

# Who are our first-year students? What do they expect? How can we best support them?

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ONDERRIG-EN-LEERSENTRUM  
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# Outline

- Who are our students?
- How engaged do they expect to be?
- What do they come into university with?

# What do we know?

- Underprepared students
  - Struggle with transition
  - Vulnerable to drop-out
- 
- How does this influence first-year experience?

# What can we contribute

- Getting to know students who enter
  - We can better serve and help them when we understand where they're coming from
- Provide data through Student Engagement
  - Large database of national self-reported data
  - Well-researched
  - Could lead to further research

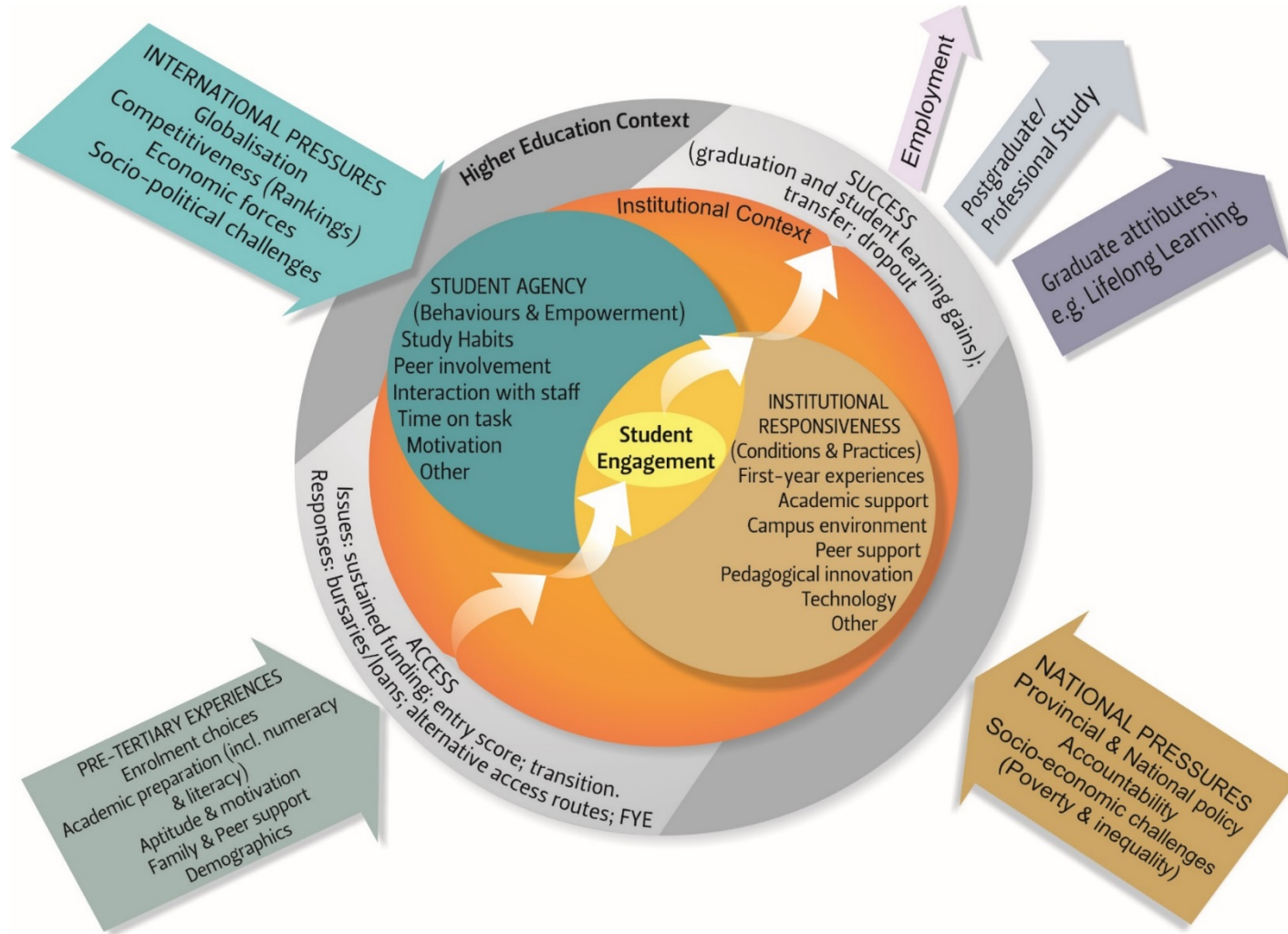


# What is Student Engagement?

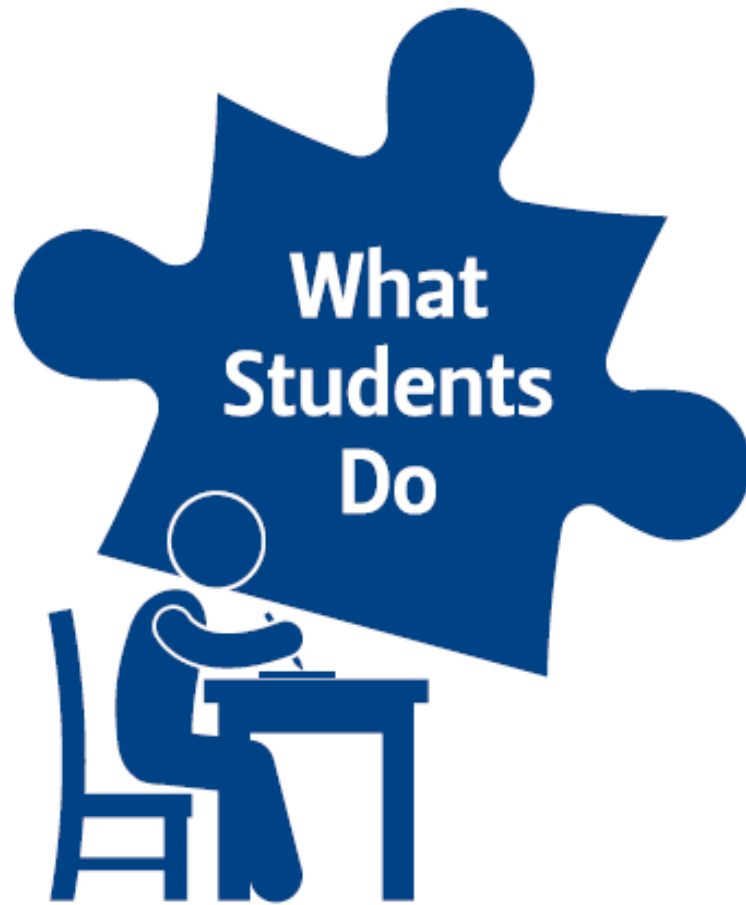




# What is student engagement?



# What is student engagement?



# Range of Student Engagement Measures

Institutional	<b>BUSSE</b>	Beginning University Survey of Student Engagement
	<b>SASSE</b>	South African Survey of Student Engagement
	<b>LSSE</b>	Lecturer Survey of Student Engagement
Module/course	<b>CLASSE</b>	CLASSE-Student: Classroom Survey of Student Engagement
		CLASSE-Lecturer: Classroom Survey of Student Engagement



# About BUSSE

- Administered as soon as students enter university
- Collects data about entering university students'
  - high school experiences
  - expectations for participating in educationally purposeful activities during first year.

# BUSSE themes and scales

## High-school engagement

- Quantitative reasoning
- Learning strategies

## First-year expectations

- Collaborative learning
- Student-staff interaction
- Discussions with diverse others
- Academic perseverance
- Academic difficulty
- Perceived academic preparation
- Importance of campus environment



# Who are our students?

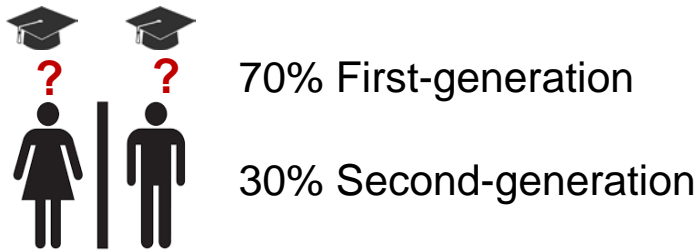


# BUSSE data

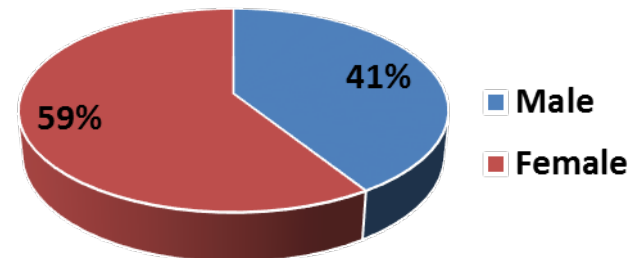
2015-2017: 9 universities participated, 14 872 students.

