



International
Talent Finland

International students in Finland: studies, everyday life, employment and plans for the future

International Talent Finland Research Project
E2 Research

Ville Pitkänen, Matti Välimäki, Mari K. Niemi,
Mari Paljakka & Roosa Veijola



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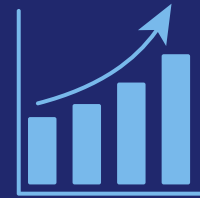


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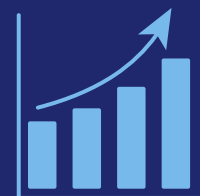
I. ABOUT THE STUDY



INTERNATIONAL TALENT FINLAND RESEARCH PROJECT



In the International Talent Finland Research Project, we ask how to attract international talents to work and live in Finland. We look at talent and different talent groups with a solution-oriented approach and from the perspective of resources.



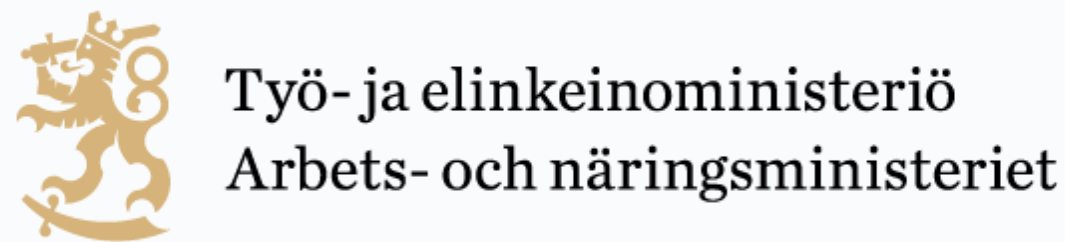
We ask how Finland can become a country that invites, engages, and attracts talent, and where it is easy for an expatriate Finn to return to or a foreigner to come to work. How could people from outside Finland also take part in building the country?



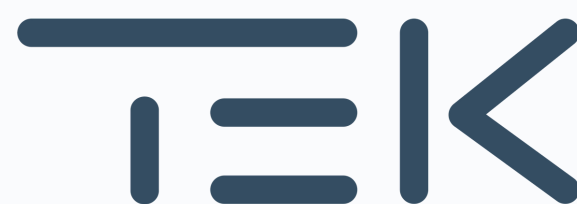
RESEARCH

The research project was conducted from October 2021 to March 2023 by E2 Tutkimus (E2 Research), an independent research institute. E2 Tutkimus is a multidisciplinary research institute serving third-sector organisations, businesses, foundations, municipalities, ministries, political decision-makers, and the media.

CONSORTIUM PARTNERS



**BUSINESS
FINLAND**





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Survey data

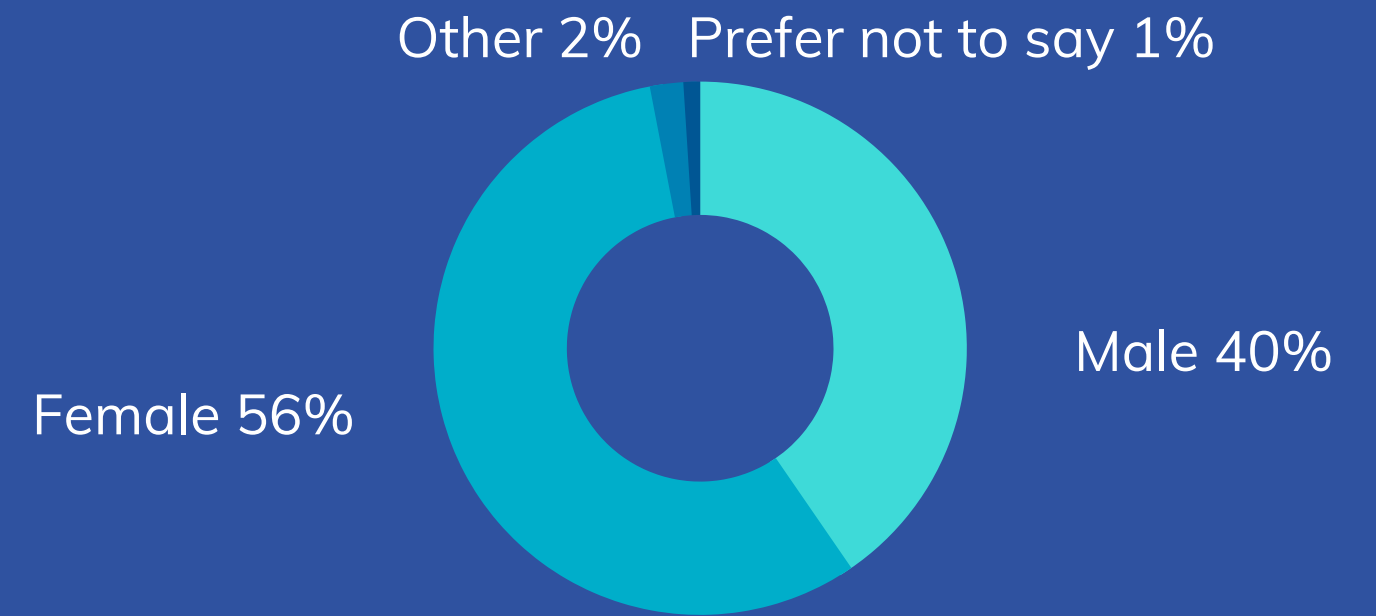
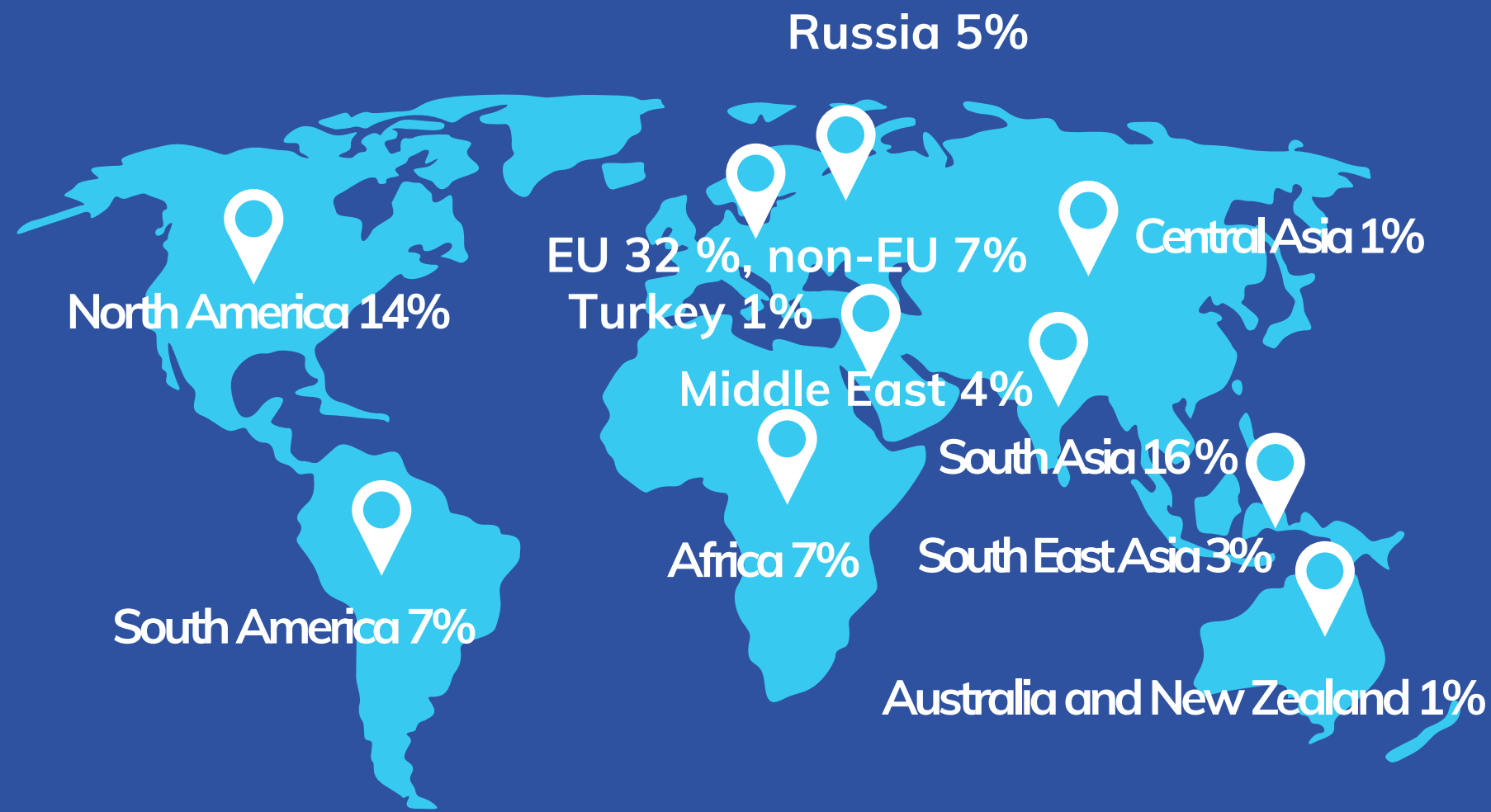
This report is based on a survey that was intended for international students who are studying for a bachelor's or master's degree at Finnish universities or universities of applied sciences.

The survey examined the views of international students on factors attracting international students to Finland, opinions on life and working in Finland, the need for services, and plans for the future.

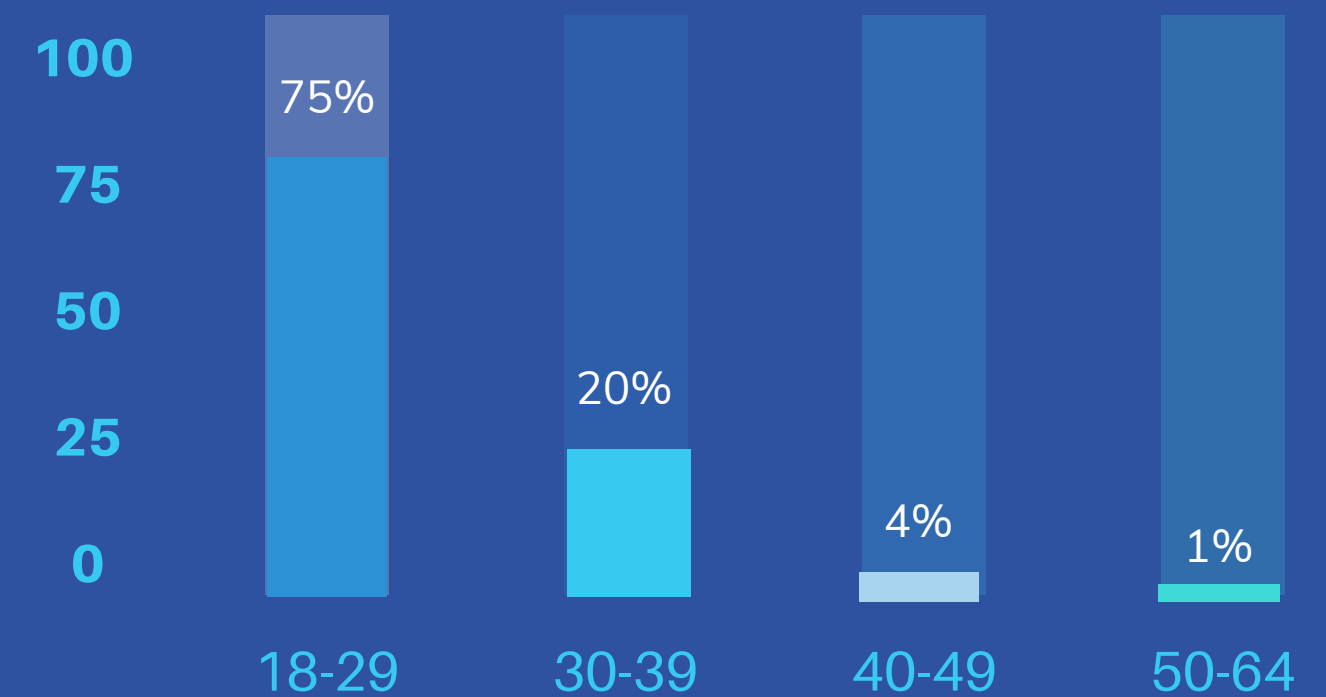
Respondents (N=600) were international students studying at Finnish universities (72 %) or Finnish universities of applied sciences (27 %).

The survey was conducted anonymously on Webropol and was open to responses between November 1 and 31, 2022. The survey was in English.

RESPONDENTS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION (N=600)

