

2010 SSHRC Scholarships and Fellowships Survey

The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) is a federal funding agency that promotes and supports postsecondary research and training in the social sciences and humanities. SSHRC's scholarship/fellowship programs aim to support the best and most promising graduate students and postdoctoral researchers in developing research skills, and to assist in the training of highly qualified personnel in the social sciences and humanities. These scholarship/fellowship programs (Joseph-Armand Bombardier Canada Graduate Scholarships [CGS]: Master's, SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships, and SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowships) help develop Canadian talent and train the researchers and leaders of tomorrow.

Overview This report highlights results from a cohort survey of SSHRC-funded scholarship and fellowship award holders at the master's, doctoral and postdoctoral levels. Former SSHRC award holders provided information on their career pathways, international mobility, and perceptions on the importance of the SSHRC award to their studies, research and careers. Their insights facilitate policy and program learning needs, support the capture of performance information, and enable SSHRC to share the results and impacts of its work.

Context The cohort of former SSHRC doctoral and postdoctoral award holders who completed this survey began their graduate studies approximately 10 to 13 years ago. The strategic priorities at the time, as reported in SSHRC's 1997-98 Departmental Performance Report, emphasized support for research training of highly qualified personnel. It was a time when many postsecondary institutions were anticipating severe demographic pressures brought on by an unprecedented number of faculty retirements. A key question was where the replacement faculty cadre would come from to fill these positions: off shore, Canada or both? It is this situational context, among other factors, that must be kept in mind when interpreting the survey findings. Overall, the data speaks to program success and achievement. SSHRC intends to implement a similar survey of more recent SSHRC scholarship/fellowship graduates in 2011. While trends may be slightly different, the emphasis remains—the development of the next generation of researchers and leaders needed both in academia and across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

Methodology The cohort award population and the competition year for this study were former SSHRC scholarship/fellowship recipients for the following programs: CGS Master's Scholarships (2003), SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships(1997-99), and SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowships (1997-2001). SSHRC-funded recipients that held an award at a Canadian university were contacted through university alumni offices. Those who held their award at a foreign university were contacted through email. The first group was offered the opportunity to return the paper questionnaire or to complete the survey online. In the end, 643 completed questionnaires were received out of the eligible cohort population of 2,183. This resulted in a response rate of just under 30 per cent. Respondents were asked if they would be willing to participate in a follow-up interview to elaborate on their survey responses. Numerous former award holders provided their contact information and interviews were conducted with recipients at the master's, doctoral and postdoctoral levels. These interviews resulted in the creation of the SSHRC scholarship/fellowship award holder profiles featured in the report.

Sample Characteristics The survey sample is representative of the cohort population in terms of key demographic characteristics.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of sample

	CGS Master's Scholarship recipients (n=129)	SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship recipients (n=345)	SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship recipients (n=169)	All recipients (n=643)
Age at graduation				
Average	28	35	37	34
Median	26	34	35	33
Gender				
Female	70.5%	62.4%	53.6%	61.7%
Male	29.5%	37.6%	46.4%	38.3%
Discipline				
Social Sciences*	71.9%	58.3%	56.2%	60.4%
Humanities	28.1%	41.7%	43.8%	39.6%
University size				
Small	8.4%	3.1%	6.5%	5.1%
Medium	53.0%	25.9%	26.9%	32.2%
Large	38.6%	71.0%	66.7%	62.6%
Award location				
Canada		71.7%	71.0%	71.5%
Abroad		28.3%	29.0%	28.5%

*Social sciences disciplines include approximately two per cent interdisciplinary studies

Career Pathways

Post-degree pathways suggest that employment opportunities for SSHRC award holders increase as the level of education increases.

