

New to UBC Okanagan Student Survey 2019: Graduate Students



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

Okanagan Planning and Institutional Research

Table of Contents

Executive Summary.....	4
Demographics.....	4
Choosing a Graduate Program	4
Concerns and Barriers.....	4
Opportunities for Graduate Students.....	4
Finances.....	5
Career Pathways	5
Health and Wellbeing	5
Introduction.....	6
Methodology	6
Sample	6
Notes.....	7
Demographics	8
Gender and Sexual Orientation	8
Residence	8
Languages	8
Ethno-Racial Distribution and Citizenship	8
Previous Education	10
Choosing a Graduate Program	11
Choosing UBC’s Okanagan Campus.....	11
Choosing a Supervisor	11
Concerns and Barriers	13
Academic Concerns.....	13
Barriers to Academic Success.....	15
Time Commitments	16
Opportunities for Graduate Students	16
Likelihood of Participation in Activities	16
Orientation Events	18
Perceived Importance of Offering Opportunities.....	18
Finances	21
Financing Graduate Studies.....	21
Debt.....	22
Career Pathways.....	23



Health and Wellbeing.....	25
General Health.....	25
Health Care.....	25
Fitness Facilities.....	26
Disabilities.....	27
Mental Health, Stress, and Academic Performance	29
Overall Mental Health	29
Mental Health and Resilience.....	29
Impact of Mental Health and Stressors on Academic Performance.....	31



Executive Summary

The New to UBC (NUBC) Survey was administered in summer 2019 to all new incoming graduate students at UBC's Okanagan campus. In total, 153 students out of 210 responded to the survey – a response rate of 73%. The sample of respondents was generally a good representation of the 2019/20 new graduate student population at UBC's Okanagan campus, with some exceptions.

Demographics

Eight in ten domestic respondents (81%, n=43) identified their gender identity to be “woman,” and 35% (n=71) of international respondents did so.

Eighty-four percent (n=44) of domestic respondents identified as White, while international respondents most often identified as South Asian (43%), Chinese (19%), and West Asian (16%) (n=70). Two percent (n=4) of domestic respondents self-reported as First Nations (status or non-status). All international respondents said they were born outside of Canada (n=72) while 84% (n=45) of domestic respondents were born in Canada. Thirty-one percent of domestic respondents (n=42) 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 the supervisor has intellectual interests that match theirs (80%, 20), that the supervisor was willing to work with them (79%, 19), and that the supervisor is doing interesting research (77%, 17) (n>=22). For international respondents, the most influential factors were: the supervisor was willing to work with them (80%, 53), the supervisor is doing interesting research (78%, 52), and that their supervisor is knowledgeable in the techniques and methods they will employ (76%, 53) (n>=66).

Concerns and Barriers

Most frequently, domestic respondents were very concerned with customary practices regarding publication (when and how to submit, etc.) (24%, 7), customary practices of generating, handling, and using research data responsibly (23%, 8), and commitments regarding the funding of their graduate studies (21%, 9) (n>=29). International respondents were very concerned with commitments regarding the funding of their thesis/dissertation research project (58%, 39) and commitments regarding the funding of their graduate studies (53%, 40) (n>=67). Work/financial commitments (domestic: 29%, 14; international: 34%, 26) and availability of funding (domestic: 25%, 11; international: 39%, 30) were often identified as a major obstacle to academic progress by both international (n>=76) and domestic (n>=48) respondents.

Sixty-five percent (31, n=48) of domestic respondents and 73% (54, n=74) 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 both domestic and international respondents, many reported being very likely to participate in an orientation for new graduate students in their program (domestic: 77% (40, n=52); international: 82%, 65, n=79), utilize a graduate students study/collaboration space with printers, lockers, and breakout rooms (domestic: 69% (36, n=52); international: 84%, 66, n=79), and utilize a graduate student handbook for the



program (domestic: 63%, 33, n=52; international: 82%, 65, n=79). When asked to identify important opportunities, ongoing coaching to accomplish academic goals (domestic: 72%, 34, n=47; international: 69%, 52, n=75), internships (domestic: 66%, 31, n=47; international: 79%, 60, n=76), and a workshop on career opportunities outside academia (domestic: 70%, 32, n=46; international: 76%, 58, n=76) were frequently identified as very important.

Finances

Almost two thirds (65%, 30) of domestic respondents selected loans, savings, or family assistance as a form of support they will receive while enrolled in their graduate studies, and 37% indicated they would have off-campus employment (17) (n=46). Forty-seven percent (29) of international graduate student respondents said they would be taking on graduate teaching assistantships to support their graduate studies enrollment, and 46% indicated they would be taking on graduate research assistantships (28) (n=61). The largest proportions of domestic and international respondents indicated they would not have to repay any undergraduate or graduate educational debt. Twenty-five percent (18, n=71) of international and 35% (17, n=48) of domestic respondents indicated that their debt due to their graduate education will be \$20,000 or more.

Career Pathways

To conduct research in a non-profit organization or government agency was the choice which the most domestic (41%, 19, n=46) respondents would definitely be interested in. International respondents were most often interested in becoming a professor in a college or university, with 67% (48, n=72) indicating they would be “definitely interested”.

Health and Wellbeing

Physical 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: 62%, 26; international: 97%, 57), on-campus counselling (domestic: 50%, 21; international: 69%, 41), on-campus drop-in mental health clinic (domestic: 43%, 18; international: 41%, 24), and/or walk-in clinics (domestic: 40%, 17; international: 44%, 26) (domestic n=42; international n=59).

The majority of domestic (73%, 29, n=40) and international (94%, 63, n=67) respondents indicated that they do not have a disability or ongoing medical condition.

Stress, anxiety, sleep difficulties, work, and financial difficulties were the most frequently identified issues that had somewhat or significant impacted academic performance for domestic respondents. Stress, anxiety, and internet use/computer games were the issues most commonly cited by international respondents.

Introduction

This report displays the findings of the 2019 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 July 4th to September 3rd, 2019.

Sample

A total of 210 graduate students were invited to complete the survey, excluding email bounce backs. Of 210 invitees, there were 153 full or partial completes –an overall response rate of 73% (65% for domestic and 79% 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 program type, with slightly greater differences in terms of domestic/international student status.

Table 1: Demographic breakdown of cohort and sample

	Cohort		Sample	
	Count (N)	%	Count (n)	%
Gender				
Male	115	55%	80	52%
Female	95	45%	73	48%
Domestic/International				
Domestic	94	45%	61	40%
International	116	55%	92	60%
Program				
MA-O	20	10%	18	12%
MASC-O	21	10%	15	10%
MDS-O	29	14%	19	12%
MED-O	3	1%	2	1%
MENG-O	28	13%	22	14%
MFA-O	7	3%	2	1%
MSC-O	26	12%	20	13%
MSW-O	48	23%	33	22%
PHD-O	28	13%	22	14%

Note: The data above are from SISC.

When breaking down the cohort and sample proportions by domestic/international student status, in general, the sample of respondents reflected the cohort fairly well.

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

	<i>Domestic</i>				<i>International</i>			
	<i>Cohort</i>		<i>Sample</i>		<i>Cohort</i>		<i>Sample</i>	
	<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								
Female	73	78%	48	79%	42	36%	32	35%
Male	21	22%	13	21%	74	64%	60	65%
Program								
MA-O	2	2%	0	0%	19	16%	15	16%
MASC-O	11	12%	8	13%	18	16%	11	12%
MDS-O	2	2%	1	2%	1	1%	1	1%
MED-O	1	1%	1	2%	27	23%	21	23%
MENG-O	4	4%	0	0%	3	3%	2	2%
MFA-O	12	13%	8	13%	14	12%	12	13%
MSC-O	47	50%	32	52%	1	1%	1	1%
MSW-O	6	6%	4	7%	22	19%	18	20%
PHD-O	73	78%	48	79%	42	36%	32	35%

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 61 domestic and 92 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 61 domestic and 92 international respondents.

Demographics

Gender and Sexual Orientation

Eight in ten domestic respondents (81%, 35, n=43) identified their gender identity to be “woman,” and 35% (25, n=71) of international respondents did so. The majority of respondents identified as heterosexual (domestic: 84%, 37, n=44; international: 83%, 50, n=60).

Residence

Eighty-three percent (84%, n=38) of domestic student respondents were born in Canada, and 100% (72, n=72) of international respondents were born outside of Canada. Thirty-one percent of domestic respondents (13, n=42) had at least one of their parents/guardians born outside of Canada.

Twenty percent (9) of domestic graduate student respondents have lived in the Okanagan region for at least one year, 48% (21) have lived elsewhere in BC for at least one year, 61% (27) have lived in another province/territory in Canada for at least one year, and 18% (8) have lived in another country besides Canada for at least one year (n=44). Most international respondents (95%, 54, n=57) have lived outside of Canada for at least one year.

Languages

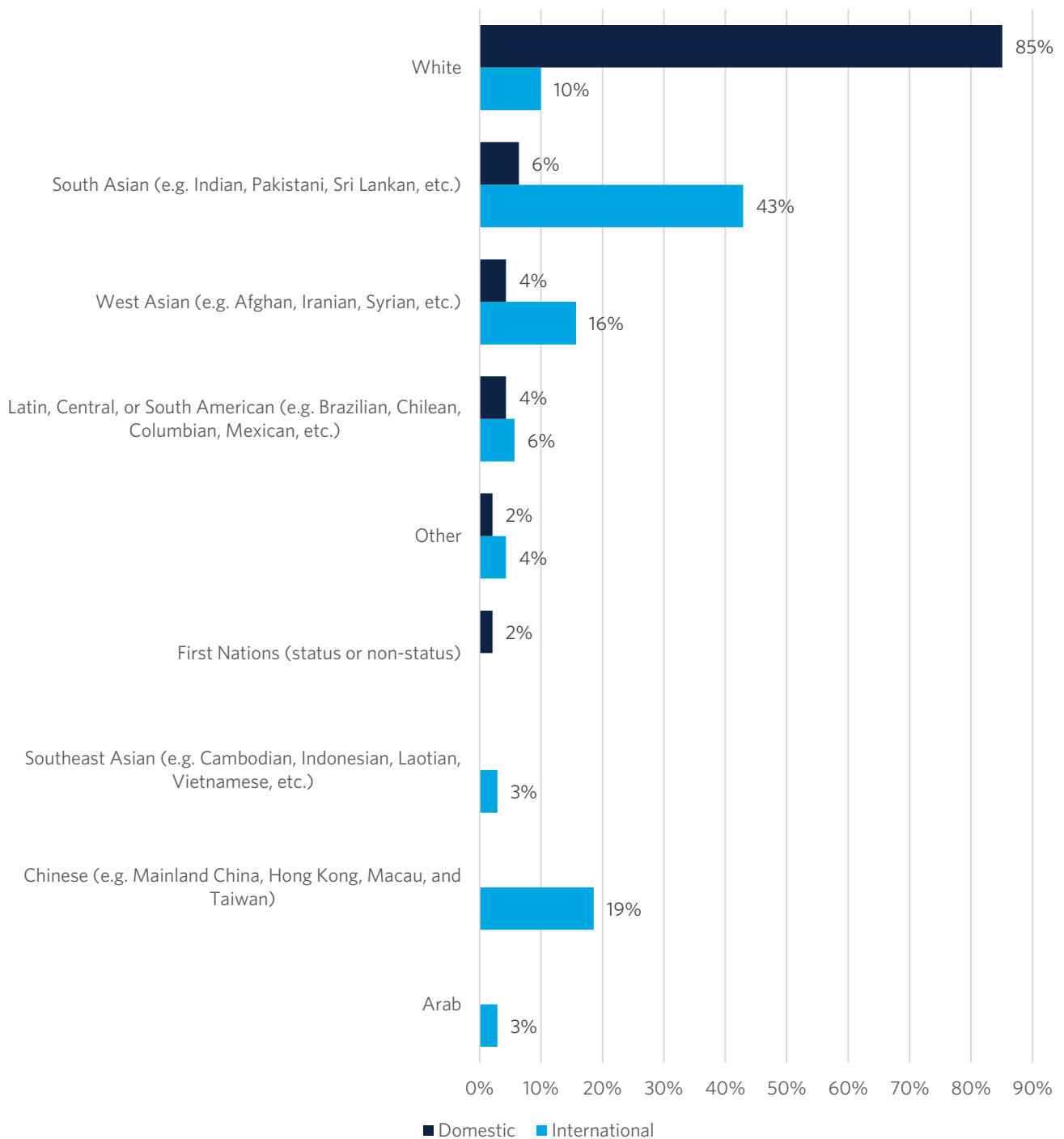
Respondents were asked which languages they spoke well enough to conduct a conversation about everyday topics. The majority of respondents, both domestic (98%, 44, n=45) and international (99%, 70, n=71) selected English. Hindi (34%, 24, n=71), Mandarin (16%, 11, n=71), and Persian/Farsi (15%, 11, n=71) were the next most common responses among international respondents, while French (18%, 8, n=45) and Spanish (13%, 6, n=45) were the next most common responses among domestic respondents.

English was the language that all domestic respondents identified they knew well enough to conduct an academic/technical conversation (43, n=43). The top two responses for international students were English (99%, 70, n=71) and Hindi (20%, 14, n=71).

Ethno-Racial Distribution and Citizenship

Eighty-four percent of domestic respondents (37) selected that they identify their ethnicity as White, while 2% (1) selected First Nations (status or non-status) (n=44). International respondents most often identified as South Asian (43%, 30, n=70), Chinese (19%, 13, n=70), and West Asian (16%, 11, n=70).

