

UNDERGRADUATE EXPERIENCE SURVEY

2024



WSU
Walter Sisulu University

In pursuit of excellence

**This report was produced by Institutional Research and Planning
under the Directorate of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation.**

@2024 Institutional Research and Planning
1st Floor New Admin Building, Potsdam Campus
Planning Monitoring and Evaluation
Walter Sisulu University

Enquiries:

Institutional Research and
Planning Department (IRP)

irp@wsu.ac.za

Student Tracking Unit and
Institutional Research

stu@wsu.ac.za

This report may be used in part or in its entirety, provided that the
Student Tracking Unit and Institutional Research is acknowledged as the
source of the information.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Project Supervision

Dr Munienge Mbodila

(Manager: Student Tracking Unit and Institutional Research)

Data Collection

Dr Munienge Mbodila

Mr Anele Bangani

(Institutional Researcher)

Miss Ayathola Mafanya

(Admin)

Miss Regomoditswe Mkhabela

(Student Assistant)

Miss Nocwaka Pangwa

(Student Assistant)

Miss Athini Debeza

(Intern)

Miss Esethu Krexeca

(Intern)

Mr Xolisa Mabunu

(Student Assistant)

Mr Abongile Loyiso Bakubaku

(Student Assistant)

Mr Smiley Kgaugelo Mmakola

(Student Assistant)

Miss Andisiwe Lufundo

(Student Assistant)

Data Analysis

Mr Anele Bangani

Miss Regomoditswe Mkhabela

Mr Smiley Kgaugelo Mmakola

Report Writing

Mr Anele Bangani

(Primary Report Writer)

Dr Munienge Mbodila

(Secondary Report Writer)

Reviewers

Mr Ntsundeni Louis Mapatagane

(Critical Reviewer)

Dr Munienge Mbodila

(Internal Reviewer)

FOREWORD

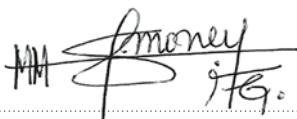
I am delighted to present our very first *Undergraduate Experience Survey 2024* Report a milestone in our commitment to understanding and enhancing the student journey at WSU. This inaugural survey marks a significant step forward in our efforts to listen, learn, and respond to the needs of our undergraduate community.

The insights gathered here provide a foundational understanding of our FTENs and Senior students' academic journey, social, and personal experiences. From classroom learning to campus life, this report highlights what we are doing well and where we must focus our efforts to create an even more supportive and enriching environment.

I want to extend my deepest appreciation to every student who participated in this survey, your voices are essential in shaping our institution's future. I also commend the dedication of the teams who worked tirelessly to bring this first-of-its-kind initiative to life.

As we reflect on these findings, let us embrace this opportunity to innovate, collaborate, and take actionable steps toward continuous improvement. Together, we can ensure that WSU remains a place where every student feels valued, challenged, and empowered to succeed.

This is just the beginning, and I look forward to the progress we will achieve together.



Dr Munienge Mbodila

Manager: Student Tracking Unit and Institutional Research
Institutional Research and Planning
Directorate of Planning, Monitoring, and Evaluation
Walter Sisulu University



TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of Figures	10
a. Introduction	12
b. Literature Review	12
c. Objectives	13
d. Conceptual Framework	13
e. Methodology	14
f. Ethical Consideration	15
SECTION 1: DATA COMPARISON	17
1.1. Survey Participation by Campus	18
1.2. Comparison of Survey Participation of FTEN, Senior Student, and Total Student	19
1.3. Distribution of Survey Participation by Faculty	20
1.4. Quintile Distribution of Survey Participants	22
SECTION 2: FTEN RESULTS ANALYSIS	26
2.1. FTEN Participation Distribution by Campus	27
2.2. FTEN Participation Distribution by Faculty	28
2.3. FTEN Participation Distribution by Quintile	29
2.4. FTEN First-generation Status	30
2.5. High School Geographical Location	32
2.6. Applying to Study at WSU	33
2.7. The Orientation Week	45
2.8. Access to Services and the Environment at WSU	47
2.9. Library	58
2.10. Facilities and Security	61
2.11. Qualification of First Choice Preference	64

2.12. Personal Motivation	65
2.13. Reasons for Choosing the Preferred Qualification	67
2.14. Course Organisation	68
2.15. Workload and Assessment	70
2.16. Teaching and Learning	72
2.17. Study Habits	74
2.18. Student Needs	76
2.19. Institutional Culture	78
2.20. Weekly Psychosocial Experiences	81
2.21. Food and Housing Insecurity	84
2.22. Living Arrangements	86
2.23. Discrimination and Harassment	87
2.24. Other Challenges Faced by Students	89
2.25. Additional Comments About Student Experiences at WSU	93

SECTION 3: SENIOR STUDENTS

98

3.1. Seniors Participation Distribution by Campus	99
3.2. Seniors Participation Distribution by Faculty	100
3.3. Senior Participation Distribution by Study Level	101
3.4. Final Year Students in the Survey	102
3.5. Senior Students Participation Distribution by Quintile	103
3.6. Senior Students First Generation Status	104
3.7. Seniors School Location	105
3.8. Seniors Applying to Study at WSU	106
3.9. The Orientation Week	115
3.10. Access to Services and the Environment at WSU	118
3.11. Library	130
3.12. Facilities and Security	132

3.13. Qualification of First Choice Preference	135
3.14. Personal Motivation	136
3.15. Reasons for Choosing the Preferred Qualification	138
3.16. Course Organisation	140
3.17. Workload and Assessment	143
3.18. Teaching and Learning	144
3.19. Study Habits	147
3.20. Student Needs	149
3.21. Institutional Culture	153
3.22. Weekly Psychosocial Experiences	156
3.23. Food and Housing Insecurity	161
3.24. Living Arrangements	163
3.25. Discrimination, Bias and Harassment	164
3.26. Other Challenges Faced by Students	167
3.27. Additional Comments About Student Experience at WSU	169

Summary **172**

1. Quintile Representation: Socioeconomic Diversity and Student Retention	172
2. First-generation Learners: Unique Challenges and Support Needs	172
3. Geographical Inclusivity: Rural vs. Urban Representation	173
4. Institutional Appeal: Student Perceptions of WSU	173

Challenges Faced by Students **174**

1. Accommodation and Transportation Issues	174
2. Academic and Administrative Inefficiencies	174
3. Social and Psychological Barriers	174
4. Institutional Disruptions	174

Strategic Recommendations	175
Conclusion	176
References	177

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1:	Participation distribution by campus	18
Figure 2:	Participation distribution by campus comparing senior students, FTENs, and institutional data	19
Figure 3:	Participation distribution by faculty	21
Figure 4:	Quintile distribution	22
Figure 5:	FTEN distribution by campus	27
Figure 6:	FTEN distribution by faculty	28
Figure 7:	FTEN distribution by quintile	29
Figure 8:	FTEN first-generation status	31
Figure 9:	FTEN high school location	32
Figure 10:	WSU as first choice university	33
Figure 11:	Admission and registration processes	39
Figure 12:	Availability of information	41
Figure 13:	Welcoming and registration rating	42
Figure 14:	Usefulness of orientation information week	46
Figure 15:	Type of residence	48
Figure 16:	Campus environment rating	50
Figure 17:	Health and psychosocial support services visibility	52
Figure 18:	Participation of student in support services	53
Figure 19:	Usefulness of support services	55
Figure 20:	Satisfaction with various student services	57
Figure 21:	Library ratings	60
Figure 22:	Ratings of facilities and security	62
Figure 23:	Choice of qualification as study of first choice	64
Figure 24:	Motivation with university studies	66
Figure 25:	Reasons for choosing a qualification	67
Figure 26:	Ratings on course organisation	69
Figure 27:	Ratings on workload and assessment	71
Figure 28:	Rating of teaching and learning	73
Figure 29:	Study habits	75
Figure 30:	Rating of institutional culture	80
Figure 31:	Weekly psychosocial experiences (academic and emotional challenges)	82

Figure 32:	Weekly psychosocial experiences (social and behavioural aspects)	83
Figure 33:	Food and housing experiences	85
Figure 34:	Living arrangement conditions	86
Figure 35:	Experiences of discrimination and harrasment	88
Figure 36:	Seniors distribution by campus	99
Figure 37:	Seniors participation distribution by faculty	100
Figure 38:	Seniors participation by study level	101
Figure 39:	Comparing final year students with continuing students	102
Figure 40:	Quintile distribution of senior students	103
Figure 41:	First-generation status of senior students	104
Figure 42:	High school location	106
Figure 43:	WSU as first-choice university	107
Figure 44:	Sentiments on the application process	110
Figure 45:	Availability of information ratings	111
Figure 46:	Registration, welcome and induction	112
Figure 47:	Usefulness of information during orientation	116
Figure 48:	Type of residence	120
Figure 49:	Campus environment rating	121
Figure 50:	Student support services awareness	123
Figure 51:	Engagement with support services	124
Figure 52:	Usefulness and effectiveness of support services	126
Figure 53:	Satisfaction with support services	128
Figure 54:	Library services	131
Figure 55:	Facilities and security ratings	134
Figure 56:	Qualification as preference of first choice	135
Figure 57:	Personal motivation	137
Figure 58:	Motivation for choosing the preferred qualification	139
Figure 59:	Course organisation	141
Figure 60:	Workload and assessment	143
Figure 61:	Teaching and learning practices	146
Figure 62:	Personal study habits	148
Figure 63:	Institutional culture	154
Figure 64:	Weekly personal psychosocial experiences	156
Figure 65:	Food and housing insecurity	162
Figure 66:	Living arrangements	163
Figure 67:	Discrimination and harassment frequency	166

a. Introduction

In the dynamic landscape of higher education, institutions must consistently seek ways to enhance the quality of their academic programs and support services. One of the most impactful strategies to achieve this is systematically collecting and analysing student feedback while tracking undergraduate career outcomes. This section details a structured approach to conducting student surveys and monitoring undergraduate destinations at WSU.

The primary goal is to improve the quality of education, boost student satisfaction, and ensure graduates are well-equipped for their careers. To achieve this, WSU utilised an online survey to collect and systematically analyse relevant data. WSU's vision emphasises becoming "a value-driven, technology-infused African university providing a gateway for local talent to be globally competitive and make a sustainable socio-economic impact." At the same time, its mission focuses on delivering quality education through "technology-infused teaching and learning methodologies that are student-centred, lead to student success, and are valued by stakeholders" (WSU Strategic Plan 2020-2030).



By employing these tools, WSU aims to gain critical insights into student experiences, evaluate the effectiveness of its educational programs, and implement data-driven decisions to improve resources and services for current and future students. This initiative fosters a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring the university remains responsive to student needs and aligned with industry expectations.

The benefits of these surveys, which contribute to enhanced teaching and learning quality, improved student satisfaction, and better-prepared graduates, extend further by strengthening WSU's reputation. This positions the institution competitively within South Africa and the global higher education landscape.

b. Literature Review

In the South African context, the literature has shown that higher education institutions face unique challenges, including addressing historical inequities and aligning educational outcomes with national development goals. Comprehensive student surveys such as student satisfaction and undergrads' destinations are critical for improving academic quality and fostering equity.

Most South African universities use various student surveys to address access, quality, student support, and inclusivity issues. Mokoena (2012) highlights the importance of student feedback in promoting inclusive education practices. Regular surveys at institutions like WSU can provide insights into student needs, helping to implement targeted interventions that enhance the academic and social needs and the environment in which students are.



The Department of Higher Education and Training (DHET) in South Africa mandates tracking graduate outcomes to ensure that academic programs contribute to the employability and economic development of the country (CHE, 2016). According to the Council on Higher Education (CHE) (2016), systematically tracking graduation destinations helps align curricula with industry needs and improves career services. Within South Africa, the level of education has been linked to finding employment (Bhorat, Cassim, & Tseng, 2016), and undergraduates tended to have significantly lower unemployment rates than peers without higher education training (Statistics South Africa, 2018, 2019). Although macro trends can link economic activity to the education level, such investigations cannot provide institutional-level information regarding the financial activities of undergraduates (McCowan et al., 2016). Information about undergraduates' destinations offers a valuable opportunity for HEI to reflect on the quality of their services and the success of their programmes (Senekal & Munro, 2019). For WSU, strong undergraduate tracking will provide valuable data on the employability of graduates and inform curriculum development to meet market demands better.

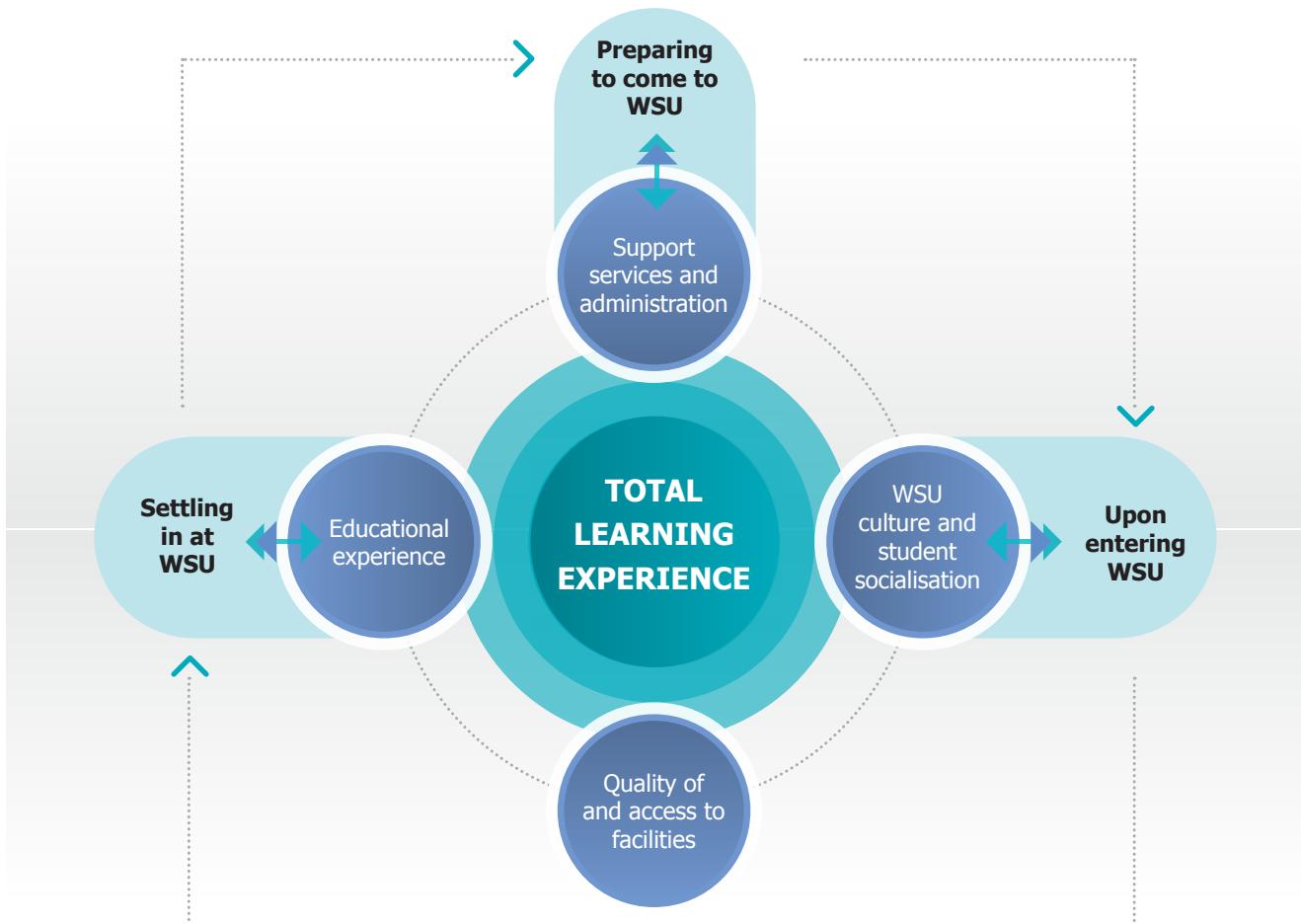
c. Objectives

The objectives outlined below will guide us during the implementation and ensure that WSU meets its strategic goals of enhancing teaching and learning quality, improving undergraduates' satisfaction, and aligning academic programs with industry demands:

- **Undergraduates' Satisfaction Surveys:** To collect detailed feedback on undergraduate experiences, satisfaction levels, and suggestions for continuous improvement.
- **Undergraduate Destinations:** To monitor, assess, and analyse our postgraduates' feedback on the support offered by the institution, career trajectories and further education pursuits.

d. Conceptual Framework

This study adopts a conceptual framework inspired by the undergraduate surveys conducted by the Analytics & Institutional Research Unit at the University of the Witwatersrand (2017). The framework divides the undergraduate student experience into three key phases: preparing to join the university, transitioning upon entry, and settling into university life.



Model of student satisfaction with first-year experience
(University of Witwatersrand: Analytics & Institutional Research Unit, 2017).

The above model highlights the critical role of support and socialisation mechanisms in shaping interventions to support first-year students. The framework was utilised to assess undergraduate satisfaction across these phases, providing a comprehensive overview of the student experience at WSU.

This framework represents holistic feedback and serves as a valuable measure of the university's responsiveness to the needs of its undergraduates evaluated through satisfaction levels reported by respondents about specific statements.

e. Methodology

This research employs a comprehensive mixed methods approach to assess student satisfaction, undergraduate destinations, and module reviews. The methodology includes quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, providing a holistic understanding of the student experience and outcomes. These methods offer increased flexibility for WSU, ensuring that relevant data is collected in its specific context, which might not be possible through other methods at the required scale.

Given the large student population, extensive studies, and strong technology adoption, institutions have increasingly turned to online survey approaches for various student survey studies, locally and internationally (Du Toit et al., 2014). Online surveys help institutions to avoid the time and cost associated with physical data collection, thus improving project turnaround times. However, it is important to note that response rates for such studies abroad have varied widely, ranging from 10% to 92% (Frawley & Harvey, 2015). This introduces the potential challenge of achieving lower response rates. Although university student populations (current study and graduates) and modules are typically easily identified from institutional records, the sampling timeframe of such studies adds some layer of complication.

Surveys such as Student satisfaction (under/ Postgraduates) should be typically sent out to the entire student population during the academic year—beginning, mid-term, and end—to capture a holistic view of student experiences. The survey instrument includes Likert scale questions, multiple-choice items, and open-ended questions. Key focus areas include teaching quality, campus facilities, residence, social well-being support, academic support, and extracurricular activities. Quantitative data are analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression analysis to identify trends and factors influencing student satisfaction.

Qualitative responses are analysed thematically to provide deeper insights into student experiences where there is a need for further understanding. However, within South Africa, personal communication information is typically incomplete or rapidly changing after students complete their studies (Branson & Leibbrandt, 2017; Cape Higher Education Consortium, 2015; Du Toit et al., 2014).

Consequently, information collected by institutions often occurs during graduation ceremonies or the graduation period, when students are more accessible due to their attendance at the event. Several authors advise maintaining communication with graduates before they exit the system to increase response rates (Du Toit et al., 2014; McCowan et al., 2018). Following the above, there is a need to outline the various methodologies applied to collect, analyse, and present data when conducting this survey.

The following section summarises the survey design, data collection methods, and analysis.

- **Survey Design:** This covers the development of a holistic survey that includes aspects of student life, such as academic experiences, campus facilities, residence, student support services (academic and social well-being), and extracurricular activities.
- **Implementation:** The survey was conducted at key points during the academic year—beginning, mid-term, and end to capture a holistic view of student experiences during that academic year.
- **Analysis:** Data collected in the survey was analysed and represented using statistical tools to identify trends and areas needing attention.

f. Ethical Consideration

One of the primary foundations of research ethics focuses on protecting research participants. Such protection includes guarding against explicit or implicit harm and the protection of the rights of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Ensuring participant confidentiality, gaining informed consent, and adequately using data are ethical considerations for undergraduate destination tracking, module ratings, and student satisfaction surveys. Confidentiality must be maintained to preserve student identities and replies and promote a trusting environment.

To obtain informed permission, participants were made aware of the goal of the surveys and reviews, how the data would be used, and that their participation would be optional. Furthermore, the information gathered will be utilised only to enhance learning outcomes and implement supportive initiatives to improve student success at WSU, but never punitive measures against academics or students. The institution abides by ethical standards and policy to ensure that any information gathered is handled responsibly.



SECTION 1

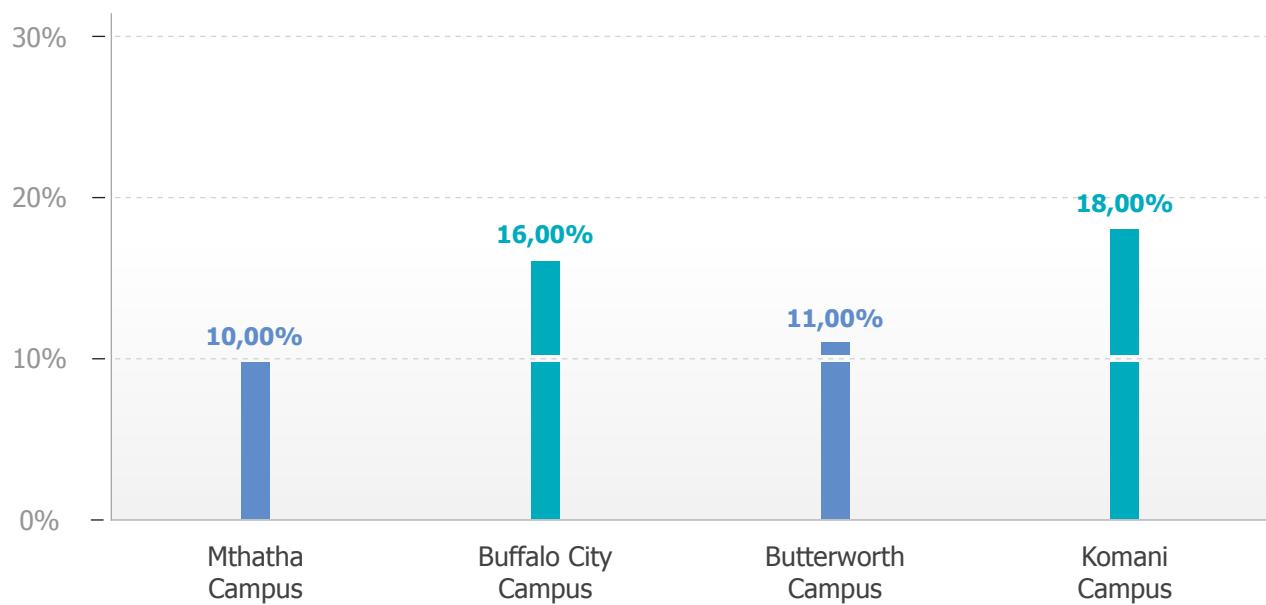
DATA COMPARISON

1.1 SURVEY PARTICIPATION BY CAMPUS

WSU has four campuses: Mthatha, Butterworth, Buffalo City, and Komani. The undergraduate survey was conducted online across all four campuses from September 5th, 2024, to November 30th, 2024, reaching an institutional participation rate of 12%, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Participation distribution by campus

Participation rates per campus:



The participation rates across the campuses vary, reflecting differences in engagement levels and potential challenges in outreach efforts. Mthatha has the lowest participation rate at 10%, suggesting limited involvement due to factors such as accessibility, awareness, or interest. Butterworth follows closely with an 11% participation rate, slightly higher than Mthatha but still indicating possible barriers to greater engagement, such as infrastructure or communication challenges. Buffalo City reports a higher participation rate of 16%, which suggests relatively better engagement or more effective outreach strategies, though there is still room for improvement. Komani stands out with the highest participation rate at 18%, potentially benefiting from stronger support structures, a more engaged community, or effective survey promotion.

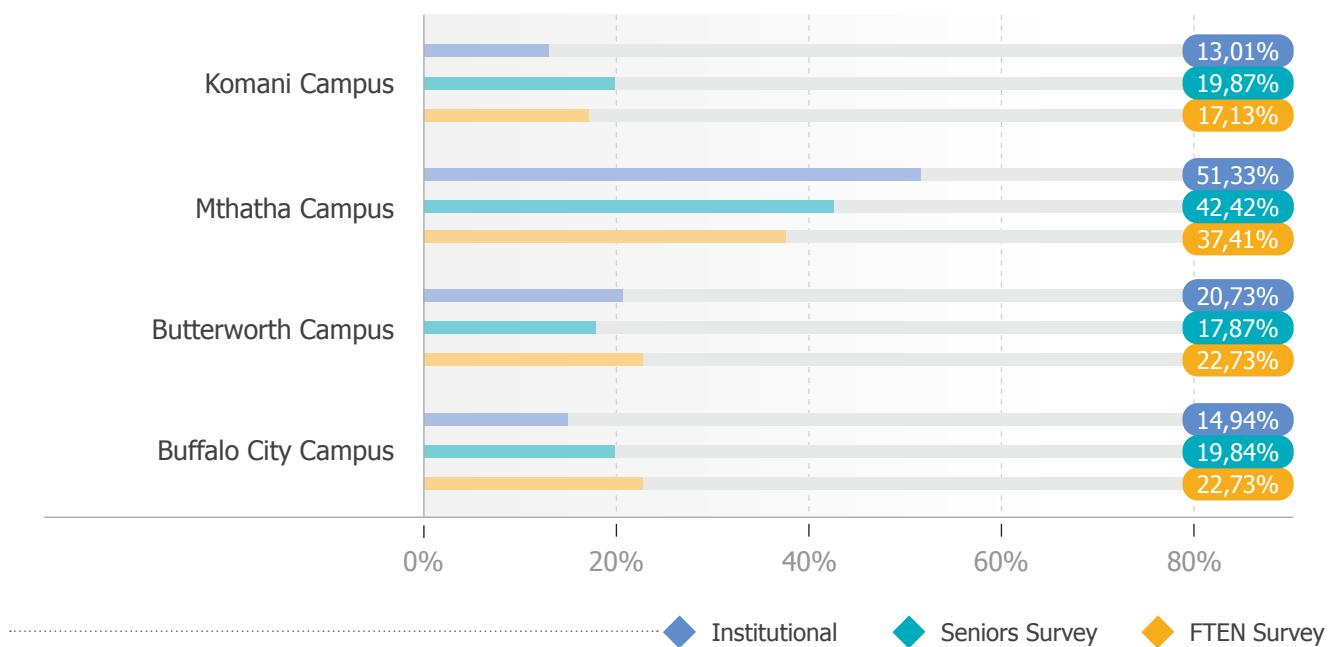
Overall, the variation in participation rates across campuses may be influenced by factors such as geographical location, student demographics, resource availability, and promotional efforts. Despite Komani leading with 18%, all campuses show relatively low engagement levels, highlighting the need for strategies to increase student participation further.

1.2 COMPARISON OF SURVEY PARTICIPATION OF FTEN, SENIOR STUDENT, AND TOTAL STUDENT

The survey was conducted across the four campuses of WSU: Buffalo City, Butterworth, Mthatha, and Komani. The survey analysis represents first-time entering students and senior students against the institutional enrolment data across four distinct campuses. It offers valuable insights into the trends and variations experienced by each campus, allowing for a detailed understanding of the student demographics and institutional characteristics at each location. By examining these trends, we can better appreciate each campus's unique challenges and opportunities, ultimately contributing to more informed decision-making and strategic planning within the institution. The data in Figure 2 compares the representation of the FTEN Survey (First-Time Entering Students), Seniors Survey (Senior students surveyed), and Institutional Data (Enrolment data) across four campuses: Buffalo City, Butterworth, Mthatha, and Komani, providing a detailed view of trends for each campus.

Figure 2: Participation distribution by campus comparing senior students, FTENs, and institutional data

Distribution by campus:



Buffalo City Campus (BCC) saw first-time entering students (FTENs) making up nearly one-quarter of the survey participants, with a 22.73% contribution, while senior students accounted for 19.84%. This slight decline in senior student participation suggests reduced engagement as students progress in their studies. Institutionally, BCC had the second lowest representation among the four campuses, with a 14.94% share, indicating a lower institutional presence relative to its survey participation.

Similarly, Butterworth Campus had a 22.73% participation rate among FTENs, comparable to Buffalo City. However, senior student participation was slightly lower at 17.87%, suggesting possible challenges such as student apathy or survey fatigue. Institutionally, Butterworth had a stronger presence than Komani and Buffalo City, with 20.73% of overall enrolments, reflecting a more significant role in the institution.

Mthatha Campus stood out with the highest participation rate among FTENs at 37.41%, contributing over one-third of the survey participants. Senior student representation was even higher at 42.42%, showing a unique trend where participation increased at higher academic levels, unlike the declines observed at other campuses. Institutionally, Mthatha dominated with a 51.33% presence, confirming its status as the central campus, catering to a large share of the student population across all levels.

Komani Campus had the smallest share of FTEN participants at 17.13%, with senior students slightly higher at 19.87%. This indicates a relatively stable participation rate across academic levels. However, institutionally, Komani had the lowest representation at 13.01%, highlighting its more limited representation within the overall institutional student population.

From these observations, Mthatha Campus clearly functions as the central hub of the institution, leading in all three categories: FTENs, Seniors, and Institutional representation. Buffalo City and Butterworth campuses exhibit similarities, both attracting nearly equal shares of first-time students (22.73%), though Buffalo City has a slightly higher senior representation (19.84% vs. 17.87%), while Butterworth holds a stronger institutional presence (20.73% vs. 14.94%). Komani Campus plays a more limited role with the smallest shares in all categories, though its slight increase in senior representation compared to FTENs suggests stable participation over time.

Overall, this analysis highlights the distinct roles of each campus in the survey, with Mthatha serving as the institutional core, Buffalo City and Butterworth playing significant yet secondary roles, and Komani maintaining a niche presence within the university structure.

1.3 DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY PARTICIPATION BY FACULTY

Understanding student distribution across various faculties is crucial for assessing demographic trends. A comparative analysis of the FTEN surveyed, seniors surveyed, and Institutional Data, highlighting student presence and participation differences across faculties. We can identify key trends, discrepancies, and potential insights into student engagement and institutional demographics by examining these variations. Figure 3 presents a comparison that provides valuable context for interpreting survey data and understanding how institutional representation aligns with enrolment patterns.

Figure 3: Participation distribution by faculty

Distribution by faculty:

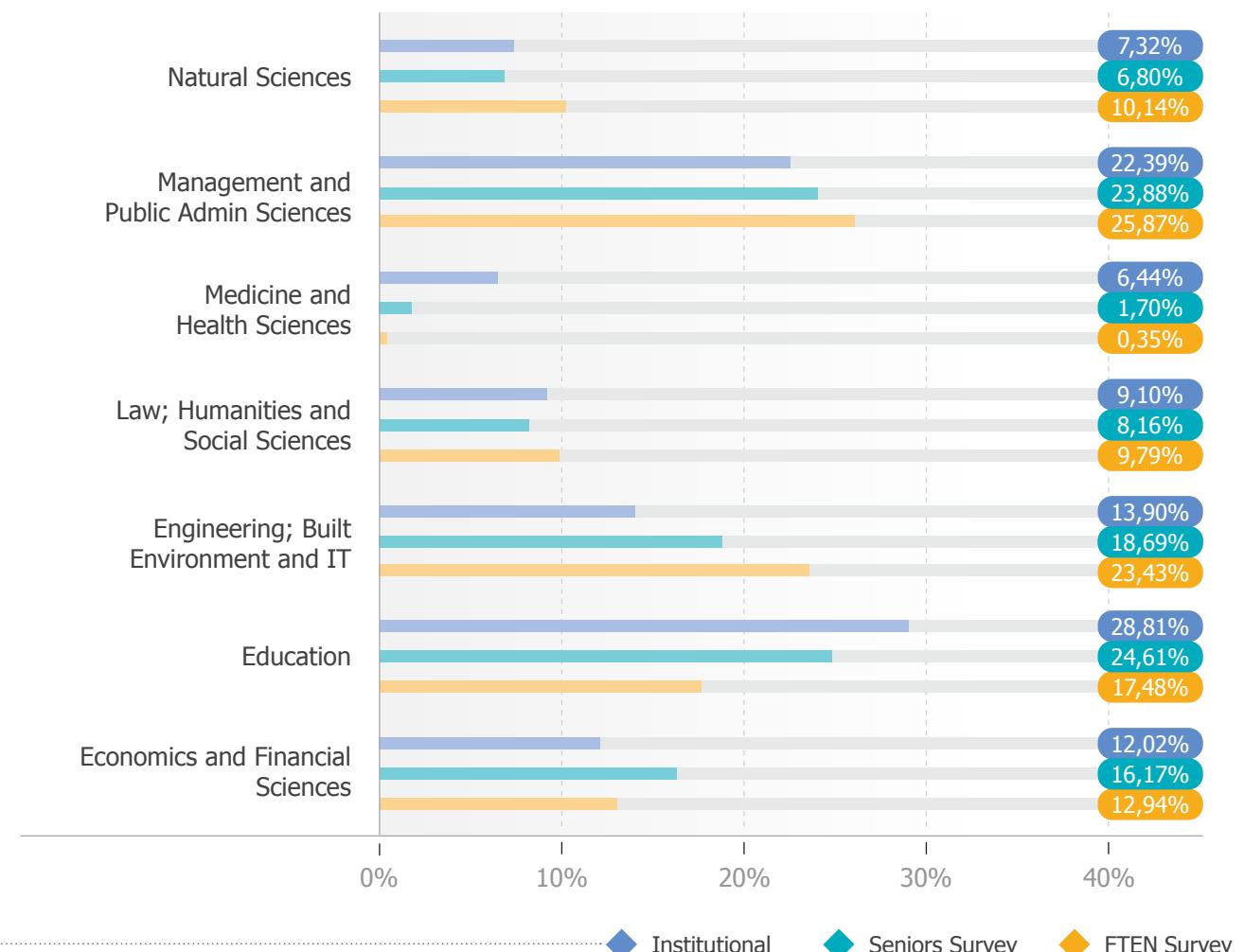


Figure 3 presents a detailed comparison of the representation of FTENs in the survey, senior students in the survey, and institutional data across various faculties, highlighting trends and variations in student participation distribution and institutional presence.

The Faculty of Education (FED) is the largest with a 28.81% share of the student population, demonstrating engagement among senior students in the survey at a 24.61% participation rate, surpassing FTEN participation at 17.48%. In contrast, the Faculty of Management and Public Administration Sciences (FMPAS) is the second largest faculty at 22.39% institutional share but shows higher rates in FTEN (25.87%) and Senior student (23.88%) participation.

Like FMPAS, the Faculty of Engineering, Built Environment and IT (FEBEIT) experiences a noticeable participation gap. While it shows a strong FTEN representation at 23.43%, this percentage declines to 18.69% among senior students and drops to 13.90% institutionally. This pattern suggests that their students are relatively highly engaged in the survey.

The Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences (FMHS), despite having a minimal FTEN share (0.35%), maintains a relatively strong institutional presence at 6.44%, underscoring a level of survey apathy from the student population.

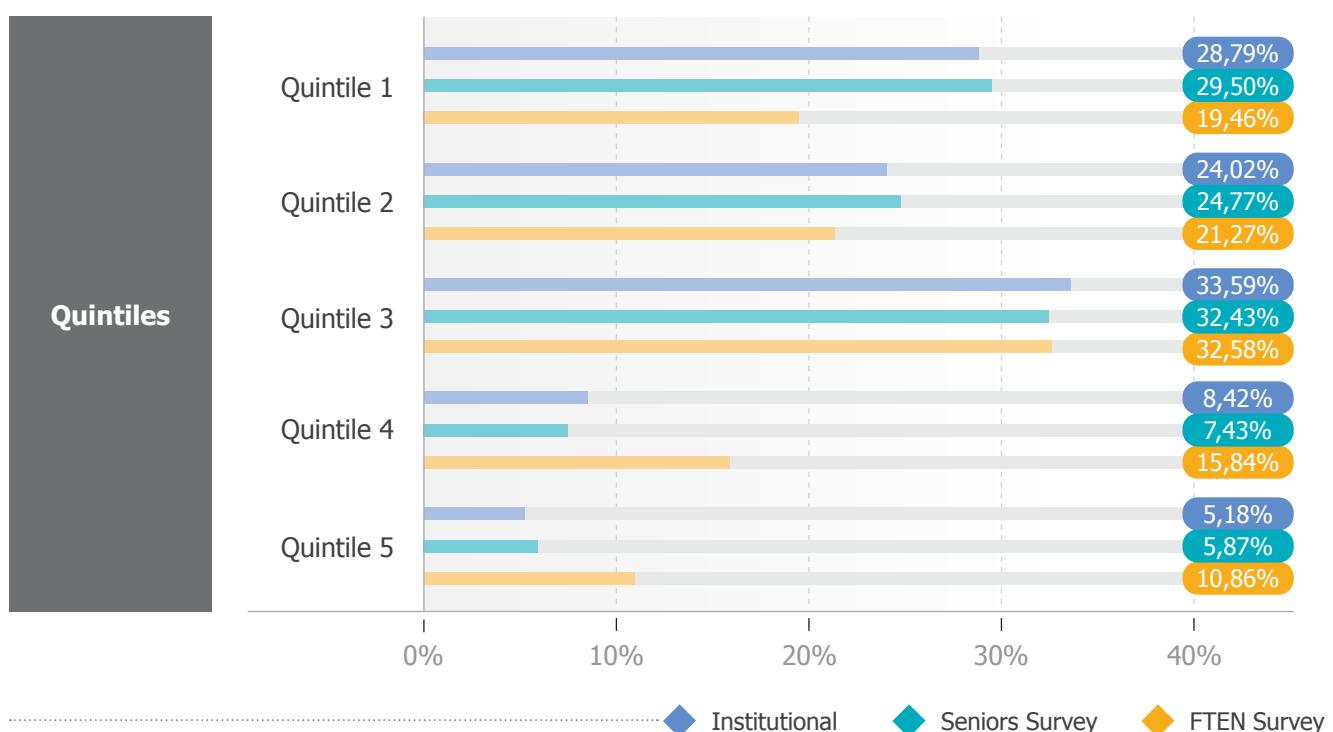
The Faculty of Natural Sciences (FNS) demonstrates a mixed engagement pattern, its representation declines steadily from FTENs (10.14%) to seniors (6.80%) while having a 7.32% share of the institutional population. This mixed pattern variation is also observed in the Faculties of Economics and Financial Sciences (FEFS) and Law, Humanities and Social Sciences (FLHSS).

1.4 QUINTILE DISTRIBUTION OF SURVEY PARTICIPANTS

The South African school quintile system is a framework used to classify schools based on their socioeconomic context and the educational challenges they face. The quintile rating system ranges from 1 to 5, with 1 being the lowest and 5 being the highest. Each school is assigned a quintile rating that reflects its students' communities' relative wealth and resources. Schools in lower quintile categories (1-3) typically serve students from poorer backgrounds and often face more challenges regarding facilities, teaching resources, ICT resources, infrastructure and student support. Figure 4 gives an overview of FTENs quintile distribution at WSU.

Figure 4: Quintile distribution

Quintile distribution:



The institutional data reveals that Quintile 3 has the highest institutional representation at 33.59%, indicating a strong concentration of individuals within this category. Quintile 1 follows closely with 28.79%, showing a significant share, though slightly lower than Quintile 3. Quintile 2 represents 24.02%, reflecting a moderate contribution to the institutional composition. Quintile 4, with 8.42%, has a smaller presence, while Quintile 5 has the lowest institutional representation at 5.18%, indicating minimal contribution to the overall dataset.

In the FTEN Survey Representation, Quintile 3 also leads with 32.58%, indicating that the largest proportion of first-time entering students falls into this category. Quintile 2 follows with 21.27%, signifying a sizable but smaller share of FTENs. Quintile 1 accounts for 19.46%, showing a notable presence, though less dominant than Quintiles 3 and 2. Interestingly, Quintile 4 contributes 5.84%, which is higher than its institutional share, suggesting a relatively stronger participation of new students. Quintile 5, while the smallest at 10.86%, still surpasses its institutional representation, indicating that first-time entering students are strongly participating in the survey.

Comparing with Seniors Survey Representation, Quintile 3 remains the highest at 32.43%, maintaining its dominant trend across all datasets. Quintile 1 rises to the second-highest representation at 29.50%, showing an increased presence of senior students compared to FTENs. Quintile 2, at 24.77%, aligns closely with its institutional representation, demonstrating consistency. Quintile 4 drops to 7.43%, indicating a significant decline from the FTEN Survey, possibly due to lower persistence rates in this group. Quintile 5 remains the smallest at 5.87%, although higher than institutional share.

Overall, Quintile 3 consistently dominates across all datasets, confirming its prevalence among FTENs, senior students, and institutional representation. Quintiles 1 and 2 are well represented in the institutional data and among senior students, suggesting an increasing presence as students progress through their studies. In contrast, Quintiles 4 and 5 exhibit the lowest representation across all datasets, but their relatively higher presence in the FTEN Survey, particularly for Quintile 4. These trends may indicate that students at quintiles 4 and 5, particularly FTENs, understand the intrinsic value of participating in surveys probably due to prior exposure to surveys at high school.



Understanding School Quintiles and their Impact on University Readiness

In recent years, the high cost of higher education has been a significant concern across South Africa. However, financial barriers are not limited to tertiary institutions—many students also face challenges accessing quality school education. Unlike higher education, which remains financially burdensome, the right to basic education is constitutionally guaranteed under Section 29 of the South African Constitution. This means that quality education must be immediately accessible to all and that historical inequalities in funding and provision must be addressed.

The School Quintile System

Addressing Unequal Access

To tackle disparities in access to quality public schooling, the South African Schools Act was amended in 2005 to introduce a quintile system. Under this system, schools are categorized into five quintiles based on the economic status of their surrounding communities:

- **Quintile 1:** Poorest communities
- **Quintile 2:** Low-income communities
- **Quintile 3:** Lower-middle-income communities
- **Quintile 4:** Upper-middle-income communities
- **Quintile 5:** Wealthiest communities

Schools in Quintiles 1, 2, and 3 are no-fee schools, meaning they are not allowed to charge tuition fees and receive government funding per learner. As of 2016, this funding was set at R1,175 per learner per year for Quintiles 1-3, while Quintile 4 and 5 schools received significantly less at R588 and R203 per learner per year, respectively.

Since the introduction of no-fee school policies, the number of learners attending such schools has grown significantly—from just 3% in 2006 to 65% in 2014 (StatsSA, 2014). The impact is particularly evident in provinces like Limpopo (92%) and the Eastern Cape (82%), while urban provinces like Gauteng (45%) and the Western Cape (41%) have a smaller proportion of no-fee school learners.

Challenges in the Quintile System

Despite its intentions, the quintile system has several shortcomings that impact the distribution of resources:

1. Funding Shortfalls

Many schools do not receive the minimum funding allocated to them. The 2013 School Monitoring Survey Report found that 53% of learners attended schools that did not receive their due funding, with provinces like Mpumalanga, Eastern Cape, KwaZulu-Natal, and Limpopo being the most affected.

2. Misclassification of Schools

Schools are classified based on the economic status of their surrounding community, rather than the financial situation of the students themselves. This leads to issues where poor learners attending schools in areas near wealthier neighbourhoods may be wrongly classified into a higher quintile. Such misclassification reduces the funding these schools receive, despite serving underprivileged students.

3. Failure to Consider Informal Settlements

The system does not adequately account for informal settlements or townships near wealthy areas, nor does it consider students who travel long distances from poor communities to attend better-resourced schools.

The Impact of School Quintiles on University Readiness

Understanding a student's quintile background is crucial for universities like Walter Sisulu University (WSU) to assess potential gaps in readiness for higher education. Many students, particularly from Quintile 1 to 3 schools, may not have had access to essential learning resources.

For example:

- **Limited Access to Science and Computer Laboratories**

Many Quintiles 1-3 schools lack basic facilities such as science labs, computer centres, and modern libraries. This means that students entering Science, Engineering, and Technology (SET) programs at WSU may need additional support in basic technical knowledge, such as computer literacy, lab equipment handling, and scientific methodologies.

- **Differences in Teaching and Learning Resources**

While academic potential may be similar across all quintiles, the availability of learning materials, exposure to technology, and access to well-trained teachers can be vastly different between Quintile 1-3 and Quintile 4-5 schools.

Bridging the Gap:

Institutional Support and Interventions

Given these disparities, universities must implement targeted interventions to support students from lower quintiles.

Potential strategies include:

- Bridging programmes to help students from under-resourced schools develop essential skills before starting their degrees.
- Access to computer literacy and technical training for students entering STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) fields.
- Additional academic support and tutoring to help first-year students adjust to the higher academic demands of university education.

The quintile system has played an important role in addressing historical inequalities in basic education. However, challenges remain in ensuring proper funding allocation and accurate school classification. For WSU, understanding the quintile distribution of its students is essential to identifying areas where additional academic support is needed. By implementing tailored interventions, the university can help bridge the gap in learning resources and ensure all students, regardless of their school background, have an equal opportunity for success in higher education.

SECTION 2

FTEN RESULTS ANALYSIS

2.1. FTEN PARTICIPATION DISTRIBUTION BY CAMPUS

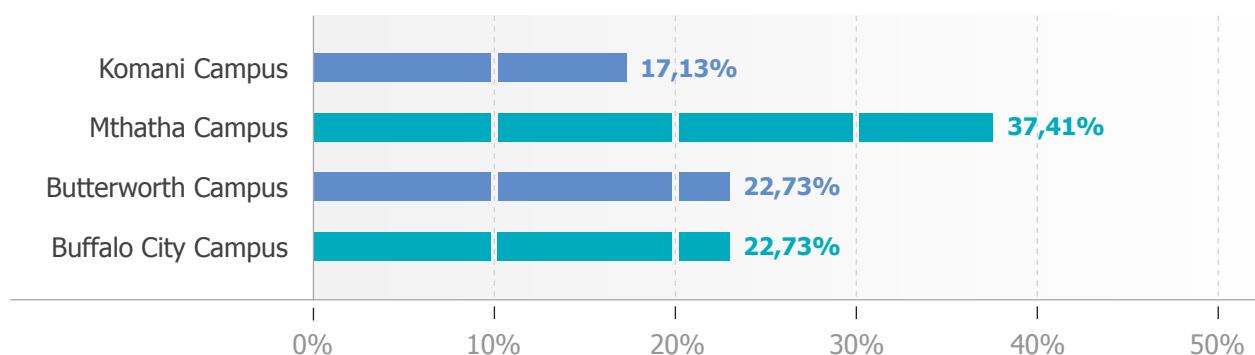
The distribution of FTEN students across WSU's four campuses—Buffalo City, Butterworth, Mthatha, and Komani—provides valuable insights into student enrolment patterns and campus prominence. By analysing the percentage representation at each location, this data highlights the varying levels of student participation, which may influence academic programs, campus resources, and geographical accessibility. Understanding these differences can help in strategic planning to enhance student support, resource allocation, and overall campus development.

Comprehensive Descriptive Summary of Campus Representation

Analysis in Figure 5 compares the percentage representation of FTEN students at four campuses: Buffalo City, Butterworth, Mthatha, and Komani. The percentages reflect the distribution of students across these campuses, highlighting variations in student participation and campus prominence.

Figure 5: FTEN distribution by campus

FTEN distribution by campus:



Buffalo City Campus contributes 22.73% of the total participating FTEN student population, accounting for nearly one-quarter of the surveyed first-year students. This percentage is identical to that of Butterworth Campus, indicating that Buffalo City has a higher participation ratio relative to the institutional student population.

Mthatha Campus has the highest FTEN representation, contributing 37.41%, accounting for over one-third of the surveyed first-year student population. As the institution's central hub, Mthatha attracts the most students.

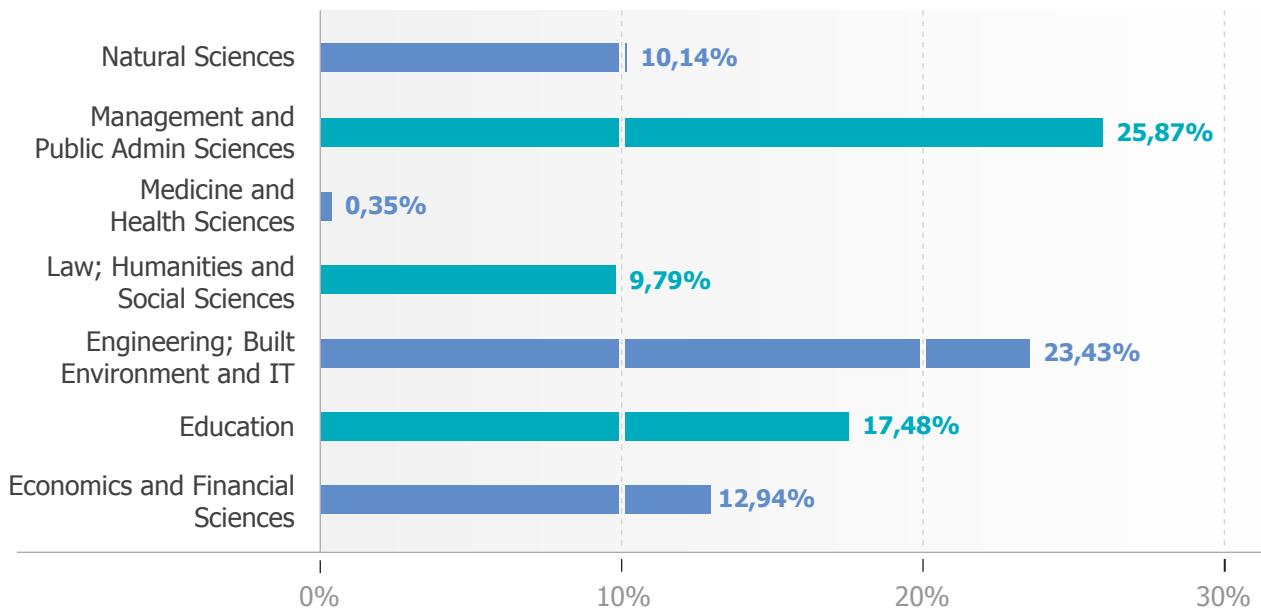
In contrast, Komani Campus has the smallest representation, contributing 17.13% of the total surveyed FTEN student population. Despite its smaller size, Komani still plays a meaningful role within the institution, serving a specific segment of the student population.

With 37.41% representation, Mthatha Campus significantly surpasses the other campuses, underscoring its dominance as the largest campus. Buffalo City and Butterworth, with their identical 22.73% shares, highlight their shared importance in maintaining institutional equilibrium and supporting relatively similar-sized student bodies. While the Komani Campus represents the smallest share, its role remains valuable, reflecting its niche contribution within the institution's overall structure.

2.2. FTEN PARTICIPATION DISTRIBUTION BY FACULTY

Figure 6: FTEN distribution by faculty

FTEN distribution by faculty:



The analysis of FTEN distribution across faculties at WSU highlights key trends in student enrolment. FMPAS leads with the highest representation at 25.87%, followed closely by FEBEIT, which accounts for 23.43%.

The FED, with 17.48%, plays a crucial role in WSU's academic framework. As the faculty that has the largest student enrolment, their student voice is very important.

In contrast, FMHS has a much smaller representation at 0.35%, yet it remains a flagship faculty due to its specialized and selective nature. FEFS (12.94%), FNS (10.14%), and FLHSS (9.79%) demonstrate a more balanced FTEN representation.

The data underscores a robust and comprehensive institutional structure at WSU, highlighted by strong representation in the First-Time Entering (FTEN) survey across critical academic domains such as technical, business, education, and administrative fields. This diversity in survey participation ensures that the institution can capture a wide range of student perspectives, leading to a more inclusive and representative understanding of student needs and experiences.

Moreover, the survey's inclusion of perspectives from disciplines like law, humanities, health sciences, and natural sciences enriches the university's understanding of its diverse student body. Law and humanities programs emphasise the cultivation of ethical reasoning, critical thinking, and cultural sensitivity, vital for addressing complex societal challenges.

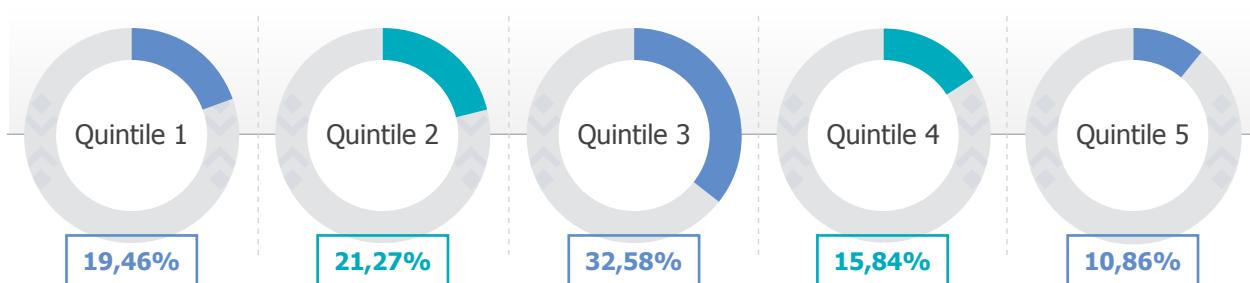
The broad representation in the FTEN survey fosters a balanced view of student opinion, which is crucial for enhancing the overall university experience. By incorporating feedback from various academic disciplines, WSU can identify and address specific needs, improve infrastructure and resources, and tailor its support services to better align with student expectations. This inclusive approach strengthens institutional decision-making and reinforces the university's commitment to fostering a supportive and dynamic learning environment.

2.3. FTEN PARTICIPATION DISTRIBUTION BY QUINTILE

The South African school quintile system is a method used to categorise schools based on their socioeconomic environment and the difficulties they face in education. Schools are assigned a rating from 1 to 5, where 1 represents the least advantaged and 5 is the most advantaged. This rating reflects the wealth and resources available within the communities the schools serve. Schools in the lower quintile groups (1-3) generally serve students from less affluent backgrounds and often contend with challenges such as insufficient facilities, limited teaching materials, and inadequate student support, see Figure 7.

Figure 7: FTEN distribution by quintile

FTEN distribution by quintile:



The distribution of FTEN participants across quintiles reveals key insights into the socioeconomic backgrounds of students at WSU. Quintile 1 contributes 19.46% of the total FTEN participants, representing the lower range of data values. This suggests that a significant portion of students come from economically disadvantaged schools with limited or poor resources, reflecting challenges in accessibility and support.

Quintile 2 accounts for 21.27%, slightly higher than Quintile 1, indicating a modest rise in students from slightly better-resourced schools. However, the economic and infrastructural challenges remain substantial, showing only a marginal improvement from the lowest category.

