



RETURN TO CAMPUS SURVEY

GRADUATE STUDENTS' ASSOCIATION, UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

JUNE 2021

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Summary

The GSA administered a return to campus survey for the University of Calgary (UCalgary) graduate students from June 15 to June 22, 2021. The survey was distributed through the GSA social media, newsletter, and direct email to all currently enrolled UCalgary graduate students. A total of 975 completed responses were received representing 12.6% of the total UCalgary graduate students. 129 partial responses were also recorded. The summary and data provided in this report include both partial and complete responses.

The objectives of the survey are:

- To assess how comfortable graduate students are with returning to campus
- To identify major concerns or feedback about coming back to campus: for general graduate students, for TAs, for students living in residence
- To identify ways that UCalgary can ensure a safe transition back to campus

The survey received responses from a diverse group of graduate students. Demographic data shows that most respondents come from course-based master's programs (34.7%), thesis-based master's programs (30%), and PhD programs (34%) while a very small number of students are from diploma, certificate, and other programs. This composition of survey respondents reflects the graduate student population at UCalgary.

Most respondents currently live in Calgary (81.54%), while a small percentage lives either outside of Calgary in Alberta (5.13%), in another Canadian province (4.82%), and internationally (8.51%). Other demographic data that was collected include respondents' campuses, dependents, and dependents/respondents' risk level with COVID-19. This survey didn't collect other demographic information such as gender, faculty/department, ethnicity, or living arrangements.

In this survey, the GSA asked a variety of questions about the respondents' comfort level with returning to campus, their views on vaccination requirements, concerns and/or challenges with returning to campus, and necessary safety measures that should be in place, especially for those with teaching assistance responsibilities.

Finding highlights

Survey results show that while 47% of respondents are comfortable with returning to campus, 19% are extremely uncomfortable and 25% are somewhat uncomfortable. 9% of respondents are neither comfortable nor uncomfortable.

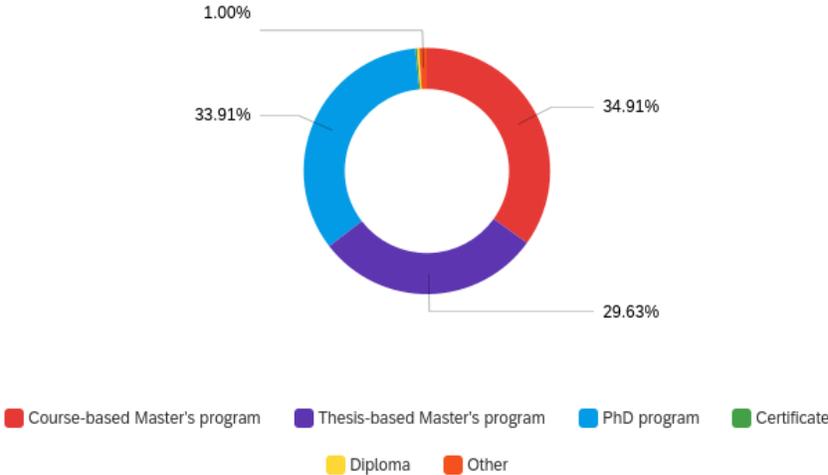
When asked if they believe that the university is ready to have all students and employees return to campus, 46.05% think that the university is not ready to have all students and employees back to campus this Fall, 18.38% is unsure, and the rest (35.56%) believe that the university is ready.

Respondents overwhelmingly want flexibility in course delivery so that they could access the course material online when they feel uncomfortable attending in-person classes/study or when they are ill and need to isolate.

