

Perspectives from PhDs & Postdocs

Lea Heckmann, Maxime Vincent, Pierre Pichard

Biennale APC 2026



PhD and postdoc working group

Context

- Decided as a recurrent group after last biennial
- Aim: Assess the current situation of PhDs and postdocs in the lab + find actions to make it better if possible
- Coordinators of the group: Lea Heckmann, **Maxime Vincent**, **Pierre Pichard**

PhD representatives at the lab council: come anytime to discuss any topic concerning your PhD
- it's our role!

Postdoc representative: Isabel Goos

Status at the last biennial

- 1st time there is a PhD/Postdoc working group and presentation
- Quite confrontational from both sides : first time many subjects were talked about (thesis committee, colloquia, issues with supervision ...)

Changes since then

- Thesis referent (after biennale + Psychosocial Risk study)
- Psychosocial Risk study
- Welcome booklet + Installation guide
- Career day from direction about permanent positions in France

2024 Psychosocial Risk Survey results

Critical points for PhDs

- Work outside contract hours and high work rhythm
- Work life balance
- Internal violence in the work space
- Socio-economic insecurity

Critical points for Postdocs

- Performance pressure
- Socio-economic insecurity

Methodology

Aim: Assess the current situation of PhDs and postdocs in the lab on critical points discussed in the group during a first meeting

- Critical points and question discussed in the group during a first meeting
- Questions implemented using the CNRS limesurvey (English + French)
- Opened 13-22 May
- Anonymous responses

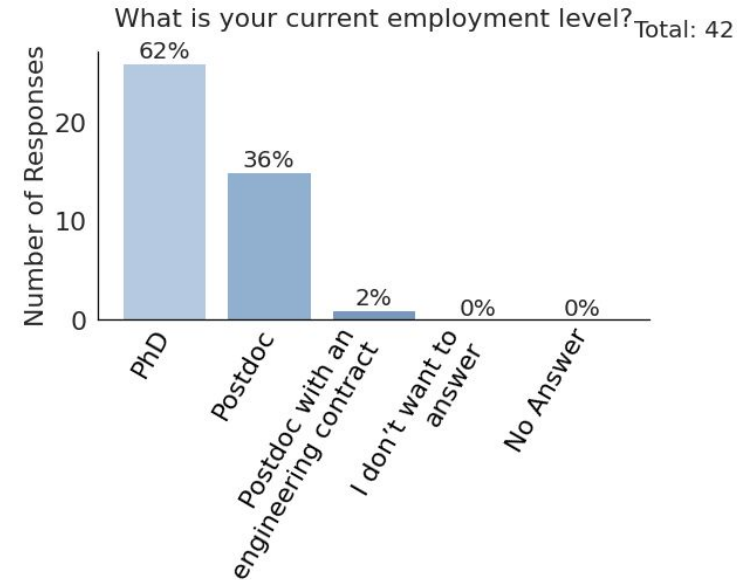
PhD + Postdoc Survey 2026

Methodology

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-> 42 responses (54%)



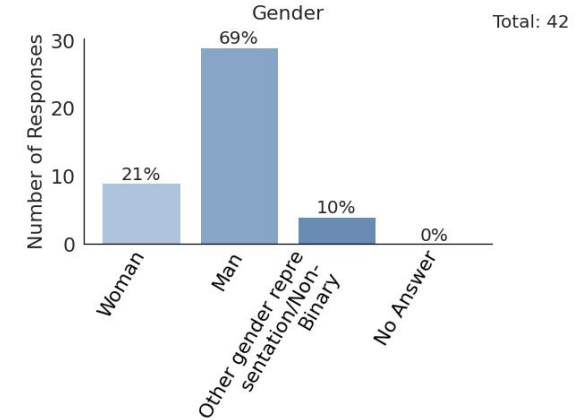
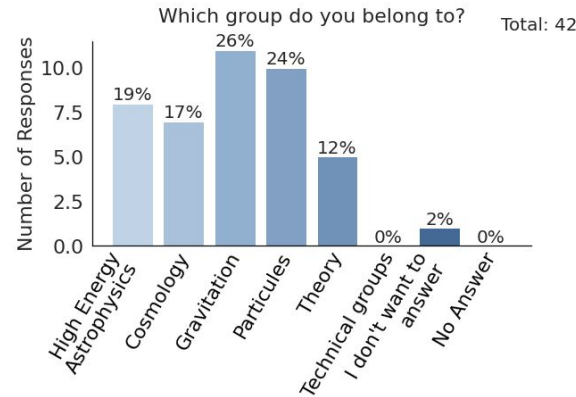
Demographics

Good representation

- representing distribution of PhDs and postdocs well
- among scientific groups
- not really among gender (but that is a problem bigger than this group)

Disclaimer

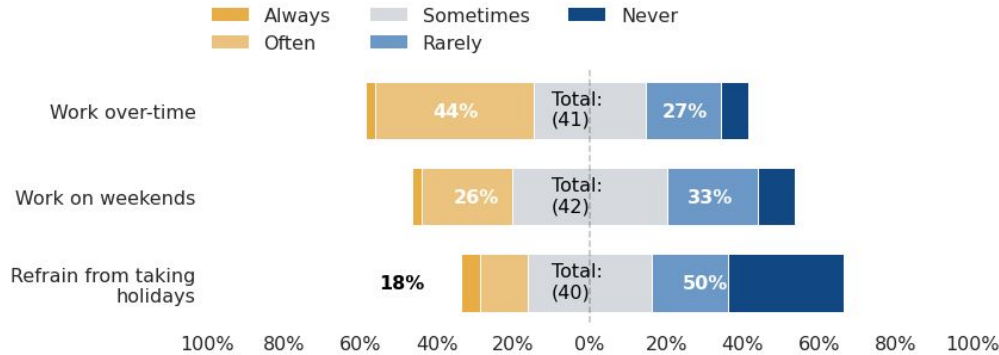
Please keep in mind that all results and conclusion shown after here are only the 42 survey participants, not all early-career members of APC.



