



WHAT DO GRADUATES WANT? | 2018

A look at what 3,000+ Bright Network members want from their career and future employers



BRIGHT
NETWORK



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Bright Network, 5th Floor, Goldsmiths House, 137-141 Regent Street, London, W1B 4HZ
0203 011 1612 employers@brightnetwork.co.uk [@brightnetwork](https://twitter.com/brightnetwork) www.brightnetwork.co.uk

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We established Bright Network to help the world's best companies find the talent they need to grow their businesses faster and enable the UK's brightest graduates to discover great career opportunities.

By combining rich data, proprietary technology and analytics with extensive knowledge and insights, we create exceptional experiences, interactions and opportunities to connect students and their future employers.

ABOUT THE SURVEY

As part of our mission to provide better matchmaking between employers and graduates, we conducted this annual research in January 2018 to gain a greater understanding into what graduates think about their future career and what they look for in an employer.

We surveyed 3,000+ members of Bright Network. Where relevant, we have segmented data by gender, graduation year, ethnicity and background. All percentages are rounded up or down to the nearest whole number.

KEY CONTACTS



James Uffindell
Founder & CEO
james@brightnetwork.co.uk



Kirsten Barnes
Commercial Director
kirsten@brightnetwork.co.uk



Ben Triggs
Head of Marketing & Client Delivery
ben@brightnetwork.co.uk

BRIGHT NETWORK STATS

150,000+
MEMBERS

85,000+
UNDERGRADUATES

25%
STEM

58%
FEMALE

40%
BAME

47%
MORE LIKELY TO GET HIRED THAN
THE AVERAGE GRADUATE AT
ASSESSMENT CENTRE

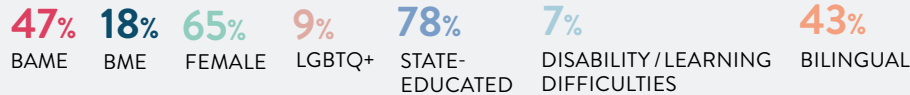
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What do graduates want? is the only survey that seeks to understand more about the specific career preferences, concerns and ambitions of those studying across the UK's top universities, breaking down the results by gender, graduation year and ethnicity where relevant.

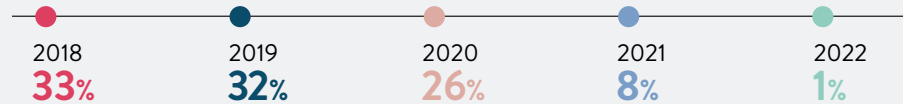
- **52%** of Bright Network members surveyed decided to attend university to improve their career prospects. **35%** chose to attend as they had a passion for their degree subject.
 - **49%** of those surveyed do not feel or are unsure as to whether university is equipping them for the world of work.
 - **49%** of those surveyed are concerned by the level of debt they will have after they graduate.
 - **90%** of 2018 graduates will leave university with some work experience.
 - **12%** of final year graduates are either unsure as to what they will do after university or are still researching and considering their options.
 - **58%** of those surveyed expect to start a graduate job straight after university. **57%** are confident about securing a graduate role.
 - **41%** of current undergraduates believe Brexit will have a negative impact on their job prospects.
 - **39%** of our LGBTQ+ community surveyed said that they did not feel they could pursue any career path they wish.
 - Graduates see **strong competition from other graduates, a lack of relevant work experience** and a **lack of network and contacts** as the biggest barriers to pursuing any career path they wish.
 - **6%** of BAME students believe their ethnicity is the biggest barrier to pursuing any career path they wish, rising to **8%** amongst BME students.
 - **35%** of those surveyed feel that their background has hindered them in an application for either work or academic study.
 - Graduates look for companies that are **fast growing and innovative**, followed by **financial success** and **inspiring management**. They prioritise a **friendly and respectable working environment** and look for roles that offer **professional training and development**.
 - The majority of students feel it is important **to meet employers face-to-face** before submitting an application.
 - **61%** of respondents are most likely to apply for graduate roles based in London.
 - **88%** of those surveyed would reject an offer they had already received for a better one – with **54%** citing a more prestigious firm or a more exiting role as the main reasons for doing so. **15%** of LGBTQ+ respondents said they would reject an offer in favour of another opportunity if they felt they had received a better experience during another application process.
 - Respondents believe that the most important attributes an employer values in successful candidates are **achieving a 2:1 or above** and **existing industry experience**. In contrast, graduate employers say they look for candidates that have a **passion for the business, good communication skills** and are **good at problem solving**.
-

ABOUT THE RESPONDENTS

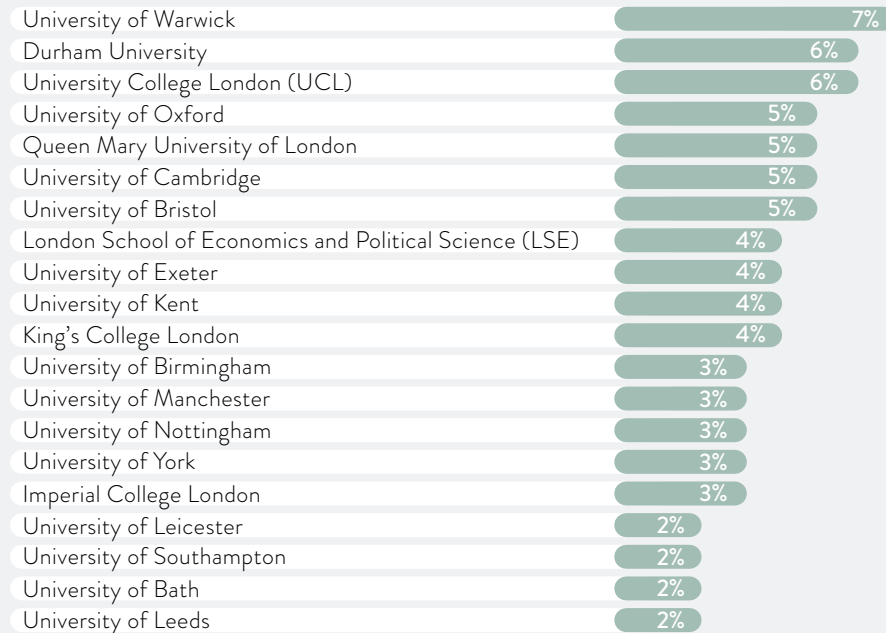
3,109 TOTAL RESPONSES



GRADUATION YEAR

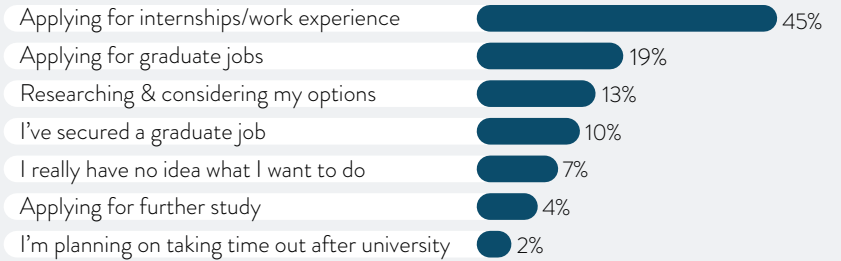


TOP 20 UNIVERSITIES ATTENDED BY RESPONDENTS

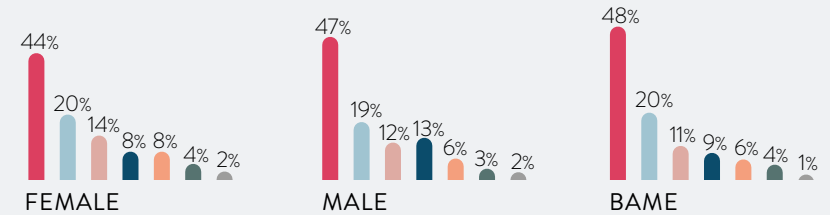


CAREER STAGE OF RESPONDENTS

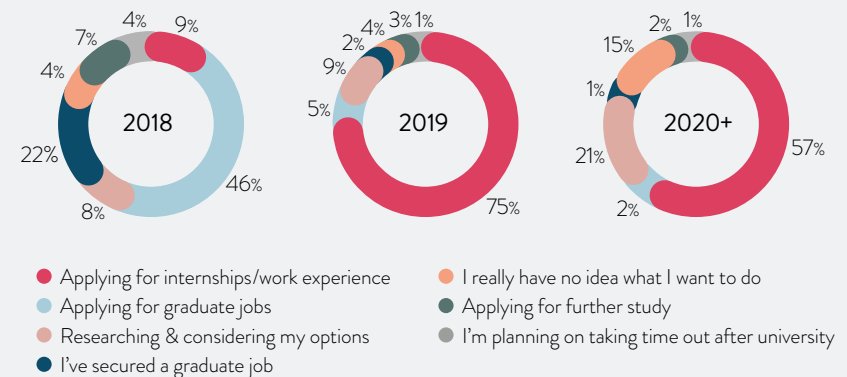
ALL RESPONDENTS



BY GENDER & ETHNICITY



BY GRADUATION YEAR



THE GENDER GAP

Our research looks at the differences between male and female responses. We highlight some of the key findings below.

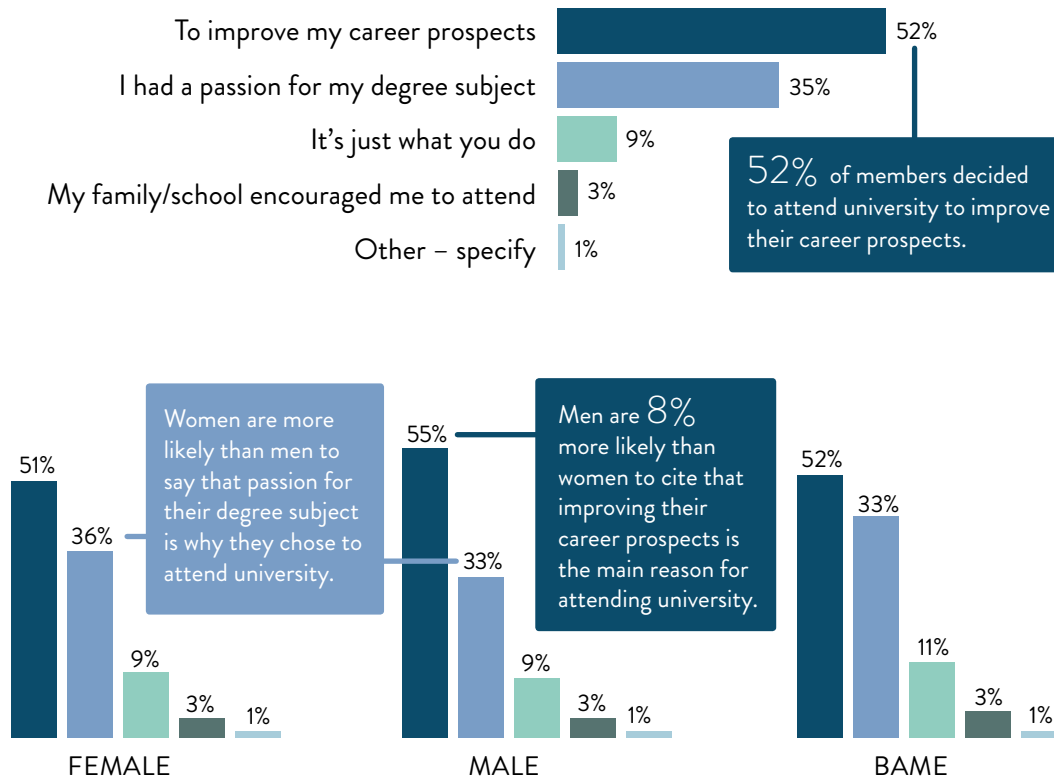
- Women are **36%** more likely than their male peers to be unsure as to what to do after university.
- Women are more likely than men to feel that university is either not preparing them for the world of work or they are unsure as to whether it is.
- Men are **45%** more confident than women about securing a role after they graduate and are **14%** more confident about pursuing any career path they wish.
- Female undergraduates are **24%** more likely than their male peers to cite a firm's people and culture as the most important factor when choosing a graduate role, whereas men are **33%** more likely to select remuneration and advancement as the most important factor.
- When it comes to rating their skills, men on average score themselves more highly than women and most notably put their ability to problem solve at the top of their skills list. In contrast, women score themselves more highly on communication, organisation and time management.
- Both men and women think their weakest qualities and skills are confidence, negotiation & persuasion and commercial awareness.
- Women are **56%** more likely than their male counterparts to abandon an application because they have lost confidence in their ability to get the role.
- Men are **40%** more likely than women to cite that earning a lot of money as the biggest measure of success five years after graduating.
- Men expect a starting salary of **£29,279**. In contrast, women expect **£25,832**. When asked about their salary expectations for five years after they graduate, the gap increases further with women expecting an annual salary of **£47,492** and men looking for a salary of **£60,521** – a difference of **27%**.
- Women are **24%** more likely than men to say that competition from other graduates is their biggest barrier to success.
- Women are **40%** more likely than men to have undertaken part-time work during term time, but **16%** less likely to have undertaken a Spring Week or Internship.
- Women are **23%** more likely than men to feel their background has hindered them.



UNIVERSITY PRIORITIES

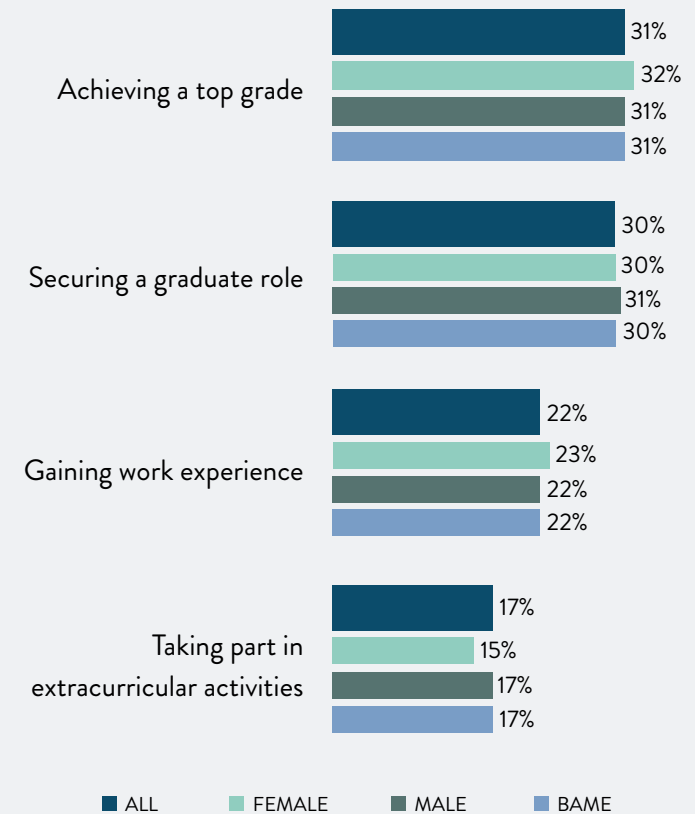
To understand more about our members' expectations around university, we asked three key questions – what was the most important factor in deciding to attend university; what matters most while you are at university and whether you have gained any work experience whilst at university.

