
NEW TO UBC OKANAGAN STUDENT SURVEY 2023:

GRADUATE STUDENTS

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Executive Summary

The New to UBC (NUBC) Survey is an annual survey of new, incoming graduate students at UBC Okanagan. In 2023, all new UBCO graduate students (n=267) were invited via email to participate in the online survey, which was open for responses from August 8th to September 5th, 2023. Most students (162 total; 43 domestic, 119 international) fully or partially completed the survey. The overall response rate was $162/267 = 61\%$ (response rate: 49% domestic, 66% international).

Choosing a Graduate Program

Seventy-three percent of domestic and 84% of international new UBCO graduate students stated that UBC Okanagan was their first choice of school for post-secondary education. Most (50% or more) of new UBCO domestic graduate students who are enrolled in a thesis- or dissertation-based program were influenced to a great extent when choosing their supervisor by:

- Having research interests that match the student's interests (92%)
- Being willing to work with the student (92%)
- Doing interesting research (83%)
- Making sure the student will do a rigorous project/thesis/dissertation (67%)
- Having a reputation for being a good researcher (64%)
- Having a research group that fosters a working environment that the student likes (64%)
- Having money to support the student (50%)
- Being knowledgeable in the techniques and methods the student will use in their research (50%)
- Being able to write a good recommendation letter that will carry the student's career a long way (50%)

New UBCO international graduate students had similar influences on their choice of supervisor as their domestic counterpart. Most (50% or more) were influenced to a great extent when choosing their supervisor by:

- Being willing to work with the student (93%)
- Doing interesting research (88%)
- Having research interests that match the student's interests (79%)
- Making sure the student will do a rigorous project/thesis/dissertation (72%)
- Having a research group that fosters a working environment that the student likes (70%)
- Having a reputation for mentoring their students through their degree in a timely manner (67%)
- Having money to support the student (65%)
- Being knowledgeable in the techniques and methods the student will use in their research (63%)
- Having a reputation for being a good researcher (58%)
- Being able to write a good recommendation letter that will carry the student's career a long way (57%)

Academic Concerns

Overall, new UBCO graduate students did not have high levels of academic concerns. Most frequently, domestic respondents were very concerned with:

- Commitments regarding the funding of their graduate studies (24%)
- Producing research publications (17%)

International respondents were mostly frequently concerned with:

- Commitments regarding the funding of their graduate studies (48%)
- Length of time they will be a student (40%)
- Using research funds appropriately (40%)
- A respectful and supporting learning and research environment (40%)

New UBCO graduate students had higher levels of campus and community concerns. Most frequently, domestic respondents were very concerned with:

- Finding affordable housing in Kelowna (44%)
- Adapting to life in a new country/province/city (22%)

International respondents were most frequently concerned with:

- Finding affordable housing in Kelowna (69%)
- Adapting to life in a new country/province/city (41%)
- Balancing academics and family responsibilities (36%)
- Availability of family-friendly spaces on campus (36%)

Learning Opportunities

Many learning opportunities are important to new UBCO graduate students as part of their graduate program. For new domestic graduate students, most (50% or more) are “very likely” to participate in/utilize the following:

- A graduate student handbook for their program (77%)
- An orientation for new graduate students in their program (63%)
- A workshop on career opportunities outside of academia (52%)

For new international graduate students, most (50% or more) are “very likely” to participate in/utilize the following:

- Internships (e.g., in industry) (88%)
- A workshop on career opportunities outside of academia (82%)
- An orientation for new graduate students in their program (79%)
- A series of workshops that lead to The Career Readiness and Professional Development Credential (77%)
- A graduate student handbook for their program (76%)
- Programs and services for International students (76%)
- A teaching assistant training course (74%)
- Student life events and activities (62%)
- A workshop on fostering a positive relationship with their supervisor (71%)
- Workshops and services offered by the Centre for Teaching and Learning (70%)
- Workshops and services offered by the Centre for Scholarly Communication (69%)
- An opportunity to participate in campus or department committees (69%)
- A workshop on teaching in their discipline (68%)
- A workshop on how to prepare scholarship applications (66%)
- Graduate only recreation classes and programs (65%)
- Presenting at a regional or national meeting (59%)
- Opportunities for non-credit credentials (56%)
- A workshop on research ethics (56%)

- A workshop on faculty roles and responsibilities (56%)
- Workshops of respectful work/learning environments from the Equity & Inclusion or Sexual Violence Prevention & Response Office (54%)

Career Interests

New UBCO domestic and international graduate students expressed somewhat different career interests. New domestic graduate students were most interested in:

- Working independently (e.g., consultant, writer) (43% definitely interested)
- Starting their own business (30% definitely interested)
- Conducting research in a non-profit organization or government agency (23% definitely interested)

New UBCO international graduate students were most interested in:

- Conducting research in business, industry, or the private sector (63% definitely interested)
- Becoming an administrator/manager in business, industry, or the private sector (61% definitely interested)
- Becoming a research professor in a college or university (45% definitely interested)
- Working independently (e.g., consultant, writer) (44% definitely interested)

Introduction

This report displays the findings of the 2023 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 8th to September 5th, 2023.

Sample

A total of 267 graduate students were invited to complete the survey, excluding email bounce backs. Of 267 invitees, there were 162 full or partial completes –an overall response rate of 61% (49% for domestic and 66% for international students).

The sample of survey respondents reflects a higher proportion of international students and a lower proportion of domestic students compared to the overall cohort of students (refer to Table 1).

Table 1: Demographic breakdown of cohort and sample

	Invited Cohort		Survey Respondents	
	Count (N)	%	Count (n)	%
Domestic/International				
Domestic	87	33%	43	27%
International	180	67%	119	74%
Program				
MA-O	20	8%	14	9%
MASC-O	9	3%	6	4%
MDS-O	37	14%	22	14%
MED-O	10	4%	7	4%
MENG-O	78	29%	48	30%
MFA-O	8	3%	4	3%
MSC-O	35	13%	20	12%
MSW-O	45	17%	23	14%
PHD-O	25	9%	18	11%

Note: The invited cohort data above are from the Student Information System (SIS). Data pulled August 4, 2023.

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

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

Program	<i>Domestic</i>				<i>International</i>			
	Invited Cohort		Survey Respondents		Invited Cohort		Survey Respondents	
	Count (N)	%	Count (n)	%	Count (N)	%	Count (n)	%
MA-O	9	10%	4	9%	11	6%	10	8%
MASC-O	0	0%	0	0%	9	5%	6	5%
MDS-O	12	14%	7	16%	25	14%	15	13%
MED-O	5	6%	2	5%	5	3%	5	4%
MENG-O	2	2%	0	0%	76	42%	48	40%
MFA-O	4	5%	1	2%	4	2%	3	3%
MSC-O	10	12%	6	14%	25	14%	14	12%
MSW-O	42	48%	20	47%	3	2%	3	3%
PHD-O	3	3%	3	7%	22	12%	15	13%

Note: The invited cohort data above are from the SIS. Data pulled August 4, 2023.

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 43 domestic and 119 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 43 domestic and 119 international new to UBC respondents.

Demographics

Gender

Two-thirds of domestic respondents (67%, 22, n=33) indicated the gender category that best represented them was “woman” and 33% (11, n=33) were best represented by the gender category “man”. For international respondents 42% (37, n=89) were best represented by “woman” and 57% (51, n=89) were best represented by “man”. No respondents chose “non-binary” as the gender category that best represented them.

Residence

Seventy-six percent (25, n=33) of domestic student respondents were born in Canada, and 100% (89, n=89) of international respondents were born outside of Canada. Thirty percent of domestic respondents (10, n=33) had at least one of their parents/guardians born outside of Canada.

Twenty-four percent (8) of domestic graduate student respondents have lived in the Okanagan region for at least one year, 30% (10) have lived elsewhere in BC for at least one year, 61% (20) have lived in another province/territory in Canada for at least one year, and 24% (8) have lived in another country besides Canada for at least one year (n=33). Most international respondents (85%, 73, n=86) have lived outside of Canada for at least one year.

Languages

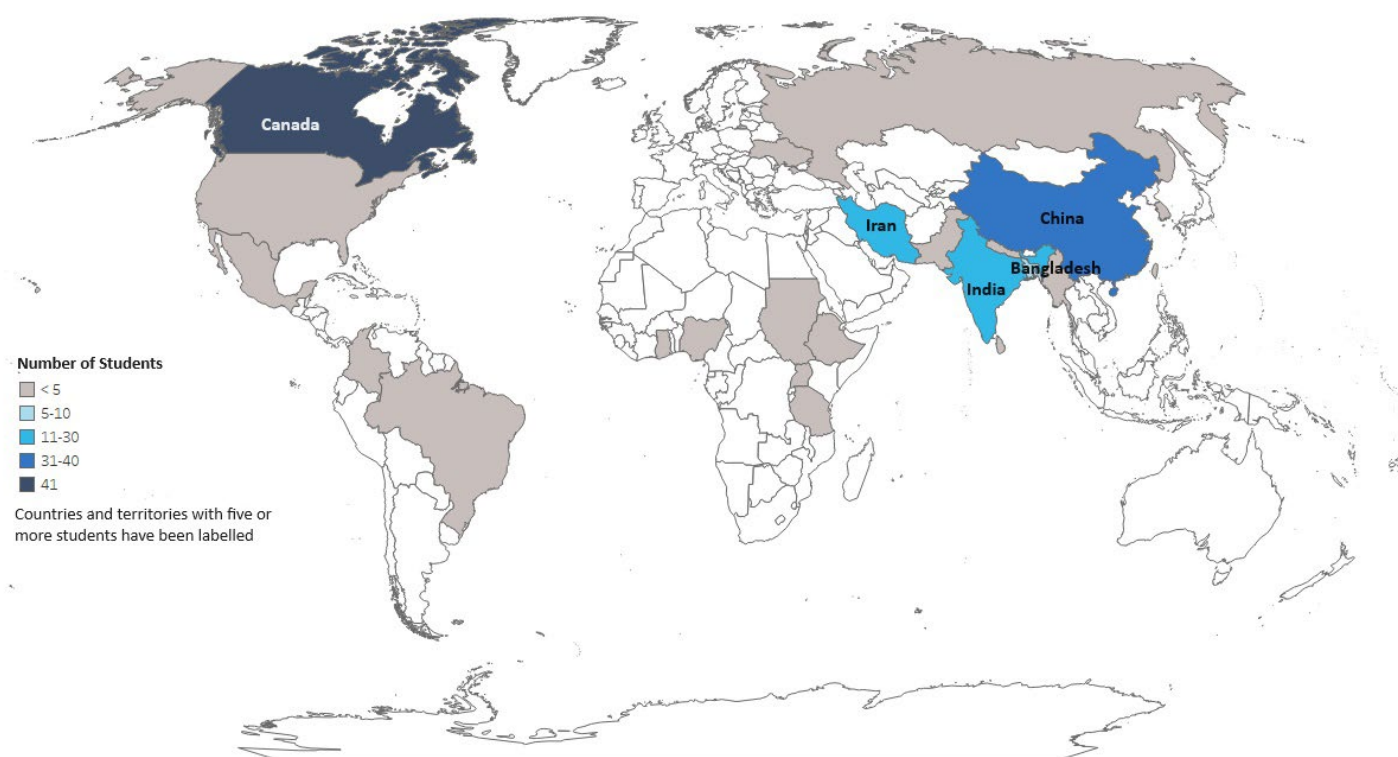
Respondents were asked which languages they spoke well enough to conduct an academic/technical conversation. The majority of respondents, both domestic (96%, 26, n=27) and international (92%, 77, n=84) selected English. Mandarin (26%, 22, n=84), Hindi (13%, 11, n=84), and Persian (11%, 9, n=84) were the next most common responses among international respondents, while French (7%, 2, n=27) was the next most common response among domestic respondents.

Ethno-Racial Identity and Citizenship

Eighty-three percent of domestic respondents (25, n=30) indicated that “White” was the term that best described their ethno-racial identity. International respondents most often identified as “East Asian” (33%, 28, n=85) and “South Asian” (24%, 20, n=85).

Data on respondents’ citizenship was also taken from SIS (data pulled August 4, 2023). The majority of domestic respondents were Canadian citizens (95%, 41, n=43). The most common country or territory of citizenship for international respondents was China (35), followed by India (24), Iran (24) and Bangladesh (9) (n=119). Overall, students represented 23 countries and territories.

Figure 1: Citizenship



Previous Education

Most respondents (domestic: 79%, 26, n=33; international: 69%, 61, n=89) completed their bachelor's degree between 2018 and 2023. Forty-four percent (39, n=89) of international and 21% (7, n=33) of domestic respondents indicated they had completed a graduate program previously. For almost all of international respondents, this previous graduate degree was earned outside of Canada (95%, 37, n=39) and most commonly were within the same discipline as their current program (42%, 16, n=38). Fifty-seven percent of domestic respondents received their previous degree within Canada (4, n=7) and they were also most commonly within the same discipline as their current program (43%, 3, n=7).

