



**SPOTLIGHT ON GENDER EQUALITY: WHEN
INSECURITY OVERSHADOWS EVERYTHING**

/The Swedish Association of University Teachers and Researchers

English translation of the report

Spotlight on gender equality: When insecurity overshadows everything

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Foreword

In your hand you hold the latest in a number of reports that show that women face more obstacles than men in their academic careers. Academia is a highly hierarchical world, and that is one of the causes of gender inequality at universities and colleges. Women have a poorer situation generally in academia, which in practice means poorer employment conditions, a poorer working environment and greater difficulties with regard to both funding and promotions. Women are treated differently from men in a way that disadvantages them. At the same time, the upper echelons, those who have the decision-making power, still comprise a large proportion of men.

At the level of professor, the majority are men and the minority are women. Today, not even a third of professors in Sweden are women, and it is a statement of fact that it takes longer for women to become professors. The proportion of female professors has increased, but at a snail's pace, and the danger is that we will have to wait another quarter of a century before we achieve gender balance.

Why is gender inequality a problem?

As well as the obvious issue of fairness, it is evident that there is a problem when it comes to quality. If academic careers are founded on other criteria than merit, the recruitment base will shrink and people with the potential to become excellent researchers and university teachers will be left on the sidelines. There is an increased risk of homogeneity in research and teaching when people with different backgrounds, genders and perspectives are not given opportunities to test their ideas and share their thoughts with each other. Environments characterised by equality perform better and utilising all the skills and competence at the disposal of an institution should be a matter of course for improving the quality of both education and research. Quite simply, higher education benefits from having people with different backgrounds and experience at the top, but that is not the reality in academia.

Facing obstacles due to your gender or having to manoeuvre around the prevailing norms takes time and energy that could otherwise be spent on gaining career development qualifications. Another energy-sapping factor is a poor work environment, and as the report shows, this affects greater numbers of women more than it does men.

This report was published on 8 March 2022, International Women's Day. It is shameful that we should still have to highlight the issue of women in academia over a hundred years after women were granted the right to vote in Sweden. But we will continue to do so for as long as it is necessary.

In order for Sweden to be a leading knowledge nation, academic careers must offer decent - and equal - conditions for both women and men.



Sanna Wolk,
President of SULF

Spotlight on gender equality: When insecurity overshadows everything

1.1 Summary

This report examines the work environments of women and men working in higher education and their conditions regarding health and careers. The results are based on a survey answered by 5 446 SULF members and interviews with 54 PhD-qualified researchers.

The results show that women face greater pressure and have access to fewer resources compared with men. Women feel they are treated differently from men in ways that disadvantage them, both in their daily work and in the allocation of work tasks and resources. As a result, women are generally more at risk of stress and related ill health than men, and women need to overcome more obstacles to pursuing a career than men do. This confirms the findings of previous studies and research on women's and men's situations at universities and colleges.

Furthermore, it appears that problems with gender equality go hand in hand with the structure of uncertainty and scarcity with regard to time and funding that affects both women and men. Rather than being two separate problems, these are two dimensions of power and discrimination that can interact and can lead to a particularly problematic situation for women over time. For example, fixed-term employees, both women and men, generally experience a poorer working environment than permanent employees. However, the highest workloads are reported by women with permanent employment, such as professors and senior lecturers. This can be explained by a burden of tasks that provide few or no qualifications for career development or an unseen responsibility for the work of the department, which might fall to permanently employed women to a greater extent than to men, but also by differences in how women and men are treated and assessed throughout their careers.

The importance of both formal and informal distribution of work both within and between workplaces and subject areas thus becomes clear, not least in the shadow of the high degree of external funding of research. External funding is a prerequisite for (a still limited level of) job security, for the ability to influence one's work and for building a career. In order to achieve a more equal environment in higher education, women and men need to have similar obstacles and workloads *in practice*. This requires a critical examination of how tasks, both those that are meritorious for career development and those that are not, are formally and informally distributed between women and men. In order to equalise the burdens on women and men, the problems concerning the treatment of women and men, in daily interactions and in the allocation of resources, positions and promotions, need to be identified and addressed. Furthermore, women and men need to have equal opportunities *in practice* to conduct research. Due to the large proportion of external funding, this means that women and men need to be given the same amount of time to write research applications, as well as be given access to the same amount of external funding to apply for.

A career in higher education seems to require a private life with resources that offset the insecurity of working life and its consequences, not least in terms of time when private time needs to be spent to compensate for the lack of time that people have available in their working hours. Health and career conditions will continue to be unequal as long as employers do not ensure that there are equal opportunities for employees to carry out their work *within the framework of their working hours*. A job should not require more time than the employer pays for, either for women or men. A shift towards greater equality in academia goes hand in hand with a shift towards more secure and stable employment and funding conditions in higher education.

In addition to basic requirements such as transparency and fairness regarding promotion and appointments, allocation of resources and constant work to ensure that women and men are treated equally and with the same respect in their daily work, this report identifies the following ways to achieve a more equality in academia:

- Ensure that women and men work under similar pressure and workloads *in practice*. This requires a critical examination of how tasks, both those that are meritorious for career development opportunities and those that are not, are distributed between women and men, both within and between workplaces, departments and subject areas. Work should not require more time than the employer pays for, either for women or men
- Ensure that women and men have equal opportunities to conduct research *in practice*. Due to the large proportion of external funding, this means that women and men need to be given the same amount of time to write research applications and access to the same amount of external funding to apply for. External funding is a prerequisite for (a still limited level of) job security, for the ability to influence one's work and for the opportunity to build a career. Health and career conditions will continue to be unequal as long as employers do not ensure that there are equal opportunities for employees to carry out this task *within the framework of their working hours*.



For greater equality in academia:

- Ensure that women and men work under similar pressure and have similar workloads in practice.
- Ensure that women and men have equal opportunities in practice to conduct research.

1.2 Introduction

This report has been published as a follow up to SULF's report *The shadow of uncertainty – external funding, precarious employment and work environment in higher education* (SULF, 2021a), and focuses on gender equality in the work environments of researchers and university teachers. *The shadow of uncertainty* examined the work environment in relation to external funding of research and precarious employment in higher education. It found that uncertainty and insecurity impact the work environment and working conditions in higher education and increase the risk of stress.

The purpose of this report is to examine the conditions for women and men for pursuing a career and the risks that women and men face in their work environments, and to identify obstacles to gender equality and opportunities for the development of greater equality for those working in higher education. It focuses on women's and men's psychosocial work environments: how tasks, resources and rewards are allocated and how this affects women and men, and how women and men perceive the processes and power relationships that allocate these resources. By focusing on the work environment, the report provides a deeper understanding of shortcomings in and obstacles to gender equality in a structural and long-term perspective. It is based on the same material as *The shadow of uncertainty* but presents previously unpublished results.

1.3 Gender equality on and below the surface

To an outside observer, academia may seem comparatively equal. Almost as many women as men work in higher education and the meritocratic principles that guide career paths and research funding suggest that it is also the most suitable and deserving – regardless of gender – who benefit, are allocated resources and can pursue careers.

Gender equality within an organisation is not an issue that is limited, however, to the number of women and men that can be found in different positions or the formal opportunities open to women and men. Gender equality means that women and men have equal conditions for their work in practice, and thus for health and well-being and for career development. These conditions are created, maintained and duplicated through formal processes that allocate resources, work tasks and rewards, in interactions and meetings in daily work, and in the symbols that explain these processes and interactions, (see, for example, Acker, 1990; 2006). An organisation where there are systematic differences between women and men with regard to power, respect and control over resources and decisions that affect the distribution of tasks, promotion opportunities, job security, funding, benefits and salaries is not an equal organisation. Whether women and men have equal opportunities on paper, the numbers of women and men in different positions and women's and men's formally equal opportunities are merely superficial measures of equality. To understand the extent of the problem and get to grips with it, it is necessary to look more deeply and examine what is beneath the surface.

The way in which resources, tasks and rewards are distributed at universities and colleges is in many ways unique in the Swedish labour market and is essential to an understanding of gender equality problems - but also for understanding how issues of gender equality risk being overshadowed by other injustices that affect men as well as women.

1.4 Hierarchies of insecurity

For many researchers and university teachers, life is characterised by financial and employment insecurity, which casts a shadow over their work environments, research, teaching, health and private lives (SULF, 2021a). This insecurity stems partly from the high proportion of fixed-term employment in higher education and partly from the high proportion of external funding, which means that employees themselves are in practice responsible for bringing in money to pay their own salaries (Figure 1).

