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Labour market insertion studies. A relevant source of information for improving the Higher Education quality

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Abstract

The ESG´s state that "Higher education aims to fulfil multiple purposes; including the preparation of students for active citizenship, for their future careers (e.g. contributing to their employability)...". This frame of reference highlights the importance of knowing the employment situation of university graduates so that university institutions can design strategies aligned with the demands existing in the labour market. Therefore, with the main objective of gathering and providing information about the graduate population, ACSUG has been carrying out labour market insertion studies periodically since the creation of the agency in 2001.

During all this time, the compiled data have been carefully analysed to identity trends with impact in the planning and fine-tuning of the Galician academic programmes. Also a more student-centred learning and teaching approach has been promoted, as established in the ESG. Finally, by analysing key factors related to integration of the graduates into the labour market, the studies also provide universities and governments with detail information they can consider when designing strategies for increasing the employability of the graduates, or when adjusting the range and type of degree programs that are going to be offered.

Key words: graduates; master's graduates; labour market insertion; employment; workplace; job; employability; competences; skills; internationalisation.

1. Introduction

The establishment over the years of an annual periodicity for these studies has allowed a history of results to be obtained, which now allows analysis of the evolution of various factors over time. In this paper, we study some aspects about graduates such as: who are working, where are working, the time taken to find a first job related to the degree/master's degree and which competencies and skills are important for the performance of the job.

Section 2 includes the technical data of these studies: graduates during the academic year between 2005-2006 to 2012-2013 (EIL0506 to EIL1213) and Master's degree graduates during the academic year between 2009-2010 to 2012-2013 (EILMasteres0910 to EILMasteres1213) (both studies shall be designated with the acronym EIL "Study of Labor Market Insertion" followed by the academic year they refer to).

Section 3 and *Section 4* present some results obtained and general conclusions.

All information about ACSUG publications are available in the website:
http://www.acsug.es/en/documentacion/publicacions

2. Technical Data

Graduates (diplomas, bachelor's degree, engineering technician, engineers, architecture, architecture technician, degrees). Labour market insertion studies by ACSUG in recent years, in particular, the past eight, guarantee the comparability of results by using a similar methodology in all of them, including the same or similar questionnaire. The study population consists of SUG graduates from EIL0506 to EIL1213. *Table 1* shows size of population, sample and fieldwork's date.
In the design of the sampling, a maximum permissible error of 10% with a confidence level of 95% was established.

Academic year	EIL0506	EIL0607	EIL0708	EIL0809	EIL0910	EIL1011	EIL1112	EIL1213
Population	10280	8689	9216	8846	8922	9289	8106	8395
Sample	5362	4569	4830	4965	5004	5114	4687	4473
% surveyed	52,16%	52,58%	52,41%	56,13%	56,09%	55,05%	57,82%	53,28%
Fieldwork	May 2008	May-June 2009	May-November 2010	October 2011	December 2012	December 2013	December 2014	December 2015

Table 1. Surveys conducted amongst SUG graduates.

Master's degree graduates
The study population consists of Master's degree graduates from EILMasteres0910 to EILMasteres1213. In order to ensure maximum representativeness for each of the Master's Degree programs in the SUG, an exhaustive study was performed by contacting each and every one of the individuals included in the study population. The overall sampling error for the SUG Master's Degree graduates was +/-1,32% (EILMasteres0910), +/-1.31% (EILMasteres1011) +/-1.23 (EILMasteres1112) and +/-1.27 (EILMasteres1213), with a 95% confidence level. *Table 2* shows size of population, sample and fieldwork's date.

| Academic year	EILMasteres0910	EILMasteres1011	EILMasteres1112	EILMasteres1213
Population	1633	2099	2728	2432
Sample	1261	1526	1907	1723
% surveyed	77,21%	72,70%	69,90%	70,85%
Fieldwork	May-June 2013	June-July 2014	June-July 2015	Feb-March 2016

