



Gender and international student mobility

Campus France has chosen to focus on the issue of gender by looking at the context of this mobility, in order to analyse that of French female students and the foreign female students who come to study in France.

The aim of this memo is to provide significant insight – some of it totally new – into the subject in question, with the intention of opening up or expanding lines of discussion that may be continued or further examined by researchers.

The first section takes stock of the space occupied by women in higher education in France. It is clear that, despite recent improvements, the road to equality remains a long one.

The second section sets out a summary of the international mobility of French students from the perspective of gender. A recent major study carried out by Campus France emphasises that female students still remain less mobile than their male counterparts today.

Though equally attracted by international study, women encounter more obstacles to their plans, which are identified and analysed here.

In the third section, a parallel is drawn with international students who have chosen France for their studies. This highlights strong disparities, both in terms of gender inequalities according to the country of origin and in terms of the type of institution or subject area chosen.

Finally, the memo endeavours to evaluate the attractiveness of France according to gender compared with two other major destinations of international mobility: the United States and Germany. This section underscores the real competitive capacity of France to appeal to female students, especially according to origins or chosen subject areas.

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I. THE PLACE OF WOMEN IN FRENCH HIGHER EDUCATION

► Equality in worldwide international mobility

In its annual 2010 report, UNESCO published an insert on international mobility opportunities for women.

In 2008, with 49% of women, equality was almost total among students having been internationally mobile. Although this study only relates to a small group of countries and only takes degree courses into account – and therefore a minor part of international mobility – it does allow several observations to be made, which would be useful to verify on a larger scale.

Indeed, this global balance masks strong disparities highlighted in a study on the gender of students mobile for degree purposes, also carried out by UNESCO.

5 major host countries were selected for analysis: the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, South Africa and France. The analysis of the gender of students hosted by this group of countries **shows a net deficit of women among students from South and West Asia** (27% of women vs. 73% of men), Arab countries (34%), and to a lesser extent sub-Saharan Africa (43%).

Conversely, mobile female students from Central and Eastern Europe turned out to be significantly better represented with 65% of students hosted in the area being

mobile. The proportion is also higher in North America and Western Europe (54%), East Asia and the Pacific (54%), Latin America and the Caribbean (52%) and almost equal in Central Asia (51%).

Within these countries of study, **France stands out for its low proportion of women among its students who are mobile as part of a degree course¹.** UNESCO estimated this at only 46%, while this level affects 58% of those from the United States, 54% of Germans, 53% of Spaniards and 55% of Italians.

► France: average OECD student in terms of equality in higher education

According to the 2015 OECD report on education, higher education has been developing in all OECD member countries for two decades. Today, an average of 35% of young people complete at least one higher education course before the age of 30.

With regards to France, the OECD has observed a significant increase in the proportion of women in higher education. As a result, in 2013 women are in the majority among those with a higher education degree, although they remain under-represented in fields of study relating to science and engineering.

Women in French higher education: increasingly less represented at each echelon of education and responsibility

- **55%** of women among students on higher education courses in 2014 ⁽¹⁾
- **58%** among those with a Bachelor's Degree in 2013 ⁽²⁾
but **44%** of women among those with a PhD in 2011-2012 ⁽³⁾
- **44%** among lecturers in 2014 ⁽¹⁾
- **36%** among lecturer-researchers in 2014 ⁽¹⁾
- **23%** among university professors in 2014 ⁽¹⁾
- **34%** of women on university boards of trustees in 2014 ⁽⁴⁾
- **17%** of female deans of universities and EPSTs ⁽⁵⁾

Sources:

(1) L'état de l'enseignement supérieur et de la recherche en France (Summary of Higher Education and Research in France) – June 2015.

(2) Statistical markers and references, 2015.

(3) L'état de l'emploi scientifique en France (Summary of science jobs in France) – 2014 Report.

(4) High Council on the equality of men and women, 2015.

(5) State-funded science and technology centres.

1- Study limited to degree courses, or a minority of international mobility.

→ The characteristics of female students' academic choices (MENESR data)¹

In France, women are **over-represented** in certain types of institutions such as paramedical and social studies schools (84%), veterinary schools (75%), and schools of journalism and literature (63%). Conversely, they are **under-represented** in engineering courses (27%), Écoles Normales Supérieures (39%), DUTs (technology degrees) (39%) and even CPGE (postgraduate preparatory classes) (42%).

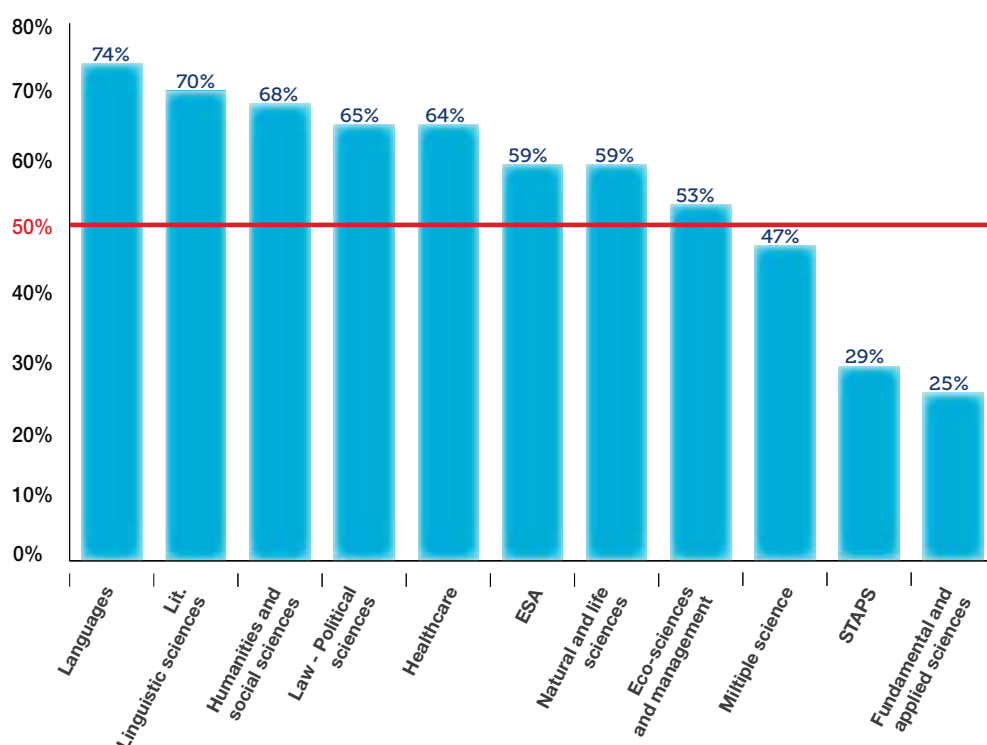
There are marked differences in the choice of university subject areas. Women represent 74% of the students in Languages, 70% in Literature and Linguistic Sciences, 68% in Humanities and Social Sciences, 65% in Law and Political Sciences, 64% in Healthcare, 59% in ESA, 59% in Natural and life sciences, 53% in Eco-sciences and management, 47% in Multiple science, 29% in STAPS, and 25% in Fundamental and applied sciences.