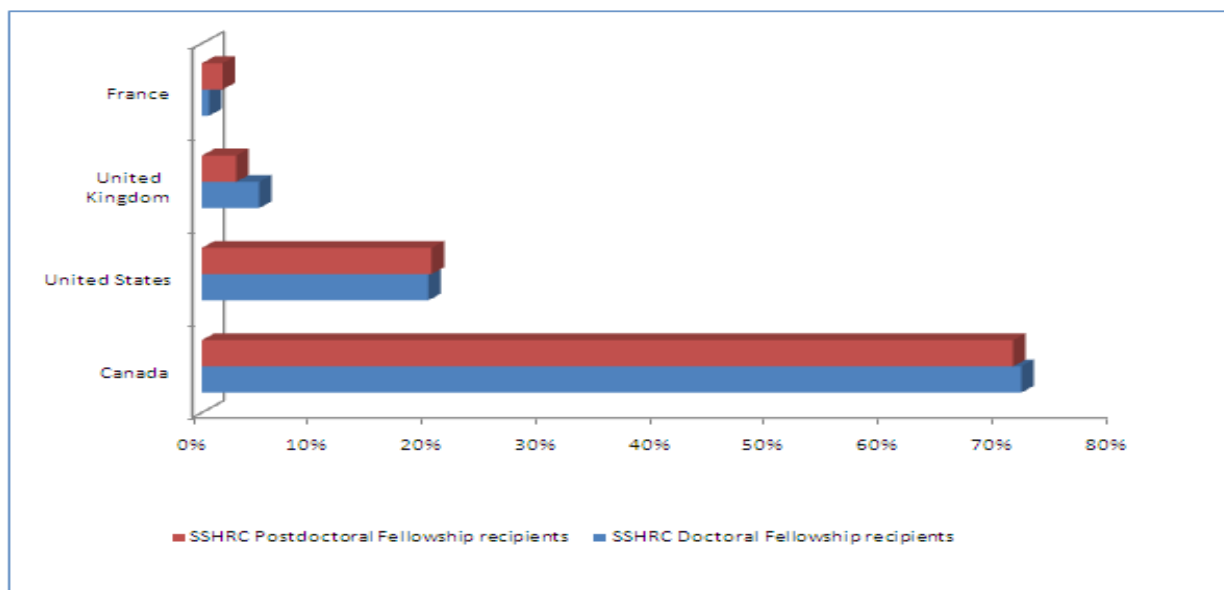
- The majority of former doctoral and postdoctoral award holders are employed full-time in the university sector. The majority of CGS Master's recipients are employed full-time either in the public service or the private sector.
- Of those employed full-time, approximately four out of five SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship award holders earn more than \$75,000 annually. This finding was also similar for doctoral fellowship recipients. For CGS Master's, just over 80 per cent are employed full-time. Two in five CGS Master's recipients report earning between \$55,000 and \$74,999 annually. CGS Master's graduates have lower levels of both full-time employment and income attainment partly due to the fact that nearly one-quarter are currently undertaking further studies.
- In sum, post-graduation career pathways for former SSHRC scholarship/fellowship award holders, in terms of employment opportunities and earning potential is positively correlated with their level of education.

International Mobility

International mobility is considered an important element of SSHRC's doctoral and postdoctoral fellowships. In fact, the survey indicates that 30 per cent of SSHRC scholarship/fellowship recipients received their graduate education and training at a foreign institution.

- Just fewer than 70 per cent of doctoral and postdoctoral graduates studied in Canada, while the remaining 30 per cent of graduates studied in the United States (20%), United Kingdom (4%), and France (1%). Of those who held their SSHRC doctoral award abroad, close to 60 per cent were females.
- Of the award recipients who studied abroad, many were women who studied in the social sciences, and just under 70 per cent returned to Canada. The remaining were uncertain about their intentions to return to Canada.
- Just over 10 per cent of SSHRC-funded recipients are currently working or pursuing further studies abroad. For those currently

