



Analysis of students and recent graduates survey 2010

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Summary

In July 2010, the Society and College of Radiographers surveyed current students and recent graduates from radiography programmes to gather information about their motivations, finances and experiences. Nearly 500 respondents answered a range of questions in an online questionnaire about the reasons they chose radiography, their finances during and after their degree and their experiences in their first job. This document presents an analysis of this survey.

Executive Summary

In July 2010, the Society and College of Radiographers surveyed current students and recent graduates from radiography programmes to gather information about their motivations, finances and experiences. Nearly 500 respondents answered a range of questions in an online questionnaire about the reasons they chose radiography, their finances during and after their degree and their experiences in their first job. This document presents an analysis of this survey and the following bullet points highlight the main findings:

- The main reasons students give for choosing the subject of radiography are that they are interested in a healthcare career; want to help people / contribute to society; feel it is likely they will find a job on graduation; and that there is potential for career development. The most important reason for choosing a specific course is the reputation of the university.
- Financial problems is the most commonly selected factor for not completing the course, with finding the course too difficult; wrong career choice and dissatisfaction with clinical placement also frequently selected.
- The average student radiographer debt is between £5,000 and £10,000 which, whilst worrying, is not as large as the average debt of students across all subjects.
- 80% of 2009 graduates who responded to the survey started their first job within 2 months of graduating indicating that the job market for radiography graduates was still strong in 2009.
- However, the recent government downward pressure on public finances may already be starting to have a negative effect on the job market for radiography graduates as the number of 2010 graduates with a job arranged as of July (59%) has decreased compared with last year's figures (76%).
- 93% of 2009 graduates said that they did feel prepared for their first job.
- Graduates from 2009 are overwhelming positive in their assessment of their first year working as a qualified radiographer: over 90% agreed or strongly agreed that their career is so far consistent with their expectations.

1. Introduction

This document presents an analysis of an online survey of students and recent graduates run by the SoR in July 2010. The survey was targeted at current radiography students and graduates from radiography degrees since 2009. Respondents were asked about their motivations for studying radiography, details of their finances and their experiences since graduating.

The survey was anonymous and covered as many students and recent graduates as possible. We identified 3618 potential subjects from the SoR membership database and emailed to ask if they would complete the online questionnaire. Respondents were offered the option of entering a prize draw if they completed the online survey.

The questionnaire was completed by 479 individuals. It was designed to ask respondents different questions depending on their year of graduation: current students were asked questions about the reasons they chose to study radiography and why some students did not complete the course, and recent graduates were asked their experiences in their first job. All respondents were asked questions about their finances including how they financed their degree and their level of debt on graduation.

The results are mainly displayed using descriptive statistics. Where there are key differences from last year's survey, a statistical test (t-test) is used to determine with 95% confidence if the differences are statistically significant or could just be explained by chance.

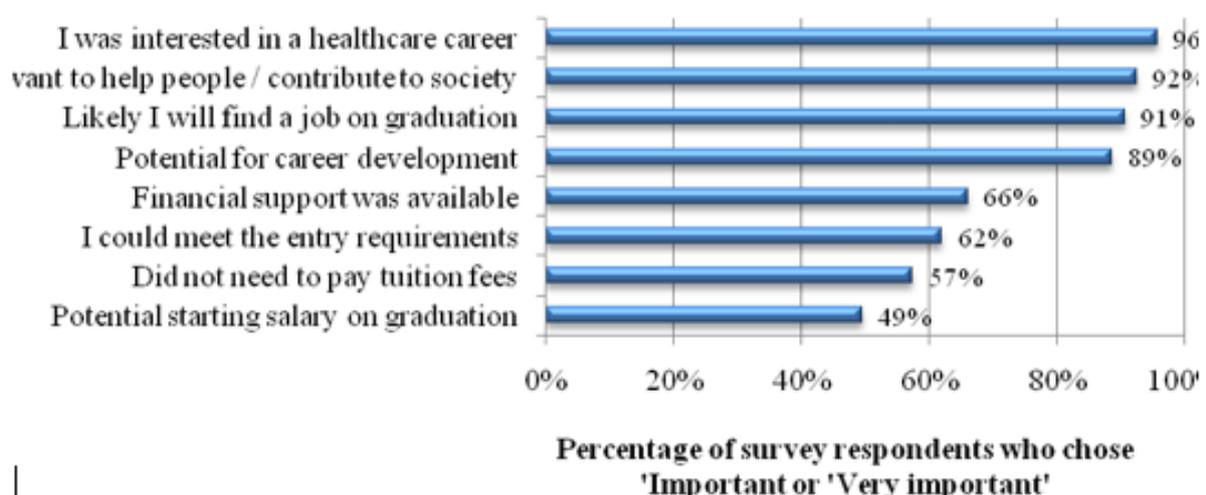
2. Pre-registration education

2.1 Reasons for studying radiography

The main reasons students give for choosing the subject of radiography are that they are interested in a healthcare career; want to help people / contribute to society; feel it is likely they will find a job on graduation; and there is potential for career development. Financial considerations are considered less important by the respondents.

