



UNIVERSITY OF  
**LIMERICK**  
OLLSCOIL LUIMNIGH

Cooperative  
Education and  
Careers Division



# Early Careers Employer Survey 2024



# Foreword

The University of Limerick is delighted to present the results of the 2024 Early Careers Employer Survey. The report and its findings reflect the views and experiences of employers who hired graduates or offered work placements in 2023 and 2024.

We are very grateful to the 420+ employers who responded to the survey, representing an increase of 24% on last year. This rich data reflects a diversity of employers across sector, size, location, and discipline. The report specifically addresses many aspects of graduate recruitment and work placement, including:

- Graduate Recruitment Trends
- Recruitment Channels
- Application and Selection
- Remuneration
- Recruitment Challenges
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
- Work Placement Trends
- Soft and Technical Skills

For higher education institutions, the report and findings help us to identify emerging trends in the graduate and undergraduate labour markets. And in a very practical way, they help us to prepare our students for their future careers. For employers who are directly involved in the attraction, selection, and recruitment of graduates, we hope that the report will be useful in building an evidenced picture of the broader, often complex, early careers landscape.

Many thanks again to everyone who responded to the survey.



*Patrice Twomey*

Dr Patrice Twomey,  
Director, Cooperative Education and Careers Division, University of Limerick

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For a deeper dive into data pertinent to your sector, give the QR Code a quick scan using your mobile or tablet. You'll be steered towards a dedicated website where you can access a variety of downloads – from comprehensive reports to insightful charts and graphs. These resources are designed to give you a clearer picture of the prevailing market trends and potential openings for your enterprise.







# Welcome

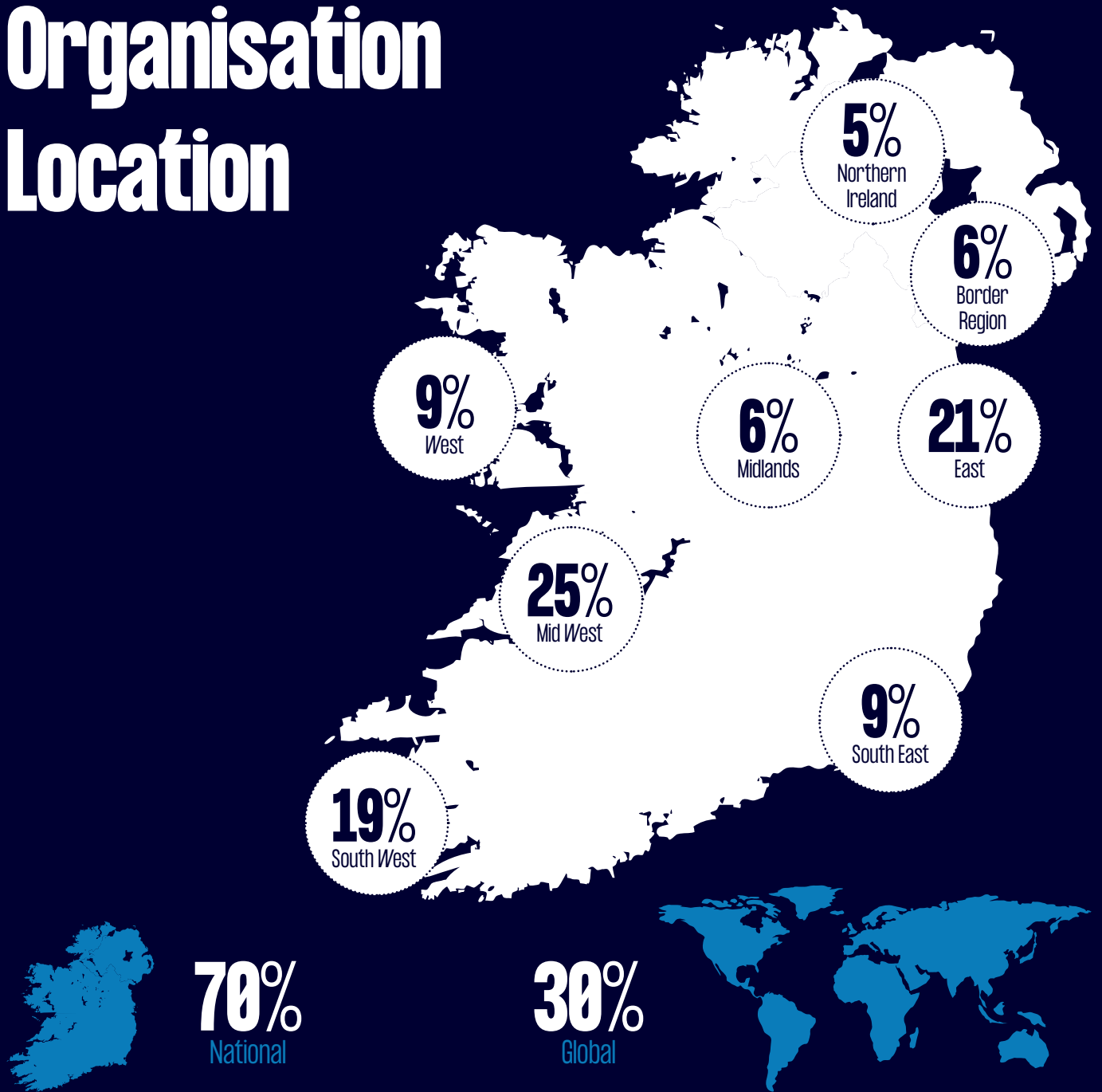
The Early Careers Employer Survey 2024, conducted by the University of Limerick, offers a comprehensive analysis of the graduate recruitment landscape in Ireland. With participation from 423 employers across a spectrum of industries, the survey provides insights into various facets of employment for recent graduates and placement students.

## Key Findings:

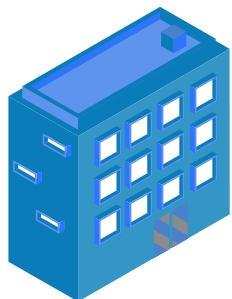
1. Placement and graduate recruitment demands are stabilising, indicating a shift towards a more balanced job market.
2. There is a notable rise in demand for STEM and Business discipline expertise, reflecting evolving industry needs.
3. Average salaries across all award classifications are on an upward trend, albeit with a steadier rate of growth recently.
4. Some organisations have graduate programmes that might encompass near-shoring opportunities, especially in fields like analytics, consulting, and technology.
5. The trend of onboarding new graduates on company campuses is growing, highlighting the increasing need for in-person engagement.
6. A call for greater salary range transparency is evident, aligning with global movements towards open and equitable pay structures.
7. Emotional intelligence (EI) is increasingly recognised as a valuable skill for graduates entering the workforce. Employers are looking for graduates who can demonstrate strong EI competencies such as self-awareness, social awareness and relationship management.

The survey serves as a vital tool for employers, students, and higher education institutions to navigate the complexities of the placement and graduate recruitment market. The feedback and data collected are instrumental in preparing graduates for successful careers and ensuring that educational programmes align with industry requirements. The University of Limerick's initiative in conducting this survey underscores the importance of continuous dialogue and collaboration between academia and industry.

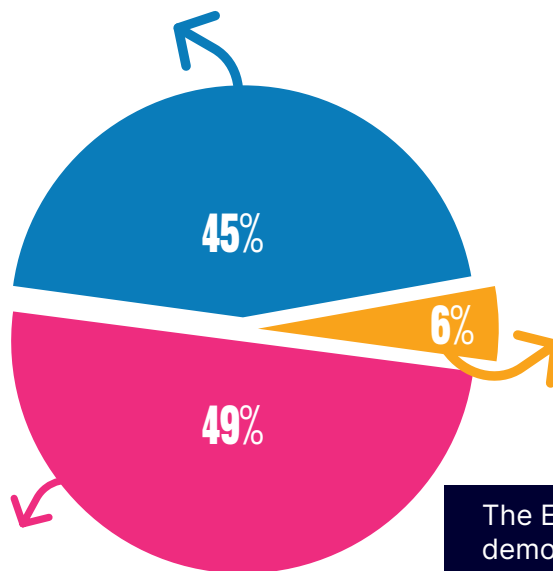
# Organisation Location



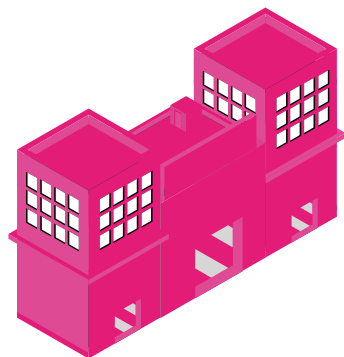
# Organisation Type



**Small - Medium Enterprises (SME)**  
Less than 250 employees



**Charitable or Not-for-Profit**



**Large Organisations**  
Over 250 employees

The Early Careers Survey has demonstrated a commendable increase in participation this year, with a total of 423 responses, a notable rise from the 340 responses received the previous year. This 24.4% increase in engagement is indicative of an escalating interest and commitment to early career development among respondents from various organisational types. Such a trend underscores the importance that early career professionals and their development hold in the current workforce landscape.

