Graduate Student Advisory Council Quality of Life Survey Report 2017-2018

Table of Contents

Introduction

For almost a decade, the Quality of Life Committee of the Graduate Student Advisory Council has been publishing an annual or biannual Quality of Life survey, with the objective of understanding the challenges and the benefits of graduate student life and work at Columbia University. The data collected through these surveys is summarized in a publicly available report, which is then used as the basis for graduate student government advocacy in the following year.

The present survey is based primarily on previous GSAC surveys: it collects information on the respondents' demographics, financial stability and income sources, housing, and experiences with their programs and other Columbia resources. In response to feedback from previous surveys, the question set for 2017-2018 has also been expanded to include sections dedicated to international students, students with families, and students with disabilities; question sections concerning mental and physical healthcare, as well as experiences of harassment and discrimination have been significantly expanded to create a more nuanced picture regarding these matters. Finally, in response to the recent push for graduate student unionization, GSAC found it appropriate to investigate its respondents' attitudes towards unionization, as it pertains to their quality of life at Columbia. Overall, the survey aimed to garner insight into a wide range of issues that directly factor into the satisfaction with quality of life; a focus on practical facets of graduate student life rather than more general assessments of well-being allows for the development of more efficient follow-up in terms of communicating successes and shortcomings to the administration, and formulating a concrete and goal-oriented advocacy platform for the coming years.

The survey was distributed via GSAC's mailing lists and mailing lists of affiliate organizations starting February 15th 2018. The graduate student body was additionally incentivized to respond through the option of enrolling into a sweepstakes that offered ten $50 Amazon vouchers, and one $150 voucher. The winners of the sweepstakes are to be announced by April 30th. The survey closed on March 18th with a total of 405 responses. The data collected

was processed and analyzed by the members of the Quality of Life Committee, signed below. The present report contains the statistical breakdown of answers to each individual question, summaries of each section, analyses and summaries of questions that required extended comments; a cumulative summary of all sections is included at the end, followed by overall conclusions and recommendations.

On April 1st 2018, due to reorganization of graduate student councils within the university, GSAC formally ceased to exist and is now inherited by the Arts and Sciences Graduate Council (ASGC), a graduate student body that will only be representing students at the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Due to these changes, the present GSAC Quality of Life survey is the last one to address the quality of life of the graduate student body across Columbia University's diverse graduate schools. At the end of this academic year, we are hoping that the insights garnered through this report might help formulate both short and long-term policy and advocacy goals for ASGC and related organizations across campus, fostering a productive and fruitful collaboration among graduate student councils and other groups across Columbia University.

Quality of Life Chair

Milica Iličić, Slavic Languages

Quality of Life Committee

Kirsten Blancato, Astronomy

Sean Hiroshima, Political Science

Caitlin McMahon, Sociomedical Sciences

Peter Moody, EALAC

Niklas Straetker, Germanic Languages

Ellen Tedeschi, Psychology

Demographics

Section overview

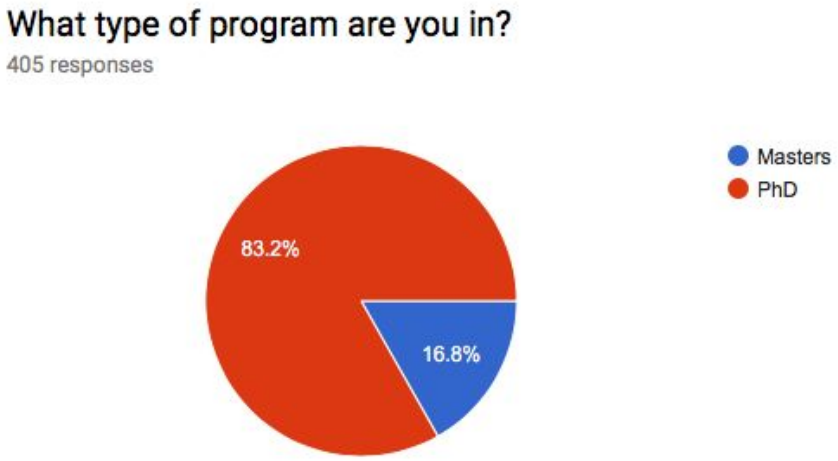
The Demographics section of the survey consisted of three sub-sections: the first one applicable to all students, followed by separate designated sections for Masters and PhD students, respectively. The statistical and numerical overviews of answers to questions are found below, along with comments and analysis.

General demographics

The questions in this section were offered to all students taking the survey.

Type of program

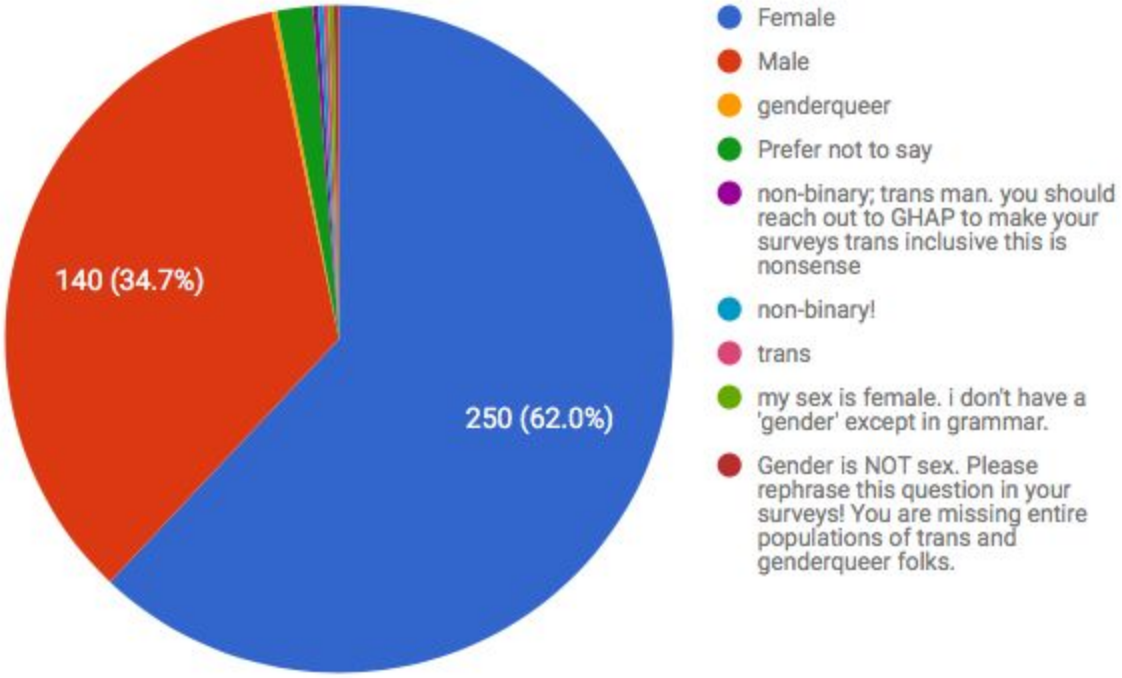
This is a multiple-choice question. Options offered are “Masters” and “PhD.” N=405



The majority of survey respondents (83.2%) are PhD students, and only 16.8% are Masters students.

Gender

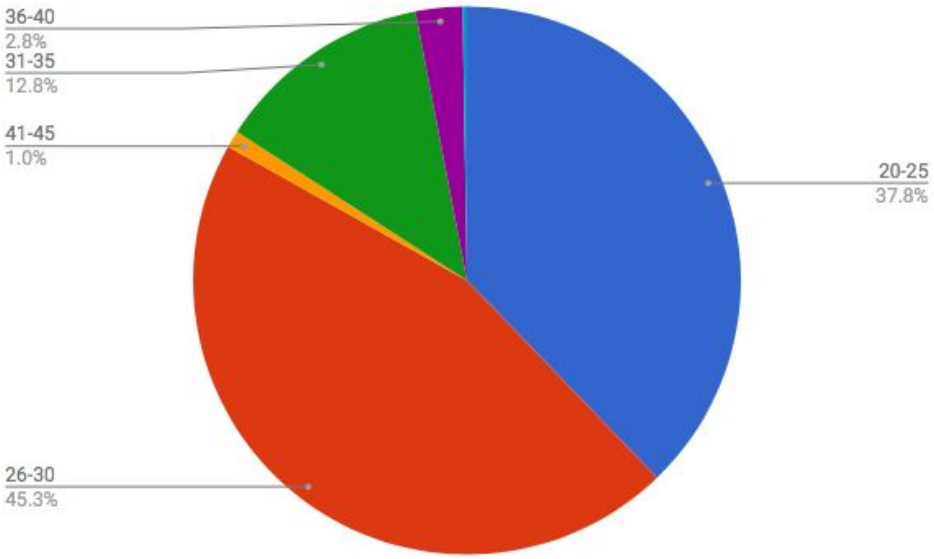
This is a multiple-choice question. Options offered are “Male,” “Female,” “Prefer not to say,” and a write-in “Other” option. N = 403.



62% of respondents identified as female, 34.7% identified as male, and 7% preferred not to say. Six respondents (1.5%) chose the “Other” option. Write-in responses included genderqueer (1), non-binary (2), and transgender (2); all are listed in the legend of the pie chart above.

