

A MORE WELCOMING COMMUNITY: A LOOK AT THE EXPERIENCE OF INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN WINDSOR-ESSEX

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Whether as nurses on the pandemic’s front lines, or as founders of some of the most promising start-ups, international students are giving back to communities across Canada as we continue the fight against the pandemic. Their status may be temporary, but the contributions of international students are lasting. This new policy means that young students from abroad who have studied here can stay and find work, while ensuring that Canada meets the urgent needs of our economy for today and tomorrow. Our message to international students and graduates is simple: we don’t just want you to study here, we want you to stay here.”

—The Honourable Marco Mendicino, P.C., M.P., Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship

Since 2015, Windsor-Essex has seen a substantial increase in international students attending our local institutions of higher learning and using their education as an opportunity to migrate to Canada through the Post-Graduate Work Permit Program and other channels.

The Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership (WE LIP) is interested in better understanding the needs of international students locally. For this report they retained Munro Strategic Perspective and Creative Momentum Consulting to direct two strategies to gain input from both international students and stakeholders in the community – a survey and focus groups.

A total of 298 students took part in the survey, while 15 individuals representing business, education, and social services were involved in focus groups. The purpose of this report is to document the findings from the survey and focus groups, staying faithful to the words and opinions of those who took part.

The report demonstrates that there are opportunities for improvement to make Windsor-Essex a welcoming community for international students. As well, deeper research and investigation is need important to fully understand the scope and nature of what is needed.

What we found out about International Students in Windsor-Essex

Demographics



- Survey respondents were more likely to be male, a student for less than two years, from Asia (predominantly India), and younger than 34
 - They were evenly split between University of Windsor (UWindsor) and St. Clair College
 - UWindsor students were most often in the Faculty of Engineering, while St. Clair students were more often in the School of Business
 - Almost half of students were living in Windsor-Essex but learning online at the time of the survey
-

Coming to Windsor-Essex



- Students most often chose Windsor-Essex to study because the program they want is available and costs are more affordable
- Students felt they did not always receive an accurate account of what to expect regarding employment and housing in Windsor-Essex

Housing



- The vast majority of students lived off campus
- Living off campus was the result of both the cost of campus accommodations and a lack of culturally appropriate food
- Students were generally able to live close to transportation and amenities
- Roughly two thirds of students found housing relatively easily, that they found to be affordable and safe
- Students had on average four (4) or more roommates and paid approximately \$470 per month in rent, although differences were noted across institutions and by sex
- Focus group members felt that students underutilized housing resources

Finances



- The main source of income for students was family, though families may not have much money
 - Students relied on employment in Canada and student loans from their home country
 - More than half of students were worried about having enough money for rent, utilities, tuition, and food
 - Students reported using credit cards and food banks, as well as skipping meals, to make ends meet financially (some differences by sex were noted)
 - One fifth of students had taken a loan and one in 10 had taken a job that they felt was not safe
-

Employment



- Almost 90% of students said it was difficult to look for work with over 50% reporting they were unable to speak to anyone in person or get employment services
- More than 65% had to look for work in another region and more than 35% experienced discrimination while looking for work
- Online job boards were the most common tool students used to look for work
- Despite the challenges looking for work, almost 70% of students were able to find work while living in Windsor-Essex, as a student and/or after graduation
- Almost 20% reported working after graduation through the Post-Graduate Work Permit program
- Racism and the availability of jobs were seen as barriers to employment, resulting in some students working outside the region
- Limits to work hours students are permitted was also identified as a barrier
- Students working during school found it challenging to get school work done, however many had to work more than one job
- Students worked most often as labourers or clerks, in retail and sales, food, or industrial sectors with on-campus work difficult to find
- Students worked an average of 19 hours per week, most at minimum wage
- Overall, the experience of working was positive, although finding work in their field of study was challenging. This was a particular concern for students seeking work after graduation

Services



- Transportation, employment, health, and immigration services were among those used by students, as well as housing, recreation, and financial services
 - Financial, employment, legal assistance, and recreation services were considered difficult or impossible areas to find service
 - Walking and public transit were the most popular ways to get around. For most tasks, students were able to move around easily, though getting to work in some cases proved more difficult, with respect to commute time
 - Students were generally able to access health care, most often through campus health services, though cost and access were primary concerns
 - Students were less likely to receive mental health services compared to physical health services. They typically used on-campus services
 - While cost was a concern for mental health services, finding culturally safe services in their preferred language and social stigma were also noted
 - In general, most students were comfortable accessing services in English and felt providers were patient with their English fluency, however, getting services and resources in their own language was a challenge for some
 - In person assistance was most desirable
-

Social Connection



- Students reported a sense of connection to family, friends they had before coming to Windsor-Essex, other international students, and members of their cultural or ethnic groups
- They reported less connection to domestic students or faith-based groups
- The majority felt welcome in Windsor-Essex and relatively connected to the community
- At the same time, more than a third reported experiencing discrimination
- Students said that St. Clair College and UWindsor worked to make students feel welcome and that the diversity of Windsor-Essex makes it a welcoming place
- Students spent most of their time on campus or around the campus

Future Plans



- Students believed they understood the process for immigration and were aware of where to find information
- Students were less sure about where to find help and whether there were enough services for students considering immigration
- 75% of students surveyed said their intention was to remain in Canada after graduation



INTRODUCTION

Since 2015, Windsor-Essex has seen a substantial increase in international students attending our local institutions of higher learning and using their education as an opportunity to migrate to Canada through the Post-Graduate Work Permit Program or other channels.

In the past, international students have been regarded as temporary residents, ineligible newcomer services and supports, but recently the Government of Canada has considered changing this approach. These changes would support the policy of using the Post-Graduate Work Permit Program as a way to encourage and expand migration to Canada of young, well-educated, and motivated immigrants.

The Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership (WE LIP) is interested in better understanding the needs of international students locally and commissioned Munro Strategic Perspective and Creative Momentum Consulting to conduct a survey of international students and host focus groups with key stakeholders. This report is a summary of that work.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

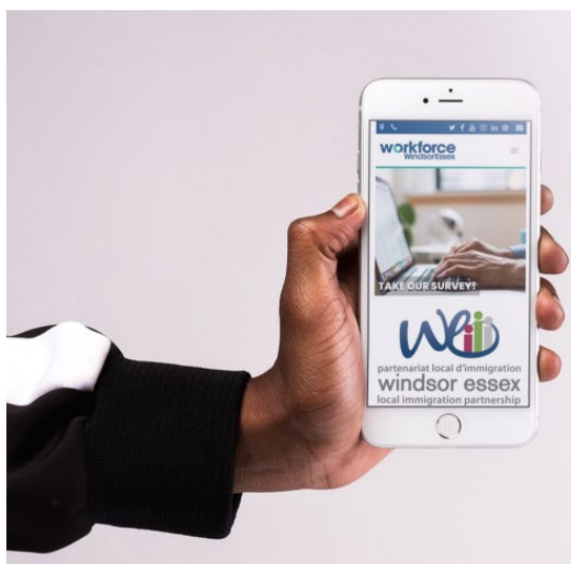
Two strategies were used to gain input from international students and the community – a survey and focus groups.

Student Survey

In partnership with WE LIP, we developed a survey to canvass the experience of international students in Windsor-Essex (WE). The survey was anonymous to encourage students to be as honest as possible about their experience and provided a range of closed and open-ended questions. It was promoted to international students through social media, student associations, service providers, and educational institutions. Students were also provided an incentive to complete the survey in the form of an opportunity to win one of five \$100 grocery cards. In order to maintain anonymity, students were directed to a separate survey to enter their name and contact information for the gift card draw.

The survey was deployed through SurveyMonkey, opened on January 18, 2021 and closed on February 2, 2021.

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY



Are you an International Student?

Take the survey for a chance to WIN from \$100 in prizes

Funded by: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

Financé par : Immigration, Réfugiés et Citoyenneté Canada

The survey covered the following topics:

Demographics

Country/Area of Origin
Age and Sex
Last WE Postal Code

Working (During & After School)

Experience of Work
Type of Position Held and Sector
Typical Wage
Usual Hours Worked
Experience in Work Place
Impact of COVID-19 on Work

Access to Services

Use of Services and Ease of Access
Experience with Service in English
Preferred Mode for Service
Knowledge of Immigration and Services
Immigration Plans

Education

Years of Study in WE
Current Situation
Place and Program of Study

Transportation

Typical Mode of Transportation
Ease of Getting Around
Concerns about Transportation

COVID-19

Lived in WE During COVID-19
Safety Concerns about COVID-19

Housing

Type of Roommates
Type of Housing
Number of People in Housing
Average Monthly Rent
Housing Situation

Health (Physical and Mental)

Need for Services
Access to Services
Which Services Used
Concerns Accessing Services

Social Connection

Feelings of Social Connection
Connection to the Community
Expectations about WE
Reason for Coming to WE

Looking for Work

Looked for Work in WE
Experience Looking for Work
Use of Online Tools
Success Finding Work

Finances

Areas of Financial Concern
Source of Income
Coping with Lack of Money

Other

Other Information We Should Know

Focus Groups

We also held three focus groups with 15 participants divided as follows:

- Business organizations including
 - Businesses
 - Employment support organizations
- Students
 - Current and former students of both institutions
- Educational institutions and social support agencies

Focus group members were asked to comment on selected results from the survey as part of our due diligence to validate and ensure understanding of survey findings. They were also asked to provide their views on the benefits and risks to the students and community of having students come to Windsor-Essex. Finally, they were asked for their expertise on how to maximize the benefits and minimize the risks. Their comments are woven into the discussion in the report where appropriate.

For more information about sampling, response rates, and sample representativeness, please refer to Appendix A.



STUDY RESULTS

Respondent Characteristics



Of the respondents, 65% were male and 32% were female with 3% preferring not to answer. A total of 88% of students were from Asia, mostly India. Most of the students have been or were students in Windsor-Essex for two years or less (88%). Roughly 50% of the respondents were under 24 and 42% were between the ages of 25 and 34.

65% Male
32% Female



88% from Asia,
most from India

88% students for
two years or less



50% under 24
42% 25 to 34

Of the survey respondents, 45% were studying or had studied at St. Clair College and 48% at the University of Windsor. The remaining students attended local high schools (n=15) or another university (n=4).

48% from University of
Windsor



61% Engineering
12% Business



45% from St. Clair
College

55% Business & IT
12% Engineering
10% Skilled Trades

Of the University students who completed the survey, 61% were in the faculty of engineering and 12% in the school of business. Conversely, 55% of St. Clair College students were at the Zekelman School of Business and Information Technology, 22% in the School of Engineering Technologies, with another 10% in Skilled Trades.

As survey results were reviewed, we noticed significant differences in experience depending on the institution or the gender of the student. Where relevant, those differences are highlighted.

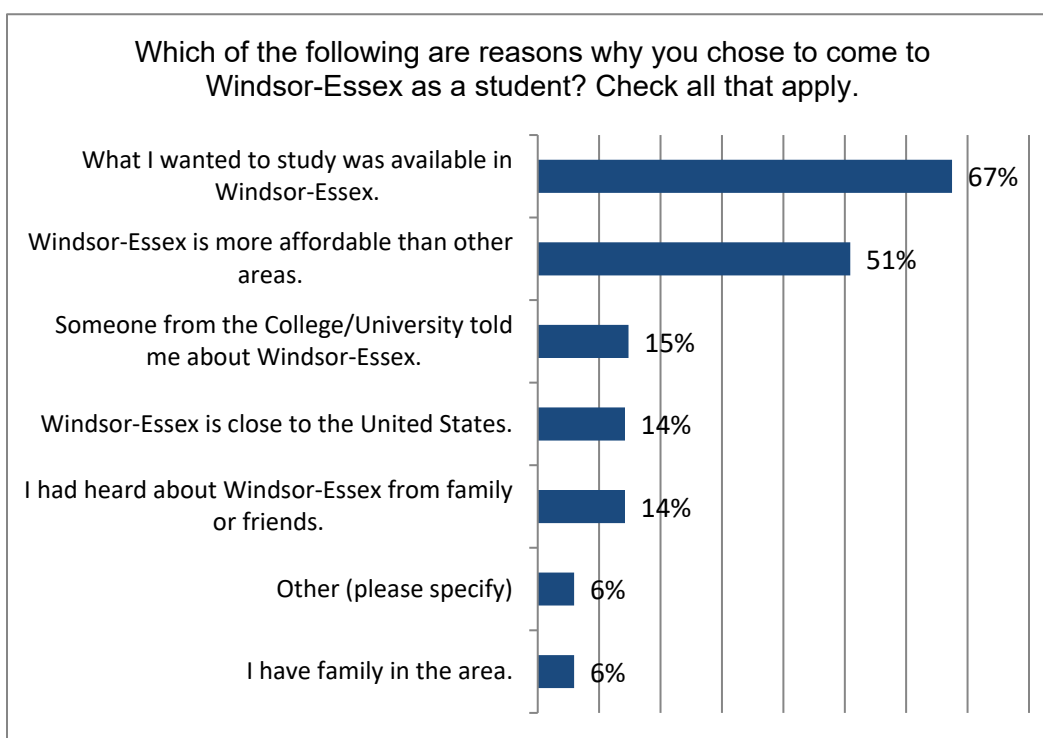
Coming to Windsor-Essex



For international students coming to Windsor-Essex, their journey begins long before they arrive. Understanding why they chose Windsor-Essex and their expectations prior to arriving provides important context for their experience once here.

