CHAPTER 1

# Gender-Equal Imbalance?

*Lotta Snickare*
University of Oslo

*Øystein Gullvåg Holter*
University of Oslo

**Abstract**
Most staff and students at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences at Oslo University want gender equality, both in the workplace and in their private lives. Yet, since they also assume that academia is a meritocracy, the faculty's gender imbalance is seen as a result of women and men making different choices. Above all, the vertical gender balance, with more men at the top and in leadership positions, is explained by the fact that women prioritize children and family over an academic career. Our quantitative and qualitative data, however, refute the explanation that women deliberately opt out of an academic career in favour of active parenting. Instead, we show that more women than men have failed to fulfil their own career ambitions. On the other hand, we also note that the potential to combine work and family are different for women and men.

**Keywords:** equality, gender, gender imbalance, career, academia

## Introduction

The Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences in the University of Oslo has approximately 1200 academic employees: 400 women and 800 men. Although the faculty has almost achieved gender balance among its bachelor and master students, the middle and higher positions,

Citation: Snickare, L. & Holter, Ø. G. (2022). Gender-equal imbalance? In Ø. G. Holter & L. Snickare (Eds.), *Gender equality in academia – from knowledge to change* (Ch. 1, pp. 21–52). Cappelen Damm Akademisk. https://doi.org/10.23865/noasp.179.ch1
Licence: CC BY-NC-ND 4.0

especially top research leader positions, are numerically dominated by men. There is an increasing gender skewness from the student level, having at least 40 per cent women, to the professor level, having 22 per cent. This gender imbalance is visible in two ways: *vertically*, between different positions; and *horizontally*, between different disciplines and research groups. There are more women on the lower levels and administrative functions, and more men on the higher levels and leadership positions.

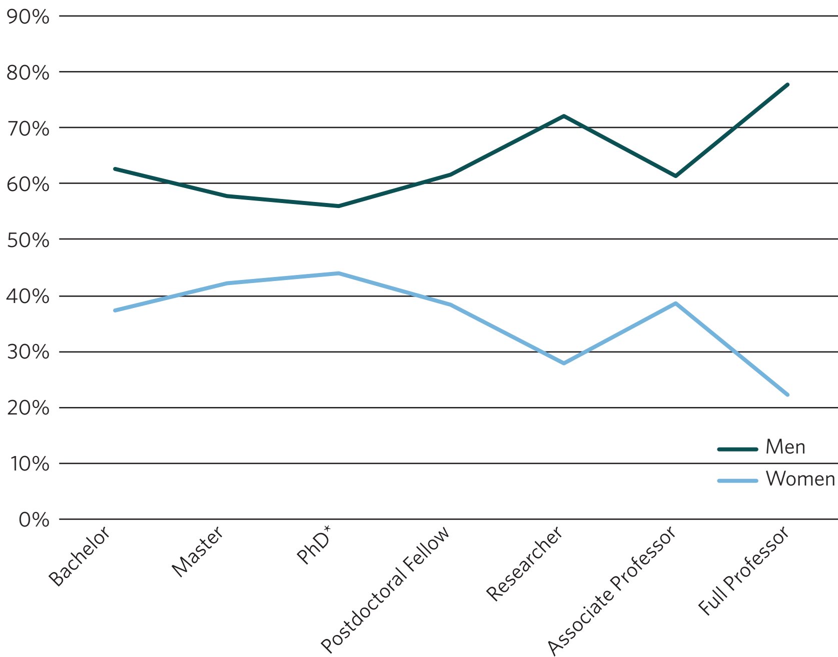


**Figure 1.1.** Gender Distribution at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences in the University of Oslo 2020, according to position level. Source: Database for statistikk om høyere utdanning (DBH).

*work year, not number of PhD contracts

Although the faculty has a total of approximately 40 per cent female students, the proportion of women varies greatly between departments and degree programmes. While programmes within the biosciences and pharmacy have more than 70 per cent women, there are programmes within physics, mathematics and informatics with approximately 20 per cent women and 80 percent men (DBH, 2020). On the other hand,

the proportion of female professors is more or less the same throughout the faculty, at barely 20 per cent.

There are also major differences within one and the same department. When the FRONT project began, there were twelve research groups in the Department of Informatics (IFI): one numerically female-dominated, one with an even gender distribution, and ten male-dominated.[1]

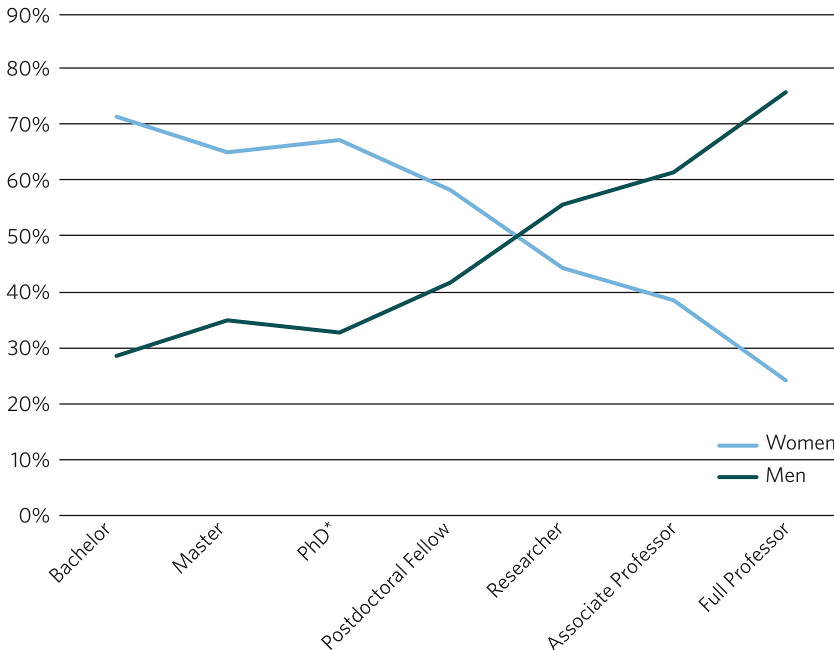


**Figure 1.2.** Gender Distribution at the Department of Biosciences 2020, according to position level. Source: Database for statistikk om høyere utdanning (DBH).

*work year, not number of PhD contracts

Gender balance and gender equality are often referred to as if they were the same thing, or two sides of the same issue. We consider the degree of gender balance as a measuring stick for gender equality in an organization. But gender balance and gender equality are not identical. Gender balance is first and foremost about representation, meaning there is an equal proportion of women and men within an educational programme, a field of research, or a position category. Gender equality, on the other

hand, refers to whether men and women have the same opportunities, rights and duties in all areas of life. It means, for instance, that they have the same opportunity to get an education and find work in any field of research or in any position category (NOU 2012: 15).

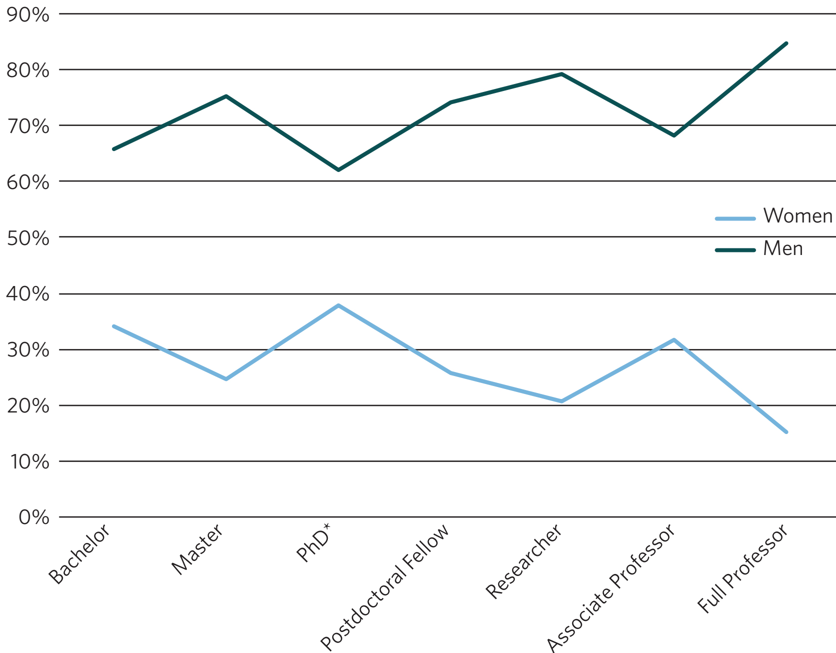


**Figure 1.3.** Gender Distribution at the Department of Informatics 2020, according to position level. Source: Database for statistikk om høyere utdanning (DBH).