PhD + Postdoc Survey 2026

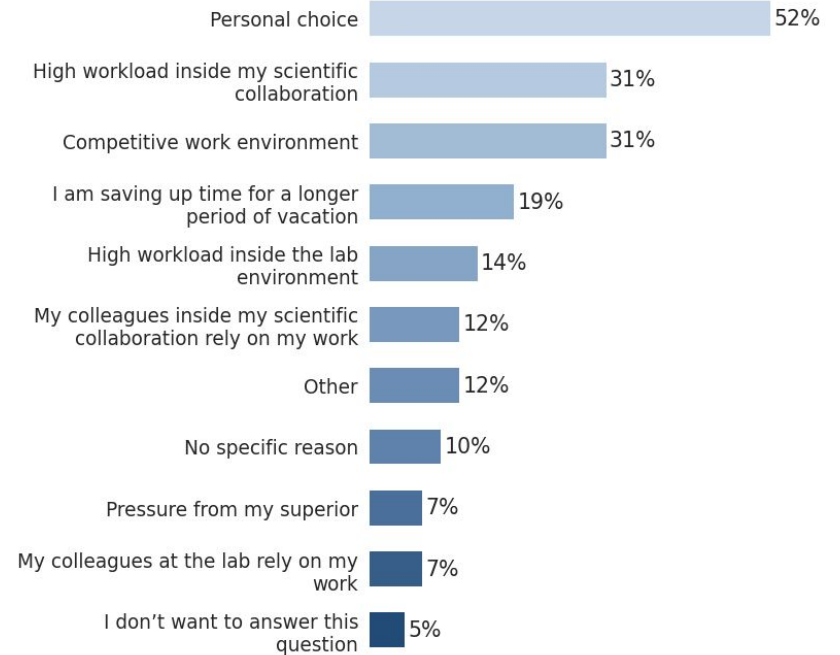
Worktime

Which of the following apply to you? I ...



High workload and colleagues relying on your work in your scientific collaboration higher for post-docs, as well as competitive work environment

What prevents you from taking time off?



Total: 42

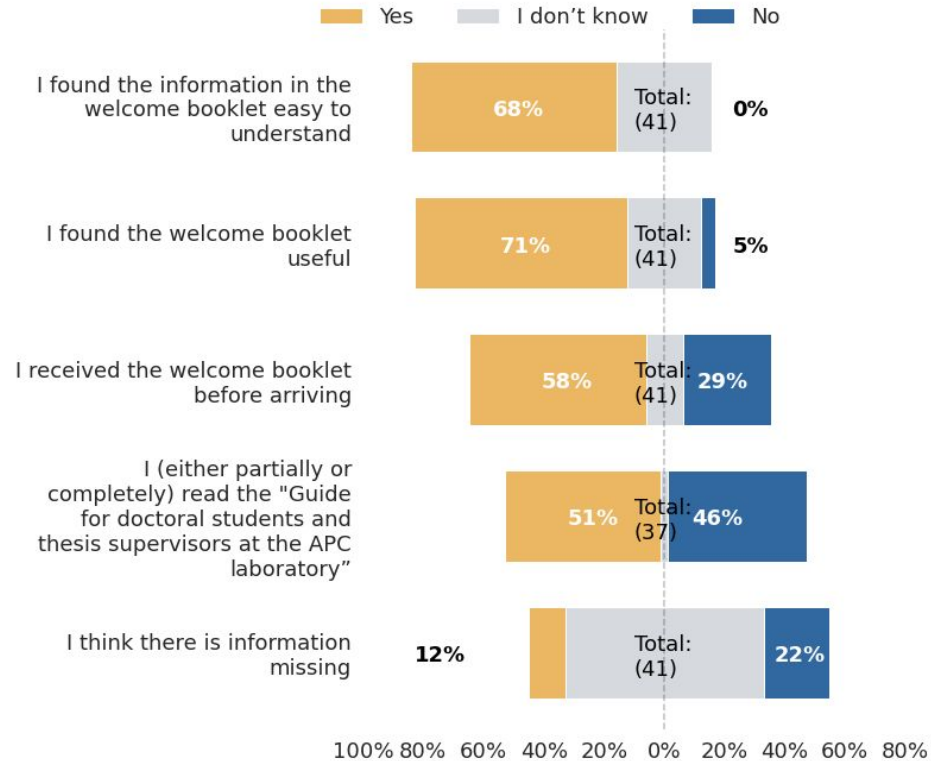
Welcome booklet

- Very useful, but needs to be spread more.
- [Guide for doctoral students](#) also needs to be advertised more (40% of PhDs do not know it)

Action points:

- How to ensure that everyone gets it early?
- Information missing:
 - **Collaborative project** - shared google doc link here : [french](#) [english](#)
 - Day to day life foreigners - in [installation guide](#) - rename; also make sure installation guide is distributed
 - Maybe merge the two?
 - Teaching opportunities - For PhDs? For Postdocs? In French? In English ?