1. What was the most important factor for you in deciding to attend university?

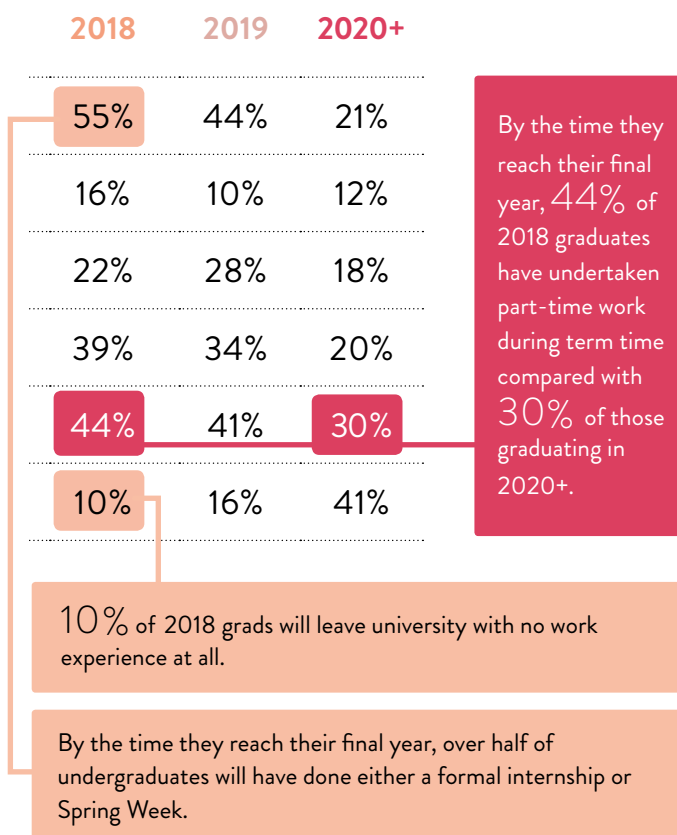
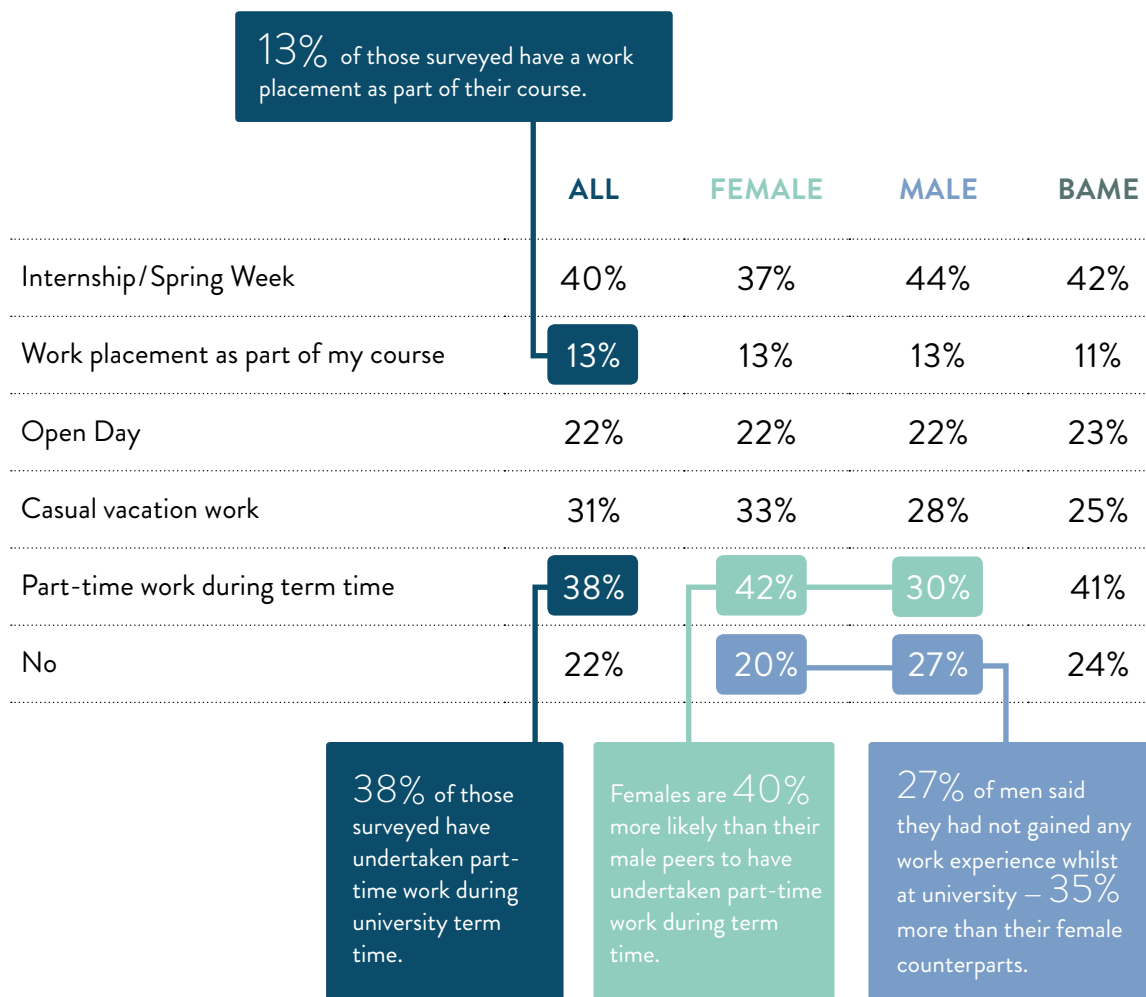


1. Respondents were asked to select one option.
2. Respondents were asked to rank the four options in order of importance.

2. What's most important to you while you're at university?



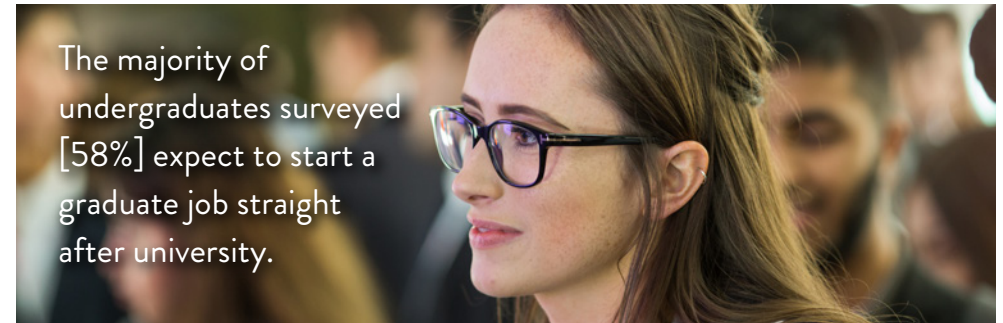
3. Have you gained any work experience while at university?



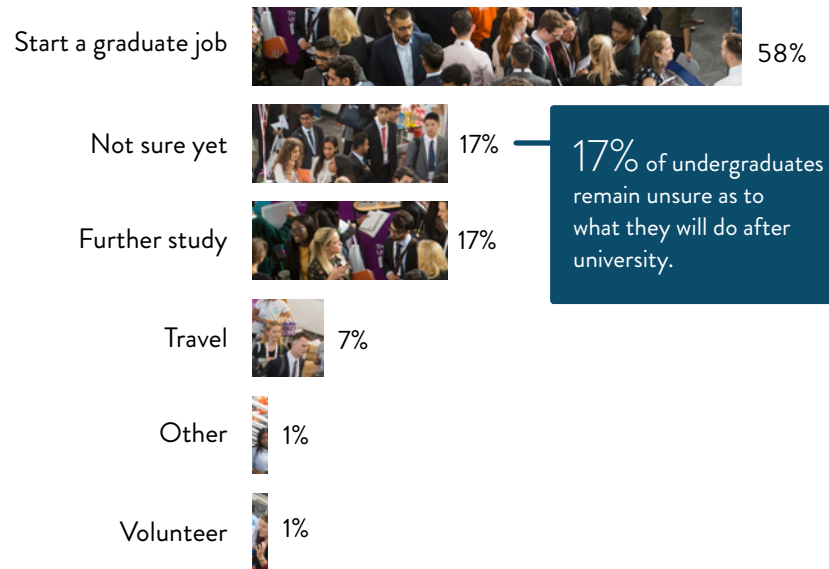
3. A multi-choice option question where respondents were asked to select all types of experience they have gained.

CONFIDENCE INDEX

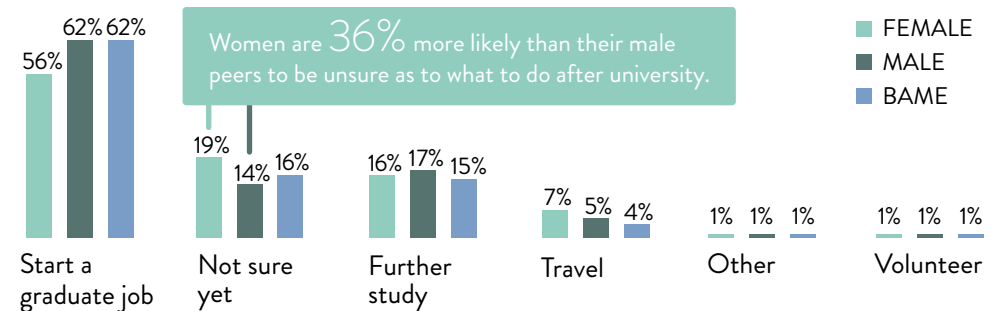
To understand how confident undergraduates feel about their future we asked them a series of questions about their plans straight after they graduate, whether they feel their time at university is equipping them to enter the world of work and if they are confident about securing a role once they finish. We also asked our members whether they feel Brexit will have a negative effect on their job prospects.



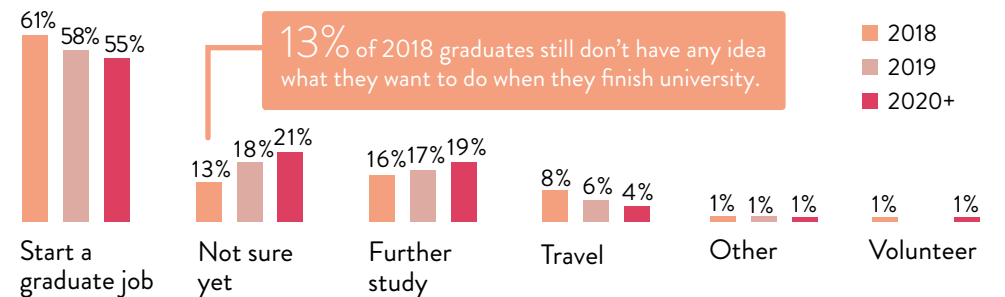
1. What do you plan to do straight after finishing university?



BY GENDER & ETHNICITY

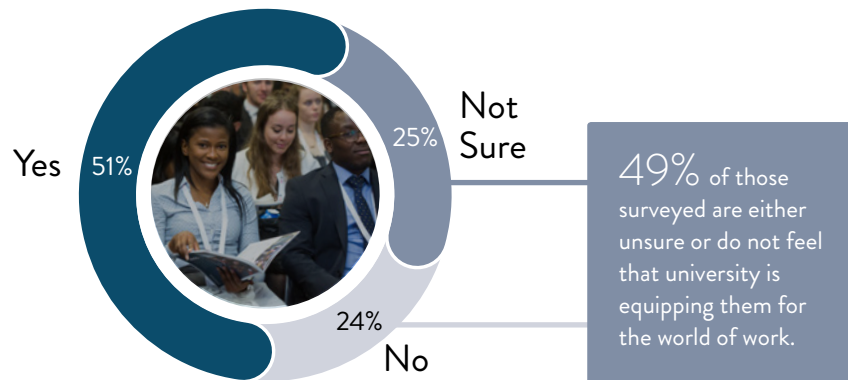


BY GRADUATION YEAR

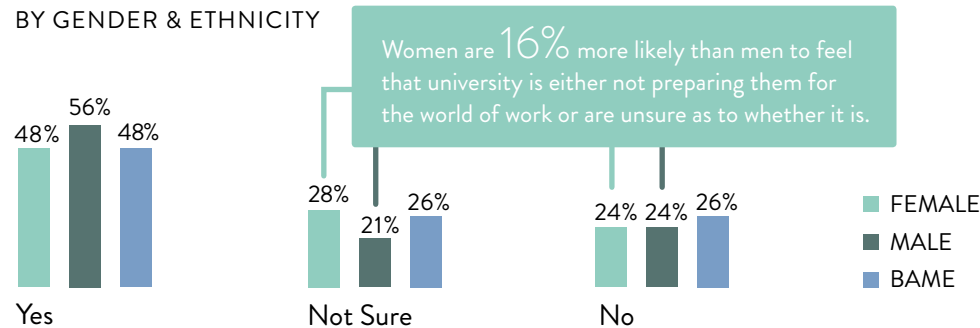


1. Respondents were asked to select one option.

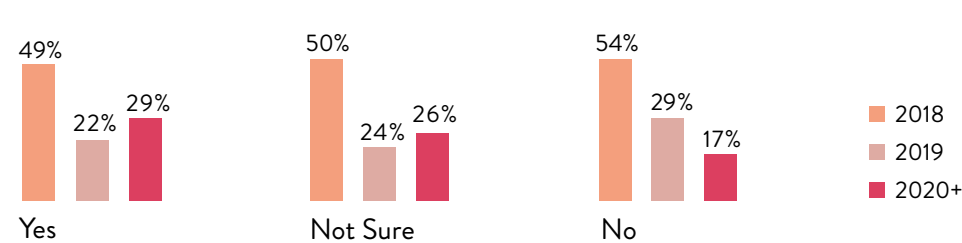
2. Do you feel your time at university is equipping you to enter the world of work?



