

Online teacher education; a way to
create a more diverse teacher
workforce

Þuríður Jóhannsdóttir & Amalía Björnsdóttir

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Open and distance programmes in teacher education

- Worldwide open and distance learning have been used to enrol more student teachers and recruit students from a greater variety of social groups into teacher–education programmes
- This was the case in Iceland when teacher education was first offered as distance-online (blended with f2f meetings) in 1993 to meet a lack of teachers in sparsely populated rural regions
- In the last 15–20 years, half or more of student teachers enrolled at the University of Iceland have been distance students.

A shortage of compulsory–school teachers in Iceland

- Too few student teachers graduating from teacher–education is a serious concern in Iceland
- Recruitment of more student teachers – a pressing issue
- High dropout rates from teacher education programmes
 - Too many students only finish three–year studies (B.Ed) and do not enter the Master’s programme required for certification.
- Slow progress
 - various indications that the progress of distance students is slower than on–campus students

Characteristics of the distance students in University of Iceland

- Since half of the student teachers in the University of Iceland enrol in the online-distance programme it is important to know if and how the selected mode influences progress and graduation rate
- In the study presented here we look at the difference between the groups regarding social background and circumstances
- In the next phase of the study we look at how those factors influence their progress and graduation rate

Aim and research questions

- The aim of this study is to explore
 - the characteristics of student teachers choosing to enrol in distance teacher–education programmes compared to those preferring traditional campus–based studies.
- What are the characteristics of distance student teachers compared to traditional on–campus student teachers at the University of Iceland?
- Can we claim that the distance programme contributes to creating more diverse teacher workforce in Iceland?

Three online questionnaires in the school year 2018-2019

- student teachers at the University of Iceland in their first year of a five-year programme preparing for teaching in compulsory schools
- Participants: N=65
- Participants were asked if they were traditional on-campus students or distance students,
 - About 57% ($N = 37$) planned to be on campus students,
 - 38% ($N = 25$) planned to be distance students
 - 5% ($N = 3$) planned to be both on-campus and distance students
- 82% of the distance students said it was rather influential or very influential for the selection of a teacher-education programme that it was possible to study as a distance student.

Student teachers were asked about

social backgrounds

parents' education

employment status – how many hours and what type of work they were doing.

