

The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015

Survey Report



Produced by High Fliers Research

The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015

The twenty-first annual survey of graduate recruitment at the UK's leading universities.



Produced by



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Employers who participated in the 2015 research programme:

ACCA	The Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales (ICAEW)
Accenture	
Aldi	The Institute of Practitioners in Advertising (IPA)
American Express	Jaguar Land Rover
Arcadia Group	J.P. Morgan
The Army	KPMG
Arup	Lidl
Atos	Lloyds Banking Group
Bank of England	L'Oréal
Barclays	Mars
BDO	McDonald's
Bloomberg	Microsoft
BP	The National College for Teaching & Leadership
BT	Nationwide
Capital One	Network Rail
Centrica	The NHS
CIMA	nucleargraduates
Civil Service Fast Stream	Police Now
Danone	PwC
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Fidelity Worldwide Investment	Shell
Frontline	Siemens
FTI Consulting	Science and Technology Facilities Council
GCHQ	Teach First
GlaxoSmithKline	Telefónica
Grant Thornton	Think Ahead
HSBC	Transport for London
IBM	Unilever
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New to graduate recruitment?

Get off to a flying start.

For the last two decades, **High Fliers Research** has conducted detailed research into the graduate recruitment market in the UK, providing the country's leading employers with a unique insight into the attitudes and aspirations of final year university students.

Now, the company is delighted to offer **professional training** for new or recently-appointed graduate recruiters through intensive **one-day courses**, available monthly throughout the year at the High Fliers Research Centre in London. The courses have been designed to provide a highly practical insight into best-practice graduate recruitment and are ideal for those with up to 12 months experience of working in recruitment marketing or selection.

*For more information about future training courses or to book a place, please call
Carla Smith, Events Director on 020 7428 9000 or email carla.smith@highfliers.co.uk*

Foreword

Executive Summary

The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015 is based on face-to-face interviews with **18,412** final year students from the 'Class of 2015' studying at thirty leading universities in the UK, carried out in March 2015. It is the **largest** independent survey of the country's top finalists ever conducted and the sample includes a fifth of students graduating from these universities in the summer of 2015:

- The proportion of finalists who expect to begin a graduate job **straight after graduation** has increased to **26%**, its highest level for fourteen years, and there has been a corresponding drop in the number of graduates who expect to still be looking for work after leaving university.
- A quarter of students are intending to do a **postgraduate course** and one in seven are hoping to **take time off or go travelling** after graduation. The number of finalists intending to run their **own business** after university has increased to 4%, twice the level of two years ago.
- There has been a dramatic drop in the number of undergraduates with '**no definite plans**' for after university, just 9% were undecided about their futures, the lowest proportion since 1998.
- A record **64%** of students had made applications to graduate employers by the **end of February** in their final year, up very substantially from 46% ten years ago. On average, finalists made **7.4 applications** each to graduate employers and together made an estimated **474,000 applications** to graduate employers, four-fifths more than during the equivalent recruitment period six years ago.
- For the first time since 2001, **consulting** is the top destination for new graduates and interest in the sector is now at an all-time high, having increased by two-thirds in the last five years. **Marketing**, the **media** and **charity & voluntary work** are the next most-popular destinations for 2015.
- The **average starting salary** that finalists expect to earn as new graduates has **risen to £23,700**, some £700 more than in 2014 and the largest annual rise for seven years. Salaries that finalists expect to be paid five years after leaving university have also increased, to an average of **£41,400**, and over a sixth of finalists believe they will be earning **£100,000 or more** by the age of 30.
- An **unprecedented 37%** of the 'Class of 2015' had received a **graduate job offer** by Easter in their final year – either from an employer they had completed work experience with, or through the job applications they had made during their final year at university.
- Following the introduction of the new £9,000 per year **university tuition fees** for many of those graduating in 2015, finalists' average expected graduation debt has risen sharply to £30,000 and immediate debt (that needing to be repaid within 2-3 years) now averages £6,900.
- A record 48% of final year students graduating in 2015 began looking into their career options and researching potential graduate employers by the end of their **first year** at university.
- **Half** of all final year students had either done course placements, internships, or vacation work whilst at university, completing an average of at least **six months** work experience. The number of finalists who had done **casual vacation work** dropped to its lowest level ever.
- **Finalists' confidence** in the graduate job market has improved again and fewer than a quarter of the 'Class of 2015' were worried that the opportunities for new graduates are 'limited'.

The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015

Universities included in the survey.



Chapter 1

Introduction

About the Survey

The **UK Graduate Careers Survey** is the largest and most authoritative annual survey of final year students at the UK's top universities. Now in its twenty-first year, it is conducted annually by **High Fliers Research**.

The survey gives employers a unique insight into the career expectations and aspirations of final year students – just weeks before they graduate – and provides a definitive record of how they have conducted their job search.

Devised originally in 1995, the survey is the UK's largest and most comprehensive annual graduate recruitment survey. The research has become a key source of information for employers when reviewing the success of their graduate recruitment on campus and planning future marketing campaigns.

Headlines from recent surveys have also been widely reported in the national and local press, including coverage on *Breakfast on BBC One*, *Today on BBC Radio 4* and the *BBC News* channel, and in articles in *The Times*, *Daily Telegraph*, *The Independent*, *The Guardian* and *Financial Times*.

The 2015 survey is the largest independent student survey ever carried out at the UK's top universities and has been supported by sixty-five graduate employers. The survey is based on face-to-face interviews with **18,412 final year students**, supported by in-depth research with 2,288 student job hunters.



Survey Organisers

High Fliers Research Limited is an independent market research company that has been at the forefront of graduate recruitment research at the UK's leading universities since 1994. It has now worked with more than 150 national & international employers to measure the impact of their recruitment activities on campus and help them understand their position in the graduate market.

The company also conducts regular surveys of employers to research the latest graduate vacancy levels, starting salaries and benchmark recruitment practices. Its most recent study, *The Graduate Market in 2015* reported that Britain's top employers are planning to increase their graduate vacancies by eight per cent in 2015, taking recruitment to its highest level for over a decade.

Since 2007, High Fliers Research has hosted the UK's only annual conference exclusively for graduate recruiters, *The National Graduate Recruitment Conference*, at the five-star Grove Hotel in Hertfordshire each September. It also runs monthly one-day professional training courses for new graduate recruiters throughout the year at the High Fliers Research Centre in central London.

Internationally, the company works closely with the **Australian Association of Graduate Employers** and the **South African Graduate Recruitment Association** to carry out their annual surveys of graduate employers, new graduate joiners and graduates in-work.



Fieldwork for the Survey

The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015 sets out to examine the impact of graduate recruitment at the UK universities which are most-often targeted by national or international employers during their graduate recruitment. This ensures that the survey is as relevant and insightful as possible for the employers who participate in and fund the research programme.

The universities included are reviewed annually and adjusted to reflect changes in recruiting patterns but the 2015 list is unchanged from 2014. King's College London was introduced into the 2007 survey, the University of Reading became part of the research programme in 2004 and the London School of Economics was included for the first time in 2003.

Preparations for *The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015* began in earnest in April 2014 with the recruitment of local research managers at each of the universities selected for the survey. Managers were typically final year students, postgraduate students, or recent graduates of the university still living nearby. Their role was to co-ordinate the survey fieldwork at their university and they were selected for their strong local knowledge and understanding of the graduate recruitment process.

The main part of the survey is completed through face-to-face interviews with approximately one fifth of the final year student population. Whilst this is clearly a very labour-intensive, this approach is essential to guarantee that a large representative sample of final year students participate in the research. Interviewers for the fieldwork are drawn from the student community and over 800 were recruited by local university managers for 2015.

Interviews for the survey were timed to take place during early March – as late in the academic year as possible before the beginning of the final exam period, to ensure the survey recorded as much of students' job hunting activities as possible. At each university, a team of up to 40 local interviewers conducted 25 interviews each during an intensive six-day period. Every interviewer was provided with several university departments from which to select students at random to take part in interviews. Finalists studying medicine, veterinary science, pharmacy or dentistry were omitted from the survey as their career paths are quite separate from mainstream graduate recruitment. After the interviews had been completed, approximately five per cent of the original sample were re-interviewed by the survey's full-time research team to confirm the validity of the data.

The overall target for the survey was to interview between 15 and 20 per cent of the final year population at each of the universities in the study. In total, the 2015 survey included face-to-face interviews with a record 18,412 finalists, providing a sample of 18.9 per cent (see *Table 1.1*).

Table 1.1 Final Year Students Interviewed for The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015

	Number of finalists interviewed for the survey	Estimated number of finalists at university	% of finalists interviewed for survey		Number of finalists interviewed for the survey	Estimated number of finalists at university	% of finalists interviewed for survey
Aston	293	1,665	17.6	London School of Economics	345	1,260	27.4
Bath	402	2,275	17.7	London University College	478	3,070	15.6
Belfast Queen's University	476	3,015	15.8	Loughborough	711	3,055	23.3
Birmingham	859	4,480	19.2	Manchester	1,122	6,380	17.6
Bristol	598	2,970	20.1	Newcastle	679	3,435	19.8
Cambridge	676	3,035	22.3	Nottingham	1,027	5,360	19.2
Cardiff	757	3,670	20.6	Oxford	574	2,940	19.5
Durham	751	3,220	23.3	Reading	506	2,425	20.9
Edinburgh	673	4,135	16.3	Sheffield	840	4,155	20.2
Exeter	714	3,510	20.3	Southampton	585	3,645	16.0
Glasgow	525	3,230	16.3	St Andrews	378	1,365	27.7
Lancaster	538	2,505	21.5	Strathclyde	501	2,895	17.3
Leeds	1,072	5,655	19.0	Warwick	517	3,500	14.8
Liverpool	574	3,555	16.1	York	641	2,895	22.1
London Imperial College	262	1,630	16.1				
London King's College	338	2,710	12.5	SURVEY TOTAL	18,412	97,460	18.9

Chapter 2

The Class of 2015

Key Findings

- *26% of finalists expect to start a graduate job after university, the highest proportion since 2001.*
- *The number of finalists with 'no definite plans' is at its lowest level for seventeen years.*
- *Consulting is the top destination for 2015.*
- *Record number of finalists had applied to employers.*
- *Confidence in the job market is at a six-year high.*

Careers > Graduate Programmes

- > List the opportunities available to me
- > What are the minimum academic requirements?
- > What is the application deadline?

Make an application

ROBIN BURROWS

Background

The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015 examines final year students' plans and intentions for life after university, and their applications for employment to help build up a full picture of current graduate recruitment and students' confidence in the graduate employment market.

An important indicator is the number of finalists who expect to start (or continue looking for) a graduate job this year, as compared to those who have other plans such as postgraduate study or travel, and the number who are undecided about their future.

Finalists were also asked in detail about the business areas or job functions that they had been applying to or expected to make applications to later in the recruitment round. These results provide important data on the supply of new graduates in 2015 and the kind of employment which they are most interested in. Students were also asked about their views on the graduate job market and the employment prospects for the 'Class of 2015'.

The research also explores the timetable for those making applications, the application methods used and the volume of applications that individuals have made. Those who had made applications were additionally asked about their progress and experiences during the assessment and selection rounds – had they been rejected or invited to interview? Had they reached the final-round selection centres or been made a job offer? If so, had they accepted a definite position with a graduate employer?

The final part of the analysis looks at the total debts that final year students expected to have upon graduation from university and investigates how finalists felt about their university experience – from their choice of degree course and institution, to the quality of teaching & tuition provided and the employability skills that they developed.

Finalists' Plans for After University

This year's survey shows that a total of 42 per cent of final year students are planning to join the graduate job market in 2015 (see *Chart 2.1*), a similar figure to that recorded in last year's survey. However, within this figure, 26 per cent of the 'Class of 2015' are expecting to start a full-time graduate role soon after leaving university, the highest level for fourteen years (see *Chart 2.2*). Conversely, fewer finalists thought they would be job hunting after graduation – just 16 per cent expected to still be looking for a graduate job following their final exams.

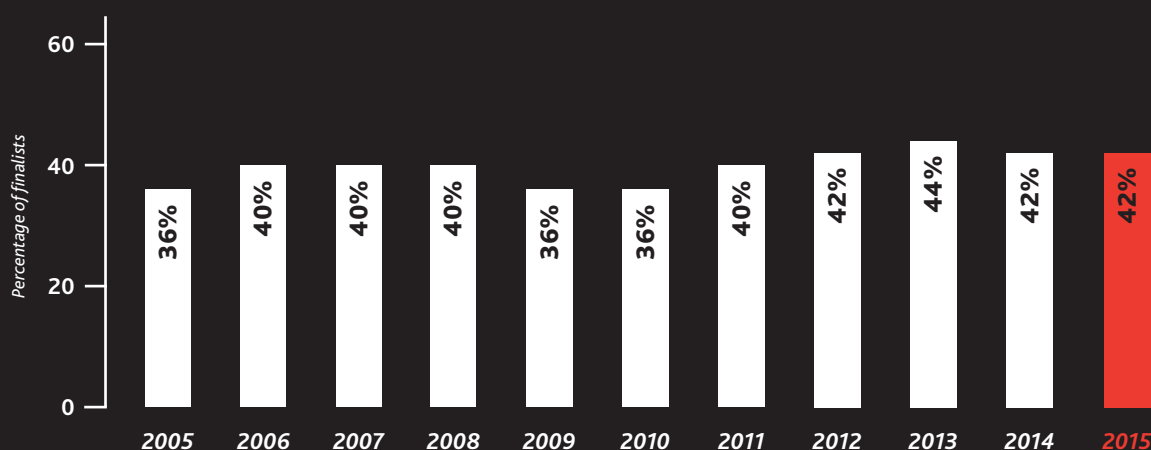
Seven per cent of this year's finalists believe they will be doing 'other work' after their degree, typically a temporary job or a voluntary position, and four per cent hope to be running their own business – double the proportion seen two years ago. A quarter of finalists are preparing to continue their studies with a postgraduate course but just 13 per cent are intending to take time-off or go travelling after graduation. And strikingly, the proportion of finalists with 'no definite plans' for life beyond university has dropped to nine per cent, its lowest level since 1998.

This combination of results suggest that the 'Class of 2015' is one of the most confident, motivated and organised cohorts of the last two decades – with more final year students expecting to start work straightaway, fewer expecting to be job hunting after graduation, increased numbers hoping to start their own business, and a very substantial reduction in the proportion of undergraduates who are uncertain about their future.

Examining how finalists' plans have changed over the last twenty years, it is interesting to see that for seven consecutive recruitment seasons until 2004, the percentage of university-leavers heading to the graduate job market fell steadily – from a high of 49 per cent in 1998 to an all-time low of just 35 per cent. Although this trend was reversed for the two following years, *The UK Graduate Careers Survey* did not record any further increases in the number of finalists expecting graduate jobs between 2006 and 2008. The onset of the recession clearly had a major impact and the number of graduates expecting to join the job market dropped back to 36 per cent in 2009 and 2010. In the five years since, the proportion of finalists expecting to find graduate employment has recovered to its current level.

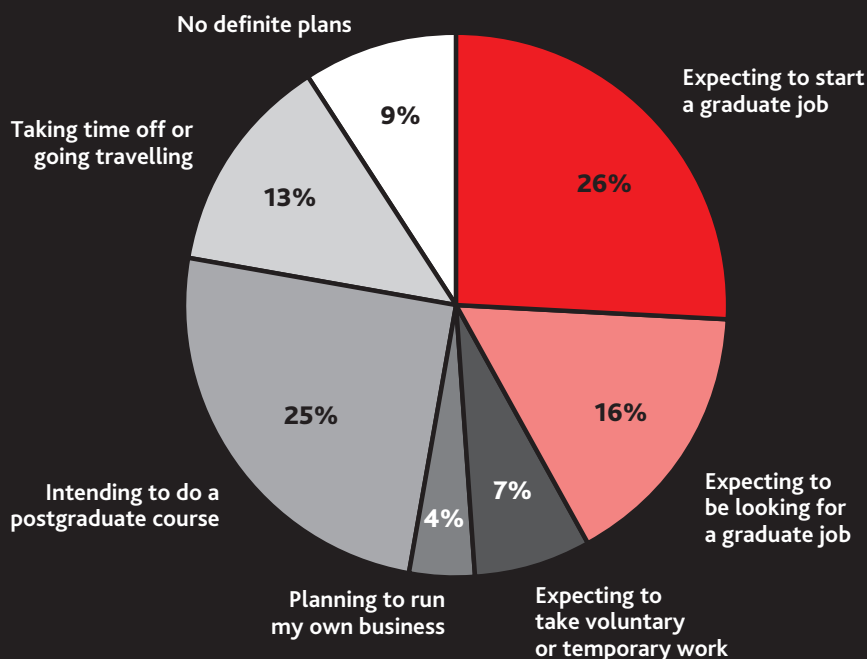
Aston, Bath, Imperial College London, Loughborough, Southampton, the London School of Economics and Warwick had the largest number of students planning to start work or look for a graduate job after university – at least half of finalists thought they would enter the graduate job market in 2015 (see *Table 2.3*). Postgraduate courses were especially popular with students at Liverpool, King's College London and St Andrews (see *Table 2.4*), whereas finalists at Newcastle, Leeds and Bristol were the most likely to be planning to take time off or go travelling at the end of their studies.

Chart 2.1 Finalists who are Expecting to Join the Graduate Job Market



Base - The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2005-2015

Chart 2.2 Finalists' Plans for After University in 2015



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Table 2.3 Finalists who expect Graduate Jobs

	<i>% of finalists</i>
Aston	59
Bath	56
London Imperial College	53
Loughborough	53
Southampton	53
London School of Economics	50
Warwick	50
Strathclyde	48
Manchester	46
Newcastle	45
Birmingham	44
Oxford	44
Reading	44
Cambridge	43
Durham	43
Nottingham	43
Lancaster	42
London King's College	42
Belfast Queen's University	41
Edinburgh	41
Exeter	40
York	39
London University College	38
Leeds	37
Bristol	35
Cardiff	35
Sheffield	35
Liverpool	34
Glasgow	32
St Andrews	32
SURVEY AVERAGE	26

Table 2.4 Finalists who plan Further Study

	<i>% of finalists</i>
Liverpool	37
London King's College	34
St Andrews	34
London University College	33
Glasgow	31
Cambridge	29
Durham	29
York	29
Belfast Queen's University	28
Sheffield	28
Oxford	27
Warwick	27
Bristol	26
Cardiff	26
Edinburgh	26
London Imperial College	26
Southampton	26
Lancaster	25
London School of Economics	25
Manchester	25
Exeter	24
Reading	23
Birmingham	22
Leeds	22
Nottingham	22
Strathclyde	20
Newcastle	18
Bath	17
Loughborough	15
Aston	13
SURVEY AVERAGE	25

Applications to Employers

The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015 measured applications to graduate employers in 2014-2015 in three ways – finalists who had already applied to different career areas by the time the survey took place in late February, students who stated that they intended to make applications later in the year, and a combination of all these applications.

