

Empowering Canadian Post-Secondary Students: The impact of Studiosity on learning, confidence, and success

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1. Introduction

Studiosity

Studiosity provides online writing feedback and study help, 24/7, 365 days of the year, and is designed to meet social challenges. Studiosity is a global leader, partnering with more than 250 educational institutions worldwide, and supporting 1.6m students. Studiosity connects students with academic writing specialists and core skills tutors who provide feedback on their writing assignments and help them to work through problems in a live chat session. Studiosity compliments existing institutional services, enhances the student experience, and improves wellbeing, retention, performance, and integrity, proven through university research.

Studiosity Canada

Studiosity launched in Canada in 2021 and has grown to support over 20,000 students in Canada, with nine institutions trusting Studiosity to provide routine, personal feedback to their students. With guidance from an Academic Advisory Board including Dr. Mamdouh Shoukri, Former President of York University, Dr. Alan Shaver, President Emeritus at Thompson Rivers University, and Dr. Noreen Golfman, Former Provost & Vice-President Academic at Memorial University, and Ann Buller, C.M., President Emeritus of Centennial College, Studiosity continues to expand support for students across Canada, working in partnership with their higher education institutions.

2. About this report

As part of the introduction of Studiosity to Canadian universities and colleges, research has been commissioned to examine how students are experiencing and benefiting from Studiosity's online study success services. A survey was sent to all Studiosity users in each of the partner institutions about their experience of studying and of using Studiosity, and how it had impacted on them. The survey was sent by Studiosity, but the analysis was undertaken by Liz Thomas Associates Ltd. Each institution has received their own report, and in this report we undertake and present analysis from across the nine partner institutions. This enables us to identify trends, and provides a point of comparison for individual universities and colleges. In this report we draw comparisons between institutions using Studiosity, and with other Canadian post-secondary education providers drawing on the 2023 Canadian Student Wellbeing Survey (Angus Reid Group, 2023). Where appropriate we also make comparisons with students using Studiosity in the UK, drawing on Thomas 2019 and Thomas 2023.

3. Executive summary

Survey participants

The survey included responses from 380 students across nine partner institutions in Canada, with response rates ranging from 13% to 68%. The majority of respondents were female (75.79%), and a diverse range of ethnic backgrounds and age groups were represented. Approximately 15.79% reported having a disability, while 82.37% were domestic students. Most students were studying full-time at the undergraduate or taught Master's level, with business, management, and administration being the most common field of study.

Students' study context

The study revealed that many students had part-time jobs (66.32%) and often worked more than 16 hours per week (53.16%). Moreover, about one-third of respondents were caring for dependents while studying. A significant number had long commutes of more than 45 minutes. The majority of students used Studiosity outside of regular hours, indicating a need for support beyond typical academic support service hours.

Challenges

A considerable proportion of students (35.1%) felt comfortable studying alone, although others reported various negative consequences. Thoughts of quitting due to struggles in studying alone were reported by 59.0% of students. 80.3% of students mentioned studying all night at some point, with "too many work-life demands" as the most common reason.

Use of Studiosity at the time of the survey

More than half of the respondents had used Studiosity twice or more at the time of the survey. Research indicated that repeated engagement with Studiosity was associated with increased academic gains.

Impact on student learning

The data revealed a positive impact on student learning. Most students reported increased confidence, motivation, and study skills due to their experience with Studiosity. The majority felt they had learned a reasonable amount, and 77.9% of students indicated they were more likely to seek help when struggling with their studies, often through referrals to institutional services facilitated by Studiosity.

Impact on student wellbeing

Despite the challenges they faced, respondents reported relatively good overall wellbeing (58.7% reporting 'very good' or 'good'). This suggests that Studiosity may help mitigate some of the stress associated with academic work, and it provides an additional layer of support to students who might not have access to university services during non-standard hours.

Conclusions summary

The research demonstrates that students have diverse commitments and often study outside traditional working hours, making access to support services challenging. Studiosity has been shown to be a valuable resource for students, enhancing their learning experiences and increasing their likelihood to seek help. This support not only improves their academic performance but also positively impacts their overall wellbeing. The findings of this study suggest that Studiosity plays a significant role in fostering students' self-efficacy, confidence, and academic success.

4. Study findings

Survey participants

Participating institutions and institutional response rates

Overall, there were 380 respondents to the survey from nine different institutions, shown in *Table 1*. Combining the results from nine institutions provides greater confidence in the findings, across institutional types and student demographics.

Response rates ranged from 13% to 68%, and the overall response rate was 26%. In each institution we aimed for a minimum of 30 respondents which was achieved in all but two institutions.

Table 1: Survey respondents and institutional response rates

Institution Number	Institution Name	Total Studiosity Users	Number of Responses	Response Rate
1	Athabasca University	137	30	22%
2	Carleton University	71	34	48%
3	McMaster University DeGroote School of Business	246	36	15%
4	Humber College	149	58	39%
5	Mohawk College	120	65	54%
6	Toronto Metropolitan University	63	24	38%
7	University of Saskatchewan	47	32	68%
8	Vancouver Island University	49	27	55%
9	Yorkville University	569	74	13%

Details on demographic profile, majority discipline(s) and level of study

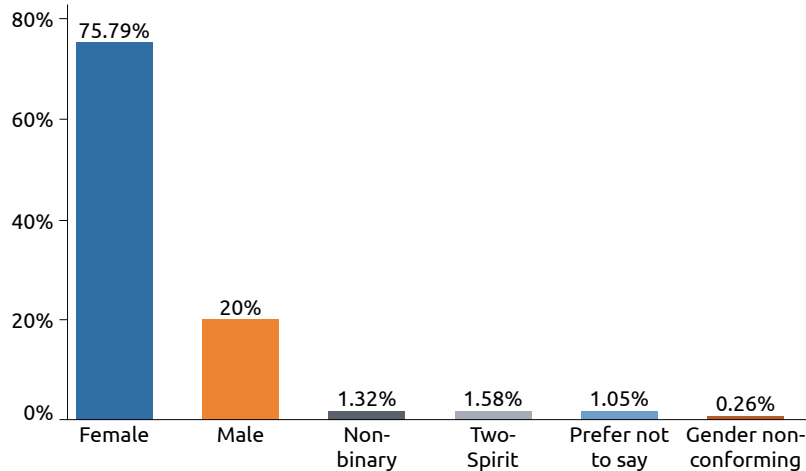
The responses are predominantly female, from a range of ethnic backgrounds and age groups; just over three quarters reported no disability. The majority are domestic students, studying full-time, at either undergraduate or taught Master’s level. Respondents come from a wide range of disciplines, but business, management and administration is the largest subject grouping. This means that female students are overrepresented in the respondents¹, and males are underrepresented, but in other ways the profile of respondents is similar to the Canadian post-secondary sector (based on evidence cited in the 2023 Canadian Student Wellbeing Survey report, Angus Reid 2023 and HESA 2023).

Gender

75.79% (288) of respondents identify as female, 20.00% (76) as male, 1.58% (6) as Two Spirit, 1.32% (5) as non-binary, 1.05% (4) preferred not to say and 0.26% (1) identified as Gender non-conforming (see Fig. 1).

