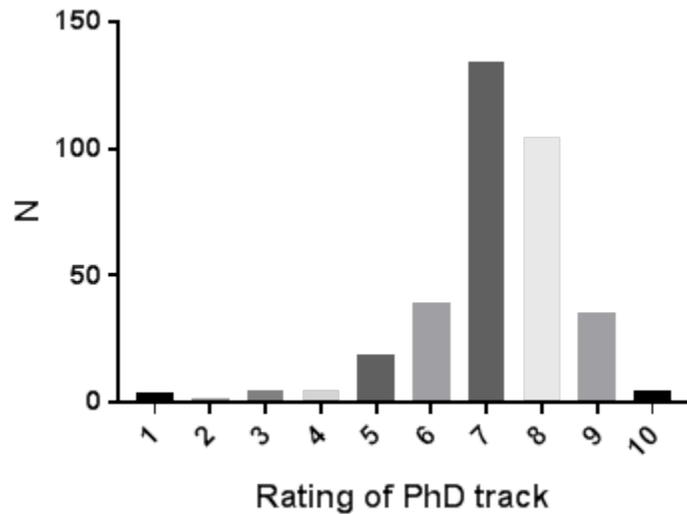


Dear PhD candidates,

It has been a while, but in spring you have received the annual GSLS PhD survey. Thank you all for filling out the survey! The bol.com gift certificates have been raffled and winners will soon be contacted through email.

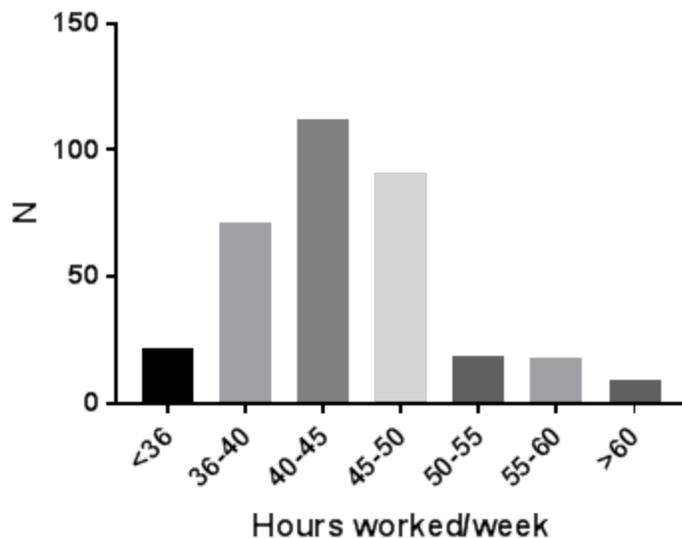
We would also like to share some of the results of the GSLS survey with you. All points mentioned below are work in progress for [the PhD council](#), and we value your input. If you wish to know more about these results or if you would like to comment, please contact us at phd-council-ugsls@googlegroups.com.

351 people responded, a higher turnout than last year! Generally, you're pretty satisfied about your PhD; most respondents give good marks, with 7/10 (134 respondents) and 8/10 (104 respondents) as most prevalent answers.



For a while now, the PhD council has been working on issues around PhD project planning and unpaid extensions. We performed a survey about this last year, and also included some questions on the topic in this year's GSLS survey. About 4 out of 5 respondents regularly discuss the planning of their PhD with their supervisor. However, only 26% of the respondents think that they will finish their PhD within the duration of their contract, while 32% are sure that they will need extra time. Of the 113 respondents in need of extra time, 23 have finished or will continue their PhD unpaid on a hospitality agreement (20%). These results are consistent with our earlier survey, and have been discussed with the GSLS leadership and the PhD program leaders. The deans of our faculties have agreed that no one should be forced to do substantial amounts of work unpaid, and have created a task force to design solutions to prevent these situations.

This was the first year that we included questions regarding things like burn-out, working hours and pregnancy leave. The results show that there is plenty of room for improvement. PhD candidates in the GSLS work hard; 30% of the respondents report to regularly work 10-20 hours per week more than their contract hours, and another 10% regularly work 20 hours or more over their contract (unpaid!).



It seems that matters concerning maternity leave are not clearly

arranged. Of the 31 respondents that have been pregnant during their PhD, or plan to do so, 60% say that there was insufficient information available about the consequences of maternity leave for their contract. 11 respondents reported expecting or having experienced some problems with getting extensions and/or compensation. We have discussed these results with the GSLS leadership and the Utrecht PhD Party members of the university council. The latter have taken this up with UU HR, and HR has updated the intranet pages on pregnancy to include information on PhD contract extension. In the UMC, the O&O council has taken up this issue. If you're an UU employee and under the CAO-NU, you have a right to get your contract extended with the duration of maternity leave (see <http://www.labouragreementuniversities.nl/>). We're working on getting the UMC-CAO clarified.

If you're feeling burned out, you're not alone! On a modified version of the Utrecht Burnout Scale, 87 of 351 respondents (24.8%) scored 'possible burnout'. This finding is in line with reports from other universities*. We shared these results with the university board and steps will be taken to address mental health problems in PhD candidates. As mental health problems often have a multifactorial cause, we and the University Board are working on several avenues. On a structural level, the quality of supervision will be addressed, as well as the working conditions (such as extensions, pregnancy leave, etc). There are also several services to support PhD candidates. At the PhD course center, you can for instance take time management and planning courses, as well as mindfulness courses and intervision. If you'd like to get professional help regarding your mental health, you can consult your GP or the Arbo arts (occupational health physician). At the UU and the UMC there are also confidential advisors, see <https://www.uu.nl/organisatie/vertrouwenspersoon> and <https://www.uu.nl/en/education/graduate-school-of-life-sciences/confidants>.

In the survey, you also provided feedback on the GSLS, the courses, and your own PhD program. Thanks a lot! The collated and anonymized results have been shared with program coordinators and other people involved in improving your PhD track. Next year, we'll bring a completely new and revised (and shorter!) survey to you.

Best wishes,

The GSLS PhD council

* See:

<https://nos.nl/op3/artikel/2180638-ook-leidse-promovendus-heeft-grotere-kans-op-depressie.html>
<http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0048733317300422>