

Status of the study

In the spring surveys of the fifth year of the Career Tracker Cohorts (CTC) study, we have successfully interviewed 1572 participants over four cohorts (2018–2021), and we are currently preparing and documenting the data. We take this opportunity to thank all our – meanwhile long-term – study participants for their important contribution!

As in our previous newsletter, we explore our first longitudinal dataset to give insights on working conditions and changes of professional values in the last years. The data include the first four waves (2018–2021) of the CTC-18 cohort, which consists of people who applied for Early Postdoc.Mobility or Postdoc.Mobility in fall 2018.

Working conditions and career expectations three years after the initial SNSF application

The survey participants and their application history

In fall 2018, 450 people had applied for either Early Postdoc.Mobility or Postdoc.Mobility. Since then, as many as 38% have applied for an SNSF career funding scheme again, a few even up to four times. The average number of applications was 1.4. Between 2018 and 2021, 63% received a positive funding decision for at least one of their applications, 8% even for two. 238 people (53%) received a positive funding decision for the application in fall 2018, when they were surveyed for the first time.

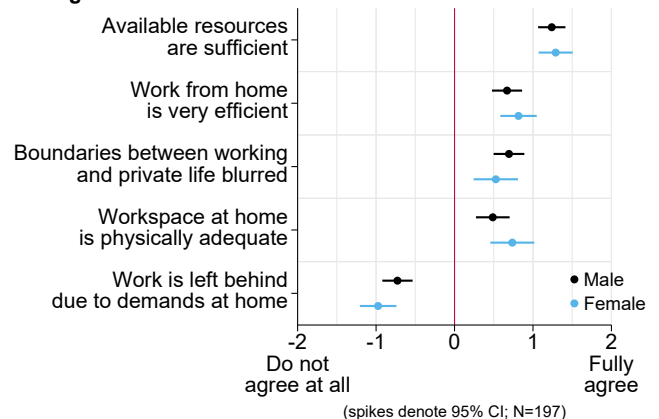
Three years later – in 2021 – 214 people participated

in the monitoring survey (60% of all applicants from 2018). For 152 of the survey participants their grant had ended, 7 reported it was still running, and 26 had already started their next grant. Finally, 39 reported that they were not doing academic research anymore or not at the time. This includes both former grantees and non-grantees. Note that the current status of the grant is only known for applicants who participated in the surveys (for more details on the response rates of this cohort see the Newsletter 2022/1).

Good conditions when working from home

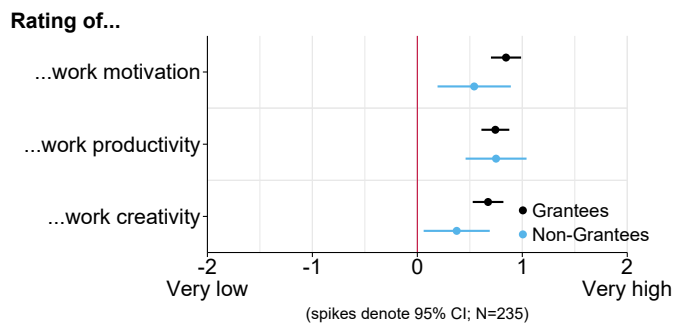
While in spring 2020 a majority worked mainly from home, participants thereafter gradually returned to their offices and labs. Consequently, the share of work performed at home decreased, and most recently amounted to 45%. If people worked from home in fall 2021, they reported having sufficient resources and adequate work spaces. While they agree with the statement that they work very efficiently when working from home, they also agree that the boundaries between working and private life become blurred. Finally, work being left behind because of demands at home does not seem to be a big issue. There are no significant differences between male and female participants.

Working from home



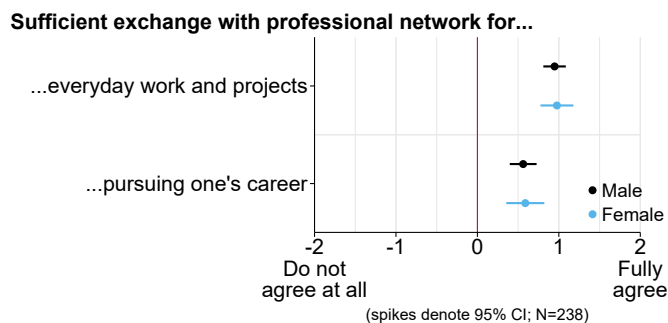
Self-rating of motivation, productivity, and creativity, two years into the pandemic

In 2020, the participants' productivity had been somewhat reduced – according to their own assessment – compared to the time before the pandemic. When we asked the participants again in fall 2021, they indicated a rather high work motivation, as well as a rather high work productivity and creativity. There are no significant differences between grantees and people who never received a grant, and no gender differences.



