PhD Chapter Survey
2024

Focus of survey

In the spring of 2024 the PhD Chapter conducted a survey to cover topics missed in the 2023 survey.

2023 Survey (40% response rate)
32% have faced issues moving up the ladder ⬚ Decided to invesitage the matter futher!
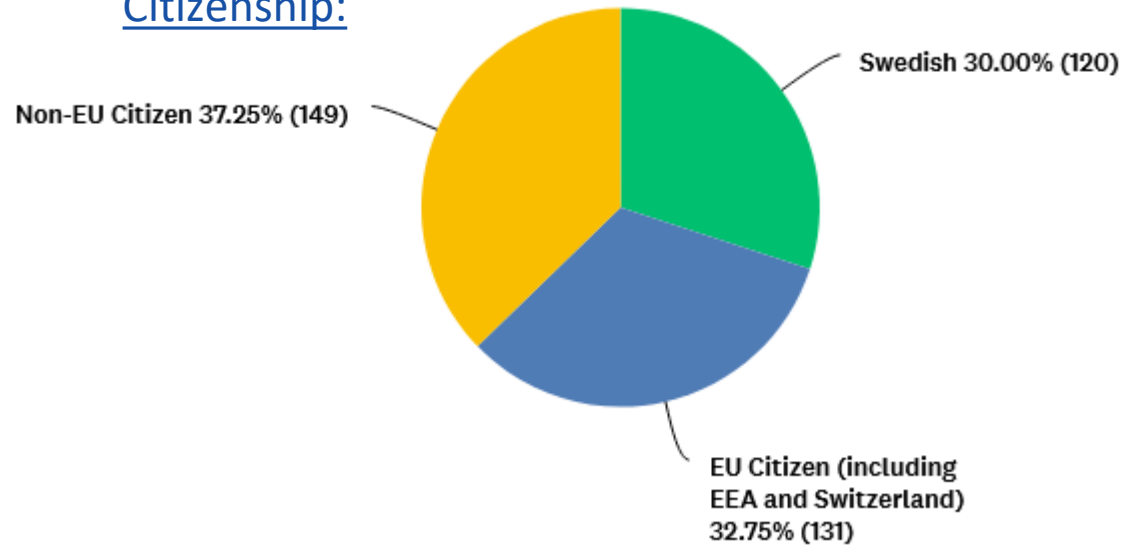
This survey includes:
- **Salary Ladder**
- Vacation and Sick leave
- Labor Unions
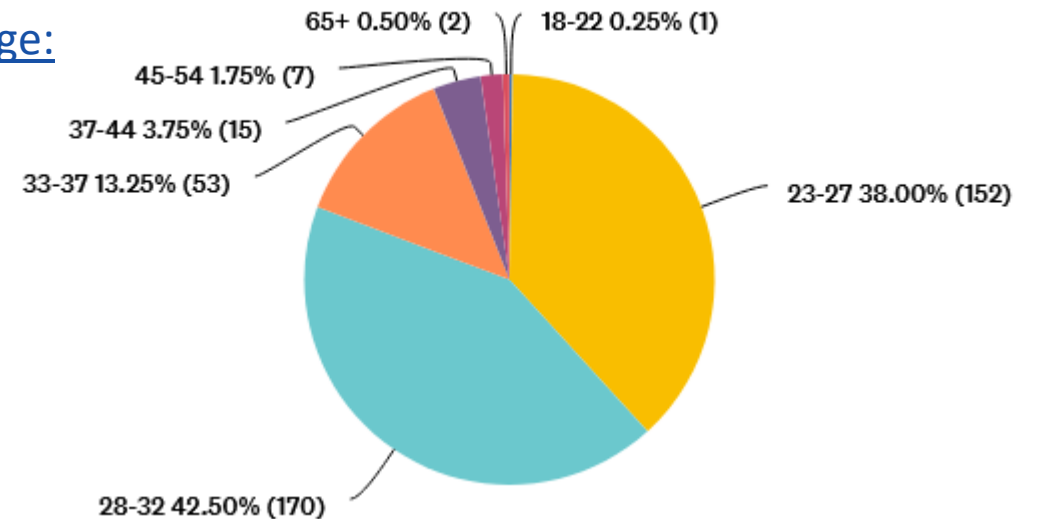- On-boarding, Reception and Chapter Hall
- PhD Ombudsman

Our Student Sample (analysis)

➢ 400 responses ≈ 30% of total PhD students
➢ The sample is divers in citizenship, year started, as well as over all schools.
➢ Most students are member of THS and around half are a member of a trade union
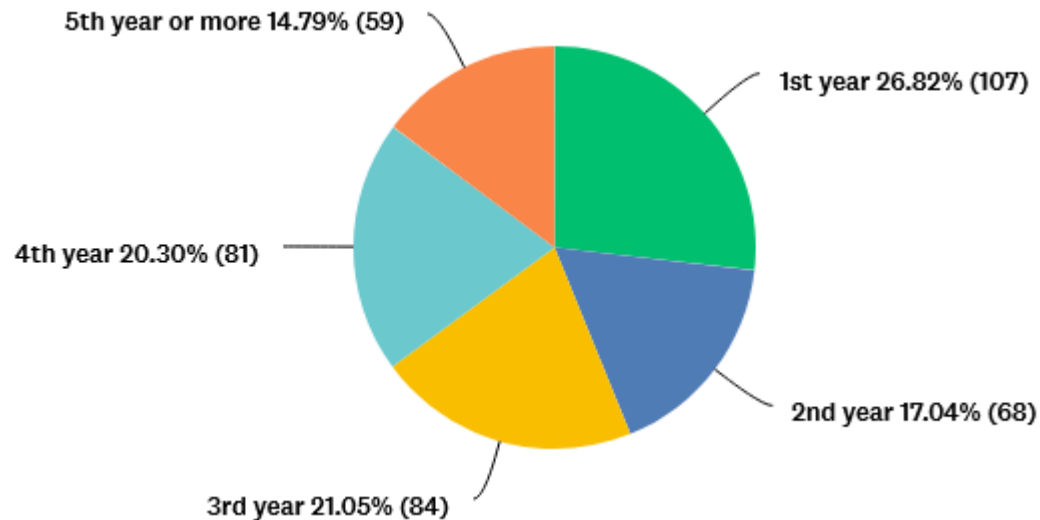
Citizenship:

Swedish 30.00% (120)
Non-EU Citizen 37.25% (149)
EU Citizen (including EEA and Switzerland) 32.75% (131)

Age:

65+ 0.50% (2)
18-22 0.25% (1)
45-54 1.75% (7)
37-44 3.75% (15)
33-37 13.25% (53)
23-27 38.00% (152)
28-32 42.50% (170)

Our Student Sample (data)

In which year:

5th year or more 14.79% (59)

4th year 20.30% (81)

3rd year 21.05% (84)

1st year 26.82% (107)

2nd year 17.04% (68)

1st year (started less than 12 months ago)

2nd year (started between 12 and 24 months ago)

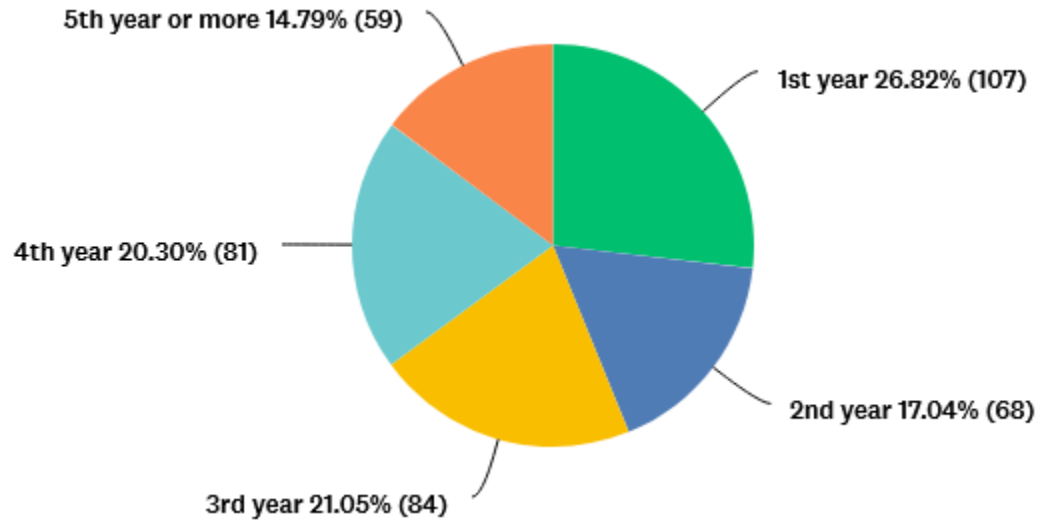3rd year (started between 24 and 36 months ago)

4th year (started between 36 and 48 months ago)
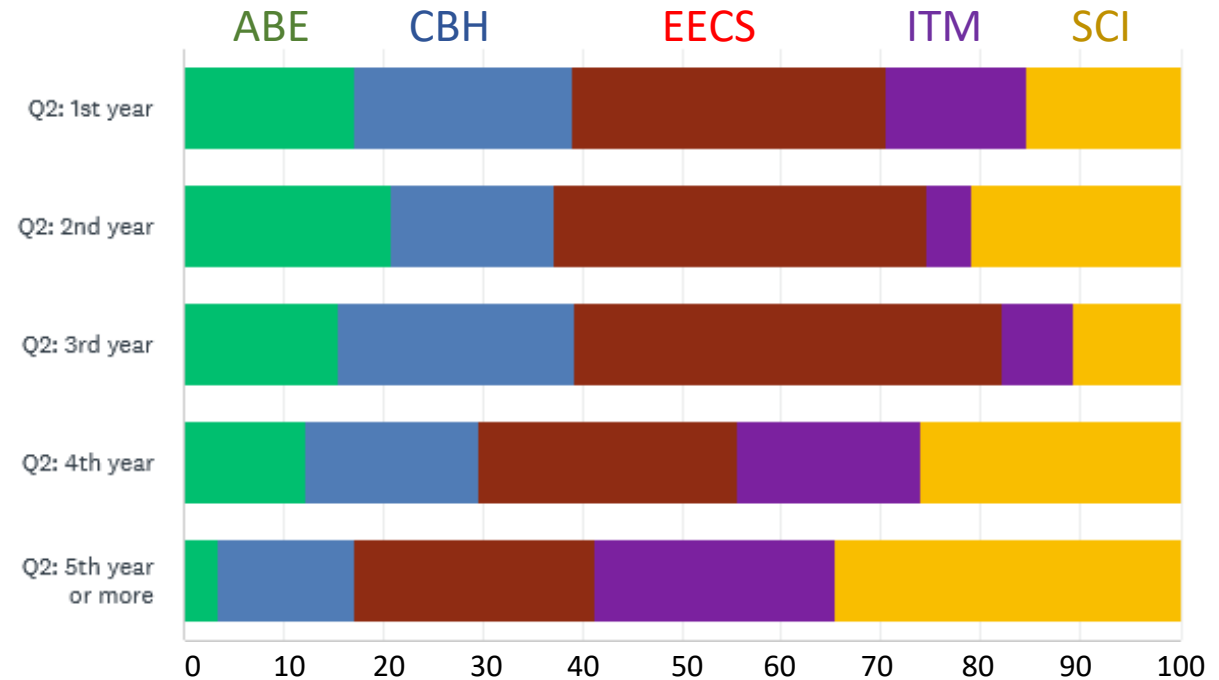
5th year or more (started more than 48 months ago)

Our Student Sample (data)

In which year:

Correlation by school:

Our Student Sample (data)

Finances:

➤ Full-time employed by KTH as a doctoral student, FOFU-Ingenjör or between contracts (more than 80% employment).

➤ Part-time employed at KTH (less than 80%).

➤ Industrial doctoral student (i.e., employed by another company)

➤ Scholarship (i.e., foreign government, EU grant with no employment status, etc).

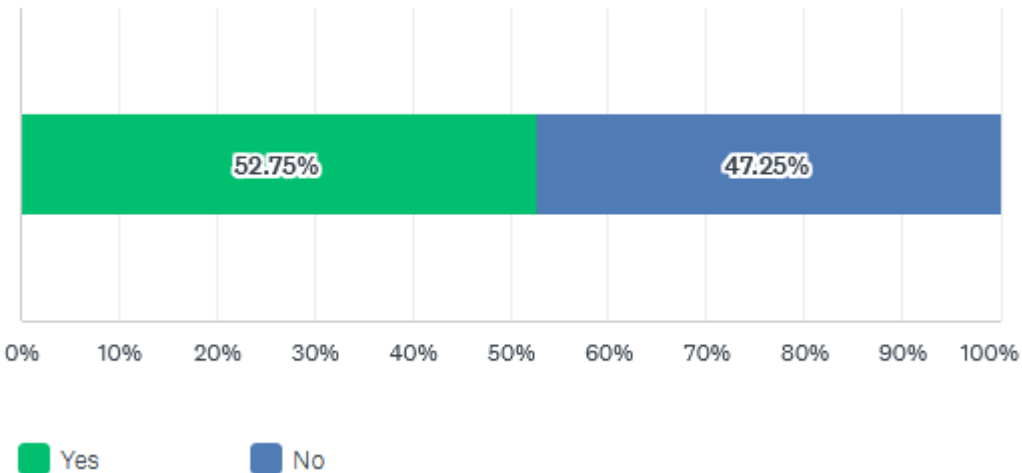➤ Not employed by KTH (i.e., joint-programmes, time-limited exchange, or just not employed at all).

Not employed by KTH 1.76% (7)
Scholarship 1.51% (6)
Industrial PhD 4.52% (18)
Part-time employed at KTH 1.01% (4)
Full-time employed by KTH 91.21% (363)
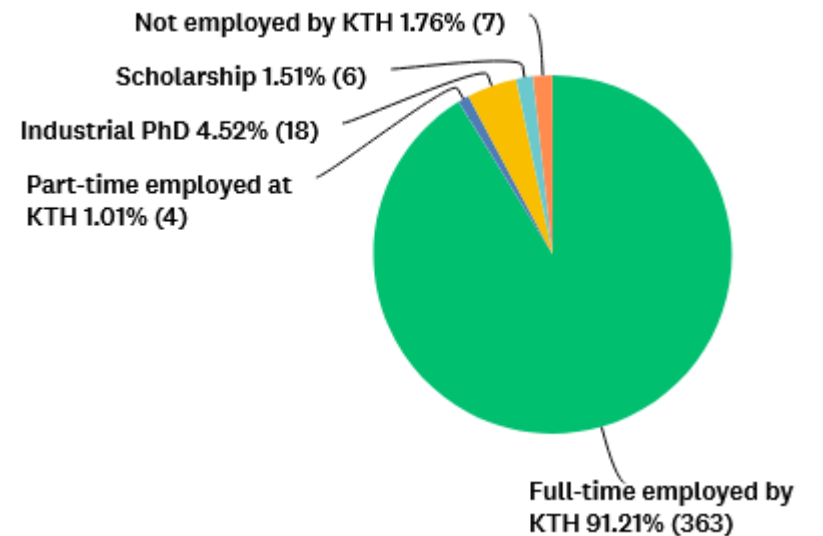
Student Union (data)

Q7: Are you currently a THS member?

76.44%	23.56%

■ Yes   ■ No
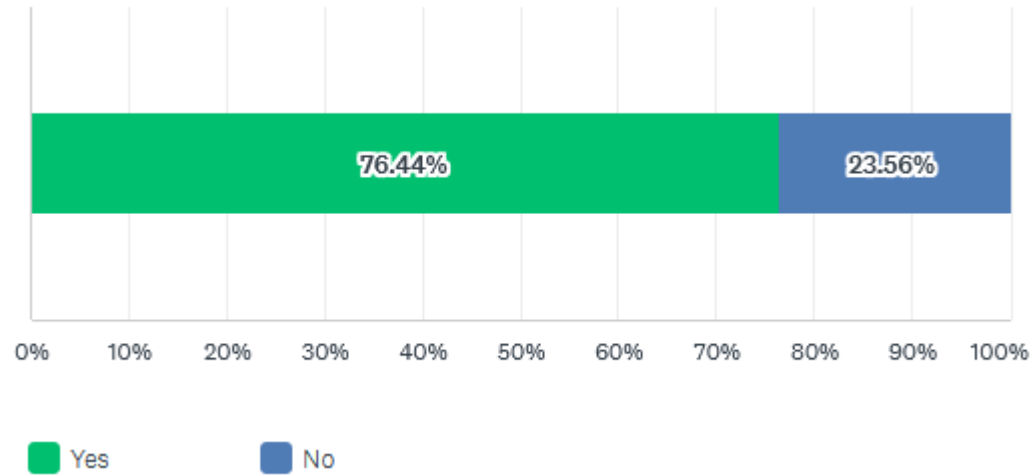
Labour Unions (data)

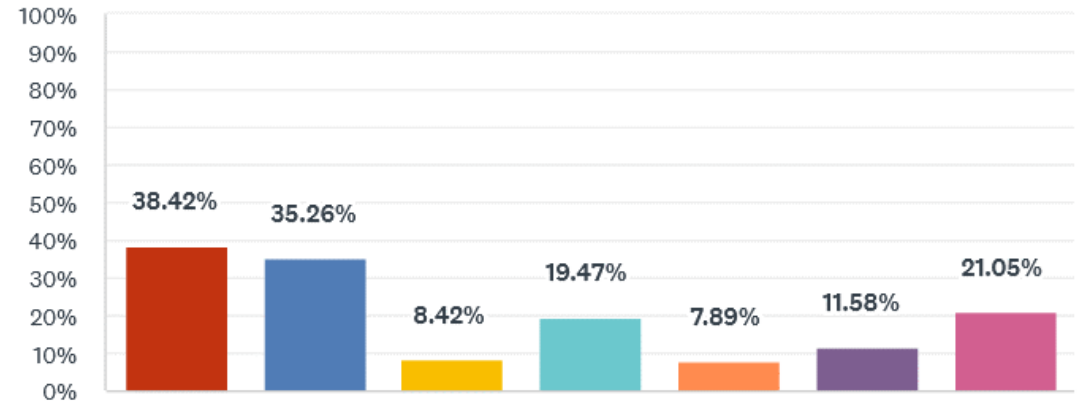**Q8**: Why are you not a member of a Labour Union? (Select all that apply)

Q6: Are you currently a member of a trade union? Do not mistake the Labour Unions for the Student Union at KTH (THS)! Example of Trade Unions are SULF, Engineers of Sweden (Sveriges Ingenjörer) and ST.

Yes: 52.75%   No: 47.25%

No one told me to be a member / I didn't know it existed — 38.42%
I do not know what a trade union is for / what it does — 35.26%
There are no relevant benefits in associating to one — 8.42%
I do not perceive their work as being useful — 19.47%
I do not want to pay the monthly fee — 7.89%
I will not stay in Sweden after my studies — 11.58%
There are no reasons at all for me to be a member
Other (please specify) — 21.05%
    People are mainly in the process of still choosing the right one or planning to join one soon

PhD Salary Ladder

Doctoral student salary agreement

The doctoral student agreement are locally agreed monthly salaries for employees as doctoral students at KTH

Current System:
Requirements stated in ISP or time based

Doctoral student salary

Initial - step 1: 32 000 kr (30 800 kr)

30 % - step 2: 32 600 kr (31 600 kr)

50 % - step 3: 35 000 kr (33 800 kr)

80 % - step 4: 36 100 kr (35 100 kr)

The amounts apply from 2023-10-01. Last years amounts in paranthesis. Monthly salary at full-time before tax.

Structure of the doctoral degree:

Step 1 is the initial salary. Advancement to step 2, 3 and 4 is done after achieving the sub targets which are defined in the Individual Study Plan (ISP) corresponding 30 %, 50 % and 80 % of the total degree requirements of a doctoral diploma. Deviations from the schedule in the ISP must be motivated in writing by the main supervisor in consultation with the Director of Third Cycle Education. In absence of explicit and objective sub targets in the ISP advancement in the doctoral ladder is done after 30 %, 50 % and 80 % of the time plan for the studies.

Salary Ladder Step (data)

Q9: In which step of the salary ladder are you currently? For scholarship students, the values described are tax-free.
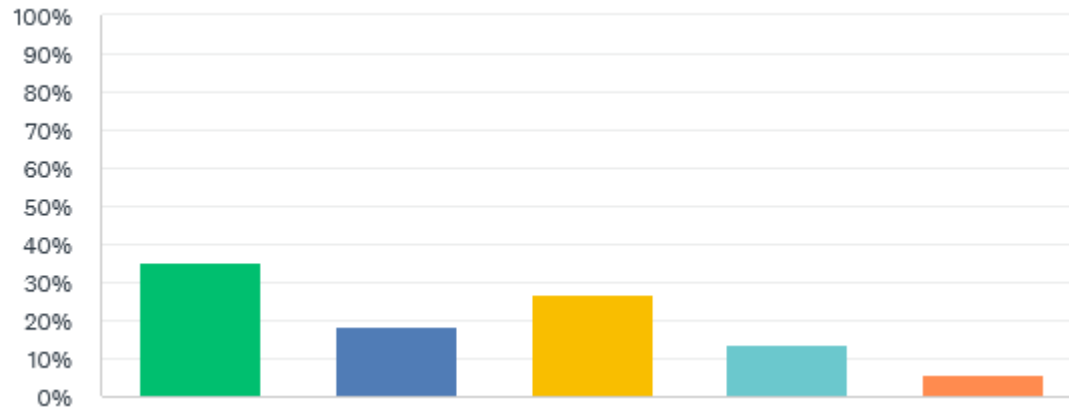
Initial (Employed: 32 000 kr, Scholarship: 25 400 kr)
30% (Employed: 32 600 kr, Scholarship: 25 800 kr)
50% (Employed: 35 000 kr, Scholarship: 27 500 kr)
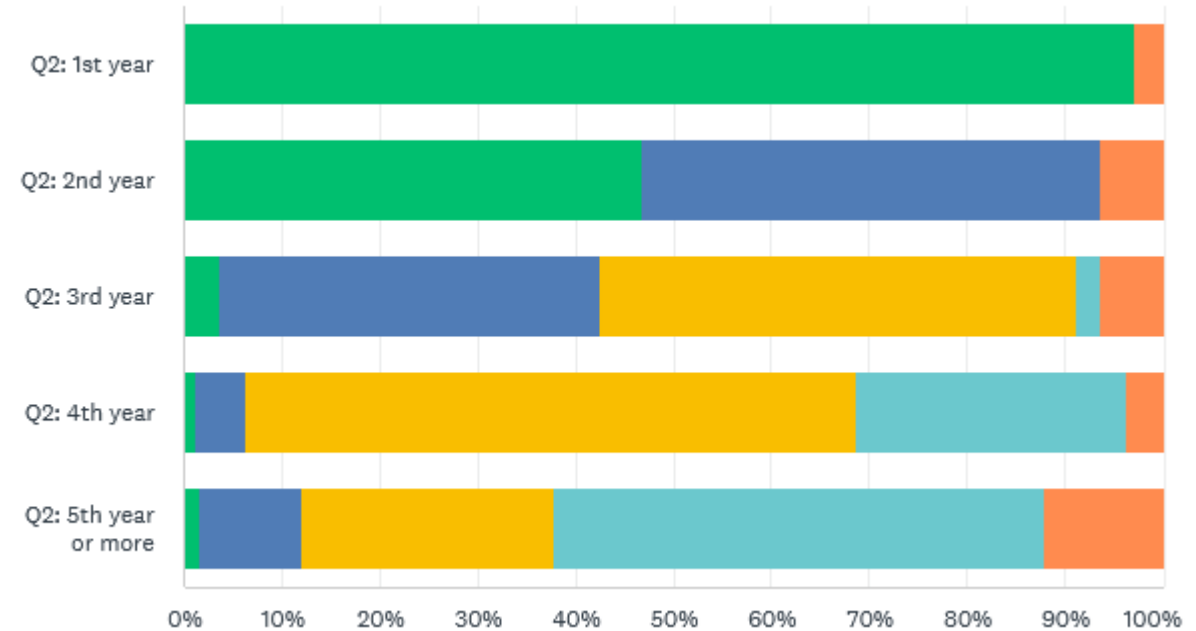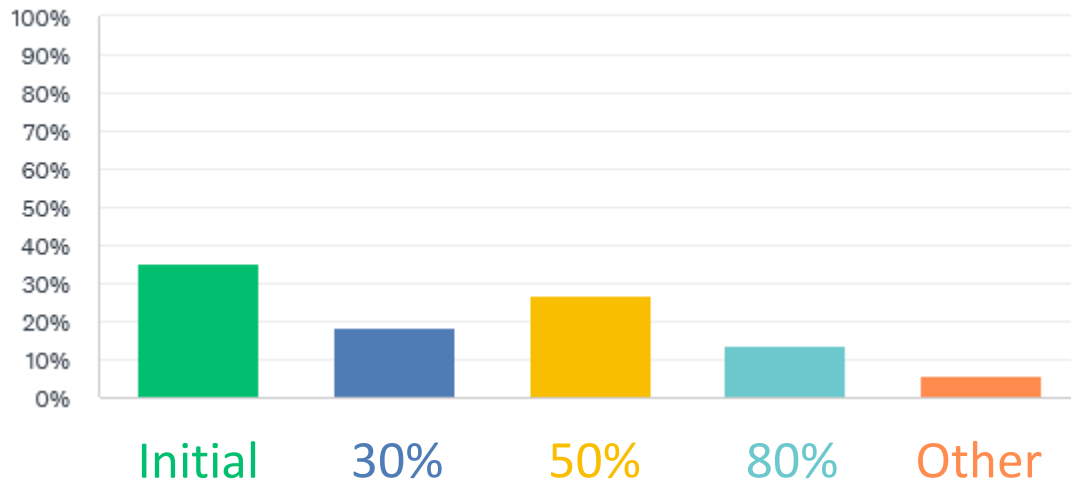80% (Employed: 36 100 kr, Scholarship: 28 300 kr)
Other (please specify, for example, if you have a different salary for being an industrial PhD, or receive a value different than the ones formally established in the salary ladder)
Mainly industrial PhD students and some other people that don't have a contract at KTH.
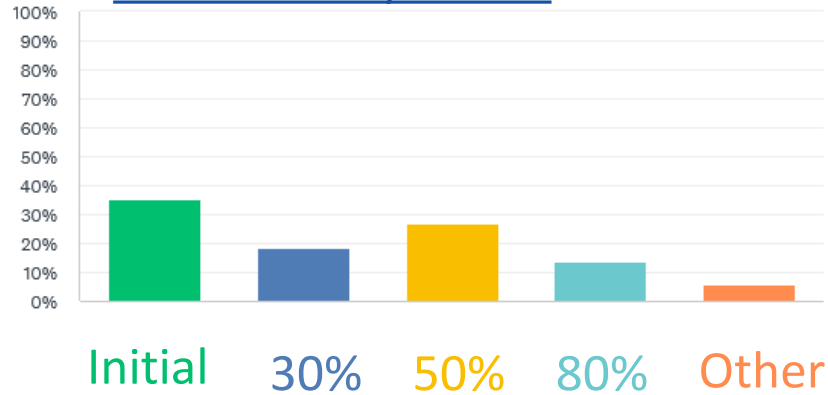
Salary Ladder Step (data)

