



Understanding Tasmanian School Students' Post-School Pathway Intentions

Phase Two: 2020 Student Survey

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The Peter Underwood Centre

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Table of Contents

Executive Summary	i
Section 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Research focus	1
1.2 Ethics approval.....	2
1.3 Overview of data.....	2
1.4 Outline of the report.....	4
Section 2: Broad post-school plans.....	5
2.1 Pathway intentions	5
2.2 Industry preferences.....	8
2.3 Location.....	9
Section 3: Insights into the most popular pathways	10
3.1 Students planning to go to the University of Tasmania.....	10
3.1.1 Certainty.....	10
3.1.2 Reasons	11
3.1.3 Industry preferences.....	14
3.2 Students planning to go to a different university interstate	15
3.2.1 Certainty.....	15
3.2.2 Reasons	15
3.2.3 Industry preferences.....	19
3.3 Students planning to get a job	20
3.3.1 Certainty.....	20
3.3.2 Reasons	20
3.3.3 Industry preferences.....	24
3.4 Comparison of reasons across the main three intended pathways	25
Section 4: Influences	31
4.1 Influencers	31
4.1.1 Parents/caregivers	31
4.1.2 Friends.....	32
4.1.3 School staff.....	32
4.1.4 Knowing someone with a university degree.....	33
4.2 Information and knowledge.....	35
4.2.1 Sources of information	35
4.2.2 Knowledge about pursuing post-school options	37
Section 5: Concluding comments.....	41

List of Figures

Figure 1: Distribution by school sector among survey respondents, and across Tasmanian secondary students (2019)	3
Figure 2: Distribution by year level among survey respondents	4
Figure 3: Post-school pathway plans immediately after school	5
Figure 4: Post-school pathway plans after gap year	6
Figure 5: Immediate plans after school (by region)	7
Figure 6: Immediate plans after school (by year level)	7
Figure 7: Preferred industry or field – all survey respondents	8
Figure 8: Preferred location for non-university pathways	9
Figure 9: Preferred location for university pathway (immediately after school or after gap year)	9
Figure 10: Certainty of pathway - UTAS (immediately after school or after a gap year)	10
Figure 11: Reasons for choosing UTAS - practical and logistical	11
Figure 12: Reasons for choosing UTAS - value and worth	12
Figure 13: Reasons for choosing UTAS - long-term and financial	12
Figure 14: Reasons for choosing UTAS - interests, strengths and personal readiness	13
Figure 15: Reasons for choosing UTAS - social	13
Figure 16: Preferred industry or field – survey respondents planning to go to UTAS	14
Figure 17: Certainty of pathway - interstate university (immediately after school or after a gap year)	15
Figure 18: Reasons for choosing interstate university - practical and logistical	16
Figure 19: Reasons for choosing interstate university - value and worth	17
Figure 20: Reasons for choosing interstate university - long-term and financial	17
Figure 21: Reasons for choosing interstate university - interests, strengths and personal readiness	18
Figure 22: Reasons for choosing interstate university - social	18
Figure 23: Preferred industry or field – survey respondents planning to go to interstate university	19
Figure 24: Certainty of pathway - employment (immediately after school or after a gap year)	20
Figure 25: Reasons for choosing employment - practical and logistical	21
Figure 26: Reasons for choosing employment - value and worth	22
Figure 27: Reasons for choosing employment - long-term and financial	22
Figure 28: Reasons for choosing employment - interests, strengths and personal readiness	23
Figure 29: Reasons for choosing employment - social	23
Figure 30: Preferred industry or field – survey respondents planning to get a job	24
Figure 31: Comparison of reasons across pathways - practical and logistical	26
Figure 32: Comparison of reasons across pathways - value and worth	27
Figure 33: Comparison of reasons across pathways - long-term and financial	28
Figure 34: Comparison of reasons across pathways - interests, strengths and personal readiness	29
Figure 35: Comparison of reasons across pathways - social	30
Figure 36: Post-school pathway preferences – parents/caregivers	31
Figure 37: Post-school pathway preferences - friends	32
Figure 38: Post-school pathway preferences – school staff	32
Figure 39: Family and friends' university participation	33
Figure 40: Knowing someone with a university degree, broken down by planned pathway	33
Figure 41: Close contacts with a university degree are	34
Figure 42: Sources of information	35
Figure 43: Key sources by chosen pathway	36
Figure 44: Knowledge	37
Figure 45: Knowledge (university pathway respondents only)	38
Figure 46: Knowledge (apprenticeship/traineeship and TAFE pathway respondents only)	39
Figure 47: Knowledge (apprenticeship/traineeship and TAFE pathway respondents only)	40

List of Tables

Table 1: Comparison of reasons across the main three intended pathways 25

Glossary

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease of 2019
DoE	Department of Education (Tasmania)
ICT	Information and Communication Technologies
LSAY	Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth
RAAC	Research Assessment and Approval Committee (DoE)
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TCEO	Tasmanian Catholic Education Office
UTAS	University of Tasmania

Executive Summary

The University's Future Students Division has commissioned the Peter Underwood Centre to undertake a study which seeks insights into the post-school intentions of Tasmanian Year 10, 11 and 12 students from all school sectors. This report focuses on Phase Two of the research, presenting findings from analysis of data from a survey of 1160 students from Year 10, 11 and 12 in Term 4, 2020.

Key findings

- More than half of the respondents plan to go to university (after school or a gap year). Entering the labour market (after school or a gap year) was the second most popular option, and apprenticeships third. Technical and Further Education (TAFE), traineeships or doing some other course or training elsewhere featured less.
- Overall, the overwhelming majority of students wish to undertake their pathway in Tasmania. This dropped to just under half for students intending to go to university after a gap year.
- Overall, respondents showed a preference towards the Health and Social Assistance industry. This applied strongly to students intending to go to the University of Tasmania and (although slightly less so) to a different university interstate, but far less so to those intending to get a job. For the latter group, Retail, Tourism and Hospitality and Health and Social Assistance all were equally popular.
- The key considerations for students choosing to go to university (at the University of Tasmania or interstate) relate to their interests, strengths and personal readiness – that they are interested in the option, that they will be happy doing it, and that they feel they have 'what it takes' to be successful in the option. Another key consideration is that it will give them a 'good career pathway'. Social considerations around the safety of the environment, getting to meet new people, and having the freedom to be independent also featured prominently.
- Students wishing to enter the labour market also were concerned with social considerations and their interests, strengths and personal readiness. In addition, they prioritised long-term and financial considerations when choosing this option, such as affordability, whether it will give them a 'good career pathway', and the ability to earn an income immediately.
- Going to university featured prominently as the option encouraged by parents/caregivers and school staff, and planned by the students' friends.
- Just over half of the respondents said that there is someone close to them (most commonly family members) who has a university degree.
- The Department of Education My Education resources were a source of information about different options for after school for over half of the students. About one-third of students gained information from career days/events/expos at their own school and online, via websites or social media.
- Students were most knowledgeable about pursuing employment (writing a resume, applying for jobs, and where to search for job vacancies) and about the types of courses that are available at university and how to enrol in university with an ATAR. They were far less knowledgeable about various aspects to do with going to TAFE or a private training provider.

Section 1: Introduction

1.1 Research focus

The University of Tasmania aspires “to have a positive impact on the lives and experiences of Tasmanians”¹. One focus is on supporting increased educational attainment, including enhanced access to university pathways. To inform this aspiration, it is important to understand the intentions of students in the last few years of secondary school for their post-school pathways, including any factors that influence the choices they intend to pursue.

The University’s Future Students Division has commissioned the Peter Underwood Centre to undertake a study which seeks insights into the post-school intentions of Tasmanian Year 10, 11 and 12 students from all school sectors. The overarching research question is:

Why do Tasmanian school students intend to pursue particular post-school pathways?

The study consists of four phases:

1. **Expert Informant Focus Groups:** Gaining insights from key experts, i.e., current Tasmanian school students; parents; and school staff – reported in December 2019².
2. **Student Survey:** The survey design is informed by the expert focus group outcomes, and the survey will be provided to a broader population of school students.
3. **Quantitative Data Collection:** For triangulation with qualitative data and addition of pattern analysis of elements such as courses completed during Years 10-12, credentials attained, ATARs, and post-school enrolments – reported in July 2020³.
4. **Follow-up interviews:** Involving key stakeholders, to provide deeper understanding of students’ intentions.

This interim report focuses on Phase Two of the research, presenting findings from analysis of data from a survey of 1160 students in Year 10, 11 and 12 in Term 4, 2020.

The focus of the survey aligned with support provided in schools for students to explore careers. The design of the survey benefited from input from Department of Education staff in the Vocational Learning and Career Education unit.

Students were able to download their survey answers as a PDF which they could readily use for career and life planning purposes.

With the Education Act 2016 increasing the minimum leaving requirements to age 18 from 2020, more Tasmanian young people will be staying in school and this study provides useful insights into their post-school pathway intentions. Further, in the context of the Years 9 to 12 Project which is working towards improving student attendance, retention and attainment in Tasmanian schools, the data may inform the work of the Department of Education (DoE), Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (TCEO), and Independent schools.

¹ See p.36 in the University of Tasmania Strategic Plan 2019-2024, https://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/1255234/UTAS-Strategy-Document-2019.pdf

² See: https://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/1411014/Crellin,-te-Riele-and-West-2020.pdf

³ See: https://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1413817/Final-Bakhtiar-et-al-2020-SPSPI-C3.pdf

1.2 Ethics approval

Phase Two of this research project received approval from the Social Sciences Human Research Ethics Committee at the University of Tasmania (SSHREC) [ref H0017976]; the Research Assessment and Approval Committee (RAAC) of the Tasmanian Department of Education (DoE) [ref 2019-11]; and from the Tasmanian Catholic Education Office (TCEO) [29/09/2020].

The survey was designed to be administered by school staff during class time, as part of the 'Explore my Future' unit and/or 'Career and Life Planning' or another appropriate class. There were three levels of consent for the research.

First, school principals provided permission for the research to be conducted in their school, and for a school staff member to collaborate with the research team to roll out the survey in a way that met ethics requirements and best suited the school.

Secondly, with support from the school, students' parents/carers were contacted. All three committees supported a passive consent process because the survey was both anonymous and non-sensitive. This meant parents/carers could opt-out, rather than having to actively opt-in for the survey. The research team prepared a letter that each participating school sent to parents/carers via email or post. This contained a detailed information sheet and user-friendly flyer that explained the project and the opt-out consent procedure. Parents/carers were able to contact the research team (by a certain date) and ask for their child not to be included in the study and the research team passed these names on to the teachers administering the survey via their contact at each specific school.

Finally, active consent was sought from students themselves through the information to participants and consent embedded as the preamble to the survey. In addition, guidelines for the teacher in each class included text to read out to explain students' choices about participation.

For students who did not wish to take part in the research (or whose parents had opted out), an alternative survey URL was available where the data was not accessed for the purposes of the research. In total 73 students chose to undertake this private survey. By providing a private version of the survey through an alternative URL, these students could still benefit from reflecting about their post-school pathway intentions along with their peers without those reflections/data being used for the research.

Students who asked for the URL to the survey used for this research were advised in the preamble to the survey that they could change their mind and decline to take part by simply not completing and submitting the survey.

1.3 Overview of data

In total 1160 students completed the research survey. Almost all questions asked students to either tick one or more boxes, or respond to a Likert scale. Findings in this report are based on descriptive statistical analysis of their submitted surveys. The more fine-grained analysis used a slightly smaller sample size of 1148.

Twenty-two Tasmanian schools agreed to take part in the survey. Of these 22 schools, 12 were Government, 7 were Catholic, and 3 were Independent.

Eleven additional schools were named by a small number of students as the school they attended despite the school not agreeing to take part in the survey, and not receiving a link to the survey. It is unclear whether these schools were named in error, or the student was dually enrolled and only named one school, or the student misunderstood the question and wrote the name of a school they had previously attended or plan to attend in the following year. A small number of respondents did not provide the name of their school (1%).

Based on the 33 schools named by students:

- 67% of respondents were from Government schools,
- 29% of respondents were from Catholic schools,
- 3% of respondents were from Independent schools.

This sample closely matches the 2019 secondary school population in Tasmania as indicated in the Report on Government Services 2021⁴: 65% Government, 35% non-Government.

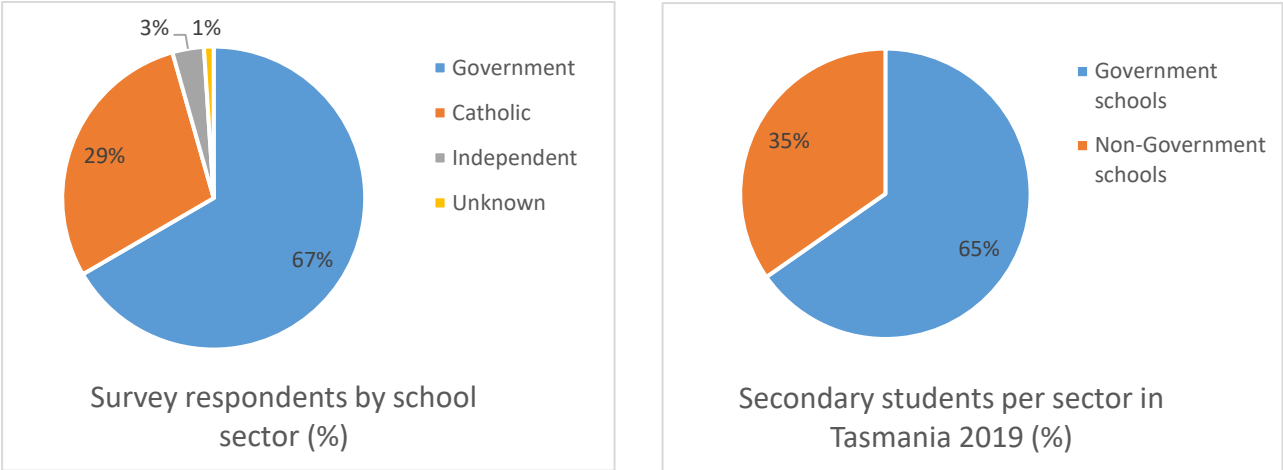


Figure 1: Distribution by school sector among survey respondents, and across Tasmanian secondary students (2019)

Half of the students who completed the survey were in Year 10. Due to COVID-19 the survey had to be delayed from Term 2 to Term 4. Although at that time Year 12 students had their final examinations, nevertheless 323 students in Year 12 participated in the survey.

⁴ See: <https://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services/2021/child-care-education-and-training/school-education>

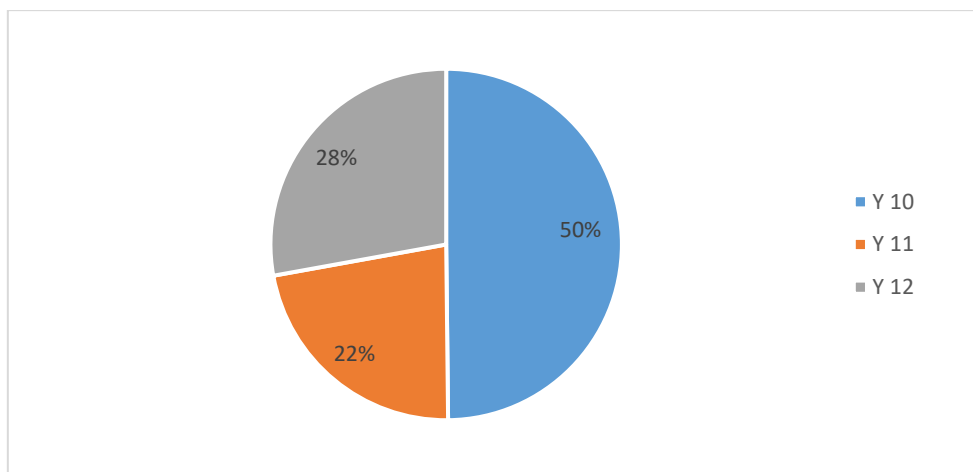


Figure 2: Distribution by year level among survey respondents

More female (60%) than male students (38%) completed the survey. In contrast, Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data⁵ shows a much more even split of male (51%) and female (49%) students across all Tasmanian school students.

In the survey, 10% of respondents identified themselves as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander. According to ABS data⁶, this closely matches the overall Tasmanian school population, with 9.7% Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander students.

1.4 Outline of the report

Findings from the survey are presented in three main sections.

Section 2 provides a broad overview of trends, looking at the breakdown of pathway selection across the 1160 students who completed the survey, and broad location, industry, and university preferences.

Section 3 drills down into the most popular pathways as reported by students: University of Tasmania, university interstate, or employment. The section offers insights into their reasons for selecting each pathway, and how certain they are about their preferred option. It concludes with a comparison of students' reasons between these three pathways.

Section 4 examines influences on students' plans, including their sources of information and knowledge.

The report ends with a brief conclusion.

⁵ See Schools Australia, Table 90a Key Information, by States and Territories, 2019 to 2020, <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/education/schools/latest-release>

⁶ *ibid*

Section 2: Broad post-school plans

As a broad overview, this section begins by outlining findings about the pathways students indicated they were most likely to pursue immediately on leaving school. It then indicates preferred industries, and finally the preferred location of their pathway option.

2.1 Pathway intentions

Students were asked to choose one option that best reflected what they plan to do immediately after they finish school. This question was formulated to reflect a questionnaire from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY), in order to enable comparisons in future publications (not in this report).

- Nearly half of all students surveyed (49%) said they would like to go to university immediately after school.
- Taking a gap year (17%) and employment (12%) were relatively popular options.
- Examples given under 'other' include 'professional athlete' and 'travel the world'.

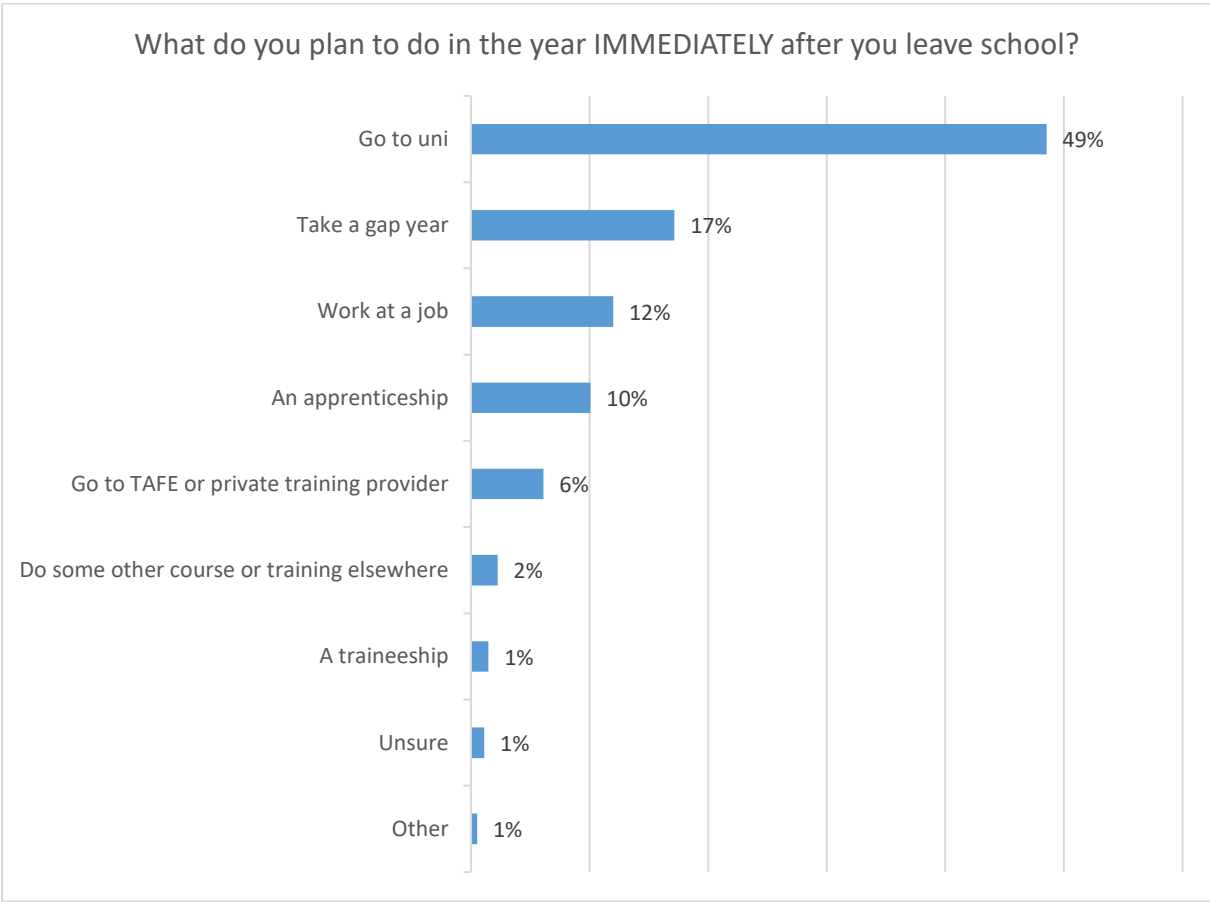


Figure 3: Post-school pathway plans immediately after school

Those students who indicated that they would like to undertake a gap year post-school (17%) were asked what they planned to do after that gap year.

- The overwhelming majority of these students (73%) said that they would like to go to university after their gap year.

