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# 1 Fab is the most efficient format to express functional antibodies by 2 yeast surface display

3 Coline Sivelle<sup>1\*</sup>, Raphaël Sierocki<sup>1\*</sup>, Kelly Ferreira-Pinto<sup>1</sup>, Stéphanie Simon<sup>2</sup>, Bernard  
4 Maillere<sup>1</sup>, Hervé Nozach<sup>1</sup>

5  
6 <sup>1</sup> Service d'Ingénierie Moléculaire des Protéines (SIMOPRO), CEA, Université Paris-Saclay, F-  
7 91191 Gif/Yvette, France.

8 <sup>2</sup> Service de Pharmacologie et Immunoanalyse (SPI), CEA, INRA, Laboratoire d'Etudes et de  
9 Recherches en Immunoanalyse, Université Paris-Saclay, F-91191 Gif/Yvette, France.

10 \* These authors contributed equally to this work

11

## 12 **Abstract**

13 Multiple formats are available for engineering of monoclonal antibodies (mAbs) by yeast surface  
14 display, but they do not all lead to efficient expression of functional molecules. We therefore expressed  
15 four anti-tumor necrosis factor and two anti-IpaD mAbs as single-chain variable fragment (scFv),  
16 antigen-binding fragment (Fab) or single-chain Fabs and compared their expression levels and antigen-  
17 binding efficiency. Although the scFv and scFab formats are widely used in the literature, 2 of 6  
18 antibodies were either not or weakly expressed. In contrast, all 6 antibodies expressed as Fab revealed  
19 strong binding and high affinity, comparable to that of the soluble form. We also demonstrated that  
20 the variations in expression did not affect Fab functionality and were due to variations in light chain  
21 display and not to misfolded dimers. Our results suggest that Fab is the most versatile format for the  
22 engineering of mAbs.

23

24 **Keywords:** yeast surface display, antibody engineering, scFv fragment, scFab fragment, Fab  
25 fragment, affinity maturation, monoclonal antibodies

26 **Abbreviations:**

27 BSA: bovine serum albumin; DSF: differential scanning fluorimetry; Fab: antigen-binding  
28 fragment; MFI: mean fluorescence intensity; PDI: protein disulfide isomerase; PEI: polyethylenimine;  
29 scFab: single-chain antigen-binding fragment; scFv: single-chain variable fragment; SEC: size exclusion  
30 chromatography; TNF: tumor necrosis factor; YSD: yeast surface display

## 31 **Conflict-of-interest and financial disclosure**

32 None

## 33 **Introduction**

34 Over the past 20 years, yeast surface display (YSD) has emerged as a very potent tool for  
35 protein engineering. It is a very proficient platform for *de novo* identification of new binders in naïve<sup>1</sup>  
36 or immune libraries.<sup>2,3</sup> YSD is also used for the engineering of many antibodies, principally to identify  
37 mutants with improved affinity<sup>4,5</sup> selectivity, stability and expression.<sup>4-7</sup> Affinity-matured antibodies  
38 have been developed against multiple antigens such as tumor necrosis factor (TNF),<sup>8</sup> fluorescein,<sup>9</sup>  
39 botulinum neurotoxin type A,<sup>10</sup> carcinoembryonic antigen,<sup>11</sup> epidermal growth factor receptor<sup>12</sup> and  
40 streptavidin.<sup>13</sup> Engineering of other properties of antibodies such as pH sensitivity or antigen specificity  
41 has also been described.<sup>14,15</sup>

42 Engineering of pre-existing antibodies using YSD relies on the anchoring of antibody fragments  
43 on the surface of yeast cells via fusion with a cell wall protein. Various formats are described in the  
44 literature for the functional display of antibody fragments on yeast cells, such as single-chain variable  
45 fragment (scFv), antigen-binding fragment (Fab) or single-chain Fab (scFab), although they are known  
46 to lead to variable levels of antibody expression.<sup>2,4,10,16</sup> Yeast display of IgG has also been reported  
47 with secretion and capture strategies,<sup>17,18</sup> but, to our knowledge, not as a conventional fusion with a  
48 yeast surface anchor protein. In most cases, antibody fragments are presented using the Aga2p-based  
49 display system, which permits either N-terminal or C-terminal fusion,<sup>4</sup> but the lack of comparative  
50 studies does not facilitate the choice of the appropriate formats to be used.

51 ScFv molecules are the smallest functional entity (30 kDa) that includes the complete antigen-  
52 binding site of an antibody. This entity comprises the two variable domains VH and VL connected by  
53 a flexible linker that prevents their dissociation.

54 Fab are composed of the light chain (VL + CL) and a heavy chain (VH + CH1) connected by an  
55 interchain disulfide bond. Several studies have reported the expression of Fab molecules on the  
56 surface of yeast cells using either a bigenic plasmid<sup>13</sup> or two distinct plasmids<sup>10, 14, 19</sup> to allow separate  
57 expression of the two chains. Expression levels of Fab molecules are generally considered as lower  
58 than those of scFv molecules in *E. coli*,<sup>20, 21</sup> at the surface of phages<sup>22, 23</sup> and also on the surface of yeast  
59 cells.<sup>10</sup>

60 The scFab derived from Fab is obtained through introduction of a polypeptide linker  
61 connecting the light chain and the heavy chain. Thus, it combines some advantages of the scFv (single  
62 chain and one expression plasmid, level of expression) with the stability and lower tendency to  
63 aggregate of the Fab.<sup>2, 23</sup> The linker prevents the display of unpaired heavy chain antibodies (devoid of  
64 light chain), which can sometimes interfere with the selection steps.<sup>2</sup> ScFab molecules carry a flexible  
65 linker of variable length (32 to 80 amino acids) and an optional inter-chain disulfide bond.<sup>2, 24</sup> Deletion  
66 of carboxy terminal cysteine residues ( $\Delta$ C) of the CL and CH1 domains results in a scFab $\Delta$ C format,  
67 which has increased expression levels in *E. coli*.<sup>23</sup>

68 The scFv is the most popular format for antibody engineering,<sup>4</sup> probably because of its very  
69 high level of expression, its small size and the presence of a single peptide chain, which is an advantage  
70 for cloning or sequencing procedures. However, Fab and scFab formats have undeniable advantages,  
71 especially when it comes to stability or for reformatting to IgG molecules after engineering.<sup>22</sup> To date,  
72 there is no clear literature consensus regarding the choice of an antibody fragment format suitable for  
73 engineering using yeast cell display. Also, no general study has yet explored the influence of antibody  
74 fragment formats on a diversity of antibodies in this particular context.

75 Here, we report the comparison of 4 antibody fragment formats – scFv, scFab with and without  
76 interchain disulfide bond and Fab - for the functional display of 6 antibodies. This study includes a first  
77 set of well-known antibodies - adalimumab, infliximab, golimumab and certolizumab - already used in  
78 clinical settings. This set of antibodies encompasses humanized, chimeric and fully human antibodies,  
79 which share TNF as a common antigen.<sup>25</sup> The second set is composed of two chimeric antibodies  
80 targeting the protein IpaD from the needle tip of type III secretion system of *Shigella* spp obtained  
81 from mouse immunization. The objective of this study was to identify the most suitable format for the  
82 functional expression of antibody fragments on the surface of yeast cells.

83

84

## 85 Results

### 86 Conception of yeast surface display vectors allowing expression of scFv, scFab and Fab 87 antibody fragments

88 To determine the influence of formats on the expression and functionality of antibody fragments, a  
89 new subset of yeast display plasmids was designed. Four plasmids were constructed for respective  
90 expression of scFv, scFab formats and Fab at the surface of *S. cerevisiae* cells. Those plasmids share a  
91 common backbone from previously described pCT-L7.5.1,<sup>26</sup> including inducible promoter *Gal 1-10* and  
92 Aga2p signal peptide [Fig. 1]. Antibody fragments were displayed with a free N-terminus and tethered  
93 to the yeast cell wall by C-terminal fusion with Aga2p,<sup>27</sup> in order to avoid possible steric hindrance of  
94 the fusion.

95 The plasmid pNT scFv encodes a typical scFv composed of VH/VL domains connected by a flexible linker  
96 (G4S)<sub>3</sub>. We also compared two previously described scFab formats, scFab $\Delta$ C<sup>2</sup> and sc60Fab,<sup>24</sup> by  
97 constructing the plasmids pNT scFab $\Delta$ C and pNT sc60Fab. ScFabs are composed of a VL-C<sub>k</sub> light chain  
98 connected to the VH-CH1 heavy chain by a flexible linker. The difference between the two formats

99 resides in the nature and length of the linker (34 amino acids for scFab $\Delta$ C versus 60 amino acids for  
100 sc60Fab) and the presence of an inter-chain disulfide bond in sc60Fab connecting the two C-terminal  
101 cysteine residues of C $\kappa$  and CH1. Display of Fab molecules on yeast without any linker was achieved  
102 using the bigenic plasmid pNT Fab where *Gal 1-10* promoter and terminator are duplicated to obtain  
103 separate expression of the two chains.

104 Each plasmid includes a hemagglutinin (HA) tag to report expression of the complete antibody  
105 fragment. For single chain formats (scFv and scFabs), the HA tag is located between the antibody  
106 fragment and the Aga2p subunit. Full Fab expression can be controlled for pNT Fab through the  
107 expression of the light chain with the HA tag or by direct labeling with anti-C $\kappa$  antibody. Expression of  
108 heavy chain can be revealed by the HIS tag located between the heavy chain and Aga2p.

109 The 6 selected antibodies are IgG1 molecules with C $\kappa$  light chains. The sequences of TNF-specific  
110 antibodies were obtained from the IMGT database.<sup>28</sup> The mAbs IpaD\_301 and IpaD\_318 were obtained  
111 by mouse immunization [data not shown] and engineered to generate chimeric antibodies. These two  
112 antibodies derive from the same parental genes *IGHV1-14\*01/IGKV1-117\*01* from *Mus musculus* and  
113 differ by only 7 and 8 mutations in the heavy chain and the light chain, respectively. Together, 24  
114 plasmids corresponding to the sequences of 6 selected antibodies expressed in the 4 antibody formats  
115 were successfully cloned and transformed into yeast. An exhaustive analysis of the 24 constructs was  
116 performed in parallel to investigate the influence of the antibody fragment format on antigen binding.