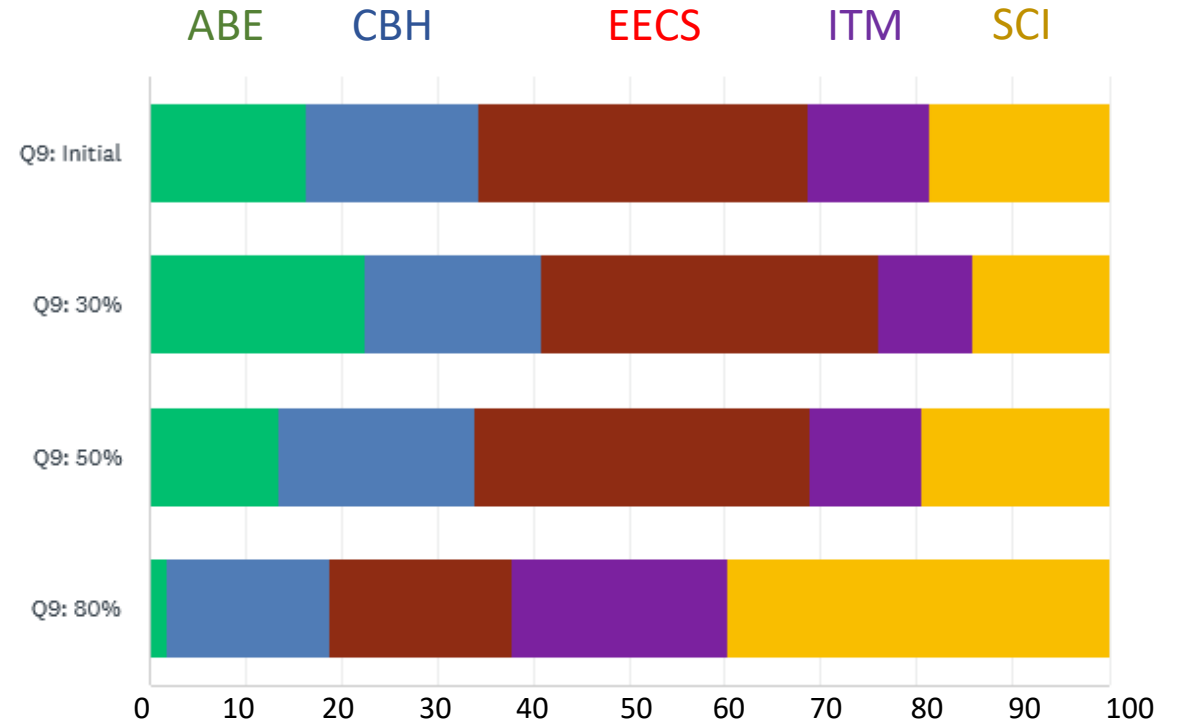Correlation by year a PhD student is in:
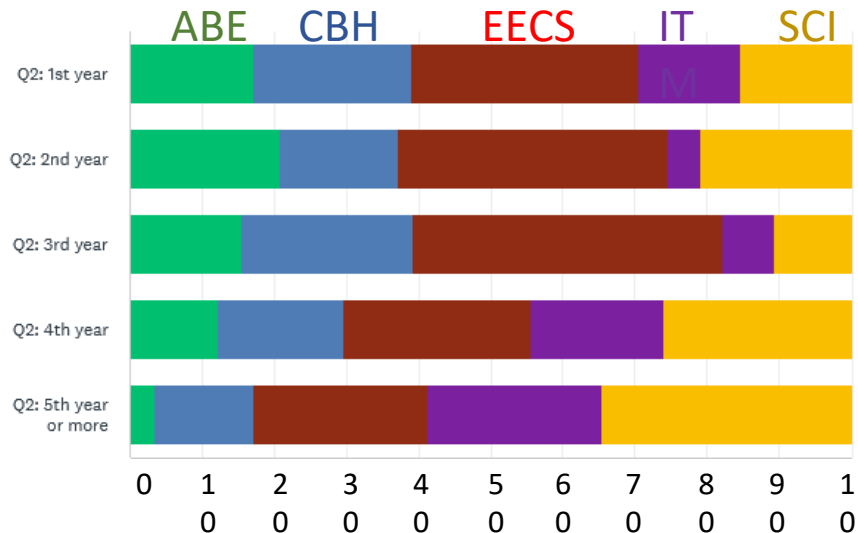
Salary Ladder Step (data)

Correlation by school:

Initial   30%   50%   80%   Other

Current year of PhD Student

ABE   CBH   EECS   IT   SCI

Distribution of each step per school
Percentage breakdown, not absolute values.

ABE   CBH   EECS   ITM   SCI

Criteria PhD salary ladder (data)

Correlation by year a PhD student is in:

Q10: Do you believe that you have a well-defined criteria to achieve in your ISP to move up on the salary ladder?
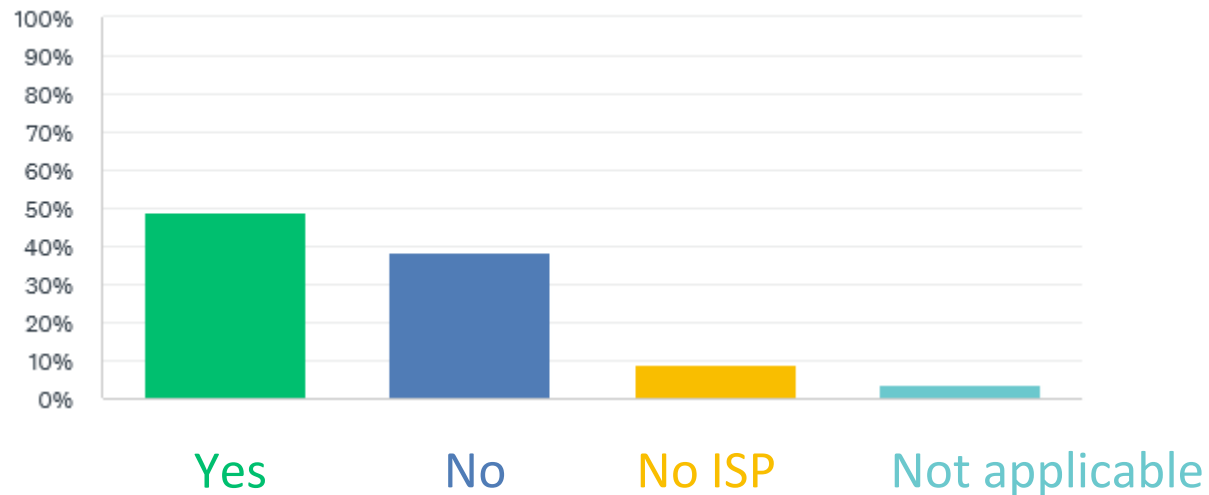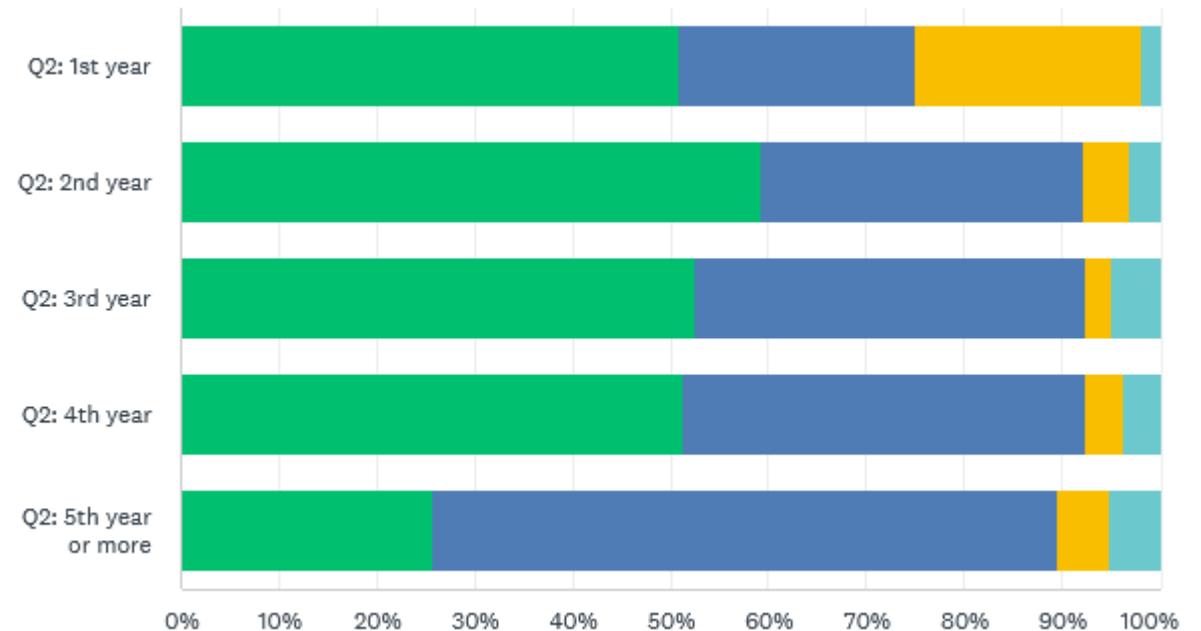
Criteria PhD salary ladder (data)

Q10: Do you believe that you have a well-defined criteria to achieve in your ISP to move up on the salary ladder?
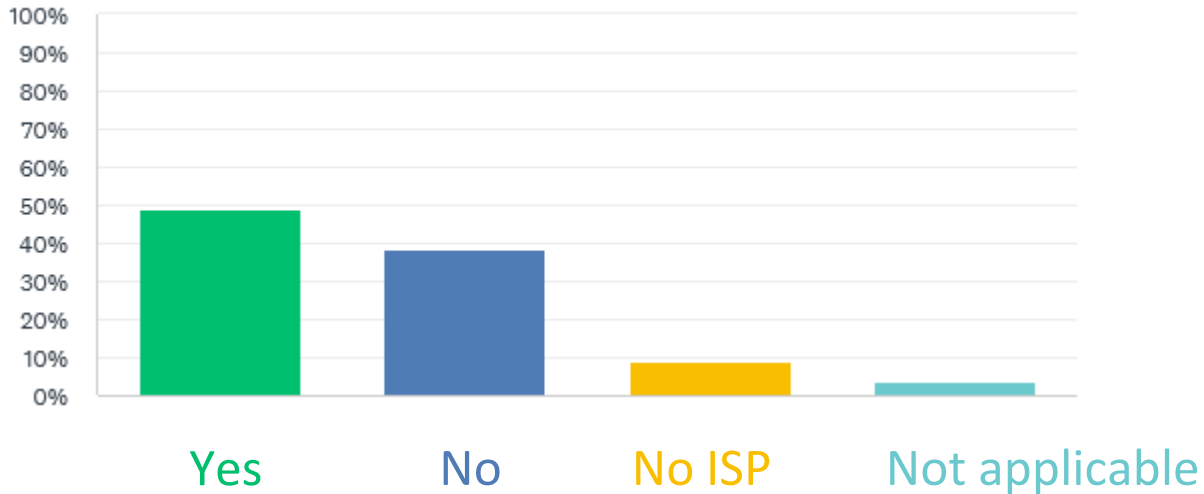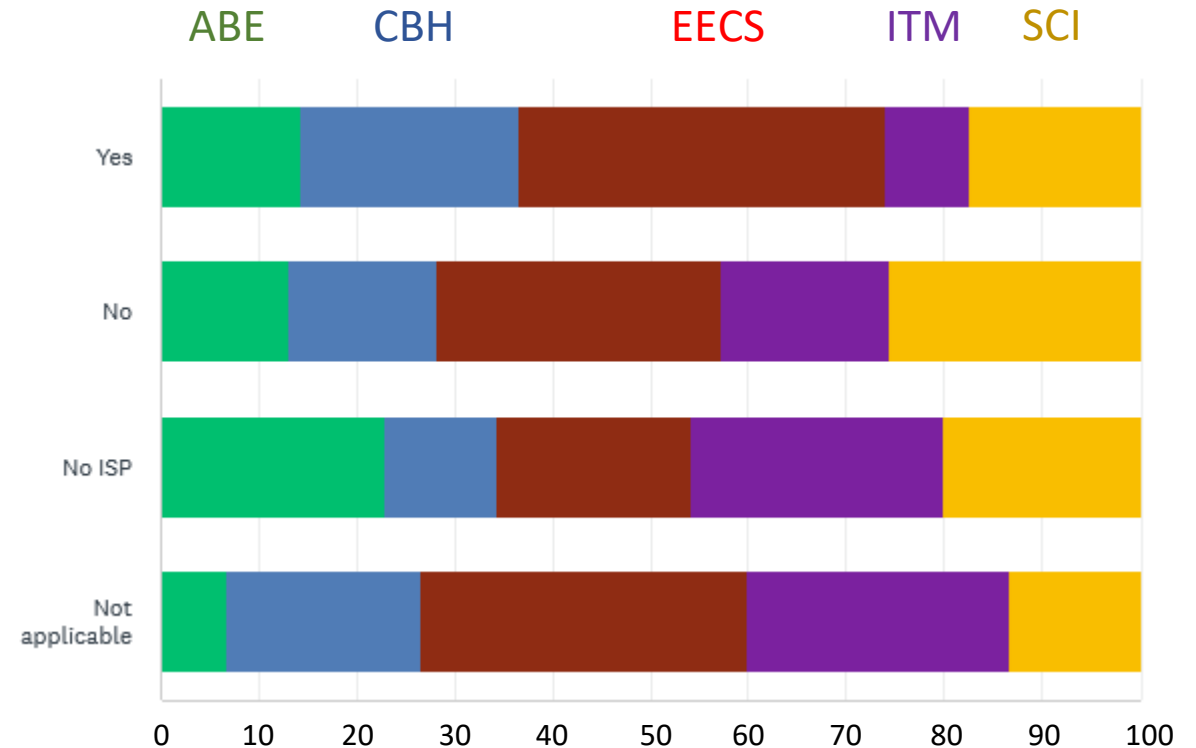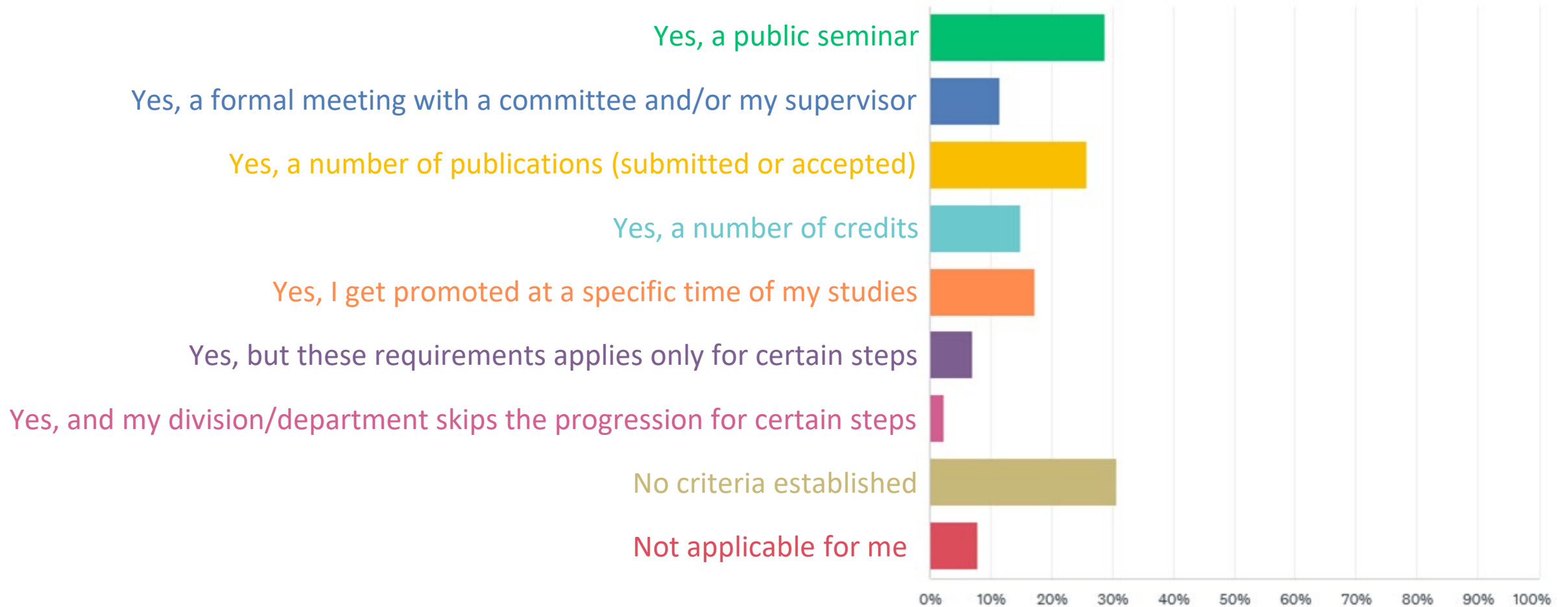

Correlation by school:

Criteria PhD salary ladder (data)

Q11: Are there any institutional requirements (even if unofficial) from your department or division for you to go up on the ladder? (Select all that apply)

Criteria PhD salary ladder (data)

Correlation by school:

ABE   CBH   EECS   ITM   SCI

Yes, a public seminar

Yes, a formal meeting with a committee and/or my supervisor

Yes, a number of publications (submitted or accepted)

Yes, a number of credits

Yes, I get promoted at a specific time of my studies

Yes, but these requirements applies only for certain steps

Yes, and my division/department skips the progression for certain steps

No criteria established

Not applicable for me

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100

16

Criteria PhD salary ladder (data)

> **Q12**: leave a commentary if you desire.

> 70+ responses

Summary:
- Some students are still discussing the criteria with their supervisor
- It's not always clear what the requirements are/students are not well informed
- When requirements are defined in the ISP, they are not always followed strictly and leads to the PhD students having to ask for salary increase
- Students seem to think that it is unfair that the supervisor has a say in the salary increase/think they have too much power and neglect the salary ladder

Criteria PhD salary ladder (data)

➢ **~38%** of PhD students that are in their 5th year or more, are still in 2nd step or below of their PhD salary ladder

➢ Some students (~ 9%) don't have an established ISP

➢ **~38%** of PhD students think that they don't have clear criteria for advancing in the PhD salary ladder

eISPs–Why don't you have one? (data)

Q13: In a previous question, you checked that you do not have an ISP established. Please select the reason why you don't have one. According to the Higher Education Law, all doctoral students are entitled to a regularly updated Individual Study Plan.

