

# Mind the gap

# Cognitive biases

They are mental patterns serve as mental automata from which we produce beliefs that facilitate fast decision-making. These are frequently mistakes in judgment that affect not just actions and decisions but also mental processes in day-to-day living.



Shortcuts

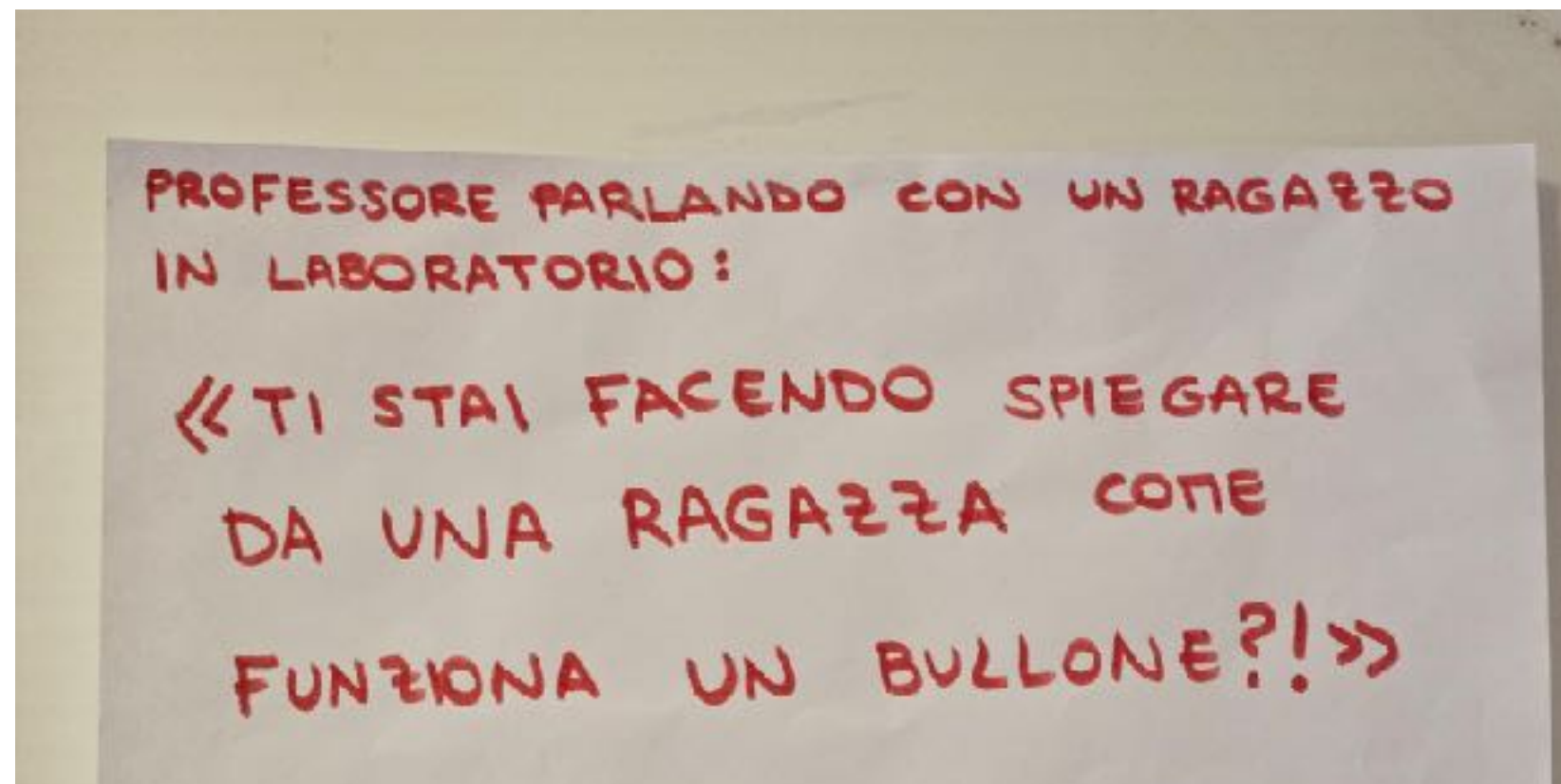


They help saving energy in the decisions making process

# Biases that can have an impact in the gender relationship

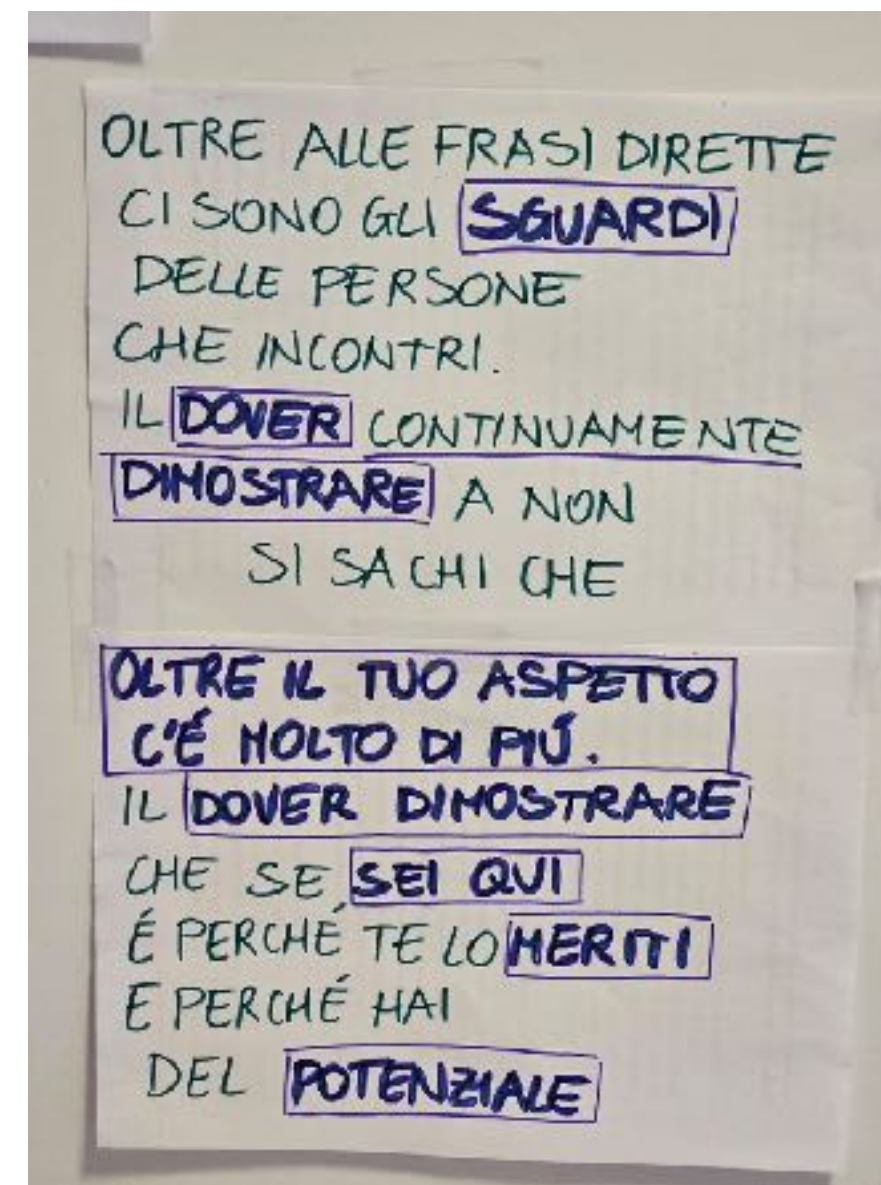
- **Affinity bias:** the tendency to prefer or choose people who are similar to us.
