

4th June 2019

[REDACTED]

Dear [REDACTED]

Freedom of Information request: 2019/0112

Thank you for your freedom of information request received on the 3rd of May 2019 in which you requested the following:

Your request:

- How much do male applicants to UKRI receive, compared to female applicants (in £GBP)?
- What proportion of funding by UKRI is currently controlled by male project leads (and female project leads – and provide the total figure for UKRI)?
- How much of UKRI's £6.5bn spending goes to women?
- How do you vet your reviewers to guarantee independence? Do you ask about their membership of specific groups?

Our response

I can confirm UK Research and Innovation hold information relevant to your request.

Research England and Innovate UK do not collect data on the gender of recipients of funding or loans, and in some cases, funding is awarded to an institution as opposed to a named project lead, such as with Quality Related funding (QR).

Innovate UK are collating some additional information relating to competitions targeted solely at female applicants which may be of relevance to your request, as well as information on their vetting process as they appoint assessors and not reviewers. This information will be issued to you in a follow-up response as soon as it becomes available.

Therefore, the responses below relate to the total funding distributed by the seven Research Councils (AHRC, BBSRC, ESRC, EPSRC, MRC, NERC and STFC) only.

We are reporting on funding awarded during the 2018-19 financial year. All numbers have been rounded to the nearest £100million and to whole percentage points.

We are defining 'project leads' as Principal Investigators (PIs) and recipients of individual Fellowships for this analysis. Less than 2% of awardees have not provided information on gender. Less than 1% of research grants and Fellowships have anomalous data attached and have been classified as 'not known' as it is not possible to ascertain gender of the recipient. An individual PI can be awarded more than one research grant in a financial year.

1. How much do male applicants to UKRI receive, compared to female applicants (in £GBP)?

Male applicants received £1.5B and female applicants received £0.6B in the 2018-19 period in Fellowships and research grants awarded by the seven Research Councils.

2. What proportion of funding by UKRI is currently controlled by male project leads (and female project leads – and provide the total figure for UKRI)?

The total amount for research grants and fellowships funded by the seven research councils was £2.2B in the 2018-19 period. 71% of funds were awarded to projects and fellowships led by men and 27% of awards are allocated to projects led by women. The rest was awarded to projects where the gender of the PI or the gender of the Fellow was not known.

Of the £.2B awarded as Fellowships, 42% went to women, 52% went to men and 6% to individuals with undisclosed or unknown gender.

Of the £1.9B awarded as research grants, 73% of the funds were awarded to projects led by male PIs, 25% to projects led by female PIs and 2% to individuals with undisclosed or unknown gender.

3. How much of UKRI's £6.5bn spending goes to women?

The total planning allocation for UKRI is £6.9B in 2018-19¹. We only have data on funding by gender for research grants and Fellowships awarded by the seven research councils, which is described above.

4. How do you vet your reviewers to guarantee independence? Do you ask about their membership of specific groups? Are any "objective" reviewers a member of any special interest groups, for example freemasons, etc.?

UKRI uses a range of approaches in securing peer reviewers and assessors, depending on the nature of the scheme and call. It is important to note that funding applications are considered by more than one reviewer (e.g. 3 or 5) and usually a wider panel also. **Reviewers contribute to the assessment of applications; they do not themselves make funding decisions.**

A key consideration across all processes is that reviewers are sufficiently appropriate, independent and impartial to act as expert reviewers. Conflicts of interest must be declared, identified and managed. In some cases, reviewers are approached directly and UKRI research commissioners/managers take care to avoid any conflicts. In some cases, reviewers are recruited initially to a peer review college, and will have been asked to complete additional process to assess their suitability.

Most colleges have some form of code of conduct e.g. <https://esrc.ukri.org/files/funding/guidance-for-peer-reviewers/peer-review-college-code-of-practice-for-reviewers>). More widely all Research Councils have policies and processes to manage conflicts of interest and impartiality. This means that peer reviewers if they are approached and have a conflict, must declare such interests and decline to review. Where conflicts of interests are identified after a review has been submitted, the review is excluded as unusable.

