

Lessons from the Other Side: What can dispatch companies teach us?

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Background

Two categories of hiring:

- Direct-hire (DH)
- "Dispatch"

What is "Dispatch"?

Essentially, the outsourcing of instructors from private companies to educational institutions, corporate entities, etc.





Westgate

As well as a significant, unknowable, number of smaller companies

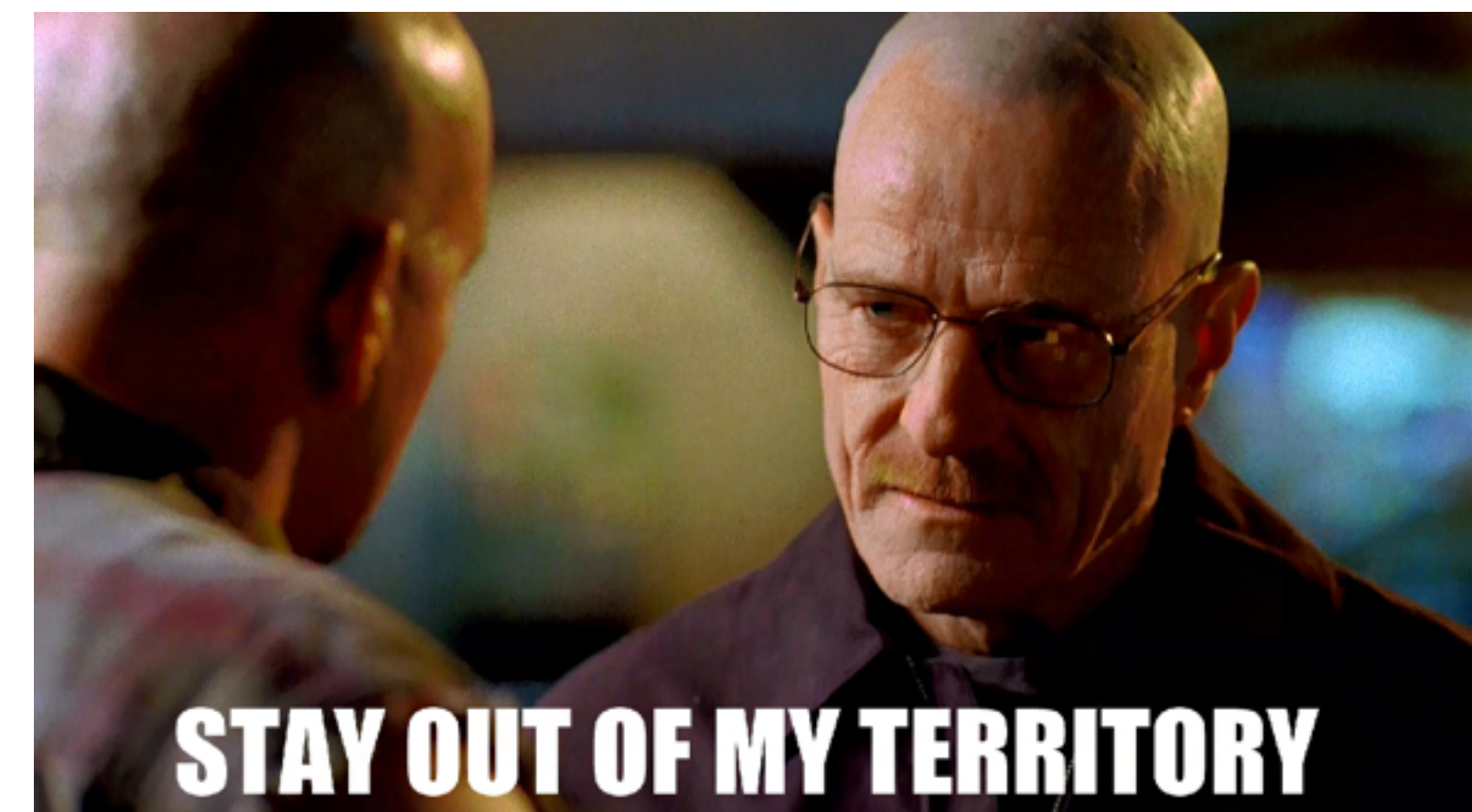


Dispatch Companies

- Wide range of activities
 - Short-term / Long-term
 - Extracurricular / Accredited



- Regional differences / territories
- Differences in business practices, employment, etc.



Reputations and tales of dispatch companies vary amongst our social circles.



ECC



(usually not so great)

Concerns about dispatch companies:

- Business practices / profit motive
- Quality of educational programs
- Corporatization of (higher) education
- Diminishing employment security for DH instructors

Similarly, dispatch instructors often face similar disdain.



Concerns about dispatch employees:

- Quality of instruction
- Background & education & training
- Ability to achieve institutional/program goals

Dispatch work is often contrasted with DH work.

“Direct hire” positions (university or otherwise) are often seen as:

career culmination



an ultimate prize

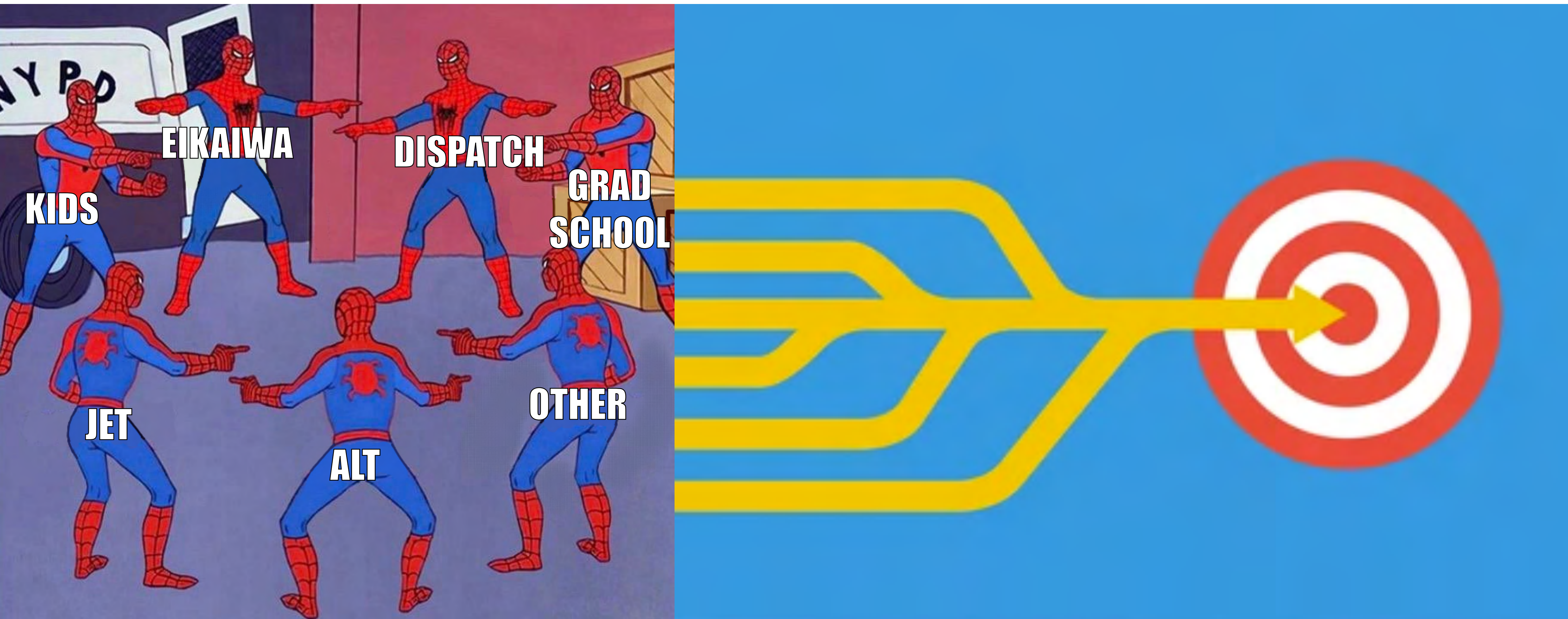


higher status



For those of us in DH positions (or seeking them):

Different backgrounds, same destination, different routes



A special group of interest



Current DH instructors...

... with dispatch **experience**

(Did the job, but didn't "**have**" the job.)