Choosing Windsor-Essex

The two biggest reasons students chose Windsor-Essex are the availability of the programs and a more affordable cost of living.



What Students Expected

Survey respondents were asked to provide feedback about anything they were told prior to coming to Windsor-Essex that they later found to be untrue. A total of 59 students chose to provide input. Of those, 39% felt they were given an accurate image of Windsor-Essex prior to arriving. Based on answers, it was clear that those images were not always positive:

"Everything was true, not able to find job, no work, no money, nothing for surviving. Just borrowing money from friends and family all the time."

A common disconnect for students regarded employment. Many believed that work would be easy to find, but were disappointed at the reality:

"It is said that Mechanical Engineering jobs are really easy to get because Windsor is an "automotive industry hub". This is the biggest lie ever spoken in the history of mankind. These industries are very picky and they ask for 5+ years of experience. Their requirements are ridiculous and absurd because people with 5+ years of experience have either moved away from engineering or they are not looking for a new company as they are well-paid in their ongoing engineering jobs."

Others reported that work difficult to find, even before COVID-19, but had been advised of this prior to arriving:

"I was told about the problem of unemployment in the Windsor-Essex region for international students which came out be true. Even before COVID-19 happened, there were extremely limited opportunities for part-time jobs. Moreover, there were no on-campus jobs!"

Housing and accommodation were also addressed. The cost of housing and lack of available, affordable housing were common concerns. Many students spoke to the ongoing impacts of housing difficulties, although acknowledging that recent economic factors may have created unexpected challenges:

"After coming here, finding accommodation became expensive because of the sudden hike in prices caused by an increased intake of St. Clair College students happened during 2018 and 2019 year semesters. To overcome the heavy expenses, I have seen students force themselves to stay as two to three students per one room, which was a single occupant room, in 2016 and 2017 years."

"The fact that the city was really cheap to buy a house was the main reason I chose UWindsor. Because rather than spending \$700 a month on a room I can just get a house. I was told a good two-three bedroom house I could get for \$100-150k. I sold property back home to buy a house here, but the inflation rate hit Windsor really hard and now I can't afford a house, which has deeply impacted my financial situation."

Students also heard about the safety of Windsor-Essex prior to coming. Some heard it was unsafe, but found that was not the case. Others had the opposite experience:

"I didn't listen to what people said, my priority was Windsor and it makes me feel really safe and I love this place a lot."

"People said that Windsor-Essex is not safe but I found it a safe and peaceful place."

Many of the students' reflections were confirmed by the focus groups who had heard similar stories from students regarding their expectations versus realities of work and life Windsor-Essex. They recommended changes to how recruiters are selected, monitored, and paid. They also suggested the educational institutions have more accountability for their use of recruiters.



The Experience in Windsor-Essex

To understand how to plan for and support international students who may immigrate to Windsor-Essex, it is important to understand their social and community experience and their impacts on the community at large. The Windsor-Essex has already experienced pressure on housing and transportation due to the large numbers of students and the decrease in affordable housing stock due to the overall increase in both housing prices and rental rates.

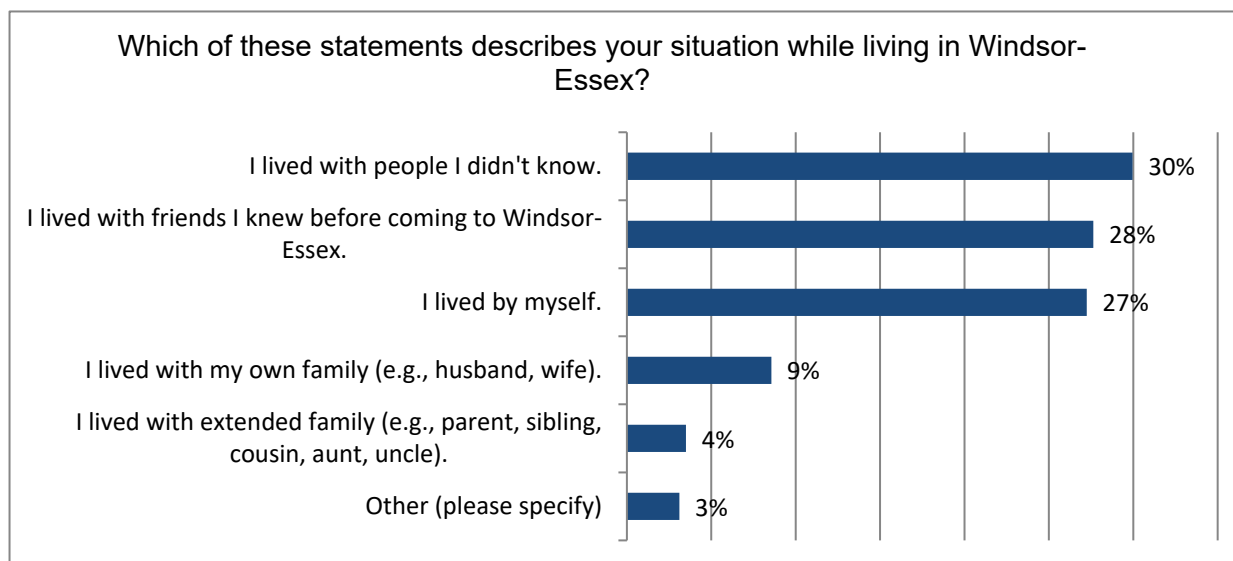
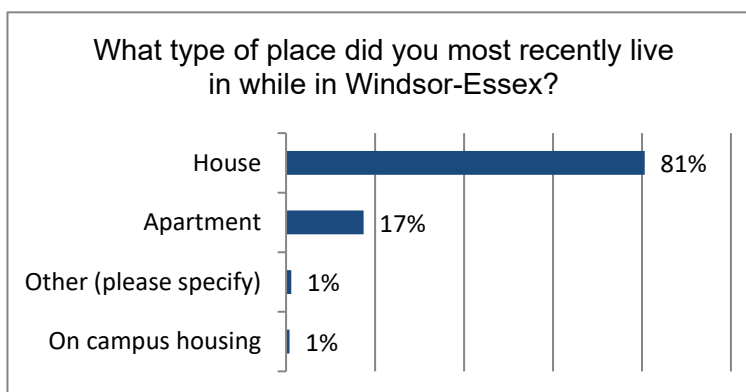
Finding Housing



housing.

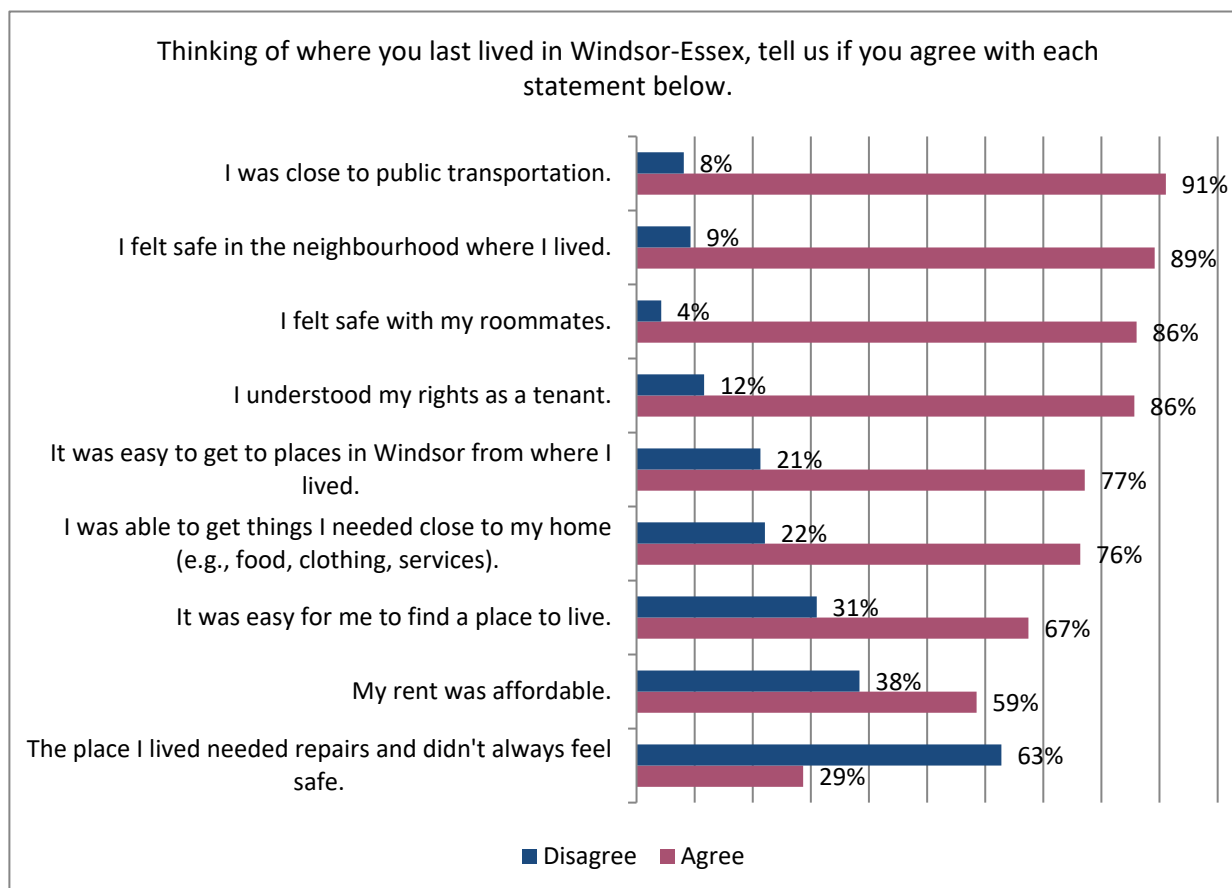
Ninety-eight (98) percent of students lived off campus with only 1% indicating that they lived in on-campus

housing. Approximately 28% of students lived with friends they knew prior to coming to Windsor-Essex, while 30% of students lived with people they didn't know, and another 27% lived alone.



Students were also asked to weigh in on a range of factors related to housing. Responses suggest that, for the most part, students considered their housing to be close to transportation and amenities, providing access to things they needed, and relatively safe.

Roughly 65% of students found it easy to find a place to live and found their rent to be affordable. A similar proportion indicated their housing was safe and not in need of repair.



Respondents reported having four or more roommates and paying approximately \$470 per month in rent on average. However, as demonstrated in the table below, important differences were noted:

- Average rent was higher for St. Clair College students than for UWindsor students, as was the average number of roommates
- Average rent for females was higher than for males at both institutions
- For St. Clair College students, more rent was not associated with fewer roommates for females, rather females paid more rent and had more roommates

	Average Number Sharing Space	Average Monthly Rent
St. Clair College	5	\$502
Female	6	\$638
Male	5	\$425
University of Windsor	4	\$440
Female	4	\$514
Male	5	\$413
Grand Total	5	\$470

The survey results were again confirmed by the focus groups. There was some surprise expressed at how few students tried to use housing resources. The focus group with students confirmed that students in general want to live off campus as they find on-campus housing too expensive and the food not culturally appropriate. The groups recommended that St. Clair College and/or the University of Windsor could do more to promote a minimum standard of acceptable housing.