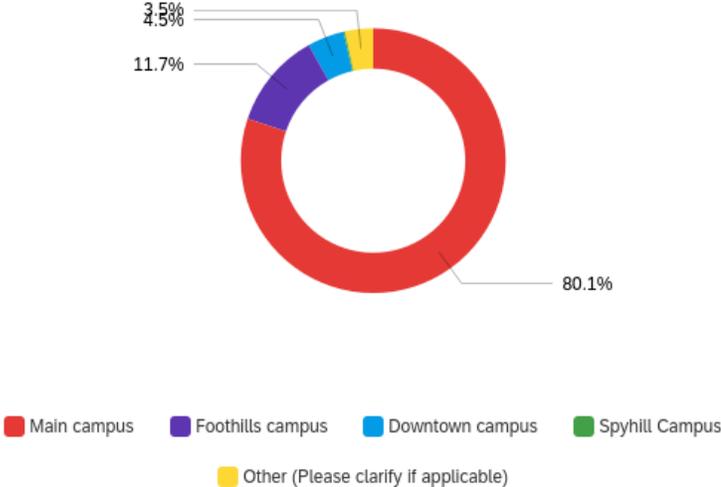
Data

Demographics

34.91% of respondents are from a course-based master’s program, 29.63% are from a thesis-based master’s program, and 33.91% are from the PhD program, and the rest 1.54% are from certificate, diploma, and other programs.

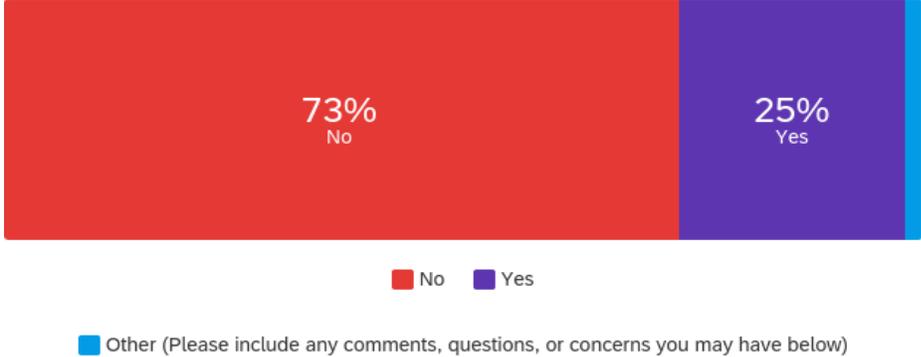


80.1% of respondents would mainly study at the Main Campus, while 11.7% would mainly study at the Foothills Campus, 4.5% at the Downtown Campus, and 3.5% would study at other campuses.

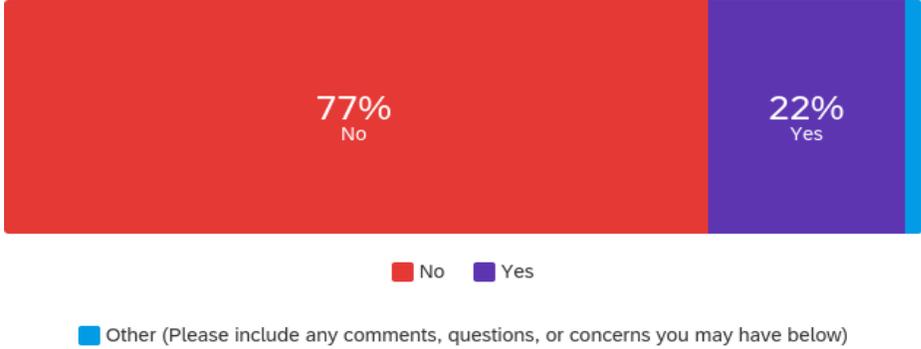


24.4% of respondents have a dependent in their household, and 22% of respondents have a high risk of illness from COVID-19 themselves or have a member of the household that have a high risk of illness from COVID-19.

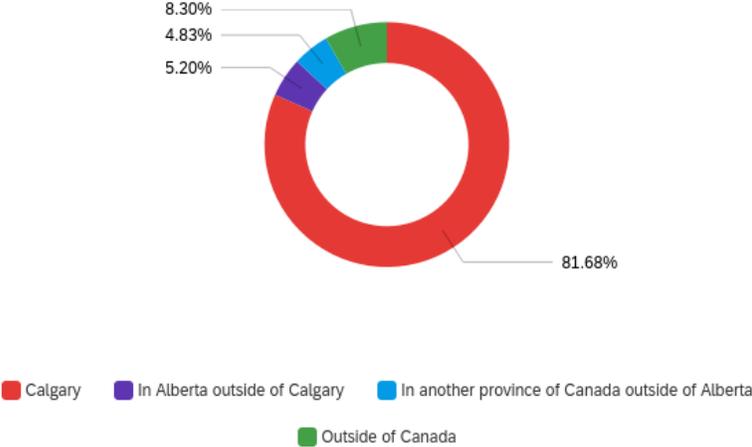
Do you have any dependents that you are responsible for at home?



