



Tracing the Impact of European Work Experience on VET Learners from Ireland

Charis Hughes, Léargas





Tracing VET Graduates with Foreign Mobility Experience (upcoming publication, FRSE Poland)

- Transnational research on the education and career paths of vocational learners with foreign mobility experience
- Austria, Belgium (Flanders), Czech Republic, Ireland, Latvia, Luxembourg, Latvia, Slovakia, United Kingdom and Poland
- Compare national contexts: trace longer-term personal outcomes; explore relevance to needs and labour market



Ireland: Scope and Method

- Leonardo da Vinci 2007-2014 & Erasmus+ 2014-2018
- 47-question survey: 335 responses
(22% response rate. Erasmus+ participants 95% of total)
- Four semi-structured one to one interviews
- Two college-based focus groups, 12 participants total

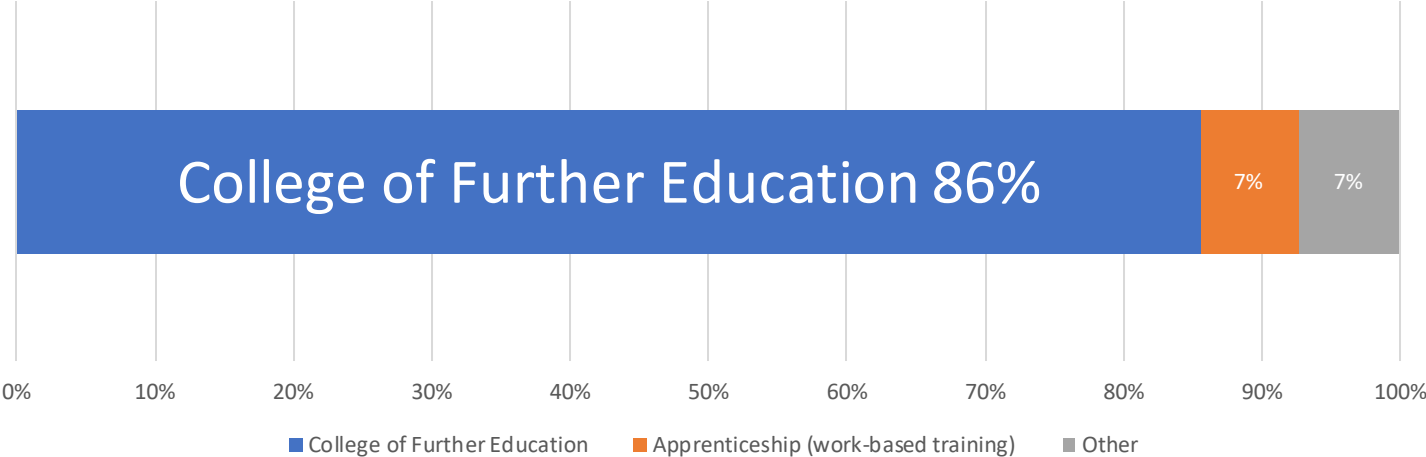


Current Context

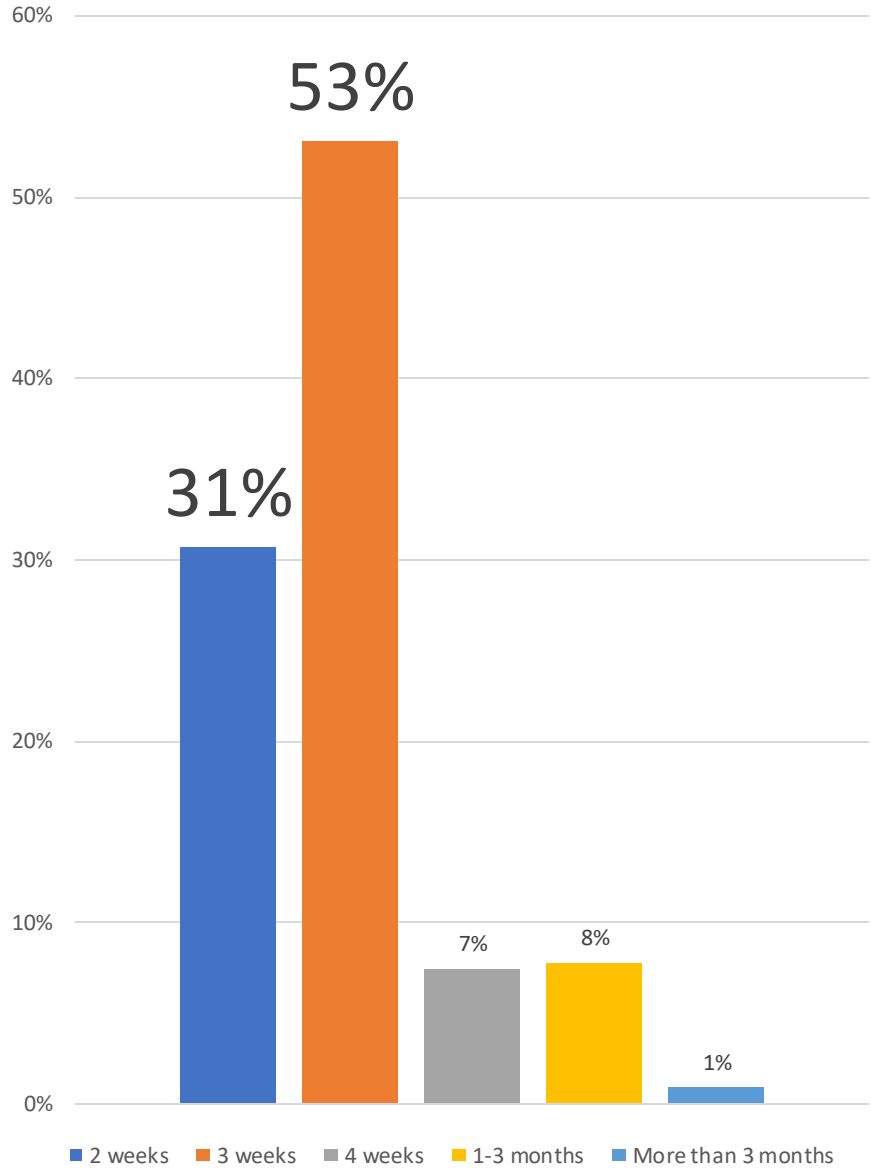
- COVID-19
- Solas FET Strategy 2020-2024
- Increased funding in new programme
- Brexit: Potential loss of UK as receiving country for Ireland and likely increase in demand for Ireland as receiving country from elsewhere