Choosing a Graduate Program

Choosing UBC's Okanagan Campus

Seventy-seven percent (33, n=43) of domestic respondents indicated that UBC's Okanagan campus was their first choice for graduate studies. Of international respondents, 84% (100, n=119) 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 79% (15, n=19) 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: 44%, 4, n=9; international: 63%, 12, n=19).

Twenty-nine percent (12, n=41) of domestic respondents stated that they were in a thesis- or dissertation-based graduate program, compared to 38% (45, n=118) of international respondents.

Choosing a Supervisor

Ninety-eight percent (43, n=44) of the international respondents enrolled in a thesis- or dissertation-based graduate program specified that they have identified a faculty member to be their thesis/dissertation supervisor, while 100% (12, n=12) of domestic respondents did so.

Students choose to work with a particular faculty member as their supervisor for a variety of reasons. Respondents who indicated they were enrolled in a thesis- or dissertation-based graduate program were asked to rate the extent to which several aspects influenced their choice of supervisor.

For domestic respondents, the top two factors which influenced their decision to a great extent included that their supervisor has research interests that match the student (92%, 11, n=12) and was willing to work with them (92%, 11, n=12). International respondents most often selected that their supervisor was willing to work with them (93%, 39, n=42) and they were doing interesting research (88%, 36, n=41) 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)

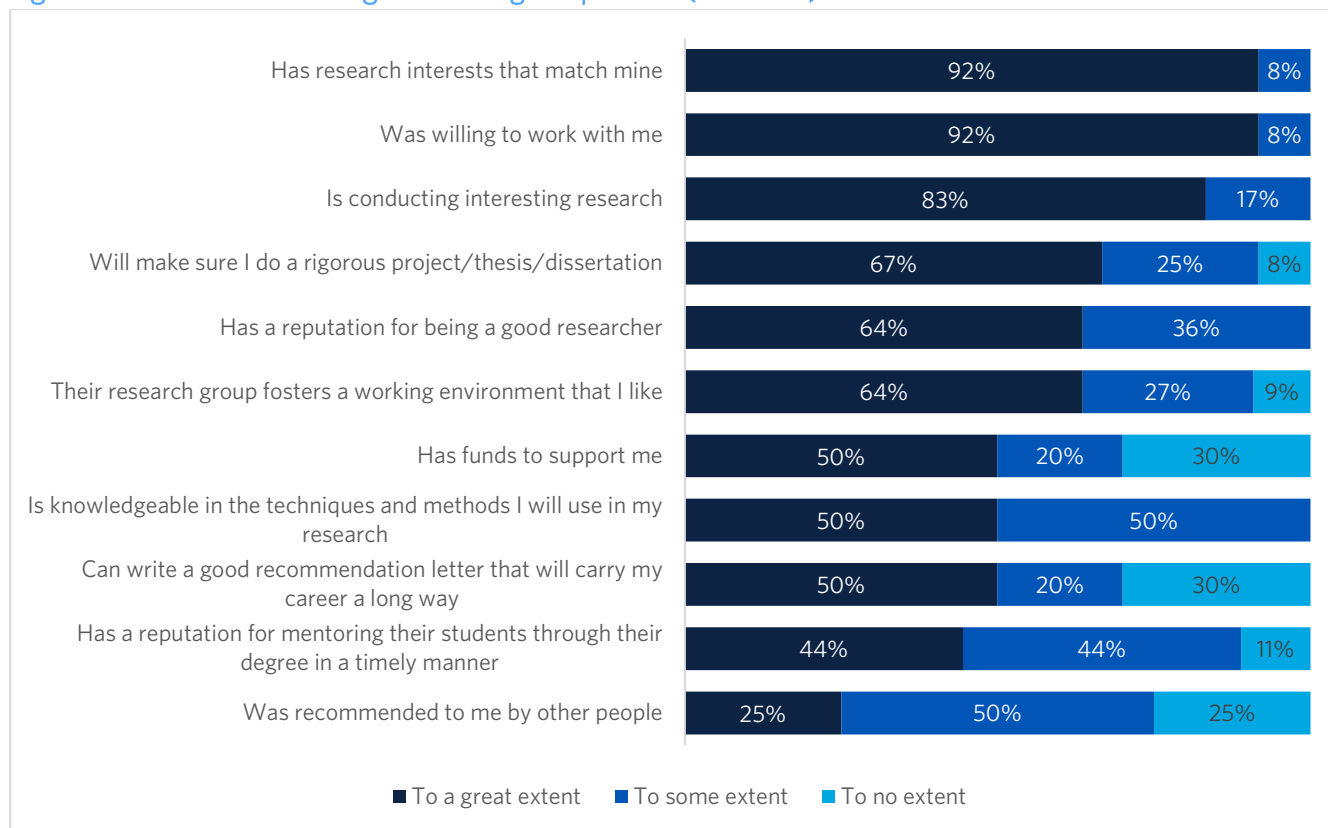
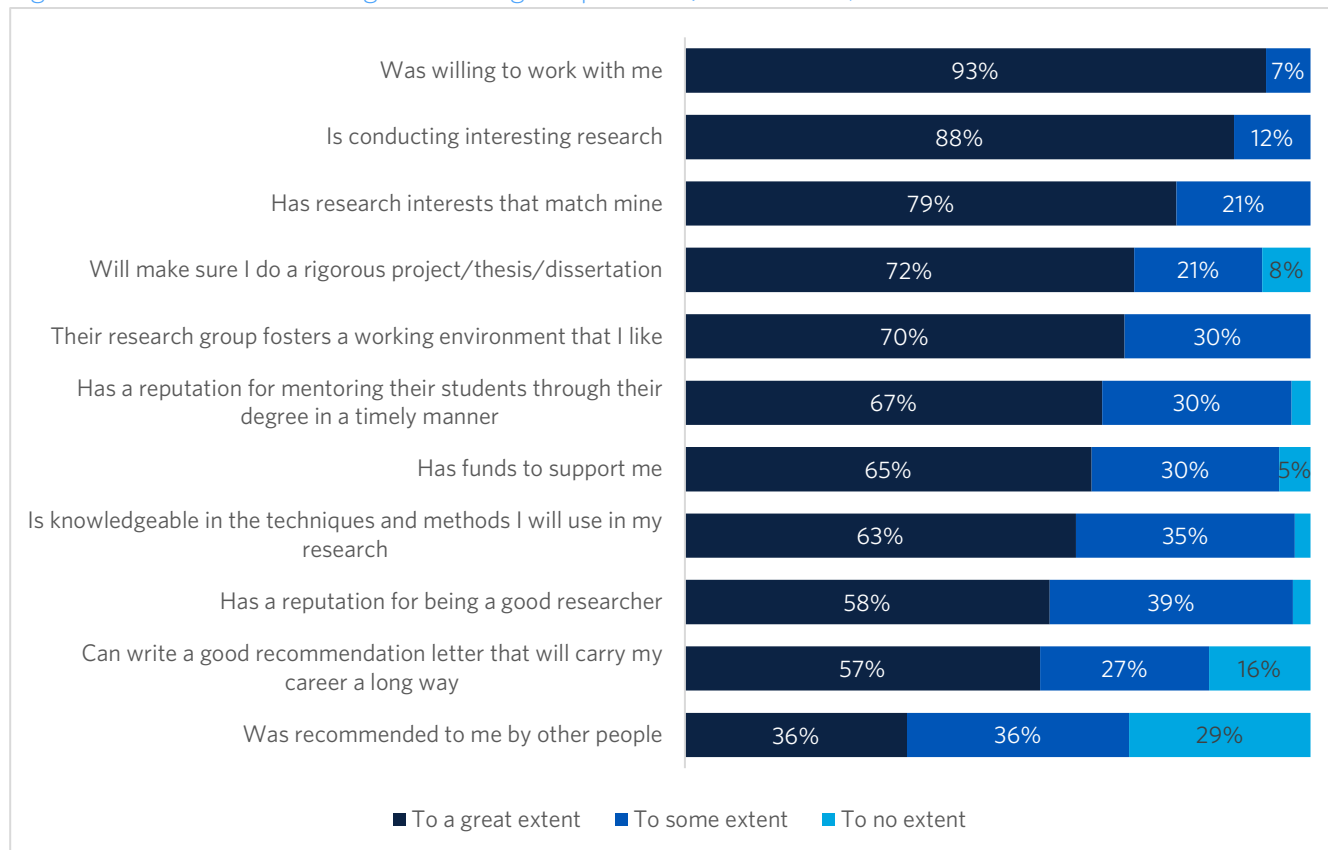


Figure 2b: Factors contributing to choosing a supervisor (international)



Concerns

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 (24%, 8, n=34) and producing research publications (17%, 3, n=18). For international respondents, the top concerns included commitments regarding the funding of their graduate studies (48%, 44, n=92) and the length of time they will be a student (40%, 39, n = 97). Respondents selecting “not applicable/no opinion” were excluded in these analyses.

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

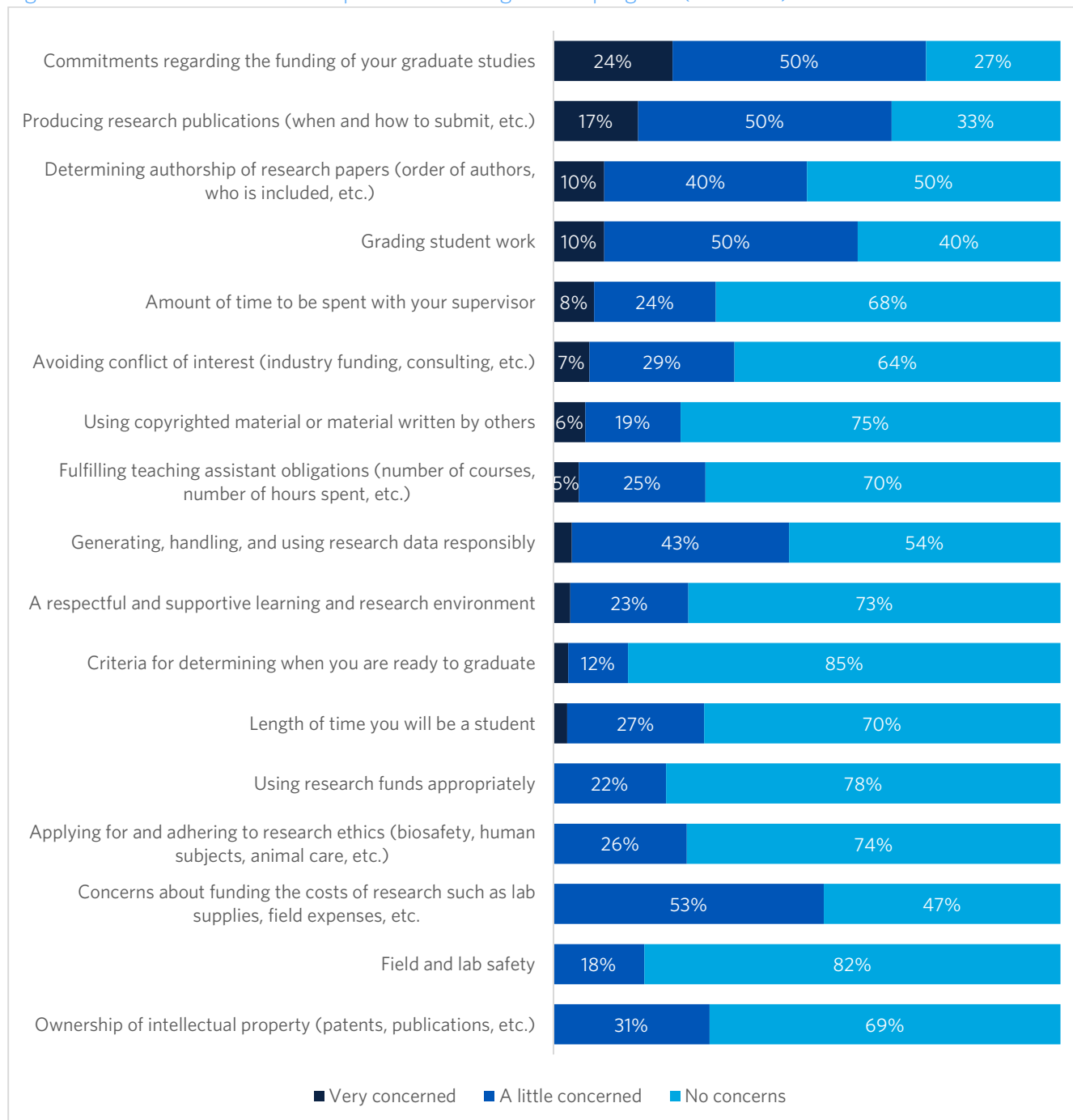
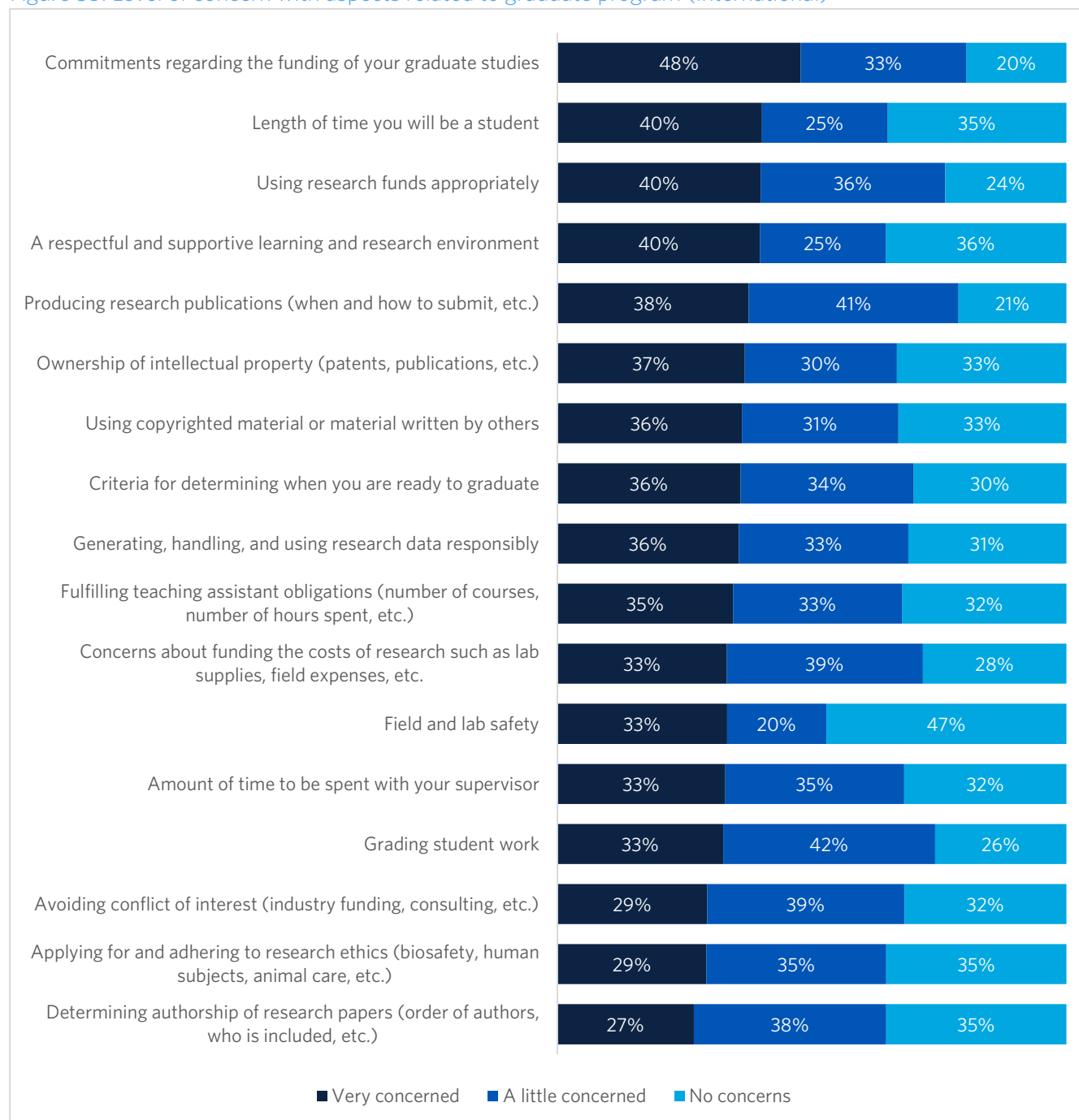