Do you or a member of your household have a high risk of illness from COVID-19?



Most respondents currently live in Calgary (81.68%), while smaller percentages of respondents live either outside of Calgary in Alberta (5.20%), in another Canadian province (4.82%), and internationally (8.30%).



Readiness toward Returning to Campus

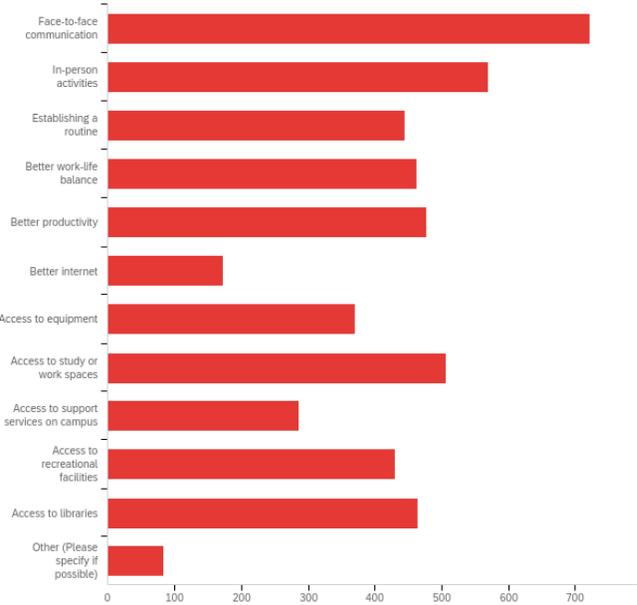
Survey results show that while 47% of respondents are comfortable with returning to campus, 19% are extremely uncomfortable, and 25% are somewhat uncomfortable. 9% of respondents are neither comfortable nor uncomfortable.



When asked if they believe that the university is ready to have all students and employees return to campus, 46.05% think that the university is not ready to have all students and employees back to campus this Fall, 18.38% is unsure, and the rest (35.56%) believe that the university is ready.



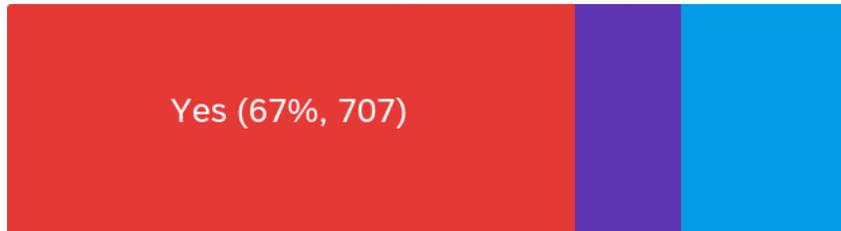
Most respondents look forward to face-to-face communication, in-person activities, access to work or study spaces, libraries, facilities, and better productivity as they return to campus this Fall.



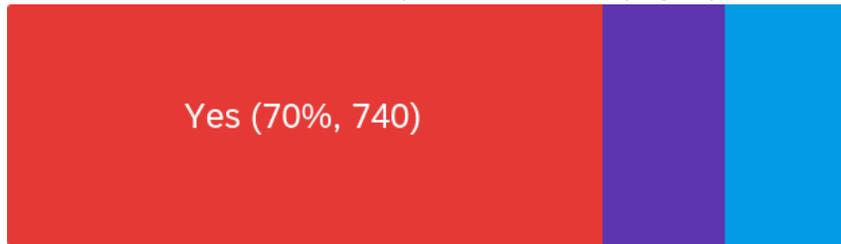
Vaccinations and Safety Measures

Most respondents (93%) stated that they are willing to remain at home if they show COVID-19 symptoms. 67% of respondents think that vaccinations should be mandatory for students living in residence, and 70% think that vaccinations should be mandatory for students studying in person on campus. 77% of respondents feel comfortable taking part in rapid COVID-19 tests on campus if available.

Should vaccinations be mandatory for students living in residence?



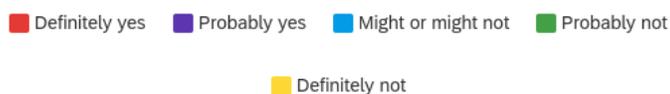
Should vaccinations be mandatory for students studying in-person on campus?



