

The qualification level of French people aged 25 to 64 is rising even though it remains relatively low. The cohorts who have just completed their studies account for 42% of higher education diplomas, including 27% on long general courses and 15% on short specific courses.

As in the Latin countries and Germany, France has a low proportion of adults holding a Higher Education degree (19th among OECD countries in 2008). Secondary and university education were less developed compared to the U.S. and Japan, when the generations currently aged 60 enrolled. However, the youngest generations have benefited from important advances in secondary and higher education from 1985 to 1995. The proportion of higher education graduates among people aged 25 to 34 means that in 2008, France stood among the most advanced countries (*Graph 01*). France stands out for its high proportion of higher education graduates on short and specific courses (5th) and a smaller proportion of long-term qualifications leading to research (19th overall).

The European Union has reached agreement on the strategic development of higher education and research, aspiring towards a 40% higher education qualification rate across the EU in 2020 as against 31% in 2008 (among those aged 30-34). This constitutes a common direction rather than a standard. Several countries, including France and Denmark, are more ambitious. The French Constitutional by-law on budget acts (LOLF) aims for 50% of a given generation to gain a higher education diploma in 2012. Statistics on degrees awarded assess progress towards this goal and it is estimated that in the 2008 session, 44.7% of an age group obtained a higher education degree in France.

The generations of the late 1970s are twice as likely to graduate than those of the early 1960s: 44% of the generations born from 1979 to 1983 were higher

education graduates in 2009, as were 21% of the generations born from 1961 to 1965 at the same age in 1991 (*Graph 02*).

42% of the generations who have just finished their studies are higher education graduates. 27% of leavers have pursued theoretical and long courses: 10% have a degree or master's degree, 15% a diploma certifying successful completion of a Master's cycle (five years) and 1% a research doctorate. In addition, 15% of leavers have accredited short specific courses (BTS, DUT, paramedical and social qualifications) (*Table 03*). With the development of the new "Licence Master Doctorate" cycles, the youngest generations are more likely to pursue their further studies to qualifications at Master's level, in particular a Diploma in Specialised Higher Education, and are on the contrary less likely to complete these courses with a qualification from a short targeted course. The share of young graduates on longer courses is witnessing slight growth.

In addition, 70,000 young people per year (9% of a generation) left higher education without validating their learning and their highest level of qualification is a *baccalauréat*. They represent less than 19% of those who have enrolled, as confirmed by the student panel. France aims to reduce this percentage to 15% in 2010. Young people whose highest qualification on finishing their studies belongs to the upper secondary cycle represented 40% of the total generation and those holding the National Certificate or with no degree accounted for 18%.

Tables and Graphs 02 and 03 are based on employment surveys from INSEE, as is 01 for France.

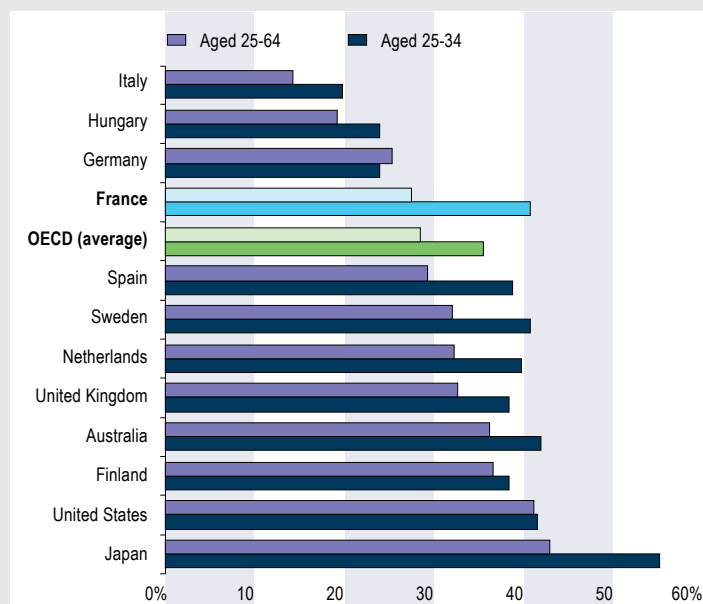
Graph 02 relates to the qualifications declared by those present in metropolitan France at 25-29 years (as of January 1), i.e. the generations born between 1979 and 1983 in 2009.