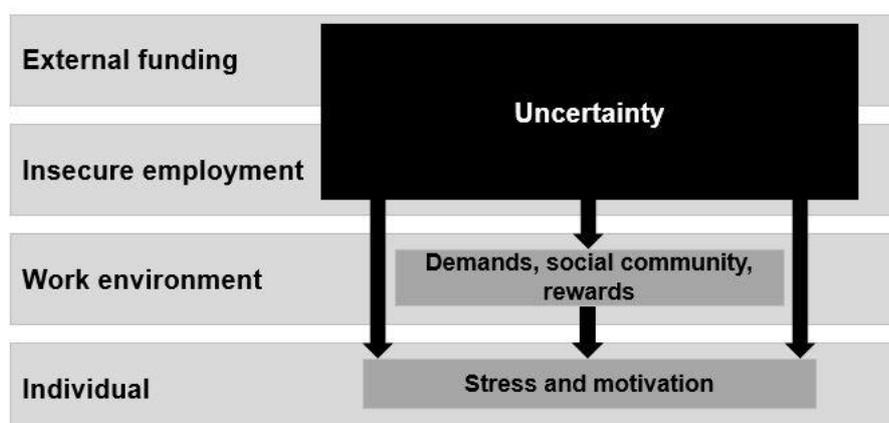


Figure 1: Uncertainty with regard to external funding and employment conditions impacts the work environment in several ways and can lead, for example, to poor cooperation in the workplace, high workloads and stress.

The state grants distributed directly to higher education institutions for research have been reduced in recent decades in favour of a higher proportion of external funding (SULF 2021b). This helps to explain the high proportion of fixed-term employment, as the institutions therefore do not run the risk of having to pay the salary of an employee who does not bring in money (SULF, 2014). Permanent employees are also in danger of being made redundant if they do not bring in external funding, which means that permanent employment in higher education does not provide the same security as it does generally (SULF, 2021a).

Academia is highly hierarchical. Different job categories with associated status, responsibilities and opportunities to influence the allocation of resources and work constitute a formal hierarchy. This is supplemented by an informal hierarchy created by the power and status that comes with somehow obtaining a share of the scarce and coveted resources that provide secure employment and research funding. At Swedish higher education institutions, as well as internationally, a 'research precariat' has been created, consisting of people with a doctoral degree who are employed for a limited time and with no guarantee of a future permanent employment (OECD, 2021). This is said to lead to the consolidation of a two-tiered academic labour market, with a protected but increasingly shrinking academic elite and a growing majority of temporarily employed researchers. This is described in detail in *The shadow of uncertainty*, where insecurity and its consequences are perceived as a significant factor even for permanent employees, with a very real threat of redundancy for those who do not bring in external funding (SULF, 2021a).

The academic elite that the OECD describes thus seems to be vanishingly small in Sweden. Regardless, this insecurity looms over the work environment and the conditions under which researchers and university teachers work (OECD, 2021; SULF, 2021a). It also means that a structural stratification emerges, with power and dependency relationships created through differences in access to resources such as funding and perceptions of uncertainty. The scope to say no to work tasks and to influence one's work and workplace shrinks as insecurity grows. The general uncertainty and the effort required to reduce it impact the work environment and constitute a significant risk factor for workloads and stress levels for both men and women (SULF, 2021a; Figure 1). This leads to the risk of a large group of both women and men being disadvantaged when it comes to work tasks, resources and rewards. The fact that both women and men are affected does not mean that problems with gender equality do not exist, but it risks overshadowing them.

1.5 The tip of the iceberg

Even a superficial look at Swedish colleges and universities shows problems with gender equality (Figure 2). More men than women have been offered and been given career development positions, the purpose of which is for the individual to qualify for a continued research career. Seventy-two per cent of professors are men, a slightly larger proportion of men than women have permanent positions and women working in higher education have lower salaries on average than men (Swedish Higher Education Authority (UKÄ), 2020; Statistics Sweden (SCB), 2020). Men apply for and receive more research funding than women (Swedish Research Council, 2019).

The meritocratic ideal means that resources such as secure employment, senior positions and external funding are assumed to be distributed according to the individual's merits. It should therefore be possible for everyone to pursue a career and advance in academia, and those who do so are also assumed to be the most deserving. For that to be the case, everyone also needs to have the same opportunities to compete for resources. There is a need to examine what conditions women and men have in order to acquire career development qualifications and a need to analyse the process for allocating resources.

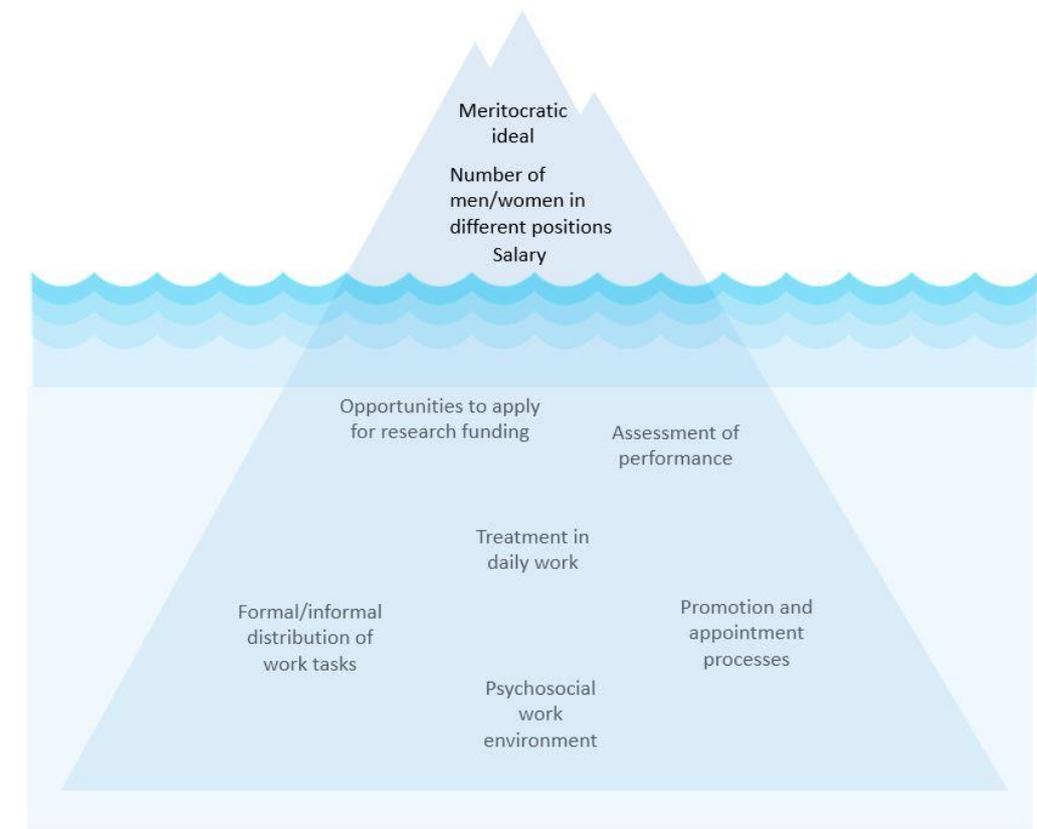


Figure 2: Beneath the surface, there are hidden processes that are of importance for gender equality: distribution of research funding, employment security, work tasks that are meritorious or not and require varying workloads, as well as how performance is assessed and how people are treated in daily work. These affect the conditions for acquiring career development qualifications, wellbeing and building a career.

1.6 Hidden discrimination below the surface

Gender discrimination in academia is often hidden and subtle and it is tempting to dismiss it as individual, isolated events or non-events that only affect individuals – both for the person who is discriminated against and the person who sees it happen. A broader perspective is required to be able to see how these events form part of long-term processes, are based on structural rather than individual conditions, and systematically affect women as a group rather than randomly affecting individuals.

1.6.1 Promotion and employment processes

A lack of transparency in recruitment processes, along with the formal and informal hierarchy of power, poses the risk of enabling favouritism so that positions and titles are more or less earmarked for selected people from the beginning (SULF, 2018; Swedish Research Council, 2021). This is a problem that affects both women and men, but informal processes risk disadvantaging women more than men (Acker, 2006; Yarrow, 2020).

