

A gender perspective on the global migration of scholars

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International recognition is key to many successful academic careers, but research published today in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* shows female scientific researchers are less internationally

mobile than their male counterparts, although the gender gap has shrunk.

Scientists tend to move from one country to another to advance their careers. But researchers from Oxford's Leverhulme Center for Demographic Science and the Max Planck Institute for Demographic Research in Germany, have found female researchers continue to be under-represented among internationally mobile researchers. In addition to moving less, female researchers also originate from and move to fewer countries, as well as migrate shorter distances, than their [male counterparts](#).

The study shows that [gender inequality](#) among mobile academic scientists varies across countries and over time on a global scale, and it reveals how it affects the demographic composition of the scientific workforce across the origin and the destination countries. The researchers provide a global and dynamic view on the global migration of scholars by [gender](#).

According to the paper, "While the U.S. remained the leading academic destination worldwide, the shares of both female and male scholarly inflows to that country declined from around 25% to 20% over the study period, partially due to the growing relevance of China."

Lead author Xinyi Zhao, from the Leverhulme Center and the Max Planck Institute adds, "Current literature points to gender inequality in science across countries. But a lack of relevant data on the migration of scholars has made it difficult to answer whether male and female scientists migrate equally."

Co-author Ridhi Kashyap from Oxford's Leverhulme Center, says, "While gender inequalities remain, our findings support a growing feminization of scholars migrating internationally. However, female researchers are still restricted in moving as globally and as freely as their

male counterparts."

Gender gaps among researchers and [international scholars](#) favoring men were smaller in high-income and upper-middle income countries, than low-income countries. The U.S., U.K., and Germany remained popular with female and male mobile scholars, but in these global hubs of international science, gender gaps nonetheless persisted.

In a handful of countries such as Portugal, Brazil and Argentina, near gender equality among mobile researchers was seen. Others such as Japan and South Korea had significant gender gaps in favor of men.

Co-author Emilio Zagheni, from the Max Planck Institute, concludes, "Our study indicates that opportunities for women to advance their academic careers through international mobility have increased. While we unveiled a key and welcome trend, we also note that more research is needed to understand underlying mechanisms, including the roles played by families and by science policies in shaping gender differences in the drivers and outcomes of relocations."

The team used bibliometric data on more than 33 million [scientific publications](#) from Scopus, a global database of scholarly publications, to estimate the international migration of female and male researchers around the world from 1998 to 2017. This allowed the researchers to document and analyze cross-national trends in a systematic way.

More information: Zhao, Xinyi, A gender perspective on the global migration of scholars, *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* (2023). [DOI: 10.1073/pnas.2214664120](https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.2214664120)

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