Teaching
the same
dang thing

Dispatch
veterans

Corporate
Japan

Formal
Institutions

- Have done the “same” job ...
... in two different employment
contexts....
... with two different
approaches & sets of values
- Maybe the only people who
can start the job, actually
having prior experience (via
dispatch)



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Dispatch Uni Instructor



Dispatch Administrator
Dispatch Uni Instructor

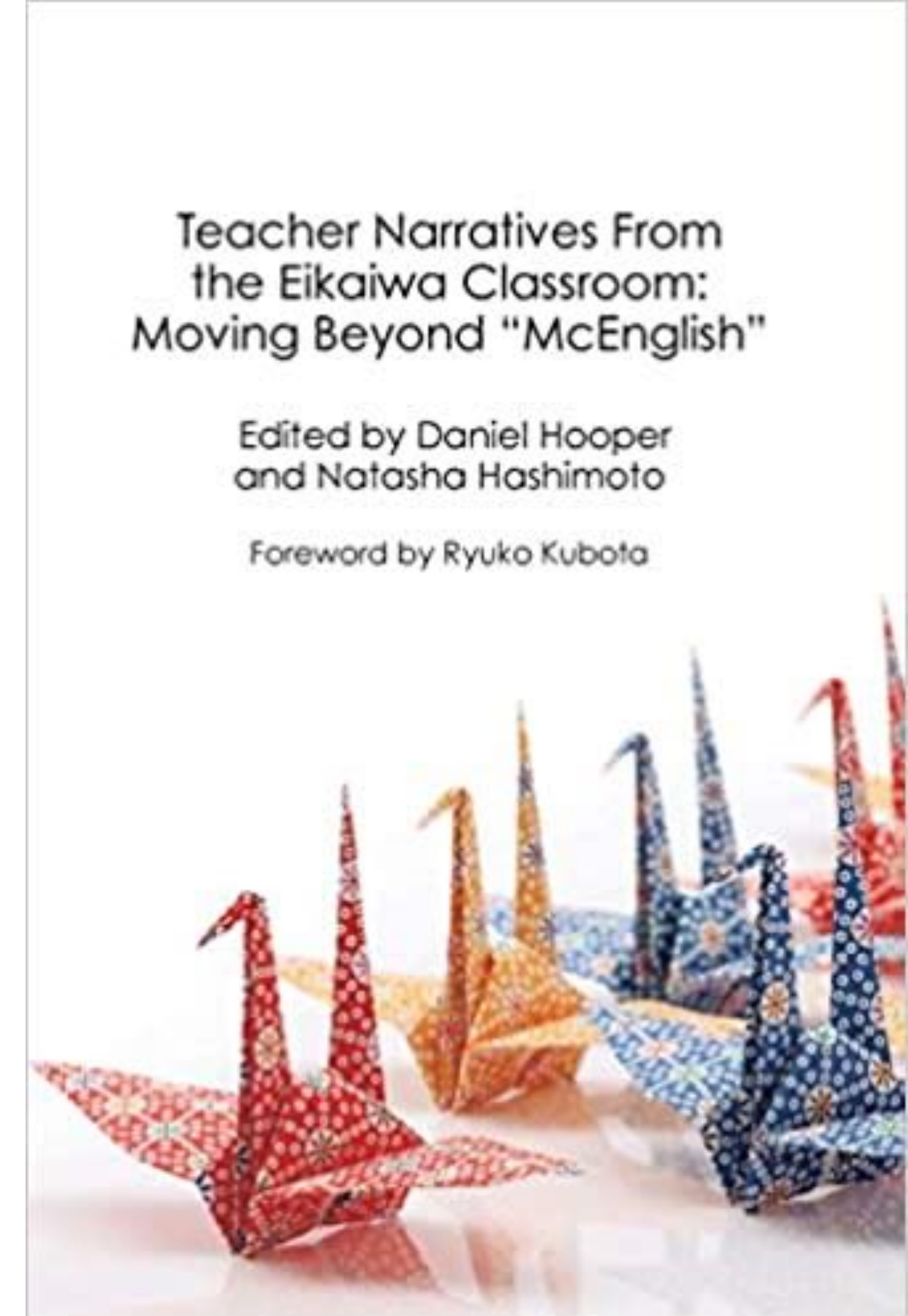
Literature Review

(gaping hole)



Information re: dispatch (similar scope)

- Transitioning from Eikaiwa to University teaching (Hooper, 2019)
- Transitioning from ALT to University teaching (Ferrier, 2018)
- Dispatch ALT companies at high school level
(Aspinall, 2008; Flynn, 2009; Martin 2010; Sekeres, 2010)



Information re: dispatch (university level)

- How dispatch instructors can “take away” koma from PT instructors
(Butler, 2019; Milliner, 2017)
- How it can be a way of sidestepping requiring a graduate degree
(Parrish, 2015)
- How dispatch companies gain access to universities
(Kozlowski, 2020)



Scope of project

- Share what we know about dispatch companies and their practices by drawing on our own professional experiences
- Report on the experiences and insights of other ex-dispatch employees as captured in our survey questionnaire
- See what can be learned from these dispatch companies to enhance our own instruction and programs



(They are here to stay)

Participants

Recruited from :

- online teaching forums & teacher support groups
- mass emails
- JALT SIGs
- “chain” sampling (“I know a guy”)

Survey

21 Likert-scale questions (with places for free comments)

Participants rated which party they felt was more effective in various domains



In layman's terms, the question was "Who does _____ better?"

Instructor domains

- Q1 Dealing with administrative staff / management of administrative issues.
- Q2 Liaising with other instructors
- Q3 General administrative duties
- Q4 Punctuality & time management (lesson start/finish)
- Q5 Use of technology in the class room (e.g. AV consoles, Moodle integration)
- Q6 Class / student management
- Q7 Lesson planning / preparation
- Q8 Use of graded instructional language
- Q9 Education material design and/or selection
- Q10 Management & reliability of student records (e.g. attendance, assessments)
- Q11 Assessment design & implementation

Organization domains

- Q1 Support for instructors regarding general personnel / HR matters
- Q2 Facilitation of instructors' professional development / publishing
- Q3 Instructor workload for administrative "paperwork"
- Q4 Facilitating instructors' use of technology / CALL
- Q5 Responsiveness to instructor feedback
- Q6 Supporting instructors in lesson planning / class preparation
- Q7 Non-instructor support of students / liaising with students
- Q8 Education material design and/or selection
- Q9 Effective approach to development & design of assessment structures.
- Q10 Curriculum development