How important to you were the following reasons for choosing the subject of radiography?

Source: SoR survey of students 2010



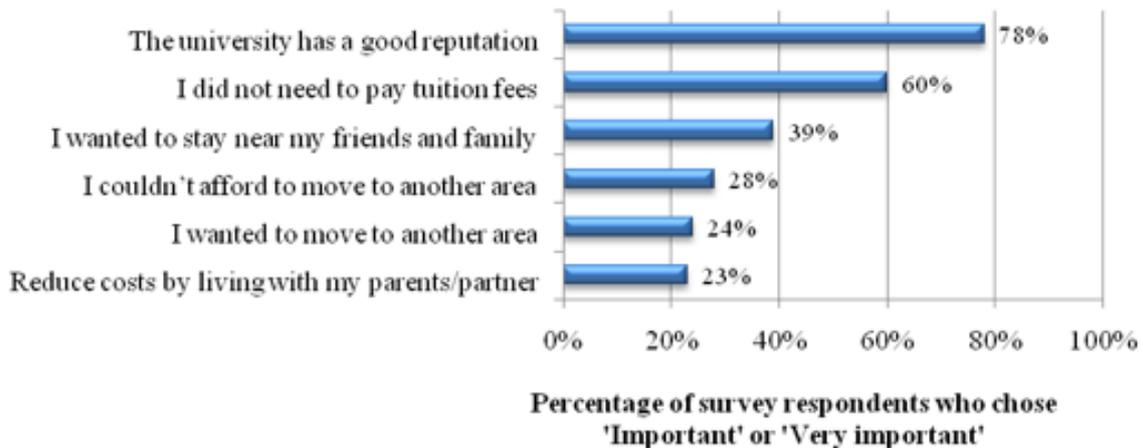
Other factors mentioned as free text responses are an interest in radiography; the location of the course; the combination of science and patient care; the variety of modalities; the student had undergone radiography themselves; opportunities to work abroad; and the student had previously worked as an assistant.

2.2 Reasons for choosing specific course

The most important reason for choosing a specific course is the reputation of the university. In the free text answers respondents also talked about the importance of the arrangements for clinical placements by the university they had chosen.

How important to you were the following reasons for choosing your specific course?

Source: SoR survey of students 2010



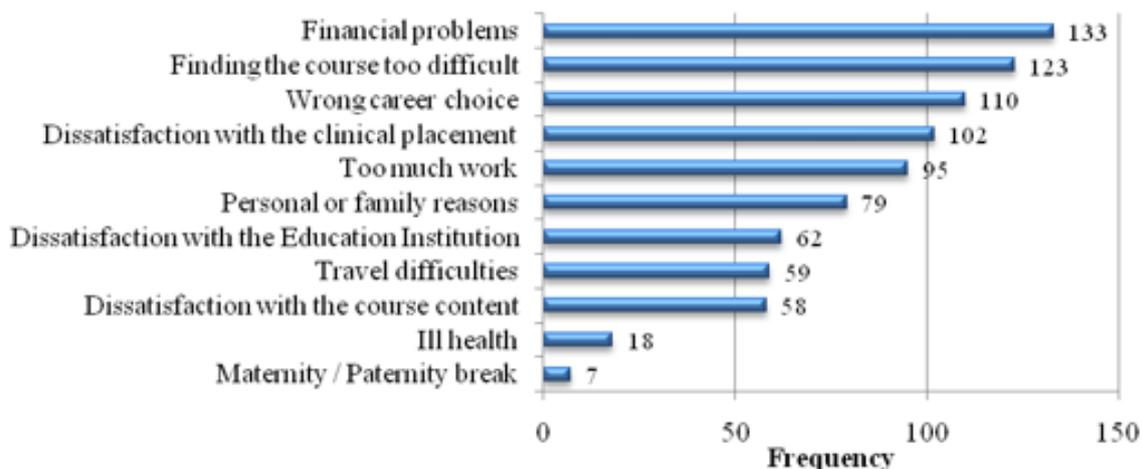
2.3 Reasons for not completing the course

