iBET

Plan
Gender Equality and Inclusion

2021 - 2026

ibet.pt

Providing Biotech Solutions Globally

iBET · Instituto de Biologia Experimental e Tecnológica

Gender Equality and Inclusion Plan

Characterization of gender distribution at iBET · 2021–2026

Reporting period: 2021 – 2026 (May)

Previous report: 2018 – 2020

Plan validity period through 2030

Location: Oeiras, Portugal

1. Executive Summary

Building on the Gender Equality and Inclusion Plan adopted by iBET's Executive Committee in January 2022, this report updates the gender characterization of iBET's workforce for the period **2021–2026**, extending the earlier 2018–2020 baseline. Five annual snapshots (end-of-December 2021–2025) and one partial-year snapshot (end-of-May 2026) were analyzed across four dimensions: overall headcount, leadership and seniority, career opportunities, and working conditions.

~70%	~270	50/50	+25pp
Female collaborators — consistent across all six years	Average annual headcount (range 265–277)	Gender parity in Sr. & Strategic Management	Growth in permanent contracts, 2021→2026

The available data is consistent with iBET's sustained commitment to non-discriminatory recruitment practices and equitable working conditions. The female majority reflects the broader national and European trend in Life and Health Sciences (≈70% female in Portugal [4]) rather than any institutional bias. Most notably, the period under review shows a marked improvement in employment stability: the proportion of collaborators holding permanent contracts has grown substantially for both genders, while fellowship-type arrangements have declined, clear evidence of iBET's ambition to offer durable career pathways to all its people.

> **Note on the data point:** The May 2026 snapshot represents approximately five months of the year and should be interpreted as an interim measure. All other years refer to the full year-end headcount (31 December).

2. Overarching Goals

Equality between men and women is a fundamental societal value that iBET is committed to protect and promote. Equality and Inclusion at iBET means that every individual regardless of gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, age, family situation, race, religion, ethnicity, disability, or language, shall have the same rights, obligations, and equal access to opportunities and services.

As a reference research organization in biotechnology and bioengineering, iBET is engaged in promoting equal opportunities and preventing unlawful discrimination of all employees, students, and visitors, irrespective of hierarchical status. iBET does not tolerate any form of verbal, written, physical, visual, or psychological harassment, including misogynistic behavior, bullying, or any conduct that undermines dignity, respect, and inclusion as stated in iBET's Code of Conduct and Ethics.

This plan is anchored in **UN Sustainable Development Goal #5** (Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls) and aligned with the Global Compact Network Portugal challenge to reach **40% women in decision-making positions** by 2030. A milestone iBET had already surpassed in 2018.

3. Responsibility for the Work to Promote Gender Equality

As defined by iBET's Executive Committee, promoting equality between women and men is a collective responsibility of scientists, administrative staff, research associates, and students. Every team leader bears specific responsibility for identifying and reporting misconduct within their team and for ensuring that inclusion efforts receive adequate resources. Specific responsibilities are also assigned to:

- The Gender Equality and Inclusion Committee;
- The direct supervisor of each team leader, within the relevant line of authority;
- The People and Culture team, which oversees recruitment processes and contributes to the development of an inclusive organizational culture.

4. Committee for Gender Equality and Inclusion

The Executive Committee has established a Gender Equality and Inclusion Committee with a three-year mandate. The Committee monitors and reports on gender equality and inclusion matters, promotes preventive and corrective actions, and identifies opportunities for continuous improvement. It comprises representatives from the following groups: scientists, administrative staff, research associates, and students. This Committee serves as the primary liaison between collaborators and iBET's Executive Committee on matters related to gender equality and inclusion.

Core responsibilities of the Committee include:

- Establishing and evaluating iBET's Gender Equality and Inclusion Plan;
- Conducting surveys or studies to evaluate gender equality performance;
- Monitoring the implementation of non-discrimination policies in the workplace, including recruitment, career development, and promotion processes;
- Defining and tracking key performance indicators for inclusion;
- Facilitating the reporting of discrimination or harassment concerns and supporting communication between collaborators and leadership.

