

# The European Research Council



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## Gender perspectives from the ERC: From application to funding

**Prof. Isabelle Vernos**  
*Chair of the ScC Gender balance WG*

# What is ERC?



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## European Research Council

- An autonomous pan-European funding body set up by the EU in 2007 **led by scientists** after a long struggle
- **Mandate:** to encourage the highest **quality research** in Europe through competitive funding of **frontier projects**
- Funded through the EU Framework programmes for Research and Innovation
- For the period 2014-2020: **Horizon 2020**

# ERC Research Grant Schemes



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## Starting Grants (StG)

starters  
(2-7 years after PhD)  
up to € 1.5 Mio  
for 5 years

## Consolidator Grants (CoG)

consolidators  
(7-12 years after PhD)  
up to € 2 Mio  
for 5 years

## Advanced Grants (AdG)

track-record of  
significant research  
achievements in the  
last 10 years  
up to € 2.5 Mio  
for 5 years

# Gender Balance Working Group



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**In 2008, the ERC Scientific Council established the Working Group on Gender balance to promote gender mainstreaming at each level of the ERC procedures, aiming at:**

- ✓ informing and raising awareness among both male and female excellent researchers of the opportunities of the ERC grants;
- ✓ giving equal opportunities and treatment to men and women applying in all ERC grant competitions;
- ✓ monitoring gender distribution within the ERC's peer review system;
- ✓ taking into account the gender dimension in all ERC grants.

# Gender Equality Plan



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## Main objectives

- ✓ **Raise awareness** about the ERC gender policy;
- ✓ Identify and **remove gender bias** in evaluation;
- ✓ Improve the **gender balance in ERC calls** (PIs and teams);
- ✓ **Monitor differences** in gender specific careers;
- ✓ **Keep gender awareness** in ERC processes;
- ✓ Strive for gender balance among the **ERC peer reviewers**

# Gender Equality Plan Implemented



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## Gender mainstreaming with focus kept on scientific quality

### ERC Scientific Council Gender Equality Plan

**Awareness**

**Submission**

**Evaluation**

**Granting**

Take an active role in the **gender debate**, gender equality networks and workshops

Make **targeted visits** to scientific meetings and workshops addressing gender topics, to inform about open ERC calls

Highlight ERC women grantees as **role models** for potential ERC applicants

Monitor **submission rates** of women and men

Ensure **ERC evaluation criteria** encompass the situation of both women and men in research

Look at **success rates** of and granted amounts to women and men

Analyse relation between ERC grants and gender structures in **research careers**

Highlight good practice host institutions regarding coverage of **family related costs** (e.g. child care, moving with a family, etc.)

Achieve a better **gender balance** in each ERC evaluation panel as compared to that panel's relevant scientific communities

# ERC overview figures

## Gender equality



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- **Scientific Council members**  
Women share increased from 23% (in 2006) to 36% (in 2013)
- **Panel members**  
30% women in the panels
- **Evaluated**  
26% women applications: 15% Advance  
29% Consolidator  
31% Starting
- **Grantees**  
21% women funded: 13% Advance  
26% Consolidator  
26% Starting
- **ERCEA Scientific Officers**  
62% women coordinating the evaluations