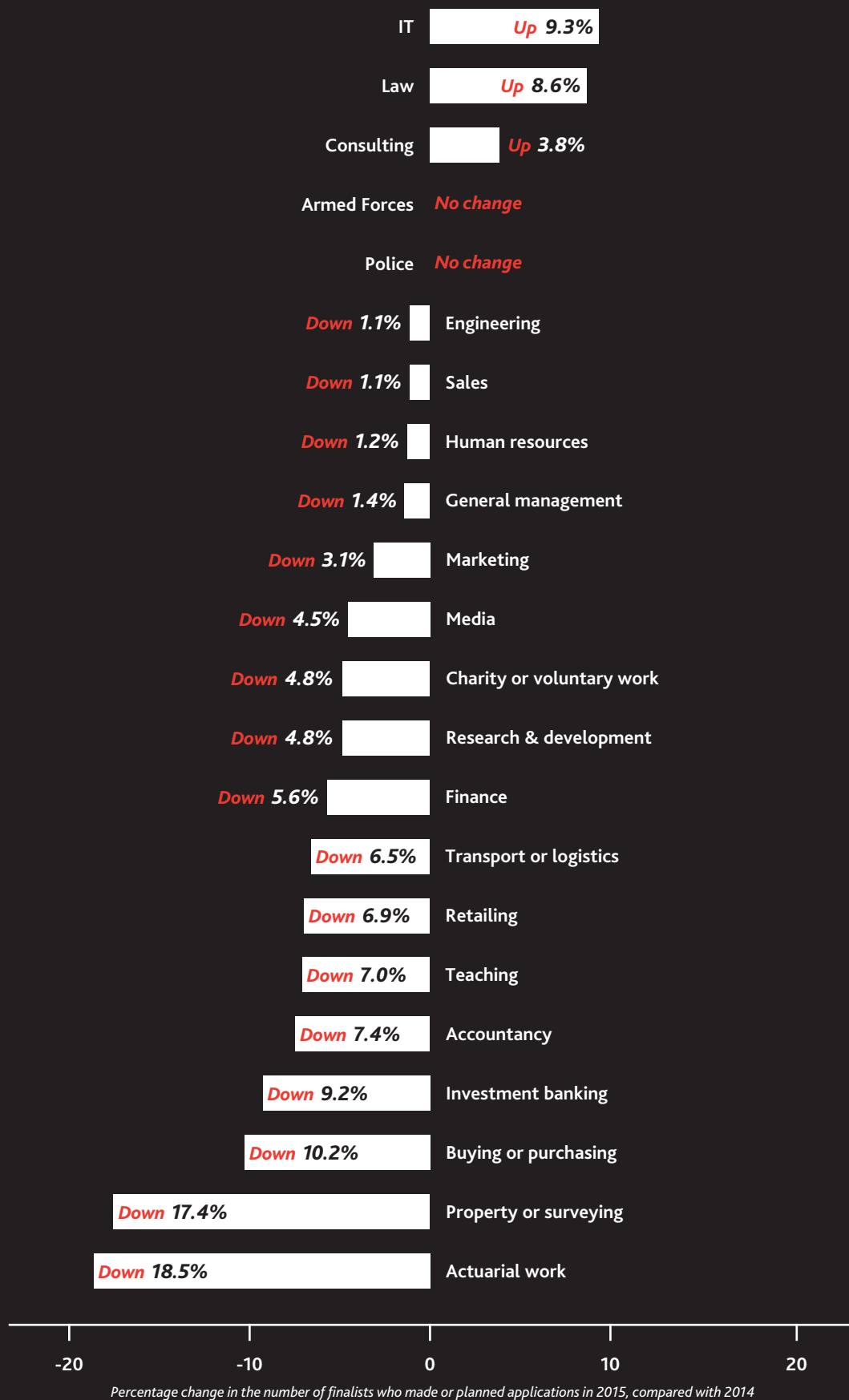
Analysis of applications that finalists from the ‘Class of 2015’ had already made shows that there has been another noticeable rise in the number of students applying for graduate jobs in consulting (see *Table 2.5*). This means that for the second year running consulting is the most popular destination for students who had made applications by the end of February and that the level of applicants for the sector has now virtually doubled, compared with just five years ago. In all, just seven individual career areas had an increase in early applicants in 2014-2015, including law, sales, human resources, IT, the Armed Forces and the police.

Looking at the applications that finalists plan to make later in 2015, the sectors that job hunters are most likely to apply to are marketing, media, charity or voluntary work, consulting, research & development and teaching (see *Table 2.6*).

By combining these ‘early’ and ‘late’ applications, the resulting table shows that for the first time since 2001, consulting is the top choice for new graduates (see *Table 2.7*) and is attracting more university-leavers than at any time in the last two decades. Marketing and media jobs remain popular choices but teaching has slipped out of the top five graduate destinations for the first time in fifteen years. Examining this full list of finalists’ applications against the similar table from 2014 shows that the number of applicants has increased in just three careers sectors this year – IT, law and consulting (see *Chart 2.8*). Students’ interest in the Armed Forces and the police is unchanged year-on-year but in seventeen key areas applications have dropped, including accountancy, investment banking, finance, retailing and teaching.

Table 2.5 Job Applications already made by Finalists		Table 2.6 Job Applications Finalists plan to make later		Table 2.7 Total Number of Finalists Interested in Sectors	
	% of finalists		% of finalists		% of finalists
Consulting	13.0	Marketing	11.3	Consulting	16.4
Marketing	10.2	Media	10.5	Marketing	15.7
Investment banking	8.4	Charity or voluntary work	9.6	Media	12.7
Accountancy	8.1	Consulting	9.5	Charity or voluntary work	11.9
Finance	7.4	Research & development	9.1	Research & development	11.9
Law	7.2	Teaching	8.5	Teaching	11.9
Engineering	7.1	Law	7.4	Investment banking	10.8
Research & development	7.1	Finance	6.2	Finance	10.2
Media	6.4	Human resources	6.1	Law	10.1
Teaching	6.3	Engineering	5.8	Accountancy	10.0
Sales	5.9	Investment banking	5.7	Engineering	8.9
Charity or voluntary work	5.4	Sales	5.6	Sales	8.7
Human resources	4.9	Accountancy	5.5	Human resources	8.5
General management	4.4	General management	4.7	General management	6.8
IT	3.5	Retailing	3.6	Retailing	5.4
Retailing	3.2	IT	3.0	IT	4.7
Buying or purchasing	2.5	Buying or purchasing	2.9	Buying or purchasing	4.4
Transport or logistics	1.9	Transport or logistics	1.8	Transport or logistics	2.9
Actuarial work	1.7	Armed Forces	1.6	Armed Forces	2.5
Armed Forces	1.3	Property or surveying	1.4	Actuarial work	2.2
Property or surveying	1.0	Police	1.4	Police	1.9
Police	0.8	Actuarial work	1.1	Property or surveying	1.9

Chart 2.8 How the Number of Applicants has Changed in 2015, compared with 2014



Source - The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2014 & 2015

Progress with Applications to Employers

As well as recording when students made job applications, the survey also tracks the number of applications that finalists made. By the time the survey took place in February 2015, a total of 64 per cent of final year students had applied for graduate positions, a two per cent increase on the same point a year ago and the highest proportion ever recorded by *The UK Graduate Careers Survey*. This is a remarkable 18 per cent higher than the level of applicants ten years ago.

Finalists had made an average of 7.4 applications each this year – this is a similar level to last year but a noticeable increase from the average of 6.9 applications in 2012 and 5.7 applications in 2010 (see *Chart 2.11*). This would suggest that finalists from the ‘Class of 2015’ at these thirty universities collectively submitted approximately 474,000 applications to employers by the end of February, an annual increase of around two per cent, taking application levels to their highest yet (see *Chart 2.13*). Applications to employers have risen in six of the last seven years and are now double the volume they were at the start of the recession in 2008.

Students were asked about their progress so far with securing a graduate job offer. A fifth of finalists had received a job offer from an employer they had done work experience with and a similar proportion had received offers via applications to employers during their final year (see *Chart 2.12*). Interestingly, at the time of the survey, barely half of finalists had accepted a definite offer. Students at the London School of Economics, Imperial College London, Warwick, Cambridge and Bath had the highest success rates – at least half had secured a job offer by the end of February (see *Table 2.10*).

Table 2.9 Average Number of Applications

	Average Made
London School of Economics	10.2
Warwick	9.8
Strathclyde	9.6
Aston	9.0
London Imperial College	8.5
London University College	8.5
Glasgow	8.3
Durham	8.1
London King's College	8.1
Reading	8.0
Southampton	8.0
Cambridge	7.6
Edinburgh	7.6
York	7.6
Newcastle	7.5
St Andrews	7.5
Lancaster	7.4
Exeter	7.3
Loughborough	7.2
Manchester	7.1
Nottingham	7.1
Bath	7.0
Sheffield	7.0
Birmingham	6.9
Oxford	6.9
Bristol	6.1
Leeds	6.1
Liverpool	5.5
Cardiff	5.4
Belfast Queen's University	4.4
SURVEY AVERAGE	7.4

Table 2.10 Finalists who received Job Offers

	% of finalists
London School of Economics	67
London Imperial College	63
Warwick	55
Cambridge	53
Bath	50
London University College	49
Oxford	49
Aston	48
Durham	42
St Andrews	42
Edinburgh	40
Loughborough	40
Southampton	40
Strathclyde	38
Birmingham	37
Nottingham	37
York	37
Belfast Queen's University	36
Lancaster	33
London King's College	33
Exeter	32
Manchester	32
Newcastle	32
Glasgow	31
Sheffield	31
Leeds	29
Bristol	27
Reading	26
Cardiff	23
Liverpool	20
SURVEY AVERAGE	37

Chart 2.11 Total Number of Job Applications made by Finalists

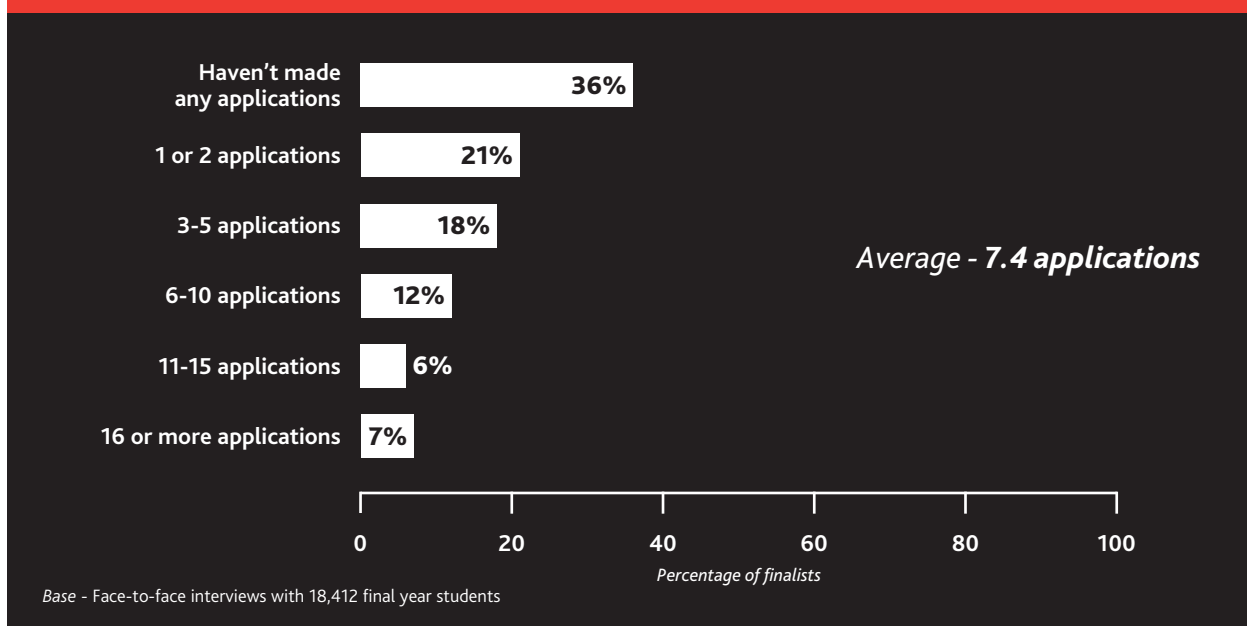


Chart 2.12 Finalists' Progress with Graduate Job Offers, by February in Final Year

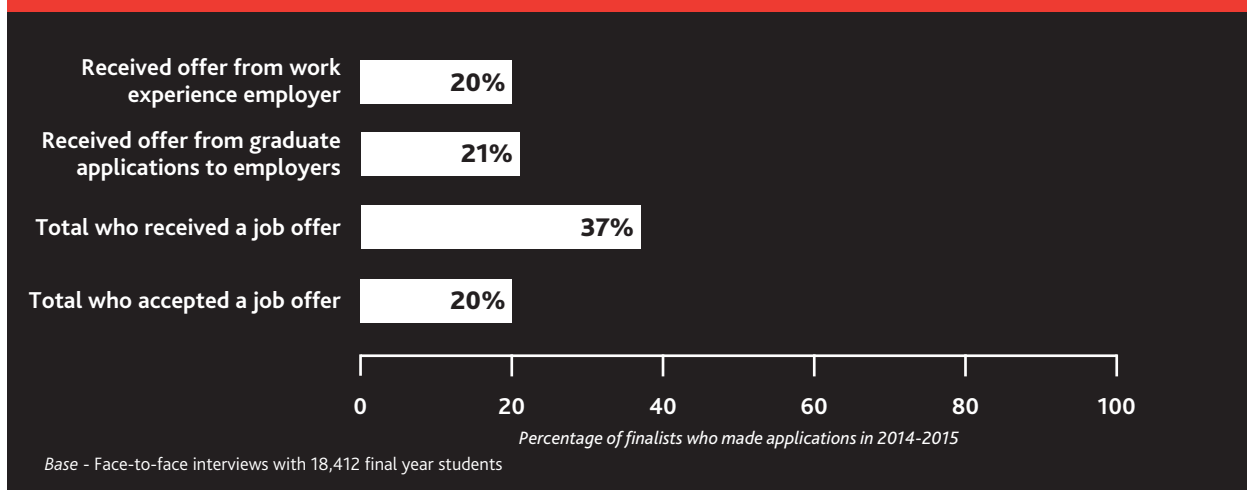
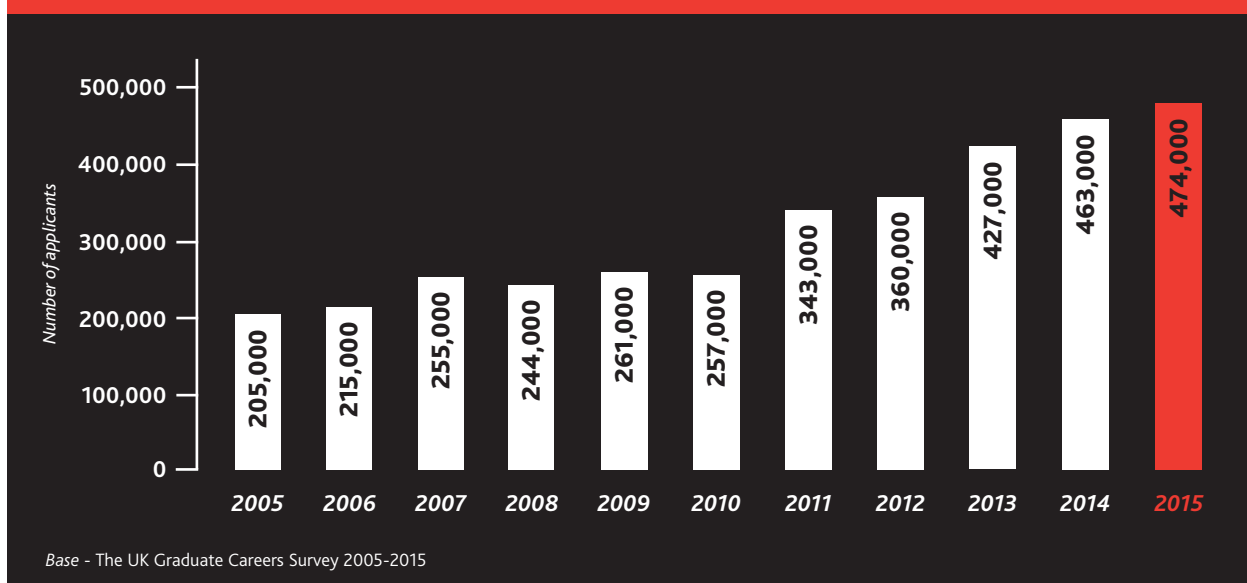


Chart 2.13 Estimated Total Number of Applications made by Finalists to Graduate Employers



Finalists' Views on the Graduate Job Market

The prolonged recession that beset the UK for five years until 2013 had a very profound effect on the graduate job market. Vacancies for new graduates at the leading employers dropped by a quarter during 2008 and 2009 and a record number of finalists faced being left unemployed or opted for postgraduate study as an alternative to working after graduation.

While the number of graduate jobs available in 2010 and 2011 increased by more than 15 per cent, few finalists at the universities included within the survey seemed more confident about their career prospects. And in 2012, the recovery in graduate recruitment appeared to stall, with fewer vacancies available at the leading employers. Thankfully, the economic climate has improved considerably since and *The Graduate Market in 2015* report, published by High Fliers Research in January, confirmed that the number of entry-level vacancies for graduates increased significantly in 2014 and are set to rise again by a further eight per cent during 2015, taking graduate recruitment to its highest level for over a decade.

Final year students from the 'Class of 2015' were asked what their perceptions were of this year's graduate job market. Around a sixth of finalists thought 'there are plenty of graduate jobs for finalists', three-fifths of students gave the realistic assessment that 'there are some jobs, but not enough for everyone' whilst 23 per cent were more pessimistic, describing the job market as 'limited' (see *Chart 2.16*). This profile is decidedly more optimistic than last year and is certainly the most upbeat assessment since the beginning of the recession. In the years following the previous economic

Table 2.14 Finalists who thought there are 'Plenty of Graduate Jobs' available in 2015

	% of finalists
Aston	27
Bath	22
London Imperial College	21
Southampton	20
London School of Economics	19
Birmingham	17
Cambridge	17
Loughborough	17
Strathclyde	17
Manchester	16
Newcastle	16
Nottingham	16
Durham	15
Warwick	15
Lancaster	14
Oxford	14
Reading	14
Edinburgh	13
Exeter	13
Glasgow	13
Leeds	13
London University College	13
York	13
Belfast Queen's University	12
Cardiff	12
Liverpool	12
Sheffield	12
Bristol	9
London King's College	9
St Andrews	7
SURVEY AVERAGE	15

Table 2.15 Finalists who thought there are 'Limited Graduate Jobs' available in 2015

	% of finalists
Belfast Queen's University	32
Edinburgh	32
London King's College	30
Liverpool	28
Manchester	28
Glasgow	26
Reading	26
St Andrews	26
Warwick	26
York	26
Bristol	25
Lancaster	25
Nottingham	25
Leeds	24
London Imperial College	24
Sheffield	24
Southampton	24
Cardiff	23
London School of Economics	23
Newcastle	23
Strathclyde	23
Birmingham	21
Durham	19
London University College	19
Loughborough	19
Bath	18
Exeter	18
Cambridge	16
Oxford	12
Aston	11
SURVEY AVERAGE	23

downturn in 2002-2003, the proportion of final year students who described the graduate job market as 'limited' dropped to less than a fifth, reaching a low of 17 per cent in 2008, the year before the recession took hold (see *Chart 2.17*). Twelve months later, the mood on campus had changed entirely and over half of all final year undergraduates from the 'Class of 2009' were very pessimistic about their graduate employment prospects.