Figure 3b: Level of concern with aspects related to graduate program (international)



Campus and Community Concerns

Respondents were asked to rate their levels of concern for a second set of items related to various aspects of campus and community life. The item that respondents were most concerned about was finding affordable housing in Kelowna (domestic: 44%, 14, n=32; international: 69%, 68, n=98). Both domestic and international respondents were second-most concerned about adapting to life in a new country/province/city (domestic: 22%, 7, n=32; international: 41%, 41, n=99). Respondents selecting “not applicable/no opinion” were excluded in these analyses.

Figure 4a: Level of concern with aspects related to campus and community life (domestic)

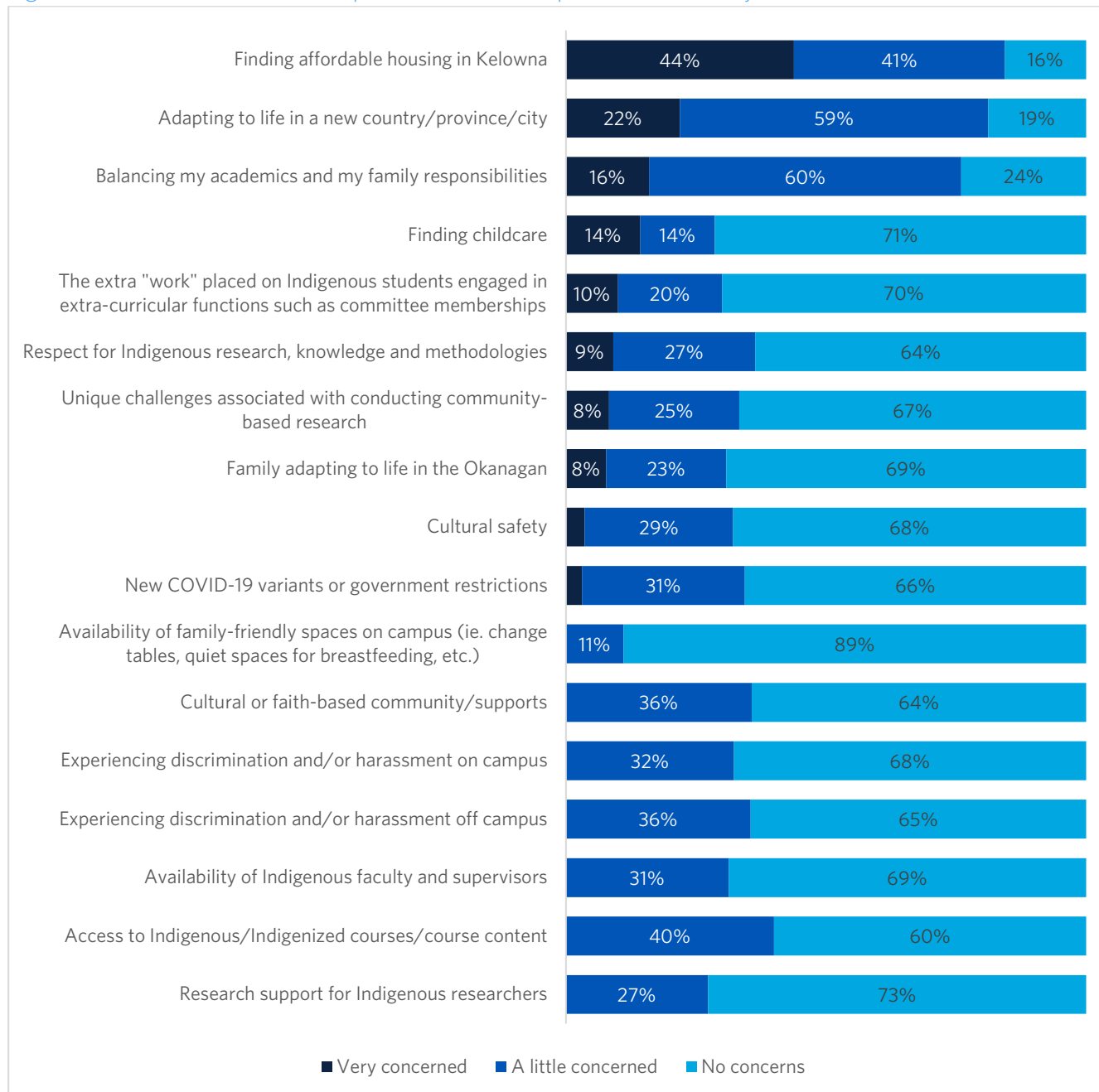
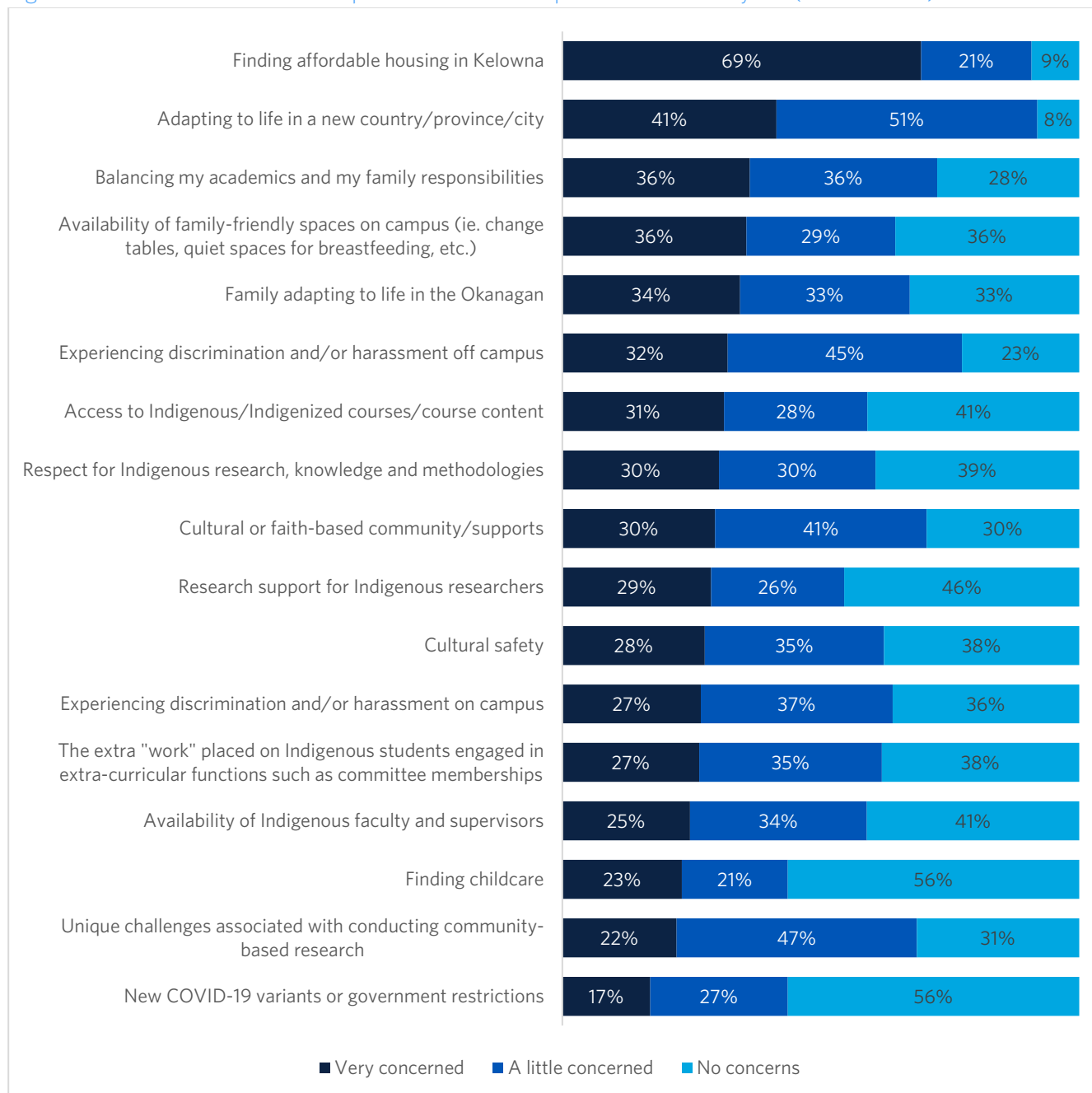


Figure 4b: Level of concern with aspects related to campus and community life (international)



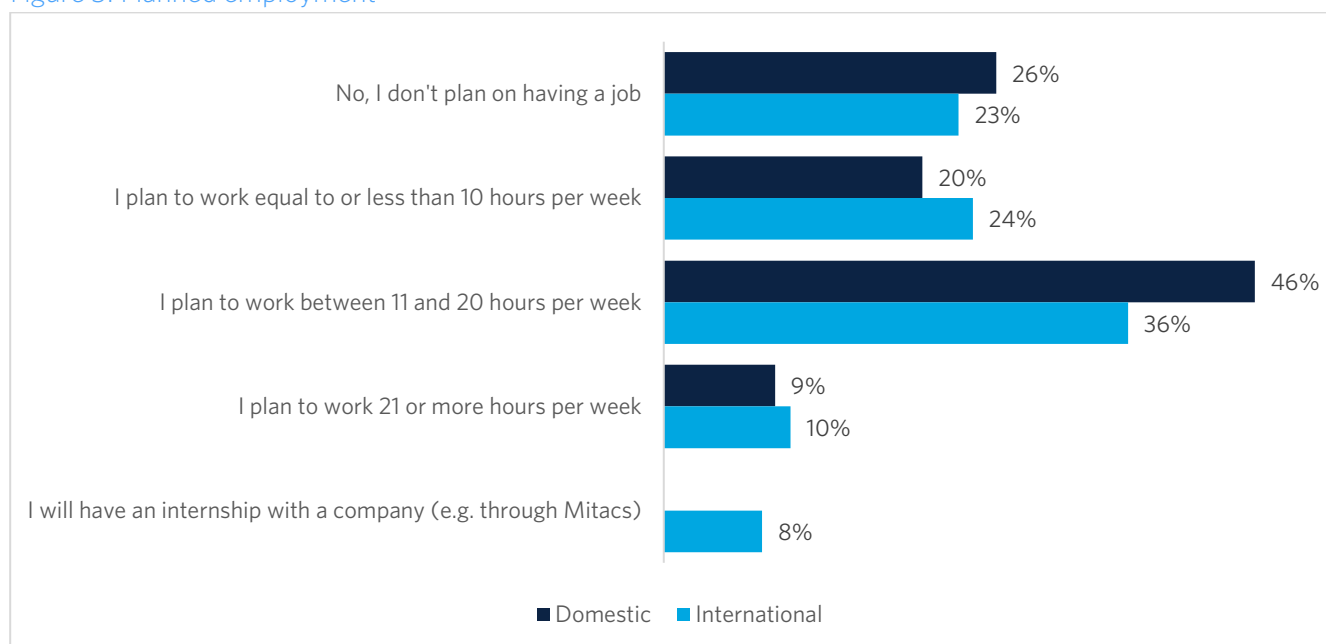
Time Commitments

Respondents were asked if they planned to work for pay in addition to any appointments at UBC (e.g. research and teaching assistantships). Twenty-six percent (9, n=35) of domestic respondents and 23% (21, n=92) of international respondents stated that they do not plan on working outside of any appointments at UBC.

