

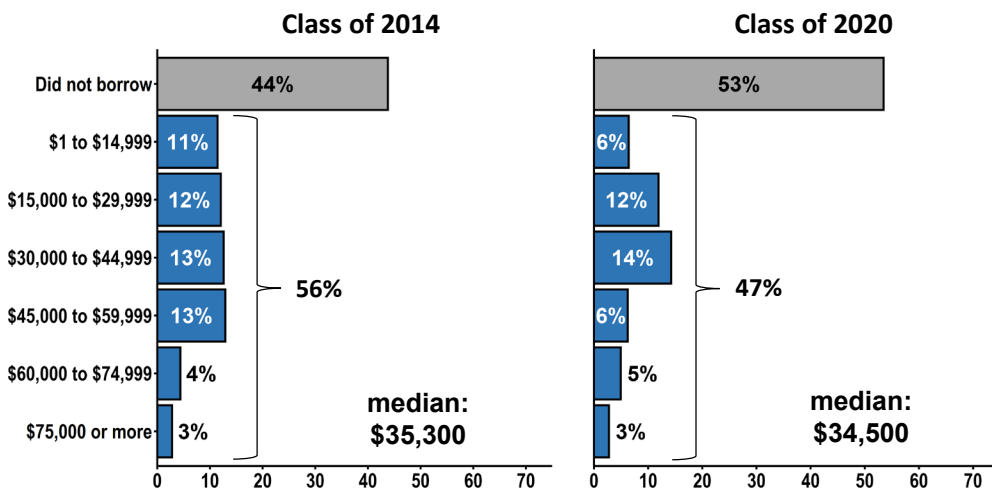
For many students, paying for a university education (i.e., tuition and fees) and associated living costs requires borrowing money. This could be for their first bachelor's degree or any education pursued after a first degree. The sources of money vary across graduates but typically include governments, banks, and family members. This report presents an overview of Class of 2020 first-degree holders (FDH) borrowing for their 2020 degree and any education they pursued after, and their debt status two years after graduation.

A comparison of the Class of 2020 to the Class of 2014 is shown on the right (the MPHEC's report on borrowing and debt for the Class of 2014 is [here](#)). A lower proportion of Class of 2020 FDH borrowed to finance their first degree than Class of 2014 FDH. Among borrowers, the amounts borrowed were similar between the classes. Two years after graduation, a larger proportion of Class of 2020 FDH had no debt from the first degree than did their Class of 2014 peers, and among those still owing they owed \$1,400 less.

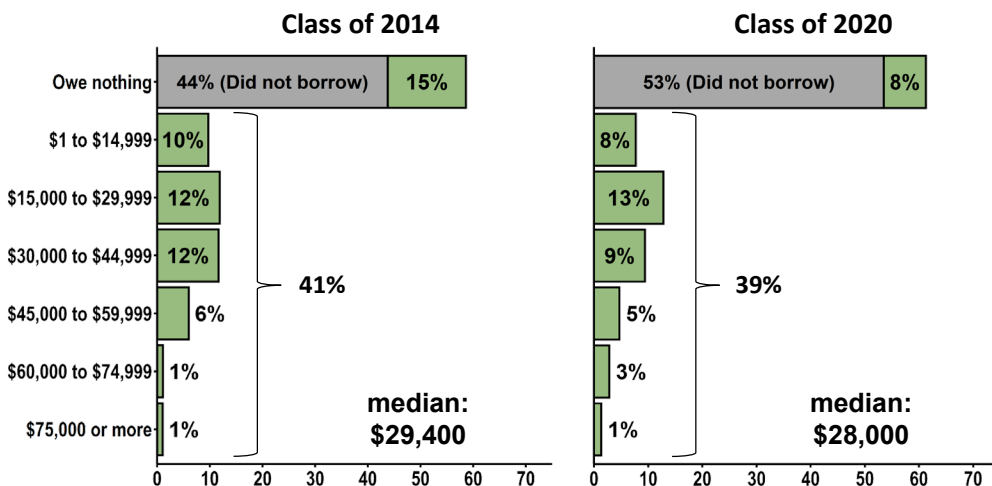
Notes:

- Median amount borrowed excludes graduates who did not borrow; unless otherwise noted, amounts are from all sources combined (governments, banks or other financial institutions, family, and other sources).
- Median amounts owing excludes graduates who did not borrow and those who had entirely repaid their debt.
- All amounts are in constant 2022 dollars, rounded to the nearest \$100.
- Statistics may not sum to 100 % due to rounding.
- The data presented here are for first-degree holders (FDH), that is those who enrolled in their degree without a prior post-secondary credential, who provided information on their amounts borrowed *and* owing. All statistics have been generated from weighted data; data are weighted by university of graduation and gender.
- Samples:
Class of 2014 in 2016: n = 1,986
Class of 2020 in 2022: n = 1,942

