

EUROPEAN POLICYBRIEF



MAPPING THE POPULATION, CAREERS, MOBILITIES AND IMPACTS OF ADVANCED DEGREE GRADUATES IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES (POCARIM)

6. THE IMPACT OF PARTNERING, PARENTING AND OTHER CARING RESPONSIBILITIES ON SSH WORK AND CAREERS

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INTRODUCTION

Partnering, parenting and other caring responsibilities constitute a serious challenge to the careers, mobilities and impacts of PhD holders involved in scientific research in the Social Sciences and Humanities (SSH).

The thorough review of existing research at national, European and international level that took place as part of the POCARIM project identified as an issue the extent to which women (and other groups to a lesser degree) were disadvantaged in research careers in a number of ways. In terms of who drops out from scientific careers, it was pointed out that some authors specifically highlight that gender shapes success in academic labour markets, women tending more than male researchers to drop out both after completing PhDs and in the post-doctoral phase (Velichová, 2003; BMBF, 2008; Chlosta, Pull et al. 2010). This is due to key decisions related to the establishment of a family, as well as job insecurity and unclear prospects (BMBF, 2008).

Female as well as older academics, without academic family backgrounds, living in partnerships, in dual-career constellations and with children, are less frequently supported by mentors, have low funding support and are disadvantaged in the labour market in terms of recognition and academic promotion (Leemann, 2010).

Furthermore, women show a slower progression in their academic careers and lower job satisfaction compared with men (Casaca and Lopes, 2008; Perista, 2013).

A further important dimension of career progression requirements in scientific work relates to the expectation of mobility and the ability to travel frequently. Previous research (e.g. Ackers, 2005; Ackers and Gill, 2008) has stressed that career progression in scientific research demands a very high level of mobility in order to achieve the level of international experience necessary for progression. This high 'expectation of mobility' associated with science careers is discussed in the literature mainly in terms of its interplay with

family status and parenting in particular (e.g. Perista, 2013). According to Ackers (2010), the growing pressure on researchers to be mobile as a necessary step toward internationalisation and excellence in research is likely to produce discriminatory outcomes for women, given their disproportionate caring responsibilities. Temporary and short-term stays can diminish women's personal risks by making careers international without forcing relocation and significant disruptions to family lives (Ackers, 2008).

Research has thus shown (e.g. Ackers, 2004, 2005, 2008, 2010; Ackers and Gill, 2008; Perista, 2013) the relevance of placing emphasis on the importance of gender and life-course, partnering and parenting in particular, in the migration decision-making processes of male and female scientists.

Evidence from the POCARIM survey and qualitative interviews contributes to further explore how these family-driven gendered dimensions, parenting in particular, actually impact differently on men's and women's migration decision-making processes, and how this gendered differential ability to respond to the 'expectation of mobility' represents a key factor in understanding the progression and impacts of women and men in science careers in the SSH.

EVIDENCE AND ANALYSIS

Partnering, Parenting and other Caring Responsibilities

Partnering, marriage and parenting have strong impacts in the lives of women and men in science careers in the SSH. It is almost as if having an 'abnormal' life, i.e. being single and childless and having no personal life, was a pre-condition to be able to fully commit to scientific work. One key implication of partnering was that it shaped the location and mobility decisions of the respondents. This became more prominent with the birth of children. In particular, the freedom to undertake work-related mobility was curtailed. At the age when it is common to start a family, women scientists have to decide whether to postpone the beginning of their career path until after raising children, or to try to combine the two. Only a few of the respondents decided to postpone starting their family because of work. Even when the children have grown, other family-related responsibilities, domestic work and household tasks in particular, traditionally imposing on women, still have an impact. For men, instead, family acts as a supportive structure rather than an inhibiting one. In order to manage the necessity of mobility in their professional lives, some respondents reported spending extended or frequent periods away from their partners or families, that is, 'living apart together'.

As well as parenting and partnering, other caring responsibilities also had an impact on the work and career of some respondents. As respondents reported, elderly parents or a serious health problem in the close family may constitute a difficult challenge.

The Work/Family Articulation

At certain times along the life course, the family influences the flow of work of everyone. At these times people change their life priorities, work responsibilities and their career ambitions. Only a few PhD holders in SSH who participated in the research did not intend to have a family in the foreseeable future. This decision was closely linked with career paths and a fear of complications that could occur with childcare.

Time and temporalities emerge in complex and multi-faceted ways in the interviews. Time use and time pressure are often intertwined in the respondents' reports, also among married men with children.

On top of practical problems were perceptions of cultural expectations of mothering which placed the burden of care on women. Some respondents who are mothers talk about the difficulty of finding the balance between family and professional life and suggest this is a particular problem for women. These responses echo the sense of guilt and self-penalisation many professional women express in relation to their mothering.

In some countries, such as Slovakia, motherhood and maternity leave were associated with the loss of work and exit from academic careers, due to the fact that contracts were short-term and institutions were not obliged to hold positions open.

