

SNSF Career Tracker Cohorts (CTC)

Newsletter 2023/1

Status of the study

This year marks the fifth anniversary of the CTC study, and we are looking forward to continuing with the monitoring. Before we start the spring surveys, we are prepar-

ing the data collected last fall (2022), when 633 study participants completed a CTC monitoring survey, resulting in an overall response rate of 59%.

Working conditions inside and outside academia

The survey participants and their current employment situation

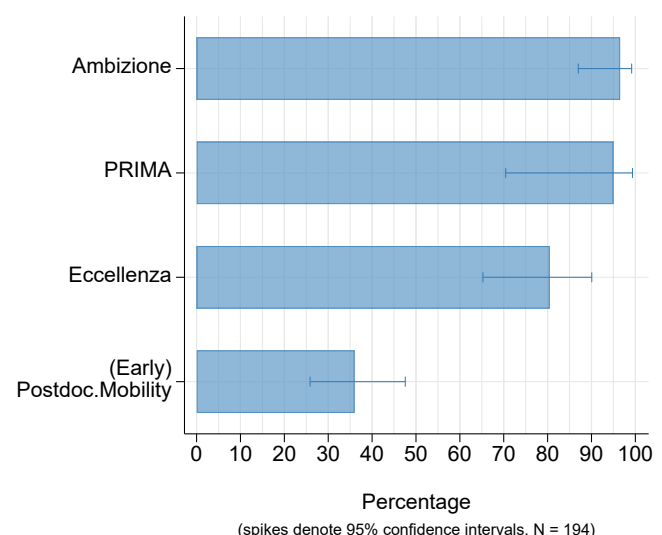
This newsletter focuses on the working conditions inside and outside academia. In the following, we analyse the data collected during the third monitoring survey with the CTC-18 and CTC-19 spring cohorts. These cohorts include 1421 (former) researchers who had applied for (Early) Postdoc.Mobility, Ambizione, Eccellenza, or PRIMA in fall 2018 or spring 2019. Three years later, 855 (60%) of them took part in the third monitoring survey. Of 804 participants with valid answers, 195 were

researchers who had a running grant funded by the SNSF; 464 were engaged in academic research as well, but with other financial sources; 110 were no longer or currently not doing academic research at the time of the survey; and 34 were not engaged in paid employment. Note that the participants working inside and outside academia may not be directly comparable because, for example, they may differ in terms of academic age, country of employment, or the funding scheme they originally applied for.

Few contracts for postdocs abroad

The survey participants who had a running SNSF grant at the time of the third monitoring survey were asked whether they had received an employment contract for their grant from their host institutions. Given that written confirmation from the host institution is required by all funding schemes except for (Early) Postdoc.Mobility, it was expected that the researchers with a mobility grant in particular would often not have an employment contract. The survey results indeed show that only 36% of the (Early) Postdoc.Mobility grantees had received a contract from their host institution. In contrast, 97% of the Ambizione grantees, 95% of the PRIMA grantees (19 of 20), and 80% of the Eccellenza grantees reported that they have a contract with their host institution. We assume that the remaining Eccellenza grantees have a contract from their host institution regardless of the grant and therefore answered the question in the negative.

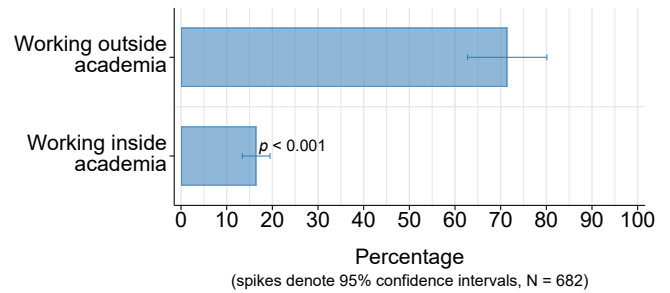
Grantees with a contract by funding scheme



More permanent contracts outside academia

Among all the surveyed researchers (with or without a current SNSF grant), the majority have a fixed-term contract (84%). The mean duration of the contracts of researchers without an SNSF grant amounts to 29 months. The contract duration of the researchers with an SNSF grant depends on the respective scheme. In contrast, the majority of the participants who were currently not or no longer engaged in academic research reported that they have permanent contracts. Only 29% had fixed-term contracts, with a mean duration of 23 months.

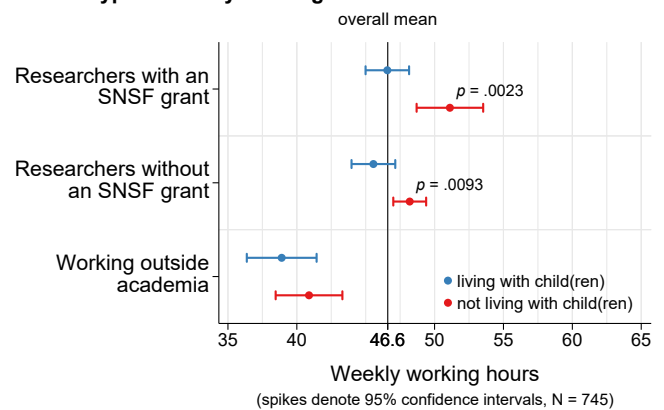
Share of respondents with a permanent contract



Researchers work more – especially those without children

Regarding the work time in a typical week, there are also differences between participants engaged in academic research and participants who were not engaged in research. Researchers with an SNSF grant reported that they work 49 hours per week, and researchers with other financial sources reported working 47 hours. Compared to researchers, respondents working outside academia reported that they work 40 hours in a typical week. Moreover, and particularly among the researchers, participants living without children reported that they work significantly more hours compared to participants with children. There are no significant gender differences regarding work time.