Results

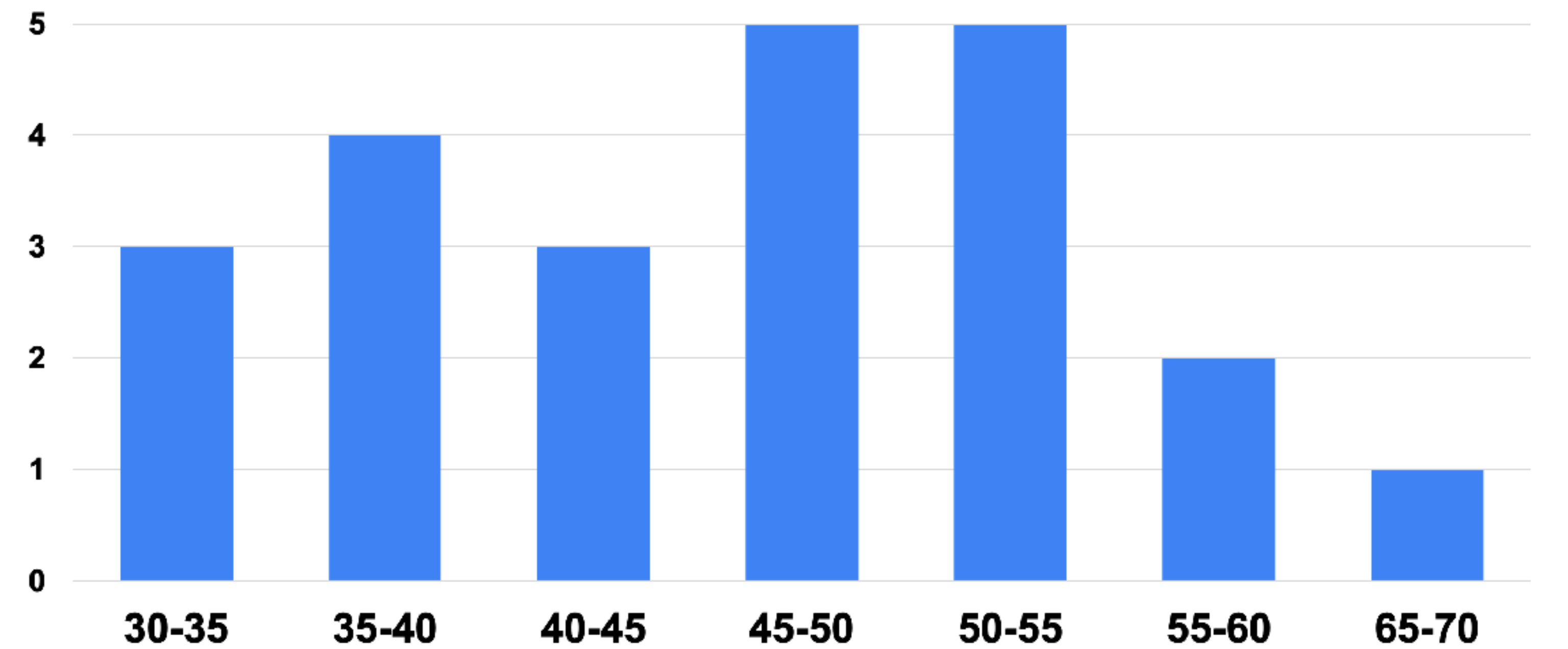
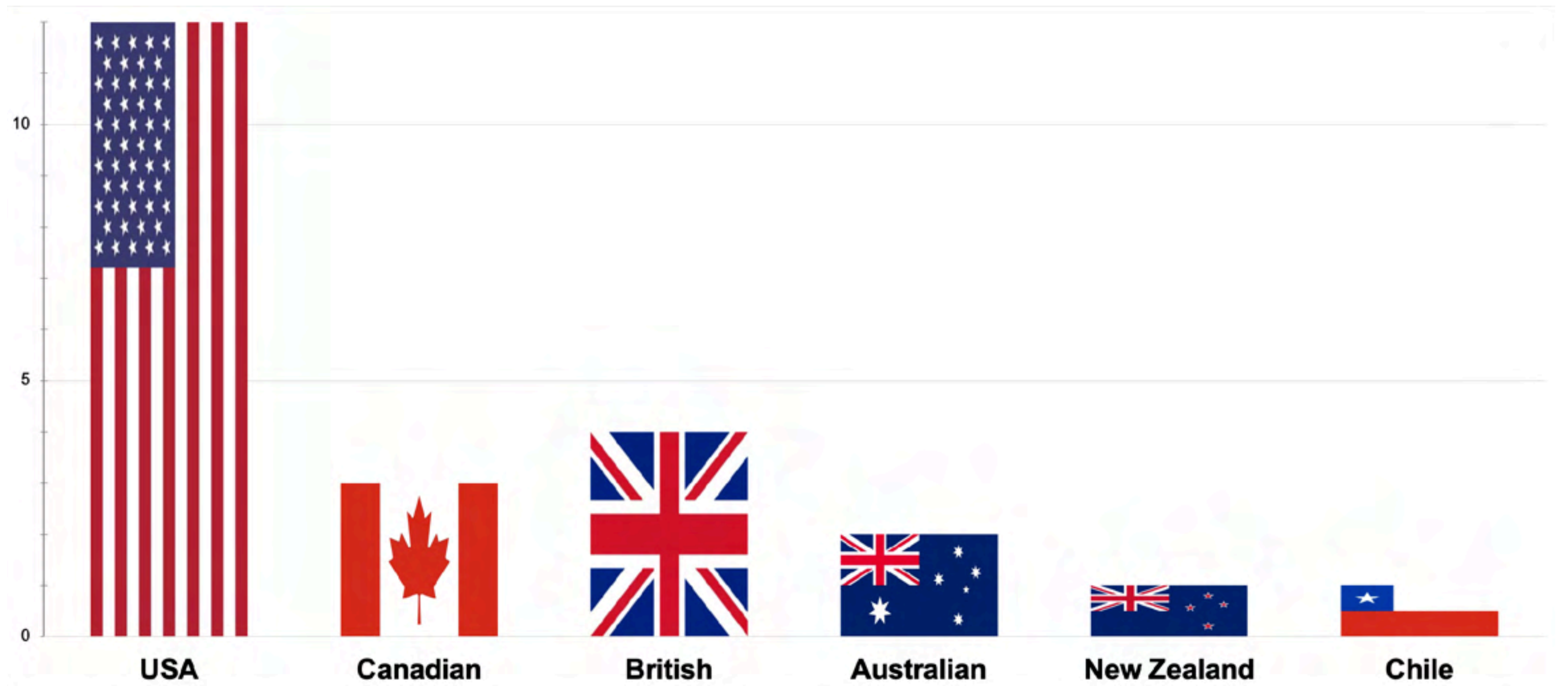
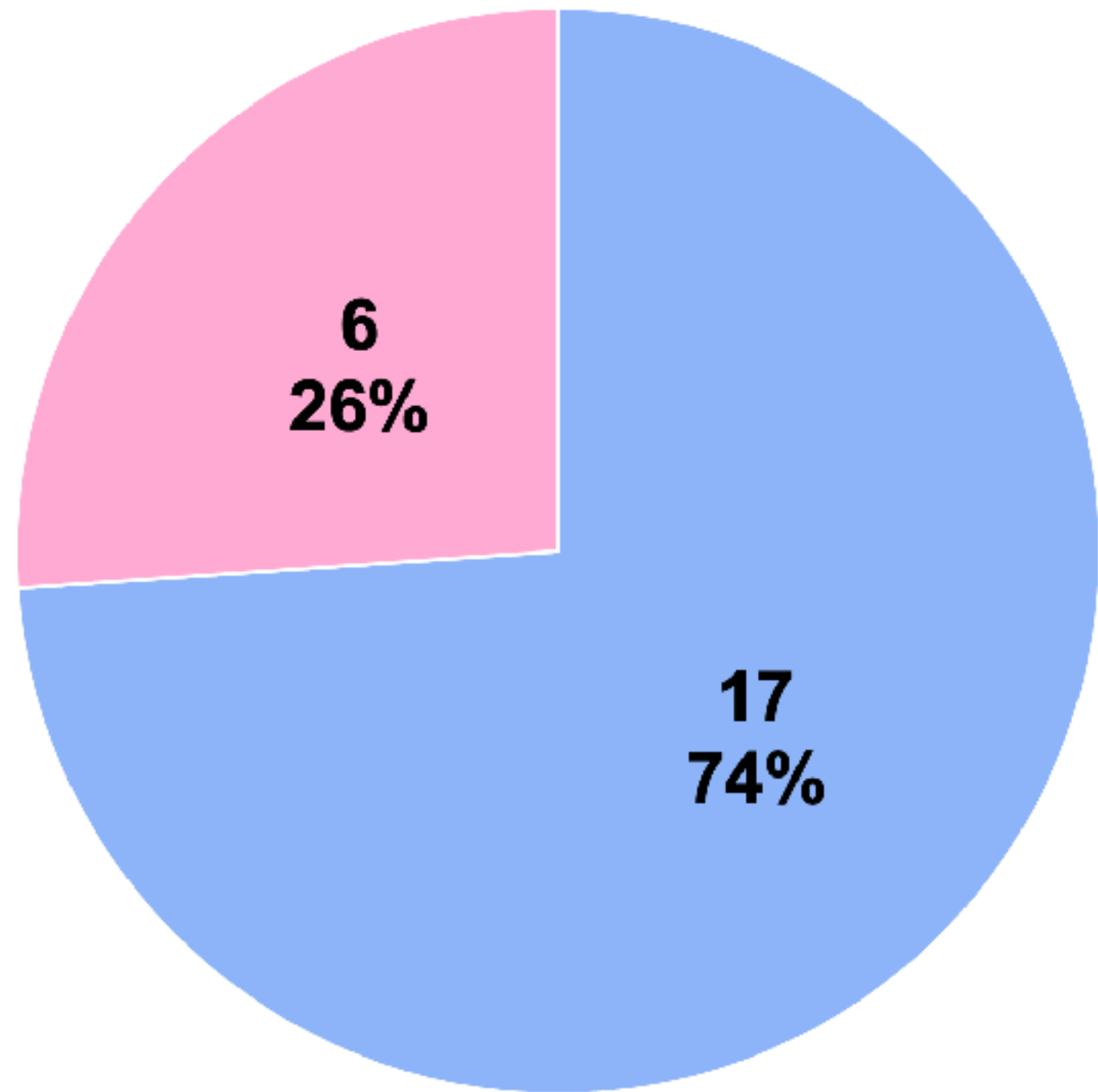
Participants