And factors they thought would adversely affect their studies,

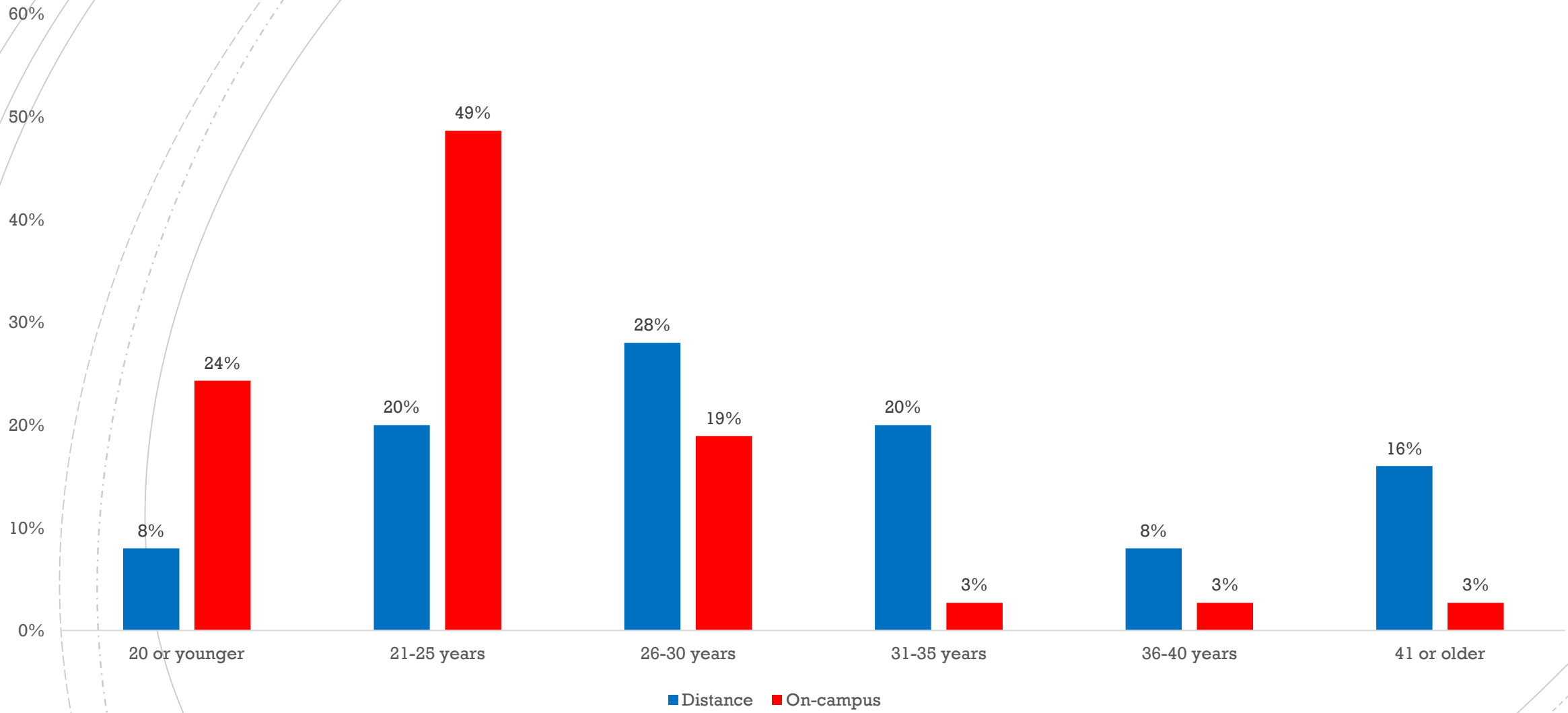