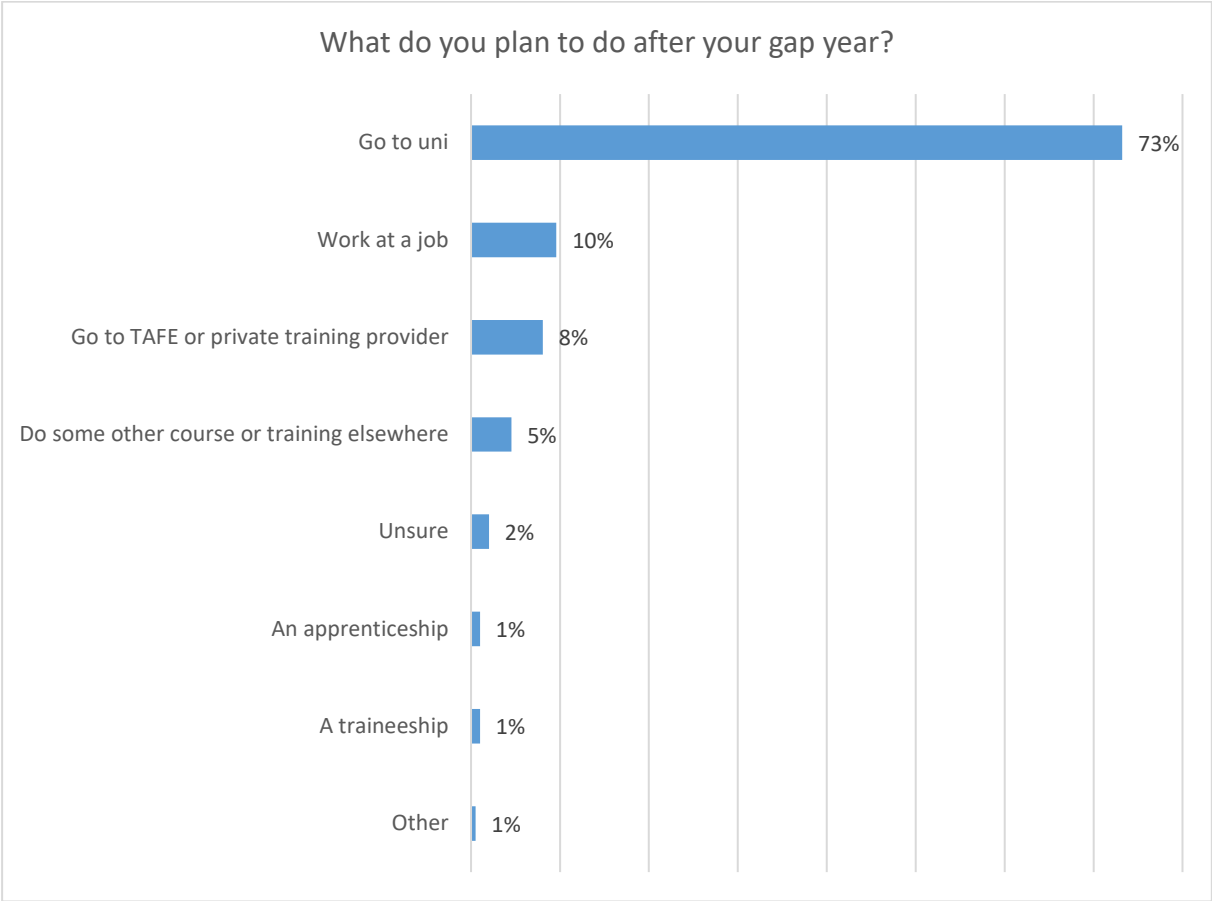


Figure 4: Post-school pathway plans after gap year

When combining Figures 3 and 4, it becomes evident that:

- Over half of the students who undertook the survey indicated that they plan on going to university, adding up to 61% in total across immediately after school plus after a gap year.

Broken down by region, the percentage of students choosing a particular pathway is fairly consistent, except for gap year with almost double the amount of students in the south planning to undertake one, compared to the north and north-west. There was also a notable difference between regions for apprenticeship/TAFE, with 22.7% of students in the north-west intending to pursue this pathway, compared to 17.3% of northern students and 12.8% of southern students.

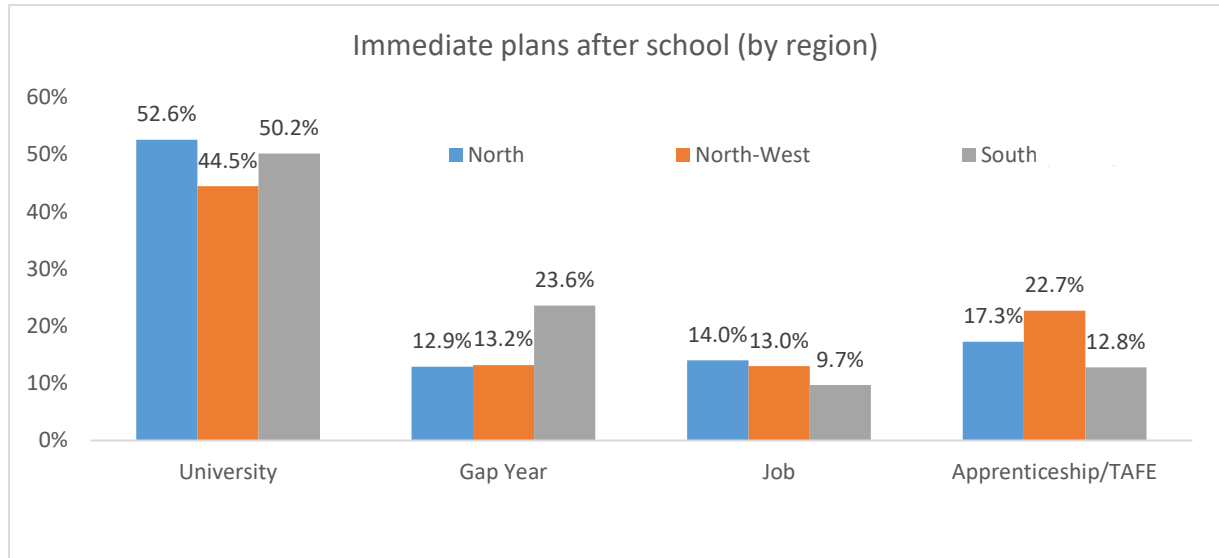


Figure 5: Immediate plans after school (by region)

Broken down by year level, the percentage of students looking to go to university immediately after school is very consistent regardless of whether a student is in Year 10, 11 or 12, but varied for the other key pathways. Just over half the amount of Year 12 students wish to undertake a gap year compared to Year 11 students, and more than double the amount of Year 12 students compared to Year 10 students plan to get a job immediately after school.

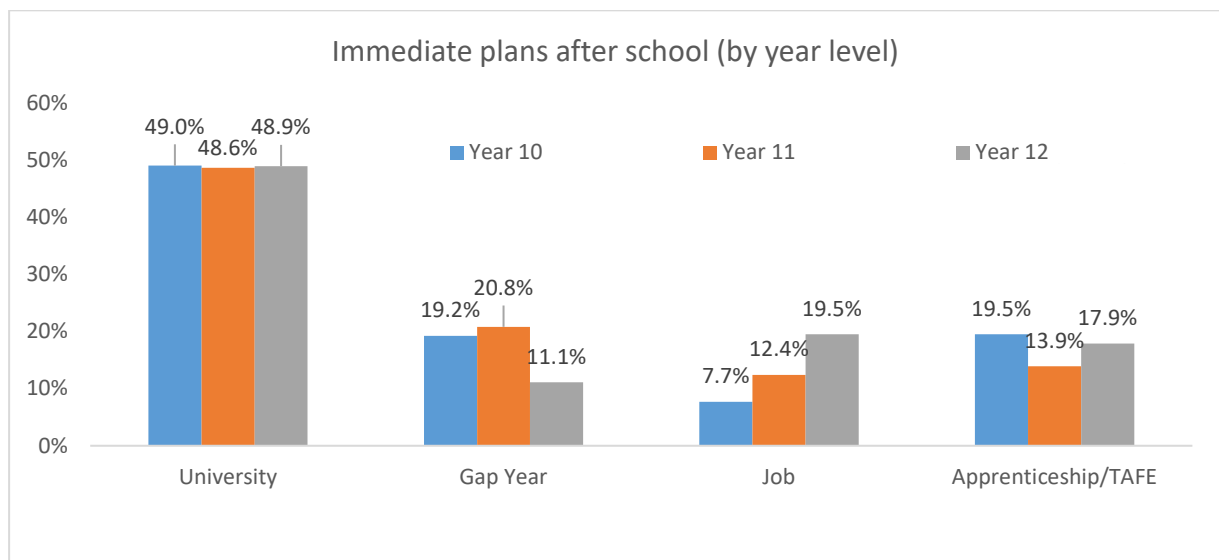


Figure 6: Immediate plans after school (by year level)

2.2 Industry preferences

Figure 5 indicates the industries or fields students were most interested in, across all participants. The industries/fields and examples were designed to be applicable across university courses, vocational education and training, and employment. Section 3 of this report provides this chart specifically for the responses from students who chose one of the three most commonly chosen pathways: University of Tasmania, University interstate, and employment.

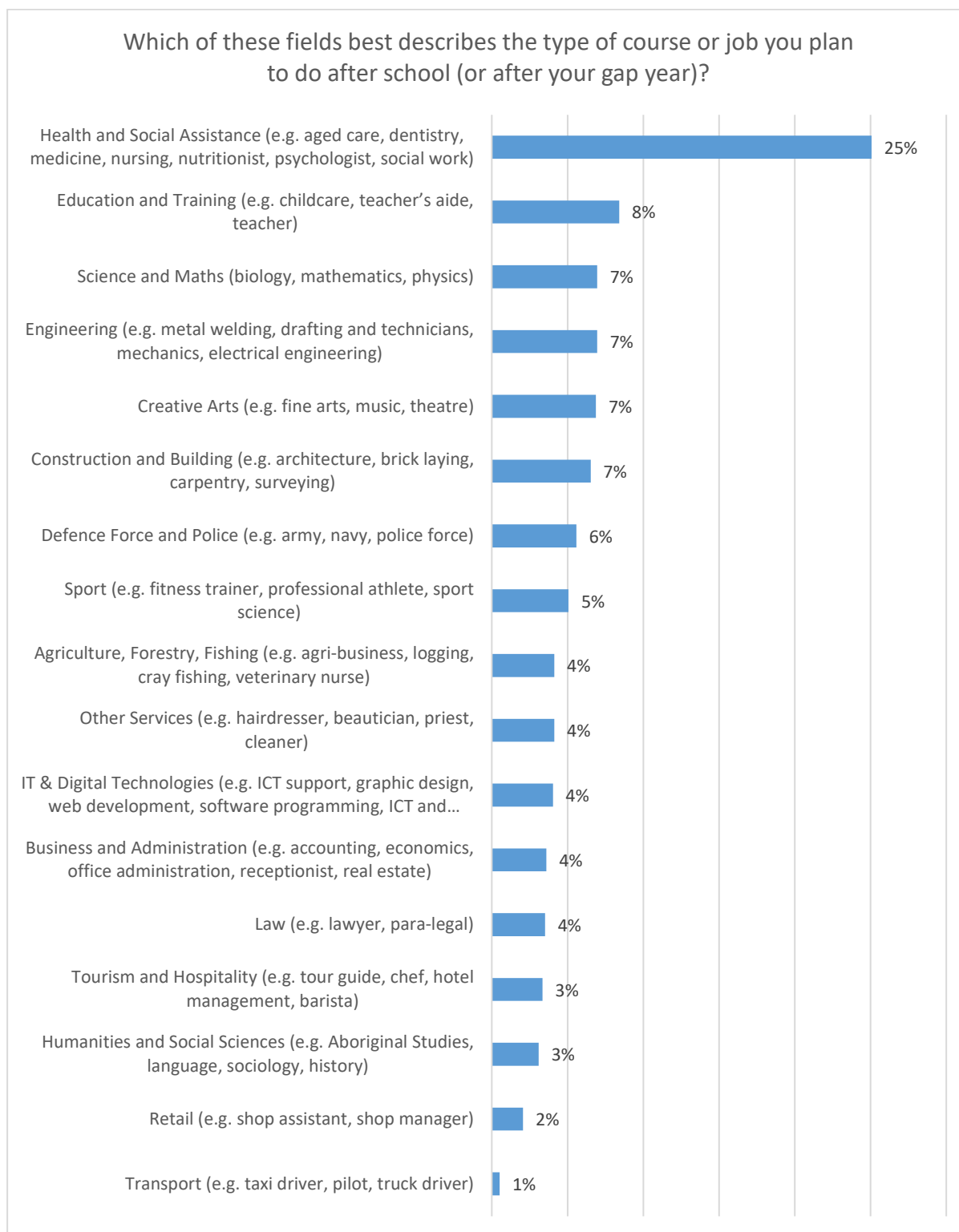


Figure 7: Preferred industry or field – all survey respondents

2.3 Location

Below, we have combined the responses to the question 'Where will you do this option' from students that plan to undertake a non-university pathway immediately after school with those students that plan to undertake a non-university pathway after a gap year.

- 78% of these combined (non-university) respondents said they will undertake their non-university pathway in Tasmania, compared to 20% interstate, and 2% overseas.

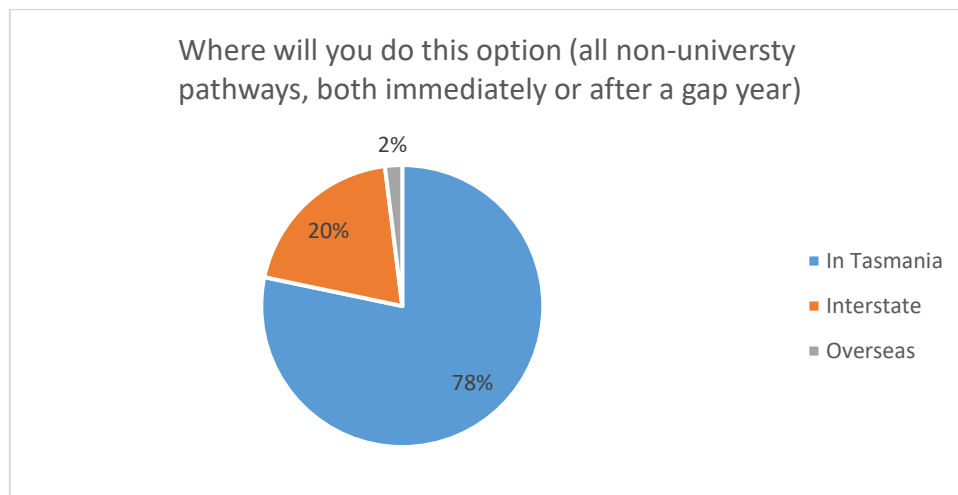


Figure 8: Preferred location for non-university pathways

Students interested in pursuing a university pathway were asked which university they would like to attend, rather than the generic location of their chosen post-school pathway, partly because the University of Tasmania has a campus interstate.

- 64% of respondents who plan to go *straight* to university, indicate they will go to the University of Tasmania, compared to 35% plan on going to a different university interstate, and 1% plan on going to a university overseas.
- For students that indicated that they plan to go to university *after a gap year*, the location preference switches, with more students planning on going to a different university interstate (52%) than the University of Tasmania (48%).

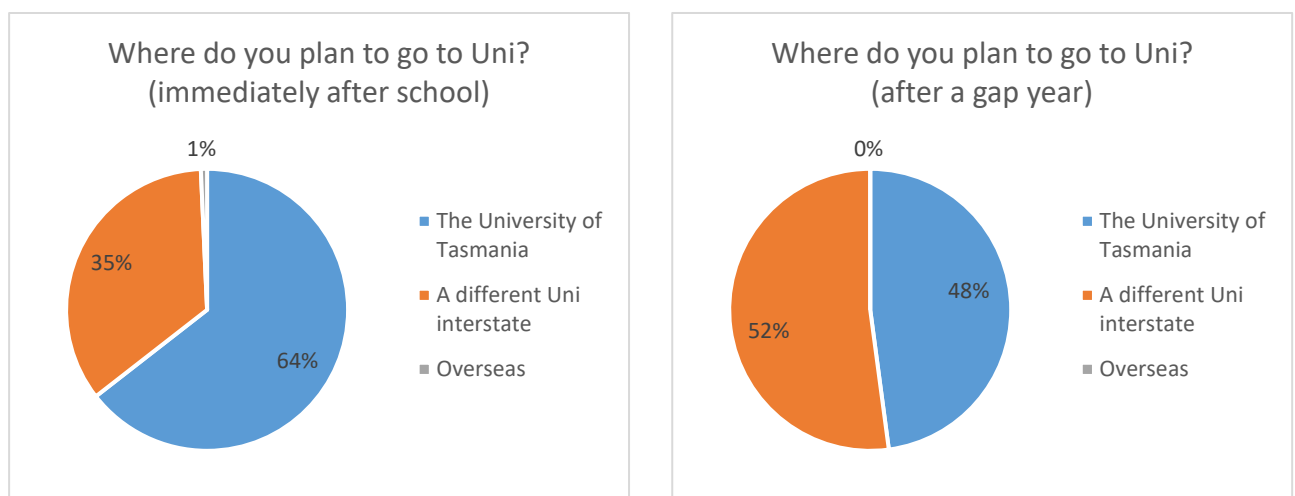


Figure 9: Preferred location for university pathway (immediately after school or after gap year)

Section 3: Insights into the most popular pathways

Section 2 demonstrated that the three most popular pathways were: University of Tasmania, university interstate, or employment.

This section examines each of these in turn, in relation to how certain students were about their pathway, reasons for choosing this option, and industry preferences within this option.

Section 3 concludes with a comparison of students' reasons between these three pathways.

3.1 Students planning to go to the University of Tasmania

3.1.1 Certainty

Respondents who indicated they planned to go to the University of Tasmania were asked how sure they were about this plan.

The charts below show that the respondents with the most certainty about their post-school plan were those young people who indicated they would be going to the University of Tasmania immediately after school (as opposed to after a gap year)⁷.

- 54% of respondents planning to go to the University of Tasmania *immediately after school* indicated that they are very sure about this option.
- 26% of respondents planning to go to the University of Tasmania *after a gap year* were very sure about this option.

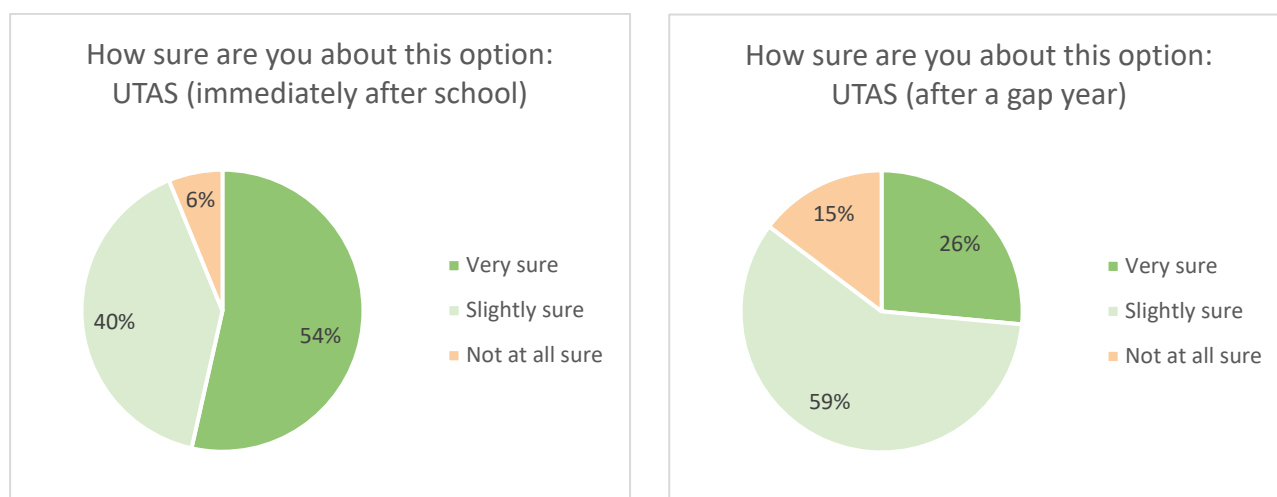


Figure 10: Certainty of pathway - UTAS (immediately after school or after a gap year)

⁷ The survey used a five-point Likert scale: (1) 100% sure; (2) Very sure; (3) Moderately sure; (4) Slightly sure; (5) Not at all sure. In the analysis, responses for 1 and 2, as well as for 3 and 4, have been combined.

3.1.2 Reasons

Respondents were presented with a list of possible reasons for choosing to go to the University of Tasmania and were asked to indicate whether these reasons were important to them with a three-point Likert scale: disagree, neutral, or agree that the reason is important. Responses from students wishing to go to the University of Tasmania after school have been combined with the responses of students wishing to go to the University of Tasmania after a gap year. Reasons have been grouped into five separate diagrams: practical and logistical reasons; reasons to do with perceived value and worth; long-term and financial reasons; reasons to do with the student’s interests, strengths and personal readiness; and social reasons.