Another 66% (23, n=35) of domestic respondents and 60% (55, n=92) 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 (83%, 58, n=70), while most domestic respondents planned to do so off campus (85%, 22, n=26).

Figure 5: Planned employment



Opportunities for Graduate Students

Participation in/Utilization of Opportunities and Resources

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 an orientation for new graduate students in their program, with 77% (27, n=35) and 63% (22, n=35) selecting "very likely," respectively. Internships (e.g., in industry) (88%, 81, n=92) and a workshop on career opportunities outside of academia (82%, 75, n=91) were the most popular resources among international respondents, with the majority saying they would be very likely to use them.

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

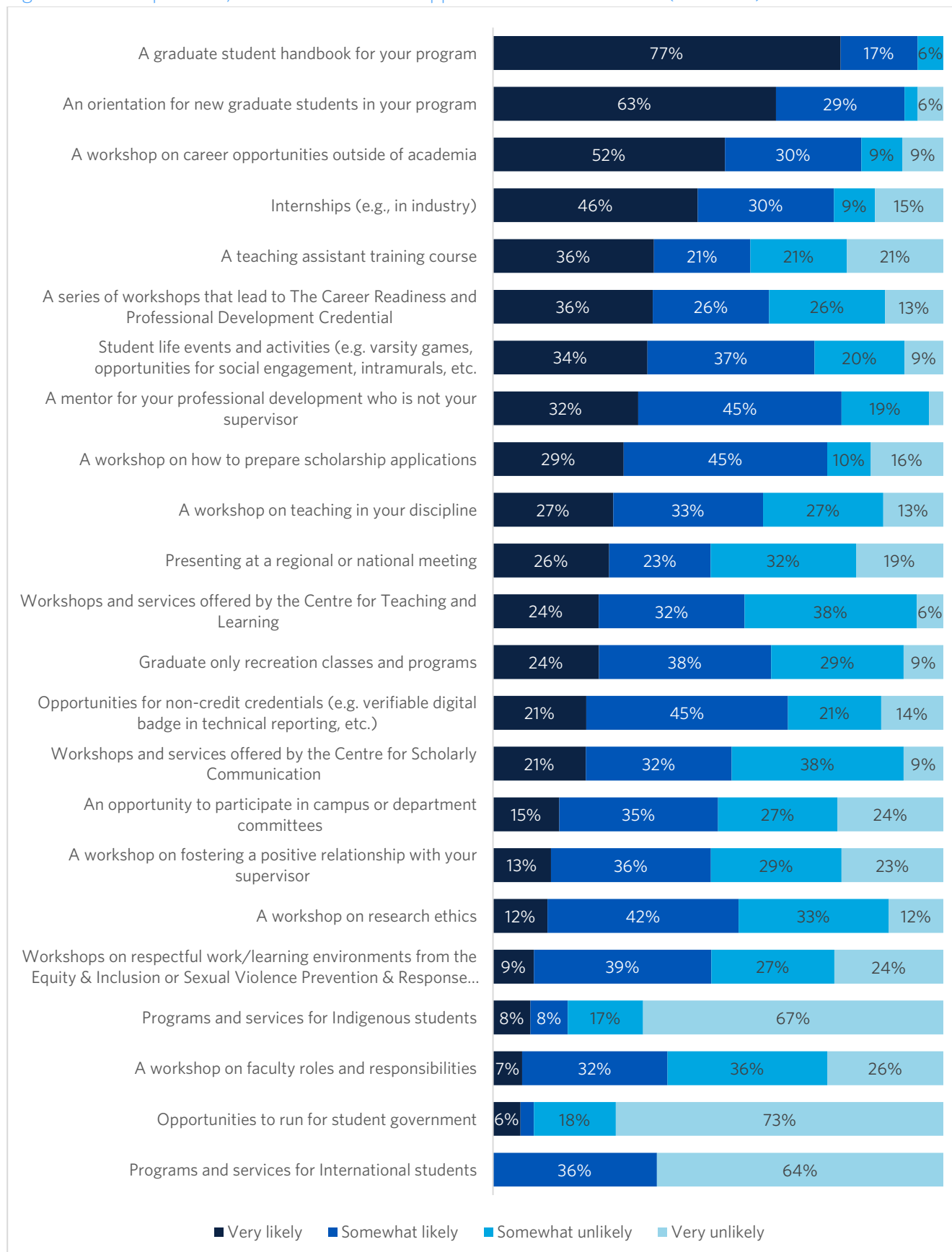
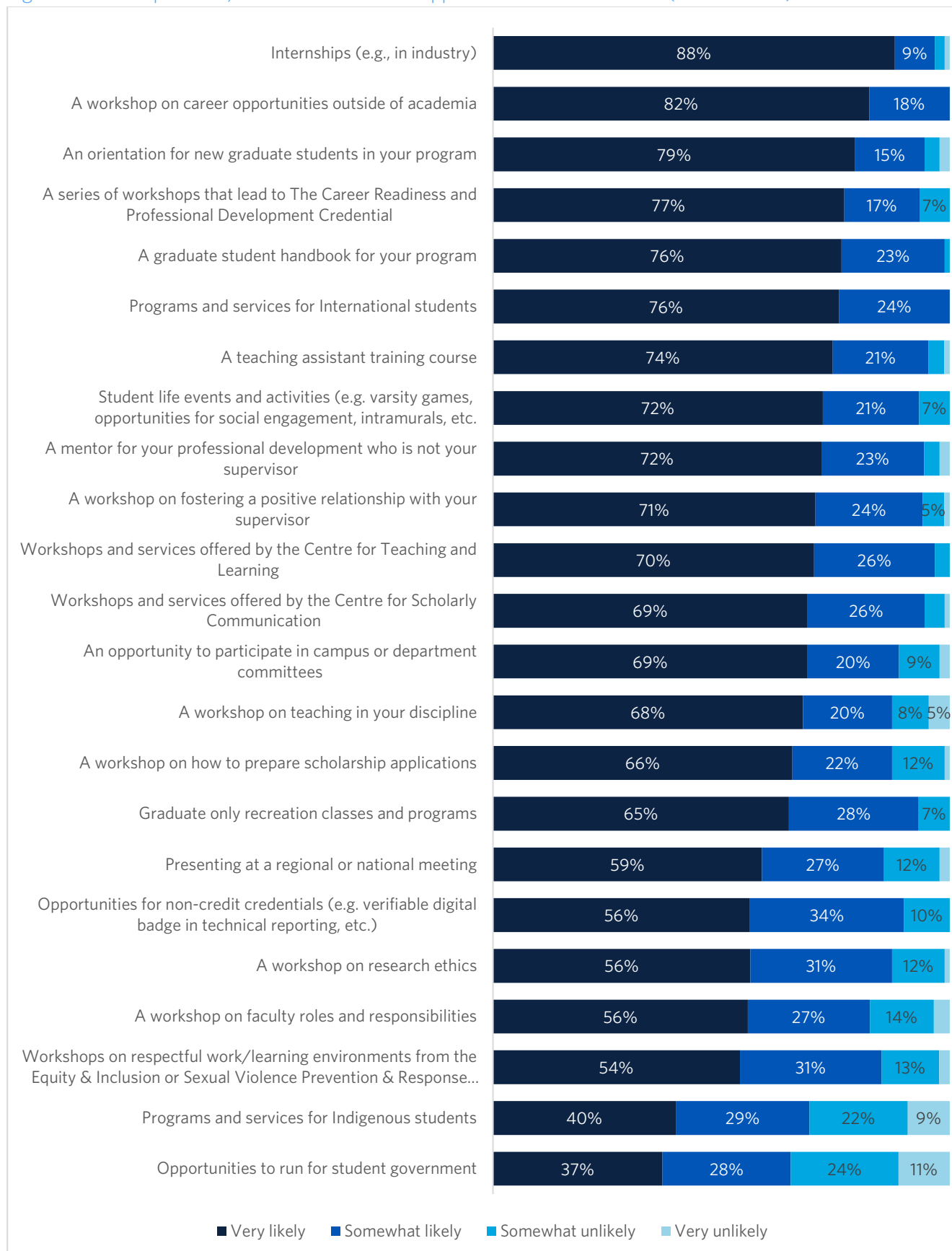


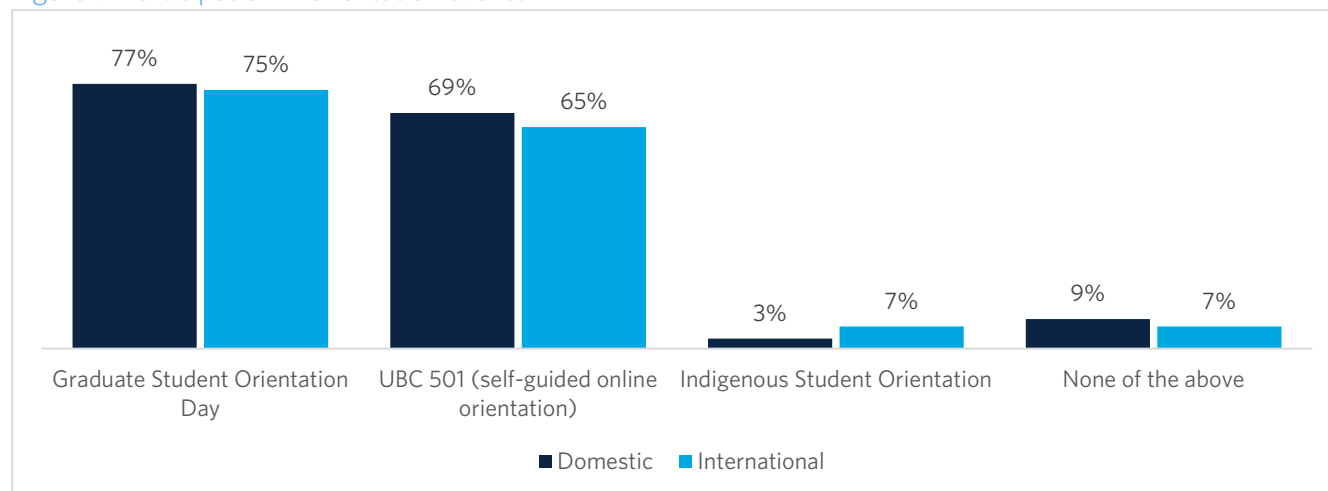
Figure 6b: Participation in/utilization of various opportunities and resources (international)



Orientation Events

Students were asked which orientation events they see themselves participating in. The majority of respondents stated they saw themselves participating in graduate student orientation day (domestic: 77%, 27, n=35; international: 75%, 70, n=93) and/or UBC 501 (self-guided online orientation) (domestic: 69%, 24, n=35; international: 65%, 60, n=93).