1.6.2 Scope for applying for research funding

Women and men at universities and colleges tend to be active in differing subject areas. Women work to a greater extent in medicine and health, the humanities and social sciences, while men are in the majority in technology and natural sciences (UKÄ,

2016). The distribution of resources, tasks and rewards differs between these areas in a way that risks disadvantaging women. Compared with male-dominated subject areas, there are fewer female-dominated professorship positions and thus fewer career options. There are also fewer opportunities for research and the teaching hours requirement is greater (Swedish Research Council, 2021), which risks resulting in a high workload and thus fewer opportunities for other tasks that are meritorious for career development (SULF, 2021a).

1.6.3 Treatment and assessment

Women and their work are reported as systematically not seen, heard, read, quoted, referenced, invited, encouraged, supported or validated to the same extent as men and their work (Husu, 2005). This limits career opportunities and increases the pressure on women.

1.6.4 Distribution of work

Women are assigned extra work in addition to their more or less formal tasks to a greater extent than men, tasks that have been described as 'academic housework', since, like women's housework in many heterosexual relationships, it refers to necessary but often invisible tasks, such as providing assistance to colleagues and efforts to make the work in research groups and in the department flow smoothly (Kalm, 2019). This work takes time and energy, but it is not attributed any meritorious value, despite its necessity and value also for those who do not contribute. This 'invisible work' constitutes an extra burden and is often perceived as an obstacle to taking on more meritorious tasks or seeking research funding (SULF, 2021a).

1.6.5 The psychosocial work environment

Generally, women report a poorer psychosocial work environment than men: they feel less socially included at work in terms of cooperation and sense of community in the workplace, perceive themselves to have fewer opportunities than men to make decisions regarding work and feel less noticed and appreciated for their work (SULF, 2021s; Swedish Research Council, 2021). More women than men report experiencing unfairness at work, for example not being invited, seen, listened to, read, referred to, or finding that someone else has taken credit for their work (Swedish Research Council, 2021).

1.7 The purpose of this report

Regardless of research area or position, women seem systematically to face more challenges than men, in a recurring pattern that risks becoming fatal to their careers (Swedish Research Council, 2021) and slowly breaking down those who are subjected to them (Husu, 2005). This report examines the psychosocial work environments of women and men and the health risks and career obstacles that they encounter in their work. Conditions for career and health are closely linked, and both are firmly rooted in the psychosocial work environment: being prevented from pursuing a career despite hard work and investment can increase pressure and lead to ill health, and the pressure, workload and resources the psychosocial work environment presents have an impact on both one's potential and motivation to pursue a career.

2 Results: Gender equality in the shadow of uncertainty

Here we present new results on the subject of women's and men's conditions regarding health and career development opportunities. The data was collected through a survey and through interviews that all SULF members were invited to complete and participate in during the autumn of 2020. The survey was answered by 5 446 professionally active members, which is a response rate of 31 per cent. Just over half (55 per cent) of these respondents were women. Of the hundreds of members who responded to advertisements and information that they wished to be interviewed, women made up the majority. A selection was made with the aim of obtaining as varied a pool of interviewees as possible. Of the 54 PhD-qualified researchers and university teachers interviewed, 32 were women and 22 men, with a fairly even gender distribution among different positions and forms of employment. For a more detailed description of the material and methods, see SULF (2021a).

2.1 Higher education's two classes

The interviews provide a picture of a two-tiered higher education sector, where researchers and university teachers, regardless of gender, are treated differently depending on their type of employment. It is reported that there is a "huge difference" between different positions where "researchers are some type of second-class employee" (Man 1). This differentiation can manifest itself in concrete ways in the allocation of resources from the higher education institution, for example by giving temporary and permanent employees rooms in different corridors, or temporary and fixed term employees not having the same access to equipment and infrastructure as permanent employees as a matter of course.

”

I wanted some bookshelves (...) and I got them in the end, but then she said that yes, we don't invest much in external researchers because they come and go so fast; they soon disappear. (Woman 1)

We are more a disturbing factor than a resource, we who have recently qualified. (...) waiting for us to leave, for there to be empty rooms. (Woman 2)

There are signs that academia has become a place where it is easy for some people to feel they are "better" than others (Woman 3), that "some are helped, others not" (Woman 4), where conflicts between permanent and fixed-term staff "can be felt in the walls" (Woman 1) and friction arises between fixed-term and permanent employees based on influence or power over longer-term issues.

2.2 Overshadowed gender equality issues

Although some men do not consider themselves entitled to complain about their employment conditions, work environment and funding because they are, after all, the "privileged" male (Man 8), and although a number of men consider women to be in many ways more disadvantaged by the conditions in the workplace, there is also the view that there is a "gender aspect behind all decisions" (Man 2) in certain areas, which gives women greater opportunities to secure certain research grants. This is confirmed

by women who report that male colleagues and superiors believe that, as women, they would have a greater chance of obtaining certain research grants.

Men perceive their workplace as more gender-equal than women. Of the men, 86 per cent believe that women and men are treated equally to a large extent in the workplace, a view that a smaller proportion of women (63 per cent) agree with (Figure 3). Of the women, 11 per cent answer that women and men are treated equally in the workplace to a small or very small degree, an opinion that only just over three per cent of their male colleagues share.

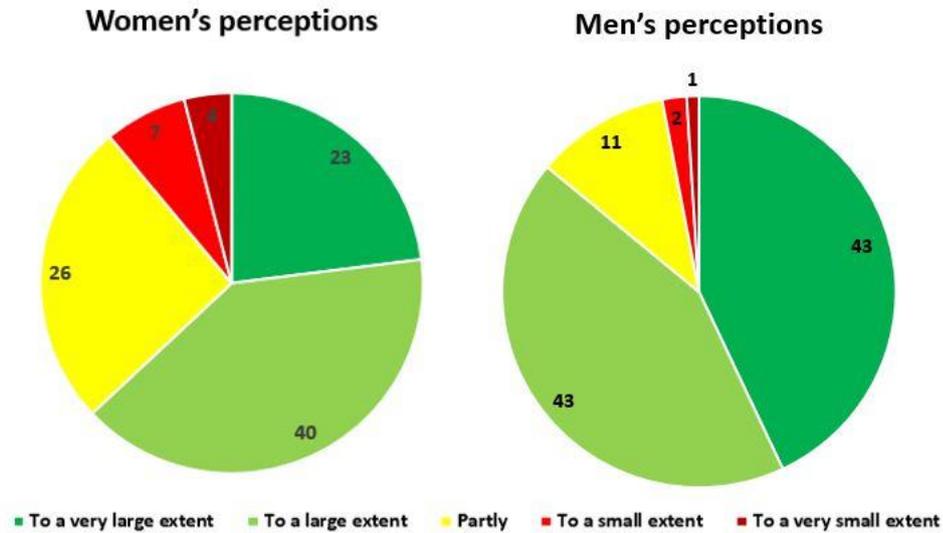


Figure 3: The extent to which women and men are treated equally in the workplace, according to women and men respectively. Percentage (%) within each gender that responded on a scale from “very small” to “very large”.

Furthermore, 22 per cent of women report that they have been subjected to unpleasant or offensive actions that are difficult to defend themselves against, (i.e. bullying), at some point in the last 12 months. The corresponding figure for men is 16 per cent. Almost twice as many women (n = 111) as men (n = 67) report being bullied once a month or more often. For both women and men, it is mainly colleagues or superiors who are responsible for these unpleasant or offensive actions.

Defending others can mean that you have to come into conflict with powerful figures in the workplace. Defending your staff can create conflicts that ultimately lead to you looking for opportunities at another workplace.

” If I had never received the money and if I had never had a research team, I would have just continued to try to protect myself [from] sexual harassment and (...) discrimination due to not being Swedish. (Woman 5).

2.3 Treatment

Lack of equality can manifest itself in unequal opportunities for promotion or career development, in a distribution of tasks that creates different conditions for women and men to be able to do their jobs and experience well-being, but also in subtle signs of

women's and men's power and dependence relationships. In the interviews, women talk about injustices based on the fact that they are women in a way that is not echoed by men's reported experience of being men in academia. For example, the lack of women in senior positions is perceived as disadvantageous to women with regard to decision-making and allocation of work tasks. Furthermore, women perceive themselves to be overlooked and uninvited when it comes to collaborations, despite the fact that they are "working themselves to death" and that "it's women who are pulling in the money" (Woman 6). Women more often report extra work with, for example, administration, teaching and support to colleagues at the expense of meritorious tasks:

There are people who do their teaching a little half-heartedly and never volunteer for things or get involved in the department, I believe, to push it forward and so on, and then it's easier to focus on your career, then you qualify as a docent faster. It's often men who do so, at least in my workplace, and so we're a bunch of women who toil away and take on assignments as directors of studies. It's such a classic trap for women. (Woman 7)

Women feel that they are treated differently by men, in a way that does not correspond to men's experience of being treated by women, for example in interactions with managers "when he cuts me off in a way that he doesn't do with my male colleagues" (Woman 8), and in the way male colleagues take credit for work, take over seminars and are perceived to assert their ownership of results and research. It can be easy to write off such experiences as one-off events that can and should be dealt with by the victim themselves and that they are responsible.