*work year, not number of PhD contracts

In Norway and other Nordic countries, gender equality work in academia has been developing since the 1980s, often with gender balance as a primary goal.[2] (Bergman, 2013; Husu, 2015; Thun, 2019). Despite the Norwegian gender equality work, Norway is not very different from the EU average in gender balance. Both within the EU and in Norway, a slight majority of women study and graduate from universities and university colleges.[3] Norway is slightly better than the EU average in regard to the proportion of female professors. Within the EU, the proportion of female professors is 24 per cent, and in Norway it is 28 per cent (European Commission, 2020). There are major differences between disciplines, however. Both

within the EU and in Norway, the proportion of female students and researchers is considerably higher within medicine/health sciences, the humanities, and social sciences than within mathematics, the natural sciences and technology.[4]

In this chapter, we describe how students and employees at the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Sciences (MN faculty) in the University of Oslo relate to gender equality and gender balance. We begin by describing attitudes, that is, whether or not gender equality and gender balance are desirable. We then go on to describe different explanatory models for a gender imbalance that is obvious to all. Do students and employees consider gender imbalance an effect of a gender-unequal faculty or is it rooted in something else?

We also explore how the proposed explanations correspond to research on academia from a gender perspective – both in our own study of the MN faculty and other national and international research. Our own material is both qualitative and quantitative, meaning that we have worked with two questionnaire surveys, one for students and one for employees, and conducted interviews with women and men in various roles at the faculty. The material and how we collected it are described in more detail in the book's appendix "Method".

## Attitudes to Gender Equality

Many students and employees at the faculty express an explicit desire for gender equality. They want both to work in a gender-equal workplace and have a gender-equal private life. The survey of master students indicates that nearly 80 per cent, slightly more women than men, want an equal distribution of care responsibility, housework, and paid work within the family. Among the master students, only 10 per cent of the women and 15 per cent of the men completely agree that "gender equality has come far enough". Instead, many wish that gender equality was given more attention.

The interviews with employees indicate a similar pattern. "In my opinion, completely honest, gender equality is crucial to us," says Aksel,[5] a male leader at the faculty. Wenche, a female leader, is even more explicit,

saying, "We may have to make some decisions on account of something else. But you then have to weigh them against each other, and the gender equality aspect cannot always yield, because if it does we will never move on. Sometimes it is, in fact, exactly what we need to strengthen, I think." Gender equality is not something we can work for only when it suits us, according to Wenche. Sometimes, gender equality will compete with other vital issues, and then it is crucial that gender equality is not always deprioritized.

> There is gender equality, but unfortunately not gender balance. The men stay and have careers, whereas the women choose to quit.
>
> (From an interview with Tobias, a male professor)

We have heard versions of the above quote many times during the project's interviews and seminars. Despite the importance of gender equality and the fact that it is something many people want, there is a common perception that gender imbalance within the faculty is independent of gender inequality, and it rather has to do with women and men making different choices. That the faculty is not gender-balanced is visible in meeting rooms, laboratories and lecture theatres. Gender equality, or the lack thereof, is more difficult to observe with the naked eye. Since everyone knows that the natural sciences attract more men than women, gender inequality becomes unnecessary as an explanation for the gender imbalance.

Another thing that may support the perception that gender inequality is not the reason behind gender imbalance is Norway's position as one of the world's most gender-equal countries (see also World Economic Forum, 2020). That Norway is best in gender equality can be easily misunderstood to mean that Norway *is* gender-equal. "Gender equality is part of Norway's identity. Norwegian society is built on equality between women and men," according to the first page of the government's white paper on gender equality "Likestilling i praksis – Like muligheter for kvinner og menn" ("Gender Equality in Practice: Equal Opportunities for Women and Men", Meld. St. 7 (2015–2016)). A university in a society built on gender equality, where gender equality is part of its identity, *must* be gender-equal.

Among participants in one of the project's long-term initiatives,[6] the image of academia changed during the initiative. In the interviews conducted prior to the initiative's start, a picture of academia as a strong meritocracy emerges. In later discussions, in the concluding phase of the initiative, the view of academia as a meritocracy had changed. What was first interpreted as exceptions, individual occurrences or individual challenges, were now considered expressions of gender-unequal structures. Hege, for instance, a female associate professor, says the following in the last interview: "It is easy to think that I am the only one dealing with this, but then I hear that everyone else deals with the same issues."

She also describes how her altered view of the organization affects her behaviour: "I look for things that are problematic for women. I am more attentive to how women are treated and whether women are contacted in connection to appointment processes etc." Tirild, also a female associate professor, reflects upon how she, in the same way as the rest of the group of participants, was initially negative to the FRONT project being based on gender research, but that she subsequently changed her opinion. "Gender theory and gender research were not things that could help me in my situation there and then. The theory is interesting at a later stage … I noticed that my boss agreed with me when we spoke before the meeting, but not when we were in the meeting with the others – then he agreed with the men. He criticized me in front of the others who were there. Gender theory became an eye-opener for this."

The survey among employees at the faculty shows that female employees in particular perceive the faculty as gender unequal. Women's and men's experiences with culture and academic community differ in a number of areas. One example is the question of whether the faculty is sexist or not. Of the men 47 per cent, but only 28 per cent of the women, completely agreed that the culture in their workplace is non-sexist. The survey reveals that the image of the faculty as a meritocracy from the interviews is highly abstract and a matter of principle. The more we ask about practical experiences, the more we see other realities emerge.[7]

In surveys and interviews, both students and employees express their support for gender equality. The interviews also show that the

interviewees – both women and men – often consider academia to be gender-equal. The survey among employees provides a different picture, however. As mentioned, only around half of the men and around one-fourth of the women completely agreed that the culture in their workplace was non-sexist. It is also interesting to see that the view of academia and the faculty as meritocratic and gender-equal changed among the interviewees who participated in some of the project's long-term initiatives. Rather than interpreting incidents as individual ups and downs, they were considered expressions of the faculty not being gender-equal.

## Attitudes to Gender Balance and Explanations for Gender Imbalance

> Because I think research also needs women, just to see things in a slightly different way. So I think women in research are important.
>
> (From an interview with Heidi, a female postdoctoral fellow)

Although students and employees agree that they want gender equality, there is less agreement regarding the importance of gender balance. Many would like a workplace or degree programme with an approximately equal proportion of women and men. But since they consider academia a gender-equal meritocracy, their explanation for the imbalance is not gender discrimination but rather individual choices, something that neither can nor should be controlled. Instead, some think the work for increased gender balance can have undesirable effects. Kari, a female postdoctoral fellow, says, for instance, "I think it is better if we get more women, but we should also ensure that we don't recruit people just because they have a specific gender."