Amount borrowed to finance the first degree



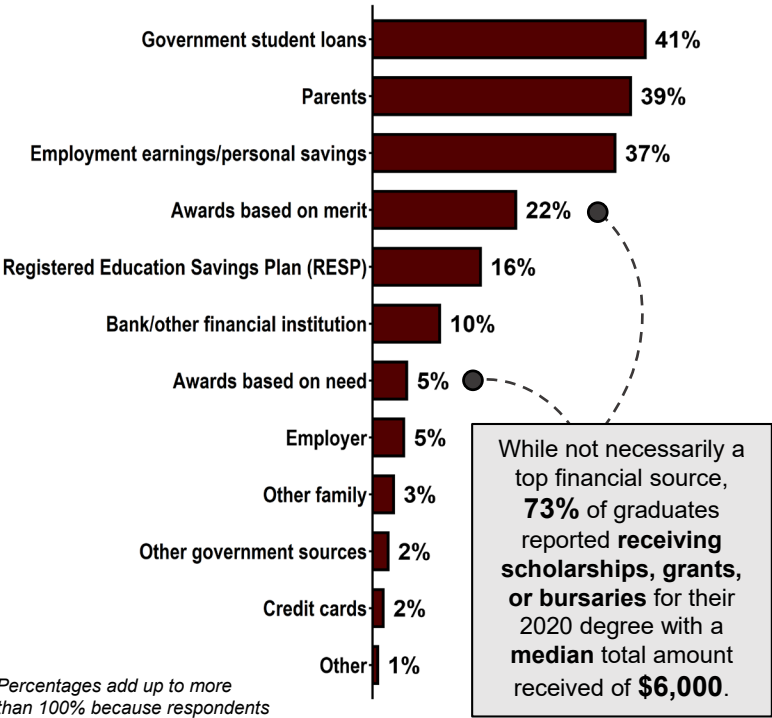
Amount owing on funds borrowed for the first degree



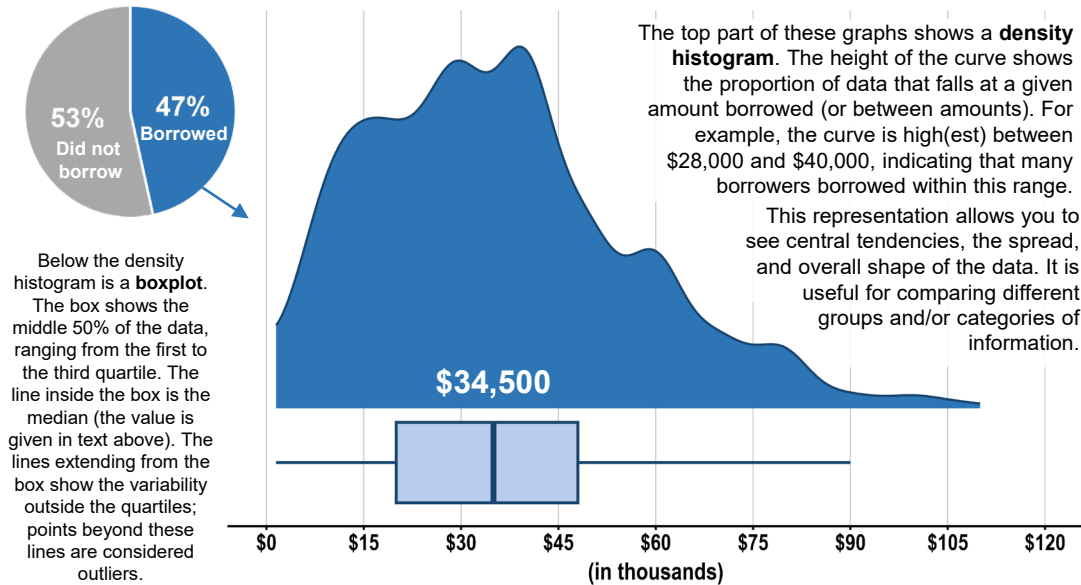
Less than half (47%) of all Class of 2020 first-degree holders reported borrowing to finance their 2020 degree. Two years after graduation, 8% of borrowers had fully repaid their debt, meaning **61% of the Class of 2020 FDH had no debt from their 2020 degree**. Overall, 19% of the funds borrowed had been repaid.

Graduates relied on a range of sources to finance their degree, but the most often cited were government student loans, parents, and employment earnings and personal savings.

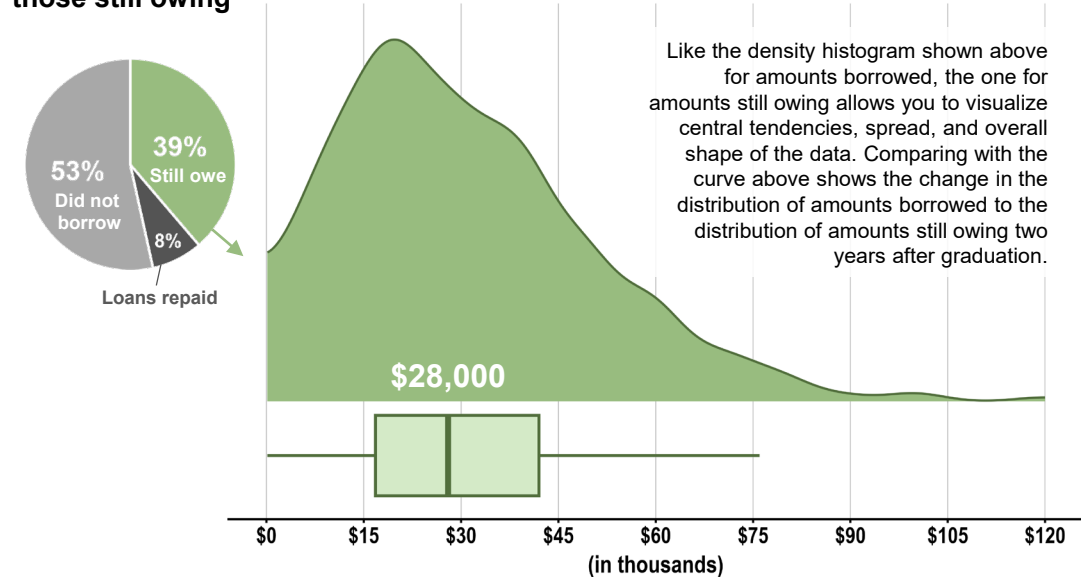
Top two sources for financing the 2020 degree



