

# TRENDS IN MARITIME HIGHER EDUCATION

Volume 19, Number 4

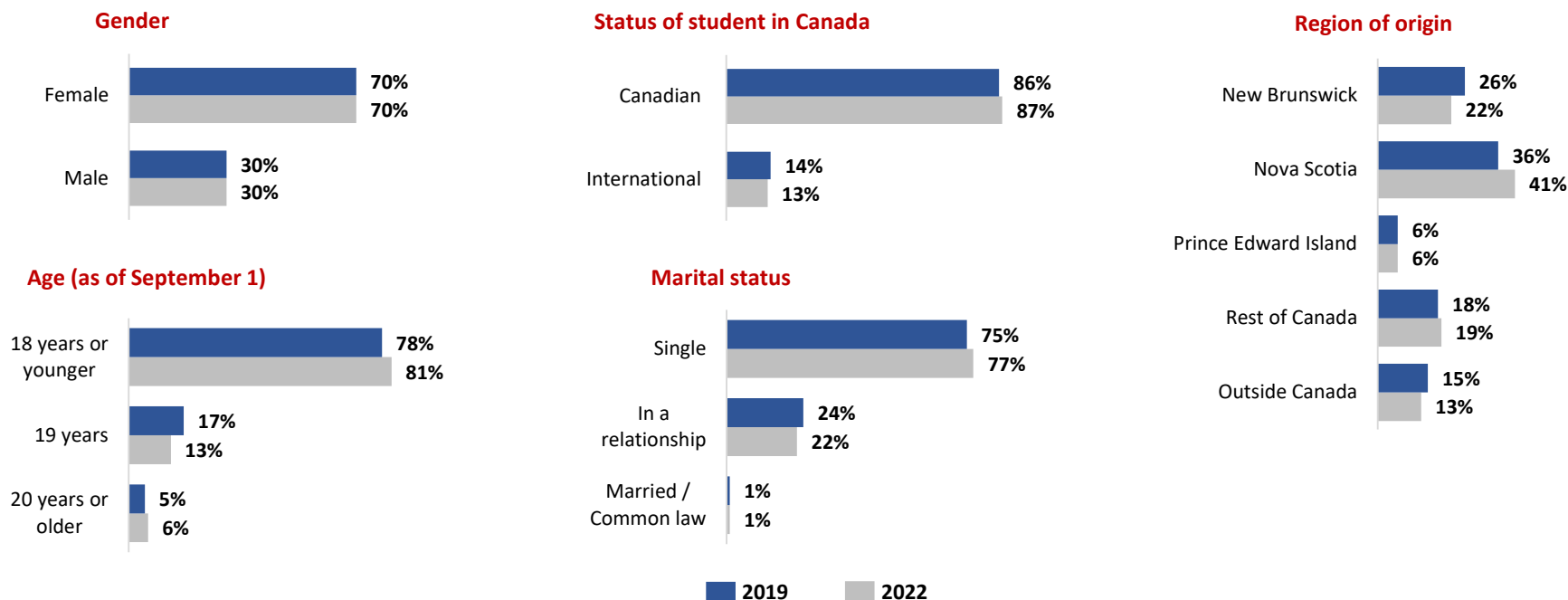
December 2022

## The First-Year University Student Population in the Maritimes: 2018-2019 and 2021-2022

This report presents the profile and experiences of first-year students who started their post-secondary education at a Maritime university during the 2018-2019 and 2021-2022 academic years. All Maritime universities offering a bachelor's degree participated in the Canadian University Survey Consortium 2019 and 2022 surveys of first-year students as part of a collaboration group. The results of these surveys offer valuable insight into students' demographic characteristics, academic and employment profile, reasons to attend university as well as their satisfaction with their first-year experience. The Commission, in consultation with the Maritime collaboration group, conducted further analyses by parental educational attainment and by students' region of origin. The report provides additional breakdowns of designated ethnic and racial groups and persons with disabilities or impairments. It is important to note that the 2019 Survey was conducted before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, while the 2022 Survey was conducted while there were restrictions in place to manage the impact of COVID-19. Overall, the results between the two cohorts are quite similar. However, there are few notable differences that have been highlighted in the report.