Those arguing for gender balance often emphasize that women can bring out something new and different in the traditional "male disciplines". According to them, women and men are different, or they have different experiences, and can therefore contribute different perspectives in the workplace and in research. Some also emphasize representation and democracy, but academic quality is the main issue. In the introductory quote to this section, the female postdoctoral fellow says

that more gender balance leads to better research. Similarly, a male professor and leader at the faculty asserts that "better balance provides a better work environment, and we have to deliver to society – therefore, there should be more women involved in shaping the discipline." Both of them are positive to more women within the MN faculty's male-dominated disciplines. But the purpose of the balance is not primarily for the individual or organization. It is rather for an overarching and relatively abstract societal level. It can be difficult to feel personal involvement in this issue, and also see how initiatives on the organizational or individual level can result in this type of structural change. This feeling can be strengthened if one believes that the problems are caused primarily by "other" structures or social conditions than the university itself, such as family and socialization, and perhaps also biological gender differences.

Several interviewees attempt to explain how such a gender-equal country as Norway still has a gender-imbalanced labour market. For instance, a male professor, Petter, says, "Norway, in which the opportunities are in principle equal, has kept a gender-segregated labour market, indicating that we have personal gender preferences, rather than systematic obstacles preventing people from thriving."

Because Norway is one of the most gender-equal countries in the world, Petter is of the opinion that it is entirely gender-equal, at least "in principle". Therefore, the existing gender imbalance is not likely to result from gender discrimination, but rather from women and men making different choices. According to Petter, this is dependent on "gender-driven motivations." Several of the interviewees express similar ideas. As an explanation for why so few women study and work in informatics, Leif, a male professor, says, "I think there is this boys' club, where they […] keep at it like they always have." Ingrid, a female postdoctoral fellow, agrees. She says, "I don't think women are as interested in hard sciences, like programming and such."

However, most interviewees think the most common reason for the gender imbalance is different requirements for women and men – and also that women and men make different choices – when it comes to starting a family. Hedda, a female associate professor, responds to the

question of why there are fewer women in higher positions in her department by describing how one of her female PhD students, with "excellent publications", chose to stay in Oslo, despite her advice to apply for a mobility grant, because she had a boyfriend and a new apartment there. Such a choice means that an academic career becomes much more "difficult". According to Ingvild, a female professor, most women leaving academia do so between the first and the second postdoctoral period. They are then at an age when they wish to start a family, and are therefore more in need of a permanent position. They need to know that the chances are good that they will be able to stay within academia, in order to choose such an uncertain future. "They need a different type of feedback in order to apply a second time," she says. They need to hear, "You're good, we'll make it work, I will help you."

Interviews with leaders at the faculty conducted early in the project period, and before the initiatives were implemented, show a view of the academic career path that is largely meritocratic (cf. Thun, 2019). That an organizational culture with long work days and temporary positions have somewhat different effects on women and men is considered undesirable but unavoidable. Research leaders describe the ideal career path as one or two postdoc periods, at least one at a foreign university, followed by a temporary research position financed by their own project funds. Only after ten years of temporary positions and working abroad should one apply for a position as associate professor.

> I think if everyone thinks they're going in this direction, we will have a major challenge. We are different by nature, and I suppose I have always been worried that we push too many in this direction.
>
> (From an interview with Leif, a male professor and leader)

The fact that these trial periods, including the need for mobility and the long period of temporary work, cause many to choose to leave academia is not a problem, according to Leif. On the contrary, in the above quote he says it would be a "major challenge" if all PhD students and postdoctoral fellows wanted an academic career. Most of them have to leave academia, he maintains.

The image of the academic career's different stages is established within the organization:

> It is almost like career guidance, what is it that you need, I had precisely that conversation yesterday with one of our best PhD students. And then I have to ask him directly, "Would you like to do a postdoc?". Yes, he would. "Would you like to do a postdoc and then quit, or would you like to do a postdoc and then perhaps see where it ends?" Yes, it was the latter. But then you have to go out, you have to travel abroad [...] you have to go away and publish something without me.
>
> (From an interview with Sigrid, a female associate professor)

When the female associate professor advises her PhD student on how to pursue an academic career, she carefully emphasizes that he must apply for a postdoctoral fellowship abroad, and prove his independence as a researcher by publishing articles with other researchers than herself. Anne, a female postdoctoral fellow, expresses the same idea. "I know that I must have a period abroad, but after that, I might perhaps come back to Oslo and apply for my own project."

Both leaders and young researchers agree that the type of career described above is difficult to accomplish in combination with starting a family. Stein, a male professor and leader, describes how he experienced early in his career that all the younger female researchers and some of the men in his group "got a family life" and were forced to divide their time between research and family. He continues, "And then there were these guys, like loners, right – yes, nice people – who remained for a period. [...] Yes, the men who settled down, and the women, were lagging behind the "loner group" consisting of only guys since they didn't do anything else anyway. And they published more often and more [papers], and their careers accelerated." Stein describes it as equally difficult for women and men to combine work as a researcher with family life. The gender difference is that all the women in his group, but only "some of the men", chose to start a family. The men who did not start a family instead concentrated entirely on research, and got a headstart in their career before they would start a family at a later stage.

There is also a widespread image within the organization that many working hours and one-sided concentration on work is good for an academic career. An academic career makes other demands than a normal working life. "It is impossible to write a good PhD dissertation and work 40 hours a week. You have to work more. Sometimes you don't need to work much more than that, but in certain periods you have to work almost 24 hours a day," says Jon, a male professor. Marthe, a female associate professor, similarly describes how a postdoctoral fellow, who does not want to take night shifts at the lab, is not suited for a researcher career. "I had a postdoctoral fellow who did not want to take night shifts at the lab. She said it made her too exhausted. That she needed to sleep. That is not possible. Everyone must help out. Sometimes you have to work 24 hours. You can't say no to that."

A female postdoctoral fellow, Kari, describes how a career path in academia, with a long period of temporary positions, affects women and men differently. "I believe we women have a bit, are slightly more worried about temporary positions since, having passed 30 and starting a family while having a temporary position is a little […] I think perhaps it is a little more difficult for girls." According to Kari, women do not have the same opportunity as men to postpone starting a family. It has to happen during the same period in your career that you qualify for a permanent position.

Despite the fact that both leaders and researchers agree that it is difficult to have a career in academia in combination with starting a family, none of the interviewees suggest that career conditions should change. The faculty considers itself part of an international community in which it is not possible for an individual organization to alter anything as fundamental as qualification requirements. The researchers educated in the faculty must be able to compete with international researchers. One of the leaders explains, "If we are to succeed as a university, these people also have to be attractive elsewhere."

In the interviews with female associate professors and full professors, that is those who have made a career, family and children are also mentioned often, but now as something they will not allow to be a hindrance to their careers. Two associate professors, Sigrid and Agnes, say:

> I have the ability to work quite a lot, so I can sit […] so all these huge applications, I sat for like … or I was awake for perhaps … these 36-hour sessions. And then there were some days where I would sit here during the day, and then go home, the children, "Duh duh duh," put them to bed and then back here and then, "Thrrr." Then I was here during the night, then came home to make [breakfast and lunch packs], and sent them off.
>
> (Sigrid, female associate professor)

> And then I'll sit down and work again when my son has gone to bed. […] And I had a … yes, I worked most of Easter, I worked most of the Christmas holiday, I … yes, I worked most of these red-letter days, right […] I did not get full work days then, since kindergarten was closed, but I would sit and work while he had his nap during the day and after … before he got up and after he had gone to bed and so on.
>
> (Agnes, female associate professor)

Another strategy is to prioritize an academic career and not have children. Kathrine, also a female associate professor, says, "I still don't have children. It hasn't been my priority – because – yes, I only wanted to become a good researcher."

Students and employees, women and men – they all see gender imbalance in the faculty. But at the same time, most of them presume that academia is a functioning meritocracy, and that the imbalance results from men and women making different choices. The interviewees agree that family and children are an obstacle when building an academic career, and gender imbalance is most often considered an effect of women choosing to be more active as parents than men. With such a perspective, the responsibility for gender imbalance is placed mainly outside academia, and consequently, the motivation for changing the system within academia is limited.

