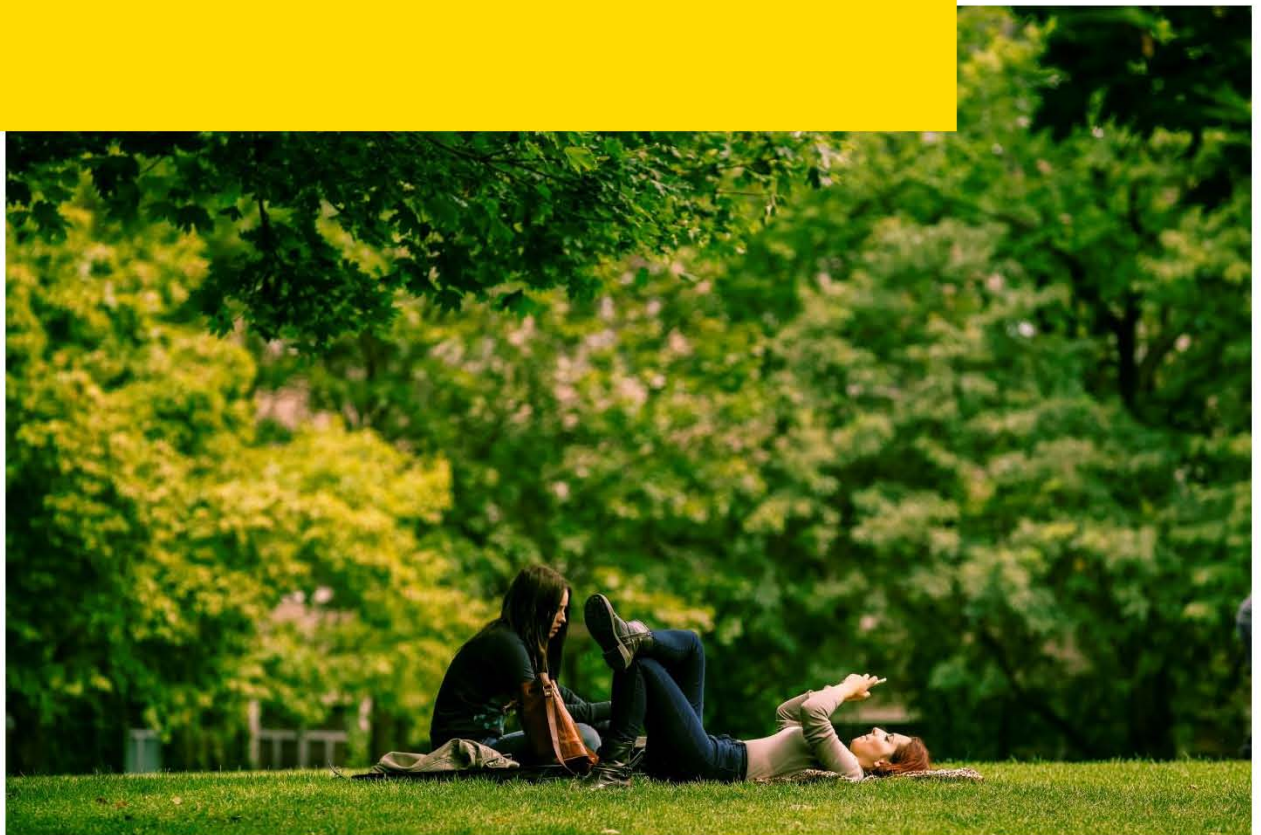


FIRST YEAR STUDENT SURVEY 2016

Highlights of Results

Prepared by the University Planning Office



Introduction

Since 1997, Ryerson has been a member of the Canadian University Survey Consortium, a group of universities across Canada that conducts student surveys on a regular basis. In 2016, 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 1,000 first-year students who came to Ryerson directly from secondary school. Entrants coming from secondary school represented about 73 percent of first-year students in that academic year. With 205 respondents, the response rate is 21 percent.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 as they relate to students' decisions to attend Ryerson.