Published together with USAf: *Understanding students: A key to systemic success*

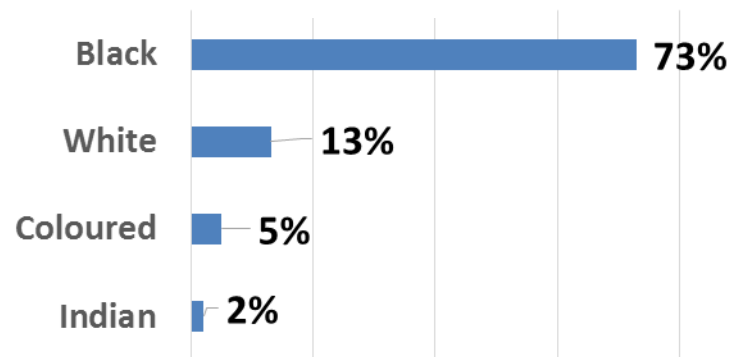
## First-generation status



## Gender



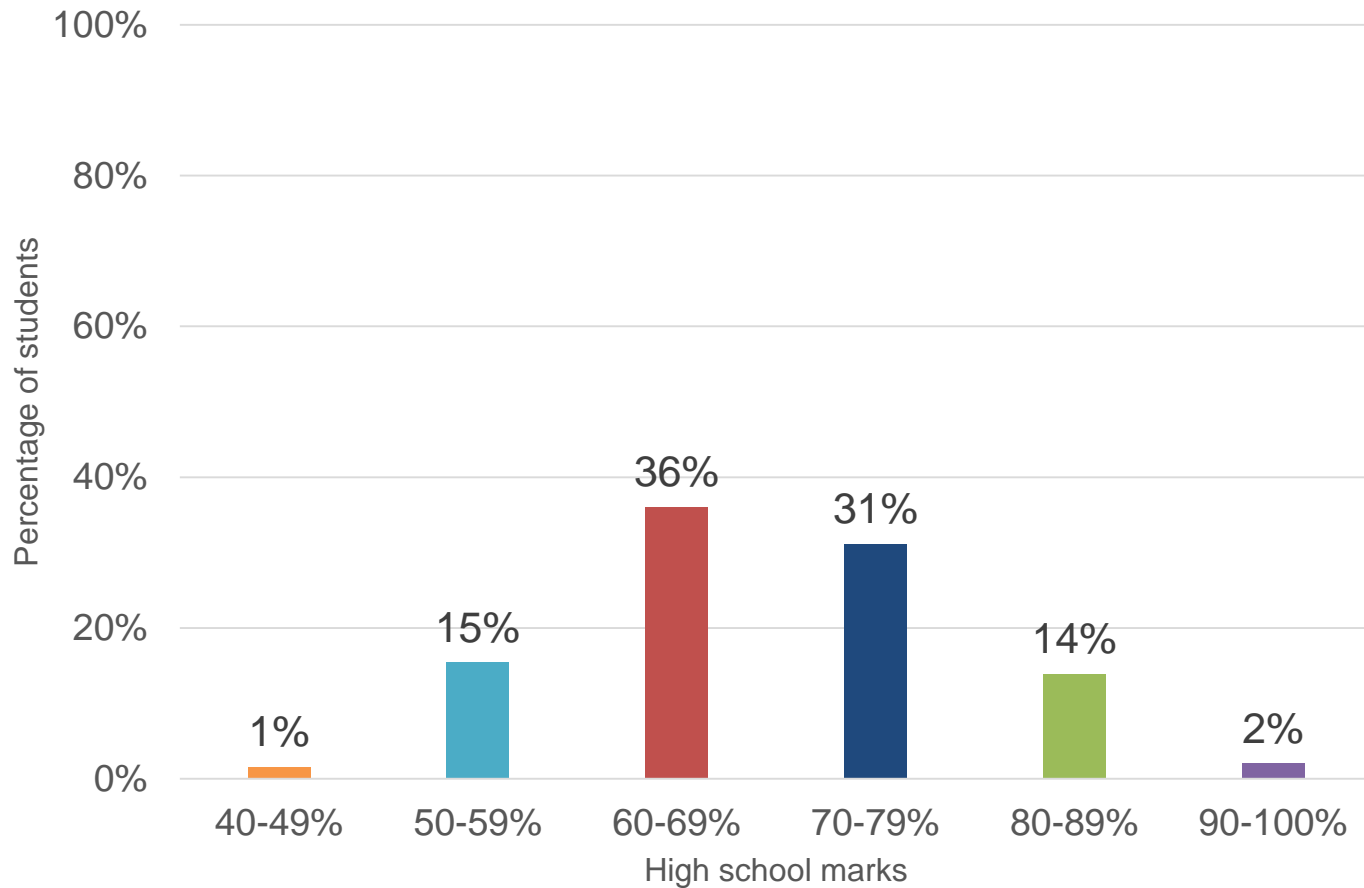
## Race



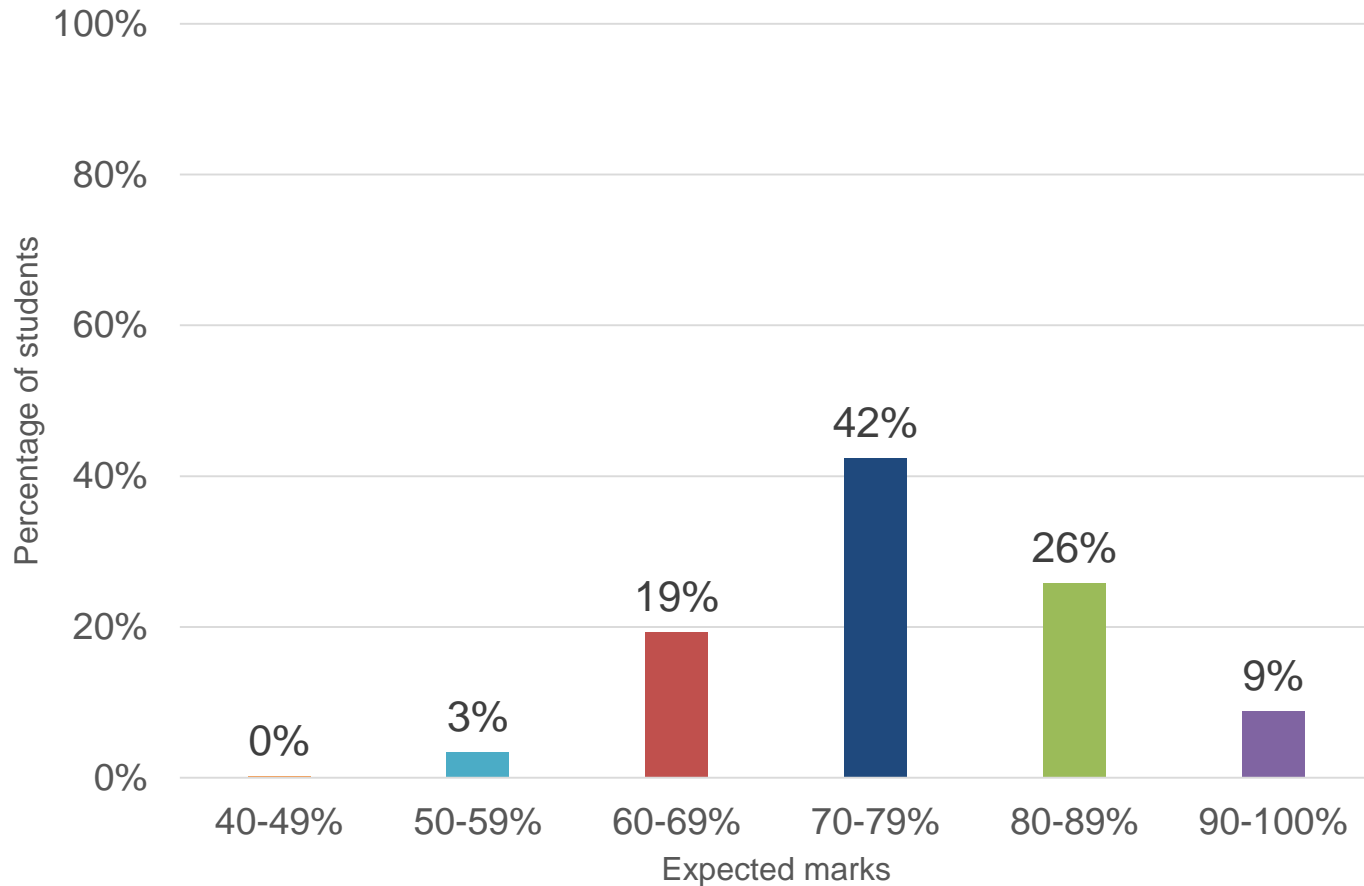
