

Individualizing and comparing goal attainment

Findings from 10 years of mentoring for female post-docs

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Objective

By looking at individual characteristics and goal attainment, the objective of this evaluation study was to identify the different effects of mentoring and to identify need for action.

Background

Although supporting women through mentoring has established itself as an instrument for promoting equal opportunities it is less clear as to its effectiveness in achieving this goal. How can programs help break barriers for women in science? What influence does mentoring have on goal attainment, for example in terms of acquiring an academic title or professorship appointments? The literature points to a relationship between careers and individual characteristics (Table 1).

Table 1: Influence of individual characteristics on the careers of female scientists

Influencing factor	Chances higher for...
age	ältere Wissenschaftlerinnen (längere Qualifikationsphase, spätere Berufung) [1,2,3]
Mutterschaft	female scientists without children (maternal leave, family work falls mostly on women) [4,5]
migrant background	female scientists without a migrant background (knowledge of German scientific system, language barriers for migrants) [6,7]

Due to the fact that women professors are still underrepresented, it is important to answer these questions. Effective programs for female scientists depend on a better understanding of individual situations and circumstances.

The evaluation study

Our evaluation study looks at the effects of mentoring on careers while taking into account the aforementioned influencing factors.

To do so the 155 current and former participants (in total 7 program-rounds over the course of 10 years) took part in a written survey that occurred between August and October 2014. The response rate was 47.7% (n=74).

Results

Based on individual characteristics comparison groups were formed to then look at relationships between them and goal parameters (Figure 1-3). In terms of the goal parameters 'number of publications' and 'acquisition of an academic title' only small differences between the comparison groups based on age and motherhood could be determined. This suggests the chances for these groups are relatively level and that the support measures may have already come into effect.

However, in terms of goal attainment the difference between age-groups is clear. It seems that action is necessary in order to counter disadvantages.

The examination shows that differences in goal attainment can be traced back in part to group heterogeneity and points to the importance of measuring individual characteristics in future program evaluation studies.

By looking at rounds of mentoring participants over time, the findings provide steps for the further development of programs through monitoring and adjustments and contribute to the reduction of inequalities through the leveling-out differences.

Summary

The evaluation looked at social inequalities and it was demonstrated that they are relevant in the attainment of goals for mentoring participants. The evaluation points to individual-level mechanisms and contributes to the further optimization of mentoring programs.

