупредили о возможной гибели своей нации

Российская наука переживает не лучшие времена - с этой фразой

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Careering out of control: UK science career structure in crisis

Scientists issue a stark warning to the government about challenges faced by researchers in early stages of their careers



Careering Out of Control: A Crisis in the UK Science Profession?



A report prepared by **Science is Vital** at the
request of the Rt Hon David Willetts MP,
Minister of State for Universities and Science

5 October 2011

An old problem

“ Our current report complements that of Sir Gareth Roberts, a 2002 review commissioned as part of the Government's productivity and innovation strategy. Roberts identified the lack of a clear career structure, and **uncertain career prospects associated with work on a short-term contractual basis**, as a major barrier to the recruitment and development of postdoctoral researchers. ”

The most pressing problem

The poll

We asked respondents to identify which of the seven categories identified at the meeting (see above) they felt constituted the biggest problem with science careers. Because we expected that many people would have more than one career-related issue, we asked them to rank the issues in order of how pressing they were perceived. The results of the 744 individual responses are as follows (Figure 1):

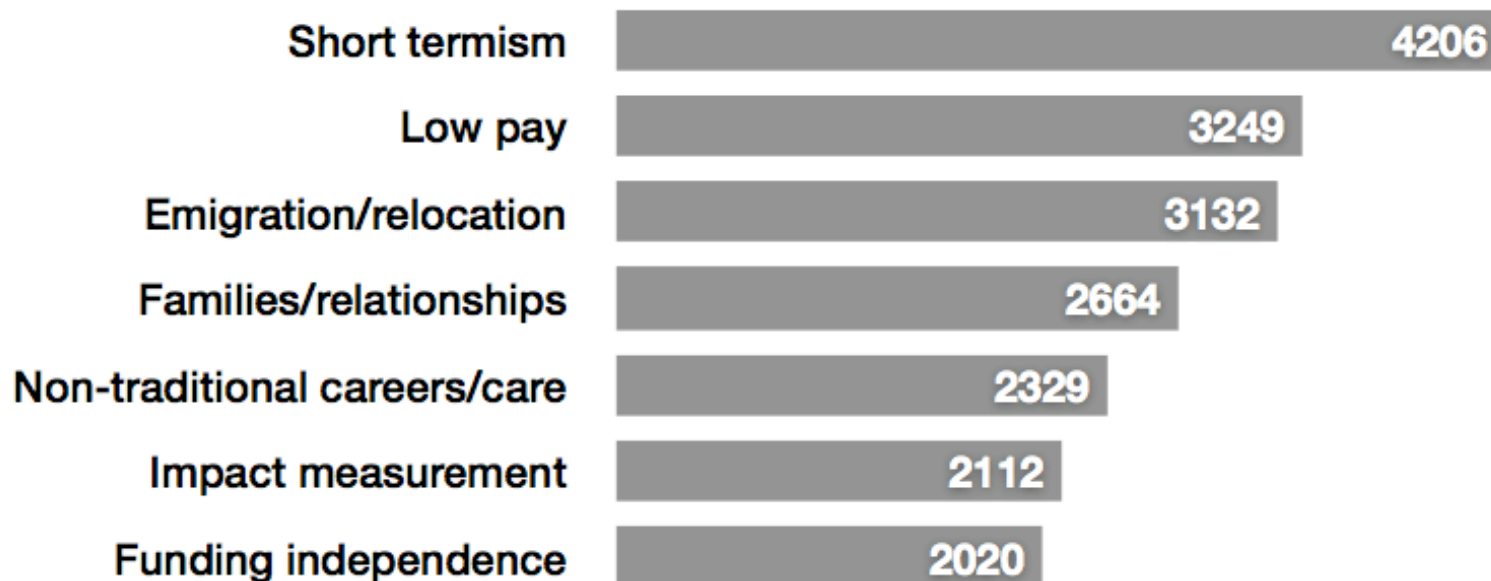


Figure 1: Poll results Numbers are a score from a weighted calculation: items ranked first are valued higher than following ranks; the score is the sum of all weighted rank counts.

An ignored problem

“ The 2008 Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers recommended that all research staff be employed on open-ended contracts. According to a 2011 survey by the research staff organisation Vitae, however, **a full 77% of the 7,000+ respondents reported being on a fixed-term contract.** In reality, even those on open-ended contracts usually find those contracts terminated when their PI's grant money runs out.”

- The Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers <http://www.researchconcordat.ac.uk/>

- Careers in Research Online Survey (CROS) 2011: Analysis of UK Results. Vitae and Careers Research and Advisory Centre Ltd.