Across these five sets, the top reasons (80% or more agree) for the University of Tasmania include:

- I am interested in this option (92%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]
- It will give me a good career pathway (87%) [long-term and financial]
- I will be happy doing this option (85%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]
- It's a safe environment (84%) [social]
- I have what it takes to be successful in this option (80%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]
- I will get to meet new people (80%) [social]

In contrast, least agreement (20% or less agree) was with these reasons:

- It’s an easy option after the stress of Year 12 (18%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]
- It won’t be too hard (20%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]
- It will mean I can enjoy a ‘big city’ lifestyle (20%) [social]

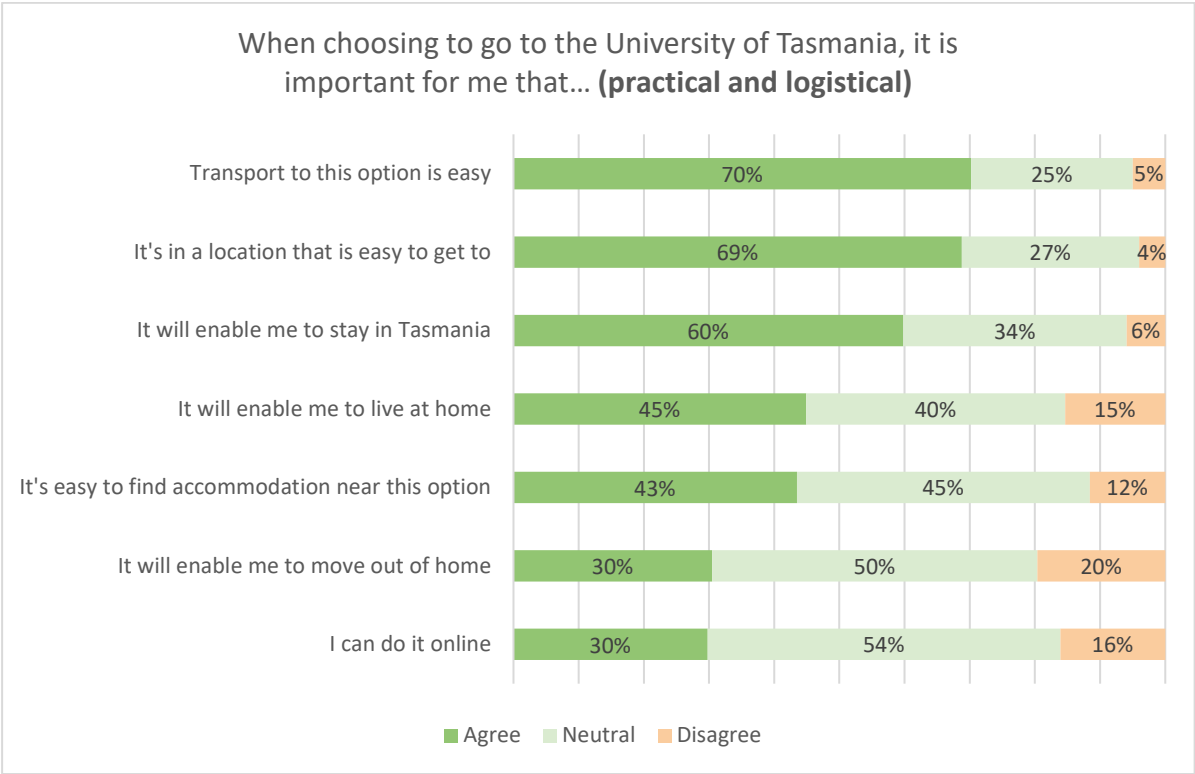


Figure 11: Reasons for choosing UTAS - practical and logistical

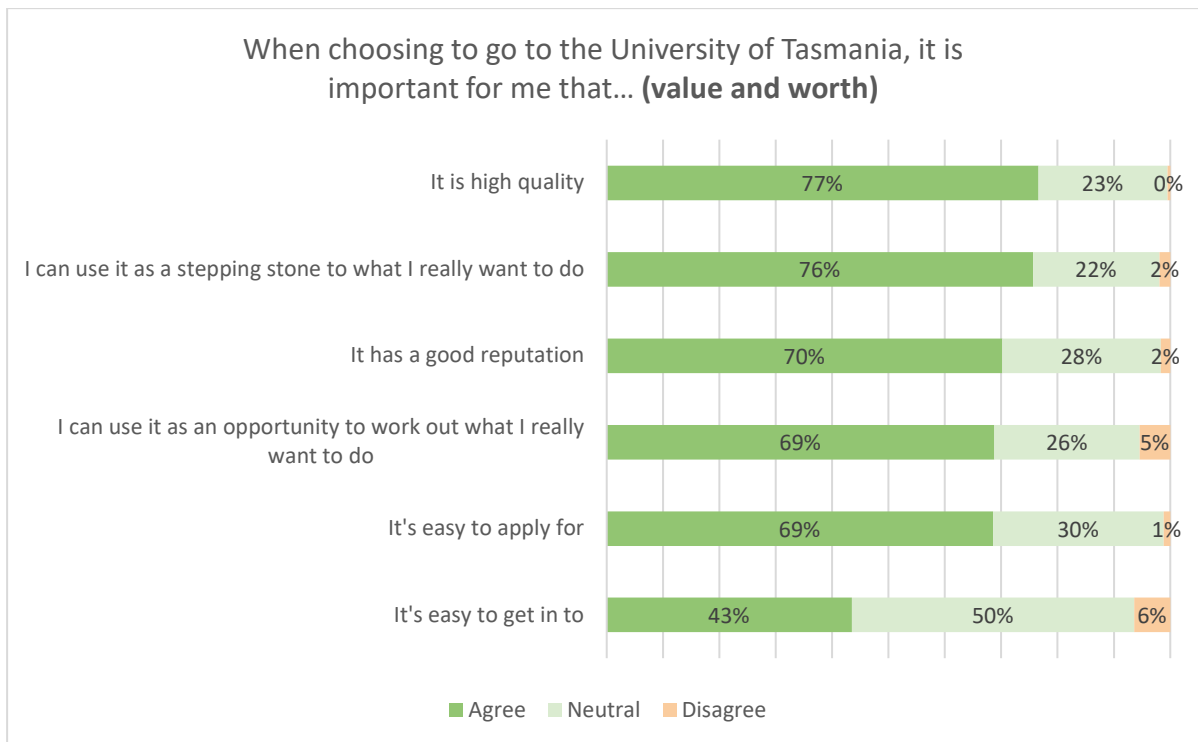


Figure 12: Reasons for choosing UTAS - value and worth

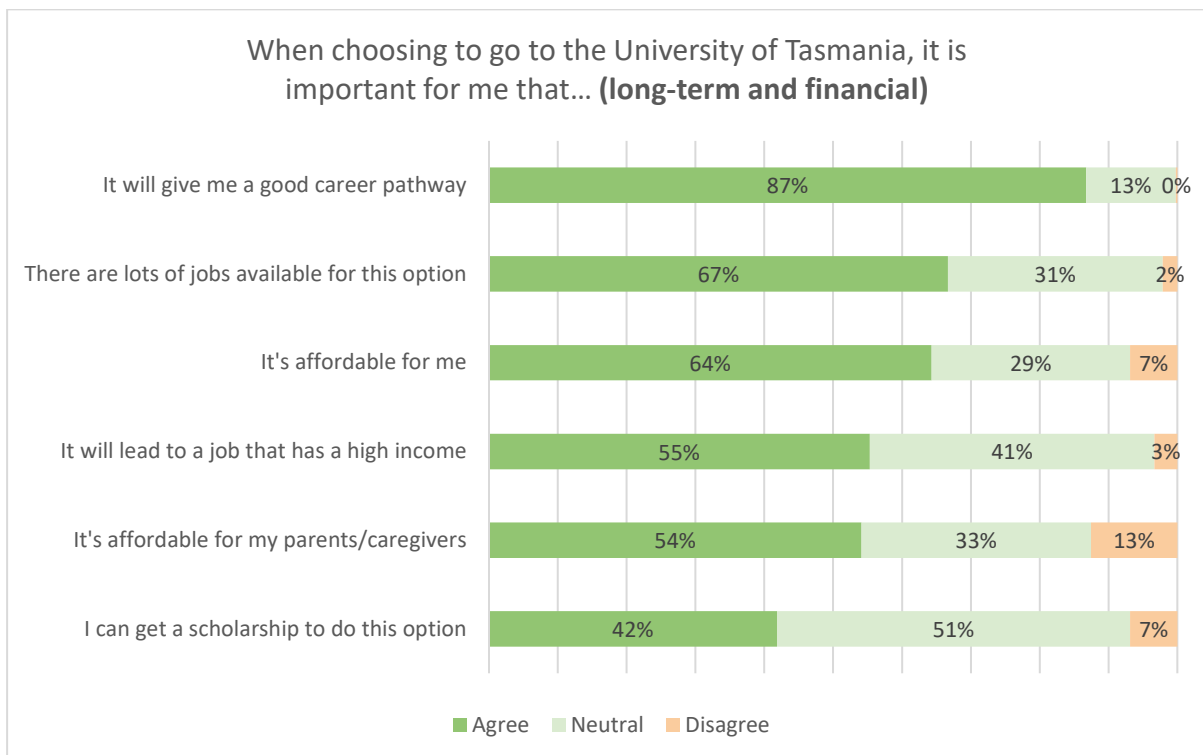


Figure 13: Reasons for choosing UTAS - long-term and financial

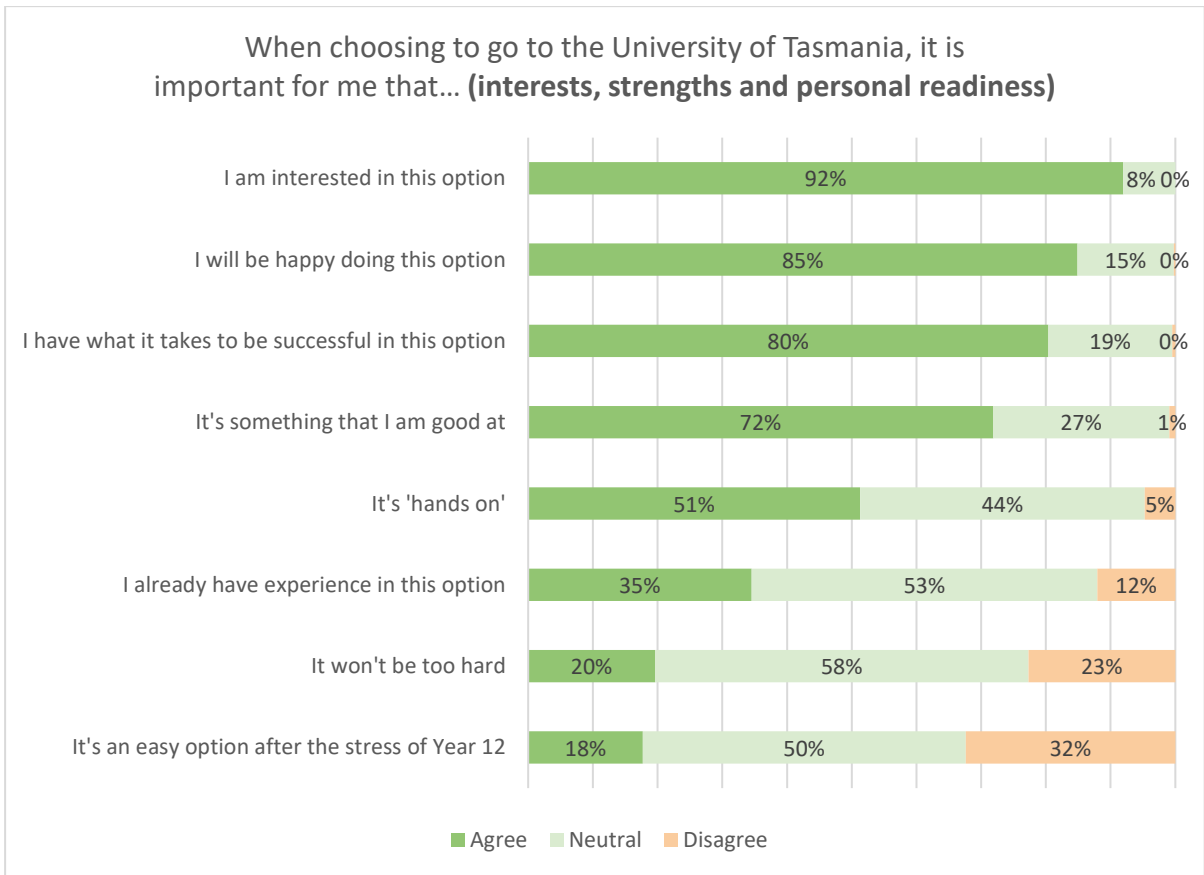


Figure 14: Reasons for choosing UTAS - interests, strengths and personal readiness

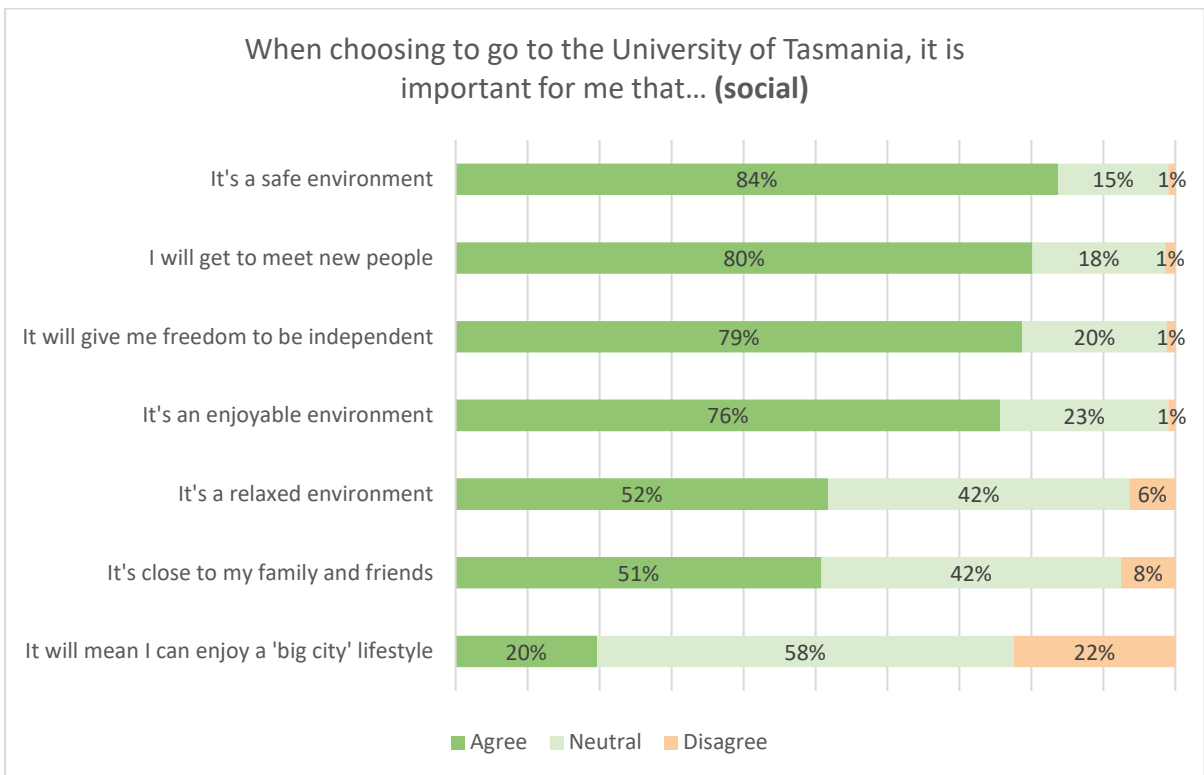


Figure 15: Reasons for choosing UTAS - social

3.1.3 Industry preferences

Overall industry preferences were shown in Section 2.2. Here, results have been filtered for students planning to go to the University of Tasmania – either after school or after a gap year. This highlights an even stronger preference towards the Health and Social Assistance industry (41%, versus 25% across the whole cohort). Education and Training is somewhat higher: 13% versus 8%.

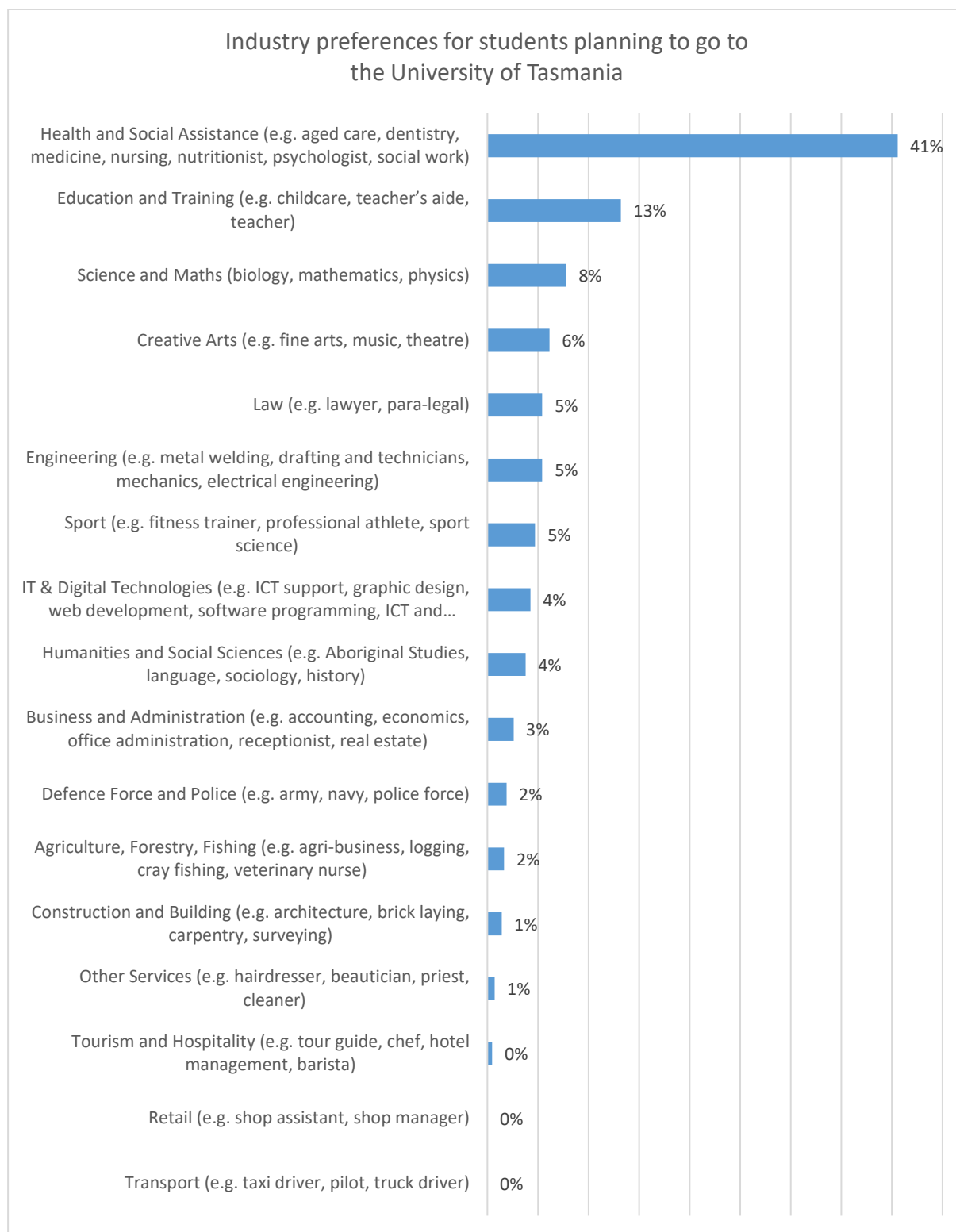


Figure 16: Preferred industry or field – survey respondents planning to go to UTAS

3.2 Students planning to go to a different university interstate

3.2.1 Certainty

Respondents who indicated they planned to go to a university interstate were asked how sure they were about this plan.

Students were more certain about enrolling in a different university interstate immediately after school compared to those planning a gap year first⁸.

- 50% of respondents planning to go to an interstate university *immediately after school* indicated that they are very sure about this option,
- 34% of respondents planning to go to an interstate university *after a gap year* were very sure about this option.

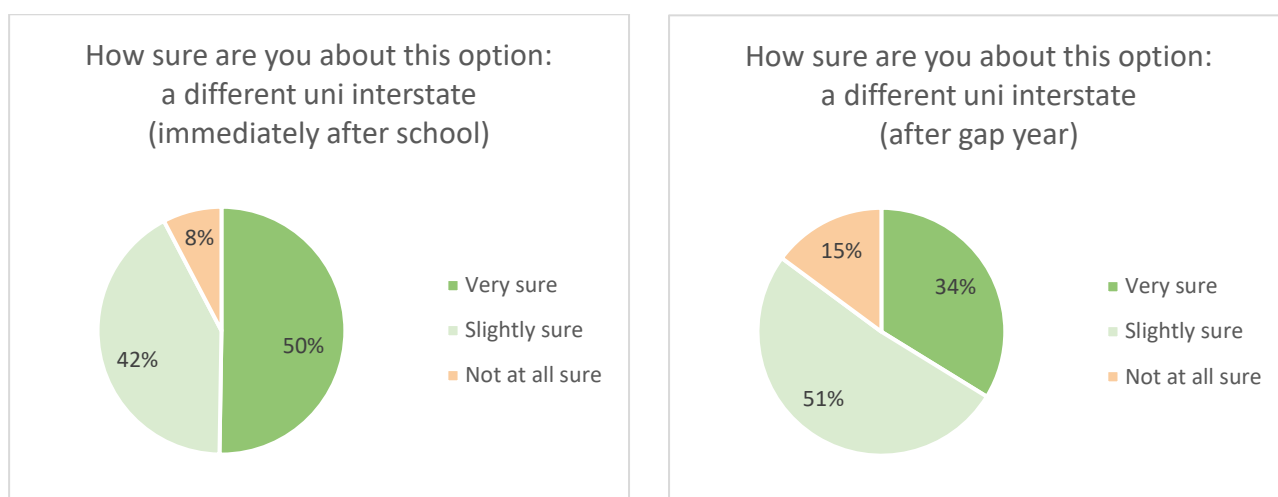


Figure 17: Certainty of pathway - interstate university (immediately after school or after a gap year)

3.2.2 Reasons

Respondents were presented with a list of possible reasons for choosing to go to a different university interstate and asked to indicate whether these reasons were important to them with a three-point Likert scale: disagree, neutral, or agree that the reason is important. Responses from students wishing to go to an interstate university after school have been combined with the responses of students planning a gap year first.