## Residential status



# What were most of your high school marks?

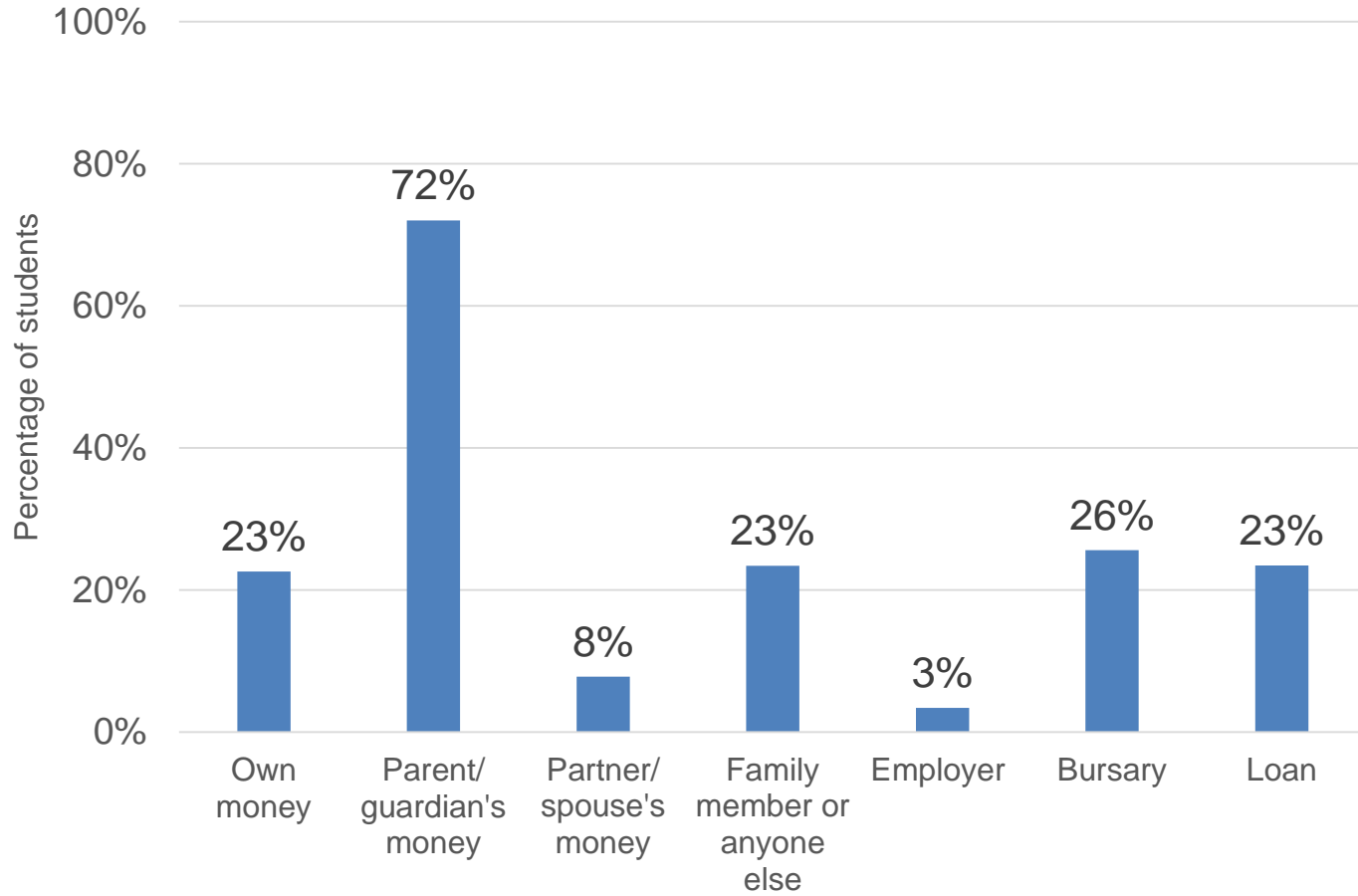


# What do you expect most of your marks to be at this university during the coming year?

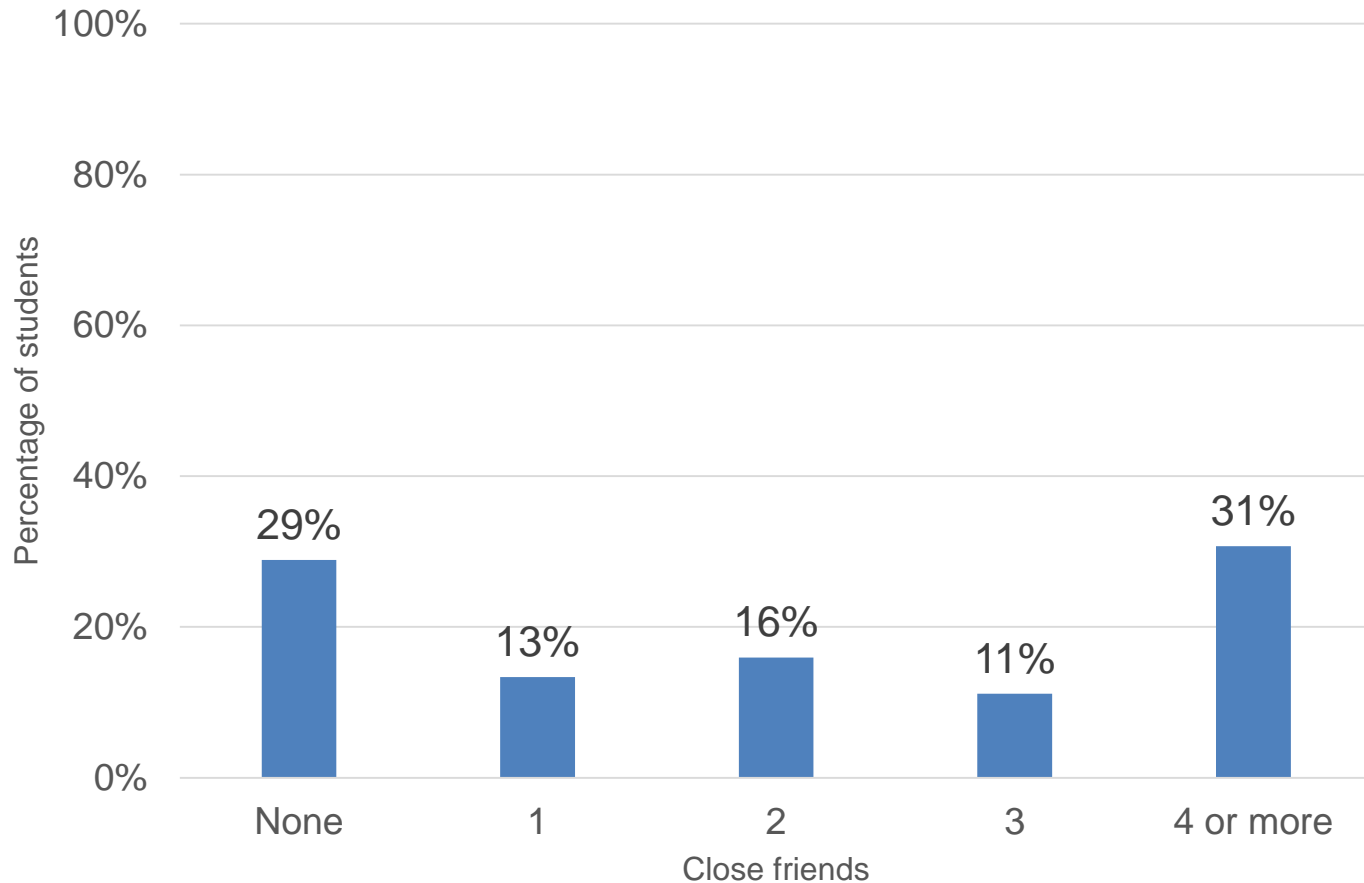




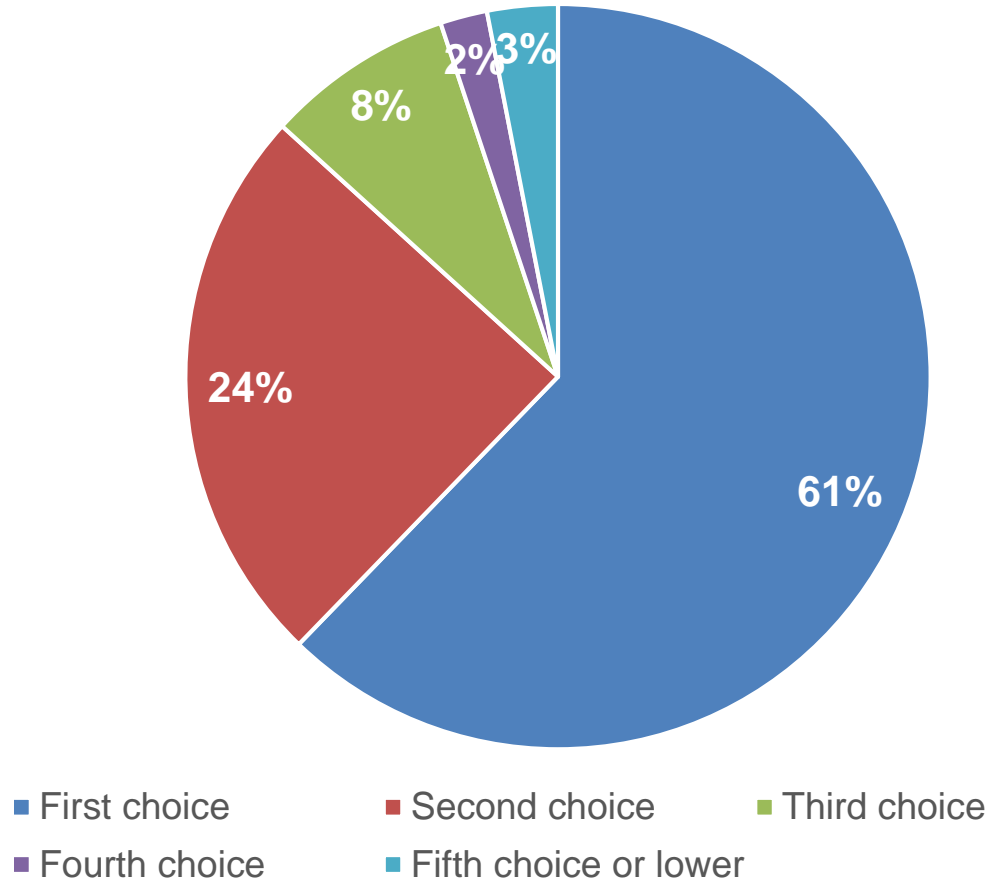