Figure 7: Participation in orientation events

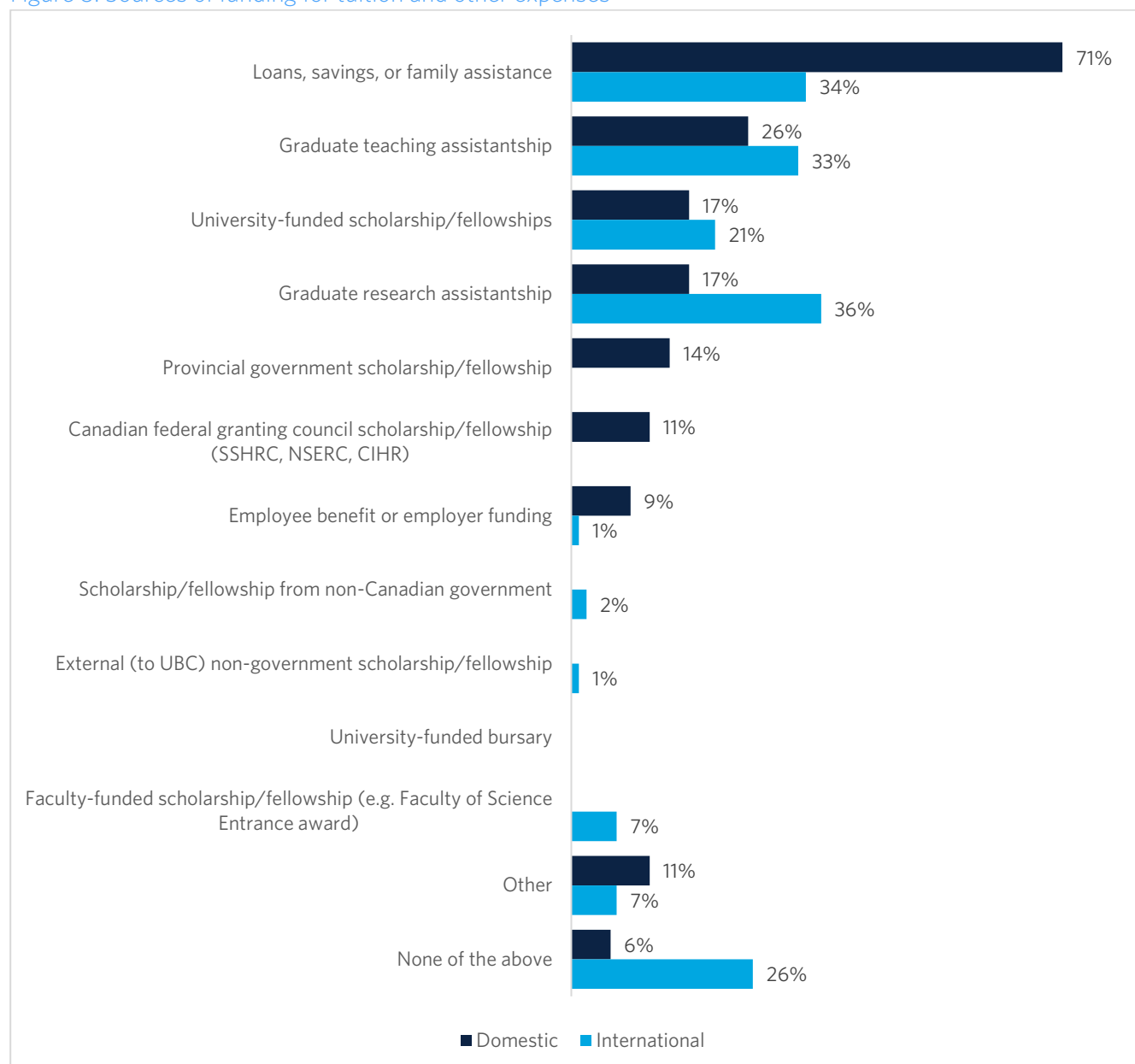


Finances

Financing Graduate Studies

The primary sources of income for domestic respondents were loans, savings, or family assistance (71%, 25, n=35) and graduate teaching assistantships (26%, 9, n=35). For international respondents, the primary sources of income for the duration of their studies were graduate research assistantships (36%, 33, n=91), loans, savings, or family assistance (34%, 31, n=91), and graduate teaching assistantships (33%, 30, n=91).

Figure 8: Sources of funding for tuition and other expenses



Career Pathways

Working independently (e.g., consultant, writer) and starting their own business were the most desired future career options for domestic respondents, with 43% (15, n=35) and 30% (10, n=33), respectively 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 business, industry, or the private sector (63%, 55, n=88) and becoming an administrator/manager in business, industry, or the private sector (61%, 54, n=88). Respondents selecting “not applicable/no opinion” were excluded in these analyses.

Figure 9a: Desire for various career options (domestic)

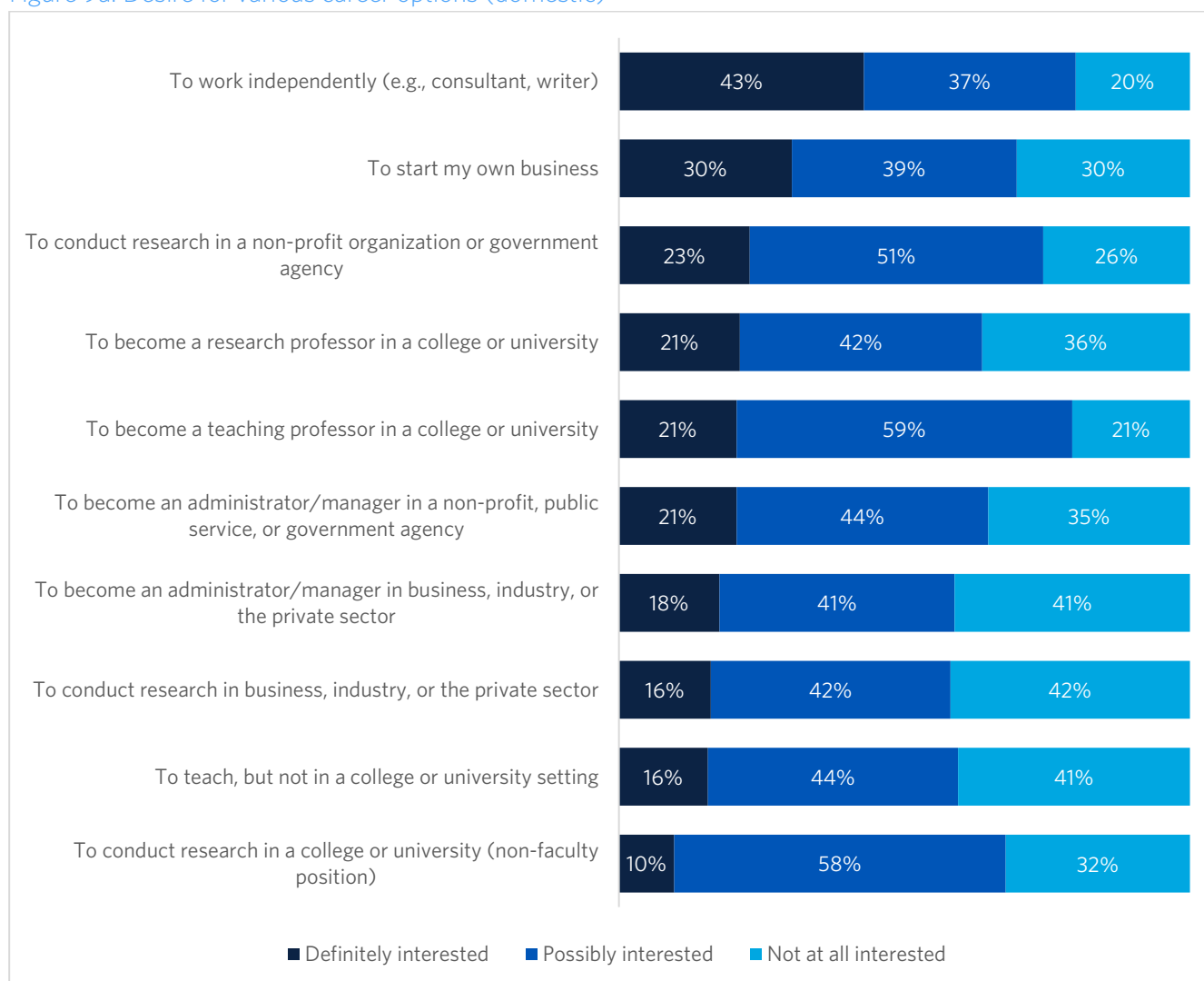
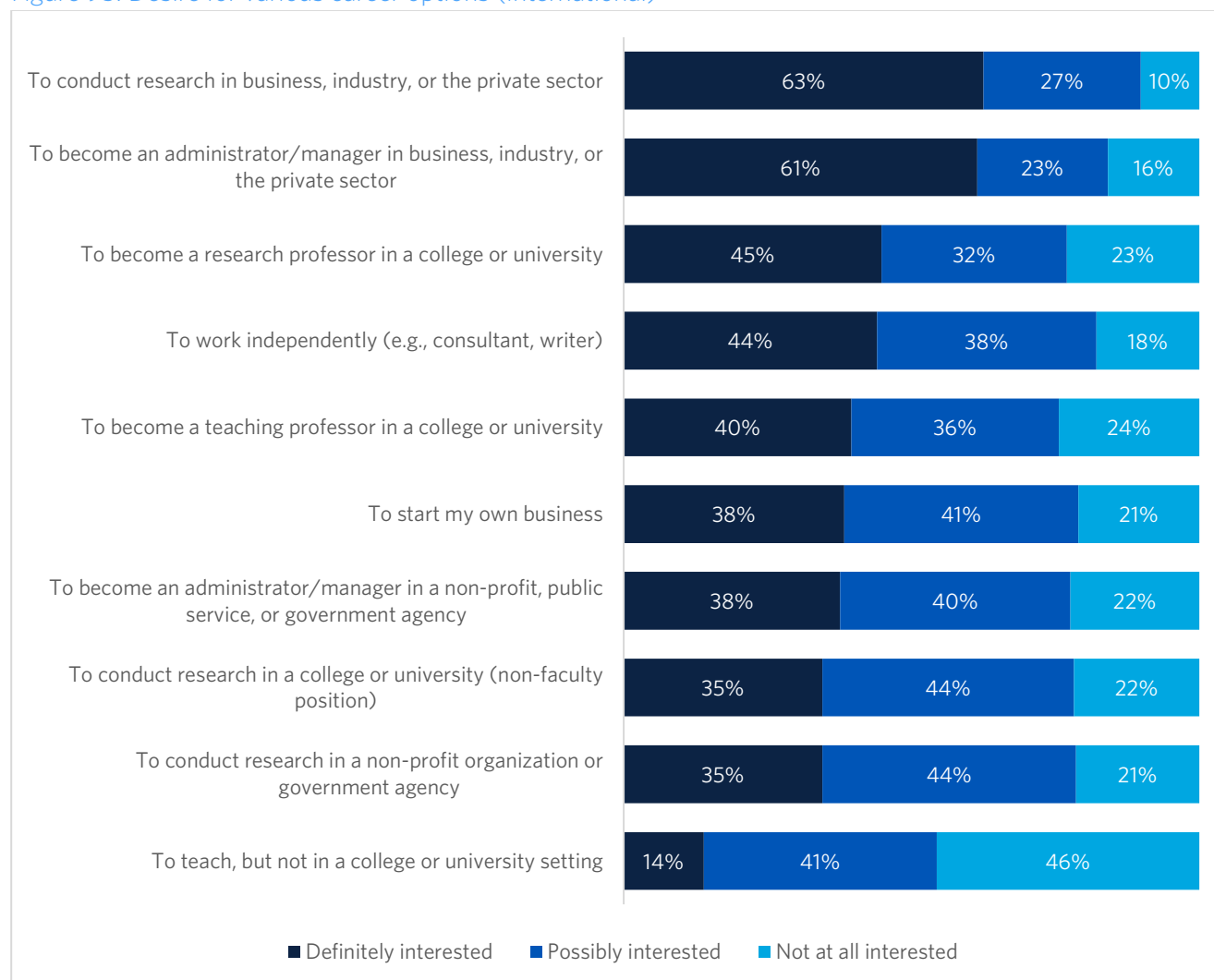


Figure 9b: Desire for various career options (international)



Health and Wellbeing

Mental Health, Stress, and Academic Performance

Mental Health and Resilience

Students rated their agreement with statements regarding mental health and resilience. Domestic respondents most often strongly agreed or agreed with the statements “I am aware of personal signs when I experience too much stress” (85%, 28, n=33) and “I am confident that I have the ability to succeed in my courses during my degree” (85%, 28, n=33). International respondents most often strongly agreed or agreed with the statements “I am confident in my ability to cope with the demands of my life” (83%, 75, n=90) and “I am confident that I have the ability to succeed in my courses during my degree” (81%, 73, n=90).