Distribution of amounts borrowed to finance the 2020 degree, among borrowers



Distribution of amounts owing on funds borrowed for the 2020 degree, among those still owing



KEY FACTOR RELATED TO BORROWING AND DEBT FOR THE 2020 DEGREE: REGION OF ORIGIN

First-degree holders who were **residing in the Maritimes** prior to starting their 2020 degree were **more likely to borrow** for the 2020 degree and those who borrowed, **borrowed more** than those who came from outside the region.

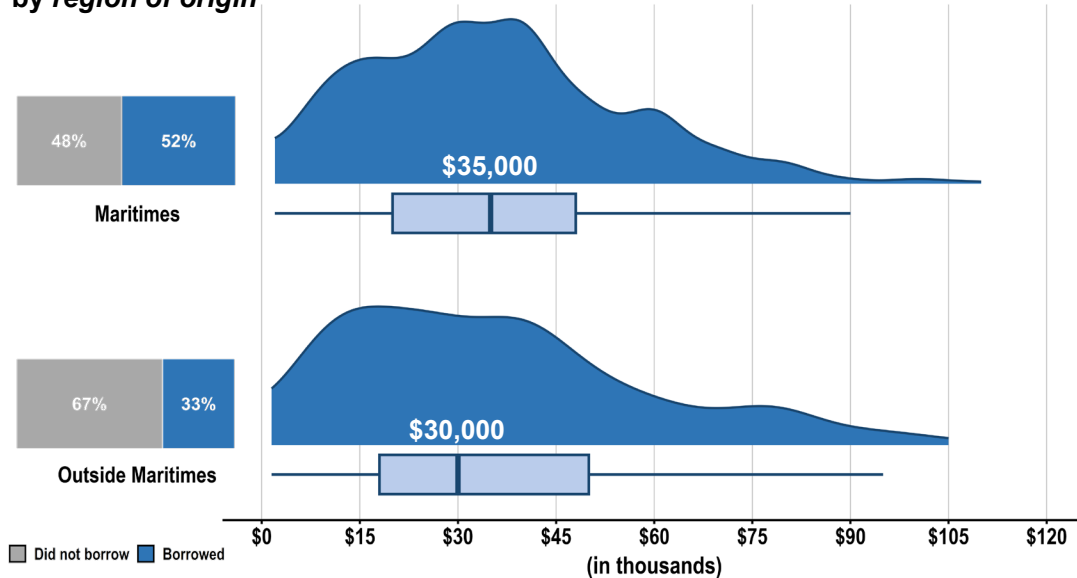
Two years after graduation, a **larger proportion of borrowers from the Maritimes had entirely repaid their debt** than had borrowers from outside the region. This is also reflected in the median amounts outstanding being the same, despite differing in their median amounts borrowed.

Origin	Borrowed	Median
Maritimes	52%	\$35,000
New Brunswick	57%	\$35,000
Nova Scotia	51%	\$32,000
Prince Edward Island	43%	\$36,100
Outside Maritimes	33%	\$30,000
Rest of Canada	39%	\$34,700
Outside Canada	18%	*

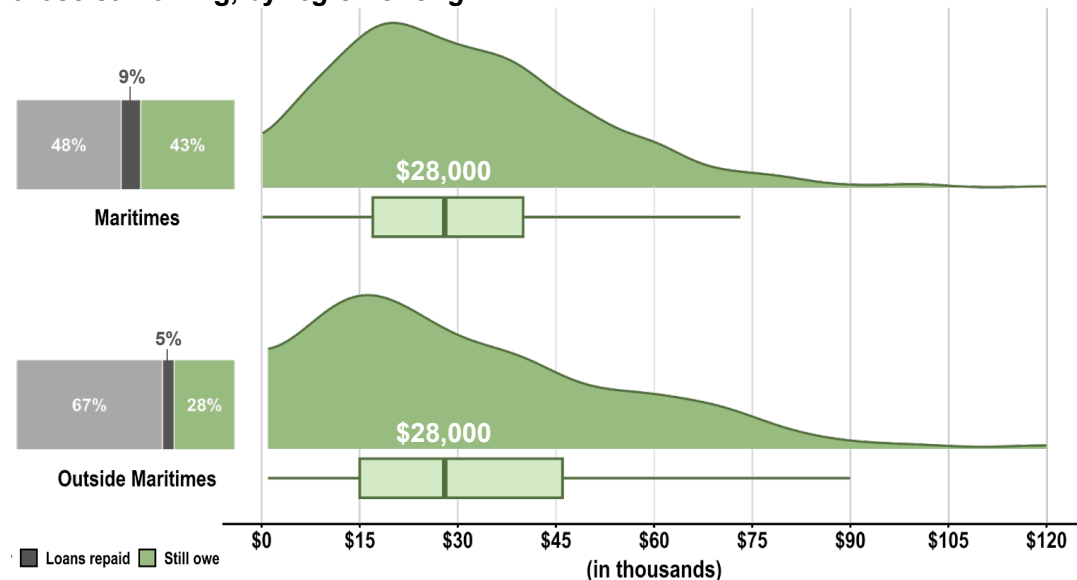
Origin	Still owe	Median
Maritimes	43%	\$28,000
New Brunswick	45%	\$30,000
Nova Scotia	43%	\$27,000
Prince Edward Island	35%	\$29,000
Outside Maritimes	28%	\$28,000
Rest of Canada	32%	\$30,000
Outside Canada	17%	*