### Demographic profile

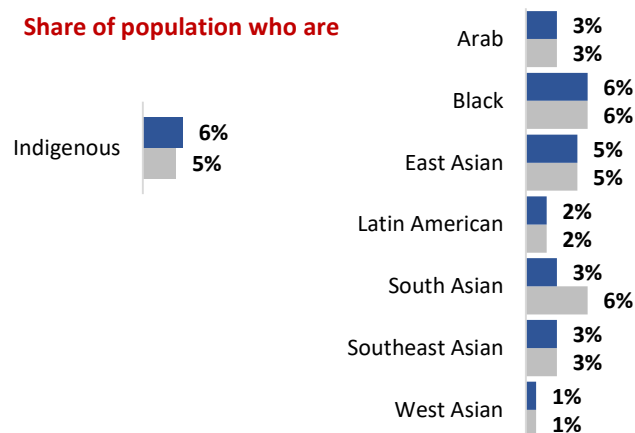
In 2019 and 2022, first-year students in Maritime universities were predominantly female, Canadian, 18 years of age or younger, single, and from the Maritime provinces. The percentage of students from the Maritimes remained unchanged between the two surveys at 68%, but the share of New Brunswickers decreased and the share of Nova Scotians increased in 2022 compared to 2019.



### Indigenous identity and ethnic groups

The percentage of students who self-identified as being indigenous was slightly lower in 2022 compared to 2019. The percentage of South Asians doubled from 3% in 2019 to 6% in 2022. This is likely due to the increase in International students coming from India. Between 2018-2019 and 2021-2022, the overall enrolment from India increased by 81%<sup>1</sup>.

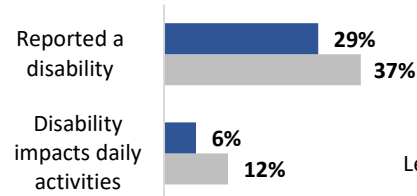
#### Share of population who are



### Disabilities and impairments

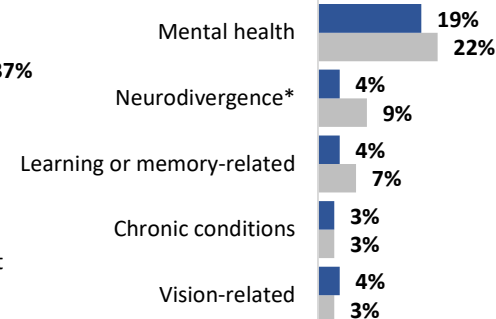
The percentage of students who reported a disability or impairment increased from 29% in 2019 to 37% in 2022. Mental health was the most commonly reported disability or impairment. In 2022, 12% of students indicated that their daily activities are always limited by their disability or impairment, which is double the percentage from 2019. These findings may not be surprising given the negative impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on students' mental health and well-being during the 2021-2022 academic year.

#### Disabilities and impairments



\*In 2019, only data on attention deficit disorder were collected.

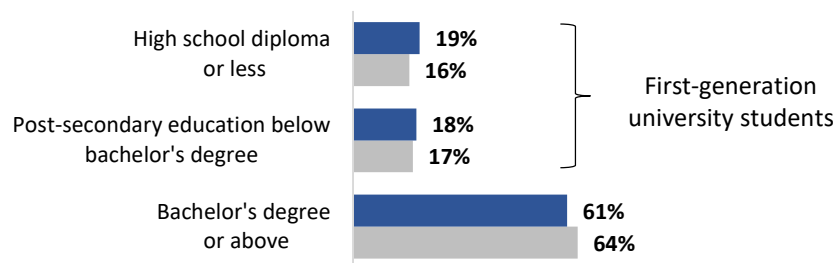
#### Most commonly reported disabilities