- **Out-group homogeneity effect:** the perception that everyone outside one's group has similar characteristics.
- **Confirmation bias:** the tendency to go in search of information that confirms our beliefs.
- **Social desirability bias:** the tendency to provide a socially desirable response.

# Biases that can have an impact in the gender relationship



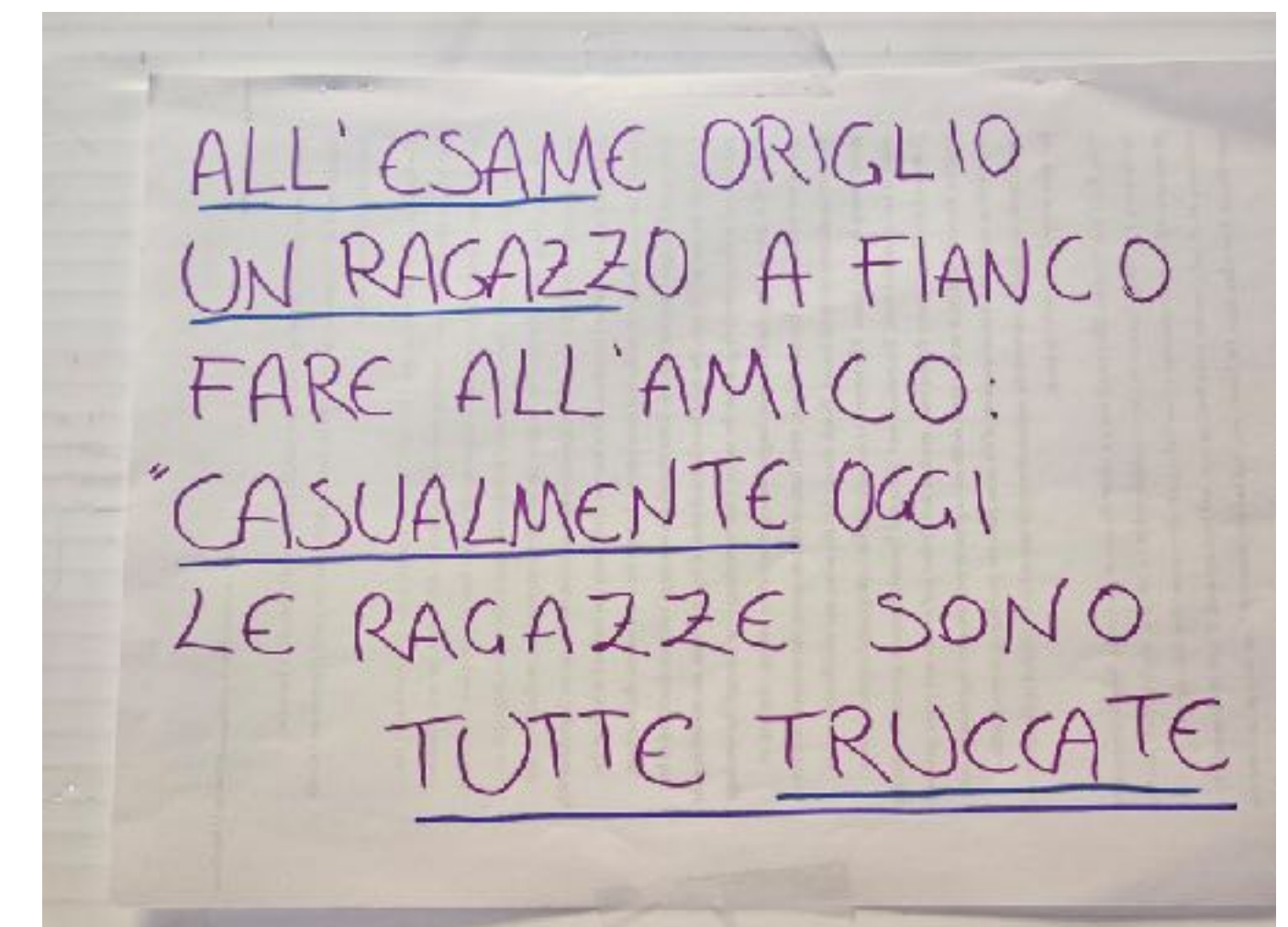
PROFESSORE PARLANDO CON UN RAGAZZO  
IN LABORATORIO:  
«TI STAI FACENDO SPIEGARE  
DA UNA RAGAZZA COME  
FUNZIONA UN BULLONE?!»

