

The University Experience of Recent Bachelor's Graduates

Highlights

Here is what the Class of 2018 Maritime university first-degree holders (FDH) said about their university experience two years after graduation:

- If they could start over, 82% of FDH would choose to go to university again.
- 81% of FDH felt that their program contributed to their growth as a person. Also, seven out of ten felt that it gave them an in-depth knowledge of a particular area and provided them with a rich intellectual learning experience.
- Of the FDH who pursued further education after their first degree, 78% said that the program they completed in 2018 prepared them for further studies.
- 52% of FDH of applied or professional programs reported that their program prepared them for the workforce compared to 31% of FDH of liberal arts and sciences programs.
- 70% of FDH said that their education was worth the personal investment of time required, and 59% said that it was worth the financial investment. FDH who borrowed \$30,000 or more for all their post-secondary education were significantly less likely to say that their education was worth the financial investment.

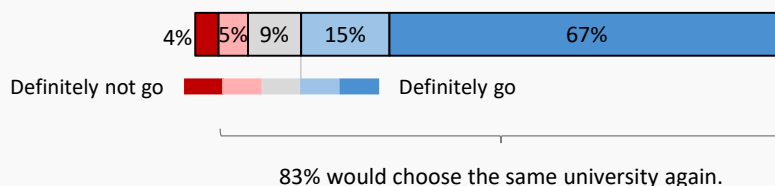
Introduction

Students enroll in a university degree for a variety of reasons. While most expect that their first degree will prepare them for further studies or the workforce, they also place a high value on other aspects of the university experience, including learning about a particular area and broadening their understanding of the world.¹ In fall 2020, the Commission surveyed over 2,400 FDH who graduated from a Maritime university in 2018 to find out about their first degree, and their experience since. It is important to note that two years after graduation many FDH are still in their transition between education and the labour market and the majority pursue further studies after their first degree. The Commission plans to survey the Class of 2018 graduates again in 2024, six years after graduating from their first degree to find out more about their educational and labour market experience.

Eight out of ten FDH said that they would likely or definitely choose to go to university again.*

Excluding those who would definitely not go to university again, 83% of FDH said that they would choose the same university again. FDH who came from the rest of Canada to study in the Maritimes were more likely to say that they would choose to go to university again (88%), compared to FDH who were from the Maritimes (80%) or those from outside Canada (82%).[†] FDH from the rest of Canada were also more likely to say that they would choose the same university again (91%) than FDH from the Maritimes (81%) or those from outside Canada (76%).[†]

If you could choose to do it all over again, would you choose to go to university?



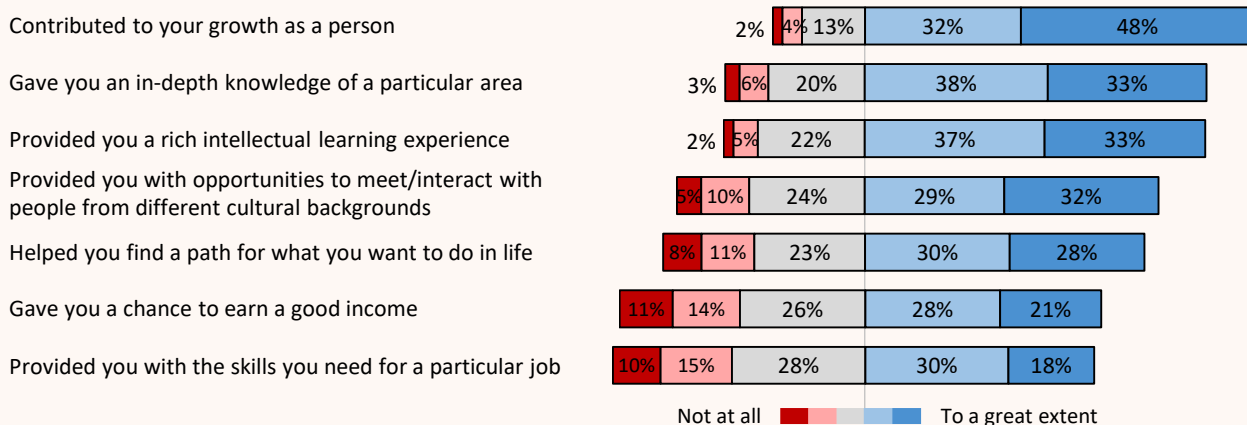
* Selected 4 or 5 on a five-point scale.

[†] Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

The majority of FDH felt that their university education provided them with opportunities for growth and life experiences.