¹ In 2022 57% of university students and 53-55% of college students are women. (HESA 2023)

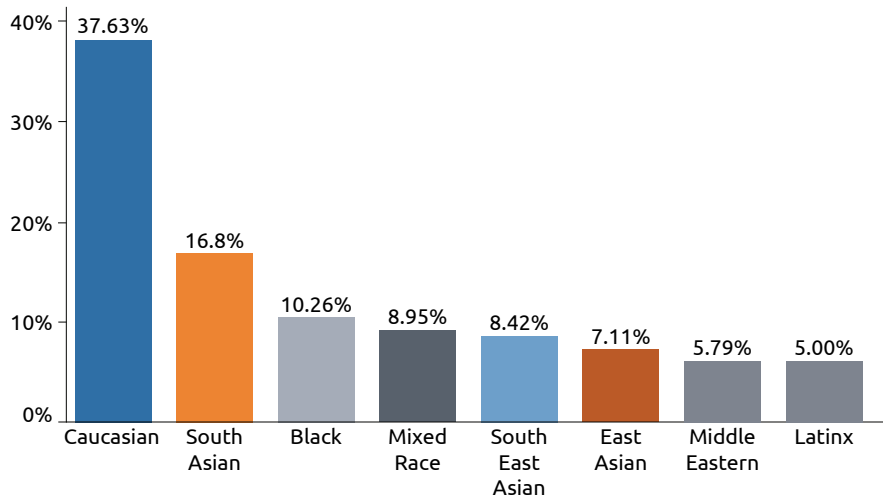
Fig. 1: Which of the following best describes how you identify?



Ethnicity

Respondents came from a range of ethnic groups, with the largest groups being Caucasian (37.63%), South Asian (16.84%) and Black (10.26%). See Fig. 2 below for details. A more detailed breakdown of the ethnicity of the respondents is provided in Appendix A.

Fig. 2: To Which of the Broad Ethnic Groupings Would You Say You Belong To?



Disability

15.79% of respondents declared a disability with their institution, 77.63% said they had no disability and 6.58% preferred not to say.

Age

A range of age groups was represented, the majority (26.32%) being in the 'Under-20' category- see Table 2 below for details.

Table 2: Age of Respondents

Age	%
Under 20	26.32%
20-24	17.89%
25-29	18.68%
30-34	12.11%
35-39	9.21%
40-44	9.47%
45-49	3.95%
50+	2.37%

International/Domestic

17.63% (67) of respondents were international students, 82.37% (313) were domestic students.

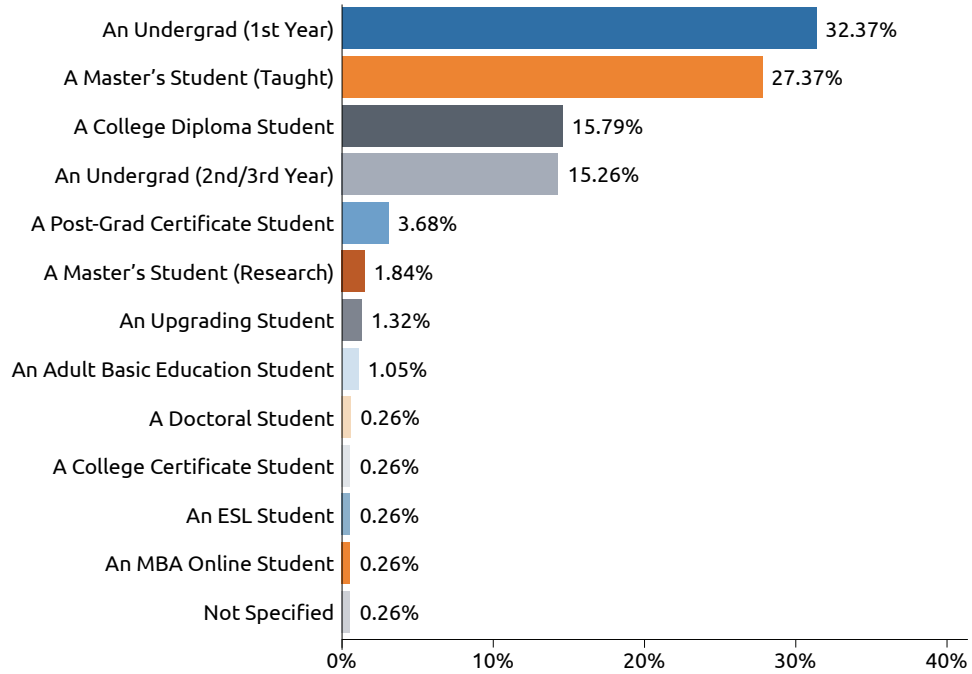
Study Mode

23.68% (90) were part-time students, 76.32% were full-time.

Level of Study

The majority of respondents were undergraduates, either 1st year (32.37%) or 2nd/3rd year (15.26%), although other student cohorts were represented including master's students (taught) (27.37%) and college diploma students (15.79%).

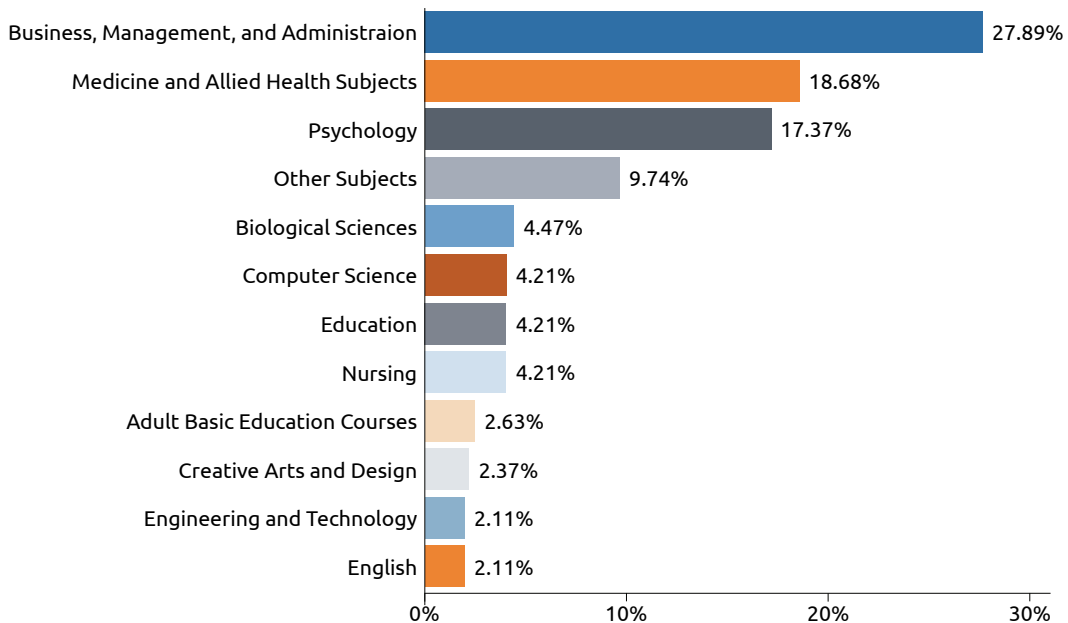
Fig. 3: Level of Study of Survey Respondents



Discipline Studied

Students were studying a range of subjects, with the most represented subjects being Business, Management and Administration (27.89%), Medicine and Allied Health Subjects (18.68%) and Psychology (17.37%). See Fig. 4 below for details.