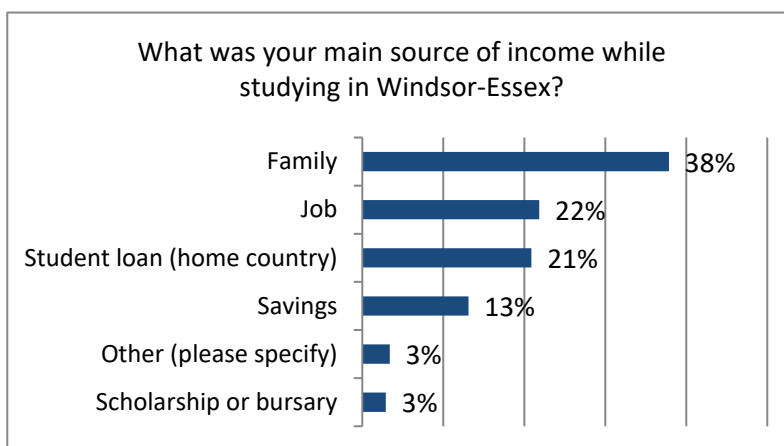


Managing Finances

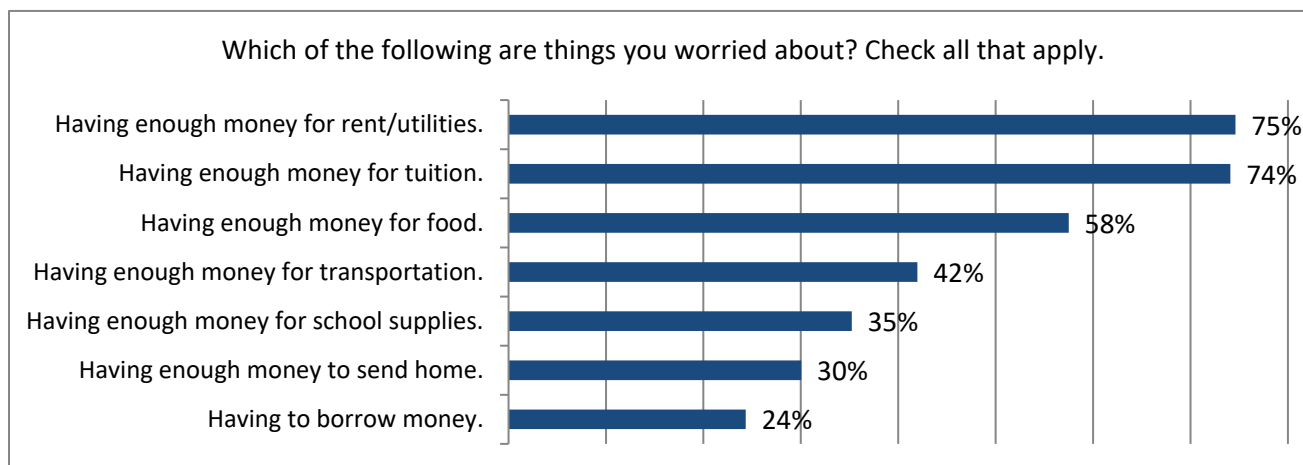


The respondents were asked about their financial worries related to basic needs including rent, tuition, and food.

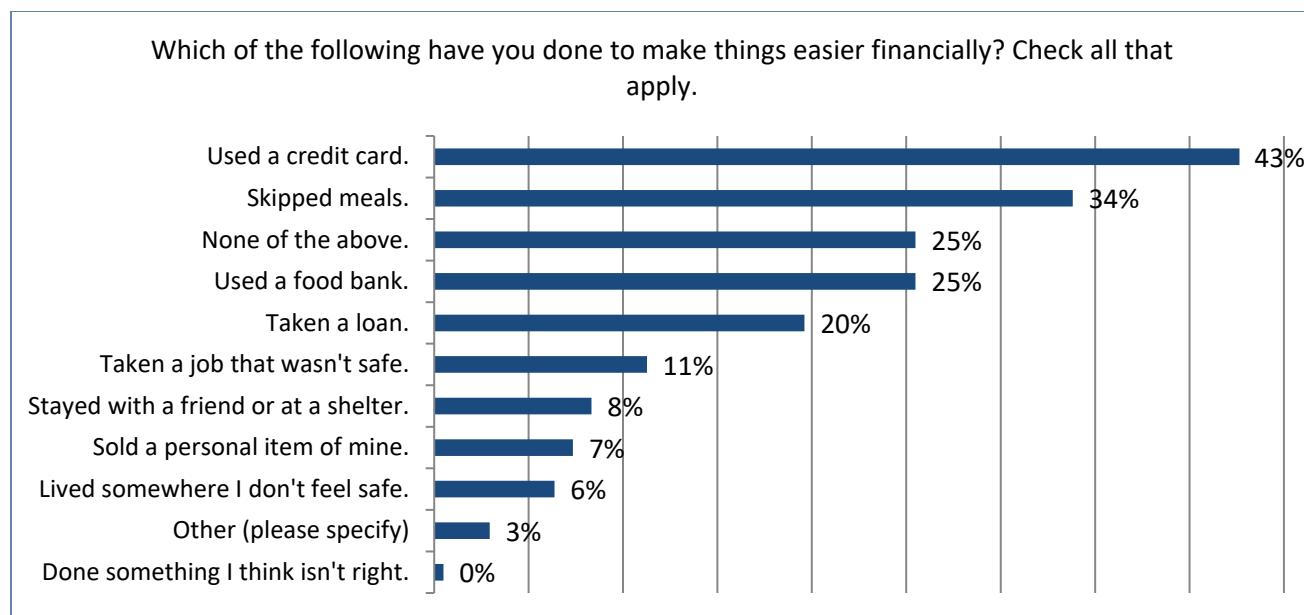
The main source of income for students was family (38%), job (22%), and student loans from their home country (13%). As noted in focus groups, despite a reliance on family for support, these families may not have much money. With 22% of students relying on work, lack of employment is problematic.



Seventy-five (75) percent of students worried about money for rent or utilities and 74% were concerned about money for tuition. Almost 60% were worried about money for food, while 24% worried about having to borrow money while here.



Respondents were also asked to provide information on how they filled financial shortfalls. Using credit cards and skipping meals were the most common, followed by using a food bank. Twenty (20) percent of students had taken a loan and 10% had taken a job that they felt was not safe.



The focus groups expressed concern about the financial pressures faced by students and it was proposed that there be more vetting of the economic capacity of international students. Among the groups, there was an anecdotal belief that the proof of financial capacity required to apply to UWindsor or St. Clair College was not as secure as possible. However, the focus groups did express an interest in comparing the financial pressures of international students to those of domestic students facing similar housing, tuitions, and other cost-of-living expenses. Additional analysis on the financial capacity of international students may well be warranted.



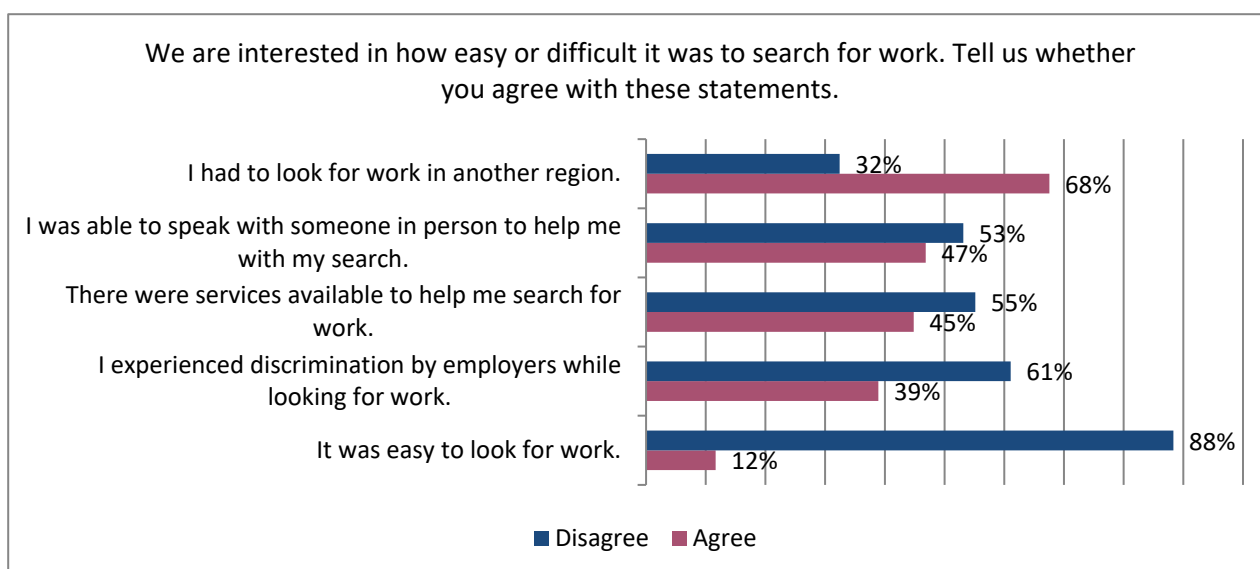
Employment

Looking for Work

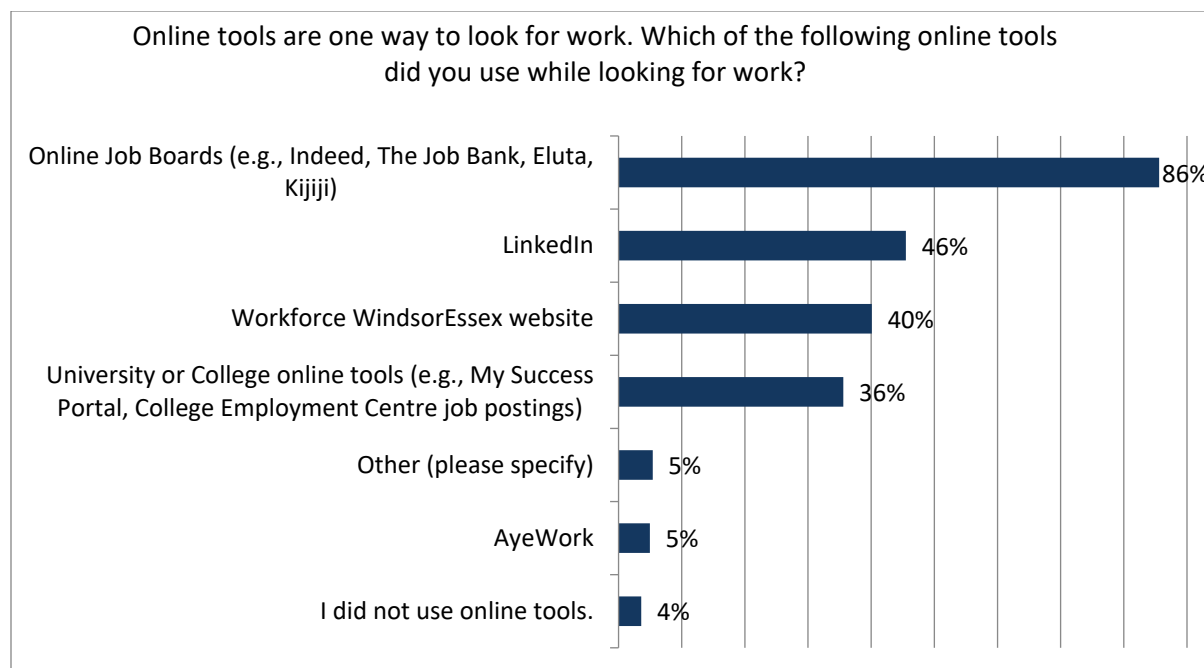


As previously noted, most students indicated the need for work and 89% reported that they looked for work while they were living in Windsor-Essex. Therefore, it is important to understand the employment needs of international students. These metrics will also help inform workforce planning, appreciating the pressures on the workforce of large numbers of students seeking part-time work.

Based on survey responses, the experience of looking for work have been largely negative. Almost 90% said it was difficult to look for work, with more than 50% unable to speak to access employment services. More than 65% had to look for work in another region and more than 33% experienced discrimination while looking for work.



Among students looking for work, online job boards were the most common tool (86%), followed by LinkedIn (46%), Workforce WindsorEssex website (40%), and University of Windsor or St. Clair College online sources (36%).



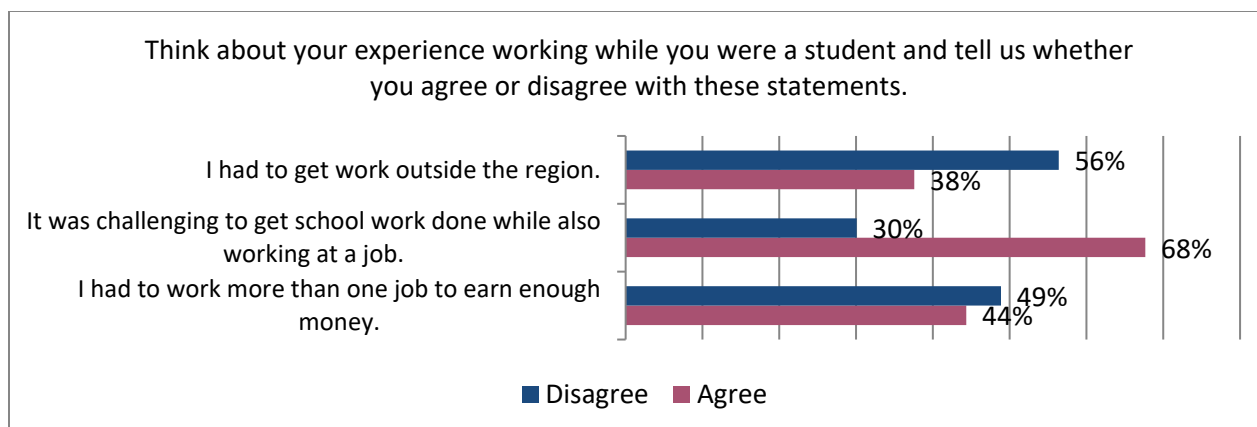
Almost 70% of students looking for work were able to find employment while living in Windsor-Essex. Of those surveyed, 95% worked as a student and 17% worked after graduation through the Post-Graduate Work Permit Program. Respondents were asked to describe their experiences while working.

