

Study on the

Academic, Economic and Professional

Situations of Psychology Doctoral Students:

*Working Towards Internship Compensation!*

1<sup>st</sup> Report





**Fédération Interuniversitaire des Doctorants en Psychologie :**

The Fédération Interuniversitaire des Doctorants en Psychologie (FIDEP) is an inter-university network of Psychology doctoral students

The FIDEP's goals consist of promoting, developing and protecting Quebec's Psychology doctoral students' material, professional, cultural, pedagogical and social interests.

Université Laval

Université de Montréal

Université du Québec à Chicoutimi

Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières

Université du Québec à Montréal

Université de Sherbrooke

We are proud to reveal results from the most important survey carried out by the FIDEP. Our Federation is determined to report on Psychology doctoral students' current situations, from academic and economic fronts to their professional future. We are particularly concerned about the problems unpaid interns encounter and the debt level they have to face during their first years as psychologists in the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux (MSSS), psychology graduates' main employer.

*Geneviève Laberge*

FIDEP President

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## Background and Goals

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### Background

Since its inception, the FIDEP's goal has been to obtain fair and equitable compensation for internships in psychology. The internship consists of a year of full-time (1,600 hours) supervised and unpaid work. A component of this goal is to gather information about the life conditions of psychology graduate students and interns. Ever since its implementation, the FIDEP has received a considerable amount of support from both university and professional sectors, yet interns in psychology have not received any recognition for the value of their services provided.

### Goals

The survey's goal is to report on psychology doctoral students' academic, economic and professional situations so the FIDEP can support its claims in favour of fair and equitable internship compensation in the public network. The secondary goal is to identify the beneficial effects that paid internships would have on labour attraction and retention in the psychology sector within the MSSS.

## Methodology

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This study was conducted on the Internet from **February 6 to 17, 2012** among **608 psychology doctoral students** from all ten universities in Quebec offering graduate programs recognized by the Ordre des psychologues du Québec.

The respondents had access to the study's questionnaire in the language of their choice, either French or English.

A random sample of this size has **an error margin of  $\pm 3.5\%$  19 times on 20.**

In the tables, the **orange** numbers are significantly higher than the others and the **blue** numbers are significantly lower than the others.

The different doctoral programs are identified under the following acronyms:

Clinical psychology	PsyD
Research and clinical	PhD-RI
Research	PhD-Rech
Community psychology	PhD-Comm

## Highlights

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### **Interns are not compensated in exchange for the professional services they offer.**

While the majority of interns (72.3%) are not compensated, a quarter of them receive compensation that is on average inferior to minimum wage.<sup>1</sup>

### **The average debt expected at the end of studies for psychology doctoral students is \$21,023.**

The majority of doctoral students (59.8%) will finish their studies with over \$15,000 in student debt.

### **Wage conditions currently offered within the public network are the main barriers causing**

### **future psychologists to look for work elsewhere.**

The great majority of them (80.9%) do not plan on working there due to the wage conditions offered.

### **A psychologist's minimum salary should be between \$50,000 and \$80,000.**

Doctoral students (89.0%) believe that a psychology doctoral student's salary after graduation should be over \$50,000, whereas an experienced psychologist's salary should be over \$80,000 (90.1%).

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<sup>1</sup>It is important to note that some workplaces offer a symbolic amount and that some doctoral students complete their internship in the private sector.

**A scholarship during the internship with the condition that the intern continues to work in the public network for a few years would motivate interns to continue working there.**

Nearly three quarters of doctoral students (71.6%) consider that a scholarship during the internship in exchange for a commitment to work at the MSSS would encourage them to work there.

**Doctoral students would be willing to work at the MSSS for over a year if it would offer them an internship scholarship in return.**

While 92.3% of doctoral students would be willing to work there for over a year, only 7.7% believe that a one-year commitment would be acceptable.

**Internship compensation and the recognition of the intern's work would encourage doctoral students to choose the public network as their employer.**

While 90.7% of doctoral students believe that internship compensation would encourage them to work in Quebec's public network after graduation, only 9.3% believe it would not have an impact on their decision.

**Internship compensation should consist of at least \$20,000.**

The majority of doctoral students (62.3%) estimate that compensation over \$20,000 would be reasonable for the internship.

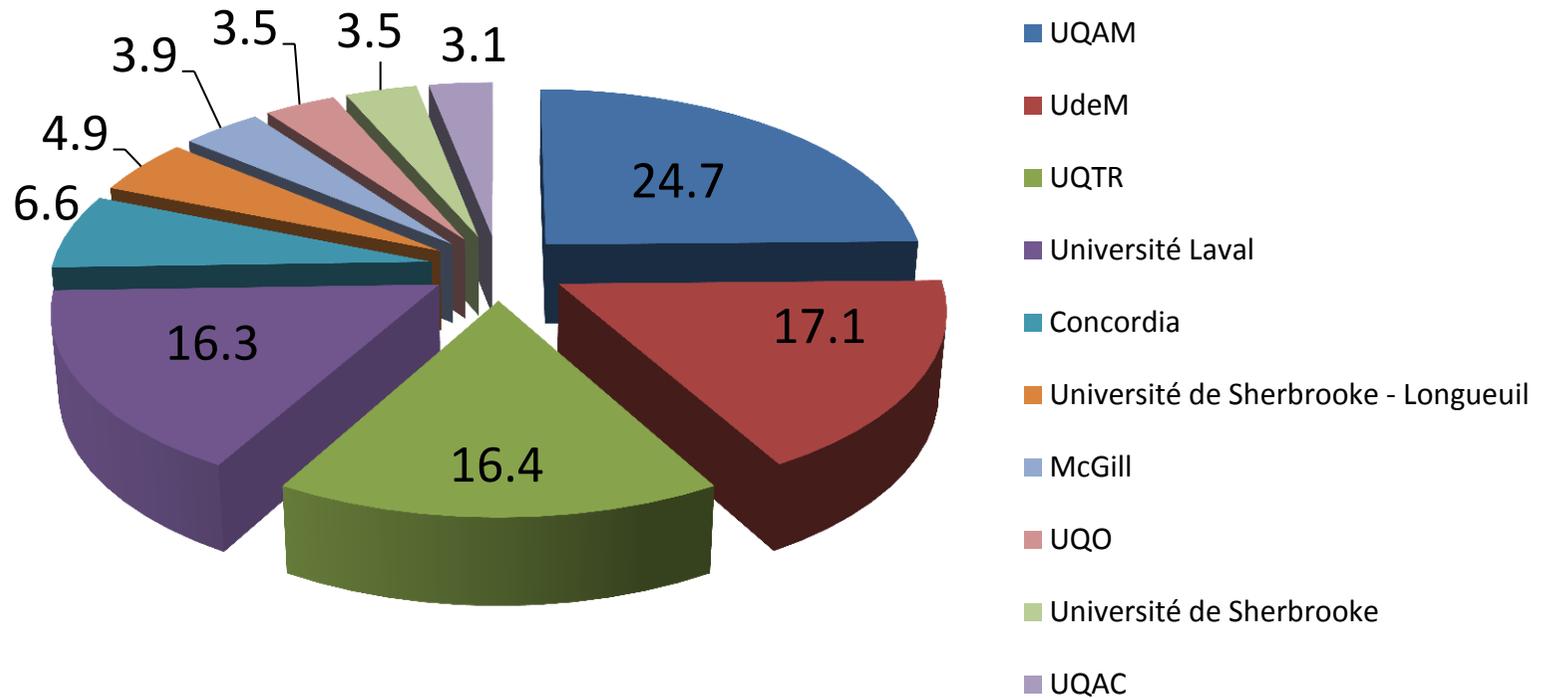
## Doctoral Students' Academic Situation

