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Swiss National Science Foundation

UNIVERSITÄT BERN

SNSF Career Tracker Cohorts (CTC) Newsletter 2020/1

Status of the study

One and a half years after the very successful start of the SNSF Career Tracker Cohorts (CTC) project, the study already includes two cohorts. We conducted base surveys with both cohorts and a first follow-up survey among all the participants of the base survey in fall 2018. **Many thanks to all study participants for their valuable contribution!** This newsletter focuses on the very first results of the first follow-up survey. More results of the CTC study can be found in the Report 2019 available at http://careertrackercohorts.ch/.

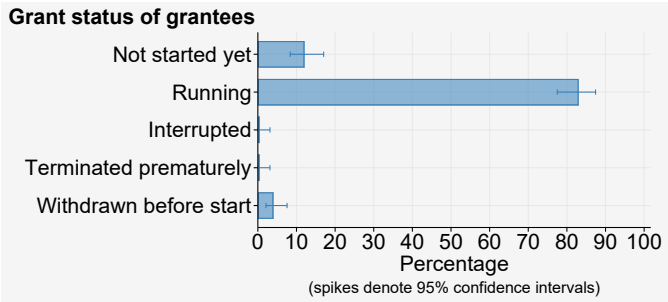
Results from the first follow-up survey with the CTC-18 cohort

Composition of the cohort and study participants

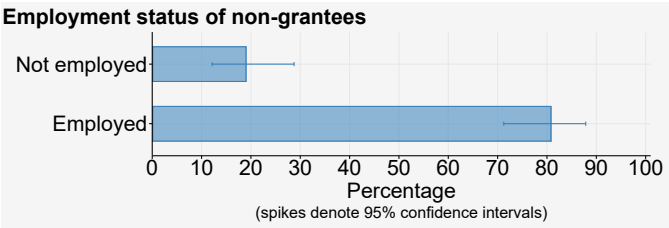
The CTC-18 cohort comprises 450 researchers who applied for Early Postdoc.Mobility (68%) or Postdoc.Mobility (32%) in fall 2018. Not part of the cohort are people who had withdrawn their application before the start of the base survey, submitted a follow-up proposal for an ongoing grant, or whose application was rejected for formal reasons. For the first follow-up survey in fall 2019, we invited all people who had participated in the base survey in 2018 irrespective of whether their application turned out to be successful or not. We invited 415 people, of which 315 completed the survey. This corresponds to a response rate of 76%. In 2018, 63% of the survey participants received a positive decision for their application and 36% received a negative decision (1% had withdrawn their application before the decision). The funding decision had an influence on the participation in the follow-up survey, with candidates who received a positive funding decision being more likely to participate in the survey. More precisely, 89% of all the invited grantees and 61% of all the non-grantees (including withdrawals) took part in the survey.

Grant and employment status in 2019

Some candidates who had received a negative decision in 2018 submitted another application by 2019. Taking these applications into account, 72% of all the survey participants were grantees (i.e., they had eventually received a positive funding decision) at the time of the follow-up survey, and 28% were non-grantees (including those who had withdrawn their application before the decision). Among the grantees, 83% had already started their grant. For 12%, the grant had not started yet and 4% had withdrawn their grant before the start.



Of all the non-grantees, 81% were engaged in paid employment at the time of the follow-up survey, and 27% of them had the same job as in the previous year. The remaining 19% reported that they were not engaged in paid employment.



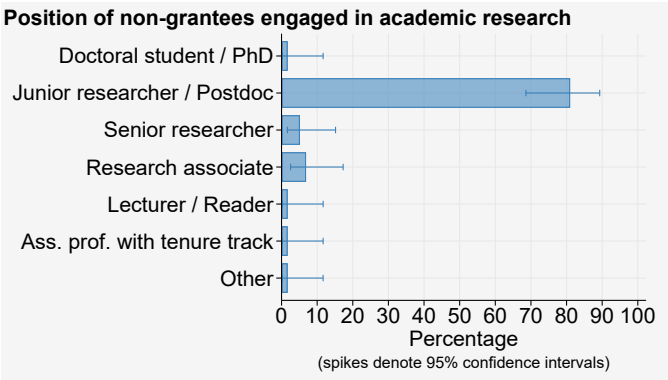
The reasons for not being engaged in paid employment were the following: More than half of those not engaged in paid employment indicated that the main reason was unemployment (65%). For 18% the main reason was pursuing further education or training, 12% reported family obligations, and 6% were transitioning between jobs.

