



### PhD in Quantitative / Mixed Methods Sociology

Post Title:	PhD Researcher in Sociology
Post Status:	<b>48 months</b> , Full-time
Starting Date:	September 2025
Department/Faculty:	Department of Sociology, School of Social Sciences and Philosophy
Reports to (supervisors):	<b>Assistant Professor Nicole Kapelle</b> <b>Assistant Professor Annatina Aerne</b>
Location:	Trinity College Dublin (Dublin, Ireland)
Stipend:	<b>Maintenance stipend from 18,500 up to 25,000 EURO per annum</b> (depending on funding source) plus fees (EU fees). On top, the department offers <b>teaching assistantship</b> as non-stipend pay.
Closing Date:	<b>April 21, 2025 (23:00 GMT)</b>

#### Summary of post

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##### *Doctoral Researcher in Quantitative / Mixed Methods Sociology (PhD programme)*

The **Department of Sociology at Trinity College Dublin** is offering stipends for two doctoral students to join the **PhD in Sociology degree programme** for a period of 48 months. Candidates are given the opportunity to design and carry out an innovative PhD project in quantitative sociology in the field of social inequality and life course research or mixed methods sociology in the field of organizational sociology. We are seeking applicants who are intrinsically motivated in working on one of the of the following streams of research:

##### **Stream 1 (Supervisor: Kapelle): The Economics of Late-Life Divorce in High-Income Countries**

While overall divorce rates in high-income countries have stabilized, divorces among individuals over 50—often referred to as "grey divorce"—have increased significantly. Grey divorce presents unique economic and social challenges, disrupting long-standing financial and social structures, with significant consequences for individual well-being and societal costs. Unlike divorces earlier in life, individuals undergoing grey divorce have limited time to rebuild financial security, leading to increased economic vulnerability, reliance on public assistance, and shifting intergenerational financial transfers. Despite its growing relevance, research on grey divorce remains scarce, predominantly U.S.-focused, and lacks causal evidence that accounts for different institutional and policy contexts.

The PhD project will address these gaps by employing advanced longitudinal methods and cross-national data analysis to investigate the economic drivers and consequences of grey divorce. The project will explore how individual- and couple-level economic factors—such as



intra-couple income inequality, household wealth, and social class—shape the risk of grey divorce and how economic outcomes post-divorce vary across different welfare state contexts. The findings will provide critical insights for policymakers addressing financial instability and social support in ageing populations.

The project will employ a comparative, longitudinal research design using panel data from multiple high-income countries, including the UK (UKHLS), Germany (SOEP), Australia (HILDA), and the US (PSID), alongside ageing studies such as SHARE, ELSA, and TILDA. Where feasible, administrative data from Nordic countries will complement survey data. The study will apply event history analysis to examine predictors of grey divorce and advanced panel regression methods (e.g., fixed-effects growth curve models, staggered difference-in-differences) to analyse post-divorce economic trajectories. Synthetic control methods may be employed to establish causal relationships.

Applicants to Stream 1 are asked to submit a **research statement** that demonstrates how their research background and skills match with the project.

**Stream 2 (Supervisor: Aerne): Employer training and hiring in times of technological change**

Technological advancements, such as artificial intelligence and automation increase the skill levels required in many jobs. As technological change transforms traditional roles, upskilling becomes essential for employees to remain competitive and adapt to new work environments.

Employers play a critical role in workforce development: they reward certain skills by hiring and promoting some candidates rather than others, and they train the workforce. Yet employers' perspectives on various forms of training remain underexplored. This project is interested in employers' skills strategies: how do they invest in training and what kinds of programs do employers find attractive in times of technological change?

Of particular interest is the interdependence of employers when investing in training or education. Investment in training represents a collective action problem: individual employers are at a competitive disadvantage if they invest in training, but their competitors do not. Competing in a product market with free-riding employers refraining from training investments and thus, benefitting from lower labour costs is often not viable. Investing in training is thus only possible if employers do so collectively. A certain level of employer coordination is thus needed to introduce new training options and updating workforce skills.