Already popular relative to size and population: 468 incoming v 388 for France

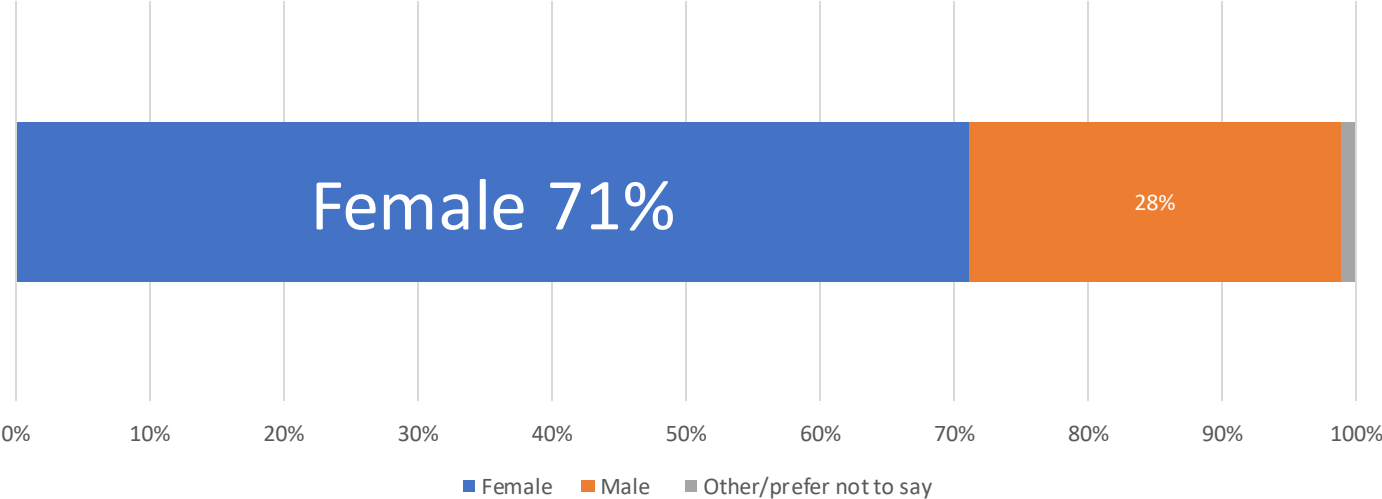
Type of Education Institution



Duration



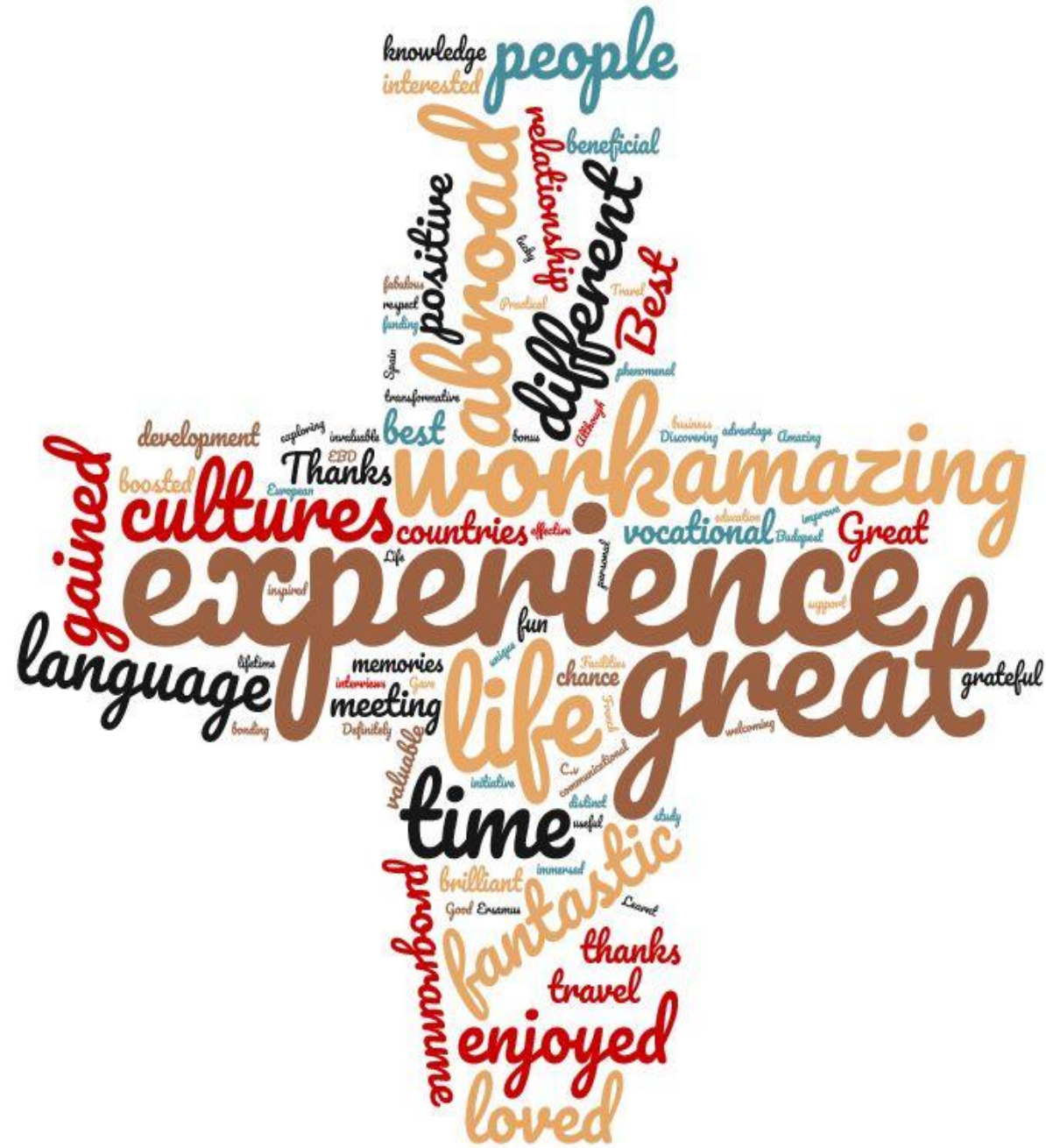
Gender





Learners' Overall Assessment of Mobility Experience

- 90% remembered their placement positively or very positively
