

FIRST YEAR STUDENT SURVEY 2010

HIGHLIGHTS OF RESULTS

PREPARED BY THE UNIVERSITY PLANNING OFFICE



**RYERSON
UNIVERSITY**

Everyone Makes a Mark

Introduction

Since 1997, Ryerson has been a member of the Canadian Undergraduate Survey Consortium, a group of approximately 30 universities across Canada that conducts student surveys across participating universities. In 2010, Ryerson, under the auspices of the Consortium, undertook the First-Year Student Survey. Students were asked about their decision to attend university and about their experiences at Ryerson. The survey was made available online to a sample of 1,200 students who came to Ryerson directly from secondary school. Students coming directly from secondary school represented about 72 percent of first-year students that year. The overall response rate is 29 percent. The sample size and the response rate contribute to an acceptable estimate of statistical error.¹

Decision to attend university

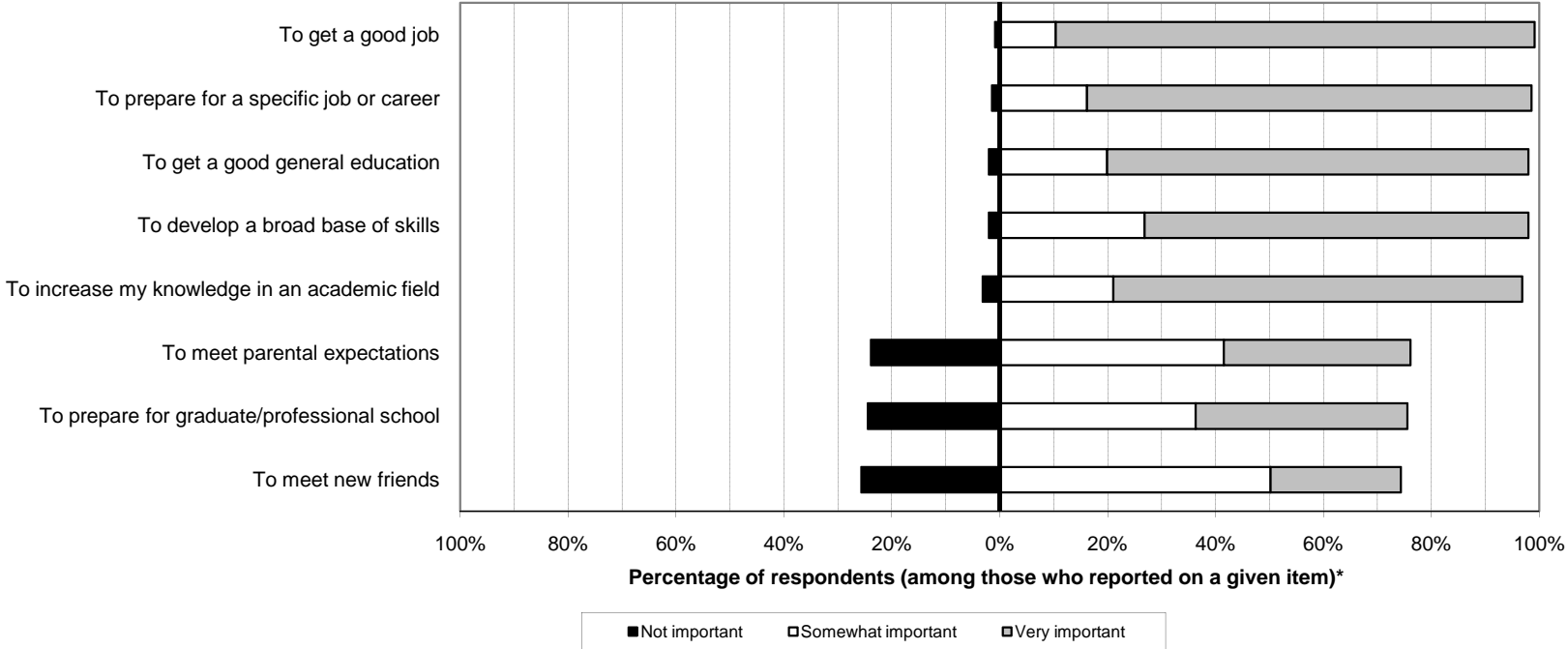
First-year students were asked about their reasons for attending university in general and their reasons for attending Ryerson in particular. The survey also examined the importance of various sources of information in students' decisions to attend Ryerson. Respondents were provided a three-point scale to evaluate the various factors: not important, somewhat important and very important.

Figure 1 outlines respondents' evaluation of various reasons for attending university. Virtually all (more than 98 percent) identify "to get a good job," "to prepare for a specific job or career" and "to get a good general education" as important reasons in their decision. The vast majority of respondents also rate other academic and career-related reasons as somewhat or very important. Non-academic objectives, including "to meet parental expectations" and "to meet new friends," are of lesser importance, although both are rated as at least somewhat important by about three-quarters of respondents. In fact, meeting parental expectations is identified by a greater proportion of students in 2010 than it was in 2007, when only a third of respondents indicated this as an important reason for attending university.