If there were rapid tests on campus, would you feel comfortable taking part in it?



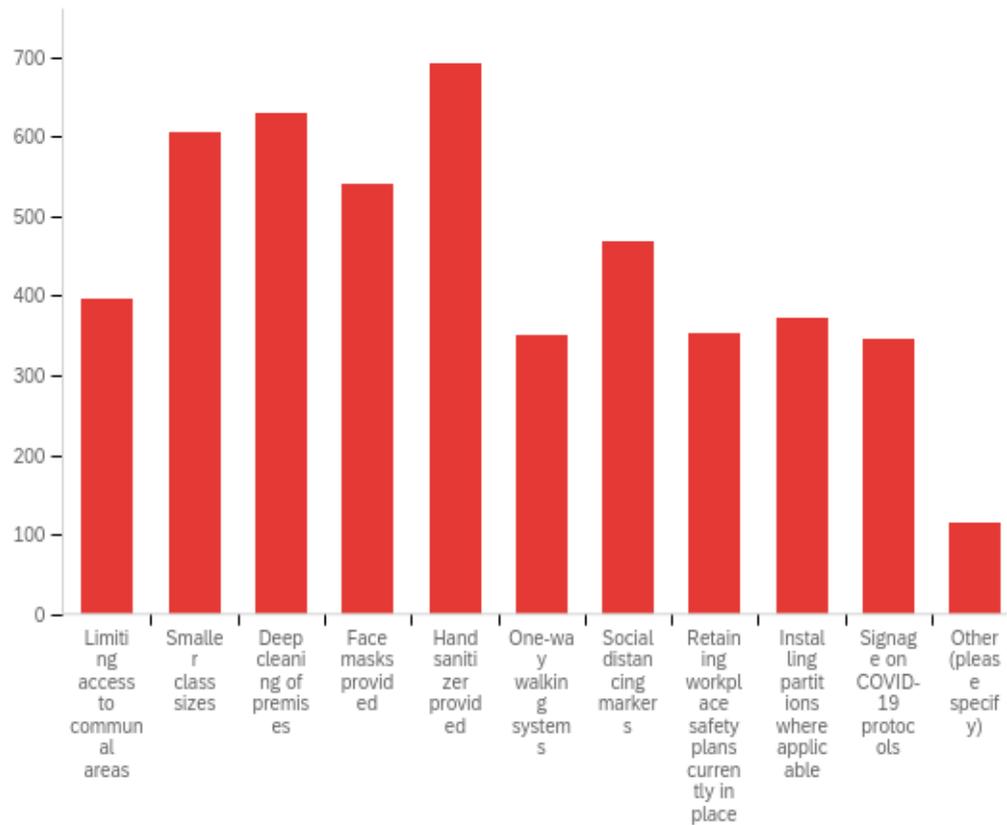
Are you willing to remain at home if you show COVID-19 symptoms?



The top five safety protocols or measures to make them feel safer on campus indicated are: hand sanitizer provided, deep cleaning of premises, smaller class size, social distancing markers, and limiting access to communal areas.

