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partners for legal & hr talent

Legal labor market survey

Perspectives on the career of law graduates

21 October 2019

In collaboration with



YouConnect: a niche staffing firm for Legal & HR professionals

- **Permanent recruitment** as well as **legal interim management**
- Founded in **2013**, grown to a team of 14 people, mainly legal professionals
- The team combines **70 years** of recruitment experience, half of which in legal recruitment
- **Largest** independent recruitment firm for legal professionals in Belgium
- In 2019, YouConnect expanded into **HR interim management**
- **Value driven** approach centered around trust, empathy, sustainability and growth
- **Passionate** about people!





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Methodology developed in collaboration with
Vlerick Business School



Collaboration between YouConnect and Vlerick Business School

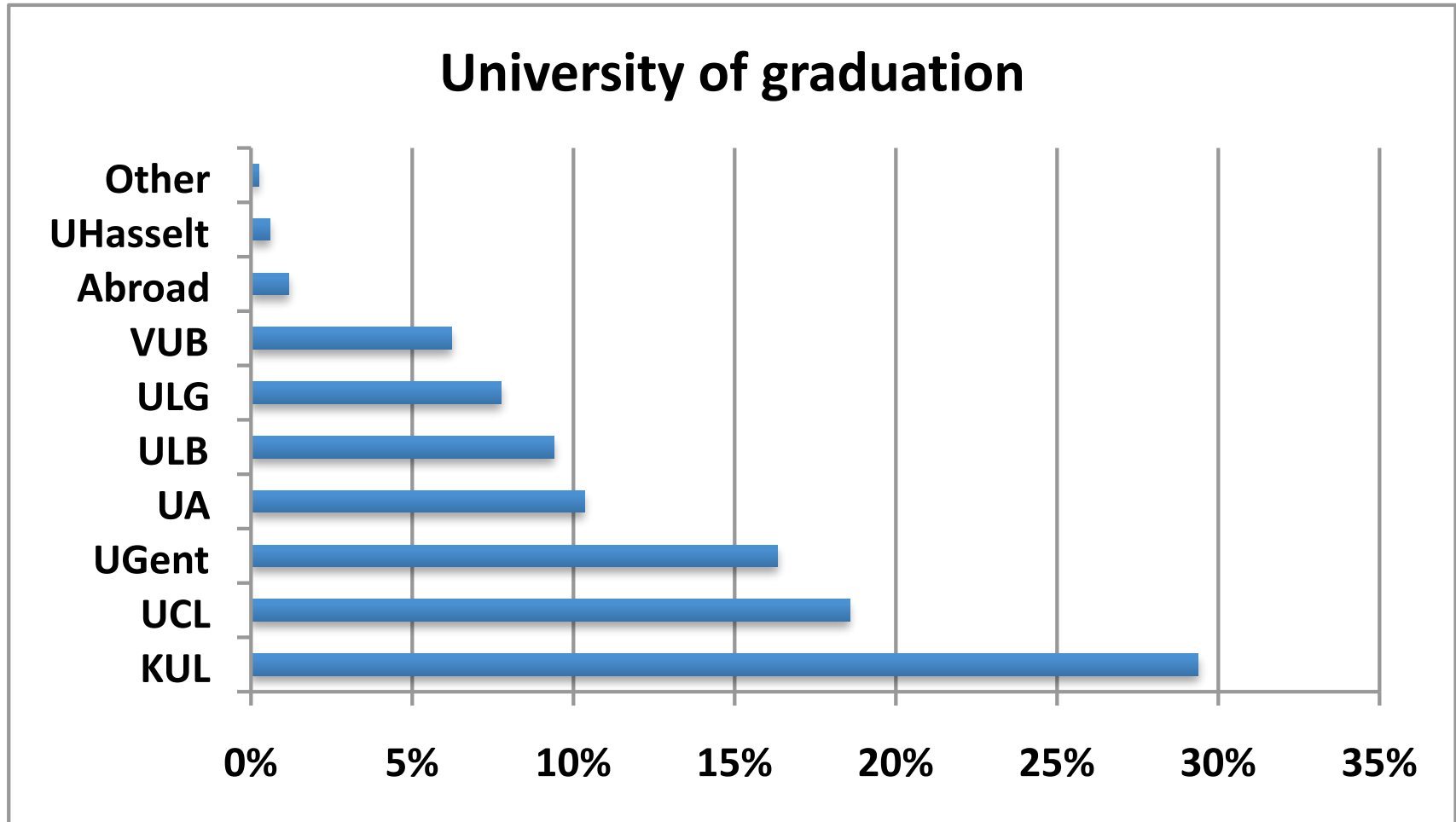
- The total market of active Belgian legal graduates is estimated at **50.000**
- A representative sample of more than **900 LinkedIn profiles**:
 - Master in Law, graduated at Belgian universities
 - 30 profiles per year of professional experience (0 to 30+ years)
- An additional sample of **46 LinkedIn profiles** of Belgium-based **General Counsels**, of listed or private Belgian companies and of Belgium-based multinationals, all with teams of 5 or more legal professionals
- 21 in-depth **interviews** with Masters in Law (lawyers, inhouse counsels, executives in non-legal careers)
- **Law firms** were categorized into 4 categories using [The Legal 500](#) rankings:

• Large multidisciplinary firms	16 firms
• Boutique firms	27 firms
• Other ranked firms	72 firms
• Non-ranked firms	all other