Professor side: affinity bias  
Student side: desirability bias



OLTRE ALLE FRASI DIRETTE  
CI SONO GLI SQUARDI  
DELLE PERSONE  
CHE INCONTRI.  
IL DOVER CONTINUAMENTE  
DIMOSTRARE A NON  
SI SACHI CHE  
OLTRE IL TUO ASPETTO  
C'E' MOLTO DI PIU'.  
IL DOVER DIMOSTRARE  
CHE SE SEI QUI  
E' PERCHE' TE LO MERITI  
E PERCHE' HAI  
DEL POTENZIALE

Out-group homogeneity effect



ALL' ESAME ORIGLIO  
UN RAGAZZO A FIANCO  
FARE ALL'AMICO:  
"CASUALMENTE OGGI  
LE RAGAZZE SONO  
TUTTE TRUCCATE

Confirmation bias

**7th March, 2024, Exposition of sexist comments and phrases**



# Selected papers

Gaiaschi, C. 2023. *Gender, class and the meritocratic ideal. The case of the life sciences in Italian Academia*. In Conley, H. and Sandberg, P. K. (eds.) *Handbook on Gender and Public Sector Employment*. Edward Elgar.

Gaiaschi, C., Musumeci, R. «Why so slow?» (2021). Un'analisi del reclutamento accademico in Italia dal 2000 al 2020, tra processi di femminilizzazione e (ri-)maschilizzazione. *AIS - Journal of Sociology*, 18, pp. 97-122. ISSN 2281-2652.

Gaiaschi, C. (2021). Università e cultura dell'eccellenza: più meritocratica per chi? Aporie di genere nell'accademia italiana. *Etnografia e ricerca Qualitativa*, (2). ISSN:1973-3194

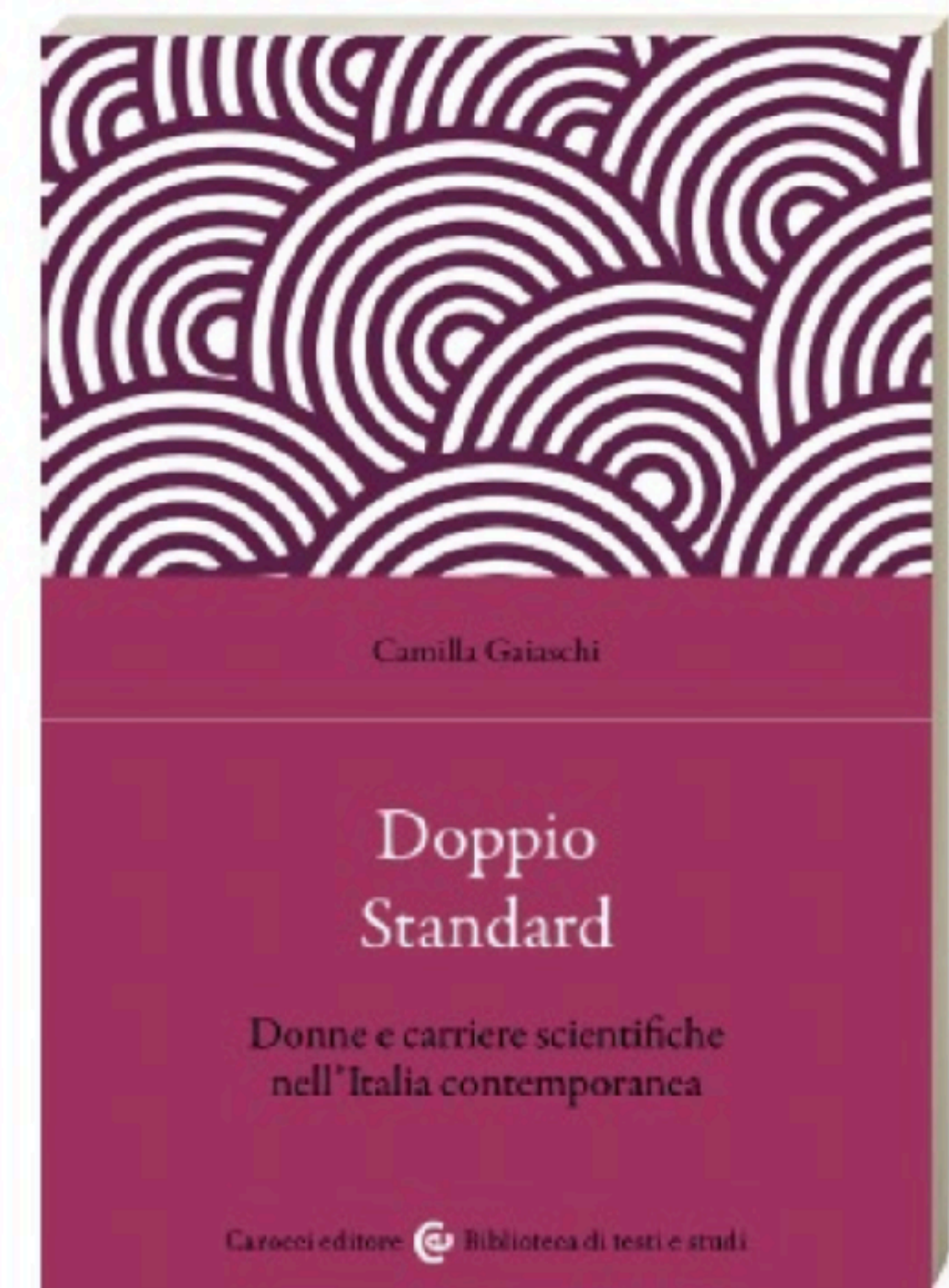
Gaiaschi, C. (2021). Highly Skilled Women Reaching the Top: A Cost-free Achievement? Analyzing the Gender Promotion Gap in the Medical Profession. *Social Forces*, 100(2), pp. 622–648.