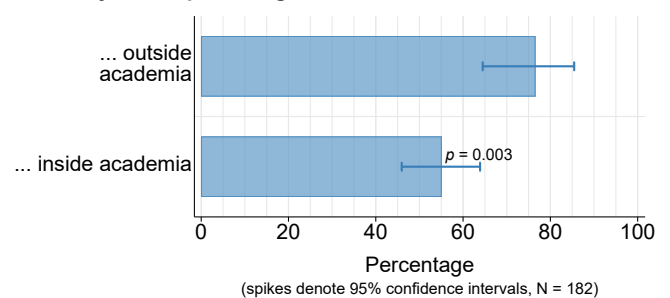
Mean of typical weekly working hours



Researchers usually cannot report and compensate overtime

Researchers (with or without an SNSF grant) not only indicated working more hours than people working outside academia, but they also rarely replied that they have to report working hours to their employer. Thus, 20% of all the researchers report working hours, compared to 61% of people working outside academia. Those who need to report working hours were further asked if they can compensate overtime. While 77% of people outside academia can compensate overtime (by getting time off or extra pay), only 55% of people inside academia can do so.

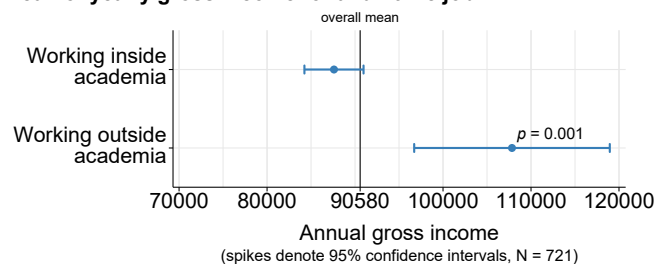
Possibility of compensating overtime ...



Higher incomes outside academia

The survey participants were further asked about their annual gross earnings. For the analyses, every participant's income was converted into Swiss francs and projected to an equivalent full-time job. On average, participants doing academic research earn less than participants working outside academia (CHF 87'606 vs. CHF 107'837 – note the reduced comparability given different career stages). The low number for academia is likely due to the mobility grants. There are no significant gender differences.

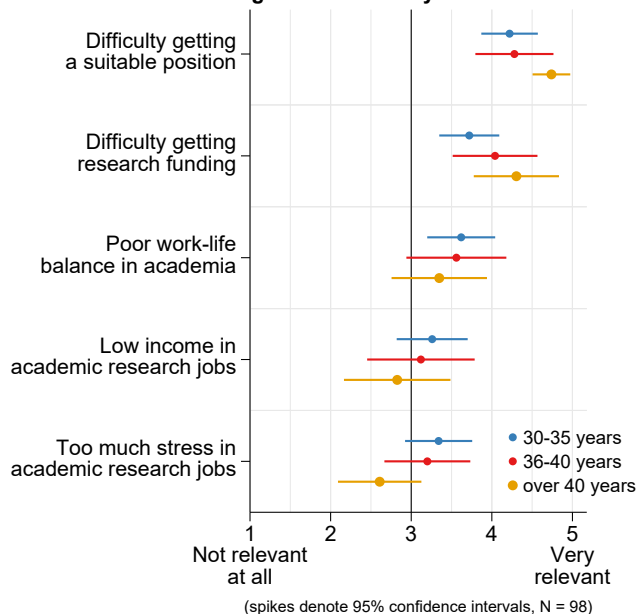
Mean of yearly gross income for a full-time job



People leave academia because of difficulties in finding jobs

Given the fixed-term contracts, long work hours, missing compensation possibilities, and lower income, we analysed whether these conditions could represent reasons for people to leave academia. In the survey, we asked all participants who were (currently) not working as researchers to rate how relevant several aspects were for their leaving academia. The results show that difficulties in finding a suitable academic position (mean = 4.3) and in finding funding for research (mean = 3.9) are the main reason for people to leave academia, and that they become more important with age. Poor work-life balance (mean = 3.5) and stress in academia (mean = 3.1) are cited as relevant factors by younger respondents. For older respondents, however, these factors are no longer as important. Finally, low income in academic research jobs (mean = 3.1) was rated as neither relevant nor irrelevant. Hence, difficulties in finding funding and suitable jobs clearly outweigh other working conditions.

Reasons for not working in academia anymore



Up next

In April, we will field the monitoring surveys for participants of the CTC-19, CTC-20, and CTC-21 spring cohorts. To get a good picture of the career tracks of (former) SNSF grantees and people who did not receive SNSF

career funding, we are looking forward to getting as many answers as possible. Every single answer – especially from former researchers and former grantees – is important and contributes to a clearer picture of career tracks.

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 to track 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 CTC study is affiliated with the Interfaculty Centre for Educational Research (ICER) at the University of Bern.

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

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