

Chapter 2.2

The Research Administration as a Profession (RAAAP) Survey

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Abstract

In this chapter, we look at survey responses from the third Research Administration as a Profession Survey (RAAAP-3) conducted in 2022. We examine some demographic attributes of Research Managers and Administrators (RMAs) such as gender identity, age when entering the profession, age in the current role, and other personal characteristics such as birth country and current country of employment. We also explore the types of institutions where RMAs are employed, the type of work they do, their highest academic qualifications, whether they obtained professional accreditations, and their affiliation with any RMA professional associations. Each topic is investigated both globally and by geographic region to highlight similarities and differences. Overall we find the

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profession to be global, female-dominated, highly academically qualified, and mainly working in the higher education sector.

Keywords: RAAAP; demographic attributes; gender; qualifications; native country; role; age; RMA; RMA associations

History of RAAAP

The RAAAP project started with an award from the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) Research Program in 2015. The initial project (see [Kerridge & Scott, 2018a](#)) was to create a questionnaire to survey RMAs around the world on their perceptions of the relative importance of ‘soft’ transferrable skills and ‘hard’ technical/RMA-specific skills. Due to a large number of responses, a snapshot of the RMA profession around the world was created. Following the initial survey in 2016, a second (RAAAP-2) survey was endorsed by INORMS, the International Network of Research Management Societies (see <https://inorms.net/activities/raaap-taskforce/>; <https://bit.ly/raaap>) and conducted in 2019 and included a focus on research engagement and impact. This chapter provides an overview of demographic data from the third iteration (RAAAP-3) from 2022. The survey also included a focus on ‘How I Became a Research Manager and Administrator’ – HIBARMA, see Chapter 2.3, [Dutta et al. \(2023\)](#) in order to discover more about routes into the profession.

Methodology

This survey was developed based on the previous iterations of the RAAAP survey, in 2016 and 2019. The main structure and questions from the past surveys were kept, enabling longitudinal studies on the evolution of the profession around the world (however, longitudinal analyses are not included in this chapter). Additionally, in eight of the questions, respondents were asked to reply concerning their ‘first role as RMA’ and ‘current role as RMA’, enabling a deeper analysis of the career progression within the profession.

The questionnaire was developed in the third quarter of 2021 and sent for review and feedback to the INORMS member associations. As with past iterations, the involvement of RMA associations was key to ensuring that all questions were understandable in all contexts across the globe and also to supporting the dissemination of the survey to its members, maximising the survey’s geographic coverage and the respective number of respondents.

The final survey contained 46 questions (see [Fischer et al., 2022](#)), providing up to 403 data points per respondent. The survey was constructed and delivered in Qualtrics. The estimated completion time was between 20 and 30 minutes, and the questionnaire included multiple-choice, Likert-type rating scales, and open-ended questions. In all questions related to the profession, respondents were asked to provide more information on their answers, to the non-mandatory open-ended question ‘please give details’. All questions were optional.

The RAAAP-3 survey was submitted and approved (with minor amendments) by each of the authors’ institutions’ ethical and compliance committees. The survey was launched on 25 January 2022 and disseminated to all INORMS member associations to cascade it to their members as they wished, including promoting it on their web pages, newsletters, and mailing lists.

The results presented below describe the sample participating in the survey, and, due to the number of responses, this is a potentially characteristic picture of the

Research Management and Administration community. In addition, comparisons between responses provided in the different geographic regions can provide interesting insights into the profession around the world. For that, responses were grouped into five geographic regions, based on the datapoint *AnalysisRegionofEmployment* created and computed from the *CountryOfEmployment*. The geographical regions are *Canada*, *Europe (excluding UK)*, *Oceania*, *UK*, *USA*, and the *Rest of the World* (including responses from 28 other countries). Note that throughout this chapter field names from the data sets are shown in *bold italics*, field values are shown in *italics*, and text from the questionnaire in *‘quoted italics’*.

The RAAAP-3 survey captured 5,076 responses in total. Of those, only 3,532 provided geographic locations, spanning 66 different countries (*CountryOfEmployment*). The top 5 countries represented in the survey are the *USA* (30.9%), *UK* (13.5%), *Australia* (9.7%), *Canada* (5.0%), and *China* (3.4%); the darker hues in Fig. 2.2.1.