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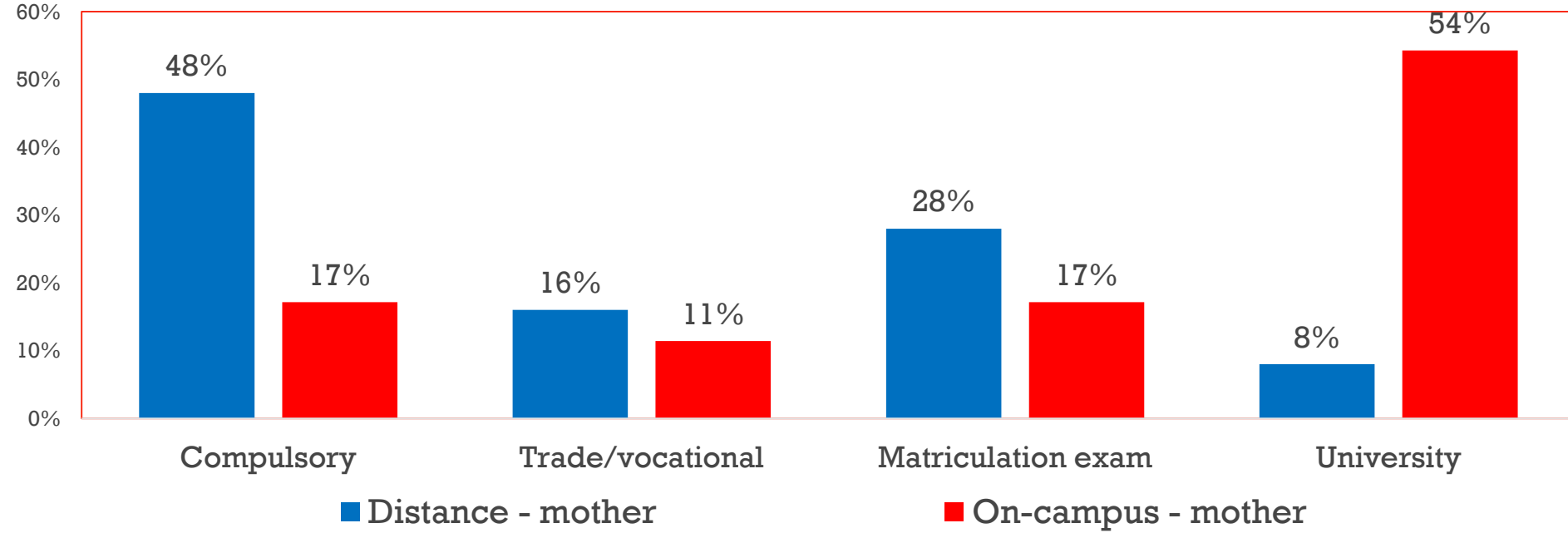
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