



Ocupadors

A vertical photograph on the left side of the page shows a woman from behind, walking on a grassy hill. She is wearing a dark long-sleeved top, dark leggings, and a large backpack. The background is a bright, hazy sky. The image is partially obscured by a white circular graphic element.

# **EMPLOYABILITY AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN THE FIELD OF PSYCHOLOGY**



AQU CATALUNYA





# EMPLOYABILITY AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN THE FIELD OF PSYCHOLOGY

Barcelona, 2022

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report offers a global overview of **Psychology** degree programmes. The data analysed includes the perspective of stakeholders – alumni and companies and organisations that recruit graduates – on the employability of graduates: surveys on **satisfaction, employment outcomes** and **employers' opinions**. In addition, it includes basic data on the degree analysed: supply and demand, and breakdown of enrolments by biological sex.

The main findings of this report are set out below.

### Basic data on the study programmes

- > Psychology degrees are very popular. Pre-enrolment data for the 2021-2022 academic year indicate that, in public universities, the demand for places as a first option in June represented 217% of the number of places offered. In terms of new enrolments, Psychology degrees have the second largest volume: in the academic year 2019-2020, more than 7% of students in the Catalan higher education system (SUC) were students on one of these degrees.
- > Psychology degrees are among the most feminised in the Catalan higher education system (SOLER JULVE, 2022): 8 out of 10 people enrolled in the 2020-2021 academic year were women.

### Satisfaction survey

- > Psychology graduates are satisfied with their chosen degree: in the range of 9 out of 10 would take the degree again, 10 percentage points more than the overall figure for the Catalan higher education system (76.2%).
- > Despite rating highly the fact that Psychology degrees encourage the acquisition of communication and interpersonal skills, Psychology graduates are significantly less satisfied with work placements (6.4) as an activity that allows the application and consolidation of knowledge from the degree course. The average overall satisfaction of the Catalan higher education system for this indicator is 6.9 out of 10.

### Employment outcomes survey

- > The employment outcome indicators show that Psychology graduates are more likely to be unemployed, earn less and have more precarious contracts than other degrees. For example, three years after graduating, the average gross monthly salary of Psychology graduates is around €1,700, almost €500 lower than the average salary in the Catalan higher education system as a whole.
- > However, there are differences depending on the field in which graduates are employed. In general, Psychology graduates who work in unrelated fields tend to perform non-university-level functions and have a poorer quality of employment. On the contrary, people working in the corporate sphere tend to have better salaries and more permanent contracts.

### Employer survey

## Employability and university education in the field of Psychology

- > Employers of Psychology graduates tend to have less difficulty than other employers in recruiting the right people. Those who do have difficulties indicate that this is mainly due to a lack of qualified people with the necessary skills for the job.
- > Employers are generally satisfied with the skills of Psychology graduates. Their overall satisfaction is very good (7.2).
- > The skills that most employers say graduates should improve are:
  - communication and interpersonal skills,
  - identification and assessment of people's needs, and
  - intervention with people in different areas (clinical, educational, occupational, legal, etc.).
- > In general, the skills that are worked on the most during the work placement are also those with the biggest room for improvement, according to the employers surveyed. This points to the complementarity and suitability of work placements as a fundamental element of university education.



## INTRODUCTION

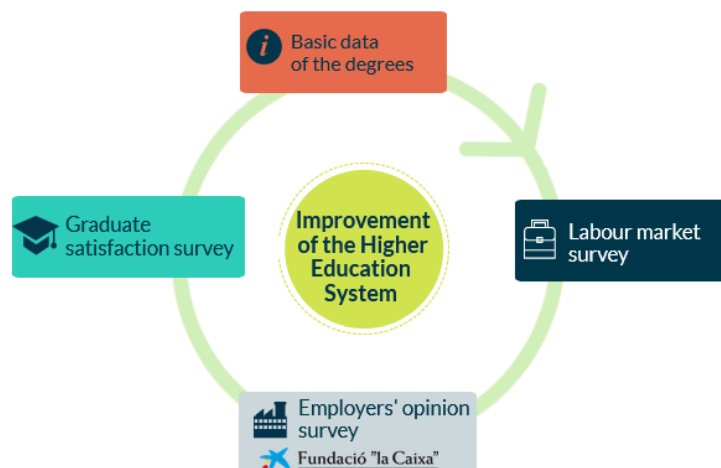
The expansion of university systems in Catalonia and elsewhere has intensified the diversification of the functions performed by universities, which have become institutions that go beyond their historical role associated with teaching and research. Today we usually refer to four missions: teaching, research, innovation and service to society (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 2022). The emergence of the so-called “knowledge society”, associated with this expansion, has emphasised the role of universities in the **employability of graduates**, understood not only as obtaining work – which may depend more on the economic situation and employment policies – but also as the capacity of universities to design “training with a profile that responds to the skills and qualifications requested in the labour market” (RODRÍGUEZ ESPINAR et al, 2007, 338).

The emphasis on analysing graduate employability profiles also coincides with the emergence of demands for accountability for expansive university systems that require increased public spending. It therefore makes sense for university quality agencies to make available to the university community a set of resources to assess the quality and impact of higher education from an employability perspective (BRENNAN, 2018). In this regard, one of the strategic courses of action of AQU Catalunya that enables this objective to be achieved is that of “facilitating access to quantitative and qualitative data, in an integrated way, to improve the quality of the Catalan higher education system” (AQU CATALUNYA, 2022).

This report, which is part of a series of reports on the relationship between university and employability, aims to achieve this objective for Psychology degree programmes.

The document collates the analysis of key data that can be used to understand the functioning of university education from the perspective of employability. The aim is to provide facts that will help those responsible for universities in the political and academic spheres to make decisions aimed at improving university education. Moreover, this knowledge also has the potential to support current and future students in making informed decisions about their career paths. Figure 1 shows the sources of information included in this analysis.

Figure 1. Sources of information analysed



In addition, this report also analyses the results of the new edition of the **employer survey**, which gathers the opinions on university education of companies, organisations and institutions that recruit Psychology graduates. A new feature of this edition is the section on the professional skills that have been worked on the most and require the most improvement by **work placement students**. This report compares the results of this edition with those of the previous edition (AQU Catalunya, 2020A) with the aim of identifying noteworthy differences, and reflects on the evolution of the sector in relation to the conclusions that were generated at the conference “Proposals for improvement in the education received in Psychology” (AQU CATALUNYA, 2020b)<sup>1</sup>, where the aforementioned results were presented.

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<sup>1</sup> As this is an employer survey, a type of survey that usually generates relatively small samples, we cannot claim that the similarities or differences with the previous edition are statistically significant. Although we believe that the continuity we observe between the two editions is evidence of the robustness of our results, we recommend readers interpret the results with caution and from a critical perspective.

## INDICATORS ON PSYCHOLOGY DEGREE PROGRAMMES

### Basic data on degrees

The following map shows the data on the supply and demand of places on the Psychology degrees taught in Catalonia in the academic year 2021-2022. In addition, data on three key indicators are shown: the achievement rate,<sup>2</sup> the drop-out rate in the first year and the number of graduates in the academic year 2020-2021.

**In public universities, the demand for places on Psychology degrees far exceeds supply. In the academic year 2021-2022, the demand for places as a first option represented 217% of the places offered**

- > In terms of new enrolments, Psychology degrees are the second most popular after Business Administration and Management. During the 2019-2020 academic year, a total of 4,163 people enrolled on one of these degrees, 7% of the total number of new undergraduate students.<sup>3</sup>
- > The drop-out rate for Psychology degrees is 24%, a percentage that is mainly explained by the values for the Open University of Catalonia (UOC). This institution has by far the highest number of enrolments: around 65% of Psychology degree students are enrolled at the UOC.

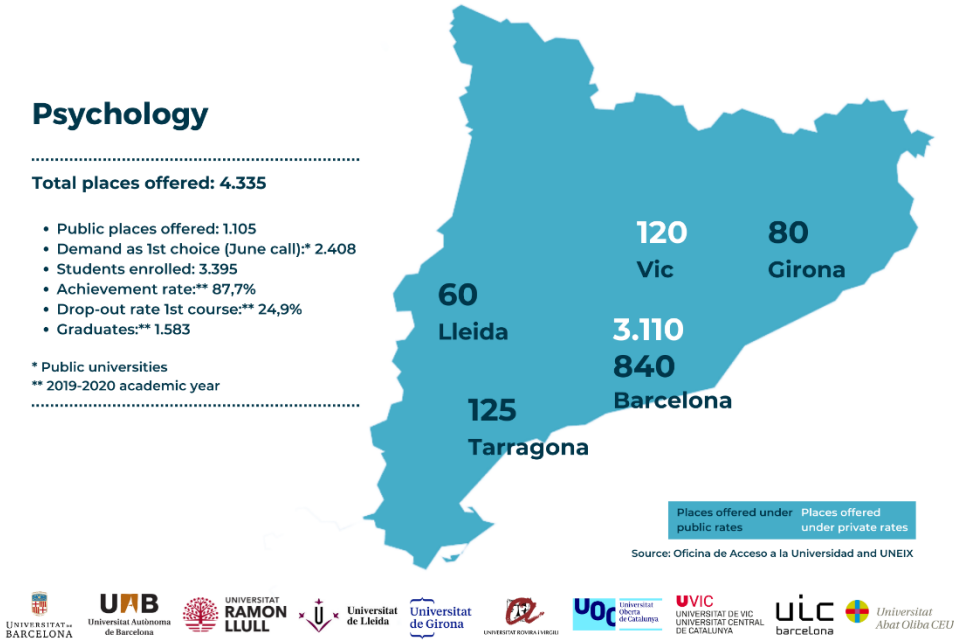
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<sup>2</sup> The achievement rate is calculated by dividing the number of credits passed by the number of credits on which students are enrolled, for all the students on a study programme. The first-year drop-out rate shows the percentage of students who do not re-enrol the following year (including those who enrol on another degree programme). For more information, see the [glossary on the Estudis Universitaris de Catalunya \(EUC\) website](#).