# Which of the following sources are you using to pay for your educational expenses (tuition fees, books, room and board, etc.)?



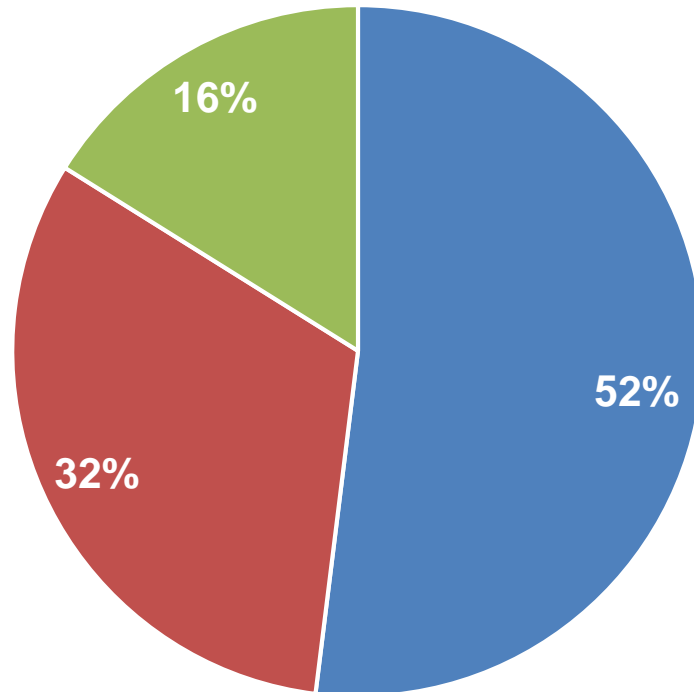
# How many of your close friends will attend this university during the coming year?