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# ERC statistics

## Applications



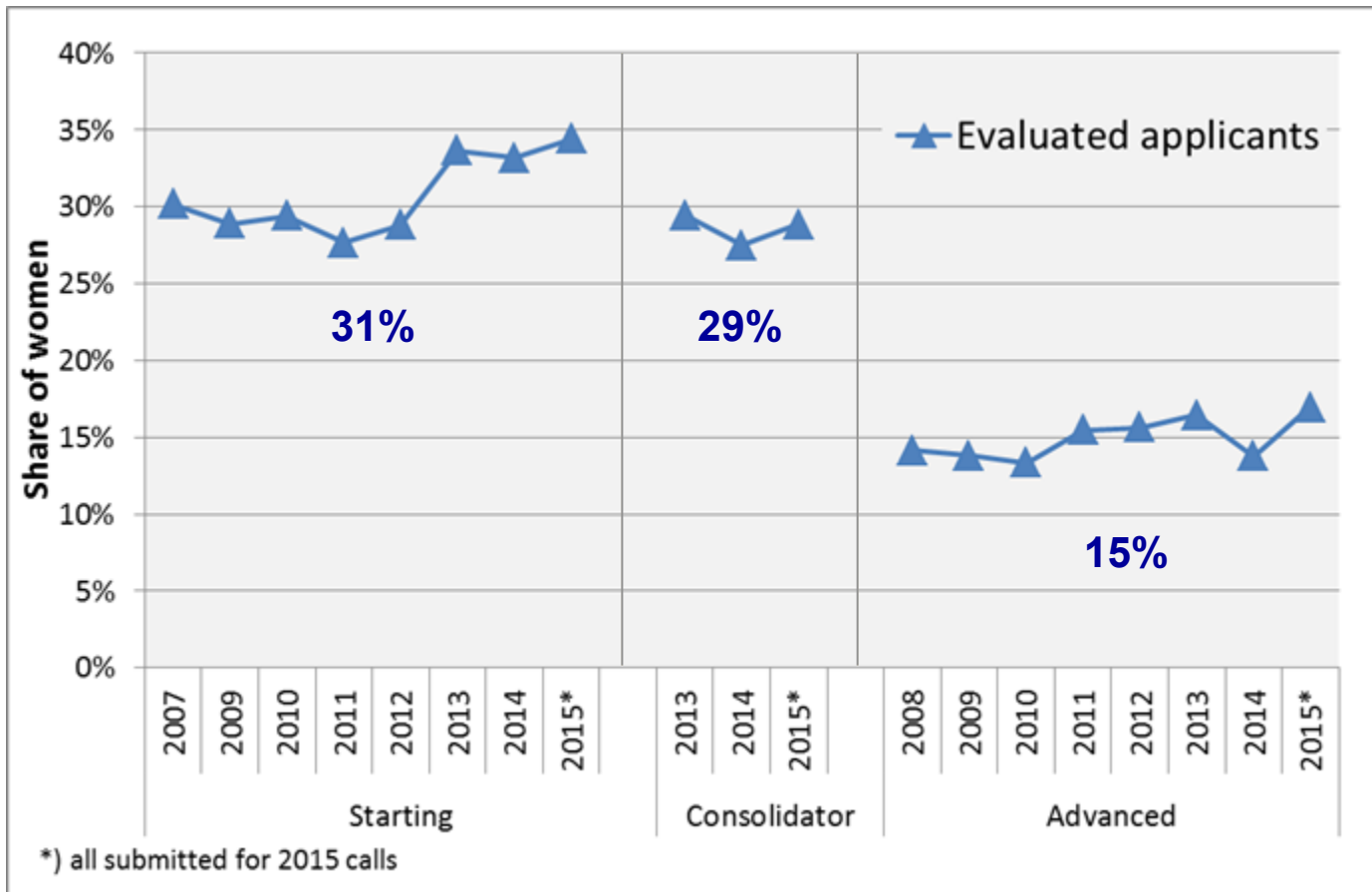
# Female applicants to ERC

26% overall of the applications from women



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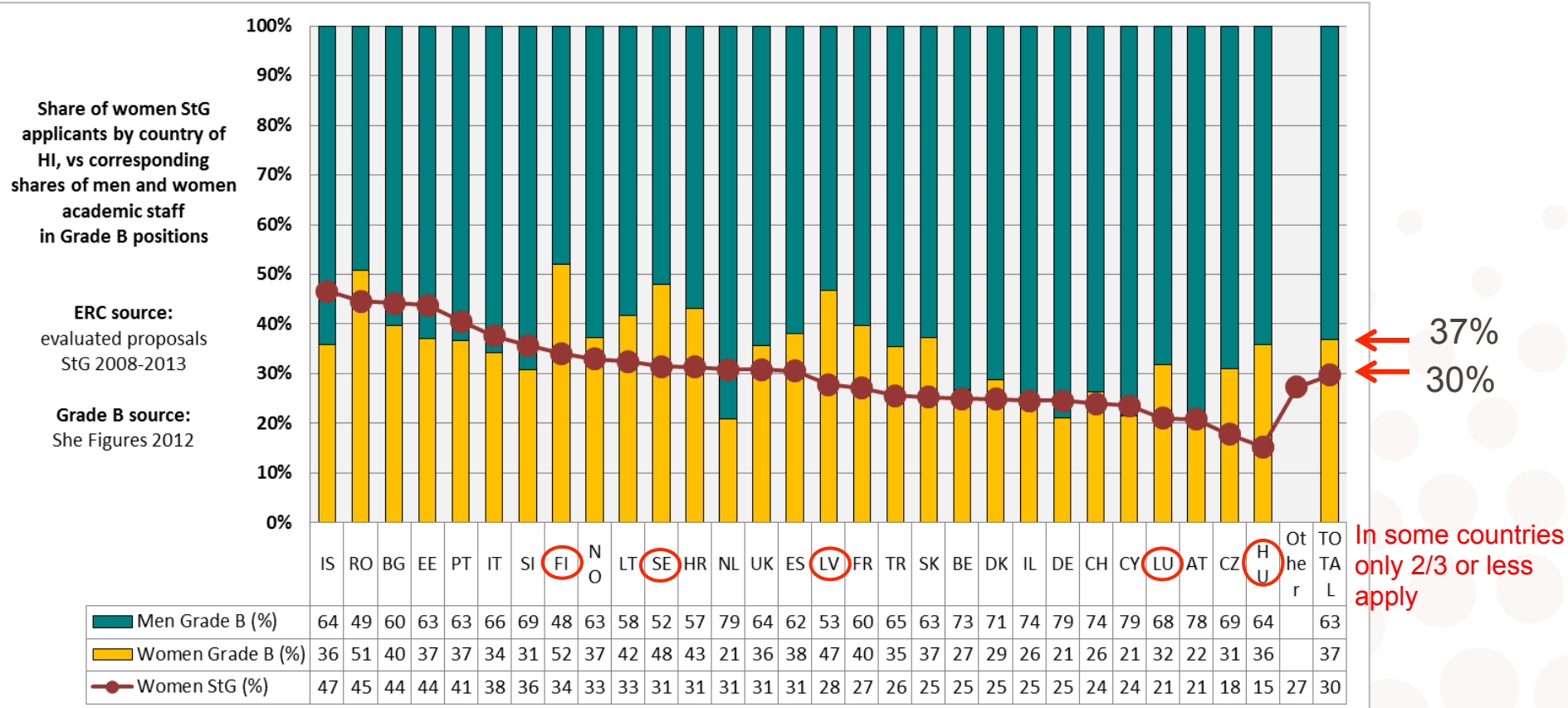


# Monitor submission rates of women & men by country



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Share women **StG applicants** vs. women academic staff in Grade B, by country of host institution



Grade B: "Researchers working in positions not as senior as top positions (A) but more senior than newly qualified PhD holders". (She Figures 2012)

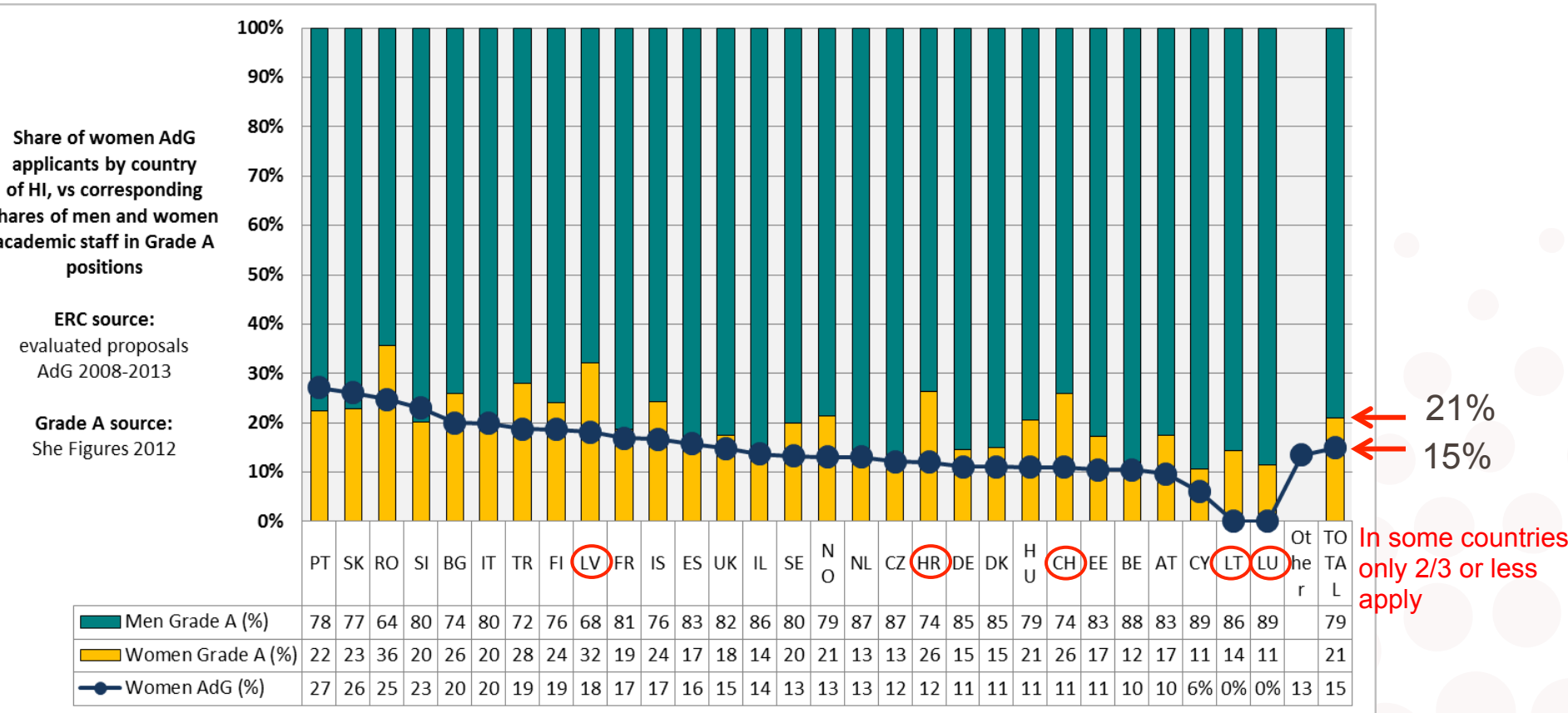
# Monitor submission rates of women & men by country