* Data suppressed due to small subsample (unweighted n < 40)

Distribution of amounts borrowed to finance the 2020 degree, among borrowers, by region of origin



Distribution of amounts owing on funds borrowed for the 2020 degree, among those still owing, by region of origin



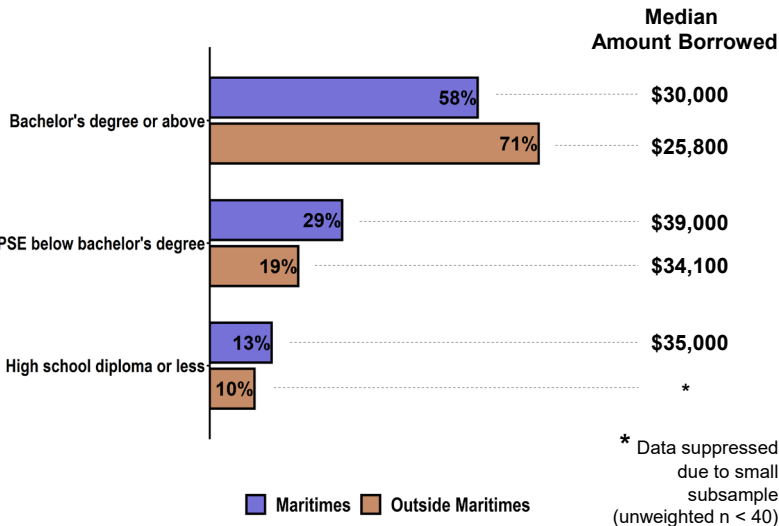
KEY FACTOR RELATED TO BORROWING AND DEBT FOR THE 2020 DEGREE: PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT (PEA)

First-degree holders whose PEA was a **bachelor's degree or above** were **much less likely to borrow** for the 2020 degree than those whose PEA was PSE below bachelor's degree or a high school diploma or less. Moreover, among borrowers, those whose PEA was a **bachelor's degree or above borrowed smaller amounts** than those from the other PEA groups.

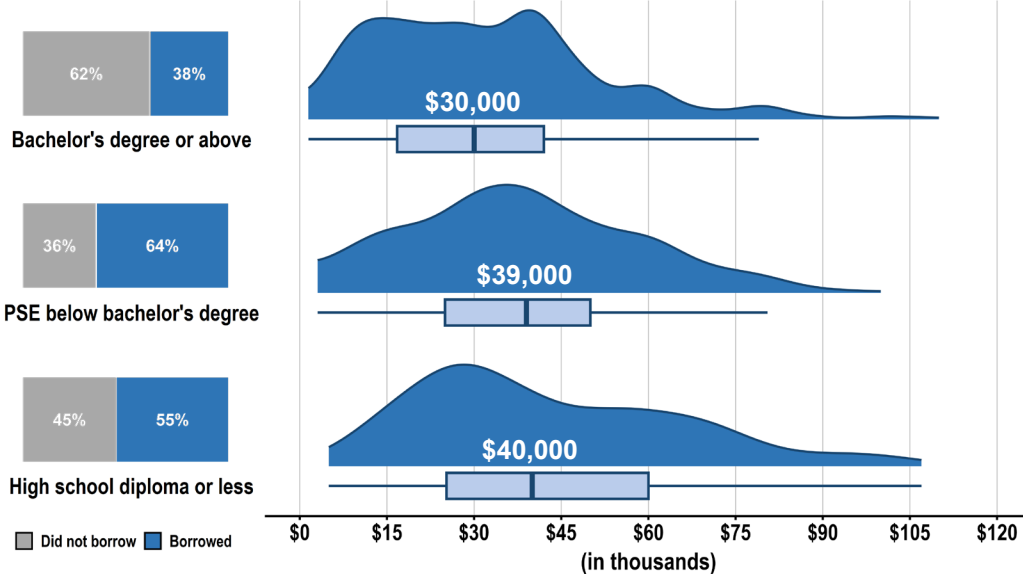
For debt repayment, having at least one parent with a **bachelor's degree or above** was **related with a higher likelihood of being free of debt** from the 2020 degree, and, if not debt free, having a **smaller median amount outstanding**.