117

### 118 **Fab format grants functional expression of the largest number of antibodies**

119 To assess the expression and functionality of the constructs, yeast cells were incubated with the  
120 appropriate biotinylated antigen at a concentration far above the expected K $_D$  to reach quantitative  
121 binding of the antibody fragments to their antigen. When evaluated by fluorescence-activated cell  
122 sorting (FACS), cells expressing scFvs of adalimumab, certolizumab, golimumab and IpaD\_318

123 exhibited a high level of fluorescence, indicating quantitative binding of the antigen [Fig 2]. Weaker  
124 fluorescence levels were observed for IpaD\_301 scFv, whereas no signal was observed for infliximab  
125 scFv, indicating antigen binding was weak or absent. Functionality of constructs displaying low or  
126 moderate antigen binding was not improved by increased induction times [Supp Data Fig 3]. Antigen  
127 binding was specific, as demonstrated by the lack of cross-reactivity with the non-relevant antigen:  
128 anti-TNF antibodies showed no detectable IpaD binding and anti-IpaD antibodies showed no  
129 detectable TNF binding [Supp Data Fig 1].

130 Yeast cells expressing scFab corresponding to adalimumab, golimumab and IpaD\_318 displayed  
131 quantitative binding to their antigen, both as scFab $\Delta$ C and sc60Fab formats. Infliximab and IpaD\_301  
132 in scFab formats were not or weakly functional, respectively, as attested by the absence of  
133 fluorescence for the corresponding cells. Interestingly, certolizumab scFab $\Delta$ C showed significant  
134 binding to TNF, while certolizumab sc60Fab with the 60-amino-acid linker and inter-chain disulfide  
135 bond failed to bind TNF. All single-chain constructs were expressed at the surface of cells, as attested  
136 by labeling with anti-HA antibodies, with the notable exception of certolizumab sc60Fab [Supp Data  
137 Fig 2]. Except for this specific construct, the absence of binding of the antibody fragments to their  
138 antigen could not be explained by lack of expression, but rather by a functional deficiency.

139 In contrast, all of the 6 tested antibodies bound to their antigen when expressed as Fab at the surface  
140 of yeast cells. For each antibody, cells expressing functional Fabs form homogeneous populations with  
141 a clear shift in fluorescence levels compared to non-expressing cells. The proportion of cells expressing  
142 functional Fabs is relatively high (from 46% to 74%).

143 In our set-up, Fab is the only viable format for functional expression of infliximab and IpaD\_301  
144 antibody fragments. Besides, for 5 of 6 antibodies tested, the fluorescence of cells expressing  
145 functional Fab was higher than the fluorescence of the equivalent cells expressing either scFvs or  
146 scFabs. This suggested that Fab molecules were not only active, but also well expressed. For these  
147 reasons, we focused on display of Fab molecules in the rest of the study.

148

### 149 **Variations of expression in Fab format among antibodies do not affect functionality**

150 We observed that maximal fluorescence levels of Fab-expressing cells vary among antibodies targeting  
151 a common antigen. More specifically, the mean fluorescence intensity of cells displaying functional  
152 infliximab Fabs was much lower than for adalimumab or golimumab, a phenomenon also observed for  
153 IpaD\_301 when compared to IpaD\_318.

154 As variations of signal corresponding to antigen binding could be attributed either to differences of  
155 expression levels or to functional differences, dissociation constants ( $K_D$ ) were determined for each  
156 displayed Fab [Fig. 3]. The measured  $K_D$  values for IpaD\_301 and IpaD\_318 are 3.2 nM and 1.7 nM,  
157 respectively. This result is in accordance with the  $K_D$  evaluated by OctetRed with measured affinities  
158 of 1.1 nM and 0.9 nM (Supplementary figure 4). Yeast expressing anti-TNF Fabs show subnanomolar  
159  $K_D$ , 161 pM for adalimumab, 102 pM for infliximab, 39 pM for golimumab and 11 pM for certolizumab.  
160 These  $K_D$  values are consistent with the reported  $K_D$  determined for the corresponding IgG molecules  
161 using SPR,<sup>25</sup> indicating that Fabs expressed on the surface of yeast cells have a very strong affinity for  
162 their antigen.

163 Interestingly, higher affinity was not correlated with higher level of binding fluorescence. While having  
164 a very good affinity for TNF, infliximab Fab displayed much weaker TNF binding signal compared to  
165 adalimumab Fab, suggesting differences in their expression levels. Thus, additional labeling  
166 experiments were performed to evaluate different expression reporters. In addition to antigen binding  
167 labeling, light chain expression was evaluated with anti-HA or anti-C $\kappa$  antibodies and heavy chain  
168 expression was assessed with anti-HIS antibodies [Fig. 4].

169 Heavy chain expression showed slight variations between the 6 selected antibodies [Fig. 4a]. Labeling  
170 with anti-HIS antibodies showed homogeneous expression of heavy chains, with IpaD\_318 and  
171 adalimumab being somewhat above average. This observation contrasted with light chain expression,



172 which showed strong differences across the Fab antibodies [Fig. 4b]. Light chain expression was  
173 significantly higher for IpaD\_318 and adalimumab Fabs than for IpaD\_301 or infliximab, while  
174 certolizumab and golimumab had intermediate light chain expression levels. Values observed for both  
175 reporters anti-HA or anti-C<sub>κ</sub> were in good agreement, and the relative intensities of constructs were  
176 very similar. Anti-C<sub>κ</sub> antibody yielded a very strong fluorescence signal, thus favoring easy  
177 discrimination of C<sub>κ</sub>-expressing cells.

178 Antigen binding signals for IpaD\_301 and IpaD\_318 correlated well with their relative light chain  
179 expression levels [Fig. 4c and Fig. 5]. Very similarly, the TNF binding signal was proportional to the  
180 respective expression levels of adalimumab, infliximab, certolizumab and golimumab light chain of the  
181 Fab [Fig 5]. Direct correlation between light chain expression and antigen binding was confirmed by  
182 simultaneous labeling with anti-C<sub>κ</sub> antibody conjugated to allophycocyanin (APC) and streptavidin R-  
183 phycoerythrin (streptavidin-PE) [Fig. 4d].

184 While having high sequence homology and similar affinities, IpaD\_301 and IpaD\_318 display significant  
185 differences in expression and antigen binding in all formats tested. For this reason, we investigated a  
186 possible correlation between the biophysical attributes of these two antibodies and their behavior on  
187 the surface of yeast cells. Thus, recombinant expression of complete IgG1 IpaD\_301 and IpaD\_318 was  
188 performed by transient transfection of HEK293 cells<sup>29</sup> followed by protein A purification. Production  
189 yield was slightly higher for IpaD\_318 than for IpaD\_301 (20 and 14 mg per liter, respectively). Size-  
190 exclusion chromatography revealed that both antibodies are predominantly produced as full-length  
191 IgG with low amounts of aggregates for IpaD\_318 and even lower amounts for IpaD\_301 [Fig. 6]. In  
192 contrast, differential scanning fluorimetry (DSF) analysis reveals that IpaD\_301 has a lower melting  
193 temperature (T<sub>m</sub>) than IpaD\_318, with T<sub>m</sub> values of 67.6°C and 69.3°C, respectively [Fig. 6].

194

195

## Discussion

196 We carried out a comparative study of expression formats using 6 different antibodies specific for two  
197 different antigens, TNF and IpaD. In our hands, Fab appears to be the most versatile expression format  
198 for display of functional antibodies on the surface of yeast cells.

199 ScFv is currently the most widespread format for antibody engineering. It has indisputable advantages,  
200 such as its small size, which is particularly convenient for the cloning and sequencing of libraries. Also,  
201 numerous studies have used scFvs successfully to engineer clones with improved properties,<sup>4</sup> including  
202 clones derived from adalimumab with improved affinity towards TNF.<sup>8</sup> However, some antibodies  
203 display reduced affinity and impaired biophysical properties when expressed as scFv as compared to  
204 the corresponding Fab molecules.<sup>23, 30</sup> Indeed, CH1 and CL domains, which are not present in scFv  
205 molecules, participate in the greater stability of Fab and scFab.<sup>31, 32</sup> The choice of an adapted format  
206 has also proved to be an important parameter for other approaches such as phage display<sup>33, 34</sup> or  
207 recombinant expression of antibody fragments.<sup>35</sup>

208 Here, we show that some antibodies do not seem to be active either in the scFv format or in the scFab  
209 format when they are expressed at the surface of yeast cells. In our set-up, two antibodies, infliximab  
210 and IpaD\_301, appeared to lack functionality, as suggested by the total absence of antigen binding in  
211 any single-chain format. The presence of C<sub>κ</sub> and CH1 domains, which could have a stabilizing role in  
212 the scFab formats, had no effect on the functionality of the corresponding infliximab and IpaD\_301  
213 constructs. We cannot exclude that the presence of a linker between the light chain and the heavy  
214 chain could also cause steric hindrance that impairs functionality.

215 We found that adalimumab, golimumab and IpaD\_318 were well expressed and perfectly able to bind  
216 their antigen as scFv constructs, but also in scFab or Fab formats. Certolizumab was also a very well  
217 expressed and functional antibody in these formats, with the notable exception of the sc60Fab format,  
218 which exhibited very poor expression and had no detectable antigen binding (Supp. Fig 2). These  
219 particular results emphasize that the presence of the two C-terminal cysteine residues in scFab, as well

220 as the nature and length of the linker sequence, can dramatically alter expression of scFab molecules  
221 for some antibodies. Moreover, the presence of the interchain disulfide bond can have a major  
222 influence on the stability of the antibody fragment, as recently shown for the adalimumab Fab.<sup>36</sup> The  
223 length of the linker also proved to be an important parameter for the proper packing of light and heavy  
224 chains and possibly the accessibility of the paratope, thus ultimately affecting the function of the scFab  
225 fragment.<sup>23, 24</sup>

226 In this study set-up, Fab was the only format that allowed functional display for each of the 6 tested  
227 antibodies. FACS analysis revealed that a very high proportion of induced yeast cells (up to 70%)  
228 expressed Fabs and produced a strong fluorescence signal corresponding to antigen binding. In the  
229 context of protein engineering or affinity maturation, a strong signal would favor an easy  
230 discrimination of high-affinity clones in libraries containing very high numbers of mutants.