In terms of the *AnalysisRegionofEmployment*, the *USA* represents 30.9% of the responses, followed by *Europe (excluding UK)* with 28.5%, *UK* with 13.5%, *Rest of the World* with 11.3%, *Oceania* with 10.8%, and *Canada* with 5%.

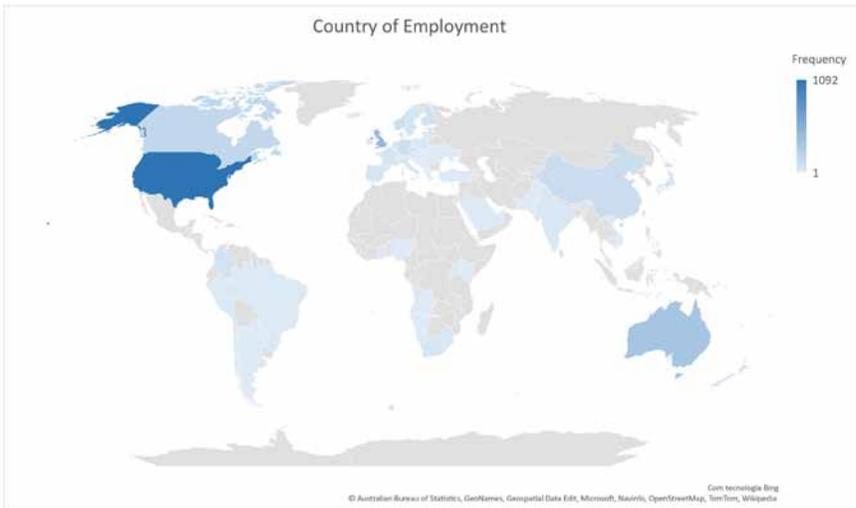


Fig. 2.2.1. Geographic Coverage of Responses.

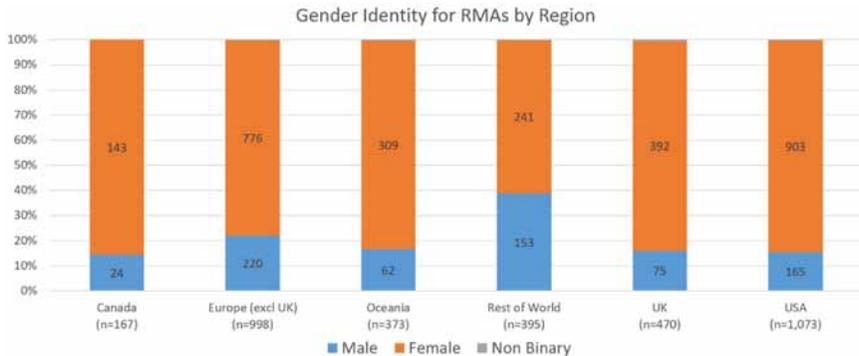


Fig. 2.2.2. Gender Identity by Region.

RAAAP-3 Data

In this section, we highlight some of the major high-level findings from the RAAAP-3 main dataset (Kerridge, Dutta, et al., 2022a).

Fig. 2.2.2 shows the self-identified gender (*GenderExtended*) excluding *Prefer not to provide* across all regions (*AnalysisRegionOfEmployment*), it is clear that the profession is dominated by female respondents (79.5% of $n = 3,521$) a finding that has been made many times, for example, by Kerridge and Scott (2018a) and Shambrook et al. (2015). The greatest polarisations are in *Canada* (85.6% of $n = 167$), *USA* (84.2% of $n = 1,073$), *UK* (83.4% of $n = 470$), and *Oceania* (82.8% of $n = 373$) in terms of female RMAs. The *Rest of the World* region has the highest rate of self-identified male respondents (38.7% of $n = 395$) but is still a predominantly female workforce (61.0%). There are many potential reasons for these differences. For example, Shambrook et al. (2015) showed that in the USA the profession flipped from being predominantly male to predominantly female over time – perhaps as the profession matured, or more generally that there were more women in the workforce. In the *Rest of the World* region there are many countries where RMA is a new profession. Another potential contributor may be cultural differences, for example, the ratio of females in a specific country or region’s workforce, in general. Another area for future investigation is the engagement of males within the professional associations, which was the main mechanism for the distribution of the survey.

