

Gender Equality Plan

Sanquin Research & Lab services

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Summary

At Sanquin Research the gender balance for young scientists mirrors the gender balance of university students for the appropriate studies, indicating no gender bias in recruitment. Although the female/male ratio is decreasing towards more senior positions, Sanquin maintains an even balance, contrary to many of the benchmark organizations. Still, a number of actions will be taken to maintain or even increase this ratio in the future.

With respect to a safe and social working environment a number of measures are already in place. Next to offering personal development courses, monitoring (new) performance indicators and annual reporting to the management and senior staff will be strengthened. In An Employee Engagement Survey regarding workload, psychological safety and social support was launched within the Research department in June 2024. In addition, Sanquin is working on a sustainability plan (corporate sustainability reporting directive) of which a social plan is one of the topics.

This Gender Equality Plan is published on the Sanquin website and will be evaluated and updated regularly.

Introduction

The not-for-profit Sanquin Blood Supply Foundation includes 11 departments amongst which the department of Research & Lab Services. Contrary to the other departments, the Research department has a large number of staff with temporary contracts, especially young researchers and technicians, which results in a totally different dynamics in recruiting personnel. This is the main reason why this Gender Equality Plan focuses on the Research department only.

This Gender Equality Plan is published on our website¹ and will be evaluated and updated regularly. Policies with respect to diversity in general are being developed. The emphasis is not only on gender, but on creating an inclusive organization in which employees feel welcome and have equal opportunities. In the end this Gender Equality Plan will be part of the general sustainability plan of Sanquin.

Sanquin Research is operating in a national and international field of (bio)medical and health sciences research. As part of the not-for-profit Sanquin Blood Supply Foundation, Sanquin Research performs basic, translational and applied research that contributes to our four medical priorities:

- Anemia
- Bleeding and Hemostasis
- Immunotherapy
- Immunity and Inflammation

Research staff and benchmarks

Sanquin Research is home to around 238 research employees, including around 83 PhD students, 32 post-docs and 34 group leaders of which about half are full professors, with an interest in academically oriented research as well as applied research focusing on the optimization and innovation of Sanquin products and services.

The Rathenau Institute² states that in the Netherlands 45% of PhD candidates is female, while only 28% of the Dutch full professors and 34% of the Dutch associate professors is female (2022). This is different for assistant professors, where 46% is female (2022).

Sanquin recruits junior researchers and technicians from a large pool of students, in the fields of medicine and biomedical and health sciences, from universities and universities of applied sciences. Around 71% of these students is female³. A predominance of women rather than men in these fields is a phenomenon already noticeable for decades in Dutch higher education establishments.

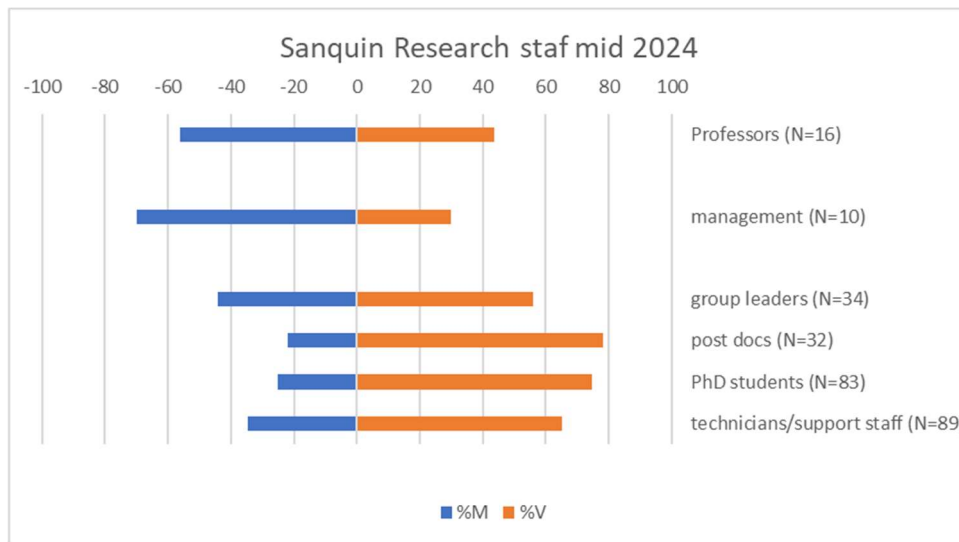
¹ <https://www.sanquin.org/research/about/gep>