Quintile 3 holds the largest share, with 32.58%, making it the most represented segment in the dataset. This quintile serves as a middle ground between the least and most affluent schools, suggesting that most students come from schools with moderate economic standing. Its dominance highlights its central role in shaping overall enrolment trends.

In Quintile 4, representation drops to 15.84%, indicating a decline in student concentration as economic backgrounds improve. This quintile reflects the upper middle economic class within the dataset, where fewer students are present compared to the more dominant Quintile 3.

Finally, Quintile 5 has the smallest share at 10.86%, representing students from wealthier schools. The lower percentage suggests that students from wealthier backgrounds are a minority, reinforcing the idea that the dataset skews toward students from lower to middle-income schools. This quintile represents the outliers in the distribution, contributing the least to the overall student population.

Overall, the data shows a notable concentration in Quintile 3, with progressively lower representation in both the lowest and highest quintiles. This distribution suggests a central tendency, where most students come from moderately resourced schools, with fewer from both the most disadvantaged and the most affluent institutions. Understanding this socioeconomic distribution is crucial for tailoring institutional support, resource allocation, and policymaking to better address the diverse needs of the student population.

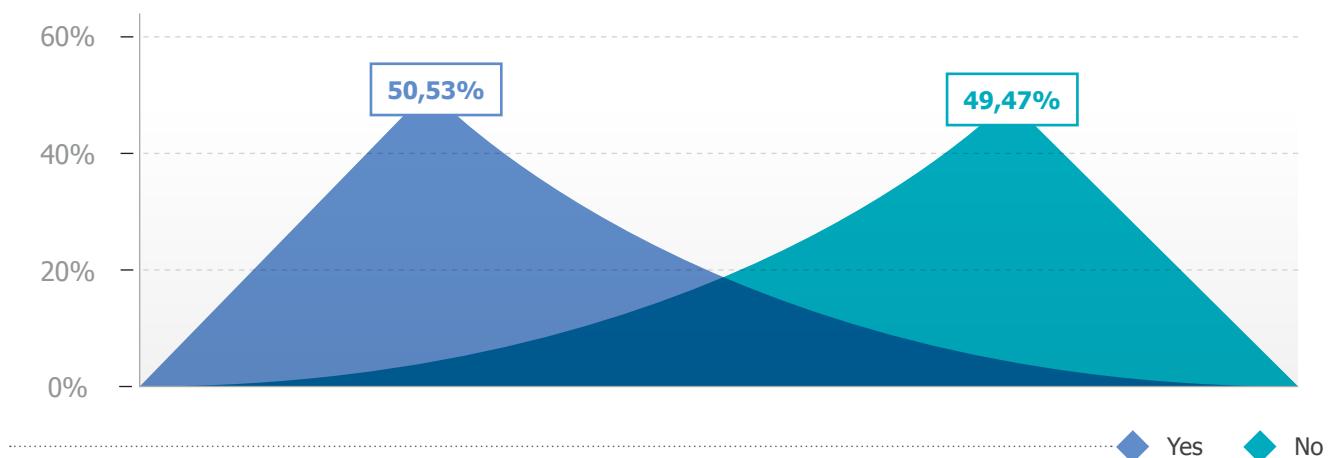
2.4. FTEN FIRST-GENERATION STATUS

The need to understand the educational background of university students provides valuable insights into the role of family influence in higher education enrolment. This data examines whether students at WSU have family members who have previously attended university, shedding light on the distribution of first-generation and non-first-generation students. With nearly an equal split between these two groups, the findings highlight both the advantages that familial academic experience can offer and the unique challenges faced by first-generation learners.

This analysis, in Figure 8, shows the status of FTENs' first-generation. This underscores the importance of tailored support systems and inclusive initiatives to ensure academic success for all students, regardless of their family's educational history.

Figure 8: FTEN first-generation status

University educated family member:



The data analysis provides valuable insights into the influence of family educational background on university enrolment, particularly in understanding whether students are first-generation university attendees or come from families with prior university experience. Slightly over half (50.53%) of the respondents indicated that they have at least one family member who has attended a university. This suggests that higher education is a shared family experience, potentially offering guidance, motivation, and support in navigating academic life. Having relatives with university experience may contribute to an intergenerational transfer of educational opportunities, increasing the likelihood of pursuing and completing higher education. Such students may benefit from familiarity with academic expectations, access to advice on course selection, and emotional support from family members who understand the demands of university life.

On the other hand, nearly half (49.47%) of the respondents are first-generation university students, meaning they are the first in their families to attend a higher education institution. This represents a significant proportion of students who may lack familial guidance or prior exposure to university culture, potentially leading to unique challenges. These students might struggle with understanding academic processes, financial management, and campus life, which could impact their success and overall university experience.

With nearly half of the FTEN population being first-generation learners, WSU should prioritise tailored support programs. Initiatives could include mentorship programs, workshops on academic skills, counselling, and all other support services WSU offers to help these students acclimate to the university environment. The 50.53% of students with a family history of university education, likely benefit from informal support networks.

WSU can build on this by involving families in orientations or creating family engagement programs to strengthen support systems. The nearly equal split between first-generation and non-first-generation students suggests an opportunity for WSU to foster peer-to-peer support networks. Encouraging interactions between these groups can promote knowledge sharing, create a sense of belonging, and reduce disparities. The balance between first-generation and non-first-generation students underscores the diversity in educational backgrounds. WSU should aim to provide equitable resources and foster an inclusive environment that supports all students, regardless of their family's academic history.

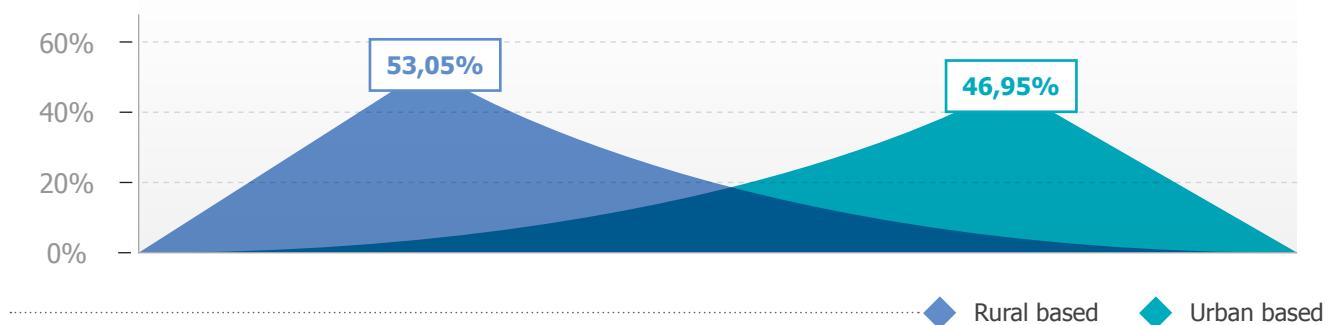
2.5. HIGH SCHOOL GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION

The distribution of students from rural-based and urban-based schools within the WSU catchment area reflects the institution's deliberate efforts to promote geographical inclusivity and equitable access to higher education. This distribution underscores WSU's role in bridging educational disparities by accommodating students from diverse backgrounds, particularly those from underserved rural communities. By maintaining a balanced representation between rural and urban student populations, the institution demonstrates its commitment to fostering diversity, ensuring that students from both resource-constrained and well-equipped educational environments can pursue higher education.

Figure 9 provides insights into the distribution of students between rural-based and urban-based schools, showcasing the geographical dynamics and focus areas of the WSU catchment area. Each category represents a portion of the total FTEN population with differing backgrounds.

Figure 9: FTEN high school location

School location:



Rural-based schools contribute the majority of students, making up 53.05% of the total representation. This highlights a strong FTEN representation from rural areas, indicating that WSU prioritises access to education for students in underserved or remote communities. These schools likely play a vital role in fostering educational opportunities in areas where resources may be limited, addressing equity and inclusivity challenges. The higher percentage suggests that rural-based schools are a critical focus for the institution, possibly due to the location of WSU campuses.

Urban-based schools contribute a smaller share, accounting for 46.95% of the total FTEN representation. This indicates a strong but slightly lower focus on urban centres, where access to education is typically more abundant than in rural areas. Despite being relatively smaller in representation, urban-based schools remain essential for addressing the demands of a growing urban population and providing competitive academic offerings.

This analysis underscores the institution's dedication to fostering geographical inclusivity, with a pronounced emphasis on rural-based schools, which account for 53.05% of the FTEN student population. By prioritising educational access for underserved and historically marginalised rural communities, the institution demonstrates its commitment to bridging socioeconomic and regional disparities. Meanwhile, urban-based schools, comprising 46.95% of the FTEN student cohort, remain a substantial focus, reflecting a deliberate and strategic balance between rural and urban priorities. This equitable approach highlights the institution's holistic strategy in addressing the diverse needs of students across varying geographical and socioeconomic contexts, promoting a more inclusive and representative educational environment.

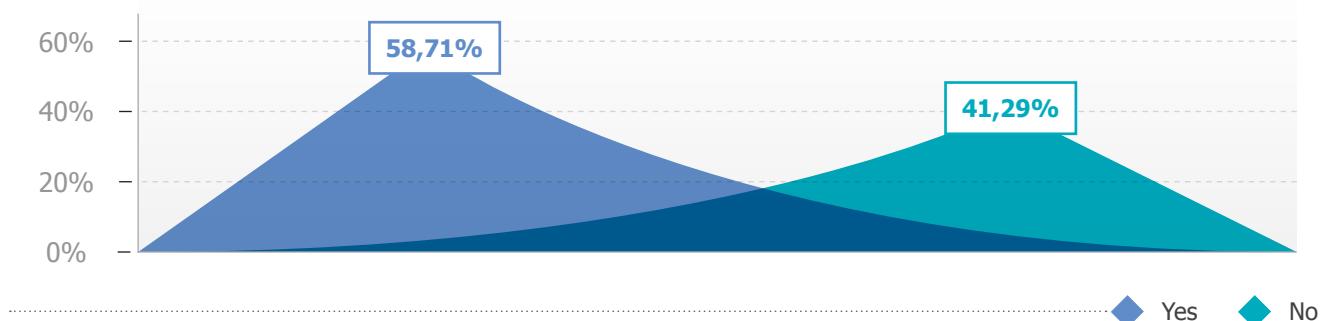
2.6. APPLYING TO STUDY AT WSU

Selecting a university is a crucial decision influenced by academic reputation, program offerings, affordability, and accessibility. Understanding students' preferences in choosing WSU as their first-choice institution provides valuable insights into the university's appeal and competitiveness. This report analyses the distribution of students based on their first-choice selection, highlighting WSU's strengths and potential areas for improvement.

The data in Figure 10 outlines the percentage of students who chose WSU as their first-choice institution compared to those who did not. This distribution provides insight into students' preferences, perceptions of the university, and its competitiveness in attracting applicants.

Figure 10: WSU as first choice university

WSU as first choice:



Most students, 58.71%, indicated WSU as their first-choice institution. This reflects a strong preference for WSU among applicants, indicating that the university is viewed positively as a top choice for higher education. This may be due to WSU's reputation for academic quality, affordability, or accessibility, specialised or well-regarded programs that align with applicants' interests, and the university's geographical accessibility, particularly for students in its service regions.

A significant minority, 41.29%, did not select WSU as their first-choice institution. While this group represents a smaller portion of the student body, it suggests there is competition from other institutions that may be perceived as more desirable by some applicants. Applicants may view other institutions as better suited to their academic or career aspirations or have limited awareness of WSU's offerings or specific program limitations. Understanding the motivations of this group could help WSU identify areas for improvement, such as program diversification, enhanced marketing, or student outreach initiatives.

Students were encouraged to share their perspectives on the key factors influencing their decision to apply to WSU. Their responses highlight a blend of personal aspirations, convenience, and social influence, all underscore WSU's appeal as a premier institution for higher learning.

For many students, WSU represents more than just an academic institution it is a gateway to achieving personal and family milestones. As a preferred choice for aspiring first-generation graduates, the university plays a crucial role in their educational journey. The university's location is a significant factor in students' decision-making, offering convenience and peace of mind. Many students appreciate being close to home, making travel and family connections more manageable.

One student, as indicated:



"It is closer to home."

Another indicates a similar view:



"I didn't want to be far from home."

In the same line, others also stated that:



*"The university is not in another province,
so it's easier to go home."*



"WSU is our varsity as it is in our district."

With an efficient application process and responsive admissions team, WSU further solidifies its reputation as an accessible and student-friendly institution.

Family, friends, and personal connections play a pivotal role in shaping students' choices. Many applicants were encouraged by their loved ones, reinforcing the importance of strong social networks in enrolment decisions.

A student stated that:



"Most people I know are here at WSU."

While these two students indicated:



"Having a friend who completed her studies at WSU played a huge role."



"Friends told me about the institution."

Others have indicated that:



"My sibling advised me to apply."



"My aunt who works at WSU encouraged me."

Modern platforms such as BridgeApp, social media, and career expos are powerful tools for increasing awareness about WSU. These digital and event-driven initiatives help prospective students make informed choices, demonstrating the university's commitment to reaching a wider audience.

WSU's strong emphasis on diversity, accessibility, and academic excellence continues to resonate with students. By aligning with the aspirations of its first-time entering (FTEN) students, WSU establishes itself as a transformative institution that nurtures potential and broadens opportunities.

Affordability is frequently the decisive factor for students from low-income families when selecting a university. Many people find WSU appealing because of its dedication to offering affordable education and having no application fees.

Below are students' voices:



"No need for an application fee, that means anyone can apply."



"I applied because WSU is in rural areas but still provides the best services."



"It was the only university I knew that wouldn't reject me based on my choice."

For some, the opportunity to study at WSU was a lifeline in difficult circumstances.

One student indicates that:



"I had family issues, and nothing was going well. Then I found out that WSU was still open for 2024 intake, so I had to use that opportunity to pursue my dream of being the first person to graduate in my family."

One important consideration in students' decisions was WSU's reputation for producing highly qualified professionals, especially in the field of teaching. The university attracted many applications because of its academic record and the achievements of its graduates.

Below are students' voices:



"It was highly praised that teachers who studied at WSU are the best."



"WSU produces quality teachers because students start practicals in their first year, gaining experience as they progress."



"WSU has a high percentage of pass rates in the education course."

Some students were also attracted by the university's commitment to rural-based education and uplifting disadvantaged communities.

Amongst the respondents, one student indicated that:



"It's the university that accommodates everyone regardless of their background."

The availability of their preferred course was a major factor in some students' decision to enrol at WSU. WSU was an obvious choice for students who were enthusiastic about particular subjects because some of its courses were not commonly offered at other universities.

Below are students' voices:



"The course I applied for is only offered here, UFH & NWU."



"WSU gave me a chance to study what I love, which is teaching."



"Since I wanted to be a leader, I chose management as my first choice."

For others, WSU represented an opportunity to secure a stable career.

One student stated:



"WSU is well known for providing the best educators worldwide."

Several students highlighted WSU's seamless application process as a key reason for their enrolment. The university's accessibility and willingness to accept late applications provided an opportunity for those who might have otherwise been left out of higher education.

Students' voices:



"It was the first institution to accept my application."



"I applied during late applications and got accepted."



*"I was applying to every university in South Africa,
but WSU was the most responsive."*

For some students, the decision to apply was spontaneous, driven by the ease of the process.



*"I just searched for universities in South Africa and
applied to the ones that were free."*

The role of social media and online platforms in influencing students' decisions cannot be overlooked. Many applicants learned about WSU through social media, online searches, and recommendations from digital communities.

Students' voices:



"Social media and family helped me decide."



*"I saw how people judged WSU online, so I wanted
to see for myself."*

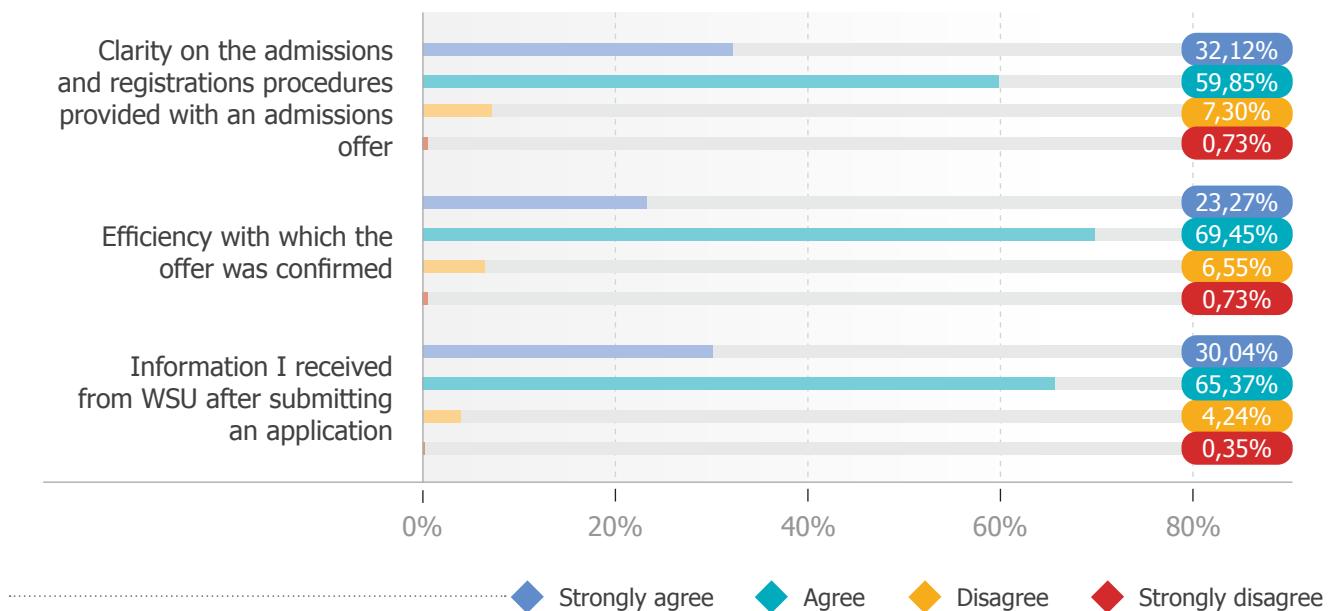


*"I found WSU's website and decided to apply after
reading about its programs."*

Figure 11 depicts the applicants' perceptions regarding three critical aspects of WSU's admissions process: information received after applying, the efficiency of offer confirmation, and the clarity of admissions and registration procedures. Each metric reflects satisfaction levels, providing insights into strengths and areas for improvement.

Figure 11: Admission and registration processes

Applying to WSU:



In terms of the quality and clarity of information provided to applicants after they submit their applications, most respondents (65.37%) found the information satisfactory, indicating that WSU is generally effective in communicating essential details to its applicants. A significant portion of applicants (30.04%) strongly endorsed the quality of the information, suggesting a highly positive communication experience for many. However, a small minority of applicants (4.24%) expressed dissatisfaction, highlighting potential gaps in the clarity or comprehensiveness of the information provided. Very few applicants (0.35%) strongly disagreed, indicating that outright dissatisfaction is rare but should still be addressed. The high agreement rates (95.41% when combining those who agree and strongly agree) suggest that WSU's communication is largely effective, albeit there is room for continuous improvement to address the concerns of the small percentage of dissatisfied applicants.

Regarding the speed and efficiency with which WSU confirmed admission offers, most applicants (69.45%) expressed satisfaction with the process. This highlights WSU's capacity to handle applications promptly. While a smaller percentage of applicants (23.27%) strongly agreed with this sentiment, it still reflects a generally positive view of WSU's efficiency.

On the other hand, a small portion of applicants (6.55%) reported dissatisfaction with the speed of the process, indicating that some experienced delays.

Very few applicants (0.73%), indicated strong dissatisfaction, pointing to isolated cases where efficiency may have been an issue. Overall, the satisfaction rate, comprising 92.72% of those who agreed or strongly agreed, reflects positively on WSU's efficiency. However, it is essential to address the delays that a minority of applicants experienced.

The clarity of the admissions and registration procedures was communicated to applicants along with their admissions offers. A significant majority of applicants (59.85%) expressed satisfaction with the clarity of the instructions provided, indicating that WSU generally offers clear and understandable guidance. Furthermore, a high percentage of strong agreement (32.12%) shows that many applicants had an excellent experience with the clarity of the procedures.

However, a slightly larger proportion of applicants (7.30%) reported dissatisfaction, compared to other metrics, indicating that some found the procedures unclear or confusing. Very few applicants (0.73%) were strongly dissatisfied, but their presence highlights the need for more consistent communication. Overall, the combined percentage of agreement (91.97%) is robust. Nonetheless, the slightly higher disagreement percentage compared to other metrics suggests that enhancing clarity in the admissions and registration procedures could lead to a better understanding for all applicants.

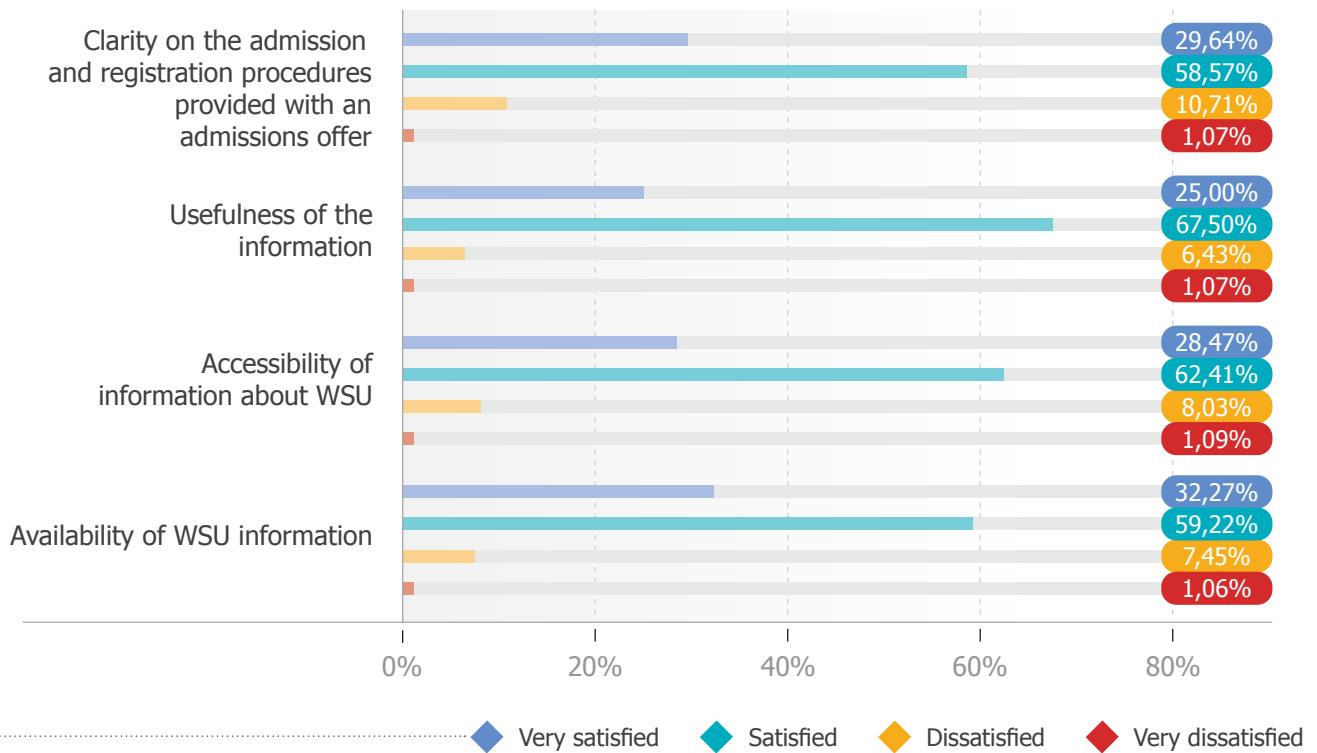
WSU demonstrates a strong overall performance in its admissions process, with high levels of satisfaction across information delivery, efficiency, and procedural clarity. To further enhance applicant experiences, WSU can focus on refining its processes to address the concerns of the small minority who expressed dissatisfaction, particularly regarding procedural clarity and processing efficiency. By doing so, WSU can continue strengthening its reputation and appeal to prospective students.

The registration, admission, and orientation processes are crucial in shaping students' initial experiences at WSU. This analysis examines student satisfaction with information accessibility, registration efficiency, and induction programs, highlighting successes and areas for improvement. While WSU performs well in delivering essential information and organising admission activities, challenges such as communication delays, technical issues, and residence allocation concerns persist, see illustration in Figure 12.



Figure 12: Availability of information

Satisfaction levels - availability of information:



This analysis highlights students' satisfaction levels with various aspects of information and processes provided by the institution, focusing on availability, accessibility, usefulness, and clarity.

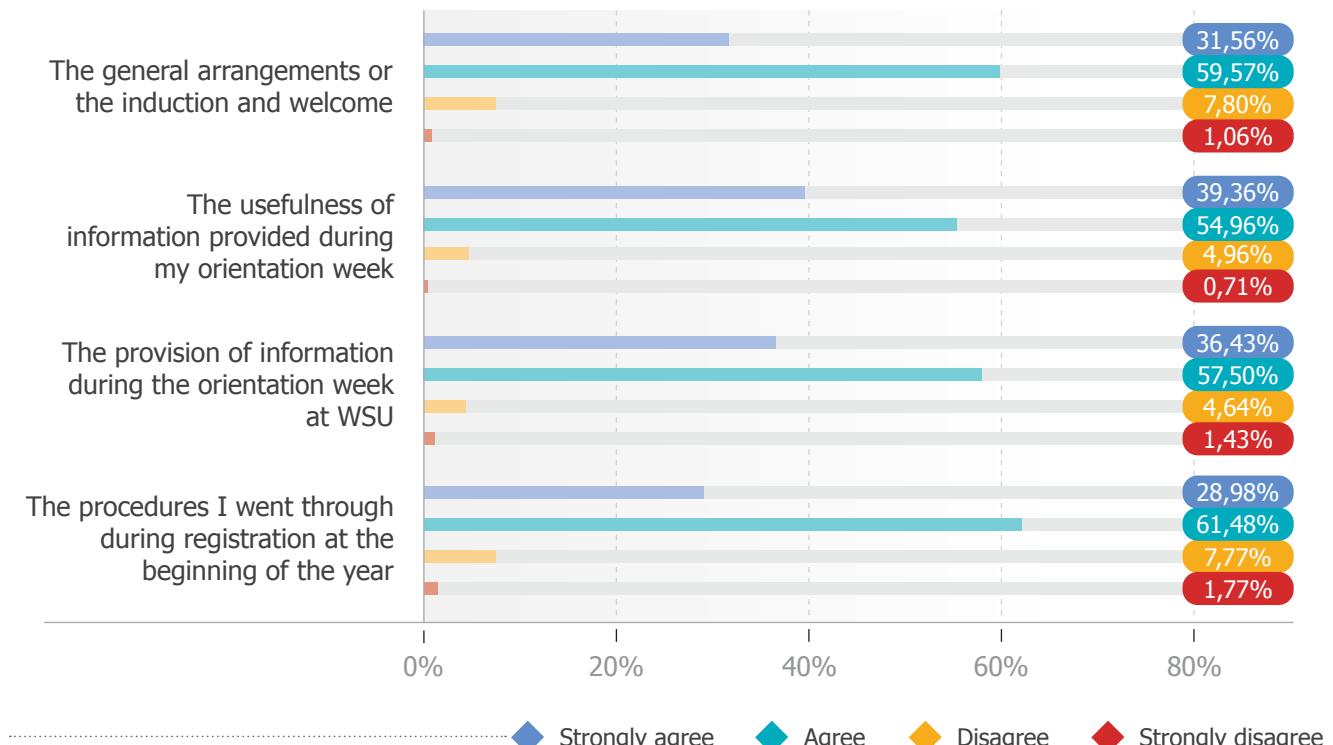
A significant 91.49% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the availability of information provided by WSU, indicating that the university is largely successful in ensuring students have access to necessary details. However, 8.51% of students reported dissatisfaction, possibly due to specific information gaps or communication delays. Similarly, 90.88% of students found the accessibility of information to be satisfactory, suggesting that WSU has made commendable efforts to ensure students can quickly obtain resources. Despite this, 9.12% of respondents noted challenges, which may indicate the need for further improvements, such as simplifying access channels or addressing technological barriers.

Regarding usefulness, 92.50% of students reported that the information provided was beneficial, making this the highest-rated aspect among the four categories. This suggests that WSU's communication materials effectively address student needs and provide valuable insights. However, 7.50% of respondents felt information could be better tailored to meet diverse student expectations. When assessing the clarity of admission and registration procedures, 88.21% of students expressed satisfaction. However, this category had the highest dissatisfaction rate (11.78%), suggesting that some students experience confusion or difficulties with the admission and registration process.

Overall, WSU performs well in providing accessible, useful, and available information. However, there is room for improvement, particularly in enhancing clarity in admission and registration procedures. Addressing these gaps will help improve the overall student experience and satisfaction. The analysis in Figure 13 provides a comprehensive understanding of students' feedback on the registration process, orientation week, and related logistical arrangements at WSU.

Figure 13: Welcoming and registration rating

Registration:



The feedback highlights key aspects of the university's approach to onboarding new students, including the efficiency and accessibility of the registration system, the effectiveness of orientation activities in fostering a sense of belonging and preparedness, and the adequacy of support structures provided during this critical transition period.

90.46% of respondents expressed satisfaction, indicating that the registration process was smooth and met expectations for most students. A dissatisfaction rate of 9.54% suggests that some students encountered challenges, such as delays, lack of clarity, or inefficiencies in the process.

A combined 93.93% satisfaction rate highlights that orientation week effectively delivers the necessary information to students. Only 6.07% of students reported dissatisfaction, indicating minor gaps, possibly in information relevance.

A high satisfaction rate of 94.32% shows that students found the orientation materials and sessions valuable for transitioning into university life. A low dissatisfaction rate of 5.67% suggests that only a few students felt the information provided was inadequate or irrelevant.

A total of 91.13% satisfaction reflects positive feedback on the planning and execution of induction and welcome events. The dissatisfaction rate of 8.86% indicates room for improvement in areas such as organisation, inclusivity, or accessibility of induction activities.

Examining these areas, the analysis identifies strengths and challenges in the university's efforts to streamline administrative processes, provide timely communication, and address student needs during the initial stages of their academic journey. The insights are essential for assessing the overall student experience, making orientation programs informative and inclusive, and improving the university's capacity to provide a smooth and supportive transition into higher education. This evaluation is a foundation for refining current practices and implementing targeted improvements to promote student satisfaction and retention. This feedback indicates that WSU performs exceptionally well in delivering information and organising registration and orientation activities. By addressing the small areas of dissatisfaction, the university can further enhance the student experience and foster a smoother transition into academic life.

Students were invited to share their experiences and opinions through an open-ended question regarding various aspects of the registration, admission, and orientation process at WSU. Below is a consolidated summary and synthesis of the feedback, providing a clear picture of student perspectives. The analysis identifies recurring themes, highlighting positive experiences and areas requiring improvement.

Students voiced frustration about not receiving clear updates on their admission status and registration deadlines. Students expressed concerns about slow responses to emails and delayed communication regarding acceptance, registration confirmation, and other administrative processes. Many had to rely on checking their application status themselves, as acceptance letters were not consistently emailed. Numerous students also raised concerns about the fairness of the existing first-come, first-served course registration system, advocating for a more inclusive approach. Under the current model, admitted students must register as soon as slots become available, with courses closing immediately once their capacity is reached. This frequently leaves learners—particularly those vying for high-demand courses—unable to secure placements, even after meeting admission requirements. Students highlighted that administrative bottlenecks, such as delayed NSFAS funding approvals, exacerbate the issue, disproportionately affecting those who register later or face processing setbacks. Consequently, many qualified candidates, despite holding formal admission offers, are excluded from their desired programs due to timing rather than academic eligibility.

Students' voices:



"Acceptance letters must be drafted and emailed to every admitted student, it was hard to know I was admitted at the beginning of the year; what helped me was constantly checking my application status."



"That students who come from distant provinces be aided online instead of having to travel to the Eastern Cape, not get assistance and not have a place to stay for the night due to not being assigned residence."



"The fact that you have to rush to register because of space restrictions, sometimes NSFAS takes time to clear student."

A recurring concern was the lack of clarity in the instructions provided during registration. Students highlighted that information, such as course prerequisites, module selections, and funding statuses, should be easier to understand, especially for new students. Students emphasized the need for online registration to be more accessible and efficient, particularly for those from distant provinces or international students. Issues such as long wait times, slow website performance, and incomplete information hindered a smooth process. Some students were unable to participate in the orientation week due to registration delays or residence-related issues. Students also requested that induction and welcome events be well-structured and timely. Students suggested that the registration period should be extended (e.g., to 8 weeks) to accommodate delays, particularly for those facing issues with payments, residence allocations, or funding approval.

Students' voices:



"The system is confusing for first entry and with all the strikes that occur around the times it can be infuriating. There should be clarity and more info in terms of registration, credits, the general calendar on how everything will play out."



"I would like it to be written in simpler terms that everyone who is registering can understand because people are not all the same when it comes to understanding the rules and requirements of the registration."



"They must try a different approach online because the current one is very complicated you cannot do it without assistants."

A key issue raised was the availability of accommodation, especially for students from out-of-town areas like Limpopo and other provinces. Some students were unable to secure on-campus housing due to lack of space or delays in the registration process.

Students mentioned delays in the processing of their NSFAS or other funding sources, which caused problems with registration and residence allocation. Additionally, there were concerns about students needing to pay registration fees upfront because their funding had not been cleared.

Students' voices:

 "Fully admit all students, register them on time. And orientation be done accordingly. E.g., I never got to experience any orientation as I had to fix issues of finding and registering for residency and other academic stuff."

 "Please ensure that whenever you open the registrations, everything is under control because I saw a poster saying Orientation Week starts on 29 January and I came because I didn't want to miss it only to find out that they made a mistake. I had to return to Jozi then come back at the beginning of February."

 "They must try a different approach online because the current one is very complicated; you cannot do it without assistants."

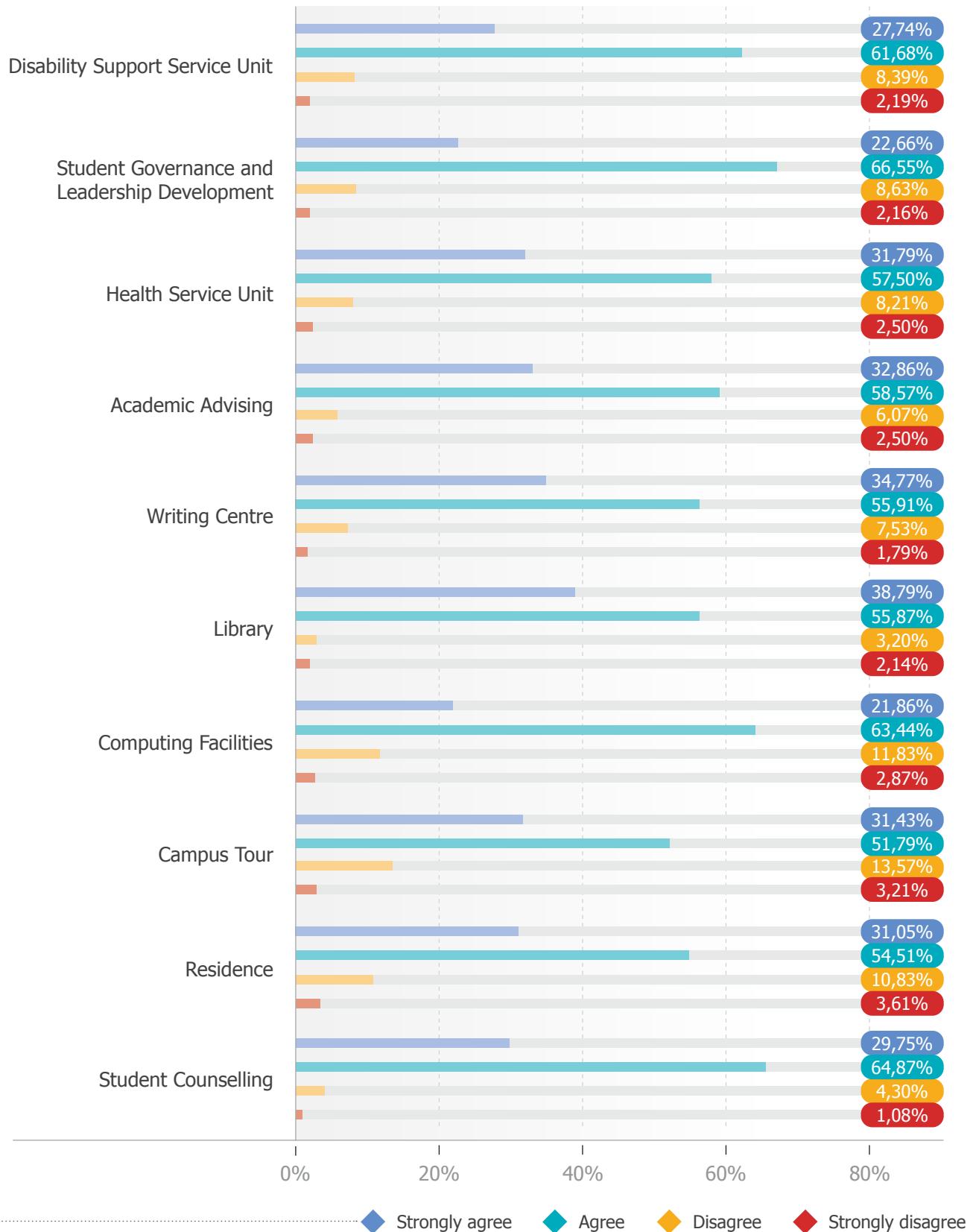
The feedback highlights several persistent challenges in the registration, admission, and orientation processes at WSU, with key issues identified as inefficiencies in communication, delays in registration, complications in residence allocation, and recurring technical difficulties. These challenges impede the overall student experience and present barriers to a seamless transition into university life. Addressing these concerns is critical for enhancing institutional efficiency and fostering a positive student-centric environment. By implementing targeted improvements, such as streamlining communication channels, optimising registration workflows, enhancing the residence allocation process, and investing in reliable technical infrastructure, WSU can significantly improve the clarity, accessibility, and timeliness of its administrative processes. These measures will improve the immediate experiences of incoming students and also contribute to the institution's long-term reputation as an effective and supportive academic environment.

2.7. THE ORIENTATION WEEK

The summary provides a comprehensive overview of student feedback regarding Orientation Week at WSU, focusing on the effectiveness and accessibility of various support services. Key areas of evaluation include the quality of information shared, staff responsiveness, and overall organisation of the orientation program; see Figure 14.

Figure 14: Usefulness of orientation information week

Usefulness of orientation information:



Student Governance and Leadership Development received 66.55% positive feedback, indicating that students found the leadership programs valuable in fostering engagement and empowerment. Residence and Accommodation services also received a high satisfaction rate, with 54.51% agreeing and 31.05% strongly agreeing that orientation activities helped them settle in. However, 10.83% disagreed, suggesting that some students faced challenges with accommodation arrangements. Similarly, the Campus Tour was well received, with 51.79% of students agreeing and 31.43% strongly agreeing that it helped familiarise them with campus facilities. However, 13.57% disagreed, indicating that some students may have found the tours lacking detail or coverage.

Among university services, the Health Service Unit received strong positive feedback, with 57.50% agreeing and 31.79% strongly agreeing that it was effective during orientation. Similarly, Student Counselling Services had a high satisfaction rate, with 64.87% agreeing and 29.75% strongly agreeing, reflecting the importance of mental health and well-being support for new students. The Disability Support Service Unit was also rated positively by 61.68% of students, although 8.39% disagreed, indicating that there may be room for improvement in ensuring accessibility and awareness of services for students with disabilities.

The availability of Computing Facilities was well received, with 63.44% of students agreeing and 21.86% strongly agreeing. However, 11.83% disagreed, suggesting possible concerns regarding resource availability or ease of access. Library Services were rated highly, with 55.87% of students agreeing and 38.79% strongly agreeing, demonstrating the library's role as an essential resource during orientation. However, 3.20% of students expressed dissatisfaction, possibly due to challenges in accessibility or availability of materials. The Writing Centre was also positively rated, with 55.91% agreeing and 34.77% strongly agreeing, though 7.53% of students felt that writing assistance was not as helpful as expected.

Academic Advising received positive feedback, with 58.57% of students agreeing and 32.86% strongly agreeing that it provided useful guidance. However, 6.07% disagreed, suggesting that there may be inconsistencies in how advising services were delivered or communicated.

Orientation Week at WSU received mostly positive feedback, with students particularly appreciating information on Student Counselling, Health Services, Campus Tours, and Academic Advising. However, some areas require improvement, particularly in-residence arrangements, clarity of information, and availability of certain facilities. Addressing these concerns could further enhance the orientation experience, making it more inclusive, accessible, and beneficial for future students transitioning into university life.

2.8. ACCESS TO SERVICES AND THE ENVIRONMENT AT WSU

Student opinions shed light on various experiences related to access to university services, the campus environment, and social well-being at WSU.

Many students expressed overall satisfaction with the institution, emphasising that they enjoy their stay and find the university environment conducive to learning. Facilities such as the study centre and the campus radio station were highlighted explicitly as positive elements that enhance the student experience. Additionally, the WSU Snack Bar was mentioned as a valued resource for students on campus.

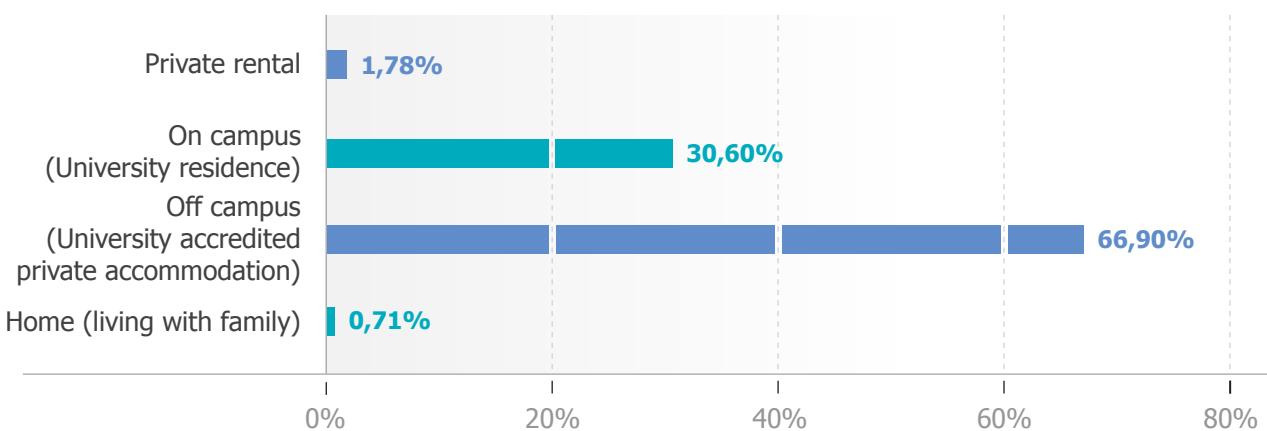
On the other hand, challenges and areas for improvement were also identified. Several students reported delays in the admissions and registration processes, which resulted in some key activities such as orientation being missing. These delays highlight inefficiencies in administrative processes, disrupting the transition and integration of new students into university life. Concerns were also raised regarding perceived shortcomings in the university's management, suggesting a need for improved oversight and responsiveness to student needs.

Despite these challenges, there was appreciation for the guidance provided by the university, including advice on appropriate behaviour, which was seen as fostering a sense of discipline and responsibility among students. While these initiatives contribute to a supportive environment, there is room for growth in ensuring that all students have equal access to services and opportunities for engagement. Addressing these concerns could enhance the overall student experience, ensuring a more seamless transition into university life and fostering a stronger sense of community and well-being.

The summary in Figure 15 provides insights into the living arrangements of WSU students, highlighting the different types of accommodation they utilise. The accommodation of WSU students reveal a strong inclination toward off-campus university-accredited housing, probably valued for its balance of independence and quality standards.

Figure 15: Type of residence

Residence:



A significant portion of students (66.90%) reside in off-campus accommodations, specifically university-accredited private housing. This could indicate a WSU reliance on off-campus living probably due to factors like cost, convenience, limited on-campus options, or available amenities. About 30.60% of students are residing in university-owned residences on campus.

This suggests that while on-campus living is popular, more students use alternative housing arrangements.

Only 1.78% of students are living in private rental accommodations. This indicates that private rentals are not as commonly chosen by students at WSU, perhaps due to affordability or availability issues. Only 0.71% of students reported living with family. This represents a tiny proportion of students, suggesting that most students at WSU choose to live independently, either on or off campus.

University-owned on-campus residences are the second most popular, appreciated for their convenience and sense of community. Private rentals and living with family are less common, likely due to higher costs, logistical challenges, and geographic diversity. The data highlights the importance of maintaining and expanding on-campus options, and improving accredited off-campus housing.

The accommodation usage by WSU students reflects diverse living needs, with a clear majority staying in off-campus university-accredited residences. This affords students the combination of independence and the assurance of quality living conditions regulated by the university. Off-campus university-accredited housing often provides a middle ground, offering students the autonomy of living outside campus while still benefiting from accommodations that meet university-approved standards in terms of safety, proximity, and amenities.

University-owned on-campus residences rank as the second most used option. This indicates that a significant number of students have the convenience of living close to lecture halls, libraries, and other academic facilities. On-campus housing also fosters a sense of community and provides students with opportunities to engage in university life more actively. The structured environment of on-campus living may also appeal to students who are transitioning to independent living for the first time, offering them a supportive environment with a sense of stability.

In contrast, private rentals are less popular among students. This may be attributed to several factors, including the higher costs of private rentals, the potential for substandard living conditions in unregulated properties, and the logistical challenges of finding housing near campus. Private rentals might also lack the sense of community and academic integration that university-accredited or on-campus residences provide.

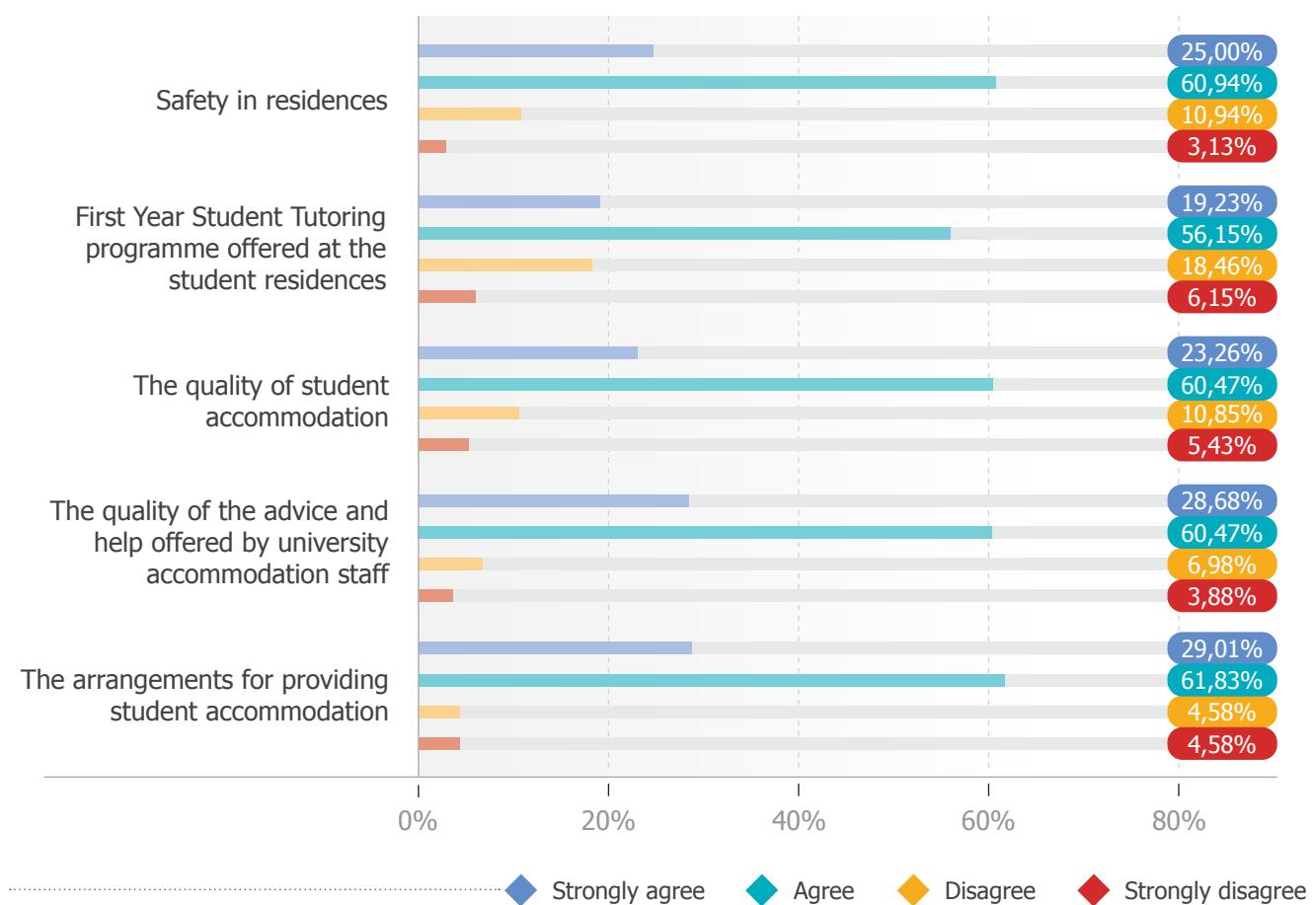
Living with family is the least common option, reflecting the geographic diversity of WSU's student body. Many students likely come from regions far from the university's campuses, making it impractical to live at home while attending classes. Additionally, students may prefer the independence and social opportunities associated with living away from family, which are integral to the university experience. This option is suitable for those who are from close by and prefer to have the benefits of family support and other conveniences associated with staying at home.

The data in Figure 16 highlights the varied preferences and circumstances that influence students' housing decisions at WSU. The strong prevalence of off-campus university-accredited housing underscores the importance of maintaining good relations with landlords and transport providers.

Enhancing the quality and capacity of on-campus residences could accommodate more students who value proximity to academic facilities and the vibrant campus atmosphere. Conversely, the relatively low preference for private rentals and family living points to the need for the university to better understand and address barriers associated with these options. This could involve providing additional support for students navigating private rental markets or exploring partnerships to improve the affordability and standards of private accommodations. Overall, the data provides valuable insights into how WSU can further tailor its housing strategies to enhance student satisfaction and success.

Figure 16: Campus environment rating

Campus environment:



The student experience regarding accommodation at WSU reflects a mix of satisfaction and areas for improvement, particularly concerning quality, safety, and support within on-campus housing. Many students appreciate the convenience and proximity of residences to lecture halls and other campus facilities. However, challenges such as overcrowding, maintenance issues, and inconsistent safety measures have been noted as areas requiring attention.

A strong majority of students (61.83% agree, 29.01% strongly agree) express satisfaction with the arrangements for providing student accommodation, indicating that WSU has made adequate provisions for housing needs. Similarly, 60.47% of students agree and 28.68% strongly agree that the quality of advice and help from accommodation staff is satisfactory, reflecting a general sense of support in navigating housing-related concerns. However, some students feel that additional improvements in responsiveness and guidance could further enhance their experience.

Regarding the quality of student accommodation, 60.47% of students report satisfaction, though 10.85% disagree and 5.43% strongly disagree, highlighting concerns about living conditions in some residences. Issues such as inadequate maintenance, overcrowding, and a lack of sufficient amenities have been raised by a portion of students.

Additionally, the First-Year Student Tutoring Programme, which aims to support new students within residences, received mixed feedback. While 56.15% of students agree and 19.23% strongly agree that the program is beneficial, 18.46% disagree, suggesting that the program may not meet all students' expectations and could benefit from improved structure and integration into the first-year experience.

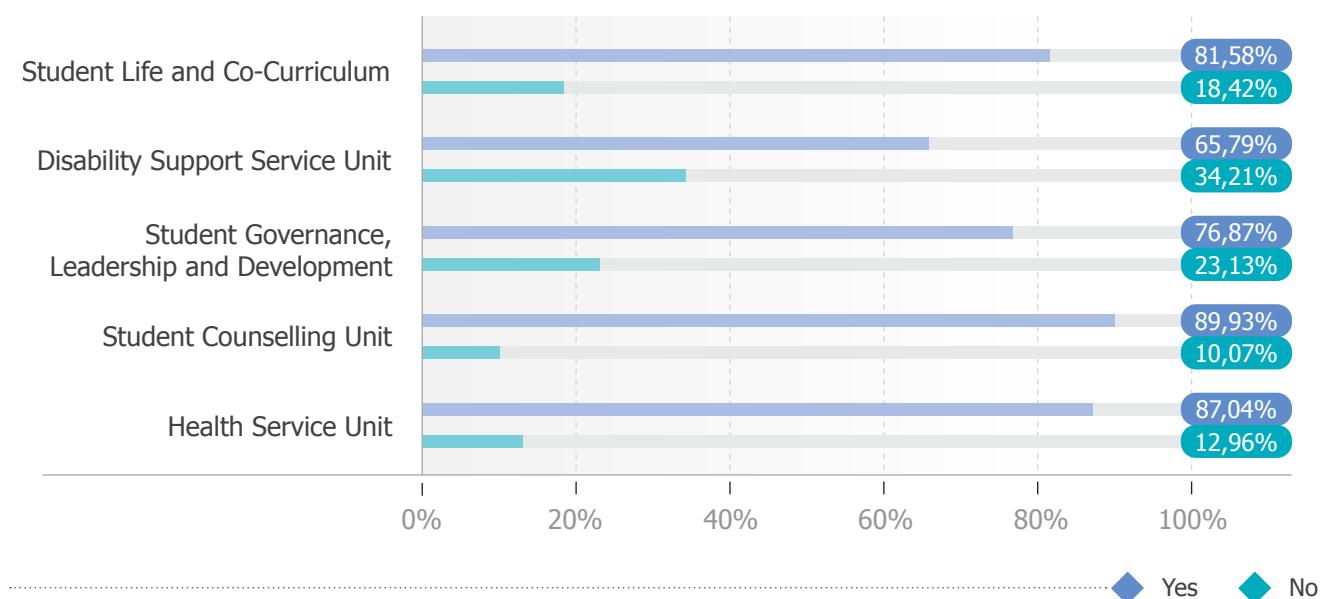
Safety within residences is another key aspect of student feedback, with 60.94% agreeing and 25% strongly agreeing that residence safety is well managed. However, 10.94% of students disagree, indicating that safety concerns still persist for some. While most students feel secure, addressing these concerns could further strengthen the residential experience.

