

## Call for Two PhD Candidates in Sociology

*Positions funded by the WIDOW ERC project*

The Center for Research on Social Inequalities (CRIS) at Sciences Po invites applications for two three-year PhD fellowships within the remit of the ERC project: A Social Demography of Widowhood across Ageing Societies.

### Research Environment

The Centre for Research on Social Inequalities (CRIS) is a joint Sciences Po – CNRS research centre and nested within the Department of Sociology. CRIS is devoted to research that covers the multidimensionality of social inequality in contemporary societies. CRIS' research program seeks to describe patterns and trends of inequality, analyze their mechanisms and inform policy analysis in a world where inequality has become a major threat. The center has a strong tradition of comparative sociology highlighting the role of welfare state policies, institutional mechanisms and national narratives related to inequality.

CRIS is committed to theory-driven empirical research, drawing on a diversity of methods (qualitative, quantitative, experimental, etc.), adopting micro-, meso- and macro-perspectives, and promoting interdisciplinary approaches for an integrated research on inequality in social sciences. Faculty members are international experts in the study of different facets of inequality such as education, gender, family, life course, labor market and economic inequality, social mobility, urban segregation, migration, ethno-racial minorities, cultural inequality and digital inequality. The research agenda is also engaged in enhancing new perspectives in inequality studies such as environmental inequality and health inequality.

### The WIDOW Project

Widowhood is a critical event entailing profound grief. Although the frequency of this high risk event is increasing across ageing societies, many countries have cut survival benefits exposing more bereaved spouses to dire short- and long-term consequences. Despite its growing relevance, widowhood research remains underdeveloped compared to other disruptive events, such as divorce. This ground-breaking research moves beyond the state-of-the-art in at least four ways to establish a social demography of widowhood. (1) The foundation of my project lies in an innovative conceptual and methodological approach to the risk and vulnerability to widowhood. While risk aims at the probability and duration of widowhood, vulnerability focuses on its mental health and economic consequences. Current assessments of widowhood effects are limited to change in wellbeing directly after bereavement with a special focus on unexpected deaths. However, the most prevalent scenario entails a process of terminal health decline in the years before death. The consequences of the often neglected longer process of expected widowhood may be larger than the shorter process of unexpected widowhood. Three ground-breaking pillars build on risk and vulnerability to examine (2) social inequalities by socioeconomic status, race-ethnicity and nativity, social support networks, gender and age, as well as (3) country differences and (4) change over time. High-quality cross-sectional and longitudinal data sources will be harmonized and applied to an advanced set of statistical methods for up to 60 ageing countries varying in demographic trends and welfare systems from 1985 with projections to 2050. A social demography of widowhood will supplement fragmented evidence with systematic and comprehensive estimates on risk and vulnerability, provide insights into the challenges facing a growing widowed population and their family members, and facilitate new research on sustainable pension and elder care systems.

There are currently two openings on (A) the risk of widowhood and (B) the vulnerability to widowhood. Applicants should specify whether they are applying to the position focused on the risk or the vulnerability of widowhood. It is expected that the successful applicants will contribute to research on how the risk or vulnerability to widowhood varies across social groups and across countries. Interested persons are asked to refer to the project proposals (see <https://www.zachary-vanwinkle.com/widow>) for more information and contact Zachary Van Winkle ([zachary.vanwinkle@sciencespo.fr](mailto:zachary.vanwinkle@sciencespo.fr)) with any questions.

## **Job Description**

### *Responsibilities*

- Completion of a PhD in Sociology by developing an independent research project within the remit of the WIDOW project on (A) the risk of widowhood or (B) the vulnerability to widowhood
- Quantitative data preparation and analysis
- Drafting, submission, and revision of own and collaborative English language academic articles
- Presentation and dissemination of own and collaborative project results at academic conferences
- Assistance with the fulfillment of reporting requirements

### *Requirements*

- Master's degree in sociology, demography, economics, gerontology or a related field
- A background or strong interest in family sociology and/or demography as well as quantitative methods
- Previous experience with cross-sectional and/or longitudinal data preparation and analysis in Stata, R or a similar program
- An ability to work independently and collaboratively
- Excellent English language skills

### *Offer*

- PhD supervision by project PI Zachary Van Winkle. Candidates will have the option to have a member of the international WIDOW project's expert committee as a second supervisor.
- Enrollment in Sciences Po's School of Research PhD program, including access to language classes and other topical and methodological seminars as well as an extensive international institutional network.
- An internationally competitive salary
- Funding for multiple international conferences and trainings each year
- Optional, but well remunerated and flexible teaching possibilities
- Work space at the Saint-Thomas campus in central Paris and options for remote work
- Possible funding for a fourth year
- Start date: September 1, 2025

## Application Procedure

Applications should be submitted by **December 1, 2024** as a single PDF to Zachary Van Winkle ([zachary.vanwinkle@sciencespo.fr](mailto:zachary.vanwinkle@sciencespo.fr)), and include the following documents:

- Cover letter (one page)
- CV (two pages)
- A thesis project synopsis (two pages)
- (Preliminary) BA and MA transcripts

Please note that the thesis project synopsis should clearly indicate whether the candidate is applying to the fellowship on (A) widowhood risk or (B) the vulnerability to widowhood. The project should lean heavily on the WIDOW project proposals, but also give an indication of the applicant's own idea of how they plan to implement the project into their own PhD thesis.

Applicants may be contacted for an interview as part of the admissions procedure. Selected candidates will be asked to apply via Sciences Po admissions by early January, 2025 to the structured Sociology PhD program.