Figure 10a: Ratings of mental health and resilience statements (domestic)

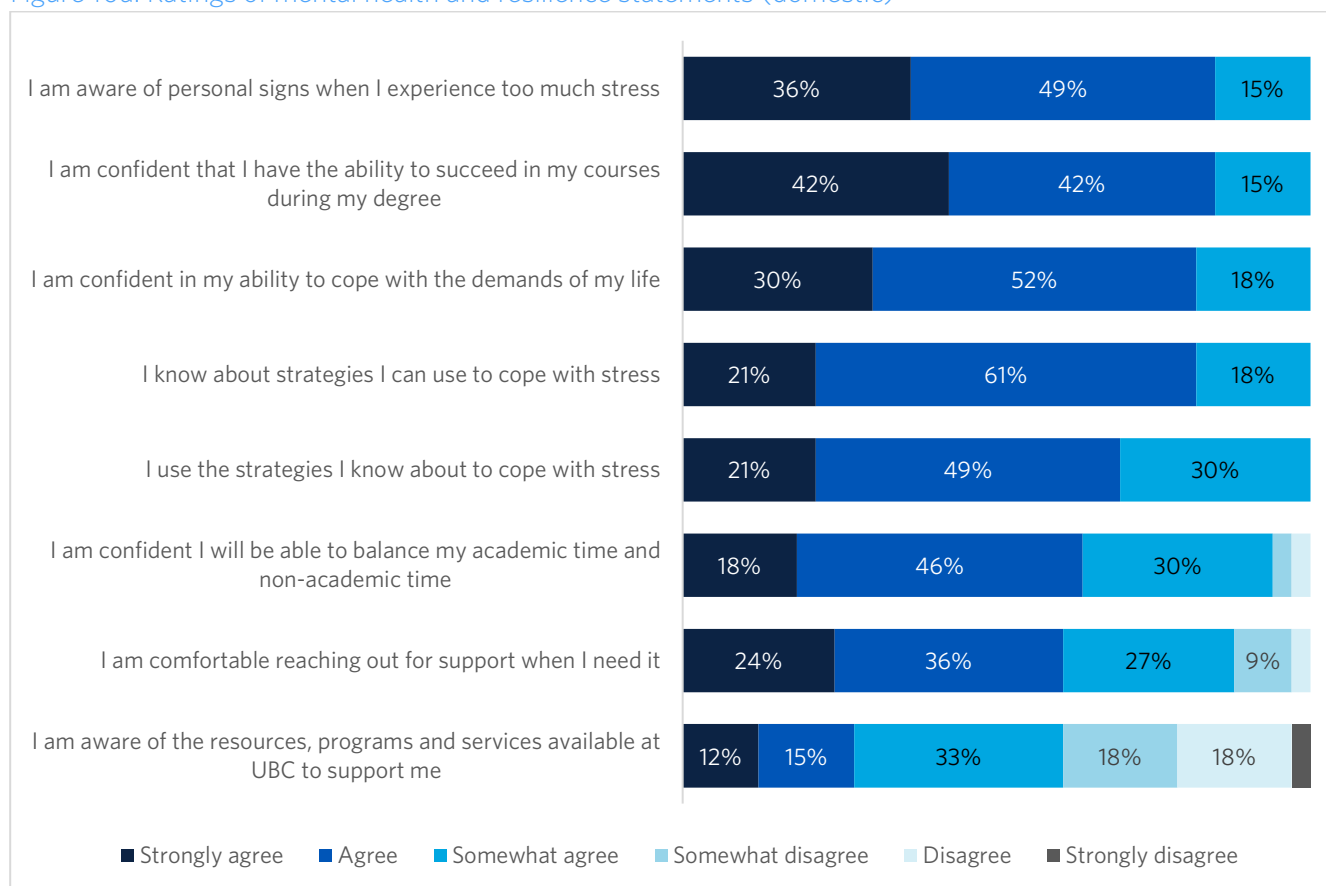
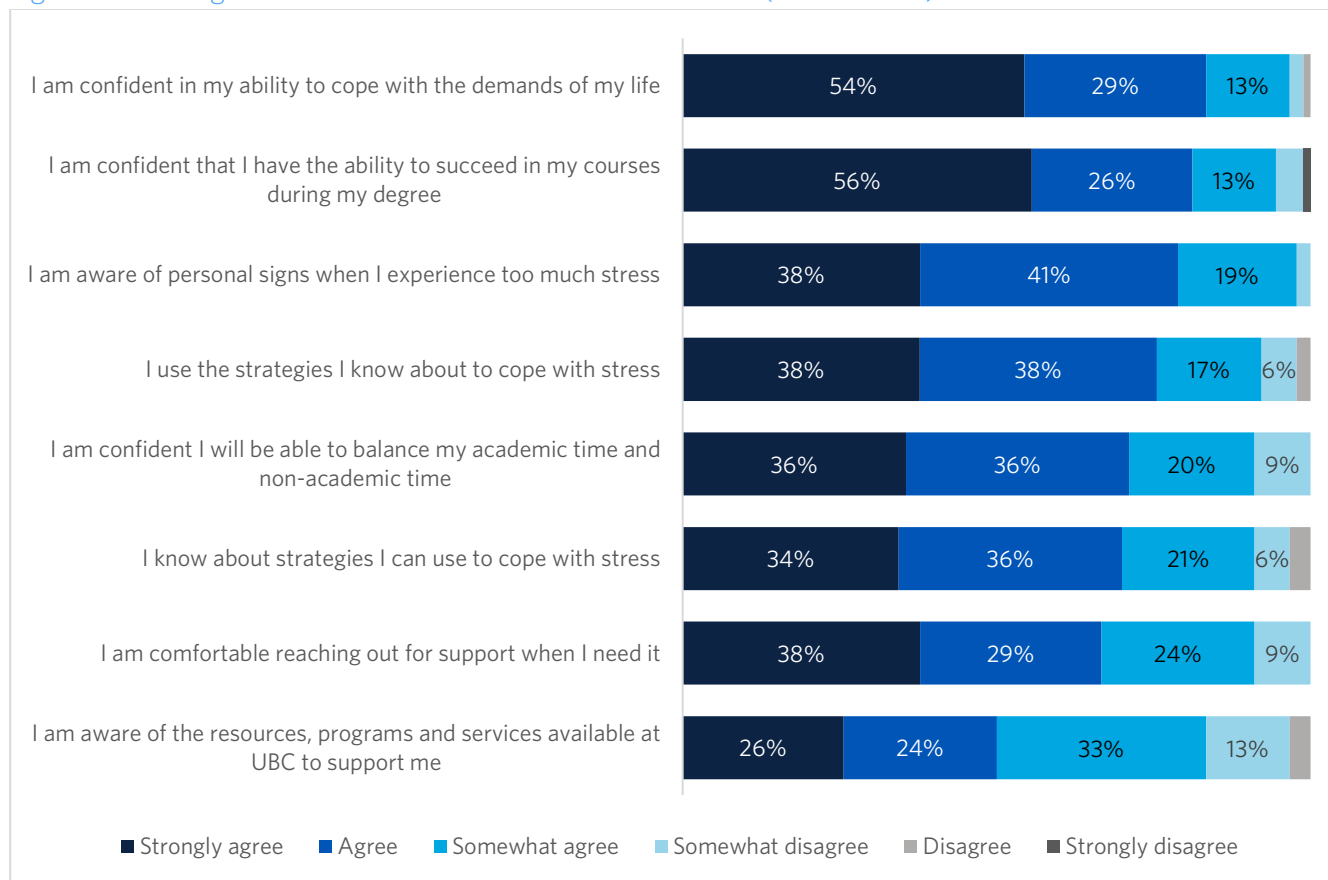


Figure 10b: Ratings of mental health and resilience statements (international)



Impact of Mental Health and Stressors on Academic Performance

Students who had attended an academic institution in the past year reported whether they had experienced a range of issues, and whether those issues had negatively affected their academic performance over the past 12 months. Anxiety and stress were indicated by the largest proportion of domestic respondents as having somewhat or significantly negatively impacted academic performance (anxiety: 67%, 6, n=9; stress: 56%, 5, n=9). Stress was indicated by the largest proportion of international respondents as having somewhat or significantly negatively impacted academic performance (44%, 22, n=50).

Figure 11a: Impact of various issues on academic performance (domestic)

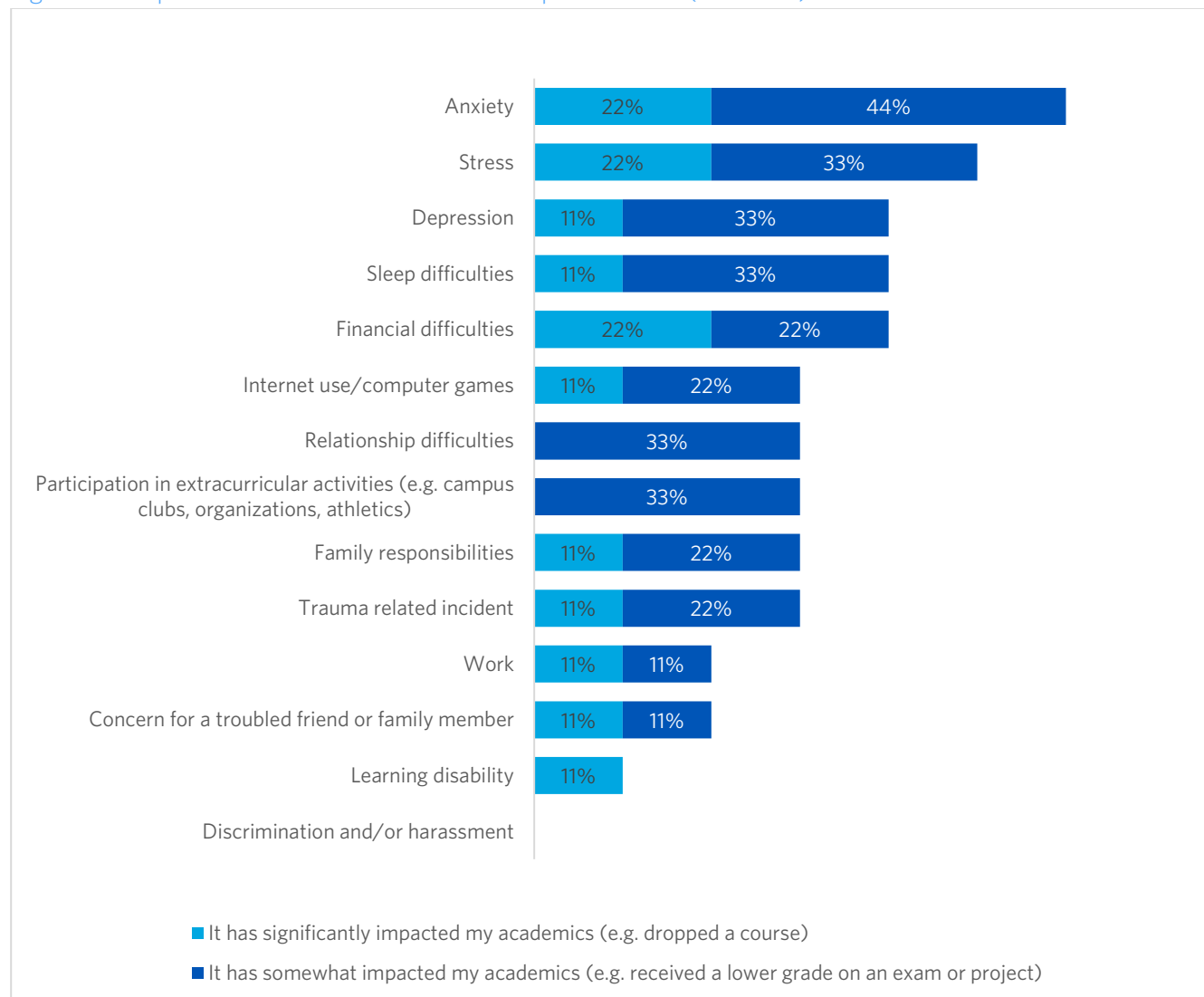
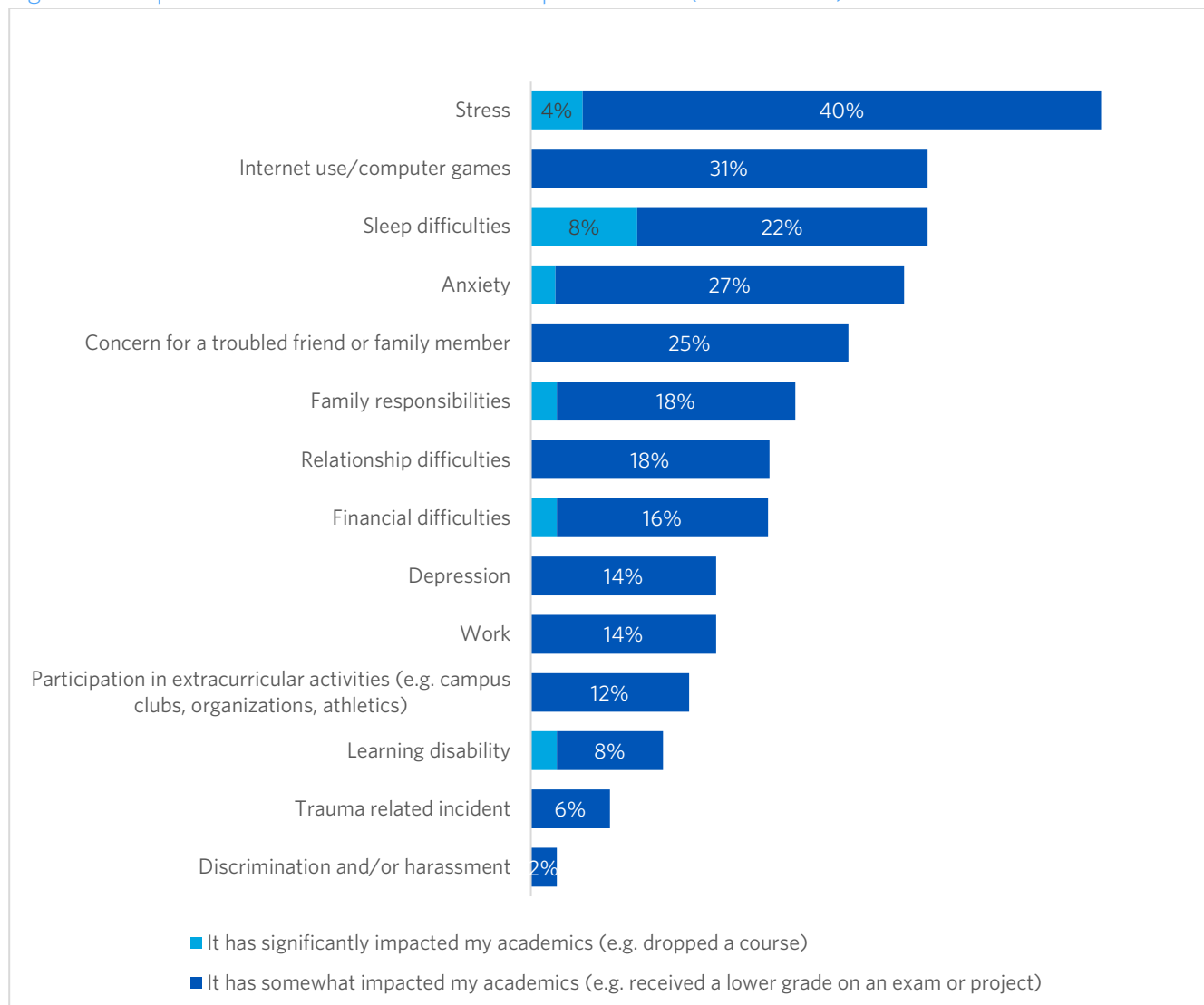