The focus groups were asked about the employment experiences of international students and confirmed that finding employment for students is difficult for a number of reasons, including the availability of jobs, racism and discrimination based on their names or social insurance numbers. It was no surprise to the focus groups that students left the area to find work and the impression was that more employment opportunities in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA). Some students found work shuttling other students to county or as far as the GTA. There was speculation in the focus groups that large numbers of international students were flooding the part-time job market.

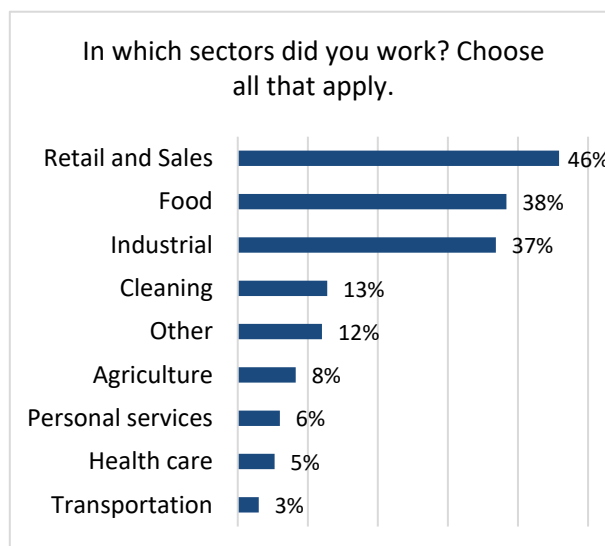
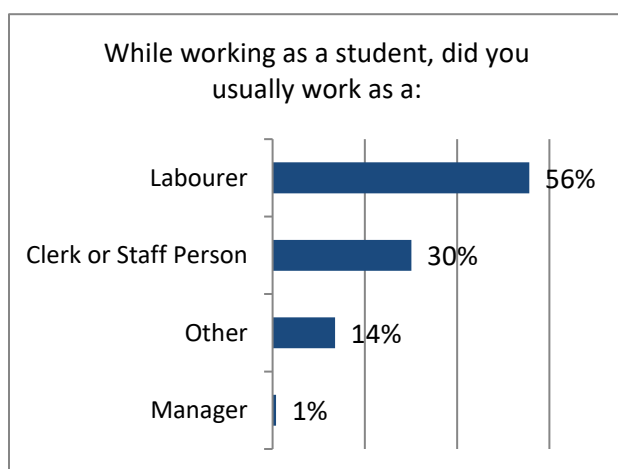
The business centered focus group expressed concern that the educational institutions were not concerned about the employment needs of students while in school and after graduation. They recommended some changes to federal and provincial policies to assist students, including changing provincial and municipal nominee program restrictions. The student focus group suggested easing restrictions on the number of hours students are allowed to work each week.

Working as a Student

Working as a student can be difficult. More than 65% reported that it was challenging to complete school work while employed and almost 50% had to work more than one job to earn enough money. More than 33% of students had to get work outside the region. Understanding more about the experience of domestic students as a point of comparison would be helpful going forward.



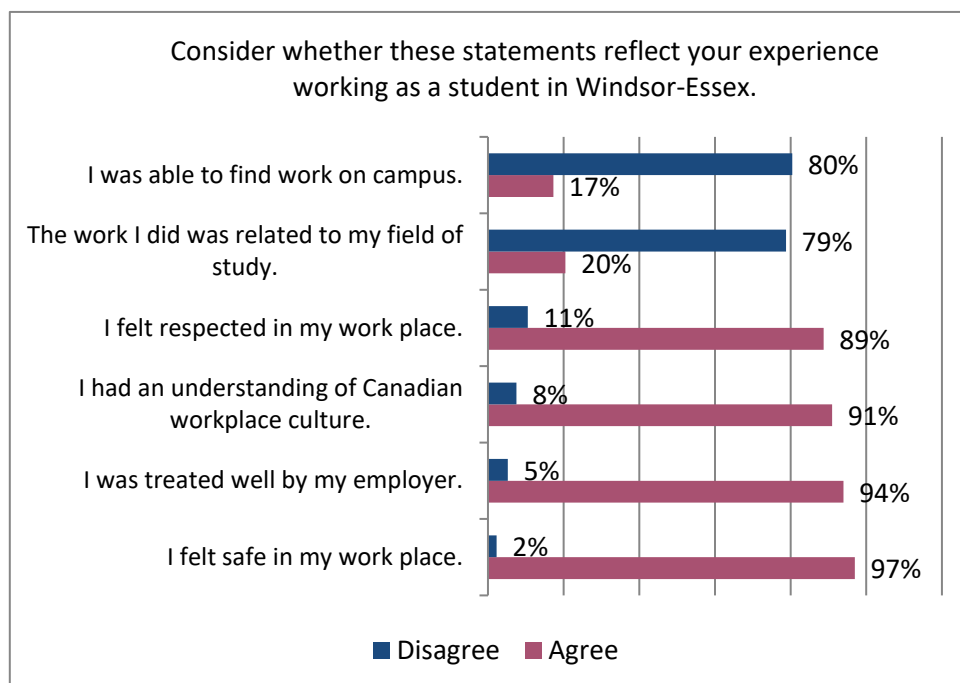
When working as students, respondents were most commonly employed as labourers, clerks, in retail and sales, food, and industrial sectors. Work on campus was difficult to find. On average, they worked 19 hours per week, although typical hours reported by students ranged from four (4) to 50 hours per week.



For the most part, students were paid minimum wage with a small percentage paid below minimum wage.

Typical Pay Received	Less than minimum wage	Minimum wage	More than minimum wage
St. Clair College	5%	76%	19%
Female	8%	83%	8%
Male	3%	73%	23%
University of Windsor	4%	68%	28%
Female	0%	82%	18%
Male	5%	64%	31%
Grand Total	4%	72%	24%

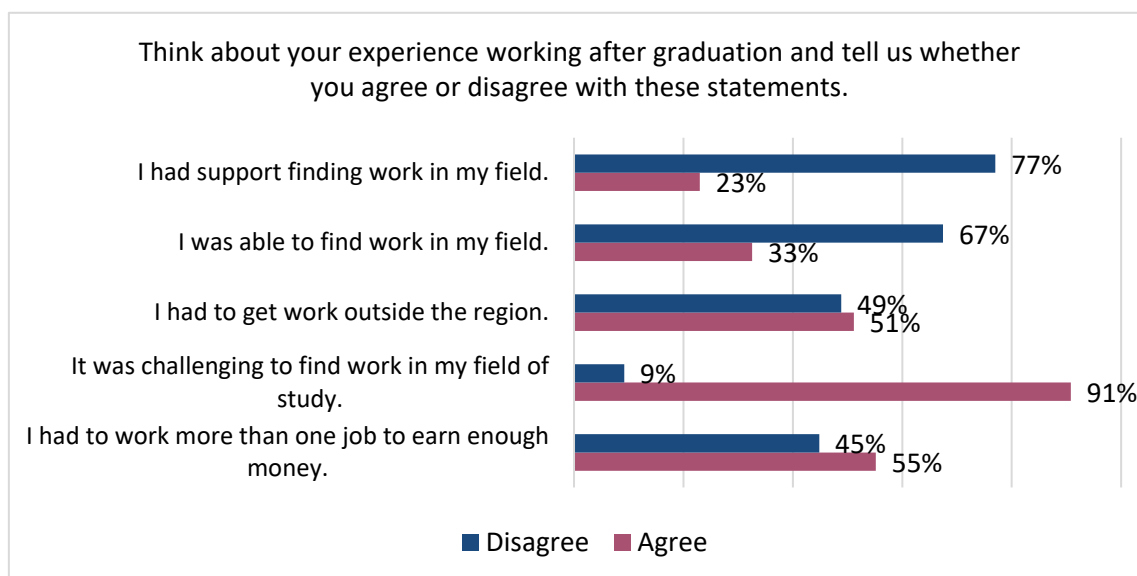
In terms of the quality of their work experience as students, respondents generally felt respected in their workplace, were treated well by their employer, and felt safe. They also expressed an understanding of Canadian workplace culture as well. However, only 20% found work related to their area of study.



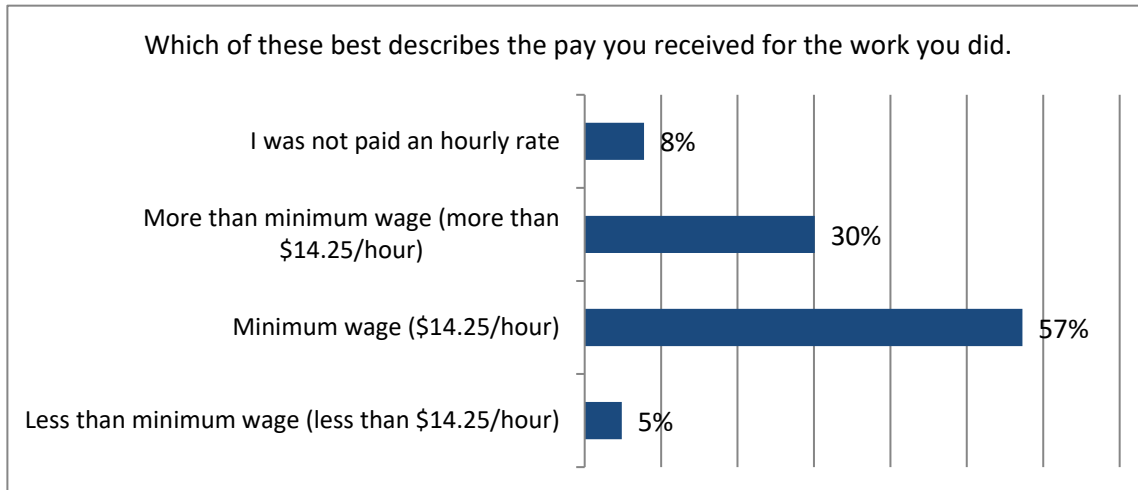
Work After Graduation

Respondents were also asked if they worked post-graduation. A total of 121 students reported working after graduation, but only 20% of those did so as part of the Post-Graduate Work Permit Program.

More than 65% reported it challenging to find work in their field, felt unsupported in their attempts, and were ultimately unable to do so. More than 50% had to find work outside the region and work more than one job to earn enough money. Working as a labourer (35%) or clerk/staff person (23%) was common, with other occupations mentioned including administration, education, engineering, security, and tech support. Respondents reported working most often in industrial (35%), food (29%), and retail (28%) sectors.



Similar to their experience while working as a student, most students post-graduation earned minimum wage, while 30% made more than minimum wage. The average number of hours worked was 25, but ranged between two (2) and fifty (50). Despite the difficulty finding work in their field, respondents described their experience working after graduation in very positive terms.





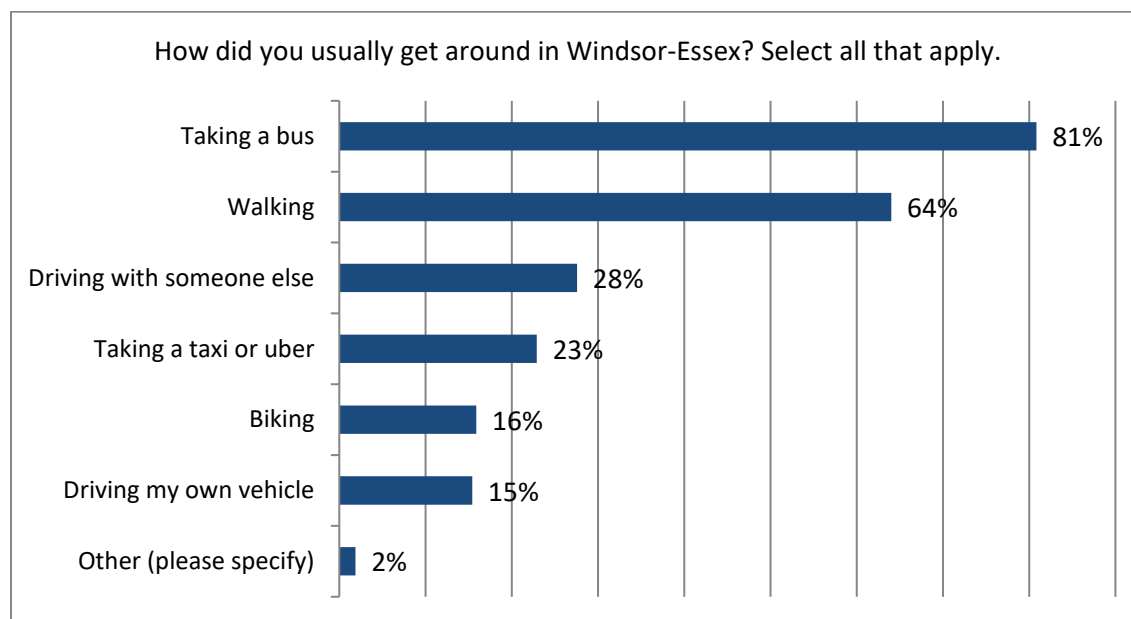
Accessing Services



The respondents were asked about access to a broad range of services in the community, and provided information about their experience of services.

