



ADDED VALUE OF THE PHD

Insights from PhD Holders and Employers

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MISSIONS OF THE OBSERVATORY



Track and analyse the careers of researchers in the Wallonia-Brussels Federation



Produce data on research careers



Formulate guidelines and recommendations



Disseminate findings

ONGOING STUDIES

FUTURE OF PHD HOLDERS



RECRUITING TALENTS



RECRUITING ACADEMIC TALENTS



SECTION 1. PHDS AT WORK: WHAT DO PHDS FROM FWB DO ?



PARTICIPANTS

2025 (Third wave of the survey!)



2398 doctorate holders



Year PhD was awarded
2022 -2025 (n = 1563)
Previous wave (n = 826)



Male
56% Female
43%



ENS SSH LHS
40% 32% 27%

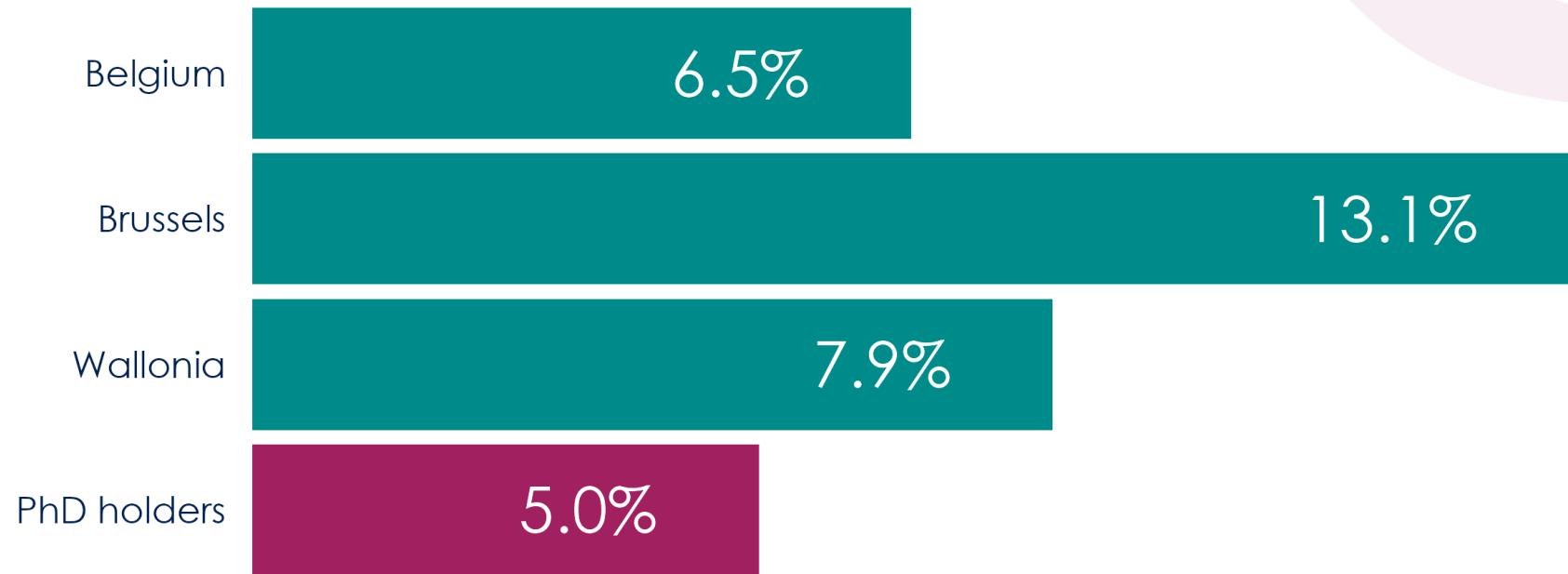


THE LARGE MAJORITY OF PHD HOLDERS ARE EMPLOYED !

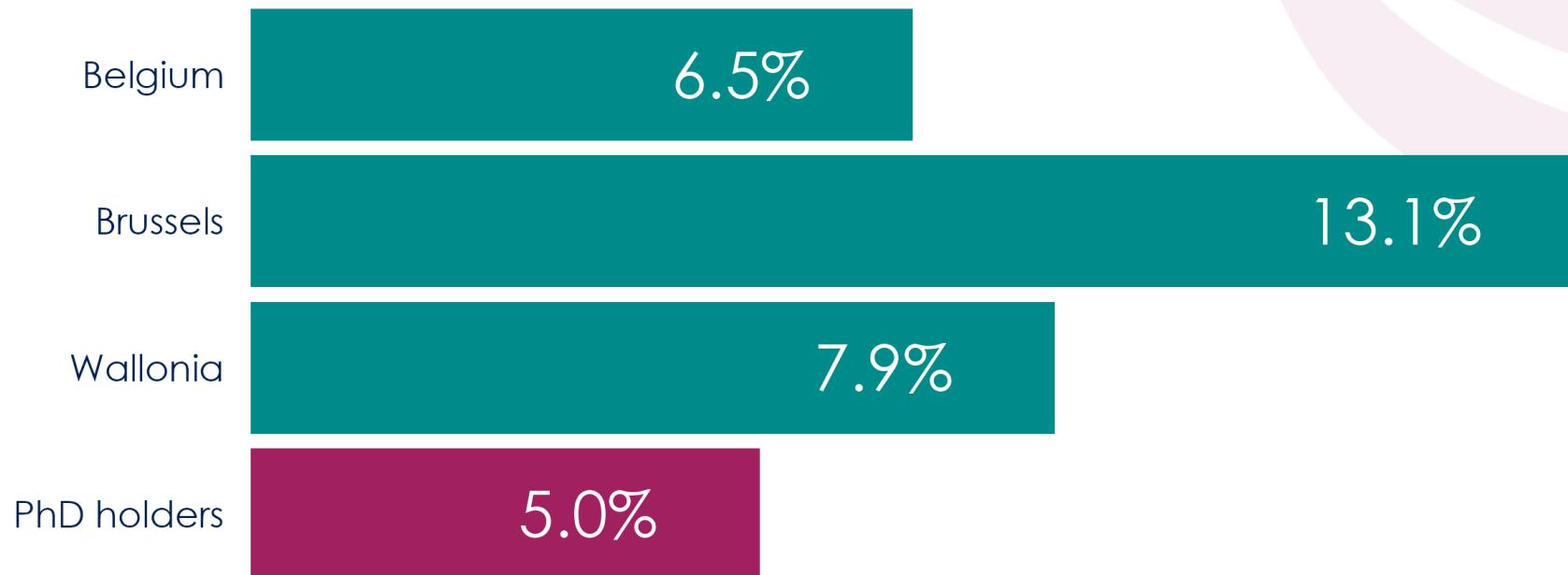
95%

of PhD holders are employed!

