

New to UBC Okanagan Student Survey 2018: Graduate Students



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Okanagan Planning and Institutional Research

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Executive Summary

The New to UBC (NUBC) Survey was administered in summer 2018 to all new incoming graduate students at UBC's Okanagan campus. In total, 119 students out of 157 responded to the survey – a response rate of 76%. The sample of respondents was generally a good representation of the 2018/19 new graduate student population at UBC's Okanagan campus, with some exceptions.

Demographics

Just over seven in ten domestic respondents (71%, n = 27) identified their gender identity to be “woman,” and 38% (n = 18) of international respondents did so.

Seventy-six percent (n = 28) of domestic respondents identified as White, while international respondents most often identified as South Asian (52%, n = 25), Chinese (17%, n = 8), and White (13%, n = 6). Eight percent (n = 3) of domestic respondents self-reported as Canadian Aboriginal, which is higher than the cohort of students where 3% were identified as Aboriginal. All international respondents said they were born outside of Canada (n = 48) while 95% (n = 37) of domestic respondents were born in Canada. Thirty-three percent of domestic respondents (n = 13) had at least one of their parents/guardian born outside of Canada. Most domestic and international students identified English as the language that they know both well enough to conduct a conversation about everyday topics and well enough to conduct an academic/technical conversation. For international students the second-most common language in both categories was Hindi.

Choosing a Graduate Program

Most respondents stated that UBC Okanagan was their first choice of school for post-secondary education. For domestic respondents, the most influential factors in choosing a supervisor were that they were willing to work with them (83%, n = 20), his/her research group fosters a working environment that the respondent likes (80%, n = 16), and they are doing interesting research (69%, n = 18). Those for international respondents were that their supervisor has a reputation for being a good researcher (79%, n = 30), was willing to work with them (79%, n = 33), and will make sure they do a rigorous project/thesis/dissertation (78%, n = 35).

Concerns and Barriers

Most frequently, domestic respondents were very concerned with commitments regarding the funding of their graduate studies (33%, n = 13) and customary practices for grading student work (16%, n = 5). International respondents were very concerned with commitments regarding the funding of their thesis/dissertation research project (54%, n = 23) and fulfilling teaching assistant obligations (51%, n = 26). Work/financial commitments (domestic: 33%, n = 14; international: 32%, n = 16) and availability of funding (domestic: 24%, n = 9; international: 31%, n = 16) were often identified as a major obstacle to academic progress by both international and domestic respondents.

Sixty-two percent (n = 26) of domestic respondents and 80% (n = 39) of international respondents planned to work for pay outside of appointments that are part of their funding package. Most international respondents planned to work on campus, while most domestic respondents planned to work off campus.

Opportunities for Graduate Students

Among domestic respondents, 68% (n = 28) would be very likely to utilize a graduate student handbook for their program and 66% (n = 27) would be very likely to participate in an orientation for new graduate students in their program. International respondents were keen to participate in/utilize almost all of the proposed activities and resources. Specifically, 78% (n = 40) and 73% (n = 37) of international respondents would be very likely to participate in an orientation for new graduate students in their program and having a mentor for



their professional development who is not their advisor, respectively. The majority of respondents stated they saw themselves participating in the graduate student orientation (domestic: 68%, n = 28; international: 92%, n = 47). Internships (domestic: 72%, n = 28; international: 80%, n = 39) and a workshop on career opportunities outside academia (domestic: 71%, n = 27; international: 84%, n = 41) were identified as very important by many respondents.

Finances

Almost two thirds (61%, n = 25) of domestic respondents selected loans, savings, or family assistance as a form of support they will receive while enrolled in their graduate studies. Thirty-nine percent (n = 18) of international graduate student respondents said they would be taking on graduate research assistantships to support their graduate studies enrollment. The largest proportions of domestic and international respondents indicated they would not have to repay any undergraduate or graduate educational debt. Twenty-nine percent (n = 13) of international and 26% (n = 11) of domestic respondents indicated that their debt due to their graduate education will be \$20,000 or more.

Career Pathways

Becoming a professor in a college or university was the career choice which the most domestic (40%, n = 16) respondents would definitely be interested in. International respondents were most often interested in conducting research in a business, industry, or the private sector, with 59% (n = 29) selecting they would definitely be interested.

Health and Wellbeing

General health and mental health were rated favorably –as “good” or better– by the majority of respondents.

When in need of health care services, student respondents planned to use the on-campus physicians (domestic: 59%, n = 19; international: 78%, n = 29), walk-in clinics (domestic: 56%, n = 18; international: 57%, n = 21), and/or on-campus counselling (domestic: 47%, n = 15; international: 57%, n = 21).

The majority of domestic (69%, n = 22) and international (89%, n = 41) respondents indicated that they do not have a disability or ongoing medical condition.

Stress, sleep difficulties, and financial difficulties were the most frequently identified issues that had somewhat or significant impacted academic performance for domestic respondents. Stress, concern for a troubled friend or family member, and financial difficulties were the issues most commonly cited by international respondents.

Introduction

This report displays the findings of the 2018 New to UBC (NUBC) Graduate Student Survey for UBC's Okanagan campus. Graduate students participating in this survey were asked about why they chose to pursue their graduate studies at UBC Okanagan, their academic concerns, opportunities they may pursue, their time commitments, how they will finance their studies, and their career plans.

Methodology

All new, incoming graduate students to UBC Okanagan were invited to participate in the NUBC Graduate Student Survey. The NUBC Survey was deployed online via e-mail invitations, and was available to students from August 9th to September 4th, 2018.

Sample

A total of 157 graduate students were invited to complete the survey, excluding email bounce backs. Of 157 invitees, there were 119 full or partial completes –an overall response rate of 76% (75% for domestic and 76% for international students).

The sample of respondents was generally a good representation of the cohort of students (refer to Table 1). The sample of respondents reflects the composition of the cohort well in terms of gender and domestic/international student status. In terms of program type, MSW-O students were underrepresented (cohort: 29%, sample: 27%) while MA-O students were overrepresented (cohort: 6%, sample: 8%).

Table 1: Demographic breakdown of cohort and sample

	Cohort		Sample	
	Count (N)	%	Count (n)	%
Gender				
Male	69	44%	53	45%
Female	88	56%	66	55%
Domestic/International				
Domestic	73	46%	55	46%
International	84	54%	64	54%
Program				
MA-O	10	6%	9	8%
MASC-O	9	6%	8	7%
MDS-O	19	12%	13	11%
MED-O	3	2%	1	1%
MENG-O	26	17%	21	18%
MFA-O	6	3%	3	3%
MSC-O	22	14%	17	14%
MSW-O	45	29%	32	27%
PHD-O	19	12%	15	13%

Note: The data above are from SISC.

When breaking down the cohort and sample proportions by domestic/international student status, in general, the samples of respondents reflected the cohorts well, with a few exceptions (refer to Table 2). Among domestic students, MSC-O (cohort: 12%, sample: 15%) students and females (cohort: 75%, sample: 78%) were overrepresented, while PHD-O students (cohort: 4%, sample: 2%) and males (cohort: 25%, sample: 22%) were underrepresented. Of international students, MENG-O students (cohort: 31%, sample: 33%),



PHD-O (cohort: 19%, sample: 22%) students, and males (cohort: 61%, sample: 64%) were overrepresented, whereas MDS-O students (cohort: 18%, sample: 16%), MSC students (cohort: 16%, sample: 14%), and females (cohort: 39%, sample: 36%) were underrepresented.

Table 2: Demographic breakdown of cohort and sample by domestic/international student status

	<i>Domestic</i>				<i>International</i>			
	Cohort		Sample		Cohort		Sample	
	<i>Count (N)</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Count (n)</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Count (N)</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Count (n)</i>	<i>%</i>
Gender								
Male	18	25%	12	22%	51	61%	41	64%
Female	55	75%	43	78%	33	39%	23	36%
Program								
MA-O	8	11%	7	13%	2	2%	2	3%
MASC-O	2	3%	2	4%	7	8%	6	9%
MDS-O	4	6%	3	6%	15	18%	10	16%
MED-O	3	4%	1	2%	0	0%	0	0%
MENG-O	0	0%	0	0%	26	31%	21	33%
MFA-O	1	1%	1	2%	3	4%	2	3%
MSC-O	9	12%	8	15%	13	16%	9	14%
MSW-O	43	59%	32	58%	2	2%	0	0%
PHD-O	3	4%	1	2%	16	19%	14	22%

Note: The data above are from SISC.

Notes

Readers should be aware that the percentages given in this report reflect the number of respondents who selected an option in terms of the total number of students who responded to a given survey item. In other words, "50%" denotes 50% of students who responded to a certain item rather than 50% of all domestic or all international students who participated in this survey.

Additionally, when applicable, students who responded to a question by selecting "Don't know", "Not applicable", or "Prefer not to answer" were not included in the analysis of that specific question, unless otherwise noted.

In total, there were 64 domestic and 55 international students who participated in the NUBC survey for graduate students. Thus, it should be noted that figures should be interpreted with a degree of caution as they can only represent a maximum of 64 domestic and 55 international respondents.

Demographics

Gender and Sexual Orientation

Just over seven in ten domestic respondents (71%, n = 27) identified their gender identity to be “woman,” and 38% (n = 18) of international respondents did so. The majority of respondents identified as heterosexual (domestic: 82%, n = 31; international: 86%, n = 36).

Residence

Ninety-five percent (n = 37) of domestic student respondents were born in Canada, and 100% (n = 48) of international respondents were born outside of Canada. Thirty-three percent of domestic respondents (n = 13) had at least one of their parents/guardians born outside of Canada.

Fifteen percent (n = 6) of domestic graduate student respondents have lived in the Okanagan region for at least one year, 39% (n = 15) have lived elsewhere in BC for at least one year, 62% (n = 24) have lived in another province/territory in Canada for at least one year, and 15% (n = 6) have lived in another country besides Canada for at least one year. Most international respondents (93%, n = 37) have lived outside of Canada for at least one year.

Languages

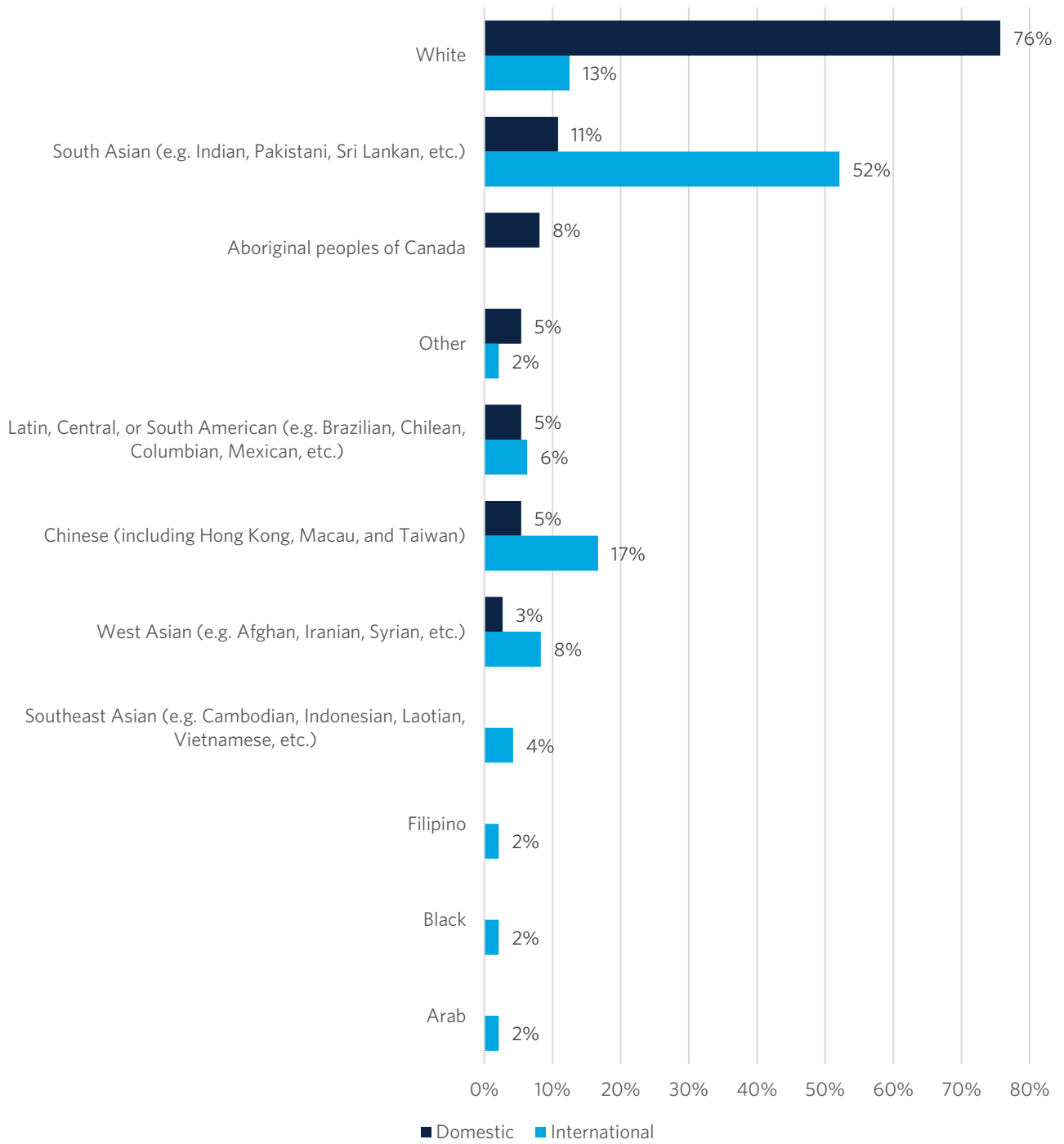
Respondents were asked which languages they spoke well enough to conduct a conversation about everyday topics. The majority of respondents, both domestic (100%, n = 39) and international (98%, n = 47) selected English. Hindi (40%, n = 19), Mandarin (19%, n = 9), and Punjabi (15%, n = 7) were the next most common responses among international respondents, while French (15%, n = 6) was the second most common response among domestic respondents.