Gaiaschi, C. (2021). The academic profession in neoliberal times: a gendered view. *Professions and Professionalism*, 11(1).

Gaiaschi, C. & Musumeci, R. (2020) *Just a Matter of Time? Women's Career Advancement in Neo-Liberal Academia*. An Analysis of Recruitment Trends in Italian Universities. *Social Sciences*, 9(9), 163..

Gaiaschi, C. (2019). Same job, different rewards: the gender pay gap among physicians in Italy. *Gender Work & Organization*, 26(11), 1562-1588.

Gaiaschi, C. (2017). Premiums and penalties among physicians in Italy: how gender affects the combined impact of marital and parental status on pay. *Polis*, (1), 97-126.





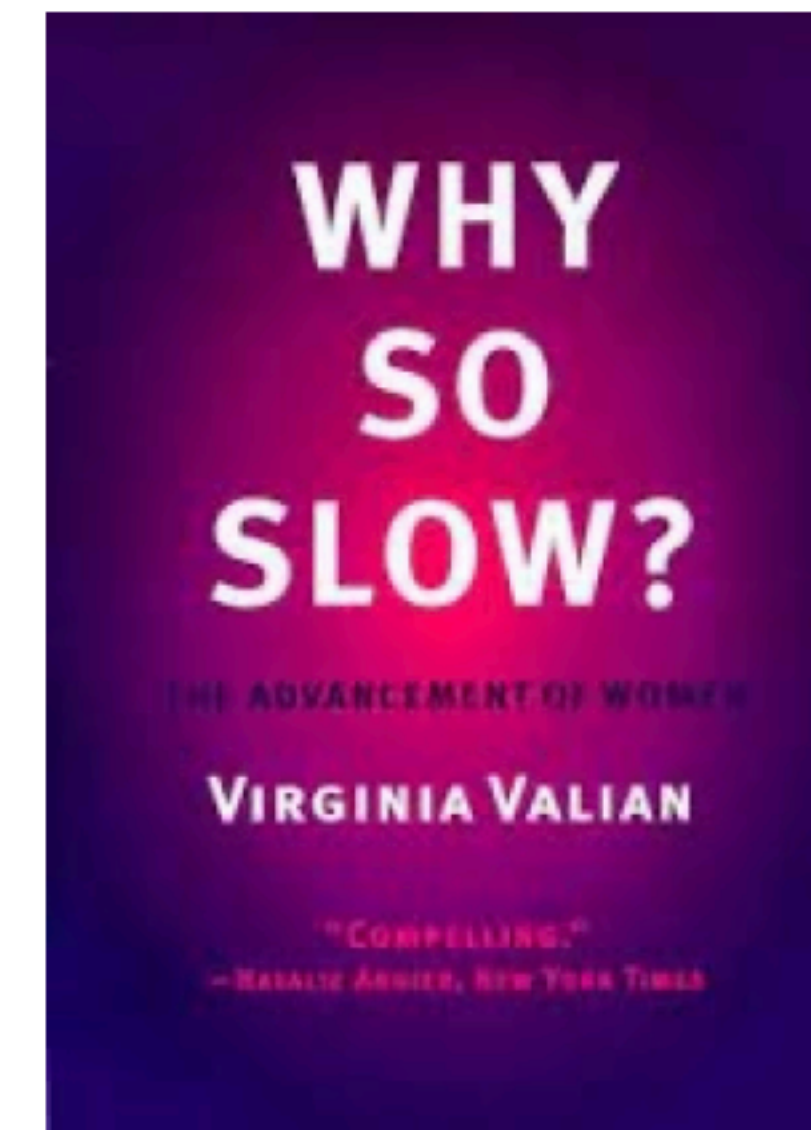
# The three questions



Why so few?  
Alice Rossi, 1965



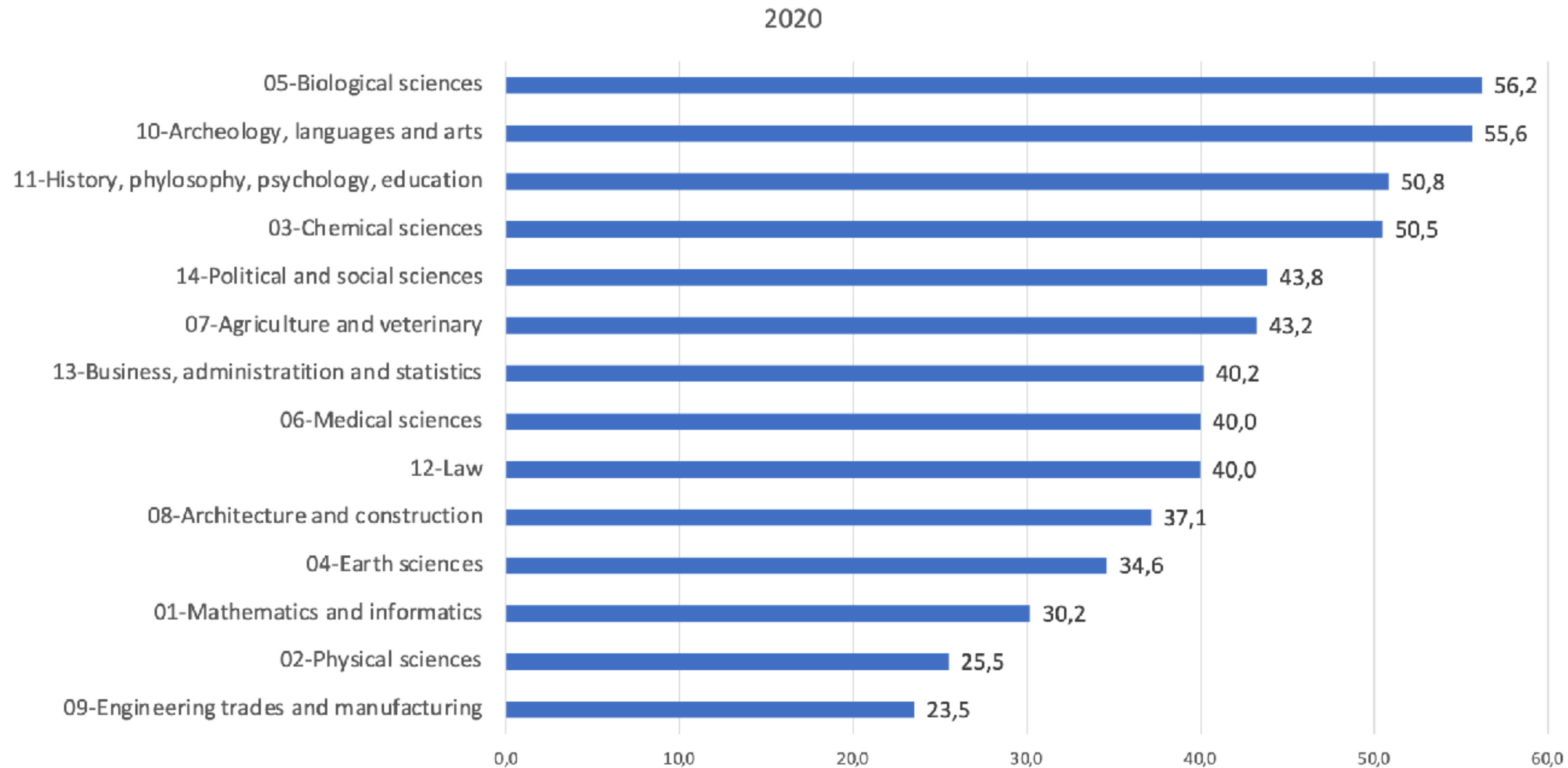
Why so low?  
Inspired by:  
Rossella Palomba, 2013