This PhD provides insights into how organizations approach workforce development and the conditions under which they invest in employee training. It examines how employers develop skills collecting data through qualitative interviews, surveys, and experiments. To address the interdependent nature of employer behaviour, the project collects and analyses network data.

Applicants to Stream 2 are asked to submit a **research statement** that demonstrates how their research background and skills match with the project.

**Stream 3 (supervisor: Kapelle or Aerne): Open project based on research proposal**



Applicants may additionally propose their own research, which has to connect to one of the following broad thematic fields.

**Supervision Kapelle:**

- Wealth, stratification, and social mobility (e.g., wealth distribution, asset poverty, intergenerational transmission, and the role of policies in shaping inequality).
- Family, gender, and life course dynamics (e.g., how family structures, relationships, and gender shape social and economic outcomes over the life course).
- Social attitudes and perceptions of inequality (e.g., public views on wealth, mobility, fairness, and deservingness across different societies).
- Health, well-being, and social inequalities (e.g., how life course transitions, financial conditions, and social environments affect health and well-being).

**Supervision Aerne:**

- Employer hiring and training strategies (e.g. how employers value different educational credentials and experiences)
- Organizational cooperation, e.g. inter-firm networks, such as board interlocks (e.g. how firms build and maintain networks to access resources)
- Antecedents and effects of occupational closure (e.g. how certification and licensing affect incomes of incumbents and outsiders)

Applicants to Stream 3 are asked to submit a **research proposal** that specifies a research objective and question, background and relevance, a testable empirical hypothesis, as well as data and possible methods of analysis.

**Applicant profile**

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Applicants are expected to have a strong interest in the topic and to be intrinsically motivated to work on the project. They are expected to have an excellent knowledge of quantitative-statistical methodology, and to be competent in using a statistical package (R, Python or Stata).

For Stream 1, applicants should be comfortable working with formal analytical frameworks and using data from multiple countries in a cross-national setup. Experience with cross-sectional and/or longitudinal data is especially welcome. Additionally, applicants who aim to apply innovative computational social science approaches, such as machine learning, to substantive sociological challenges are particularly encouraged to apply.

For Stream 2, candidates are expected to have knowledge of qualitative and/or quantitative (network) research methods, and the willingness to learn the other. Experience with network analysis, data scraping and quantitative text analysis is an asset.

Major research activities conducted by the candidate will involve (1) collaborating closely with your research supervisor; (2) becoming familiar with the main theoretical debates in the field by engaging in a systematic reading of the literature and writing a state-of-the-art literature review for your project; (3) becoming proficient in working with cross-sectional and longitudinal data, respectively network data; (4) conducting advanced statistical analyses to



test alternative theory-derived hypotheses; (5) summarizing and interpreting your findings for a social science audience and developing policy implications; (6) presenting work at international academics conferences or networks in the field; (7) preparing research papers and submitting them to pertinent academic journals.

We are looking for enthusiastic PhD candidates who would like to acquire high-level training in sociology and in writing a cutting-edge PhD dissertation at TCD Sociology.

### *Qualifications*

- (nearly) finished MA, MSc or MPhil in Sociology, Social Research, Computational Social Science, Population Studies/Demography, Economics, Psychology, Social Policy, Education, Business, or in any cognate fields.

### *Essential research skills*

#### *Stream 1*

- excellent analytical skills;
- knowledge of quantitative methods in the social sciences;
- familiarity with the literature on social stratification and social inequality;
- experience in the management and analysis of micro-level quantitative data (preferably longitudinal data);
- technical skills in *Stata* or a comparable statistical package (like R) or willingness and competence to acquire such skills in a short amount of time;
- solid statistical training or knowledge of advanced multivariate statistical methods, and preferably, competence in longitudinal research designs and/or techniques of machine learning.

#### *Stream 2*

- excellent analytical skills;
- knowledge of quantitative methods in the social sciences;
- knowledge of qualitative methods in the social sciences;
- familiarity with the literature on organizational sociology;
- experience with network analysis or quantitative language processing is a plus;
- technical skills in R or Python or willingness and competence to acquire such skills in a short amount of time;
- solid statistical training or knowledge of advanced multivariate statistical methods, and preferably, competence in network analysis, data scraping and quantitative text analysis.