English was the language that all domestic respondents identified they knew well enough to conduct an academic/technical conversation (n = 37). The top two responses for international students were English (96%, n = 46) and Hindi (31%, n = 15).

Ethno-Racial Distribution and Citizenship

Seventy-six percent of domestic respondents (n = 28) selected that they identify their ethnicity as White, while 8% (n = 3) selected Canadian Aboriginal. The proportion of students identifying as Aboriginal was higher than the cohort (cohort: 3%, sample: 8%). International respondents most often identified as South Asian (52%, n = 25), Chinese (17%, n = 8), and White (13%, n = 6).

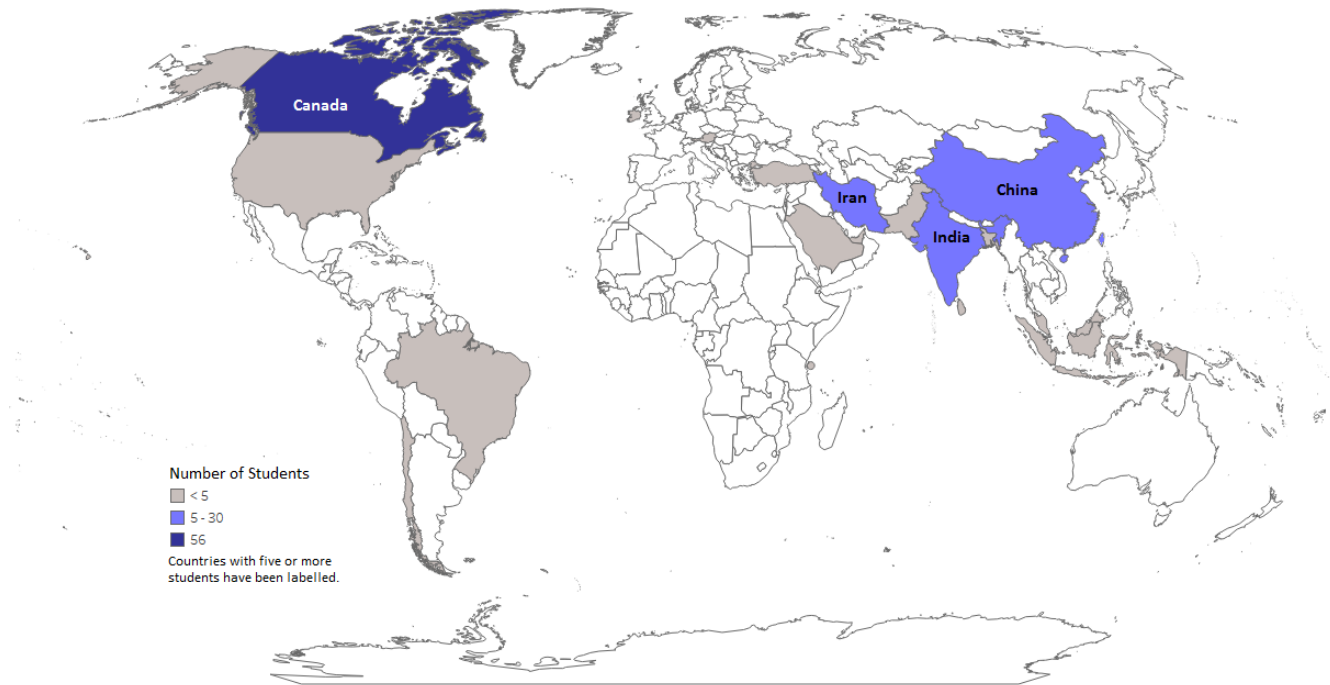
Figure 1a: Self-reported ethnicity



Note: Ethnicities which fewer than 2% of respondents selected were not included in the above graph (Indigenous (outside of Canada), Japanese, Korean); this graph is reflective of survey data.

Data on respondents' citizenship was also taken from SISC. The majority of respondents were Canadian citizens ($n = 56$). The most common country of citizenship for international respondents was India ($n = 30$), followed by China ($n = 8$) and Iran ($n = 5$). Overall, students represented 18 countries.

Figure 1b: Citizenship



Previous Education

Most respondents (68% ($n = 27$) domestic, 63% ($n = 30$) international) completed their bachelor's degree between 2015 and 2018. Thirty-five percent ($n = 17$) of international and only 13% ($n = 5$) of domestic respondents indicated they had completed a graduate program previously. For all international respondents, this previous graduate degree was earned outside of Canada ($n = 17$) and most were within the same discipline as their current program (65%, $n = 11$). All domestic respondents received their degree within Canada ($n = 5$).

Choosing a Graduate Program

Choosing UBC's Okanagan Campus

Eighty-two (n = 45) percent of domestic respondents indicated that UBC's Okanagan campus was their first choice for graduate studies. Of international respondents, 75% (n = 47) chose UBC's Okanagan campus as their first choice. Among those respondents who did not rank UBC's Okanagan campus as their first choice for graduate studies, 70% (n = 7) of domestic and 94% (n = 15) of international respondents indicated UBC Okanagan was their second choice institution.

Among respondents who did not rank UBC's Okanagan campus as their first choice institution, international students most often selected UBC's Vancouver campus (75%, n = 12) as their first choice institution.

Thirty-six percent (n = 19) of domestic respondents stated that they were in a thesis- or dissertation-based graduate program, compared to 53% (n = 30) of international respondents.

Choosing a Supervisor

Sixty percent (n = 34) of the international respondents specified that they have identified a faculty member to be their thesis/dissertation supervisor, while 38% (n = 20) of domestic respondents did so.

Students choose to work with a particular faculty member as their supervisor for a variety of reasons. Respondents were asked to rate the extent to which several aspects influenced their choice of supervisor.

For domestic respondents, the top three factors which influenced their decision to a great extent included that they were willing to work with them (83%, n = 20), his/her research group fosters a working environment that the respondent likes (80%, n = 16), and they are doing interesting research (69%, n = 18). International respondents most often selected that their supervisor has a reputation for being a good researcher (79%, n = 30), was willing to work with them (79%, n = 33), and will make sure I do a rigorous project/thesis/dissertation (78%, n = 35) as the factors that most influenced their decision.

Respondents selecting "not applicable/no opinion" were excluded in these analyses.



Figure 2a: Factors contributing to choosing a supervisor (domestic)

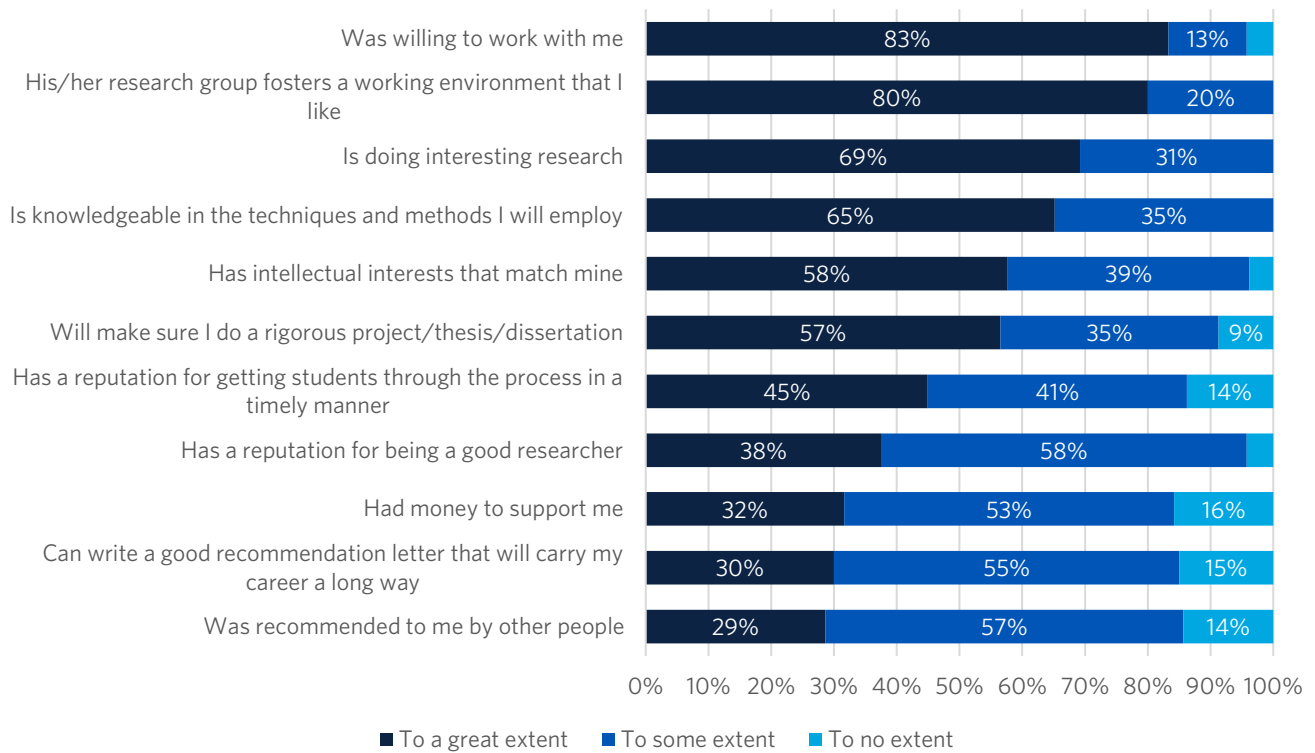
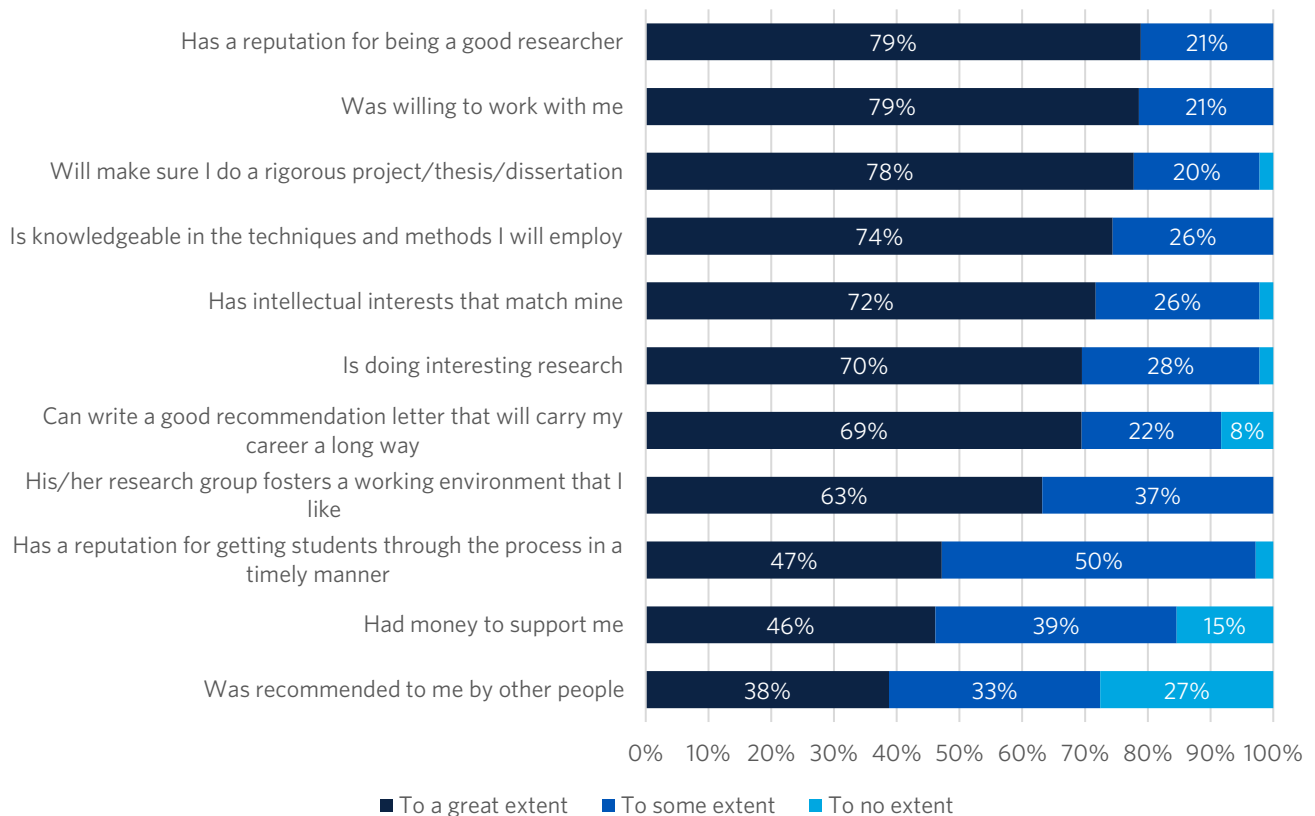


Figure 2b: Factors contributing to choosing a supervisor (international)



Concerns and Barriers

Academic Concerns

In general, international respondents expressed higher levels of concern with commitments and customary practices related to graduate studies than domestic respondents. For domestic respondents, the top concerns included: commitments regarding the funding of their graduate studies (33%, n = 13) and customary practices for grading student work (16%, n = 5). For international respondents, the top concerns included: commitment regarding the funding of their thesis/dissertation research project (54%, n = 23) and fulfilling teaching assistant obligations (51%, n = 26). Respondents selecting “not applicable/no opinion” were excluded in these analyses.