² <https://www.rathenau.nl/nl/wetenschap-cijfers/wetenschappers/vrouwen-de-wetenschap/vrouwen-de-wetenschap>; August 2024)

³ Source CBS-statline (Statistics Netherlands, year 2023-2024)

The 2023 annual report of the Sanquin Blood Supply Foundation states a total number of personnel of 2058, of which 74% is female. For the Research department this is 238 people of which 70% is female.

The recruitment of young researchers at Sanquin Research (PhD students and technicians/support staff) mirrors the student population at the institutes for higher education, as can be seen in the graph below, showing the gender distribution of our research staff (people, not fte) mid 2024.



Sanquin hosts around 83 PhD students. Of these PhD students 75% is female, which is comparable with current percentage of female students at universities (71%). In the last five years 84 PhD students defended their thesis based on research done at Sanquin. Of these PhD students 62% was female, which is slightly less than the current percentage of female PhD students, but indicating that there is no clear gender bias in finalizing a PhD research project.

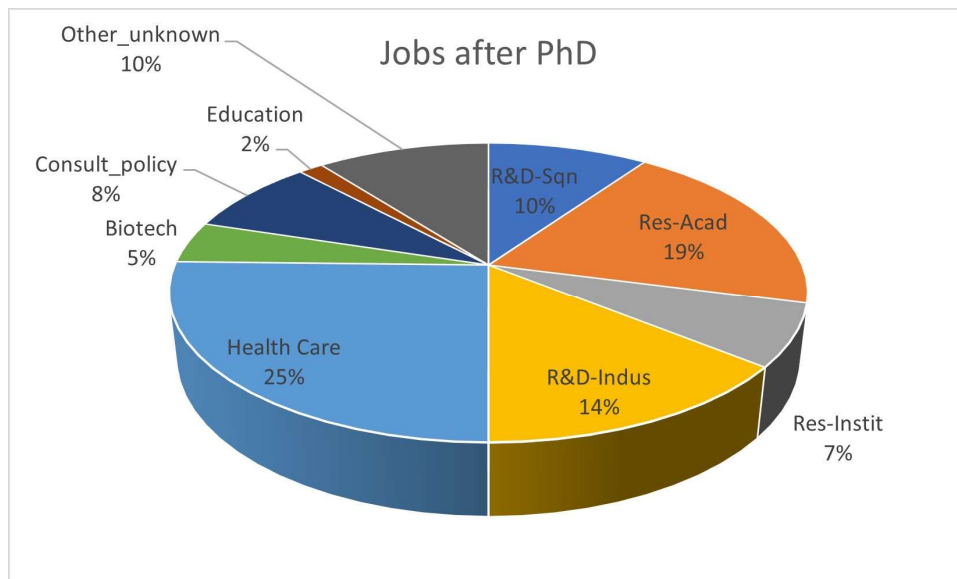
The higher participation of women in research is still visible for postdoc positions but at the level of group leaders the man - woman distribution becomes more equal. In the management team, there is a temporary higher participation of male researchers. Eight of the ten positions in this team are taken by our senior group leaders who take turns and join the team for a period of 4 years. In the current team three of the eight coordinators are women.

At Sanquin 44% of professors is female, which is a higher participation than at the Dutch Universities, where the percentage of female professors has increased from 15 to 28% in the

last ten years. This is also higher than the 34% female professors at the University Medical Centers⁴).

From all information above the question arises why at higher positions the gender balance shifts from a higher participation of women towards a more equal participation. This means that either more women than men are leaving Sanquin and/or that relatively more men are being recruited for the higher positions, which would be an undesirable situation. Although there is equal participation of men and women in higher positions, Sanquin could take more effort in recruiting and appointing female investigators in the higher staff positions by ensuring to choose female candidates in case of equal suitability. In line with this, in 2023 two new group leaders were recruited in an open application round, both women.

