

## SNSF Career Tracker Cohorts (CTC)

## Newsletter 2025/1

### Status of the study

As we enter the seventh year of implementing the CTC study, we are excited to continue tracking the career paths of our study participants. The CTC study is evolving as we explore new ways to complement survey data with other sources, for example through linkage with FSO data. Additionally, we are focusing on harmonising ex-

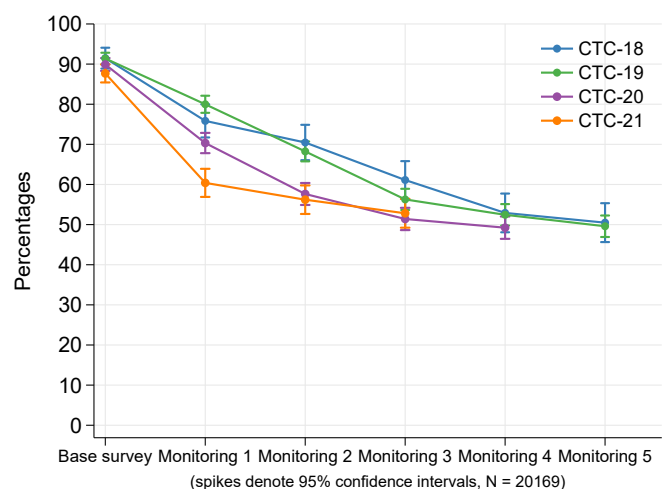
isting data and preparing longitudinal datasets to enrich our research insights. We are also pleased to share that the CTC study was recently showcased at the SNSF's [Research on Research event](#), highlighting its contribution to insights about Switzerland's research landscape and the usability of the CTC data.

### Career trajectories observed in six years

#### Aim and data basis of this newsletter

This newsletter focuses on the career trajectories of CTC survey respondents. The sample includes persons who applied for SNSF postdoctoral career funding between 2018 and 2021. The analyses below are based on pooled data from the base and monitoring surveys conducted by fall 2024 (up to the fifth monitoring survey). Note that the fourth and fifth monitoring surveys have not yet been conducted for all cohorts (see figure on the right). The analyses include all individuals who participated in at least the base survey, irrespective of participation in the subsequent monitoring surveys. Therefore, not all individuals were surveyed at every time point. Also, all cohorts are affected by panel attrition, which has various impacts on the sample. For instance, grantees and researchers in general are more likely to participate in the CTC surveys.

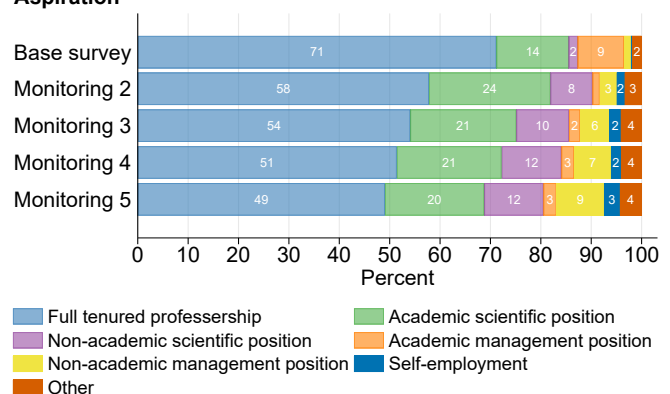
Response rate over time by cohort



#### Shifting career aspirations over time

CTC study participants are regularly asked about their career aspirations, except in the first monitoring survey. In the base survey, shortly after applying for SNSF funding, the majority expressed a desire to pursue a professorship. These aspirations shift slightly over the subsequent years. The proportion of participants striving for a professorship decreases noticeably, even within the first few years. Meanwhile, the share of those aiming for scientific positions within academia remains relatively stable. At the same time, a growing number participants show interest in scientific or management positions outside academia.