Transportation

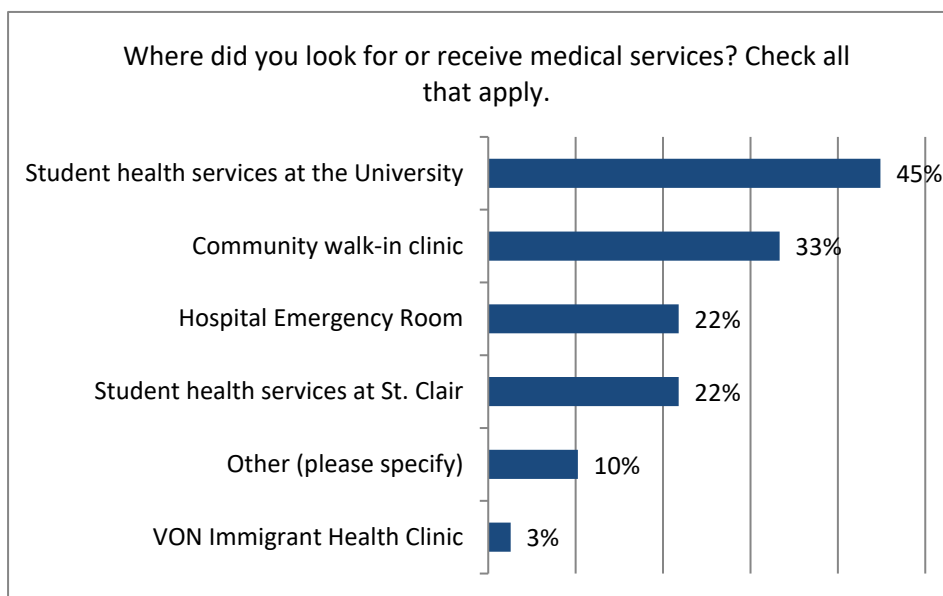
By far, walking and public transit were the dominant modes of transportation for these respondents, with 81% indicating they typically use public transit and 64% walk to get around.



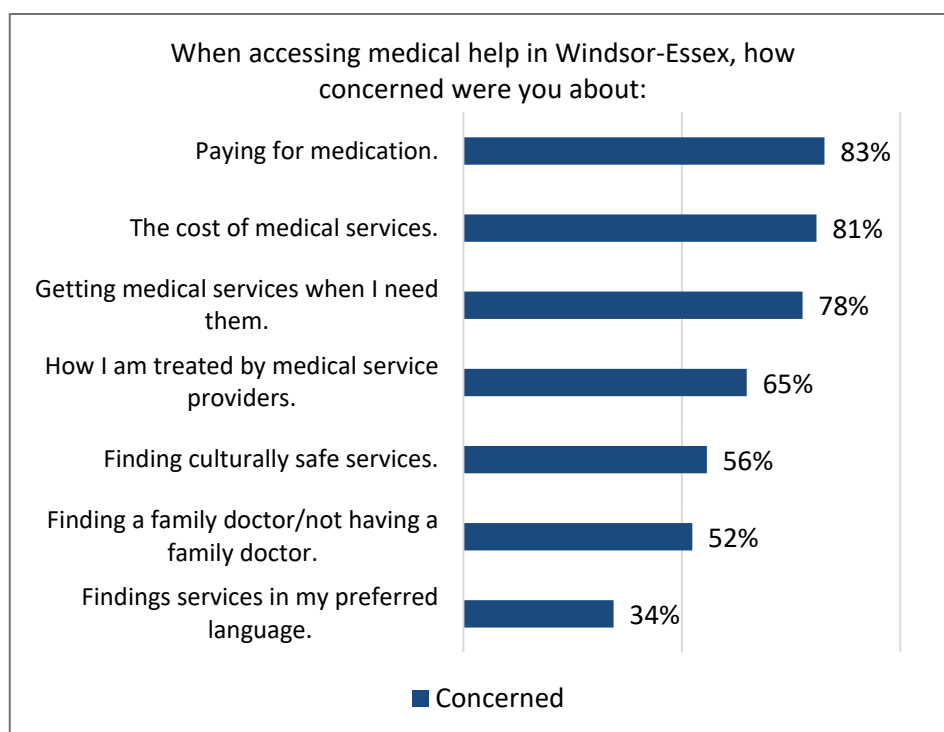
For most tasks (attending school, meeting friends, shopping, and appointments) students indicated that it was easy to get around. However, that was not true for getting to work and pursuing hobbies which were deemed not easy by 53% and 49% of respondents respectively. When asked about their concerns in regard to transportation, the largest concern was the time it takes to get places (74%) followed by the cost of transportation (51%).

Health Care

A total of 79 respondents said they needed health care while in Windsor Essex, and 78% indicated they were able to access that care while 22% were not. Campus services were often used for health care needs, as well as community walk-in clinics and hospital emergency rooms. The VON Immigrant Health Clinic was used by a few students.

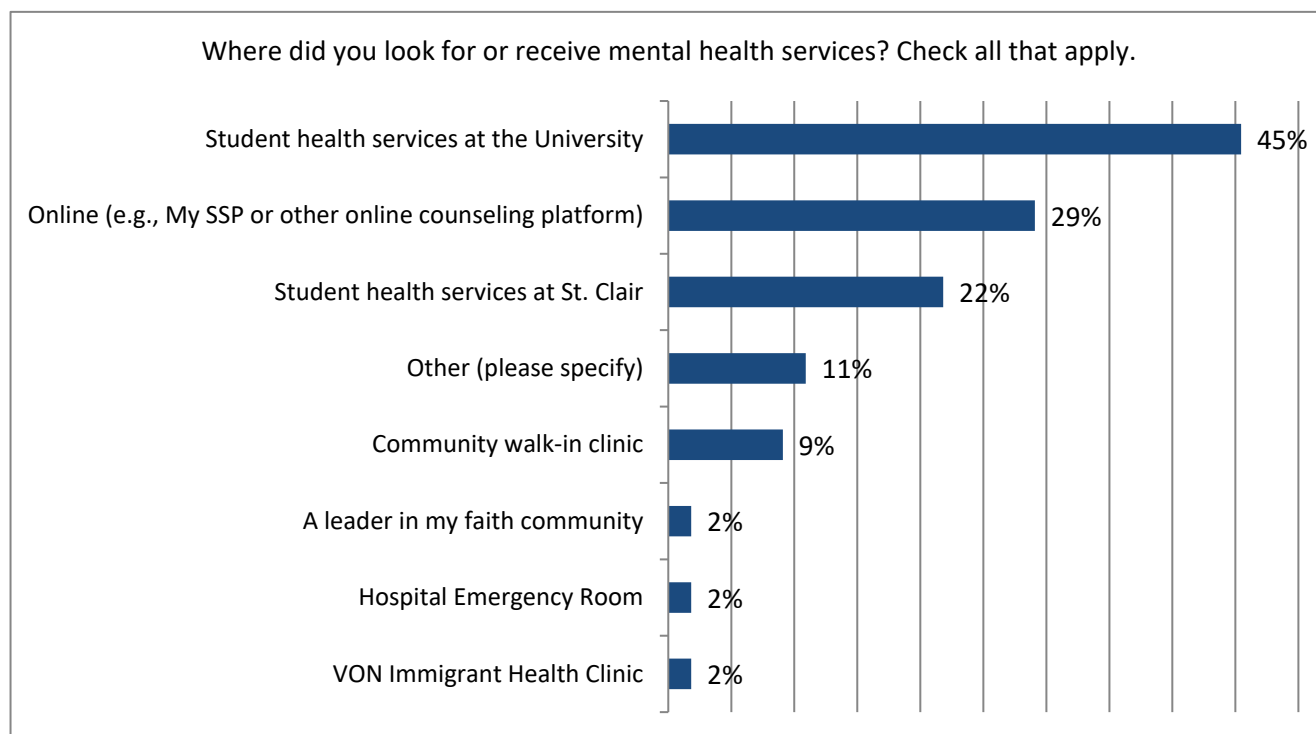


When asked about accessing health services, students identified cost as the biggest concern followed by access. There was also some concern about finding culturally appropriate services.

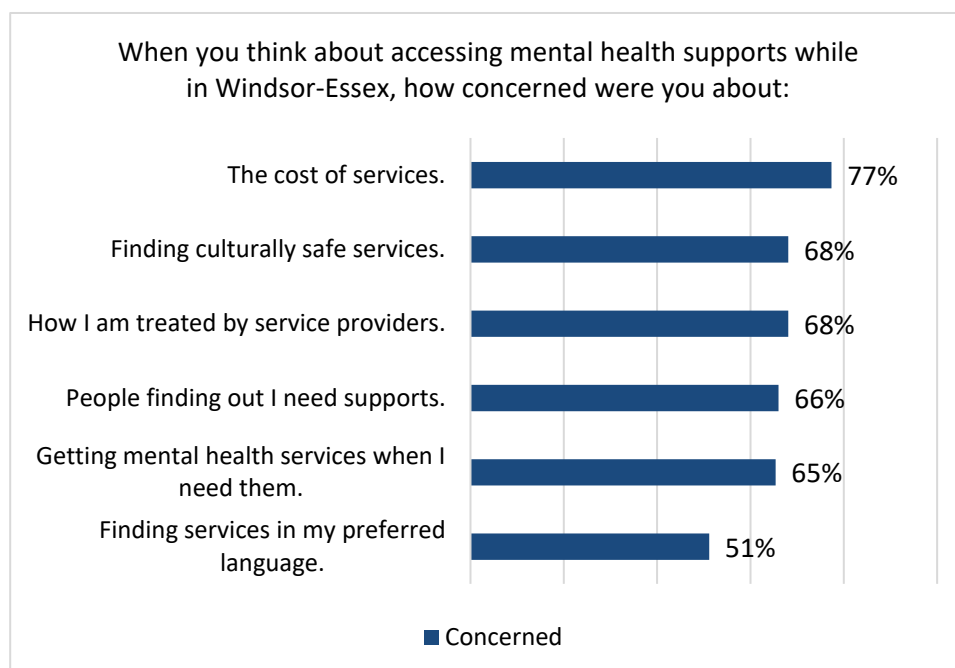


Mental Health Care

While only 58 students reported needing mental health supports or services, 53% said they were unable to get them. Similar to health care more broadly, campus services were frequently used for mental health care needs, followed by online services. Students in the focus group shared how accessing on-campus services was difficult when they lived far from the campus.



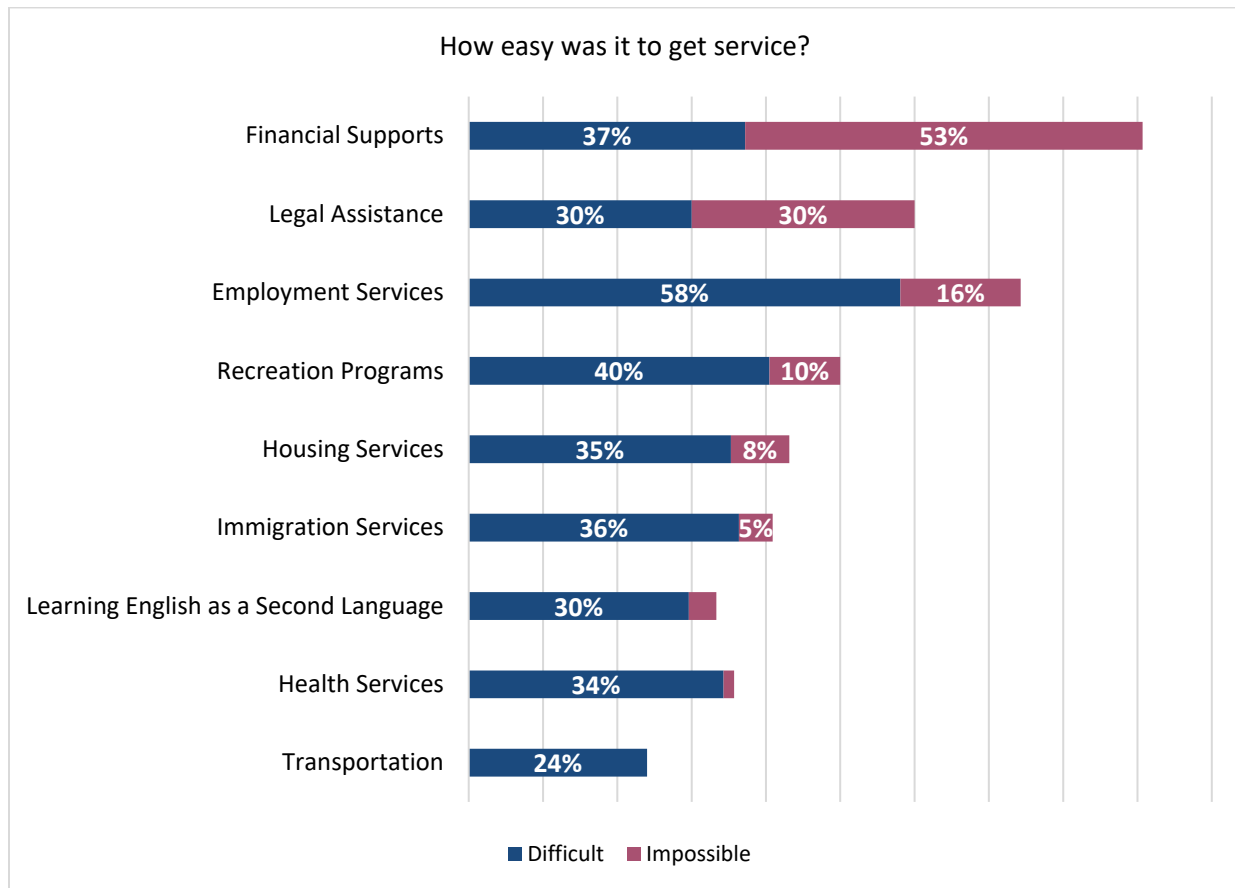
To note, while cost is still the most important concern when seeking mental health services, culturally safe preferred language services were more of a concern for mental health than general health. As well, stigma attached to mental health services was also relevant.