# Sectors Surveyed

The Early Careers Survey employs the NACE system, which is also utilised by the Central Statistics Office (CSO) and the Higher Education Authority (HEA) to guarantee a consistent classification of economic activities. NACE stands for 'Nomenclature générale des Activités économiques dans les Communautés européennes', a French term that translates to 'General Industrial Classification of Economic Activities within the European Communities'. This classification system is pivotal for statistical analysis of human health and social activities across the EU. For detailed NACE classifications, one can refer to the CSO website.

**23%**

**Professional, Scientific  
& Technical Activities**

**9%**

**Information and  
Communication**







**18%**

**Industry**



**13%**

**Financial and Insurance  
Activities**



**10%**

**Construction**



**7%**

**Education**



**6%**

**Human Health and  
Social Work**



**3%**

**Wholesale  
and Retail Trade**



**3%**

**Agricultural, Forestry  
and Fishing**



**2%**

**Administrative and  
Support Service Activities**



**1%**

**Transport and Storage**

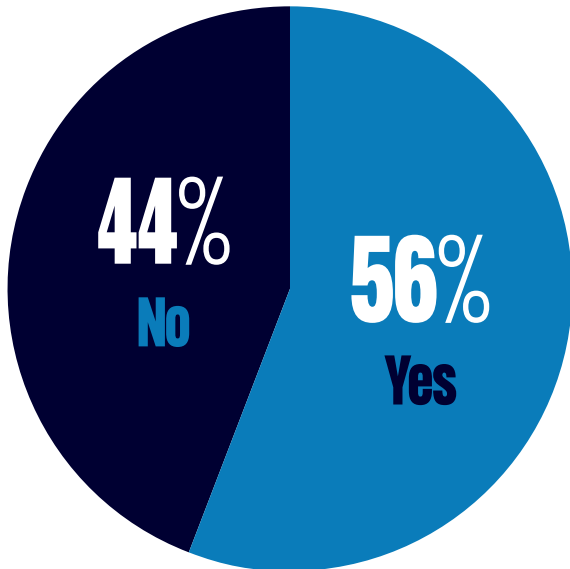
# Work Placement

Work Placement, a component of academic degrees or training programmes, enables students to utilise their academic knowledge and skills within a professional environment pertinent to their area of study. This arrangement involves a tripartite agreement among an employer, a student, and a Higher Education Institution (HEI), wherein the student engages in work for a duration typically spanning 3 to 12 months, earning academic credits and remuneration.

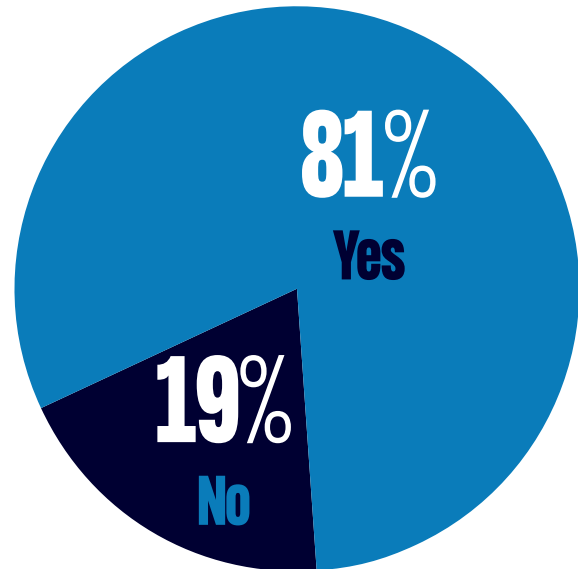
81% of employers surveyed are offering Work Placement, marking a 2% rise on last year's figures. Additionally, over half of the employers, standing at 56%, also provide opportunities for summer internships. This shows a growing trend in the availability of practical work experiences for students and graduates, reflecting a positive shift towards hands-on learning in the professional environment.



Do you offer  
**Summer Internships?**



Do you offer  
**Work Placements?**

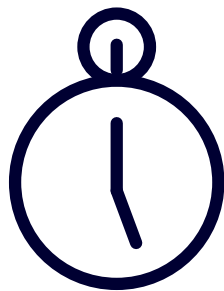


**Duration of Work Placements**



**29%**

up to 3 Months



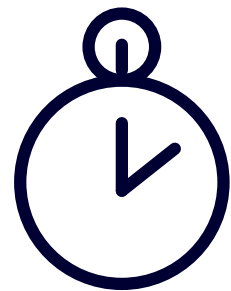
**43%**

3-6 Months



**61%**

6-12 Months



**16%**

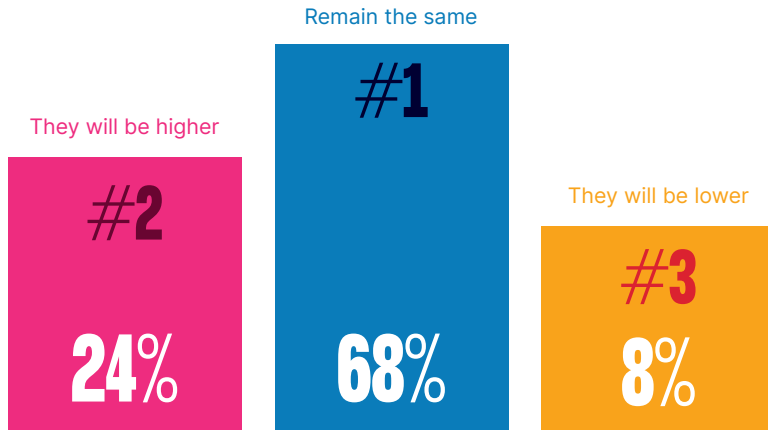
12 Months+

# Changes in Placement

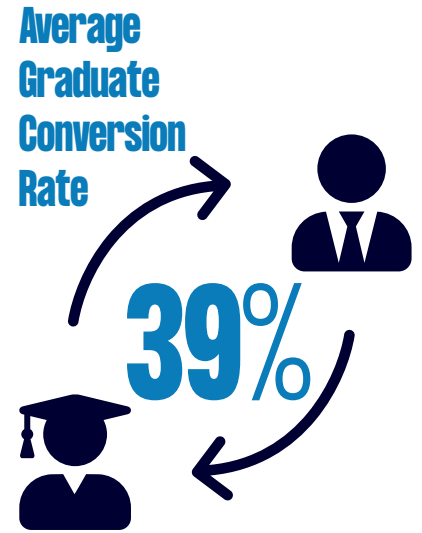
Recent survey findings signal a shift in expectations for work placements in the forthcoming year, with 68% of participants foreseeing a stable outlook, an increase from the previous 64%. In contrast, the proportion of those anticipating growth has lessened to 24%, marking a 4% decline. This indicates a prevailing inclination towards preserving the status quo rather than seeking expansion.

Notably, 39% of work placements result in graduate employment, which is trending to the industry norm.