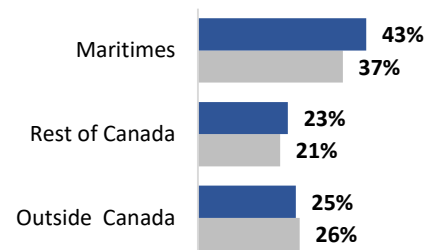
### Parental educational attainment

About one third of students were first-generation university students, that is, a student whose parents or guardians did not complete a university degree. Maritimers attending a Maritime university were significantly more likely to be first-generation university students than students who were from outside the Maritime region. This may be because first-generation university students are more likely to study close to home than students with university-educated parents.

#### Parental educational attainment



#### Percentage of first-generation university students by region of origin†



†Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

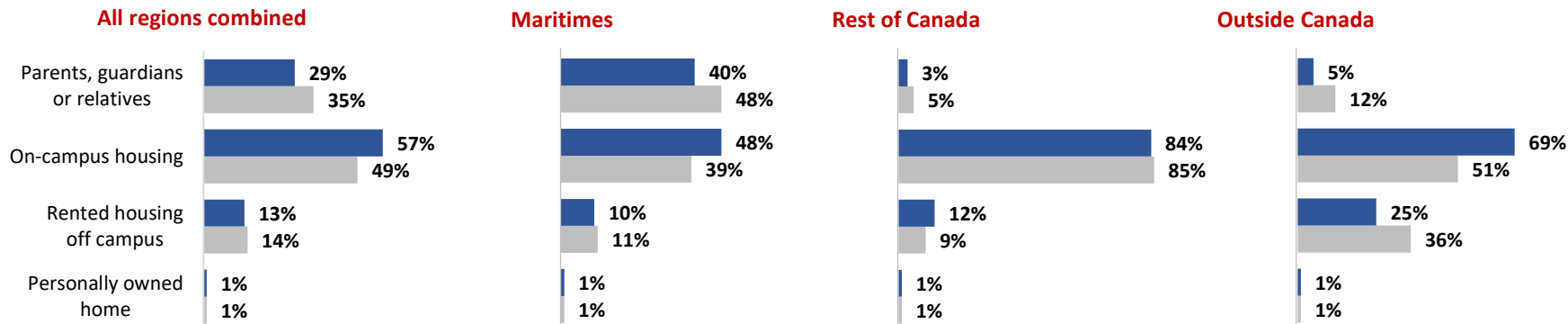
■ 2019

■ 2022

### Living arrangements

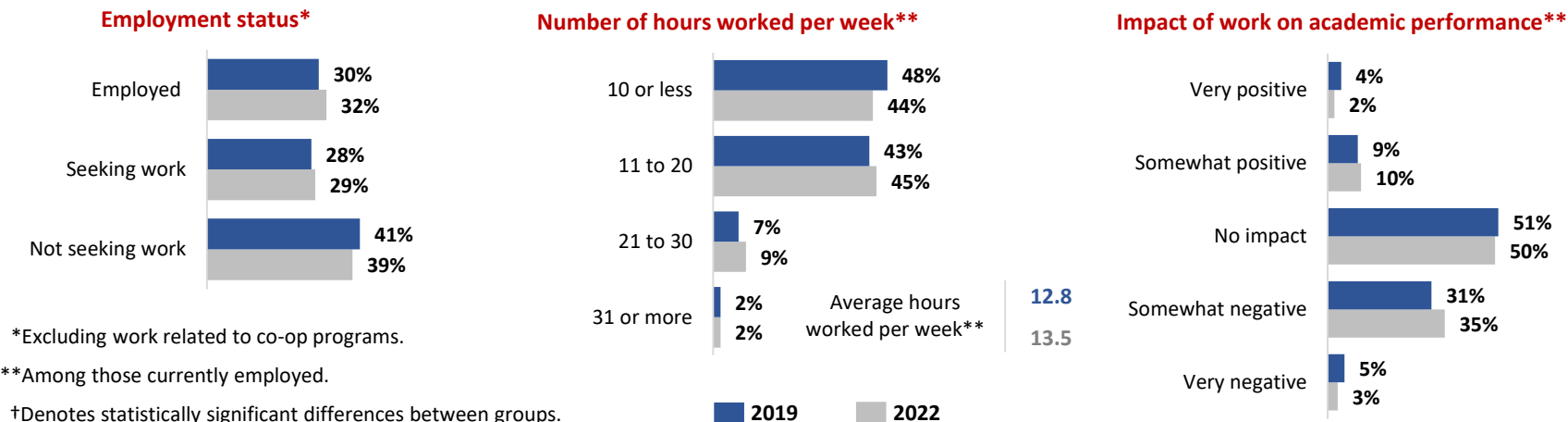
In 2019, 29% of first-year students were living with their family, compared to 35% in 2022. Those living independently were most likely to be residing on campus. In 2019, more than half (57%) of first-year students were living in on-campus housing. COVID-19 safety protocols put in place in university residences, such as occupancy limits, may explain, at least in part, the decrease in the percentage of students who were living on