As we look at the age ranges of people in their first RMA role (*FirstAgeRange*) by Region (*AnalysisRegionOfEmployment*), we see that the largest proportion enter the field between the ages of 25 and 34 (47.2% of $n = 3,444$). This is especially true in *Europe* (excluding UK), where 52.9% (of 989) reported entering the field between the ages of 25 and 34, and in the *UK*, with 52.6% ($n = 470$). Interestingly, the *USA* (43.2% of $n = 1,070$) and *Oceania* (43.0% of $n = 377$) shared the lowest percentage of workers entering the RMA profession between the ages of 25 and 34. More investigation is needed, but this may be due to the circuitous, or ‘labyrinthine’ as Poli, Kerridge, et al. (2023) describe in Chapter 2.4, routes that many take on their way to finding themselves in the RMA profession. Respondents in the 35–44 age range were the second largest group to report entering the field, with 28.0%. The *USA* boasts the largest percentage of respondents aged 24 and under entering the field as their first job (17.3%) while *Canada* has the lowest percentage of respondents entering at an age below 25 (4.7% of $n = 170$). However, when looking at the ages of RMAs now (see Fig. 2.2.3) there are

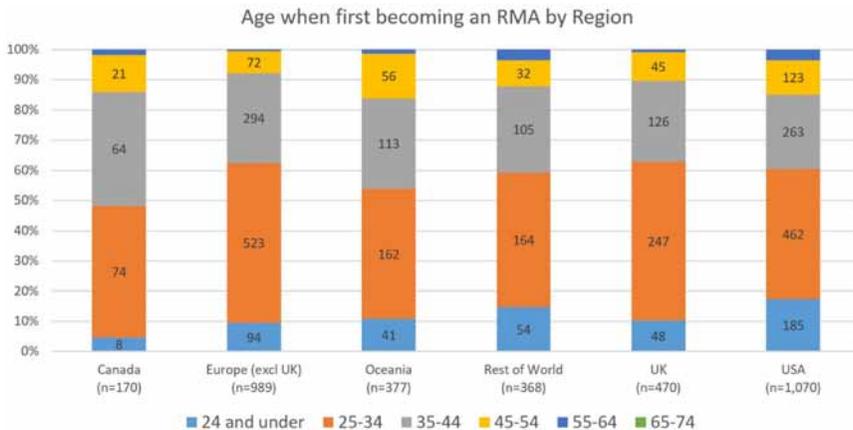


Fig. 2.2.3. Age of RMAs When Joining the Profession by Region.

very few (0.4% of $n = 3,451$) 24 and under, which could suggest that RMAs are now joining at a later age – or perhaps more likely those 24 and under are so new to the profession that they have not yet engaged with the associations that distributed the survey.

When comparing the age range of those entering their first RMA role (*FirstAgeRange*, see Fig. 2.2.4) and respondents' current age ranges (*AgeRange*) by Region (*AnalysisRegionOfEmployment*), it appears we have an ageing population who have remained in RMA positions. With the largest proportion of respondents (37.1% of $n = 3,451$) reporting their age in the 35–44 range, the second largest group was the 45–54 age range (31.1%). *Oceania* saw the largest percentage of respondents fall in this range, with 37.7% (of $n = 374$) in the range 45–54. Overall, we even see a sizeable percentage (15.3%) of RMAs in the 55–64 age range. This is especially prominent in the *USA*, where 23.1% (of $n = 1,067$) of RMAs are in the 55–64 age range, and in *Canada*, where 19.3% (of $n = 171$) are aged 55–64. The *USA* even reported 4.8% of respondents in the 65 and over age range. Whether this points to later retirement ages in the *USA* or a highly developed professional workforce who are passionate about their field and continue working late in life would need further investigation. *Europe* and the *UK* reported similar percentages of respondent age ranges, with the 35–44 (Europe 43.8% of $n = 992$, UK 41.8% of $n = 471$) most common, with 45–54 range trailing a little behind (*Europe* 30.0% and *UK* 32.5%).