What do you know about the lab's welcome booklet?



PhD + Postdoc Survey 2026

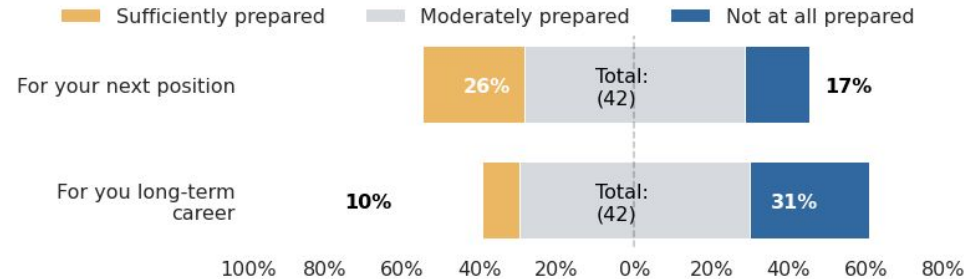
Career development

- People feel not well prepared, more information needed

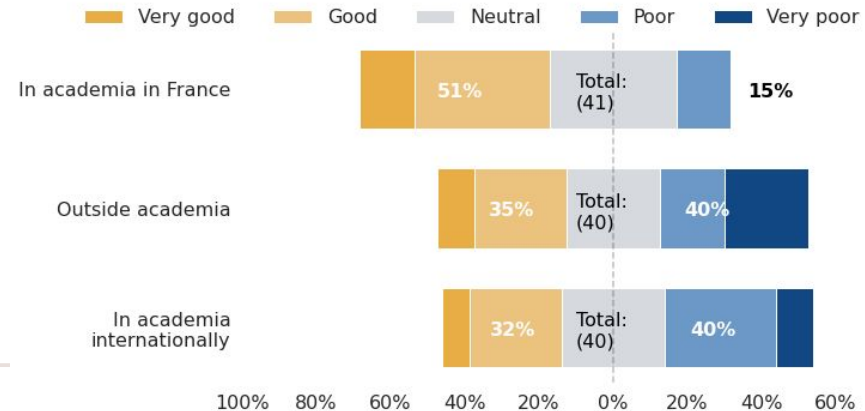
Action points:

- Organize more events on career path (like the one on French system last month)
 - Also on postdoc fellowships
 - International/EU fellowships
- Career paths outside academia
 - Advertise career fair of UPC more
 - List of alumni volunteering to be contacted
 - How to highlight PhD/Postdoc work that is usually hidden in collaborations?
Papers not important in private sector

How prepared do you feel to find employment after your current position?



How would you rate your access to information about career paths available after your current position?



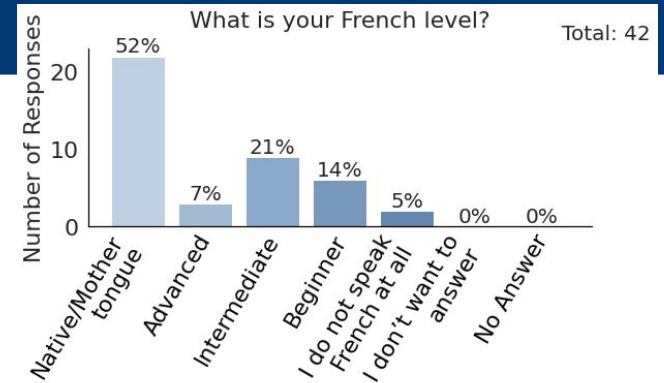
PhD + Postdoc Survey 2026

Language

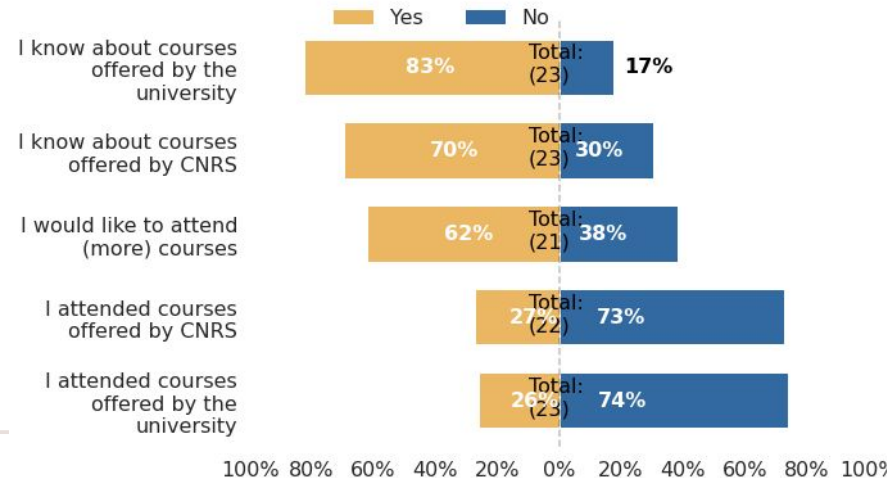
- ~ 50% non-natives (same among PhDs and postdocs)
- Level of English not a big obstacle for PhDs/Postdocs
- French courses:
 - Most people know about them, but did not attend
People that attended are mainly satisfied
 - 62% want to attend more
 - Main reason for not attending: limited access to CNRS courses, uni courses with lack of flexibility
 - Quality of uni courses criticized, CNRS good but not often

Action points:

- How to best organize more courses?
Has the CNRS stopped more courses than 1x per year?
- Tandem for people to practise French / English?
Ecole Doctorale points for it to increase engagement?