Age

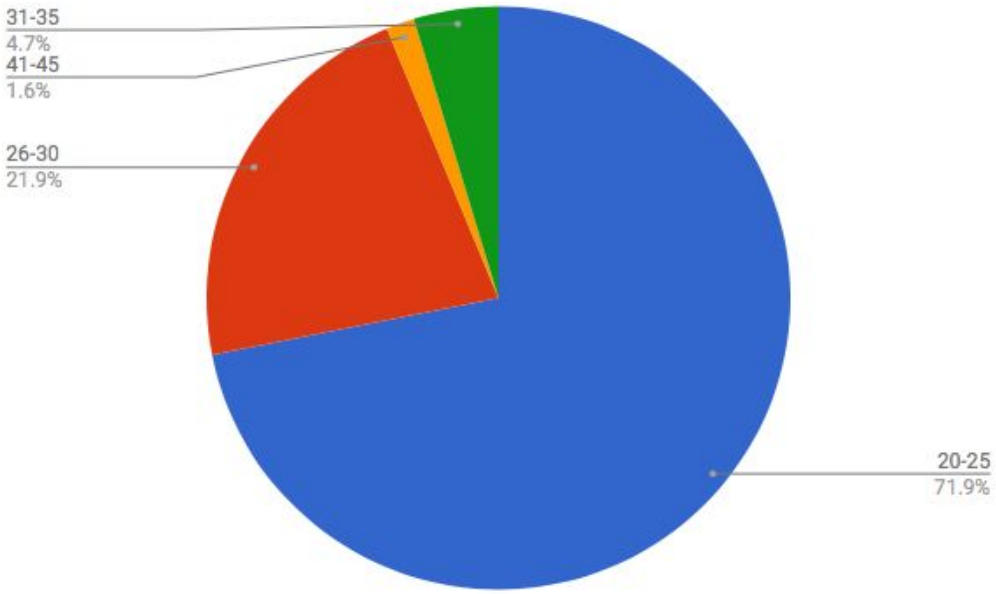
This is a multiple-choice question. Options offered are < 20, 20-25, 25-30, 30-35, 35-40, 40-45, 45-50, >50. N=397.



The majority of respondents are in the 26-30 category (45.3%), followed by the 20-25 category (37.8%). The 30-35 group comprises 12.7% of the survey respondents, the 36-40 group 2.8%, 40-45 group 1%, one respondent is older than 50, and none are in the 45-50 age range.Broken down by degree type, significant differences in age groups emerge.

Age, Masters

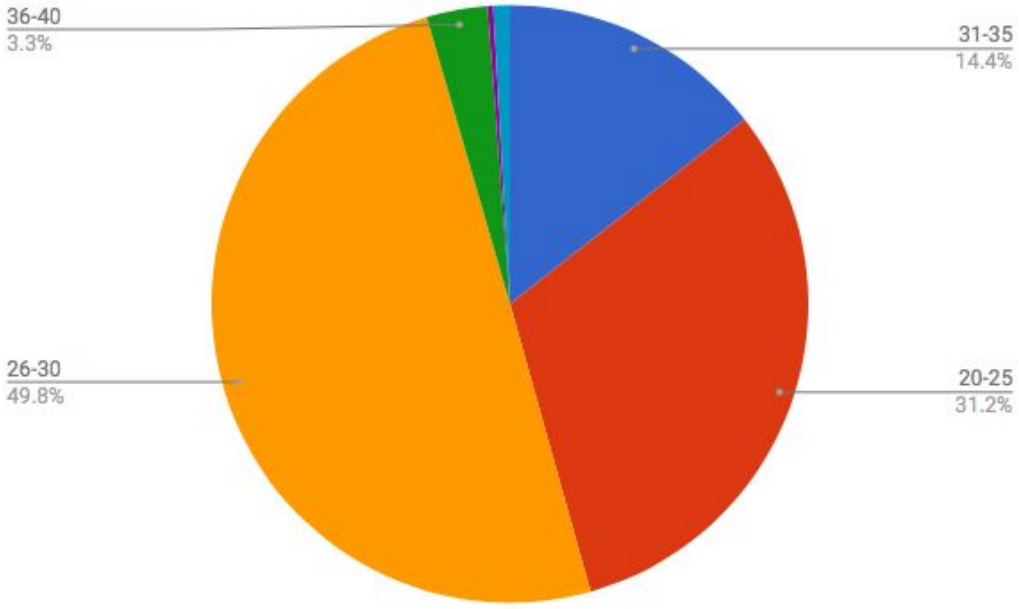
For Masters students, N=65.



As many as 71.9% of Masters students are in the 20-25 years group, 21.9% is in the 26-30 group, and only 4.7% and 1.6% are in the 31-35 and 41-45 age groups, respectively.

Age, PhD

For PhD students, N=338.



The 26-30 group is the most represented with 49.8% of the PhD survey population, followed by 31.2% for the 20-25 group. 14.4% of students are in the 31-35 age group, and 3.3% are in the 36-40 age group. The rest are older than 40.

Overall, it would seem that the vast majority of Masters students are under 25, whereas the vast majority of PhD students are older than 25. This

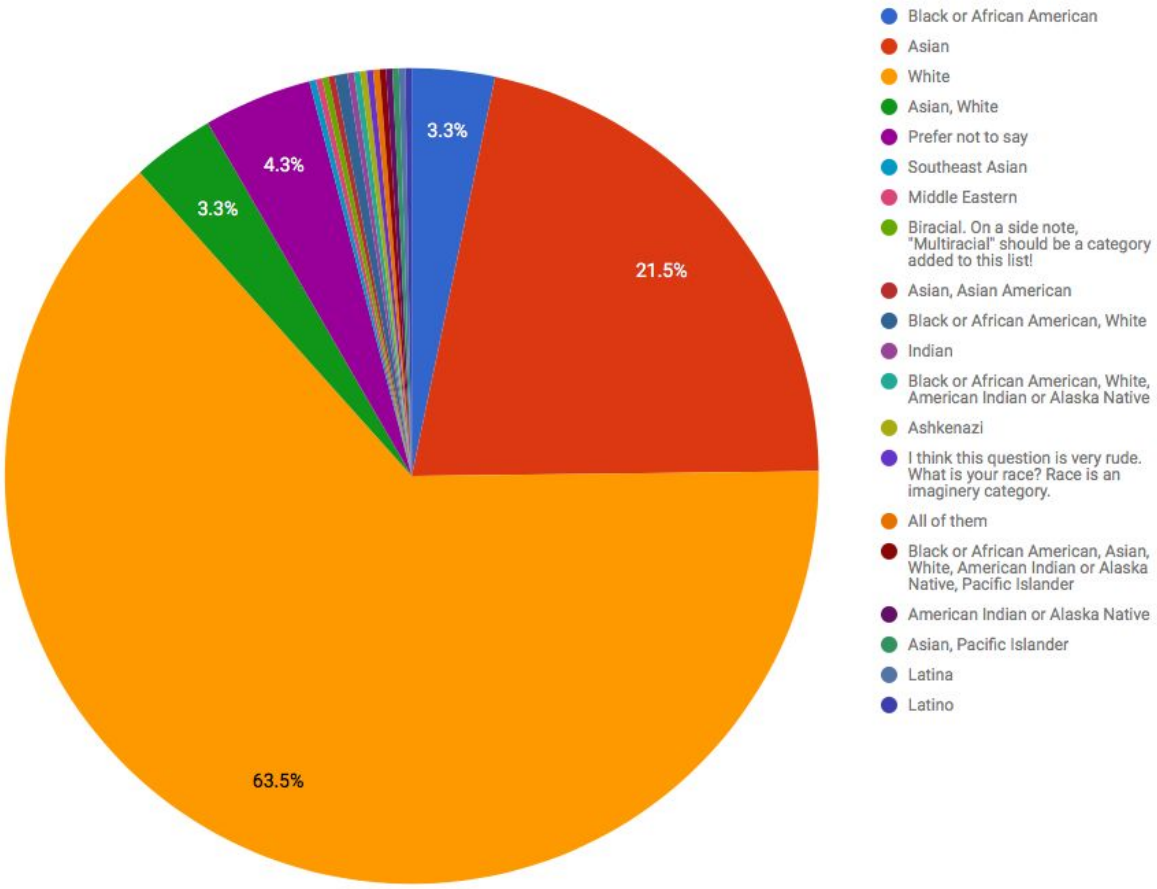
Racial affiliation.

This is a multiple-choice grid questions where participants were asked to select all options that applied. Options offered are “Black or African American,” “Asian,” “White,” “American Indian or Alaska Native,” “Pacific Islander,” “Prefer not to say,” and a write-in “Other” option. N=395.

The majority of respondents only identified with one of the categories, or one write-in option. Of those respondents, 3.3% identified as Black or African American, 21.5% as Asian,

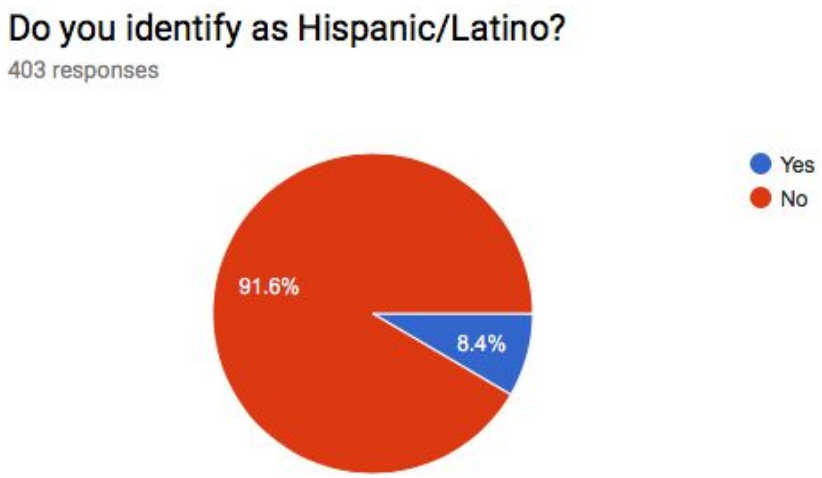
63.5% as White, 0.3% as American Indian or Alaska Natives, none identified exclusively as Pacific Islanders, and 4.3% preferred not to state their race. Ten respondents (2.5%) chose the "Other" option. Write-in responses included Latino/Latina, Indian, Southeast Asian, Asian American, Ashkenazi, Middle Eastern, and Multiracial.

Of the respondents who selected more than one category, 3.3% identified as both White and Asian, and 0.5% identified as Black/African American and White. There was only one person for each of the other response combinations, each listed in the legend to the chart below.