BY GENDER & ETHNICITY



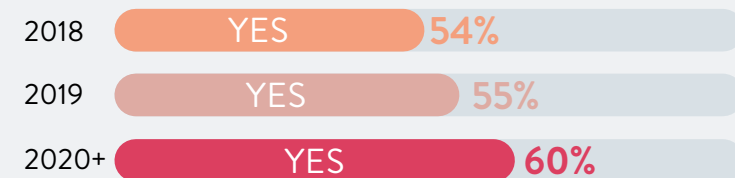
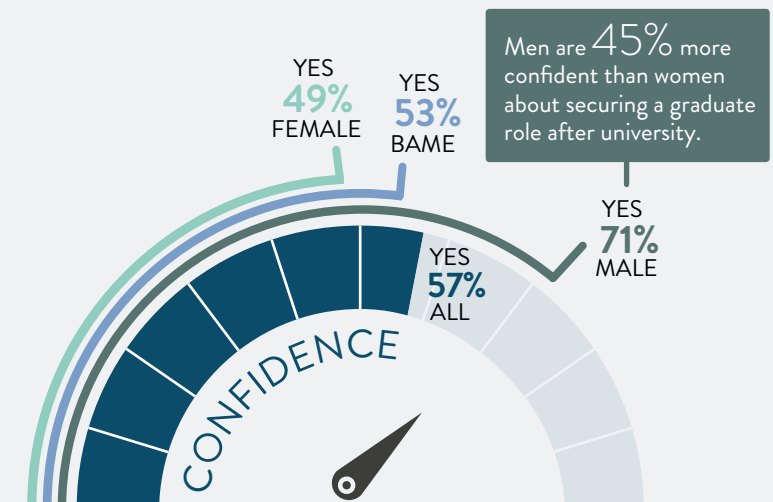
BY GRADUATION YEAR



2. Respondents were asked to select one option – Yes, Not Sure or No.

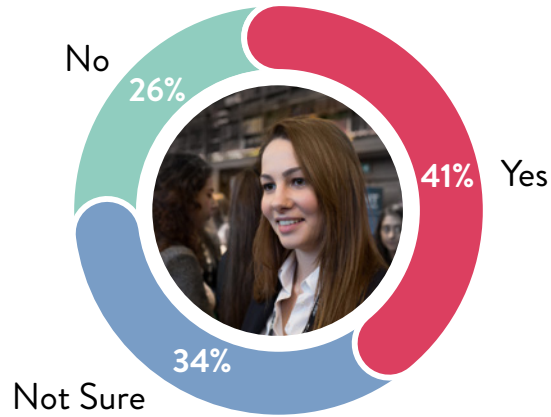
3. Respondents were asked to select one option – either Yes or No.

3. Are you confident about securing a graduate role after university?



Students graduating in 2020 or later are 11% more confident about securing a graduate job than those in their final year of university.

4. Do you think Brexit will have a negative effect on your job prospects after graduating?



BY GRADUATION YEAR



4. Respondents were asked to select one option – Yes, No, Not Sure.



41% of current undergraduates believe Brexit will have a negative impact on their job prospects.

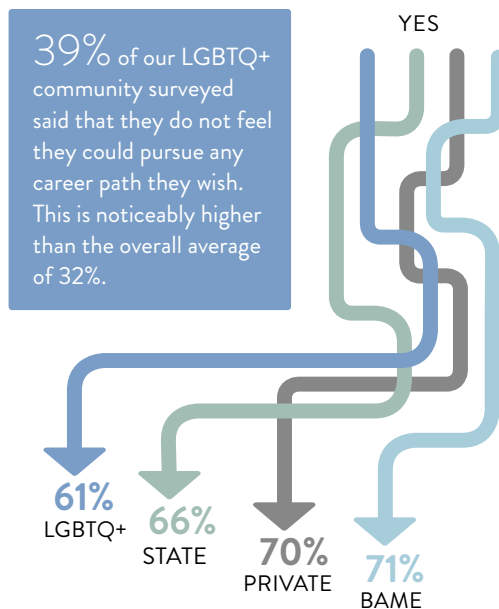
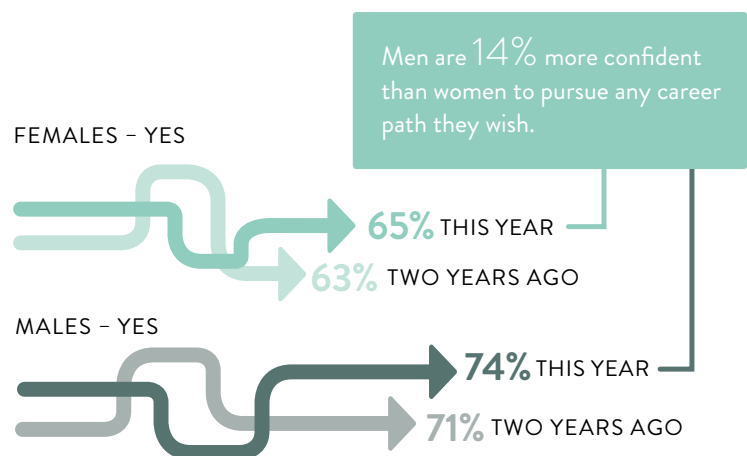
WHAT HOLDS GRADUATES BACK?

We asked our members questions about their confidence in pursuing any career path they wish and compared this with responses given to the same question two years ago. We asked them what they feel are the biggest barriers to their future career success and whether they have ever felt hindered by their background.

1. Do you believe you can pursue any career path you wish?

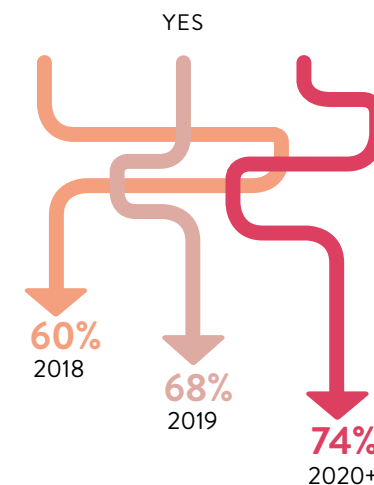


Our results show that the majority of students today feel more confident about their future prospects than they did two years ago. However 32% of those surveyed still do not feel they can pursue any career path they wish.



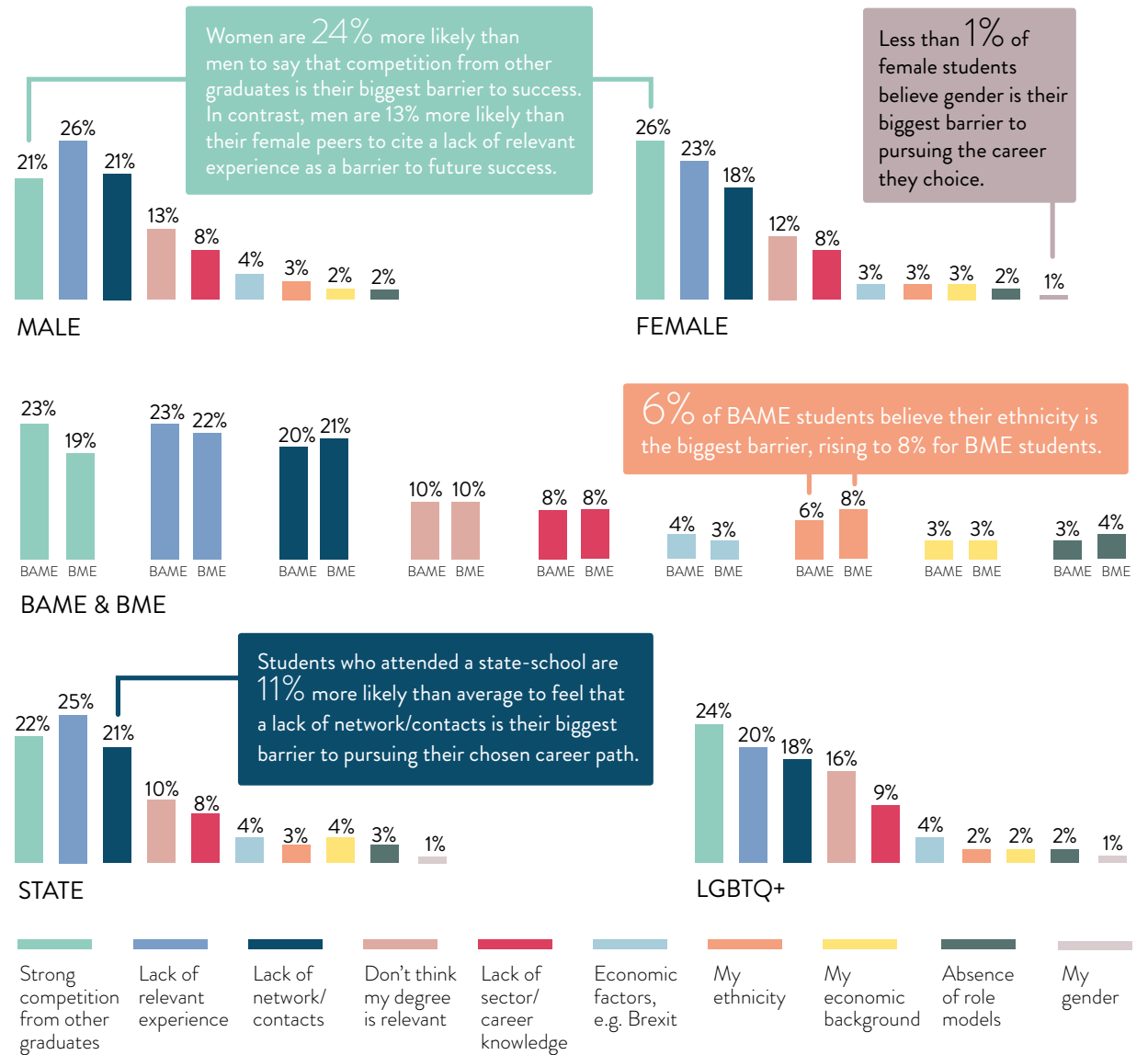
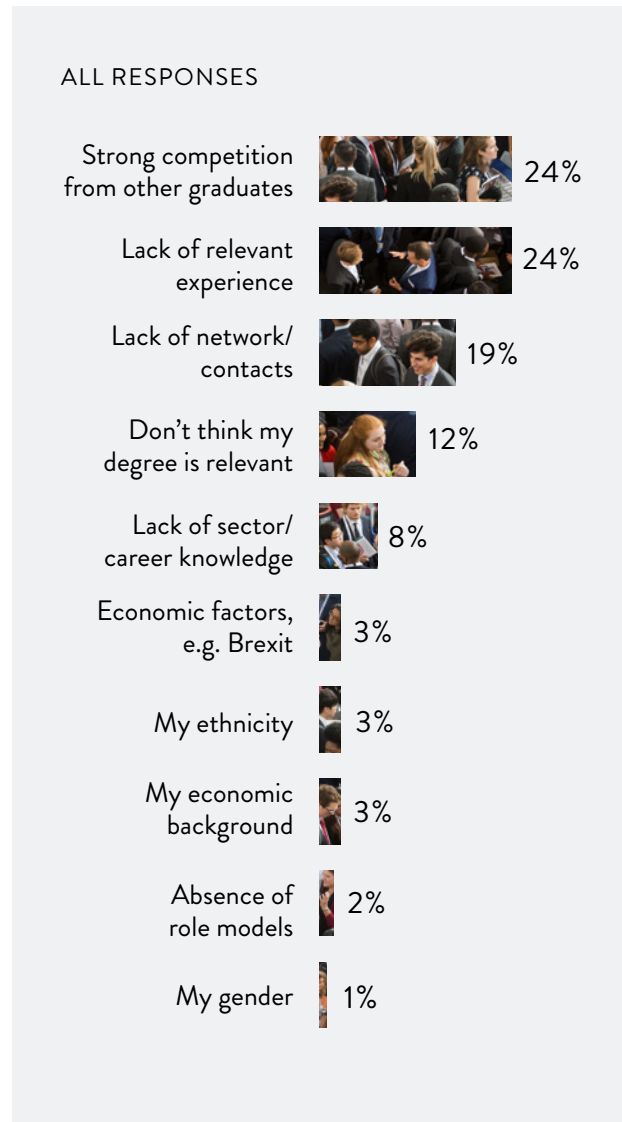
BAME students and those whom have been educated privately appear to be more confident about their ability to pursue any career path.

As they progress through university our results suggest that students begin to feel their options narrow. This might be because they become more specialised and focused or it could be that they develop greater awareness about what's possible and the skills and knowledge required to pursue certain routes.



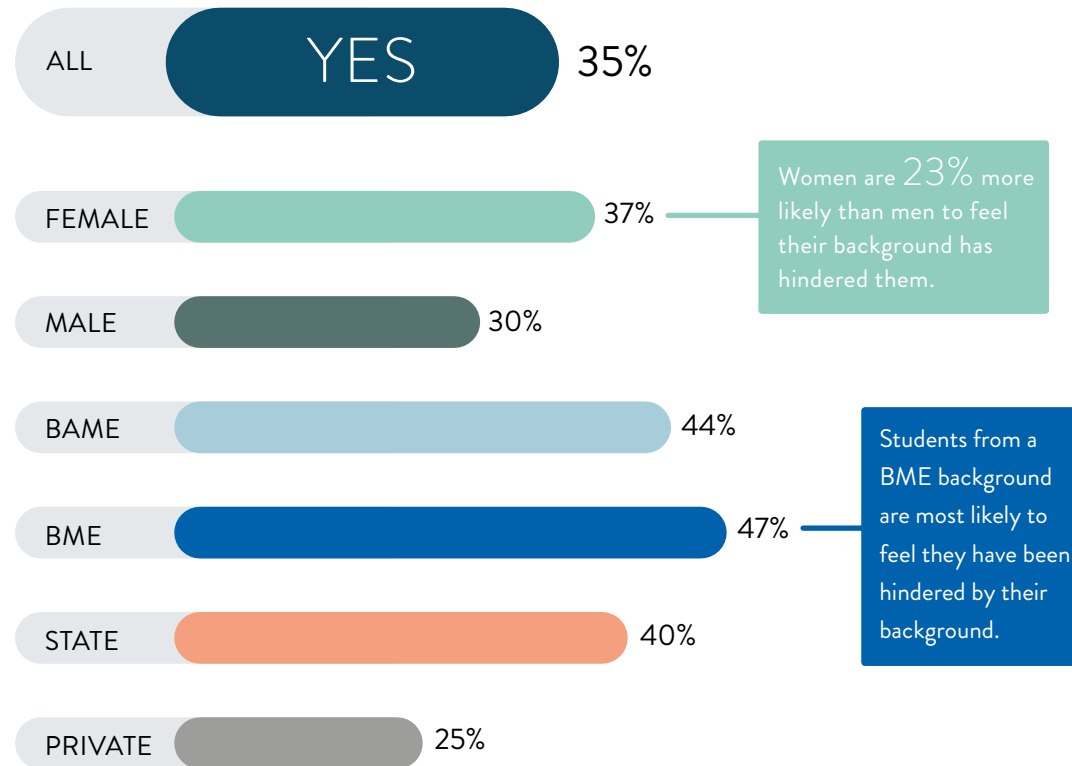
1. Respondents were asked to select one option – Yes or No.