I have worked very hard on my status and that it should not be ok to steal [ideas and achievements] from me. (Woman 6)

2.4 Allocation of resources

That promotion is based on merit is a matter that both men and women call into question. Appointments, promotion and recruitment are perceived as "corrupt" (Man 3), where they would like someone who "grew up in the department" or "who follows in the professor's footsteps and tries to do the same things" (Man 4), someone who "the male professors have, as it were, nurtured, developed, cultivated (...) and to whom they would much rather have given the money to than to me" (Woman 1). Decisions are also perceived to be made on arbitrary grounds, for example that a high degree of collaboration with other researchers can be seen as a sign of a lack of independence for women but not for men.

The fierce competition may cause institutions to prefer to invest in "safe cards" that will attract funding and that will be published to a greater extent, and the risk is that the safe cards will be men:

The safe cards are the ones that have received support from their supervisors to learn how to publish and to build all their networks, and then things happen fast. When they team up, then it goes fast (...) and then you get so incredibly lonely as a woman. (Woman 6)

There is also the risk that prerequisites for promotion or career development are distributed according to criteria other than merits, for example the relationship a person has with those in positions of power:

There is a lot of patronage in this system (...) It is very unclear why they favour some people over others. (Woman 1)

When resources are allocated internally within a higher education institution, people perceive that power lies in the hands of those who want the best for their "friends" (Woman 6). The institutions and departments are viewed as quite "problematic" in how they allocate resources (Woman 1):

The department is not allowed to decide who receives external funding, so there is an opportunity for people like me, who come from the outside, to show that we are actually very good and can be given research funding and therefore stay on (...). So you can counter many power structures as it's not the departments themselves that are allowed to choose. (Woman 1)

2.5 Men's and women's work environments in different forms of employment

Of those who completed the survey, women are in the majority among the permanent employees (54 per cent). However, a significantly lower proportion of women (77 per cent) are permanently employed than men (82 per cent).

Fixed-term employed women and men report no significant differences regarding their work environments, (see Appendix and Figure 4). However, permanently employed women experience significantly higher demands, weaker influence and less sense of social community than permanently employed men, (Figure 4 and Appendix). While permanently employed men report higher influence over their work than those with fixed-term employment, women report no such difference.

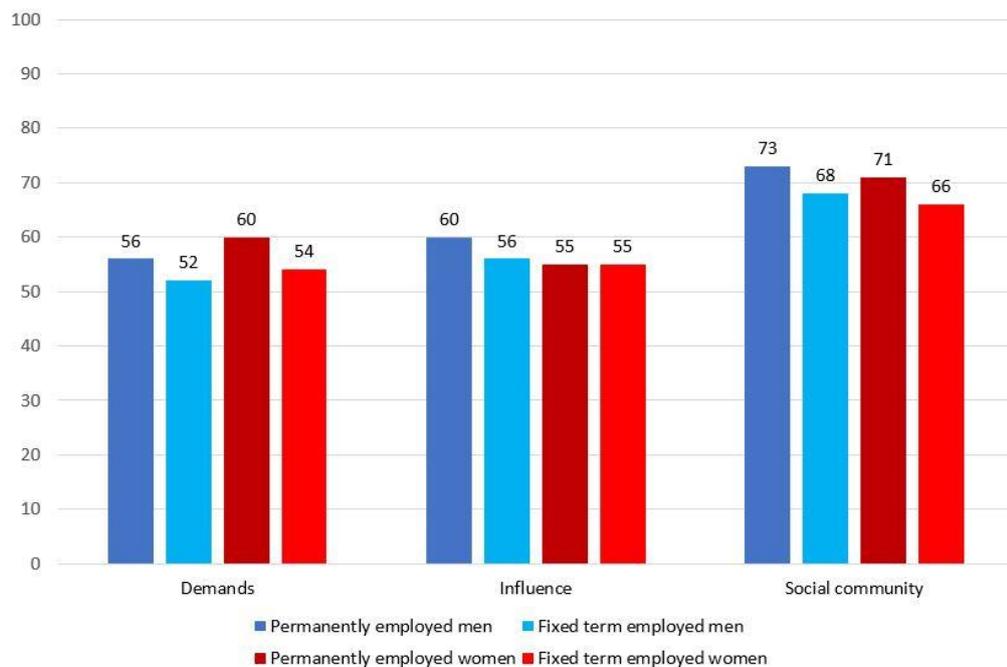


Figure 4: Psychosocial work environment¹ for women and men with permanent and fixed-term employment.

Logistic regression analyses the likelihood of different groups to have an outcome in comparison with a reference group. Compared with permanently employed men, all the categories compared above run a significantly increased risk of experiencing high levels of stress, but primarily men and women with fixed-term employment: the average fixed-term employed woman runs twice as high a risk as a permanently employed man, and the risk for a fixed-term employed man is almost equally high. Women who are permanently employed also run a higher risk of stress compared with permanently employed men. This risk is partly explained by the work environment: the higher demands and the lower degree of influence that permanently employed women report compared with men.

¹ Survey questions about psychosocial work environment taken from The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire: Kristensen et al., 2005; Berthelsen et al., 2020).

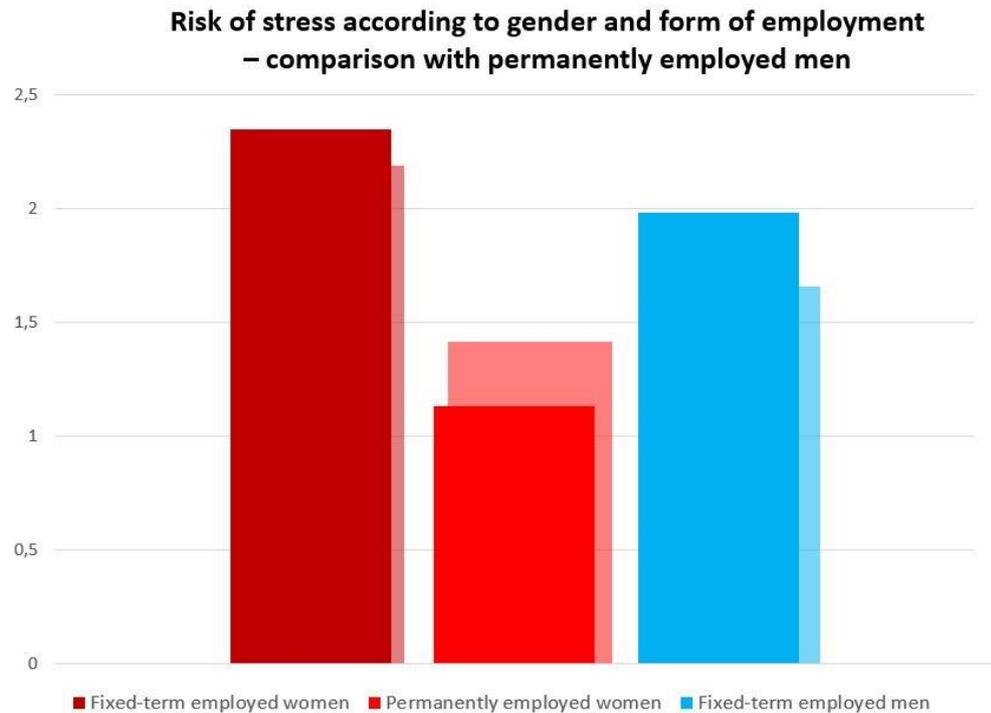


Figure 5: The risk of stress in comparison with the reference group of permanently employed men. A woman on a fixed-term contract faces more than twice the risk of stress compared with a permanently employed man. The risk is also almost twice as great for fixed-term employed men. The risk is also significantly higher for women who are permanently employed, but this risk can largely be explained by the work environment and the significance of demands and influence with regard to stress. Solid bars: the risk of high stress levels without taking the work environment into account. Transparent bars: the risk of high stress when the analysis has taken the work environment into account.