Fig. 4: Discipline of Survey Respondents



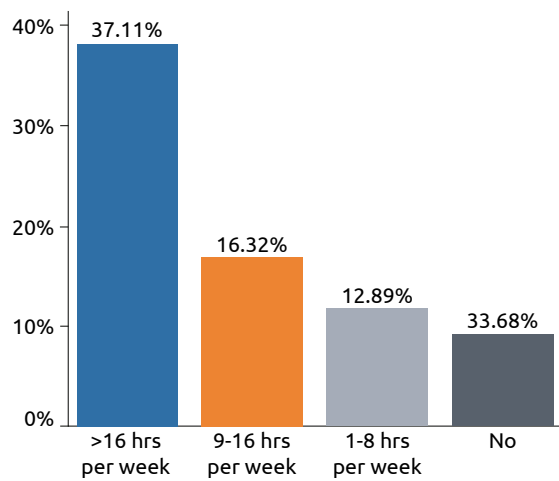
Students' study context

Two thirds of respondents had a part-time job whilst studying, and more than a third worked for more than 16 hours per week; around a third of respondents were caring for dependants whilst studying; just under half of the respondents had a long commute (more than 45 minutes).

Employment

66.32% (252) of students said they had a part-time job while studying- details in Fig. 5 below. This is a higher proportion of students working than suggested in the national data (50.4% of all students, Statistics Canada 2023). These comparisons suggest that working students make greater use of Studiosity than non-working students, perhaps because they are forced to study 'out of hours'.

Fig. 5: Do you have a part-time job while undertaking your program of study?



Dependants

34.74% (248) of students said they were caring for dependants while studying, the rest were not.

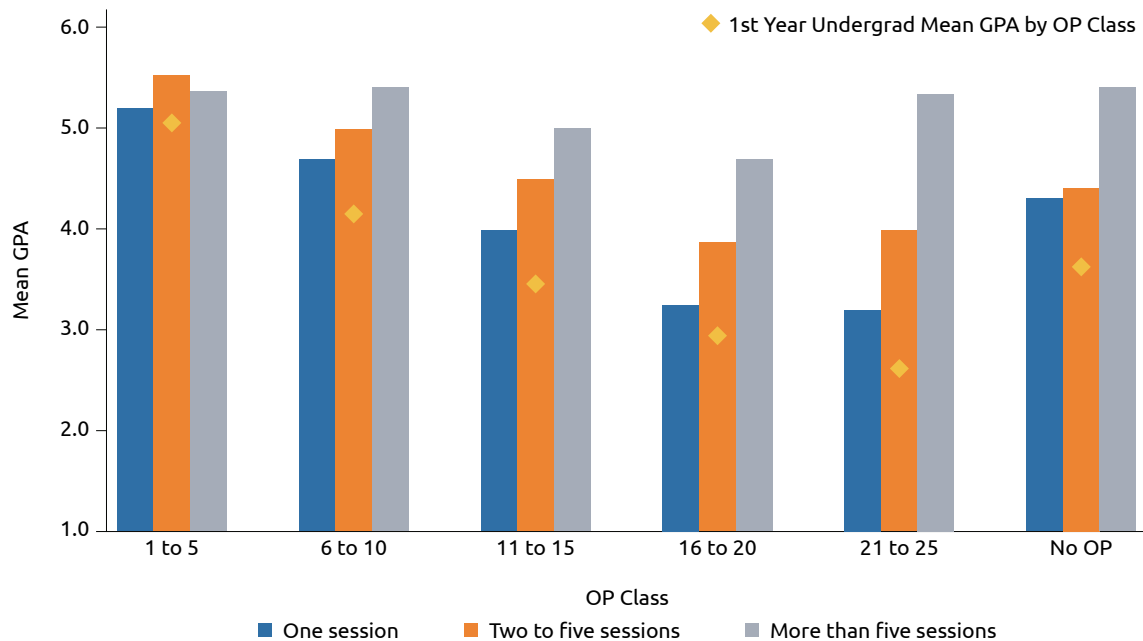
Commute

53.16% (202) students said their commute never took more than 45 minutes in one direction; the rest said that it did Occasionally (16.05%), Frequently (7.11%) or Always (23.68%).

Use of Studiosity at the time of the survey

Repeat engagement is material to academic benefits, with scaled academic gains seen in students who use Studiosity more than once, twice, and five times. Notably, in an independent university study repeat engagement was correlated with Grade Point Average increases of up to one whole point, seen regardless of a students' starting performance band, see Figure 6. (Lynch, 2017).

Fig. 6: Mean GPA of students who used writing feedback



It can be seen in Table 3, on the next page, that in each participating institution, more than half the respondents had used Studiosity twice or more at the time when they completed the survey. Research from James Cook University (Lynch 2017a) found that students who used Studiosity increased their attainment (GPA) compared to students who did not, and the improvement increased with the number of uses.

Table 3: Percentage of Studiosity users who used the service twice or more

Institution No.	Instution Name	Return Rate Percentage
1	Athabasca University	54.74%
2	Carleton University	62.82%
3	Humber College	58.38%
4	McMaster University	54.22%
5	Mohawk College	62.02%
6	Toronto Metropolitan University	57.14%
7	University of Saskatchewan	62.00%
8	Vancouver Island University	57.14%
9	Yorkville University	57.96%

Study habits

Hours spent studying

21.32% of students said they studied for more than 5 hours per week, the rest for between 1 and 5 hours, except 2.63% who claimed less than an hour per week.

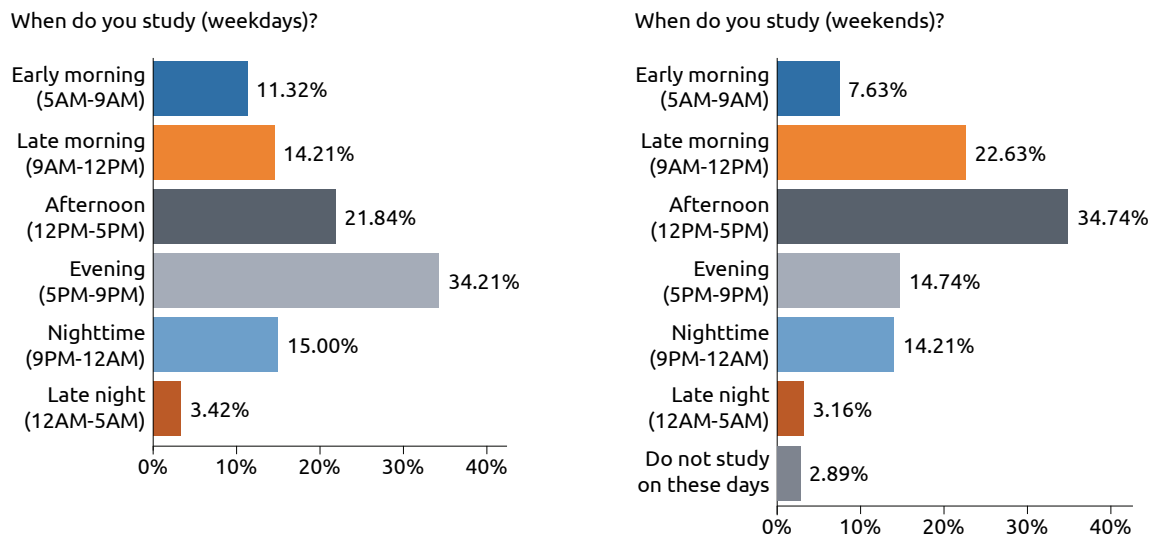
Table 4: Hours Spent Studying

Hours Spent Studying	Respondents	% of Total Respondents
Less than 1 hour	10	2.63%
1	23	6.05%
2	66	17.37%
3	81	21.32%
4	66	17.37%
5	53	13.95%
More than 5 hours	81	21.32%

When studying takes place

During weekdays, the majority of studying takes place in the evenings (34.21%), whereas at the weekends it takes place in the afternoons (34.74%). See Fig. 7 for details.