Figure 11b: Impact of various issues on academic performance (international)



Concern with Disclosure of Disabilities and Accommodations

Respondents were asked to rate their levels of concern with disclosure of disabilities and the availability of academic accommodations at UBC Okanagan. International students were more likely to report being very concerned or concerned about both the availability of academic accommodations (61%, 52, n=86) and disclosure of a disability or ongoing medical condition to university staff or faculty (37%, 23, n=63) compared to domestic students (14%, 4, n=28; 15%, 3, n=20; respectively).

Figure 12a: Concern with disclosure of disabilities and availability of academic accommodations (domestic)

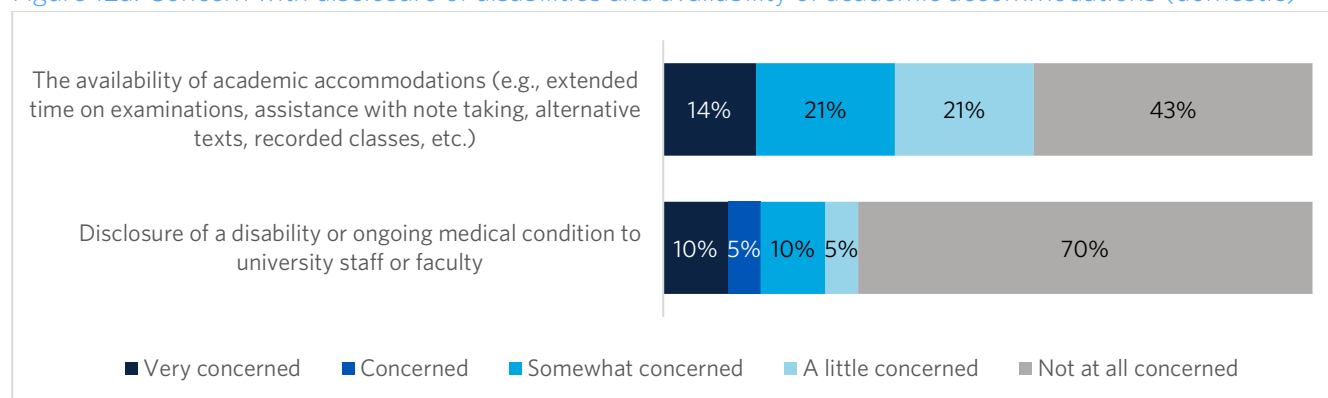
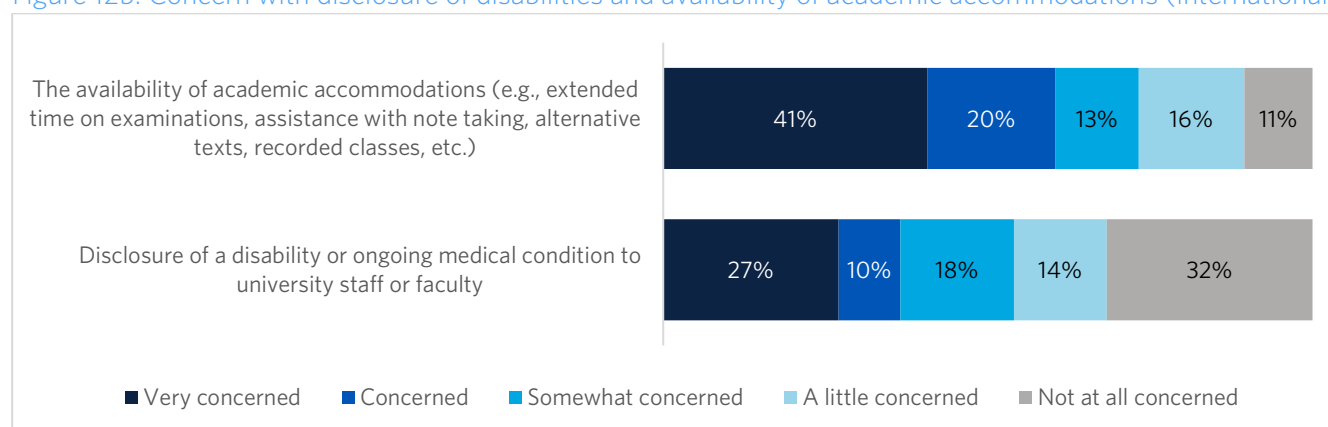


Figure 12b: Concern with disclosure of disabilities and availability of academic accommodations (international)

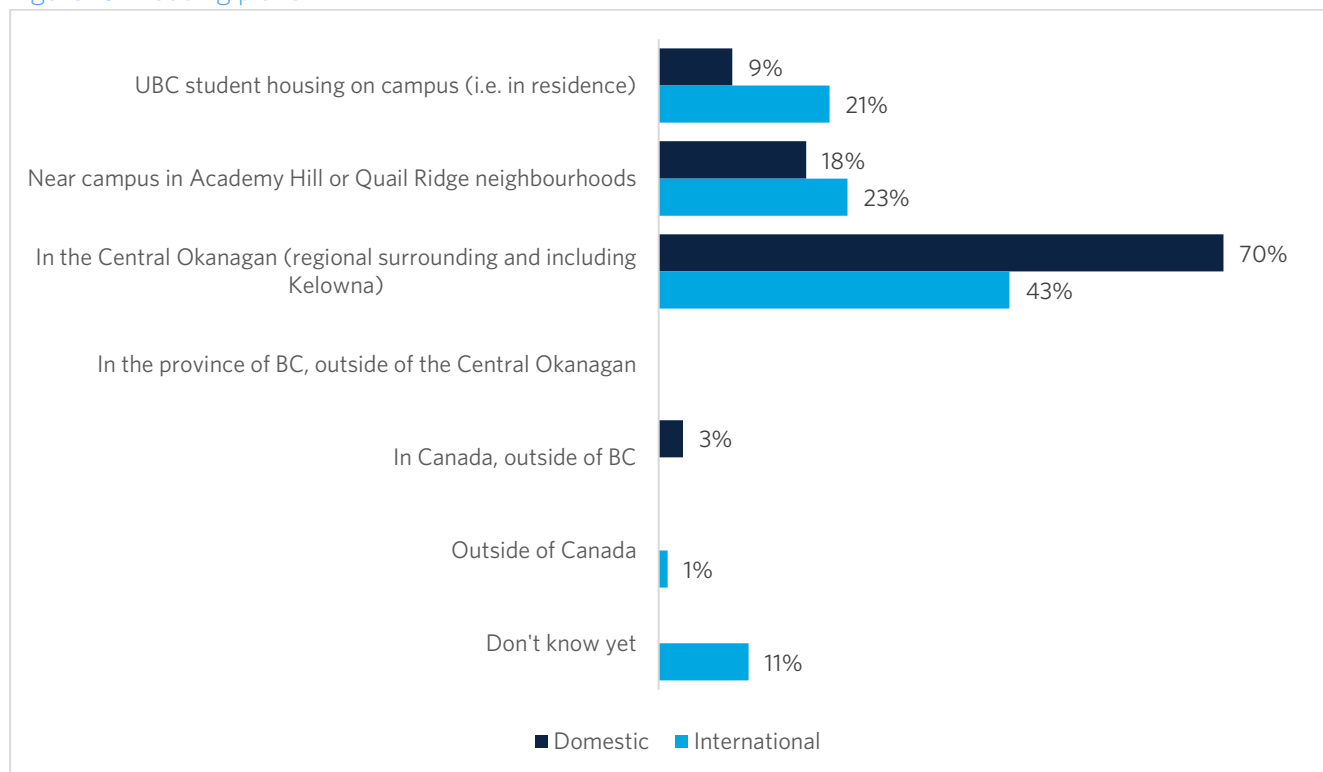


Housing, Commute, and Residency

Housing

The majority of student respondents intend to live in the Central Okanagan (domestic: 70%, 23, n=33; international: 43%, 39, n=90) or near campus in the Academy Hill or Quail Ridge neighbourhoods (domestic: 18%, 6, n=33; international: 23%, 21, n=90).