Overall, students at WSU express general satisfaction with their on-campus accommodation, particularly regarding housing arrangements, safety, and staff support. Many students highly value the convenience of location and the sense of security within residences. However, there is room for improvement, particularly regarding the housing quality and the effectiveness of student support services. Enhancing maintenance efforts, reducing overcrowding, and expanding tutoring support could significantly improve all students' living and learning environments. While the overall sentiment remains positive, targeted adjustments in accommodation standards and student support initiatives could make the residential experience even more comfortable and conducive to academic success.

Student support services are crucial in fostering a holistic and enriching university experience, addressing students' academic, personal, and social needs. At WSU, various units and programs provide essential services, including healthcare, counselling, leadership development, disability support, and extracurricular activities. Understanding students' awareness of these services is key to evaluating their effectiveness and ensuring equitable access. This section examines students' familiarity with key support areas, identifying communication strengths and areas needing improvement, as illustrated in Figure 17.

Figure 17: Health and psychosocial support services visibility

Psychosocial support visibility:



The Health Service Unit enjoys high awareness, with 87.04% of students knowing about its services, while only 12.96% remain unaware. This suggests that WSU effectively publicises and provides access to healthcare resources. Similarly, 89.93% of students are familiar with the Student Counselling Unit, indicating strong recognition of mental health and emotional support services on campus.

However, awareness of Student Governance, Leadership, and Development programs is comparatively lower. While 76.87% of students are aware of these opportunities, 23.13% remain uninformed, suggesting that outreach efforts could be strengthened. Awareness is even lower for the Disability Support Service Unit, with only 65.79% of students aware of its existence, leaving 34.21% uninformed about available services for students with disabilities. This highlights a potential gap in communication and outreach, which may prevent some students from accessing necessary accommodations and support.

On a more positive note, 81.58% of students are aware of Student Life and Co-Curriculum services, making it one of the most widely recognised support areas. However, 18.42% of students remain unaware of these opportunities, indicating some room for increased outreach and promotion to ensure broader participation in extracurricular activities.

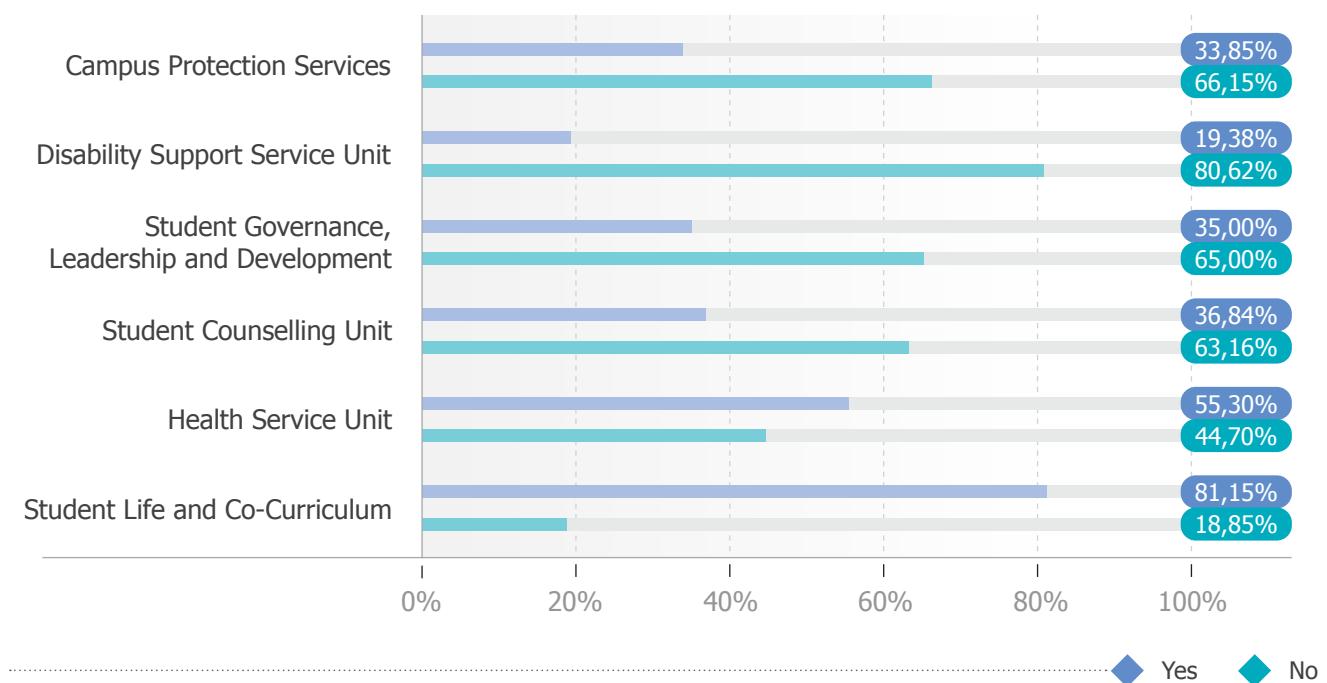
Overall, WSU students demonstrate high awareness of health services, student counselling, and student life programs, with more than 80% of respondents familiar with these essential areas. However, awareness of student governance and disability support services is significantly lower, with a notable portion of students unfamiliar with these offerings. This disparity suggests gaps in communication and outreach strategies, particularly in ensuring that students who need disability support or governance programs are well-informed.

To enhance visibility and accessibility, WSU could strengthen awareness campaigns and integrate these services more prominently into orientation programs and student engagement initiatives. This would ensure equitable access to all support domains, enabling every student to benefit from the resources available to them.

Beyond awareness, student participation in various campus services reflects their engagement with key resources designed to enhance their university experience. The data analysis in Figure 18 explores student engagement across six critical service areas, including Student Life and Co-Curriculum, Health Services, Student Counselling, Student Governance, Disability Support, and Campus Protection Services. The findings highlight areas of high participation as well as opportunities for improved outreach and accessibility, ensuring that all students can fully benefit from these essential university services.

Figure 18: Participation of students in support services

Support service participation:



The data on student engagement with campus services at WSU reveals varied levels of participation across different support areas. While some services, such as Student Life and Co-Curriculum, enjoy high engagement, others, particularly Disability Support and Student Counselling, show low participation rates, highlighting potential gaps in outreach and accessibility.

Student Life and Co-Curriculum services have the highest participation rate, with 81.15% of students actively engaging in extracurricular activities and campus life beyond academics. This demonstrates strong involvement in non-academic aspects of university life, suggesting that students value opportunities for personal development, networking, and recreation.

The Health Service Unit has a moderate participation rate of 55.30%, indicating that more than half of the student body seeks medical or health-related support. However, 44.70% of students have not engaged with these services, suggesting that there is still room for increased utilization, possibly through better communication and outreach strategies.

Engagement with Student Counselling Services is relatively low, with only 36.84% of students having used these services, while 63.16% have not participated. This highlights a significant gap in mental health support engagement, suggesting that many students may not be fully aware of available counselling resources or may hesitate to seek help due to stigma or accessibility barriers. Similarly, participation in Student Governance, Leadership, and Development services is also low, with only 35.00% of students engaging, while 65.00% remain uninvolved. While these programs are known, fewer students are actively taking part in leadership opportunities, indicating a need for more targeted promotion to encourage participation.

The Disability Support Service Unit records the lowest participation rate, with only 19.38% of students accessing these services, while 80.62% have not engaged. This suggests that students with disabilities may not be receiving adequate outreach and support, making it crucial to improve visibility, accessibility, and inclusivity within this unit. On the other hand, this could mean students with no disabilities responded to engaging the Disability Support Service Unit question, that they do not require. Campus Protection Services show moderate engagement, with 33.85% of students using these services, while 66.15% have not interacted with them. This indicates that while safety resources are available, they may not be widely utilized or recognized by the majority of students, pointing to a need for improved communication and awareness initiatives.

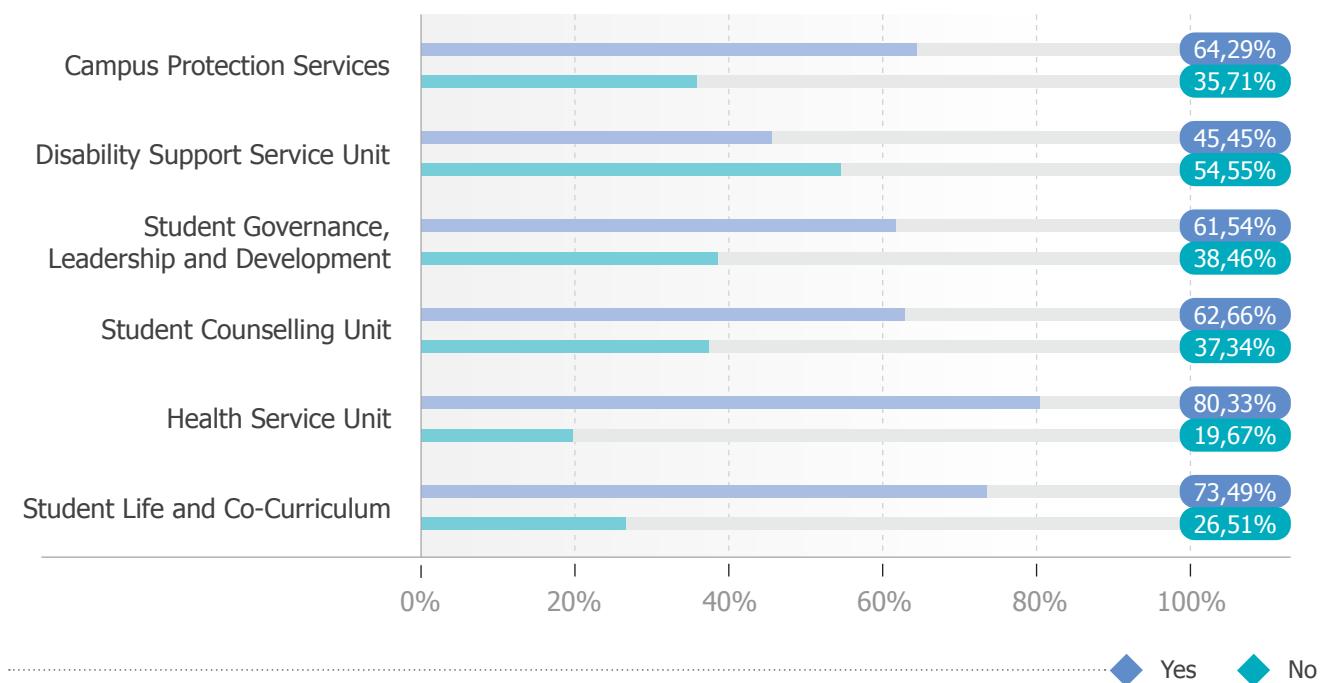
The findings indicate that while Student Life and Co-Curriculum services are widely utilized, other essential services—especially mental health support, leadership programs, disability services, and campus safety—require stronger outreach efforts. Increasing student engagement in these areas could involve targeted awareness campaigns, workshops and orientation sessions focused on mental health, leadership, and disability support, and enhancing accessibility and visibility of student services across digital platforms and physical campus locations. Additionally, strengthening peer mentorship programs could encourage participation in counselling, leadership, and disability support initiatives.

Overall, while WSU has successfully fostered engagement in some areas, there is a clear need to improve participation in critical student support services. Strengthening communication and accessibility will ensure that all students, regardless of their needs, can benefit from the full range of resources available, contributing to a more inclusive and supportive university experience.

The analysis of Figure 19 provides insight into student feedback regarding the effectiveness of six critical support services at WSU: Student Life and Co-Curriculum, Health Service Unit, Student Counselling Unit, Student Governance, Leadership and Development, Disability Support Service Unit, and Campus Protection Services. These services play a crucial role in enhancing students' academic, personal, and social experiences, and the feedback helps identify areas of satisfaction and opportunities for improvement.

Figure 19: Usefulness of support services

Usefulness of support service:



Student Life and Co-Curriculum services received a high satisfaction rate of 73.49%, indicating that the majority of students who participated found these activities and support programs met their needs. Similarly, the Health Service Unit demonstrated strong effectiveness, with 80.33% of students expressing satisfaction with the healthcare services provided, suggesting that most individuals received the necessary medical support.

On the other hand, the Student Counselling Unit received mixed feedback, with 62.66% of students feeling that their needs were met to some extent, while 37.34% expressed dissatisfaction. While the majority found the services beneficial, the feedback suggests that further enhancements may be needed to better support students who did not find counselling effective. A similar trend is observed in Student Governance, Leadership, and Development, where 61.54% of students felt their needs were met, while 38.46% did not, indicating that while leadership development programs are valuable, improvements may be required to ensure broader engagement and effectiveness.

The Disability Support Service Unit recorded the lowest satisfaction rate, with only 45.45% of students feeling that their needs were met, while 54.55% expressed dissatisfaction. This highlights a significant gap in providing adequate accommodations and resources for students with disabilities, suggesting a need for improved accessibility, awareness, and support within this service. Campus Protection Services, while moderately successful, showed 64.29% satisfaction, with 35.71% of students indicating that their safety concerns were not fully addressed. While the majority felt secure, the remaining dissatisfaction suggests that certain security aspects still require attention.

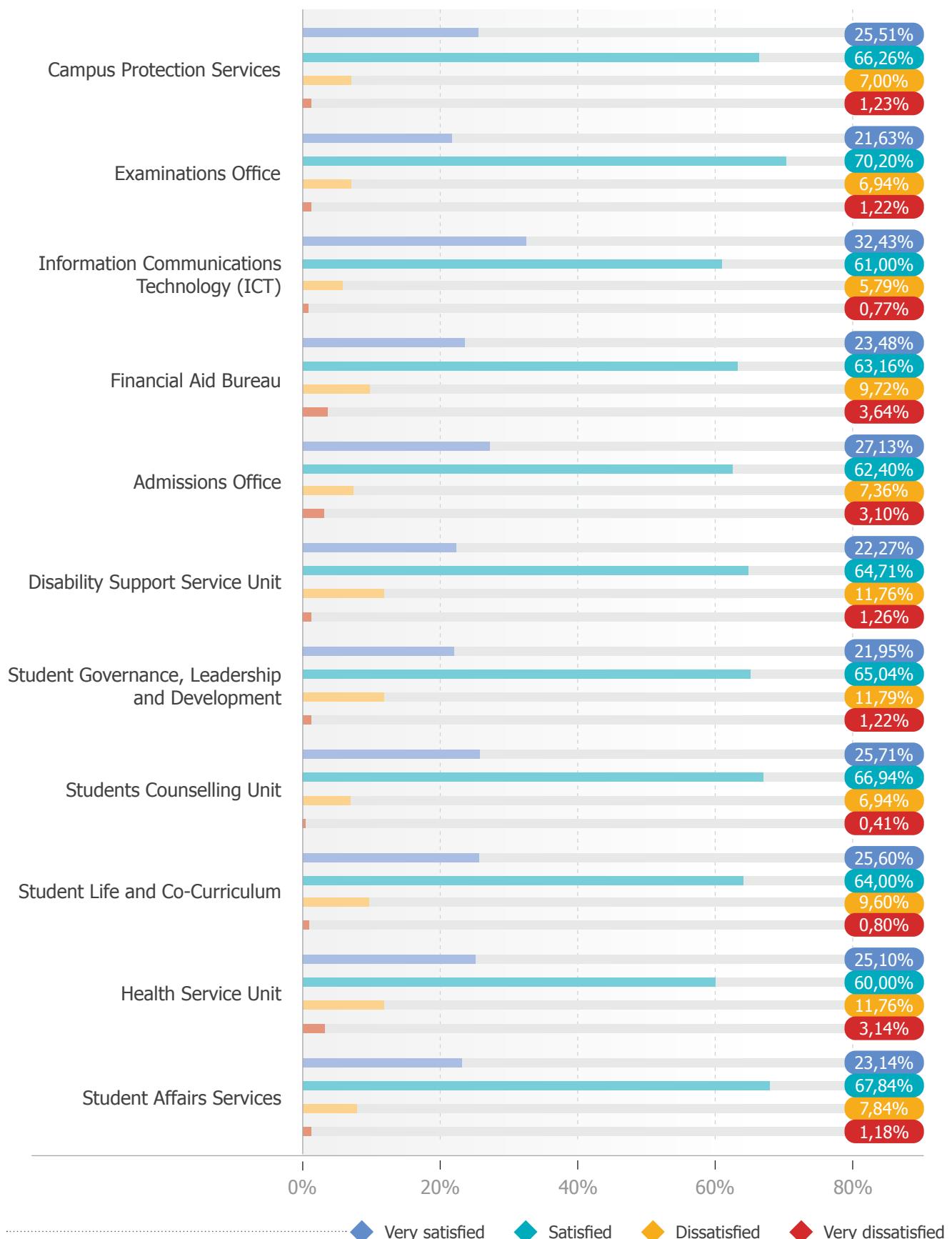


Overall, the findings reveal a mixed level of satisfaction across the six evaluated support services. Student Life and Co-Curriculum and the Health Service Unit received the highest satisfaction levels, reflecting their effectiveness in meeting student needs. However, services such as the Disability Support Unit and Student Counselling show notable dissatisfaction, indicating a need for targeted improvements. Addressing these gaps will be essential in ensuring that all students have equitable access to the support they require. Enhancing the effectiveness and inclusivity of these services will contribute to a more positive and fulfilling university experience, reinforcing WSU's commitment to student well-being and institutional effectiveness.

The data in Figure 20 provides a detailed breakdown of student satisfaction levels across various student support services at WSU, including Student Affairs, Health Services, Student Life, Governance, Disability Support, Admissions, Financial Aid, ICT, and Campus Protection. By analysing these satisfaction rates, key strengths and areas for improvement emerge, ensuring that student needs are effectively met. The findings highlight overall contentment among students and offer insights into service performance and potential enhancements.

Figure 20: Satisfaction with various student services

Service satisfaction:



Student Affairs Services received high satisfaction levels, with 67.84% of students satisfied and 23.14% strongly satisfied, while only 7.84% expressed dissatisfaction. Similarly, the Health Service Unit performed well, with 60.00% satisfaction and 25.10% strong satisfaction, though 11.76% of students were dissatisfied. The Student Life and Co-Curriculum services also had strong approval, with 64.00% satisfied and 25.60% strongly satisfied, while 9.60% were dissatisfied.

The Student Counselling Unit saw 66.94% satisfaction, with 25.71% strongly satisfied and only 6.94% expressing dissatisfaction, indicating that mental health services are generally well-received. Student Governance, Leadership, and Development services followed closely, with 65.04% satisfied and 21.95% strongly satisfied, though 11.79% reported dissatisfaction, suggesting that leadership programs may require further development to engage more students.

The Disability Support Service Unit had 64.71% satisfaction, with 22.27% strongly satisfied, but 11.76% of students expressed dissatisfaction, indicating gaps in accessibility and accommodations. The Admissions Office had a 62.40% satisfaction rate, with 27.13% strongly satisfied, while only 7.36% expressed dissatisfaction, demonstrating strong performance in managing student admissions.

Financial Aid Bureau services showed 63.16% satisfaction, with 23.48% strongly satisfied, while 9.72% expressed dissatisfaction, suggesting potential issues in funding distribution or communication. Information Communications Technology (ICT) received 61.00% satisfaction, with a high 32.43% strongly satisfied, and only 5.79% dissatisfied, indicating a generally positive perception of IT services.

The Examinations Office ranked among the highest-rated services, with 70.20% satisfied and 21.63% strongly satisfied, while only 6.94% were dissatisfied, reflecting effective management of assessments and exams. Campus Protection Services also performed well, with 66.26% satisfaction and 25.51% strongly satisfied, though a small percentage expressed concerns about security measures.

Overall, the data reveals positive satisfaction levels across WSU's student services, with most units achieving satisfaction rates above 60%. The Examinations Office and Student Affairs Services received the highest satisfaction ratings, while areas such as the Disability Support Service Unit and Financial Aid Bureau had slightly higher dissatisfaction rates, indicating the need for targeted improvements. These insights emphasize the importance of continuous enhancements in student services to improve support, engagement, and the overall university experience. By addressing areas of concern, WSU can further strengthen its commitment to student well-being and academic success.

2.9. LIBRARY

A well-functioning library is essential for student success, providing access to resources, study spaces, and support services that enhance learning experiences. The data in Figure 21 presents student satisfaction levels regarding various aspects of the library they primarily use, covering opening hours, staff helpfulness, book availability, study spaces, training resources, and more.

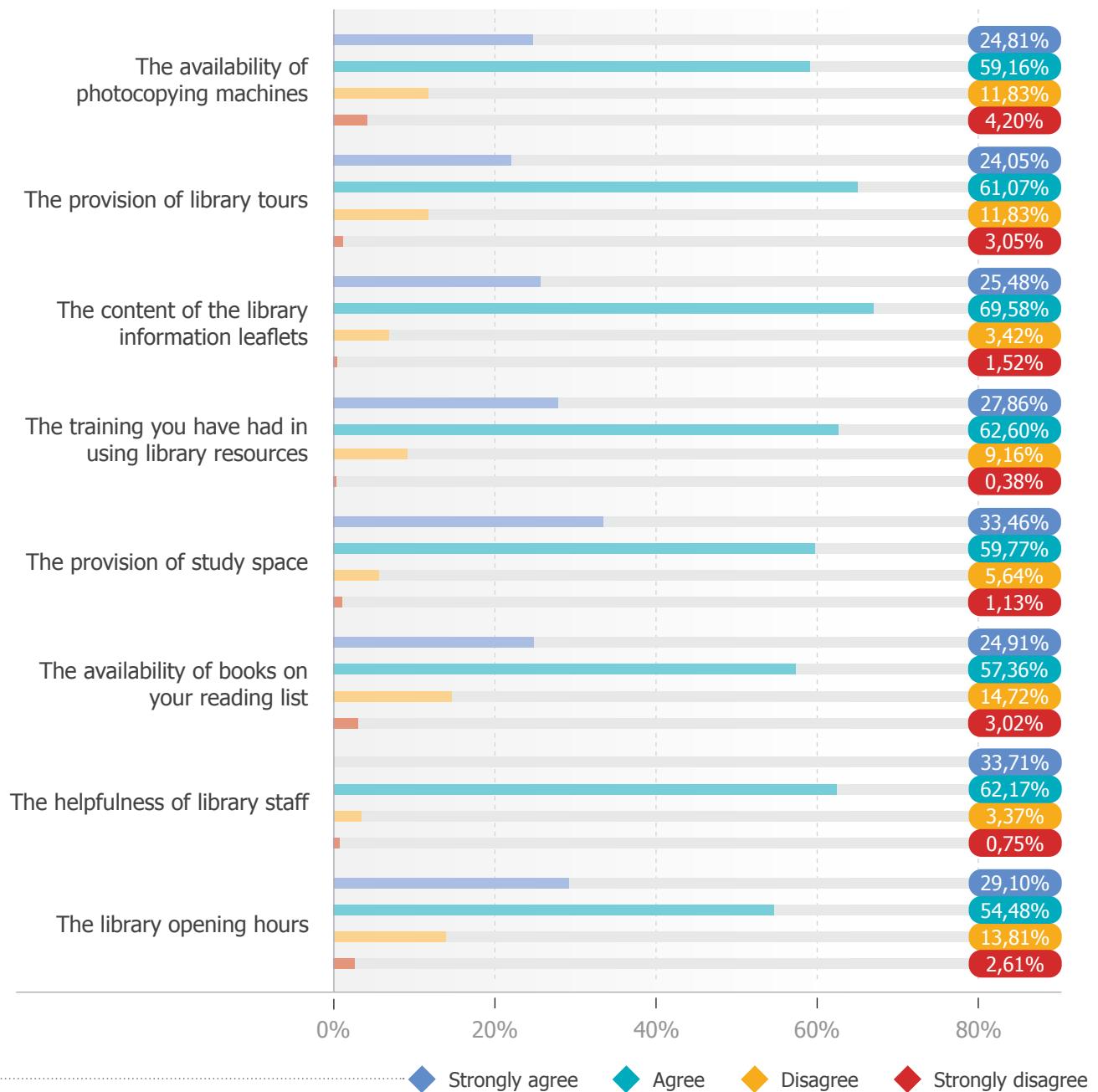


Regarding library opening hours, 54.48% of students agree that they are adequate, with 29.10% strongly agreeing. However, 13.81% disagreed, and 2.61% strongly disagreed, indicating that some students find the hours inconvenient and would prefer more flexible access. The helpfulness of library staff received high satisfaction ratings, with 62.17% agreeing and 33.71% strongly agreeing, while only 3.37% disagreed and 0.75% strongly disagreed, suggesting that library staff are perceived as supportive and knowledgeable with minimal negative feedback.

The availability of books on reading lists was generally well-rated, with 57.36% of students agreeing and 24.91% strongly agreeing. However, 14.72% disagreed, and 3.02% strongly disagreed, highlighting that some students experience difficulty accessing required materials, suggesting a need for better book stocking and availability strategies. Study space provision received positive feedback, with 59.77% of students agreeing and 33.46% strongly agreeing, while only 5.64% disagreed and 1.13% strongly disagreed, indicating that some students may struggle to find space during peak hours.

Figure 21: Library ratings

Library ratings:



Training in using library resources was rated positively, with 62.60% agreeing and 27.86% strongly agreeing. However, 9.16% disagreed, and 0.38% strongly disagreed, suggesting that some students may benefit from additional training opportunities or more targeted support. The content of library information leaflets was also highly rated, with 69.58% agreeing and 25.48% strongly agreeing, while only 3.42% disagreed and 1.52% strongly disagreed, showing that the majority of students find these materials helpful and informative.

Feedback on library tours was generally positive, with 61.07% agreeing and 24.05% strongly agreeing. However, 11.83% disagreed, and 3.05% strongly disagreed, suggesting that some students may not be fully informed about the tours or their usefulness. The availability of photocopying machines received mixed feedback, with 59.16% agreeing and 24.81% strongly agreeing, but 11.83% disagreed and 4.20% strongly disagreed, indicating some difficulties in access due to high demand or maintenance issues.

Overall, student feedback reflects high satisfaction with the library, particularly in staff helpfulness, training resources, and the usefulness of information leaflets. While study spaces, book availability, and photocopying machines received generally positive ratings, some students raised concerns about limited access during peak times. Addressing key areas for improvement, such as extending opening hours, increasing book availability, and enhancing study space provisions, can further optimize the library's role in supporting student learning and academic success.

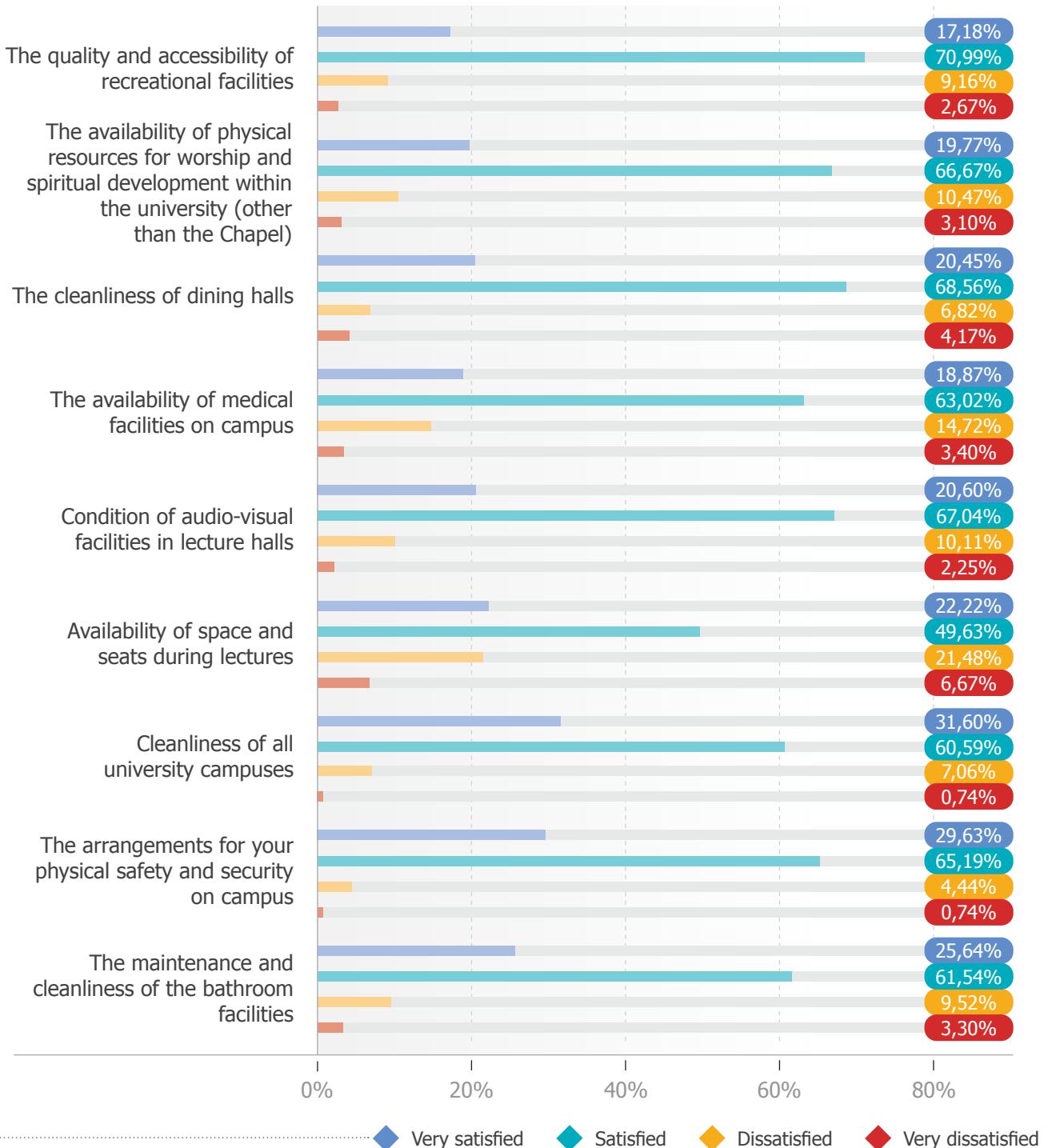
2.10. FACILITIES AND SECURITY

Campus facilities and security play a crucial role in shaping the overall university experience. The data in Figure 22 presents student feedback on key aspects such as cleanliness, safety, lecture space, medical facilities, and recreational resources. By analysing satisfaction levels, the university can identify strengths and areas requiring improvement, ensuring an optimal learning environment for students. The findings suggest a generally positive perception of campus maintenance and security, though some challenges remain, particularly regarding space availability and specific facility conditions.



Figure 22: Ratings of facilities and security

Facilities and security:



The maintenance and cleanliness of bathroom facilities received primarily positive feedback, with 61.54% of students satisfied and 25.64% very satisfied. However, 9.52% reported dissatisfaction, and 3.30% expressed strong dissatisfaction, indicating that while most students appreciate the upkeep, targeted improvements in cleanliness could further enhance satisfaction.

Similarly, arrangements for campus safety and security were rated highly, with 65.19% of students satisfied and 29.63% strongly satisfied, demonstrating high confidence in campus security measures. Only 4.44% of students expressed dissatisfaction, with 0.74% strongly dissatisfied, reinforcing the university's effective safety protocols.

The cleanliness of university campuses was also well-rated, with 60.59% of students satisfied and 31.60% expressing strong satisfaction, while only 7.06% expressed dissatisfaction. These results highlight a high standard of cleanliness across WSU's campuses. However, the availability of space and seating during lectures remains a concern. While 49.63% of students reported satisfaction 22.22% expressed strong satisfaction, 21.48% were dissatisfied, and 6.67% were strongly dissatisfied. This suggests that overcrowding and limited seating remain challenging, requiring improved lecture hall capacity and resource allocation.

A total of 67.04% of students expressed satisfaction with the audio-visual amenities in lecture halls, with 20.60% expressing significant pleasure. However, 2.25% expressed significant discontent, while 10.11% expressed displeasure itself. While the majority of students value the facilities' functioning, this suggests that there are performance and maintenance problems that need recurring improvements and better technical assistance. There were also conflicting opinions about the campus medical facilities. Students were generally satisfied (63.02%), with 18.87% expressing strong satisfaction. In contrast, 3.40% of respondents said they were extremely dissatisfied, while 14.72% said they were unsatisfied. This implies that potential gaps in service quality or accessibility may need to be filled.

According to 68.56% of students who reported being satisfied and 20.45% who expressed great pleasure, the dining halls were clean. However, 4.17% of students were highly dissatisfied, and 6.82% of students were unsatisfied overall. These results show that, on the whole, maintenance standards are good, with very few students voicing concerns. Similarly, the provision of resources for spiritual worship was also warmly embraced. 19.77% of students expressed strong satisfaction, while 66.67% expressed satisfaction. 10.47% of students, however, voiced unhappiness, and 3.10% were highly dissatisfied, indicating that some students believe the spiritual facilities may use some improvement.

The quality and accessibility of recreational facilities received the highest satisfaction ratings, with 70.99% of students satisfied and 17.18% strongly satisfied. Only 9.16% expressed dissatisfaction, and 2.67% were strongly dissatisfied, indicating that WSU's recreational facilities are widely appreciated and accessible.

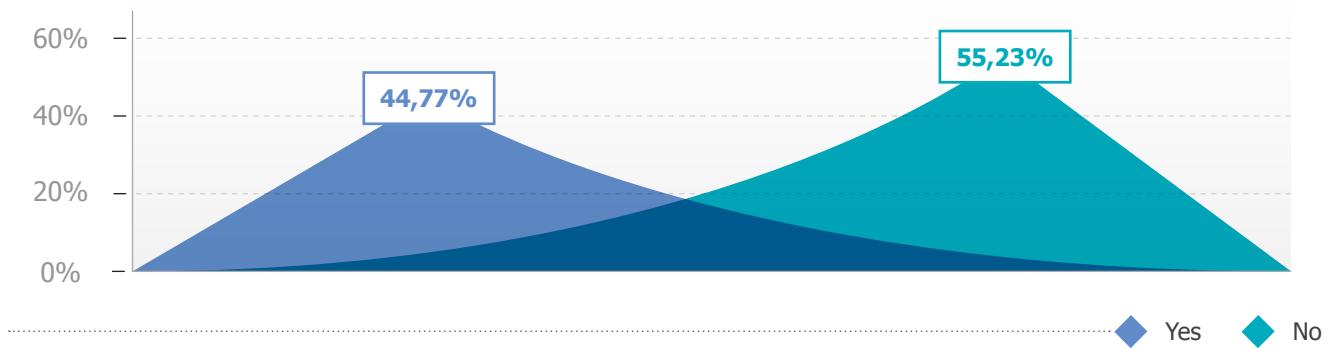
In general, students have been rather satisfied with the campus's security, cleanliness, and recreational opportunities, which indicates the university's dedication to maintaining a secure and well-kept environment. On the other hand, issues with lecture hall seating, medical facility accessibility, and audio-visual equipment upkeep persist. Resolving these problems will improve the student experience by expanding seating capacity, improving access to healthcare services, and boosting technical support for lecture halls. Improvements to campus amenities over time will contribute to the development of a more secure, and creative learning environment, which will improve student well-being and academic achievement.

2.11. QUALIFICATION OF FIRST CHOICE PREFERENCE

The alignment between students' current degree programs and their initial academic preferences is a critical factor influencing their overall satisfaction and academic performance. This section examines survey responses regarding whether students are enrolled in their first choice degree programs and explores the potential implications of these findings. Understanding the factors contributing to students being placed in non-preferred programs can help institutions develop strategies to enhance academic advising, support services, and program accessibility, see Figure 23.

Figure 23: Choice of qualification as a study of first choice

Study of first choice:



Over half of the respondents (55.23%) are enrolled in degrees that were not their first choice. This could indicate challenges in securing admission to preferred programs, such as limited availability, high competition, or program-specific entry requirements.

Students studying degrees that were not their first choice may experience lower motivation, engagement, or satisfaction with their academic journey. WSU may need to focus on academic advising and career counselling to support these students in aligning their studies with their interests and long-term goals.

A significant proportion (44.77%) are pursuing their first-choice degrees, indicating that nearly half of the students are on their desired academic path. This group is more likely to be satisfied and invested in their studies, potentially leading to better outcomes.

The survey results reveal that most students (55.23%) study towards degrees that were not their first choice, which may affect their motivation, engagement, and academic success. Several factors may contribute to this trend, including admission limitations, lack of awareness, and financial or geographical constraints. To address these challenges, WSU should consider enhancing career counselling, expanding high-demand programs, and providing pathways for students to transition into their preferred fields. By implementing these measures, WSU can better support students in achieving academic fulfilment and long-term career success.

2.12. PERSONAL MOTIVATION

Student perceptions of university education play a crucial role in shaping their academic experiences, motivation, and long-term success. This section explores students' attitudes toward higher education, focusing on satisfaction, doubts about its value, alternative considerations, and concerns about persistence. Understanding these perspectives provides valuable insights into the challenges students face and the support they may require to stay engaged and motivated throughout their academic journey, as illustrated in Figure 24.

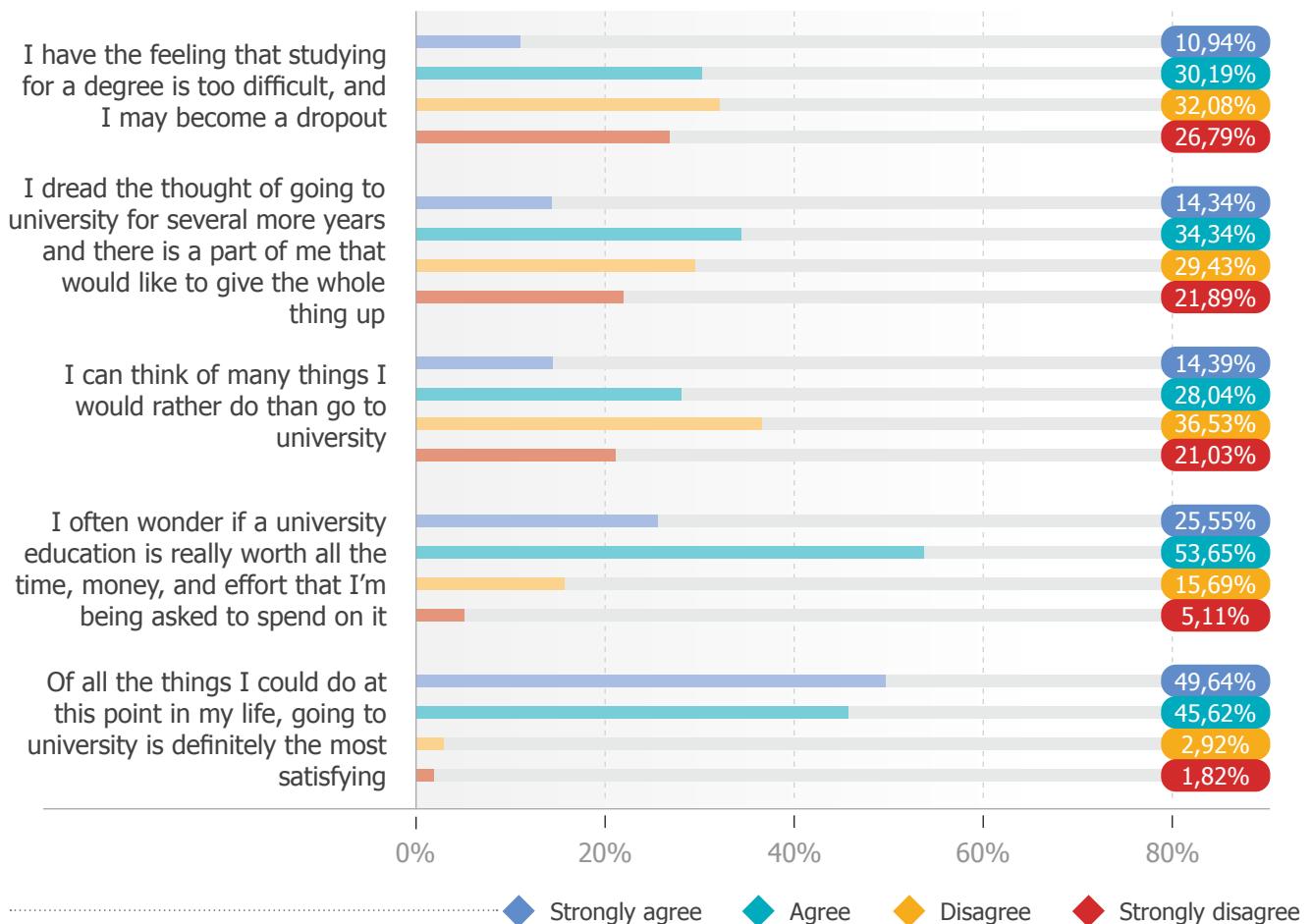
A vast majority of students (95.26%) believe that going to university is the most satisfying option at this stage of their lives, with nearly half strongly agreeing. This suggests that students associate higher education with personal growth and future opportunities. The low disagreement rate (4.74%) reflects a strong overall commitment to university education as a meaningful pursuit. However, despite this commitment, nearly 80% of students admitted to questioning whether university is worth the time, money, and effort. This highlights significant concerns about the cost-benefit ratio of higher education. Only 20.8% disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating a smaller group of students with unwavering confidence in the value of their degree.

Concerns about academic difficulty and dropout risks were also prevalent, with 41.13% of students feeling that studying for a degree is too difficult and fearing they may not complete their studies. On the other hand, 58.87% disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating that a larger group remains confident in their ability to succeed. These findings point to the need for academic and emotional support services to assist students who feel at risk of falling behind.



Figure 24: Motivation with university studies

Motivation:



When asked whether they would rather pursue other activities than attend university, 42.43% of students acknowledged considering alternatives. However, the majority (57.56%) disagreed or strongly disagreed, reaffirming their preference for higher education over other pursuits. This suggests that while most students remain committed, a notable portion faces competing priorities or alternative aspirations. Similarly, 48.68% of students admitted to feeling dread about continuing university, with some even expressing a desire to drop out. However, 51.32% disagreed or strongly disagreed, showing a slight majority remains resilient and determined to complete their studies. This near-even split suggests that while many students are motivated, a substantial number feel overwhelmed by the demands of university life.

The results show that while students are highly motivated and believe that attending university is a worthwhile endeavour, they are still worried about the long-term sustainability of their education, academic difficulties, and financial ramifications. While a significant portion of students exhibit a dedication to finishing their coursework, many also struggle with uncertainty, stress, and juggling conflicting goals.

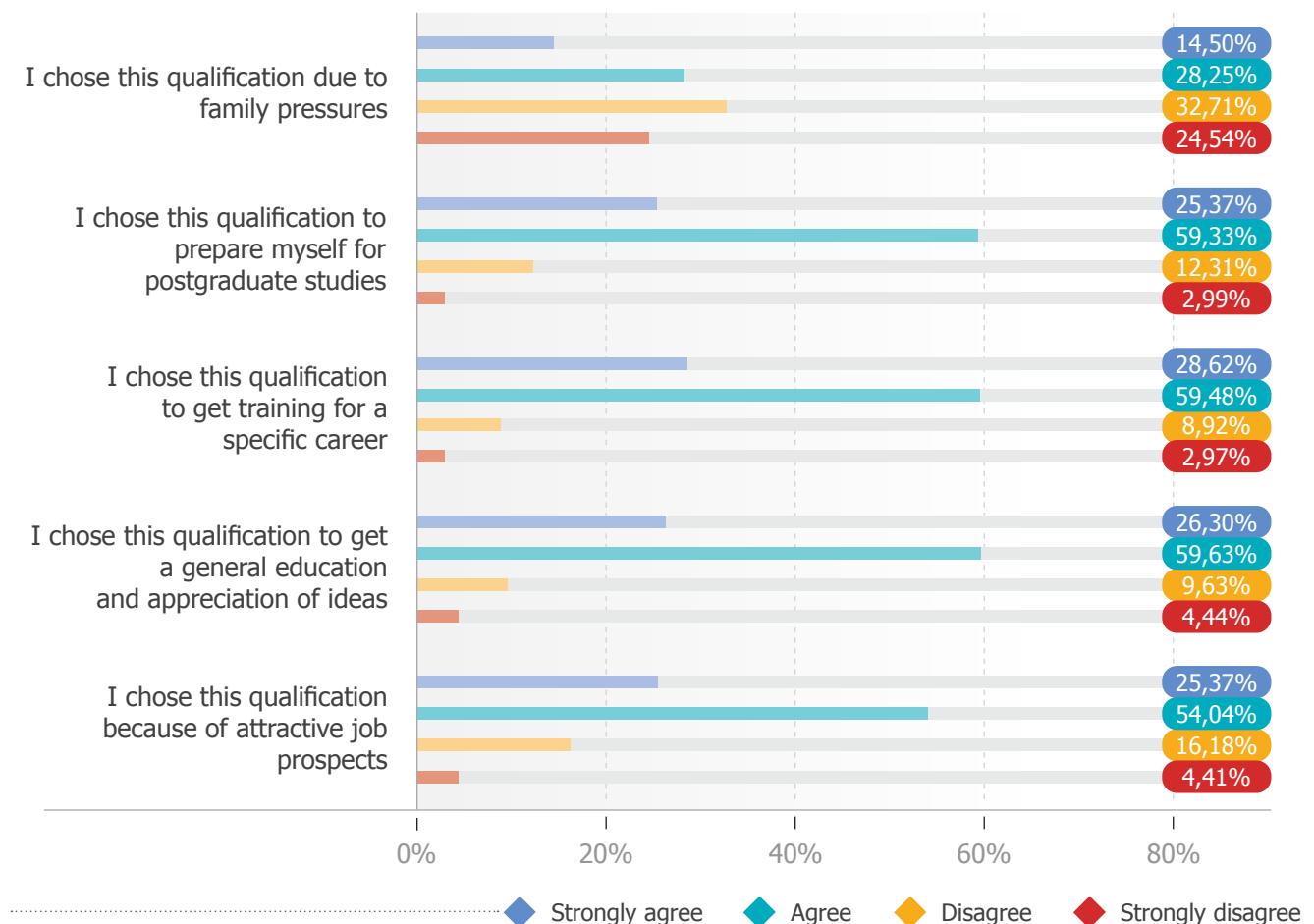
Addressing these problems requires career-focused resources, financial counselling, academic mentoring, and focused support services. Students can maintain their motivation, gain confidence, and make sure they are well-prepared for success in their academic and professional pursuits with the support of such programs.

2.13. REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE PREFERRED QUALIFICATION

Understanding the factors that influence students' choice of academic qualifications is essential for recognizing their educational and career aspirations. This section examines the key motivations behind students' program selections, including career prospects, intellectual growth, postgraduate ambitions, and external influences such as family pressure. Identifying these driving forces allows institutions to refine academic offerings, enhance support services, and strengthen career development initiatives, ensuring alignment with students' needs and expectations, as illustrated in Figure 25.

Figure 25: Reasons for choosing a qualification

Qualification selection:



The majority of students (79.41%) chose their qualifications based on attractive job prospects, highlighting that career-oriented motivations play a significant role in program selection. The relatively low disagreement rate (20.59%) indicates that only a small portion of students are not driven by job market considerations. Similarly, 85.93% of students cited their desire for a broad education and knowledge expansion as a key factor in their decision. This suggests that, alongside career preparation, students value intellectual growth and an appreciation of diverse ideas. With only 14.07% disagreeing, it is evident that most students see higher education as a platform for holistic development.

The importance of career-specific training is also evident, as 88.1% of students stated that preparing for a specific career was a major factor in choosing their qualifications. The low disagreement rate (11.89%) confirms that most students prioritize academic programs that provide clear career pathways. Additionally, 84.7% of students selected their qualification to pursue postgraduate studies, indicating that a large proportion view undergraduate studies as a stepping stone to further education. However, 15.3% disagreed, suggesting that some students may not consider postgraduate education as part of their long-term plans.

While external influences such as family pressure play a role in academic choices, the majority (57.25%) disagreed with the notion that family dictated their decision, whereas 42.75% acknowledged family influence. This suggests that most students feel autonomous in their academic decision-making, though family expectations remain a significant factor for a minority.

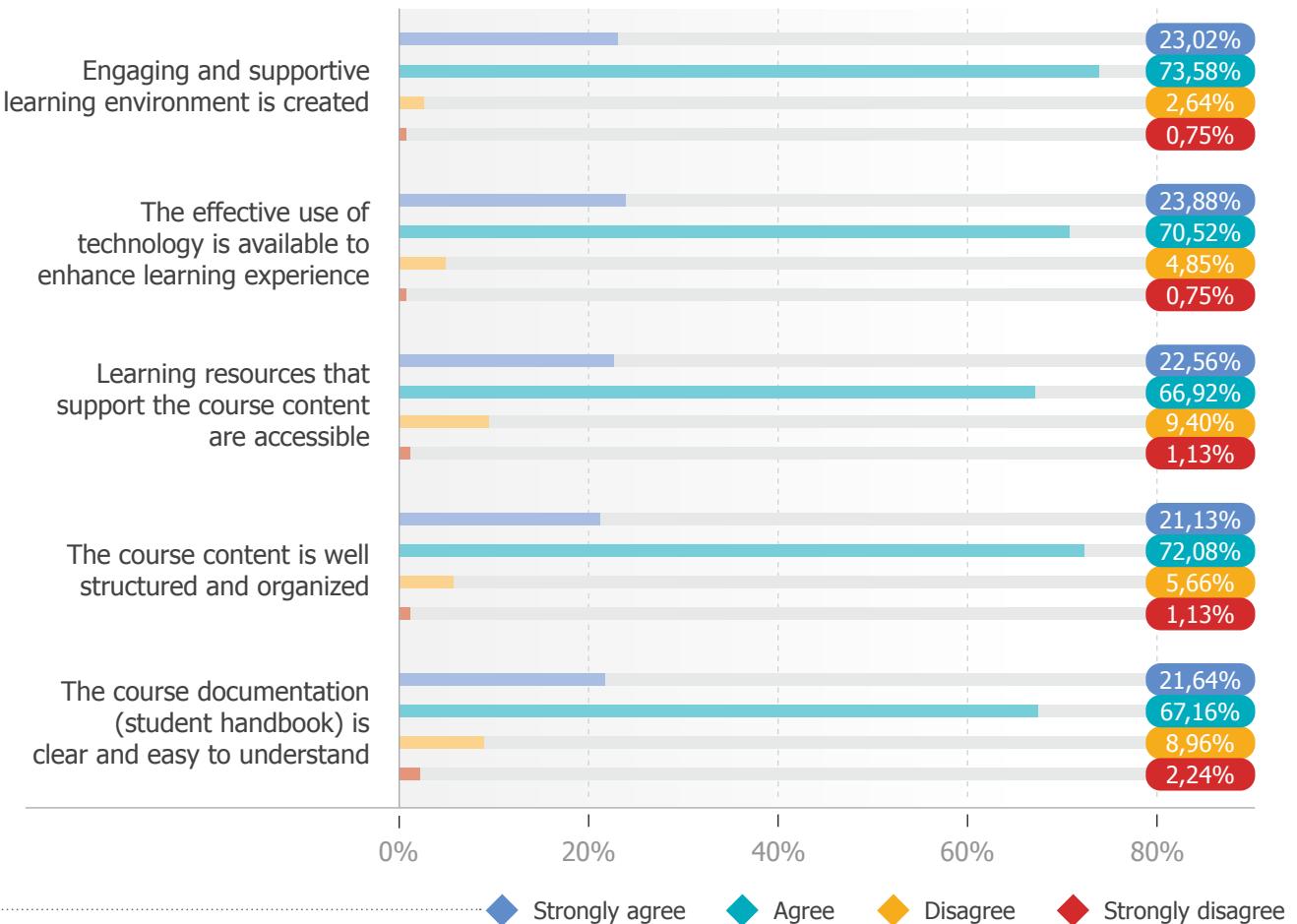
The findings indicate that career-oriented motivations are the primary drivers behind students' qualification choices, with a strong emphasis on job prospects and specialized career training. Additionally, many students value intellectual enrichment and view their studies as a pathway to postgraduate opportunities. While family influence is present for some, the majority make independent academic decisions. To effectively support students, WSU should enhance career services, postgraduate preparation, and academic guidance resources, while also promoting the broader benefits of higher education. Balancing career readiness with intellectual enrichment will ensure students are well-equipped for professional success and lifelong learning.

2.14. COURSE ORGANISATION

The structure and delivery of academic courses play a crucial role in shaping students' learning experiences and overall satisfaction. This section explores students' perceptions of course organization, accessibility of learning resources, technological integration, and the overall learning environment. By analysing these factors, institutions can identify strengths and areas for improvement to enhance the quality of education and support student success, as illustrated in Figure 26.

Figure 26: Ratings on course organization

Course organisation:



The student handbook was rated positively, with 88.8% of respondents finding it clear and easy to understand. This highlights its effectiveness in providing essential course-related information. However, 11.2% of students experienced challenges, suggesting that minor improvements in clarity and accessibility could enhance the handbook's usefulness. Similarly, the course content organization received overwhelming approval, with 93.21% of students agreeing that courses are well-structured. The minimal disagreement (6.79%) suggests that while most students are satisfied, specific programs or modules may require adjustments.

The availability of learning resources was also rated positively, with 89.48% of students finding resources accessible. However, 10.53% of respondents faced challenges, indicating that some students may struggle to access necessary materials, such as physical textbooks, online content, or library resources. The integration of technology in enhancing the learning experience received strong approval, with 94% of students appreciating its role in improving their studies. A small minority (5.6%) expressed dissatisfaction, suggesting opportunities to enhance technical support or improve access to digital learning platforms.

The learning environment received the highest satisfaction rating, with 96.6% of students agreeing that it is engaging and supportive. This reflects the success of teaching staff, course design, and institutional support in fostering positive academic experiences. The very low dissatisfaction rate (3.39%) suggests that only a small number of students have concerns, likely related to isolated cases of course delivery or classroom dynamics.

The findings indicate high student satisfaction with course documentation, organization, accessibility of learning resources, and technological integration. The overwhelmingly positive feedback on the learning environment highlights WSU's success in fostering an engaging and supportive academic culture. However, addressing minor concerns about resource accessibility and technological support can further enhance the student experience. By refining course materials, expanding learning resources, and maintaining a strong emphasis on student engagement, WSU can continue to improve academic quality and ensure an enriching learning journey for all students.