Women and men in some positions perceive themselves as having similar workloads and stress levels. Workloads and stress burdens for male doctoral candidates, lecturers, postdoctoral fellows, associate senior lecturers and associate professors are as great as those of their female colleagues. On the other hand, there is a significant difference between women and men who are employed as administrative staff, senior lecturers, professors and, when it comes to demands made on them, researchers, as women in these positions report a poorer work environment than men (Figure 6).

	<i>Demands on women/men</i>	<i>Stress for women/men</i>
Administrative staff	53/46**	45/38*
Professors	63/56***	47/43*
Associate professors	61/57	49/49
Senior lecturers	62/56***	54/47***
Associate senior lecturers	62/59	56/57
Researchers	61/57*	54/51
Postdoctoral fellows	54/51	58/55
Doctoral candidates	51/52	59/57
Lecturers	56/54	52/49

Figure 6: Women employed as researchers, senior lecturers, professors and administrative staff report higher workloads than their male counterparts. Women employed as senior lecturers, professors and administrative staff report more stress than their male counterparts. Women who are employed as doctoral candidates, lecturers, postdocs, associate senior lecturers, professors and associate professors do not report significantly higher demands or stress than men in similar positions. Statistical significance (t-test): * $p < .05$; ** $p > .01$; *** $p > .001$.

2.5.1 Distribution of work according to gender

In this questionnaire, women and men do not report significant differences in the proportion of working time they spend on teaching, research and administration (see Appendix). However, it can be problematic to place too much emphasis on what percentage of a person's working time is spent on each task. Some tasks require more time than is formally assigned to them. For example, teaching is reported as taking up significantly more time than the formal distribution of hours indicates, which has an impact on other tasks: "Students get in touch and exams need be marked, so what you can reallocate time from is research " (Woman 7). While some adapt their efforts to what they believe the task requires, others adapt to what they are paid for and what they believe that the schedule allows:

Shall I spend the time I am allocated on this, or do I want to give the students what I think they need and thus reduce my research time? (...)
I feel that I limit myself in my teaching. I know I could give more, but I'm not willing to do it. I'm not willing to sacrifice my own research. (Man 7)



I booked in extra meetings that I didn't get paid for so that I didn't need to fail them. (Woman12)

2.6 Who has the time they need?

Central to the question of workload, working tempo and the perception of stress is time. Women report a significantly greater conflict between work and private life than men. Such a conflict in this context means that work takes up so much of a person's time and energy that it negatively affects their private sphere, and that the demands of work interfere with their private life.

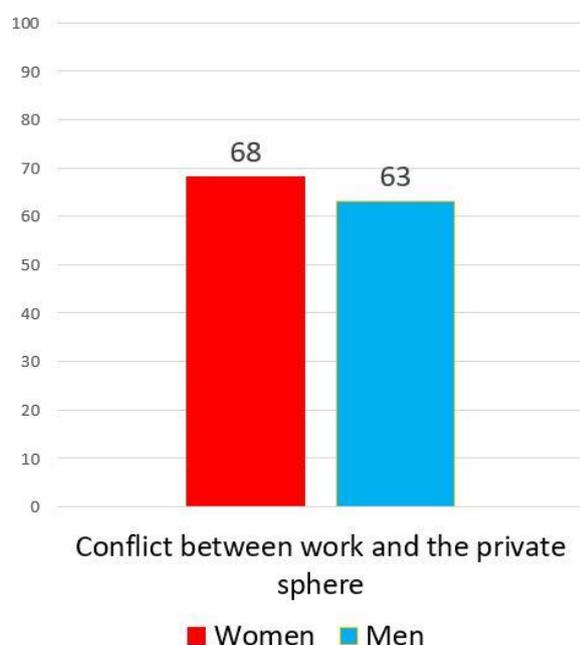


Figure 7: Women report that the time and energy that their work requires impacts their private sphere in a negative way to a greater extent than men. Statistically significant difference ($p > .001$).

Rather than women generally being more affected by this conflict or valuing their leisure time and life outside more highly than men do, the conflict between work and leisure time seems to be due to their working hours being largely eaten up by extra tasks or teaching.

Teaching one hundred per cent - then I can't work full time, then I have to work overtime, so it's difficult to teach 100 per cent when you have children (...). It's such a poor allocation of working hours. (Woman14)

Time is also a fundamental resource for the capacity to apply for research money: you "have to spend a lot of time on it" (Woman 9), it is "a huge investment of time" (Woman 5), "if you are to write competitive applications, you need to spend quite a lot of time on it, and that time is very difficult to find" (Man 5). You find the resource of time wherever you can and use it by talking about applications over lunches or grabbing whatever time you can by doing other things while sitting in meetings (Woman 17).

Those are the rules of the game, but it would be nice if you could somehow stop time in order to write that application. (Woman 7)

When people cannot freeze time and need more of it to be able to apply for external funding and to have the chance to work on their research, they use their leisure time to write research grant applications:



I do it during the summer holidays, for example, or during the Christmas holidays when I'm supposed to be having time off. I don't have time to do it during working hours. (Woman13)

When a deadline is approaching, I mean it takes precedence over everything I do so... it takes time. Whether it's actually working time or leisure time, it takes time. (Woman 12)

I write [research funding applications] in my spare time. I don't have time to do it during working hours. (Woman 8)

I don't get time for it [writing applications], so I do it in my spare time. That is one of the reasons why I work more than a 40-hour week. (Woman 10)

It requires me to sit at home and write applications. (Woman 11)

The fact that there is no time to apply for research funding during working hours limits the opportunities to apply for research funding not only to when other tasks allow it, but also to "when I can fit it around the family" (Woman 15):

It takes up a lot of leisure time so of course it impacts the work environment so that it affects the balance between work and leisure. (Woman 15)

Anyone who makes an active choice not to work more than 40 hours a week or even to reduce their working hours, for example to prioritise their health or family, is faced with a different kind of pressure "precisely because you remain in the same performance-focused environment" and are thus constantly compared with people who work more (Man 5), and where you might need to work at weekends "because those I write with could only work at the weekends "(Woman 12).

It seems to have become accepted that the work of a researcher and a university teacher is not just a job but a lifestyle – something that is not just suitable for a person who has the skills, merits and experience, but who also has the private situation to allow it: "The more flexible you are, the more secure you are" (Man 6). The uncertainty that arises from the conditions regarding employment and funding is a "huge insecurity factor", especially when you need an income because you have a family to think about (Woman 15). Without the right conditions outside work, it can seem difficult to continue pursuing a career in higher education:

And then I have a husband who has a good job. Otherwise I wouldn't carry on (...). If I'd been single, I wouldn't have been able to do that. (Woman 1)

Those who cannot or do not want to prioritise work above all else also do not have the chance to advance to higher positions, which raises the question of who careers in higher education should be for: "Is it only those who see their job as a vocation?" (Man 5).

”

I really want to do research. So it was a bit of an abyss to feel that I really wanted it (...), wanted to take the difficult path, and it was a bit like 'oh no how long can you keep it up?' (Woman 9)

3 Discussion

These stories of treatment and injustice, primarily from women, only represent a few voices, and the differences in women's and men's work environments may seem small, but the results still show a clear pattern of women generally carrying a greater burden and facing more obstacles than men, in the same way that uncertainty leads to systematic risks in the work environment for employees with differing working conditions.

3.1 The overshadowed issue

Studies have consistently found that women at universities and colleges generally have a poorer work environment, (see, for example, Swedish Council for Higher Education (UHR), 2014; Swedish Research Council, 2021; Husu, 2005). The fact that men in this study perceive the workplace as more equal than women could be an expression of the privilege of the privileged to be unaware of their privileges. It can also be easy to interpret discrimination as isolated events, both for those who are affected and for those who stand by and watch it happen. One likely reason why gender equality is so seldom brought to light, however, is that the problem is overshadowed by injustices and work environment issues that affect men as well as women – not because of gender but because they are in various ways precariously employed and thus "interchangeable" (SULF, 2021a; OECD, 2021). Employees with fixed-term employment report poorer working environments with regard to social community and influence, and also feel they are treated differently than permanent employees – and this report shows that both women and men are affected. Efforts should be made to reduce the uncertainty in the higher education sector and its negative consequences for both men and women, but the problems are not mutually exclusive. Rather, they have a common foundation in academia's power structures and the processes that allocate scarce but attractive resources such as time and funding for research. A more comprehensive understanding also requires consideration of the different conditions that women and men in different positions and with different degrees of insecurity work under (Figure 8).