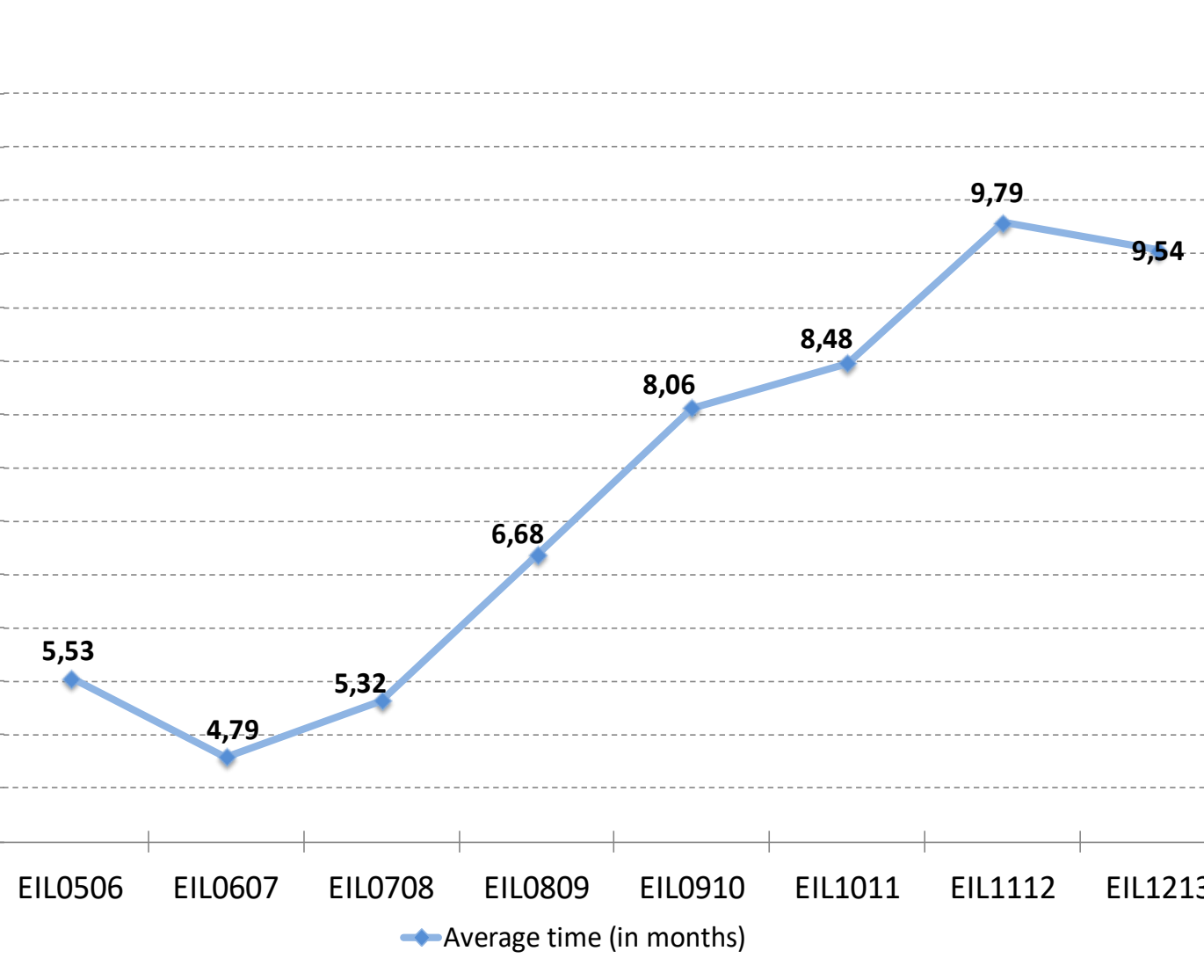*Table 2. Surveys conducted amongst SUG Master's degree graduates.*

