



COVID-19 Student Survey Report

College Student Alliance (CSA)

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The CSA COVID-19 Student Survey was conducted to collect student experiences and to better understand how college students in Ontario can be supported during the COVID-19 pandemic and into the future. We posed questions surrounding 5 key areas of concern: academics, financials, employment, issues affecting international students, and mental health. Between April 21st and April 30th, 2020, 75 responses were collected through an online survey from students from 12 different colleges in Ontario. Based on the sample size, this survey has a confidence level of 90% and a 10% margin of error.

Student Status

Part-time students	11%
Full-time students	89%

Mature Students

Mature students (≥ 25 years)	41%
Non-mature students (< 25 yrs)	59%

Affected by the 2017 College Strike

Yes	33%
No	64%
Not sure	3%

International or Domestic Student

International	38%
Domestic	62%

Academics

Online Course-Delivery

Since COVID-19 physical distancing measures came into effect in Ontario, all of Ontario's 24 colleges have closed their campuses and transitioned to online course-delivery. The majority of our survey respondents (92%) have experienced all of their classes being moved online, which are being carried out through: a) online video-conferencing, b) uploaded powerpoint slides, or c) uploaded instruction videos, with the exception of some respondents (8%) having one or more classes cancelled completely. Within a short period, college students have had to adjust to this new mode of learning with varying levels of satisfaction. Respondents report mixed feelings in terms of their satisfaction with online classes; roughly one third report being satisfied, one third report feeling neutral, and one third report feeling dissatisfied (see Figure 1). Additionally, 13% report not having adequate technology to effectively access their online class materials, such as wifi, a computer, or software.

Satisfaction with Online Course-Delivery

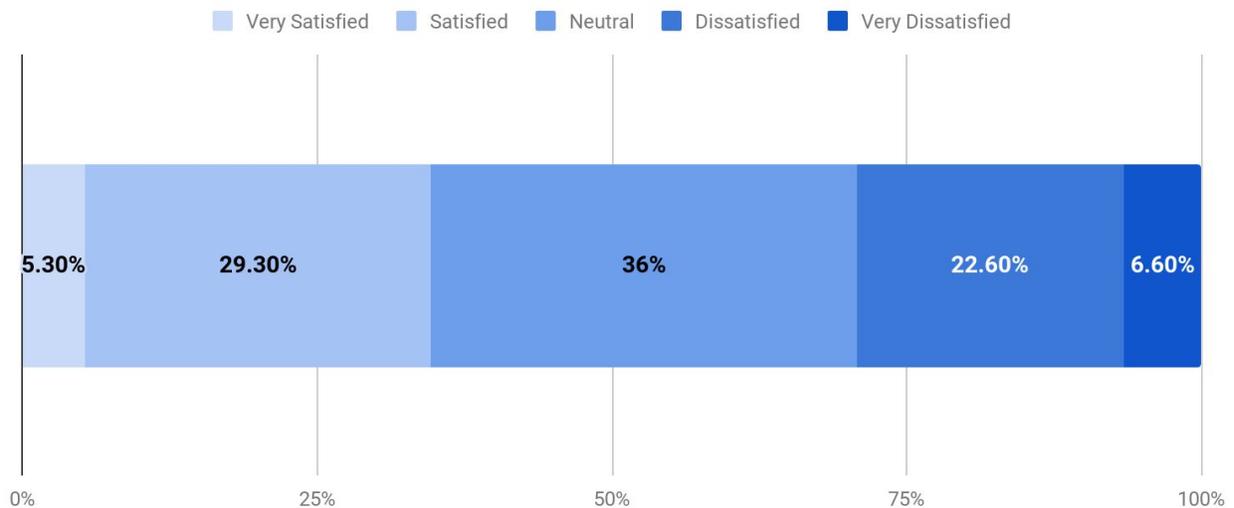


Figure 1

Practicum

In addition to in-person classes, hands-on practicum and co-ops have also been adjusted as to adhere to physical distancing measures. Of the 35% of respondents who were participating in a practicum this past semester, most indicate that their practicum was either cancelled or turned into an assignment, with some indicating that their practicum was postponed or carried out in alternative means. Practicum is a crucial component of many college programs that is imperative to students' preparedness for the workforce and effective completion of programs, as 91% of respondents with practicum indicate that this hands-on learning experience was a mandatory program component.