None of the above

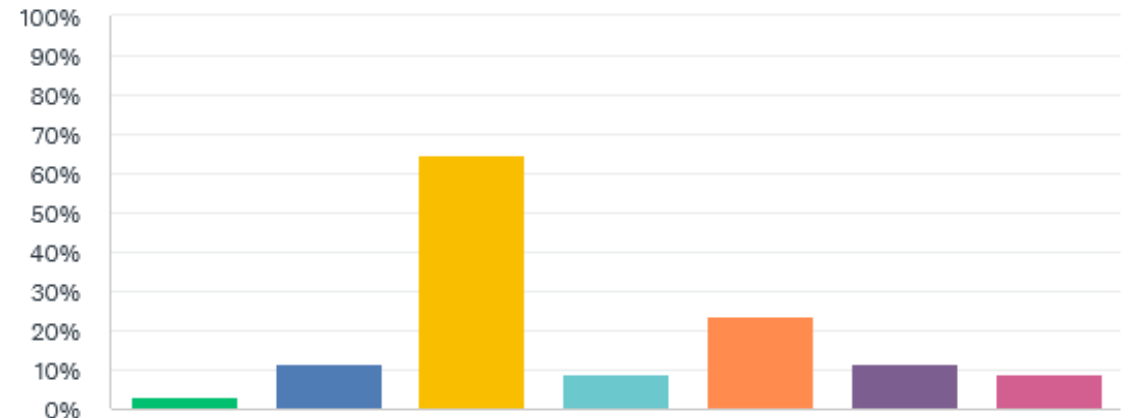My supervisor doesn't care about it / want to me have one

I am a new student / It's in process of being established

I don't care about it

It takes too long to establish one / It has been held by a third-party (Director of Third-Cycle studies or Human Resources) during the process

I do not know how to make an eISP (lack of information)

I didn't have time to do one

eISPs–Why don't you have one? (analysis)

- ➤ The most common reason why students don't have an ISP established yet is because they are new students and it's in the process of being established
- ➤ Other students don't have an ISP because it takes too long to create one, or their supervisor doesn't want them to have one, or because of lack of information or they feel they don't have time to establish one
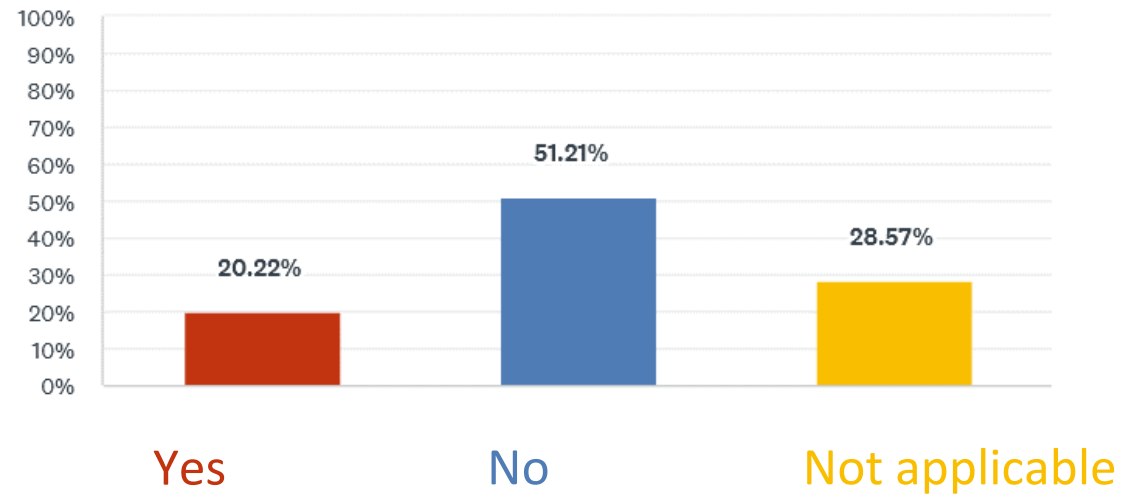
- ➤ **Q14**: leave a commentary if you desire.

- ➤ 8 responses

Summary:
- ▪ Some students think it's a waste of time/get no help
- ▪ It's being established soon

Issues with Ladder (data)

Q15: Did you have any issues going up on the PhD Ladder?

Yes	No	Not applicable
20.22%	51.21%	28.57%

Resolving PhD Salary Ladder Issues (data)

Q16: As you selected that you had problems moving up on the salary ladder, what were the reason(s) behind these issues? (Select all that apply)
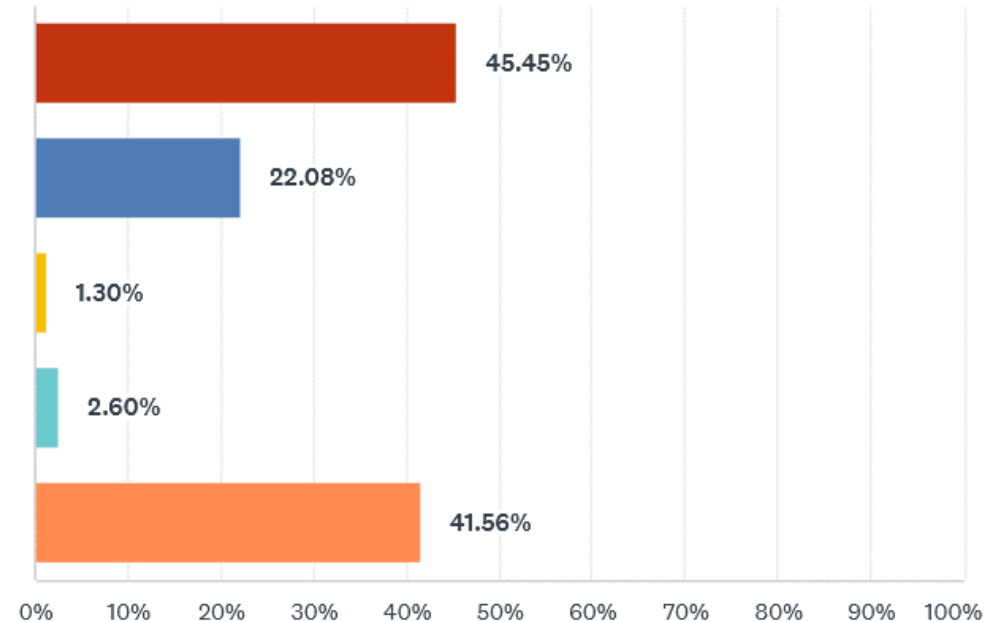

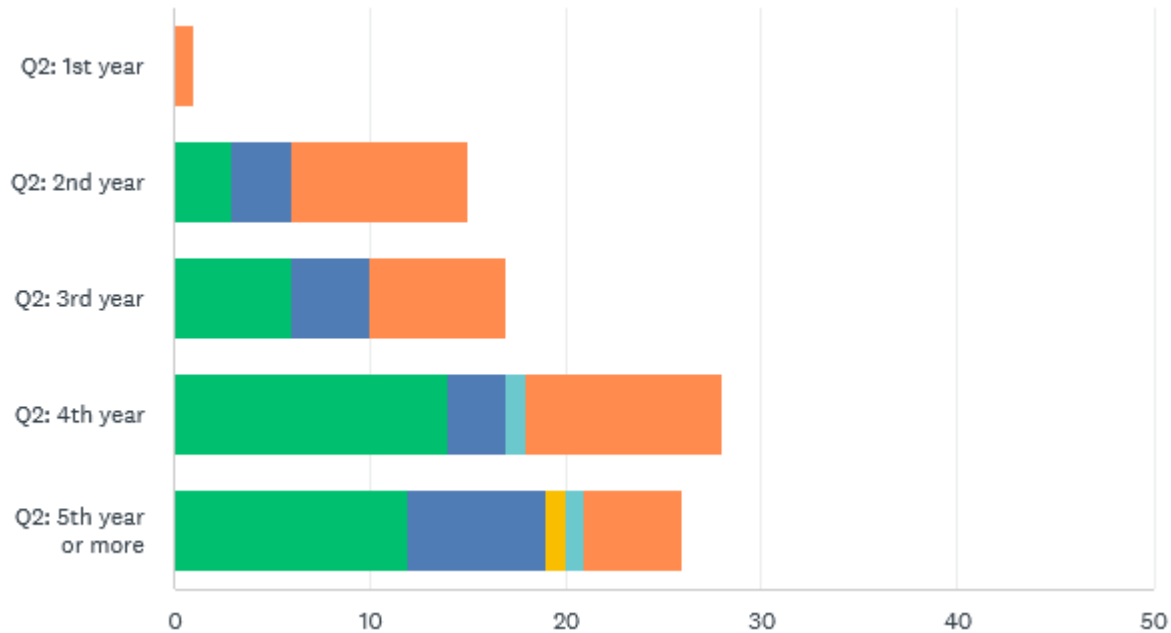| Reason	Percentage
My supervisor explicitly didn't let me to go forward on the salary ladder, for any reason	45.45%
The criteria set by the division	22.08%
The human resources didn't want me to go up	1.30%
The Director of Third-Cycle (FA) blocked my progress	2.60%
None/Other	41.56%

Resolving PhD Salary Ladder Issues (data)

Correlation by year a PhD student is in:

My supervisor explicitly didn't let me to go forward on the salary ladder, for any reason

The criteria set by the division

None/Other

The human resources didn't want me to go up

The Director of Third-Cycle (FA) blocked my progress

Resolving PhD Salary Ladder Issues (data)

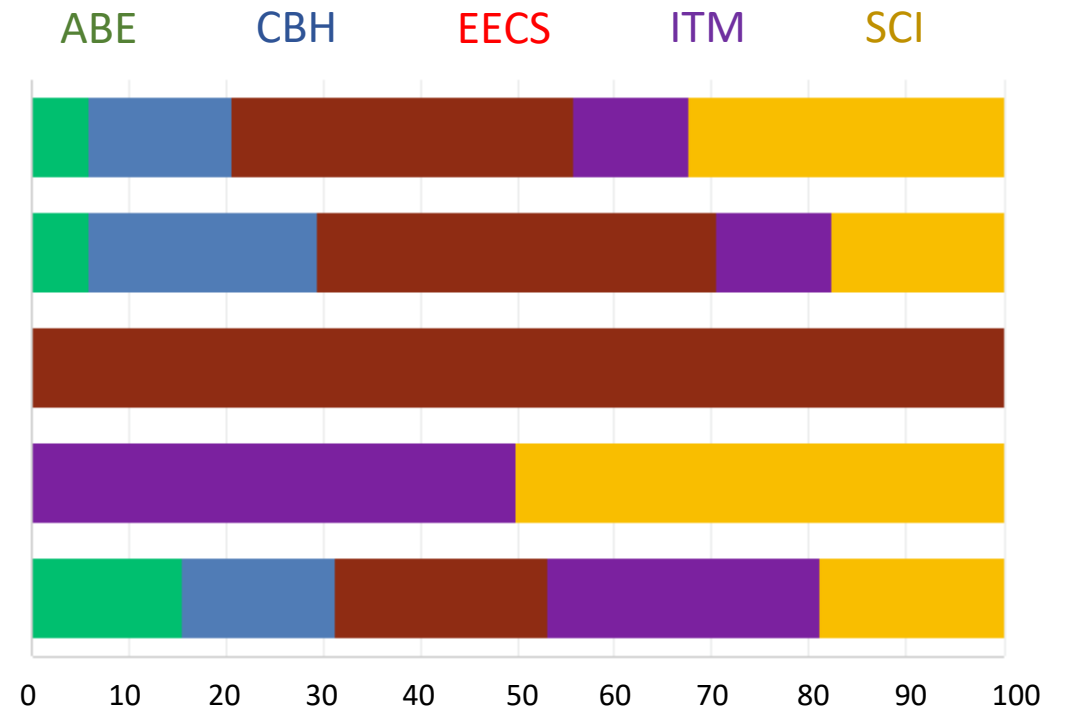Correlation by school:

ABE CBH EECS ITM SCI

My supervisor explicitly didn't let me to go forward on the salary ladder, for any reason

The criteria set by the division

The human resources didn't want me to go up
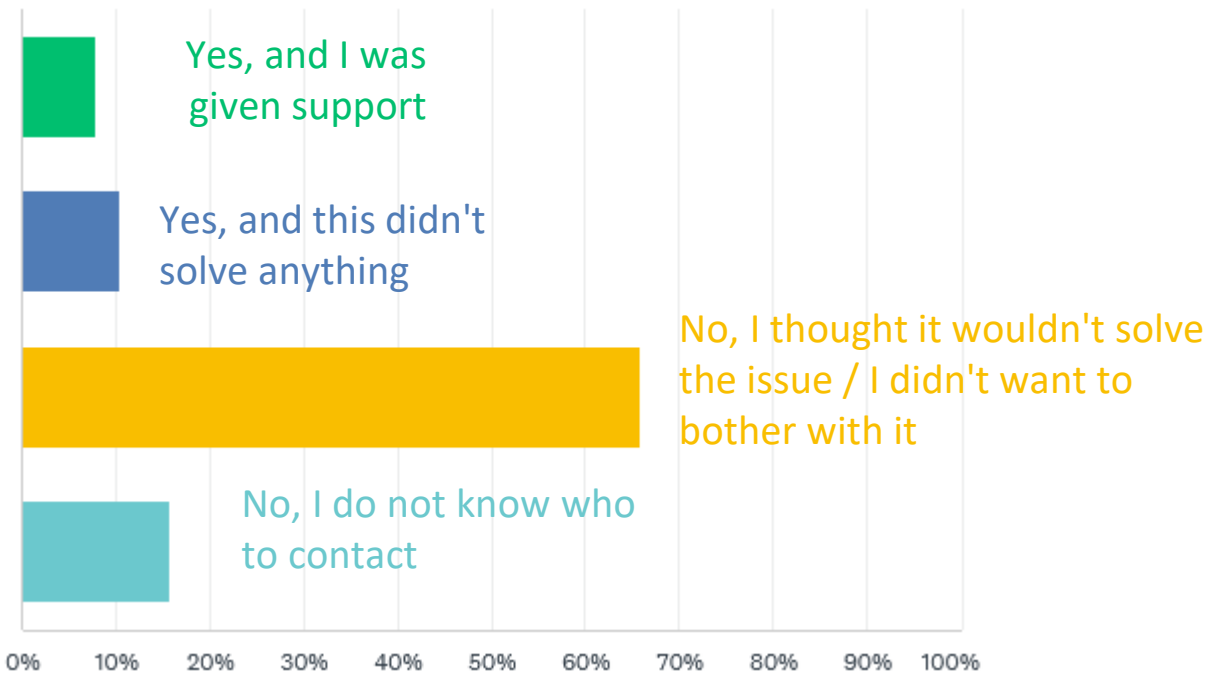
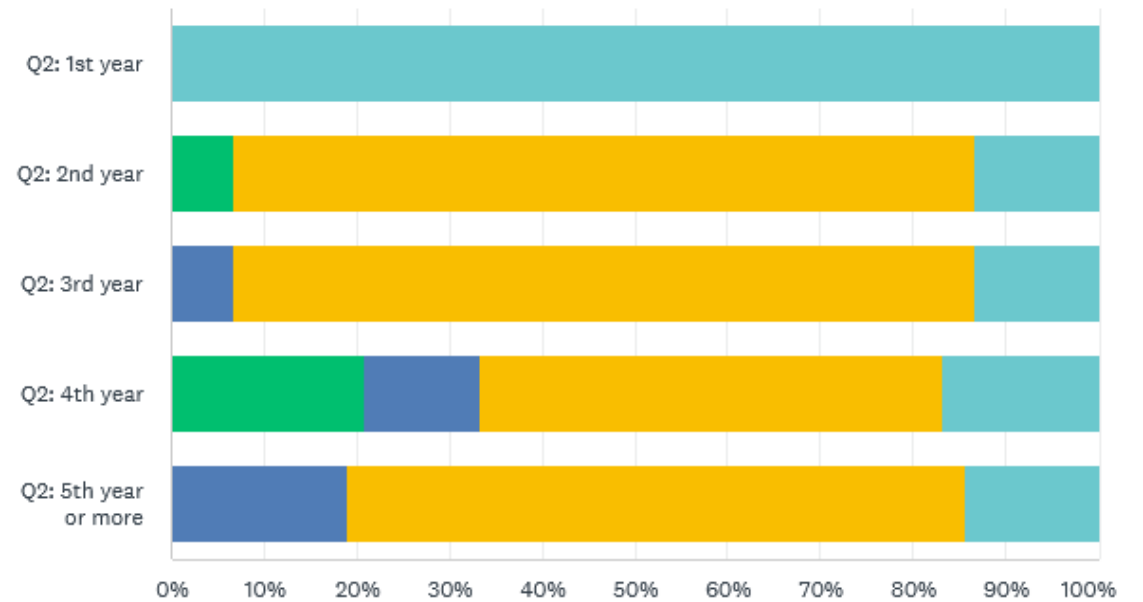The Director of Third-Cycle (FA) blocked my progress

None/Other

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Resolving PhD Salary Ladder Issues (data)

Q17: Did you try to contact the Human Resources (HR) regarding these issues?

Yes, and I was given support
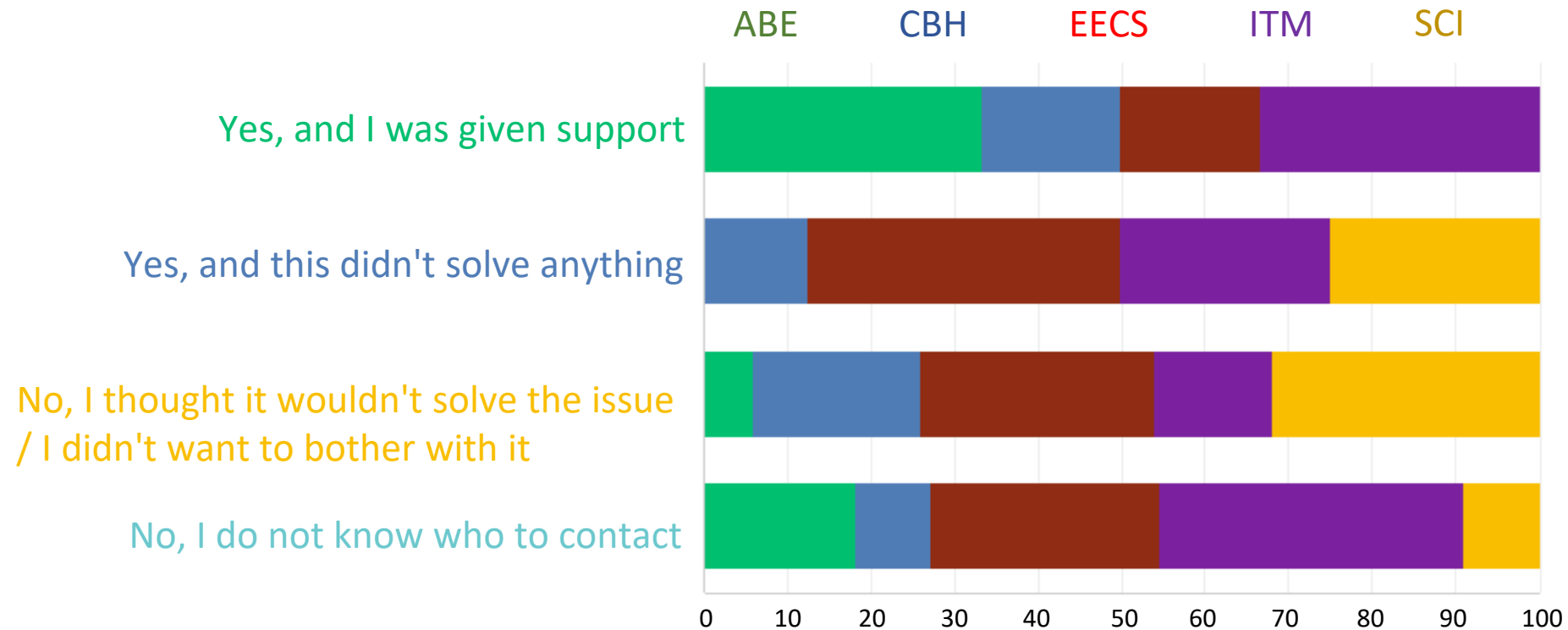
Yes, and this didn't solve anything

No, I thought it wouldn't solve the issue / I didn't want to bother with it

No, I do not know who to contact

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Correlation by year a PhD student is in:

Q2: 1st year

Q2: 2nd year

Q2: 3rd year

Q2: 4th year

Q2: 5th year or more

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Resolving PhD Salary Ladder Issues (data)

Q17: Correlation by school:

ABE   CBH   EECS   ITM   SCI

Yes, and I was given support

Yes, and this didn't solve anything

No, I thought it wouldn't solve the issue / I didn't want to bother with it

No, I do not know who to contact

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100
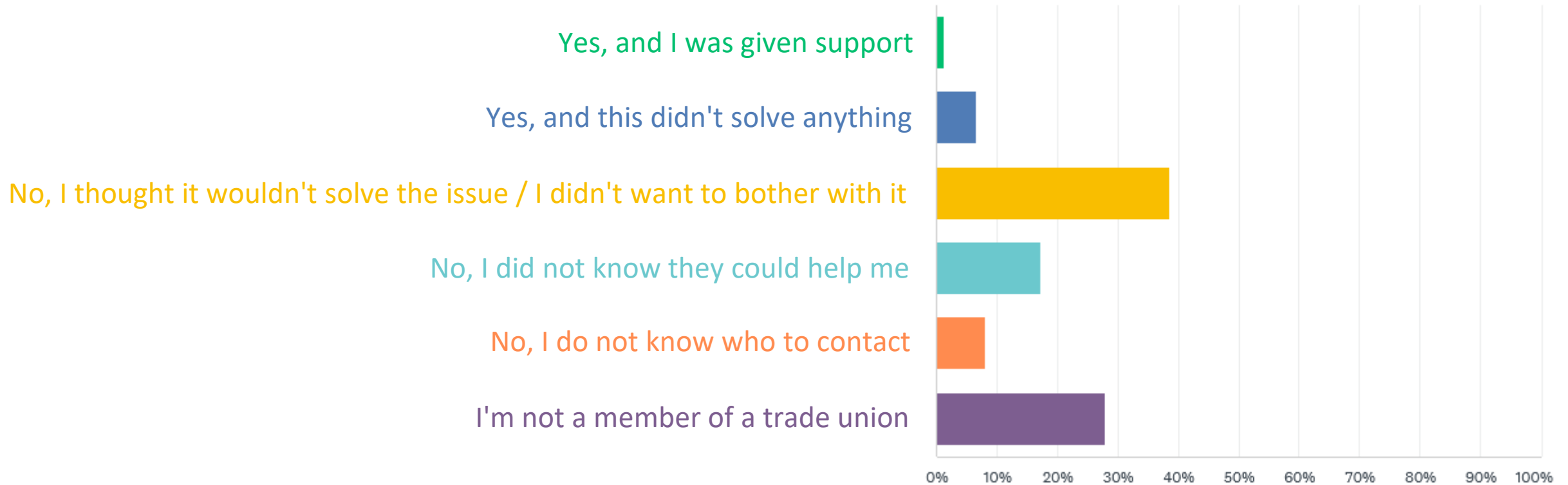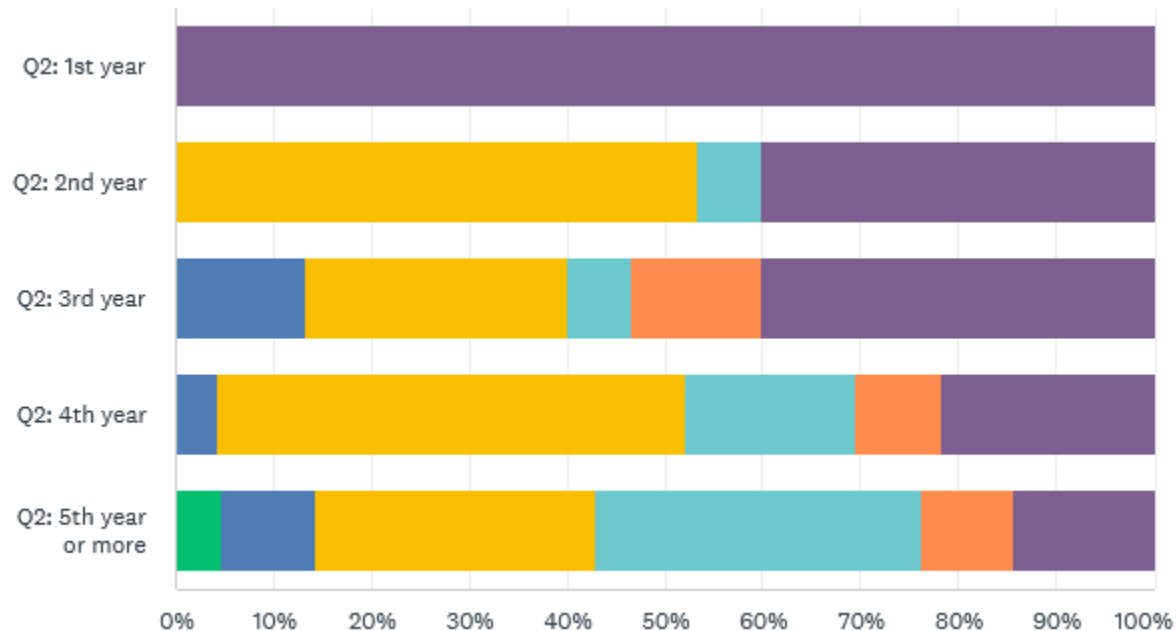
Resolving PhD Salary Ladder Issues (data)

Q18: Did you try to contact your local trade union (Saco-S/ST/Sulf/Sveriges ingenjörer) regarding these issues?