Destination Countries

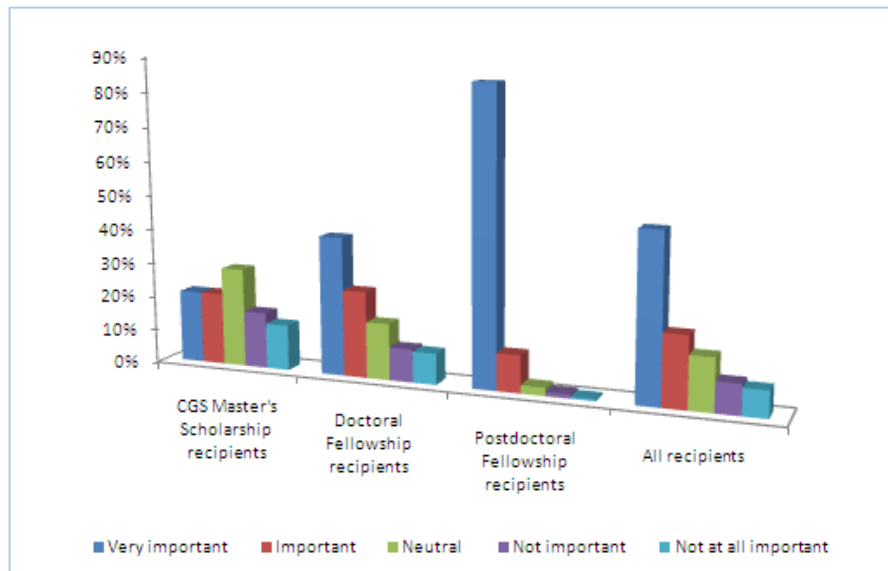


Perception of SSHRC Funding

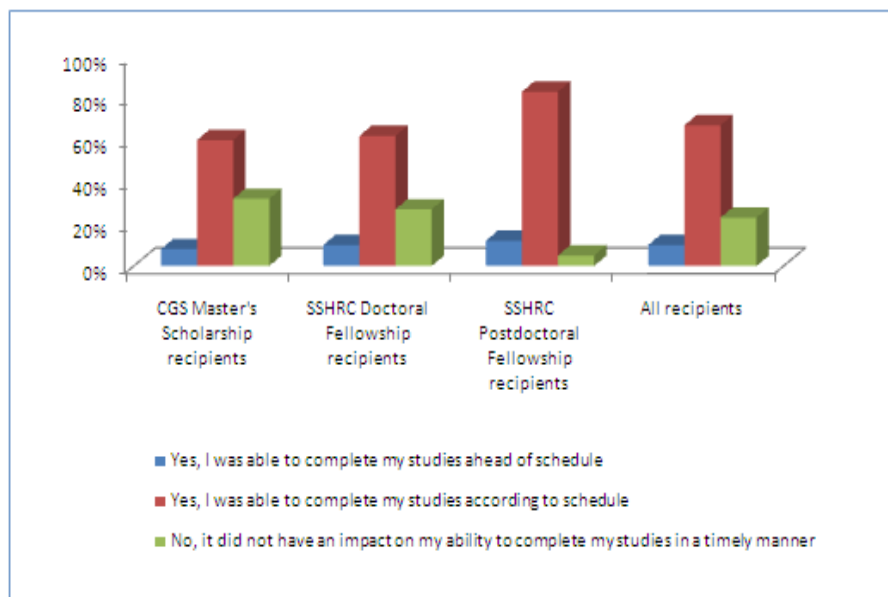
The findings highlight the overall perceptions of former award holders in terms of 1) the importance of receiving a SSHRC award in their decision to undertake graduate studies; 2) the importance of the SSHRC award for their chosen career path; 3) the impact of the SSHRC award on completing graduate studies in a timely manner; and 4) the impact of the SSHRC award on their research and/or career (open-ended responses).

- Former award holders considered the possibility of receiving a SSHRC scholarship or fellowship as important or very important in their decision to undertake graduate studies (40% of CGS Master's, 65% of doctoral fellows, and 95% of postdoctoral fellows). It appears that the possibility of receiving a SSHRC scholarship or fellowship is positively correlated with the level of graduate studies.
- Sixty-five per cent of recipients reported that the SSHRC award enabled them to complete their graduate studies in a timely manner. This proportion is higher for post-doctoral respondents, with 80 per cent stating that the SSHRC award had an impact on their ability to complete their studies "according to schedule."
- Most postdoctoral award holders (60%) indicated that receiving a SSHRC award was critical to their career (e.g., an essential employment requirement), with the remaining 40 per cent indicating that the award was beneficial. Doctoral award holders felt that the SSHRC award was critical (50%) or beneficial (50%) in terms of its perceived importance to their careers. These findings are not surprising as most doctoral and postdoctoral fellows are employed in academia. Only a small portion (15%) of CGS Master's recipients cited that the scholarship was critical to their career, which again is not surprising as master's graduates are less likely to be employed in the academic sector.

