Godwin's Law

(on comments, Nazis, and internet civility)

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thoppe.github.io/godwins_law/

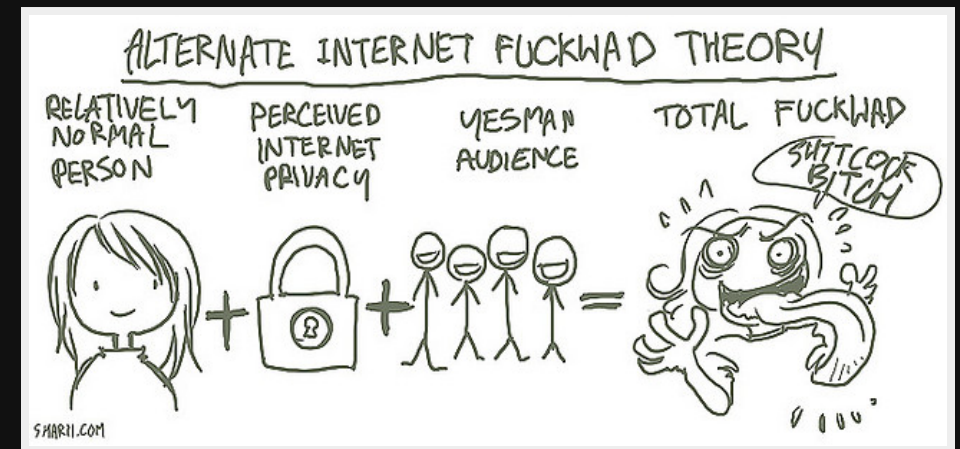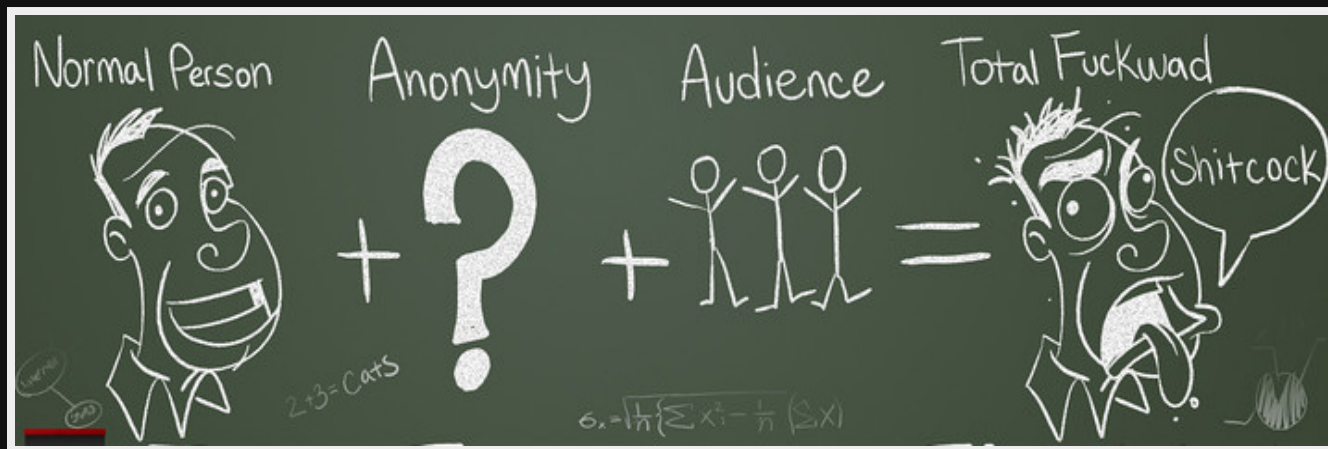# Godwin's Law (weak form)

As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches 1.

No empirical studies to date! Let's test it!

Godwin's Law (strong form)

As an online discussion grows longer, the probability of a comparison involving Nazis or Hitler approaches 1 **when not talking about the events of WWII.**

Why is this important? (aka the Greater Internet Fuckwad Theory)

Any conversation is effectively over once someone makes a comparison to one of the worst genocides in history.