Why so slow?  
Virginia Valian, 1999

# Why so few?

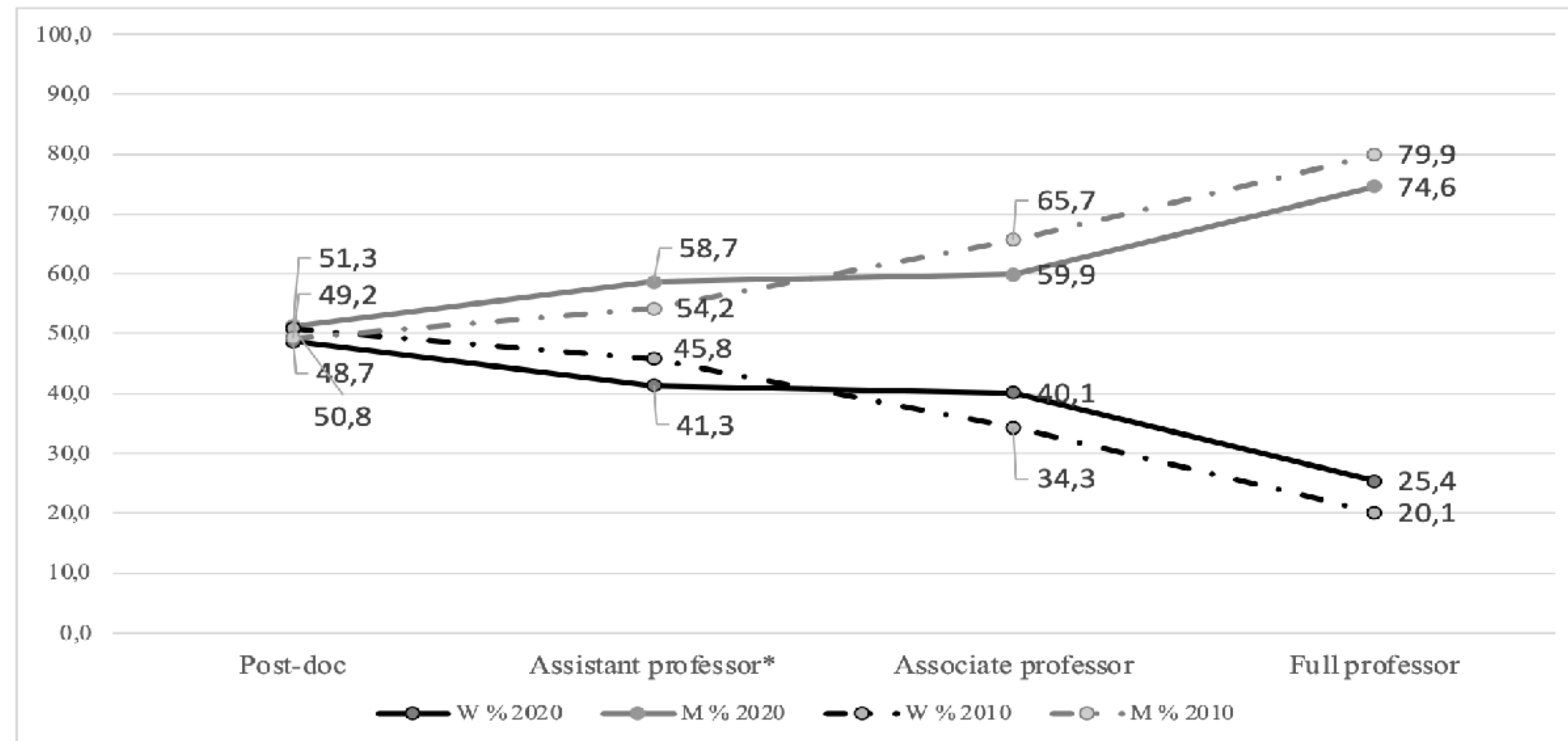
## Female rates across academic population