Continuation of Studies

Our research shows that more respondents are returning to school (45%) than expecting to graduate (27%). However when asked if they believe COVID-19 will delay the completion of their program, 17% answered yes, and 39% are unsure. When asked if they have deferred the upcoming semester, 89% said they have not. Our data suggests that many students wish to return to school and to have as little interruption to their classes and program completion as possible.

Finances

Physical-distancing measures have forced the closures of institutions and businesses, which has created a precarious situation for college students, causing many to struggle to fund their education and afford basic necessities. When asked in which ways COVID-19 has affected them financially, over 60% of respondents indicate that COVID-19 has significantly impacted their ability to fund their education, and 49% indicate that they are having a decreased ability to afford rent. While when asked what kind of funds they have access to, 25% report support from CERB, 20% report support from OSAP, and 19% reported having financial assistance from family, yet 31% report not having access to any support (see Figure 2). Our survey data shows that many college students are being impacted financially by COVID-19 and that the funds they have access to do not meet their financial needs. Access to adequate funds is imperative for the well-being and ability to continue their studies in the upcoming year.

Access to Funds

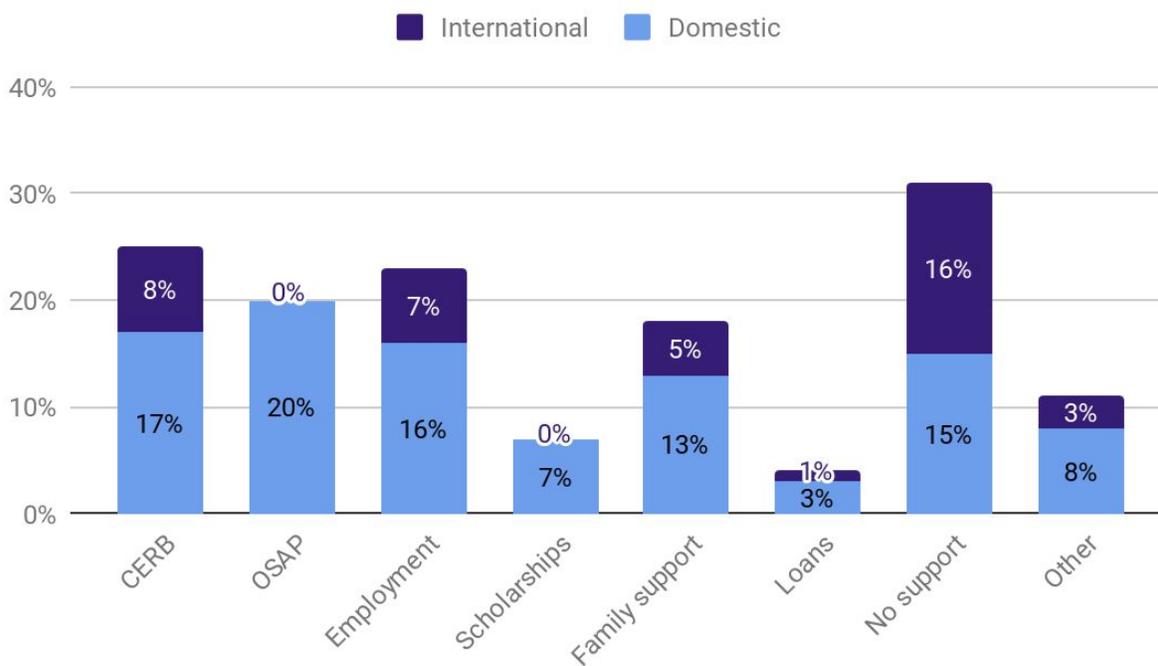


Figure 2

Employment

COVID-19 has impacted the employment of many college students who rely on their job(s) to support themselves and their families—23% of our survey respondents have dependents. When asked in which ways their employment has been affected by COVID-19, 37% of respondents report that they were looking for a job but now few jobs are available to them, 24% report being laid off, 19% report having a job offer rescinded, and 16% report working fewer hours (see Figure 3). Whether COVID-19 had affected their employment or not, the majority of respondents (75%) indicate that they are significantly concerned about finding a job after graduation in a post-COVID-19 economy. Our data suggests that COVID-19 could have long-term ramifications for the career development of many college students in Ontario.