Figure 2 illustrates respondents' reasons for choosing Ryerson rather than another university. The top-rated reasons relate to Ryerson's academic strengths: "quality of academic programs," "specific career-related programs," and the "University's good reputation." At least 93 percent of respondents identify each of these reasons as being somewhat or very important. At least 70 percent identify factors related to Ryerson's location as important, specifically the size of the city and the ability to live close to home. In addition, the availability of public transportation is named as important by 82 percent of respondents. Most students rate having friends who attend Ryerson, or having parents or relatives who want them to attend, as not important. These results are largely consistent with those reported in previous rounds of the First-Year Student Survey.

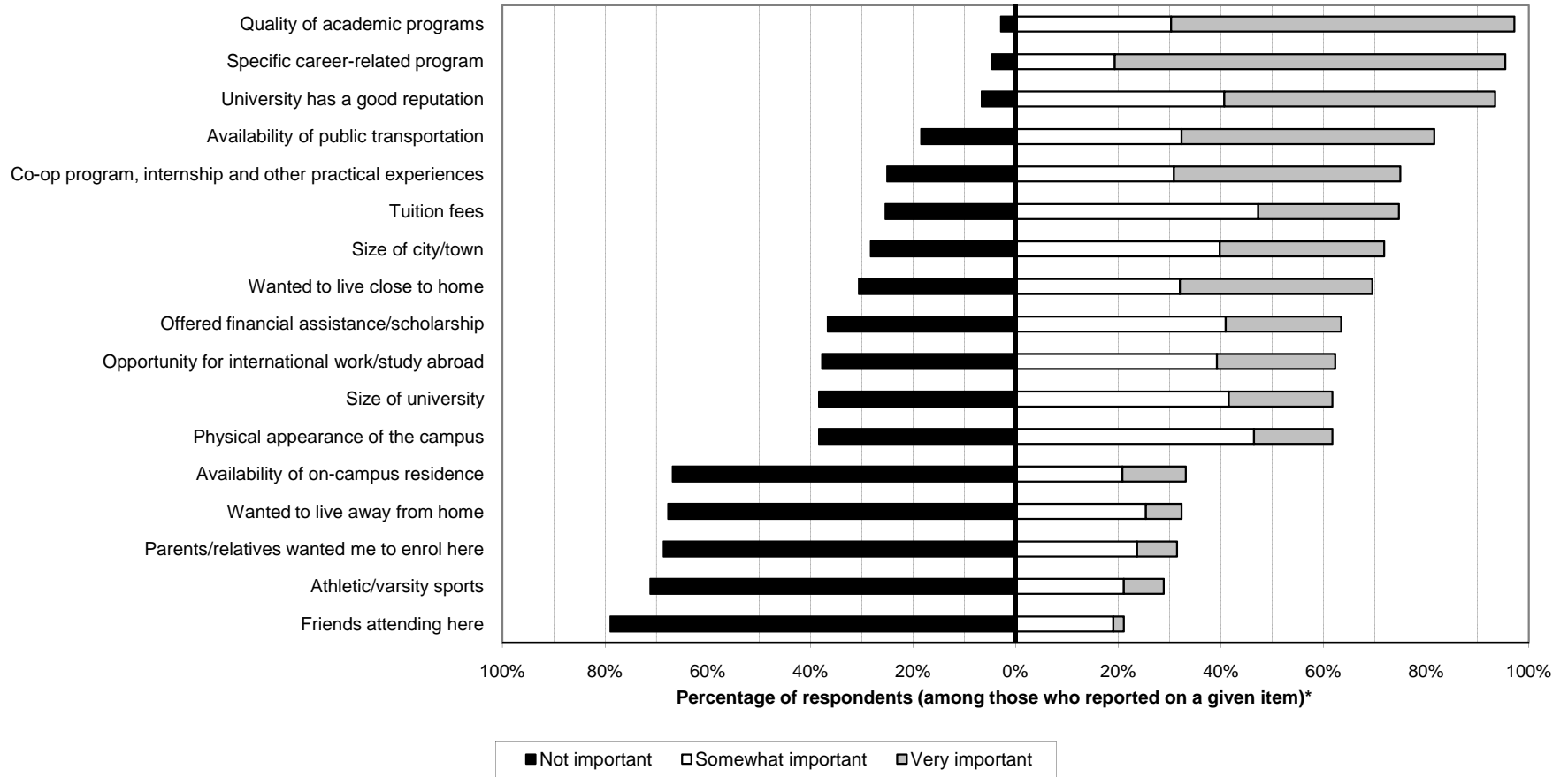
¹ Nineteen times out of twenty, the percentages shown throughout this report are estimated to be accurate within 4.4 percentage points.

Figure 1: Students' reasons for attending university



*NOTE: 100 percent of respondents reported on each item.

Figure 2: Students' reasons for attending Ryerson University



*NOTE: 100 percent of respondents reported on each item.