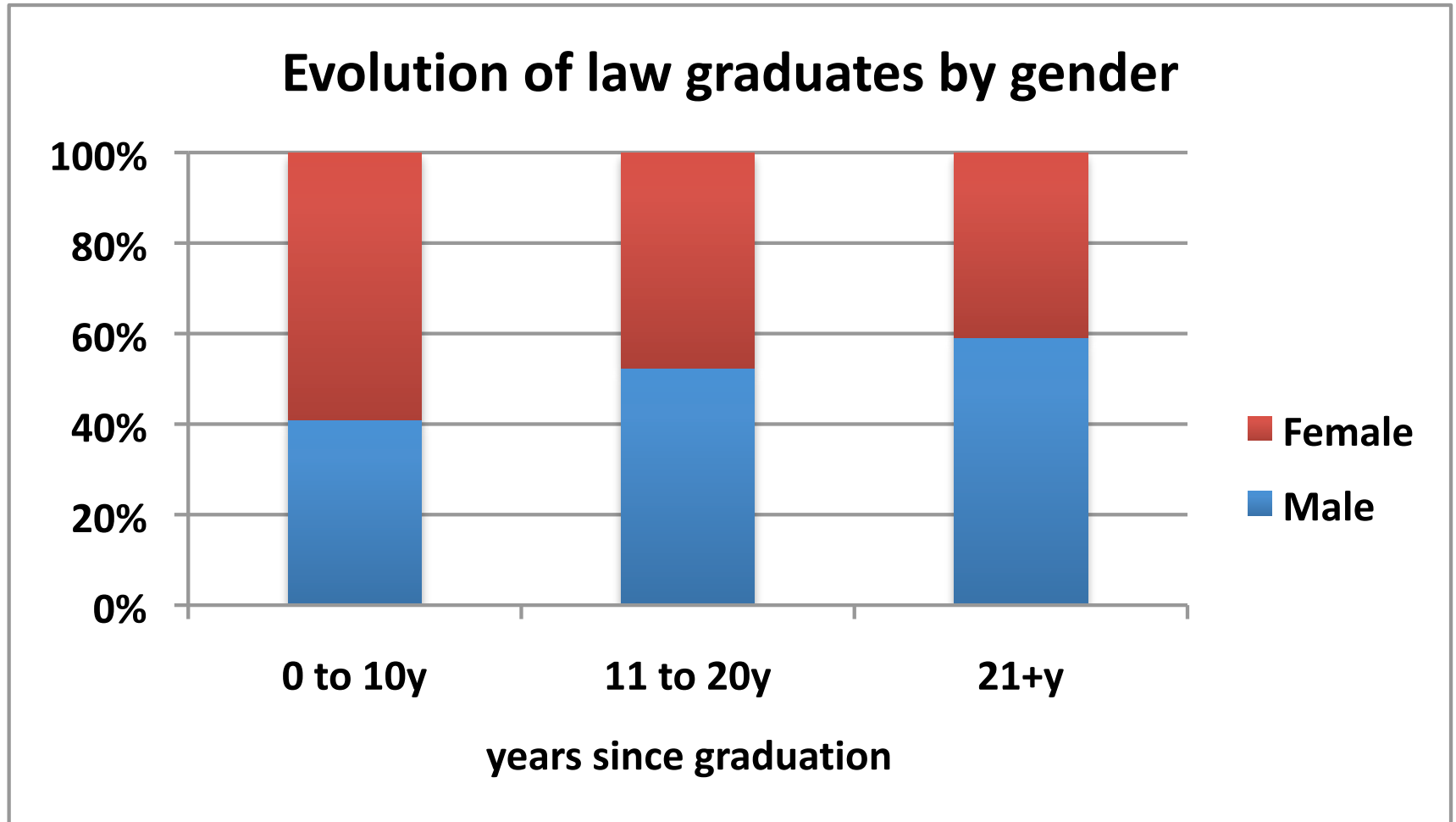


Academic background of the law graduates

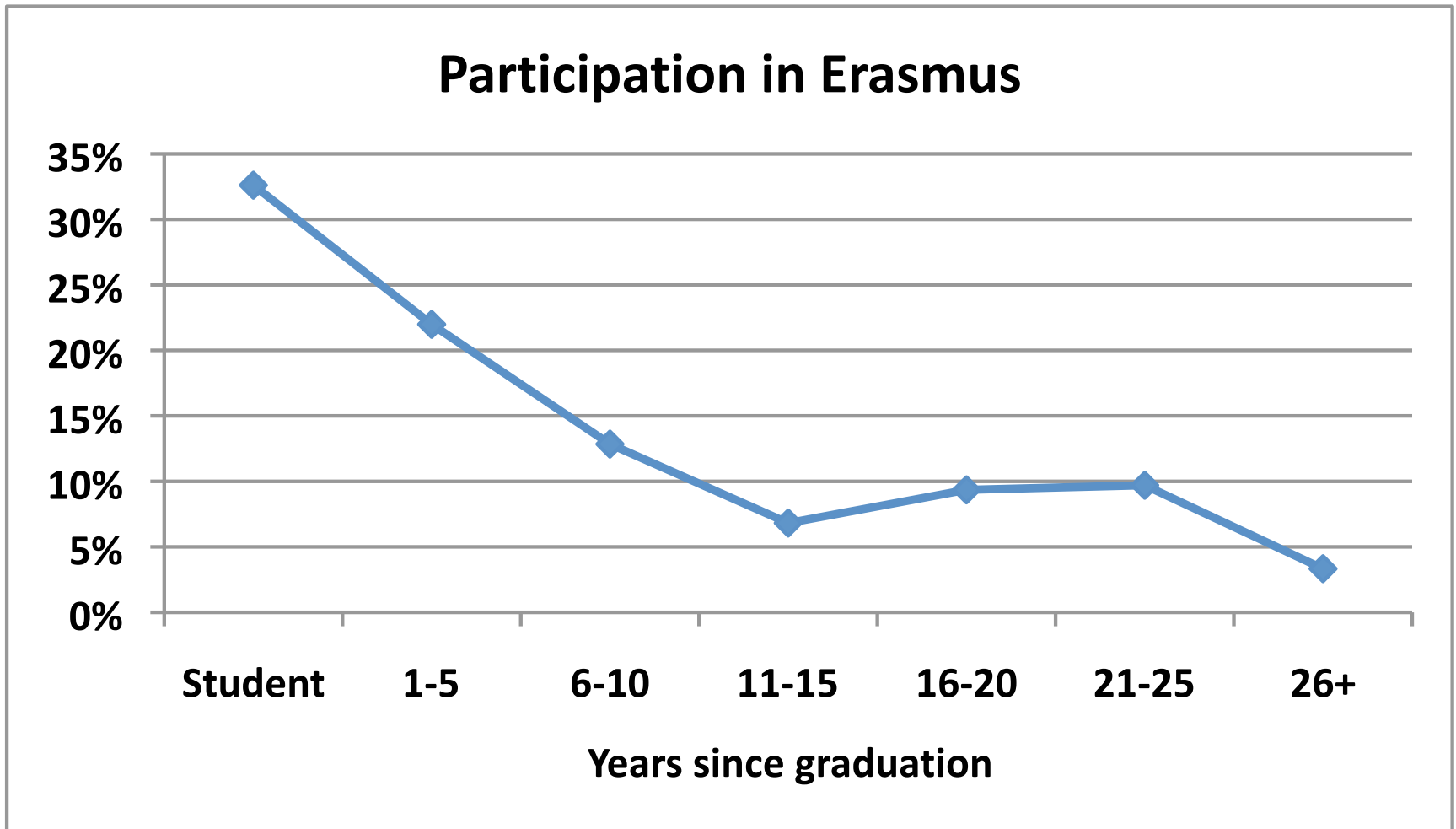
KULeuven, UCL and UGent are the most represented universities



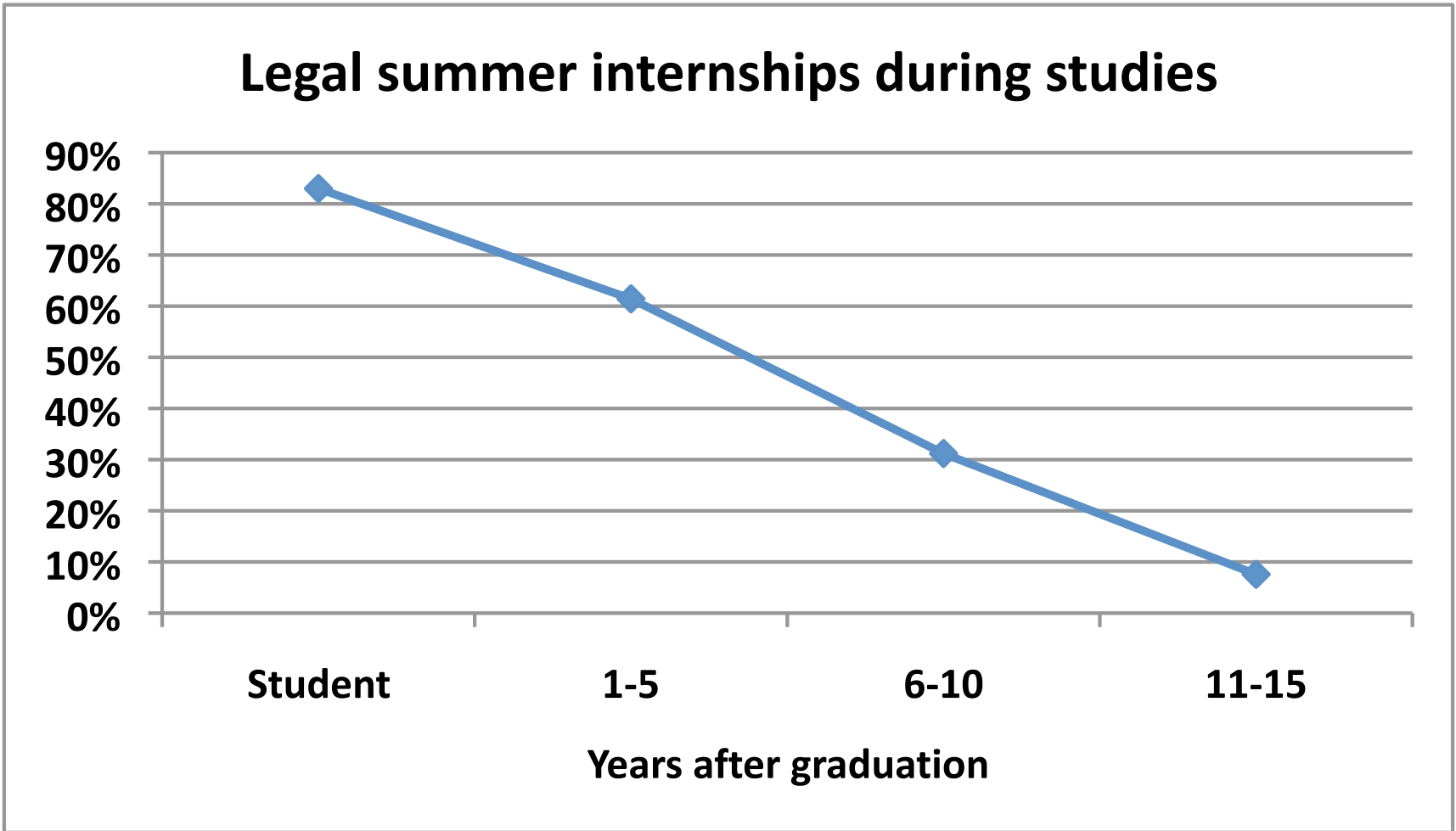
Law has gradually become a female dominated study



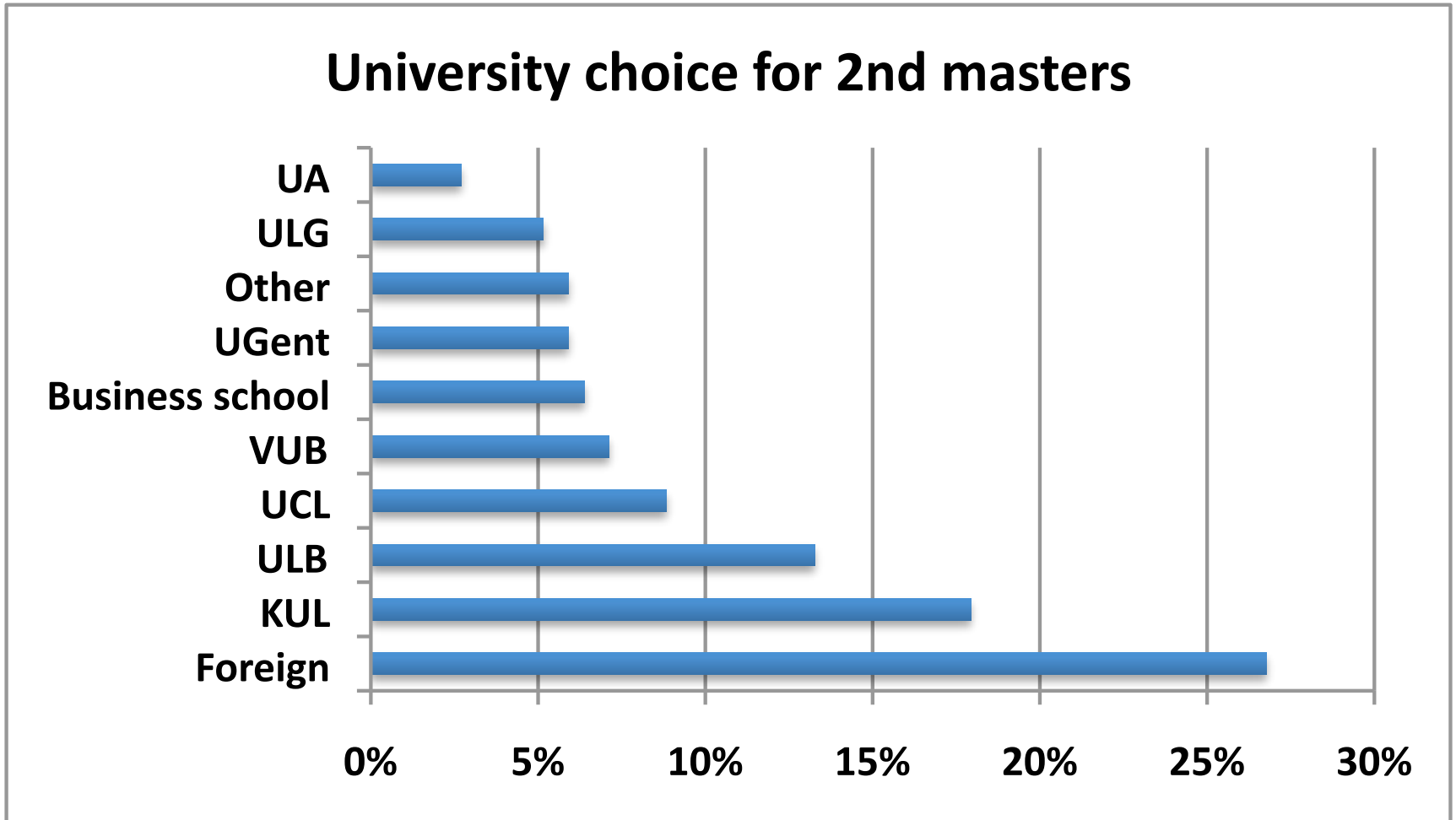
33% of recent law graduates participated in Erasmus



Voluntary legal summer internships have become common practice, currently averaging as much as 2,38



Almost 50% of the law graduates obtain a second masters degree, a quarter of which are abroad