231 Moreover, for anti-TNF molecules, all Fabs expressed on the surface of yeast cells exhibited a high  
232 affinity for their antigen, with  $K_D$  values close to those reported in the literature, strongly suggesting  
233 that the  $K_D$  of a protein-protein binding interaction measured on the surface of yeast cells was  
234 essentially equal to that measured using soluble proteins.<sup>37, 38</sup>

235 Deeper analysis of expression reporters in the Fab format indicated a lower display level of light chains  
236 for infliximab and IpaD\_301 Fabs. Light chain display correlated perfectly with lower target binding of  
237 these two constructs compared to the other anti-TNF Fabs or IpaD\_318 Fab, respectively. Coexpression  
238 of chaperones such as BiP, use of alternative promoters such as *Gal10* for the light chain expression,  
239 or introduction of a new secretory leader sequence optimized for antibody secretion such as  $\alpha$ MFpp8<sup>39</sup>  
240 might be useful to promote the assembly of light and heavy chains of antibodies during Fab expression.

241 A recent study demonstrated that co-expression of protein disulfide isomerase (PDI) had a positive  
242 effect on the functionality of some antibodies expressed as Fab on the surface of yeast cells.<sup>40</sup> In this  
243 study, Georgiou and co-workers also showed that pairing of antibody chains could be promoted by  
244 fusing the light and heavy chains with dimerization domains such as leucine-zipper proteins. Forced-

245 dimerization of antibody chains restored functionality for 3 of 13 tested anti-HA antibodies, although  
246 with a lower proportion of cells displaying functional Fab.

247 Overall, infliximab and IpaD\_301 exhibited relatively low expression in every tested format of antibody  
248 fragment. We observed, however, marked differences in the expression profiles of IpaD\_301 and  
249 IpaD\_318 on the surface of yeast cells in spite of their high sequence homology, with only 7 and 8  
250 mutations in the heavy chain and the light chain, respectively. Production of these two antibodies in a  
251 full-length IgG format reveal that IpaD\_301 has lower production titers in HEK cells and also a lower  
252 T<sub>m</sub> (67.6°C vs 69.3°C). Interestingly, infliximab is also described as difficult to express in HEK cells<sup>41</sup> and  
253 CHO cells,<sup>42</sup> with relatively low stability over time.<sup>43</sup> A comprehensive study comparing the biophysical  
254 properties of clinical-stage antibodies indicated that infliximab has much lower production titers in  
255 HEK cells than adalimumab, certolizumab and golimumab (6 mg/L for infliximab vs more than 100  
256 mg/mL for the three other anti-TNF antibodies).<sup>41</sup> Wittrup and co-workers also reported that infliximab  
257 had a lower T<sub>m</sub> (64.5°C vs at least 70°C for the three other anti-TNF antibodies). These observations  
258 are consistent with previously published studies indicating that protein secretion by yeast cells is  
259 correlated with thermodynamic stability.<sup>44, 45</sup> Together, this suggests that antibodies with low  
260 thermodynamic stability might have low expression on the surface of yeast cells.

261 Even as many alternative antibody formats are emerging, most of current therapeutic antibodies on  
262 the market are antibodies in the IgG format.<sup>21</sup> Thus, it is essential that the conversion between the  
263 screening format – the antibody fragment – and the IgG antibody does not impair the desired  
264 properties, and in particular affinity for the antigen. From this perspective, use of Fab has strong  
265 advantages. Several reports show that the Fab format tends to retain its binding affinity better than  
266 scFv when converted into IgG.<sup>19</sup> Moreover, the presence of a peptide linker in the scFv and scFab  
267 formats or introduction of additional domains such as leucine-zipper dimerization proteins might  
268 introduce bias in the screening of improved clones because of subtle structural changes. Indeed, some

269 affinity-enhanced molecules engineered in scFv and scFab $\Delta$ C formats lost affinity after conversion into  
270 IgG.<sup>22</sup>

271 In conclusion, in spite of their practical convenience, single-chain antibody fragment formats such as  
272 scFv and scFab do not always lead to a functional display of antibodies at the surface of yeast cells. In  
273 contrast, we showed that all 6 tested antibodies were functional in the Fab format, with high affinities  
274 for their antigen. Using our Fab expression plasmid, high proportions of yeast cells expressed Fab  
275 molecules and exhibited strong antigen binding signals in FACS, two important properties when getting  
276 started with the affinity maturation process by yeast display in good conditions. These advantages and  
277 the lower risk of losing engineered properties upon conversion into IgG suggest that the Fab format is  
278 the best alternative for the engineering of antibodies using YSD.

279

280

281

## 282 **Material and methods**

### 283 **Yeast display vectors construction**

284 Cloning were performed with the SLiCE recombination cloning method<sup>46</sup> or classic  
285 restriction/ligature method using *E.coli* DH5 $\alpha$  strain (Invitrogen). For each anti-TNF antibody,  
286 optimized synthetic genes (VH and VL) were ordered from Eurofins Genomics based on the IMGT  
287 sequences. All expression plasmids are derived from previously described pCT-L7.5.1<sup>26</sup> and share the  
288 *CEN/ARS* replication origin, *TRP* auxotrophy marker, *coIE1* replication origin, Ampicillin resistance gene  
289 and galactose inducible promoter *GAL1*. Plasmid pCT-L7.5.1 was a gift from Prof. K. Dane Wittrup  
290 (Addgene plasmid # 42900).

291 Plasmids pNT scFv were modified from parental pCT-L7.5.1 plasmid by modifying the aga2p  
292 signal sequence with a dipeptide spacer<sup>27</sup> and a *NheI* restriction site. A stop codon was inserted at the  
293 3' end of aga2p gene to obtain plasmids allowing the display of scFv with a free N-terminus end and a  
294 C-terminal anchoring to the yeast cell wall. Synthetic genes corresponding to each scFv were then  
295 cloned using *NheI* and *SpeI* restriction sites.

296 The pNT scFab $\Delta$ C vector was generated by cloning the coding sequence of the scFab $\Delta$ C of the  
297 previously described pYDscFab<sup>2</sup> between the restriction sites *NheI* and *XhoI* of the pNT scFv plasmid.  
298 Plasmid pYDscFab was a gift from Prof. Dennis Burton. Heavy chains and light chains of antibodies were  
299 cloned between *NheI/Pfl23II* and *NcoI/SalI* restrictions sites, respectively.

300 The pNT sc60Fab vectors were generated from pNT scFab plasmids. The linker and the cysteine  
301 residues allowing interchain disulfide bond formation were modified by PCR and homologous  
302 recombination between *BssHII* and *NcoI* sites. Heavy chains and light chains of antibodies were cloned  
303 between *NheI-Pfl23II* and *NcoI-SalI* restriction sites, respectively.

304 The bigenic pNT Fab vector was generated by ligation into pNT scFv between *SpeI* and *XhoI* of  
305 a synthetic gene (Eurofins Genomics) containing a 6-HIS tag, the Aga2p domain, a *Gal1* promoter, an

306 aga2p signal sequence, an HA tag and a transcription terminator. The resulting plasmid has two distinct  
307 expression cassettes corresponding to respective expression of light and heavy chains of the Fabs.  
308 Heavy chains and light chains of antibodies were then cloned between *NheI/PfI23II* and *NcoI/SalI*  
309 restrictions sites, respectively.

### 310 **Yeast transformation**

311 Preparation of competent yeast cells EBY100 (ATCC® MYA-4941™; a *GAL1-AGA1 :: URA3 ura3-*  
312 *52 trp1 leu2 Δ1 his3 Δ200 pep4 :: HIS2 prb1Δ1.6R can1 GAL*) was performed according to Suga et al.<sup>47</sup>  
313 Then, 100 μL of EBY100 electro-competent cells were mixed with 1-2 μg plasmid DNA, transferred to  
314 a pre-chilled electroporation cuvette (Biorad, 165-2086) and pulsed at 2.5 kV, 25 μF (Biorad Gene  
315 Pulser Xcell). Yeast cells were then diluted in 1 mL of sorbitol (1 M), and 200 μL were streaked on SD-  
316 CAA agar plates [6.7 g/L yeast nitrogen base without casamino acids, 20 g/L dextrose, 5 g/L casamino  
317 acids, 100 mM sodium phosphate pH 6.0].

### 318 **Growth and expression conditions**

319 Yeast cultures were performed in 24 deep-well round-bottom plates. Pre-cultures were  
320 performed by inoculating 3 mL of SD-CAA medium with one colony from selective agar plate and  
321 incubated overnight at 30°C, 200 rpm. The saturated pre-culture (typically OD<sub>600</sub> of 8-10) was passaged  
322 in order to obtain an initial culture OD<sub>600</sub> of 0.25-0.50. The culture was grown at 30°C until its OD<sub>600</sub>  
323 reached 0.5-1.0. Cells were centrifuged and re-suspended in 3 mL of SG-CAA galactose induction  
324 medium [6.7 g/L yeast nitrogen base without casamino acids, 20 g/L galactose, 5 g/L casamino acids,  
325 100 mM sodium phosphate, pH 6.0] and induced for 16-36 h at 20°C, 200 rpm.

### 326 **Yeast labelling and flow cytometry analysis**

327 10<sup>6</sup> cells were taken from the induced culture and washed with 1 mL PBSF (phosphate-buffered  
328 saline (PBS), bovine serum albumin (BSA) 0.1%) buffer. Cells were resuspended in 50 μL of the target  
329 protein at the desired concentration and incubated at 20°C, 1000 rpm until equilibrium is reached

330 (depending on target protein concentration). Cells were washed with 1 mL of ice-cold PBSF to avoid  
331 dissociation and resuspended in ice-cold PBSF containing the appropriate fluorescent reporters:  
332 Streptavidin-PE (Thermo Fisher scientific; catalog number S866; 1:100 dilution), Mouse anti-Human  
333 Kappa Light Chain Antibody APC conjugate (Thermo Fisher scientific; catalog number MH10515; 1:100  
334 dilution), 6x-His Epitope Tag antibody Dylight-650 conjugate (Thermo Scientific, catalog number MA1-  
335 21315-D650; 1:100 dilution) or HA Tag Monoclonal Antibody APC conjugate (1:50 dilution). Cells were  
336 incubated on ice in the dark for 15 minutes and analyzed with BD FACS Aria™ III cytometer.

