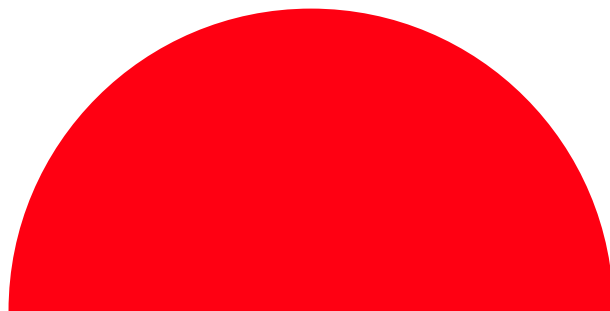
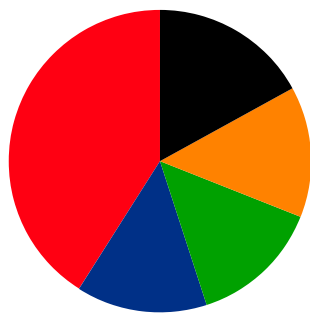


Is there room for diversity in academia?

Findings from a survey study on internationalization, discrimination, and sexual harassment among young researchers in Norway



A report by **The Young Academy of Norway**

Summary

Academia in Norway is changing; ongoing internationalization and increasing diversity are creating new possibilities, but also new challenges. What kind of relationships to and experiences with internationalization and diversity do young researchers have? To what degree do they experience harassment and discrimination at work?

In 2018, the Young Academy of Norway surveyed young researchers working in Norway about these questions and topics. One aim was to find out how young researchers' view and experience internationalization, discrimination, and harassment, and in turn how this affects their likelihood of recommending a career in research to others.

The survey was carried out during the autumn of 2018. 1251 young researchers, 45 years old or younger responded, to this web-based survey. Respondents were employed in various academic positions at Norwegian universities, university colleges, and research institutes. The survey was available in Norwegian and in English, and was based on a convenience sample, i.e., not a probability sample. Here we summarize the most important findings

Internationalization

- Respondents predominantly agree that internationalization in their fields of research is positive, answering, on average, 4.5 on a scale from 1 to 5, with 1 being “strongly disagree” and 5 being “strongly agree”. At the same time, some researchers express that increasing internationalization also involves challenges related to language and integration.
- Over half of the respondents have taken at least part of their higher education outside of Norway. Of these, 70 percent said this had given them better career options. Between 60 and 70 percent have ongoing international cooperation of some kind. Those who have undertaken overseas research stays are also more likely to report ongoing international cooperation.
- 70 percent of respondents born outside of Norway said their employer had facilitated inclusion in the workplace. However, 30 percent disagreed and said the employer had not facilitated inclusion.

Discrimination

- 40 percent of the respondents reported having experienced discrimination in the last two years. There was no systematic difference in the likelihood of experiencing discrimination in different academic fields or across different types of institutions.
- Researchers' reports of discrimination in formal processes (such as recruitment or promotion) were notably lower than in informal processes (such as lack of inclusion in the workplace or discriminatory comments).
- Gender and being born in a foreign country are systematically tied to experiencing discrimination in Norwegian academia: around 23 percent of the foreign-born researchers had experienced differential treatment, versus 15 percent of the Norwegian-born researchers. There were also significant gender differences. The likelihood of experiencing discrimination was 10 percentage points higher for women than men, and 16 percentage points higher for all those who were foreign-born versus Norwegian-born, after accounting for differences in academic field, workplace, or job category.
- Researchers report different grounds for the discrimination they have experienced – 15 percent of women and 4 percent of men in the sample said they had experienced differential treatment because of gender, while nearly 25 percent of the foreign-born researchers said they had experienced discrimination based on their immigrant background.
- There were few reports of discrimination based on other aspects such as disability and sexual orientation, but an open “other” category showed instances of discrimination based on age and seniority, nepotism and networks, as well as temporary employment. These were all experienced as grounds for differential treatment.

- Those who experienced discrimination were systematically less likely to recommend a career in research to others.

Sexual harassment

- Nearly 90 percent of the sample said they had never experienced sexual harassment, while 8 percent said they had, and 2 percent were uncertain. There were clear gender differences: 2 percent of men said they had experienced sexual harassment, while nearly 12 percent of women said the same.
- Only 15 of those who said they had experienced sexual harassment had reported it. 49 of the respondents explained why they had not reported the harassment; for instance, some highlighted that the harassment took place abroad; that they had a lack of confidence that reporting it would have any effect; that sexual harassment (to a certain extent) is seen as “normal” in their academic environments; or, that the risk of it negatively affecting their career was too great.
- Experiencing sexual harassment reduced the likelihood that respondents would recommend a career in research to others, but not to the same extent as experiencing discrimination.

Conclusion and recommendations

The Young Academy of Norway’s survey results suggests a need for additional measures to ensure equal treatment of all employees in Norwegian academia. First and foremost, this is a management and leadership responsibility, applying not only to formal processes like recruitment and promotion, but also to informal situations and processes in the workplace. The Young Academy of Norway believes there are number of measures which should be implemented:

In order to best utilize the possibilities of internationalization in Norwegian academia, a more systematic process for learning Norwegian should be considered as an offer to foreign-born researchers. At the same time, there should be ongoing reflection about how to handle both the intentional and unintended effects of internationalization in different fields. Young researchers, in general, have valuable experiences to offer, while young foreign-born researchers can also be in particularly difficult or demanding situations.

Research institutions must ensure that all employees are treated equally, regardless of background, in both formal and informal processes. In formal processes this can be achieved through implicit bias training, for example related to gender and ethnicity, for all leaders at all levels. It is easier to discover and then combat discrimination when one is aware of what kinds of discrimination that tend to occur. Equal treatment in informal processes leads to a more equal and inclusive culture in the workplace, which both leadership and employees can contribute to building over time.

Researchers in all fields experience sexual harassment, both in their workplace and outside of it, for instance at conferences or during fieldwork. There need to be clear reporting procedures for such incidents, both for when they occur in the workplace or outside, such as at conferences or during fieldwork. It is important that all employees know and understand the reporting procedures, and that the possibility for anonymous reporting is considered, with the goal of reducing uncertainty for young and temporarily employed researchers.

Finally, the Young Academy of Norway wishes to emphasize the need for solid knowledge as a basis for further work when it comes to equality and fighting discrimination in Norwegian academia. Having a strong knowledge base to draw on is crucial to identifying and combating discrimination and harassment, and to ensuring equal treatment. Gathering relevant statistics – and streamlining the reporting from institutions and gathering nationally comparable statistics – is extremely important in order to develop effective measures. This knowledge base must be developed by providing adequate funding for the study of diversity, internationalization, and equal treatment in academia – both with regards to gender-based, ethnic-, and other forms of discrimination, and with regards to the potential for furthering cognitive diversity in academia in Norway.

The Young Academy of Norway - the voice of young researchers in the public arena