Confidence has gradually improved in the years since and now with less than a quarter of finalists describing the job market as 'limited', sentiment is close to returning to the levels seen a decade ago. At individual universities, students at Aston, Bath, Imperial College London and Southampton seem most confident about graduates' employment prospects (see *Table 2.14*), whereas more than a quarter of finalists at Belfast Queen's University, Edinburgh, London King's College, Liverpool, Manchester, Glasgow, Reading, St Andrews, Warwick and York are still concerned there will be limited opportunities for university-leavers this year (see *Table 2.15*).

Chart 2.16 Finalists' Perceptions of the 2015 Graduate Job Market

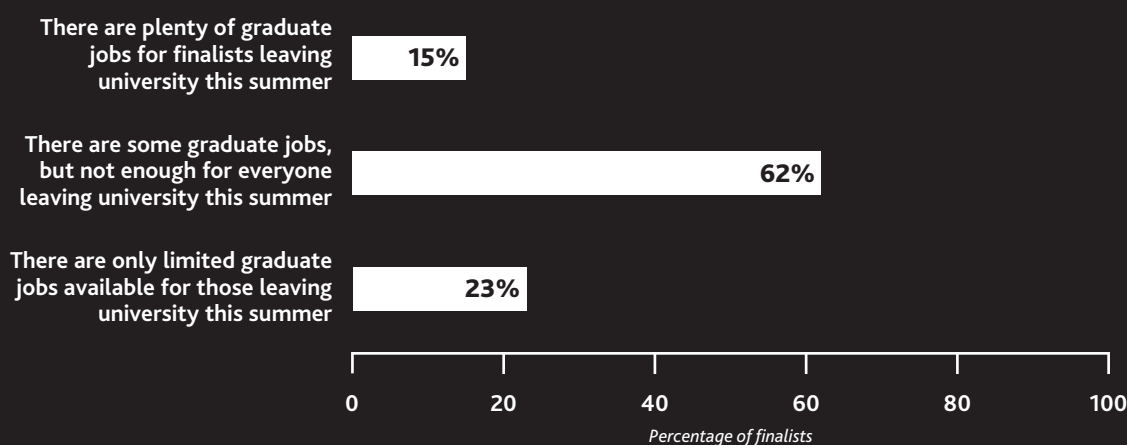
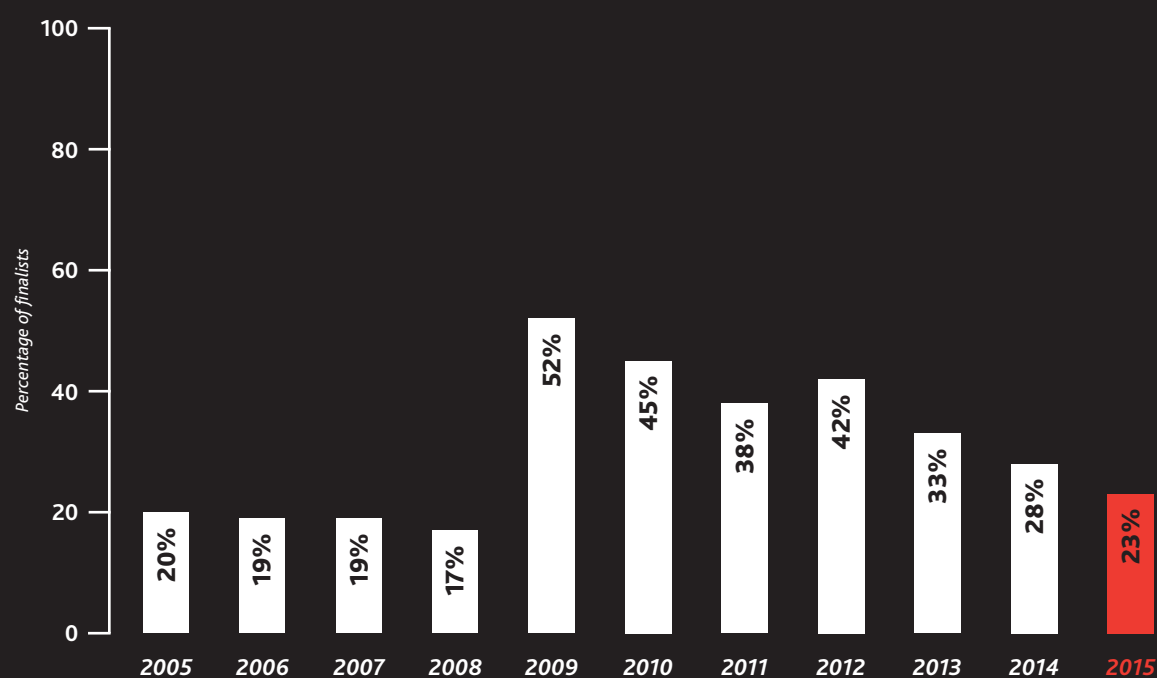


Chart 2.17 Finalists who Described the Graduate Job Market as 'Limited'



Base - The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2005-2015

Graduation Debt

There are three different groups of students within the ‘Class of 2015’ – UK students on three-year degree courses who started their studies in 2012 and are the first cohort of undergraduates whose university tuition fees are up to £9,000 per year; UK students who have done four or five-year courses who have paid annual tuition fees of up to £3,500, the fee-structure introduced in 2006; and overseas students who have paid variable tuition fees depending on the university attended and subject studied. Student loans have been available to students from the UK and European Union countries to cover the full amount of tuition fees, along with maintenance loans of £5,000 per annum for those studying away from home, at universities outside London.

As a result of these changes to the university tuition fee regime, this year’s survey shows that the expected graduation debt for finalists leaving university this summer has risen very significantly, to an average of £30,000, almost £10,000 more than the level recorded in 2014 (see *Chart 2.21*). Students at Imperial College London, University College London and the London School of Economics faced the largest debts of between £35,000 and £40,000, fuelled by higher proportions of overseas students and the cost of living in London. The lowest predicted debts were at Strathclyde and Glasgow, where many undergraduates opt to live at home for their studies and Scottish students benefit from not having to pay tuition fees for their courses.

The survey analysed how much of these debts needed repaying soon – within 2 or 3 years of graduating – as opposed to long-term student loans. This shows that whilst three-quarters of students don’t expect to have any immediate debts, the average for those that do has increased to £6,900 (see *Table 2.19*).

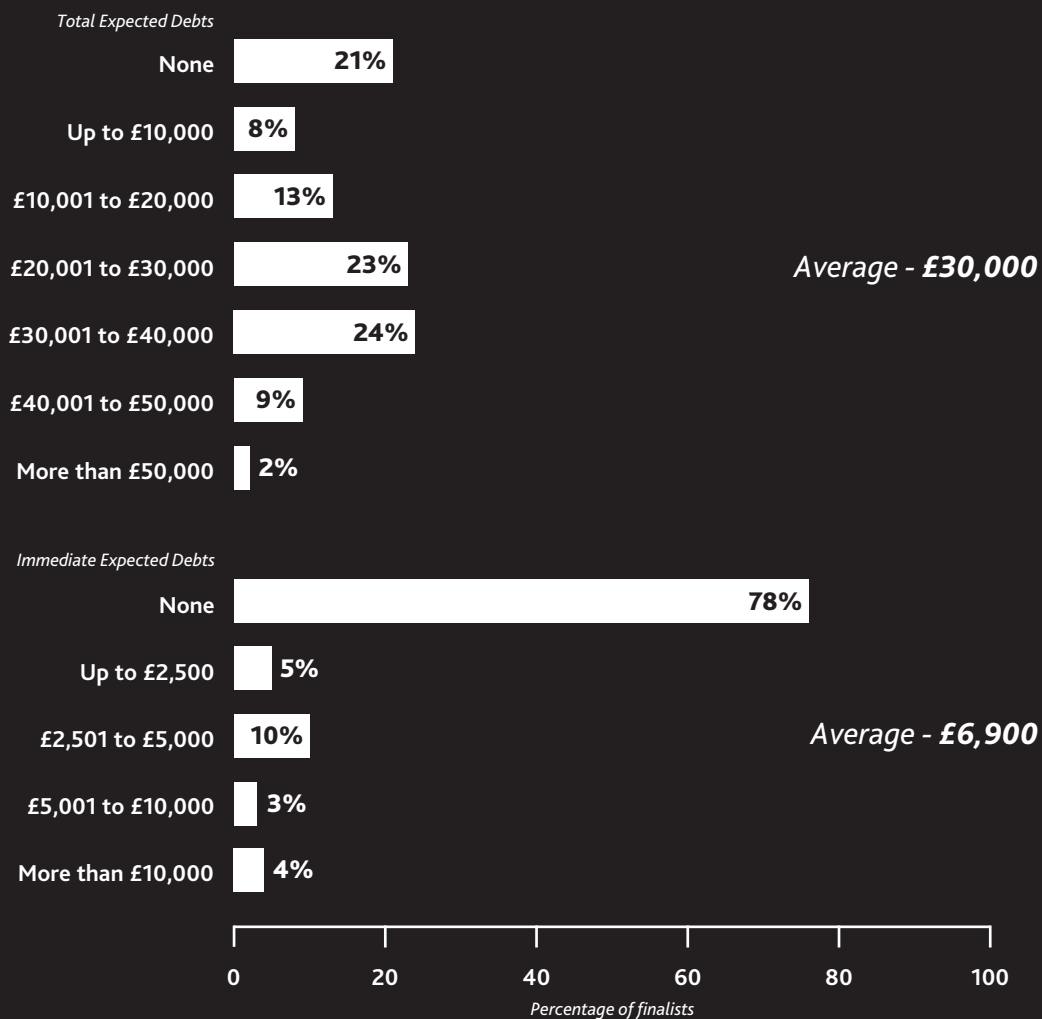
Table 2.18 Finalists’ Average Total Debt

	<i>Average Debt</i>
London Imperial College	£39,300
London University College	£36,500
London School of Economics	£36,400
Durham	£33,700
Sheffield	£33,700
Lancaster	£33,200
London King’s College	£33,200
Warwick	£33,000
York	£32,700
Bristol	£32,600
Newcastle	£32,400
Manchester	£32,100
Liverpool	£32,000
Exeter	£31,900
Cambridge	£31,800
Oxford	£31,700
Nottingham	£31,600
Reading	£31,200
Loughborough	£30,200
Leeds	£29,500
Birmingham	£29,300
Cardiff	£28,700
Southampton	£28,600
Bath	£27,100
Aston	£23,000
Edinburgh	£21,000
St Andrews	£20,800
Belfast Queen’s University	£19,900
Glasgow	£15,700
Strathclyde	£13,000
SURVEY AVERAGE	£30,000

Table 2.19 Finalists’ Average Immediate Debts

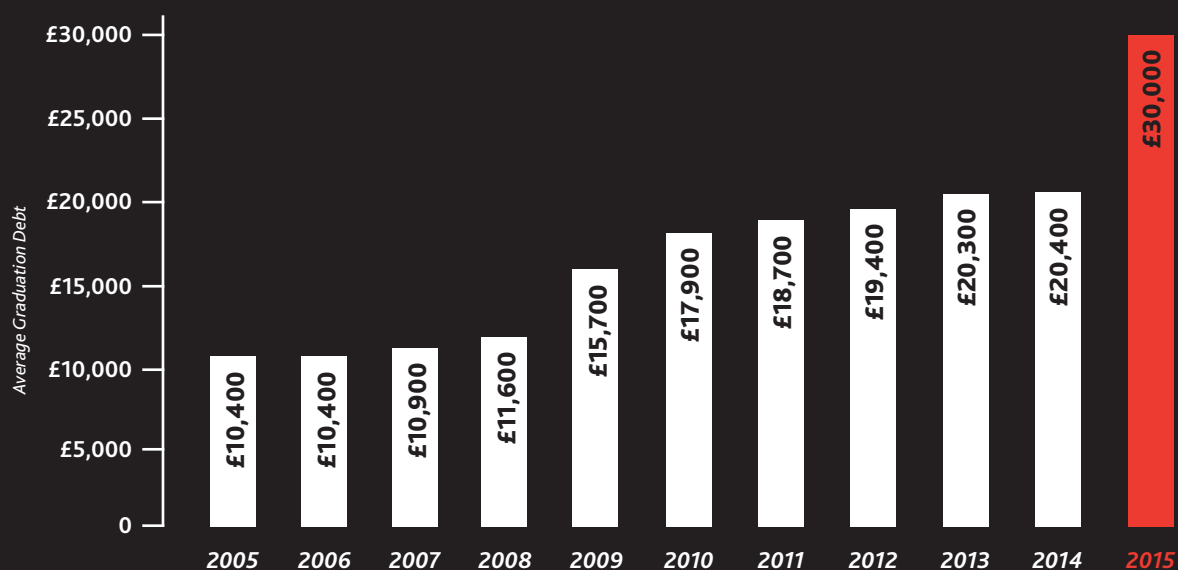
	<i>Average Debt</i>
London Imperial College	£11,200
London School of Economics	£10,000
London University College	£9,400
York	£8,900
London King’s College	£8,600
Durham	£8,400
Warwick	£8,300
Cambridge	£8,100
Exeter	£8,100
Birmingham	£8,000
Manchester	£7,700
Sheffield	£7,600
Lancaster	£7,300
Reading	£6,900
Southampton	£6,900
Bath	£6,800
Leeds	£6,700
Nottingham	£6,600
Aston	£6,500
Bristol	£6,500
Liverpool	£6,300
Newcastle	£6,300
Oxford	£6,200
Cardiff	£5,900
St Andrews	£5,600
Loughborough	£5,500
Edinburgh	£5,000
Belfast Queen’s University	£4,300
Strathclyde	£4,200
Glasgow	£3,100
SURVEY AVERAGE	£6,900

Chart 2.20 Finalists' Expected Debts on Graduation



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Chart 2.21 Finalists' Average Graduation Debts 2005-2015



Base - The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2005-2015

Students' Time at University

The penultimate section in this part of the survey explored students' opinions on the university experience. Finalists were shown eleven different statements about their time at university and asked whether they 'strongly agree', 'agree', 'disagree' or 'strongly disagree' with each one.

The results show that finalists are generally positive and upbeat about their experiences at university. A very convincing 95 per cent of finalists say that they've enjoyed their time as an undergraduate and would recommend it to others, whilst more than four-fifths of students think that the content of their course and the standard of teaching was good (see *Table 2.22*). These enthusiastic endorsements came from finalists at every university in the survey but those at Oxford and Cambridge were particularly complimentary about the tuition they've received.

A total of 85 per cent of finalists said that their main reason for starting a degree course was to improve their career prospects but fewer than a fifth were convinced that their time at university had given them the skills that graduate employers are looking for. Those at Loughborough, Aston, Lancaster, Strathclyde and Liverpool seemed to be the most careers-motivated at the start of their degrees and were amongst the most optimistic at the end of their studies.

Over 90 per cent of students believed that the university they had chosen to attend would stand them in good stead with employers, although those at Queen's University Belfast, Reading, Liverpool and Cardiff were the least convinced by this. Three-fifths of students admitted they didn't know when they started their degree which job or career they were likely to do after university and two-thirds confirmed that whilst they'd been at university they had changed their mind about what they wanted to do after graduation.

Table 2.22 Final Year Students' Views on their Time at University

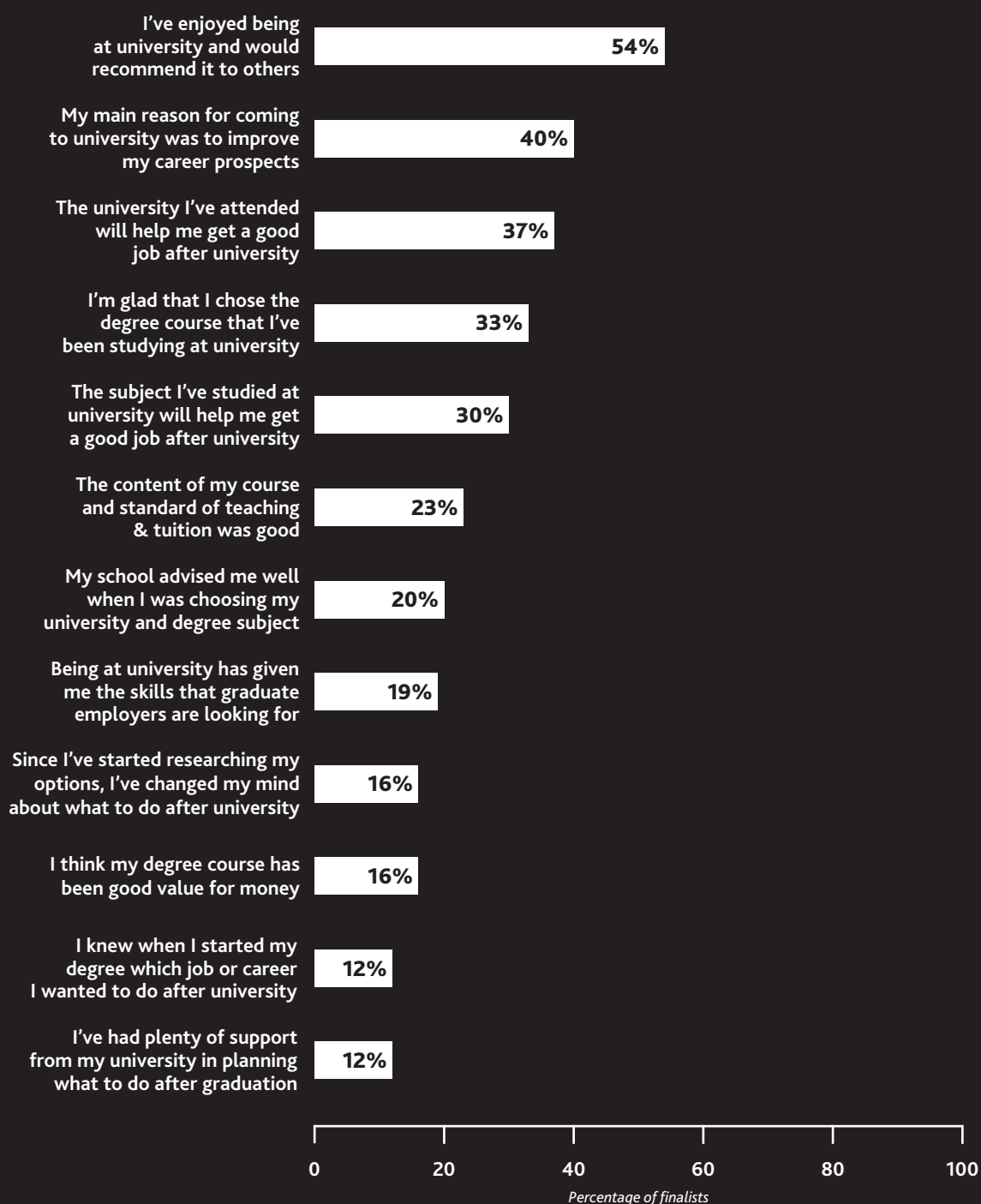
	Strongly Agree %	Agree %	Disagree %	Strongly Disagree %
I've enjoyed being at university and would recommend it to others	54	41	4	1
My main reason for coming to university was to improve my career prospects	40	45	13	2
The university I've attended will help me get a good job after university	37	56	6	1
I'm glad I chose the degree course I've been studying	33	52	12	3
The subject I've studied at university will help me get a good job after university	30	55	13	2
The content of my course and standard of teaching & tuition was good	23	62	12	3
My school advised me well when I was choosing my university and degree subject	20	48	24	8
Being at university has given me the skills that graduate employers are looking for	19	67	12	2
Since I've started researching my options, I've changed my mind about what I want to do after university	16	51	28	5
I think my degree course has been good value for money	16	45	30	9
I knew when I started my degree which job or career I wanted to do after university	12	28	40	20
I've had plenty of support from the university in planning what to do after completing my degree	12	47	34	7

Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

It is now nine years since this question about undergraduates' time at university was first included in *The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2006* and it is intriguing to see how final year students' opinions have changed over this period.