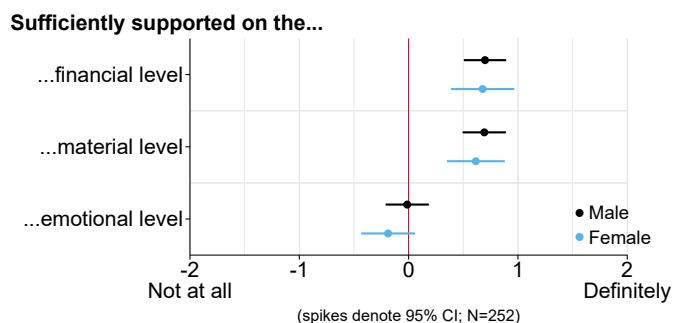
Sufficient exchange with network

Professional in-person exchange is an integral part of building a successful academic career. Restrictions due to Covid-19 clearly impeded this exchange. Nevertheless, in 2021, the survey participants reported they had sufficient exchange with their networks, both regarding their everyday work and projects, and for pursuing their careers, though they rated the latter as somewhat less sufficient. Hence, the exchange seems to suffice overall, despite working from home or other conditions the pandemic may have brought about.



Enough financial and material support

Not only did the participants rate the exchange with their network as sufficient, they also indicated sufficient support on other levels. They had enough financial support, for instance for further education and projects. Similarly, they received sufficient material support (e.g., equipment and everyday things). By contrast, they felt less supported emotionally, for example regarding stress management and interactions. There are no significant gender differences, and no differences between people who received a grant and those who did not.



Mixed career expectations

Even though the participants described their professional situation as satisfactory or even good in many respects in fall 2021, worries about the future do emerge: They expect some difficulties in finding an appropriate job or funding in the future, and they are somewhat concerned about their professional future. This is rather not surprising, as a majority indicates that they are employed with a fixed-term contract. At the same time, grantees rather agree that their career is currently advancing the way they want it to advance, while people who did not receive a grant agree less (0.51 vs. 0.07, $p=0.034$). Moreover, non-grantees think about changing their career plans a bit more

than grantees. However, this difference is not significant. There are no significant differences concerning either of these statements between men and women.

Career expectations



After three years: few changes in work-related values

As described in more detail in our very first newsletter (see Newsletter 2019/1), the survey participants display a high intrinsic work motivation. The importance of work values are very stable over time. Since many have completed their grant in 2021 and may (have had to) reorient themselves professionally, one would expect shifts in the importance of specific aspects. The results of the surveys conducted in fall 2021 show that continuing an academic career is now seen as less important than it was three years ago. At the same time, extrinsic values, such as earning a high salary, have become slightly more important. In spite of the fact that between 2018 and 2021 the share of parents among the participants increased from 19% to 33%, overall, the importance of family-related values did not increase remarkably. Hence, the career orientation of the researchers remains very high, even during changes in professional and family life.

Work-related values



Corrigendum Newsletter 2022/1

There was a mistake in the last newsletter regarding the percentages of people conducting research (second para-

graph). A revised version of the newsletter is now available online: <http://careertrackercohorts.ch/newsletter/2022/1>.

Up next

We are looking forward to the fall surveys with participants who applied for the Early Postdoc.Mobility or the Postdoc-Mobility scheme in 2018, 2019, or 2020. The

surveys will start in October. Moreover, we will soon upload new data and documentation on SwissUbase, where all interested researchers can access the material.

About

The Career Tracker Cohorts (CTC) project of the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF) is a longitudinal panel study with four cohorts (CTC-18 – CTC-21). It aims at tracking the career paths of young researchers applying for SNSF career funding schemes at the post-doctoral 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 Career Tracker Cohorts study is affiliated to the Interfaculty Centre for Educational Research (ICER) at the University of Bern.

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

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