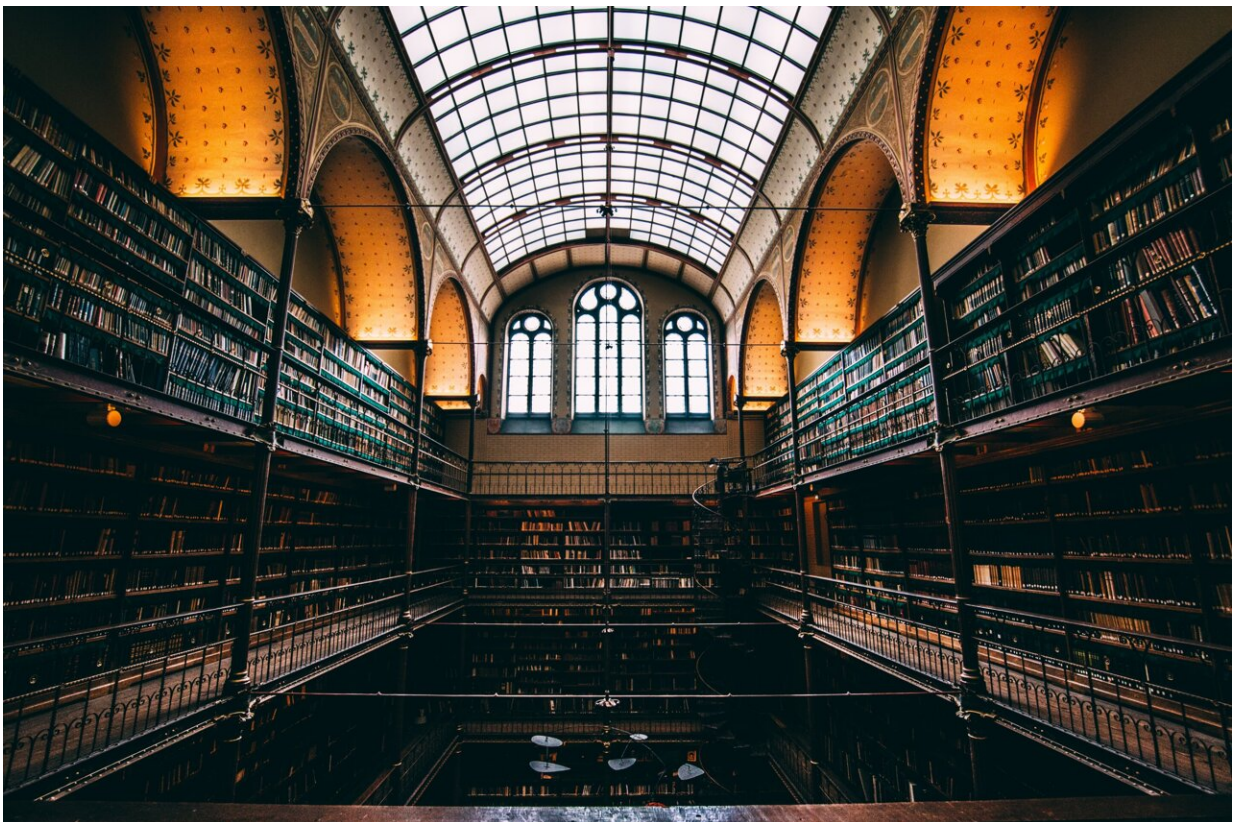


# Scientists propose 10 measures to prevent women from abandoning their academic careers after motherhood

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The challenges of motherhood often lead women to leave academia after their first child. In fact, studies in the United States suggest that about

50% of women scientists in the U.S. leave science after motherhood. To address this problem, a group of Spanish women scientists, who are themselves mothers, propose 10 urgent measures that academic institutions should adapt in order to create a friendlier environment to prevent women from leaving academia after motherhood.

These guidelines cover a range of issues, from support during pregnancy to [work-life balance](#), including career advancement opportunities. They propose measures such as support during pregnancy, childcare and breastfeeding and the school phase, actions aimed at organizing, making research and teaching activities more flexible and equitably distributed, and measures for the career advancement of [mothers](#), thus combating mental health problems, discrimination and harassment.

This work, published in the journal *PLOS Computational Biology* under the title "Ten simple rules for a mom-friendly academia," highlights the need for greater representation of women in science, including mothers, because equality is a fundamental right and, in addition, there are studies that certify that diverse work environments are more productive and innovative.

According to Esther Sebastián-González, lead researcher from the Department of Ecology at the University of Alicante (UA), the benefit of implementing many of these ideas will not only be for trans mothers and fathers, but also for parents, caregivers of dependents, women, and even the academic community at large. It is imperative that [academic institutions](#) take proactive steps to promote gender equality and empower all people, including mothers, in the development of their scientific careers.

Among the measures proposed by this group of [women scientists](#) is technical support for pregnant women for field and laboratory work, as well as policies to facilitate flexible working hours and remote working.

Another point highlighted in the article is that maternity and paternity leave should be taken into account in selection processes and in eligibility criteria for grants and research positions. They also call for the creation of crèches and breastfeeding centers at work and at scientific meetings, flexibility in working hours and location, and giving priority to parents with children in the selection of teaching hours during school hours.

To support the career advancement of mothers, the authors raise other issues such as extending the eligibility window for fellowships and grants for scientific mothers to at least 18 months per child, waiving the geographical mobility requirement for fellowships and grants for scientific mothers and creating specific grants after long career breaks. They also propose to create, disseminate and enforce anti-harassment and anti-discrimination policies in all research institutions and to reduce [women's](#) unpaid and unrecognized work, such as membership of hiring or thesis committees, and equalize this administrative burden to that of men.

**More information:** Esther Sebastián-González et al, Ten simple rules for a mom-friendly academia, *PLOS Computational Biology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1371/journal.pcbi.1011284](https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pcbi.1011284)

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