Godwin's hypothesis is the implicit assumption that conversation is over once the atrocities of the third Reich are invoked.

...20 second digression on eponymous laws....

Wikipedia page of eponymous laws...

A–B [edit]

- Aitken's law describes how vowel length in Scots and Scottish English is conditioned by environment. Named for Professor A. J. Aitken, who formulated it.
- Allen curve: Shows frequency of communication drops exponentially as the distance between the people increases.
- Allen's rule: Endotherms from colder climates usually have shorter limbs (or appendages) than the equivalent animals from warmer climates.
- Amagat's law describes the behaviour and properties of mixtures of ideal gases. Named for Émile Amagat.
- Amara's law: "We tend to overestimate the effect of a technology in the short run and underestimate the effect in the long run."
- Amdahl's law is used to find out the maximum expected improvement to an overall system when only a part of it is improved. Named after Gene Amdahl (born 1922).
- Ampère's circuital law, in physics, relates the circulating magnetic field in a closed loop to the electric current passing through the loop. Discovered by André-Marie Ampère.
- Anderson's rule is used for the construction of energy band diagrams of the heterojunction between two semiconductor materials. Named for R. L. Anderson.
- Andy and Bill's law describes how when a computer chip is released, new software will be released to use up all of its power. Named for Andy Grove, then CEO of Intel, and Bill Gates, then CEO of Microsoft. [1] [2]
- Archie's law, in petrophysics, relates the in-situ electrical conductivity of sedimentary rock to its porosity and brine saturation. Named for Gus Archie (1907–1978).
- Archimedes' principle indicates that the upward buoyant force that is exerted on a body immersed in a fluid, whether fully or partially submerged, is equal to the weight of the fluid that the body displaces. Named for Archimedes.
- Asimov's Three Laws of Robotics formulated by Isaac Asimov:
  - A robot may not injure a human being or, through inaction, allow a human being to come to harm.
  - A robot must obey the orders given it by human beings, except where such orders would conflict with the First Law.
  - A robot must protect its own existence as long as such protection does not conflict with the First or Second Laws.
- Atwood's Law: Any software that can be written in JavaScript will eventually be written in JavaScript.
- Augustine's laws on air force management. Named for Norman Augustine.
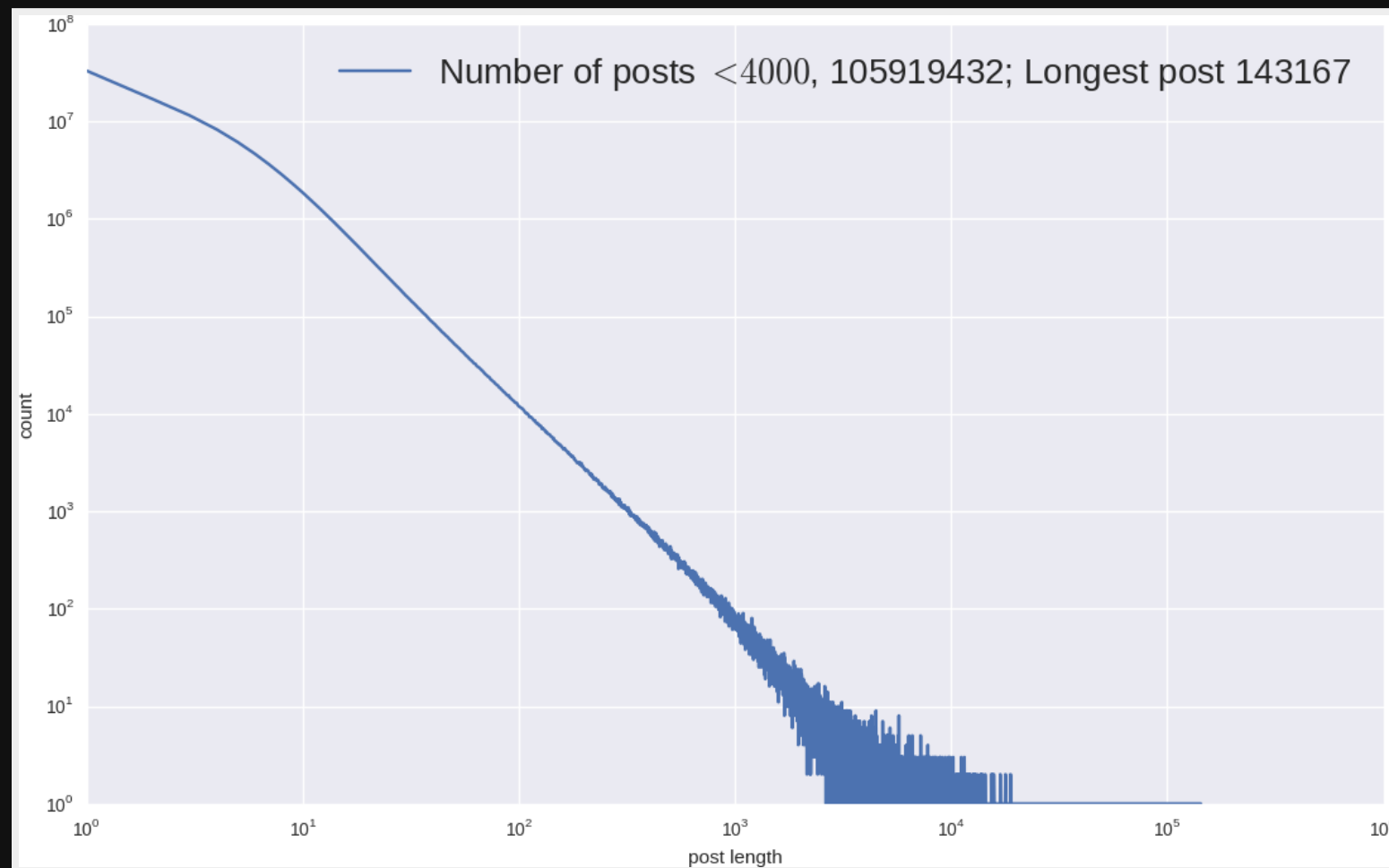
how cool is this!?