AND THEIR UNEMPLOYMENT RATE IS LOWER THAN WHAT WE SEE IN BELGIUM OR FWB



...AND THIS RATE SHOWS LITTLE VARIATION DEPENDING ON THE RESEARCH FIELD

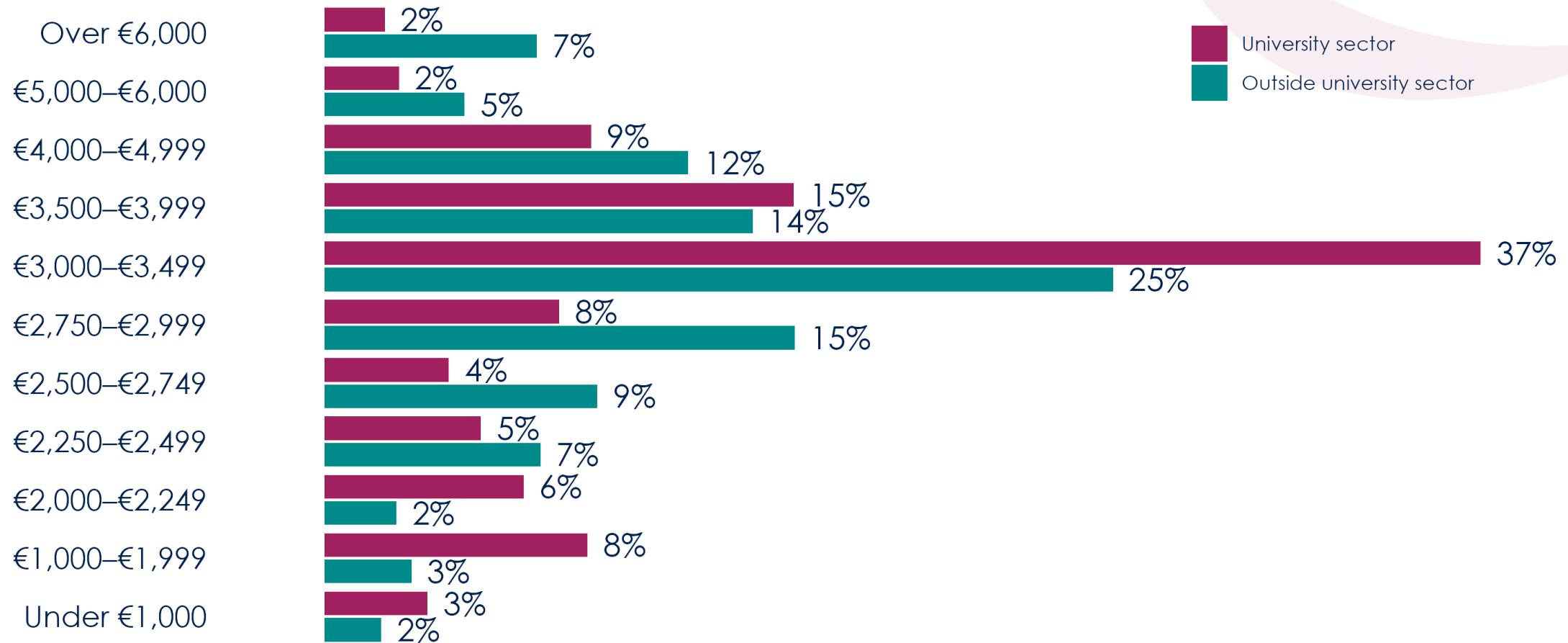


SSH
94.7%

ENS
95.5%

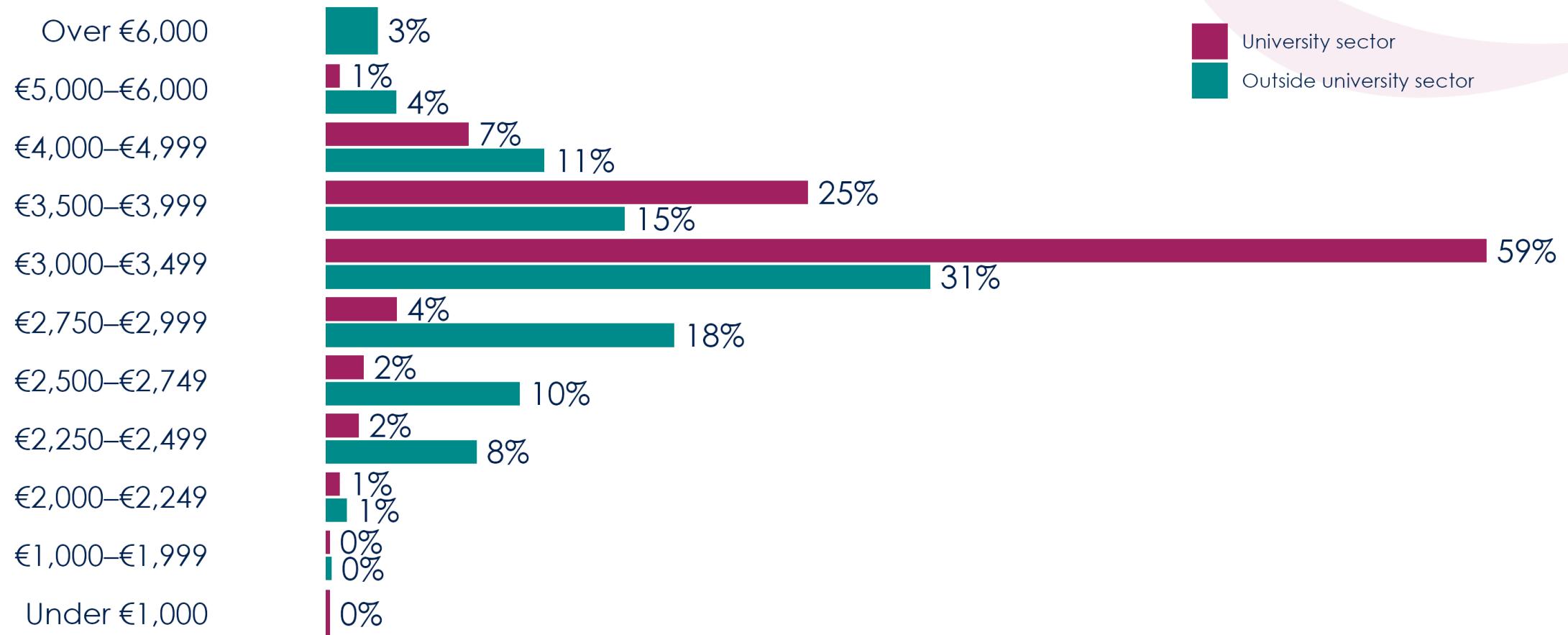
LHS
94.8%

AND THEY EARN A DECENT SALARY



AND THEY EARN A DECENT SALARY

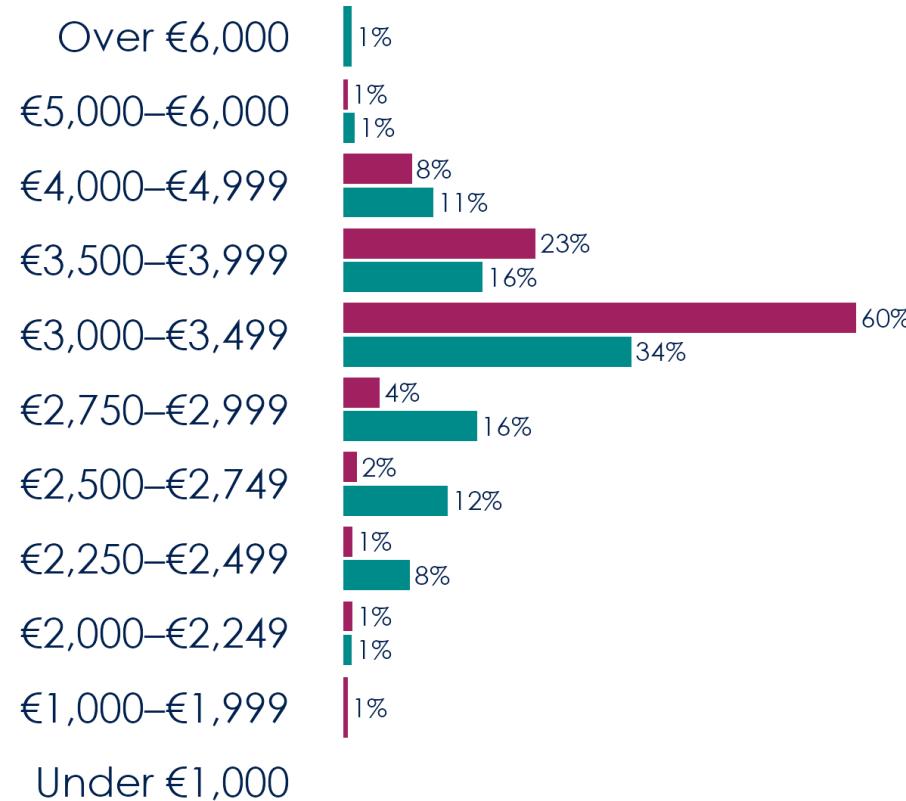
(Salary Levels Among PhDs Working in Belgium)



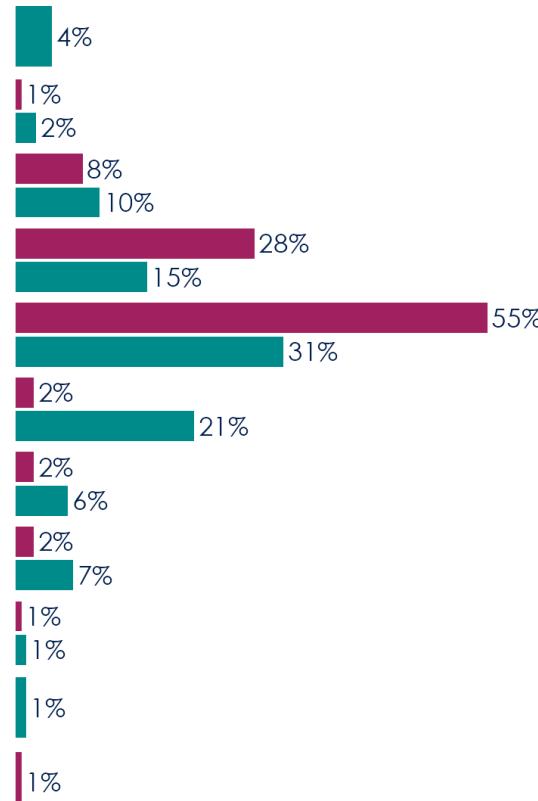
REGARDLESS OF THEIR RESEARCH FIELD

(Salary Levels Among PhDs Working in Belgium)