**The majority of doctoral students are enrolled in one of Quebec's universities.**

The majority of participating doctoral students are doing their studies at Université du Québec à

Montréal (24.7%), Université de Montréal (17.1%), Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (16.4%) and Université Laval (16.3%).

*Question 4. At which university do you study? (in percentage; N = 608)*



### Doctoral studies in psychology are expected to take 4.8 years on average.

The doctoral clinical and research program and community psychology program are longer than other programs (5.4 years; 5.2 years).

The clinical doctoral program is shorter than the other doctoral programs in psychology (4.0 years).

These results indicate that the duration of studies can largely vary from one program to another. These differences must be considered in the calculations of financial assistance (Aide financière aux études, AFE), in internship compensation as well as in psychology doctoral students' salaries after graduation.

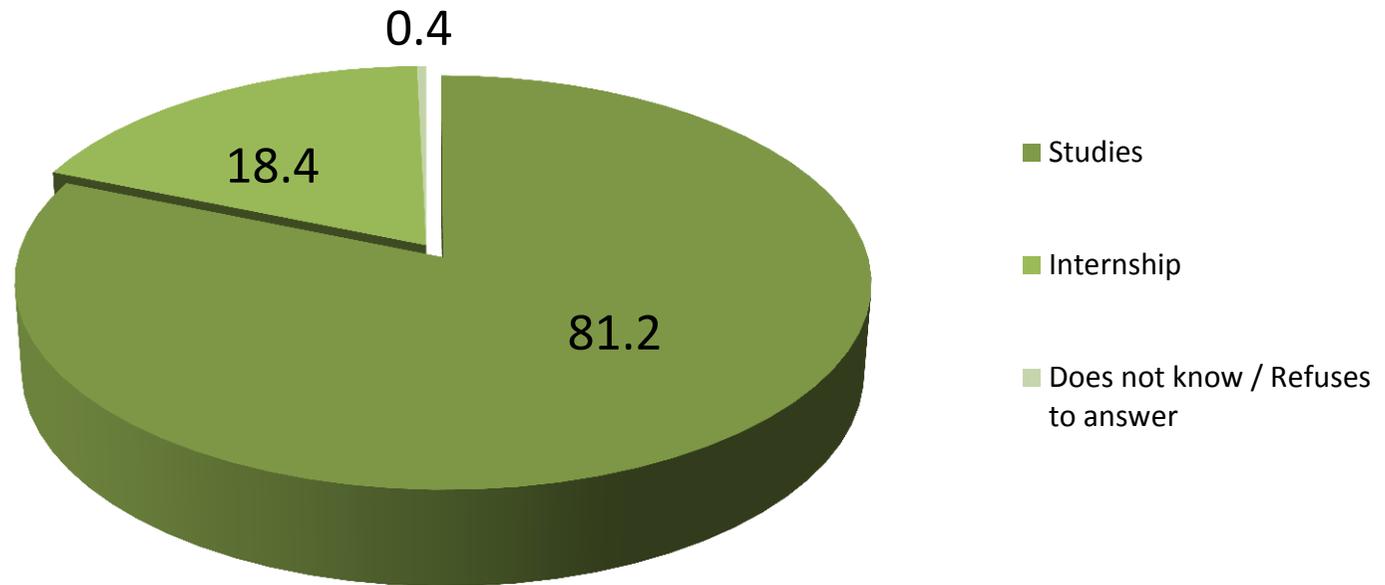
*Question 5. What is your program? Question 6. How many years are anticipated for your program? (average based on program)*

Program	N	Average (Standard Deviation)
PsyD	236	4.0 (0.6)
PhD-Rech	54	4.4 (0.7)
PhD-Comm	6	5.2 (0.7)
PhD-RI	312	5.4 (0.7)
All Programs	<b>608</b>	4.8 (1.0)

**The majority of the survey participants are currently completing their studies.**

While 81.2% of participants are currently completing their studies, 18.4% are working in their internship workplace.

*Question 8. Are you currently completing an internship? (in percentage; N = 608)*



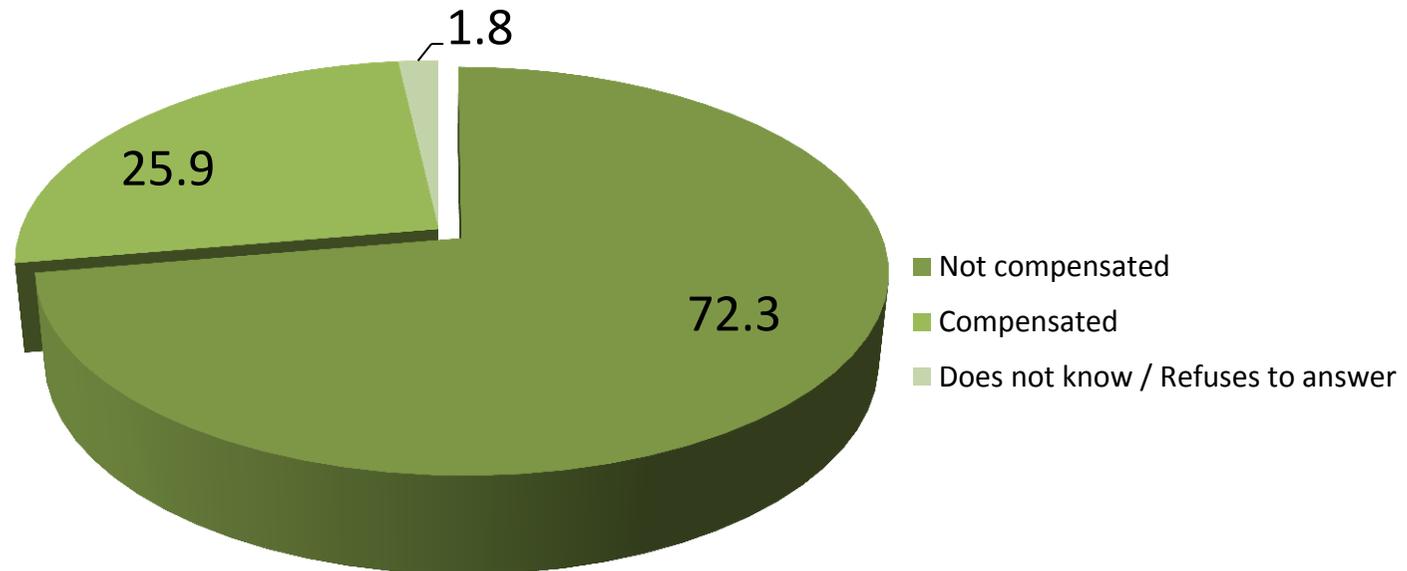
## Doctoral Students' Economic Situation

**Interns are not compensated in exchange for the professional services they offer.**

While the majority of interns (72.3%) are not compensated, a quarter of them receive compensation for the services they give to the clientele.