By comparison with the 'Class of 2006', the number of finalists whose main reason for going to university was improve their career prospects has increased very sharply and more of today's students would recommend their university to others. And this year's finalists seem to be more certain that the university they've attended will help improve their employment chances. Whilst finalists from 2006 were preoccupied about the introduction of the new university tuition fees of £3,000 per year, only one in six students from the 'Class of 2015' believe their degree courses have been value for money.

Chart 2.23 Statements about Students' Time at University with which Finalists 'Strongly Agree'



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Conclusions and Recommendations

The 2015 survey results provide a detailed analysis of the applications that final year students made or intend to make for employment after university and their reaction to the current graduate job market:

- The percentage of final year students from the UK's leading universities who expect to start a full-time graduate job straight after university has increased for the fifth year running to 26 per cent, its highest level for fourteen years.
- A quarter of students are intending to do a postgraduate course and one in seven are hoping to take time off or go travelling after graduation. The number of finalists intending to work for themselves or run their own business after university has increased to four per cent, twice the level of two years ago.
- There has been a dramatic drop in the number of undergraduates with 'no definite plans' for after university – just nine per cent were undecided about their futures, the lowest proportion since 1998.
- For the first time in fourteen years, consulting is the top destination for new graduates and interest in the sector is now at an all-time high, having increased by two-thirds in the last five years.
- A record 64 per cent of students had made applications to graduate employers by the end of February in their final year, up very substantially from 46 per cent ten years ago.
- Final year students made an estimated 474,000 applications to employers by the end of February, four-fifths more than during the similar recruitment period five years ago.
- An unprecedented 37 per cent of the 'Class of 2015' had received a graduate job offer by Easter in their final year – either from an employer they had completed work experience with, or through the job applications they had made during their final year at university.
- Confidence in the graduate job market has improved again and fewer than a quarter of the 'Class of 2015' were worried that the opportunities for new graduates remain 'limited'.
- Following the introduction of the new £9,000 per year university tuition fees for some of those graduating in 2015, finalists' average expected graduation debt has risen sharply to £30,000 and immediate debt (needing to be repaid within 2-3 years) now averages £6,900.
- The majority of finalists are very positive about their time at university, their choice of institution and the course they've studied, but fewer are certain that they've developed the right skills for employment.

Chapter 3

Graduates' Expectations & Aspirations

Key Findings

- Advertising, public relations & marketing agencies are again the most popular employers.
- Fewer job hunters hope to work in London after graduating from university.
- The most important factor influencing applications is 'content of work'.
- Finalists expect to earn average starting salaries of £23,700, a sharp increase compared with 2014.



SARAH MERSON

Background

A key aim of *The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015* is to provide graduate employers with an accurate and realistic picture of what final year university students really expect from their first employment and career beyond. This can be hard for employers to do directly, as students who have applied for graduate positions often tell recruiters what they think their interviewers and assessors want to hear in order to improve their chances of success during the application and selection process.

For this part of the research, the report focuses just on the aspirations and expectations of finalists who had either already made applications for a graduate job at the time the survey took place, or intended to make applications later in the year. This is a combined population of 76 per cent of final year students and these students are referred to as 'job hunters' throughout Chapter 3. This approach means that only the opinions and views of students who were actively looking for work in 2014-2015 were recorded – the 24 per cent of finalists who did not plan to make any applications for work this year are excluded.

Student job hunters were questioned in detail about their aspirations for their first employment after university – the type of organisation and the industry or sector they would like to work for, the location of work, the aspects of their first job that were most important, what they thought 'day-to-day' working life would be like and the length of time they expected to stay with their initial employer. The survey also examined job hunters' views on remuneration – asking about anticipated graduate starting salaries and what they thought they would be earning five years into their career

The research investigated which of these factors were most important to job hunters when they were deciding which graduate employers to apply to and concluded by questioning students about their hopes and aspirations for the future.

Expectations for First Employer

Student job hunters were asked about the type of organisation they most wanted to be employed by after university and in which industry or business sector they hoped to work.

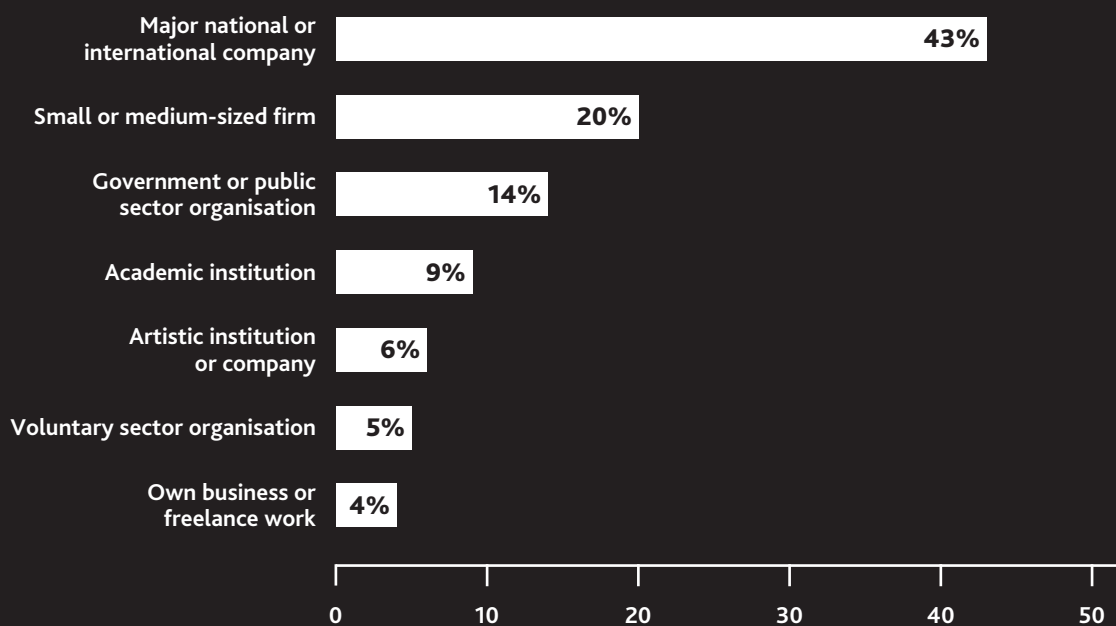
The results highlights that 43 per cent of final year student job hunters wanted to work for major national or international companies (see *Chart 3.1*), a noticeable decrease compared with the levels recorded over the last four years. This is the lowest level since 2010 when, in the midst of the recession, interest in large private sector employers dropped sharply and just 40 per cent of job hunters aspired to work for national or international companies, an all-time low since this question was first included in *The UK Graduate Careers Survey 1998*. These latest results suggest that whilst the largest recruiters continue to attract the most job hunters, more students from the ‘Class of 2015’ are aspiring to join other types of employers.

There has been a modest increase in the number of student job hunters planning to work for Government or other public sector organisations and a similar small rise in the proportion of job hunters keen to join a small or medium-sized firm after university. There are also more students who would rather work for either an academic institution, an artistic organisation or the voluntary sector this year but the number of finalists who aspire to start their own business or work on a freelance basis is unchanged.

Looking at the pattern of these results since the late 1990s, it is clear they have remained largely unchanged. Large numbers of student job hunters continue to be drawn to larger employers because of the perception that there may be better training on offer, higher starting salaries and improved long-term career prospects. Many finalists also seem to believe that beginning their career with a well-known employer will give them stronger ‘CV points’ for the future rather than working for smaller or unknown organisations.

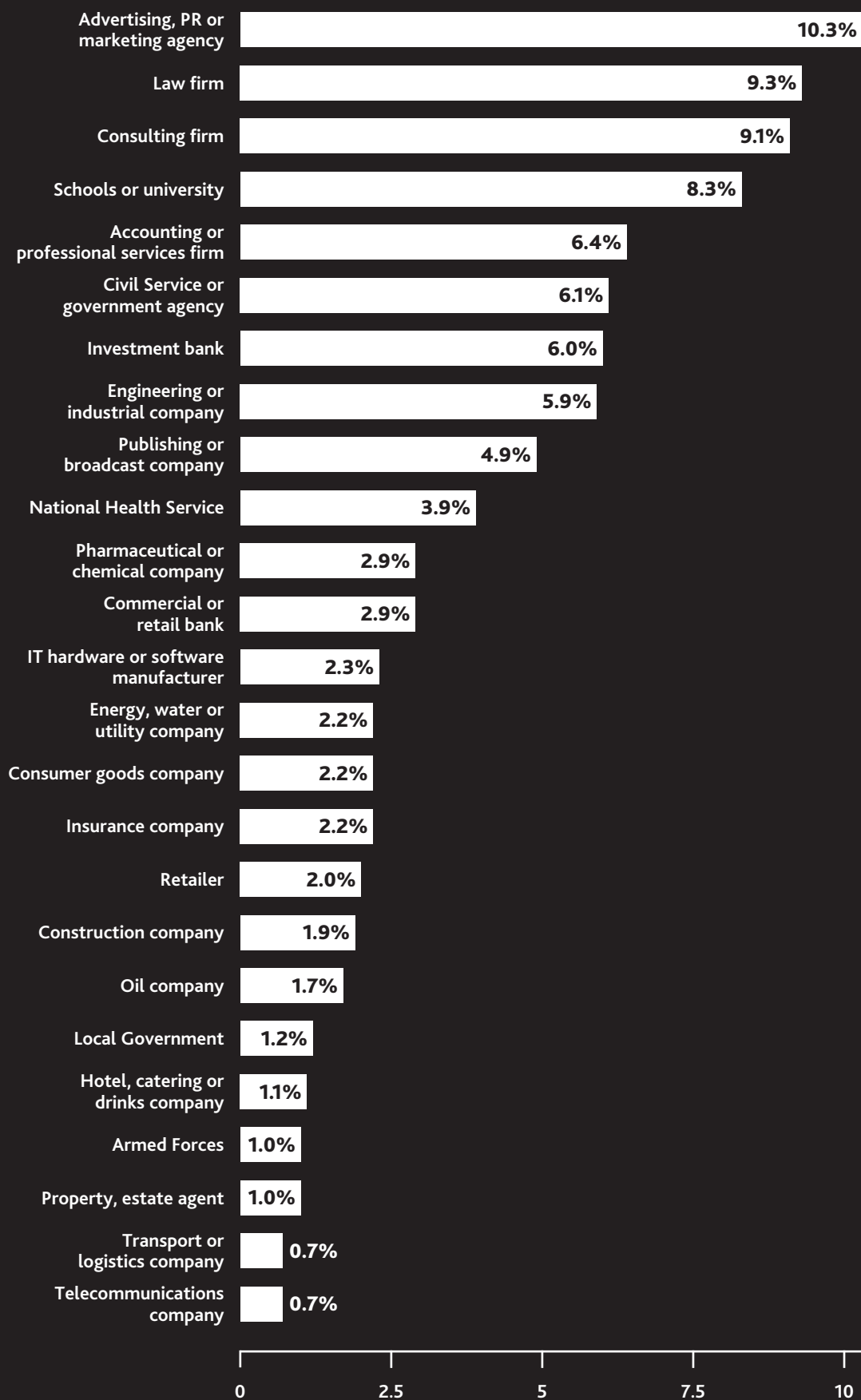
In terms of the industry or business sectors that students wanted to join, the top destination – for the seventh consecutive year – was advertising, PR or marketing agencies (see *Chart 3.2*), ahead of law firms which have overtaken schools or universities as the second most-popular option this year. More students hoped to work at consulting firms too and also for the Civil Service or government agencies, but there was less interest in accounting & professional services firms and investment banks.

Chart 3.1 Type of Organisation that Job Hunters would like to work for



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Percentage of job hunters

Chart 3.2 Leading Industries or Business Areas that Job Hunters most wanted to work for

Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Percentage of job hunters

Where Job Hunters Wanted to Work

The survey results confirm that although London was again the leading destination for job hunters from the 'Class of 2015' – 45 per cent hoped to start work there after graduation – its appeal appears to have waned somewhat this year (see *Chart 3.5*). London has been the top destination for graduates each year since *The UK Graduate Careers Survey* was launched in 1995, but for the past two years an unprecedented 50 per cent of university-leavers aspired to begin their careers in the capital.

This year a further four per cent of finalists wanted to work in the south east of England, which means that almost half of graduate job hunters expect to be employed in or around the M25 after university. Because of this, the number of graduates aiming to work in other parts of the UK, or further afield, remains very small. The next most-popular destinations were the north west of England, the Midlands, the south west and Scotland. A fifth of finalists said they wanted to work overseas after graduation, although around half of these are overseas students returning home.

London was the top destination for students at twenty-six of the thirty universities in the survey but for finalists at the four other universities – Glasgow, Strathclyde, Edinburgh and Queen's University Belfast – the preferred destination was the region in which job hunters had been studying. The research also highlights that a quarter of finalists looking for work wanted to remain close to their old university after graduation (see *Table 3.3*) and identifies the two-fifths of job hunters that could be regarded as being the most mobile – those who moved away from their home region to go to university and are now intending to move again to a different area for their first graduate job (see *Table 3.4*).

Table 3.3 Job hunters who are Planning to Stay in the University Region for First Job

	% of job hunters
London School of Economics	75
London King's College	74
London University College	58
London Imperial College	54
Belfast Queen's University	46
Strathclyde	45
Glasgow	35
Manchester	31
Edinburgh	26
Lancaster	22
Liverpool	22
Cardiff	19
Birmingham	18
Newcastle	17
St Andrews	17
Bristol	16
Leeds	16
Reading	16
Sheffield	15
Nottingham	14
Southampton	14
Exeter	13
Loughborough	13
Warwick	11
Aston	9
Bath	9
York	7
Durham	5
Oxford	4
Cambridge	3
SURVEY AVERAGE	24

Table 3.4 Job hunters Studying away from Home who Plan to move again for First Job

	% of job hunters
Cambridge	60
Durham	60
York	60
Bath	59
Warwick	53
Oxford	52
Newcastle	50
Sheffield	50
Leeds	49
Loughborough	48
Exeter	47
Birmingham	44
Nottingham	44
Cardiff	43
Aston	42
Bristol	42
Lancaster	39
Southampton	39
Reading	38
St Andrews	38
Edinburgh	36
Manchester	35
Liverpool	32
Glasgow	21
London Imperial College	17
London University College	15
London School of Economics	13
Strathclyde	12
London King's College	10
Belfast Queen's University	8
SURVEY AVERAGE	39

Chart 3.5 Job Hunters' Preferred Location for their First Graduate Job after University



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Expectations of First Graduate Job

Student job hunters were asked to consider which aspects of their first graduate job after university were most important to them. Finalists assessed sixteen different elements, rating each as either ‘very important’, ‘quite important’ or ‘not important’ (see *Table 3.6*).

The survey results show that job hunters’ top priority for their first graduate role was again ‘being challenged and stretched on a day-to-day basis’ – nearly half described this as ‘very important’, with just five per cent regarding it as ‘not important’. A similar proportion hoped for a ‘good social life around work’, two-fifths wanted to experience ‘genuine responsibility from day one’ and 38 per cent of job hunters said it was ‘very important’ to them that they joined ‘a structured graduate training & development programme’ after university.

More of this year’s job hunters were keen on ‘having a job that allows you to give something back to the community’ and there was a small increase in the number who were concerned about ‘using their degree subject’ this year. And for the third consecutive year, there was a modest rise in the number of students who thought ‘not working evenings or weekends’ was a priority for them. It is interesting to note, however, that the proportion who maintained this was ‘very important’ remains a fifth lower than in 2008, the year before the recession took hold, suggesting that in what continues to be a competitive job market, striving for a positive work-life balance is a secondary issue for many job hunters.

Students were divided as to whether to join a rotational scheme or begin work within one particular department or function – 31 per cent felt that doing a ‘series of placements in different parts of the organisation’ was ‘very important’ for them, whereas 23 per cent would rather join ‘the part of the organisation you want to work in straightaway’. Fewer than a third of job hunters hoped to work with senior managers and less than quarter were enthusiastic about managing other people.

Table 3.6 Job Hunters views on Different Elements of First Job After University

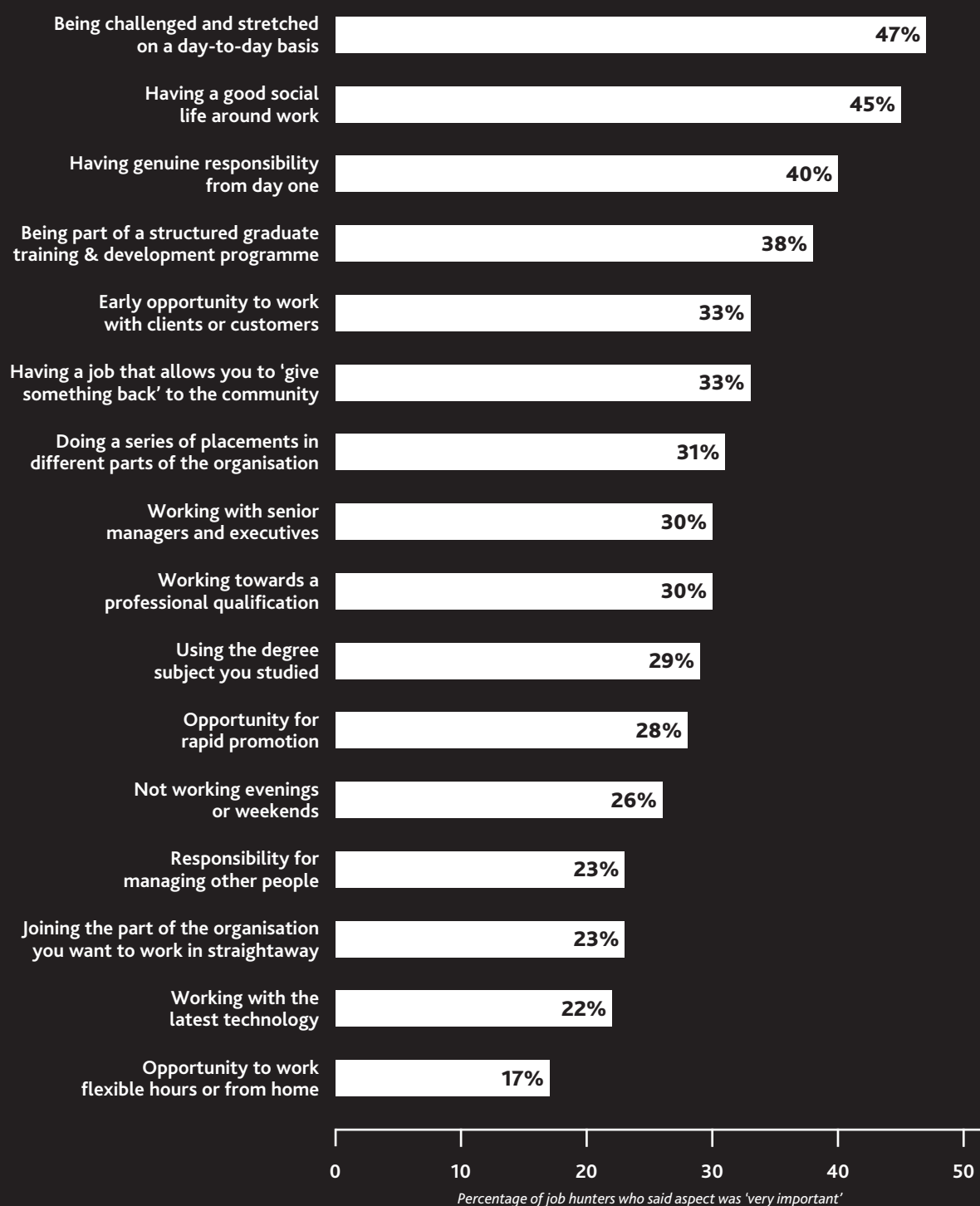
	Very Important %	Quite Important %	Not Important %
Being challenged and stretched on a day-to-day basis	47	48	5
Having a good social life around work	45	46	9
Having genuine responsibility from day one	40	50	10
Being part of a structured graduate training & development programme	38	44	18
Early opportunity to work with clients or customers	33	48	19
Having a job that allows you to ‘give something back’ to the community	33	47	20
Doing a series of placements in different parts of the organisation	31	53	16
Working with senior managers and executives	30	48	22
Working towards a professional qualification	30	40	30
Using the degree subject you studied	29	40	31
Opportunity for rapid promotion	28	54	18
Not working evenings and weekends	26	43	31
Responsibility for managing other people	23	49	28
Joining the part of the organisation you want to work in straightaway	23	53	24
Working with the latest technology	22	44	34
Opportunity to work flexible hours or from home	17	36	47

Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

At twenty of the universities included within the research, the top priority for student job hunters was 'being challenged and stretched on a day-to-day basis', with finalists at Cambridge, Oxford, St Andrews, Aston, Durham, Bath and Bristol expressing this the most strongly.