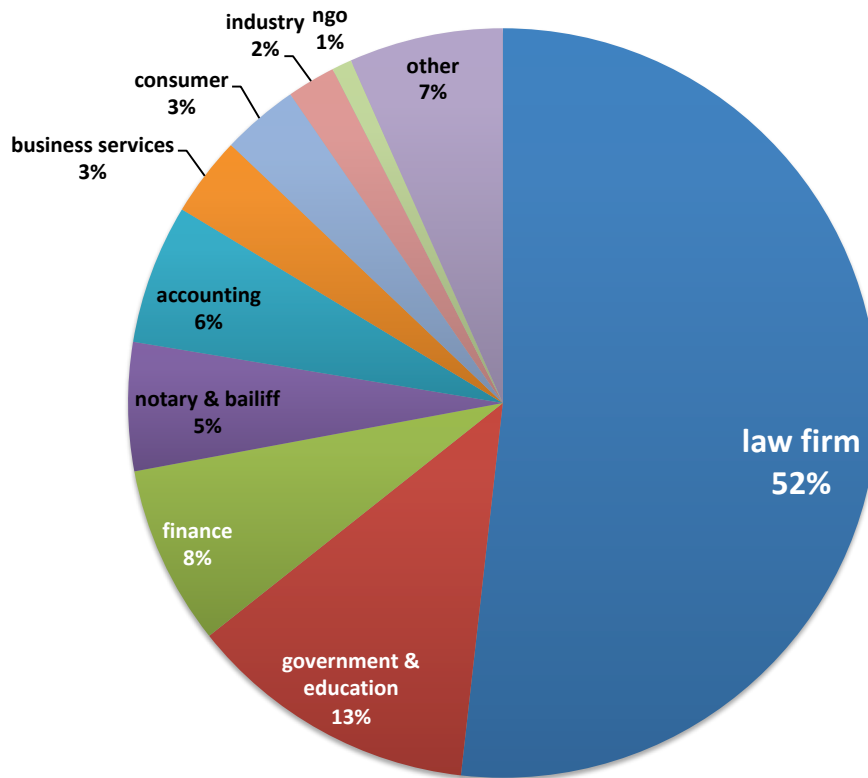
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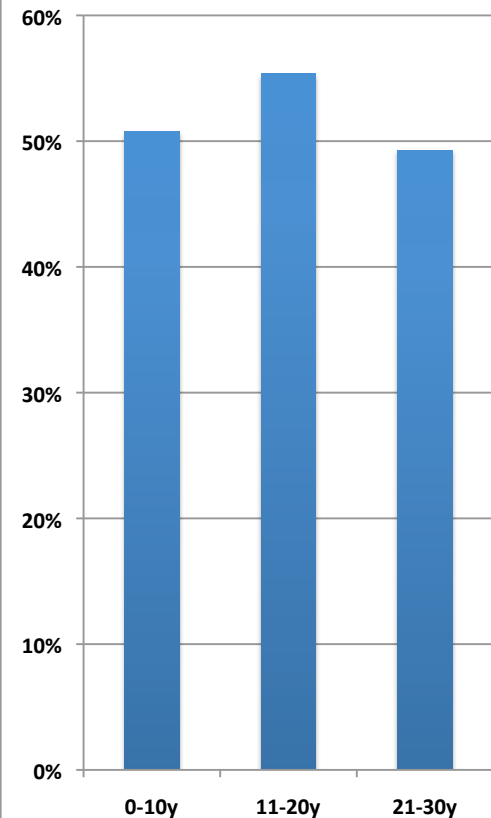
Career

52% of all law graduates started their career in a law firm, a figure which has remained stable for 30 years

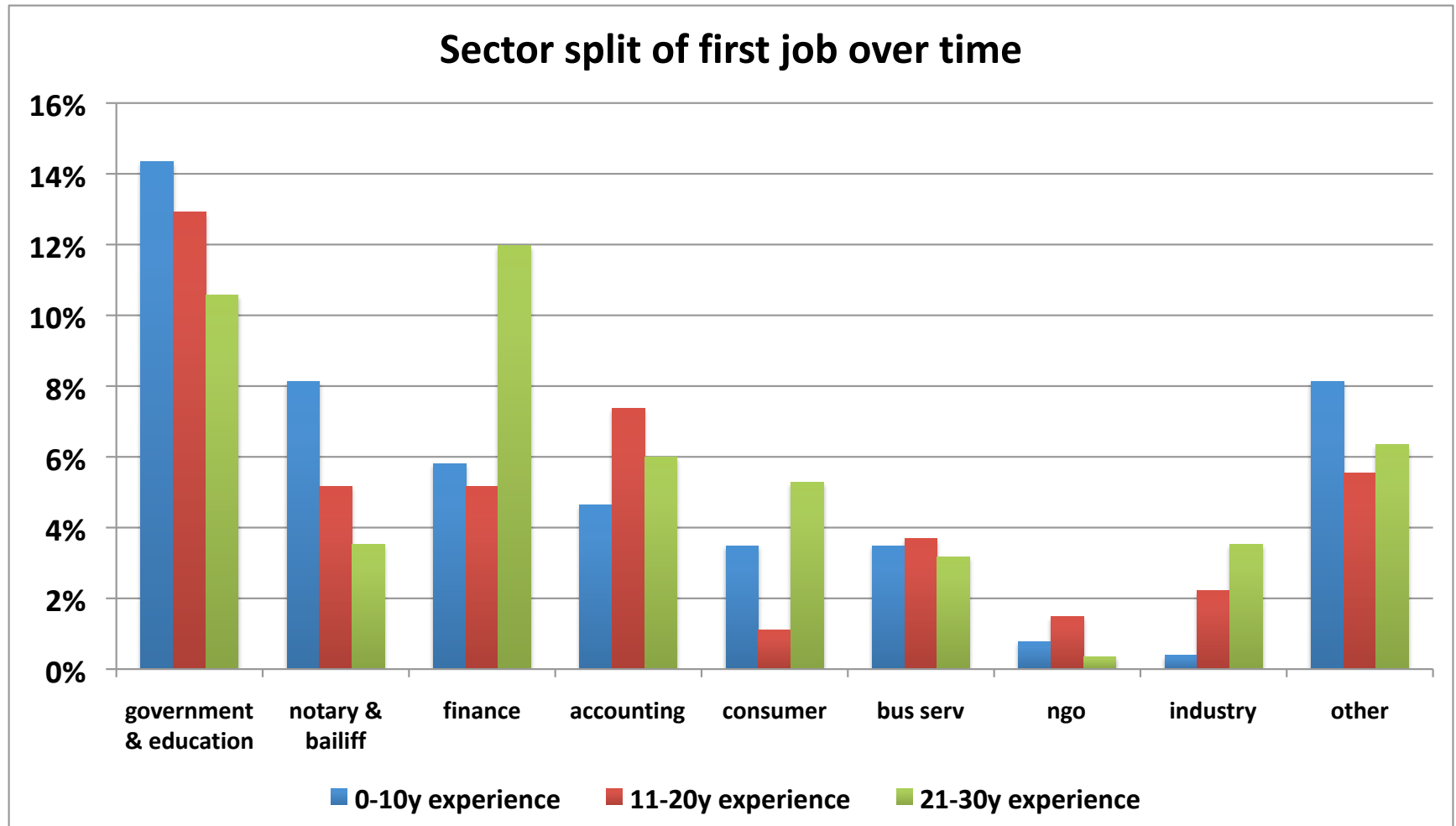
Sector of first job



share of law firms as first job over time

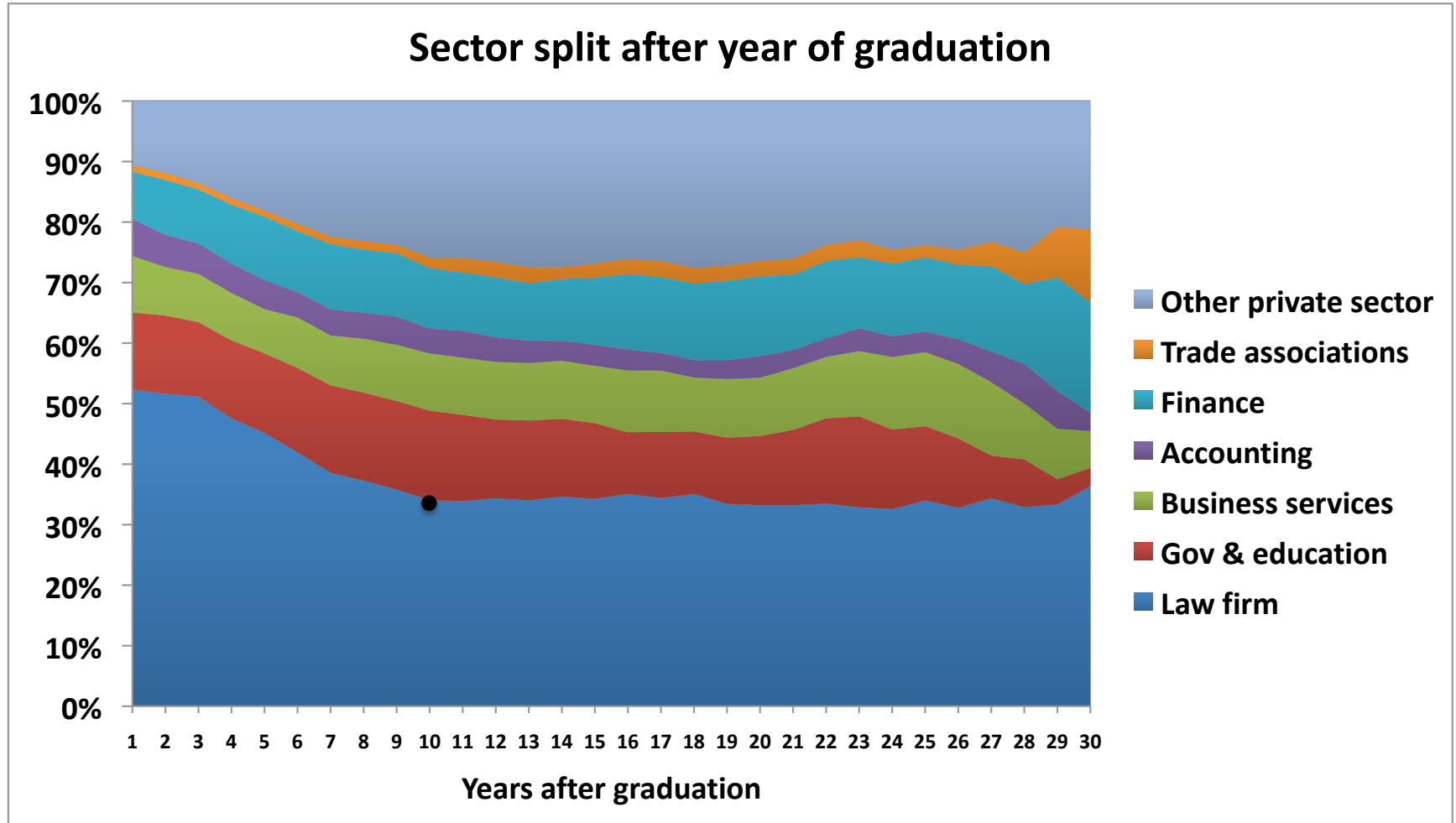


Outside law firms, the sector split of the first jobs has evolved over time, with government overtaking finance