Figure 3 illustrates the extent to which various sources and types of information influenced students to attend Ryerson. Respondents report that “view books, brochures or pamphlets,” the “University website” and “word of mouth” were the most effective in determining Ryerson as their choice. (Over 80 percent report that these sources were important in their decision.) Over three-quarters indicate that campus visits and advice from high school counselors or teachers were important. Contact from University staff or faculty, recruitment fairs, and high school visits made by University staff were each rated as important by about two-thirds (63 to 69 percent) of students.

Experience with application and registration processes

Respondents were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction with how “the University handled their application for admission:” 50 percent report being very satisfied with their experience and 34 percent are somewhat satisfied. (This represents a positive shift from the 2007 round of the survey, when 36 percent were very satisfied and 47 were somewhat satisfied.)

First-year students were also asked about any “advice or help they may have received from the University regarding program or course selection.” Over a third (37 percent) of students report that they received assistance; among them, 91 percent were satisfied with the support they received.

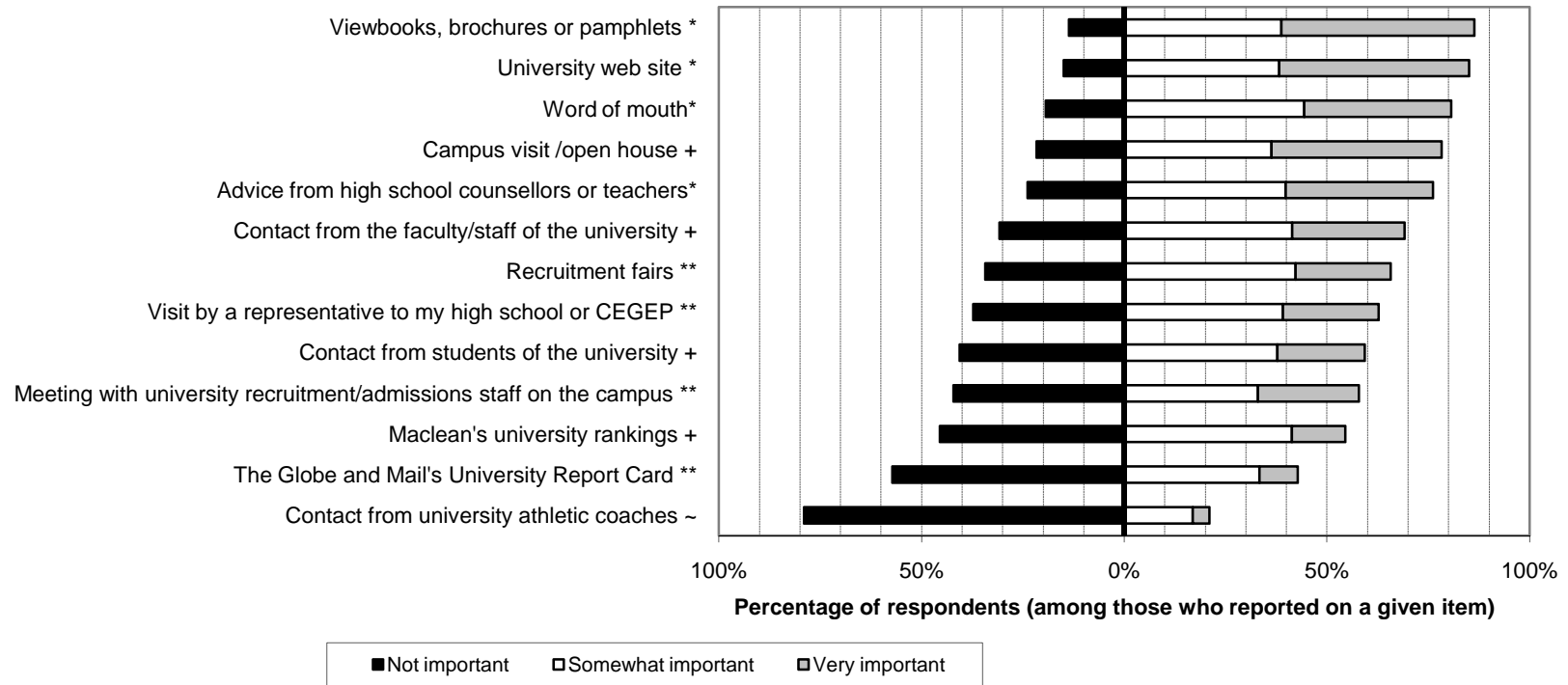
Orientation experience

Respondents rated their level of satisfaction with various aspects of the orientation program. Satisfaction was expressed on the basis of a four-point scale: very satisfied, satisfied, dissatisfied, and very dissatisfied. (Students also had the option of selecting a response of “don’t know.”) Generally, respondents are satisfied with all aspects of the orientation program evaluated. As Figure 4 illustrates, 93 percent report “feeling welcome at the university”. In addition, over 80 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with being helped to understand the university’s academic expectations and the provision of information about campus life. Generally, these results are consistent with those reported in the 2007 round of the survey.