Figure 1a: Self-reported ethnicity

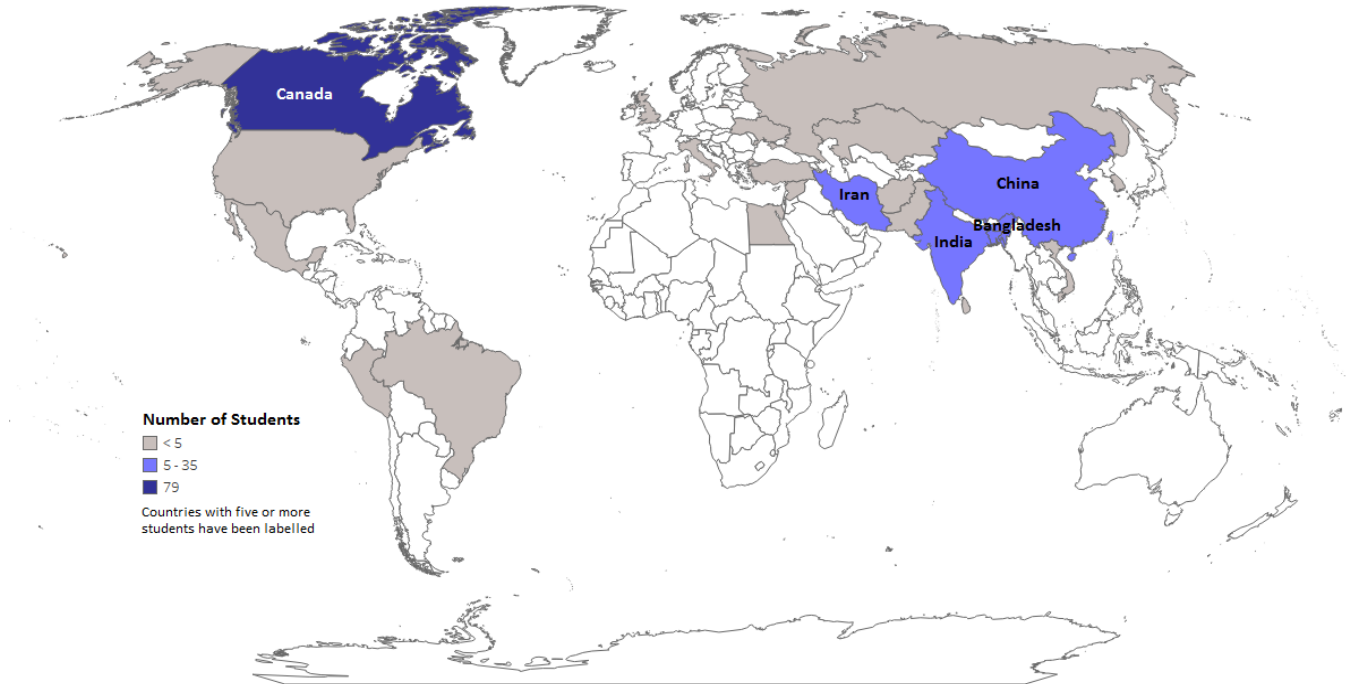


Note: Ethnicities which fewer than 2% of respondents selected were not included in the above graph (Métis, Inuit, Aboriginal Peoples of Canada, Black, Filipino, Japanese, Korean); this graph is reflective of survey data.

Data on respondents' citizenship was also taken from SISC. The majority of domestic respondents were Canadian citizens (98%, 60, n=61). The most common country of citizenship for international respondents

was India (31), followed by Iran (14), China (13) and Bangladesh (12) (n=92). Overall, students represented 24 countries.

Figure 1b: Citizenship



Previous Education

Most respondents (domestic: 71%, 32, n=45; international: 75%, 54, n=72) completed their bachelor's degree between 2014 and 2019. Forty-four percent (32, n=72) of international and only 13% (6, n=45) 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=32) and most were within the same discipline as their current program (45%, 14, n=31). Fifty percent (3) of domestic respondents received their degree within Canada, and 50% received their degree outside of Canada (3) (n=6).

Choosing a Graduate Program

Choosing UBC's Okanagan Campus

Eighty-three percent (50, n=60) of domestic respondents indicated that UBC's Okanagan campus was their first choice for graduate studies. Of international respondents, 75% (68, n=91) 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, 80% (8, n=10) of domestic and 70% (16, n=23) 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, both domestic and international students most often selected UBC's Vancouver campus as their first choice institution (domestic: 67%, 6, n=9; international: 52%, 12, n=23).

Thirty-three percent (18, n=55) of domestic respondents stated that they were in a thesis- or dissertation-based graduate program, compared to 61% (52, n=85) of international respondents.

Choosing a Supervisor

Sixty-seven percent (57, n=85) of the international respondents specified that they have identified a faculty member to be their thesis/dissertation supervisor, while 32% (17, n=54) 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 had intellectual interests that match theirs (80%, 20, n=25), they were willing to work with the student (79%, 19, n=24), and they are doing interesting research (77%, 17, n=22). International respondents most often selected that their supervisor was willing to work with them (80%, 53, n=66), they were doing interesting research (78%, 52, n=67), and they have intellectual interests that match the student (76%, 48, n=63) 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)

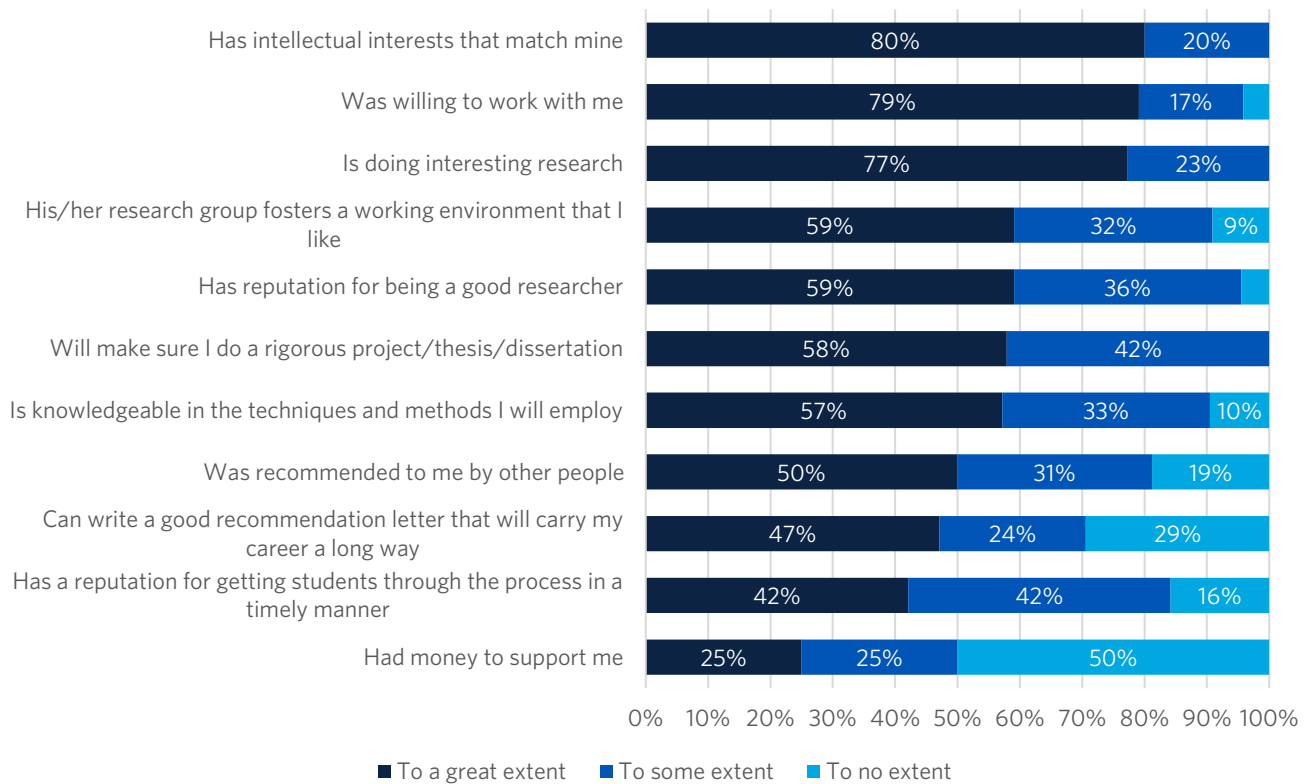
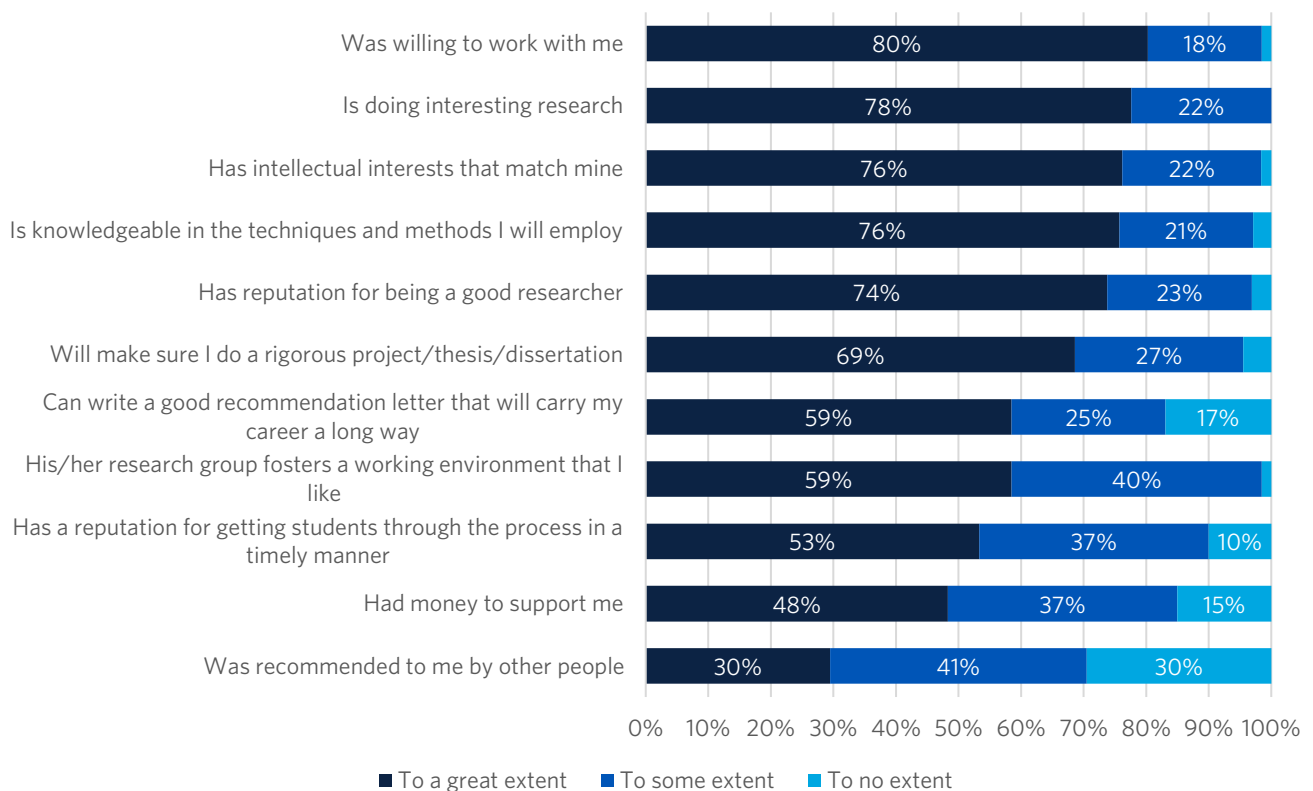


Figure 2b: Factors contributing to choosing a supervisor (international)



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: customary practices regarding publication (24%, 7, n=29), customary practices of generating, handling, and using research data responsibly (23%, 8, n=35), and commitments regarding the funding of their graduate studies (21%, 9, n=43). For international respondents, the top concerns included: commitment regarding the funding of their thesis/dissertation research project (58%, 39, n=67) and commitments regarding the funding of their graduate studies (53%, 40, n=75). Respondents selecting “not applicable/no opinion” were excluded in these analyses.