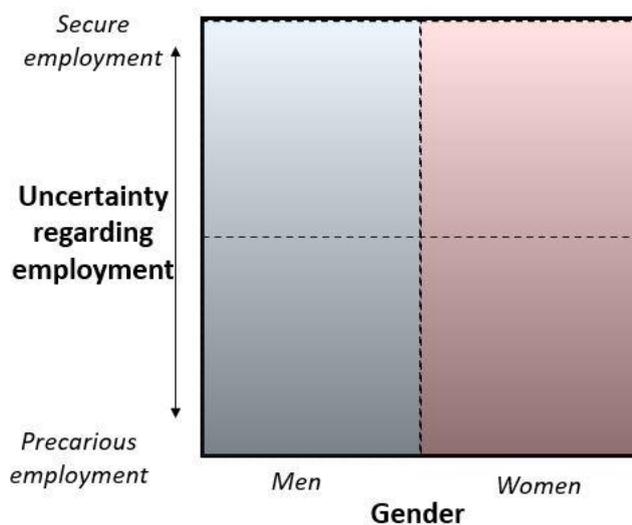


Figure 8: The horizontal division into different degrees of insecurity needs to be supplemented with an understanding of the systematically different conditions under which women and men work throughout their careers.

To understand the problem of inequality as well as the overshadowing uncertainty in academia, the concept of intersectionality may be helpful. This refers to the analysis of how people are embedded in more than one social dimension that express different power relationships, (e.g. gender or class), and how these overlap. Having power over

someone in this context means a relationship where one person can more or less get another person to do what they want regardless of the other person's own interests. Power relationships arise through dependency, where the one with control over resources the other is dependent on also has the power to reward or punish by regulating the supply.

People with insecure employment in higher education – both permanent and fixed-term employees – are in a dependency situation. Both formal and informal power structures determine the future of their employment as well as work tasks and their scope. Regardless of whether a female researcher or university teacher is insecurely employed or can feel secure in her employment, this report confirms previous findings that, because of her gender, she risks being penalised by being denied resources: promotion or positions that carry status and respect; a salary that corresponds to that of men; fewer opportunities for research funding; less influence; and less access to work tasks that are meritorious for career development (UKÄ, 2020; Statistics Sweden, 2020; Swedish Research Council, 2021). As a fixed-term employee, she shares some of these penalties with men, but not all – if she is a senior lecturer or a professor, fewer of her male colleagues share the burden she needs to bear in order to get her share of the resources.

As they rise up the hierarchy and are granted permanent employment, for example as a senior lecturer or a professor, women risk being disadvantaged in a way that men do not. This leads to the danger of women being disadvantaged on multiple grounds and thus also for a longer period of time.

3.2 A path with more obstacles and a heavier burden

Women carry a greater workload than men. Permanently employed women experience the highest demands, and it is mainly in positions such as senior lecturer and professor that women experience a higher workload and a higher level of stress than men. A perceived insecurity and fixed-term employment can lead a person to take on too much for fear of saying no, being punished for it or not being able to bring in enough money to cover their own salary as a result, (SULF, 2021a), but it is highly likely that long-term operational issues will fall to people who also probably consider themselves to have a future in the department in the long term. When similar tasks are offered to and accepted by women to a greater extent than men, (Kalm, 2019; UHR 2014), the workload for female senior lecturers and professors increases in comparison with that of their male colleagues.

The average woman in academia needs to carry a heavier rucksack than the average man, and often her path is strewn with more and more challenging obstacles (Figure 9). This may explain why it takes longer for women to become professors than it takes men (Swedish Research Council 2021) – a lighter load means you can run faster. Even at the top of the ladder, at the level of professor, women continue to be weighed down more than men. The extra burden can consist of:

- Tasks that are not “counted” or meritorious despite the fact that they contribute to the work of the department, invisible work or what have been called career-derailing tasks (UHR 2014) or academic housework (Kalm, 2019).
- The effort involved in “working on” their status, preventing others from taking credit for the work done or stealing ideas, dealing with unfair processes for promotion (SULF, 2018) and demeaning attitudes in daily work situations (Husu, 2005).
- “Subject-specific” (Swedish Research Council, 2021) characteristics such as the time and energy a high proportion of teaching entails (SULF, 2021a).
- Lack of research funding that “buys time” and thus enables people to do research and apply for research funding during working hours (SULF,2021a).

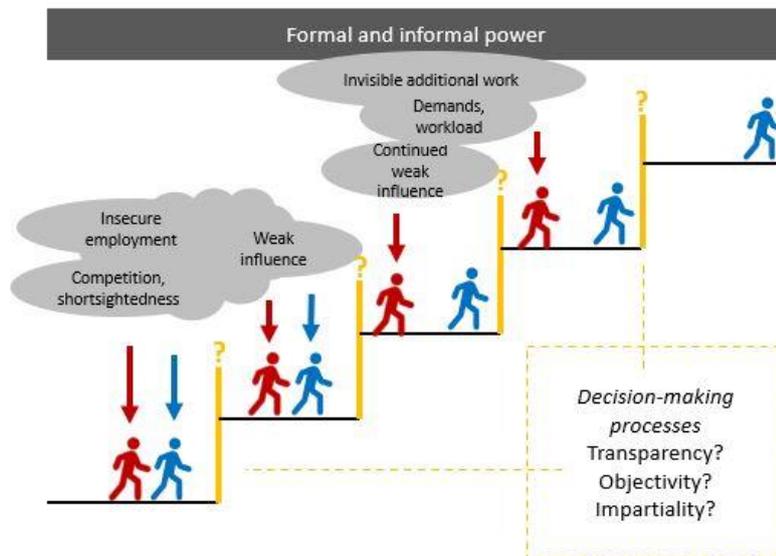


Figure 9: The burden that women (red) and men (blue) bear on the different career steps in academia and the often opaque and difficult-to-navigate decision-making processes that lead from one level to another and risk giving different opportunities to women and men. While women and men at the lower levels share the experience of being replaceable and being unable to exert influence or become part of the permanently employed community, women's and men's perceptions differ higher up the hierarchy. Female senior lecturers and professors report greater demands and more stress than their male counterparts, and as little influence as when they were fixed-term employees. Over time, this results in women carrying a heavier burden – often for a longer period of time.

The fact that women report working in a weaker social community than men, experience a lower degree of influence over their work and feel treated and assessed differently to men may be due to interactions in the workplace where women are excluded from collaborations or decisions to a greater extent than men and because women are judged differently as people and researchers than men (Husu, 2005; Swedish Research Council, 2021).

3.3 Who can keep the fire burning and whose gets extinguished?

The burden they have to bear and the obstacles they have to overcome have an impact on a person trying to reach the top. There is a danger that these handicaps suffocate commitment and lead to a reassessment of how far people really want to go and, in the worst-case scenario, can wear them down and break them (Figure 10).

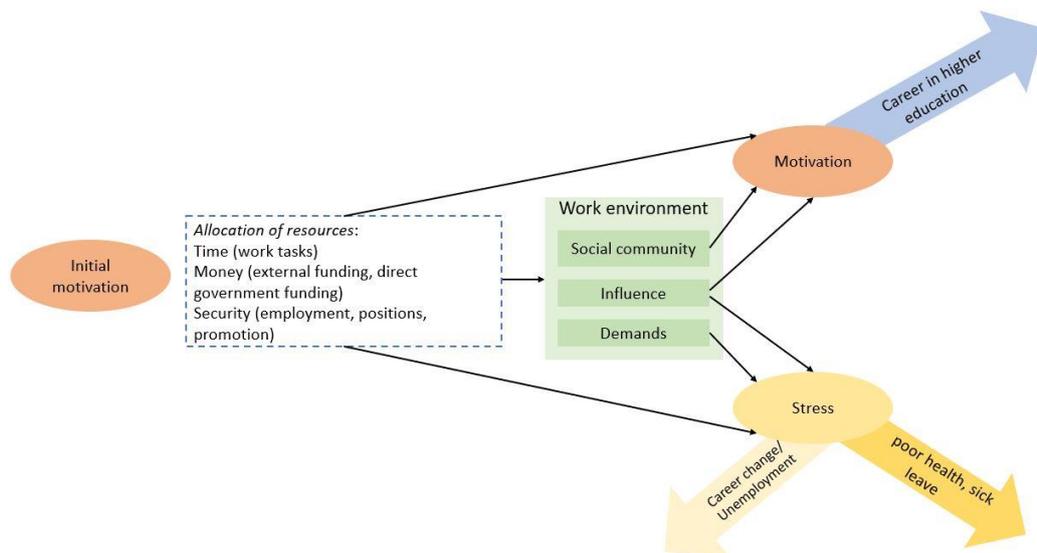


Figure 10: The importance of equal and fair processes and structures for the allocation of resources and of work environment for careers and health in academia. Most people choose a career in higher education with an initial and internal motivation. Distribution of scarce resources impacts the work environment, which in turn can drive motivation – or cause stress. Women are systematically exposed to greater demands over a long period of time, and they perceive themselves as having a less influence and weaker involvement in social community at work. This increases their risk of stress-related mental illnesses such as depression or fatigue syndrome and slows their careers. Leaving academia is one way to prevent poor health.