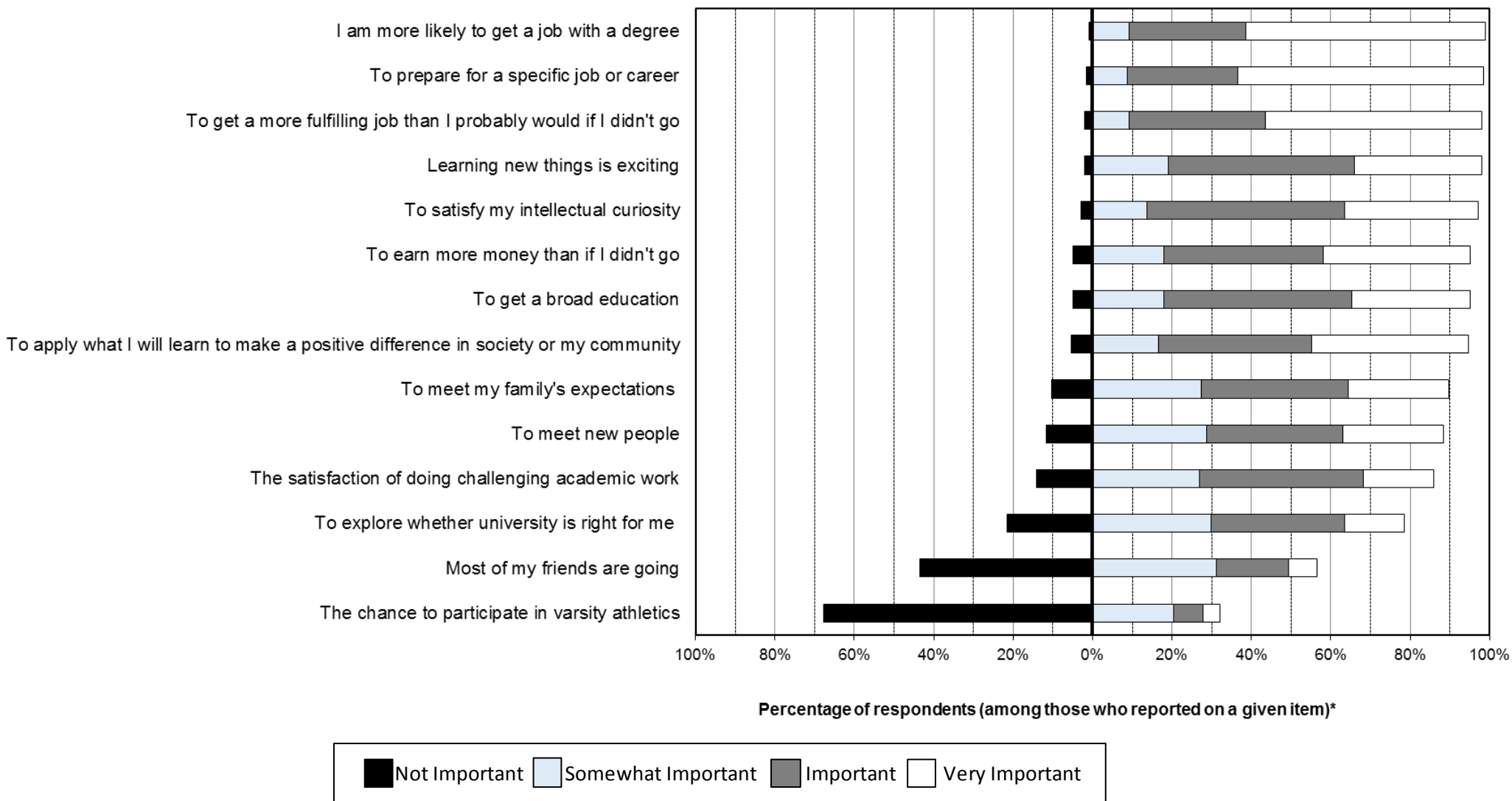
Figure 1 outlines various reasons for attending university. Virtually all students (99 percent) identify "to prepare for a specific job or career," "I am more likely to get a job with a degree" and "to get a more fulfilling job than I probably would if I didn't go" as important reasons in their decision. The vast majority of respondents also rate other academic and career-related reasons as somewhat important, important or very important. While non-academic objectives, including "to meet family's expectations" and "to meet new people," are of lesser importance, both are viewed as at least somewhat important by a majority of respondents. 95 percent of respondents indicate that a reason for attending is "to apply what I will learn to make a positive difference in society or my community" – this reason is identified as important by more students than is family expectations.

Almost all respondents (95 percent) applied to more than one university. Figure 2 illustrates respondents' reasons for choosing Ryerson rather than another university. The three reasons cited most frequently include offering the program I want to take (97 percent), the city in which it's located (95 percent) and availability of public transportation (95 percent). Most students rate having friends who attend Ryerson, or having family who want them to attend, as not important.

Figure 3 illustrates the extent to which various sources and types of information influenced students to attend Ryerson. Respondents report that the University website was the most important in determining Ryerson as their choice. More than half (52 percent) indicate that the website was an important or very important source of information, with a further 21 percent indicating that it was somewhat important. Students attending the university as well as parents were also important sources – more than 70 percent indicate that each of these sources influenced their decision to select Ryerson. Visiting the campus, printed materials, contact with admissions staff, and high school counsellors or teachers are important influences for 65 to 70 percent of respondents. The reported importance of printed viewbooks, brochures or pamphlets has declined by more than 10 percentage points since the 2010 round of the survey, when 80 percent of students named them as important sources.

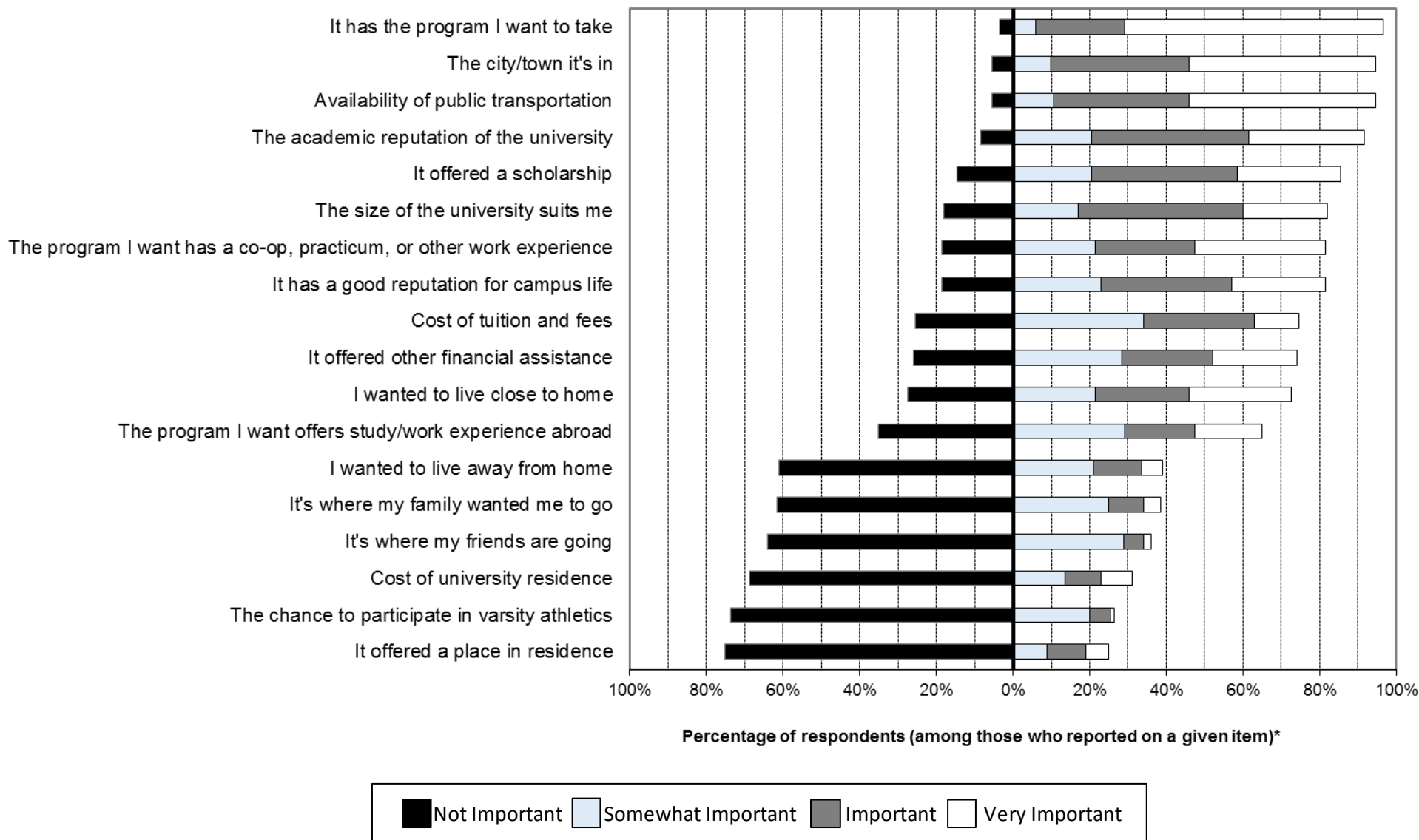
¹ Nineteen times out of twenty, the percentages shown throughout this report are estimated to be accurate within 6.1 percentage points.