# This institution was your:

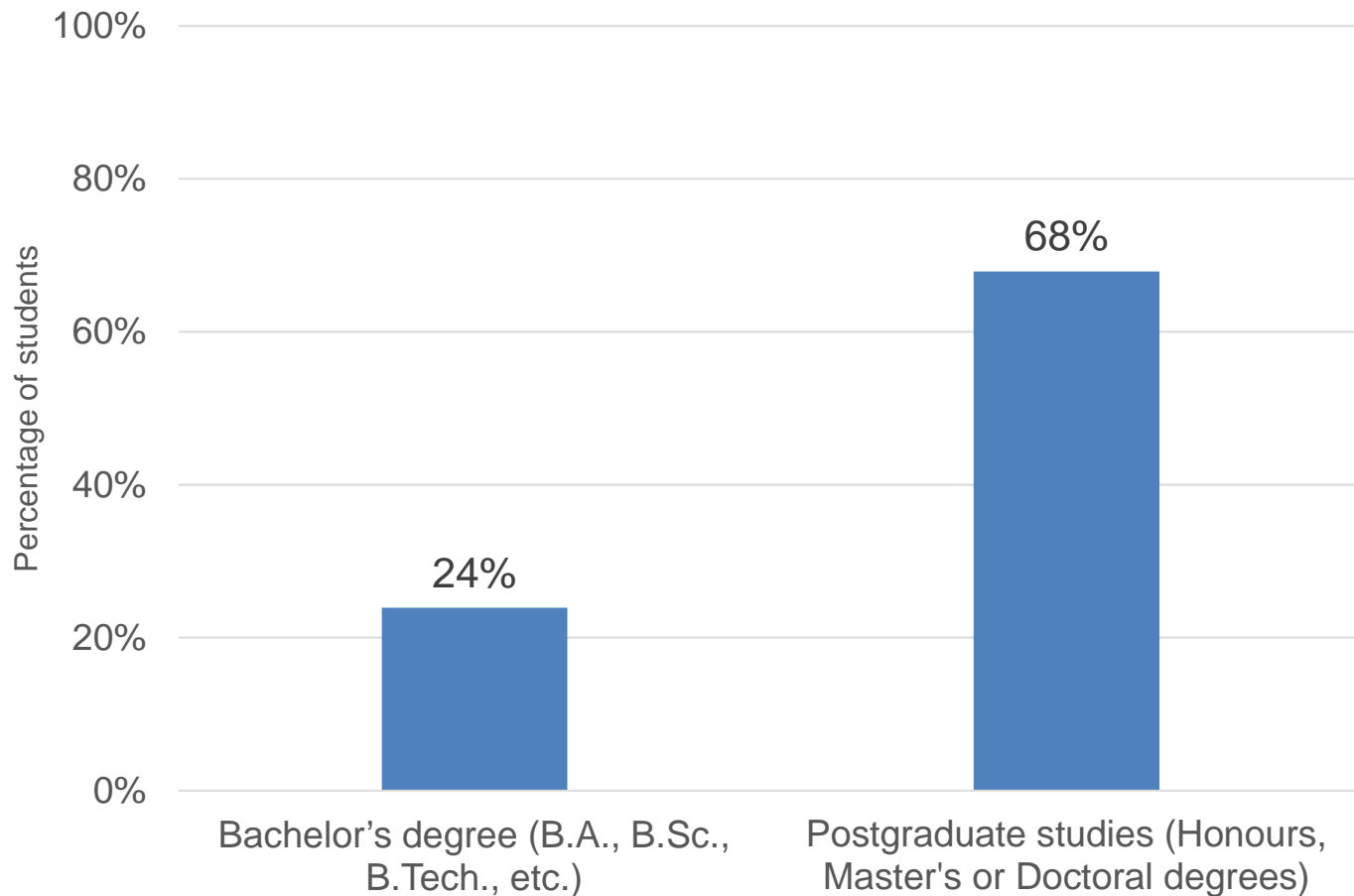


# Your programme of study was your:



■ First choice ■ Second choice ■ Third choice

# Highest qualification aiming to complete



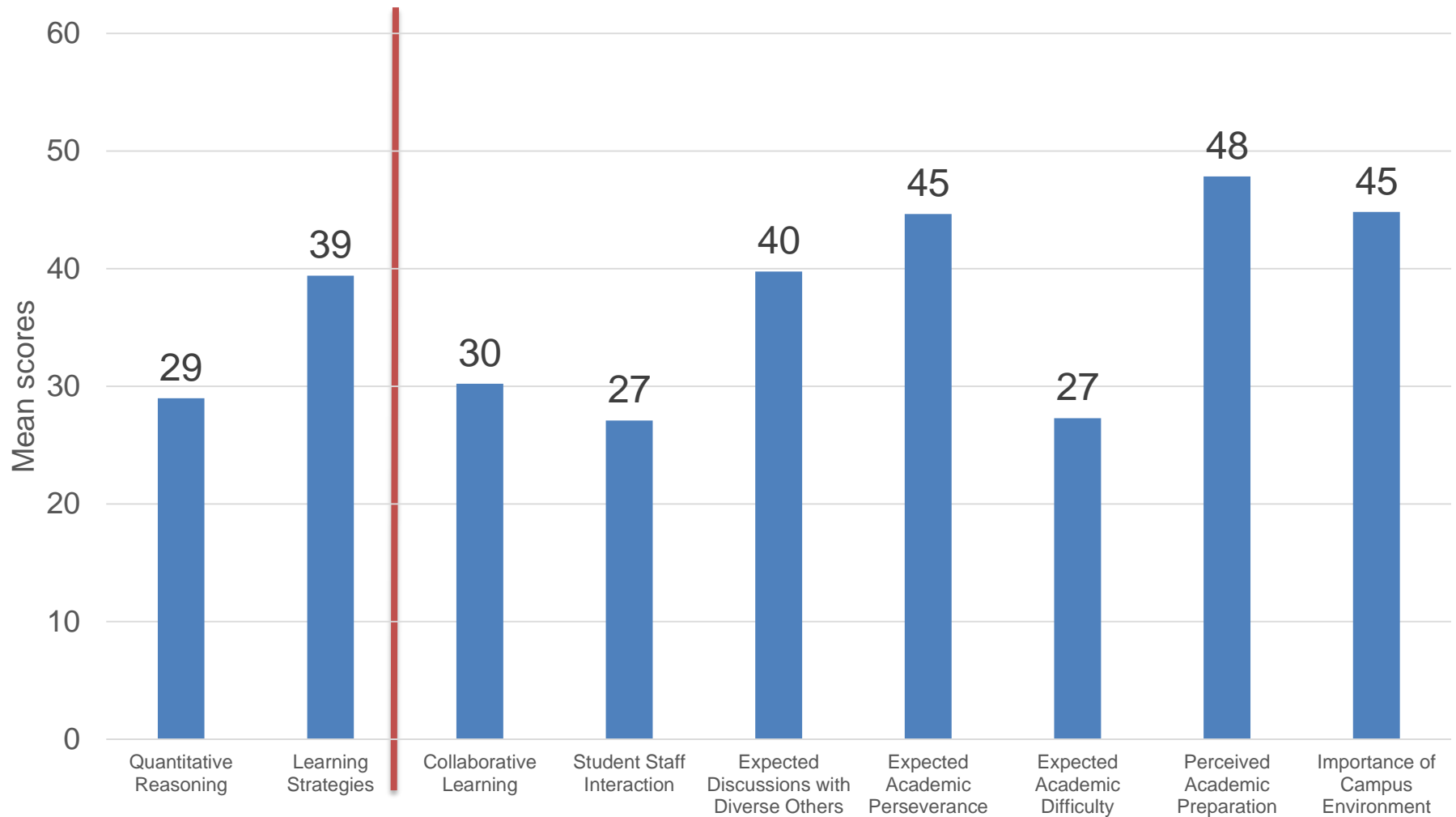