<sup>3</sup> Source: UNEIX.

Figure 2. Supply and demand indicators for Psychology degrees (academic year 2021-2022)

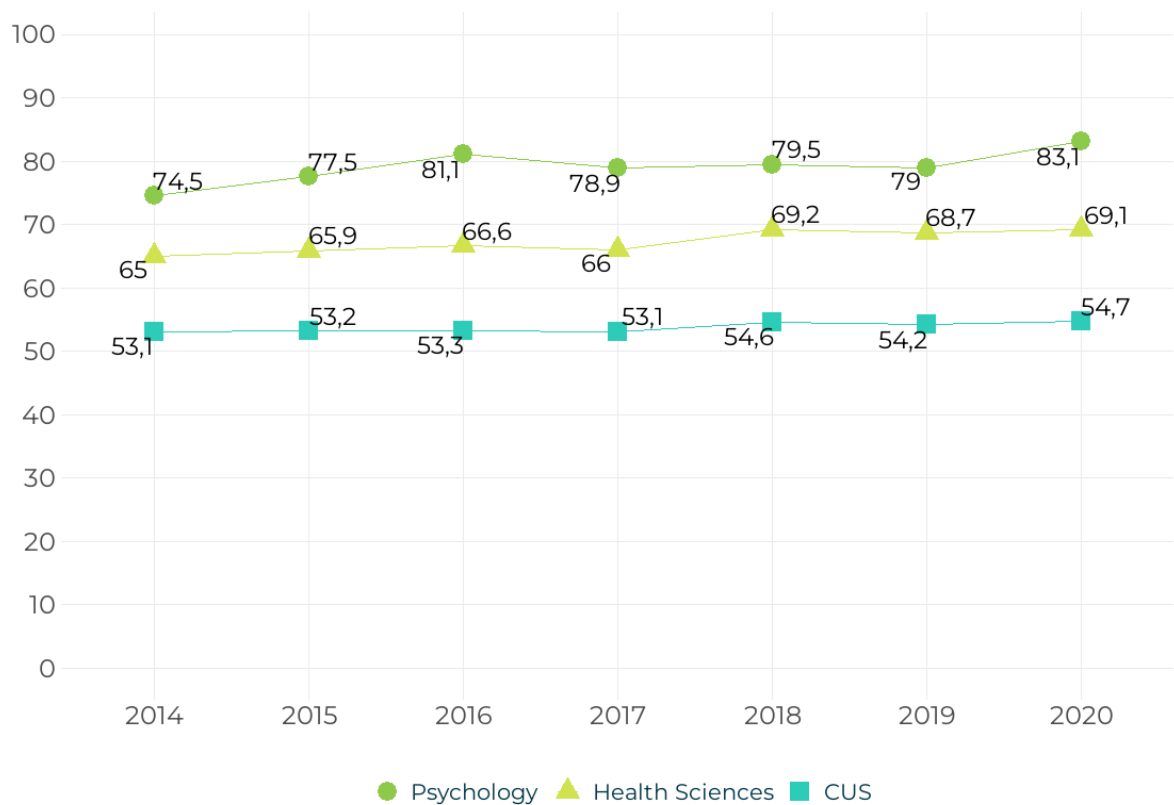
Note: The logos correspond to the universities that offer these degrees.



## Psychology degrees are much more feminised than all Catalan higher education system degrees and all Health degrees overall.

- > In 2020, 8 out of 10 psychology students were women. According to the criteria of SOLER JULVE (2022), this is a “highly feminised” field of degrees and, together with the fields of Education and Social Intervention, it is the group of degrees with the highest proportion of women.
- > Figure 3 shows the persistence of horizontal segmentation in university education: men and women are not randomly distributed by qualification. Women tend to enrol on degrees that are associated with “care-related tasks” (AQU CATALUNYA, 2021, 50).

Figure 3. Evolution of the percentage of women enrolled on Psychology degrees



## Psychology graduates' satisfaction with the education received

The data analysed in this section comes from the **satisfaction survey**,<sup>4</sup> an annual survey carried out since 2015 by Catalan universities in coordination with AQU Catalunya. This survey asks recent graduates how satisfied they are with different aspects of their educational experience in the Catalan higher education system. The results shown below correspond to the data for the last three available years for degrees in **Psychology**. The overall response rate by the Catalan higher education system to the satisfaction survey for these three years is 26.3%, with some 25,500 responses received.

The table below shows the samples of graduates who responded to the survey, both from Psychology and from all Catalan higher education system degrees.

**Table 1. Population, sample, response rate and sampling error of the satisfaction survey of graduates in Psychology and in the SUC as a whole (2018-2020)**

Discipline (degree)	Population	Sample	Response rate	Sampling error
Psychology	4,527	1,115	24.6%	2.6%
<b>Total SUC</b>	<b>96,892</b>	<b>25,484</b>	<b>26.3%</b>	<b>0.5%</b>

This section analyses the data on levels of satisfaction with the aspects of university education that are most relevant to the employability of graduates in Psychology. A summary of the overall satisfaction of Psychology graduates is also provided.

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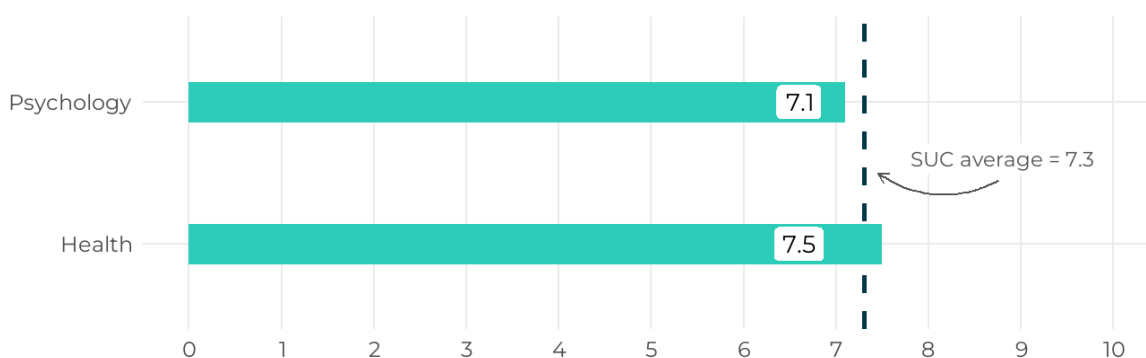
<sup>4</sup> <<https://www.aqu.cat/en/Studies/Surveys-and-thematic-studies/Bachelor-and-Master-s-graduate-satisfaction-survey>>

## Overall satisfaction with Psychology degrees

The overall satisfaction of Psychology graduates is similar to that for the Catalan higher education system average<sup>5</sup>

- > In addition, the overall satisfaction of Psychology graduates has improved slightly (0.20 points) with respect to the previous year (AQU CATALUNYA, 2020a).

Figure 4. Overall satisfaction with Psychology degrees

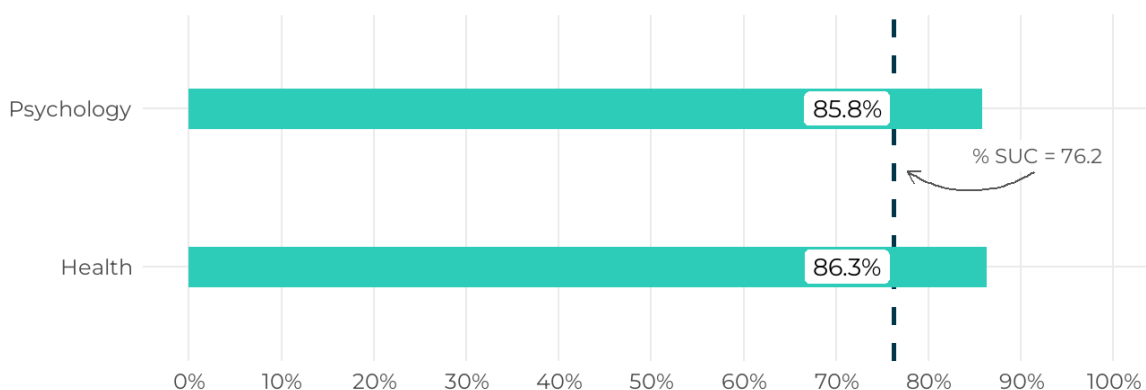


More than 8 out of 10 graduates would take their degree again. This percentage is significantly higher than that for the Catalan higher education system as a whole (76.2%)

<sup>5</sup> To check whether the differences between the degree programmes analysed and the SUC as a whole are statistically significant, a tool developed by AQU Catalunya was used to carry out 1,000 simulations using the bootstrap method for simple random sampling with replacement in the scenario of infinite populations (EFRON, TIBSHIRANI, 1993), thus obtaining a distribution of the 1,000 simulated differences between the two groups. This tool then analyses whether the observed difference is within 95% of the simulated differences. In addition, this system includes a set of filters to ensure that the differences are not only statistically significant, but also of sufficient magnitude. This difference must be at least 0.5 in the case of values on scales from 0 to 10 and 2 percentage points in the case of percentages. This technique has been applied to the results shown in this report for data on satisfaction and employment outcomes.