Table 03 focuses on generations or sub-populations who first interrupted their studies (or "left initial education") in the same year. Data on the cohorts "leaving year n" are gathered in the following year (survey "n+1". The data in Table 03 refer to the average of three such cohorts (the 2008 generation surveyed in 2009, 2007, 2008, etc.). The margins of error are at least +/- 1 point: 42% is not really different from 43%.

Moreover, the annual statistics of diplomas issued each year are used to estimate the proportion of higher education graduates among all young people of a given age group. These statistics provide a benchmark for a LOLF indicator

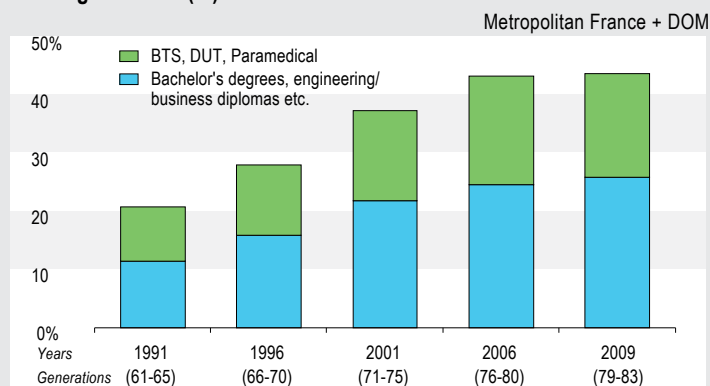
Source: OECD and MESR-DEPP based on INSEE Employment surveys.
Scope: Metropolitan France.

01 Proportion of higher education graduates in the population (2008) (%)



Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance 2010* (based on Labour Force Surveys)

02 Proportion of higher education graduates according to generation (%)



Interpretation: in 2009, 44% of young people born between 1979 and 1983 declared at the beginning of 2006 that they held a higher education diploma compared to 21% of the generations born in the early '60s at the beginning of 1991.

Source: DEPP calculations (INSEE Employment surveys in March 1991, 1996, 2001 and for the first quarter of 2006 and 2009).

03 Breakdown of generations leaving initial education by highest qualification

Highest qualification (ISCED*)	ISCED*	Metropolitan France + DOM			
		2003-2005 generations (average)		2006-2008 generations (average)	
		in th.	%	in th.	%
PhD (except medicine)	6	5	1%	7	1%
Health care doctor diploma (medicine)	5A	7	1%	6	1%
<i>Diplôme d'études approfondies</i> (diploma testifying to five years of tertiary education), <i>magistère</i> (post-grad. vocational qualification)	5A	12	2%	10	1%
Engineering degree	5A	22	3%	24	3%
Degrees from other schools	5A	24	3%	20	3%
<i>Diplôme d'études supérieures spécialisées</i> (post-graduate diploma)	5A	31	4%	47	7%
Total "Master's level"	5A	96	13%	107	15%
Master's	5A	33	4%	22	3%
Bachelor's degree	5A	44	6%	56	7%
Total "Bachelor's degree level"	5A	77	10%	78	10%
DEUG	5A	6	1%	5	1%
Subtotal courses possibly leading to research	5A	184	25%	197	27%
Paramedical and social studies diplomas (nurses)	5B	25	3%	24	3%
DUT, DUEST	5B	14	2%	11	2%
BTS and equivalent	5B	84	12%	77	10%
Total completed courses	5B	123	17%	112	15%
Total higher education	5/6	307	42%	309	42%
Baccalauréat or equivalent	3A/C	163	23%	171	23%
<i>of which: have followed higher education courses</i>	3A/C	77	11%	70	9%
CAP, BEP or equivalent	3C	126	17%	123	17%
Total upper secondary school leavers with diploma	3A/C	289	40%	294	40%
National vocational diploma (DNB)	2	53	7%	64	8%
No qualification	0/2	77	11%	72	10%
Total DNB or less	0/2	130	18%	136	18%
All education/training options		726	100%	739	100%

* La classification internationale type des enseignements (CITE) de l'UNESCO permet de comparer entre pays statistiques et indicateurs sur l'enseignement (cf. annexe).