3. Results

Graduates
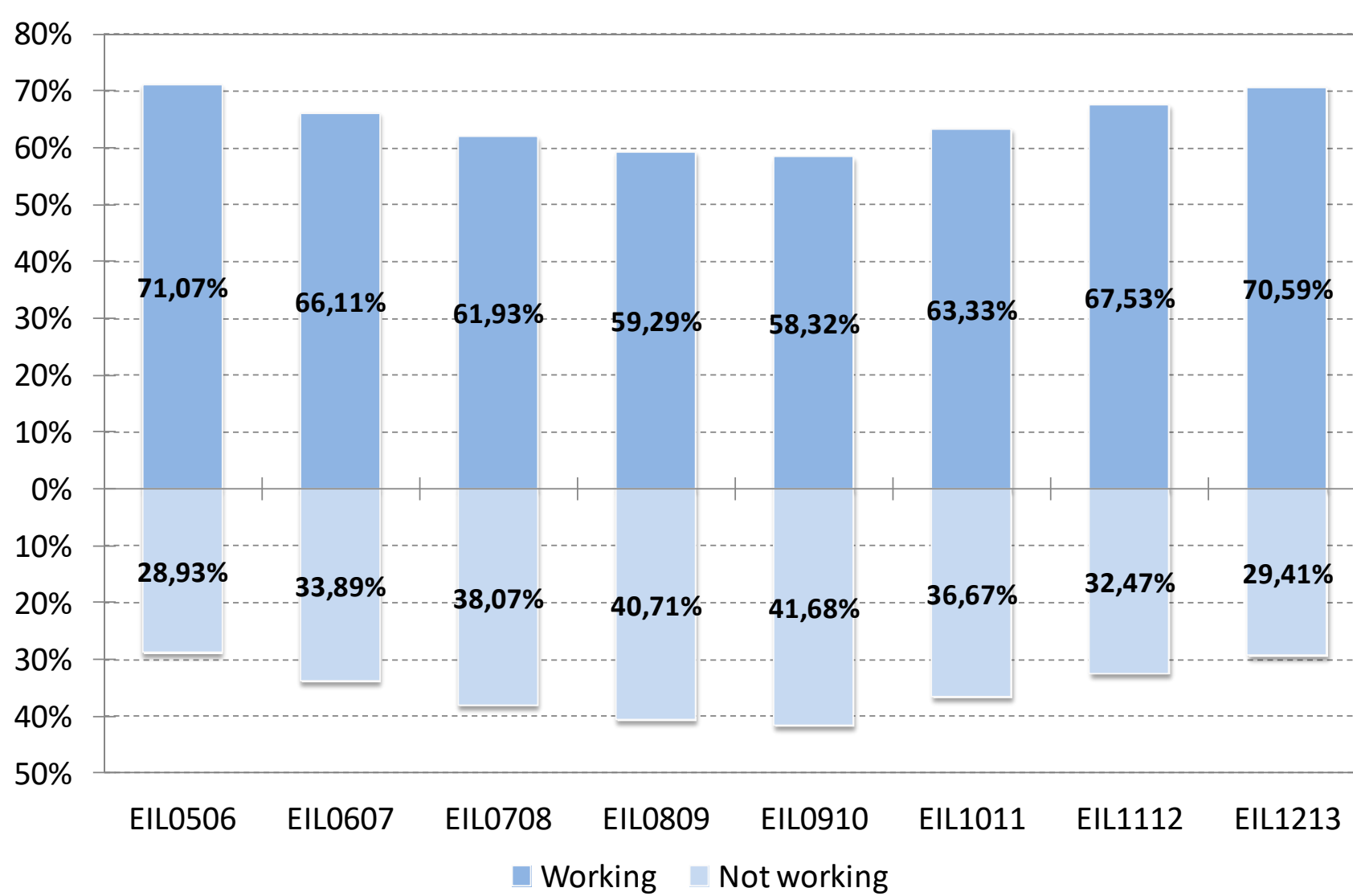
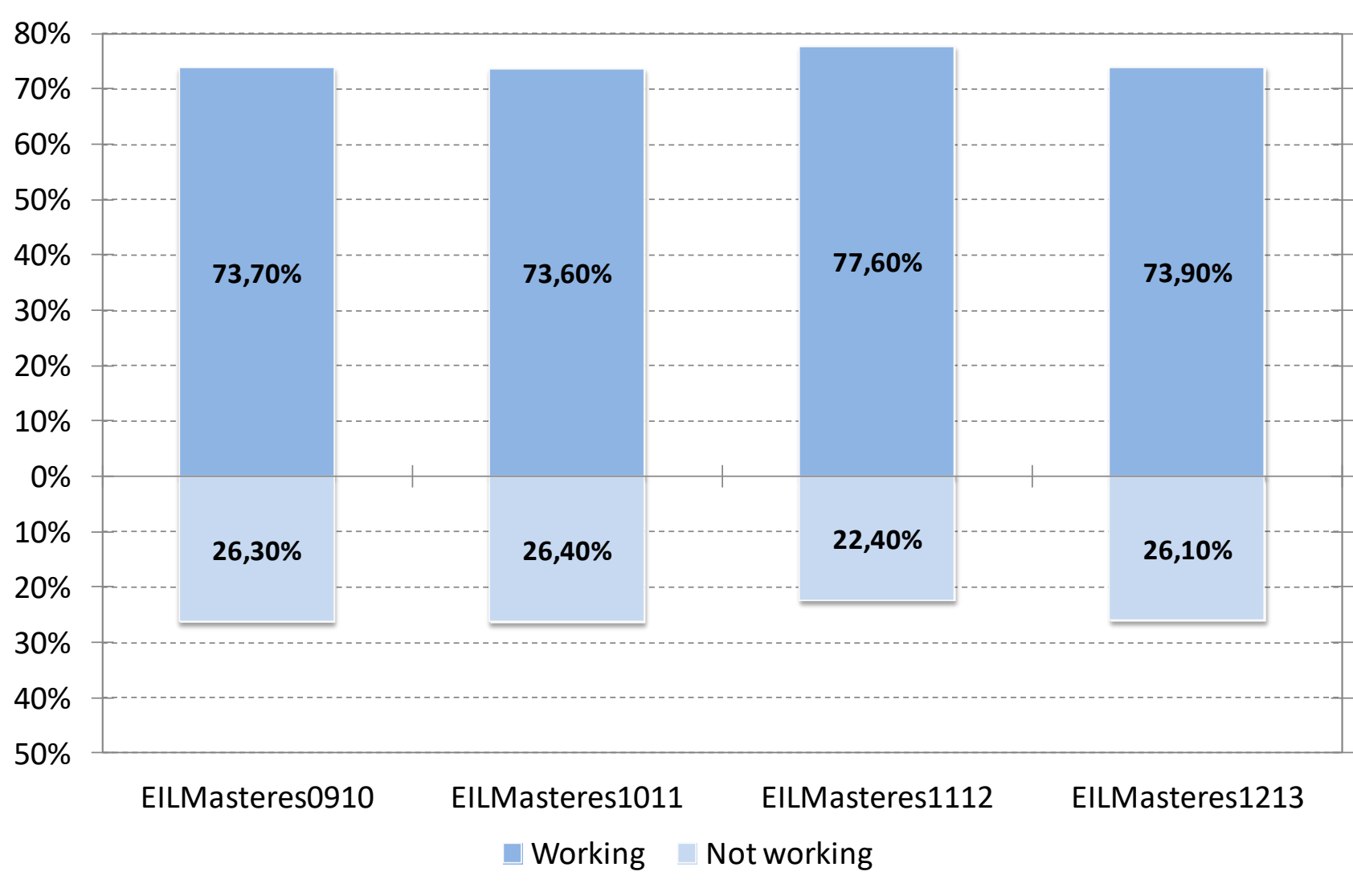*Figure 1. Working (at the time the