Fig. 7: When do you study on weekdays and weekends?



This demonstrates that during weekdays 36.1% of studying takes place during the 'working day', and 64.0% in the evenings, at night and in the early morning. Similarly, the 2023 Canadian Student Wellbeing Survey also found that 36% of student studying on weekdays took place during the working day and 64% out of hours (with 1% of respondents not studying on weekdays). This may indicate that Studiosity users have less access to university or college academic and writing support services as they study when these services are less likely to be available.

Data collected via the Studiosity Canada Partner Portal, demonstrates that the majority of use of Studiosity by students takes place out of hours (Table 5). The median usage after-hours across all institutions was 57.58%.

Table 5: Studiosity usage after 17:00 local time

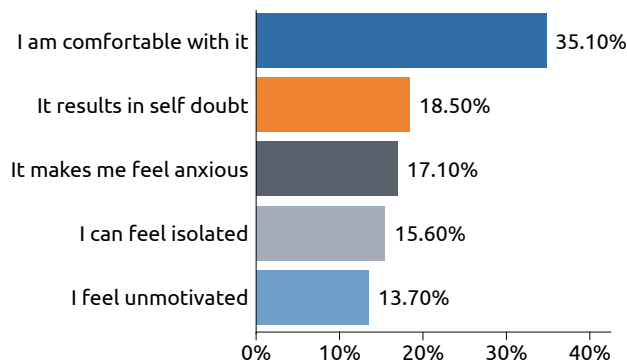
Institution No.	Instution Name	Usage after 5:00PM local time
1	Athabasca University	61.43%
2	Carleton University	62.50%
3	Humber College	49.16%
4	McMaster University	64.06%
5	Mohawk College	57.58%
6	Toronto Metropolitan University	56.63%
7	University of Saskatchewan	52.59%
8	Vancouver Island University	59.31%
9	Yorkville University	48.81%

Challenges

Studying alone

Over a third (35.1%) of students said that they felt comfortable studying alone, although others reported a range of negative consequences (Fig. 8). These findings suggest that of the survey respondents more students must study alone 'out of hours', but more are uncomfortable studying alone.

Fig. 8: How does studying by yourself make you feel?

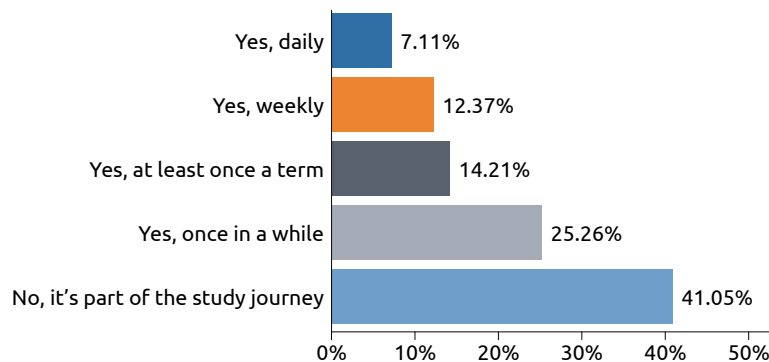


Thoughts of quitting

While 41.05% of students said that they had not thought of quitting as a consequence of struggling alone, 59.0% of students had, with varying degrees of frequency, thought about leaving as a result of struggling on their own (Fig. 9).

In comparison, the 2023 Canadian Student Wellbeing Survey found that on average 48% of students had not considered dropping a course as a result of struggling studying alone, while 52% of students had.

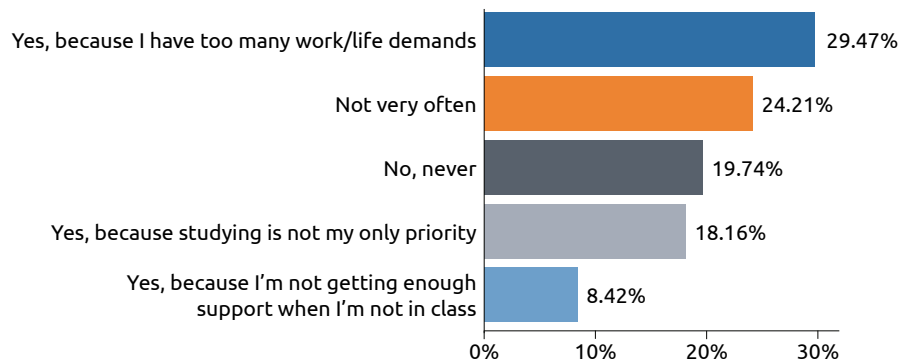
Fig. 9: Has struggling alone made you consider quitting the course?



Studying all night

The majority of students (80.3%) reported that they had had to study all night on occasion. In the 2023 Canadian Student Wellbeing Survey 70% reported studying all night. Fig. 10 provides details of the reasons respondents stated for studying all night, with ‘too many work life demands’ being the most commonly selected reason. Concerningly, 8.42% said that they had done this as they felt they had not received enough support while in class.

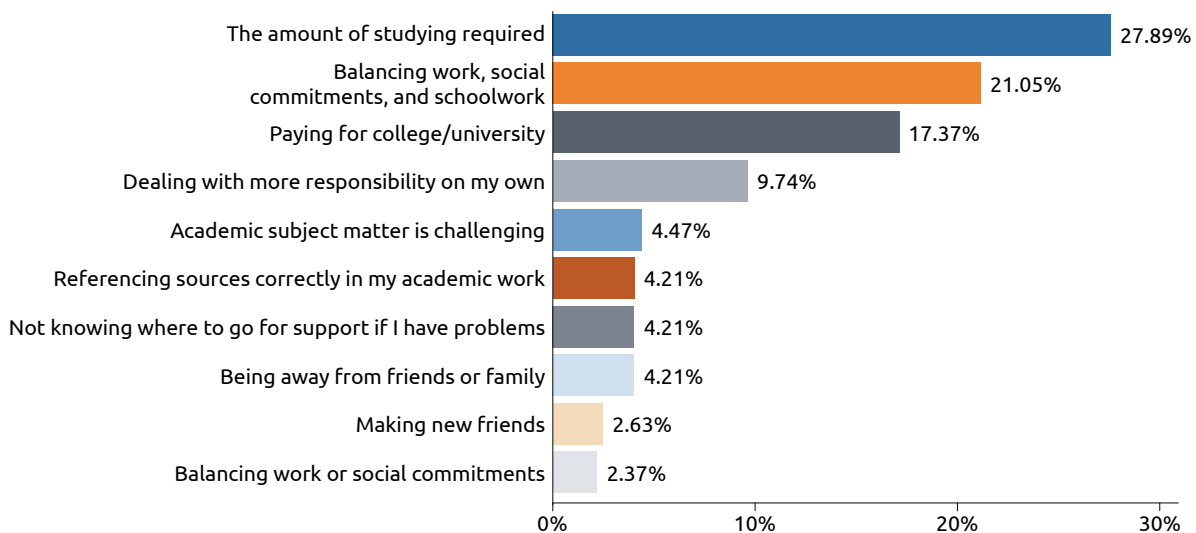
Fig. 10: Have you ever had to study all night?