2. What is the biggest barrier to pursuing any career path you wish?



2. Respondents were asked to select one option.

3. Have you ever felt your background has hindered you in an application process for work or academic study?



Our research indicates that ethnicity is more of a perceived issue than that of social mobility and gender. BME students are 34% more likely than average to feel that their background has hindered them.

3. Respondents were asked to select one option – Yes or No.



Women are 36% more likely to be unsure what to do after university than men.

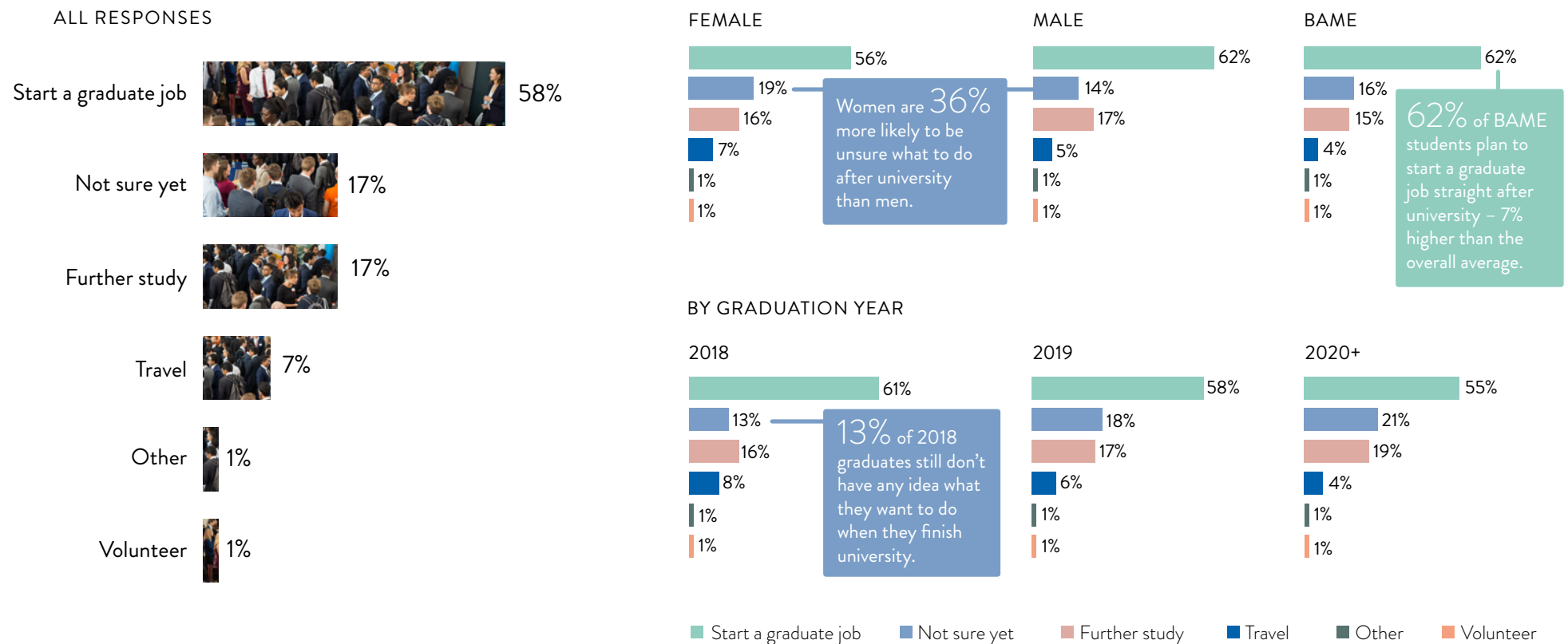


1. Respondents were asked to select one option.

CHOOSING A FUTURE CAREER & EMPLOYER

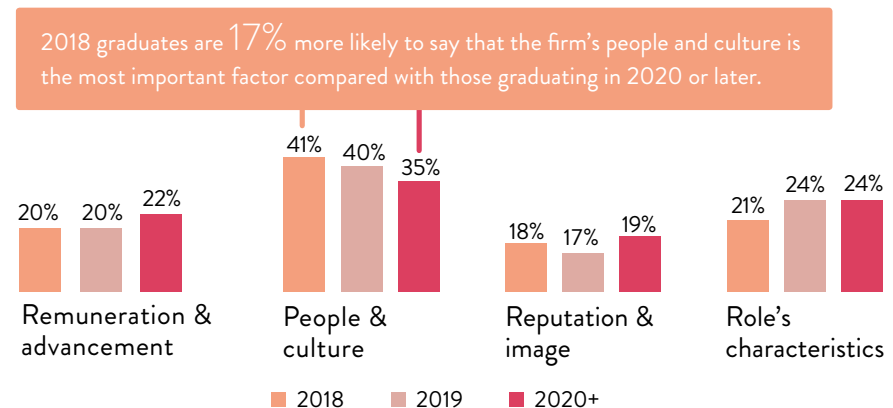
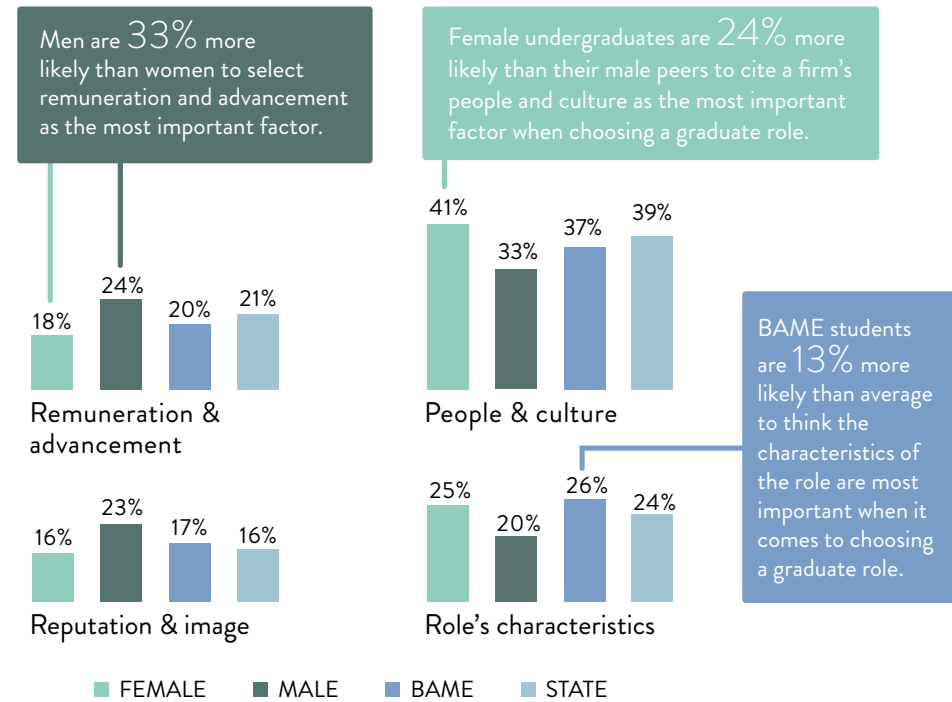
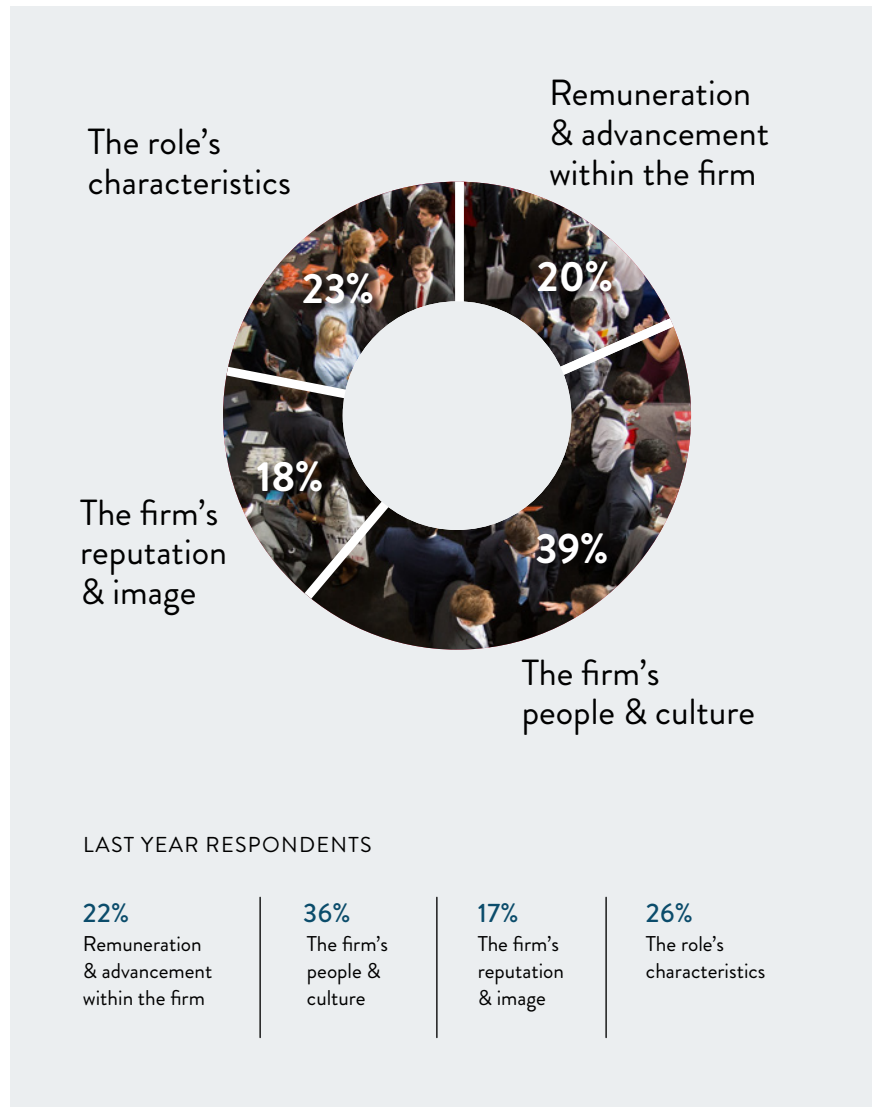
We asked our members a series of eight questions designed to understand what's most important when applying for a graduate role and what they look for specifically in a future employer. We asked them what is most likely to put them off applying for a particular firm and whether it is important to meet representatives from a company in advance of submitting an application.

1. What do you plan to do straight after finishing university?



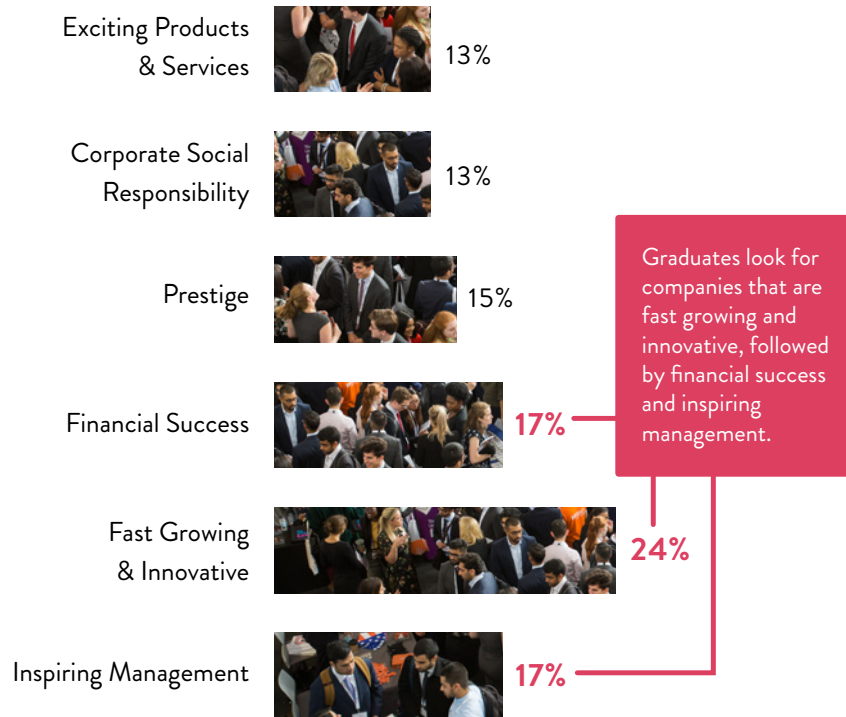
1. Respondents were asked to select one option.

2. What is most important to you when choosing a graduate role?



2. Respondents were asked to select one option.

3. When it comes to a graduate employer's reputation & image, what's most important?



YEAR ON YEAR STATS

13%	15%	14%	18%	24%	16%
Exciting Products & Services	Corporate Social Responsibility	Prestige	Financial Success	Fast Growing & Innovative	Inspiring Management

4. When it comes to a graduate employer's people & culture, what's most important?



YEAR ON YEAR STATS

18%	32%	11%	11%	20%	8%
Creative & Dynamic Work Environment	Friendly & Respectable Work Environment	Flexible Work Conditions	International Firm	Recognising & Rewarding Achievement	Championing Diversity

3. Respondents were asked to select one option.

4-7 (pages 19-21). Respondents were asked to select three options. The results were collated and calculated into a percentage popularity score based on how many respondents had scored them in first, second and third place.