Figure 1: Students' reasons for attending university



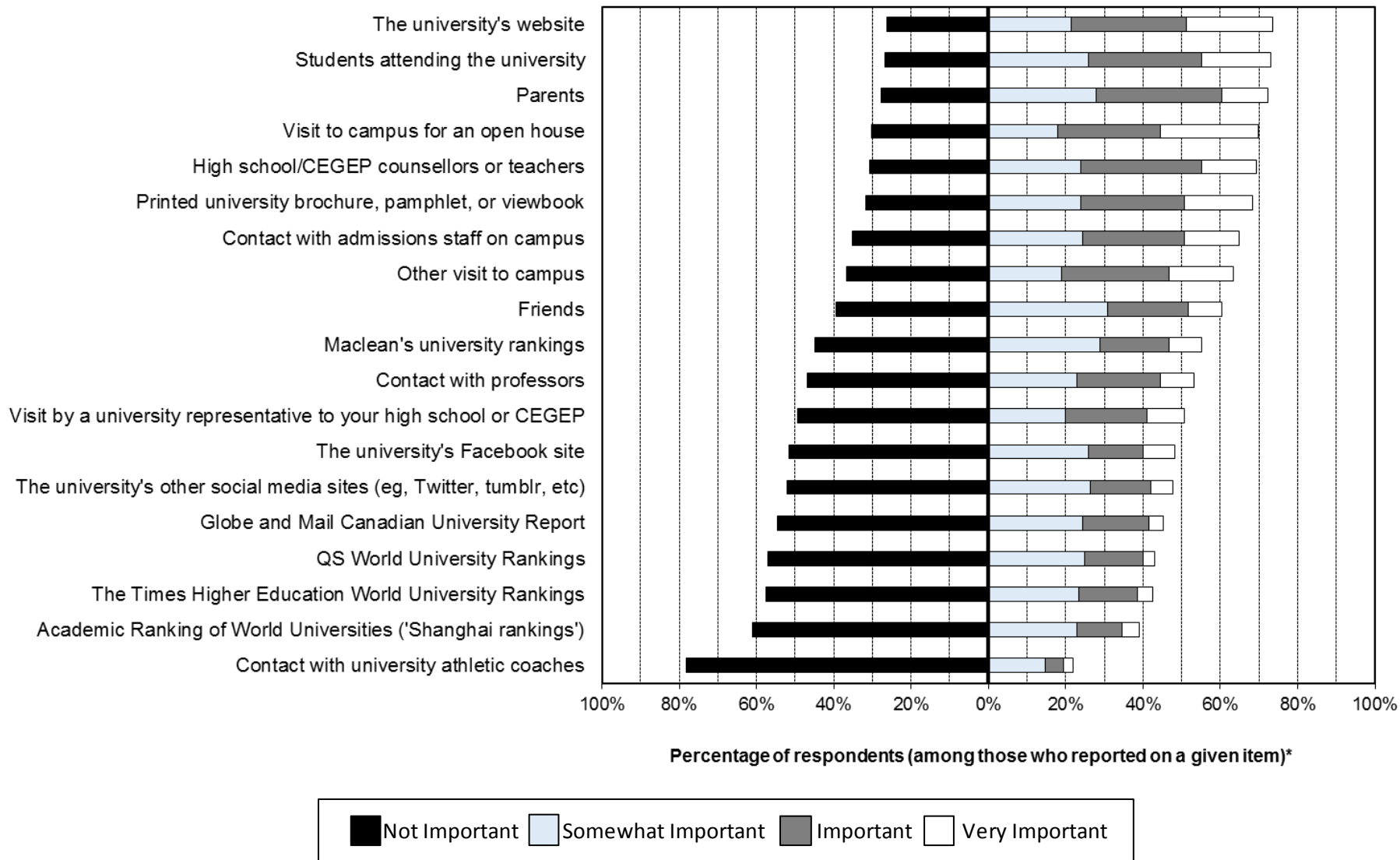
NOTE: *100 percent of respondents reported on each item.

Figure 2: Students' reasons for selecting Ryerson University



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

Figure 3: Sources of information used in students' decision to attend Ryerson University



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

Getting started: registration and orientation

Registration: About three quarters of students report being at least somewhat satisfied with their registration experience. 79 percent are satisfied with their ability to get into the courses they wanted; this marks a decline from the 2013 round of the survey, when 90 percent were satisfied.

Orientation experience: 74 percent of first-year students report participating in orientation programs or activities. Generally, respondents are satisfied with all aspects of the orientation program evaluated. As Figure 4 illustrates, 95 percent report feeling welcome at the university. In addition, 85 to 88 percent are satisfied or very satisfied with being helped to understand the university's academic expectations, the provision of information about campus life, and information about student services. These results are slightly higher than those reported in the 2013 round of the survey.