survey was conducted). Results for SUG overall. Comparison with previous studies.*
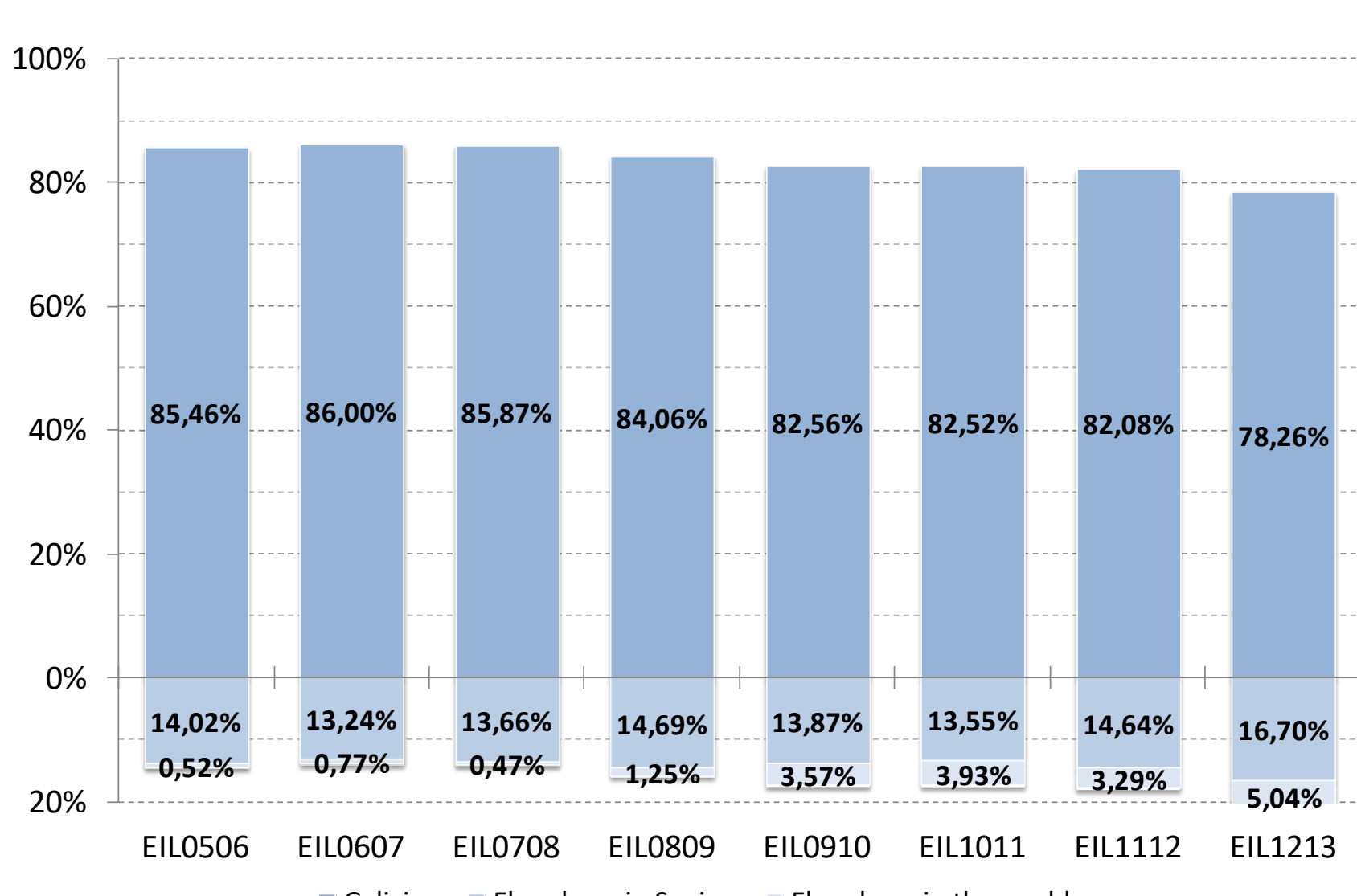