What do you know about offered language courses: French Courses



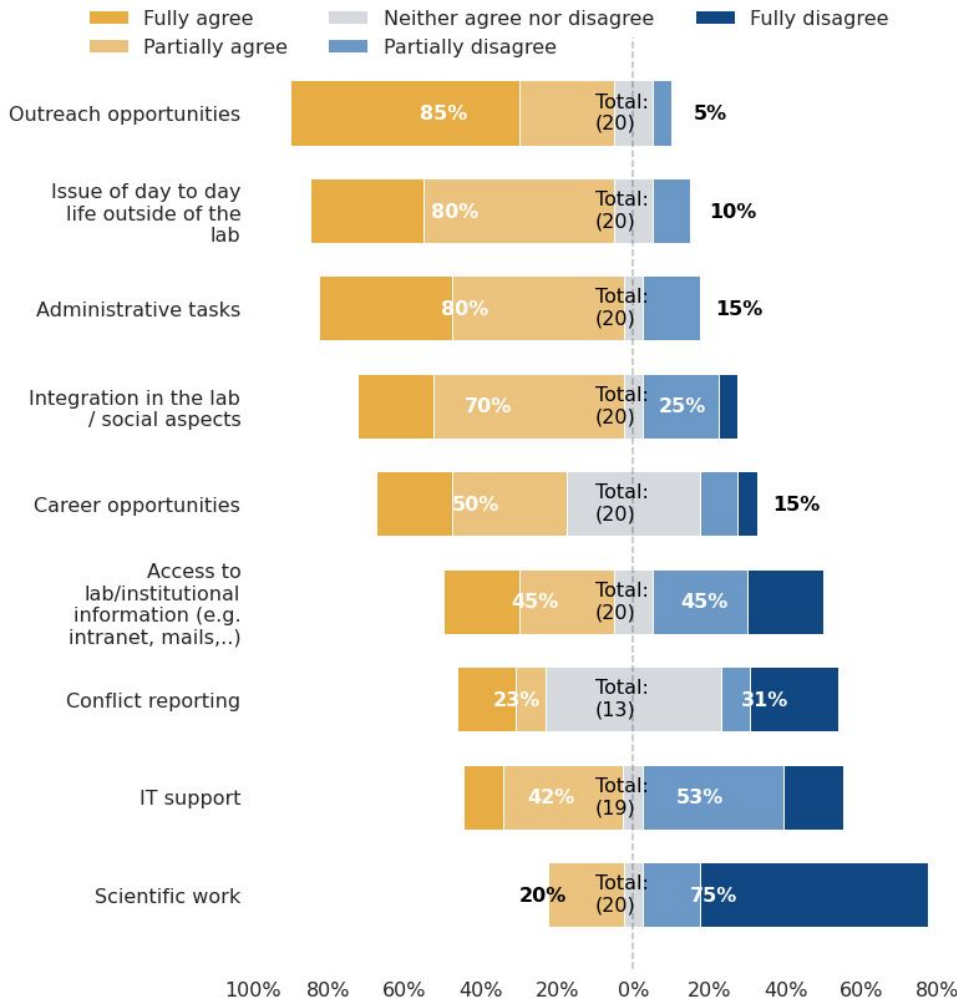
PhD + Postdoc Survey 2026

Language

Main points where French is an obstacle + their action points (APs)

- Outreach - AP: To be discussed here. Ideas? E.g. For programs in school - consider international or schools with English programs?
- Day to day life - AP: Advertise installation guide (& rename)
- Administrative tasks - AP: To be discussed here. Is there an automatic way to translate all mails sent to apc_tous via the server maybe?
- Integration lab - AP: Raise awareness. Revive the slack? Create whatsapp community? MPQ e.g. has a croissant breakfast meeting every 2 weeks. Possible for a few times per year?
- Career opportunities - AP: already covered

Do you feel like your level of French is an obstacle in your...