In the case of this indicator, it is seen that the overall satisfaction of the graduates of the degree programmes analysed is not significantly lower than that of the Catalan higher education system as a whole, although in the case of Psychology it is 0.18 points lower than for the Catalan higher education system as a whole. This difference is therefore probably due to the randomness inherent in collecting survey data.

Figure 5. Percentage of people who would take the degree in Psychology again



Satisfaction with the skills acquired, <sup>6</sup>the external work placements and the bachelor's degree final project

Psychology graduates think that the training especially improves their communication skills and personal competencies, values that are similar to the indicators for all SUC degrees

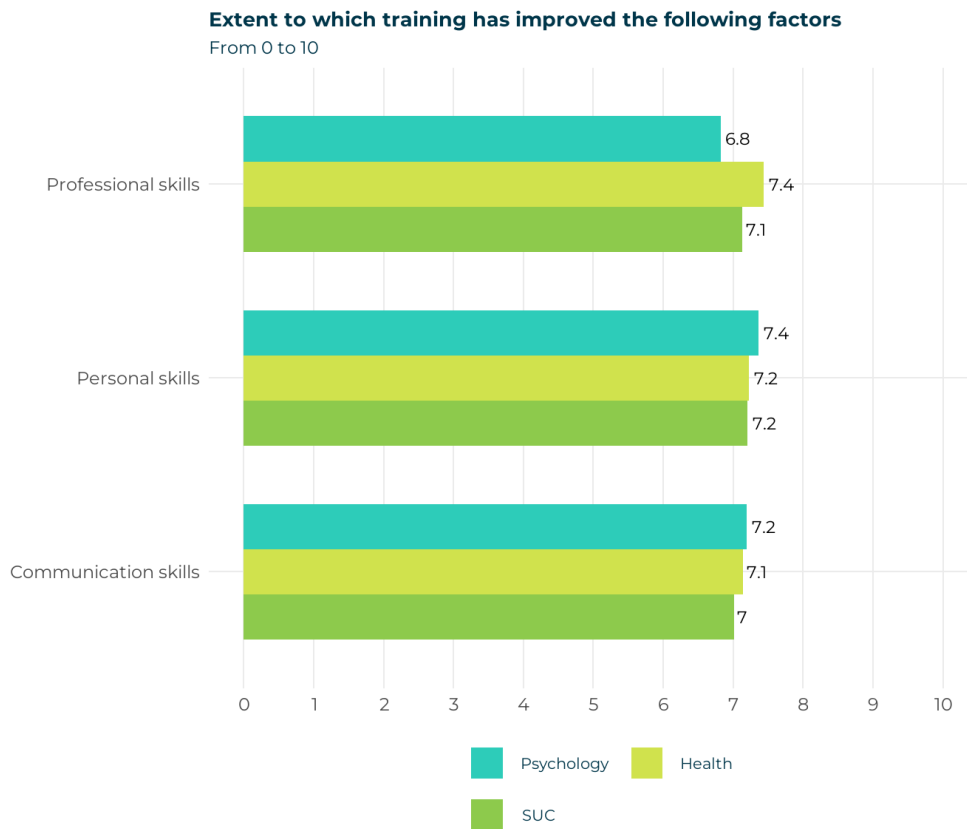
- > The assessment of the acquisition of skills for professional activity is slightly lower than the average satisfaction of the Catalan higher education system as a whole, but this difference is not statistically significant.
- > These indicators have remained practically the same as in the previous edition of the satisfaction survey (AQU CATALUNYA, 2020a).

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<sup>6</sup> It analyses the extent to which the graduates of the degree believe that the training has improved their communication skills, personal skills and skills required for professional activity. Personal skills include, among other things, the level of confidence, independent learning, creativity, problem solving, critical analysis and teamwork.



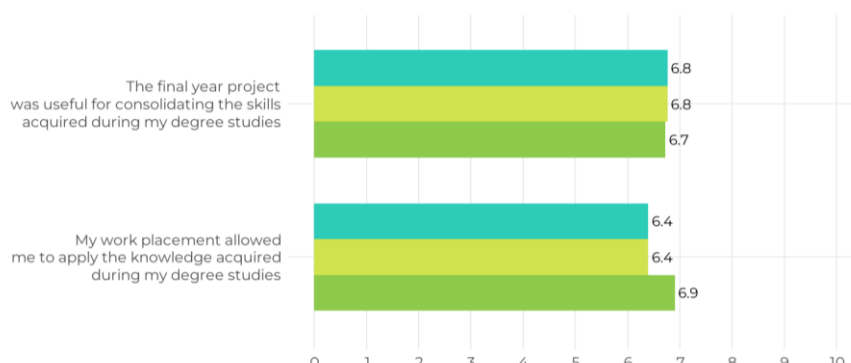
## Employability and university education in the field of Psychology



Satisfaction with the ability to apply the knowledge acquired from the degree during the work placement is significantly lower than for SUC degrees as a whole.

- > Satisfaction with the final-year project is practically identical to that for the SUC as a whole.
- > The values of these indicators have remained virtually unchanged with respect to the previous edition of the survey.

**Figure 6. Psychology graduates' satisfaction with work placements and bachelor's degree final project**



## Employment outcomes for Psychology graduates

The data analysed in this section comes from the **employment outcomes survey**, an annual survey carried out since 2001 by Catalan universities in coordination with AQU Catalunya. This survey asks about factors related to the employment activity of graduates and the quality of that employment activity (job suitability, contractual stability, earnings, etc.). The results shown below correspond to the data for the latest edition of the survey<sup>7,8</sup> the fieldwork for which was carried out in 2020, surveying 2015-2016 **Psychology** degree graduates.

The table below shows the samples of graduates who responded to the survey, both from Psychology and from all Catalan higher education system degrees.

**Table 2. Population, sample, response rate and sampling error of the employment outcomes survey of graduates in Psychology and in the Catalan higher education system as a whole (2020)**

Discipline (degree)	Population	Sample	Response rate	Sampling error
Psychology	1,043	485	46.5%	3.3%
<b>Total SUC</b>	<b>30,084</b>	<b>13,902</b>	<b>46.2%</b>	<b>0.6%</b>

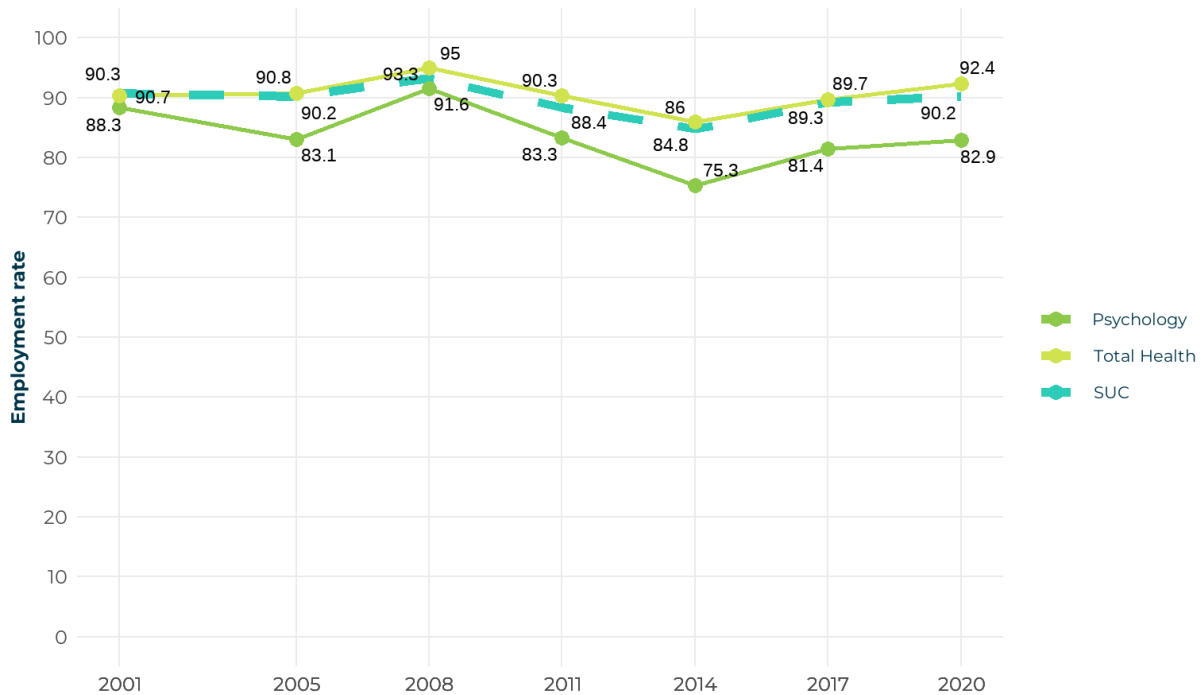
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<sup>7</sup> In traditional universities. The data presented in this report are weighted according to stratified sampling by degree and sampling unit.