23

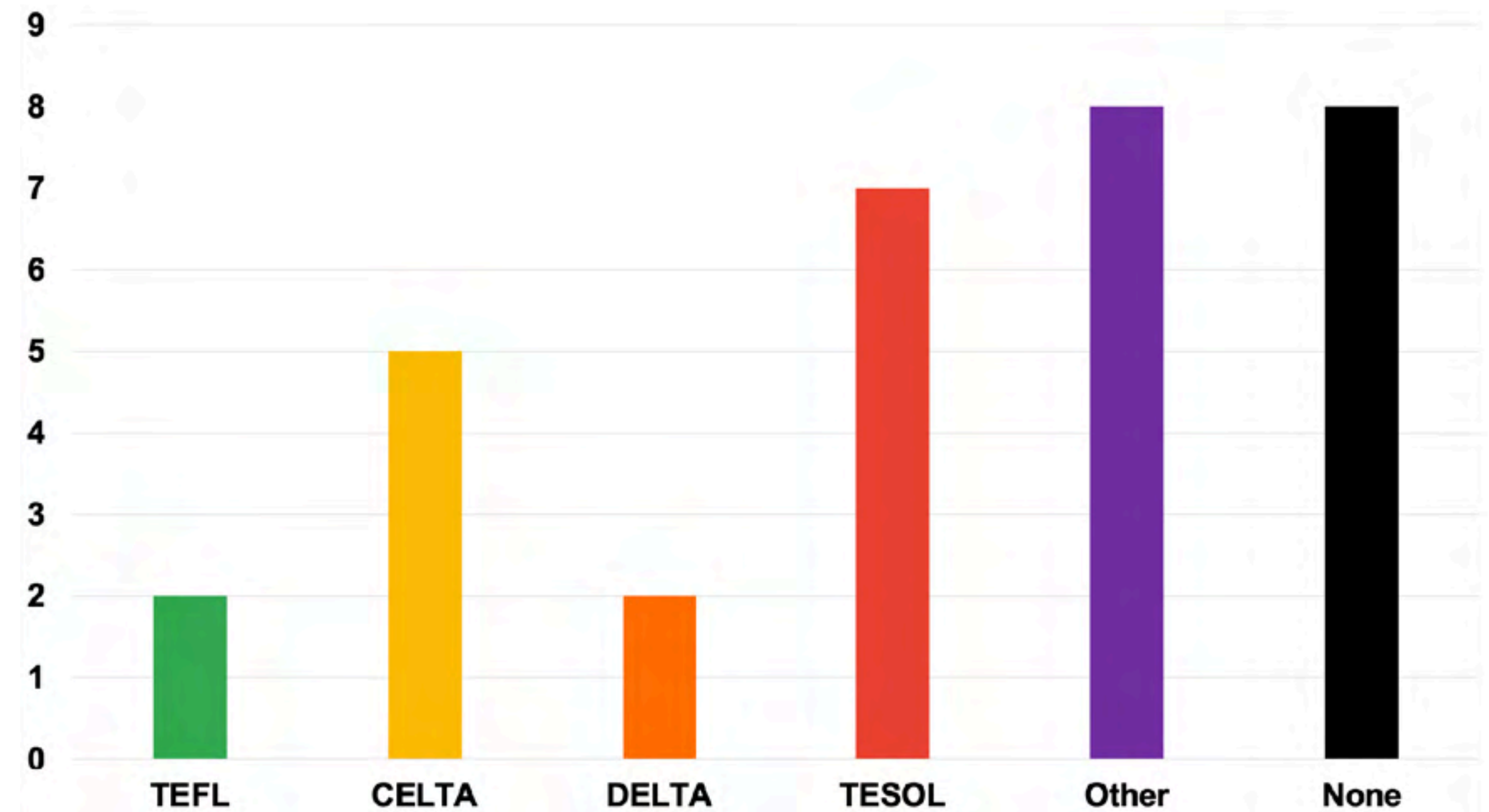
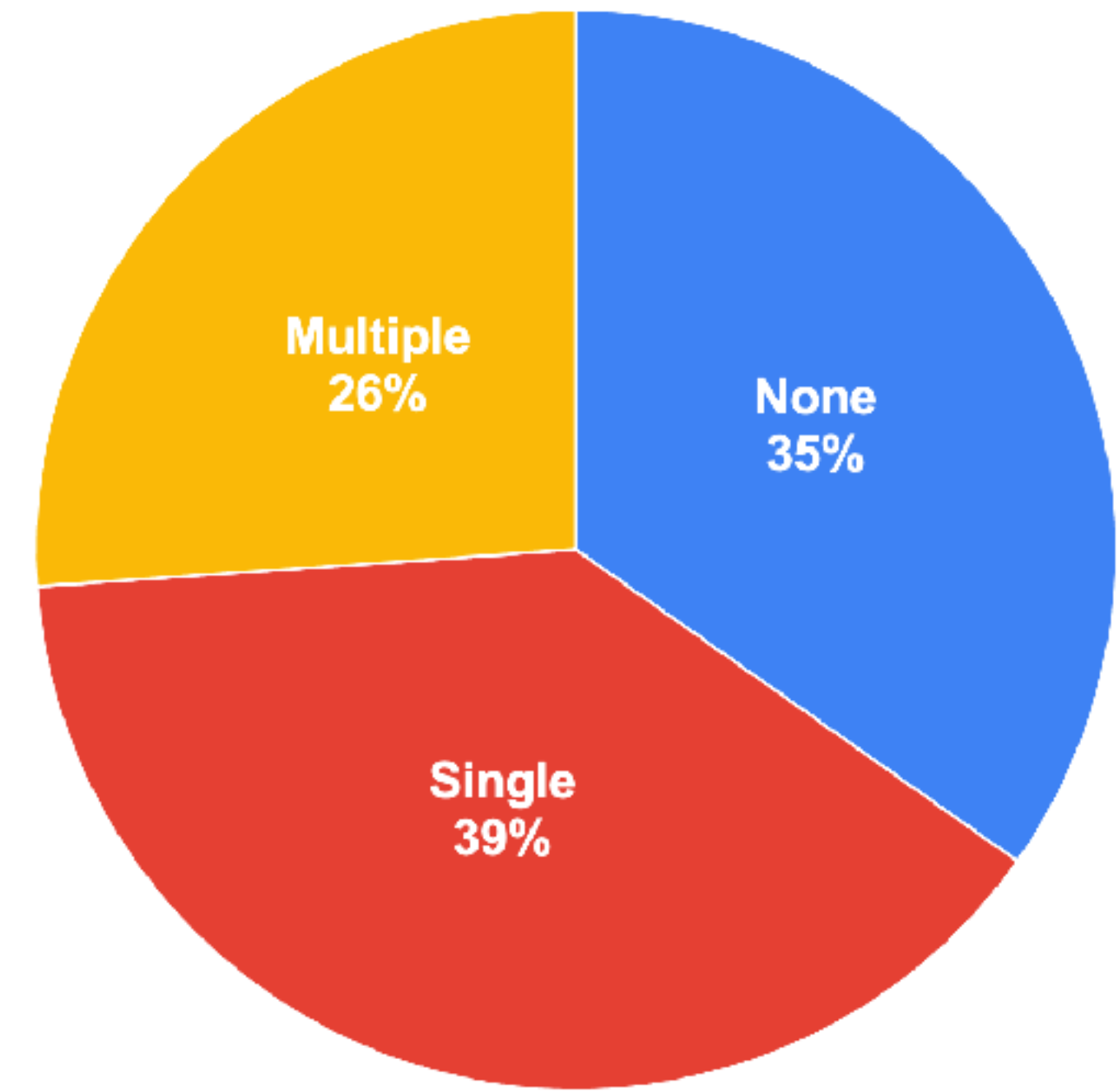
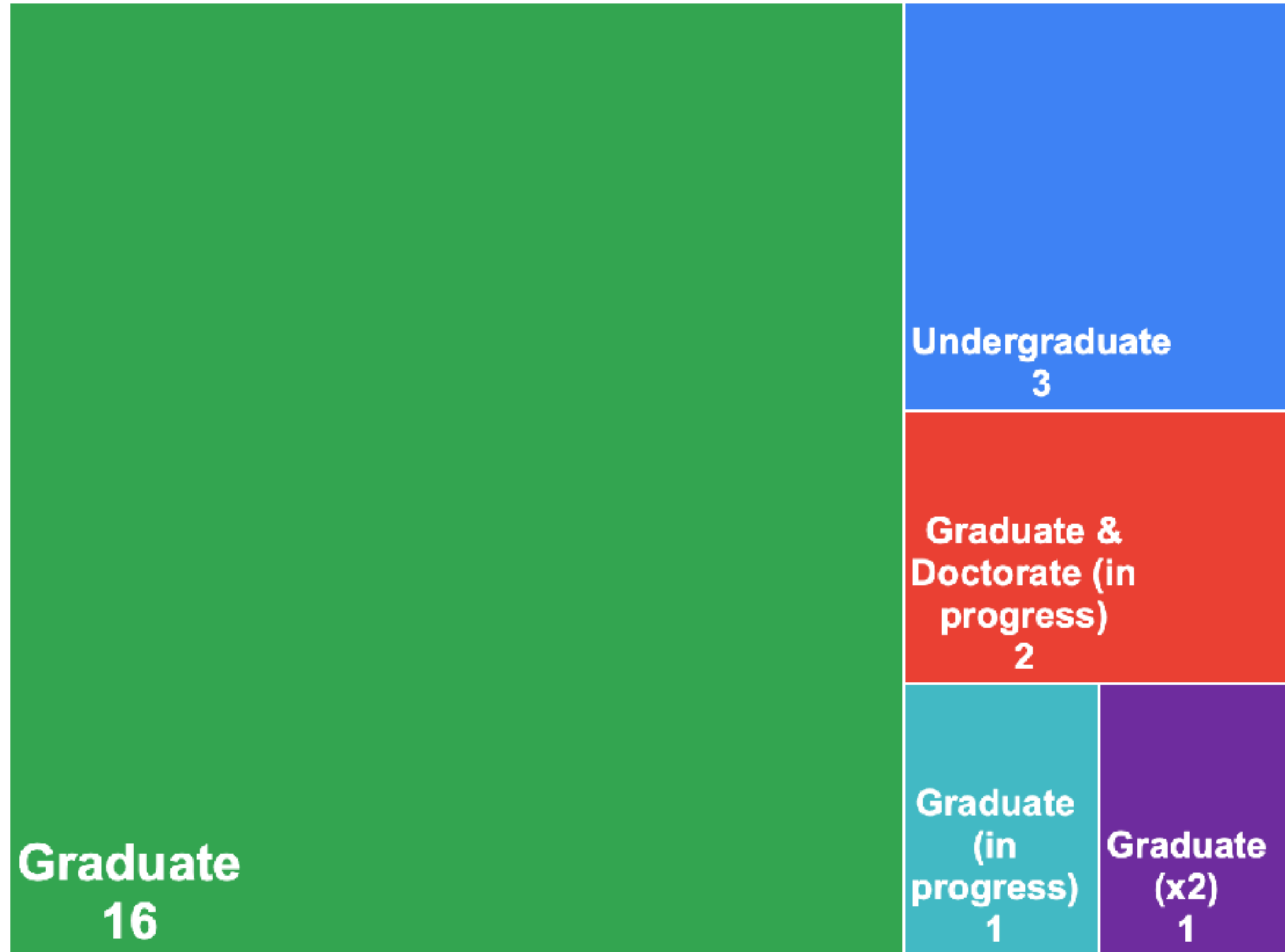
(from 32 total)

Dispatch context = Direct hire context
(University only)