5. Characterization of Gender Distribution at iBET

5.1 Overall Gender Distribution

Across Europe, Life and Health Sciences gender balance is skewed towards women, with nearly 60% female researchers [4]. In Portugal, that proportion rises to approximately 70% of Health and Life Sciences researchers [4]. In line with these national figures, iBET's headcount over the 2021–2026 period shows a remarkably stable female representation of approximately **69–70%**, with total workforce fluctuating between 265 and 277 collaborators.

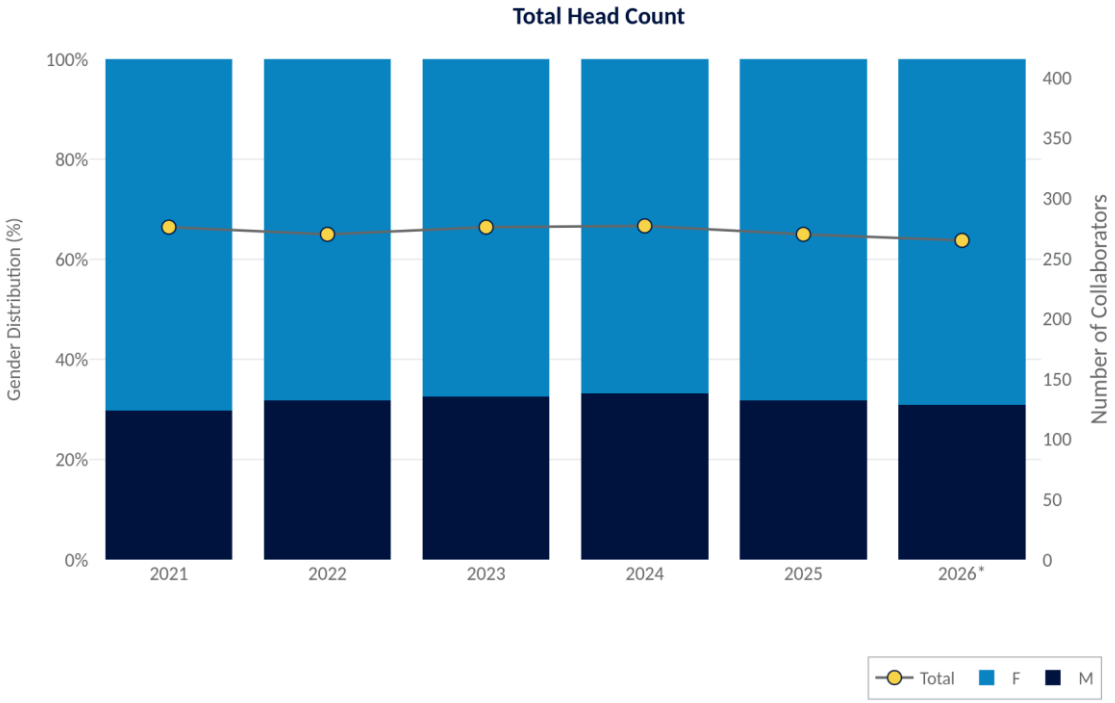

*Figure 1a. Evolution of male and female collaborators at iBET over the period 2021–2026. The line (right axis) shows total headcount; stacked bars show gender split as a percentage of the annual total. * May 2026 snapshot.*

The consistency of the approximately 70% female representation over the six years suggests alignment with national Life Sciences benchmarks; the available data does not indicate a recruitment imbalance. Departmental breakdown confirms this pattern: the female majority is consistently observed across **Biopharma**, **Sustainability for Food & Health**, and **Core Areas of Support**, with no department showing a meaningful deviation from the overall ratio.