## Can Gender Imbalance Be Due to Women and Men Having Different Ambitions?

Is it the case that women and men at the faculty choose differently? Might gender imbalance be explained by what many interviewees think – that

women choose to deprioritize their careers in favour of family? The survey of employees provides a different picture. For instance, when we look at the extent to which women and men feel they have achieved their career ambitions in their current position, 59 per cent of all employees respond that they have fulfilled their ambitions, whereas 41 per cent say they have not. The proportion of negative responses is higher among women (47 per cent) than among men (38 per cent). This tendency pertains to most position levels. In other words, we do not see any signs of a lower ambition level among women, perhaps rather the opposite.[8]

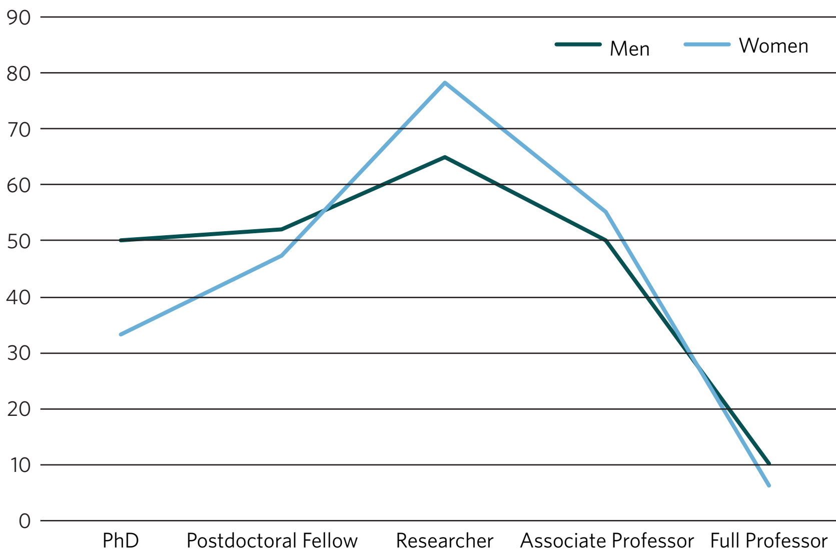


**Figure 1.4.** The Proportion of Employees Not Satisfied With Their Current Position in Relation to Their Ambitions, by Position Level and Gender. The figures are given as percentages. Source: FRONT Employee survey (N = 623 academic employees).

The high level of dissatisfaction at the researcher level is expected, since this is often perceived as a "dead end" (Figure 1.4). However, a notable result is the high level of dissatisfaction at all levels except the highest one, indication a clear ambition to reach higher levels within academia. At the full professor level, the proportion of both men and women who are dissatisfied goes down, which makes sense. The question here is "ambitions fulfilled in relation to the current position level." There is no higher position level to which full professors can advance. If women's ambition levels were lower

than men's, they ought to be more satisfied before the top of the career ladder. And perhaps they ought to be particularly "happy to get into" top positions. However, the results are not consistent with this hypothesis.

We also see some of the same patterns based on age (Figure 1.5). Being a senior seems to work best for men.

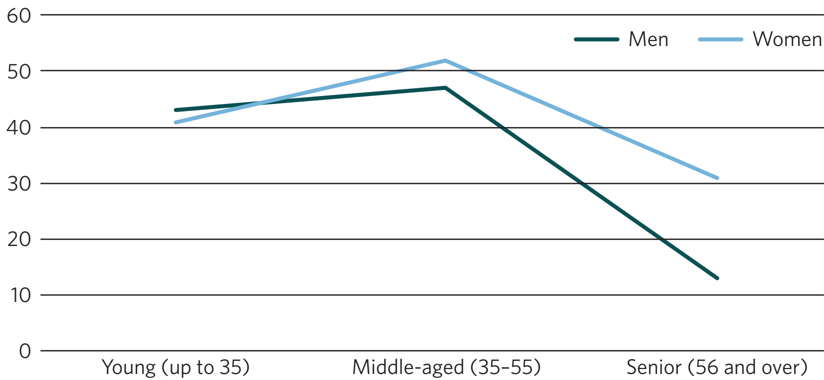


**Figure 1.5.** The Proportion of Employees Not Satisfied with Their Current Position in Relation to Their Ambitions, by Age and Gender. The figures are given as percentages. Source: FRONT Employee survey (N = 409 academic employees).

Women do not have lower ambitions than men. The proportion of those not experiencing that their ambitions are met in their current position is higher among women than men of advanced age, particularly among those in the 56+ age group. Here, a gender gap appears, more fully described in Chapter 5.

The female associate professors' descriptions of how they manage to amass many working hours, despite obligations to children and family, in the previous section show high ambition and motivation. The interviewed associate professors also describe how they work to build their research platforms:

> But I have used so much energy to achieve this. And this is very good for my future, I hope, and I therefore spend a lot of time on it. I spend 60 per cent of my time on strategy, development and ideas.
>
> (Kathrine, female associate professor)

In the above quote, Kathrine says that she spends 60 per cent of her time on strategic work, which she believes is crucial to her career. Nora says

approximately the same. She wishes to be identified with her field of research, not only by other researchers, but also by the media. If there is going to be a conference within her field or someone from the media has a question, she should be the obvious person to turn to. "I have to see if I, perhaps I have to attend more conferences. They mentioned that, yes, it has to be, you have to "be" your subject area in Norway. If the media are talking about it they have to come to you."

The interviews with researchers on lower levels, postdoctoral fellows and temporary research positions, describe a slightly different reality. Marit says she perceives "an expression of goodwill" in the research group where she works, which she interprets as a signal that they want her there also after her postdoctoral fellowship. She continues, "So I thought as a kind of idea for myself that it is OK, I'll do some teaching, it is a way of making myself useful in this group." Marit's story is not about becoming a top researcher, the one person to whom both other researchers and the media turn. It is about having the opportunity to continue as a researcher after the temporary position she has now has ended. With that goal in mind, she takes on various tasks to prove her competence, and how much her research group needs her.

Neither surveys nor interviews show that women and men at the faculty make different choices, where women consciously choose a lower career level in order to have time for children and family. For instance, the survey shows that women are less satisfied with their careers than men are. Many wish they were further up on the career ladder than they are. Analysis of the interview material reveals female researchers with high ambition levels, associate professors planning for a career as top researchers, and postdoctoral fellows interpreting and acting on signals in the organization to be able to continue as researchers.

## Whose Job Comes First?

Even if a woman and a man make the same choices regarding career and family, they nevertheless encounter different challenges. Uneven support at home is part of the picture. The survey of employees indicates that many academic households gave equal priority to partners' careers in

the past year, but we also see signs that the man's career still has higher priority.

Women are married to other academics more often than men are. Among those who had a partner, 40 per cent of the women and 28 per cent of the men reported that their partner was an academic. When we asked about career breaks due to relocation, either in connection with their own job or their partner's, women and men gave slightly different pictures of the situation. Taking a career break in relation to one's partner's job was unusual for both men and women, although the women had a somewhat longer break than the men, on average. The differences were clearer when asked if the partner had taken a career break on account of their job. The men's partners had taken a break of just over four months for the men's jobs, whereas the women's partners had taken a leave of less than two months.

The interview material indicates the same tendency. Male researchers, to a greater extent than female, have a partner who supports their career. Bente, a female associate professor, describes how she cannot get advice on schooling and similar things from her male colleagues before a stay abroad. "When I asked my colleagues how they arranged for their children's schooling when they were on sabbatical, no one knew. It was their wives who took care of all the practicalities in connection to the relocation." Many women, but none of the men, also talk about difficulties getting their partner to accompany them abroad. Maren, a female associate professor, says, "But I do not really envisage a year or six months out, and that has to do with my family situation – that I don't have a very flexible man in that sense." Heidi, a female postdoctoral fellow, describes the same thing. "I applied for postdoctoral positions in France. I wanted to work at a lab there. But now I have a Norwegian partner who doesn't want to live abroad. So now I'm staying here."