Demographics



Education & Certifications

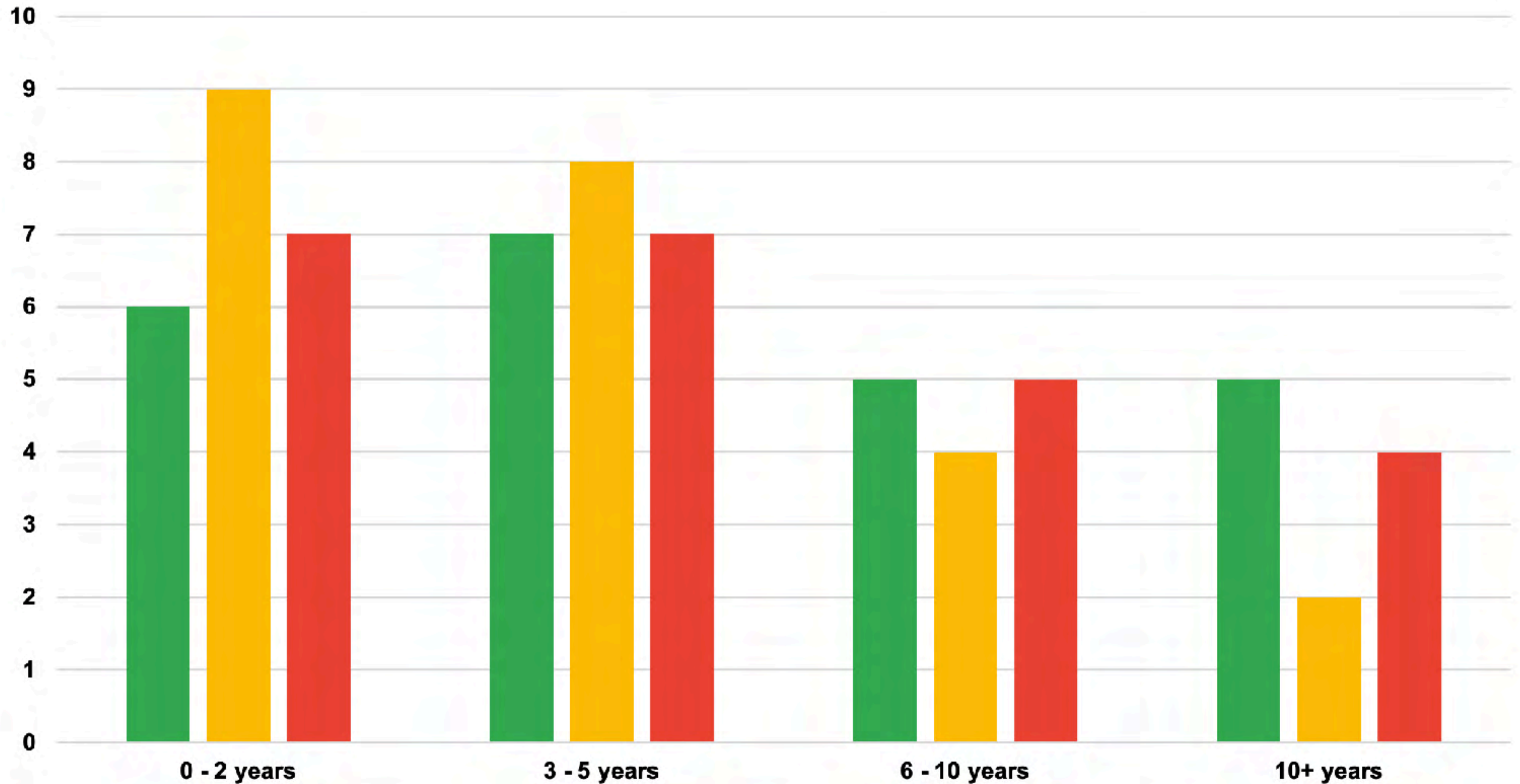


Work Experience

| Pre-Dipatch | |
|--------------|-----------|
| 0 - 2 years | 6 |
| 3 - 5 years | 7 |
| 6 - 10 years | 5 |
| 10+ years | 5 |
| Total | 23 |

| Dispatch | |
|--------------|-----------|
| 0 - 2 years | 9 |
| 3 - 5 years | 8 |
| 6 - 10 years | 4 |
| 10+ years | 2 |
| Total | 23 |

| Current | |
|--------------|-----------|
| 0 - 2 years | 7 |
| 3 - 5 years | 7 |
| 6 - 10 years | 5 |
| 10+ years | 4 |
| Total | 23 |