The most stressful part of studying

Respondents reported that the most stressful part of studying was the ‘amount of studying required’ (27.89%), ‘balance work and social commitments’ (21.05%), and ‘paying for college/university’ (17.37%). The top 9 answers to this question are shown in Fig. 11 below.

Fig. 11: What is the most stressful part of studying? Top 9 answers given:

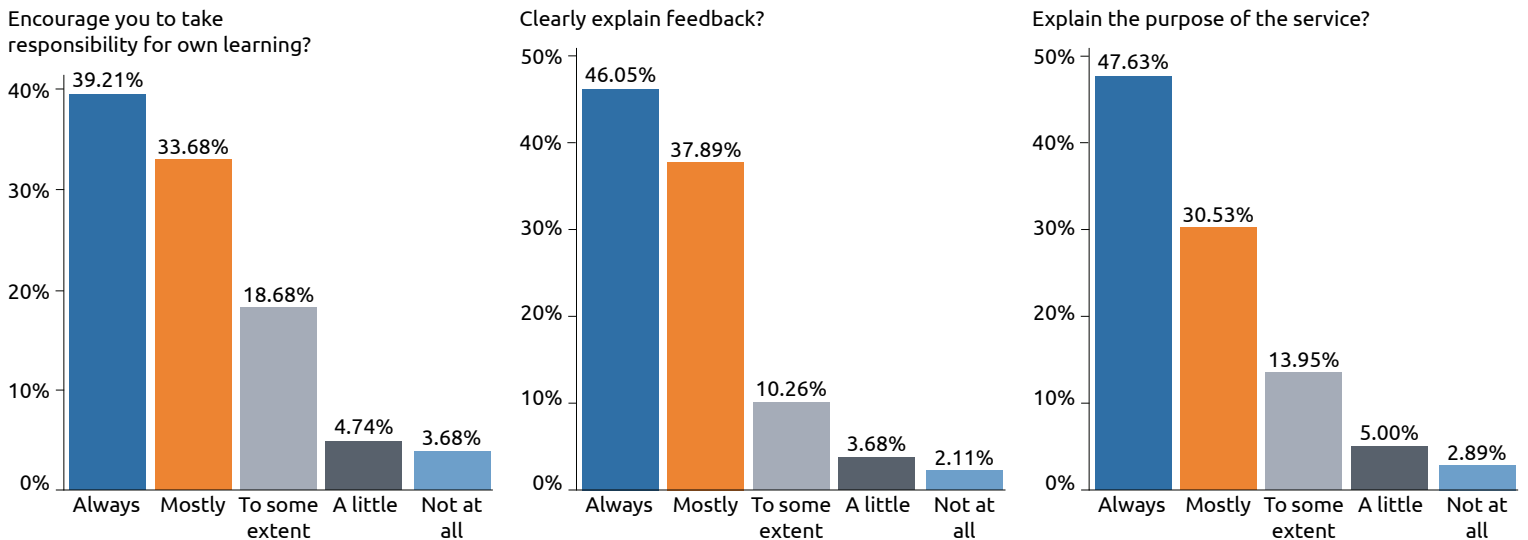


Student experience and satisfaction using Studiosity

These questions were designed to find out about how students experienced Studiosity, in terms of understanding that Studiosity is designed to help students learn how to learn, and apply the feedback to their own learning, both now and in the future. The first three questions explore their initial experience, in relation to the following three questions (Fig. 12):

- Did Studiosity Subject Specialists encourage you to take responsibility for your own learning?
- Did Studiosity clearly explain the feedback?
- Did Studiosity Subject Specialists clearly explain the purpose of the service?

Fig. 12: Satisfaction with Studiosity



These responses demonstrate that the majority of students felt that the purpose of Studiosity was explained (always or mostly = 78.2%), they were encouraged to take responsibility for their learning (always or mostly = 72.9%), and the feedback was clear (always or mostly = 89.9%).

The next questions also relate to students' experience of using Studiosity, but are more future oriented, focusing on how students feel they will be able to use feedback (Fig. 13 and Fig 14).

- Were Studiosity Subject Specialists helpful and supportive?
- Did Studiosity Subject Specialists provide feedback that will help you improve in future assignments?
- Did Studiosity Subject Specialists work hard to make the feedback relevant?
- Did Studiosity Subject Specialists motivate you to do your best work?

Fig. 13: Were Studiosity subject specialists helpful and supportive?

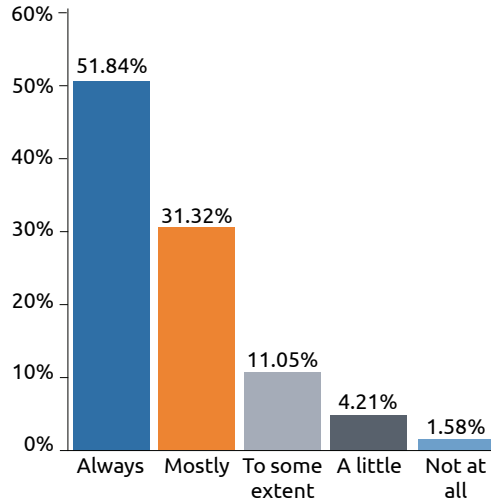
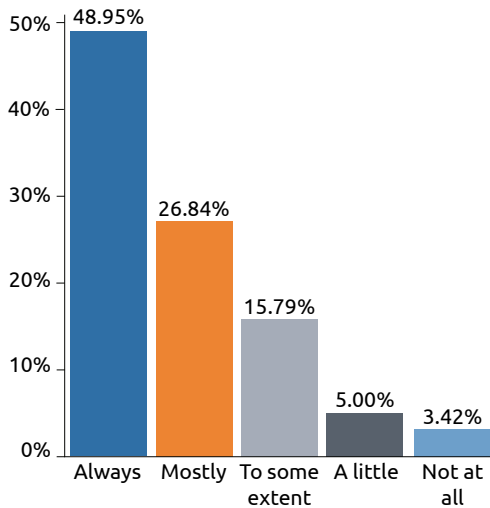
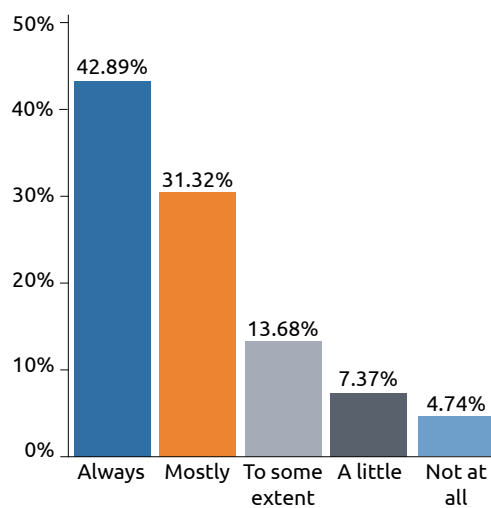