Share women **AdG applicants** vs. women academic staff in Grade A, by country of host institution



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Grade A: "The single highest grade/post at which research is normally conducted." (She Figures 2012)

# ERC Work Programmes

## Evolution of gender-related issues 2007 - 2014



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**2007** StG introduced with 2 – 9 years eligibility and extensions possible including **12** months/child born *after* PhD;

**2010** Extension of StG eligibility window to **18** months/child born *before or after* PhD award;

**2013**

- Reversing the order of evaluation criteria:  
1: project description; 2: PI track record;
- Scientific leadership potential (self-evaluation) **removed**

**2014** Model CV template included in application forms

# ERC calls 2014

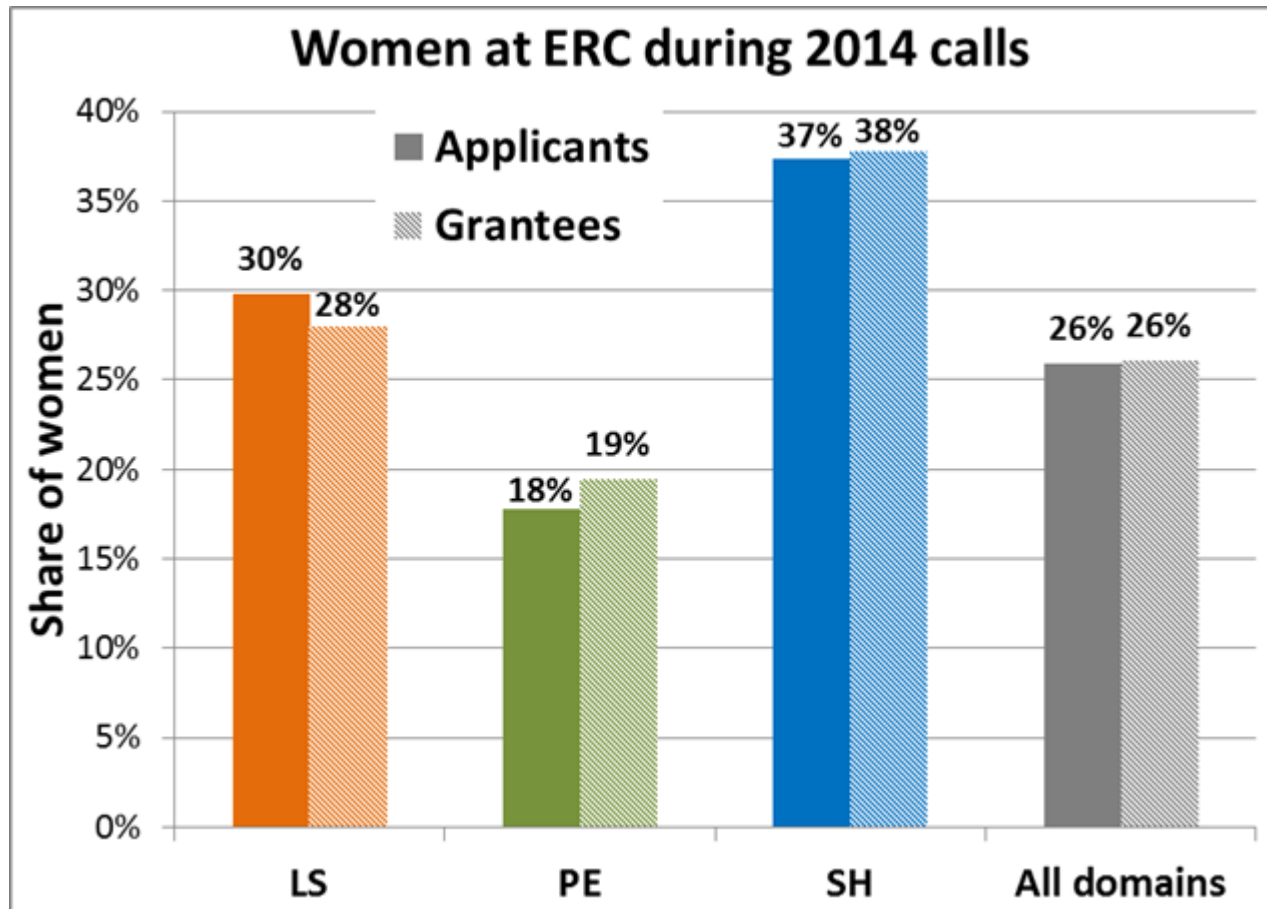
26 % of the applications from women

26 % of the grants to women



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# ERC statistics

## Funding-Success rates

# ERC Female grantees

26% of the applications from women

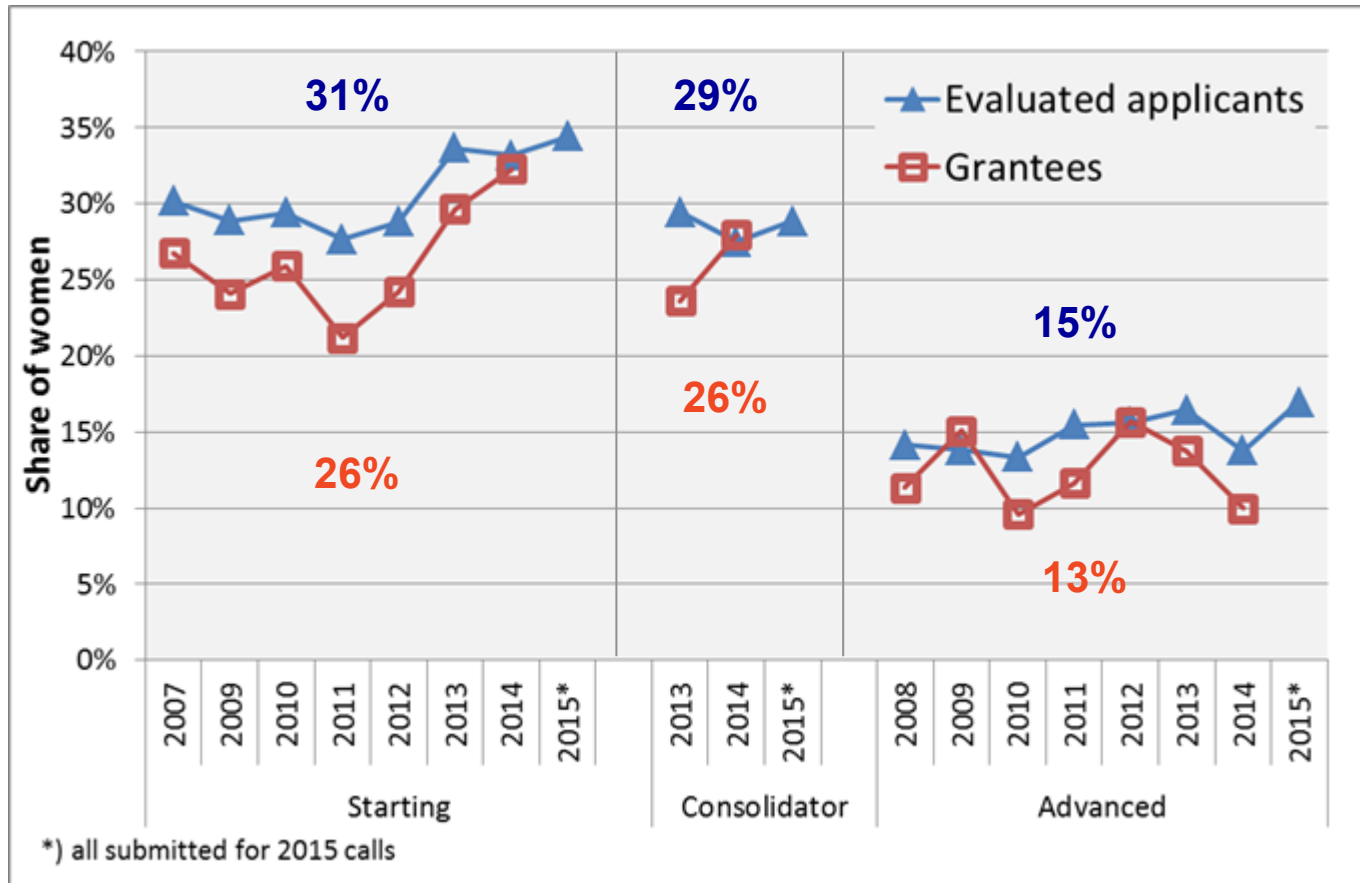
21% of the grants to women



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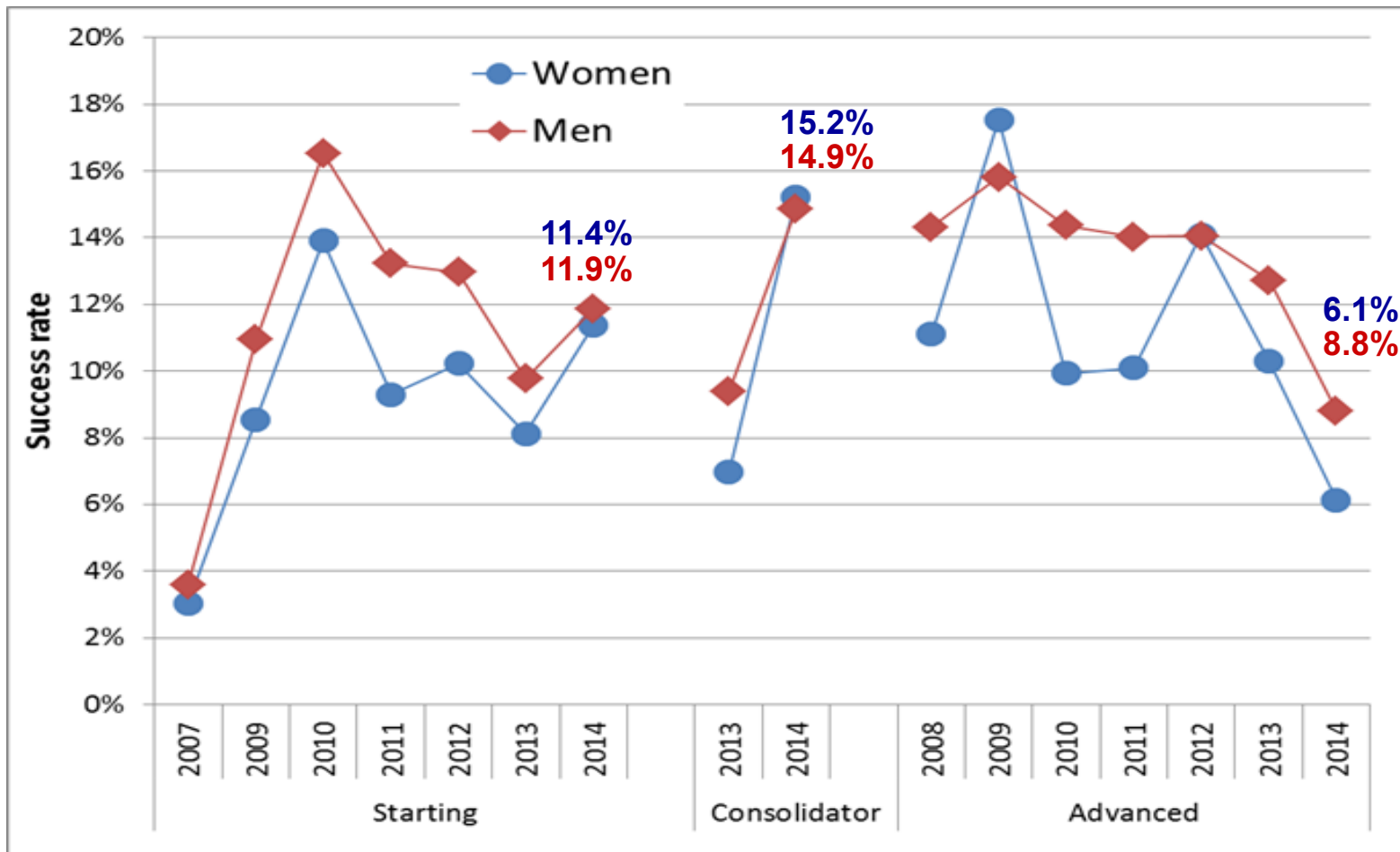
Share of women and grantees by grant type in all ERC calls (2007-2015)