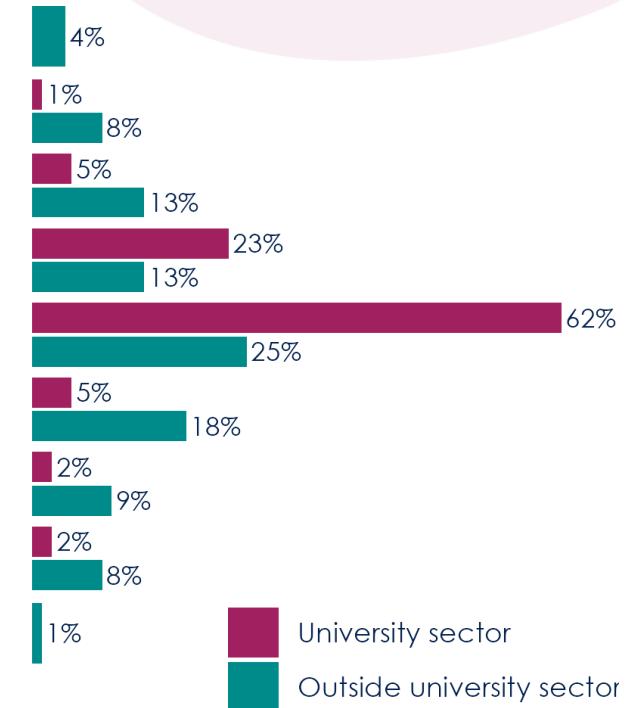
ENS



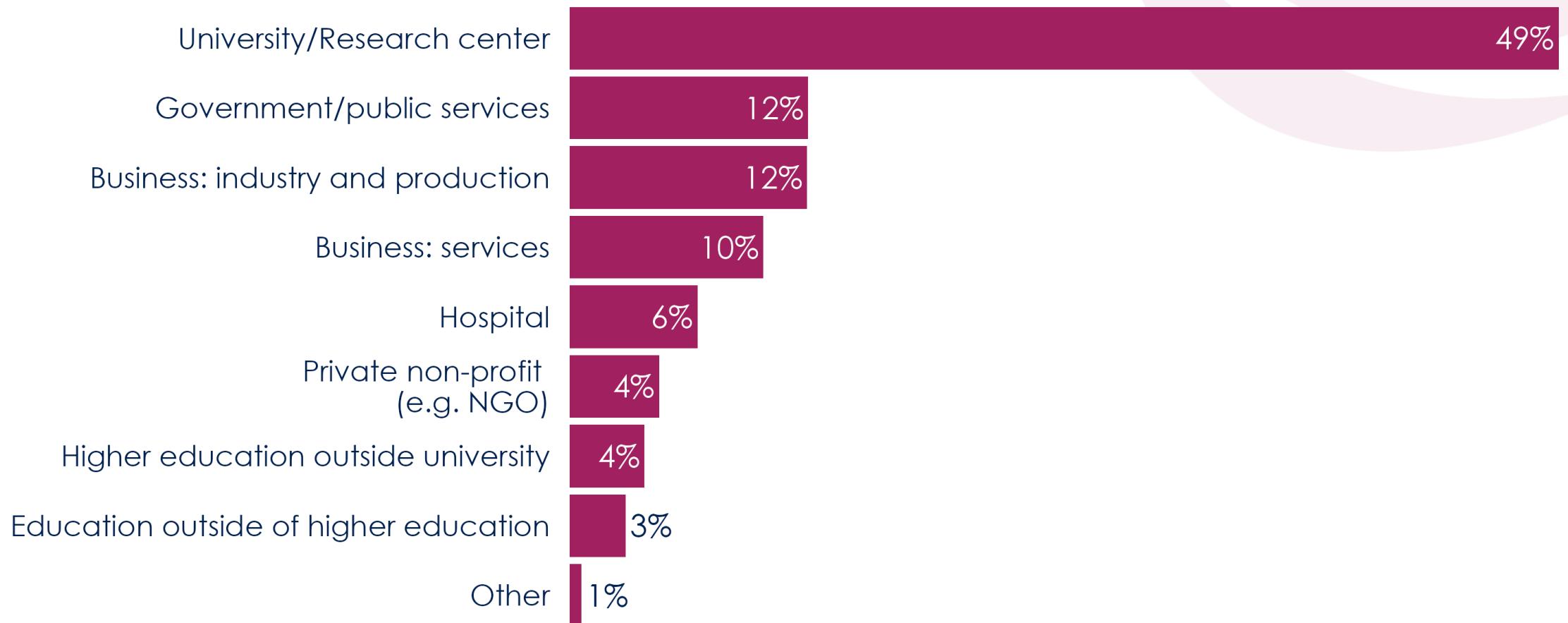
SSH



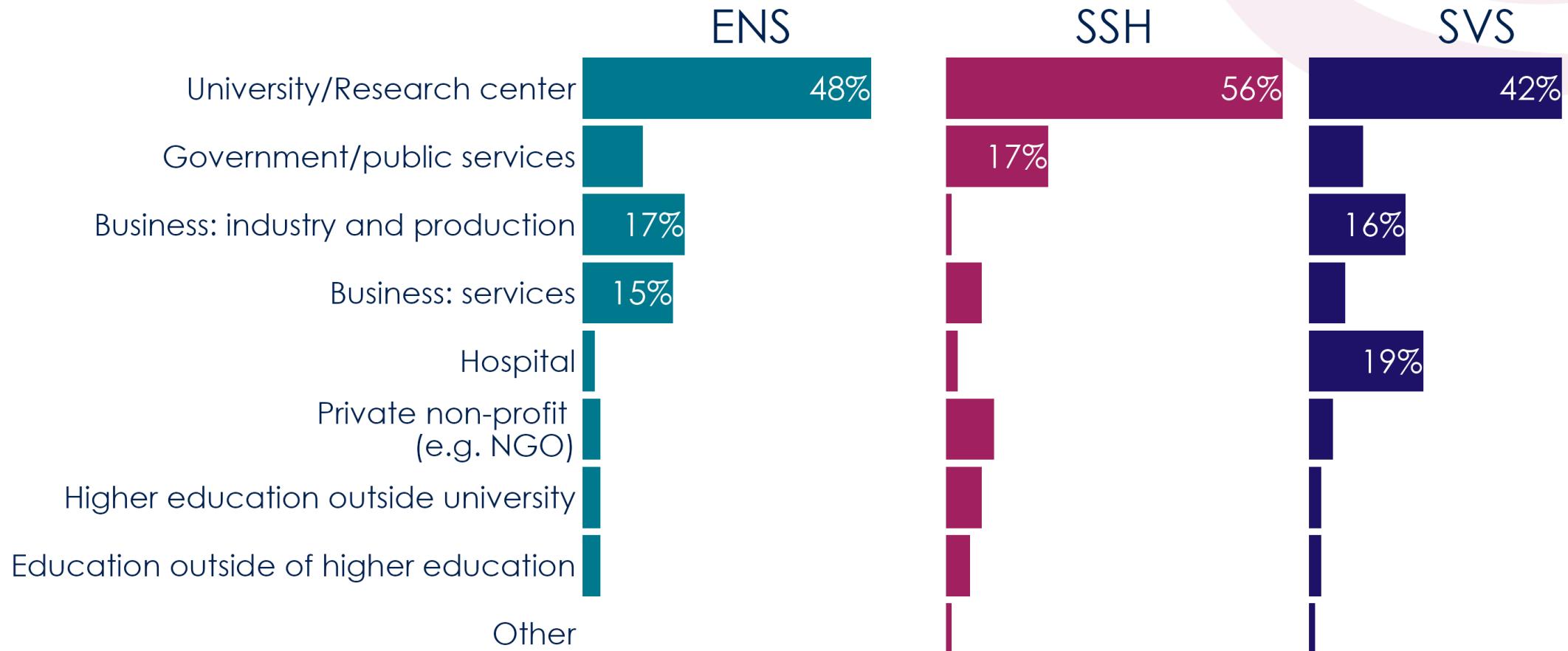
SVS



MOST PHD HOLDERS STAY IN ACADEMIA AFTER THEIR PHD

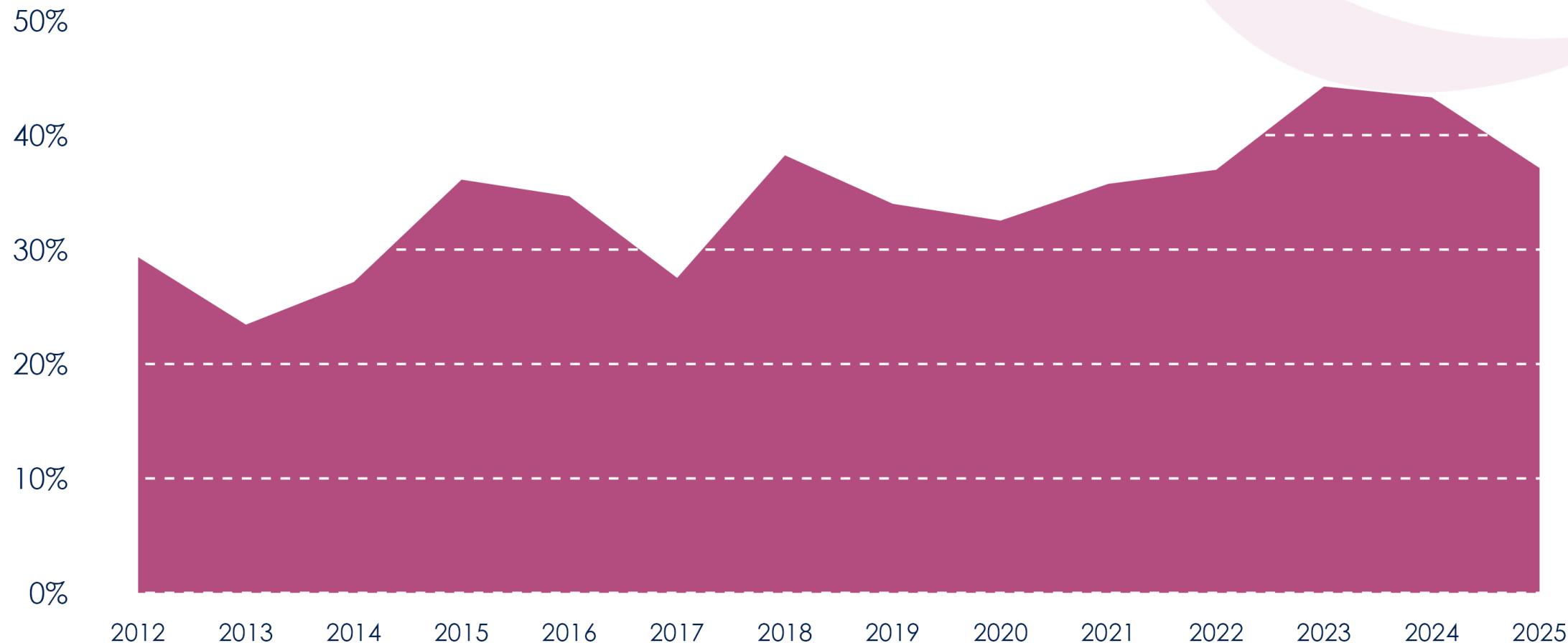


BUT THE SECOND EMPLOYMENT SECTOR DIFFERS ACROSS RESEARCH FIELDS

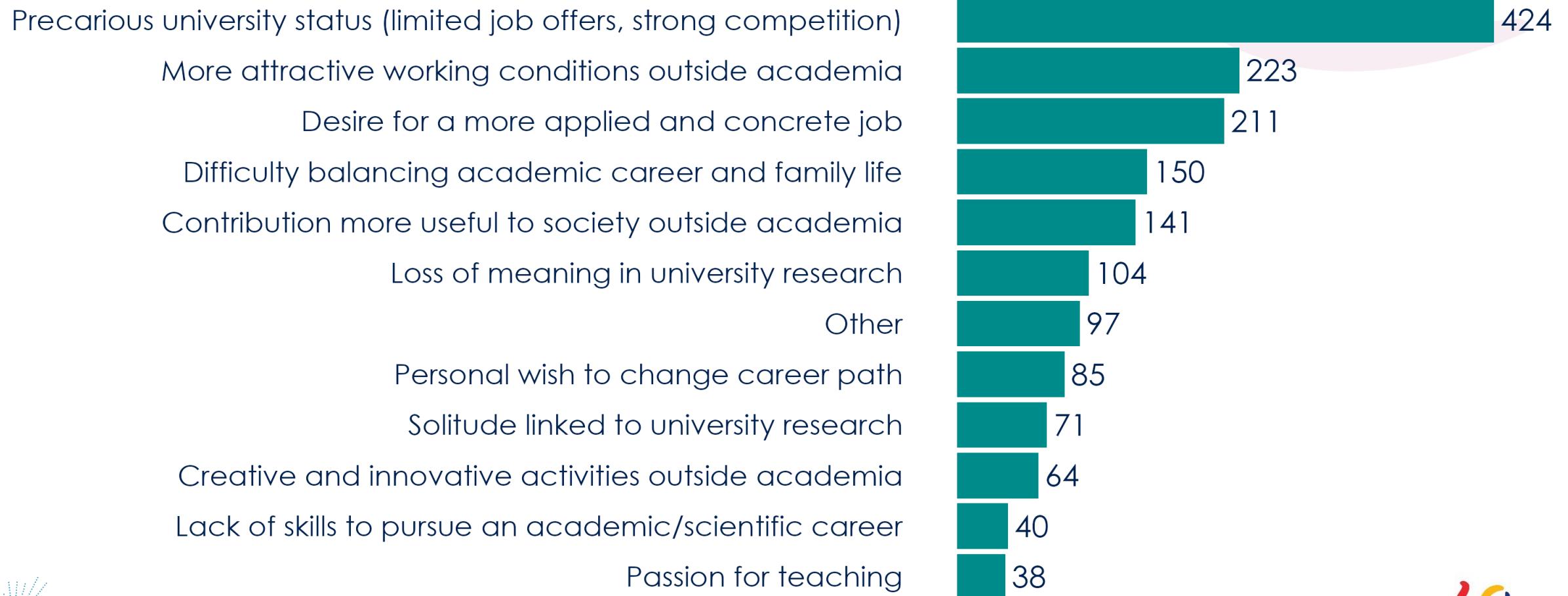