### *Other essential knowledge and skills*

- strong interpersonal and relational skills;
- an interdisciplinary approach;
- excellent written and verbal communication skills in English;
- ability to structure and pursue an independent research project;
- strong motivation to publish in academic journals;
- good organisational skills;
- ability to work effectively in a team.



*Desirable skills*

- interest in or basic knowledge of cross-country comparative research;
- interest in pursuing an academic or teaching career.

**The PhD Programme at TCD Sociology**

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The candidate will join the PhD programme at the Department of Sociology of Trinity College Dublin, Ireland's leading university which is located on a historic campus in the heart of Dublin. The Department will provide all logistic, academic and intellectual support and integrate the successful candidate into a vibrant doctoral programme at TCD, while offering additional economic supports to cover fees and basic expenses related to the PhD programme. PhD students at the department are embedded in the interdisciplinary context of the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy which also includes economics, political science, and philosophy.

PhD students in Sociology enjoy a wide range of training opportunities. For example, students participate in a research training programme in the department and have the opportunity to join masters level courses (including courses on research methods). Moreover, our PhD students are supported to attend high-quality international workshops and summer schools.

PhD students are expected to collaborate closely with their supervisors and will produce a PhD based on four papers of a publishable standard. PhD students also acquire teaching experience by providing teaching support in our undergraduate programme (4 hours per week during term times).

*Standard expectations of the post*

- Critical, systematic and analytical review of relevant literature for the project.
- Writing academic output (working papers, chapters, journal articles) in excellent English.
- Conducting empirical research using quantitative-statistical methods.
- Actively writing and submitting research papers for publication and contributing to joint projects or related submissions with the PhD supervisor.
- Attending meetings, workshops, and conferences.
- Disseminating academic work to specialised and general audiences.
- 4 hours of teaching a week during the statutory term (facilitating undergraduate tutorials).

**Application Procedure**

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Informal enquiries are very welcome and can be made directly to **Dr Nicole Kapelle** ([nicole.kapelle@tcd.ie](mailto:nicole.kapelle@tcd.ie)), Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology or **Dr Annatina Aerne** ([aernea@tcd.ie](mailto:aernea@tcd.ie)), Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology.

To apply, candidates should submit:

1. a **motivation letter** clearly indicating motivation and background (max. 1 page), importantly the letter must specify the **desired stream** (1,2, or 3, see above);



2. a **full curriculum vitae**
3. A concise **research statement** (Streams 1 and 2) or **research proposal** (Stream 3) no longer than 1500 words excluding references (see explanation below)
4. the names and contact details of **two referees** (with email addresses included);
5. at least **one example of your written work** (in English and including some data analysis) that shows your analytical and writing skills in a social science discipline.

via email to

- Professor Camilla Devitt ([DEVITTCA@tcd.ie](mailto:DEVITTCA@tcd.ie)), Director of Postgraduate Research at the Department of sociology.

before the **closing date of April 21, 2025 (23:00 GMT)**.

Applications must indicate exactly *"PhD Application – Quantitative / Mixed Methods Sociology, Stream X"* in the subject line (replace X with the Stream number).

### **Research statement (Streams 1 and 2)**

Applications will be considered based on a candidate's academic record and a **short research statement** to be submitted alongside the usual application documents (motivation, CV, references, writing sample, see below). The research statement demonstrates a candidate's research experience and skills in quantitative sociological research as well as a brief outline of their research interests in relation to the project. The statement should be **no longer than 1500 words** (excluding references).

### **Research proposal (Stream 3)**

Applications will be considered based on a candidate's academic record and, if applying to stream 3, a **short research proposal** to be submitted alongside the usual application documents (motivation, CV, references, writing sample, see below). The aim of the research proposal is to delineate a potential PhD research project that connects to some of the mentioned broader fields. An excellent research proposal has a telling project title, outlines research objective and questions clearly, addresses why it is important to conduct this research, embeds the project in the current research literature, proposes some theoretical orientation, develops a testable empirical hypothesis, and briefly describes the data and methods it intends to employ. The proposal should be **no longer than 1500 words** (excluding references).