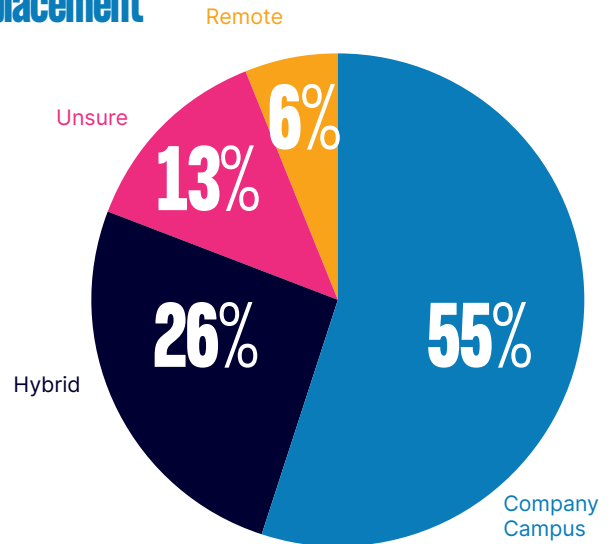




**Do you expect your placement requirements to change next year?**



**What are your plans for onboarding placement students?**





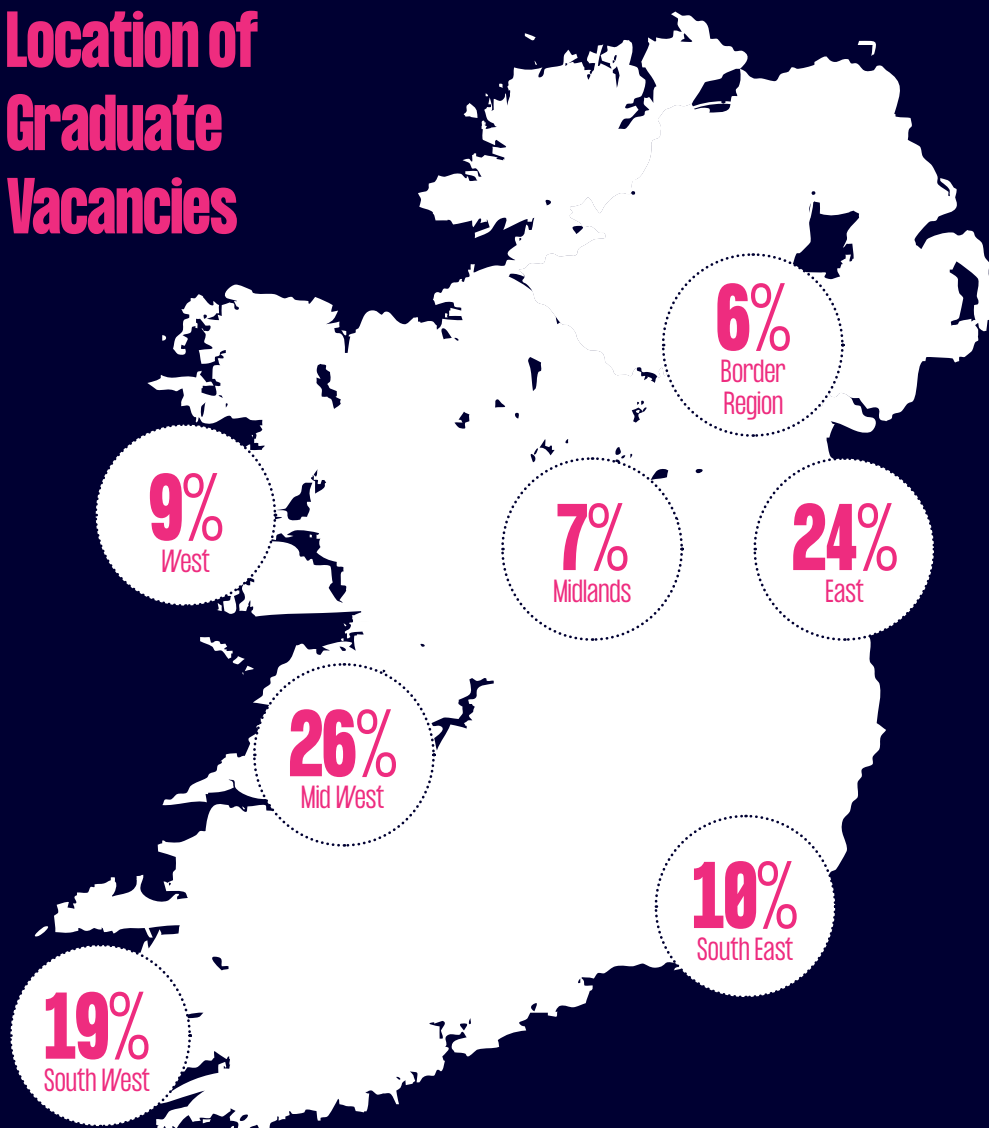


# Graduate Recruitment

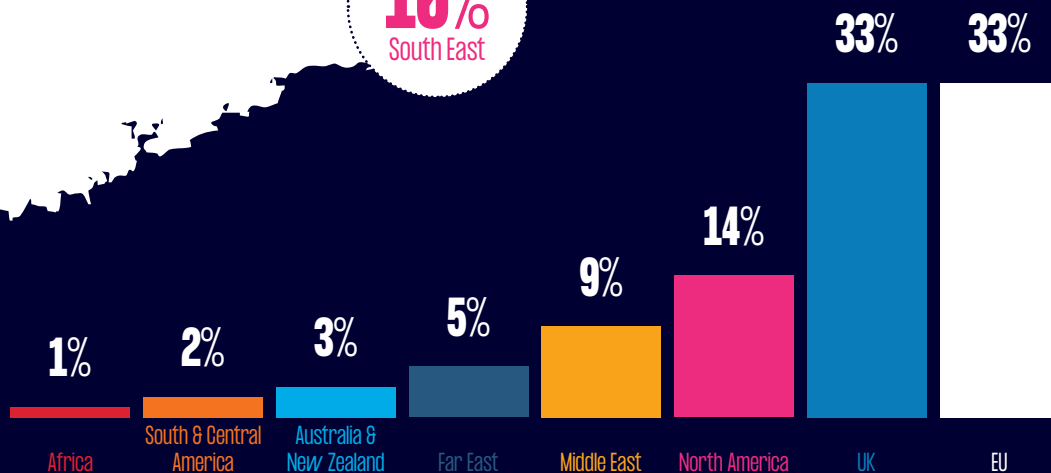
The Early Careers employment landscape is marked by key trends influenced by the evolving expectations of graduates and employers, alongside economic shifts.

- There's a growing demand for digital competencies such as data analysis, coding, and digital marketing, underscoring the critical role of technology in innovation and market competitiveness.
- Soft skills such as communication, adaptability, and problem-solving are in high demand, with graduates who exhibit strong interpersonal skills and emotional intelligence particularly sought after.
- There is a growing awareness of sustainability and corporate social responsibility among employers. The evolution of jobs and skills over the next five years will be shaped by socio-economic and technological trends.
- The job market is experiencing healthy growth, moving towards equilibrium to prevent saturation and maintain a focus on high-quality job creation.
- Hybrid work arrangements are commonplace, providing enhanced flexibility and work-life balance. Simultaneously, there's a noticeable shift towards in-person onboarding processes preferred by employers and new graduates.

# Location of Graduate Vacancies



The distribution of graduate vacancies has largely mirrored the previous year's pattern, with 24% in the East, 26% in the Mid West, and 19% in the South West. A significant majority, 86%, of these roles are located within Ireland, while the remaining 14% are to be found abroad.