When asked about parental leave, 39 per cent of employees said they had taken parental leave during their time as PhD students or later in their career (37 per cent of the men, 42 per cent of the women). The women who had taken leave have, on average, spent 11 months on it, whereas the men spent on average four months. Of the women who had been on leave 30 per cent experienced difficulties when they returned to work, compared

to 5 per cent of the leave-taking men. Those experiencing difficulties mentioned problems combining work and family life, difficulties getting back into the discipline, a lack of things to do at work, and/or a change of tasks, lack of inclusion, and academic devaluation.

Respondents living with a spouse or partner were also asked whether they were equally committed to both careers. An overwhelming majority answered yes to this general question. However, the question was followed by a more precise and practical question concerning which partner's career had actually been prioritized in the past year. As shown in Figure 1.6, 29 per cent of the men and 23 per cent of the women responded that their own careers had first priority. Approximately half of all respondents reported that both partners had roughly the same priority in the past year, whereas 8 per cent of the men and 18 per cent of the women said that their partner's career had priority.

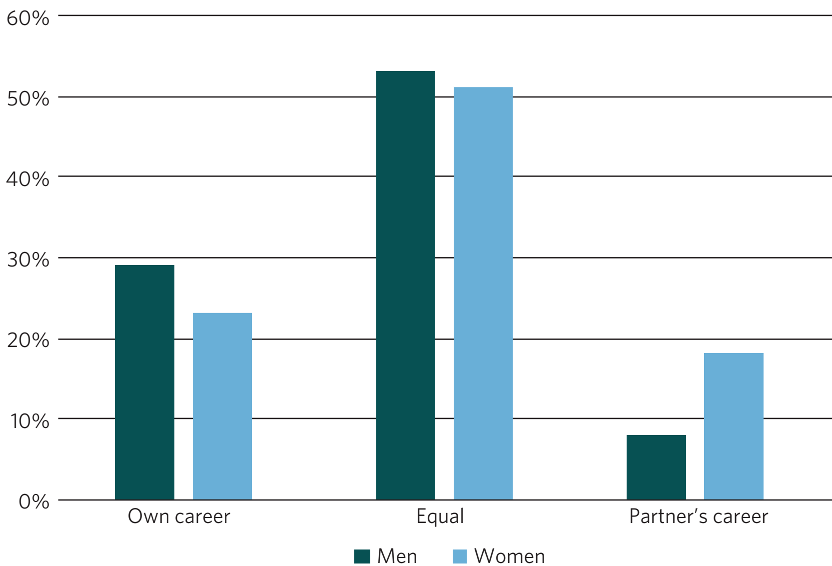


**Figure 1.6.** Which Career Had the Highest Priority in the Household Last Year, by Gender (percentage, married and cohabiting). Source: FRONT Employee survey (N = 609).

Even though both men and women frequently say that their career was prioritized or that the prioritization was equal, there were nevertheless considerably more women whose partner's career was prioritized.

We also see that the proportion who talk about unequal prioritization, that either the man or the woman's career came first, is greatest at the postdoctoral level. This may reflect a particularly challenging phase of career development in which the academic career comes first, no matter whether it is men or women.

## Long Work Days and Priorities in the Household

Based on self-reported figures in the survey, it appears that many employees work long hours.

Among the academic employees, the average work week is 46.5 hours (men 46.8 hours, women 46.1 hours). Administrative employees report that they work an average of 39.8 hours per week. Working hours were considerably longer among professors, with an average of 50 hours, than among the lower academic position levels, with an average of 45–46 hours. However, there are major variations in working hours during different periods. In the interviews, several researchers describe how they work 70 hours or more a week, for example, in periods when they work with grant applications, whereas the working week is more normal in other periods. Geir, a male professor, says, "I sat in my basement for three months and wrote the application. It would never have happened unless my wife supported me. Our children are grown now, which makes it easier." Hedda, a female associate professor, describes almost the same thing. "I wrote the application in a month. But that is not something I would recommend. I worked almost 24 hours a day."

The academic employees spend, on average, 25 per cent of their working hours teaching, 55 per cent on research, and 11 per cent on administration (the rest is other/unanswered). The proportion of research time was highest among the postdoctoral fellows (80 per cent) and employees in the position category of researcher (73 per cent). Among associate professors, the average was down to 30 per cent on research, whereas professors reported that they spent 37 per cent of their time on research, 35 per cent on teaching, 17 per cent on administration, and the rest on other/unanswered.[9] We also see clear gender differences in the amount of time spent on research in the two latter position levels. Whereas male associate

professors spend 35 per cent of their working hours on research, the figure is only 24 per cent for female associate professors. There is also a considerable difference among professors. Male professors report spending 39 per cent of their working hours on research, whereas the figure is 33 per cent for female professors.

If we look at men saying that their partner's career has been given priority in the past year, an otherwise relatively "typical female" position, an interesting pattern emerges. The question of career divides households into three groups: one where the man's career has first priority; one in which both parts have approximately equal priority; and one where the woman's career has first priority. Men in households reporting that the woman's career has priority do not, as often, report problems related to a culture with long working hours. There is up to a three times greater inclination to talk about this among men whose own career comes first. In cases where the female partner's career has priority, 10 per cent have problems with the work hour culture, 16 per cent have problems in households where the partners' careers have equal priority, and 26 per cent report problems related to long working days in families where the man's career has priority.

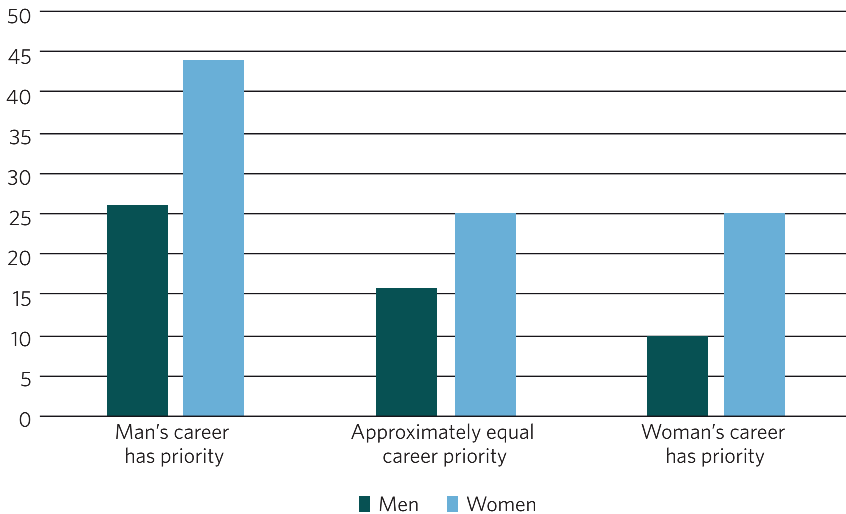


**Figure 1.7.** Proportion of Women and Men Stating They Have Problems With a Long Work Hour Culture by Career Priorities in the Household. The figures are given as percentages. Source: FRONT Employee survey (N = 608 married/cohabitants).

The figures are similar among the women. Among women whose partner's career had first priority 44 per cent experienced problems with a long work hour culture, 25 per cent where there was equal priority, and 25 per cent when their own career had priority. Again, a gender gap appears, in male job priority households especially. Based on reports from both genders, it thus appears that women have jobs with fewer demands for long working hours. But there is little in the material supporting this interpretation. A more relevant explanation may be that women plan their work days in a way that does not disturb their family life. We have previously described how the female researchers leave work to pick up their children from kindergarten, prepare dinner and help with homework. However, when family obligations are completed and the children have been put to bed, they either go back to work, or they sit down at their computer at home to work another three or four hours. If the men, to a more considerable degree, remain in the workplace until they are done with their work for the day, this will, of course, have a bigger impact on their family life.