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

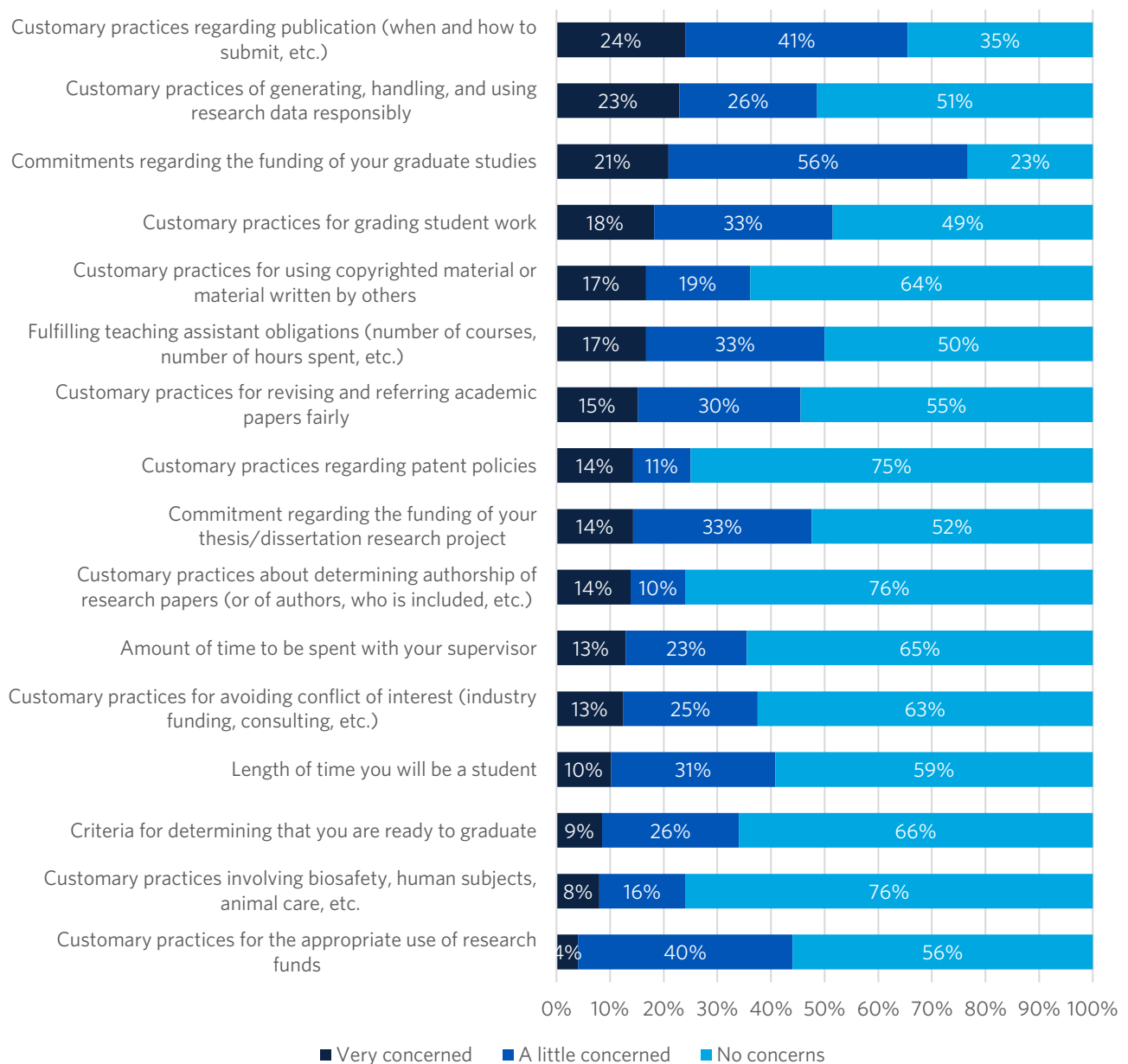
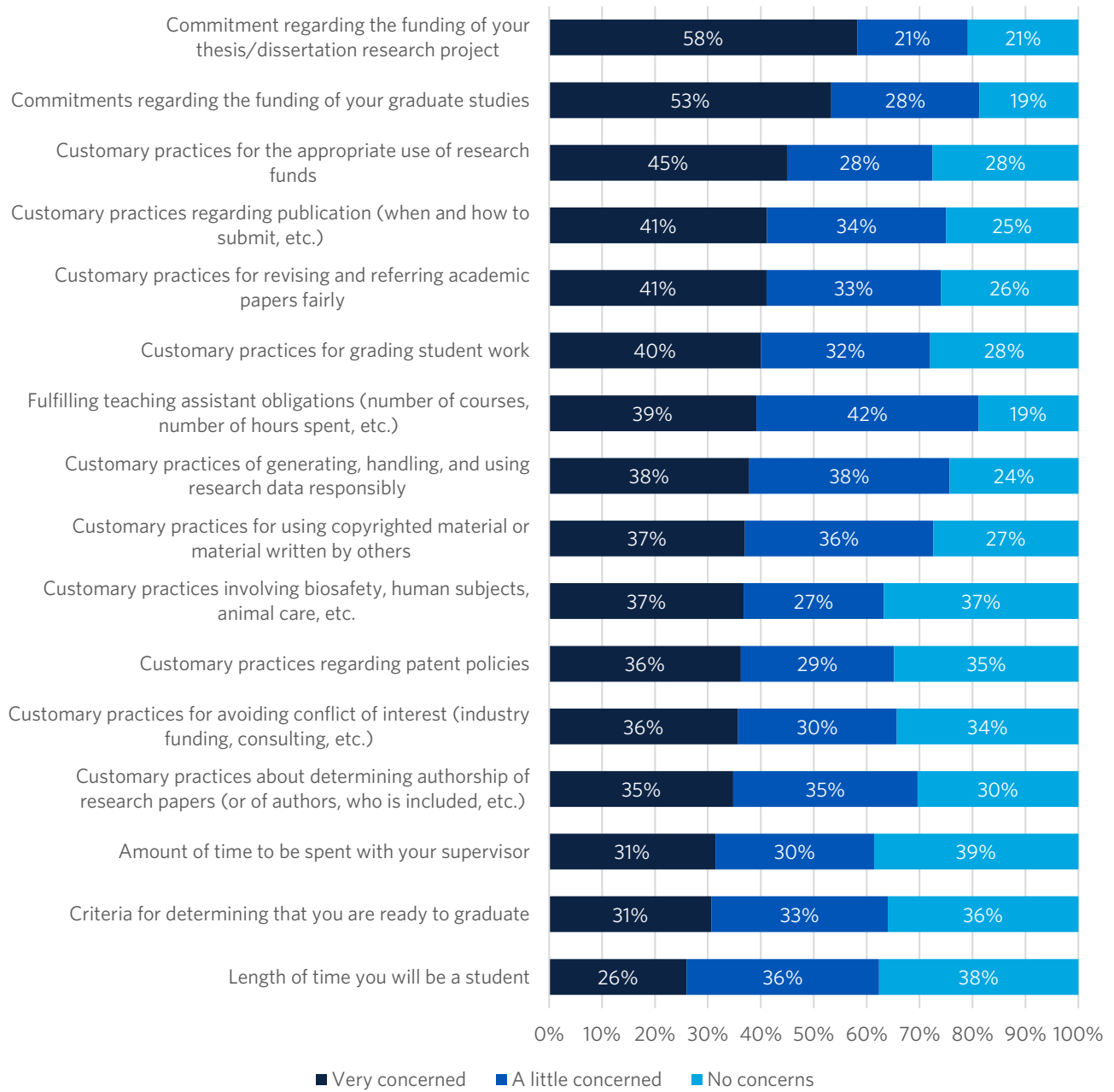


Figure 3b: Level of concern with aspects related to graduate program (international)



Barriers to Academic Success

Work/financial commitments (domestic: 29%, 14, n=49; international: 34%, 26, n=76) and availability of funding (domestic: 25%, 11, n=44; international: 39%, 30, n=77) 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)

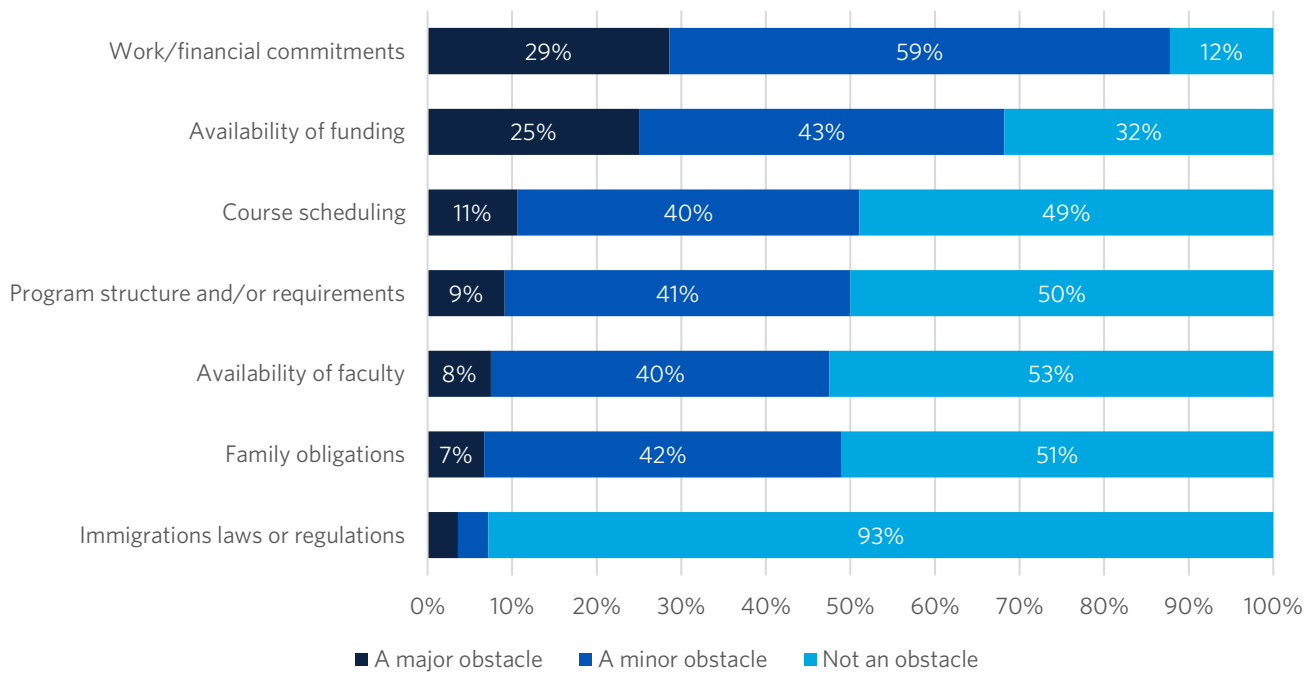
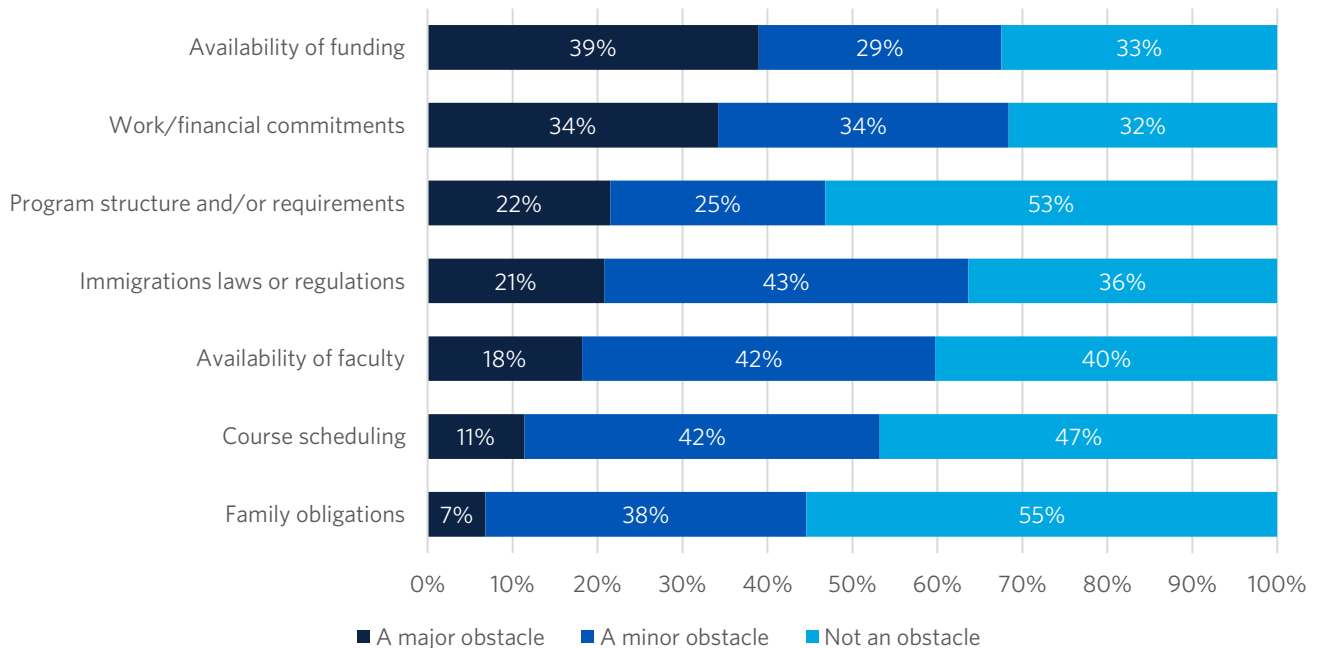


Figure 4b: Obstacles to academic progress (international)

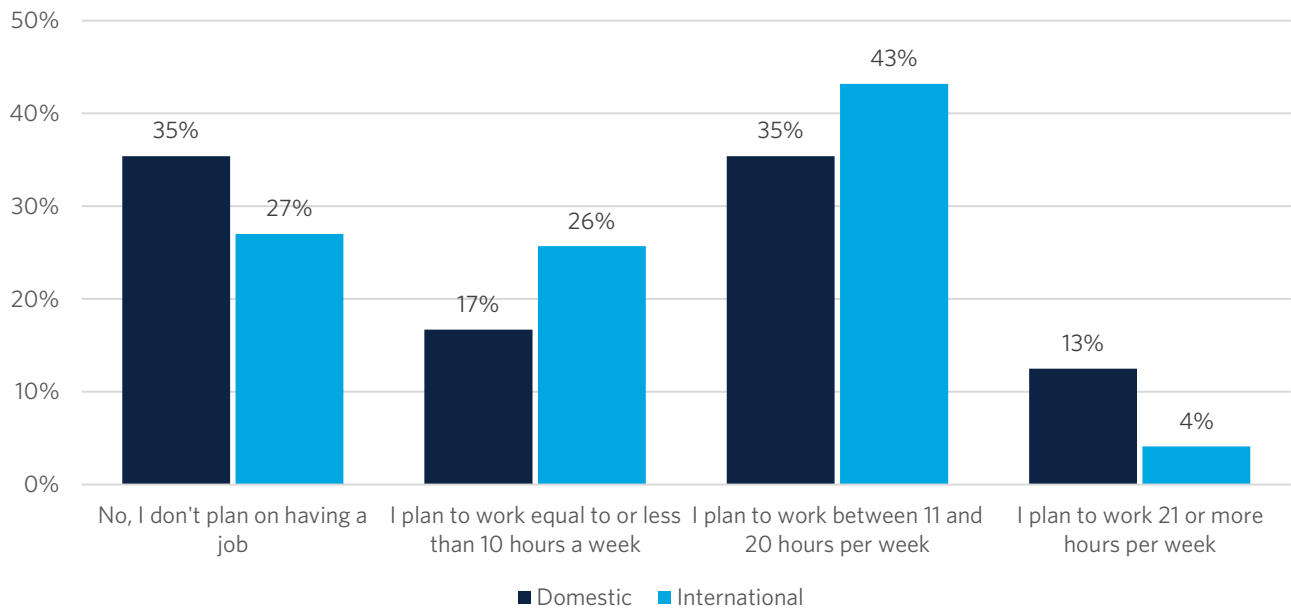


Time Commitments

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-five percent (17, n=48) of domestic respondents and 27% (20, n=74) of international respondents stated that they do not plan on working outside of their funding package commitments. Another 52% (25, n=48) of domestic respondents and 69% (51, n=74) 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 (96%, 52, n=54), while most domestic respondents planned to do so off campus (87%, 26, n=30).