When asked how senior (*CurrentRoleLevelR3*) they are, across the world (*AnalysisRegionOfEmployment*), nearly a quarter (23.0% of $n = 3,476$) reported that they were in *Leader* positions, with the largest proportion (29.0% of $n = 1,088$) in the *USA*. Conversely, the average for managerial positions was 37.1% with the *USA* having the second lowest proportion (33.6%) and the *UK* having the largest proportion (50.5% of $n = 473$). *Canada* had the lowest proportion of *Manager* staff (24.4% of $n = 176$), but the highest of *Operational* staff (47.2%). Whether these differences represent structural differences in the organisation of RMA around the world, a difference in self-perception, or the local semantics of the definitions, is unclear. For example, some may see the word ‘*Manager*’ and assume it pertains only to having subordinate staff, whereas others may view the management of a function, even if they are the only person in that function, as being managerial as opposed to administrative. Overall, it seems that the RAAAP-3 survey elicited responses from RMAs at a broad range of levels of seniority from the various regions of the world, see Fig. 2.2.5.

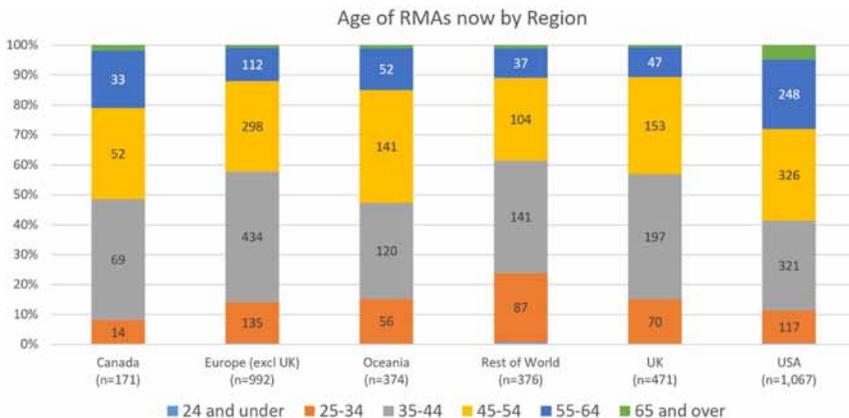


Fig. 2.2.4. Age of RMAs in the Profession by Region.

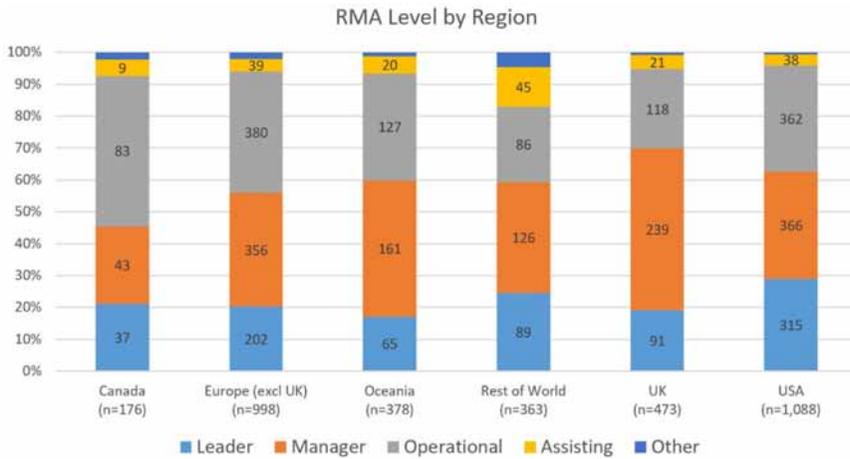


Fig. 2.2.5. The (Self-reported) Role Level of RMAs by Region.