the numbers in Fundamental and Applied Sciences and 29% in Sports Sciences.

In terms of CPGEs, the distribution is the same: 29% of women in science subjects, 55% in economics subjects and 74% in literature subjects.

In graduate schools, there is a balance of genders in business schools (49.9% of women). However, female students only represent 28% of the numbers in engineering schools and, in some schools, this figure drops to under 20% (e.g. Polytechnic School: 18%). According to a recent report by the General Economic and Financial Inspectorate (CGEF, June 2015), the more prestigious the engineering school, the lower their number of women.

Percentage of women at university according to their subject area in 2014

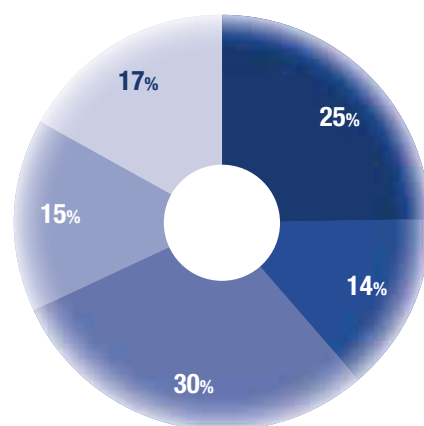
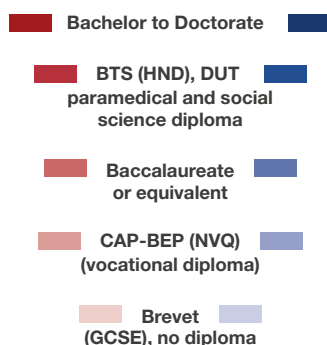
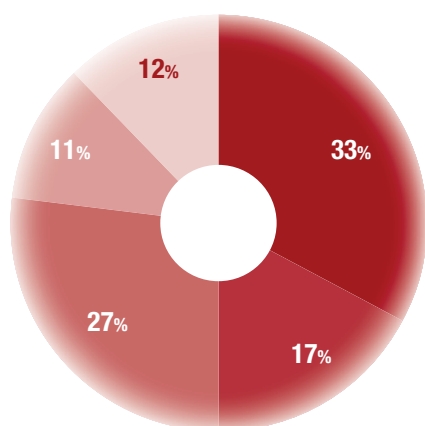


Info:
in 2014, 65% of students enrolled in «Law/Political Sciences» are women.

Scope:
Mainland France
+ overseas departments (DOM)

Source: MENESR-DGESIP-DGRI-SIES.

Final degree/diploma (%)



Info: on average in 2011, 2012 and 2013, 33% of women leaving the education system hold a Bachelor's degree or graduate degree, as opposed to 25% of men.

Scope: Mainland France **Source:** INSEE employment surveys 2011 to 2013, MENESR-DEPP processing.

1- Ministry of National Education, Higher Education and Research.

Note: on average **women study for longer and achieve higher degree levels than their male counterparts.** Over the period 2011-2013, 33% of women achieved at least a degree, against 25% of men.

► Tentative prospects for development

An analysis of the evolution of study area choices shows that women's choices are becoming similar to those of men, but still at a very slow pace. According to a study by the MENESR, based on the premise of a constant progression from that recorded between 1991 and 2011, **another 60 years would be required to achieve equality in engineering schools!**

In the research sector and based on the evolution recorded between 1992 and 2012, **at least 10 years would be required for there to be as many female university lecturers as male, and 50 years to reach gender equality for university professors.**

A simple and now recognised observation, yet a persistent one: **although women are more successful in their studies, professionally they continue to be less and less present the higher up we look in company hierarchies.**

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II. FRENCH FEMALE STUDENTS AND INTERNATIONAL MOBILITY

► The genuine appeal of international mobility among French female students¹

The essential element to keep in mind when analysing the international mobility of French female students is the unequal distribution of women in the different types of institutions, subject areas and courses. Many observations are more often the result of institutional characteristics and subject area affiliations than a direct consequence of gender. Nevertheless, beyond this aspect a few key figures enable the significant gaps between male and female students to be measured.

Concerning the profile of graduates, France is within the OECD average which counts 58% of women among those who graduate for the first time with a Bachelor's degree or equivalent course and 47% (but 44% in France) among those graduating for the first time with a PhD

→ The context of mobility: the study conditions for female students in France

- **The Campus France Observatory on International Mobility estimates that the financial status of female students is often even more difficult than that of male students:**

- There are slightly **more of them currently receiving grants** (29% vs. 25% for men);
- More of them consider their parents to be in a **difficult financial situation** (33% vs. 29%);
- More of them have or have had **paid work during their studies** (50% vs. 46%);
- They more often admit to having made concessions in their studies for financial reasons. 43% have therefore taken the differing tuition fees of institutions into account when choosing their higher education studies (vs. 37%) and 14% have even chosen not to do their desired course (vs. 10%);
- 18% have had to **choose not to study abroad** for financial reasons (vs. 13%).
- **Faced with the future, and although slightly fewer of them have a precise career plan (32% vs. 30%), female students state they are significantly more concerned than their male counterparts: 52% say they are concerned about the future (vs. 40%) and 25% anxious (vs. 14%) compared with 26% who are optimistic (vs. 31%)².**

1- Information from the Campus France 2016 Observatory on International Mobility and a survey carried out in late 2015 among 26,000 male and female students representative of the population in question.