Adjustment to university life

Transition: Respondents were asked about their level of success in adjusting to various aspects of university life. As Figure 5 illustrates, most respondents report success in their transition. They are very comfortable with finding their way around campus, choosing their program, understanding their course material, and finding information about academic integrity – more than 90 percent of respondents report success in these areas.

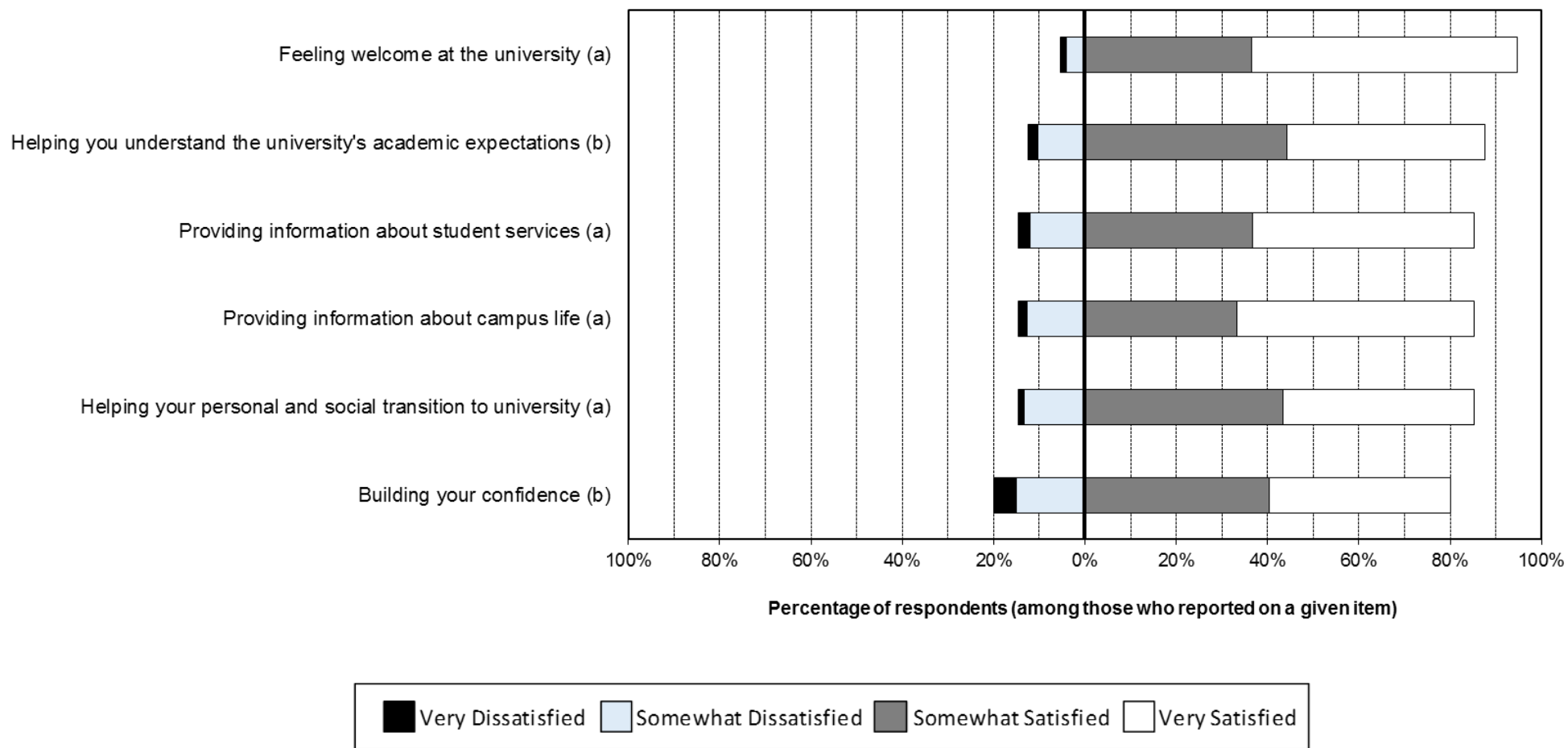
Students are less likely to report success with becoming involved in campus activities (40 percent), finding suitable housing (54 percent) and finding career information (55 percent). Further, students in 2016 report less success with involvement in campus activities, finding career information, making friends and using the library than was found in the 2013 round of the survey. (Interestingly, reported satisfaction with career counselling services has increased significantly over the same period; results are reviewed later in this document.)

Engagement and fit: Respondents were asked how they are dealing with the demands of university and whether they feel suited to their program. Virtually everyone (99 percent) indicates a willingness to put a lot of effort into being successful at university, and a similar proportion reports planning to return next year. 93 percent of students report that they normally attend all of their classes and 88 percent believe that they are in the right program. Three quarters say that they can deal with stress. Fewer students (62 percent) report that they have good study habits. Results are summarized in Figure 6. These questions were asked for the first time in 2016, hence there are no comparative results for previous rounds of the survey.

Expectations and actual experience: Respondents were asked about the extent to which their experience of university life aligns with their initial expectations. This was explored for the first time in the 2016 round of the survey. Generally, students do coursework *on their own* to about the same extent they had expected. However, more than half of students report that they have to put *more time* into their coursework than expected, and that courses are more demanding academically than expected.