THOSE WHO STAY IN ACADEMIA HAVE TO LEAVE EVENTUALLY

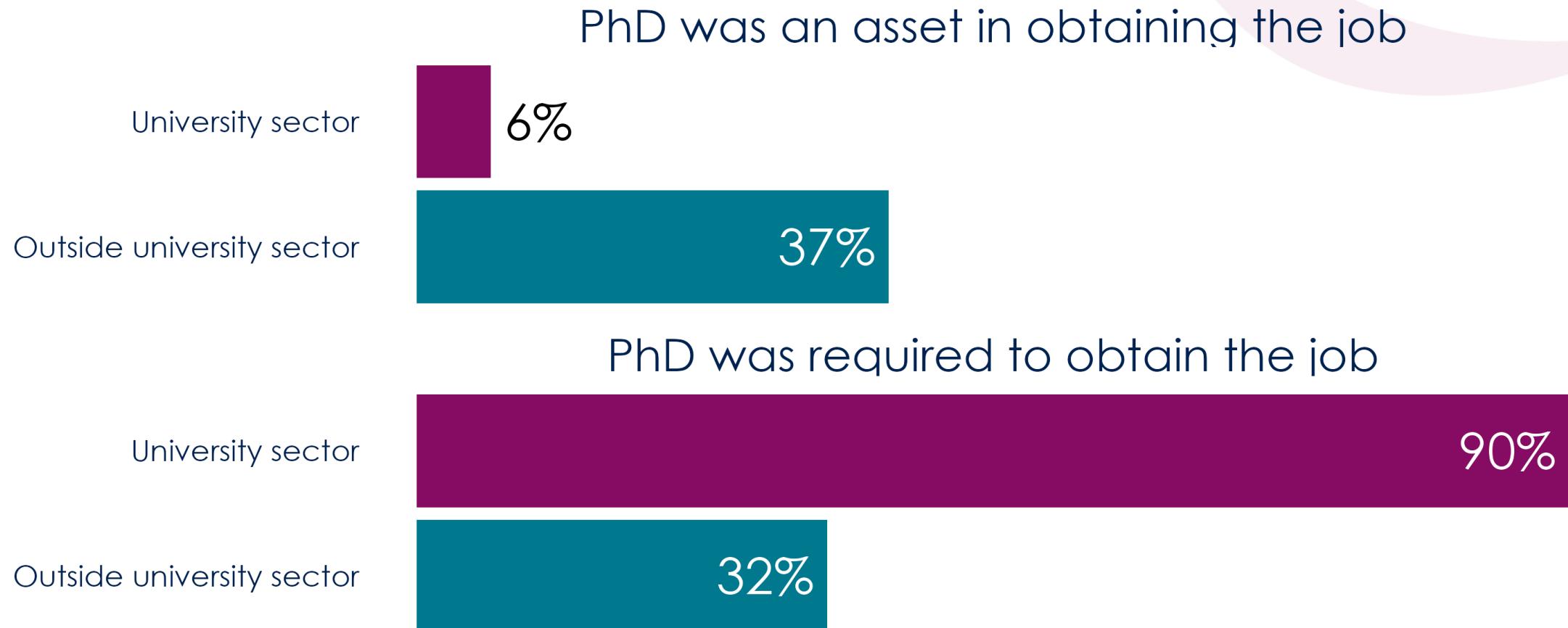
% of respondent still in academia by year of completion



MOSTLY BECAUSE OF PRECARITY OF THE UNIVERSITY STATUS

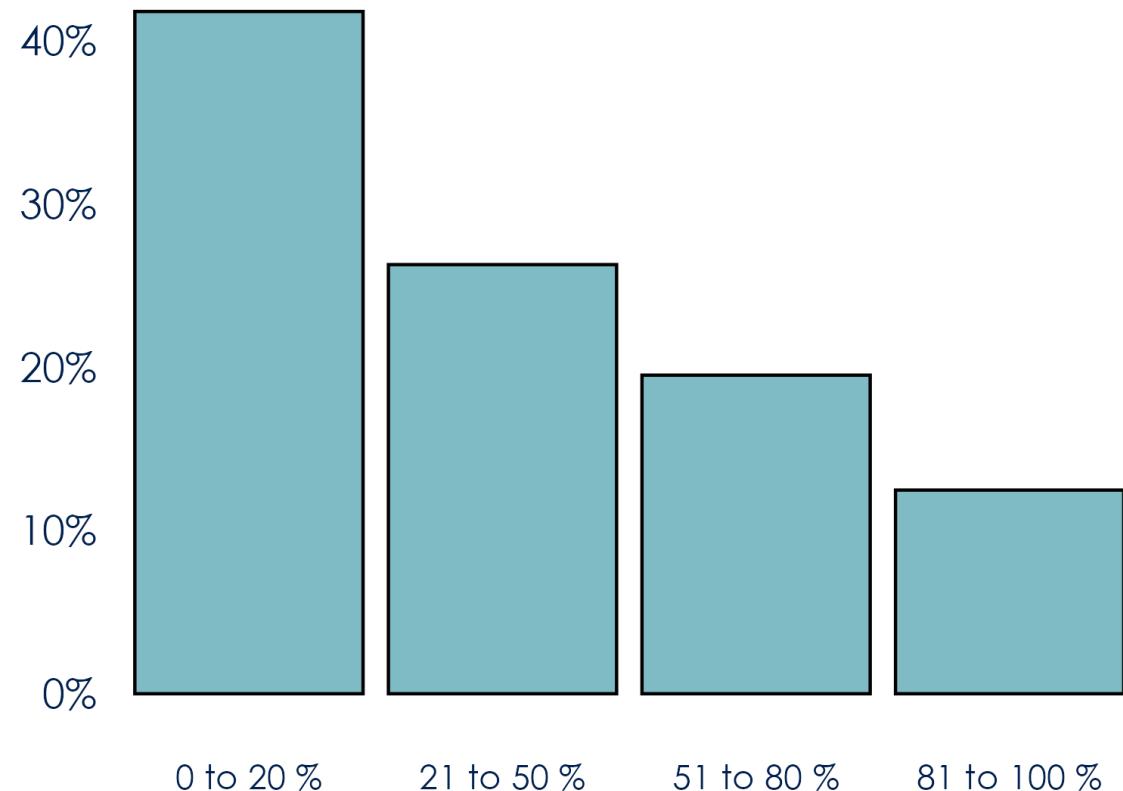


ONCE THEY STEP OUTSIDE ACADEMIA, THEY ARE OVEREDUCATED

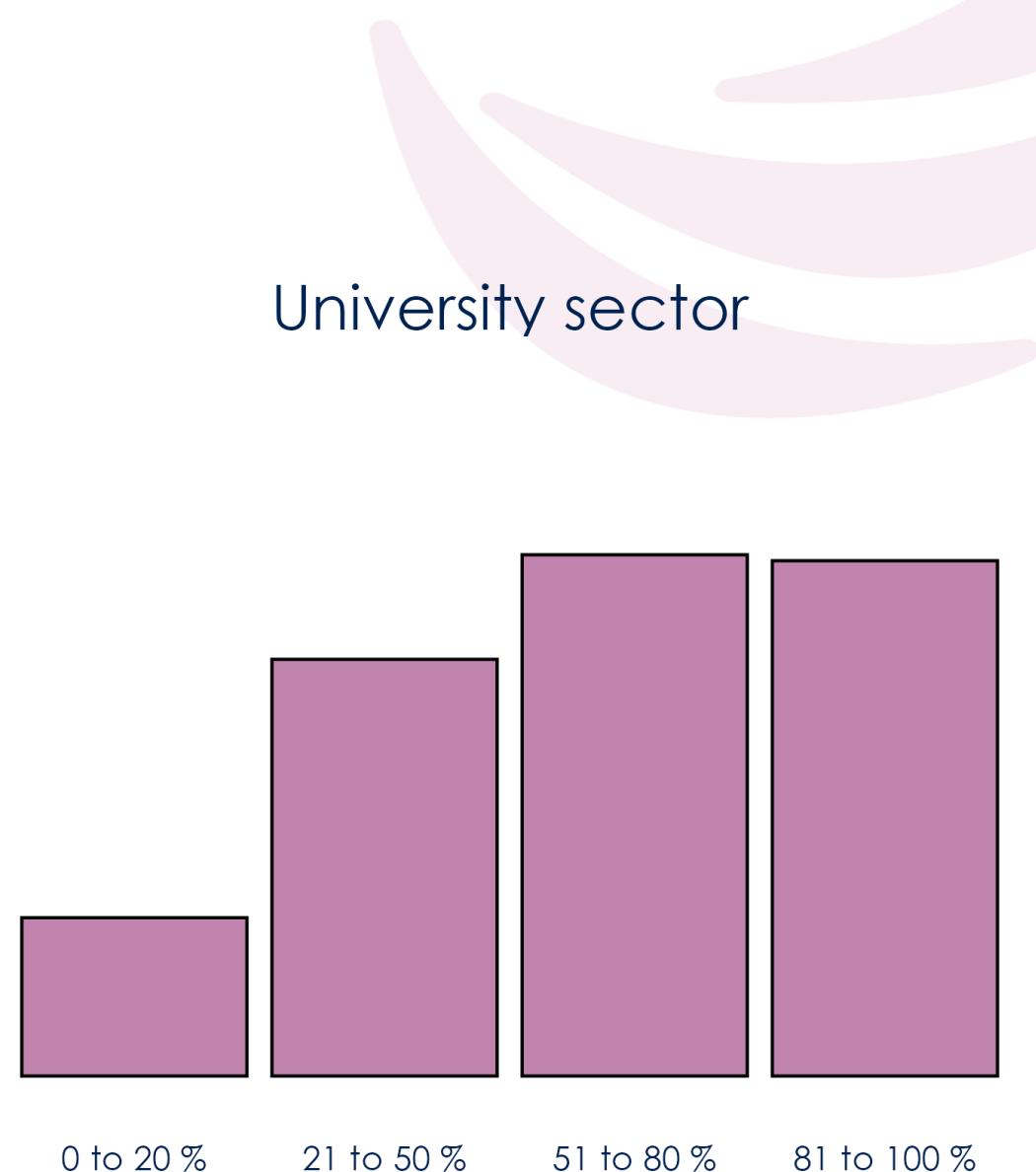


BUT THEY CONTINUE DOING RESEARCH!