2- Several possible responses based on a list of adjectives suggested from a list distributed randomly.

→ The appeal of international experience for students

• French female students are just as attracted by experience abroad as male students:

- 57% of female students feel that, faced with international competition, France is losing ground in a worrying way (vs. 53% of men). Only 17% feel that France has solid assets in terms of global competition (vs. 31%) and 42% feel they have better career perspectives abroad against 20% in France, similar figures to male students.
- They are even more convinced than men of the benefits of experience abroad. They see it as a gain in terms of experience (87% vs. 84%), and a personal enrichment (82% vs. 76%). Perhaps more unexpectedly, only 27% associate this type of study period with being uprooted, against 30% for male students.

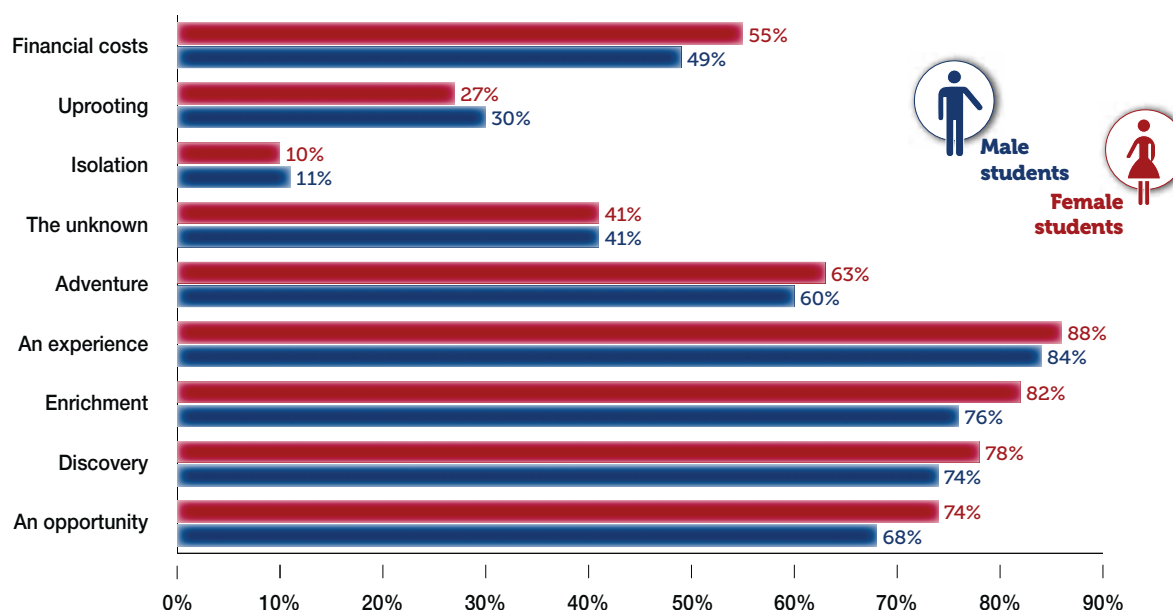
- Female students turn out to be just as, if not significantly more **aware of the potential gains** as their male counterparts:

- 74% qualify a period abroad as essential to improving their language level (vs. 69%);
- 60% to find work abroad (vs. 53%) or in a French multinational company (54% vs. 45%);
- It is only for access to a role as Chief Executive that this period seems less essential to them (25% vs. 29%), but the current inequality in the world of work no doubt means that they are less likely to envisage such a management career;
- Not significantly unlike men, 33% of them judge international experience to be essential to building their career and 34% very useful, against 15% of those not convinced (vs. 12%).

Consistently, 52% confirm that they would have no hesitation in studying abroad or taking an internship abroad were this option offered to them (vs. 49%).

QUESTION:

From the following list, which word or words represent a period abroad for you?



- **Contrary to the common preconception that it would be more difficult for a young woman to convince those around her to let her go abroad, female students are rarely dissuaded from embarking on an international experience.** 51% state that their parents would be encouraging against 7% discouraging and 31% not involved, with no significant difference from male students.
- However, within their institution a significantly lower number say they have received help with these plans (39% vs. 49%), while 29% even state that the topic is never addressed (vs. 23%). This difference is probably a simple result of the lower proportion of women in specialised

schools where mobility is compulsory and therefore more regularly organised and supported.

- **Limits to their mobility: female students are less confident in their level of foreign language skill.**
 - They have less compulsory language lessons (67% vs. 76%).
 - They are harsher on their own ability to follow lessons in their subject taught in English and only award themselves 6.7/10 (vs 7/10), with 59% marking themselves between 1 and 6 (vs. 47%).

► **Female students are more motivated but, in reality, less mobile than male students**

→ **A disparity in experiences**

Although they are just as interested in experiencing a period abroad and slightly more aware of its benefits, it would appear that less female students actually go through with it than their male counterparts.

While 45% of male students are certain about such an experience during the course of their higher education, this rate drops to 40% for female students. That said, and just as with male students, only one in six does not envisage a period abroad, and 8% are currently planning one. The difference is therefore in the proportion of those female students who would like to travel but have no precise plans (37% vs. 32%).