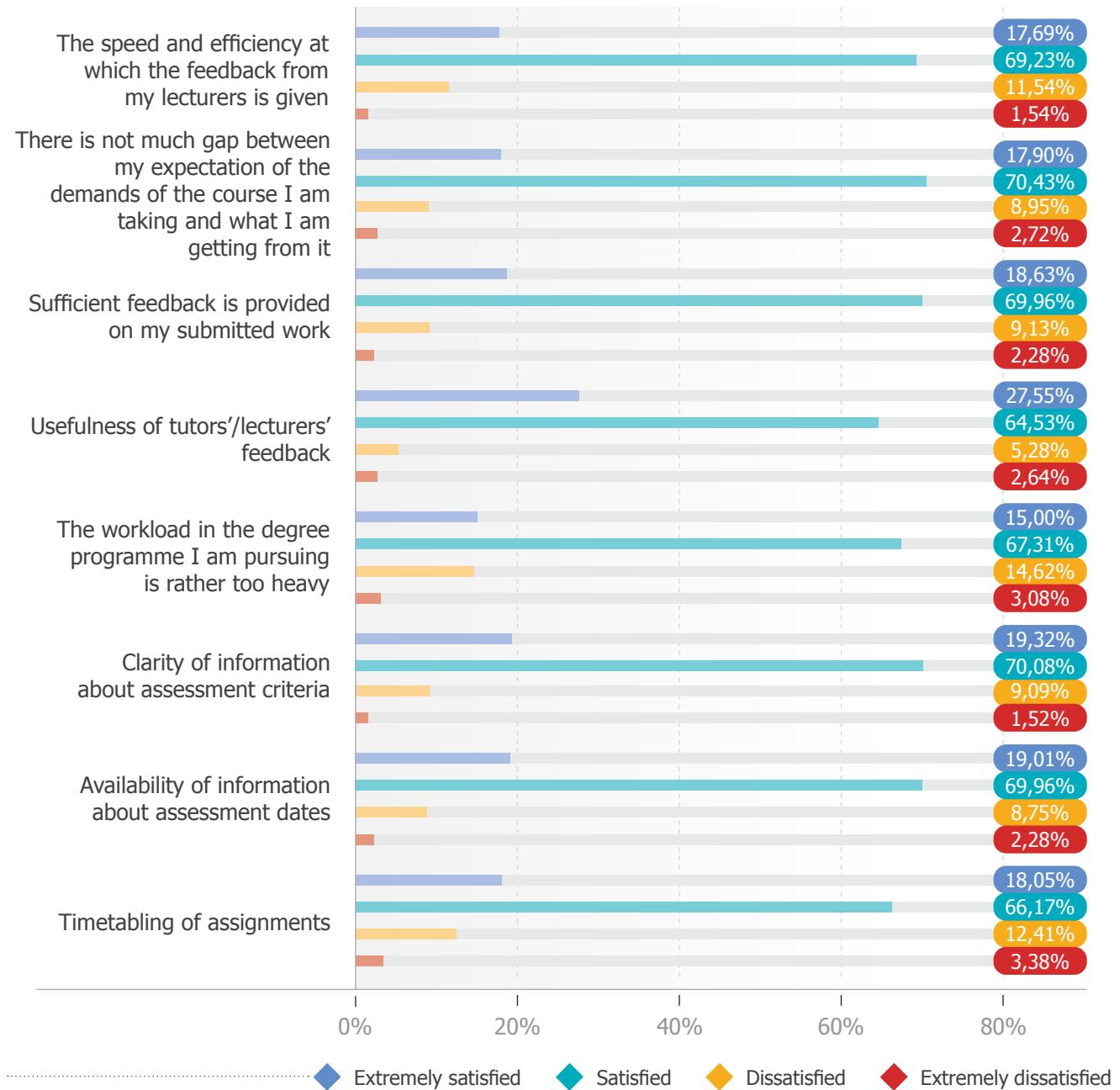
2.15. WORKLOAD AND ASSESSMENT

The effectiveness of assessment processes, workload management, and feedback mechanisms is crucial in shaping students' academic experiences and success. This section evaluates students' perceptions of assignment scheduling, clarity of assessment criteria, workload distribution, and the usefulness of feedback from lecturers. By analysing these factors, WSU can refine its academic strategies to enhance student satisfaction and learning outcomes, as illustrated in Figure 27.



Figure 27: Ratings on workload and assessment

Workload and assessment:



Most students (84.22%) expressed satisfaction with the timetabling of assignments, indicating that deadlines and schedules are generally manageable. However, 15.79% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, suggesting a need for better communication or adjustments to assignment scheduling to accommodate varying workloads. Similarly, the availability of information about assessment dates received 88.97% approval, demonstrating that most students find assessment schedules clear and accessible. The low dissatisfaction rate (11.03%) suggests that while concerns are minimal, further efforts could improve transparency and accessibility of assessment timelines.

The clarity of assessment criteria was highly rated, with 90.4% of respondents satisfied, reflecting a strong understanding of evaluation standards among students. However, 10.61% of students expressed dissatisfaction, indicating that some areas could benefit from clearer explanations of grading rubrics or assessment expectations. Similarly, while 82.31% of students felt comfortable with their workload, 17.7% indicated that it was overly heavy. This suggests that some students struggle with workload distribution, highlighting a potential need to better balance academic and personal commitments. The usefulness of feedback from tutors and lecturers received an impressive 92.08% satisfaction rate, indicating that students generally find feedback constructive and clear. However, 7.92% of respondents expressed dissatisfaction, suggesting that some students may require more detailed, personalized, or actionable feedback. Similarly, 88.59% of students were satisfied with the amount of feedback provided on submitted work, but 11.41% expressed dissatisfaction, indicating a need for more comprehensive or timely responses to assignments.

A significant 88.33% of students reported that their course expectations aligned well with the actual academic demands. However, 11.67% identified a gap, highlighting the need for clearer communication during orientation and course introductions to ensure students fully understand academic expectations.

Additionally, 86.92% of respondents expressed satisfaction with the speed and efficiency of feedback from lecturers, indicating that most students receive timely and responsive support from their instructors. However, 13.08% of students reported delays or inefficiencies, emphasizing the need for faster turnaround times on assessments and clearer communication regarding feedback timelines. Students expressed high satisfaction with assessment scheduling, workload management, and feedback quality, reflecting WSU's commitment to transparent and structured academic processes. The positive reception of lecturers' feedback and clarity of assessment criteria indicates that academic guidelines are generally well-communicated. However, some areas require further attention, particularly regarding workload distribution, timeliness of feedback, assessment clarity, and communication of assessment schedules.

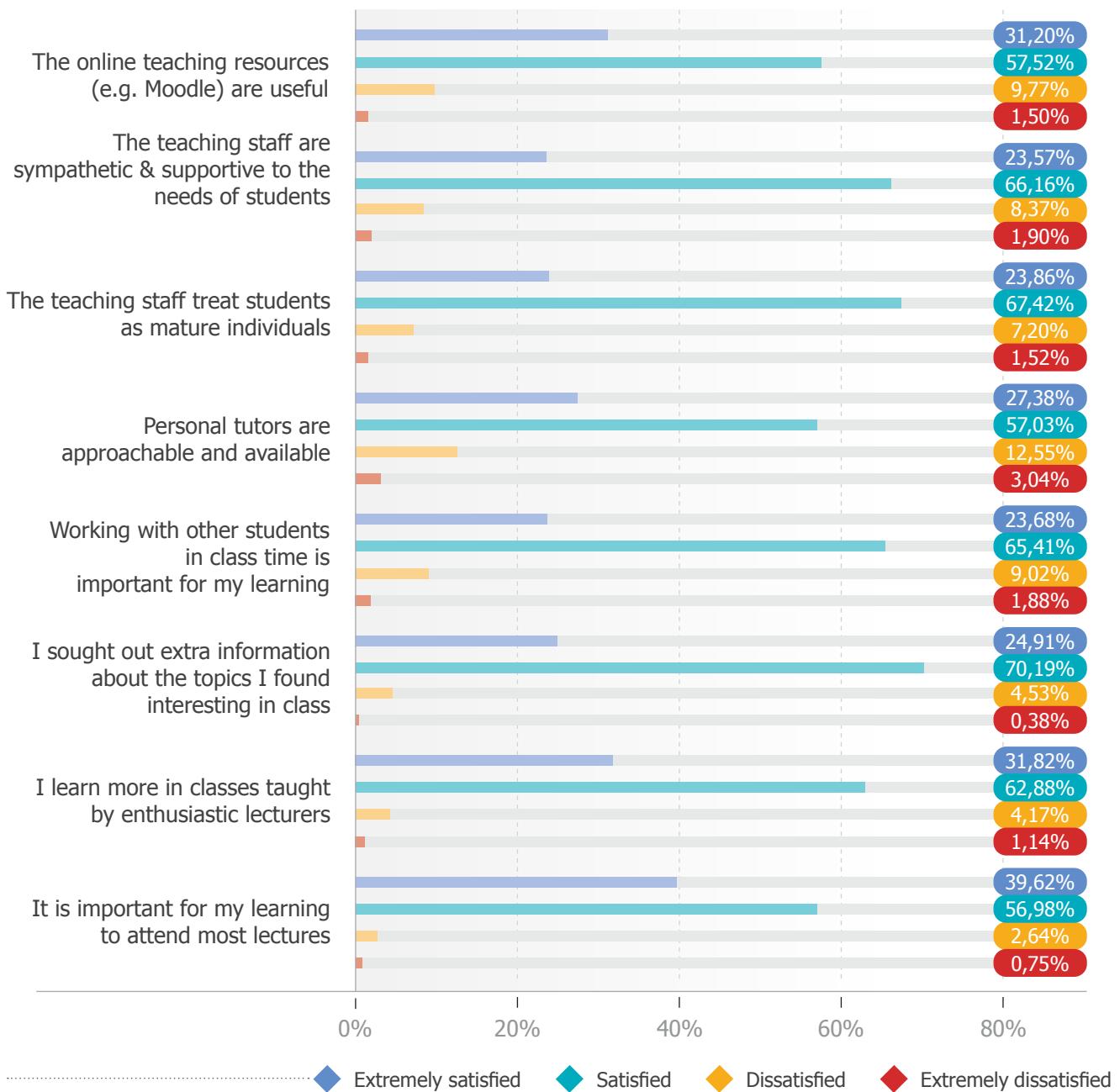
Ensuring that assignments and academic requirements are evenly spread across the semester can help prevent excessive academic pressure on students. Additionally, addressing delays in returning graded work and ensuring students receive constructive feedback within a reasonable timeframe will improve learning outcomes and engagement. Providing more detailed explanations of grading rubrics, expectations, and course demands can also help align students' expectations with reality and reduce confusion. Furthermore, making assessment dates and deadlines more transparent and accessible can enhance planning and minimise student uncertainty regarding their coursework.

2.16. TEACHING AND LEARNING

Effective teaching and learning experiences are central to student engagement and academic success. This section examines student perceptions of lecture attendance, instructor enthusiasm, collaborative learning, tutor accessibility, and the usefulness of online teaching resources. Understanding these aspects helps institutions refine their teaching strategies and provide the best possible support for students, as illustrated in Figure 28.

Figure 28: Rating of teaching and learning

Teaching and learning:



An overwhelming 96.6% of students view lecture attendance as crucial to their learning, with only 3.39% expressing dissatisfaction. This highlights the perceived value of in-person instruction and active participation in lectures. Similarly, 94.7% of students agreed that enthusiastic lecturers significantly enhance their learning experience, emphasizing the importance of passion and engagement in teaching to sustain student interest and motivation. Additionally, 95.1% of students reported actively seeking additional information about topics that sparked their interest in class, demonstrating a high level of intellectual curiosity and self-directed learning.

Collaborative learning was also rated highly, with 89.09% of students valuing group work as a key component of their educational experience. However, 10.9% of students expressed dissatisfaction, suggesting that some students may prefer alternative teaching methods or face challenges in group dynamics. Similarly, while 84.41% of students found personal tutors approachable and available, a notable 15.59% expressed dissatisfaction, indicating a need for improved accessibility and responsiveness from tutors.

The student-lecturer relationship was rated positively, with 91.28% of students feeling respected as mature individuals by teaching staff. The low dissatisfaction rate (8.72%) suggests that concerns about professionalism and respect are isolated rather than widespread. Additionally, 89.73% of students perceive teaching staff as sympathetic and supportive, reflecting a strong sense of care in addressing student needs. However, 10.27% dissatisfaction suggests that some students may require more individualized support.

Online teaching resources, such as Moodle, were also well-received, with 88.72% of students finding them useful for their learning experience. However, the 11.27% dissatisfaction rate may be linked to issues such as outdated content, technical difficulties, or inadequate integration with course materials, indicating opportunities for improvement in digital learning tools.

Although most students find the teaching staff supportive and courteous, some areas could be improved, such as tutor availability and group learning dynamics. Improving online resource integration, improving group-based learning strategies, and improving personal tutor accessibility will further strengthen the student learning experience. Overall, students have a positive view of their learning experience, emphasizing the value of enthusiastic teaching, collaborative learning, and accessible online resources. By addressing these issues and consistently improving teaching methods, WSU can create an even more engaging, supportive, and effective academic environment.

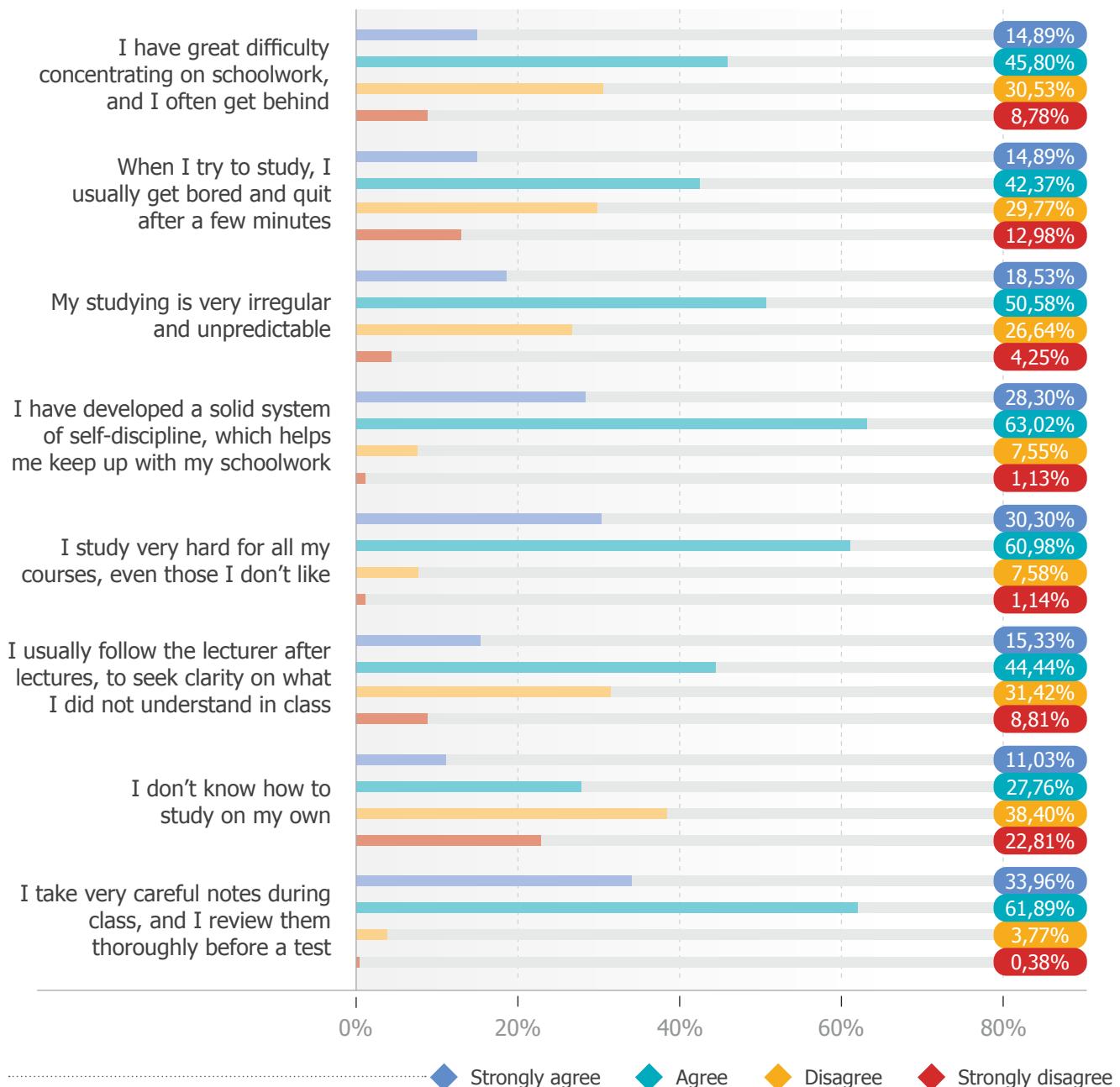
2.17. STUDY HABITS

Academic success is deeply tied to effective study habits, self-discipline, and workload management. However, students often face challenges in maintaining consistency, staying motivated, and developing independent study skills. This analysis explores key trends in student study behaviours, highlighting both strengths and areas for improvement. From meticulous note-taking and strong academic commitment to struggles with concentration and irregular study patterns, these insights shed light on the diverse experiences of students and emphasize the need for targeted support to enhance learning outcomes. Most of the students (95.85%) reported being meticulous about notetaking and thoroughly reviewing their notes before tests, reflecting a strong inclination toward organized and active learning methods. However, 38.79% of students admitted to struggling with studying independently, despite 61.21% expressing confidence in their self-study skills. This highlights a need for resources and workshops to support students in developing effective independent study techniques. Additionally, while 59.77% of students actively seek clarification from lecturers after class, a notable 40.23% do not engage in this practice, possibly due to time constraints or hesitance to approach lecturers.

Students displayed a strong commitment to academic success, with 91.28% reporting consistent effort across all courses, even in subjects they dislike. Similarly, 91.32% of students credited self-discipline as a key factor in effectively managing their workload, suggesting that most have developed time management and organizational skills. However, challenges persist, as 69.11% of students admitted to having irregular and unpredictable study habits, which could negatively impact academic performance. This highlights the need for guidance in developing consistent and effective study routines.

Figure 29: Study habits

Study habits:



Additionally, 57.26% of students reported difficulty staying engaged while studying, suggesting that many could benefit from strategies to improve focus and motivation. Furthermore, 60.69% of students acknowledged difficulty concentrating on schoolwork and staying on schedule, indicating that distractions, stress, or workload management issues may be affecting a significant portion of the student body.

The findings reveal a student body that is largely committed to academic success, as evidenced by high rates of notetaking, self-discipline, and consistent effort across courses. However, challenges such as irregular study habits, difficulty concentrating, and struggles with independent learning point to areas where additional support could make a significant difference. By addressing these issues through workshops, academic resources, and strategies to improve focus and motivation, WSU can empower students to develop more effective study routines and achieve their full potential. Balancing strengths with targeted interventions will be key to fostering a more productive and confident learning environment.

2.18. STUDENT NEEDS

The university experience is shaped not only by academic rigour but also by the availability of support systems that address students' holistic needs. Students were asked about their needs that they think are not fully addressed. This analysis delves into students' diverse challenges and requirements, spanning academic, emotional, financial, and logistical domains. From the need for enhanced study aids and timely feedback to calls for improved mental health services and financial assistance, the findings highlight the strengths and gaps in current support structures. By understanding these multifaceted needs, institutions can better tailor their resources and policies to foster a more inclusive, supportive, and empowering environment for all students.

Academic support emerged as a top priority for students, with several specific needs identified. Students emphasised the importance of access to past exam papers for practice, which helps them familiarise themselves with question formats and reduces exam anxiety. The absence of such resources leaves many feeling unprepared. Additionally, students expressed a need for supplementary classes or tutorials for those struggling with concentration or performance. Clear and detailed course materials, along with training on online platforms like Moodle, were also highlighted as essential for effective learning.

Students' voices:



"Getting previous question papers because, for me, I don't feel like I am learning when I only just read, I want to practice and familiarise myself with the structure of the paper and how questions are asked. This is the reason why I panic when I have to write... I just read but no practice."



"There were all resources available to perform my every school need."

Students suggested informal, unannounced tests to assess their understanding without the pressure of formal exams. Timely feedback from lecturers was another critical concern, as delays hinder students' ability to improve. Furthermore, students called for more interactive classroom environments where lecturers actively check their comprehension. Collaborative learning through study groups and one-on-one partnerships was highly valued. Students believe that facilitated peer interactions can enhance understanding and improve academic outcomes.

One student stated:



"For the lectures to understand us as a class if we do get the lesson or not and, they must check that by giving us a test without us knowing that it is not a real test."

While some students appreciated the initial support from counselling services, many reported a lack of follow-up, leaving their issues unresolved. This gap underscores the need for more accessible, empathetic, and consistent mental health services on campus. Students requested motivational talks, academic guidance, and emotional support to help them manage stress and build confidence. Several students highlighted the importance of spiritual guidance, indicating its role in their overall well-being and resilience.

Other Students feedback:



"For the first few months (February to June), I couldn't find the Student Council, but now I know where to find it."



"I required help from the student counselling unit, and after two sessions, they never got back to me again. I am still struggling with my mental health, but they do not seem to care at all."

Many students require bursaries or other financial aid to cover tuition and living expenses. Financial stress was identified as a significant barrier to academic focus and success. Requests for free or subsidised meals during lecture hours were common, reflecting students' food insecurity issues.

Despite repeated complaints, students reported unresolved maintenance issues, such as broken lights in common rooms and bathrooms. Additionally, there were calls for better access to sports equipment and recreational facilities.

One student stated that:



"The common room and bathroom in my block don't have working lights, and we've gone to maintenance, but they still can't fix it."

As noted earlier, students value peer collaboration through study groups and one-on-one partnerships. These interactions foster a sense of community and shared learning. While some students initially struggled to locate the SRC for assistance, those who accessed it reported positive experiences. Improved visibility and accessibility of the SRC could enhance its effectiveness in addressing student concerns.

The insights gathered from student responses underscore the importance of a well-rounded support system that addresses academic, emotional, financial, and logistical challenges. While many students appreciate the existing resources, significant gaps remain, particularly in mental health follow-ups, financial aid, and campus maintenance. By implementing targeted recommendations—such as expanding academic support, enhancing counselling services, addressing financial insecurities, and improving campus facilities WSU can create a more equitable and nurturing environment. Ultimately, prioritising these areas will improve student satisfaction and empower learners to achieve their full academic and personal potential.

2.19. INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

WSU has established itself as an institution that prioritises inclusivity, student welfare, and a culture of acceptance. This analysis explores student perceptions of WSU's institutional culture, focusing on acceptance, freedom of expression, cultural tolerance, and student-centred practices. The findings indicate a predominantly positive outlook, with most students feeling welcomed, valued, and proud to be part of the university. However, the data also highlights areas where improvements can be made to ensure that every student feels included and empowered. By addressing these concerns, WSU can further strengthen its reputation as a diverse, inclusive, and student-focused institution, as illustrated in Figure 30.

A strong majority (94.81%) of students feel welcomed and accepted at WSU, indicating that the university has created an inclusive environment where students feel they belong. Similarly, 92.16% of students take pride in studying at WSU, reflecting a strong institutional reputation. However, a small percentage (7.84%) do not share this sentiment, suggesting that some students may not feel as connected or engaged with the university community.

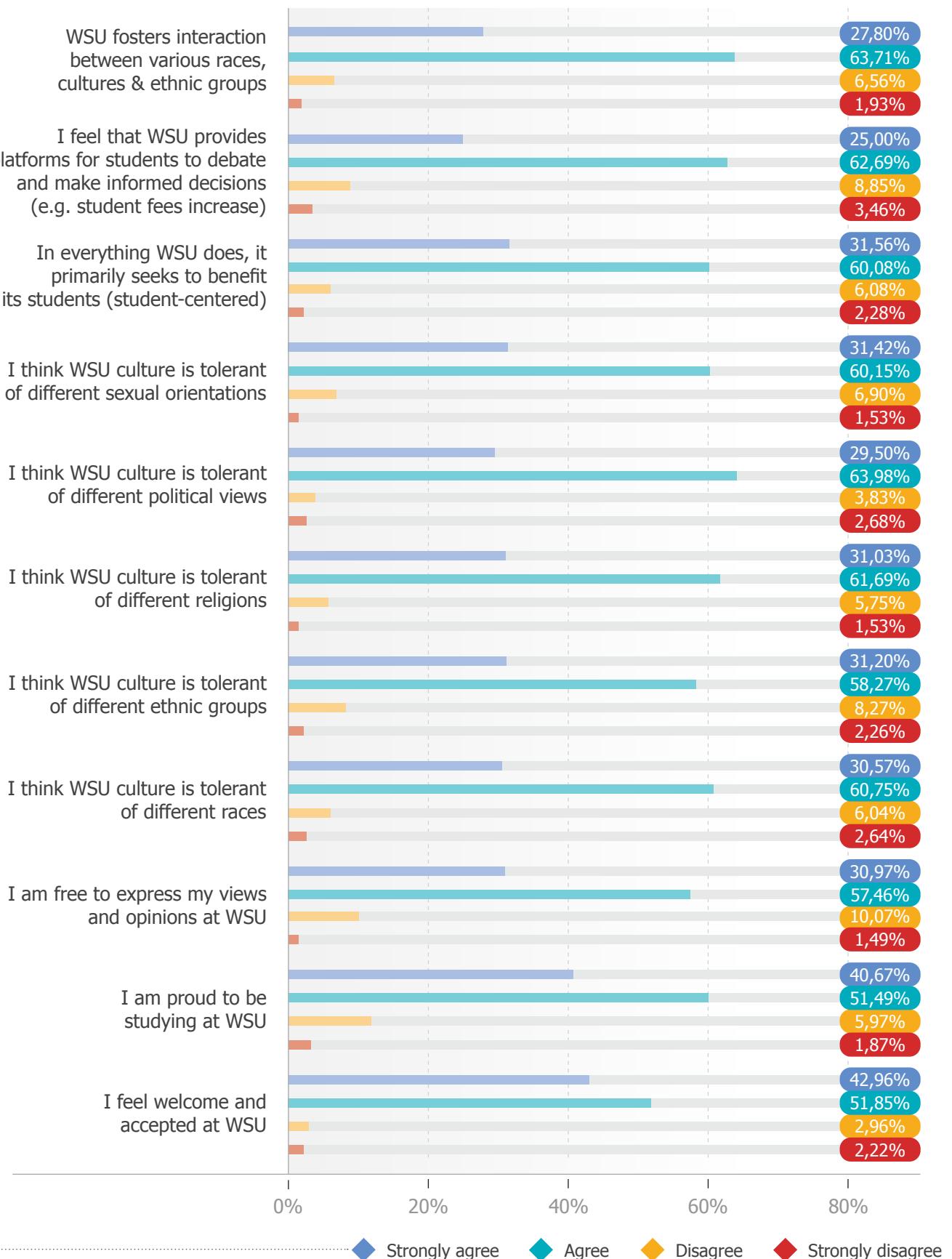


Freedom of expression is also widely supported, with 88.43% of students stating they feel comfortable expressing their views and opinions at WSU. However, 11.56% of students disagreed, indicating that while most students feel free to express themselves, there is room for improvement in fostering open dialogue and ensuring all voices are heard.

WSU demonstrates a largely inclusive and tolerant culture across racial, ethnic, religious, and political dimensions. 91.32% of students believe WSU is racially inclusive, while 89.47% agree that ethnic diversity is respected. Additionally, 92.72% of students feel that WSU is religiously tolerant, and 93.48% believe it fosters a politically tolerant environment. Sexual orientation tolerance is also rated highly, with 91.57% of students feeling that WSU is accepting of diverse sexual identities, though 8.43% expressed dissatisfaction. The university also encourages interaction among races, cultures, and ethnic groups, with 91.51% of students agreeing that WSU promotes inclusivity in student interactions.

Figure 30: Rating of institutional culture

Institutional culture:



A strong student-centred approach is evident, as 91.64% of students believe WSU prioritizes student welfare in all its activities. However, 8.36% of students felt that WSU could do more to focus on student needs, suggesting opportunities to enhance support systems and engagement initiatives. Similarly, 87.69% of students believe WSU provides platforms for debate and decision-making, such as discussions on student fees. However, 12.31% expressed dissatisfaction, indicating potential gaps in transparency or inclusivity within decision-making processes.

WSU has successfully fostered a culture of acceptance, inclusivity, and student-centeredness, as evidenced by the overwhelmingly positive responses from its student body. Most students feel welcomed, respected, and proud to be part of the institution, with high tolerance levels across racial, ethnic, religious, political, and sexual orientation dimensions. However, concerns raised by a minority of students regarding freedom of expression, inclusivity, and participation in decision-making processes highlight areas for improvement.

2.20. WEEKLY PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES

Emotional well-being and social behaviours are critical factors in enhancing students' overall learning experience and academic engagement. This analysis, illustrated in Figures 31 and 32, explores classroom engagement, mental health challenges, and extracurricular activities, providing insights into the factors that shape student life.



Student engagement levels in class vary significantly, with 27.55% of students frequently experiencing boredom, while 9.81% report consistent boredom. However, 50.57% feel bored only occasionally, and 12.08% never experience boredom, suggesting that while most students remain engaged, there are areas where interactive teaching methods could be enhanced. Peer tutoring is common but not universal, as 37.26% of students regularly assist their peers, while 11.41% do so consistently. However, 51.33% are minimally or not involved in peer tutoring, indicating that while some students benefit from collaborative learning, it may not be a preferred method for all.

Figure 31: Weekly psychosocial experiences (academic and emotional challenges)

Academic and emotional challenges:

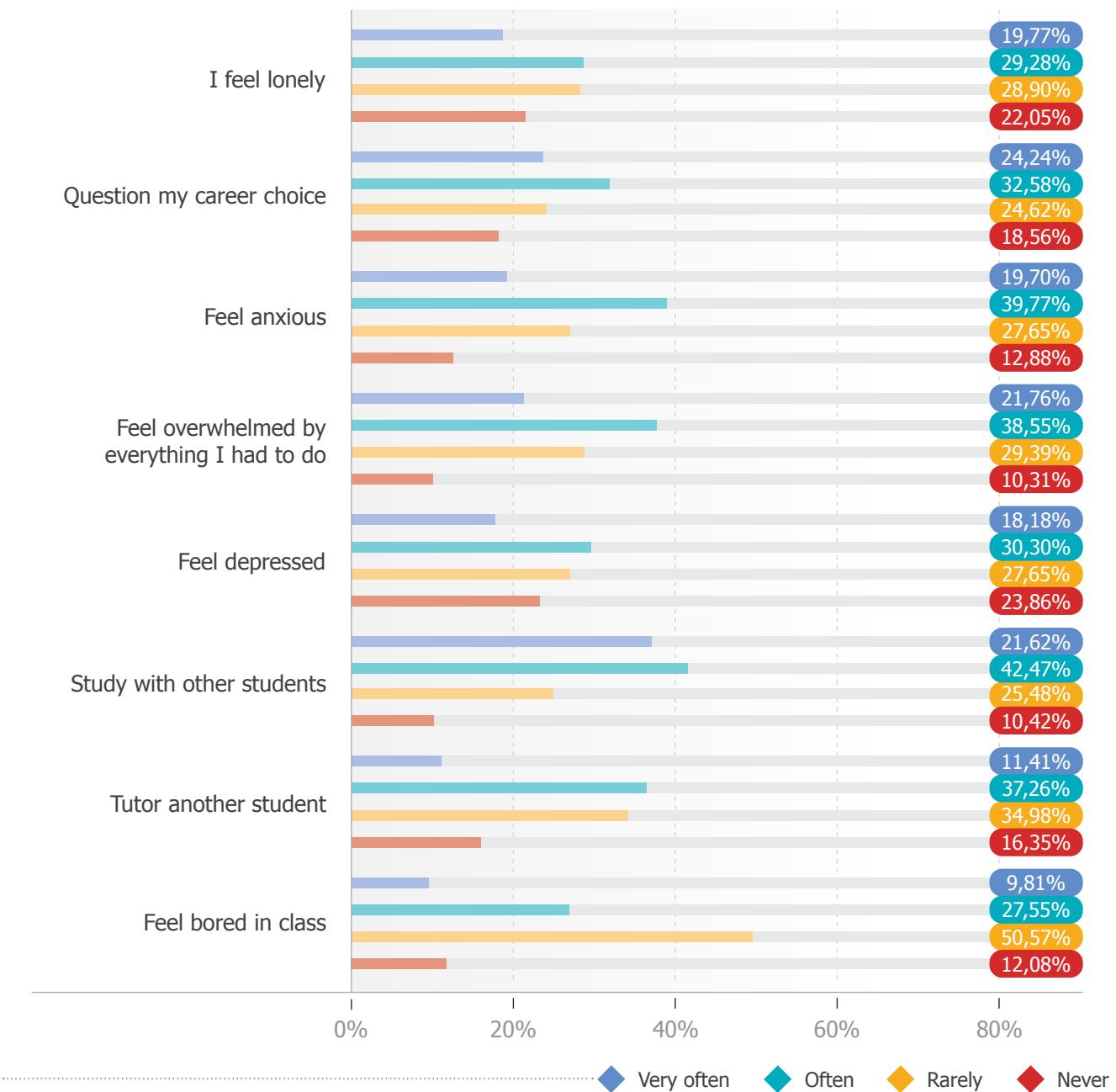
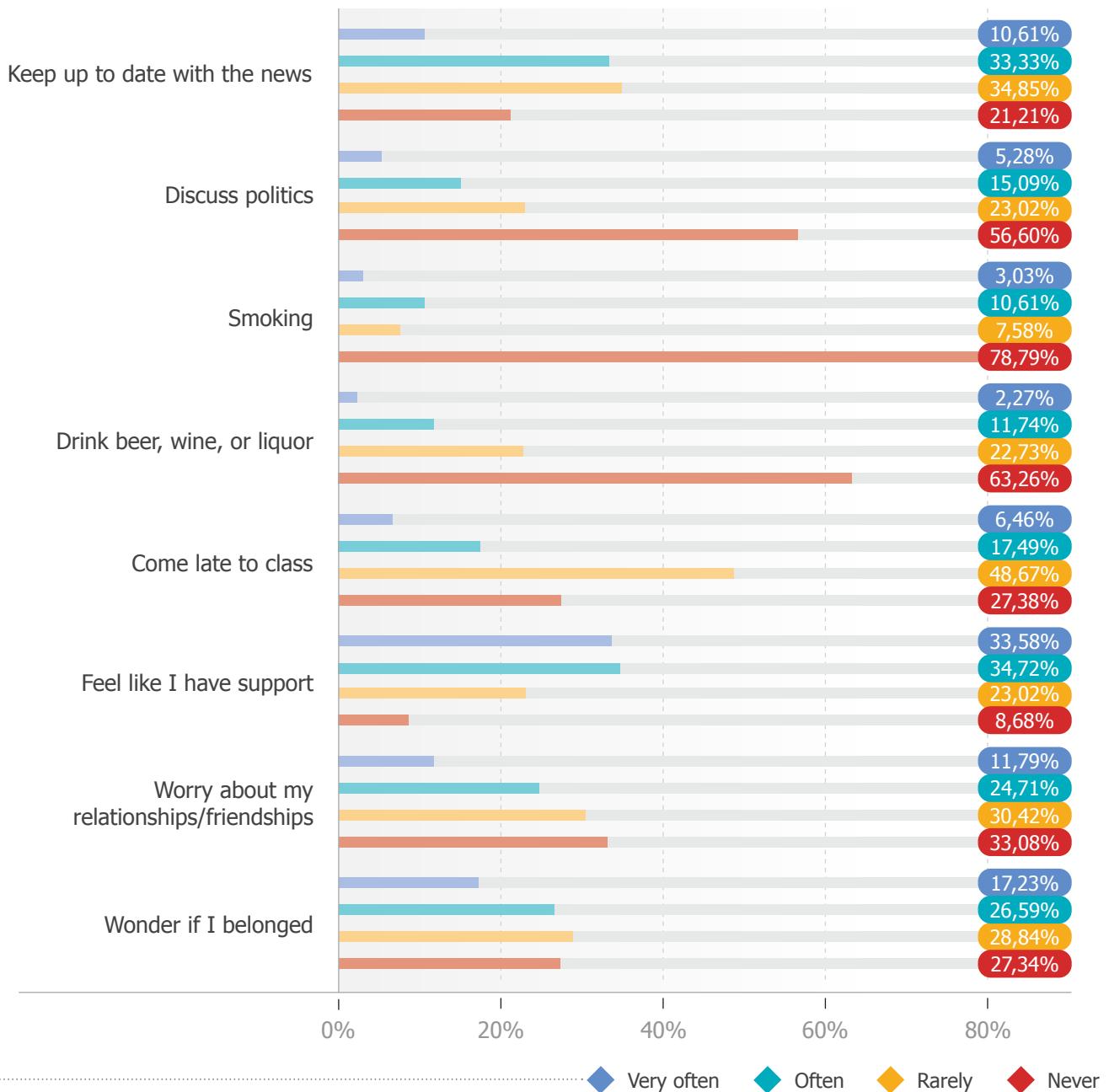


Figure 32: Weekly psychosocial experiences (social and behavioural aspects)

Social and behavioural aspects:



Group study habits show a positive trend, with 42.47% of students regularly studying with peers and 21.62% frequently participating in group sessions. However, 10.42% never engage in group study, and 25.48% do so only occasionally, suggesting that while many students value collaboration, some prefer individual study methods. Punctuality in class is generally maintained, with 48.67% of students rarely arriving late and 27.38% never being late. Only 6.46% report frequent tardiness, indicating that most students practice effective time management.

Mental health challenges are prevalent among WSU students, with 30.30% frequently experiencing depression, while 18.18% report severe symptoms. A significant proportion (38.55%) often feel overwhelmed, and 21.76% experience this very frequently. Similarly, 39.77% regularly feel anxious, while 19.70% report persistent anxiety, indicating that stress management and mental health support should remain a priority.

Career uncertainty is another common concern, with 32.58% frequently questioning their career choices, while 24.24% do so very often. Feelings of loneliness affect 29.28% of students regularly, and 19.77% experience them very often, suggesting that social integration initiatives and peer support programs could be strengthened. Similarly, 26.59% of students often feel a lack of belonging, with 17.23% experiencing this very frequently.

Social concerns also impact well-being, with 24.71% frequently worrying about friendships and relationships, though 33.08% never experience such concerns. Despite these challenges, 34.72% of students often feel supported, and 33.58% report a strong sense of support, suggesting that institutional and peer support mechanisms are effective for a majority of students.

Alcohol consumption among WSU students is relatively low, with 63.26% reporting that they never drink, while only 2.27% drink frequently. Smoking rates are also low, as 78.79% of students abstain entirely, and only 13.64% engage in the habit regularly.

Political engagement is limited, with 56.60% of students rarely or never discussing politics, while 15.09% do so frequently and 5.28% engage very often. News consumption varies, as 33.33% of students frequently stay updated, while 34.85% rarely follow current events, and 21.21% never do. This suggests a need to promote civic awareness and engagement opportunities within the student community.

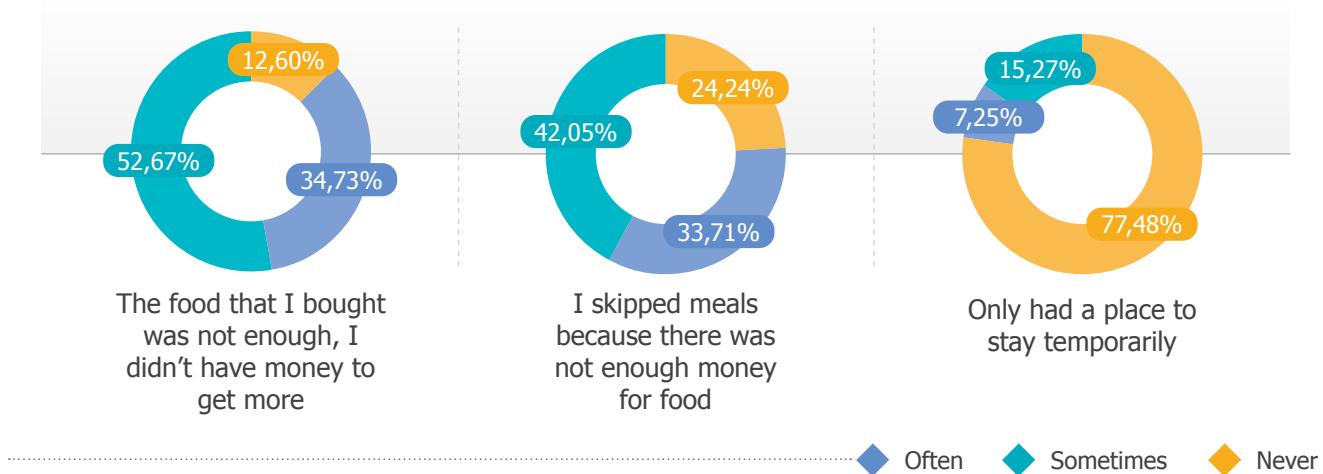
The weekly experiences of WSU students highlight both strengths and areas for improvement within the university environment. While many students feel supported and engage in collaborative learning, significant challenges such as anxiety, depression, and feelings of loneliness persist. Additionally, limited civic engagement and occasional academic disengagement suggest growth opportunities.

2.21. FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITY

Food and housing insecurity are critical issues that can significantly impact students' well-being, academic success, and overall quality of life. This analysis, illustrated in Figure 33, examines the prevalence of food and housing insecurity among students, emphasizing the financial and structural challenges they face in meeting their basic needs. Understanding these challenges is essential for developing effective support systems and policy interventions that promote student stability and success.

Figure 33: Food and housing experiences

Food and housing:



Food insecurity is a widespread concern among WSU students, with over 87% experiencing food insufficiency at some point. Among them, 34.73% frequently struggle to afford enough food, indicating that a significant portion of the student population faces financial difficulties affecting their ability to maintain a stable diet. Additionally, nearly 76% of students reported skipping meals due to financial constraints, with over a third skipping meals regularly. The severity of food insecurity can negatively impact students' academic performance, concentration, and physical health, making it a critical issue that requires immediate attention.

While housing insecurity affects a smaller proportion of students compared to food insecurity, it remains a pressing issue. Approximately 22.52% of students face temporary housing challenges, meaning they do not have a stable place to stay. Although the majority of students do not experience housing instability, those who do face significant stress and uncertainty, which can disrupt their academic progress, mental well-being, and overall sense of security.

The findings highlight the widespread nature of food insecurity, with many students experiencing food shortages and skipping meals due to financial constraints. While housing insecurity affects fewer students, it remains a serious issue for those who experience temporary instability. Addressing these challenges requires a multi-faceted approach, including expanding financial aid programs to help students meet basic living costs, implementing food assistance programs such as on-campus food pantries or meal voucher systems, and providing affordable student housing solutions, including emergency housing support for students in crisis.

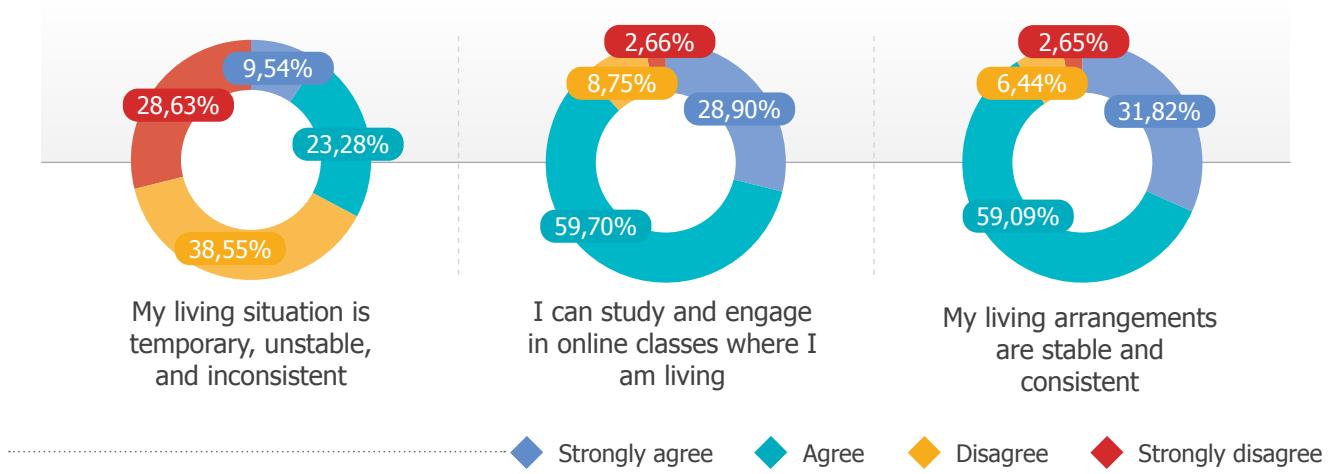
Additionally, raising institutional awareness and advocating for student support policies that address food and housing insecurity will be key to developing sustainable solutions.

2.22. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

The stability and suitability of students' living arrangements play a crucial role in their academic success and overall well-being. This section examines the extent to which students have stable housing, whether their living environments support effective studying—particularly for online learning—and the prevalence of temporary or unstable living situations. Understanding these factors is essential for identifying challenges and developing targeted support systems to ensure that all students can thrive academically, as illustrated in Figure 34.

Figure 34: Living arrangement conditions

Living arrangements:



The majority of students (59.09%) report having stable living arrangements, with 31.82% strongly affirming the stability of their housing. Only 9.09% experience instability, meaning that nearly 91% of students feel secure in their living conditions, which is a positive indication of housing security for most. However, a significant minority faces challenges, particularly regarding suitability for studying and online classes.

When asked about their ability to study and engage in online classes, 59.70% of students found their living environments conducive, with 28.90% feeling very confident in their ability to study effectively. However, 11.41% reported difficulty studying or engaging in online learning due to their living conditions, indicating that while most students have supportive study environments, a notable minority struggle with distractions, inadequate space, or poor internet access.

Housing stability remains a challenge for some students, as approximately 33% report experiencing some level of temporary or unstable living conditions. While 67% have consistent living arrangements, one-third of students facing temporary housing insecurity are at risk of academic disruption, mental health struggles, and decreased engagement in coursework.

The findings reveal that while most students enjoy stable living conditions, a significant portion faces challenges related to temporary housing and unsuitable study environments. These issues can negatively impact students' academic performance, mental health, and engagement in online learning. To address these concerns, WSU should implement targeted interventions such as emergency housing solutions, financial aid for students facing instability, and improved study resources to support students struggling with inadequate learning environments.

2.23. DISCRIMINATION AND HARASSMENT

The campus environment is meant to be a space of learning, growth, and inclusivity, where students from diverse backgrounds can thrive. However, for many students, bias, harassment, and discrimination undermine their sense of safety, belonging, and academic success. This section provides a detailed analysis of the frequency and nature of these challenges, drawing on data to uncover patterns and insights. From verbal and written harassment to social exclusion, threats, and physical assaults, the findings reveal the pervasive and multifaceted nature of these issues. Additionally, certain groups, including women, LGBTQ+ students, international students, and students with disabilities, face compounded challenges. While there are positive indicators of safety and progress, systemic barriers and underreporting remain significant concerns, as illustrated in Figure 35.

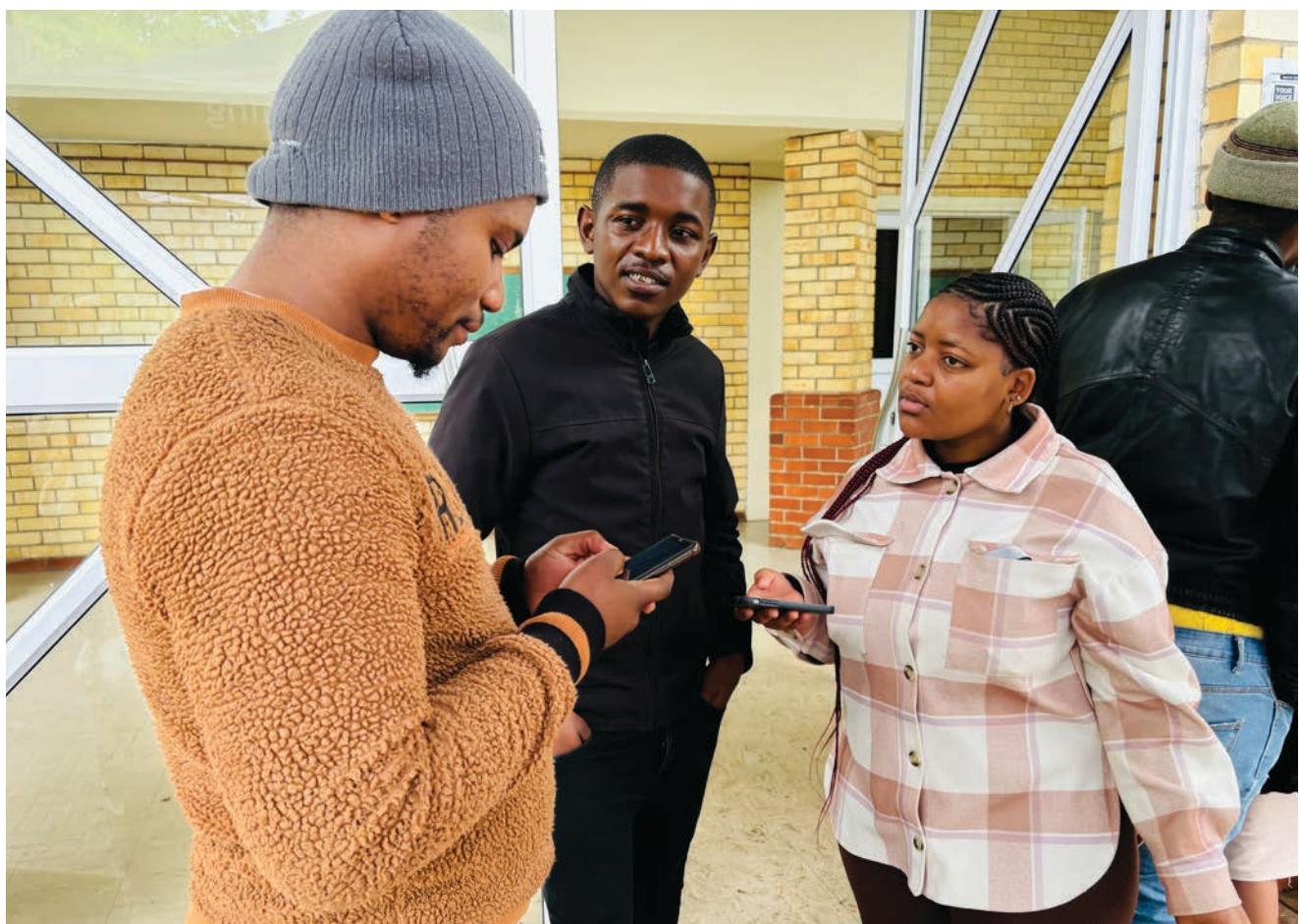
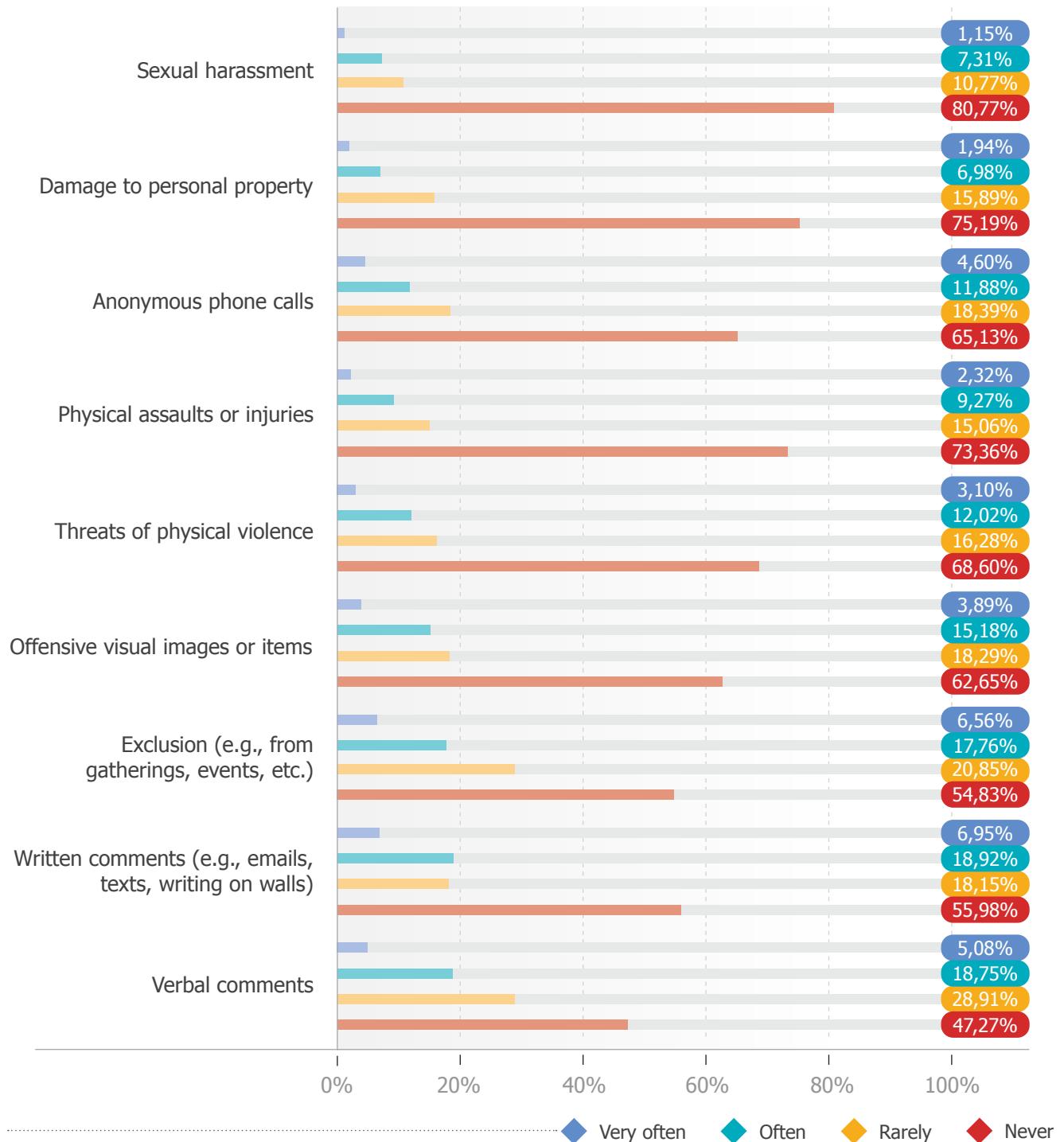


Figure 35: Experiences of discrimination and harassment

Discrimination and harassment:



Verbal harassment is the most frequently experienced form of bias, with 24% of students encountering verbal comments often or very often. These comments may stem from stereotypes, cultural insensitivity, or overt discrimination, making it a pervasive issue on campus.