Students were asked about factors which they found difficult and which may lead them to consider leaving the course. They were also asked if they knew of other students considering leaving the course and if they knew the reasons why. The reasons given for not completing the course are collated below according to the course discipline and are shown in separate graphs for diagnostic radiography and therapeutic radiography. For both disciplines financial problems is the most commonly selected factor, with finding the course too difficult; wrong career choice and dissatisfaction with clinical placement also frequently selected. Two other factors highlighted by more than two respondents in the free text responses are a lack of respect shown to students on clinical placements and failing parts of the course.

Reasons why students do not complete the course

Diagnostic

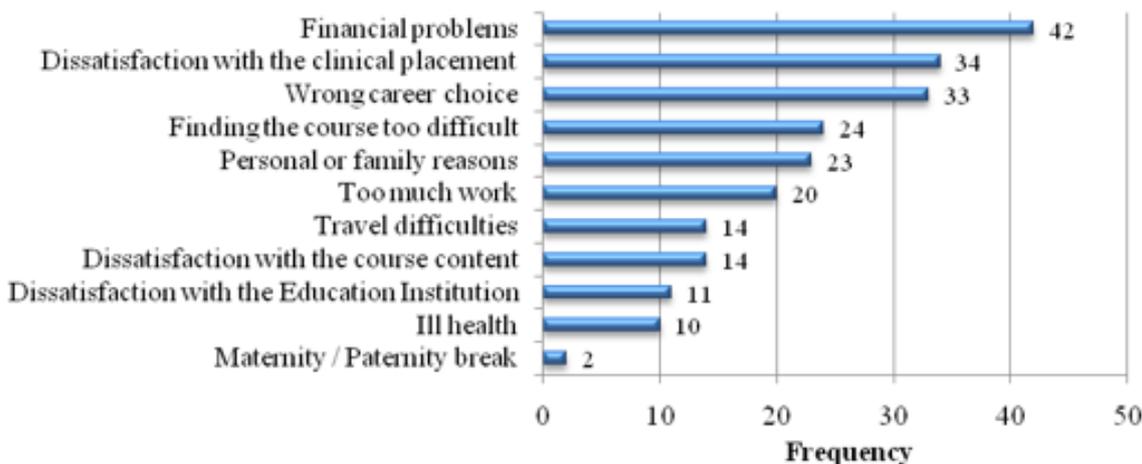
Source: SoR survey of students 2010



Reasons why students do not complete the course

Therapeutic

Source: SoR survey of students 2010



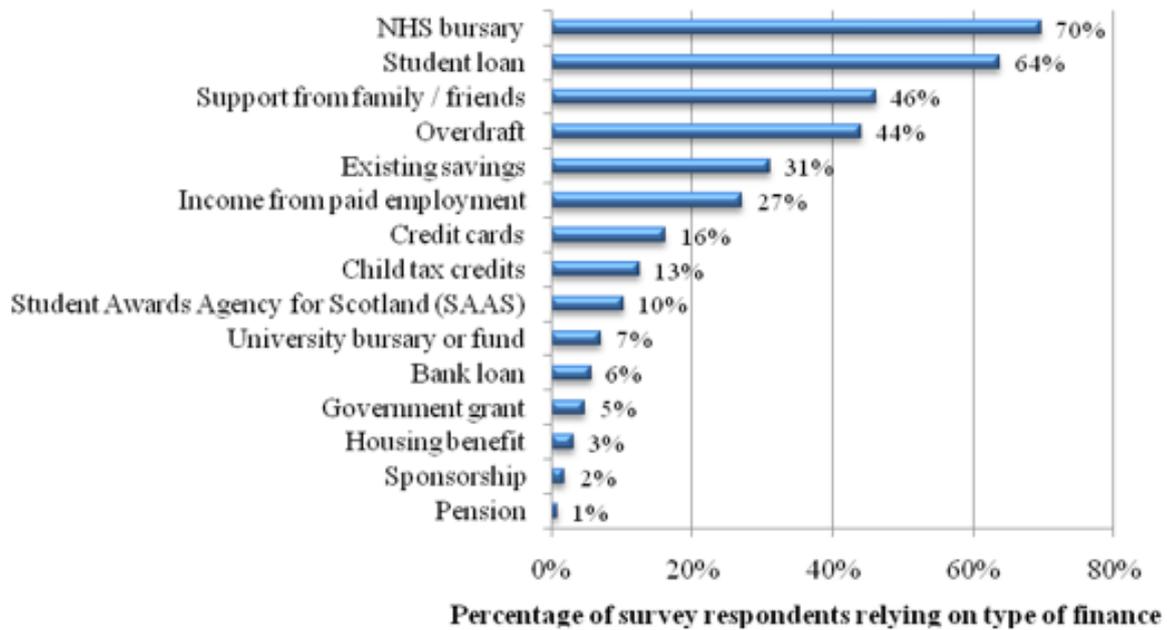
3. Student finances

3.1 Types of finance

Respondents were asked to select all the types of finance they relied on to fund their studies. 23% of respondents did not select either NHS bursary or Student Awards Agency for Scotland (SAAS) presumably because they are not eligible for an NHS bursary or SAAS award.