3.3.1 Women face greater risks to their mental health

Overall, women's work environments at universities and colleges are consistently marked by greater risk of mental illness, such as depression and fatigue syndrome, compared with those of men. The risk of such ill health increases in tandem with workload and pressure, (both cognitive and emotional), and it increases the less influence you have over your own work and the poorer social community you feel at work (Harvey et al., 2017; SBU, 2014). These risks are well established, and women and men are equally vulnerable. The fact that more women than men in the Swedish labour market suffer from work-related problems such as mental illness is simply due to the fact that they face more risks than men do – since women and men work in different areas, work with different tasks within the same areas, are systematically treated differently and have fewer and different opportunities (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2013; 2016; 2020; 2021). Higher education is no exception: it reflects the labour market as a whole.

3.3.2 Women denied more motivating resources

The distribution of resources and work tasks and the degree of influence, social community and cooperation that people have also affect motivation and job satisfaction (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Fagerlind et al., 2013). Despite the stressful work environment, researchers and university teachers report a burning commitment to their work, a commitment that can often be assumed to derive from their interest in the subject as such rather than being the result of a motivating work environment. However, women generally experience lower levels of job satisfaction than men (SULF, 2021a). Instead of nurturing and nourishing this inherent commitment that is a resource for both research and teaching and in many ways enables the work of the department to continue, time constraints, competition for scarce resources and constant uncertainty put it in jeopardy (SULF, 2021a). This report shows that, to a greater extent than men, women work in an environment that risks stifling their commitment: they have less

access to resources such as time, money, security and respect and face greater demands, have less influence and feel less included in the social community than men. Like a fire that is suffocated by heavy logs and insufficient oxygen and heat, the burning commitment of many researchers and university teachers in higher education is at risk of being suffocated – but women are systematically at greater risk.

3.3.3 Having to leave in order to save yourself

That both women and men are welcomed into academia and enjoy equal rights remains an illusion as long as women systematically face poorer conditions which mean that women are at greater risk of ill health and face more career obstacles than men. As long as the structural problems remain hidden, it can be argued that people are "free to choose" to stop climbing the ladder or to leave academia altogether rather than it being a consequence of several years of fewer resources, more obstacles and greater demands.

3.3.4 Who has time?

A picture emerges of a working life that requires complete commitment. Time is highlighted as the most important resource for being able to do a good job, in both teaching and research (SULF, 2021a). External funding is used to "buy time", to gain control over one's own time, to reduce the proportion of time taken up by the pressure of teaching rather than doing research, acquiring career development qualifications or writing research applications. Time is invested with the aim of increasing security, for example by applying for vacancies and positions. The high workload that women experience compared with men, combined with women receiving less external research funding, (Swedish Research Council, 2021), systematically gives women less time.

The fact that women have less time increases their workload, because more needs to be done in less time, and it requires time to be taken from the private sphere to compensate for the lack of time available at work. The fact that women have less time compromises their ability to apply for research funding, which in turn prevents them from having more time in the future (Figure 11).

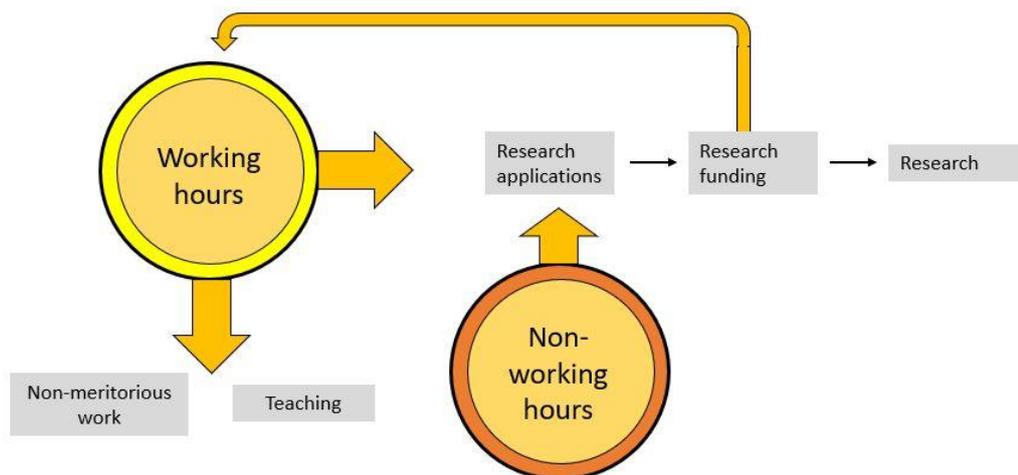


Figure 11: Time as a basic resource. Distribution of work tasks affects the ability to acquire more resources, such as research funding. Women report a conflict between work and private life to a greater extent, and risk having to devote non-working time to be able to compete on equal terms due to heavy workloads and "invisible" work.

3.3.5 The ideal researcher/university teacher

The last resort to secure the time necessary to do your job and pursue a career, but which the employer does not offer, is to "borrow" from your private time – perhaps with the intention to pay yourself back someday when the situation is less busy and stressful. Women report a greater conflict between work and private life than men, a situation that is confirmed by the Swedish Research Council (2021), for example, which found that women find it more difficult to take care of young children while trying to pursue a career in higher education. When women need to take care of academic housework and invisible, non-meritorious work in the workplace to a greater extent than men, women also need to use more of their private time both to complete tasks that belong to the "ordinary working day" (SULF, 2021) and to acquire career development qualifications, write research applications and write articles (Figure 10).

When insecurity and taking your workload home has been normalised, it is not only question of who can best do their job and develop their career in the time that the employer pays for, but also of who has the most compatible private sphere. When work also requires private time, it is no longer just a matter of whether you see your work as a calling or not – it is about whether you have anything else that requires your attention outside work. It demands that you are a researcher or university teacher without any private baggage.

The ideal worker is always available for paid work, has no family obligations and is ready to devote themselves wholeheartedly to their work (Acker, 2006; Blair-Loy et al., 2015). The ideal researcher is competition-oriented and resilient, prepared to place scientific progress above all else, dedicated to research around the clock and as flexible as an entrepreneur in their efforts to bend according to the wishes of the funders (Salminen-Karlsson, Wolfram & Almgren, 2018). A career in higher education is an option for people who enjoy security outside work that can counterbalance the great uncertainty and for people who wish to and are able to sacrifice their private lives for an academic career. Only a person who has an alternative career path outside higher education as a safety net or a partner with a good job and a steady income can counterbalance the security that the employer does not offer.

3.3.6 Excuses

Conditions for applying for and receiving research funding, and thus time, are crucial for the work environment and for people's health and careers – and the conditions differ markedly between women and men. Power is exercised not only at workplace and organisational level, but also when decisions are made at national level on which subjects and what kind of research is to be rewarded with funding. There is "a structure that can contribute to financial inequality between women and men in that women de facto have access to a smaller amount of research funding than men" (Swedish Research Council, 2015). This structure is not an excuse but an explanation. The fact that more men than women are granted funding through excellence initiatives based on the fact that fewer women apply for funding (Swedish Research Council, 2019) becomes an expression of discrimination in an academic environment where research funding plays such a crucial role.

Discrimination takes place not only in the different conditions for women and men who apply for external funding, (for example due to workload, task allocation and time constraints), but also in which research subject areas are considered to be worthy of research grants. Subject areas are not research-heavy or teaching-heavy per se; they acquire such status through the value that society places on them. Just as we see how parts of the labour market that have come to be dominated by women are valued less highly than areas dominated by men, we see that women-dominated subjects within higher education are not considered as requiring or facilitating research to the same extent as male-dominated subject areas.