Adjusting to university

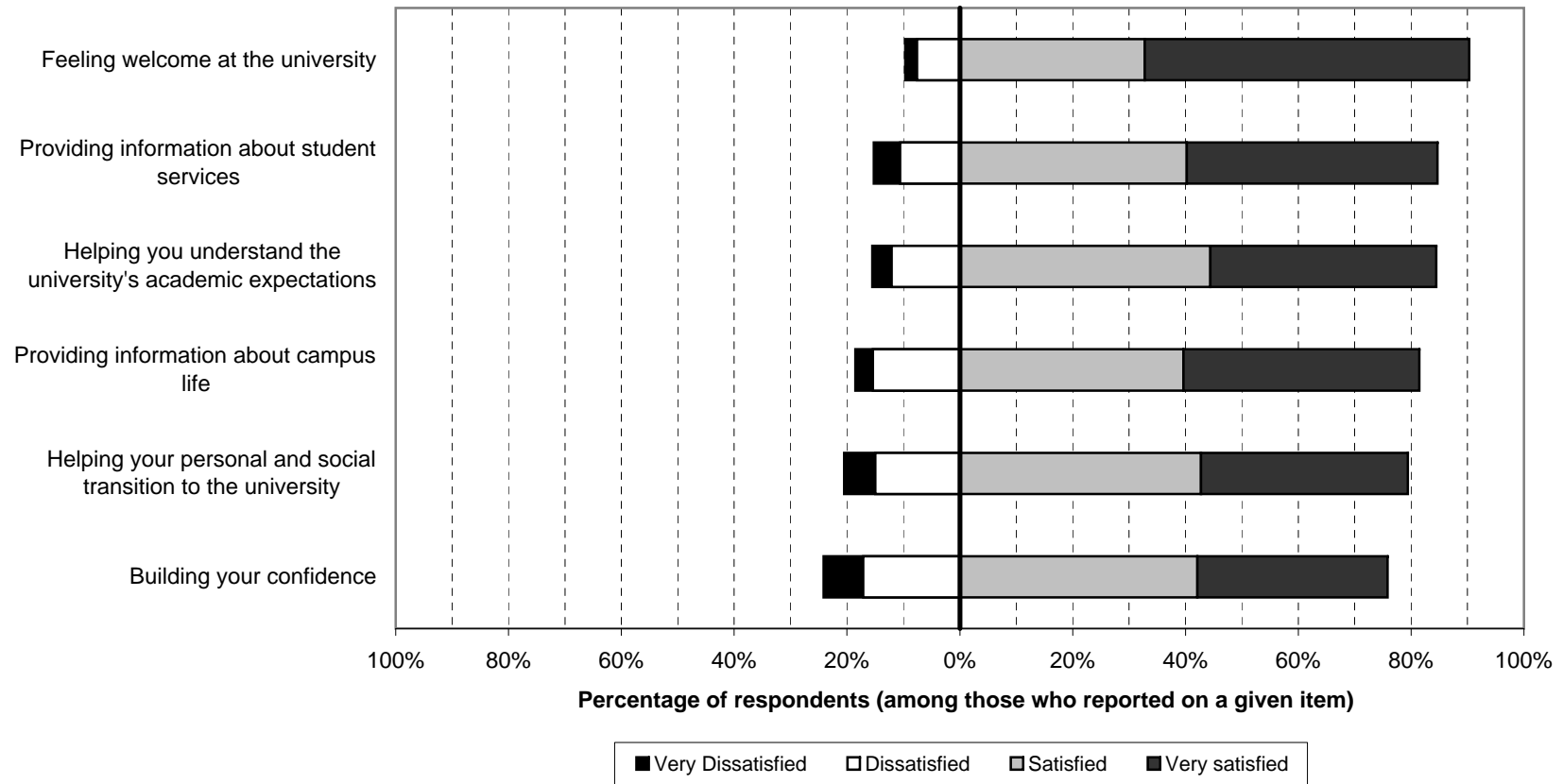
Respondents reported their level of success in adjusting to various aspects of university life with the use of the following scale: none, very little, some and very much. As Figure 5 illustrates, most respondents report success in their adjustment to university life. They are very comfortable with finding their way around campus, understanding the content and information presented in courses, choosing a program of studies to meet their objectives, and meeting academic expectations – over 90 percent of respondents report success in these areas. Students are less likely to report success with getting involved in campus activities; only 43 percent report at least some success in this area.