Fig. 14. Using Studiosity feedback

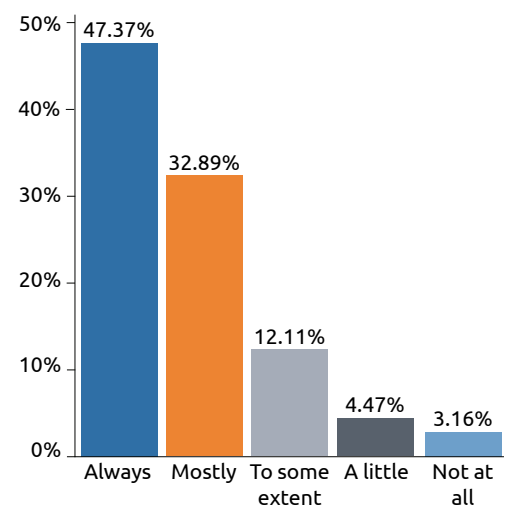
Provide feedback that will help improve in future assignments?



Motivate you to do your best work?



Work hard to make the feedback relevant?



The findings shown in Fig. 13 and Fig. 14 indicate that the majority of students feel that the feedback was helpful and supportive (83.2%), will be helpful for future assignments (75.8%), will motivate them to do their best work (74.2%) and is relevant (80.3%). This is positive, indicating that the majority of students are developing through their engagement with Studiosity, rather than relying on the support in relation to each assignment.

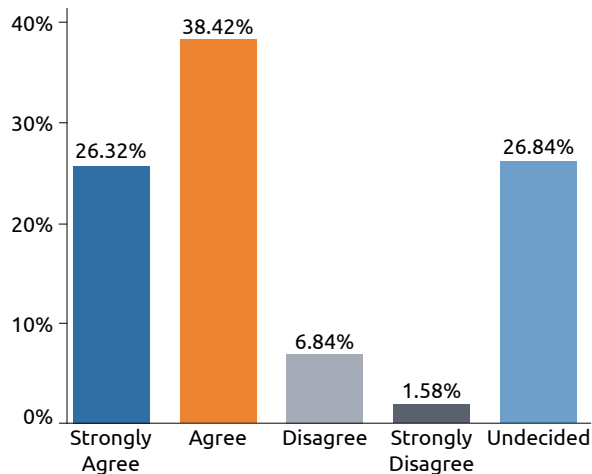
Impact on student learning

The following explores the impact of Studiosity on student learning (Fig. 15-17):

- Do you feel Studiosity has helped with your confidence?
- Do you feel Studiosity has helped with motivation?
- Do you feel Studiosity has helped with your study skills?
- Since using Studiosity are you now more likely to seek help when struggling with study?
- Since using Studiosity, how much do you feel you have learned?

Fig. 15: Impact on motivation and confidence

Studiosity has helped with motivation



Studiosity has helped with confidence

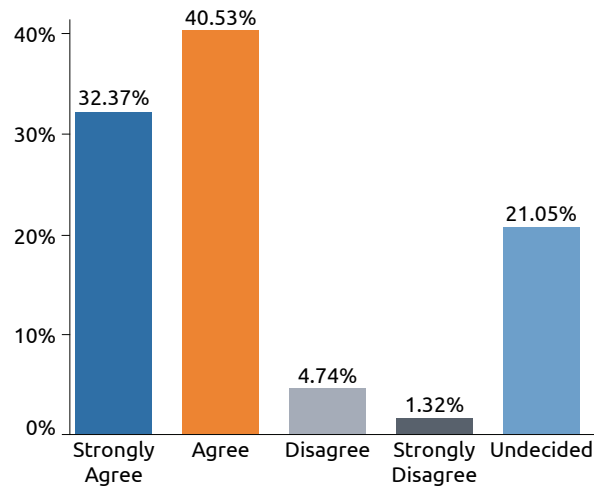
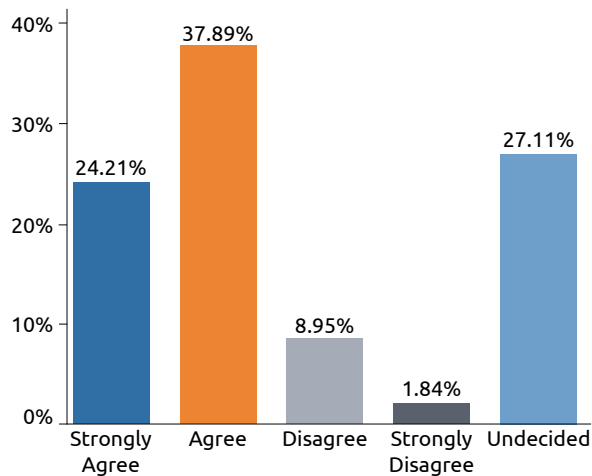
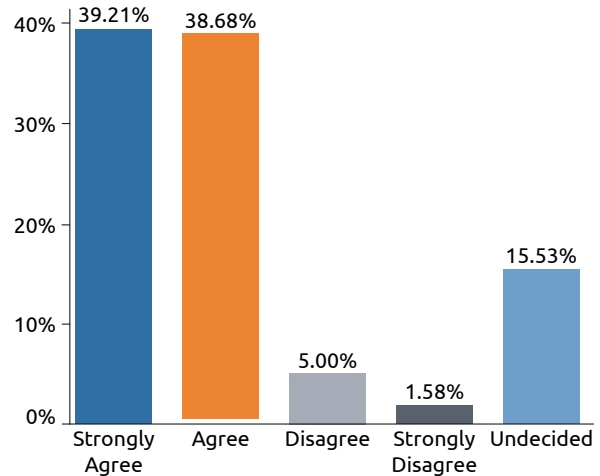


Fig. 16: Impact on study skills and help-seeking

Studiosity has helped with study skills



You are now more likely to seek help



The responses indicate that most students feel that Studiosity has had a positive impact on their motivation (64.7% Strongly Agree or Agree), while 26.8% are undecided and only 8.1% disagreed. The majority also feel that Studiosity has helped with their confidence (72.9%) and their study skills (62.1%). Where students were undecided in these areas may indicate that students were unsure about whether they would be able to transfer the skills to future assessments. Importantly, 77.9% of students agree or strongly agree that since using Studiosity they are more likely to seek help. In research at James Cook University, Australia 72% had accessed at least one other university service, while for 28% Studiosity was the only support service they had accessed (Lynch 2017b). This is important as it indicates how Studiosity can be used as a ‘gateway’ to encourage students to access academic, and other forms of help. This is supported by data from the Studiosity Partner Portal, shown in Table 6 below. This demonstrates that Studiosity tutors are referring students to other institutional academic support services. In Table 6 it can be seen that around two-thirds of Studiosity interactions with students resulted in referrals to other services.