Finalists at Liverpool and Lancaster were more concerned about 'being part of a structured graduate training & development programme', whereas those at Exeter, Newcastle, Nottingham, Sheffield, Strathclyde the London School of Economics and York, actually classed having 'a good social life around work' as their highest priority.

Chart 3.7 Elements of First Employment that Job Hunters thought were 'Very Important'



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Financial Aspirations & Expectations

Job hunters were asked about the graduate starting salaries they were expecting to earn after leaving university. The results show that the average anticipated starting salary for 2015 has risen to £23,700 (see *Chart 3.10*), some £700 more than the salary expected last year and the biggest annual increase in expectations for seven years.

Before the onset of the recession in 2008, expected starting salaries rose every year apart from 2003 – the previous downturn to hit the graduate job market – but expectations dropped in both 2009 and 2010 (see *Chart 3.11*). Whilst the average salary predicted by the ‘Class of 2015’ is the highest yet recorded by *The UK Graduate Careers Survey*, it is worth noting that it is actually just £1,000 more than the average salary expected by graduates in 2008.

This year finalists at eight individual universities – the London School of Economics, Oxford, Imperial College London, Cambridge, Bath, Warwick, University College London and Aston expect to earn an average of £25,000 or more for their first graduate jobs (see *Table 3.8*). By contrast, the average initial pay expected by students at Queen’s University Belfast is less than £20,000. Looking at the top end of students’ financial expectations, one in six final year students now believe they’ll be paid at least £30,000 when they leave university (see *Table 3.9*).

It seems likely that finalists’ rising financial expectations are being fuelled by the improving graduate job market and the impact of higher levels of student debt from the new £9,000-a-year university tuition fees, which just under half of those graduating in 2015 have paid for their degree courses.

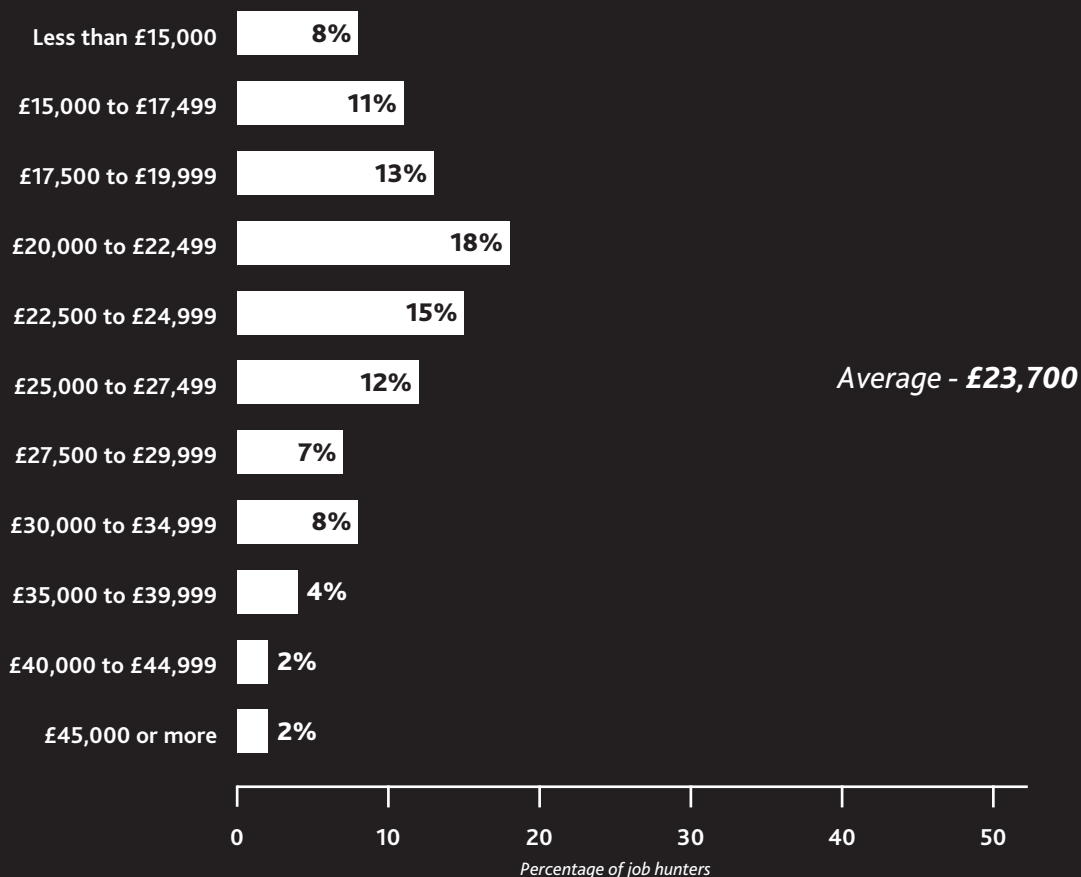
Table 3.8 Finalists’ Expected Starting Salary

	Average
London School of Economics	£31,600
Oxford	£28,900
London Imperial College	£28,000
Cambridge	£27,700
Bath	£26,300
Warwick	£26,200
London University College	£25,400
Aston	£25,200
Durham	£24,600
London King’s College	£24,400
Birmingham	£24,000
Southampton	£23,900
York	£23,900
Exeter	£23,400
Loughborough	£23,400
Edinburgh	£23,100
Nottingham	£23,100
Bristol	£22,900
St Andrews	£22,900
Strathclyde	£22,900
Newcastle	£22,800
Lancaster	£22,700
Manchester	£22,600
Sheffield	£22,400
Reading	£21,700
Glasgow	£21,500
Cardiff	£21,300
Leeds	£21,100
Liverpool	£20,600
Belfast Queen’s University	£19,900
SURVEY AVERAGE	£23,700

Table 3.9 Finalists Expecting to Earn £30,000+

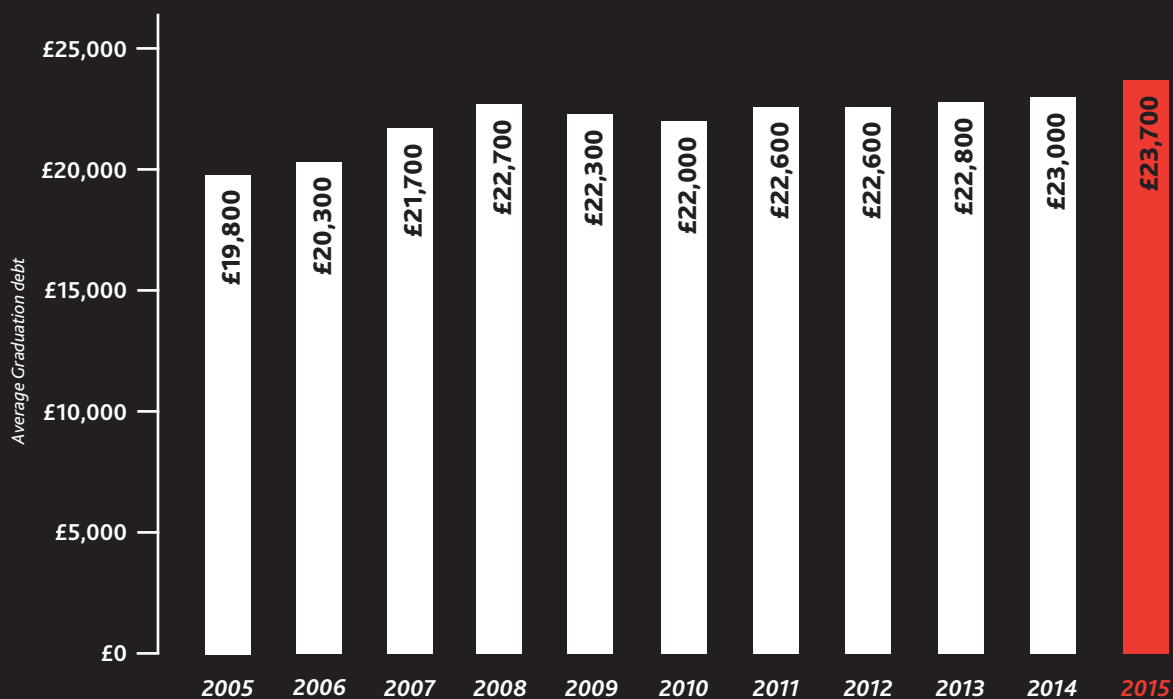
	% of Job Hunters
London School of Economics	53
Oxford	37
Cambridge	33
London Imperial College	31
London University College	26
Warwick	26
Bath	23
Durham	17
London King’s College	17
Aston	16
Southampton	16
York	16
Edinburgh	15
Exeter	15
Birmingham	14
St Andrews	14
Glasgow	13
Bristol	12
Loughborough	12
Manchester	12
Sheffield	12
Lancaster	11
Nottingham	11
Strathclyde	11
Liverpool	9
Newcastle	9
Cardiff	8
Reading	7
Leeds	5
Belfast Queen’s University	4
SURVEY AVERAGE	16

Chart 3.10 Job Hunters' Expected Starting Salaries in 2015



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Chart 3.11 Average Expected Graduate Starting Salaries 2005-2015



Base - The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2005-2015

Decision Making about Graduate Applications

Looking at all the research conducted this year for *The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015*, it is clear that student job hunters have had many things to consider when making decisions about their first employment after university. Final year undergraduates have described in detail their hopes and aspirations on individual issues such as location of graduate jobs, starting salaries, the content of work, the industries or business sectors they hoped to join and work-life balance, but it is difficult to assess just how significant each aspect of employment is to today's student job hunters.

To quantify this, the survey asked final year students who were applying to employers the direct question "When you were deciding which employers to apply to, how important were each of these factors to you?". Finalists were shown a list of fourteen factors and asked to rate them as 'very important', 'quite important' or 'not important' (see *Table 3.12*).

Analysis of these results shows that the overriding priority for most students was the content of the work they'd be doing in their first job – 62 per cent of finalists described this as 'very important' (see *Chart 3.13*). Some 57 per cent said the quality of the training and development on offer was an essential factor and more than half thought the location of jobs was of key importance.

An organisation's overall reputation was classed as 'very important' by 49 per cent of finalists, but fewer students were concerned about working for a well-known employer or worried about the culture of an organisation or even its commercial success. Although more of this year's job hunters described work-life balance as 'very important', it remains a less significant issue than when this question was first introduced into the survey in 2008, when it was a key priority for nearly half of students.

Slightly higher numbers of final year students were influenced this year by the quality of staff who were already at an organisation, by starting salaries and other benefits, and by the potential to work for an employer long-term. And student job hunters placed a little more emphasis on employers' corporate social responsibility (CSR) records and on the volume of new graduates that organisations recruit annually.

Table 3.12 Job Hunters views on Different Factors when Deciding which Employers to Apply to

	Very Important %	Quite Important %	Not Important %
Content of work	62	33	5
Quality of training & development programme	57	38	5
Where the jobs are located	52	38	10
Overall reputation of the organisation	49	44	7
Work-life balance	43	46	11
Culture of the organisation	40	48	12
Quality of staff already working for the organisation	38	50	12
Starting salary & additional benefits	37	50	13
Organisation's business performance and business success	35	49	16
Potential to work for the organisation long-term	34	50	16
Opportunity to work overseas	28	41	31
Employer is a well-known organisation	27	46	27
Employer's 'corporate social responsibility' record	27	49	24
Number of graduate jobs available at employer	21	47	32

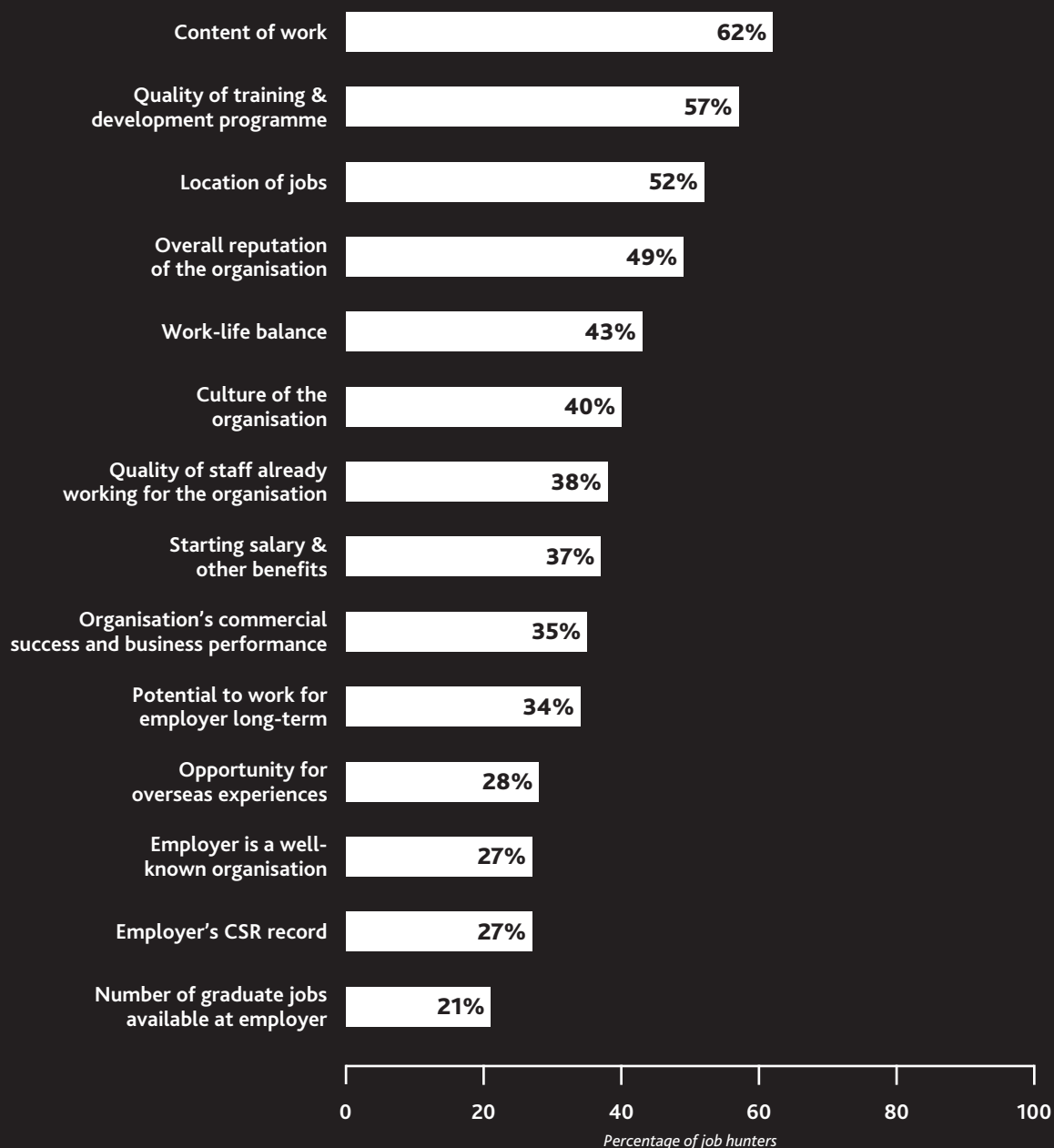
Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

At individual universities, it is apparent that the content of work is the leading priority for students at twenty-five institutions, but at Lancaster, Liverpool, Nottingham, Southampton and Strathclyde higher numbers of final year students classed the quality of employers’ training and development as ‘very important’.

Students at Bristol, Cambridge, St Andrews, Edinburgh and Glasgow said they were the least concerned about starting salaries and other benefits. Those at Imperial College London and Aston were the most preoccupied by employers’ business performance and commercial success, whilst job hunters at the London School of Economics seemed the most determined to work for a well-known organisation.

Strathclyde, Reading and Queen’s University Belfast had the highest numbers concerned about the potential to work for an employer long-term, whereas those at Cambridge, Durham and Oxford were the most concerned about the culture of the organisation they’d be joining after graduation – up to half of finalists at these universities described this as ‘very important’ to them.