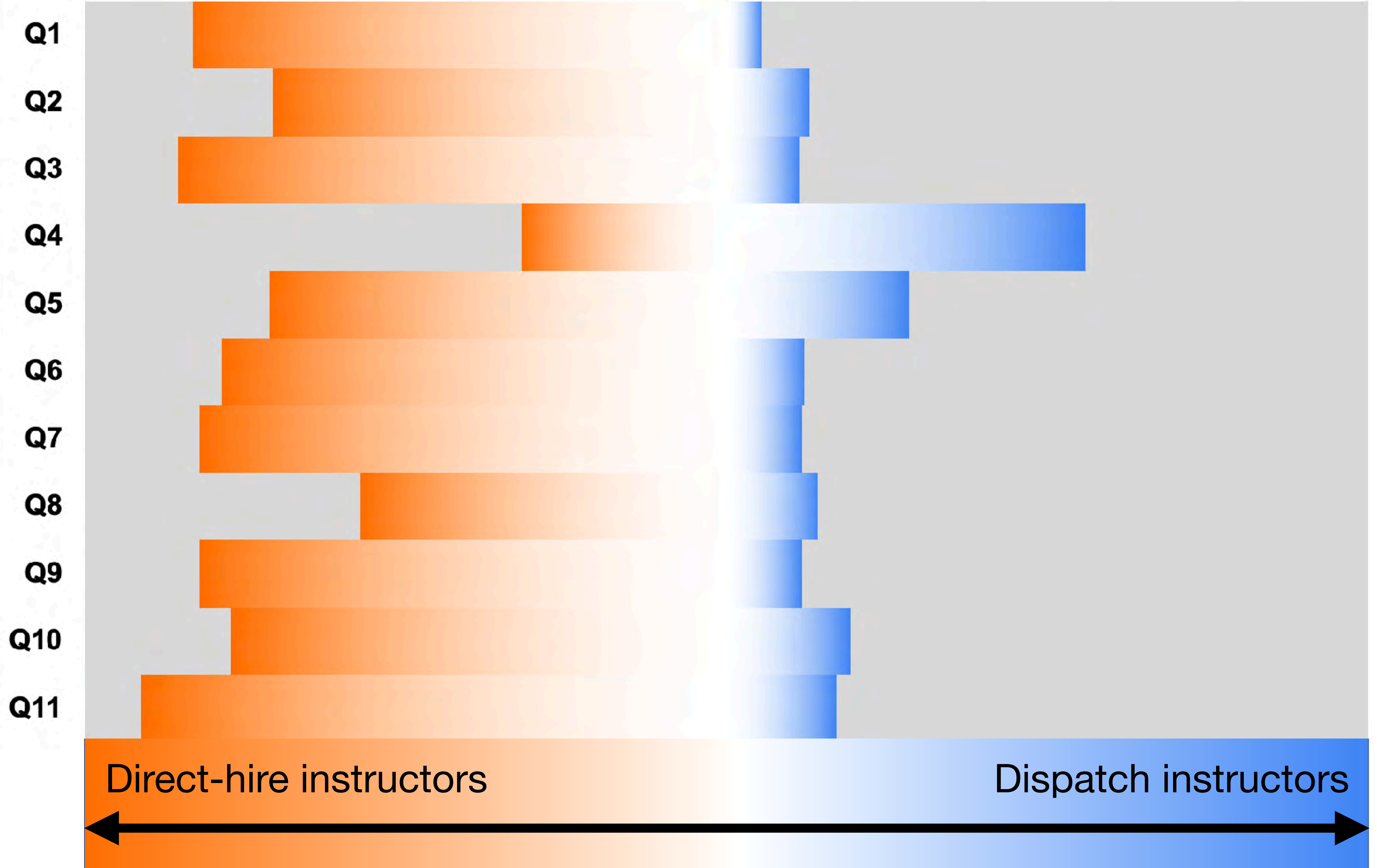


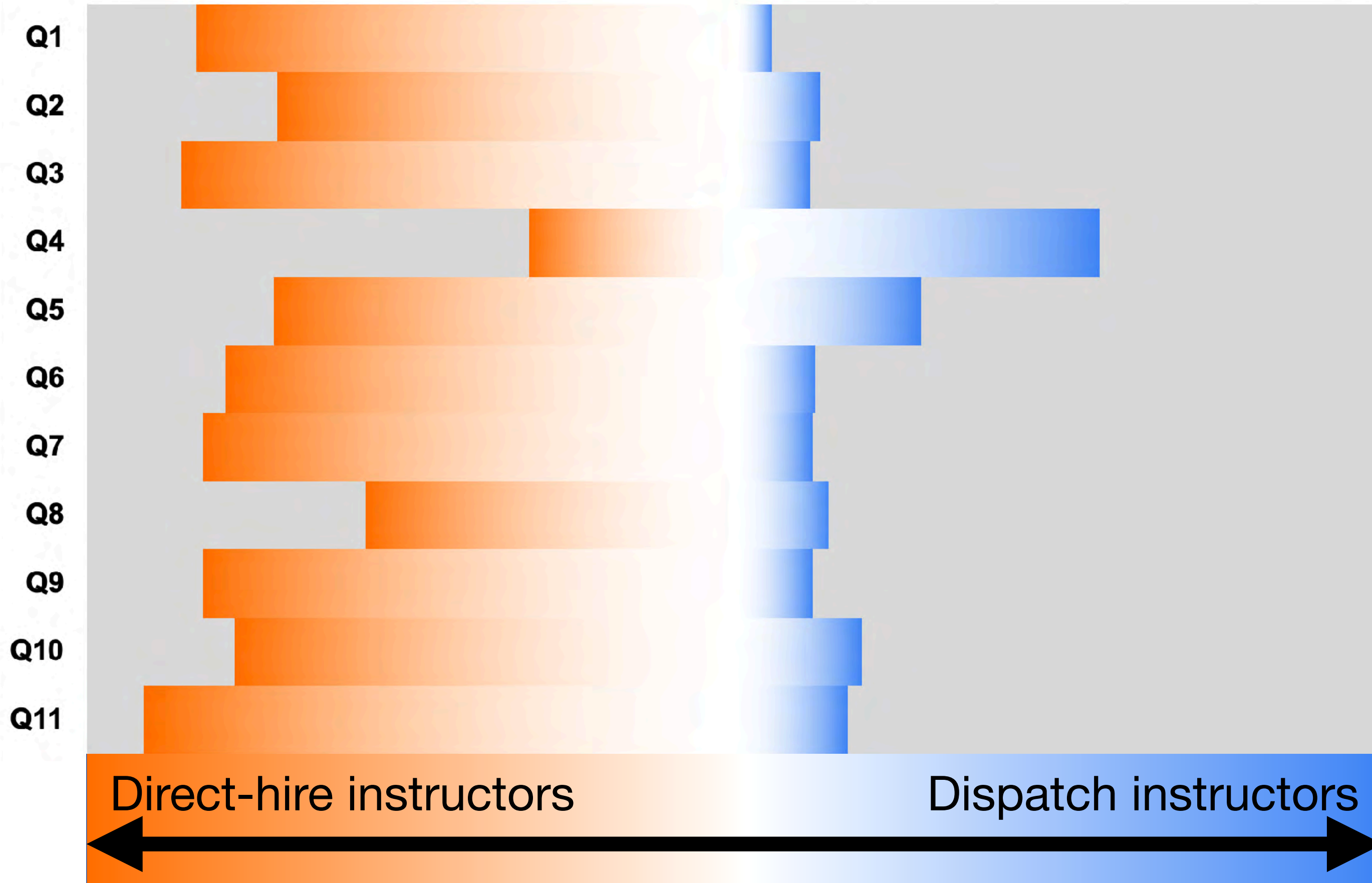
Responses



“Who does _____ better?”

**Instructor
domains**

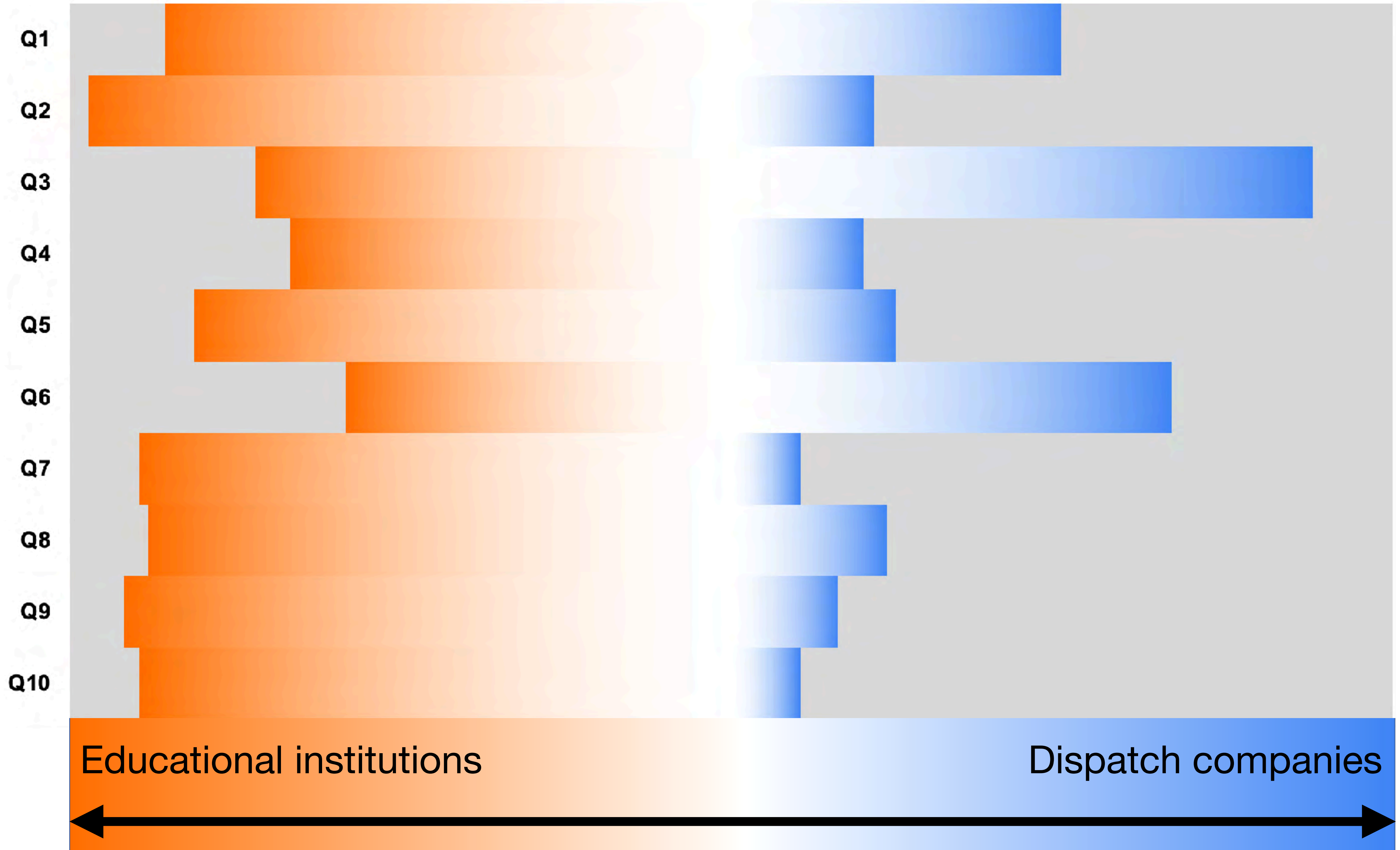


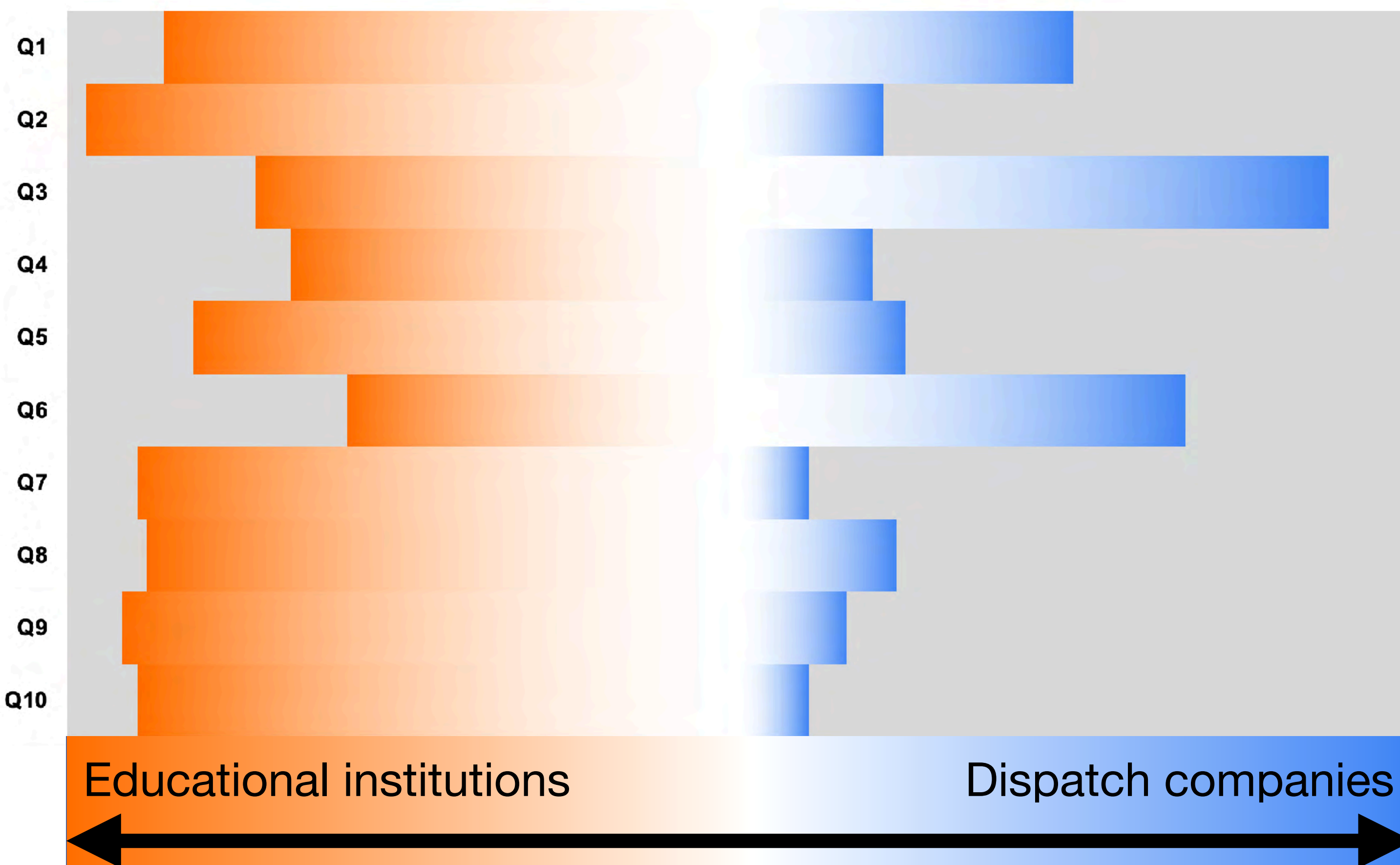


Overwhelmingly [Direct hire]
(we'll come back to that soon)