Figure 3a: Level of concern with aspects related to graduate program (domestic)

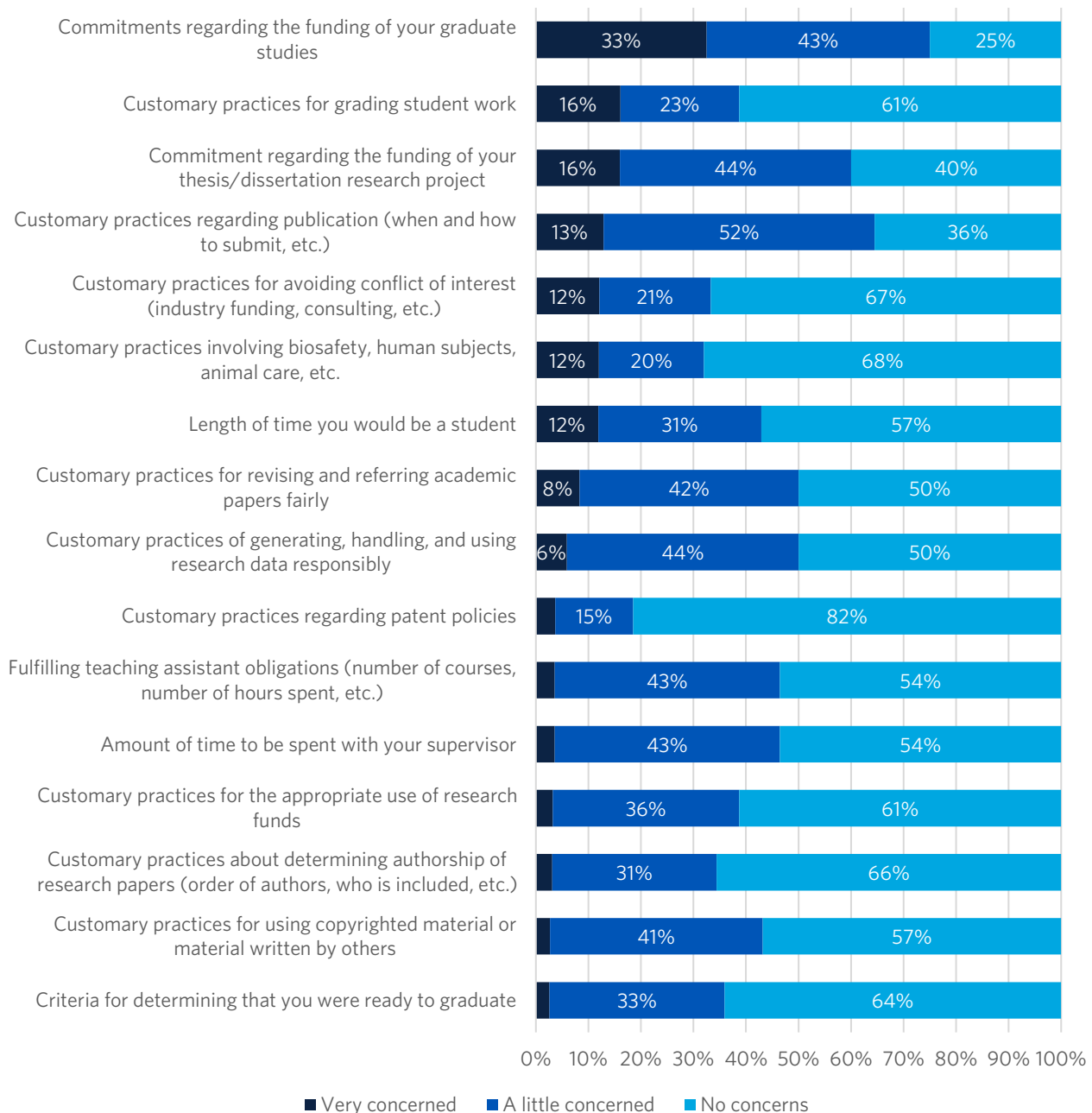
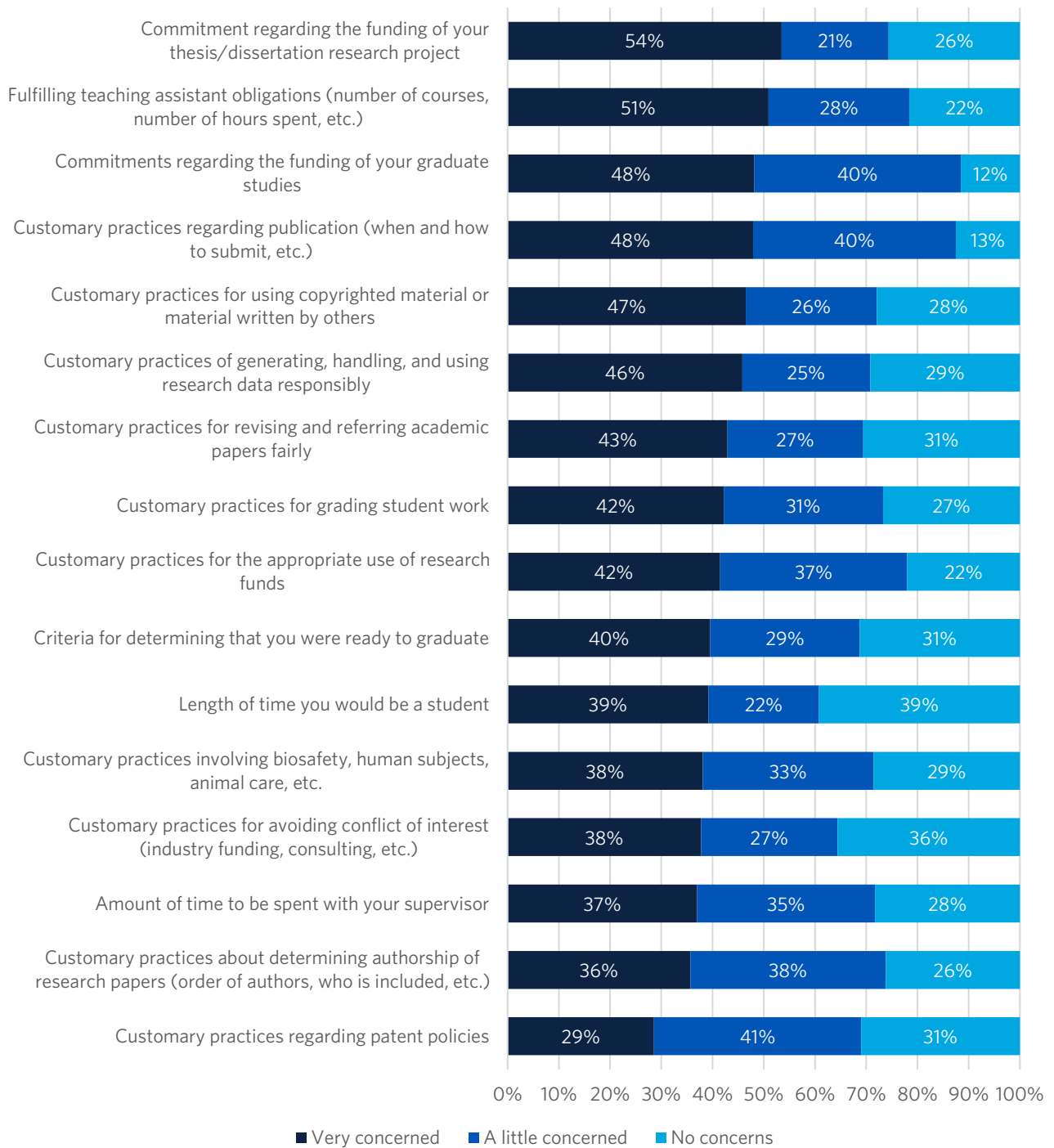


Figure 3b: Level of concern with aspects related to graduate program (international)



Barriers to Academic Success

Work/financial commitments (domestic: 33%, n = 14; international: 32%, n = 16) and availability of funding (domestic: 24%, n = 9; international: 31%, n = 16) were identified as the top obstacles to academic progress by both international and domestic respondents, with the greatest proportions of respondents rating these as a major obstacle. Respondents selecting “not applicable/no opinion” were excluded in these analyses.

Figure 4a: Obstacles to academic progress (domestic)

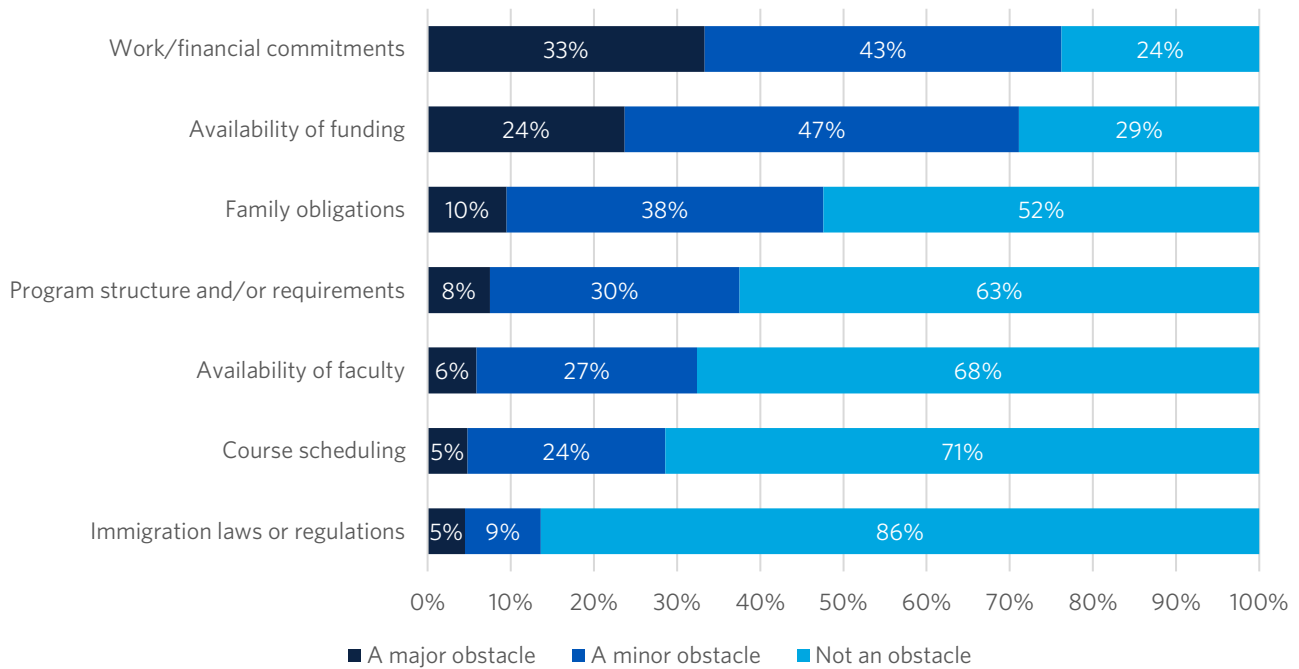
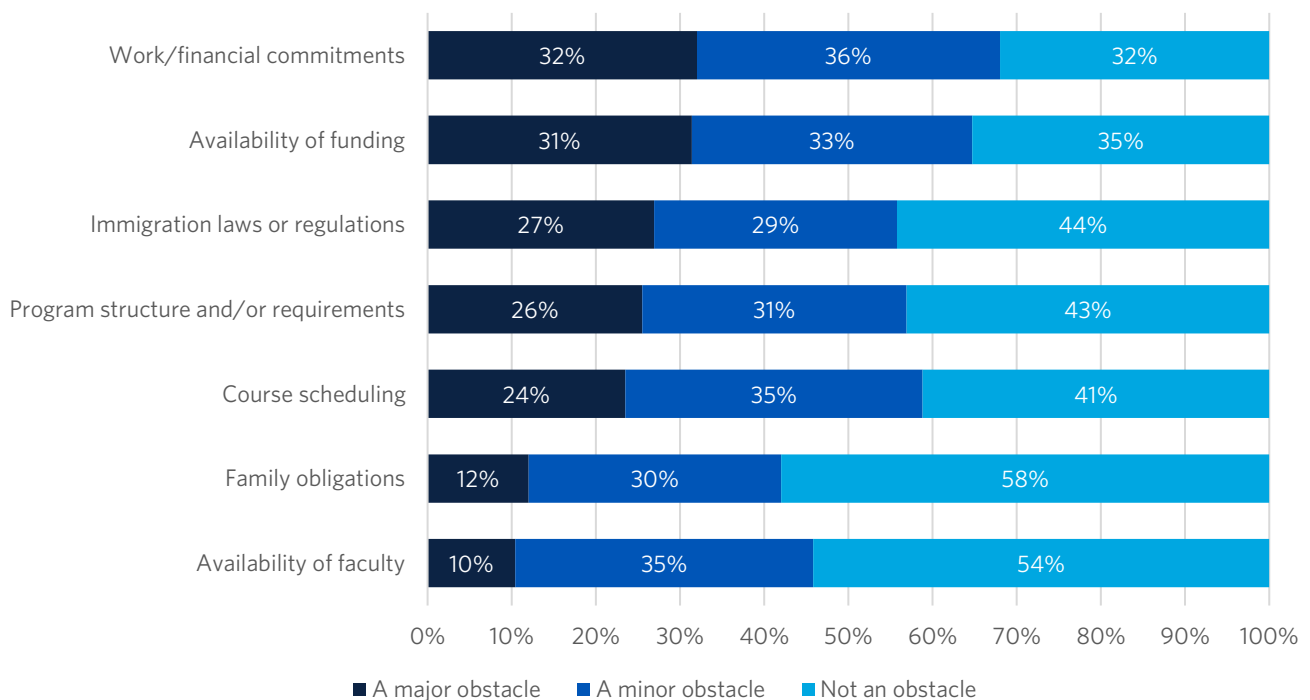


Figure 4b: Obstacles to academic progress (international)

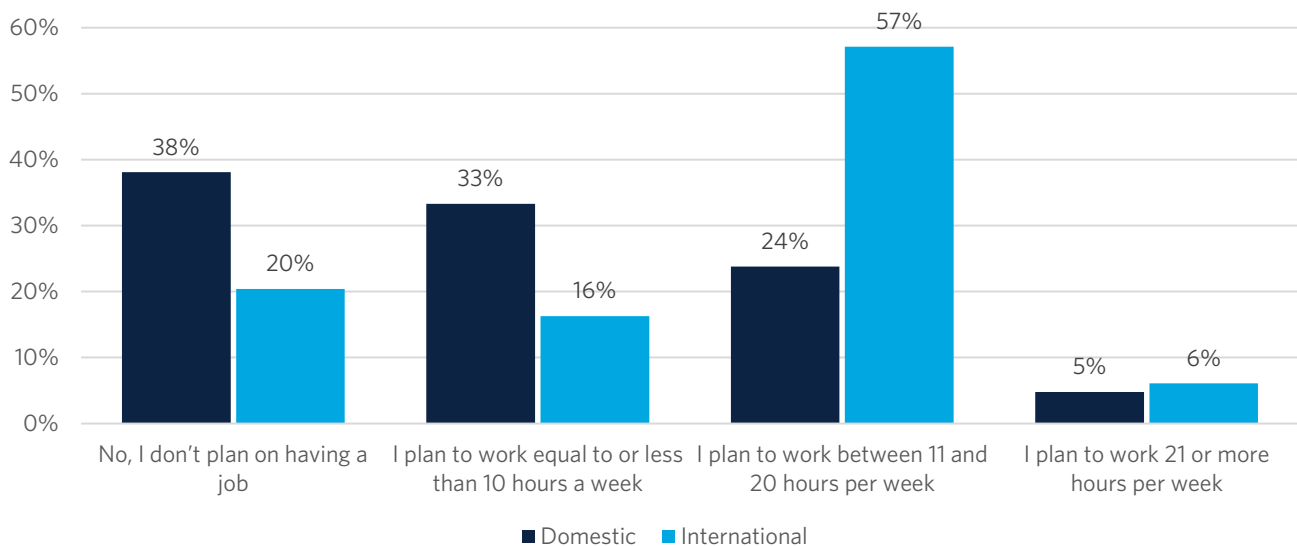


Time Commitments

Respondents were asked if they planned to work for pay outside of appointments that are a part of their funding package (e.g. research and teaching assistantships). Thirty-eight percent (n = 16) of domestic respondents and 20% (n = 10) of international respondents stated that they do not plan on working outside of their funding package commitments. Another 57% (n = 24) of domestic respondents and 73% (n = 36) of international respondents plan to work 20 or less hours a week.