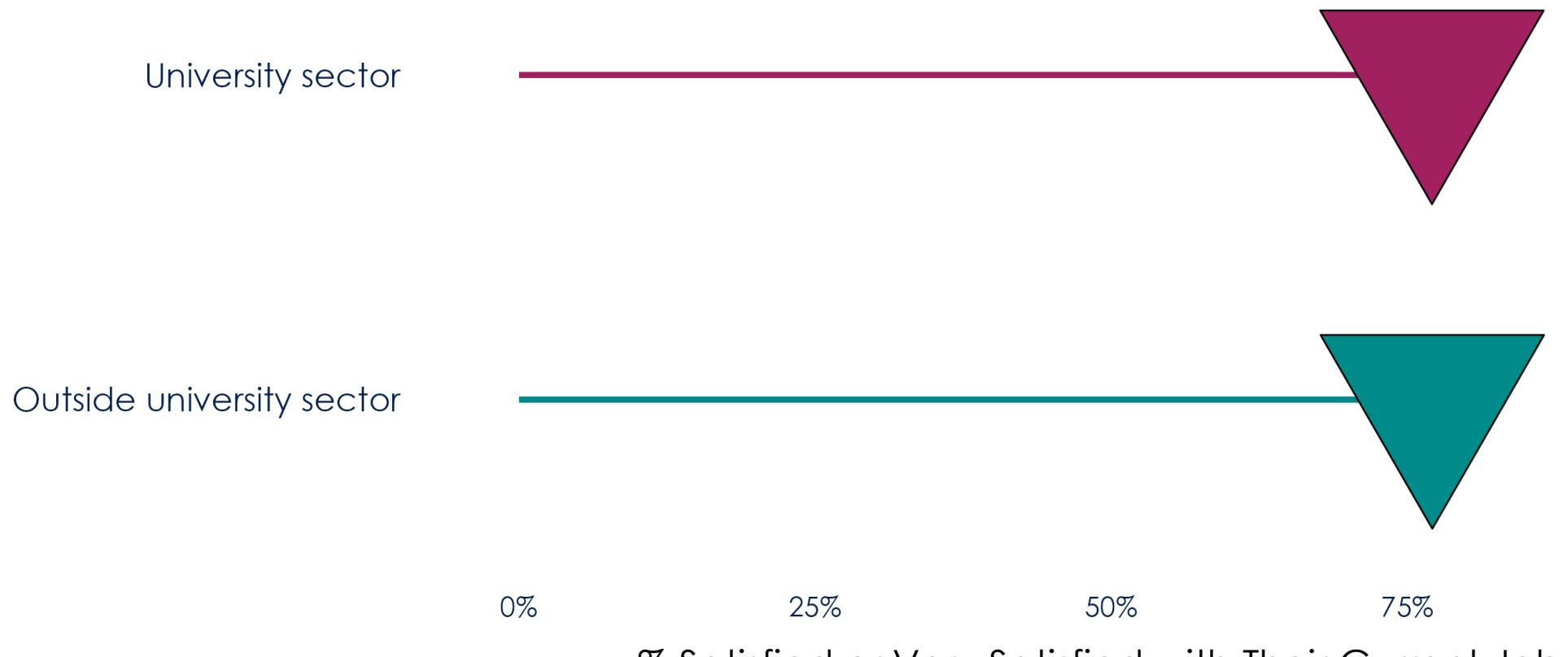
Outside university sector



University sector

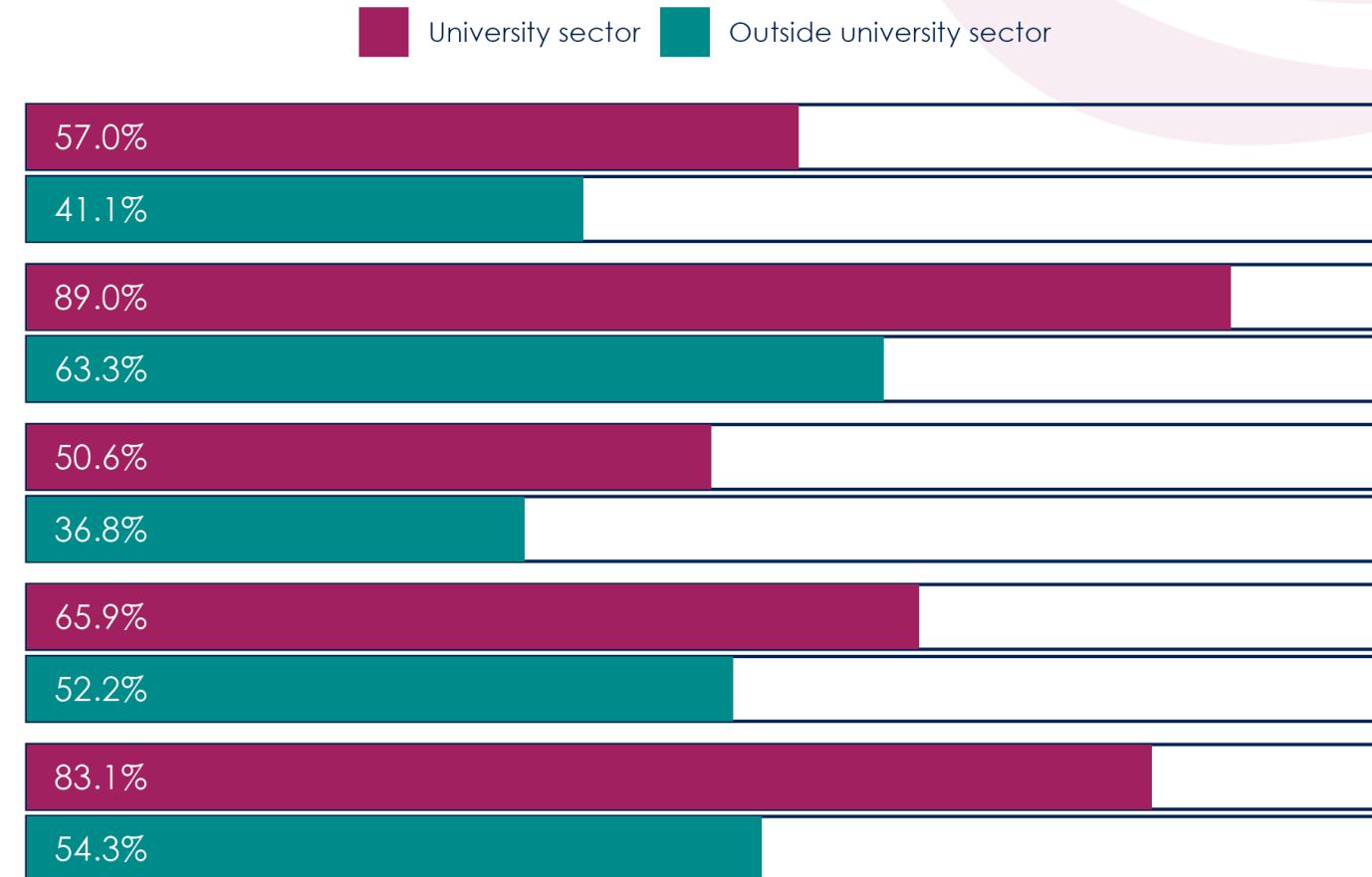


OVERALL, PHDS ARE HIGHLY SATISFIED, REGARDLESS OF THEIR SECTOR OF WORK.



AND THEY SEE THEIR PHD AS ADDING VALUE TO THEIR CAREER

- Faster career progression
- PhD adds value to current job
- Better salary
- Better career opportunities
- Job related to PhD field



TO CONCLUDE

Few Regrets! % who would do a PhD again (agree or strongly agree)



SECTION 2. ADDED VALUE OF THE PHD FOR EMPLOYERS



RECRUITING TALENTS STUDY



Goal: To better understand the perspective of employers outside the academic sector regarding the added value of a doctoral degree.

Themes: Strengths and weaknesses of PhD holders, employers' expectations of PhD graduates, the added value of a doctoral degree, motivations and barriers to hiring PhD holders, and motivations and barriers to collaborating with universities, etc.