5. When it comes to graduate job characteristics, what's most important?



YEAR ON YEAR STATS

17% Challenging work	6% Team-orientated work	12% High level of responsibility	14% Opportunities for international travel/relocation	31% Professional training & development	20% Secure employment
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6. When it comes to remuneration & advancement, what's most important?

A clear path for advancement tops the list as to what graduates prioritise when it comes to remuneration and advancement. This is followed by a competitive base salary and high future earnings.



YEAR ON YEAR STATS

28% Clear path for advancement	22% Competitive base salary	11% Competitive benefits	20% High future earnings	4% Overtime pay/compensation	15% Sponsorship of future education & professional qualifications
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7. What is most likely to put you off applying to a firm?



The survey reveals that respondents are most likely to be put off applying for a graduate employer if they feel they have had a poor or unimpressive experience when meeting representatives from that firm.



YEAR ON YEAR STATS

13%

Negative stories in the media

15%

Reports of redundancies

14%

Long and complicated application process

18%

Negative feedback from trusted friends and family

24%

Poor/unimpressive experience when meeting representatives from the firm

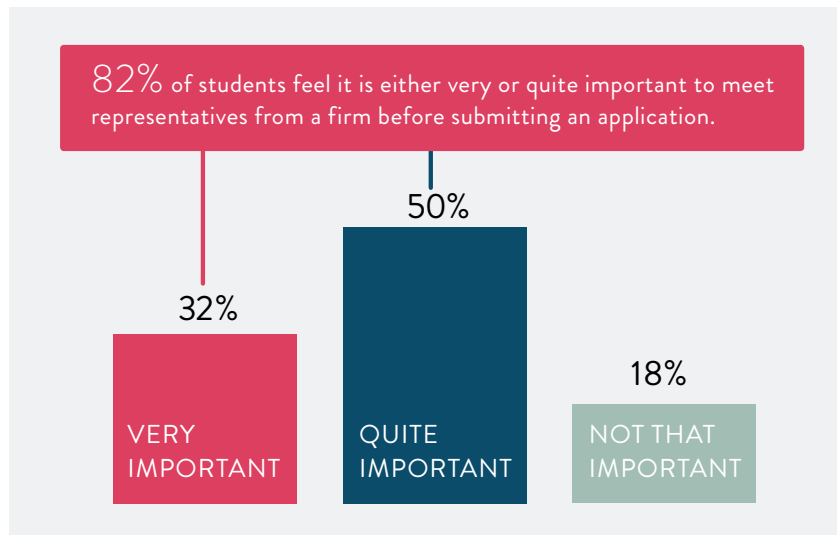
16%

Lack of available information

16%

Perceived lack of diversity

8. How important is it to meet a firm's representatives before applying for a role with them?

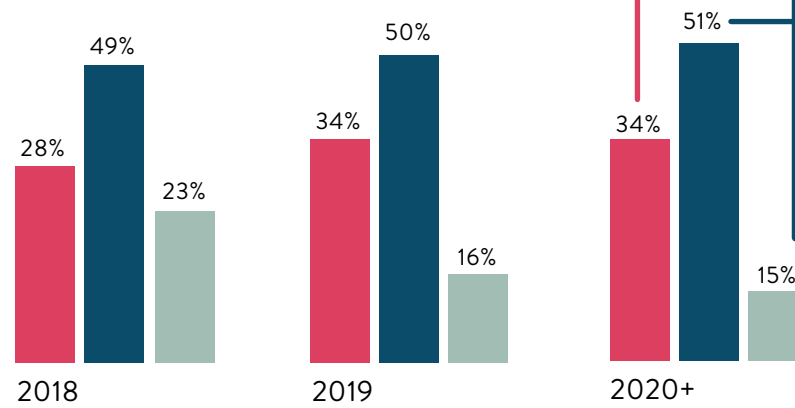


Our research shows that the majority of students feel it is important to meet employers face-to-face before submitting an application.

BY GENDER



BY GRADUATION YEAR



85% of 2020+ graduates think it's important to meet a firm representatives before applying. This highlights the importance and value of meeting students who are in the early stages of their university career.

■ Very important ■ Quite important ■ Not that important

8. Respondents were asked to select one option

9. When a firm says it supports diversity and inclusion, how do you interpret this?

	ALL	FEMALE	MALE	BAME	BME	STATE	NON STATE	LAST YEAR
I really don't know	5%	4%	7%	6%	3%	5%	6%	6%
It believes a diverse workforce is the most effective	27%	26%	27%	28%	28%	27%	28%	59%
It has a diversity quota	24%	23%	26%	23%	26%	24%	24%	28%
It has an inclusive culture	36%	39%	33%	35%	33%	36%	35%	N/A
It primarily wants to meet candidates from minority groups	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	5%	3%
Other – specify	3%	3%	3%	3%	5%	3%	3%	3%



26% of BME students surveyed believe that supporting diversity and inclusion means a firm has a diversity quota.

9. Respondents were asked to select the most relevant one option from six. If they selected the 'other' option respondents were given a free text box for their answer.

SKILLS

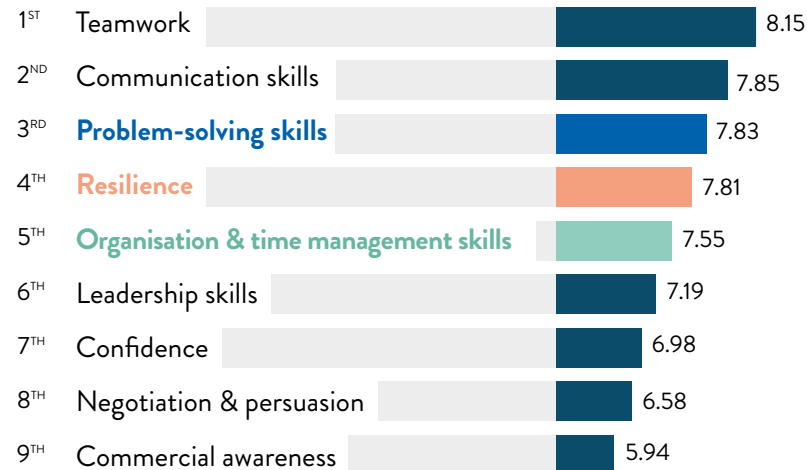


We presented our members with a list of nine skills and asked them to rate themselves out of 10 for each one.

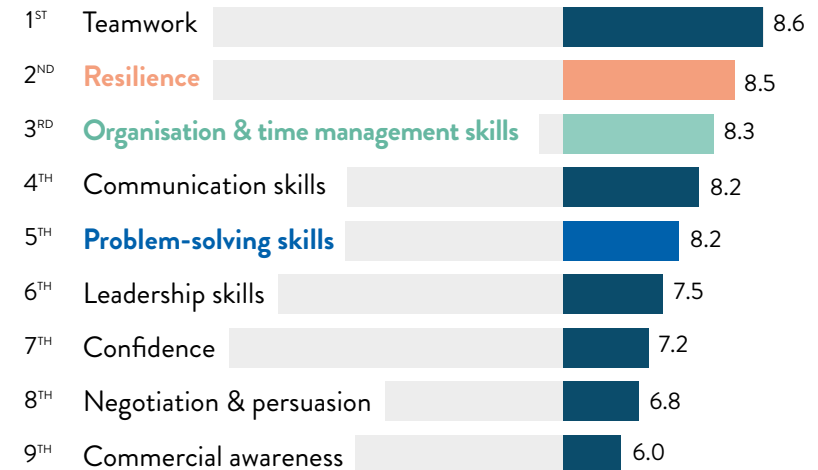
We compared this year's results with those from 2017 and look at the key differences between how men and women rate their different skills.

1. How would you rate yourself in these skills in order of ability?

ALL RESPONSES THIS YEAR

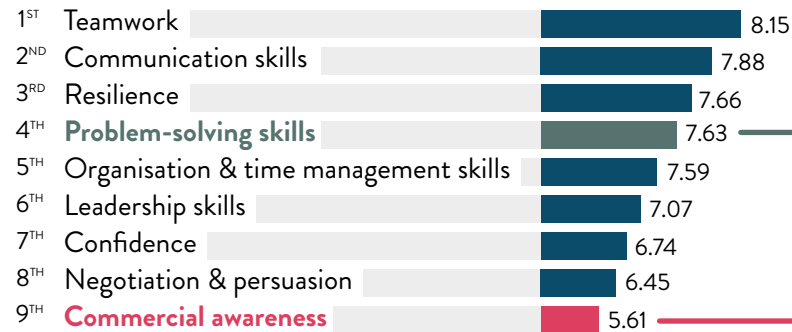


ALL RESPONSES LAST YEAR



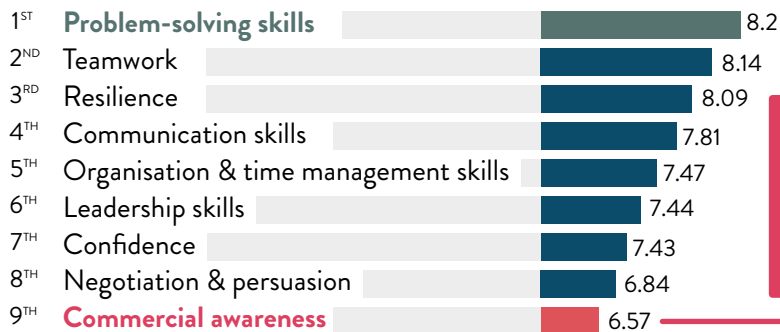
1. Each respondent was asked to rate themselves out of 10 for each skill, 1 being the lowest, 10 the highest. The average of these scores is displayed above.

FEMALE



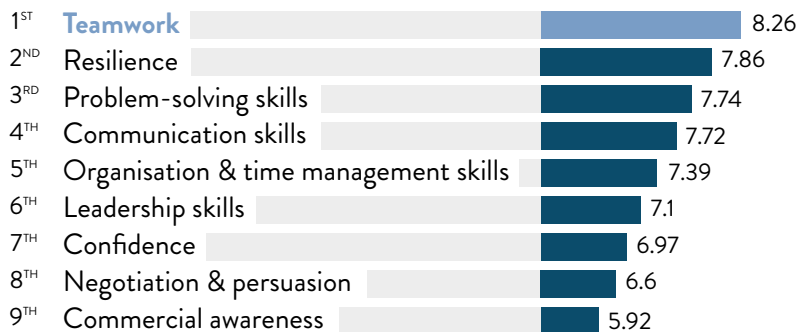
Men rate themselves on average 7% better at problem solving than women.

MALE



Men rate themselves on average 17% better at commercial awareness than females.

BAME



BAME students rate themselves better at teamwork than the average undergraduate.

On average, men score themselves more highly across a range of skills compared to women. They place problem solving at the top of their skillset list, whereas women believe their strongest skills are teamwork, communication and resilience.



EMPLOYER & CANDIDATE PERCEPTIONS

We asked our members what they think graduate employers value most in candidates. We then asked 157 graduate employers across a range of companies and sectors, what they value most in graduate candidates.

We presented both our members and employers with the exact same list of 11 qualities. The results are shown below.

1. What do you think graduate employers value most in candidates?

STUDENT



2. What do you value most in graduate candidates?

EMPLOYER



Graduate employers and survey respondents were asked to select their top three out of the eleven.

There are key differences between what graduates think employers value in candidates compared with what they actually do.

Candidates think that employers value achieving a 2:1 or above and gaining existing industry experience over other factors.

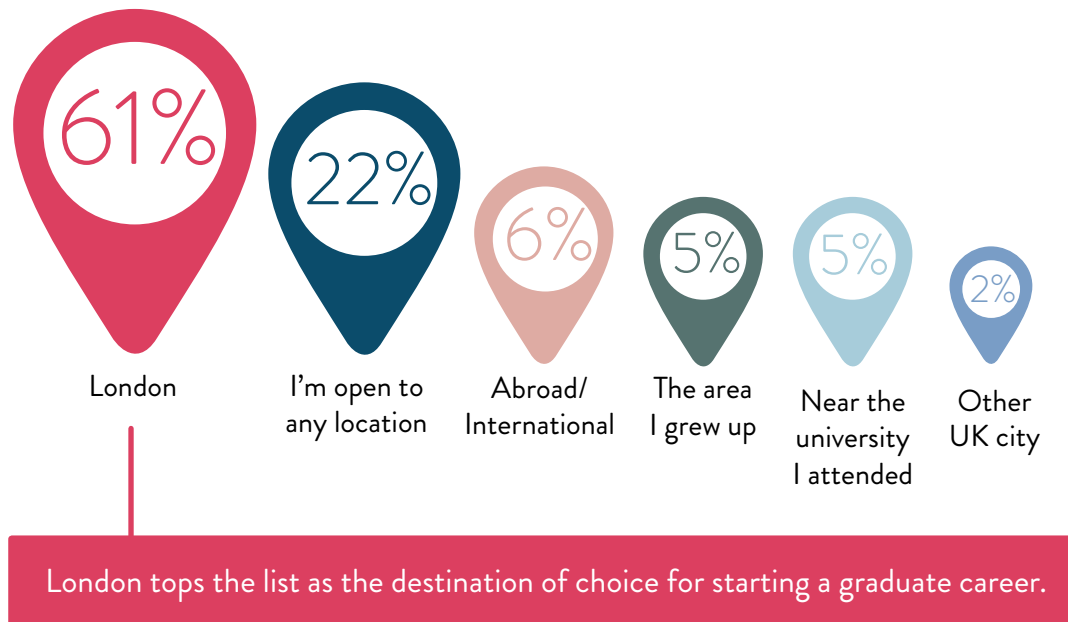
In contrast, the survey reveals that employers place greater importance on qualities such as problem solving and resilience.

With resilience featuring on the bottom of the students' list of valued attributes, it suggests that more needs to be done to inform candidates about what employers are really looking for from their future hires.