Hispanic/Latino identification

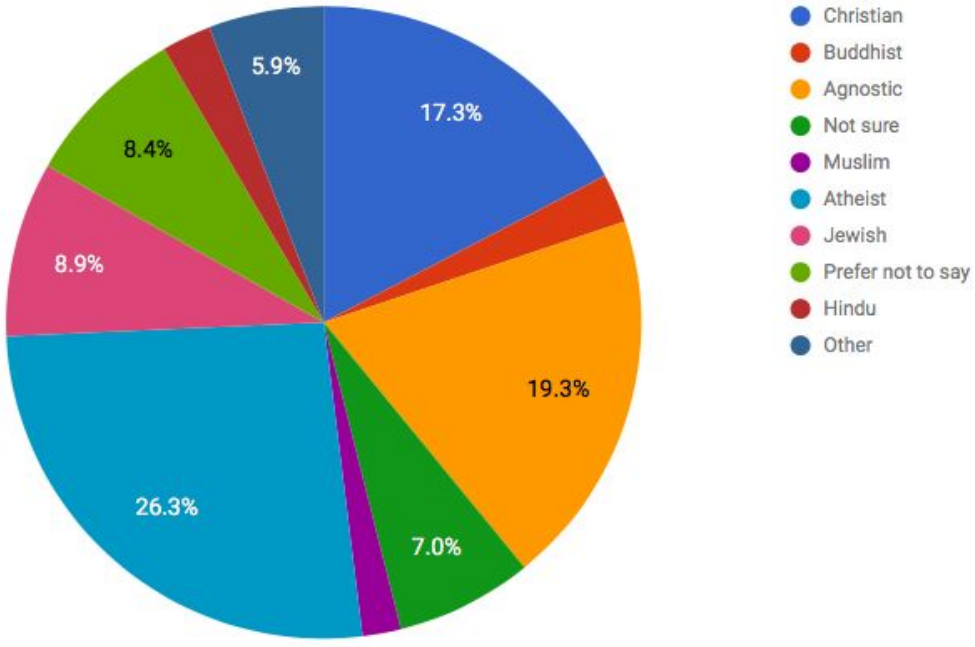
This is a multiple-choice question. Options offered are "Yes" and "No." N=403.



8.4% of respondents identify as Hispanic/Latino.

Religious affiliation

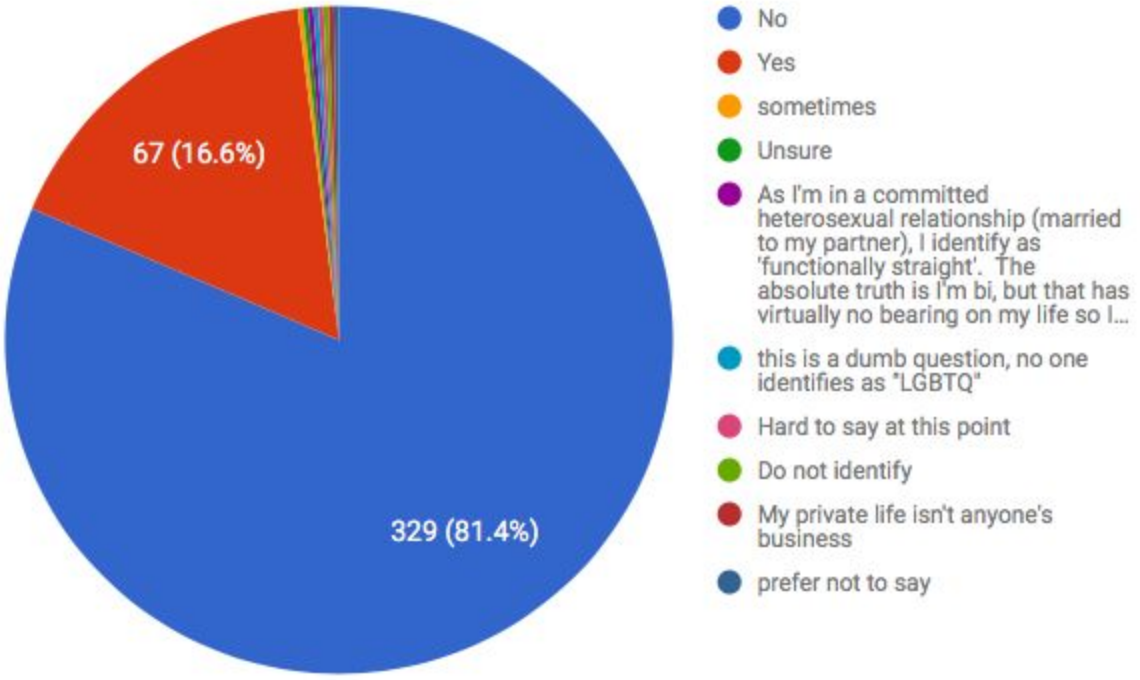
This is a multiple choice question. Options offered are “Christian,” “Jewish,” “Muslim,” “Buddhist,” “Hindu,” “Agnostic,” “Atheist,” “Other,” “Not sure,” and “Prefer not to say.” N=358.



The most represented religious affiliation is Atheist (26.3%), followed closely by Agnostic (19.3%) and Christian (17.3%). Of the remaining responses, 15.9% are affiliated with one of the other specified religions: Jewish (8.9%), Muslim (2%), Buddhist (2.5%), and Hindu (2.5%). The remaining 21.3% preferred not to state their affiliation (8.4%), were not sure (7%), or selected "Other" (5.9%).

LGBTQ identification

This is a multiple choice question. Options offered are "Yes," "No," and a write-in "Other" option. N=404.



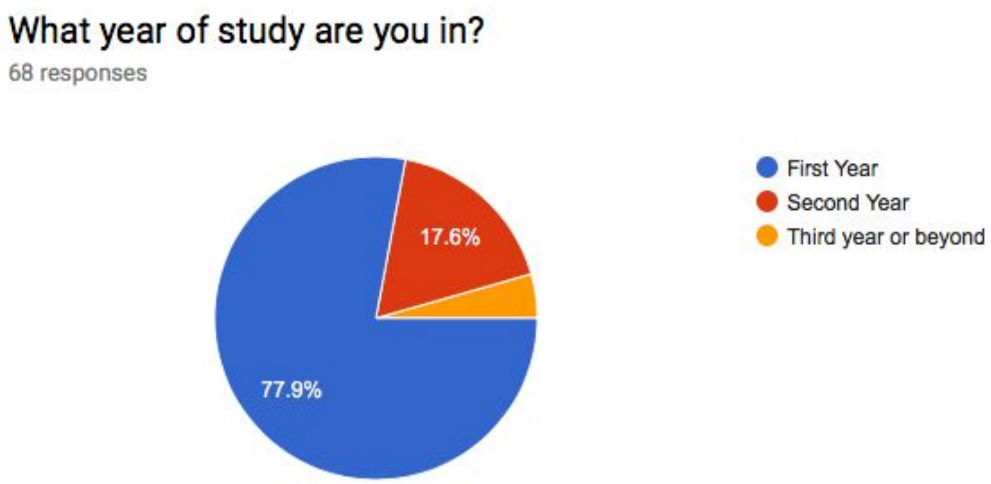
16.6% of respondents identify as LGBTQ, while 81.4% do not. Another 2% used the write-in option to state that they are uncertain, prefer not to say, or to protest the survey question altogether.

Masters students

The questions in this section were offered to the 65 respondents who answered "Masters" to the question "What type of program are you in?"

Year of study

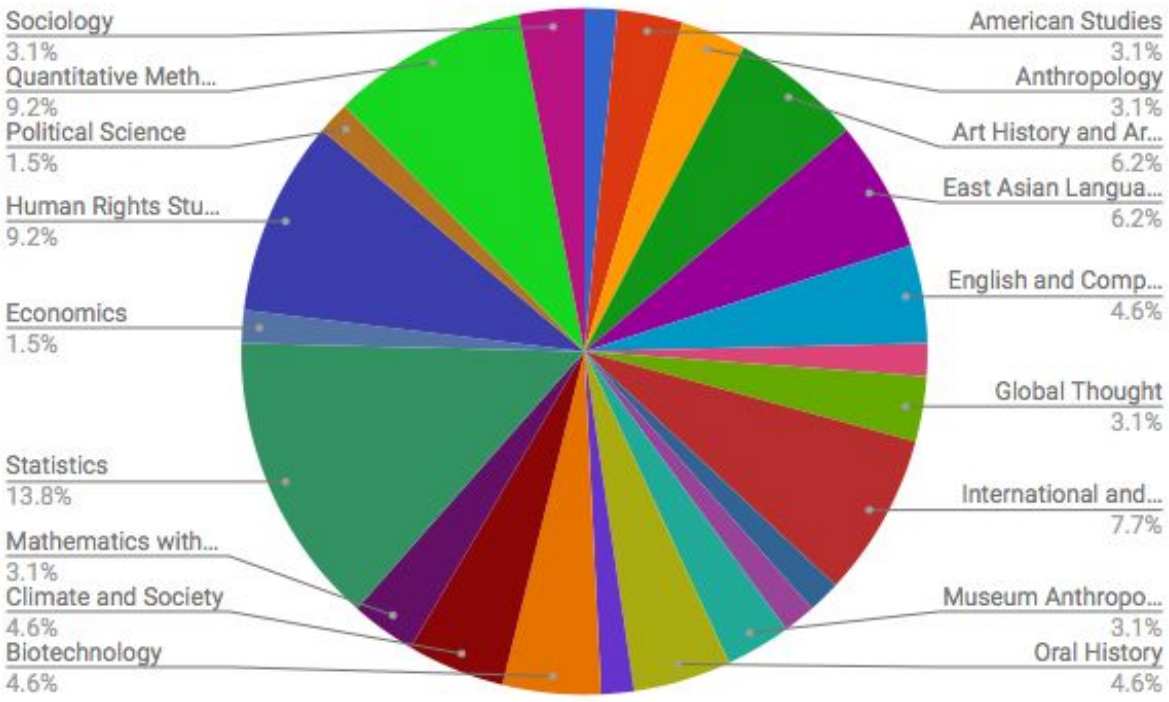
This is a multiple-choice questions. Options offered are "First Year," "Second Year," and "Third year or beyond." N=68.



The majority of our Masters respondents (77.9%) were in their first year, 17.6% in their second year, and 4.4% in third year or beyond.