PARTICIPANTS



614 non-academic employers



Supervisor/Director

90%



PhD in the staff

77%



Have a PhD

40%



Female

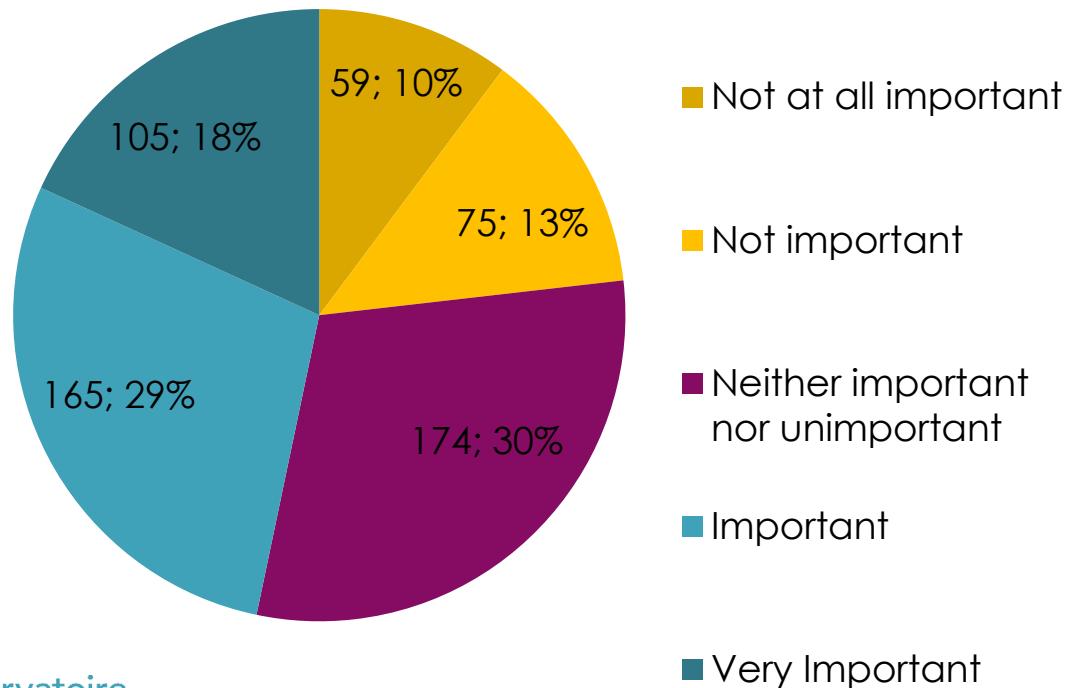
30%



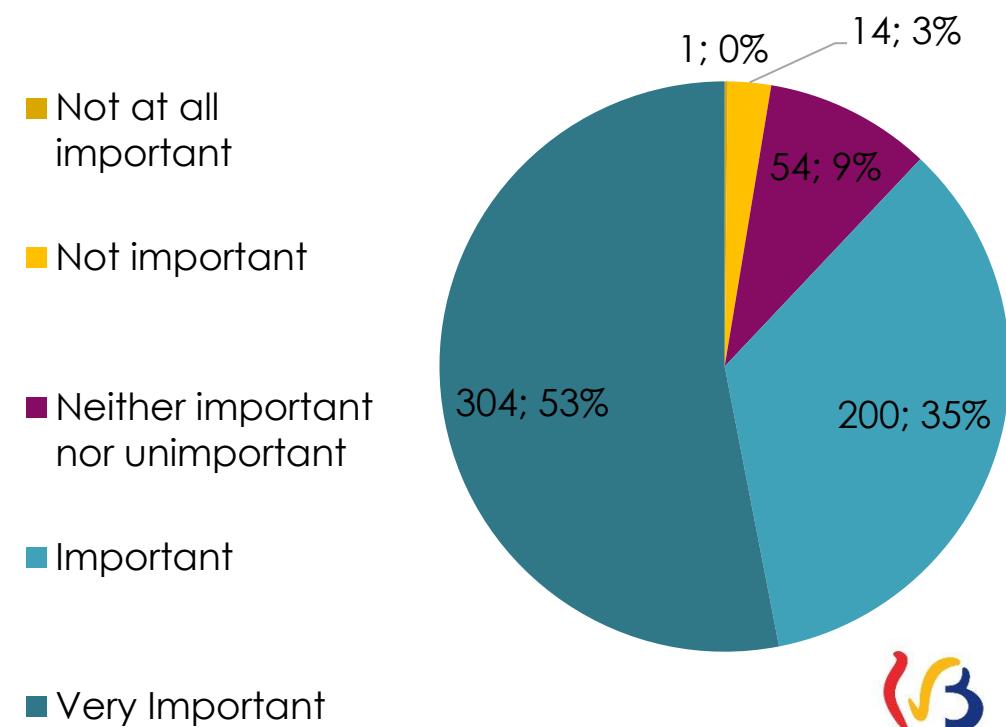
FOR HALF OF THE EMPLOYERS SURVEYED, RECRUITING PHD HOLDERS IS IMPORTANT FOR THEIR ORGANIZATION.

How important it is for you to

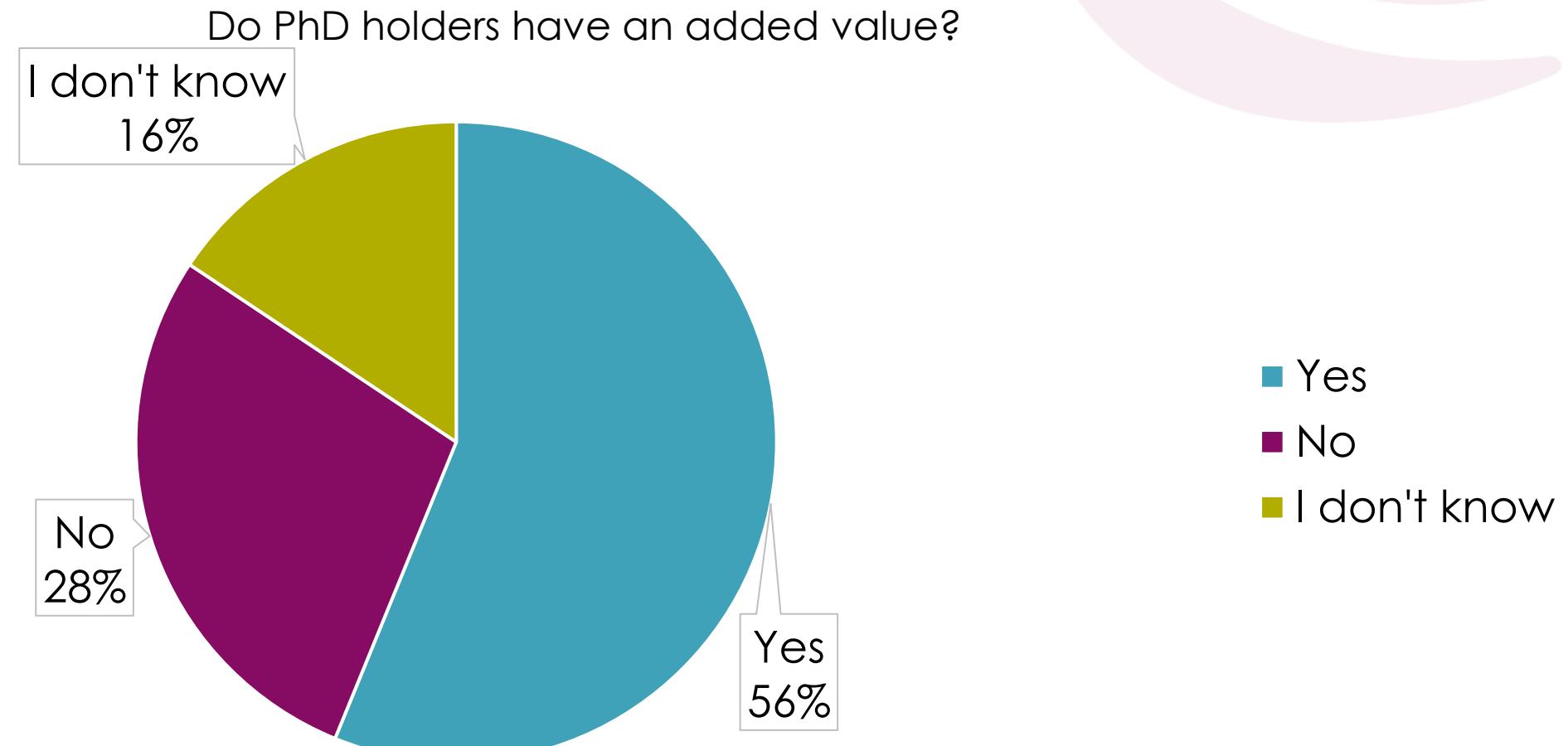
...recruit **PhD** holders? (n = 578)



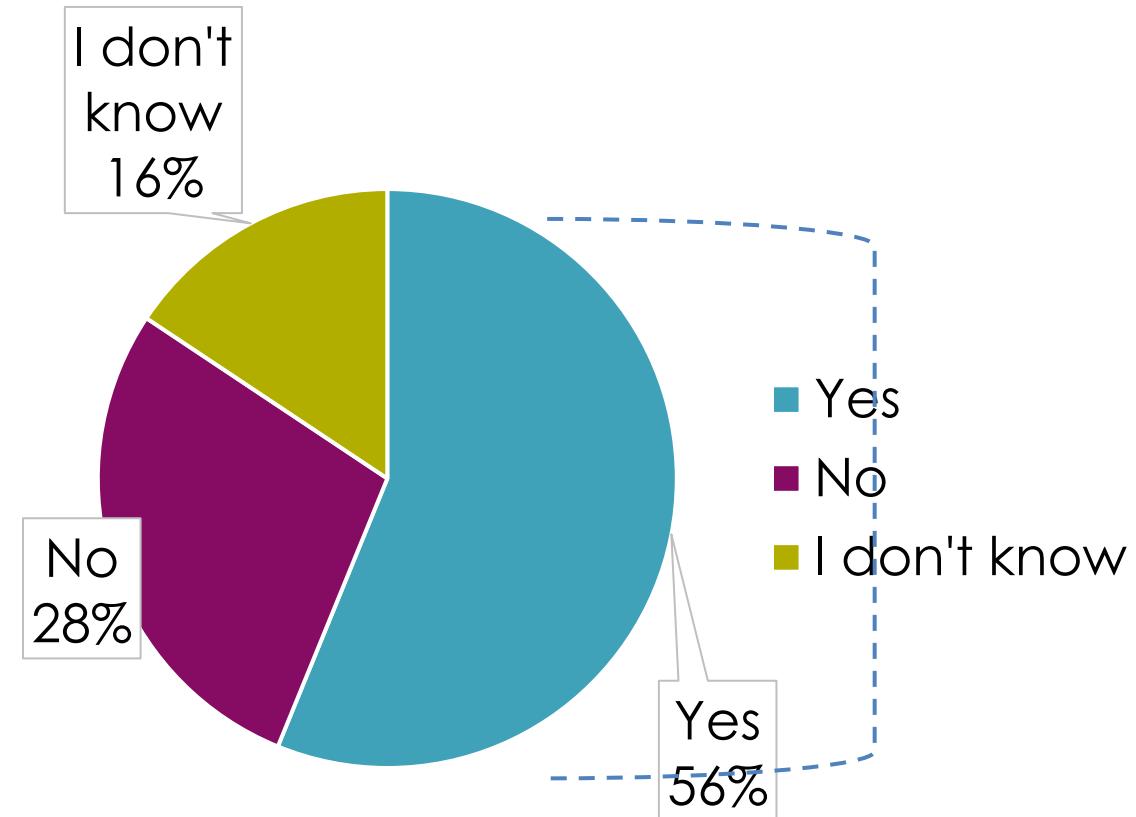
...recruit people with **Master's** qualifications? (n = 573)



SIMILARLY, A LITTLE OVER HALF OF EMPLOYERS RECOGNIZE THE ADDED VALUE OF A PHD COMPARED TO A MASTER'S DEGREE (N = 575)



WHO ARE THESE PEOPLE WHO SEE THE ADDED VALUE?



