

# Barriers to Employment & Further Study

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RESEARCH INFO-BYTE



GRADUATE  
OUTCOMES  
WHERE TO NEXT?

HEA | HIGHER EDUCATION AUTHORITY  
AN tÚDARÁS um ARD-OIDEACHAS

# Background

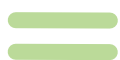
## 2.3%

Of graduates are Engaged in Other Activities and not seeking employment. This includes, for example, an inability to work due to illness or disability, going travelling or taking time out to volunteer.



## 8.1%

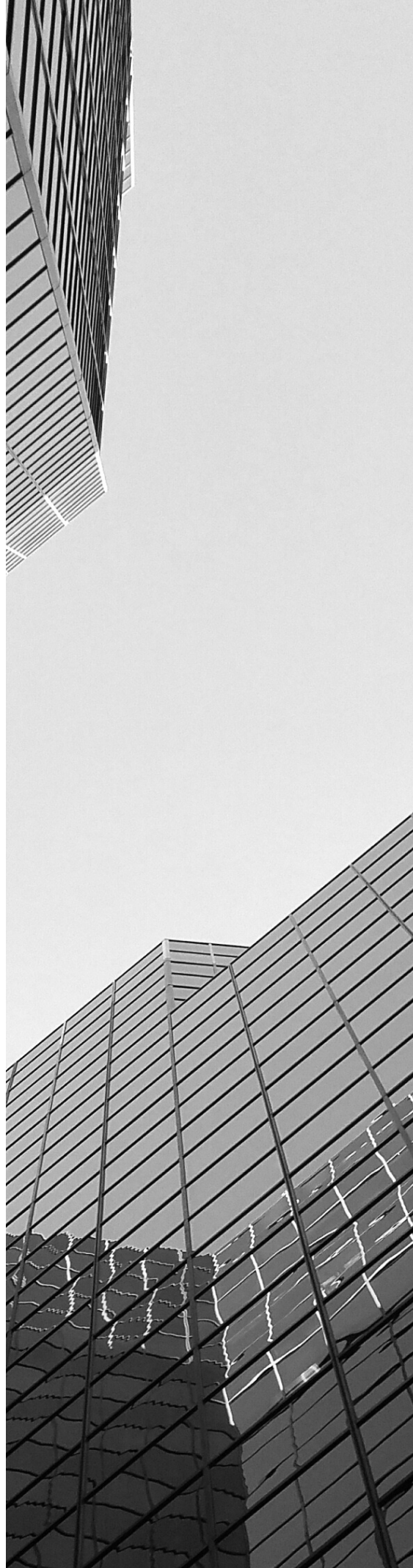
Of graduates are Unemployed and looking for work. This is up from **4.3%** for the Class of 2018.



## 10.4%

Combined, these graduates account for **10.4%** of the total. These graduates were asked:

"Are there any particular barriers you feel are preventing you from engaging in employment or further study?"



# Context

This Info-Byte seeks to explore the barriers cited by graduates, and to further understand the issues graduates face in seeking employment or further study nine months after graduation.

# Methodology

Graduates are asked to cite the barriers preventing them from engaging in employment or further study, via open-ended survey responses.

Common themes are identified using these open-ended survey responses. Examples of these are provided in Appendix A.

One response could be categorised into multiple themes. For example, if a graduate responds "COVID-19 and discrimination", this graduate would be classified in both the theme "COVID" and "Culture / Discrimination". As such, percentages will not add up to 100%. This, in turn, reflects the % of the total that cited a specific barrier.

Only graduates who are Engaged in Other Activities or Unemployed and Looking for Work are included in this analysis.