Source: calculs DEPP à partir des enquêtes Emploi de l'INSEE 2004 à 2009 (moyenne annuelle).

The children of managers and the self-employed succeed in proportions comparable to those of employees and workers in specific short courses such as a BTS or paramedical training. In contrast, children from disadvantaged groups are 3-4 times less successful than the latter in courses such as Master's, *grande école* or doctorate.

Developments in secondary and higher education have resulted in its increasing openness to students from social environments who were previously denied access. A general assessment can be made here of accessibility and its limits by comparing the extent to which different social groups pass the *baccalauréat* stage and move on to higher education and their breakdown according to highest qualification obtained

In the generations born in the 1940s, over 66% of children with management-level parents attained the *baccalauréat* compared with only 6% of working-class children. In more recent generations, half of working class children have obtained a *baccalauréat* (Graph 01). This advance has been particularly rapid in the space of ten years. Difficulties in accessing the *baccalauréat* between social classes are less pronounced in the generations born between 1974 and 1978 than among their elders born between 1964 and 1968. From this point of view, progress made at the end of the '80s has contributed to a reduction in educational inequalities.

In line with developments in secondary education, higher education considerably widened its recruitment base at the beginning of the nineties. Nearly twice as many children of working class and employee parents enrolled in higher education in 2001 than in 1991. Trends in inequality of access between social classes are difficult to interpret. On the one hand, access to higher education has increased as much, in absolute terms, for the children of the self-employed,

managers, teachers and intermediate professions as for the children of workers and employees (by about 20 points) (Graph 02). On the other, the indicators used to measure inequalities show they are slightly decreasing, including at *grandes écoles*, where they remain significant however.

One of the aims of the LOLF is to increase the proportion of working class and employee children aged 20-21 continuing into higher education to 50% in 2010; they were 39% among the 20-24 age group in 2009.

In 2009, the children of self-employed, managers and intermediate professionals aged 25-29 were nearly twice as likely to be graduates of higher education than children of workers and employees of the same age. Inequalities between social groups were somewhat lower in 2009 than in 1999 (Graph 03). However, children of the former are 3 to 4 times more successful than those of workers and employees on long-term courses in *grandes écoles* or university (master's and doctorate levels). However, both groups contain similar proportions of young people whose highest qualification is a BTS, DUT or paramedical or social work qualification (ratio close to 1). Moreover, comparable percentages of young people in these groups leave higher education without the desired diploma, i.e. children of workers and employees fail more as a proportion of entrants.

