



SSHRC'S PERFORMANCE IN 2020-21: REPORT ON COMPETITIONS

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Conseil de recherches en
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada



The Honourable François-Philippe Champagne, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry

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Introduction

The Report on Competitions is developed annually for SSHRC's Programs Committee. The report supports the committee's mandate to assess the extent to which SSHRC's programs support the achievement of organizational objectives, and to inform recommendations to Council on strategic directions for program budget allocations, and the overall structure and balance of SSHRC's programs.

For a second year, in support of transparency and open government policy, SSHRC will be making the report publicly available. Key elements of the report will also be highlighted on SSHRC's website and social media throughout the coming year.

The report provides an annual overview of activities undertaken by SSHRC program portfolios and incorporates feedback from committee members and observers. Point-in-time data on applications adjudicated and awarded during the 2020-21 fiscal year are included to inform and support Committee discussions. These findings also serve to inform SSHRC programs for continuous learning and improvement.

Advancing continuous improvements within SSHRC's merit review processes and program delivery in 2020-21 was taken up in the backdrop of significant change. As experienced in most sectors, the widespread disruptions of COVID-19 reverberated within the global and Canadian research enterprise. The research community experienced interruptions and delays in research activities, as well as changes and transitions to merit review and program delivery research funding processes. These changes and resulting impacts are reflected in the report.

The report includes data on acceptance rates and workloads of SSHRC merit review members, as well as an overview of their academic backgrounds and representation across the four designated groups of women, Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities and persons with disabilities. This year, the report includes multi-year trend analysis of committee member and observer feedback received through questionnaires.

The report complements other corporate reports, including the annual Departmental Results Report presented to the minister of Innovation, Science and Industry. It also complements comprehensive competition data provided on SSHRC's website, including the [interactive dashboards](#) launched over the past two years. Additional related information and data are publicly available on [SSHRC's Award Search Engine](#) and the [Open Government Portal](#).

The Report on Competitions includes information relating to competitions with adjudication dates between April 1, 2020 and March 31, 2021. Post-adjudication grants and awards resulting from the reallocation of funds between programs and funding opportunities or additional government funding are not included. As well, some of the data related to competition results—particularly EDI data—represent low numbers of applications and short periods of analysis. In these cases, SSHRC has employed caution in interpreting trends.

Overview

Merit review and committee adjudication are continually undergoing adjustments to evolve and align with international best practices and to incorporate policy and practice changes informed by research community stakeholders. The analysis undertaken in the Report on Competitions supports learning and improvements in SSHRC competitions.

In parallel, the Programs Planning and Operations Division (PPOD) annually administers an internal SSHRC-wide consultation on program and program policy related changes. Referred to as “One Launch,” the consultation aims to systematically harmonize and coordinate changes across SSHRC’s suite of funding opportunities.

2020-21 Context: Maintaining momentum during a global pandemic

In the context of the disruptions of COVID-19, SSHRC and the other federal research funding agencies—the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)—were challenged to continue to deliver on their mandates to support research and research training, and to advise government on matters relating to research. SSHRC quickly pivoted to adapt competition processes, including merit review, to respond to public health measures that severely restricted in-person activities. SSHRC employees also needed to adjust to a remote-work environment.

SSHRC took an active role in Canada’s response to the pandemic, which included developing an accessible expert database with perspectives from the social sciences and humanities research community. Resources were mobilized to launch a special Partnership Engage Grants call to respond to COVID-19, and to support a tri-agency COVID-19 Rapid Response call. Additional joint initiatives were created and continue to be developed into 2021-22, in order to strengthen Canada’s research response and recovery to the pandemic.

Support measures

During the year, SSHRC implemented a number of measures to provide support and relief to the research community. These were communicated on an ongoing basis on [SSHRC’s website](#), as well as through webinars and research and graduate studies administrator networks:

- grant extensions of up to 12 months to accommodate for delays in SSHRC-funded research activities;
- four-month paid extensions for eligible scholarship and fellowship award holders and indirect support to students and research personnel, made possible through a \$291.6 million Government of Canada investment in April 2020;
- modifications to some competition deadlines and start dates;
- flexibility in post-award regulations for scholarship and fellowship holders;

- consideration for COVID-19 disruptions when determining early career researcher status;
- the creation of a new platform to enable secure online dissemination of competition results;
- temporary streamlining of select steps within the merit review process;
- options for applicants to communicate any COVID-19 impacts in their application and/or a contingency plan to address potential future impacts of the pandemic on the proposed research;
- temporary reimbursement and allowances for all non-federal public service committee members for dependent care; and
- providing support to institutions through the \$417 million Canada Research Continuity Emergency Fund, delivered by SSHRC through the Tri-agency Institutional Programs Secretariat.

Implementing these changes to respond to the pandemic, and the ensuing new remote work environment, brought many challenges to SSHRC's application and merit review processes, within existing system limitations and limited resources. A number of SSHRC's funding opportunities were made to hold online adjudication meetings for the first time, and some faced delays with hiring processes that bring in qualified program officers to recruit committee members and lead the review processes.

Despite these challenges, building on previous initiatives to enable electronic application processes and systems, the context also opened opportunities and provided impetus to re-imagine the way we work. The impact of these changes will inform future processes and provide important guidance as SSHRC and other federal research granting agencies advance work on the Tri-agency Grants Management Solution.¹

Impacts on competitions

Despite the disruptions, an analysis undertaken on the impacts to SSHRC's 2020-21 competition year showed that applications and awards remained fairly constant across SSHRC programs. As expected, there was a decline in applications to funding opportunities to support knowledge mobilization activities because of the restrictions in travel and public gatherings. Data related to provincial, institutional and disciplinary applications and awards remained stable, and applicants who self-identified as a member of the four designated groups (women, Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities or persons with disabilities) did not experience lower application or award rates compared to overall applicants.

Details of the impact analysis are provided in **Appendix E**; SSHRC has identified a number of areas for further investigation and will continue to monitor medium- to long-term impacts on underrepresented

¹ The Tri-agency Grants Management Solution is an inter-agency initiative that will help select a new innovative online solution for managing grants. The solution is currently being co-designed with the input of multiple stakeholders, including agency staff, funding opportunity participants, institutions and solution providers.

groups in particular as the impacts of COVID-19 continue to be felt across the research community and within institutions.

Tri-agency and corporate priorities

Throughout the year, SSHRC continued to respond to Canada Research Coordinating Committee (CRCC) priority areas, in collaboration with NSERC, CIHR and the Canada Foundation for Innovation. CRCC's **2019-20 Progress Report** outlines key advances in federal research priorities through the coordination of policies and programs, enabled through federal investments in Budgets 2018 and 2019.

New partnerships, as well as innovations to SSHRC program delivery, including harmonization across SSHRC, NSERC and CIHR, continued to be implemented throughout the year. Some of these advancements are highlighted below, many of which are supported under SSHRC's annual One Launch initiative, an internal inter-divisional prioritization and co-ordination process.

Key changes implemented in the 2020-21 competition cycle

New funding opportunities:

- ◆ **New Knowledge Synthesis competitions.** SSHRC launched and administered two new Knowledge Synthesis Grants competitions to address priorities across the [16 future challenge areas](#) within the third phase of SSHRC's Imagining Canada's Future initiative. These included a Skills and Work in the Digital Economy call in partnership with the Future Skills Centre, and a Mobility and Public Transit call, in partnership with Infrastructure Canada.
- ◆ **Sixth Call for Proposals for ORA Joint Initiative.** In support of SSHRC's strategic plan objectives to enable international research collaborations, SSHRC launched a sixth Open Research Area (ORA) call for proposals for joint, international and interdisciplinary research projects. The initiative is a collaboration with funding agencies in France, Germany and the UK. The competition results included nine international partnerships involving Canadian researchers.

Some key web updates:

- ◆ **Revised Partnerships webpage.** SSHRC redesigned its [Partnerships webpage](#), which includes a clear pathway and [guidelines](#) for partners seeking to set up a [joint initiative with SSHRC](#). The website also includes an updated, pre-filtered [Funding search tool](#) to review current initiatives.
- ◆ **Updated appeals policy page.** SSHRC launched a revised webpage on its appeals policy in September 2020. The [Appeals of decisions based on merit review](#) page provides a clear outline of the policy, key procedures and timelines for applicants seeking to review a funding decision.

New programing options and processes:

- ◆ **New accommodations mailbox.** In support of the new *Accessible Canada Act*, SSHRC launched a dedicated point of access for SSHRC applicants and committee members requiring support to access application materials due to a disability.

- ◆ **Co-director role created for Partnership Grants.** SSHRC created a co-director role for the Partnership Grants – Stage 1 competition. This allows for an individual participating in a grant application to share intellectual leadership with the project director and other co-directors.
- ◆ **Development of new EDI initiatives.** In consultation with the research community and based on related tri-agency funding requirements pioneered under the New Frontiers in Research Fund, SSHRC developed pilot initiatives that will enable applicants to address equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) considerations in their research. The pilot initiatives align with SSHRC's commitment to drive change in the research enterprise. They will be integrated in SSHRC's Partnership Grants, Doctoral Awards and Postdoctoral Fellowships funding opportunities in fall 2021.

SSHRC adjudication committees

SSHRC research grants and fellowships are adjudicated through an independent merit review process. Hundreds of volunteers are enlisted to contribute to the process. SSHRC seeks to ensure a diversity of societal perspectives and lived experiences across Canada and internationally. While most committee members are drawn from Canadian universities, members are also recruited from colleges and other sectors including public, private and not-for-profit organizations, depending on the needs of the funding opportunity.

Committee members evaluate the merit of applications and provide scores using a pre-established scoring system. This is followed by a committee discussion before funding recommendations are made to SSHRC management. Committee chairs are selected to ensure committees carry out their work with fairness, thoroughness and integrity, while observing SSHRC's policies and procedures.

WHO WERE OUR COMMITTEE MEMBERS IN 2020-21?



In 2020-21

Number of competitions: **20**

Number of committees: **104**

Number of committee members: **896** (31 international)

Average age²: **50**

Average number of years served³: One: **51%**; Two: **25%**; Three: **15%**; Four: **5%**

Average acceptance rate: **40%**

Average returning members⁴: **44%**

Number who withdrew from the process: **44**



Language profile⁶

English: **75%**

French: **25%**



Sectoral representation

98.1% Postsecondary

0.7% Industry

0.6% Not-for-profit

0.7% Public



Equity, diversity and inclusion⁵

52.1% Women

42.3% Men

2.3% Gender-fluid, non-binary, and/or Two-Spirit

4.7% Indigenous identity

6.2% Persons with a disability

13.0% Visible minorities

4.6% Prefer not to answer (on average, to designated group questions)

Institutional representation⁷

53% large

18% medium

20% small

(**8%** international)

Institution positions

34% Associate professor

29% Full professor

23% Assistant professor

13% Other

1% Adjunct professor

² Based on 552 responses to the question in the self-identification EDI questionnaire, completed in 2020-21.

³ Based on 468 responses to the 2020-21 merit review experience surveys.

⁴ Defined by members who have served as a SSHRC committee member within the previous five years.

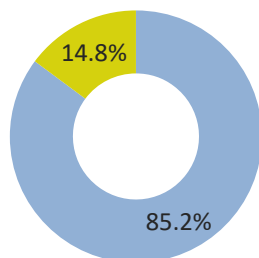
⁵ Based on results of self-identification EDI questionnaire; see **Appendix F**.

⁶ Based on the correspondence language of committee members (notwithstanding the use of unilingual committees on occasion, all committee members are expected to be functionally bilingual).

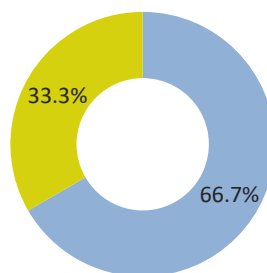
⁷ SSHRC's current methodology to determine the size of institutions, in the context of social sciences and humanities research: Small = fewer than 249 full-time faculty; Medium = between 250-499 full-time faculty; Large = more than 500+ full-time faculty. See **Appendix H** for a breakdown by funding opportunity.

Disciplinary backgrounds⁸

INTERDISCIPLINARY

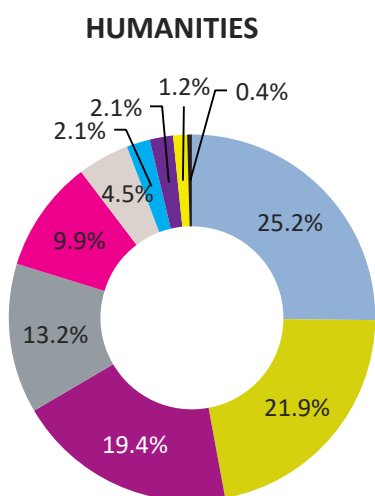


OTHER



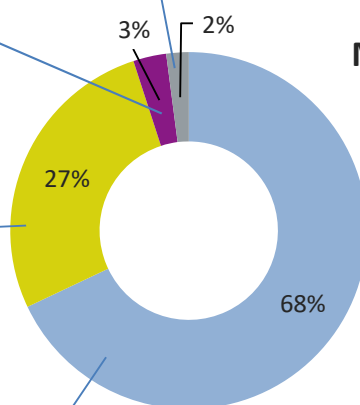
- Not specified
- Other

HUMANITIES



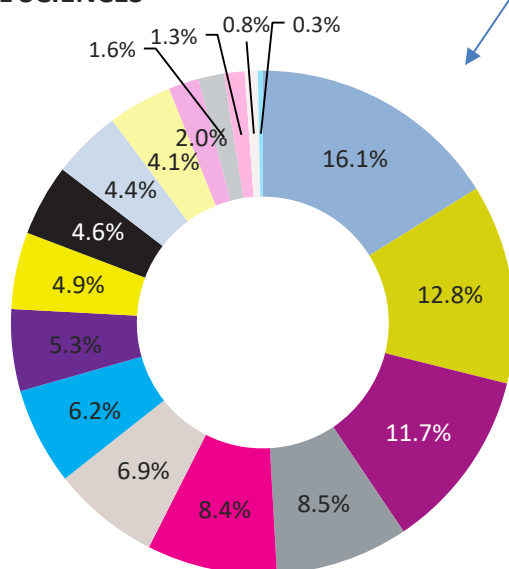
- Fine Arts
- Literature and Modern Languages
- History
- Communications and Media Studies
- Philosophy
- Religious Studies
- Classics, Classical & Dead Languages
- Library and Information Science
- Mediaeval Studies
- Archival Science

MAIN DISCIPLINES



- SOCIAL SCIENCES
- HUMANITIES
- INTERDISCIPLINARY
- OTHER

SOCIAL SCIENCES



- Education
- Management, Business, Administrative Studies
- Psychology
- Sociology
- Political Science
- Economics
- Social Work
- Geography
- Anthropology
- Law
- Urban and Regional Studies, Environmental Studies
- Linguistics
- Criminology
- Archaeology
- Industrial Relations
- Demography
- Folklore

⁸ Percentages are calculated based on member participation and the number of participants who identified these subject areas as one of their main disciplines. Individuals participating on more than one committee during the year are counted each time they participate.

Observer reports: SSHRC also invites members of the academic community to observe and provide insight and guidance on ways to improve the adjudication process. Observers attend adjudication meetings (in person or via teleconference, as applicable) and submit narrative reports to SSHRC. See **Appendix B** for a list of the eight observer reports received in 2020-21.



Key findings

Feedback from merit review members and observers provide valuable insights across a number of elements of the adjudication process. The participation rate in the survey dropped by 10% from the previous year, likely due to increased workloads and online demands due to the transition to a remote work environment. Nevertheless, 55% is still considered a high response rate.

Highlights of the survey and observer report findings are provided below, under four topics:



- merit review process
- committee workload
- equity, diversity and inclusion
- SSHRC staff support

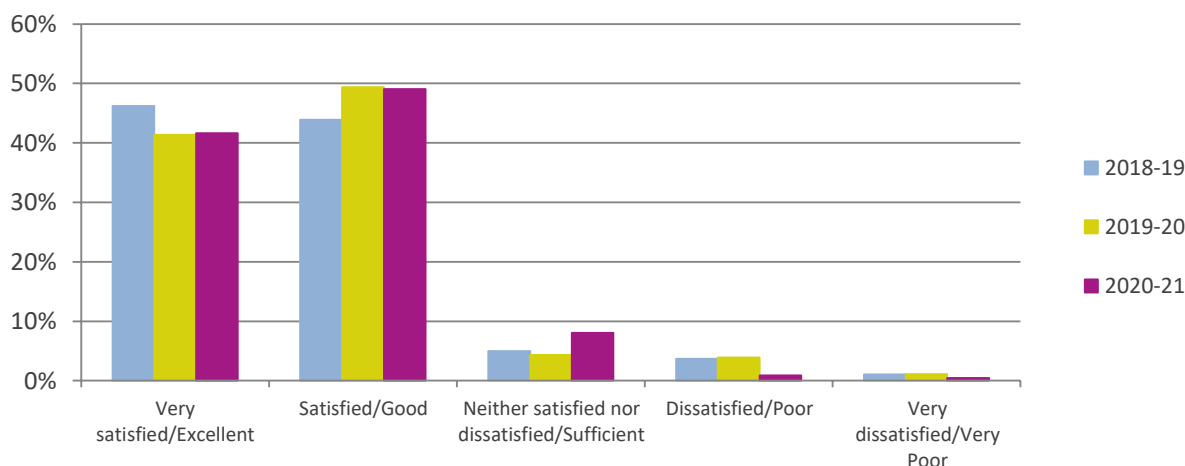
These topics and selected results are not inclusive of all feedback received in 2020-21; these overall findings seek to highlight some of the prominent or cross-cutting issues that surfaced in an analysis of the responses received. All findings and recommendations will be further analyzed at the program level to build on successes and to inform further changes and improvements.

Merit review process

A number of SSHRC merit review processes experienced disruptions in 2020-21 due to the global pandemic. While some funding opportunities with established remote processes were mainly unaffected, others had to adjust to a virtual process for the first time. Measures were introduced to support transitions to online adjudication processes, as both SSHRC and committee members adjusted to a fully remote work environment.

Survey respondents provided invaluable comments as to what worked well, and what needed to be improved. Despite the uncertainty and changes, committee members and observers expressed an overwhelmingly positive merit review experience. In 2020-21, 91% rated the overall merit review process as good (49%) or excellent (42%). Survey responses over the past three years are fairly consistent in this regard.

**Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of SSHRC's merit review process?
(3-year analysis)**



— "It gives me confidence in Canada's research future that SSHRC is so fair and progressive with its competitions. Thank you. It's an honour to serve SSHRC."
Committee member, Doctoral Awards

— "The merit review process went extremely well: reminders of the Impact Award objectives and of the process, and then the evaluators spoke in turn. Other members of the committee had the opportunity to share their thoughts and to discuss each case in terms of its merits and the program's objectives."
Committee member, Impact Awards

— "This was my first experience and it was a great one. I am very happy with the pre-, during, and post- sessions. The Chair was exceptional and kept us on task. The Elder provided guidance and was good to have around for the entire session."
Committee member, Insight Grants

— "An excellent, balanced and fair process."
Committee member, May 2020 Connection Grants

Temporary streamlined review measures: Changes to simplify a number of SSHRC's grant-funding opportunities at the beginning of the 2020-21 year included reducing the number of readers, limiting discussions on successful or unsuccessful files, reducing the number of applications per reviewer, and simplifying the scoring forms. Many survey respondents pointed to the efficiencies of these streamlined processes, notably a more manageable workload. A number of members also appreciated limiting detailed discussions at the sub-criteria level during the meetings.

— "I think it was good that we only had reviewer A and B. In one instance where we needed more eyes, we had the whole committee review a file, and that worked out well."
First-time committee member, Insight Development Grants

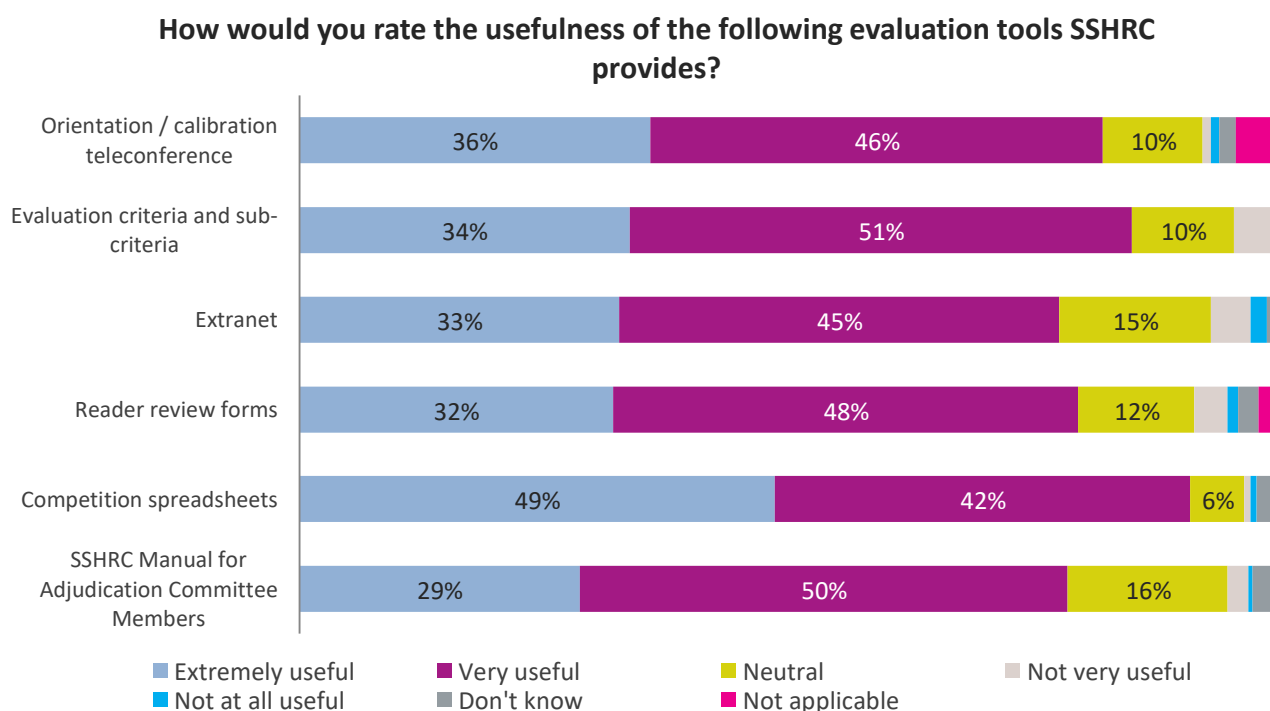
Despite the reduced workload and shorter meetings, a strong majority of committee members surveyed supported a return to providing comments to applicants in several funding opportunities, especially for

unsuccessful applicants. There was also a preference overall to return to three adjudicators per file where applicable, to address differing views and to ensure thorough, fair reviews. Opinions on the continued use of simplified reader reviewer forms in some competitions were divided among reviewers.

- “People need to know why their grants have been rejected, they need details that explain why their methodology might have been inappropriate, why the use of certain theoretical frameworks might not be appropriate, etc. This is especially true for early career researchers.”
Committee member, June 2020 Partnership Engage Grants COVID-19 call
- “The narrative committee comments are always brief, but those one or two sentences provide valuable clues to unsuccessful candidates (even more than the sub-criteria).”
Committee member, May 2020 Connection Grants
- “For some reason, having two readers moved discussion over a couple of files into more contentious and, in my opinion, poor collegiality, where one reader felt that he/she had to push his/her scoring over the other. By having three readers last year, it was easier to identify outlier opinions and bring consensus into the decision making more easily.”
Committee member, Insight Development Grants

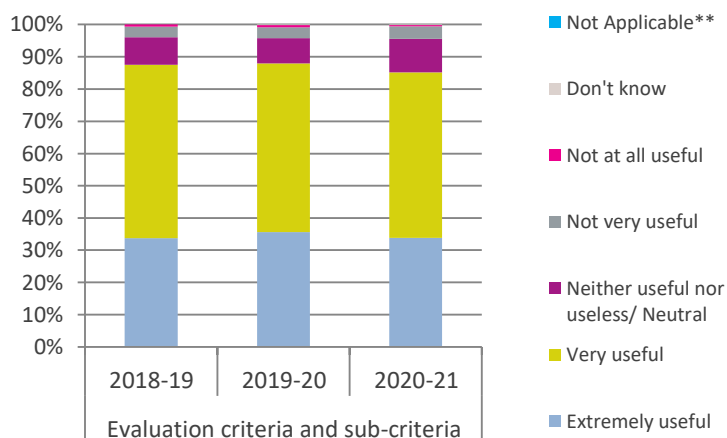
Evaluation tools and scoring mechanisms:

Overall, SSHRC’s evaluation tools were well received. The majority of members rated the main tools as either “extremely useful” or “very useful.”



The feedback on the evaluation criteria and sub-criteria was positive overall. Over the past three years, close to 90% of merit reviewers rated the usefulness of evaluation criteria and sub-criteria as either “extremely useful” or “very useful.”

Survey responses on the usefulness of evaluation criteria and sub-criteria



**Not a survey reply option in 2018-19

Some observers and committee members commented on the thorough review processes within their committees, where criteria were closely followed. Some noted the need for additional clarity on the definitions and relative weight of sub-criteria, as well as other aspects of the applications and budgets.

In recent years, some committee members who served on Postdoctoral Fellowships committees questioned the unfair weight on applicant publications in the review process. In the coming year, the funding opportunity will adjust its merit review guidelines to help members consider a wider range of research outputs and the greater impact of these contributions, including non-traditional publications and the recognition and valuing of Indigenous knowledge frameworks.

Overall, members felt well supported during the adjudication meeting. They widely praised the scoring spreadsheets, noting they were time-saving and helpful in guiding discussions.

91% of survey respondents rated the usefulness of the competition spreadsheets as extremely useful (49%) or very useful (42%) (n=468).

— “Spreadsheets helped enormously to visualize deliberations.”
Committee member, Insight Grants

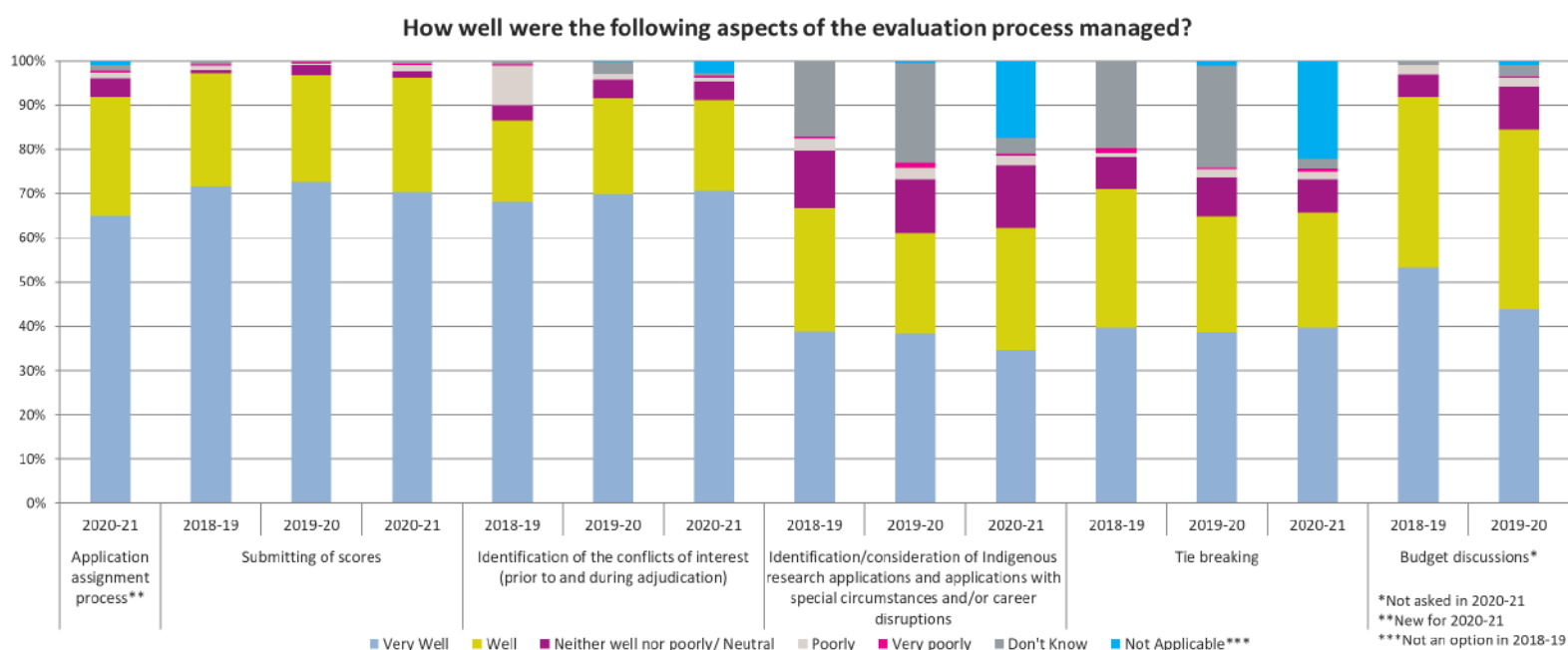
In 2020-21, most funding opportunities had established calibration sessions before adjudication meetings, during which members were briefed and undertook a mock process by using sample applications. These sessions continue to be a critical part of ensuring a fair and open review process and are invaluable for new reviewers. Over the past three adjudication cycles, more than 80% of merit reviewers rated the usefulness of orientation/calibration teleconferencing as “extremely useful” or very “useful”

As outlined in the funding opportunity sections of this report, a clear majority supported the move to auto-calibration in the 2020-21 Doctoral Awards and Postdoctoral Fellowships competitions. Auto-calibration resolves scoring variances across committee members by averaging or normalizing the scores of each committee member's preliminary scores to ensure they do not deviate from the committee average. Once the committee meeting starts, scores are no longer automatically calibrated.

— “I appreciated how the evaluation scoring was adjusted this year: I believe that SSHRC should stay with this model and not return to forcing us to separate and force our scores. With the old evaluation model, I evaluated just like I did with this time, but then forced them according to SSHRC's distribution. I much prefer what was done this time: just ensure everyone is trained and using it.”

Committee member, Doctoral Awards

The following three-year trend analysis shows consistently positive views on how SSHRC's evaluation process is managed.



Technology: Committee members noted some technological challenges, including connectivity issues and problems uploading from the SSHRC extranet. In some instances, where videoconferences were held, members had to turn off their videos to stabilize the connection, which varied based on the individual committee member's connectivity. Overall, the videoconferencing tools worked well. An additional meeting improvement included the phasing out of teleconferencing meetings by the end of 2020-21, which were used within some previous adjudication processes and at the onset of the pandemic.

Consistent with last year's results, only **7%** of respondents cited technology (i.e. video- and teleconferences, SSHRC extranet) as a reason that would deter them from serving again [as a committee member] (n=468).

- “The videoconference meeting worked well. Much more efficient than either in-person meetings or mix of online and phone that I used in past SSHRC committees.”
Committee member, Doctoral Awards

Overall, the reliability and support for technology improved over the course of the year. Many members noted how the videoconferencing tool improved how conflicts of interests were managed during the adjudication meetings.

- “Conflicts of interest were very well handled—individuals with conflicts were moved into a separate virtual waiting room during discussion of the case in question. Also, during the meeting, committee members brought up conflicts that were not in the day’s schedule, and adjustments were made accordingly. Everything went very smoothly.”
Observer, Partnership Grants Stage 2

The technology will continue to be enhanced in the coming competition year. Updates to the videoconferencing platform in early 2021-22 will improve stability and reliability of the system, including enhanced connectivity and functionalities for a higher-quality conference experience.

Virtual experiences: Discussions on holding in-person versus remote adjudication processes are not new among SSHRC committee volunteers. Before 2020-21, four of SSHRC’s funding opportunities held in-person merit review meetings: SSHRC’s Impact Awards, Insight Grants, Partnership Grants and Partnership Development Grants. Some previous funding opportunities had transitioned in recent years to a remote process, including Insight Development Grants and Knowledge Synthesis Grants.

Members who supported remote merit review processes noted they were both time- and cost-effective, without the need for travel. Others thought that remote adjudication hampered the ability to pick-up on nonverbal social cues that occur during discussions and that collegiality in the meetings was reduced. These members missed the benefits of in-person networking, which also feeds into the evaluation process. Other reviewers voiced the benefits of both approaches.

- “I would be willing to serve remotely, but my preference would be for in-person. I think it’s easier to focus on the work when you are removed from other distractions for the three days. You also get to know your colleagues a bit better and that helps the discussions flow.”
Committee member, Partnership Development Grants

For funding opportunities where in-person reviews were previously possible, reviewers were sympathetic to the circumstances, but overall hoped for a return to in-person meetings in Ottawa. Members provided helpful feedback for subsequent competitions, including spacing the meetings over several days to avoid fatigue and, in some cases, improvements to time management.