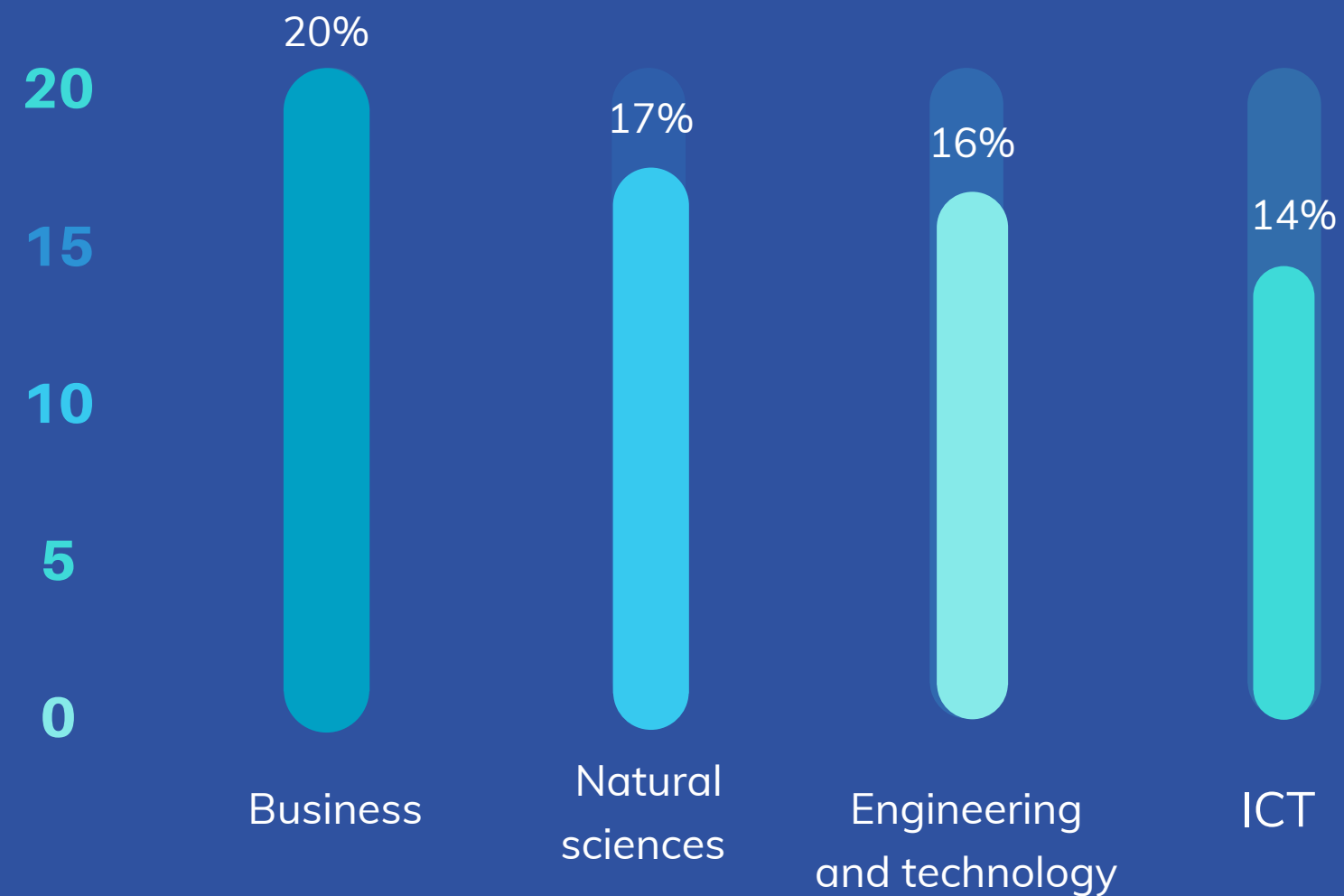


GENDER DISTRIBUTION



AGE DISTRIBUTION

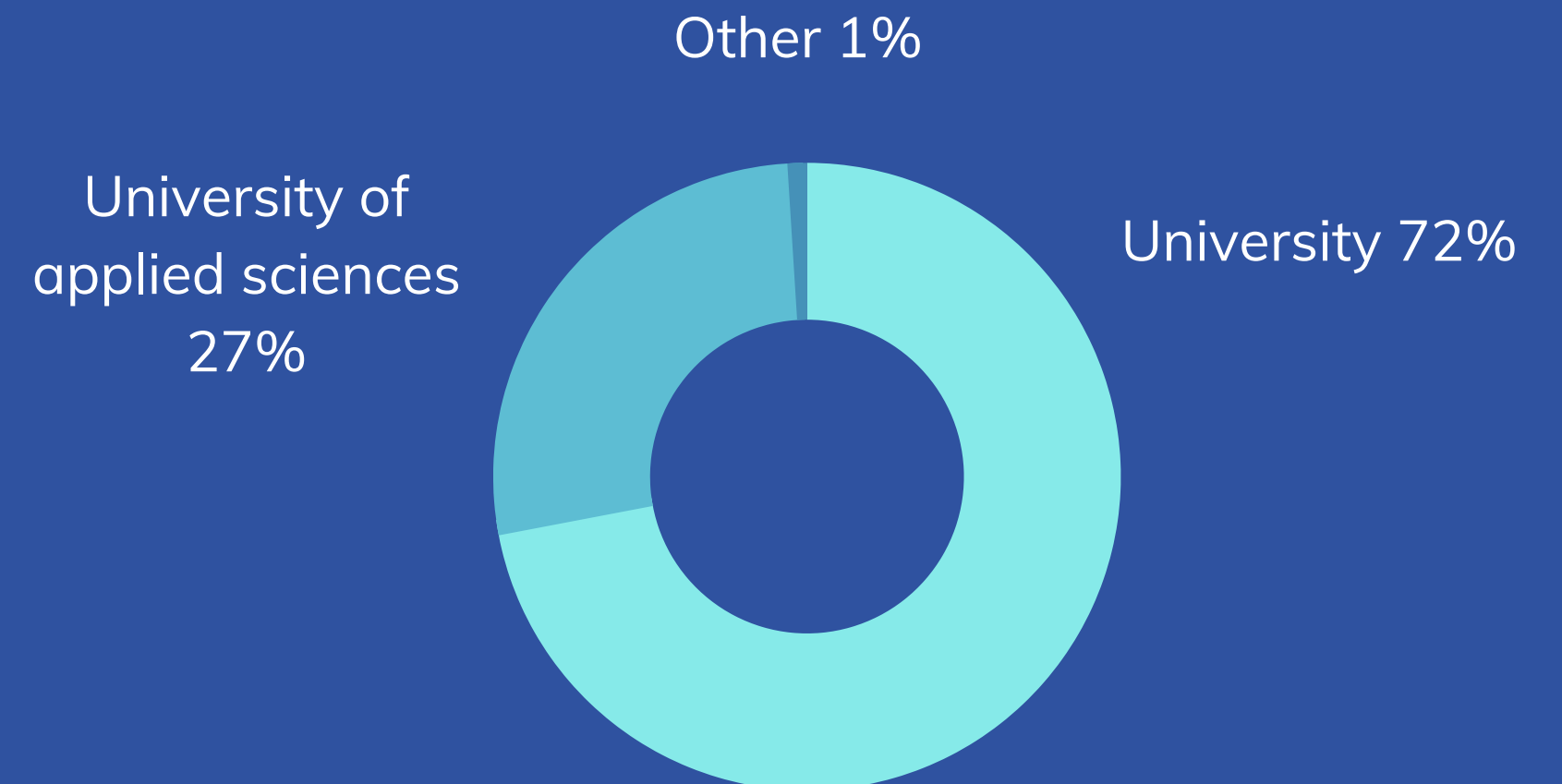
FIELD OF STUDY



- Social studies 10%
- Education 9%
- Humanities 8%
- Health and welfare 6%
- Agriculture and forestry 6%
- Law 5%
- Arts 3%
- Services 1%
- Other fields 6%

INSTITUTION

- The majority (72%) of respondents study at a university.
- About one in four (27%) is studying at a university of applied sciences.





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The research project is conducted by E2 Research. The Director of the project is Docent, DSocSci Mari K. Niemi, and the Deputy Director is Docent, DSocSci Ville Pitkänen.



The responsible researchers for the project are Docent Ville Pitkänen and DSocSci Matti Välimäki. MSocSci Mari Paljakka and MA Roosa Veijola have played a central role in making this report. Director Mari K. Niemi has participated in the implementation of the research project in all its phases. Roosa Veijola is also responsible for the graphic design of this report.



More information about the results:

- ville.pitkanen@e2.fi, 040 777 0869
- matti.valimaki@e2.fi, 050 543 0191

More information about the project:

- mari.k.niemi@e2.fi, +44 77 37 1619 44

About the authors



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II. RESULTS



1. THE BACKGROUND FACTORS FOR MOVING TO FINLAND



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Pull factors of Finland

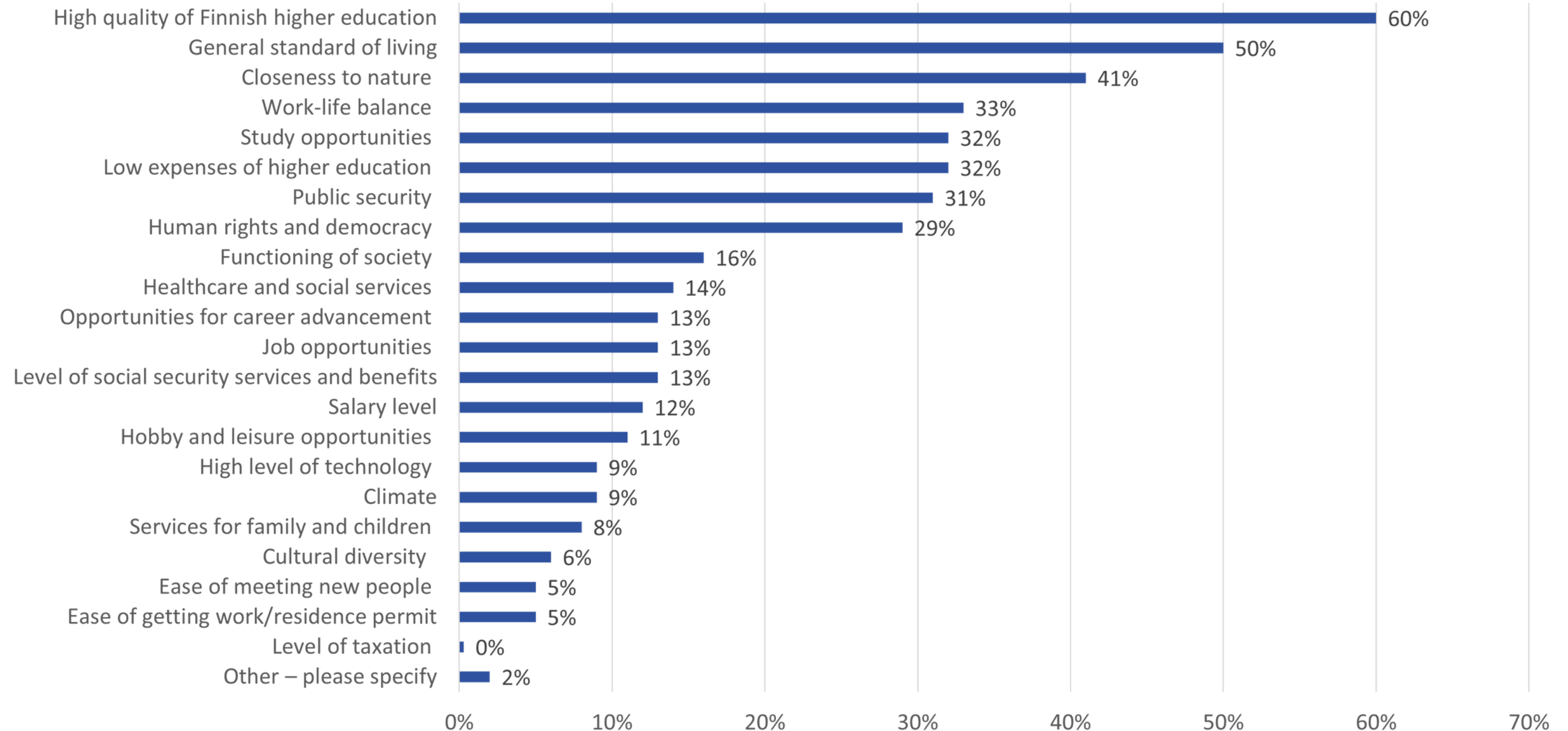
Receiving a place of study and an overall desire to live in Finland are the main reasons to move to Finland

What were the main reasons behind your decision to move to Finland? (You can choose more than one option) (N=600)



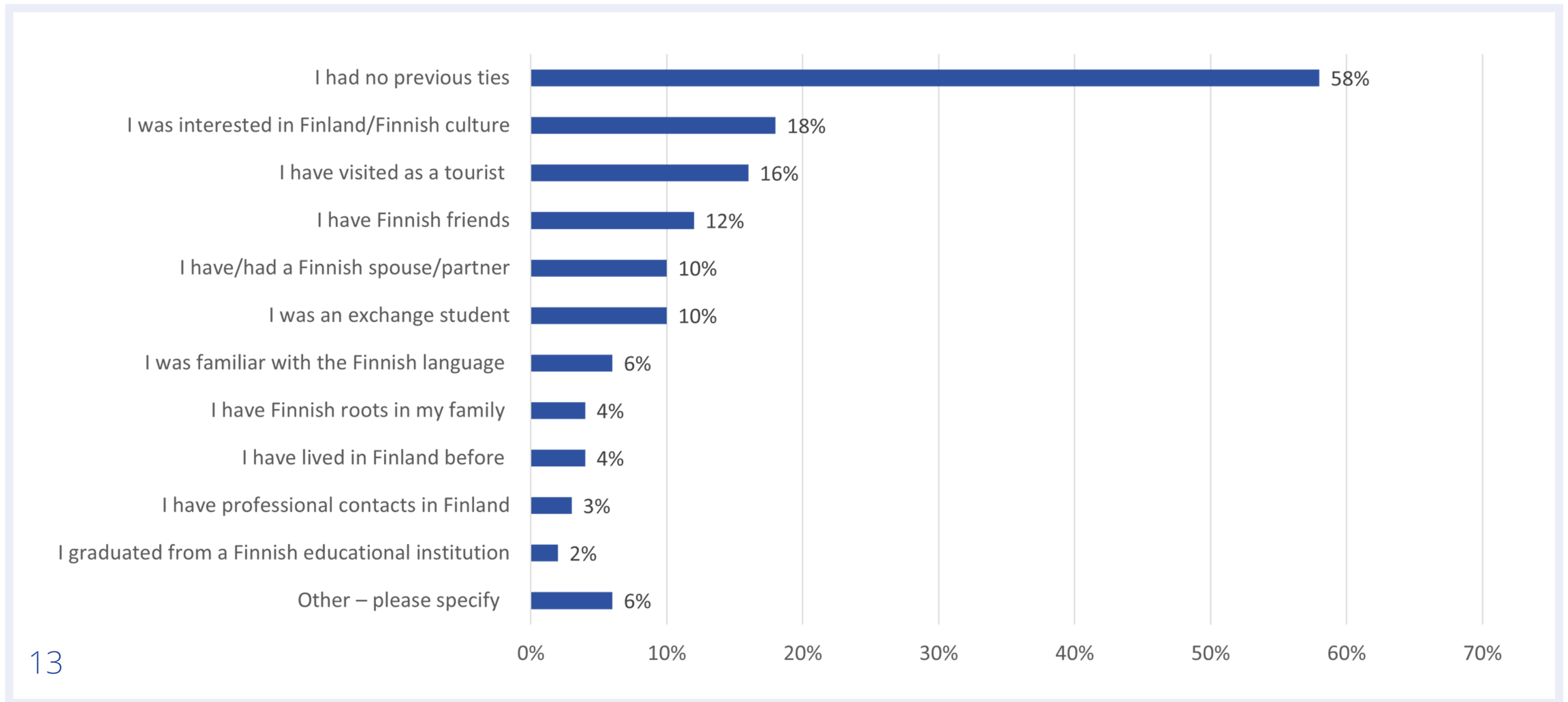
The quality of higher education, the general standard of living, and closeness to nature attract international students

Which of the following factors do you consider appealing in Finland? (Please choose 1–5 most important factors) (N=600)



More than half (58%) had no previous ties to Finland

What previous ties did you have to Finland before you moved here? (You can choose more than one option) (N=600)





2.