*Question 11. Is your internship compensated? (in percentage; N = 112)*

These results demonstrate that internship compensation is inequitable and that measures must be taken for everyone to receive recognition for their work.



**The few compensated interns receive \$10,592 on average in exchange for their professional services.**

When compensated, interns receive less than minimum wage, the equivalent of \$8.15 per hour.

These results demonstrate how interns do not necessarily receive a fair and equitable recognition according to their abilities, even when they are compensated.

*Question 12. If you answered "yes" to the previous question, what is the total amount you are receiving?*

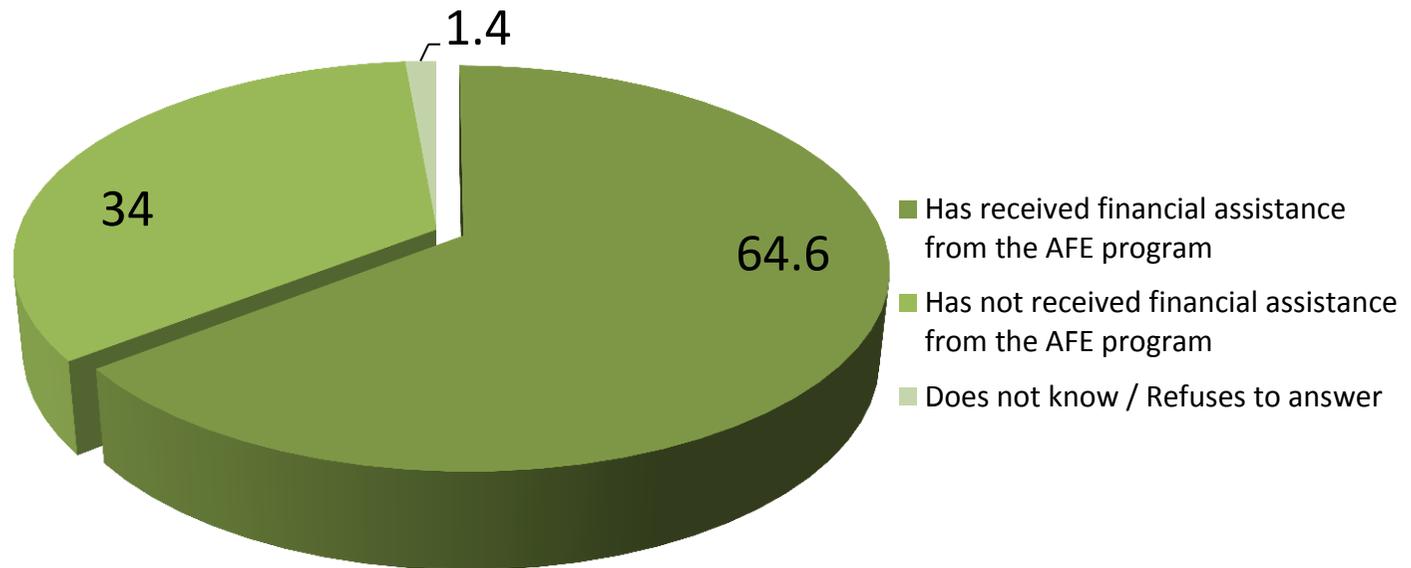
Program	N	Average (in Dollars)	Standard Deviation (in Dollars)
PsyD	9	8,491	12,476
PhD-Comm	3	22,543	19,037
PhD-RI	18	9,651	10,982
Total	30	10,592	12,463

**The Aide financière aux études (AFE) program lends money to most psychology doctoral students.**

These results demonstrate doctoral students' dependence to financial assistance when completing their studies or internship.

The majority of doctoral students (64.5%) benefits from a financial loan from the government through the AFE program.

*Question 15. During your doctoral studies, have you obtained loans from the loans/bursaries government program (Aide financière aux études du gouvernement du Québec)? (in percentage; N = 608)*



**The average debt expected at the end of studies for psychology doctoral students is \$21,023.**

The majority of doctoral students (59.8%) will finish their studies with over \$15,000 in student

debt, which brings it to a total of over \$19,500 to reimburse in 15 years with a 3.5% annual interest rate.

*Question 20. At the end of your studies, you expect your total debt level (including your undergraduate studies) to be at:*

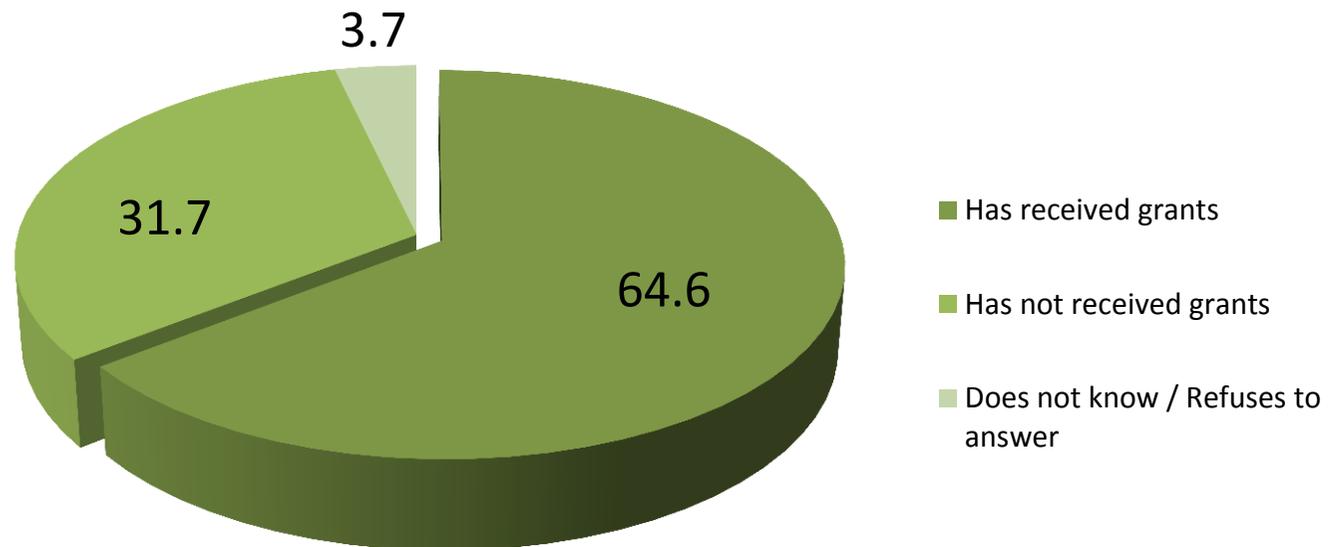
Total Debt (\$)	N	Percentage
0	64	11.0
0-10,000	115	19.7
10,000-15,000	56	9.6
15,000-20,000	59	10.1
20,000-25,000	63	10.8
25,000-30,000	46	7.9
30,000-35,000	47	8.0
35,000-40,000	46	7.9
40,000-45,000	29	5.0
45,000 and over	59	10.1
Total	584	100.0