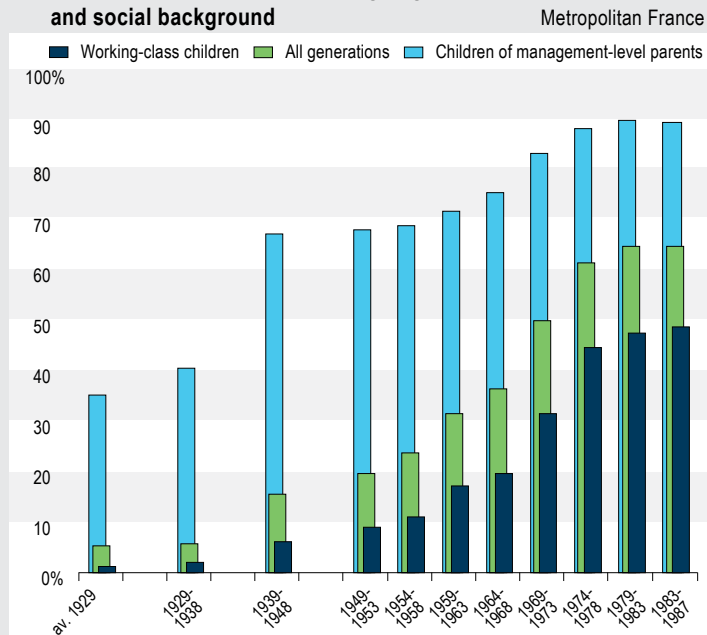
Graph 01 concerns **generations** i.e. young people born in the same year. It is based on the Formation et Qualification Professionnelle (FQP: Training and vocational qualification) and Employment surveys conducted by INSEE. Access to the *baccalauréat* is measured by surveys at intervals of 5 years, conducted among generations aged 21-25. Diplomas close to the *baccalauréat* are not assimilated.

Graphs 02 and 03, based on the same employment surveys, also reflect age groups corresponding to generations (age as of 1 January) Those aged 25-29 in 2009 were born between 1979 and 1983, those in 1999 between 1969 and 1973 (Graph 03).

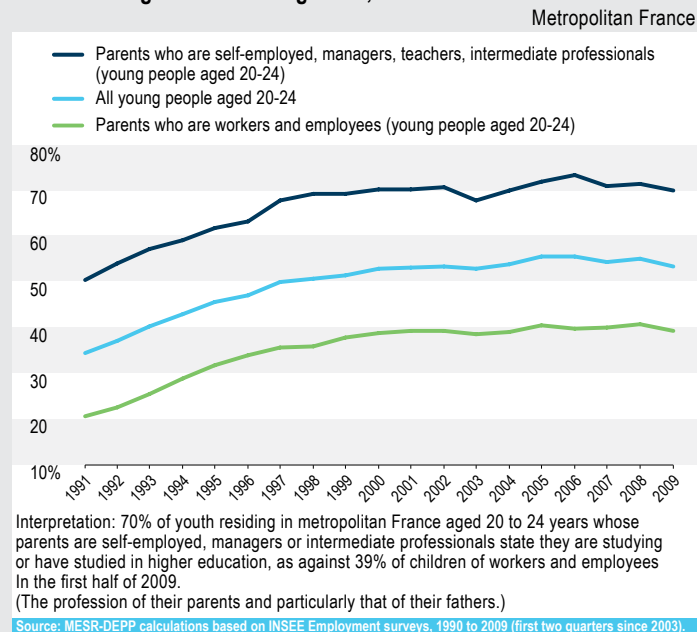
"Social background" is determined on the basis of parents' socio-professional category, (SPC) particularly that of the father. The SPC of the retired or unemployed is usually that of the last position held.

Source: Sources: INSEE
Employment, Training and
Vocational Qualification Surveys.
Scope: Metropolitan France.