Attending university is an important step in a young adult's life. They may be living away from home for the first time, gaining independence and living many new experiences. Eighty-one percent of FDH felt that their program contributed to their growth as a person, 61% said that it provided them with opportunities to meet and interact with people from different cultural backgrounds, and 58% said that their program helped them find a path for what they want to do in life.*

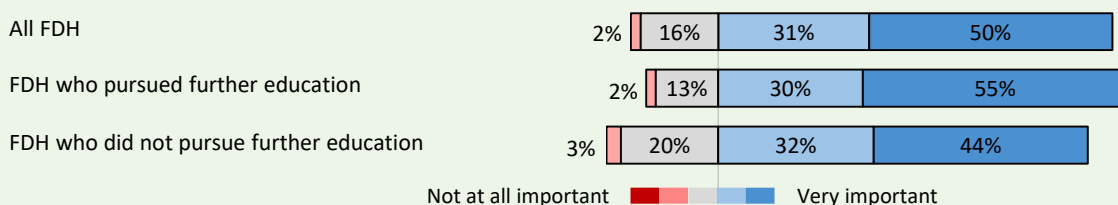
To what extent do you feel the program you completed in 2018 did each of the following?



Most FDH (70%) thought their program prepared them for further education.*

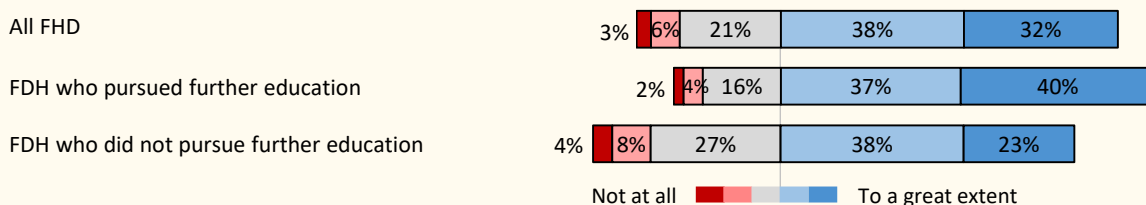
Fifty-three percent of the Class of 2018 FDH pursued further education after their first degree and, of those who pursued, 61% were still enrolled in a program at the time of the survey.² Eighty-one percent of all FDH thought it was important or very important that an undergraduate education prepare students for further studies.*

How important do you think it is for an undergraduate education to prepare students for further studies?



FDH who pursued a program after their first degree were more likely to feel that their program prepared them for further education than those who did not pursue (78% compared to 61%).*†

To what extent do you feel the program you completed in 2018 prepared you for further studies?



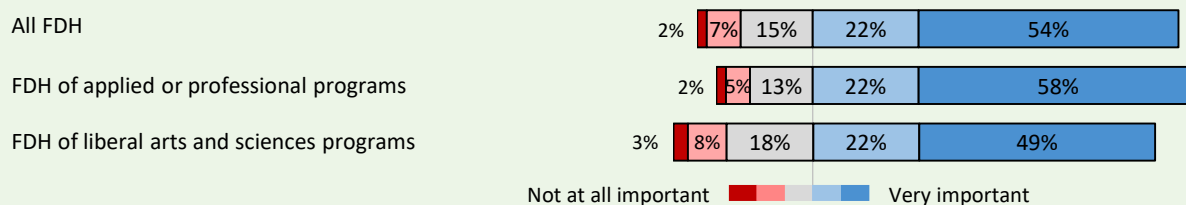
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† Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

The majority of FDH (76%) thought it was important or very important that an undergraduate education prepare students for the workforce.*

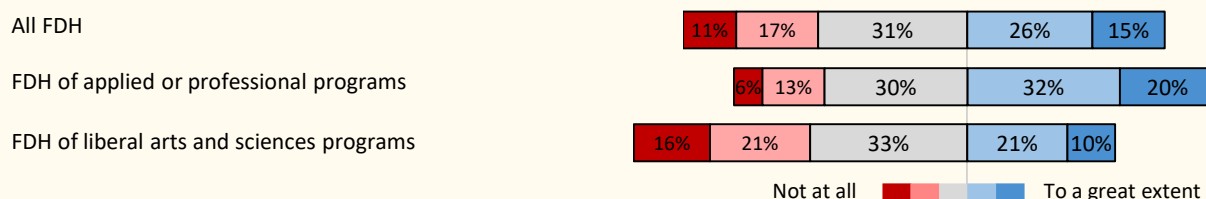
Eighty percent of FDH of applied or professional programs thought it was important or very important that an undergraduate education prepare students for the workforce, compared to 71% of FDH of liberal arts and sciences programs.**

How important do you think it is for an undergraduate education to prepare students for the workforce?



Forty-one percent of all FDH felt that the program they completed in 2018 prepared them for the workforce to a large or a great extent.* Another 31% reported that their program prepared them to some extent (selected 3 out of 5). FDH of applied or professional programs were more likely to report that their program prepared them for the workforce (52%) than FDH of liberal arts and sciences programs (31%).† For most liberal arts and sciences FDH, their bachelor's degree is only a stepping stone in their educational pathway. A previous survey conducted six years after graduation found that 79% of liberal arts and sciences FDH pursued further education after their first degree.³ Of those who pursued further education and were employed at the time of the survey, 77% were working in a job that was to a large or a great extent related to the programs they pursued after their first degree, and 80% were using the skills they learned in these programs.*

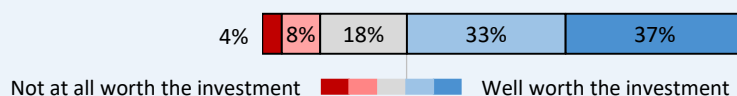
To what extent do you feel the program you completed in 2018 prepared you for the workforce?