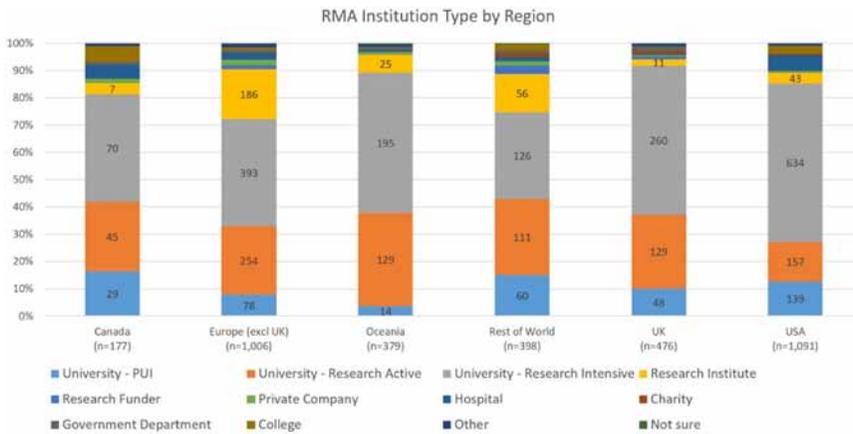


Fig. 2.2.6. RMA Institution Type by Region.

When asked what type of institution (*InstitutionCharacter2*) they worked in by Region (*AnalysisRegionOfEmployment*), the majority reported working in a *University – Research Intensive* (47.6% of $n = 3,527$). Fig. 2.2.6 shows this was true for each geographic region, with the *Rest of the World* reporting the lowest percentage (31.7% of $n = 398$) and the *USA* reporting the highest percentage (58.1% of $n = 1,091$). *University – Research Active* was the next highest designation of institution represented in the survey, with the highest percentage coming from *Oceania* (34.0% of $n = 379$) and the lowest from the *USA* (14.4%). Also in the university research ecosystem, we have *University – PUI* (Predominantly Undergraduate Institution) with 10.4% and *Research Institutes* with 9.3% of the responses. *Private Companies*, *Hospitals*, *Charities*, and *Colleges* all had representation, but the proportion of respondents was low. Whether this is due to there actually being fewer RMAs outside universities and research institutes, or that those working in non-traditional research areas are unaware of the RMA community and the professional associations that were largely responsible for the distribution of the survey is unclear, this is discussed by Santos et al. (2023, Chapter 2.5).

When using the macro-areas of Japanese taxonomy for RMA sub-areas of work (see Takahashi & Yoshioka-Kobayashi, 2016), which is looking at those that work in all of the subareas in each of the four major areas of ‘Research Development and Policy’ (RDP, *JRespFor_RDP*), ‘Pre Award’ (*JRespFor_Pre*), ‘Post Award’ (*JRespFor_Post*), and ‘Other Areas’ (*JRespFor_Other*), we see similarities and differences across the *AnalysisRegionOfEmployment*, shown in Fig. 2.2.7. Without exception in response to what parts of RMA do you work in, the most common area is ‘Pre Award’, with globally 37.5% (of $n = 3,389$) of RMAs covering all the aspects. Almost ubiquitously RDP was the next most common area (26.8% globally) apart from the USA, where ‘Post Award’ (28.0% of $n = 1,075$) outstrips RDP (22.2%). This is perhaps surprising, given the high proportion of leaders in the USA. Although this could potentially be explained by those leaders focusing on individual aspects or sub-areas of RDP, rather than macro-areas, which are displayed in this chart. Globally, those who work in all of the ‘Other Areas’ is a low percentage (4.4%), this is perhaps unsurprising as some of these areas are at the border of what is generally accepted as RMA, and again, all of the sub-areas would need to be undertaken for the result to show in *JRespFor_Other*.

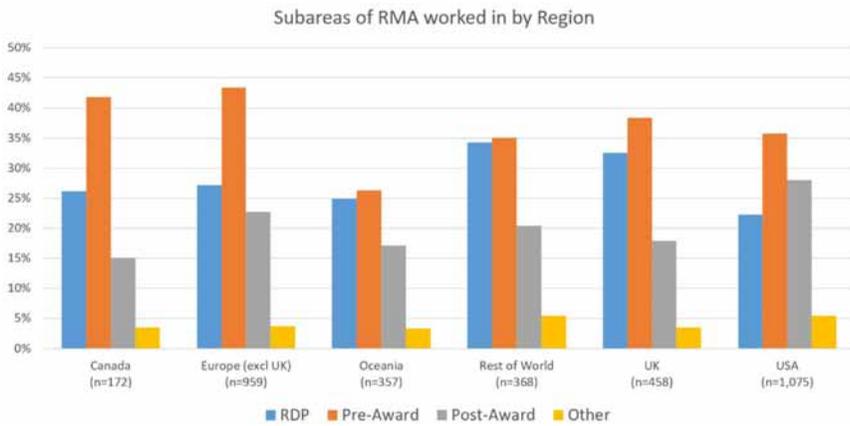


Fig. 2.2.7. Areas that RMAs Work in (Japanese Taxonomy) by Region.