**All sources combined, only a little more than half of doctoral students receive a grant during their doctoral studies.**

Only 64.6% of doctoral students receive grants (mainly from the AFE program, from their

university, and from granting agencies). In regards to grants from the AFE program, the median amount comes to only \$9,000. Internship compensation would make up for this loss of earnings.

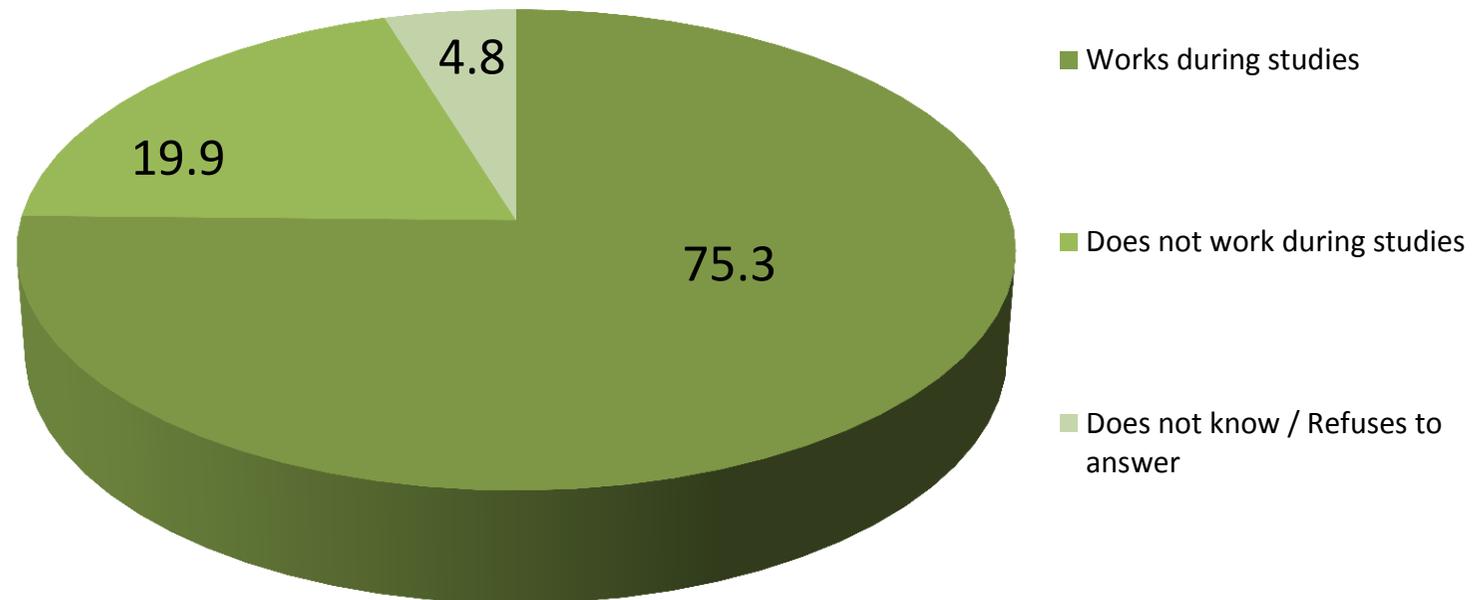
*Question 22. During my doctoral studies, have you received one or many scholarship(s)? (in percentage; N = 608)*



**Most doctoral students must deal with both academic and professional obligations during their studies.**

While nearly three quarters of doctoral students (75.3%) work during their studies, only 19.9% of them do not work.

*Question 26. Are you or have you worked during your doctoral studies? (in percentage; N = 608)*



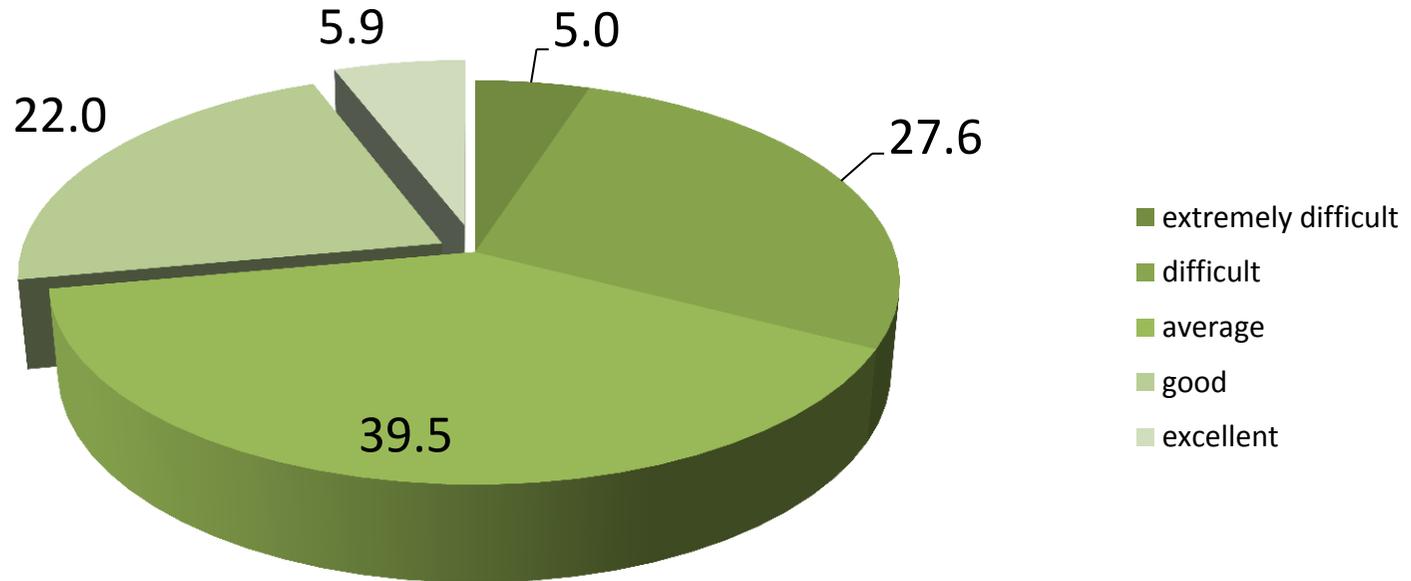
**The majority of doctoral students are not in a good financial situation.**

A third of doctoral students describe their financial situation as difficult or extremely difficult (32.5%) and 39.5% of them describe it as average.