Committee membership and dynamics: Many respondents commented positively about committee membership dynamics in terms of collegiality, professionalism and the willingness to compromise. The following includes a selection of quotes from committee observers:

- “Discussion of ideas was frank and lively. Each member was able to share their thoughts freely.”
Observer, Doctoral Awards

- “Excellent overall. Most committees were extremely collegial, and readers easily compromised when necessary, with few exceptions.”

Observer, Insight Grants

- “The chair was respectful, courteous and cordial, and did an excellent job of mediating discussions among the committee members. This allowed members to feel valued, heard and respected, which helped diffuse any potential misunderstandings that could have led to conflict. This also helped foster an excellent dynamic among the committee members and a high-level functioning of the committee as a whole.”

Observer, Partnership Development Grants

The role of the chair continues to be recognized as an essential element to building a positive adjudication environment. Respondents positively acknowledged instances where chairs played a proactive role to support discussions, maintain time and address contentious files during the sessions.

In addition to taking subject matter expertise into account, SSHRC seeks to recruit a balanced membership across its committees, both regionally and linguistically. Staff members are also able to use any available self-identified equity, diversity and inclusion data provided by previous members or applicants to ensure diversity among underrepresented groups. The diversity of committee membership was at the forefront of many reviewer comments, offering perspectives on the relative representation within specific committee membership in terms of underrepresented groups, as well as non-academic sectors, early career researchers or those who have not been SSHRC funded. Overall, committee members and observers provided positive feedback on the diversity of its committees.

- “The committee consisted of an equitable representation of members with various backgrounds which ensured that, as a committee, they were able to provide equitable review of research excellence in the applications, particularly in relation to EDI policies (specifically for Indigenous researchers and less so for female researchers). The committee members were also from diverse disciplinary backgrounds which facilitated their ability to review and provide expert feedback on a large breadth of applications from different disciplinary areas. Finally, the committee members were drawn from various educational institutions (small, medium and large universities as well as government organizations), which helped the committee members provide fair and equitable evaluation of the wide range of applicants.”

Observer, Partnership Development Grants

Developing balanced committee membership continues to be a priority for SSHRC, while acknowledging that the recruitment of members is largely influenced by the availability and willingness of researchers to serve on committees. The average acceptance rate across all SSHRC committees was 40% in 2020-21.

Committee workload

While committee members continued to identify heavy workloads as a key challenge in SSHRC competition processes, these comments were fewer than in previous years.

58% of survey respondents cited “workload” as a reason that would deter them from serving again in 2020-21 (n=468), compared to **79%** in 2019-20 (n=465).

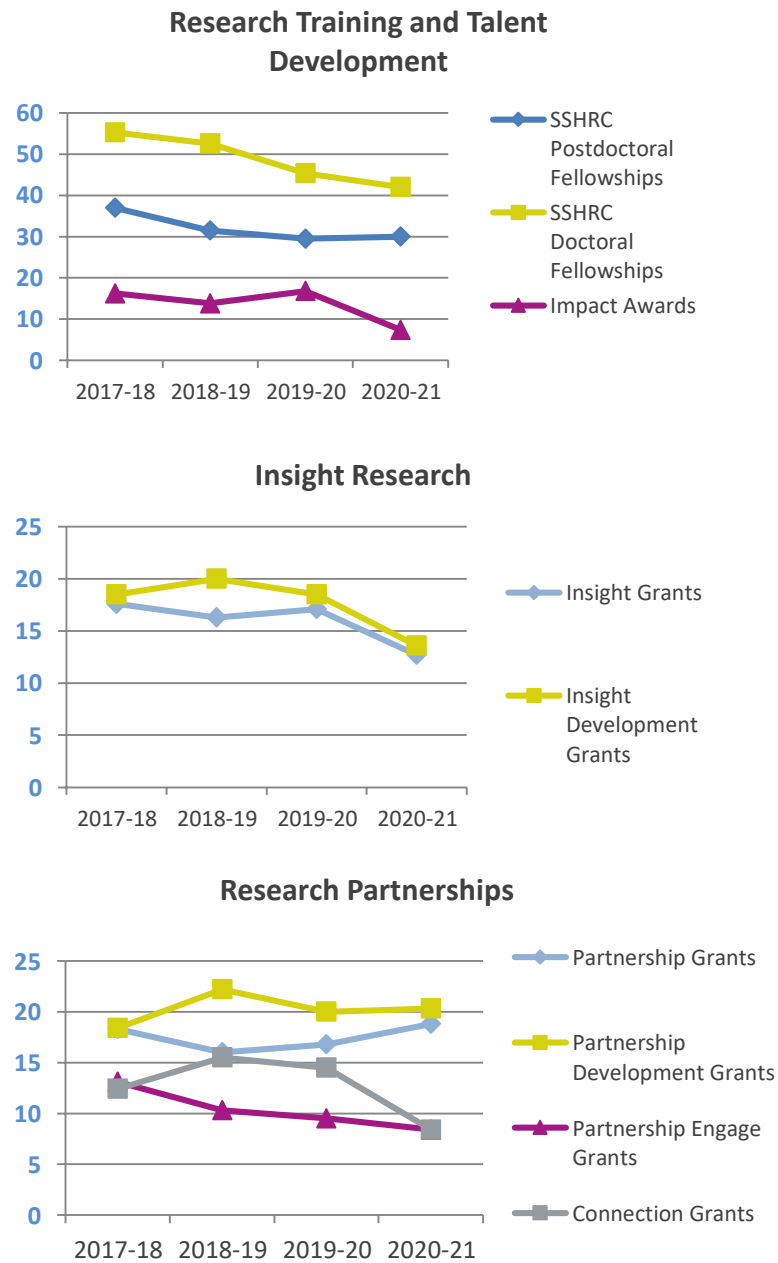
There was some variability in feedback this year due to unique funding opportunity circumstances, including the move for some to remote adjudication and temporary simplified processes. SSHRC reduced the number of application assignments per reader, where possible, in merit review processes to minimize the disruptions of transitioning to a fully remote work environment. Due to public health measures that severely restricted in-person activities, Connections Grants funding opportunities, which fund knowledge translation and mobilization activities, experienced lower applications rates during the year. As a result, committee members reviewed fewer applications. The resulting reduced workload was reflected in committee member feedback. Partnerships Grants committee members, however, underlined significant time commitments and challenges to virtually assessing large, complex research proposals.

While such elements as travel time were eliminated for some funding opportunities, new demands and challenges surfaced. Responses to the survey questions reflected unique circumstances caused by the pandemic and public health measures. These included increased academic workloads and, for some, familial demands with caring for dependents and/or managing child care or home schooling. The relative positive or negative impact on reviewers with dependents was mixed and likely varied on different individual circumstances.

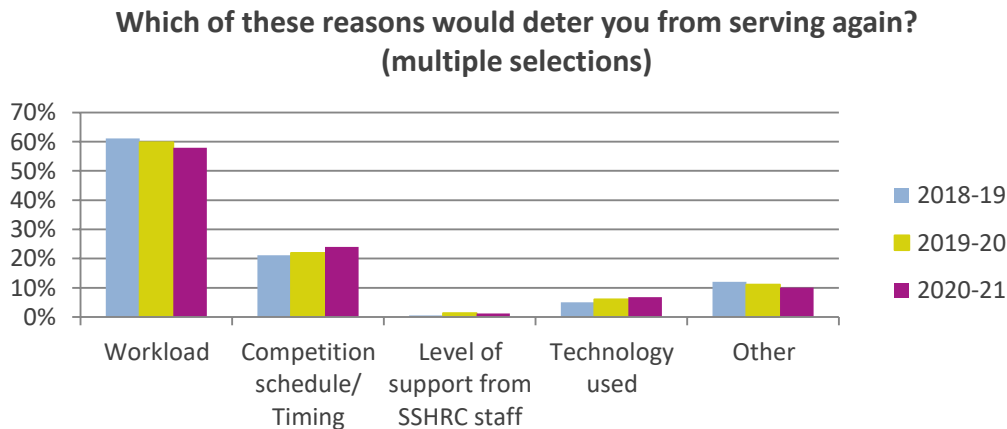
As under normal circumstances, workloads can be exacerbated by unforeseen technological challenges and delays and by committee members dropping out at the last-minute, resulting in the redistribution of applications to the remaining committee members.

Each funding opportunity entails different application demands and adjudication needs. **Appendix C** outlines the changes in workload demands over the past four years. Notwithstanding the disruptions of COVID-19 in 2020-21, the trend shows a gradual reduction in the number of files assigned per committee member, particularly within SSHRC’s Research Training and Talent Development funding opportunities.

Number of applications assigned to SSHRC committee members for review (2017-20):



Although workload remains the major factor in determining if committee members will volunteer again, this reason is trending downward.



Concerns regarding workload are valid and understandable, considering the demands on researchers with supervision, teaching and other departmental duties beyond their own research activities.

Equity, diversity and inclusion

Additional questions on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) were added to the 2020-21 merit review experience survey. SSHRC is also in its third year of collecting [self-identification EDI data](#) from applicants and committee members, which is provided in **Appendix F** alongside current policy and programming contexts and an analysis of early trends.

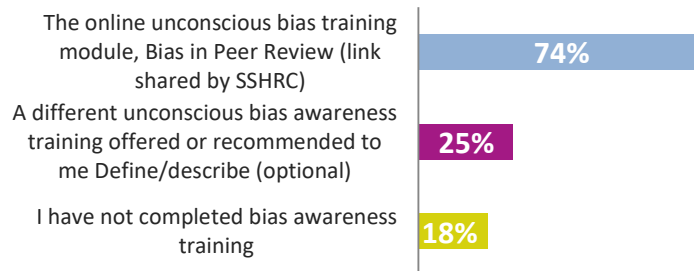
As noted above, committee members and observers commented on the importance of having a diverse committee member composition, and noted when this was in effect:

- “As a first-time committee member, I was incredibly impressed with most aspects of the process. The committee itself reflected a great deal of diversity, which had a very positive effect on evaluation and equity. The program officer's support and knowledge and role were outstanding. I especially appreciated disability accommodations that were readily provided. Equitable and inclusive evaluation requires a diverse committee and this was achieved.”
Committee member, Insight Development Grants

Committee members provided some views on the [online unconscious bias awareness training module](#), which promotes understanding of unconscious bias, how it can affect merit review, and ways to mitigate biases of different kinds. Members and observers underlined the importance of ensuring training for all committee members; while the module is mandatory for all committee members, 18% of survey respondents disclosed that they did not complete this or other training.

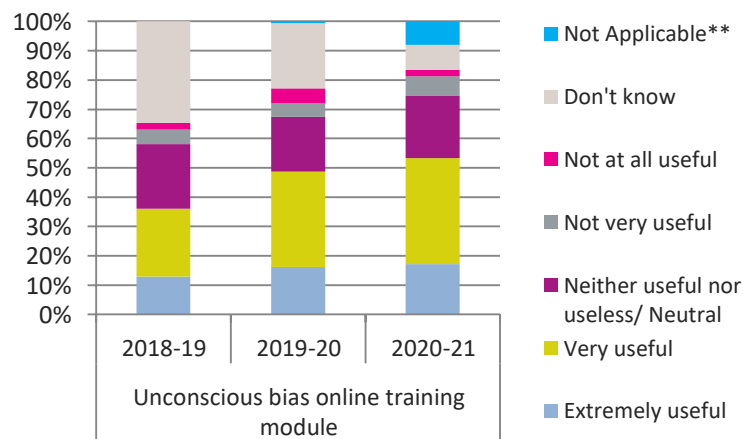
What types of bias awareness training have you completed?

Please select as many as apply



For those who have completed the training, positive opinions of the module have increased over the past three years. The module will be updated and new content will be added in 2021-22.

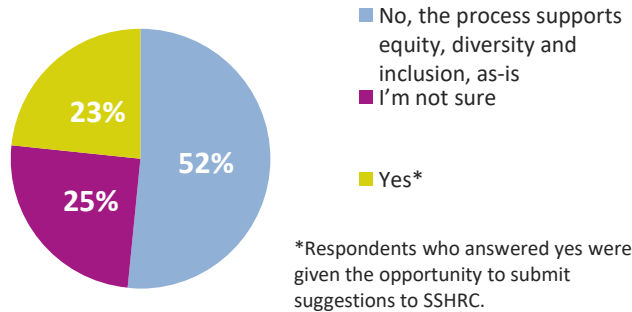
How would you rate the usefulness of the unconscious bias online training module?



**Not an option in 2018-19

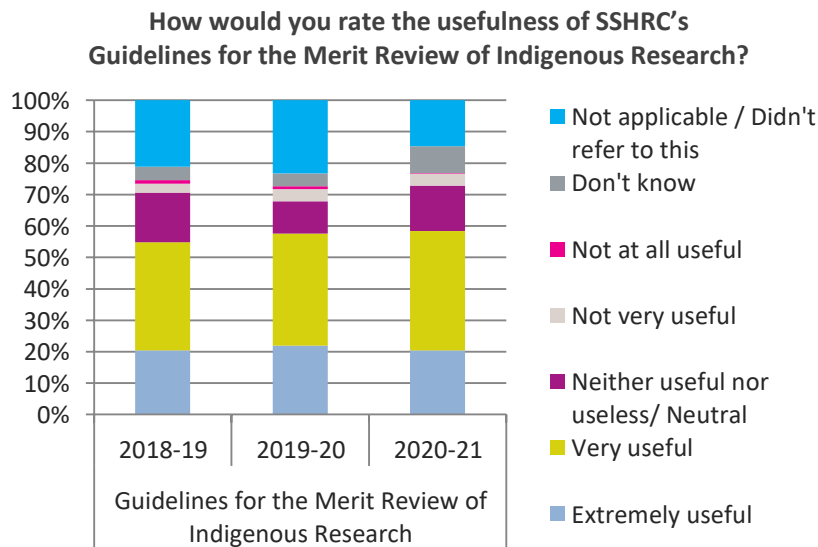
Members were also asked to comment on SSHRC's EDI merit review measures. A quarter of respondents suggested that SSHRC needs to adopt additional measures, from targeted training or enhancements in the application and evaluation processes. SSHRC's EDI pilot projects in 2021-22, outlined in Appendix F with Partnership Grants, Postdoctoral Fellowships and Doctoral Awards, will respond to some of these suggestions by incorporating EDI considerations into the research proposals.

Based on your recent experience as a committee member, does SSHRC need to adopt additional measures to further increase equity, diversity and inclusion in merit review?



- “I think SSHRC could do a better job of connecting the EDI training to, not only real life, but also the adjudication process (intersectional discrimination, for instance) and more detailed feedback is crucial for fairness and a better evaluation of innovative and creative projects that fall outside the limits of disciplinary norms.”
Committee member, June 2020 Partnership Engage Grants COVID-19 call

Indigenous research: SSHRC’s Guidelines for the Merit Review of Indigenous Research continue to be well-received and considered, when applicable.



Several survey respondents across the funding opportunities called for increased clarity on what constitutes Indigenous scholarship. Others recommended distinct training on how to evaluate applications involving Indigenous research, and to ensure that the guidelines are read and followed.

“Should have a specific session on assessing Indigenous submissions in relation to merit guidelines. Committee members are still drawing on a Eurocentric settler, colonial social science disciplinary framework to assess Indigenous submissions.”

Committee member, Doctoral Awards

“When proposed Indigenous partnerships were not well supported, the committee members effectively consulted SSHRC’s Guidelines for the Merit Review of Indigenous Research.”

Observer, Partnership Development Grants

Members underlined the importance of Indigenous representation on both applicant teams and on SSHRC’s review committees. Some of SSHRC’s larger funding opportunities have specific committees for Indigenous research proposals, while most applications are grouped by disciplinary focus, then flagged to the members as having an Indigenous research focus.

Official languages: A number of members commented on the bilingual dimension of SSHRC adjudication processes. Overall, feedback was very positive in terms of SSHRC supporting a strong bilingual process.

- “I really appreciated the fact that the meeting was bilingual. I was able to express myself in French, which I didn’t think would be possible. Thank you!”

Committee member, Postdoctoral Fellowships

- “I really appreciate the fact that anyone can use the language of choice. That was really very helpful.”

Committee member, Partnership Development Grants

- “The meeting ran seamlessly in both languages.”

Observer, Doctoral Awards

There were a couple instances where fluency of members or program officers was variable, and where some reviewers perceived communication challenges or a lack of inclusion. One Anglophone member cited that their main reason for not serving again was the challenge of serving in bilingual meetings.

- “...bilingualism makes it really very hard for a passingly bilingual academic to manage the fast, technical conversation in French. I understand and support commitment to bilingualism, but the rules here exclude a lot of Anglo academics AND overburden French-fluent scholars (all of my committee was Francophone).”

Committee member, Postdoctoral Fellowships

The concern of the potential burden on French academics to serve on committees was also noted.

Aside from larger funding opportunities where numbers allow for a few committees to review English-only applications, merit review members who review SSHRC funding opportunities must be competent in both official languages. Based on the language of correspondence, 75% of committee members were Anglophone and 25% were Francophone.

Appendix G includes comprehensive applicant and awards rates and committee data with respect to official languages.

SSHRC staff support

Committee members continued to strongly commend the support of SSHRC staff. Overall, survey respondents described program officers as organized, knowledgeable, supportive and responsive to their questions.

Members acknowledged the challenges experienced by SSHRC as a result of the COVID-19 disruptions and appreciated their ability to maintain both rigour and flexibility throughout the process.

97% of survey respondents rated the support from SSHRC staff as good (14%) or excellent (83%). (n=468)

Staff continue to welcome ways of improving communications and clarifying expectations, particularly for new reviewers and non-academics. The following includes a small selection of comments related to SSHRC staff support:

- “The level of support to myself as an observer and to the committee (with the organization of, as well as the meeting itself) were excellent.”
Observer, Doctoral Awards
- “One of the main reasons I enjoy this committee work is the chance to serve with excellent colleagues at SSHRC.”
Committee member, Postdoctoral Fellowships
- “The program officer was fantastic in their ability to support the committee and ensure we knew the rules, regulations and other frameworks that were in place. Communication was fantastic both before and after the committee meeting.”
Committee member, Insight Development Grants
- “Excellent committee program officer with a deep knowledge of how SSHRC thinks and the implications that committee decisions could have for applicants.”
Committee member, Insight Grants
- “The staff support was excellent—timing, friendly, and effective.”
Committee member, Impact Awards
- “The staff were helpful and professional in all dealings. As a new reviewer, the orientation provided at the beginning of the process was very helpful to me.”
Committee member, Knowledge Synthesis Grants – Mobility and Public Transit
- “Staff at SSHRC overseeing the process are fabulous!”
Committee member, Partnership Development Grants
- “The SSHRC staff were excellent to work with—very professional and friendly.”
Committee member, Partnership Engage Grants, February 2021
- “Support from staff was amazing. I was very impressed. They were very supportive and flexible during these challenging times.”

Committee member, Partnership Grants – Stage 1

- “The staff were excellent. They provided clear instructions, provided materials in a timely manner, and addressed questions and challenges during the meeting with calm, logical responses.”

Committee member, Connection Grants, May 2020

2020-21 Funding opportunities

Research Training and Talent Development

Summary of 2020-21 competition statistics

Competition	Eligible applications	Awards*	Success rate**	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowships	795	160	20%	n/a	\$14,015,250
SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships / CGS Doctoral Scholarships	2393	528 (SSHRC)	43%	n/a	\$30,140,008
		500 (CGS)			\$52,500,000
CGS Program – Master’s Scholarships	2983	1510	51%	n/a	\$26,425,000
CGS Program – Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplements	67	67	n/a	n/a	\$397,738
Impact Awards	79	5	6% (average over five awards)	n/a	\$300,000

*Award data is drawn immediately following adjudication. Awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are not included.

**The success rates for the SSHRC and CGS Doctoral and CGS Master’s awards are influenced by institutional selection processes and quotas that limit the total number of applications.

SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowships



Value:

\$45,000 per year



Duration:

1 or 2 years

Application deadline:	September 16, 2020
Application system:	SSHRC online
Adjudication dates:	December 10 -16, 2020
Adjudication method:	Videoconference
Number of committees:	8
Number of committee members:	53 (including 5 international)

41% acceptance rate

SSHRC invited 140 experts
57 accepted
4 members withdrew from the process

33% returning members

18 out of 53 committee members
served within
the last 5 years

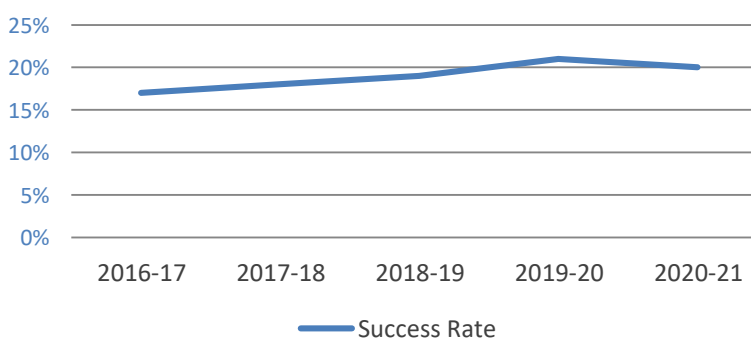
Committee members
reviewed
an average of

30 applications

Success rates represent the number of awards divided by the number of eligible applications.

Competitions statistics are included in Appendix D and are based on point-in-time adjudication data; awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are not included.

Success rate trends



SUPPLEMENTS: Eligible candidates for supplements are determined and allocated later in 2021.

JULES AND GABRIELLE LÉGER FELLOWSHIP: \$10,000 awarded annually to a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship recipient conducting research on the historical and contemporary contribution of the Crown to the life of the country.

BORA LASKIN NATIONAL FELLOWSHIP IN HUMAN RIGHTS RESEARCH: \$10,000 awarded annually to a SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship recipient conducting research in the field of human rights.



See [Joint Initiatives section](#) for additional postdoctoral awards and supplements granted under the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation – SSHRC Housing Research Training Awards Program, the Department of National Defence MINDS Scholarship Initiative, the Initiative for Digital Citizen Research, Mitacs Accelerate, the Mitacs Elevate Research Management Training Initiative and the Sports Participation Research Initiative.

New in 2020-21

AUTOMATIC CALIBRATION AND TIE-BREAKING PROCESSES IN PLACE. Following a successful pilot in 2019-20, an auto-calibration process⁹ was implemented across all committees in the 2020-21 Postdoctoral Fellowships competition. The process replaces the previous forced, manual distribution formula.¹⁰ The automatic process also now resolves any ties by favouring scores with the lowest discrepancy between reviewers. Members may still review and validate the scores during the adjudication meeting and have the opportunity to adjust rankings, as needed.

CALIBRATION SESSIONS IN EFFECT. SSHRC implemented calibration sessions this year for all Postdoctoral Fellowships merit review committees. Sub-committees were convened and briefed on competition and adjudication processes. Each sub-committee undertook a mock evaluation of sample applications, drawn from the previous competition, to help familiarize members with the range of applications to be evaluated, and to set expectations on calibrated scoring and committee discussions.

TENURE LOCATION JUSTIFICATION REMOVED. Applicants choosing to remain at the same institution where they obtained their PhD are no longer required to provide a one-page Tenure Location Justification. This change, informed by surveying committee members in 2019-20, is intended to remove potential barriers for applicants who are unable to relocate for such reasons as disability, family responsibility or research facility availability.

VIDEOCONFERENCE MEETINGS APPLIED ACROSS ALL COMMITTEES. All adjudication meetings were conducted by videoconference, replacing the teleconference approach in previous competitions. The adopted process was intended to enhance overall interactions between committee members and SSHRC staff.

⁹ Auto-calibration involves averaging or normalizing the scores of each committee member's preliminary scores to ensure the scores do not deviate from the committee average. Once the committee meeting starts, scores are no longer automatically calibrated.

¹⁰ The distribution formula outlines the maximum percentage of applications that can be attributed a relative score within a given range of the scoring table.

ADJUSTMENTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO COVID-19:

- **COVID CIRCUMSTANCES CONSIDERED.** Applicants were invited to include impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on any aspects of their application in the Allowable Inclusions (special circumstances) section of their application. Committee members were instructed to take these impacts into consideration with regard to the applicants' academic grades and progress.
- **FLEXIBLE POST-AWARD REGULATIONS.** All training award recipients were granted the option of delaying the start date of their award or requesting an unpaid interruption of up to four months for reasons related to the COVID-19 crisis.
- **PART-TIME RESEARCH.** SSHRC supported training award holders who, given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 situation, can only devote part-time hours to their research. These individuals could continue to hold their awards and be paid at the full amount.
- **PAID EXTENSIONS EXTENDED IN 2020-21.** All eligible award holders of research training programs covered by the Tri-agency Research Training Award Holder's Guide (**TARTAHG**), with awards that ended between March and August 2020, were offered a four-month paid extension.

Competition observations



100% of survey respondents rated the quality of SSHRC staff support as excellent (89%) or good (11%).

89% of survey respondents rated the quality of the merit review process as excellent (32%) or good (57%).

n=28

- "Support to the committee chair was superb. Advice freely and graciously offered. Very perceptive co-creation of a good experience for committee members."
Committee member survey respondent
- "SSHRC was terrific in all regards."
Committee member survey respondent
- "Staff responses to the committee's questions were clear and relevant to what the committee had asked."
Observer

MEMBERS WELCOME AUTO-CALIBRATION PROCESS. Survey respondents confirmed that the new auto-calibration process implemented across the committees in 2020-21 was overall very positive. The process served as an important tool to ensure different scores were aligned and reduced pressure on members.

- "The new auto-calibration system is much more natural. It was much less stressful than in previous years."
Committee member survey respondent

IMPROVED VIRTUAL MEETINGS AND INCREASED ACCESSIBILITY. The videoconferencing tool, which replaced the previous teleconference approach, was welcomed by many committee members. It was also beneficial for members with accessibility needs. Staff noted that closed-captioning in both official languages would be an additional, beneficial tool for users—both internally and externally—with auditory processing issues.

- “I have served on the Committee for three years and have been heartened and emboldened by the changes I have seen in the Committees' behaviour in just that short time. The best new feature is the video teleconference that creates a more relational co-creation of expectations leading to a higher degree of consensus rather than unembodied people speaking by phone without body language, except through the spoken word. I perceived fewer dismissive comments and more deference to those with related experiences to those of the applicants. These are positive developments in my view.”

Committee member survey respondent

Anticipated changes to 2021-22 competition

REVIEW TIMELINE EXTENDED. As a pilot approach, the December committee meetings will be moved to take place in the second and third weeks of January 2022. This recommendation seeks to provide more time for SSHRC to meet its service standards and allow members more time to complete the initial review stage. The move will also seek to reduce committee member workloads during a busy time in the academic year. The efficacy of this adjustment will be monitored through member feedback.

CLEARER GUIDELINES FOR THE ARM'S LENGTH REFEREE. SSHRC adjusted wording in the application guidelines to clarify the purpose, eligibility and expectations regarding the reference letter requirements.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS DOCUMENT. Candidates draft and include a Research Contributions Document as part of the application package, which speaks directly to the capability criterion. Instructions to the applicant for this document were updated for the 2021-22 competition to help committee members better evaluate the relative merit of an applicant's research outputs. They include: focusing on achieved outputs; listing non-traditional publication venues and co-created works in the examples of research outputs; and allowing space for a narrative description of the significance of their three most important contributions. This change allows applicants to offer multi-disciplinary committee members greater insight into publication venues outside their areas of expertise (including foreign language publications). It also encourages the inclusion of non-traditional publication venues, including Indigenous knowledge systems as outlined in Chapter 9 of the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2).

DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS IN RESEARCH DESIGN MODULE. Following feedback and consultation, the postdoctoral and doctoral application processes will include a Diversity Considerations in Research Design module in 2021-22 that will require applicants to indicate and justify how such considerations apply or do not apply to their research. For the coming year, this component of the postdoctoral award application will serve as an awareness tool. Responses to the module questions will not be subject to merit review. The module's integration into the evaluation process is planned for next year.

ELIGIBILITY ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO COVID-19. Following consultation with research community stakeholders, the **eligibility window** to apply to the 2021-22 Postdoctoral Fellowships competition was extended by one year. This change was implemented to allow those who, in fall 2020, missed their final chance to apply to this funding opportunity as a result of the pandemic.

ELIGIBILITY OPENED TO PROTECTED PERSONS. The eligibility for the Canada Graduate Scholarships Program (CGS) and agency-specific research training funding opportunities will be broadened in the 2021-22 competition cycle to include **protected persons**, in addition to Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

ADJUSTMENTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO COVID-19. SSHRC will continue to monitor the pandemic's impact on research trainees and institutions and will collaborate with its federal research agency partners and research community stakeholders to ensure appropriate measures are put in place to support its applicants.

Doctoral Awards (SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships / CGS Doctoral Scholarships)



Value:

\$20,000 per year (SSHRC) / \$35,000 per year (CGS)



Duration:

12, 24, 36 or 48 months (SSHRC) / 36 months (CGS)

Application deadline:	October 19, 2020 (direct) and November 23, 2020 (university)
Application system:	SSHRC online
Adjudication dates:	March 1 – 19, 2021
Adjudication method:	Videoconference
Number of committees:	16 sub-committees, under 5 committees
Number of committee members:	114 (including 16 international)

50% acceptance rate

SSHRC invited 245 experts
122 accepted
8 members withdrew from the process

52% returning members

64 out of 122 committee members
served within
the last 5 years

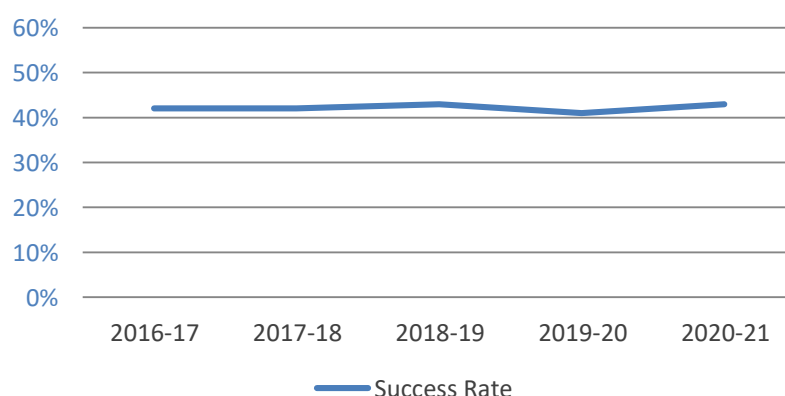
Committee members
reviewed
an average of

42 applications

Success rates represent the number of awards divided by the number of eligible applications. The rate is calculated using the combined total of SSHRC and CGS awards, in relation to the number of applications eligible at the national stage.

Competitions statistics are included in Appendix D and are based on point-in-time adjudication data; awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are not included.

Success rate trends





See [Joint Initiatives section](#) for additional doctoral awards and supplements granted under the Department of National Defence MINDS Scholarships Initiative, the Initiative for Digital Citizen Research and the Sports Participation Research Initiative.

New in 2020-21

NEW AUTOMATED CALIBRATION AND TIE-BREAKING PROCESSES. In 2020-21, along with the Postdoctoral Fellowships competition, SSHRC replaced the forced distribution formula of member scores with an auto-calibration process.¹¹ The manual tie-breaking process was also replaced with an automatic process in which ties are broken by favouring scores with the lowest discrepancy between reviewers. Members may still review and validate the scores during the adjudication meeting and have the opportunity to adjust rankings as needed.

A REFRESHED RECRUITMENT APPROACH. In 2020-21, both postdoctoral researchers and early career researchers were invited to participate in the merit review process. Eight postdoctoral researchers and more than 20 early career researchers served on the merit review committees.

CONTINUED USE OF UNILINGUAL COMMITTEES. SSHRC implemented two unilingual English sub-committees as a pilot in the 2019-20 Doctoral Awards competition, allowing a number of experts the opportunity to participate in the merit review process. The volume of applications and sub-committees of this funding opportunity lends itself well to this approach. SSHRC will continue with this approach in future competitions.

ADJUSTMENTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO COVID-19:

- **COVID CIRCUMSTANCES CONSIDERED.** Applicants were invited to include impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on any aspects of their application in the Allowable Inclusions (special circumstances) section of their application. Committee members were instructed to take these impacts into consideration with regard to the applicants' academic grades and progress.
- **TRANSCRIPT REQUIREMENTS EASED.** The three federal research granting agencies provided flexibility to institutions (as co-delivery partners) and applicants to provide unofficial transcripts. Acknowledging the impact of the pandemic on some students' achievements and given that some institutions had to adjust the formats in which they provided course results, the agencies encouraged institutions to exercise flexibility in assessing academic records during the eligibility screening and merit review.
- **FLEXIBLE POST-AWARD REGULATIONS.** All training award recipients were granted the option of delaying the start date of their award or requesting an unpaid interruption of up to four months for reasons related to the COVID-19 crisis.
- **PART-TIME RESEARCH.** SSHRC supported training award holders who, given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 situation, can only devote part-time hours to their research. These individuals could continue to hold their awards and be paid at the full amount.
- **PAID EXTENSIONS EXTENDED IN 2020-21.** All eligible award holders of research training programs covered by the Tri-agency Research Training Award Holder's Guide ([TARTAHG](#)) with awards that ended between March and August 2020 were offered a four-month paid extension.