Resolving PhD Salary Ladder Issues (data)

Correlation by year a PhD student is in:

Yes, and I was given support

Yes, and this didn't solve anything

No, I thought it wouldn't solve the issue / I didn't want to bother with it

No, I did not know they could help me

No, I do not know who to contact

I'm not a member of a trade union

Resolving PhD Salary Ladder Issues (data)

Correlation by school:

ABE   CBH   EECS   ITM   SCI

- Yes, and I was given support
- Yes, and this didn't solve anything
- No, I thought it wouldn't solve the issue / I didn't want to bother with it
- No, I did not know they could help me
- No, I do not know who to contact
- I'm not a member of a trade union

0   10   20   30   40   50   60   70   80   90   100
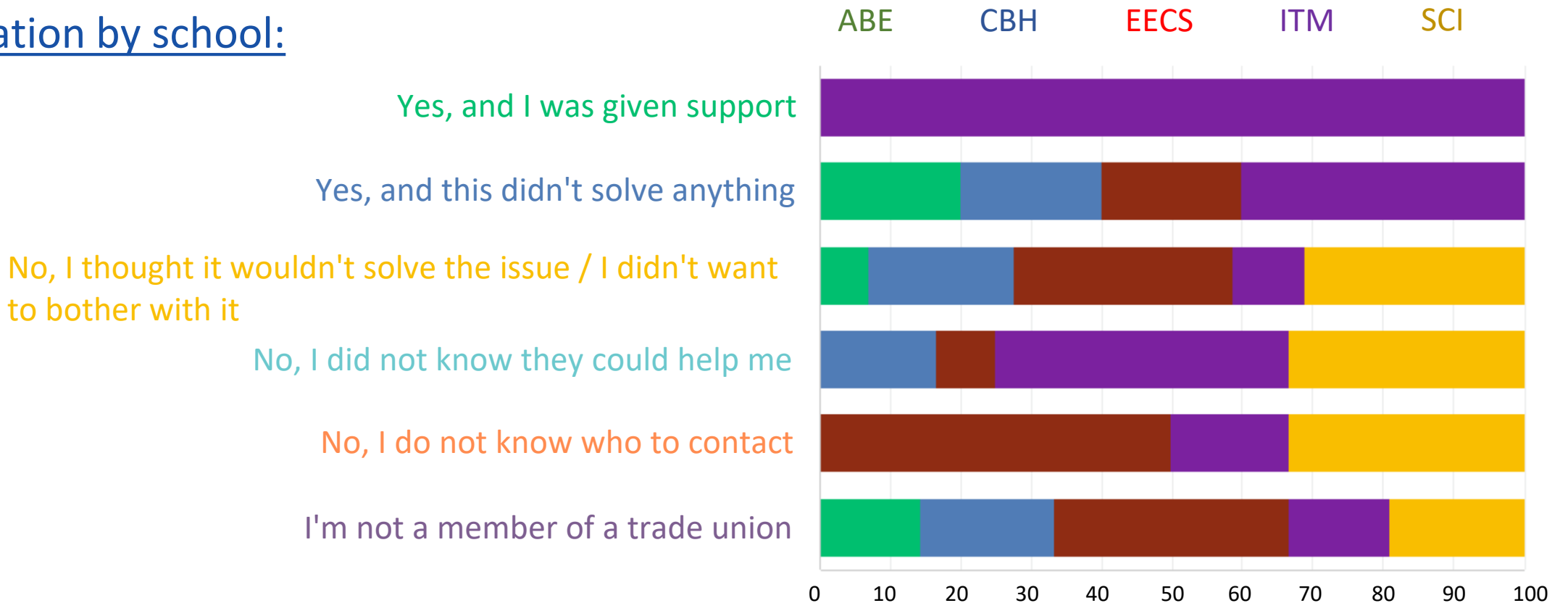
Resolving PhD Salary Ladder Issues (analysis)

- Nearly **30%** of all students on the PhD salary ladder (including first years) have experienced trouble moving up the ladder

- Main reasons reported are neglect or push back from supervisors

- Students do not reach out for help because they do not think it will help

- As nearly **40%** of 5th year or more doctoral students, still haven't reached the 4th step of their PhD salary ladder, students are getting stuck in comparison to their study time

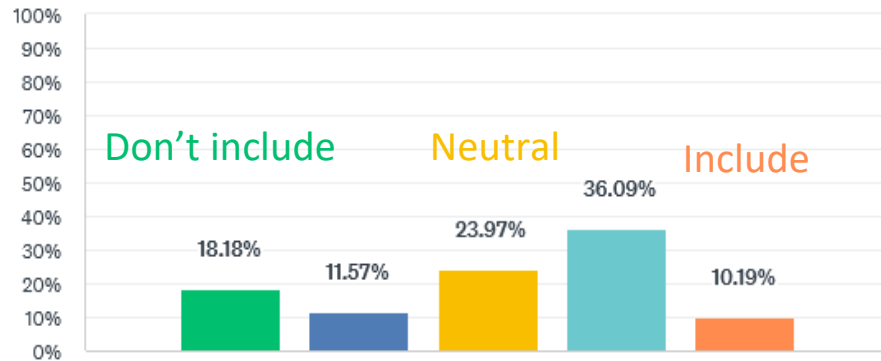➢ **Q19**: leave a commentary if you desire.

➢ 28 responses

Summary of comments:
- Delay because of difficulty to get the requirements
- Students were not informed/unaware of the PhD Salary process
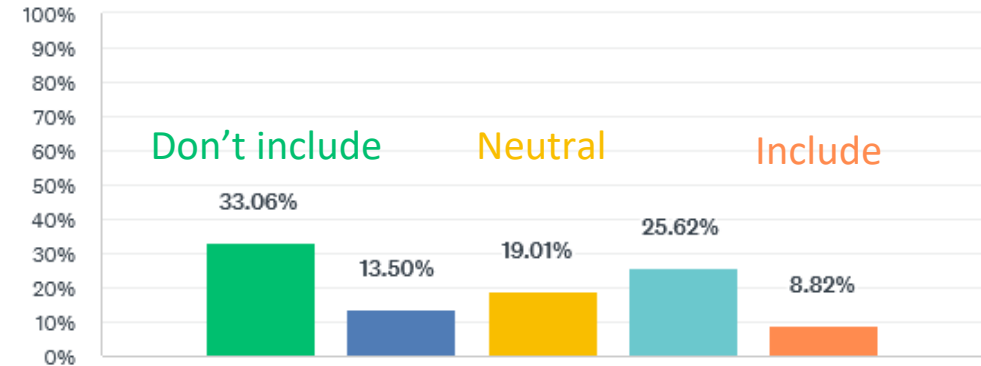- Supervisors neglecting this process
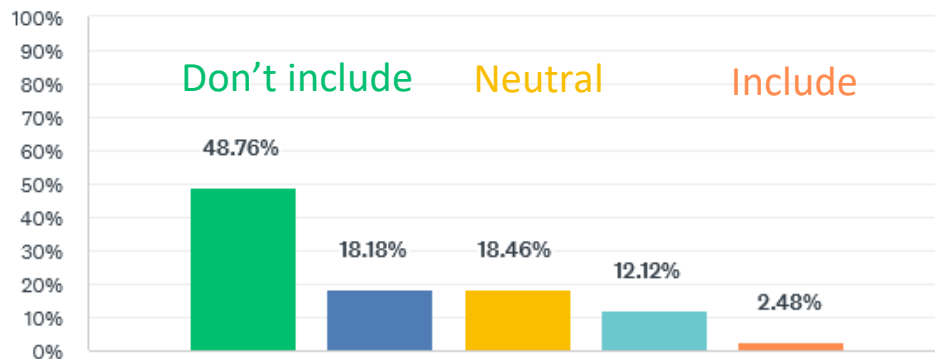
How to modify salary ladder (data)
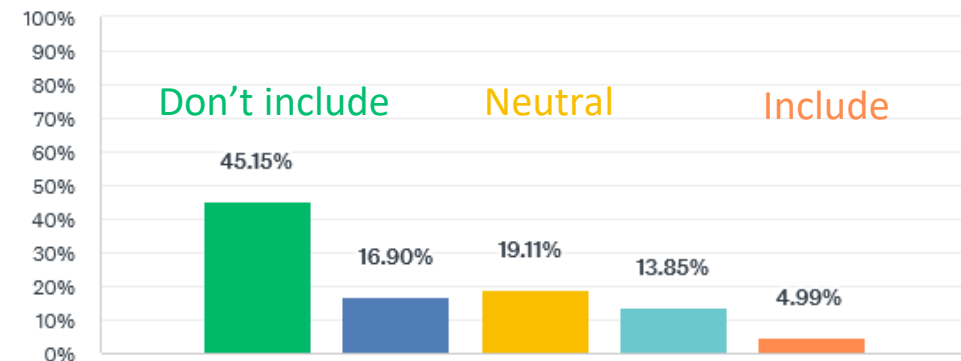
Numb completed credits:

Don't include — 18.18%, 11.57%
Neutral — 23.97%, 36.09%
Include — 10.19%

Num submitted papers (either conferences or journals):

Don't include — 33.06%, 13.50%
Neutral — 19.01%, 25.62%
Include — 8.82%

Num published papers (either conferences or journals):

Don't include — 48.76%, 18.18%
Neutral — 18.46%, 12.12%
Include — 2.48%

Numb accepted papers (either conferences or journals):

Don't include — 45.15%, 16.90%
Neutral — 19.11%, 13.85%
Include — 4.99%

How to modify salary ladder (data)

Time (i.e., from when you started the PhD):

Don't include — 4.13%
3.03%
Neutral — 13.22%
26.45%
Include — 53.17%
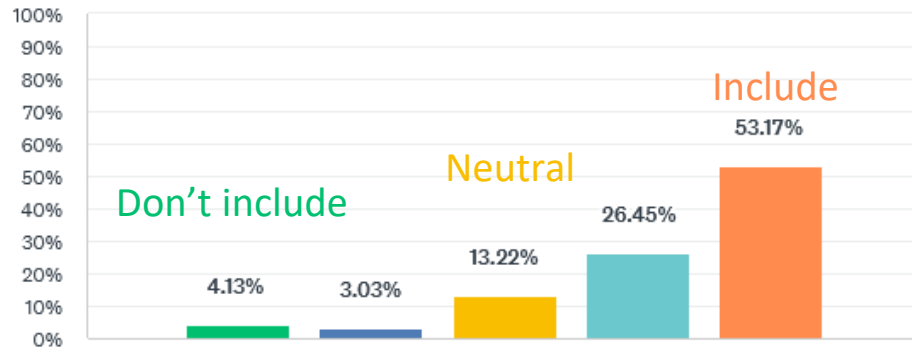
Presentation of a public seminar:

Don't include — 14.84%
7.42%
Neutral — 33.79%
31.32%
Include — 12.64%

The criteria should be tailored to the student:

Don't include — 19.50%
9.19%
Neutral — 22.56%
17.83%
Include — 30.92%
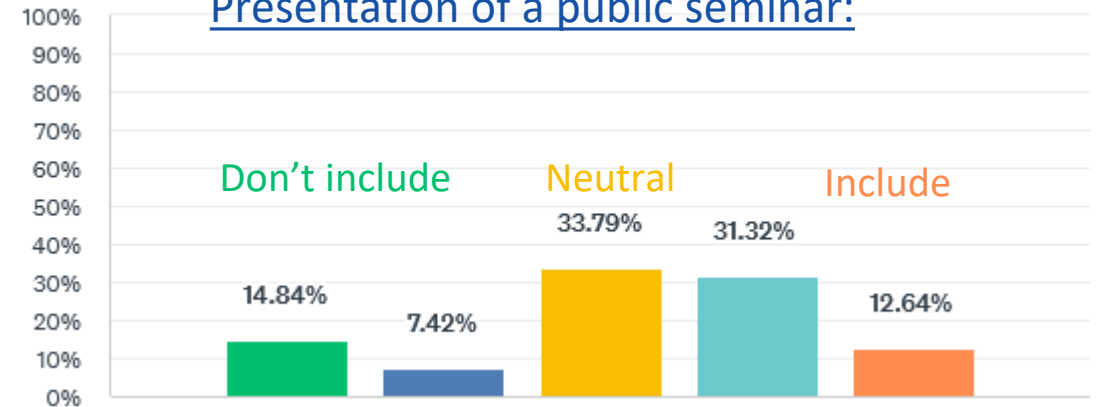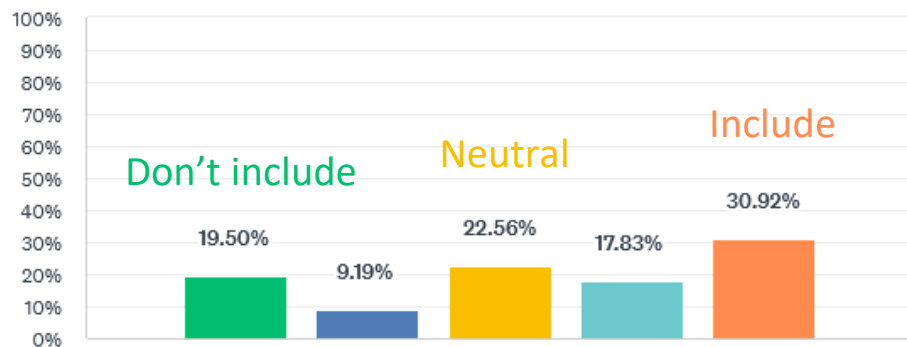
My supervisor should have the discretion to decide when I advance:

Don't include — 38.61%
17.22%
Neutral — 23.33%
13.33%
Include — 7.50%
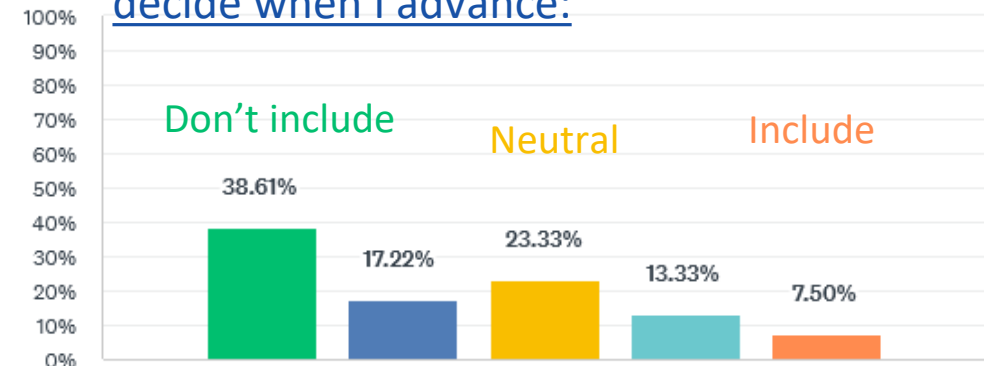
Resolving PhD Salary Ladder Issues (data)

➢ **Q28**: leave a commentary if you desire.

➢ 61 responses

Summary:
- The advancement in the PhD salary ladder should not be up to the PhD Supervisor
- Having number of credits/papers as criteria to move up the salary ladder will lead to different progression rates for PhD students depending on 'luck' factors (such as: research field, project, PI, etc.)
- Time seems to be the most fair criteria
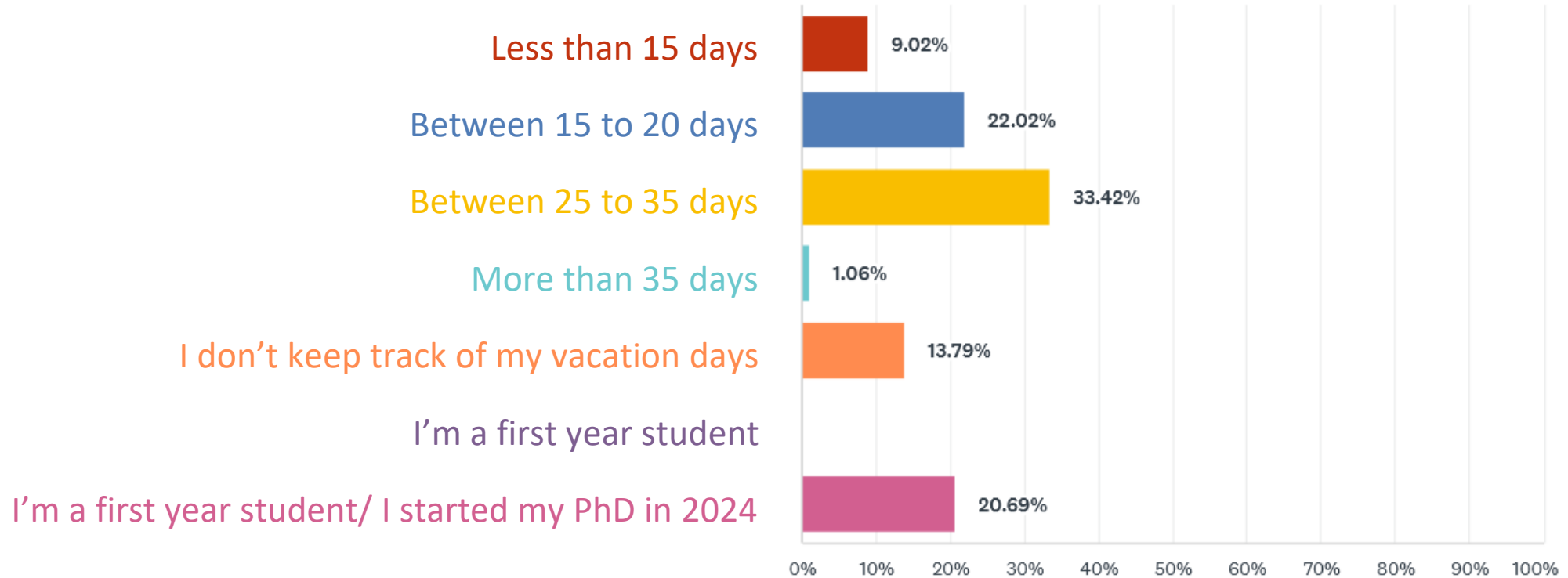
Resolving PhD Salary Ladder Issues (analysis)

➢ **~53%** of the PhD students think that time should be included as criteria from comments and overall grades, a time based PhD ladder is clearly favoured by the students.

➢ ~39% of the students think their supervisor should not decide when they get to move up on the PhD salary ladder and from the responses it seems that some students think that this gives them too much power which could lead to potential abuse of the students

➢ ~31% of the students think that the criteria should be tailored to the student

➢ Students seem quite positive about having amount of credits or a public seminar as criteria

➢ Students are less keen on having papers as a criteria, especially not either accepted or published papers. Submitted papers has the highest grade of these criteria.

Vacation and Sick leave

Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

Q29: In 2023, how many vacation days did you effectively use (i.e., not counting national holidays)?
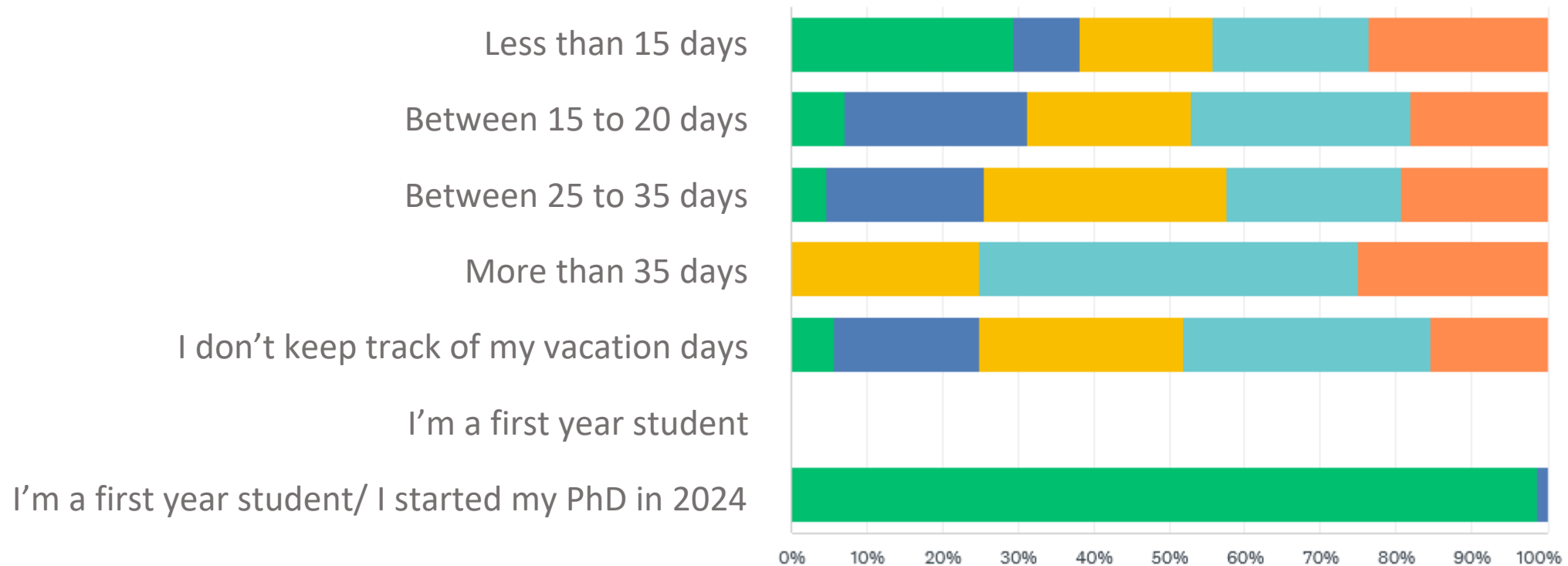

Category	Percentage
Less than 15 days	9.02%
Between 15 to 20 days	22.02%
Between 25 to 35 days	33.42%
More than 35 days	1.06%
I don't keep track of my vacation days	13.79%
I'm a first year student	
I'm a first year student/ I started my PhD in 2024	20.69%

Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

Correlation by year a PhD student is in:

1st year · 2nd year · 3rd year · 4th year · 5th year or more

Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

Correlation by school:
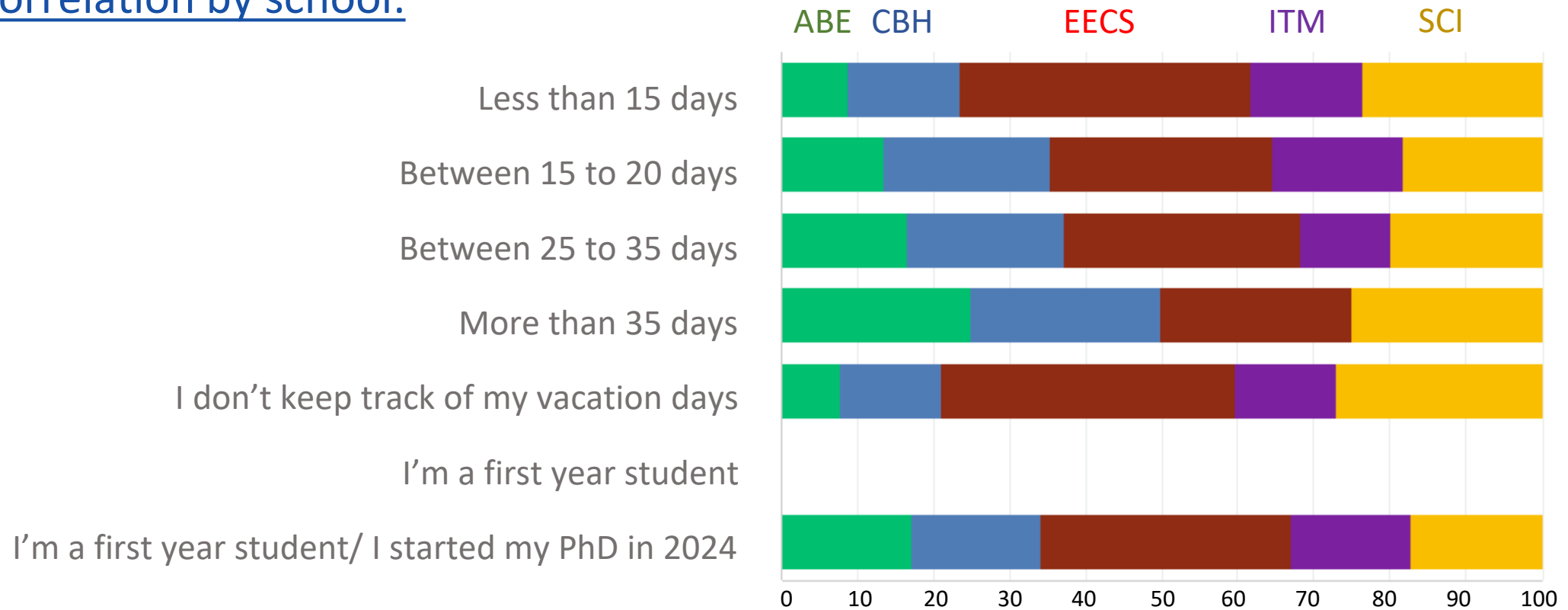
Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

Q30: To whom do you report when you are going to use your vacation days?