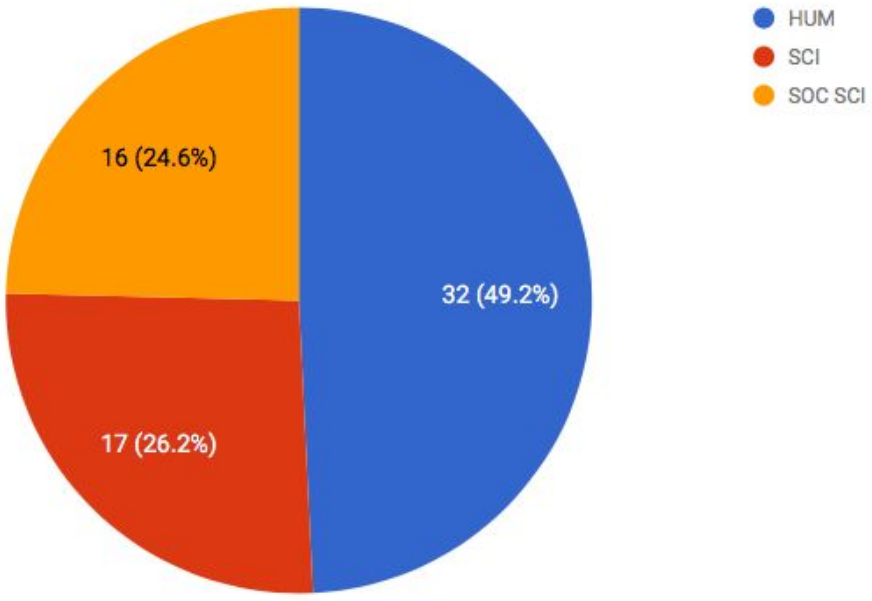
Program

This is a multiple-choice question. Options offered included 63 Masters degree programs offered across Columbia University's schools, and an "Other" option. N=65.



The answers collected came from 50 different Masters programs. Statistics students are the most represented in the survey population (13.8%), followed by Quantitative Methods in the Social Sciences (9.2%), Human Rights Studies (9.2%), and International and World History (Ma/MSci with the London School of Economics) 7.7%.

The programs were then categorized into Humanities, Sciences, and Social Sciences.



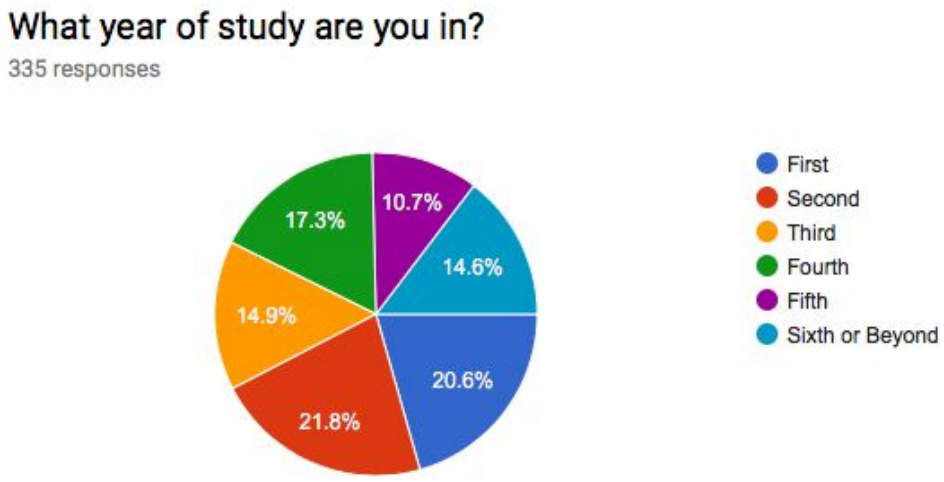
We found that 49.2% of respondents came from programs in the Humanities, 24.6% from Social Sciences, and 26.2% from Sciences.

PhD Students

The questions in this section were offered to the 337 students who answered "PhD" to the question "What type of program are you in?"

Year of study

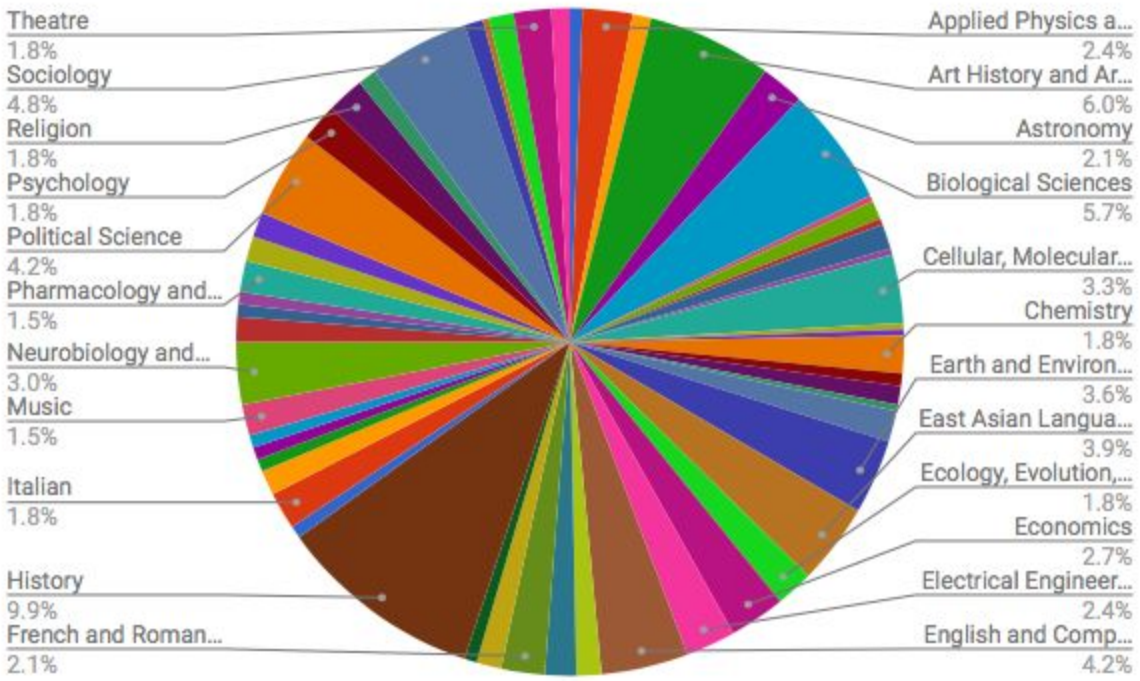
This is a multiple-choice question. Options offered are years 1-5, and year 6 and beyond. N=335.



Of the PhD respondents, 20.6% are in first year, 21.8% are in second year, 14.9% are in third year, 17.3% are in fourth year, 10.7% are in fifth year, and 14.6% are in sixth year or beyond.

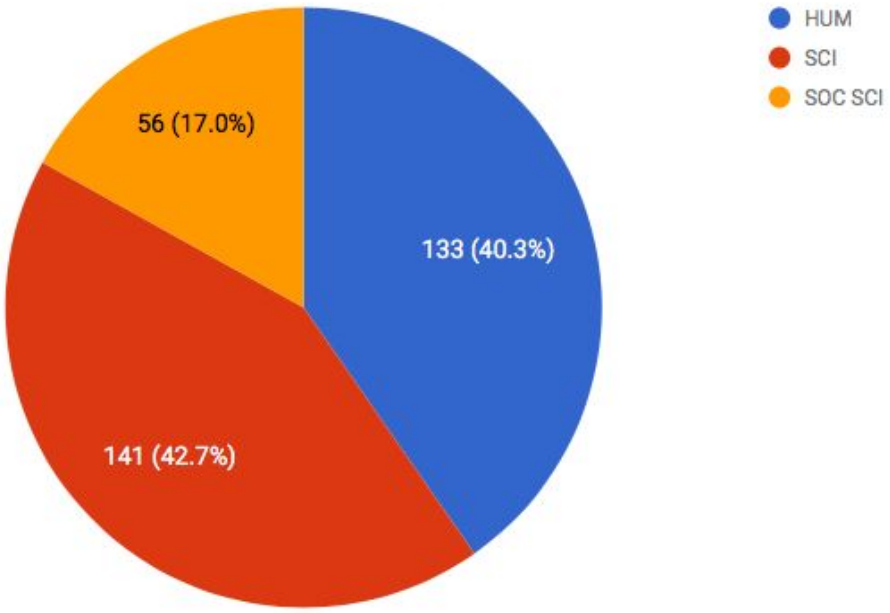
Program

This is a multiple-choice questions. Options included 63 PhD programs programs offered across Columbia University's schools, and an"Other" option. N=332.



The sample contains responses from all 63 programs listed, and only two respondents (0.2%) selected "Other." History students are the most represented in the survey population (9.9%), followed by Art History and Archaeology (6%), Biological Sciences (5.7%), Sociology (4.8%), Political Science (4.2%,), and English and Comparative Literature (4.2%).

The programs were then categorized as Humanities, Mathematics and Engineering, Sciences, and Social Sciences.



We found that 40.3% of respondents came from programs in the Humanities, 42.7% from the Sciences, 17.0% from the Social Sciences.

Section summary and remarks

Overall, the demographic breakdown reflects the underrepresentation of Masters students in GSAC. Involving more Masters students in student government is a matter that the Steering Committee has been addressing throughout the past two years with some success, and one that will remain a priority with the newly formed ASGC. The sample of PhD students, on the other hand, is both robust and well-balanced in terms of distribution across departments.

The gender distribution in the sample is somewhat skewed toward Female; the strong majority of respondents are White, and only 8.6% identify as Latino/Latina. This raises concerns about the extent to which the insights in survey might be able to address concerns specific to ethnic minorities. LGBTQ students seem to be proportionally well-represented, with 16.6% of respondents identifying with the label.

The survey population is diverse in terms of religious affiliation, although almost half (45.6%) does not express an affiliation with an organized religion, identifying as Agnostic or Atheist instead.

The majority of survey respondents are in their twenties; however, Masters students are on the whole younger than PhD students, which may bring about differences in needs and priorities when it comes to quality of life for those two groups. Most of the existing Masters and PhD programs across Columbia are represented in the survey, although Masters students in the humanities are somewhat more heavily represented than the other two divisions, and PhD students in the social sciences are less well-represented than their counterparts in humanities and hard sciences.