Interaction between Region of Origin and PEA

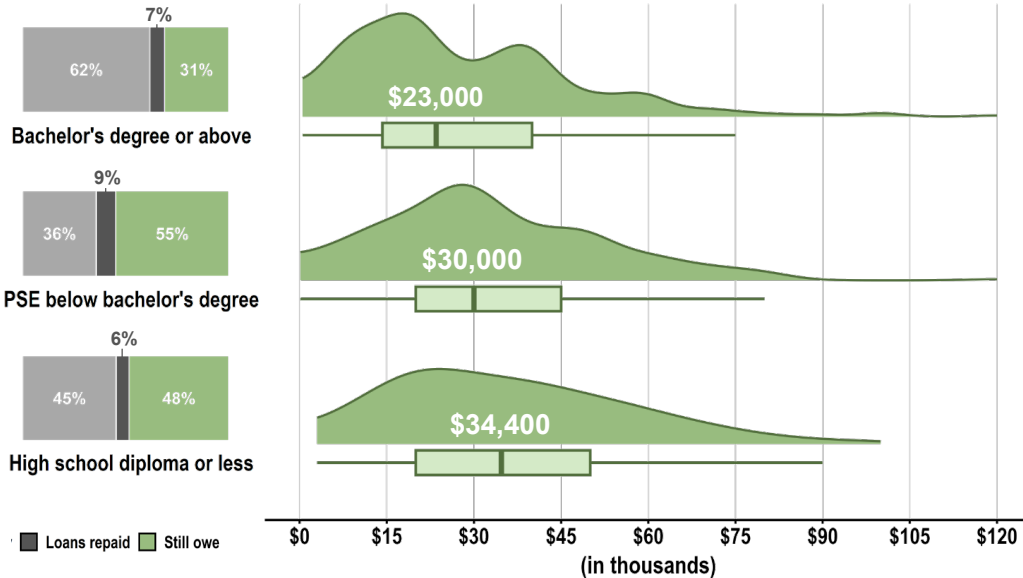
As can be seen in the figure below, which shows the distribution of FDH by region of origin and PEA, Maritimers are more likely to have parents or guardians whose educational attainment was PSE below bachelor's degree or high school diploma or less. These groups are more likely to borrow and borrow more to finance their education.



Distribution of amounts borrowed to finance the 2020 degree, among borrowers, by parents' educational attainment



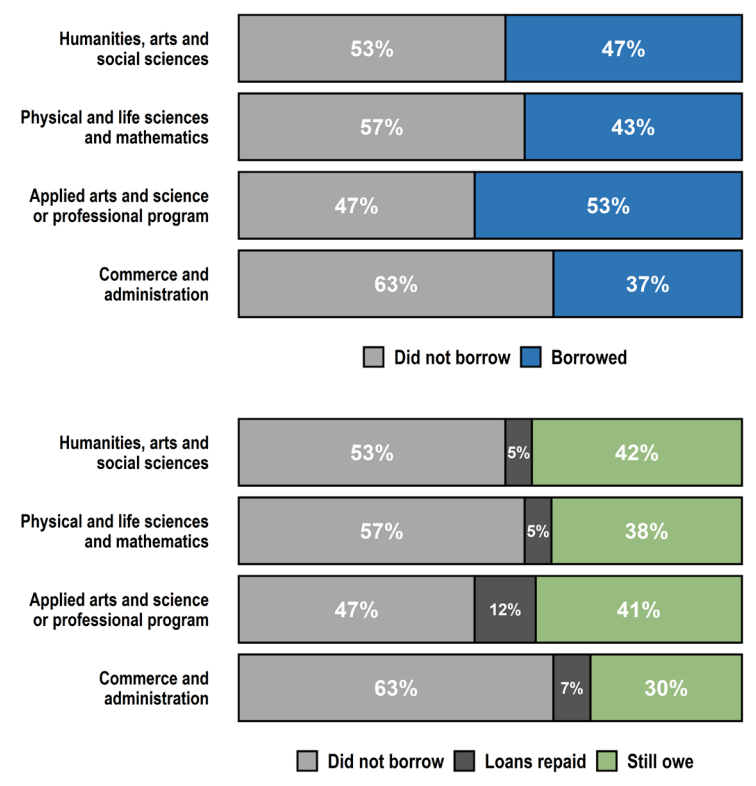
Distribution of amounts owing on funds borrowed for the 2020 degree, among those still owing, by parents' educational attainment