Of those respondents planning to work, most international respondents planned to work on campus (97%, n = 38), while most domestic respondents planned to do so off campus (85%, n = 22).

Figure 5: Planned employment



Opportunities for Graduate Students

Likelihood of Participation in Activities

Overall, international respondents showed more interest in participating in the opportunities for graduate students than domestic respondents. When asked how likely they would be to participate in a variety of activities, larger proportions of international respondents said that they would be very likely to participate across all items listed.

Domestic respondents indicated that they would be most likely to utilize a graduate student handbook for their program and participate in an orientation for new graduate students in their program, with 68% (n = 28) and 66% (n = 27) selecting "very likely," respectively. An orientation for new graduate students in the program (78%, n = 40) and a mentor for their professional development who is not their advisor (73%, n = 37) were the most popular resources among international respondents, with the majority saying they would be very likely to use them.

Figure 6a: Likelihood of participation in/utilization of various opportunities and resources (domestic)

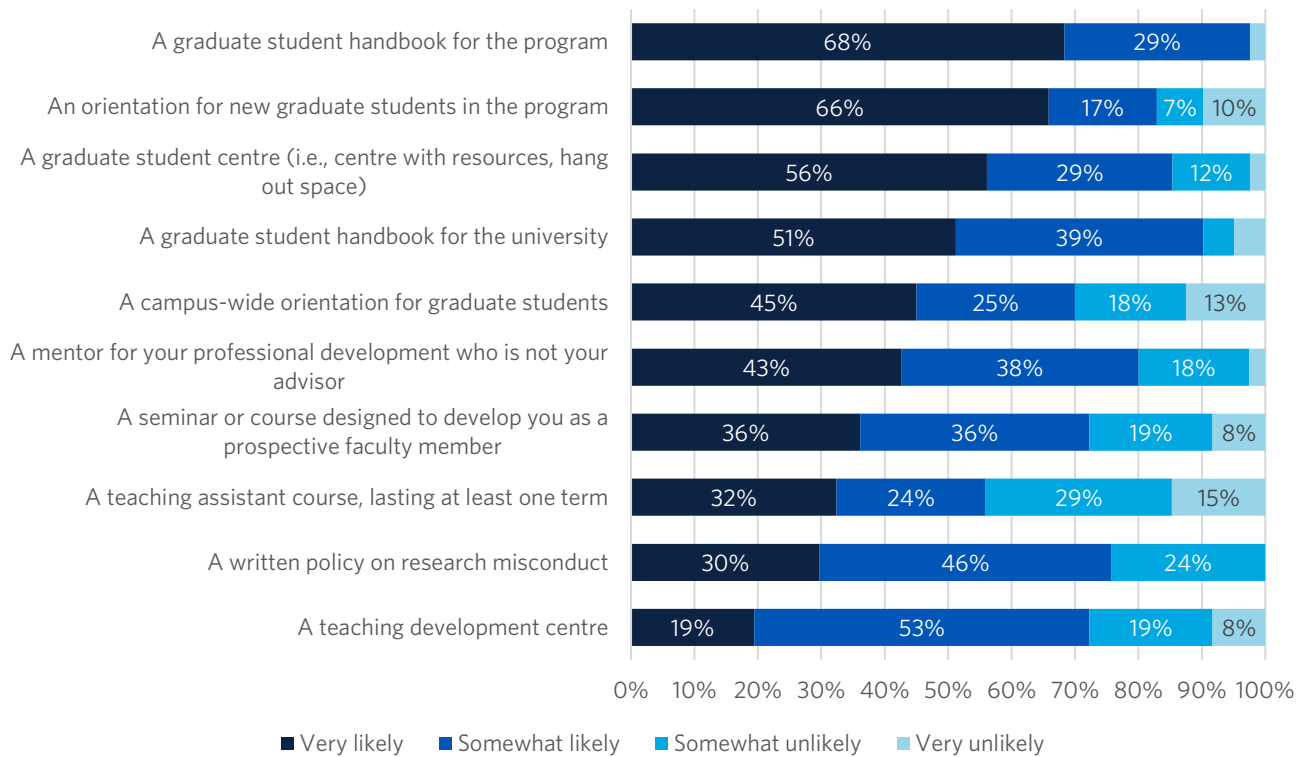
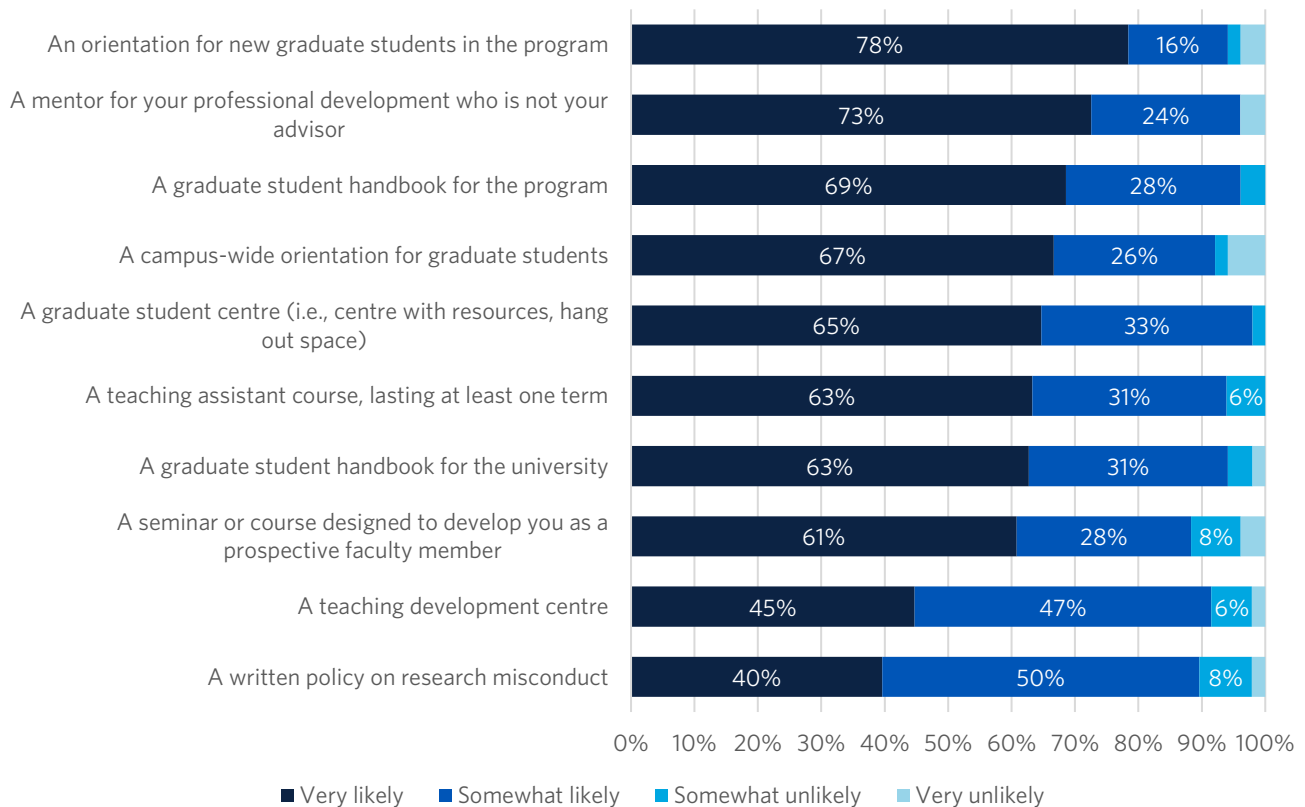


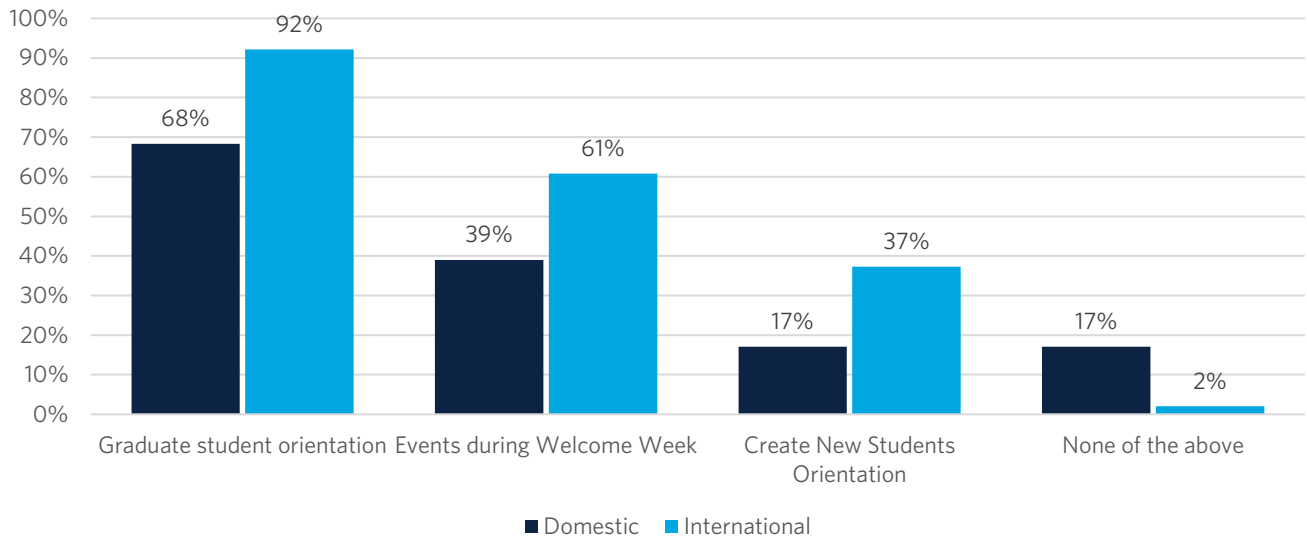
Figure 6b: Likelihood of participation in/utilization of various opportunities and resources (international)



Orientation Events

Students were asked which orientation events they see themselves participating in. The majority of respondents (domestic: 68%, n = 28; international: 92%, n = 47) stated they saw themselves participating in the graduate student orientation. Overall, more international students anticipated attending orientation events than domestic student respondents.

Figure 7: Participation in orientation events



Perceived Importance of Offering Opportunities

Survey participants also rated how important a variety of opportunities were to their graduate program experience. Internships (domestic: 72%, n = 28; international: 80%, n = 39) and a workshop on career opportunities outside academia (domestic: 71%, n = 27; international: 84%, n = 41) were most frequently rated as very important by respondents. Respondents selecting “not applicable/no opinion” were excluded in these analyses.