Reasons have been grouped into five separate diagrams: practical and logistical reasons; reasons to do with perceived value and worth; long-term and financial reasons; reasons to do with the student's interests, strengths and personal readiness; and social reasons.

⁸ The survey used a five-point Likert scale: (1) 100% sure; (2) Very sure; (3) Moderately sure; (4) Slightly sure; (5) Not at all sure. In the analysis, responses for 1 and 2, as well as for 3 and 4, have been combined.

Across these five sets, the top reasons (80% or more agree) for choosing an interstate university include:

- I am interested in this option (94%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]
- I will be happy doing this option (93%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]
- It will give me a good career pathway (92%) [long-term and financial]
- It will give me freedom to be independent (86%) [social]
- It is high quality (84%) [value and worth]
- It's a safe environment (84%) [social]
- I have what it takes to be successful in this option (84%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]
- I will get to meet new people (84%) [social]
- It's an enjoyable environment (83%) [social]

In contrast, least agreement (20% or less agree) was with these reasons:

- It's an easy option after the stress of Year 12 (10%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]
- It won't be too hard (14%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]
- It's close to my family and friends (19%) [social]
- I can do it online (20%) [practical and logistical]

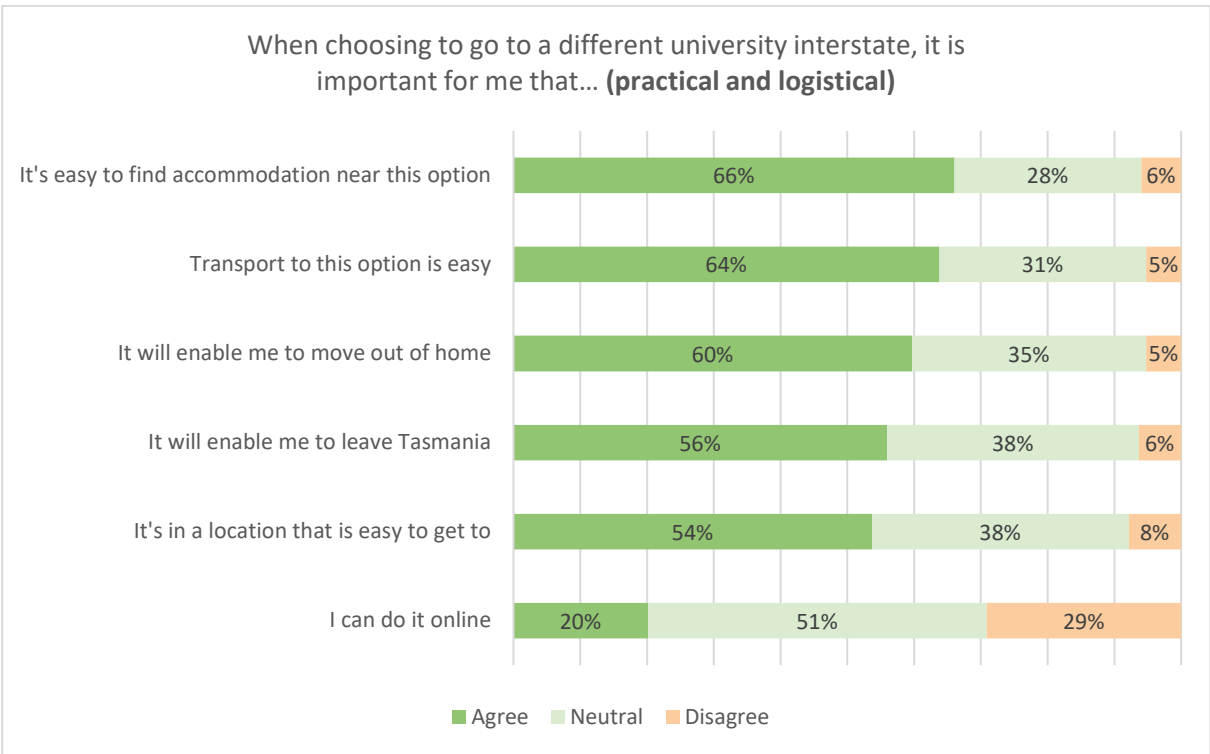


Figure 18: Reasons for choosing interstate university - practical and logistical

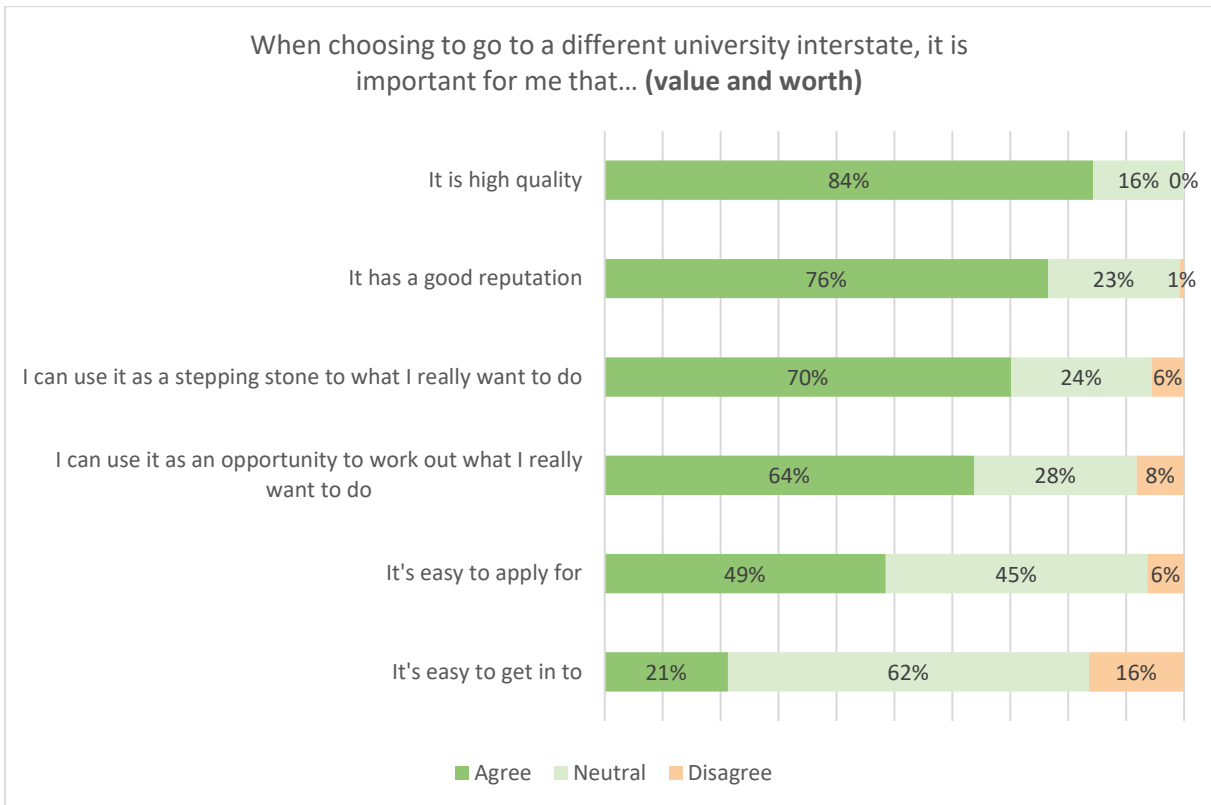


Figure 19: Reasons for choosing interstate university - value and worth

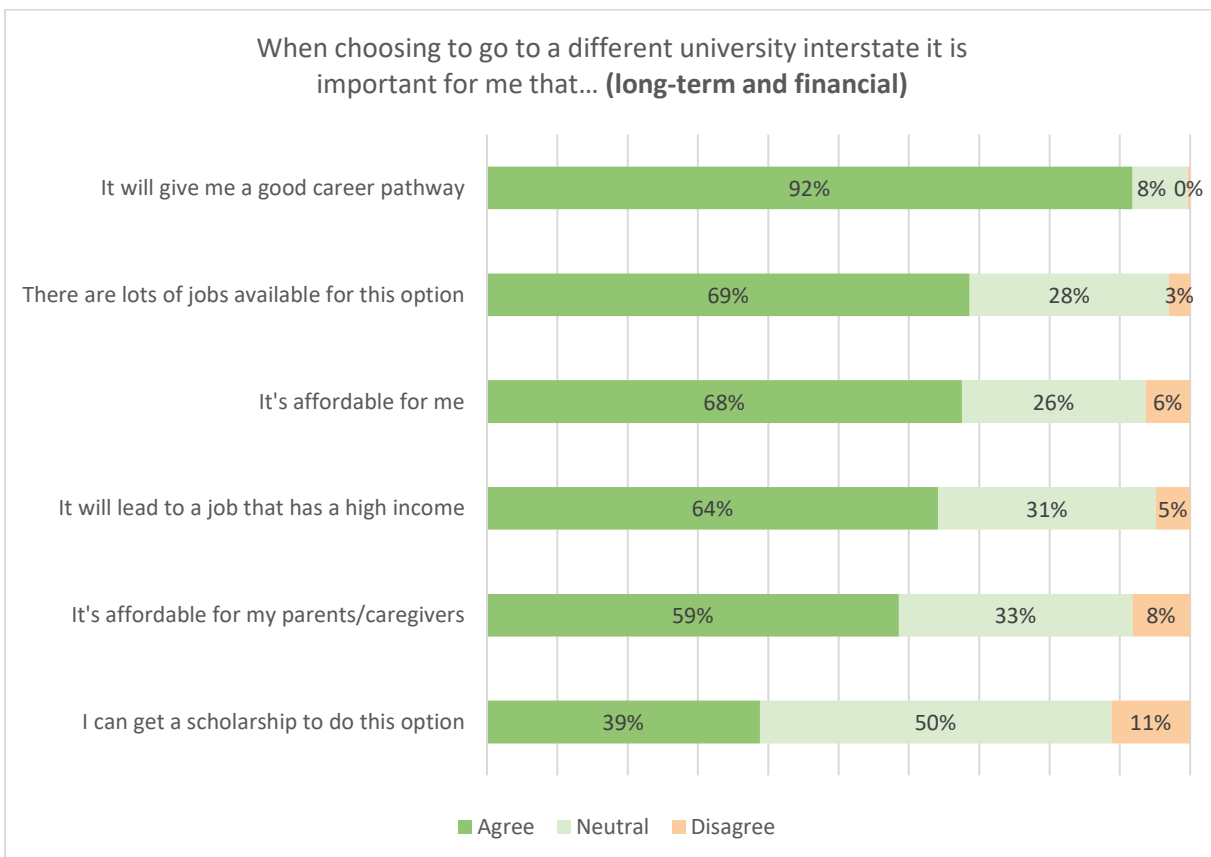


Figure 20: Reasons for choosing interstate university - long-term and financial

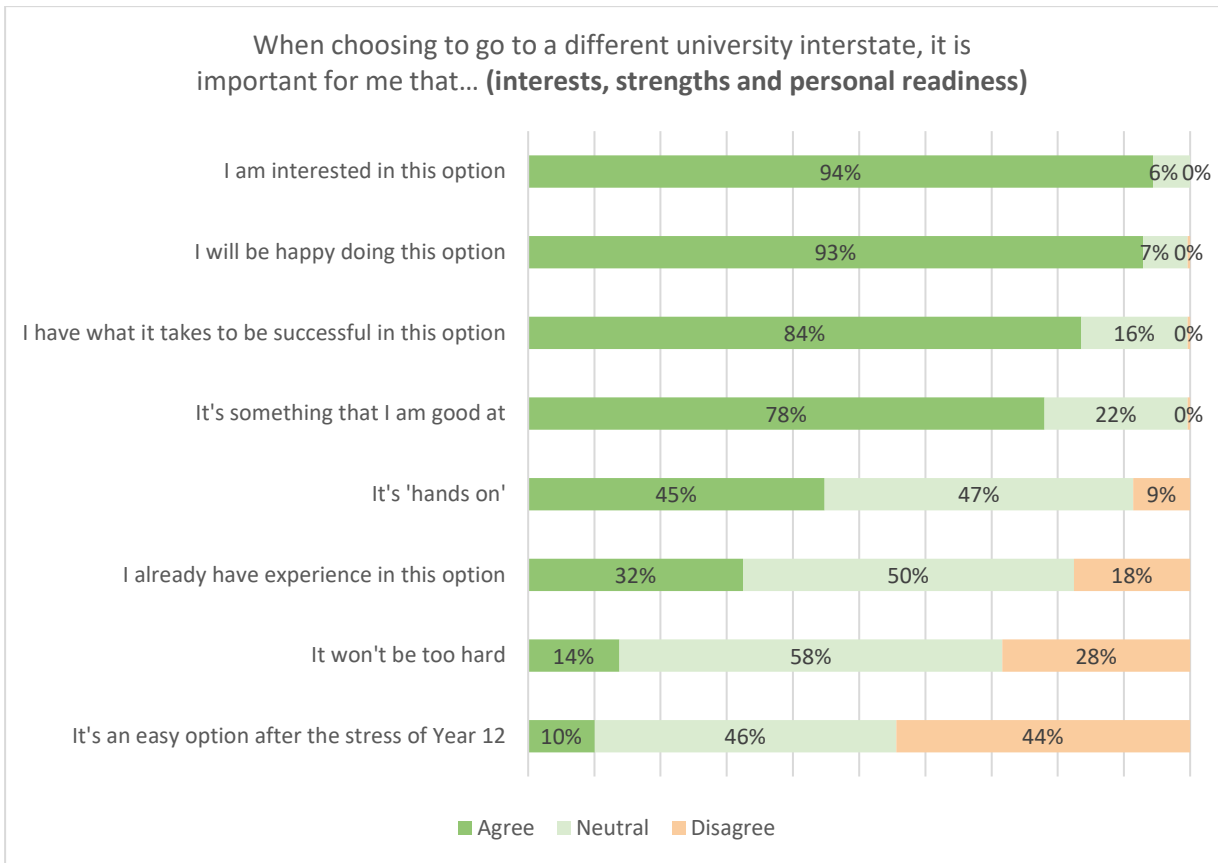


Figure 21: Reasons for choosing interstate university - interests, strengths and personal readiness

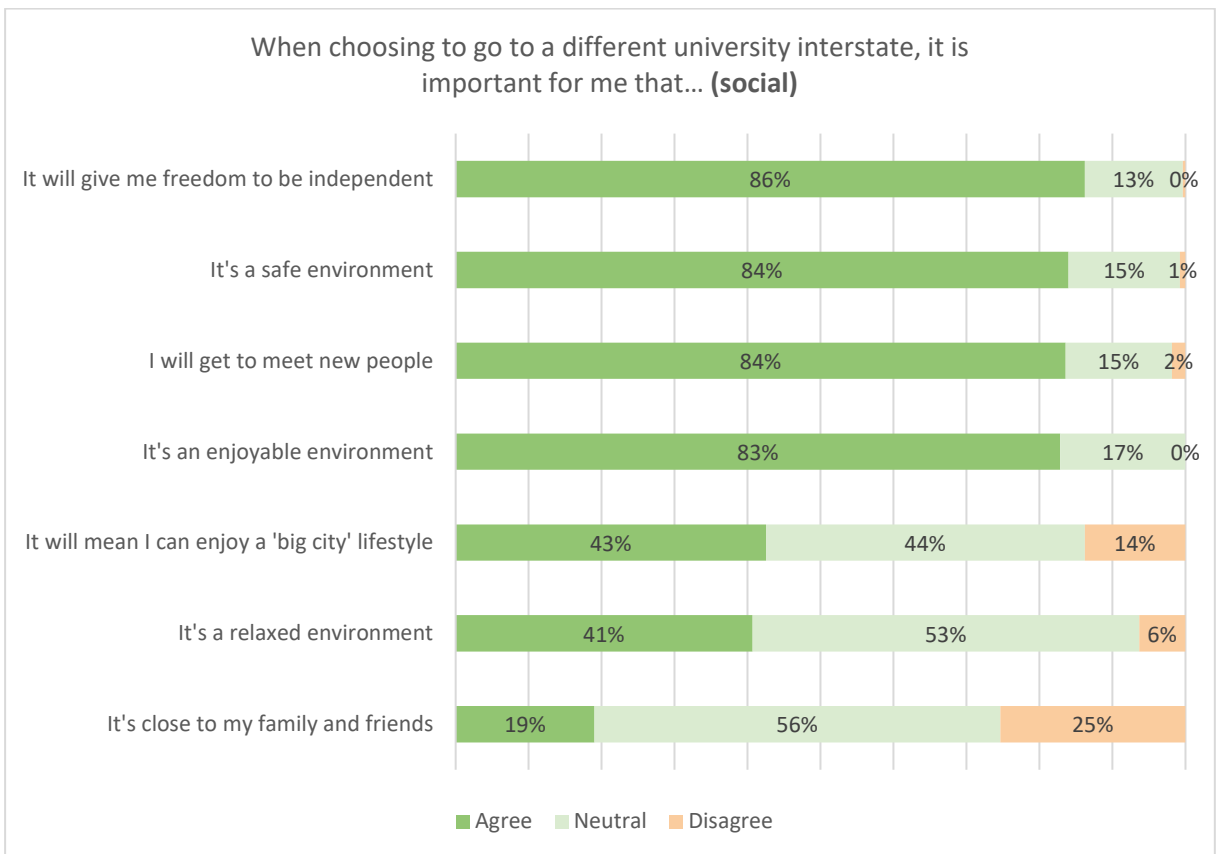


Figure 22: Reasons for choosing interstate university - social

3.2.3 Industry preferences

As in Section 3.1.3, we have filtered responses to the industry question for students planning on going to a different university interstate – either after school or after a gap year. The Health and Social Assistance industry is somewhat less popular for this cohort (29%, versus 41% of those planning on going to the University of Tasmania, and 25% across the whole cohort). Science and Maths is more popular (14% versus 8% for University of Tasmania and 7% overall).

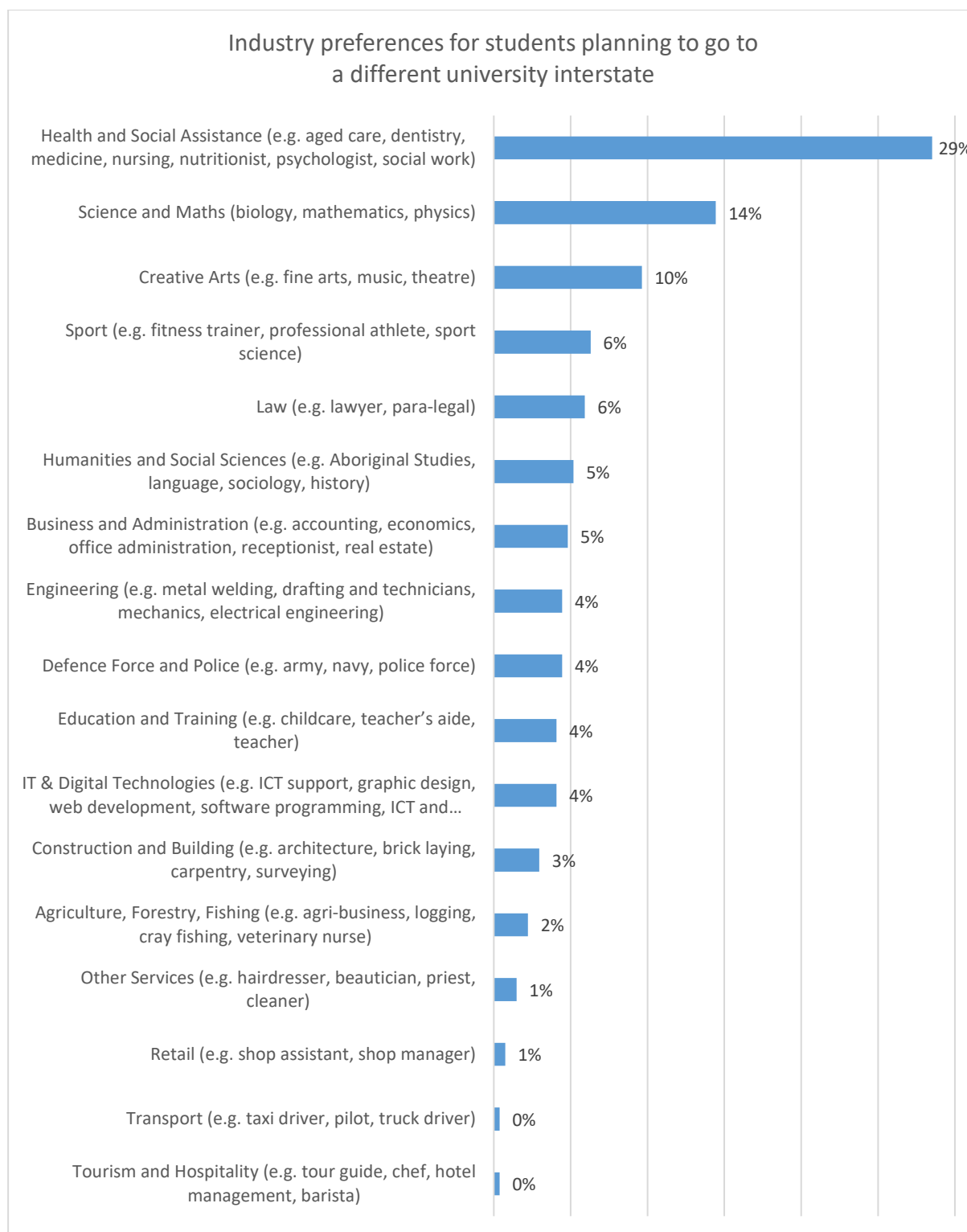


Figure 23: Preferred industry or field – survey respondents planning to go to interstate university

3.3 Students planning to get a job

3.3.1 Certainty

Respondents who indicated they planned to get a job were also asked how sure they were about their plan.