Table 6: Number of referrals to other services

Institution Number	Institution Name	Interaction with Referral	Interaction without Referral
1	Athabasca University	267 (71.97%)	104 (28.03%)
2	Carleton University	N/A	N/A
3	Humber College	355 (70.02%)	152 (29.98%)
4	McMaster University	120 (52.40%)	109 (47.60%)
5	Mohawk College	276 (64.94%)	149 (35.06%)
6	Toronto Metropolitan University	8 (25.00%)	24 (75.00%)
7	University of Saskatchewan	80 (34.48%)	152 (65.52%)
8	Vancouver Island University	91 (38.40%)	146 (61.60%)
9	Yorkville University	3,018 (68.37%)	1,396 (31.63%)

Overall, 65.4% (4,215) of interactions with Studiosity provided students with a referral back to an institutional service with 34.6% (2,232) without a referral.

In the UK some higher education providers have embedded Studiosity into early formative or summative assessments enabling students to have the experience of using the service, and to develop confidence in asking for help. It has also alerted staff to other issues and support needs (Thomas 2023). This is supported by this detailed comment from a Studiosity user, in which they explain how initially they were uncomfortable asking for help, but how over time their confidence to ask for help increased.

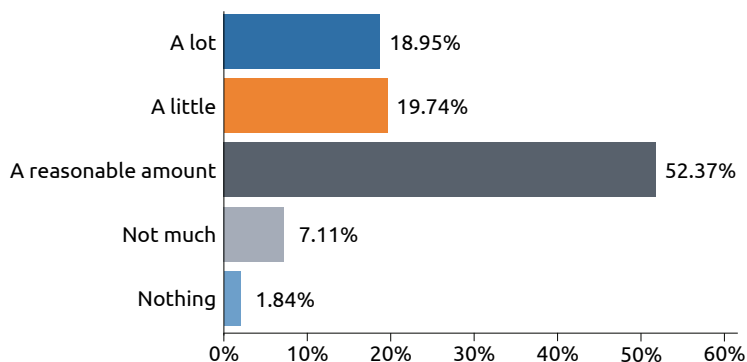
“Also the support of Studiosity, that was a really great thing, especially in my first semester when I was too shy to put my hand up and be like ‘Hey! I don’t really know what I’m doing!’ By the second semester I had no problem being like ‘Okay, I have no clue what you’re talking about! Could you just like run it through?’ But that first semester when I was like, oh no, I don’t want to seem like I don’t know what I’m doing and I was first back, that was especially helpful because it was easier to ask for the help of a complete stranger than someone you know. Now I’m more comfortable asking the people I see daily. Studiosity I see as being especially helpful when you’re upgrading, because like I said, you’re not sure you want to ask for help yet, you’re not sure how to reach out, and sometimes you might be working a job so maybe you need your help at 11 at night, or at 5:30 in the morning because you maybe do your school work before you go to work. Studiosity was great for my anxiety about coming back to school and helping me to gain the confidence that it’s okay to ask for help.”

- Quote from a Vancouver Island University Student

Amount Learned

The majority of students (52.4%) feel they have learned a reasonable amount, while 19.0% feel they have learned a lot and only 1.8% feel they have learned nothing. See Fig. 17 below.

Fig. 17: Since using Studiosity, how much do you feel you have learned?



Impact on student wellbeing

In addition to supporting and developing students’ learning, Studiosity has been found to impact positively on students’ wellbeing (Thomas 2019). This is explored in this study by examining (Fig. 18-22):

- What do you find is the most stressful part of studying?
- On average, how often do you feel stressed by studying/schoolwork?
- Have you ever found that struggling with study when you’re alone (after class or when you leave campus) had made you think about quitting your course?

- How would you describe your overall wellbeing at the present time?
- On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is “not at all” and 5 is “completely,” how supported do you feel by your college/university?

The majority of students feel stressed by schoolwork at least once a week (83.7%), with 20.26% of respondents stating that they are ‘constantly’ stressed by schoolwork. It is therefore not necessarily surprising to learn that the majority of respondents have thought about leaving (59.0%), and 19.5% have thought about leaving at least weekly. Despite feeling stressed by schoolwork, respondents report relatively good wellbeing, with 58.7% reporting ‘very good’ or ‘good’ overall wellbeing at the present time. This is perhaps explained by the fact that the majority of respondents feel moderately well or well supported by their university or college, based on a scale of 1-5 (where 1 is “not at all” and 5 is “completely”) the most frequent response was ‘3’ (37.89%).

Fig. 18: What do you find is the most stressful part of studying?

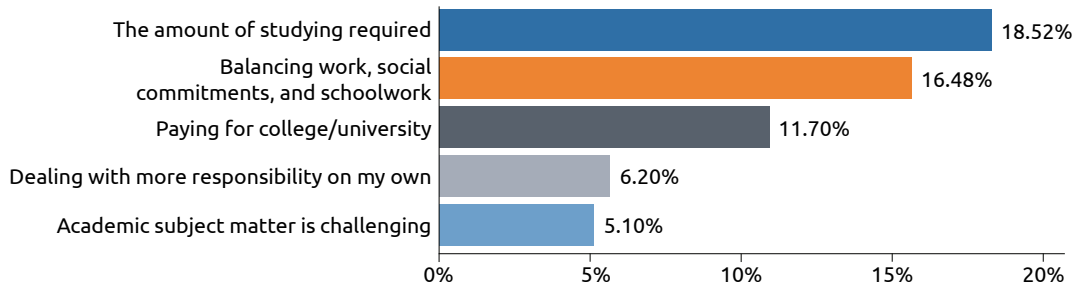


Fig. 19: On average, how often do you feel stressed by studying/schoolwork?

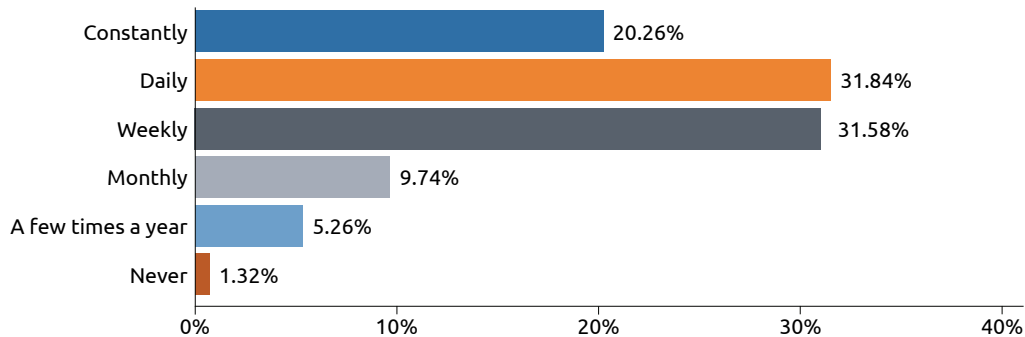


Fig. 20: Have you ever found that struggling with study when you're alone (after class or when you leave campus) had made you think about quitting your course?

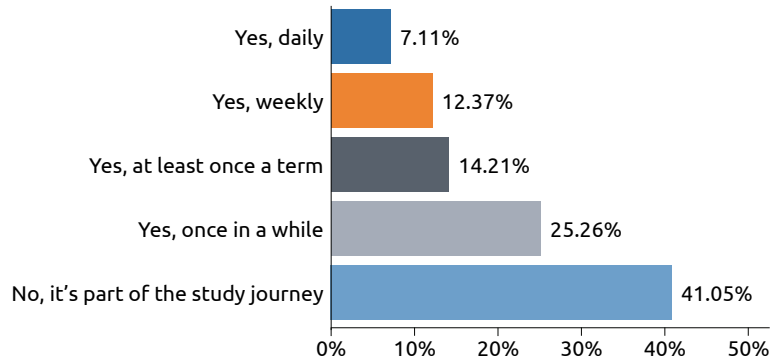


Fig. 21: How would you describe your overall wellbeing at the present time?