COVID-19 Effects on Employment

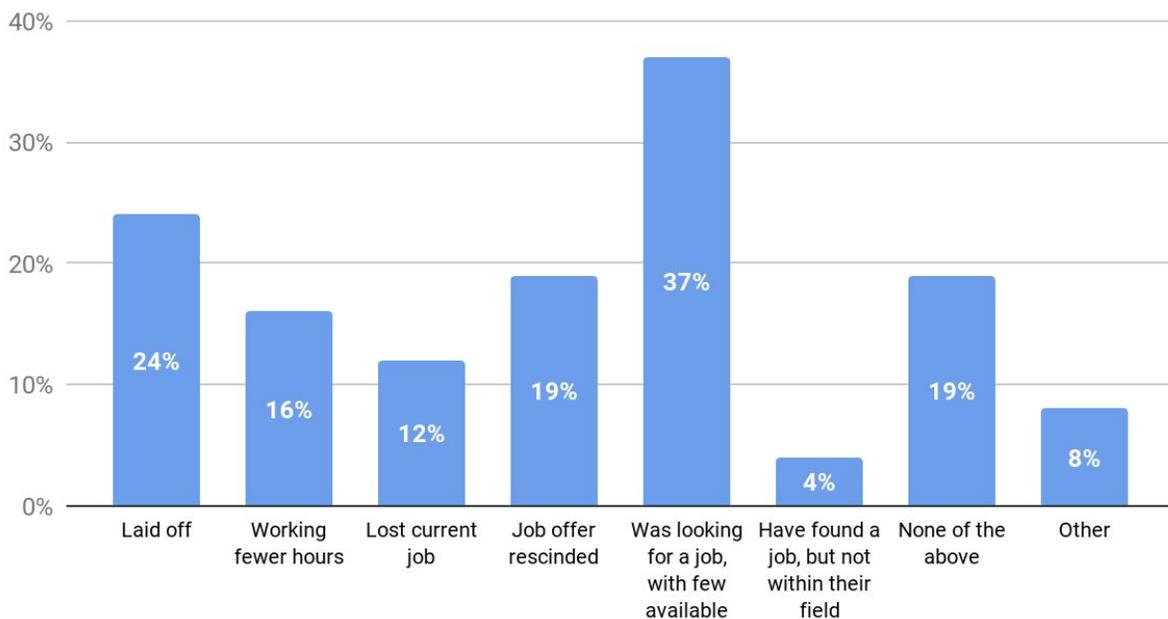


Figure 3

International Students

International students make up a significant portion of Ontario's college student population and make up 38% of our survey respondents. When asked what kind of support they have access to, some international students report having access to CERB, employment, institutional emergency relief, and financial support from family, however the majority of international students indicate that they do not have access to any financial support (see Figure 2). Our survey findings show that international students are twice as likely to not have access to support in comparison to domestic students, which demonstrates that international students are disproportionately without access to support. (see Figure 4).

Percentage of Domestic vs International Students Without Access to Financial Support