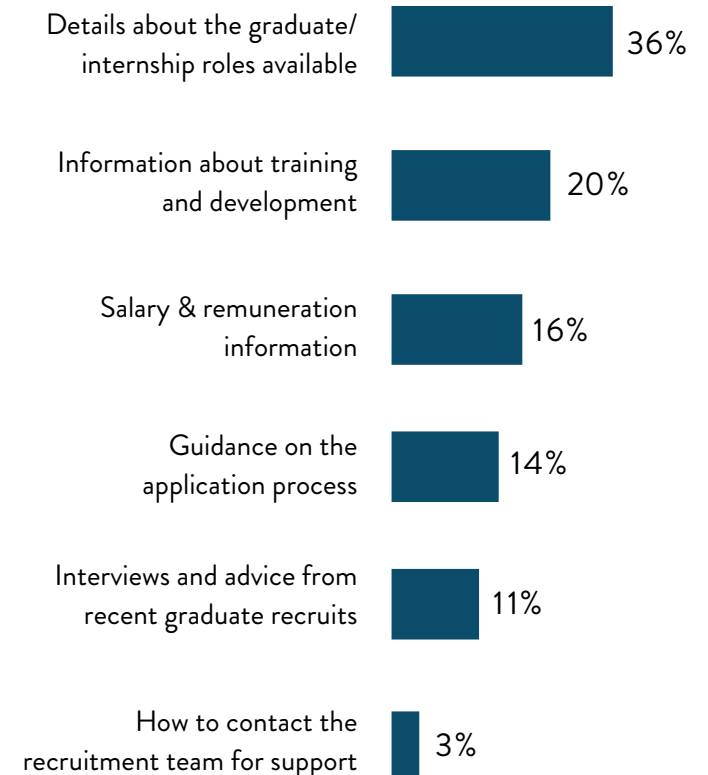
APPLYING FOR A GRADUATE ROLE

To understand more about how undergraduates approach the application process we asked them a series of nine questions. Ranging from the information they require before making an application, to the total number of applications they make and whether they would reject an offer they had previously accepted, our findings are shown on the following pages.

1. Where are you most likely to apply for a graduate role?



2. What information do you want to see from employers before you apply for a role?



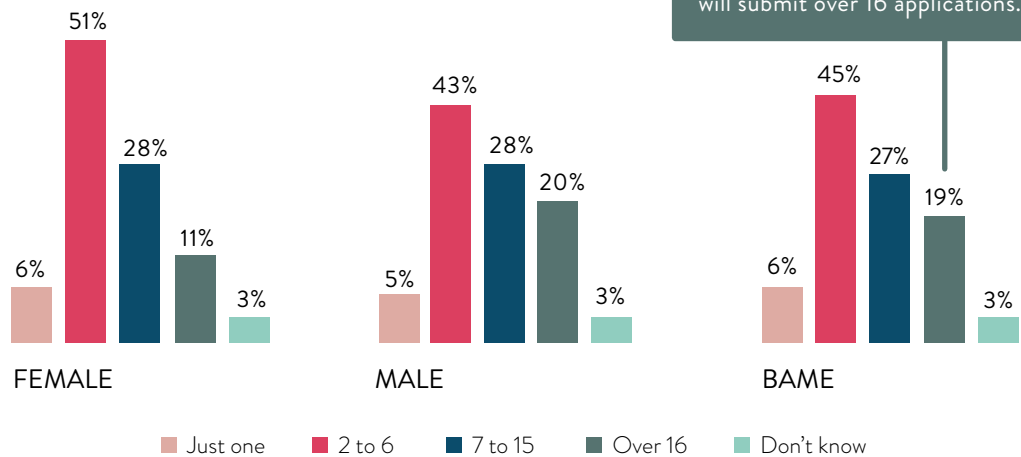
1. Respondents were asked to select one option. They were given a free text box if they selected 'other UK city'.

2. Respondents were asked to select their top three options. The results were collated and calculated into a percentage popularity score based on how many respondents had scored them in first, second and third place.

3. When applying for insight days, internships or graduate programmes, on average how many applications do you submit?



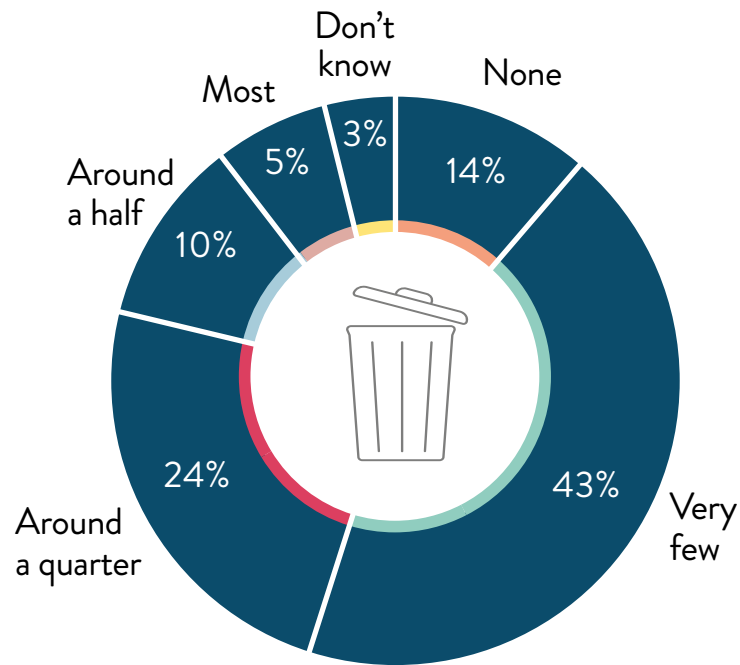
BY GENDER & ETHNICITY



3. Respondents were asked to select one option.



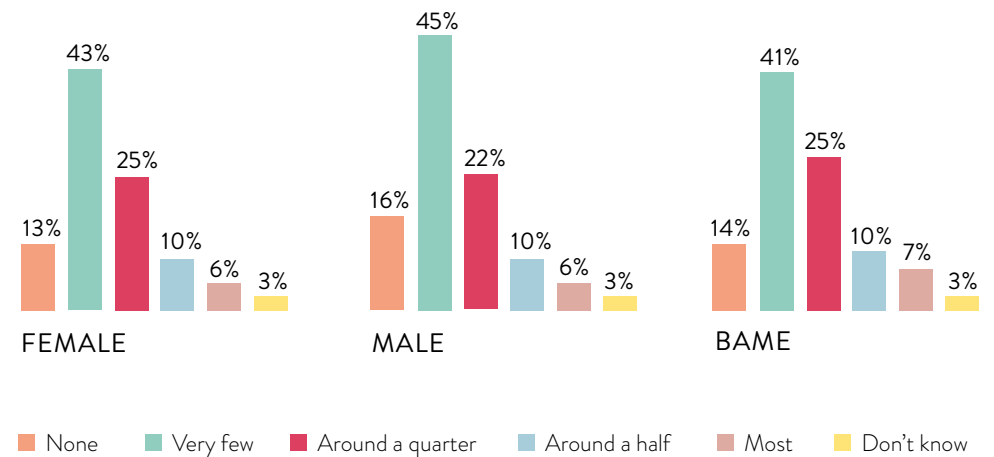
4. When applying for insight days, internships or graduate programmes, how many applications do you abandon?



The majority of undergraduates surveyed will submit most of the applications they make. 43% of students said they abandon very few and 14% said they would not abandon any.

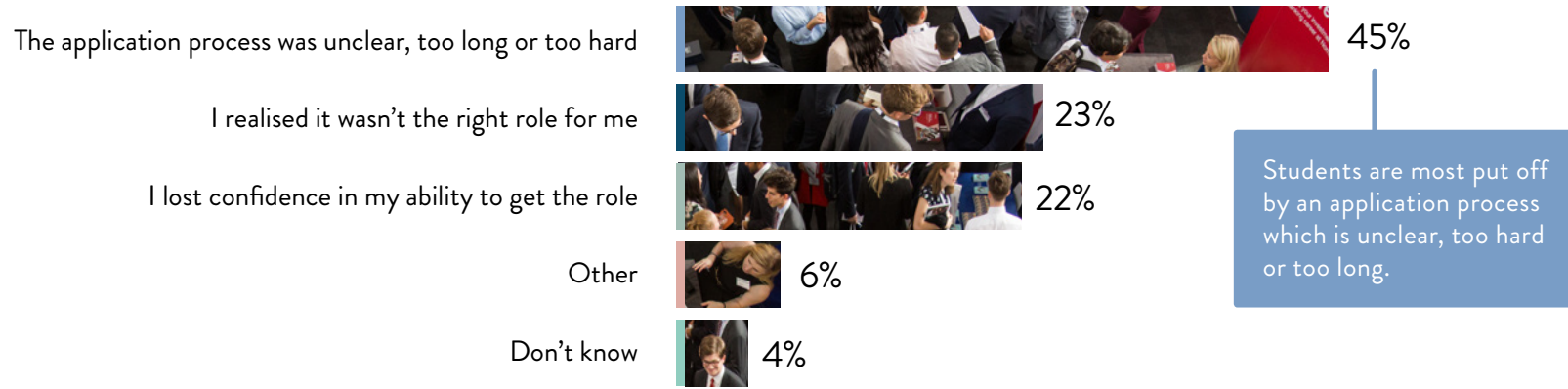


BY GENDER & ETHNICITY

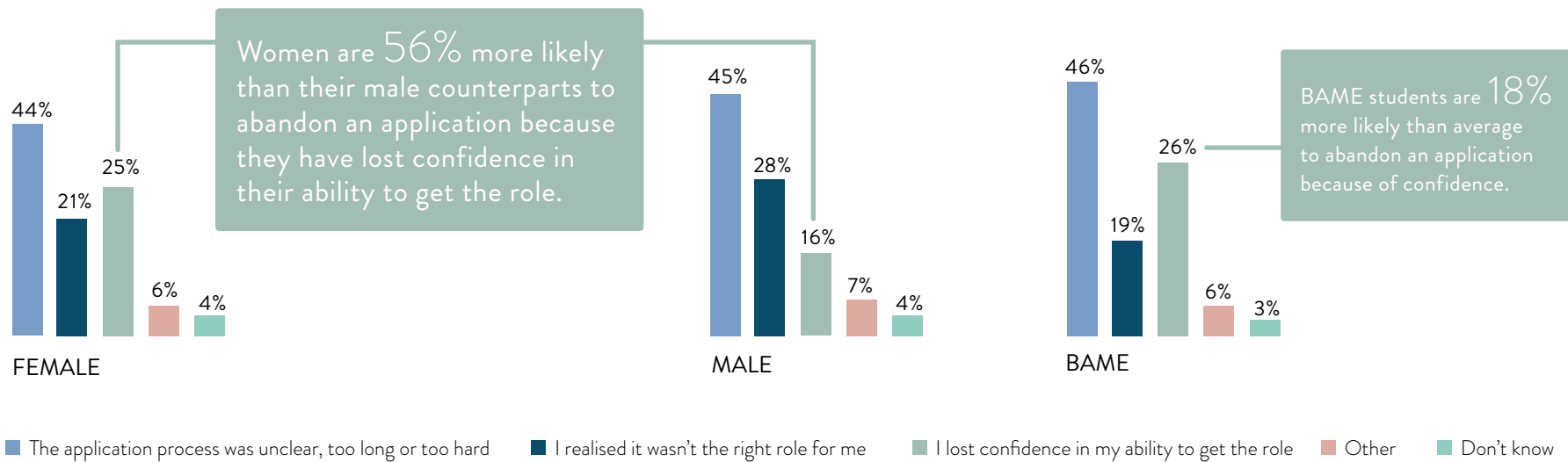


4. Respondents were asked to select one option.

5. What's the main reason you have usually given up on an application?

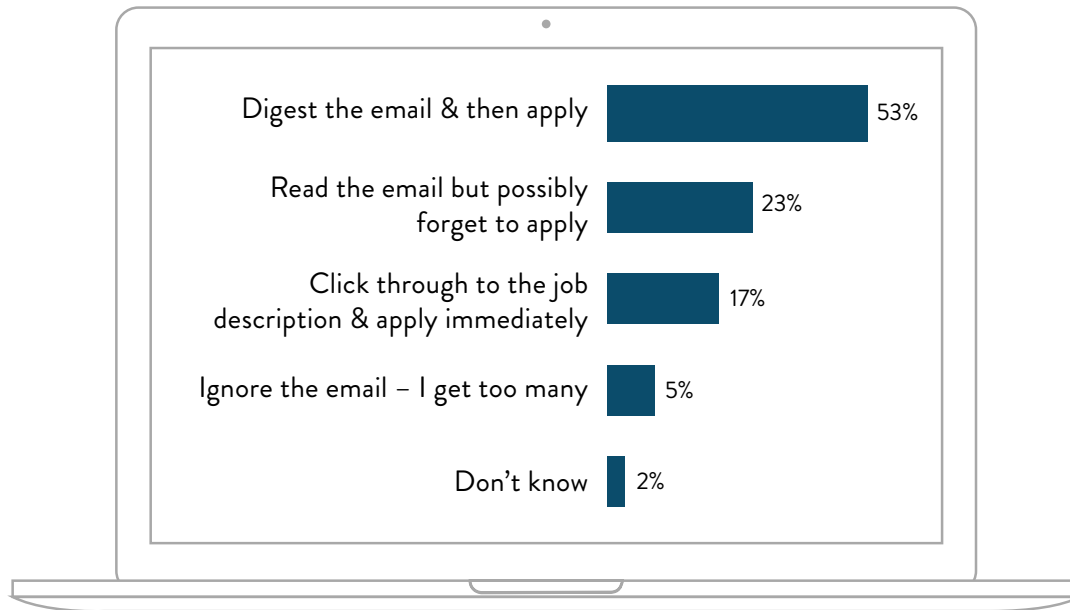


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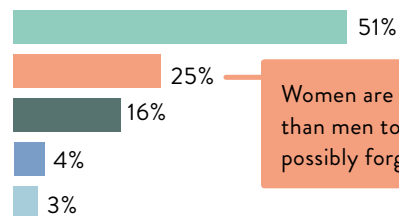


5. Respondents were asked to select one option.

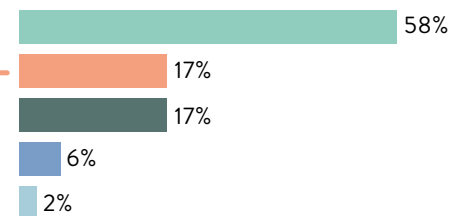
6. If you receive an email about a great internship/graduate opportunity, what are you most likely to do?