Q4 (Punctuality & time management) was the sole break-away result
(we'll talk about that later)

Organization domains





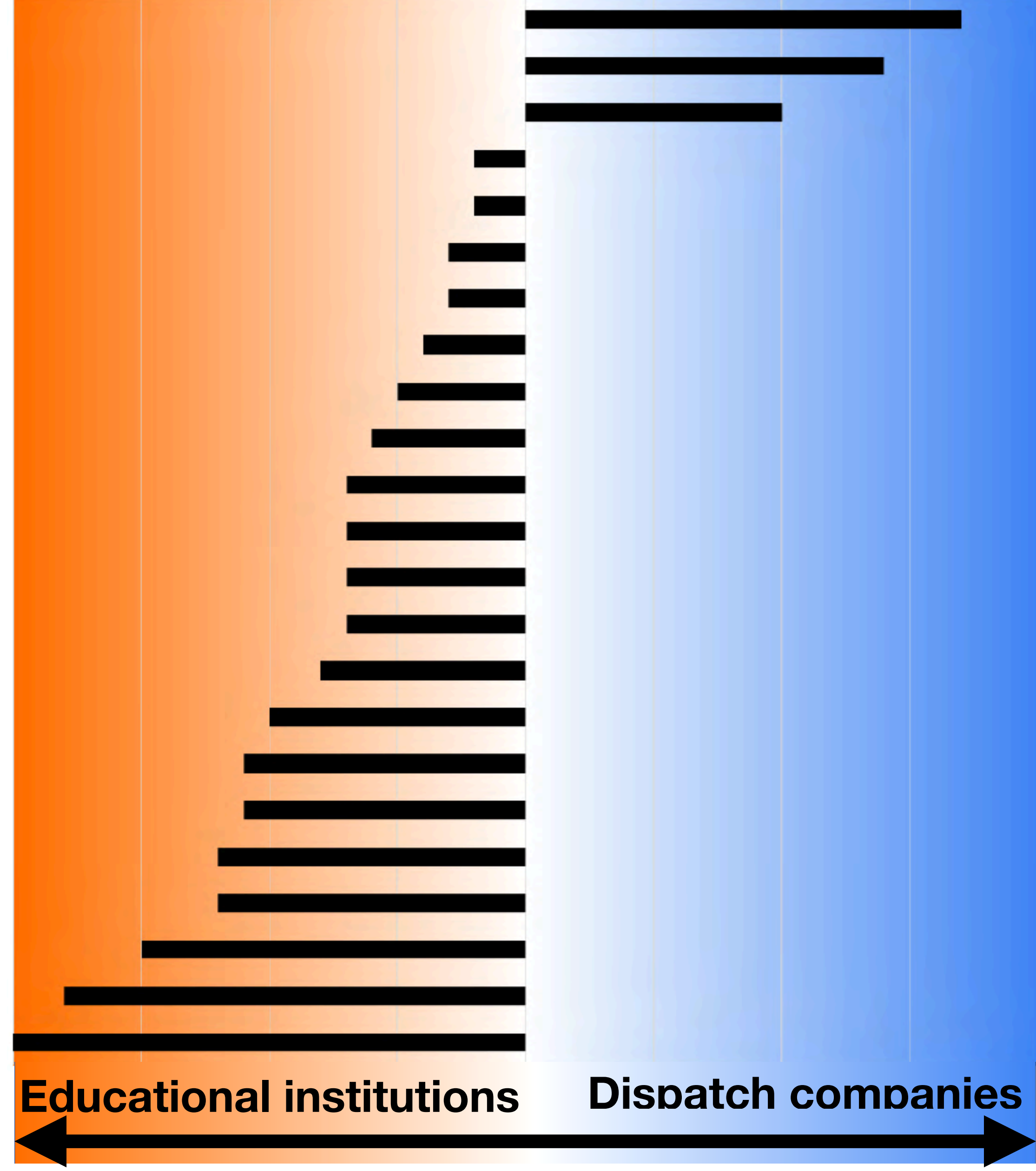
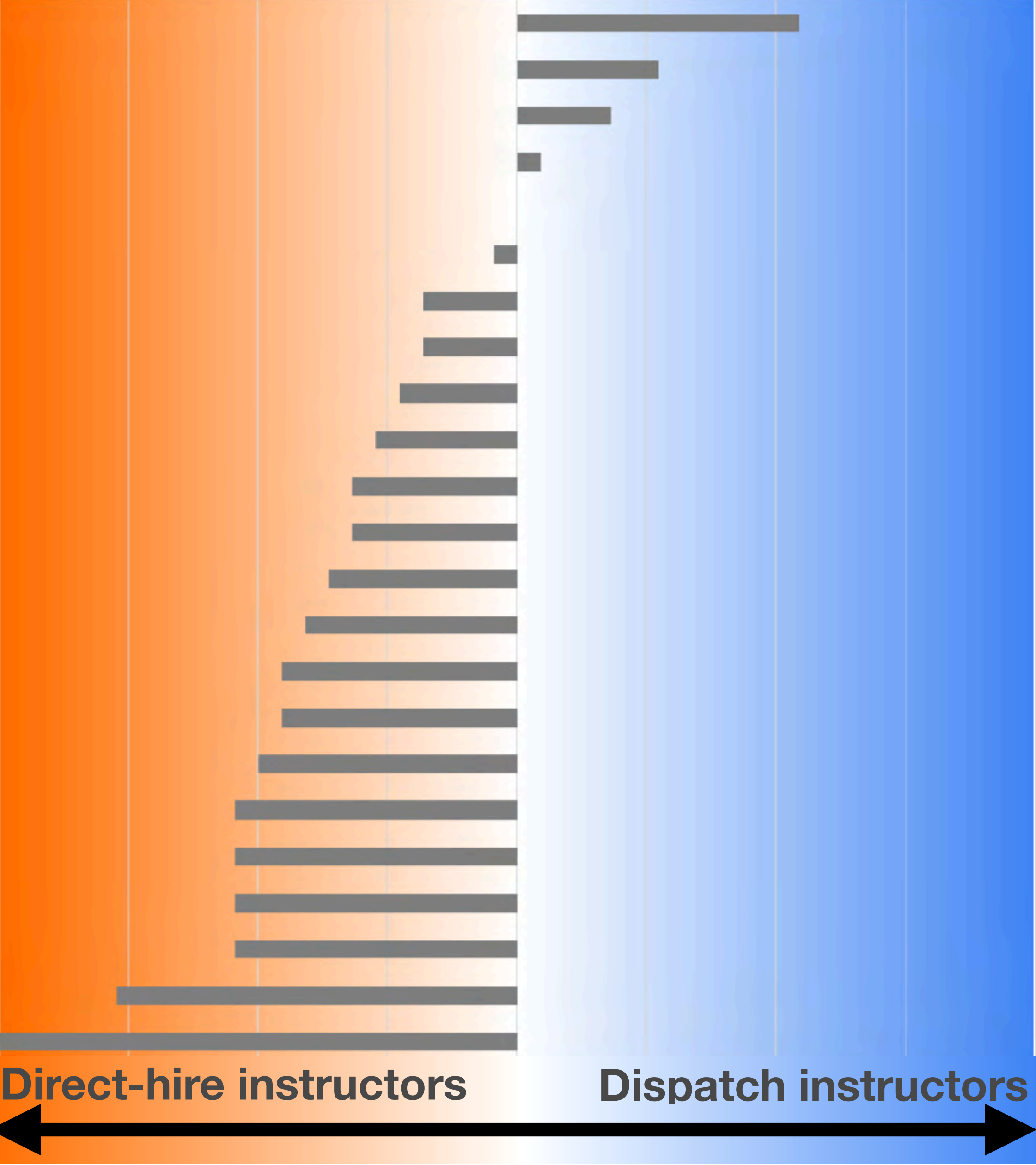
Educational Institutions
 come out ahead,
 but results are less polarized
 (we'll come back to that soon)

- Q1 (Support = personnel/HR matters)
- Q3 (Administrative workload/“paperwork”)
- Q6 (Support = course & lesson preparation)
 (we'll talk about these later also)