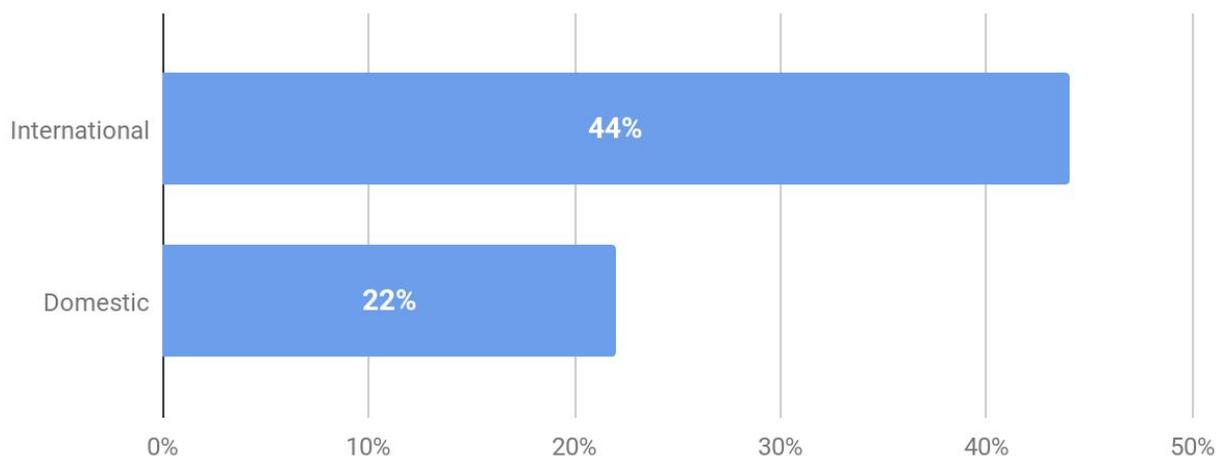


Figure 4

College communities are integral sources of support for many international students who are far away from their families and support networks. Institutional closures have made it more difficult for many international students to continue their studies in Canada. When asked if they have plans to return to their home country as a result of COVID-19, international students have mixed reactions: 12% answered yes, 69% answered no, and 19% were not sure. However, 50% indicated that COVID-19 travel restrictions have prevented them from returning home. Some international students may have initially intended to return home but were forced to remain in Canada with limited access to support.

Mental Health

The financial and academic pressures posed by COVID-19 have resulted in increased negative mental health in college students. Both students with and without preexisting negative mental health are experiencing increased severity and frequency of stress, depression, and anxiety. Of those who answered whether they are experiencing negative mental health due to COVID-19, 72% of respondents indicate they are experiencing increased negative mental health and roughly half report that they currently do not have access to mental health support. Respondents report the following mental health determinants associated with COVID-19:

- Financial stress
- Distance from family
- Inability to work
- Transition to online learning
- Isolation
- Academic Uncertainty
- Pre-existing mental health diagnoses

We asked respondents to describe their current situation and major concerns, an analysis on their answers revealed the most prevalent themes of concern: self-sustainability (40); academics (26); employment (24); and health (16). Respondents indicate that financial pressures, academic pressures, and personal well-being are the issues of utmost concern for college students that are affecting their mental health. In addition, we asked respondents what types of support would help their current situations, their responses are presented in Table 1. As many of the supports mentioned by respondents are linked to the aforementioned mental health determinants, these supports could benefit not only the overall circumstances of college students but also improve their mental health.

Type of Support (% of respondents)	Specific Supports Mentioned
Financial Support (65%)	Loan payment deferrals, increased access to emergency funds, increased grants, rent support, and fee or tuition reduction.
Mental Health Support (17%)	Online therapy from counsellors.
Employment Support (13%)	Increased job opportunities.
Academic Support (6%)	One-on-one communications from teachers and increased communication from institutions regarding the upcoming school year.

Table 1

Conclusion

We surveyed Ontario college students on their circumstances and concerns in light of COVID-19 to obtain a better understanding of how they could be supported now and into the future. Our results show that the employment and financial standing of many college students are being affected by COVID-19. College students are concerned about affording their education and basic necessities, finding a job after graduation, and successfully completing their practicum and online classes. International students are particularly struggling with limited access to financial support, with some being prevented from returning home. While these concerns are quite common for college students regardless of the current circumstances, the additional stresses posed by physical-distancing, closures of institutions, and fewer employment opportunities have exacerbated the concerns of college students. As a result, many college students are experiencing increased negative mental health—some without access to mental health support. Our survey findings demonstrate that college students would benefit from increased financial, mental health, employment, and academic support.