Other Community Services

To obtain a sense of what resources would benefit international students, respondents were asked about other community services they had used. Transportation, employment, health, and immigration services topped the list, but a significant number of students also sought out housing, recreation, and financial services.

In contrast, when students were asked to indicate how easy it was to get services in these same areas, financial, employment, legal assistance, and recreation services were considered difficult or impossible. Employment services were particularly noteworthy given that 65% of students tried to access such services but 74% found them difficult or impossible to find.

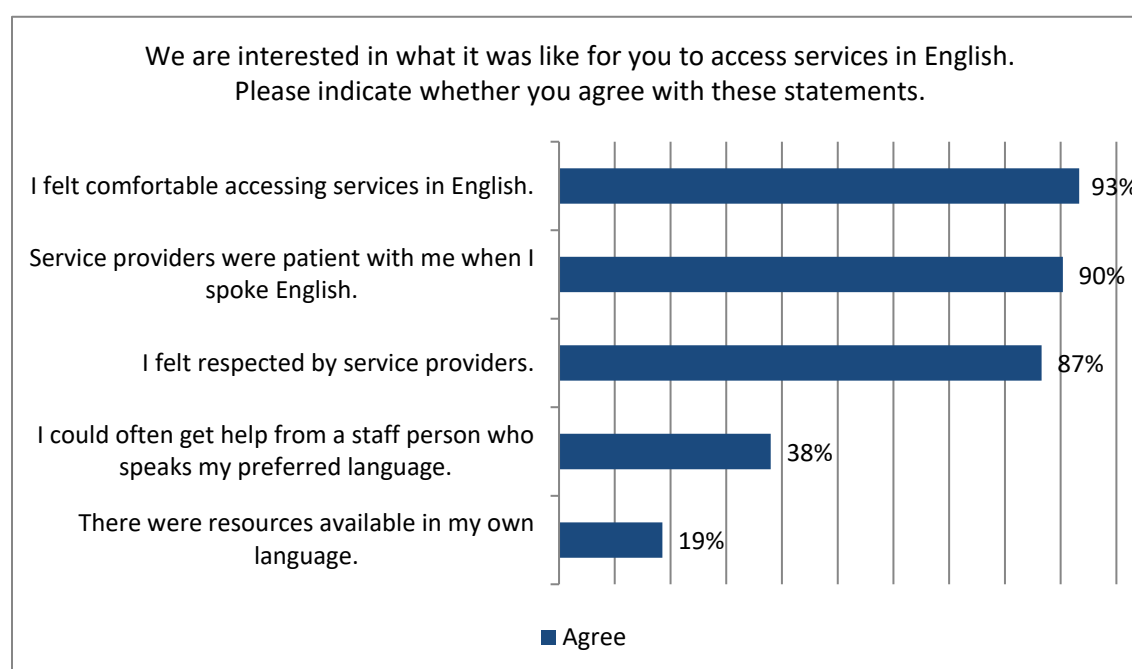


Language Access

As many international students have English as their second language, it was important to understand their experience receiving services in English.

As the respondents are required to have English language skills before coming to study in Windsor-Essex, it was not surprising that almost all of them indicated they were comfortable accessing services in English, and the majority felt respected by service providers and felt service providers were patient with their English abilities. Thirty-eight percent (38%) indicated they were able to get help from a staff person in their own language.

However, 62% indicated that they were unable to find resources in their own language. The majority of respondents preferred to receive services in person (60%), although phone (20%) and online (21%) services were preferred by some.

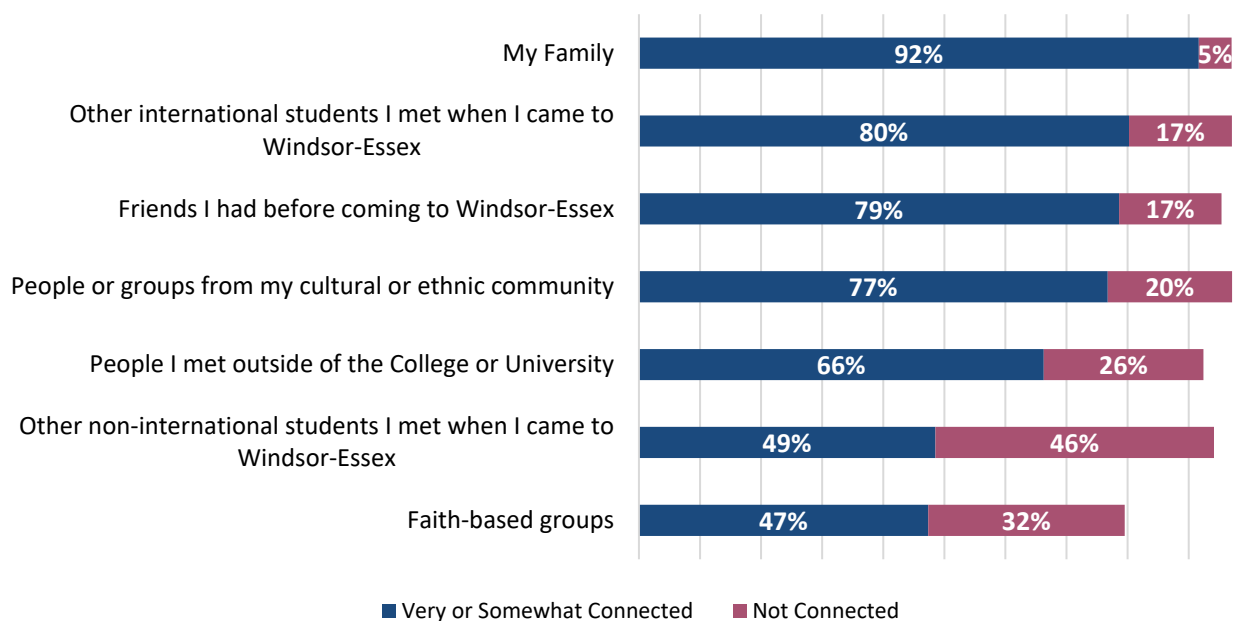


Building Social Connections



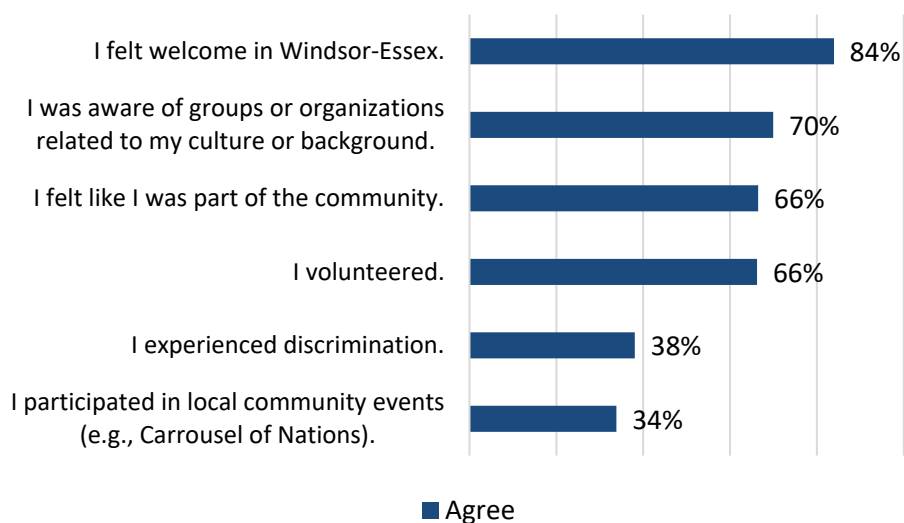
We asked the students to share who they felt socially connected to while in Windsor-Essex. The respondents felt a sense of connection to family, friends they had before coming to Windsor-Essex, other international students, and members of their cultural or ethnic groups. They did not feel a strong sense of connection to domestic students or faith-based groups.

While studying in Windsor-Essex, how connected did you feel to:



The majority (84%) of students felt welcome in Windsor-Essex with a somewhat smaller group feeling connected to the community. Efforts were made to connect as 66% performed volunteer work and 34% participated in local events. However, almost 40% believed they had experienced discrimination. It is important to note that COVID-19 brought unique challenges to social connection. As one student noted, COVID-19 caused their community engagement in Canadian society to be “extremely low.”

Think about your time living in Windsor-Essex. Tell us whether you agree or disagree with these statements.



The focus groups were asked to reflect on the difference between feeling welcome in Windsor-Essex and feeling like a part of the community. The students said that St. Clair College and the University of Windsor worked to make students feel welcome and that the diversity of Windsor makes it a welcoming place. However, they spent most of their time on campus or around the campus and therefore they did not feel integrated into the broader community.

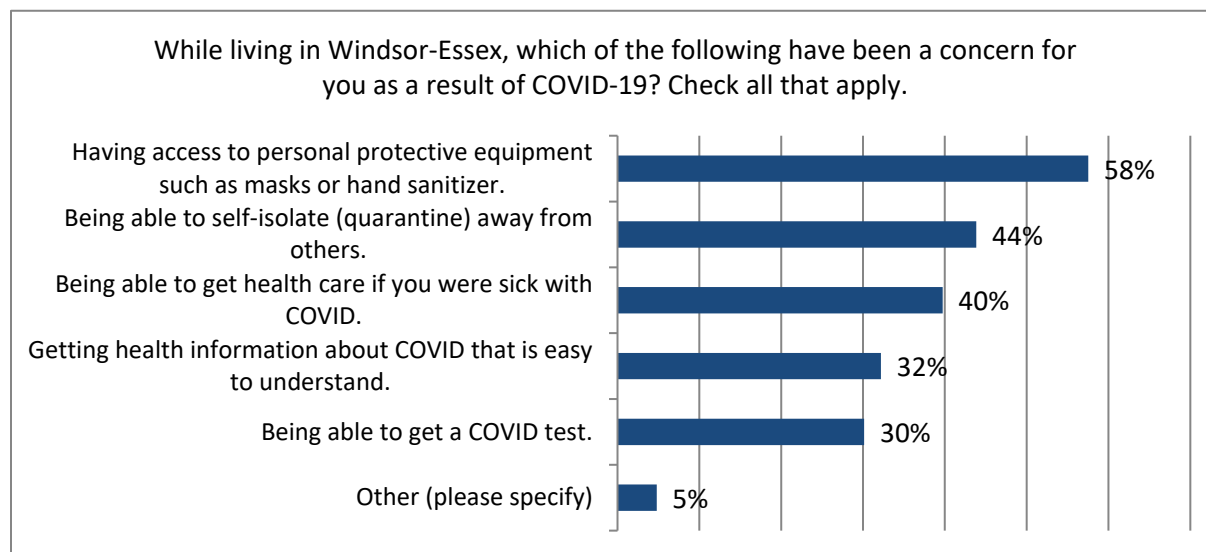
One of the recommendations from the focus groups was to encourage the private sector to be more welcoming not only through employment but also through culturally familiar goods and services which can help ease homesickness.

COVID-19 Impacts

Because the survey was conducted in January 2021, we appreciate that there are both particular impacts on students due to COVID-19 and confounding factors that may skew some of the responses. In particular, it is important to consider the impact of COVID-19 on employment, health care, and access to services. A total of 163 (89%) of the respondents lived in Windsor-Essex during the quarantine period beginning in March 2020.