My supervisor	79.52%
My point-of-contact at HR	3.72%
Head of division	10.37%
Head of department	1.86%
Head of school	
At an internal system of KTH	4.26%
I don't report my vacation days at all	12.77%
I don't know	1.86%
I am a first year student/ I didn't have the need to report my vacation days so far	9.04%
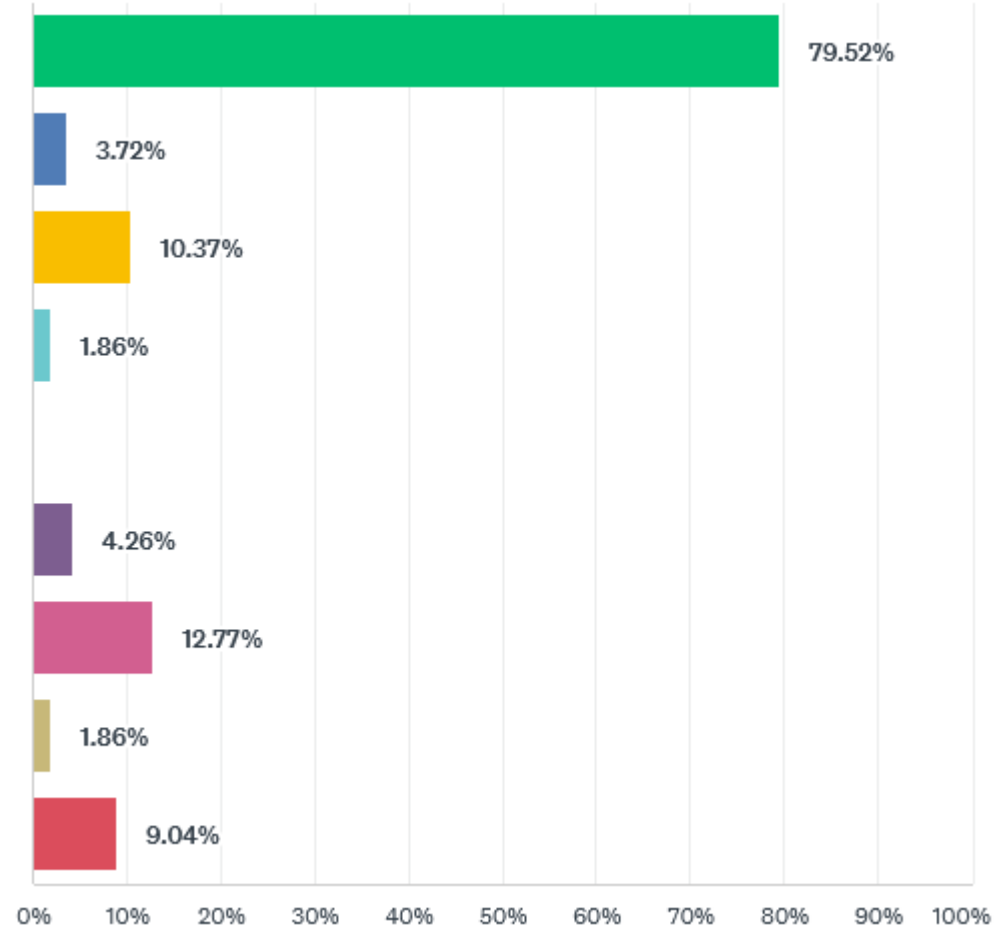
Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

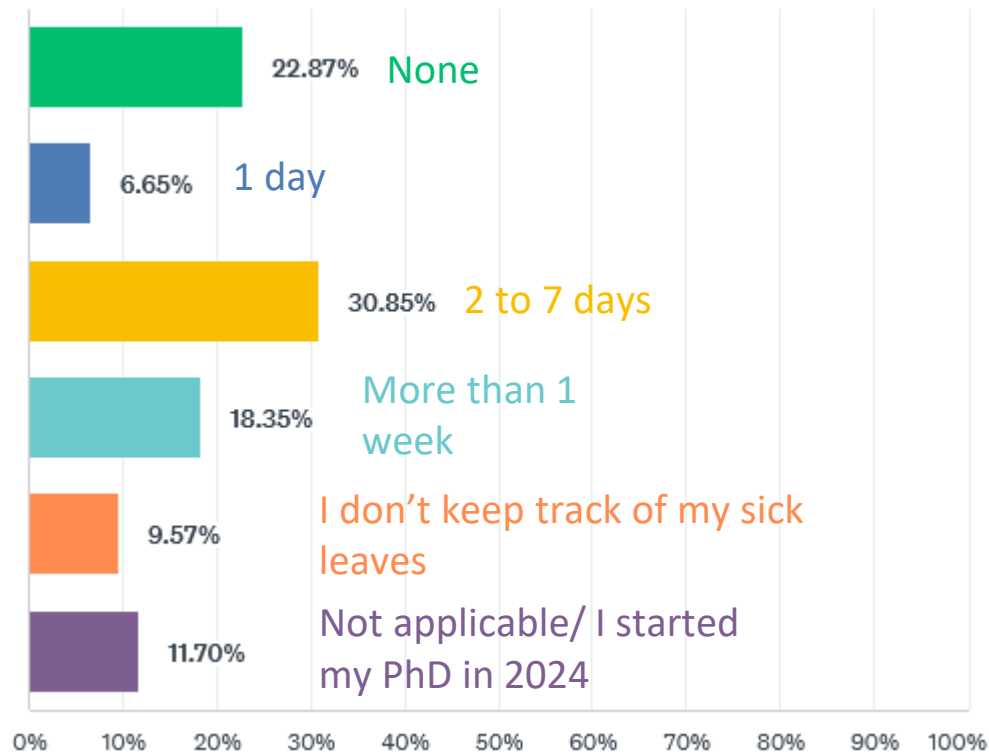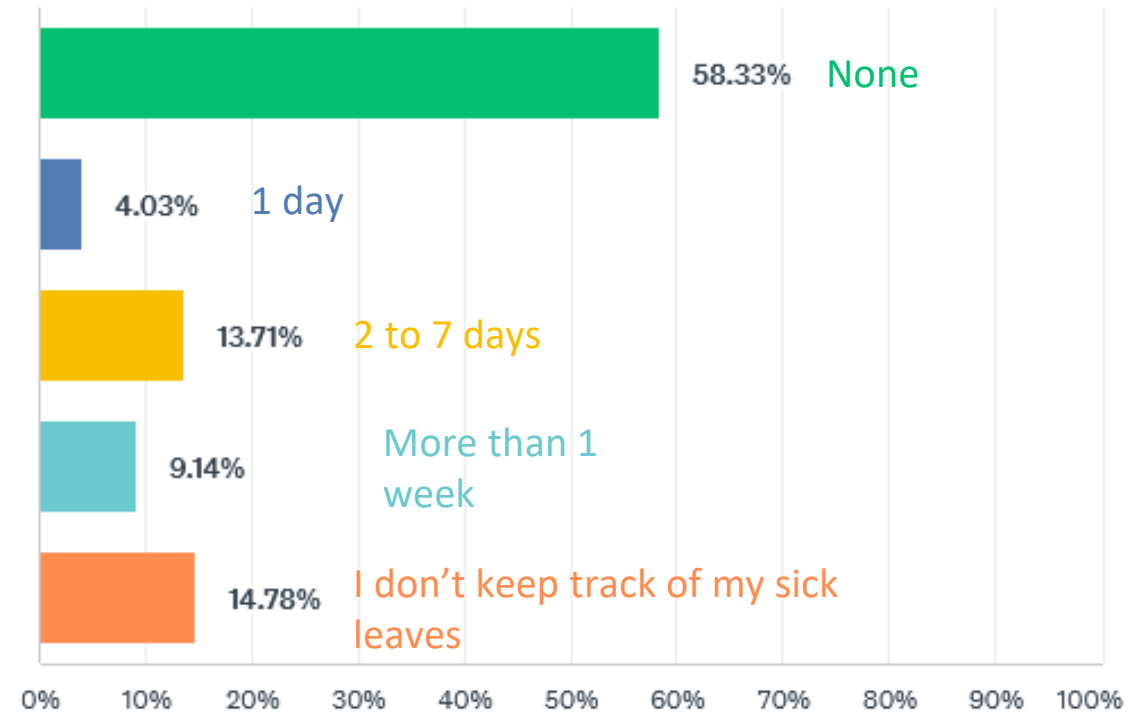Correlation by school:
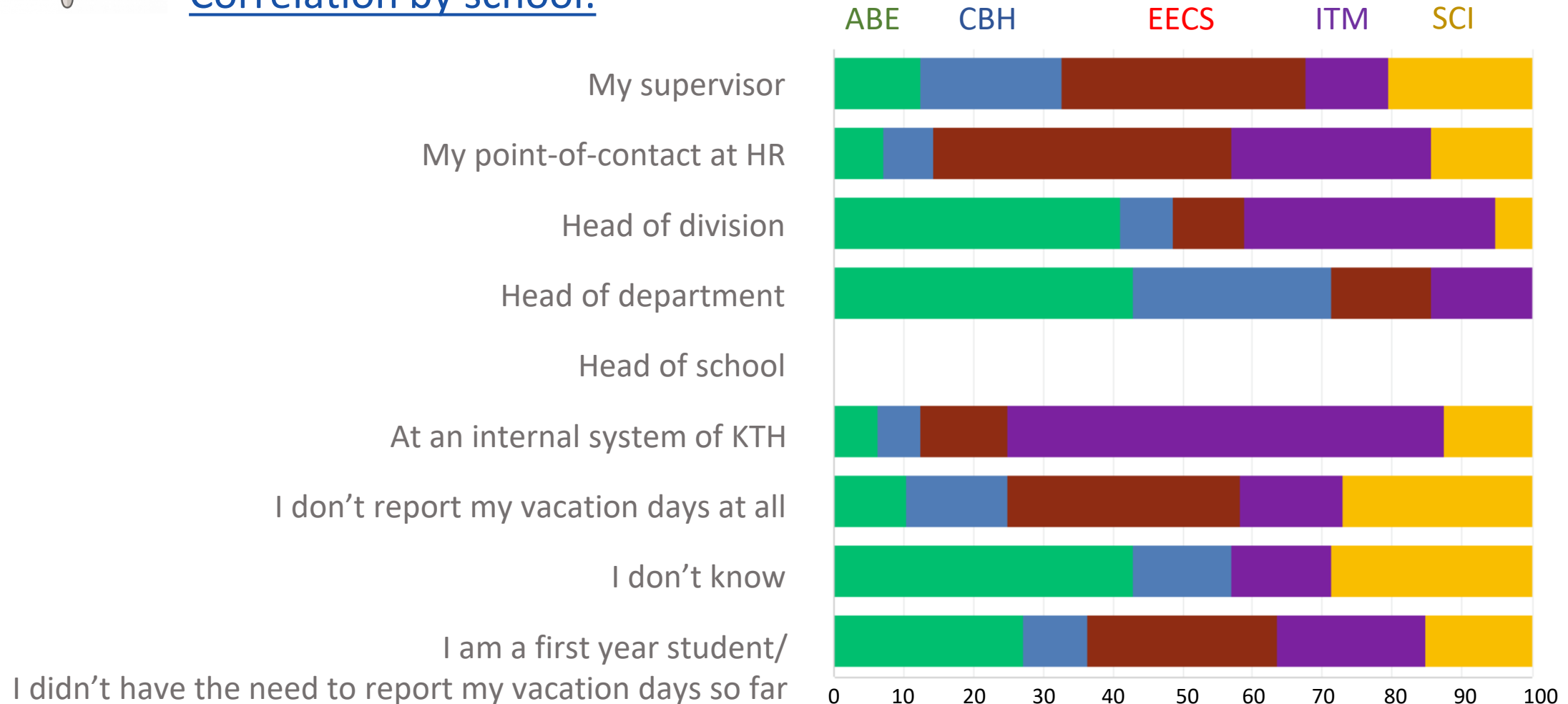
Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

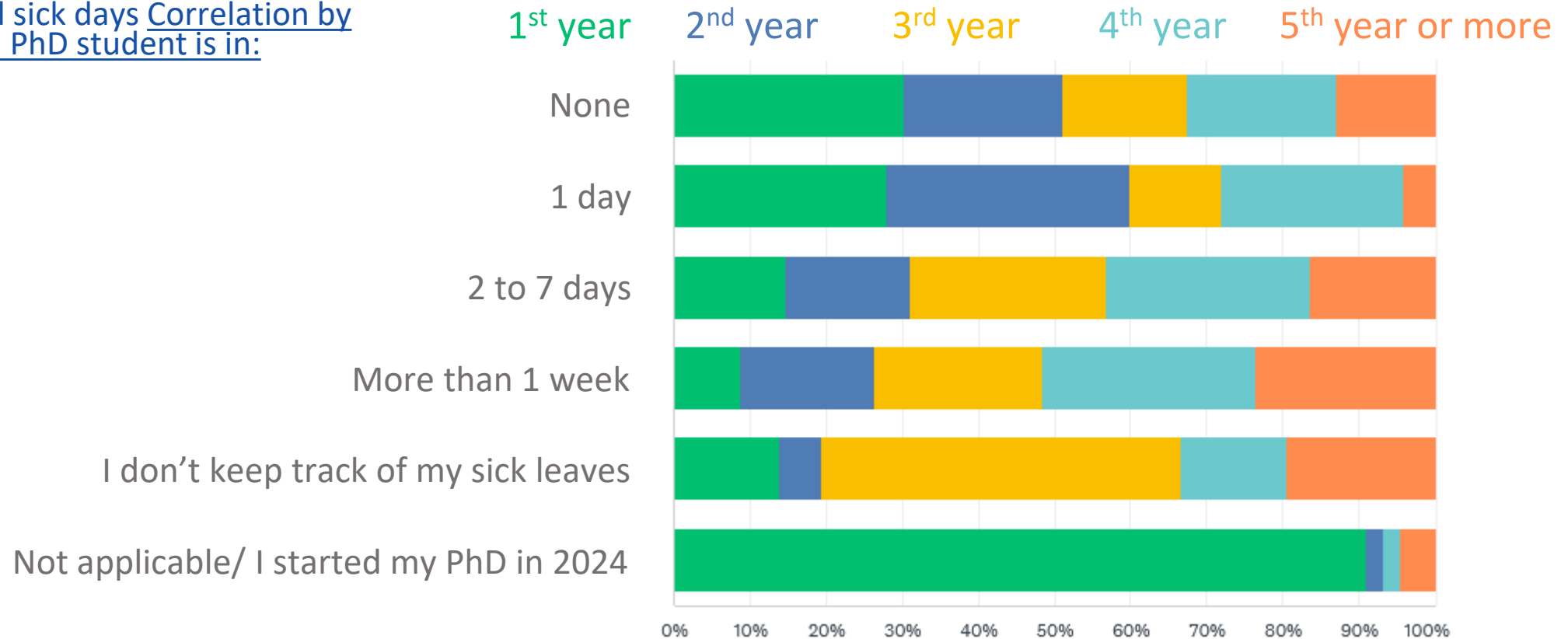**Q31**: In 2023, how many days were you sick? (excluding parental leave)

- 22.87% None
- 6.65% 1 day
- 30.85% 2 to 7 days
- 18.35% More than 1 week
- 9.57% I don't keep track of my sick leaves
- 11.70% Not applicable/ I started my PhD in 2024

Q32: In 2023, how many sick leaves (excluding parental leave) did you effectively report in total?

- 58.33% None
- 4.03% 1 day
- 13.71% 2 to 7 days
- 9.14% More than 1 week
- 14.78% I don't keep track of my sick leaves

Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

Actual sick days Correlation by year a PhD student is in:

1st year   2nd year   3rd year   4th year   5th year or more

None

1 day

2 to 7 days

More than 1 week

I don't keep track of my sick leaves

Not applicable/ I started my PhD in 2024

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%

Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

Actual sick days Correlation by school:
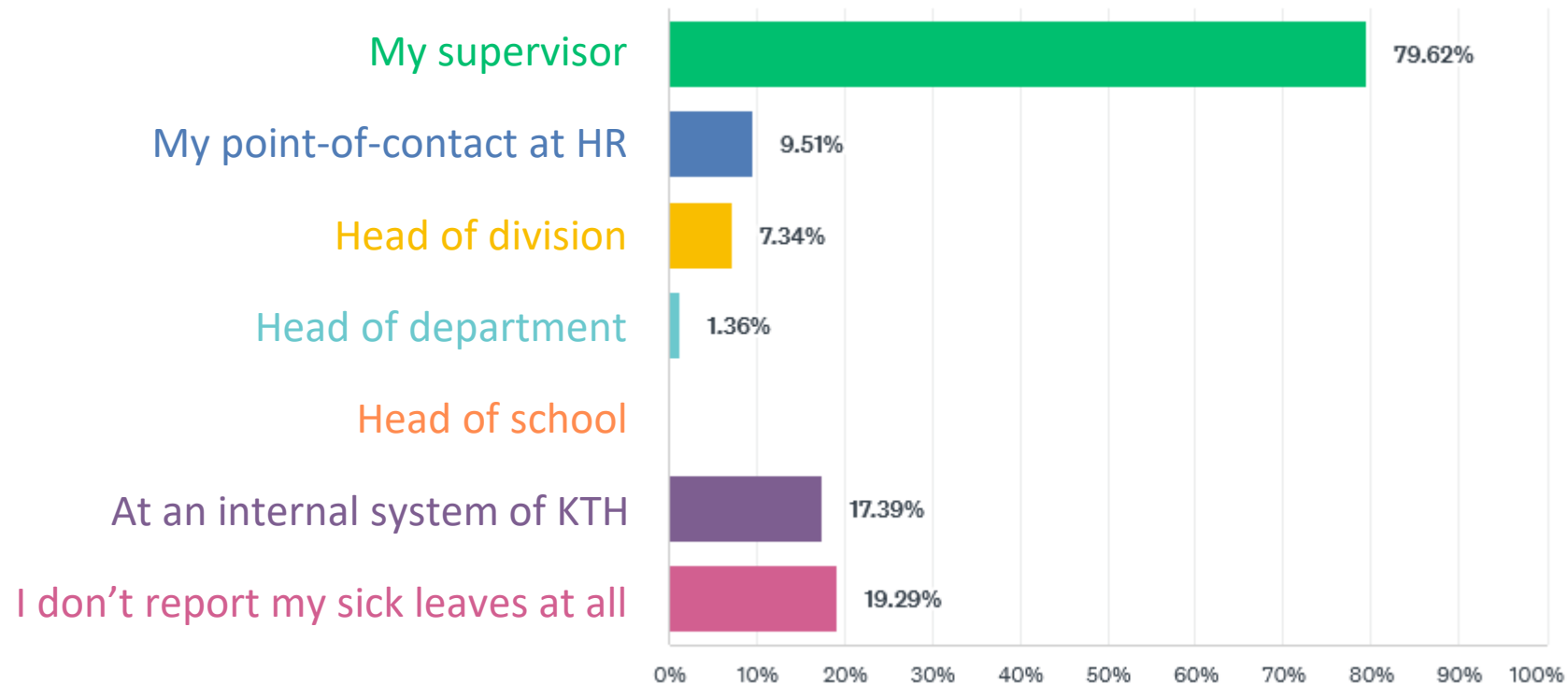
Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

Reported sick days, corralted per school:
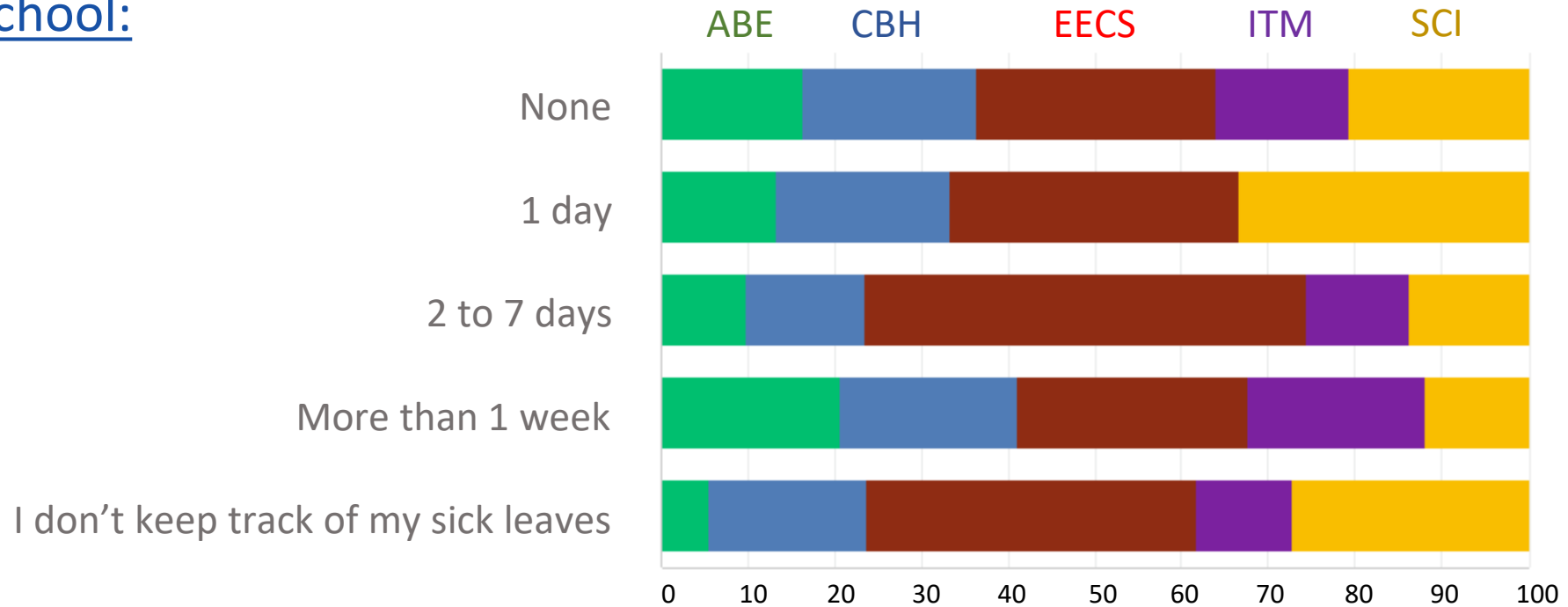
Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

Q33: To whom do you report when you are going to take a sick leave? (select all that apply)