Figure 8a: Importance of opportunities for graduate program experience (domestic)

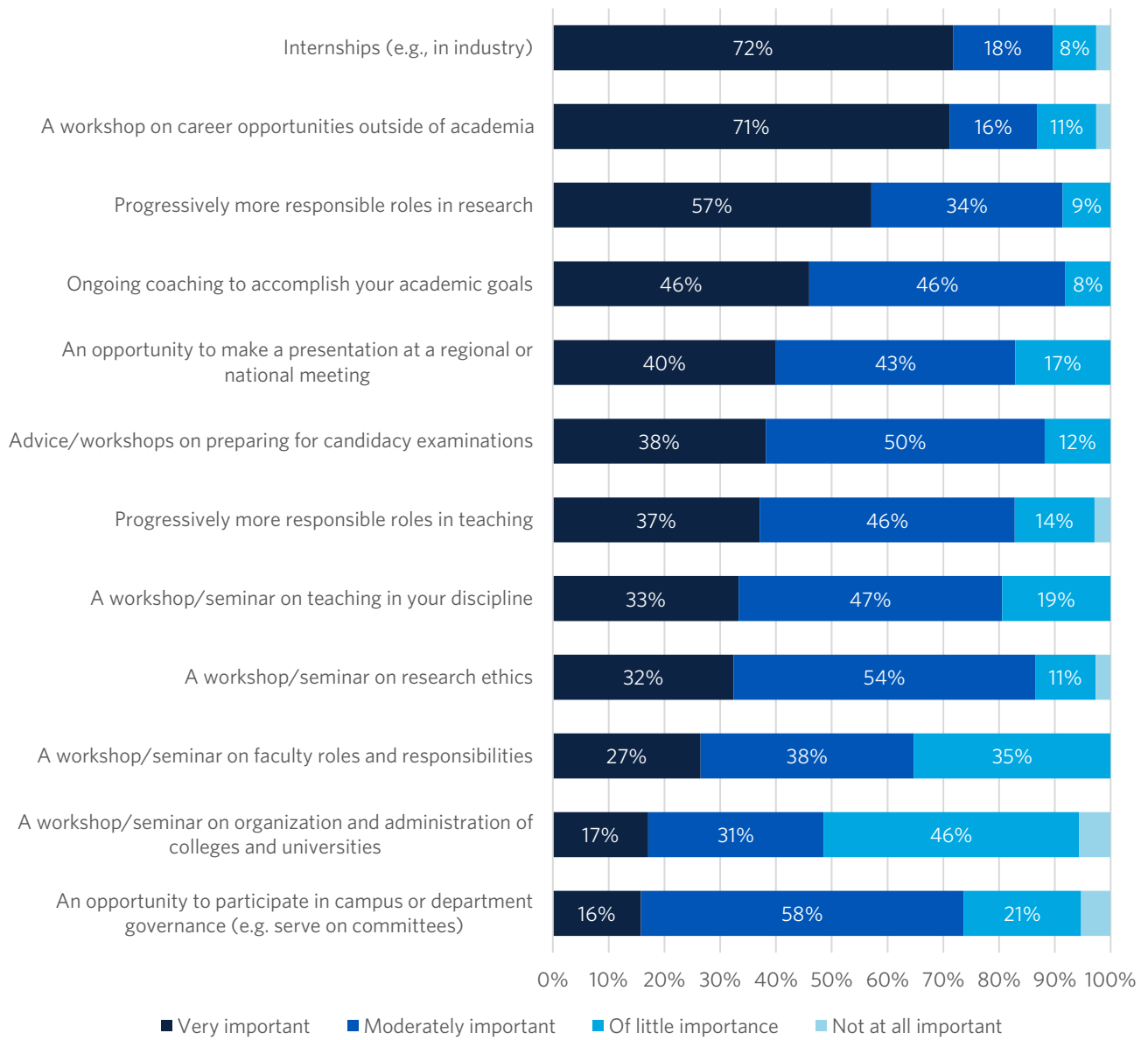
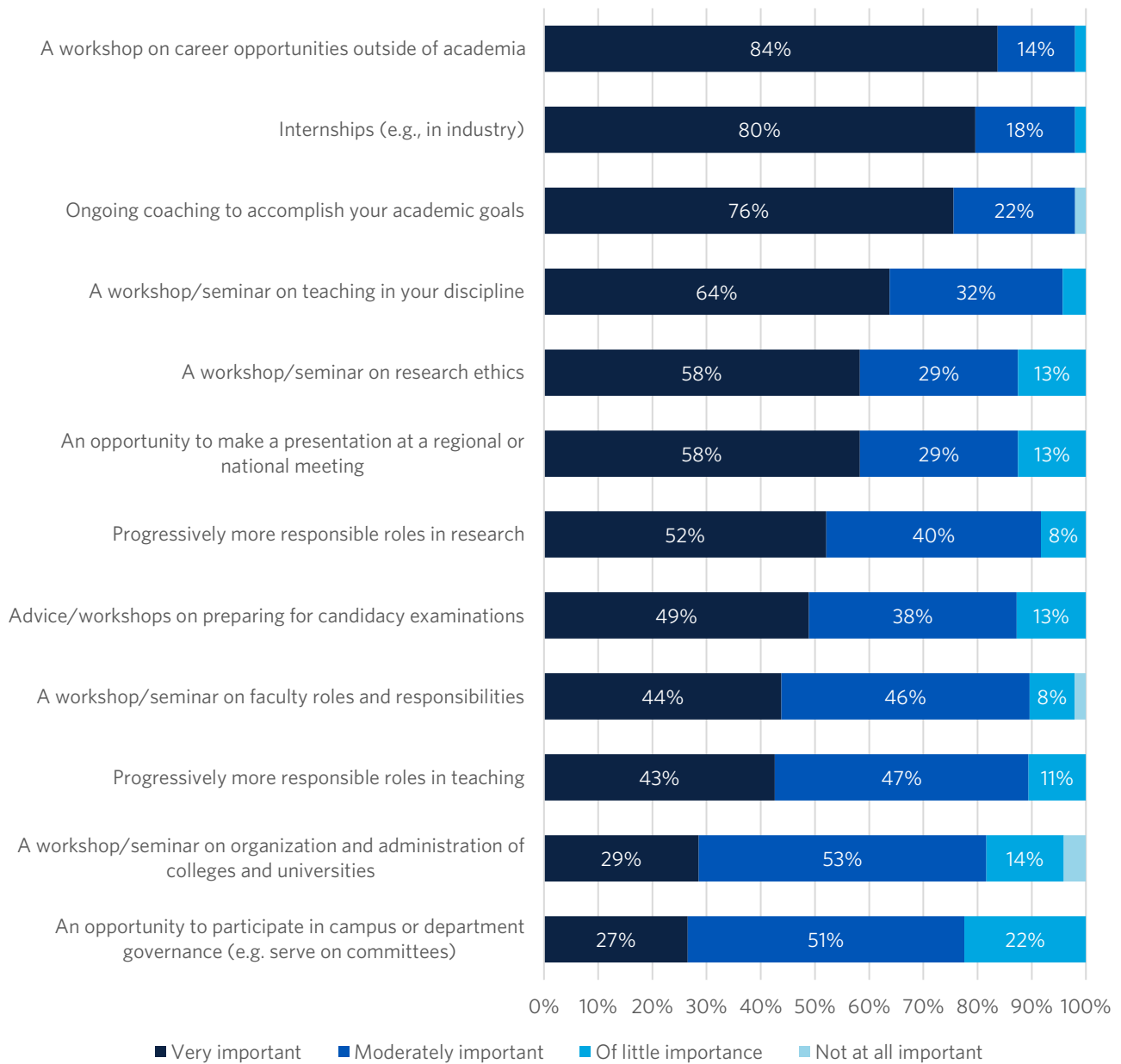


Figure 8b: Importance of opportunities for graduate program experience (international)

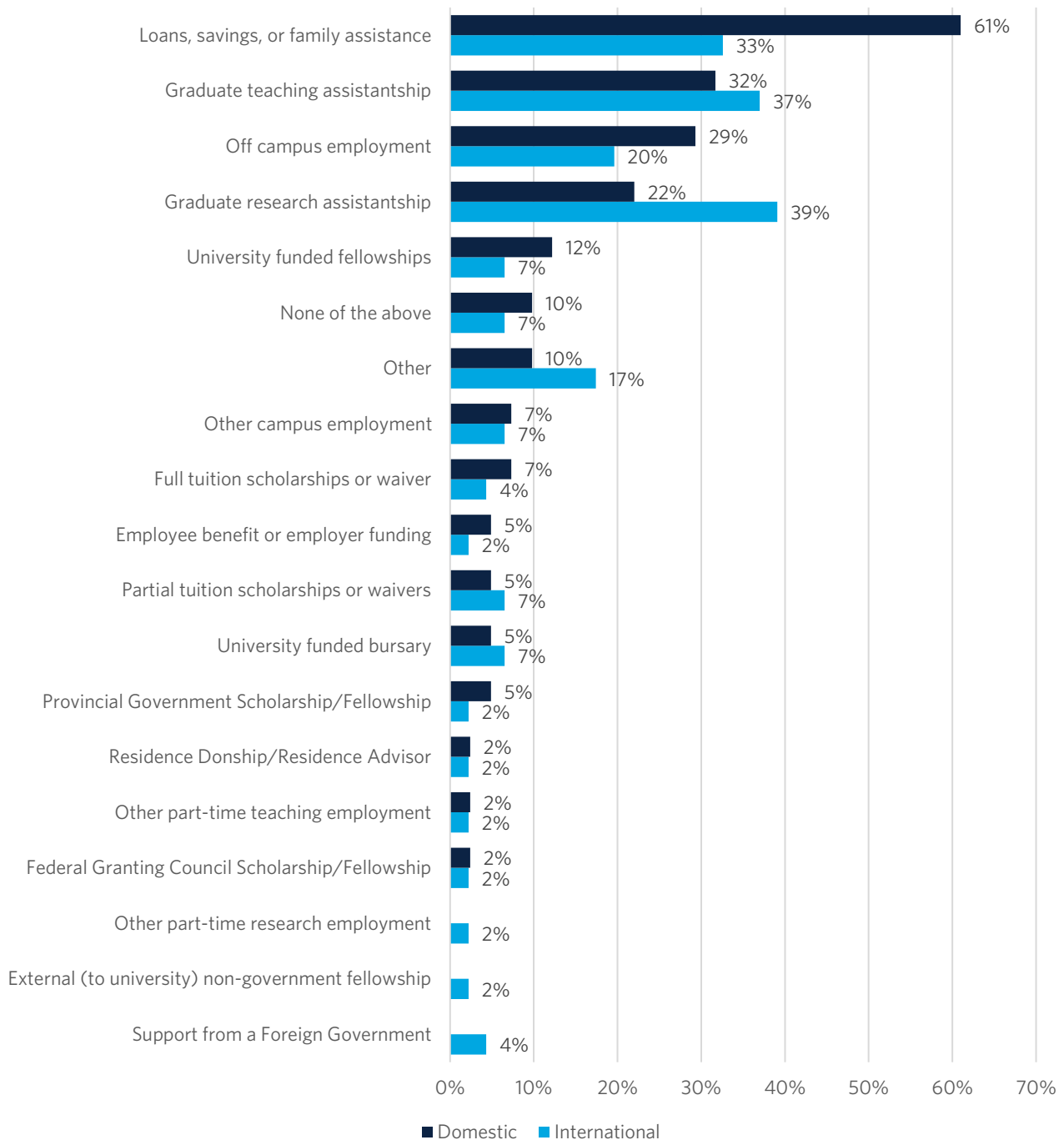


Finances

Financing Graduate Studies

The primary sources of income for domestic respondents were loans, savings, or family assistance (61%, n = 25) and graduate teaching assistantships (32%, n = 13). For international respondents, the primary sources of income for the duration of their studies were graduate research assistantships (39%, n = 18) and graduate teaching assistantships (37%, n = 17).

Figure 9: Sources of funding for tuition and other expenses



Debt

The majority of both international (84%, n = 37) and domestic (61%, n = 25) respondents stated that they will have no debt resulting from their undergraduate education to be paid at the end of their graduate degree. Only seven percent (n = 3) of international respondents and 22% (n = 9) of domestic respondents indicated that they will have \$20,000 or more in educational debt resulting from their undergraduate degree.

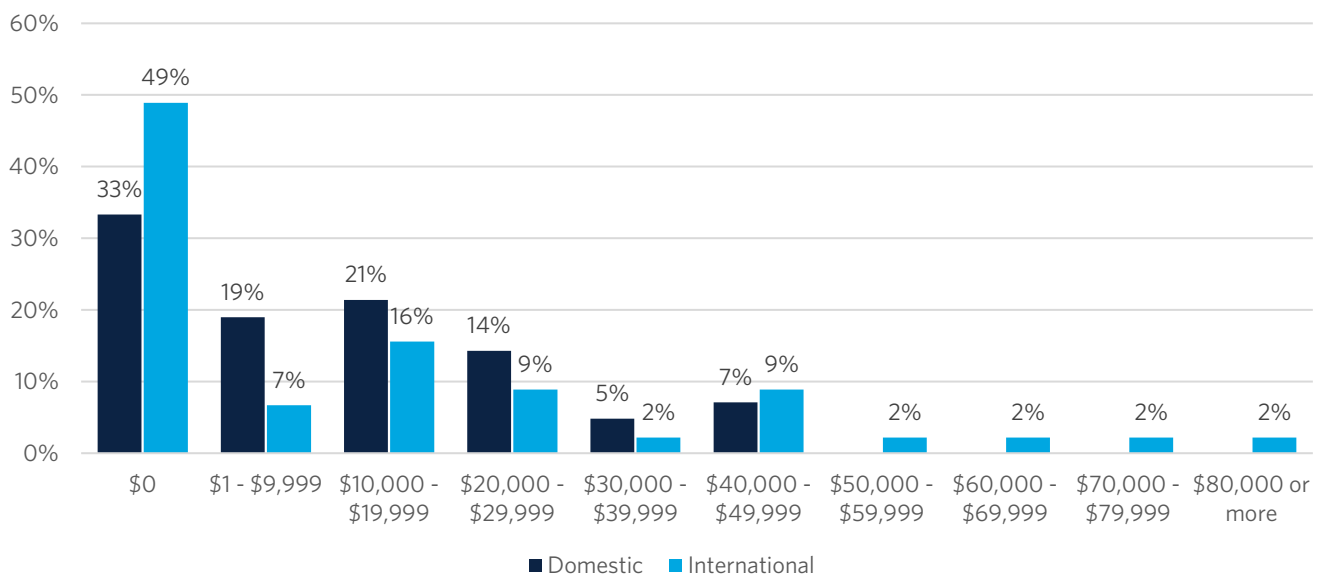
Figure 10: Estimated amount of undergraduate education debt to be paid at the end of studies



Note: 0% of respondents chose \$70,000 - \$79,999.

Forty-nine percent (n = 22) of international respondents and 33% (n = 14) of domestic respondents stated that they will have no debt to repay at the end of their studies due to their graduate education. Another 26% (n = 11) of domestic and 29% (n = 13) of international respondents indicated that their debt due to their graduate education will be \$20,000 or more.

Figure 11: Estimated amount of graduate education debt to be paid at the end of studies



Career Pathways

Becoming a professor in a college or university was the most desired future career option for domestic respondents, with 40% (n = 16) indicating that they would definitely be interested in this career path. International respondents most frequently cited they would definitely be interested in conducting research in a business, industry, or the private sector (59%, n = 29). Respondents selecting “not applicable/no opinion” were excluded in these analyses.