Figure 2. Work place (at the time the survey was conducted). Results for SUG overall. Comparison with previous studies.
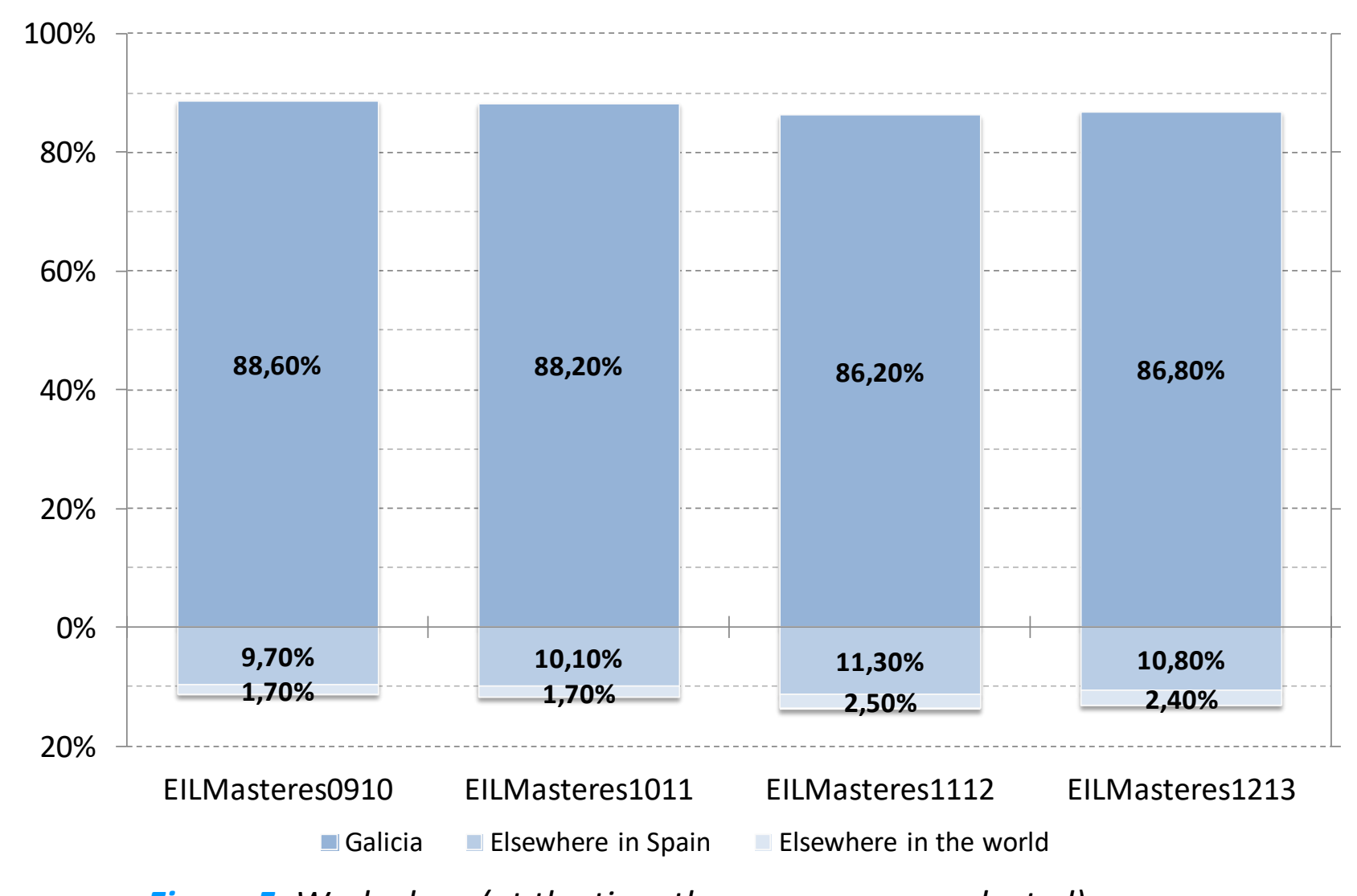