Figure 1: Publications by individual factors

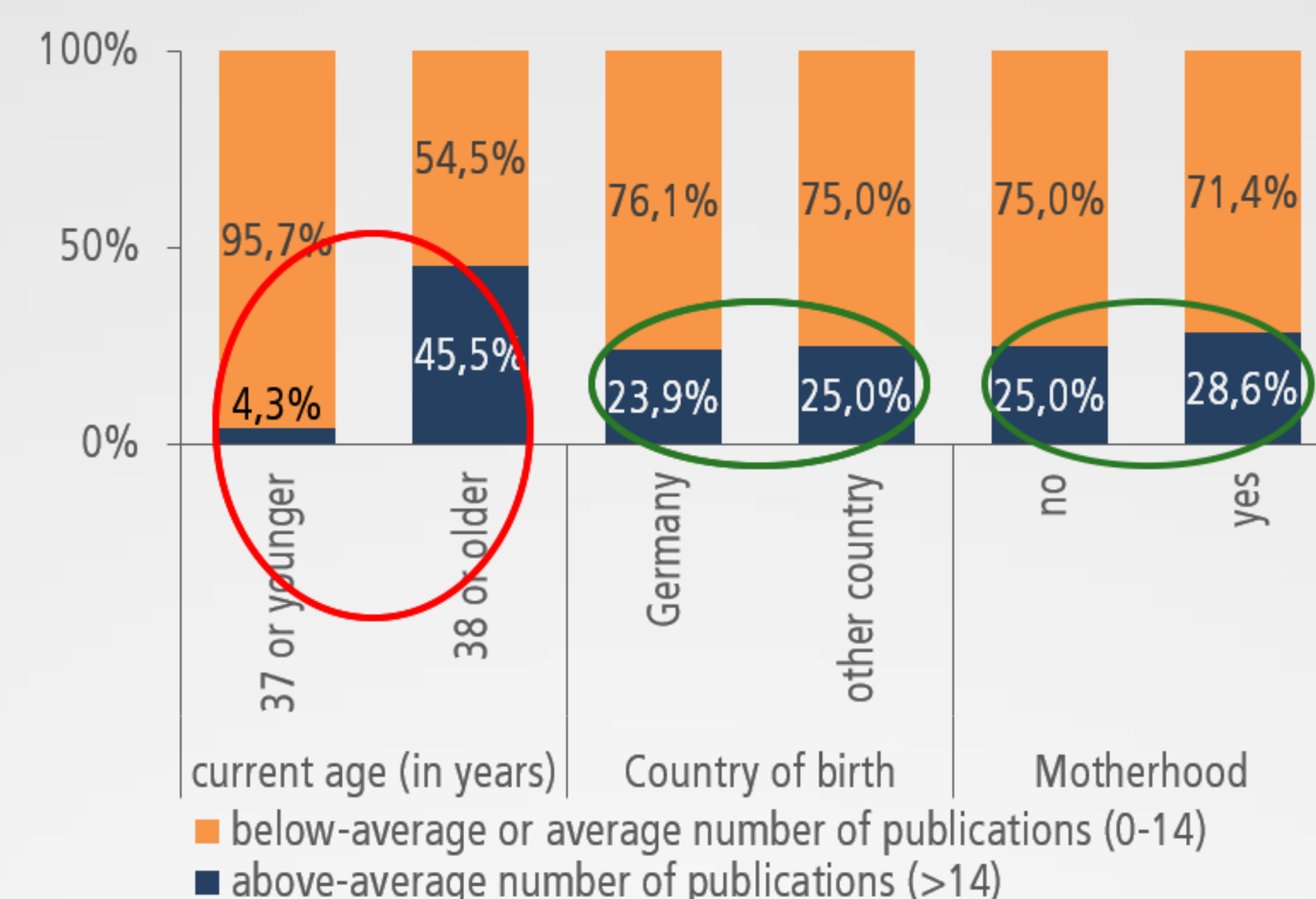


Figure 2: Third-party funding by individual factors

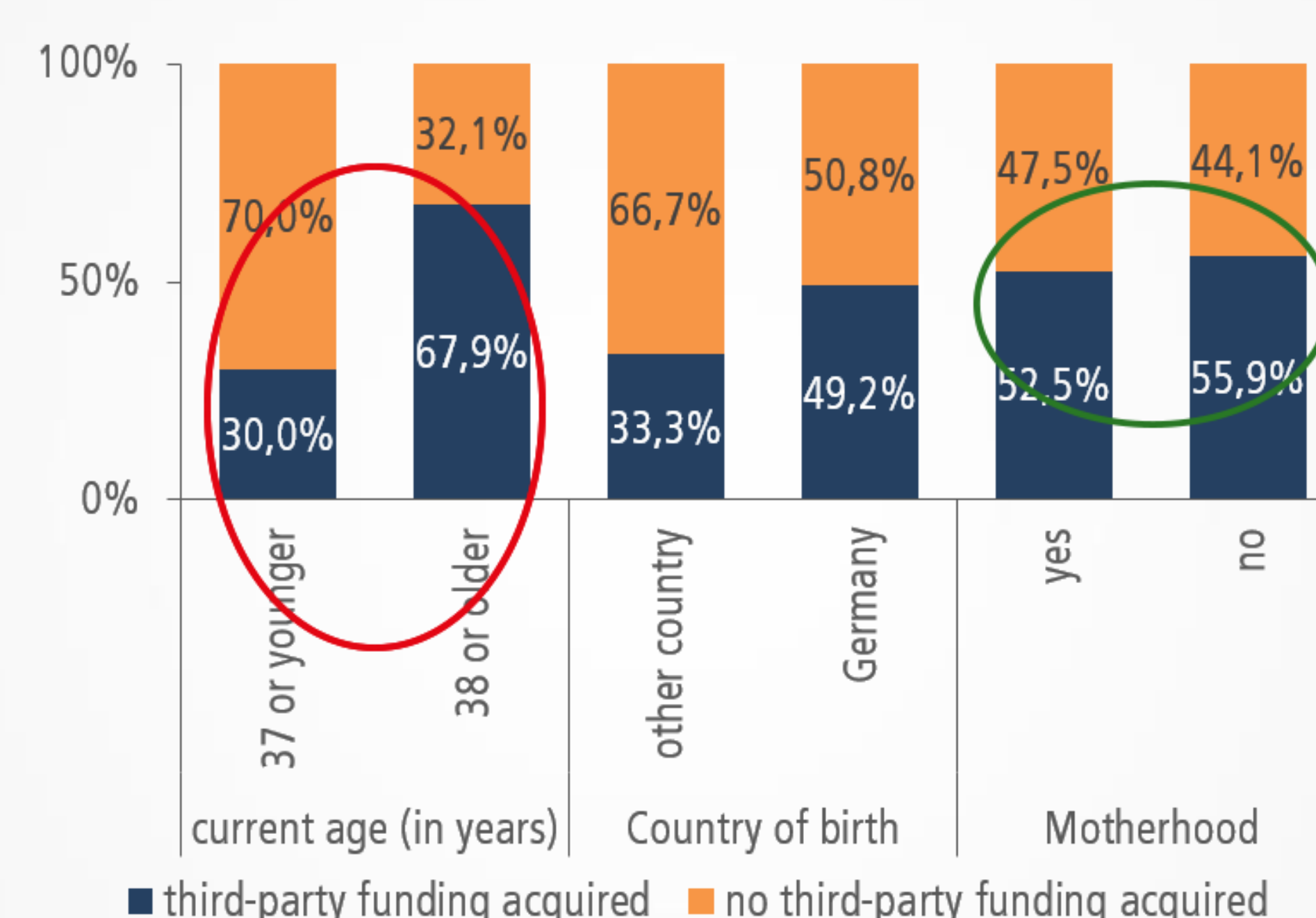