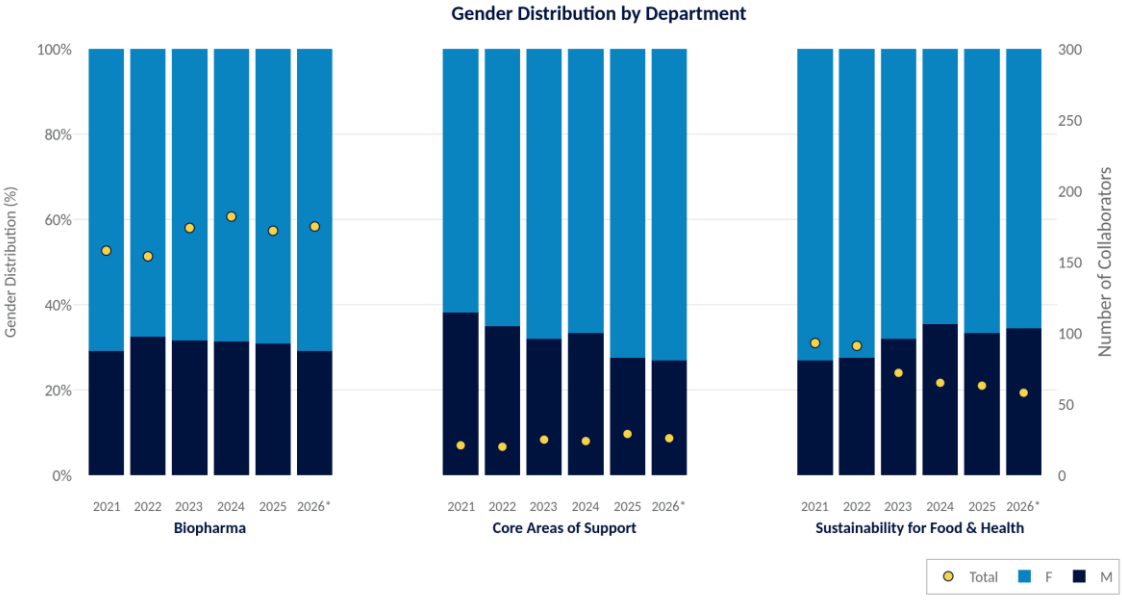

*Figure 1b. Gender distribution within each of iBET's three main divisions (2021–2026). Dots indicate absolute headcount per division per year (right axis). * May 2026 snapshot.*

Key finding: The female-majority ratio is homogeneous across all divisions and stable over the entire reporting period, consistent with the sectoral baseline for Portuguese Life Sciences [3].

5.2 Gender Balance and Leadership

The Global Compact Network Portugal challenged Portuguese organizations to reach 40% women in decision-making positions by 2030. iBET surpassed this threshold in 2018 and has sustained it throughout the current reporting period. The data for 2021–2026 reveal a near-parity or a female majority in Senior & Strategic Management, with the male share ranging from approximately **46% to 52%**. This represents a more balanced leadership profile than the European average reported for women in senior research leadership [3].

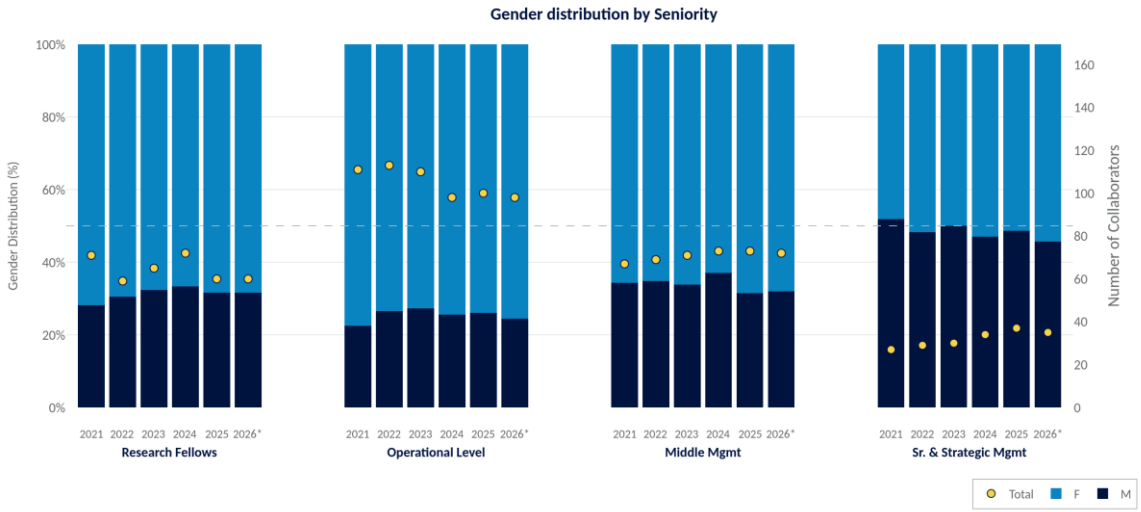

*Figure 2. Gender distribution across hierarchical levels at iBET (2021–2026). The dashed line marks the 50% parity threshold. Dots show absolute counts per group per year (right axis). * May 2026 snapshot.*