Figure 3. Average time (in months) in finding employment. Results for SUG overall. Comparison with previous studies.

EILG	Most valued	Least valued
EIL0506	Motivation (4.50)	Foreign language knowledge (3.26)
	Learning abilities (4.48)	Leadership ability (3.44)
	Problem-solving ability (4.45)	Creativity (3.70)
EIL0607	Learning abilities (4.53)	Foreign language knowledge (3.29)
	Motivation (4.51)	Leadership ability (3.42)
	Problem-solving ability (4.45)	Creativity (3.72)
EIL0708	Learning abilities (4.55)	Foreign language knowledge (3.39)
	Motivation (4.51)	Leadership ability (3.60)
	Problem-solving ability (4.47)	Creativity (3.78)
EIL0809	Learning abilities (4.49)	Foreign language knowledge (3.31)
	Motivation (4.45)	Leadership ability (3.52)
	Problem-solving ability (4.44)	Broad general knowledge (3.73)
EIL0910	Learning abilities (4.59)	Foreign language knowledge (3.46)
	Motivation (4.57)	Leadership ability (3.58)
	Problem-solving ability (4.56)	Broad general knowledge (3.81)
EIL1011	Learning abilities (4.64)	Foreign language knowledge (3.43)
	Motivation (4.64)	Leadership ability (3.62)
	Problem-solving ability (4.62)	Broad general knowledge (3.83)
EIL1112	Learning abilities (4.45)	Foreign language knowledge (3.09)
	Problem-solving ability (4.44)	Leadership ability (3.39)
	Motivation (4.42)	Creativity (3.51)
EIL1213	Learning abilities (4.52)	Foreign language knowledge (3.19)
	Motivation (4.50)	Leadership ability (3.40)
	Problem-solving ability (4.47)	Creativity (3.54)