Only a little over a quarter of students are satisfied with their financial situation (27.9%).

These results justify the obligation of taking future actions to ensure a good financial situation for doctoral students, interns and young psychologists.

*Question 33. Do you consider your financial situation to be... (in percentage; N = 608)*



## Doctoral Students' Professional Situation

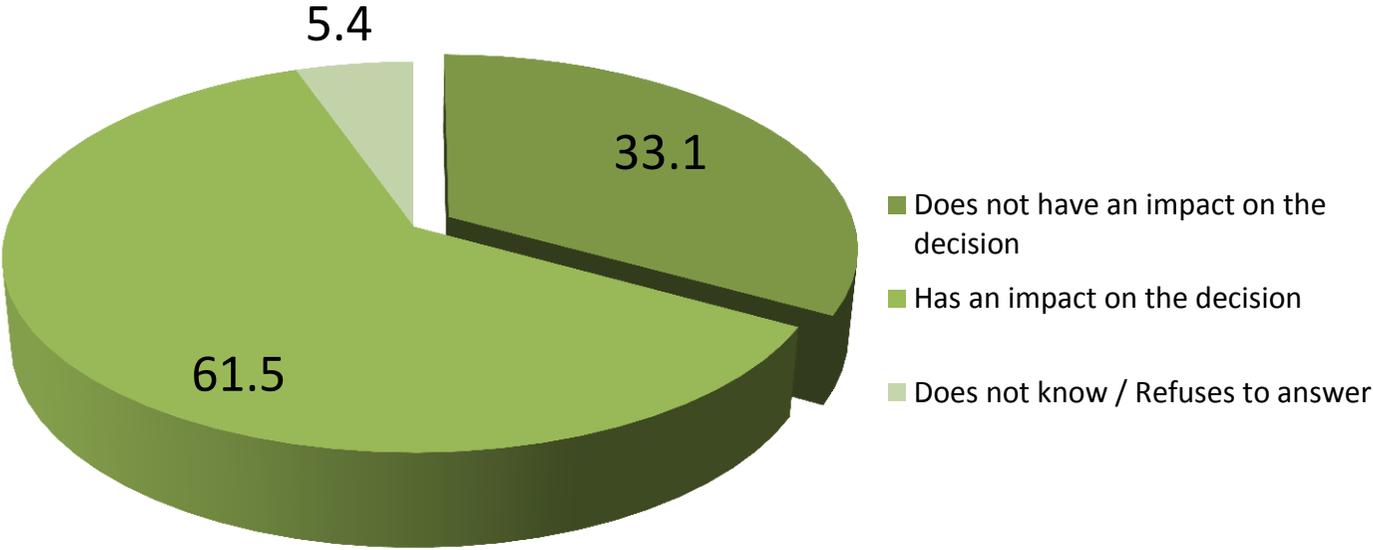
**Doctoral students' financial situation has an impact on their choice to work or not in the public sector after graduation.**

The majority of doctoral students (61.5%) say their current financial situation will have an impact

on their decision to work either in the public or private sector after graduation.

These results confirm that student debt and psychologists' salaries influence career paths after graduation.

*Question 34. Will your current financial situation have an impact on your choice to work in the public or private sector? (in percentage; N = 608)*



**Doctoral students desire to work in Quebec, but do not necessarily plan on working in the public network full time.**

While 85.3% of doctoral students would like to work in Quebec, less than a quarter of them

(22.6%) somewhat or totally agree with working full time in the public sector.

However, half of them (50.5%) somewhat or totally agree with working part time in the public network.

*Question 35. Express your opinion with regards to the following statements... (in percentage; N=524)*

	After my studies, I plan on working in Quebec.	After my studies, I would like to work full time in the Quebec public network.	After my studies, I would like to work part time in the Quebec public network.
Totally disagrees	3.6	20.9	9.0
Somewhat disagrees	5.6	24.5	10.8
More or less agrees	9.7	26.0	24.0
Somewhat agrees	18.2	15.2	40.4
Totally agrees	57.4	7.4	10.1

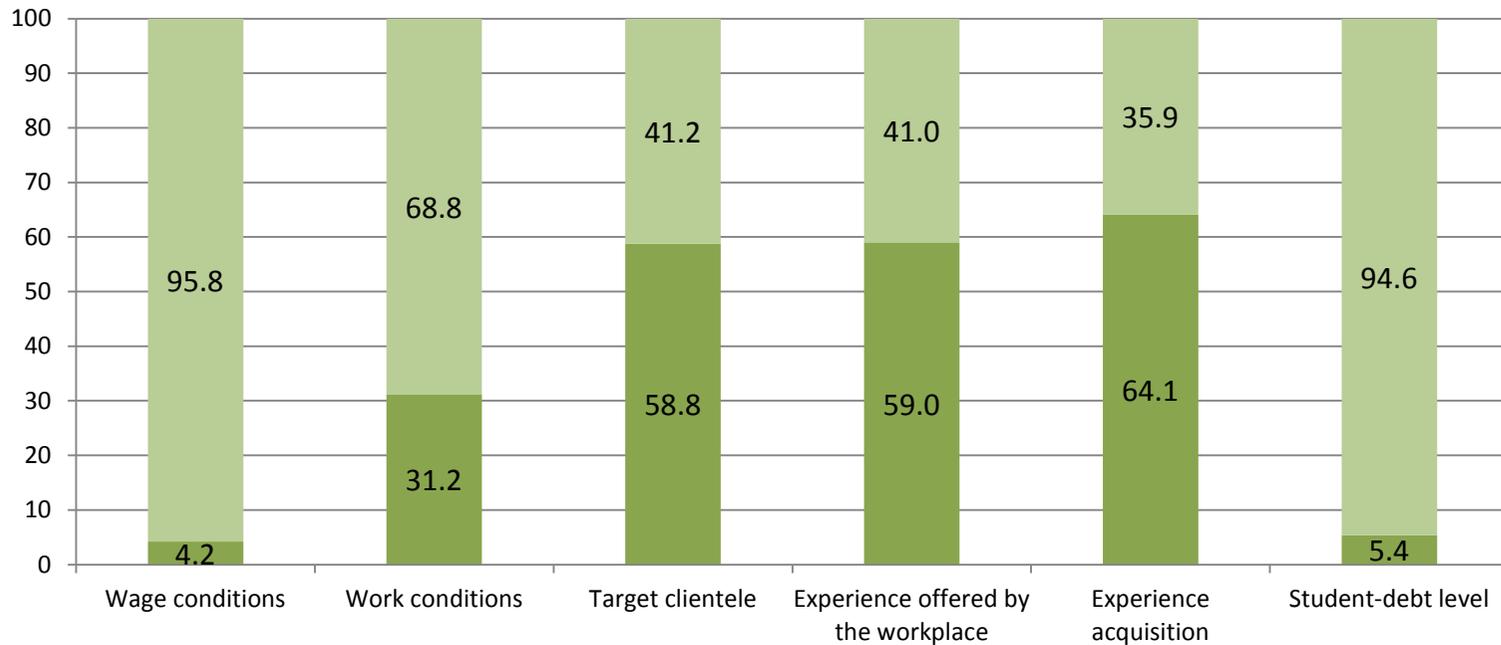
**Doctoral students are interested in the work offered in the public network to gain experience and learn from the workplace.**

The majority of doctoral students consider the public network as a workplace where they can learn and gain experience (59.0%; 64.1%).