campus in 2022 (49%) compared to 2019. Students from the rest of Canada were significantly more likely to be living in on-campus housing than those from outside Canada. Among those not living on campus, the same percentage of students (31%) in 2019 and 2022 said they would choose to live on campus if given the opportunity.

### Current living arrangements by region of origin†



### Working while studying

About three in 10 first-year students were employed at the time of the survey. Among those who were employed, more than one third said their employment had a somewhat or very negative impact on their academic performance.



\*Excluding work related to co-op programs.

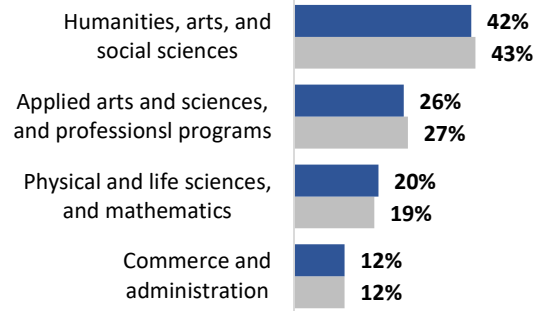
\*\*Among those currently employed.

†Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

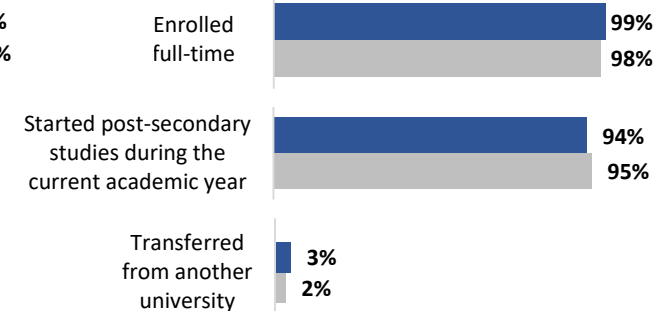
### Academic profile

Humanities, arts, and social sciences students made up the highest percentage of first-year students. This discipline cluster includes students enrolled in a general Bachelor of Arts program who have yet to declare a major. The majority of students were attending full-time, started their post-secondary studies during the current academic year at their university, and did not transfer from another institution.