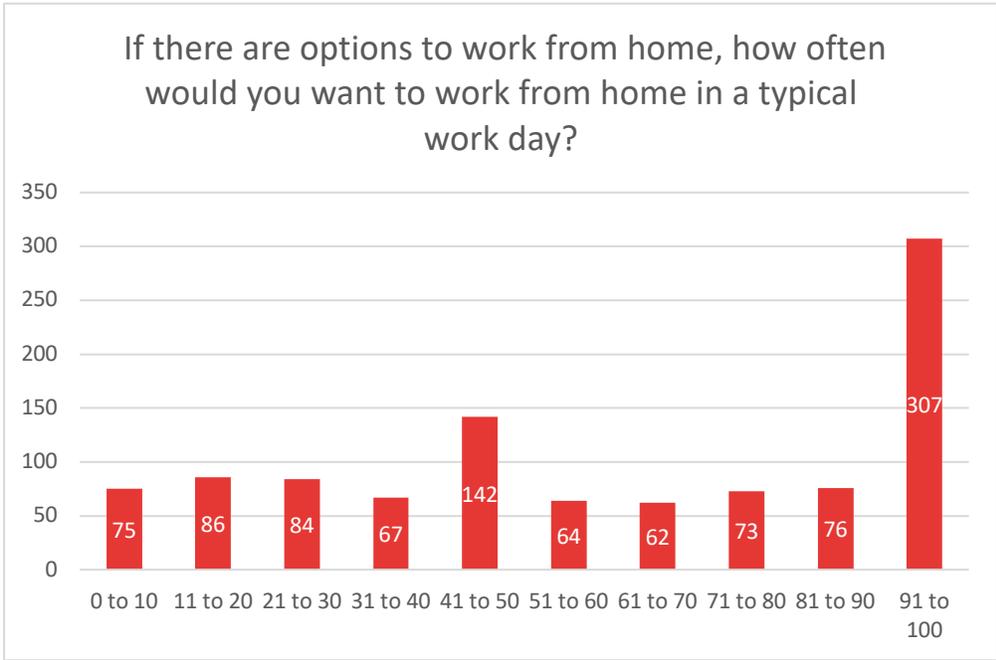
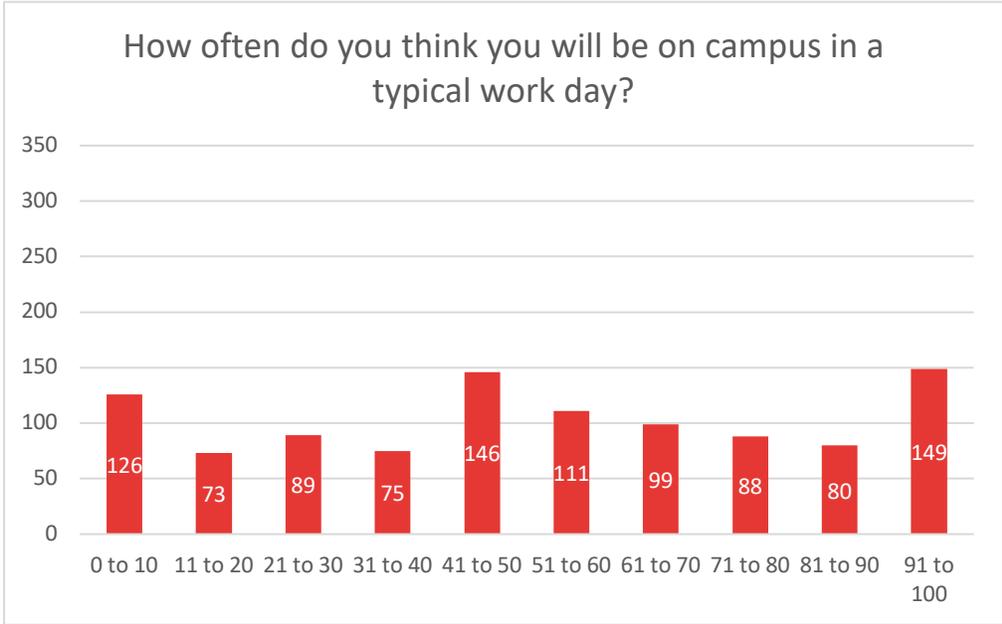
Libraries, food and dining services, Active Living facilities, meeting and conference rooms, and wellness services are indicated as the most needed services to access on campus.

Which of the following protocols would help make you feel safer on campus? Choose all which apply.



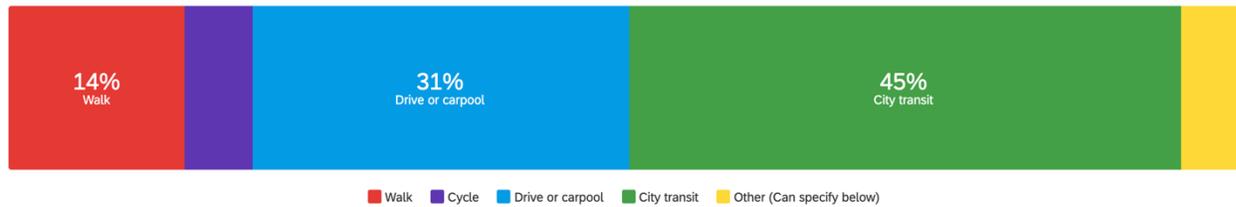
When asked how often respondents think they will be on campus in a typical workday on a scale of 0 to 100, a high number of respondents indicated they will be on campus 91 to 100% or 41 to 50% of the time.