The charts below show that over half of the respondents planning to get a job immediately after school were certain about this plan. Following a gap year, more respondents aiming for employment were certain compared to those planning to go to university (see 3.1.1 and 3.2.1)⁹.

- 54% of respondents planning to get a job *immediately after school* indicated that they are very sure about this option,
- 42% of respondents planning to get a job *after a gap year* were very sure about this option.

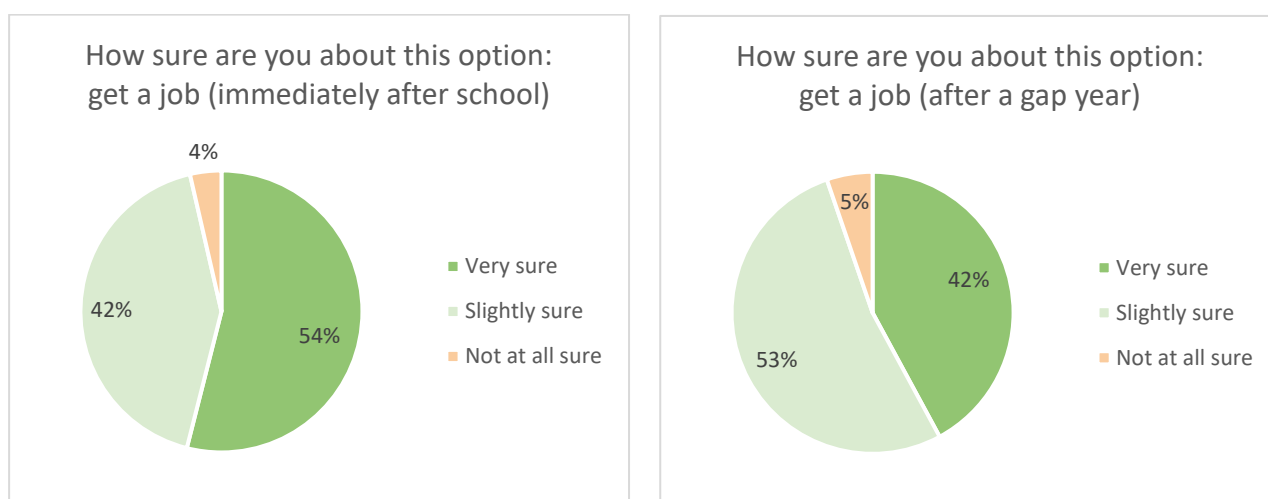


Figure 24: Certainty of pathway - employment (immediately after school or after a gap year)

3.3.2 Reasons

Respondents were presented with a list of possible reasons for choosing to get a job and asked to indicate whether these reasons were important to them with a three-point Likert scale: disagree, neutral, or agree that the reason is important. Responses from students wishing to get a job straight after school have been combined with the responses of students planning a gap year first.

Reasons have been grouped into five separate diagrams: practical and logistical reasons; reasons to do with perceived value and worth; long-term and financial reasons; reasons to do with the student's interests, strengths and personal readiness; and social reasons.

⁹ The survey used a five-point Likert scale: (1) 100% sure; (2) Very sure; (3) Moderately sure; (4) Slightly sure; (5) Not at all sure. In the analysis, responses for 1 and 2, as well as for 3 and 4, have been combined.

Across these five sets, the top reasons (70% or more agree) for choosing employment include:

- It's an enjoyable environment (76%) [social]
- I am interested in this option (75%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]
- I will be happy doing this option (75%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]
- It's a safe environment (72%) [social]
- It's affordable for me (72%) [long-term and financial]
- It will give me a good career pathway (70%) [long-term and financial]
- It enables me to earn an income right now (70%) [long-term and financial]
- It will give me freedom to be independent (70%) [social]

In contrast, least agreement (30% or less agree) was with these reasons:

- It will mean I can enjoy a 'big city' lifestyle (13%) [social]
- It will enable me to leave Tasmania (18%) [practical and logistical]
- It won't be too hard (28%) [interests, strengths and personal readiness]

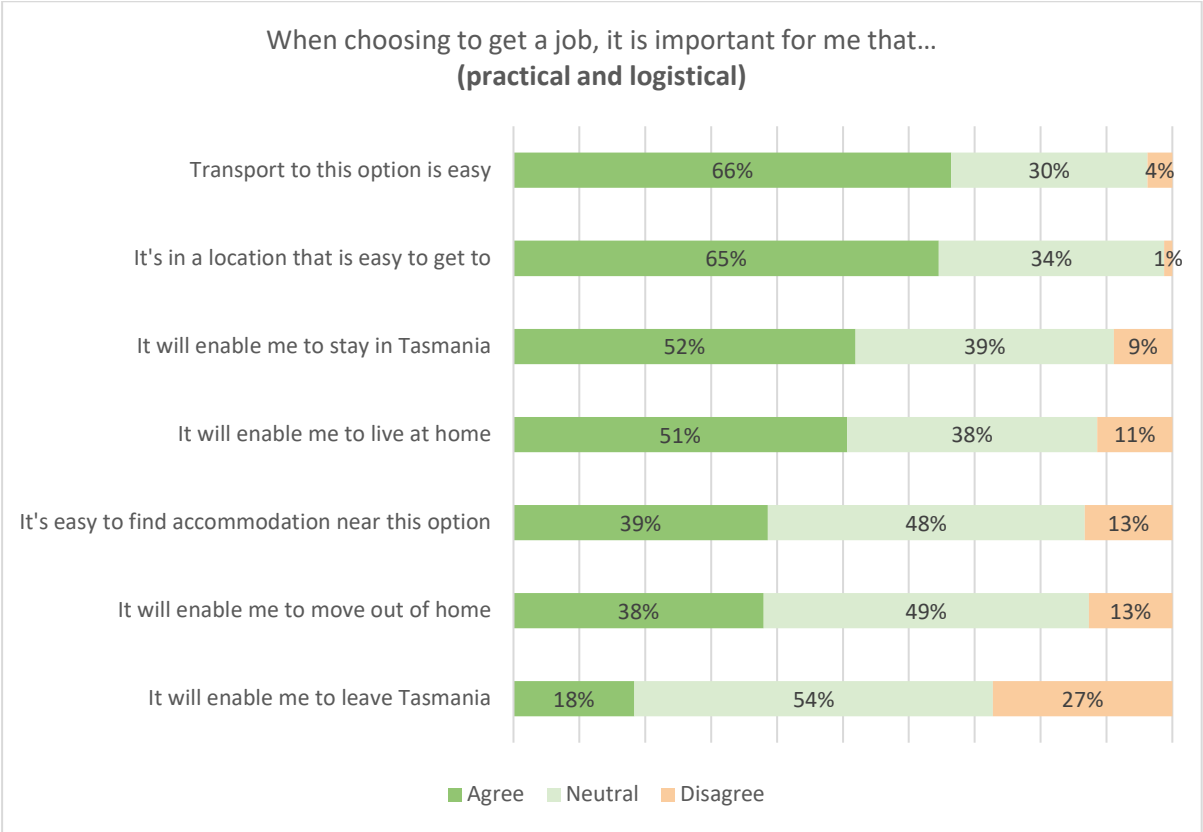


Figure 25: Reasons for choosing employment - practical and logistical

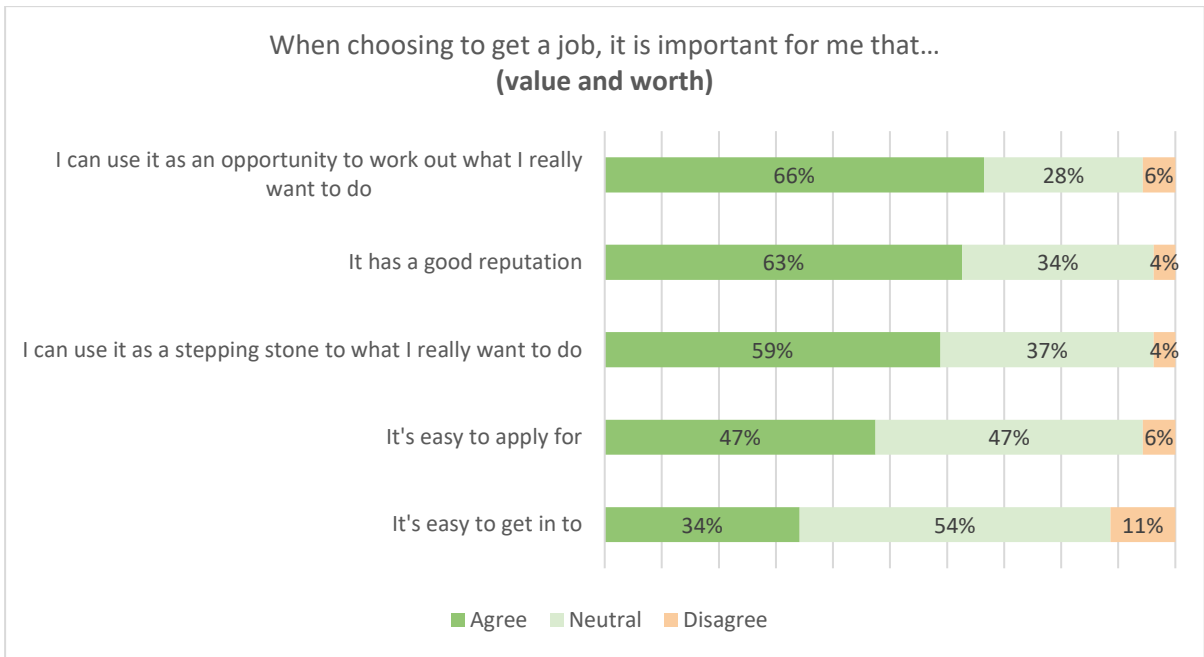


Figure 26: Reasons for choosing employment - value and worth

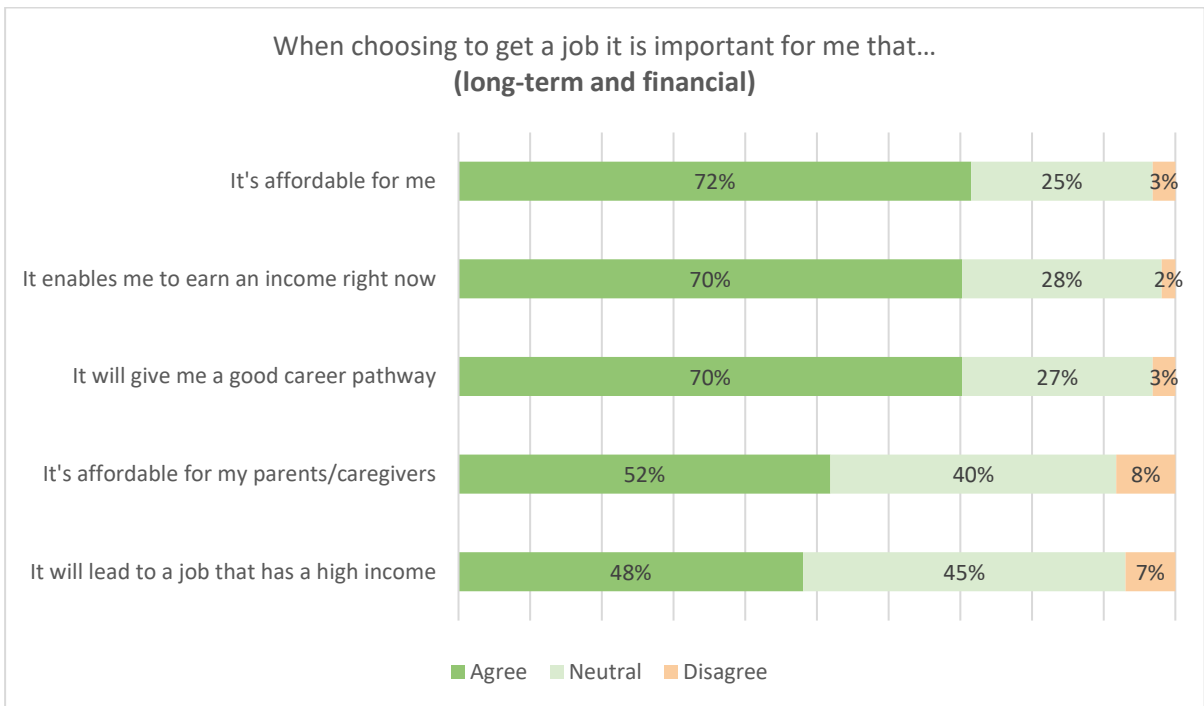


Figure 27: Reasons for choosing employment - long-term and financial

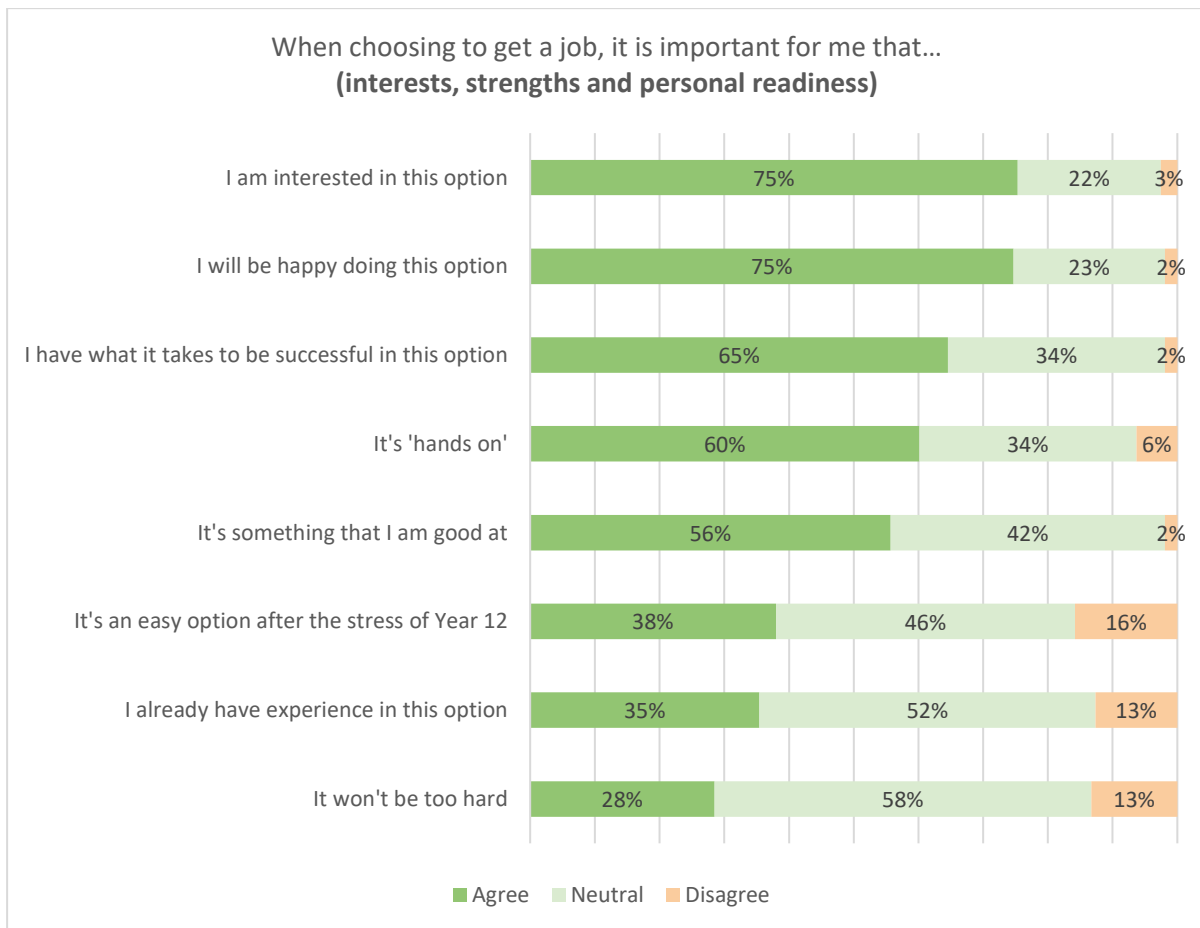


Figure 28: Reasons for choosing employment - interests, strengths and personal readiness

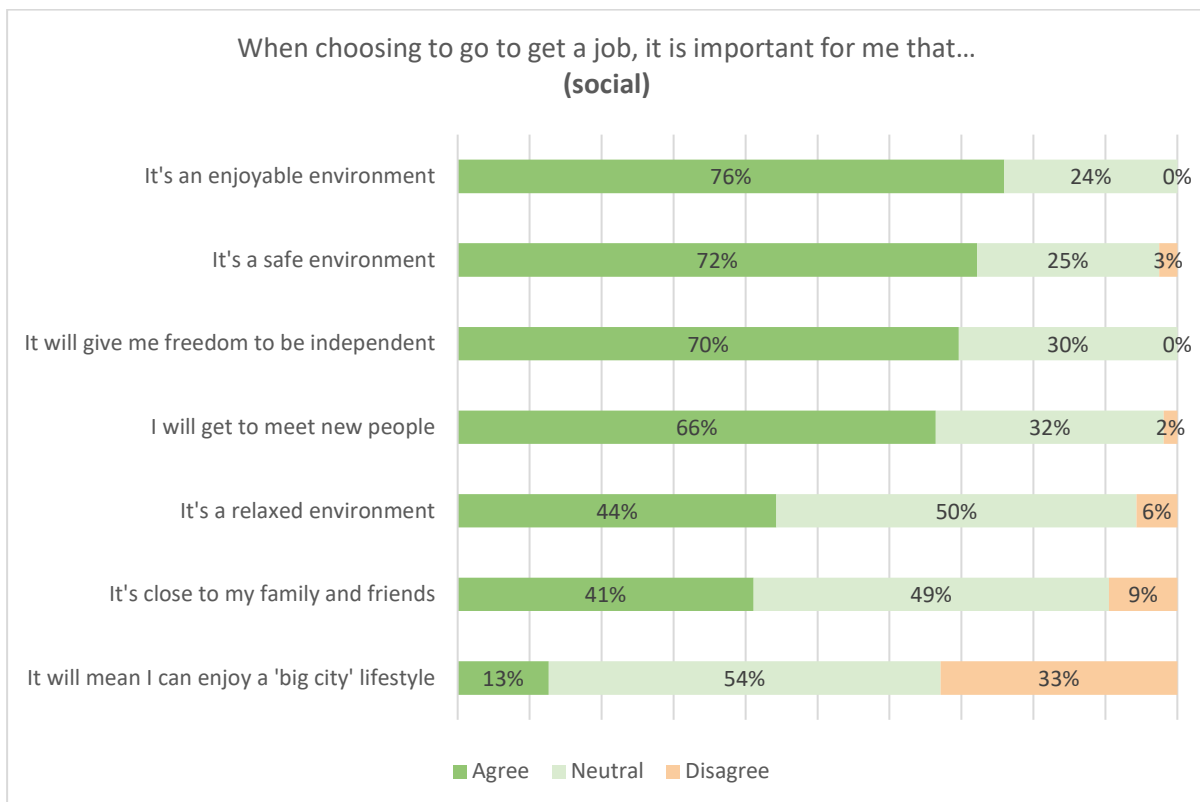


Figure 29: Reasons for choosing employment - social

3.3.3 Industry preferences

The industry preferences for respondents planning on getting a job either immediately after school or after a gap year are diverse. The most popular industry was Retail (13%, versus 2% for the whole cohort), followed closely by Tourism and Hospitality (12%, versus 3%) and Health and Social Assistance (12%, versus 25%).

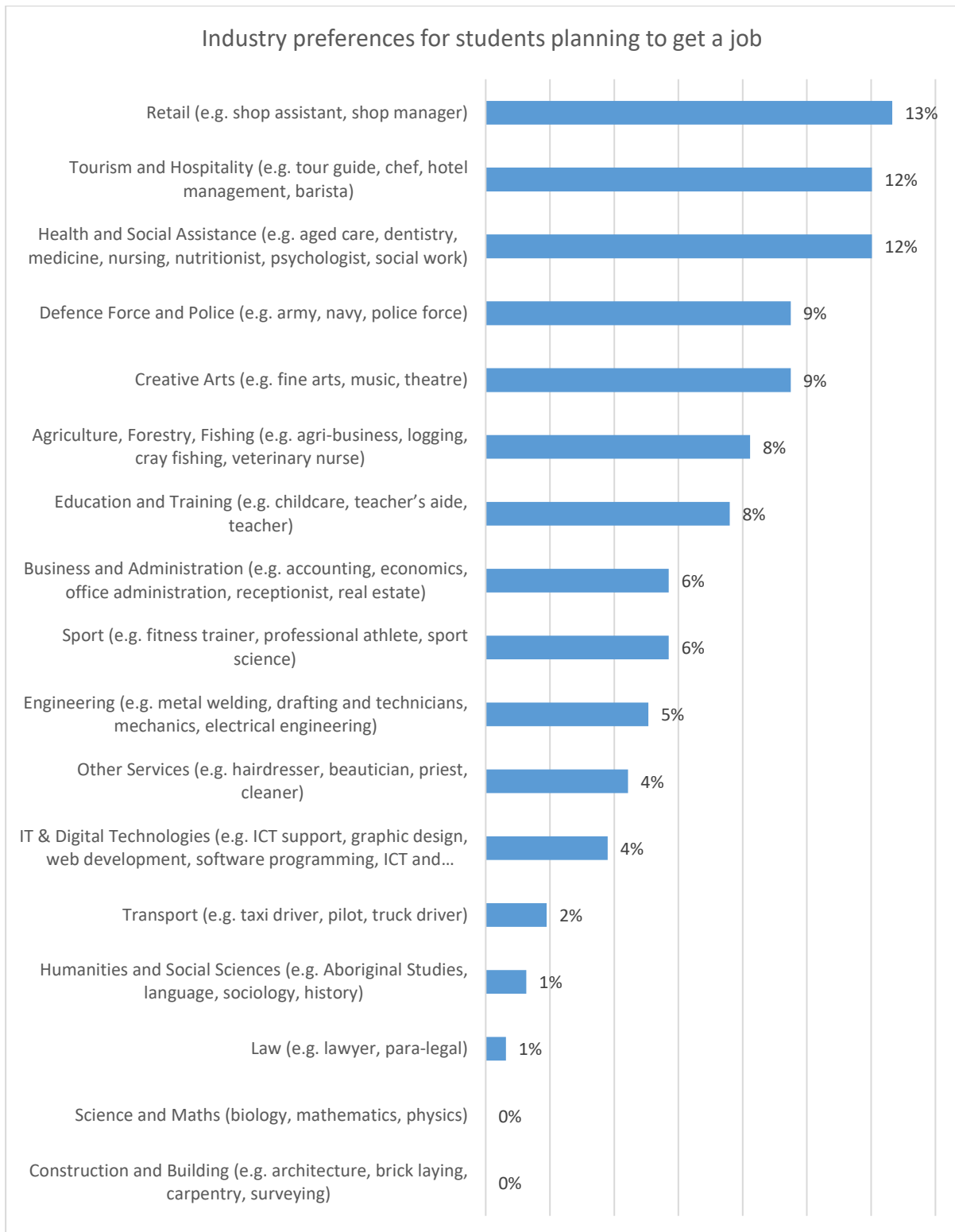


Figure 30: Preferred industry or field – survey respondents planning to get a job

3.4 Comparison of reasons across the main three intended pathways

Students' reasons for planning to pursue the three most popular pathways (the University of Tasmania, interstate university and employment) vary considerably. This section enables comparison between these groups, based on the proportion who agreed with each reason.