All cohorts below Senior Management show a predominance of female collaborators, consistent with the overall female majority in the Life Sciences pipeline. Research Fellows and the Operational Level remain the most female-dominated groups (~68–78% F), reflecting the gender composition at earlier career stages. Middle Management has been consistently around 65–68% female.

> **Positive trend:** Senior & Strategic Management moved from a slight male majority (52% M in 2021) to a slight female majority (54% F in 2026), signaling continued progress in balanced leadership representation.

5.3 Gender Balance and Career Opportunities

Despite an overall female majority, iBET shows no detectable gender bias in career opportunities. Both male and female populations are distributed similarly across educational and hierarchical levels, suggesting that neither recruitment nor promotion processes introduce systematic gender-based differences.

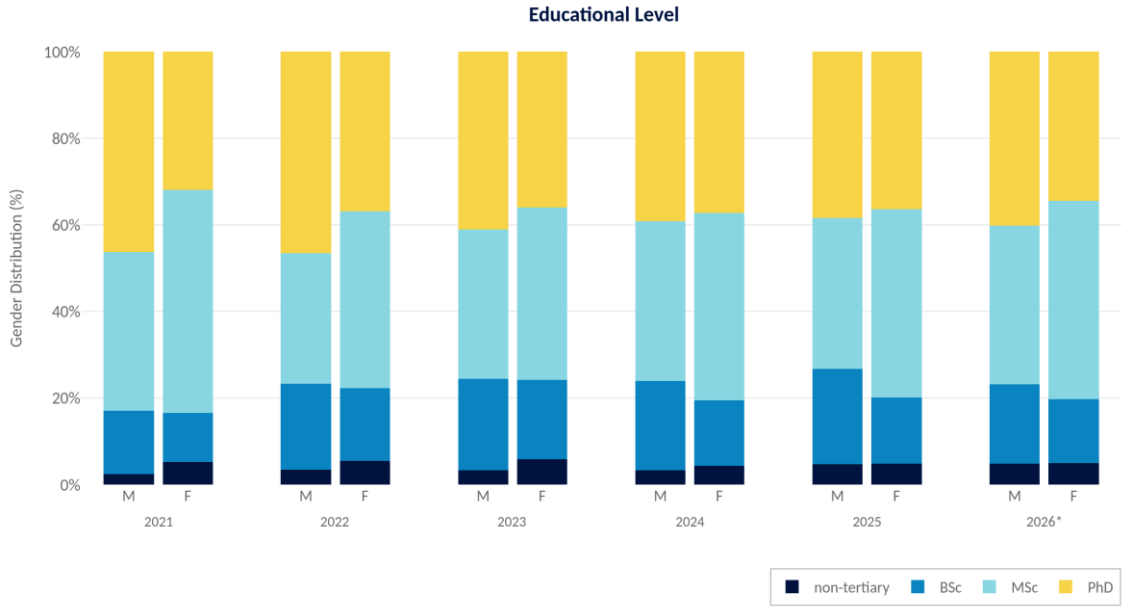

*Figure 3a. Educational attainment distribution within the male (M) and female (F) collaborator populations for each year 2021–2026. * May 2026 snapshot.*

PhD holders constitute the largest educational group for both genders, typically accounting for 35–45% of each cohort, with the remainder distributed across MSc, BSc, and non-tertiary qualifications in broadly comparable proportions. This alignment is consistent across all six years of the reporting period.