# Comparing success rates of men and women by type of grant



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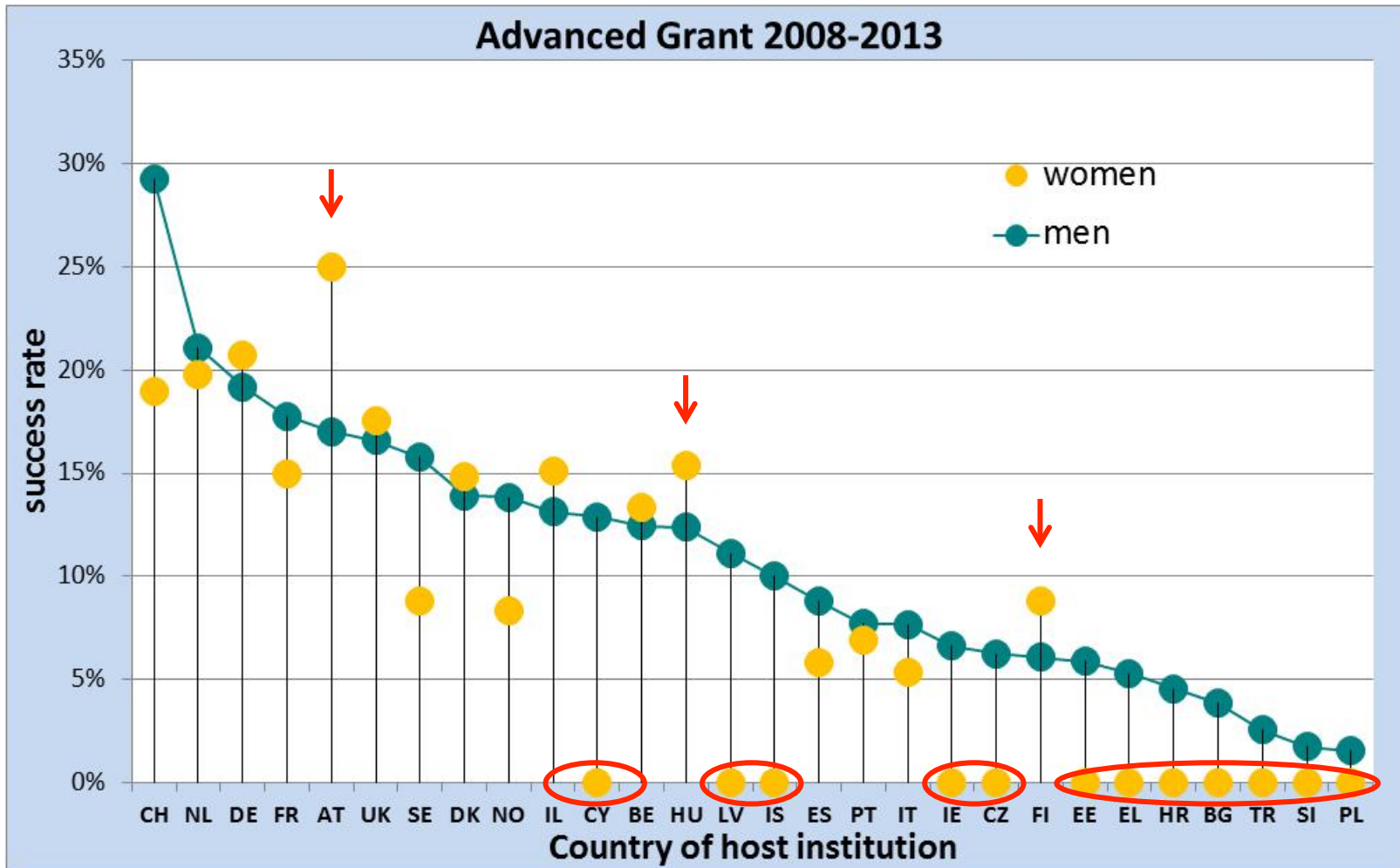