These findings strengthen the image that the male career usually has first priority in marriage and partnerships. The man's job seems to be the biggest "problem generator" within the long work hour culture. A possible reason may be traditions and gender roles that remain from the time when the man was considered "the family's main breadwinner," and that demands for long working hours on the man's part are connected to this.

The surveys, supported by the interviews, do not show, as mentioned, that women opt out of careers to focus on the family. But we can see that women and men work under different conditions in the faculty. The women are married to other academics more often than the men are. The men's partners took longer career breaks in connection to the man's job than the women's partners. The women who had taken parental leave were away from work for more extended periods than the men (an average of eleven and four months, respectively), and experienced more difficulties when returning to the workplace. The men are more often in relationships in which their own career has priority, and are rarely in relationships in which their partner's career has priority. One in three male professors report being in a relationship in which their career is

prioritized, whereas less than one in ten female professors say the same. When the man's career comes first, both women and men experience problems related to the culture of long work hours.

## Discussion

Both women and men, students and employees, express the desire for a gender-equal and gender-balanced faculty. But when gender equality is considered an effect of a meritocratic organization, meaning something that already permeates the faculty's processes and culture, gender imbalance becomes the result of individual choices. In many of the interviews, both women and men describe academia as a functioning meritocracy.[10] They do not consider being a meritocracy a vision that academic organizations such as the MN faculty strive to achieve. They presume that the organization's systems and processes actually work in a meritocratic way. They express the desire for gender equality as a self-evident part of a meritocratic ideal, and thus perceive academia, and also the MN faculty, as gender-equal.[11]

That the interviewees consider both academia in general and their own faculty as a functioning meritocracy is in line with studies by, for example Nielsen (2016), and Brandser and Sümer (2017). Nielsen explores a Danish university, whereas Brandser and Sümer gather their empirical data from Norway. Henningsen and Liestøl (2013) take things a step further, claiming that there is not only a notion of academia as a meritocracy but also that measures working for gender balance may result in women being perceived as prioritized, and having advantages within the academic system. According to them, this notion enables the actual structural and cultural barriers to women to become invisible. The idea that academia "is" gender-equal is probably stronger in Norway and other Nordic countries than in the U.S., for example. Norway may be interpreted as a gender-equal country, and gender equality may even be emphasized as a national value, part of the "Norwegian identity", as mentioned above. From here, it is easy to conclude that "gender equality has already been achieved" and that no further measures are needed. One thus overlooks the fact that being in the lead in the world is not the same

as having reached one's goal, and that there is considerable variation within Norway and other countries.

Brandser and Sümer (2017, p. 31) describe how both temporary and permanent employees at the University of Bergen agreed that the recruitment process was fair – although they were aware that the process "could be manipulated in various ways", either by "creating positions", "tailor-made job announcements" or "inviting specific applicants". Several studies of the recruitment process have been carried out since Elisabeth Fürst, in her pioneering 1988 study of the University of Oslo, demonstrated how gender-stereotypical ideas about women and men influenced the assessment of competence (see e.g., Nielsen, 2016; van den Brink & Benschop, 2011). The major opposition to Fürst's result (Fürst, 2012) may be interpreted as a defence of the idea of academia, and thus science in general, as objective and neutral (Hovdhaugen et al., 2004). The women participating in one of the FRONT project's initiatives (see Chapter 12) changed their view of the faculty as a meritocracy during the initiative. What were described as single occurrences and exceptions in interviews before the initiative began, such as gender-stereotypical evaluations of competence, were interpreted as a consequence of gender-unequal structures towards the end of the initiative. Our results indicate that the interviewees, by sharing their experiences of "single occurrences", realized that they were, in fact, not isolated incidents, but rather parts of a pattern and a structure. When the idea of science being objective is strong, combined with the notion that academia is a purely meritocratic organization, more than an individual experience is required for the image of a meritocracy to crumble.

As stated in the introduction, there is also a horizontal gender imbalance in the MN faculty (which we will look at in more detail in Chapter 2). This imbalance, that women and men choose different disciplines and approaches to the disciplines, is described by most interviewees as personal choices. Women and men are simply interested in different things. Male students, therefore, choose male-dominated disciplines, whereas female students choose disciplines and degree programmes with more women – despite the fact that both female and male students prefer a gender-balanced student environment (Thun & Holter, 2013). In accordance with this widespread understanding, it is not an

indication of gender discrimination that specific disciplines are considered "boy" disciplines and attract more boys, while others are considered "girl" disciplines and attract more girls. Instead, it is considered a sign of women and men having different interests. In a study of the history discipline, Tømte and Egeland (2016, p. 32) demonstrate how certain disciplines, approaches and methods are associated with "masculinity" historically and culturally. This, in turn, is interpreted as "an effect of women and men being different, and therefore interested in and suited for different things." According to Vabø et al. (2012), there are notions about what men and women should do and are suited for in academia, as in all other organizations. Thun and Holter (2013) demonstrate how different disciplines at the University of Oslo are defined as either "soft" or "hard", and how the soft disciplines are associated with women, while the hard are associated with men.

Our study confirms these results. For instance, several of the interviewees describe interdisciplinary studies being defined as less prestigious than studies closer to the core of the discipline, and that the less prestigious parts of a discipline are also defined as feminine.[12]

The interviewees describe horizontal and vertical gender balance within education and research as important, particularly on the societal level (see also Brandser & Sümer, 2017). But if academia's meritocratic principles must be adjusted in order to achieve a vertical balance, for example through quota-like measures, women as well as men are negative. The image of an ideal academic (see Lund, 2012), who can pursue the ideal career without obstacles, such as parental leave or picking up children from kindergarten, is highly prominent in the interviews. The challenge of combining childcare and a career as a researcher, for instance, affects everyone who wants to be an active parent, meaning both men and women (Orning, 2016). The fact that it is more difficult for women to postpone having children than men, until the ten years of temporary positions and high publication levels have resulted in a permanent position, is therefore not considered a gendered structure.[13] Instead, the absence of women on higher position levels is seen as a lack of ambition, and above all, that women choose to give priority to their family (van den Brink, 2011).

However, when we examine the organization more closely to see whether vertical gender imbalance may be explained by men and women making different choices, and whether women consciously opt out of a career to be a more active parent, this view is contradicted by both surveys and interviews. Instead, the surveys as well as the interviews show that women and men work under different conditions at the faculty. The women are rarely in relationships in which their own career has priority. When the man's career comes first, both women and men experience problems with a long work hour culture. The fact that the man still has the role of primary breadwinner, and thus must fulfill the demand for long working hours, is an underlying reason (Halrynjo, 2017; Halrynjo & Lyng, 2017; Holter et al., 2009; Holter & Aarseth, 1993; Snickare & Holter, 2018). We also see a significant difference in the distribution of working hours spent on different tasks, with female associate professors and full professors spending a greater part of their time on teaching and administration, and less time on research than their male colleagues. This will negatively affect their career opportunities, as long as academic competence is measured mainly in terms of scientific publications (e.g., Addis, 2010). The imbalanced work distribution between women and men is a pattern also found in international studies (e.g., Aldercotte et al., 2017). The Swedish Research Council describes work displacement as a primary cause of gender imbalance in higher academic positions. Women are more active than men in research areas characterized by a lot of teaching, which also provides fewer opportunities for them to obtain scientific merits. Additionally, women within all disciplines respond that they have less time for research than their male colleagues (Vetenskapsrådet, 2021).