LIFE IN FINLAND



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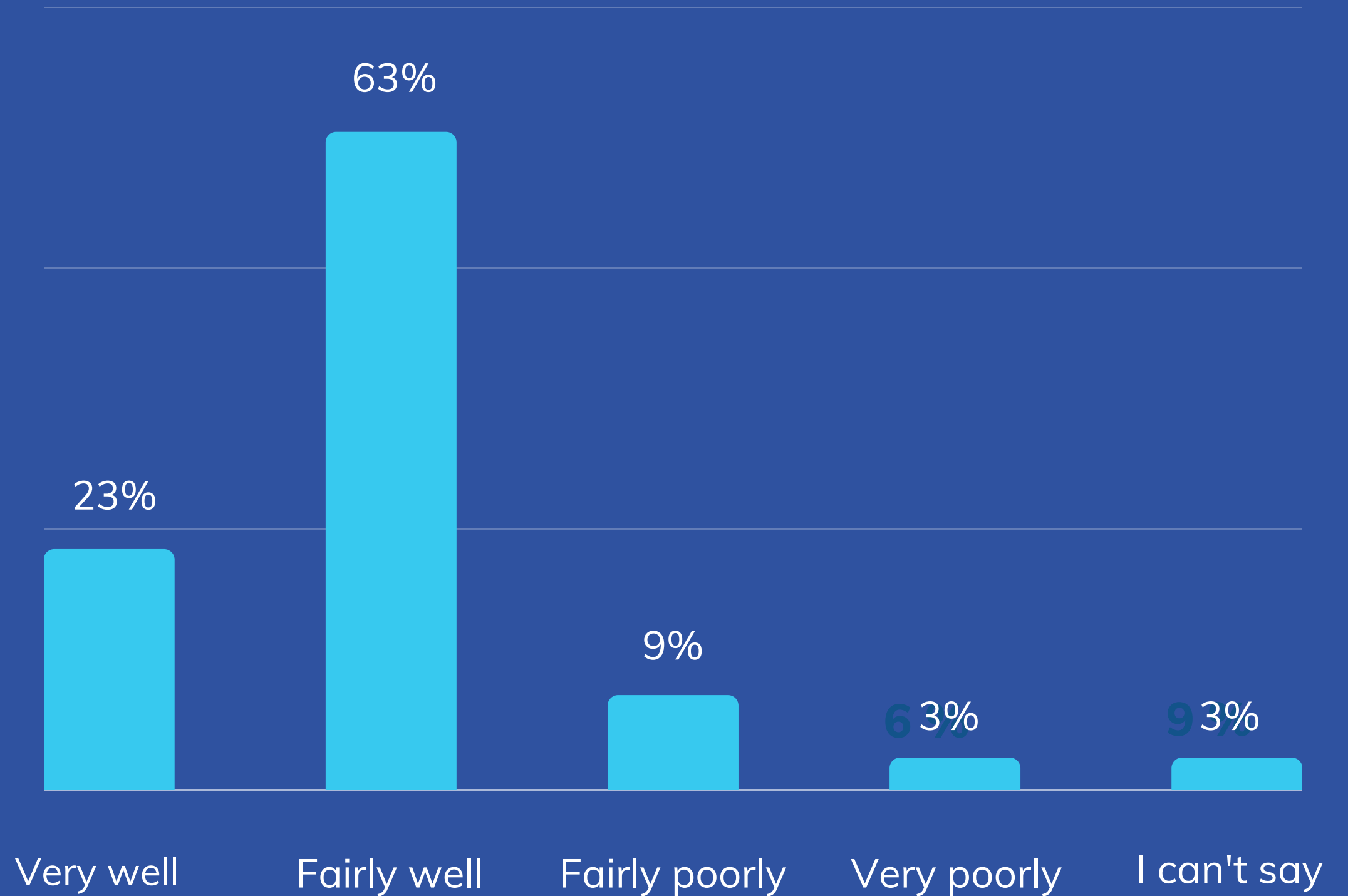
Adjusting to life in Finland



Most international students have adjusted well to life in Finland

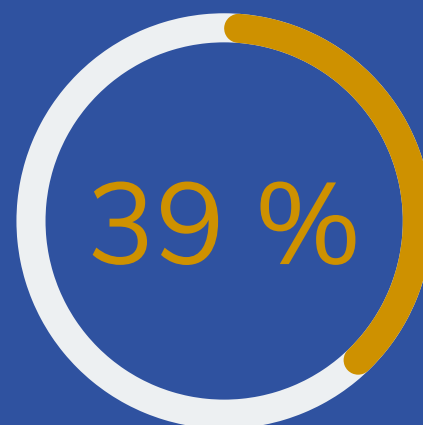
- The majority of international students have adjusted to life in Finland very (23%) or fairly (63%) well.
- Only 3% feel that they have adjusted very poorly to living in Finland.

How well do you think you have adjusted to living in Finland?
(N=600)

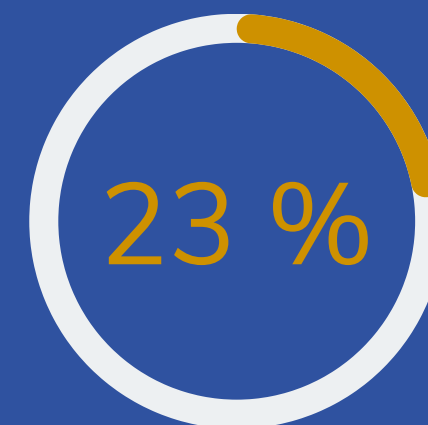


Well over half have adjusted to life in Finland in less than six months

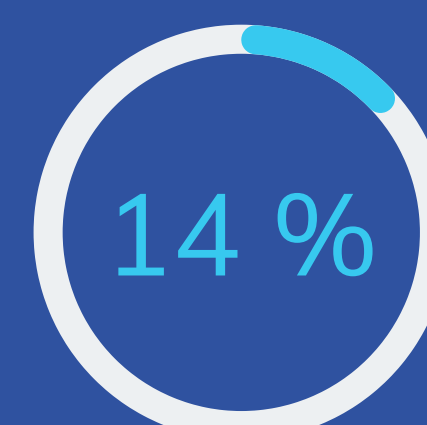
How long did it take for you to adjust to life in Finland? (N=600)



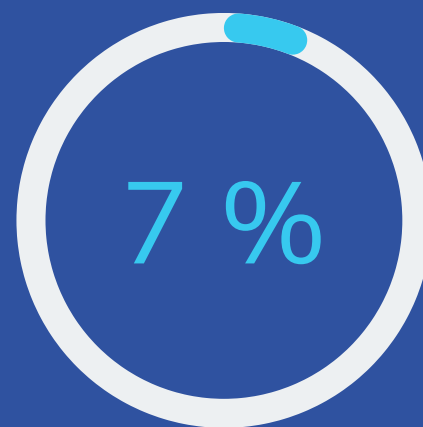
Less than 3 months



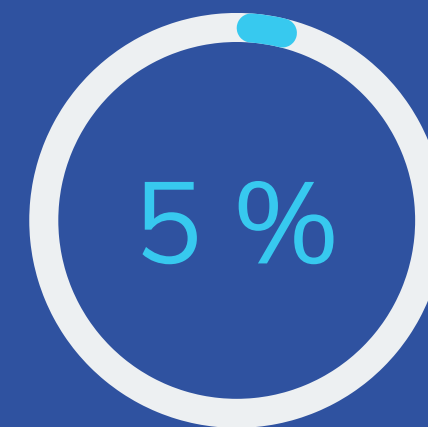
3-6 months



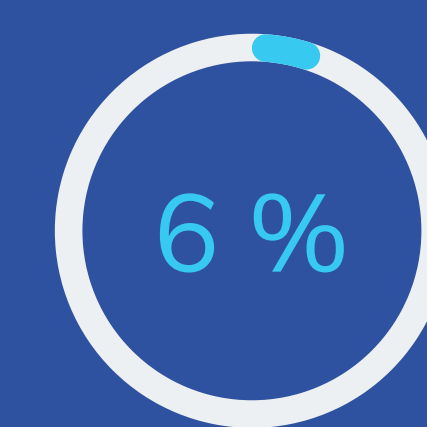
6-12 months



12-14 months



More than 24 months



I have not adjusted

I can't say: 7%



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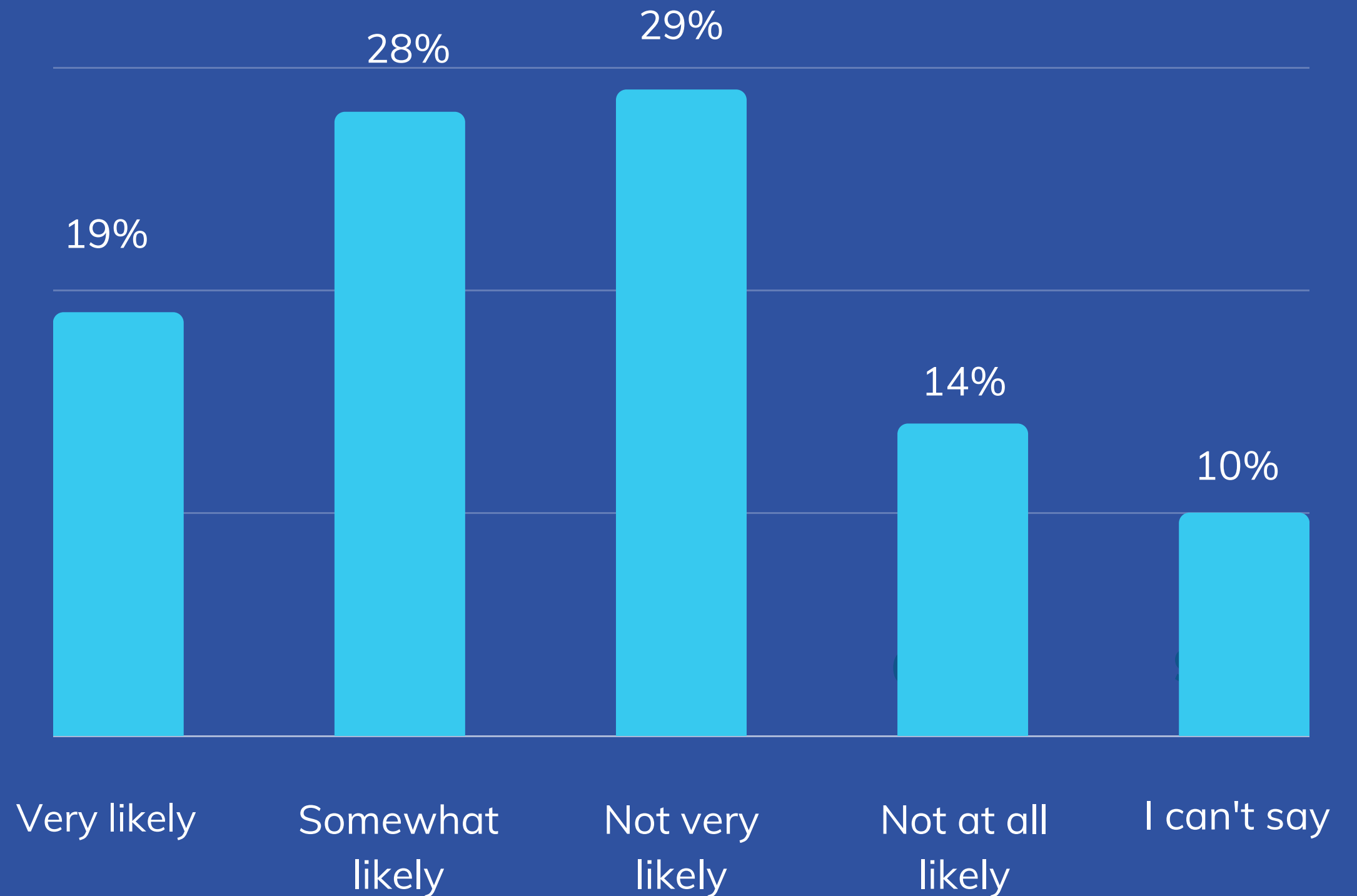


Plans after completing studies

How likely are you to move out of Finland after completing your studies? (N=600)

There are little more of those who are likely to leave, than those who are likely to stay

- Almost half (47%) are likely to move out of Finland after completing their studies.
- 43% are not likely to move out of Finland after completing their studies



"Opportunity to invest time in studies.
Maintain healthy work life balance."

"Good quality of life and public services.
High salary standard."

Source: Open-ended survey answers.

"Partner, social network, feeling of belonging."

"As a non-EU citizen I would stay if I can get the visa."

Reasons for staying in Finland after completing studies



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“Lack of job opportunities related to the field of study.”

“The main reason is I do not feel included in the Finnish culture.”

“Darkness in the winter and difficulty to socialize.”

“Language barrier and low level of salary compared to other peer countries.”

Source: Open-ended survey answers.

Reasons for leaving Finland after completing studies





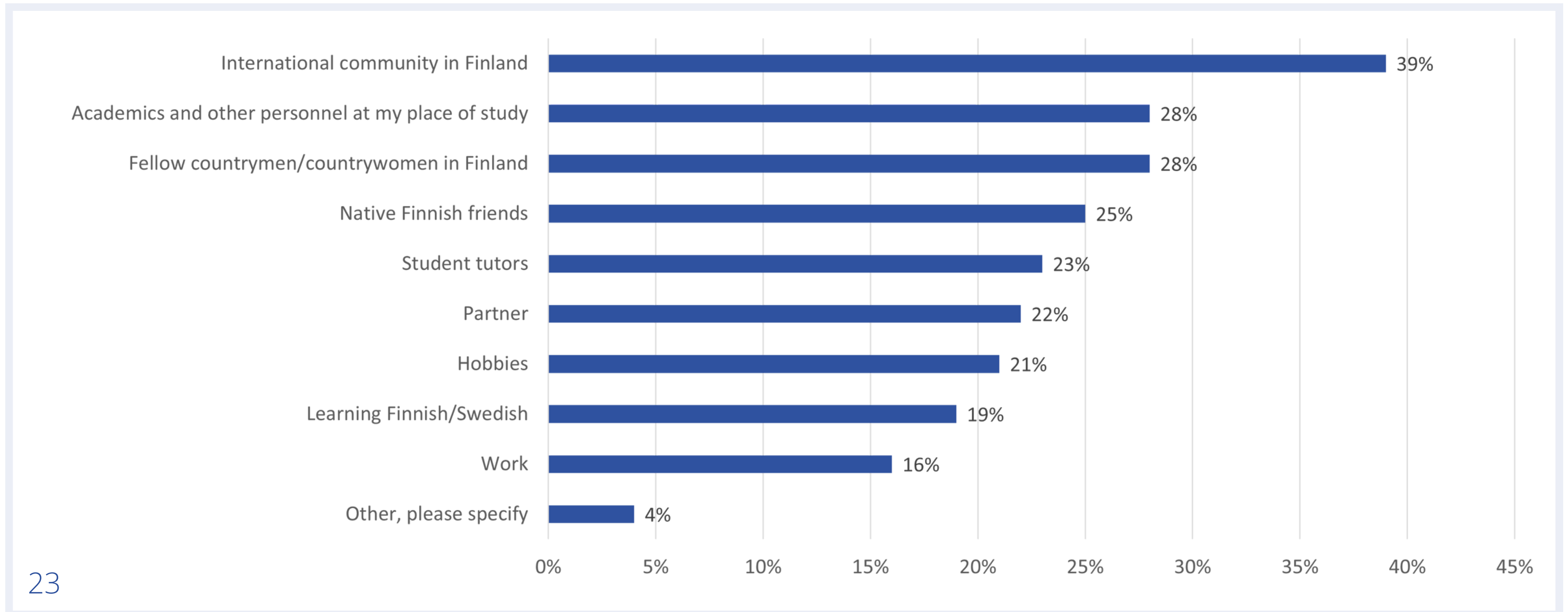
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Factors that affect adjustment

The international community plays a significant role in students' adjustment to Finland

Which of the following helped you the most in your adjustment to Finland? (Please choose 1–3 most important) (N=600)



"Social inclusiveness is strong, the welfare system is perfect, social security is guaranteed, and there is no large gap between the rich and the poor. A sound welfare system for the aged, medical care, education and unemployment has ensured social stability and prosperity."

"Good place to raise children."

Source: Open-ended survey answers for international students

"The life quality is very good. I have a big opportunity to actually be more happy because there is space for me to go after my hobbies which I don't have in my own country."