<sup>8</sup> In this section, the bootstrapping technique described in note 5 has been applied to check whether the differences between the values for Psychology and those for the Catalan higher education system as a whole are statistically significant.

The employment rate of Psychology graduates is about 10 percentage points lower than the rate for graduates in the field of Health and the Catalan higher education system as a whole

Figure 7. Evolution of the employment rate of Psychology graduates (the year indicates when they responded to the survey, i.e. three years after graduation)

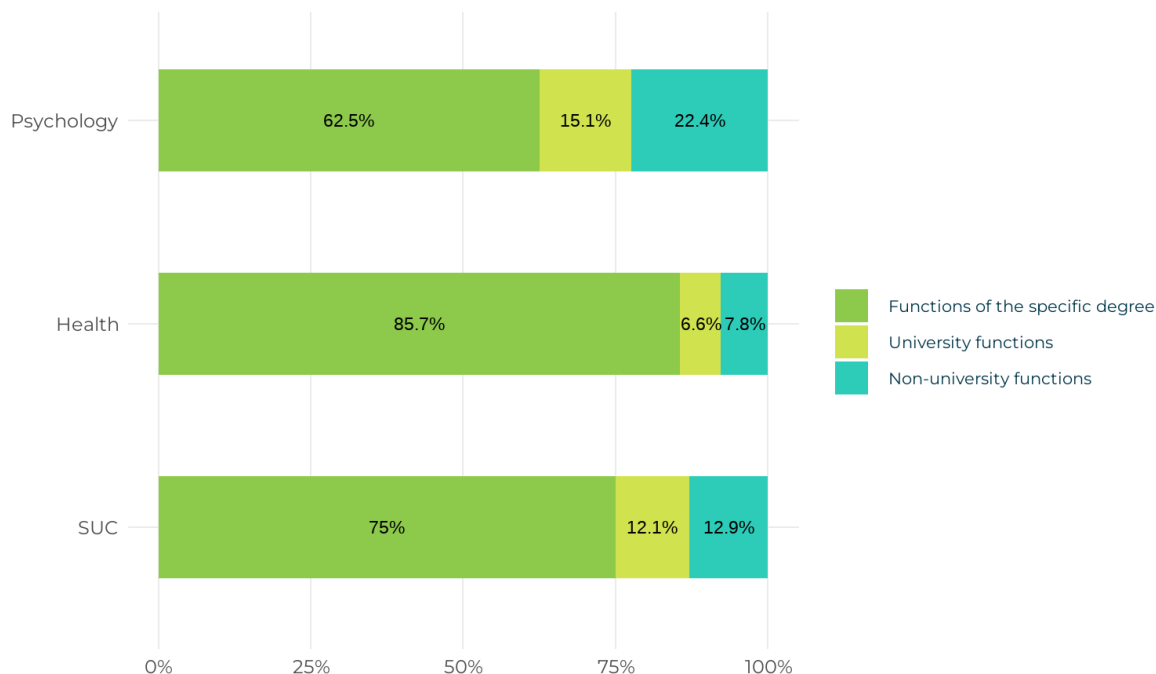


The percentage of Psychology graduates who carry out functions specific to their degree (62.5%) is 12.5 percentage points lower than that for the Catalan higher education system as a whole (75%) and more than 20 percentage points lower than that for all Health degrees<sup>9</sup>

- > The percentage of graduates who in 2020 did not perform university-level functions (22.4%) is significantly higher than that for all workers with a Health degree (7.8%) and for the Catalan higher education system as a whole (12.9%).

<sup>9</sup> The difference is significant according to the test described in footnote 5.

Figure 8. Functions carried out in the workplace (2020)



The distribution of employed people across the different areas of the sector confirms that a significant proportion end up working in an area unrelated to the profession (21.4%).

- > A detailed look at the category “Other unrelated fields” provides insight into the career paths of Psychology graduates who end up working outside the profession. A programming language package *R* that automatically classifies natural language has been used to describe jobs as ISCO<sup>10</sup> occupations.<sup>11</sup> The most frequent categories (3-digit ISCO) are: “Other teaching professionals”, such as after-school teacher or guidance counsellor ( $n = 7$ ), “Social science and theology specialists”, which includes community workers or communication officers ( $n = 7$ ), “Organisation and administration specialists” ( $n = 6$ ), “Customer service information workers” ( $n = 6$ ) and “Waiters” ( $n = 6$ ).

<sup>10</sup> International Standard Classification of Occupations.

<sup>11</sup> See the ‘labourR’ package developed by Alexandros Kouretsis et al. (2020). The results presented here are a preliminary exploration of the potential of this package.

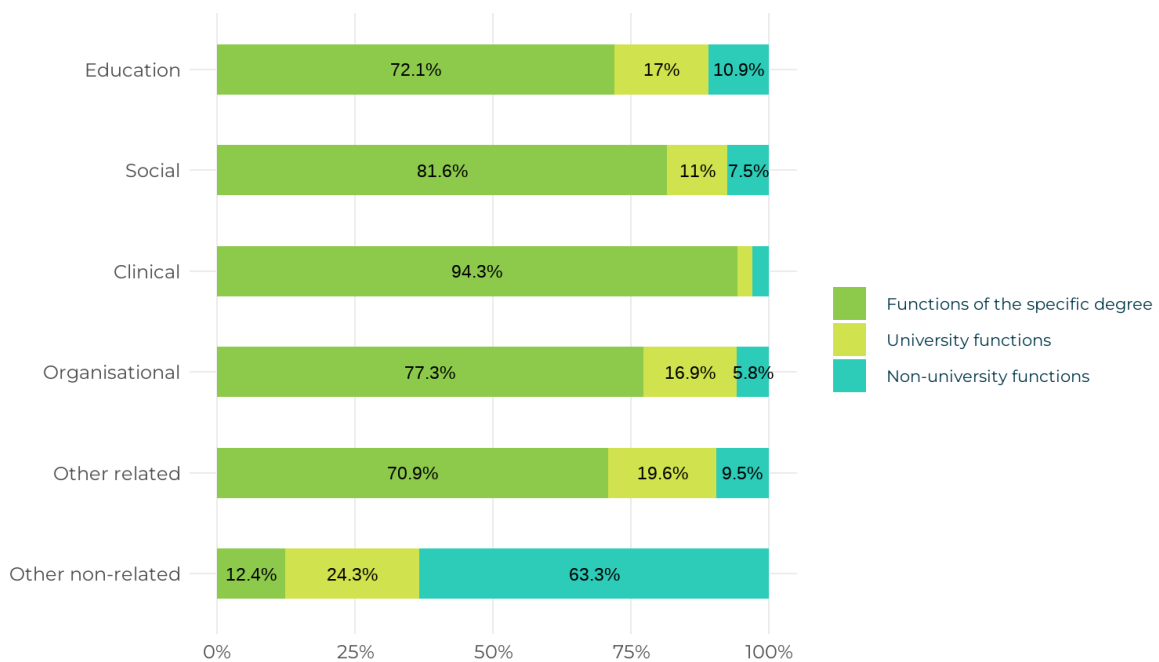
Table 3. Distribution of Psychology graduates according to field of work (2020, employed persons)

Area of psychology	<i>n</i>	Percentage
Education	54	13.6
Social	66	16.6
Clinical	67	16.9
Corporate	53	13.4
Other related areas	72	18.1
Other unrelated areas	85	21.4
Total	397	100

The likelihood of performing degree-specific functions – or university-level functions – also varies according to the field of psychology in which the person works

- > There is a very marked difference between the percentage of people who work in psychology-related fields and perform degree-specific functions (between 72% and 94%), and those who work in non-related fields (12%).