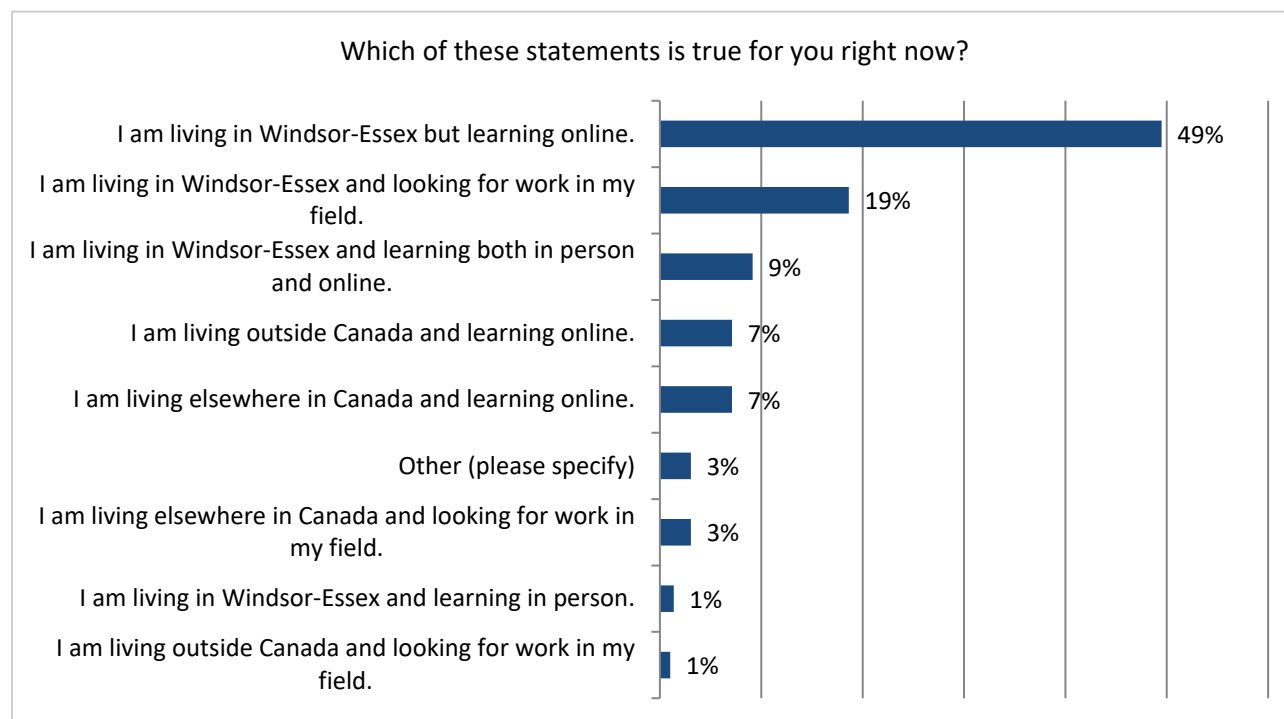
Staying Safe

Students worried about staying safe during COVID-19. The most common concerns included access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), the ability to self-isolate, and the ability to access health care if sick with COVID-19.



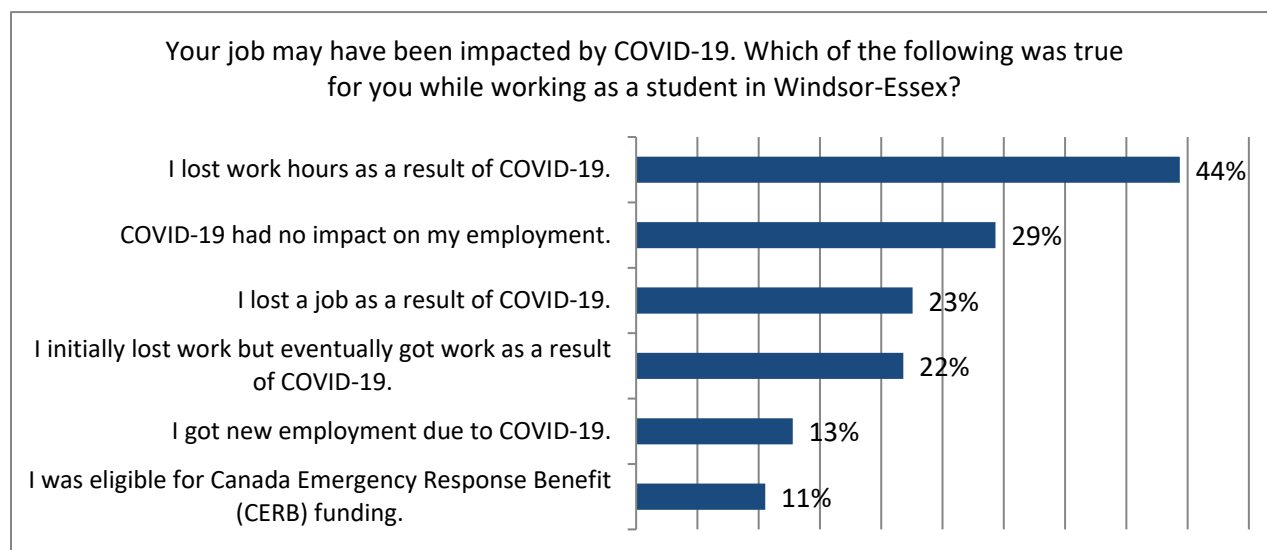
Learning Online

Almost 50% of the students were living in Windsor-Essex while learning online, with another 10% learning in person and/or online. Another 7% were living in Canada, not Windsor-Essex, while learning online, and 7% were living outside Canada while learning online.



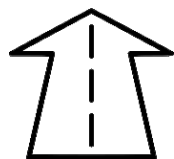
Looking for Work

The impact of COVID-19 on employment was also considered. With respect to employment there was a mix of students who both lost and gained due to the pandemic. On April 22, 2020, the Federal government lifted some restrictions on employment for international students who were in particular disciplines or to ensure students who couldn't get home had a way to earn a living while they stayed in Canada. Additional restrictions were lifted on January 8, 2021 when the government announced that former international students who hold or held a Post-Graduate Work Permit would have the opportunity to apply for an open work permit. Despite these changes, 44% of respondents indicated their income was reduced or lost due to COVID-19.





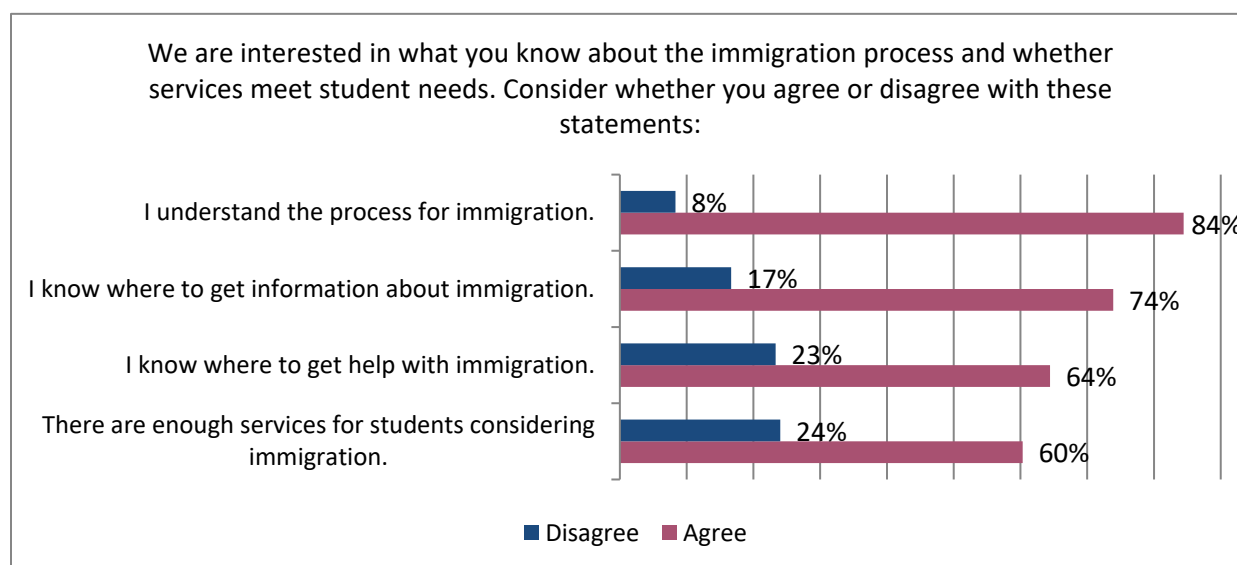
Future Plans



Permanent residency is a goal for many international students, as well as a component of local, provincial, and federal development plans. To better understand what is required to support student immigration in the future, students were asked to consider immigration services and their intentions post-graduation.

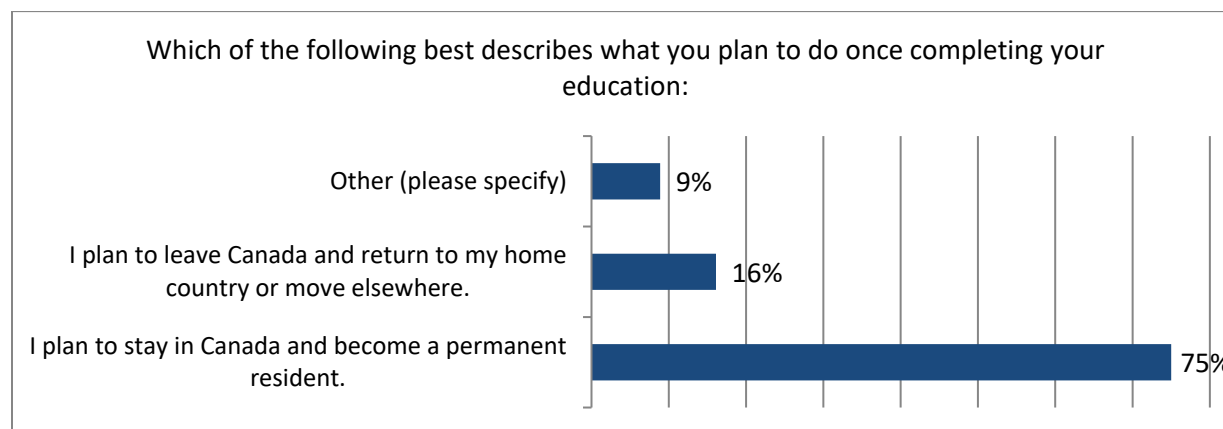
Immigration Services

Generally speaking, students believed they understood the immigration process and were aware of where to find information. Fewer students felt they knew where to get help and whether there were enough services for students considering immigration.



Planning for Immigration

Seventy-five percent (75%) of respondents indicated their intention was to remain in Canada after graduation. Given that, it is not surprising that most respondents knew what the immigration process required and how to access services, however there was concern regarding whether there were enough services available.



Planning for Continued International Student Presence

The focus groups were asked about the benefits and risks to the community of welcoming more international students. There is very strong support for attracting students and trying to retain them. International students were perceived by business leaders and educational institutions as excellent candidates for immigration as they have considerable personal initiative, strong language proficiency, and are well educated. One focus group member talked about the importance of having a talent pipeline in Windsor-Essex and considered international students an important part of that.

Moreover, it was felt that international students made an important contribution to the local economy while here, given the money they spend on tuition, rent, food, and other goods. It was suggested that governments could use more of the economic contributions by international students to supports, including bursaries and financial supports, as well as integrating them into established settlement services. The focus groups believed that settlement services would support both students' academic achievement, as well as integration into the community.

Focus groups also reflected on the risk to post-secondary programs if Windsor-Essex is perceived as a problematic place for international students due to lack of employment or poor support services like housing and transportation. In the student focus group, they expressed concern regarding the quality of their degrees being diluted due of the number of students obtaining them.

Finally, the focus groups recommended the Windsor Essex Local Immigration Partnership (WE LIP) as a place to discuss working more closely across sectors to improve the outcomes and experiences of international students in Windsor-Essex.

Anything Else

In closing the survey, respondents were asked whether there was anything else they wanted to share. Responses centred on employment (9), services (4), housing (3), immigration (3), discrimination (3), and COVID-19 (3).

In terms of employment, students spoke strongly about the need for part-time jobs for international students, particularly with the lack of other kinds of supports. For one student, the need to address employment was their main driver to complete the survey:

"It is necessary for every student to work as a part timer to spend the expense and live a regular life, but here in Windsor there is very less students are getting part time job."

"Please provide more jobs to us. Its really hard to earn money for living abroad."

"Windsor has the highest unemployment rate and for us international students, a part time job is inevitable for us. Many students moved out from Windsor to many other towns for getting a part-time job, they are not interested to move from here as Windsor is a developing town, it has all the amenities, the living expense is affordable and not too high. Only problem that Windsor has is less employment opportunity. The only reason for me to take this survey is to notify you about the unemployment, especially that we international students face here."