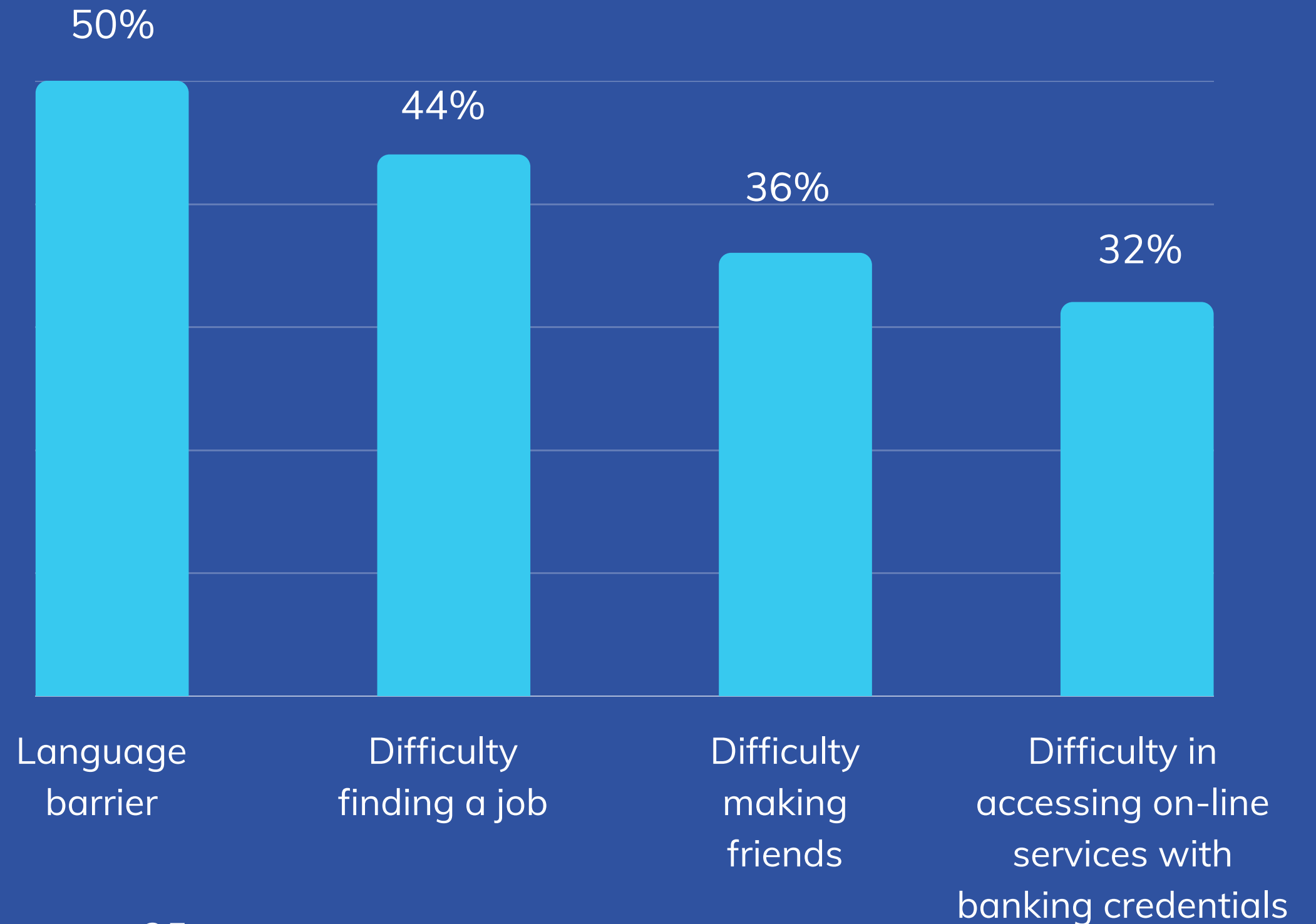
"I love the nature here and I like many aspects of "the Finnish way of living" such as a laid-back mindset and a great feeling of general trust within society."

Pros of living in Finland

Which of the following factors made it difficult for you to adjust to life in Finland? (Please choose 1–3 most important factors) (N=600)

Language barrier and difficulties in finding a job or friends make it difficult to adjust

- Lack of support networks: 18%
- Difficulties in dealing with authorities: 14%
- Difficulties in my studies: 14%
- I have experiences discrimination: 9%
- I have not had any difficulties: 9%
- Lack of public support services: 7%
- Difficulties my family members face in adapting to living in Finland: 2%
- Other: 8%



“Because I am working full-time to be able to pay for myself and it's hard balancing work and studies.”

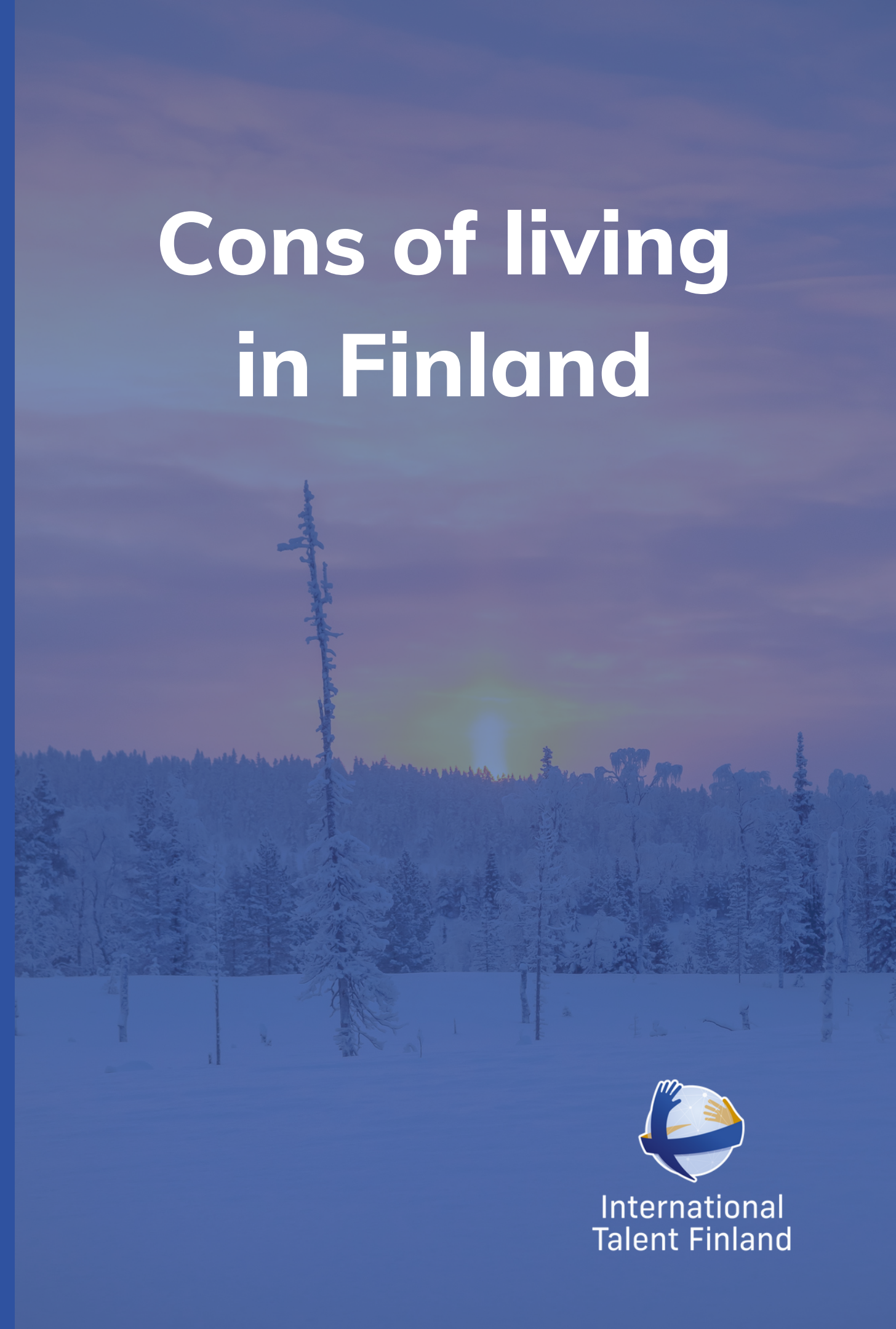
“The cost of living in Finland is quite high than other European countries.”

Source: Open-ended survey answers.

“The winter darkness. There are not many activities to do.”

“My partner hasn't fully adapted to Finland, and the weather is challenging for families with small children and no support network.”

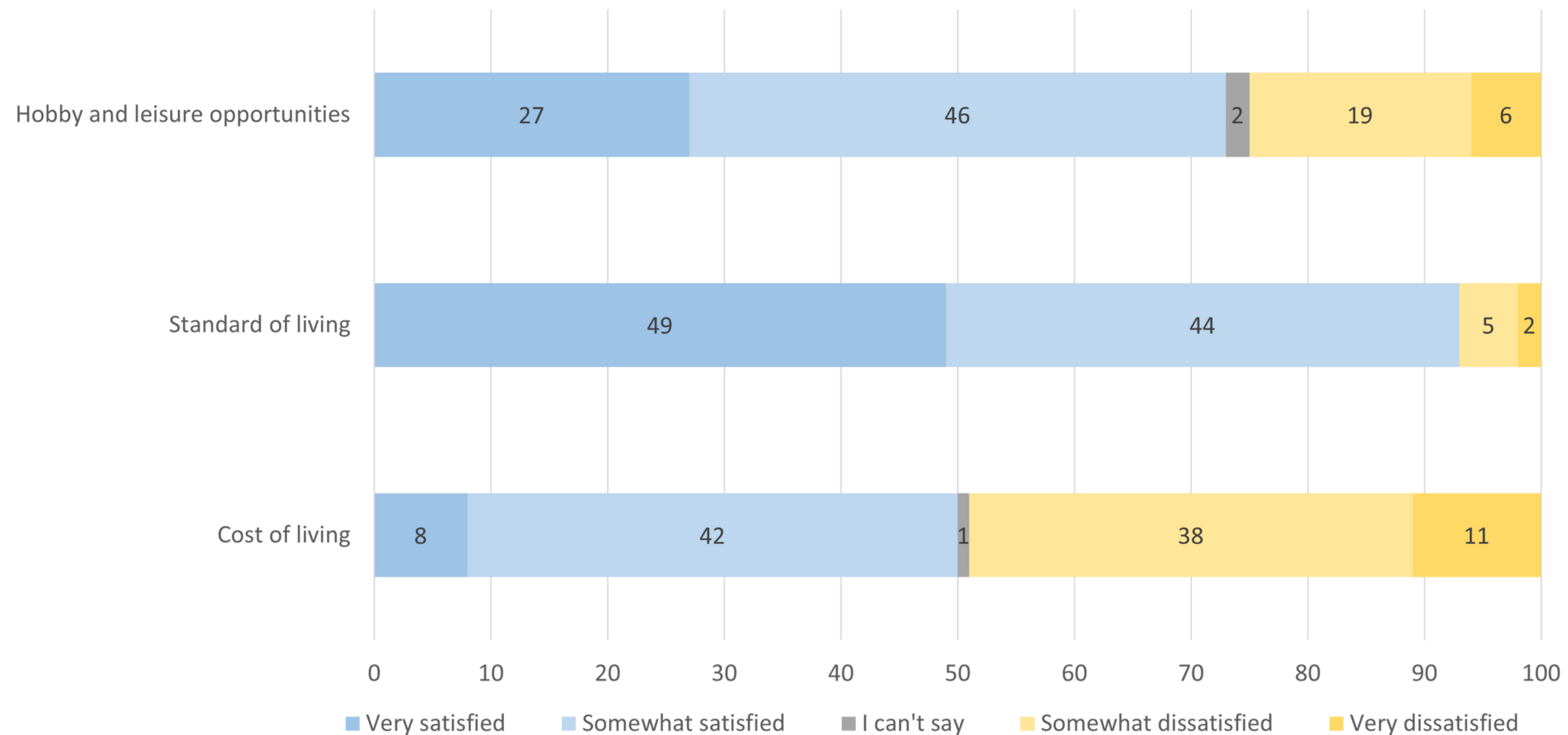
Cons of living in Finland



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Nearly all are satisfied with the standard of living

How satisfied are you with the following things related to living in Finland? (%) (N=600)





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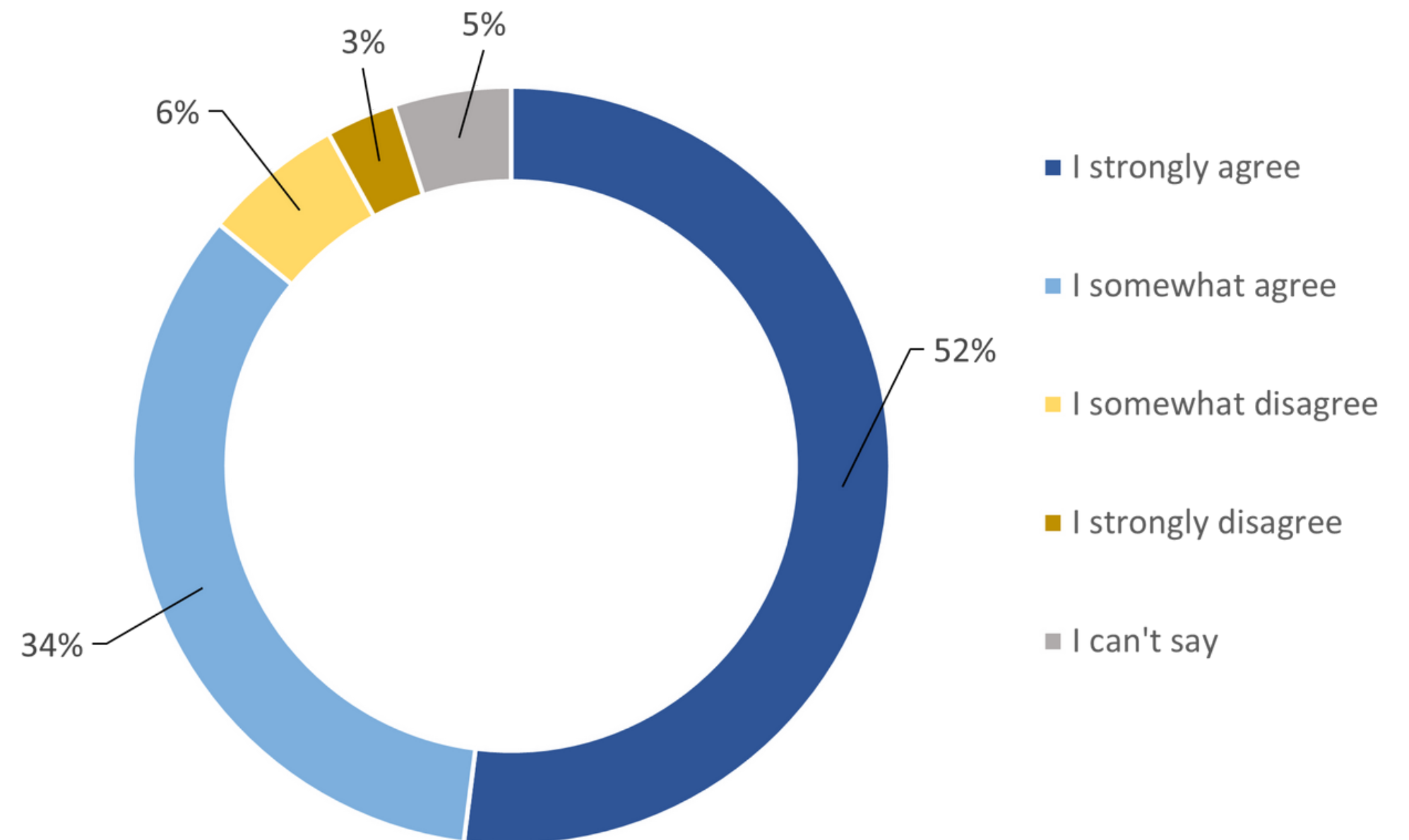
Importance of learning Finnish or Swedish