Although gender was not taken in to consideration we searched LinkedIn to look for jobs graduated PhD students took directly after their PhD project (2019-2023). Three-quarter of our PhD-students ended up in research or health care directly after their PhD, which seems a direction well suited to Sanquin' s aims and priorities.



⁴ <https://www.rathenau.nl/nl/wetenschap-cijfers/wetenschappers/vrouwen-de-wetenschap/het-aandeel-vrouwelijke-hoogleraren>, August 2024

Organizational and cultural aspects: a safe and social working environment

Recently, Sanquin set up a survey amongst employees of the Research department regarding workload, psychological safety and social support. Results were presented in the Management Team and scientific staff meetings and shared with the Works Council Research & Lab services.

Sanquin offers a program (SanquinVitaal) with courses and training to keep its personnel healthy and promotes a good work/life balance. As part of that, a 'preventive medical examination' is offered to Sanquin personnel in collaboration with the external occupational health and safety service. Besides personal advice to the participants, anonymized outcomes are used to evaluate and implement personnel and organizational policies.

Especially for PhD students and postdocs dedicated courses are offered for personal development throughout their appointment at Sanquin.

The Netherlands has legally binding rules on maternal and paternal leave and the right to work part-time. The standard work week according to the Collective Labor Agreement is 36 hours per week. For scientific personnel at Sanquin, including PhD-students, the part-time factor is 0.94 for women and 0.96 for men. Sanquin Research realizes that for young researchers working towards advancing their career in science, working hours certainly are a pitfall. Next to scientific supervision each PhD student has a supervisory committee that also takes these kind of issues into consideration. For postdocs, a mentorship program is in place that also addresses these issues.

For all employees funding is available for professional training as well as for courses or coaching on topics like work/life balance and personal development as part of their annual remuneration.

Within the Dutch Working Conditions Act, four different forms of undesirable behavior are distinguished: discrimination, (sexual) harassment, aggression and violence, bullying. Sanquin has an external confidential counsellor that can be contacted when an employee feels threatened. PhD students can also contact the members of their supervisory committee and postdocs can reach out to their mentor. In case of a breach of scientific integrity an external ombudsman may be contacted. Sanquin is affiliated to the LOWI- Netherlands Board on Research Integrity. Both the external confidential counsellor and the ombudsman annually write an anonymized report to the Sanquin Executive Committee. If necessary, the HR department will adapt or create new policies.

Regarding the question whether there is a need for a higher participation of male researchers as PhD students or postdocs in order to obtain a more equal gender situation for young researchers. There are no indications as yet that the female/male ratio offers any problems in

working culture and/or running of the department. For the time being our answer to this question is therefore no.

Actions already taken

The gender balance at Sanquin Research & Lab services does not seem to be problematic. A number of important actions are already in place for both female and male researchers:

- Training for both young and established personnel with respect to personal development and related skills;
- Leadership program for newly recruited post-docs and other talented employees;
- Support committee for PhD students;
- Mentorship for post-docs

An Employee Engagement Survey regarding workload, psychological safety and social support was launched within the Research department in June 2024. Actions to be taken

In order to increase the number of women in higher positions:

- In addition to the data given above, further data collection and monitoring will be developed by creating a number of indicators to be measured annually. Not only based on ratios or numbers of staff leaving or being recruited, but also on organizational and social aspects, working culture and day to day running of the department. We aim to finding out if there are hurdles preventing female scientists from continuing their career in science at Sanquin (or elsewhere), what they are and how we can try to overcome those hurdles;
- Sanquin is working on a sustainability plan (corporate sustainability reporting directive) of which a social plan is one of the topics.
- Annually report and present these figures and actions in the Management Team and Scientific Staff meetings;
- Evaluate and update the Gender Equality Plan regularly;
- In case of equal quality and suitability chose women rather than men in higher positions (start at once, continuously); This has been realized for two new group leader positions in 2023.
- Ensuring gender balance in selection committees for new personnel.

In order to maintain a safe and social working environment

- HR department to repeat their questionnaire regularly, also taking gender and diversity in consideration and report the outcome in both the Management Team and Scientific Staff meetings;
- Take appropriate action when required, based among other signals, the annual reports of confidential counselors and ombudsman.