### Percentage of students by discipline cluster



### Percentage of enrolment of first-year students



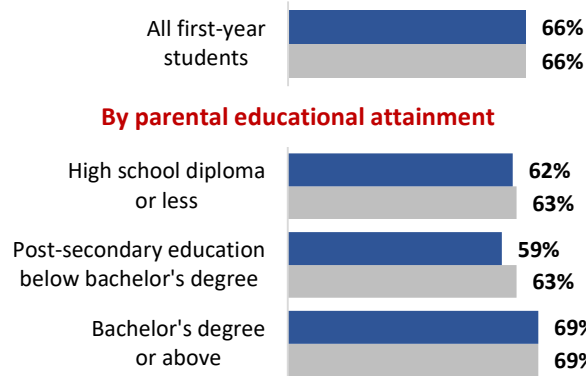
### Applying to university

Two thirds of first-year students applied to a university other than the one they were currently attending. Students from the Maritimes were significantly less likely than those from the rest of Canada or outside Canada to have applied to other universities.

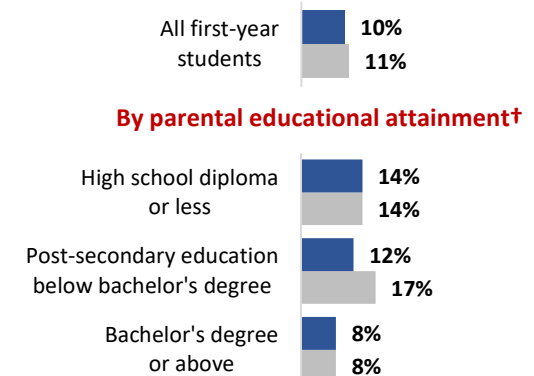
In addition to their current university, one in 10 also applied to a college or CEGEP. Students whose parental educational attainment was a bachelor's degree or above were significantly less likely than other students to have applied to a college or CEGEP. Also, students from outside Canada were significantly more likely than those from the Maritimes or the rest of Canada to have applied to a college or CEGEP.

Although many students applied elsewhere, the vast majority said they were attending their first choice university.

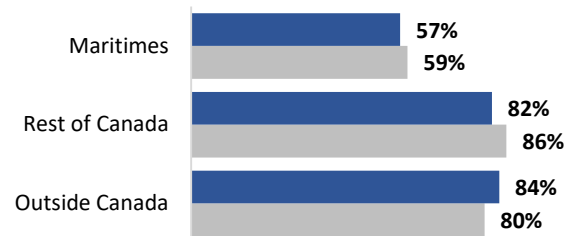
### Percentage who applied to other universities



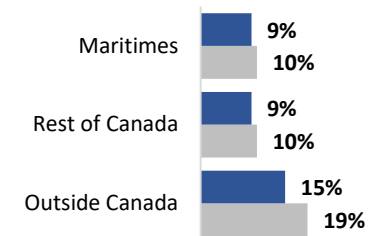
### Percentage who applied to a college or CEGEP



### By region of origin†



### By region of origin†



†Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

■ 2019 ■ 2022

### Factors influencing university decisions

Employment-related reasons were the most important motivators for attending university. More than a third of students chose *preparing for a specific job or career* as the most important reason to attend university.

First-year students at Maritime universities selected *their university has the program they wanted to take* as the most important reason for selecting their current university.

### Financial awards and assistance

Over 70% of first-year students received a financial award from their university. Among those who received an award, over one third said they would not have been able to attend university without this financial assistance.

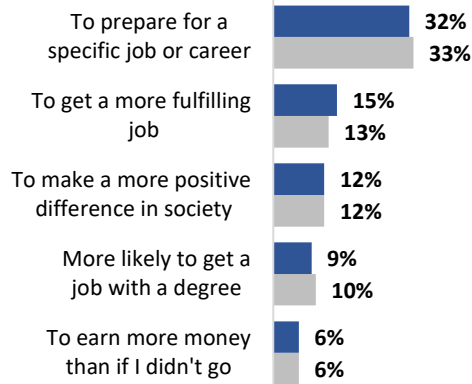
First generation university students were significantly more likely to say that they would not have been able to attend university without the financial assistance they received than those whose parental educational attainment was a bachelor's degree or above.

Students from the Maritimes were significantly more likely to report receiving a financial award or bursary from their university than students from the rest of Canada or those from outside Canada.