### 337 **Cell-Binding assays for determining the affinity of antibodies for their antigen**

338 Cell binding assays were performed according to Hunter et al.<sup>38</sup> in order to avoid ligand  
339 depletion.  $10^4$  to  $10^5$  cells were incubated in 50-500  $\mu$ L of the target protein at the desired  
340 concentrations and incubated at 20°C, 1000 rpm long enough to reach equilibrium. Cells were analyzed  
341 by FACS for their binding fluorescence as described above. Auto-fluorescence was subtracted for each  
342 measure and resulting values were normalized with maximum fluorescence. Data are then fitted with  
343 a non-linear regression analysis to obtain the  $K_D$ .

### 344 **Production and purification of IgG IpaD\_301 and IpaD\_318**

345 IpaD\_301 and IpaD\_318 antibodies were produced via transient transfection of HEK293  
346 Freestyle™ cells (HEK 293FS). HEK 293FS were transfected as previously described by Subedi *et al.*<sup>48</sup>  
347 without the use of Valproic acid using the HEK transient transfection plasmids described by Smith *et*  
348 *al.*<sup>29</sup>

349 The day before transfection, cells were sub-cultured in order to be at a density of  $2-3 \cdot 10^6$   
350 cells/mL the next day. The day of the transfection, cells were centrifuged 5 min at 100 g and  
351 resuspended in fresh FreeStyle 293 Expression medium (Thermo-Fisher) to obtain a density of  $2.5 \cdot 10^6$   
352 cells/mL. For a transfection volume of 100 mL, 150  $\mu$ g of each plasmid (coding for heavy chain and light  
353 chain) was added to the cells at a concentration of 0.5  $\mu$ g/ $\mu$ L. Cells were incubated 5 min at 37°C, 180



354 rpm, 8 % CO<sub>2</sub>. 1.8 mL of polyethylenimine (PEI) was added at a concentration of 0.5 mg/mL to the cells  
355 (PEI:DNA ratio = 3:1). Cells were subsequently incubated 24h at 37°C, 180 rpm, 8 % CO<sub>2</sub>.

356 A day after transfection, 100 mL of fresh EX-CELL<sup>®</sup> Serum-Free Medium for HEK 293 (Sigma-  
357 Aldrich), supplemented with 6 mM L-Glutamine, was added to the transfected culture. Cells were  
358 finally incubated 4 more days at 37°C, 180 rpm, 8 % CO<sub>2</sub>. Five days after transfection, the supernatant  
359 was harvested by centrifuging the cells at 1000g for 15 min at 4°C and kept on ice until purification.  
360 The supernatant was purified using a HiTrap<sup>™</sup> Protein A HP column of 1 mL (GE Healthcare) on an  
361 ÄKTA purifier (GE Healthcare) according to the manufacturer's description.

#### 362 **Size-exclusion chromatography**

363 A Superdex-200 10/300 GL (GE Healthcare) column was used on an ÄKTA purifier (GE  
364 Healthcare). Runs were monitored with Unicorn<sup>™</sup> 5.31 software (GE Healthcare). 500 µL of each  
365 sample was applied on the column using a flow rate of 0.7 mL/min and PBS as running buffer.

#### 366 **Fab IpaD\_301 and IpaD\_318 affinity determination**

367 Fab were prepared from full-length IgG using a Pierce<sup>®</sup> Fab Micro Preparation Kit. The binding  
368 affinity of Fab IpaD\_301 and IpaD\_318 was evaluated by biolayer interferometry using an Octet RED96  
369 instrument (Pall ForteBio). Biotinylated IpaD was loaded onto streptavidin biosensors (ForteBio) at a  
370 concentration of 5 µg/mL for 8 min in PBSF (1x PBS, pH 7.4, 0.1% BSA). Fab IpaD\_301 and IpaD\_318  
371 were then associated with IpaD using 4 different concentrations (20, 10, 5 and 2.5 nM). Duration of  
372 association and dissociation steps were 20 min and 120 min. All steps were performed at 20°C. Data  
373 were collected and analyzed using Octet Software version 10.0.3 (Pall ForteBio). Binding kinetics were  
374 fitted using a 1:1 Langmuir-binding model.

375

#### 376 **Thermostability evaluation**

377 DSF was performed as previously described by Niesen *et al.*<sup>49</sup> using a StepOne Real-Time PCR  
378 System from Applied Biosystems. IgG monomers of IpaD\_301 and IpaD\_318 purified via SEC were  
379 mixed with the SYPRO Orange reagent. Final dye concentration was 5x and final IgG concentration was  
380 150 µg/mL. The temperature gradient was run from 20 to 90 °C with 1 min equilibration at each degree  
381 centigrade.

382

383

#### 384 **Acknowledgements**

385

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387 scanning fluorimetry experiments and Dr Hervé Volland for anti-HA antibodies.

388

#### 389 **Figure 1. Schematic representation of yeast surface display vectors used in this study.**

390 Antibody fragment constructs are tethered to the cell wall of *S. cerevisiae* cells by C-terminal fusion  
391 with the Aga2p subunit of the  $\alpha$ -agglutinin yeast cell surface anchor protein. Expression is controlled  
392 by the tightly regulated galactose-inducible *Gal1* promoter. Aga2-ss: native signal sequence of Aga2p  
393 for secretion of the constructs. Single-chain antibody fragments (scFv, scFab $\Delta$ C and sc60Fab) include  
394 flexible linkers connecting the light chain and the heavy chain. pNT Fab is a bigenic plasmid including  
395 two identical GAL1 promoters for respective expression of light and heavy chains. Cysteine residues  
396 responsible for the formation of the inter-chain disulfide bond connecting C<sub>k</sub> and CH1 are indicated in  
397 red. Expression of antibody fragments can be monitored using the HA tag for all constructs. A 6His-Tag  
398 sequence can also be used for the monitoring of heavy chain expression when using pNT Fab.

399

400

401 **Figure 2. Antigen binding of the 6 selected antibodies expressed as different antibody**  
402 **fragment formats on the surface of yeast cells.** Cells are labeled with biotinylated antigen then with  
403 Streptavidin–PE (Target Binding) before FACS analysis. Selected antigen concentrations are far above  
404 the expected  $K_D$  to reach a quantitative binding with the antibody fragments. Respective antigen  
405 concentration were 20 nM for anti-TNF antibodies and 50 nM for anti-IpaD antibodies. For each  
406 construct, a FACS histogram shows the fluorescence intensity corresponding to antigen binding (x-axis)  
407 vs the number of detected events (y-axis). Interval gates (bars) are shown to differentiate cells with  
408 detectable antigen binding (mean fluorescence intensity (MFI) score above  $10^3$ , in green) from cells  
409 with no detectable antigen binding (MFI score under  $10^3$ , in grey). The  $10^3$  cutoff has been obtained by  
410 measuring MFI of cells with a non-relevant antigen, cf. Supplementary figure1.

411

412 **Figure 3. Affinity of Fab antibody fragments expressed on the surface of yeast cells.** The mean  
413 fluorescence intensity (MFI), determined by FACS analysis, is plotted against varying concentrations of  
414 antigen for every Fab construct, and fit to a monovalent binding model. Measurements were done in  
415 triplicate with independent cultures and inductions. (A) Equilibrium binding constants  $K_D$  of the four  
416 anti-TNF Fabs for TNF at 20°C. Curve fitting results in a  $K_D$  of  $114 \pm 6$  nM for adalimumab Fab,  $102 \pm 14$   
417 pM for infliximab Fab,  $39 \pm 4$  pM for golimumab Fab and  $11 \pm 1$  pM for certolizumab Fab. (B) Equilibrium  
418 binding constants  $K_D$  of the two anti-IpaD Fabs for IpaD at 20°C.  $K_D$  IpaD\_301 Fab =  $3.2 \pm 0.3$  nM,  $K_D$   
419 IpaD\_318 Fab =  $1.7 \pm 0.2$  nM.

420

421 **Figure 4. Antigen binding and expression levels of heavy and light chains of the 6 selected**  
422 **antibodies expressed as Fab on the surface of yeast cells.** Cells were labeled with the appropriate  
423 expression reporter and the mean fluorescence intensity of positive cells was determined by FACS  
424 analysis. For antigen binding, cells were double-labeled with biotinylated antigen and Streptavidin-PE  
425 (target binding) before FACS analysis. (A) Heavy chain expression evaluated with anti-HIS antibody  
426 reporter. (B) Light chain expression evaluated with anti-HA antibody reporter (C) Biotinylated antigen  
427 binding evaluated with Streptavidin-PE (D) Light chain expression evaluated with anti-CK antibody  
428 reporter. Measurements were made in triplicate using cells from independent cultures.

429

430 **Figure 5. Representative bivariate flow cytometric analysis of yeast cells expressing Fab**  
431 **antibody fragments expressed on their surface.** Each single dot on the plot designates the APC (y-axis)  
432 and PE (x-axis) fluorescence intensity values for a single yeast cell. Cells were double-labeled with  
433 biotinylated antigen/Streptavidin-PE (target binding) and anti-CK APC labels (Fab expression). Antigen  
434 concentrations in labeling experiments were 20 nM for anti-TNF antibodies and 50 nM for anti-IpaD  
435 antibodies. Functional subpopulations were gated using an inverted gate of the double negative sub-  
436 populations. The percentage number correspond to the mean percentage of cells expressing functional  
437 Fabs from three separate inductions.

438

439 **Figure 6. Biophysical characterization of IpaD\_301 IgG and IpaD\_318 IgG expressed by HEK**  
440 **cells.** (A): Size-exclusion chromatograms of the protein A purified IgGs on a Superdex 200 10/300 GL  
441 size-exclusion column for IpaD\_301 IgG (black) and IpaD\_318 IgG (grey). Monomeric IgG species elutes  
442 at 15 mL and aggregates or multimeric species elutes between 10 to 12 mL. (B): T<sub>m</sub> determination of  
443 IgGs by differential scanning fluorimetry. The fluorescence intensities are normalized to peak values.  
444 Error bars correspond to experiment triplicates.