It is important to note that the survey used branching logic, based on the planned pathway indicated by students at the start. As a result, respondents were not presented with all of the same items: the survey filtered out items that were not relevant. For example, students who indicated that they would be pursuing employment were not presented with the item 'I can get a scholarship to do this option' as a possible reason. In Figures 29-33, where an item in the chart is missing a bar, this means that group of respondents were not presented with that item as a possible option.

As previously in Section 3, responses from students who said they would do their pathway immediately after school are combined with responses from students who said they would do it after a gap year. The same five categories of reasons also have been used again for the separate diagrams. Overall, different categories figured most prominently as important reasons for each of the three groups:

Table 1: Comparison of reasons across the main three intended pathways

	University of Tasmania	University interstate	Getting a job
Practical and logistical reasons			
Reasons to do with perceived value and worth		(✓)	
Long-term and financial reasons	(✓)	(✓)	✓
Reasons to do with the student's interests, strengths and personal readiness	✓	✓	✓
Social reasons	(✓)	✓	✓

✓ = most prominent for this group

(✓) = also prominent for this group

Below, findings for each of the five categories across the three groups are outlined in more detail.

For reasons to do with practical and logistical aspects:

- *Accessibility in terms of transport and location:* this was quite important across all three groups (54-70% agreed), although slightly less so for those planning to study interstate. These reasons attracted the highest proportion of agreement in this category from students planning to study at the University of Tasmania (69-70%) or to seek employment 65-66%).
- *Living arrangements:* for students planning to study interstate 66% agreed ease of finding accommodation near their chosen option was an important reason; and 60% agreed enabling them to move out of home was important. In contrast, 60% of students planning to study at the University of Tasmania and 52% of those planning to pursue employment agreed being able to stay in Tasmania was important.
- *Online study:* being able to pursue university online was important for a relatively small proportion of students (20-30%).

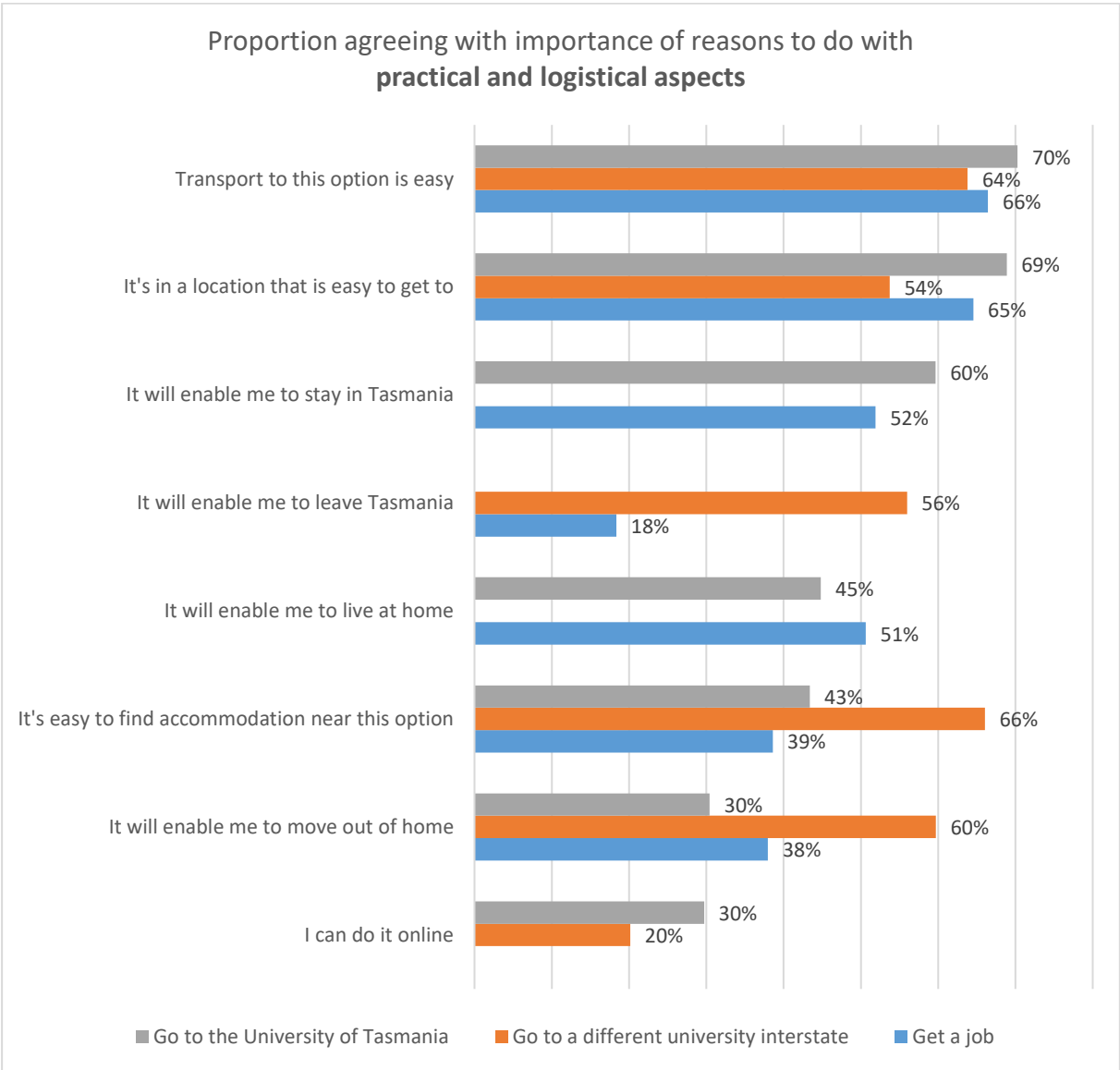


Figure 31: Comparison of reasons across pathways - practical and logistical

For reasons to do with perceived value and worth:

- *High quality and good reputation*: these are important for students wishing to go to university at the University of Tasmania or interstate (70-84%) but somewhat less for those aiming for a job (63%).
- *First step*: the idea that their chosen option is a stepping stone to, or an opportunity to work out, what they really want to do is important for many students across the three groups, and especially for students planning to go to the University of Tasmania (69-76%).
- *Easy application and access*: relatively fewer students agreed this was an important reason, except for students intending to go to the University of Tasmania, many of whom considered easy application to be important (69%).

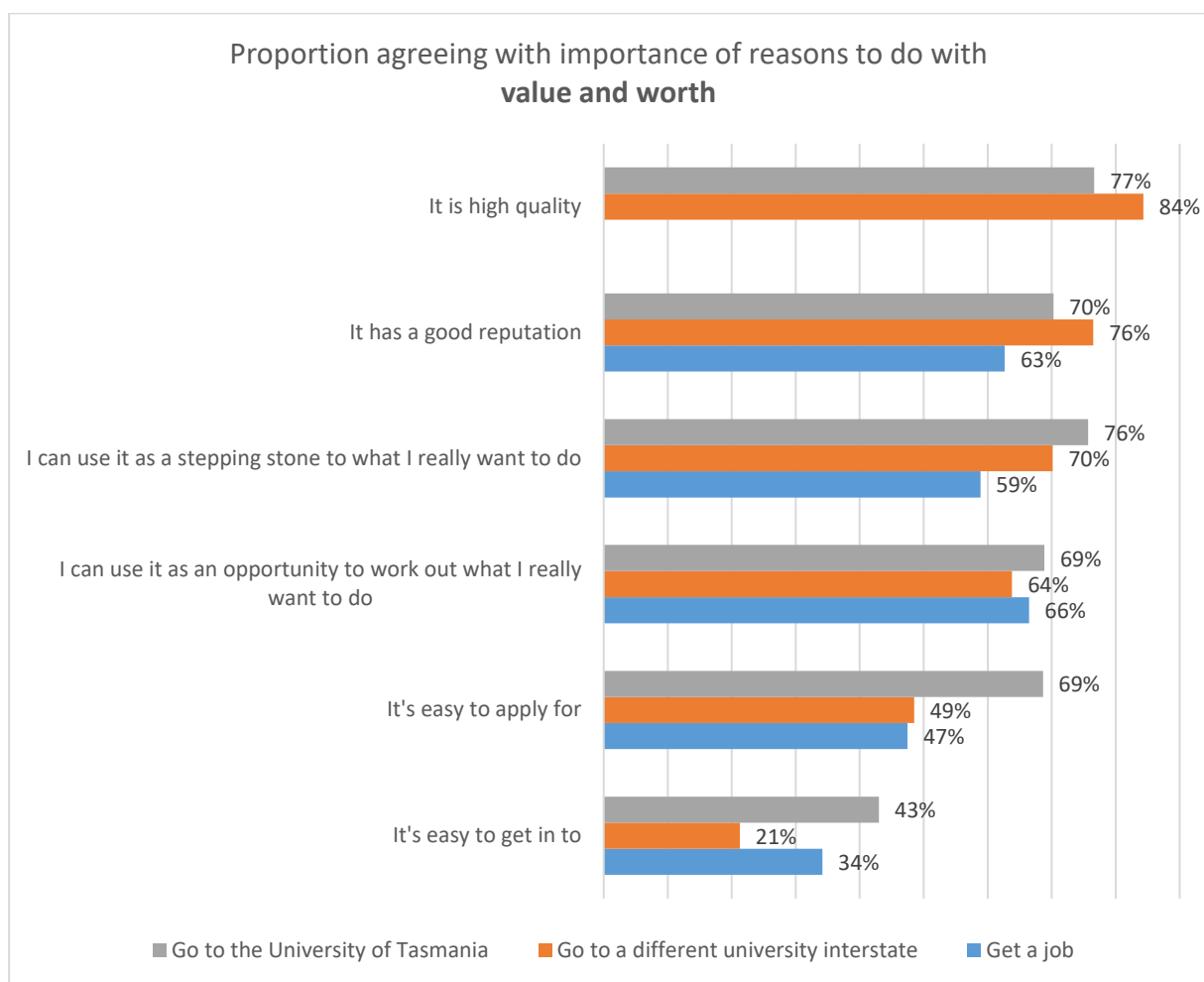


Figure 32: Comparison of reasons across pathways - value and worth

For reasons to do with long-term and financial aspects:

- **Career:** a career pathway was important for a large proportion of students, especially those intending to go to university (87-92%) but also those intending to get a job (70%). Availability of jobs also mattered to many university-bound students (67-69%).
- **Income:** earning an income right now was important for many students planning to get a job (70%). More generally leading to a well-paid job mattered to more students planning to go to a university interstate (64%) and to fewer students planning to get a job straightaway (48%).
- **Affordability:** across all groups affordability for themselves was important to a lot of students (64-72%) and affordability for their parents/caregivers for quite a few (52-59%). Being able to get a scholarship for those aiming to go to university figured somewhat less prominently (39-42%).

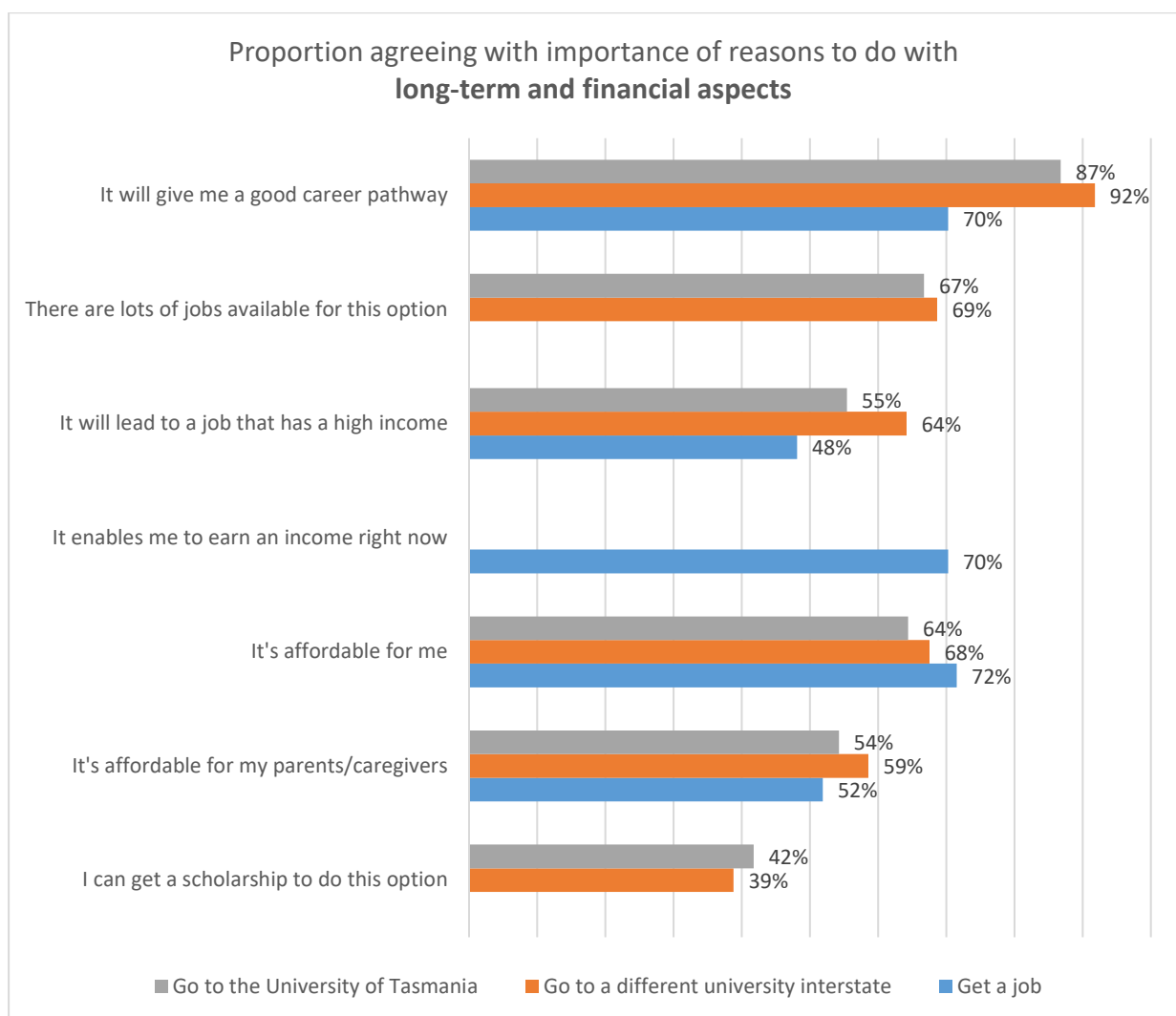


Figure 33: Comparison of reasons across pathways - long-term and financial

For reasons to do with students' own interests, strengths and personal readiness:

- *Personal appeal*: being interested and happy doing the option was important across the three groups, but especially do for students aiming to go to university (85-94%), and slightly less for those planning on getting a job (75%). The 'hands on' nature of the option was important to more students aiming for employment (60%) than those aiming for university (45-51%).
- *Alignment with strengths*: many students aiming for university agreed it was important that they had relevant strengths (72-84%); this mattered to somewhat fewer students heading for a job (56-65%). About a third of students across all groups agreed it was important that they already had experience for their chosen option.
- *Easy to do*: overall relatively few students across all groups agreed that the option being easy was an important reason. This mattered to somewhat more to students aiming for a job (28-38%) than those planning to go to university (10-20%).

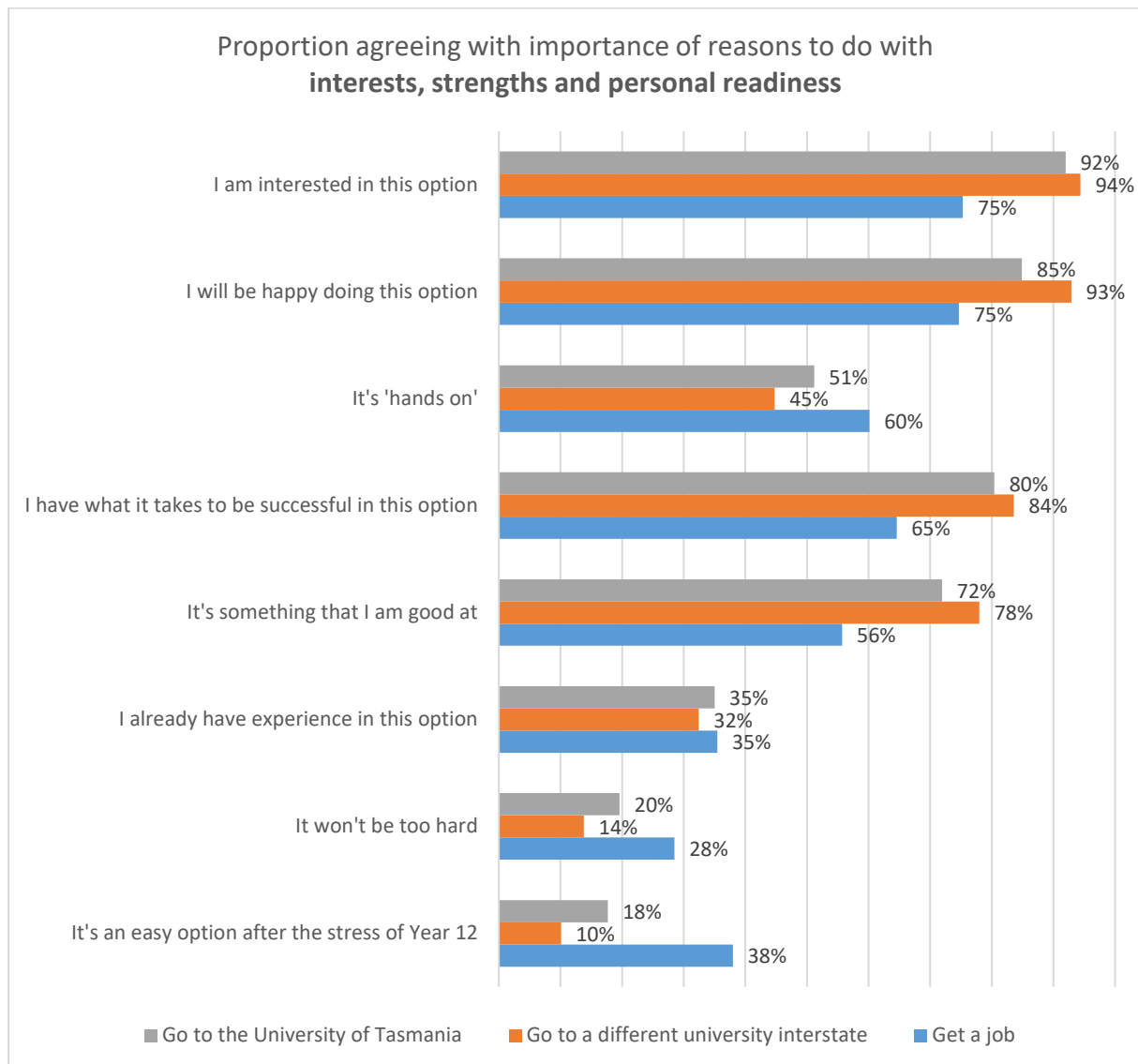


Figure 34: Comparison of reasons across pathways - interests, strengths and personal readiness

For reasons to do with social aspects:

- *Comfortable environment*: across all groups a large number of students agreed that a safe and enjoyable environment was important (72-84%). Relatively fewer agreed that it mattered that the environment was relaxed (41-52%) or that the option was close to family and friends (19% for those planning to go university interstate, and 41-51% for the other two groups).
- *New experiences*: meeting new people and having the freedom to be independent was important to large number of students aiming for university (79-86%) and to somewhat fewer students planning to get a job (66-70%). Quite a few students intending to go to university interstate agreed a 'big city' lifestyle was attractive (43%), but this mattered to relatively few of the other two groups (13-20%).