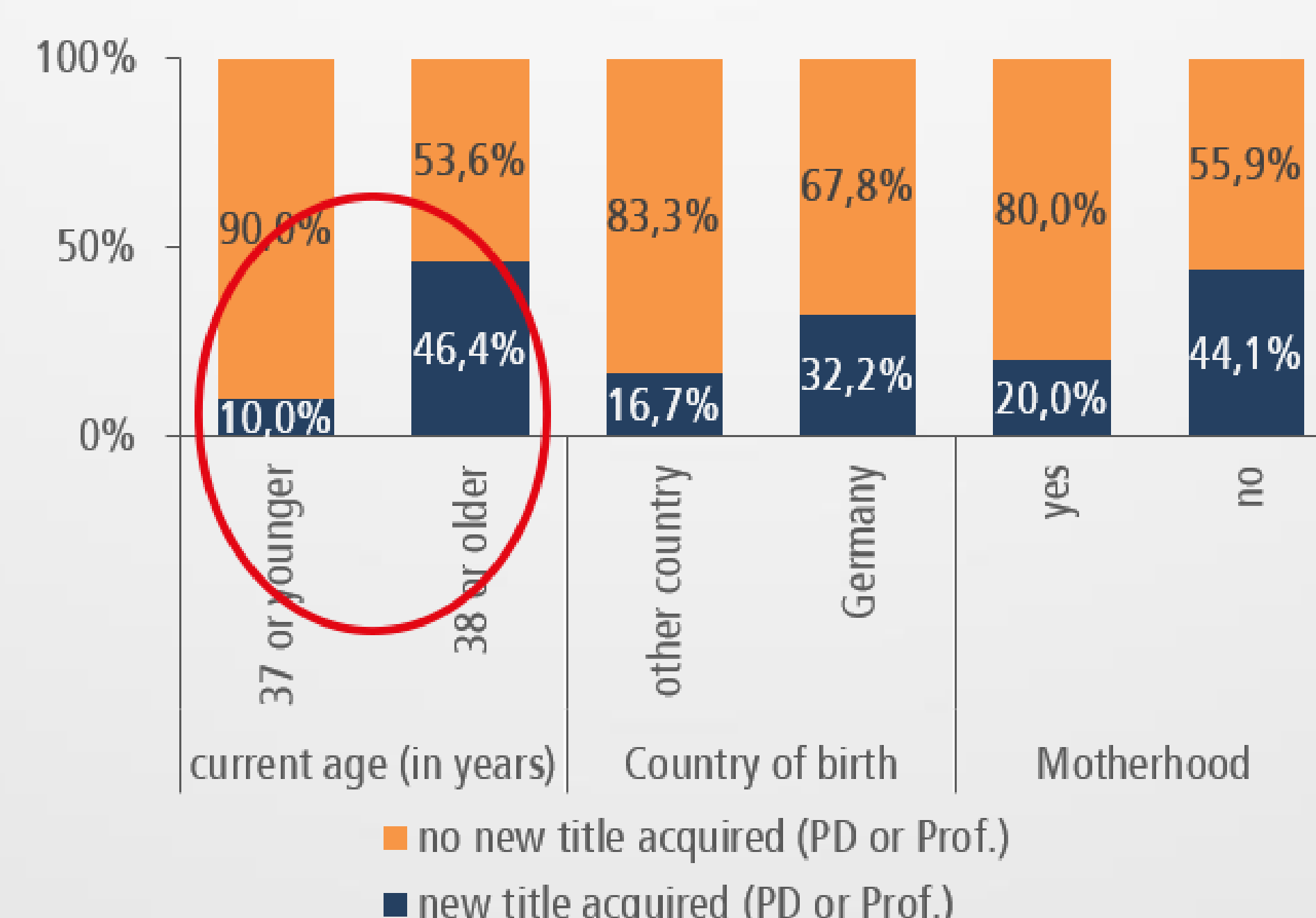


Figure 3: Acquisition of academic title by individual factors



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