Personal Social Networks

Personal social networks may be an important way of securing informal support. The POCARIM respondents mentioned their parents most frequently in cases of helping with children's' upbringing. This

family support is even more crucial for single-parents. Respondents often stayed close to their families and used the possibility of support from parents. Despite the importance attached to personal social networks, and to the role of grandparents/grandmothers in particular, the impacts of the current economic and social crisis in terms of job precariousness and unemployment may lead some PhD holders in the SSH to reconsider their former options and to move where to a job is available.

Family and Mobility

Mobility, and/or immobility, was the most frequent issue when the POCARIM respondents talked about family.

The majority of the POCARIM survey respondents, both male and female, were occasionally in contact with colleagues abroad, followed by a large minority who were in regular contact with colleagues abroad, and also quite a large minority who were never in contact with colleagues abroad. Having a partner and especially having children has some impact on the frequency of international collaboration, which tends to be more occasional or even to never occur (see Policy Brief 5, on internationalisation and international mobility).

The impacts of family on international mobility were also highlighted by most POCARIM interview respondents. Our respondents who were single and had no caring responsibilities at the time of research did not see any obstacles with mobility. In contrast, if our respondents had a family, they had limited options to undertake these work stays. Medium and long-term mobility present specific challenges.

The extent of international mobility is thus shaped by having a spouse/partner and parenting in particular, as well as by gender, as shown by the outcomes of the POCARIM survey. Many of the female respondents to the interviews rejected the alternative of migration abroad because of the need for stability when raising a child. Nevertheless, they did not give up their career plans, rather they just postponed them to a later stage in their life course, a time when their children will be grown up or more self-sufficient.

Respondents who had refrained from travelling due to family reasons are well aware of the negative impact this has on their image as an 'excellent scientist', as well as on their ability to network and publish.

Caring, Gender and Working Conditions

The interplay between family care work and scientific careers shapes working conditions in a number of ways.

At the most immediate level, respondents refer to the tensions during the typical working day. Here we see discussions about long (daily) working schedules and overtime or anti-social working hours, especially at the end of the working day when parents and especially mothers have to collect children from nursery and school.

A common concern was not simply that work may continue into the early evening, but also that the nature of the work commitments at that time of the day may be of particular significance. The practice of calling meetings at the end of the day is frequently referred to.

In addition to the structure of the working day, respondents note pressures across the typical working week. These include an expectation of very long working hours (well in excess of the European Working Time Directive) often involving evening and weekend working, but also serious concerns about the impacts of part-time working. This includes the importance attached to attending conferences either nationally or internationally (business-stay mobility) in performance management systems (for networking and/or dissemination).

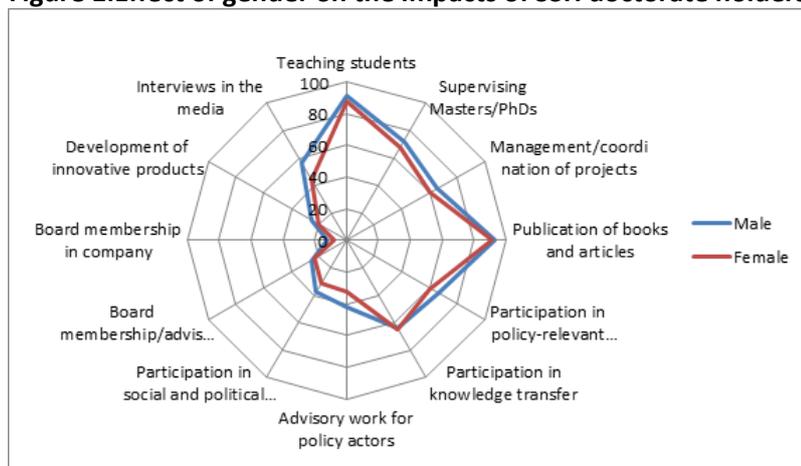
A number of obstacles to network formation and development were reported by the interviewees. Inhibiting factors included family and time. The combination of academic workloads and family obligations, for example, left little time for travel or other non-essential activities.

Moreover, the effects can be cumulative and become part of a circular process, with limited access to networks and opportunities resulting in lower profiles, further exclusion and limited impacts.

One of the aims of the POCARIM study was to identify the impacts SSH PhD graduates had through their work. The gendered nature of the impacts is clearly evidenced by the POCARIM findings: men report greater impacts than women in all the types of impact considered, except for participation in knowledge

transfer (figure 1). The gender gap is particularly significant regarding supervision of Masters/PhDs; management /coordination of projects; participation in policy-relevant events; advisory work for policy actors on the local, regional, national or international level; participation in social and political committees; and interviews in the media (radio, TV or newspapers).

Figure 1. Effect of gender on the impacts of SSH doctorate holders



Source: POCARIM

Surprisingly, according to the responses to this quantitative survey, parenting and partnering do not seem to have a negative influence on the impacts of SSH PhD holders, in fact they have the opposite effect, i.e., respondents with a partner and/or children tend to report greater impacts. However, due consideration should again be given to age as a key factor, because the likelihood of having positive impacts, regardless of the type of impact, tends to increase over the life course.