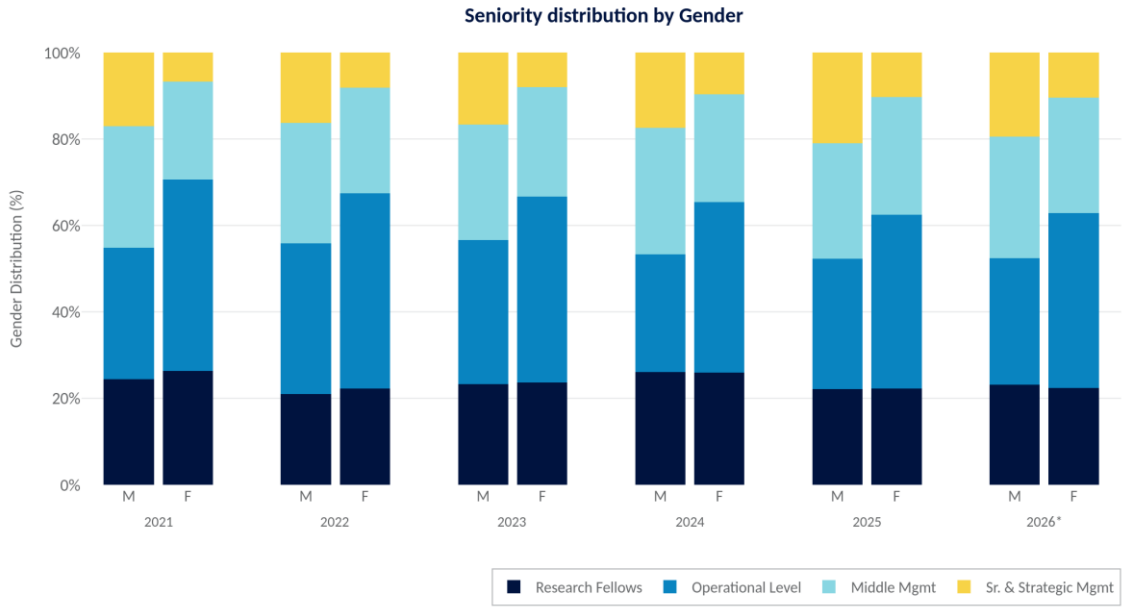

*Figure 3b. Seniority level composition within the male (M) and female (F) populations for each year 2021–2026. * May 2026 snapshot.*

Key finding: The similarity in seniority and educational profiles between male and female collaborators across the reporting period suggests that no clear gender-based barriers to career progression are visible in the available aggregate data.

5.4 Gender Balance and Working Conditions

As a research-intensive organization, iBET hosts collaborators under a variety of funding arrangements, including national and international grants, industry-partnered research projects, advanced studies programs (MSc and PhD), and specialized training. A meaningful fraction of the workforce therefore holds fellowship-type or externally funded positions without a direct iBET employment contract.