# All ERC Advanced Grants: Success rates per country of HI



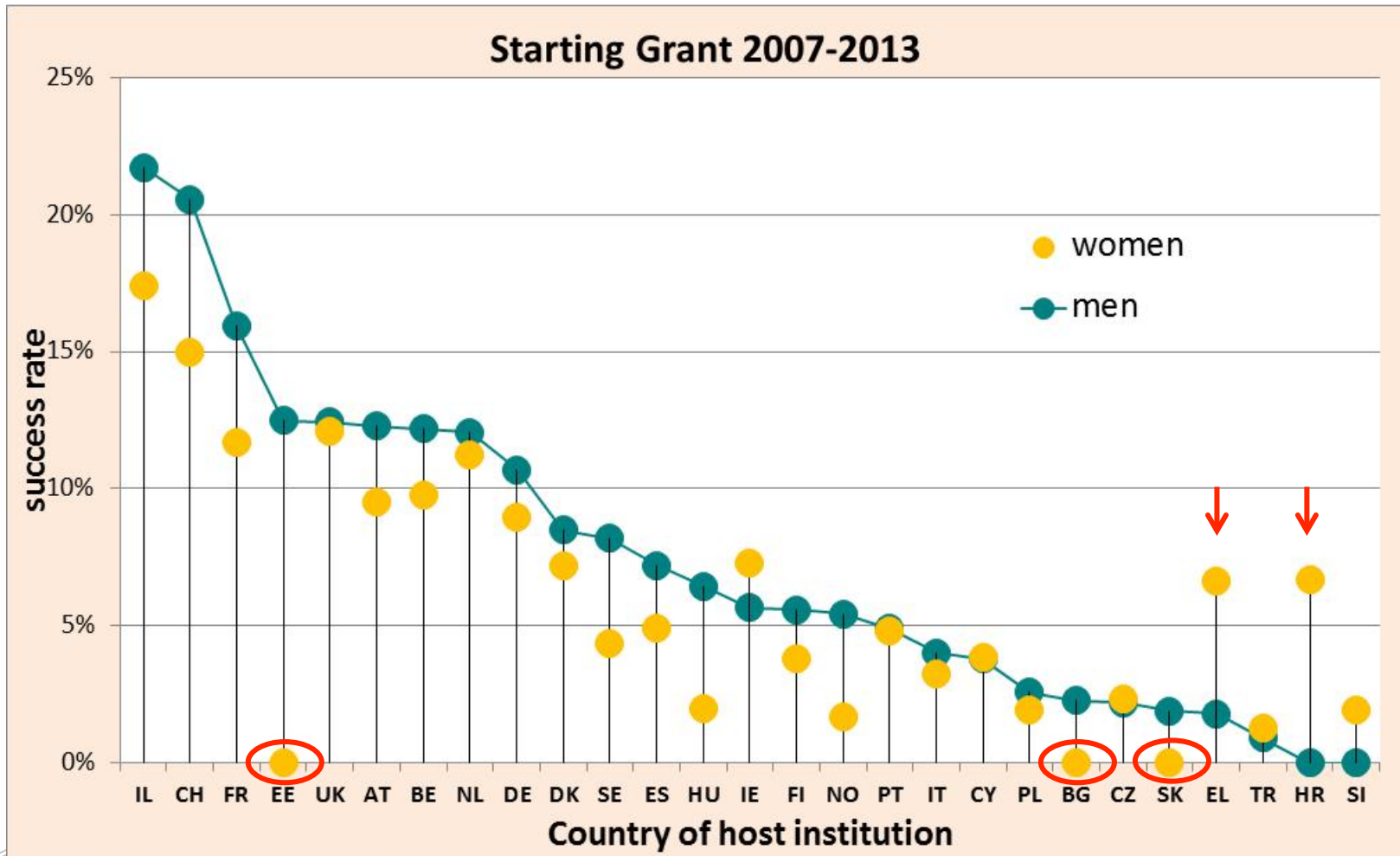
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# All ERC Starting Grants: Success rates per country of HI



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# ERC New Work Programme

## New features for WP 2015



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- ✓ Effective limit on the number of children that count towards the eligibility extension for StG & CoG removed;
- ✓ Care of sick relative = reason for extension of eligibility Window for StG & CoG;
- ✓ Applicants now restricted to highlighting maximum 5/10 publications in their track record, but still sufficient freedom to be original in proposal



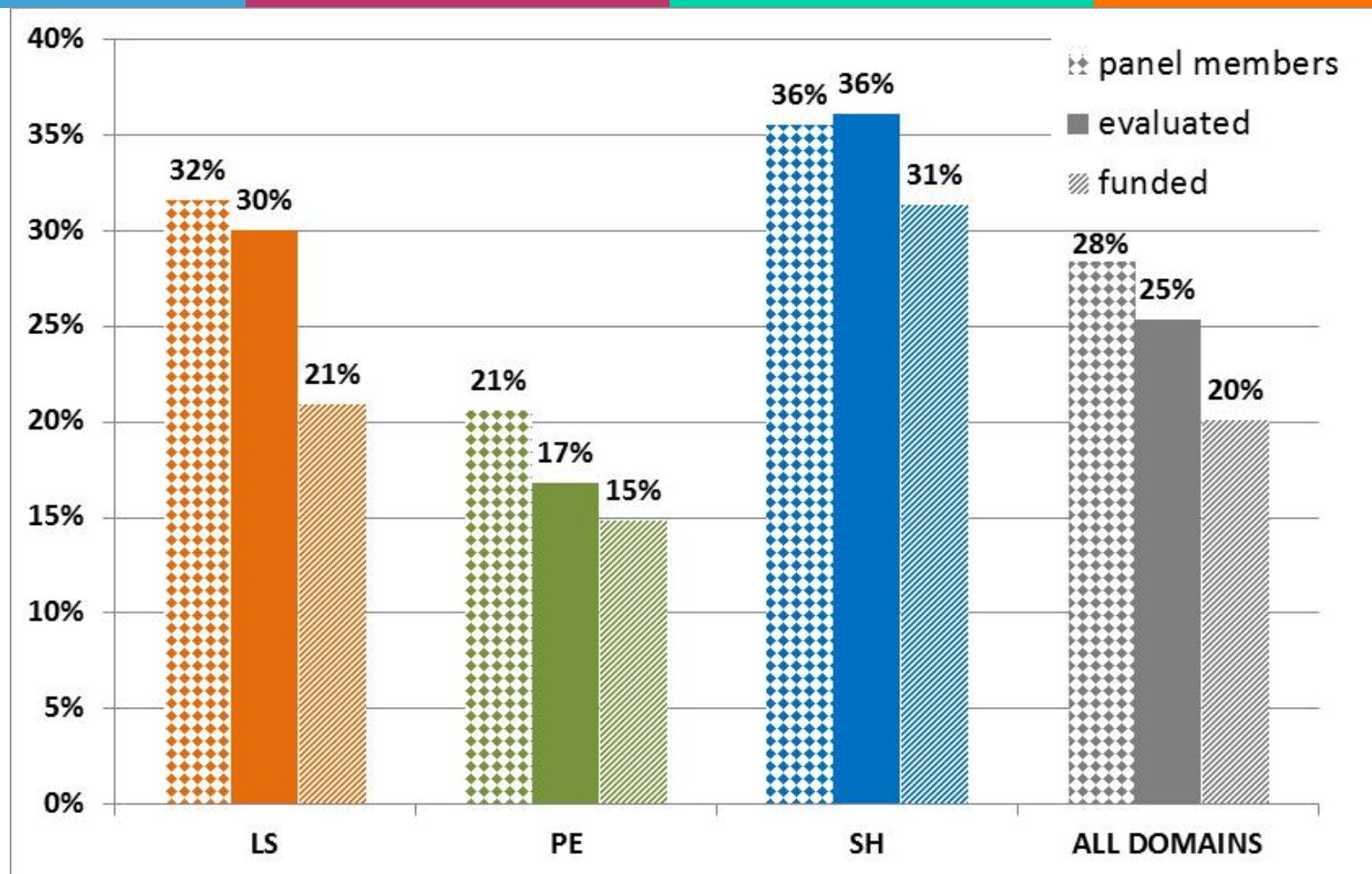
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# ERC evaluation panels