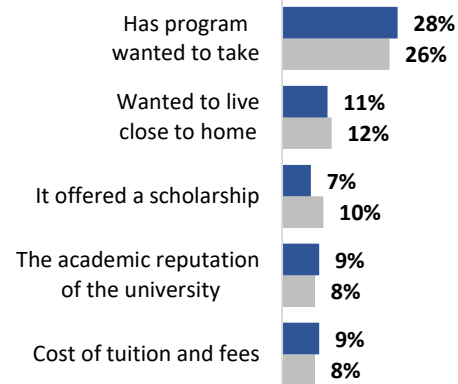
\*Among those who received a financial award or bursary from their university.

†Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

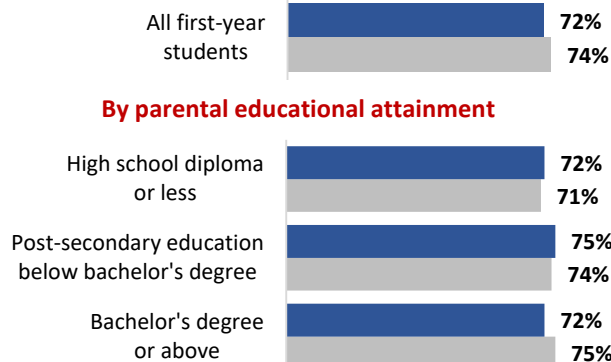
### Top motivator for attending university



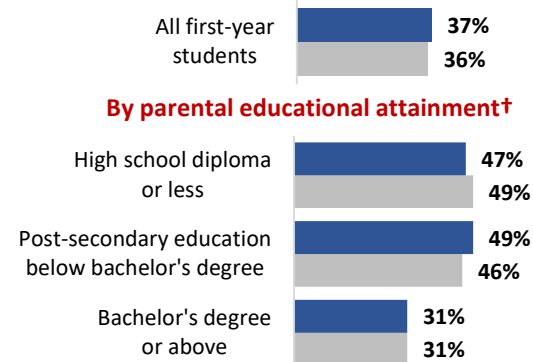
### Top reason for choosing this university



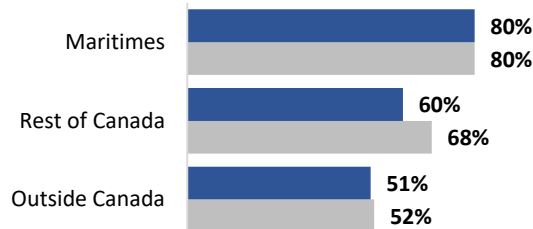
### Percentage who received a financial award or bursary from their university



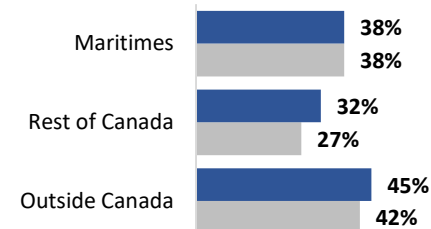
### Percentage who said they would not have been able to attend without this financial assistance\*