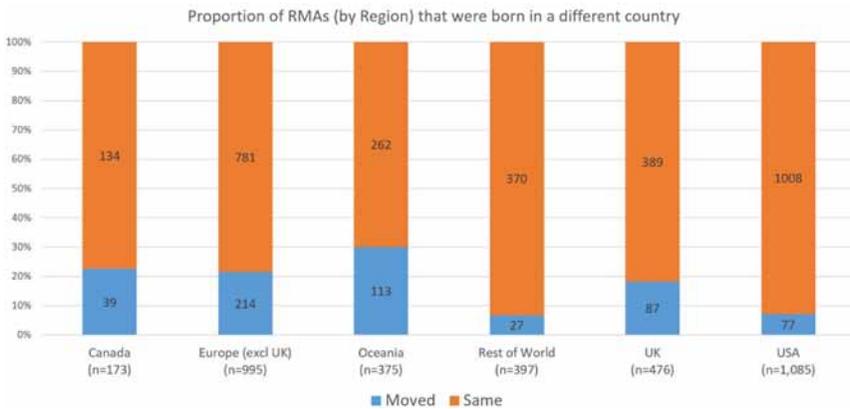


Fig. 2.2.8. Proportion of RMAs, by Region, Born in Different Country From Where They Now Work.

A measure of RMA geographic mobility is shown in Fig. 2.2.8 by comparing *CountryOfBirth* with *CountryOfEmployment*, and shown by *AnalysisRegionOfEmployment*. Note that a person that was born in the same country as they currently work, but had worked elsewhere in between would show as Same, whereas someone born abroad, perhaps on a trip, but had never ventured outside their country after that would show as Moved, so this metric should be treated with caution. However, overall 15.9% (of $n = 3,501$) of RMAs now work in a country where they were not born. Looking at the UK the 18.3% (of $n = 476$) is a little higher than the national average (14.5%¹). Oceania sees the largest mobile workforce with 30.1% ($n = 375$). The USA (7.1% of $n = 1,085$) and the *Rest of the World* (6.8% of $n = 397$) have the lowest levels. The latter is difficult to comment on due to the large variety of countries included, whereas the former differs greatly from the national USA average of 17.4%.²

The survey included 42 professional associations around the world for RMAs to indicate their affiliations '26. With which professional organizations are you affiliated?' When five or more responses to the question '26a Other Association(s): Please provide details' included a particular association, backcoding the responses provided an additional 10 associations, giving a total of 52 professional associations. Fig. 2.2.9 shows the number of affiliations RMAs have with different associations (*Assoc_ACU_Member*, *Assoc_UIDP_Member*, by region *AnalysisRegionOfEmployment*). Of the 3,582 responses, 53.2% of RMAs have one affiliation, and 15.3% have two affiliations. Interestingly, as the survey was distributed mainly by INORMS member associations, 25.2% report not having any affiliation with any RMA association. Overall 21.6% of RMAs have two or more association memberships, but this is skewed by the 35.9% (of $n = 1,092$) in the USA, and the 23.3% (of $n = 1,007$) in Europe (excluding UK). The former benefits from a large number of national associations, and the latter from a pan-European association and a number of national associations.

RMAs were asked to choose their '20. Level of Academic Qualification Gained BEFORE becoming an RMA and DURING your time as an RMA'. Fig. 2.2.10 shows a comparison of *HighestQualification* (computed from the highest of *HighestQualBefore*