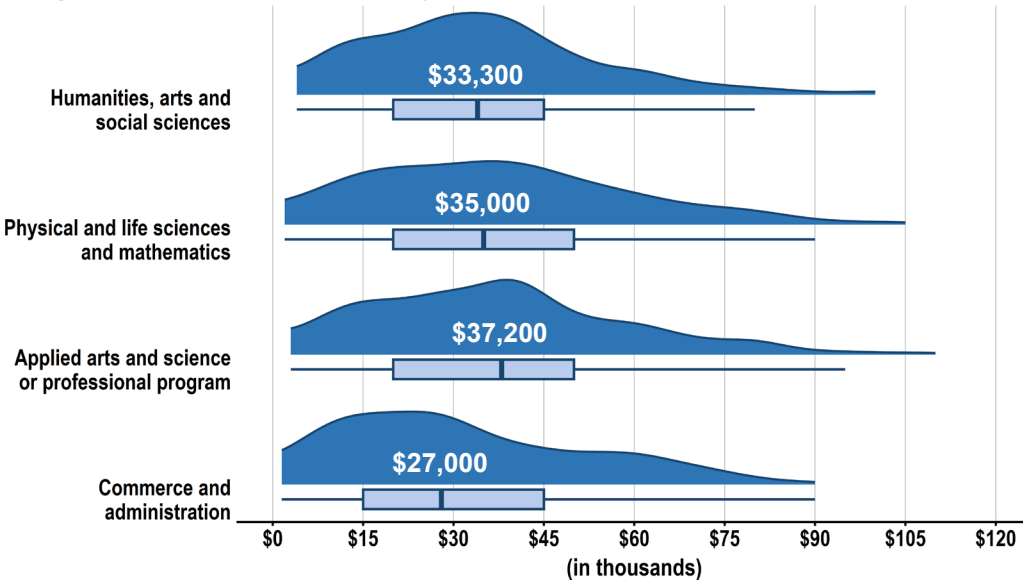
KEY FACTOR RELATED TO BORROWING AND DEBT FOR THE 2020 DEGREE: DISCIPLINE CLUSTER OF DEGREE

First-degree holders who completed a degree in *Commerce and Administration* were less likely to borrow and borrowed a smaller median amount than those from the other discipline clusters.

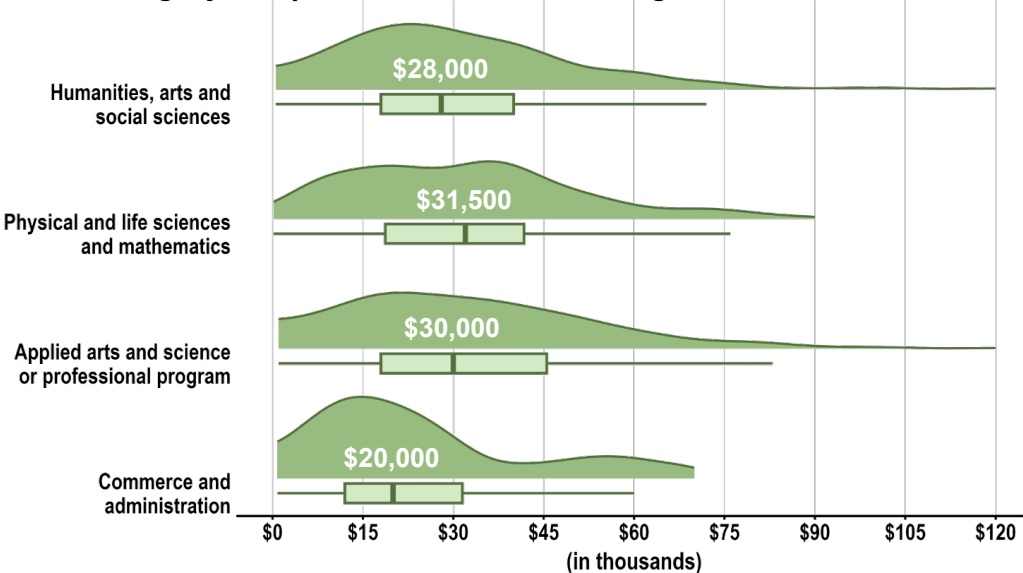
For debt repayment, FDH who completed an *Applied Arts and Science or Professional Program* degree were the most likely to have repaid their loans from the 2020 degree, leaving them with a median outstanding amount similar to those who completed degrees in the *Humanities, Arts and Sciences* and *Physical and Life Sciences and Mathematics*. *Commerce and Administration* graduates had the lowest outstanding amount, coinciding with their lower amount borrowed.



Distribution of amounts borrowed to finance the 2020 degree, among borrowers, by discipline cluster of the 2020 degree



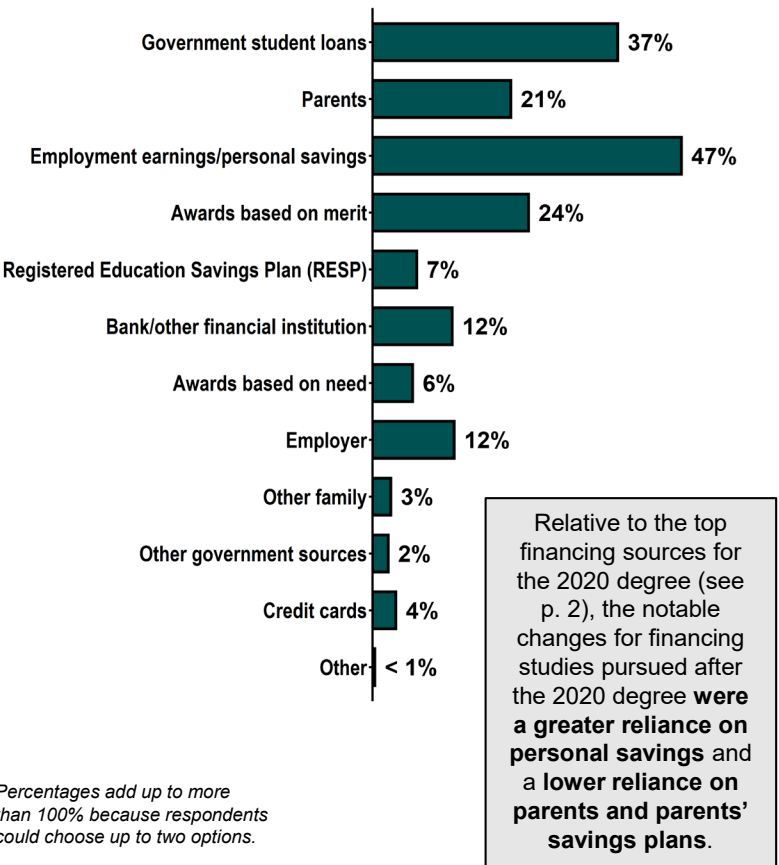
Distribution of amounts owing on funds borrowed for the 2020 degree, among those still owing, by discipline cluster of the 2020 degree