Figure 3: Factors that influence students to attend Ryerson University



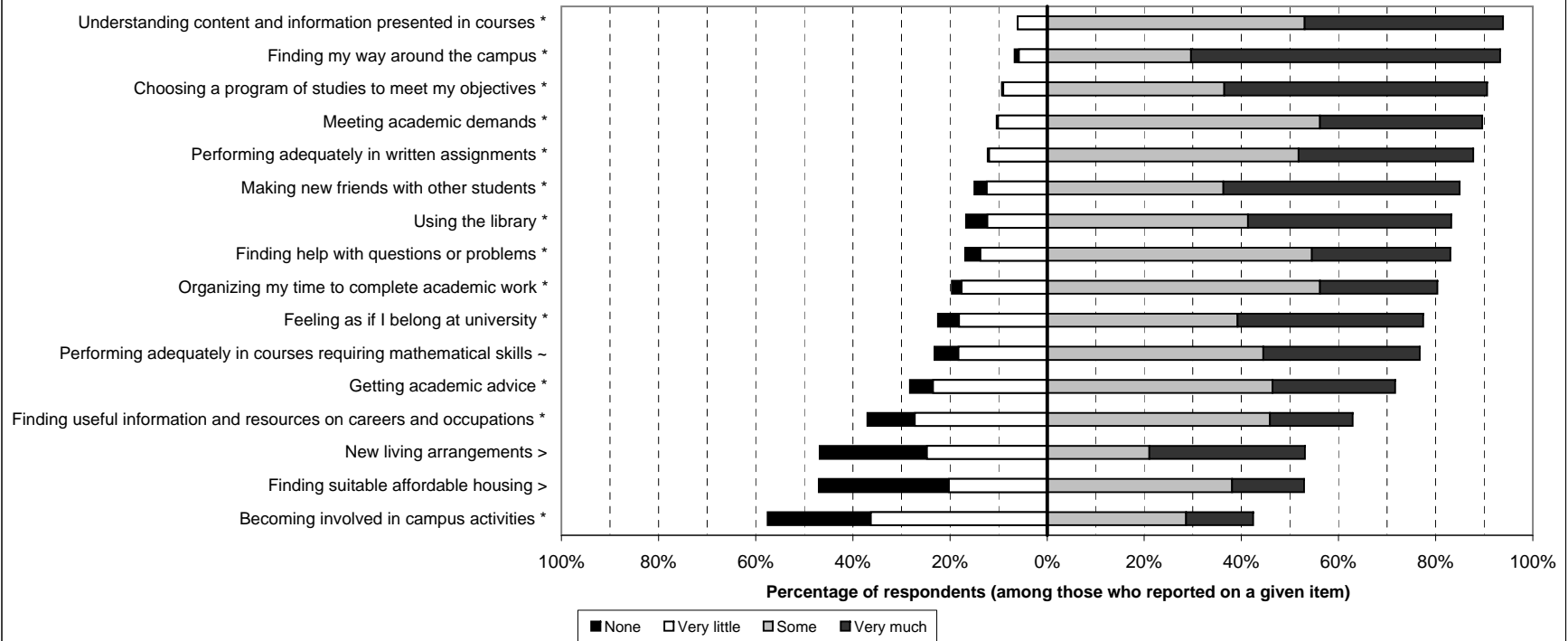
NOTES: * 90.0 to 100.0% of respondents reported on this item.
 + 80.0 to 89.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 ** 70.0 to 79.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 ~ 60.0 to 69.9% of respondents reported on this item.

Figure 4: Satisfaction with orientation



*Note: At least 65 percent of respondents reported on each item.

Figure 5: Students' transition to university



NOTES: * 90% to 100% of respondents reported on this item.
 ~ 76% of respondents reported on this item.
 > 48% to 55% of respondents reported on this item.