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 an orientation for new graduate students in the program and a graduate students study/collaboration space, with 78% (38, n=49) and 67% (33, n=49) selecting "very likely," respectively. A graduate students study/collaboration space (84%, 66, n=79), a graduate student handbook for the program (82%, 65, n=79), and an orientation for new graduate students in the program (82%, 65, n=79) 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)

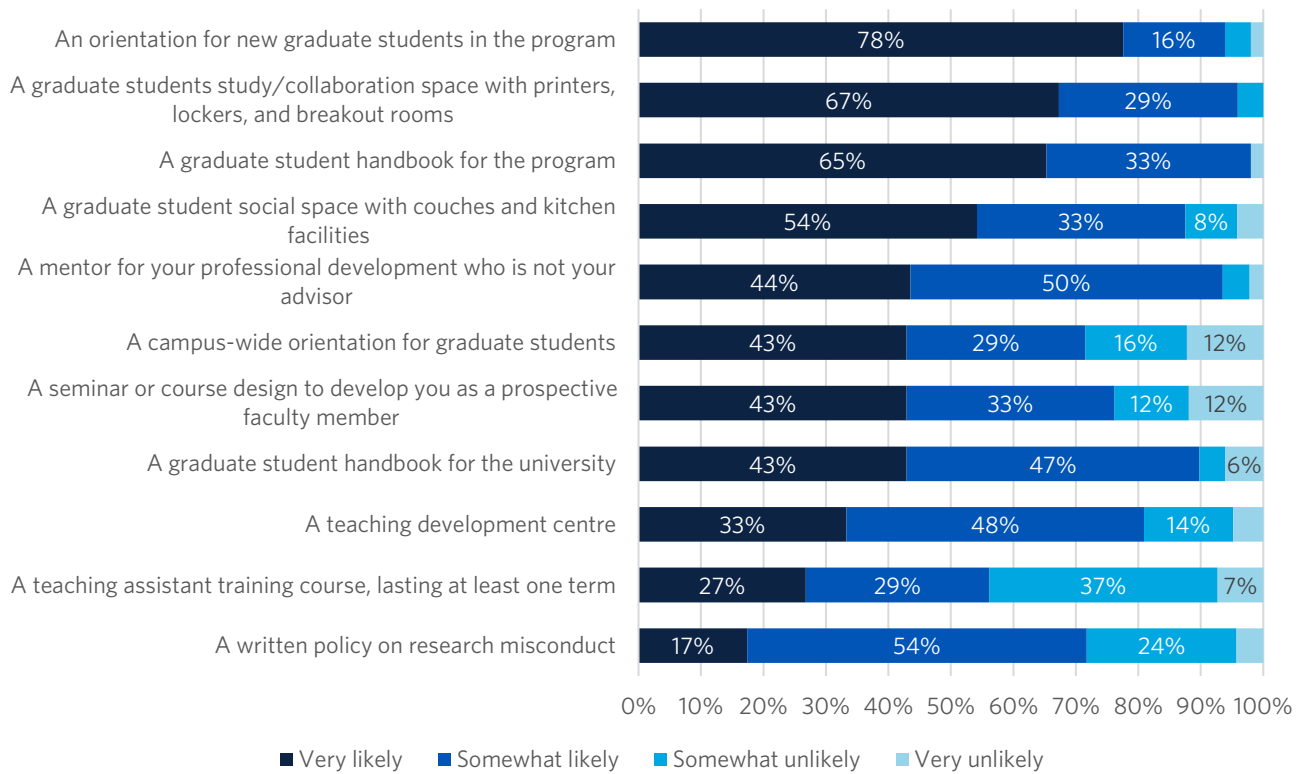
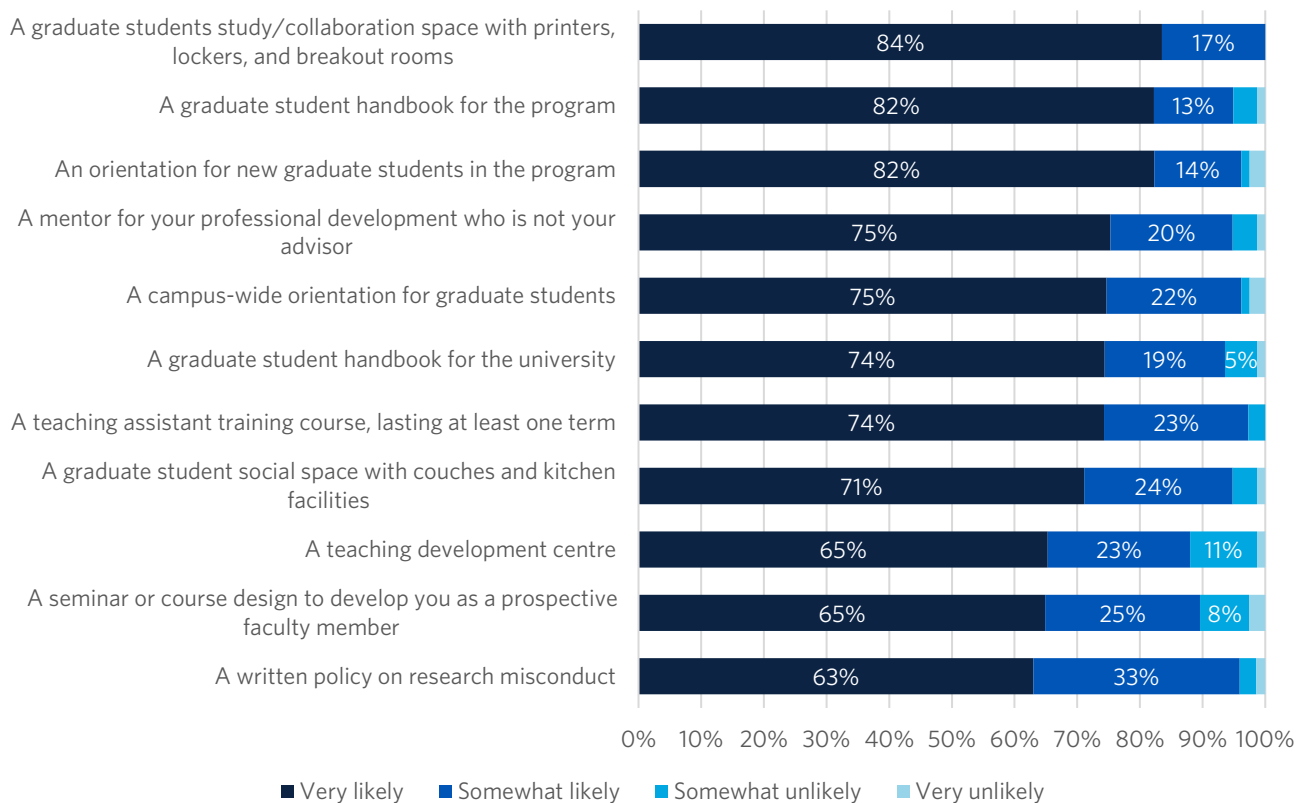


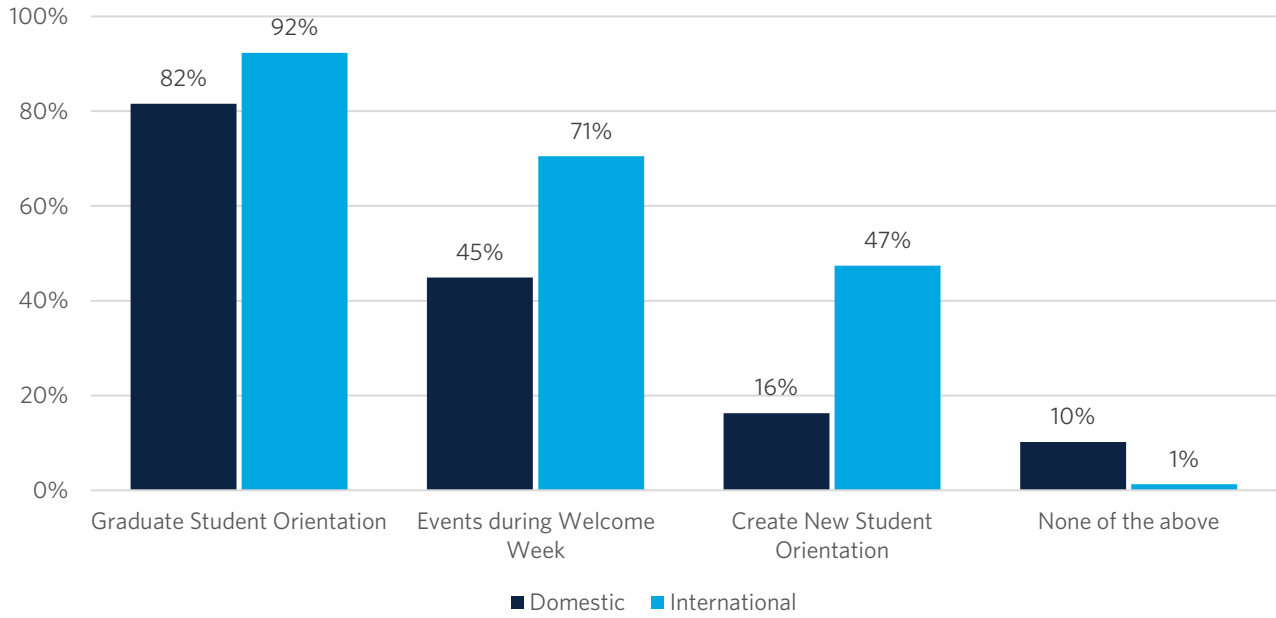
Figure 6b: Likelihood of participation in/utilization of various opportunities and resources (international)



Orientation Events

Students were asked which orientation events they see themselves participating in. The majority of respondents (domestic: 82%, 40, n=49; international: 92%, 72, n=78) 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. Ongoing coaching to accomplish academic goals (domestic: 72%, 34, n=47; international: 69%, 52, n=75), a workshop on career opportunities outside academia (domestic: 70%, 32, n=46; international: 76%, 58, n=76), and internships (domestic: 66%, 31, n=47; international: 79%, 60, n=76) 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)

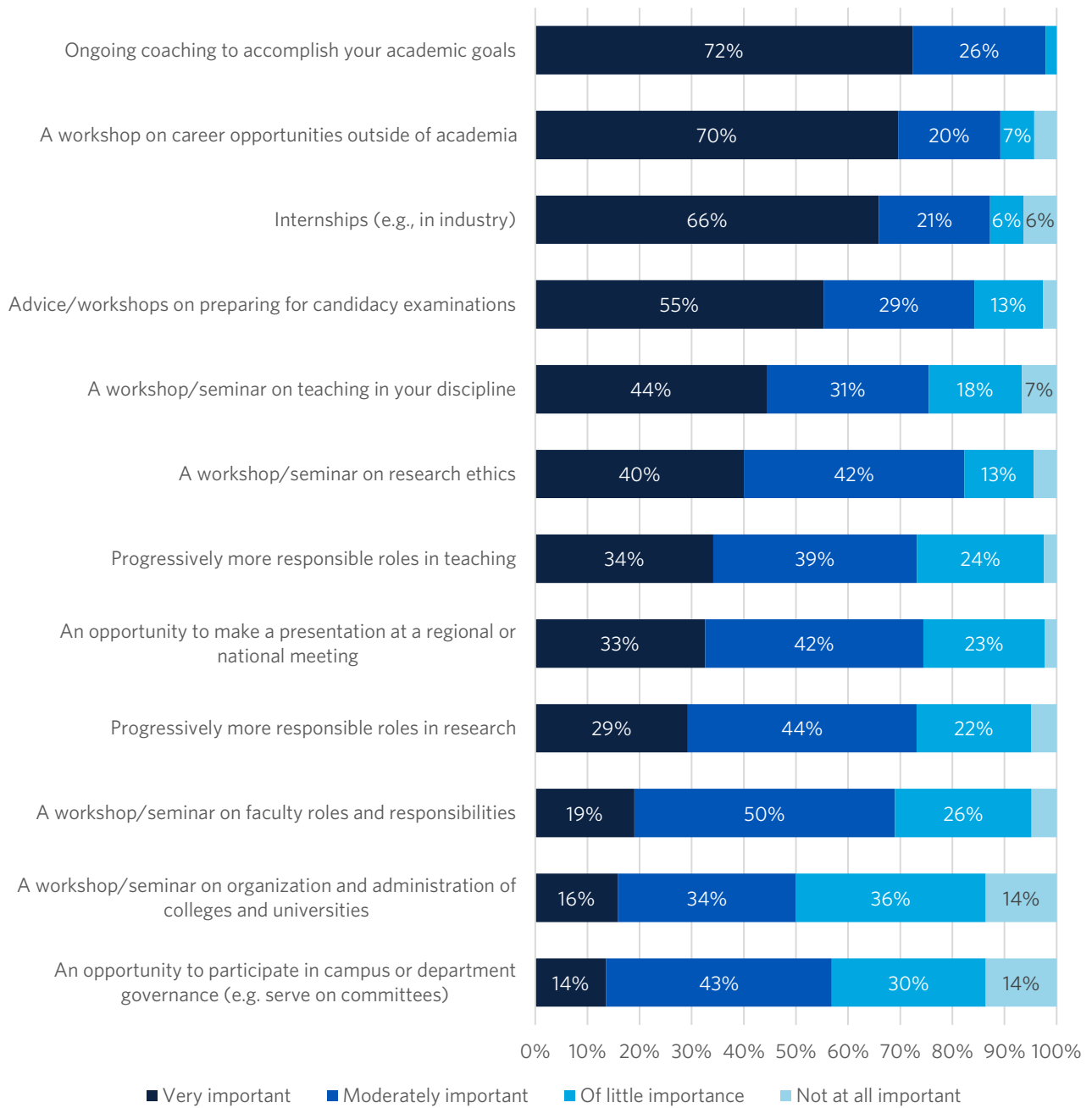
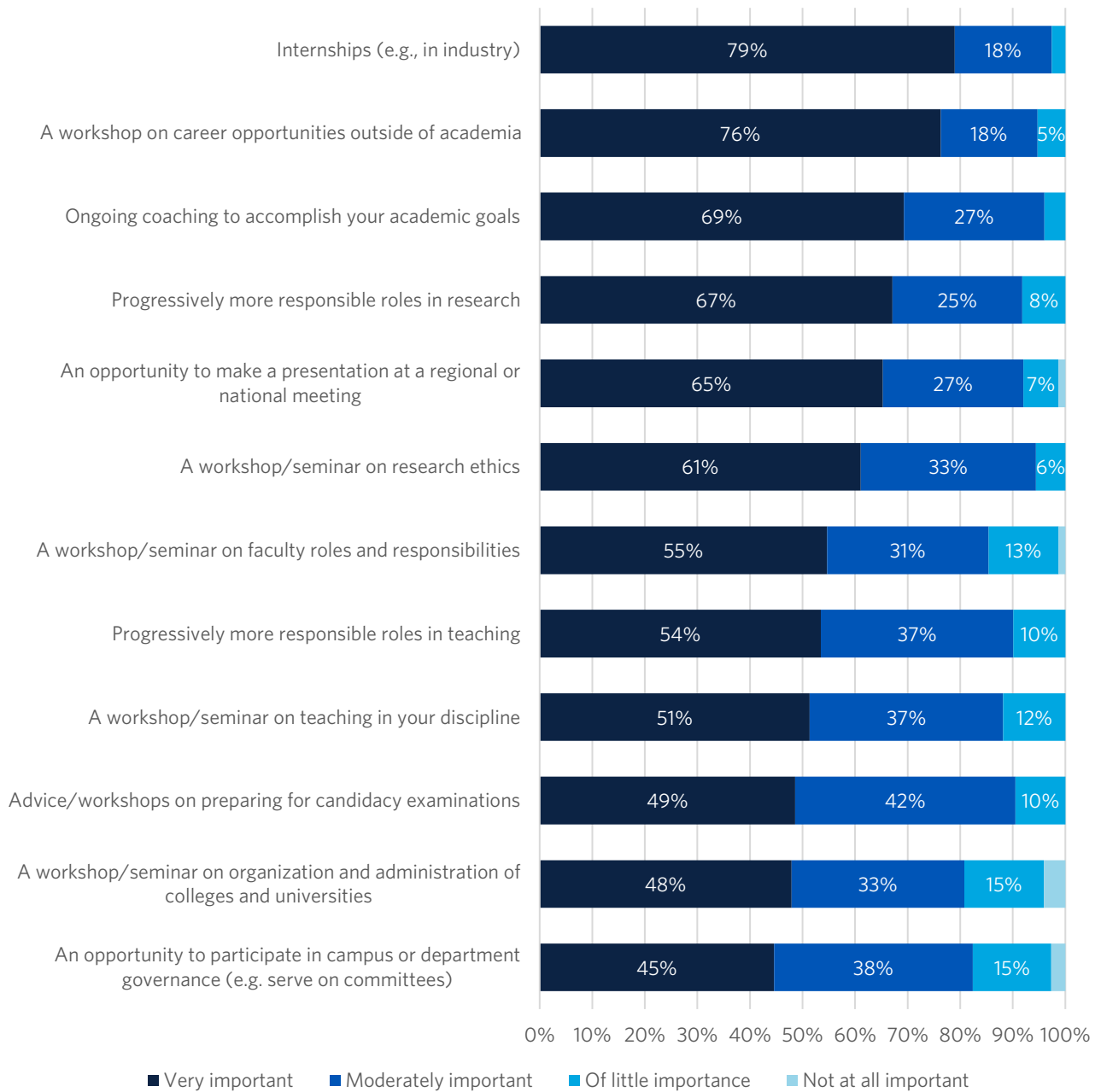