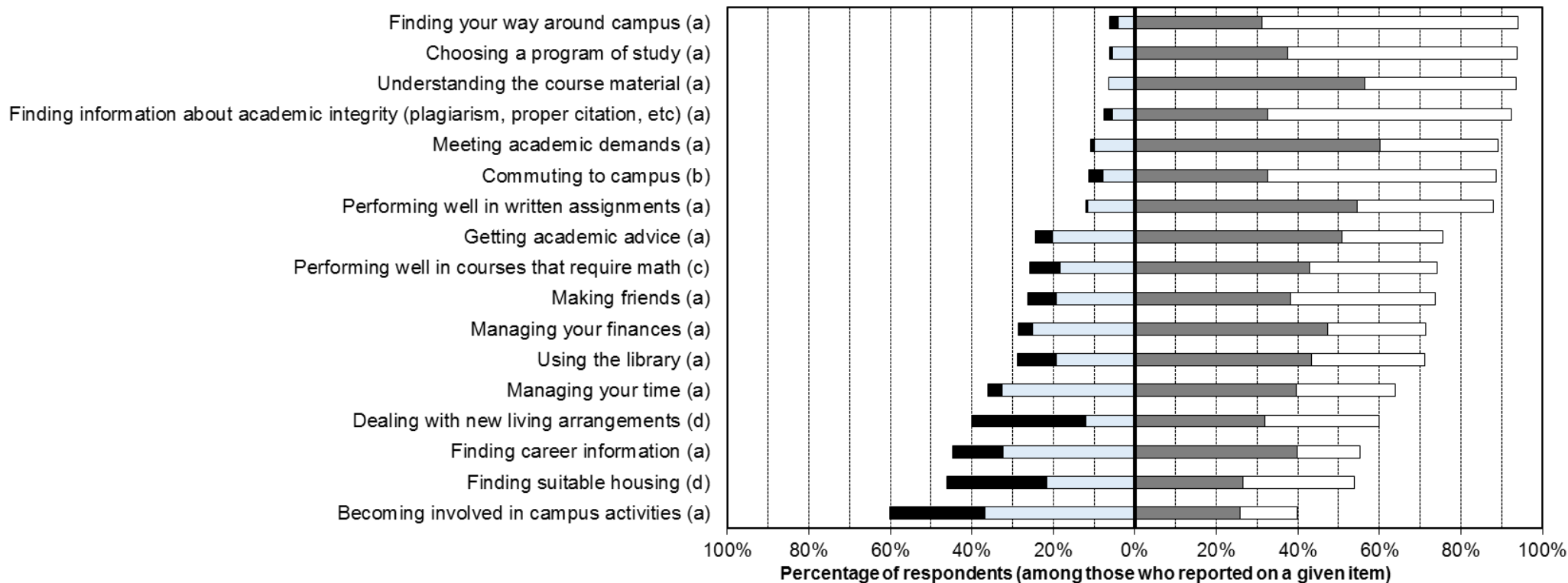
Involvement in campus social activities occurs less than expected for almost half of respondents, and course grades are lower than expected for almost half as well. Results are summarized in Figure 7.

Figure 4: Satisfaction with orientation



Notes: (a) Approximately 1% of respondents did not report on this item.
 (b) Approximately 5% of respondents did not report on this item.

Figure 5: Students' transition to university

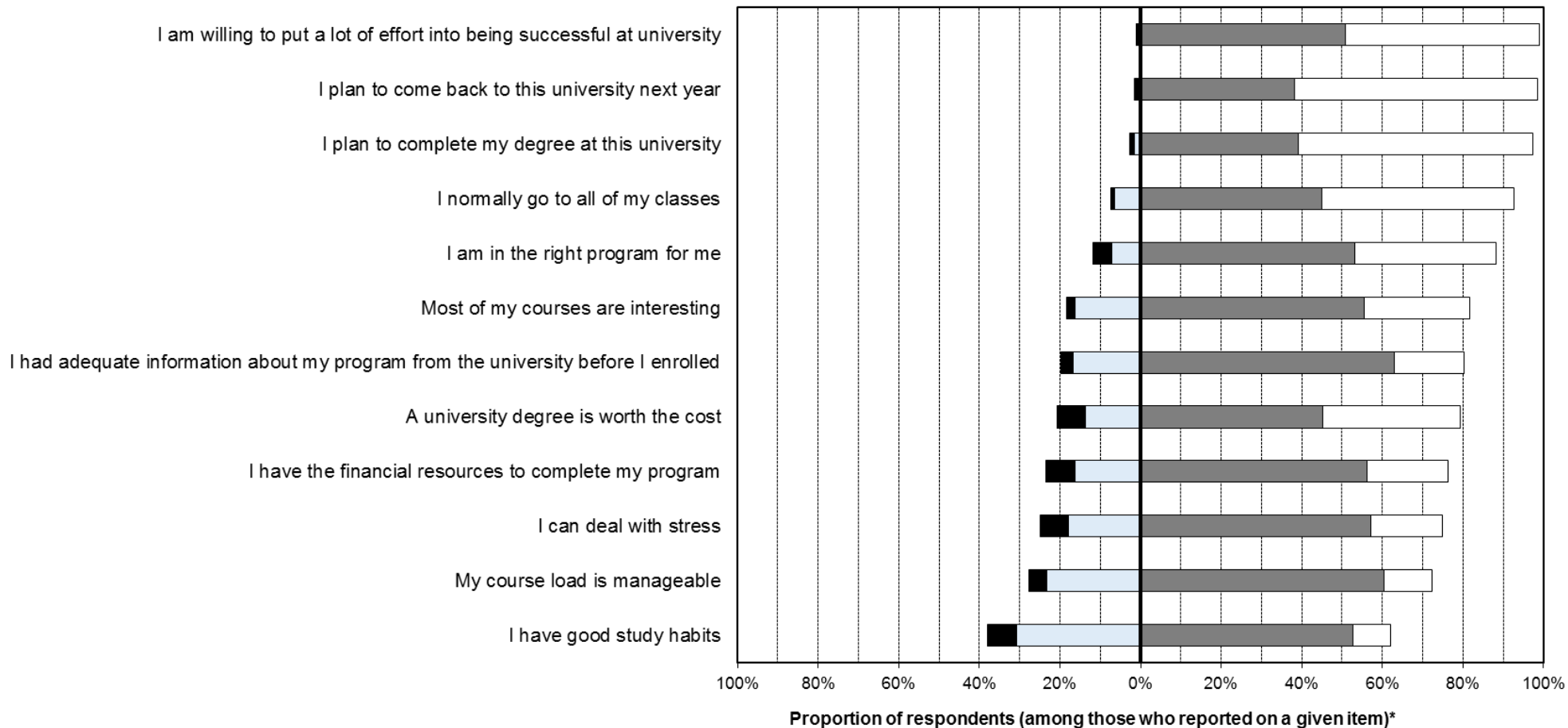


NOTES:

- (a) 90.0 to 100.0% of respondents reported on this item.
- (b) 80.0 to 89.9% of respondents reported on this item.
- (c) 70.0 to 79.9% of respondents reported on this item.
- (d) 40.0 to 49.9% of respondents reported on this item.