A vast majority (86%) think that learning Finnish or Swedish is important

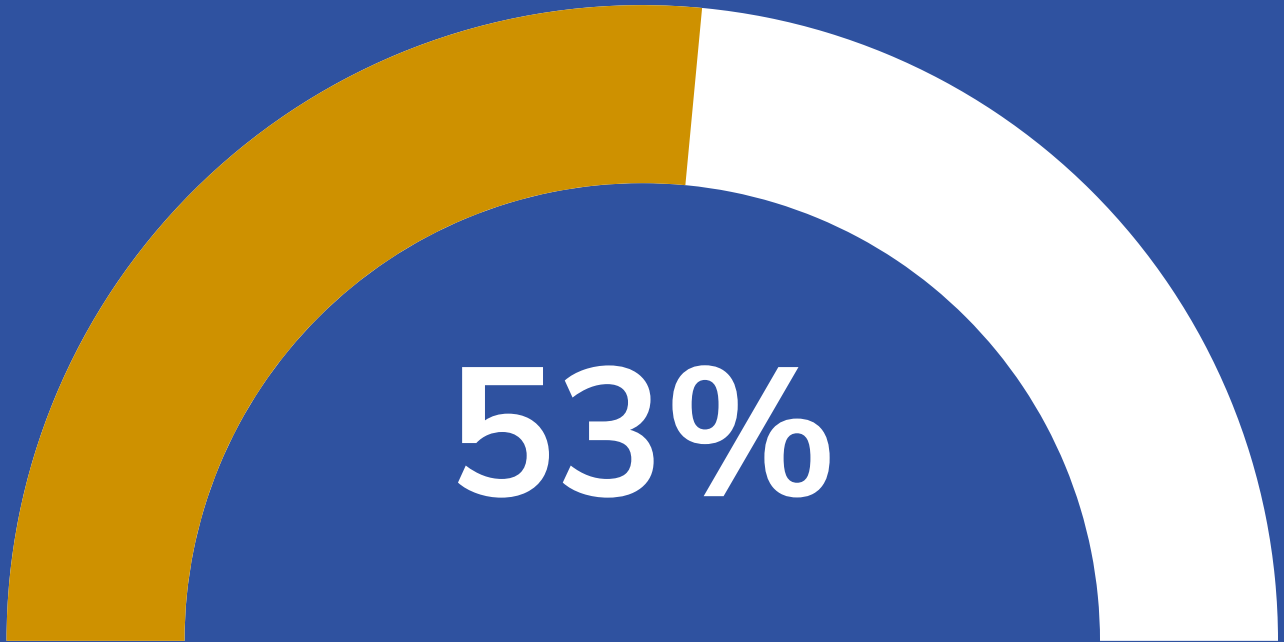


Evaluate the following statement:

A person living permanently in Finland should learn Finnish or Swedish. (%) (N=600)



About half find Finnish or Swedish language training useful



"Which of the following services and support do you find the most useful? (Please choose 1-5 the most useful) (N=600)"





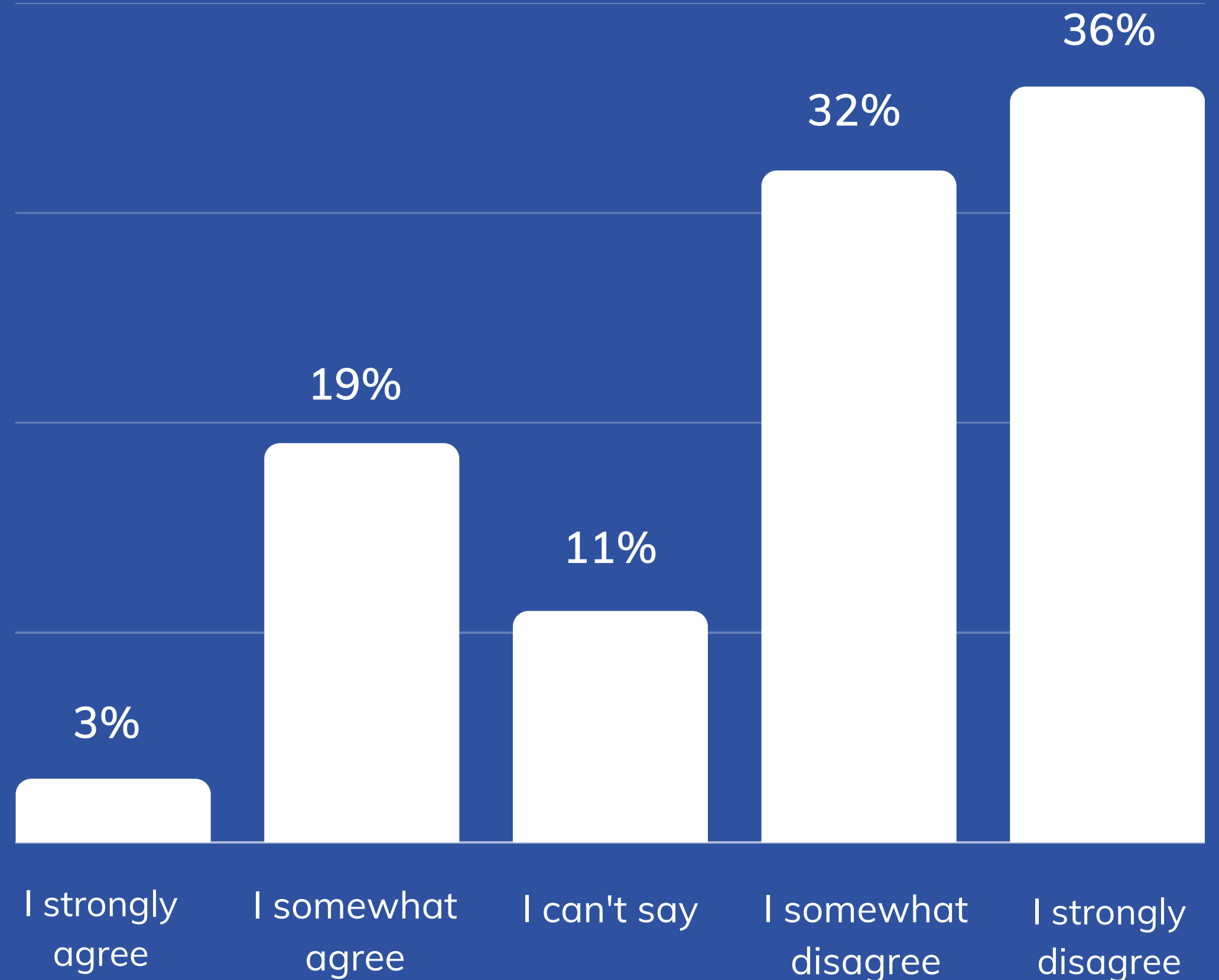
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Proficiency in Finnish or Swedish is considered important in Finnish working life



Please evaluate the following statement (%) (N=600):

In Finnish working life, you can do without proficiency in Finnish or Swedish.



“The Finnish language and having a network with the Finns is more favorable in getting a job.”

“The language barrier. I tried getting a job while studying but because I can't speak the language, I couldn't get jobs.”

“The jobs available appear to be for Finnish speaking candidates.”

“[Finnish] is not the simplest of languages and from that perspective, I don't think universities are doing that much. - - The thing is that, because they want to accommodate as many people as possible, they're standardizing it [language courses]. And because they're standardizing it, the times you can take them are very limited.”

Source: Open-ended survey answers and focus group interviews for students

Language barrier limits access to Finnish working life





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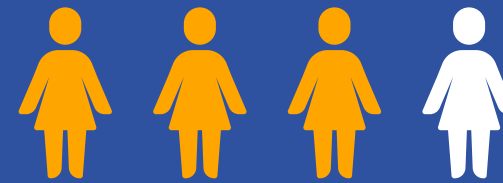


Social networks

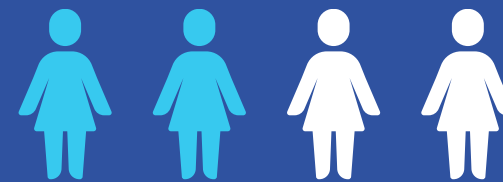
Many have several Finnish friends - one in four has none



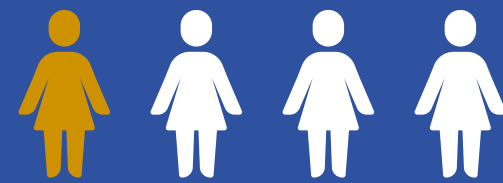
How many native Finnish friends do
you have? (N=600)



Three out of four have Finnish
friends.



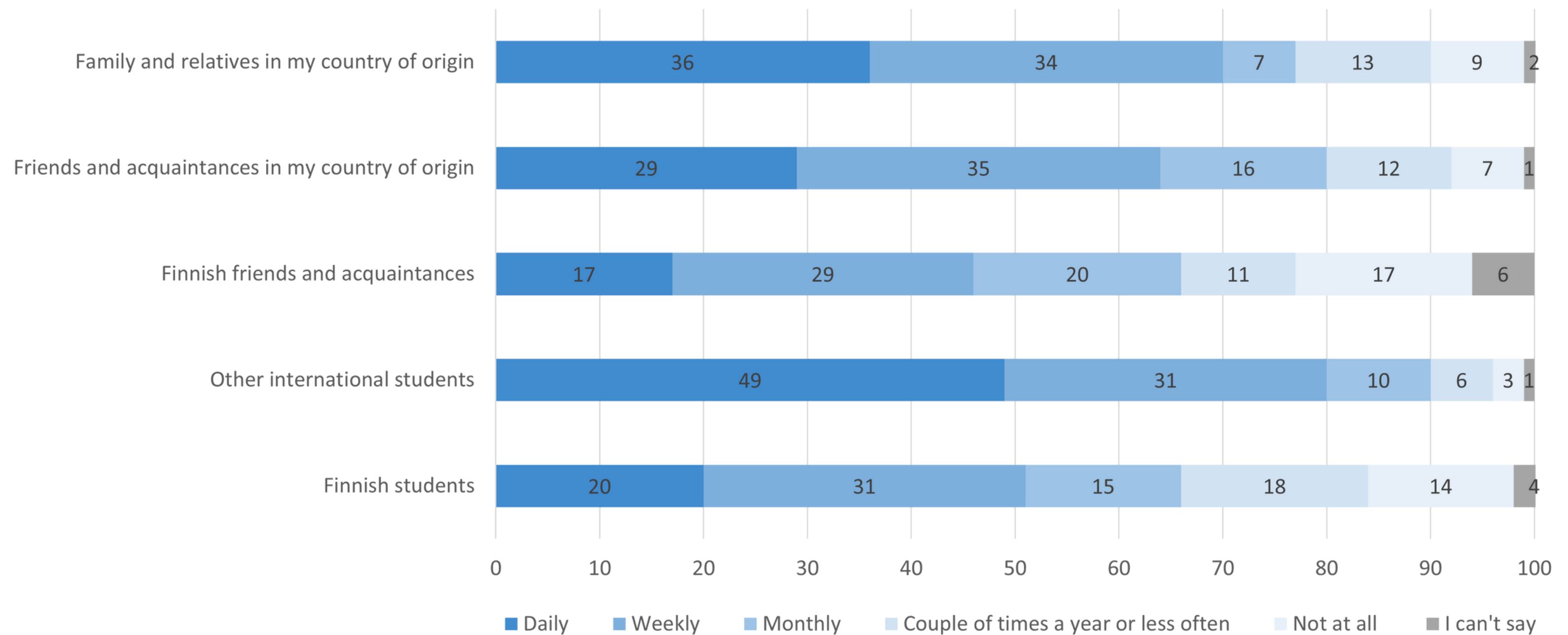
A little more than half (56%)
have at least two Finnish
friends.



One in four (25%) has no
Finnish friends at all.

Most students are in daily or weekly contact with other international students and family and relatives

How often are you in contact with the following people? (%) (N=600)





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STUDYING IN FINLAND



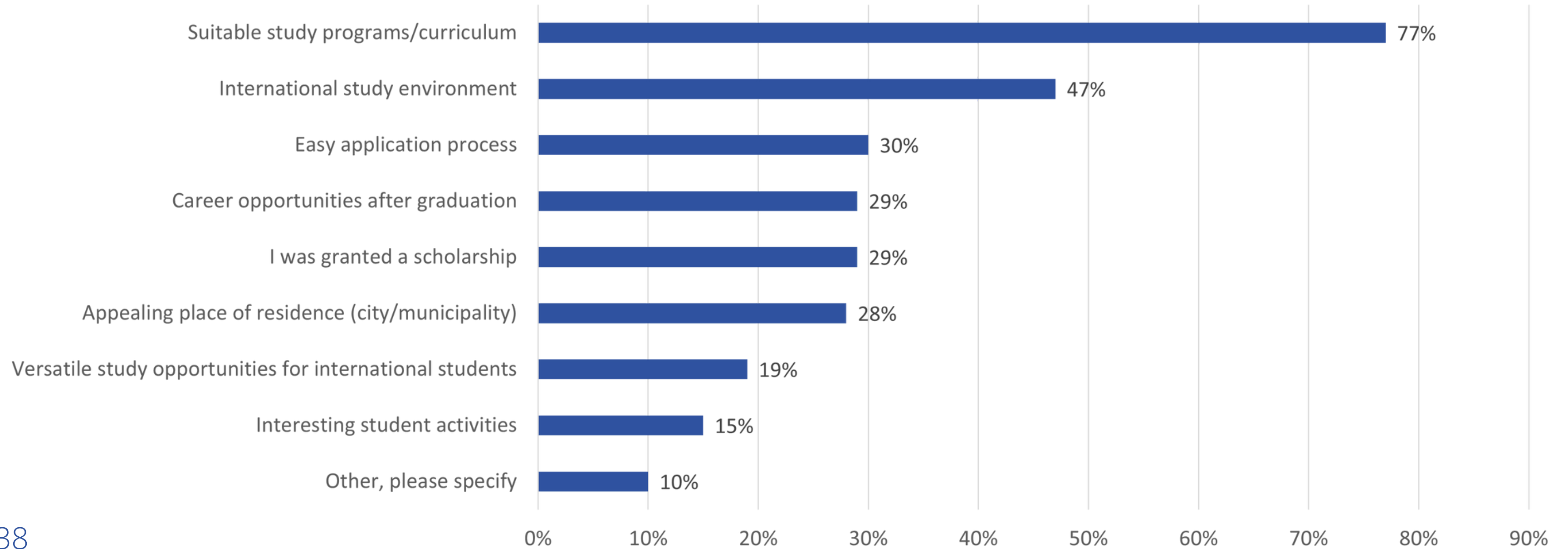
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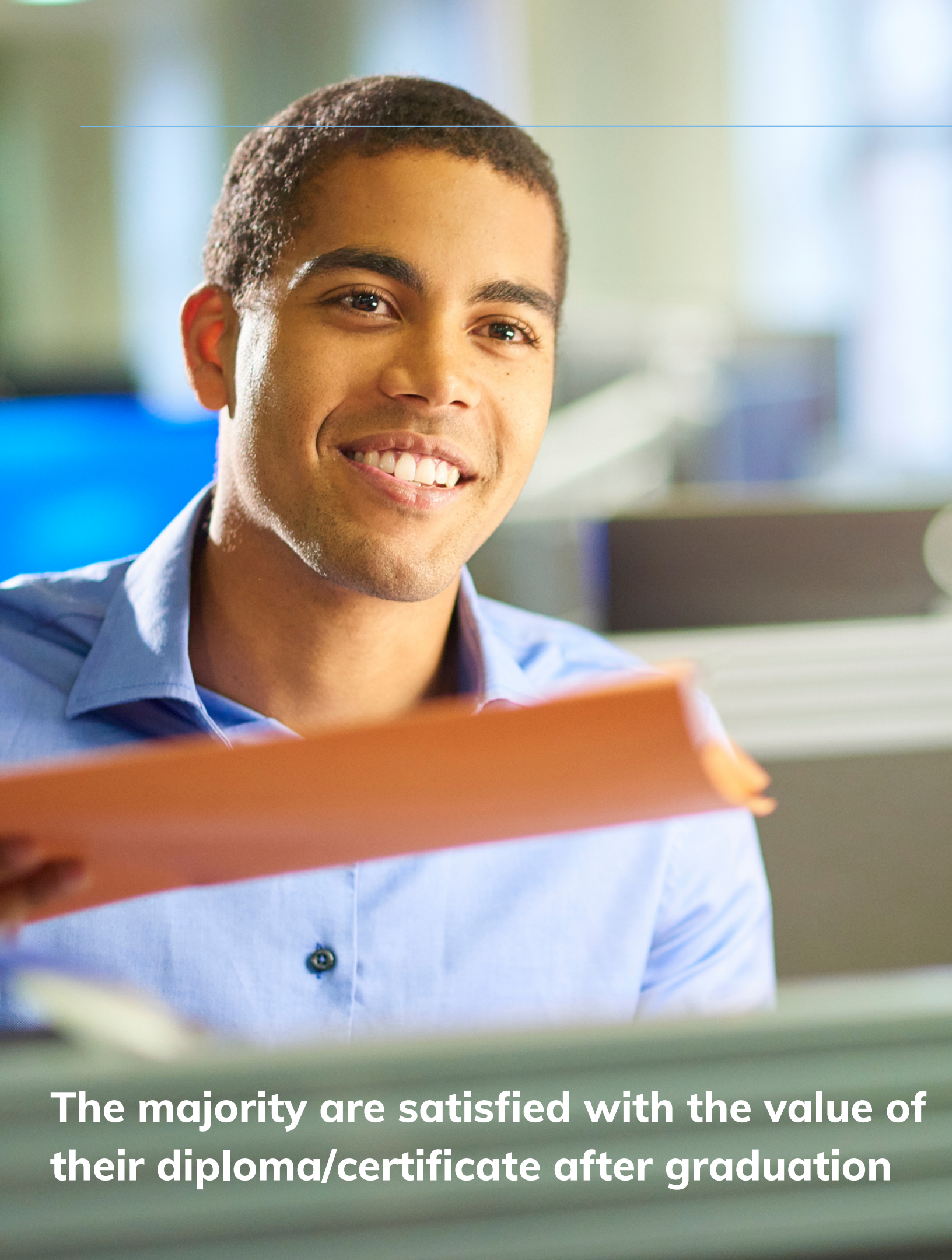