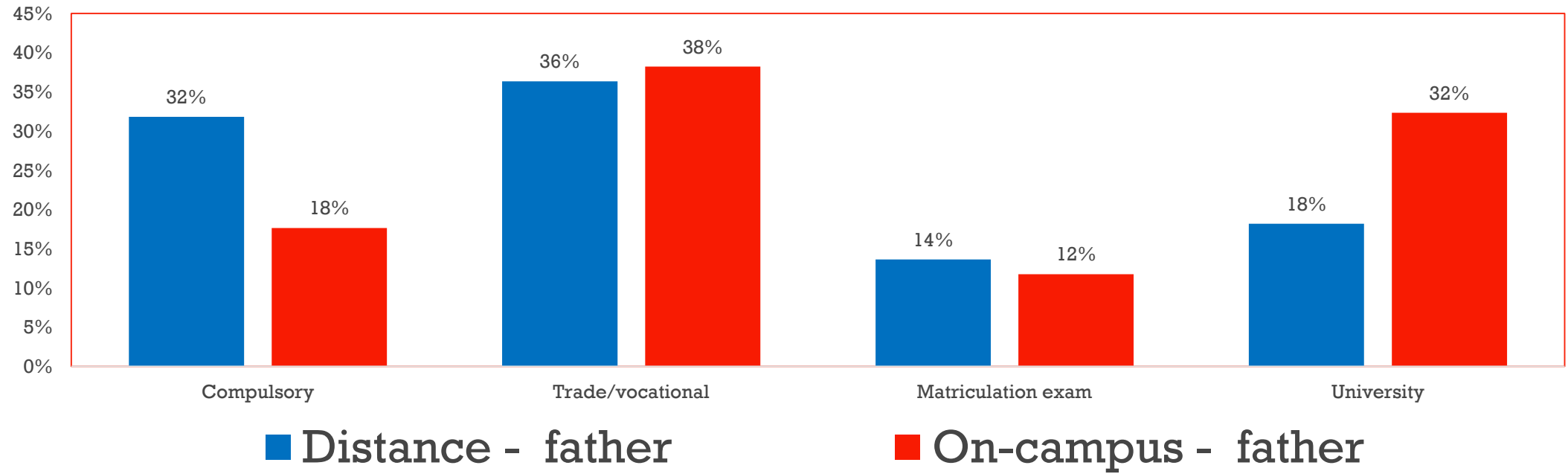
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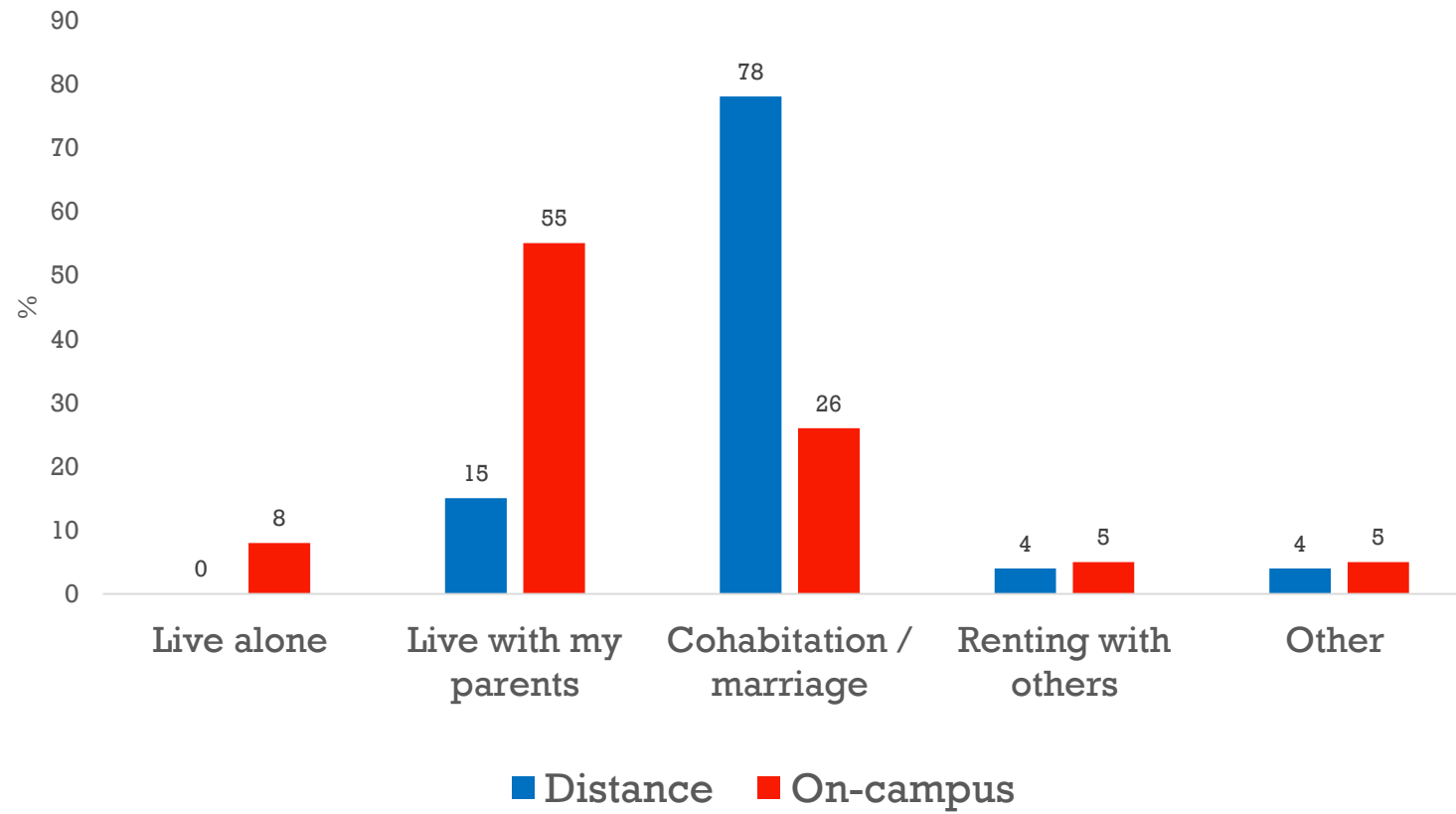