Only 4.2% of doctoral students consider the public network for its wage conditions or because of their student debt.

These results show that reimbursing student debt in exchange for a commitment to work in the public sector would attract more psychologists to the network. A better salary would also attract more psychologists to this workplace.

Question 36. *After my studies, I would like to work in the Quebec public network for the following reasons: (in percentage; N = 554)*



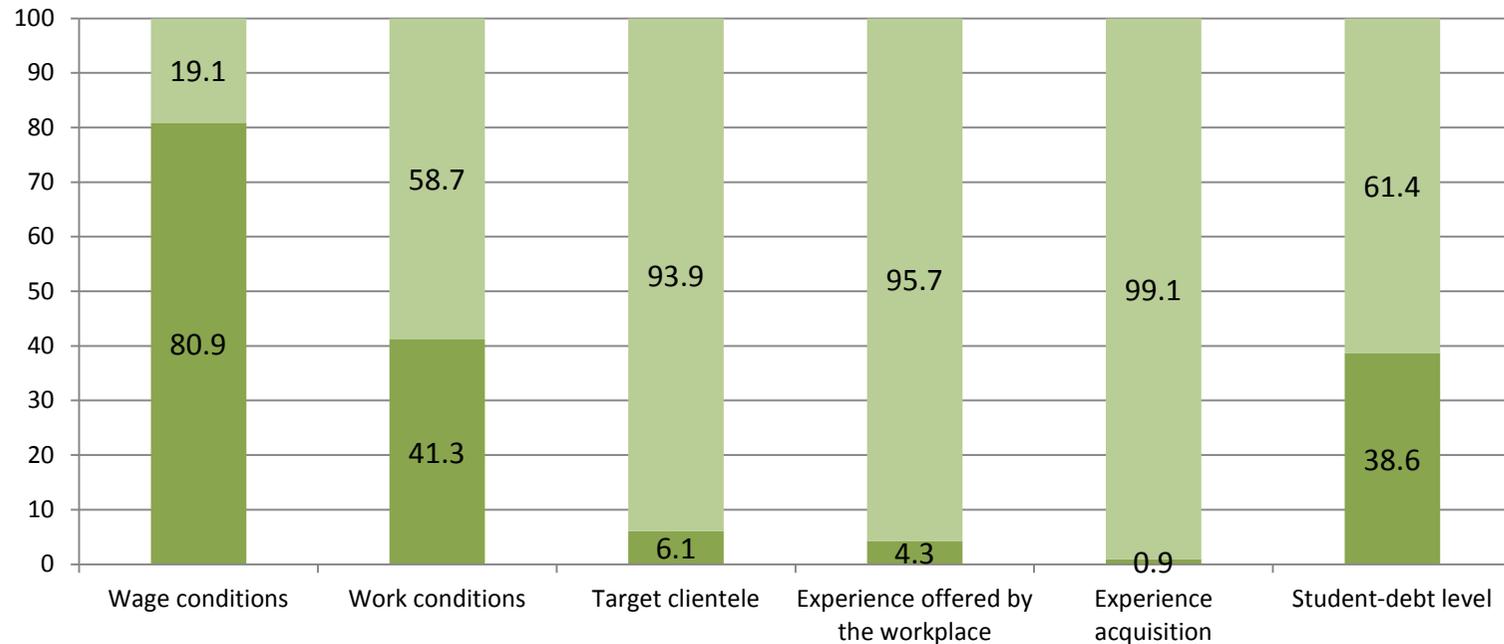
**The current wage conditions offered in the public network are the main barriers causing future psychologists to look for work elsewhere.**

The great majority of doctoral students (80.9%) do not pursue a career in the public network due to its wage conditions.

Furthermore, over a third of doctoral students (respectively 41.3% and 38.6%) claim to not pursue a career in the public network because of its wage conditions and their student-debt level.

These results demonstrate that the government must act upon the student-debt issue for students in psychology.

*Question 37. After my studies, I do not intend on working in the Quebec public network for the following reasons: (in percentage; N = 554)*



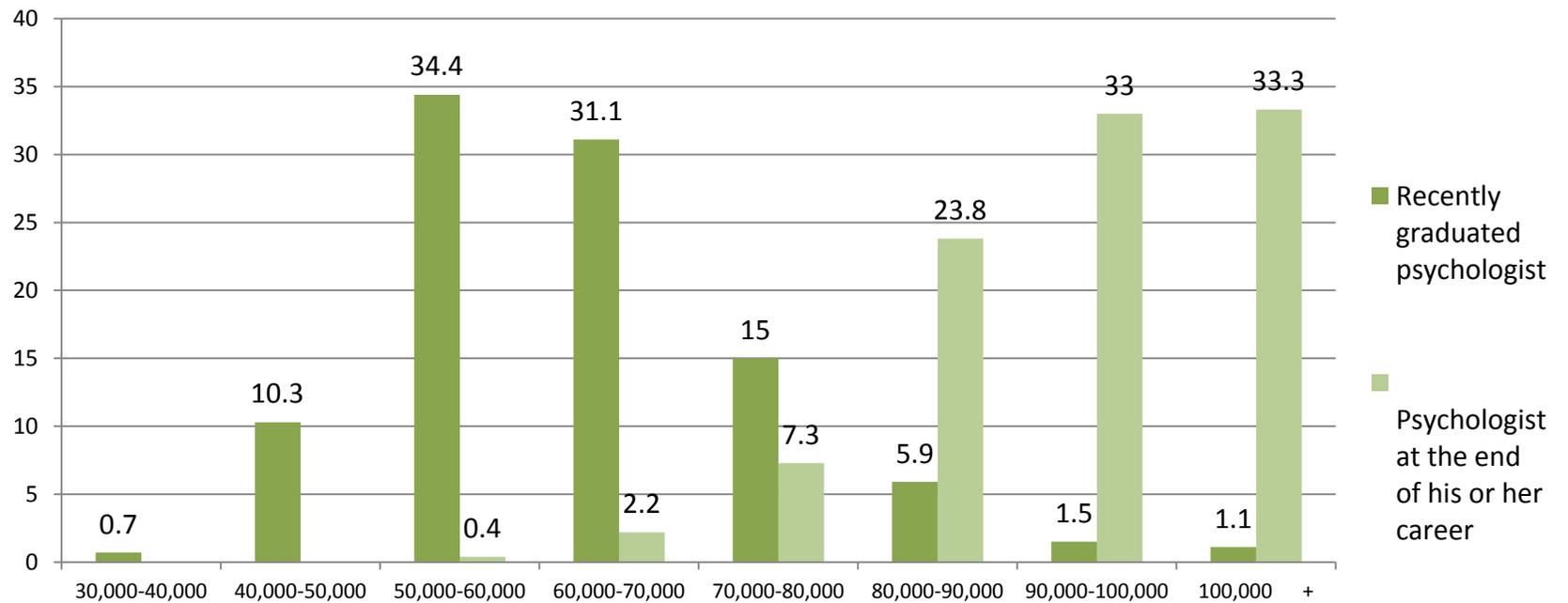
**A psychologist’s minimum salary should be between \$50,000 and \$80,000.**