¹¹ Auto-calibration involves averaging or normalizing the scores of each committee member's preliminary scores to ensure the scores do not deviate from the committee average. Once the committee meeting starts, scores are no longer automatically calibrated.

Competition observations



98% of survey respondents rated the quality of SSHRC staff support as excellent (88%) or good (10%).

94% of survey respondents rated the quality of the merit review process as excellent (48%) or good (46%).

n=69

— “Based on the discussions during the adjudication meeting, it seemed like the process worked well and that the committee members were happy with the new changes to the scoring process. In the discussion of applications with significantly different scores, it was obvious that the committee members had read the applications carefully and applied the merit criteria in a thoughtful and fair way.”

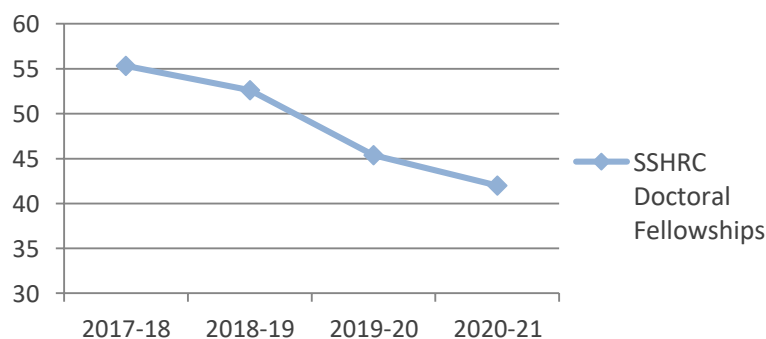
Observer

— “[A huge success]: SSHRC support and organization as we went through the process. SSHRC employees were highly professional and efficient.”

Committee member survey respondent

REDUCED WORKLOAD. While some survey respondents commented on the large number of applications to review for the Doctoral Awards competition, there were fewer such comments compared to recent years. Returning members acknowledged the decrease in the workload, as outlined in **Appendix C**.

Average number of applications reviewed by each committee member



— “This year ‘only’ 40 applications versus almost 60 at other times: 40 = perfect, 60 = too many.”

Committee member survey respondent

— “[Improvement:] Maintain the (relatively high) number of committee members to spread the work around—it allowed time to devote to each application.”

Committee member survey respondent

MEMBERS WELCOME AUTO-CALIBRATION BUT RECOMMEND MORE CLARITY ON CRITERIA. The new auto-calibration process implemented across the committees in 2020-21 was deemed beneficial. However, a number of members noted the need to provide greater clarity on the evaluation criteria themselves, in terms of their definitions and priority level in the overall evaluation.

- “Based on the discussions during the adjudication meeting, it seemed like the process worked well and that the committee members were happy with the new changes to the scoring process.”
Observer

Anticipated changes to the 2021-22 competition

DIVERSITY CONSIDERATIONS IN RESEARCH DESIGN MODULE. Following feedback and consultation, the doctoral and postdoctoral application processes will now include a Diversity Considerations in Research Design module that will require applicants to indicate and justify how such considerations apply to their research. For the upcoming year, this component of the Doctoral Awards application will serve as an awareness tool. Responses to the module questions will not be subject to merit review. The module’s integration into the evaluation process is planned for the following year, 2022-23.

ELIGIBILITY OPENED TO PROTECTED PERSONS. The eligibility for the Canada Graduate Scholarships Program (CGS) and agency-specific research training funding opportunities will be broadened in the 2021-22 competition cycle to include **protected persons**, in addition to Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

UPDATED DISTRIBUTION OF CGS AWARDS. A new distribution formula of CGS scholarships across the three federal research agencies will come into effect in 2021-22. The new formula, aligned with the Government of Canada’s 20% increase in the number of permanent CGS scholarships announced in 2019, will increase the total number of SSHRC CGS Doctoral scholarships to 1,260. The refreshed distribution formula is based on an in-depth tri-agency review and reflects the evolution of graduate student enrolment data from Statistics Canada.

MORE HARMONIZED PROGRAM CHANGES. To continue with one competition for both doctoral award types, the SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships funding opportunity will align, where possible, with the 2020-21 changes to the CGS-D program. Important elements will remain unchanged, including the value and duration of the award, as well as the portability of the SSHRC doctoral fellowship outside of Canada.

ADJUSTMENTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO COVID-19. SSHRC will continue to monitor the pandemic’s impact on research trainees and institutions and will collaborate with its federal research agency partners and research community stakeholders to ensure appropriate measures are put in place to support its applicants.

Canada Graduate Scholarships Program - Master's Scholarships (CGS-M)



Value:

\$17,500



Duration:

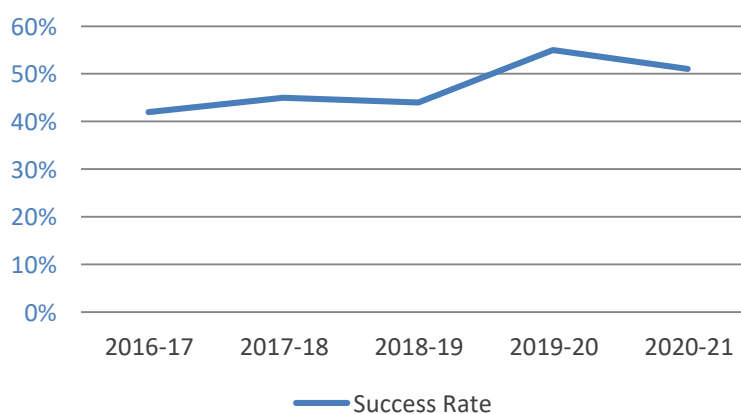
1 year

Application deadline:	December 1, 2020
Application system:	Research Portal online
Adjudication dates:	N/A
Adjudication method:	Merit review at Canadian institution(s)

The number of awards offered depends on the number of eligible applications received. Some institutions do not receive enough eligible applications to be able to use their allocation. Unused allocations are redistributed at the end of the year.

Competitions statistics are included in Appendix D and are based on point-in-time adjudication data; awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are not included.

Success rate trends



See [Joint Initiatives section](#) for CGS-Master's supplements granted under the Department of National Defence MINDS Scholarships Initiative.

New in 2020-21

ADJUSTMENTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO COVID-19:

- **COVID CIRCUMSTANCES CONSIDERED.** Applicants were invited to include impacts of the COVID-19 crisis on any aspects of their application in the Leaves of absence and impact on research section of the Canadian Common CV. Committee members were instructed to take these impacts into consideration with regard to the applicants' academic grades and progress.
- **TRANSCRIPT REQUIREMENTS EASED.** The three federal research granting agencies provided flexibility to institutions (as co-delivery partners) and applicants to provide unofficial transcripts. Acknowledging the impact of the pandemic on some students' achievements and given that some institutions had to adjust the formats in which they provided course results, the agencies encouraged institutions to exercise flexibility in assessing academic records during the eligibility screening and merit review.
- **FLEXIBLE POST-AWARD REGULATIONS.** All training award recipients were granted the option of delaying the start date of their award or requesting an unpaid interruption of up to four-months for reasons related to the COVID-19 crisis.
- **PART-TIME RESEARCH.** SSHRC supported training award holders who, given the challenges posed by the COVID-19 situation, can only devote part-time hours to their research. These individuals could continue to hold their awards and be paid at the full amount.
- **PAID EXTENSIONS EXTENDED IN 2020-21.** All eligible award holders of research training programs covered by the Tri-agency Research Training Award Holder's Guide (**TARTAHG**), with awards that ended between March and August 2020, were offered a four-month paid extension.

Anticipated changes to 2021-22 competition

FIRST CLASS AVERAGE REQUIREMENT REVISED. Following consultations with Canadian institutions, universities will now have the flexibility to accept CGS M applications from individuals who have not obtained a first-class average. This eligibility requirement, now at the discretion of the institutions, was adjusted to increase access to the funding opportunity.

UPDATED AGENCY DISTRIBUTION OF CGS AWARDS. Institutional allocations for CGS M scholarships in 2021-22 will reflect a new distribution formula of CGS awards across the three federal research agencies. As of next year, a total of 1,365 SSHRC CGS M scholarships will be available on an annual basis. The refreshed distribution formula is based on an in-depth tri-agency review and reflects the evolution of graduate student enrolment data from Statistics Canada. This new formula supports equitable access to funding for graduate students across all fields and disciplines and is aligned with the Government of Canada's 2019 20% increase in the number of permanent CGS scholarships.

ELIGIBILITY OPENED TO PROTECTED PERSONS. The eligibility for the Canada Graduate Scholarships Program (CGS) and agency-specific research training funding opportunities will be broadened in the 2021-22 competition cycle to include **protected persons**, in addition to Canadian citizens and permanent residents.

ADJUSTMENTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO COVID-19. SSHRC will continue to monitor the pandemic's impact on research trainees and institutions and will collaborate with its federal research agency partners and research community stakeholders to ensure appropriate measures are put in place to support its applicants.

Canada Graduate Scholarships – Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplements



Value:

Up to \$6,000



Duration:

2 to 6 months

Application deadline:

June 10, 2020 / October 10, 2020

Application system:

SSHRC online / tri-agency awards extranet

Adjudication dates:

N/A

Adjudication method:

Nomination at Canadian institution(s)

Eligible Canadian institutions submit a ranked list of applications to each agency. The agency conducts a review of eligibility and awards supplements to eligible applicants.

Competition Statistics

Year	Eligible applications	Awards*	Total awarded
2020-21	67	67	\$397,738
2019-20	129	129	\$760,946
2018-19	131	131	\$764,361
2017-18	141	141	\$833,632
2016-17	129	129	\$766,602

*Results are allocation-based.

New in 2020-21

REPORTING REQUIREMENTS REDUCED FOR CHANGES TO TRAVEL DATES. To reduce the administrative burden on students and program staff, the three federal research agencies no longer require supplement holders to report trip date changes if the changes are within one month of the original dates.

CONTINUED SUPPORT AND FLEXIBLE START DATES. Due to COVID-19-restrictions, SSHRC allowed MSFSS recipients to defer their travel abroad beyond the one-year deadline from the notice of award, provided they still held an active CGS or remained registered at the same Canadian institution.

Competition observations

DECREASE IN THE NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS. SSHRC's annual target of 125 applications was not reached in 2020-21, due to a decrease in the number of applications received in the June and October competitions. This decrease is largely attributed to COVID-19 disruptions in travel, which is an essential element of the funding opportunity.

Anticipated changes to 2021-22 competition

ADJUSTMENTS AND ACCOMMODATIONS DUE TO COVID-19. SSHRC will continue to monitor the pandemic's impact on research trainees and institutions and will collaborate with its federal research agency partners and research community stakeholders to ensure appropriate measures are put in place to support its applicants.

Impact Awards



Value:

\$100,000 (Gold Medal) / \$50,000 (all other prizes)



Duration:

1 year

Application deadline:	May 1, 2020
Application system:	Secure upload site
Adjudication dates:	September 9-11, 2020
Adjudication method:	Videoconference
Number of committees:	1
Number of committee members:	13 (including 1 international)

57% acceptance rate SSHRC invited 23 experts 13 accepted 0 members withdrew from the process	62% returning members 8 out of 13 committee members served within the last 5 years	Committee members reviewed an average of 7 applications
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SSHRC [Impact Awards](#) are uniquely based on a nomination versus a competitive application process.

Competition Statistics

	Eligible nominations	Finalists	Awards	Success rate	Average success rate over 5 years	Total awarded
Gold Medal	13	n/a	1	8%	10%	\$100,000
Talent Award	22	3	1	5%	6%	\$50,000
Insight award	14	3	1	7%	7%	\$50,000
Connection Award	22	3	1	5%	7%	\$50,000
Partnership Award	8	3	1	13%	12%	\$50,000

New in 2020-21

VIRTUAL PROCESS. As with a number of other SSHRC funding opportunities, the 2020-21 evaluation process for the Impact Awards was held remotely for the first time.

NEW EQUITY MEASURES. In support of the tri-agency principles on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), and inspired by practices of the Canada Research Chairs Program, the following changes were implemented in the 2020 Impact Awards competition:

- **NEW INSTITUTIONAL NOMINATION PROCESS PAGE.** Institutions were required to provide a description of how EDI was considered in the nomination process, which will be used for internal monitoring purposes.
- **BEST PRACTICES FOR REFEREES.** SSHRC integrated guidelines for reference letter writers from the Canada Research Chairs and the SSHRC Doctoral Awards and Postdoctoral Fellowships programs into the nomination instructions.
- **CONSIDERATION FOR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES.** A new section on Career Interruptions and Special Circumstances was added to the nomination package, aligning the process with the rest of SSHRC programs. The evaluation manual for jury members was updated to include instructions in reference to this new section.

Competition observations



100% of survey respondents rated the quality of SSHRC staff support as excellent (80%) or good (20%).

80% of survey respondents rated the quality of the merit review process as excellent.

n=9

- “The staff support was excellent—timing, friendly, and effective.”
Committee member survey respondent
- “The administrative support was excellent throughout the process.”
Committee member survey respondent

INCREASED NOMINATIONS. Despite the pandemic, the 2020-21 competition saw an 18% increase in nominations from the previous year. The total number of nominations submitted (79) was the highest ever received for the Impact Awards competition. The increase could be attributed to the one-month deadline extension granted at the onset of the pandemic to accommodate institutions’ preparation of nominations.

REACH ACROSS INSTITUTIONAL SIZE AND LANGUAGE. Small and medium-sized institutions represented 25% of nominations; however, none were selected for an award in 2020-21. Twenty-five percent of nominations were submitted by Francophone or bilingual institutions. Of the five awards, one award was granted to a French institution nominee and two were granted to individuals from bilingual institutions.



In 2020-21: 79 nominations

Just over **25%** of nominations were from small and medium-sized institutions.

Approximately **25%** of nominations were submitted by Francophone or bilingual institutions.

ADAPTATIONS TO A REMOTE PROCESS. A few jury member survey respondents voiced the challenges of moving to a remote jury process. These individuals provided helpful feedback on ways that SSHRC can improve future remote processes, including reducing the daily amount of time in meetings, by spreading the adjudication meeting over several days, and clarifying meeting procedures to ensure focused and timely discussions that are less structured and encourage broader participation.

- “I found this a somewhat frustrating experience—mostly due to COVID and associated technical challenges. This is not a reflection on SSHRC staff or the chair, who were terrific. This was my first time on the jury, and I felt very uncertain about the modes of participation and tried to watch and listen to how people intervened. I would have appreciated more open and possibly less structured participation.”

Committee member survey respondent

Summary of 2020-21 competition statistics

Competition	Eligible applications	Awards	Success Rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
Insight Grants	1213	637	53%	\$224,744,976	\$104,001,032
Insight Development Grants	1256	563	45%	\$77,596,998	\$32,302,006

Award data is drawn immediately following adjudication. Awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are not included.

Insight Grants



Value:

Stream A: \$7,000 to \$100,000 / Stream B: \$100,001 to \$400,000



Duration:

2 to 5 years

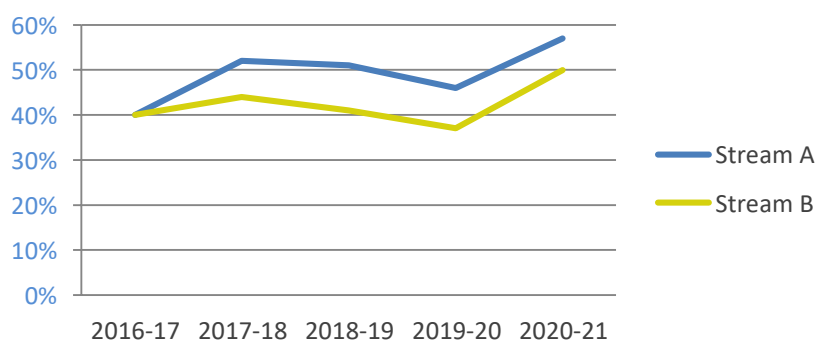
Application deadline:	October 1, 2020
Application system:	SSHRC online
Adjudication dates:	February 17 – February 27, 2021
Adjudication method:	Videoconference meeting (due to COVID-19)
Number of committees:	25
Number of committee members:	214 (including 4 international)
Number of assessors (received):	2,558 (including 1,168 international)

<p>49% committee member acceptance rate</p> <p>SSHRC invited 465 experts 228 accepted 14 members withdrew from the process</p>	<p>34% external assessor acceptance rate</p> <p>SSHRC invited 8,129 external assessors 2,798 accepted</p>	<p>50% returning members</p> <p>106 out of 214 committee members served within the last 5 years</p>	<p>Committee members reviewed an average of 13 applications</p>
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Success rates represent the number of awards divided by the number of eligible applications.

Competitions statistics are included in Appendix D and are based on point-in-time adjudication data; awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are not included.

Success rate trends





See [Joint Initiatives section](#) for Insight Grants awarded under the Department of National Defence Research Initiative, the Initiative for Digital Citizen Research, Societal Implications of Genomics Research and the Sports Participation Research Initiative.

New in 2020-21

REVISED COMPETITION DEADLINE. To reduce stress on SSHRC's current online application systems, resulting from increased demand for online services and overlapping competition deadlines, the submission deadline for Insight Grants was permanently changed from October 15 to October 1.

TEMPORARY REMOTE ADJUDICATION MEETINGS. The exceptional circumstances of COVID-19 impeded SSHRC's usual in-person adjudication process. The 2020-21 adjudication meetings were held via videoconference with staff working from home, marking the first time the grants were remotely adjudicated.

Competition observations



96% of survey respondents rated the quality of SSHRC staff support as excellent (82%) or good (14%).

95% of survey respondents rated the quality of the merit review process as excellent (45%) or good (50%).

n=140

- “The meetings were exceptionally well prepared and organized for us as committee members. Hats off ...”
Committee member survey respondent
- “Great work. I learned a lot and it was satisfying to give back to an organization that has been very generous to me over the years. Call on me again (although not all the time!).”
Committee member survey respondent

COVID-19 PROVISIONS. As with other SSHRC funding opportunities, provisions were added to the project description and career interruption section of the application form to allow applicants to either indicate the impact of the pandemic on their career and/or to provide information on contingency plans. Committee members were given additional instructions on how to consider this information in the merit review process. Program staff observed that, where this information was provided, the committee took it into consideration. If the applicant did not provide a contingency plan, they were not judged negatively.

MIXED REACTIONS TO REMOTE REVIEW PROCESS. The survey responses demonstrated mixed opinions on the change to a virtual review process. Stated advantages of the online process included greater flexibility, efficiencies and economies; the disadvantages included tedious and ergonomically difficult sessions, and the lack of face-to-face social cues to foster thorough reviews. Overall, the feedback received on the videoconferencing platform and other supporting technology tools was positive.

- “It was easy to login and also beneficial to not have to make time to travel. It was good to have fewer applications to read—this made the workload of serving on the committee much more manageable than the previous year when I served in person.”

Committee member survey respondent

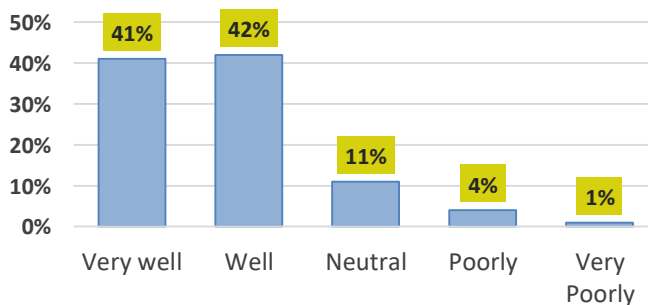
- “...the missing link in it all was the informal connections among committee members that facilitate communication on the committee. All committee members invest a very large amount of time and effort in reviewing, evaluating and deliberating, and to be rushed through meetings with people we don't know and don't get to know undermines the collegial aspect of the process, and severely reduces the meaning of participation in adjudications.”

Committee member survey respondent

CHALLENGES RECRUITING EXTERNAL ASSESSORS. Due to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, program staff experienced heightened challenges in recruiting external assessors. At the same time, the pandemic prolonged the hiring process of new program officers, which also challenged the recruitment of external assessors.

LATE EXTERNAL REVIEWS AND VARIED VIEWS ON QUALITY. Obtaining external assessments on time is an ongoing challenge for SSHRC’s Insight Grants funding opportunity. Assessments that arrive after the meeting dates are not considered in committee deliberations. The thoroughness of the assessments can also vary. Despite these challenges, the majority of survey respondents rated this element of the merit review process positively.

**How well were the following aspects of the evaluation process managed?:
external assessments**



83% of survey respondents felt that the external assessments were managed very well (41%) or well (42%).

- “We had external assessments coming in right up to and during our adjudication days in late February, which made including all of these external assessments into the consideration of each application very difficult.”

Committee member survey respondent

NEW DEADLINE BENEFITS ADJUDICATION PROCESS. Moving the submission deadline up two weeks was very beneficial for SSHRC staff providing overlapping support to other funding opportunities. Although there were unexpected delays in 2020-21 due to COVID-19, the change will likely benefit the adjudication process in terms of being able to recruit external assessors earlier and providing committee members more time to review applications.

Anticipated changes to 2021-22 competition

TRI-AGENCY INTERDISCIPLINARY PEER REVIEW COMMITTEE. A new adjudication mechanism will be launched in 2021-22 for applications that fall between or reach across the federal research agency mandates. This SSHRC-led initiative, which responds to recommendations made in Canada's 2017 Fundamental Science Review, will apply to applications submitted to SSHRC Insight Grants, NSERC Discovery Horizons Grants and CIHR Project Grants. The proposals will be reviewed by a common tri-agency merit review committee.

DELAYED IMPLEMENTATION OF NEW ECR DEFINITION. Due to the impacts of COVID-19, the implementation of a new tri-agency early career researcher definition in the Insight Grants funding opportunity is postponed to the 2022-23 competition.

REMOTE APPROACH CONFIRMED FOR 2021-22 COMPETITION. SSHRC confirmed that the February 2022 Insight Grants adjudication process will once again be held remotely.

Insight Development Grants



Value:

\$7,000 to \$75,000



Duration:

1 to 2 years

Application deadline:	February 2, 2020
Application system:	Research Portal online
Adjudication dates:	May 4 – May 21, 2020
Adjudication method:	Teleconference due to COVID-19 pandemic; one via videoconference for Indigenous Research Committee
Number of committees:	23
Number of committee members:	198 (including 2 international)

33% acceptance rate

SSHRC invited 600 experts
198 accepted
9 members dropped-out of the process

46% returning members

91 out of 198 committee members served within the last 5 years

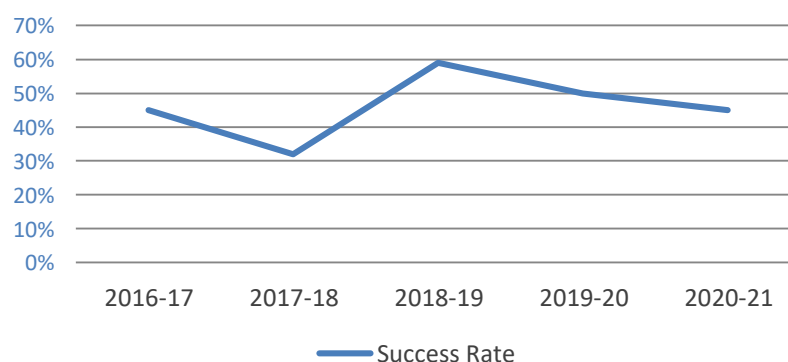
Committee members reviewed an average of

14 applications

Success rates represent the number of awards divided by the number of eligible applications.

Competitions statistics are included in Appendix D and are based on point-in-time adjudication data; awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are not included.

Success rate trends



See [Joint Initiatives section](#) for Insight Development Grants awarded under the Belmont Forum, Department of National Defence Research Initiative and Societal Implications of Genomics Research initiatives.

New in 2020-21

TEMPORARY CHANGES TO PEER REVIEW ADJUDICATION DUE TO COVID-19:

- Adjudication was held by teleconference instead of videoconference due to technical limitations at the time of the meetings, which occurred at the onset of the pandemic.
- The number of readers was reduced from three to two to reduce the workload for committee members and help reduce the length of the meetings.
- The enhanced feedback for early career researchers piloted in 2019-20 was put on hold. Following the previous standard triage process, only the budgets for the top 25%- ranked applications in the preliminary spreadsheet were discussed, unless a full discussion was needed. The bottom 30% ranked applications were not discussed, unless flagged.
- Feedback for applicants was reduced to the three merit criteria scores: challenge, feasibility and capability. Committee members did not complete evaluation forms.
- Committees were asked to be flexible when assessing the feasibility criterion, in the context of COVID-19.

Competition observations



95% of survey respondents rated the quality of SSHRC staff support as excellent (85%) or good (9%).

86% of survey respondents rated the quality of the merit review process as excellent (41%) or good (45%).

n=117

- “The SSHRC representatives were thoroughly professional, courteous, and knowledgeable—a tremendous assistance during adjudication.”
Committee member survey respondent
- “Staff are excellent and do a great job of making sure the process is well-organized and that the chair is prepared to lead the evaluation process.”
Committee member survey respondent

TEMPORARY TELECONFERENCE ADJUDICATION. The Insight Development Grants were one of the first funding opportunities to be adjudicated at the onset of the pandemic. Due to technical challenges and to ensure connectivity, SSHRC held the Insight Development Grants meetings by teleconference instead of videoconference. Many committee members commented that this method impeded interactions during the committee discussions. Most members expressed the hope to revert to videoconference meetings in the next competition.

VIDEOCONFERENCE PROCESS FOR INDIGENOUS RESEARCH. Since 2018-19, the Indigenous Research committee has met in person for the Insight Development Grants adjudication meeting. Staff had previously concluded that the approach was successful and provided a rewarding and rigorous merit review experience.

To respond to public health measures, the committee was held via videoconference. Committee members expressed the hope of reverting to in-person meetings in the future.

SUPPORT FOR PROVIDING COMMENTS. As noted above, due to the temporary changes to merit review processes, committees did not complete evaluation forms. A significant number of survey respondents expressed regret that they were unable to provide the usual level of feedback to applicants to support future applications and research. Some reviewers provided suggestions for note-takers, or for allowing reviewers to provide comments. A handful of reviewers who chose to comment on this issue appreciated the simplified process that reduced workloads and enabled more emphasis to be placed on the scoring and ranking processes.

- “It is unfortunate no narrative feedback could be offered to candidates this year. Ideally, this would be reinstated in some fashion, as it can be very helpful in improving one's application for future competitions.”

Committee member survey respondent

TWO OR THREE REVIEWERS? There were divided views from merit reviewers who chose to comment on the reduction of reviewers from three to two. However, most felt it would be better to return to three reviewers next year to ensure greater consensus and a fair process. Those who favoured the process noted the workload reduction and felt it did not impact the review process.

- “Reducing to two adjudicators per application. That seemed an efficient idea that did not appreciably prejudice our ability to make fair decisions.”

Committee member survey respondent

- “By having three readers last year, it was easier to identify outlier opinions and bring consensus into the decision making more easily.”

Committee member survey respondent

VIEWS ON OTHER SIMPLIFIED PROCESSES. Merit review members had the opportunity to comment on other temporary changes that SSHRC implemented as a result of COVID-19, in terms of scoring and the number of readers. These comments helped SSHRC adjust merit review processes in other competitions to respond to constraints caused by the public health measures.

Anticipated changes to 2021-22 competition

A RETURN TO REGULAR ADJUDICATION. The Insight Development Grants competition intends to resume the adjudication processes in place before the disruptions of COVID-19. Each application will have three readers. Committee meetings will be held by videoconference and all applications discussed will receive the committee evaluation form. Anticipating a high success rate in 2021-22, only the budgets of the top-ranked 30% of applications in the preliminary meeting spreadsheet will be discussed, unless flagged for discussion. The bottom 25% (previously 30%) will not be discussed unless also flagged for discussion.



Summary of 2020-21 competition statistics

Competition	Eligible applications	Awards*	Success rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
Partnership Grants	75 (Stage 1)	19	25%	\$62,150,620 (Stage 2 only)	\$47,468,400 (Stage 2 only)
Partnership Development Grants	135	96	71%	\$25,493,209	\$18,210,879
Partnership Engage Grants	305	216	71%	\$7,350,137	\$5,218,919
Partnership Engage Grants – COVID-19**	396	251	63%	\$9,583,096	\$6,092,299
Connection Grants	309	237	77%	\$8,968,236	\$6,552,586
Knowledge Synthesis Grants – Digital Skills	59	36	61%	\$1,694,824	\$762,217
Knowledge Synthesis Grants – Mobility and Public Transit	30	23	77%	\$858,425	\$669,238

*Award data is drawn immediately following adjudication.

**Awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are only included for the special call on COVID-19; as a result of reallocation, SSHRC strategically allocated an additional 43 awards, for a total of 294 awards, the number more widely publicized in 2020-21 by the government.

Partnership Grants

	Stage 1	Stage 2
 Value:	up to \$20,000	\$500,000 to \$2.5 million
 Duration:	One year	4 to 7 years

Application deadline:	February 10, 2020	October 29, 2020
Adjudication dates:	June 9-12, 2020	March 9-10, 2021
Adjudication method:	Videoconference	Videoconference
Number of committees:	1	1
Number of committee members:	13 (including 1 international)	12 (including 1 international)
Number of expert panelists:	n/a	76 (including 42 international)

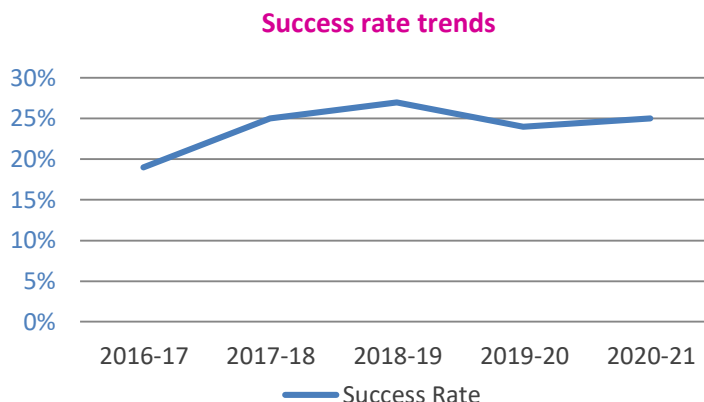
36% acceptance rate* SSHRC invited 36 experts for Stage 1 13 accepted	46% returning members 6 out of 13 committee members served within the last 5 years	Committee members reviewed an average of 19 applications
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*Data is based on the Stage 1 Partnerships Grants process.

Each annual call involves a two-stage process: Proposals successful in Stage 1 are invited to apply to the Stage 2 competition.

Success rates represent the number of awards divided by the number of eligible applications.

Competitions statistics are included in Appendix D and are based on point-in-time adjudication data; awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are not included.



See [Joint Initiatives section](#) for Partnership Grants awarded under the Canada Foundation for Innovation – John R. Evans Leaders Fund.

New in 2020-21

ALTERED REVIEW PROCESSES AND PLATFORMS. Because of COVID-19 disruptions, the Partnership Grants Stage 1 and Stage 2 adjudication committee meetings moved to an online videoconferencing platform. Due to the technical challenges of the remote environment, the Stage 2 competition temporarily replaced the applicant interview process with a written response to the Expert Panel reports.

SOFT LAUNCH OF EDI REQUIREMENTS. In light of the equity, diversity and inclusion pilot program developed for the 2021-22 Partnership Grants competitions, applicants and committee members were informed that EDI considerations would soon be part of the evaluation criteria for all applications submitted to this funding opportunity. These criteria were not implemented in this competition year.

Competition observations



100% of survey respondents rated the quality of SSHRC staff support as excellent (86%) or good (14%).

93% of survey respondents rated the quality of the merit review process as excellent (29% for Stage 1 and 29% for Stage 2) or good (71% for Stage 1 and 57% for Stage 2).

n= 14 (7 Stage 1 and 7 Stage 2)

- “The team at SSHRC is wonderful—very professional and always prepared. I particularly want to commend them for working through the challenges imposed by the pandemic.”
Stage 1 Committee member survey respondent

- “The time commitment was high, but the team did a great job of respecting the committee's time by grouping applications. That was very appreciated. I also think the 'moderator' did a great job of moving the conversation along.”

Stage 1 Committee member survey respondent

- “Although the pandemic meant we had to have the meeting by videoconference, cut down on the deliberation time and use new evaluation methods (written response to the report from the panel of experts, replacing the interview with committee members), this set-up did encourage respectful discussion and a systematic and rigorous application of the competition's evaluation criteria.”

Observer, on Stage 2 review process

HIGH WORKLOAD. A number of committee member survey respondents commented on the high workload demands of the review process, in the context of the remote working conditions during the year. The workload was particularly pronounced for the Stage 2 process.

- “The problem for me is not the remote meetings, but the heaviness of the task. If the lockdown continues, and given the heaviness of the task and family constraints, I will not be able to participate again... This is easily over 90 hours of work that must be done during the workdays, which are already full.”