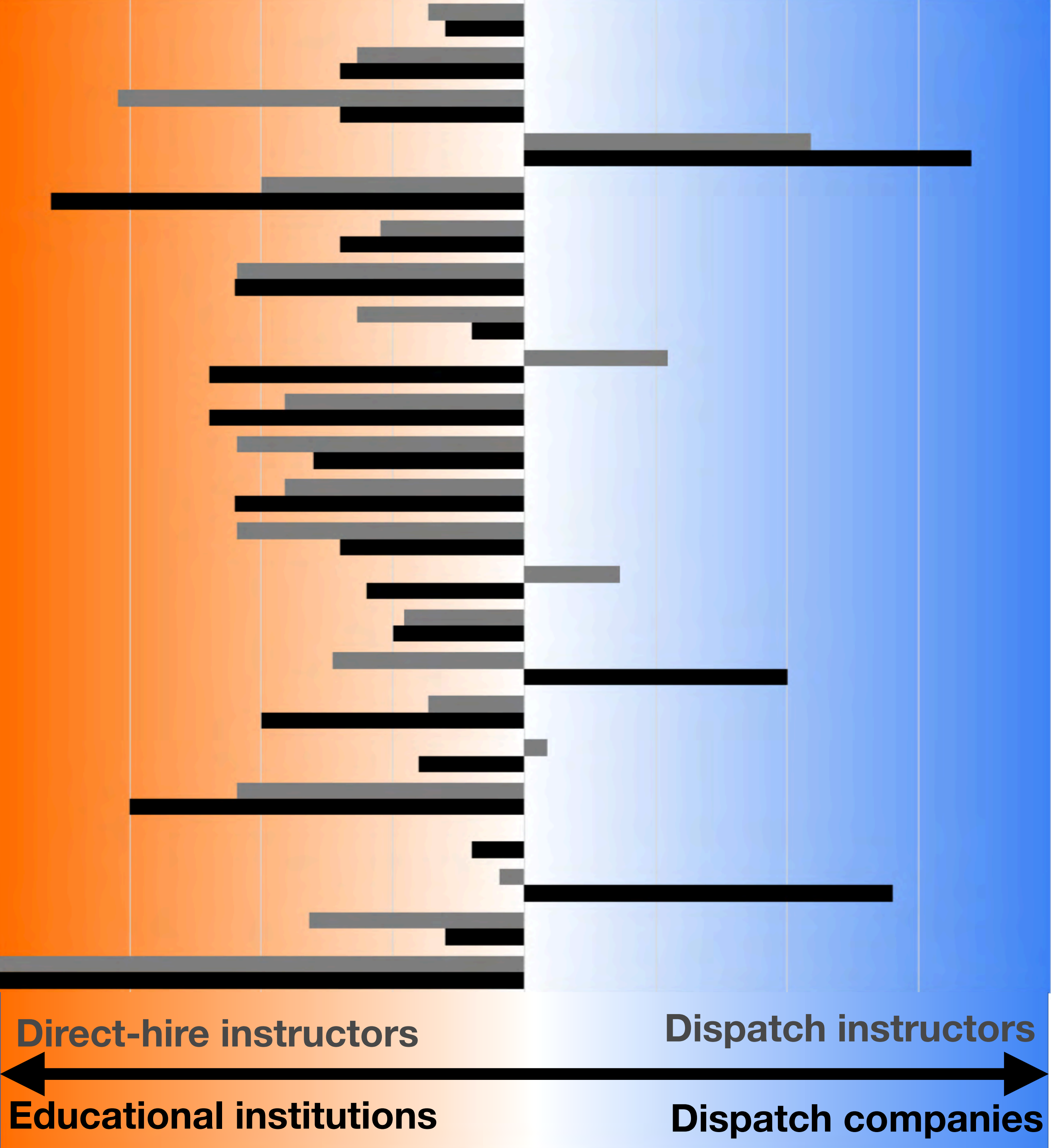
Participant
“preferences”

&

contradictions



“Alignment” of individual respondents



Instructor “alignments” are varied along a spectrum.

However, individual participants responses are “messier”.

Intensity of “alignments” can vary. Individual respondents can be “split” in their “alignments”.

Personal experiences (positive/negative) seem to play a large role here.

Discussion

&

Themes

Instructors

Instructors

- Participants were not negative towards skills and abilities of dispatch instructors.
- Any criticism of dispatch companies does not appear to carry over to instructors.
- It comes down to the individual, not the organizational context.
- Any strength of direct-hire instructors is because of their institutional knowledge, connections, and experience on the job.
- Any weakness of dispatch instructors is because of their limited involvement in the organization aside from their teaching roles.



Self (and skill set) as commodity

More “disposable”, so important to stand out:

- Ability to satisfy multiple/varied stakeholders
- Punctuality
- Professionalism
- Creativity
- Attention to details/regulations

Organizations

Organizations

(Unsurprisingly?)

Opinions varied by individual respondent experience

Each does best what they are “supposed” to do best.



Universities (presumably) education > profit

better at providing instructors with:

- more general autonomy
- flexibility in teaching, assessment, etc.
- resources
- development towards career advancement

Dispatch companies (presumably) profit > education

better at:

- handling "red tape"
- managing employees
- instructor & program oversight
- recruiting & hiring
- organizing / systematizing processes
- skills-oriented instructor development

Organizations

Something missing at direct hire positions....



- “Fresh” hiring
- Systematic & structured curricula/lessons
- Ongoing instructor development
- Observations (supervisory and/or peer)
- Instructor camaraderie / resource sharing
- Clarity of objectives

Institutions are not claimed to be inadequate.

However...

...coming from a different frame of reference, respondents noted these factors to be lacking.

Limitations

Instructors

Possible respondent bias

Respondents were asked to assess DH -vs- Dispatch instructors.

But.....

All respondents are currently DH instructors now.

What to take away.....

If you are a dispatch
instructor.....

Dispatch = Time well spent

- Importance of dispatch experience in getting and succeeding at DH positions
- Valuable experience: how to conduct lessons and successfully implement predetermined syllabi
- Systematic/structured nature of dispatch courses: bring to your own courses?

If you are a DH instructor...

Be mindful of your time-keeping

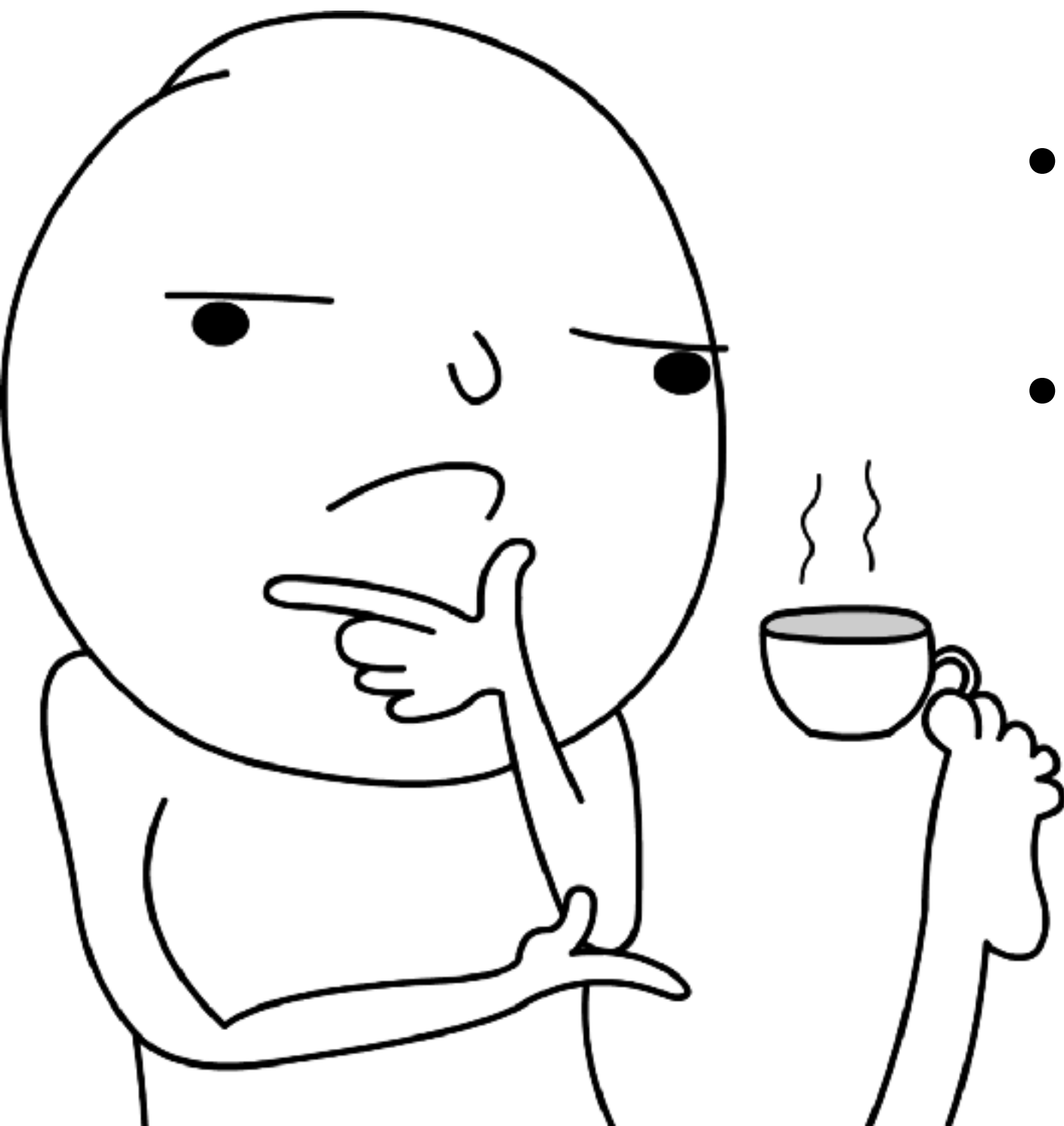
lesson time-keeping
timeliness of administrative issues
work times

(Remember, these are your co-workers and peers commenting.)



Consider:

- Are courses adequately structured to meet program goals?
- Lesson quality and teaching methods
- Communication among instructors on curricula
- Communication with dispatch instructors



If you are university admin....

Highly qualified instructors ≠ least oversight possible



Actively promote instructors sharing ideas and materials

Visa / “life in Japan” administrative support

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Thank you !

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Q & A

Thank you !

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