Figure 6: Engagement and Fit



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

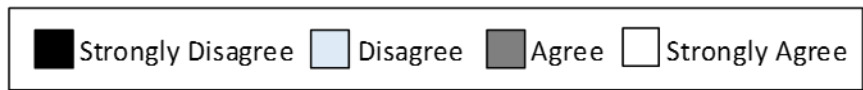
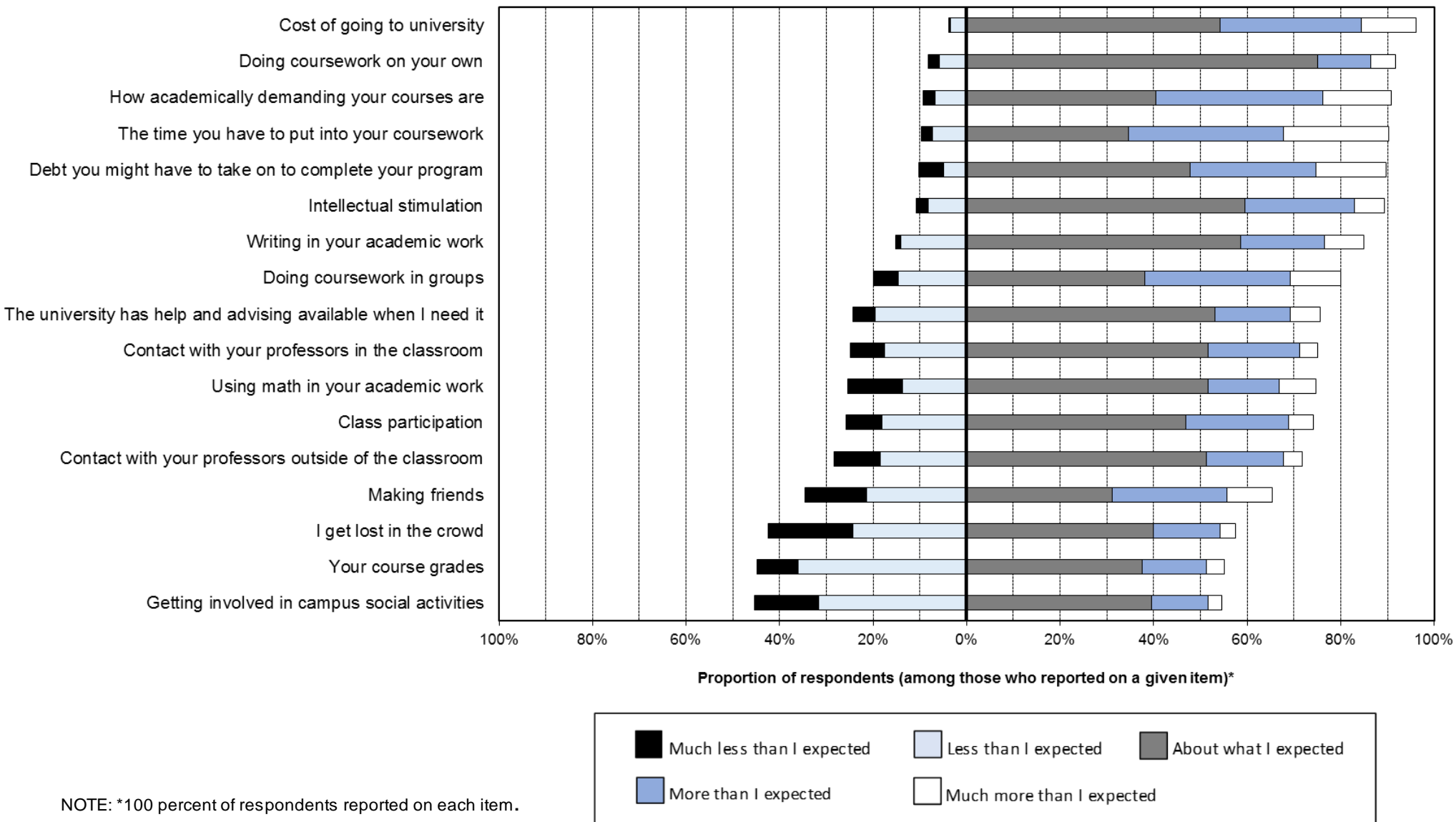


Figure 7: How Actual Experience Compares with Expectations



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

Student satisfaction

Overall, students' impressions of their first year at Ryerson are positive. 92 percent of respondents are satisfied with their decision to attend Ryerson, and 95 percent would recommend Ryerson to others. 86 percent of respondents report that their experience at Ryerson has met or exceeded their expectations, with one in four students reporting that it has exceeded their expectations.

First-year students were asked about their satisfaction with various university services. Generally, reported satisfaction is high. Half of the services listed garner positive reviews by at least 90 percent of students. For example, 99 percent of students indicate that they are satisfied or very satisfied with athletic facilities. Although they are used by a relatively small proportion of respondents, all users (100 percent) report being satisfied or very satisfied with co-op offices and support, and with facilities for university-based social activities, respectively. Satisfaction with both career counselling services and food services increased significantly over 2013 levels. In 2016, 93 percent express satisfaction with career counselling, compared to 70 percent in 2013. 85 percent are satisfied with food services in 2016, compared with 57 percent in 2013. Responses for 2016 are summarized in Figure 8.