Perception of the University

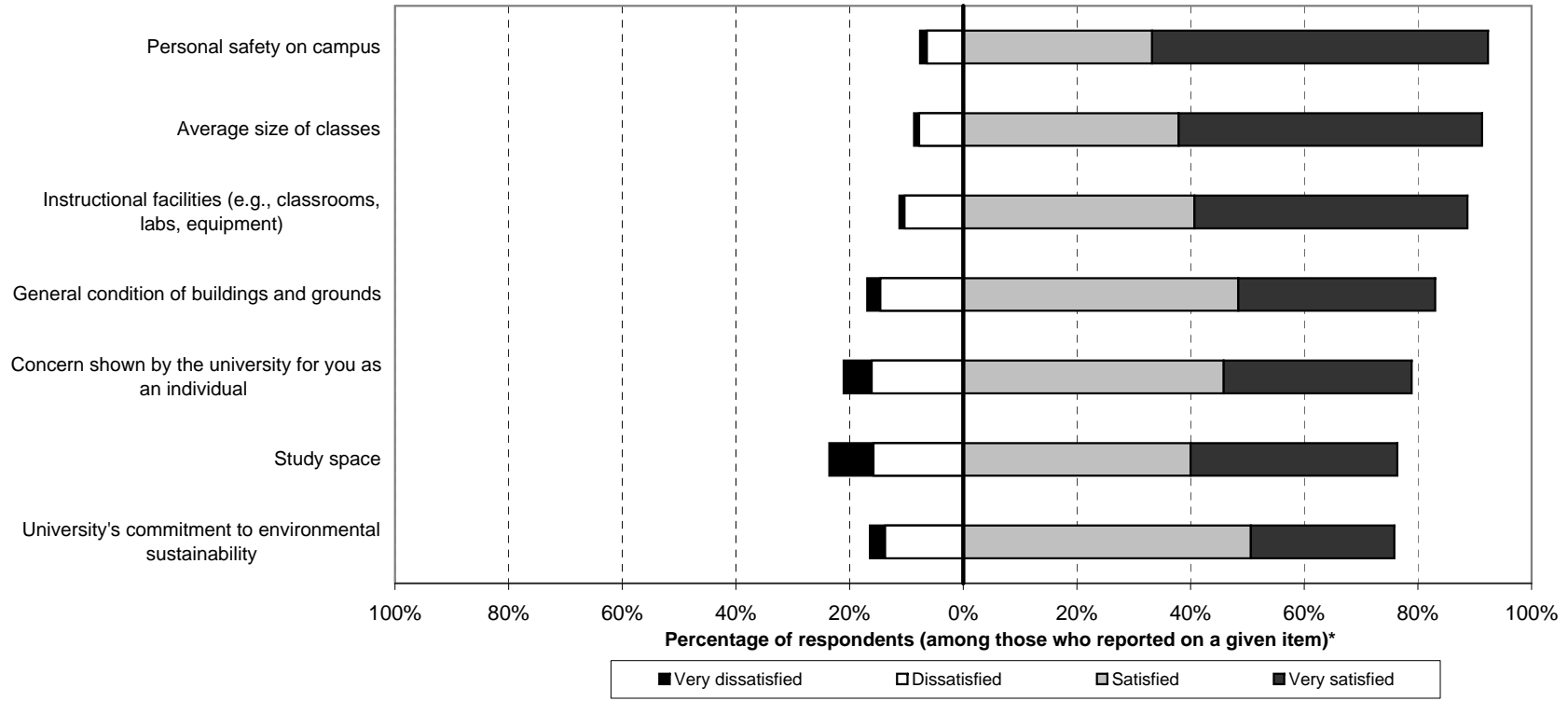
Overall, students' impressions of their first year at Ryerson are positive. Sixty percent of respondents report that their experience at Ryerson met their expectations, while 22 percent indicate that it exceeded their expectations. These figures are very similar to those obtained when the question was asked in the 2007 round of the survey.

First-year students were asked about their perception of various features of the University: average class size; personal safety on campus; instructional facilities; concern shown by the University; general condition of buildings and grounds; and study space. A four-point scale ranging from "very dissatisfied" to "very satisfied" was used. The vast majority (91 percent) of respondents report being satisfied or very satisfied with the average size of classes. Over 90 percent report similarly on personal safety on campus, and 89 percent are satisfied with instructional facilities (e.g., classrooms, labs, equipment). Three quarters of the students are satisfied with "study space" and 83 percent indicate that they are satisfied with the "general condition of buildings and grounds." Seventy-nine percent report satisfaction with "concern shown by the university for you as an individual," which represents an increase over 2007 levels, when 65 percent reported satisfaction in this area. Results are summarized in Figure 6.

Figure 7 summarizes student satisfaction with an array of university services. Most campus services receive positive ratings by the majority of respondents, including key academic services such as library facilities and academic advising. Over 90 percent of first-year students are satisfied with access to computers, facilities for student associations and clubs, and study skills or learning support services. Compared to results of the 2007 round of the survey, there appears to be a decline in the level of satisfaction with university residences – in 2010, 69 percent are satisfied with the residences, compared to 84 percent in 2007. Satisfaction with tutoring services has increased since 2007, with 90 percent of respondents expressing satisfaction in 2010 (compared to 78 percent in the earlier round).