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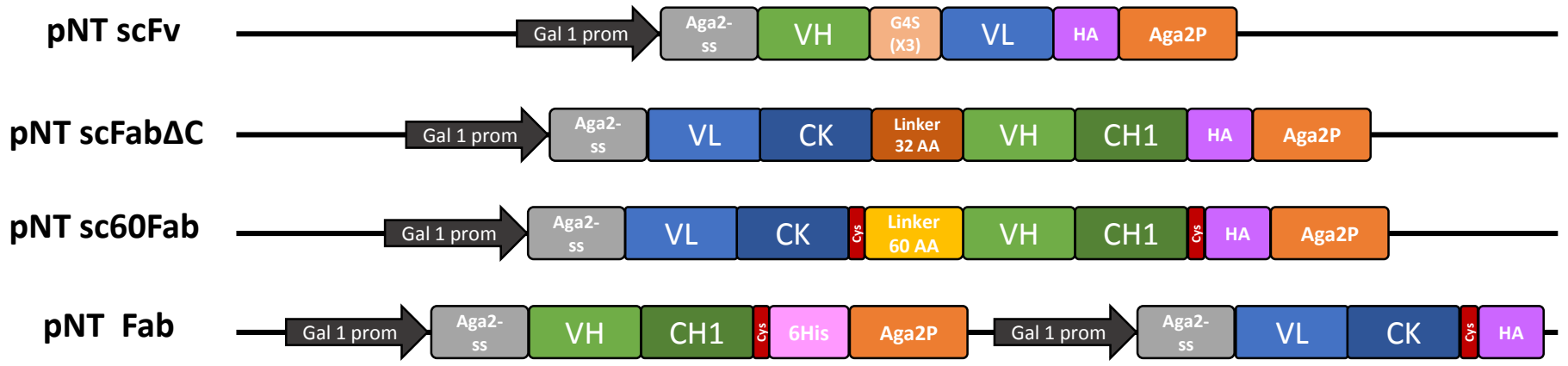


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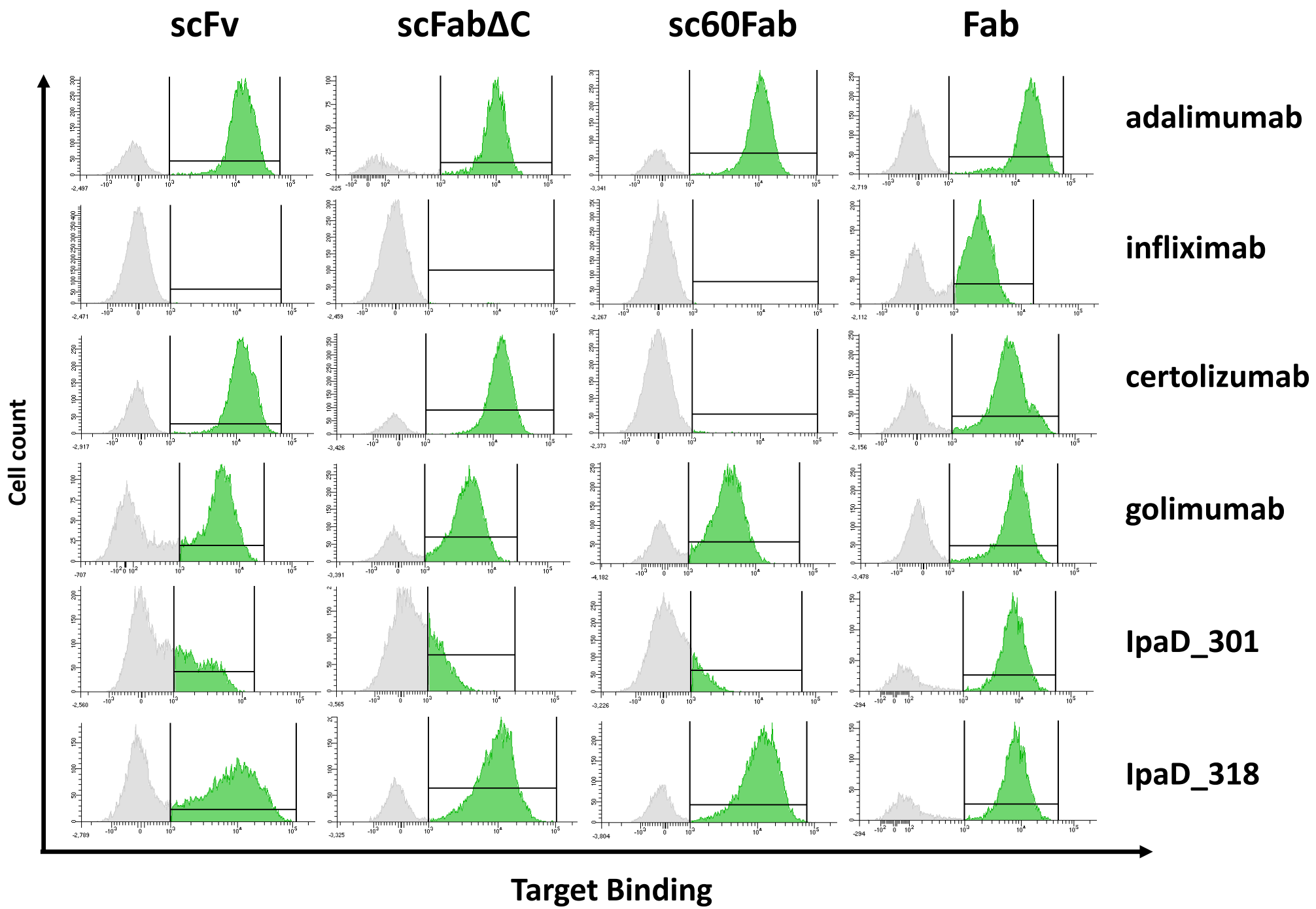


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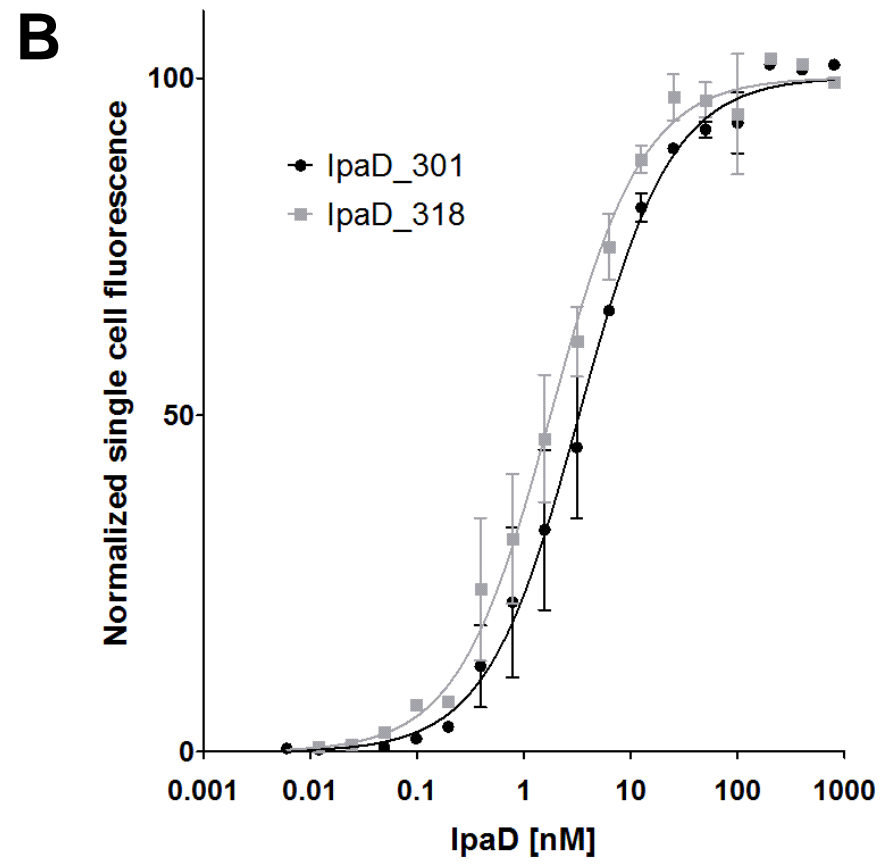
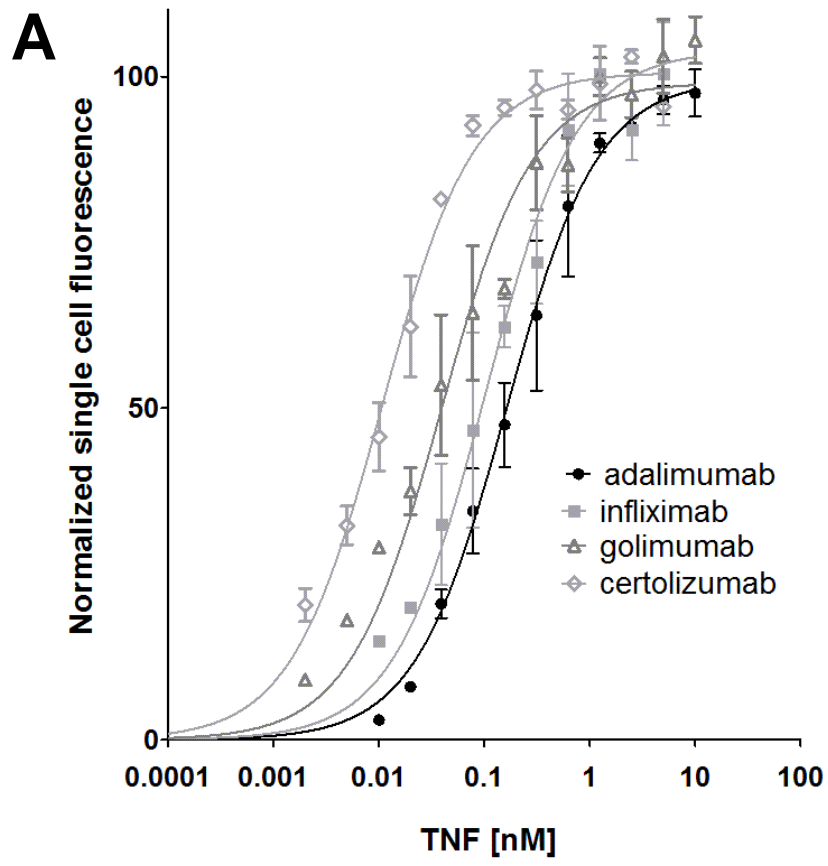
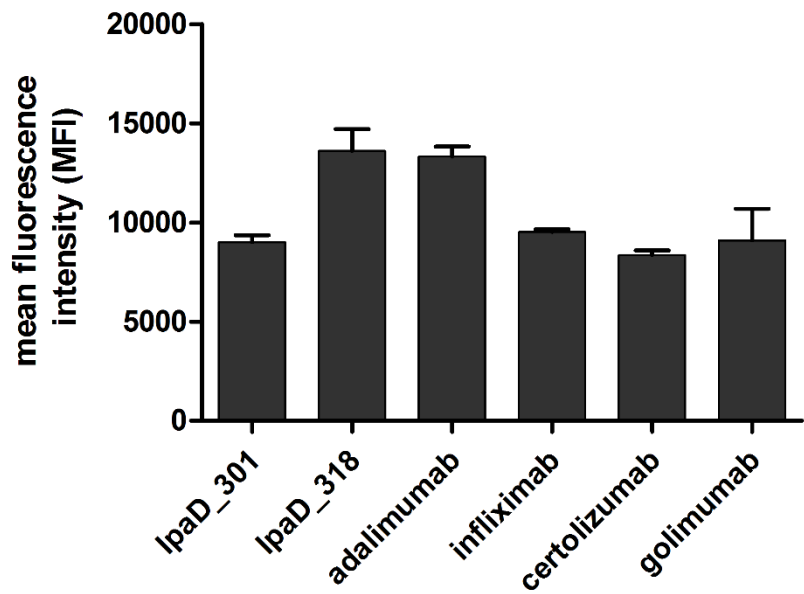
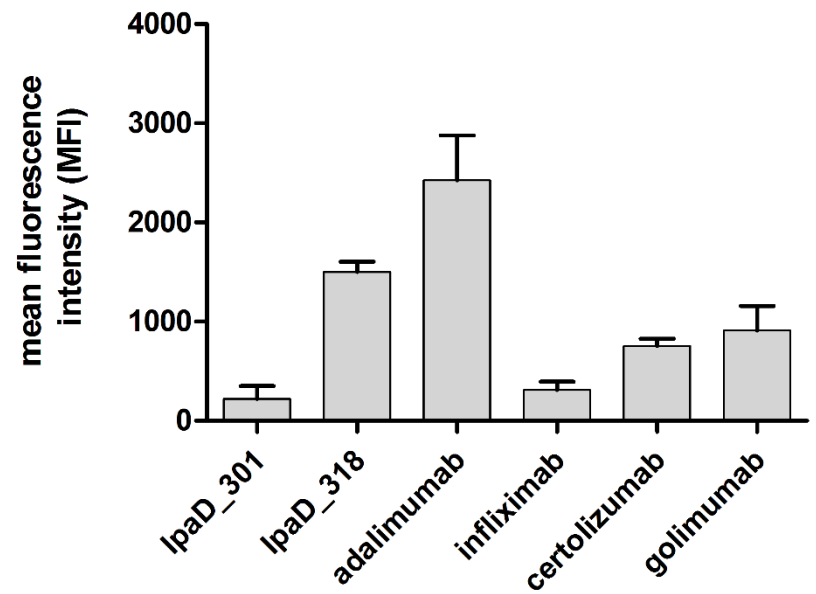


