

Status of the study

In spring 2020, the third cohort of the SNSF Career Tracker Cohorts (CTC) project started with the base survey. At the same time, we administered the first follow-up survey among all participants of the base survey in spring 2019. Moreover, the Report 2020 with results of all surveys conducted in 2019 was published in June and

is available at <http://careertrackercohorts.ch/>. **We thank all participants for their valuable contribution, which adds to the success of the CTC study!** This newsletter focuses on first results of the first follow-up survey conducted in spring 2020, and specifically on the topics of mentoring and networks.

First results from the follow-up survey with the CTC-19 cohort

**Composition of the cohort and study participants**

In spring 2019, we surveyed 1144 researchers of the CTC-19 cohort, who had applied for Early Postdoc.Mobility (28%), Postdoc.Mobility (13%), Ambizione (30%), Eccellenza (19%), or PRIMA (10%). Shortly afterwards, 33% of the survey participants received a positive decision for their application and 64% received a negative decision (3% had withdrawn their application before the decision). Importantly, the percentage of pos-

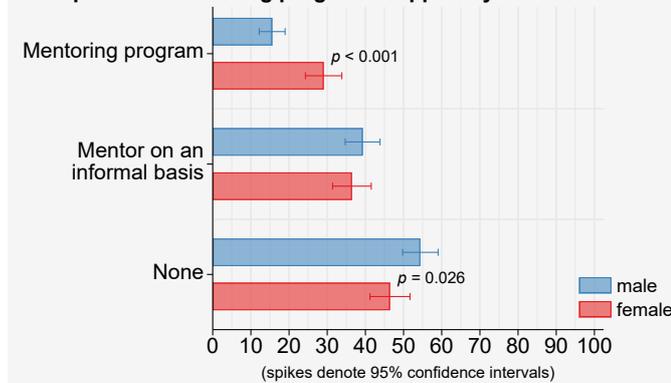
itive funding decisions varies between funding schemes. For the first follow-up survey in spring 2020 with this cohort, we invited all people who had participated in the base survey in 2019. Candidates were asked to take the survey irrespective of whether their application turned out to be successful or not. We invited 1001 people, of which 797 completed the survey. This corresponds to a response rate of 80%.

**More women than men had mentoring**

Of all survey participants, 49% reported that they had experienced some kind of mentoring (either through an informal mentor or a mentoring program) in the course of their academic career.

More precisely, women had participated in mentoring programs significantly more often than men (29% vs. 16%,  $p < 0.001$ ). The gender difference for having a mentor on an informal basis is not significant (men: 39% vs. women: 36%,  $p = 0.418$ ). However, men indicated more often than women that they had not had any mentoring in their academic career (54% vs. 46%,  $p = 0.026$ ).

Participation in mentoring program / support by mentor

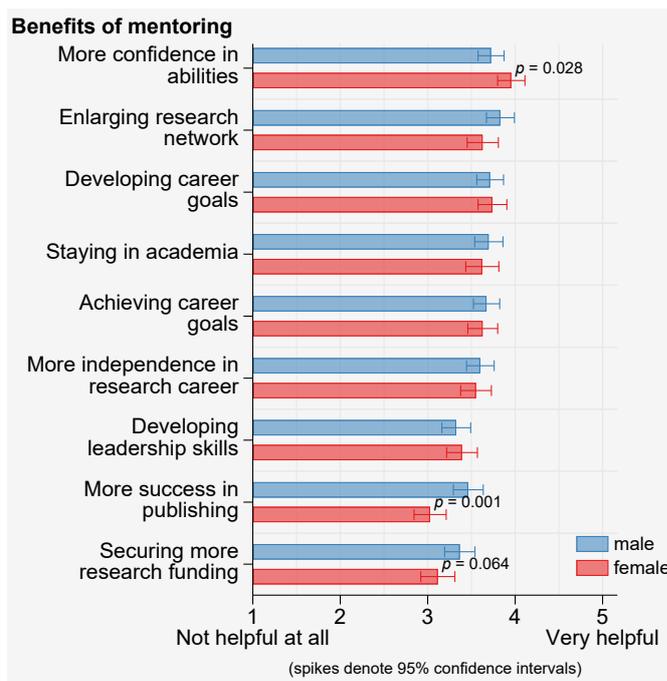


Comparing those participants who received a positive funding decision since 2019 with those who did not, we see that grantees had had an informal mentor more often than non-grantees (42% vs. 35%,  $p = 0.061$ ). There are no significant differences by funding decision among those who had participated in a mentoring program (grantees: 23% vs. non-grantees: 21%,  $p = 0.435$ ) and those without any mentoring experience (grantees: 48% vs. non-grantees: 53%,  $p = 0.154$ ).

## Mentoring boosts confidence, networks, and goals

The survey participants who had experienced some form of mentoring in their academic career were further asked how helpful the mentoring was for specific aspects on a scale from 1 to 5. Overall, mentoring was rated as most helpful in terms of gaining more confidence in one's abilities (mean = 3.8), enlarging one's research network (mean = 3.7), and developing specific career goals (mean = 3.7). On average, mentoring proved less helpful for developing leadership skills (mean = 3.4), becoming more successful in publishing (mean = 3.3), and securing more research funding (mean = 3.2).

As for gender differences, women reported more often than men that the mentoring was helpful to have more confidence in their own abilities (mean = 4.0 vs. mean = 3.7,  $p = 0.028$ ). By contrast, mentoring was more helpful for men than for women with regard to becoming more successful in publishing (mean = 3.5 vs. mean = 3.0,  $p = 0.001$ ) and securing more research funding (mean = 3.4 vs. mean = 3.1,  $p = 0.064$ ).