Figure 12a: Desire for various career options (domestic)

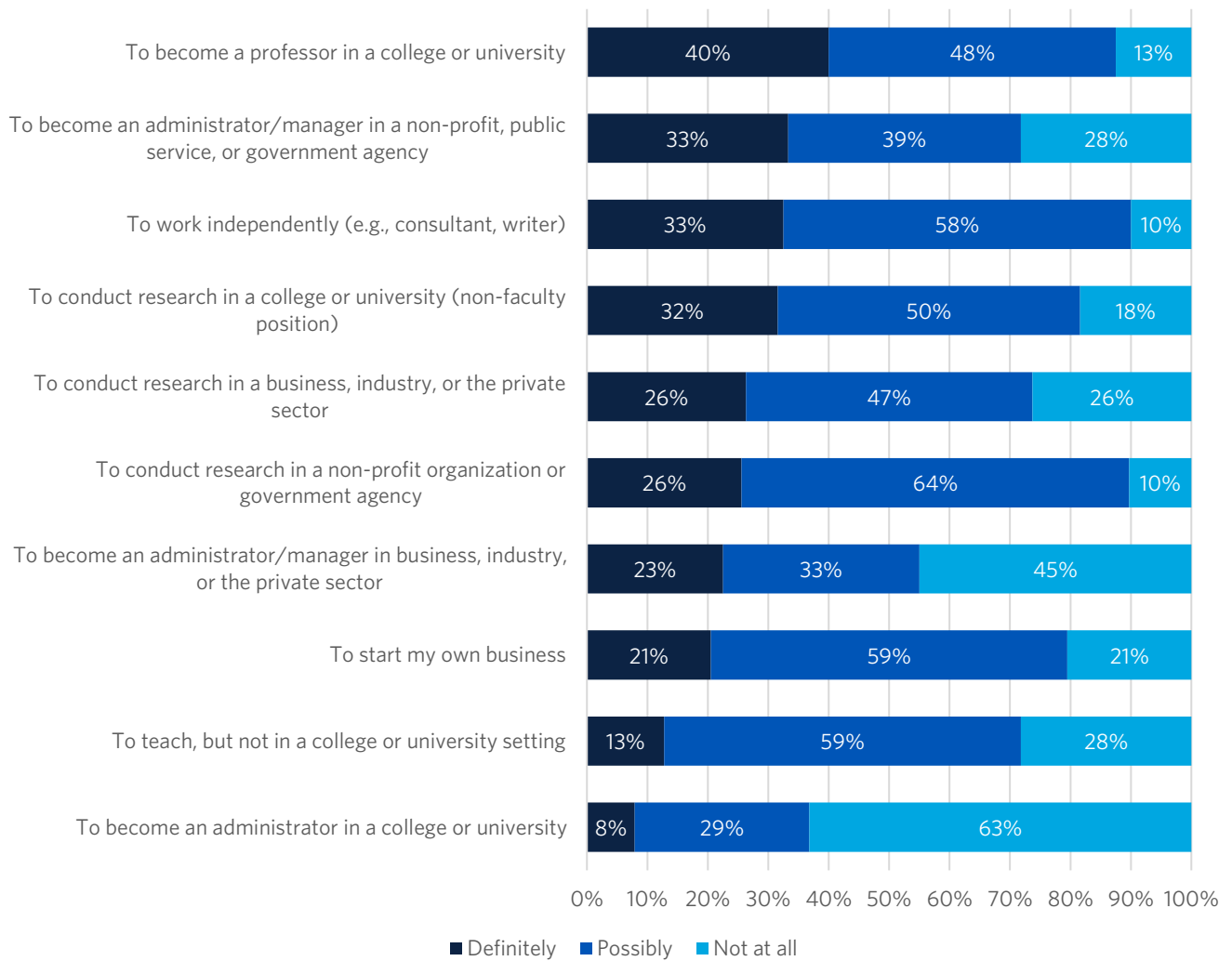
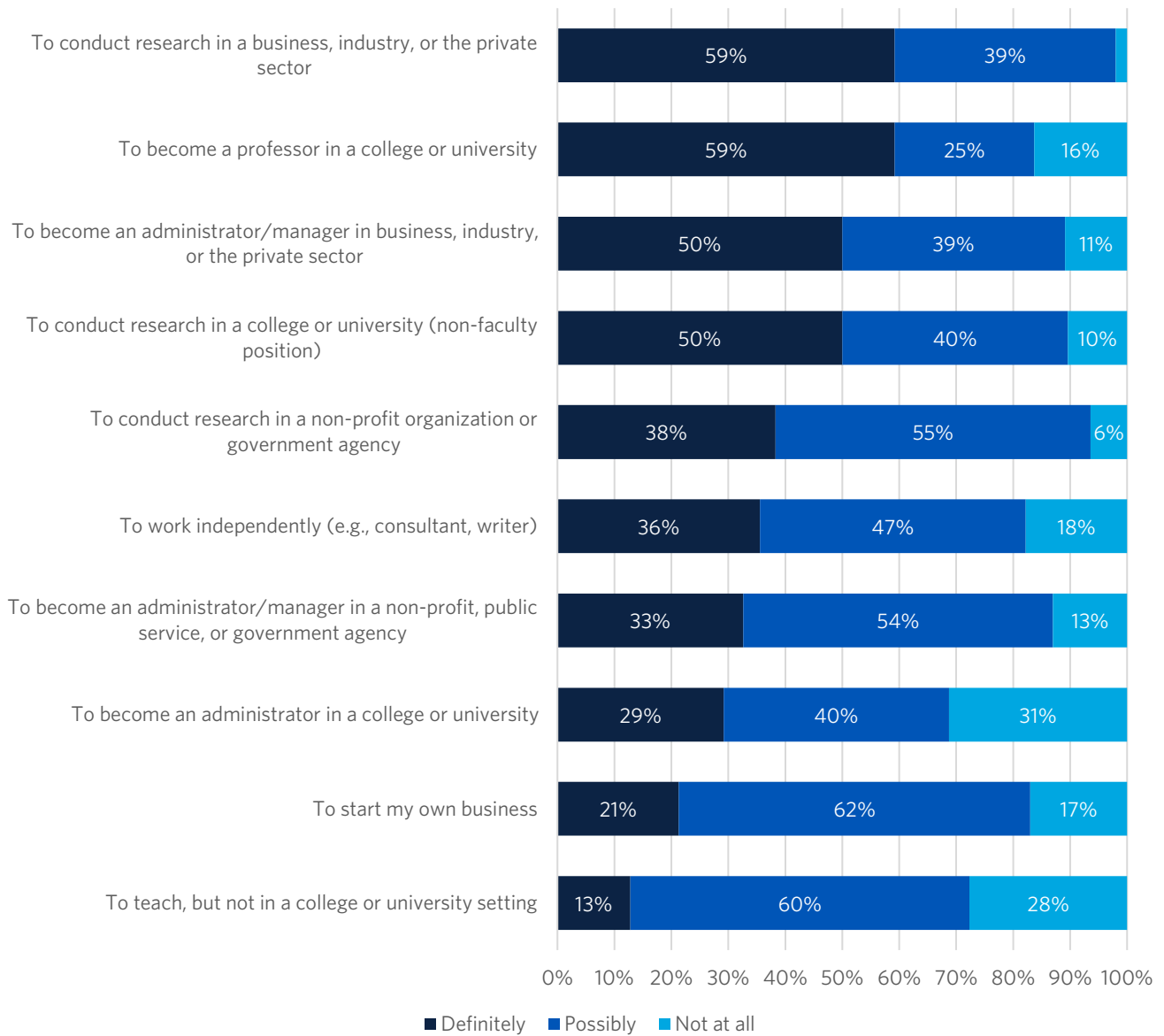


Figure 12b: Desire for various career options (international)

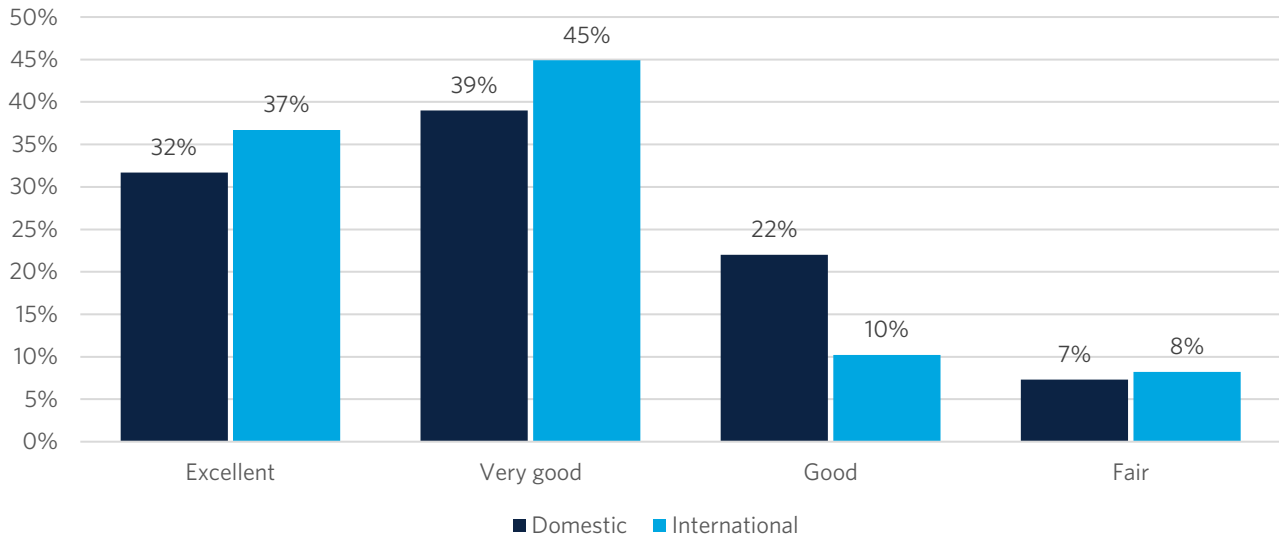


Health and Wellbeing

General Health

The majority of domestic (93%, n = 38) and international (92%, n = 45) student respondents rated their general health as “good” or higher.

Figure 13: Ratings of general health

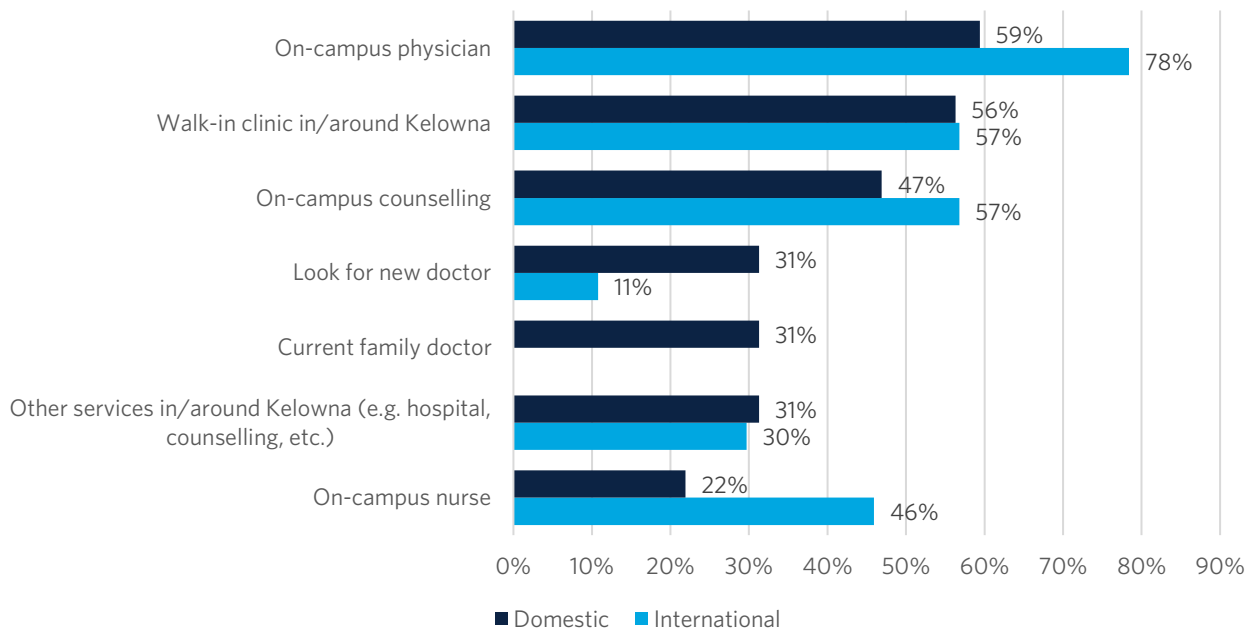


Note: 0% of respondents selected “poor” or “very poor.”

Health Care

Most respondents planned to use the on-campus physicians (domestic: 59%, n = 19; international: 78%, n = 29), walk-in clinics in/around Kelowna (domestic: 56%, n = 18; international: 57%, n = 21), and/or on-campus counselling (domestic: 47%, n = 15; international: 57%, n = 21) when in need of health care services.