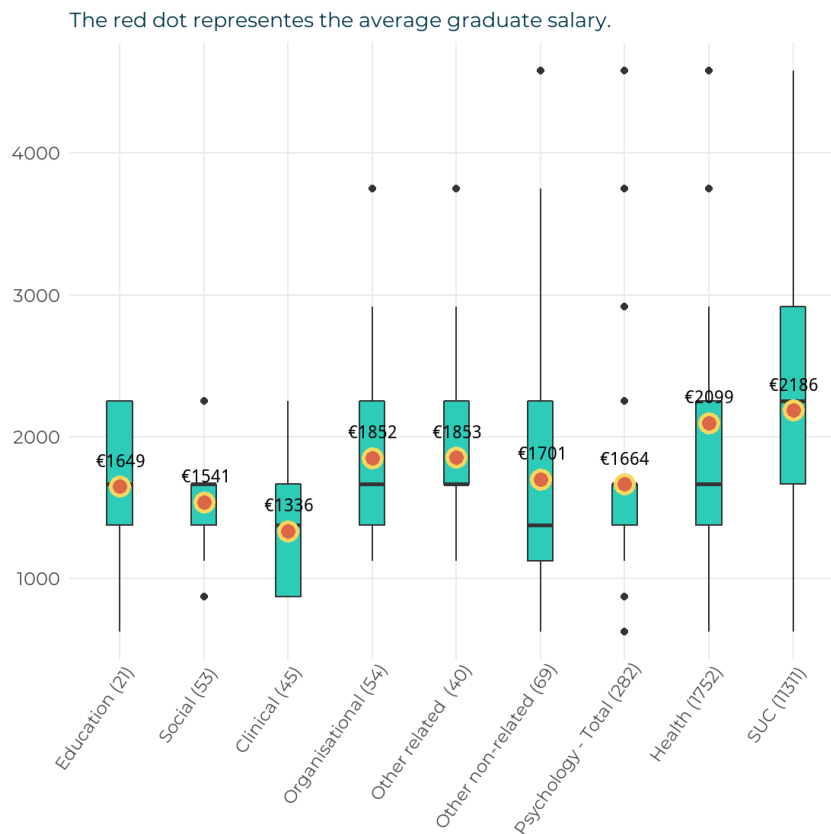
Figure 9. Functions performed at work by area of psychology (2020)



**Lower salaries than graduates from the Health sector and from the Catalan higher education system as a whole, and more temporary contracts than graduates in Catalonia as a whole**

- > The average full-time salary of Psychology graduates (€1,664) tends to be lower than that for the Catalan higher education system as a whole (€2,186), and they report more temporary contracts.<sup>12</sup>
- > Also noteworthy are the differences in salaries depending on the area of employment within the sector: people working in the clinical field have the lowest average salary (€1,336), about €500 less than those working in the corporate sphere (€1,852).

**Figure 10. Distribution of gross monthly salaries of Psychology graduates (2020, full-time only)**

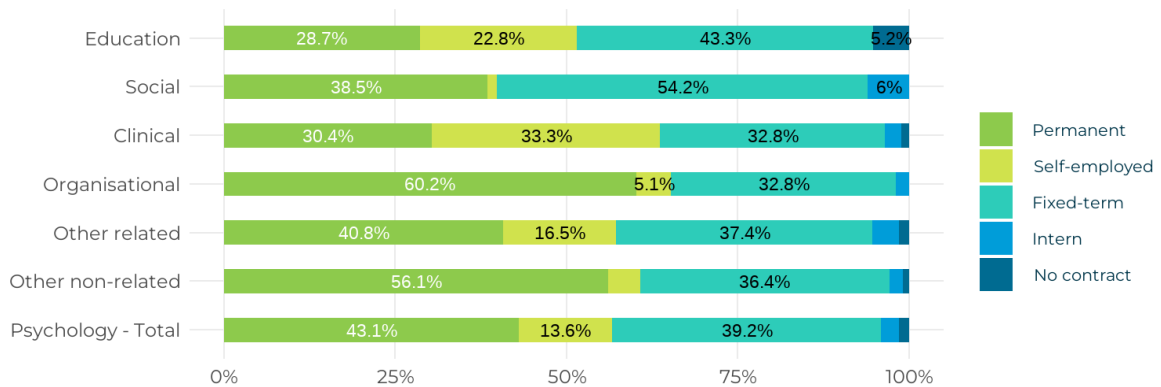


<sup>12</sup> The difference is significant according to the test described in footnote 5.

**Contractual stability is less common among Psychology graduates (43.1%) than for the Catalan higher education system as a whole (56.3%)**

- > Again, there are differences depending on the area of employment. People working in the corporate sphere are more likely to have a permanent contract (60.2%) than those in the clinical (30.4%) or social (38.5%) fields.

**Figure 11. Type of contract of Psychology graduates (2020)**



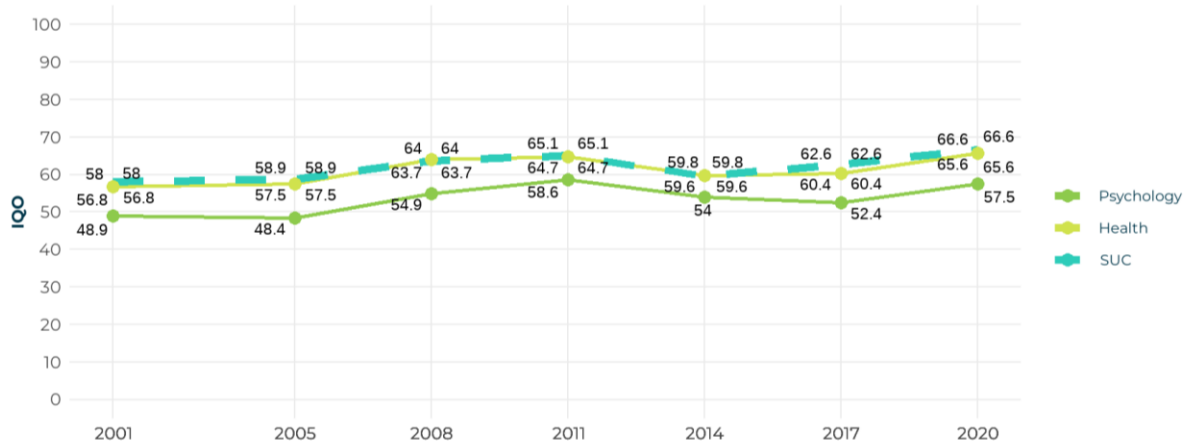
**An analysis of the Occupational Quality Index (IQO) reinforces the idea that employment outcomes in terms of salary and type of contract tends to be worse for Psychology graduates<sup>13</sup>**

- > However, we found differences in the IQO depending on the field of psychology in which the person works. It is mainly people working in fields that are not related to psychology – and who mostly do not perform university-level functions – who have a lower IQO, as shown in Figure 14.

**Figure 12. Evolution of the Occupational Quality Index (IQO) of Psychology graduates**

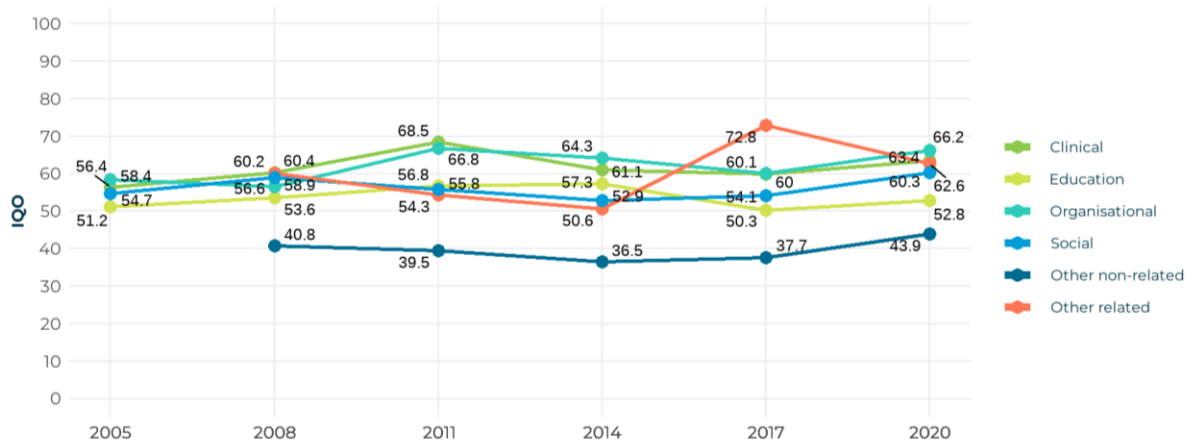
<sup>13</sup> The difference is significant according to the test described in footnote 5.

## Employability and university education in the field of Psychology



The occupational quality index (IQO) is based on different indicators: contract (C), job satisfaction (S), remuneration (R) and fit (F). The value range is from 0 to 100 and the higher the rating the better the occupational quality experienced. The formula is  $IQO = f[(C + R + F) * S]$ . For further details, refer to Corominas et al. (2012).

Figure 13. Evolution of the Occupational Quality Index (IQO) of Psychology graduates, by area of employment



The occupational quality index (IQO) is based on different indicators: contract (C), job satisfaction (S), remuneration (R) and fit (F). The value range is from 0 to 100 and the higher the rating the better the occupational quality experienced. The formula is  $IQO = f[(C + R + F) * S]$ . For further details, refer to Corominas et al. (2012).