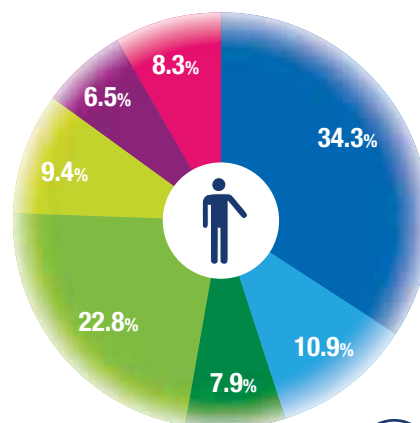
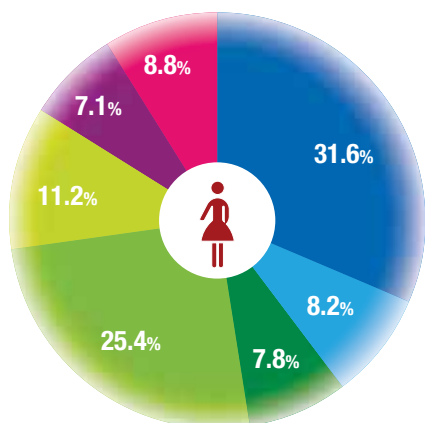
One indicator underlines the greater **difficulty encountered by young women in fulfilling their mobility** plans: when we compare the rate of periods spent abroad with that of cancelled plans, we notice that 26% of women's plans have failed as opposed to only 21% of men's.

For all types of period abroad, female students are more likely to travel on their own initiative than under obligation (61% vs. 55%), including the first period abroad (55% vs. 48%). As a whole, these periods are **mostly for study (59%)** but with a **large proportion of internships (41%)** as with all students.

At almost **6 months**, the **duration of the period** is the same for both genders.

QUESTION :

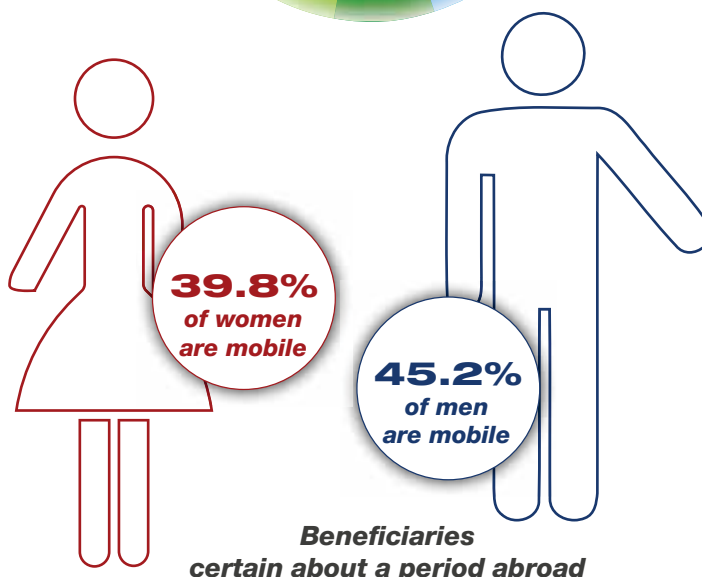
Over the course of your studies, have you personally spent one or more periods abroad for study or an internship?



Yes	MOBILE
No, but I am obliged to do so as part of my course	MOBILE

No, but I am currently planning to	INTERESTED
No, but I would be interested in doing so	INTERESTED
No, I had thought about it but did not go through with it	INTERESTED

No, and I do not plan to go abroad	NOT INTERESTED
No, and I have never really considered it	NOT INTERESTED



→ **Women's motivations for spending time abroad**

Female students are often searching for freedom, **more likely to seek an escape, change and discovery, although they remain anxious to improve their knowledge, especially linguistically.**

Their answers indicate that they are **slightly less concerned about the prospect of a return on investment**, whether to become more competitive or increase their value with a prestigious foreign degree.

→ Women's motivations for spending time abroad are the same as those of male students, with a few slight differences



Men



Women

	Men	Women
The desire to travel and discover other cultures	79.3%	85.7%
The desire to learn or perfect the language of that country	65.3%	63.8%
The desire for independence, freedom, to increase my self-confidence	53.3%	63.5%
The desire to leave France, to live elsewhere	46.9%	55.0%
The desire to improve my level of English	59.5%	52.6%
The desire to diversify the initial education I acquired in France	40.7%	45.1%
The desire to become more competitive on the job market	44.4%	36.8%
Friends and family encouraged me to try it	31.9%	33.2%
My study institution offered an attractive exchange programme	24.2%	27.5%
The desire for a higher level of study	22.6%	25.0%
I discovered the country while travelling and would like to return	21.0%	22.4%
An opportunity for accommodation there	15.5%	16.7%
Contacts there (friends, family, etc.)	13.5%	15.9%
The desire to join a prestigious and well-ranked institution	14.5%	10.9%

→ The profile of the first period abroad

As the purpose of the study is to identify the positive or negative determining factors for mobility, it is interesting to focus the analysis on the first period abroad, as the satisfaction with this experience then has a total impact on the students' attitude.

As they are less represented in Engineering schools, the first period abroad for female students is more rarely compulsory (38% vs. 45%) and more often optional but organised by the institution (35% vs. 30%). Also, among those who cross a border for a first period elsewhere, one in four did so on their own initiative.

A very slightly higher proportion of European exchange programmes can be observed for female students (23% vs. 21%), and slightly less periods abroad that are no part of any type of programme (40% vs. 42%).

Note: female students tend to leave slightly earlier for the first time during their course. 58% spend their first period abroad during or at the end of their Bachelor's degree (vs. 52%).

Women's choice of destination differs in some aspects:

The majority of young women are attracted by the **European Union**, especially and more than male students by **Germany and Spain**.

On the other hand, **less of them attempt a destination in Asia, including China**. Hypothesis: these more "exotic" trips are overall more expensive and evoke more apprehension about the foreign country, with the difficulty of cultural integration.

Female students' propensity for travel is especially marked given that, **among those in institutions where the period abroad is compulsory, 38% emphasise that this option was decisive in their choice of institution** for their higher education (vs. 26%).