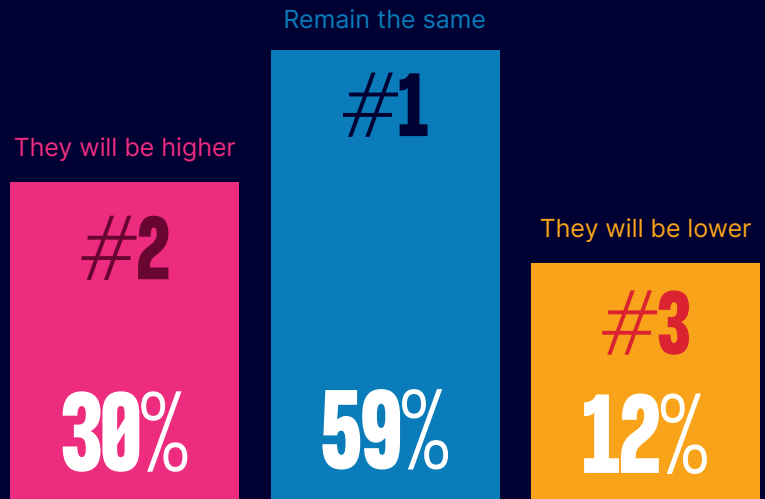


# Graduate Vacancies and Hiring Environment 2024/25

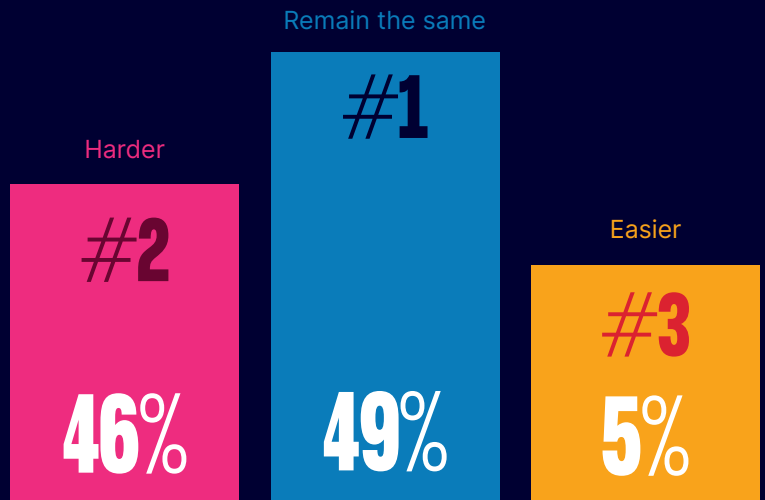
Our survey indicates that a majority of respondents, 89% (a slight decrease of 3% from the previous year), anticipate that the number of graduate vacancies will either rise or remain consistent with 2024 levels. Conversely, a minority of 12% (an increase of 4.5% from last year) foresee a reduction in graduate opportunities.

Furthermore, the survey inquired about the perceived challenges in filling these roles. The consensus suggests stability in the hiring landscape over the forthcoming year. To elaborate, 46% of participants (down 7%) expect a heightened challenge in recruitment, 49% (an increase of 6%) predict no change, and 5% believe the process will become easier.

These findings suggest a cautiously optimistic outlook for graduate employment, with a stable to slightly challenging hiring environment on the horizon. Companies may need to invest more in recruitment strategies to attract top talent amidst a competitive market.



Expected Level of Graduate Vacancies  
over the next 12 months



Expected Hiring Environment  
over the next 12 months

# What disciplines will you recruit from?



**52%**

Engineering



**39%**

Business



**21%**

ICT & Electronics



**21%**

Science



**13%**

Health Sciences



**8%**

Creative



**8%**

Education



**8%**

Law



**7%**

Humanities



**5%**

All Disciplines



**3%**

Hospitality

# Equality Diversity & Inclusion

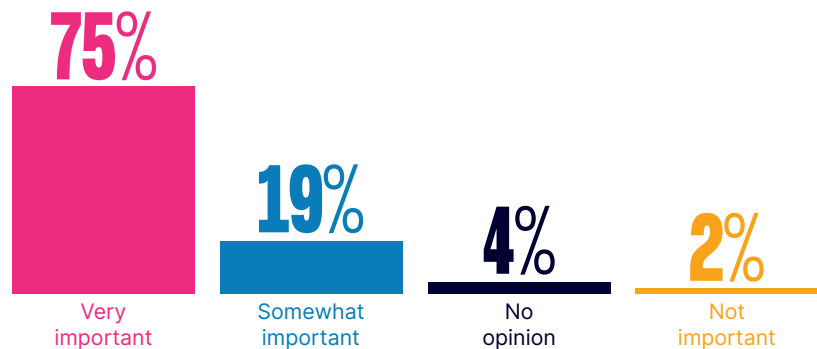
Diversity and inclusion are pivotal in fostering a positive and productive workplace atmosphere. These principles aid organisations in attracting and retaining top-notch talent from a variety of backgrounds and viewpoints. Inclusive recruitment involves engaging with, evaluating, and choosing a diverse array of individuals during the hiring process. This necessitates both organisational and individual practices that appreciate diversity and are free from bias. Diversity encompasses the representation and acknowledgement of individuals with differing attributes, such as age, gender, ethnicity, disability, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic status. Inclusion extends beyond mere representation and acknowledgement, embracing these differences and empowering all to prosper in their employment.

One method to gauge the success of inclusive recruitment is through the establishment of hiring targets for various candidate groups. Hiring targets are defined objectives or quotas aimed at bolstering the presence of underrepresented or marginalised groups within the workforce.

Nevertheless, not every employer incorporates hiring targets into their diversity and inclusion strategies. Our research indicates that while most participants (94%) consider diversity and inclusion somewhat important/very important to their recruitment policies, a significant portion (69%) refrain from setting hiring targets. There are some positive indicators, as “we don’t set targets” decreased from 78% to 69%. Among those who establish targets, the primary focus is on gender, with a marginal rise in targets for ethnic diversity to 4%.

These findings suggest that while there is a high level of awareness regarding the importance of diversity and inclusion, there is still a reluctance or challenge in implementing concrete measures, such as hiring targets, to achieve these goals. The slight increase in ethnic diversity targets, although minimal, indicates a growing recognition of the need to address not just gender disparities but also ethnic representation in the workplace.

**How important is diversity and inclusion to your recruitment policy?**





# What have you set hiring targets for?



**69%**

We don't set targets/  
Other



**19%**

Gender



**4%**

Ethnicity



**2%**

Physical disability



**2%**

Social class



**2%**

Age



**<1%**

Mental/ Neurodiversity



**<1%**

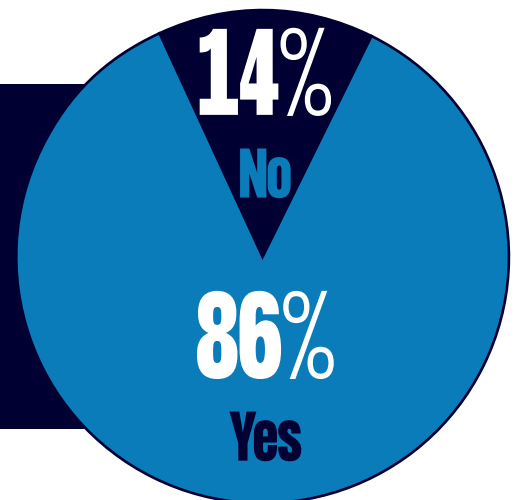
Sexual orientation



**<1%**

Religion

Do you typically provide a job specification for each new graduate role?



# Recruitment Channels



**85%**

Organisational Website



**82%**

LinkedIn



**74%**

University Vacancy Systems



**63%**

Employee Referral



**61%**

Jobs Boards



**58%**

Placement/Internships



**31%**

Recruitment Agency



**24%**

Facebook



**22%**

Instagram



**6%**

TikTok



**5%**

Other

# Please rank how positively you view the following when reviewing applications

**#1**

**66%**  
Completing a summer internship or work placement

**#2**

**62%**  
Degree discipline

**#3**

**37%**  
Working to support themselves throughout college

**#4**

**35%**  
Classification of degree (2:1)

**#5**

**30%**  
Additional independent learning undertaken

**#6**

**30%**  
Involvement in volunteering, clubs, societies, sports whilst in college

**#7**

**23%**  
University/college attended



# Time Frame for recruiting new graduates

The recruitment procedure for fresh graduates is crafted to be both effective and comprehensive. Typically, it spans 7 to 8 weeks from the job advertisement to the extension of the job offer. However, this duration can vary based on the volume of applicants, the intricacy of the position, and additional variables. The process encompasses multiple phases, including the vetting of applications, execution of interviews, evaluation of the candidates' competencies and capabilities, as well as the verification of references.

These findings would suggest that the hiring process is structured to balance speed with a detailed evaluation of potential hires. The time frame allows for a careful review of applicants, ensuring that the most suitable candidates are selected for the role. The steps involved are crucial in determining the right fit for the company and the position, aiming to secure a successful and beneficial addition to the team.



**Average Time Frame 7.5 Weeks**





**89%**

CV &  
Covering letter



**58%**

Pre-screening  
questions



**42%**

Application  
form



**24%**

ATS (Applicant  
Tracking System)



**20%**

Aptitude  
tests



**20%**

Personality  
questionnaires



**9%**

Video  
applications

# Application Process

The findings of the survey highlight the critical importance of a robust CV and cover letter for those seeking employment, with a significant 89% of employers surveyed insisting on these at the application phase. The study further unveils that online submissions are a favoured approach, employed by 42% of the entities involved. Moreover, a notable 58% of the participants utilise preliminary screening queries to sift through applicants early on.