Figure 8b: Importance of opportunities for graduate program experience (international)

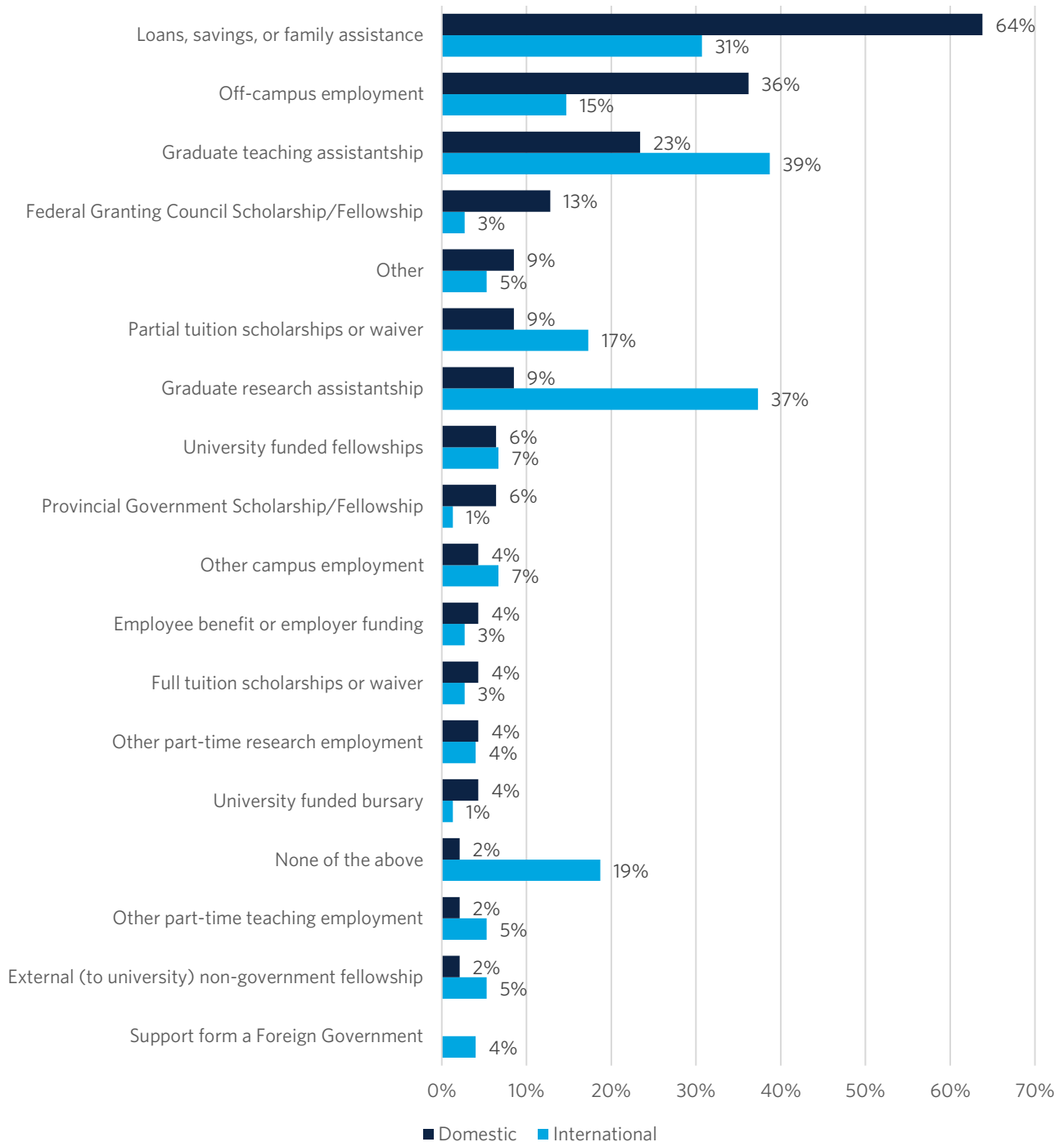


Finances

Financing Graduate Studies

The primary sources of income for domestic respondents were loans, savings, or family assistance (64%, 30, n=47) and off-campus employment (36%, 17, n=47). For international respondents, the primary sources of income for the duration of their studies were graduate teaching assistantships (39%, 29, n=75) and graduate research assistantships (37% 28, n=75).

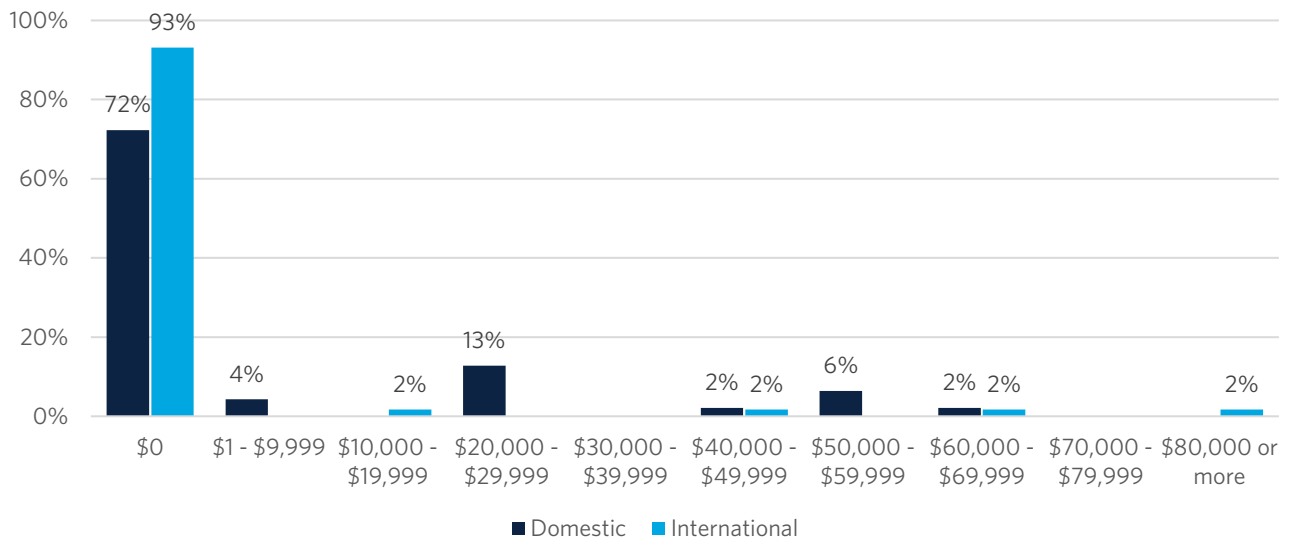
Figure 9: Sources of funding for tuition and other expenses



Debt

The majority of both international (93%, 54, n=58) and domestic (72%, 34, n=47) respondents stated that they will have no debt resulting from their undergraduate education to be paid at the end of their graduate degree. Only five percent (3, n=58) of international respondents and 23% (11, n=47) of domestic respondents indicated that they will have \$20,000 or more in educational debt resulting from their undergraduate degree.

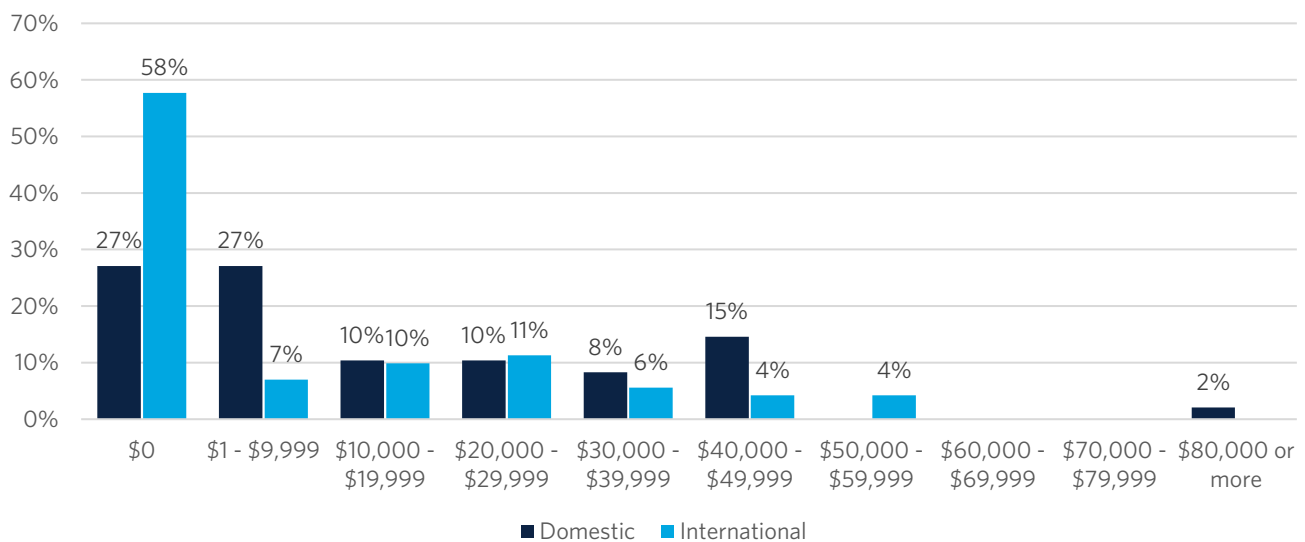
Figure 10: Estimated amount of undergraduate education debt to be paid at the end of studies



Note: 0% of respondents chose \$30,000 - \$39,999 or \$70,000 - \$79,999.

Fifty-eight percent (41, n=71) of international respondents and 27% (13, n=48) of domestic respondents stated that they will have no debt to repay at the end of their studies due to their graduate education. Another 35% (17, n=48) of domestic and 25% (18, n=71) 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



Note: 0% of respondents chose \$60,000 - \$69,999 or \$70,000 - \$79,999.

Career Pathways

Working independently and becoming a professor in a college or university were the most desired future career options for domestic respondents, with 43% (18, n=42) and 42% (18, n=43, respectively) indicating that they would definitely be interested in this career path. International respondents most frequently cited they would definitely be interested in becoming a professor in a college or university (67%, 48, n=72). Respondents selecting “not applicable/no opinion” were excluded in these analyses.