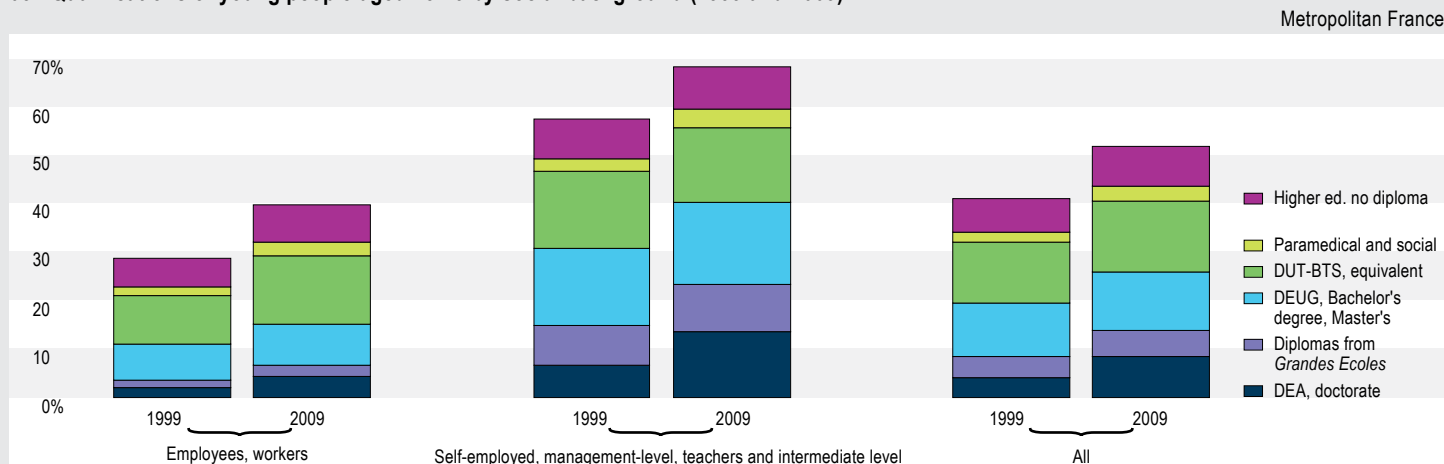
01 Baccalauréat pass rate according to generation and social background



02 Access to higher education for young people aged 20-24 according to social background, from 1984 to 2009



03 Qualifications of young people aged 25-29 by social background (1999 and 2009)



Qualifications have never been so valuable and despite the crisis, the hierarchy of qualifications remains unchanged. For decades, possession of a *baccalauréat* + 5 has proven a greater asset in terms of access to employment, employment contract, professional position or salary, than possession of a *baccalauréat* + 2.

Ememployability conditions for those leaving higher education are far from homogenous. Beyond the divide between graduates and undergraduates, there are other mechanisms at work: the effect of level of course, but also that of the courses concerned (sciences proper versus the humanities and social sciences, vocational versus general courses, "*grandes écoles*" versus universities...)

Starting out on the labour market is particularly difficult for those leaving higher education without qualifications although, leavers from STS or IUT suffer less from the non-validation of their degrees than those who fail university after the *baccalauréat*.

The employability prospects of those possessing a *baccalauréat* + 2 differ widely depending on the courses pursued: unemployment rates by sector three years after completing education vary between 6% and 16%. Certain professional degrees such as the Industrial DUT still provide a real advantage in terms of employability but also in terms of stability once in employment.

At L-level, entry into working life is relatively easy for graduates with a vocational license. Three years after their entry into working life, over 90% of them are employed, with the vast majority on indefinite contracts. The proportion of those working part-time is very low, including those from service-sector courses.

At Bac + 5 level, it is always business and engineering school graduates who face the most positive employment prospects. However, those from certain university courses such as Masters and post-graduate diplomas in computing face entirely comparable employment prospects. Law, economics and management graduates experience fewer problems in starting their professional careers than their humanities

counterparts, whether the latter have completed a professional or research Master's. Despite a lower unemployment rate, it appears they are more likely than their counterparts in the hard sciences to have to accept a position in an intermediate profession rather than a management post following a vocational master's.

Conditions for entering the job market for new PhDs also vary widely depending on the type of doctorate. While medicine graduates (doctors, pharmacists) have a very low unemployment rate (2%), those of chemistry are more likely to face this problem (15%). Graduates of engineering sciences and computing occupy an intermediate position (6%) while it reaches 10% for those from humanities courses. Overall, most (92%) of PhDs employed at the time of the survey have become managers, but this proportion also varies greatly depending on the discipline of origin: it applies to only 79% of PhDs in literature, languages and arts.

In terms of wages, qualification levels being equal, the advantage clearly lies with vocational courses. The worst off are humanities graduates while law, economics or science graduates occupy an intermediate position. This salary advantage can transcend levels. The highest median salary (over €2,000) is found among doctors of medicine or pharmacy, engineering and business school graduates, and doctors in law or science. But Master's graduates in humanities (with €1,450) have a median income lower than that of industrial DUT graduates and equivalent to industrial BTS graduates.