51% of the Class of 2020 first-degree holders pursued education after their 2020 degree. Those who borrowed funds to finance their 2020 degree were less likely to have pursued education (46% pursued) than those who did not borrow (55% pursued). Interestingly, among borrowers, those who pursued education after the 2020 degree had borrowed a larger median amount for their 2020 degree (\$35,000) than those who did not pursue further education (\$30,000).

For financing education pursued after the 2020 degree, **40% borrowed to finance their pursued studies**, borrowing a median amount of **\$20,000**. Graduates relied on a range of sources for the funds they borrowed, but the most often cited were Government student loans, and employment earnings and personal savings. Two years after graduation, **37% still had debt outstanding**, with a **median amount owing of \$20,000** (note that 58% of those who pursued further education were still enrolled in a program they pursued at the time of the survey).

Top two sources for financing post-2020 studies



	Among those who pursued post-2020 studies				
	Pursued post-2020 studies	Borrowed for post-2020 studies	Median amount borrowed for post-2020 studies	Still owe for post-2020 studies	Median amount owing for post-2020 studies
All First-degree holders	51%	40%	\$20,000	37%	\$20,000
Region of Origin					
Maritimes	50%	45%	\$20,000	42%	\$20,000
Outside Maritimes	51%	29%	\$20,000	28%	\$19,800
Parents Educational Attainment					
Bachelor's degree or above	53%	37%	\$20,000	35%	\$20,000
PSE below bachelor's level	49%	47%	\$20,000	44%	\$20,000
High school diploma or less	48%	45%	\$20,000	43%	\$20,000
Discipline Cluster					
Humanities, arts and social sciences	57%	42%	\$20,000	40%	\$20,000
Physical and life sciences and mathematics	71%	43%	\$20,000	40%	\$20,000
Applied arts and science or professional program	38%	44%	\$20,000	41%	\$20,000
Commerce and administration	43%	21%	\$20,000	20%	\$16,200

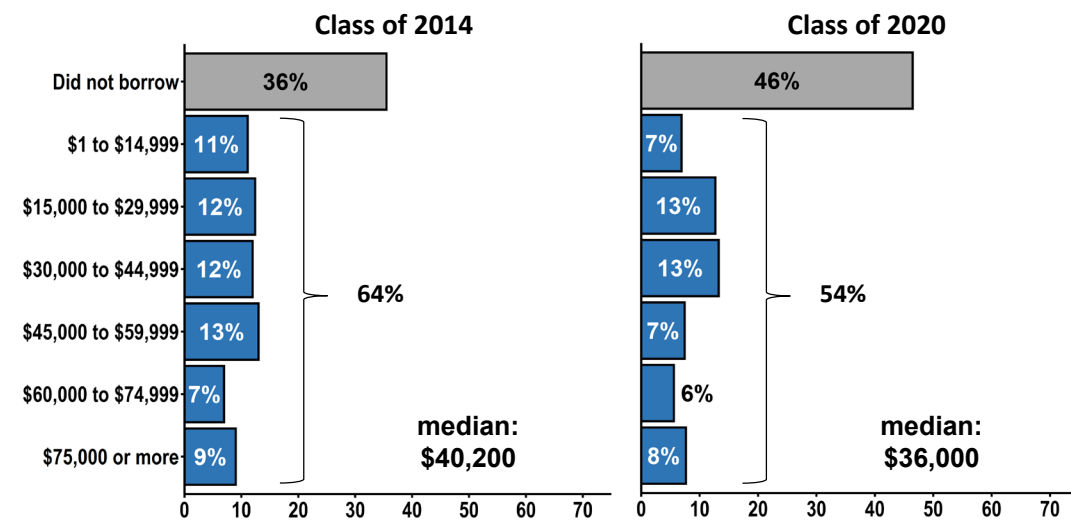
On the previous pages borrowing and debt to finance the 2020 degree and any education pursued within two years of graduating in 2020 were explored separately. Here, the *total borrowing and debt situation* of the Class of 2020 is shown (and compared with the Class of 2014), providing the overall financing picture, that is for the first degree *and* any education pursued after it, all sources combined.

More than half (54%) of all Class of 2020 first-degree holders reported borrowing to finance their education, with a median amount borrowed of \$36,000. Compared with their Class of 2014 peers, the proportion of Class of 2020 FDH who borrowed was 10 percentage points (p.p.) lower and the median amount borrowed was \$4,200 lower.