Stage 1 Committee member survey respondent

- “I will have to think long and hard about doing the PG adjudication again. The workload was immense. I enjoyed the process and have regularly served on SSHRC committees over the years but am not sure I want to take on the job of reading 25+ dissertation-length proposals again.”

Stage 2 Committee member survey respondent

BILINGUAL COMMITTEE EXCHANGE. The observer for the Stage 2 competition highlighted the positive bilingual committee interchanges during the adjudication process.

- “The evaluation committee had Francophone and Anglophone members, and a bilingual chair who regularly commented in both languages. The Francophone members mostly spoke French, and their colleagues spoke English. Nevertheless, it was clear in the lively discussions that there was a high level of functional bilingualism on the committee, with members carrying on conversations in both languages at the same time. The majority of applications reviewed were the subject of bilingual discussions.”

Observer, Stage 2

Anticipated changes to 2021-22 competition

CO-PROJECT DIRECTOR PARTICIPANT CATEGORY ADDED. In response to the [Management Response and Action Plan](#) following the [2018 Partnerships Evaluation](#), SSHRC will implement a co-project director participant category in the 2021-22 Partnerships Grants competition. This move fully engages non-academics in project leadership and in the establishment of research objectives. The new category also responds to community requests for co-leadership models in partnership applications.

IMPLEMENTATION OF EDI CONSIDERATIONS IN EVALUATION CRITERIA. SSHRC will pilot EDI requirements in the upcoming Partnership Grants – Stage 2 competition, to be launched in July 2021. The initiative will include a SSHRC EDI Guide, as well as the addition of EDI evaluation criteria, in terms of research practice and research design. The requirements will be implemented in the 2022-23 Stage 1 competition in October 2021.

EXPLORATION OF WAYS TO LESSEN COMMITTEE MEMBER WORKLOADS. Committee members expressed concerns about high workload in the Stage 2 review process, due to the large size of the applications, the move to a virtual environment and the addition of a written expert panel report response. It has also been standard practice for committee members to read all applications at the Stage 2 process. SSHRC will consider ways to reduce the workload in the next competition.

Partnership Development Grants



Value:

\$75,000 to \$200,000



Duration:

1 to 3 years

Application deadline:	November 16, 2020
Application system:	SSHRC online
Adjudication dates:	February 24 - March 5, 2021
Adjudication method:	Videoconference
Number of committees:	2
Number of committee members:	22

29% acceptance rate

SSHRC invited 84 experts
24 accepted
2 members withdrew from the process

58% returning members

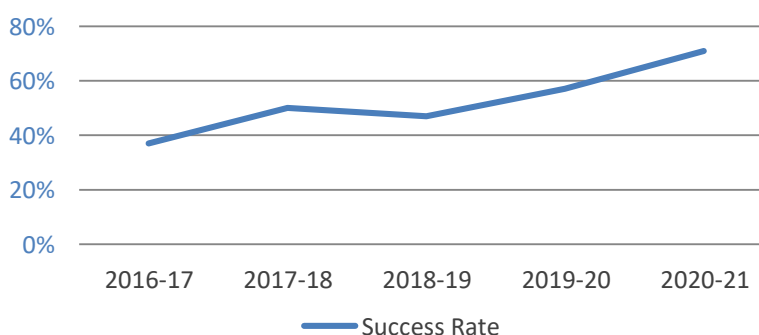
14 out of 22 committee members served within the last 5 years

Committee members reviewed an average of **20 applications**

Success rates represent the number of awards divided by the number of eligible applications.

Competitions statistics are included in Appendix D and are based on point-in-time adjudication data; awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are not included.

Success rate trends



See [Joint Initiatives section](#) for Partnership Development Grants awarded under the Belmont Forum.

New in 2020-21

VIRTUAL ADJUDICATION MEETINGS. In response to the disruptions of COVID-19, the Partnership Development Grants adjudication meetings, traditionally held in-person, were held remotely via a videoconferencing platform. The three-day committee meetings were spaced out over the course of two weeks to allow the same program officer to run both meetings from beginning to end.

VIDEO ORIENTATION AND CALIBRATION MEETINGS. In addition to the adjudication meetings, a videoconference platform was also used for committee member orientation and calibration sessions. This approach provided a common communications platform and allowed members to become familiar with the system before the meetings.

COLLEGE AND ECR COMMITTEE REPRESENTATION. To enhance diversity of the committee membership, SSHRC ensured early career researchers (ECR) and members from colleges were included in the committee member recruitment process for the 2020-21 competition. As a result, one college and two ECR members participated in the two committees formed.

Competition observations



100% of survey respondents rated the quality of SSHRC staff support as excellent.

100% of survey respondents rated the quality of the merit review process as excellent (63%) or good (37%).

n=8

- “The review process reflected the highest of standards—from the composition of the committee, to the guidance and direction of the program officer and the staff from SSHRC, to the discussion of the applications and the assigned scores. The review process was rigorous and conformed to fair, objective, and ethical practice. Both the committees were made up of qualified, experienced and representative members from interdisciplinary backgrounds, which facilitated their ability to effectively review and assess applications from numerous disciplinary areas.”

Observer

- “The program officers and chair were excellent in their support.”

Committee member survey respondent

MOVE TO A REMOTE PROCESS. The observer and committee members who responded to the survey commented on the remote adjudication process, new to the Partnership Development Grants this year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some members appreciated conducting the process remotely, remarking positively on the technology, while others noted the loss of in-person contact.

- “I would be willing to serve remotely, but my preference would be for in-person. I think it's easier to focus on the work when you are removed from other distractions for the three days. You also get to know your colleagues a bit better and that helps the discussions flow.”

Committee member survey respondent

- “The virtual format of the adjudication meeting did create unique challenges to communication, discussion, and flow compared to when the review process occurs in person, but these challenges were effectively mediated by both the program officer and the chair of the committees. At times committee members experienced technological challenges, for example members were disconnected from the meeting, forgot they were muted, believed they were muted when they were not, experienced lag in response from other members, etc., which slowed down the review process. When these technological challenges occurred, the program officer immediately intervened and was able to resolve the issue at hand, which ensured the continued flow of the meeting. These unique challenges experienced throughout the virtual review process (particularly given that the adjudication meetings occurred over a three-day period) serve to highlight the benefit of continuing to hold adjudication meetings in-person, as has historically been done, once circumstances allow for in-person meetings to resume”.

Observer

Anticipated changes to 2021-22 competition

UPDATE TO APPLICATION INSTRUCTIONS. To simplify the application process, uploading a list of potential partner organizations will be made optional to reduce the application burden on those who do not have partner organizations.

Partnership Engage Grants



Value: \$7,000 to \$25,000



Duration: 1 year

Application system:	SSHRC online			
Adjudication method:	Videoconference			
Application deadline:	March 15, 2020	June 15, 2020	Sept 15, 2020	Dec 15, 2020
Adjudication dates:	May 5-6, 2020	August 4-6, 2020	Nov 3-5, 2020	Feb 3-4, 2021
Number of committees:	2	1 regular 3 COVID-19	2 regular 4 COVID-19	2
Number of committee members:	27	16 regular 39 COVID-19	15 regular 40 COVID-19	25
Total number of committee members:	162 (several members served more than once; total returning members = 68)			

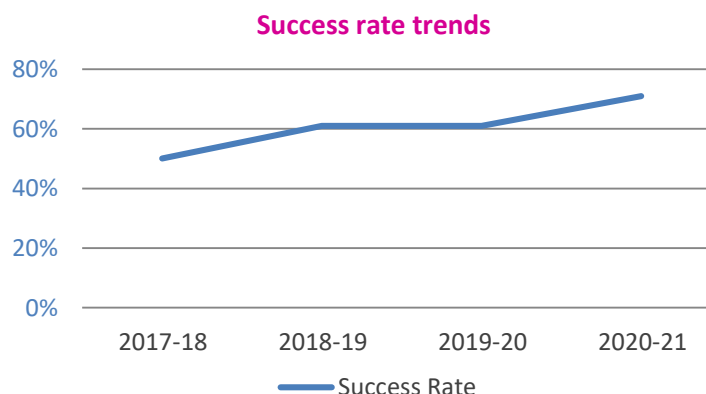
30% acceptance rate SSHRC invited 605 experts 184 accepted 7 members withdrew from the process	28% returning members 52 out of 184 committee members served within the last 5 years	Committee members reviewed an average of 8 applications
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Statistics include combined data for the special COVID-19 call.

SSHRC administers four separate competitions each fiscal year. The Partnership Engage Grants were first implemented in the 2017-18 competition year. In 2020 there were two COVID-19 Special Calls held in conjunction with the June 15, 2020 and September 15, 2020 deadlines.

Success rates represent the number of awards divided by the number of eligible applications.

Competitions statistics are included in Appendix D and are based on point-in-time adjudication data; awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are not included.



See [Joint Initiatives section](#) for Partnership Engage Grants awarded under the Mitacs Accelerate initiative.

New in 2020-21

SPECIAL COVID-19 INITIATIVE. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, SSHRC launched a special call under the Partnership Engage Grants (PEG) funding opportunity, to provide short-term and timely support for small-scale, stakeholder-driven partnership grants. The funding supports researchers and their partners to address urgent and specific needs, challenges or opportunities on COVID-19-related issues through collaboration. The call was quickly prepared and launched in time for the June and September 2020 competitions. Proposals were evaluated by a separate committee made up of social sciences and humanities experts on pandemics and funded through a separate funding envelope.

INCREASE IN APPLICATIONS. Applications to the Partnership Engage Grants increased nearly two-fold from the previous year, due to the launch of the special COVID-19 Initiative. SSHRC received a total of 722 applications.

GREATER CLARITY ON ELIGIBLE PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS. SSHRC revised the Partnership Engage Grants funding opportunity description to further clarify details on partner organization eligibility requirements, with regard to affiliation with a postsecondary institution. Changes were made to further reduce the number of ineligible applications.

Competition observations



93% of survey respondents rated the quality of SSHRC staff support as excellent (62%) or good (31%).

83% of survey respondents rated the quality of the merit review process as excellent (24%) or good (59%).

n=42 (June and December 2020 competitions surveyed)

- “The program officers and chairs of the meeting were AMAZING.”
November 2020 Committee member survey respondent
- “The staff were great, very responsive to emails and questions, very accommodating when technical issues arose and patient with reviewer questions.”
June 2020 COVID-19 call Committee member survey respondent
- “Moderators and adjudicators were professional in following procedures and fairly identifying proposals of merit.”
June 2020 Committee member survey respondent

POSITIVE FEEDBACK ON SIMPLIFIED PROCESSES: To ease the workload of committee members working from home during the pandemic, SSHRC recruited additional committee members and eased a number of processes, including simplifying scoring forms and reducing the number of reviewers from three to two. These changes were very well received overall, but a few members recommended the return to providing feedback to applicants.

- “Minimizing the number of applicants given to each committee member so that they are manageable, particularly during the health pandemic, was very much appreciated.”
June 2020 Committee member survey respondent
- “The waiving of comments enabled reviewers to participate effectively. Reviewers are also trying to cope with heavier workloads, so this was helpful. Scoring was straightforward. The expedited discussions in committee also helped with efficiency. I do not believe this compromised the results. Applications perhaps would benefit from feedback to improve their future submissions. It is a difficult balancing act.”
June 2020 COVID-19 call Committee member survey respondent

VIRTUAL MEETINGS. SSHRC program staff received positive feedback on the remote adjudication meetings, held by teleconference and videoconference by staff working from home.

- “I think the SSHRC professionals, the committee chair and the faculty evaluators all did a great job. I can’t think of any significant room for improvement on that score.”
November 2020 Committee member survey respondent
- “Success—Having individuals who support us, answer our questions, and support us. The quality and patience of the staff makes this a much more efficient process.”
June 2020 COVID-19 call Committee member survey respondent

Connection Grants



Value: \$7,000 to \$25,000 (events) / \$7,000 to \$50,000 (outreach activities)



Duration: 1 year

Application system:	SSHRC online			
Adjudication method:	Teleconference			
Application deadline:	May 1, 2020	August 1, 2020	Nov 1, 2020	Feb 1, 2021
Adjudication dates:	June 8-12, 2020	Sept 8-11, 2020	Dec 7-11, 2020	Mar 8-12, 2021
Number of committees:	4	3	2	2
Committee members:	28	19	15	14
Total committee members:	76 (several members served more than once; total individuals = 60)			

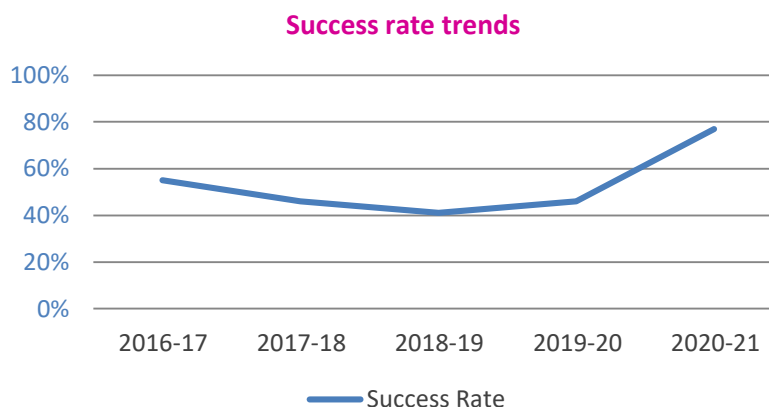
33% acceptance rate SSHRC invited 278 experts 92 accepted 1 member withdrew and 16 were released from the process ¹²	69% returning members 62 out of 92 committee members served within the last 5 years	Committee members reviewed an average of 8 applications
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SSHRC administers four separate competitions each fiscal year. Applicants whose project is an outreach activity can request more than \$50,000, with justification.

¹² Due to a smaller than expected application intake, members were released during the August 2020, November 2020 and February 2021 competitions.

Success rates represent the number of awards divided by the number of eligible applications.

Competitions statistics are included in Appendix D and are based on point-in-time adjudication data; awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are not included.



See [Joint Initiatives section](#) for Connections Grants awarded under the Initiative for Digital Citizen Research.

New in 2020-21

SIMPLIFIED REVIEW PROCESSES. To respond to the new remote working conditions that were put into place at the onset of the COVID-19 crisis, SSHRC temporarily simplified some elements of its review processes to reduce the demands on merit reviewers, including simplifying the forms. Regular processes were reinstated for the fourth, final competition in 2020-21.

EXPANDED COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP SIZE. Committee membership was increased to reduce members' workloads in the context of the new remote work environment. The average number of applications assigned was reduced to 8 to 10 applications, versus approximately 15 to 18 per member under normal circumstances.

ECR AND COLLEGE MEMBER RECRUITMENT. To increase the diversity of committee membership, SSHRC expanded its recruitment efforts for early career researchers,¹³ as well as members affiliated with colleges. A total of 16 ECRs and five college representatives participated in the merit review process this year.

DATA MANAGEMENT INITIATIVE EXTENDED. The [Research Data Management Capacity Building Initiative](#), a special call delivered under the Connection Grants funding opportunity, was extended for one additional year. The initiative promotes greater understanding of data management considerations and practices within the research community, in the context of the [Tri-agency Research Data Management Policy](#). SSHRC will continue to fund a minimum of 10 relevant Connections Grants applications per competition.

¹³ SSHRC's [Emerging Scholars](#) definition was used to recruit early career researchers.

Competition observations



97% of survey respondents rated the quality of SSHRC staff support as excellent (76%) or good (21%).

91% of survey respondents rated the quality of the merit review process as excellent (35%) or good (56%).

n=34 (May & August 2020 and February 2021 competitions surveyed)

— “An excellent, balanced, and fair process.”

May 2020 Committee member survey respondent

— “SSHRC staff are extremely helpful and collegial. Wonderful to work with and set a productive tone. The lead adjudicator also set an incredibly productive, positive and generous tone.”

February 2021 Committee member survey respondent

REDUCED APPLICATION INTAKE DUE TO COVID-19. The public health restrictions in place throughout the competition year in response to the COVID-19 pandemic had a pronounced impact on SSHRC’s Connection Grants funding opportunity, which enables largely in-person research events and outreach activities. The number of applications in 2020-21 declined by 56% from the previous year. Knowing that virtual events and activities are also encouraged in this funding opportunity, this pattern could suggest that the research community prefers organizing in-person events and activities.

POSITIVE FEEDBACK ON REDUCED WORKLOADS. SSHRC program staff received positive feedback from committee members on their reduced workload as a result of the COVID-19 context and reduced application numbers.

— “The online deliberation process seems to be just as efficient, and the idea of having only 10 applications to review seems very reasonable to me in terms of the workload. In short, unlike what I had heard through the grapevine about the SSHRC application review process before the pandemic, the process now seems to be much simpler and more friendly. Thank you!”

February 2021 Committee member survey respondent

FEEDBACK TO APPLICANTS. The opportunity to provide feedback to unsuccessful applicants was reduced with the simplified review process implemented in the first three 2020-21 Connections Grants competitions. Several survey respondents underlined the importance of providing such feedback, which was re-instated in the last competition adjudicated in 2020-21.

— “Some comments should be given to applicants who don't get funding.”

May 2020 Committee member survey respondent



— “More focus is needed on providing meaningful qualitative feedback to applicants who do not get funding.”

May 2020 Committee member survey respondent

Anticipated changes to 2021-22 competitions

A RETURN TO PRE-COVID APPLICATION RATES. With the hope of improvements to the global pandemic situation and the re-opening of organizations and in-person meetings, SSHRC anticipates a return to more normal levels of Connections Grants application rates later in 2021-22.

Knowledge Synthesis Grants

	Skills and Work in the Digital Economy	Mobility and Public Transit
 Value:	Up to \$30,000	Up to \$30,000
 Duration:	1 year	1 year

Application deadline:	September 3, 2020	December 17, 2020
Application system:	SSHRC online	SSHRC online
Adjudication date:	November 13, 2020	March 5, 2021
Adjudication method:	Teleconference	Videoconference
Number of committees:	1	1
Number of committee members:	11	8

Skills and Work in the Digital Economy 52% acceptance rate SSHRC invited 21 experts 11 accepted 0 members withdrew from the process	Committee members reviewed an average of 16 applications	Mobility and Public Transit 22% acceptance rate SSHRC invited 36 experts 8 accepted 0 members withdrew from the process	Committee members reviewed an average of 11 applications
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Two competitions addressed several of the [16 future challenge areas](#) under the second phase of SSHRC's Imagining Canada's Future (ICF) initiative.

Competition Statistics

Year	Eligible applications	Awards	Success rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21 Digital Skills	59	36	61%	\$1,694,824	\$762,217

Year	Eligible applications	Awards	Success rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21 Mobility and Public Transit	30	23	77%	\$858,425	\$669,238

*Competition statistics are based on point-in-time adjudication data; awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding are not included.

New in 2020-21

DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES IN A RAPIDLY CHANGING ECONOMIC LANDSCAPE. In collaboration with the Future Skills Centre, SSHRC launched a Knowledge Synthesis Grant competition on Skills and Work in the Digital Economy in 2020-21. The resulting synthesis reports will identify how academic, public, private and not-for-profit sectors can help workers respond to the new challenges and opportunities presented by digital technologies, including lifelong learning and creating effective, resilient and inclusive workplaces.

MOBILITY AND PUBLIC TRANSIT CHALLENGES: SSHRC and Infrastructure Canada launched a Knowledge Synthesis Grant competition on mobility and public transit issues. The call will address new challenges in today's complex policy environment, alongside emerging societal trends, environmental imperatives and technological innovations. Grant holders will identify research gaps and opportunities related to transit, land use, urban planning, and public health and safety.

DELAYED 2019-20 RESULTS DUE TO COVID-19. Due to the disruptions of COVID-19 on research synthesis activities, including access to facilities and challenges of hiring students, SSHRC delayed the publication of evidence briefs for the 2019-20 tri-agency Knowledge Synthesis Grants on Living Within the Earth's Carrying Capacity. The briefs will be published on the SSHRC website in late fall 2021.

VIRTUAL FORUM DUE TO TRAVEL AND HEALTH RESTRICTIONS. Due to the travel restrictions experienced throughout the year, all Knowledge Synthesis Grants events were conducted remotely. They also occurred later than initially scheduled to accommodate the production of the research results. While the kickoff webinars had transitioned to a virtual webinar in the previous year, the final forums were also held remotely, for the first time, over multiple days.

Competition observations



100% of survey respondents rated the quality of SSHRC staff support as excellent (90%) or good (10%).

90% of survey respondents rated the quality of the merit review process as excellent (70%) or good (20%).

n= 10 (5 Digital Skills and 5 Mobility and Public Transit)

— “The engagement & support from SSHRC staff was excellent.”
Digital Economy committee member survey respondent

- “The staff were helpful and professional in all dealings. As a new reviewer, the orientation provided at the beginning of the process was very helpful to me.”
Mobility and Public Transit committee member survey respondent

RESEARCHERS OUTLINING THE CYCLICAL NATURE OF SSHRC GRANTS. Researchers outlined that, in some cases, Knowledge Synthesis Grants applications were developed following the identification of new research questions emerging from successful applications to SSHRC’s Insight program. This demonstrates the cyclical nature and complementarity of SSHRC programming as Knowledge Synthesis Grants may lead to a new application in other funding opportunities, such as Insight Grants.

RANGES IN CAREER STAGES. Knowledge Synthesis Grants funding opportunities continue to attract a wide variety of scholars at different stages of their career. Participation in knowledge mobilization events such as the Knowledge Synthesis forums ranges from doctoral and postdoctoral researchers to full professors, including Canada Research Chairs, as well as cross-sectoral policy-makers.

Anticipated changes to 2021-22 competitions

COMPETITIONS TO ADDRESS NEW CHALLENGES. One Knowledge Synthesis Grants competition and the new Imaging Canada’s Future IDEAS Lab pilot funding opportunity will be launched in 2021-22:

- In 2018, SSHRC identified 16 future challenges through its Imagining Canada’s Future foresight exercise. Three of those challenges were identified as being of particular interest to the research community and were to be explored through a series of Knowledge Synthesis Grants funding opportunities. The last of these KSG funding opportunities is scheduled to launch in September 2021, on The Emerging Asocial Society, which will particularly appeal to researchers in the humanities.
- A new set of three future challenges will be identified from the remaining 16 Imagining Canada’s Future global challenges. They will be announced in spring 2022, with the first Knowledge Synthesis Grants competition scheduled for fall 2022.
- Launched in May 2021, the new IDEAS Lab will address the future challenge of Living within the Earth’s Carrying Capacity through its theme of Canada and the Circular Economy. During the first stage of the pilot, researchers from different disciplines and institutions will come together at a virtual workshop and explore the theme through facilitated activities. They will then form research teams and “pitch” interdisciplinary project ideas to the merit reviewers who will be present throughout the workshop. The teams whose projects meet the workshop criteria will be invited to apply for funding during the second Stage of the IDEAS lab in early 2022. The pilot funding opportunity will assess new approaches to research design and merit review.

Joint Initiatives

SSHRC's program architecture facilitates the development of **partnerships** between members of the research community in Canada and abroad, as well as between the Canadian research community and the public, private and not-for-profit sectors.

These joint initiatives, developed under a set of **guidelines**, are either managed by SSHRC or managed externally. Not all initiatives involve funding. A summary of the initiatives and key results for 2020-21 are outlined below (in alphabetical order).

Belmont Forum

Partner: Belmont Forum

About: Canadian researchers interested in the themes put forward by the Belmont Forum on global environmental change research issues develop proposals that involve international research partnerships. Applications are submitted through SSHRC's Insight and Connection programs; successful SSHRC grant holders can use their existing research funds to participate as collaborators. SSHRC assists its grantees in establishing international research contacts to create new networks of research collaboration and coordination.

2020-21:

- 1 Insight Grant application indicated interest; no collaboration established
- 1 Partnership Development Grant application indicated interest; collaboration established
- 3 Partnership Grants Stage 1 applications indicated interest; no collaboration established

Canada Foundation for Innovation – John R. Evans Leaders Fund

Partner: The Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI)

About: The fund offers infrastructure funding to support research and/or research-related partnership activities. Universities can submit proposals requesting up to \$800,000, with a maximum total eligible cost of \$2 million. The CFI accepts proposals requesting less than or equal to \$75,000 from the social sciences, humanities and arts, and from those universities that have access to the Small Institution Fund.

2020-21:

- 3 successful Partnership Grants awarded

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation – SSHRC Housing Research Training Awards Program

Partner: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)

About: This initiative offers postdoctoral fellowships to individuals conducting social sciences and humanities research in areas related to housing, in support of the National Housing Strategy. Each fellowship is valued at \$45,000 per year and is tenable for one or two years. Candidates apply through the SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowships funding opportunity. Meritorious applications are forwarded to CMHC for consideration.

2020-21:

4 Postdoctoral Fellowships awarded (3 jointly funded by CMHC and SSHRC and 1 fully funded by CMHC)
\$247,500 investment from CMHC to support new and ongoing awards

College and Community Innovation Program – includes special call for Rapid Response to COVID-19

Partners: Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (lead) and Canadian Institutes of Health Research

About: The program aims to increase innovation at the community and/or regional level by enabling Canadian colleges to increase their capacity to work with local companies, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises. It supports applied research and collaborations that facilitate commercialization, as well as technology transfer and adaptation, and the adoption of new technologies.¹⁴

The College and Community Innovation program includes nine types of grants. In 2020-21, SSHRC funded projects under one of the types of funds, the Engage Grants. SSHRC also funded 10 projects under the College and Community Innovation Program – Applied Research Rapid Response to COVID-19 special call held in the spring of 2020.

2020-21:

6 College and Community Innovation Program Engage Grants for a total of \$149,996

10 Applied Research Rapid Response to COVID-19 special call grants for a total of \$746,157

Total of \$896,153 investment by SSHRC

Department of National Defence Research Initiative

Partner: Defence Research and Development Canada (DRDC), agency of the Department of National Defence

About: The initiative supports social sciences and humanities research and related activities related to DRDC's research priorities, including military personnel readiness, organizational and operational effectiveness, and human effectiveness in modern operations. Interested researchers submit their applications through SSHRC's Insight programs.

2020-21:

8 Insight Grants applications indicated interest; 4 were forwarded to DRDC, and all were awarded DNDRI funding.

3 Insight Development Grants applications indicated interest; 8 were forwarded to DRDC, all of which were awarded an Insight Development Grant.

3 Insight Development Grants applications indicated interest; one of the two applications forwarded to DRDC was awarded DNDRI funding.

\$270,000 total investment from DRDC (\$54,000 to each proposal)

¹⁴ Grants are funded by NSERC, with the exception of proposals exclusively in the social sciences, humanities and/or health sciences, which will be funded by SSHRC or CIHR, as appropriate.

Department of National Defence MINDS Scholarship Initiative

Partner: The Department of National Defence's Mobilizing Insights in Defence and Security (MINDS) Program

About: The Department of National Defence (DND) offers research training awards and supplements at the master's, doctoral and postdoctoral levels to social sciences and humanities students and researchers. Research must be related to the [MINDS Policy Challenges](#), as well as [Canada's defence policy, Strong, Secure, Engaged](#).

The initiative includes awards for successful candidates in the Canada Graduate Scholarships –Master's (CGS M) Program who self-identify as Indigenous and whose research aligns with Canada's defence policy areas.

The initiative's funding streams are associated with three funding opportunities: CGS M, SSHRC Doctoral Awards and SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowships. Competition results of these funding opportunities are used to adjudicate the initiative's awards and supplements in the fiscal year following that of the associated SSHRC or tri-agency competition.

2020-21:

9 Master's scholarships for Indigenous students awarded, valued at \$17.5K

2 Doctoral Awards, valued at \$35K per year for 3 years

4 Doctoral Awards, valued at \$35K per year for 1 year

1 Postdoctoral Fellowship, valued at \$45K per year for 2 years

11 supplements awarded, valued at \$10K, for award holders at the master's, doctoral and postdoctoral levels
\$600K investment from DND

Healthy Cities Research Training Platform

Partners: Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC)

About: The national Healthy Cities Research Training Platform (HC RTP) is an interdisciplinary, cross-sectoral training initiative to support cutting-edge knowledge and capacity-building. This funding opportunity will support a team in designing and delivering a national research training initiative focused on how to create, implement and scale innovative, solution-based interventions in a variety of urban contexts focused on promoting healthy, resilient, sustainable and equitable cities.

The application process for the HC RTP consists of a Letter of Intent stage and a Full Application stage. Only one partnership will receive the full grant.

2020-21:

One platform will be funded at the full application stage starting in fiscal year 2021-2022

Initiative for Digital Citizen Research

Partner: Department of Canadian Heritage

About: The Initiative for Digital Citizen Research (IDCR) supports the goals of the Department of Canadian Heritage's approach to protecting democracy and the [Digital Citizen Initiative](#) by funding selected research on issues related to online disinformation in Canada. The initiative provides a maximum annual amount of

\$600,000. In 2020-21, IDCR funding was awarded under SSHRC's Insight Grants, Connection Grants, Postdoctoral Fellowships and Doctoral Award funding opportunities.

2020-21:

31 Insight Grants applications indicated interest.

- ◆ 7 IDCR research supplements were awarded, valued at \$20,000 each
- ◆ 8 applications deemed meritorious by SSHRC's Insight Grants adjudication committees were forwarded to Canadian Heritage to be considered for research grants. Of these, 4 were deemed relevant by Canadian Heritage and awarded grants.

2 Connection Grants applications indicated interest (in the February 2021 funding opportunity).

- ◆ 1 IDCR grants was awarded, for a total amount of \$19,145

4 postdoctoral and 14 doctoral applications were forwarded to IDCR for their relevancy review.

- ◆ 3 postdoctoral and 6 doctoral awards were funded at a value of \$10,000 each

2 Connection Grants applications indicated interest (in the February 2021 funding opportunity)

- ◆ 1 IDCR grant was awarded, for a total amount of \$19,145.00

\$90,000 investment from IDCR

Mitacs Accelerate

Partner: Mitacs

About: Partnership Grants, Partnership Development Grants, Partnership Engage Grants and Insight Grants holders are eligible for a streamlined application process for Mitacs Accelerate internships. The grants support research internships between graduate students and/or postdoctoral fellows and are open to partnerships with both for-profit businesses and eligible not-for-profit organizations.

2020-21:

41 students and postdoctoral fellows awarded

Representation from 18 universities

33 Canadian companies and non-profit hosts

\$619,167 investment from Mitacs and partners

Mitacs Elevate

Partner: Mitacs

About: SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship candidates working with Canadian business and/or not-for-profit organizations can simultaneously apply for a Mitacs Elevate fellowship, valued at \$55,000 per year and tenable for up to two years.

2020-21:

SSHRC did not receive any applications for a Mitacs Elevate fellowship.

Mitacs Elevate Research Management Training Initiative

Partner: Mitacs

About: This initiative offers exclusive access to a two-year program that consists of in-person and online networking and training activities, focusing on developing skills in leadership and management, communication and relationship building, and personal and professional management. Participants may request additional support to offset lodging and travel expenses related to personal circumstances (e.g., childcare-related costs, accommodations for disability, international travel or travel from remote areas). Note: The program's activities will be conducted online until COVID-19-related restrictions are lifted.

2020-21:

25 SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowship holders were selected to participate in the initiative

Open Research Area 6th Call for Proposals

Partner: Agence nationale de la recherche, France; Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Germany; Economic and Social Research Council, United Kingdom

About: SSHRC and its three partners launched a sixth Open Research Area (ORA) call for proposals to fund joint, international and interdisciplinary research projects. The call provides funding for integrated projects by researchers from at least three of the four subscribing countries using a two-stage application process. The Economic and Social Research Council was the coordinating agency for ORA 6.

2020-21:

103 applications were submitted, out of which 85 had Canadian participation

13 applications were successful, out of which 9 had Canadian participation

A total of 9 ORA grants that included Canadian participation were awarded

\$3,018,528 investment from SSHRC over three years

Societal Implications of Genomics Research

Partner: Genome Canada

About: The initiative promotes social sciences and humanities research and related activities aimed at expanding understanding of the potential for new and emerging genomic innovations to profoundly affect society. Interested researchers submit their applications through SSHRC's Insight and Connection programs.

2020-21:

4 Insight Grants applications indicated interest; 1 was awarded by SSHRC only, as it did not pass the relevancy review conducted by Genome Canada

3 Insight Development Grants applications indicated interest; none were awarded

Sports Participation Research Initiative

Partner: Sport Canada

About: The Sports Participation Research Initiative (SPRI) supports the goals of the Canadian Sport Policy by funding selected research on issues related to enhancing participation in sport in Canada. The initiative includes a maximum annual amount of \$750,000, with an additional \$75,000 in annual funding for applied research on sport participation of Indigenous children and youth. Interested researchers can choose to be considered for funding under SSHRC's Insight Grants, postdoctoral and doctoral funding opportunity competitions.

2020-21:

27 Insight Grants applications; 21 forwarded to Sport Canada, 15 of which were awarded an Insight Grant. Six applications were recommended for funding but were not awarded due to budgetary constraints.