The "ideal career" in academia is characterized by competition, with high demands in terms of constantly applying for prestigious projects and funding, high publication frequency, international mobility, and networking. Our results resemble findings from studies of elite professions in Norway (Aarseth, 2014; Halrynjo, 2017; Halrynjo et al., 2019). In occupations that compete for customers, clients and projects, being able to invest time and energy at work becomes a substantial competitive advantage. To avoid losing momentum, having flexibility at home (in terms

of having a supportive partner) becomes essential in order to be able to work when needed. Two such careers within the same family can be demanding. A study of Norwegian elite professions shows that even the most gender-equality oriented couples can experience sliding back into a traditional gendered pattern.[14] When mothers, to a much larger extent than fathers, take extended parental leave they risk losing momentum, while at the same time showing clearly that they are replaceable. Others can and must take over their tasks, customers, and projects. On the other hand, fathers in professional careers often find ways that allow them to adapt and postpone their leave without losing customers and investment opportunities. While the fathers can continue to be irreplaceable at work, the mothers become irreplaceable at home (Halrynjo, 2017; Halrynjo & Lyng, 2017).

The surveys show that women are more dissatisfied with their careers than men are. They want to get further. This is strengthened by the interviews. On the individual level, women try to adapt to the ideal career and the ideal worker. Some choose not to have children, whereas others compensate for lost working hours spent picking up children from kindergarten or helping out with homework, by working at night or on holidays.

That leaders within an organization have a different picture of what women on lower levels in the organization want in terms of work and career was shown almost thirty years ago in the Swedish official report *Mäns föreställningar om kvinnor och chefskap* (*Men's Ideas About Women and Leadership*, SOU 1994: 3). The male leaders who were interviewed all had the idea that women on the levels below themselves in the organization did not want to move up the career ladder, since long working hours or many required business trips could not be easily combined with family and children. The study also included interviews with women in the same organizations – who presented a completely different picture. They wanted to move up, and had various strategies for handling new work requirements. Van den Brink (2011) demonstrates how the same reasoning permeates academia. The absence of women in leading positions is explained by a lack of ambition, while the women themselves report having equally high career ambitions as men.

Our study is in line with these results. There is a notion within the entire organization, not just among leaders, that it is difficult to have an academic career and be an active parent at the same time. Here, the idea of the ideal academic worker emerges as a "phantom" – that is, someone working 24 hours a day, either writing grant applications and articles, or handling experimental studies in the laboratory (Lindgren, 1996, 1999; Lund, 2012). They always prioritize work and have no other interests or obligations. The survey confirms long working hours, especially on higher levels, with an average of 46.5 hours a week for all the academic employees.[15] The interviews confirm a high but varied workload with flexibility, making balancing work with family obligations somewhat easier. The notion of the constantly working ideal academic employee is not always reality for employees at the MN faculty, yet it still exists as an ideal model, one that seems difficult to live up to, and probably makes an academic career seem unattractive to many.

## Conclusion

Nearly all – women and men, students and employees – support gender equality. But since they presume at the same time that academia is a functioning meritocracy, the faculty's visible gender imbalance is regarded as a result of women's and men's different choices. Above all, the vertical gender imbalance, with more men on higher levels and in leading positions, is explained in terms of women choosing children and family over an academic career. That a working culture of long days and temporary positions affects women and men differently is described as undesirable, but nevertheless unavoidable. Career requirements are considered to be objective and inevitable, since the faculty must be able to compete internationally.

The results of our studies do not support the explanation that women consciously opt out of an academic career to be active and present as parents. Instead, they show an academic organization that fails to meet the ambitions of women compared to men, so that more women than men have unfulfilled career goals. Moreover, we see that conditions for combining work and family are different for women and men. More often

than men, women have a partner who is also an academic. The men are, more often than women, in relationships where their own career has priority, and are less often in relationships where their partner's career has first priority. For example, one in three male professors say they are in relationships in which their own career has priority, whereas less than one in ten female professors say the same. The men's partners also have longer career breaks connected to the man's job than do the women's partners. When the man's career comes first, both women and men experience problems with a culture of long working hours, but the same does not apply if the woman's career comes first. When women describe how they combine work and family obligations by working evenings and holidays, the men report how they get a lot of support from their partner in busy periods.

The idea of the ideal academic worker (see Lund, 2012), who is able to work 24 hours a day writing applications and articles, or handling experiments in the laboratory, who always prioritizes work and has no outside interests or obligations, is powerful within the organization. That this "phantom researcher" ideal affects women and men differently is not discussed.

## Referanser

Aarseth, H. (2014). Finanskapitalismens kjønnsromantikk: Næringslivselitens kjønnskomplementære familiekultur. *Tidsskrift for kjønnsforskning*, *38*(3–4), 203–218. https://doi.org/10.18261/ISSN1891-1781-2014-03-04-02

Addis, E. (2010). *Topic report. Gender and scientific excellence. Meta-analysis of gender and science research.* European Union. https://genderedinnovations.stanford.edu/images/TR5_Excellence.pdf

Aldercotte, A., Guyan, K., Lawson, J., Neave, S. & Altorjai, S. (2017). *ASSET 2016: Experiences of gender equality in STEMM academia and their intersections with ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and age*. Equality Challenge Unit. https://www.advance-he.ac.uk/knowledge-hub/asset-2016

Bergman, S. (2013). *The Nordic region – a step closer to gender balance in research? Joint Nordic strategies and measures to promote gender balance among researchers in academia* (TemaNord 2013:544). Nordic Council of Ministers. http://dx.doi.org/10.6027/TN2013-544

Brandser, G. C. & Sümer, S. (2017). Kjønnsbalanse i akademiske toppstillinger – med blikk for brytninger og nye muligheter. *Tidsskrift for kjønnsforskning, 41*(1), 22–38. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1891-1781-2017-01-03

Database for statistikk om høgre utdanning [DBH]. (2021). *Statistikk om høyere utdanning.* https://dbh.nsd.uib.no/statistikk/

Diku. (2019). *Tilstandsrapport for høyere utdanning 2019* (Diku rapportserie 5/2019). Kunnskapsdepartementet. https://diku.no/rapporter/diku-rapportserie-05-2019-tilstandsrapport-for-hoeyere-utdanning-2019

European Commission. (2019). *She figures 2018*. European Union. https://doi.org/10.2777/936

Fürst, E. (1988). *Kvinner i Akademia – inntrengere i en mannskultur?* NAVFs sekretariat for kvinneforskning, UiO.

Fürst, E. (2012). 'Kvinner i Akademia' (1988) – tilbakeblikk og refleksjoner. *Tidsskrift for kjønnsforskning, 36*(2), 159–165.

Halrynjo, S. (2017). Exploring the career logic within the Nordic work-family model. In B. Brandth, S. Halrynjo & E. Kvande (Eds.), *Work – family dynamics: Competing logics of regulation, economy and morals* (Ch. 12). Routledge.

Halrynjo, S. & Lyng, S. T. (2017). Fathers' parental leave and work – family division in Norwegian elite professions. In B. Liebig & M. Oechsle (Eds.), *Fathers in work organizations: Inequalities and capabilities, rationalities and politics* (pp. 61–82). Barbara Budrich Publishers.

Halrynjo, S., Løke, H. K. & Torjussen, S. A. A. (2019). *Kvinner og karriere i finans: Får ikke, kan ikke eller vil ikke?* (Rapport 2019:7), Institutt for samfunnsforskning. http://hdl.handle.net/11250/2597048

Henningsen, I. & Liestøl, K. (2013). Likestilling i akademia. Er eksellense for menn og grand challenges for kvinner? *Tidsskrift for kjønnsforskning*, *37*(3–4), 348–361.

Holter, Ø. G. (2007). Men's work and family reconciliation in Europe. *Men and Masculinities, 9*(4), 425–456. https://doi.org/10.1177/1097184X06287794

Holter, Ø. G. (1990). *Arbeid og familie – en studie av teknologkulturen*. Universitetsforlaget.