Figure 3.

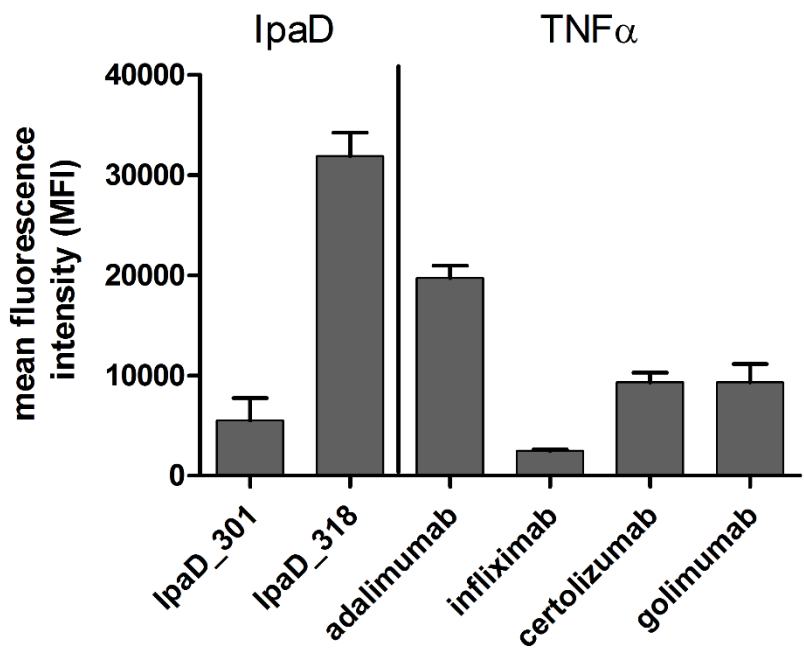
**A** Heavy chain expression (HIS Tag)



**B** Light chain expression (HA Tag)



**C** Target Binding (SA-PE)



**D** Light chain expression (Anti CK antibody)

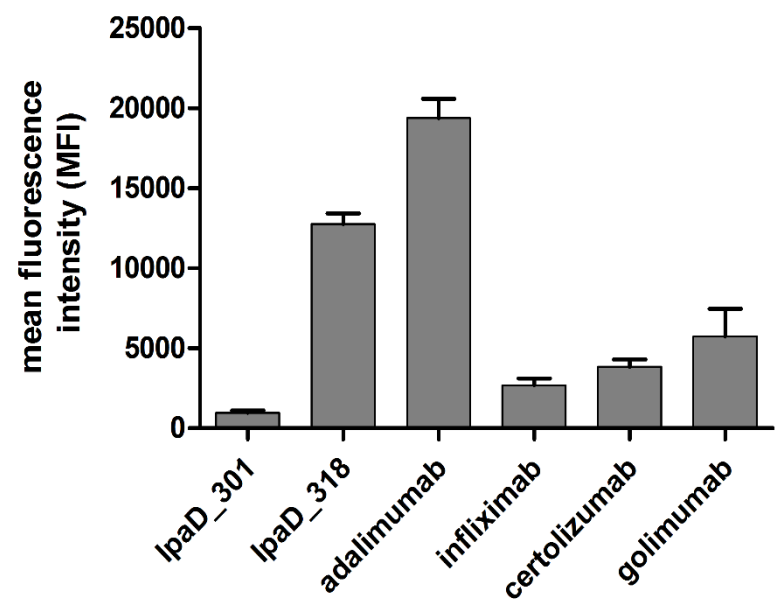


Figure 4.