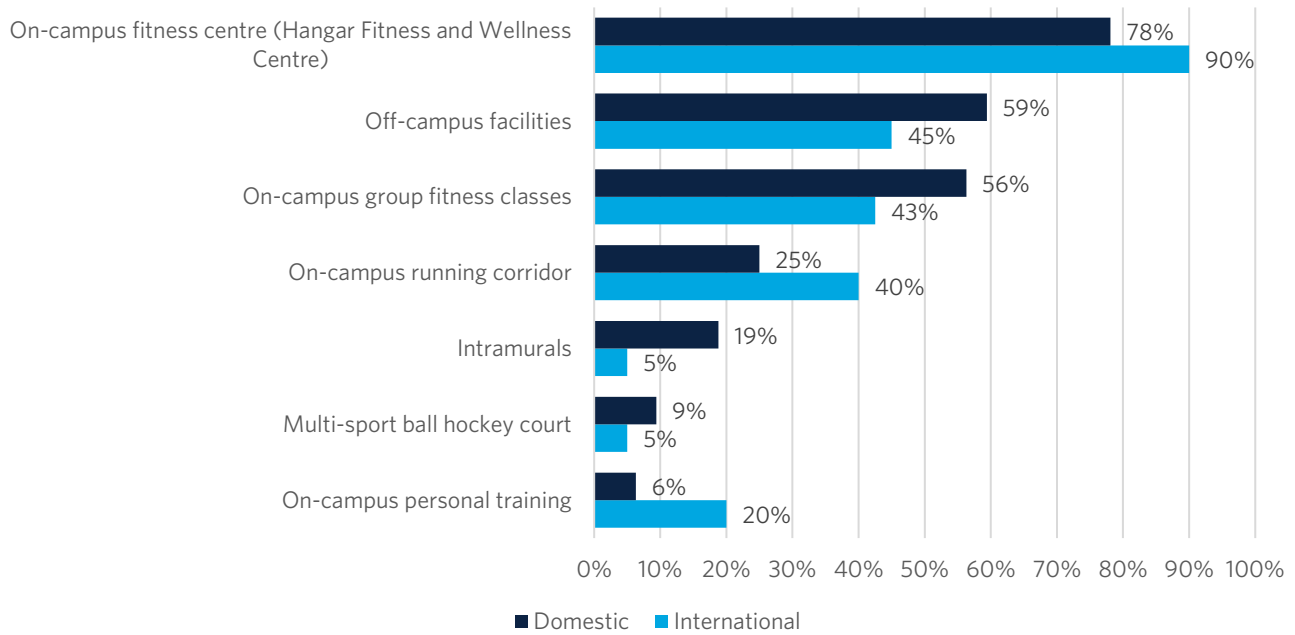
Figure 14: Expected access to health care services



Fitness Facilities

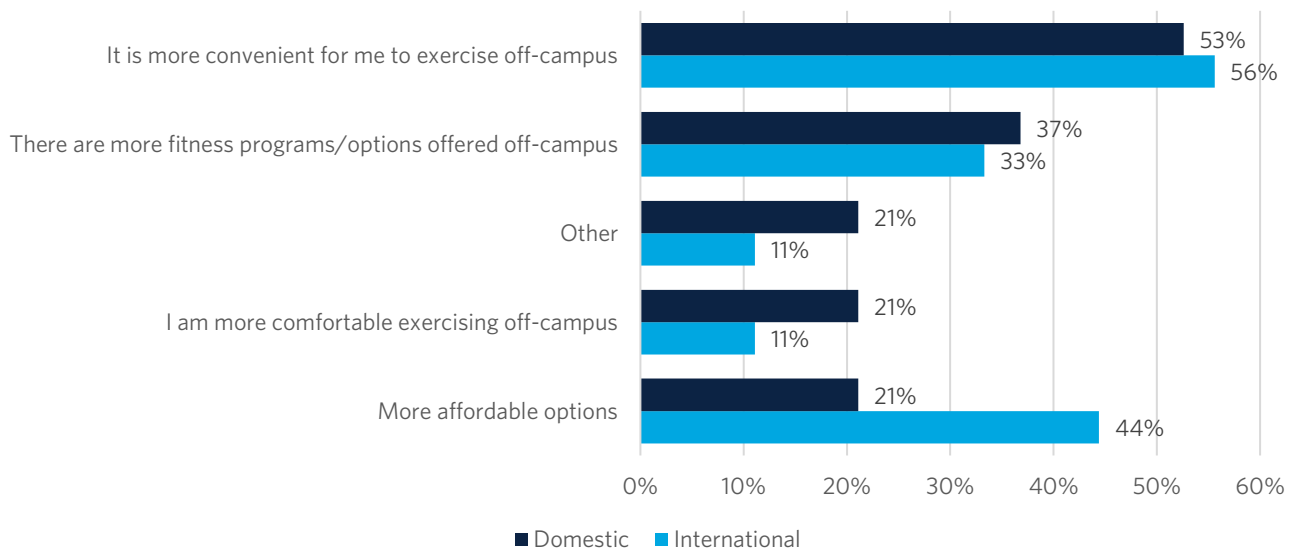
The on-campus fitness centre (Hangar Fitness and Wellness Centre) was the most popular response when students were asked which fitness facilities they planned to use while at UBC (domestic: 78%, n = 25; international: 90%, n = 36). The second most popular response was off-campus facilities (domestic: 59%, n = 19; international: 45%, n = 18).

Figure 15. Planned use of fitness facilities



Those students that selected “off-campus facilities” were asked why they planned to exercise off-campus. Respondents were most likely to select “it is more convenient for me to exercise off-campus” (domestic: 53%, n = 10; international: 56%, n = 10) and/or “there are more fitness programs/options offered off-campus” (domestic: 37%, n = 7; international: 33%, n = 6).

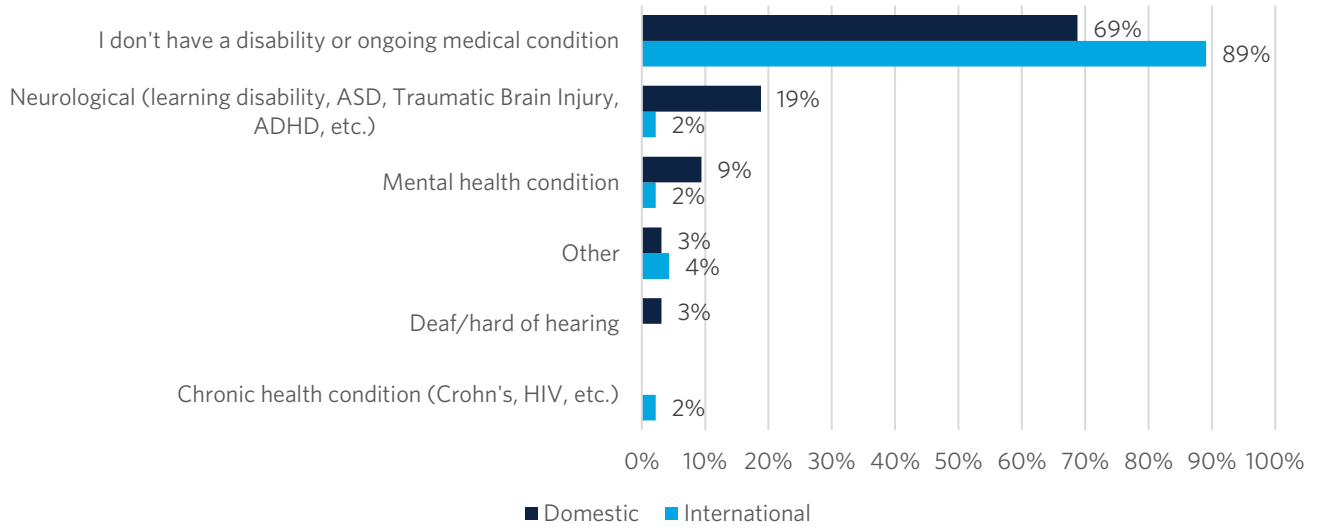
Figure 16. Reasons for exercising off-campus



Disabilities

The majority of domestic (69%, n = 22) and international (89%, n = 41) respondents indicated that they do not have a disability or ongoing medical condition. Neurological conditions (learning disability, ASD, Traumatic Brain Injury, ADHD, etc.) were most commonly reported by domestic respondents who had a disability/ongoing medical condition (19%, n = 6).

Figure 17: Reported disabilities and ongoing medical conditions



Note: Disabilities/chronic medical conditions selected by 0% of respondents are not shown here.

Respondents were asked to rate their levels of concern with the facilities and accommodations available at UBC Okanagan. Both domestic and international respondents were most likely to be very concerned or concerned about the availability of quiet study spaces (domestic: 27%, n = 10; international: 56%, n = 24) and the availability of academic accommodations (domestic: 17%, n = 6; international: 46%, n = 20). In general, international respondents had higher levels of concern across all items.

Figure 18a. Concerns with facilities and accommodations (domestic)

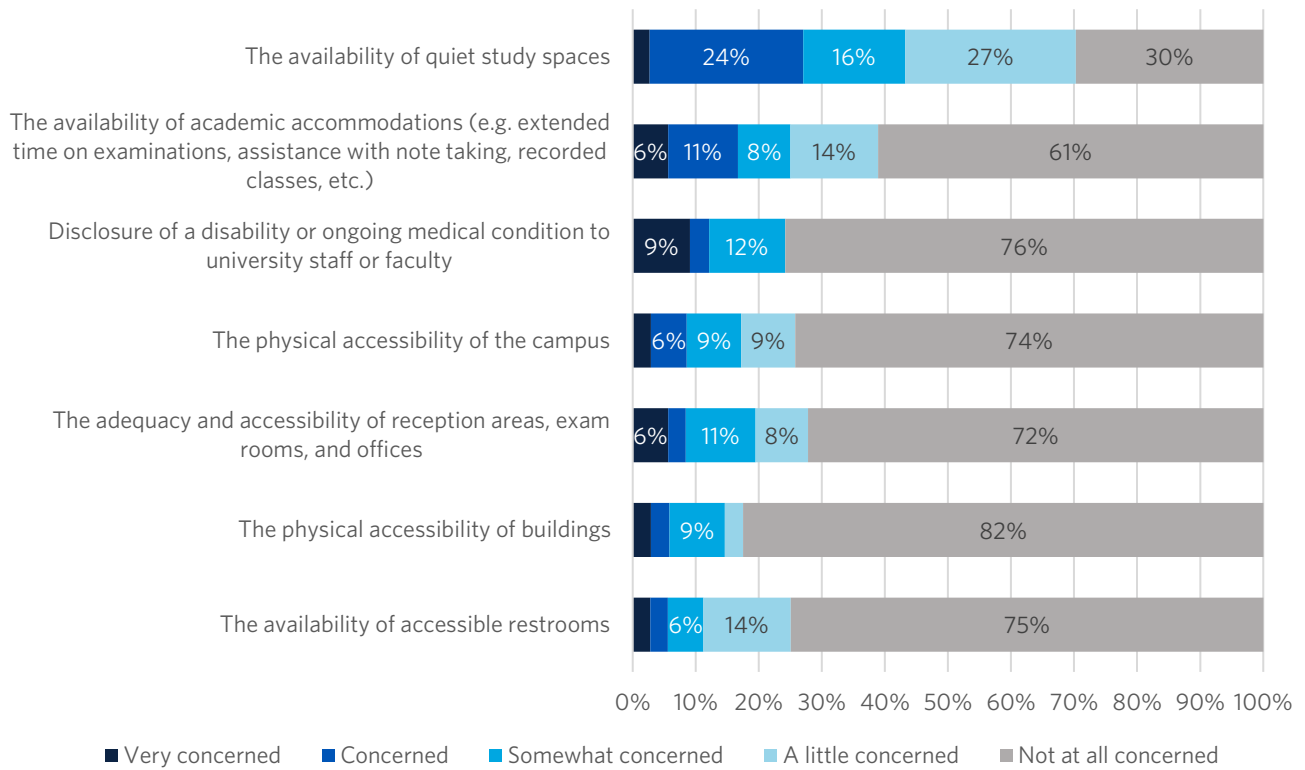
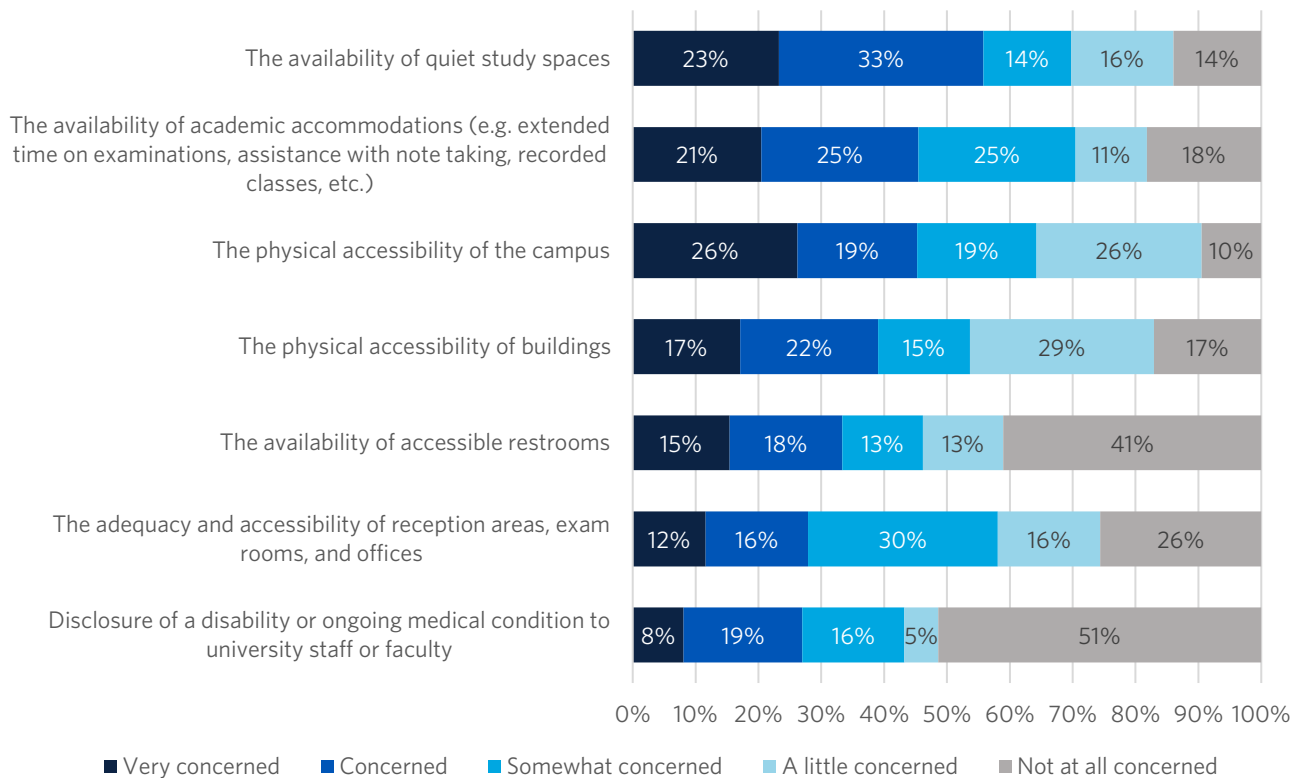