The above data are taken from a survey conducted in spring 2007 by CEREQ (Centre d'études et de recherches sur les qualifications: Centre for study and research in training and education policy) among 65,000 young people - among 705,000 school leavers in 2004 as part of the investigation entitled "Generation 2004".

Surveys conducted by CEREQ of young people entering the workforce, at intervals of three years, enable the analysis of the career paths of new generations of young school leavers during their first three years on the labour market.

This survey covers French or foreign people under 35 years, leaving higher education in 2004, enrolled in training in the 2003-2004 school year, who did not interrupt their studies for a year or more before the 2003-2004 school year (except for health reasons) or return to school during the year following their entry into the labour market.

Source: CÉREQ.

Scope: Metropolitan France.

Professional Situation in 2007 of young people leaving higher education in 2004

	Unemployment rate (%)	Share of permanent contracts (1)	Share of part time	Rate of managers	Rate of intermediate professions (2)	Median salary
After dropping out from or failing the BTS or DUT	13%	63%	11%	3%	34%	€1,250
<i>Industrial courses</i>	10%	70%	4%	2%	34%	€1,300
<i>Service courses</i>	15%	59%	16%	4%	34%	€1,200
After dropping out from or failing the DEUG	17%	53%	22%	5%	37%	€1,190
<i>in hard sciences</i>	15%	56%	19%	5%	33%	€1,200
<i>in law, economics, management</i>	18%	54%	17%	5%	38%	€1,200
<i>in arts and humanities</i>	18%	51%	25%	5%	37%	€1,150
BTS	8%	71%	8%	5%	49%	€1,310
<i>Industrial courses</i>	6%	73%	4%	5%	54%	€1,400
<i>Service courses</i>	10%	70%	11%	5%	45%	€1,260
DUT	8%	76%	6%	11%	56%	€1,410
<i>Industrial courses</i>	7%	72%	3%	8%	68%	€1,500
<i>Service courses</i>	9%	78%	7%	12%	49%	€1,370
DEUG-DEUST	12%	63%	20%	20%	43%	€1,260
<i>in Hard Sciences</i>	16%	71%	15%	20%	54%	€1,450
<i>in Law, Economics, Management</i>	12%	62%	20%	23%	37%	€1,260
<i>in Arts and Humanities</i>	9%	62%	27%	10%	53%	€1,200
General Bachelor's degrees	7%	70%	19%	16%	65%	€1,420
<i>in Hard Sciences</i>	5%	79%	14%	25%	66%	€1,500
<i>in Law, Economics, Management</i>	10%	73%	18%	17%	55%	€1,400
<i>in Arts and Humanities</i>	7%	66%	20%	14%	68%	€1,400
Vocational Licenses	6%	81%	3%	13%	65%	€1,500
<i>Industrial courses</i>	5%	81%	2%	10%	72%	€1,540
<i>Service courses</i>	6%	80%	5%	15%	58%	€1,470
M1 University	9%	70%	13%	32%	49%	€1,500
<i>Hard sciences (including Medicine, Life and Earth Sciences)</i>	5%	71%	9%	52%	39%	€1,550
<i>Arts, Languages, Literature</i>	8%	69%	15%	37%	49%	€1,500
<i>Human sciences, psychology and education</i>	7%	62%	18%	27%	54%	€1,450
<i>Economics, Management, Communication</i>	12%	77%	8%	25%	48%	€1,500
<i>Law, Political Science</i>	11%	74%	11%	23%	52%	€1,430
Research Master's or DEA	10%	74%	12%	56%	33%	€1 680
<i>in hard sciences</i>	12%	70%	8%	57%	37%	€1,700
<i>in law, economics, management</i>	7%	86%	5%	64%	29%	€1,850
<i>in arts and humanities</i>	13%	61%	27%	44%	37%	€1 450
Vocational Master's or Post-graduate diploma	7%	79%	6%	61%	31%	€1,820
<i>in hard sciences</i>	8%	79%	4%	69%	26%	€1,900
<i>in law, economics, management</i>	5%	84%	3%	60%	32%	€1,900
<i>in arts and humanities</i>	8%	66%	16%	53%	37%	€1,500
Business schools Bac + 5	6%	93%	3%	65%	27%	€2,300
Engineering schools	4%	92%	1%	87%	10%	€2,150
PhD	6%	72%	12%	92%	7%	€2,170
<i>in medicine, pharmacy</i>	2%	74%	15%	97%	3%	€2,520
<i>in hard sciences (excl medicine)</i>	9%	70%	5%	91%	98%	€2,050
<i>in law, economics, management</i>	6%	81%	10%	92%	6%	€2,100
<i>in arts and humanities</i>	10%	68%	21%	79%	17%	€1,840
Total leaving higher education	8%	74%	10%	25%	47%	€1,500