Dataset

Recently, u/stuck_in_the_matrix downloaded _every comment_ from Reddit.
It took 9 months, is 100 GB compressed, and is about 1 TB uncompressed raw json.

105,925,637 submissions (posts)
971,555,203 comments
189,283 invocations of Godwin's law
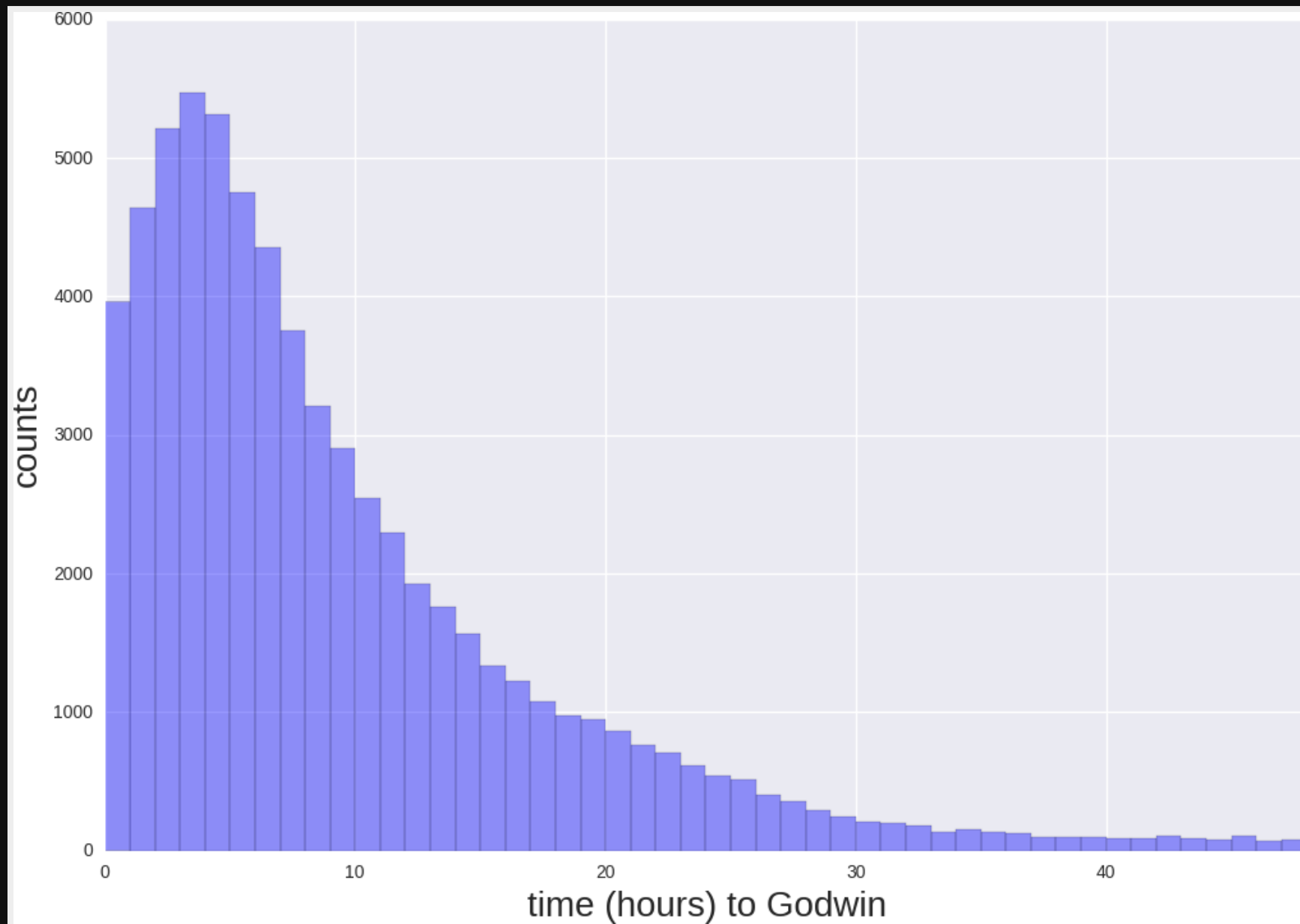69,912 when considering conversations of length > 50

Methodology

A Nazi by any other name...

3	1	hitler	705114
4	1	nazi	569558
5	1	nazis	326295
6	1	nazism	31024
7	1	auschwitz	28727
8	1	hitlers	17944
9	1	kampf	16974
10	1	feminazi	15427
11	0	ashkenazi	10324
12	1	feminazis	9907
13	1	neonazi	3449
14	1	neonazis	2992
15	0	internazionale	2739
16	0	nazir	2681
17	0	nazionale	2565
18	1	naziism	2242
19	1	hitlerum	1986
20	1	grammarnazi	1983
21	0	ashkenazim	1822
22	1	hitlerally	1414
23	0	benazir	1393
24	1	grammernazi	1390