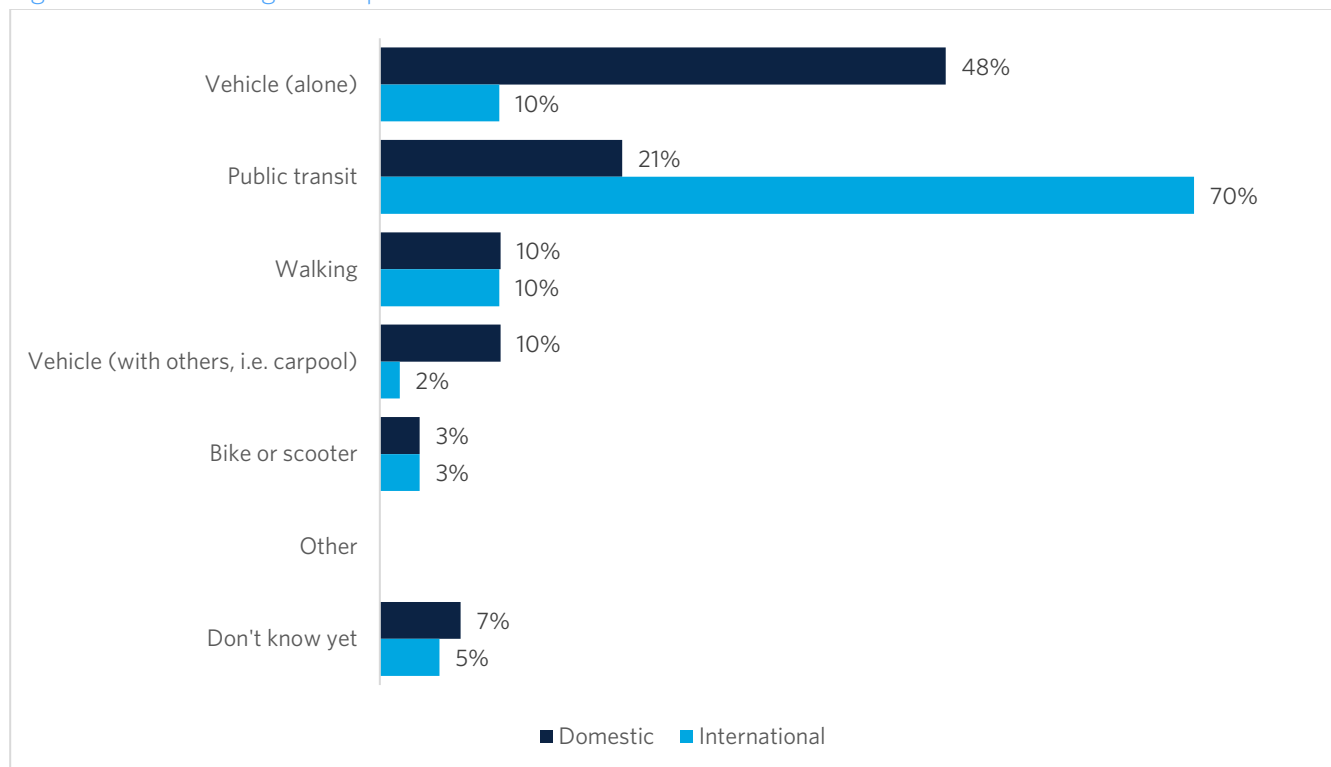
Figure 13: Housing plans



Commute to Campus

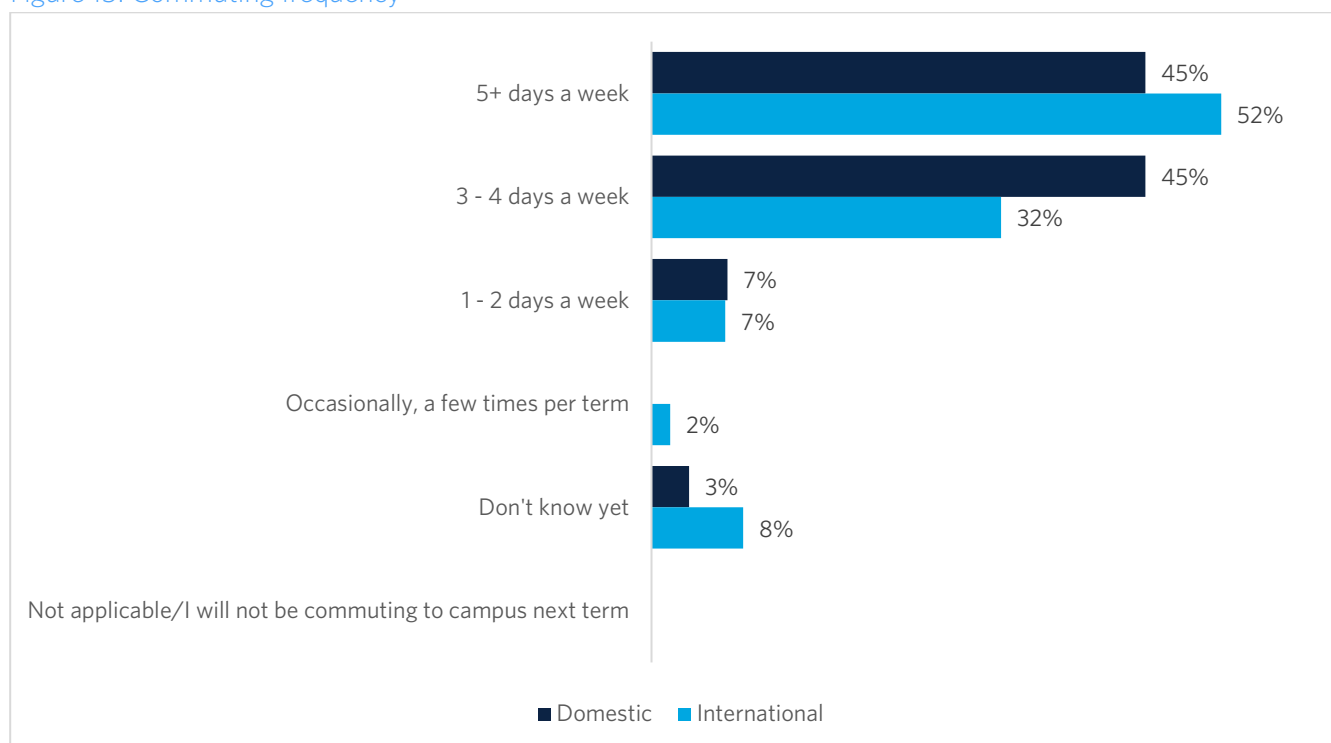
Among student respondents who plan to live near campus in the Academy Hill or Quail Ridge neighbourhoods or in the Central Okanagan, domestic students are most likely to commute to and from campus by vehicle (alone) (48%, 14, n=29) while international students are most likely to use public transit (70%, 41, n=59).

Figure 14: Commuting to campus



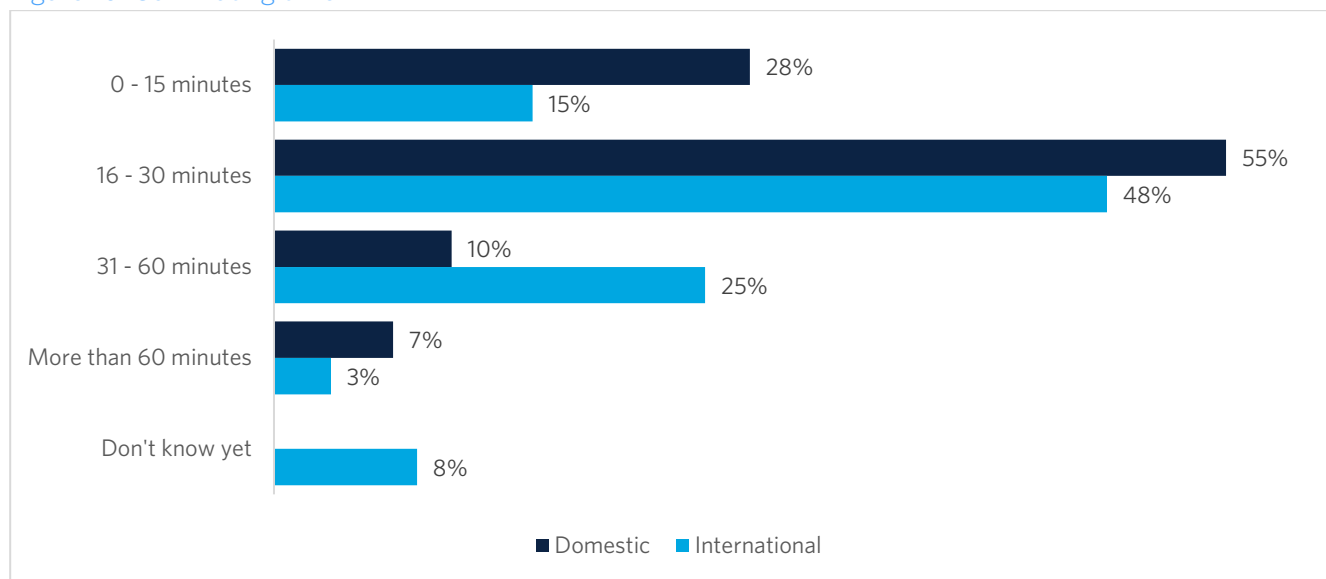
Among student respondents who plan to live near campus in the Academy Hill or Quail Ridge neighbourhoods or in the Central Okanagan, most domestic students plan to commute to campus 5+ days a week or 3-4 days a week (45%, 13, n=29 for both options). Most international students plan to commute to campus 5+ days a week (52%, 31, n=60).

Figure 15: Commuting frequency



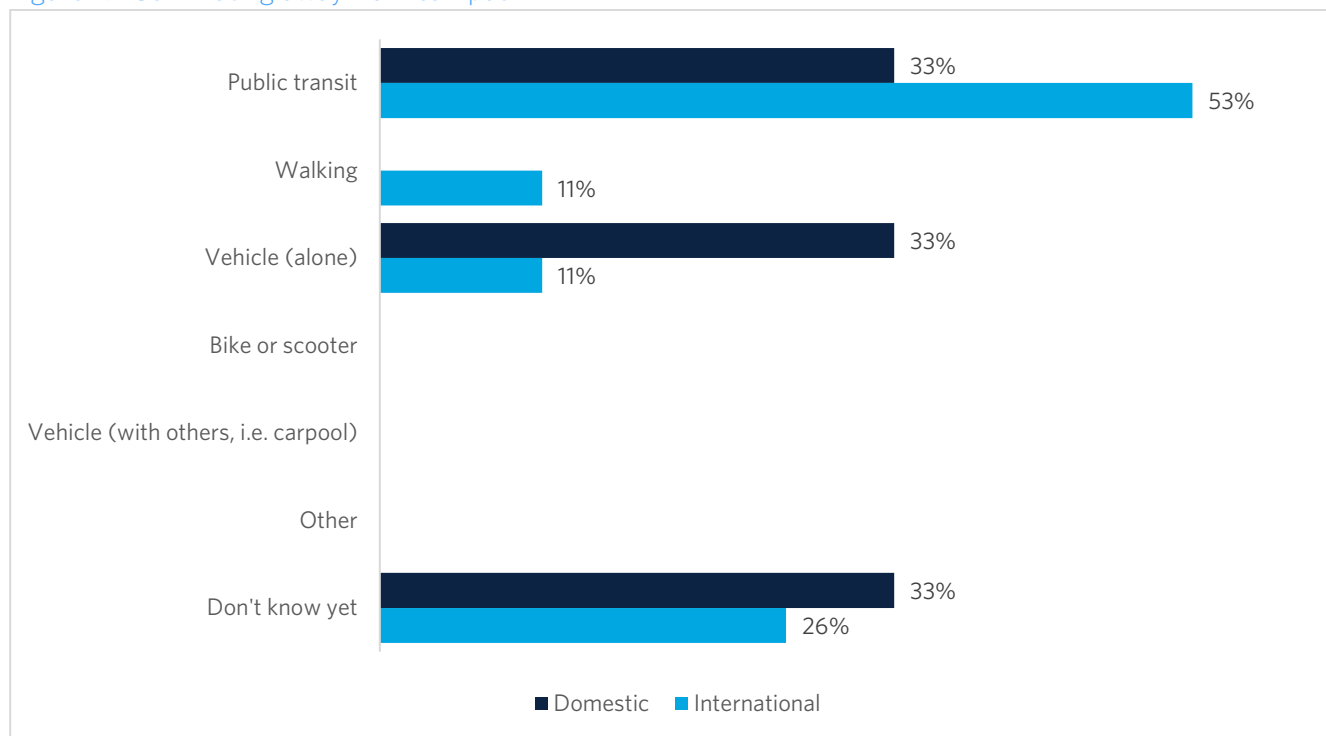
Among student respondents who plan to live near campus in the Academy Hill or Quail Ridge neighbourhoods or in the Central Okanagan, most domestic and international respondents expect their one-way commute to campus to take 16-30 minutes (domestic: 55%, 16, n=29; international: 48%, 29, n=60).

Figure 16: Commuting time



International students who plan to live in UBC student housing on campus are most likely to use public transit to travel off campus (to buy groceries, run errands, go shopping, go to work, etc.) (53%, 10, n=19).

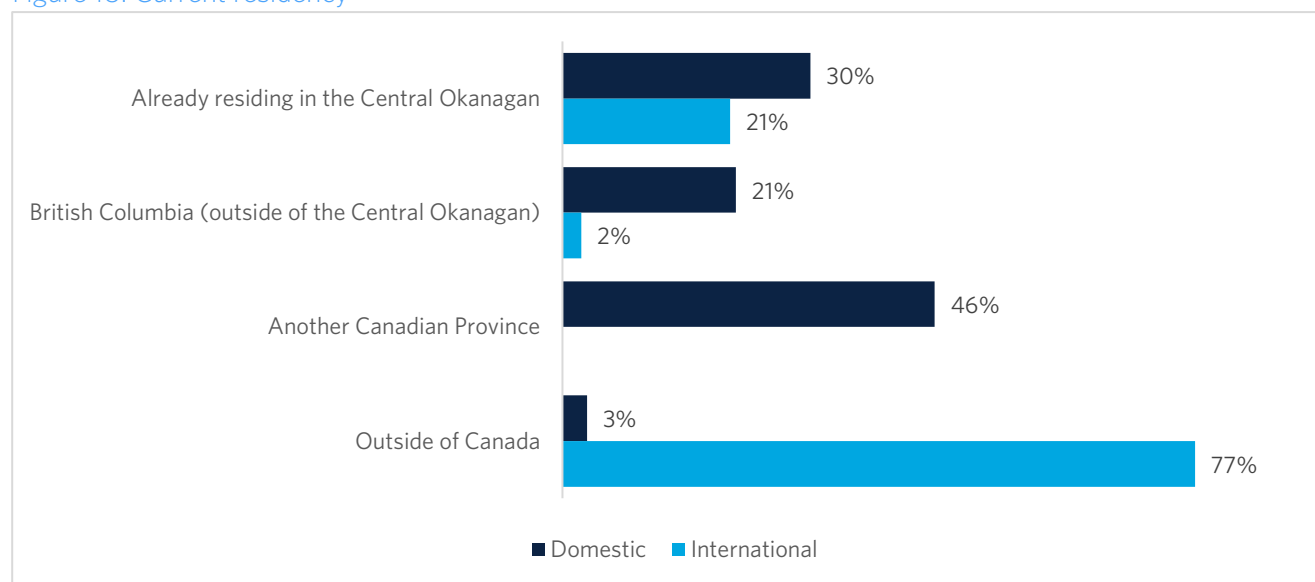
Figure 17: Commuting away from campus



Residency Plans

Seventy-seven percent of international respondents were currently living outside of Canada (68, n=88), while domestic respondents were mainly split between currently residing in another Canadian province (46%, 15, n=33), residing in British Columbia (outside of the Central Okanagan) (21%, 7, n=33), and already residing in the Central Okanagan (within commuting distance to UBC) (30%, 10, n=33).

Figure 18: Current residency



Conclusion

Overall, New to UBC graduate students showed a high level of engagement, with 61% (162, n=268) participating in the NUBC Survey. The survey respondents were excited to come to UBCO, with the majority indicating that UBC's Okanagan campus was their first choice institution for their graduate studies. International student respondents in particular showed high levels of interest in taking advantage of provided resources, such as internships, workshops, handbooks, etc.

The largest concern for all survey respondents was finding affordable housing in Kelowna. Other top areas of concern included funding and research publications.

When presented with various potential career opportunities, survey respondents showed high levels of interest in all of the options listed, suggesting that they are beginning their graduate studies with an open mind about what the future may hold.