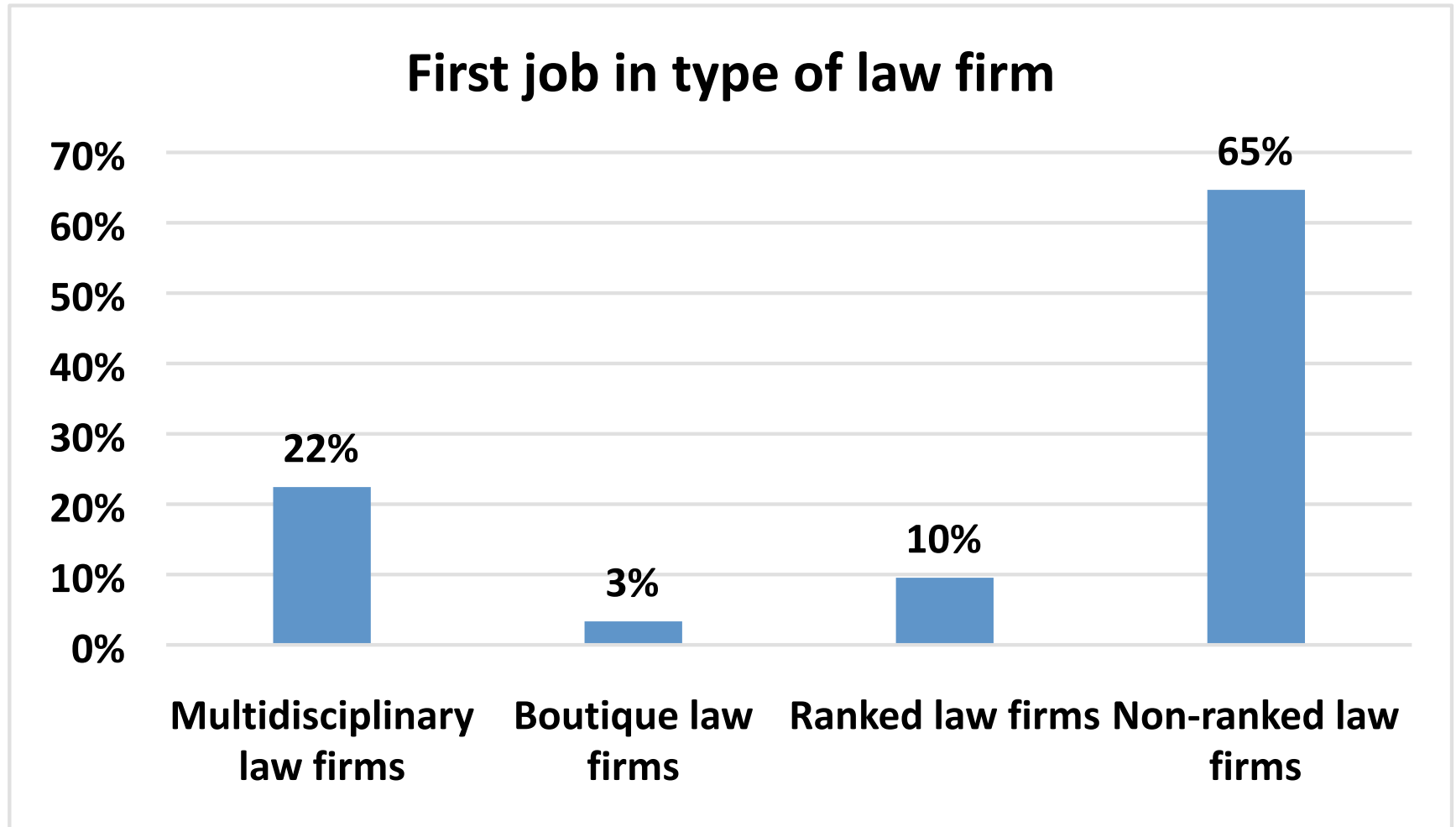


*“**Law firms** attract **more than half** of law graduates at the start of their careers. Compared to corporates, law firms frequently offer **summer internships** and have **more job opportunities** for law graduates with little or no work experience.”*

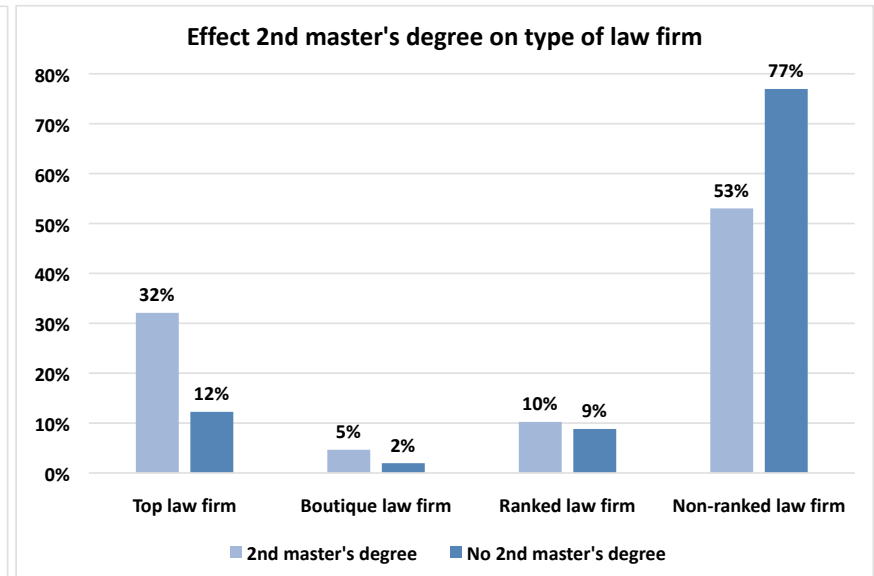
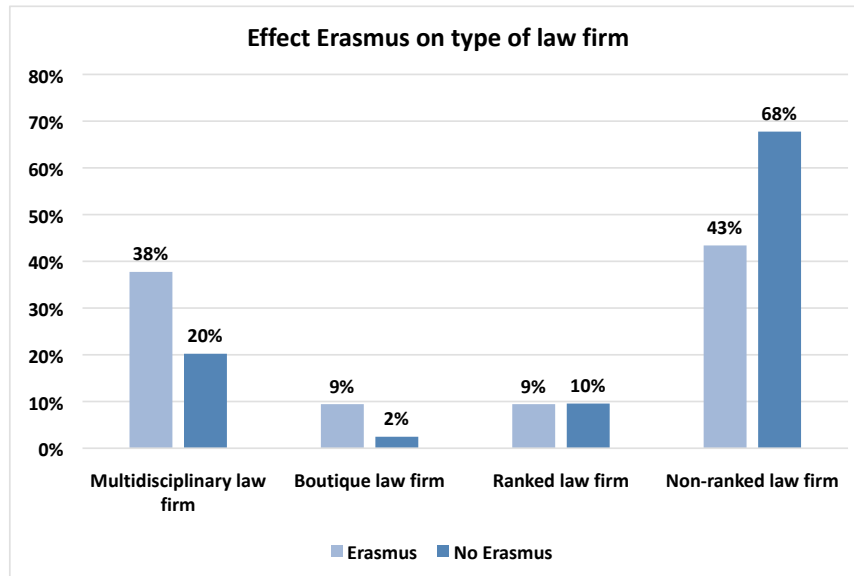
The percentage employed by law firms drops to 34% ten years after graduation



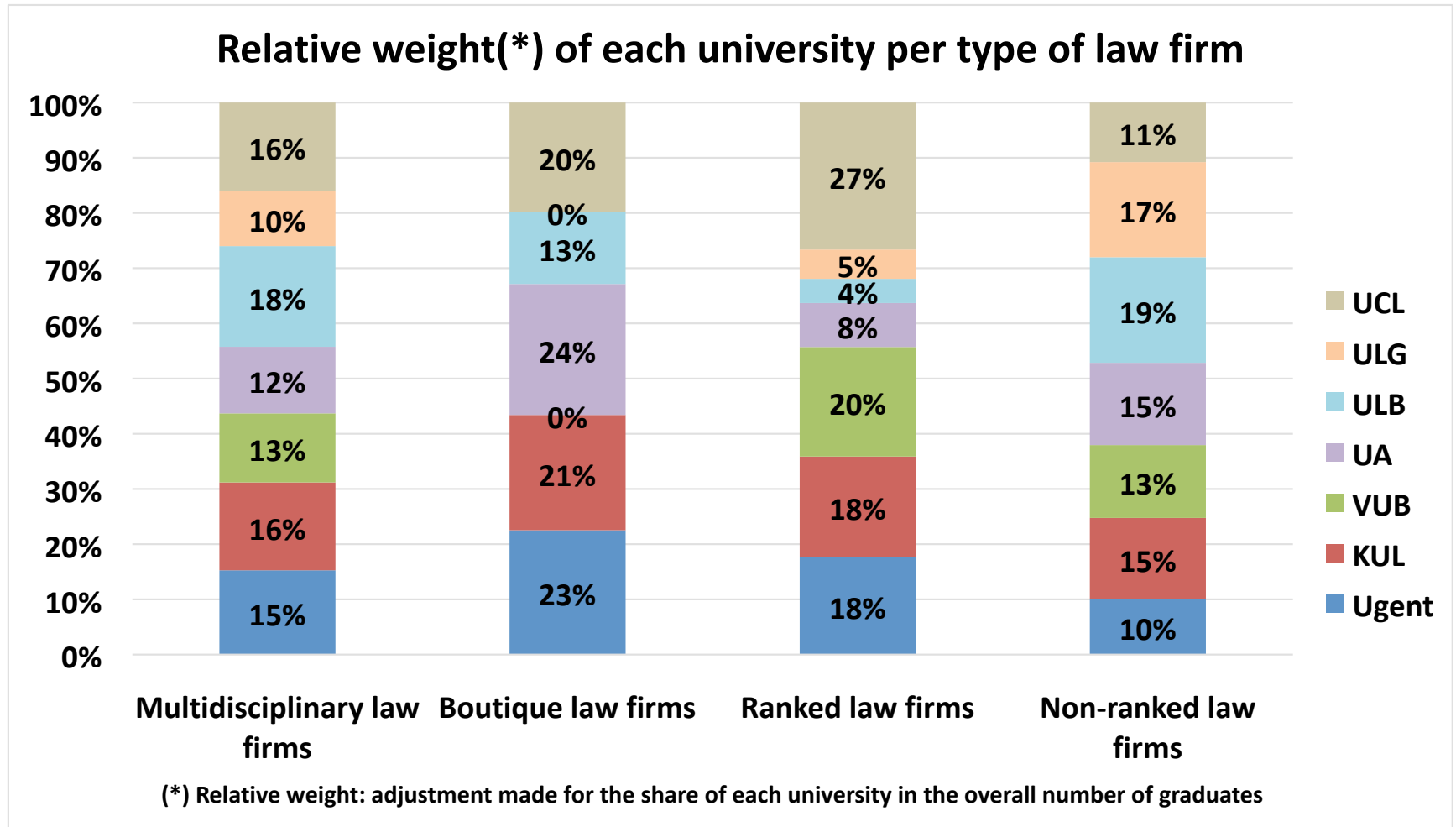
Only a quarter of the entrants at the Bar start in the top ranked law firms