Holter, Ø. G., Svare, H. & Egeland, C. (2009). *Gender equality and quality of life – a Nordic perspective.* Nordic Gender Institute (NIKK) and The Work Research Institute (WRI). http://www.nikk.no/en/publications/gender-equality-and-quality-of-life-a-norwegian-perspective-2009/

Holter, Ø. G. & Aarseth, H. (1993). *Menns livssammenheng.* Gyldendal.

Hovdhaugen, E., Kyvik, S. & Bruen Olsen, T. (2004). *Kvinner og menn – like muligheter? Om kvinners og menns karriereveier i akademia* (NIFU-rapport 2004:25). https://www.nifu.no/publications/998852/

Husu, L. (2015). A comprehensive national approach to promote gender equality in science: The case of Norway. In W. Pearson Jr., L. Frehill & C. McNeely (Eds.),

*Advancing women in science: An international perspective* (pp. 327–329). Springer. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-08629-3

Lindgren, G. (1996). Broderskapets logik. *Kvinnovetenskaplig tidskrift, 17*(1), 4–14.

Lindgren, G. (1999). *Klass, kön och kirurgi*. Liber.

Lund, R. (2012). Publishing to become an 'ideal academic': An institutional ethnography and a feminist critique. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, *28*(3), 218–228. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2012.05.003

Meld. St. 7 (2015–2016). *Likestilling i praksis – like muligheter for kvinner og menn*. Barne- og familiedepartementet. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/meld.-st.-7-20152016/id2456562/

Nielsen, M. W. (2016). Limits to meritocracy? Gender in academic recruitment and promotion processes. *Science and Public Policy*, *43*(3), 386–399. https://doi.org/10.1093/scipol/scv052

NOU 2012: 15. (2012). *Politikk for likestilling* [Skjeie-utvalget]. Barne- og familiedepartementet. https://www.regjeringen.no/no/dokumenter/nou-2012-15/id699800/

Orning, S. (2016). *Veiledning, kjønn og omsorgsansvar. En studie av hvordan stipendiater og veiledere opplever kombinasjonen av omsorgsansvar og akademisk karriere*. Universitetet i Oslo, Senter for tverrfaglig kjønnsforskning. http://urn.nb.no/URN:NBN:no-56861

SOU 1994: 3. (1994). *Mäns föreställningar om kvinnor och chefskap* Socialdepartementet. https://www.regeringen.se/rattsliga-dokument/statens-offentliga-utredningar/1994/03/sou-19943/

Snickare, L. & Holter, Ø. G. (2018). When office life becomes life – a study of investment banking. In A. Bolsø, S. H. Svendsen & S. Ø. Sørensen (Eds.), *Bodies, symbols and organizational practice: The gendered dynamics of power.* Routledge.

Thun, C. (2018). Å 'bære' sitt kjønn: Kjønnet organisasjonskultur innenfor realfag. *Tidsskrift for kjønnsforskning*, *42*(1–2), 120–136. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1891-1781-2018-01-02-08

Thun, C. (2019). Akademisk karriere som 'risikosport'. Midlertidighet i et kjønnsperspektiv. *Søkelys på arbeidslivet*, *36*(1–2), 4–20. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1504-7989-2019-01-02-01

Thun, C. & Holter, Ø. G. (2013). *Kjønnsbalanse og læringsutbytte: En studie av betydningen av kjønns(u)balanse for masterstudenters opplevelse av læringsutbytte og studiekvalitet*. Universitetet i Oslo, Senter for tverrfaglig kjønnsforskning. https://www.stk.uio.no/forskning/publikasjoner/rapporter/2013/rapport_kjonnsbalanse_og_leringsutbytte.pdf

Tømte, C. & Egeland, C. (2016). Kjønnsubalanse blant historikere – bare et spørsmål om tid? *Tidsskrift for kjønnsforskning, 40*(1), 24–44. https://doi.org/10.18261/issn.1891-1781-2016-01-03

Vabø, A., Gunnes, H., Tømte, C., Bergene, A. C. & Egeland, C. (2012). *Kvinner og menns karriereløp i norsk forskning: En tilstandsrapport* (NIFU-rapport 2012:9). https://www.nifu.no/publications/951891/

van den Brink, M. (2011). Scouting for talent: Appointment practices of women professors in academic medicine. *Social Science & Medicine*, *72*(12), 2033–2040. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.04.016

van den Brink, M. & Benschop, Y. (2012). Gender practices in the construction of academic excellence: Sheep with five legs. *Organization*, *19*(4), 507–524. https://doi.org/10.1177/1350508411414293

Vetenskapsrådet (Swedish Research Council). (2021). *Hur jämställt är det i högskolan? Kvinnors och mäns förutsättningar att bedriva forskning.* Vetenskapsrådets (Swedish Research Council) rapportserie, 2106. https://www.vr.se/download/18.5b512ab5179b56f3d0fea7/1624460065545/Hur%20jämställt%20är%20det%20i%20högskolan_VR2106.pdf

World Economic Forum. (2020). *Global gender gap report 2020*. http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf

# Notes

1 Some of the categories in Figures 1.1–1.3 should be interpreted with extra caution. Especially, the researcher category is highly diverse, often based on temporary external funding and not necessarily a step up on the career ladder. Also, the female proportion of bachelor students is probably higher than shown in Figure 1.1 due to irregularities in the statistics. The figures are snapshots of ongoing changes. For example, the apparent fall in the female proportion from bachelor to master level in informatics (Figure 1.3) is due to a strongly increasing proportion of women on the bachelor level, which will probably also be reflected on the master level in a couple of years.

2 "Forskningsmeldingen 2009" ("The 2009 Research Report") says, for example: "The government considers as one of its most important challenges to strive for an equal number of women and men on all job levels and in all disciplines" (translated from Norwegian).

3 In the EU, 54 per cent of all bachelor and master students are women. In Norway, the proportion of women is 59 per cent (Diku, 2019; European Commission, 2019).

4 In the EU, only 32 per cent of students, 37 per cent of PhD students, and 15 per cent of professors are women in mathematics and the natural sciences. In Norway, the figures are somewhat higher: 34 per cent, 40 per cent and 16 per cent, respectively (Diku, 2019; European Commission, 2019).

5 All interviewees are anonymized. Aksel, Wenche, and Tobias, etc. are fictitious names.

6 A detailed description of the interview material can be found in the appendix "Method". We conducted interviews with two objectives in mind: investigating how women and men perceive their workplace, and investigating the effect of different initiatives.

7 See more about this in Chapter 5.

8 This applies to the employees – we know less about ambitions among those who have left the faculty. Satisfaction with ambitions also varies somewhat with other variables in the survey, although this does not have a particularly strong effect with regard to gender. It is somewhat higher among participants having Norwegian family backgrounds compared to those having non-Norwegian backgrounds. Respondents whose parents had a high level of education

answered yes slightly less often than those whose parents had a medium or low level. Parents' level of education thus indicates higher career ambitions, although the association is not very strong.

9 The proportion of time for research reflects, in part, the contents of the different positions. Postdoctoral fellows have 0–25 per cent teaching as part of their contracts, whereas researchers are not supposed to teach at all.

10 As already mentioned, those participating in one of the FRONT project's long-term initiatives changed their perception.

11 See also earlier publications in the project, e.g., Thun, 2018, 2019.

12 See Chapter 2, "Men, Masculinities and Professional Hierarchies".

13 This is described in more detail in a previous publication from the project: Thun, C. (2019). Akademisk karriere som 'risikosport'. Midlertidighet i et kjønnsperspektiv. *Søkelys på Arbeidslivet*, *36*, (4–20).

14 A "classic" description in Norwegian gender research is Hanne Haavind's article «Makt og kjærlighet i ekteskapet» (1982). She later revised the model towards increased gender equality (Haavind, 2006).

15 The normal work week in Norway is 37.5 hours.