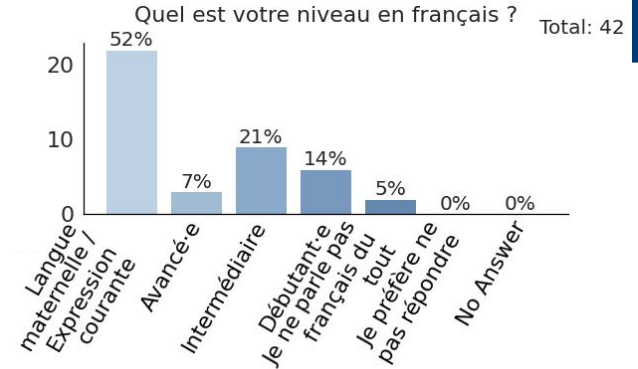
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Langue

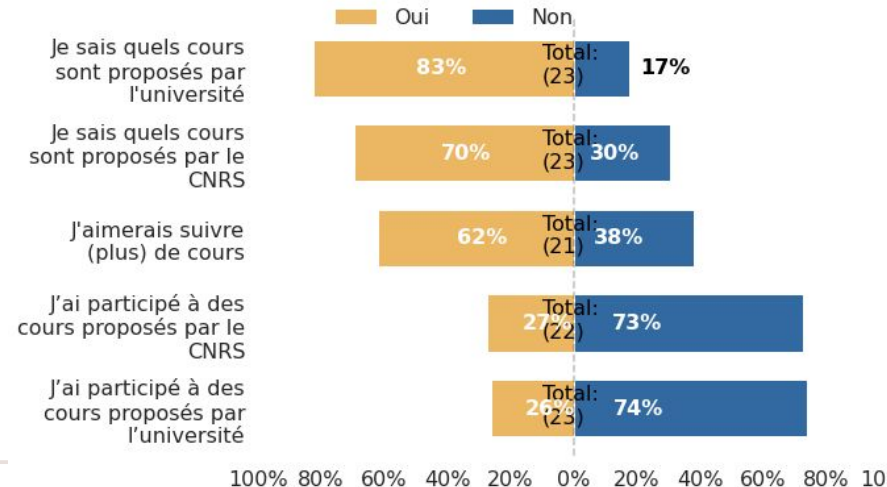
- ~ 50% français non-courant (équivalent pour PhDs et postdocs)
- Niveau d'anglais pas un obstacle pour PhDs/Postdocs
- Cours de français:
 - Majorité est au courant, mais n'en ont pas suivi ceux qui en ont suivi en sont satisfaits
 - 62% voudraient en avoir plus
 - Raisons pour ceux qui n'en ont pas suivi: accès limité au cours CNRS, cours UPC manque flexibilité
 - Qualité des cours UPCité critiquée, CNRS bien mais trop rare

Points d'action:

- Organiser plus de cours?
Pourquoi le CNRS a arrêté de faire + d'1 cours/an?
- Binôme français / anglais? Points de l'ED pour l'encourager ?



Que savez-vous des cours de langues proposés ? French Courses



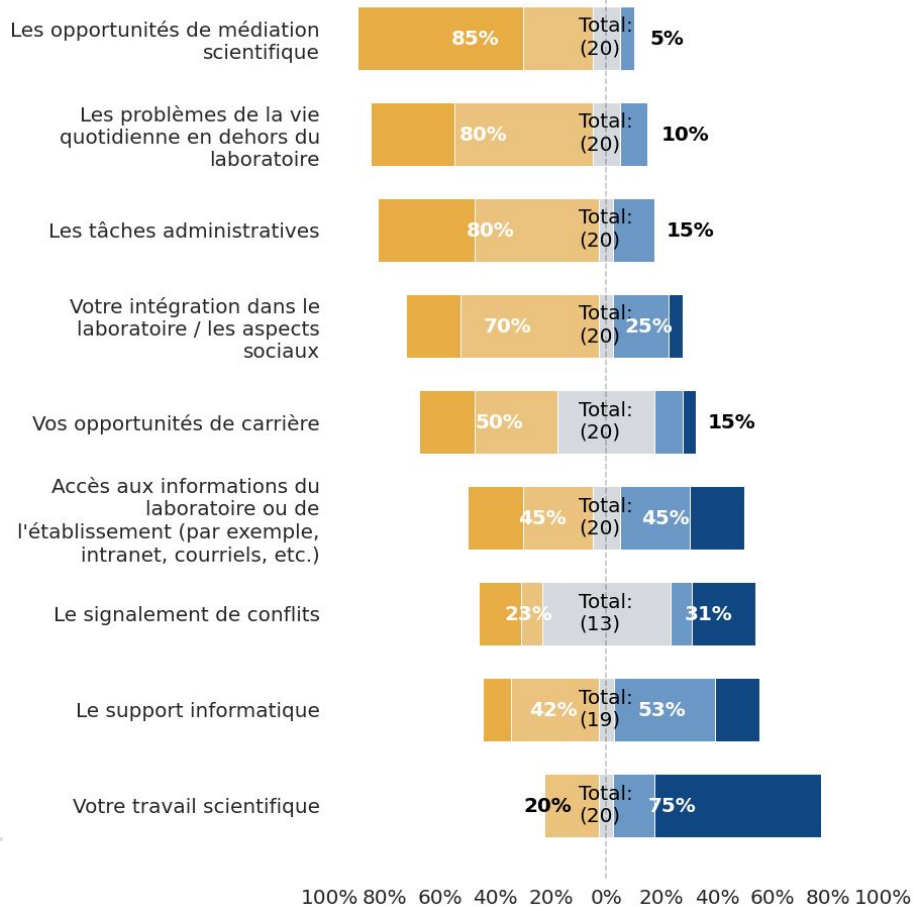
PhD + Postdoc Survey 2026

Langue

Principaux points où le français est un obstacle + points d'action (PAs)