The 2024 survey's insights into prevalent selection techniques reveal that competency-based interviews maintain their lead as the most utilised method, with 54% of the surveyed organisations employing them. Nonetheless, the data also points to an uptick in the adoption of virtual and telephonic interviews have seen little change year on year (77% and 44% respectively), while, video interviewing has decreased by 6%.

Additional selection practices that have seen a rise since the previous year, as adopted by certain organisations, include delivering presentations (24%), engaging in assessment centres (14%), and conducting strengths-based interviews (33%). The survey further probed into the vetting methods organisations deploy pre- or post-interview, with reference verification emerging as the most common, used unanimously by all, followed by checks on social media platforms, as reported by 30% of the respondents.



# Graduate Recruitment Selection Tools



**77%**  
Virtual  
Interviews



**54%**  
Competency Behavioural-  
Based Interviews



**44%**  
Telephone  
Interviews



**33%**  
Strengths-Based  
Interviews



**31%**  
Video  
Interviews



**24%**  
Presentations



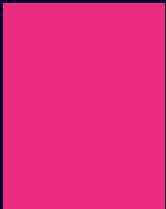
**14%**  
Assessment Centres



**10%**  
Other

## Pre-employment process

100%



References

30%

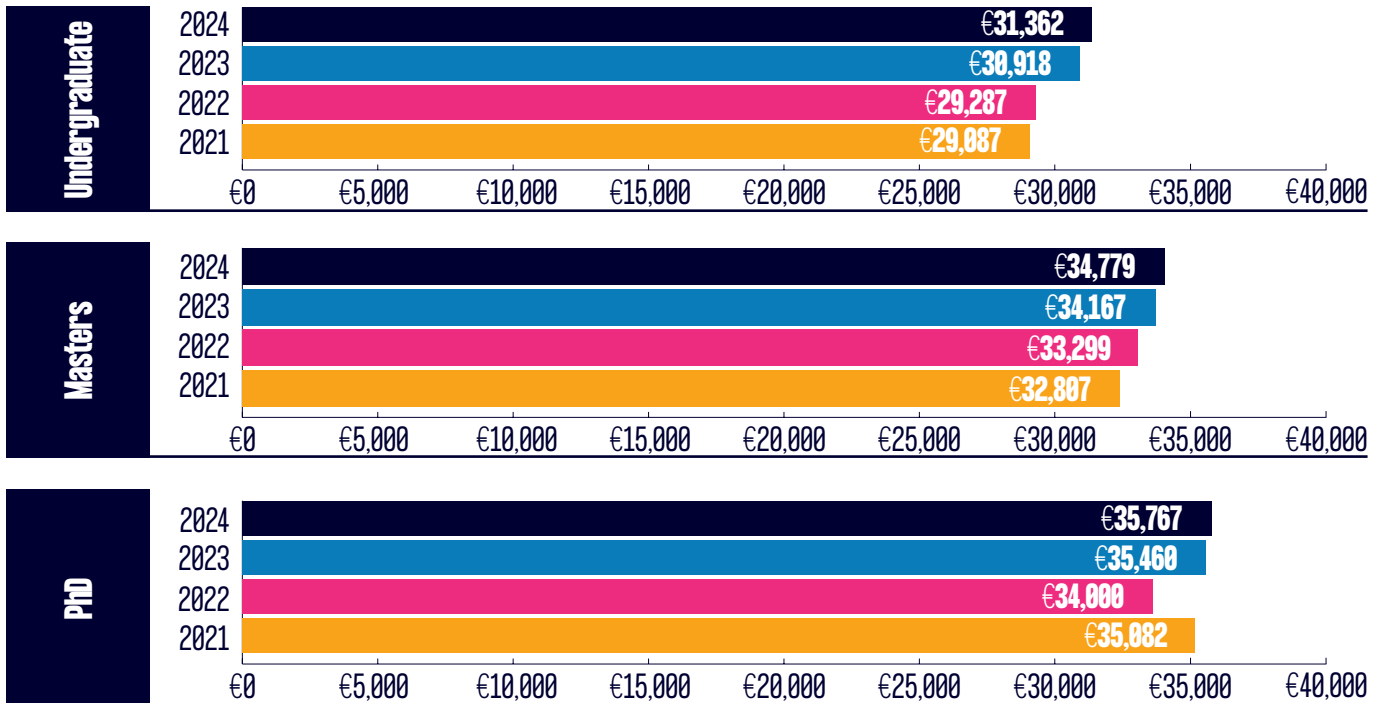


Social media Checks

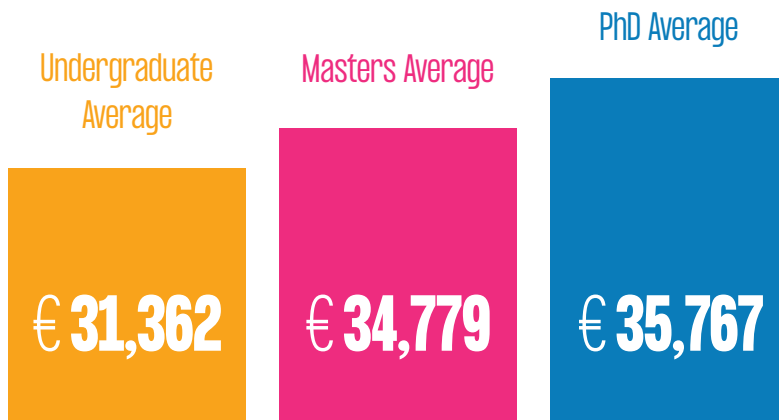
# Graduate Salaries

The chart presents a comparison of the initial average earnings for individuals with Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctoral qualifications. The information suggests a direct correlation between educational attainment and commencement salaries. However, it's important to note that these figures can differ based on the industry, geographic location of the qualification, and various other elements.

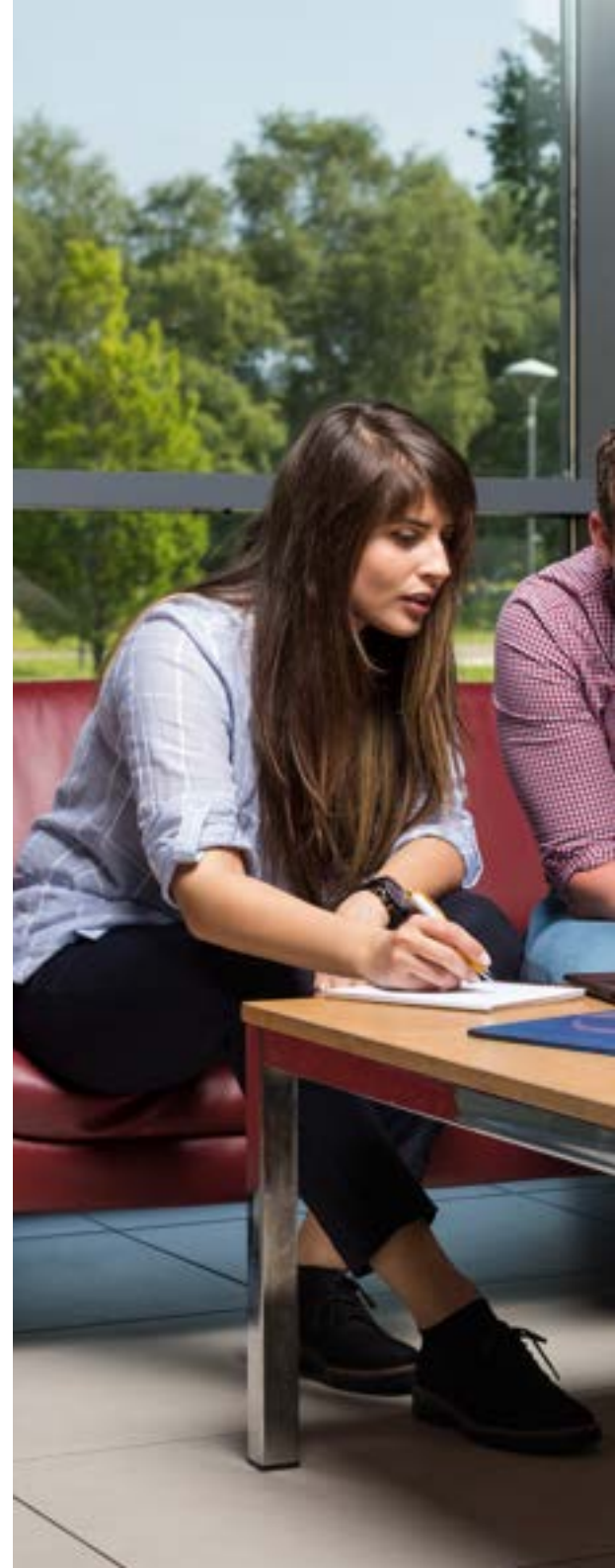
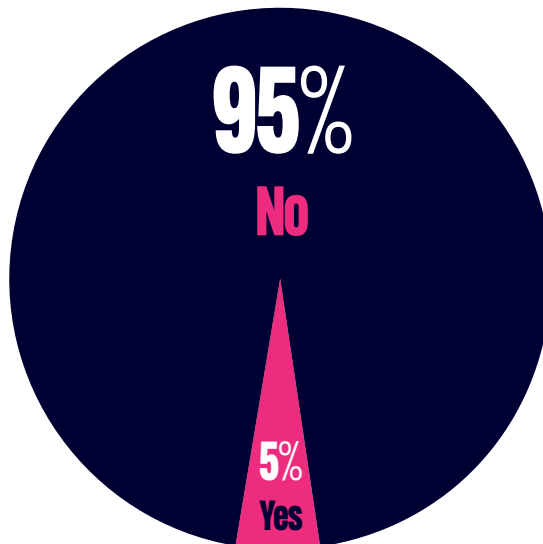
In Ireland, the typical starting salary for those with an undergraduate degree is now €31,362, marking a €400 increase on last year's figures. Holders of postgraduate master's degrees can expect to start on an average salary of €34,779, up €600 from the previous year. Meanwhile, PhD graduates are entering positions with an average starting salary of €35,767, which is €300 above last year's average. Although salaries are climbing annually, the pace of this growth is showing signs of deceleration.