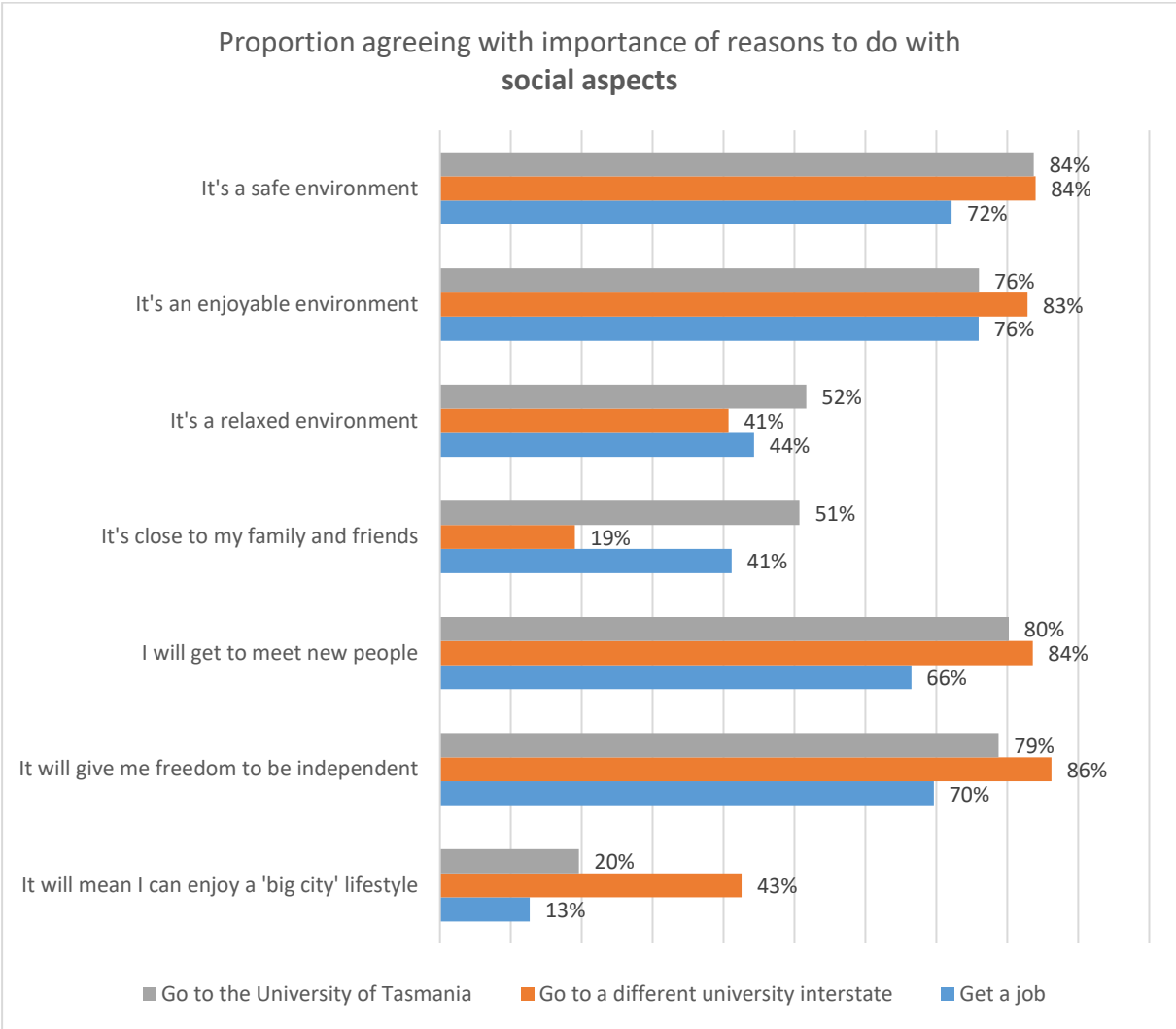


Figure 35: Comparison of reasons across pathways - social

Section 4: Influences

This section explores findings in relation to the influences on students' decision-making, first in terms of various types of people who may be influencers, and then in relation to students' knowledge.

4.1 Influencers

The survey asked about three different types of people who may have an influence on students' plans: parents or caregivers, friends, and school staff.

4.1.1 Parents/caregivers

Most respondents (47%) said that their parents/caregivers want them to do what they (the student) want or what will make them (the student) happy. In terms of actual pathways, far more students indicated that their parents/caregivers want them to go to university (34%) than any of the other pathways.

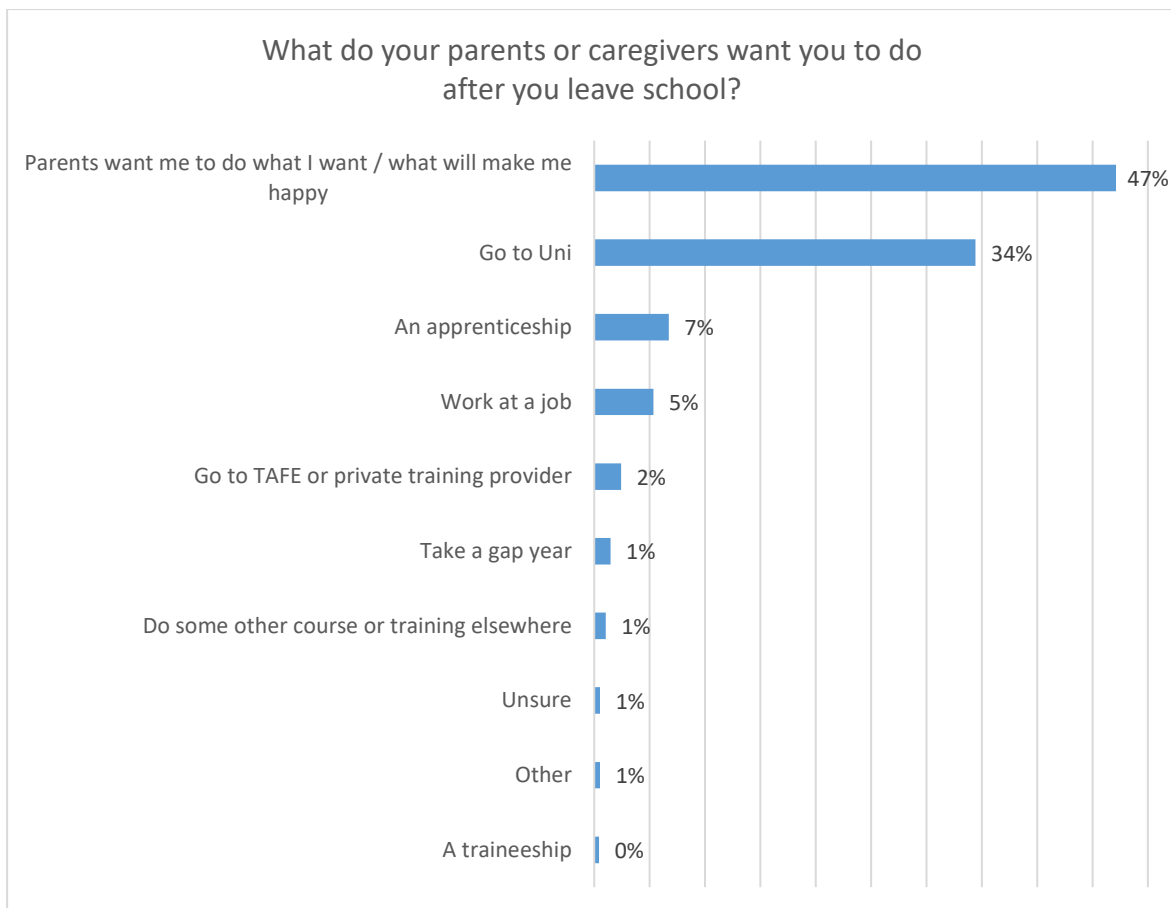


Figure 36: Post-school pathway preferences – parents/caregivers

Students who chose 'other' for the question of what their parents or caregivers want them to do after school were asked to provide further detail. They typically wrote something similar to 'parents want me to do what I want / what will make me happy'. Similar to the question about their own plans, a few students in Year 10 wrote 'College' (see Section 2.1).

4.1.2 Friends

The majority of respondents (53%) said that their friends plan to attend university after school.

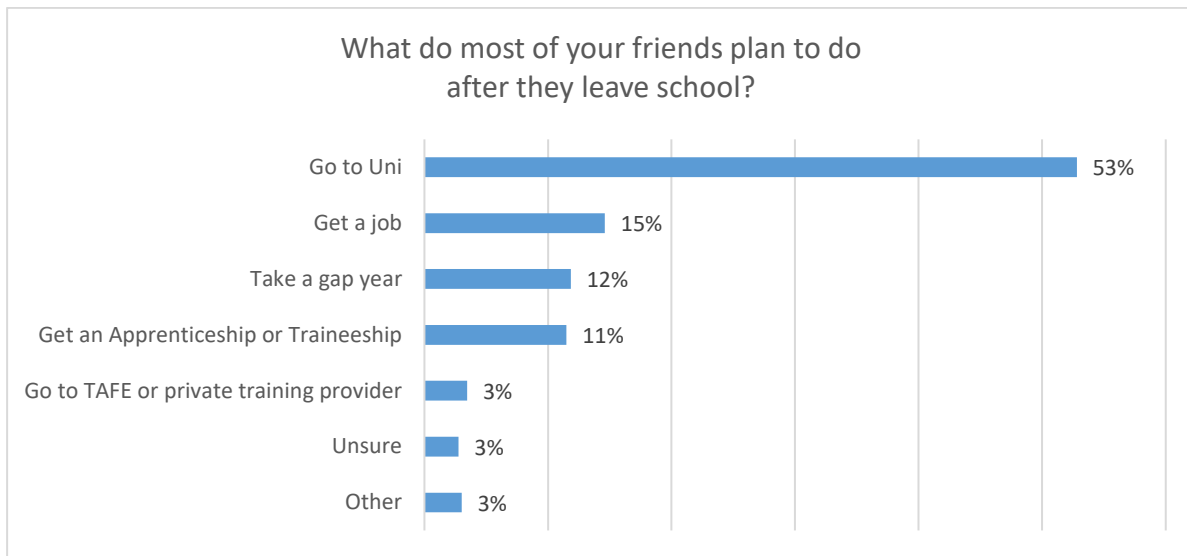


Figure 37: Post-school pathway preferences - friends

The majority of students who selected 'other' indicated that they were unsure what their friends want to do after they leave school.

4.1.3 School staff

The majority of respondents (52%) said that they are encouraged to enrol at university as a post-school option by teachers or adults at their school.

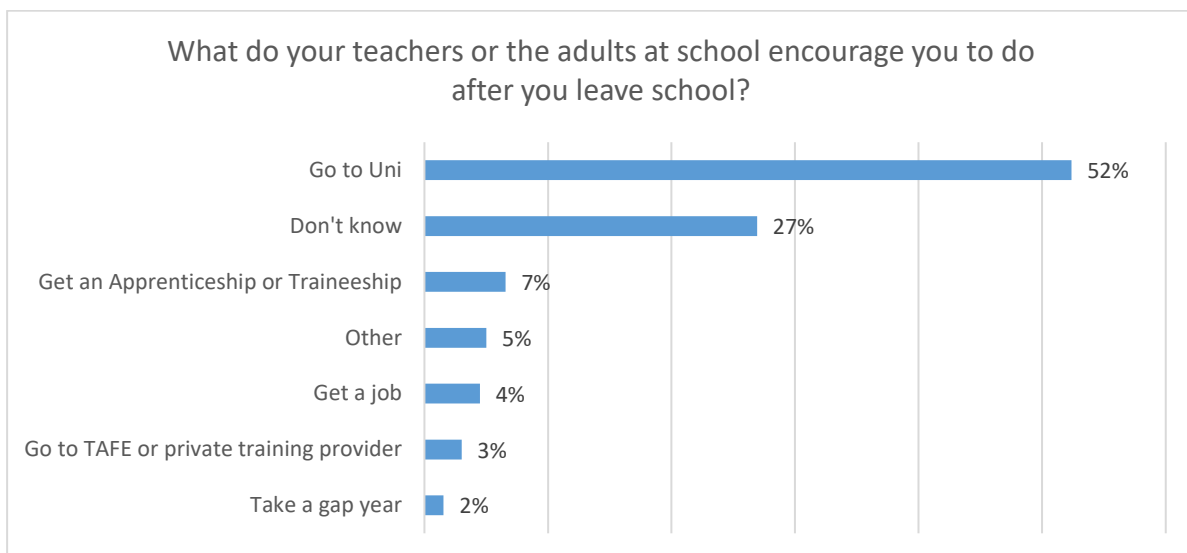


Figure 38: Post-school pathway preferences – school staff

As with the question about parents and friends, students who chose 'other' for the question of what teachers or adults at school want them to do after school were asked to provide further detail. They typically wrote something similar to 'teachers want me to do what I want / what will make me happy.'

4.1.4 Knowing someone with a university degree

Knowing people who have a university degree may have an influence on students' plans to go to university, since it may create some familiarity with university study.

Just over half (56%) of students said that there is someone close to them who has a university degree.

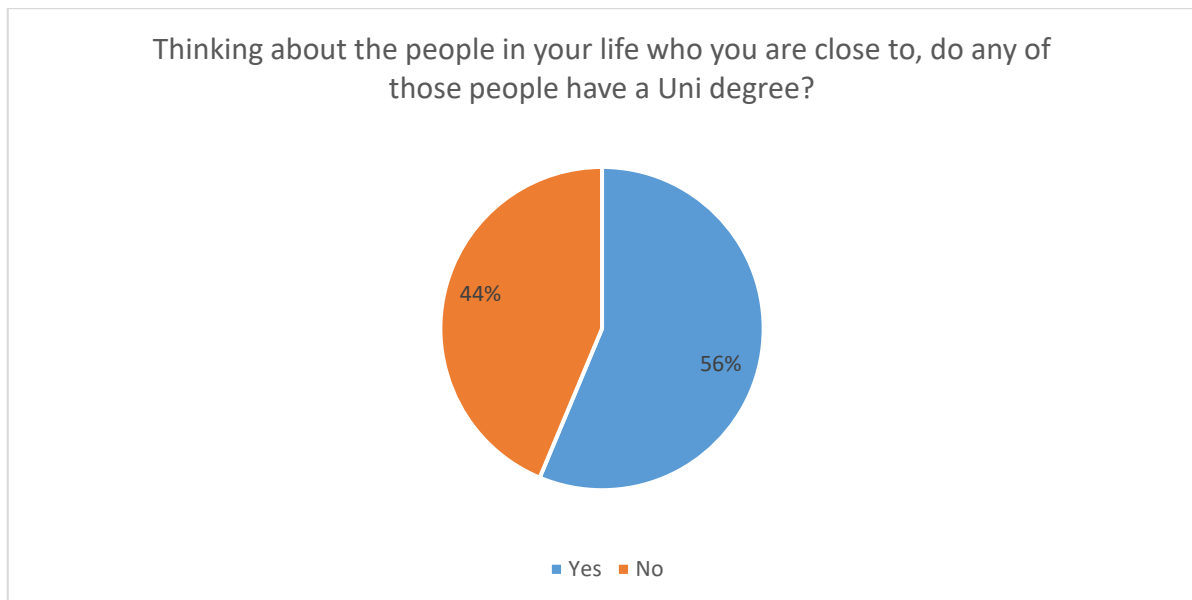


Figure 39: Family and friends' university participation

Broken down by pathway, students intending to go to university immediately after they finish school are most likely to know someone close to them who has a university degree.

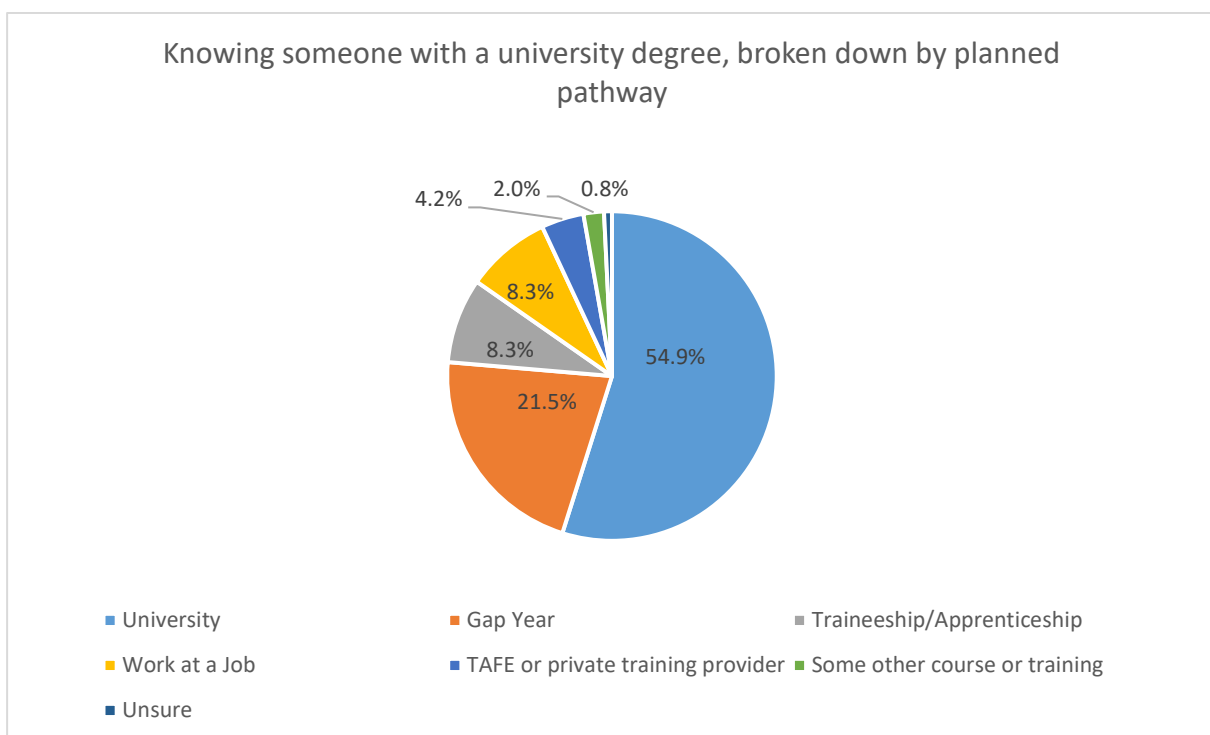


Figure 40: Knowing someone with a university degree, broken down by planned pathway

Students who indicated that there is someone close to them with a university degree were asked 'Who are the people you know who have a Uni degree? (e.g., my mum, my brother, two of my neighbours)'. Overwhelmingly, they referred to family members, particularly parents or carers, but also siblings and extended family. Friends, neighbours, teachers, and others were mentioned less frequently.

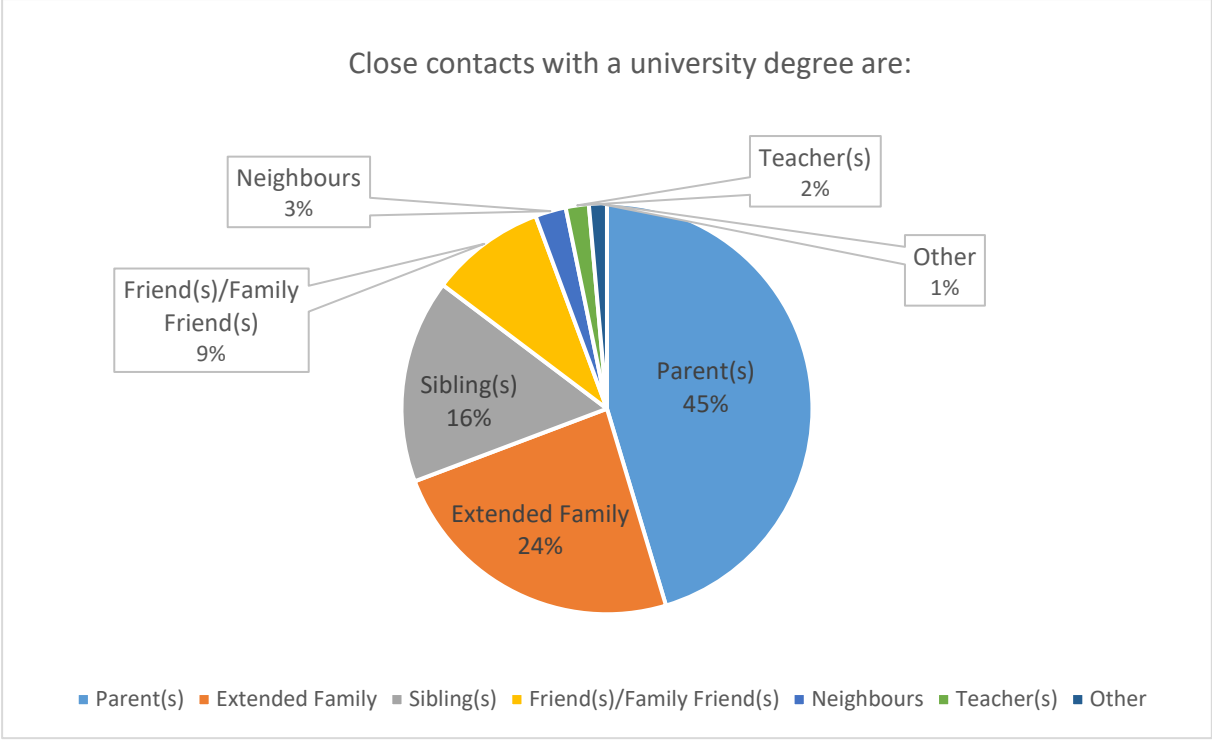


Figure 41: Close contacts with a university degree are...

4.2 Information and knowledge

Student decisions about their plans after leaving school are also likely to be influenced by the information they have access to. This section outlines findings about the sources of information students had for their post-school options and about the extent of their knowledge about various aspects of work or further study.

4.2.1 Sources of information

The most prominent source of information about different options for after school were the My Education resources. My Education is provided by the Department of Education in Tasmania for career education from Kindergarten through to Year 12¹⁰.