- Outreach - PA: A discuter ici. Des idées ?
E.g. pour les actions à l'école - écoles internationales ou lycées avec de l'anglais renforcé ?
- Vie quotidienne - PA: Mettre en avant le guide d'installation
- Taches admin - PA: A discuter ici. Moyen d'automatiser la traduction de tous les mails envoyés à apc_tous ?
- Intégration au labo - PA: Refaire vivre le Slack? Créer une communauté whatsapp?
ex: petit-dej croissant tous les 2 semaines à MPQ. Possible quelques fois par an ?
- Opportunités de carrière - PA: déjà évoqué

Considérez-vous votre niveau en français comme un obstacle dans :



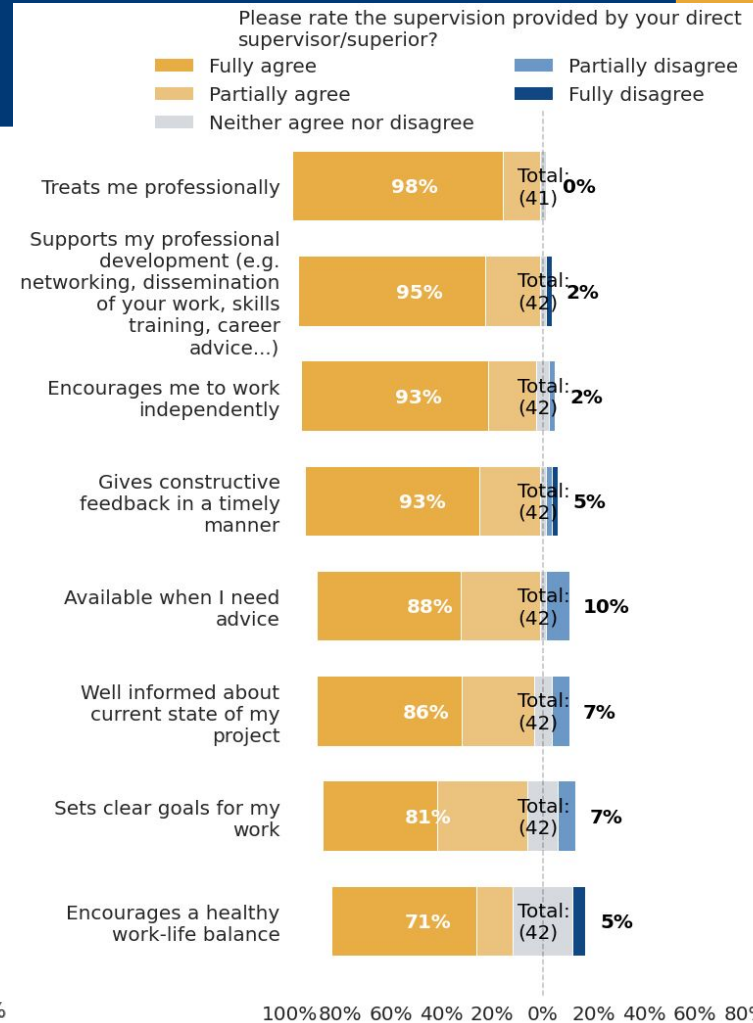
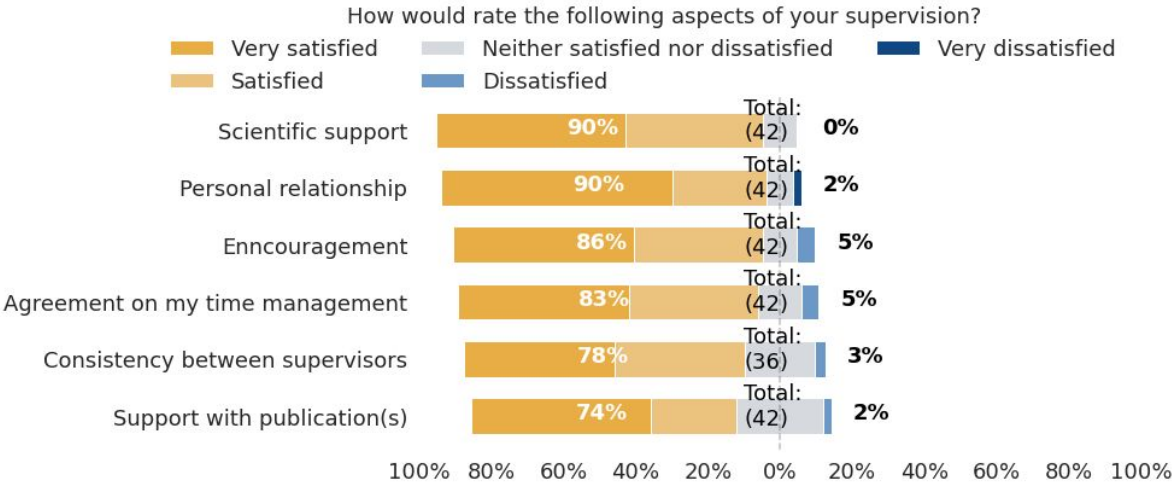
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Supervision

Meeting frequency with supervisor:

- 75 % happy with their meeting frequency
- 15% want to meet more, 7% want to meet less