Opinions on the quality of studies and study environment

A suitable study program and international study environment main reasons for choosing an educational institution

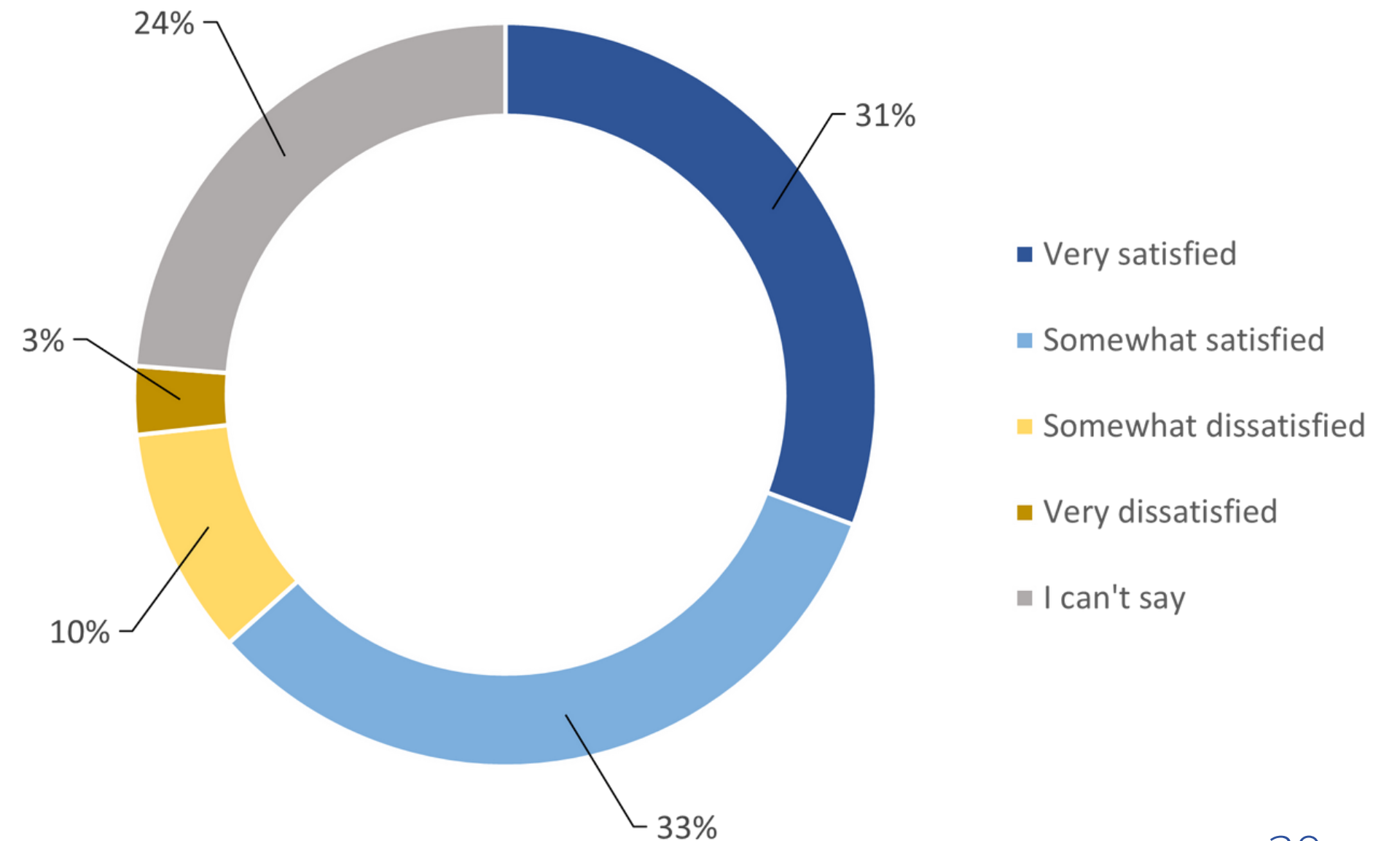
What were the main reasons behind your decision to choose your current educational institution in Finland?
(You can choose more than one option) (N=600)





How satisfied are you with the following things related to living in Finland? (%) (N=600)

Value of diploma/certificate after graduation.



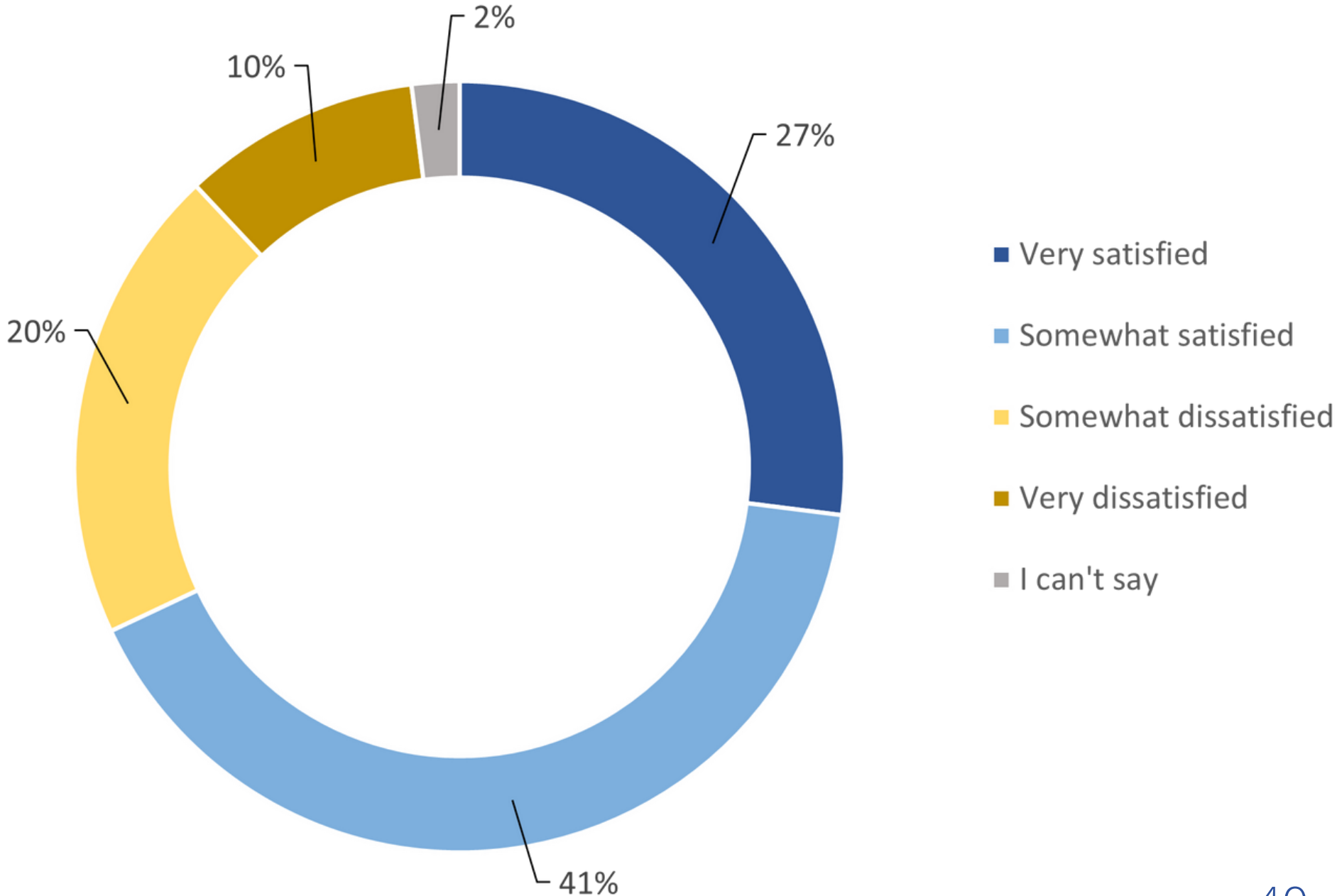
The majority are satisfied with the value of their diploma/certificate after graduation

Almost 70% are satisfied with interaction with other students



How satisfied are you with the following things related to living in Finland? (%) (N=600)

Interaction with other students.





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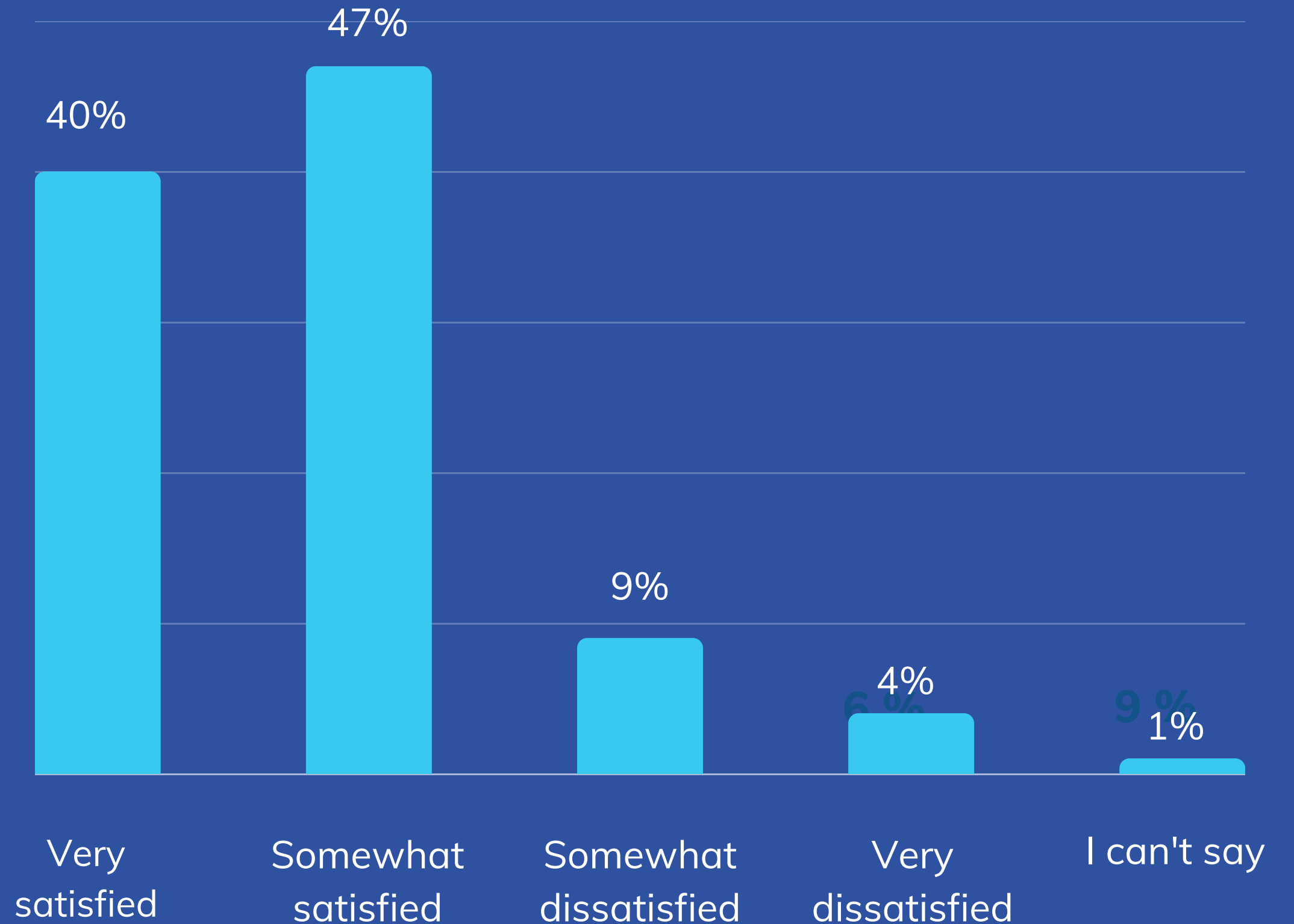


Satisfaction with studies

The majority of students are satisfied with their studies in Finland

- Most of the respondents are very (40%) or somewhat (47%) satisfied with their studies in Finland.
- Four percent are very dissatisfied with their studies.

How satisfied are you with your studies in Finland? (N=600)



“Finland always treats the international students in a welcomed way and also it provides every facilities that binds the students to stay here. I feel good to live here. The nature is so beautiful and attractive. Also, there's a great career opportunities after the studies.”

Source: Open-ended survey answers.

“Studies are very theoretical, there is no labs activities for master students it's only for PhD students. I was very disappointed when I knew about this.”