# How engaged do they expect to be?

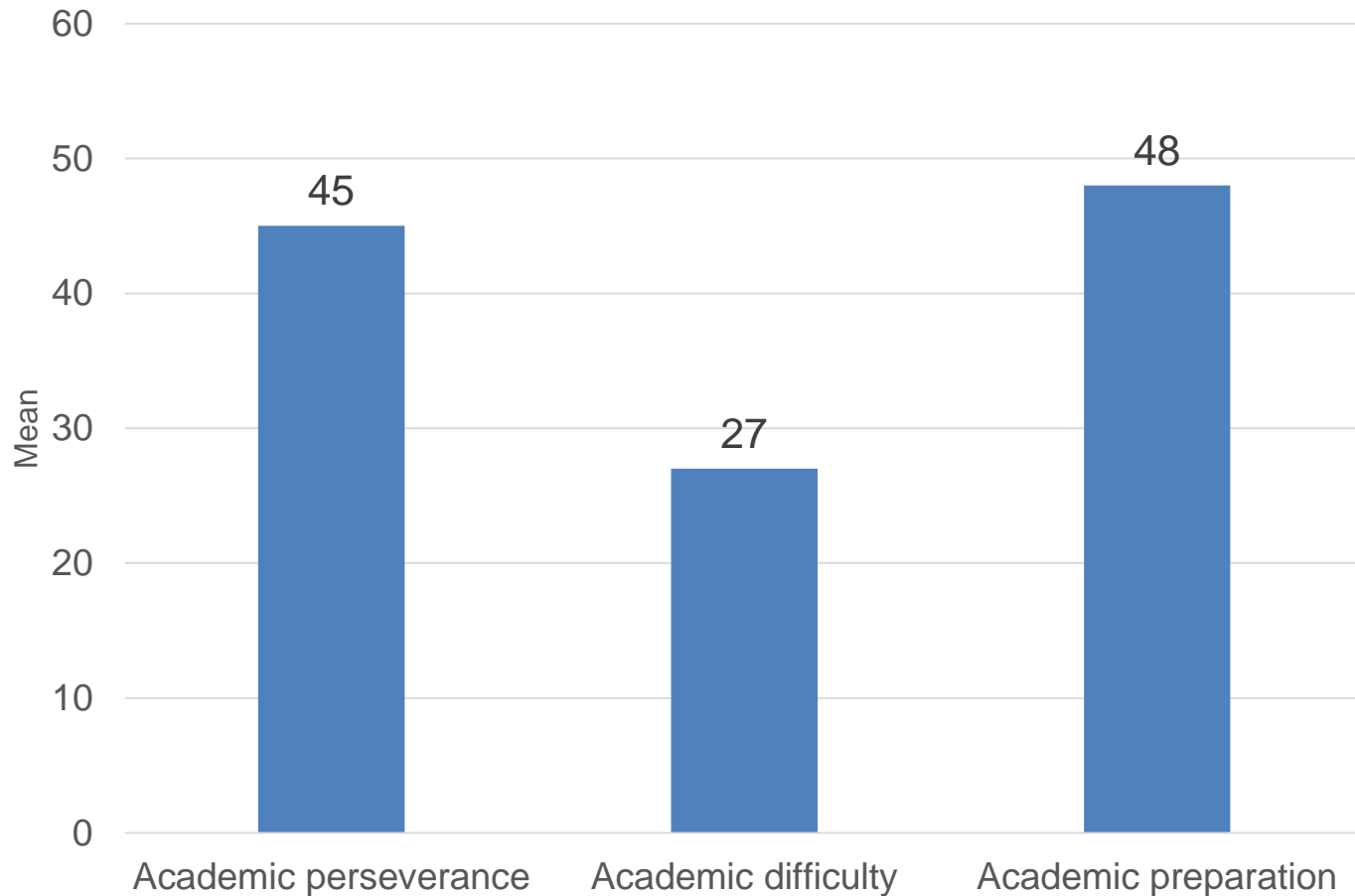




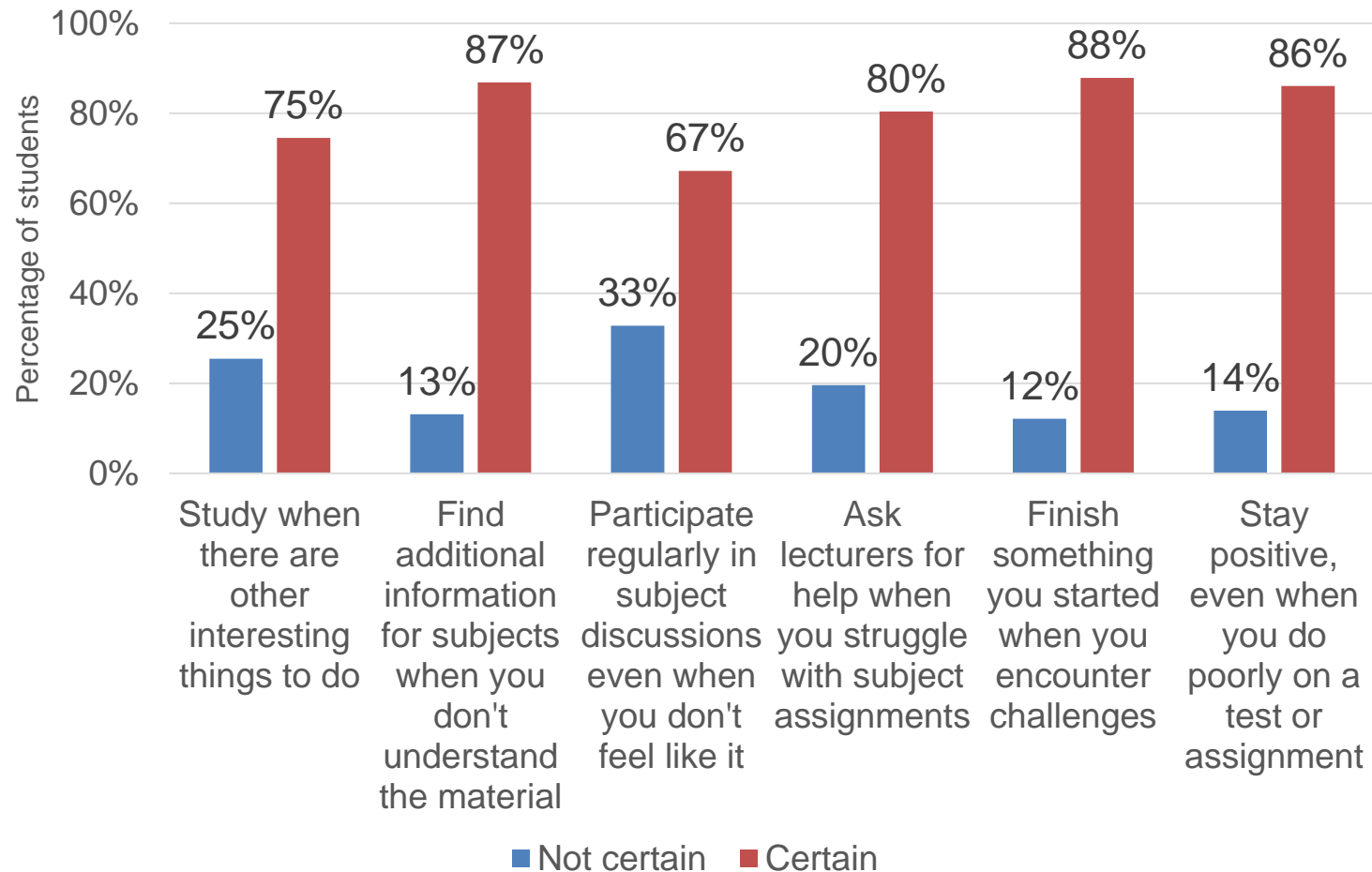
# BUSSE mean scale scores



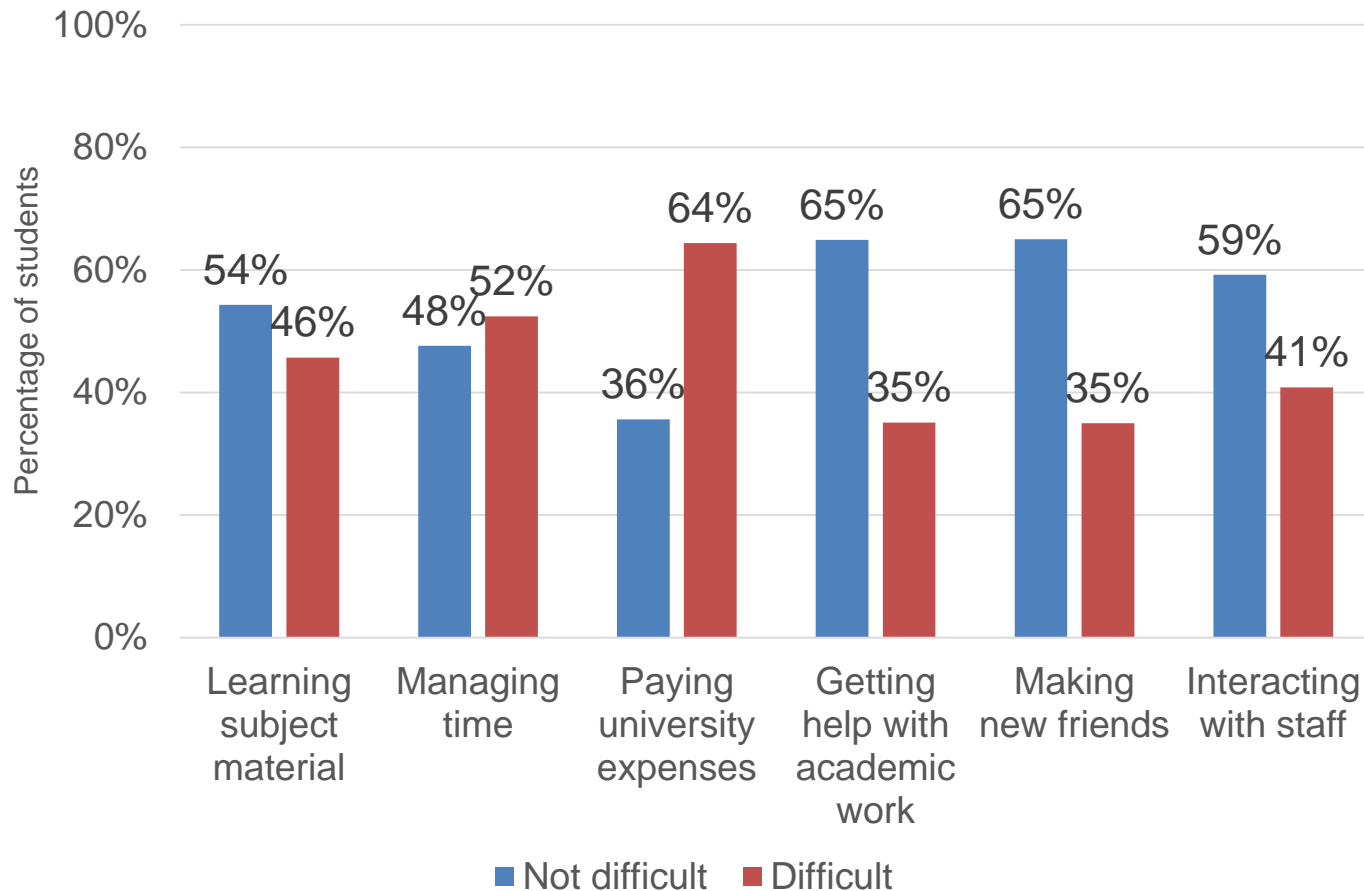
# Perceived preparedness vs. Expected difficulty