Respondents with a PhD degree

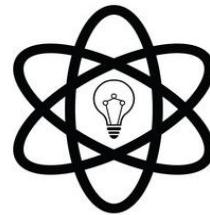


Respondents who work in organisations with an R&D department



Respondents from organisations that employ staff members with a PhD degree

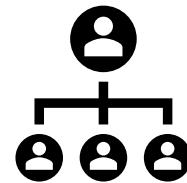
EMPLOYERS LOOK FOR... IN PHD HOLDERS



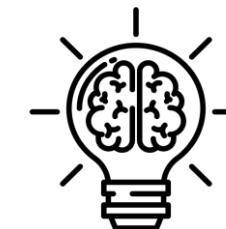
Scientific expertise



Collaboration and teamwork

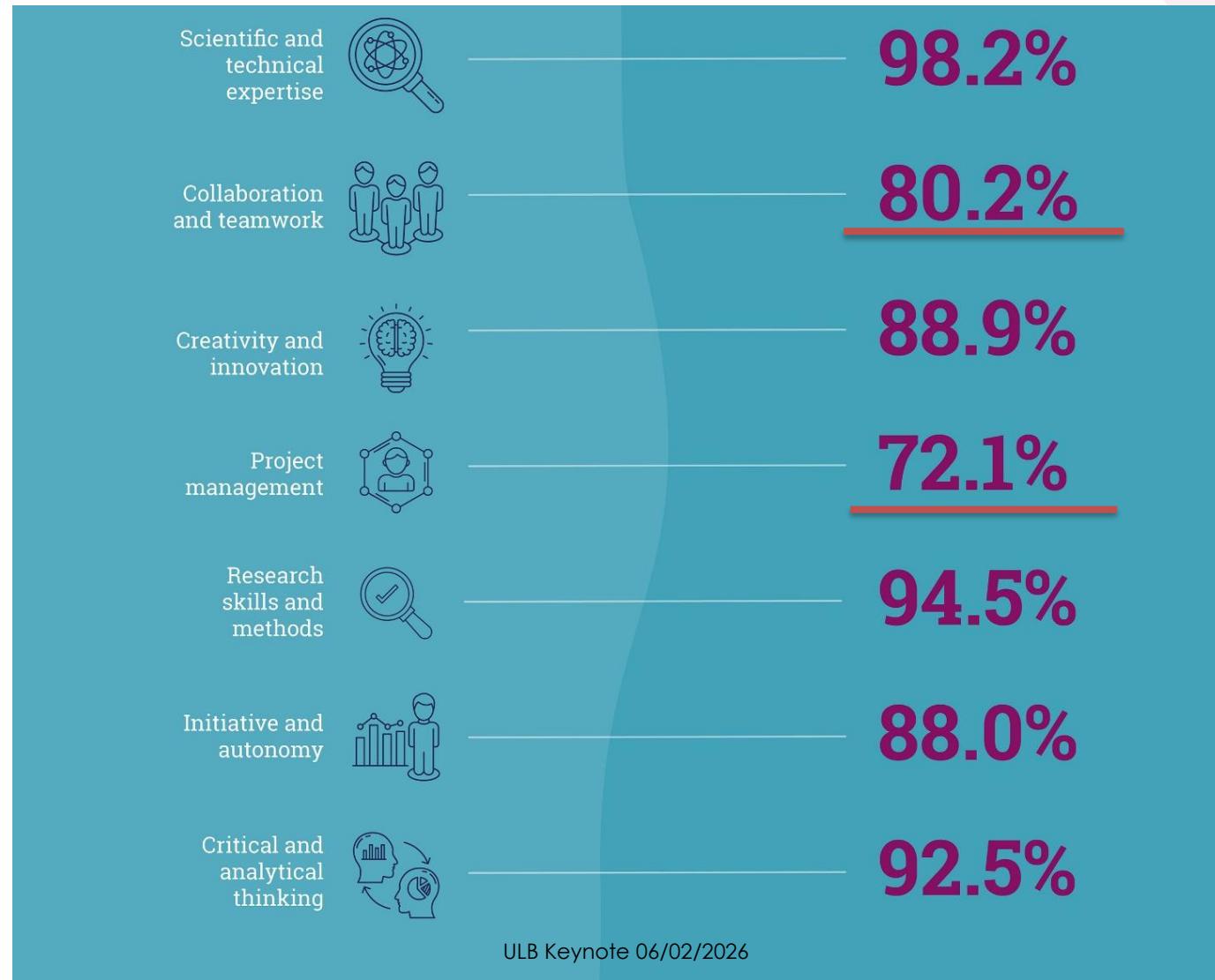


Project management

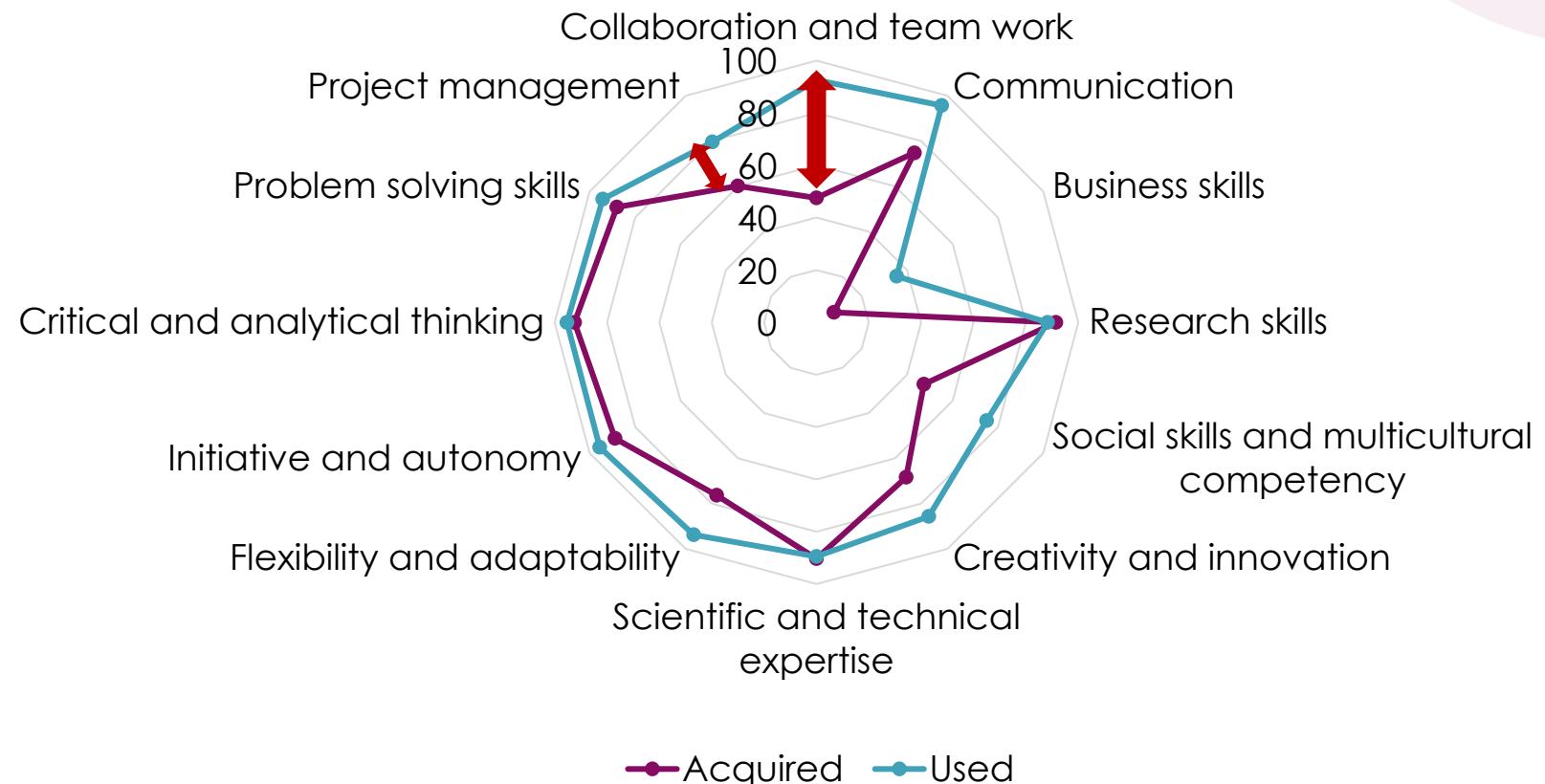


Creativity and innovation

AND THEY ARE GENERALLY VERY SATISFIED WITH THESE SKILLS



HOWEVER SOME PHD HOLDERS MAY EXPERIENCE A SKILLS GAP BETWEEN SKILLS THEY HAVE ACQUIRED AND THOSE REQUIRED IN THEIR PROFESSIONAL ROLES



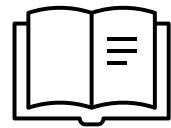
AND ACCORDING TO EMPLOYERS, IT SEEMS LIKE PHD HOLDERS ALSO HAVE SOME ADAPTATION PROBLEMS...



EMPLOYERS ALSO THINK THAT PHD HOLDERS HAVE UNIQUE STRENGTHS



AND FOR EMPLOYERS, MOST R&D ACTIVITIES ARE INITIATED, MANAGED AND LED BY PHD HOLDERS



Publications 76%



Knowledge creation 61%



Creation of new products and services 55%



WHAT ARE YOU SUPPOSED TO DO?