Most FDH (70%) thought their education was worth the personal investment of time.*

There was no significant difference between FHD from applied or professional programs and liberal arts and sciences programs in terms of the value they placed on their personal investment of time.

When you look back at the university education you completed in 2018, and your experience since, to what extent was all of your education worth the personal investment of time?



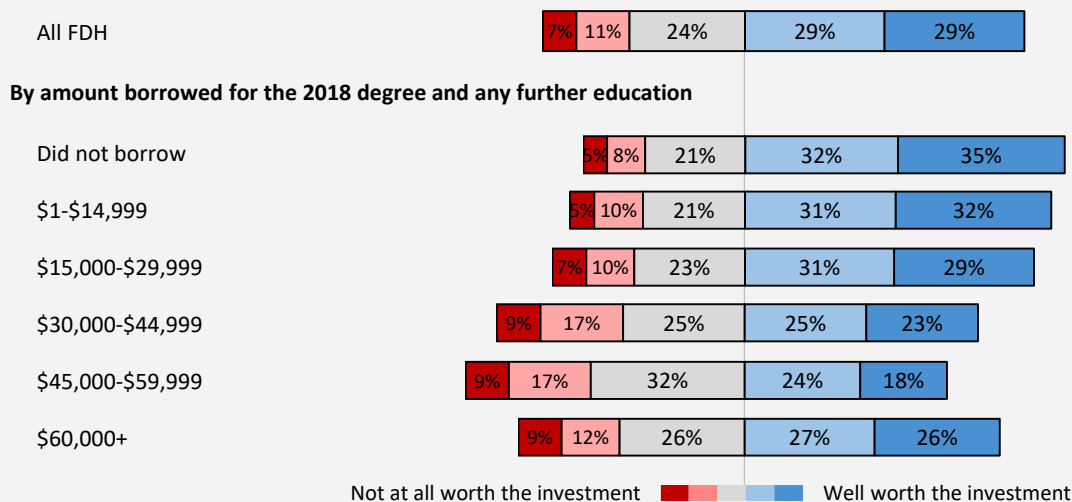
* Selected 4 or 5 on a five-point scale.

† Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

FDH who borrowed \$30,000 or more for all their post-secondary education were significantly less likely to say that their education was worth the financial investment.

Fifty-nine percent of all FDH said that their university education was worth the financial investment required.* Overall, the less graduates borrowed to finance their 2018 degree and further education, the more likely they were to value the financial investment they made in their university education.† More than half (53%) of those who borrowed \$60,000 or more said that the money they invested in their education was worth it. Many of those at the highest borrowing range are pursuing professional degrees such as a health doctorate and are expected to work in careers with a high return on their financial investment.⁴

When you look back at the university education you completed in 2018, and your experience since, to what extent was all of your education worth the financial investment?



* Selected 4 or 5 on a five-point scale.

† Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

What you should know about this study

Data for the analyses were extracted from the Graduate Outcomes Survey of the Class of 2018 Maritime university graduates. The survey was conducted between September and December 2020. This report is limited to graduates who enrolled in a bachelor's degree without prior post-secondary credentials and graduated with their first degree in 2018 (first-degree holders). The sample size was 2,437, with a margin of error of ± 2.0 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. All statistics presented in this report have been generated from weighted data on the basis of the university of graduation and gender. Statistics in charts may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Statistical differences were determined using Chi-square tests (SPSS version 26).

More information on the profile of the Class of 2018 graduates can be found here:

http://www.mphec.ca/media/201943/Class-of-2018-in-2020_Profile-of-First-Degree-Holders_Trends.pdf

Major fields of study are grouped into two broad categories for analytical purposes: applied or professional programs and liberal arts and sciences. A list of fields of study comprising each category can be found at:

<http://www.mphec.ca/media/84665/DisciplineClustersCIP.pdf>

References

1. MPHEC. 2015. *Higher education expectations: The view from grade 12*. Trends in Maritime Higher Education. Vol. 12, No. 2.
2. MPHEC. 2021. *How were recent Maritime university graduates impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic?* Infographic.
3. MPHEC. 2020. *The Class of 2012 six years on: Pursuing education after a first degree*. Trends in Maritime Higher Education. Vol. 17, No. 2.
4. MPHEC. 2020. *Class of 2012 Maritime university graduates: Borrowing and debt six years after graduation*. Trends in Maritime Higher Education. Vol. 17, No. 3.

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