- 70% gained practical professional experience
- 64% learned elements of their profession that they could not otherwise learn in school or college
- 60% encountered work cultures and environments that were different from Ireland, and learnt how these workplaces function differently from Ireland.



Q11 "To what extent did your placement abroad allow you to acquire, develop or improve the following competences?"

Interpersonal skills (e.g. customer service, negotiations, sales)

Ability to work in an international environment

Communication and team-working skills

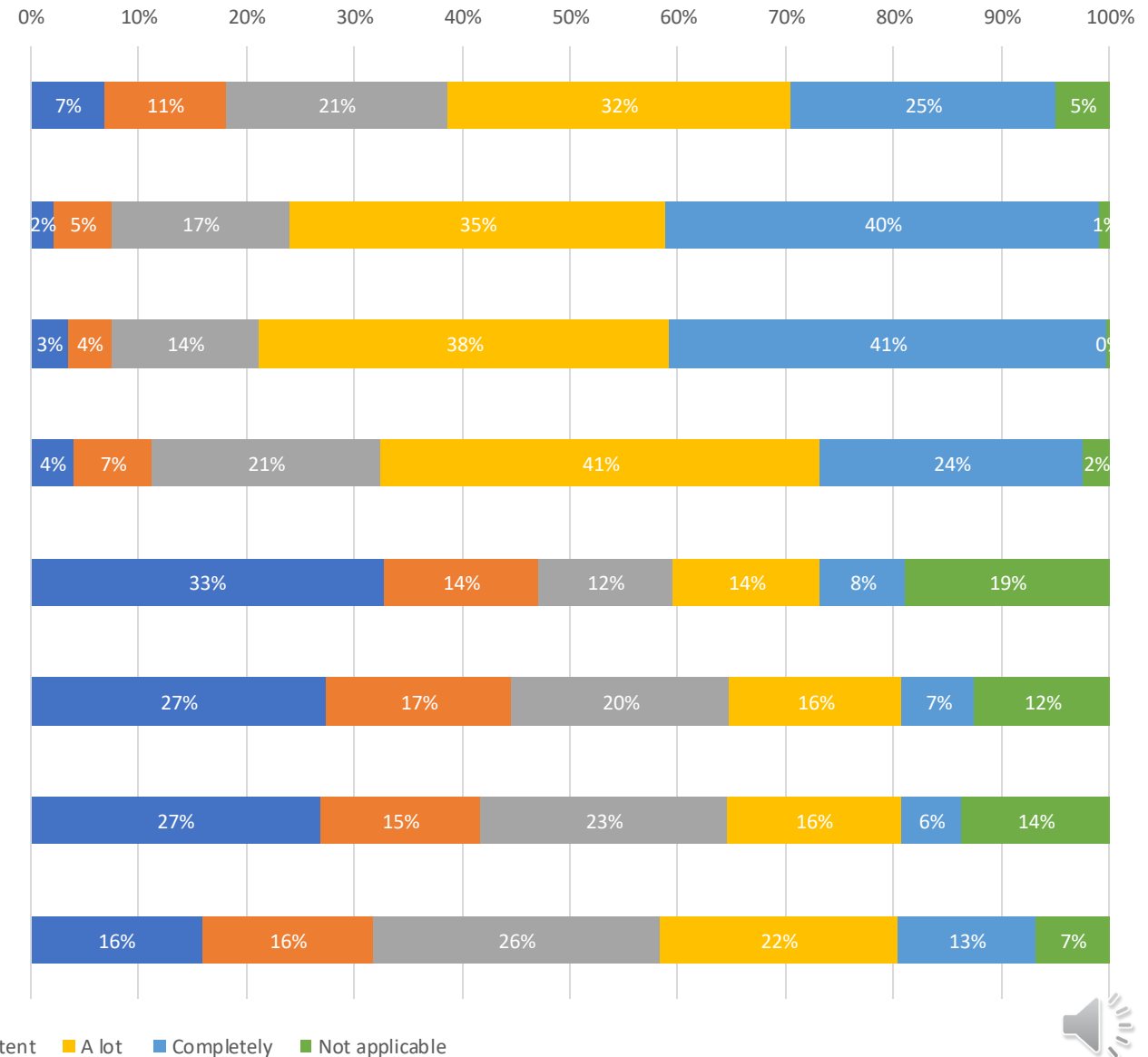
Awareness of the characteristics of individual workplaces