Academics

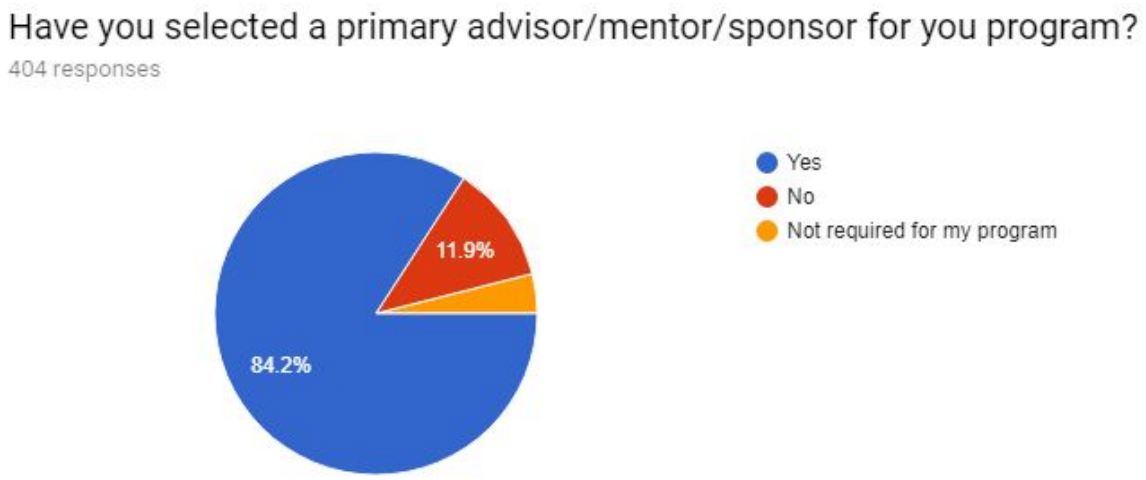
Section overview

This section has two main focuses: a) the graduate students' relationships with their advisors and departments, and b) the use of and satisfaction with work time and work spaces.

Relationship with advisor(s)/department

Selection of primary advisor

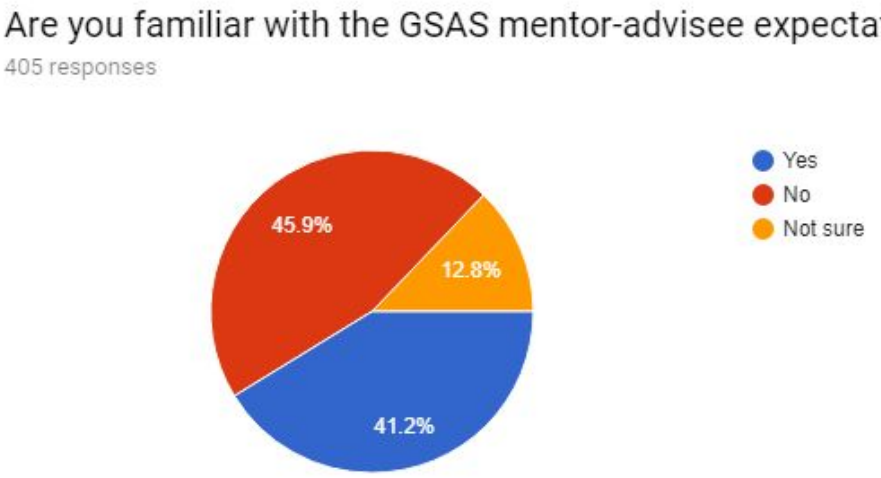
This is a multiple-choice question. Options are "Yes," "No," and "Not required for my program." N=404.



Of the respondents, the majority (84.2 %) have already selected an advisor whereas 11.9% haven't. 4% of the respondents were not required to select one.

Familiarity with mentor-advisee expectations

This is a multiple-choice question. Options are "Yes," "No," and "Not sure." N=405.



Significantly less than half of the respondents (41.9%) are positive that they are familiar with the GSAS expectations. 12,8% are not sure, whereas 45.9% are not familiar with them.

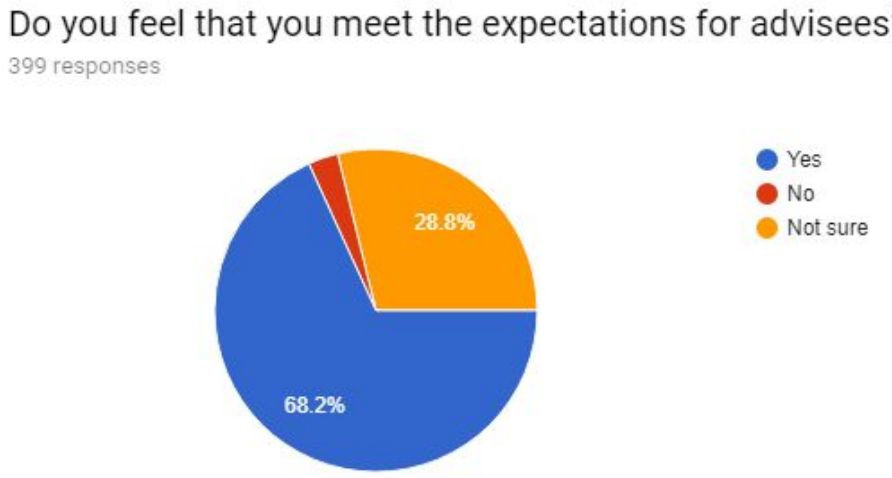
Advisor meeting expectations

This is a multiple-choice question. Options are "Yes," "No," and "Not sure." N=399.

Although more than half of the 405 respondents to the prior question freely revealed their unfamiliarity with the advisor-advisee expectations, 399 people still responded to the present one. Two-thirds (66.4%) of the respondents replied in the affirmative whereas 24.8% are not sure. 8.8% feel that their advisors do not meet the expectations.

Advisee meeting expectations

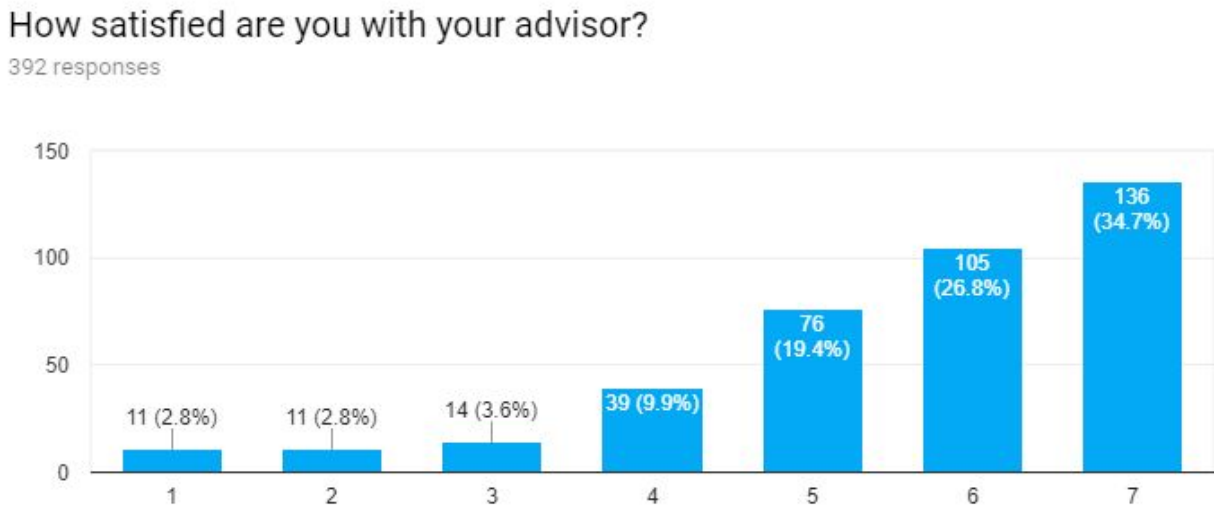
This is a multiple-choice question. Options are “Yes,” “No,” and “Not sure.” N=399.



68.2% of the respondents feel that they meet the expectations whereas 3% feel they don’t. 28.8% are not sure.

Satisfaction with advisor

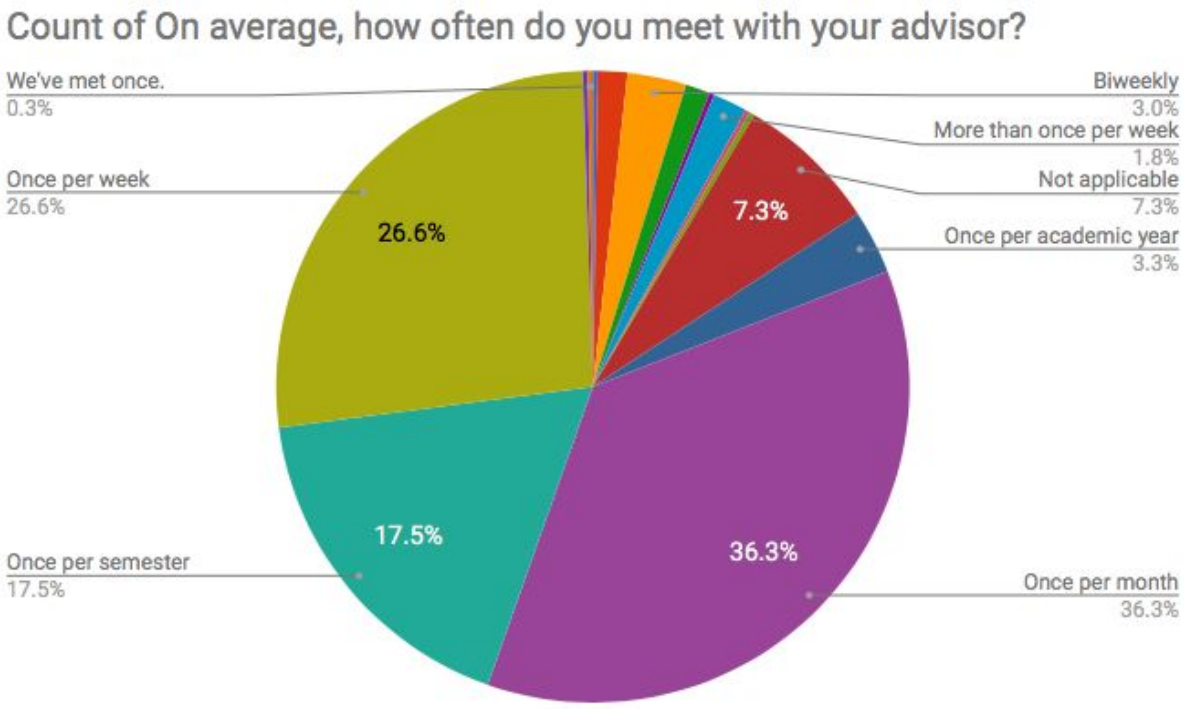
This is a scaled question. The scale ranges from 1 (“very unsatisfied”) to 7 (“very satisfied”). N=392.