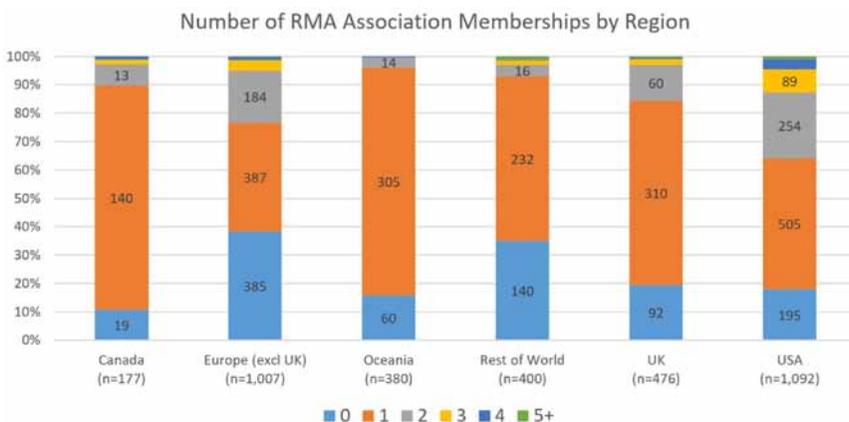


Fig. 2.2.9. Number of RMA Associations Affiliations by Region.

¹ <https://migrationobservatory.ox.ac.uk/resources/briefings/migrants-in-the-uk-an-overview/>

² <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/pdf/forbrn.pdf>

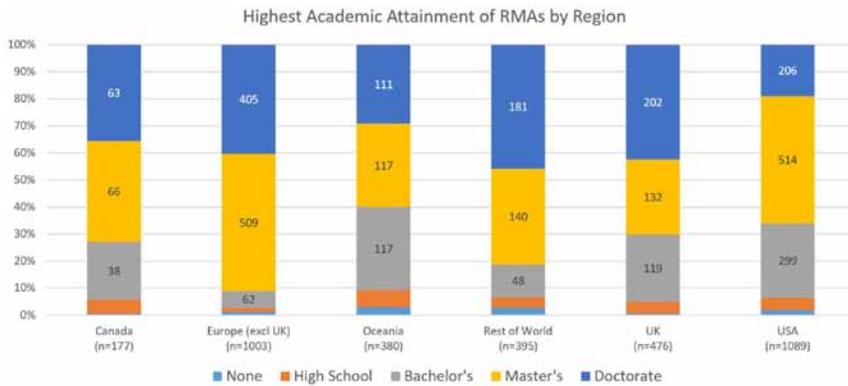


Fig. 2.2.10. Highest Academic Qualifications of RMAs, by Region.

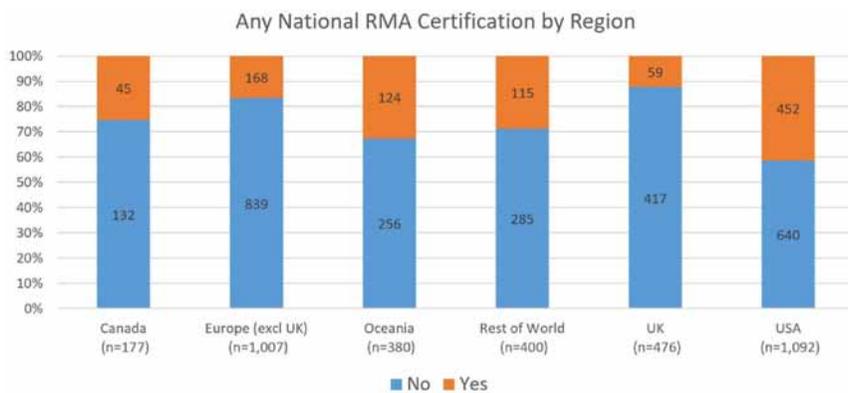


Fig. 2.2.11. Professional Accreditation of RMAs by Regions.

and *HighestQualDuring*) by *AnalysisRegionOfEmployment*. Of the RMAs who responded to this question, 42.0% ($n = 3,520$) have a *Master's* degree, and a further 33.2% have a *Doctorate* degree, with 19.4% having a *Bachelor's* degree. In terms of *Master's* degrees, the largest proportion was in *Europe (excluding UK)* with 50.7% (of $n = 1,003$), and the next largest proportion was 47.2% (of $n = 1,089$) from the *USA*. Looking at RMAs with *Doctorate* degrees, the *Rest of the World* has the highest proportion (45.8% of $n = 395$) of RMAs with the *UK* (42.4% of $n = 476$) and *Europe (excluding UK)* (40.4% of $n = 1,003$) not far behind. Overall the RMA profession is highly academically qualified. The high proportion of *Doctorates* is likely associated with the number of RMAs who have moved from research with 25.1% (of $n = 3,334$) indicating that 'I was previously an academic researcher and moved into research administration' being a top factor in their becoming an RMA (see Dutta et al., 2023).