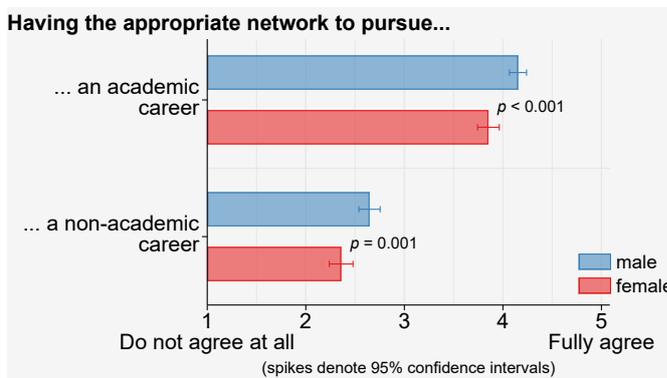


## Men more strongly indicated having the right network

On average, the survey participants reported that they had the appropriate professional network to pursue an academic career (mean = 4.0, on a scale from 1 to 5). By contrast, their networks seem to be less helpful for a non-academic career (mean = 2.5). In both these respects, however, men indicated more strongly than women that they had the appropriate network both for an academic career (mean = 4.2 vs. mean = 3.9,  $p < 0.001$ ) and for a non-academic career (mean = 2.6 vs. mean = 2.4,  $p = 0.001$ ).

Moreover, the grantees indicated more strongly than the non-grantees that they had the appropriate professional network for pursuing an academic career (mean = 4.2 vs. mean = 3.9,  $p < 0.001$ ) and also

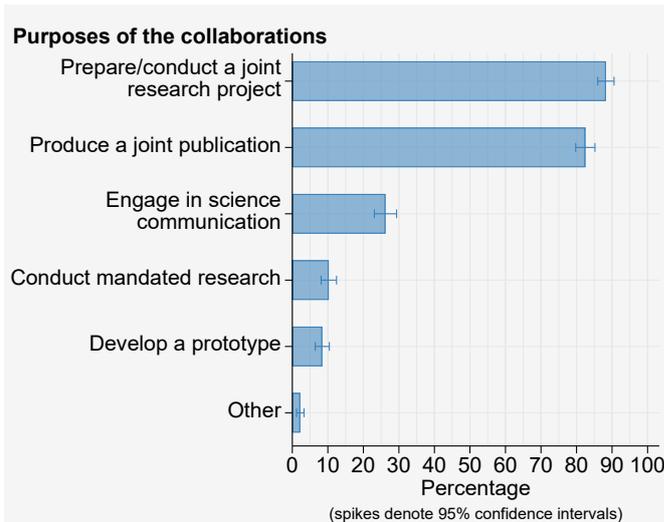
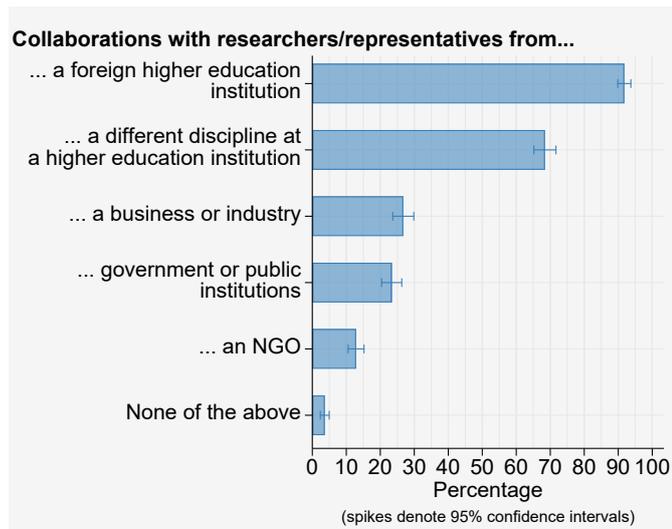
for pursuing a non-academic career (mean = 2.6 vs. mean = 2.5,  $p = 0.081$ ).



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## Many international and interdisciplinary collaborations

The survey participants were also asked about their research collaborations. Almost all of them (92%) reported that they had collaborated with researchers based at a higher education institution in another country and 68% had worked with researchers from a different discipline. In addition, 27% reported a collaboration with researchers or other representatives from a business or industry, 23% had worked with researchers or other representatives from government or public institutions, and 13% had worked with researchers or other representatives from an NGO. Finally, 4% reported they had not collaborated with any of these.



As for the purpose of these collaborations, the survey participants most often reported the preparation or implementation of a joint research project (88%) and the production of a joint publication (82%). Moreover, 26% of the participants indicated that the collaboration was initiated for science communication purposes. Only few indicated that the purpose of the collaboration was to conduct mandated or commercial research (e.g., a report, expertise, review, evaluation) for a partner outside of academia (10%), to develop a prototype (8%), or something else (2%).

## Up next

The next survey waves will take place in September and October 2020. The new applicants for Early Postdoc.Mobility and Postdoc.Mobility will be invited to participate in the base survey. Furthermore, we will conduct the first follow-up survey among all participants of the

base survey from October 2019 and the second follow-up survey among all participants of the base survey from October 2018. These follow-up surveys target candidates who had applied for Early Postdoc.Mobility and Postdoc.Mobility.

## About

The Career Tracker Cohorts (CTC) project of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) is a longitudinal panel study with yearly cohorts. It aims at tracking the career paths of young researchers applying for SNSF career funding schemes at the postdoctoral level (Early Postdoc.Mobility, Postdoc.Mobility, Ambizione, Eccellenza,

and PRIMA). The main goals of the CTC are to monitor the careers of these researchers and to evaluate the impact of the different career funding schemes of the SNSF.

The SNSF has entrusted a project team from the University of Bern (Institute of Sociology and Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies) to carry out the study.

For more information see: <http://careertrackercohorts.ch/>

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