Almost one-third of students gained information online, via websites or social media. Students who selected websites or social media were asked to provide examples of the platforms which they have found useful for exploring different options for after school. A large variety of responses were given, but university and Australian Defence Force websites were the most popular websites, and Facebook and Instagram the most popular social media platforms.

Career days and work exposure events/expos were also a source of information for many students, especially when held at their own school. Responses suggest that students found Open Days (OD) at the University of Tasmania more informative than those provided by TAFE/private training providers or other universities.

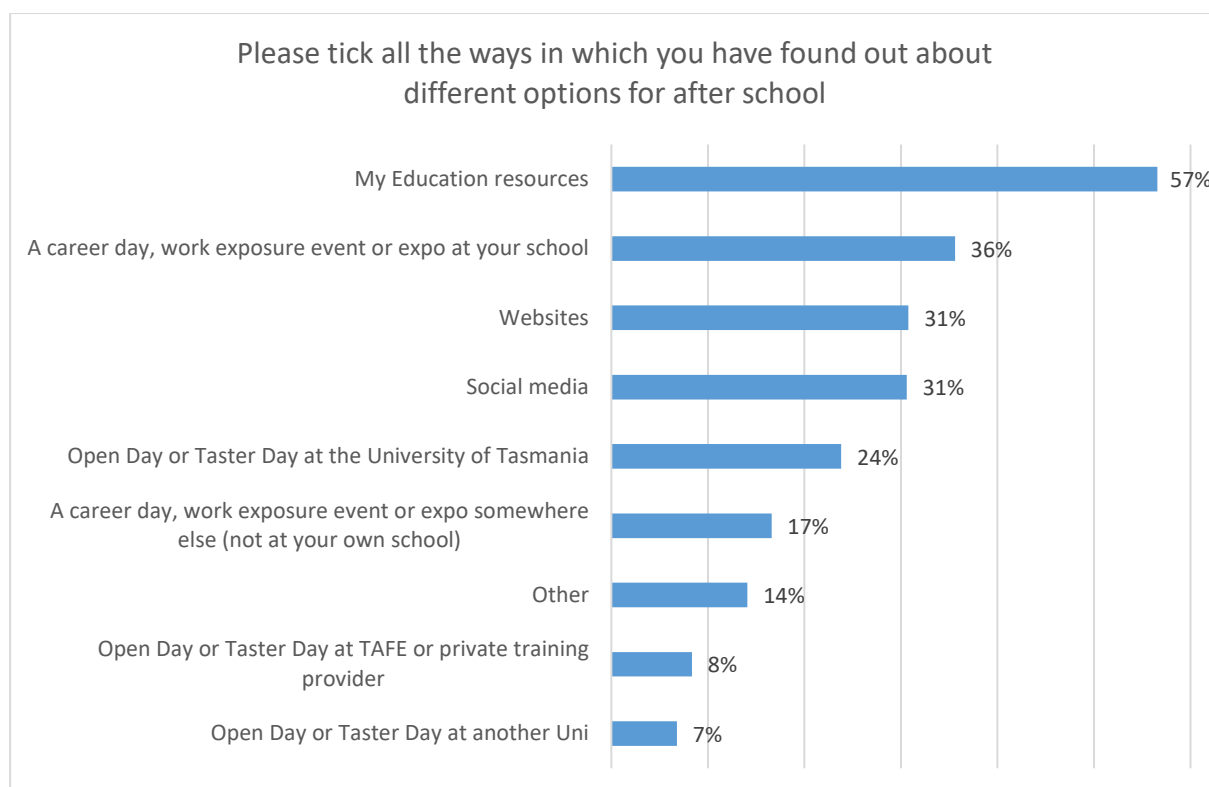


Figure 42: Sources of information

Many different responses were given for 'other' when students were asked to elaborate. Family, friends, and school staff were frequently mentioned as additional sources of information.

¹⁰ See: <https://my.education.tas.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx>

Broken down by chosen pathway, students interested in going to university were more influenced by My Education resources than students looking to get an apprenticeship/traineeship, go to TAFE or obtain employment. This was also the case for websites and Open Days (OD)/Taster Days at the University of Tasmania. Career days outside of school, OD/Taster days at TAFE and 'other' sources (e.g. 'word of mouth,' interests, work experience) were less influential for students pursuing a university pathway compared to those intending to undertake an apprenticeship/traineeship, go to TAFE or obtain employment.

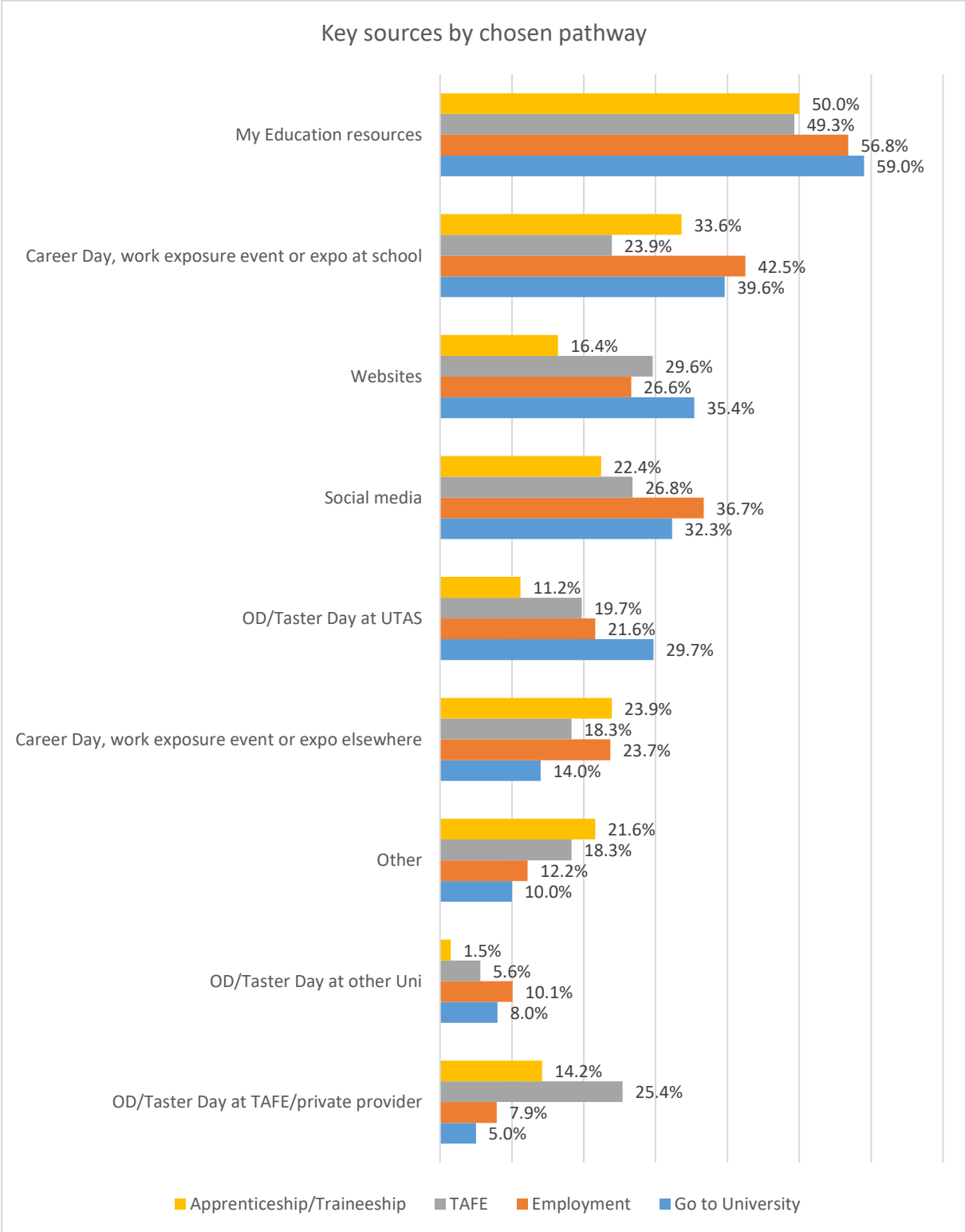


Figure 43: Key sources by chosen pathway

4.2.2 Knowledge about pursuing post-school options

Students were most knowledgeable about pursuing employment (writing a resume, applying for jobs, and where to search for job vacancies) and about the types of courses that are available at university and how to enrol with an ATAR.

In contrast, half or more of the respondents know ‘nothing at all’ about various aspects of going to TAFE or a private training provider, including sources of financial assistance, online study options, the overall cost, and how to get accepted. Roughly half know ‘nothing at all’ about getting into university without an ATAR and about sources of financial assistance at the University of Tasmania.

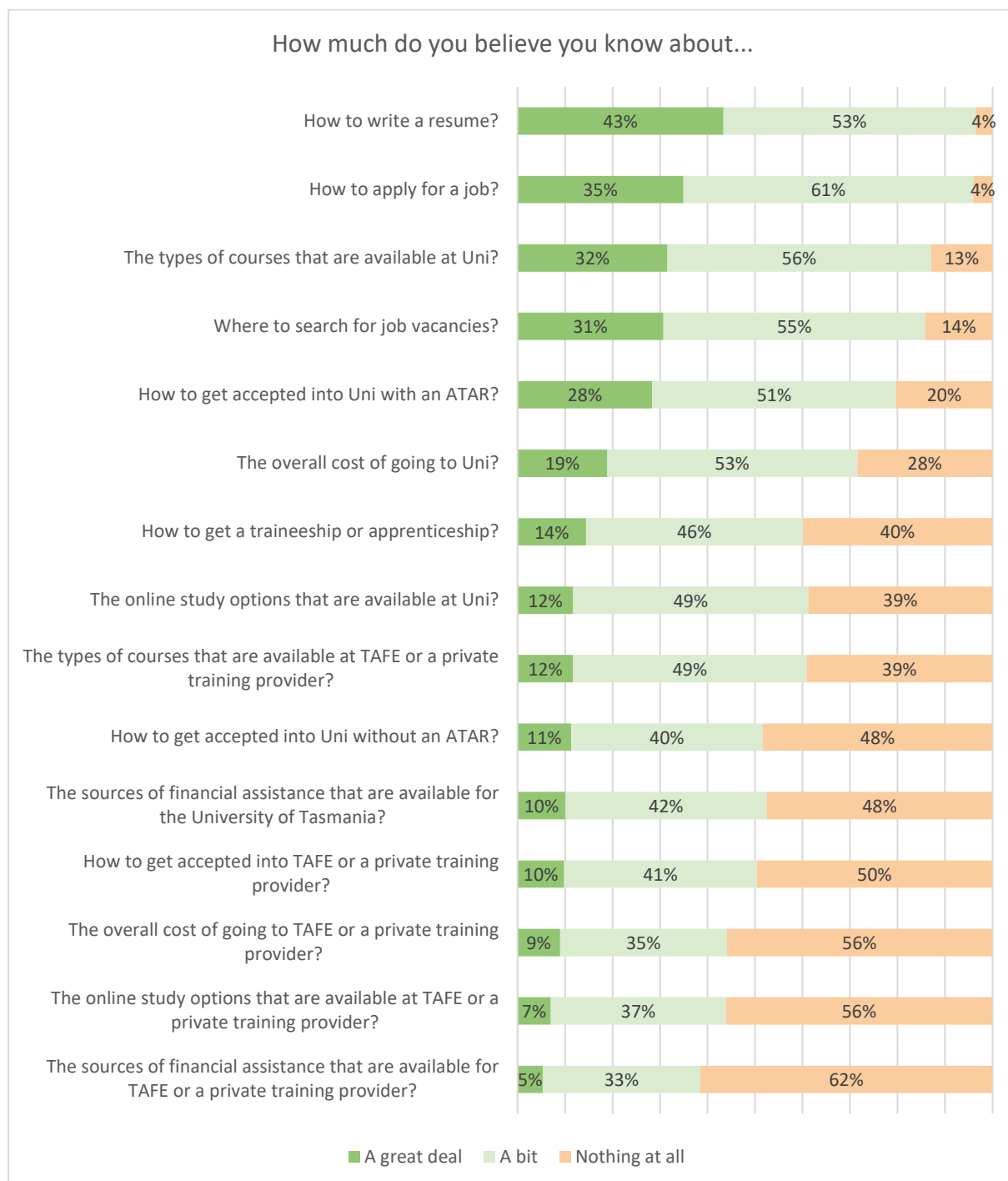
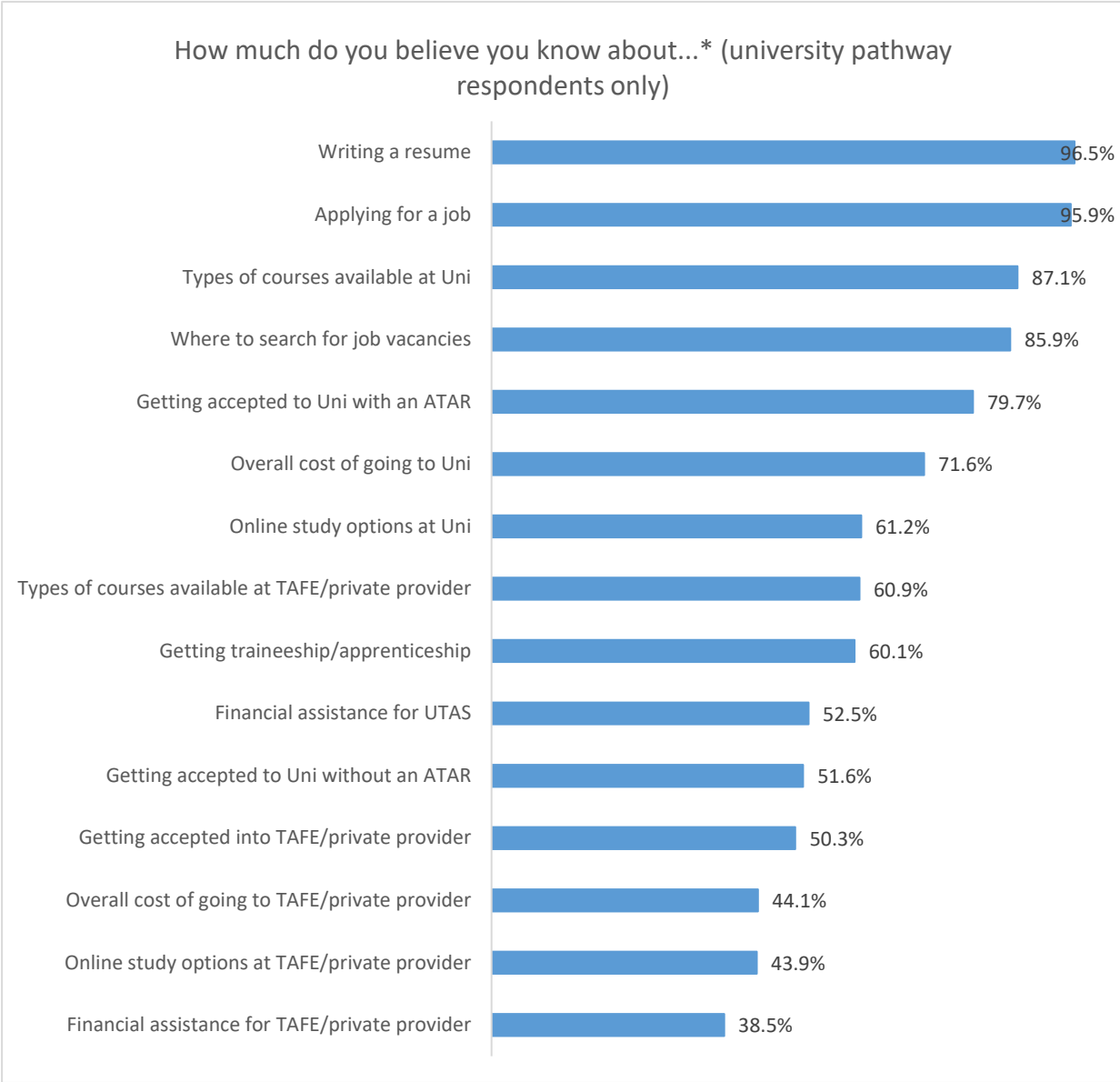


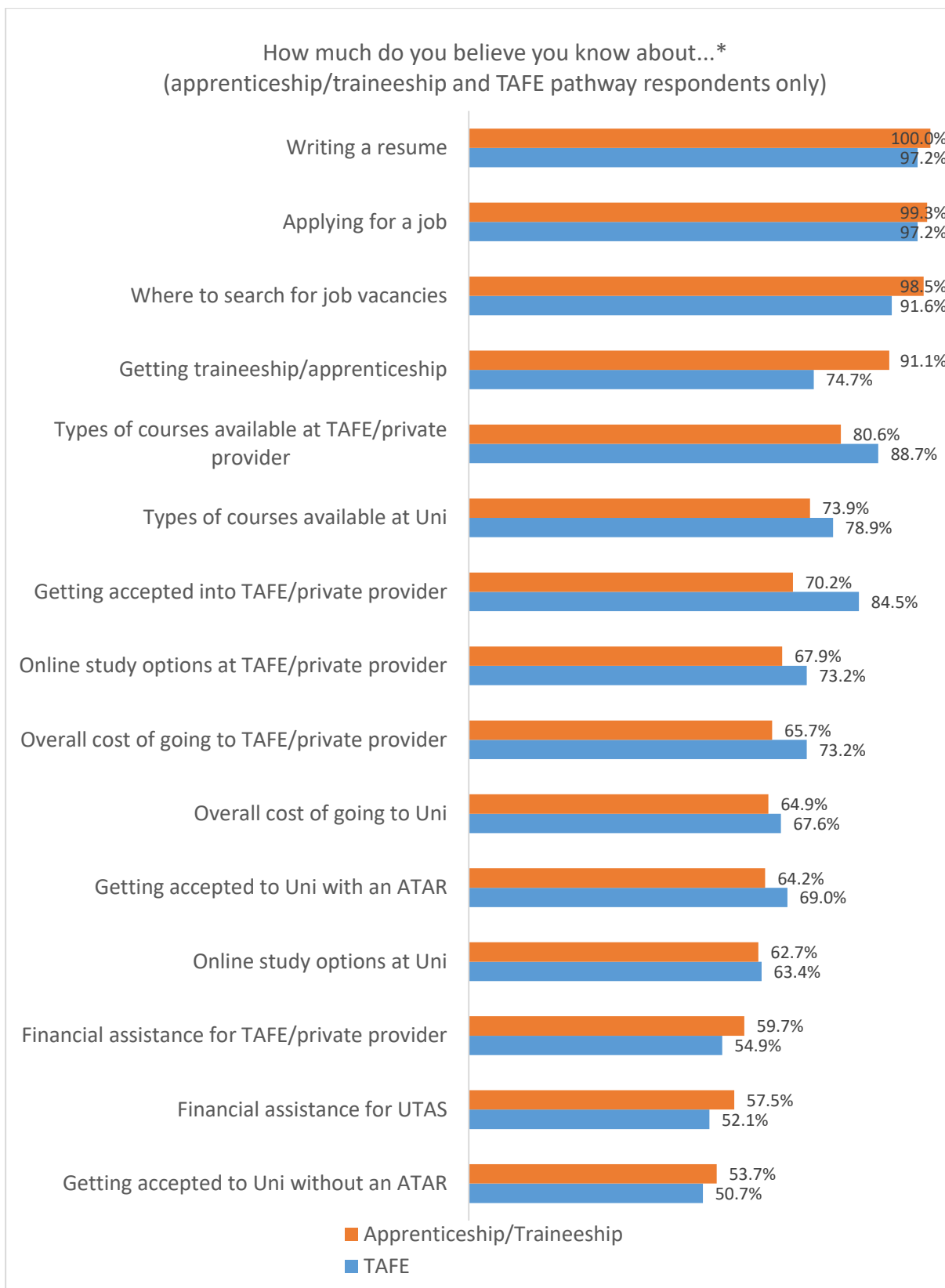
Figure 44: Knowledge

Broken down by pathway, students who are interested in going to university, getting an apprenticeship/traineeship, pursuing TAFE or obtaining employment have remarkably similar levels of knowledge for each of the different facets to those seen across the entire cohort.



* % of respondents who selected 'A great deal' or 'A bit'

Figure 45: Knowledge (university pathway respondents only)



* % of respondents who selected 'A great deal' or 'A bit'

Figure 46: Knowledge (apprenticeship/traineeship and TAFE pathway respondents only)



* % of respondents who selected 'A great deal' or 'A bit'

Figure 47: Knowledge (apprenticeship/traineeship and TAFE pathway respondents only)

Section 5: Concluding comments

This report has provided an overview of key findings from Phase 2 of the research: a survey completed by 1160 students from Year 10, 11 and 12 in Term 4, 2020. These findings have provided significant insights into the plans these students have for after they leave school, reasons they consider important for choosing their preferred option, the industries/fields they are interested in, and influences on their decision-making.

The survey was repeated in Term 3 and 4, 2021. This was an opportunity for more schools and students to participate.

The project also has repeated the analysis of University of Tasmania business intelligence data¹¹ and we are planning further qualitative data collection from key stakeholders in 2022¹².

For any questions or comments, feel free to contact the research team:
UnderwoodCentre.Enquiries@utas.edu.au
Attention: SPSPI team

You are welcome to share this overview report with your school community.

¹¹ For findings from the first round of business intelligence data analysis, see:
https://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/1413817/Final-Bakhtiar-et-al-2020-SPSPI-C3.pdf

The second report from the BI data will be available late 2022.

¹² For findings from the first round of qualitative data collection, see:
https://www.utas.edu.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/1411014/Crellin,-te-Riele-and-West-2020.pdf

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