Similarly, written forms of harassment, such as emails, texts, and graffiti, affect 26% of students, often carrying anonymity, which exacerbates the sense of vulnerability among recipients. Social exclusion is another prominent concern, with 24% of students frequently feeling left out of gatherings or events, potentially due to cliques, cultural differences, or systemic inequities in student communities.

Offensive visual images or items, such as graffiti or inappropriate posters, were reported as a frequent experience by 19% of students. These perpetuate stereotypes and undermine students' sense of belonging and safety. Threats of physical violence, while less common, were experienced by 15% of students often or very often, indicating a significant safety concern, even though 68.6% reported never encountering such threats. Physical assault, which is among the most severe forms of harassment, was frequently experienced by 11% of students, likely in-residence halls or during social events. However, underreporting may mean the actual numbers are higher.

Anonymous harassing phone calls were reported by 16% of students, further contributing to feelings of helplessness and intimidation. Damage to personal property, although not as widespread, was still frequently experienced by 9% of students, often arising from vandalism or personal disputes. Sexual harassment, though reported less frequently, affected 8.5% of students on a regular basis, a figure that remains concerning due to its emotional and psychological impact.

The findings paint a nuanced picture of the campus climate, revealing both progress and persistent challenges. While a majority of students feel safe and free from severe forms of harassment, a significant minority continues to experience verbal bias, exclusion, threats, and other forms of discrimination. These experiences are not evenly distributed, with marginalized groups disproportionately affected.

Addressing these issues requires proactive measures, including strengthening reporting mechanisms, enhancing security, and fostering inclusive community-building initiatives. WSU must also prioritise education and awareness campaigns, provide support services for affected students, and implement systemic changes to ensure that all students feel valued and protected.

2.24. OTHER CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS

University life is often envisioned as a transformative experience, offering students opportunities for academic growth, personal development, and social connection. However, for many students, this ideal is overshadowed by a range of challenges that hinder their ability to thrive. This analysis explores the multifaceted difficulties students face, from academic and financial struggles to housing issues, social isolation, and systemic barriers. Language barriers, high workloads, and inadequate support systems create academic hurdles, while insufficient financial aid and poor living conditions exacerbate stress and hardship. Social and emotional challenges, such as loneliness, bullying, and discrimination, further compound the difficulties faced by marginalised groups. Additionally, infrastructure shortcomings, including load shedding, Wi-Fi issues, and transportation problems, disrupt daily life and academic progress. These challenges highlight the urgent need for comprehensive solutions to create a more supportive, inclusive, and equitable campus environment.

Students' voices:

 *"The distance I have to travel from my residential place to Campus. When it rains, I have to walk on a muddy road with gravel. In the cafeteria, the chairs and tables don't look pleasant; they are old. There are always long lines at the cafeteria. The wifi only works at certain areas at Campus."*

 *"The res that I currently stay in is not in an appropriate state for students to reside in."*

Several students face challenges in comprehension and academic performance due to language barriers. Specifically, when isiXhosa is used instead of English in instructional settings, students who are not proficient in the language struggle to grasp course material effectively.

Students' voices:

 *"I couldn't adapt to the environment quickly because the only communication language is isiXhosa, and I don't know how to speak the language."*

 *"Speaking of the language of instructions. Everyone here wants to speak isiXhosa, whereas we are supposed to be speaking English, which we prepare ourselves for in job interviews and outside life. No question paper comes written in isiXhosa. I think that sometimes students fail to understand questions not because they are dumb but because of the language. They say English is hard, but it isn't. They don't want to practice it... It is said that if one doesn't understand the language of instructions, they won't understand the subject."*

Students report difficulties in managing multiple assignments within short time frames, leading to feelings of academic pressure and stress. The demanding workload contributes to burnout and negatively impacts students' overall well-being. Some students indicate a lack of academic support from lecturers, particularly in cases where late submissions are not accommodated, even under extenuating circumstances. Additionally, first-year students and those unfamiliar with the academic environment express concerns over limited access to academic guidance.

Inadequate classroom seating and overcrowding in lecture halls hinder students' ability to concentrate and engage effectively with course material. Furthermore, insufficient study spaces and the absence of heating in study centers during colder months present additional challenges for academic success.

Many students struggle to meet basic needs claiming that the R1650 monthly allowance is insufficient. Some students are forced to skip meals or limit food intake to once a day. Additionally, a portion of this allowance is often allocated to supporting family members, exacerbating financial constraints.

Concerns have been raised regarding the quality of student housing and its cost. Many students believe their living conditions do not justify their expenses, further straining their financial resources.

Student residences often suffer from inadequate maintenance, including broken furniture, insufficient washing machines, limited stoves, and overcrowding such as 14 individuals sharing two bathrooms. Some students also report experiencing temporary and unstable living conditions.

Students' voices:

 *"In this economy, the R1650 is not enough for groceries; the grocery ends before the 20th, even though I skip meals a day sometimes, and I eat only once."*

 *"Not having a seat during a lecture Felt extremely judged and uncomfortable when playing sports, so I ended up quitting. Struggling to find a venue to attend lectures."*

The long distances between residences and campus pose safety risks, particularly when students must navigate unsafe or poorly maintained roads, especially in inclement weather. The lack of campus transportation and nearby facilities, such as canteens, further exacerbates these concerns, particularly for students returning late from academic activities.

Many students report experiencing social isolation, particularly in their initial months on campus. The inability to form friendships or integrate into social groups contributes to feelings of loneliness. Reports of discrimination based on sexuality (e.g., lesbian women) or body image (e.g., being slender) further exacerbate social exclusion.

Instances of bullying, particularly within student residences and peer groups, contribute to emotional distress and negatively impact students' overall well-being. Many students experience stress, anxiety, and emotional distress, often feeling unsupported in addressing these concerns. A lack of access to mental health resources or individuals to confide in further compounds these issues.

Students' voices:



"Is the way people look at me since I'm way too slender."



"Loneliness, no compatibility whatsoever and access to little to no information regarding all things related to my course during the first 2 months."

Frequent power outages due to load shedding disrupt academic activities, particularly during critical periods such as assignment deadlines and examinations. The absence of adequate heating in study spaces during winter further hinders academic productivity. Limited Wi-Fi connectivity in residences and poor network coverage on campus pose significant barriers to academic and social engagement, limiting students' ability to access online resources and communicate effectively.

Frequent water shortages and reliance on tank water present additional challenges for students. Some students report experiencing allergic reactions due to water quality issues, raising concerns about health and hygiene.

Students' voices:



"Lack of water accessibility."



"The on-campus residences do not have washing machines, and we do not get time to wash our clothes, and we cannot dry them when it's raining."

Students who do not speak isiXhosa report experiencing social exclusion and marginalisation in both academic and social settings. The lack of linguistic inclusivity creates barriers to integration and participation. Negative perceptions and biases based on ethnic or cultural differences contribute to divisions within the student body, fostering an environment that is not fully inclusive. LGBTQ+ students, particularly lesbian women, report experiencing discrimination and a lack of acceptance within the student community. This contributes to feelings of alienation and reduced engagement in campus activities.

Some students endure long and physically demanding commutes to campus, negatively impacting their ability to engage in academic activities fully. Students face challenges with transportation, particularly during adverse weather conditions with no shelter and late hours, limiting their mobility and access to campus resources.

Students express dissatisfaction with residence management, citing unresponsive landlords and the lack of prioritization of student needs regarding maintenance and amenities. Limited food options, outdated infrastructure, and long queues in campus cafeterias contribute to student dissatisfaction regarding meal accessibility. The campus clinic is reported to lack sufficient medication and healthcare resources, limiting students' access to essential medical services.

Students' voices:



"I have never faced any challenges; I'm happy to be here."



"No challenge, but please do canteen for on-campus students, as going out at night is dangerous."

The challenges outlined in this analysis reveal a complex and interconnected web of issues that significantly impact FTEN students' academic performance, mental health, and overall well-being. These difficulties, from academic pressures and financial constraints to poor living conditions and social exclusion, underscore the need for systemic change and targeted interventions. While some students navigate these challenges with resilience, many others feel overwhelmed and unsupported, particularly those from marginalised or vulnerable groups. Attending to these issues requires a holistic approach prioritising accessible academic support, improved living conditions, enhanced mental health resources, and inclusive policies. By fostering a campus environment that values equity, empathy, and collaboration, WSU can empower students to overcome these obstacles and achieve their full potential. The path forward demands a collective commitment to listening, understanding, and acting on the needs of all students, ensuring that the campus becomes a place where everyone can thrive.

2.25. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ABOUT STUDENT EXPERIENCES AT WSU

WSU is a dynamic institution that offers students the opportunity to grow intellectually, socially, and personally. However, student feedback reveals a complex reality where systemic challenges often overshadow the promise of academic and personal development. This thematic summary delves into the diverse experiences of WSU students, highlighting both the strengths of the university and the persistent issues that hinder their success. The challenges are multifaceted, from academic disruptions caused by strikes and inadequate lecturer support to poor living conditions, financial pressures, and social exclusion. At the same time, students appreciate the university's efforts to modernise facilities, foster cultural diversity, and provide opportunities for entrepreneurship and skill development. By examining these themes in detail, this analysis aims to provide actionable insights to address the gaps and enhance the overall student experience at WSU.

WSU is described as an institution that fosters intellectual curiosity, critical thinking, and independence. Many students appreciate the transition from high school's structured learning environment to a more self-directed academic approach, which encourages personal growth. Programs such as the Student Entrepreneurship Program provide valuable opportunities for students to explore business ventures alongside their studies, promoting financial independence and practical skill development. Furthermore, the university makes commendable efforts to provide study materials and academic support to students who lack access to personal resources, such as laptops.

Students' voices:

 "The university's faculty, staff, and facilities have consistently demonstrated a high level of dedication, expertise, and passion for education. The diverse range of academic programs, cutting-edge research opportunities, and extracurricular activities provide students with a well-rounded and enriching experience. WSU has established itself as a beacon of intellectual curiosity, creativity, and critical thinking, and I am honoured to be affiliated with this esteemed institution."

 "At first, I thought I made a mistake coming here... but since we started classes and tasks, I noticed that I was wrong, and I enjoy being a WSU student."

Despite these positive aspects, challenges persist. Strikes significantly disrupt the continuity of education, particularly impacting first-year students who struggle to adapt to the university's academic demands under condensed semester schedules. Additionally, some students report that lecturers dismiss classes prematurely, exhibit low enthusiasm, and fail to foster an interactive learning environment. The slow response to academic queries—such as assignment submissions and module cancellations—further exacerbates stress and impedes academic progress.

Recent renovations and infrastructure improvements, particularly in campus libraries and common areas, have been acknowledged as steps toward modernisation. The availability of study materials for students without personal learning devices has also been positively received. However, several infrastructural deficiencies continue to hinder students' academic experiences. Overcrowding in on-campus residences and substandard conditions in off-campus accommodations remain persistent concerns. Reports highlight issues such as non-functional stoves, unhygienic communal areas, and inconsistent water supply. Furthermore, some students have reported landlord misconduct, including noise disturbances and harassment, contributing to an unsafe living environment.

Water shortages and power outages, particularly during examination periods, significantly disrupt students' ability to study effectively. Limited access to computer labs and unreliable Wi-Fi further hinders academic productivity. Additionally, the absence of adequate shelter at transportation hubs exposes students to harsh weather conditions, affecting their overall well-being.

Students' voices:

 "Other than the lack of water on my first day, everything else on Campus is amazing. However, my residence is so terrible that there is always noise. Our landlord drinks every day and makes noise, and he also comes with his friends, who sometimes assault us. Another thing is that our residence is always dirty."

 "It's been a great experience besides us not having any classes during the first semester while we are doing our first year. Now, the whole load is a lot in the second semester while it is short."

WSU is widely regarded as a diverse and inclusive environment, with many students describing it as a "home away from home." The university offers exposure to different cultures, fostering tolerance and social cohesion among students. Social events and extracurricular programs provide opportunities for students to engage with peers, develop skills, and build meaningful relationships.

Nevertheless, challenges persist, particularly for students from non-isiXhosa-speaking backgrounds. Language barriers in lectures and daily interactions hinder both academic engagement and social integration. Additionally, reports of exclusion based on factors such as sexuality, body image, and cultural background contribute to emotional distress and marginalization. Feelings of homesickness and difficulties in forming friendships further exacerbate loneliness, particularly for first-year and transfer students.

Many students find the R1650 monthly stipend insufficient to cover essential living expenses, leading to financial strain. Some students resort to skipping meals or severely limiting their food intake to manage expenses. The financial burden is further compounded for those who share their allowances with family members back home, making it increasingly difficult to sustain themselves throughout the academic year.

Students experiencing mental health challenges often face long waiting times or inadequate support from the university's counselling services. The combination of academic disruptions due to strikes, condensed semesters, and increased workload contributes to heightened stress levels. Moreover, students facing discrimination, social isolation, or familial pressures frequently lack accessible avenues for seeking psychological support, further exacerbating their emotional distress.

Students' voices:

 *"I just wish that the student counselling unit could assist students with a sense of urgency. It is the area we look to for help, but I have experienced a lack thereof."*

 *"I have experienced different cultures and races, and I enjoyed it."*

 *"My experience has been nothing other than "figure it out on your own" there's almost little to no help offered here to first year students. I only found out in second semester the sports offered here yet."*

 *"I am still trying to get comfortable. I had high hopes for how varsity would look and the treatment, but I was not proud; the residence we stayed at should be inspected. I like the fact that the Campus is being renovated; that would be a point I would raise if it weren't being renovated. And I think that's all."*

Recurring strikes present a major challenge to academic stability at WSU. These disruptions not only delay course completion but also leave students unprepared and overburdened with coursework once academic activities resume. First-year students, in particular, struggle to adapt to university life in the absence of consistent academic support, making it difficult to achieve a smooth transition into higher education.

Several campus policies, particularly those governing student residences, are perceived as overly strict or impractical. For example, restrictions on library access hours and cooking facilities limit students' ability to engage in academic and personal activities efficiently. Furthermore, slow administrative responses to essential matters, such as module cancellations and transport-related issues, hinder students' ability to effectively plan their academic and personal schedules.

Students' voices:

 *"We didn't have stoves and microwaves since we arrived; the plugs are not working, but we keep reporting this, and no one comes."*



"It has been an accommodative institution, even though I am not satisfied with living conditions at my residency and transportation for off-campus students."

The FTEN student experiences at WSU reflect a mix of opportunities and challenges, underscoring the need for targeted interventions to create a more supportive and inclusive environment. While WSU has made strides in fostering diversity, intellectual growth, and infrastructure improvements, significant issues remain. Strikes, poor living conditions, financial constraints, and barriers to social integration continue to impact students' academic performance and well-being. Addressing these challenges requires a holistic approach, including enhanced academic and administrative support, improved infrastructure, expanded mental health services, and initiatives to promote inclusivity and cultural understanding. By prioritising these areas, WSU can build on its strengths and ensure that all students have the resources and support they need to thrive. A student-centred approach will not only improve individual outcomes but also strengthen the university's reputation as an institution committed to academic excellence and personal growth.

SECTION 3

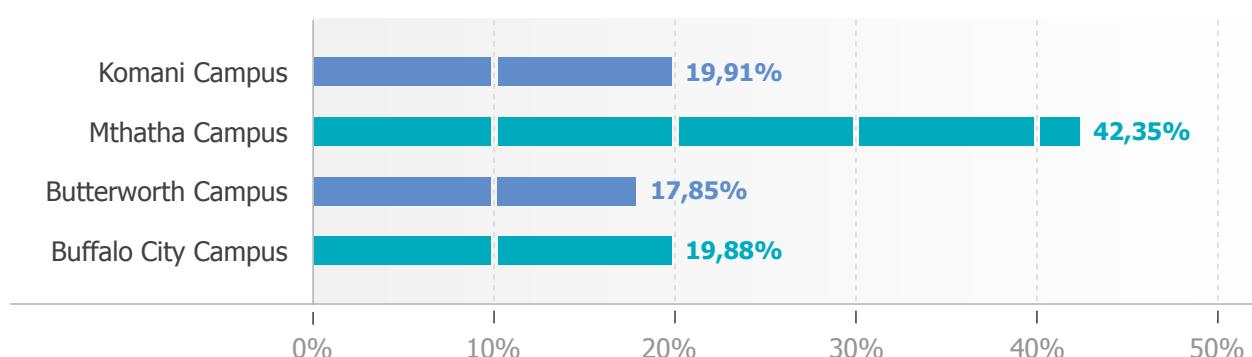
SENIOR STUDENTS

3.1. SENIORS PARTICIPATION DISTRIBUTION BY CAMPUS

Understanding the distribution of students across different campuses is essential for assessing institutional reach and representation. Figure 35 provides an overview of the percentage of respondents from each campus, offering insights into the relative student population at each location. By analysing these figures, we can better understand campus dynamics, including differences in enrolment and participation in the survey and perhaps other university initiatives.

Figure 36: Seniors distribution by campus

Distribution by campus:



The above Figure 36 presents an overview of the distribution of respondents among the four campuses of WSU. The data is expressed in percentages, which helps to illustrate the relative representation of students at each campus.

Mthatha Campus, the largest campus, is the most represented among the four, serving 42.35% of the total respondents. This significant majority highlights its prominence within the university's overall structure, attributable to a wider array of programs and more extensive facilities.

Komani Campus, although smallest by size, follows as the second most represented, accommodating 19.91% of the participants. Just slightly behind is the Buffalo City Campus, where participating students make up 19.88% of the total. Butterworth Campus represents the smallest segment of student participation, hosting only 17.85% of students.

The data highlights Mthatha Campus as the most represented among respondents, reflecting its role as WSU's largest and most resource-intensive campus. Komani and Buffalo City Campuses follow closely in student participation, while Butterworth Campus accounts for the smallest share. These variations may be influenced by campus size and levels of engagement with survey outreach efforts. Understanding these distribution trends can help the university enhance student representation and tailor services to meet the needs of each campus more effectively.

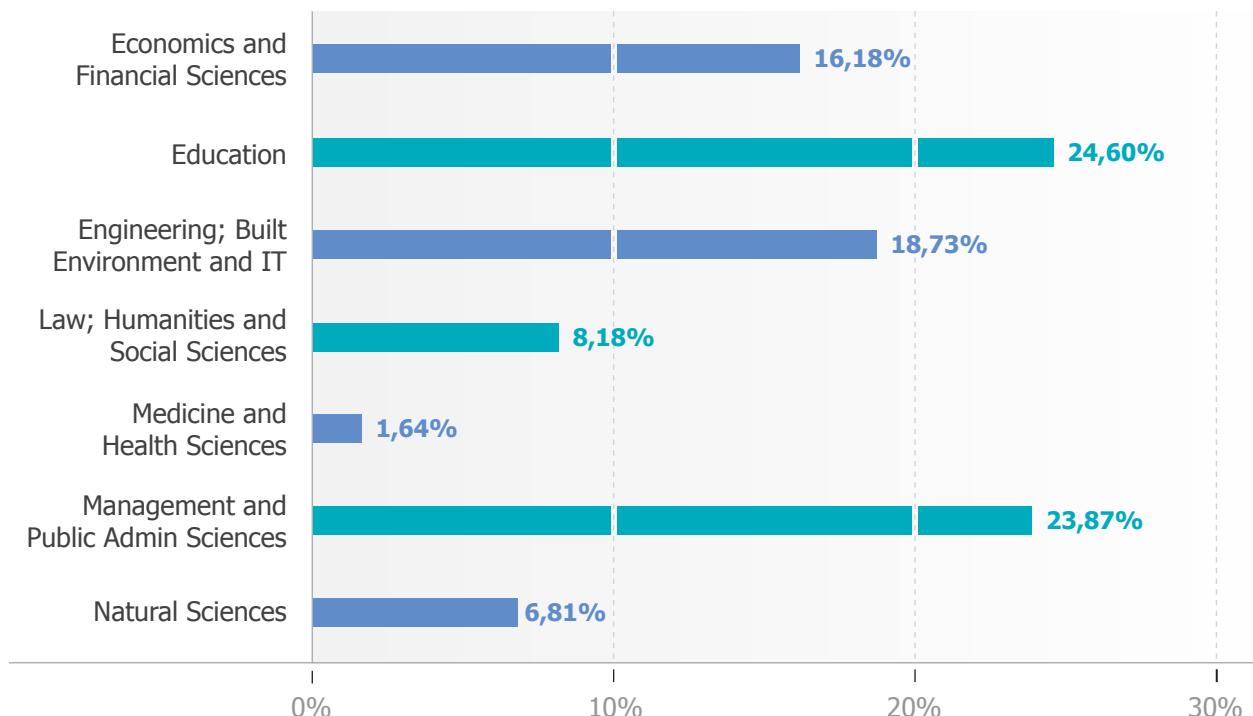
3.2. SENIORS PARTICIPATION DISTRIBUTION BY FACULTY

Figure 37 offers a detailed depiction of the distribution of participating students across various faculties at WSU. These visuals reveal the percentages of different faculties that are represented, providing an insightful look into student engagement and highlighting the relative prominence of each faculty within the institution. By analysing this data, we can discern the key areas of focus and interest among WSU students and the distribution of academic resources and faculty influence across the campus.

FED is the largest represented faculty, comprising 24.60% of the total student representation. This reflects the dominance of the Mthatha and Komani campuses in this survey, as the faculty is hosted by these two campuses. FMPAS follows closely on the heels of the FED, accounting for 23.87% of student representation. FEBEIT is represented by 18.73% of the respondents.

Figure 37: Senior participation distribution by faculty

Distribution by faculty:



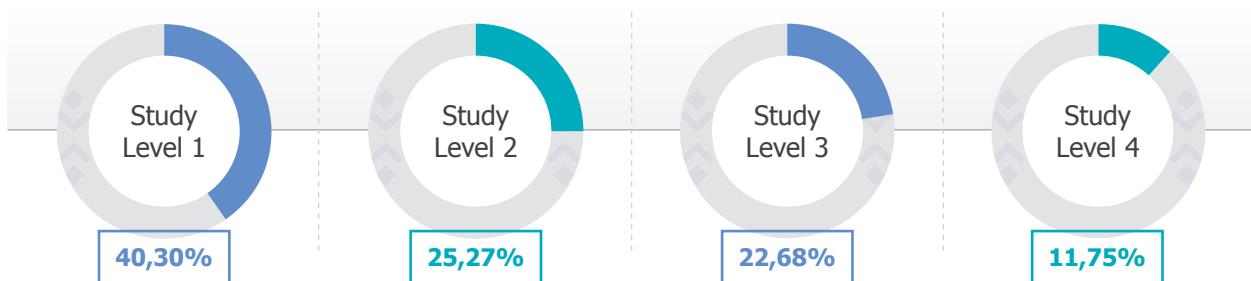
The above faculties are followed by the FEFS with 16.18%, the FLHSS at 8.18%, the FNS covering 6.81%, and lastly the FMHS at only 1.64%.

3.3. SENIOR PARTICIPATION DISTRIBUTION BY STUDY LEVEL

This analysis examines the distribution of participants across different undergraduate study levels (1 to 4). The findings highlight a significant concentration of students in the lower levels, particularly Level 1, which accounts for the largest proportion. In contrast, the higher levels exhibit much lower participation rates. Understanding these patterns is crucial for identifying potential challenges, such as student retention, academic progression, and the need for additional support at advanced levels, see Figure 38.

Figure 38: Seniors participation by study level

Distribution by study level:



The analysis reveals that Level 1 has the highest representation, encompassing 40.30% of the total participants. This suggests that a significant majority of individuals involved in the study are categorised at this foundational level; this is a worrying observation since these students are not FTENs. This implies that 40% of respondents are either repeating or transferred from other programmes, however, this group constitutes 5.83% of the enrolment figures. Following Level 1, Level 2 accounts for 25.27% of participants, indicating a substantial but smaller group segmentation. Level 3 continues this trend with a contribution of 22.68%, demonstrating a gradual decrease in participation as one moves up the levels. Level 4 has a more limited share at 11.75%, reflecting fewer individuals participating at this advanced level.

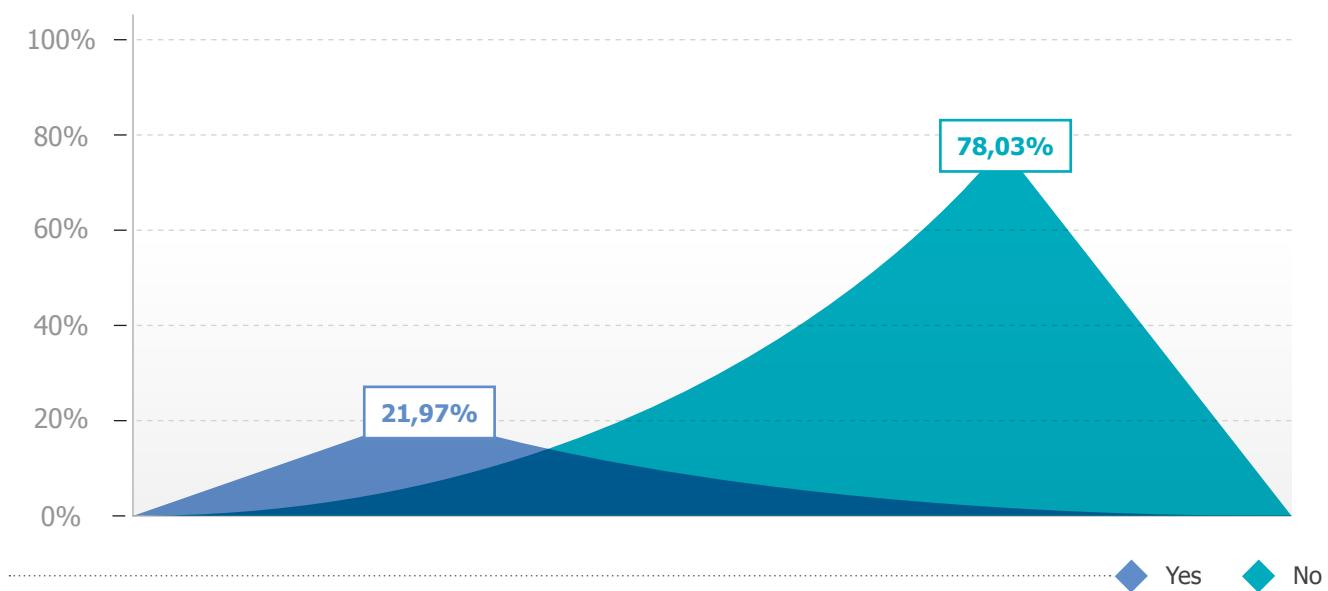
In summary, the overall distribution of study levels demonstrates a pronounced concentration in the lower levels (1 to 2), indicating that most participants are positioned at these foundational stages. Conversely, there are significantly lower proportions of individuals at the higher levels (3 and 4). This pattern suggests potential areas for further exploration or support to encourage engagement at the higher study levels and within the lesser-represented categories.

3.4. FINAL YEAR STUDENTS IN THE SURVEY

The data presented in Figure 39 provides valuable insights into the composition of the student body at WSU, distinguishing between students who are in their final year and those who are not. With 78.03% of respondents not in their final year and 21.97% being final-year students), the data reveals a clear skew toward non-final-year students. This distribution highlights the significant presence of students who are still progressing through their academic journey and will remain enrolled at WSU in the coming years. The findings underscore the importance of addressing the needs and concerns of this majority group to ensure their continued success and satisfaction. At the same time, the smaller but still significant proportion of final-year students presents unique challenges and opportunities, particularly in terms of post-graduation support and career readiness. By understanding these dynamics, WSU can take targeted actions to enhance the student experience, foster retention, and build a more supportive academic environment.

Figure 39: Comparing final year students with continuing students

Final year:



According to the analysis, continuing participants make up a dominant 78.03%, which indicates that most survey respondents fall into this category. This suggests that the strong participation of students who are not in their final year represents a significant presence relative to those who are in their final year.

This group likely represents students who are still progressing through their academic journey at WSU and are expected to remain enrolled through 2025. Their significant share indicates that WSU will continue to have this large proportion of students on campus in the upcoming year, reinforcing the importance of addressing their needs and concerns, as raised in the survey.

Final-year participants represent a much smaller 21.97%, indicating that only a small portion of participants are in their final year. Despite being smaller, this group still holds some importance, accounting for roughly one-fifth of the total. Some students may not return to WSU in 2025, while others may opt to further their studies, by pursuing post-graduate programs at WSU or returning for other educational opportunities. This smaller yet significant group presents different needs and challenges for the university, such as post-graduation support and career services.

3.5. SENIOR STUDENTS PARTICIPATION DISTRIBUTION BY QUINTILE

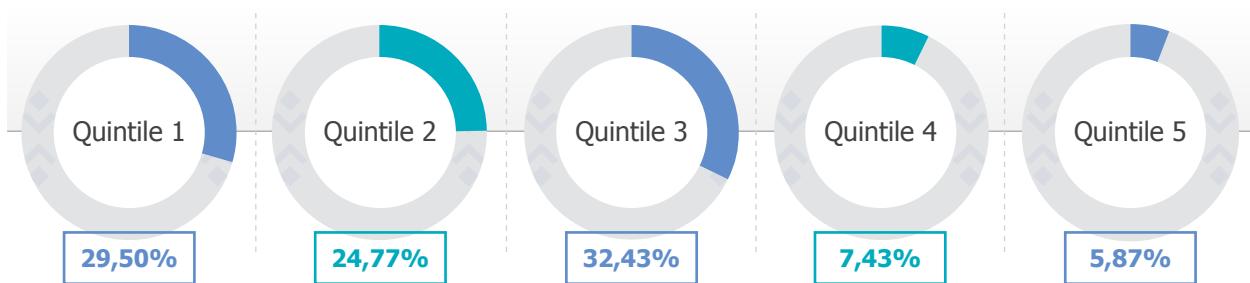
The South African school quintile system is a government framework designed to promote equity in education by allocating funding and resources to public schools based on the socioeconomic conditions of the communities they serve. Schools are classified into five quintiles, with Quintile 1 representing the most disadvantaged schools and Quintile 5 the most affluent.

The quintile system aims to address historical inequalities by directing more resources to schools in disadvantaged areas. While it has helped improve access to education for low-income students, challenges such as resource gaps and infrastructure deficits persist in Quintile 1-3 schools. In contrast, Quintile 5 schools, benefit from greater financial independence and better facilities, reflecting the socioeconomic disparities within the education system. As a result, learners from Quintile 1-3 schools are less prepared for the higher education environment and demands. See Figure 40.

In the first quintile, 29.50% of the participants are situated here, illustrating a significant dataset segment. This suggests that nearly one-third of the participants are in the lower end of the quintile spectrum.

Figure 40: Quintile distribution of senior students

Quintile distribution:



The second quintile contains 24.77% of the participants, making it the second-largest group. Although it is slightly smaller than Quintile 1, it still represents a considerable number of students. Occupying the most substantial portion of the data, the third quintile accounts for 32.43% of the observations.

The dominance of students in this range (1-3) highlights that 86.7% of the participants are situated in the low to middle range of the quintile distribution.

The fourth quintile encompasses only 7.43% of participants, marking it as significantly smaller compared to the first three quintiles. This segment represents better-resourced schools, yet it constitutes a relatively minor fraction of the overall student participation, indicating a clear cut-off as we move to more affluent schools.

The fifth and final quintile holds a mere 5.87% of the participants, making it the smallest group. This quintile consists of the highest quintile within the dataset, and the limited percentage suggests that only a select few students are found in these upper extremes, further emphasizing the scarcity of participants in this range.

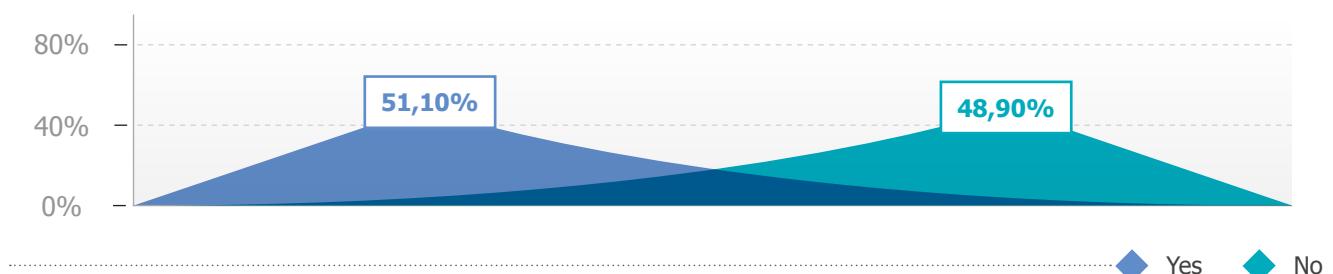
This distribution pattern indicates that the majority of participants are concentrated in the lower to middle strata (Quintile 1-3), with only a small fraction reaching the upper extremes. This suggests that, regarding the socio-economic background, the predominant group exhibits values below quintile 4 indicating that the majority of students are from poor backgrounds. Consequently, efforts aimed at addressing challenges or improving outcomes should focus on these quintiles, where the largest proportion of participants is situated. By prioritizing interventions that target this dominant group, WSU policymakers can drive meaningful improvements and bridge gaps.

3.6. SENIOR STUDENTS FIRST GENERATION STATUS

The experience of attending university can differ significantly depending on one's family background. One key factor influencing a student's university journey is whether they have family members who have previously attended a university. This report examines the distribution of respondents based on whether someone else in their family has studied at a university, highlighting the implications of these differences. With the understanding of these variations, institutions can develop strategies to provide better support and resources, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background, have an equal opportunity to succeed in higher education, see Figure 41.

Figure 41: First-generation status of senior students

University educated family member:



As much as 48.90% of respondents indicate that no one else in their family has studied at a university. This is a substantial portion of the sample, suggesting that nearly half of the individuals in this group come from families where higher education at a university level has not been part of the family history.

This could indicate a range of factors, including socio-economic barriers, or lack of access to higher education. Given this, there may be potential challenges faced by these individuals in navigating the academic environment, as they might lack family experiences or support related to university life, admissions, or financial aid.

Among the respondents, 51.10% reported that a family member attended higher education. This indicates that just over half of the respondents come from families with a tradition of higher education. Having family members who have experience in university may provide these students with valuable support and insights into university life, including guidance on building social networks, exploring job opportunities, and navigating academic challenges. Additionally, this trend may reflect a higher socioeconomic status or cultural contexts in which obtaining a university education is more common or expected.

For the group that has no family members with university experience, there might be a greater need for support systems, including mentorship programs, orientation services, and academic counselling, to help them navigate the challenges of university life. Providing targeted support for these students can help bridge the gap created by a lack of familial experience in higher education.

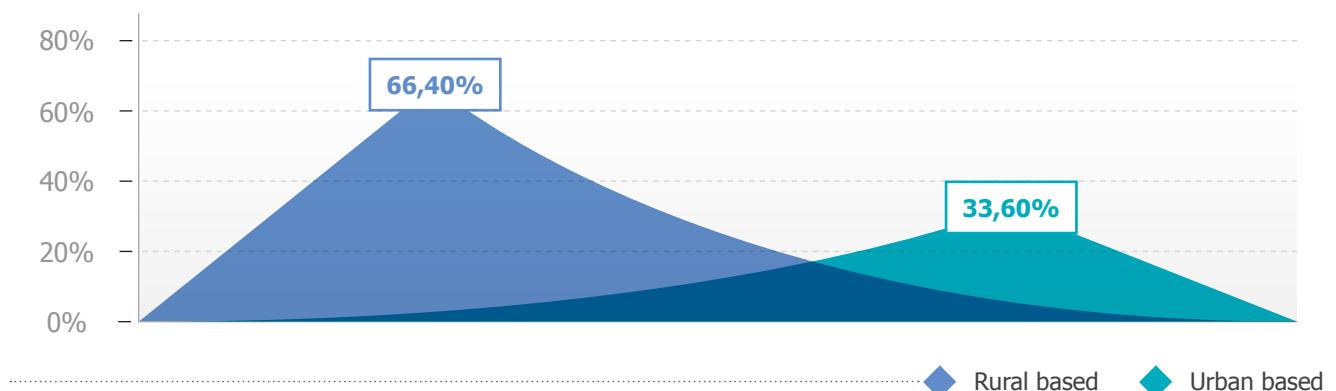
For the students who come from families with university experience, there might be a positive influence in terms of academic expectations, resource utilization, and social integration. However, this group might face different pressures, such as maintaining family expectations or following established educational paths.

3.7. SENIORS SCHOOL LOCATION

The distribution of respondents based on whether they attended rural-based or urban-based high schools provides valuable insights into the diverse backgrounds of students entering university. With 66.40% of senior respondents coming from rural-based high schools and 33.60% from urban-based institutions, the data highlights a significant majority of students from rural areas. This disparity underscores the need to attend to the unique challenges faced by rural students, such as limited access to advanced educational resources, extracurricular opportunities, and university preparation programs. In contrast, urban-based students, while benefiting from greater access to resources and opportunities, may face challenges related to academic competition and adjusting to diverse university environments, see Figure 42.

Figure 42: High school location

School location:



Rural-based high schools may have unique characteristics, such as smaller student populations, limited access to advanced educational resources or extracurricular programs, and potentially fewer opportunities for networking or exposure to diverse career options. Students from rural backgrounds may face additional challenges when transitioning to university life, such as adjusting to a more urban or larger university environment, adapting to a different pace of life, or coping with differences in social and academic expectations.

Urban-based schools tend to have larger student populations and greater access to resources such as advanced courses, extracurricular activities, and university preparation programs. Students from urban backgrounds might be more accustomed to a fast-paced, diverse, and resource-rich educational environment. They may also have easier access to cultural experiences, internships, job opportunities, and networks that could support their university applications and career paths.

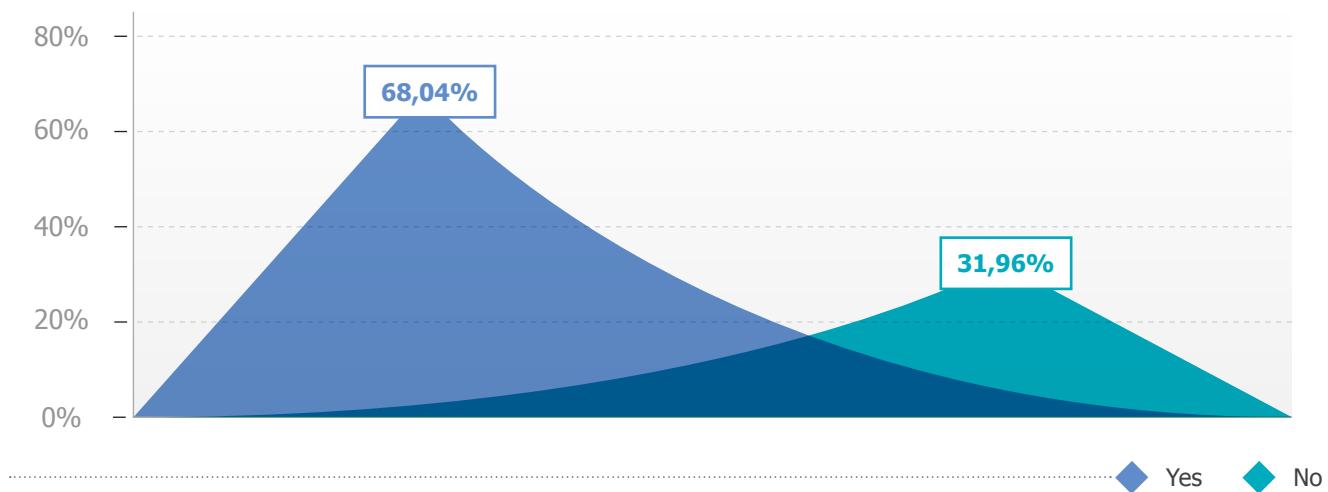
The data reveals a clear majority of students from rural-based high schools (66.40%), highlighting the need for WSU to prioritize support for this group, particularly in terms of academic preparedness, cultural adjustment, and access to resources. Rural students, often from lower quintile schools, may face significant barriers that require targeted interventions such as bridging programs, mentoring, and enhanced access to professional networks.

3.8. SENIORS APPLYING TO STUDY AT WSU

Choosing a university is a significant decision that can shape a student's academic and professional journey. While some students prefer a particular institution, others may enrol in a university that was not their first choice due to various factors such as admission offers, financial considerations, proximity to home, or programme availability. This report examines the distribution of students based on whether WSU was their first-choice university, highlighting key trends and their potential implications.

Figure 43: WSU as first-choice university

First choice:



The data in Figure 43 represents responses to whether WSU was the student's first-choice university. According to 31.89% of respondents, WSU was not their first-choice university. This suggests that nearly a third of the respondents considered alternative institutions when considering their higher education options. This could imply that while WSU was an important option, these students might have preferred other universities due to location, program offerings, reputation, or other factors. The fact that almost 32% of respondents didn't select WSU as their first choice could also indicate that some students applied to WSU as a backup, and the institution might not have been their top preference due to competitive programs, specialised fields of study, or other factors that might have influenced their initial decisions.

The results show that 68.11% of respondents indicated that WSU was their first-choice university, representing a majority of the sample. This suggests that for the majority of the students, WSU was the preferred institution, implying that the university likely offers strong appeal in terms of its programs, reputation, and campus life. A large proportion of respondents choosing WSU as their first choice indicates a strong interest in the university's offerings, whether in specific academic fields, the quality of the faculty, campus facilities, or the overall university experience. This group may feel a strong sense of loyalty or alignment with WSU's values, educational goals, or community, and their decision to attend might reflect a genuine fit between the university's offerings and their academic/career aspirations.

Overall, the data reveals that WSU holds significant appeal for a majority of senior students, with 68.11% choosing it as their first-choice university. However, 31.89% of those who did not choose WSU initially also represent a substantial group that may provide valuable insights into areas for potential improvement. Understanding the needs and concerns of this group could help the university further enhance its appeal and continue to attract a diverse range of high-achieving students.

WSU attracts prospective students due to its accessibility, strong career-oriented programs, and a well-regarded history of producing skilled professionals. This section explores the key motivations behind students' choice to attend WSU, highlighting the impact of financial considerations, family and community influence, and online resources. Prospective students chose WSU primarily for its proximity, affordability, and accessibility. The university's reputation for producing skilled professionals and offering career-oriented courses was a significant motivator, bolstered by success stories from alumni. Social influences, including guidance from family, friends, and teachers, played a crucial role, alongside cultural familiarity and the comfort of being close to home. Additionally, the ease of applying through free or late applications and support from external sources made WSU appealing. Finally, online platforms, social media, and official resources like the WSU website were essential in shaping students' decisions.

WSU's location close to home, affordability, and ease of application processes (free or late applications) made it an attractive choice for students with financial or familial constraints. External support from organisations or relatives further enhanced accessibility.

One student indicated that:

 *"The university is not far from home; my parents advised me not to go far in case something happens."*

Another one states:

 *"I wanted to be close to my grandma."*

 *"Since it was closer to home."*

WSU's strong reputation for producing skilled professionals, particularly in education and healthcare, influenced many applicants. The availability of specific career-oriented courses and alumni success stories reinforced its appeal as a pathway to achieving professional goals.

Below are the students' voices:

 *"Reputation of Walter Sisulu University."*

 *"Because they produce quality teachers."*

Social, Cultural, and Emotional Influences: Recommendations from family, friends, teachers, and school advisors were instrumental in students' decisions. Cultural familiarity, comfort, and proximity to family, especially for caregiving reasons, created an emotional connection to the institution.

Below are the students' voices:



"My sibling advised me to apply."



"My high school teacher inspired me to study here."



"Friends told me about the institution."

Social media, online platforms, and official university resources, like the website and prospectus, were key channels that informed and influenced students' application decisions.

One student indicated that:



"Searching online led me to choose WSU."

Another one says:



"Facebook was influential in my decision to apply."

WSU can enhance its appeal and support for students by improving its online presence, simplifying the application process, and emphasising career-focused opportunities. Strengthening its academic reputation through visible faculty and research achievements and fostering community and cultural engagement will also enhance its image. Providing robust student support services, such as mental health resources and mentorship programs, can ensure a better student experience. Lastly, broader outreach efforts and targeted advertising can increase awareness and attract a more diverse applicant pool. These measures collectively aim to improve accessibility, reputation, and overall student satisfaction at WSU.

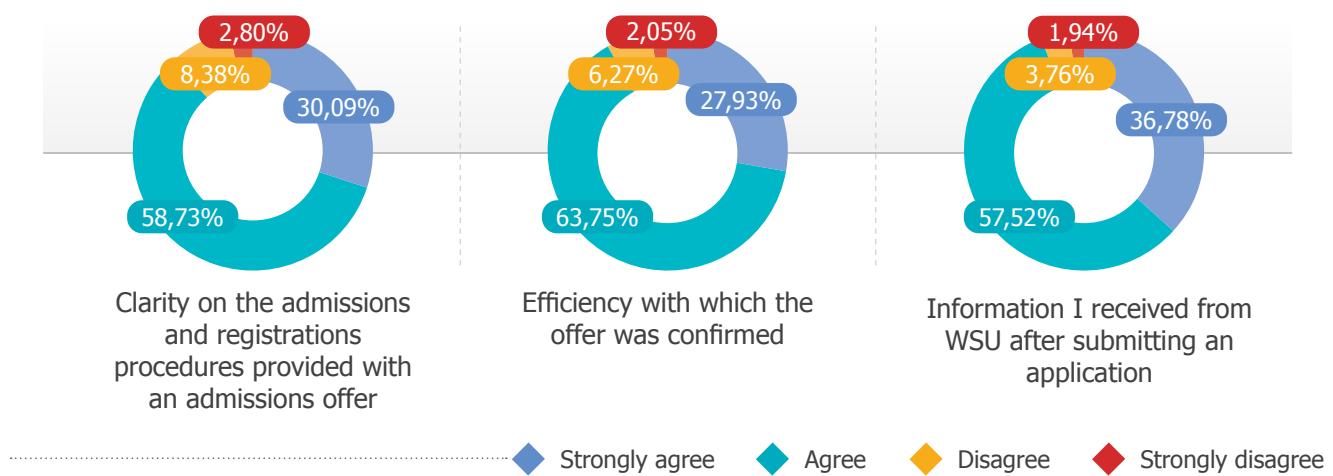
Students were asked to evaluate WSU in terms of three aspects of the application and admissions process. The admissions and registration process are a critical touchpoint for prospective students, shaping their initial impressions and overall experience with an institution. Understanding applicant perceptions of this process is essential for identifying strengths and areas for improvement. The survey data reveals that most respondents expressed satisfaction with the clarity of admissions and registration procedures, the efficiency of offer confirmation, and the quality of post-application information provided by WSU. However, a small percentage of applicants reported dissatisfaction, highlighting opportunities to refine communication strategies and enhance the overall applicant experience. This analysis explores the survey findings and offers insights into how WSU can further streamline its processes to meet the needs of all applicants, see Figure 44.

A combined majority of respondents (58.73% Agree, 30.09% Strongly Agree) felt that the admissions and registration procedures were communicated clearly. A small percentage (11.18%) expressed disagreement or strong disagreement.

Most respondents (91.68%) rated the efficiency of offer confirmation positively. A minor portion (8.32%) of the audience disagreed. Overwhelmingly, respondents (94.3%) found the post-application information satisfactory. A minimal group (5.7%) reported dissatisfaction.

Figure 44: Sentiments on the application process

WSU application:



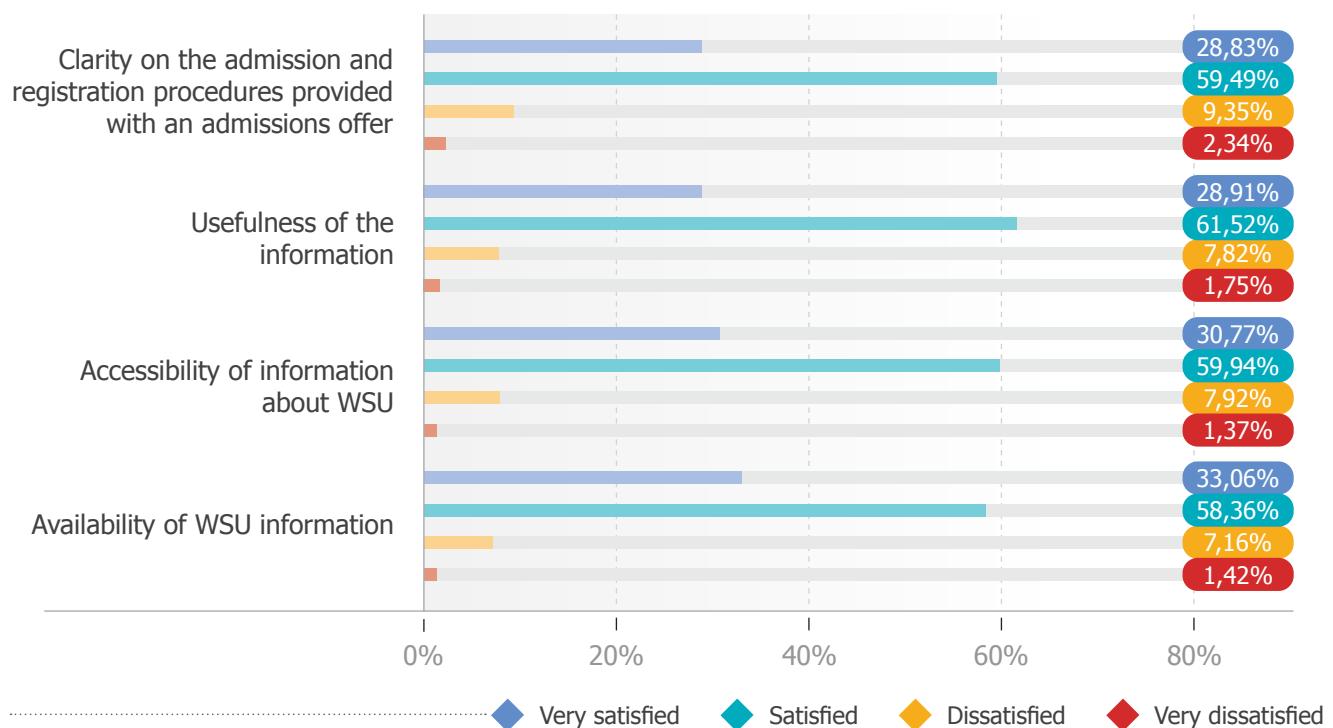
The survey results demonstrate that WSU's admissions and registration processes are well-received by the majority of applicants, with high levels of satisfaction in clarity, efficiency, and post-application communication. However, the feedback from a small but notable percentage of dissatisfied applicants underscores the importance of continuous improvement. By addressing these concerns, such as streamlining communication and ensuring timely responses, WSU can further enhance the applicant experience and solidify its reputation as an institution that prioritises student needs. These efforts will not only improve satisfaction among future applicants but also contribute to a more seamless and positive transition for new students.

The survey asked students to rate their level of satisfaction with the accessibility, availability, and usefulness of information about WSU including admission and registration procedures. Such information is very important, especially for new students in helping them make informed decisions about their choices and to follow the correct procedures.

Most students are satisfied with the availability, clarity, and usefulness of the information provided by WSU, as satisfaction rates hover above 55% across all categories. A significant proportion also expressed being very satisfied (28%–33%). However, a smaller subset of respondents is dissatisfied or strongly dissatisfied (around 8%–11%), suggesting room for improvement in communication and accessibility. Addressing these gaps will further enhance the students' overall experience.

Figure 45: Availability of information ratings

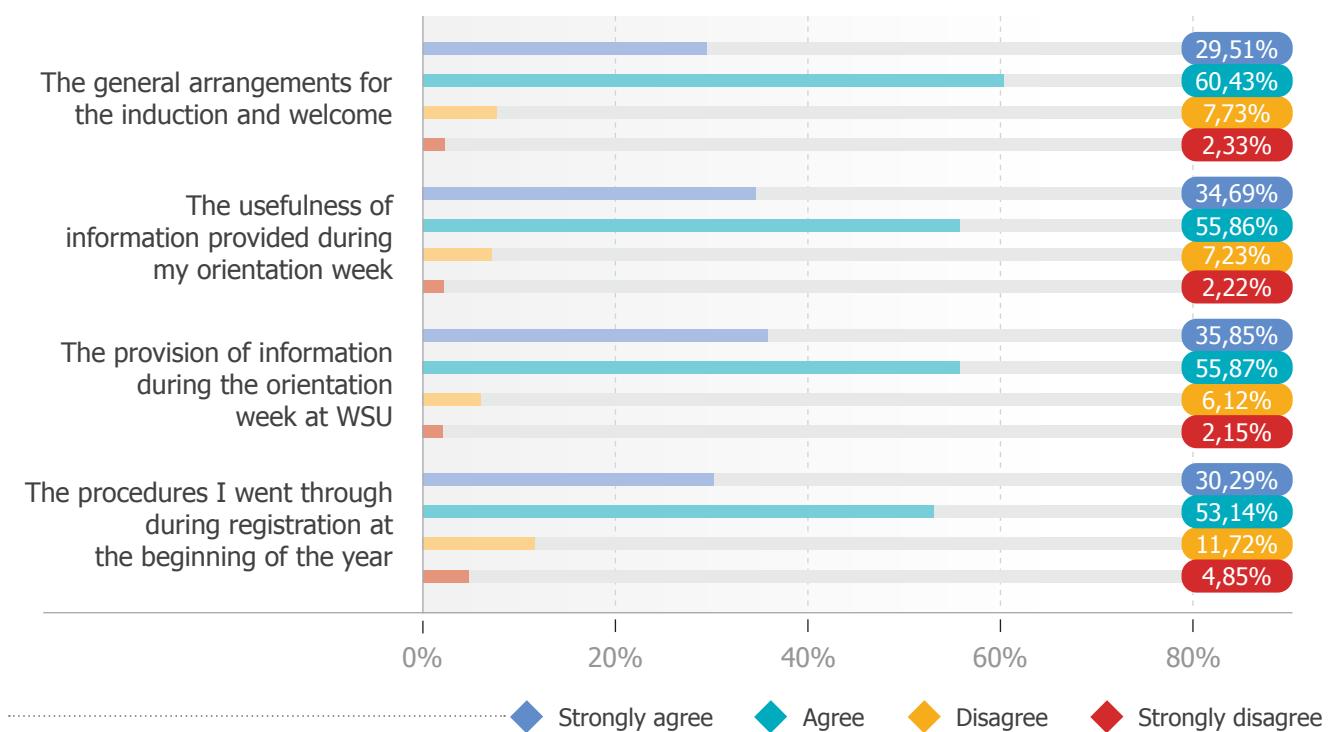
Availability of information:



Students were invited to evaluate their experiences during the registration and orientation process at WSU by rating their agreement with four important aspects. These aspects encompass the overall organization and planning of the induction events, the relevance and practicality of the information shared during orientation week, the accessibility and clarity of the materials provided throughout the orientation period, and the efficiency of the registration procedures. Each of these components plays a crucial role in ensuring a smooth transition for new students into the university environment, see Figure 46.