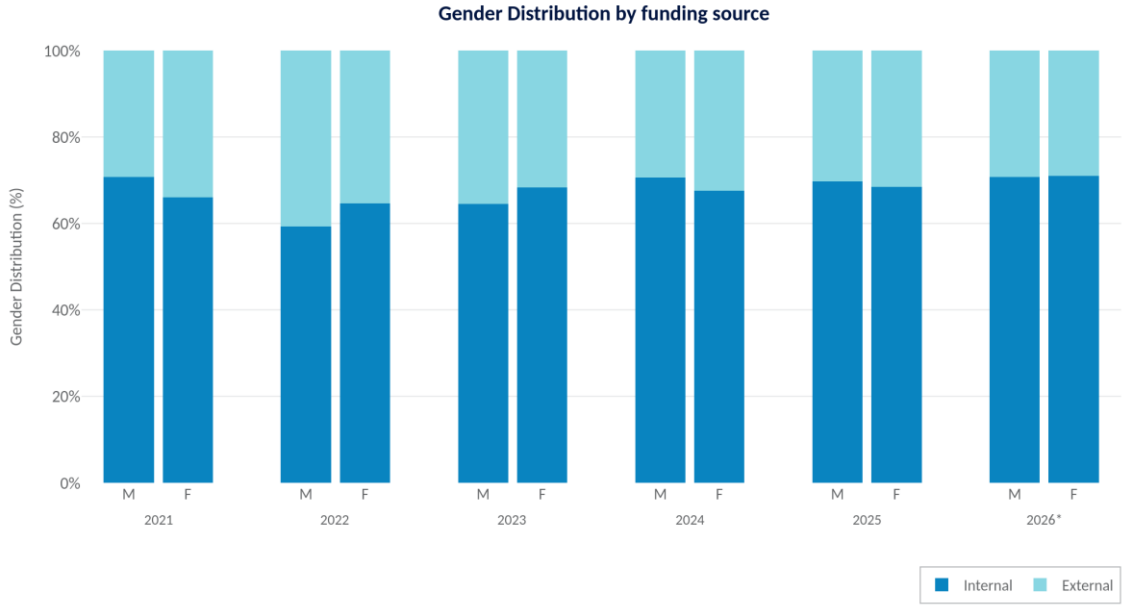

*Figure 4a. Proportion of internally (iBET-contracted) versus externally funded collaborators within each gender population (2021–2026). * May 2026 snapshot.*

The share of internally contracted collaborators has remained broadly stable at approximately **65–71%** for both genders across the period. This means that roughly two-thirds of all collaborators hold a direct contractual relationship with iBET, with no systematic difference between male and female collaborators.

Examining the distribution of contract types among internally contracted collaborators reveals a striking trend: **permanent contracts have grown markedly** while fellowship-type arrangements have declined. This trend is consistent with iBET's commitment to strengthening stable and long-term employment conditions for its people.

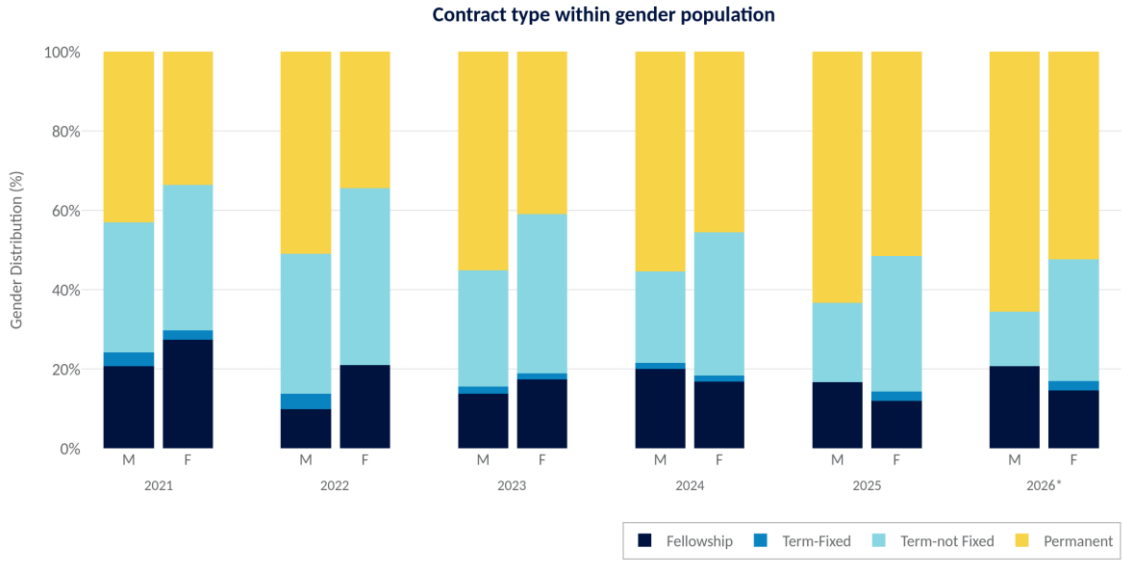

*Figure 4b. Distribution of contract types within the internally contracted male (M) and female (F) populations (2021–2026). Fellowship and Term-Fixed contracts have declined while Permanent contracts have grown for both genders. * May 2026 snapshot.*

In 2021, permanent contracts accounted for roughly 43% (M) and 34% (F) of internal collaborators. By May 2026, these figures had risen to approximately **66% (M) and 52% (F)**, representing a substantial improvement in employment security. Fellowship-type contracts followed the opposite trajectory, declining for both genders.