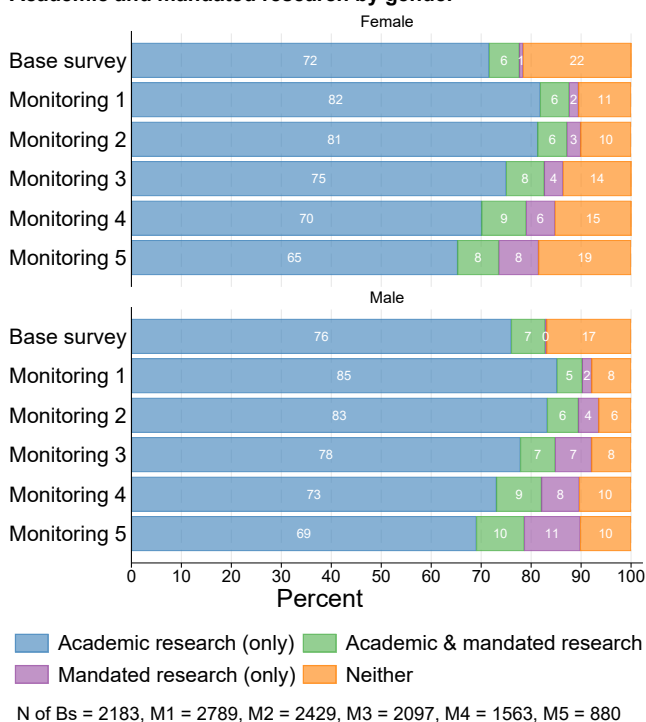
Aspiration



## Share of academic researchers decreases

At the time of the base survey, 74% of the survey participants were engaged in academic research, while 7% conducted mandated research exclusively or alongside academic research. One year later, during the first monitoring survey, the proportion of academic researchers rose to 84%, potentially due to positive grant responses and the departure of non-research participants from the study. However, following this initial increase, the share of academic researchers gradually declines year by year. The most significant drop occurs during the third monitoring survey, coinciding with the end of many (Early) Postdoc.Mobility grants. Despite these fluctuations, 67% of the survey participants conduct academic research after five years. The proportion of participants engaged in mandated research or in both mandated and academic research rises to 19%. When analysing gender differences, the proportion of male participants doing mandated research increases slightly, while more female participants exit research in general. However, these differences within waves are not statistically significant.

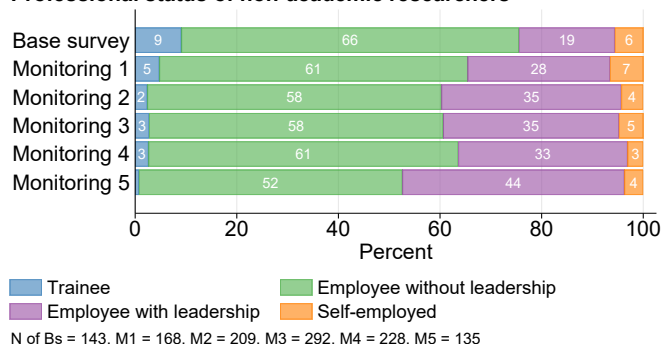
**Academic and mandated research by gender**



## Increase of leadership among non-researchers

Those survey participants who are not engaged in research as part of their jobs, are asked about their positions and if they hold leadership or managerial roles. The proportion of employees with leadership or managerial responsibilities increases with the first and subsequent monitoring surveys. Whereas in the beginning 19% are employees with leadership responsibilities or managerial roles, five years later, 44% assume such responsibilities. At the same time the share of trainees—typically applicants for (Early) Postdoc.Mobility grants—declines.