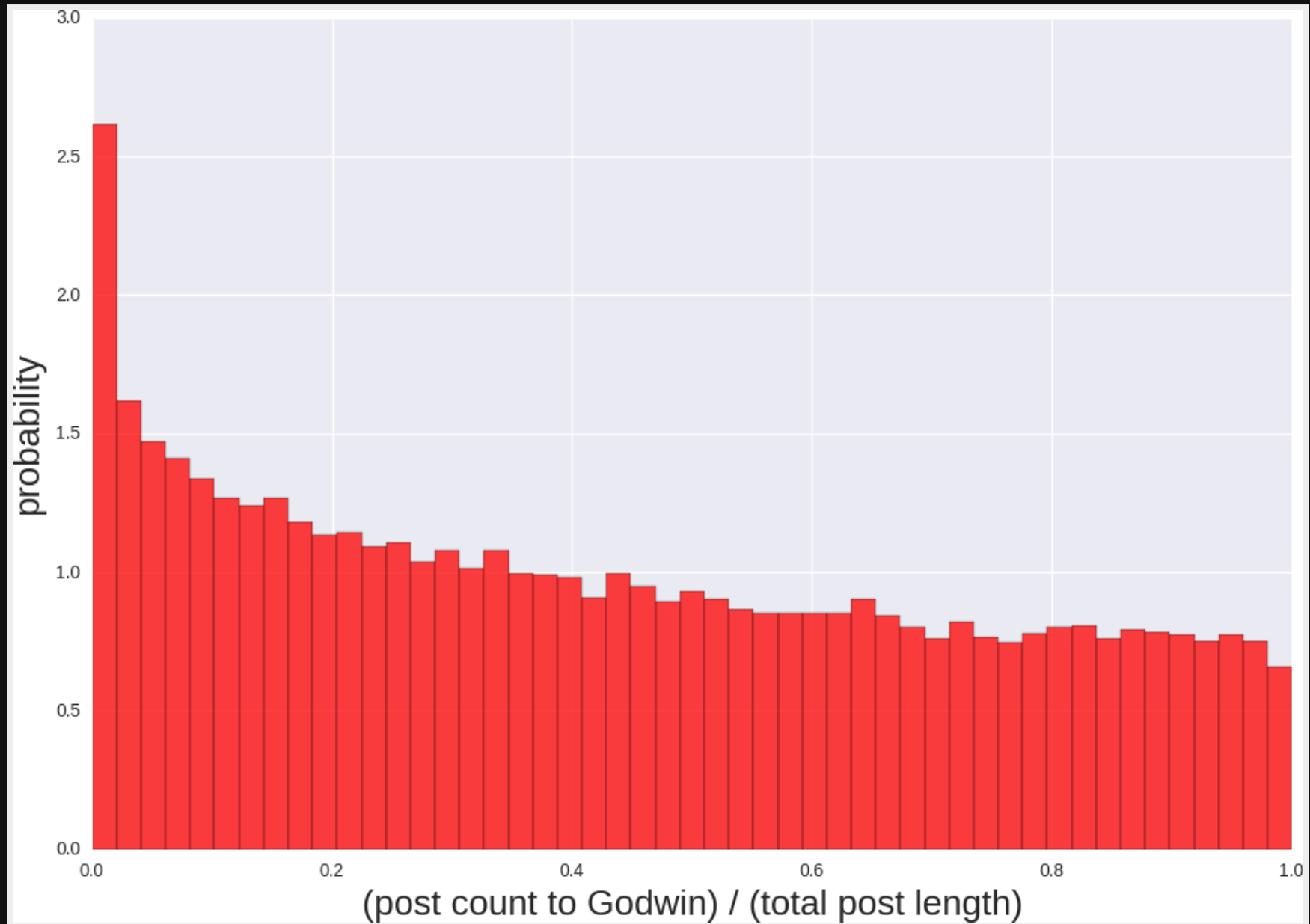A Google Doc of pure evil

TTG (time-to-Godwin)

happens in the first few hours...