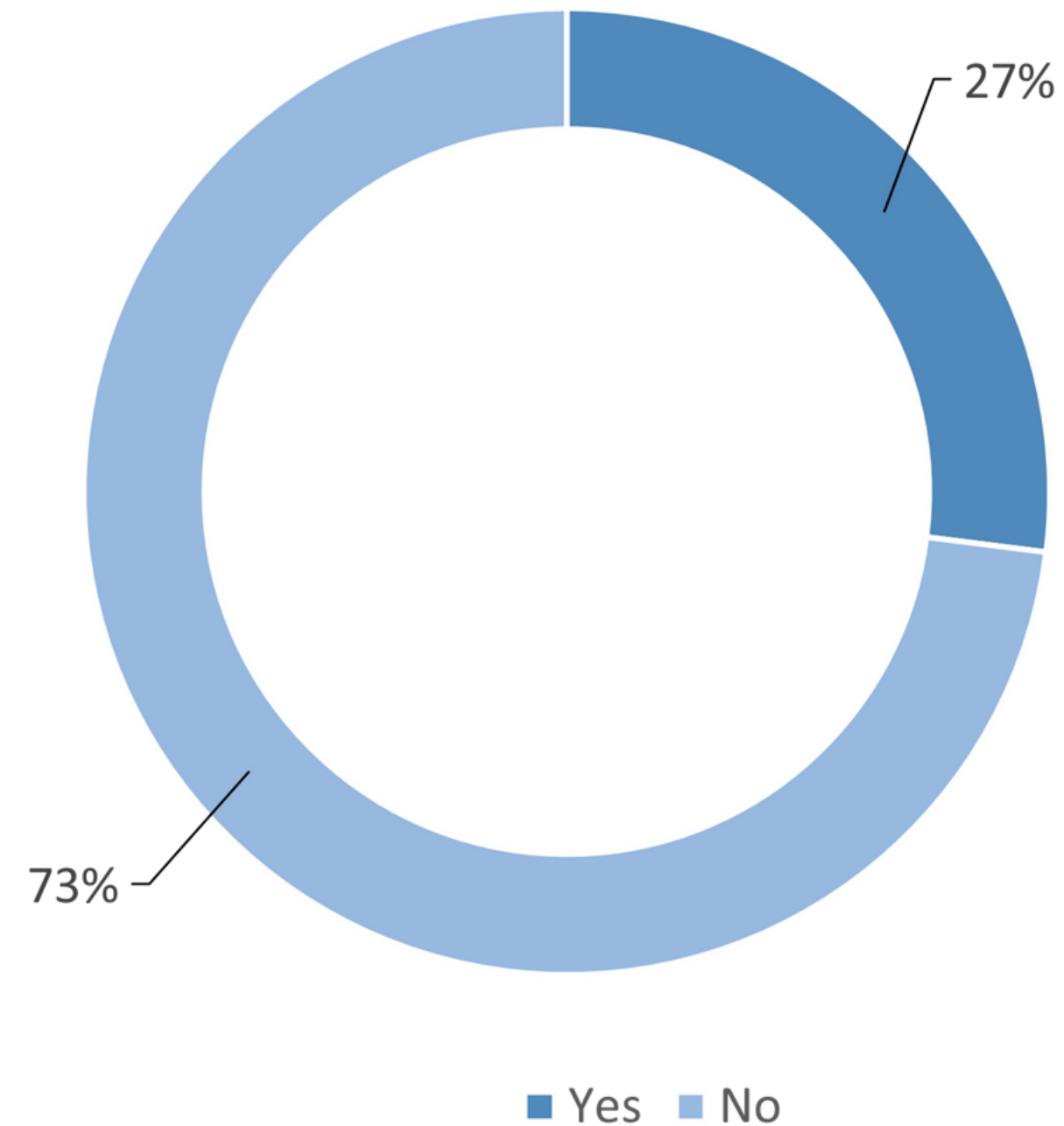
“It is somehow difficult to meet the standard of graduation in my faculty.”



Views about student life and studies in Finland

Most (73 %) have not considered dropping out of their studies

Have you ever considered dropping out of your studies? (N=600)



“At the beginning, I thought about dropping because I had a harder time adapting to living in Finland especially with all the bureaucratic matters I had to take care of. Academically, there was also so much to do. The tasks weren't too difficult but the quantity was harder to handle for me at the beginning. But luckily, I got the hang of it.”

Source: Open-ended survey answers.

“I don't want to drop out, but due to financial issues I might have to start over next year or the year after.”

“Sometimes it is difficult to work and study. So much pressure made me think giving up studies. But career counselors and my partner supported me a lot. Now I am continuing my studies.”

Combining studies and other aspects of student life





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EMPLOYMENT IN FINLAND



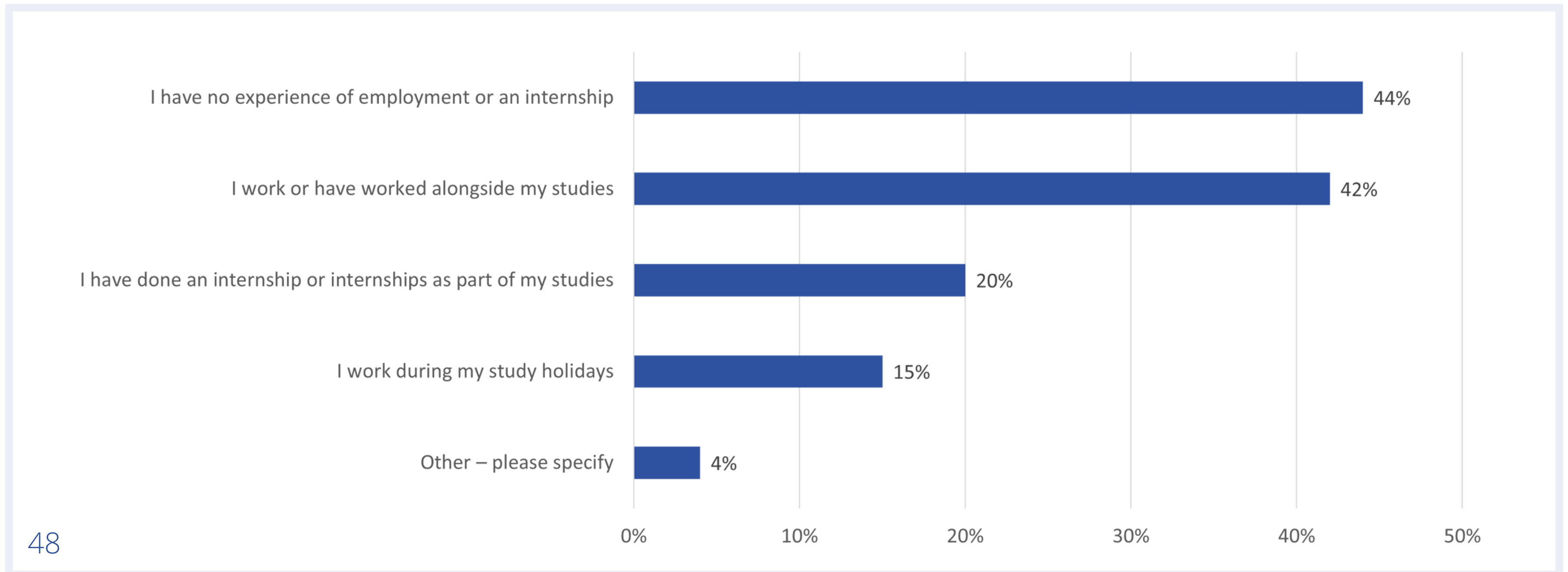
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Work experience in Finland

More than half have experience of employment or an internship

Which of the following best describes your work experience in Finland? (You can choose more than one option) (N=600)

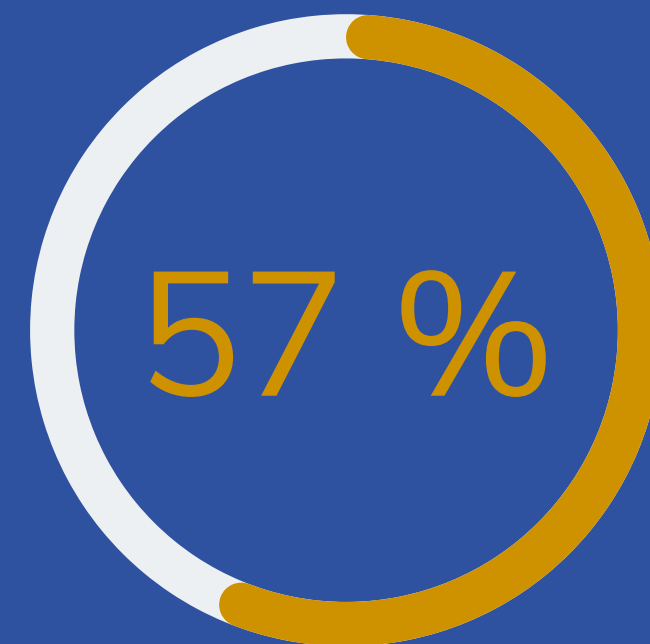


More than half (57 %) of those with work experience in Finland have worked in a field related to their studies

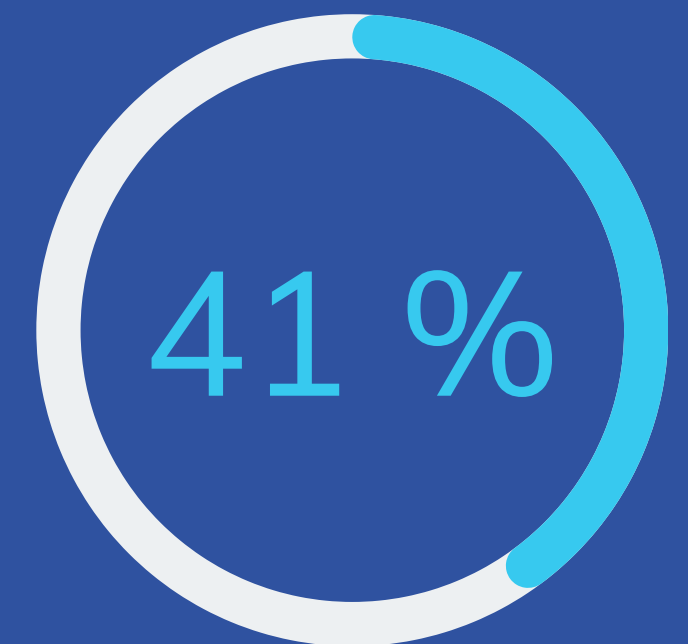


If you have work experience in Finland, has the work been in a field related your studies? (N=323)

Yes



No



I can't say: 3%



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Employment opportunities

More than half are satisfied with the possibility to work alongside studies

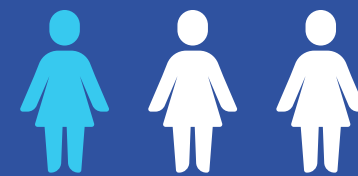


How satisfied are you with the following things related to living in Finland? (%) (N=600)

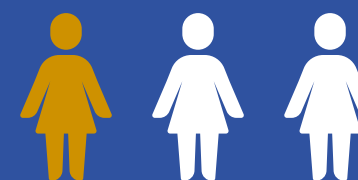
A statement: Possibility to work alongside studies



One in five (20%) are very satisfied with the possibility to work alongside studies.



One in three (34%) are somewhat satisfied.



One in three (33%) are somewhat or very dissatisfied.

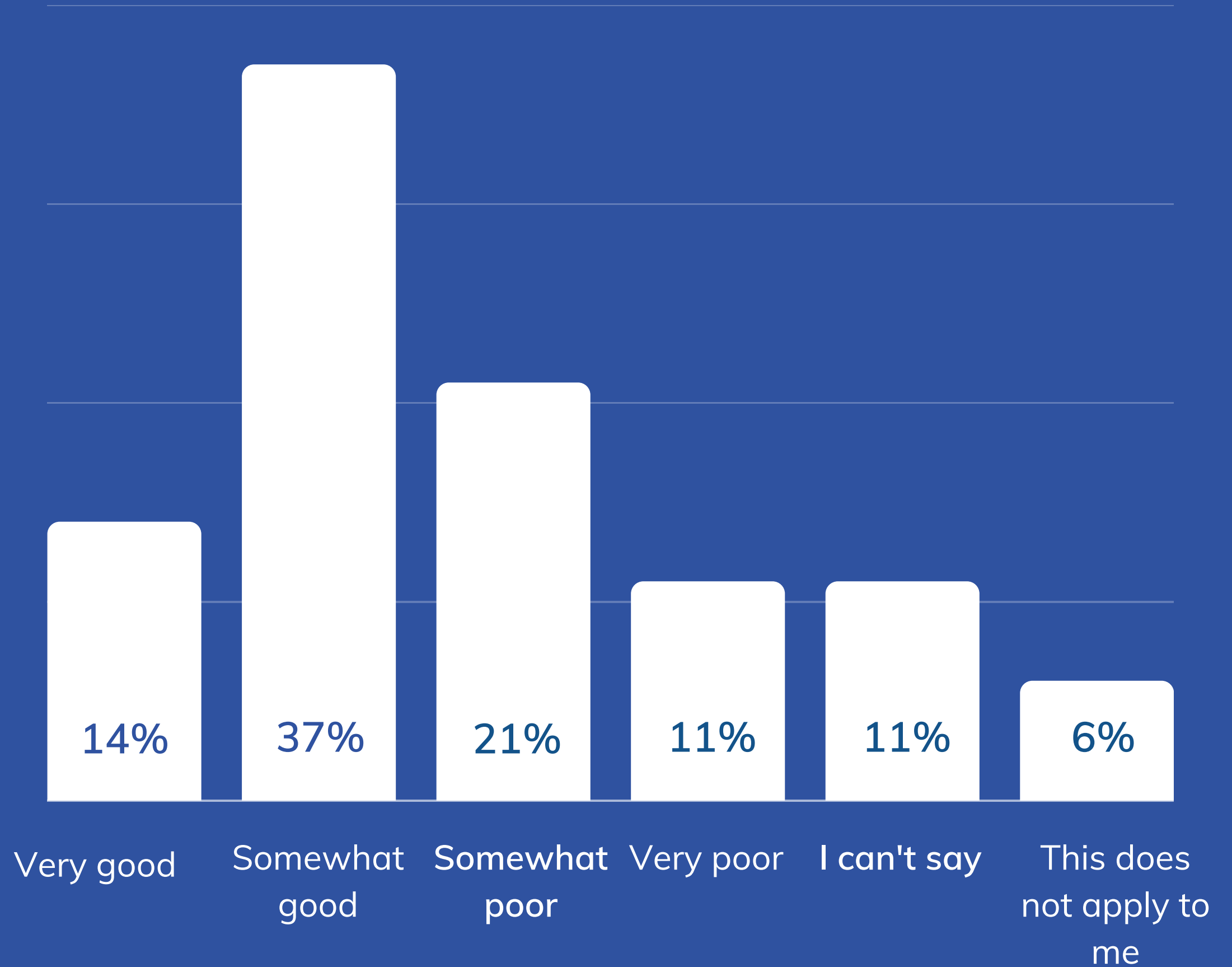


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About half (51%) see their career advancement opportunities in Finland positively