→ Destination of mobile students



Men



Women

	Men	Women
EU 28	53.2%	59.9%
North America	16.4%	13.6%
Asia	11.0%	7.9%
Central/South America	6.9%	7.3%
Africa	3.2%	3.6%
Non-EU Europe	5.3%	3.6%
Oceania	2.3%	3.4%
Middle East	1.7%	0.8%
TOP 10		
United Kingdom	15.0%	15.3%
Germany	10.5%	11.8%
Spain	5.9%	9.2%
United States	8.6%	7.0%
Canada	7.8%	6.6%
Ireland	3.4%	4.1%
Italy	3.0%	4.1%
Australia	1.5%	2.5%
China	3.7%	2.2%
Sweden	2.1%	2.1%

Among female students whose time abroad was a compulsory part of their studies, only 15% said that they would have avoided it otherwise, compared with 19% of male students.



Demonstrating genuine enthusiasm, women say they more often travel on impulse (41% vs. 34%). But this impulse is relative since their average preparation time is longer than that of men (6.8 months vs. 6.2). Only 9% left within less than 3 months (vs. 15%).

→ Their assessment of their time abroad: greater satisfaction than expected

Before the trip, female students tend to worry a little more than their male counterparts. Only one in three leave totally carefree.

QUESTION:



Before leaving, was there anything you feared about this experience abroad?

	Men 		Women 	
Yes, I was very worried about the experience	7.1%	58.4%	11.8%	68.2%
Yes, I had a few worries	51.3%		56.3%	
No, I was totally calm	39.1%		30.5%	
I can't remember	2.5%		1.3%	

Upon their return, worry gave way to real enthusiasm.

QUESTION :

In the end, did your experience turn out to be better or worse than you imagined?

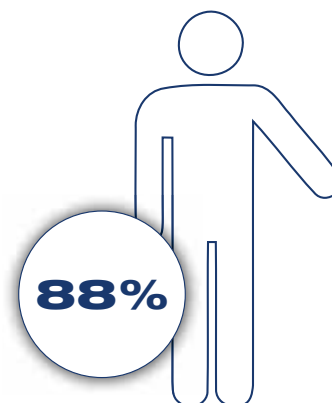
	Men 		Women 	
Significantly better	31.1%	66.5%	41.5%	72.9%
Rather better	35.4%		31.4%	
Rather disappointing	6.8%	8.3%	6.9%	8.3%
Very disappointing	1.5%		1.3%	
How I imagined	25.2%	25.2%	18.8%	18.8%

Female students are the most pleasantly surprised by their experience abroad. 73% (vs. 66%) conclude that it turned out to be a better experience than they imagined, as opposed to 8% disappointed.

...Which would very widely lead them to recommend the experience to other students... and therefore other female students.



...Would recommend without hesitation that another male or female student experience study or an internship abroad.



► Obstacles or hindrances to the international mobility of female students

→ Focus: female students who have experienced mobility (32%)

Female students who have travelled are ultimately twice as unlikely as men to mention an inadequate language level (11% vs. 20%) while their initial fears were greater.

They mention more regularly – but are still very much in the minority – the affective obstacle of being distanced from those close to them (11% vs. 6%). This difference is confirmed by the fact that 68% state that they had a few concerns before leaving (vs. 58%).

→ Focus: female students who give up their mobility plans (11%)

Among the female students who give up their plans to spend time abroad (vs. 9% of male students), 59% mention a problem with financing and 43% say it was the main reason for giving up, much before administrative obstacles (26%, 8% of whom as the main cause). Although this observation is the same for their male counterparts, it is slightly less pronounced (49% cite the financial problem, 38% of whom as the main cause).

To the question of whether the trip would have become possible once the financial obstacle was lifted, 51% of those who had to give it up said yes, as opposed to 27% who feel that other aspects would have impeded it.

In total, only 14% of those whose plans were not successful remain determined to spend time abroad in the future, while 29% have given up definitively and 57% would only seize such an opportunity if it were to present itself.

→ Focus: female students who reject the idea of international mobility (15%)

Several reasons explain this rejection, in different proportions to male students.

The main explanation put forward is their language level, which they feel to be insufficient (42% vs. 35% for male students). Second is the difficulty in leaving the comfort of their family and friends, which female students definitely find easier to admit (40% vs. 21%), followed by the financial obstacle (38% vs. 27%).

Nevertheless, it would appear that even among these female students with particularly low motivation, they could envisage spending time abroad in certain circumstances. Among the options suggested, several were selected as decisive in their choice:

- financial aid compensating for the additional cost of a period abroad (54% of those who were reticent felt that this aid would be decisive in their choice);
- fitting the period abroad into their course (49%);
- support in the administrative management of the period abroad (41%);
- support in the choice of course (26%);
- improved language level (31%);
- the option of leaving with a group of friends (31%);
- a discussion with students who have had the same experience (12%);
- marked encouragement from their teachers (11%).

Sub-population: students reticent about mobility		
	Female students	Male students
The principal obstacles to mobility mentioned by those who are reticent		
A language level they judge insufficient for study abroad	41%	34%
The difficulty of leaving their family and friends	39%	20%
The lack of financial means	37%	26%
The fact that it is not a compulsory part of the course	29%	34%
No desire to extend the duration of studies	24%	22%
The factors judged as decisive in triggering mobility for those who are reticent		
Financial aid compensating for the additional cost of studying abroad	49%	42%
Support from the institution in managing the administrative and logistical side of the period abroad (<i>documentation, accommodation, etc.</i>)	37%	33%
Improved foreign language level	28%	23%
Time abroad as part of a group, with friends	28%	21%
Support in identifying the most suitable course abroad	24%	18%

► How female students finance study abroad

→ Imagined and actual burden of financing

Unsurprisingly given the comparable destinations and durations, **the cost of a period abroad for female students is almost identical to that for male students: €6,020 vs. €6,130.**

Probably due to their financing difficulties, although female students plan on average a period abroad of 7 months and one week, **the period is actually shortened by one month** (6 months and one week).

Though 87% of female travellers were able to go through with their initial plans without having to change them, 10% were forced to change their country of destination. 23% admit having to deal with certain obstacles, and more specifically administrative (44%) and financial (42%) difficulties. In a third of the cases, these obstacles have led them to give up their plans.