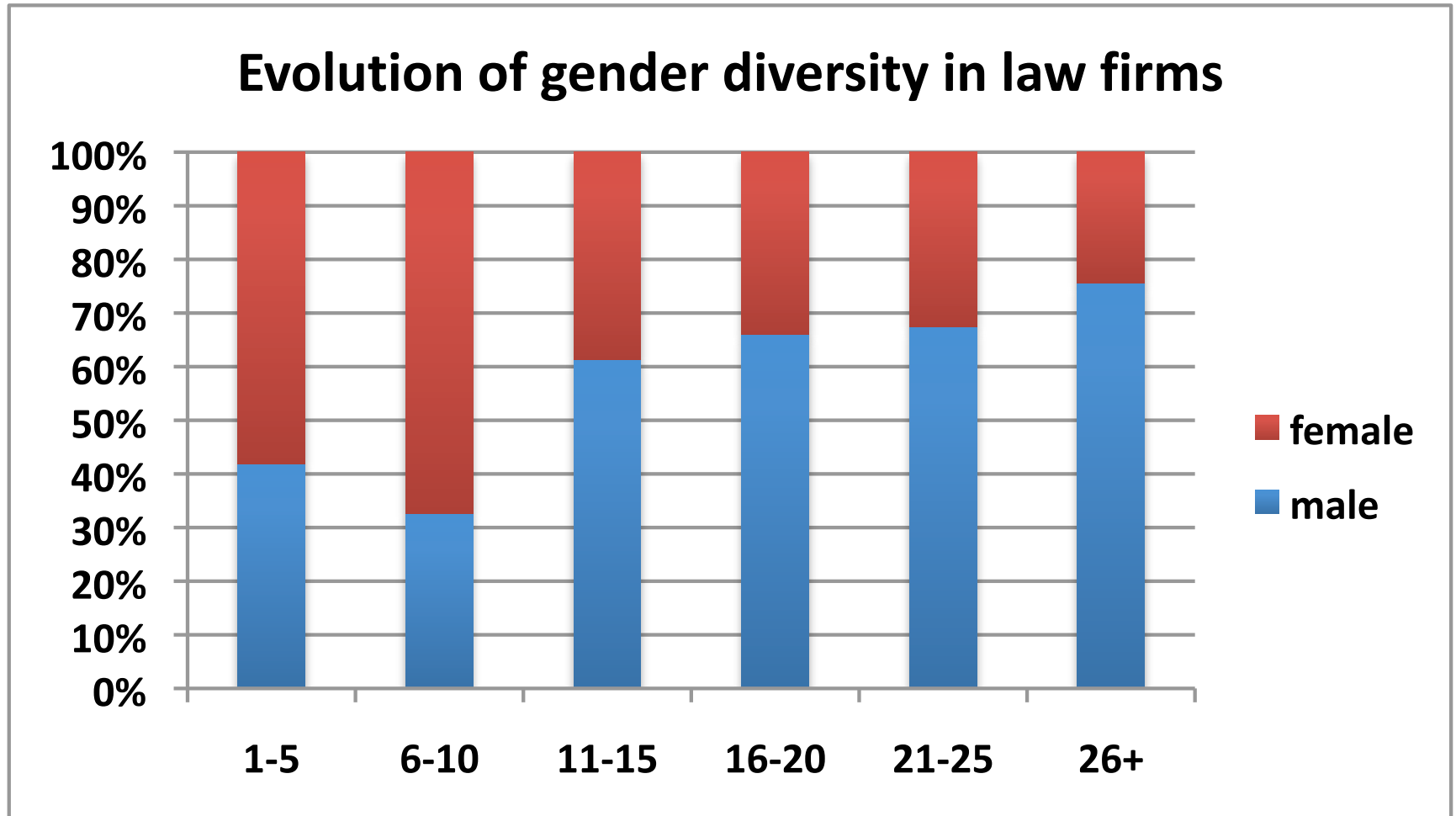
The top law firms prefer participants in the Erasmus program and graduates with a second masters degree



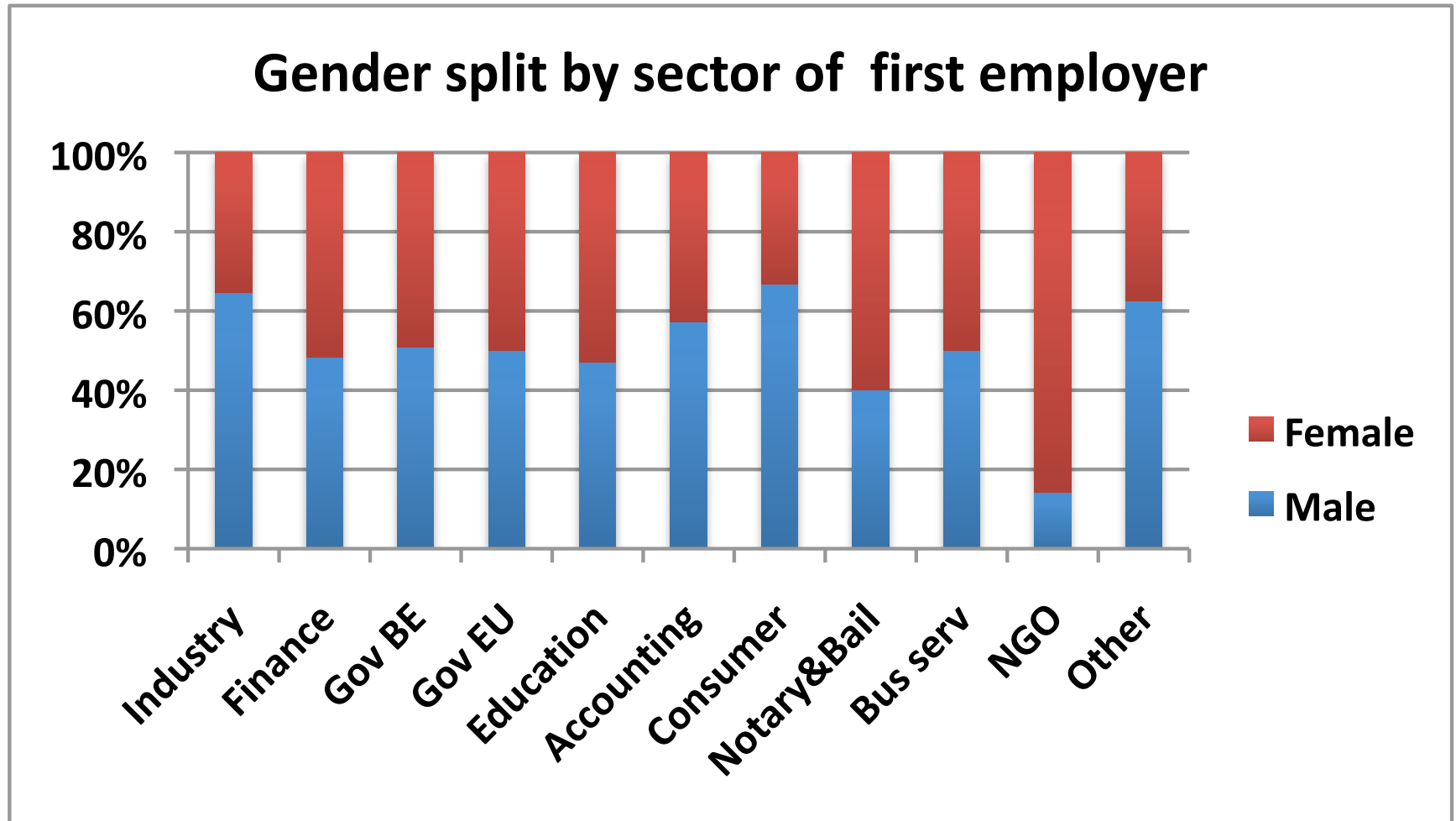
The choice of university has no significant impact on the type of initial law firm (unlike in the US)



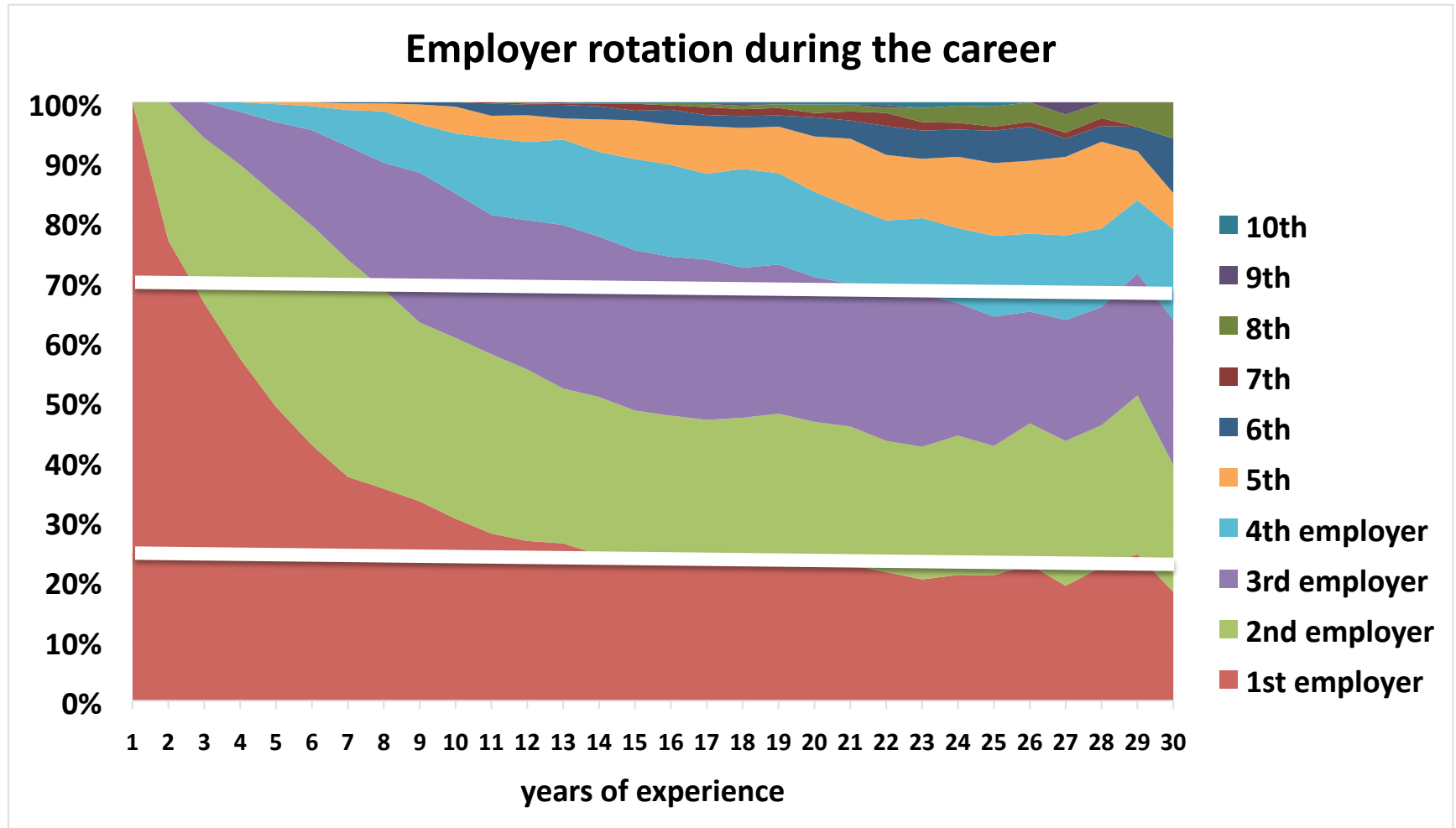
Law firms are generally female at the bottom of the pyramid and male at the top



