

Postgraduate students on their studies and their relationships

The questionnaires included a number of questions in which the postgraduate students were asked to express their opinions about their programmes, university/higher education institution, other postgraduate students, teachers, supervisors and administrative staff. The questionnaires also included some questions about their careers after the award of their degrees. The responses to these questions are presented here. The questions are:

- What overall grade would you give your postgraduate programme up to now?
- If you had to make the choice today, would you opt to begin postgraduate studies?
- Do you want to work at your current university/higher education institution after the award of your PhD? (Not Finland)
- Would you like to work at another university/higher education institution after the award of your PhD? (Not Finland)
- Do you worry about being unemployed after you complete your postgraduate programme?
- Have you experienced different treatment because of your gender?

Positive postgraduate students

The overall grade of “good” or “excellent” is awarded by a total of 84 % of the students in Ireland to their programmes. The proportion of students in Sweden awarding the same grades is 78 %, in Finland 74 % and in Catalonia 71 %.

Most postgraduate students say that they would opt to begin postgraduate studies if they had to choose today, but 14 % in Finland and 19 % in Sweden respond “definitely not” or “probably not”. The proportion in Ireland responding in the same way is 15 % and in Catalonia 14 %.

Postgraduate students in Catalonia want to stay put

Fewer than half of the postgraduate students in Sweden and Ireland want to continue to work at their current higher education institution after the award of their PhD (table 16). On the other hand a good 76 % of the students in Catalonia say that they would like to work at their present institution. The question about wanting to work at another higher education institution evokes a positive response from less than half of the postgraduate students in Sweden. However in Ireland 65 % respond positively and in Catalonia a total of 86 %. (Students in Finland were not asked this question.)

If you put the two questions into a cross table you can see that relatively many students in Sweden want to leave the “academic world”, 34 %. Corresponding figures for Ireland are 27 % and for Catalonia 10 % (see light grey cells in table 16).

Catalonia

Do you want to work at your present university/higher education institute when you have your doctorate?	Do you want to work at another university/higher education institute when you have your doctorate?		
	Definitely not/Probably not	Probably/Definitely	Total
Definitely not/Probably not	10	15	24
Probably/Definitely	5	71	76
Total	14	86	100

Ireland

Do you want to work at your present university/higher education institute when you have your doctorate?	Do you want to work at another university/higher education institute when you have your doctorate?		
	Definitely not/Probably not	Probably/Definitely	Total
Definitely not/Probably not	27	33	60
Probably/Definitely	8	32	40
Total	35	65	100

Sweden

Do you want to work at your present university/higher education institute when you have your doctorate?	Do you want to work at another university/higher education institute when you have your doctorate?		
	Definitely not/Probably not	Probably/Definitely	Total
Definitely not/Probably not	34	18	52
Probably/Definitely	21	27	48
Total	55	45	100

Table 16. Cross tabulation of “Do you want to work at your present university/higher education institute...” and “Do you want to work at another university/higher education institute when you have your doctorate?” By country.

Two closely related questions in the Finnish study show that 19 % state that they definitely or probably not want to have a career in neither research nor in the field of teaching when they have their doctorate.

Great concern about unemployment in Catalonia

The concern about unemployment after graduation varies a great deal among postgraduate students in the different countries. Students in Catalonia, where a good 64 % express concern about unemployment, show the greatest concern (table 17). The corresponding figure for Ireland is 35 % and for Finland 32 %. Least concern is shown in Sweden, where one student in every four is worried about not finding a job.

There is great variation between the different subject fields in all the countries. The postgraduate students who worry most about unemployment are those studying Science, Mathematics and Computing, 75% in Catalonia and 45 % in Finland. In Sweden and Ireland the students on postgraduate programmes in the Humanities and Art worry most, 37 % in Sweden, 52 % in Ireland. The female students consistently report greater concern about unemployment than the men.

Subject field	Catalonia	Finland	Ireland	Sweden
Humanities and Art	64	42	52	37
Social sciences, Business and Law	55	29	28	19
Science, Mathematics and Computing	75	45	36	35
Engineering, Manufacturing and Construction	60	24	23	22
Health and Welfare	66	22	23	15
Total (all subject fields)	64	32	35	24

Table 17. Percentage respondents who express concern about unemployment by country and subject field.

Gender discrimination

One question deal with whether postgraduate students feel that they have been treated differently/discriminated because of their gender by 1) other postgraduate students, 2) teachers, 3) supervisors or 4) administrative staff.

This question was formulated differently in the different countries so that direct comparison is difficult. The students in Finland, Ireland and Sweden were able to respond on a scale of 1–7 (1= not at all, 7= to a very great extent). In Finland and Ireland the question was whether they have experienced discrimination because of their gender, while in Sweden the question was whether they have experienced different treatment because of their gender. In Catalonia the question was worded differently and the response could be either yes or no.

These responses reveal no major differences between the four different categories.

Even though the questions were worded differently, it can be seen that a consistently smaller proportion of women respond “not at all” to the question about discrimination/differentiation. Table 18 presents the responses to the question about discrimination/differentiation by supervisors.

	Catalonia		Finland		Ireland		Sweden	
	M	W	M	W	M	W	M	W
1 (Not at all)	No=99	No=97	94	79	95	88	88	70
2			3	10	1	3	5	11
3			1	4	1	3	2	5
4			2	2	2	2	3	5
5			1	3	0	1	1	4
6			0	1	0	2	1	3
7 (To a very great extent)	Yes= 1	Yes= 3	0	1	0	2	0	2
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

Table 18. Discrimination from supervisors by country and gender.