However, when asked if there are options to work from home, 29.6% of respondents said they want to work from home 90 to 100% of the time.



Transportation

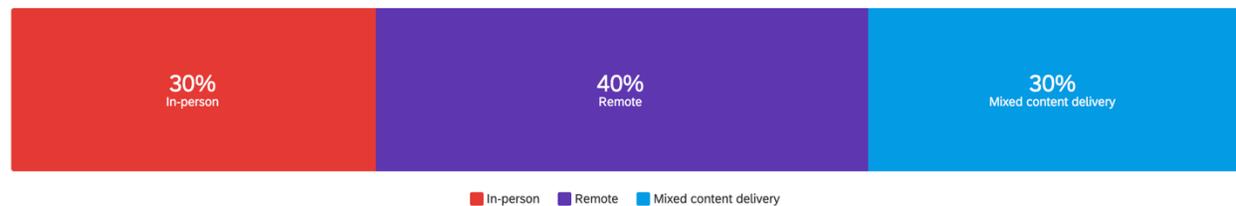
45% said they will use public transit to get to campus this upcoming fall. 30.6% will drive, and 14% will get to campus on foot.



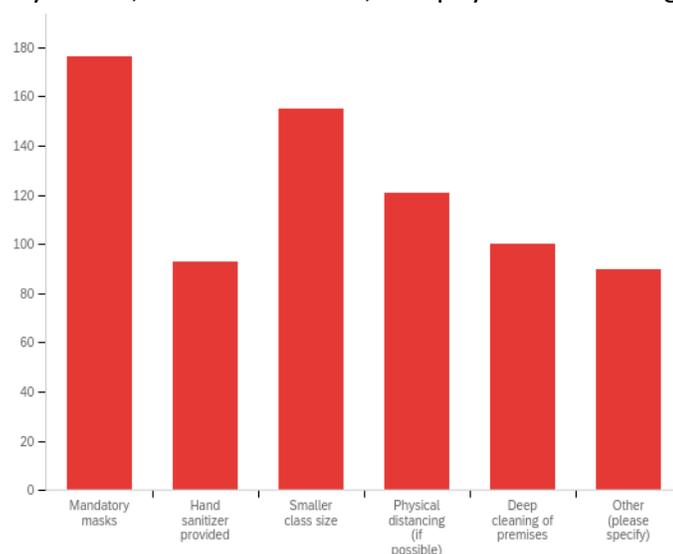
67% of respondents expressed major challenges with commuting to campus due to: temporary cancellation of UPass, higher exposure to COVID-19 in public transportation, high cost of parking and gas, lack of support for bikers (such as bike stations, lockers, showers), and loss of work life balance due to more time spent on commuting. Meanwhile, some respondents are located outside of Calgary or Canada at the time of filling out the survey which makes returning to campus more difficult.

Teaching Assistance

15.5% of respondents are expected to take on teaching assistance responsibilities this fall and 30.3% is unsure. A large percentage of respondents want to teach remotely (40%) and 30% want mixed content delivery. Only 29.7% want an in-person teaching environment.



Teaching assistants would like to see as many safety measures in place as possible, especially mandatory masks, smaller class size, and physical distancing.



Open-ended Question

There were 280 responses to our open-ended question. Most of the responses expressed concerns about in-person classes due to the high exposure to COVID-19 and ask for online course delivery option and a hybrid model of in-person and online deliveries.

Respondents believe that there should be measures to reduce the risk of contracting COVID-19, such as in-person class delay, cleaning of surfaces, mandatory face masks, and physical distancing.

Some expressed the need for support to move back to campus due to their current living location and arrangement.

Most want to see clear communication from the University and faculty so that they can make appropriate arrangements for themselves and their families.