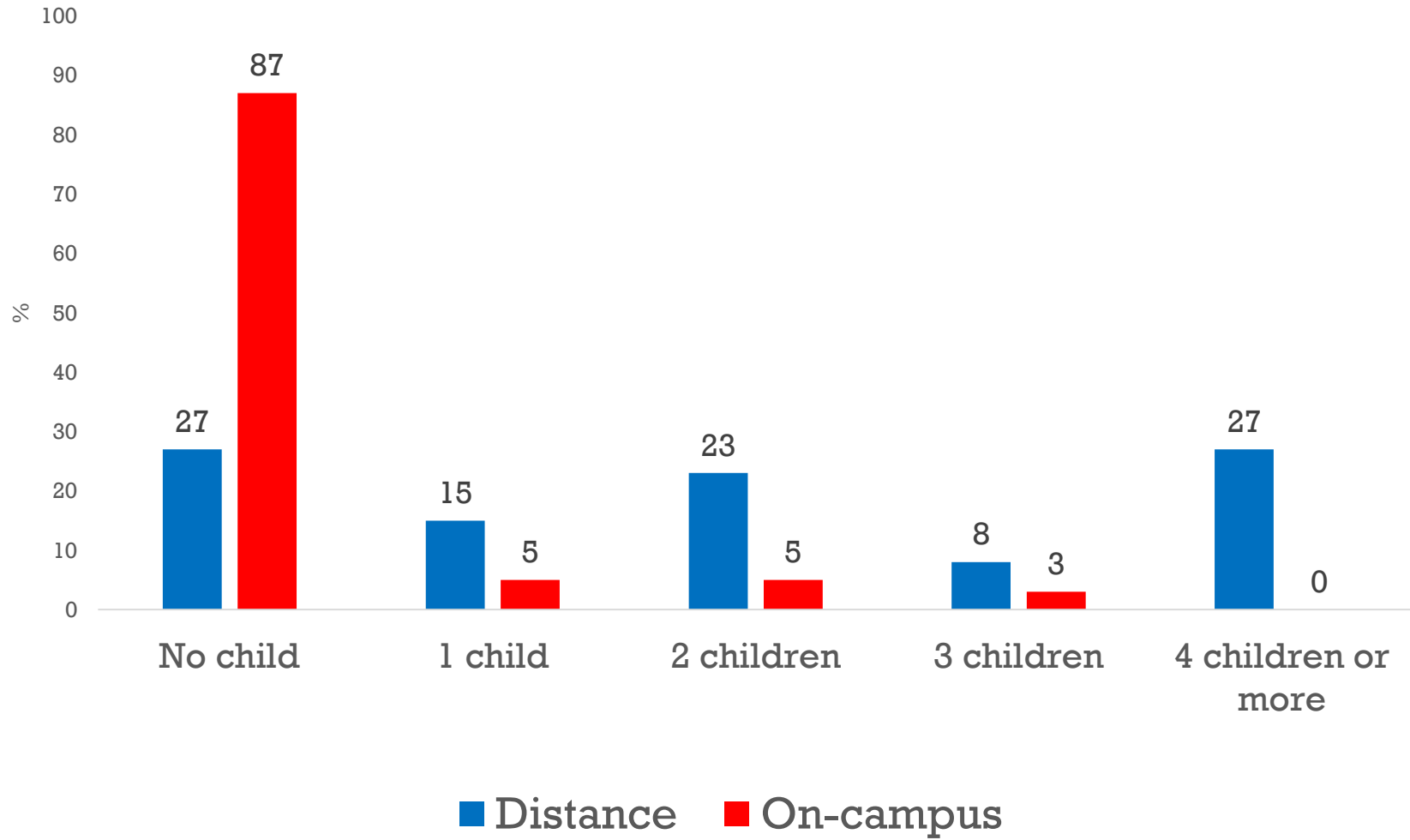


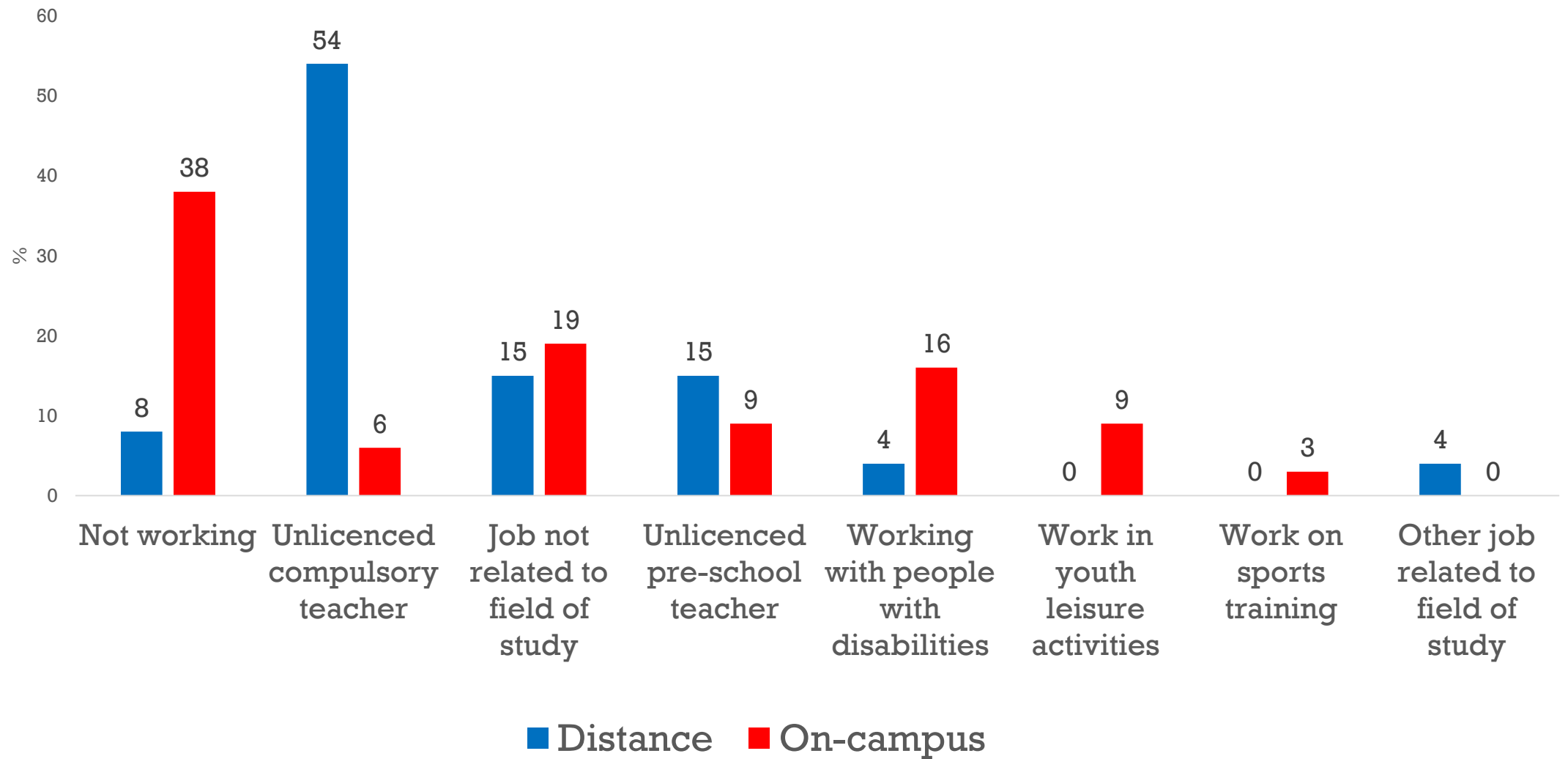
Mothers' education

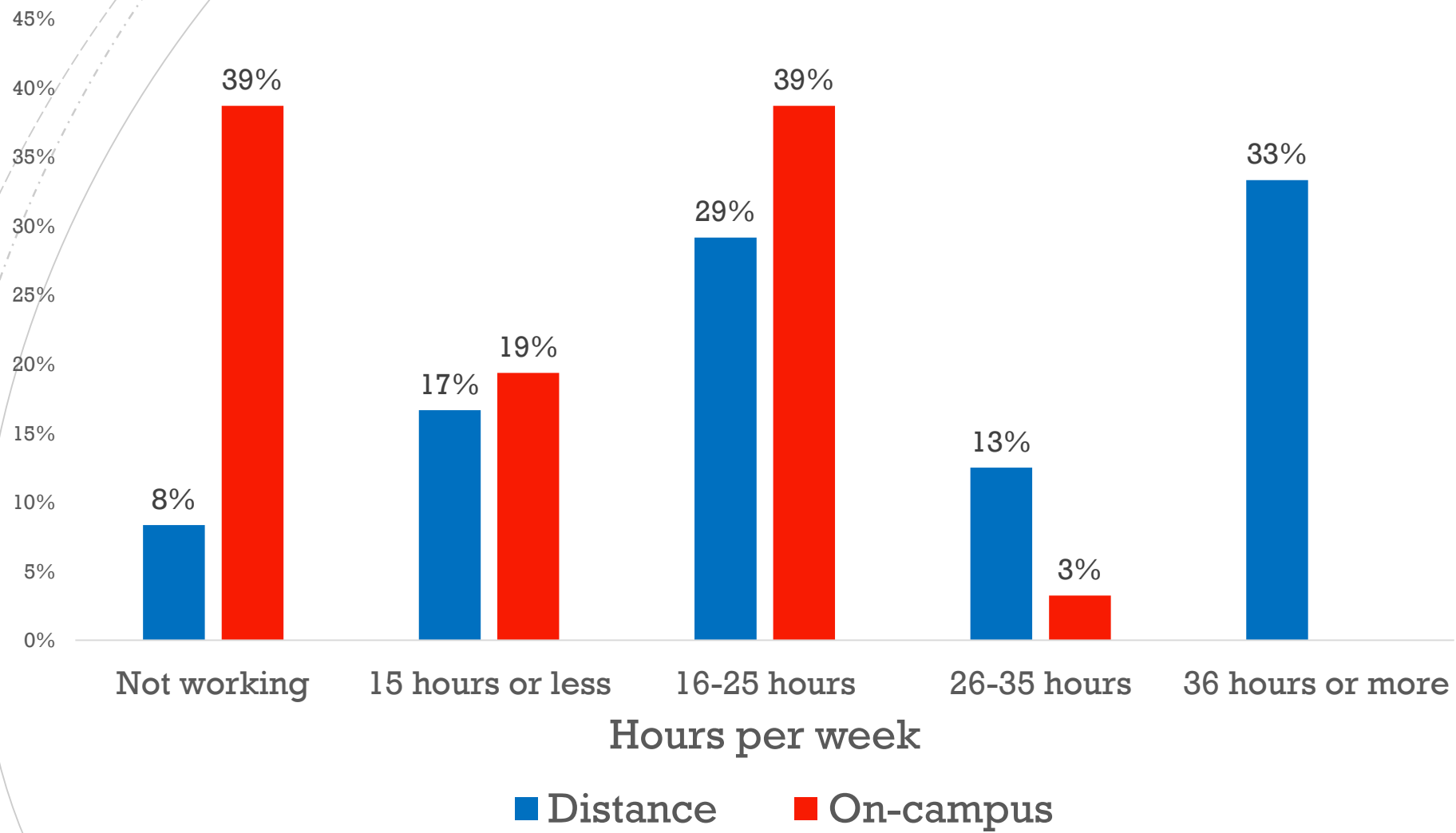


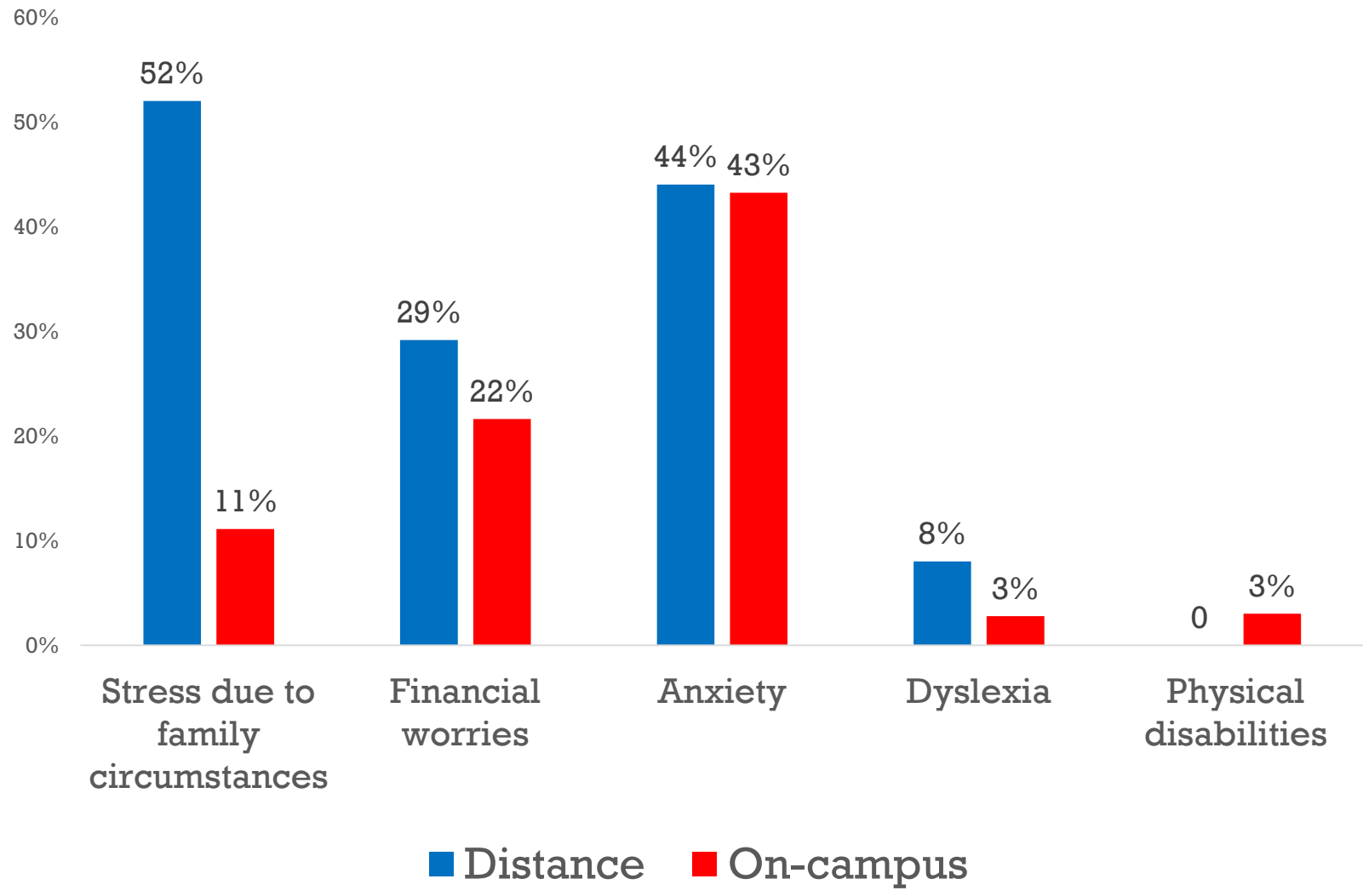
Fathers' education











The results show different characteristics of distance vs. traditional students teachers

Consistency with results from previous studies validate the results

- The results indicate that the distance programme at the University of Iceland opens access for a more diverse group of students
- Different student groups challenge traditional practice
- Knowledge about the background and circumstances of the distance students calls for practice that take their situation into account
- Challenge to develop practice responsive to the experience of working with children and bringing up their own among the distance students
- Asset-based pedagogy is suggested for guiding the practice



▼
However, the distance programme have failed to recruit students with immigrant backgrounds

- Which is important for enhancing inclusive education policy
- Foreign nationals are now 10.9% of the population in Iceland, a number that has increased from only 2.6% in the year 2000 and 15% of people living in Iceland in the year 2018 are born outside of the country (Statistics Iceland 2019b).
- The student composition in compulsory–school teacher education at the University of Iceland does not reflect the developing multicultural society in Iceland