(1) EDI *Emploi à durée indéterminée*: Indefinite contract

(2) PI: intermediate profession.

Source: CÉREQ - Génération 2004 conducted in 2007.

In 2009, two and a half years after graduation, the rate of Master's graduate employment is 91.4%. Among those employed, 80% have management jobs or intermediate professional roles. Graduates in law, economics, management and science, technology and health-related subjects — including information technology — are those that enter the labour market most easily.

In 2009, two and a half years after graduation, the rate of graduate employment of master's graduates who did not pursue education after graduation (see explanatory note opposite) amounts to 91.4%, regardless of the type of job. 80% of the jobs are management-level or intermediate occupations. 75% of graduates are in stable employment (indefinite contract, civil servant, office, profession...). Two-thirds are employed in private companies as against 16% in the public sector and 9% in associations. Differences in social origin, measured in terms of grants received and age on taking the *baccalauréat*, are still evident in terms of the employability of Master's graduates: students receiving grants on social criteria find work less easily than the others (89.4% against 92.2%). The same applies to *baccalauréat* holders who were 'behind schedule' (90%) compared with those who were "on time" (92%) or "ahead of schedule" (93%). Similar differences apply to the field of study (*Graph 01*): the labour market integration rate was 92% in law, economics, management and science, technology and health, as against 90% in human and social sciences (SHS) and 87% in arts, humanities and languages. (ALL) Within the same field situations can vary across disciplines.

The fields of law, economics and management are fairly homogeneous in terms of employability, with rates ranging from 91% (economics) to 92.6% (management), as well as in terms of stable employment rate (82%) and the percentage of managers or professionals (79.5%) among the jobs occupied (*Graph 02*). Disparities between disciplines mainly concern these graduates' employers (*Graph 03*): a high proportion of public service in law (29%) and private companies in management (85%).

The field of SHS is characterised by a marked heterogeneity across subjects. The labour market insertion rate is very high in psychology (94%), but this often (39%) concerns part-time or split jobs and less than two thirds of these jobs are stable. Conversely, the labour market integration rate is relatively low in history and geography (86%), with a percentage of part-time or split jobs twice higher than the average (12%) and a rate for managers and intermediate professions which is lower than average (71%). Graduates in SHS, with the exception of computer science and communication, work mainly in the public sector and in associations.

The field of arts language and literature is characterised by much poorer labour market integration conditions than other fields: a lower than average labour market insertion rate (87% against 91.4%), a significantly higher part-time rate (16% against 6%), a lower proportion of managers and intermediate professionals and a lower rate of stable jobs (57% and 62% respectively).

In science, technology and health, two disciplines stand out for their particularly high rates of employability: Computing (96.6%) and engineering sciences (93.6%); the jobs occupied are often those of managers or intermediate professionals (92% and 90%).

Labour market integration conditions are more difficult in life and earth sciences (88.5%) and slightly below average in fundamental sciences (90%), due to the low rate observed for chemistry graduates (86% as against 94% in Mathematics and 93% in Physics).