An example of a conflict of interest policy can be found at <https://epsrc.ukri.org/funding/assessmentprocess/coi>.

Within a process of peer review, relying on human judgement and expertise, it is challenging to avoid some forms of bias – such as cognitive biases. Nevertheless, UKRI recognises there is scope for us to investigate if biases do exist and what can be done to address these, and we have already begun some initial work on this.

¹ The allocation of funding for research and innovation – Page 11

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/731507/research-innovation-funding-allocation-2017-2021.pdf

More widely, UKRI is committed to challenging bias and ensure fair and inclusive funding processes, noted in our Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Action Plan. Over the past few years we have been working on raising awareness of the importance of EDI and the effects of unconscious bias, and to equip staff and funding boards/panels to challenge bias in all of its forms.

If you have any queries regarding our response or you are unhappy with the outcome of your request and wish to seek a review of the decision, please contact:

Head of Information Governance

UK Research and Innovation
Polaris House
North Star Avenue
Swindon
SN2 1FL
Email: foi@ukri.org or infogovernance@ukri.org

Please quote the reference number above in any future communications.

If you are still not content with the outcome of the review, you may apply to refer the matter to the Information Commissioner for a decision. Generally, the ICO cannot make a decision unless you have exhausted the review procedure provided by UKRI. The Information Commissioner can be contacted at:


Information Commissioner
Wycliffe House,
Water Lane
Wilmslow
Cheshire
SK9 5AF

Enquiry/Information Line: Between 9am and 5pm Monday to Friday 0303 123 1113 or 01625 545745

Further information about the Office of the Information Commissioner can be found at <http://www.ico.gov.uk/>

If you wish to raise a complaint regarding the service you have received or the conduct of any UKRI staff in relation to your request, please see UKRI's complaints policy: <https://www.ukri.org/about-us/policies-and-standards/complaints-policy/>

Yours sincerely,


UK Research and Innovation, Information Governance Team
Email: foi@ukri.org

20th June 2019

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

Freedom of Information request: 2019/0112 – query response and additional information

Following our initial response to your freedom of information request reference 2019/0112, we received a follow up query from you on 7th June 2019 in which you requested the following:

Your request:

My FOI specifically asked for the % of projects going to males/females to be expressed in £, not expressed as % of numbers of projects.

Please can you provide the numbers as requested and not in this curious way that gender split is reported in the public domain. Numbers of projects is potentially a very misleading way of expressing this data.

Please send me the % of £ going to men and women in each of the categories you report in the attached letter. I have asked for % £ and not % projects as you have sent.

Our response

The total amount for research grants and Fellowships funded by the seven research councils was £2.2B in the 2018-19 period. 71% of funds were awarded to projects and Fellowships led by men and 27% of funds are allocated to projects and Fellowships led by women. The rest of the funds were awarded to projects or Fellowships where the gender of the PI or Fellow was undisclosed or not known.

Of the £0.2B awarded as Fellowships, 42% of the funds went to female Fellows, 52% of the funds went to male Fellows and 6% of the funds went to Fellows with undisclosed or unknown gender.

Of the £1.9B awarded as research grants, 73% of the funds were awarded to projects led by male PIs, 25% of the funds were awarded to projects led by female PIs and 2% of the funds were awarded to projects with PIs of undisclosed or unknown gender.

Additional Information relating to Innovate UK

Innovate UK utilises assessors as opposed to reviewers, and at present there is no guidance available for the appointment and vetting of their assessors. This is currently being addressed and documentation will be created in due course, therefore we would recommend submitting an FOI at a later date if you wish to obtain this specific information.

As noted in our original response, Innovate UK does not specifically collect data on the gender of recipients, however Innovate UK has recognised this issue and has been taking action since 2016 to address the under representation of women engaging with and benefitting from our funding and other forms of support.

To date this has involved two rounds of Women in Innovation awards, two targeted global missions for women-led businesses, a series of free events across the UK for women innovators to highlight National and Regional funding opportunities and provide practical advice to ensure benefit from these.

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UK Research and Innovation
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Yours sincerely,


UK Research and Innovation, Information Governance Team
Email: foi@ukri.org