The progression from "very unsatisfied" to "very satisfied" is as follows: 2.8%, 2.8%, 3.6%, 9.9% (i.e. the middle between the two poles), 19.4%, 26.8%, and 34.7%. This means that 80.9% of the respondents are more or less satisfied with their advisors whereas 9.2% are more or less dissatisfied.

Frequency of meetings

This is a multiple-choice question. Pre-given options are "Once per week," "Once per month," "Once per semester," "Once per academic year," "Not applicable," as well as an "Other" field that can be filled out by a response of one's own choosing, the latter yielding 36 additional, different responses. Most of these responses were descriptive in nature, and for the sake of easier representation of information, they were categorized as Biweekly, Twice per semester, More than once per week, As needed, or rounded up to the nearest existing category. N=398

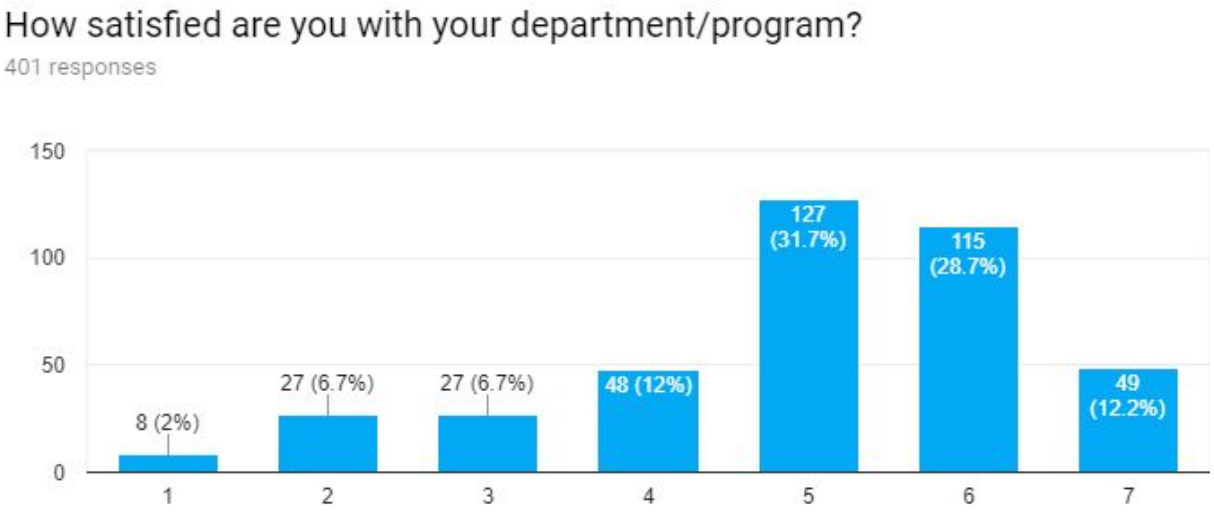


The largest fraction of respondents (36.4%) meet their advisors once per month while about a quarter (26.6%) meet once per week, and 17.5% meet once per semester. 7.3% chose "not applicable", and 3.3% meet once per academic year. An additional 1.3% met two or three times per semester, 3% met biweekly, 1.8% more than once per week or daily, while 1.5% met as needed, depending on research stage. Alarmingly, two students reported never meeting their advisor, or only meeting them once.

Cross-section analysis reveals that those who only meet with their advisor once per year are relatively dissatisfied (3.69 average on the 'satisfaction with advisor' scale) compared to those who meet once per semester (5.28), once per month (5.74) or once per week (6.01).

Satisfaction with department/program

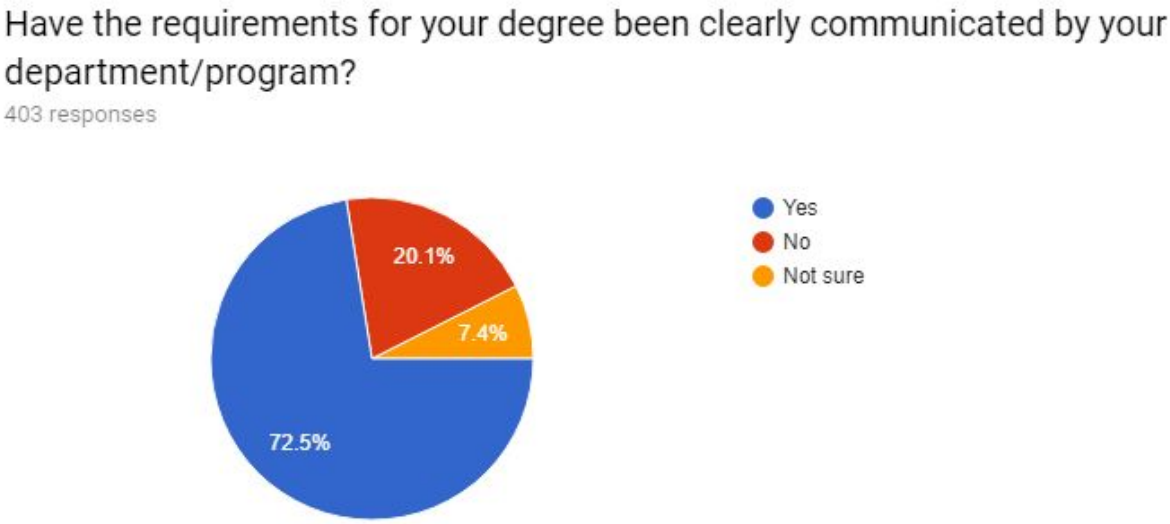
This is a scaled question. The scale ranges from 1 ("very unsatisfied") to 7 ("very satisfied"). N=401.



The progression from "very unsatisfied" to "very satisfied" is as follows: 2%, 6.7%, 6.7%, 12% (i.e. the middle between the two poles), 31.7%, 28.7%, and 12.2%. This means that 72.6% of the respondents are more or less satisfied with their department/program (though 31.7% opted for the rather neutral 5th value of the scale). 15.4% are more or less dissatisfied.

Communication of degree requirements

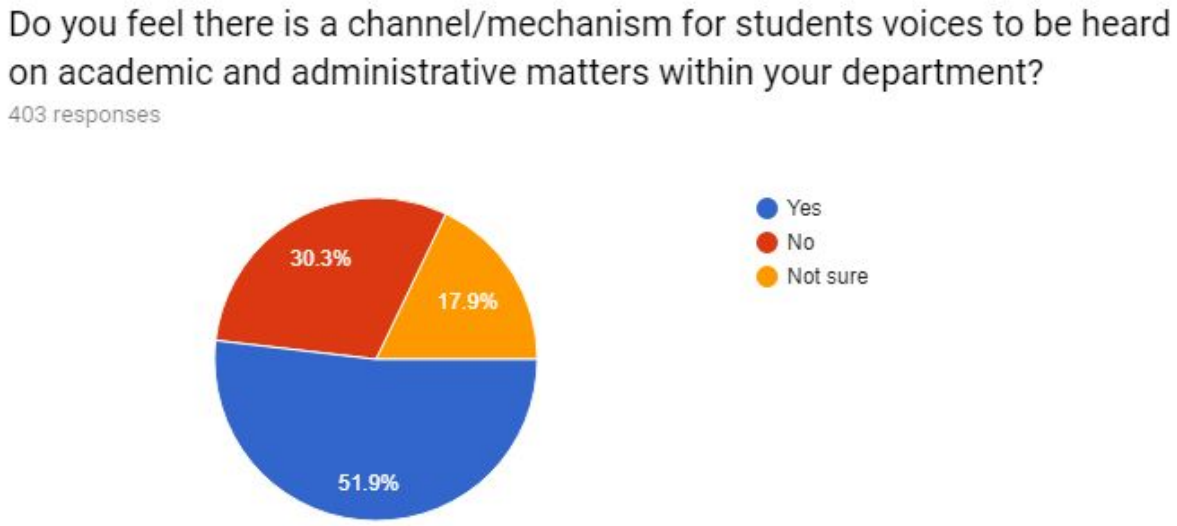
This is a multiple-choice question. Options are "Yes," No," and "Not sure." N=403.



Almost three-fourths (72.5%) of the students state that requirements have been communicated clearly to them. 7.4% are not sure, and 20.1% state that requirements have not been communicated clearly.

Channel for students' voices

This is a multiple-choice question. Options are "Yes," No," and "Not sure." N=403.



About half of the respondents (51.9%) feel that there is a channel, though roughly one third (30.3%) feel there is none. 17.9% are not sure.