# Average Salaries 2024



**Have you changed the starting salary for remote work?**





# How much pressure have you been experiencing to increase starting salaries for key target groups?

We have felt the pressure and have increased the salaries

50%

We have felt the pressure but haven't been able to increase the salaries

25%

We haven't felt the pressure to increase salaries

25%

# Do you disclose the salary ranges on your job specification?

34%  
Yes

66%  
No

# What Benefits Do You Offer to Graduates in Addition to Salary?



**68%**  
Pension



**64%**  
Cycle-To-Work Scheme



**62%**  
Wellbeing Initiatives



**58%**  
Further Study Support



**56%**  
Remote/Hybrid



**48%**  
Sports & Social Activities



**42%**  
Healthcare (VHI etc.)



**39%**  
Bonus/Commission



**39%**  
Flexi-Time



**30%**  
Volunteering Days



**29%**  
Overtime/Time In Lieu



**26%**  
Subsidised Canteens



**20%**  
Gym



**13%**  
Company Product Discount



**12%**  
Leap Cards/Travel Discounts



**10%**  
Stock/Stock Options



**8%**  
Other

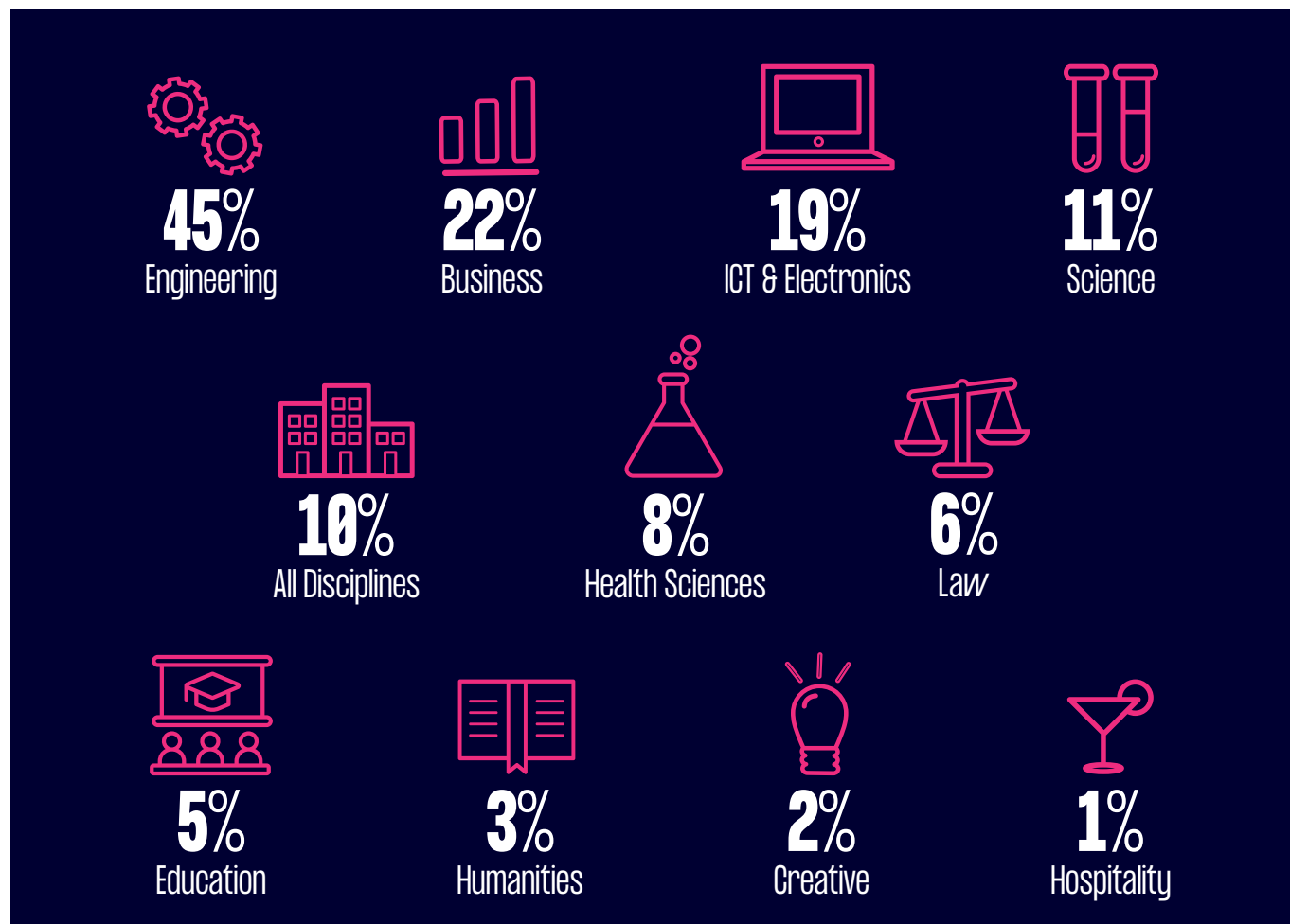


**3%**  
None

# Challenging disciplines to hire

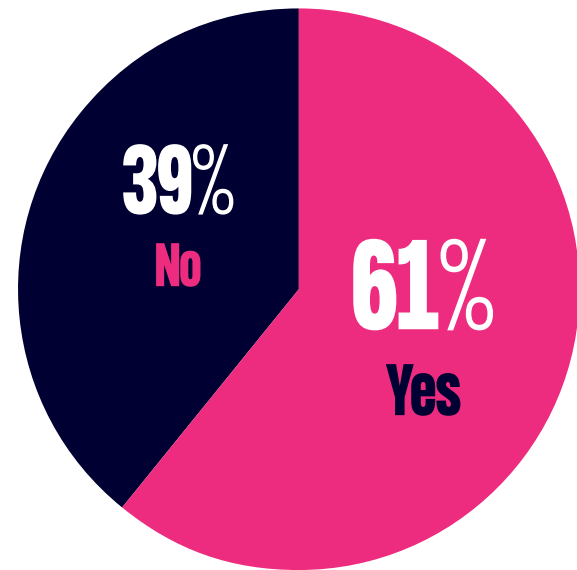
One of the most challenging tasks for graduate recruiters is to entice candidates from sectors that are highly sought after yet scarce in availability. Our survey indicates that the three most affected disciplines are engineering, accounting for 45%, followed by business and ICT & electronics at 19%. The business sector has experienced a growth of 5%, bringing it to 22%. All of these fields demand specialised skills and knowledge.