Chart 3.13 Factors that were ‘Very Important’ when Deciding which Employers to Apply to



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

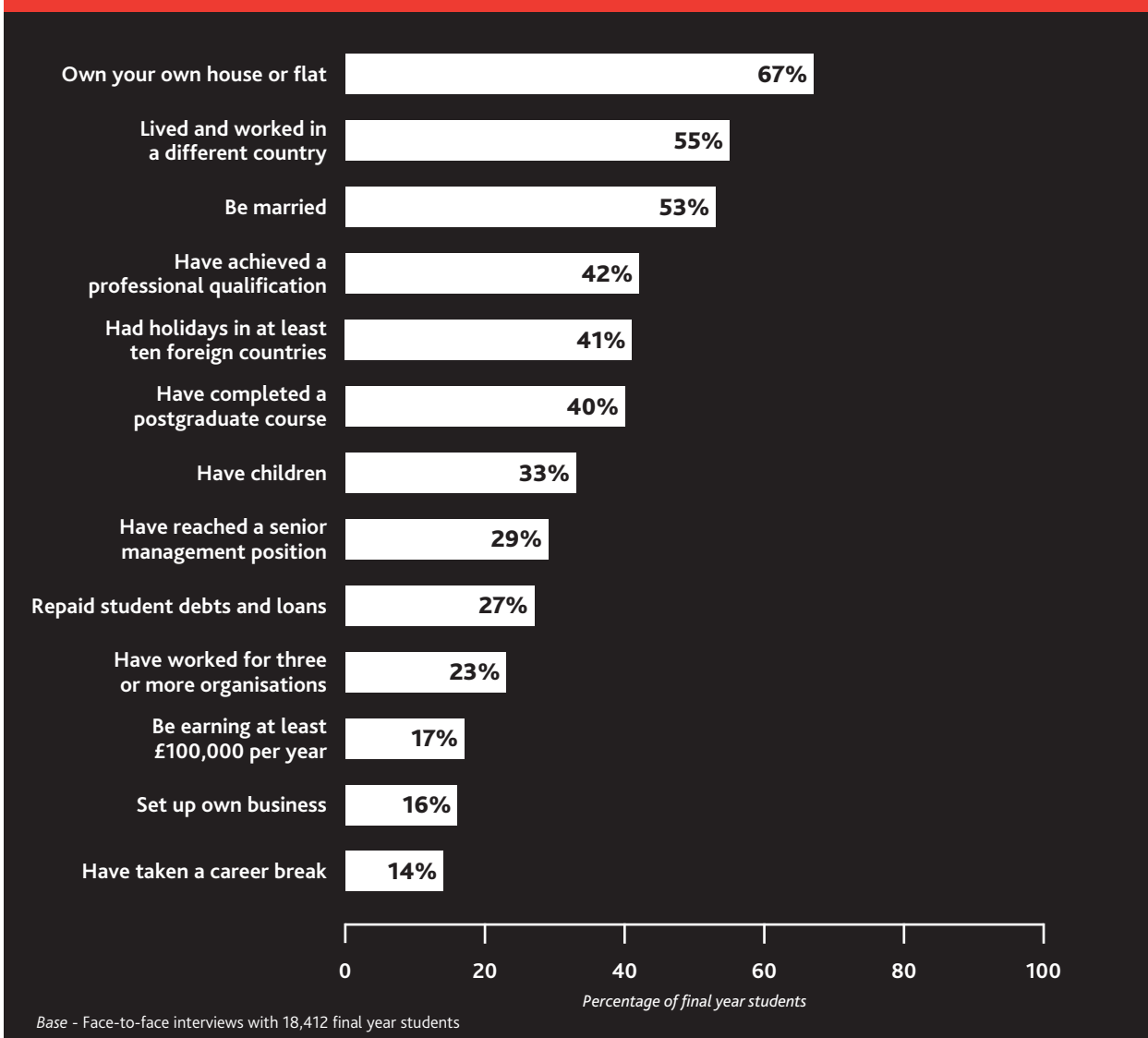
Expectations for the Future

This part of the survey concluded by examining the longer-term expectations that graduates from the ‘Class of 2015’ had for the future. On average, job hunters thought they would stay with their first employer for just under three years (see *Chart 3.15*), a modest increase compared with last year’s results. This is similar to finalists’ predications over the past seven years but rather less than the three and a half years expected by graduates in 2005 and 2006, before the start of the recession. Only one in six finalists said they planned to be with their first employer for five years or longer and five per cent admitted they would probably only be with their first employer for less than twelve months.

In terms of future earning power, this year’s job hunters believed they would be paid an average of £41,400 within five years of leaving university – £700 more than was forecast in last year’s survey. Students at most universities in the survey expect their salaries to increase by about 75 per cent during the first five years after graduation and almost a quarter of finalists thought they’d be earning at least £50,000 by that point (see *Chart 3.16*).

Looking further ahead, finalists were also asked about what they might have done in their working and personal lives by the age of 30 – a point that must seem far off in the future for the majority of undergraduates. This year’s results show that the number of university-leavers who thought they would own a house or flat within a decade of graduating is noticeably lower – over the last five years the proportion of finalists who aspire to buy their own property has dropped from three-quarters to

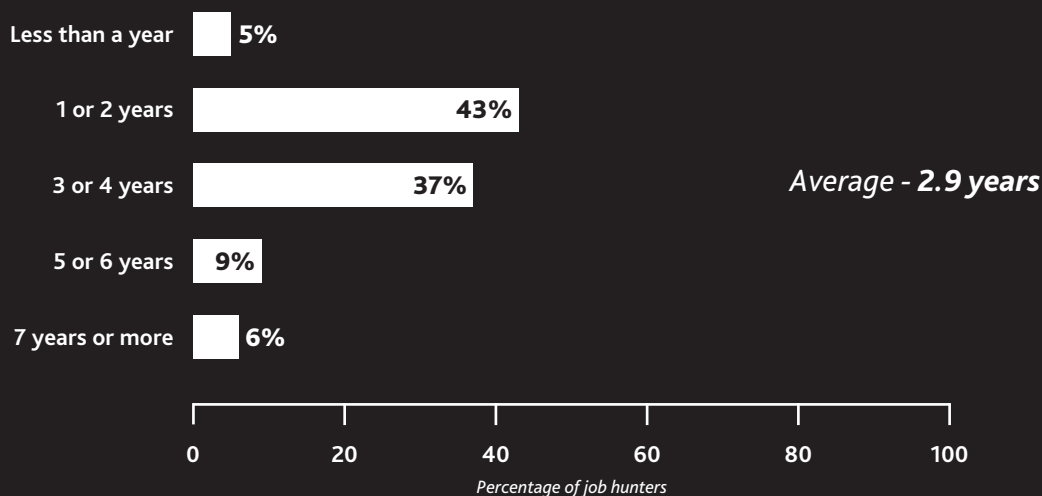
Chart 3.14 Things Final Year Students Expected to have done by the Age of 30



just two-thirds, its lowest level since this question was first included in *The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2015* (see *Chart 3.14*). At work, over two-fifths of new graduates expect to have achieved a professional qualification by the age of 30 and increasing numbers hoped to have completed a postgraduate course. Travel remains important too – over half of students hope to have lived and worked overseas, with at least two-fifths planning to holiday in at least ten foreign countries.

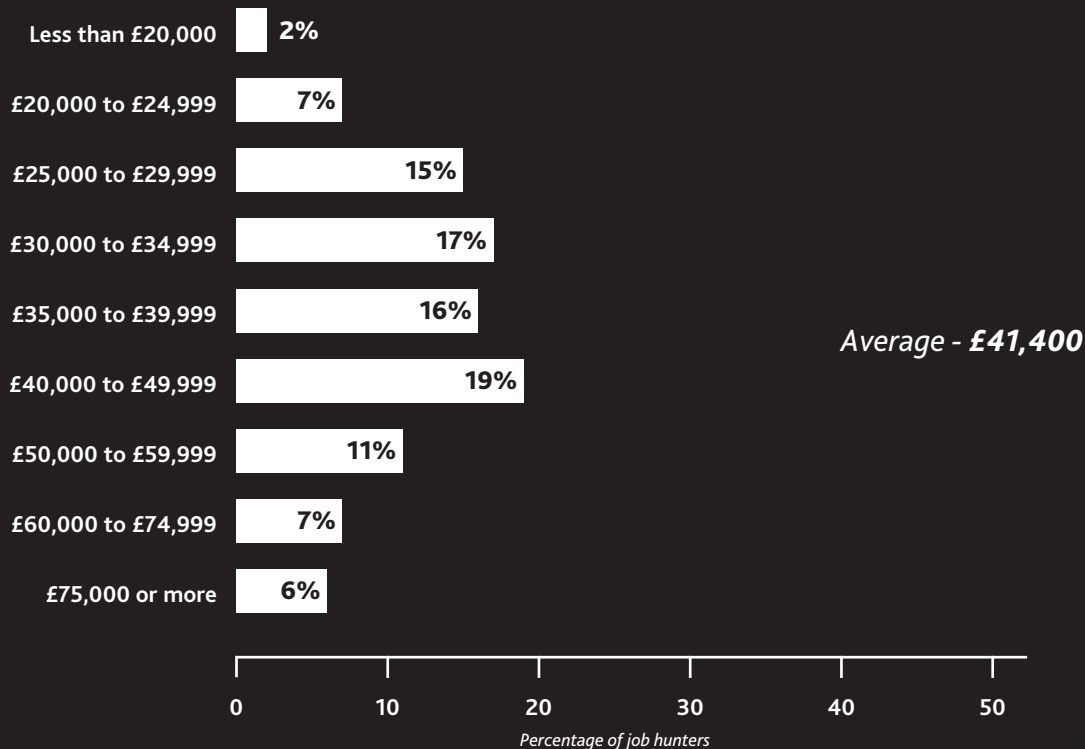
Unsurprisingly, given that this year’s graduates include the first cohort to have paid higher university tuition fees of up to £9,000-a-year, the proportion of finalists who are confident they will repay their student debts and loans by the age of 30 has dropped from 38 per cent to 27 per cent this year.

Chart 3.15 Length of Time Finalists Expect to Work for First Employer



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Chart 3.16 Job Hunters' Expected Salaries in Five Years' Time



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Conclusions and Recommendations

This year's survey analysed finalists' aspirations and expectations for their first job after university, examining their priorities, hopes and opinions on different aspects of employment:

- For the seventh consecutive year, advertising, PR or marketing agencies are the most popular type of employer.
- Fewer job hunters are intending to work for major national or international employers compared with previous years and more would like to work for small or medium sized firms or for Government or public sector organisations
- There has been a noticeable drop in the number of job hunters planning to work in London after university and a corresponding increase in the level of interest in other parts of the UK.
- Final year student job hunters' priorities for their first jobs were 'being challenged and stretched on a day-to-day basis', 'having a good social life around work', 'having genuine responsibility from day one' and 'being part of a structured graduate training & development programme'.
- The average salary that finalists expect to earn as new graduates has risen to £23,700, some £700 more than in 2014 and the largest annual rise for seven years.
- Important factors that finalists considered when deciding which graduate employers to apply to include the content of work, the training & development on offer, the location of their graduate jobs, and the organisation's overall reputation.
- New graduates expect to spend an average of 2.9 years with their first employer.
- Finalists from the 'Class of 2015' believed they would be earning £41,400 within five years of graduation and 17 per cent claimed their pay could be at least £100,000 by the time they reached the age of 30.

Chapter 4

Students' Job Hunting

Key Findings

- *Unprecedented numbers of students began job hunting in their first or penultimate years of their degrees.*
- *A record 49% of finalists had completed a work placement or internship with a graduate employer.*
- *A total of 95% of finalists had used their local university careers service whilst at university.*
- *72% of users rated their service 'excellent' or 'good'.*



UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL CAREERS SERVICE

Background

In the 1990s, graduate recruitment in the followed a very well-established formula. For most major graduate employers, it meant an annual round of university visits during the autumn to attend campus careers fairs and host presentations for final year students. Graduate application deadlines were typically in either late November or December, first-round interviews took place on campus in January or February, final-round selection events followed, with graduate job offers made – and usually accepted – by Easter.

The entire process was directed almost exclusively at final year students, most of whom didn't begin researching their career options or potential future employers until well into the autumn term. Work experience – where it was offered at all – was there to help students in younger years understand what working in a particular industry or business sector would be like but was usually entirely unconnected to an employer's graduate recruitment process.

During the last twenty years, a number of factors have changed the way both employers and students approach graduate employment. Rising student numbers have increased the competition for graduate jobs, the internet has helped make employers much more accessible than before, but pressure on graduate recruiters to hire the best candidates from an ever-growing pool of applicants remains intense. As a result, graduate recruitment and students' search for a first graduate job has expanded from being a final year activity to one which extends through the whole of the university experience.

This year's survey examined when final year students had started looking into their career options and researching potential future employers, the work experience they'd done whilst at university, how they used their university careers service, and the other graduate recruitment promotions they'd taken part in whilst researching their career options.

When Finalists Started their Job Search

The survey asked final year students from the 'Class of 2015' when they first began researching their career options. Almost a fifth of finalists said they had started their careers planning before they arrived at university and a further 30 per cent had focused on careers in the early months of their degree (see *Chart 4.3*). This means that by the end of their first year at university, 48 per cent of students had begun considering their career options and researching potential graduate employers, the highest proportion ever recorded by *The UK Graduate Careers Survey*.

Another 31 per cent of students started job hunting during their penultimate year. This confirms that an unprecedented 79 per cent of this year's finalists began their career preparations before the last year at university, up from 75 per cent in 2014, 70 per cent in 2013 and 64 per cent three years ago (see *Chart 4.4*). At the beginning of the recession in 2008, just 57 per cent of students started their job search in the early years of their degree courses but in the seven years since, the proportion has risen almost annually as ever-greater emphasis has been placed on undergraduates completing internships and other work experience with employers, before making applications for graduate positions.

This year more than half of all finalists at Bath, University College and Imperial College London, Aston, the London School of Economics, Warwick, Edinburgh, St Andrews and Oxford began their job search in their first year at university or whilst they were still at school or sixth form college (see *Table 4.1*). By contrast, two-fifths or fewer of those studying at Liverpool, Newcastle and Reading began their job hunting before their penultimate year at university.

Table 4.1 Finalists who Started their Job Search by the end of First Year at University

	% of finalists
Bath	63
London University College	60
London Imperial College	59
Aston	58
London School of Economics	58
Warwick	55
Edinburgh	54
St Andrews	54
Oxford	51
London King's College	50
Loughborough	50
Cambridge	49
York	49
Durham	48
Exeter	48
Leeds	48
Belfast Queen's University	47
Glasgow	47
Manchester	47
Sheffield	47
Southampton	47
Birmingham	46
Nottingham	45
Strathclyde	45
Bristol	44
Cardiff	41
Lancaster	41
Liverpool	40
Newcastle	40
Reading	39
SURVEY AVERAGE	48

Table 4.2 Finalists who didn't Start their Job Search Until the Final Year at University

	% of finalists
Newcastle	31
Reading	31
Liverpool	29
Leeds	26
Cardiff	25
Lancaster	25
Belfast Queen's University	23
Aston	22
Bristol	22
Loughborough	22
Manchester	22
Nottingham	22
Sheffield	22
Strathclyde	22
Birmingham	21
Glasgow	20
Cambridge	19
Durham	19
Edinburgh	19
Exeter	19
London King's College	19
York	19
Bath	18
Southampton	17
Oxford	15
Warwick	15
London University College	14
St Andrews	14
London Imperial College	11
London School of Economics	8
SURVEY AVERAGE	21

Conversely, these three universities had the highest proportion of students who left graduate job hunting until the end of their time at university – up to 31 per cent of their finalists hadn’t done any careers research before the last year of their studies (see *Table 4.2*). Similarly, at least a quarter of finalists at Leeds, Cardiff and Lancaster didn’t begin their job search until their final year. Cambridge, Durham, Edinburgh, Exeter, the London colleges, York, Bath, Southampton, Oxford, Warwick and St Andrews had the lowest proportion of last-minute job hunters – fewer than a fifth of students at these universities began their career preparations in their final year.

Chart 4.3 When Final Year Students Started their Search for a Graduate Job

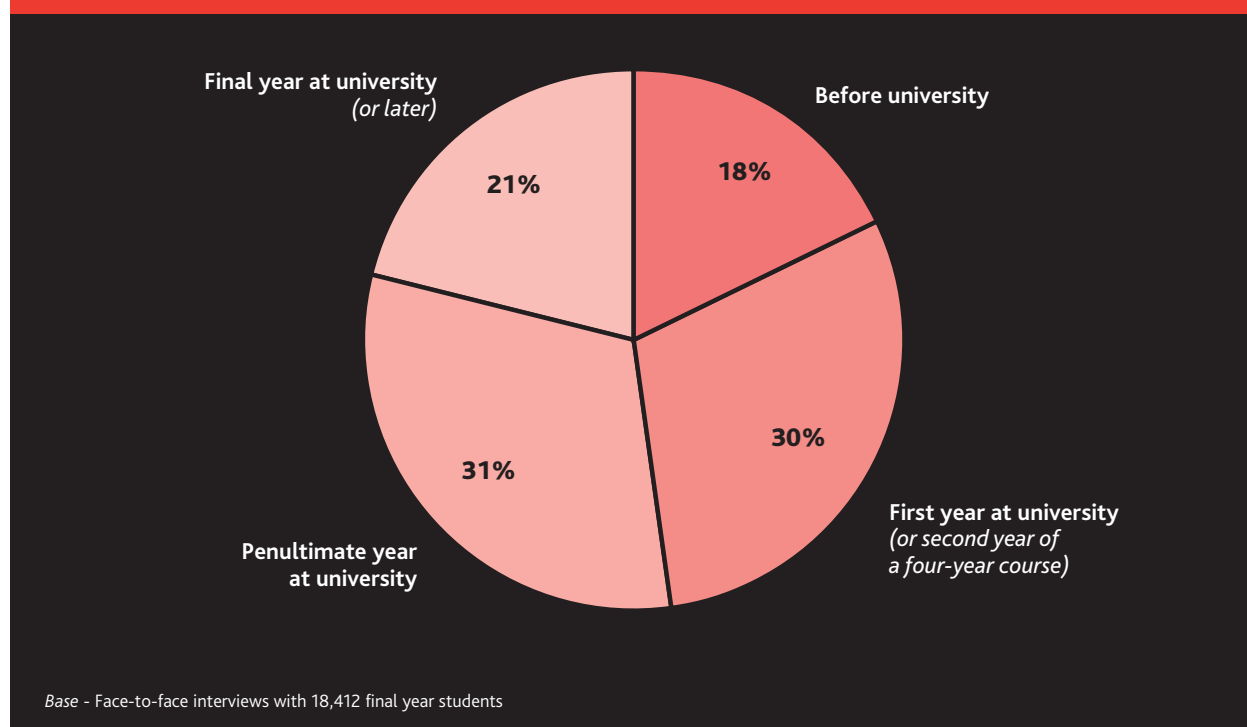
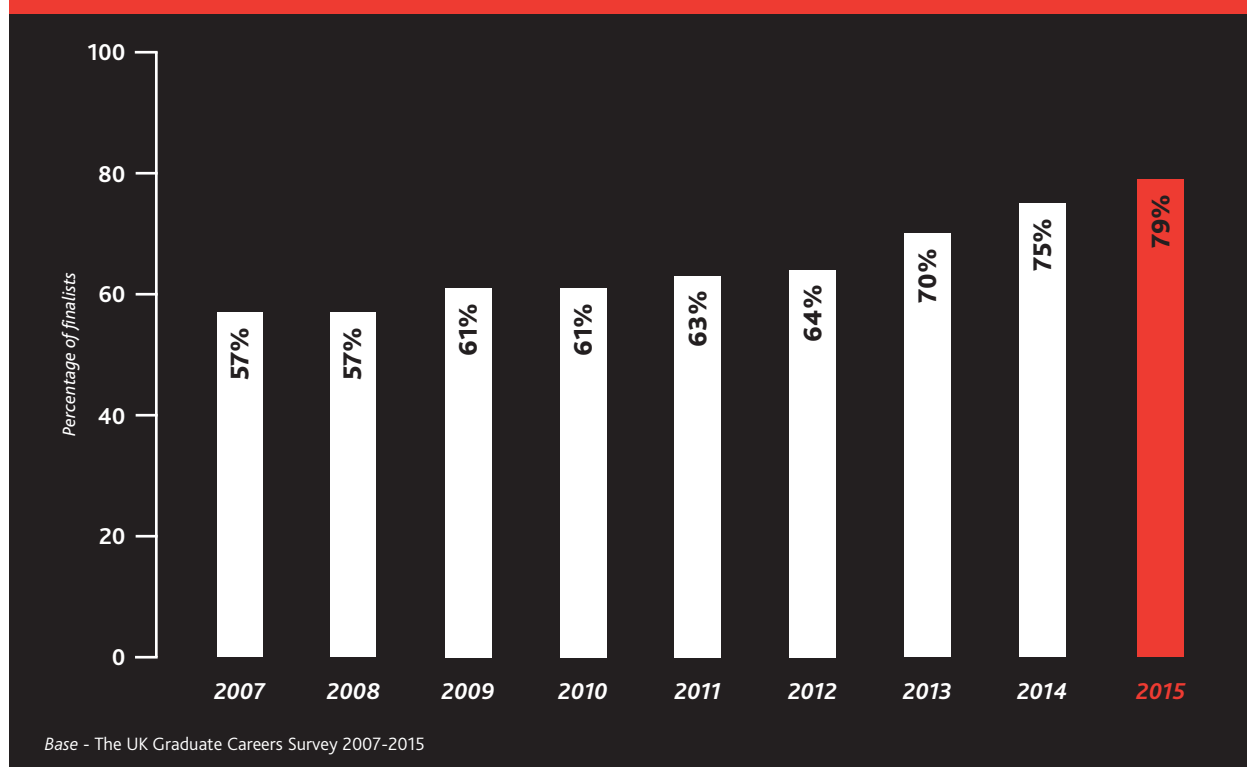


Chart 4.4 Finalists who Started their Graduate Job Search before Final Year at University



Work Experience Completed by Students

Virtually all the final year students questioned for the survey had taken part in some form of work experience during their time at university (see *Chart 4.7*). Almost half had done casual vacation work, such as bar tending, serving in restaurants, temping or fruit picking and two-fifths had done a part-time job during term-time. It is interesting to see that the number of students doing these forms of work experience has dropped noticeably over the last five years – nearly three-quarters of finalists from the ‘Class of 2010’ did a casual job during their university holidays.