1. PLAN EARLY

Start thinking about your career from the beginning of your doctorate

- Reflect on the career path you would like to pursue after graduation
- Explore different career options inside and outside academia
- Develop a flexible career development plan and revisit it regularly

CAREER DEVELOPMENT PLAN



Career Development Plan-Year 1 (Draft)

Name of fellow:

Department:

Name of Supervisor:

Date:

BRIEF OVERVIEW OF RESEARCH PROJECT AND MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS EXPECTED (half page should be sufficient):

Long-term career objectives (over 5 years):

1. Goals:
2. What further research activity or other training is needed to attain these goals?

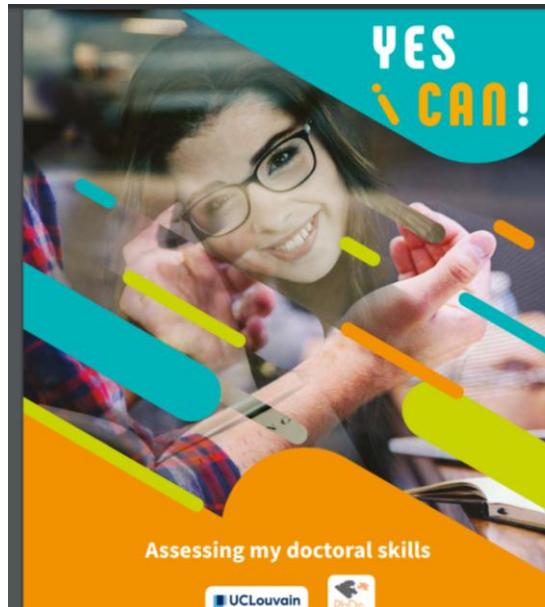
Short-term objectives (1-2 years):

1. Research results
 - o Anticipated publications:
 - o Anticipated conference, workshop attendance, courses, and /or seminar presentations:
2. Research Skills and techniques:
 - o Training in specific new areas, or technical expertise etc:
3. Research management:
 - o Fellowship or other funding applications planned (indicate name of award if known; include fellowships with entire funding periods, grants written/applied for/received, professional society presentation awards or travel awards, etc.)

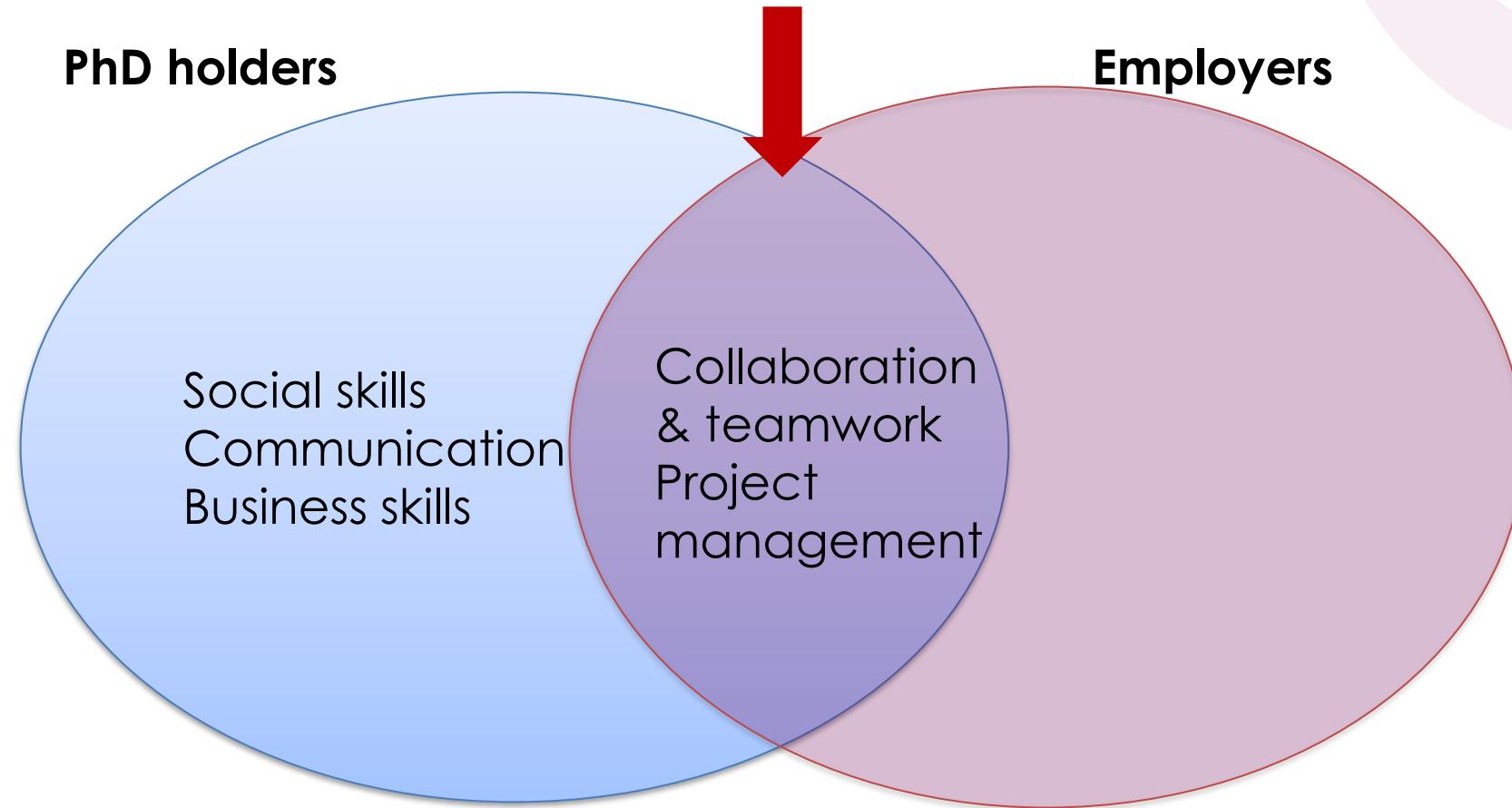
2. ASSESS AND DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS

Invest in skills development

- Identify your technical AND transferable skills
- Recognize areas that need further development
- Seek training



2. ASSESS AND DEVELOP YOUR SKILLS



3. UNDERSTAND THE EMPLOYER PERSPECTIVE AND KNOW YOUR VALUE

See your profile through the eyes of employers and articulate what you bring to the table

- Learn how employers perceive the strengths and weaknesses of PhD holders
- Adapt how you communicate your skills, value, expertise, and experience accordingly



4. PURSUE DIVERSE EXPERIENCES DURING YOUR PHD AND POSTDOC

Get out of your lab and broaden your profile

- Engage in collaborations
- Explore research stays, teaching and supervision opportunities
- Participate in job fairs, company visits or industry-related activities organized by universities
- Be proactive

5. USE AVAILABLE SUPPORT

Make full use of the university tools, resources and services available to you

- Transferable skills training
- Career services, career counseling/ individual coaching
- Mentorship programmes
- Networking events

5. USE AVAILABLE SUPPORT

Make full use of the resources of the Observatory

- Consult the Observatory's publications
- Use data and analysis to understand career trajectories and make informed decisions about your next career steps

LIST OF POSITIONS OUTSIDE ACADEMIA

Liste non exhaustive des intitulés de postes non académiques occupés par les titulaires de doctorat de la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles

Non-exhaustive list of non-academic positions held by the doctorate holders from the Wallonia-Brussels Federation



<https://observatoire.frs-fnrs.be/outilstools.html>

PHD EMPLOYERS DIRECTORY

Répertoire des Employeurs de Titulaires de Doctorat de l'Observatoire
Industrie, Service, Gouvernement/Pouvoirs publics
2021-2022

PhD Employers Directory of the Observatory
Industry, Service, Government/Public sector
2021-2022



Avec le soutien de la
 FÉDÉRATION
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<https://observatoire.frs-fnrs.be/outilstools.html>

ULB Keynote 06/02/2026

Publications

Devenir des titulaires de doctorat

The Future of PhD Holders



Pour collecter les données statistiques relatives aux titulaires de doctorat en Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles, l'Observatoire de la Recherche et des Carrières Scientifiques mène de façon longitudinale l'enquête « Devenir des titulaires de doctorat », ciblant l'insertion professionnelle des titulaires de doctorat des six universités francophones de Belgique. L'objectif est d'obtenir un aperçu détaillé de la situation professionnelle des titulaires de doctorat quel que soit leur domaine de recherche, leur secteur d'emploi et leur expérience professionnelle. L'enquête inclut une grande diversité de thématiques telles que l'expérience de formation doctorale, l'insertion professionnelle, la situation professionnelle, la satisfaction au travail ou encore les expériences de mobilité.

[→ Voir les publications...](#)

Recruter des Talents. La plus-value du doctorat selon les employeurs

Recruiting Talents. The added value of the doctorate for employers



Un nombre croissant de titulaires de doctorat travaillent en dehors du secteur universitaire. Toutefois, les résultats de nos études démontrent que seuls 34,5% des titulaires de doctorat qui travaillent en dehors du secteur universitaire occupent des emplois nécessitant un diplôme de doctorat ou une expérience postdoctorale. En outre, de nombreuses études évoquent une certaine réticence des employeurs à engager des titulaires de doctorat.

Cette étude a pour objectif de recueillir des données quantitatives et qualitatives auprès des employeurs en dehors du secteur universitaire afin d'analyser la plus-value du doctorat et d'identifier les motivations et les freins à l'engagement des titulaires de doctorat.

[→ Voir les publications...](#)

L'interruption du processus doctoral

Doctoral dropout



Au travers de 30 entretiens réalisés entre décembre 2018 et mars 2019 auprès de 12 doctorantes et doctorants ayant interrompu leur doctorat et de 18 promoteurs et promotrices, cette étude vise décrire des témoignages d'interruption du doctorat (temporaire ou plus souvent définitive) et ce qui caractérise ce processus. En allant au plus près du vécu des personnes concernées, nous pouvons souligner tout ce qui,

Thank you for your attention.



<http://www.observatoire.frs-fnrs.be>

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