Figure 46: Registration, welcome and induction

Registration:



Across all aspects, most students (over 50%) either agreed or strongly agreed, reflecting a high level of overall satisfaction with WSU's efforts in registration and orientation. This indicates that the institution is performing well in areas such as welcoming new students, providing useful information, and streamlining registration processes. These findings suggest that WSU's approach is effectively meeting the needs of most students and creating a positive first impression.

However, the areas of strong agreement stand out as particular strengths. For example, many students felt highly satisfied with the usefulness of the information provided during the orientation week and the efficiency of registration procedures, suggesting that these are well-structured and impactful elements of the student experience. This strong endorsement implies that WSU has excelled in delivering relevant, timely, and accessible information during critical stages of a student's onboarding journey. On the other hand, small percentages of disagreement and strong disagreement highlight areas that require attention. Some students expressed dissatisfaction with the clarity of information provided or the delivery methods used during the registration and orientation process. This could suggest that certain materials were not accessible, detailed, or well-communicated. While the overall trends are positive, the presence of dissatisfaction—though limited—could point to gaps that may disproportionately affect specific groups of students, such as those unfamiliar with university systems, international students, or late registrants.

Students were allowed to suggest changes they would like to see in the registration process based on their experiences. The opinions and suggestions vary but can be grouped into themes.

Common themes include a demand for improved communication and information regarding modules and registration procedures and better assistance from staff. Students expressed the need for clearer module guides and more professionalism among staff. There are also requests for more time and resources for registration, along with frustrations about delays and the handling of full-quota courses.

Students' voices:



"A guidance on which module to register when you are a first year."



"Accessibility of orientation information and dates."



"Be more people working there and communicate with us with how things are going, prioritize students and talk to us like normal adults, the stuff need to be kind and patient."



"During orientation, it would be a privilege also to introduce the use of the Microsoft Office package."

On the positive side, some students reported satisfaction with the registration process and the ability to register online, noting that their experiences were generally smooth and manageable. Overall, while many students are content, there are significant calls for enhancement in support and information to ease the transition for newcomers.

Students feel that WSU needs to alleviate the frustrations associated with "Quota Full" errors. A better system for managing admissions against available spaces must be in place. This proactive strategy will significantly reduce delays and minimise stress for students and staff. There is a sentiment that the current down payment requirements disproportionately impact unfunded students. Students suggest that by allowing registration without upfront payments for those awaiting bursary approvals, WSU can promote equity and inclusivity in the admission process.

Students' voices:



"Can students be cleared on time for registration when they are funded? I nearly died of depression this year because I'm a funded student. I did well on my studies, but WSU failed to clear me for registration, causing me a major emotional breakdown."



"The thing of a quarter full, I think those who are admitted on that specific course must be admitted due to space availability not on there, or they qualify."



"During my time, the registration programme was not as frustrating as the one we have now, that first come, first serve. I don't like it because it means that even if you qualify for the course but don't have money to secure your admission, you are out for the game. Please try to make the admission like the one for 2021, and before 2021, some of us are dependent on NSFAS."



"I am happy with the programme, but increasing efficiency would be better."

According to the survey, the WSU student portal requires a comprehensive overhaul to address persistent technical issues. Enhancing its functionality will ensure a smoother registration process, particularly for first-year students navigating the system for the first time. Students suggest that upgrading the WSU website and support systems is crucial for accommodating more users and reducing downtime. This initiative will simplify access for all students, particularly those from remote areas who may face additional challenges.

Students feel comprehensive reform is necessary to expedite registration and facilitate swift financial clearance. WSU must financially clear all admitted students promptly for registration. Enhancing support for students navigating financial clearance issues and improving the response times from our administrative offices will lead to a more efficient process. By ensuring that all preparations are completed before classes start, WSU can create a more seamless student experience.

Students' voices:



"I think if the registration must be opened at the beginning of January and students in need of special cases must apply in December so that they can also be able to register in January, this can help us as students to start classes earlier and have enough time to study and do all the assessments in time."



"If they can update the registration website because sometimes it is too slow."



"I would like the registration program to improve communication about acceptance statuses. In my experience, I learned about my acceptance too late, which delayed my registration and caused me to start classes much later than my peers. If learners could receive earlier notifications about their acceptance and registration details, it would help prevent late starts and allow for a smoother transition into the academic year."



"In as much as self-service of registration makes it comfortable for us not being given the correct information about the new programs being introduced, hence we find ourselves having to deregister certain modules later on the year."

The study reveals that providing clear instructions and timely administrative support in the post-registration phase is essential. Improving communication regarding orientation and available resources will ensure that students feel informed and supported.

According to students, this commitment to continuous improvement will foster a more inclusive and effective system for all students. By adopting these vital recommendations, WSU can significantly enhance the registration and admission processes, creating a more efficient, accessible, and conducive student environment.

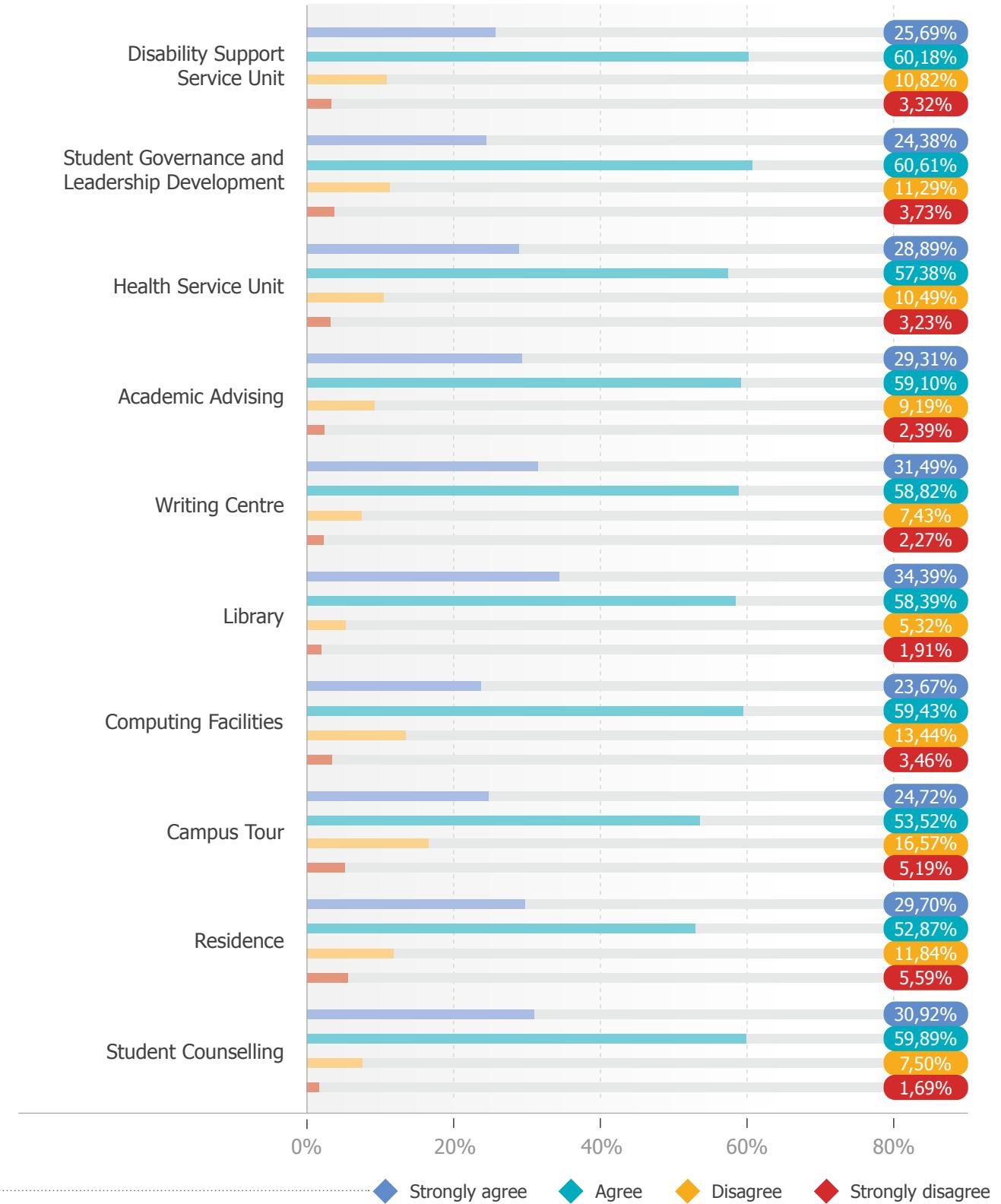
3.9. THE ORIENTATION WEEK

Figure 46 below evaluates students' perceptions of the usefulness of information provided by various support services at WSU during orientation, highlighting both positive and negative experiences.

Agreement (both agree and strongly agree) is the predominant response across all services, indicating that most students find the information WSU provides to be useful. This reflects the institution's success in communicating the purpose and availability of these resources. Strong agreement percentages vary, with certain services like academic advising, the library, and student counselling receiving particularly high levels of appreciation. However, the presence of disagreement and strong disagreement—albeit smaller percentages points to specific areas where improvements could enhance student satisfaction. For insights, see Figure 47.

Figure 47: Usefulness of information during orientation

Usefulness of orientation information:



While most students agree on the usefulness of the information provided by the disability unit, a moderate percentage of students either disagree or feel the information was not provided. This suggests that the unit's visibility and outreach could be improved to meet better the needs of students requiring these services.

The student governance and leadership development service is positively rated, with high levels of agreement. However, a notable portion of students either disagreed or did not receive relevant information. This indicates the need to raise awareness about governance and leadership opportunities.

A strong majority of students agree that the information provided by the health service unit was useful. The moderate number of responses that were not provided may indicate that some students are unaware of the health services available or do not find the communication sufficiently accessible.

Academic advising received consistently high ratings, with most students strongly agreeing or agreeing on its usefulness. Academic advising appears to be one of the university's strengths in terms of clarity and accessibility of information.

Students generally find the information about the Writing Centre useful, but a small portion of disagreement suggests room for improving communication around its services or ensuring greater outreach.

The library is one of the top-rated services, with very high levels of agreement. This indicates students recognise the library as a well-communicated and accessible resource. High levels of agreement show that students appreciate the usefulness of information related to computing facilities. However, a small proportion of students felt this information was either not provided or unclear.

The campus tour received mixed reviews compared to other services. While many students agreed on its usefulness, a significant number either disagreed or indicated the information was not provided. This highlights an area where improvements in communication and delivery could have a significant impact.

Residence services were positively rated overall, but the presence of some disagreement and not provided responses suggests that certain students may not have received clear or detailed information about accommodation options.

Student counselling service was among the most appreciated, with a high percentage of strong agreement. This reflects the value perceived by students and suggests effective communication and accessibility of counselling information.

WSU has achieved significant success in providing useful information across most of its services, as reflected by high levels of agreement. However, addressing gaps in communication and accessibility for a few services, particularly the Disability Support Service Unit, Campus Tour, and Governance Programs, could further enhance the student experience. By building on its strengths and focusing on consistent delivery, WSU can ensure that all students have equal access to and benefit from the full range of its offerings.

3.10. ACCESS TO SERVICES AND THE ENVIRONMENT AT WSU

In addition to the support services outlined earlier, students were encouraged to express their thoughts on various issues and to offer additional insights regarding the services mentioned. Their feedback was invaluable, providing a broader perspective on the effectiveness of these support options. Below is a detailed summary of the responses gathered from the students.

Many students expressed satisfaction with orientation programs, including clear guidelines, academic advising, and the availability of various services. Specific aspects like campus tours, faculty tours, and registration processes were appreciated by students, with mentions of good organization and helpfulness.

Students highlighted the importance of counselling, writing centres, and academic advising, which were viewed as beneficial to their overall experience.

Students' voices:

 "Everything about the orientation was fine, but at that time, I didn't have a place to stay."

 "During the days of orientation, I was so satisfied and happy with being part of WSU students."

 "Orientation helped me a lot as a first year. I didn't know that the varsity also provides academic giving advice and hope to those who might encounter problems and end up failing because some situations do attack us not only physically but also mentally, leading to failing and depression, but at least there's also free counselling offered."

 "The orientation wasn't a proper orientation. It was just an event held under a tent with no proper tour of the Campus, activities, or anything that would be useful for first-year students. The event primarily focused on introducing us to key individuals within the specified faculty. The only thing they gave us was key holders while other students received t-shirts, so there was no fairness or equality at all in terms of distribution of the merchandise."

Concerns were raised about poor conditions, unfair allocation processes, and a lack of suitable accommodations for first-year students. Students cited issues with clinic accessibility, shortages of medicine, and inadequate operational hours, leading to dissatisfaction. Some students mentioned the lack of proper orientation, particularly during the COVID-19 period, leaving them uninformed about campus resources and policies (e.g., G7 process). Limited shuttle services and transport challenges, especially for off-campus students, were frequently noted.

Students' voices:

 *"I would like the SRC and the school to properly check the residents before they allocate us because the conditions of some of those residents are poor poor poor. Please."*

 *"On my first day, I paid a deposit so that I could be allocated to a residence, but I did not sleep at the school residence on the day because they did not allocate me to their residence. I had to look for a place to sleep because I did not have a residence, yet I paid a deposit."*

 *"Almost everything was provided, but when we get to the clinic, some of us can't find our treatment, and to be honest, we are suffering. We don't even have time to go to the clinics."*

 *"The Residence allocation is not fair. They give single rooms to people they know who do not qualify. They were supposed to accommodate people from far first, but they it's first come, first serve."*

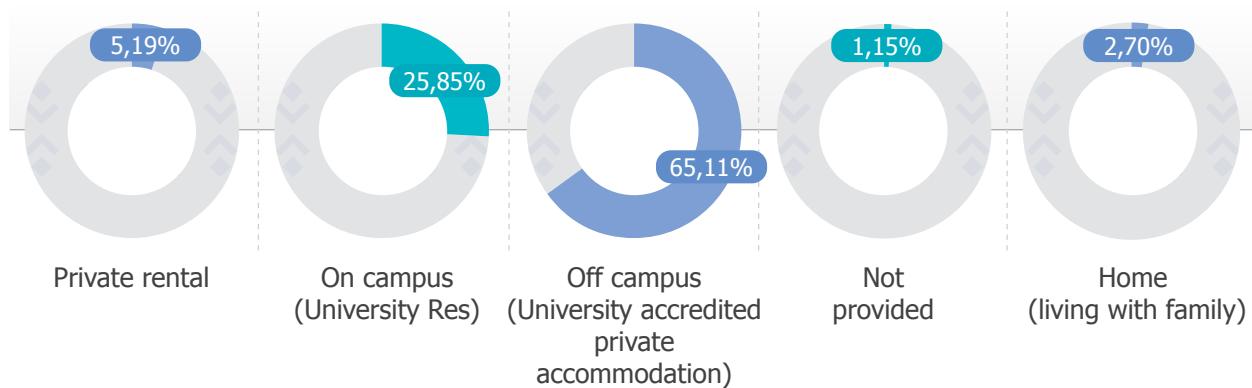
Some students praised the inclusivity of the institution and its efforts to provide support for diverse needs. Others suggested introducing more engaging events and resources like sports facilities, shuttles, and mentorship programs to improve campus life.

Overall, while WSU has strengths in areas like academic advising, writing centre, library, and orientation, addressing gaps in communication, healthcare, and accommodation would significantly enhance the student experience.

Most respondents, making up 65.11% of the survey population, reside in off-campus housing accredited by the university, see Figure 48.

Figure 48: Type of residence

Residence:



This option provides a unique blend of independence and social interaction, allowing students to forge connections with peers. These off-campus residences are often located quite a distance from the university, making it necessary for the university to provide transport between campus and residences.

Approximately 25.85% of students live in accommodations provided by the university, situated directly on campus. This arrangement offers the convenience of being just a short walk away from academic buildings and immerses students in a rich community atmosphere. Living on campus allows for greater participation in student life, including late-night study sessions, events, and social gatherings.

A smaller segment of the student population, around 5.19%, live in private rental accommodations. This choice may reflect a desire for more personal space or specific location preferences tailored to their lifestyles. These students often seek neighbourhoods that align with their interests, whether that means a quieter setting or a bustling area close to shops and restaurants.

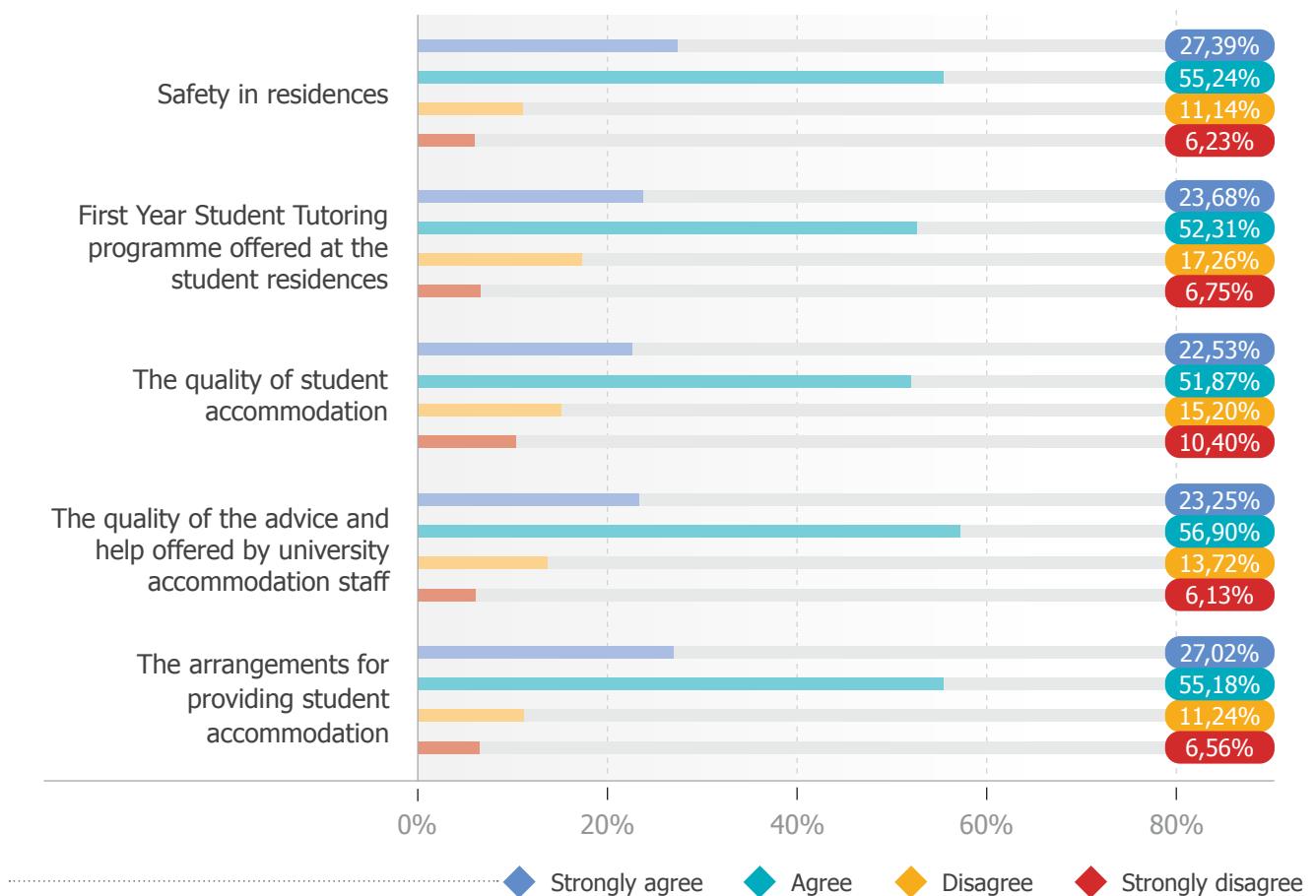
Additionally, about 2.70% of students live at home with their families. This choice can provide vital financial benefits, reduce living expenses, and offer emotional support during their academic journeys, helping them to navigate the challenges of university life more comfortably.

Finally, a small fraction of the student body, representing 1.15%, chose not to disclose their living arrangements. Their reasons for abstaining from sharing this information add an intriguing layer to the overall understanding of the diverse living situations present within the university community.

The student experience at WSU encompasses several critical aspects of campus life, including the safety of residence halls, academic support programs, the quality of student accommodation, and the assistance provided by university staff. Figure 48 depicts student feedback on five key areas, highlighting levels of satisfaction, areas of concern, and opportunities for improvement. By thoroughly understanding student perspectives, WSU can effectively address their needs and implement strategies to enhance the overall university experience.

Figure 49: Campus environment rating

Campus environment:



A significant 55.24% of students express satisfaction with the safety measures at their residence, indicating that many feel secure in their living environments and that this contributes positively to their university experience. Additionally, 27.39% strongly agree, demonstrating a strong sense of security among this group. Conversely, 11.14% express dissatisfaction with safety, suggesting some concerns may need to be addressed to enhance student well-being. A minority, 6.23%, strongly disagree with the notion of safety, highlighting that some students indeed have serious concerns.

In terms of academic support, 52.31% of students report satisfaction with the first-year student tutoring program, indicating that many find this resource beneficial for their studies. Among these, 23.68% strongly agree, underscoring that a portion of students feel highly supported through these tutoring efforts. Nonetheless, 17.26% of students express dissatisfaction with the program, suggesting areas for improvement in the tutoring services offered. A smaller percentage, 6.75%, strongly disagree, indicating a significant disconnect for some first-year students regarding the program's effectiveness.

Regarding accommodation quality, 51.87% of students express satisfaction, indicating that many feel their living conditions meet their expectations. Additionally, 22.53% strongly agree, showing that some students are particularly pleased with their accommodations.

Despite this overall satisfaction, 15.20% indicate dissatisfaction, signalling potential issues that could be addressed to enhance living conditions. A smaller proportion, 10.40%, strongly disagree, reflecting a significant level of discontent with their housing situation.

About 56.90% of students report satisfaction with the support provided by university accommodation staff, suggesting that they find this assistance helpful and accessible. Among those, 23.25% strongly agree, highlighting a positive perception of the staff's responsiveness and helpfulness. Yet, 13.72% express dissatisfaction, pointing to a significant number of students who may have encountered challenges in communication or support. Additionally, 6.13% strongly disagree, indicating critical views regarding the adequacy of the assistance provided by staff.

Regarding the arrangements for student accommodation, 55.18% of respondents express satisfaction, suggesting that many students feel their housing is well-organized. Among these, 27.02% strongly agree, reflecting high confidence in accommodation management. Nonetheless, 11.24% indicate dissatisfaction, which highlights areas that could benefit from improvement in how accommodations are managed. Also, 6.56% strongly disagree with the arrangements, highlighting significant concerns.

A clear majority of students across all categories, when combining those who agree and strongly agree, report a sense of satisfaction with their university experience. However, the level of dissatisfaction, encompassing those who disagree and strongly disagree, ranges between 26% and 30% across various aspects, indicating that while many students are content, there are also notable areas that require attention.

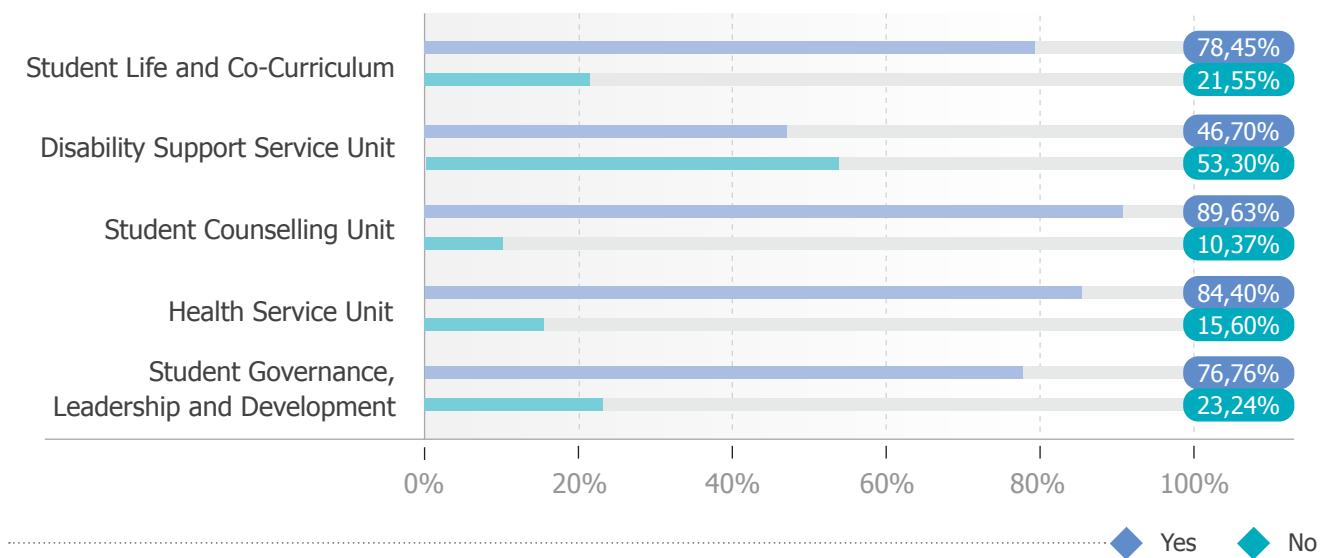
Student support services are integral to enhancing the academic, social, and personal experiences of university students. At WSU, these services include a range of programs, such as governance and leadership development, health and counselling services, disability support, and co-curricular initiatives.



Figure 49 visualises student awareness of these key services, highlighting both successes in outreach and areas requiring further improvement. By examining the level of familiarity with these services, the university can better understand how to enhance communication and ensure equitable access for all students. See Figure 50.

Figure 50: Student support services awareness

Psychosocial support visibility:



About a quarter of the respondents (23.24%) are unaware of student governance and leadership development service, indicating moderate gaps in communication and outreach. A strong majority (76.76%) are aware of this service, which suggests effective efforts in promoting student governance and leadership initiatives. However, further steps could ensure the remaining 23.24% are reached.

A relatively small percentage of respondents (15.60%) are unaware of the Health Service Unit, indicating good awareness levels. With over 84% awareness, the Health Service Unit is one of the most recognized support services. Continued efforts to sustain and further improve outreach could make this figure even higher.

The lowest percentage (10.37%) of unawareness among the services, indicating excellent promotion of the Student Counselling Unit. Nearly 90% awareness is a positive indicator that this service is well-known and accessible to students, likely due to its critical role in supporting mental health and well-being.

More than half of the respondents (53.30%) are unaware of disability support service, the highest level of unawareness among all services. This highlights a significant gap in communication and accessibility for students who might benefit from it. Awareness is relatively low (46.70%), suggesting that targeted campaigns are needed to increase visibility and promote the availability of this service.

Approximately one-fifth (21.55%) of the respondents are unaware of Student Life and Co-Curriculum service, suggesting moderate gaps in outreach efforts. A strong majority (78.45%) are aware of Student Life and Co-Curriculum initiatives, indicating fairly good promotion. Continued engagement strategies could help further boost awareness.

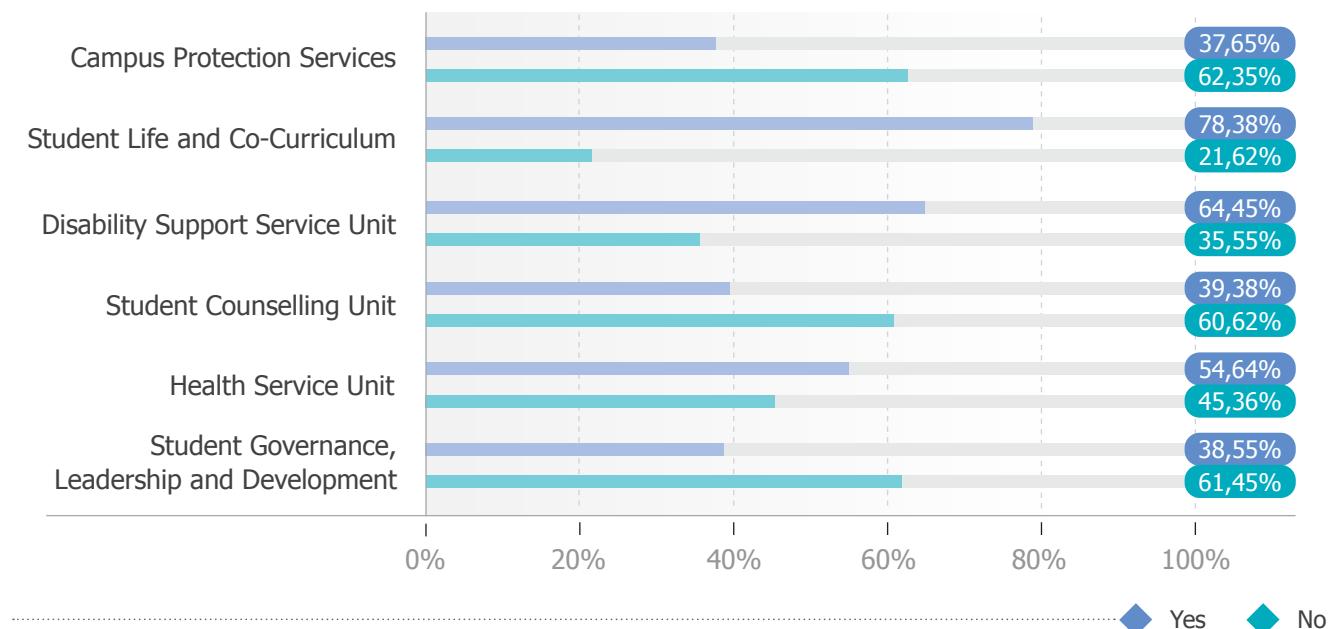
The analysis reveals significant variation in awareness levels across WSU's student support services. While services such as the Health Service Unit and Student Counselling Unit demonstrate high levels of awareness, the Disability Support Service Unit faces notable gaps in visibility and outreach. Efforts to enhance communication and engagement, particularly for less-recognized services, will be critical in ensuring that all students can access the support they need. Strengthening awareness campaigns, integrating these services into student orientation, and fostering ongoing dialogue with students can help bridge these gaps, ultimately contributing to a more inclusive and supportive university environment.

The analysis of student engagement with various services at WSU provides valuable insights into how students interact with resources aimed at enhancing their academic and personal experiences. This section examines six key service areas as per Figure 50: Student Governance, Leadership, and Development; Health Service Unit; Student Counselling Unit; Disability Support Service Unit; Student Life and Co-Curriculum; and Campus Protection Services.

The findings in Figure 50, highlight participation levels, areas of strong engagement, and potential barriers that hinder utilisation, offering a comprehensive view of the student experience and opportunities for improvement.

Figure 51: Engagement with support services

Support service participation:



A significant majority of students (61.45%) have not participated in or interacted with Student Governance, Leadership, and Development, suggesting limited engagement despite its relatively high awareness (76.76%). This might point to barriers such as perceived relevance, lack of interest, or accessibility issues. While over a third of students (38.55%) have engaged with this service, there is a clear opportunity to enhance participation by addressing these barriers and promoting the benefits of involvement.

Less than half of students (45.36%) have not engaged with the Health Service Unit, indicating relatively good participation compared to some other services. The majority of students (54.64%) have utilized or interacted with this service, reflecting its essential role in supporting student well-being. Sustaining this level of participation is key, with targeted efforts to reach the remaining 45.36%.

A high percentage of students (60.62%) have not interacted with the Student Counselling Unit, despite its high awareness (89.63%). This suggests potential barriers such as stigma around mental health, lack of perceived need, or scheduling conflicts. While nearly 40% participation is notable, there is room to improve engagement through campaigns that normalize seeking support and emphasize the unit's accessibility and benefits.

A relatively low percentage of students (35.55%) have not interacted with the Disability Support Service Unit, which is notable given its low awareness (46.70%). This indicates that those who are aware of the service are more likely to utilize it. The highest participation (64.45%) rate among all services suggests that targeted users are finding and benefiting from this support. Increasing awareness could lead to even broader engagement.

The lowest percentage of non-participants (21.62%) indicates strong engagement with the Student Life and Co-Curriculum service. The majority of students (78.38%) have participated in or interacted with Student Life and Co-Curriculum activities, demonstrating its appeal and effective outreach. This success can be leveraged to inform strategies for other services.

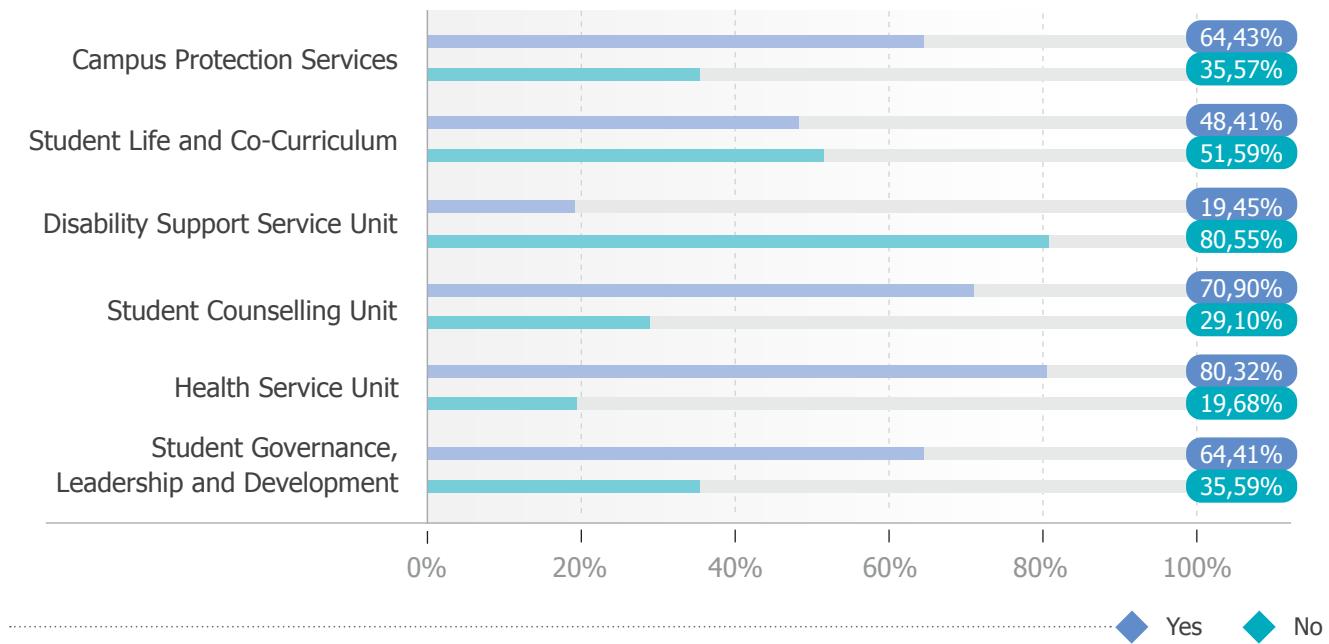
The highest percentage of non-participants (62.35%) among all services reflects limited interaction with Campus Protection Services. This might suggest that students only use this service when facing specific safety concerns. While over a third of students (37.65%) have interacted with this service, improving communication about its importance and availability could help increase engagement.

The findings reveal varied levels of engagement with university services, showcasing both successes and areas for development. Student Life and Co-Curriculum services stand out with the highest participation rate, reflecting their broad appeal and effective outreach strategies. The Disability Support Service Unit also demonstrates strong engagement among those aware of it, emphasizing the importance of targeted awareness campaigns. However, services such as Student Governance, Leadership, and Development; Student Counselling; and Campus Protection Services report limited participation, despite relatively high awareness in some cases. Addressing barriers such as accessibility, perceived relevance, and awareness can further enhance student engagement. By leveraging successful strategies from well-utilized services, WSU can create a more inclusive and supportive environment, ensuring that all students benefit fully from the resources available to them.

This section evaluates student feedback on the usefulness of six key support services offered by WSU, focusing on their ability to meet students' needs. These services as shown in Figure 51 (Student Governance, Leadership, and Development; Health Service Unit; Student Counselling Unit; Disability Support Service Unit; Student Life and Co-Curriculum; and Campus Protection Services) play a pivotal role in shaping the student experience. The analysis in Figure 52 highlights areas of satisfaction, identifies gaps in service delivery and provides insights into areas requiring improvement to better support students' academic, personal, and extracurricular development.

Figure 52: Usefulness and effectiveness of support services

Usefulness of support service:



Student support services elicit divergent experiences among respondents, with some units being useful while others face significant challenges. The Disability Support Service Unit emerges as a critical area of concern, with over 80% of respondents feeling their needs were inadequately addressed—the highest dissatisfaction rate across all services. This stark finding underscores systemic gaps in accessibility, resource allocation, or awareness, necessitating urgent reforms to ensure equitable support for students requiring accommodations. Similarly, the Student Counselling Unit reveals a notable divide: while 70.90% of students find it useful, nearly 30% report unmet needs, pointing to potential shortcomings in service personalization, resource availability, or response times. Addressing these gaps could enhance its role in supporting mental health and academic success.

Mixed perceptions surround services tied to campus engagement and safety. Student Governance, Leadership, and Development sees 35.59% dissatisfaction, suggesting programs may lack relevance or fail to resonate with a sizable minority. Despite 64.41% approval, refining activity design and communication could strengthen its impact.

Likewise, Campus Protection Services faces scepticism from 35.57% of respondents, indicating unmet safety expectations or inconsistent responsiveness, even as 64.43% affirm its effectiveness. Proactive measures to address security concerns could bridge this trust gap.

The Health Service Unit stands out as a bright spot, with 80.32% of students praising its effectiveness in addressing health needs—a testament to its vital role in student well-being. In contrast, Student Life and Co-Curriculum programs disappoint over half of participants (51.59%), signalling misalignment between offerings and student expectations. Revamping program quality, relevance, or delivery methods could transform this service from a divisive offering into a cornerstone of campus life. Collectively, these insights highlight the need for targeted, student-centred improvements to foster inclusivity, reliability, and trust across all university support systems.

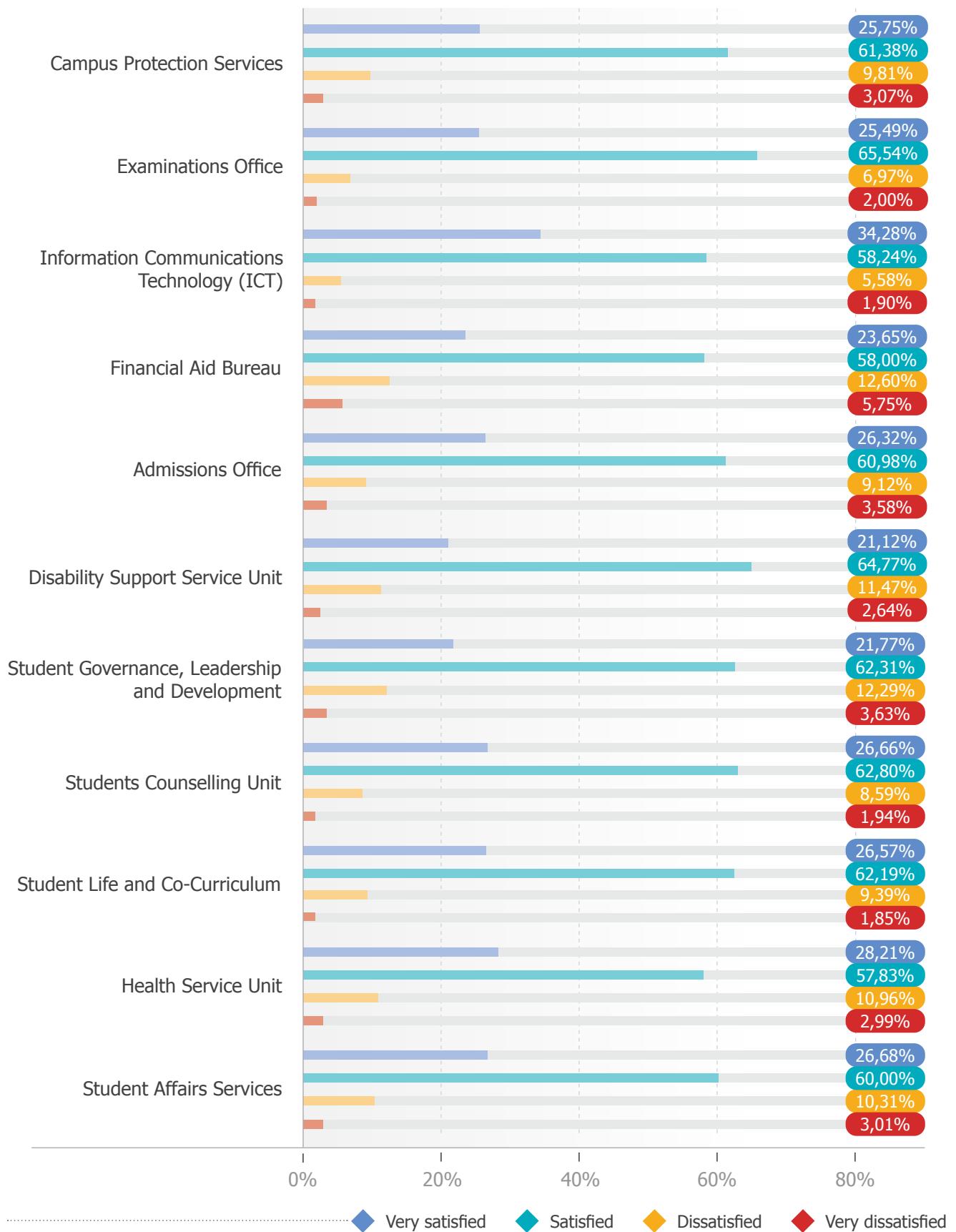
The evaluation reveals usefulness across the six services, with some units performing well and others requiring significant improvement. Services like the Health Service Unit and Student Counselling Unit demonstrate high levels of usefulness, reflecting their importance in supporting students' health and well-being. However, the Disability Support Service Unit and Student Life and Co-Curriculum show high dissatisfaction rates, indicating an urgent need for targeted interventions to improve their relevance, accessibility, and effectiveness. Addressing the concerns of dissatisfied students and enhancing the quality of underperforming services will ensure that all students feel supported, secure, and equipped to succeed during their time at WSU.

Students were then asked to rate their satisfaction with various support services at WSU. The results in Figure 53 depict the results while the analysis highlights areas of strength and potential improvement. Key student services, including Student Affairs, Health Services, Student Life, Counselling, and Governance, play a vital role in enhancing the university experience. Other essential services, such as the Admissions Office, Financial Aid Bureau, ICT, Examinations Office, and Campus Protection, directly impact students' academic and personal well-being. Assessing satisfaction levels and dissatisfaction rates, this report identifies services that are performing well and those requiring enhancements to better serve students' needs.



Figure 53: Satisfaction with support services

Service satisfaction:



Student satisfaction with university support services varies across departments, highlighting both strengths and areas requiring improvement. Student Affairs Services receive broad approval, with 60.00% of students expressing satisfaction and 26.68% reporting strong satisfaction. However, the 13.32% dissatisfaction rate suggests that accessibility and responsiveness could be refined to better meet student needs. Similarly, the Health Service Unit plays a crucial role in student well-being, earning 57.83% satisfaction and 28.21% strong satisfaction. Despite these positive ratings, a slightly elevated dissatisfaction rate (13.95%) compared to other services indicates potential gaps in healthcare accessibility or service efficiency. The Student Counselling Unit is particularly well-regarded, with 62.80% of students satisfied and 26.66% strongly satisfied. Its low dissatisfaction rate (10.53%) underscores its effectiveness in addressing mental health concerns and providing necessary emotional support.

Services that promote student engagement and development show mixed results. Student Life and Co-Curriculum has the lowest dissatisfaction rate (11.24%), with 62.19% satisfaction and 26.57% strong satisfaction, suggesting that extracurricular and social activities are well-received. In contrast, the Student Governance, Leadership, and Development unit experienced higher dissatisfaction (15.92%), despite achieving 62.31% satisfaction. This disparity suggests that leadership and governance programs may not be fully inclusive or relevant for all students, necessitating improvements in student representation and participation. The Disability Support Service Unit, while receiving the highest overall satisfaction rating (64.77%), still faces a 14.11% dissatisfaction rate, indicating gaps in accessibility and the need for more tailored support for students with disabilities.

Operational and administrative services display significant disparities in performance. The Admissions Office performs well, with 60.98% of students satisfied and 26.32% strongly satisfied. However, the 12.70% dissatisfaction rate suggests that streamlining admission processes could further enhance efficiency. In contrast, the Financial Aid Bureau struggles with the highest dissatisfaction rate (18.35%) and the lowest strong satisfaction score (23.65%). This suggests that delays, unclear processes, or unmet expectations regarding financial assistance may contribute to student frustration. On the other hand, the Examinations Office emerges as the most highly rated administrative service, with 65.54% satisfaction and 25.49% strong satisfaction, reflecting its reliability in managing academic assessments.

Infrastructure-related services generally receive strong approval. ICT Services stand out with the lowest dissatisfaction rate (7.48%) and the highest strong satisfaction score (34.28%), emphasizing their crucial role in supporting both academic and administrative functions. Campus Protection Services also receive high ratings, with 61.38% satisfaction and 25.75% strong satisfaction. However, the 12.88% dissatisfaction rate suggests occasional concerns about safety measures or the responsiveness of security personnel.

These findings illustrate a university ecosystem where most services meet student expectations. However, targeted enhancements in specific areas—such as financial aid distribution, leadership development, and disability support—are necessary to ensure a more seamless, inclusive, and responsive support structure for all students.

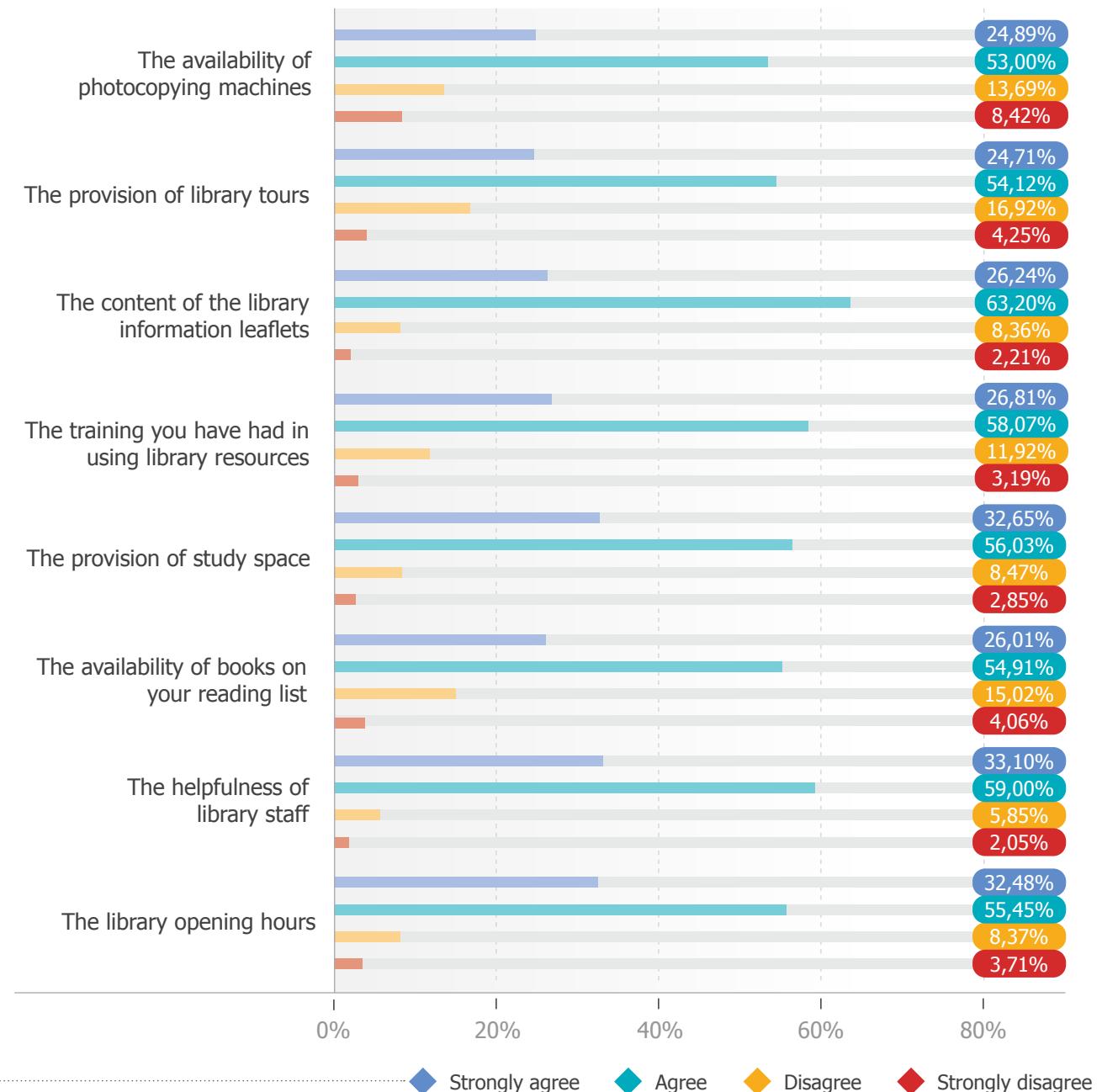


3.11. LIBRARY

The library plays a crucial role in supporting students' academic success by providing essential resources, study spaces, and support services. This report evaluates key aspects of the library's services, including operating hours, staff support, resource availability, and accessibility of facilities. Figure 54 depicts an analysis of student satisfaction levels; the findings highlight areas of strength and identify potential improvements to enhance the overall library experience. Understanding these perspectives will help inform strategic enhancements to better meet students' academic needs.

Figure 54: Library services

library ratings:



The results show that students are generally satisfied with the services provided by the library; nevertheless, certain user groups may benefit even more from focused improvements. 87.93% of students believe that the library's hours are sufficient for their academic requirements. However, the 12.08% dissatisfaction rate indicates that expanding access might be advantageous, especially for people with more demanding academic schedules or unconventional schedules. Positive reviews are given to library employees, as 92.10% of respondents praised their support and approachability. While most people view service quality as good, there are a few isolated areas where it may be improved, as evidenced by the comparatively low dissatisfaction percentage (7.90%).

Resource availability and accessibility represent both strengths and areas of concern. While 80.92% of students report satisfaction with the availability of books on reading lists, a notable proportion (19.08%) experience challenges in accessing required materials. This suggests a need for an expanded physical or digital collection, enhanced procurement processes, or alternative lending strategies to ensure equitable resource distribution. Similarly, while 77.89% of respondents find photocopying facilities adequate, 22.11% express dissatisfaction, citing technical issues, insufficient availability, or accessibility barriers. These findings highlight the importance of proactive maintenance and equitable resource allocation to accommodate the diverse needs of library users.

There are differing opinions about library training programs and study spaces. According to 88.68% of students, study areas are acceptable; nevertheless, 11.32% of them complain about crowding or insufficient seating, suggesting that the space may need to be expanded or optimized. 84.88% of respondents said they valued library training programs, but a 15.11% dissatisfaction rate highlighted the need for more individualized, interactive, or modular training methods and points to gaps in the comprehensiveness or clarity of the education. Likewise, even though 78.83% of students think library tours are beneficial, the 21.17% dissatisfaction percentage suggests that these sessions need to be more engaging and cover more ground.

Informational materials, such as library leaflets, are well received by 89.44% of users, though 10.57% of respondents call for clearer, more detailed, and accessible content. Collectively, these findings depict a library system that effectively supports the majority of its users while also highlighting key logistical, technological, and instructional shortcomings. Addressing these concerns through strategic enhancements would ensure a more inclusive and responsive academic support environment.

The library services are well received, with high satisfaction levels in key areas such as staff support, study space provision, and accessibility of library materials. However, certain aspects, including book availability, photocopying facilities, and library tours, require improvement to better align with student expectations. Addressing these concerns through targeted enhancements will contribute to a more efficient and supportive academic environment, ensuring that the library continues to serve as a vital resource for student success.

3.12. FACILITIES AND SECURITY

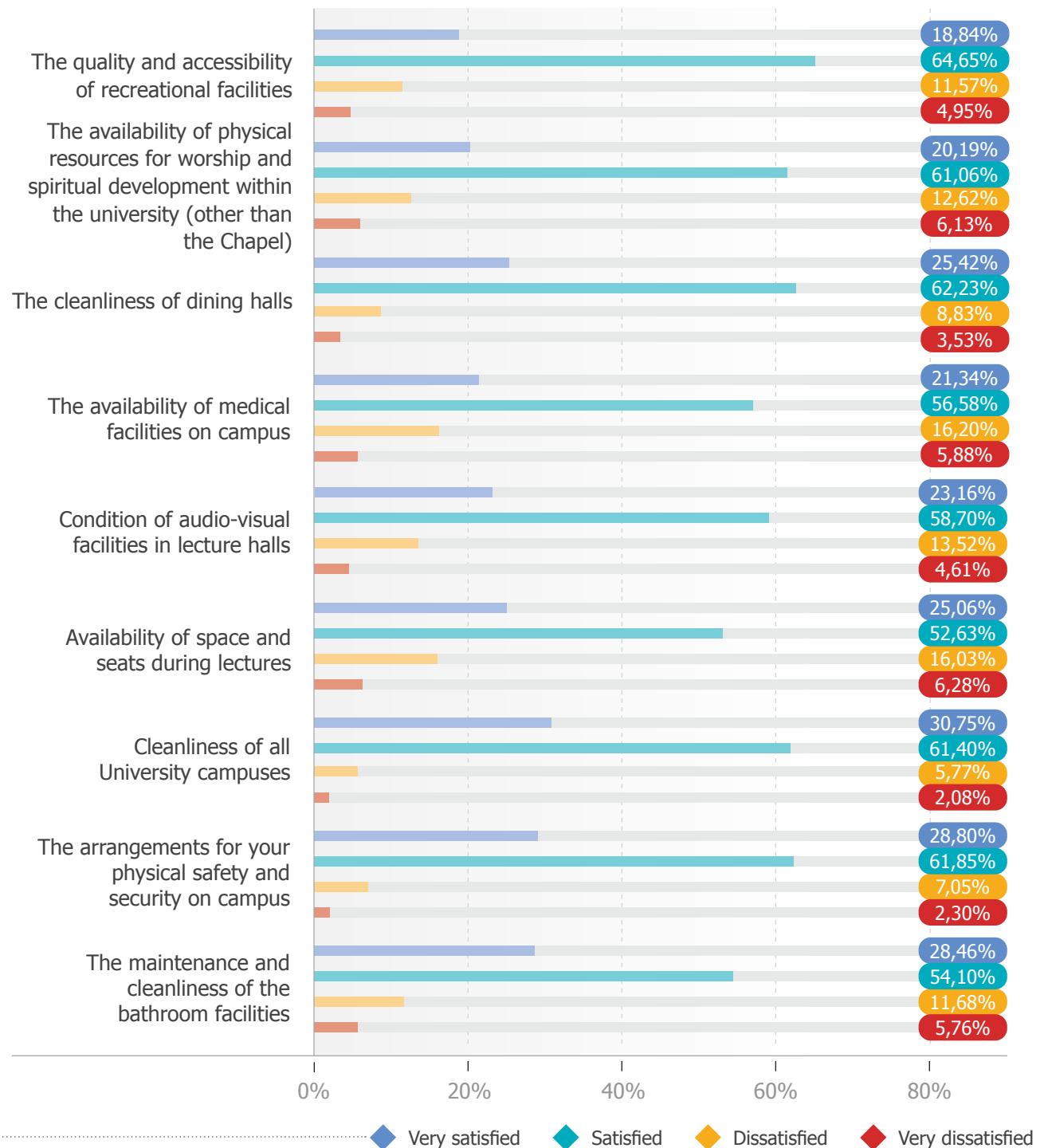
The quality of campus facilities and services plays a crucial role in shaping the overall student experience, influencing not only academic success but also personal well-being and satisfaction. At WSU, student feedback on various aspects of campus life (ranging from cleanliness and maintenance to safety, resources, and recreational facilities) provides valuable insights into areas of strength and opportunities for improvement. This analysis in Figure 55, shows student perceptions of campus facilities and services, highlighting successes and identifying areas where targeted enhancements can further elevate the student experience.