- ◆ 1 SPRI Research Grant awarded, valued at \$160,031 over 3 years
- ◆ 9 SPRI Research Grant Supplements awarded, valued at \$15,000 each

3 postdoctoral and 17 doctoral applications were forwarded to Sport Canada¹⁵

- ◆ 10 doctoral and 3 postdoctoral award supplements awarded, valued at \$10,000

\$324,002 investment from Sport Canada in 2021-22 (\$455,031 over next three years)

¹⁵ Only successful Talent applications are forwarded.

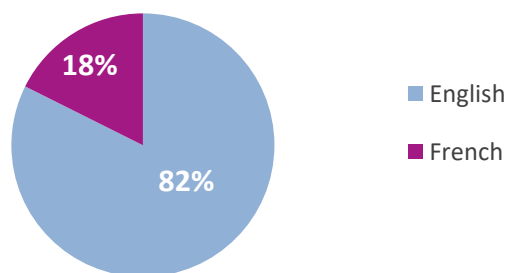
Appendix A – Committee member questionnaire: overall results and three-year trends



Committee member questionnaire: Overall results

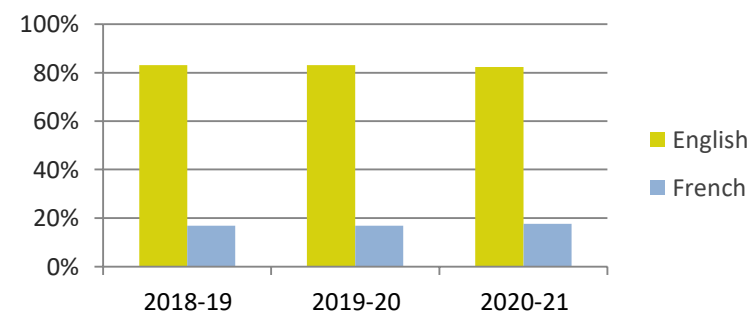
2020-21 responses

Language of correspondence of survey respondents (2020-21)

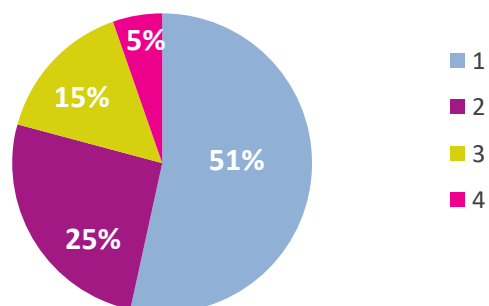


3-year trend analysis

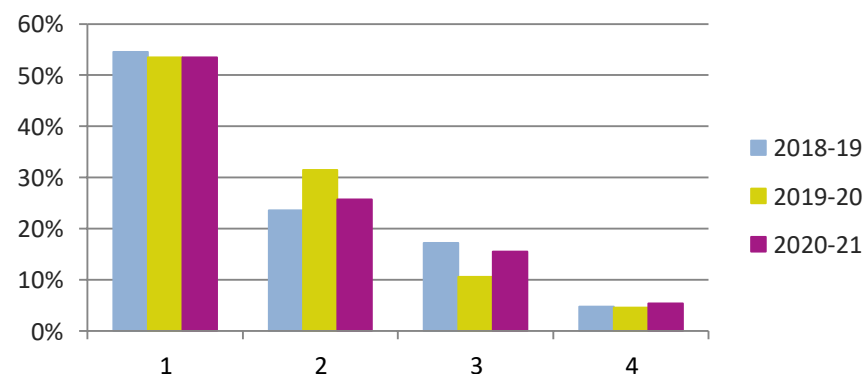
Language of correspondence of survey respondents (3-year analysis)



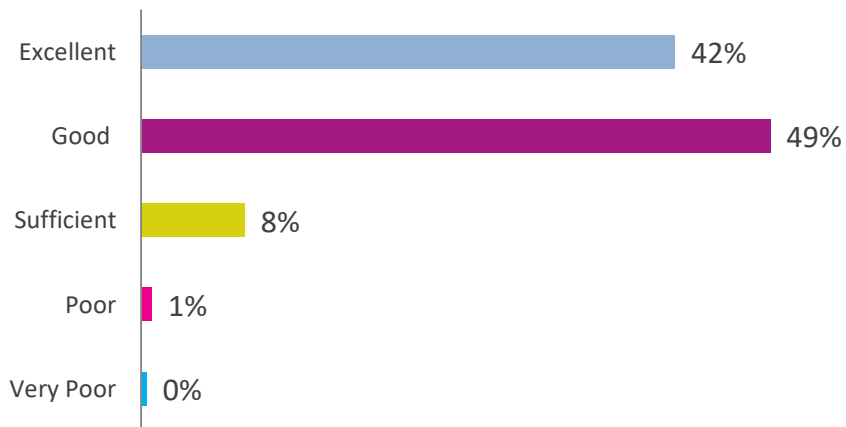
How many times have you served on this committee? (2020-21)



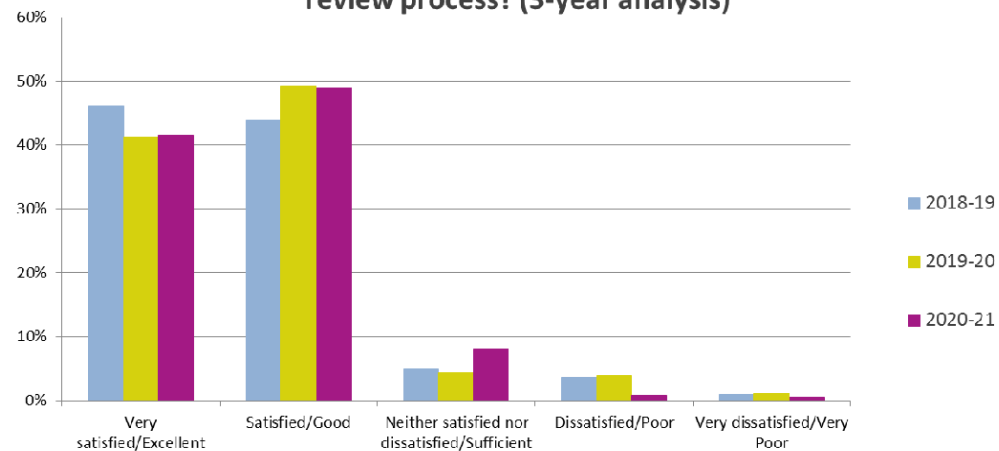
How many times have you served on this committee? (3-year analysis)



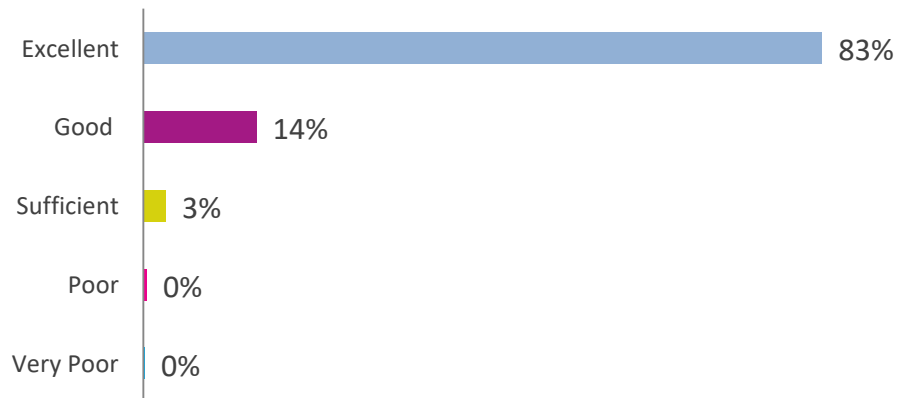
Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of SSHRC's merit review process? (2020-21)



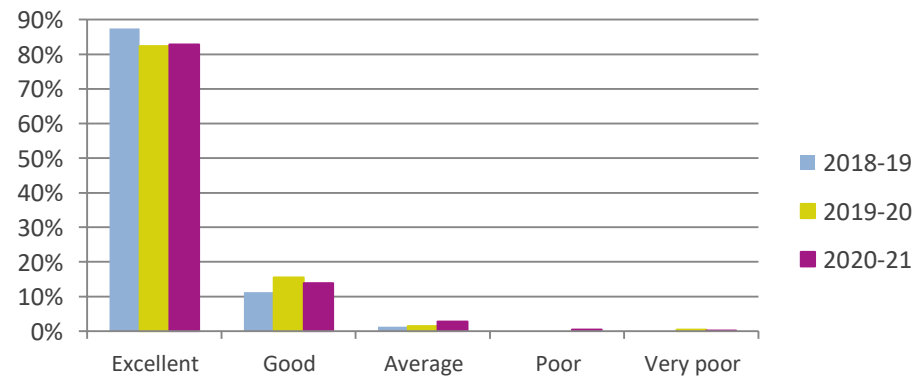
Overall, how satisfied are you with the quality of SSHRC's merit review process? (3-year analysis)



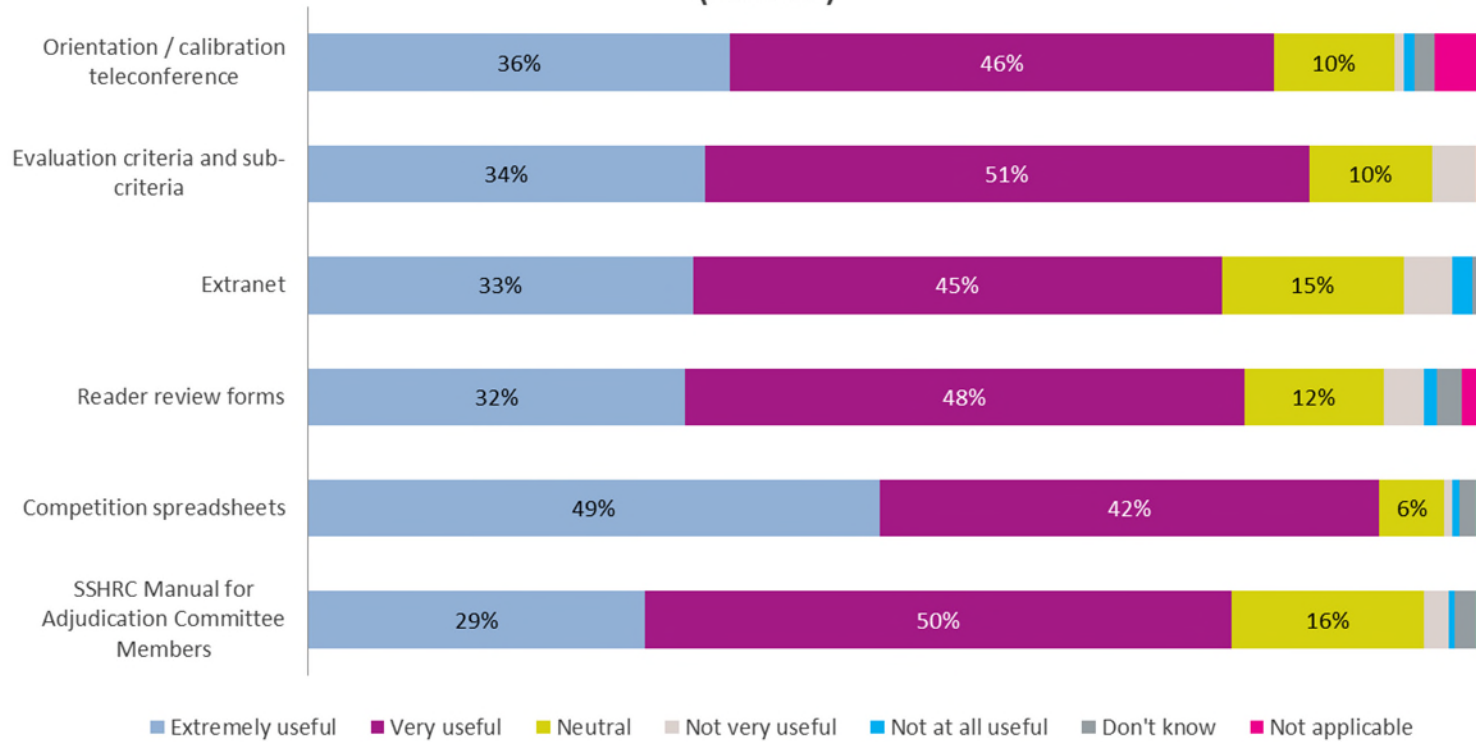
How would you rate the support from SSHRC staff? (2020-21)



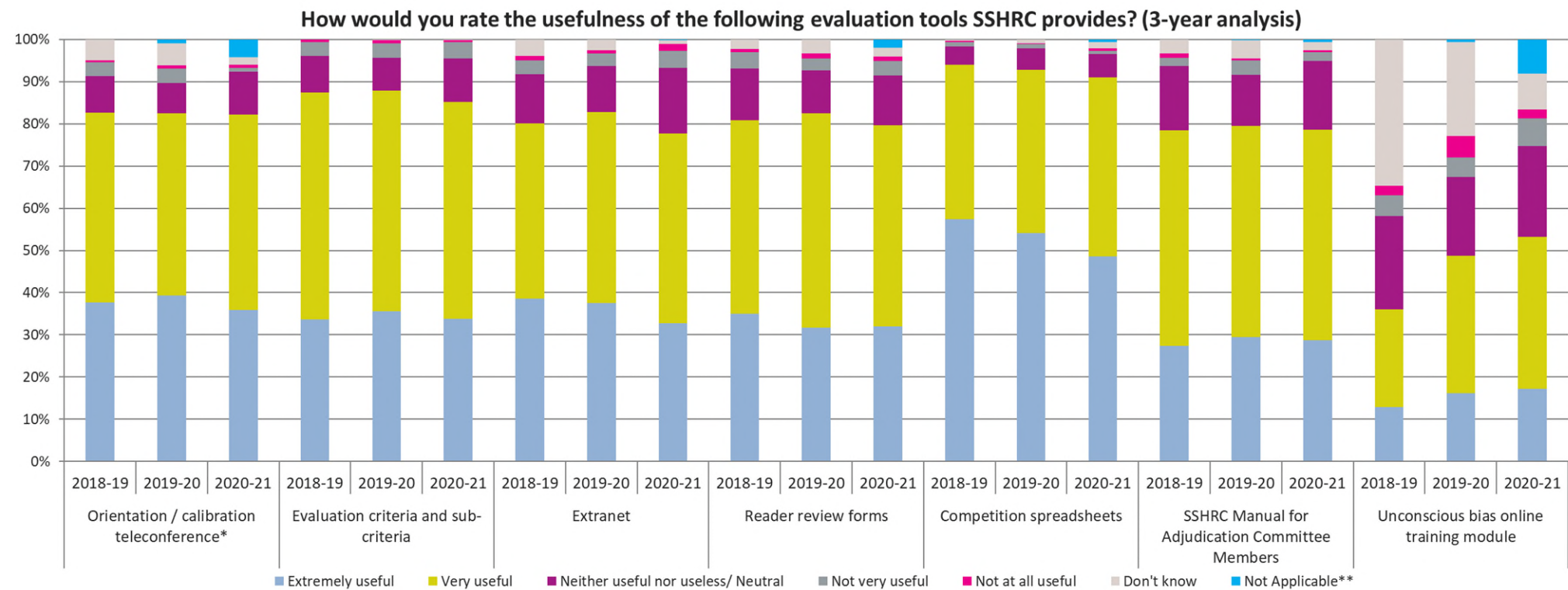
How would you rate the support from SSHRC staff? (3-year analysis)



**How would you rate the usefulness of the following evaluation tools SSHRC provides?
(2020-21)**



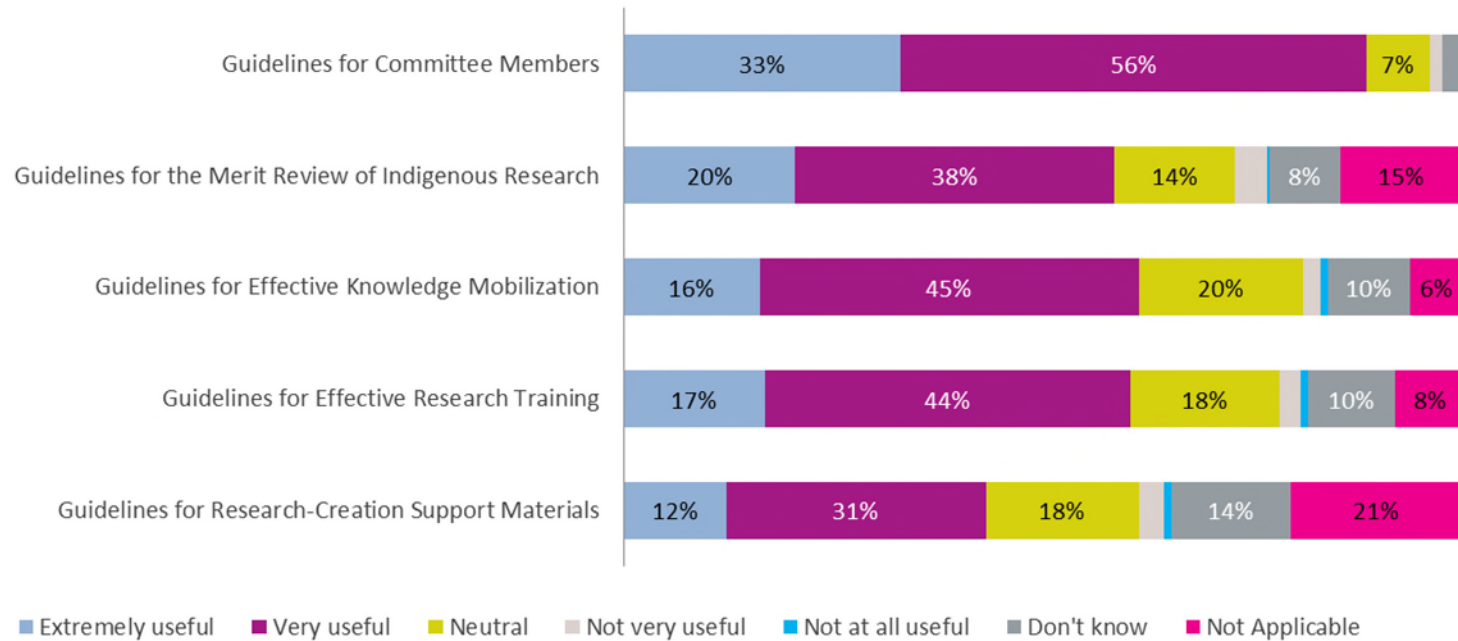
*Percentages less than 5% are not shown



*Not asked in every survey for years 2018-20

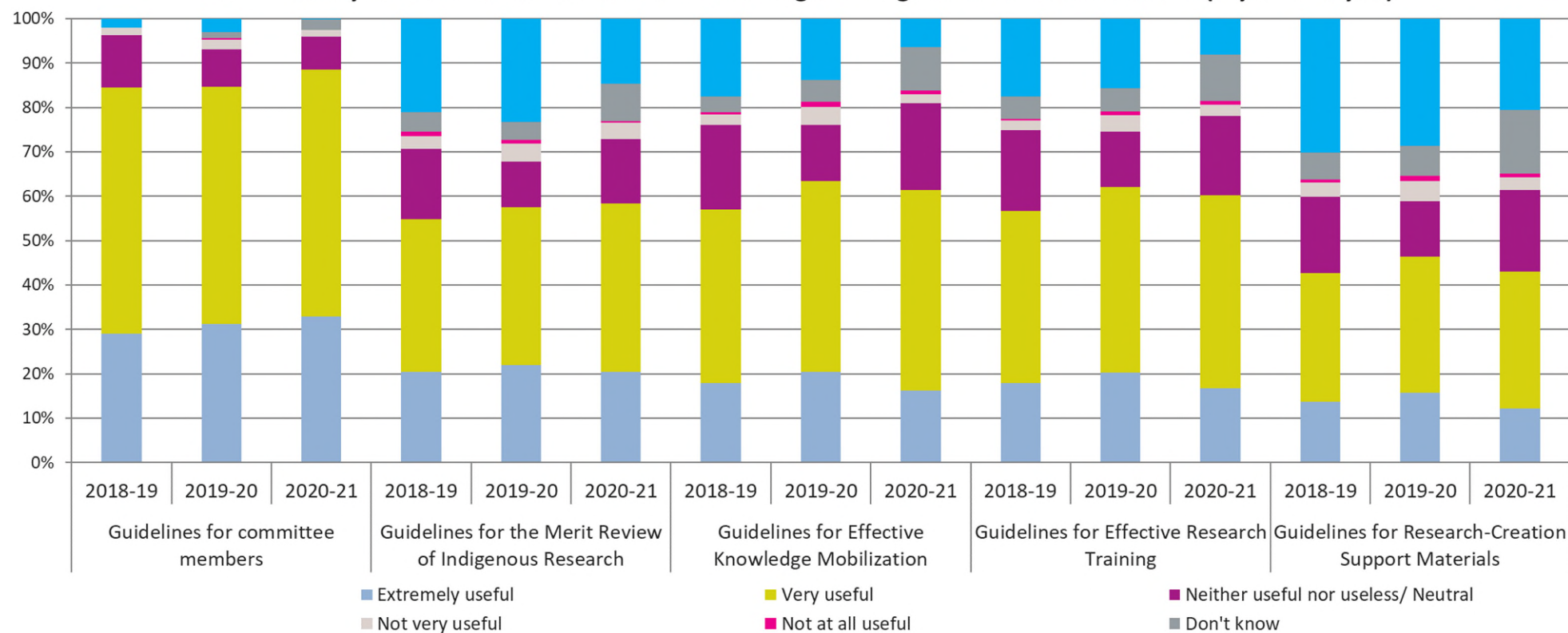
**Not an option in 2018-19

How would you rate the usefulness of the following SSHRC guidelines for evaluation? (2020-21)

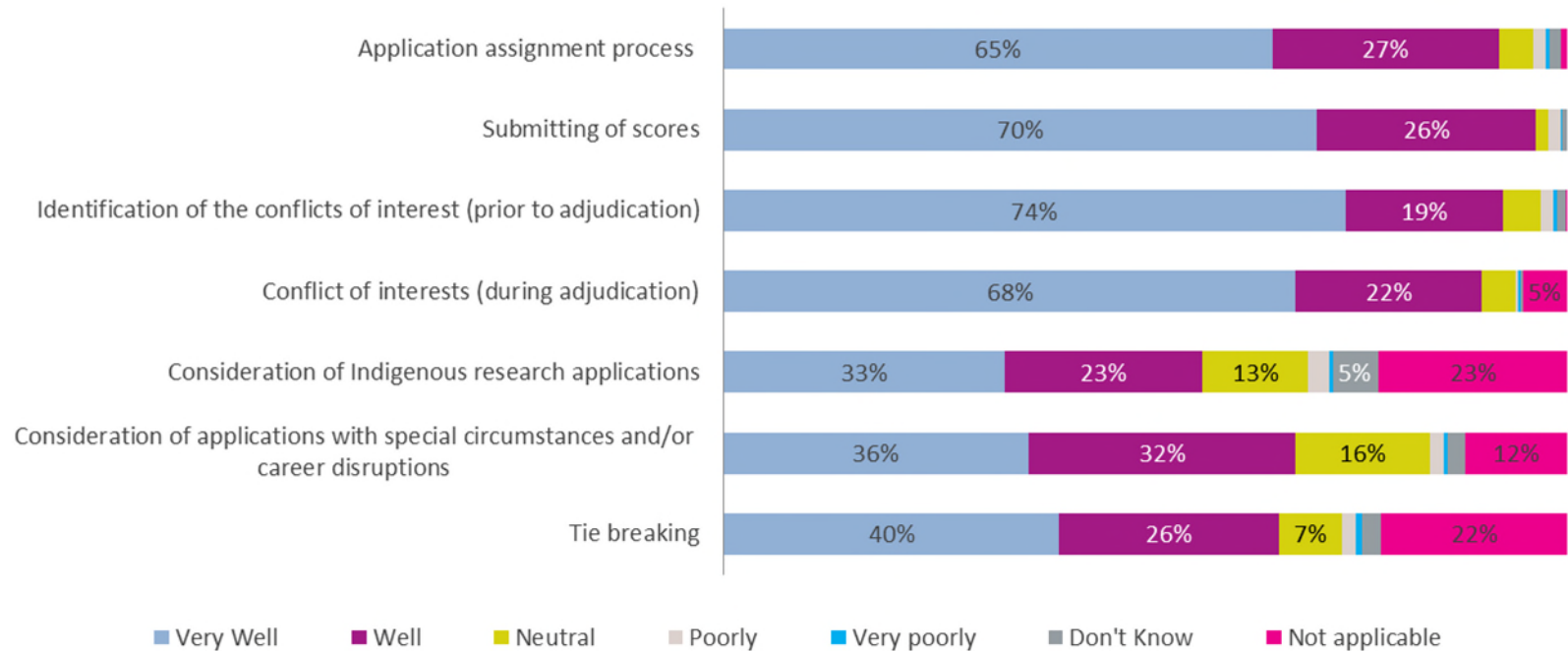


*Percentages less than 5% are not shown

How would you rate the usefulness of the following SSHRC guidelines for evaluation? (3-year analysis)

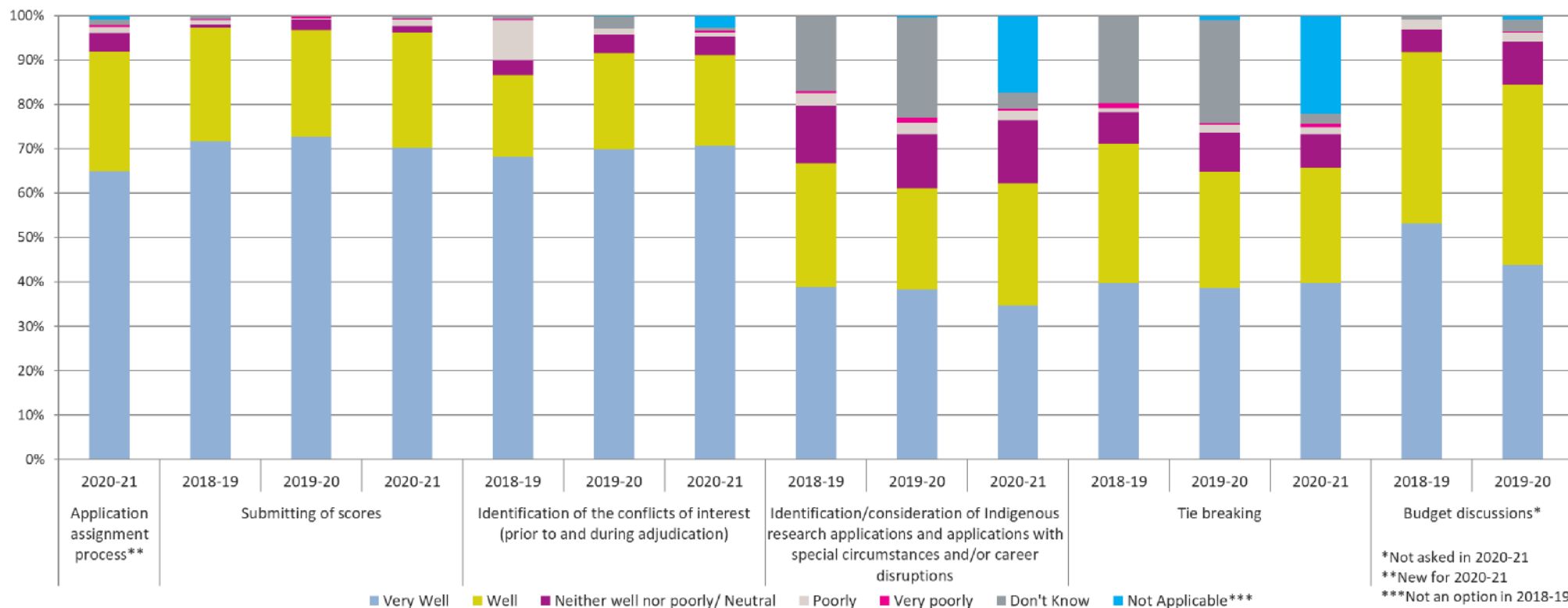


How well were the following aspects of the evaluation process managed? (2020-21)

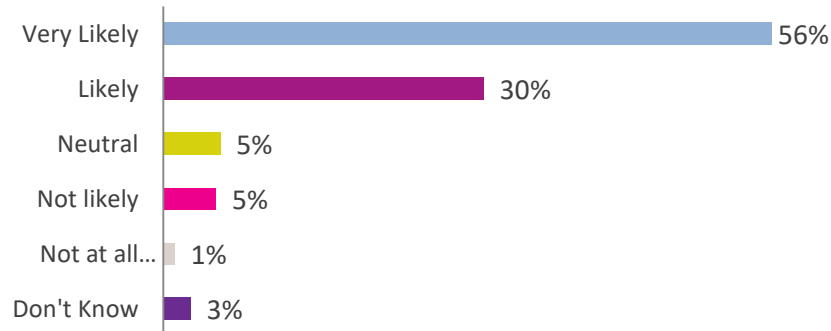


*Percentages less than 5% are not shown

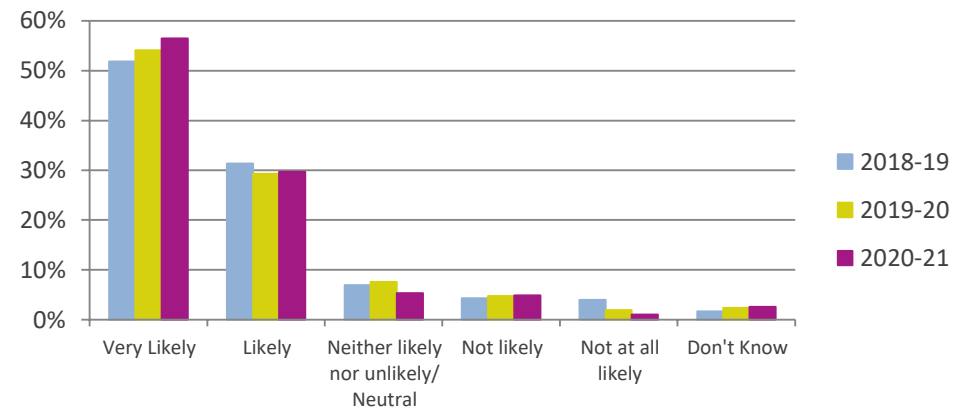
How well were the following aspects of the evaluation process managed? (3-year analysis)



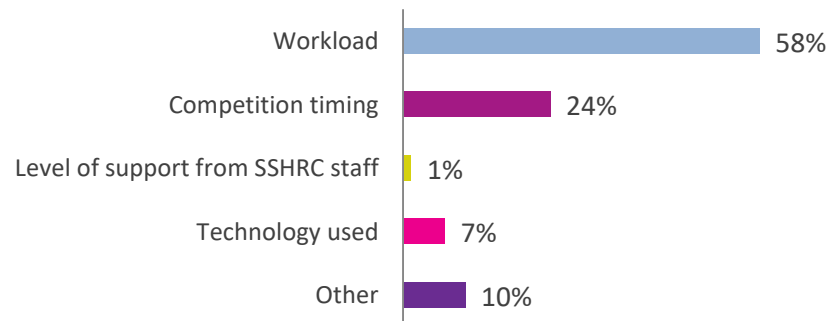
How likely are you to serve again on a SSHRC committee? (2020-21)



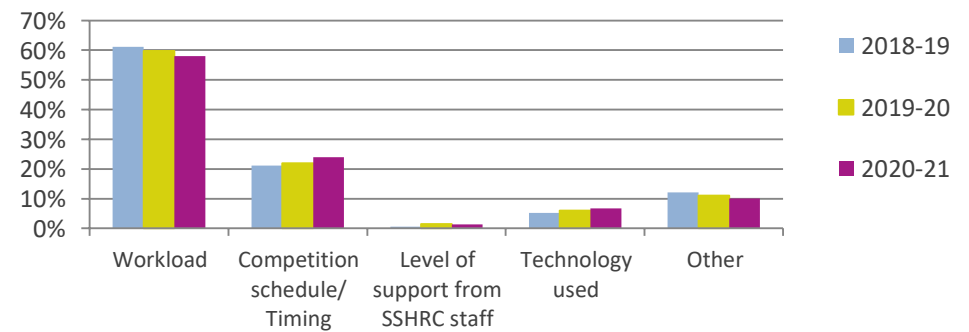
How likely are you to serve again on a SSHRC committee? (3-year analysis)



Which of the following reasons would deter you from serving again? (2020-21)
Please select as many as apply

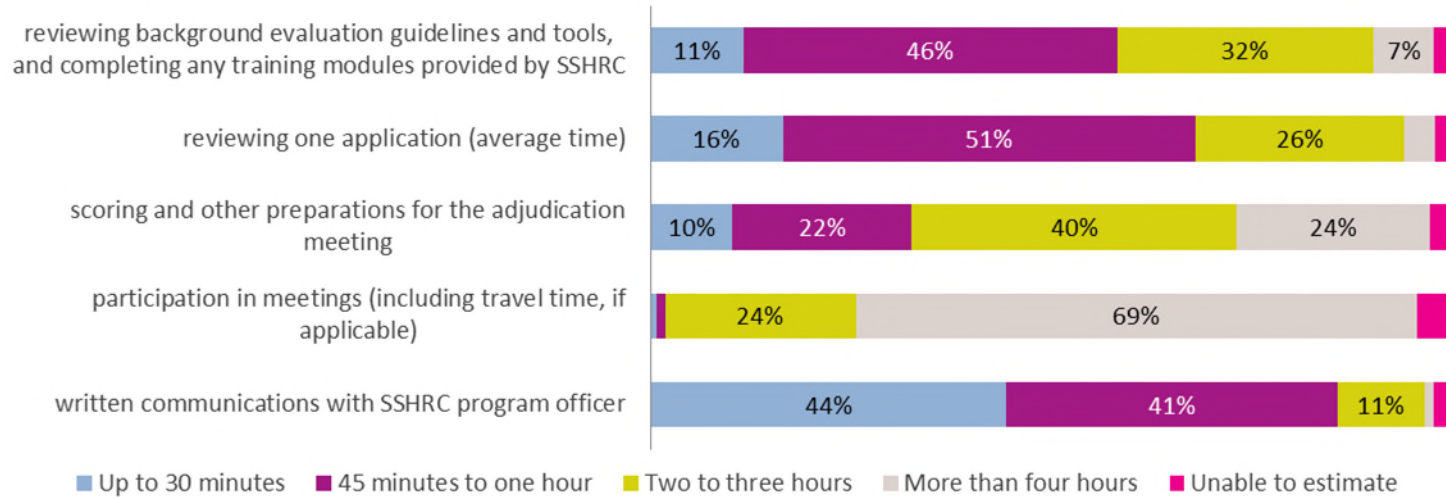


Which of the following reasons would deter you from serving again? (3-year analysis)
Please select as many as apply



New Questions in 2020-21

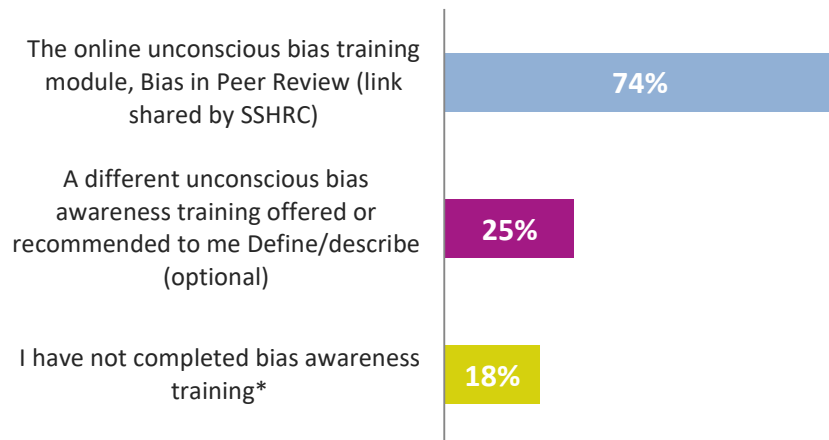
Approximately how much time did you spend on the following (2020-21):



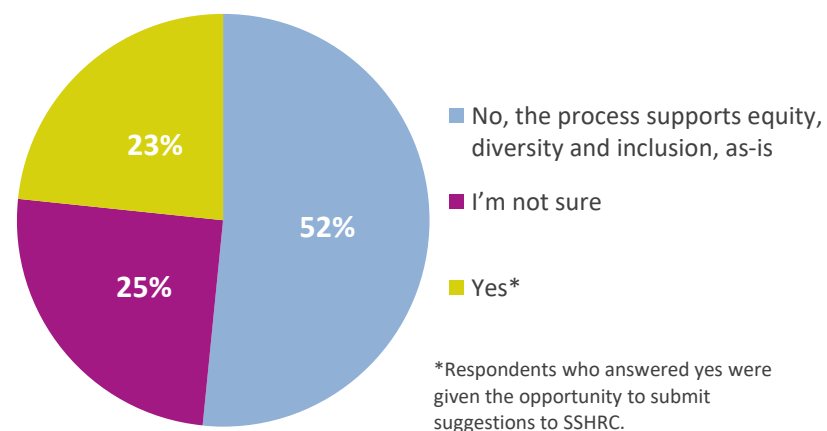
*Percentages less than 5% are not shown

What types of bias awareness training have you completed?