Code book

Name	References
Concerns about in-person classes	101
Delay in-person classes	10
Fewer days of in-person classes/study per week	3
Exposure to COVID-19	10
Financial concerns	8
More communications	23
Need support to move back to in-person learning	20
Shared space	3
Teaching Assistance concerns	12
Work-life balance	12
In favour of online delivery option	87
Ready to be back to campus	28
Safety measures needed	35
Against rapid Covid-19 test	1
Vaccination	2
Against mandatory vaccination	13
For mandatory vaccination	19

Crosstab Analyses

Respondents from thesis-based master's program feel most comfortable returning to campus.

Q6: How comfortable are you about returning to campus?

	Q1: What program are you currently in?						
	Total	Course-based Master's program	Thesis-based Master's program	PhD program	Certificate	Diploma	Other
Total Count (All)	1.097,0	383,0	325,0	372,0	3,0	3,0	11,0
Extremely comfortable	22,4%	26,1%	25,8%	15,9%	0,0%	0,0%	27,3%
Somewhat comfortable	23,8%	19,8%	29,8%	22,3%	100,0%	33,3%	9,1%
Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	8,9%	6,3%	10,5%	9,4%	0,0%	33,3%	36,4%
Somewhat uncomfortable	24,4%	24,8%	21,5%	27,2%	0,0%	0,0%	18,2%
Extremely uncomfortable	18,5%	21,1%	10,5%	23,1%	0,0%	33,3%	9,1%

More respondents from PhD programs think that the university isn't ready to have all students and employees return to campus. 56.7% of respondents in a PhD program said the university is probably not or definitely not ready to have all students and employees return to campus as compared to 42.8% and 35.7% of course-based and thesis-based master's program.

Q7: Do you believe that the university is ready to have all students and employees return to campus?

	Q1: What program are you currently in? - Selected Choice						
	Total	Course-based Master's program	Thesis-based Master's program	PhD program	Certificate	Diploma	Other
Total Count (All)	1.097,0	383,0	325,0	372,0	3,0	3,0	11,0
Definitely yes	12,9%	15,7%	15,7%	7,5%	0,0%	0,0%	18,2%
Probably yes	22,0%	22,2%	26,2%	17,2%	33,3%	33,3%	45,5%
Might or might not	18,0%	17,5%	20,6%	16,4%	33,3%	33,3%	9,1%
Probably not	25,7%	26,4%	20,0%	30,6%	33,3%	0,0%	9,1%
Definitely not	19,5%	16,4%	15,7%	26,1%	0,0%	33,3%	18,2%

Respondents that have a member of their household with a high risk of illness from COVID-19 are more uncomfortable with returning to campus. 68.2% of those indicating they are somewhat or extremely uncomfortable to return to campus.

Q6: How comfortable are you about returning to campus?

Q5: Do you or a member of your household have a high risk of illness from COVID-19? - Selected Choice				
	Total	No	Yes	Other
Total Count (All)	1.097,0	840,0	236,0	21,0
Extremely comfortable	22,4%	27,5%	5,9%	4,8%
Somewhat comfortable	23,8%	25,5%	18,6%	14,3%
Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	8,9%	9,6%	5,9%	14,3%
Somewhat uncomfortable	24,4%	22,9%	30,5%	19,0%
Extremely uncomfortable	18,5%	12,4%	37,7%	47,6%

While respondents residing in Alberta outside of Calgary, or in another province/territory in Canada are less comfortable moving back to campus (63.2% and 62.2% respectively), respondents living outside of Canada feel more comfortable returning to campus. 58.3% of respondents living internationally indicated they are comfortable, compared to 26.4% of those indicated that they are uncomfortable. The number of respondents living in Calgary that are comfortable with returning to campus (46.2%) is similar to the number of those that are uncomfortable (42.4%).

Q6: How comfortable are you about returning to campus?

Q2: Where are you currently located?					
	Total	Calgary	In Alberta outside of Calgary	In another province of Canada outside of Alberta	Outside of Canada
Total Count (All)	1.097,0	896,0	57,0	53,0	91,0
Extremely comfortable	22,4%	22,7%	7,0%	13,2%	35,2%
Somewhat comfortable	23,8%	24,8%	19,3%	13,2%	23,1%
Neither comfortable nor uncomfortable	8,9%	8,4%	8,8%	11,3%	13,2%
Somewhat uncomfortable	24,4%	25,1%	35,1%	22,6%	12,1%
Extremely uncomfortable	18,5%	17,1%	28,1%	39,6%	14,3%