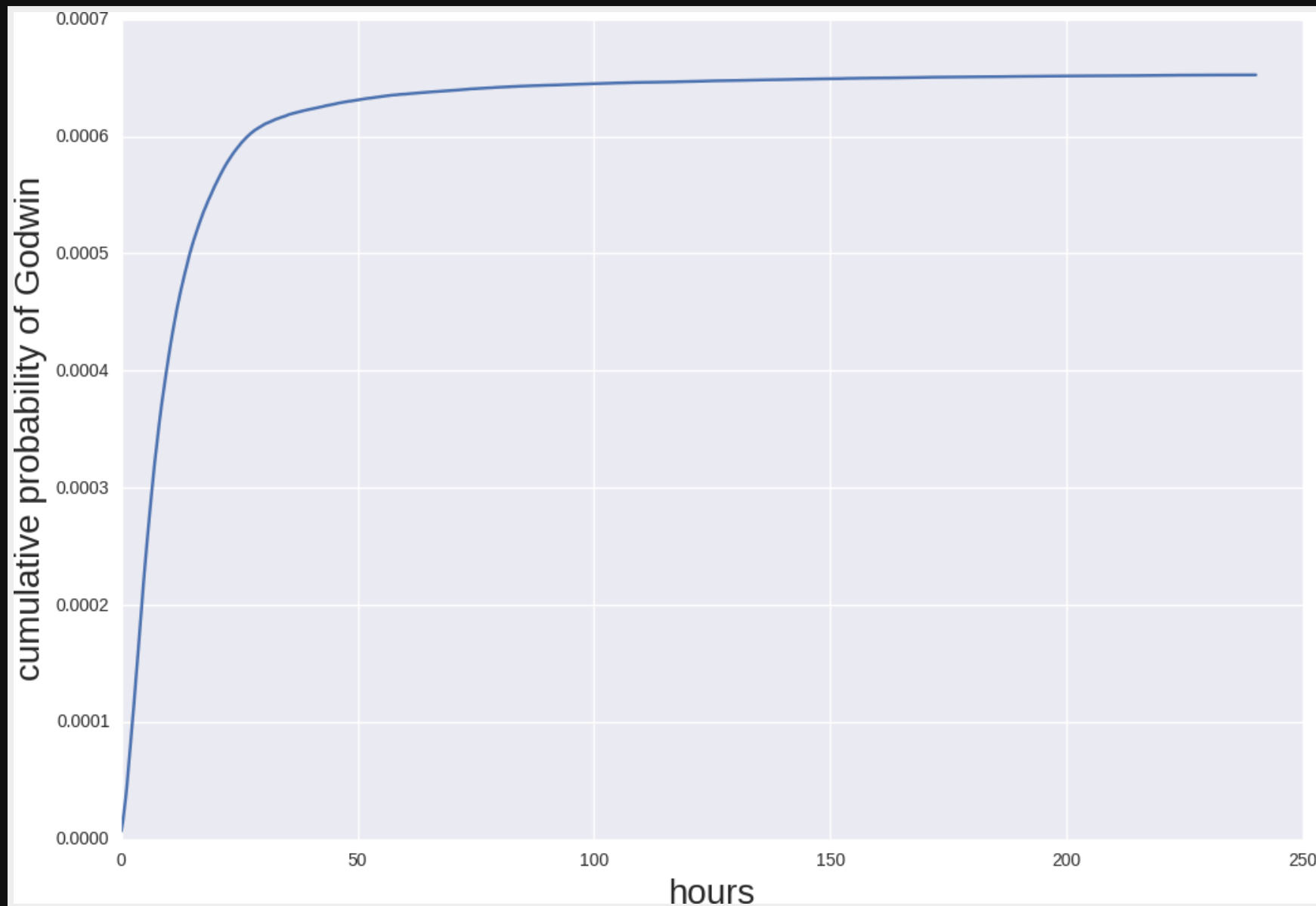all Godwin posts with >50 comments

PTG (posts-to-Godwin)

happens early comment order ... but comments continue!

all Godwin posts with >50 comments

Godwin invalidated...?

Limiting probability of Godwin is about 0.00065, or 1 out of every 1500 posts.

all posts (Godwin/Non Godwin) with >50 comments

Ongoing research!

What does the null look like? e.g. The Hitler vs puppies?

Does a conversation stop post-Godwin?

What is the *quality* of conversation post-Godwin?

Can we try to prevent it? Should we?

Is Reddit pathological or representative?

Thanks you!