This suggests a significant gap in the market for these specialised roles, highlighting the need for targeted education and training programmes to bridge this divide and meet the industry demands.



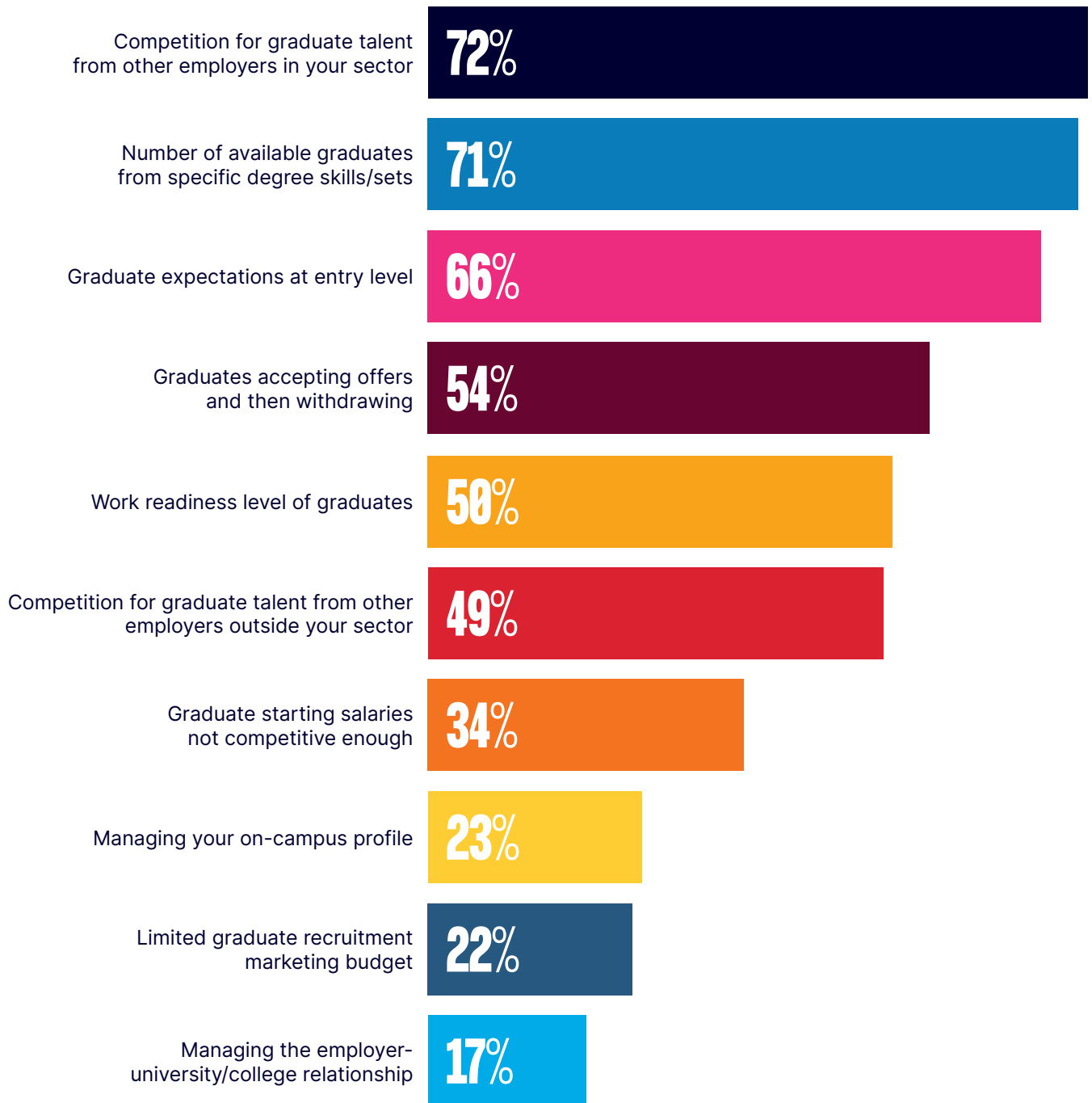


**Over the last 12 months,  
has a graduate  
accepted a job offer  
from your organisation  
and subsequently  
declined it?**



## **Challenges you faced in your graduate recruitment this year**

Our survey indicates that the primary hurdle organisations face when recruiting graduates is the intense competition from other employers within the same industry. The scarcity of graduates possessing the precise degree skills required by the organisation emerges as the second most formidable challenge. Additionally, there is a notable discrepancy between graduates' expectations and the actualities of entry-level roles, which ranks as the third most prevalent concern. This is compounded by the tendency of graduates to retract their acceptance of job offers. These findings suggest that employers must navigate a highly competitive landscape and address mismatches in skill supply and job expectations to successfully recruit and retain graduate talent.



# What foreign languages do you require in your organisation?



**72%**

No foreign languages required



**7%**

French



**6%**

German



**5%**

Spanish



**3%**

Dutch



**2%**

Italian



**2%**

Chinese



**<2%**

Portuguese



**<1%**

Japanese



**<1%**

Arabic



**<1%**

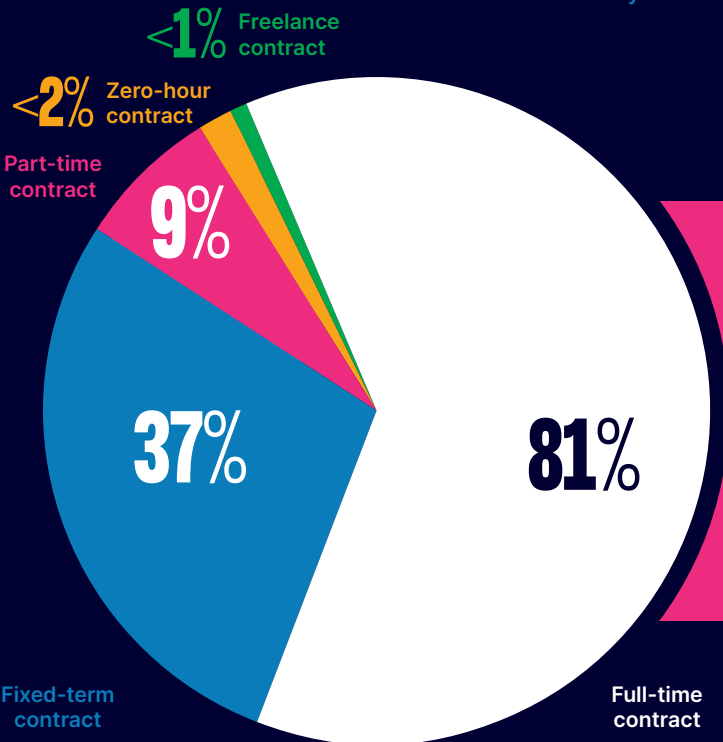
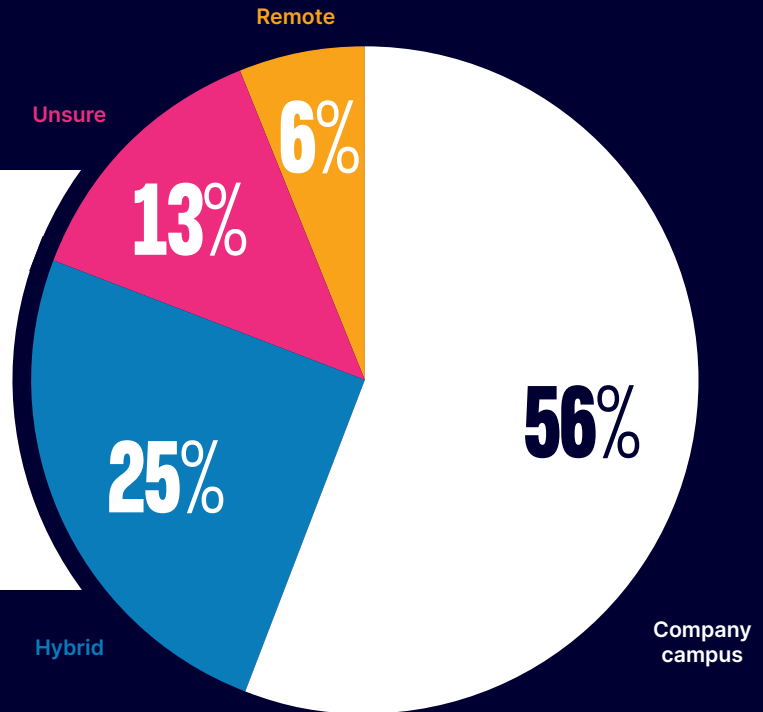
Cantonese