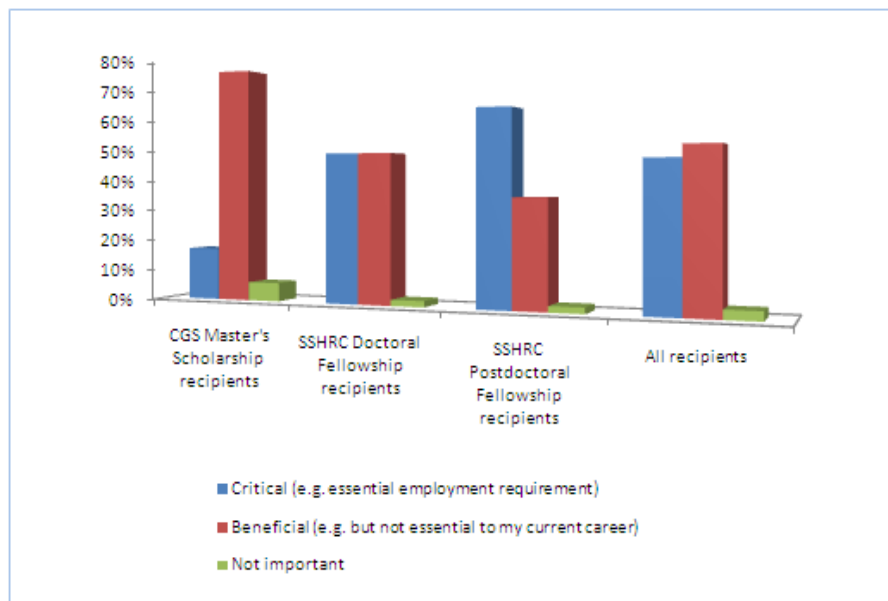
Importance of SSHRC Award to Graduate Studies



Impact of SSHRC Award on Degree Completion Time



Importance of SSHRC Award to Career



Perception of Award's Influence on Research

- The majority of respondents attributed opportunities (building networks, having international experience, publishing, etc.), independence (focus on studies/research, financial freedom, etc.) and enhancement of the research quality as the main benefits of SSHRC funding.

"The postdoctoral fellowship provided opportunities which would not have otherwise existed to interact personally with senior international scholars in my field (Canadian political and constitutional history), to conduct advanced research outside of Canada ... , to present the results of that research at international conferences, to publish in international journals, and to appear on the mass media."

"Without this scholarship my ability to complete my studies would have been severely impaired. Having the scholarship allowed me not only to complete the program, but to undertake a time-consuming piece of original research into the Canadian media that has since been widely shared among colleagues through publication and conferences."

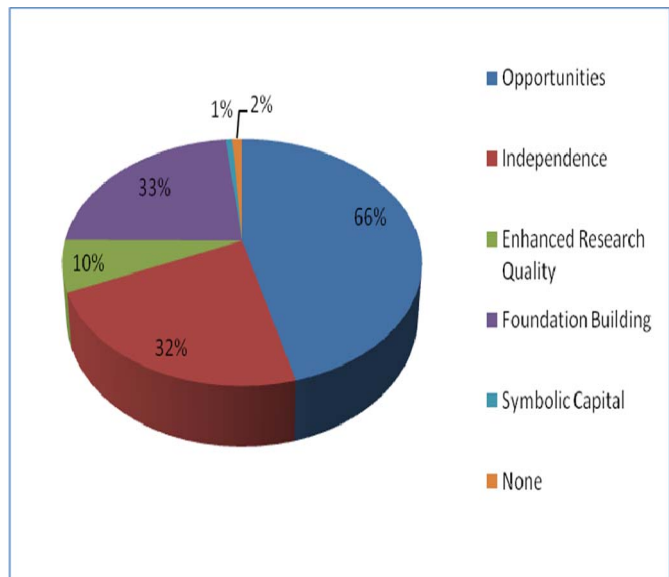
Perception of Award's Influence on Career Path

- Likewise, new opportunities, foundation-building capacities (gained skills/knowledge, basis of career, etc.) and independence were most cited by respondents as the main impacts that SSHRC funding had on their career pathways. More specifically, among SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship award holders, international experience was identified as the most important opportunity, followed by integration into academia, while postdoctoral fellows believed that their award allowed broader and more diversified career opportunities. These findings were further supported by the results of the interviews that were conducted with former scholarship/fellowship award holders.
- Overall, the findings show that both CGS Master's and SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship recipients believe that the completion of their degree was an outcome that would not have been possible without the SSHRC award.

"The SSHRC fellowship was critical to my ability to study in the United States. I think it would have been much more difficult to obtain a faculty position in Canada without having the benefit of having completed my graduate work in another country."

"The post-doc allowed me to add a substantial component of research that I published upon receipt that year of a tenure track job. It gave me time/money to conduct research that signified a slight shift in my research up to that point and provided an important base from which I am currently working as an associate professor today."

**SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship Recipients:
Perceptions of award's influence on research**



**SSHRC Doctoral Fellowship Recipients:
Perception of award's influence on career**