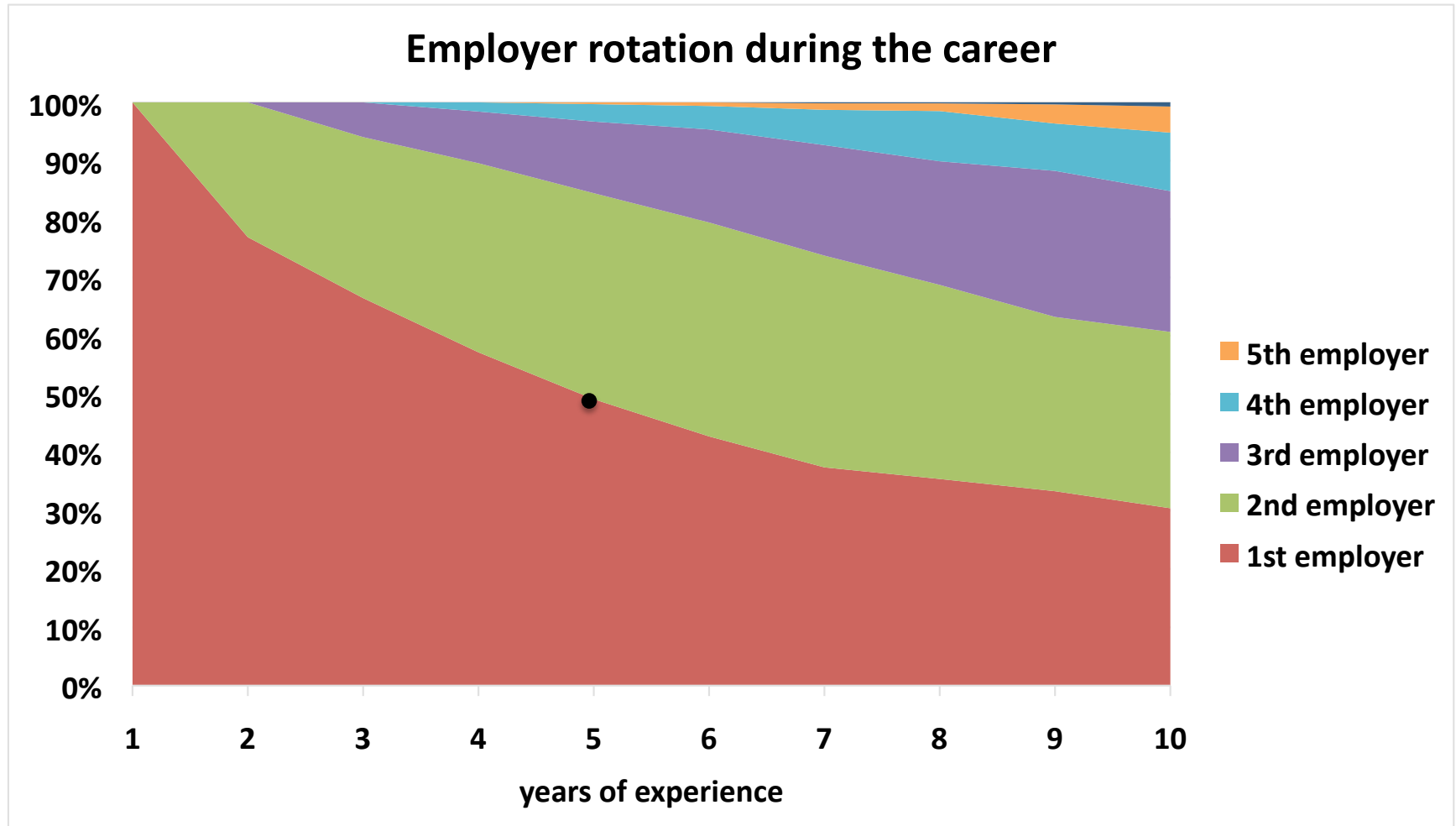
Only few sectors, such as NGO, seem to have an initial gender bias



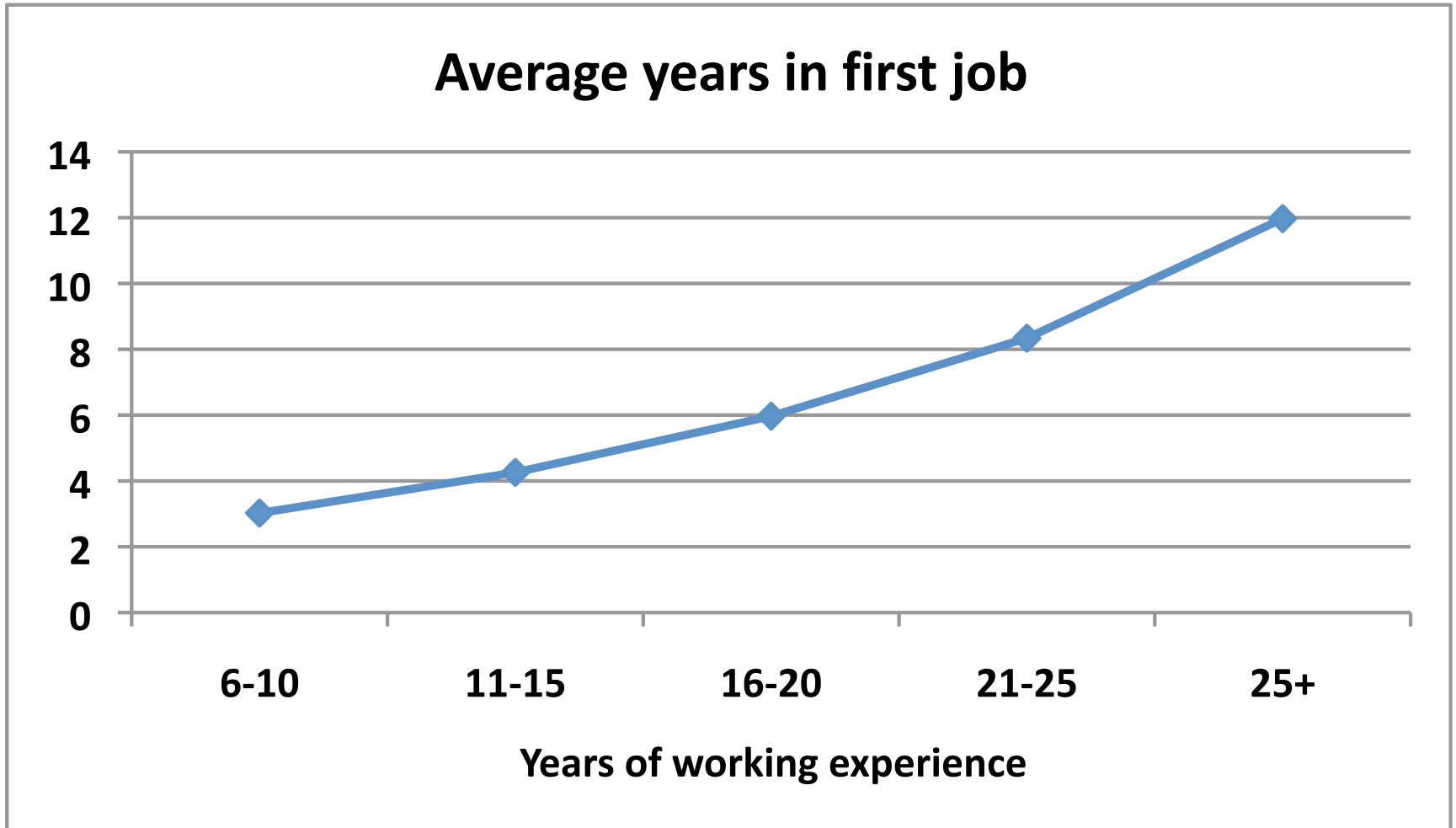
On average, few career moves: 25% stay for 25 years in their first job and 71% had only three employers in 20 years



However, there are frequent employer moves in the initial career stages: 50% switches employers within five years



Moreover, legal professionals change jobs more quickly than was the case historically