Please select as many as apply



Based on your recent experience as a committee member, does SSHRC need to adopt additional measures to further increase equity, diversity and inclusion in merit review? (2020-21)



Additional common qualitative questions:

- Please provide one thing that SSHRC did really well to support the evaluation process. For privacy reasons, please refrain from identifying individuals.
- Please provide one thing that SSHRC should change to make your experience better. For privacy reasons, please refrain from identifying individuals.
- Do you have any other comments or concerns?

Other questions were added to obtain feedback on COVID-19 impacts on the merit review process.

Appendix B – List of Observers 2020-21

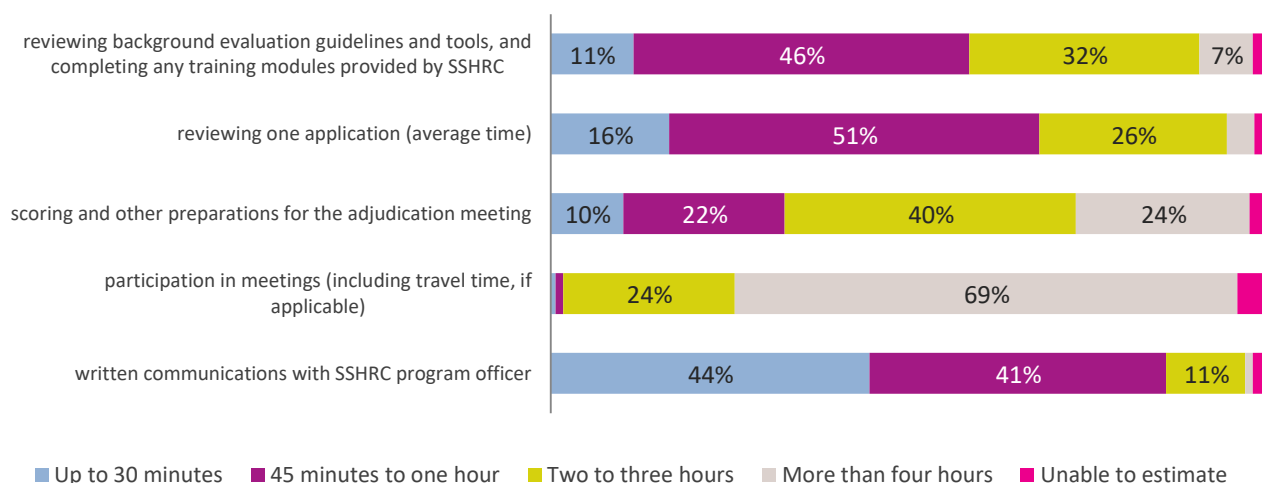
Funding Opportunity	Observer	University
Research Training and Talent Development		
SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowships	Bonnie McElhinny	Women and Gender Studies Institute, University of Toronto
SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowships	Annie Chaloux	École de politique appliquée, Université de Sherbrooke
SSHRC Doctoral Awards – National	Thomas Carrier-Lafleur	Département histoire de l'art & études cinématographiques, Université de Montréal
SSHRC Doctoral Awards – National	Jorge Emilio Rosés Labrada	Department of Linguistics, University of Alberta
Impact Awards	Nadia Rousseau	Département des sciences de l'éducation, Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières
Insight Research		
Insight Grants	Helena Osana	Department of Education, Concordia University
	Samuel Kalman	Department of History, St. Francis Xavier University
	Meg Holden	Urban Studies and Resources and Environmental Management, Simon Fraser University
Research Partnerships		
Partnership Development Grants	Caroline McDonald-Harker	Department of Sociology & Anthropology, Mount Royal University
Partnership Grants – Stage 2	Joanne Burgess	Département d'histoire, Université du Québec à Montréal

Appendix C – Committee member workload

SSHRC continues to monitor the workloads of committee members, recognizing the significant time commitment involved in partaking in the merit review process.

A new question was added to the merit review survey regarding the number of hours spent on different elements of the review process. Overall results across all funding opportunities show that the greatest demand lies in participation in the adjudication meetings.

Approximately how much time did you spend on the following:

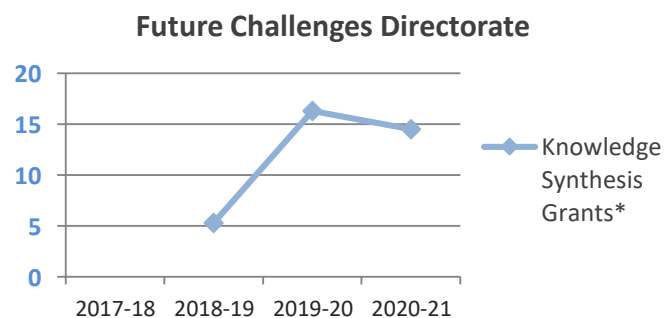
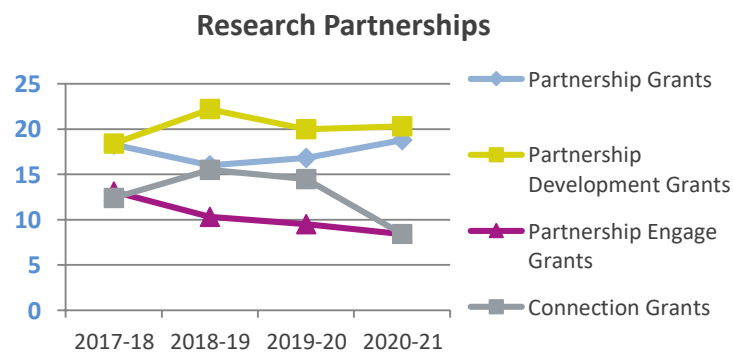
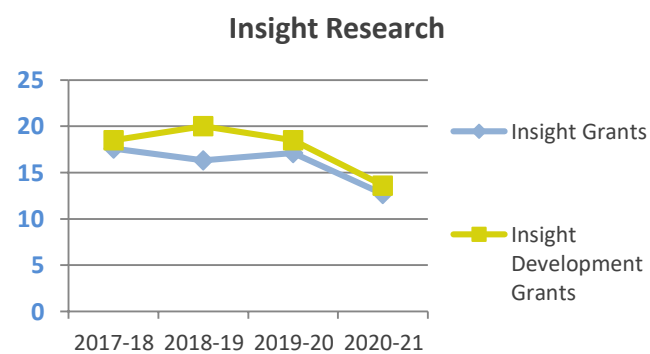
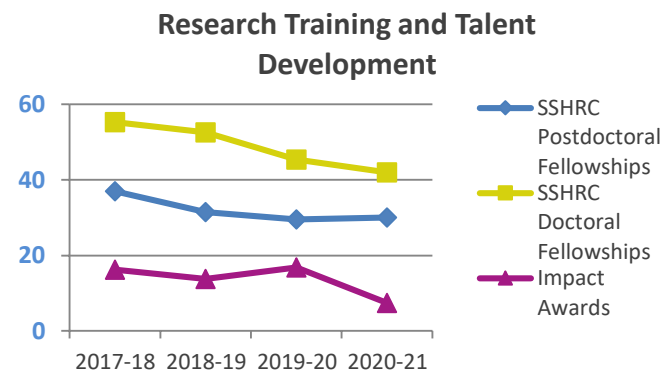


Percentages under 5% are not shown.

The number of applications assigned to committee members varies based on the length of the application of the funding opportunity. As indicated earlier in the report, 58% of survey respondents in 2020-21 cited “workload” as a reason that would deter them from serving again in 2020-21 (n=468). In the previous year, 79% of survey respondents cited workload as a response to the same question (n=465); this change reflects modifications to the review workload to alleviate the disruptions due to COVID-19, but also a general trend over the past few years in the decrease of application assignments.

SSHRC will continue to monitor and explore ways to maintain appropriate workload demands.

Workload trends 2018-2021: Average number of applications assigned to committee members for review



*multiple competitions combined

Average number of applications by committee member for each funding opportunity (2017-20)

Funding opportunity	2020-21	2019-20	2018-19	2017-18
Research Training and Talent Development				
SSHRC Postdoctoral Fellowships	average: 30.0 total # applications: 795	average: 29.5 total # applications: 751	average: 31.5 total # applications: 824	average: 37.0 total # applications: 855
SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships	average: 42.0 total # applications: 2,393	average: 45.4 total # applications: 2,585	average: 52.6 total # applications: 2,205	average: 55.3 total # applications: 2,047
Impact Awards	average: 7.4 total # nominations: 79	average: 16.8 total # nominations: 67	average: 13.8 total # nominations: 55	average: 16.2 total # nominations: 70
Insight Research				
Insight Grants	average: 12.7 total # applications: 1,213	average: 17.1 total # applications: 1,425	average: 16.3 total # applications: 1,365	average: 17.6 total # applications: 1,536
Insight Development Grants	average: 13.6 total # applications: 1,256	average: 18.5 total # applications: 1,128	average: 20 total # applications: 1,139	average: 18.5 total # applications: 1,236
Research Partnerships				
Partnership Grants	average: 18.8 total # applications: 75	average: 16.8 total # applications: 67	average: 16 total # applications: 64	average: 18.3 total # applications: 73
Partnership Development Grants	average: 20.3 total # applications: 135	average: 20.0 total # applications: 134	average: 22.2 total # applications: 148	average: 18.4 total # applications: 127
Partnership Engage Grants	average: 8.4 total # applications: 701¹⁶	average: 9.5 total # applications: 335	average: 10.3 total # applications: 372	average: 13.1 total # applications: 214
Connection Grants	average: 8.4 total # applications: 309	average: 14.48 total # applications: 699	average: 15.5 total # applications: 691	average: 12.4 total # applications: 637
Future Challenges Directorate				
Knowledge Synthesis Grants	<i>Skills and Work in the Digital Economy</i> average: 16.1 total # applications: 59	<i>Environmental and Impact Assessments</i> average: 15.0 total # applications: 40	<i>Understanding the future of Canada-UK trade relationships</i> average: 5.3 total # applications: 42	
	<i>Mobility and Public Transit</i> average: 11.3 total # applications: 30	<i>Living Within the Earth's Carrying Capacity</i> average: 17.4 total # applications: 58		

¹⁶ Total includes the special COVID-19 Partnerships Engage Grants call.

Appendix D – Competitions statistics

Award data is drawn immediately following adjudication. Awards resulting from the allocation of additional funding later in the funding cycle are not included.

Postdoctoral Fellowships

Year	Eligible applications	Awards	Success rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21	795	160	20%	n/a	\$14,015,250
2019-20	751	160	21%	n/a	\$14,220,000
2018-19	824	160	19%	n/a	\$14,265,000
2017-18	855	151	18%	n/a	\$11,907,000
2016-17	879	151	17%	n/a	\$12,069,000

Doctoral Awards (SSHRC Doctoral Fellowships / CGS Doctoral Scholarships)

Year	Eligible applications*	Applications	Awards	Success rate**	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21	4365	2393	528 (SSHRC)	43%	n/a	\$30,140,000
			500 (CGS)			\$52,500,000
2019-20	4087	2585	540 (SSHRC)	41%	n/a	\$29,160,006
			516 (CGS)			\$54,180,000
2018-19	3626	2205	508 (SSHRC)	43%	n/a	\$27,780,000
			430 (CGS)			\$45,150,000
2017-18	3562	2047	430 (SSHRC)	42%	n/a	\$24,020,000
			430 (CGS)			\$45,150,000
2016-17	4141	2043	430 (SSHRC)	42%	n/a	\$23,980,000
			430 (CGS)			\$45,150,000

* Approximate as SSHRC does not verify the eligibility of applications that are not recommended for the national competition by Canadian institutions with a quota.

**The success rate is calculated using the combined total of SSHRC and CGS awards, in relation to the number of applications eligible at the national stage.

Canada Graduate Scholarships Program – Master’s Scholarships (CGS M)

Year	Eligible applications	Allocation	Awards*	Success rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21	2983	1510	1510	51%	n/a	\$26,425,000
2019-20	2734	1510	1506	55%	n/a	\$26,938,332
2018-19	2943	1300	1295	44%	n/a	\$22,662,500
2017-18	2844	1300	1268	45%	n/a	\$22,190,000
2016-17	3037	1300	1280	42%	n/a	\$22,400,000

* Number of awards offered in light of eligible applications received. Some institutions do not receive a sufficient number of eligible applications to be able to use their allocation.

Canada Graduate Scholarships – Michael Smith Foreign Study Supplements

Year	Eligible applications	Awards*	Success rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21	67	67	n/a	n/a	\$397,738
2019-20	129	129	n/a	n/a	\$760,946
2018-19	131	131	n/a	n/a	\$764,361
2017-18	141	141	n/a	n/a	\$833,632
2016-17	129	129	n/a	n/a	\$766,602

*Results are allocation-based.

Impact Awards (2020-21)

	Eligible nominations	Finalists	Awards	Success rate	Average success rate over 5 years	Total awarded
Gold Medal	13	n/a	1	8%	10%	\$100,000
Talent Award	22	3	1	5%	6%	\$50,000
Insight award	14	3	1	7%	7%	\$50,000
Connection Award	22	3	1	5%	7%	\$50,000
Partnership Award	8	3	1	13%	12%	\$50,000

Insight Grants

Year	Eligible applications	Awards	Success rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21 (Stream A)	496	281	57%	\$41,705,518	\$23,184,285
2020-21 (Stream B)	717	356	50%	\$183,039,458	\$80,816,747
2019-20 (Stream A)	602	274	46%	\$50,788,162	\$22,703,076
2019-20 (Stream B)	823	306	37%	\$212,906,940	\$68,980,028
2018-19 (Stream A)	615	312	51%	\$52,048,696	\$24,650,325
2018-19 (Stream B)	750	307	41%	\$188,427,889	\$65,027,232
2017-18 (Stream A)	729	376	52%	\$60,574,101	\$29,303,649
2017-18 (Stream B)	807	351	44%	\$200,307,123	\$72,359,391
2016-17	1514	605	40%	\$294,935,519	\$92,786,355

Insight Development Grants

Year	Eligible applications	Awards	Success rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21	1256	563	45%	\$77,596,998	\$32,302,006
2019-20	1128	565	50%	\$68,800,784	\$31,685,401
2018-19	1139	677	59%	\$69,544,174	\$38,048,922
2017-18	1236	397	32%	\$74,480,301	\$21,835,969
2016-17	1211	549	45%	\$73,789,831	\$30,573,895

Partnerships Grants

Year	Eligible applications Stage 1	Eligible applications Stage 2	Awards	Success rate	Total requested* (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21	75	25	19	25%	\$62,150,620	\$47,468,400
2019-20	67	23	16	24%	\$55,895,685	\$38,493,991
2019-20 CMHC	19 (2018-19 PDG call)	8	6	75%	\$10,426,277	\$7,938,424
2018-19	64	26	17	27%	\$64,116,532	\$41,855,594
2017-18	73	25	16	22%	\$62,103,139	\$39,913,275
2016-17	81	26	15	19%	\$64,536,646	\$37,446,505

*Includes requested amounts at Stage 2 only.

Partnerships Development Grants

Year	Eligible applications	Awards	Success rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21	135	96	71%	\$25,493,209	\$18,210,879
2019-20	134	76	57%	\$25,406,914	\$14,790,960
2018-19	148	70	47%	\$28,154,116	\$13,173,431
2018-19 CMHC	19	8	42%	\$1,508,643	\$632,035
2017-18	127	63	50%	\$24,264,639	\$11,851,065
2016-17	143	53	37%	\$26,594,482	\$10,013,695

Partnership Engage Grants

Year	Eligible applications	Awards	Success rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21	305	216	71%	\$7,350,137	\$5,218,919
2020-21 COVID-19	396	251	63%	\$9,583,096	\$6,092,299
2019-20	335	205	61%	\$8,086,357	\$6,198,339
2018-19	372	226	61%	\$8,936,777	\$5,509,279
2017-18*	214	108	50%	\$5,123,393	\$2,600,722

*Statistics provided for 2017-18 include only two competitions (September and December 2017) as the grants were launched in summer 2017.

As a result of reallocation, SSHRC strategically allocated an additional 43 awards for the 2020-21 COVID-19 call, for a total of 294 awards, the number more widely publicized in 2020-21 by the federal government.

Connection Grants

Year	Eligible applications	Awards	Success rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21	309	237	77%	\$8,968,236	\$6,552,586
2019-20	699	324	46%	\$18,365,004	\$8,013,696
2018-19	691	284	41%	\$17,688,685	\$7,090,492
2018-19 Indigenous*	231	116	50%	\$10,756,557	\$5,554,089
2017-18	637	294	46%	\$15,687,169	\$7,177,907
2016-17	620	342	55%	\$15,521,291	\$8,060,650
2016-17 Canada 150	81	52	64%	\$2,271,202	\$1,377,120

*Special call on Indigenous Research Capacity and Reconciliation, administered in collaboration with NSERC and CIHR.

Knowledge Synthesis Grants

Year	Eligible applications	Awards	Success rate	Total requested (eligible)	Total awarded
2020-21 Digital Skills	59	36	61%	\$1,694,824	\$762,217
2020-21 Mobility and Public Transit	30	23	77%	\$858,425	\$669,238

Appendix E – COVID-19 measures and impacts in 2020-21

At the end of the fiscal year, SSHRC undertook a corporate analysis to help assess the impacts of the pandemic measures and circumstances on the 2020-21 competition year.

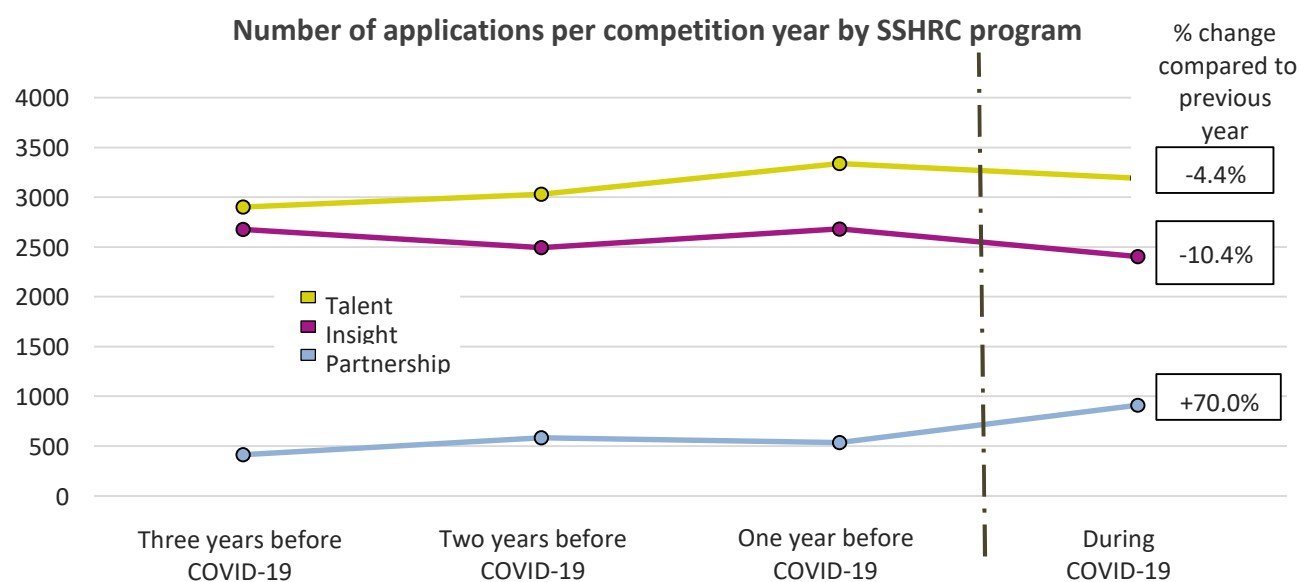
The review found that, despite the disruptions, applications and awards remained fairly consistent across SSHRC programs. There were only slight decreases in applications compared to the previous year. As expected, there was a decline in applications to funding opportunities to support knowledge mobilization activities, due to the restrictions in travel and public gatherings

Measurable application and award rates related to provincial, institutional and disciplinary representation across the social sciences and humanities remained unchanged in 2020-21. Variations in applicant and award rates were small and similar to the overall applicant pool for those who self-identified as a member of the four designated groups (those who identify as women, Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities, or persons with disabilities)

SSHRC delivered a number of emergency support measures and revised funding processes to lessen the impact of COVID-19 on students, trainees and research support personnel, and overall research. These included unfunded timeline extensions and emergency funds to students and institutions. A summary of the initiatives and their uptake is presented below.

SSHRC has identified a number of areas for further investigation and will continue to monitor changes in the coming year as the impacts of COVID-19 continue to be felt across the research community and within institutions.

Impact on SSHRC applications

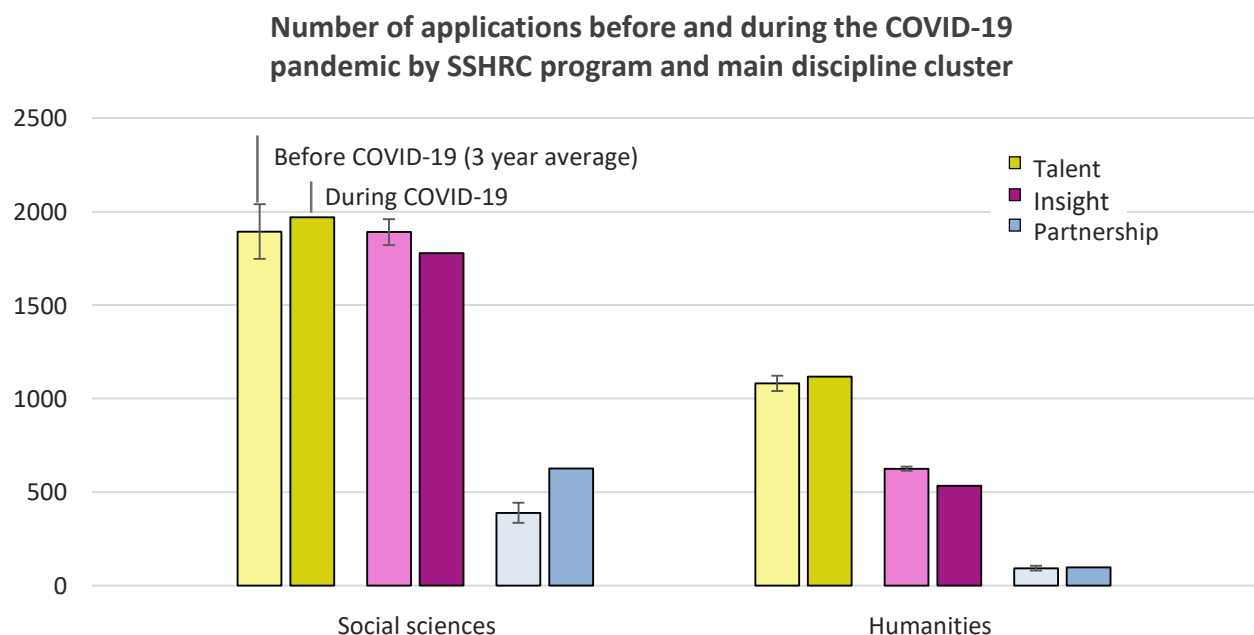


Notes:

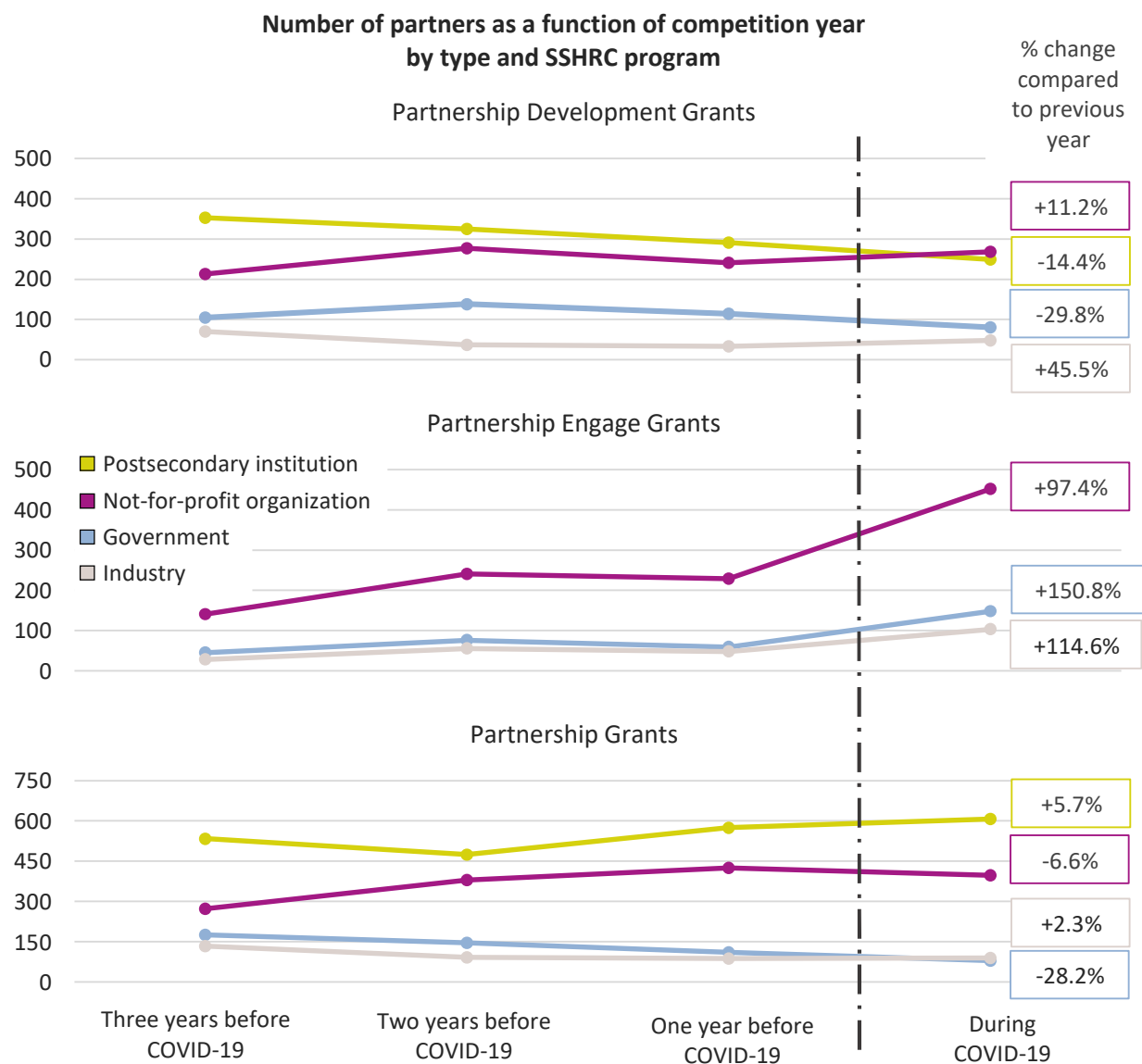
Talent includes the following programs: SSHRC Doctoral Awards / CGS Doctoral Scholarships, and SSHRC Postdoctoral Scholarships

Insight includes the following programs: Insight Development Grants and Insight Grants
 Partnership includes the following programs: Partnership Development Grants, Partnership Grants and Partnership Engage Grants (including PEG-COVID)

- Within the **Partnerships** funding opportunities, the decrease in applications to Connections Grants was offset by the increase in applications to the Partnerships Engage Grants, as a result of the special COVID-19 call.
- The slight decrease in applications to SSHRC **Talent** funding opportunities may be related to the decrease in institutional allocations rather than the effect of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The decrease in **Insight** applications may be due to the emergency support funds provided, the timeline extension, or a possible shift to Partnerships Engage Grants COVID-19 applications. The decrease also follows a general downward trend in the number of Insight Grants applications.

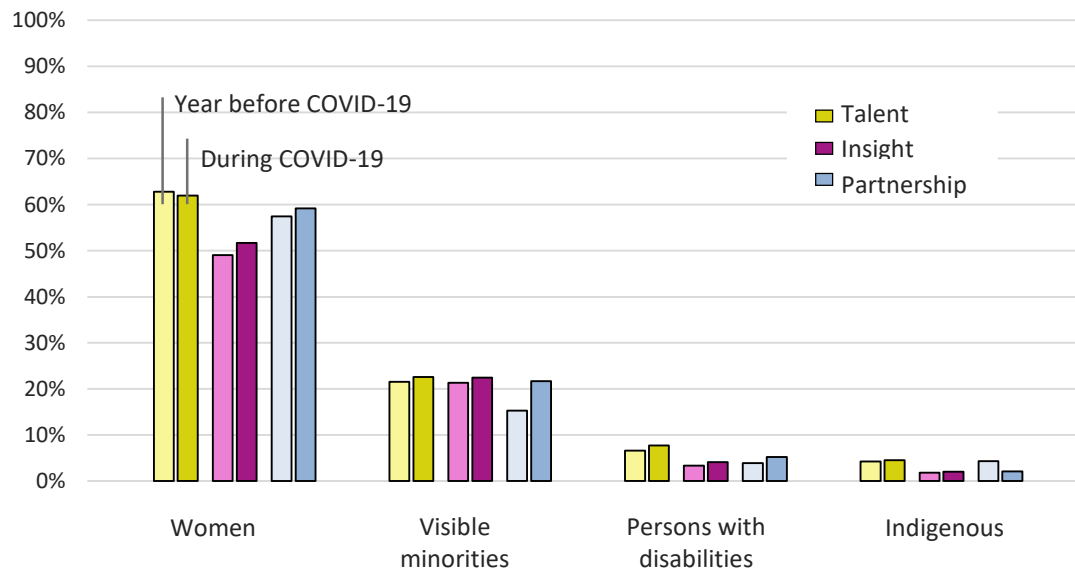


- Application trends within main discipline clusters reflect a slight decrease in Insight Grants applications in both the social sciences and humanities during the pandemic year, while applications to Partnerships and Talent funding opportunities rose slightly.