A problem for women and families

“ A woman who left research permanently after a postdoctoral position said:

[A] downside to the constant moving of contracts is that I missed out on full maternity pay because I'd had to move contracts and hadn't been in my current position long enough. **Fitting children in with short term contracts is very hard** – you've got to be in post for 6 months to get full maternity pay, and then stay for at least 6 months afterwards as well – that's a full year of your contract, and mother nature is rarely predictable so it is a problem... ”

A problem for older workers

“ A number of our respondents emphasised that the system is weighted against experience: **the longer a postdoc has been working on short-term contracts, the harder it is to continue.** Fellowship eligibility requirements are skewed towards people who are within a set number of years past their PhD vivas, and **older postdocs are deemed ‘too expensive’.** With a glut of younger postdocs swelling the ranks behind, the system encourages **discarding experience in favour of cheaper and often less proficient options.** It is safe to say that in very few other professions would years of experience and enhanced expertise count against a prospective employee. ”

After the Report...

- We met with David Willetts
- We were invited to a Round Table with BIS and the Royal Society
- People agreed it was an important problem
- Nothing seems to have happened

What's the next step?

Academia

1 year
fellowship



2 year fellowship



Lab head
announced move to
USA, lab disbanded

Academia

1 year fellowship

☆☆☆☆



2 year fellowship

☆☆☆☆

Lab head announced move to USA, lab disbanded

Private sector



Start-up biotech: Permanent position offered after 6 months

☆☆☆☆

Company files for bankruptcy



Dole, Began freelance writing career

Publishing: Permanent position offered after 6 months

☆☆☆☆

Head-hunted



Publishing: Permanent position offered after 6 months

☆☆☆☆

Academia

1 year fellowship

★★★★☆



2 year fellowship

★★★★☆

Lab head announced move to USA, lab disbanded

Private sector

Start-up biotech: Permanent position offered after 6 months

★★★★☆

Company files for bankruptcy

Dole, Began freelance writing career

Publishing: Permanent position offered after 6 months

★☆☆☆☆

Head-hunted

Publishing: Permanent position offered after 6 months

★★★★★☆☆

Academia

6 month fellowship

★★★★★☆☆



4 year fellowship

★★★★★☆☆

Age limit reached for most personal fellowships

3 mo

★★★★★☆☆



3 mo



3 mo



4 mo

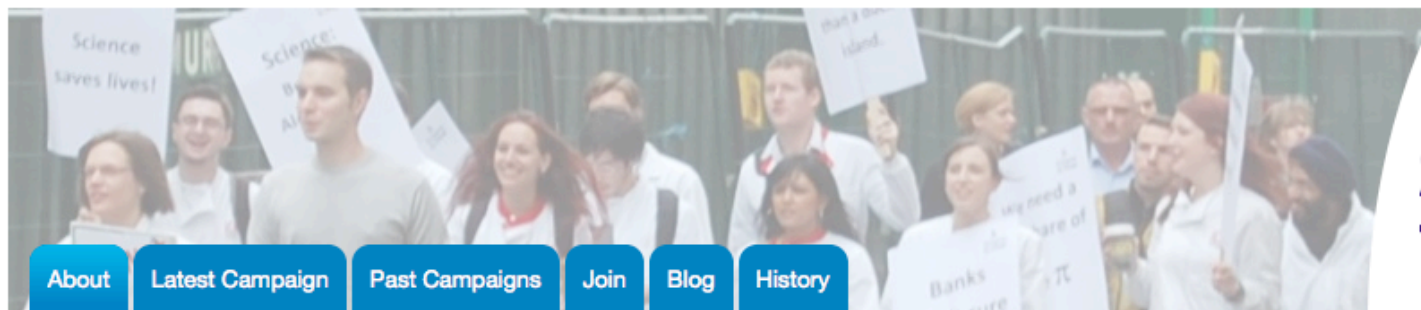


1 year fellowship

★★★★★☆☆

TBC...

Get involved: www.scienceisvital.org.uk

[About](#)[Latest Campaign](#)[Past Campaigns](#)[Join](#)[Blog](#)[History](#)

About

Science is Vital is a grassroots campaign of UK scientists and supporters of science who believe that a strong science base is vital to the UK's economy and reputation. Formed in 2010 as a response to threatened government cuts to science, we've incorporated as a formal group to remain on call to speak for the interests of scientists and UK science. But we remain a strictly grassroots organisation: we are all volunteers; working scientists, ex-scientists and non-scientists. We have no funding and give freely of our own time and resources to campaign.

Our executive committee

- Chair: Dr Jenny Rohn
- Vice-chair: Prof. Stephen Curry
- Vice-chair: Dr Evan Harris
- Treasurer: Shane McCracken
- Secretary: Dr Richard P. Grant
- Membership: Dr Julie Ghosh
- Dr Paula Salgado
- Andrew Steele
- Dr Tom Hartley
- Dr Prateek Buch

Our history

About us...

[Find out more about who we are, and what we're doing.](#)

Two years on...

September 2012 marked two years since Science is Vital sprang into life to campaign for maintaining science spending in the UK. We've had our [first AGM](#), and we're building momentum so that we can keep pressure on the Government both now and in time for the next big spending review due in 2014. We need to continue planning our strategy and tactics. We've constituted into an organization with a [transparent decision making structure](#) and the ability to raise money.

If you'd like to get involved please [sign up as a member](#).

Or contact me directly: jenny@lablit.com