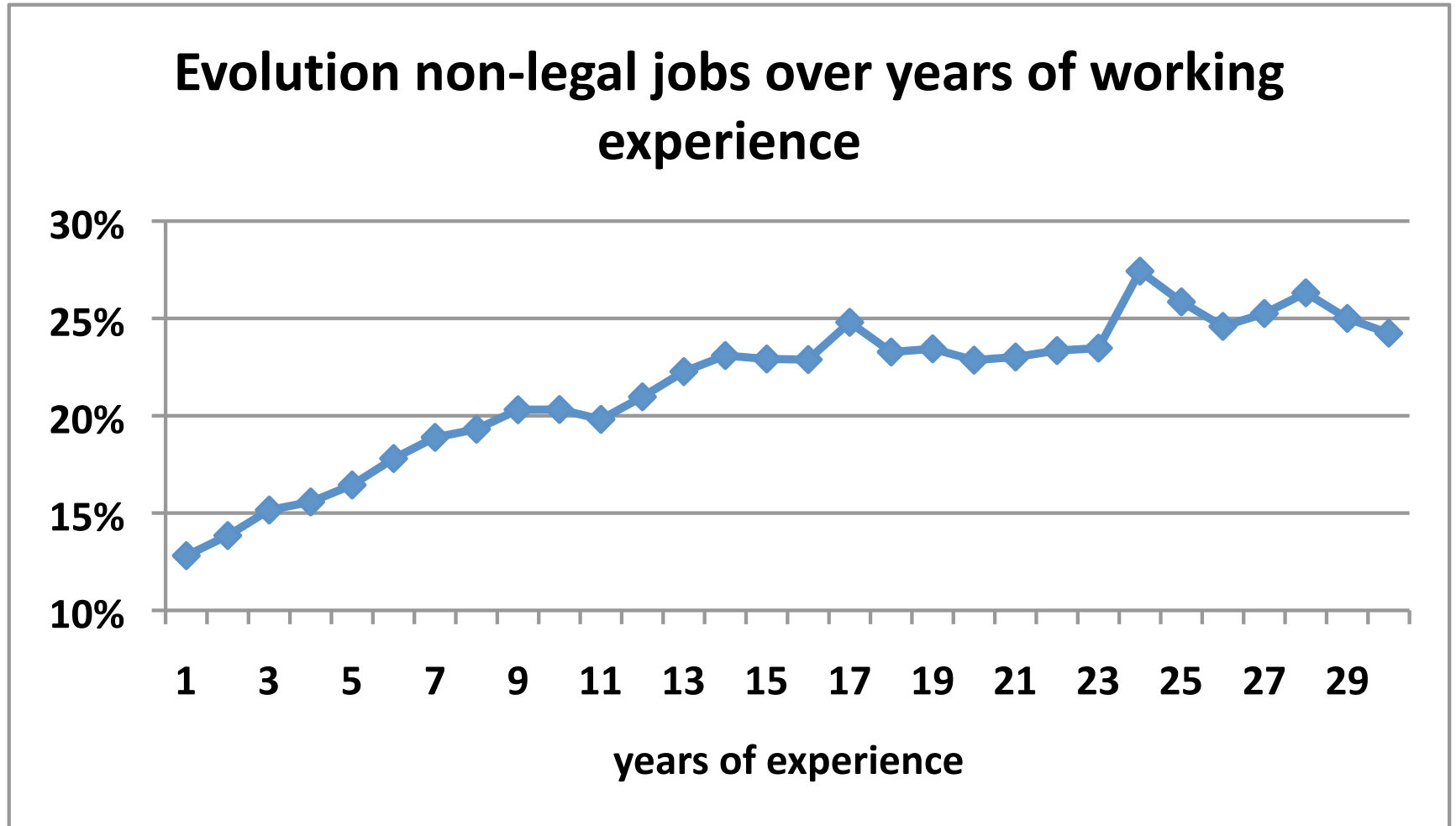


*“**Employer rotation** by law graduates has always been **low**. However, law graduates **switch** jobs more frequently at the **beginning** of their careers. This is **important** for employers in the current **scarcity context**: it's not just about **finding** legal talent, but also about **retaining** legal talent.”*



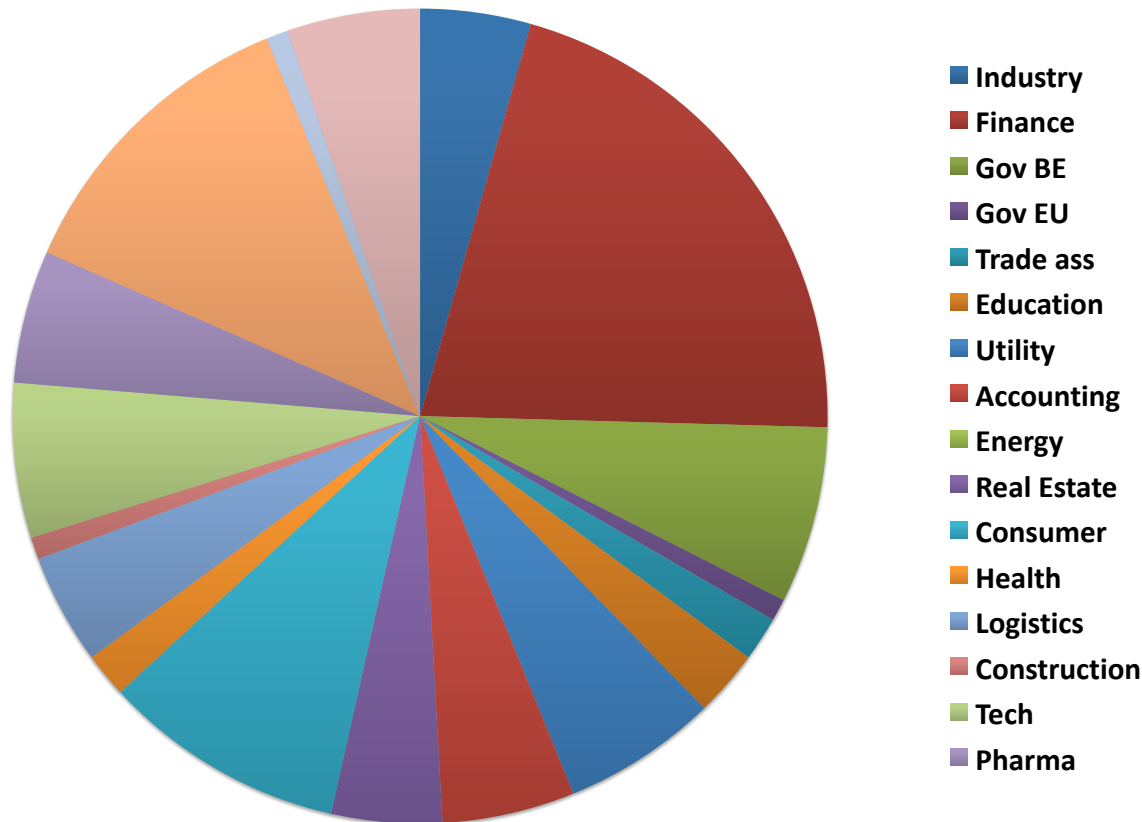
Non-legal professions

13% of law graduates start their career outside the legal profession, increasing to 25% after 17 years



When moving outside the legal profession, law graduates are represented in most sectors

Industry split of legal graduates working outside legal profession (10y after graduation)





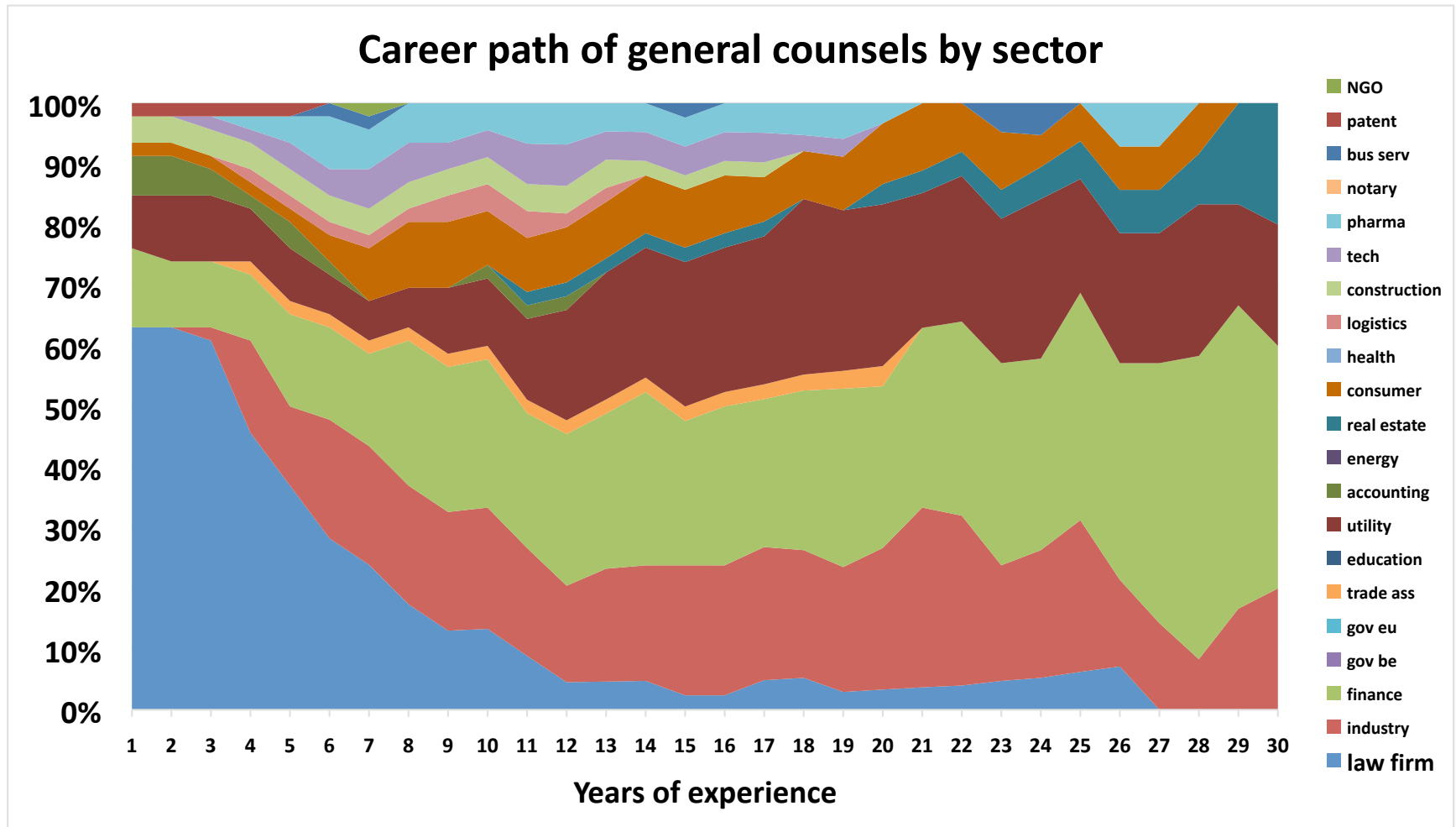
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General Counsels