Source: MIUR data on the Italian academic population, Gaiaschi and Musumeci 2021

# Why so low?

## The scissor diagram



Gaiaschi, Musumeci, 2021 – Gaiaschi 2022

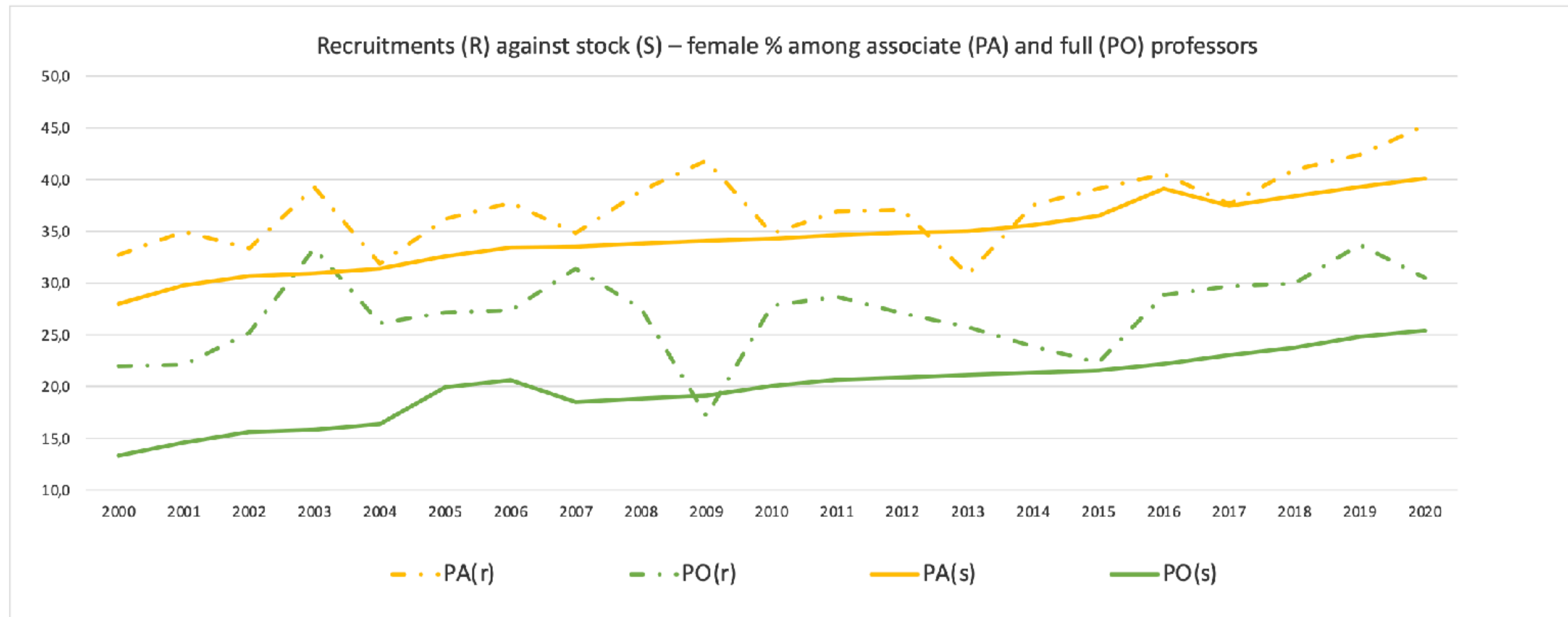
UNIVERSITÀ  
SALENTO

02 - Physical Sciences					
% F AR	%F RTDA	% F RTDB	% F RU	%F PA	% F PO
31,2	43,7	18,8	29,1	21,9	14,6



# Why so slow?

## Recruitments vs employed



Source: MIUR data on the Italian academic population, Gaiaschi and Musumeci 2020, 2021

# How to measure inequalities?

- Descriptive statistics can only provide us with **unadjusted** gender inequality gaps (in the career progression).
- Inequality does not mean discrimination!
- In order to see if discrimination is occurring it is essential to measure the **adjusted** gender gap through, for example, experimental methods or multivariate analysis on observational analysis!

# The adjusted gaps in academia

- **The international literature shows that women have a smaller – adjusted – probability of becoming full professor** (i.e. Perna et al. 2005; Durodoye et al. 2020; IT: Marini e Meschitti 2018), **associate professor** (i.e. Wolfinger et al. 2008; Box Steffenmeiser et al. 2015; Weisshaar 2017; Filandri e Pasqua 2019) and **assistant professor** (Groenwald et al. 2012; Wolfinger et al. 2008; Ginther e Kahn 2009).
- **They are more likely to drop-out before obtaining tenure:** Durodoye et al. 2020; Dubois- Shaik and Fusulier 2015, Huang et al. 2020.
- **WIRED project** (2021/2023): Camilla Gaiaschi (PI), Stephanie Steinmetz (UNIL), Giulia Valsecchi (UNIGE), Katy Morris (UNIL)



# Preliminary conclusions

- **Women are around -4% / -5% less likely to become researchers** controlling for differences in: age, nationality, university, department, scientific field, individual and organizational productivity, etc.
- Women **are less likely to apply for the ASN (abilitazione scientifica nazionale) and this partly explains the gap!**
- **Scientific productivity does not "pay" equally** for men and women in terms of chances for promotion.
- The **Gelmini reform** seems to have widened the gender gap.

# Explaining the gender gap in promotion: supply-side

- **Micro:**

1. Differences in scientific and mathematical abilities and attitudes
2. Differences in family responsibilities (*babies*)
3. Differences in scientific productivity
4. Differences in self-promotion