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

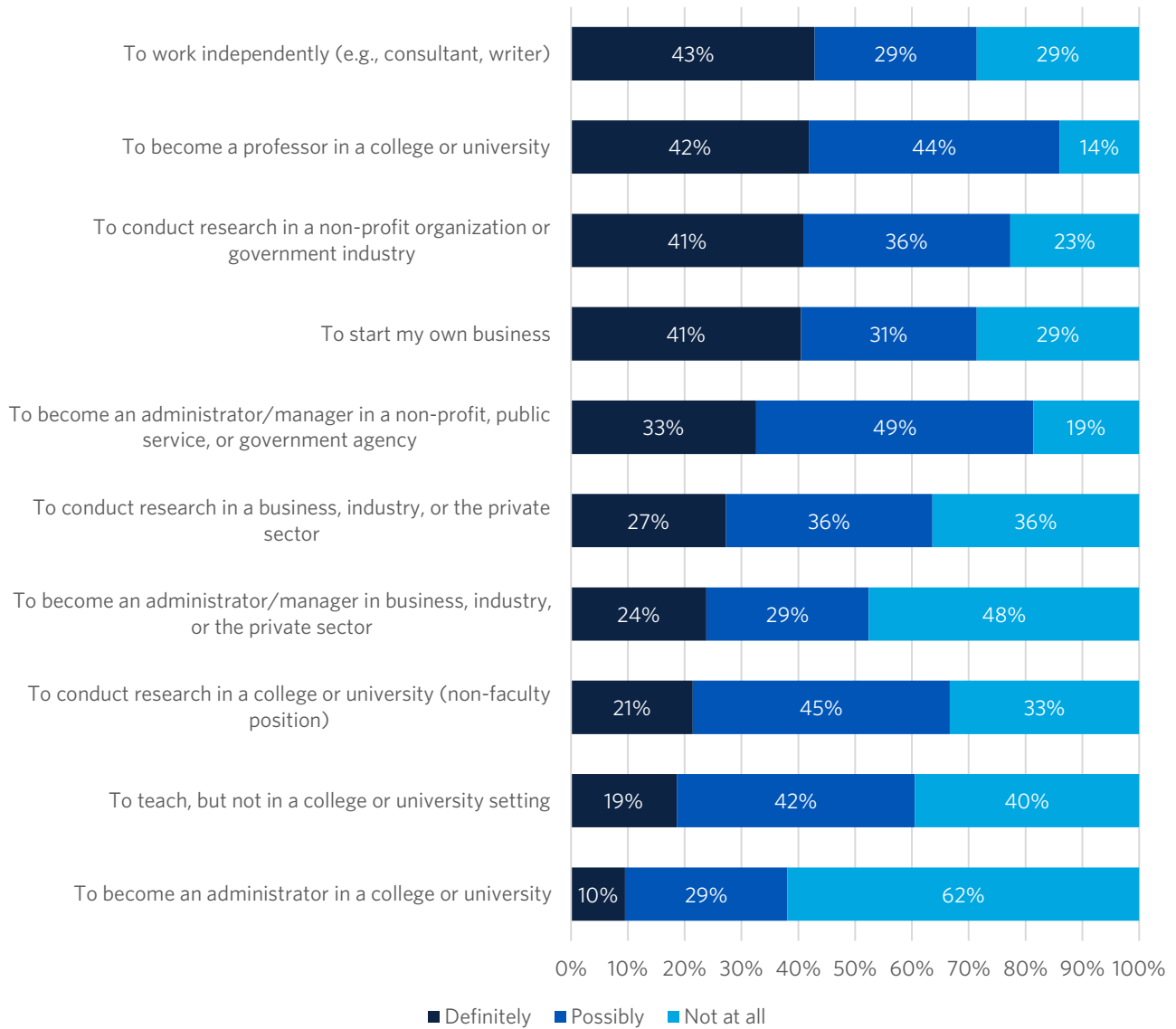
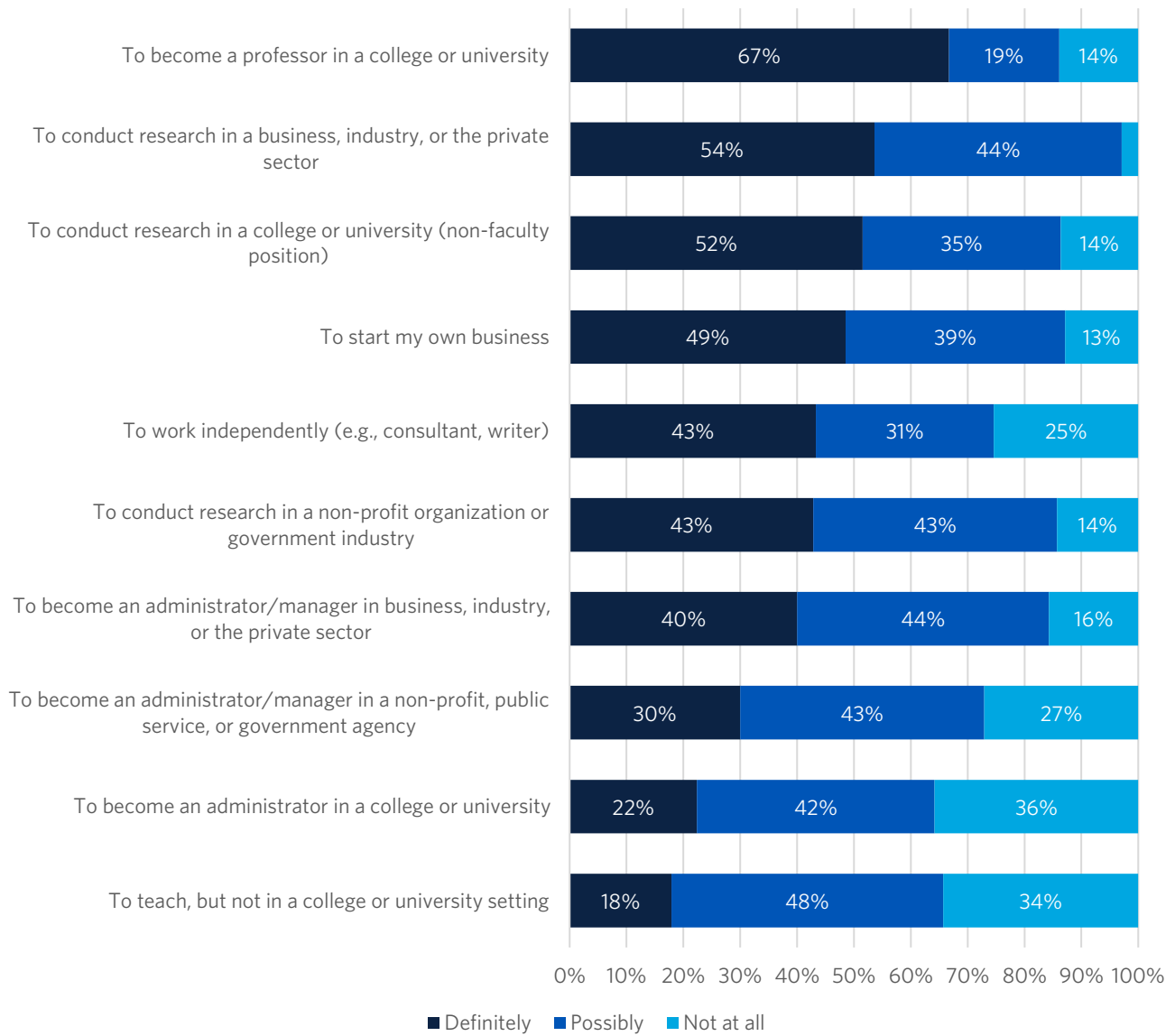


Figure 12b: Desire for various career options (international)

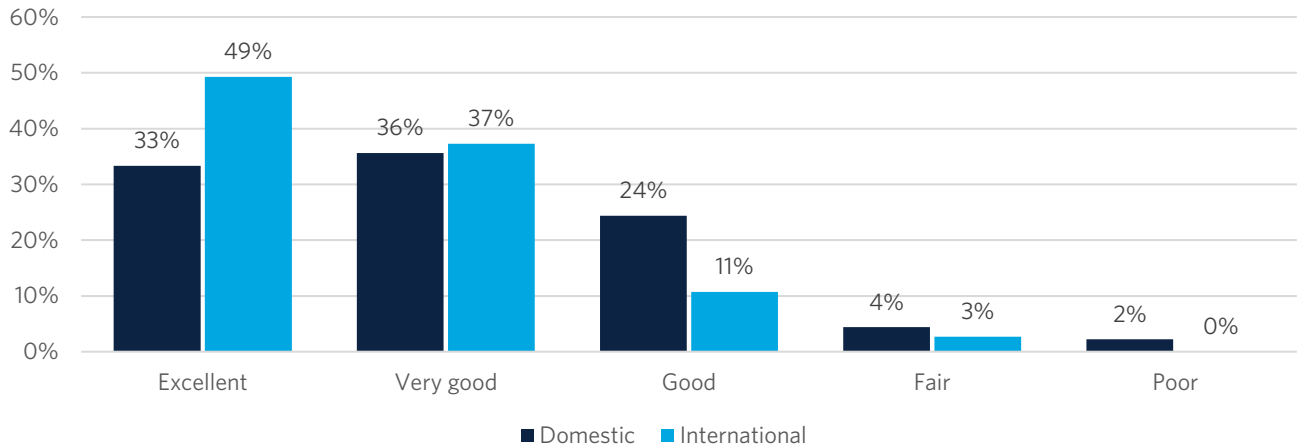


Health and Wellbeing

General Health

The majority of domestic (93%, 42, n=45) and international (97%, 73, n=75) student respondents rated their general health as “good” or higher.

Figure 13: Ratings of general health

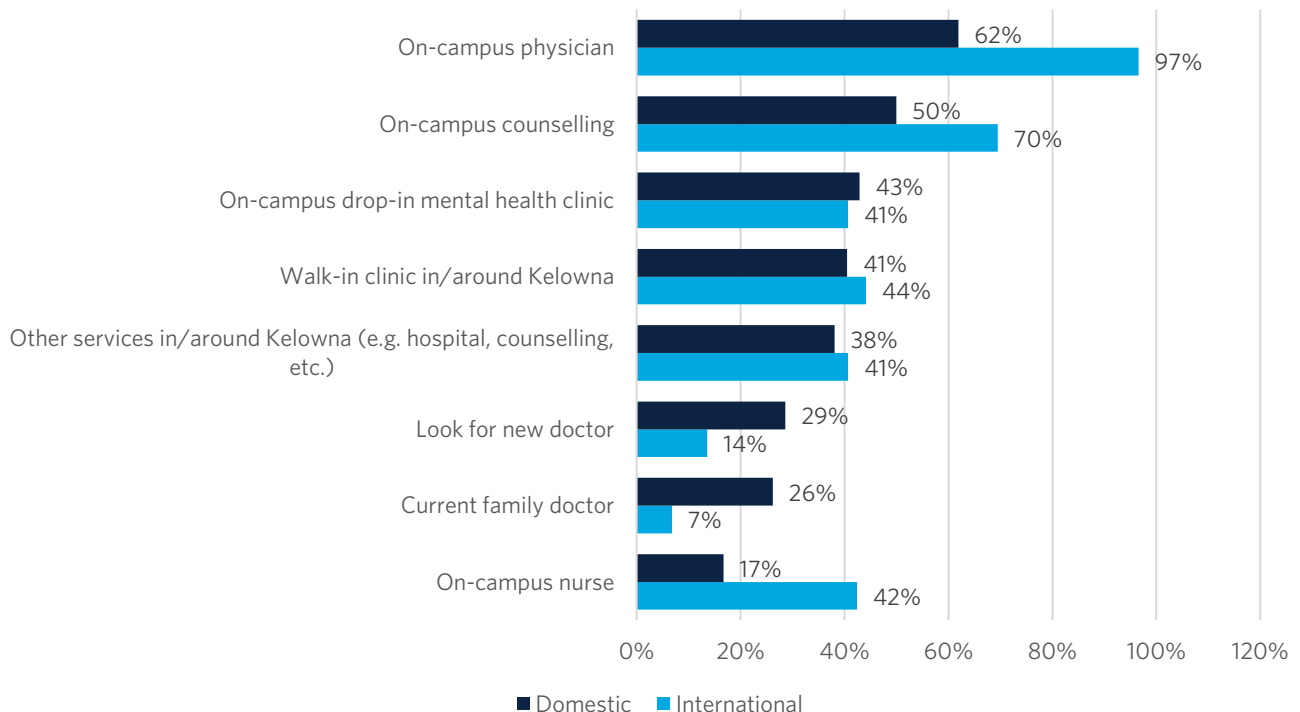


Note: 0% of respondents selected “very poor.”

Health Care

Most respondents planned to use the on-campus physicians (domestic: 62%, 26, n=42; international: 97%, 57, n=59) and/or on-campus counselling (domestic: 50%, 21, n=42; international: 70%, 41, n=59) when in need of health care services.