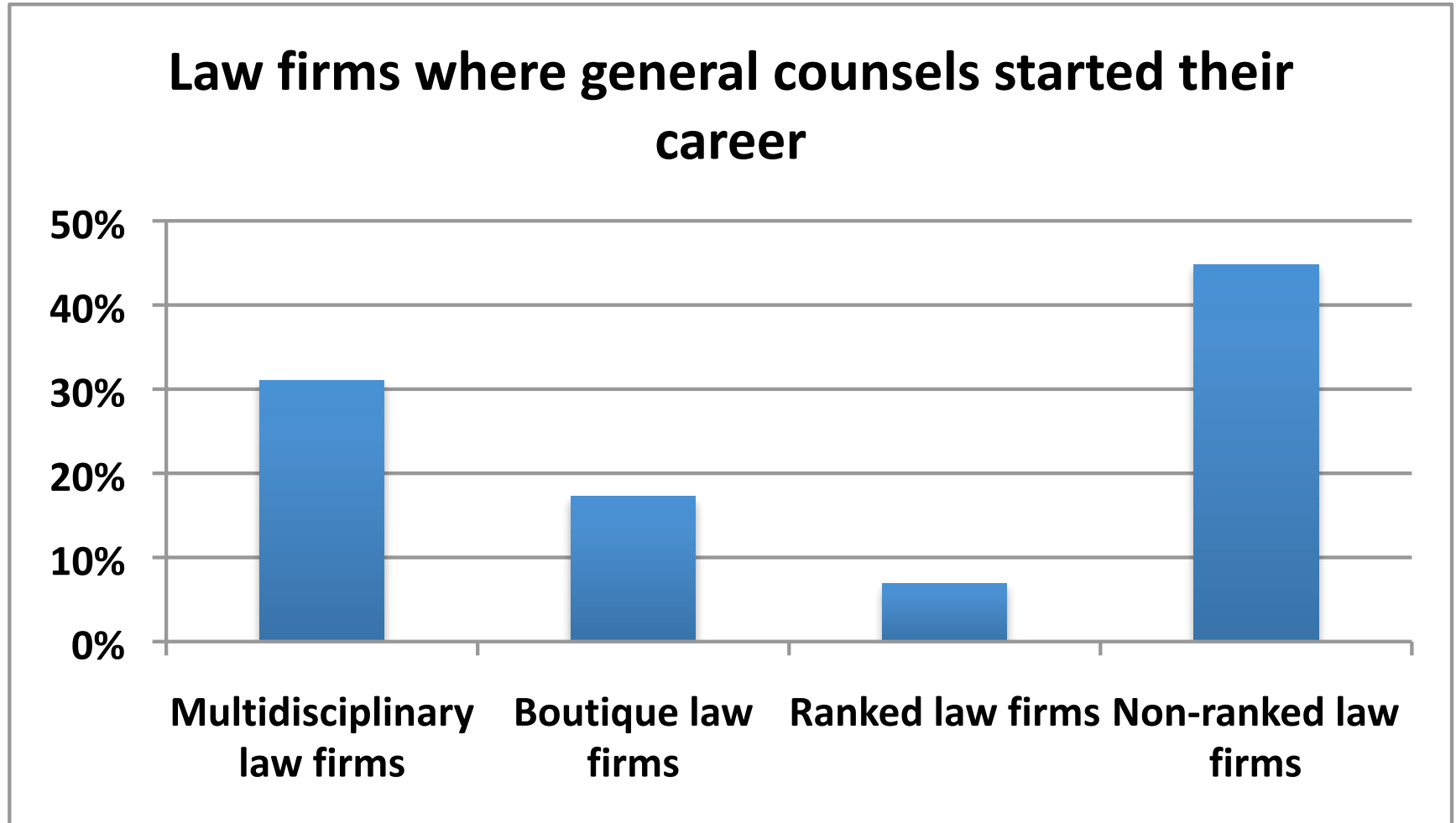
Sample selection

- Profiles of 46 Belgium-based General Counsels
- Representing listed and private Belgian companies as well as Belgium-based multinationals
- Sample only includes companies with teams of 5 or more legal professionals

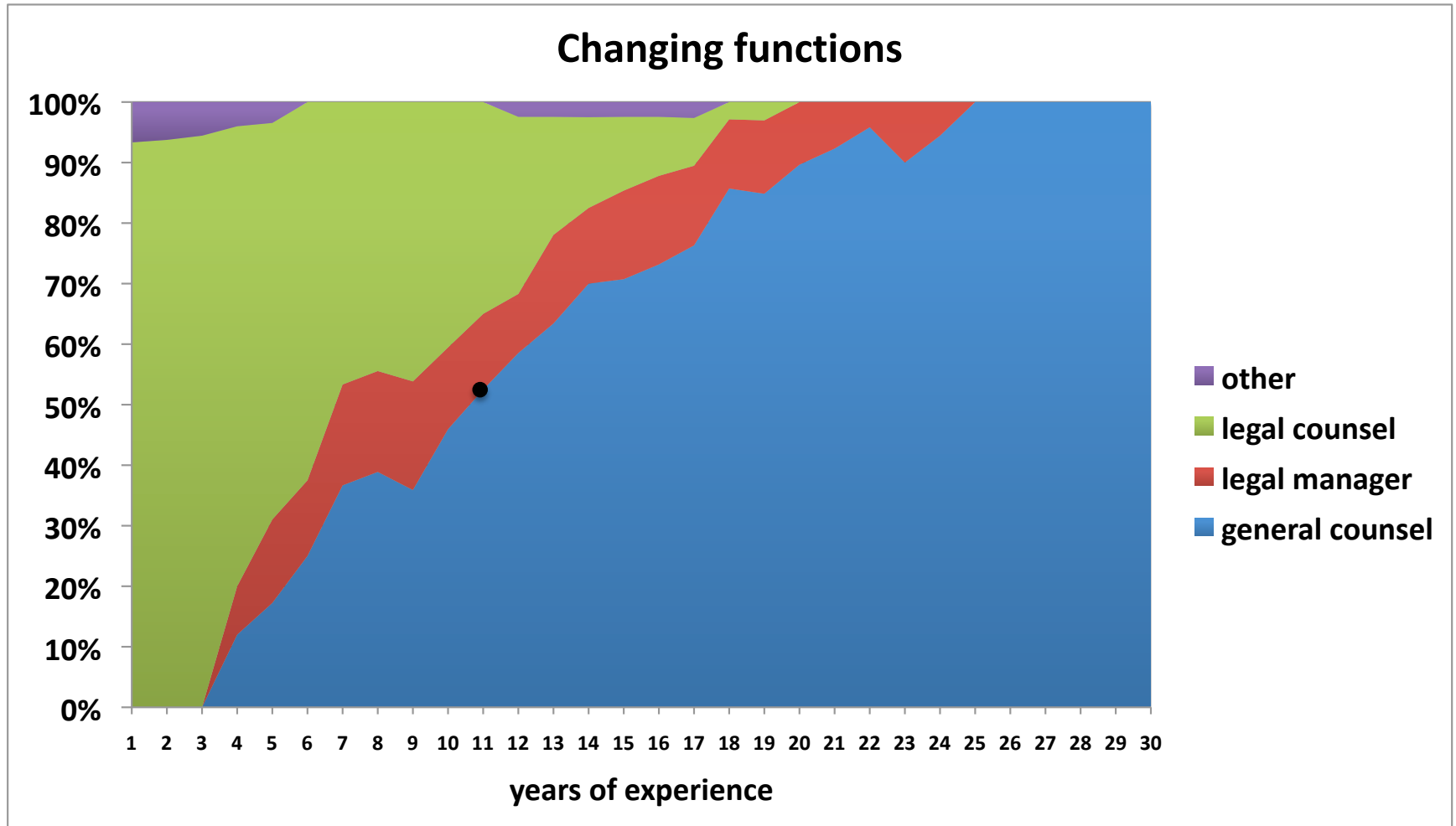
60% of the general counsels started their career in a law firm



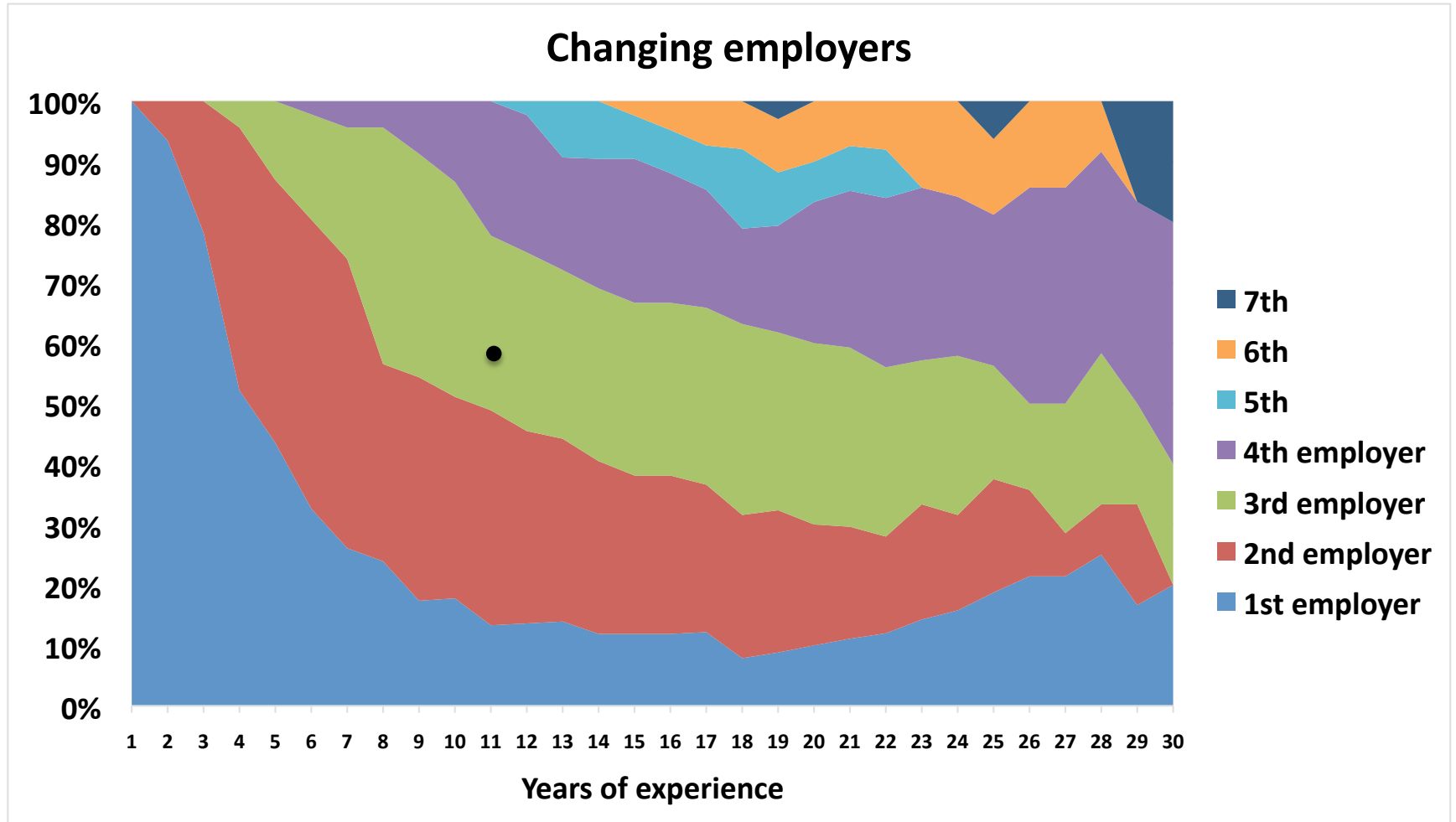
General counsels do not necessarily have a background in ranked law firms



50% of general counsels received the role of general counsel within 11 years



60% of the general counsels have two previous employers





Conclusions

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- A Belgian law degree mainly secures access to legal positions and, contrary to common understanding, much less to other professions.
- Law firms attract the majority of law graduates at the start of their careers. However, a substantial number gradually move towards inhouse functions in the corporate sector.
- A career in a top law firm is typically launched at university: Erasmus participation, summer internships and a second Masters degree are all important criteria for entry to leading law firms.
- Employer rotation of law graduates is low. Employers should know that there are frequent employer moves in the initial career stages, and that such job rotation is increasing. This is important for recruitment and retention management.

Get in touch

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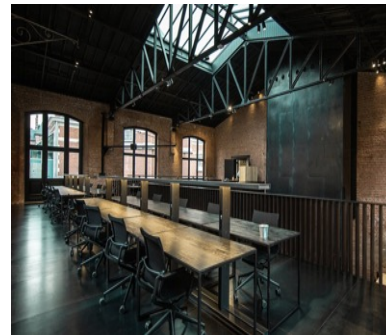
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