> **Note:** A mild gender gap in permanent contract rates persists, with male collaborators showing a somewhat higher permanent contract share than female collaborators. This warrants continued monitoring, particularly because it may partly reflect differences in career-stage distribution, including the higher proportion of female Research Fellows under fellowship arrangements.

Zooming into the May 2026 snapshot, the distribution of contract types across seniority levels confirms the expected pattern: permanent contracts dominate at Middle Management and Senior & Strategic Management, while Term-not-Fixed arrangements are more prevalent at Operational Level. This finding is consistent across both genders.

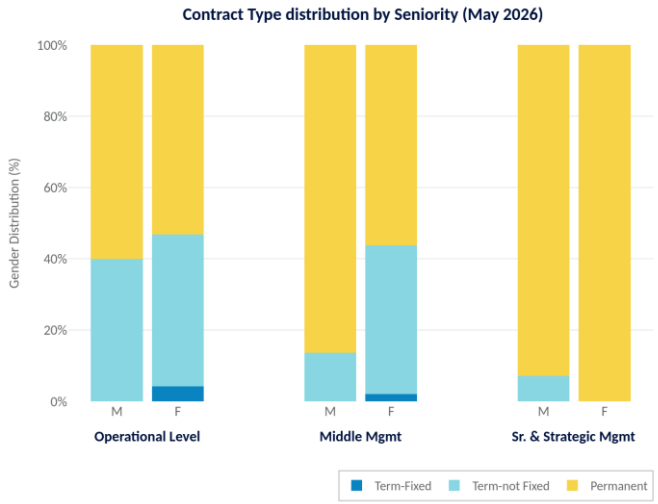

Figure 4c. Contract type distribution by seniority level and gender among internally contracted collaborators (May 2026 snapshot). Research Fellows are excluded as they are by definition on fellowship arrangements.

5.5 Work-Life Balance and Organizational Culture | Parental Leave | Number of Births

Internal data on shared parental leave taken by male employees between 2021 and 2026 shows a consistent increase over the reporting period, with a cumulative rise of over 300%.