Respondents also indicated their level of agreement with various statements about the teaching they received during their first year at Ryerson. 80 percent of respondents are generally satisfied with the quality of teaching. In particular, 85 percent of students agree that most of their professors are reasonably accessible outside of class to help students, and 89 percent agree that most professors encourage students to participate in class discussions. Roughly three quarters of respondents agree that professors communicate well in their teaching, and that most are fair in their grading. Satisfaction with both the promptness and usefulness of feedback on students' academic work tends to be lower. Results are summarized in Figure 9.

In addition to providing input on services and instructors, 89 percent of respondents indicate that most university support staff are helpful. Further, 74 percent indicate that most teaching assistants in their academic program are helpful.

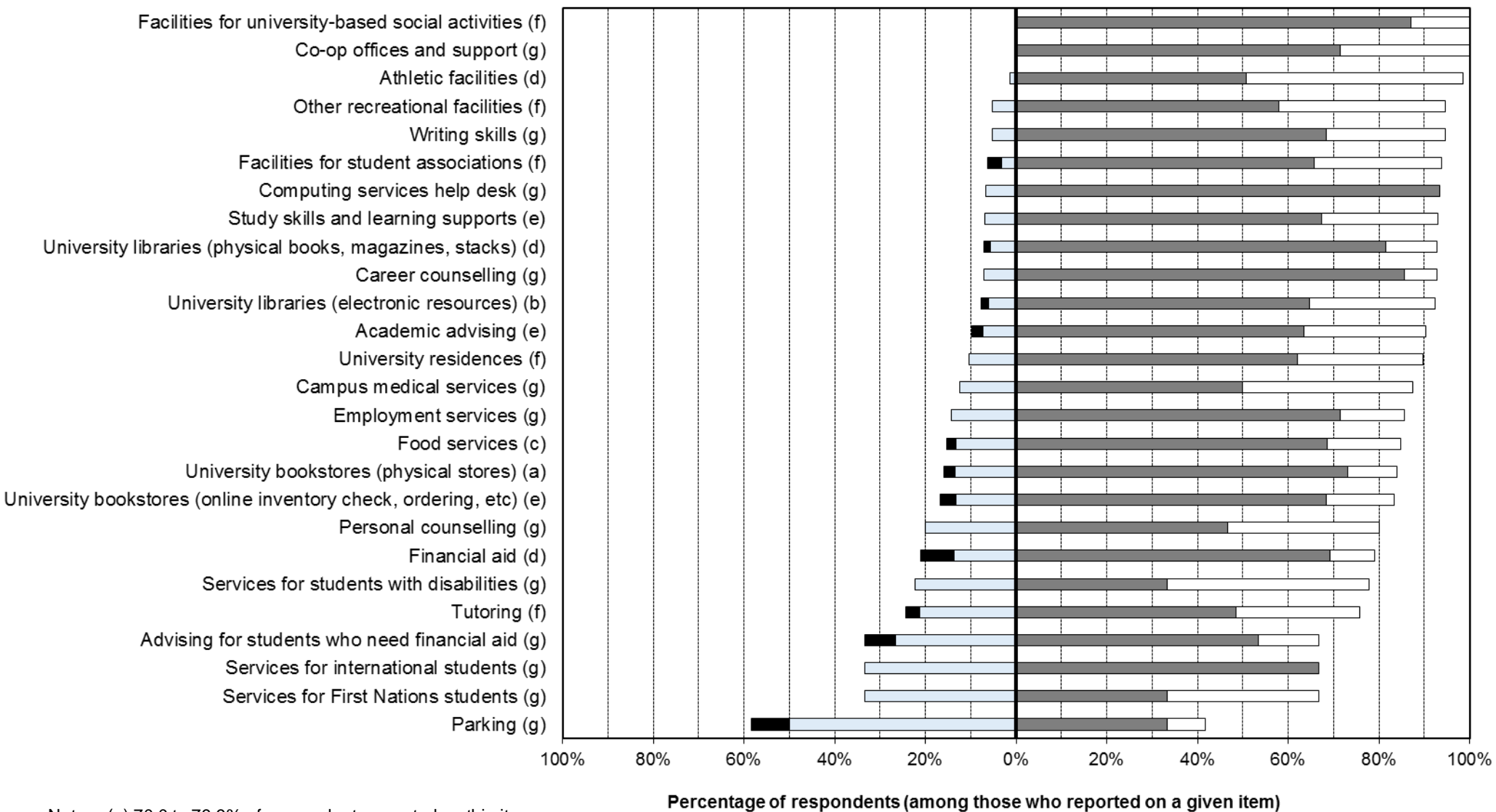
Career preparation

When asked to describe their career plans, about one in five students indicates having a specific career in mind. Most students (64 percent) have several possible careers in mind, or have some general ideas but still need to clarify them. 14 percent are unsure but want to develop a career plan, while 2 percent indicate that they are not thinking about careers at this stage (winter of first year).

Students were asked how well they know the career options that their program could open for them. 63 percent report knowing these options very well or fairly well. 31 percent know these "only a little" while 5 percent do not know at all.

Students were also asked to indicate whether they have undertaken particular steps or activities to prepare for employment after graduation. Most respondents (90 percent) had participated in at least one activity. The most common activity undertaken is discussion with parents about employment or careers. Few students have met with a career counsellor or have a mentor. Results are outlined in Table 1. Questions about students' career plans and preparation were asked for the first time in the 2016 round of the survey.

Figure 8: Satisfaction with university services



Notes: (a) 70.0 to 79.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 (b) 60.0 to 69.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 (c) 50.0 to 59.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 (d) 30.0 to 39.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 (e) 20.0 to 29.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 (f) 10.0 to 19.9% of respondents reported on this item.
 (g) 1.0 to 9.9% of respondents reported on this item.