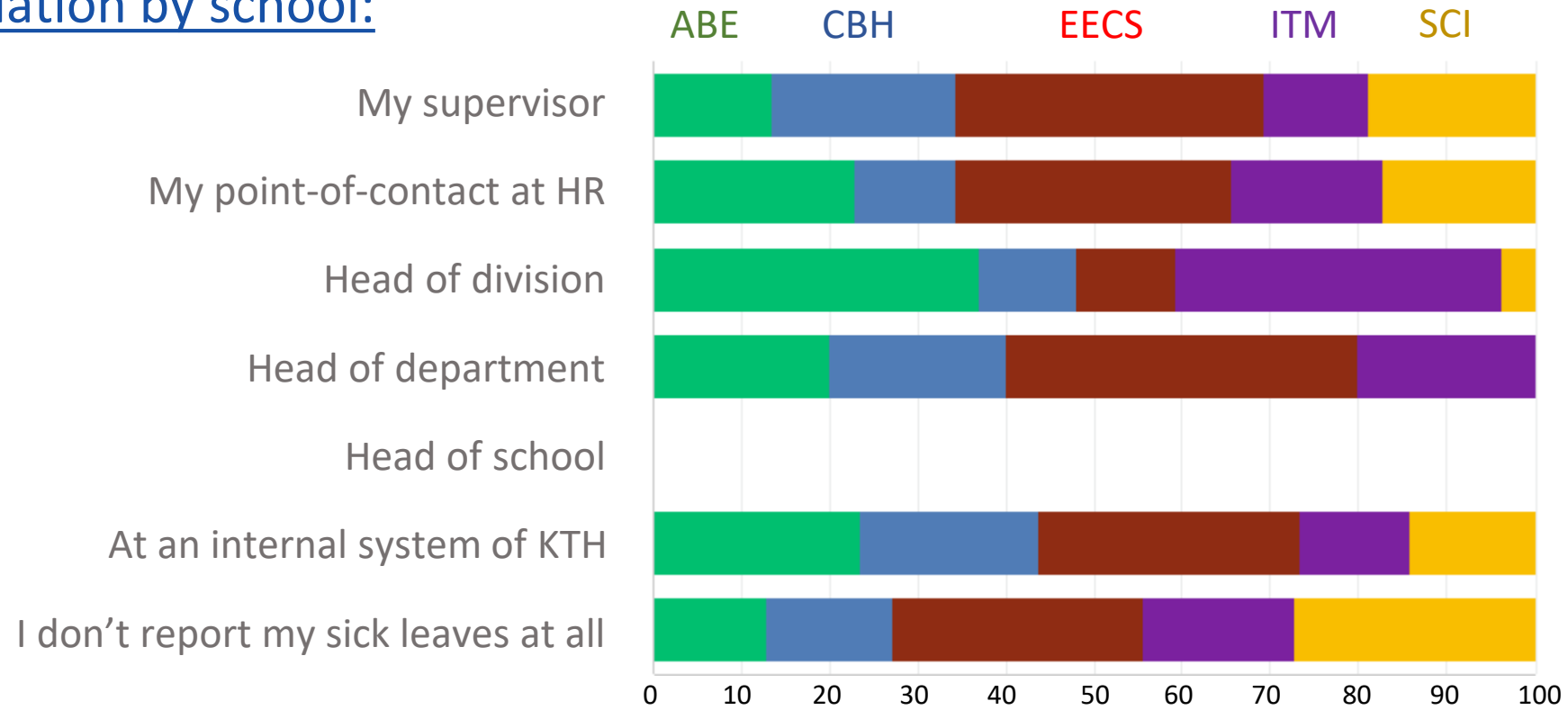|	
My supervisor	79.62%
My point-of-contact at HR	9.51%
Head of division	7.34%
Head of department	1.36%
Head of school	
At an internal system of KTH	17.39%
I don't report my sick leaves at all	19.29%

Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

Correlation by year a PhD student is in:

Vacations and Sick leaves (data)
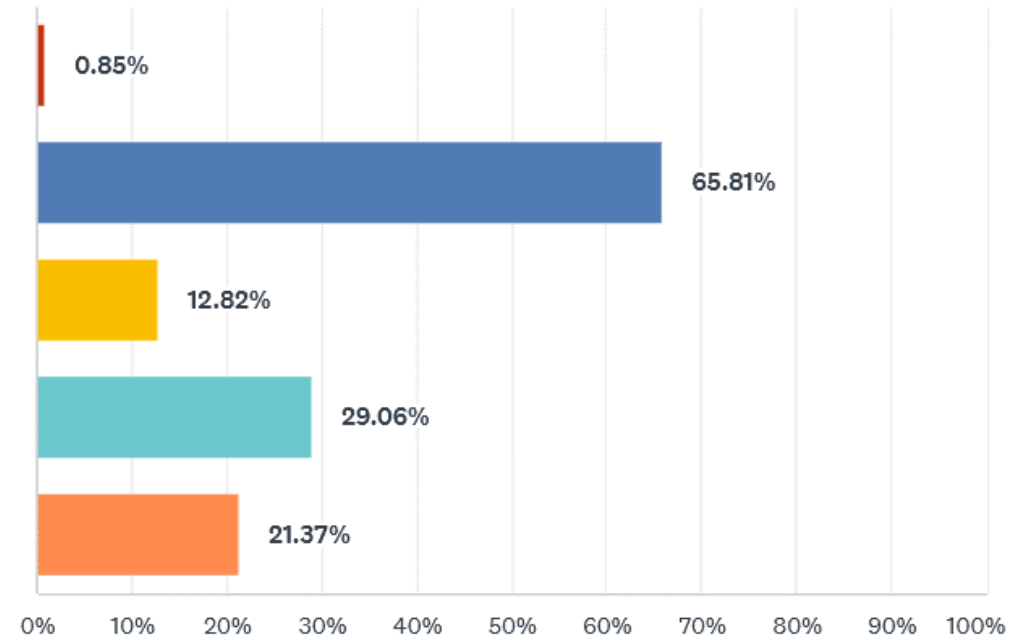
Correlation by school:

47
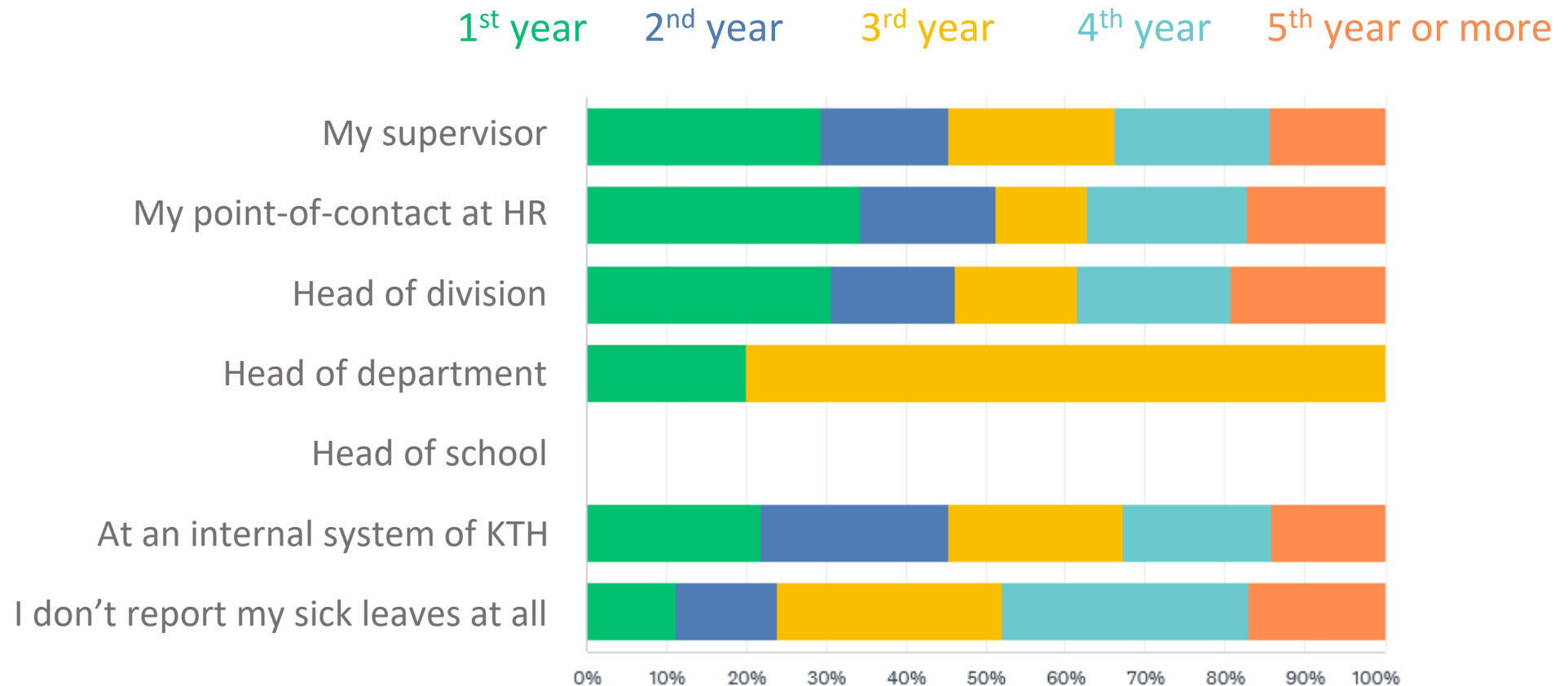
Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

Q34: In a previous question, you mentioned that you took less than 25 days for vacation last year. What are the reasons for it? (Select all that apply)

My supervisor explicitly didn't let me use all my days — 0.85%

I didn't have enough time to take it (research papers, project, etc.) — 65.81%

I felt pressure from my peers not to use all my days — 12.82%

I just didn't want to use all my days — 29.06%

Other (please specify) — 21.37%

Some students experienced pressure from their supervisor, others started somewhere during the year and didn't have the full amount of vacation days, some students just prefer to get a lot of work done
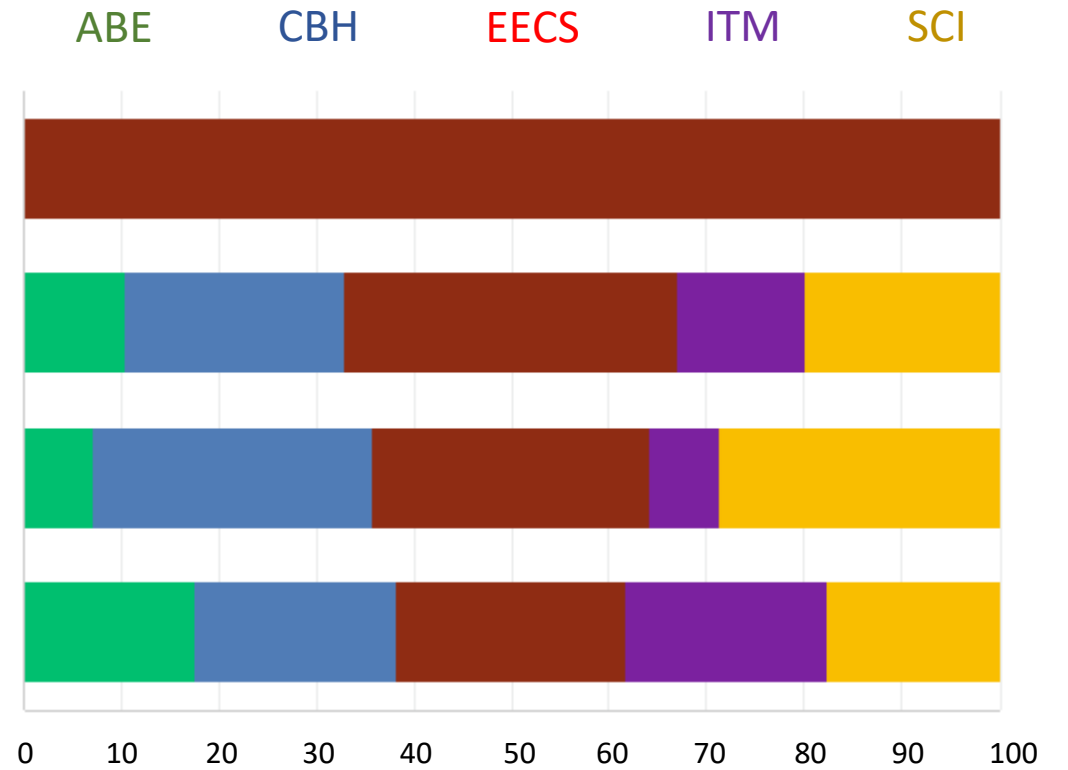
Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

Correlation by school:

ABE   CBH   EECS   ITM   SCI

My supervisor explicitly didn't let me use all my days

I didn't have enough time to take it (research papers, project, etc.)

I felt pressure from my peers not to use all my days

I just didn't want to use all my days

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Vacations and Sick leaves (data)

- **30%** of all students take less than 20 days of vacation per year and this is a problem at all schools. 70% of the students taking less than 20 days of vacation report the reason being a lack of time due to work load

- A majority of students report their sick days and vacation directly do their supervisor.

- There is a large discrepency between actual sick days and reported sick days for doctoral students.
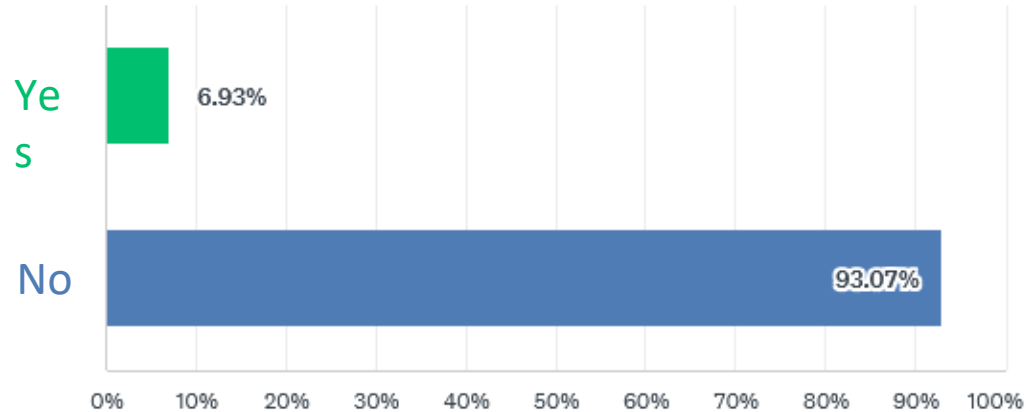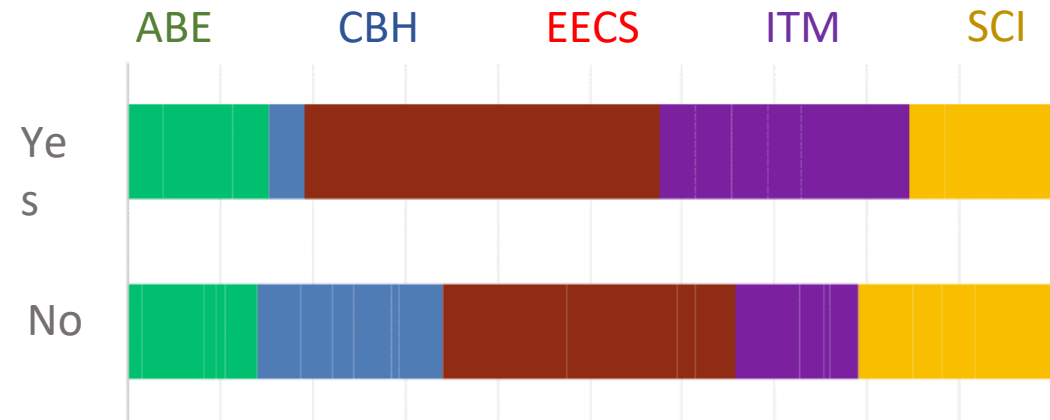
PhD Ombudsman

PhD Ombudsman (data)
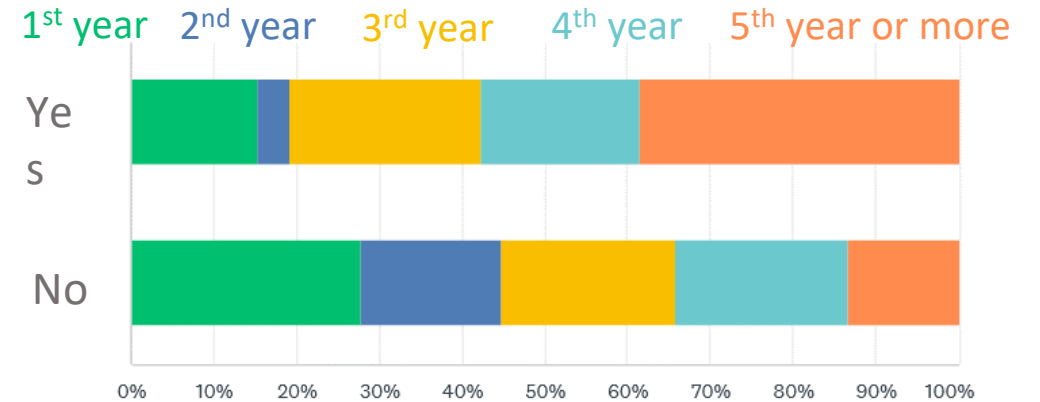
Q35: Have you ever requested the services of the PhD Ombudsman at THS?

Correlation by year a PhD student is in:

1st year   2nd year   3rd year   4th year   5th year or more

Correlation by school:

ABE   CBH   EECS   ITM   SCI
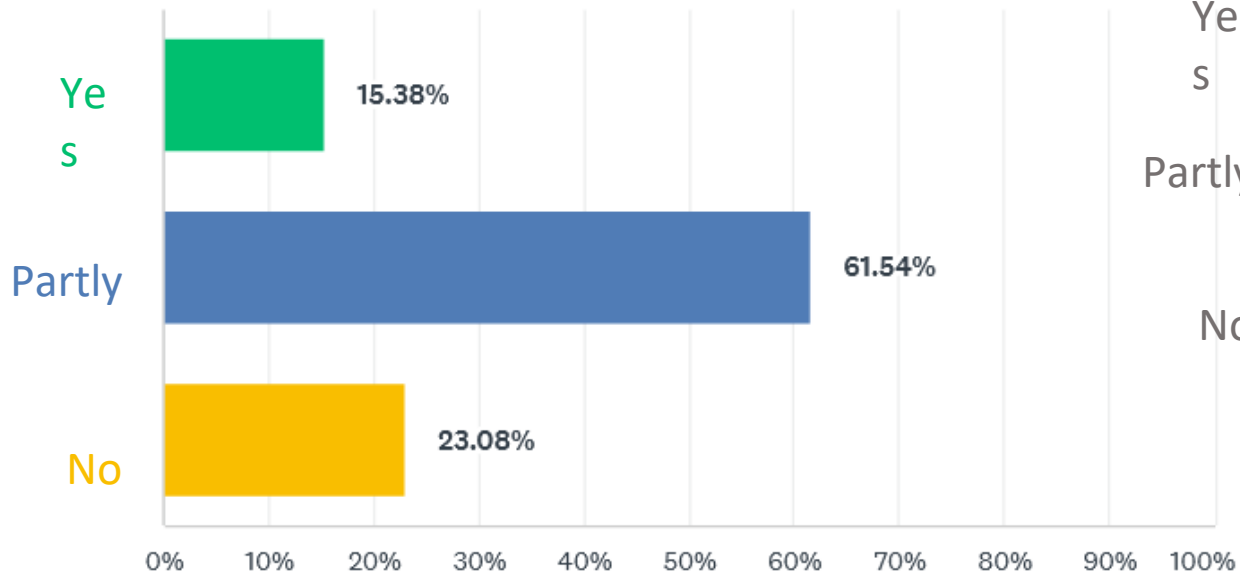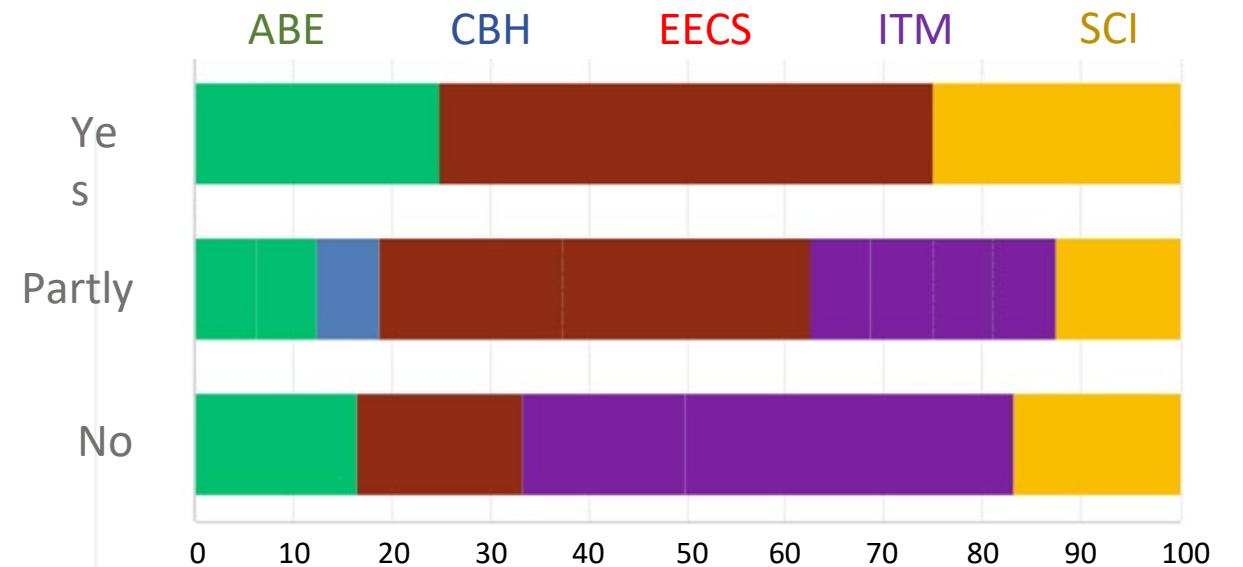
PhD Ombudsman (data)

Q36: Did the PhD Ombudsman help solving the issue that you brought to her?
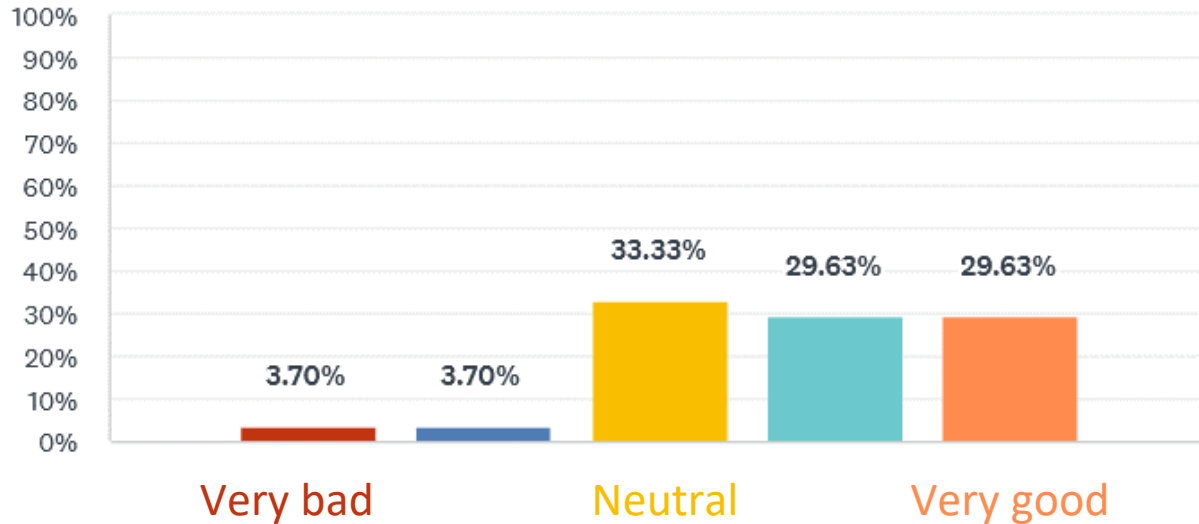

Correlation by school:
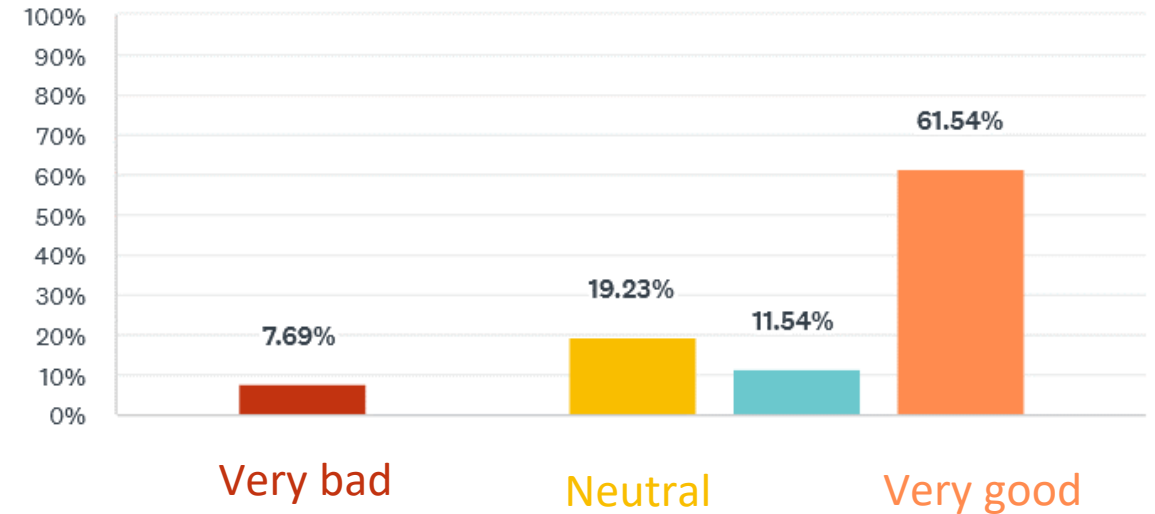
ABE   CBH   EECS   ITM   SCI

PhD Ombudsman (data)

Q37: How would you rate the help/guidance/advice that you received?