Types of finance relied on by students to fund studies

Source: SoR survey of students 2010

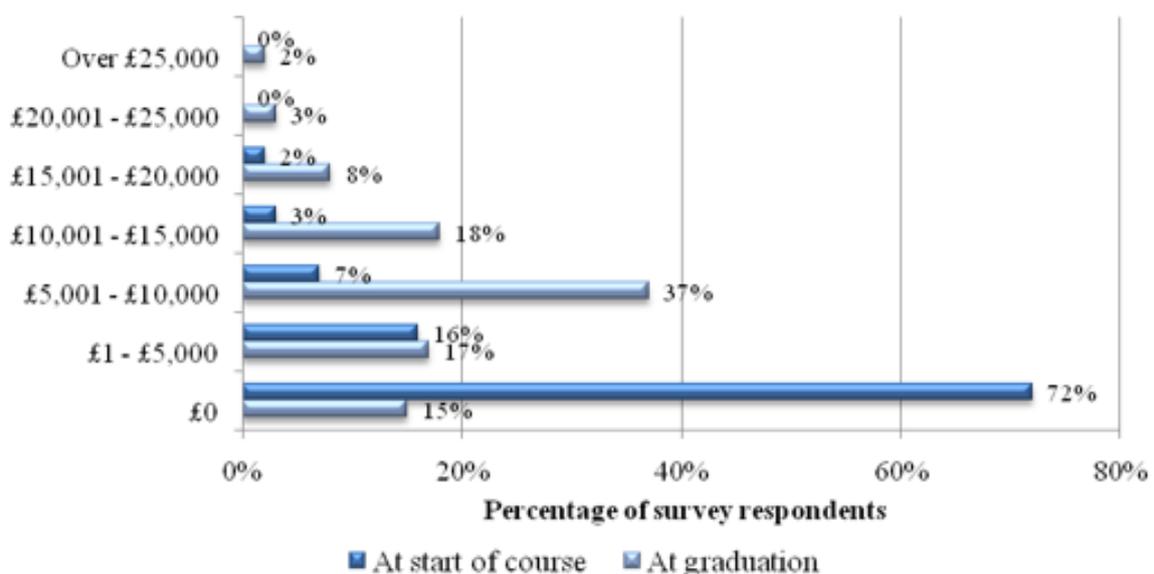


3.2 Student debt

The average respondent was in debt by between £5,000 and £10,000 on the date of their graduation, or was expecting to be. Whilst this level of debt is worrying, it is not as large as the average debt students in other subjects can expect: the Push Student Debt Survey¹ published in August 2010 found that third year students across all subjects are expecting to graduate with a debt on average of £14,100.

Level of student debt (not including mortgage)

Source: SoR survey of students and recent graduates 2010



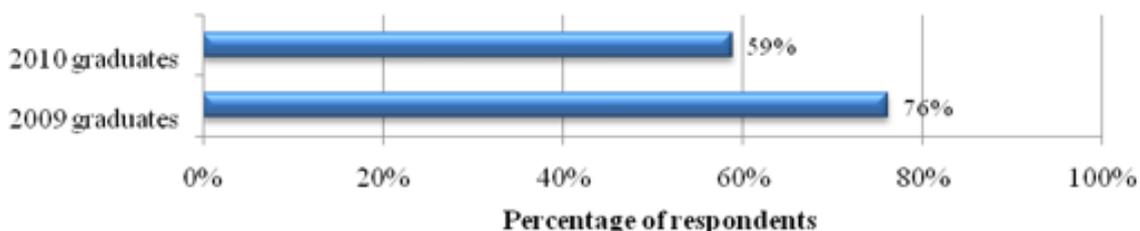
4. First job

4.1 Arranging first job

The government downward pressure on public finances may already be having a negative effect on the job market for radiography graduates as the number of graduates with a job arranged as of July has decreased compared with last year's figures. 59% of 2010 graduates who responded to the survey had arranged their first job as of July 2010. This compares with 76% of 2009 graduates who stated they had arranged their first job as of July 2009. This is a statistically significant reduction in the number of graduates with a job arranged as of July in the year of their graduation.