Although financing the trip is undoubtedly a major obstacle, the study reveals that it is often amplified compared with reality. **At the planning stage, female students have a significant tendency to overestimate the actual cost of a future period abroad.** On average, they assess it at €8,952, or an excess of 49% compared with the reality observed after the trip (€6,020). 37% imagine having to spend over €10K and 62% more than €5K, whereas this is actually the case for 18% and 38% respectively.

Despite this estimation error, female students are nevertheless **closer to reality than male students**, who on average overestimate the actual cost of a period abroad by 62%.

→ Financing solutions

Female students **organise the financing of their period abroad more promptly.** 45% as soon as they first consider their plans (vs. 40%) and only 13% once the plans have been made (vs. 17%).

Before making concrete plans, 58% of female students hope for an Erasmus grant while only 36% say they finally obtained one, and 41% aid from regional authorities which in fact is only awarded to 32%, but less of them consider other types of grants, which nevertheless benefit 24%. **They must therefore take advantage of a combination of several different** and limited public grants. In total, for half of those who receive them, these grants cover around 42% of the cost of the trip (same for male students).

As they are more likely to receive grants for social criteria, female students are also more likely to benefit from mobility grants (50% vs. 45%) but for a lesser amount (€2.31K vs. €2.54K). Their choice of closer destinations probably explains this difference.

More astonishingly, **60% nevertheless confirm that they have had to first come up with the funds later reimbursed** by grants, compared with 52% of male students, which leads us to imagine a slightly different grant structure.

While 68% envisage **help from their parents**, 81% are forced to request this (principal source of financing for 54%). Whereas 53% hope to benefit from a student job during their stay, only 25% actually undertake one.

Showing real commitment, 70% have used their own personal savings (principal source of financing for 13%) and 16% had to resort to a bank loan.

III. FOREIGN STUDENTS HOSTED IN FRANCE

► The profile of foreign female students in universities and specialised schools

In 2013/2014, **53% of foreign students enrolled on a course in France and identified by the MENESR were women.**

→ A choice of subject areas that creates disparities in terms of gender

● IN SPECIALISED SCHOOLS

Of the 85,590 foreign students enrolled in schools listed by the Conférence des Grandes Écoles (CGE), whether or not under the authority of the Ministry of National Education, 40,448 were women, or 47% of the total.

But this apparent balance hints a real disparity between engineering schools, where they only represent 33% of numbers, compared with 56% in management schools. This rate drops to 31% of women among African students enrolled in engineering schools.

Depending on the continent of origin, the distribution of female students among the different types of schools varies significantly. While 44% of African women opt for an engineering school and 52% for a management school, only 19% of European women go to engineering school and 68% opt for management schools.

In schools

Origin of foreign students in CGE schools	Engineering schools	Management schools	Other schools	All Schools
AFRICA	13 427	10 317	837	24 581
proportion of women	30.7%	47.4%	43.1%	38.2%
<i>Distribution of women/schools</i>	44.0%	52.1%	3.8%	100%
AMERICA	4 796	7 326	843	12 965
proportion of women	38.1%	58.5%	60.7%	51.1%
<i>Distribution of women/schools</i>	27.6%	64.7%	7.7%	100%
ASIA-PACIFIC	8 772	15 300	1 322	25 394
proportion of women	32.8%	61.2%	58.9%	51.2%
<i>Distribution of women/schools</i>	22.1%	71.9%	6.0%	100%
EUROPE	5 713	13 695	3 242	22 650
proportion of women	37.4%	56.5%	48.2%	50.5%
<i>Distribution of women/schools</i>	18.7%	67.7%	13.7%	100%
WORLD	32 708	46 638	6 244	85 590
<i>women</i>	10 964	26 270	3 214	40 448
proportion of women	33.5%	56.3%	51.5%	47.3%
<i>Distribution of women/schools</i>	27.1%	64.9%	7.9%	100%

Source: CGE annual survey 2015.

CGE member institutions, including those not under the authority of the MENESR.

Reading:

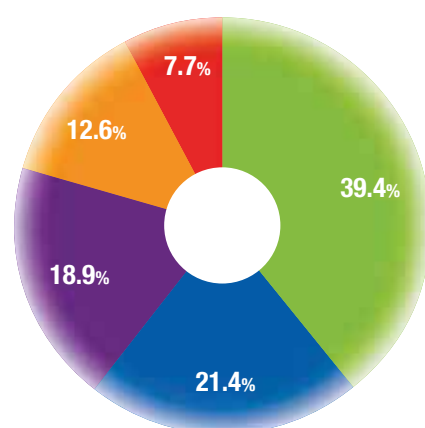
- Of the originally African students enrolled in engineering schools, 30.7% are women.
- Of the African female students enrolled in CGE schools, 44% are in engineering schools.

IN UNIVERSITIES

The choice of university subject area of foreign female students mobile in France underlines the real appeal of humanities to the detriment of sciences.