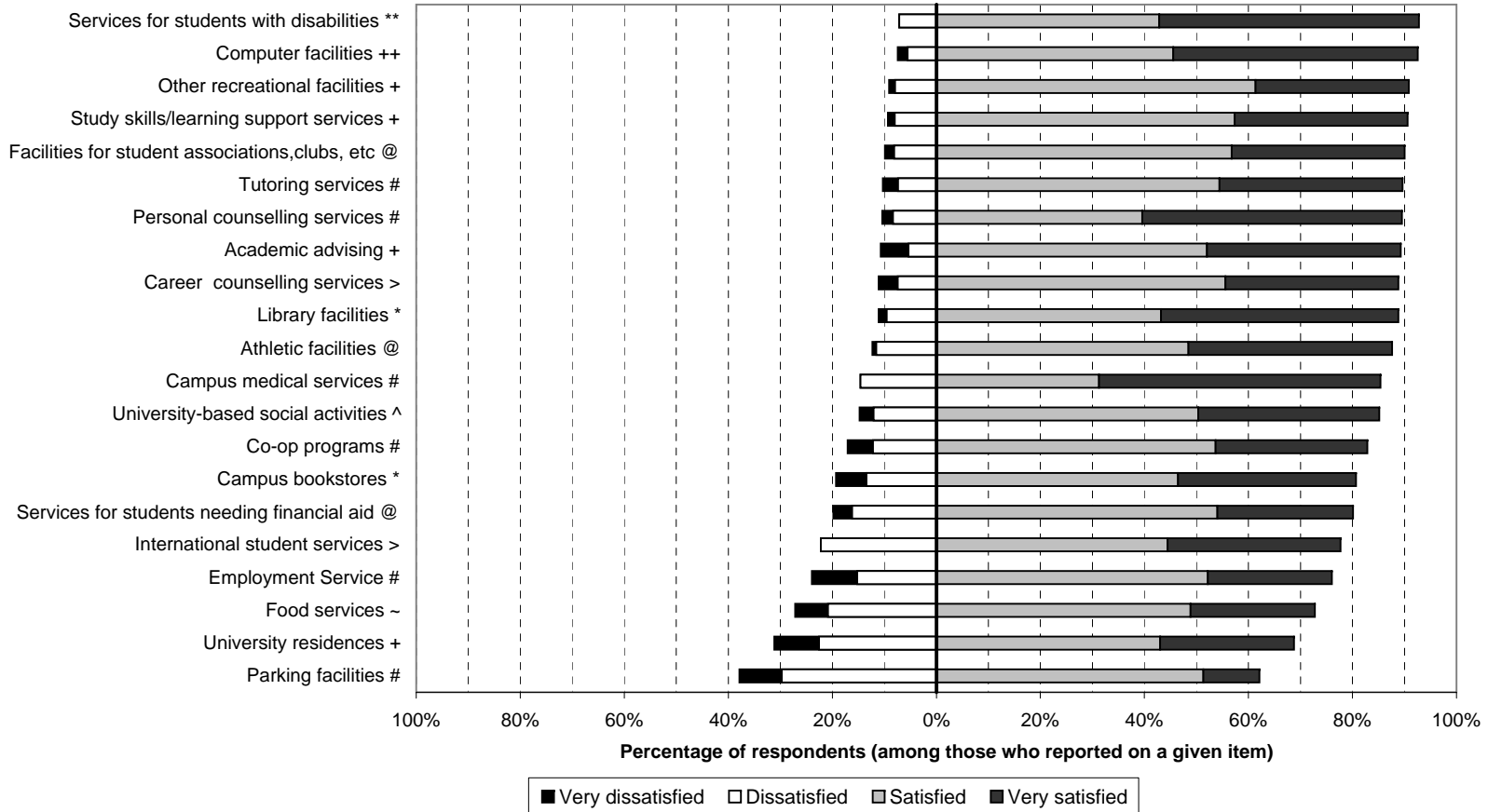
Respondents also indicated their level of agreement with various statements about the teaching they received during their first year at Ryerson. About 93 percent of students agree that most of their professors are reasonably accessible outside of class to help students. In addition, 85 percent express satisfaction with the quality of teaching that they have received. The proportion of respondents indicating that most professors encourage students to participate in class discussions increased by 10 percentage points, from 79 to 89 percent, in the 2010 round of the survey compared to the previous round conducted in 2007. Results are summarized in Figure 8.

Figure 6: Perception of the University



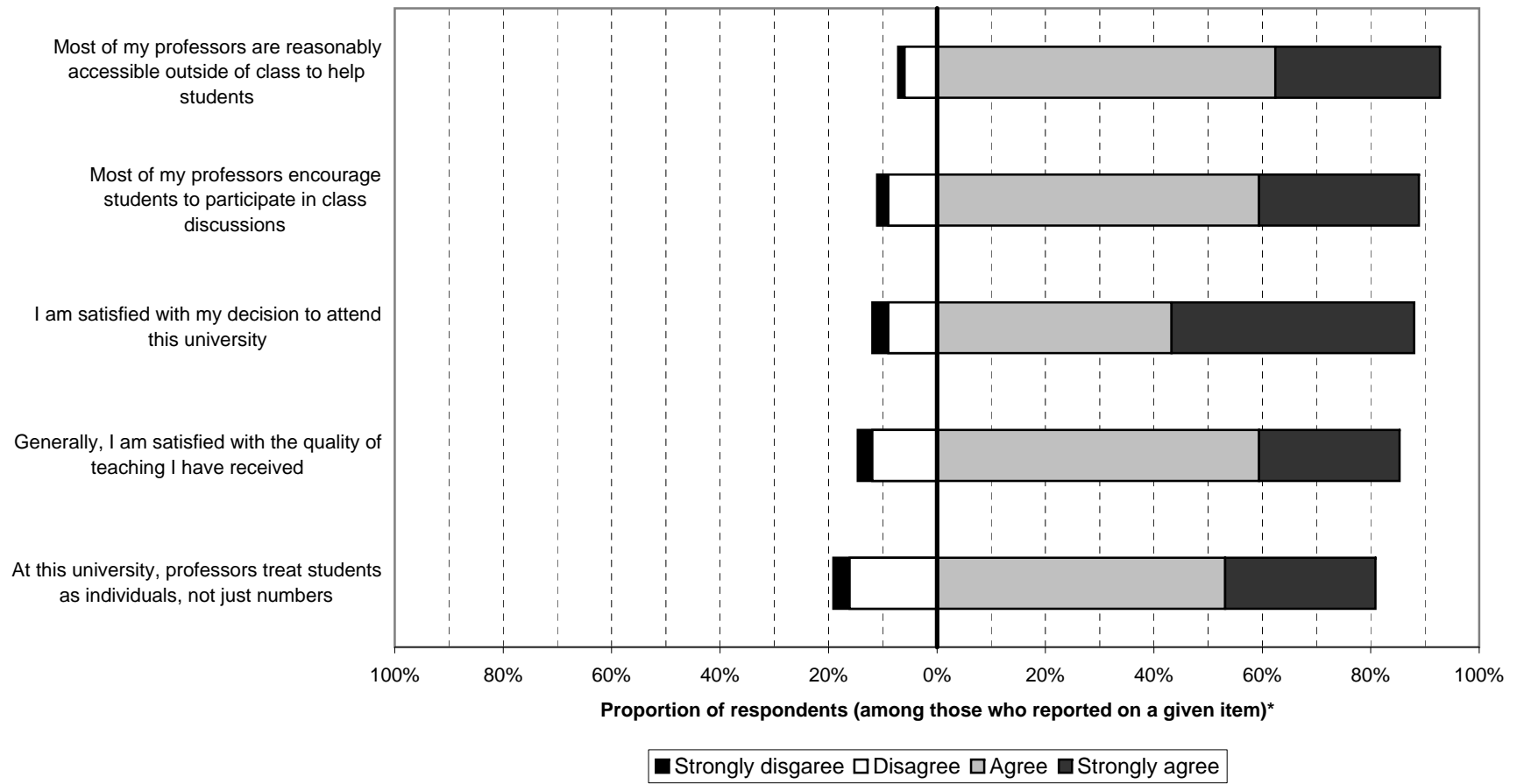
*NOTE: At least 93 percent of respondents reported on each item.