Ability to operate specialist machinery and equipment

Use of latest technologies or software

Dealing with specialist and/or technical documentation

Communicating in a foreign language in a work environment



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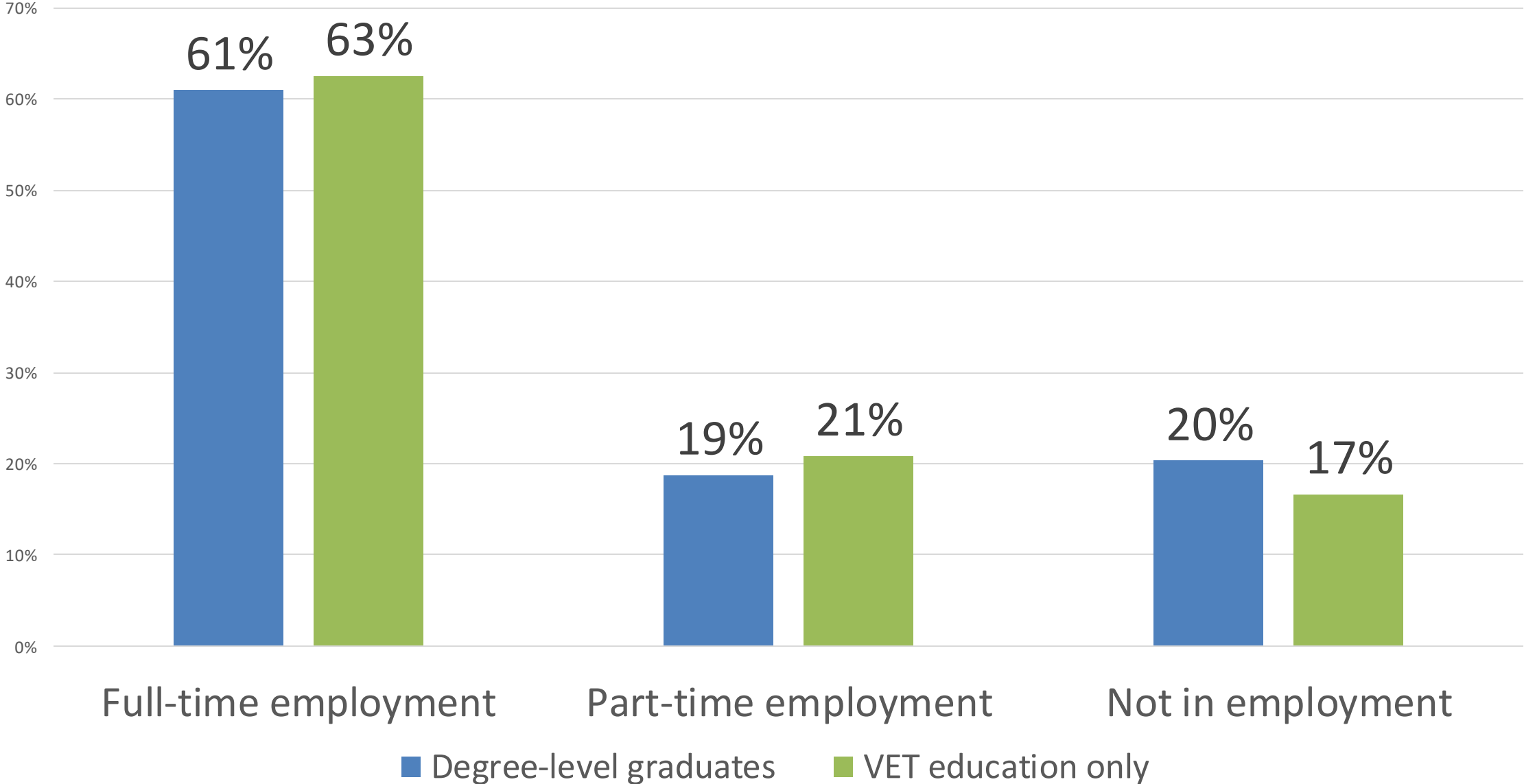
- ‘Taster’ of vocational area: real-world vocational experience is often unavailable at home
- Increases soft skills like confidence, independence, self-sufficiency – particularly evident in those who live at home
- Contributes to development of vocational skills, particularly in longer-term placements
- Promotes inclusion through funding but also through structure and support