Some 38 per cent of students had done at least one internship or vacation work placement with a graduate employer, either at the end of their first year at university or in their penultimate year. One in six finalists had done a placement as part of their degree course, typically for either six or twelve months. Only a very small proportion had done a spring programme with a graduate employer in their first year but a fifth had attended employers’ open days or done workshadowing.

In total, half of finalists had either done an internship, vacation work or a course placement with a graduate employer (see *Table 4.5*), with students at Bath, Aston, Imperial College London and the London School of Economics the most likely to have completed work placements. Aston and Bath finalists were also likely to have completed the most careers-related work experience (see *Table 4.6*). A fifth of students confirmed that they had received a graduate job offer as a result of doing work experience with an employer, although only half this number had accepted them, and many students warned they had been put off by the employers or sectors they had worked for (see *Chart 4.8*).

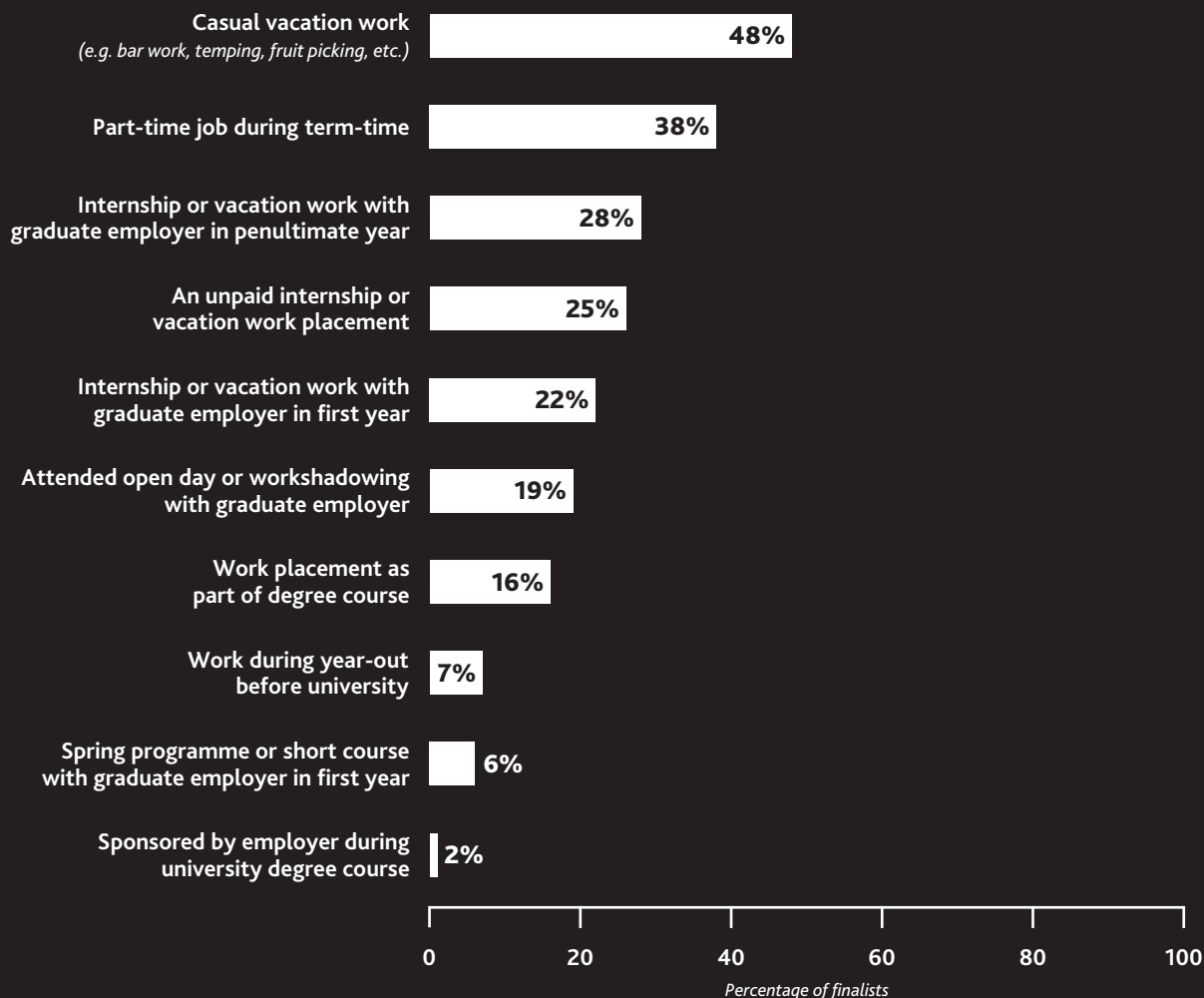
Table 4.5 Finalists who’d done Internships or Course Placements with Employers

	<i>% of finalists</i>
Bath	85
Aston	79
London Imperial College	75
London School of Economics	70
Cambridge	62
Warwick	56
Oxford	55
St Andrews	55
Loughborough	53
Edinburgh	52
London University College	52
Glasgow	50
Southampton	49
Reading	48
Durham	47
Exeter	47
Bristol	46
Leeds	46
Nottingham	46
Birmingham	44
Newcastle	44
Sheffield	44
Lancaster	41
London King’s College	41
Manchester	41
Cardiff	38
Belfast Queen’s University	36
York	36
Liverpool	34
Strathclyde	31
SURVEY AVERAGE	49

Table 4.6 Amount of Careers-Related Work Experience that Finalists had Completed

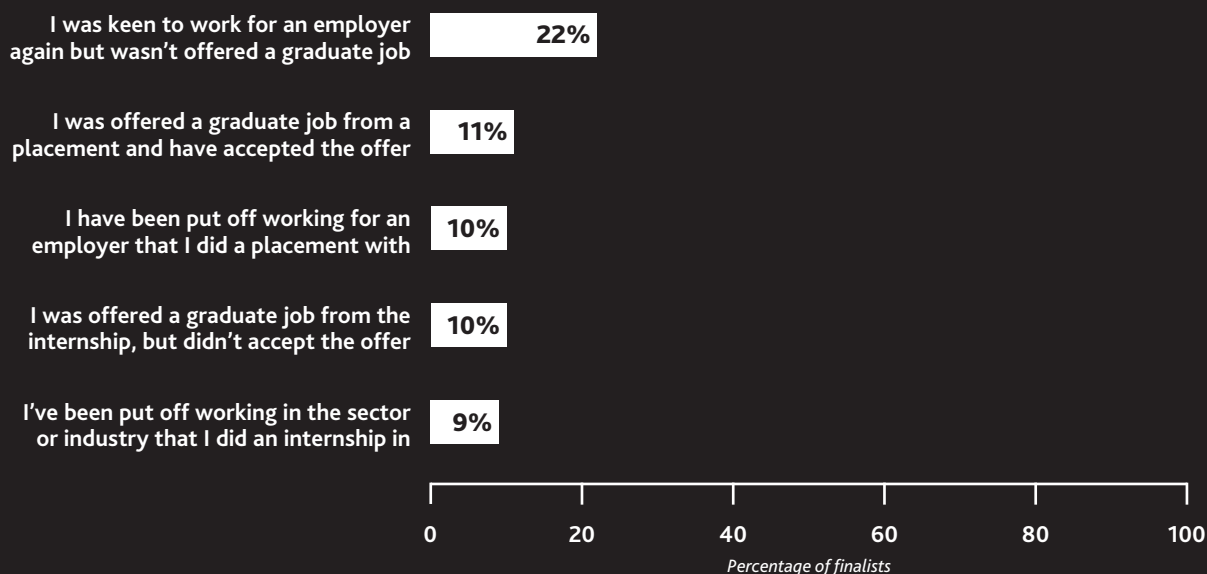
	<i>Average (in months)</i>
Aston	13.6
Bath	12.0
Belfast Queen’s University	8.9
Loughborough	8.9
Glasgow	8.1
Strathclyde	8.1
Newcastle	7.3
Reading	7.1
Leeds	7.0
St Andrews	7.0
Edinburgh	6.8
Lancaster	6.8
London King’s College	6.4
Birmingham	6.3
Manchester	6.3
Cardiff	6.0
London Imperial College	5.9
Sheffield	5.8
Bristol	5.7
London School of Economics	5.7
Nottingham	5.7
Exeter	5.6
York	5.5
Durham	5.4
Warwick	5.4
London University College	5.1
Southampton	5.1
Liverpool	5.0
Cambridge	4.9
Oxford	3.9
SURVEY AVERAGE	6.5

Chart 4.7 Total Work Experience that Finalists took part in during University



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Chart 4.8 Impact on Students of Completing Work Experience with Graduate Employers



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Usage of University Careers Services

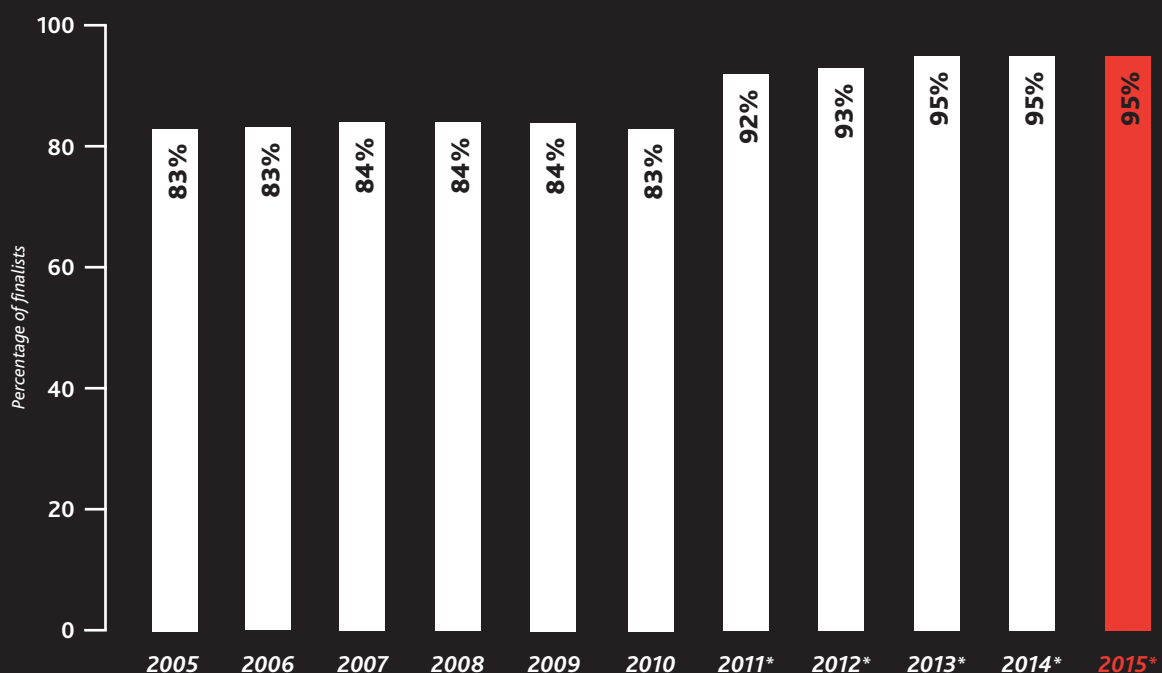
The survey shows that for the third year running, an impressive 95 per cent of final year students had used their local careers service whilst at university (see *Chart 4.9*). This usage figure remains the highest ever recorded by *The UK Graduate Careers Survey* and confirms that careers services continue to be used by virtually every student at the universities featured in the survey, to help with their preparations for life after graduation.

Examining the number of students who have engaged with university careers services over the last two decades shows that the total usage has remained exceptionally high during this period, albeit by varying means. Until 2001, the main way that students accessed their local careers service was through personal visits, but from 2003 onwards, the survey also recorded the number who used careers service websites and those who attended careers modules as part of their degree courses. Since 2011, the survey has included students who received regular emails from their career services too and last year added those who followed their careers services via social media. These combined results show that the overall volume of students using careers services in recent years is higher than ever and is now even greater than the very substantial visitor numbers seen in the late 1990s, when up to 85 per cent of students went in person to their local university careers service during their search for a graduate job.

This year more than half of finalists had taken part in careers sessions as part of their degree course (see *Chart 4.10*), almost two-thirds had visited their university careers service or used its website, four-fifths had received careers service emails and a quarter had followed their careers service on social media. It is interesting to see that four out five of these results are higher than the equivalent usage figures recorded last year and that at twenty-nine of the universities included in the survey, the local careers service had been used by at least 90 per cent of the final year population (see *Table 4.12*).

The survey has also tracked when students took part in different careers activities and researched their employment options, to help employers pinpoint exactly how to target undergraduates at different points in their studies. The results show that a third of students used careers services almost as soon as they arrived at university, two-fifths sought guidance or information in their penultimate year and almost half turned to their careers service for help during the final year of their degree (see *Chart 4.11*).

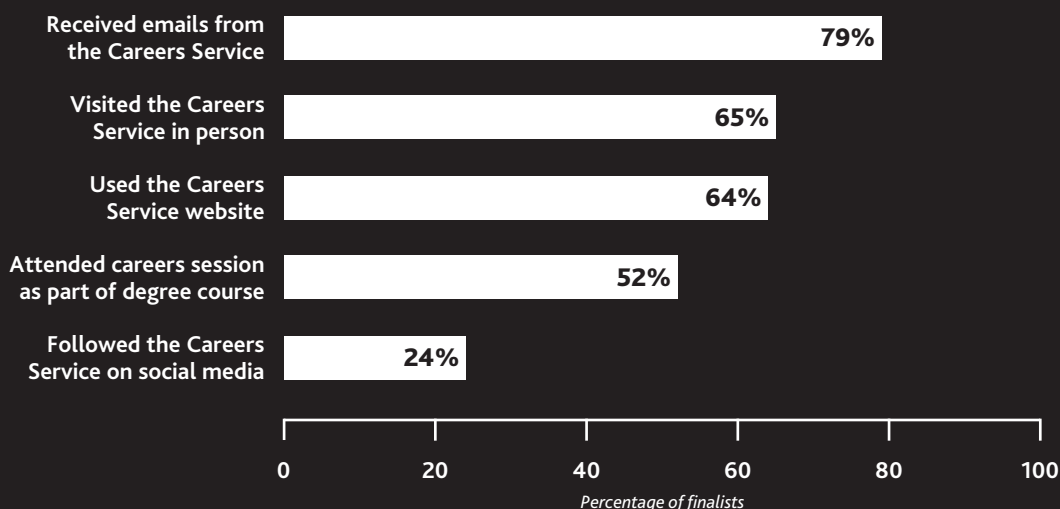
Chart 4.9 Finalists who used their University Careers Service during their Job Search



Base - The UK Graduate Careers Survey 2005-2015

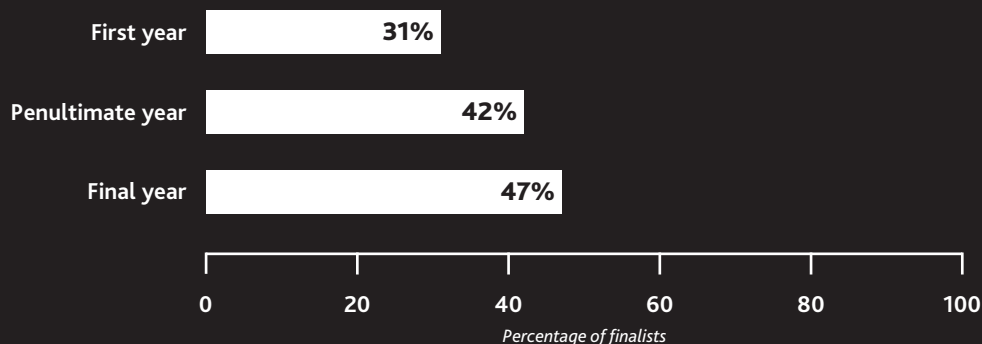
* Also includes emails, in addition to visitors, website users & degree course career sessions

Chart 4.10 How Finalists used local University Careers Services



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Chart 4.11 When Finalists used University Careers Services



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Table 4.12 Finalists who used their University Careers Service during their Job Search

	% of finalists who have used Careers Service		% of finalists who have used Careers Service
St Andrews	99	Edinburgh	95
Exeter	98	Glasgow	95
Lancaster	98	Newcastle	95
London School of Economics	98	Nottingham	95
Loughborough	97	Southampton	95
Sheffield	97	Birmingham	94
Warwick	97	Cardiff	94
York	97	London Imperial College	94
Bristol	96	Strathclyde	94
Cambridge	96	Aston	93
Durham	96	Bath	92
Leeds	96	Belfast Queen's University	92
Liverpool	96	London University College	92
Manchester	96	Reading	92
Oxford	96	London King's College	89
		SURVEY AVERAGE	95

Facilities Used at University Careers Services

For the third consecutive year, the number of students who went to their university careers service in person has risen noticeably – 65 per cent of 2015’s finalists had visited their careers service during their studies, compared with 63 per cent in 2014, 58 per cent in 2013 and 55 per cent in 2012, taking visitor numbers to their highest level for more than a decade.