Q38: How relevant do you feel that the PhD Ombudsman at THS is for doctoral students?

Q37 bar chart:
- Very bad: 3.70%
- 3.70%
- Neutral: 33.33%
- 29.63%
- Very good: 29.63%

Q38 bar chart:
- Very bad: 7.69%
- Neutral: 19.23%
- 11.54%
- Very good: 61.54%

PhD Ombudsman (data)

Q39: Would you recommend the PhD Ombudsman at THS to other students?

- Yes — 92.31%
- No — 7.69%
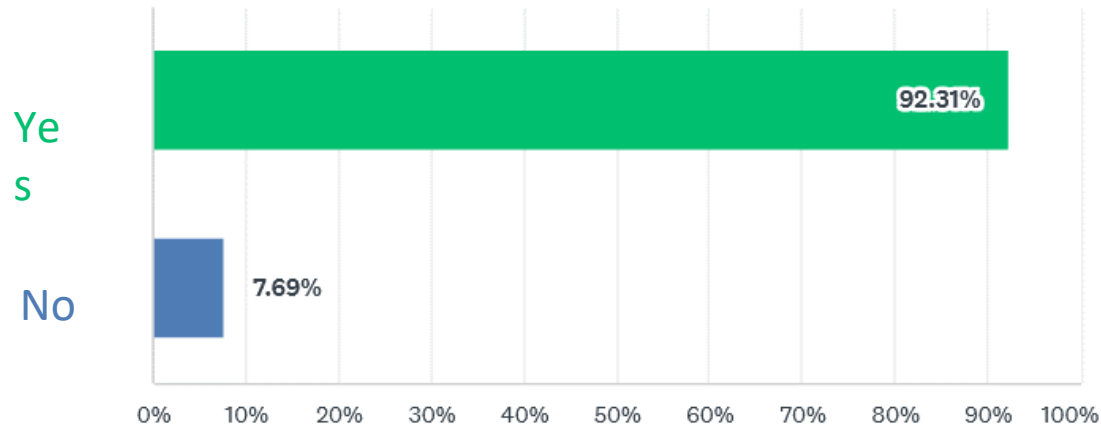
➢ **Q40**: leave a commentary if you desire.

➢ 8 responses

Summary:
- Most students were satisfied with the help they have gotten
- Some students felt like they didn't get enough help, but would still recommend her service

PhD Ombudsman (analysis)

- Around 8% of PhD Students have utilized the PhD Ombudsman

- Even though most students experienced that the PhD Ombudsman could only partly solve their problem, nearly all of them strongly recommend the PhD Ombudsman for other students.

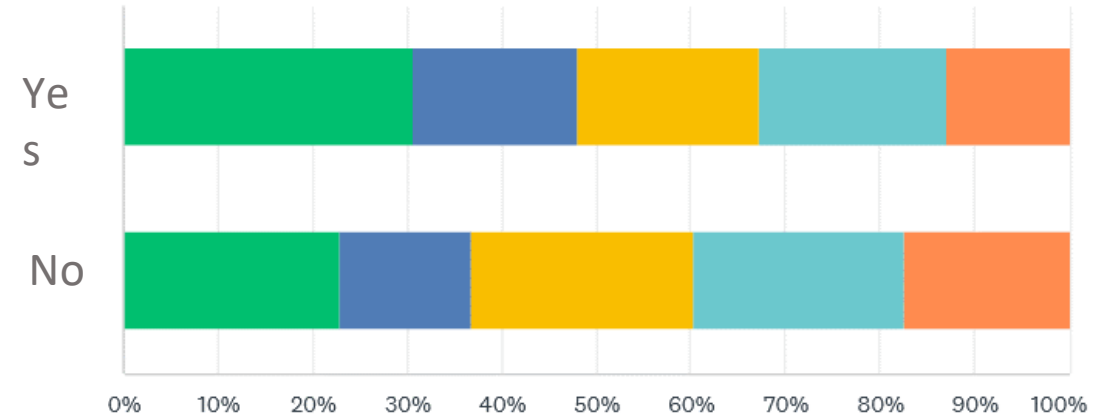# Reception, On-boarding, Chapter-Hall
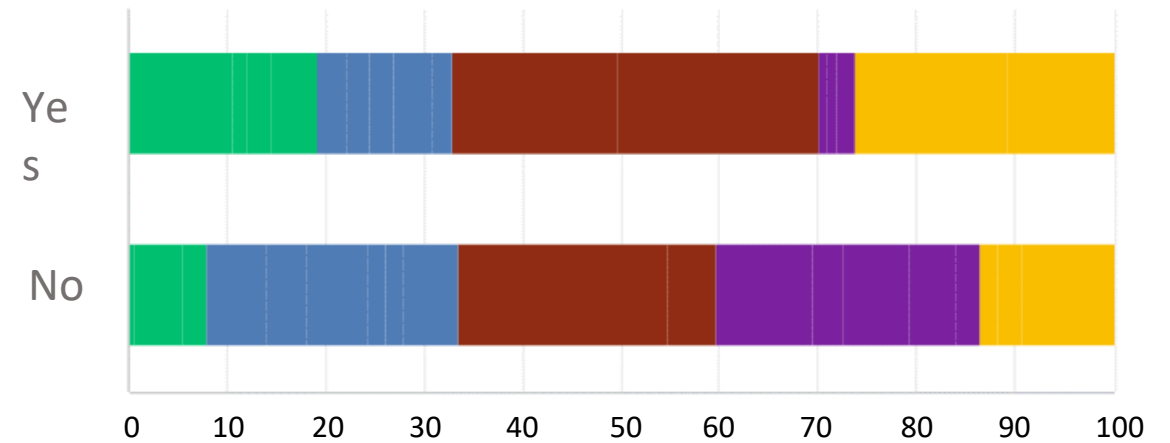
Reception and on-boarding (data)

Q41: Has KTH (not THS or the PhD Chapter) offered you an onboarding process when you started your studies? This can be a talk with HR or a small seminar about your life over here?
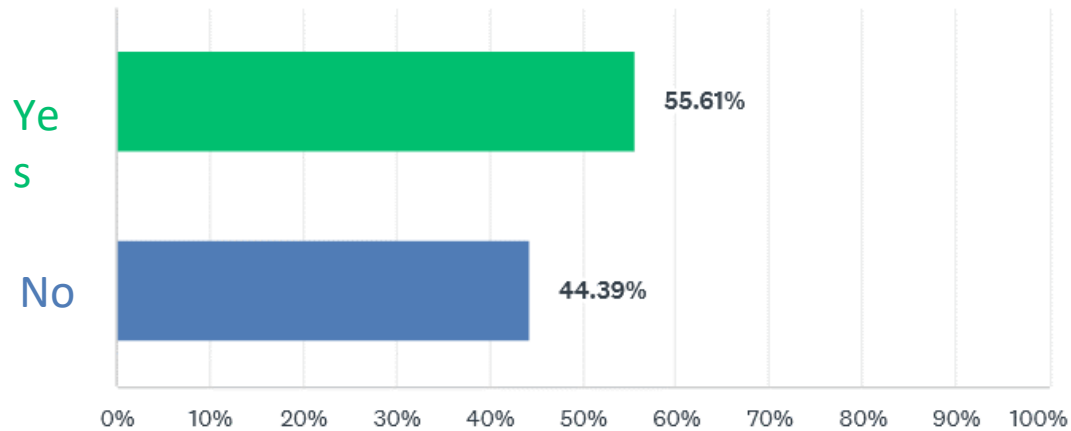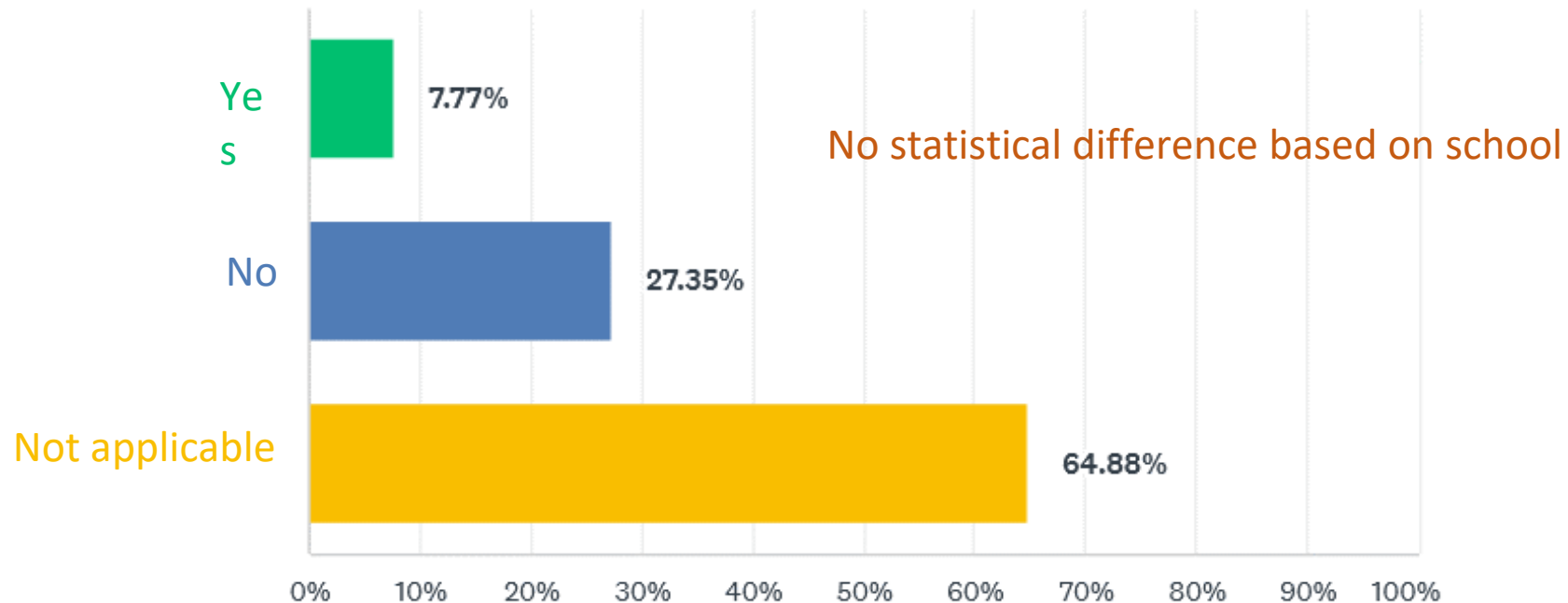
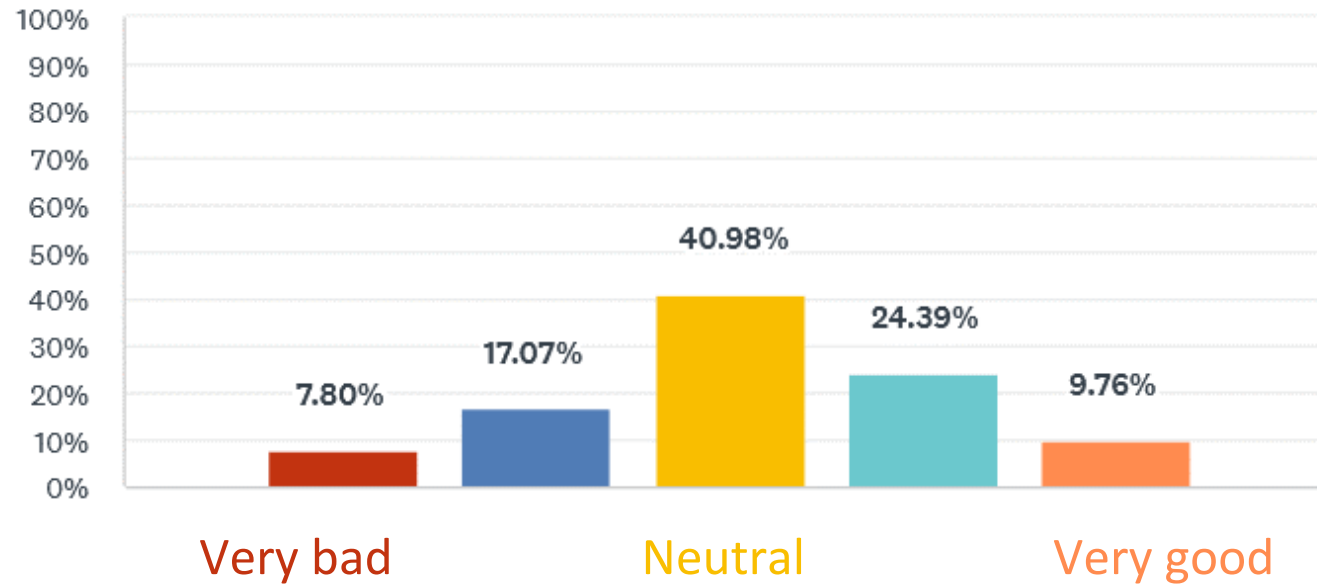# Reception and on-boarding (data)

Q42: If you started your research studies in July 2023 or afterwards, have you taken part into the Reception organized by THS or the PhD Chapter last year?

No statistical difference based on school

- Yes — 7.77%
- No — 27.35%
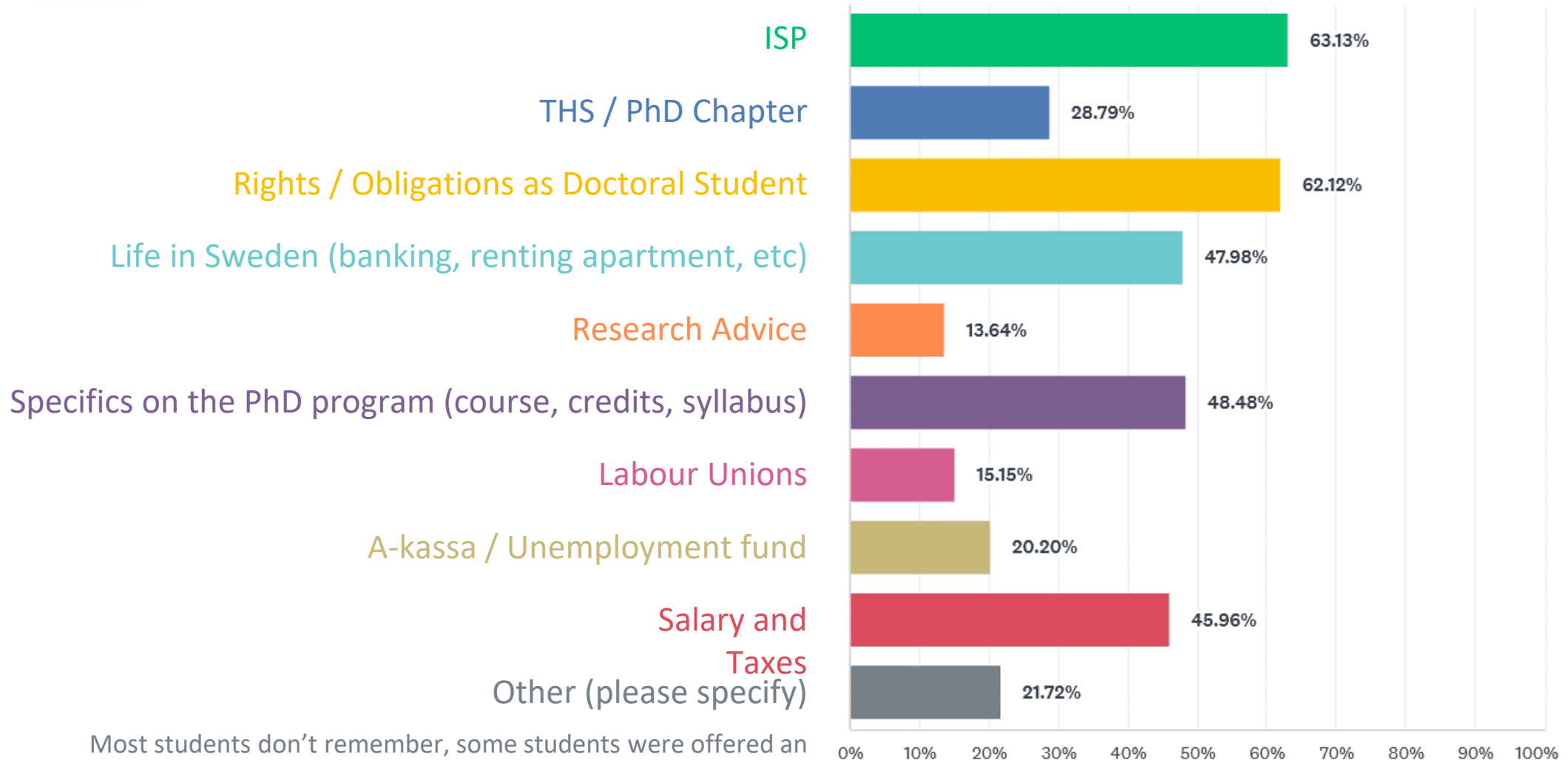- Not applicable — 64.88%

Reception and on-boarding (data)

Q43: How do you rate the onboarding process that you received at KTH?

Reception and on-boarding (data)

: Which of these topics were spoken to you during your onboarding? (Select all that apply)

Topic	Percentage
ISP	63.13%
THS / PhD Chapter	28.79%
Rights / Obligations as Doctoral Student	62.12%
Life in Sweden (banking, renting apartment, etc)	47.98%
Research Advice	13.64%
Specifics on the PhD program (course, credits, syllabus)	48.48%
Labour Unions	15.15%
A-kassa / Unemployment fund	20.20%
Salary and Taxes	45.96%
Other (please specify)	21.72%

Most students don't remember, some students were offered an onboarding but couldn't attend

On-boarding (data)
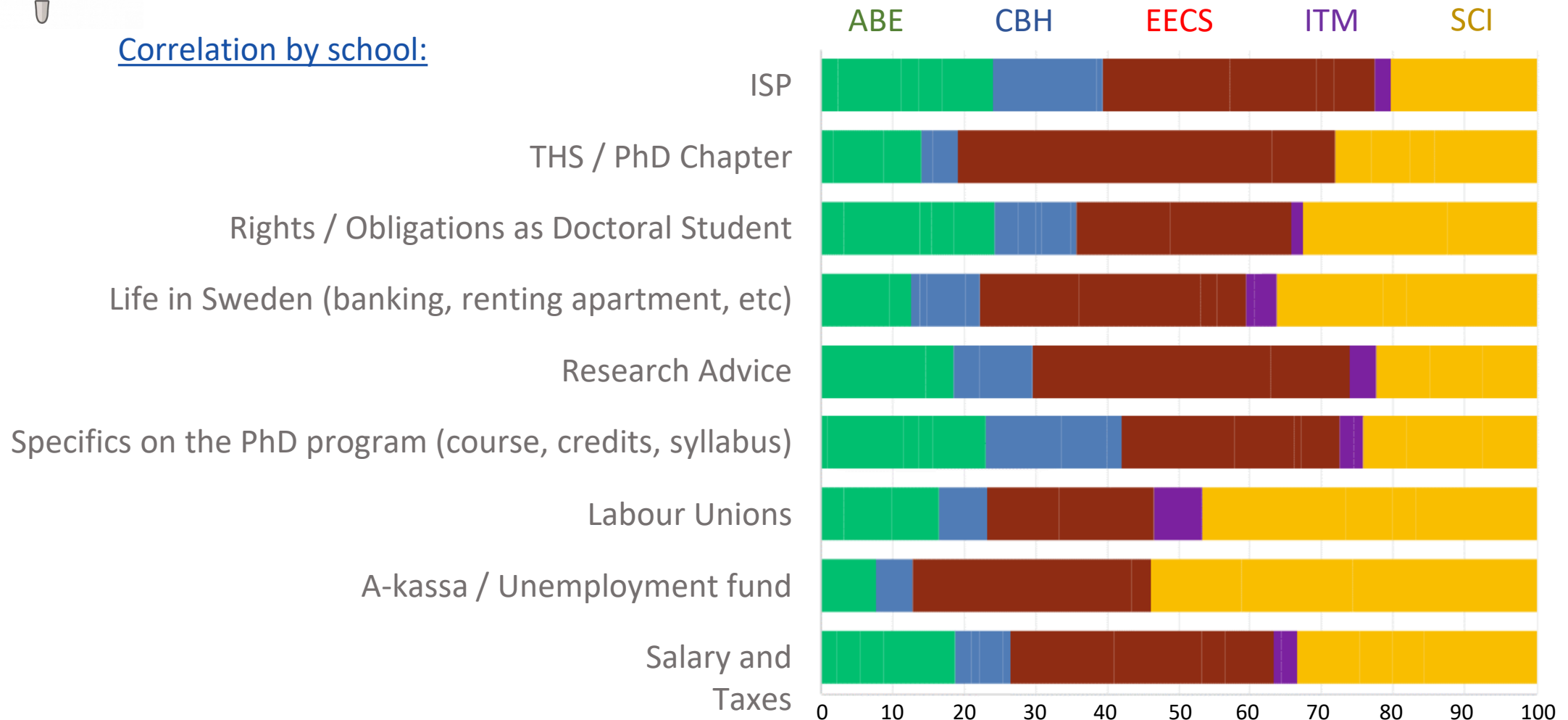
Onboarding – How was the process (analysis)

- General trend of improvement in recent years with the number of students receiving on-boarding, but still over 40% of total students did not receive any on-boarding from KTH

- Nevertheless, there is room for improvement

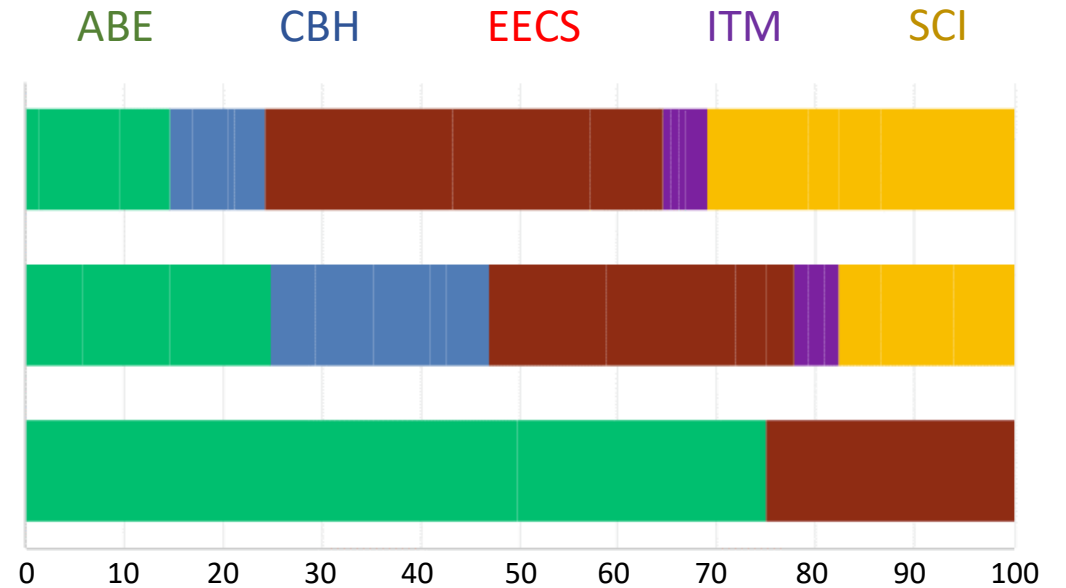- ITM and CBH schools have less exposure to onboarding events

PhD Chapter Hall – Attendance (data)

Q45: Have you ever been to any event (PhD Pubs, Karaoke Nights, WoP, etc) organized by the PhD Chapter at the PhD Chapter Hall ("T-Centralen")?