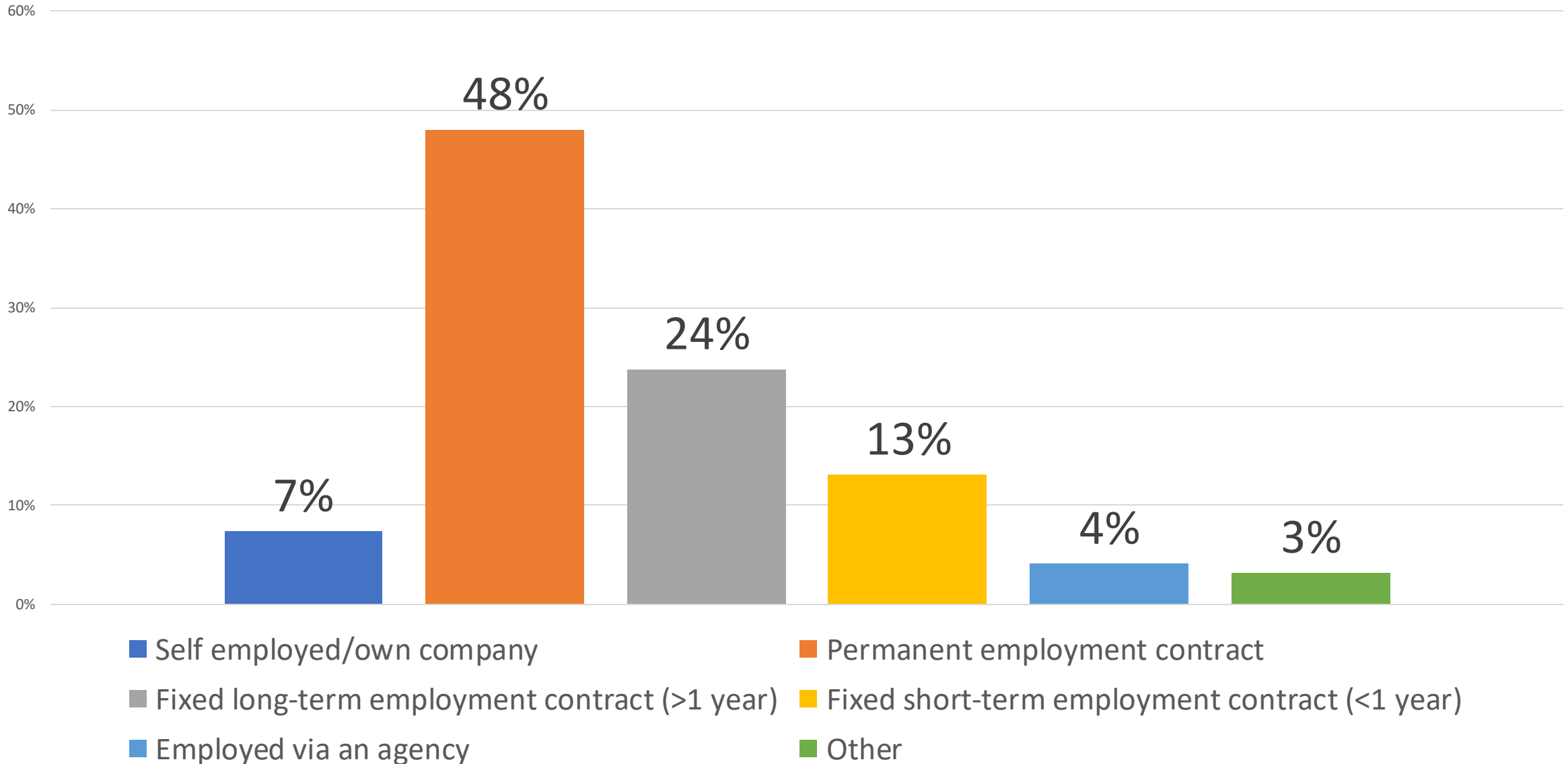
Subsequent Paths

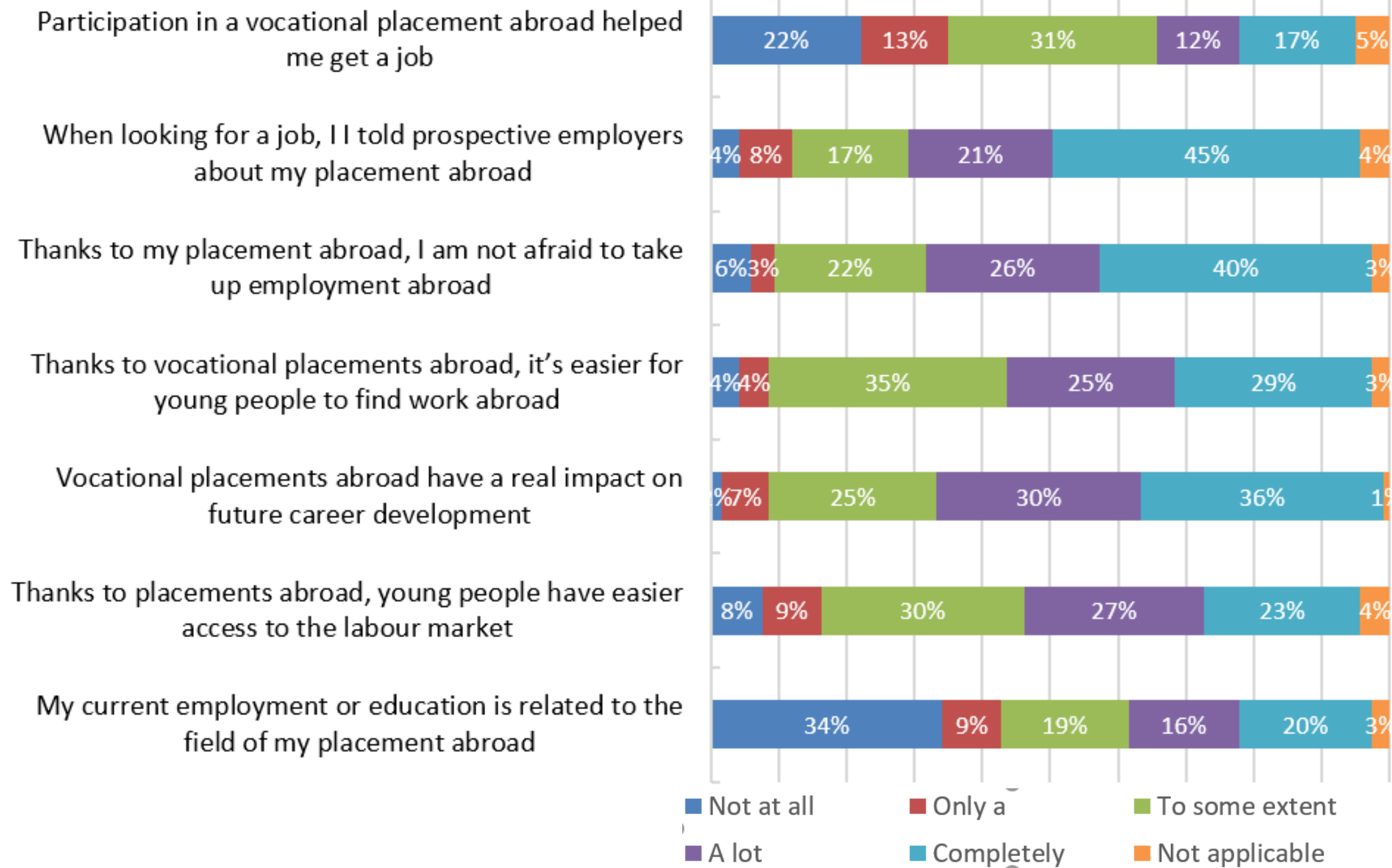
- 93% still based in Ireland
- 46% still studying VET, 54% had completed VET education
- Of these, half had progressed to Higher Education and half to the labour market
- Of those in Higher Education, 70% said their course of study was related to their vocational training; half said their work placement influenced their choice of course.

Employment status of respondents no longer in VET education



"Which of the following best describes your employment situation?"







Relevance of Skills to Labour Market

‘Employable’ people “not only know their technical area or specialism but can also apply the knowledge and skills they have in **varied and dynamic situations** which allow them to develop their skills further”

Capable people are deemed confident in their ability to:

- take appropriate action effectively;
- explain what they are hoping to achieve;
- engage successfully in life and work with others;
- continue their learning through their experiences in a changing world.

“Future Ready: Improving Graduate Employability Skills”, Irish Business and Employers Confederation 2018



Learners' Assessment of Impact on Employability

- 70% said their participation had helped them get a job
- 65% felt vocational placements abroad have a real impact on future career development
- 55% said vocational placements made it easier to find work abroad
- 48% said they had easier access to the labour market because of their placement abroad



What Would Participants Change?

- Matching of placement to learner
- Selection process
- Language training
- Duration
- Awareness of opportunity



Conclusions

Key benefits for participants are the development of competences and skills, broadening of horizons, development of new personal and professional connections.

Sending organisations provide exemplary support, which – along with European funding – contributes to social inclusion.



Recommendations

- Preparation: Peer-to-peer; project-based learning may contribute to sense of ownership and responsibility
- Preparation: Consider role of virtual mobility in matching placement to learner
- Element of language training
- Consider flexible placements or longer duration
- Increase awareness of opportunity – VET Skills Week!

10 November



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