### **Institutional background information**

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#### *The Department of Sociology*

Sociology is a member of the School of Social Sciences and Philosophy, one of 24 Schools within Trinity College. The Department's principal research clusters are: Migration, Identities



and Diversity; Comparative Inequalities, Education and Families; Power, Conflict and Resistance; Digitalisation and Social Networks.

Department staff are highly international and our research combines advanced quantitative methods applied to real-world data with the use of sophisticated and diverse qualitative methodologies. Our research links to several College priority research themes: 'International Integration' centred within Trinity Research in Social Science (TRISS), 'Identities in Transformation' and 'Inclusive Society' within the Trinity Long Room Hub (TLRH) and 'Ageing' within the Longitudinal Study of Ageing (TILDA). The Department has a long-standing collaboration with Ireland's premier research institute, the Economic and Social Research Institute (ESRI) and has strong links with other disciplines such as Medicine, Psychology, Immunology and Neuroscience.

The Department has an active postgraduate programme. It is home to an MSc in Comparative Social Change delivered jointly with University College Dublin, as well as an MPhil in Race, Ethnicity, Conflict. It has a structured PhD programme combining advanced methodological training with transferable skills workshops. There are around 15 PhD students and our doctoral graduates have positions in academic institutions, non-governmental organisations and the private sector.

Further information on the Department of Sociology is available at: [www.tcd.ie/sociology](http://www.tcd.ie/sociology)

#### *School of Social Sciences and Philosophy*

The School of Social Sciences and Philosophy was formed in 2005 and comprises the Departments of Economics, Philosophy, Political Science and Sociology, together with the Policy Institute. With over 45 full-time academic staff, the School has an international reputation in research and is committed to the dissemination of its knowledge and expertise to the benefit of the wider community, with the Policy Institute providing an important channel for policy analysis and evaluation. The School is home to the unique undergraduate degree in PPES (Philosophy, Political Science, Economics and Sociology). It also contributes to undergraduate degrees in Business, Economic and Social Studies (this includes Political Science and Sociology), Philosophy, History and Political Science, Philosophy and Political Science, Law and Political Science, Geography and Political Science, Sociology and Social Policy, and European Studies. Over 100 graduate students are conducting research across the four disciplines.

Further information on the School is available at: [www.tcd.ie/ssp](http://www.tcd.ie/ssp)

#### *Trinity College Dublin*

Founded in 1592, Trinity College is at the nexus of tradition and innovation, offering undergraduate and postgraduate programmes across 24 schools and three faculties: arts, humanities, and social sciences; engineering, maths and science; and health sciences. Spread across 47 acres in Dublin's city centre, Trinity's more than 20,000 strong student body comes from all 32 counties of Ireland, and 16% of students come from outside the country. Of those, 40% are from outside the European Union, making Trinity's campus cosmopolitan and bustling, with a focus on diversity.





## Trinity College Dublin

Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath

The University of Dublin

As Ireland's leading university, the pursuit of academic excellence through research and scholarship is at the heart of the Trinity education. Trinity is known for intellectual rigour, excellence, interdisciplinary approach, and research-led teaching. Home to Nobel prize-winners such as scientist Ernest Walton and writer Samuel Beckett, Trinity draws visitors from across the world to its historic campus each year, including to the Book of Kells and Science Gallery which capture the university's connection to both old and new. Trinity accounts for one-fifth of all spin-out companies from Irish higher education institutions, helping to turn Ireland into an innovation-intensive, high-productivity economy. That culture of innovation and entrepreneurship is a defining characteristic of our campus as we help shape the next generation of job creators.

### *Equal Opportunities Policy*

Trinity College Dublin, the University of Dublin is an equal opportunities employer and is committed to the employment policies, procedures and practices which do not discriminate on grounds such as gender, civil status, family status, age, disability, race, religious belief, sexual orientation or membership of the travelling community.