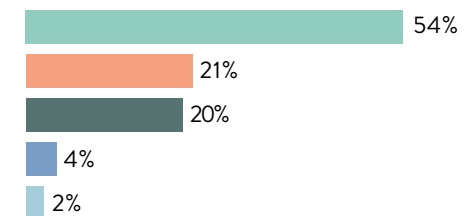
FEMALE



MALE



BAME

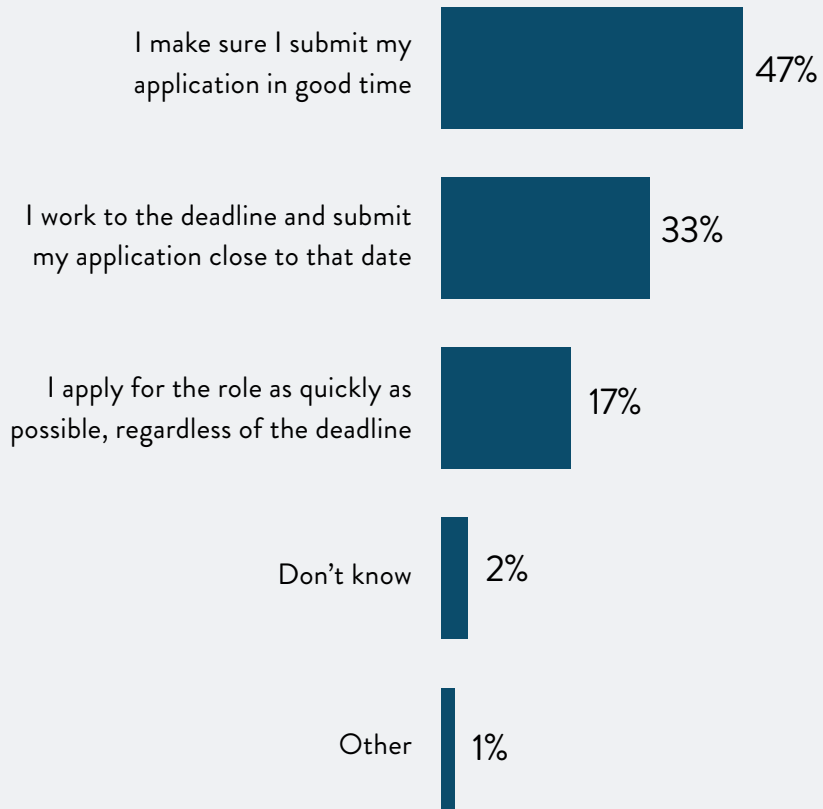


Women are 47% more likely than men to read the email but possibly forget to apply for the role.

■ Digest the email & then apply
 ■ Read the email but possibly forget to apply
 ■ Click through to the job description & apply immediately
 ■ Ignore the email – I get too many
 ■ Don't know

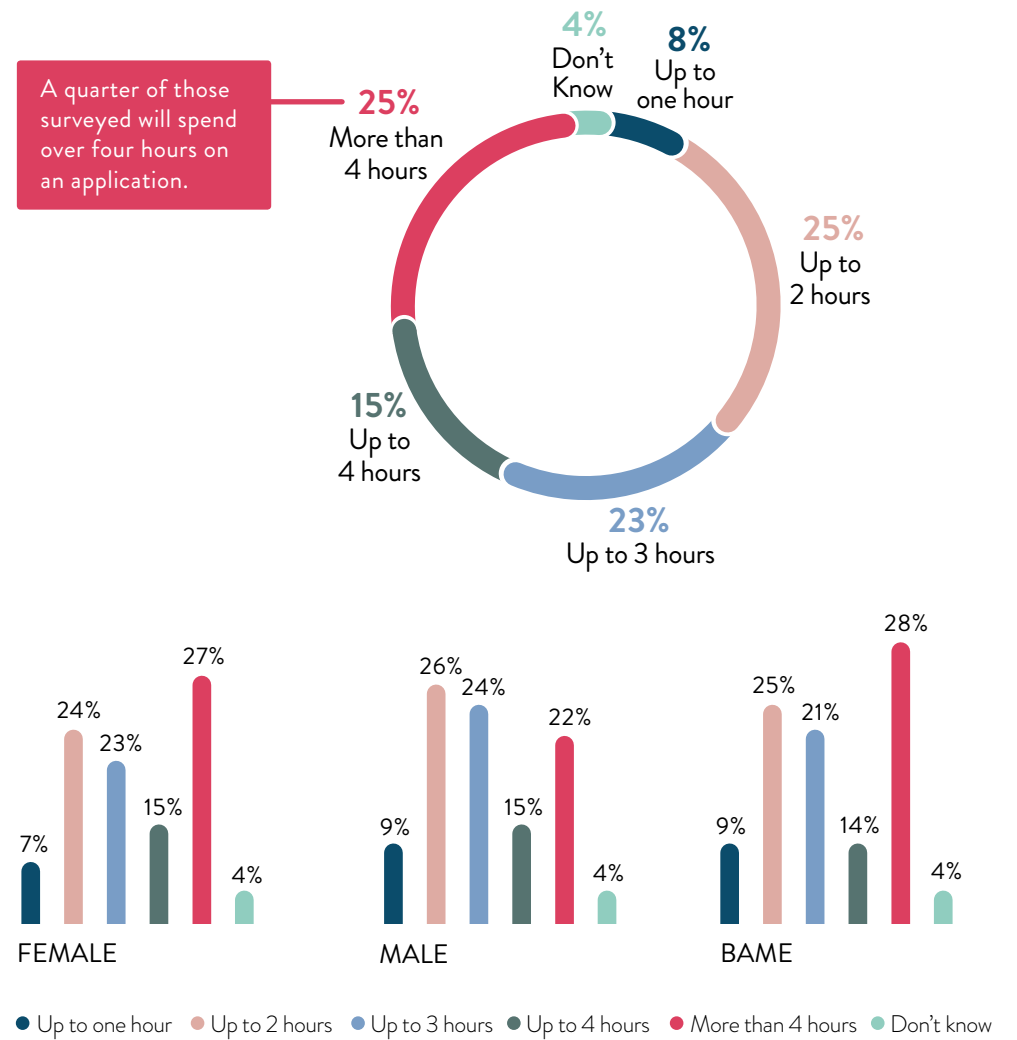
6. Respondents were asked to select one option.

7. When you see the deadline on a role you want to apply for, what do you do?



7. Respondents were asked to select one option.

8. How long do you spend on each application?



8. Respondents were asked to select one option.

9. If you had already accepted an internship or graduate role offer, what would make you reject this in favour of another opportunity?

	ALL	FEMALE	MALE	BAME	LGBTQ+
More exciting role	33%	33%	31%	29%	35%
More prestigious firm	21%	19%	25%	24%	19%
Bigger salary	13%	13%	13%	14%	13%
Better experience during the other application process	9%	8%	9%	9%	15%
Better location	5%	6%	4%	4%	3%
Don't know	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Regular communication with recruiters	2%	2%	2%	2%	3%
Other	2%	2%	2%	2%	1%
Joining bonus	1%	1%	1%	1%	0%
I wouldn't reject an offer I had accepted	12%	13%	11%	13%	9%

LGBTQ+ students are 67% more likely than average to reject an offer because they have received a better experience during the application process for another role.

12% those surveyed said they would not renege on a offer they had already accepted.

88% of students would reject an offer they have already accepted for a better one.

54% of those surveyed will reject a role either for a more prestigious firm or a more exciting role.

14% of graduates would consider rejecting an offer they've already accepted for financial reasons.

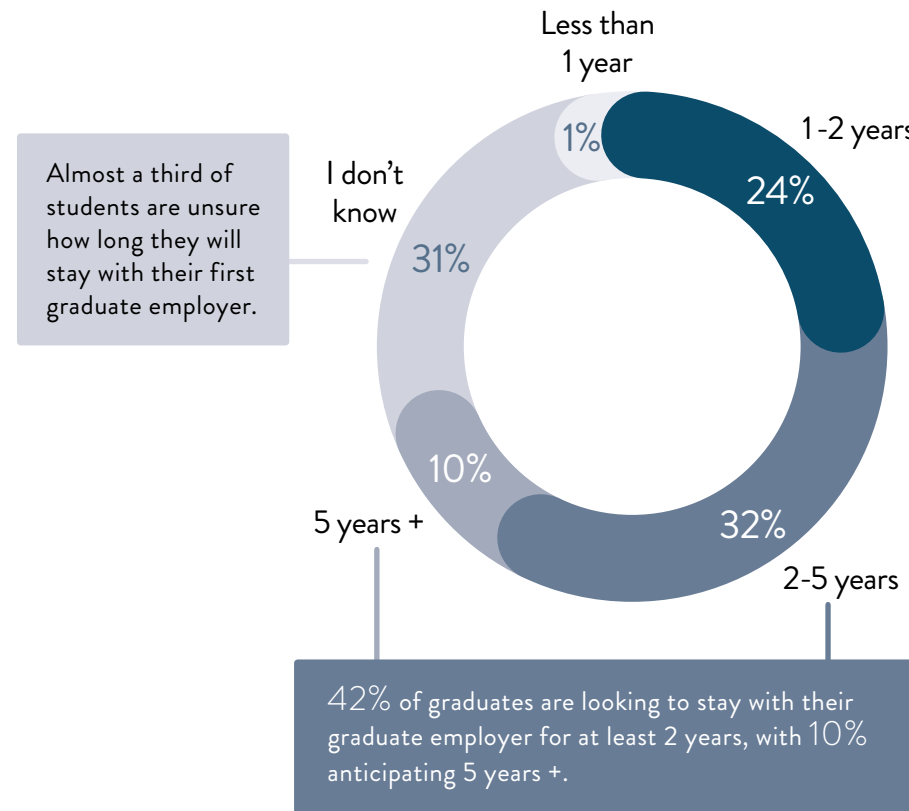
9. Respondents were asked to select one option out of the ten choices given, including 'I wouldn't reject an offer I had accepted.'



THE FUTURE

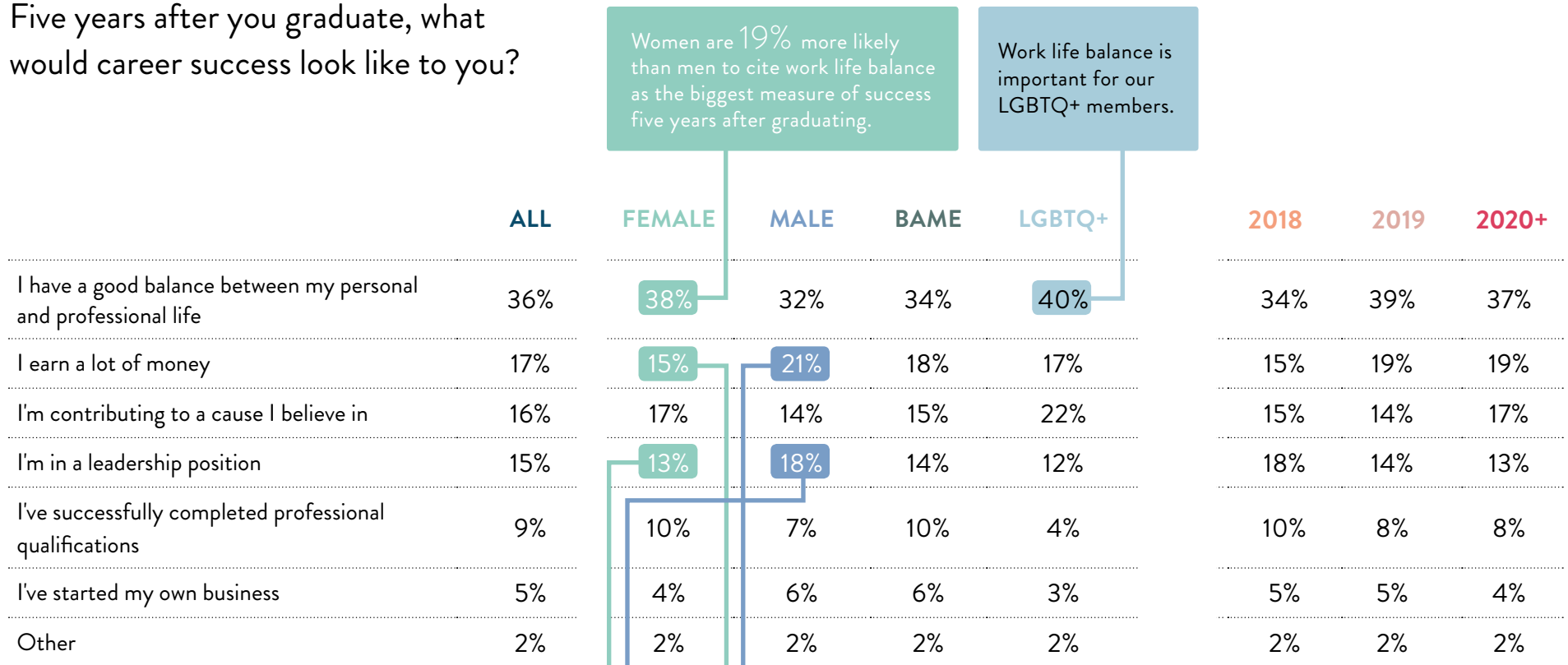
We asked our members two questions about their future. Firstly, how long they envisage staying with their first employer and secondly, what success would look like five years after graduating.

1. How long do you plan to stay with your first/graduate employer?



1. Respondents were asked to select one option.

2. Five years after you graduate, what would career success look like to you?



Women are 19% more likely than men to cite work life balance as the biggest measure of success five years after graduating.

Work life balance is important for our LGBTQ+ members.

Men are 38% more likely than women to see being in a leadership position as a sign of success.

Men are 40% more likely than their female peers to cite earning a lot of money as the biggest measure of success five years after graduating.