In general, people seem to be happy with their supervision

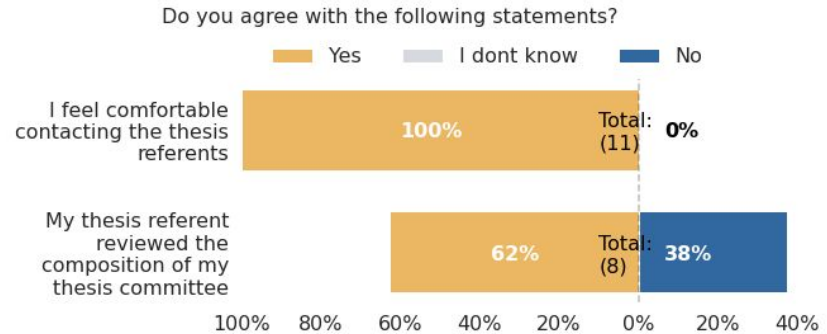
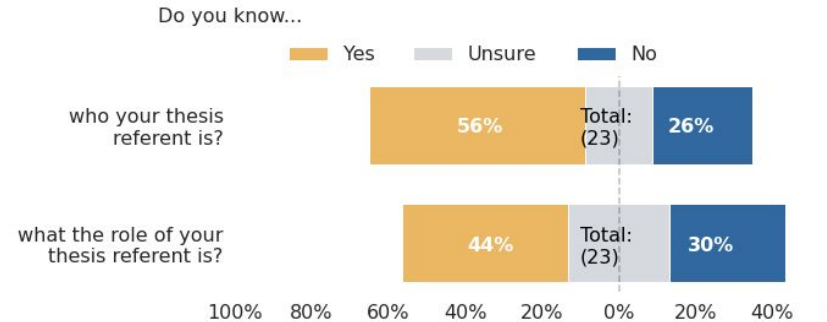


Thesis referent

- Measure taken after last biennale
- Double role : available ear for PhDs + ensure objectivity of CSI (pick member if PhD cannot)
- Very useful for 1st point as it seems
- But not known enough by PhDs (44% unsure of who the person is in their group + 56% unsure of their role)

Action points:

- More advertisement: Poster in the 4th floor, guide for doctorant/welcome booklet
- If possible doctoral school should with the CSI send out the thesis referent role - otherwise lab needs to remind more
- Referent can do a zoom with all new students in their group?



Thesis follow-up committee

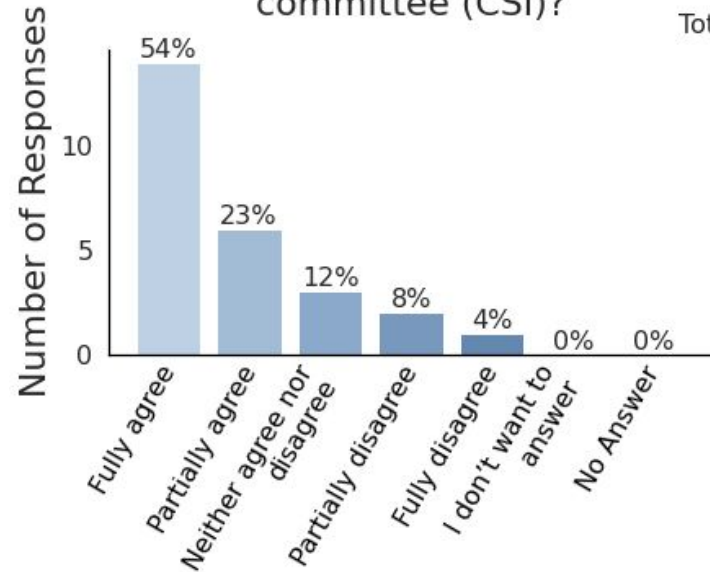
- Quite good
- But not fully satisfactory (24% not negligible, especially since first reporting line for PhDs)

Action points:

- What could be done ?
- More thorough evaluation of its composition, tell directly to referent if you don't feel happy with it
- Make role of referent clearer

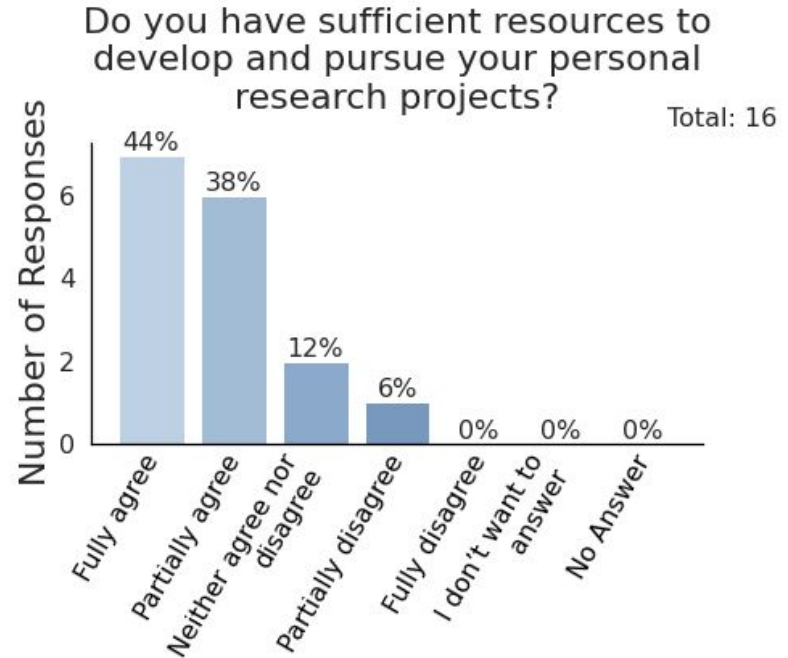
Do you feel comfortable talking freely with the members of your thesis committee (CSI)?