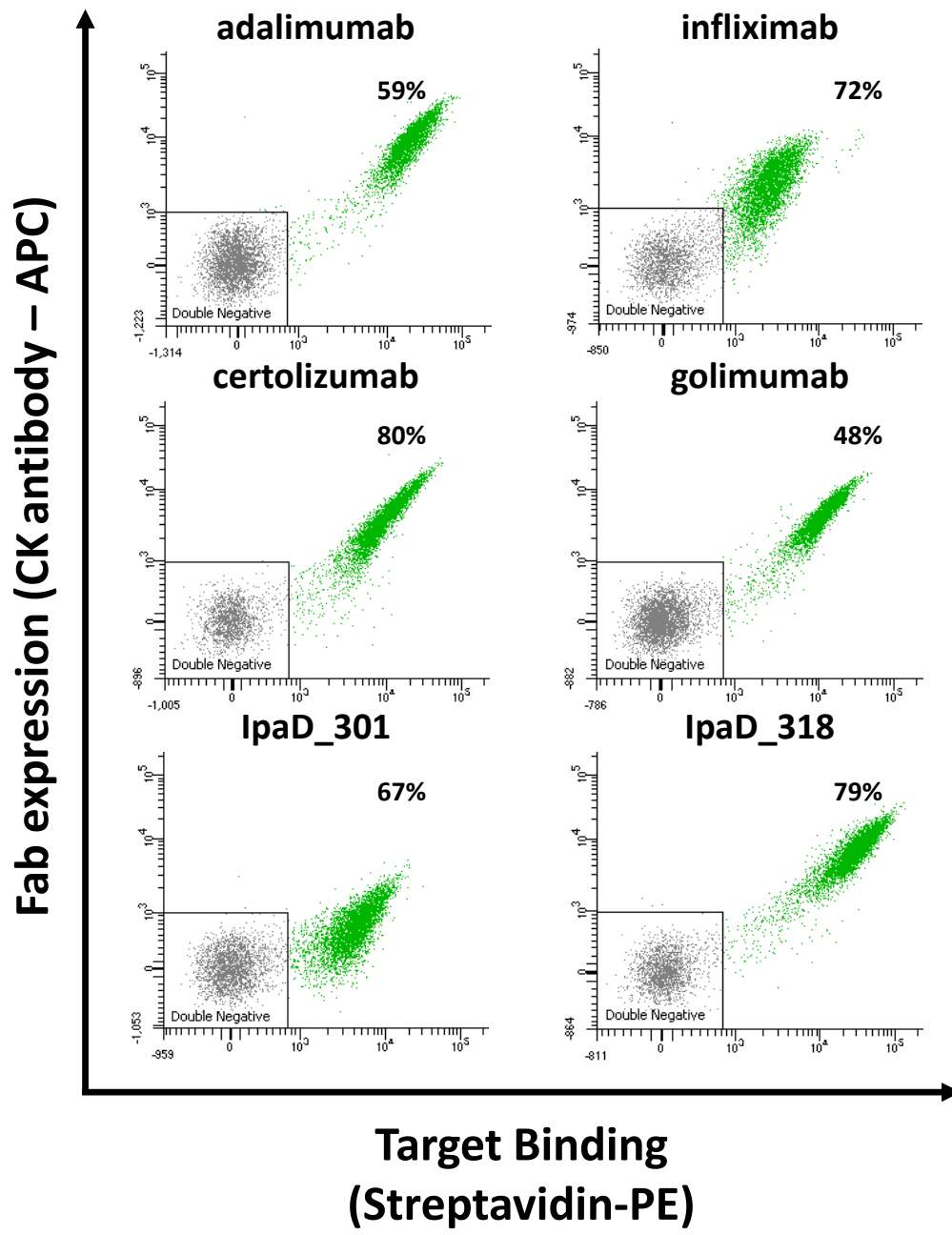


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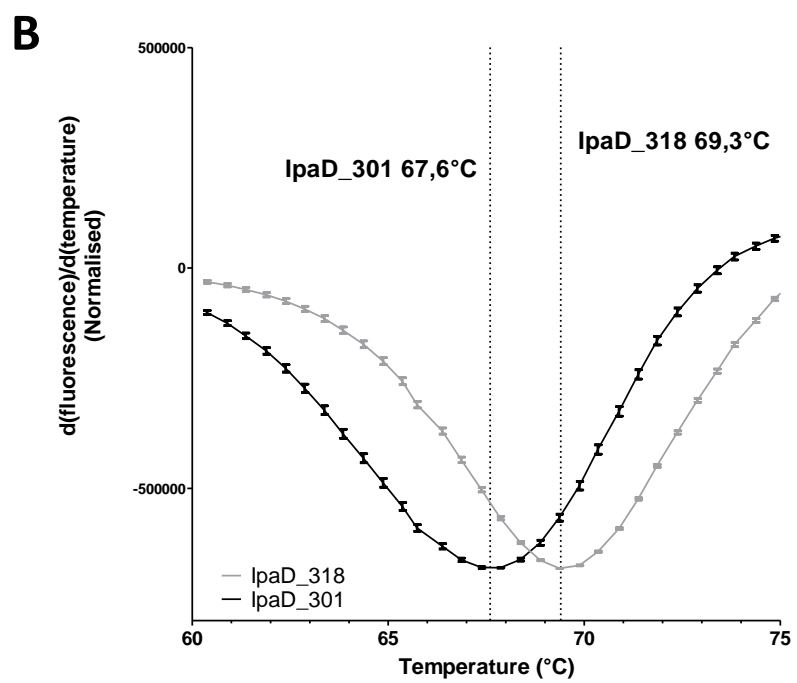
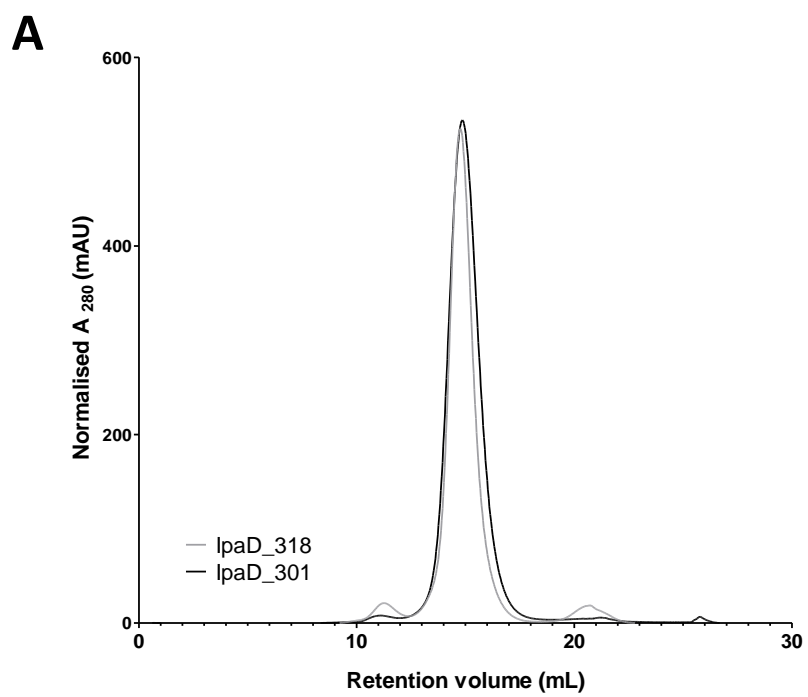
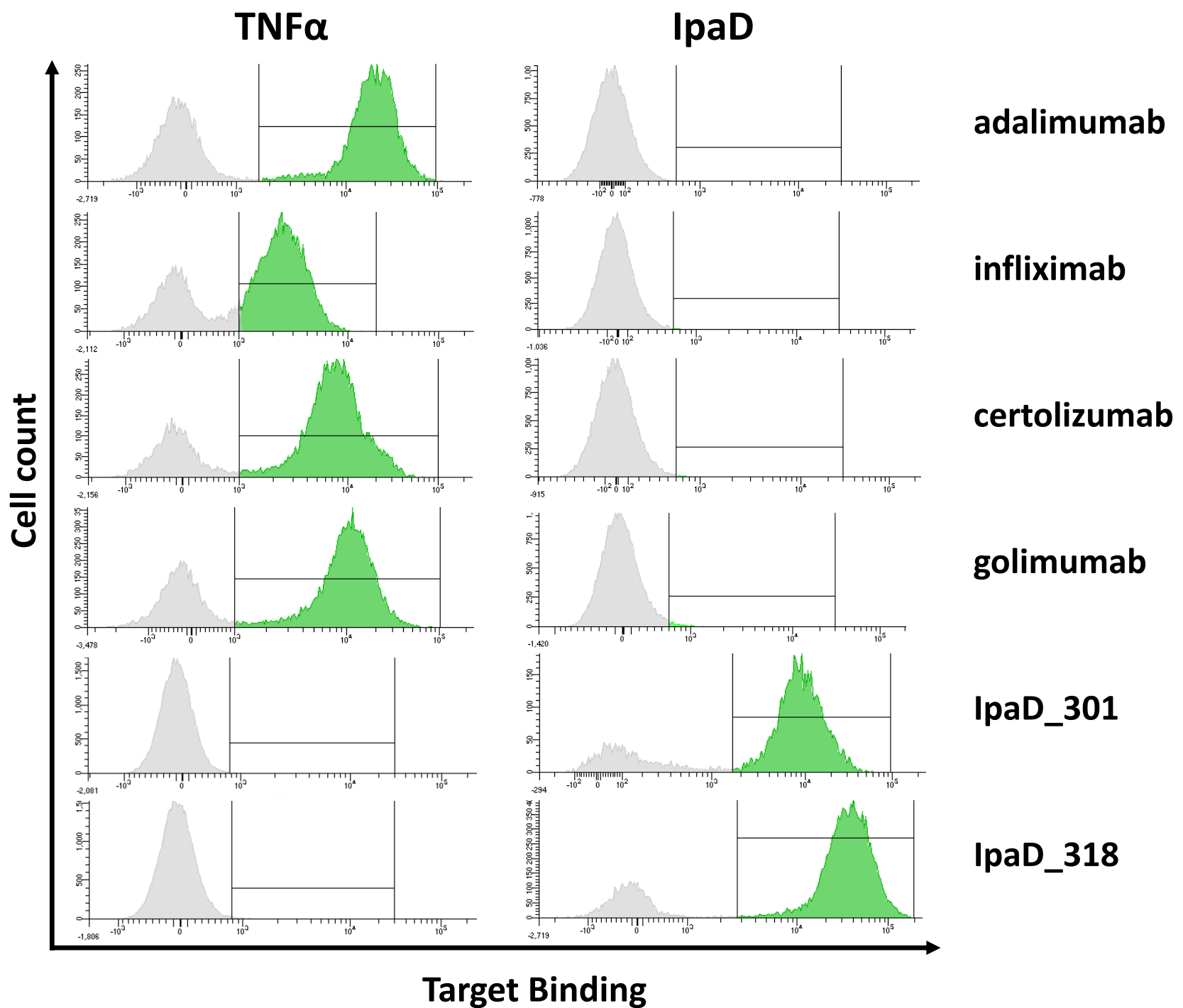
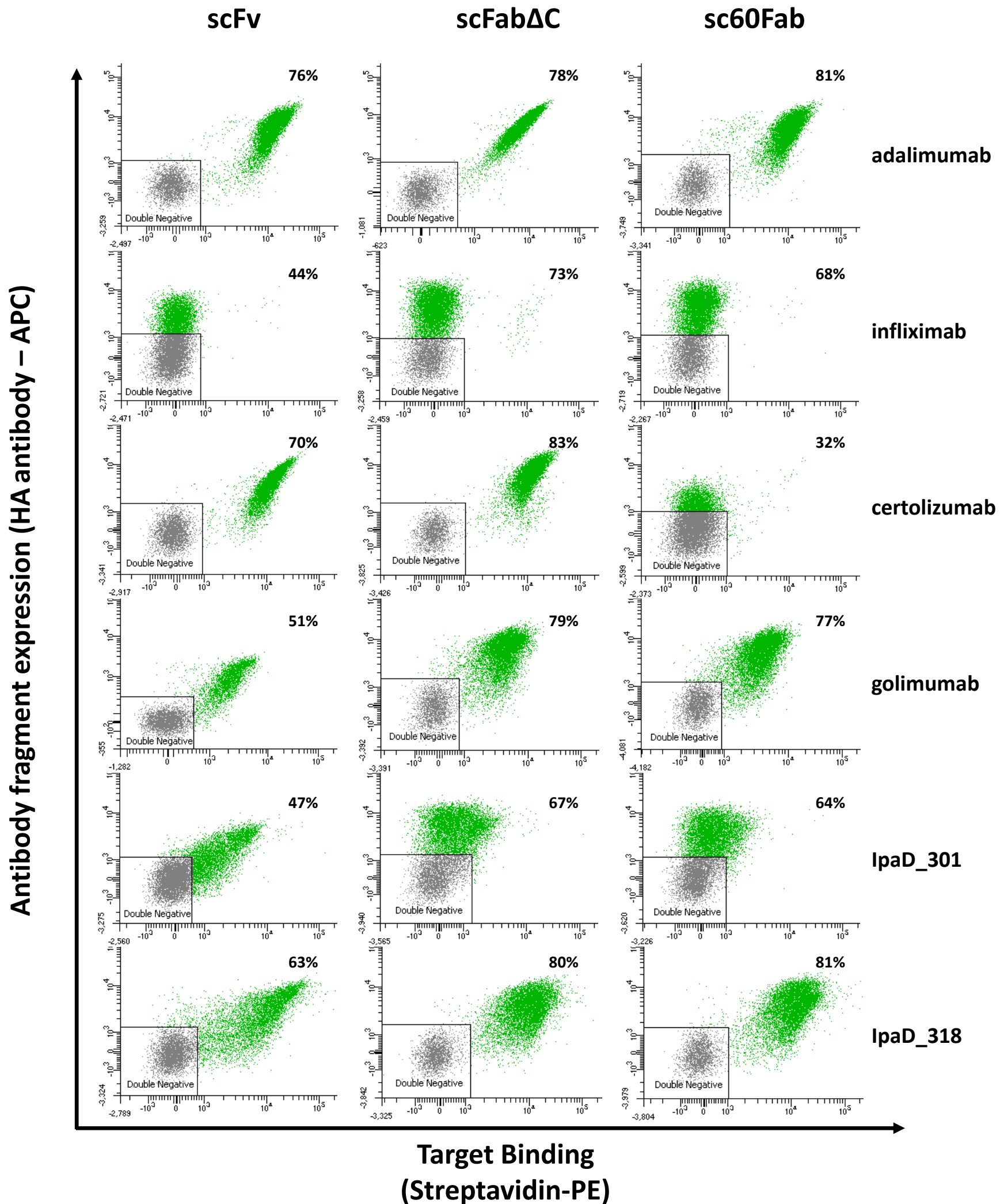


Figure 6.