Students spoke to the perceived lack of support and unfairness regarding employment, along with the concern international students will be taken advantage of by employers:

"I got an academic award, distinction, scholarship, and had a 3.9 GPA, and got no help from professors or the college to get a job in the area. Ended up accepting any job that could help me immigrate, not to be kicked out of the country. We are already under too much pressure with immigration requirements and there is no support from schools or instructors. I applied for jobs at the college after graduation and even trying to get referrals from my instructors did not help me get the job, although I'm plenty qualified. It's like the jobs already had designated people for them. Not even a call or interview. Just upsetting."

"There are lots of companies in Windsor who pay much less to the students in a very unsafe work environment and students had to comply with them as there are very few part-time jobs."

Respondents provided suggestions on how to improve the employment situation of international students, including offering tax incentives to companies and offering more support at the University and College level:

"The region needs better development. Lots of student graduates in diverse areas who can't find jobs in Windsor and end up going elsewhere, specially the Toronto area. Tax benefits should be given to companies to create jobs here."

Ultimately, employment, finances, housing, and overall well-being are intertwined for students:

"I thought it would be easy to get a job in Windsor. And accommodation will be less than other regions. It was all proved wrong and it is getting very difficult to live with a lot of financial crises."

In terms of housing, international students spoke of having to move multiple times to keep themselves housed, and the financial hardship associated with the cost of housing and rent increases. They also noted the impact of recent changes to the cost of accommodations:

"Please look at the hike of international student intake by St. Clair College during 2018 and up to now and look for current accommodation or room/apartment rent hike and less part-time jobs available for"

International Students. For example, I paid \$250 rent in 2016 for a room and it is offered in 2019 as \$450, although I'm living in an apartment currently."

Other students spoke to frustrations accessing services including transportation and employment services, and what feels like greater opportunities for domestic students:

"Transportation in the area is really bad, few bus lines, rides are too long. Maybe ride share programs or co-op cars could be available. Buses to/from the college were always too full."

"Hard to travel in busses as they are tight packed all the time. I had to go to Amherstburg for work and spend money on ride share/carpool for every shift I worked."

"I wish the employment services and other community services help international students as much as they prioritize domestic students."

"Sometimes international students deserve more supervision and support from campus and city organizations, which is overlooked by most of the organizations."

Other students expressed frustration with the post-graduate work and immigration experience, suggesting that early preparation may have been helpful:

"Does not make any sense that after I graduate, I cannot become an apprentice during the Post-Graduate Work Permit Program."

"Immigration process should be told to students while studying, so they can start preparing for the pathway to permanent residency early."

Still, others spoke to the broader experience of lack of inclusion and outright discrimination they experienced in Windsor-Essex and beyond, as well as their hopes for a different future:

"Non-international students are not welcoming. They prefer to stay away and try not to make acquaintances. In my opinion and from what I've observed, cultural stereotypes and cultural shock in the mind of non-international students is one of the main reasons why they don't prefer to communicate and make friends with international students."

"Windsor is a racist place without any good opportunities."

"It will be good if international students get more help and are accepted as their own people by people of Canada."

Finally, COVID-19 was also on the mind of many students. In some cases, COVID-19 created problems for students seeking employment or volunteer experience. While there were hopes that it will end, others expressed a hope that remote learning opportunities continue as they provide a measure of safety.

Despite these many challenges, it was clear that for some students, their experience in Windsor-Essex was very positive:

"I love Windsor."

"Overall my experience was really good other than some experiences/decisions."

"Windsor will hold a special place in my heart forever."

A Look at Women's Experience

Compared to Males, Females were...



Demographics

Older



Coming to Windsor-Essex

More likely to come to Windsor-Essex because they have family in the area



Housing

Less likely to live with friends they knew before coming to Windsor-Essex

Less likely to believe it is easy to find a place to live

Paying more rent (on average \$617/month)

Finding rent less affordable



Finances

More likely to use a credit card to get by

Less likely to use a food bank and more likely to skip meals

More likely to be concerned about money for rent and tuition



Employment

Experienced more discrimination looking for work

Had a harder time finding work in Windsor-Essex

Less likely to say there were services available to help them search for work

Less likely to look for work in another region

Less likely to find work in Windsor-Essex

More likely to work in food, personal services, and health care

More likely to work after graduation through the Post-Graduation Work Permit Program



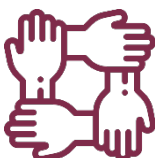
Services

More likely to need medical help or services

More likely to need mental health supports or services

Less likely to feel service providers were patient when they spoke English

Less likely to find service in their preferred language

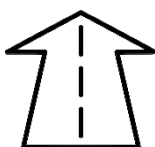


Social Connection

Less connected to other international students

Less connected to faith-based groups







Less likely to feel they were part of the community



Future Plans

Less likely to plan to leave Windsor-Essex after graduation

Institutional Differences

	UWindsor students were more likely to be...	St. Clair College students were more likely to be...
	Demographics	
	From India and Bangladesh Learning online and living in Windsor-Essex or outside Canada	From India Learning partly in person
	Housing	
	Living with friends they knew before coming to Windsor-Essex Living with fewer roommates and paying less rent (average \$440/month)	Closer to public transportation Believe they understand tenant rights Living with more roommates and paying more rent (average \$502/month) Able to get things they need close to home
	Finances	
	Using more scholarships or bursaries Using a food bank Concerned with cost of tuition	Relying more on savings Concerned with food and rent
	Employment	
	Using University or College online tools to look for work Working more than one job to earn enough money during and after graduation Working in retail and sales Making more than minimum wage Finding it easier to look for work	Using online job boards to look for work Working in agriculture Unaffected by COVID-19 Be working outside the region after graduation Making minimum wage Believe services were unavailable to help them search for work
	Services	
	Finding it harder to get to the grocery store and the mall Using on-campus health services Unable to get help in their preferred language	Struggling with transportation to get to school or meet with friends Using community walk-in clinics for medical services Using a greater variety of services for mental health care, in addition to campus services Concerned with finding culturally safe medical services
	Social Connection	
	Unconnected to domestic students	Uninvolved with volunteering

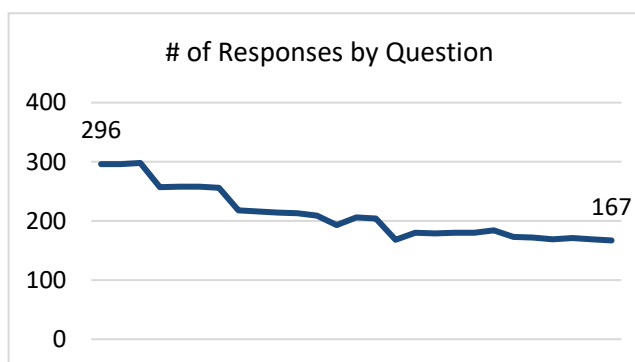
APPENDIX A: SAMPLING, SURVEY COMPLETIONS AND SAMPLE REPRESENTATIVENESS

Survey Completions

A total of 298 responses to the survey were received. Survey completions in SurveyMonkey occur when respondents click on the Done button on the last page of the survey. In turn, the completion rate is calculated as the number of survey completions divided by the total number of respondents. Using this process, survey completion would be shown as 23%.

The issue with using this completion rate as an indicator of actual meaningful data collected is that it does not include those who completed the survey but did not click the done button, which is not uncommon and is more likely in the case of a survey like this where there is a link to a separate survey to enter to win a grocery card. Nor does it include partial completions (i.e., those who completed many of the questions but chose to skip some as is their right).

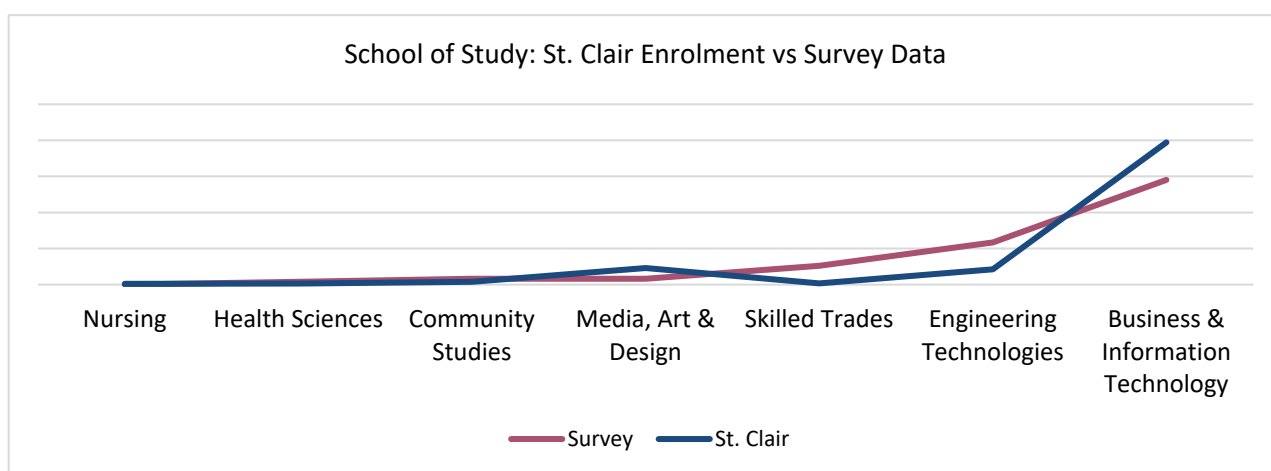
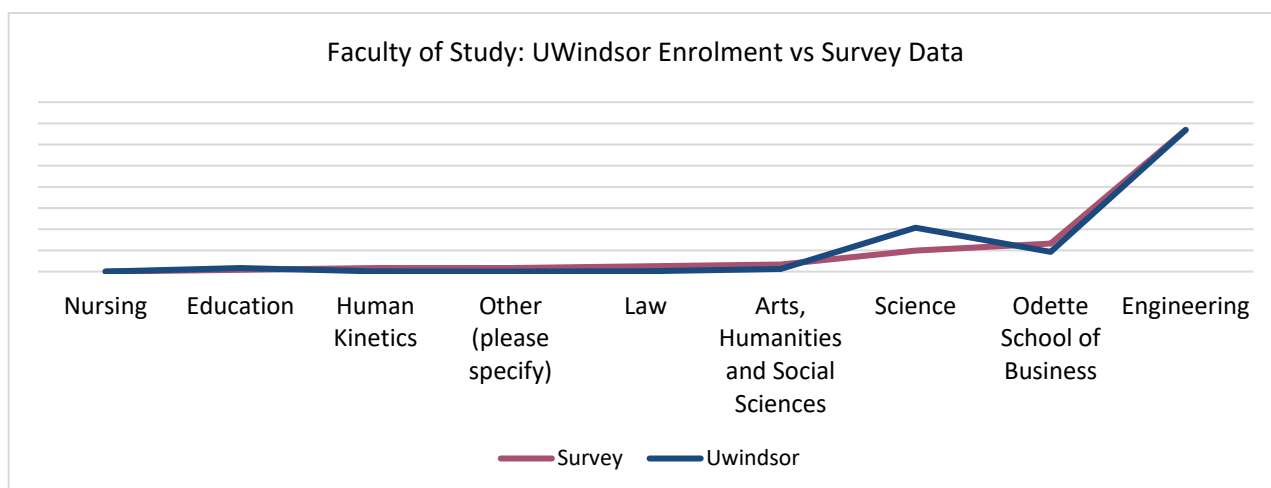
That said, some attrition is unavoidable. The figure to the right shows the drop off in responses from the beginning to end of the survey regarding questions asked of all respondents. Using the last figure of 167 results is a completion rate of 56% (167/298). However, using the average number of responses (211), we get a completion rate of 71% (211/298). As such, we can say that between 50% and 75% of respondents completed the survey.



Sample Representativeness

Representativeness occurs when your sample is similar to the population that you are interested in studying. Different sampling strategies can increase representativeness. In probability sampling, each member of the population has a known probability of being selected. In non-probability sampling, each member of the population is selected without the use of probability. While probability sampling increases the likelihood of having a representative sample – one that is similar to the population in terms of key characteristics – there are many situations in which probability sampling is not possible. For example, probability sampling is very costly and time consuming and as such, is often not feasible in community surveys. In this case, non-probability sampling is used, the most common of which is convenience sampling. In convenience sampling, individuals are selected based on their availability and willingness. Convenience sampling was used for this study.

The appropriateness of various methods, however, also hinges on the purpose of the survey. In this case, the purpose was to provide baseline or preliminary data to inform work on behalf of international students. Convenience sampling is a very commonly accepted practice in these situations. That said, it is possible to examine how this sample compares to known registration data at St. Clair College and the University of Windsor. For example, on the following page, survey information about area of study at UWindsor is compared below to the UWindsor 2020 Summer Head Counts for Full-Time VISA students and shows a relatively similar pattern of proportions. The same pattern is noted for international student enrolment data from St. Clair College.



With this information in mind, although the results in this survey cannot be considered as representative as might otherwise be gained through truly random sampling, we believe the survey results to be valuable and accurately represent the experience of a segment of the international student population here in Windsor-Essex.



partenariat local d'immigration
windsor essex
local immigration partnership

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