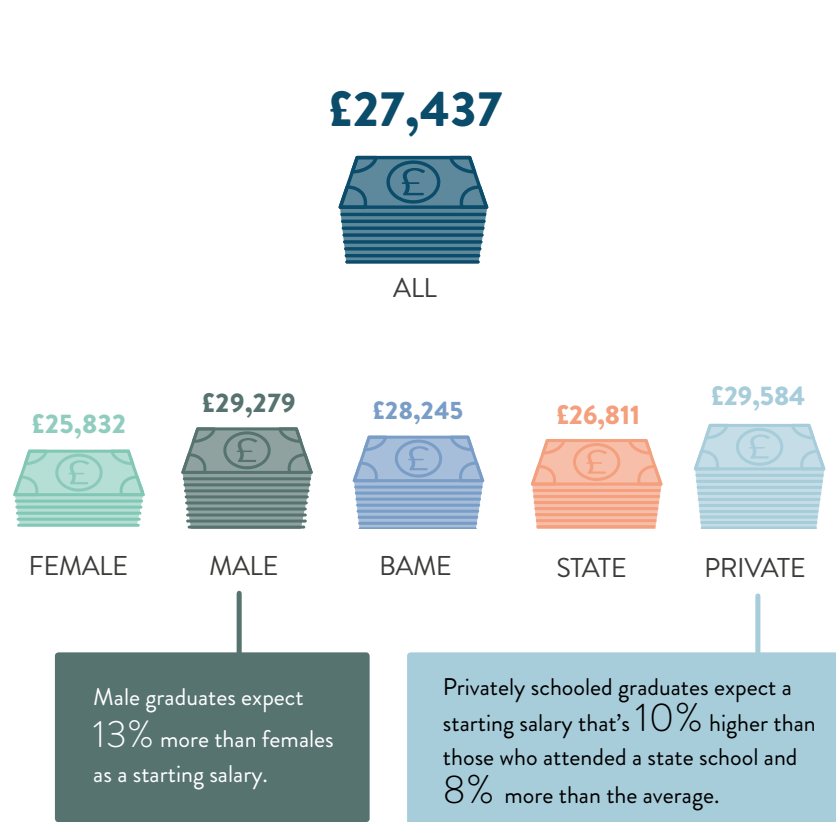


2. Respondents were asked to select one option.

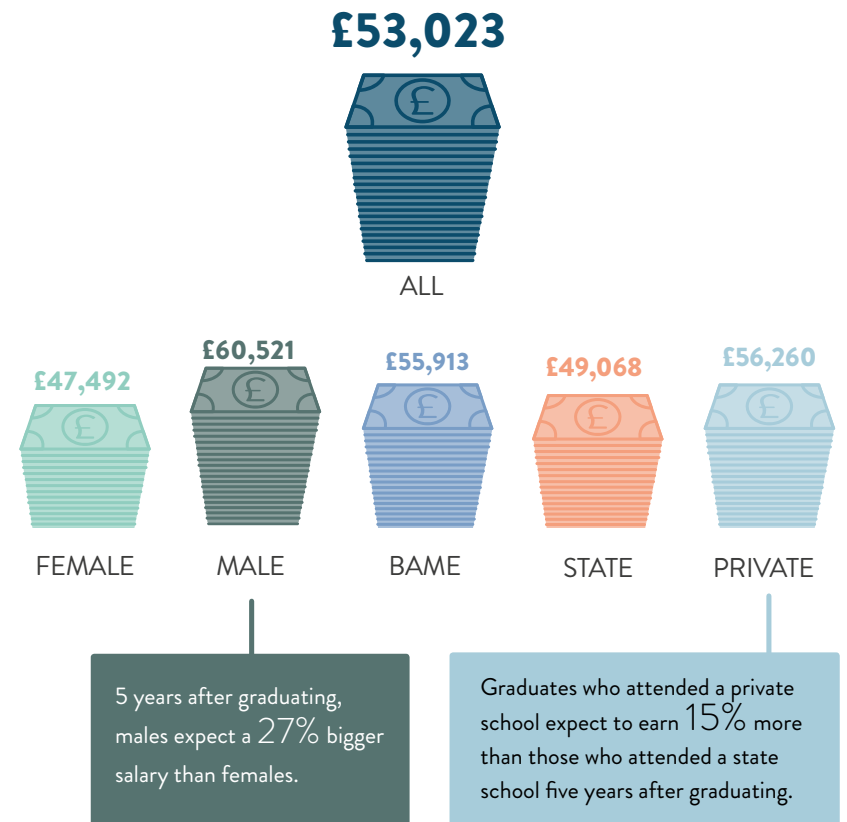
FINANCIALS & SALARY EXPECTATIONS

A look at salary expectations and concerns over the levels of student debt.

1. What is your expected basic annual salary in your first job after graduating?

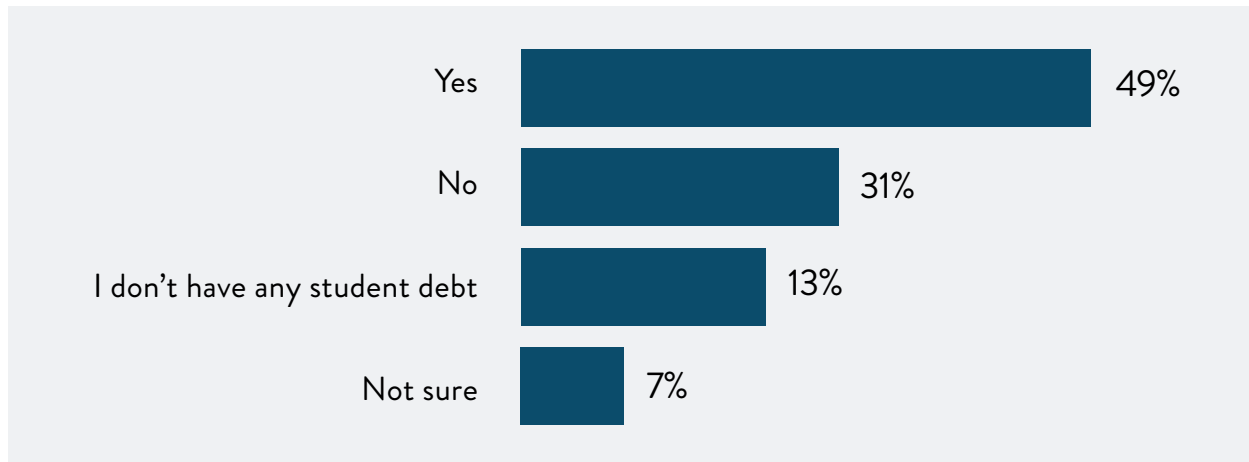


2. What is your expected basic annual salary in five years after graduating?

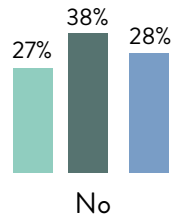
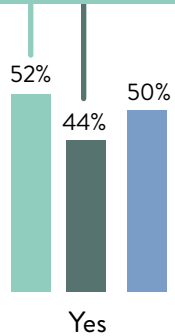


1 & 2. Respondents were asked to enter a figure for their expected salary. To calculate the respected averages, 10% of the highest and lowest answers were removed. The remaining figures were then used to calculate the averages stated above.

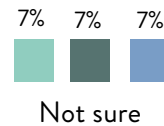
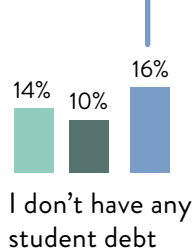
3. Are you concerned by your level of debt when you graduate?



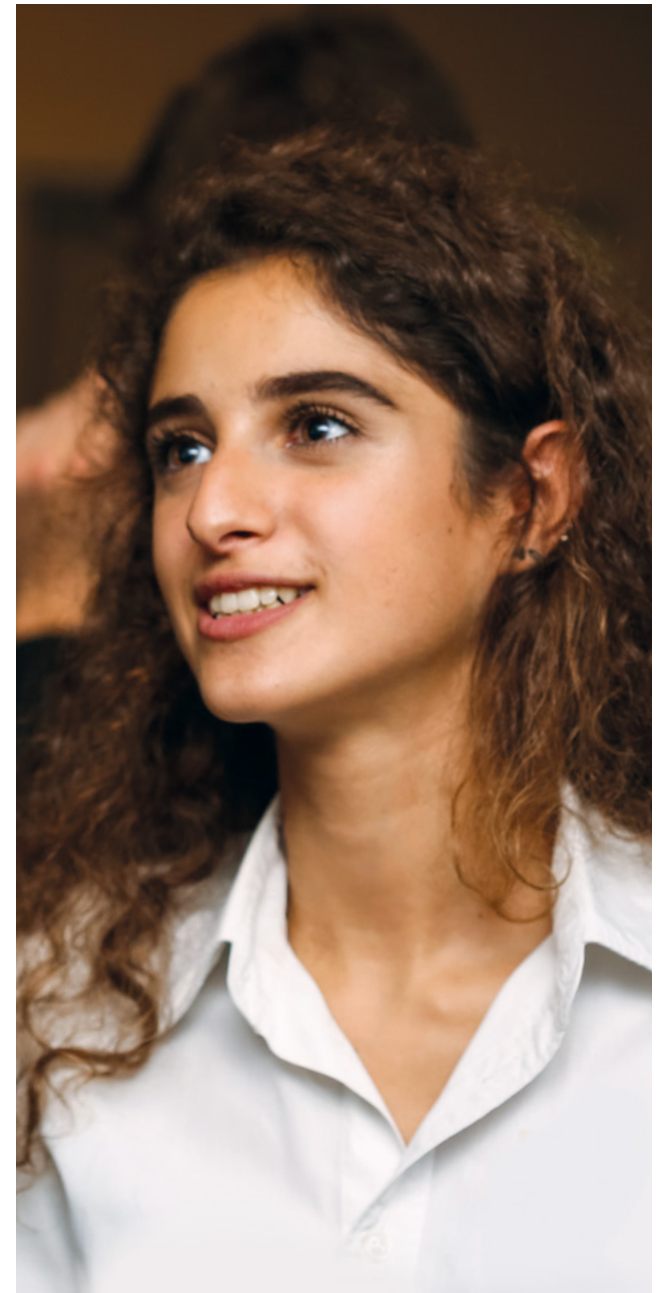
Female undergraduates are 18% more likely to be worried about levels of debt after university than males.



16% of BAME students don't have any student debt.



■ FEMALE ■ MALE ■ BAME

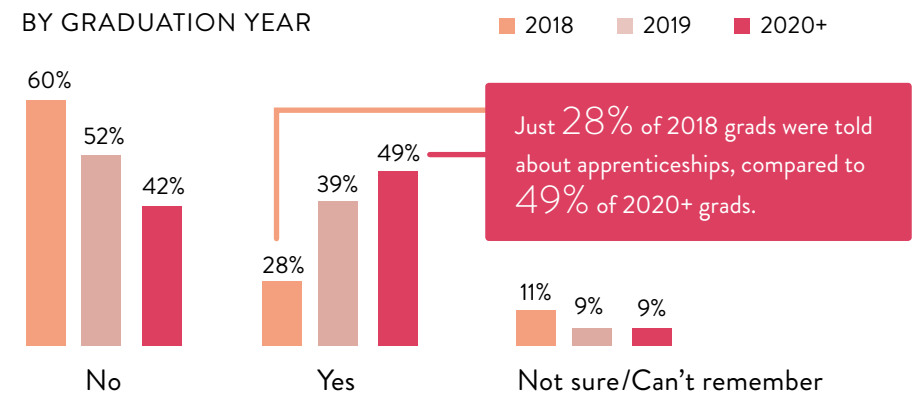


3. Respondents were asked to select one option.

APPRENTICESHIPS

In the wake of the apprenticeship levy and increased investment in degree apprenticeships, we asked our members two questions to gain a greater insight into their thinking regarding apprenticeships.

1. Did you receive any information from your school about apprenticeships as a potential career route rather than university?



2. Did you consider an apprenticeship as an option?

	ALL	FEMALE	MALE	BAME	PRIVATE	STATE	2018	2019	2020+
No I didn't	76%	77%	74%	73%	86%	72%	82%	77%	70%
Yes – but I didn't apply	15%	14%	16%	16%	9%	17%	10%	14%	20%
I wasn't sure so preferred to apply to university	6%	6%	6%	8%	5%	6%	5%	6%	6%
Yes – I applied	3%	2%	4%	4%	1%	4%	2%	3%	4%

18% of current undergraduates considered an apprenticeship.

1. Respondents were asked to select one option.

2. Respondents were asked to select one option.

What's the worst careers advice you have received?



WE ASKED OUR MEMBERS TO TELL US ABOUT SOME OF THE WORST CAREERS ADVICE THEY HAVE RECEIVED

We share some of their responses below

- Choose a big salary even if you don't enjoy what you're doing
- In today's job market, you should accept that you'll have to work unpaid for an employer for a period of time before they actually pay you
- I wouldn't apply for investment banking, you have to be ruthless. *(This advice came from a family member who has no experience in banking and has never met anyone in the industry)*
- Your degree dictates your career
- That I am not suited to a career in finance because I come from a computer science background
- To not bother applying for large competitive firms as I had taken time out of university due to mental illness
- To let the jobs come to you
- I was told to give up because I was aiming too high
- That consulting is not a serious industry

7% of those surveyed stated advice that encouraged choosing money and a higher salary over enjoyment of the role was the worst they had ever received.

Respondents were given a free text box in which to share their experiences.

A selection of the worst careers advice women have received

- Women are best suited to be teachers
- To disregard the sexism that will ensue if you really want the job
- That I should wear heels to every law firm because I am a woman
- That I can't become a lawyer whilst wearing a headscarf
- That I should rethink my plans as I will struggle to gain respect as a woman in science
- Don't go into technology because it's a male-dominated field and you won't fit in
- Don't take up a role that's too time consuming or challenging so that you have more time for family later in life
- Flirt with the male interviewers

Respondents were given a free text box in which to share their experiences.

Inappropriate interview questions



WE ASKED OUR MEMBERS TO TELL US WHETHER THEY HAD EVER FELT THEY HAD BEEN ASKED AN INAPPROPRIATE QUESTION AT INTERVIEW

We share some of these questions below

- Do you drink alcohol?
- Can you tone down your accent?
- Why are you wasting your time in finance when you have a face like yours?
- So, I take it you don't read the Guardian?
- I think mental health is a little whiny, what do you think?
- Are you married?
- We thought from your name that you were a man. Do you always mislead people with your name?
- Would someone like you from a small town be able to fit into this prestigious firm in London?
- Are you thinking of getting married soon because married women are likely to quit sooner rather than later?

Respondents were given a free text box in which to share their experiences.

Tough interview questions



WE ASKED OUR MEMBERS TO SHARE SOME OF THE TOUGHEST INTERVIEW QUESTIONS THEY HAVE FACED

- Create an algorithm to make a sandwich
- How many golf balls are in the air at one moment?
- How would you put a giraffe in a fridge?
- How many lawyers would it take to screw in a lightbulb?
- What makes you cry?
- What would you do with an elephant if you couldn't give it away or sell it?
- If you could be a piece of furniture in this room, what would you be?
- If you were to take the CEO somewhere for the day, where would you take him /her and why?
- Do you believe in the Loch Ness Monster?
- Look at this handbag. Describe the kind of person you think owns it.

Respondents were given a free text box in which to share their experiences.



BRIGHT
NETWORK