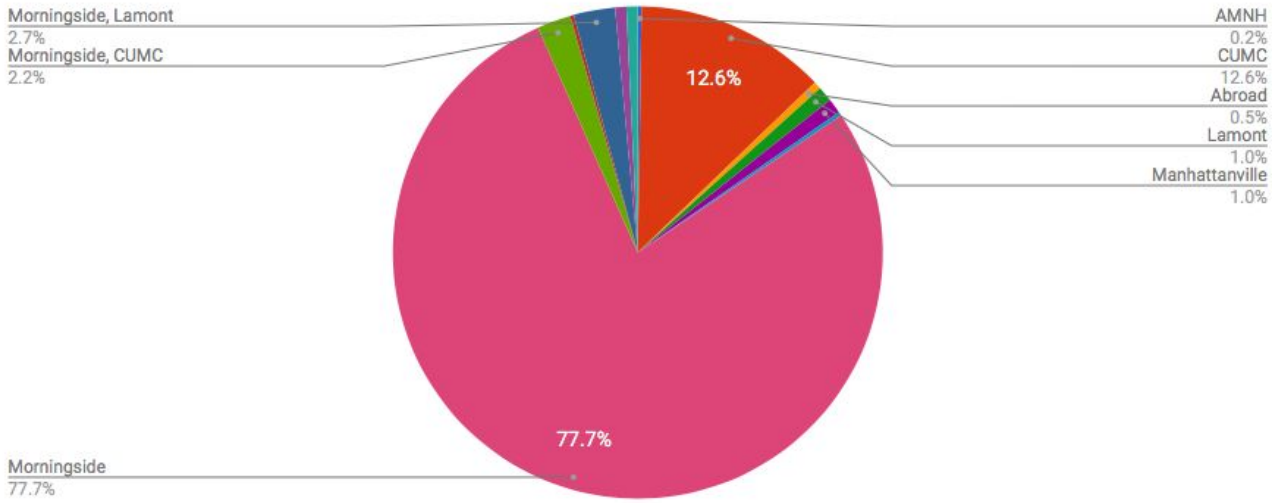
Comments about advisor/department

There were 96 comments, which differed a lot in kind. Some comments were used to praise individual, openly named advisors whereas others were used to denounce individual, openly named advisors as sexist, irresponsible, or cruel. A lot of comments highlighted the good advisor-advisee relationship but were critical of unclear and contradictory departmental policies.

Work and research: spaces and time

Campuses

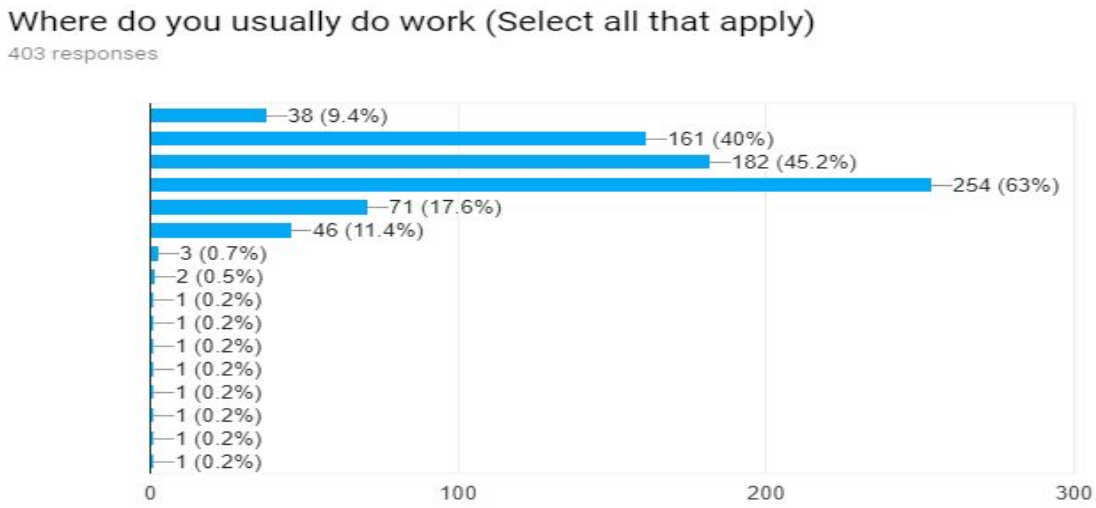
This is a multiple-answer question. Options are “Morningside”, “Manhattanville,” “Columbia Medical Center,” “Lamont,” “Nevis Laboratories,” and “Other” (to be filled out with concrete answer). N=404.



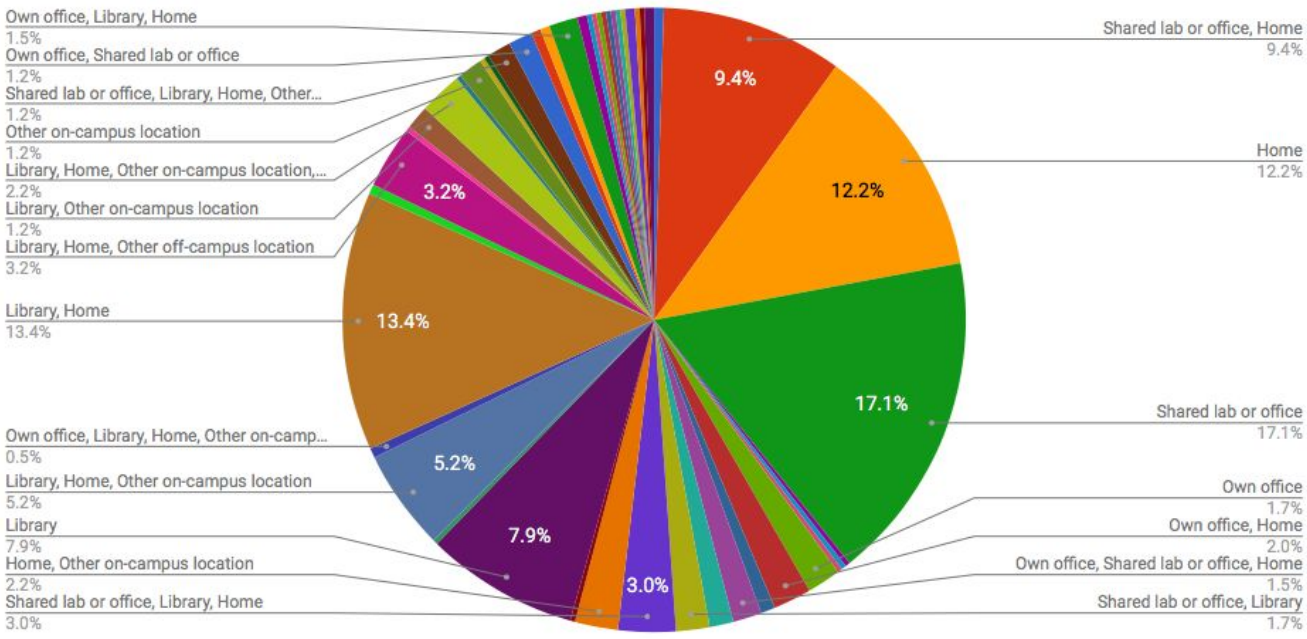
Of the respondents, 77.7% work exclusively on the Morningside Campus, and 12.6% work exclusively at CUMC; 1% work at Lamont, 1% at Manhattanvile, 0.5% are doing research abroad, 0.2% work at AMNH. Another 2.2% work both at Morningside and CUMC, and an additional 2.7% work between Morningside and Lamont, and another 1.6% work between Morningside and another location other than Lamont and CUMC.

Concrete type of work space

This is a multiple-answer question. Options include “Own Office,” “Shared Lab or Office,” “Library,” “Home,” “Other on-campus location,” “Other off-campus location,” and “Other” (to be filled out with concrete answer). N=403.

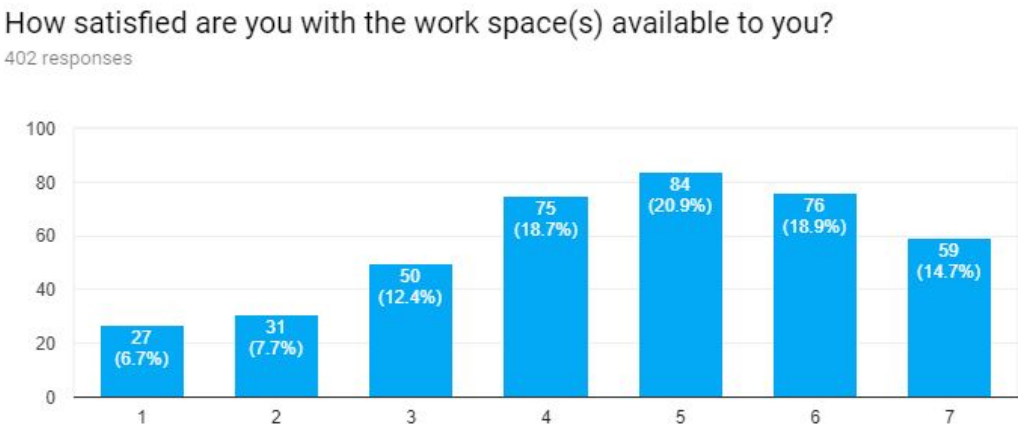


63% of the respondents do at least some of their work at home, 45.3% in the library, 40% in a shared lab or office, 17.6% at other on-campus locations, 11.4% at other off-campus locations, and 9.4% in their own office. Most, however, work at a combination of locations: only 12.2% of the 63% respondents who work at home do so exclusively; most significantly, respondents report sharing their time between library and home (13.4%), or shared lab/office and home (9.4%)



Satisfaction with work spaces

This is a scaled questions. The scale ranges from 1 ("very unsatisfied") to 7 ("very satisfied"). N=402.



The progression from "very unsatisfied" to "very satisfied" is as follows: 6.7%, 7.7%, 12.4%, 18.7% (i.e. the middle between the two poles), 20.9%, 18.9%, and 14.7%. This means that 54.5% of the respondents are more or less satisfied with their work spaces whereas 26.8% are more or less dissatisfied.

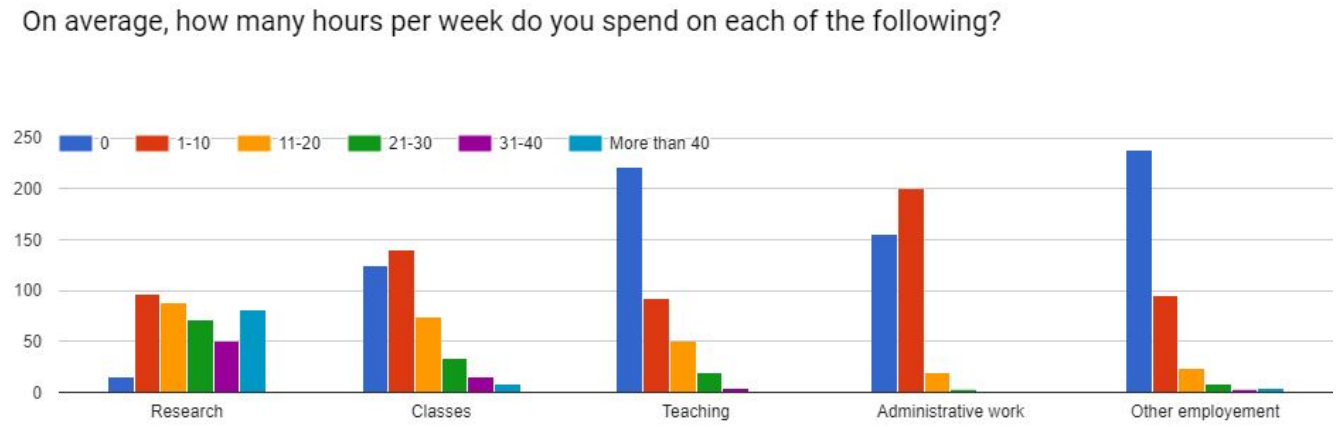
Comments about work spaces

There were 134 comments, all but 2 or 3 of which were highly critical of the existing work spaces. Common complaints are that there is a lack of space in general and of offices for grad students. The existing work spaces tend to be considered as too dark, too crowded, too cold (or too warm, in the summer), and too smelly.