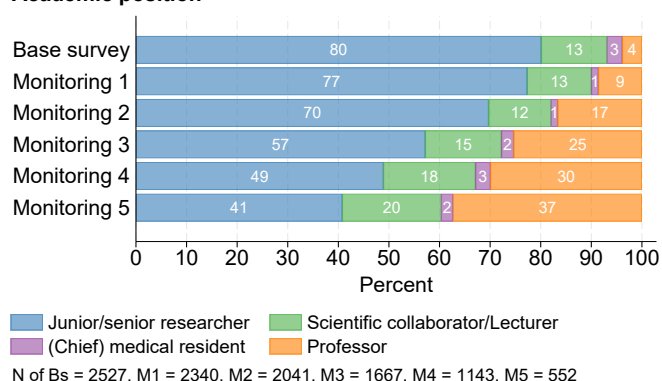
**Professional status of non-academic researchers**



## Academic positions over time

At the time of the base survey, the vast majority were junior or senior researchers. Career levels varied depending on the specific funding scheme. From the first follow-up survey onward, the proportion of junior and senior researchers steadily declines, while the share of scientific collaborators and lecturers increases, reaching 20% after five years. Notably, the proportion of professors (including assistant professors with and without tenure track, associate and full professors) rises significantly—from 4% at the time of the base survey to 37% five years later. Descriptive analyses showed no notable gender differences.

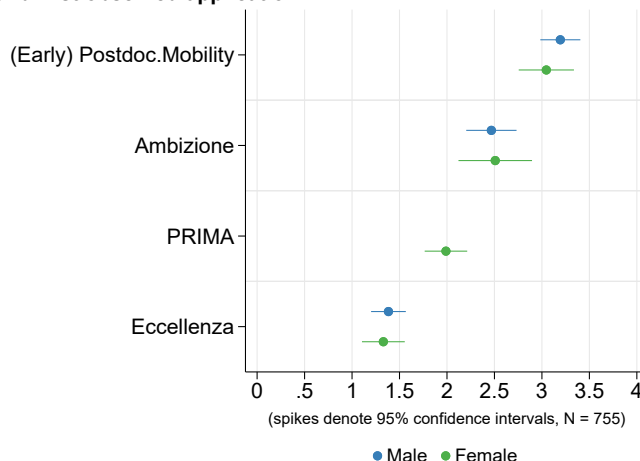
**Academic position**



## Grantees become professors 1.4 to 3.1 years after application

Regarding those who have become professors in the observed time frame, we analysed how many years after applying for SNSF career funding they became professors (assistant professors with or without tenure track, associate and full professors). Note that participants may have applied to the same or different funding schemes prior to the observed time frame, so this analysis focuses exclusively on the first application observed in the CTC study. On average, participants who applied for (Early) Postdoc.Mobility became professors within 3.1 years. For Ambizione and PRIMA applicants, the average time was 2.5 years and 2 years, respectively. PRIMA targeted female researchers exclusively. Eccellenza applicants became professors within 1.4 years on average. No significant gender differences were found across the funding schemes.

Average time in years to achieve a professorship by gender and first observed application



### Up next

We are already preparing for the upcoming spring surveys, which will feature a streamlined questionnaire to enhance the participant experience. Moreover, we are

preparing the 2024 survey data for publication. As usual, scientific use files of the CTC study can be accessed at [SWISSUBase](#).

### About

The Career Tracker Cohorts (CTC) project is hosted at the University of Bern and administered by the Interfaculty Centre for Educational Research (ICER) and the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies (ICFG). The CTC study is being conducted on behalf of the Swiss National Science

Foundation (SNSF). It is a longitudinal panel study with four cohorts (CTC-18 to CTC-21). It aims to track the career paths of researchers applying for SNSF career funding schemes at the postdoctoral level (Early Postdoc.Mobility, Postdoc.Mobility, Ambizione, Eccellenza, and PRIMA).

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

How to cite this document:

Wilhelmi, B., Lüthi, J., Schönholzer, K., & Erzinger, A.B. (2025). SNSF Career Tracker Cohorts (CTC) Newsletter 2025/1. Bern: Interfaculty Centre for Educational Research and Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies, University of Bern. Available from <https://doi.org/10.48620/85598>