Evaluation scale from 1 (Not important) to 5 (Very important)

Table 3. Most and least valued competences by graduates Results for SUG overall. Comparison with previous studies.
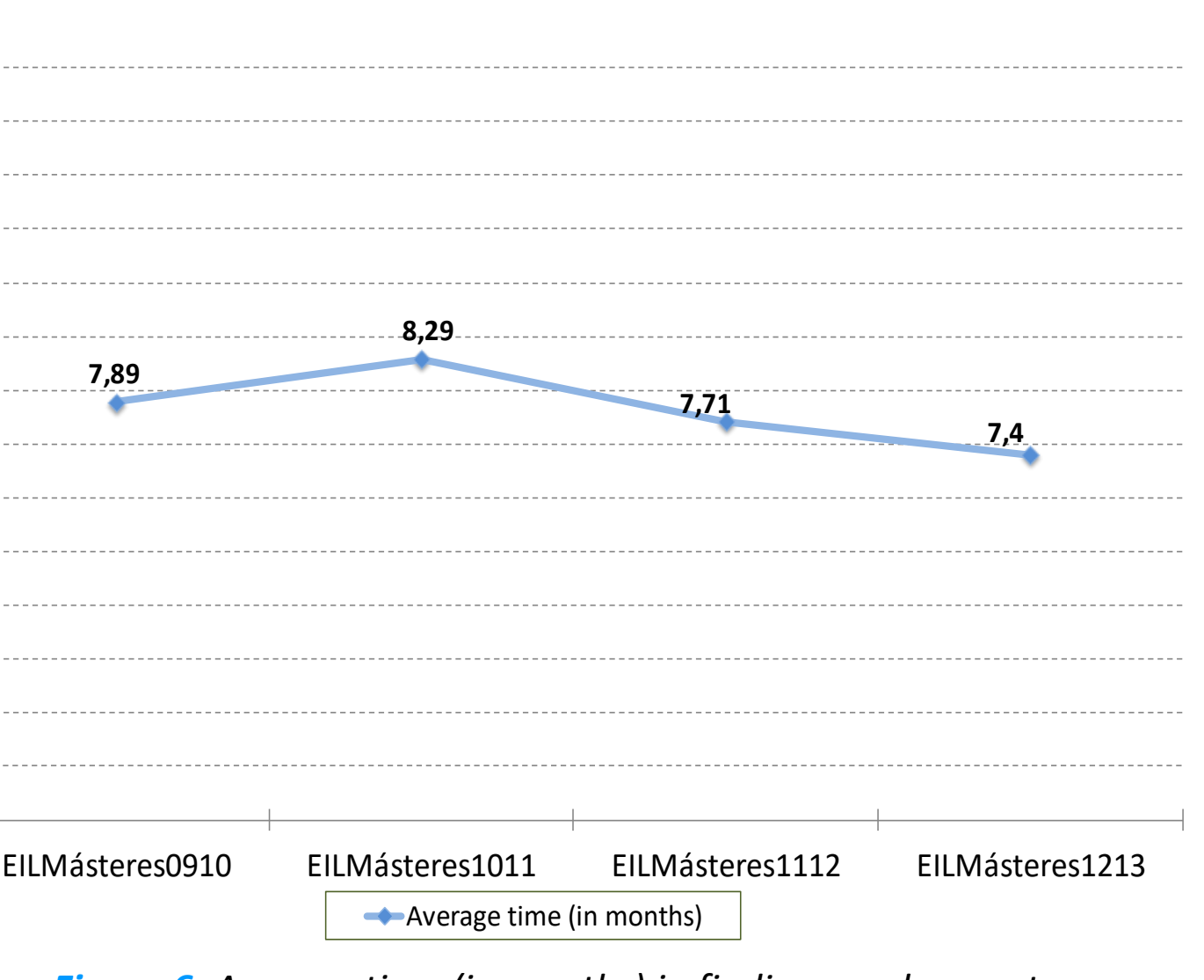
Master's degree graduates