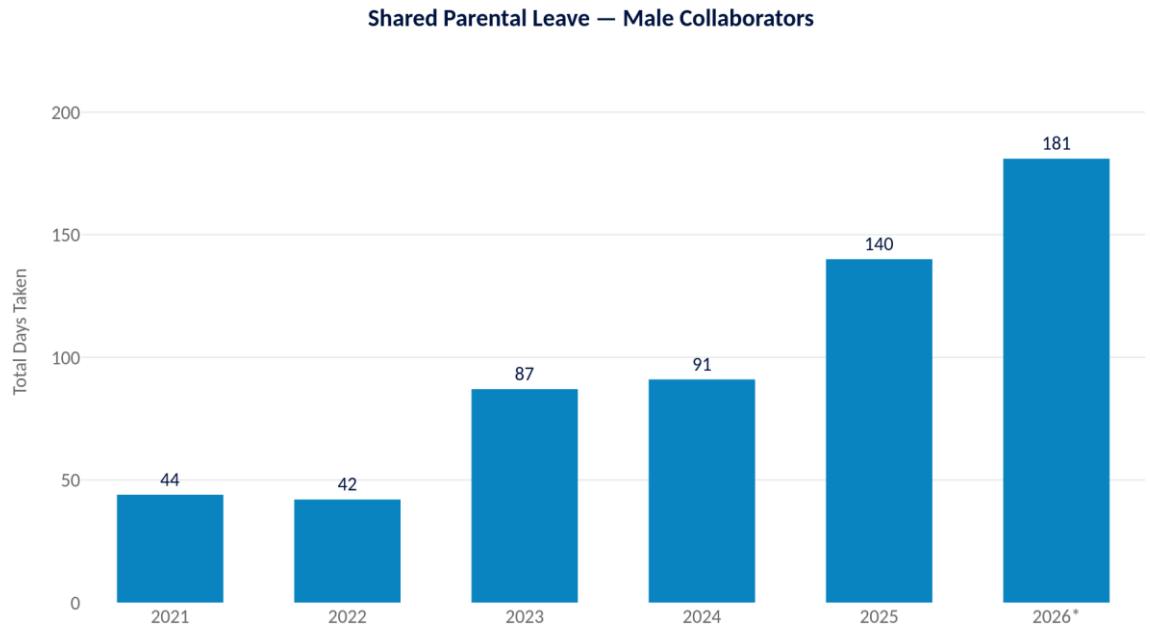

Figure 5. Total number of days of shared parental leave taken by male internally contracted collaborators, 2021–2026. The 2026 value reflects data available up to May 2026.

This trend suggests a gradual cultural shift towards greater recognition and normalization of shared parental responsibility within the organization. The increase observed in 2025 and 2026 further reinforces this pattern, indicating that work-life balance and co-responsibility in caregiving are becoming increasingly embedded in iBET's organizational culture.

This development is particularly relevant in the context of gender equality, as the more balanced use of parental leave can contribute to reducing gender asymmetries in caregiving responsibilities and, over time, support more equitable career progression.

A complementary trend is observed in internal data concerning the number of births among iBET employees during the same period, totaling 39 births between 2021 and 2026. Following a stable pattern of four births per year from 2021 to 2023, the number increased substantially from 2024 onward, reaching nine births in 2024 and peaking at ten births in 2025. This upward trajectory closely mirrors the growing uptake of shared parental leave and may be interpreted as a positive indicator of employees' confidence in iBET's family-supportive environment. Collectively, these trends suggest that the organization's policies and culture are increasingly enabling employees to reconcile family responsibilities with career development, reinforcing iBET's commitment to gender equality, work-life balance, and inclusive workforce participation throughout different life stages.

6. Gender Equality and Inclusion Activities

Despite consistently standing out as a female-inclusive organization, iBET remains actively committed to continuous improvement of Gender Equality and Inclusion in the workplace. Activities promoted by iBET include:

- Organization of webinars and seminars on diversity, equity, and inclusion in science, including events aligned with the International Day of Women and Girls in Science;

- Recruitment processes governed by a strong non-discrimination and equal-access policy, ensuring that no candidate may be privileged or disadvantaged on any basis including gender, age, race, nationality, disability, or political conviction;

7. Summary and Future Perspectives

The 2021–2026 characterization of iBET's workforce confirms and extends the findings of the 2018–2020 baseline. Three headline conclusions emerge:

- **The ~70% female composition is structurally stable** and consistent across all divisions and years, in line with national benchmarks for Life and Health Sciences in Portugal.
- **Gender parity in leadership has been maintained and extended**: Senior & Strategic Management moved from a slight male majority in 2021 to a slight female majority in 2026, and the 40%-women-in-leadership benchmark set by the UN Global Compact for 2030 has been exceeded throughout the period.
- **Employment conditions have improved across the organization**: the growth in permanent contract rates reflects iBET's commitment to building more sustainable career pathways. Nevertheless, the remaining gender gap in permanent-contract rates should continue to be monitored and addressed where relevant.

Looking ahead, the Committee for Gender Equality and Inclusion will continue to monitor these indicators annually, conduct periodic surveys on workplace inclusion, and engage with the Executive Committee to translate data insights into concrete policy and culture actions. Priority areas for the next reporting cycle include:

- Monitoring and progressively reducing the remaining gender gap in permanent contract rates;
- Sustaining balanced leadership representation as the organization evolves;
- Expanding inclusion monitoring to additional diversity dimensions, including age, nationality and disability, in line with broader DEI best practices.

8. References

1. European Commission. (2025). She Figures 2024: Gender in Research and Innovation. Publications Office of the European Union.

2. European Commission. (2025). She Figures 2024 Policy Report. Publications Office of the European Union.

3. McKinsey & Company. (2023). Diversity Matters Even More: The Case for Holistic Impact. McKinsey & Company.

4. Elsevier. (2024). Progress Toward Gender Equality in Research & Innovation: 2024 Review. Elsevier.

5. European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). (2025). Gender Equality Index 2024. Publications Office of the European Union.