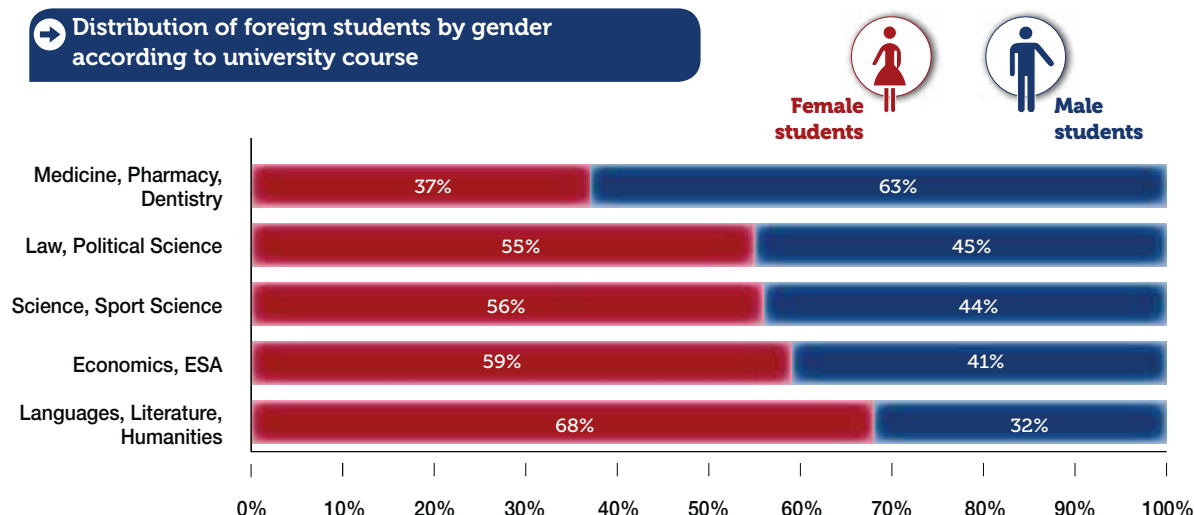
- The «Languages, Literature, Humanities» subject area has the highest proportion of women among foreign students – 68% – with around two foreign female students for every foreign male student. This subject area alone attracts 39.4% of foreign female students.
- The «Law, Political Sciences» subject area also has a significantly higher proportion of women among foreign students (59%), although it only attracts 12.6% of these female students.
- The distribution remains favourable to women, but less markedly, in the «Economic and Social Administration (ESA)» courses (56%) which attract one foreign female student in five.
- The number of women is almost identical in «Medicine, Pharmacy and Dentistry» (55%) which only attracts 7.7% of foreign female students.
- It therefore appears that, among foreign students, only courses in «Science and Sports Science» have a significantly higher proportion of men, with a rate of only 34% women. Around 18.9% of foreign female students opt for this subject area.

Distribution of foreign female students by course



- Languages, Literature, Humanities
- Law, Political Science
- Economics, ESA
- Medicine, Pharmacy, Dentistry
- Science, Sport

➔ Distribution of foreign students by gender according to university course



Source: MENESR 2013 / 2014.

➔ Foreign female students participate in re-balancing genders according to subject area

A more in-depth analysis demonstrates the fact **that the choices of subject areas made by foreign female students are actually closer to a balance than that of French female students.**

In women's preferred subject areas, the ratio of French women in national numbers is higher than the ratio of women in foreign numbers.

- In Humanities and Social Sciences, French female students therefore represent 68% of national numbers, whereas foreign female students only represent 62%.
- The Law and Political Sciences subject areas feature 65% of women among the national students and only 59% among foreign students.
- This observation is even more marked in the medical subject areas, where French female students represent 64% of the national numbers as opposed to only 55% among foreign students.

The strategies of foreign female students are quite similar to those of French female students in Languages (72%), Literature and Linguistic Sciences (71%), ESA (58%), Natural and Life Sciences (59%) and Sports Sciences (31%).

Finally, in **some subject area less favoured by French female students, there are proportionally more foreign female students.** Therefore, while in Applied Fundamental Sciences French women only represent a quarter of national numbers (25%), foreign female students represent almost a third of foreign numbers (31%).

Students at university by subject area and gender	Foreign numbers	French numbers
	% female students	% female students
Languages	72%	74%
Literature	71%	70%
Humanities & Social	62%	68%
LITERATURE & HUMANITIES	68%	70%
LAW & POLITICAL SCIENCES	59%	65%
ESA	58%	59%
Management, Eco Sciences	56%	53%
ECO. SCIENCE/ESA/ MANAGEMENT	56%	54%
Healthcare	64%	66%
Pharmacy	64%	64%
Dentistry	52%	62%
Medicine	52%	62%
HEALTHCARE	55%	64%
Natural & Life Sciences	59%	59%
Sciences	41%	47%
Applied Fundamental Sciences	31%	25%
Sport Science	31%	29%
SCIENCES	37%	36%
GENERAL TOTAL	55%	57%

Source: MENESR / RERS 2015.

→ **Strong disparities depending on geographic origin**

• **The place of women among foreign students, according to the geographic area of origin**

The proportion of women among foreign students spending a study period in France varies greatly by region of origin, with specificities that often appear according to the type of institution attended.

- Female students are in the majority across the board, with the exception of the African continent and the Middle East.

- If we consider the type of institution attended, **on the whole female students are in the majority in universities (55%) and in the minority in specialised schools (47%)**. This is particularly the case among students from Europe and Latin America. However, they are in the minority in both Universities and specialised Schools in the case of students from the African continent or the Middle East.

➡ **% of women among foreign students originating from the area (year 2013/2014)**

	In UNIVERSITIES	In SCHOOLS	ALL
<i>Europe</i>	69.3%		
<i>UE 28</i>	67.0%		
EUROPE Subtotal	67.6%	50.5%	62.7%
<i>Asia</i>	60.6%		
<i>Oceania</i>	70.6%		
ASIA-PACIFIC Subtotal	60.6%	52.4%	57.3%
NORTH AMERICA Subtotal	68.6%	56.4%	62.1%
<i>Central America</i>	58.0%		
<i>Caribbean</i>	50.5%		
<i>South America</i>	60.4%		
LATIN AND SOUTH AMERICA Subtotal	58.5%	47.7%	54.6%
MIDDLE EAST	47.6%	39.4%	46.0%
MAGHREB	47.1%	39.5%	45.3%
SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA	41.9%	35.6%	40.9%
WORLD	54.7%	47.3%	52.6%

Reconstituted sources: 2013/2014: MENESR for University data and CGE for School data.

• **Focus on the top 20 nationalities represented in France**

Whereas there are slightly more women among the foreign students hosted in France, there are strong disparities between their countries of origin.

If we concentrate on the top 20 countries, it appears that the proportion of female students varies greatly, from 37% Senegalese, 43% Moroccans and 46% Algerians to 76% Russians and 74% Romanians.

More generally, the African continent provides an often low proportion of female students.