# Female Panel Members and Applicants (FP7)

ERCEA Scientific Officers coordinating evaluations: 62% women



# Women in panels vs female success rate

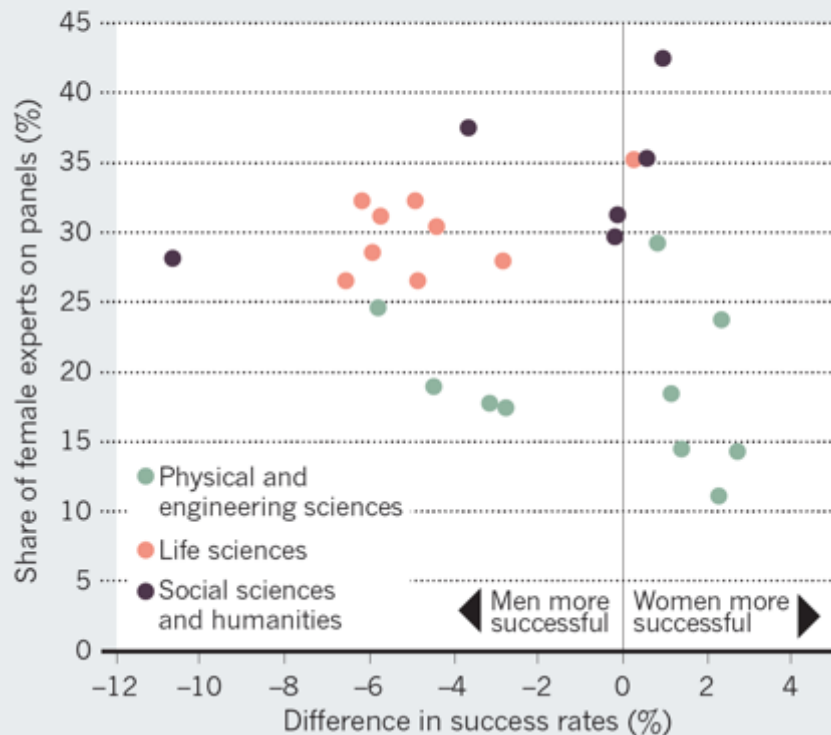


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## GRANT GAP

Aggregating data for 2008–12, the European Research Council found no correlation between the percentage of women on its evaluation panels and the success rate of female applicants.



"Quotas are questionable", Isabelle Vernos, 7 March 2013, VOL 495, NATURE 39



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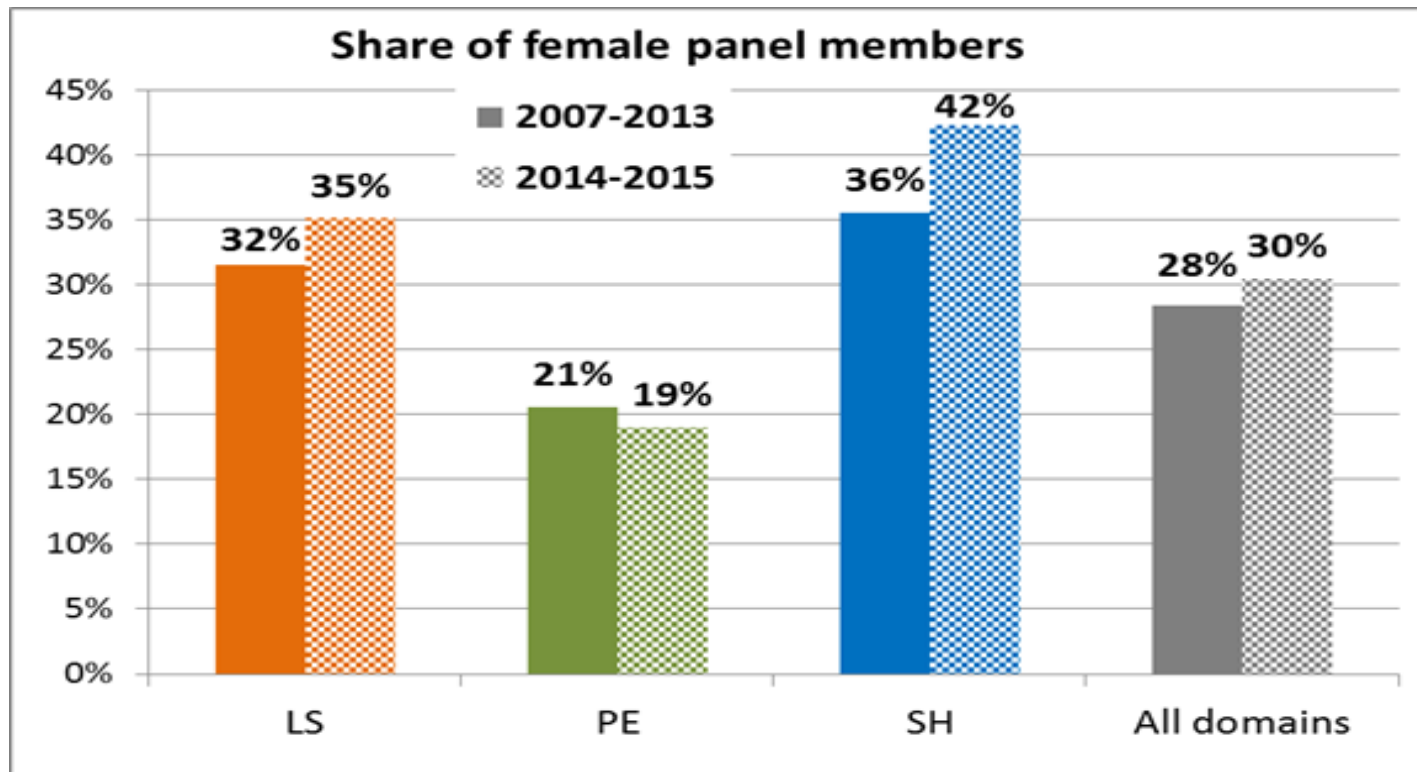
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# Increase of women in panels 2014-2015



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# Evaluations

## Training of the ERC evaluation panels



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## Briefing of panel chairs and panel members

- Outcomes of **ERC** calls in terms of gender balance
- **Unconventional career paths**
- **Tackling unconscious bias** in evaluation:
  - CV styles;
  - Role of women in research teams;
  - Female researchers and career breaks;
  - Regardless of whether evaluators are male or female.