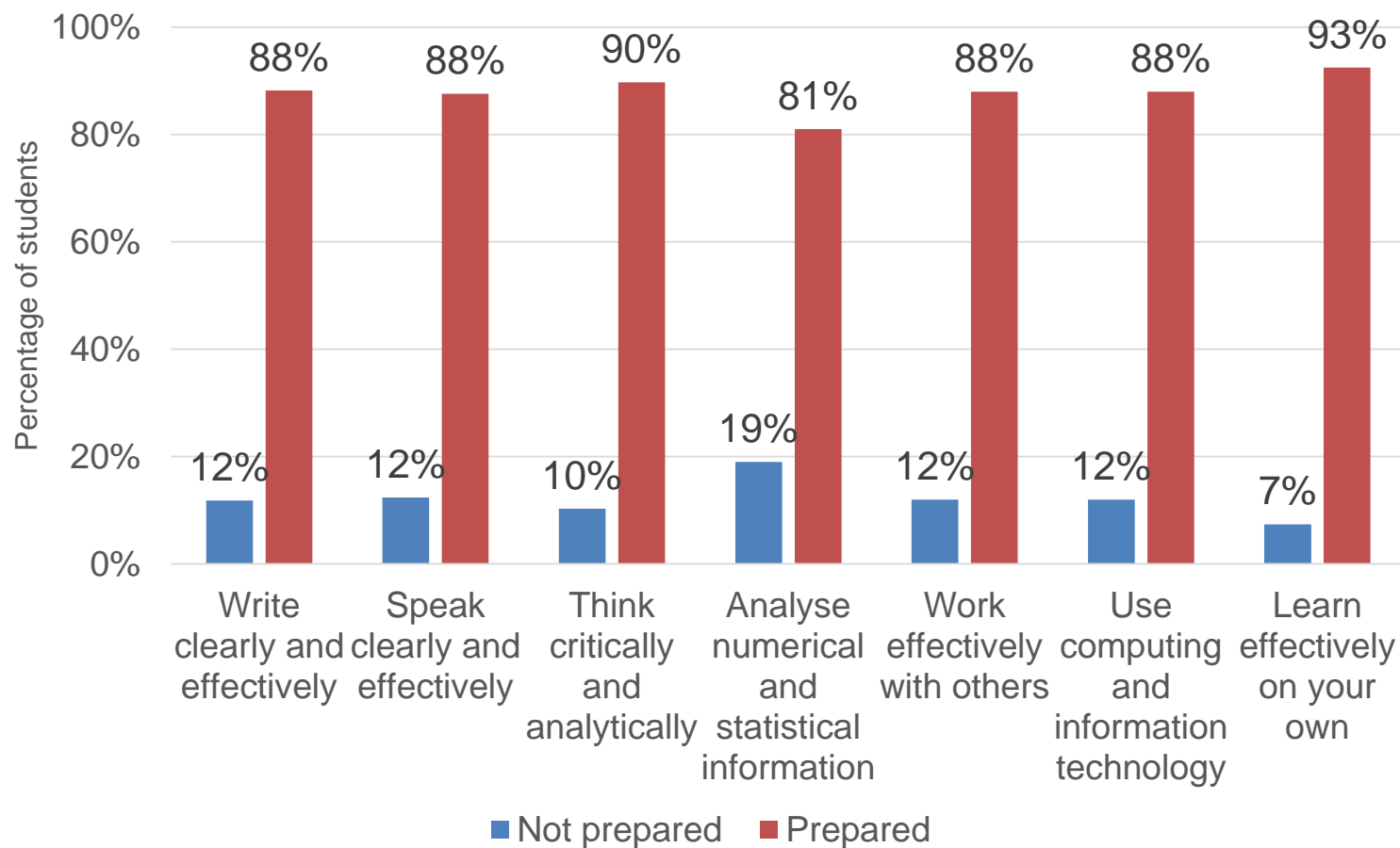
# Academic perseverance



# Academic difficulty



# Perceived academic preparation





# What do they come into university with?





# Writing



On average:  
Wrote **123.4 pages** in high school

On average:  
Expect to write **220.6 pages** in first year

# Time spent preparing for class



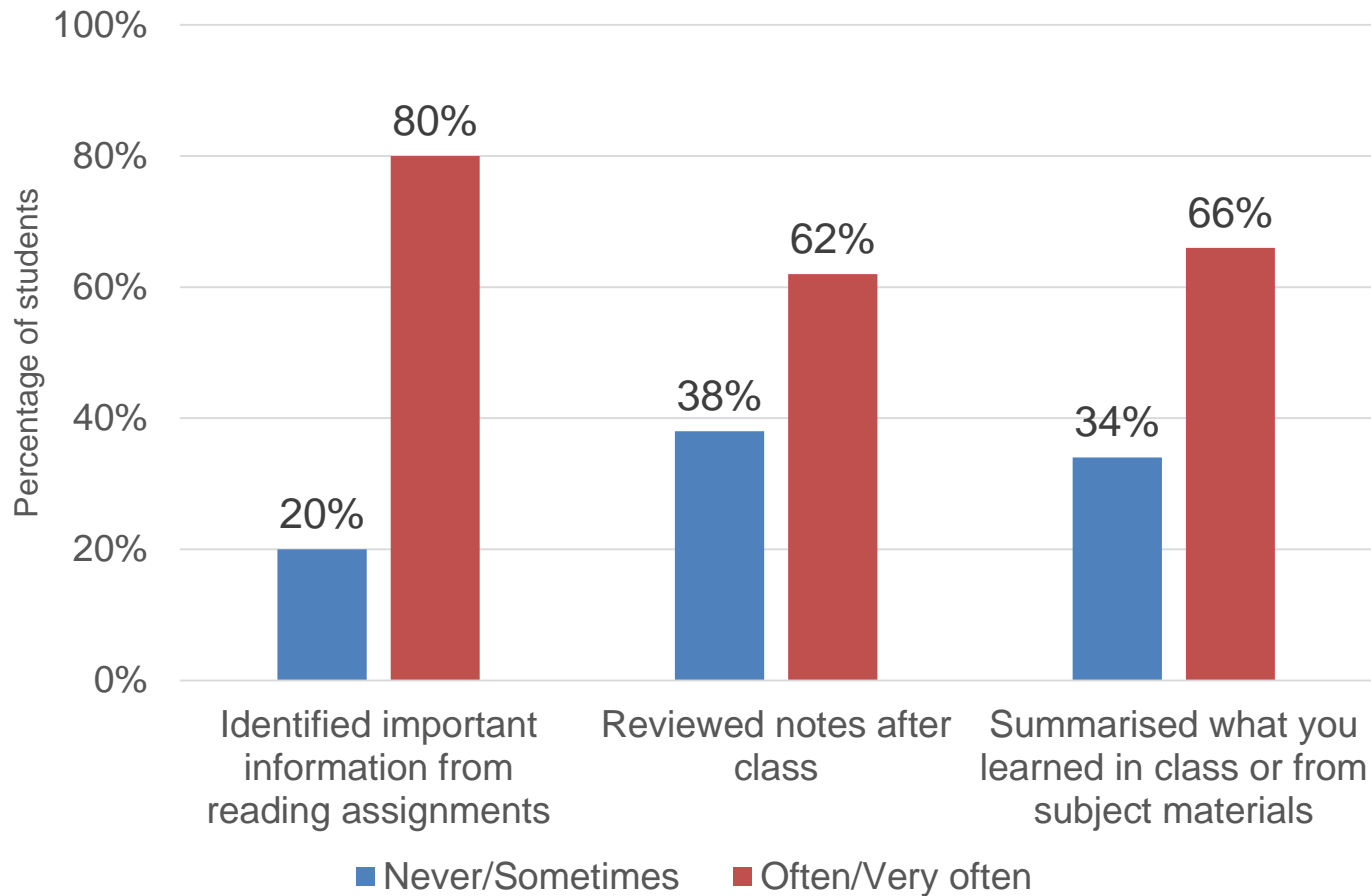
On average:

Spent **12.5 hours** preparing for class in high school

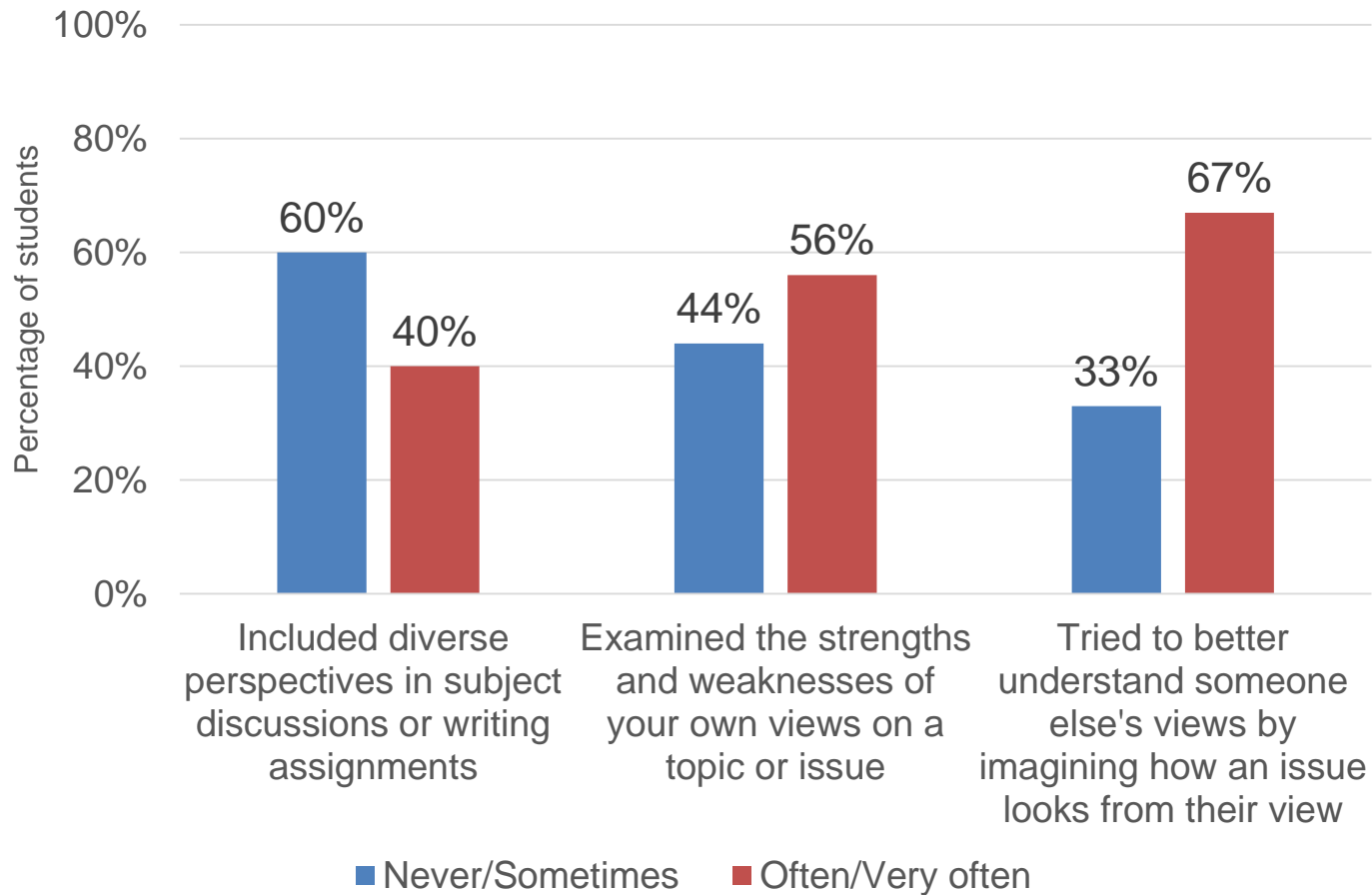
On average:

Expect to spend **15.9 hours** preparing for class in first year

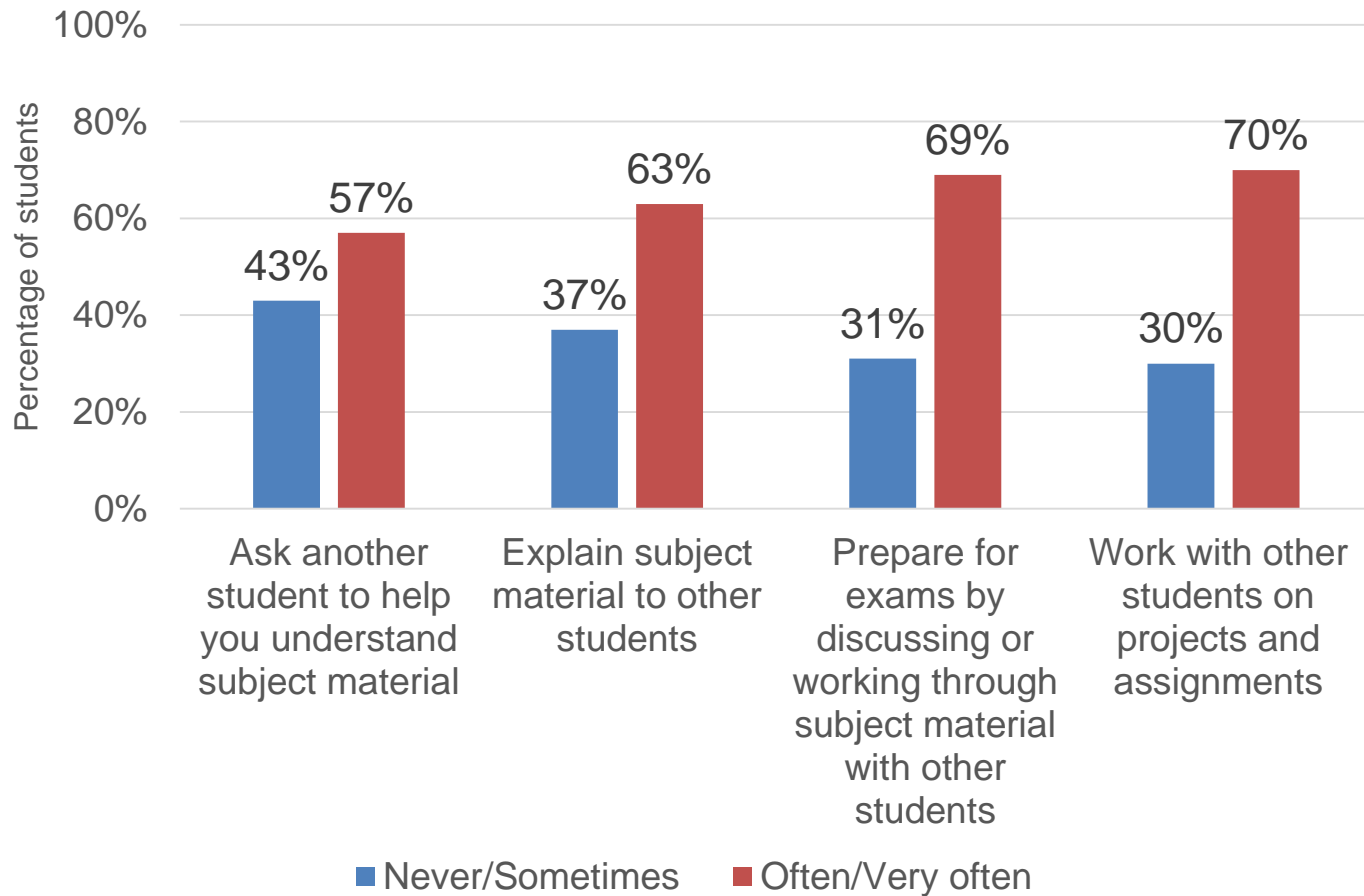
# Learning strategies – high school



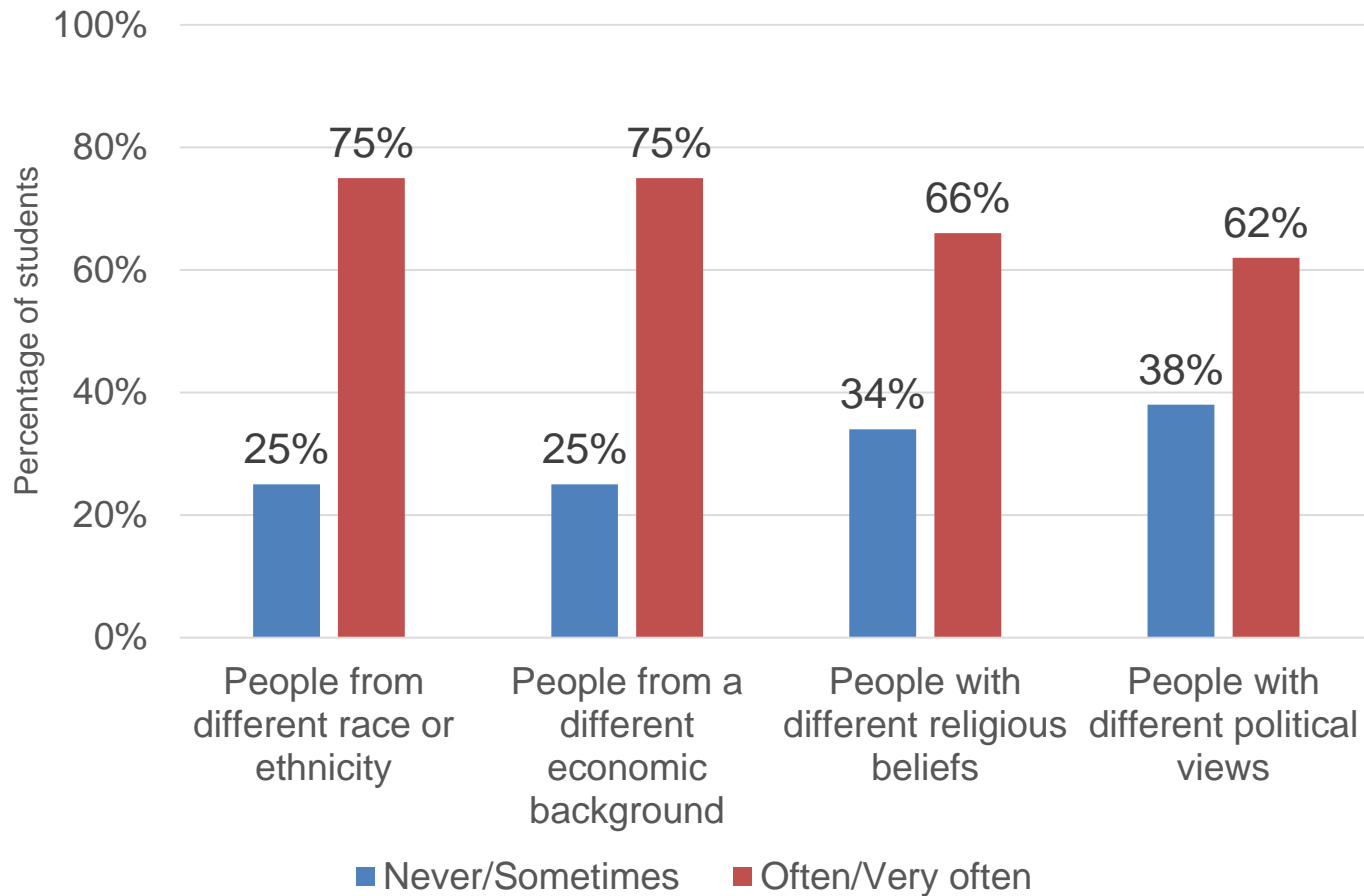
# Engaging in deep learning – high school



# Expected Collaborative learning



# Expected Discussions with diverse others







# Why is this necessary to know?



# The case of first-generation students

The vast majority of students are **first-generation** (70%).

- More FG students enter with lower scores
- More FG students live off campus
- FG students have considered dropping out because of: financial stress (47%); food insecurity (31%); not feeling that they belong (19%); and poor academic achievement (16%)
- Show higher scores of perseverance and also expect to perform better academically at university than at school
- UFS analysis shows that FG students are less successful

# Conclusion

- Who are our students?
  - Important to know
- How engaged do they expect to be?
  - Manage these expectations
- What do they come into university with?
  - “Underprepared” students
- [http://www.usaf.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Understanding-students\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.usaf.ac.za/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/Understanding-students_WEB.pdf)



# Thank you!

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