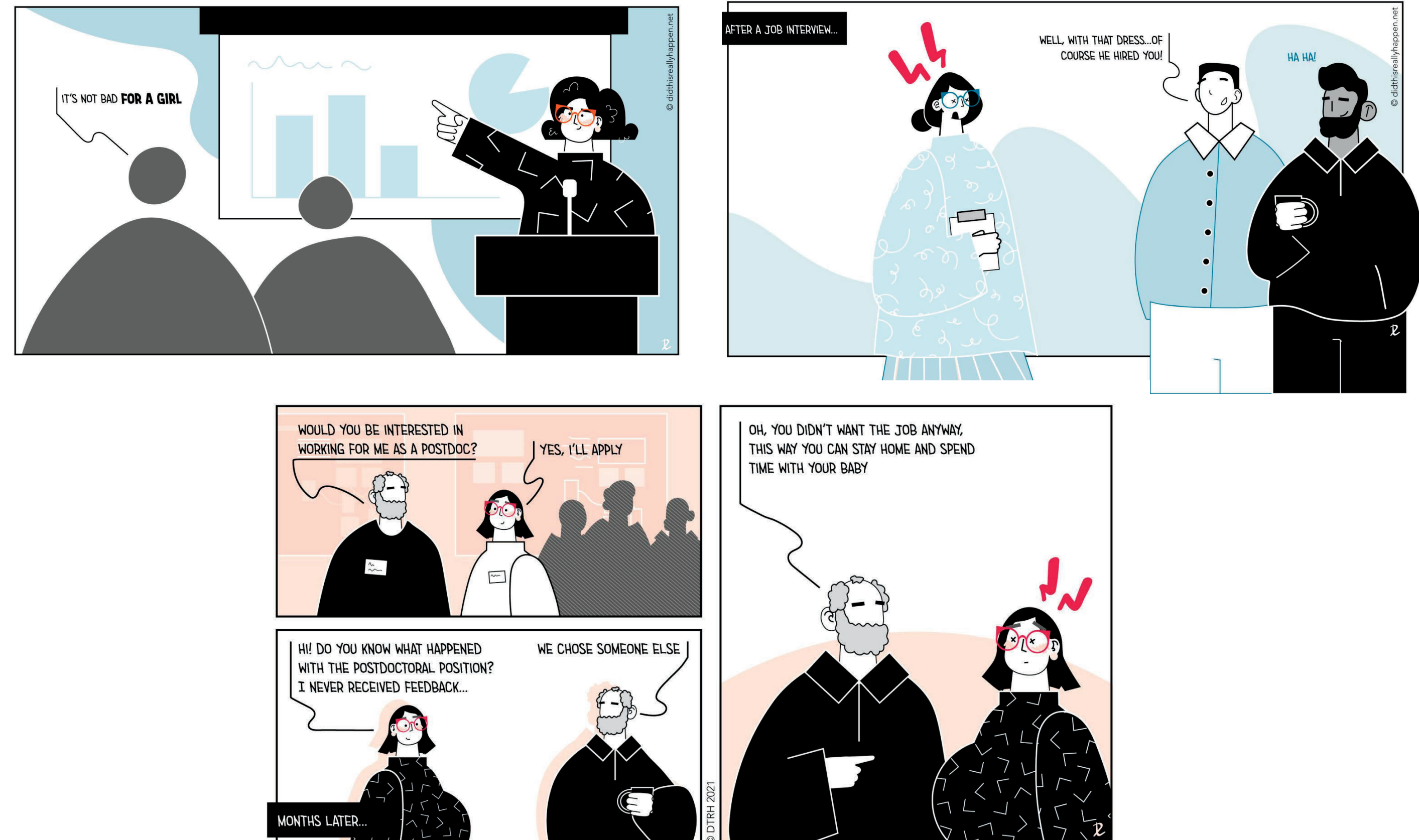


Immuni app

# Explaining the gender gap in promotion: demand-side

## Did this really happen?

- **Micro:** *biases* in evaluation processes
- **Meso:** resources, networks, segregation, work-place climate.
- **Macro:** university reforms and transformations



1. Did this really happen?!. 2018. Did this really happen?!. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://didthisreallyhappen.net/>. [Accessed 2 August 2023].
2. Alice Adenis. 2018. Entrelacs. [ONLINE] Available at: <https://entrelacsbd.wordpress.com/>. [Accessed 2 August 2023].



**Is science neutral?**



Did our **cultural category of masculine and feminine** somehow determine the observation and **interpretation** of the experiments?

Emily Martin, *The Egg and the Sperm: How Science Has Constructed a Romance*  
Based on Stereotypical Male-Female Roles  
The Chicago Press, 1991

**21th February, *Che genere di scienza*, E. Pezzulli**

# Can There Be a Feminist Epistemology?

**Epistemology:** What can we know? How should we know?

**Feminist epistemology:** Whose science, whose knowledge?



# Women are left out as “subject” of knowledge

- Women are **deprived** of the epistemological resources through lack of literacy, time, power, or economic resources.
- Women are **excluded** from particular fields of knowledge;
- by **denying them** epistemic authority;
- Woman's **under-confidence**
- by denigrating “**feminine**” **cognitive** styles.

We want a feminist epistemology **not only for ethical and political** reasons, but also for **epistemological ones**.

# Tranfeminist science

- There is not a “feminine” way of knowing, but **there is a “feminist” way of knowing and doing science.**
- Feminist epistemology defends **feminist practices in science.**
  - We need to extend our discussion to all the marginalized subjectivities
  - We need to start a deconstruction process

**We do not want a feminine science, we want a tranfeminist science**

Marginality **is a radical site of possibility**, a space of resistance. This marginality, which I defined as **spatially strategic for the production of counter-hegemonic discourse**, is present not only in words but also in ways of being and living. I was not referring, then, to a marginality that one hopes to lose -- leave or abandon -- as one approaches the center, but rather to a **place to inhabit, to remain attached to and faithful to**, because **our capacity for resistance is nourished by it**. A place capable of offering us the possibility of a radical perspective from which to look, create, imagine alternatives and new worlds