There is a need for improvement in several areas, but overall, students express satisfaction with the facilities and services offered by WSU. The majority (82.56%) are satisfied with the cleanliness and upkeep of restrooms, indicating good hygiene standards. However, the 17.44% dissatisfaction rate indicates that more maintenance is required to address any lingering issues. Similarly, 92.15% of students support the university's sanitary standards, while only 7.85% call for improvements. This indicates that campus cleanliness is highly praised. Although the dining hall's cleanliness is overwhelmingly praised (87.65%), the 12.36% dissatisfaction rate indicates that small changes could improve the whole experience.



Figure 55: Facilities and security ratings

Facilities and security:



A mixed image emerges from academic facilities. While most students (77.69%) believe that the space and seating arrangements in lecture halls are sufficient, a significant 22.31% dissatisfaction indicates that specific programs or locations are overcrowded, necessitating the judicious use of resources.

Although nearly one-fifth (18.13%) of respondents mention problems with antiquated or broken technology, 81.86% of respondents support audio-visual equipment in lecture halls, indicating that targeted updates could improve learning settings. The results of health, safety, and wellness resources are generally positive. Although there is potential for localised improvements, 90.65% of students believe campus security systems provide physical safety. While 77.92% of respondents approve of medical facilities, 22.08% express concerns about wait times, accessibility, or resource constraints, indicating areas for improvement in healthcare support systems.

Resources for recreation and spirituality are also widely accepted. While 16.52% of students support more options, better upkeep, or greater diversity, 83.49% of students are satisfied with the quality and accessibility of recreational facilities. In a similar vein, 81.25% of respondents said that there are sufficient resources for worship and spiritual growth, while 18.75% are not satisfied, highlighting the need for more accessible or varied locations to support a range of spiritual practices. When taken as a whole, these results show that while the campus environment generally satisfies student expectations, it also pays attention to changing needs by making small adjustments.

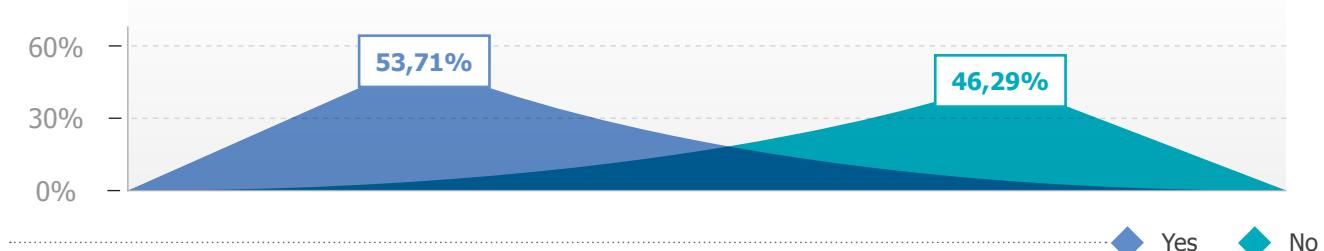
The feedback from WSU students reveals a generally positive perception of campus facilities and services, with high satisfaction rates in areas such as cleanliness, security, and dining hall maintenance. However, challenges such as overcrowding in lecture halls, inconsistent audio-visual equipment functionality, and limited medical resources highlight opportunities for improvement. Addressing these concerns through targeted investments and strategic planning can significantly enhance the quality of campus life for all students. By prioritising these improvements, WSU can continue to foster a supportive and enriching environment that meets the diverse needs of its student body, ultimately contributing to higher satisfaction and retention rates.

3.13. QUALIFICATION OF FIRST CHOICE PREFERENCE

The alignment between students' academic aspirations and their chosen programmes plays a crucial role in shaping their educational experiences and overall satisfaction. The findings in Figure 56 highlight both the strengths and challenges within the university's programme selection and placement processes, emphasising the need for targeted support systems to enhance student success and well-being.

Figure 56: Qualification as the preference of first choice

Study of first choice:



According to the survey results on programme preferences, a significant portion of students, precisely 53.71%, revealed that the program they registered for was their first choice. This finding highlights a positive correlation between students' interests and academic pathways, indicating that these individuals are genuinely passionate about their fields of study. As a result, they are likely to exhibit high levels of motivation, dedication, and engagement in their coursework, leading to better academic performance and overall satisfaction with their educational experience.

Conversely, a notable 46.29% of students reported that they are not enrolled in their preferred programmes. This situation suggests that these students may be experiencing feelings of uncertainty or frustration regarding their academic journeys. The disconnect between their aspirations and current studies could hinder their motivation and performance. To address these challenges effectively, WSU needs to implement comprehensive support systems tailored to meet the needs of these students. This support should encompass academic assistance such as tutoring, mentoring, and resources for skill development and psychological support, including counselling services and workshops focused on building resilience and coping strategies. By fostering an environment that addresses their academic and emotional needs, institutions can increase the likelihood of success for all students, regardless of whether they are in their first-choice programs.

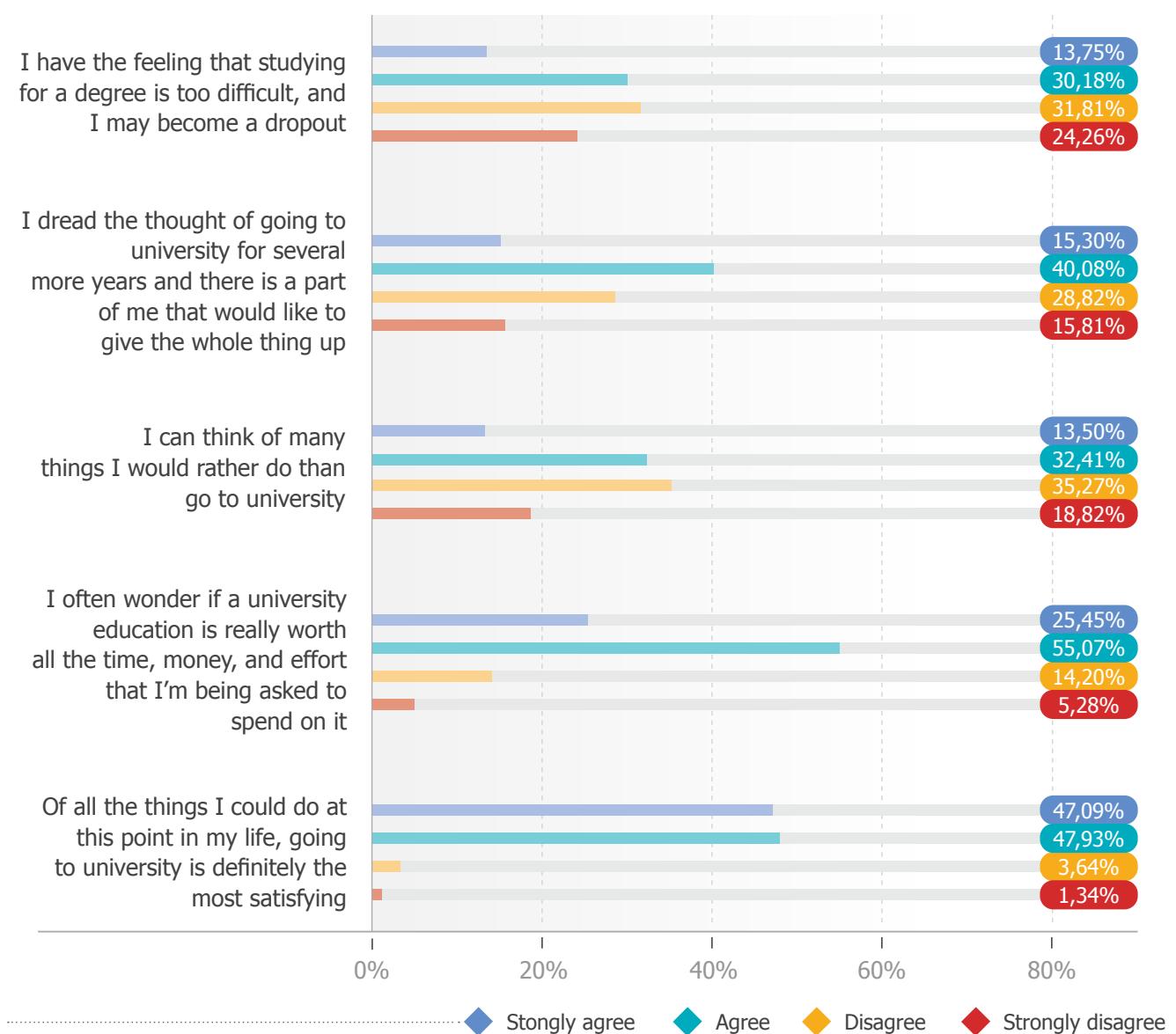
Ensuring students are engaged and motivated in their chosen academic fields is essential for long-term success. While WSU has successfully placed most students in their preferred programmes, nearly half of the student body faces potential challenges due to misalignment with their academic aspirations. The university can bridge this gap by implementing comprehensive academic and psychological support mechanisms, fostering an inclusive and supportive learning environment. Addressing these concerns proactively will enhance student satisfaction and contribute to improved retention rates, academic performance, and overall institutional success.

3.14. PERSONAL MOTIVATION

Students' perceptions of their university experience are crucial in evaluating the effectiveness of higher education institutions in fostering both academic success and personal well-being. This section explores students' sentiments regarding their university journey, focusing on their overall satisfaction, concerns about the value of higher education, and fears related to academic challenges and burnout. The findings reveal a complex dynamic in which a majority of students express contentment with their university experience, yet a significant portion also harbour doubts about its worth and sustainability. These insights shed light on the factors that contribute to student motivation and the challenges that may impede their progress. See Figure 57.

Figure 57: Personal motivation

Motivation:



Students pursuing higher education experience a complicated mixture of resilience, uncertainty, and fulfilment. The vast majority of respondents (95.02%) believe that going to university is incredibly fulfilling, with 47.93% agreeing and 47.09% strongly agreeing that it is the most rewarding option accessible to them at this point in their lives. This resounding support indicates how highly universities are regarded as places for social enrichment, professional growth, and personal development. A tiny but significant minority (4.98%), however, voice disapproval, suggesting that other routes might be more in line with their goals or situation.

Even with this overall contentment, there is still uncertainty over the cost-benefit ratio of higher education. With 25.45% expressing severe doubts, more than half of respondents (55.07%) debate whether the time, money, and emotional commitments needed to earn a degree are worthwhile. The 19.48% who dismiss such worries starkly contrast with this pessimism, highlighting a conflict between worries about the short-term costs of attending university and hope for its long-term benefits. In the same way, over 46% of students admit that they can imagine more desirable options outside of university, and 13.50% strongly believe that other activities are more desirable. Although a slight majority (54.09%) is still dedicated to the conventional academic path, it indicates that even while people are curious about other options, universities continue to be attractive as a planned path to development and opportunity.

Emotional difficulties also influence the student experience. 15.30% of respondents strongly desire to stop their academic path entirely, while a startling 40.08% of respondents fear the possibility of continuing their education for several more years. These emotions of burnout and tiredness highlight the stress of ongoing academic demands.

At the same time, more than 43% of students dread dropping out due to worries about their academic performance, mental health, or outside pressures. Resilience triumphs despite these fears: Despite extreme stress, 56.07% of respondents say they are confident in their abilities to finish their degrees, and 44.63% say they would never consider giving up. When taken as a whole, these results provide a complex picture of higher education as a highly regarded but emotionally demanding pursuit where fulfilment and dedication frequently overcome scepticism.

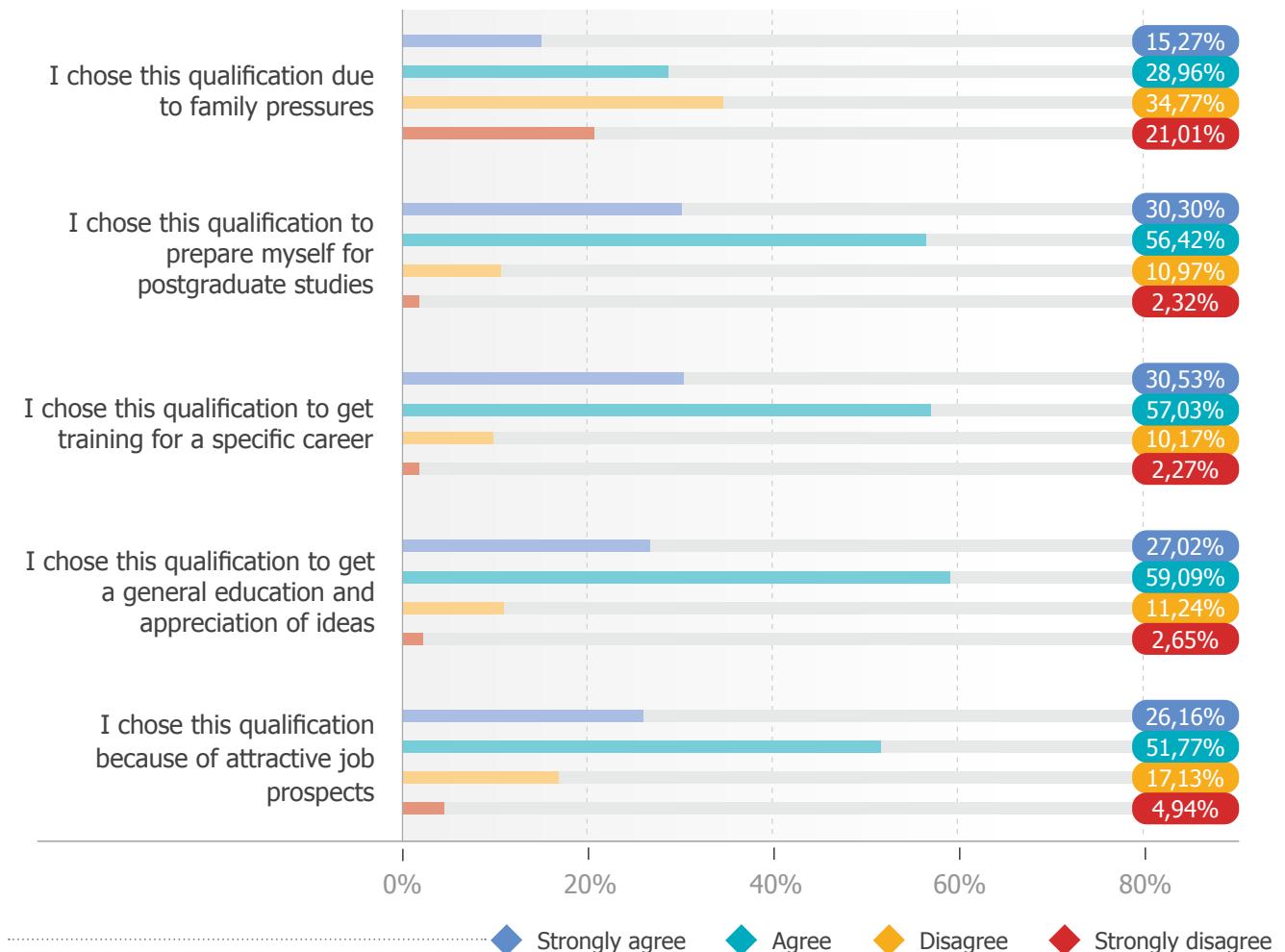
3.15. REASONS FOR CHOOSING THE PREFERRED QUALIFICATION

Reviewing the motivations behind students' educational choices is essential for developing academic programs that align with their aspirations and career goals. This study examines the key factors influencing students' decisions when selecting their qualifications, including job prospects, career-specific training, intellectual growth, and preparation for postgraduate studies.

The findings indicate that practical career considerations and the potential for future professional success primarily drive students. At the same time, family pressures play a relatively minor role in their decision-making. These insights highlight the importance of designing educational pathways that balance career readiness with intellectual development, ensuring students are well-equipped for the workforce and further academic pursuits.

Figure 58: Motivation for choosing the preferred qualification

Qualification selection:



A combination of practical and intellectual factors frequently influences the choice to seek a specific qualification. The importance of solid and financially rewarding employment chances in determining academic trajectories is emphasised by the fact that most respondents (77.93%) cited excellent job prospects as the primary consideration in their decisions. Students increasingly see education as a calculated investment in their professional destiny, consistent with the emphasis on career readiness.

Beyond pragmatic concerns, the inherent worth of education became a recurring subject. The desire to get a well-rounded education and develop an understanding of ideas drove the qualifying choices of an overwhelming 86.11% of students. This resounding affirmation indicates a broad understanding of the importance of education in promoting critical thinking abilities, intellectual curiosity, and personal development. Merely 13.89% of students disregarded the significance of this kind of holistic education, indicating that most students value the life-changing possibilities of interacting with people from different backgrounds and fields.

Another significant reason was career-specific training, as 87.56% of respondents saw their degrees as direct routes to their desired careers. Students feel pressured to gain a competitive advantage in ever-changing labour markets, which is reflected in this emphasis on employable, job-related skills. Similarly, 86.72% of participants felt that their present coursework was a basis for postgraduate prospects, indicating they were well-prepared for advanced academic endeavours. This emphasises how programs that give students the skills and credentials required for specialised vocations or better academic accomplishment are becoming increasingly popular.

Outside factors, such as familial demands, were comparatively insignificant compared to these intellectual and professional motivators. While most students (55.78%) expressly denied feeling under pressure from such dynamics, only 15.27% of students mentioned familial expectations as a key impact in their decision-making. This discrepancy demonstrates how individual aspirations significantly influence educational decisions in modern situations, reinforcing the importance of human ambition and self-directed goals over external obligations.

The insights from this data indicate that students prioritise a combination of promising job prospects, clearly defined career objectives, and opportunities for personal intellectual growth when selecting their educational paths. Students are encouraged to thoroughly research the alignment of their chosen qualifications with their prospective career paths and post-graduation success rates. In addition, they should strive to strike a balance between practical outcomes and their own interests and passions.

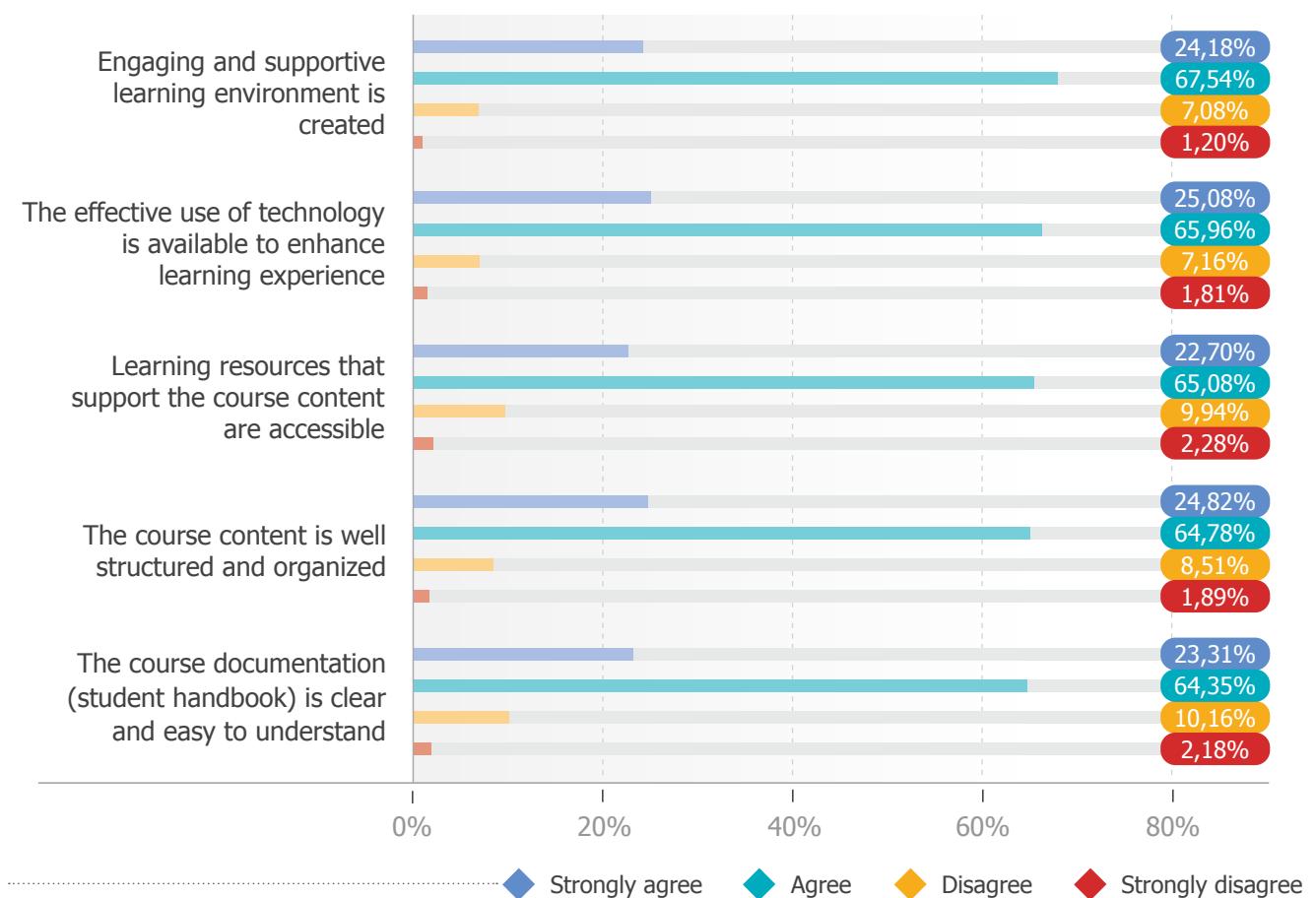
The high levels of agreement highlight the pressing need for academic qualifications that integrate career readiness with expansive intellectual development. Educators should consider incorporating internships, certifications, and immersive real-world projects into their academic programs to satisfy the growing demand for hands-on, career-oriented training. Designing educational programs that address the needs of both the job market and students who aspire to pursue postgraduate studies is crucial. Courses should be developed to cultivate critical thinking and transferable skills while maintaining relevance to specific industries and career paths.

3.16. COURSE ORGANISATION

A high-quality educational experience is essential for student engagement, academic success, and overall satisfaction. At WSU, students have expressed strong approval of several key aspects of their courses, including an engaging learning environment, the effective use of technology, and well-structured course content. However, while these strengths contribute positively to the learning experience, challenges remain in areas such as course documentation clarity and the accessibility of learning resources. See Figure 59.

Figure 59: Course organisation

Course organization:



The educational experience at WSU demonstrates high student satisfaction, with 86% to 92% of respondents agreeing on various course aspects. Key strengths include engaging learning environments, effective technology integration, and well-organized content. However, improvements are needed in course documentation clarity and resource accessibility. By addressing these issues and reinforcing strengths, WSU can enhance the academic experience and meet the evolving expectations of its diverse student body.

A striking majority of students express high satisfaction regarding various aspects of their courses. An impressive 86–92% of responses indicate agreement or strong agreement across multiple statements. The low disagreement rates (7–10%) and strong disagreement (1–2%) suggest that very few students experience significant dissatisfaction, reflecting a generally positive sentiment toward their educational experience.

The engaging and supportive learning environment created is the most appreciated aspect, garnering a remarkable 91.72% of combined agreement. Furthermore, it boasts the lowest level of dissatisfaction, with only 8.28% of students expressing disagreement.

This highlights the importance of education's human and social dimensions, such as dynamic instructor engagement, meaningful peer interactions, and a nurturing emotional support system, all of which students deeply value.

The practical and effective use of technology to enhance the learning experience is another area of notable satisfaction, with an impressive 91.04% of students agreeing that it enhances their educational experience. This sentiment may stem from the growing reliance on advanced tools like learning management systems, online resources, and collaborative software that facilitate learning. The low disagreement rate of 8.97% further emphasises WSU's strong commitment to integrating these technological resources effectively.

The clear and easy-to-understand course documentation (student handbook) comes with a strong agreement rate of only 23.31% regarding clarity and understanding, although there is significant potential for refinement. Improving course materials' organisation and presentation could help students navigate their requirements.

Accessible Learning resources that support the course content aspect show that 22.70% of students express strong agreement, but there is room for improvement in ensuring that resources are readily available and accessed in a timely manner. Addressing any gaps in resource availability could further bolster the educational experience.

Students prefer structured, well-organised content and easily accessible resources, in addition to the effective use of technology as an educational enhancer. WSU may need to consider simplifying handbooks and providing interactive, user-friendly guides that enable students to easily navigate course requirements. WSU should broaden the range of available resources- engaging videos, interactive quizzes, and practice exercises while ensuring they are accessible around the clock. Maintaining and strengthening the supportive relationships between lecturers and students is necessary, as students highly value this component. The high levels of satisfaction regarding course structure, technology integration, and the learning environment suggest that investments made by institutions in these areas are yielding positive results. WSU must continue funding professional development initiatives to ensure that instructors are well-equipped to utilise technology effectively and cultivate engaging learning environments.

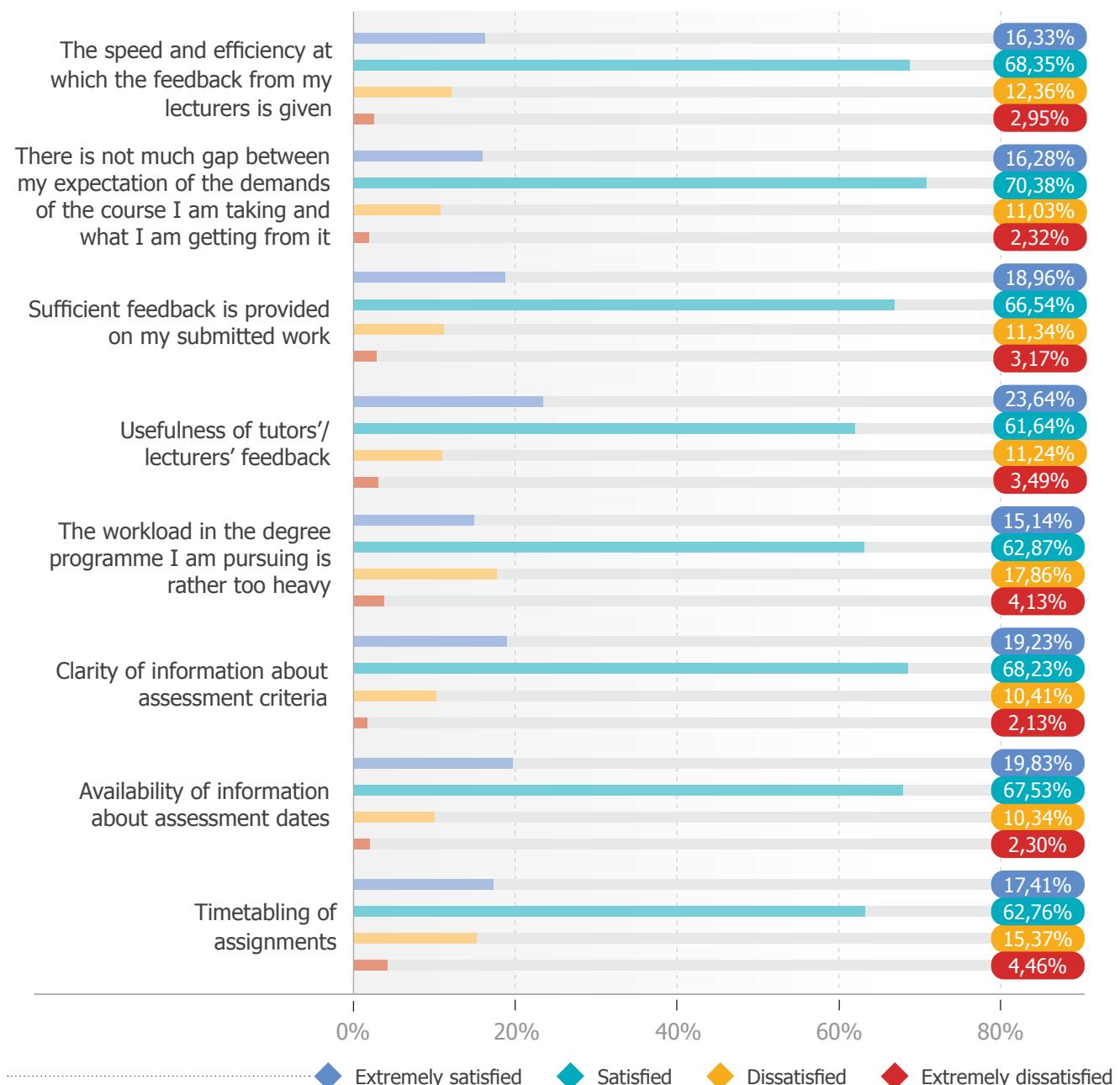
WSU should explore and adopt emerging educational tools (AI-based tutors and virtual laboratories) to enhance the learning experience and offer innovative solutions. Actively utilise surveys and feedback mechanisms to pinpoint and rectify any smaller areas of dissatisfaction related to resources or course documentation. Build on the success of the supportive learning environment by providing training for instructors in inclusive teaching practices and emotional intelligence to serve diverse student populations better.

3.17. WORKLOAD AND ASSESSMENT

In higher education, student satisfaction is one of the most important measures of institutional efficiency. According to an analysis of student feedback, most students have a positive opinion of the coursework and support, and many are satisfied with the course's communication, evaluation standards, and expectations. However, issues with workload management, assignment scheduling, and feedback timeliness still exist. This section outlines the positives and negatives that students encounter, emphasising the necessity for WSU to make changes to improve the quality of education.

Figure 60: Workload and assessment

Workload and assessment:



Most students report feeling satisfied with their educational experiences, reflecting an overall satisfaction rate that spans from 77% to 87%. This illustrates a generally positive sentiment regarding their coursework and institutional support. Impressively, 87.36% of students feel adequately informed about when assessments will take place. This suggests that the institution effectively communicates important deadlines, allowing students to manage their time and expectations appropriately.

As high as 87.46% of students express satisfaction with how assessment criteria are presented. This clarity empowers students to understand what is required for their assignments, thereby enhancing their ability to meet academic standards. With 86.66% of students agreeing that the demands of their courses align with their expectations, it's clear that the curriculum is designed in a way that resonates positively with student capabilities and workload capacity.

Despite high satisfaction levels in several areas, specific aspects engender significant dissatisfaction among students. A concerning 19.83% of students indicated that they are dissatisfied or extremely dissatisfied with how assignments are scheduled. This feedback suggests potential issues with planning of deadlines, which could lead to overwhelming pressure during peak times, indicating a need for better coordination among faculty regarding the timing of assignments across courses.

Approximately 21.99% of students report feeling dissatisfied with their overall workload. This indicates that many students may be struggling to manage the volume of work assigned, hinting at a possible disconnect between course expectations and students' capacity to handle them. Such heavy academic demands can lead to heightened stress levels and may affect students' overall well-being.

While the overall satisfaction with feedback is relatively high, 15.31% of students feel dissatisfied with the speed and efficiency of the feedback they receive. This signals a desire for more timely evaluations, as quicker feedback can significantly enhance the learning process by allowing students to apply suggestions before moving on to new material.

Lecturers should consider restructuring assignment deadlines to spread them out more evenly to prevent clustering, which can overwhelm students. Furthermore, establishing clear benchmarks for feedback timelines and exploring streamlined grading processes—such as rubrics and digital tools can enhance the overall efficiency of student feedback. WSU might benefit from implementing digital tools or applications that allow students to visualise and manage their assignment deadlines effectively. Additionally, conducting regular surveys to understand student perceptions of workload can help ensure academic demands remain realistic and manageable.

3.18. TEACHING AND LEARNING

The quality of a student's learning experience is shaped by a combination of factors, ranging from traditional classroom interactions to modern digital resources. Attending lectures, engaging with enthusiastic lecturers, and utilising online learning tools are just a few of the key elements that contribute to academic success.

Equally important are tutors' availability, staff supportiveness, and opportunities for collaborative learning, which create a well-rounded and enriching environment for students. This section explores WSU student perspectives on these components to better appreciate the multifaceted nature of education and its role in shaping knowledgeable, skilled, and confident individuals.

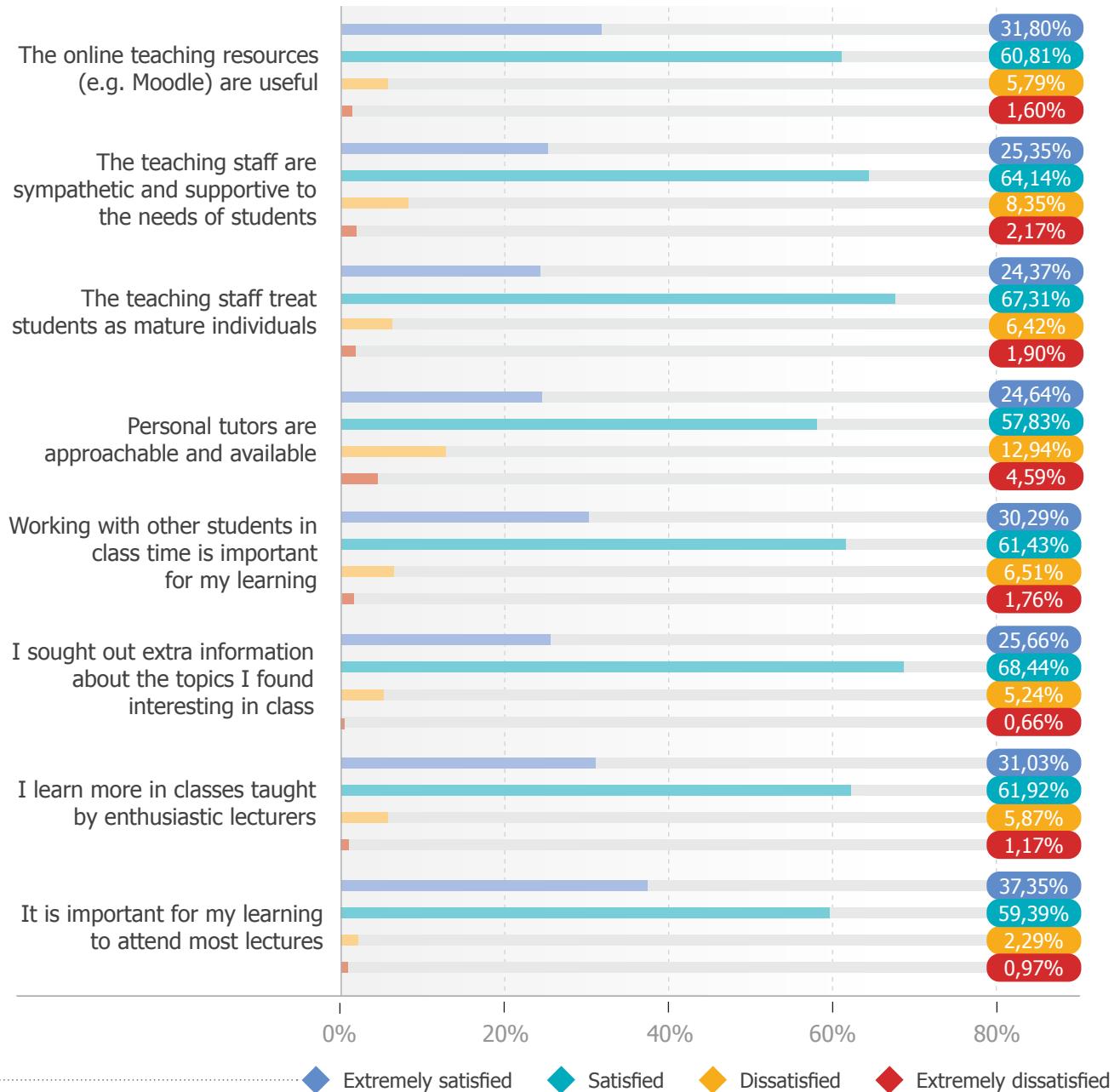
Across the board, as shown in Figure 60, students reported remarkably high satisfaction levels, with the figures for those who were either satisfied or extremely satisfied ranging from 82% to an impressive 97%.

The insights derived from Figure 61 illustrate the pivotal role of lectures, engaging teaching styles, and student curiosity in shaping a positive educational experience. A staggering 96.74% of students affirmed the significance of attending lectures for their learning process. As much as 92.95% of students said they learn more effectively in classes where lecturers display enthusiasm and energy. Similarly, 94.10% of students indicated that they actively seek out additional information on topics that intrigue them.



Figure 61: Teaching and learning practices

Teaching and learning:



While the overall sentiment reveals high satisfaction, certain areas show comparatively elevated dissatisfaction levels. A concerning 17.53% of students reported feeling dissatisfied or highly dissatisfied with the approachability and availability of their tutors. This highlights a gap in access to essential support, which could aid students in navigating their educational journeys. Although 89.49% of students remain satisfied, 10.52% expressed dissatisfaction regarding the sympathy and supportiveness of teaching staff towards their individual needs. This gap signifies an opportunity to improve how educators address student challenges and provide the necessary support.



A smaller yet noteworthy portion of students (8.27%) expressed dissatisfaction with the facilitation of working alongside their peers during class time. This suggests that collaborative experiences might not be as effectively structured or valued by all students, impacting their overall learning experience.

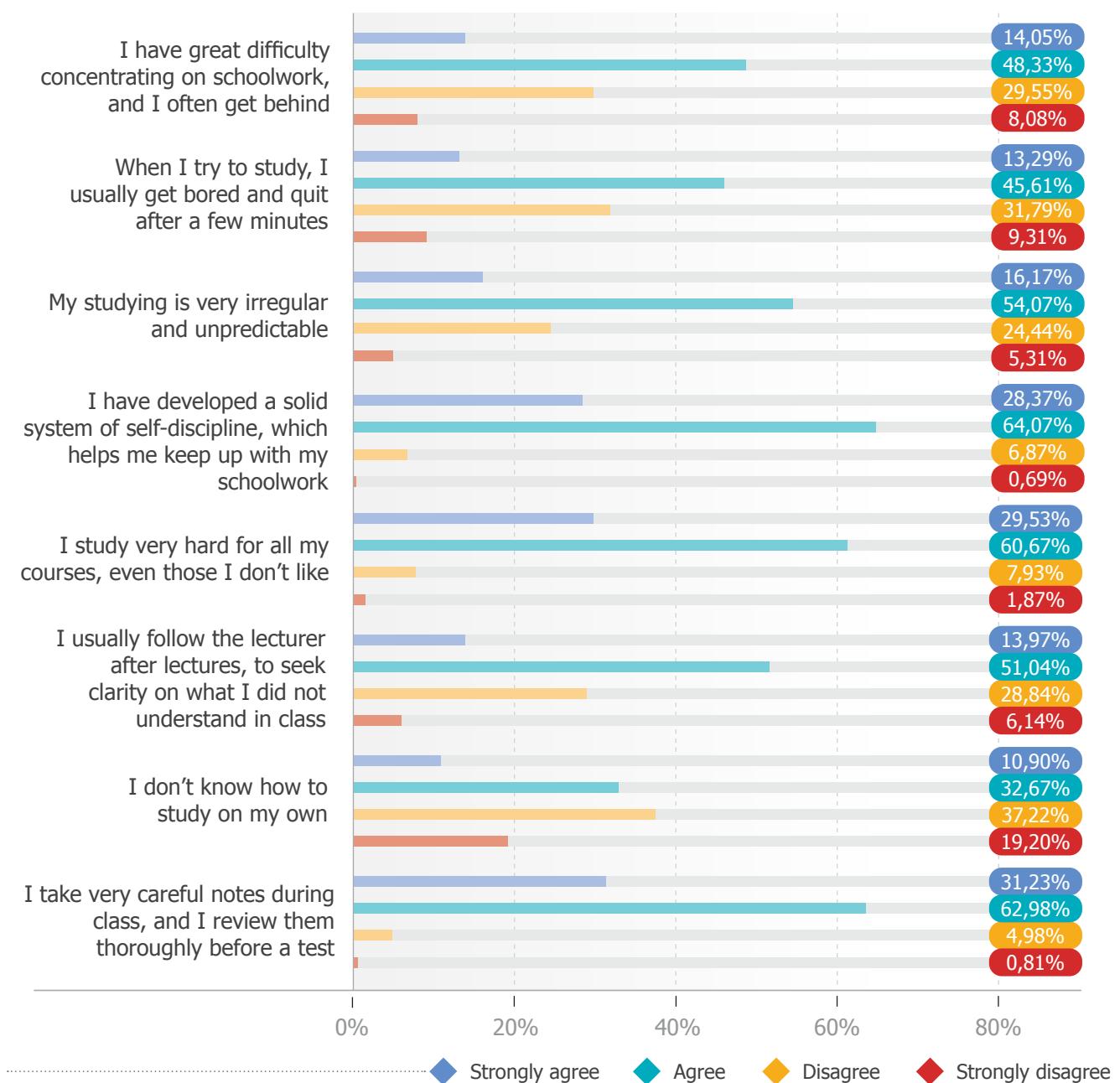
An impressive 92.61% of students found the online teaching resources (such as Moodle) beneficial. This insight reflects the importance of digital tools in facilitating independent study, particularly in hybrid or online learning environments where flexibility and access to resources can greatly enhance the educational experience.

3.19. STUDY HABITS

Students encounter various challenges on their journey to success, making their academic experience both demanding and an opportunity for personal growth. This analysis in Figure 62, emphasises key aspects of study habits, highlighting strengths such as self-discipline and effective notetaking, as well as weaknesses including inconsistent study patterns, difficulty concentrating, and a lack of motivation. While many students strongly commit to their studies, the findings indicate a need for targeted support to enhance their learning experience.

Figure 62: Personal study habits

Study habits:



Most students (94.21% Agreement) engage in detailed and careful note-taking, viewing this practice as a fundamental strategy for effective learning. By consistently reviewing their notes, they prepare themselves thoroughly for examinations and assessments, reflecting a strong commitment to their academic success.

Many students (92.44% Agreement) have cultivated impressive systems of self-discipline that help them manage their schoolwork. This disciplined approach not only underscores their commitment to their studies but also fosters a positive and proactive mindset towards their academic responsibilities.

A considerable portion of students (70.24% Agreement) admit to having inconsistent study patterns. These unpredictable routines reveal the struggles many face in establishing a reliable study schedule, which is crucial for effective learning and retention.

Almost 6 out of 10 students report that they often lose interest in their studies quickly. This dissatisfaction points to a potential lack of engagement or motivation, underscoring the need for more stimulating and interactive learning experiences.

Concentration challenges are prevalent (62.38% Agreement) among students, with many expressing concerns about an inability to focus effectively. These issues can stem from various factors, including overwhelming workloads and external distractions, ultimately hindering their academic performance.

The responses indicate a split in student confidence regarding independent study. While 48.12% of students express uncertainty about their ability to study independently, 43.57% believe they can do so effectively. This division highlights a significant need for tailored guidance in developing practical independent learning skills for those who struggle.

Many students actively seek opportunities to follow up with their lecturers to clarify course material. This willingness to engage reflects a proactive stance towards their education and a desire to deepen their understanding and foster meaningful relationships within the academic community.

Despite various challenges, many students demonstrate unwavering dedication by putting in effort across all subjects, even in those they find less appealing. This commitment highlights their resilience and determination to succeed academically.

3.20. STUDENT NEEDS

The student body at WSU comprises individuals from a wide range of socio-economic backgrounds, highlighting the importance of the university being well-equipped to address the diverse needs of its students. Recognising this diversity, the university provides a platform for students to share their thoughts and feelings regarding the support services they sought but could not obtain. This feedback is essential in identifying resource gaps and ensuring that all students receive the assistance they require to thrive in their academic and personal pursuits.

There is a pressing need for supplementary textbooks, comprehensive study materials, and access to past question papers, enabling students to prepare effectively for their courses. The library requires improved organisation and increased availability of physical resources so that students can navigate it quickly and find the necessary materials for their studies. Additionally, establishing a robust online resource hub for assignments and practical guidance would significantly enhance students' ability to complete their work and enrich their understanding of the subject matter.

Students seek more personalised interactions with their lecturers, including one-on-one sessions and enhanced communication. This would foster a more supportive learning environment and allow for tailored academic guidance. Concerns have arisen regarding lecturers who frequently miss classes or provide unclear explanations during lessons, leading to gaps in students' understanding and academic success.

There is a strong request for quiet, well-equipped study spaces that remain accessible around the clock. Such spaces would allow students to focus and study at their convenience, enhancing their academic performance. Establishing additional computer labs equipped with essential tools, such as whiteboards and collaborative spaces, would greatly benefit group work and individual study sessions.

Offering workshops focusing on effective study strategies and mentorship opportunities would empower students to develop essential skills and build confidence in their academic pursuits. Providing comprehensive career guidance, along with internships and focused job placement programs, is critical to preparing students for the workforce and helping them transition successfully from academia to employment.

Expanding counselling services is vital to support students dealing with stress, trauma, and the pressures of academic life. More counsellors could help reduce waiting times and provide immediate support. Regular workshops dedicated to stress management and coping strategies would equip students with the tools necessary to navigate their challenges effectively.

Students' voices:

 "Lectures were always talking isiXhosa when they were presenting in a class. They assume everyone is understanding isiXhosa. I did not enjoy my classes all the time."

 "Mental Health Services: More accessible mental health resources, including counselling sessions and workshops, to address stress, anxiety, and other emotional challenges."

 "Career Counseling: Enhanced career services to offer guidance on internships, job placements, and networking opportunities, especially for students nearing graduation."

Addressing discrimination linked to language barriers is crucial, ensuring that all students feel included and understood within the university community. This can foster a more harmonious and respectful campus atmosphere.

Immediate attention is needed to address delays with NSFAS, ensuring students receive the financial support they need without unnecessary hindrance.

Furthermore, creating programs that offer food relief, such as the distribution of vouchers and the establishment of soup kitchens, can aid students facing food insecurity. Additionally, providing affordable learning tools, such as textbooks and educational technologies, would alleviate some of the financial burdens students encounter.

There is a significant demand for free or affordable laptops, internet data, and printing services to aid students in completing their coursework efficiently. Improving the quality of cafeteria food and expanding feeding schemes would enhance students' dining experience and support their nutritional needs.

Students' voices:

 "During protest or strike it is hard to manage in this institution. I'm even thinking of transferring because of those endless protests."

 "None that I know of because the university provides every type of support a student can possibly need. There are tutors, student support programs, and staff members hired to assist students, including those at libraries. There's therapy, there are different support groups, even our lectures set out consultation times for students struggling with their academics to come and seek clarity, which is also a form of support."

The campus clinic urgently needs to address medication shortages and enhance healthcare staff's responsiveness. This will ensure that students receive timely medical assistance when needed. Introducing specialised care facilities, such as those providing eye examinations and treatment, would contribute to the overall health and well-being of the student population.

Improving access to on-campus accommodations and ensuring satisfactory living conditions are essential for student comfort and well-being. Many students would benefit from better amenities and maintenance in residence halls. Providing residence mentors and implementing increased safety measures would create a more secure and supportive student living environment.

Students' voices:

 "At the clinic, they don't have enough medication; they transfer us to other clinics, and we don't get help."

 "Assisting devices for students living with disabilities, e.g. I'm a student living with disabilities, but Sometimes it's hard for me to see what's written on the board since my eyes are partially sighted."

There is a strong desire to add gym facilities, tuck shops, ATMs, and upgraded sports facilities to enhance student life and promote physical wellness on campus. Maintaining recreational spaces and organising wellness programs that encourage participation and foster community among students is equally important.

Ensuring that all campus venues and materials are disability-friendly is crucial for creating an inclusive environment. This entails making necessary adjustments and providing support services to accommodate all students. Furthermore, offering assistive devices for students with disabilities would greatly enhance their educational experience and independence.

Support for diverse cultural events, socialisation programs, and societies that focus on inclusivity can contribute to a vibrant campus culture that celebrates diversity and fosters community.

Students' voices:



"Extra murals are not as available as they should be; instead, everything is done politically and unfairly. Support in sports and other codes of recreation are not so satisfying in conclusion."



"An ATM because town is miles away."

Enhancing Wi-Fi connectivity throughout all campus locations, including off-campus residences, would ensure students have reliable internet access for their studies and research.

Improving the user experience of the university portal is essential for effective communication and accessibility of information.

Allowing night-time access to computer labs would provide students with more opportunities to complete their work in a conducive environment.

Students' voices:



"Every lecturer must post notes on Moodle because we get wrong information on social platforms."



"First, going to the clinic and being told that they have taken their required number for the day. My course is more practical, but none of it has been done because machines are not connected, and it's already October now."

Promoting empathy and proactive engagement between lecturers and tutors can significantly enhance students' learning experiences. Instructors' genuine interest in their students' progress fosters a supportive educational environment. Conducting regular evaluations of teaching staff performance can ensure that educational standards are consistently upheld and that any areas needing improvement are addressed promptly.

Students' voices:

 "Asking the lecturer about what you don't understand after class is something we students don't do because 1. We were unaware that we could do that at any time. And secondly, we tend to fear talking to them because we have past experiences of being ridiculed or pushed away. During Orientation week and randomly during lectures, you should make visits to inform learners that they should ask when they do not understand."

 "I expected one-on-one sessions with the lecturer when the lecturer is noticing a change of marks for motivation and encouragement."

Organising campus tours for new students can facilitate smoother transitions into university life, helping them familiarise themselves with essential resources and points of interest. Streamlining administrative processes, particularly for registration and residence allocation, can ease frustrations and enhance operational efficiency for students and staff.

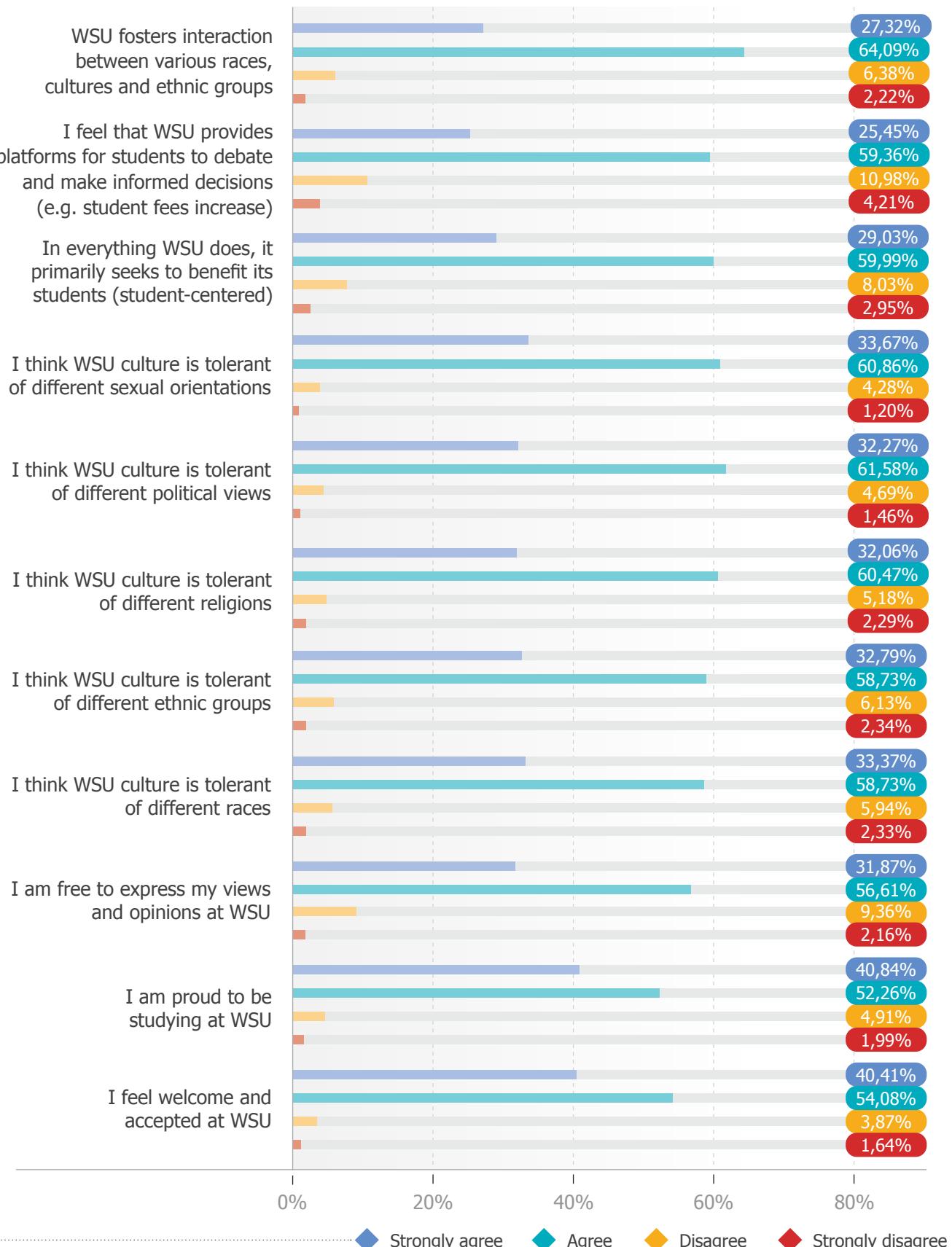
Providing food services during study hours, such as soup kitchens, ensures that students have access to nutritious meals while they prepare for exams. Lastly, addressing grievances efficiently and with transparency will build trust and improve the student experience.