→ The analysis revealed that there was an increase in the number of not-for-profit partners, likely due to the special Partnership Engage Grants competitions during the year.

Application rate for designated groups before and during the COVID-19 pandemic by SSHRC program



Notes

Talent includes the following programs: SSHRC Doctoral Awards / CGS Doctoral Scholarships and SSHRC Postdoctoral Scholarships.

Insight includes the following programs: Insight Development Grants and Insight Grants.

Partnership includes the following programs: Partnership Development Grants, Partnership Grants and Partnership Engage Grants (including PEG-COVID).

- It appears that there was no impact on applications from the four designated equity groups. Note that sample sizes for some designated groups are too small to draw conclusions.

Support for scholars and projects during the COVID-19 pandemic

Unfunded measures were implemented by SSHRC to provide support and relief to the research community. These were communicated on an ongoing basis on [SSHRC's website](#) as well as through webinars, and research and graduate studies administrator networks.

- grant extensions of up to 12 months to accommodate for delays in SSHRC-funded research activities
- modifications to some competition deadlines and start dates
- options for applicants to communicate any COVID-19 impacts in their application and/or a contingency plan to address potential future impacts of the pandemic on the proposed research
- time extensions during which applicants can apply as early career researchers
- the creation of a new platform to enable secure online dissemination of competition results
- temporary streamlining select steps within the merit review process
- temporary reimbursement and allowances for all non-federal public-service committee members for dependent care

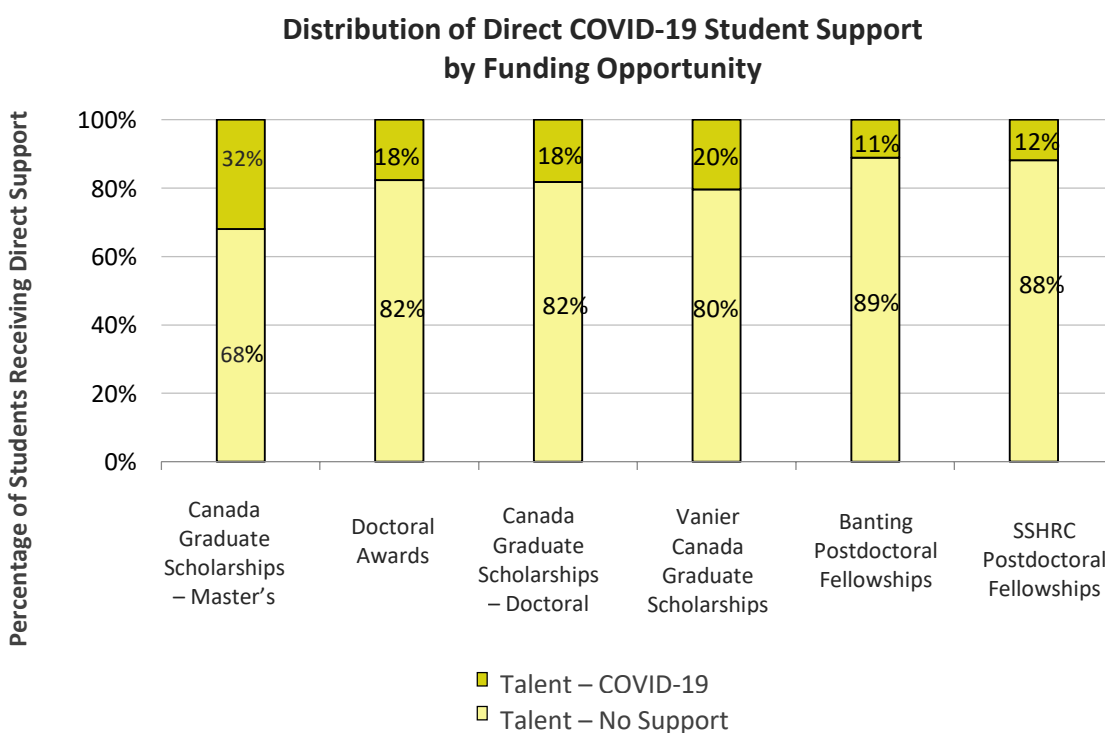
Key investments were provided through direct and indirect funding for students, trainees and research support personnel, a special Partnership Engage Grants initiative and institutional support.

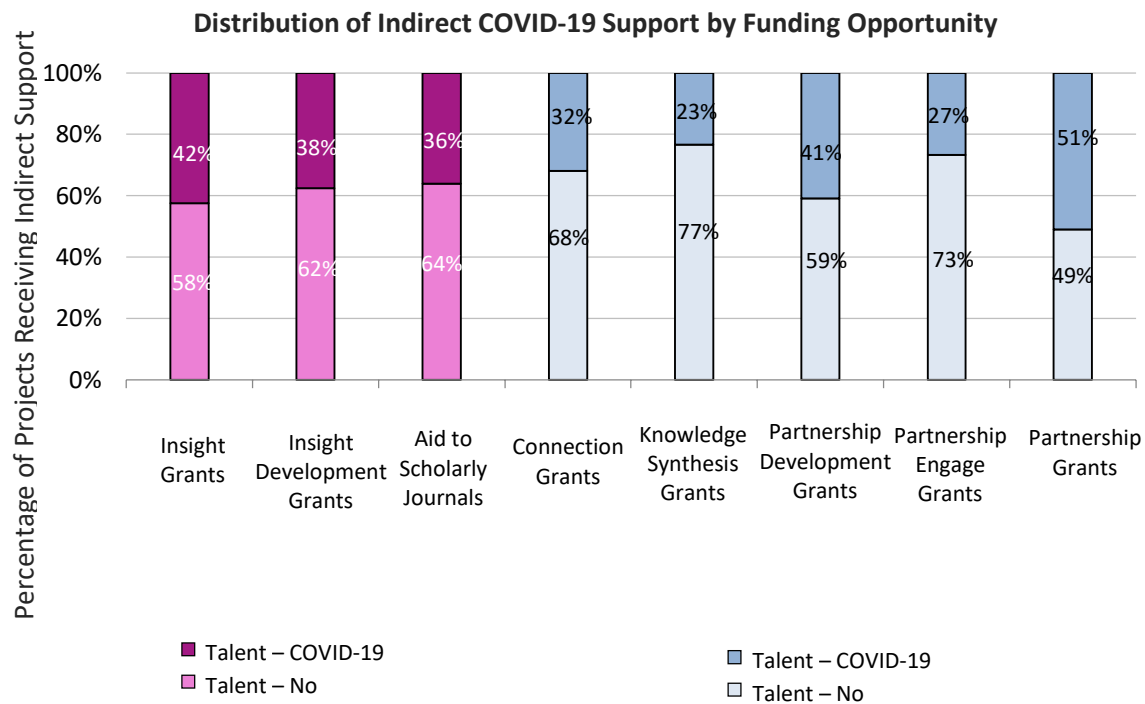
\$31.6M in emergency funding awarded
to over **3,581** projects
to support students and minimize the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Through a \$291.6 million Government of Canada investment in April 2020, SSHRC provided four-month paid extensions for eligible scholarship and fellowship award holders, and additional funding to grant holders to support students, research trainees and support personnel.

There was greater uptake of emergency funds to students engaged in SSHRC Insight and Partnerships grants programs, compared to the direct agency-specific and tri-agency postdoctoral, doctoral and masters-level awards programs. The highest uptake within the direct Talent funding opportunities was at the master's level (32%), while the highest uptake in indirect support funds was seen in the Partnership Grants funding opportunity (51%). There were no significant differences in the uptake of the emergency funds from the four designated groups.

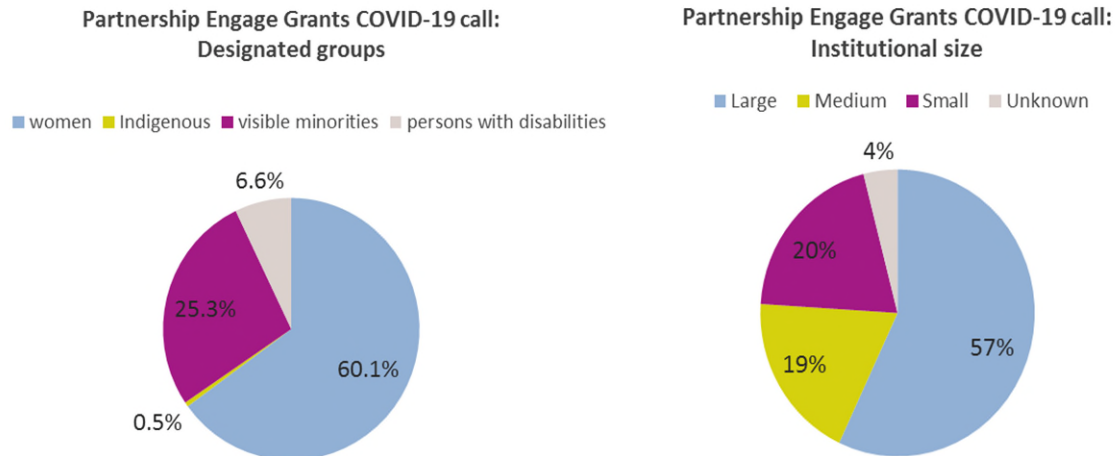
\$11.1M to 1,415 award holders in SSHRC Talent programs
\$20.5M to students, postdoctoral fellows and other research personnel engaged in 2,166 SSHRC grants.





\$7.1M invested in
294 grants
 through SSHRC's Partnership Engage Grants COVID-19 Special Initiative

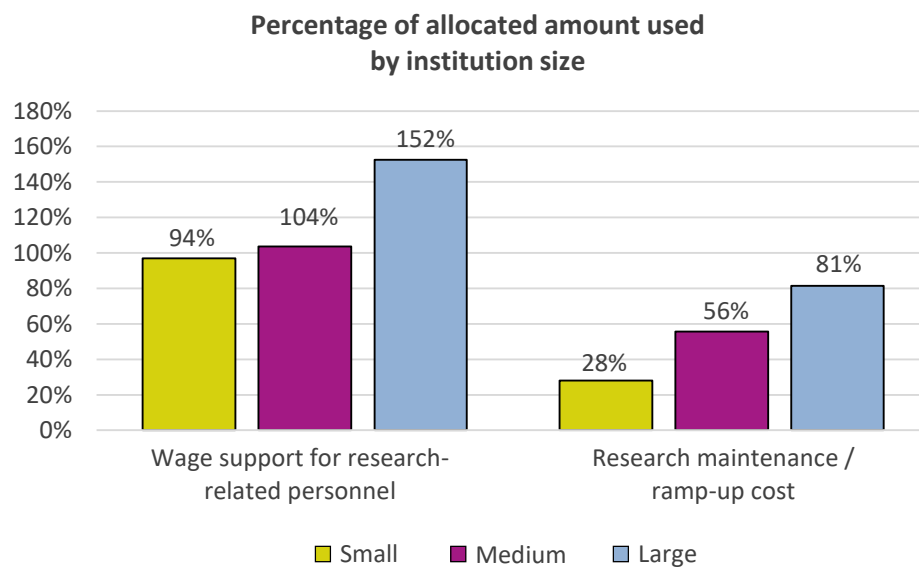
SSHRC held two Partnership Engage Grants competitions in June and September 2020 where small grants up to \$25,000 were provided to successful applications addressing the longer-term impacts of the pandemic and potential strategies for managing recovery efforts. The calls attracted close to 400 applications, with 74% receiving funding.



\$417M invested in
 65 universities
 Approximately 32,000 research personnel
 Approximately 20,000 research projects supported
 through the Canada Research Continuity Emergency Fund

The Canada Research Continuity Emergency Fund was established to help sustain the research enterprise at Canadian universities and health research institutions impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic, as part of the Government of Canada's COVID-19 economic response plan. The fund was delivered by SSHRC through the Tri-Agency Institutional Programs Secretariat and provided wage support for research-related personnel and research maintenance or ramp-up costs on as-needed basis. The majority (61%) of funds were granted to research staff, while 29% were granted to students and 10% to postdoctoral fellows.

There was significant demand from larger institutions for the emergency wage support funding. These institutions, which included affiliated health research institutions, received significantly more funding than originally allocated.



Appendix F – Equity, diversity and inclusion competition data

SSHRC, alongside NSERC, CIHR, CFI and Genome Canada are in their third year of using a [harmonized questionnaire](#) to collect self-identification data, in support of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) performance measurement and objectives. The questionnaire responds to the CRCC priority area on strengthening EDI in research and aligns with the [Tri-agency EDI Action Plan \(2018-2025\)](#).

All respondents are asked about age range and whether they identify in any of the four designated groups: women, Indigenous Peoples, visible minorities and persons with disabilities.¹⁷ The completion of the questionnaire is mandatory; however, all questions provide an option to select “I prefer not to answer.”

SSHRC’s [EDI dashboard](#), launched in January 2020, continues to be an important tool to publicly share aggregate summaries of the self-identification data collected from applicants, award-holders and merit review committee members. When available, comparable statistics on the Canadian workforce or academic context for each designated group are included in the dashboard.

EDI data on applicants, award or grant holders and committee members for all funding opportunities adjudicated in 2020-21 are highlighted below. As 2020-21 marks only the third year of collecting such data, SSHRC staff exercise caution in the interpretation of the data, particularly for competitions with low numbers of applicants. Trends will be carefully monitored and intersectionality will be considered as more data are made available from future competitions.

Despite evidence and concerns that the pandemic would have disproportionate effects on research productivity for some under-represented groups, an analysis of application and award rates of competitions launched in 2020-21 did not show substantial impacts when compared to pre-pandemic competitions. These results will continue to be monitored in 2021-22.

As indicated in the report, SSHRC began developing new EDI-related requirements for three funding opportunities that reflect the importance of EDI in research practice and research design. *Research practice* comprises research team composition and recruitment; training, mentoring, and development opportunities; and research-related decisions and processes. *Research design* comprises elements of the project itself, including research questions, theory, sources, methodology, analysis, writing or creation, and knowledge mobilization. These and other initiatives will be outlined on SSHRC’s new EDI webpage, to be launched later in 2021-22.

Eighteen per cent of committee member survey respondents indicated that they had not completed the online unconscious bias awareness training module, which is mandatory for committee members. SSHRC staff will continue to guide members to this requirement. The module will also be revised and updated by the tri-agencies in 2021-22. In addition, an updated version of the tri-agency self-identification questionnaire will be integrated into SSHRC programs in 2021-22, for both applicants and merit review committee members. Key changes in the revised version will include new questions on sexual orientation and official languages, and modifications to existing questions on gender identity, disability, visible minority and population groups.

¹⁷ The four designated equity groups are defined under the Government of Canada’s *Employment Equity Act*.

A new survey question was posed to merit review committee members in 2020-21, asking for feedback and ideas on how SSHRC can better support EDI. SSHRC received valuable comments and recommendations regarding EDI training, inclusiveness in research practice and design, and measures of achievement.

While committee members and observers commended SSHRC on the diversity of committee membership, this data will continue to be a useful tool to monitor and better understand committee participation.



EDI APPLICATIONS AND AWARDS DATA

Application and awards rates¹⁸ for nine 2020-21 competitions are outlined and analyzed below as they relate to the four under-represented groups identified in the self-identification questionnaire.¹⁹

The data provided in this report captures only one competition cycle. Looking at 2019-20 results and partial year data in 2018-19, the proportion of SSHRC applicants who self-identified within the designated groups remained fairly consistent, with a slight increase of self-identification among women, persons with disabilities and visible minorities.

The use of “awards rates” instead of “success rates” for each group aligns with the three federal research granting agencies’ updated approach to reporting on access to funding opportunities for under-represented groups. For a given competition, success rates are partly determined by number of applications and funds available. Award rate, especially when considered together with application rate, gives a better sense of the equity of the research funding process and can be compared to the representation of those groups in the academic and/or general Canadian population. As more data is collected in coming years, trends can be tracked and analysed for a clearer picture—particularly in terms of awards rates—of participation in SSHRC’s programs.

Note: Any figures involving fewer than five applicants are not indicated in the graphs.

GENDER

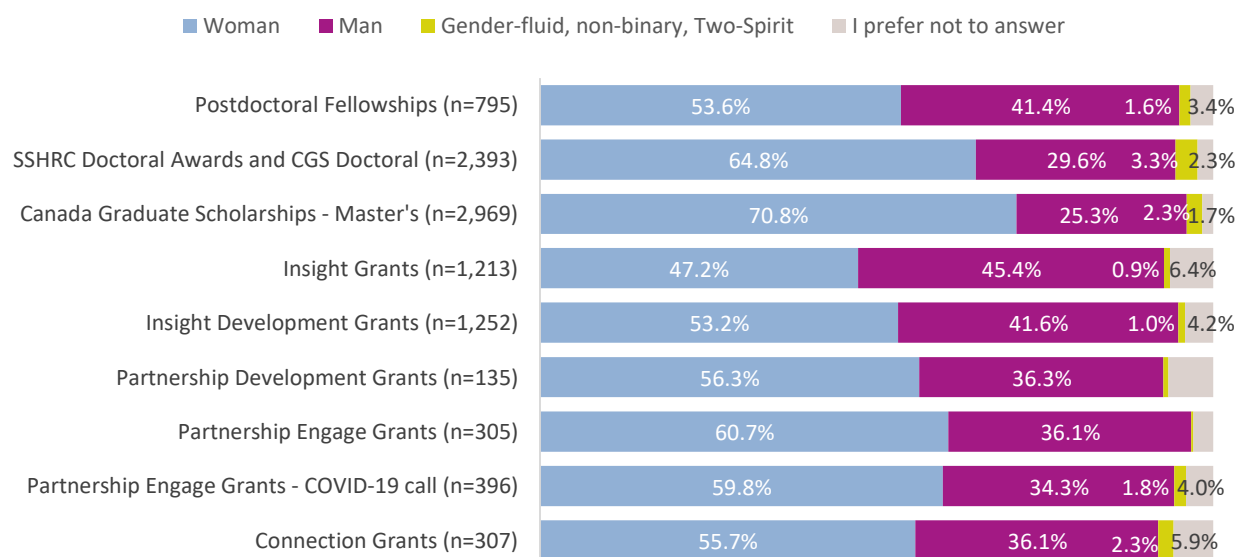
Looking at application data, 61.1% of applicants self-identified as women and 33.6% self-identified as men. Two percent self-identified as gender-fluid, non-binary and/or two-spirited, while 3.2% preferred not to answer.

¹⁸ Application rate is the percentage of applications from a given designated group within the total number of applications in a given competition. Award rate is the percentage of awards that a given designated group receives of the total awards in a given competition. Award numbers will differ slightly from what is presented in the funding opportunity summaries for the doctoral and master’s competitions due to the timing of acceptance of award offers.

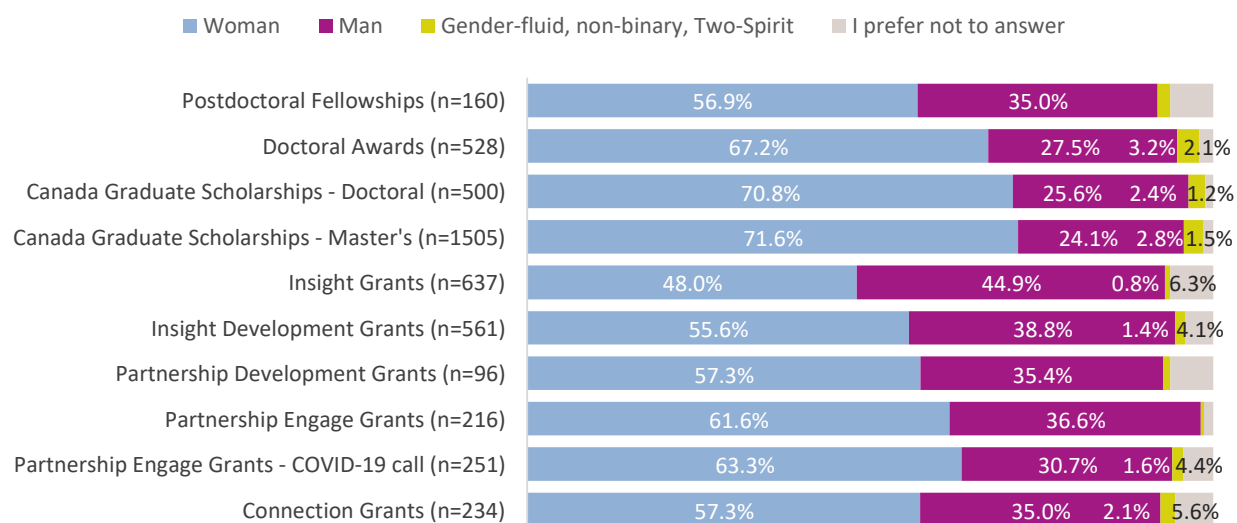
¹⁹ Applicant data is not included for competitions where data would include figures of fewer than five applicants. EDI data was not collected from the Knowledge Synthesis Grants applicants this year. Readers should be mindful of the actual numbers of applications and awards (noted in the legends of the graphs, n= x) when interpreting application and award rates.

Women have fairly even and, in most cases, a marginally higher award rate across the funding opportunities when compared to application rates.

% applications – gender



% awards – gender



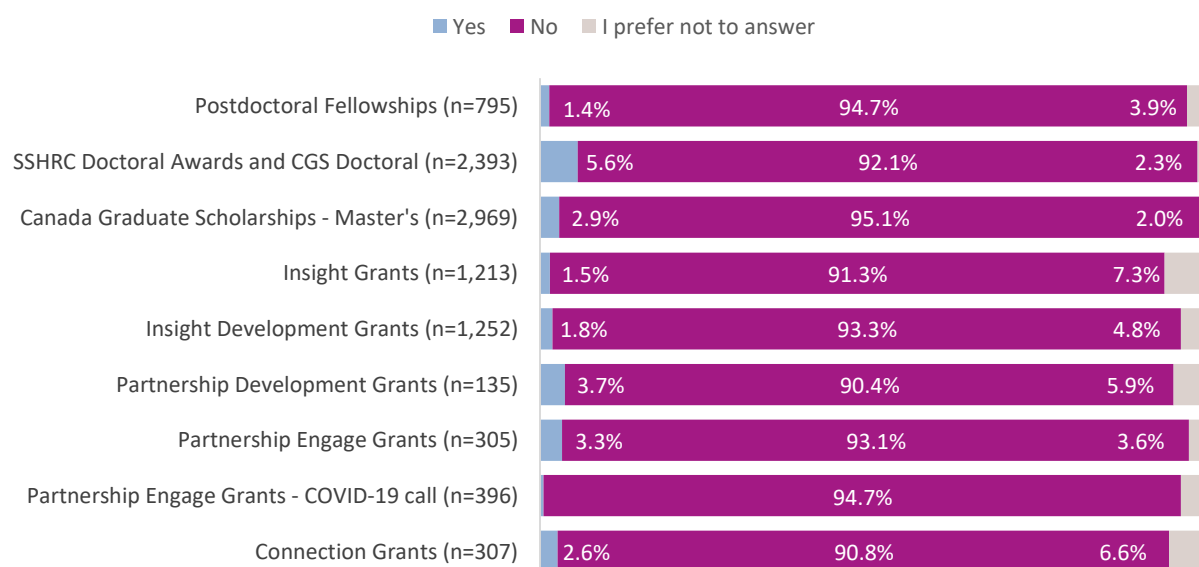
INDIGENOUS IDENTITY

Overall, three percent of applicants self-identified as Indigenous in the 11 funding opportunities with the highest percentage of these applicants self-identifying in the Doctoral Awards. Under SSHRC's [Indigenous](#)

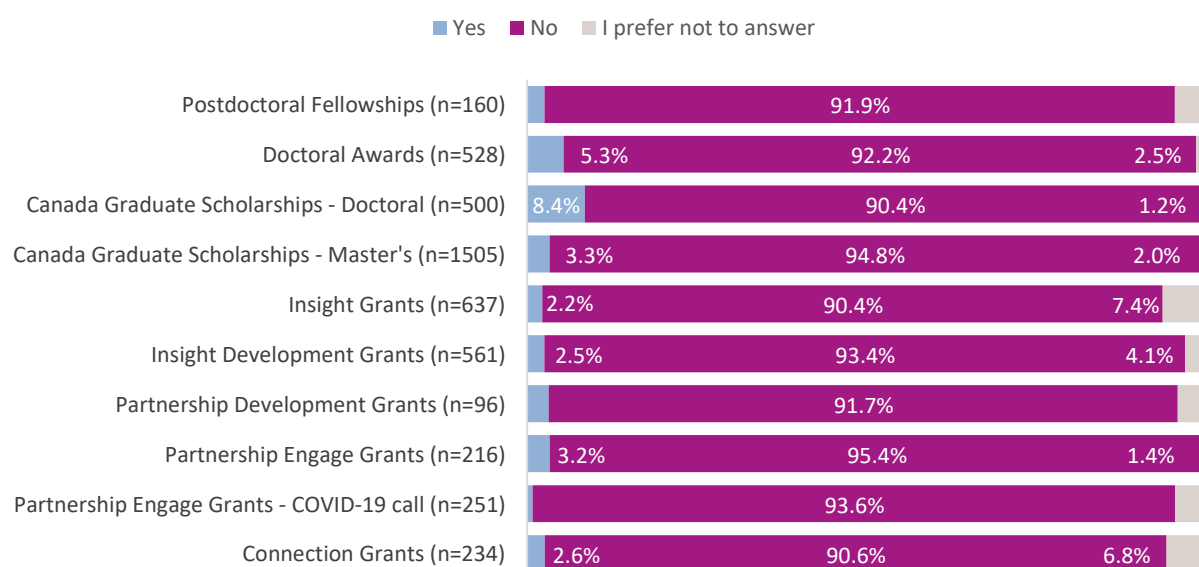
[Talent Measures](#), applications from self-identified Indigenous applicants are not counted toward the institutions' application quota. Partnership Development Grants and Partnership Engage Grants funding opportunities also had higher representation in the number of applications; 3.6% of applicants preferred not to answer this question.

Awards rates of Indigenous applicants were mostly higher compared to application rates across the funding opportunities. The highest awards rates were found in the CGS Doctoral Awards, SSHRC Doctoral Awards and Partnership Grants (between 5% and 8.5%).

% applications – Indigenous



% awards – Indigenous

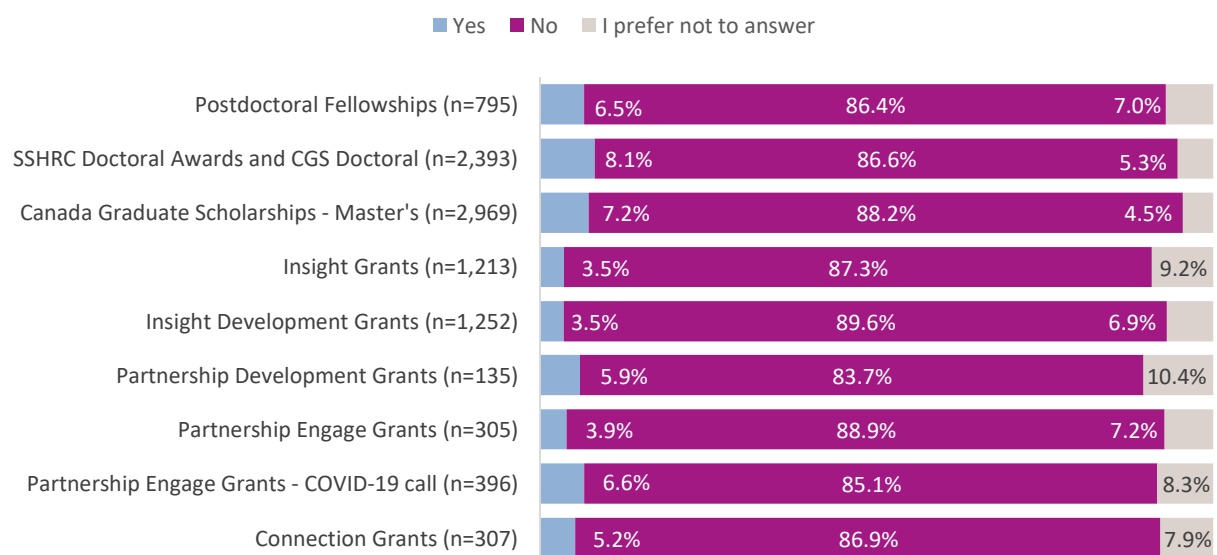


PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

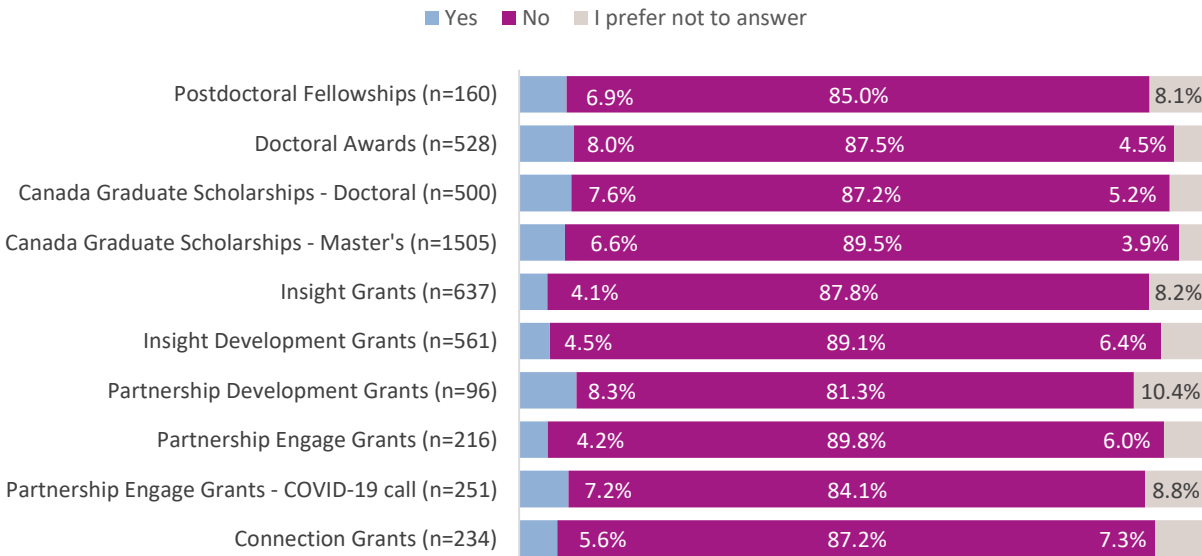
Overall, 6.2% of applicants self-identified as having a disability, at a fairly consistent level across funding opportunities (between 3% and slightly over 8%). This average represents a one-point increase from the previous year; 6.2% of total applicants preferred not to answer this question.

In 2020-21, the awards rates of applicants who self-identified as having a disability ranged between 3% to just over 8 % across SSHRC funding opportunities. The overall awards rate for this designated group was 5.7%, only slightly lower than the overall application rate and a slight increase from 2019-20. The majority of the competitions had consistent or slightly higher awards rates for persons with disabilities compared to the application rates.