Percentage of respondents who had a job arranged as of July in their graduation year

Source: SoR surveys of recent graduates 2009 and 2010



Further analysis of the data shows that this includes a statistically significant reduction in the number of diagnostic radiography graduates with a job arranged. However the proportion of therapeutic graduates with a job arranged as of July remains steady at 75%, all be it for a small sample size (with only 16 therapeutic radiography 2010 graduates responding to the survey).

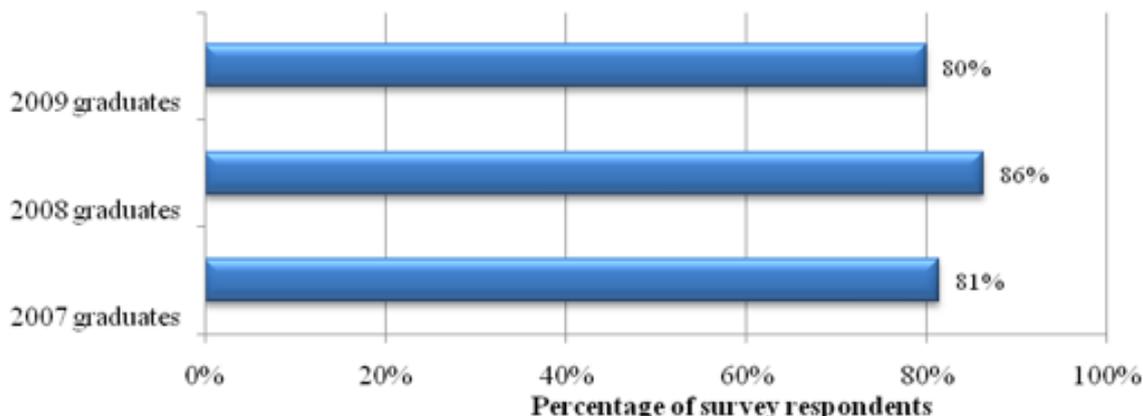
The main reason 2010 graduates give for not yet having a job arranged are that they have been so far unsuccessful at interview; they are restricted to a specific geographic area; and there are no suitable vacancies for them.

4.2 Starting first job

80% of 2009 graduates who responded to the survey started their first job within 2 months of graduating. This is not a significantly significant difference to the data from the 2009 survey and indicates that the job market for radiography graduates was still strong in 2009. It may be that the effect of the restricted public services economic circumstances is yet to be seen in these figures; 2010 graduates may be the first to feel the effects.

Percentage of graduates starting their first job within two months of graduation

Source: SoR surveys of recent graduates 2008, 2009 and 2010



93% of recent graduates responding to the survey who have worked since graduation started their first job in the NHS. The main reason (given by five respondents) for not working in the NHS is that there are more opportunities to specialise elsewhere.