Figure 18b. Concerns with facilities and accommodations (international)

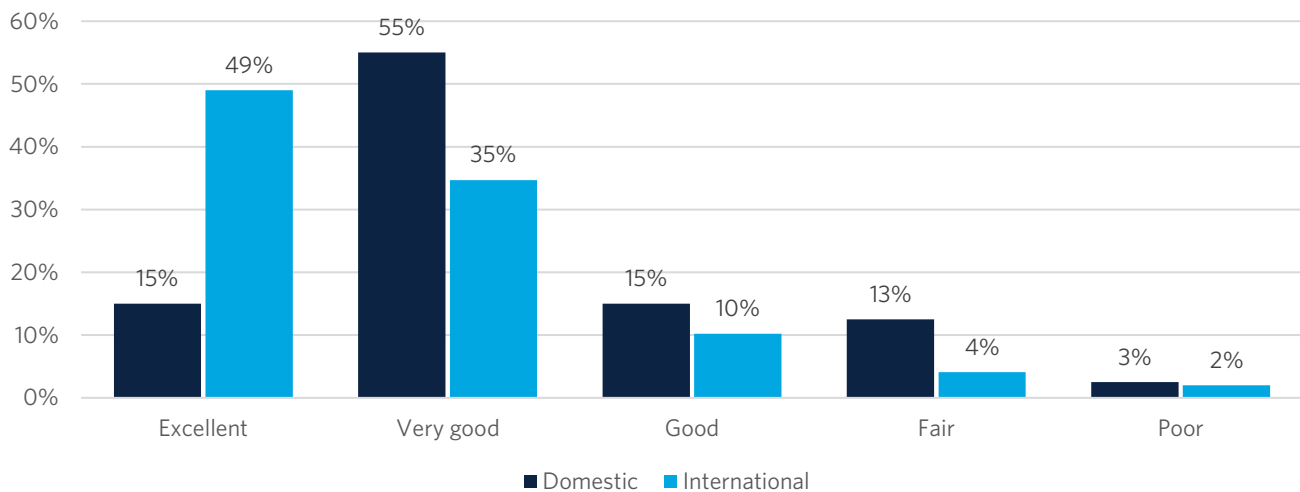


Mental Health, Stress, and Academic Performance

Overall Mental Health

Survey participants rated their mental health on a scale of very poor to excellent. The majority of respondents rated their mental health as “good” or better (domestic: 85%, n = 34; international: 94%, n = 46). However, 15% (n = 6) of domestic respondents selected “fair” or “poor,” compared to only 6% (n = 3) of international respondents.

Figure 19: Ratings of mental health



Note: 0% of respondents selected “very poor.”

Mental Health and Resilience

Students rated their agreement with statements regarding mental health and resiliency. Respondents most often strongly agreed or agreed with the statements “I am confident that I have the ability to succeed in all my courses during my first year at UBC Okanagan” (domestic: 90%, n = 36; international: 92%, n = 44) and “I am aware of personal signs when I experience too much stress” (domestic: 88%, n = 35; international: 88%, n = 42).

Figure 20a: Ratings of mental health and resiliency statements (domestic)

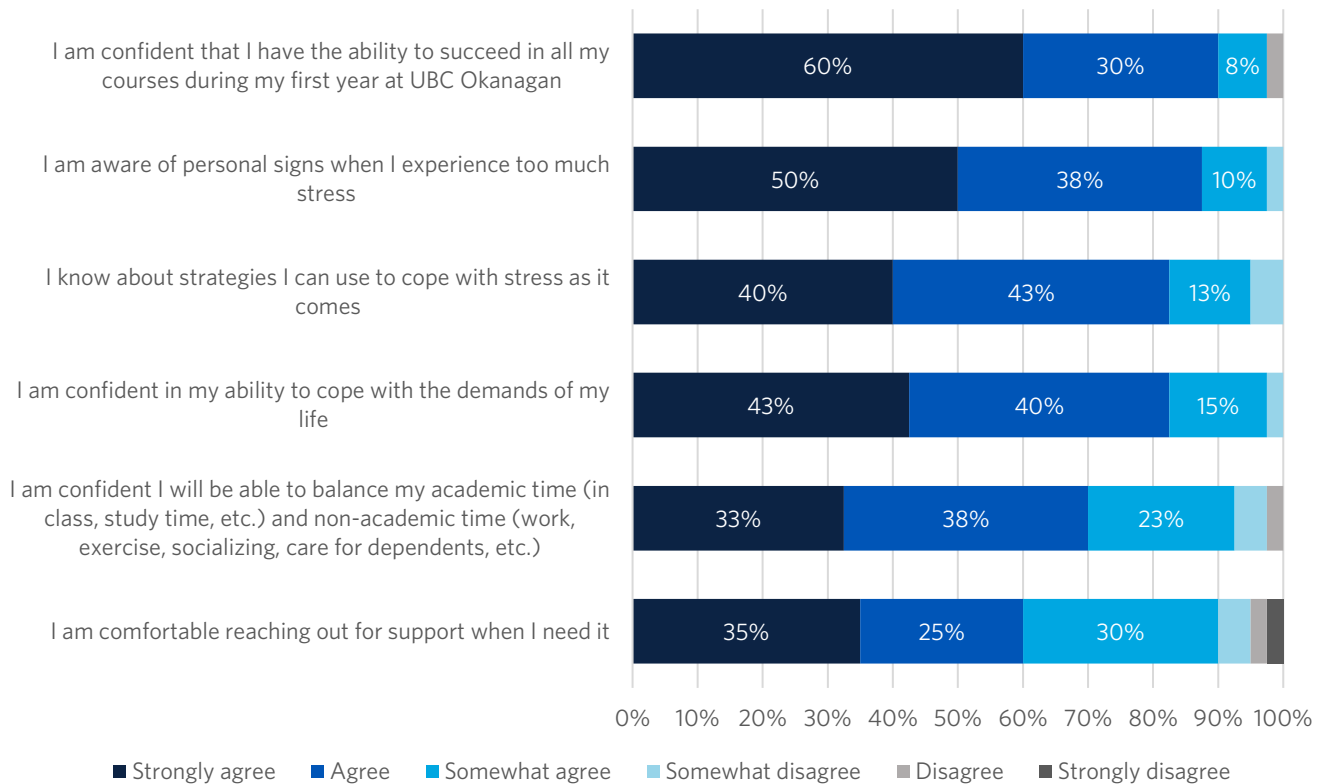
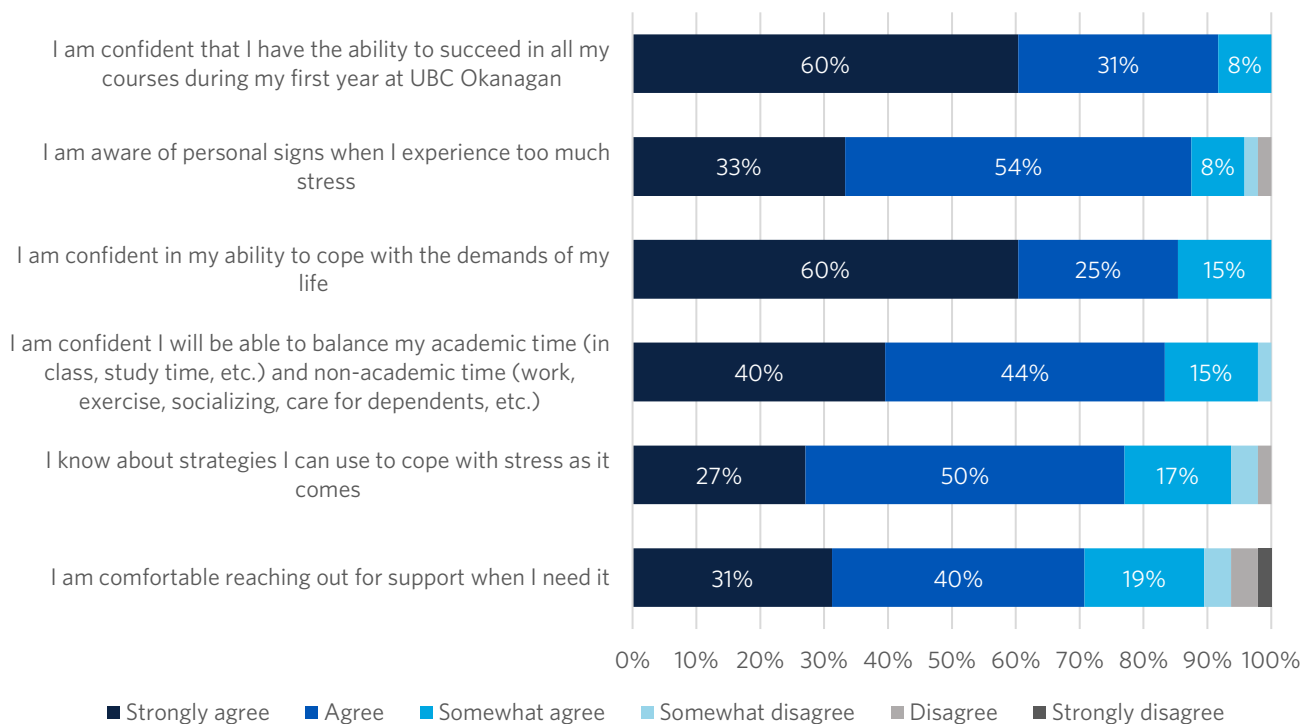


Figure 20b: Ratings of mental health and resiliency statements (international)



Impact of Mental Health and Stressors on Academic Performance

Students reported whether they had experienced a range of issues, and whether those issues had negatively affected their academic performance over the past 12 months. Stress was the issue indicated by the largest proportion of respondents as having somewhat negatively impacted academic performance (domestic: 55%, n = 22; international: 42%, n = 20). Fewer than 5 respondents indicated that any given issue had significantly impacted their academic performance.

Figure 21a: Impact of various issues on academic performance (domestic respondents)

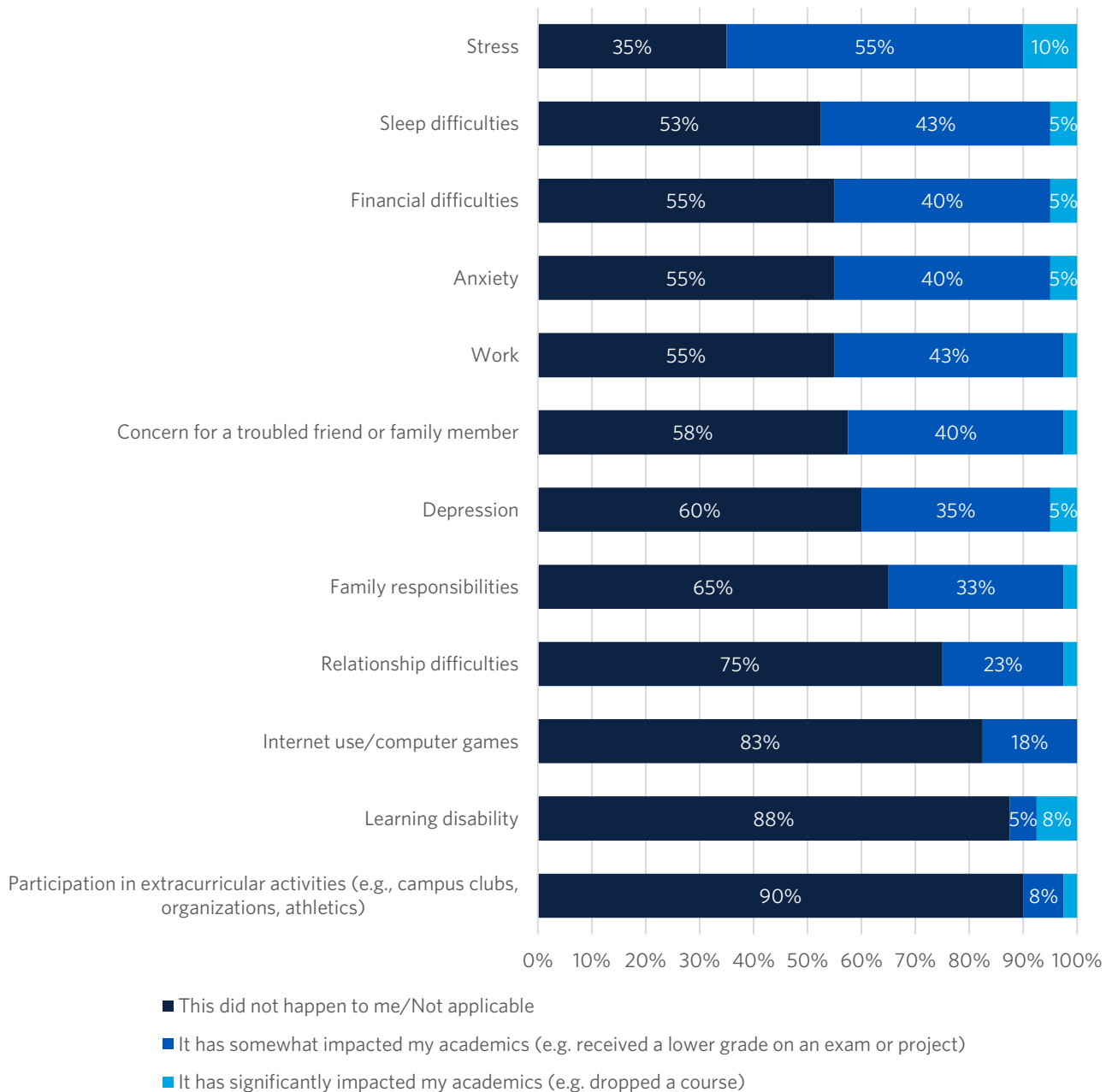


Figure 21b: Impact of various issues on academic performance (international respondents)