Yes — 65.55%
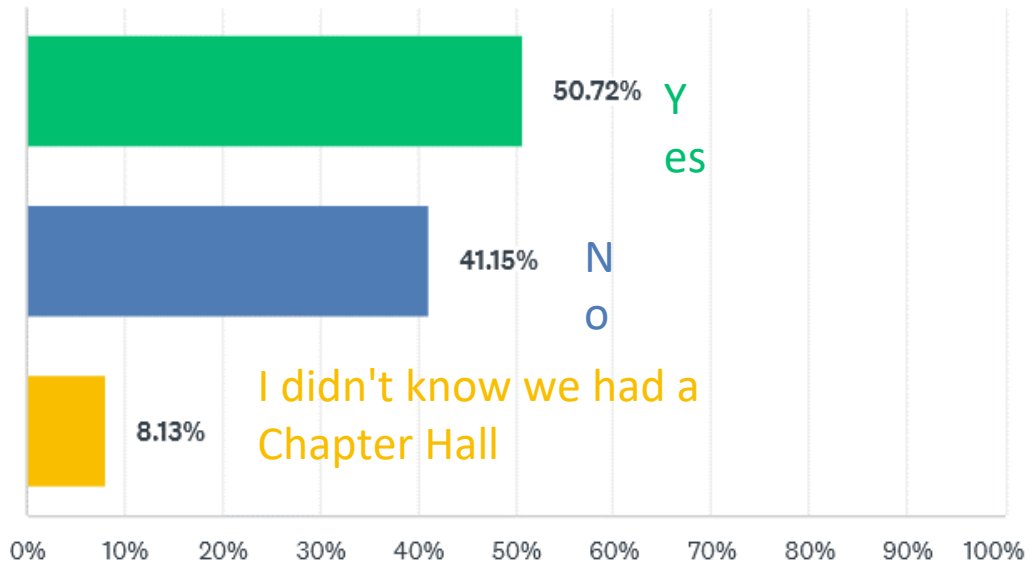
No — 32.54%
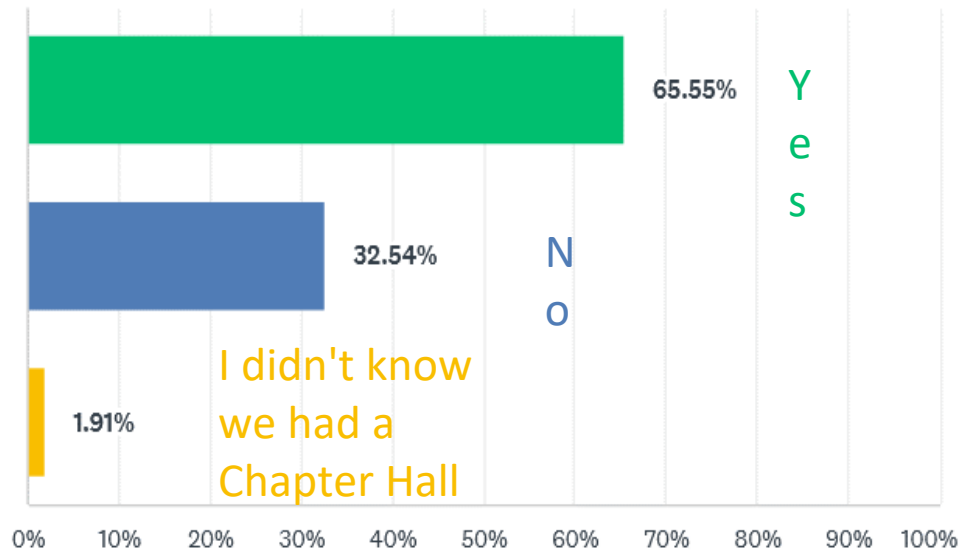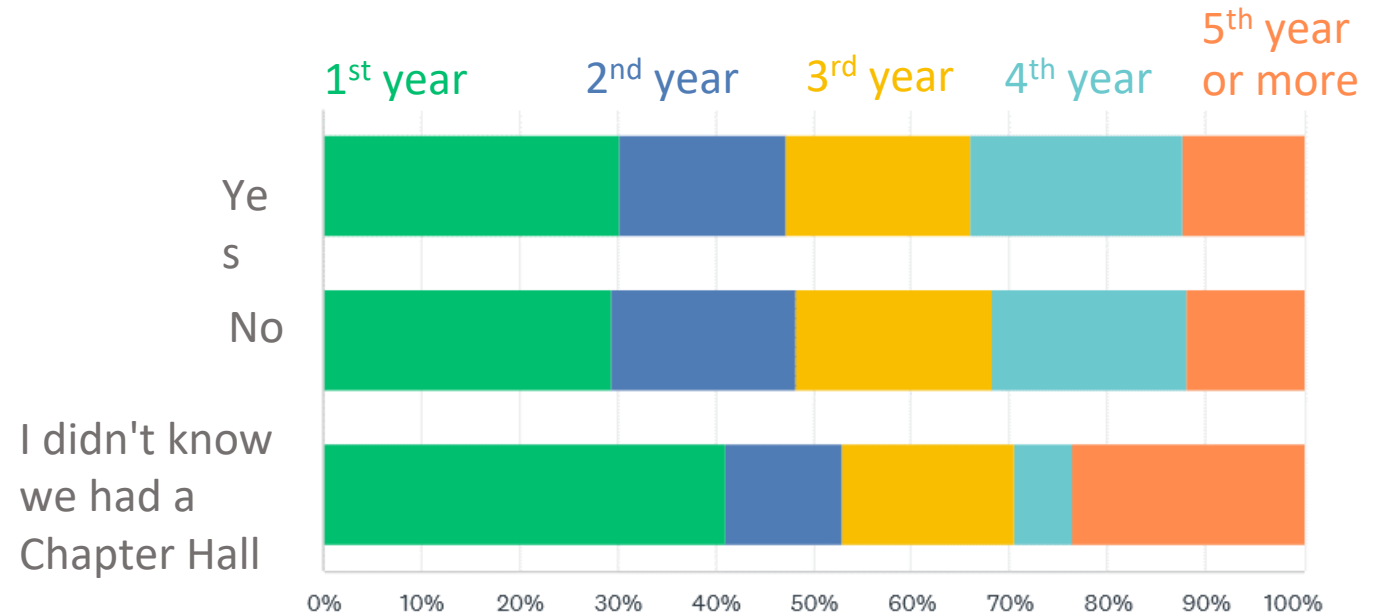
I didn't know we had a Chapter Hall — 1.91%

PhD Chapter Hall – Attendance (data)

Q46: Did you know that you could use the PhD Chapter Hall for studies or research during daytime?
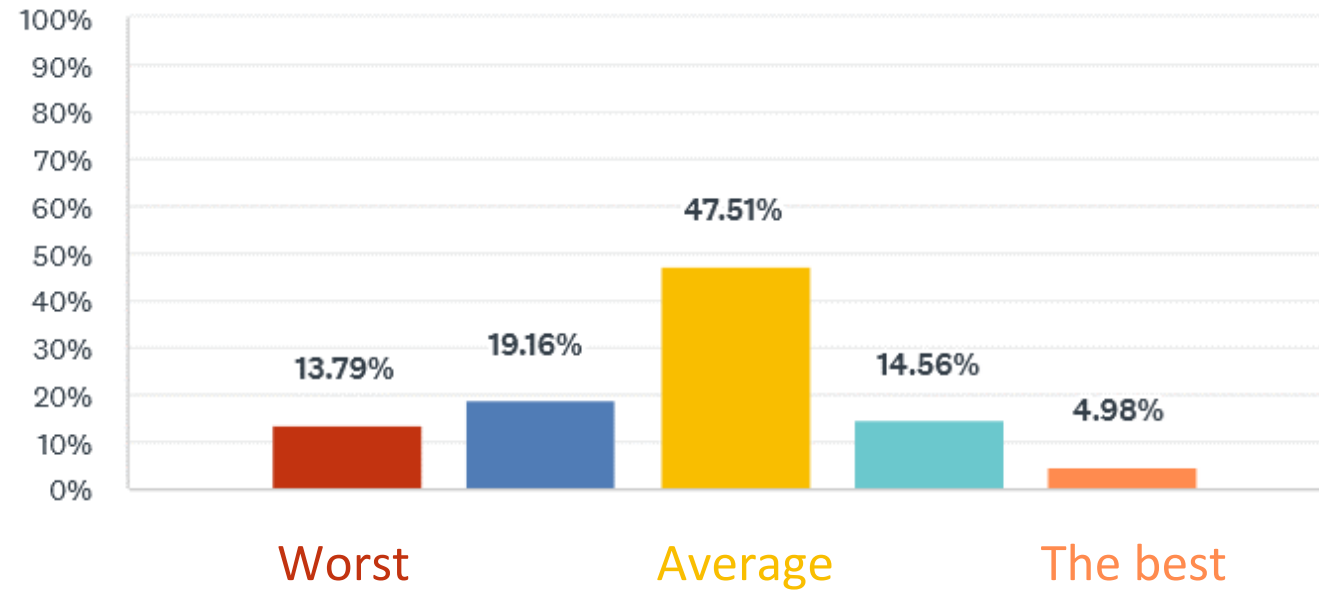

No significant differences between schools

PhD Chapter Hall – Attendance (data)

Q47: Do you think that T-Centralen is a suitable place for study activities?

Worst   Average   The best

PhD Chapter Hall – Attendance (data)

Q49: Have you used our Chapter Hall during day time for study/research-related activities?

Yes, and I still frequently use it — 1.06%

Yes, but I didn't really like it — 1.42%

No, but I would try if I had card access — 20.21%

No, and I would not because the office space suffices for me. — 77.30%
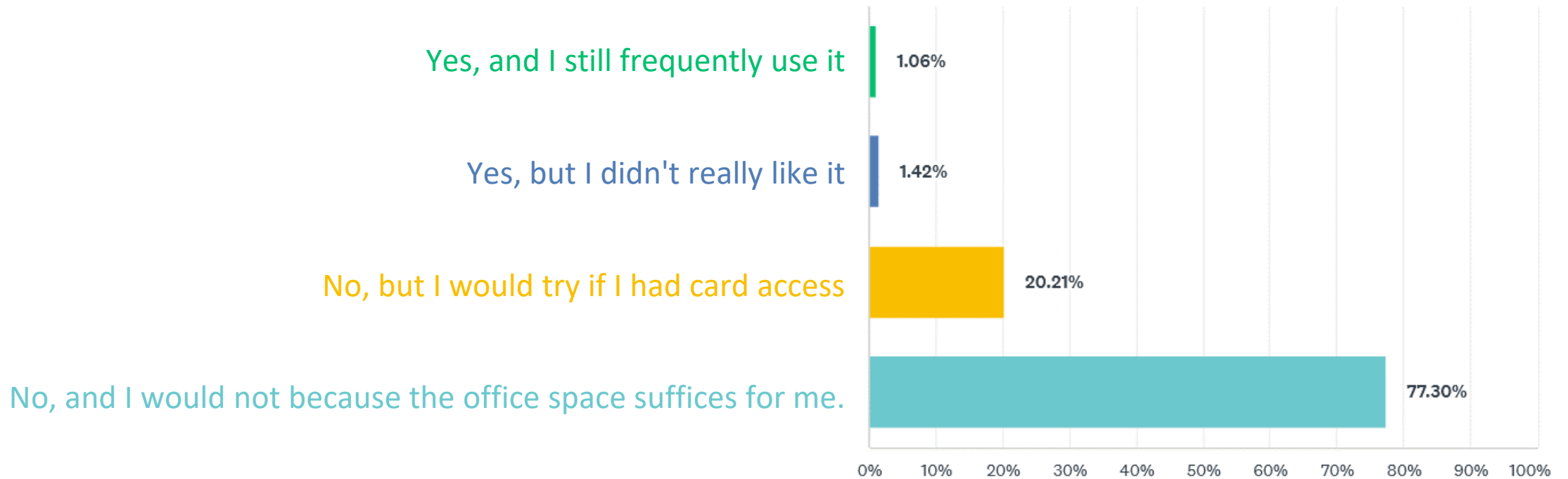
PhD Chapter Hall – Attendance (data)

Q48: How do you rate the events offered by the PhD Chapter at our Chapter Hall?

Really bad   Average   Really good
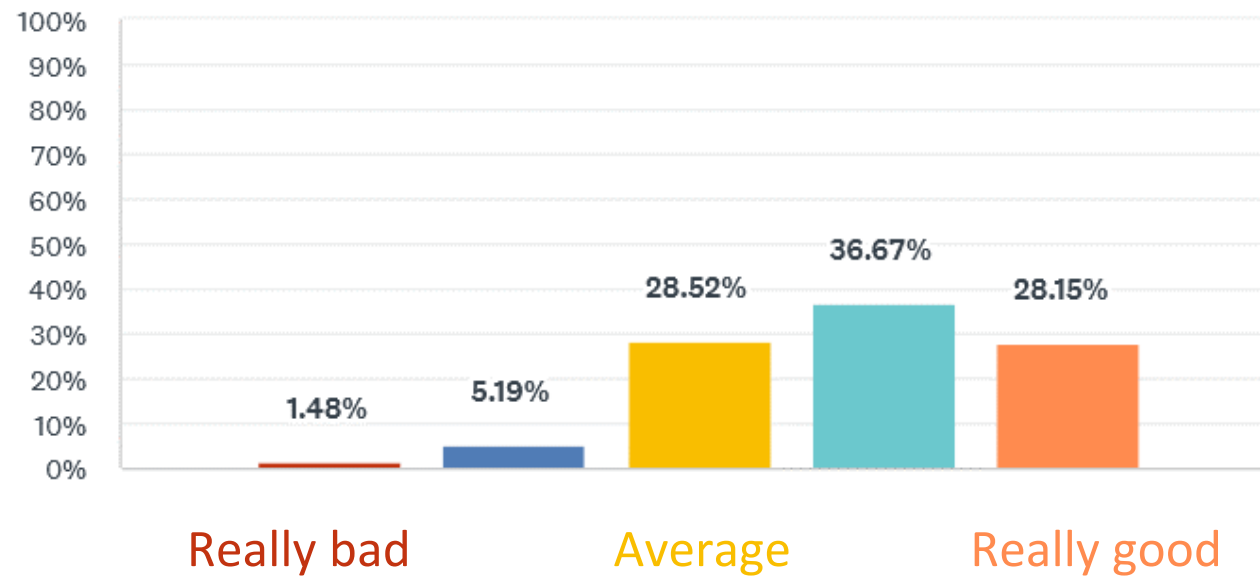
PhD Chapter Hall – Attendance (data)

> **Q50**: leave feedback on how to improve usage of the Chapter Hall

> 43 responses

Summary:
- Students didn't know the place was used for studying/think the place is not suitable for studying
- Students would like more events
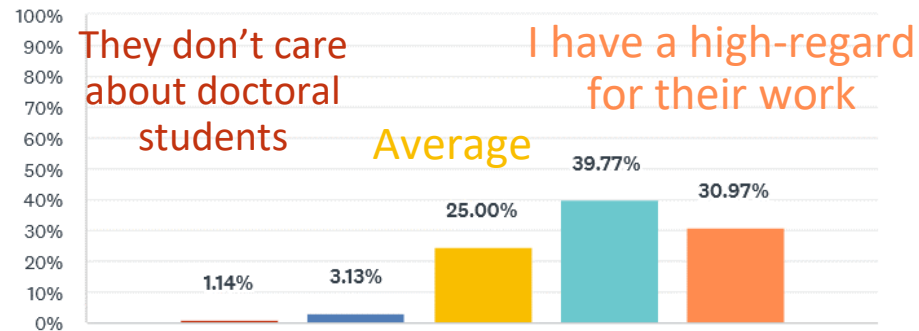- Some suggestions: serve food during pubs, have an exchange bookshelf

PhD Chapter Hall (analysis)

- A majority of students who responded to the Survey have been to events at the PhD Chapter Hall. We should note that students who attend events are also more likely to respond to a Survey from the PhD Chapter.

- Around 40% of students did not know that the Chapter hall can be used for studies, but a majority do not require this since their office space suffices. 20% would attempt to study at the Chapter Hall if they had access.

- Overall very positive review of the events organised by the PhD Chapter in the PhD Chapter Hall.
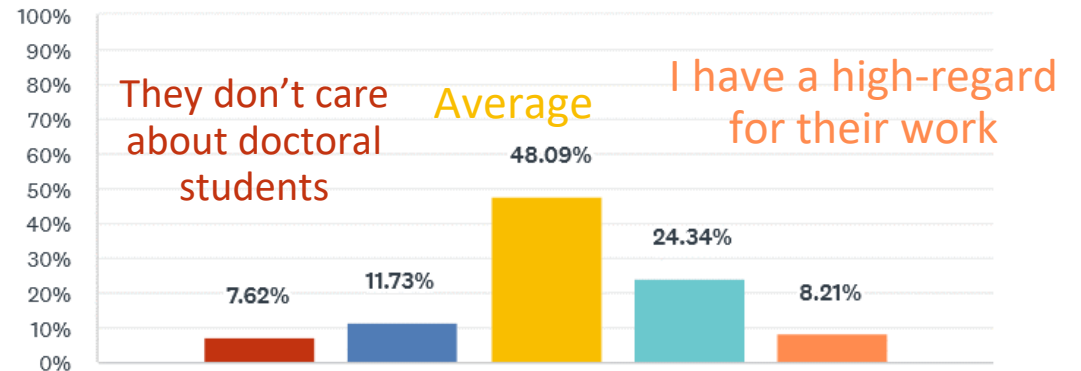
Branding and Perception (data)

Q51: Please rate how do you perceive the work done by the PhD Chapter (including councils) towards doctoral students.

They don't care about doctoral students   Average   I have a high-regard for their work

1.14%   3.13%   25.00%   39.77%   30.97%

Q52: Please rate how do you perceive the work done by THS Central (excluding the PhD Chapter) towards doctoral students.

They don't care about doctoral students   Average   I have a high-regard for their work

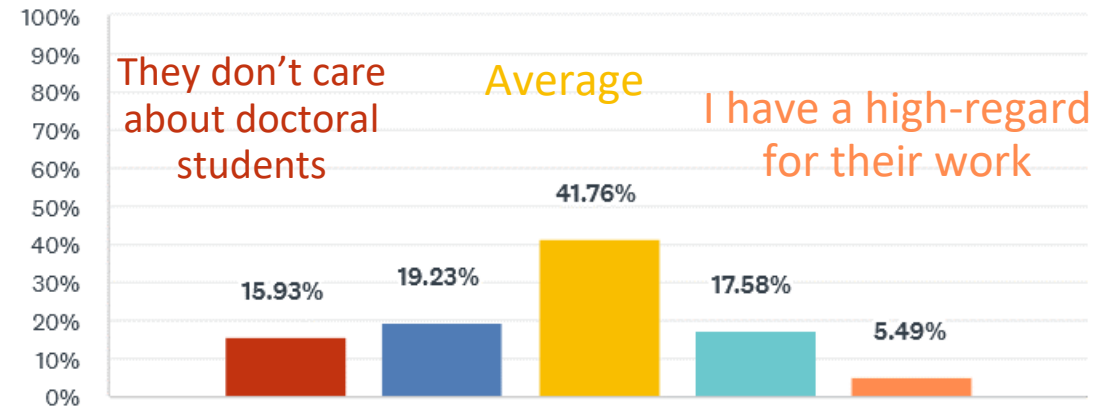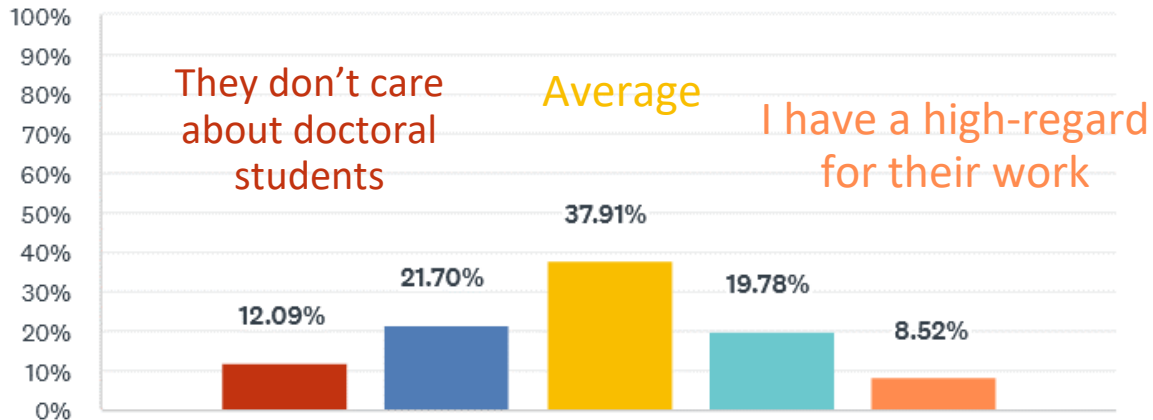7.62%   11.73%   48.09%   24.34%   8.21%

Branding and Perception (data)

Q55: Please rate how do you perceive the work done by KTH as a whole (Management Office, President of KTH) towards doctoral students.

Q54: Please rate how do you perceive the work done by your school towards doctoral students.

They don't care about doctoral students — Average — I have a high-regard for their work

12.09% 21.70% 37.91% 19.78% 8.52%

They don't care about doctoral students — Average — I have a high-regard for their work

15.93% 19.23% 41.76% 17.58% 5.49%

Branding and Perception (data)

Q53: Please rate how do you perceive the work done by Labour Unions (SULF, ST, Sveriges Ingenjör) towards doctoral students at KTH.

They don't care about doctoral students — 15.92%

Average — 16.22% / 47.45%

I have a high-regard for their work — 14.71% / 5.71%