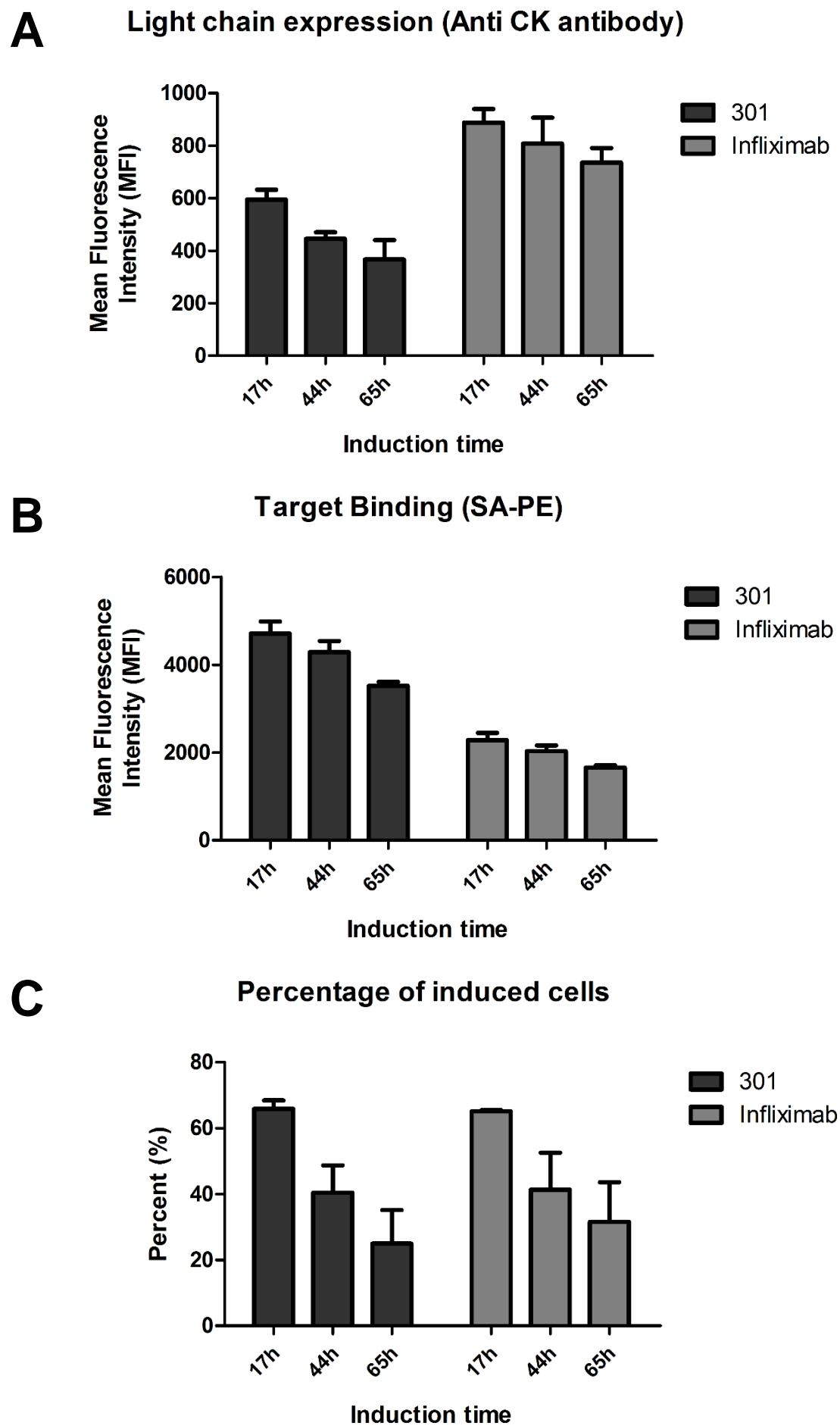


**Supplementary figure 1. TNF $\alpha$  and IpaD binding of the 6 selected antibodies expressed as Fab on the surface of yeast cells.** Cells are labeled with biotinylated antigen then with Streptavidin-PE (Target Binding) before FACS analysis. Selected antigen concentrations are far above the expected  $K_D$  to reach a quantitative binding with the antibody fragments. Respective antigen concentration were 20 nM for TNF $\alpha$  and 50 nM for IpaD. For each construct, a FACS histogram shows the fluorescence intensity corresponding to antigen binding (x-axis) vs the number of detected events (y-axis). Interval gates (bars) are shown to differentiate cells with detectable antigen binding (in green) from cells with no detectable antigen binding (in grey).



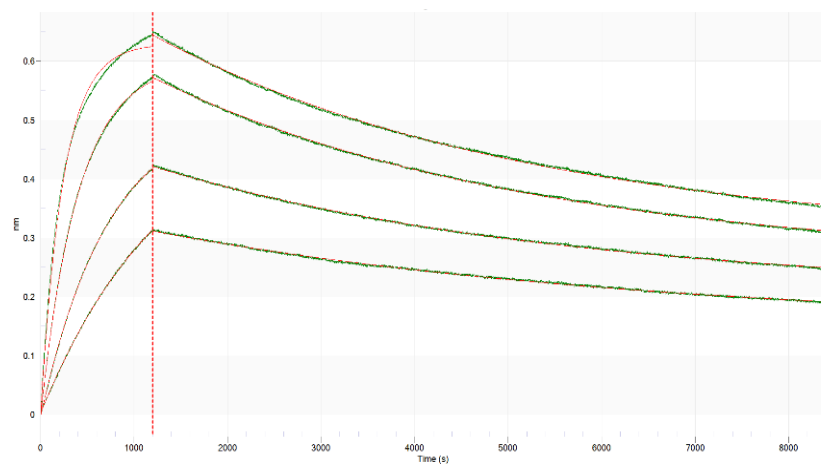
**Supplementary figure 2. Bivariate flow-cytometric analysis of yeast cells expressing various antibody fragments on their surface.** Each single dot on the plot designate the APC (y-axis) and PE (x-axis) fluorescence intensity values for a single yeast cell. Cells are double-labeled with biotinylated antigen/Streptavidin-PE (Target Binding) and anti-HA APC labels (Fab expression). Antigen concentration in labelling experiment were respectively 20 nM for anti-TNF antibodies and 50 nM for anti-IpaD antibodies. Functional subpopulations in green were gated using an inverted gate of the double negative subpopulations. The percentage is the subpopulation of cell expressing Fab.



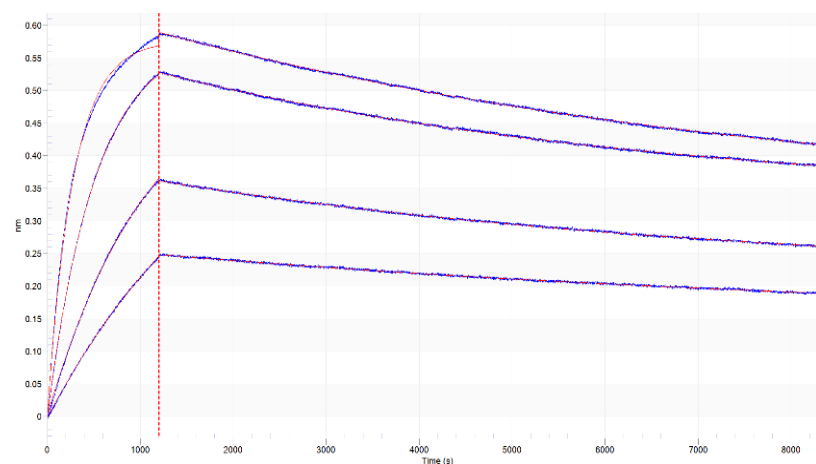


**Supplementary Figure 3. Antigen binding and expression levels of antibodies IpaD\_301 and Infliximab expressed as Fab antibody fragments on the surface of yeast cells.** Cells were labeled with the appropriate expression reporter and the mean fluorescence intensity of positive cells was determined by FACS analysis. For antigen binding, cells were double-labeled with biotinylated antigen and Streptavidin-PE (target binding) before FACS analysis. (A) Light chain expression evaluated with anti-CK antibody reporter (B) Biotinylated antigen binding evaluated with Streptavidin-PE (C) Percentage of cells with detectable antigen binding. Measurements were made in triplicate using cells from independent cultures.

## IpaD\_301



## IpaD\_318



	KD (M)	kon(1/Ms)	koff(1/s)
Fab IpaD_301	1.05E-09	2.16E+05	2.25E-04
Fab IpaD_318	9.25E-10	1.59E+05	1.47E-04

**Supplementary figure 4. Bio-layer interferometry (Octet Red)  $K_D$  determination of IpaD\_301 Fab and IpaD\_318 Fab.** Fab binding to recombinant IpaD was assayed by BLI. Biotinylated IpaD was loaded on Streptavidin biosensors and equilibrated in PBSF buffer (1X PBS pH 7.4, 0.01% (w/v) BSA) before being incubated with varying concentrations of each Fab for 20 min. Dissociation was performed in PBSF buffer to for 2 hours. For each Fab, real time binding profiles using multiple protein concentrations and fitted curves (1:1 Langmuir binding model) are displayed.