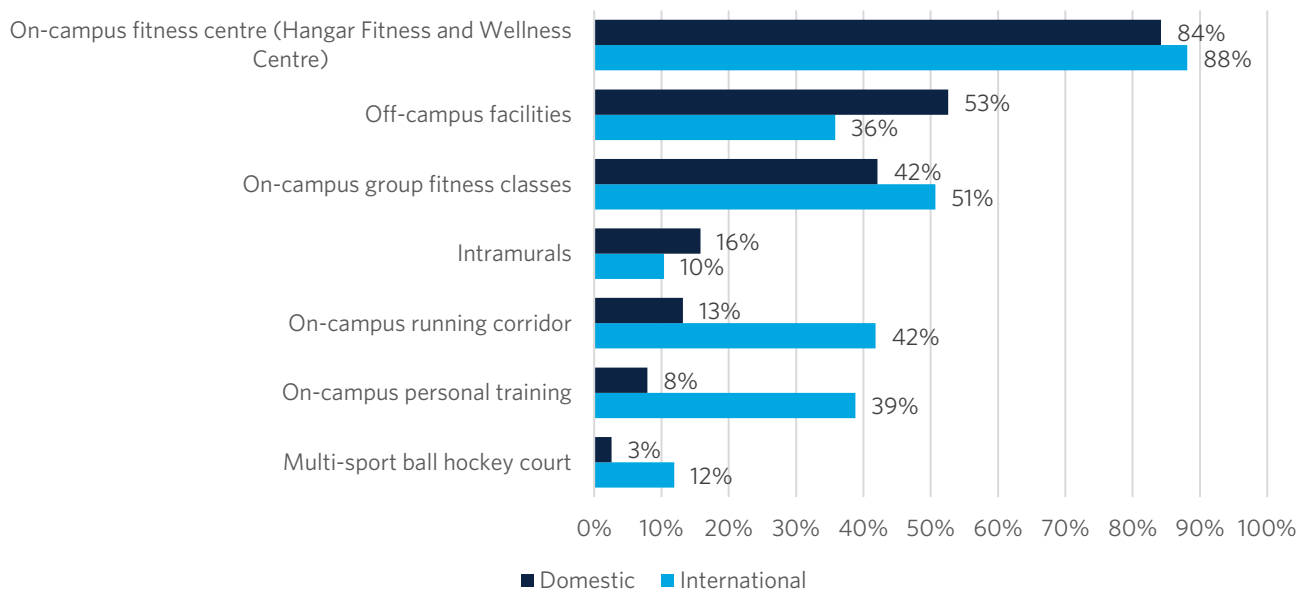
Figure 14: Expected access to health care services



Fitness Facilities

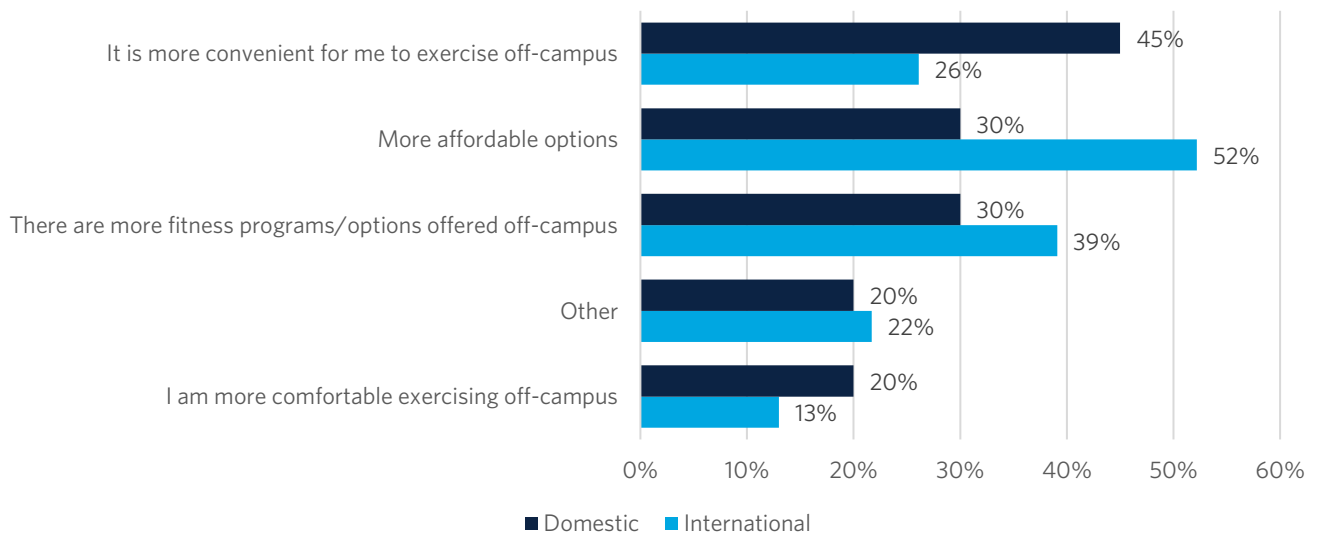
The on-campus fitness centre (Hangar Fitness and Wellness Centre) was the most popular response when students were asked which fitness facilities they planned to use while at UBC (domestic: 84%, 32, n=38; international: 88%, 59, n=67). The second most popular response for domestic respondents was off-campus facilities (53%, 20, n=38) and on-campus group fitness classes for international respondents (51%, 34, n=67).

Figure 15. Planned use of fitness facilities



Those students that selected “off-campus facilities” were asked why they planned to exercise off-campus. Domestic respondents were most likely to select “it is more convenient for me to exercise off-campus” (45%, 19, n=20) while international respondents were most likely to select “more affordable option” (52%, 12, n=23).

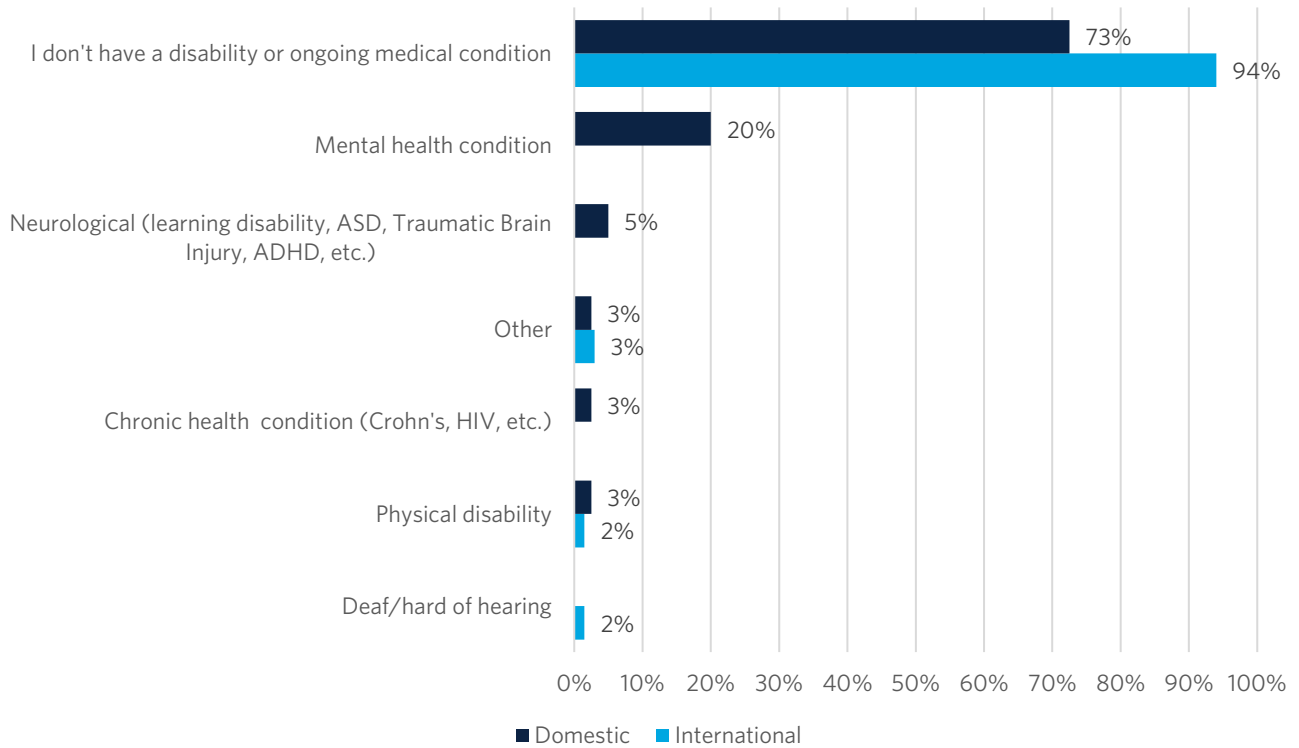
Figure 16. Reasons for exercising off-campus



Disabilities

The majority of domestic (73%, 29, n=40) and international (94%, 62, n=67) respondents indicated that they do not have a disability or ongoing medical condition. Mental health conditions were most commonly reported by domestic respondents who had a disability/ongoing medical condition (20%, 8, n=40).

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: 24%, 11, n=45; international: 56%, 40, n=71) and the availability of academic accommodations (domestic: 14%, 6, n=42; international: 49%, 32, n=66). In general, international respondents had higher levels of concern across all items.

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

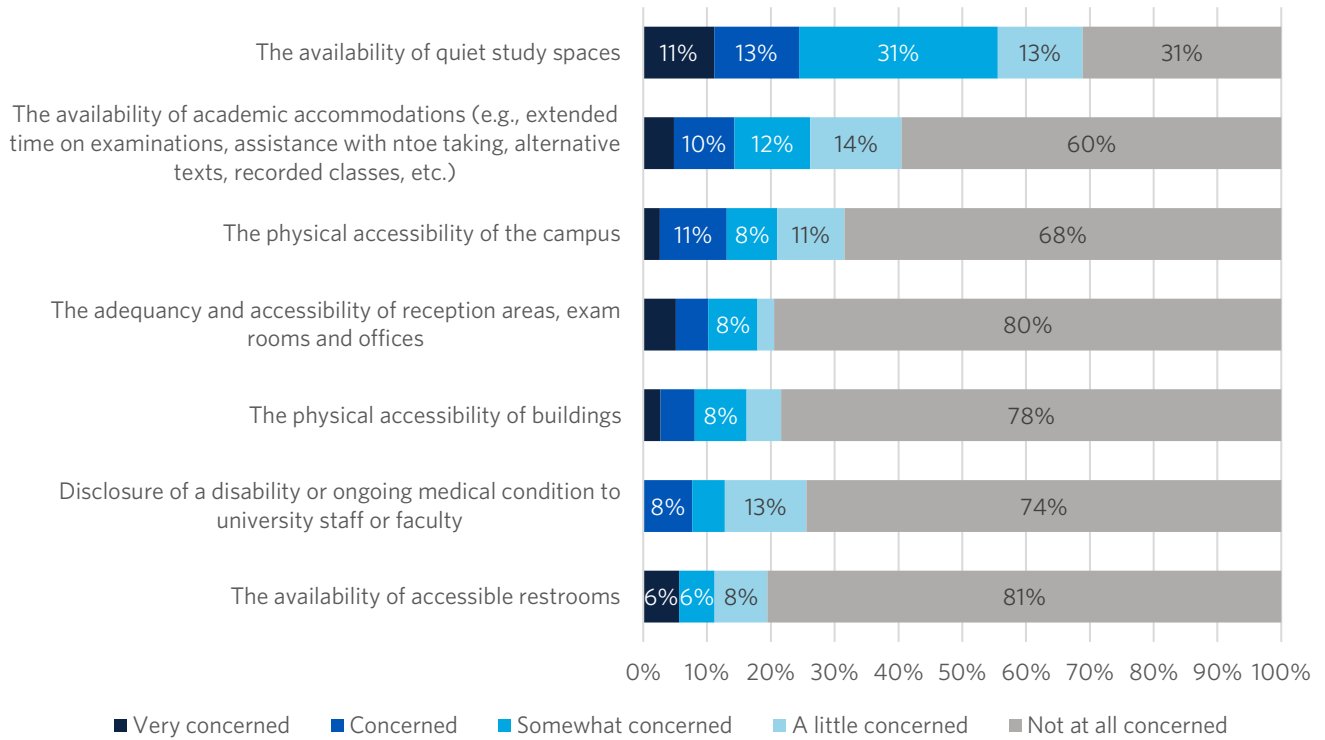
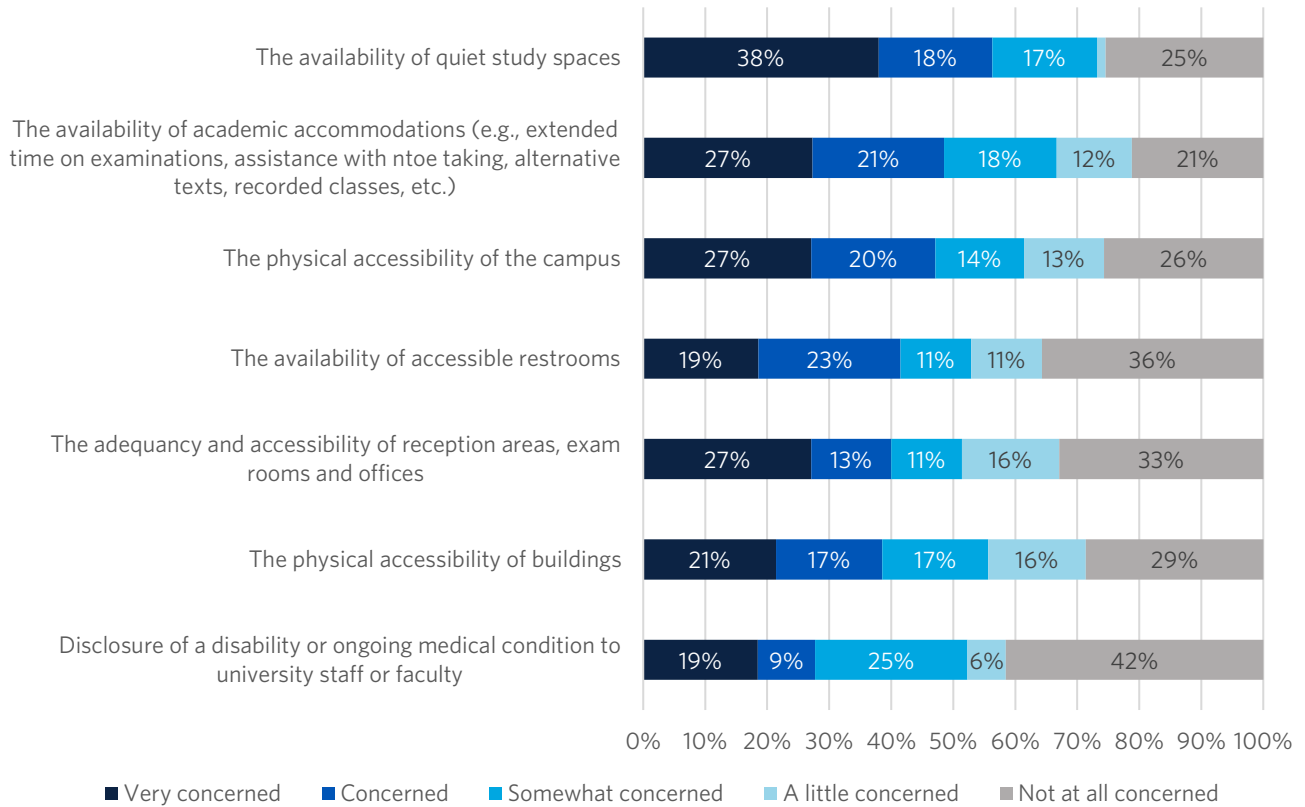