Total: 26



Postdocs independence of research

- Number speak for themselves
- very good and also vital for career development



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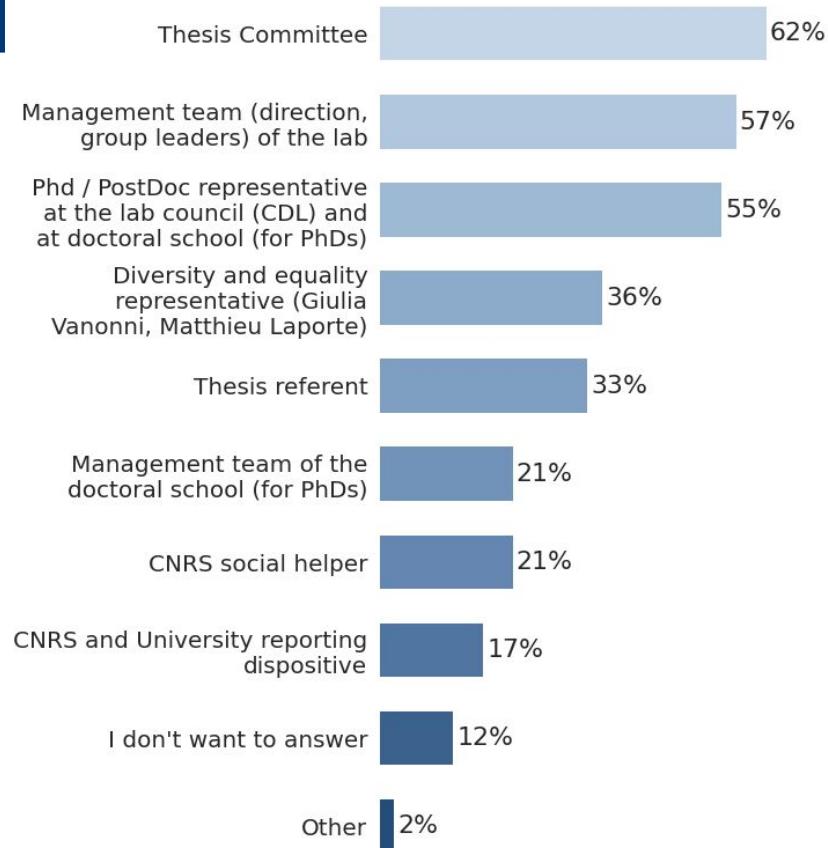
Conflicts

- Thesis Committee and referent at 81% and 46% for only PhDs
- In general, many reporting mechanisms not known

Action points:

- Improve the conflict reporting section in the welcome booklet, e.g. who to contact for what etc.
- Is there a Uni Social helper / can Uni employees see the CNRS one?
- Make a lab info poster?

Which of the following mechanisms are you aware of that can help you in case of a conflict with a superior at APC?



Summary Action points

Can be done/started mainly by us
Support from management needed
Support from whole lab needed

Welcome Booklet

- Advertise more
- Add missing information collaboratively

Career development:

- Organize more events on various career paths
- Alumni network
- Highlight work of early-career more?

Supervision:

- Trainings for supervisors (See risk survey results) - not offered by CNRS anymore

Thesis referent and CSI:

- Advertise it more (online and physically)
- Make sure the committee is really reviewed

Language:

- More French Courses
- Tandem
- Outreach - Ideas?
- Day to day life - installation guide
- Administrative tasks - Translate mails how?
- Integration lab - Revive the slack? Create whatsapp community?
MPQ e.g. has a croissant breakfast meeting every 2 weeks. Possible for a few times per year?

Conflict reporting

- Improve the conflict reporting section in the welcome booklet
- Make a lab info poster?

Thank you for your attention

Questions & Discussion



Extract of the doctoral student guide book

The role of thesis advisor has been created to support doctoral students and their supervisors throughout the thesis process. Thesis advisors have two main roles:

1. **To provide an informal and sympathetic ear** to doctoral students and thesis supervisors in the event of difficulties, particularly concerning the extra-scientific aspects of the doctorate. The referent is a trusted advisor who can be contacted at any time during the thesis.

2. **Ensure, in coordination with the doctoral school, the objectivity and benevolence of the thesis monitoring committee** in compliance with the principles defined by [article 13 of the decree of May 25, 2016](#).

With regard to this second point, the doctoral student is asked to propose the name of a trusted researcher or faculty, who will not be involved in the thesis (and possibly outside the research field). If the doctoral student does not propose a name, the thesis advisor can appoint a second member of the monitoring committee, to complement the expertise of the first member on the various aspects of the doctoral project.