source: https://doi.org/10.7892/boris.141193 | downloaded: 12.10.2024

Majority of non-grantees continues academic research career

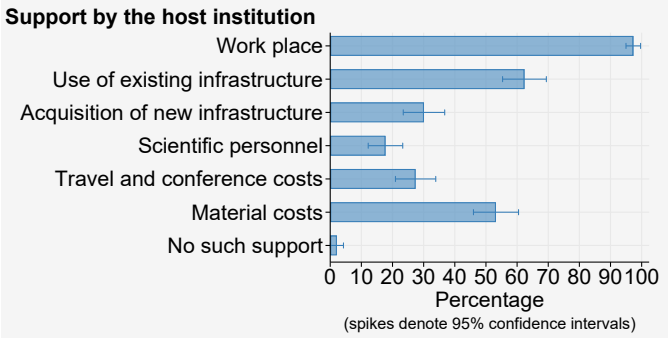
Among the non-grantees who conducted research in their (primary) job at the time of the base survey and who were engaged in paid employment one year later, 85% still had a (primary) job involving academic research. Another 2% conducted academic research only in secondary jobs, and 13% were not engaged in research anymore.

Moreover, of those non-grantees who still had a job involving academic research at the time of the follow-up survey, 78% were working as postdocs. The percentage of postdocs was slightly smaller among women (77%) than among men (80%). In addition, 9% were employed as research associates or scientific collaborators and 7% as senior researchers. The rest had positions as doctoral students, lecturers or readers, assistant professors with tenure track or similar, or other positions (2.2% each).



Grantees receive additional support by the host institution

The grantees who participated in the first follow-up survey were asked with which specific means they had been supported by the host institution since the start of their grant. Almost all the survey participants (97%) had received a work place including access to basic research infrastructure, and 62% reported support in terms of additional use of existing infrastructure (e.g., extra rooms, specialised IT facilities). Moreover, 30% of the participants indicated the acquisition of new infrastructure as a form of support, and 18% received support in the form of additional scientific personnel by their host institution. As for the coverage of additional costs, 27% of the participants reported that their host institution covered travel expenses and conference costs, and 53% received coverage of material costs. Finally, 2% reported that they did not get any such support by their host institution.

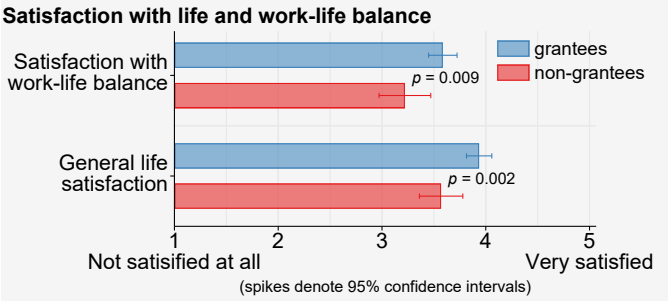


Furthermore, the grantees were asked whether they received an employment contract from their host institution for the duration of their mobility grant. The results show that 41% of all the grantees who participated in the survey received an employment contract from their host institution.

Grantees report higher life satisfaction

The survey participants rated their satisfaction with their work-life balance lower (mean = 3.5, on a scale from 1-5) than their satisfaction with life in general (mean = 3.8). Furthermore, there are differences between the grantees and non-grantees in terms of satisfaction. Participants who had received a positive funding decision since 2018 (of which 83% had already started their grant) reported a higher satisfaction with their work-life balance than those who had received a negative funding decision or withdrawn their applications before the decision (mean = 3.6 vs. mean = 3.2, on a scale from 1-5). Moreover, the grantees appear to be happier with their life in general than the non-grantees (mean = 3.9 vs. mean = 3.6).

Note however, that this analysis does not include further factors that could have an impact on life satisfaction and on which grantees and non-grantees might differ (e.g., employment situation, research conditions). Moreover, this finding is a snapshot for a limited cohort of the study.



In the base survey of the previous year (before the funding decision), there were no significant differences in life satisfaction and work-life balance satisfaction between those who eventually received a positive funding decision and those who did not.

Up next

We are looking forward to the next survey waves. In spring 2020, the base survey will be administered to the CTC-20 cohort. Moreover, we will invite the participants of the CTC-19 cohort to take part in their first follow-up survey. Both surveys target candidates who applied for Early Postdoc.Mobility, Postdoc.Mobility, Ambizione, Eccellenza, and PRIMA.

The next report including results from the base survey among the CTC-19 cohort and the first follow-up survey among the CTC-18 cohort is expected in summer 2020.

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 the 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 the Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies) to carry out the study.

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

How to cite this document:

Widmer, J., Lüthi, J., Zimmermann, B., Amacker, M. (2020). SNSF Career Tracker Cohorts (CTC) Newsletter 2020/1. Bern: Institute of Sociology and Interdisciplinary Centre for Gender Studies, University of Bern. Available from http://doi.org/10.7892/boris.141193