For the same country of origin, a close analysis shows often very considerable gaps in the proportion of women between universities and specialised schools. For example, Italian women represent 65% of the country's students who choose French Universities but only 41% of those who choose specialised Schools. There is also a large gap for Brazil, which takes in more female students than the average at university but less than the average in specialised Schools.

➡ % of women among foreign students originating from the country

Student origin	Student origin	School	All
Russia	78%	66%	76%
Romania	76%	60%	74%
United States	70%	57%	65%
Germany	70%	51%	65%
China	63%	57%	61%
Portugal	62%	45%	61%
Italy	65%	41%	60%
United Kingdom	62%	49%	59%
Spain	63%	43%	57%
Madagascar	57%	49%	57%
Brazil	62%	42%	55%
Belgium	57%	40%	54%
Vietnam	54%	39%	52%
Tunisia	53%	42%	51%
Lebanon	47%	37%	45%
Cameroon	47%	36%	45%
Algeria	47%	32%	46%
Ivory Coast	47%	32%	45%
Morocco	45%	39%	43%
senegal	37%	38%	37%
TOTAL TOP 20 COUNTRIES	55%	46%	53%
WORLD	55%	47%	53%

Sources: 2013/2014: MENESR for University data and CGE for School data.



► **Comparative analyses of the attractiveness of France for internationally mobile female students**

➔ **France vs. United States: Women in France**

The 2015 Open Doors report, which studies the international mobility of the top host country for foreign students,

dedicates a specific insert to the theme of gender in international mobility. It notes that, historically, women have been under-represented among the foreign students hosted by the United States. In 1979/1980 they only represented 28% of the total students in mobility in the United States.

➡ Comparison of foreign students by gender in France and the United States according to the region of origin

% of women among students			France/United States ratio
North America	51%	62%	1.22
Europe	50%	64%	1.28
Latin America and the Caribbean	47%	55%	1.17
Asia	46%	57%	1.24
Oceania	45%	64%	1.42
Sub-Saharan Africa	44%	41%	0.93
North Africa and the Middle East	23%	45%	1.96
TOTAL FOREIGN STUDENTS	44%	53%	1.20

Sources: France - MENESR 2013/2024/United States - Open Doors Report, 2013 data.

Although the proportion of women among the foreign students hosted in the United States has continued to increase, they remained in the minority at 44% in 2014/2015 (53% for France).

Whatever the region of origin, France hosts proportionally more female students than the United States, with the exception of sub-Saharan Africa.

The attractiveness of France is particularly high among female students from North America and Europe. Whereas female students represent almost two thirds of the numbers hosted in France, they represent barely half for the United States.

The greatest gap is observed for North Africa/the Middle East. The United States have a high deficit for this area, with less than one women in every 4 foreign students, while this number is almost balanced in France.



Finally – and an important strategic element – in Asia, the main area of outward mobility for female students, France is significantly more attractive to women than the United States.

→ France vs. Germany: a favourable but closer gap

A comparative analysis with Germany demonstrates that there is still a **higher proportion of women in France among foreign students**.

Compared with the 53% of foreign female students in France, Germany is below, at 49%. When we take a look at the top 20 countries of origin of foreign students in Germany, we notice that, apart from only three exceptions, the proportion of female students puts the advantage with France.

The difference is further accentuated with certain countries such as Morocco, which only sends 19.1% of female students to Germany, compared with 43.3% to France. For China, the number one country for international mobility, Germany just about achieves equality (50.5% of female students), while in France over 6 Chinese students in 10 are women (61.4%).

Proportion of women among foreign students in France and Germany, according to students' country of origin			
Country of origin			France/ Germany ratio
China	50.5%	61.4%	1,22
India	22.8%	29.0%	1,27
Russia	77.1%	76.0%	0,99
Austria	46.0%	66.2%	1,44
France	58.6%	nc	nc
Italy	54.4%	60.5%	1,11
Turkey	40.8%	62.6%	1,53
Bulgaria	62.7%	71.5%	1,14
Cameroon	39.5%	44.9%	1,14
Ukraine	75.5%	71.1%	0,94
Poland	74.5%	72.2%	0,97
Iran	48.1%	54.6%	1,13
Spain	51.6%	57.1%	1,11
South Korea	63.3%	70.9%	1,12
United States	50.5%	65.2%	1,29
Morocco	19.1%	43.3%	2,27
Brazil	45.8%	54.8%	1,20
Indonesia	43.3%	53.9%	1,25
Luxembourg	45.7%	53.0%	1,16
Greece	52.0%	68.0%	1,31
WORLD	49.0%	53.0%	1.08

Sources: France - MENESR 2014/Germany - DAAD-DZHW 2015.

KEY FACTS

The proportion of female students around the world continues to progress, although it remains low in the least developed countries. They now also represent almost half of the numbers for academic mobility.

In France, female students are today in the majority in higher education and stand out with a higher level of education, which nevertheless is taking time to translate concretely into genuine workplace equality.

Although there are more of them, they are just as attracted by studying abroad, are even more convinced of its benefits and encouraged by their friends and family, they nevertheless are less likely to experience mobility.

This difficulty with fulfilment can be largely explained by the fact that they remain in the minority in specialised Schools, particularly those for engineering, which involve and most often impose mobility as part of their courses.

For the much larger number of women who attend universities and are open to mobility plans, the obstacles appear more marked than for male students.

These obstacles are often financial but sometimes also psychological, in the form of less marked confidence. Many of them admit to having fears about how well the period abroad will work, as well as doubts about their ability to take classes in another language.

However, the situation in France could evolve rapidly towards greater equality in terms of outward mobility with the dual prescriptive influence of both students who have crossed the Rubicon and attest to a great deal of satisfaction, and foreign female students, who are in the majority among students hosted in France.

The latter are better distributed than French female students between the subject areas (especially sciences), proving that there are no longer subject areas exclusively for male students and that success can also be achieved through international experience.

Compared with other major host countries, France has a greater capacity to attract these foreign female students, a real strategic asset that should be exploited in a global context whereby female students will be in greater numbers, and more mobile.

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