Figure 18b. Concerns with facilities and accommodations (international)

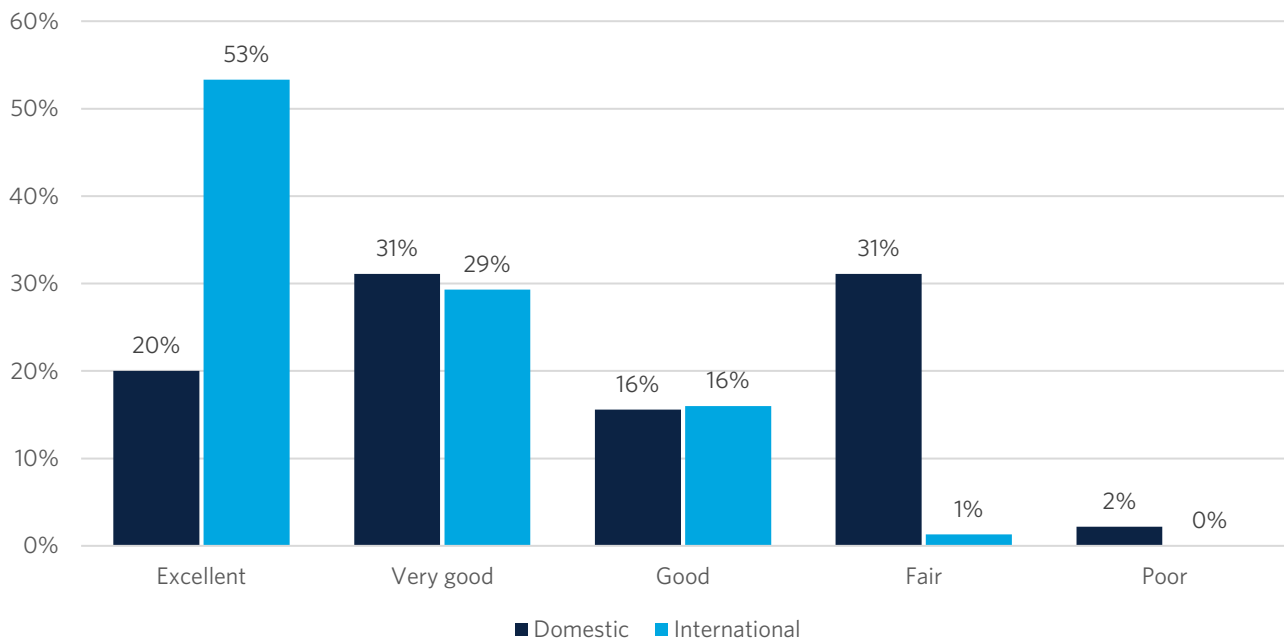


Mental Health, Stress, and Academic Performance

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: 67%, 30, n=45; international: 99%, 74, n=75). However, 33% (15, n=45) of domestic respondents selected “fair” or “poor,” compared to only 1% (1, n=75) 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. Domestic respondents most often strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I am aware of personal signs when I experience too much stress” (96%, 43, n=45). International respondents most often strongly agreed or agreed with the statement “I am confident in my ability to cope with the demands of my life” (97%, 71, n=73).

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

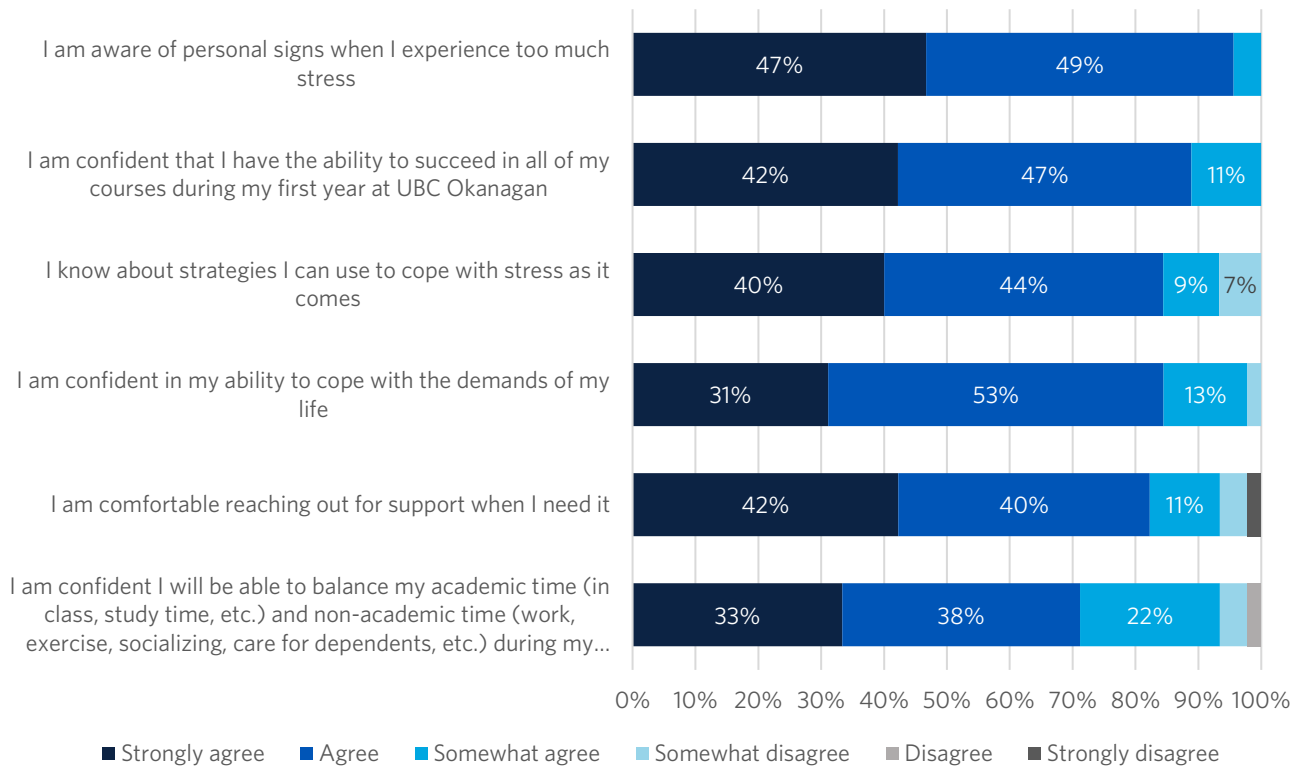
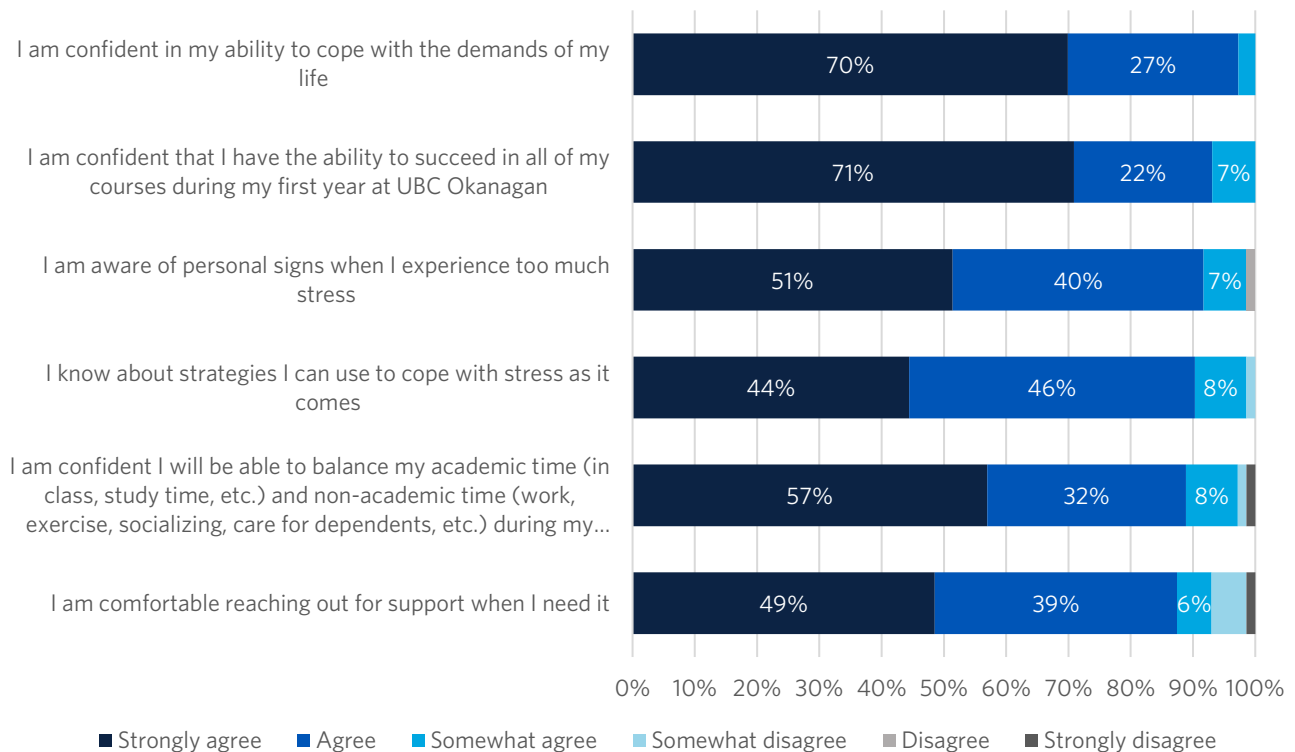


Figure 20b: Ratings of mental health and resiliency statements (international)



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 or significantly negatively impacted academic performance (domestic: 70%, 31, n=44; international: 49%, 34, n=70).

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

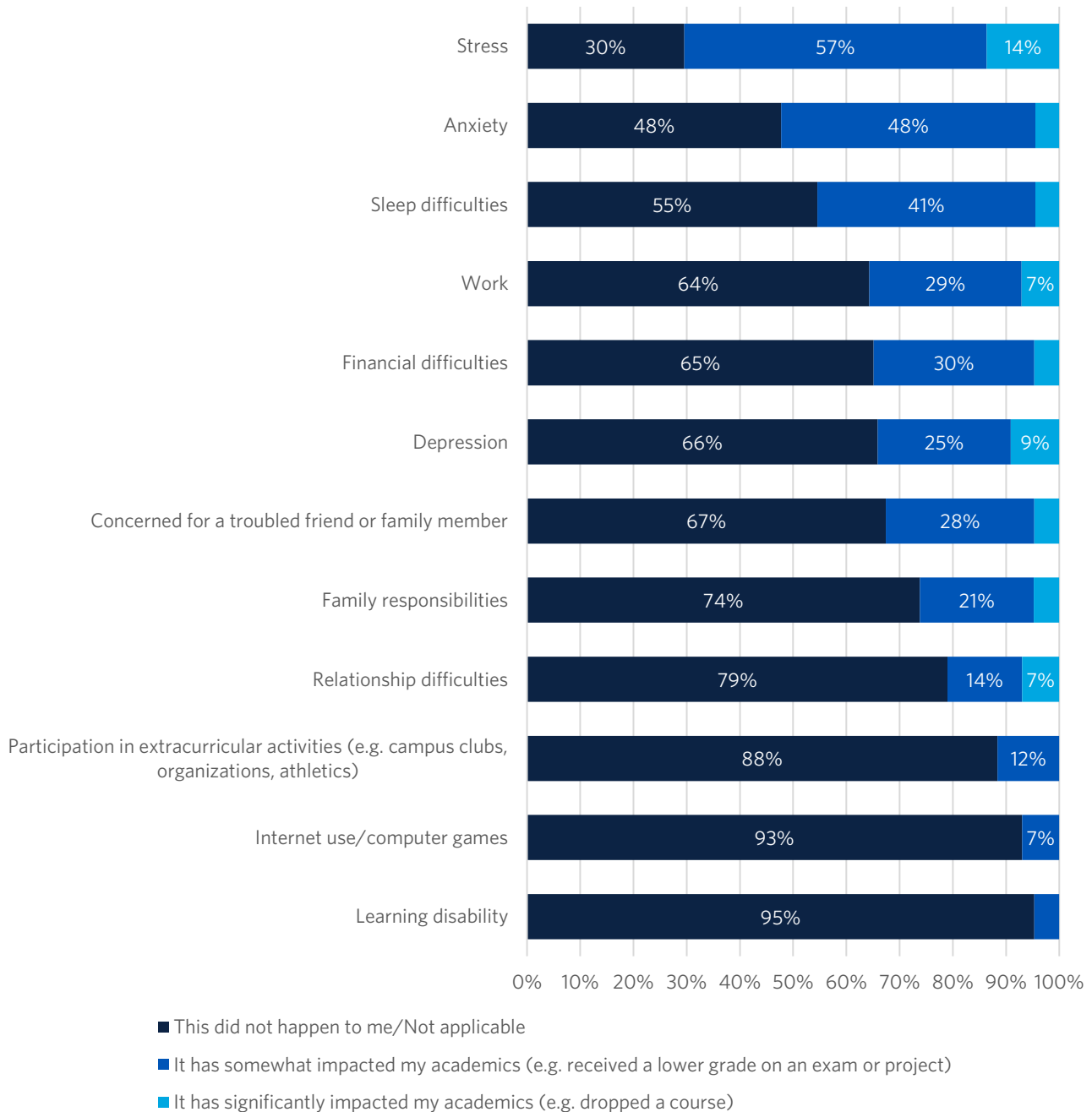


Figure 21b: Impact of various issues on academic performance (international respondents)