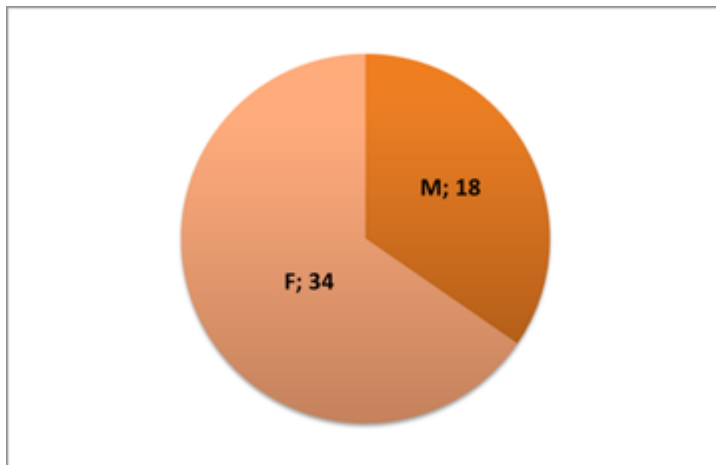
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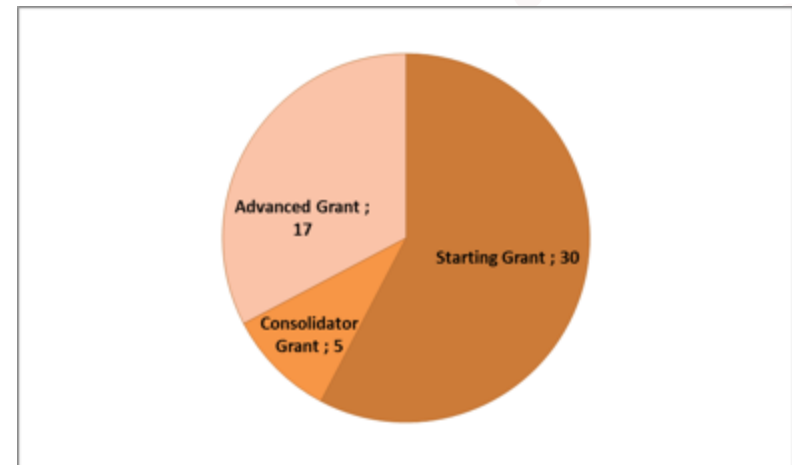
# ERC and gender funded research

# ERC gender funded research

- **52 ERC projects on gender research** (identified by keywords)
- **Other projects with a gender dimension** possibly not detected (limited keywords)



Most projects conducted by women (2/3)



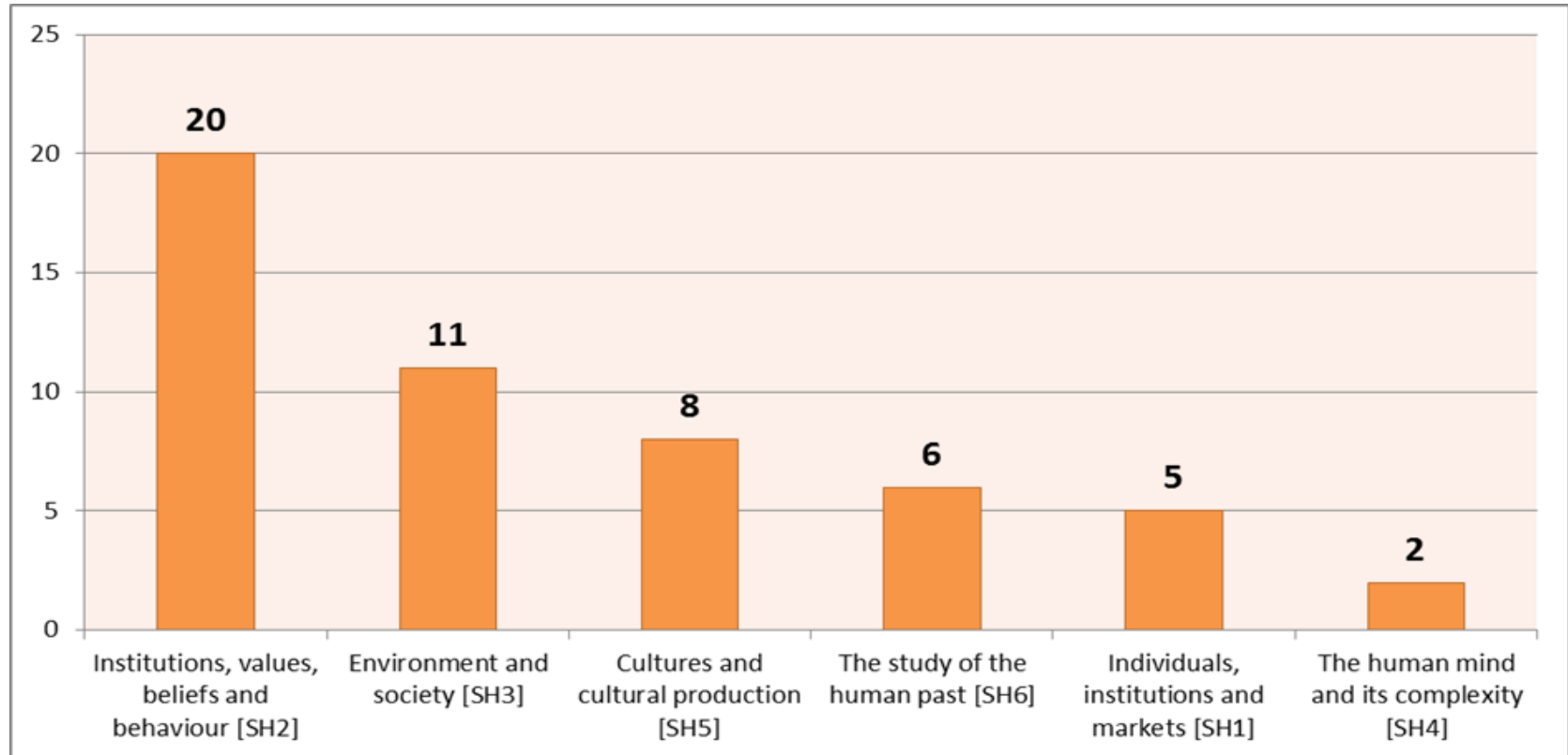
Most projects funded in StG and CoG

# ERC gender funded research



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Projects mainly funded in **SH2** and **SH3** (accounting for 6 out of 10 projects)



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# Gender perspectives from the ERC: From Application to Funding

## ERC grantee presentation

**Dr. Anne McMunn**

*ERC project: Health Effects of Social Change in Gender, Work and Family*

## ERC panel members presentations

**Prof. Mieke Verloo (SH domain)**

**Prof. Conny Aerts (PE domain), also holder of 2 ERC AdG**

# More information about ERC



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More information on

[erc.europa.eu](http://erc.europa.eu)

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