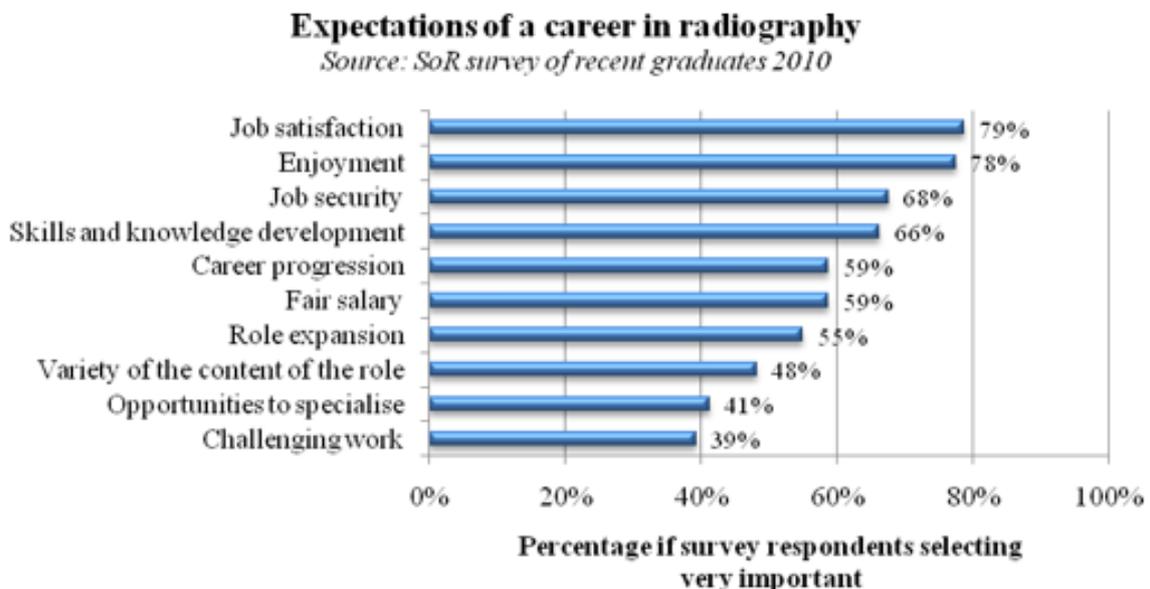
The majority of graduates get their first choice of job with a permanent full-time contract in the country/region where they studied. However, 21% of recent graduates responding to the survey who have worked since graduation did not get their first choice of job; 14% did not get their preferred type of contract; and 11% were forced to find work outside the region in which they had studied.

93% of 2009 graduates said that they did feel prepared for their first job. Most of the free text comments commented on the importance of clinical placements in the course.

"I feel that it is due to the clinical placements I had during my course that I feel prepared enough to be confident for my very first job. It was the clinical tutors on placements who assisted me with interview techniques and my clinical knowledge."

5. Career expectations

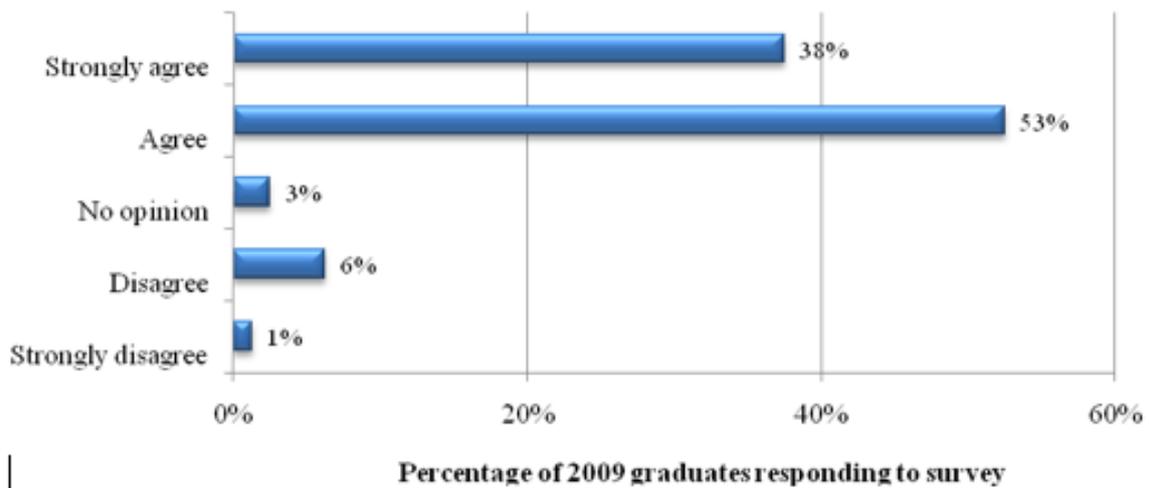
Recent graduates were asked how important certain career attributes were to them in terms of their expectations of a career in radiography with job satisfaction and enjoyment topping the list.



2009 graduates are overwhelming positive in their assessment of their first year working as a qualified radiographer: over 90% agreed or strongly agreed that their career is so far consistent with their expectations.

Radiography as a career is so far consistent with my expectations

Source: SoR survey of recent graduates 2010



"I have enjoyed my year at work very much since I started last July. I used to be excited to go to work in the mornings. There have been very few 'bad' days at work so far."

"I find I am too busy to be able to review my images properly to see how I may have improved them. In chest clinic I x-ray up to 60 patients per day, sometimes more."

Appendix A - Questionnaire (pdf version only)

<files/u2/Radiography-students-2010.pdf>

Source URL:

<https://www.sor.org/learning/document-library/analysis-students-and-recent-graduates-survey-2010>