Figure 7: Satisfaction with university services



Note: *90.0 to 100.0% of respondents reported on this item.
 ++70.0 to 89.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 ~60.0 to 69.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 ^40.0 to 49.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 @30.0 to 39.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 +20.0 to 29.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 #10.0 to 19.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 >5.0 to 9.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 **1.0 to 4.9% of respondents reported on this item.

Figure 8: Satisfaction with teaching



*Note: Over 98% of respondents reported on each item.

Academic profile of first-year students

First-year students provided information about their academic background including their entering average grade from high school, expected average grade at the end of first year, and whether they were taking a full course load. The most commonly reported average high school grade is A- and, respondents are most likely to expect an average grade of a B at the end of their first year of university. Ninety percent of respondents indicate that they began the academic year taking a full course load; at the time of the survey (winter 2010), 80 percent report taking a full course load.

Financing of university education

Forty-seven percent of respondents indicate that they received a scholarship, bursary or other financial award from the university. This represents an increase of more than 10 points over the proportion of students reporting similarly in 2007.

Thirty-eight percent of respondents report that they are employed, while 42 percent state that they are looking for work. The average number of work hours for respondents who are currently employed is 12.6 hours per week. (This represents a change from the 2007 round of the survey, when half of respondents were employed, and the average number of hours worked was 14.) Half of employed respondents indicate that their employment has no impact on their academic performance, while 36 percent report that it has a negative impact. Fifteen percent of respondents indicate that their employment has a positive impact on their academic performance.

Profile of first-year students

Nearly all respondents (96 percent) report that their permanent home before attending Ryerson is located in Ontario. Almost three-quarters of students live with their parents, guardians or relatives; 19 percent live in on-campus housing, and 7 percent live in rented accommodations.

About 3 percent of respondents identify as persons with a disability.

Table 1 provides a comparison of the survey group and the actual population of first-year students admitted from secondary schools in terms of gender, average age, and Faculty of registration. Females are over-represented among the survey respondents. The distribution of respondents by Faculty roughly approximates that for the actual population, with those from Communication and Design being somewhat overrepresented, and those from the Faculty of Engineering, Architecture and Science somewhat underrepresented among respondents.

Table 1: Comparison of survey sample and population

	Sample	Population
GENDER		
Female	66.0%	51.3%
Male	34.0%	48.7%
AGE (years)		
Mean	17.9	18.5
FACULTY		
Arts	10.4%	13.3%
Communication & Design	21.6%	17.0%
Community Services	16.7%	14.4%
Engineering, Architecture & Science	21.3%	25.4%
Ted Rogers School of Management	30.0%	30.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Method

Over a six-week period beginning in February 2010, 1,200 students in their first year at Ryerson University who had been admitted directly from secondary school in Fall 2009, were invited to participate in an online survey. The resulting sample size was 347, yielding a response rate of 29 percent. Female students are overrepresented in the sample.

Given that the questionnaire was developed for use across a number of universities, limitations of the survey relate mainly to ambiguity surrounding respondents' interpretation of certain questions. And, it is possible that some respondents who rated a given activity or feature of the University did not in fact have any direct experience with it and thus should have indicated "don't know" or "not applicable".