### By region of origin†



### By region of origin

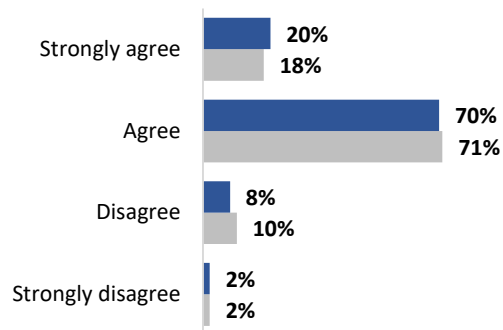


■ 2019 ■ 2022

### Experience and satisfaction with the first year of university education

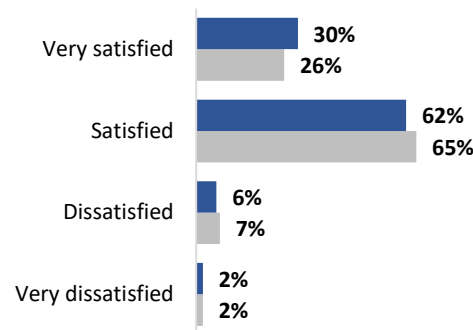
Generally, students at Maritime universities reported having a positive experience in their first year of university. Around 90% of students agreed that they were generally satisfied with the quality of teaching they received, and a similar percentage said they were satisfied with their decision to attend their university. When asked to summarize their overall experience to date, first-year students were more likely to say their university experience exceeded rather than fell short of their expectations. The percentage of students who reported that their experience at their university met or exceeded their expectations decreased from 87% in 2019 to 83% in 2022, although this difference is not statistically significant. Eight in 10 students agreed that they were in the right program and felt like they belong at their universities.

#### Generally satisfied with quality of teaching received



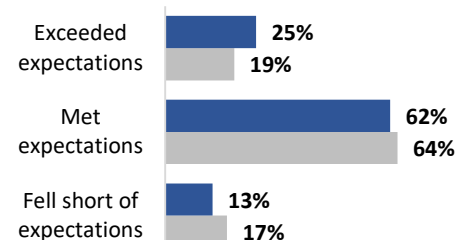
\*Percent rating agree or strongly agree.

#### Satisfaction with decision to attend this university



\*\*Percent rating some or very much.

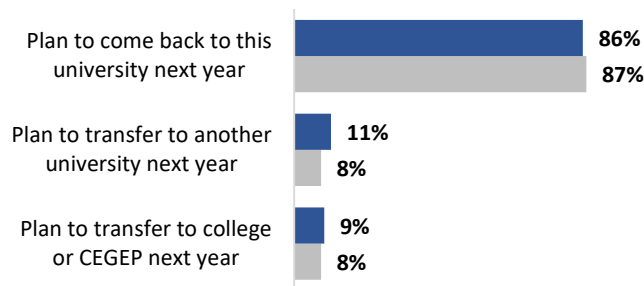
#### Overall experience to date



#### Future plans

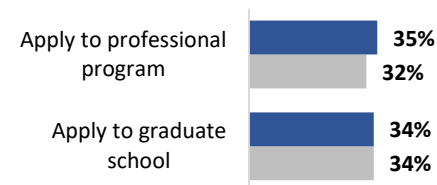
The majority of students planned to come back to their university the following year. About one in 10 planned to transfer to another university and almost one in 10 planned to go to college or CEGEP the following year. Although it is early in their post-secondary studies, about one third of students planned to apply to a professional program after graduating with their bachelor's degree and one third planned to apply to graduate school.

#### Plans for the next academic year\*



\*Percent rating agree or strongly agree.

#### Post-graduation plans



■ 2019 ■ 2022

### What you should know about these data

#### Data Sources

**The 2019 Canadian University Survey Consortium (CUSC) Survey of First-Year Students:** The survey was completed by over 18,000 students from 47 universities across Canada, including 3,620 students from 14 Maritime universities between January and April 2019. The overall response rate of participating Maritime universities was 38.1%, which was higher than the national average of 34.1%.

**The 2022 CUSC Survey of First-Year Students:** The survey was completed by over 15,000 students from 45 participating universities across Canada, including 3,235 students from 14 Maritime universities between January and April 2022. The overall response rate of participating Maritime universities was 32.6%, which was higher than the national average of 30.9%.