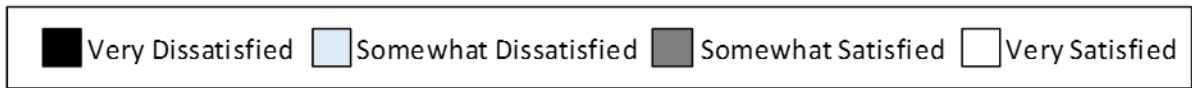
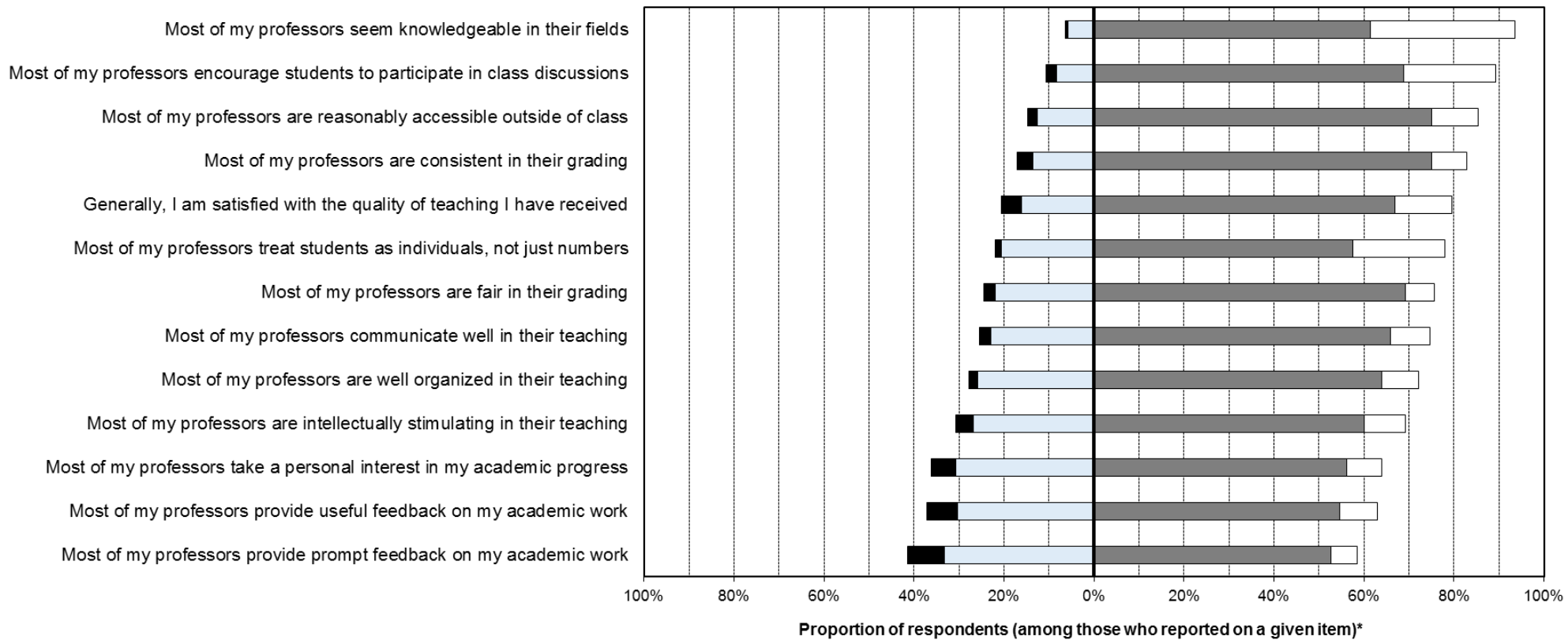


Figure 9: Satisfaction with teaching



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

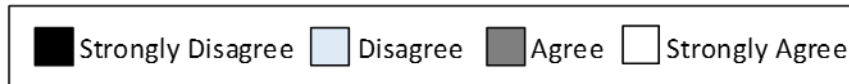


Table 1: Percentage of respondents participating in career preparation activities

Activity	% of respondents participating
Talked with parents about employment/career	71.7
Talked with friends about employment/career	64.4
Created a resume or curriculum vitae (CV)	42.0
Talked with professors about employment/career	27.8
Volunteered in my chosen field of employment	20.5
Attended an employment fair	15.6
Created an e-portfolio (inventory of skills, abilities, and experience maintained online)	14.1
Worked in my chosen field of employment	11.7
Met with a career counsellor	8.3
I have a career mentor	6.3

Profile of first-year students

70 percent of respondents live with their parents, guardians or relatives; 15 percent live in on-campus housing, and 14 percent live in rented accommodations off campus. Among students who do not live in residence, 58 percent say they would prefer to live in on-campus housing if they had the choice.

30 percent of respondents report that they are employed, while 39 percent are looking for work. Respondents who are employed work an average of 12.8 hours per week. (This represents a small decline from 2013, when 42 percent of respondents were employed and the average number of hours worked was 13.2 per week. The proportion looking for work in 2013 was 37 percent.)

Students were asked to identify the highest level of education completed by their parents. Responses indicate that about 21 percent of first-year students surveyed are first generation; that is, neither of their parents attended post-secondary education. This estimate is similar to that yielded by other surveys.

Table 2 provides a comparison of the survey group and the actual population of first-year students admitted from secondary school in terms of gender 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, although Communication and Design as well as Community Services are somewhat overrepresented, and students from the Ted Rogers School of Management are underrepresented among respondents.

Table 2: Comparison of survey sample and the population of first-year students entering Ryerson from secondary school

	Sample	Population
GENDER		
Female	62.9%	53.6%
Male	37.1%	46.4%
Total	100.0%	100.0%
FACULTY		
Arts	12.2%	14.3%
Communication & Design	21.5%	17.3%
Community Services	16.1%	12.3%
Engineering & Architectural Science	14.6%	15.5%
Science	11.2%	9.0%
Ted Rogers School of Management	24.4%	31.7%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Conclusion

The First Year Student Survey allows readers to gain an understanding of the factors that lead students to a university career at Ryerson. It also allows for an understanding of the extent to which students are adapting to university life and how satisfied they are during their first year of undergraduate studies. Generally, students are very satisfied with their programs, with teaching, and with a wide array of university services. Areas that may require further investigation include students' transition to some aspects of university life and participation in social activities.

Enabling greater student engagement and success is included as a key priority in Ryerson's Academic Plan, *Our Time to Lead*. The results of the First Year Student Survey will serve a useful role in providing information that enhances our understanding of the continued evolution of the Ryerson student experience.