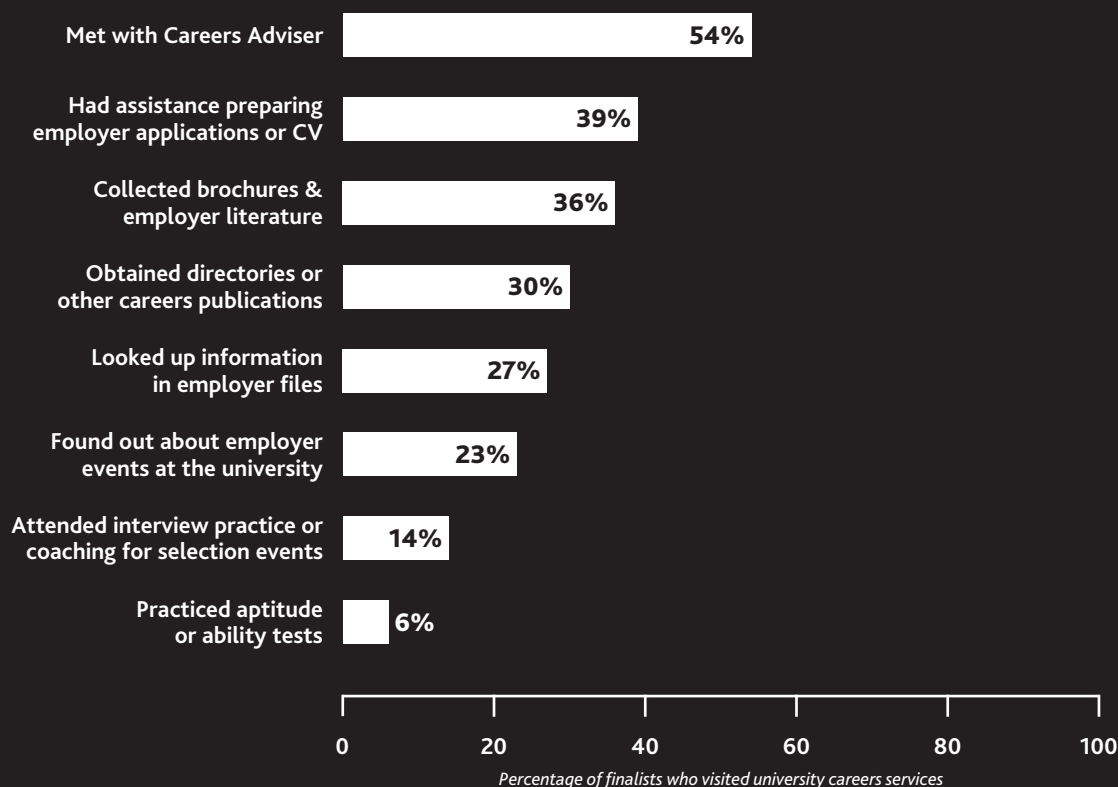
This year’s encouraging result confirms that the long-term trend of declining visitor numbers seen since the end of the 1990s has now been reversed and shows that increasing numbers of students value the face-to-face guidance and access to careers resources that a personal visit to a careers service can provide. Between half and four-fifths of this year’s finalists visited their local service at least once whilst at university, with St Andrews, Aston and Exeter recording the highest overall attendances (see *Table 4.15*). Finalists had made an average of four visits each, although a third confirmed they had only been once or twice during their search for a graduate job (see *Chart 4.14*).

Over half of visitors had one-to-one consultations with careers advisers (see *Chart 4.13*), suggesting at least 34,000 of this year’s finalists from the universities in the survey had at least one formal meeting with a careers adviser during their degree course. This is the eleventh year running that consultations with advisers have headed the list of activities that job hunters used, again re-affirming that a substantial number of students still seek the personal reassurance of a professional adviser.

Job hunters at St Andrews, Exeter, Cambridge, Oxford, Manchester, the London School of Economics and Strathclyde were the most likely to have used their careers service website – at least 70 per cent of finalists at these universities logged on during their search for a graduate job (see *Table 4.15*).

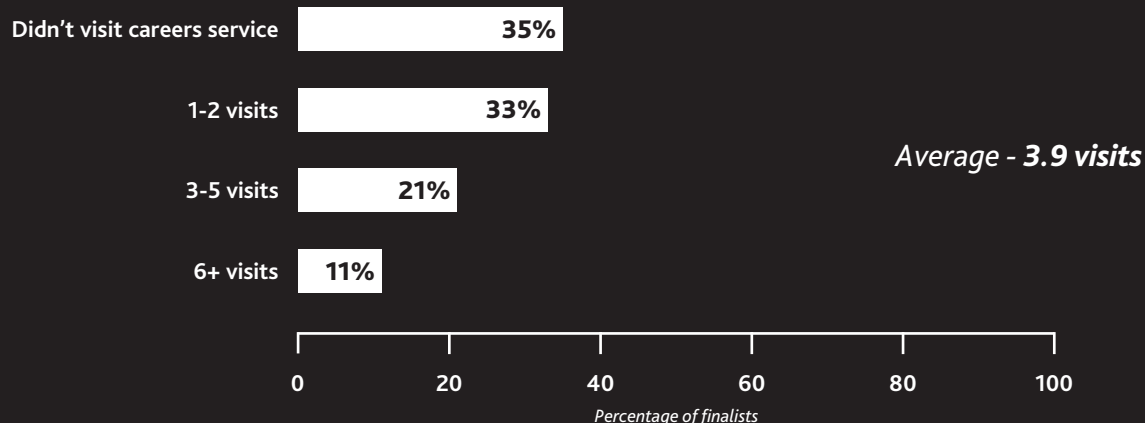
The majority of final year students seemed impressed with their university careers service – 21 per cent described them as ‘excellent’ and a further 51 per cent classed their service as ‘good’ (see *Chart 4.16*). The best ratings were at Cambridge, Manchester, Newcastle and Oxford.

Chart 4.13 Facilities Used by Finalists at University Careers Services



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Chart 4.14 Number of Visits made by Finalists to University Careers Services

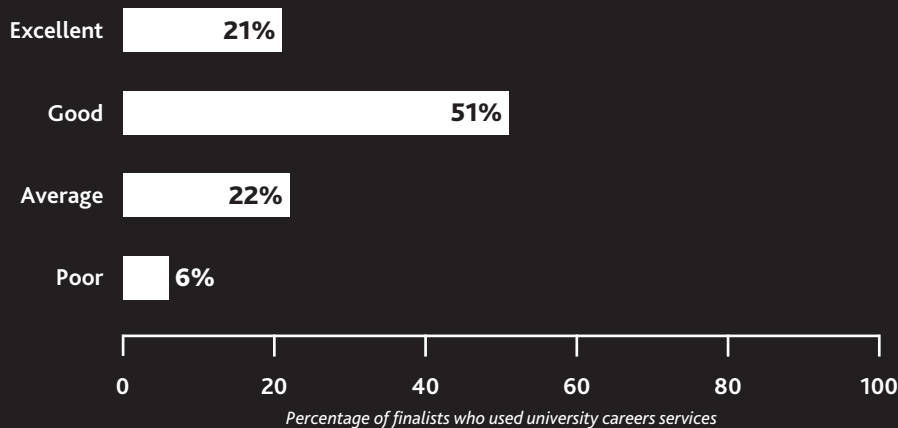


Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Table 4.15 Finalists who Visited University Careers Services or used Careers Service Websites

	% of finalists who visited in person	% of finalists who used websites		% of finalists who visited in person	% of finalists who used websites
St Andrews	78	75	Sheffield	66	62
Aston	77	68	Manchester	65	73
Exeter	76	82	Liverpool	64	63
Edinburgh	71	66	Reading	64	54
Lancaster	71	64	Bath	62	51
London School of Economics	71	70	Birmingham	62	65
Warwick	71	64	Loughborough	61	60
Leeds	70	66	Oxford	61	76
York	70	58	Southampton	59	53
Strathclyde	69	71	Cardiff	56	58
Bristol	68	68	Belfast Queen's University	55	63
Cambridge	67	80	Durham	55	54
Newcastle	67	67	Glasgow	54	65
London Imperial College	66	56	London University College	54	49
Nottingham	66	62	London King's College	53	51
			SURVEY AVERAGE	65	64

Chart 4.16 How Finalists rated their local University Careers Service



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

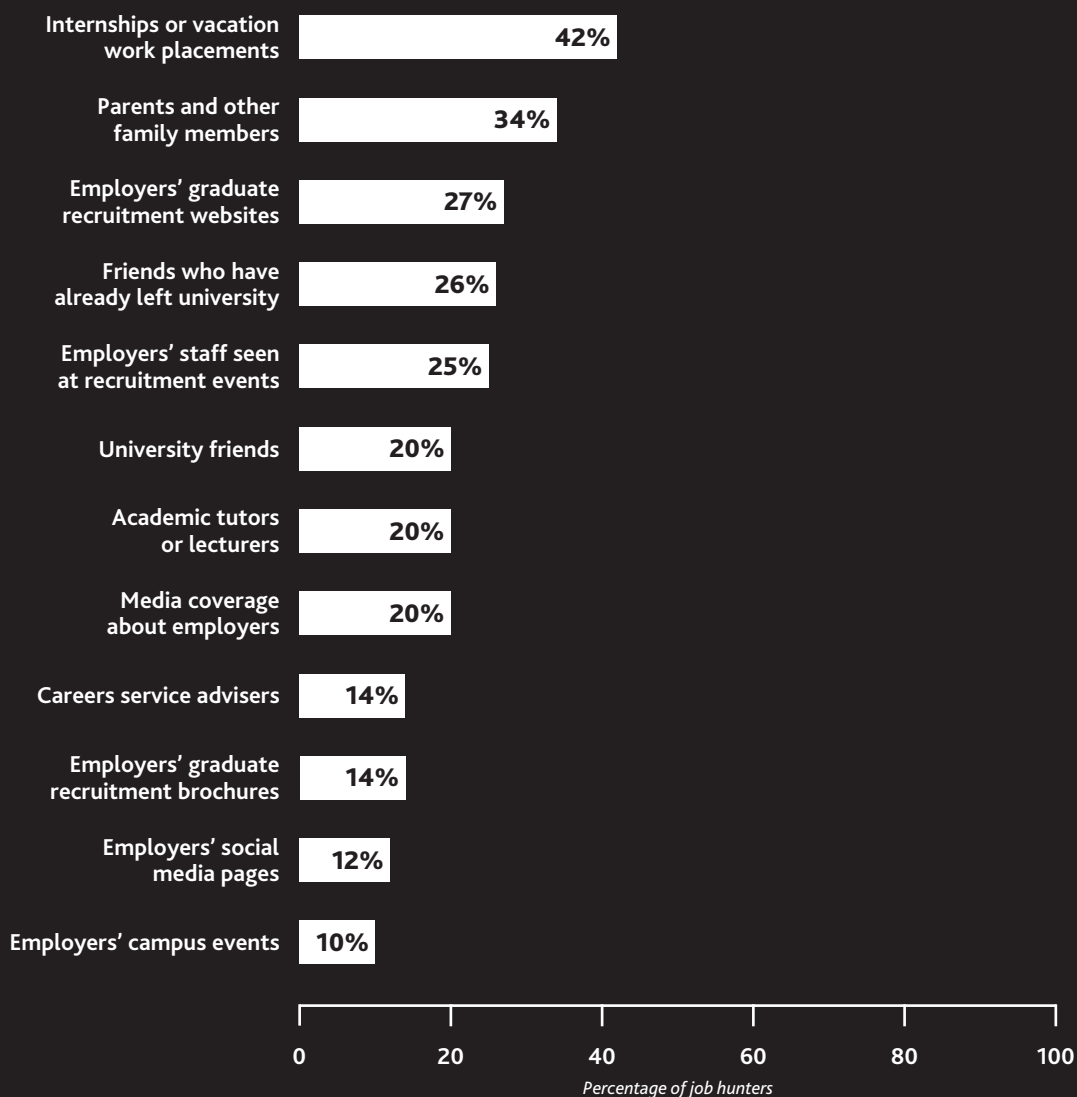
Graduate Recruitment Promotions Used by the 'Class of 2015'

Looking at the resources that final year students had made use of during their search for a graduate job, it is clear that employers' graduate websites were the most widely-used source of information, accessed by 85 per cent of finalists (see *Chart 4.18*). Employers' brochures were popular too, read by 59 per cent of those looking for work, a marked increase on the usage recorded in 2014.

At a local level, the university career services were a very important resource, either through personal visits, their websites, their email services or via social media. Presentations and autumn careers fairs were the most-likely way for students to meet prospective employers in person and had been used by significantly more finalists this year. And over a third of finalists took part in skills training events run by graduate employers. In terms of commercial careers publications or recruitment websites, *The Times Top 100 Graduate Employers* directory and the *TARGETjobs* website were the market leaders.

Final year students who had made applications for graduate jobs were asked how much impact different sources of information and guidance had when deciding which employers to apply to. Two-fifths said that work experience had been 'very influential', at least a third were guided by their parents or other family members and a quarter confirmed the value of meeting employers' representatives at campus recruitment events (see *Chart 4.17*).

Chart 4.17 Promotions, Information or Advice that Job Hunters found 'Very Influential' in 2015



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Chart 4.18 Comparison of Graduate Recruitment Promotions used by the 'Class of 2015'



Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Impact of Students' Job Search

Finalists from the 'Class of 2015' who were actively looking for a graduate job after university were asked about their outlook, having begun their job search in either their first, penultimate or final year of their degree course.

The results highlight dramatic differences between students who started their job hunting early and those who left things until later. More than four-fifths of finalists who began their job search in the first year of their degree described themselves as 'knowledgeable about my options for after university' and thought they had 'a good understanding of what employers are looking for in their graduates' (see *Table 4.19*). A similar proportion felt they'd 'developed the skills that graduate employers are looking for' or were glad they 'had the chance to apply for work experience whilst at university' and at least 70 per cent thought they'd had sufficient time 'to research different employers and the graduate jobs they offer' and were 'fairly certain about what I want to do after university'.

By comparison, students who only started their job search in the final year seemed much less certain about their future (see *Table 4.21*). Three-fifths agreed 'I'm not really sure about what I want to do after university' and that 'I realise I should have started job hunting earlier', whereas two-thirds of finalists complained 'it's been a real rush to make my graduate job applications'. Over half felt they 'haven't had much time to research employers or their opportunities for graduates' and two-fifths said 'I regret that I've not had time to apply for any work experience' while at university.

It is clear from these responses that finalists who started their job search in their first year feel much more confident about their employability, future career prospects, and the graduate employment decisions they'd made, compared with those who left job hunting until later on. But interestingly, between two-thirds and three-quarters of all finalists questioned – irrespective of when they began their job search – said they'd changed their mind about what to do after university, during their job hunting. Fewer than a third said they'd always been 'pretty sure' what to do after graduation.

Table 4.19 Outlook of Students who Started their Job Search in the First Year of University

	% of finalists		
I feel quite knowledgeable about what my options are for after university	84	16	I'm not very clear about what I could be doing after graduation
I'm fairly certain about what to do after university	70	30	I'm not really sure about what to do after university
I've had time to research different employers and the graduate jobs they offer	69	31	I haven't had much time to research employers or their opportunities for graduates
Since starting to research careers, I've changed my mind as to what to do after university	67	33	I was always pretty sure about what I wanted to do after university
I've had plenty of opportunities to meet employers at their university events	78	22	I haven't had the chance to meet with many graduate employers during my job search
I think I've been able to develop the skills that graduate employers are looking for	82	18	I've not really had the time to develop many business or employability skills
I'm glad I had the chance to apply for work experience whilst at university	83	17	I regret that I've not had time to apply for any work experience so far
I've a good understanding of what employers are looking for in their graduates	85	15	I still don't really know what graduate employers are looking for
I've had plenty of time to prepare my job applications to graduate employers	48	52	It's been a real rush to make my graduate job applications
I'm pleased I started job hunting when I did	68	32	I realise I should have started job hunting earlier
For me, being at university was always about finding a good graduate job	77	23	I'm at university to study and have a good time, so job hunting is a lower priority
I'm finding juggling job hunting and academic work in my final year quite stressful	82	18	I'm not finding juggling job hunting and academic work in my final year too stressful

Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Table 4.20 Outlook of Students who Started their Job Search in Penultimate Year of University

	<i>% of finalists</i>		
I feel quite knowledgeable about what my options are for after university	72	28	I'm not very clear about what I could be doing after graduation
I'm fairly certain about what to do after university	62	38	I'm not really sure about what to do after university
I've had time to research different employers and the graduate jobs they offer	61	39	I haven't had much time to research employers or their opportunities for graduates
Since starting to research careers, I've changed my mind as to what to do after university	73	27	I was always pretty sure about what I wanted to do after university
I've had plenty of opportunities to meet employers at their university events	71	29	I haven't had the chance to meet with many graduate employers during my job search
I think I've been able to develop the skills that graduate employers are looking for	77	23	I've not really had the time to develop many business or employability skills
I'm glad I had the chance to apply for work experience whilst at university	68	32	I regret that I've not had time to apply for any work experience so far
I've a good understanding of what employers are looking for in their graduates	80	20	I still don't really know what graduate employers are looking for
I've had plenty of time to prepare my job applications to graduate employers	36	64	It's been a real rush to make my graduate job applications
I'm pleased I started job hunting when I did	49	51	I realise I should have started job hunting earlier
For me, being at university was always about finding a good graduate job	63	37	I'm at university to study and have a good time, so job hunting is a lower priority
I'm finding juggling job hunting and academic work in my final year quite stressful	85	15	I'm not finding juggling job hunting and academic work in my final year too stressful

Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Table 4.21 Outlook of Students who Started their Job Search in the Final Year of University

	<i>% of finalists</i>		
I feel quite knowledgeable about what my options are for after university	54	46	I'm not very clear about what I could be doing after graduation
I'm fairly certain about what to do after university	40	60	I'm not really sure about what to do after university
I've had time to research different employers and the graduate jobs they offer	46	54	I haven't had much time to research employers or their opportunities for graduates
Since starting to research careers, I've changed my mind as to what to do after university	75	25	I was always pretty sure about what I wanted to do after university
I've had plenty of opportunities to meet employers at their university events	61	39	I haven't had the chance to meet with many graduate employers during my job search
I think I've been able to develop the skills that graduate employers are looking for	62	38	I've not really had the time to develop many business or employability skills
I'm glad I had the chance to apply for work experience whilst at university	58	42	I regret that I've not had time to apply for any work experience so far
I've a good understanding of what employers are looking for in their graduates	68	32	I still don't really know what graduate employers are looking for
I've had plenty of time to prepare my job applications to graduate employers	30	70	It's been a real rush to make my graduate job applications
I'm pleased I started job hunting when I did	39	61	I realise I should have started job hunting earlier
For me, being at university was always about finding a good graduate job	51	49	I'm at university to study and have a good time, so job hunting is a lower priority
I'm finding juggling job hunting and academic work in my final year quite stressful	85	15	I'm not finding juggling job hunting and academic work in my final year too stressful

Base - Face-to-face interviews with 18,412 final year students

Conclusions and Recommendations

This year's survey offers a useful analysis of when students from the 'Class of 2015' began researching their career options and looking for a graduate job, the work experience they had completed whilst at university, and the graduate recruitment information and resources that students used during their job hunting:

- Almost a fifth of final year students graduating in 2015 looked into career opportunities before arriving at university and a further 30 per cent started their careers research during the first year of their degree course.
- By the beginning of their final year, an unprecedented 79 per cent of students were actively looking for a graduate job – the highest proportion recorded to date by *The UK Graduate Careers Survey*.
- Half of final year undergraduates had done either internships, vacation work or course placements whilst at university. On average, finalists had completed more than six months careers-related work experience.
- Just 48 per cent had done casual work during the university holidays, the lowest proportion ever recorded by *The UK Graduate Careers Survey* and a third fewer than five years ago.
- University Careers Services continue to be a key focal point for job hunting and careers activities on campus and were used by 95% of final year students, a further increase on last year's record usage.
- Three-fifths of students who used careers services had a formal consultation with a careers adviser and an impressive 72% of finalists rated careers services either 'excellent' or 'good'.
- On campus, 52% of final year students had attended employer presentations, 48% took part in autumn careers fairs and 29% participated in employers' skills training events.
- A much higher proportion of early job hunters – those who started their job search in the first year at university – were confident about their career prospects, compared with students who left job hunting until later at university.
- More than three-fifths of students who didn't begin their job search until their final year said 'I realise I should have started job hunting sooner' and over half regretted that they 'haven't had much time to research employers or their opportunities for graduates'.