**First-year student population size and response rates by Maritime university**

University	2019 Survey			2022 Survey		
	Population	Completed surveys	Response rate	Population	Completed surveys	Response rate
Acadia University	744	278	37.4%	864	246	28.5%
Cape Breton University	384	226	58.9%	313	119	38.0%
Dalhousie University	2,262	767	33.9%	2,768	945	34.1%
Mount Allison University	624	187	30.0%	682	123	18.0%
Mount Saint Vincent University	296	86	29.1%	301	84	27.9%
NSCAD University	178	74	41.6%	157	47	29.9%
Saint Mary's University	879	262	29.8%	1,036	286	27.6%
Université Sainte-Anne	68	25	36.8%	34	13	38.2%
St. Francis Xavier University	865	255	29.5%	923	138	15.0%
St. Thomas University	393	205	52.2%	316	147	46.5%
Université de Moncton	726	417	57.4%	682	410	60.1%
University of King's College	197	112	56.9%	231	77	33.3%
University of New Brunswick	1,151	426	37.0%	873	305	34.5%
University of Prince Edward Island	725	300	41.4%	750	295	39.3%
<b>All Maritime universities</b>	<b>9,492</b>	<b>3,620</b>	<b>38.1%</b>	<b>9,930</b>	<b>3,235</b>	<b>32.6%</b>

Detailed information on survey methodology, including questionnaire content and the national level reports, can be found on [CUSC's website](#).

Reports comparing the results of Maritime universities to non-Maritime universities are available on the [MPHEC website](#). These reports, prepared by Prairie Research Associates for the MPHEC, present the results using the CUSC classifications and groupings.

#### Notes

- All statistics presented in this report have been generated from weighted data on the basis of the university of study.
- Statistics in the charts may not add up to 100% due to rounding.
- Statistical differences were determined using Chi-square tests (SPSS version 26). In order to term a difference as statistically significant, the Pearson's chi-square must have the probability of a type 1 error of less than .001 and either the Phi coefficient or Cramer's V must have a value of .150 or greater.
- Non-responses have been excluded from the analyses.

## Definitions and notes

### **Gender**

This variable is obtained from the universities' administrative data. Hence, it is possible that sometimes the only information available is "sex at birth" in which case it is used as a proxy for "gender." Also, some institutions include "non-binary genders" in the "unknown gender" category for the gender variable provided in their files which makes it impossible to publish data on non-binary population.

### **Status of student in Canada**

- Canadian: Canadian citizens or permanent residents
- International: non-Canadian student who does not have "permanent resident" status

### **Region of origin**

All Maritime universities participated as part of a collaboration group, which allows the addition of questions of mutual interest to the group. Students reported their permanent home prior to enrolling at the university. Students are grouped into three categories:

- Maritimes: permanent home is in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia or Prince Edward Island,
- Rest of Canada: permanent home is in another Canadian Province, and
- Outside Canada: permanent home is not in Canada.

### **Parental educational attainment**

This measure is a proxy for socioeconomic status that combines the parents' or guardians' highest level of education, and the category is based on the highest level. Parental educational attainment comprises three categories:

- High school diploma or less (Includes "Less than high school", "High school graduate", "Some college, CEGEP or technical school" and "Some university"),
- Post-secondary education below bachelor's degree (includes "College, CEGEP or technical school graduate"), and
- Bachelor's degree or above (includes "Undergraduate university degree", "Professional degree", "Graduate degree").

### **Discipline cluster**

Major fields of study are grouped into four broad categories:

- Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences,
- Physical and Life Sciences and Mathematics,
- Applied Arts and Sciences or Professional programs, and
- Commerce and Administration.

Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) codes were provided by institutions in the CUSC sample file and were reclassified to conform to the four discipline clusters used by MPHEC. A list of CIP codes comprising each discipline cluster may be found here: <http://www.mphec.ca/media/84665/DisciplineClustersCIP.pdf>

## References

1. MPHEC enrolment statistics. Table 6: Enrolment of International Students by Province of Study and Country of Citizenship, 2017-2018 to 2021-2022.

## Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission

P.O. Box 6000  
82 Westmorland Street  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5H1



Telephone: (506) 453-2844  
Email: [mphec@mphec.ca](mailto:mphec@mphec.ca)

[www.mphec.ca](http://www.mphec.ca)