Differences in terms of working conditions between academia and private sector organisations were reported in the POCARIM interviews. For several respondents, differences between universities and the private sector reflected favourably on academia. They reported having more freedom to pursue their interests, less pressure and more flexibility.

On the other hand, the PhD researchers who stayed in academia often emphasised the fact that excessive workloads have an impact on the quality of their work and of stays abroad without adequate financial reward. The nature of their responsibilities is often not delimited by their workplace: it is common for them to take their work home, and their personal and professional lives merge into each other.

Respondents also indicated the importance of stable work and job security. Securing stable and long-term work was an ambition for many, and was particularly important for women. In addition, whilst travel and other experiences may be desirable (or even a professional necessity), the priority once children are born becomes stability of income and location. It was common for various kinds of arrangement, such as part-time work, to be in a place which allowed women to combine careers and caring. Broader issues of welfare and social benefits were also noted, for example those associated with children, disability or age.

Another requirement for academic career progression is publication. Again here more female respondents acknowledged the difficulties in combining publication with caring responsibilities.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) Contractual insecurity (and unemployment) remains a major concern for researchers. Employers and funders of researchers should ensure that fixed-term status does not comprise entitlement to forms of leave (for reasons of maternity, parenthood and sickness).
- (2) Institutional leaders, as well as national and European policymakers should take steps to ensure that the professional evaluations/assessments which influence career progression take career breaks into consideration so that those using parental/care leave, and/or those with special caring responsibilities, e.g. for a child with a disability, are not penalised.

- (3) Institutional leaders, as well as national and European policymakers should value multi-tasking and organisational skills related to the articulation of scientific work and family life alongside other traditional indicators for performance metrics, such as publications.
- (4) Institutional leaders, as well as national and European policymakers need to acknowledge that the cultures of 'presenteeism' in academic workplaces, long working hours and frequent and/or long-term mobility may constitute a form of indirect gender discrimination. These practices, based on the assumption that 100% availability is a pre-requisite for career progression, do not affect women exclusively or by design, but contexts of family life, gendered roles and cultural expectations mean they are felt far less frequently and/or to a lesser degree by men.
- (5) Institutional leaders, as well as national and European policymakers should acknowledge that in a context of 'expectation of mobility', the consequences of immobility are in many cases to inhibit or bring to an end an academic career. International mobility practices and opportunities should be placed in context, taking into account that personal dispositions might inhibit or motivate mobility, as might family situations (children, elderly parents) at different times. These factors and others, with particular gender dimensions, can have a significant impact on mobility practices.
- (6) Opportunities to attract researchers from other countries and sectors into research institutions may be of particular value to those researchers who are unable to exercise mobility themselves. Institutional leaders, as well as national and European policymakers should encourage institutions to host researchers from other countries and sectors, and therefore provide opportunities for less mobile local researchers to build networks and collaborations.

RESEARCH PARAMETERS

The findings contained in this brief are based on original work carried out in each of the POCARIM countries¹ and which includes: a review of the literature, policy and existing data, as well as original empirical survey and interview research. We draw out the implications of our findings for policymakers. The project consisted of two core phases. Each phase was coordinated by a key partner and carried out across the 13 countries by all partners.

Phase one of the research consisted of:

- A review of over 350 studies on the themes of: employment trends, career paths and graduate destinations; and impact, engagement and the contribution of SSH research (Gustafsson and Hansen, 2013).
- A review of policy approaches to interdisciplinarity, doctoral education as the first phase of an academic career, and responses to the economic crisis in terms of funding of doctoral education (Bitusikova, 2013).
- A review of existing statistical data sources on the population of social science and humanities researchers in the POCARIM countries and beyond (Canibano *et al.*, 2013).

Phase two consisted of:

- An online survey of 2,723 SSH doctoral graduates which asked a number of questions on the key themes of the project. These included the perceived impacts of respondents' work, and their international, intersectoral and interdisciplinary mobilities. Survey data was cleaned and analysed in SPSS and EXCEL (Kupiszewska *et al.*, 2013).
- In-depth, qualitative interviews with 25 respondents in each of the thirteen POCARIM countries. Each interview was transcribed, translated into English if necessary, and entered into a single NVIVO project file for analysis (Ackers *et al.*, 2013).

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¹ The countries in which the study was carried out were: France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain, Switzerland, Turkey and the UK.

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PROJECT IDENTITY

PROJECT NAME	(290770) Mapping the Population Careers, Mobilities and Impacts of Advanced Research Degree Graduates in Social Sciences and Humanities (POCARIM)
COORDINATOR	Professor Louise Ackers, University of Salford (H.L.Ackers@salford.ac.uk)
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FUNDING SCHEME	FP7 Framework Programme for Research of the European Union – Coordination and Support Actions – Career Paths and Patterns of SSH Graduates
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BUDGET	EU contribution: €996,847.00.
WEBSITE	http://www.salford.ac.uk/nmsw/research/research-projects/pocarim-home
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