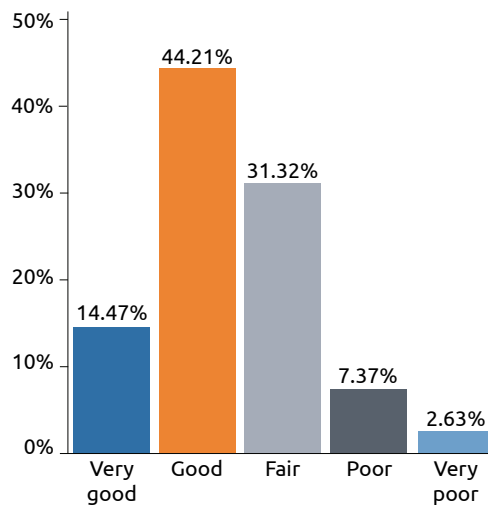
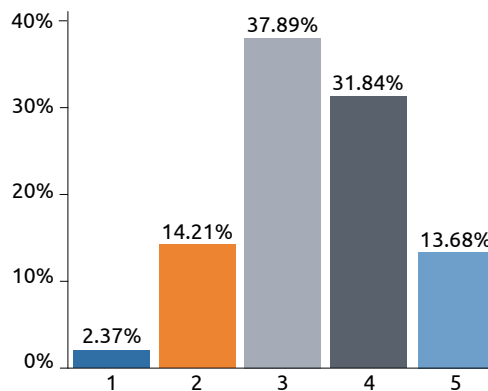


Fig. 22: On a scale of 1 to 5, where 1 is "not at all" and 5 is "completely," how supported do you feel by your college/university?



5. Conclusion

This report demonstrates that the majority of students have other commitments in addition to studying in post-secondary education, and much of their studying takes place in the evenings and the weekends, when they cannot access support from faculty or institutional support services. The proportion of respondents studying 'out of hours' appears to be greater than across the Canadian post-secondary student population as a whole. The majority of students report a number of challenges when studying alone, and the majority of students have thought about quitting. Students said that the most stressful part of studying was the amount of work required, balancing work and social commitments, and paying for their studying.

Students reported high levels of satisfaction with Studiosity, in that they understood the purpose of the service, they were encouraged to take responsibility for their learning and that the feedback was clear. Students found the Studiosity Subject Specialists to be helpful and supportive, and that they provided feedback that was relevant, motivated them to do their best work, and would be useful to help improve future assignments.

Not only were students satisfied with the service they received, but they reported a positive impact on their learning. The majority of students reported that Studiosity helped with their confidence, motivation and study skills, and particularly they reported being more likely to seek help when studying. This finding is supported by data from the Studiosity partner portal, which demonstrates that more than two-thirds of Studiosity interactions resulted in referrals to other institutional support services. Overall, more than half the respondents said that they had learned 'a reasonable amount' since using Studiosity. Students also reported quite high levels of stress in relation to school work, but fewer than 10% rated their overall wellbeing at the present time as 'poor' or 'very poor', and the majority felt reasonably well supported by their college or university.

This paints a positive picture in terms of the short-term benefits that students experienced as a result of using Studiosity. Once students' immediate learning has increased, then there is evidence that students go on to apply the skills developed to future assignments, there is an increased rate of the submission of assessments, improved student satisfaction, improved continuation and progression, and better mental health. In the longer-term there is emerging evidence of increased completion and attainment, and some evidence of closing outcome gaps between more and less advantaged students, and thus greater equity.

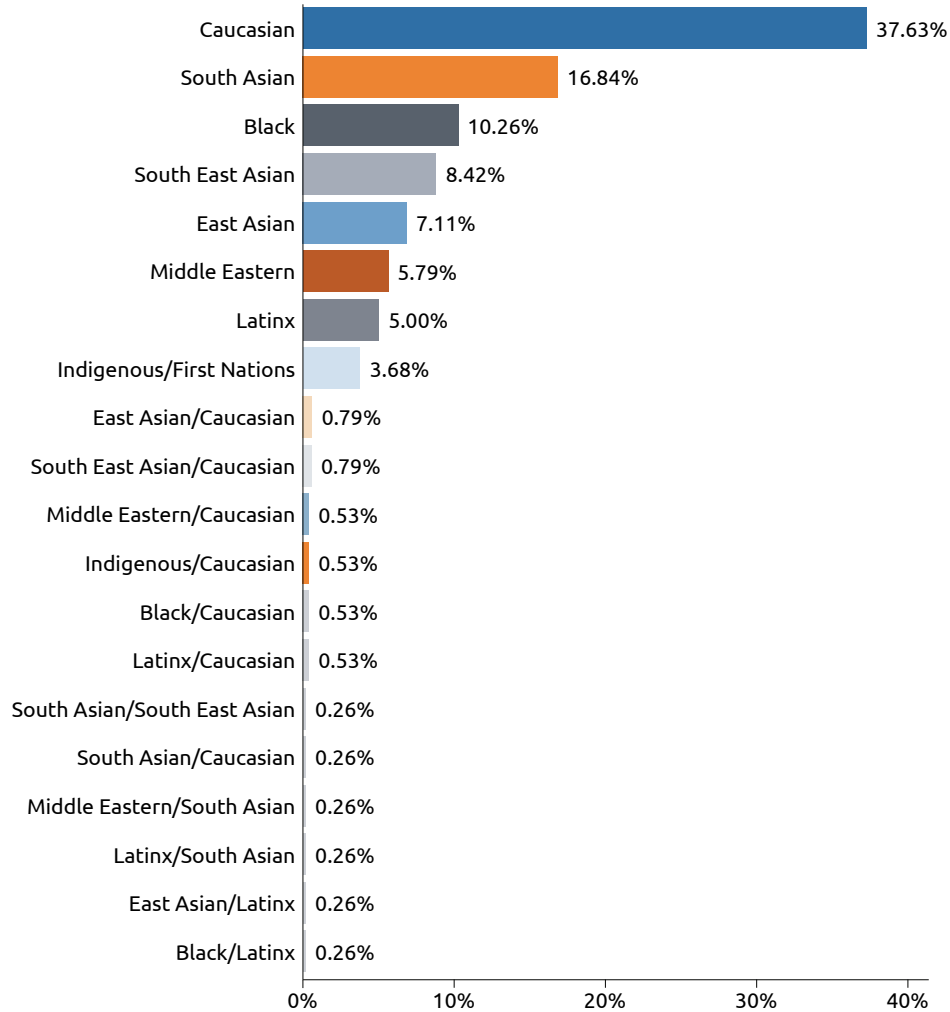
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7. Appendices

Appendix A: More detailed information about the ethnicity of respondents

Fig. 23: To Which of the Broad Ethnic Groupings Would You Say You Belong To?



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**Research conducted by Professor Liz Thomas, Liz Thomas Associates Ltd.
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