**<1%**

Russian

# What are your plans for onboarding new graduate hires?



# What type of graduate contract do you offer graduates?

# Global Technical Skills

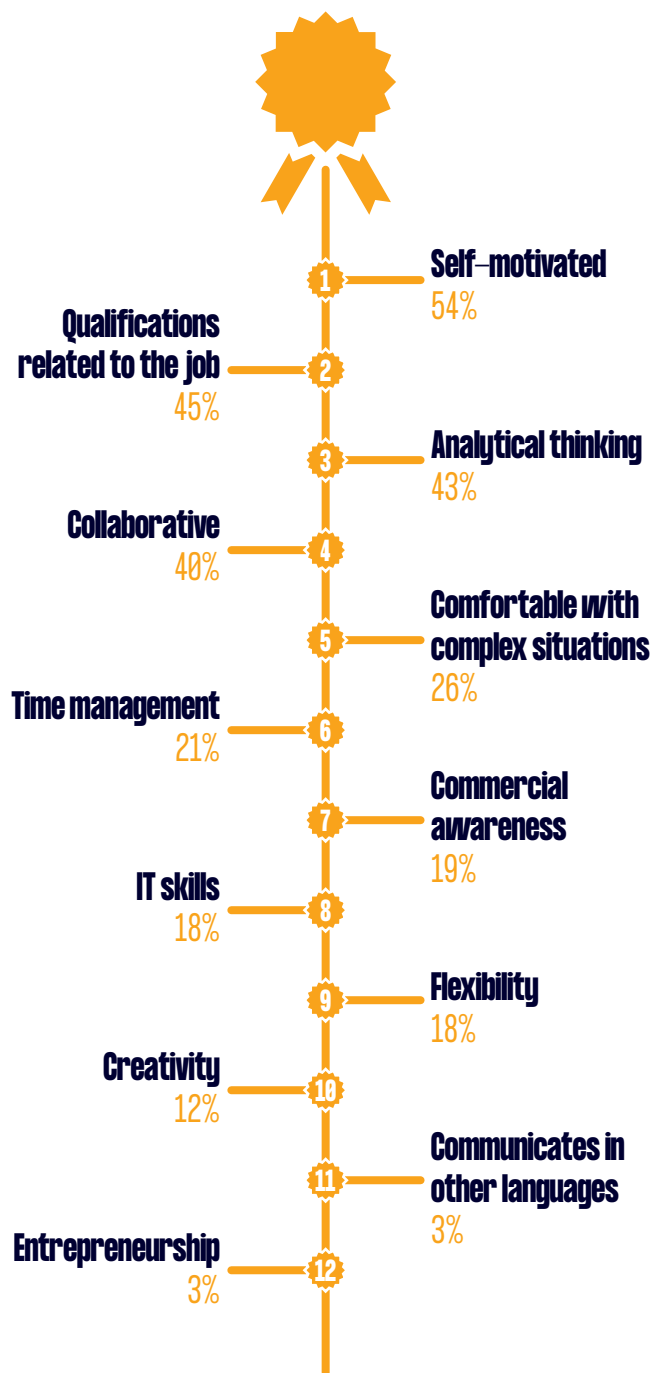
Employers surveyed were requested to evaluate twelve technical skills of global relevance, in terms of their significance to their respective organisations. The evolving economic and technological landscape is propelling the globalisation of commerce. A multitude of enterprises, regardless of size, now serve international clientele and engage in operations abroad. Consequently, the pursuit of highly skilled graduates for international recruitment is intensifying on a global scale.

## Top five global technical skills 2024:

1. Self-Motivated
2. Qualifications related to job
3. Analytical Thinking
4. Collaborative
5. Comfortable with complex situations

## Top five global technical skills 2023:

1. Self-Motivated
2. Collaborative
3. Analytical Thinking
4. Qualifications related to job
5. Comfortable with complex situations



# Global Soft Skills

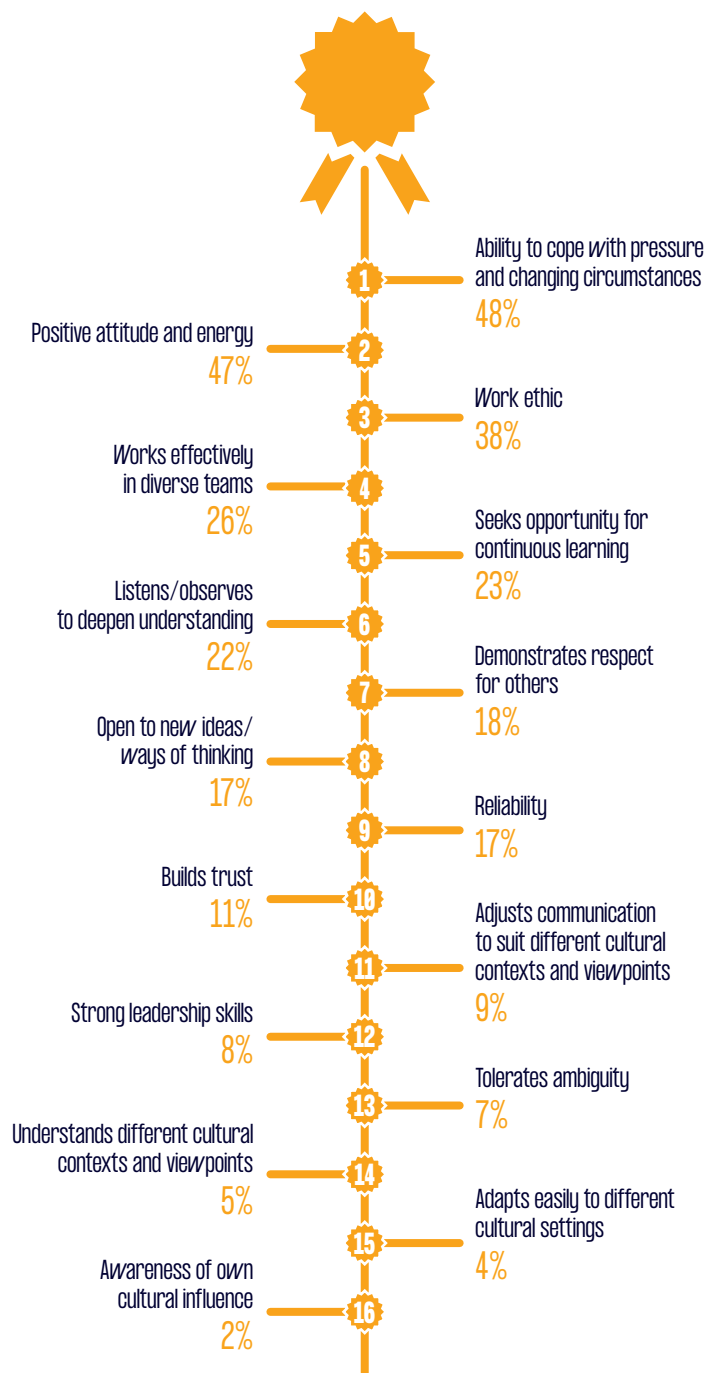
Employers who responded were requested to prioritise twelve universally-valued soft skills, based on their significance to their respective organisations. Organisations are redefining the traditional anticipations of the graduate workforce. With the evolving demands of employers for a globally competent workforce, both graduates and higher education institutions must evolve to thrive.

## Top five global soft skills 2024:

1. Ability to cope with pressure
2. Positive attitude and energy
3. Work ethic
4. Works effectively in diverse teams
5. Seeks opportunities for continuous learning

## Top five global soft skills 2023:

1. Ability to cope with pressure
2. Positive attitude and energy
3. Work ethic
4. Works effectively in diverse teams
5. Listens/observes to deepen understanding







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