Figure 4. Working (at the time the survey was conducted). Results for SUG overall. Comparison with previous studies.

Figure 5. Work place (at the time the survey was conducted). Results for SUG overall. Comparison with previous studies.

Figure 6. Average time (in months) in finding employment. Results for SUG overall. Comparison with previous studies.

EILM	Most valued	Least valued
EIL0910	Problem-solving ability (4.36)	Foreign language knowledge (4.03)
	Ability to assume responsibility (4.36)	Computer skills (4.06)
	Working in a team capacity (4.12)	Working in a team capacity (4.12)
EIL1011	Problem-solving ability (4.39)	Creativity (3.86)
	Ability to assume responsibility (4.39)	Computer skills (4.11)
	Adaptability (Multi-tasking) (4.35)	Foreign language knowledge (4.15)
EIL1112	Ability to assume responsibility (4.40)	Creativity (3.84)
	Problem-solving ability (4.39)	Computer skills (4.12)
	Written/oral communication skills (4.39)	Foreign language knowledge (4.15)
EIL1213	Ability to assume responsibility (4.46)	Creativity (3.81)
	Problem-solving ability (4.44)	Computer skills (4.08)
	Written/oral communication skills (4.41)	Foreign language knowledge (4.15)

Evaluation scale from 1 (Not important) to 5 (Very important))

Table 4. Most and least valued competences by Master graduates Results for SUG overall. Comparison with previous studies.

4. Conclusions

➢ As seen in *Figure 1* the percentage of graduates working at the time of the last survey (**70,59%**) is similar as in the EIL0506. This shows that **the graduates employment rate has been rapidly increasing**, after a time of economic crisis in Spain. Regarding Master's graduates, the percentage of alumni working (**73,90%**) has reduced since the last study (77,60), to levels comparable with other previous studies, as can be seen in *Figure 4*.

➢ It is relevant to highlight, on the contrary, that **the average time it took a SUG graduate to find job has risen in the last few years,** as it is shown in *Figure 3*. In comparison, the average time from master's graduates was **7.4 months** (EILMasteres1213), with a continuous reduction in the last 2 surveys, as can be seen in *Figure 6*.

➢ With respect to the workplace (*Figure 2* and *Figure 5*) graduates and Master's graduates are mostly working in Galicia (**G 78,26%-M 86.80%**), others (**G 16,70%-M 10.80%**) working in another region in Spain and a very reduced number outside Spain (**G 5,04%-M 2,40%**).

➢ Graduates and Master's graduates were asked to assess a list of competences in terms of their need for job performance, as can be seen *Table 3* and *Table 4*. The competences usually perceived as most important for the current job performance are **learning abilities and motivation**, and **problem-solving ability and ability to assume responsibility** by Master's graduates. The relevance of these competences have motivated **a change in the teaching-learning methodology** in the Galician degrees with a more practical approach rather than a theoretical one.

➢ The limited tradition of internationalisation in the Galician universities is possibly one of the reasons for which the **foreign language knowledge** is considered usually as the least valued competence (*Table 3* and *Table 4*). This situation has recently provoked different measures: rise in the use of **English as the main teaching language**, more **active interchange** of students and teachers or increasing interest by universities in **international research programmes.**