The RAAAP-3 survey also asked '21. Please select all professional accreditation that you have related to research management and administration'. Fig. 2.2.11 is an analysis of *AnyCRA* (a computed variable from any positive response to the options *PQ_AU_ARMF . PQ_OTHER*) by *AnalysisRegionOfEmployment*. Across regions, 27.3% (of $n = 3,532$) of RMAs had at least one certification. Certification was the highest in the *USA* at 41.4% (of $n = 1,092$) and lowest in the *UK* at 12.4% (of $n = 476$) and *Europe (excluding UK)* at 16.7% (of $n = 1,007$). This is probably related to the length of time

that RMA-specific certification has been available in the various regions – nearly 30 years in the *USA*, and fewer than 10 in the *UK* and *Europe (excluding UK)*.

Summary and Reflections

The high number of respondents who included geographic data ($n = 3,532$) provides an important illustration of the Research Management and Administration community, with interesting insights into the profession around the world.

The profession is dominated by females in all regions of the world, but with less polarisation in the *Rest of the World* where RMA is a newer profession than in other regions. In terms of age range, the largest proportion of respondents entered the profession between the ages of 25 and 34, followed by the 35–44 age range, with some differences between regions of the world. *Canada* and *USA* have the largest proportion of older RMAs in their current role. When contrasting the age range of those entering their first RMA role and respondents' current age ranges, the largest proportion of respondents reported their current age in the 35–44 range, followed by the 45–54 age range. A possible reason is that the longer you are in the profession, the more opportunities you have to engage in the RMA associations and they were the main dissemination channel of the survey.

High levels of academic qualifications characterise the RMAs who responded to the survey, with 42.0% having a *Master's* degree, 33.2% a *Doctorate* degree, and 19.4% a *Bachelor's* degree. The high proportion of *Doctorates* can possibly be explained by the 25.1% of RMAs who moved from research into RMA (see Dutta et al., 2023), suggesting a link between these two professions. The large majority of respondents (81.4%) reported working in the University context, mostly in a *University – Research Intensive* (47.6%), but *University – Research Active* (23.4%), *University*, and *Research Institutes* (10.4%) also had high proportions of respondents. This could, potentially, be an identity issue, with RMAs who work in other types of organisations unaware they work in Research Management and Administration (see Santos et al., 2023, Chapter 2.5). Overall, the RAAAP-3 survey elicited responses from RMAs at a broad range of levels of seniority and areas of RMA work from the various regions of the world. When looking at the level of seniority, the majority of respondents identified their role as either *Manager* or *Operational*. Though these terms may be interpreted differently in different regions, more people indicated they work somewhere in the middle of the professional hierarchy, with fewer selecting *Leader* and *Assisting*. Drilling down more, when asked what sub-area of work they were employed, the most common area was *Pre-Award*, followed by *Research Development and Policy*, and then *Post-Award*.

Across regions, more than a quarter of all respondents reported having at least one RMA-specific certification (27.3%). There was variation within the regions, with the *USA* having a higher proportion responding in the affirmative (41.4%), this could be related to the length of time that these certifications have been available. Another indicator of professionalisation is the creation and engagement with RMA professional associations. As stated above, 42 professional associations were presented as options in the survey, and another 10 were added due to having 5 or more unique respondents report an affiliation, for a total of 52 professional associations. Globally, over half (53.2%) of respondents reported affiliation with one association and over one-fifth (21.6%) with two or more associations. It is perhaps surprising that over a quarter (25.2%) reported having no RMA association affiliation given the primary method of distribution of the survey was through the associations.

In summary, RMA is a recognised profession across the world, with different levels of development and maturity in each region's professional communities. Even given these differences in maturity, it is clear that RMA is ubiquitous, and supports all elements of the research lifecycle.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the thousands of research managers and administrators around the world who took the time to complete the survey. In particular the authors would like to acknowledge the various RAAAP-3 champions and their respective associations in INORMS and beyond for disseminating and promoting the survey.

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