3.21. INSTITUTIONAL CULTURE

WSU has established itself as an institution that values inclusivity, tolerance, and diversity, as evidenced by its strong performance in fostering a welcoming environment for individuals of different races, ethnicities, religions, and sexual orientations. However, while the university excels in these areas, there are opportunities for growth in other critical aspects, such as freedom of expression, student-centred decision-making, and platforms for student debate. This analysis explores WSU's strengths in promoting inclusivity and cross-cultural interaction while also identifying areas where the university can enhance student engagement, transparency, and participation in governance.

Figure 63: Institutional culture

Institutional culture:



WSU is perceived as fostering an inclusive and tolerant environment, particularly in its treatment of different races, ethnicities, religions, and sexual orientations. Tolerance toward different sexual orientations (94.53% "Agree" or "Strongly Agree") is the strongest area, suggesting WSU has successfully created a welcoming environment for LGBTQ+ individuals. Tolerance for different ethnic groups (91.52%) and races (91.74%) also reflect strong inclusivity efforts. This could indicate a robust institutional framework and culture promoting diversity and equity.

While tolerance for political views scores well (93.85% positive), it is slightly less robust than scores for other areas of diversity. This may point to occasional friction or polarisation around political discourse, though overall satisfaction remains high.

While inclusivity is a clear strength, the statement "I am free to express my views and opinions at WSU" reveals slightly less favourable results. 88.48% of respondents agree or strongly agree that they feel free to express themselves, while 11.52% disagree. This relatively higher level of disagreement suggests that while the university is welcoming and inclusive, some respondents may hesitate to share their views openly.

The statement "In everything WSU does, it primarily seeks to benefit its students (student-centred)" is another area with relatively lower scores. 85.97% had positive responses, but 10.98% disagreed, and 2.95% strongly disagreed. While still a majority, this result suggests that some students may feel the institution prioritizes other goals (e.g., administration, finances) over student needs. This perception could be mitigated by increasing transparency in decision-making and demonstrating how policies directly benefit students.

The lowest positive scores came from the statement "I feel that WSU provides platforms for students to debate and make informed decisions (e.g., student fee increases)". 84.81% positive, with 15.19% disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. This indicates dissatisfaction with the opportunities provided for students to voice their opinions and participate in governance processes.

The statement "WSU fosters interaction between various races, cultures, and ethnic groups" received one of the highest positive responses. 91.41% positive, suggesting that WSU successfully encourages cross-cultural interaction. This indicates that WSU not only promotes diversity but also actively facilitates meaningful interaction among diverse groups.

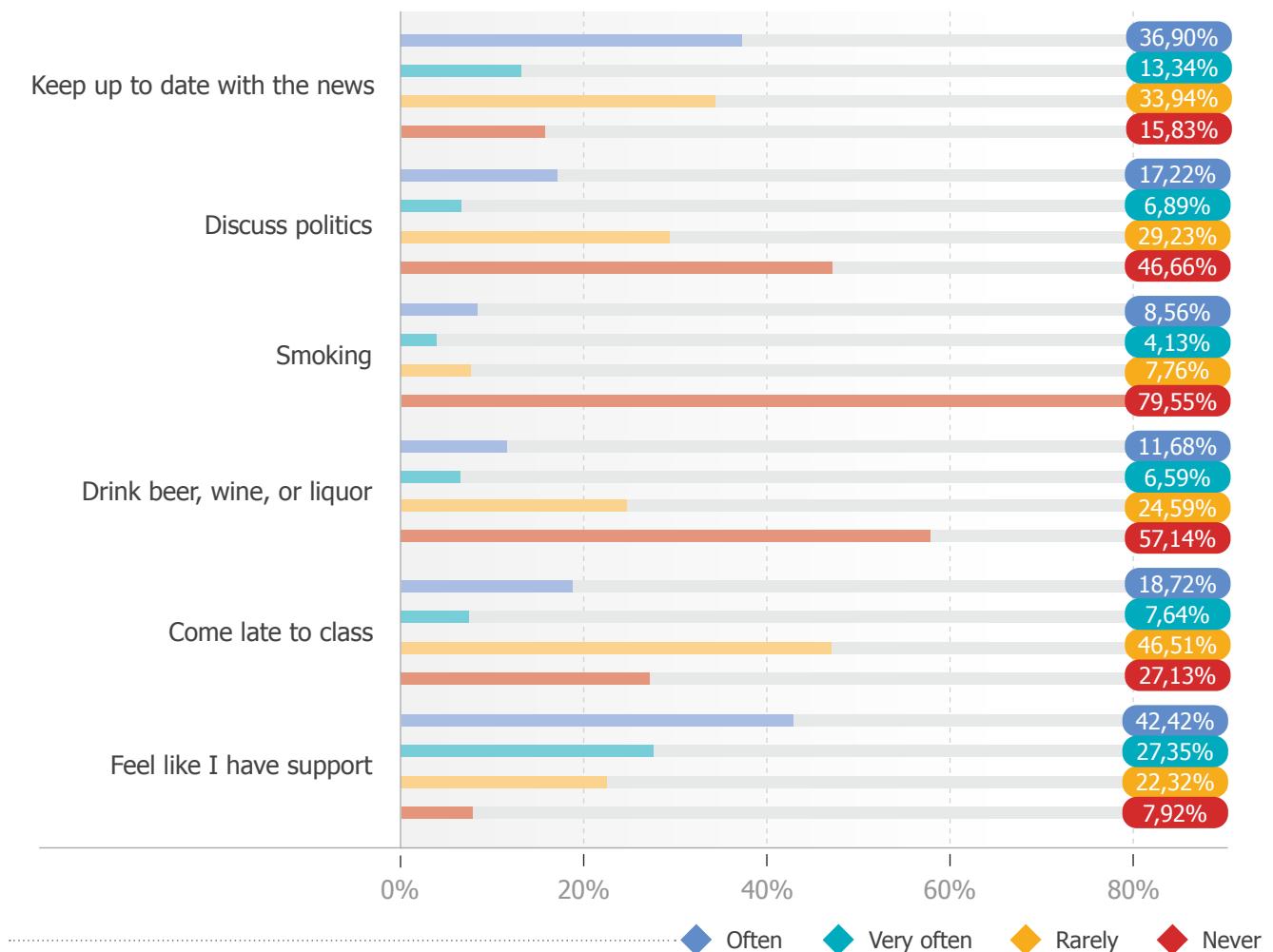
In conclusion, WSU has made significant strides in fostering an inclusive and tolerant environment, particularly in its support for diverse racial, ethnic, religious, and LGBTQ+ communities. The high levels of satisfaction in these areas reflect WSU's strong institutional commitment to diversity and equity. However, the relatively lower scores in freedom of expression, student-centred decision-making, and platforms for debate highlight areas where the university can improve. By enhancing opportunities for open dialogue, increasing student participation in governance, and better communicating its student-focused initiatives, WSU can address these gaps and further strengthen its commitment to inclusivity and student success. Leveraging its existing strengths while addressing these growth opportunities will enable WSU to continue building a vibrant, inclusive, and student-centred community that prepares individuals to thrive in an increasingly diverse and interconnected world.

3.22. WEEKLY PSYCHOSOCIAL EXPERIENCES

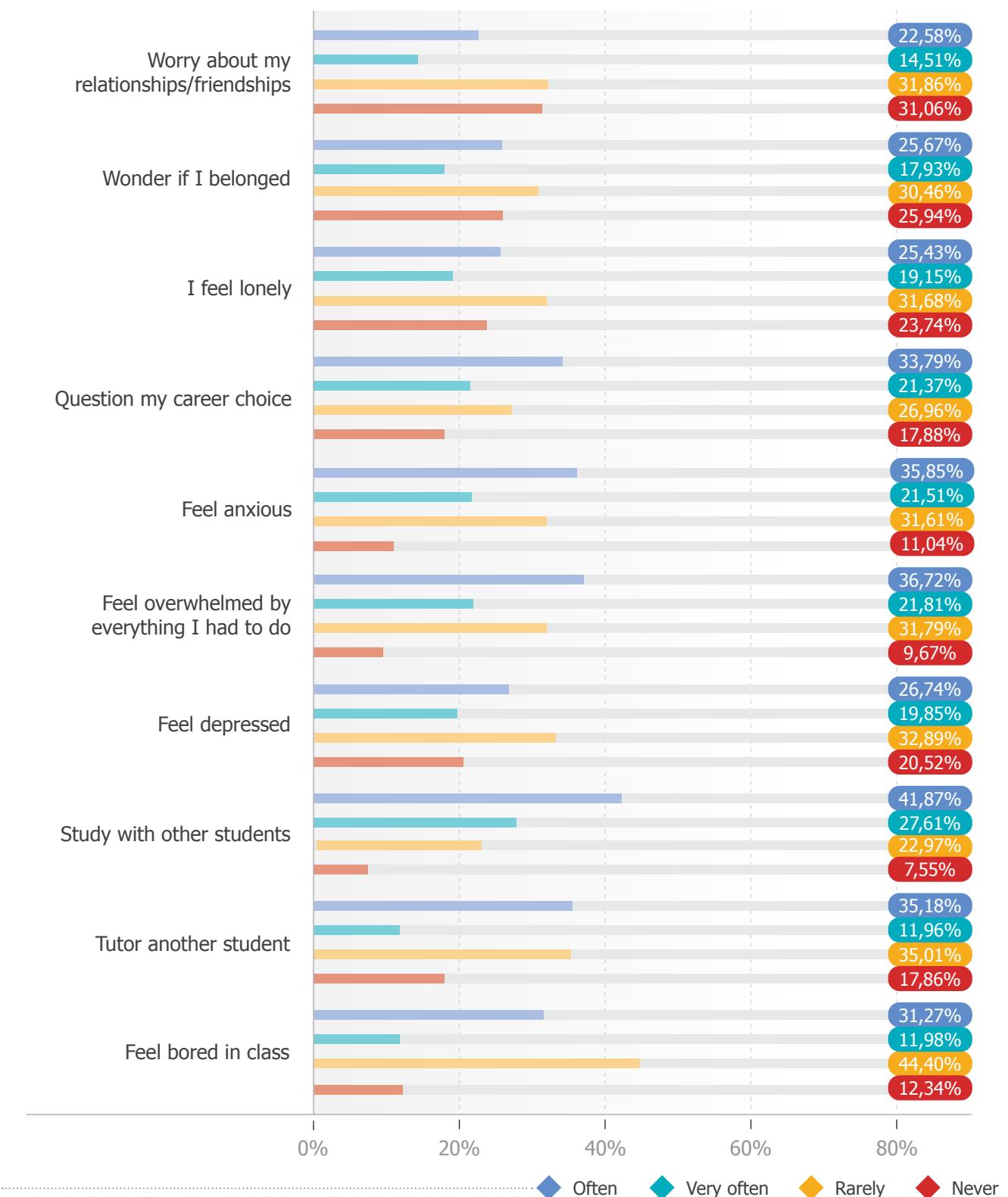
The students' academic journey is shaped by their engagement with coursework and emotional well-being, social interactions, and personal habits. This analysis delves into various aspects of student life, ranging from classroom engagement and study habits to emotional states, social connections, and lifestyle choices. While a majority of students demonstrate resilience and effective coping mechanisms, a significant portion grapples with feelings of boredom, anxiety, and loneliness, highlighting the need for robust support systems. Additionally, behaviours such as alcohol consumption, smoking, and political engagement provide further insight into the diverse experiences and priorities of students. By examining these patterns, WSU can better understand students' challenges and identify opportunities to enhance their academic and personal well-being. This exploration in Figure 63, underscores the importance of fostering an inclusive, supportive, and engaging environment that addresses both the academic and emotional needs of students.

Figure 64: Weekly personal psychosocial experiences

Weekly psychosocial experiences:



Weekly psychosocial experiences (continued):



A small yet notable group of students (12.34%) reports that they never experience boredom during class. This suggests they find the lessons thoroughly engaging and stimulating. A significant number of students (31.27%) frequently find themselves bored in class, raising concerns about the material's relevance and delivery. This reflects a possible disconnect between these students' content and interests.

The majority of students (44.40%) indicate that feelings of boredom rarely affect them in class. This suggests that, for most, the educational environment and subject matter effectively capture their attention and maintain engagement. A more minor faction of students (11.98%) routinely feels bored, hinting at possible disengagement or dissatisfaction with the course material, which could affect their overall learning experience.

Some students (17.86%) have never taken on the role of a tutor, possibly due to a lack of opportunity or confidence in their mastery of the subject matter. Many students (35.18%) frequently tutor their peers, demonstrating a strong sense of responsibility and a desire to support others in their learning journeys. Many students (35.01%) opt to tutor others infrequently, suggesting that they provide help when needed rather than making it a regular practice. A small portion of students (11.96%) frequently tutors others, indicating a deep understanding of the subject matter and a commitment to regularly aiding their classmates in their educational endeavours.

A minority of students (7.55%) prefer to study alone, finding solitude to be more effective for their learning style and concentration. A large segment of students (41.87%) actively participates in group study sessions, which fosters a collaborative and supportive learning environment that enhances their grasp of complex material. Many students (22.97%) engage in group study sporadically, likely depending on specific assignments or personal preferences that may fluctuate over time. A significant group of students (27.61%) regularly studies with peers, highlighting their appreciation for collective learning experiences and the benefits of shared knowledge.

Some students (20.52%) maintain an optimistic outlook and report never feeling depressed, suggesting they possess emotional resilience and effective coping mechanisms amidst academic pressures. A considerable percentage of students (26.74%) often grapple with feelings of depression, potentially stemming from the stress of academic demands or personal challenges they may face outside of school. Many students (32.89%) seldom experience depression, implying that while they may encounter moments of sadness or low spirits, these feelings are not a constant presence in their lives. A significant number of students (19.85%) frequently experience depression, which underscores the urgent need for accessible emotional and psychological support within academic settings.

A small group of students (9.67%) report never feeling overwhelmed, suggesting their strong organisational skills and ability to effectively balance academic and personal responsibilities. Many students (36.72%) find themselves frequently overwhelmed by their workload, pointing to a potential imbalance in their academic demands versus their capacity to manage them effectively.

A substantial portion of students (31.79%) experience occasional feeling overwhelmed, indicating that they generally manage their responsibilities well but might struggle during particularly challenging periods. Some students (21.81%) often feel overwhelmed, signalling underlying issues with time management or an excessively demanding academic environment that may hinder their performance.

A small percentage of students (11.04%) report never feeling anxious, indicating a stable emotional state coupled with effective stress management strategies. A considerable number of students (35.85%) frequently experience anxiety, which may be tied to the pressures of academic deadlines, rigorous coursework, or social dynamics within the school environment. Many students (31.61%) report that anxiety does not often affect them, suggesting that for most, anxiety may be a temporary hurdle rather than a consistent concern. Some students (21.51%) face anxiety frequently, implying that this emotional state may impede their ability to focus or excel in their academic pursuits.

A small yet confident group of students (17.88%) feels assured in their career paths, displaying certainty in their academic decisions and future aspirations. Many students (33.79%) regularly question their career choices, which may reflect a broader sense of uncertainty about their future trajectories and compatibility with their chosen fields of study. A notable portion of students (26.96%) claims to rarely question their career paths, though they may still grapple with occasional doubts or anxieties about their future. A significant segment (21.37%) frequently questions their career decisions, which might hint at a disconnect between their studies and personal aspirations, prompting the need for academic or career counselling.

Some students (23.74%) feel surrounded by supportive social circles, reporting never experiencing loneliness academically. A substantial number of students (25.43%) often feel lonely, highlighting potential issues with social integration or a struggle to forge connections in the sometimes-isolating environment of academia. Many students (31.68%) experience feelings of loneliness very infrequently, possibly due to temporary circumstances or periods of social disconnection that do not last long. Some students (19.15%) frequently feel lonely, which may reveal deeper challenges in forming meaningful relationships or experiencing emotional isolation within their academic community.

A notable segment of students (25.94%) confidently asserts that they never question their sense of belonging within the academic setting. This indicates that they feel a deep sense of inclusion and comfort, suggesting a supportive environment where they can thrive without doubts about their place. Some students (17.93%) find themselves frequently grappling with doubts about their belonging. This recurring uncertainty may highlight personal struggles with acceptance or understanding among their peers, revealing areas where they may feel disconnected or undervalued.

Several students (30.46%) experience fleeting moments of doubt regarding their sense of belonging. Although these feelings do not dominate their thoughts, they may arise from social interactions or situational factors, hinting at the complexities of navigating diverse group dynamics. A significant number of students (25.67%) often question whether they truly belong in their academic community. This frequent introspection suggests underlying feelings of alienation or exclusion, pointing to a need for greater inclusion and understanding within their environment.

A considerable portion of students (31.06%) feel secure and stable in their friendships and relationships, expressing that they never worry about these social connections. This indicates a deep-rooted sense of trust and support among their peers. Some students (22.58%) find themselves regularly anxious about their relationships. This ongoing worry may stem from personal issues or complex social dynamics, revealing challenges that impact their emotional well-being and social interactions.

Many students (31.86%) occasionally have concerns about their friendships, indicating that while they generally feel secure, stressful situations can provoke doubts about their social ties. A smaller group of students (14.51%) frequently experiences anxiety regarding their relationships, which may signal underlying insecurities or emotional strains that affect their ability to connect with others.

A small percentage of students (7.92%) report feeling entirely unsupported, which may indicate feelings of isolation or a lack of accessible resources. This sense of disconnect can be concerning and may require attention to foster a more inclusive atmosphere. A large majority of students (42.42%) frequently feel a strong sense of support from their peers and networks. This suggests that they have reliable sources of encouragement and assistance, contributing positively to their academic and emotional experiences. Numerous students (22.32%) report feeling supported at times, demonstrating that while they may not always reach out or receive help, there are moments when community resources come into play during challenging times. A significant number of students (27.35%) regularly experience a sense of support, emphasising the importance of community and reassurance when facing obstacles, reinforcing their ability to navigate academic pressures.

Some students (27.13%) demonstrate strong time management skills, consistently arriving to class on time and suggesting a responsible approach to their academic commitments. A smaller group of students (18.72%) arrives late to class with some regularity. This may reflect personal challenges in managing time effectively or external circumstances that impact their punctuality. Many students (46.51%) rarely experience tardiness, indicating that arriving late is not a chronic issue for them. Their attendance patterns suggest a balance in managing their personal and academic lives. A small number of students (7.64%) frequently arrive late, which might point to ongoing difficulties in harmonising their various responsibilities, whether academic or personal.

A substantial majority of students (57.14%) abstain from alcohol entirely, suggesting that drinking is not a prevalent part of their social or personal habits, which reflects a commitment to healthy lifestyle choices. Some students (11.68%) engage in regular alcohol consumption, likely participating in social settings or utilising drinking as a coping mechanism in their lives. A significant number of students (24.59%) consume alcohol sporadically, indicating a moderate approach to drinking that social opportunities or special occasions may influence. A smaller group of students (6.59%) drink alcohol frequently, possibly seeking social interaction or personal enjoyment as motivations for their consumption patterns.

Most students (79.55%) do not smoke, underscoring a strong inclination towards maintaining a healthy lifestyle and rejecting harmful habits. A small percentage of students (8.56%) smoke regularly, which may be indicative of occasional or habitual use, often linked to social circles or stress relief.

Some students (7.76%) smoke occasionally, typically in social contexts or during times of heightened stress, suggesting a selective approach to tobacco use. A smaller segment of students (4.13%) smoke regularly, which may reflect a consistent habit that could have health implications.

Almost half of the students (46.66%) do not engage in political discussions, potentially due to a lack of interest or exposure to differing opinions and environments. Some students (17.22%) actively engage in political discussions, indicating strong political interest and a desire to share their views and insights with others. Many students (29.23%) participate in political conversations infrequently, pointing to selective engagement based on their interests or the context of the discussion. A small group of students (6.89%) frequently partakes in political discourse, demonstrating a deep engagement with political issues that drive their interest.

A small percentage of students (15.83%) choose not to keep up with the news, which could be attributed to a lack of interest or time constraints in their busy lives. Many students (36.90%) regularly monitor news updates, reflecting a strong awareness of current events and a desire to stay informed about local and global happenings. A significant portion of students (33.94%) infrequently follow the news, which may suggest limited engagement or other priorities taking precedence in their daily lives. A smaller group of students (13.34%) consistently stays updated on current affairs, indicating their commitment to being informed and engaged with the world around them.

The diverse experiences of students reveal a complex interplay between academic engagement, emotional well-being, and social behaviours. While many students exhibit strong time management skills, healthy lifestyle choices, and active participation in collaborative learning, others face significant challenges such as anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation. The prevalence of these emotional struggles underscores the need for accessible mental health resources and supportive communities within academic institutions. Furthermore, the varying levels of engagement in political discussions and current events reflect the diverse interests and priorities of students. By addressing these multifaceted needs (through enhanced support systems, inclusive environments, and opportunities for meaningful engagement), WSU can create a more holistic and empowering experience for students. Fostering a balanced approach to academic and personal growth will enable students to thrive inside and outside the classroom.

3.23. FOOD AND HOUSING INSECURITY

Access to necessities such as food and stable housing is fundamental to an individual's well-being and ability to thrive. However, for many, these essentials remain out of reach due to financial constraints and systemic challenges. This analysis examines the prevalence of food insecurity and housing instability among respondents, shedding light on the struggles faced by a significant portion of the population. While a small percentage of individuals report a sense of security in their access to food and housing, a much larger group grapples with frequent or occasional shortages. These findings in Figure 64, underscore the urgent need for targeted interventions to address these critical issues, which have far-reaching implications for health, education, and overall quality of life.

Figure 65: Food and housing insecurity

Food and housing:



Only 11.08% of respondents reported a sense of security regarding their food supply, indicating that they have never faced a situation where they lacked enough food to meet their basic nutritional needs. This suggests that a small minority are relatively insulated from the challenges of food insecurity. A significant 34.86% of participants disclosed that they frequently encounter situations where they do not have enough food. This high percentage highlights a pressing issue within a substantial segment of the population, suggesting that a regular lack of access to food is a critical concern that affects their health and well-being. The largest group, comprising 54.06% of respondents, reported that they occasionally face food insecurity. This recurring challenge may manifest in various ways, such as relying on less nutritious food options or struggling to provide adequate meals for themselves and their families, indicating a persistent threat to their overall nutrition.

Approximately 23.89% of respondents feel secure in their ability to secure adequate meals and report never having to skip meals due to financial constraints. This reflects a fortunate position that allows them to prioritize their dietary needs without undue stress. A notable 29.34% of respondents revealed that they often have to skip meals as a result of financial limitations. This statistic illustrates the difficult choices many face, where limited financial resources force them to prioritize other expenses over food. A striking 46.78% admitted that they sometimes miss meals because of insufficient funds. This indicates that meal skipping is a prevalent issue, affecting nearly half of respondents at least occasionally and revealing the extent to which financial pressures can disrupt basic eating habits.

A reassuring 67.93% of respondents reported enjoying stable living conditions, stating that they have never had to rely on temporary housing. This stability contributes positively to their overall sense of security and well-being. In contrast, 12.94% of respondents indicated that they often experience temporary housing situations. This suggests a degree of instability that can have significant emotional and psychological impacts, and may complicate other aspects of their lives such as employment or education. Furthermore, 19.13% shared that they sometimes find themselves in temporary housing arrangements. This group may face uncertainties regarding their living conditions, which could lead to added stress and difficulty in planning for the future.

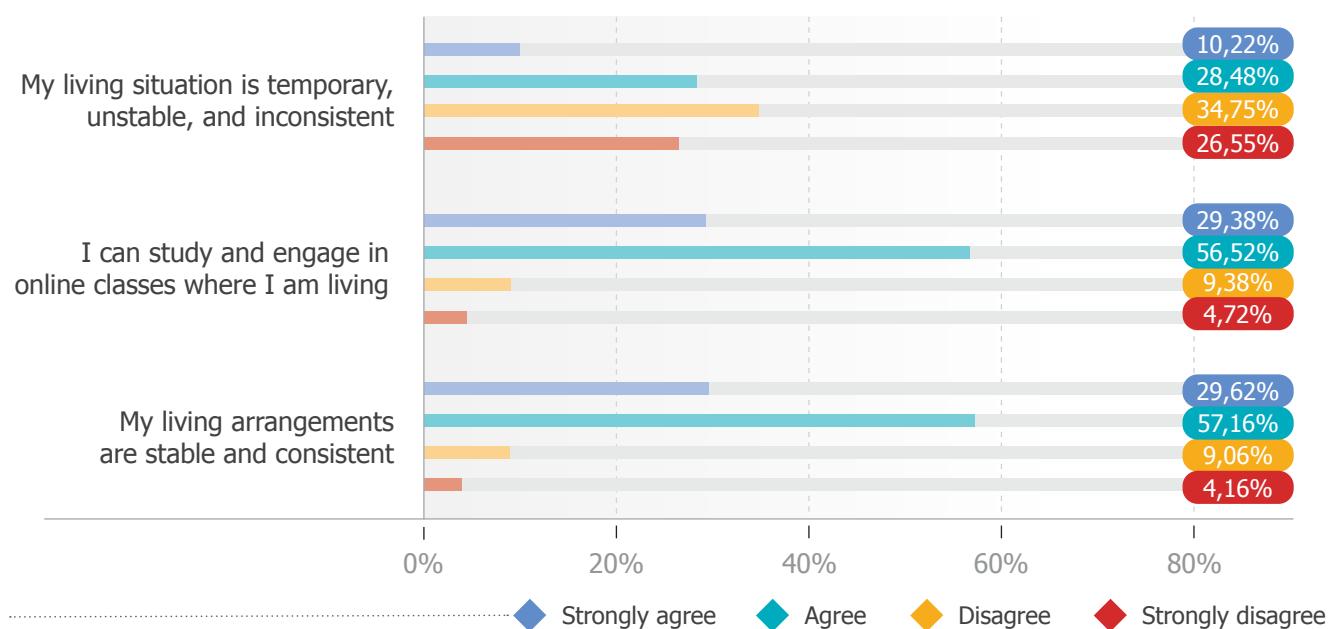
The findings reveal a stark reality: food insecurity and housing instability are pervasive issues affecting a substantial portion of the population. While a minority of respondents enjoy stable access to food and housing, the majority face frequent or occasional challenges that disrupt their ability to meet basic needs. The high prevalence of meal skipping due to financial constraints and the reliance on temporary housing arrangements highlight the urgent need for systemic solutions. Addressing these issues requires a multifaceted approach, including increased access to affordable housing and financial support for vulnerable populations.

3.24. LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Stable living arrangements are a cornerstone of academic success, providing students with the security and consistency needed to focus on their studies and fully engage in their educational pursuits. However, for many students, housing instability poses significant challenges, disrupting their ability to participate in online classes, complete assignments, and maintain academic progress. This section explores students' experiences with living arrangements, focusing on three key areas: the stability of their housing, their ability to study and engage in online learning, and the prevalence of temporary or unstable living conditions. In Figure 65, the findings highlight the profound impact of housing stability on academic engagement and underscore the need for targeted support to ensure that all students, regardless of their living situations, have the opportunity to succeed.

Figure 66: Living arrangements

Living arrangements:



A substantial majority of respondents, specifically 29.62%, agreed that their living arrangements are stable and consistent. Among these, 57.16% indicated that they agree, while an additional 29.62% strongly agree. This overwhelming consensus reflects a generally positive perception regarding the stability of their living conditions. Conversely, only 13.22% of respondents reported feelings of instability, with 9.06% disagreeing and 4.16% strongly disagreeing with the statement. These figures suggest that while most participants feel secure in their living situations, a small minority do not share this sentiment.

Similarly, a positive trend was observed when respondents were asked about their ability to study and participate in online classes given their living arrangements. An impressive 85.9% of participants agreed (56.52%) or strongly agreed (29.38%) that their living situations facilitate their educational pursuits. This high level of agreement underscores the importance of a supportive home environment for effective learning. On the other hand, only 14.1% of respondents disagreed (9.38%) or strongly disagreed (4.72%) about their living arrangements supporting their studies. These findings indicate that the majority of participants feel their current living conditions are well-suited to foster academic engagement and success in an online learning setting.

When examining the perceptions of those with temporary or unstable living situations, the responses exhibit a notable difference. Only 38.7% of respondents agreed (28.48%) or strongly agreed (10.22%) that their living arrangements were temporary or inconsistent. This represents a minority perspective, as a significant majority, 61.3%, disagreed (34.75%) or strongly disagreed (26.55%) with this assertion. This disparity indicates that while a considerable portion of respondents do not identify their living conditions as unstable, a significant number still face uncertainty regarding their housing situations. Such instability can potentially impact their ability to engage fully in their education.

The findings reveal a clear connection between stable living arrangements and academic success, emphasising the challenges faced by students experiencing housing instability. While many students benefit from consistent and secure housing, a significant portion grapples with temporary or unstable living conditions that hinder their ability to study effectively and participate in online classes. These disruptions affect academic performance and contribute to increased stress and reduced engagement. To address these issues, WSU must prioritise initiatives that provide stable housing options, financial assistance, and academic support for vulnerable students. By fostering a supportive environment that addresses housing instability, WSU can help ensure that all students have the opportunity to thrive academically, regardless of their living circumstances. Ultimately, stable housing is not just a basic need; it is a critical foundation for educational achievement and long-term success.

3.25. DISCRIMINATION, BIAS AND HARASSMENT

Harassment in educational settings is a pervasive issue that can significantly impact students' well-being, sense of safety, and academic success. This analysis examines the prevalence of various forms of harassment, ranging from verbal comments and written harassment to physical assaults and sexual harassment, among students.

While a substantial portion of students report never experiencing certain types of harassment, a concerning percentage face frequent or very frequent incidents, highlighting the urgent need for intervention. Verbal comments emerge as the most commonly reported issue (affecting nearly 30% of students), followed by written harassment, exclusion, and offensive visuals, see Figure 66. Physical assaults and threats, though less frequent, remain serious concerns that demand immediate attention.

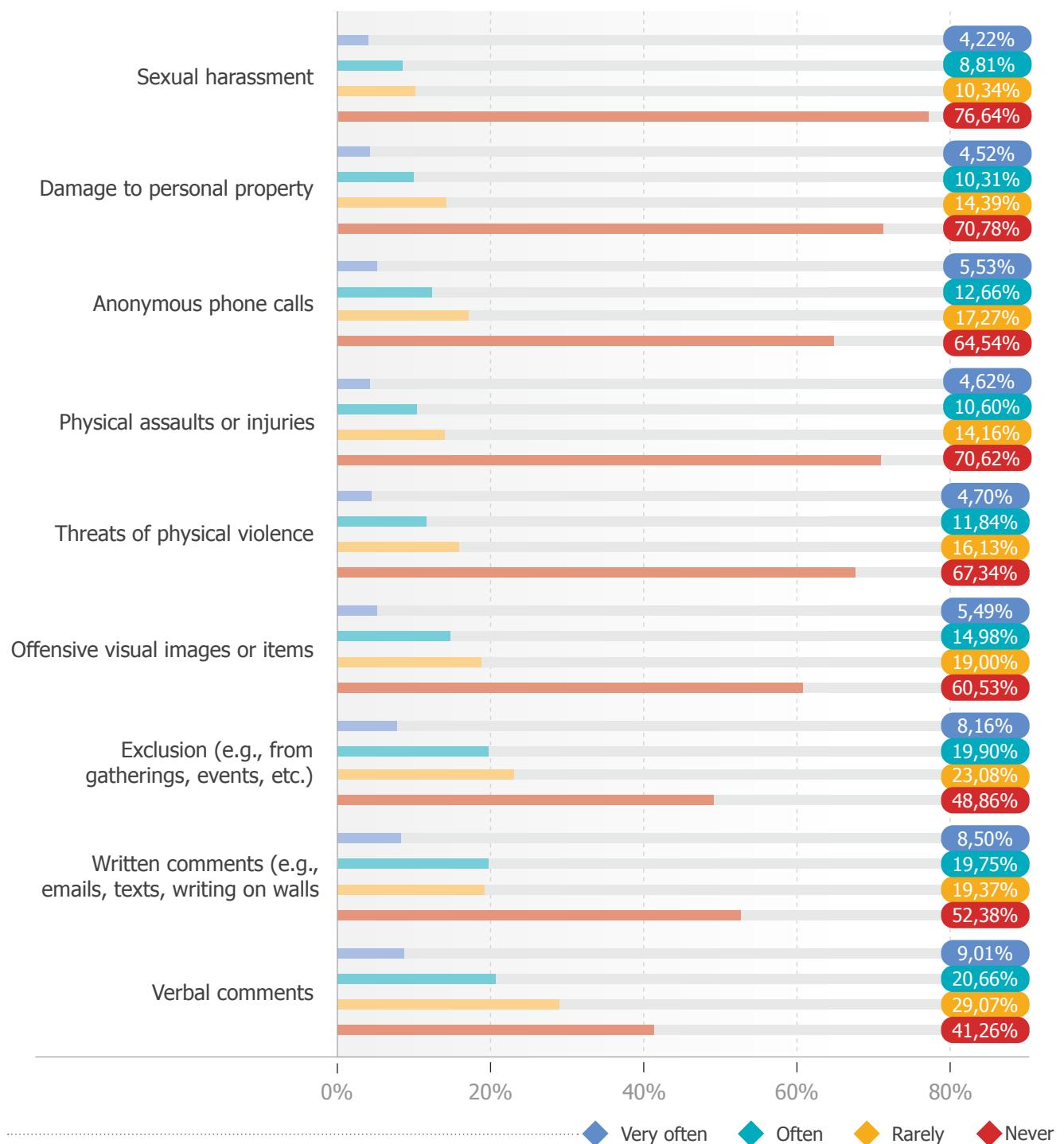
A substantial portion of students, over 41%, report that they have never encountered verbal comments directed at them. This suggests that, relative to other behaviours categorised as "Never," verbal comments are less prevalent among this group. Almost 30% of respondents indicate that they frequently experience verbal comments, with some experiencing them very often. This data highlights verbal comments as the most commonly reported issue within the student population, reflecting ongoing interpersonal challenges.

An alarming 28.25% of students experience written harassment, with 19.75% reporting it "Often" and an additional 8.50% saying it happens "Very Often." Although more than half of the students report having "Never" faced this behaviour, the extent of written harassment's persistence signals a concerning trend, considering its potential for long-lasting emotional and psychological effects.



Figure 67: Discrimination and harassment frequency

Discrimination and harassment:



Approximately 28.06% of respondents report being excluded frequently 19.90% "Often" and 8.16% "Very Often." This data may indicate broader systemic or social barriers that exist within educational environments, potentially hindering students' sense of belonging and community.

While less frequently reported than verbal and written harassment, offensive visuals still affect 20.47% of students, with 14.98% experiencing them "Often" and 5.49% "Very Often." This form of harassment often relates to wider societal biases and can create a hostile atmosphere, further alienating those targeted.

A significant majority, 70.62%, state that they have "Never" faced physical assaults. However, 15.22% of students experience them frequently, with 10.60% reporting "Often" and 4.62% "Very Often." Despite being the least frequent form of harassment, any instance of physical violence should be taken seriously and addressed promptly. The findings reveal that 76.64% of respondents report "Never" experiencing sexual harassment. Nevertheless, 13.03% of students—comprising 8.81% who experience it "Often" and 4.22% "Very Often"—still frequently encounter this serious issue, emphasizing the need for urgent attention and intervention.

While 67.34% of students indicate they have "Never" received threats of physical violence, 16.54% still report experiencing these threats regularly. This includes 11.84% encountering them "Often" and 4.70% "Very Often," suggesting a notable subset of individuals facing ongoing threats.

Similarly, 70.78% report "Never" experiencing damage to their personal property, yet 14.83% indicate frequent occurrences of such behaviour (10.31% "Often" and 4.52% "Very Often"). This type of harassment indicates that targeted attacks on students' belongings can create an atmosphere of insecurity and fear.

In conclusion, the prevalence of harassment among students, whether verbal, written, physical, or sexual, reveals a pressing need for proactive measures to ensure a safe and inclusive educational environment. While many students report never experiencing certain forms of harassment, a significant minority face frequent or very frequent incidents, which can have profound emotional, psychological, and academic consequences. To address these issues, WSU must prioritize comprehensive anti-harassment campaigns, enforce zero-tolerance policies, and establish accessible reporting channels. Additionally, fostering a classroom culture that celebrates diversity and inclusion can help reduce exclusionary practices and offensive behaviour.

3.26. OTHER CHALLENGES FACED BY STUDENTS

The university experience is meant to be a transformative growth, learning, and personal development period. However, for many students, this journey is marred by a range of systemic and institutional challenges that hinder their academic progress and overall well-being. From poor living conditions and transportation issues to academic disruptions, financial struggles, and social exclusion, students face numerous obstacles that impact their ability to thrive. This section delves into the key issues affecting students, including accommodation problems, safety concerns, communication barriers, and inadequate academic support. Additionally, it highlights the social and psychological challenges students encounter, such as cultural differences, mental health struggles, and experiences of discrimination.

Students frequently face poor living conditions, including chronic shortages of water and electricity, which severely impact their daily lives. Many report inadequate amenities in their residences, further deteriorating their living experiences. Security concerns are prevalent, with theft contributing to a sense of vulnerability. Additionally, students often encounter unfair treatment and mismatches when it comes to residence allocations, alongside consistently poor conditions in off-campus accommodations.

Students' ability to move around campus and the surrounding areas effectively is hampered by the sometimes inadequate and inconsistent transportation options accessible to them. Travel safety is still a major worry, with many people experiencing anxiety or a sense of insecurity while travelling. In the end, these transportation problems hinder students' ability to participate in campus events and arrive for classes on time.

The academic landscape is frequently disrupted by strikes, which lead to class cancellations and hinder essential exam preparation. This unrest results in a lack of coordination in exam scheduling, leaving students uncertain and stressed about their academic futures.

Language barriers significantly limit students' experiences, particularly with isiXhosa being the predominant language, which can alienate non-native speakers. Many struggle to access vital academic information and systems, especially concerning NSFAS (National Student Financial Aid Scheme) issues and registration processes, leading to frustration and confusion. There is a troubling shortage of essential academic resources, including textbooks and study materials, as well as reliable Wi-Fi access. Students report feeling neglected by unresponsive or unprofessional lecturers, which exacerbates their educational challenges. The availability of study spaces is also insufficient, with inadequate access to libraries limiting their ability to study effectively.

Cultural differences often hinder socialising and forming friendships, leaving many students feeling isolated. Reports of stress and mental health struggles are common, highlighting the urgent need for better support. Experiences of marginalisation, bullying, and discrimination contribute to an atmosphere that can feel hostile, further complicating students' social interactions.

Students experience significant delays and challenges regarding NSFAS funds and meal allowances, which directly impact their daily lives. The insufficient financial support often fails to meet basic living needs, creating a cycle of financial distress that affects their academic performance.

A pervasive lack of action on student complaints and grievances is often reported, reflecting poor management and accountability within the university. Off-campus students experience inadequate support, particularly concerning their needs and religious activities, which can further exacerbate their sense of exclusion.

Students encounter various prejudices, tribalism, and biases that hinder their integration into the university community. Disrespect towards specific groups, including LGBTQI+ individuals and disabled students, underscores a pressing need for greater inclusivity and understanding.

The challenges faced by senior students are multifaceted, encompassing accommodation issues, transportation problems, academic disruptions, financial struggles, and social and psychological barriers. These difficulties not only hinder academic performance but also affect students' overall well-being and sense of belonging. Addressing these issues requires a comprehensive and proactive approach from WSU, including improving living conditions, enhancing transportation safety, providing adequate academic resources, and fostering a more inclusive and supportive campus culture. Additionally, addressing financial delays, improving communication, and ensuring accountability in handling student grievances are critical steps toward creating a more equitable environment.

3.27. ADDITIONAL COMMENTS ABOUT STUDENT EXPERIENCE AT WSU

Students were invited to share their thoughts and reflections on their experiences at WSU, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of campus life. Below is a comprehensive summary of their feedback in response to the posed questions. The range of sentiments expressed includes both positive and negative experiences, highlighting the diverse perspectives within the student body. On the positive side, many students celebrate the strong sense of belonging, cultural diversity, and academic mentorship that define their time at WSU. These aspects foster personal growth, inclusivity, and a vibrant campus spirit. However, these strengths are often overshadowed by persistent issues such as inadequate accommodation, financial and administrative inefficiencies, inconsistent academic support, and limited resources. Additionally, cultural tensions and disruptions caused by strikes further complicate the student experience. Each comment, whether uplifting or critical, contributes to a richer understanding of the student experience at WSU. This invaluable feedback not only sheds light on areas of success but also identifies opportunities for improvement, enabling the university to enhance its programs and services for all students.

Many students at WSU report experiencing a profound sense of belonging and support that significantly enriches their university life. The nurturing community fosters both personal and academic growth, and students particularly value inclusivity within the culturally diverse environment. This vibrant atmosphere allows them to connect with peers from various backgrounds, creating a welcoming space where everyone feels appreciated.

The academic journey at WSU is characterized by impactful mentorship from dedicated lecturers who guide students through the complexities of both academic and personal challenges. Numerous students have shared profound stories of personal development, crediting the university with equipping them with invaluable skills that will benefit them long after graduation. WSU stands out for its rich tapestry of diversity, providing students with unique opportunities to engage with classmates from a myriad of cultural and linguistic backgrounds. This interaction enriches their educational experience, broadening their perspectives and fostering mutual respect and understanding.

Students frequently highlight the importance of extracurricular activities available at WSU, which encompass leadership roles and practical work experiences. These opportunities not only enhance their academic journeys but also empower them to grow personally, helping them to develop important life skills.

Despite occasional challenges, many students express genuine enjoyment of their time at WSU, often articulating a sense of pride in being a part of its community. This positive sentiment speaks to the overall vibrant spirit of the university.

One prominent concern among students revolves around inadequate living conditions, particularly in off-campus residences. Many have reported issues such as substandard facilities, hygiene concerns, and safety risks, leaving them feeling uneasy and dissatisfied with their housing situations.

Students voice frustrations regarding financial aid delays, especially among those experiencing administrative errors. There is a pervasive dissatisfaction with management's slow response times and a perceived lack of sufficient support for off-campus students, compounding their financial stress.

Some students have raised alarms about the perceived quality of education at WSU. They point to issues including erratic lecturer attendance, poor communication, and a curriculum that leans heavily on theoretical knowledge without incorporating adequate practical application. Further, many express a desire for more comprehensive support concerning assignments and academic requirements.

Several students emphasize their disappointment with the limited resources available at WSU. They mention outdated sports facilities, erratic internet access, insufficient study materials, and sluggish maintenance services for buildings, all of which detract from their academic experience.

Unfortunately, reports of racism, discrimination, and social isolation have surfaced, making some students feel marginalized. There is a growing concern that certain cultural groups face exclusion or lack equal treatment, contributing to an uneasy atmosphere on campus.

The occurrence of protests and strikes has interrupted academic schedules, generating frustration regarding lost class time and safety concerns during such incidents.

The senior student experience at WSU is marked by a duality of positive attributes and significant challenges. On one hand, the university excels in fostering a sense of belonging, cultural diversity, and academic mentorship, which contribute to students' personal and academic growth. The opportunities for leadership, practical experience, and community engagement further enrich their journey. On the other hand, issues such as poor accommodation, financial and administrative inefficiencies, inconsistent academic support, and limited resources hinder students' ability to thrive. Cultural tensions and disruptions from strikes add further strain to an already challenging environment. To build on its strengths and address its weaknesses, WSU must prioritize improving infrastructure, streamlining administrative processes, enhancing academic support, and fostering a more inclusive campus culture. Giving attention in these challenges, WSU can create a more balanced and empowering experience for its students, ensuring that they are equipped to succeed both academically and personally.



Summary



1. Quintile Representation: Socioeconomic Diversity and Student Retention

The socioeconomic background of WSU students varies significantly, influencing their academic experiences and support needs. The data reveals that:

- **Quintile 3 Students** (middle-income) dominate across all datasets—institutional, FTEN, and senior—indicating a strong presence at all stages of the academic journey. Their steady representation suggests that existing university support structures effectively meet their needs.
- **Quintiles 1 and 2** (low-income groups) are also well-represented, particularly among FTEN students. Their slight increase in representation as students' progress suggests resilience, but this group may require additional academic and financial support to maintain retention rates.
- **Quintiles 4 and 5** (high-income groups) exhibit the lowest representation. While these students are more prevalent in the FTEN dataset, their declining numbers among senior students suggest challenges in persistence, potentially due to factors such as dissatisfaction with institutional resources, alternative educational opportunities, or transfer to other institutions.

The data highlights the need for WSU to strengthen retention strategies for students across all socioeconomic backgrounds, ensuring that financial constraints or other systemic challenges do not hinder academic success.

2. First-generation Learners: Unique Challenges and Support Needs

Approximately 50% of FTEN students at WSU are first-generation university attendees, meaning they lack the advantage of family members who can provide guidance on navigating higher education. This presents significant challenges, including:

- **Limited Academic Preparedness:** Many first-generation students enter university with gaps in foundational knowledge, particularly in research skills, time management, and academic writing.
- **Financial Constraints:** First-generation students are more likely to rely on financial aid and may experience delays in receiving funds, affecting their ability to purchase textbooks, access resources, and maintain stable living conditions.
- **Psychosocial Pressures:** These students often face immense pressure to succeed, both for personal advancement and to uplift their families. This can contribute to stress, anxiety, and academic burnout.

Conversely, 50.53% of students have a family history of university education, implying that they may benefit from informal support networks, such as parental guidance on career choices and study strategies. However, WSU must ensure that all students, regardless of background, have equitable access to mentorship programs, academic workshops, and mental health resources.

3. Geographical Inclusivity: Rural vs. Urban Representation

WSU has demonstrated a strong commitment to fostering geographical inclusivity by admitting students from both rural and urban areas:

- **FTEN Students:** 53.05% come from rural-based schools, while 46.95% are from urban backgrounds.
- **Senior Students:** The rural representation increases to 66.40%, indicating that students from underserved communities continue their studies despite facing potential obstacles such as limited financial support and academic preparedness.

This distribution underscores WSU's role in bridging socioeconomic and educational disparities. However, students from rural areas may require additional academic support to address potential learning gaps caused by disparities in secondary education quality.

4. Institutional Appeal: Student Perceptions of WSU

The survey reveals that 58.71% of FTEN students and 68.11% of senior students selected WSU as their first-choice university. These figures reflect the institution's alignment with student expectations in terms of accessibility, affordability, and program offerings.

However, the significant percentage of students who did not choose WSU as their first choice (41.29% of FTEN and 31.89% of seniors) indicates opportunities for improvement.

WSU can enhance its outreach efforts by:

- Strengthening marketing strategies to highlight program strengths and career opportunities.
- Improving the quality of student services to increase retention and satisfaction rates.
- Engaging with alumni and industry partners to improve graduate employability and institutional reputation.

Challenges Faced by Students

Despite its institutional strengths, WSU students encounter several challenges that impact their academic performance and overall well-being. These challenges include:

1. Accommodation and Transportation Issues

- Many students struggle with limited on-campus housing options, forcing them to seek off-campus accommodation, which can be costly and unsafe.
- Inconsistent or unreliable transportation services create difficulties in attending lectures, particularly for students commuting from rural areas.

2. Academic and Administrative Inefficiencies

- Delays in financial aid disbursement cause financial strain and affect students' ability to purchase learning materials or secure stable housing.
- Administrative inefficiencies, including slow response times to student grievances, lead to frustration and disengagement.

3. Social and Psychological Barriers

- Students report experiencing high levels of stress due to financial instability, academic pressure, and limited mental health support services.
- Social integration challenges, particularly among first-generation students and those from rural backgrounds, contribute to feelings of isolation and disconnection.

4. Institutional Disruptions

- Recurring strikes, protests, and infrastructure challenges disrupt academic schedules and create an unpredictable learning environment.
- Poor living conditions in student residences contribute to dissatisfaction and negatively impact students' ability to focus on their studies.

Strategic Recommendations

Recommendation	Key Actions	Responsible Unit(s)
1. Enhancing Support for First-Generation Learners	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand mentorship programs (faculty/senior peers) Develop academic workshops (research, critical thinking, time management) Increase access to mental health counselling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student Affairs Academic Support Services Counselling & Wellness Center
2. Improving Infrastructure and Resource Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expand on-campus housing Implement subsidized transport solutions Modernize libraries, labs, and digital learning platforms 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilities Management Transportation Services Library & IT Services
3. Strengthening Financial and Administrative Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Streamline financial aid disbursement Digitize student request/grievance systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Financial Aid Office Registrar's Office/Administration
4. Promoting Inclusivity and Mental Health Awareness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Launch diversity & inclusion initiatives Expand mental health services (counselling, peer support, workshops) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Office of Diversity & Inclusion Counselling & Wellness Center
5. Enhancing Institutional Appeal and Reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen digital marketing (alumni success, career opportunities) Foster industry partnerships for employability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marketing & Communications Career Services/Alumni Relations

Conclusion

WSU stands as a beacon of inclusivity, diversity, and rural outreach, offering opportunities to students from all walks of life. Its mission to provide accessible and high-quality education reflects a deep commitment to social transformation and empowerment. However, despite these commendable efforts, many students continue to face significant challenges that hinder their academic and personal growth. Issues related to infrastructure, financial constraints, administrative inefficiencies, and limited academic support create barriers that can make success an uphill battle.

To truly fulfil its vision of academic excellence and student empowerment, WSU must adopt a student-centred approach that prioritizes their needs, listens to their concerns, and implements meaningful reforms. Enhancing infrastructure such as expanding modern learning facilities, ensuring reliable technology access, and improving campus accommodations—will create an environment conducive to success. Addressing financial struggles through increased funding opportunities, transparent bursary allocations, and streamlined administrative processes can alleviate unnecessary stress and allow students to focus on their education. Strengthening academic support systems, including mentorship programs, accessible tutoring, and well-structured curricula, will provide students with the tools they need to excel.

The journey toward transformation is not the responsibility of a single entity but requires a collective commitment from university leadership, faculty, students, and policymakers. By fostering open dialogue, implementing strategic interventions, and continuously refining its support structures, WSU can become a place where every student regardless of background has the opportunity to thrive. In doing so, the institution will not only uplift individuals but also solidify its reputation as a leading force in higher education, dedicated to shaping a brighter, more inclusive future.

References

1. De Freitas, S.I., Morgan, J. and Gibson, D., 2015. Will MOOCs transform learning and teaching in higher education? Engagement and course retention in online learning provision. *British journal of educational technology*, 46(3), pp.455-471.
2. McGregor, K.K., Langenfeld, N., Van Horne, S., Oleson, J., Anson, M. and Jacobson, W., 2016. The university experiences of students with learning disabilities. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 31(2), pp.90-102.
3. Terenzini, P.T., Springer, L., Yaeger, P.M., Pascarella, E.T. and Nora, A., 1996. First-generation college students: Characteristics, experiences, and cognitive development. *Research in Higher education*, 37, pp.1-22.
4. Margaryan, A., Littlejohn, A. and Vojt, G., 2011. Are digital natives a myth or reality? University students' use of digital technologies. *Computers & education*, 56(2), pp.429-440.
5. Leathwood, C. and O'connell, P., 2003. 'It's a struggle': the construction of the 'new student'in higher education. *J. Education Policy*, 18(6), pp.597-615.
6. Harte, V. and Stewart, J., 2010. Undertaking HRD research in higher education: a longitudinal approach to evaluating undergraduate "enterprise education" modules. *Education+ training*, 52(8/9), pp.679-693.
7. Varghese, S.S., Ramesh, A. and Veeraiyan, D.N., 2019. Blended module-based teaching in biostatistics and research methodology: A retrospective study with postgraduate dental students. *Journal of dental education*, 83(4), pp.445-450.
8. Benfield, J.A. and Szlemko, W.J., 2006. Internet-based data collection: Promises and realities. *Journal of Research Practice*, 2(2), p.D1. Benfield, J.A. and Szlemko, W.J.,
9. Sue, V.M. and Ritter, L.A., 2007. *Conducting online surveys*. Sage.
10. Dillman, D.A., 2011. *Mail and Internet surveys: The tailored design method--2007 Update with new Internet, visual, and mixed-mode guide*. John Wiley & Sons. est, S.J. and Krueger, B.S., 2004. *Internet data collection* (No. 141). Sage.
11. Tourangeau, R., Conrad, F.G. and Couper, M.P., 2013. *The science of web surveys*. Oxford University Press.
12. Tuten, J., Westcott, K., Drews, D., White, B. and Talisman, N., 2015. Evaluating the Effects of Cultural Event Attendance: A Qualitative Approach. *Juniata Voices*, 15.
13. Perrault, E.K., 2016. Attitudes and motivations of students toward athletic-event attendance at a midsize division III university: Recommendations for communicators. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 9(3), pp.321-339.

14. Finkel, R. and Dashper, K., 2020. Accessibility, diversity and inclusion in events. In *The Routledge handbook of events* (pp. 475-490). Routledge.
15. Person, K., 2011. A descriptive analysis of demographic characteristics and their influence on student attendance at programming board events.
16. Lacey, M.M., Capper-Parkin, K., Schwartz-Narbonne, R., Hargreaves, K., Higham, C., Duckett, C., Forbes, S. and Rawlinson, K., 2023. University student-led public engagement event: increasing audience diversity and impact in a non-science space. *Access Microbiology*, 5(8), pp.000534-v3.
17. Walters, T., 2018. A tripartite approach to accessibility, diversity, and inclusion in academic conferences. In *Accessibility, inclusion, and diversity in critical event studies* (pp. 230-241). Routledge.
18. Keet, A. and Swartz, D., 2015. A transformation barometer for South African higher education: Draft discussion document. *Introduction—the "system" II. Systemic Transformation Challenges*.
19. Meyer, L. and Fish, P., Degrees of Freedom: Rethinking Higher Education Credentials in South Africa. In *Proceedings of the International Conference on Education Research*. Academic Conferences and Publishing Limited.
20. Kapp, K. and van Wyk, B.J., 2018. The effect of the Higher Education Qualifications Sub-Framework act on human resources: a faculty of engineering and the built environment case study. In *EDULEARN18 Proceedings* (pp. 6649-6656). IATED.