3.4 Striving for gender equality in an environment of insecurity and scarcity

Gender equality is created through power relationships that are recreated every day in formal rules and informal norms that form the basis for the distribution of resources and are maintained in interactions between people. The general shortage of time, the stiff competition for scarce research funds and the constant uncertainty affect not only individual researchers and university teachers directly through, for example, workloads and stress (SULF, 2021a) but also through the social dynamics of work and the will and the real opportunities to protest:

- Envy. The fierce competition for scarce but highly sought-after resources risks creating a culture of fear and envy. Men and women can trigger different reactions when they are considered “lucky” in situations with limited but sought-after resources (Hochschild, 1997): women's success can be seen as favouritism rather than the result of competence and effort. This not only undermines women's performance but also risks passivity from management – a fear that anything that favours women will be seen as fulfilling some kind of quota.
- Failure of meritocracy. A situation of scarce resources and insecurity that claims to be a meritocracy can also hinder protest: complaining about conditions, injustices or even discrimination in an environment where so many people are in competition can be seen as a sign that you do not have what it takes and therefore do not deserve better.
- Not wanting to cause trouble. Precarious employment conditions and fixed-term positions make it difficult for individuals to protest. Being considered difficult or troublesome can mean that your employment is not extended or that you are not included in the next research project.

An ever-increasing proportion of externally funded research not only increases the risk of a steadily deteriorating work environment and conditions for fixed-term employees (OECD, 2021; SULF, 2021a), it can also actively prevent gender equality and even excuse discrimination under the meritocratic ideal and the fierce competition for scarce resources.

3.4.1 Individuals cannot make themselves equal

Achieving sustainable and long-term results requires changes in the management and distribution of resources that affect women's and men's working conditions and working environments. The responsibility for changing working conditions and the working environment lies with those in the workplace, (Arbetsmiljöverket, 2017), but is often placed on the individual who suffers from unfairness, discrimination or harassment: a responsibility to take action or to accept, for example by "dealing with" domination techniques or adapting their own behaviour according to the situation (Husu, 2005). Both acting and accepting require energy and place an additional burden on a person who is already significantly burdened. Placing the responsibility for solving or managing a structural problem on the individual is an expression of denial or "magical" thinking (Smail, 2005) which might aggravate the situation for the victim, effectively prevent the structural change required to prevent similar problems from occurring in the future and result in whole groups continuing to be systematically affected. Individuals cannot make themselves equal.

3.4.2 What sort of academia do we want to pass on to future generations?

Researchers and university teachers leave a legacy, not only through the knowledge passed on to students and the research that benefits the research community and the

world, but also through the academia and workplace that is handed down to future generations. In many ways we inherit a context of processes and structures that reward certain behaviours and penalise others (Archer, 1995). Those who work at universities and colleges today have not created the current conditions, and they have few opportunities to act in a way that does not sustain the prevailing structure. Playing by the rules of the game can come at a small cost for the individual – but it means that the status quo is maintained. Actions have costs: protesting against the level of commitment required by only working the hours you are paid for or not giving 100 per cent in everything you do will mean that you will be left behind or that you will let down people that you are responsible for. Speaking out or not allying yourself with powerful people can lead to you ruining your own career or being frozen out. Choosing not to pursue research that you do not consider important in favour of a more difficult matter that will require more time may result in no funding and thus a poorer work environment, fewer publications and fewer career opportunities.

It is only when more people discover that they have a common interest in changing the structure that things can change and something new be can created. This report highlights how women risk being disadvantaged by a structure that disadvantages both women and men, and that everyone affected by the insecurity and scarcity of resources has reason to work together to bring about change.

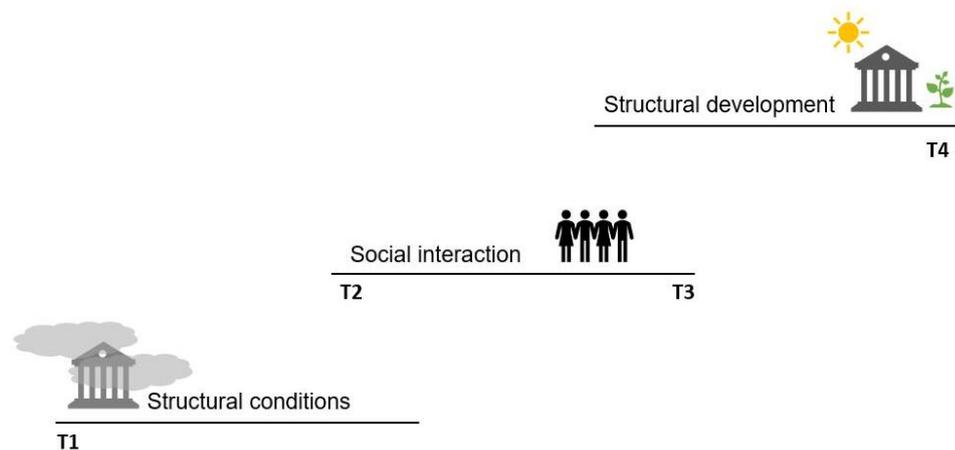


Figure 12: Our actions are punished and rewarded according to prevailing structural conditions. For change to occur and structural development to take place over time (from T1 to T4), it is not enough for individuals to act. Only when they come together and identify common interests can structural change take place that changes the conditions for different actions and behaviours. Based on Archer, 1995.

3.5 Conclusions

This report confirms that the problem of gender inequality in academia persists. Women work under psychosocial conditions which pose a higher risk of ill health compared with men and provide fewer incentives to pursue a career and actual opportunities to do so. Gender equality must be placed in relation to the increased uncertainty and insecurity surrounding work in higher education, i.e. to the consolidation of "classes" of university teachers and researchers, depending on how insecure employees feel that they are. There is a danger that these two dimensions of power and dependency relationships result in a situation where women will be disadvantaged over time and throughout their careers, both as insecure employees and as women.

In addition to basic preconditions such as transparency and fairness regarding promotion and appointments, distribution of resources and continuous work to ensure that women and men are treated equally and with the same respect in their daily work,

this report identifies the following points as ways to achieve a more gender equal sector:

- Ensure that women and men have similar workloads and pressure in practice. This requires a critical examination of how tasks, both non-meritorious and meritorious, are distributed between women and men, both within and between workplaces, departments and subject areas. Work should not require more time than is paid for by the employer, either for women or men.
- Ensure that women and men have equal opportunities in practice to conduct research. Due to the large proportion of external funding, this means that women and men need to have the same amount of time available to write research applications and the same amount of external funding to apply for. External funding is a prerequisite for (a still limited level of) job security, for the ability to influence one's own work and for being able to pursue a career. Health and career conditions will remain unequal as long as the employers do not ensure that there are equal opportunities for this work within the framework of working hours.



For greater gender equality in academia:

- Ensure that women and men have similar workloads and pressure in practice.
- Ensure that women and men have equal opportunities in practice to conduct research.

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Appendix

Women's and men's working time for teaching, research and administration:

<i>Percentage of working time</i>	<i>Proportion of women/men in each category</i>	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
0-20	34	31
21-40	18	21
41-60	18	19
61-80	17	18
81-100	13	11
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

<i>Percentage of working time</i>	<i>Proportion of women/men in each category</i>	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
0-20	44	43
21-40	20	22
41-60	17	16
61-80	15	14
81-100	4	5
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

<i>Percentage of working time</i>	<i>Proportion of women/men in each category</i>	
	<i>Women</i>	<i>Men</i>
0-20	58	62
21-40	24	22
41-60	11	10
61-80	5	4
81-100	2	2
<i>Total</i>	<i>100</i>	<i>100</i>

Risk of high stress levels (> median) according to gender and form of employment, demands and influence (logistical regression).

	Model 1		Model 2	
	OR	95% CI	OR	95% CI
Fixed term employed women (n = 638)	2.18	1.78-2.66	2.35	1.88-2.93
Permanently employed women (n = 2167)	1.41	1.24-1.62	1.13	0.97-1.32
Fixed term employed men (n = 413)	1.65	1.30-2.09	1.98	1.52-2.58
Demands			1.04	1.04-1.05
Influence			0.98	0.97-0.98

Permanently employed men (n = 1881): reference group. Total number in analysis n = 5099.

Model 1: risk of stress according to form of employment and gender. Model 2: risk of stress according to form of employment and gender, controlled for demands and degree of influence.

Fixed term = temporary employment, scholarship



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