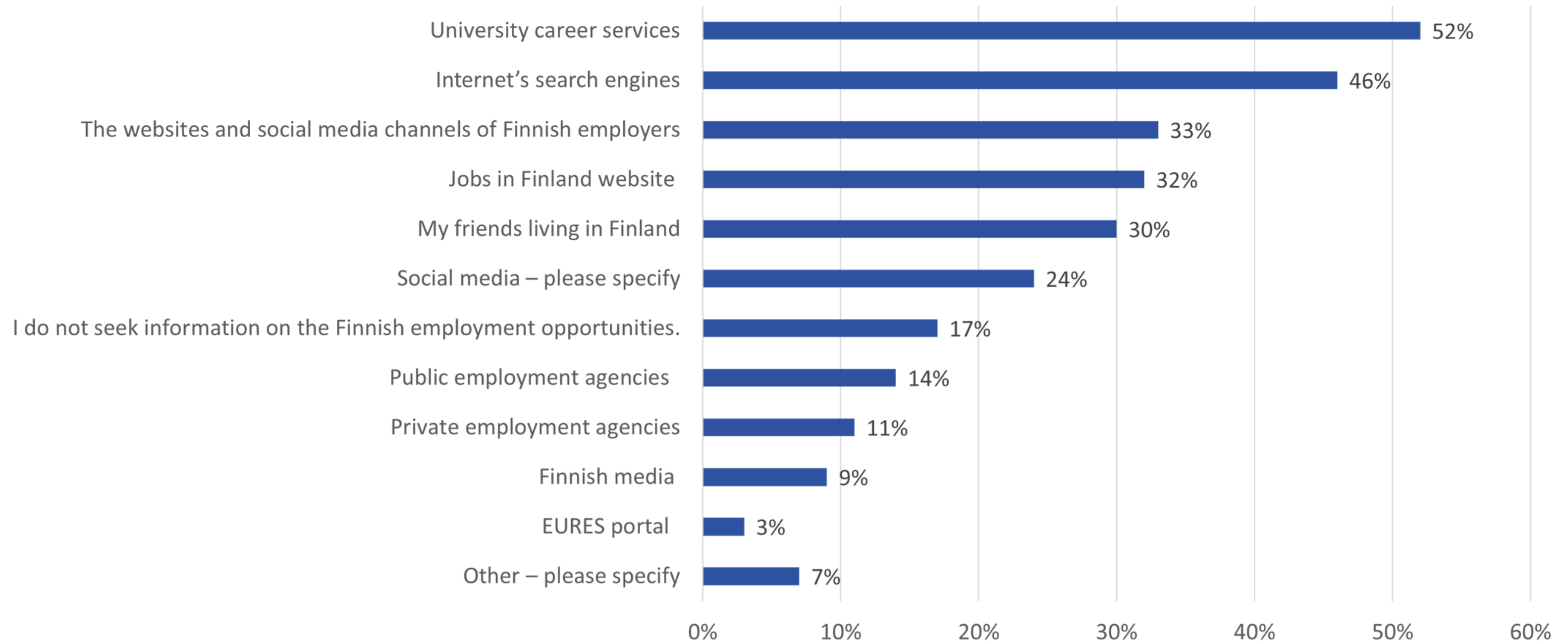


How would you rate your opportunities to advance your career in Finland?
(N=600)



Information about employment opportunities is sought from universities' career services and online

Where do you seek information on Finnish employment opportunities? (You can choose more than one option) (N=600)





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Opinions about Finnish labour markets



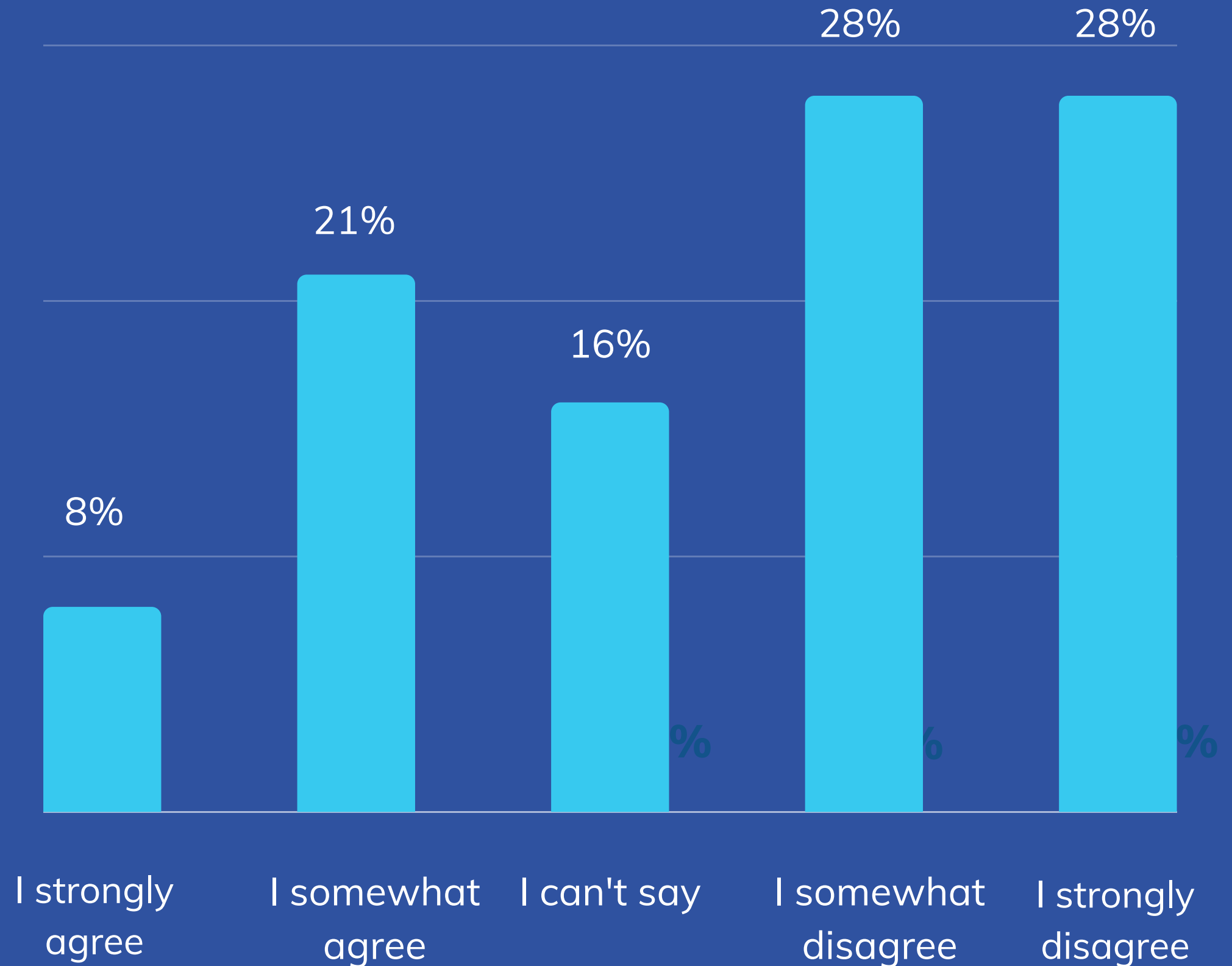
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More than half think that Finnish labour markets are not equal to all



Please evaluate the following
statement (%) (N=600):

"In the Finnish labour market,
everyone has the same
opportunities to advance in
their careers, regardless of
background."



International students are divided on whether Finnish employers value work experience, degrees or networks gained abroad



Please evaluate the following statements.
(%) (N=600)

Strongly or
somewhat
agree

Strongly or
somewhat
disagree

I can't
say



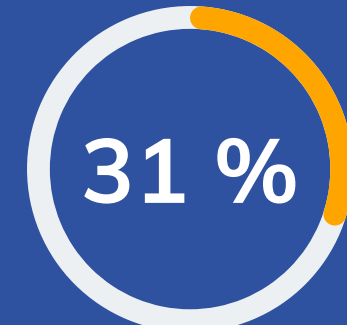
"Finnish employers value work experience gained abroad."



42%



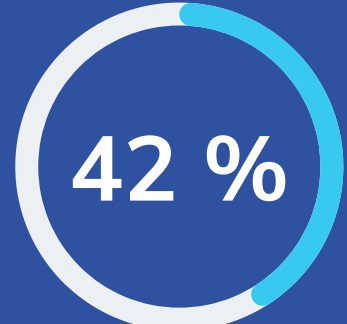
"Finnish employers value degrees obtained abroad."



45%



"Finnish workplaces have a positive attitude towards know-how and networks gained abroad."



32%

"I think the working environment in Finland is also very good. If I have the chance, I will stay and work in Finland."

"I want to stay in Finland. I am not sure if I will be able to find a job. Employers are not so welcoming to non-finns in my experience. I couldn't even get an interview out of more than 100 offices I applied for summer internship."

"Finland failing to incorporate us international students in the working market."

"Finland is a very peaceful and nice country. It has very pleasant people. It has high quality education and other public services. Job market is good for the field that I am looking for."

Source: Open-ended survey answers.



Thoughts about working life and labour market in Finland

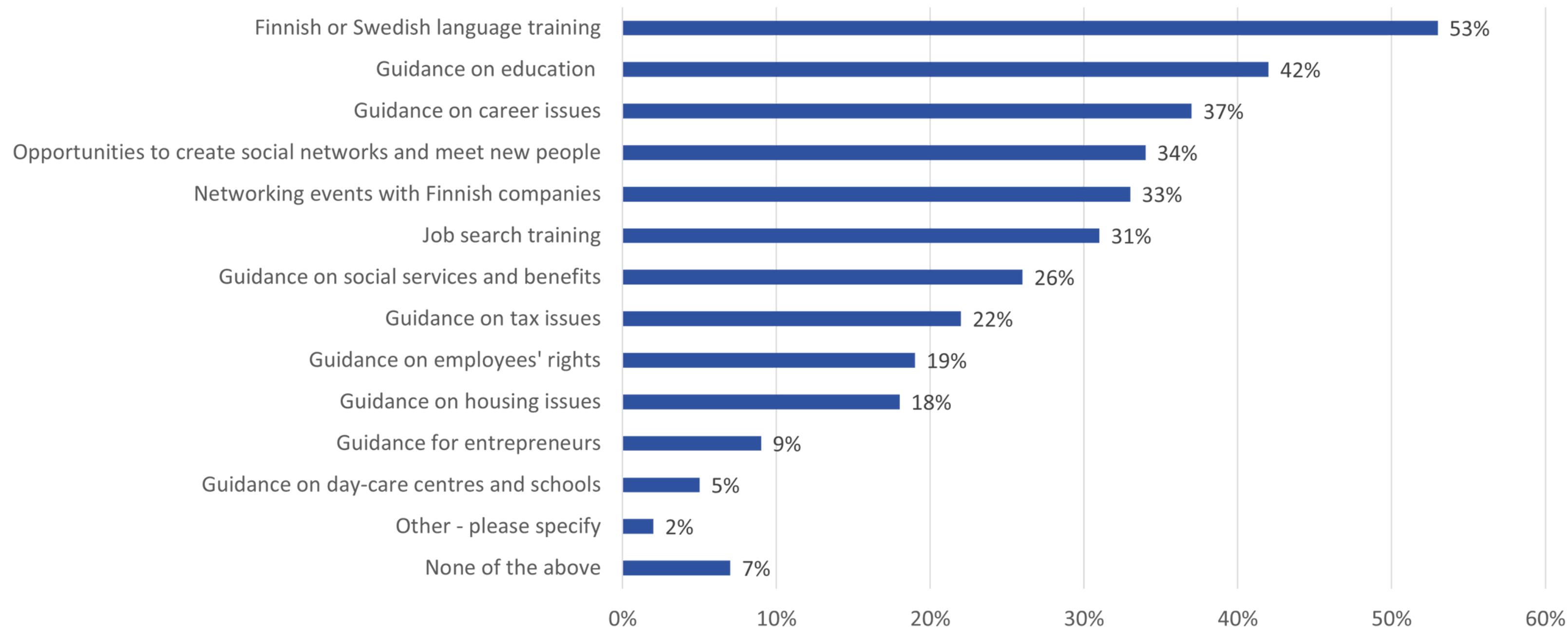


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5. NEED FOR SERVICES

Services related to language training, education, and careers are considered the most useful

Which of the following services and support do you find the most useful? (Please choose 1-5 the most useful) (N=600)



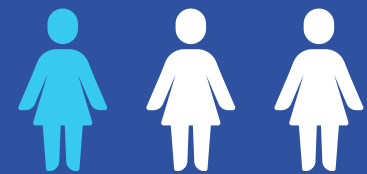
About one in three find career services useful



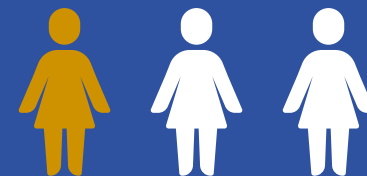
Which of the following services and support do you find the most useful?
(Please choose 1-5 the most useful)
(N=600)



A little over one in three (37%) find guidance on career one of the most useful services.



One in three (33%) find networking events with Finnish companies useful.



Almost one in three (31%) find job search training useful.



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III. CONCLUSIONS





- Overall international students are satisfied with their life in Finland. The majority of them value the high quality of Finnish higher education. They have adjusted to life in Finland well and they have done so rather quickly. They are regularly in touch with other international students, and more than half have several Finnish friends. Majority of international students are satisfied with their studies in Finland and about half are likely to stay in Finland after graduation.
- However, almost half are likely to leave Finland after completing their studies. Reasons behind leaving and things that make adjusting to life in Finland difficult vary from climate and language barrier to difficulties in job markets. There is nothing that can be done about the climate, but there are many things that can be done to make foreign students feel more at home – and support their entry into labour markets.

- According to students, learning Finnish or Swedish is something that can be expected from people living in Finland permanently. However, some students say that studies are so packed with content that there is no room for learning the language.
- Another issue has to do with the labour markets. Approximately two-thirds have gained work experience during their studies. Over half see their career prospects positively, but still almost one in three consider their opportunities to advance their career in Finland as poor.
- Over half feel that Finnish labour markets are not equal to all regardless of their background. These are also the people, who are more likely than others to leave after completing their studies. Almost third of the respondents feel that everyone has the same opportunities in the Finnish labour market.





- To make international students feel at home and make them stay, several measures need to be taken on different levels. Educational institutions need to adjust their study programs so that there is also room for language studies. Learning the language is the key factor in integration.
- Another issue has to do with the labour markets. Contacts between companies and educational institutions need to be strengthened and special focus must be put on finding internship opportunities for foreign students.
- Finally, educational institutions should encourage and advance the formation of versatile social networks during international students' studies in Finland. Many have close contacts with other international students, but contacts with Finnish students and friends are fewer. The formation of social networks promotes integration, well-being and employment opportunities.



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IV. APPENDICES



APPENDIX 1: Respondents' background information (N=600)

Gender	(%)	(N)	Nationality	(%)	(N)
Man	40%	242	EU	32%	190
Woman	56%	339	South Asia	16%	93
Other	2%	9	North America	14%	84
I prefer not to answer	2%	11	European, not EU country	7%	44
			South America	7%	43
			Africa	7%	41
Age	(%)	(N)	Russia	5%	30
18–29 year old	75%	451	Middle East	4%	21
30–39 year old	20%	120	South East Asia	3%	20
40–49 year old	4%	24	Central Asia	1%	7
50–64 year old	1%	4	Turkey	1%	6
			Australia, New Zealand	1%	4

Residence time in Finland	(%)	(N)	City/municipality of residence*	(%)	(N)
Less than 1 year	44%	266	Helsinki	40%	243
1–2 years	24%	143	Espoo	9%	55
2–3 years	11%	66	Tampere	7%	42
3–4 years	6%	35	Oulu	6%	35
4–5 years	3%	17	Turku	4%	25
6–10 years	9%	54	Kuopio	4%	25
More than 10 years	3%	20	Vaasa	3%	21
			Other localities	27%	155
Household situation	(%)	(N)	*Localities where at least 20 survey respondents lived have been mentioned by name.		
Single-person household	48%	289			
Couple without children	21%	125			
Household with children	10%	61			
Other	21%	125			

Highest education	(%)	(N)	Place where highest degree obtained	(%)	(N)
Upper secondary school	19%	111	In Finland	24%	141
Vocational education	4%	21	Elsewhere	76%	459
Bachelor's degree	54%	327			
Master's degree	22%	130			
Other	2%	11			

Certificate or degree obtained after completing studies	(%)	(N)
Bachelor's + Master's degree	13%	77
Bachelor's degree	25%	149
Master's degree	61%	366
Other	1%	8

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Ville Pitkänen,
Matti Välimäki, Mari K. Niemi, Mari Paljakka &
Roosa Veijola

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