***Elogio del margine, bell hooks***



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THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR ATTENTION

***Elogio del margine, bell hooks***

And this is just the tip of the iceberg. **Discrimination** occurs every time someone is excluded, every time someone looks the other way, every time someone fails to educate themselves or others.

And so, what can you do? **Listen, respect, support, protect, report.**  
And **fight.**

And if something like this is said to you or if you find yourself in a situation where you feel discriminated against, here are some people who you can talk to.

- GEP committee
- Generact
- Gender balance working group



GEP committee



GBWG

**THANK YOU  
FOR YOUR ATTENTION**

# Our department involvement

- **Gender Equality Plan committee (2022-...)** : it includes member of all categories of the department to fight gender inequality
- **Gender balance working group**: Physics students who decided to form a group to address the gender *imbalance* in the Physics department
- **Safe zone project (2023-...)** : members of the department who attended a course to help students and colleagues in the presence of any kind of discrimination. For those of them having an office, there is this symbol on their door.





# Last year initiatives

- **Noi ci siamo** (we are here, 24th November, 2023)
- **Did this really happen?** 27th November, 2023
- **INFN masterclass**, 9th, February 2024
- **She rocks science**, 12th, February 2024
- **Exhibition of comments and sexist phrases**, 7th, March, 2024





# Gender Equality Plan (2022-2024)

## **Sapienza University**

- Area 1: Work-Life Balance, Organisational Culture and Combating Stereotypes
- Area 2: Gender Balance in Leadership and Decision-Making
- Area 3: Gender Equality in Recruitment and Career Progression
- Area 4: Integration of the Gender Dimension into Research and Teaching Content
- Area 5. Measures against Gender-Based Violence including Sexual Harassment