## The opinion of employers regarding the education received by Psychology graduates

### Scope and methodology of the employer survey

This section contains the results of the third edition of the **employer survey**, a three-yearly survey carried out by AQU Catalunya to find out the opinion of companies and organisations based in Catalonia (hereinafter, employers) as to whether university education responds to their needs. The ultimate aim of the study is to provide the university system with information that will enable it to assess whether the educational offer needs to be adapted to the needs of the labour market. New to this edition of the employer survey is a question about the skills of work placement students.

The questions upon which the study is based are as follows:

- > How satisfied are employers with the education received by **recent graduates**?<sup>14</sup>
- > How satisfied are employers with the education received by **work placement students**?
- > What factors explain the difficulties employers face when recruiting?
- > Which competences should be improved?

The fieldwork was carried out through the sending of mass e-mails between May and July 2021 to employers that have signed an internship agreement with the SUC universities and/or appear in their job banks. We assume that this list of employers ( $n = 29,865$ ) constitutes the universe of the graduate labour market in Catalonia. We also enlisted the help of professional associations and chambers of commerce to disseminate the questionnaire. In the end, a total of **2,423 employers** responded to the survey, of which **1,729** had recruited recent graduates and/or taken on work placement students. Of these companies, **65** responded that they had recruited recent Psychology graduates and **71** that they had taken on Psychology work placement students.

In terms of methodology, there are a number of aspects to be taken into account when conducting employer surveys. First of all, it is difficult to access this population pool. In particular, it is difficult to obtain a well-defined universe of employers with associated contact details. Indeed, it is common in the literature to find that university employer databases are used as a sampling frame of graduate employers (BYRNE, 2022).

Secondly, employer surveys – and online surveys in general – tend to have a low response rate (BYRNE, 2022; MANFREDA et al., 2008).

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<sup>14</sup> In the employer survey, we define “recent graduate” as a person who has completed their studies in the two years prior to receiving the survey and who has little or no professional experience. We limit the definition of a recent graduate because we want to ascertain the opinion of the employers on the **skills acquired at university**.

Finally, it is important to note that numerous methodological studies – both quantitative and qualitative – highlight that, although the results of a survey with relatively few responses should be treated with caution, a low response rate does not mean that the sample is unrepresentative (GROVES, 2006; METERKO et al., 2015).

Below are the results of the third edition of the employer survey. Firstly, it describes the factors and difficulties faced by employers when recruiting; secondly, it details the skills of graduates that these companies believe should be improved; thirdly, it reflects on the future of the professions associated with the field of psychology according to these companies; and finally, it talks about the skills that have been worked on most during the work placement period and those that work placement students need to improve on the most.

### Characteristics of organisations and companies surveyed that have hired recent graduates

Figure 14. Distribution of the employing organisations by field of psychology

Activity	n	Percentage
Educational	8	12,5
Social	19	29,7
Clinical	23	35,9
Organisational	11	17,2
Others	3	4,7

⋮ The organisations surveyed belong mainly to the clinical (35.9%) and social (29.7%) fields

## Factors and difficulties when recruiting graduates

Figure 15. Important factors when considering a graduate from the field of Psychology as a job candidate

**In the selection process for recent graduates, was it important that they had a university degree?**

Response	n	Percentage
Yes, a specific bachelor's degree	59	91
Yes, any bachelor's degree	2	3
No	4	6

**In the selection process for recent graduates, was it important that they had a master's degree?**

Response	n	Percentage
Yes, a specific master's degree	29	45
Yes, any master's degree	6	9
No	29	45

**In the selection process for recent graduates, was their level of foreign languages (excluding English) important?**

Response	n	Percentage
Yes, a high level was required	2	3
Yes, an intermediate level was required	7	11
No	54	86

**In the selection process for recent graduates, was their level of English important?**

Response	n	Percentage
Yes, a high level was required	11	17
Yes, an intermediate level was required	17	26
No	37	57

91% of employers believe it is important to have a specific bachelor's degree, while 45% point to the importance of having a specific master's degree

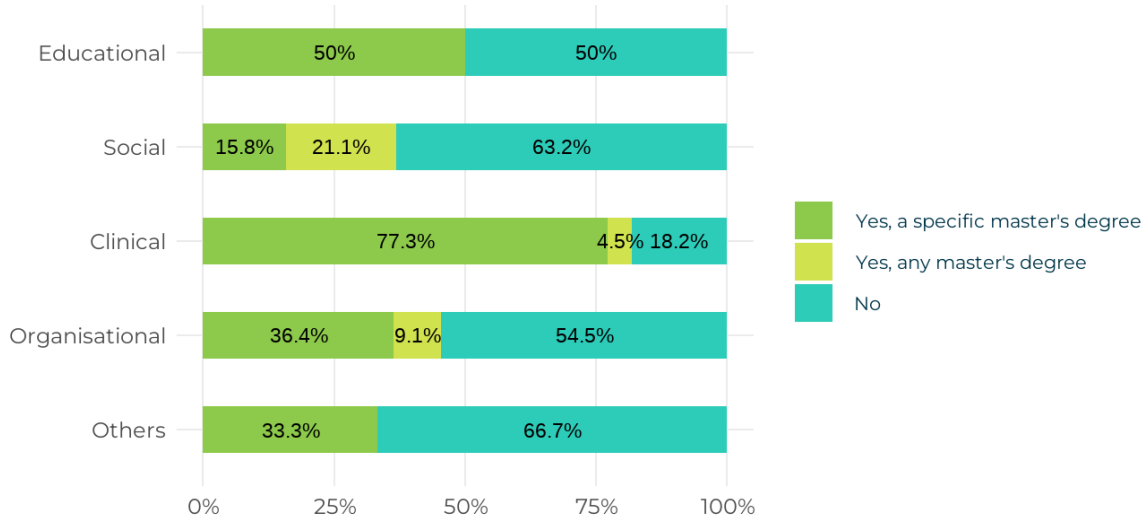
- > But there are differences depending on the field to which the employing organisation belongs. As shown in figure 17, more than 3 out of 4 organisations in the clinical field ask for a specific master's degree.

Approximately 4 out of 10 companies ask for a high or intermediate level of English

## Employability and university education in the field of Psychology

- > As shown in Figure 18, these percentages vary depending on the field of employment. For example, almost half of the organisations in the corporate field require a high level of English.

**Figure 16. Percentage of employers that indicate the importance of having a master's degree in the selection process, by area of psychology**



**Figure 17. Percentage of employers that indicate the importance of English in the selection process, by field of psychology**

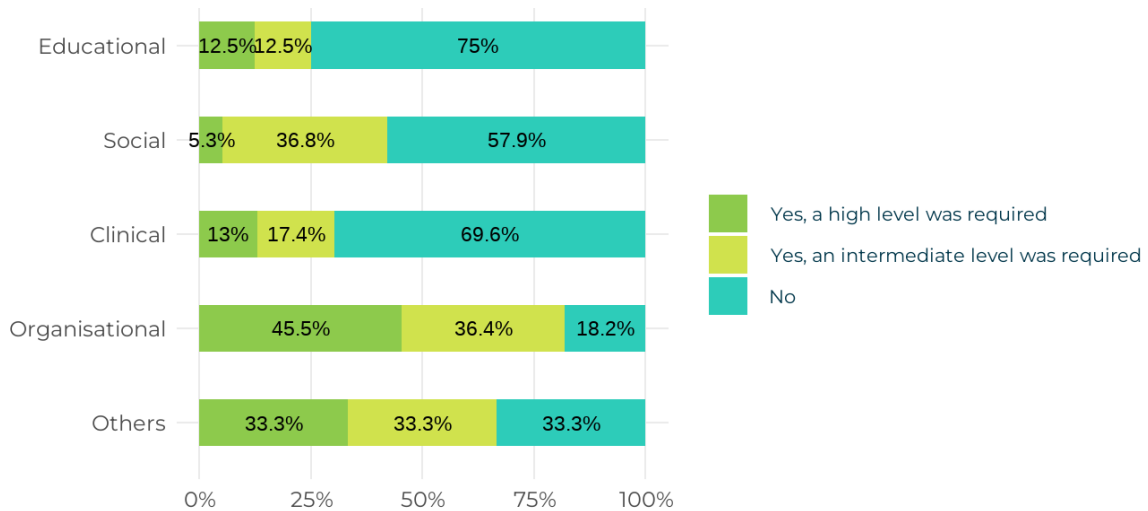
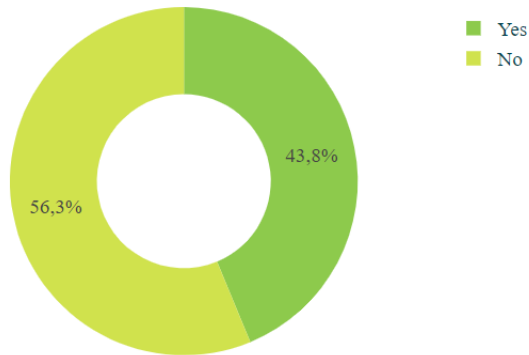


