

# **Research Management and Administration as a Profession: Who are Research Managers and Administrators? Demographics of the profession internationally.**

Simon Kerridge

University of Kent, Canterbury, United Kingdom. Kerridge Research Consulting, Canterbury, United Kingdom

## **Research Domains**

Academic practice, work, careers and cultures (AP)

## **Abstract**

This paper highlights some of the major findings from the first two Research Administration as a Profession (RAAAP) surveys that were undertaken in 2016, and 2019. The most recent iteration was undertaken in 2022 but at the time of writing the data have not been fully analysed and so are not presented here. The surveys have some core questions in common in order to develop a longitudinal picture of the profession. But each survey also focusses in on a particular aspect of research managers and administrators (RMAs).

The first, in 2016, looked at the skills of RMAs. The 2019 survey focussed on support for research impact, and the 2022 survey looked at identity and routes into the profession.

For this paper we will focus in on the demographics of RMAs and find that the profession is highly qualified and predominantly female – in most regions.

## **Full paper**

Research Managers and Administrators (RMAs) have been defined by

many authors, and with many differing titles, some restricting RMAs to those working within universities and others extending this to those supporting the research lifecycle in other settings such as in funders and policy makers. For the RAAAP surveys an inclusive approach, extending that of Stackhouse (2008) was adopted, with RMAs being defined “as someone whose role (or a significant part of it) is devoted to support some part of the research lifecycle, including, but not limited to: identifying funding sources and customers, preparing proposals, costing, pricing and submitting funding proposals, drafting, negotiating and accepting contracts, dealing with project finance, employing staff on research contracts, reporting to funders, advising on research impact, knowledge exchange, technology transfer, supporting short courses, postgraduate research student administration, research strategy and policy, research assessment, ethics and governance, information systems, audit, statutory returns, and research office management. It also includes research development and researcher development professionals. Research managers and administrators mostly work in universities and research institutes but many also work in hospitals, charities, government, funding organisations and elsewhere.” (Kerridge et al, 2022).

While the three surveys did not track individuals between iterations, they do provide longitudinal data about the cohort of RMAs as a whole across various regions. The 2016 survey elicited 2,691 responses from across 64 countries, in 2019, 4,324 responses from 74 countries were received, and in the most recent survey, over 5,000 from 66 countries. These high response rates provide for very robust data at the macro level.

## Gender

As reported by Kerridge and Scott (2018) from the RAAAP-1 data, the profession is predominantly female, with 78.0% (of n=2,642) identifying as such. The RAAAP-2 data from 2019 shows a similar picture (76.9% of n=4,206). Others, such as Shambrook et al (2015) also show a gender skewing, with their 2015 data reporting 85% female. It should be noted though that those data are predominantly for the U.S. Looking at the RAAAP data for just respondents from the U.S. we find that 84.3% (of n=928, from 2016) and 83.7% (of n=1,372, from 2019) the RAAAP data are in line with Shambrook’s

findings. Looking at the RAAAP data by region, the proportion of respondents that identify as female are:

Figure 1: Proportion of RMAs (that selected a binary gender) that identify as female, by region of the world.

The data between the two years show a reasonably static (less than 1 percentage point difference) picture for most regions, but Canada has an increase of 3.8, Europe 5.1 and the UK 1.9, all moving from a lower base towards the approximate 80-85% range seen in Oceania and the U.S. There could be many reasons for this, one that has been postulated is that for those regions where RMA as a profession is young that the proportion of males is higher due to many RMAs being recruited from the research pool (Kerridge and Scott, 2018).

## Academic Attainment

The picture for academic attainment is more mixed, and has greater fluctuations between the 2016 and 2019 surveys. For example Oceania sees an increase of 9.4 percentage points for those holding at least masters' level qualifications, and the UK a rise of 10.8 in those with doctorates.

Figure 2: Proportion of RMAs with doctorates, and with (at least) masters' level academic qualifications, by region of the world.

The overall worldwide figures for RMAs with at least a masters' degree is 67.3% (of n=2,547) in 2016 rising slightly to 71.9% (of n=4,255) in 2019. The situation for doctorates is the same, 26.5% in 2016 rising to 30.8% in 2019. RMAs tend to be highly academically qualified, with extremely high proportions of doctorates in Europe (42.3%) and the "Rest of the World" (predominantly Africa and Asia) with 53.2%. This lends some weight towards the hypothesis that in regions where RMA has only recently developed (Europe, and the Rest of the World), RMAs are more likely to be male researchers that have moved into research management and administration.

## CONCLUSIONS

The RAAAP datasets are a rich resource for those interested in the profession of research management and administration. Here we

have looks at just two of the data points – gender, and academic attainment. They clearly show that RMA is a female dominated profession, and highly qualified as compared to the general population. There are indications that in areas of the world where the profession is developing that there are a higher than average proportion of male RMAs, perhaps having recently moved from research positions.

## **References**

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