Call for Applications

PhD in Behavioral and Experimental Economics

Université Grenoble Alpes – GAEL Laboratory

Start: Fall 2026 **Location:** Grenoble

Supervisors: B. Roussillon, D. Llerena **Deadline:** May 22, 2026

Context

Issues related to the ecological transition have led to increasing attention being paid to consumption behaviors. A large share of environmental and public health problems originates from individual decisions in areas such as energy use, food consumption, mobility, and water use. Understanding these behaviors is therefore a major challenge both for academic research and for public policy design. While economics has long studied externalities such as pollution, more recent work has highlighted the importance of internalities. These correspond to welfare losses that individuals impose on themselves due to behavioral biases Allcott et al. (2014).

Internalities play a key role in the adoption of healthy and pro-environmental behaviors. They often lead to consumption levels that are higher than what would be optimal for individuals themselves. A classic example concerns energy-related equipment: by underestimating future energy savings, individuals may choose cheaper appliances upfront that are more costly in the long run (Allcott and Taubinsky, 2015). More broadly, several studies show that individuals do not always act in line with their long-term interests and may report intentions that differ from their actual behavior. For instance, a recent survey by ADEME/ObSoCo shows that 82% of French respondents claim to have a frugal lifestyle, whereas only 24% can actually be considered frugal based on their reported consumption levels . Moreover, the share of individuals who explicitly associate such practices with environmental motivations rarely exceeds 10% depending on the consumption domain. This suggests that the determinants of frugality are not solely driven by strong environmental preferences.

This raises the following question: when individuals are frugal across several domains—energy, water, mobility, food—are they simply driven by strong environmental preferences, or do they also possess a general ability to resist behavioral biases related to consumption, thereby avoiding overconsumption?

Objective and methodology

The objective of this PhD is to determine whether frugal behaviors stem from specific preferences or from a greater ability to resist behavioral biases and marketing strategies that exploit them, providing a transversal analysis of healthy and pro-environmental behaviors.

The methodology combines real consumption data and experimental approaches: laboratory experiments reproducing key structural features of consumption decisions (Poinas et al., 2012; Buckley et al., 2025; Buckley and Llerena, 2022) and observational data to identify profiles of frugal consumers across multiple domains (Fadhuile et al., 2025).

Comparing observed and experimental behaviors is a central contribution of the thesis and will allow testing whether individuals identified as frugal in laboratory settings behave similarly in real-world data, informing the design of public policy interventions.

Training and Skills

- Master's degree in Applied Economics / Experimental and Behavioral Economics
- Strong background in econometrics and data analysis
- Programming skills are a plus

Research Environment

The PhD will be conducted within the "Consumption Behavior" research group at the GAEL laboratory, Université Grenoble Alpes, benefiting from the Chair on Sobriety and Resilience and from data collection and monitoring infrastructures of the Energy Transition Observatory.

Supervision and Application

Supervisors: Béatrice Roussillon and Daniel Llerena. Applications (CV and cover letter) are reviewed on a rolling basis until May 22, 2026 and should be sent to: beatrice.roussillon@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr and daniel.llerena@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr

References

Allcott, H., Mullainathan, S., and Taubinsky, D. (2014). Energy policy with externalities and internalities. Journal of Public Economics, 112:72–88.

Allcott, H. and Taubinsky, D. (2015). Evaluating behaviorally motivated policy: Experimental evidence from the lightbulb market. American Economic Review, 105(8):2501–2538.

Buckley, P. and Llerena, D. (2022). Nudges and peak pricing: A common pool resource energy conservation experiment. Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics, 101:101928.

Buckley, P., Roussillon, B., and Teyssier, S. (2025). Loss and gain framing to encourage repeated real-effort provision: An experiment. Research in Economics, 79(3):101030.

Fadhuile, A., Llerena, D., and Roussillon, B. (2025). Intrinsic motivation to promote demand flexibility: a field experiment from household demand. The Energy Journal, 46(4):57–86.

Poinas, F., Rosaz, J., and Roussillon, B. (2012). Updating beliefs with imperfect signals: Experimental evidence. Journal of Risk and Uncertainty, 44(3):219–241.

For inquiries, please contact the supervisors by email.