Figure 18. Companies that have had difficulties in recruiting Psychology graduates

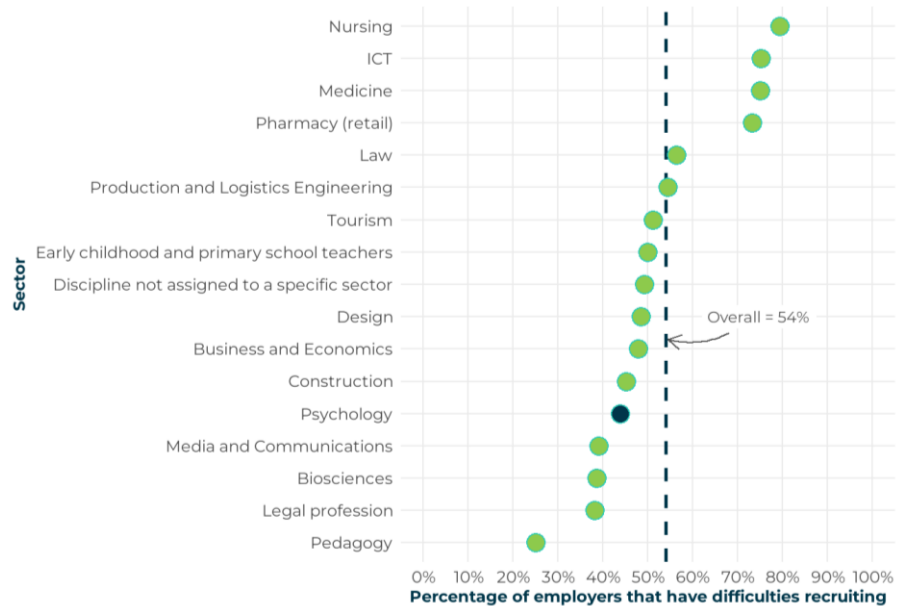


Almost half of employers (56.3%) have had no difficulties in recruiting Psychology graduates

- > The percentage of companies with difficulties has decreased 14 points compared to the 2020 employer survey (AQU CATALUNYA, 2020a)

Psychology is one of the sectors in the study in which the percentage of employers that have difficulties in recruiting graduates is below average (54%)

Figure 19. Comparison of companies who face difficulties when recruiting, by sector included in the employer survey



The main difficulty when recruiting is the lack of graduates with the necessary skills for the job

- > The skills that are most lacking according to employers are **mental health knowledge, practical training and training in clinical psychology**.<sup>15</sup> Skills related to the clinical field stand out because this is the field with the highest number of responses from employers and, moreover, the one that tends to have the greatest difficulties in recruitment (56.5%).

Figure 20. Difficulties in recruiting the right profiles in the psychology sector

Response	n	Percentage
Lack of qualified people with the necessary skills for the job	22	73
Lack of graduates in this field	8	27
They do not accept the work schedule	8	27
They do not accept the salary	7	23
Unwillingness to be geographically mobile	4	13
They do not accept the type of contract	4	13
Other (specify)	4	13
Limited resources prevent vacancies being properly advertised	3	10

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<sup>15</sup> Data based on the responses of employers to the open-ended question “You have indicated that you have had difficulties in recruiting staff due to a lack of qualified people with the necessary skills for the job. Can you specify which skills?”.

Skills that recent Psychology graduates should improve<sup>16</sup>

The skill with the most room for improvement according to the employers in this sector is good communication and interpersonal skills

- > The other skills that have been selected by more than 30% of employers are the **detection and assessment of people’s needs, intervention with people in different areas (clinical, educational, labour, legal, etc.)** and **self-critical thinking, capacity for introspection and optimal degree of self-knowledge**.

Figure 21. Skills that Psychology graduates should improve

Skill	n	Percentage
Good communication/interpersonal skills (empathy, active listening, assertiveness, teamwork and team management, strategic vision and high decision-making capacity).	44	68.8
Detection and assessment of people’s needs.	34	53.1
Intervention with people in different areas (clinical, educational, occupational, legal, etc.).	23	35.9
Self-critical thinking and capacity for introspection and optimal degree of self-knowledge.	20	31.2
Integration of advances in psychology into professional practice and keeping up to date.	19	29.7
Interest in and/or motivation regarding human behaviour in general.	19	29.7
Ability to analyse and interpret quantitative and qualitative data in different areas of intervention.	17	26.6
Professional practice based on scientific foundations.	16	25.0
Ability to extensively integrate existing multiple perspectives of psychology research into professional practice.	14	21.9
Ability to act in an ethical manner in accordance with the code of ethics of the psychology profession.	9	14.1
Critical reading of scientific literature.	5	7.8

<sup>16</sup> In the employer survey questions on skills, employers are asked to choose between 1 and 5 skills that they think recent graduates should improve. Therefore, the percentages shown represent the percentage of employers that have selected a given skill.

## Employers' satisfaction with the skills of recent Psychology graduates

### The average employers' satisfaction with the skills of recent Psychology graduates is high (7.2)

- > Average satisfaction does not vary substantially from the overall average or from the averages of other employer sectors, which range from 6.7 to 7.7.<sup>17</sup>
- > Overall satisfaction with the skills of Psychology graduates has not varied substantially with respect to the previous edition, where it was 7.1.

## Outlook

### The most requested skills are related to interpersonal skills, new technologies, psychotherapy, adapting to change and research skills

- > It is also worth noting the impact of COVID-19 on the outlook for the profession as expressed by employers.

Figure 22. Skills that will become more important in the psychology sector (most frequent keywords)



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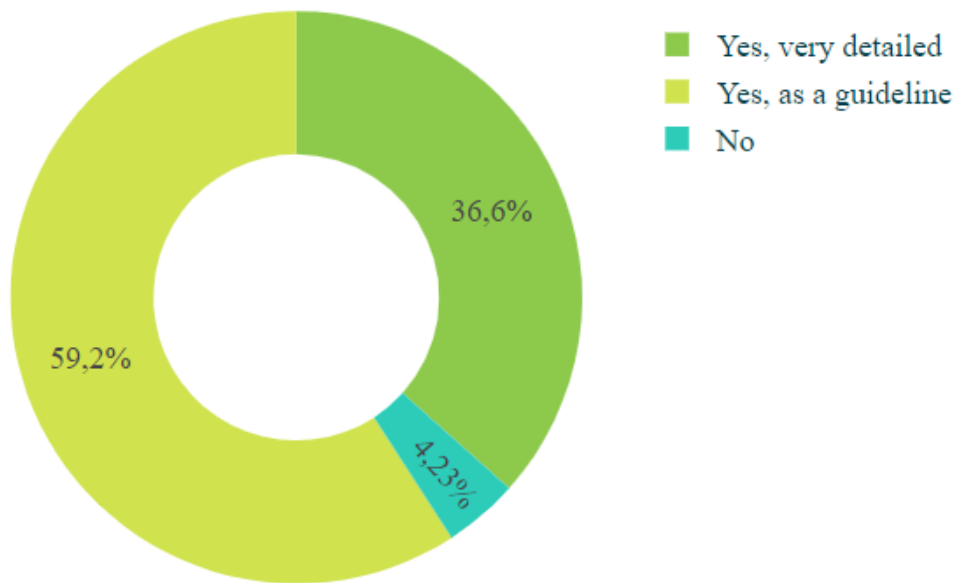
<sup>17</sup> Considering the relatively small size of the samples and the distribution of the variable measuring overall satisfaction, it cannot be claimed that these differences are statistically significant.



The opinion of employers regarding Psychology work placement students

Of the 71 employers who have taken on work placement students, 36.6% in total had a very detailed training plan and 59.2% had an indicative training plan

Figure 23. Definition of the training plan of employers that have provided work placements for Psychology degree students



## Skills that have been worked on the most during the work placement period

The three skills that have been worked on the most during the work placement period are also those that, according to employers, have the greatest room for improvement among recent graduates

- > It is also worth noting that 30% of organisations have worked on the **ability to analyse and interpret quantitative and qualitative data in different areas of intervention** and the **interest in and/or motivation towards human behaviour in general**.
- > It is not surprising that work to reinforce self-critical thinking does not stand out, as this is a skill that, a priori, would be difficult to strengthen in a professional context.