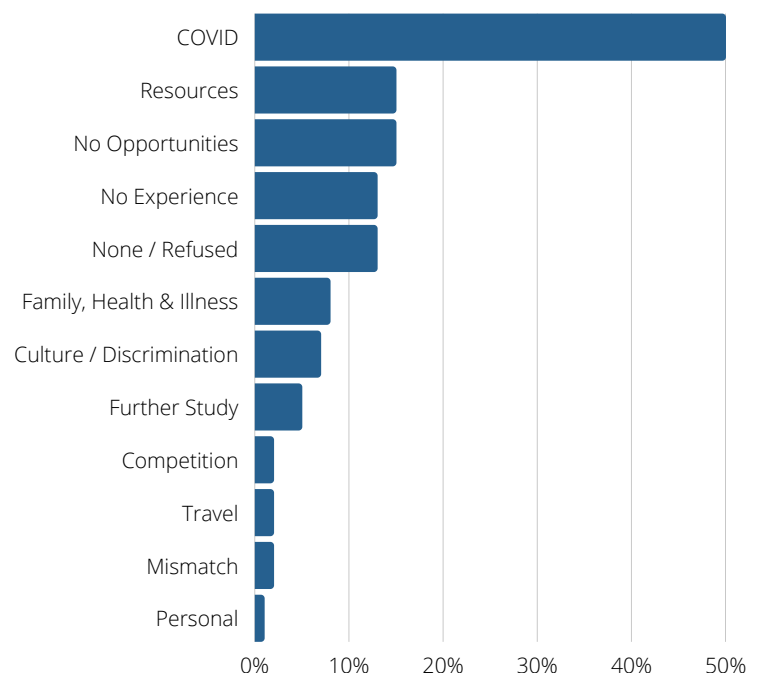


# Common barriers

**1 in 2** graduates cite COVID-19 as a barrier to employment or further study.

The second most common barrier is Resources (15%), followed by a lack of opportunities (15%).

Note that **13%** of graduates refused to disclose their perceived barriers to employment or further study.

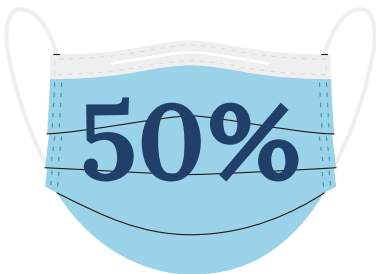


# How are graduates of different fields of study impacted?

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The below sections focus on the 4 most common barriers - COVID, Resources, No Opportunities and No Experience.

## COVID



Overall, **50%** of graduates cite COVID-19 as a barrier to employment or further study.

Similar to the unemployment rates observed in the national report, Education and Health & Welfare graduates are least impacted by COVID-19.

Only **21%** of Education graduates cite COVID as a barrier, and **37%** of Health & Welfare graduates.



# Resources

In total, **15%** of graduates cite Resources as a barrier to employment or further study. Resources can be further broken down:



1. Geographical limitations (transport / location): **7%** of all graduates



2. Financial barriers: **4%** of all graduates



3. Educational attainment (degree obtained / HEI-related): **3%** of all graduates

Other smaller categories include the lack of personal contacts or social network, lack of careers guidance, and technology-related barriers.

Looking at overall resources, **19%** of Arts & Humanities graduates, and **19%** of Social Sciences, Journalism & Information graduates cite Resource-related barriers. This is lowest amongst Services graduates, at **8%**.

By geographical limitation, Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary graduates (**9%**) and Health & Welfare graduates (**9%**) are most impacted. Meanwhile, only **5%** of Business, Administration & Law graduates, and Services graduates cite geographical limitations.



On financial barriers, Education graduates seem hardest hit (**8%**). This is followed by Arts & Humanities graduates, at **6%**. This is least cited amongst Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics graduates, and ICT graduates, whereby only **1%** of graduates cite financial barriers.

By educational attainment, **9%** of Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary graduates cite this as a barrier to employment or further study. This is followed by Arts & Humanities graduates (**5%**) and Social Sciences, Journalism & Information graduates (**5%**). This is lowest amongst ICT and Services graduates (**1%**).



# No Opportunities

Overall, **15%** of graduates cite the lack of opportunities as a barrier to employment or further study.

Although Education graduates had one of the highest employment rates, of the small proportion of graduates who are unemployed or engaged in other activities, **23%** cite the lack of opportunities as a barrier to employment or further study.

This is similarly high among Social Sciences, Journalism & Information graduates (**20%**), and Arts & Humanities graduates (**18%**).