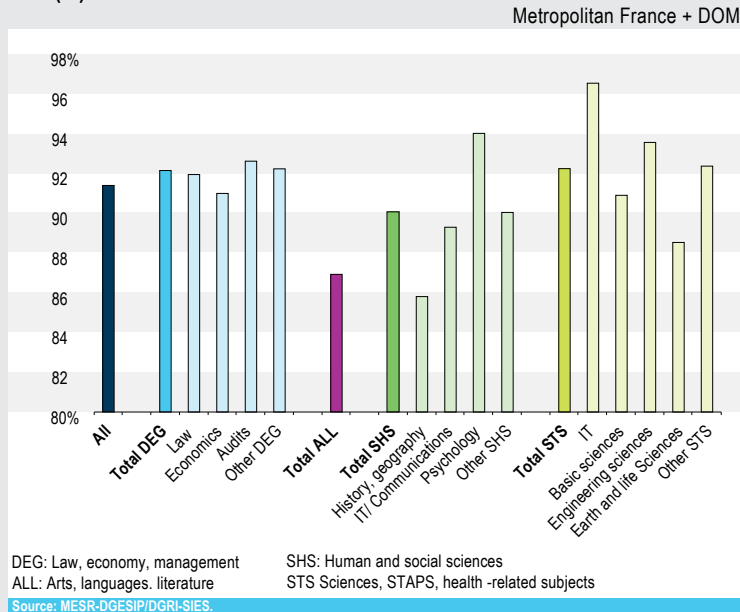
The labour market **integration rate** of Master's graduates is defined as the proportion of graduates employed, irrespective of job, of all graduates on the labour market (excluding from the analysis those still in school and those who are unemployed but say they are not seeking employment).

The social background of students is indirectly assessed through two criteria known to be strongly correlated: the fact or not of receiving a grant based on social criteria and the age of obtaining the *baccalauréat*.

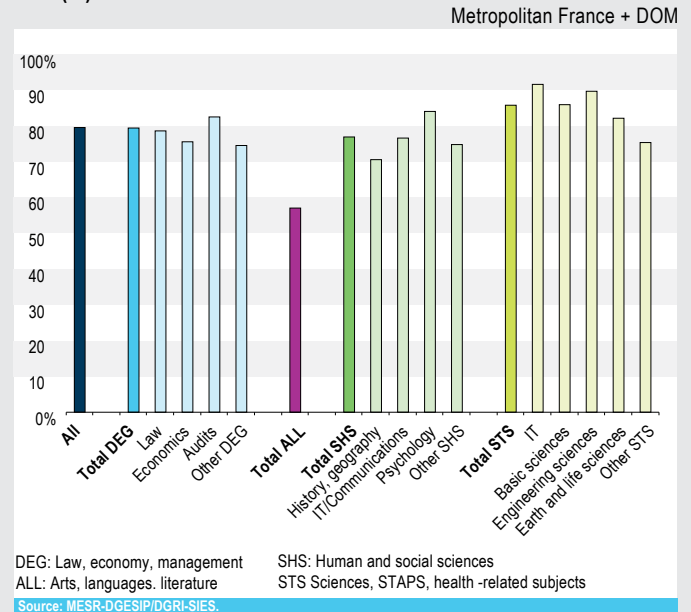
The data presented here are from the survey conducted by the MoR and public universities in metropolitan France and French overseas departments, except those who did not wish to participate (Marnes-la-Vallée, Paris Dauphine, Lyon 3). This survey was conducted in December 2009, 30 months after graduation, with 43,000 Master's graduates of the 2007 session satisfying the following conditions: having French nationality, having obtained a diploma in training and not having pursued or resumed studies within two years of gaining the Master's.

Source: MESR-DGESIP/DGRI-SIES.
Scope: Metropolitan France + DOM.

01 Employability rates by discipline (%)



02 Rate of managers and intermediate professions by (%)



03 Breakdown of main employers (%)