% applications – persons with disabilities



% awards – persons with disabilities

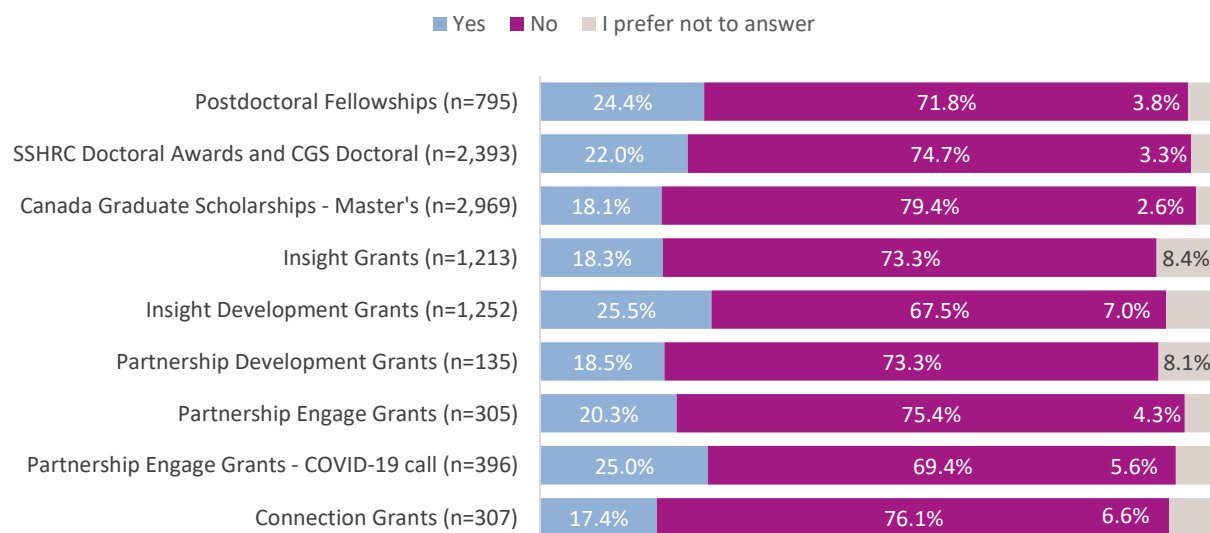


VISIBLE MINORITIES

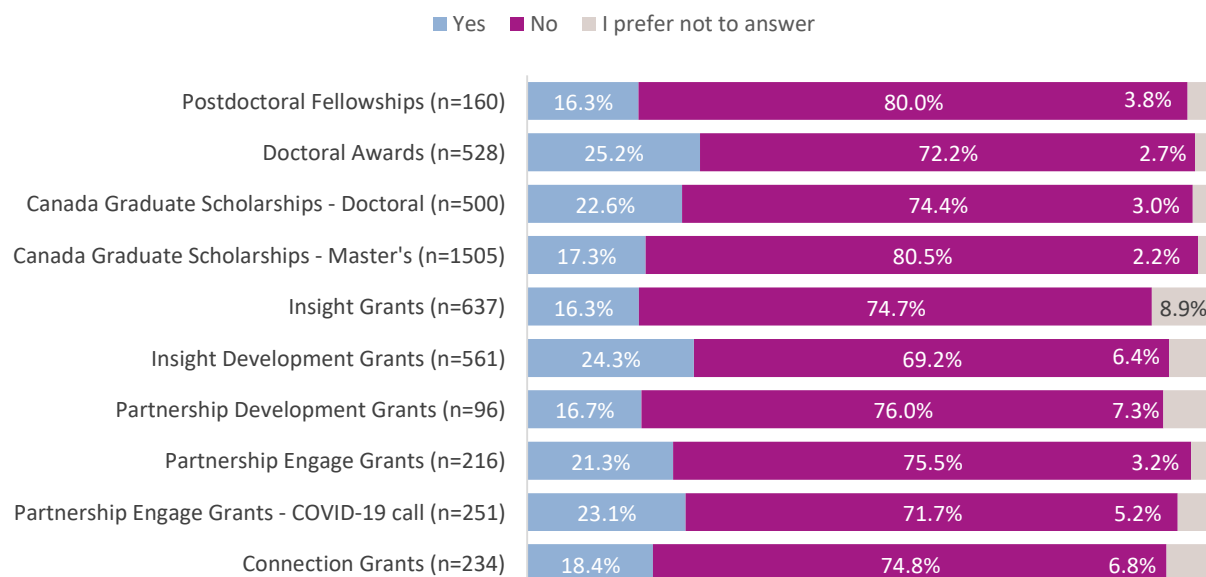
Close to 21% of applicants self-identified as visible minorities. The range of self-identification in this group across SSHRC funding opportunities was broadly distributed from 16.7% to 25.5%; 4.6% preferred not to answer.

With the exception of the 2020-21 Postdoctoral competition where awards rates for applicants who self-identify within this designated group were eight points lower than the application rate, the awards rates were overall fairly consistent with the application rates. The awards rates were only slightly lower in approximately half of SSHRC's 2020-21 competitions. The overall award rate for applicants who identify as members of visible minority groups is 19.5%, an increase of three points from the previous year.

% applications – visible minorities



% awards – visible minorities





COMMITTEE MEMBER EDI DATA

Self-identification data findings of committee members for the 2020-21 funding opportunities are included below. Approximately three-quarters of committee members responded to the EDI questionnaire.



confirmed committee members: **900**
completed self-identification questionnaires: **685**
response rate: **76.1%**

To help ensure the quality assessment of project proposals from a diverse group of applicants and mitigate possible negative bias, it is important to diversify committee membership.

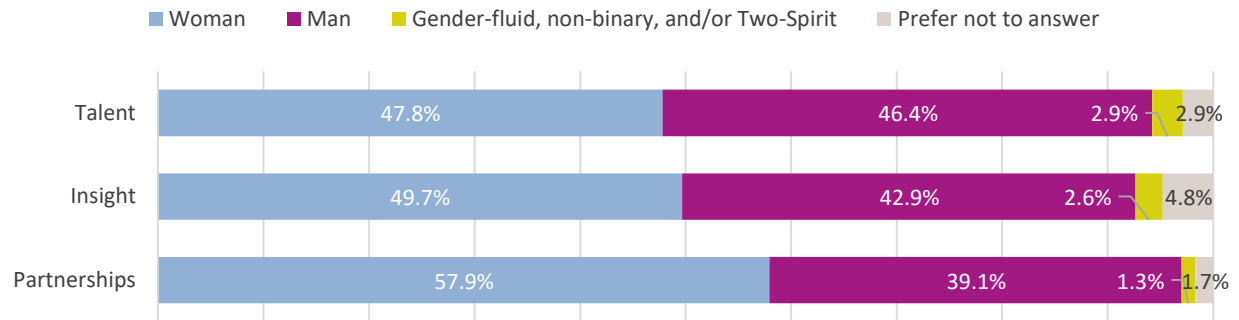
Observations of the 2020-21 data, compared to the partial 2018-19 and complete 2019-20 self-identification data collected from committee members, showed some positive changes in EDI representation. The proportion of women, gender fluid, non-binary and/or Two-Spirit persons remained fairly consistent, as was the case with the representation of members with disabilities. However, the composition of visible minorities increased across all funding opportunities (from 5.3% in 2018-19 and 8% in 2019-20, to 11.87% in 2020-21 across the three program areas). The overall proportion of committee members who self-identified as Indigenous also increased over the past three years, from 2.4% in 2018-19 and 2.7% in 2019-20 to 4.7% in 2020-21, with a particular increase this year within Partnerships Research funding opportunities, to almost 5%.

Comparing application and award rates with committee representation could possibly indicate issues with recruitment and review. As is the case with the application and award rates data, SSHRC will require more results over time, and possibly more reference data for comparison, to draw conclusions on the EDI representation of its committee members. It is critical to note that, in addition to subject matter expertise, SSHRC must also balance other elements within committee membership in addition to EDI, including regional, institutional size, and official language representation.

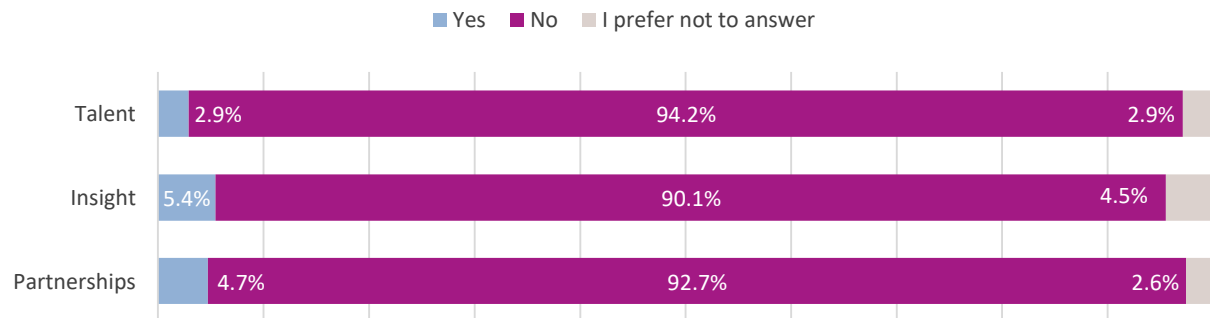
The graphs below aggregate funding opportunity data at the program level²⁰ to protect the confidentiality of merit reviewers.

²⁰ Programs areas: Talent includes data on the Postdoctoral Fellowships, SSHRC and CGS Doctoral Awards and Impact Awards; Insight includes Insight Grants and Insight Development Grants; Partnerships includes Partnership Grants, Partnership Development Grants, Partnership Engage Grants, Partnership Engage Grants – COVID-19, Connection Grants and the Knowledge Synthesis Grants.

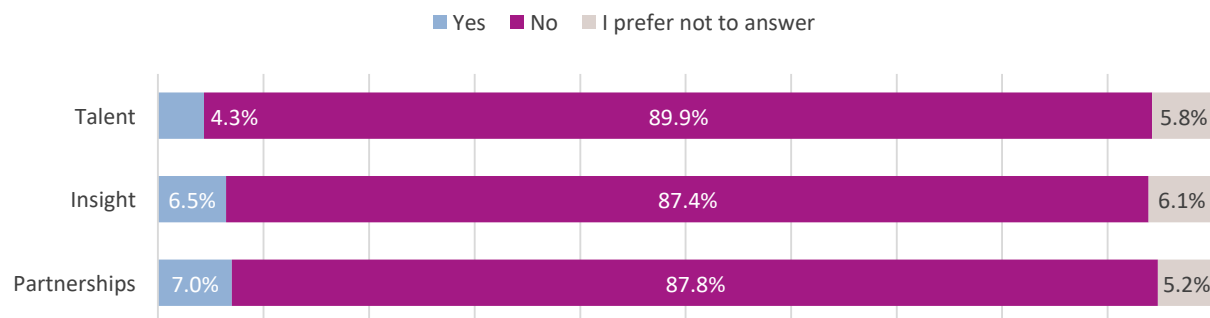
Committee member composition by gender identity, by program area



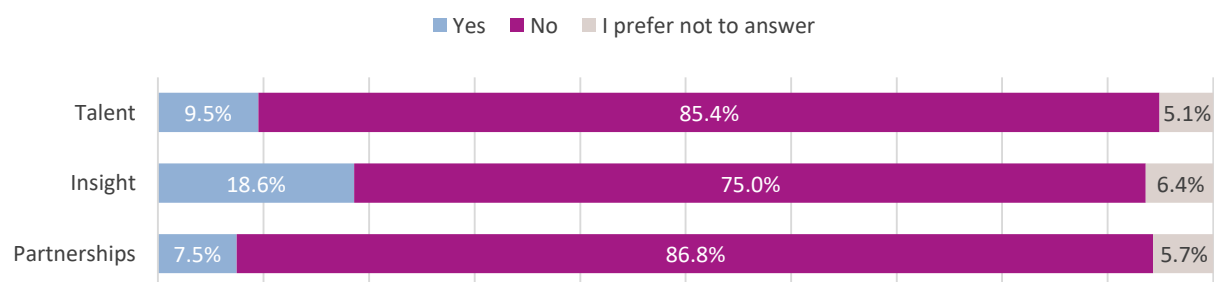
Committee member composition by Indigenous identity, by program area



Committee member composition by disability identity, by program area



Committee member composition by visible minority identity, by program area



Appendix G – Language profiles within SSHRC competitions

SSHRC collects and monitors program performance based on the official language of the application and correspondence language of committee members. The revised tri-agency equity, diversity and inclusion self-identification questionnaire, to be launched later in 2021-22, will include new questions related to the language of the individual, in alignment with Statistics Canada’s approach to official languages data collection.

The application and award rates²¹ of French and English applications across SSHRC funding opportunities have been generally the same for a number of years. In 2020-21 these rates were within one point of each other.



Application rates by application language

English: **83.5%**

French: **16.5%**



Award rates by application language

English: **82.1%**

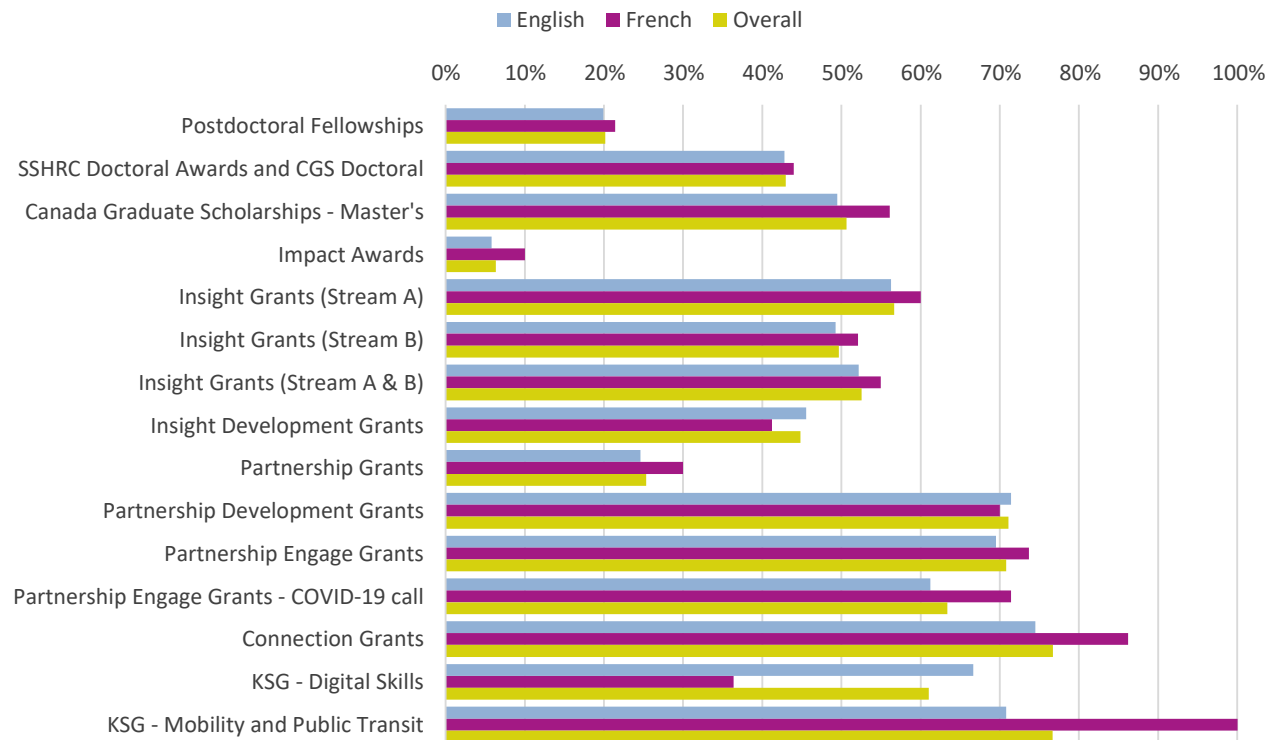
French: **17.9%**

This could be explained by an overall increase in success rates in a number of 2020-21 SSHRC competitions. This is largely due to the decrease in the number of applications in Partnerships Research funding opportunities as a result of the pandemic. French applications correspond to 16% of the 2020-21 applications and are therefore much more sensitive to variances in success rates.

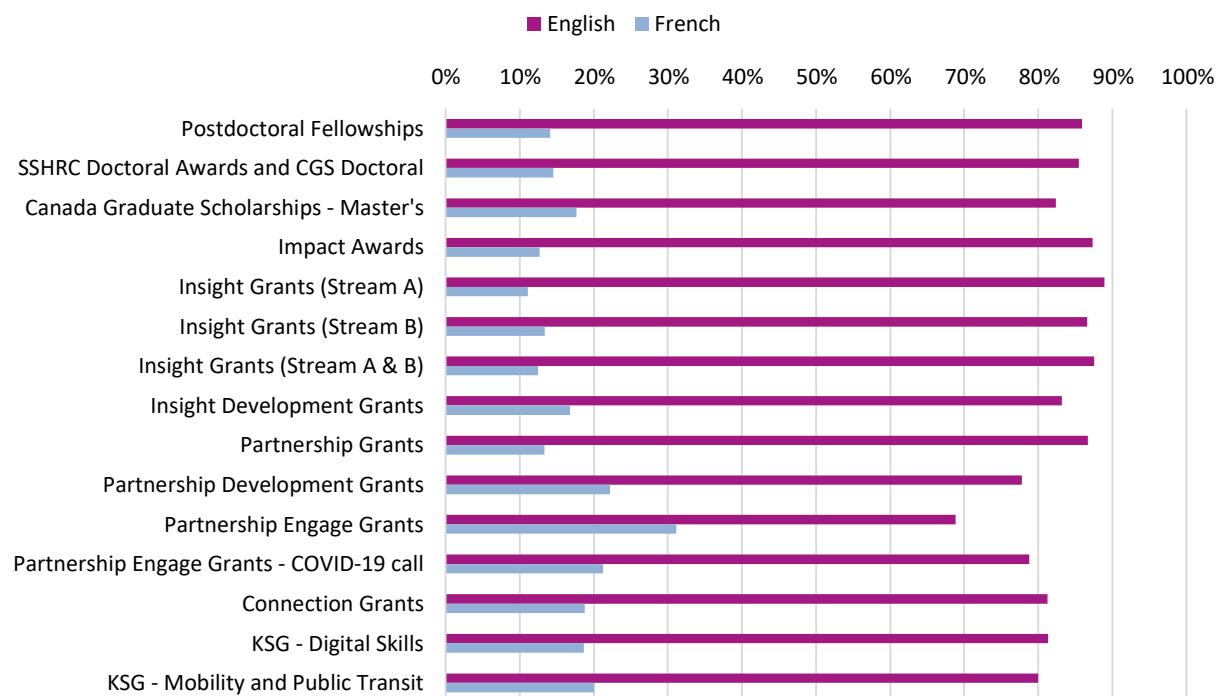
As shown in the following graphs, the application and awards rates of applications are fairly even across SSHRC funding opportunities in 2020-21.

²¹ Application rate is the percentage of applications within the total number of applications in a given competition, based on language of application. Award rate is the percentage of awards of the total awards in a given competition, based on language of application. Award numbers will differ slightly with what is presented in the funding opportunity summaries for the doctoral and master’s competitions due to the timing of acceptance of award offers.

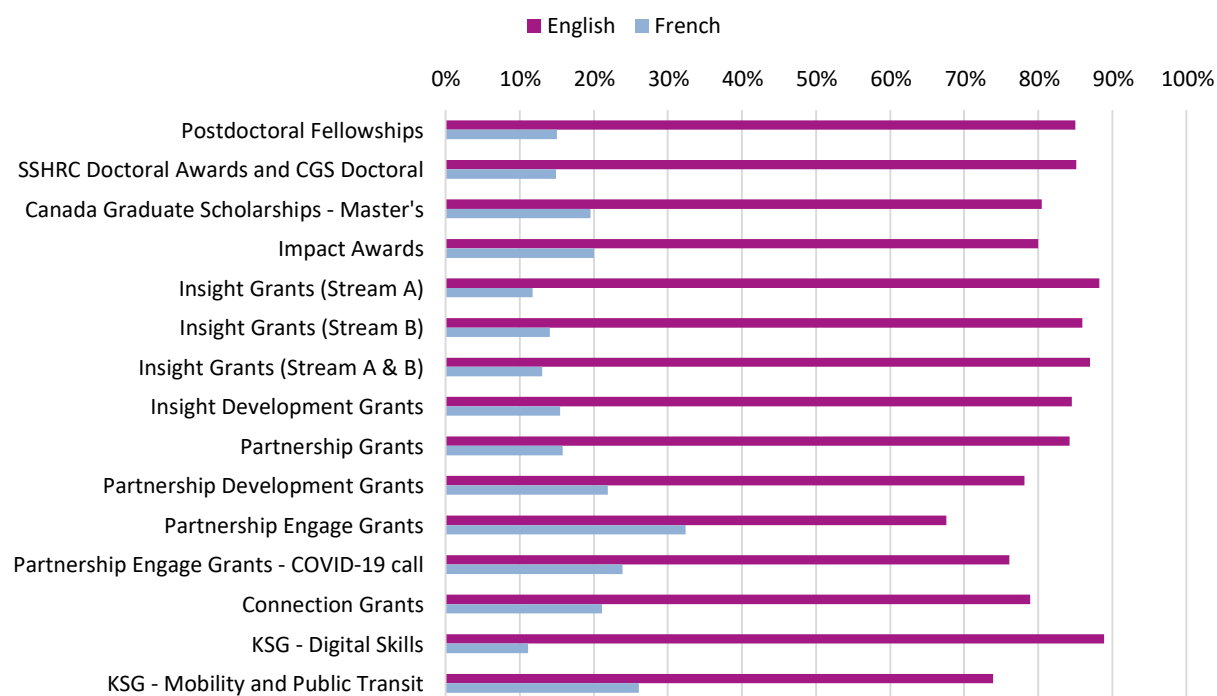
Applicant success rates by language of application



Application rates by language of application



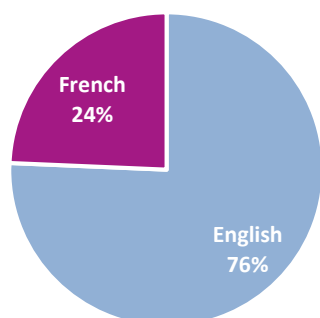
Award rates by language of application



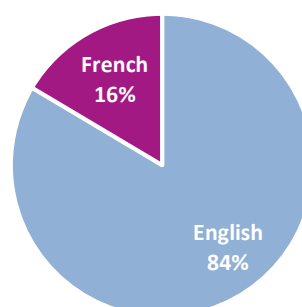
With the exception of a small number of unilingual committees formed within larger funding opportunities, all SSHRC merit review members recruited are required to be functionally bilingual.

Overall, and consistent with recent year data, the proportion of committee members to applicants whose correspondence language is French is slightly higher.

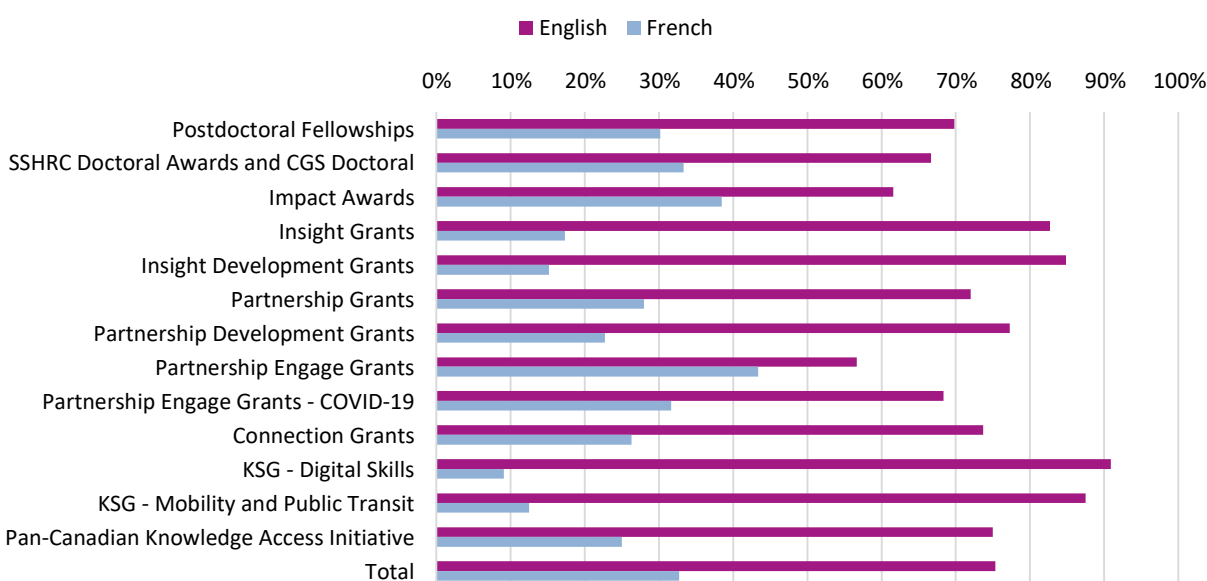
Correspondance language of committee members, overall



Application language of applicants, overall



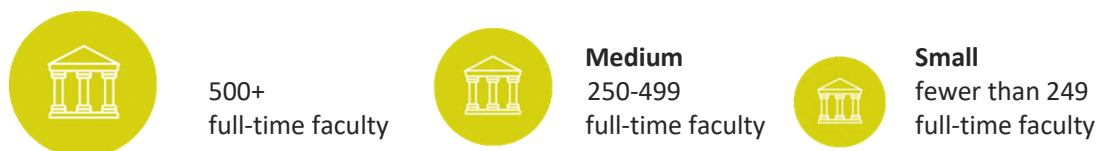
Correspondance language of committee members, by funding opportunity



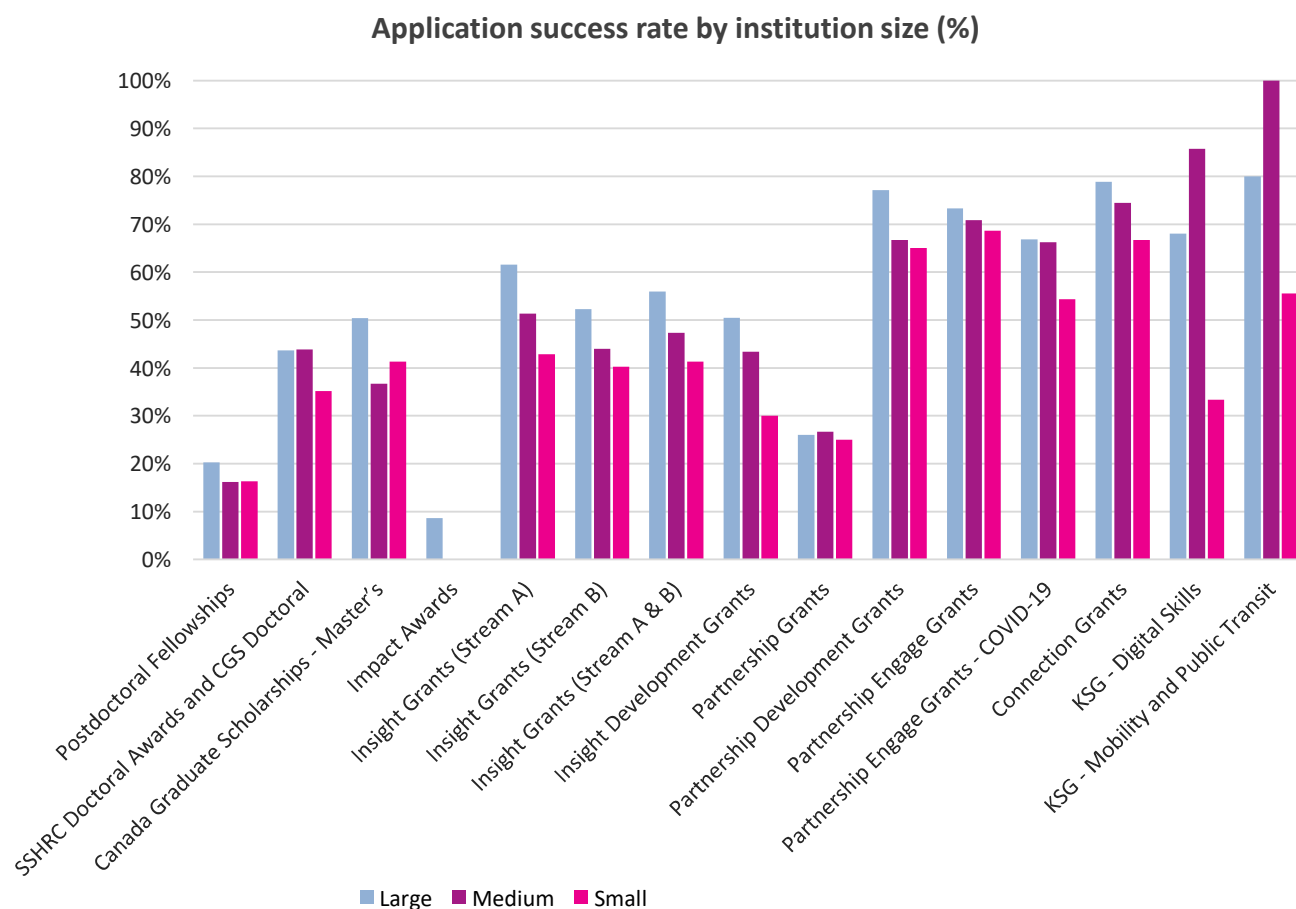
The Research Training and Talent Development funding opportunities historically have higher numbers of Francophone committee members, with a range of 30% to 38% representation in 2020-21. The Partnership Engage Grants competitions also had high representations of Francophone committee members this year.

Appendix H – Institutional representation by funding opportunity

SSHRC's current methodology on institutional size of universities within the social sciences and humanities context defines large institutions as having more than 500 faculty and small institutions having fewer than 250 faculty.



Applicant success rates in 2020-21 show little discrepancy between institutions of different size, which differs from previous years where larger institutions had more substantial success rates. This year, parity notably increased for Partnerships funding opportunities. Nonetheless, over time there are consistently higher success rates within larger, more research-intensive institutions in most of SSHRC's competitions. Smaller institutions have lower success rates. This year, all five of the Impact Award winners were from larger institutions.



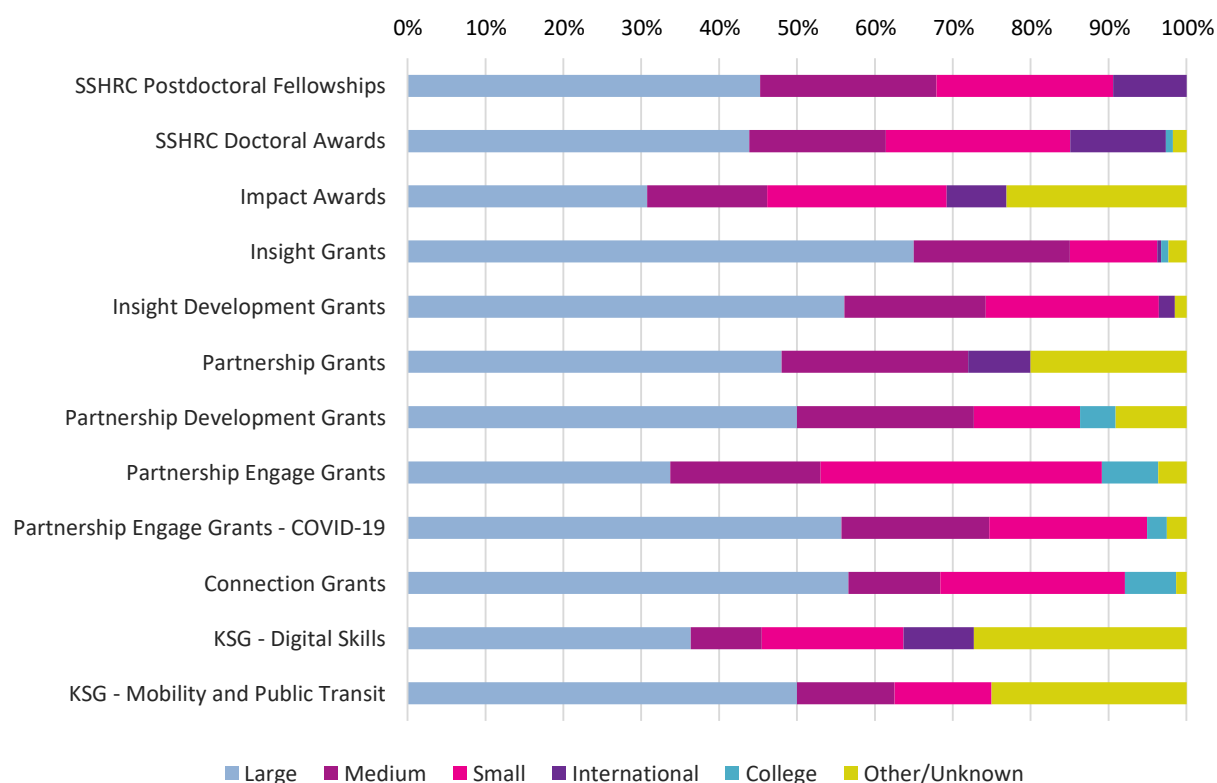
In terms of committee membership, as is to be expected, there is higher representation from larger institutions (53% overall), although the proportion has decreased from previous years, from 57% in 2019-20.

The table below includes national statistics on the representation of social sciences and humanities faculty by institution size. The statistics show that SSHRC's committees in 2019-20 are highly representative of the institutional distribution of social sciences and humanities faculty in Canada.

Representation of Canadian social sciences and humanities faculty by institution size category²²

Institution size and type	Number of institutions	Faculty members	% of faculty members	% representation of SSHRC committee members in 2020-21 competitions
Large	21	13,596	56.3%	52.9%
Medium	12	4,614	19.1%	18.4%
Small	67	5,646	23.4%	20.0%

Representation of committee members, by institution size



n = 900

Notes: The "Other/Unknown" category includes Indigenous organizations, associations, federal/provincial/territorial governments, hospitals, learning associations, private business and research organizations, as well as international colleges and universities of unknown size.

²² Statistics Canada, Full-Time: University and College Academic Staff System (FT-UCASS) 2018-2019