# No Experience

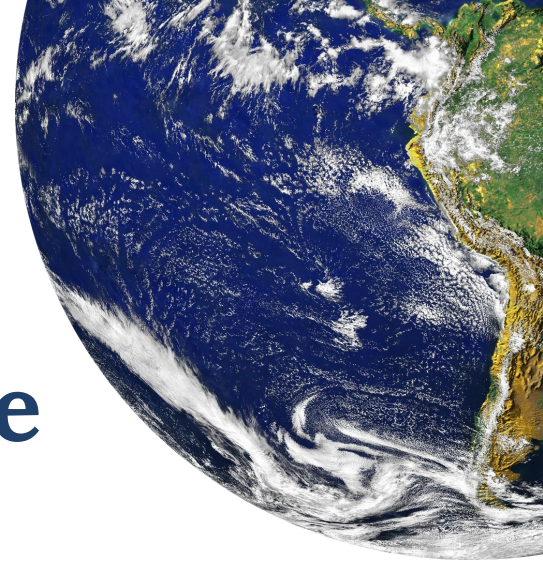


Overall, **13%** of graduates cite their lack of experience as a barrier to employment or further study.

This is particularly high amongst ICT graduates, with **22%** citing their lack of experience as a barrier. This is followed by Social Sciences, Journalism & Information graduates (**20%**), and Natural Sciences, Mathematics & Statistics graduates (**19%**).

Perceived lack of experience as a barrier is lowest amongst Agriculture, Forestry, Fisheries & Veterinary graduates, at **4%**.





# Do International graduates experience different barriers?

Note that **22%** of the graduates in the total sample included in this analysis (Engaged in Other Activities or Unemployed) are International graduates. Overall, in the total population, only **16%** of graduates are International graduates.

## 19%

Across all graduates, only **7%** of graduates cite Cultural Differences or Discrimination as a barrier. This includes language barriers, discrimination based on age, race or disability, or visa issues. Broken down by domiciliary, this constitutes **4%** of barriers cited by Irish-domiciled graduates, yet this is much higher amongst Internationally-domiciled graduates, at **19%**.

In total, **13%** of International graduates cite visa-related barriers (e.g., work permit, visa issues, or lack of recognition of Stamp 1G by companies).



Approximately **8%** of International graduates explicitly state discrimination as a barrier to employment or further study. This includes discrimination based on race, age or health status.

Comparing Irish-domiciled graduates to Internationally-domiciled graduates:

- COVID-19: There is no substantial difference - **50%** of International graduates and **50%** of Irish-domiciled graduates cite this as a barrier.
- Resources: **14%** of International and **16%** of Irish-domiciled graduates cite Resource-related barriers.
- No Opportunities: Internationally-domiciled graduates are slightly more likely to cite a lack of opportunities as a barrier to employment or further study (**19%**) than Irish-domiciled graduates (**14%**).
- No Experiences: Little to no differences observed - **13%** of Internationally-domiciled and **14%** of Irish-domiciled graduates cite this as a barrier.

# Are there different barriers by gender?

Due to the differences observed by field of study, an analysis by gender alone is insufficient (due to the differing proportions by field of study).

Thus, an analysis by field of study and gender is provided below.

Focusing on the largest gender differences by field of study:

## COVID

**46%** of female Services graduates cite COVID-19 as a barrier, versus **63%** of male Services graduates. Similarly, only **16%** of female Education graduates cite COVID-19 as a barrier, versus **31%** of male Education graduates.

## Resources

Social Sciences, Journalism & Information saw the largest gender differences - **23%** of female graduates cite Resource-related barriers, compared to **11%** of male graduates. Amongst Health & Welfare graduates, **17%** of female graduates cite Resource-related barriers, versus **9%** of males.

## No Opportunities

Amongst Education graduates, **27%** of females cite the lack of opportunities as a barrier, versus **13%** of males. Only **10%** of female Health & Welfare graduates cite this as a barrier, versus **19%** of male graduates.

## No Experience

While **29%** of female Social Sciences, Journalism & Information graduates cite their lack of experience as a barrier, only **4%** of male graduates cite this as a barrier.





# For further information:



[www.graduateoutcomes.ie](http://www.graduateoutcomes.ie)



[HEA Graduate Outcomes](#)



[@GradSurveyIRL](#)

If you have any further queries, suggestions or ideas for future Info-Byte topics, please contact [graduatesurvey@hea.ie](mailto:graduatesurvey@hea.ie).

**Feb 2022**

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