Figure 24. Skills in the field of Psychology that have been worked on the most during the work placement period

Skill	n	Percentage
Detection and assessment of people's needs.	53	74.6
Good communication/interpersonal skills (empathy, active listening, assertiveness, teamwork and team management, strategic vision and high decision-making capacity).	44	62.0
Intervention with people in different areas (clinical, educational, occupational, legal, etc.).	32	45.1
Ability to analyse and interpret quantitative and qualitative data in different areas of intervention.	26	36.6
Interest in and/or motivation regarding human behaviour in general.	25	35.2
Ability to act in an ethical manner in accordance with the code of ethics of the psychology profession.	20	28.2
Professional practice based on scientific foundations.	19	26.8
Self-critical thinking and capacity for introspection and optimal degree of self-knowledge.	15	21.1
Integration of advances in psychology into professional practice and keeping up to date.	13	18.3
Ability to extensively integrate existing multiple perspectives of psychology research into professional practice.	13	18.3
Critical reading of scientific literature.	7	9.9
Others	1	1.4

## Skills that work placement students should most improve according to employers

Again, good communication and interpersonal skills, detecting people's needs and self-critical thinking are identified as the skills with the most room for improvement

- > They also highlight the need to consolidate the **ability to extensively integrate the multiple perspectives of psychology research into professional practice**, as well as the **integration of developments in psychology into professional practice and the ability to keep up to date**.
- > Together with the results of previous sections, these results suggest that the knowledge, skills and competencies most valued by employers are related to professional practice and to the application of some of the so-called “soft skills” (communication and interpersonal skills) in a work context.

**Figure 25. Skills of Psychology work placement students that should be worked on more at university**

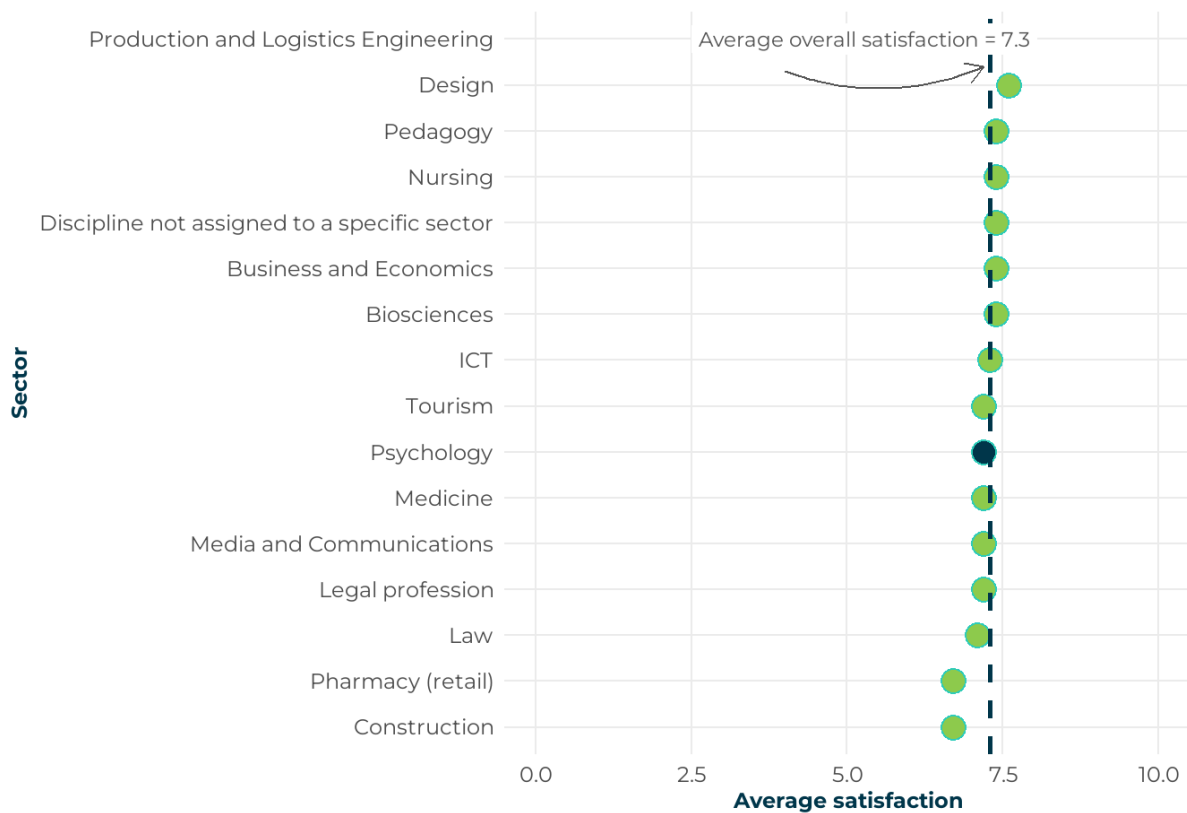
Skill	n	Percentage
Good communication/interpersonal skills (empathy, active listening, assertiveness, teamwork and team management, strategic vision and high decision-making capacity).	36	50.7
Detection and assessment of people's needs.	31	43.7
Self-critical thinking and capacity for introspection and optimal degree of self-knowledge.	30	42.3
Ability to extensively integrate existing multiple perspectives of psychology research into professional practice.	25	35.2
Integration of advances in psychology into professional practice and keeping up to date.	24	33.8
Ability to analyse and interpret quantitative and qualitative data in different areas of intervention.	21	29.6
Intervention with people in different areas (clinical, educational, occupational, legal, etc.).	19	26.8
Interest in and/or motivation regarding human behaviour in general.	15	21.1
Professional practice based on scientific foundations.	14	19.7
Critical reading of scientific literature.	14	19.7
Ability to act in an ethical manner in accordance with the code of ethics of the psychology profession.	12	16.9

## Psychology work placement students' satisfaction with skills

### The average employers' satisfaction with the skills of Psychology work placement students is high (7.2)

- > It does not vary substantially from the overall average (7.3) or from the averages of other employer sectors, which range from 6.7 to 7.7,<sup>18</sup> as shown in Figure 27.

Figure 26. Comparison of the average satisfaction with the skills of work placement students, by sector included in the employer survey (from 0 to 10)



<sup>18</sup> Considering the relatively small size of the samples and the distribution of the variable measuring overall satisfaction, it cannot be claimed that these differences are statistically significant.

## CONCLUSIONS

- > The demand for public places on Psychology degrees substantially exceeds supply. Even so, graduates of these degrees tend to occupy lower quality jobs than those of the Catalan higher education system as a whole. This fact, when analysed together with the data from the employer survey showing that companies tend to have less difficulty in recruiting graduates in this field, suggests an oversupply of graduates that is difficult for the labour market to absorb.
- > The employment outcome of Psychology graduates varies substantially depending on the field of employment. People working in the corporate sphere are seen to have relatively more favourable conditions. Those working in unrelated fields, however, tend to have less job stability, lower salaries and are more likely to be carry out non-university-level functions.
- > Psychology graduates are particularly dissatisfied with the possibility of applying the knowledge acquired during the degree in the work placement period, a result similar to the findings published in the previous edition of this report. This result may suggest a mismatch between both university education in psychology and professional practice and the suitability of the responsibilities that students take on during their work placements.
- > Once again, as indicated in the previous edition of the report, the skills that graduates in Psychology should improve the most according to employers are:
  - communication and interpersonal skills,
  - the identification and assessment of people's needs, and
  - intervention with people in different areas (clinical, educational, occupational, legal, etc.).

In addition, the need to improve the capacity for self-criticism and self-knowledge is also highlighted. These results suggest that the knowledge, skills and competencies most valued by employers are related to professional practice and to the application of some of the so-called "soft skills" (communication and interpersonal skills) in a work context.

As a new feature this year, the survey also asked about the skills most worked on during the work placement period in companies and organisations that take on interns. In this respect, it can be seen that, broadly speaking, the skills that are most lacking according to employers are the ones that are strengthened the most during the work placement period. These results point to the **suitability of work placements in terms of putting into practice the skills most in demand by employers.**

- > As pointed out in the document *Proposals for improvement in the education received in Psychology* (AQU CATALUNYA, 2020b), the skills with the greatest room for improvement can be summarised as follows:

## Employability and university education in the field of Psychology

- Carrying out activities in small groups (small-group teaching) in which certain “soft skills”, such as communication and interpersonal skills, are worked on.
- Designing a range of elective subjects with a more vocational focus for different areas of employment in psychology.

Moreover, taking into account the relatively low employment and job suitability rates of psychology graduates, universities could help students to manage their potential job opportunities:

- Tutorial action plans, elective subjects and visits to work environments would help students, while they are studying, to **better visualise the other professional fields open to psychologists.**
- Cross-disciplinary training, for example in the field of technology (big data, programming and data analytics, etc.), could help to improve the employability of people who do not manage to enter professional fields specific to psychology.

## DATA SHEET

### Employer survey

#### Technical information of the 3rd edition of the employer survey (2021-2022)

<b>Population</b>	Organisations that have hired in the last three years recent graduates from universities located in Catalonia
<b>Sampling frame</b>	Companies, organisations and institutions that have signed a work placement agreement and/or are listed in Catalan universities' job banks.
<b>Survey type</b>	Online. Software used SurveyMonkey
<b>Average time taken</b>	6' 45"

#### Summary of the responses to the 3rd edition of the employer survey (2021-2022)

<b>Sampling frame (all sectors)</b>	29,865
<b>Population of employers of Psychology graduates</b>	Unknown
<b>Responses (all sectors)</b>	2,423
<b>Response rate (all sectors)</b>	8.11%
<b>Response from employers of Psychology graduates</b>	99

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