Doctoral students (89.0%) believe that a recently graduated psychologist’s salary should start at \$50,000, whereas an experienced

psychologist must have a salary of over \$80,000 (90.1%).

These results depict a realistic portrait of future psychologists’ expectations of what employers must offer as a fair and equitable wage.

*Question 38. Express your opinion with regards the following statements: In my opinion, a reasonable annual salary for a recently graduated psychologist working in Quebec’s public network would be... In my opinion, a reasonable annual salary for a psychologist at the end of their career working in Quebec’s public network would be... (in percentage according to salary increments; N = 608)*



**Internship compensation must be over \$20,000.**

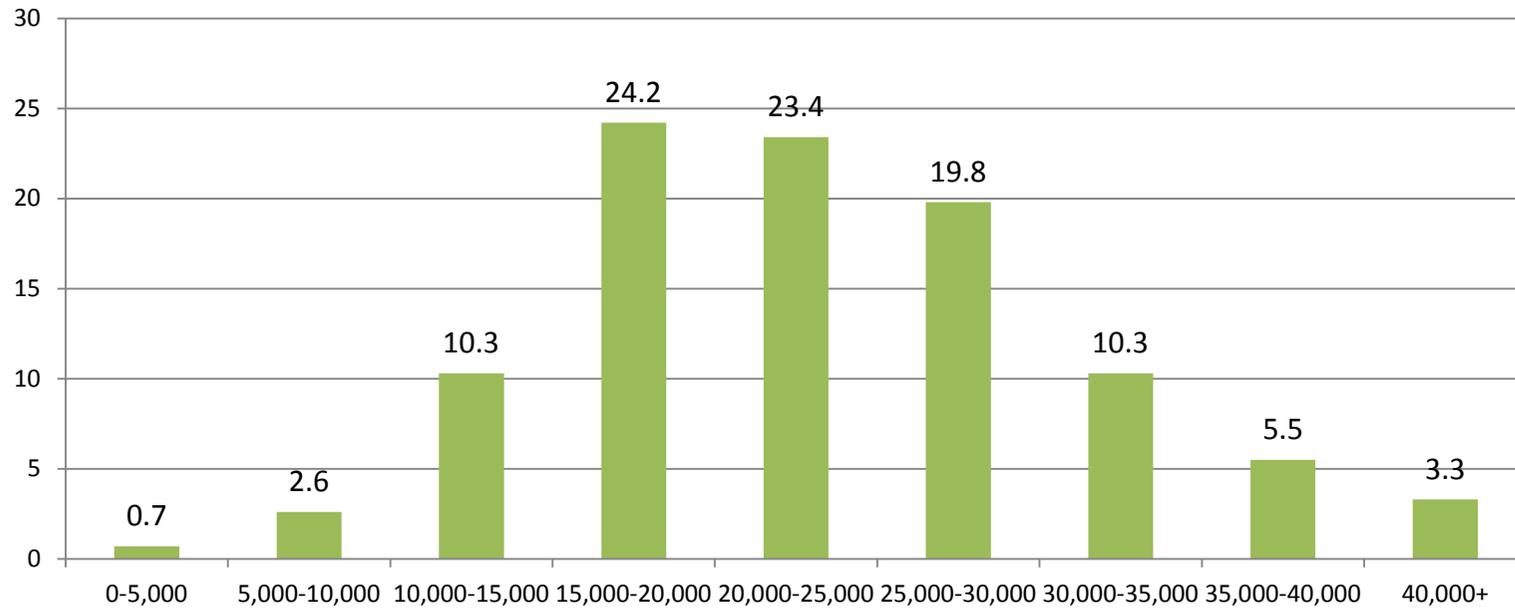
The majority of doctoral students (62.3%) estimate that compensation over \$20,000 would be reasonable for the internship.

While 86.4% of doctoral students believe that internship compensation over \$15,000 per year of

work would be reasonable, only 13.6% think lower compensation would be acceptable.

These results support the FIDEP’s claims, estimating a minimum of \$31,856 a year (Thibaudin, 2011), which could be attained progressively.

*Question 39. I consider that a scholarship or a salary of how much would be a reasonable remuneration for a full-time internship of one year: (in percentage; N = 608)*



**Internship compensation and recognition of the intern’s work would encourage doctoral students to choose the public network as an employer.**

While 92.4 % of doctoral students believe internship compensation would encourage them to work in Quebec’s public network at the end of their studies, only 7.6% believe it would not have any effect on their decision.

Doctoral students (95.3%) would be motivated to work in the public network if their year of internship would be considered as a year of work. Internship compensation would influence their choice of workplace (90.6%). The majority of them (51.4%) totally agree with the fact that it would influence them.

*Question 40. Express your opinion with regards to the following statements: (in percentage; N = 521)*

	Internship compensation would encourage me to work in Quebec’s public network at the end of my studies.	If the internship year were considered a year of work, I would be more motivated to work in Quebec’s public network at the end of my studies.	My choice of internship workplace is influenced by the possibility of it being compensated.
Totally disagrees	2,9	1,8	3,1
Somewhat disagrees	4,7	2,9	6,3
More or less agrees	17,9	13,9	10,6
Somewhat agrees	35,4	35,2	22,6
Totally agrees	33,2	39,9	51,4