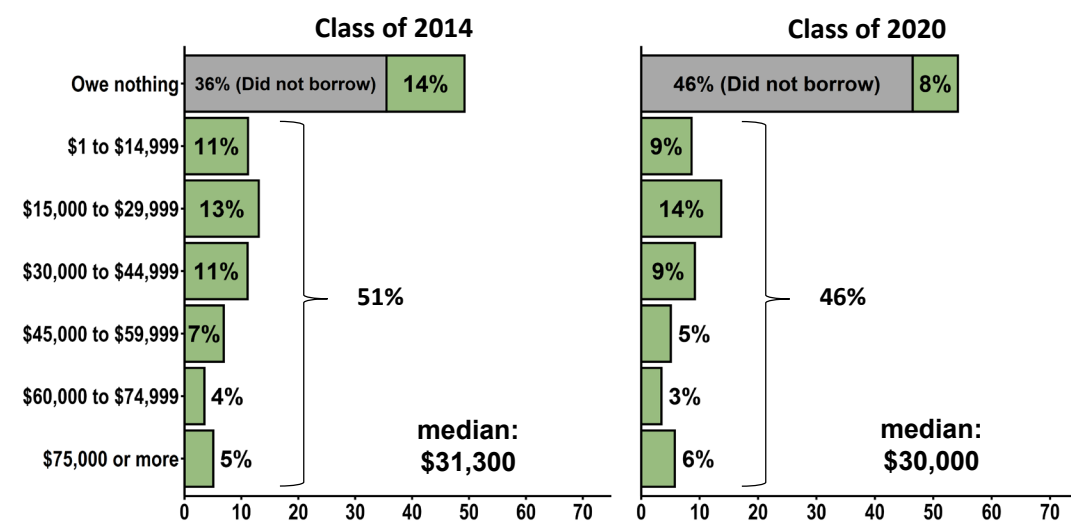
For the Class of 2020, among those who borrowed to finance their education (2020 degree and any studies pursued after) and had pursued studies after their 2020 degree, the total amount borrowed tended to come more from the amount borrowed for the 2020 degree. On average, 57% of the total amount borrowed was for financing the 2020 degree (note that for those who did not pursue further studies 100% of their total amount borrowed was for the 2020 degree).

Two years after graduation, 8% of Class of 2020 borrowers had fully repaid their debt, leaving **54% of the Class of 2020 free of education-related debt.** This is 4 p.p. higher than their Class of 2014 counterparts, at a similar point after graduation. Among the 46% of the Class of 2020 who still owed, the median amount outstanding was \$30,000, which is \$1,300 lower than the median amount outstanding among those in the Class of 2014 who still owed.

Amount borrowed to finance the first degree and any further education



Amount owing on funds borrowed for the first degree and any further education



The data for the analyses presented here were obtained from MPHEC Graduate Outcomes (GO) Survey of the Classes of 2014 and 2020. Both classes were surveyed between September and December, two years after graduation. The survey was offered in two modes, telephone and online, and was offered in both English and French. Detailed information about the GO Survey, including survey instruments, is available on [the MPHEC website: mphec.ca](https://www.mphec.ca).

The data presented here are for all first-degree holders, that is those who enrolled in their degree without a prior post-secondary credential, who provided information on their amounts borrowed *and* owing. All statistics have been generated from weighted data; data are weighted by university of graduation and gender. The margin of error for the sample is ± 1.8 percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

DEFINITIONS

Region of Origin

Graduates reported their region of residence in the 12 months before enrolling in the degree program from which they graduated in 2020.

Parents' Educational Attainment (PEA)

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.

- *High school diploma or less*
- *Post-secondary education (PSE) below bachelor's degree* (includes trade, college, CEGEP or hospital-based certificate or diploma, university certificate or diploma below the bachelor's level)
- *Bachelor's degree or above* (includes bachelor's, professional, master's or PhD degrees, and graduate level certificate or diploma)

Discipline Cluster

Major fields of study are grouped into four broad categories or clusters for analytical purposes. A list of fields of study comprising each discipline cluster is found [here](#).

Pursuit of Further Education

Graduates reported on their pursuit of an educational program of three months or more, leading towards a diploma, certificate, or degree after graduating with their bachelor's degree in 2020.

Borrowing

Graduates reported on their sources of funding for the degree program from which they graduated in 2020, and any further education that they pursued following that degree. Graduates who indicated borrowing to finance their education were categorized as *borrowers*. Funding sources included any or all of: government student loans, financial institutions/banks, family members, another source. Graduates reported the amount borrowed from each source. This information was used to calculate the median amounts borrowed in the report.

Owing

Graduates reported the amount of debt that they had remaining to each of the sources from which they had borrowed. This information was used to calculate the median amounts owing given in the report.

More information is available at the links below:

[MPHEC. Class of 2014 Profile of First-Degree Holders](#). Trends in Maritime Higher Education. Volume 14, Number 2. June 2017.

[MPHEC. Borrowing to Finance University Education: Class of 2014](#). Trends in Maritime Higher Education. Volume 15, Number 2. September 2018.

[MPHEC. Class of 2020 Profile of First-Degree Holders](#). Trends in Maritime Higher Education. Volume 20, Number 3. March 2023.