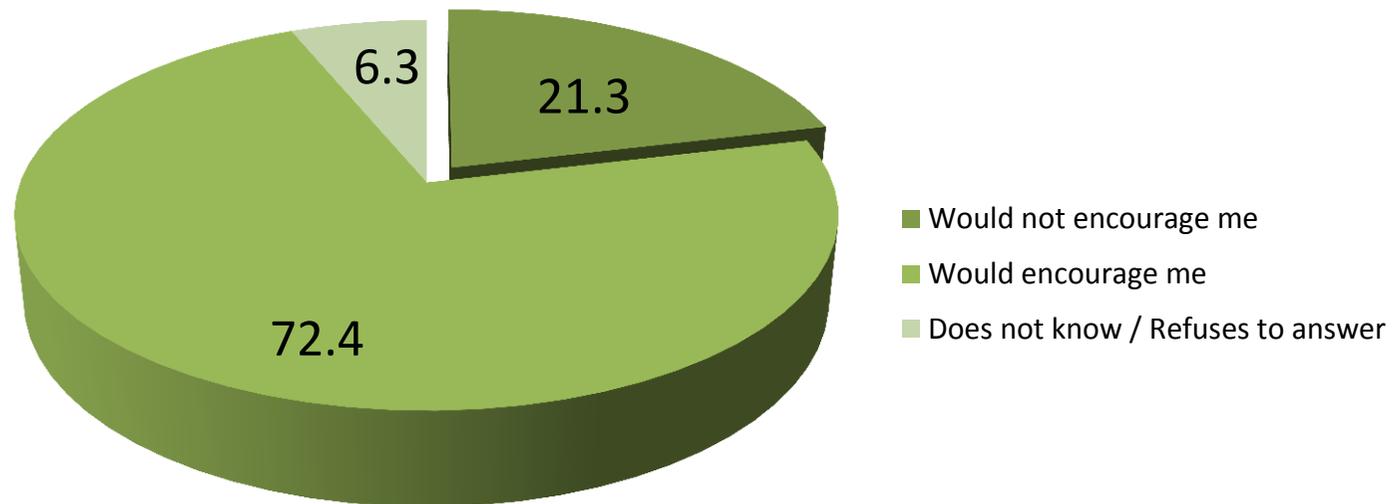
**A scholarship during the internship with the condition that the intern remains working in the public network for a few years would motivate interns to continue working there.**

Nearly three quarters of doctoral students (72.4%) consider that a scholarship during the internship in exchange for the commitment to work

at the MSSS would encourage them to work there. Only 21.3% of the participants do not consider this measure sufficient.

These results support the MSSS work group’s idea that a scholarship for interns would encourage them to choose the MSSS as an employer once they become psychologists.

*Question 41. During your year/years of internship, would a scholarship that is conditional to a commitment to work in the Quebec public sector for a number of years encourage you to work in the public sector? (in percentage; N = 554)*



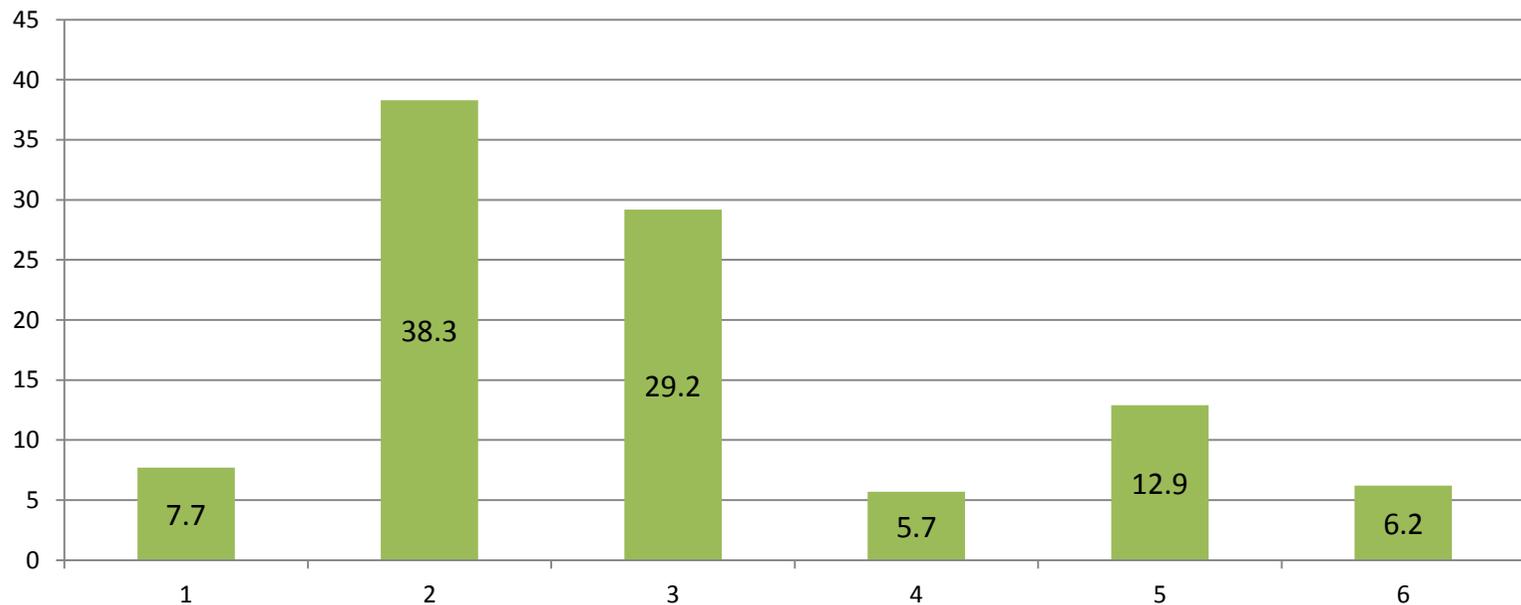
**Doctoral students would be ready to commit to working more than one year at the MSSS if it would offer an internship scholarship in return.**

While 92.3% of doctoral students are ready to commit for over a year, only 7.7% believe a one-year commitment would be acceptable.

The most appropriate number of years according to doctoral students was 2 years (38.2%), followed closely by a number of 3 years (29.2%).

The results support the thesis that adequate internship compensation would encourage graduates to make a mid-term to long-term commitment to the MSSS.

*Question 42. How many years would you be prepared to commit? (in percentage per year; N = 296)*



## Conclusion

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**The FIDEP has been demanding fair and equitable psychology intern compensation for a long time. Research shows that 72% of them work 1,600 hours for free, while the rest of them receive on average a salary inferior to minimum wage.**

A recent report from economist Henri Thibaudin<sup>2</sup> shows that equitable internship compensation would consist of \$40,000, but doctoral students are willing to compromise, asking for a minimum of \$20,000. Research shows that 93% of doctoral students are even ready to commit to working for over a year in order to help address the shortage of psychologists in the network.

Our survey demonstrates that the current wage conditions offered in the public network are the main barriers causing future psychologists to look for work elsewhere: 80% of doctoral students indicated that they are discouraged to work in the public network because of its wage conditions.

Paid internships and the recognition of psychology doctoral students' value have never been so essential.

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<sup>2</sup> Thibaudin, H. (2011). *La rémunération des internes en psychologie au Québec : montant et justifications*. Online. <<http://www.lebrulot.info/fidep/fich/Rapporteconomiste.pdf>>