Weekly work/research time

This is a multiple-choice grid question for which "Average work hours per week" (split up into six blocks, namely 0, 1-10, 11-20, 21-30, 31-40, and More than 40) are assigned to five different types of work/research, namely "Research," (N=403) "Classes," (N=396) "Teaching," (N=388)

"Administrative Work," (N=378) and "Other Employment" (N=373).



Of the 403 respondents who volunteered information about their weekly research time, 3.97% spend no time, 23.82% 1-10 hours, 21.84% 11-20 hours, 17.87% 21-30 hours, 12.41% 31-40 hours, and 20.1% more than 50 hours on research.

Of the 396 respondents for "Classes", 31.57% spend no time, 35.35% 1-10 hours, 18.69% 11-20 hours, 8.33% 21-30, 4.04% 31-40, and 2.02% more than 40 hours on classes.

Of the 388 respondents for "Teaching", 57.22% spend no time, 23.71% 1-10 hours, 13.14% 11-20 hours, 4.9% 21-30 hours, and 1.03% 31-40 hours on teaching.

Of the 378 respondents for "Administrative Work", 41.27% spend no time, 52.91% 1-10 hours, 5.03% 11-20 hours, and 0.79% 21-30 hours on administrative work.

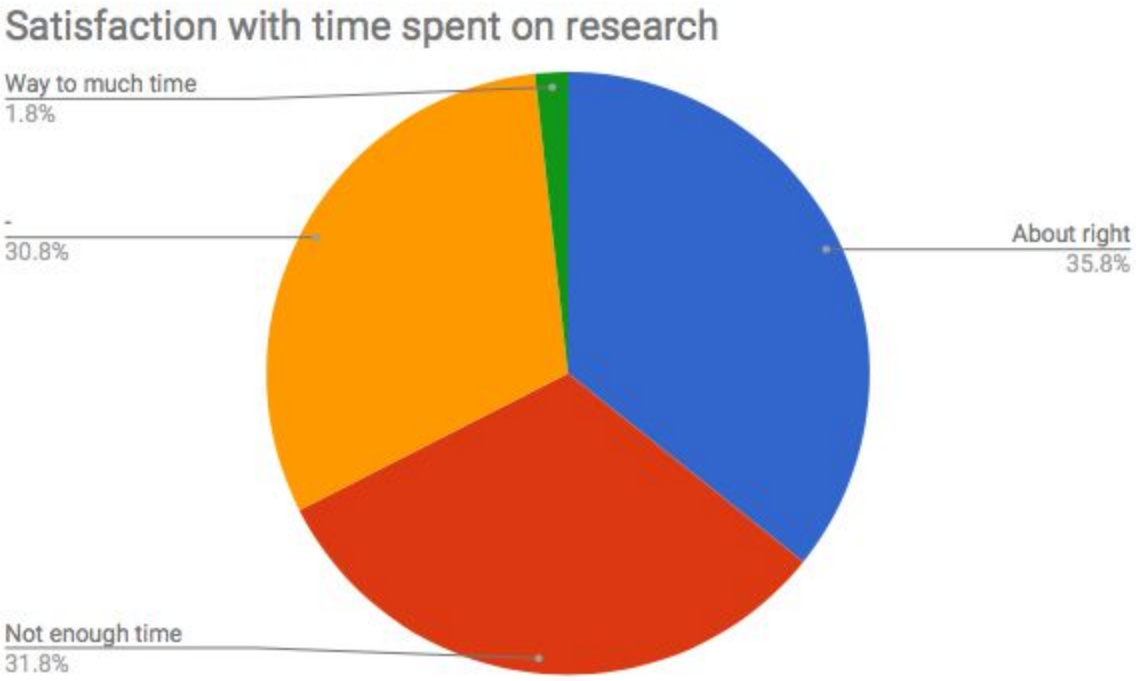
Of the 373 respondents for "Other Employment", 63.81% spend no time, 25.47 % 1-10 hours, 6.43% 11-20 hours, 2.41% 21-30 hours, 0.8% 31-40 hours, and 1.07% more than 40 hours on other employment.

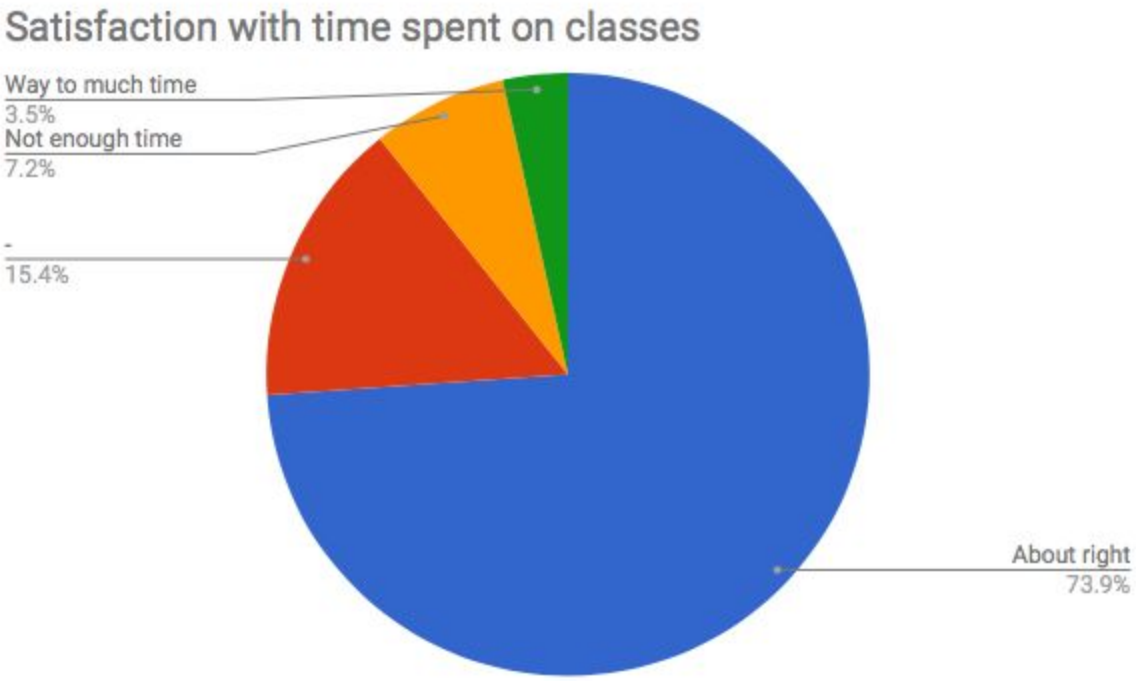
Satisfaction with amount of work/research time

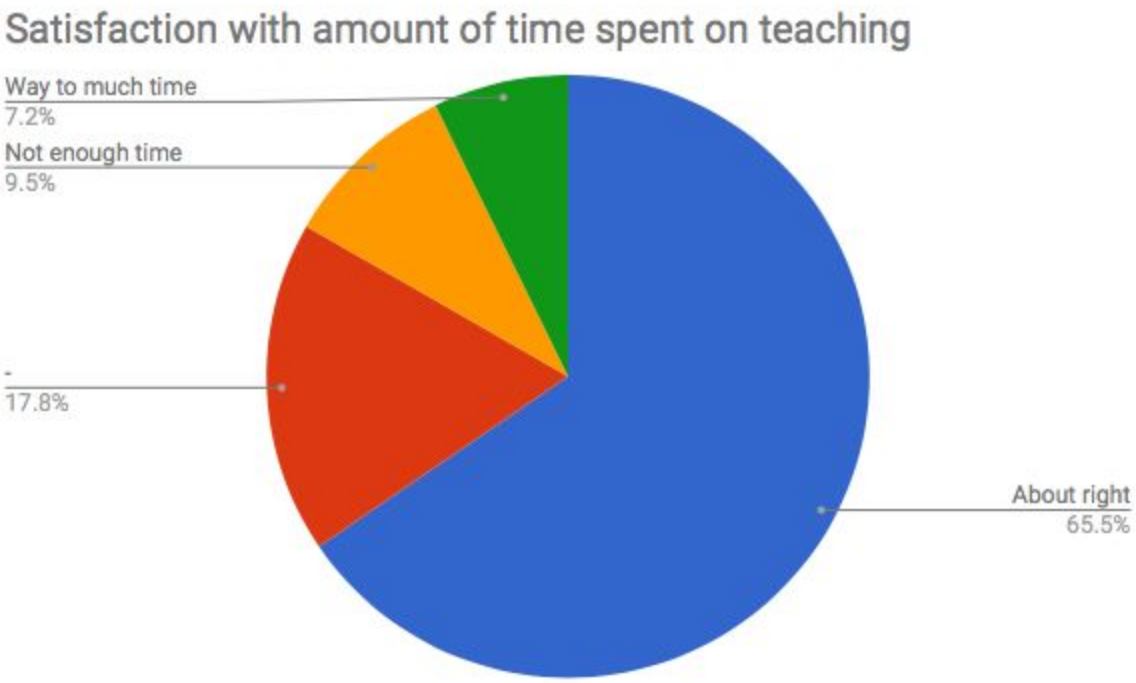
This is a multiple-choice grid question for which levels of satisfaction with weekly work time (split up into five scaled blocks ranging from "not enough time" to "way too much time" with "about right" in the middle) are assigned to the five different types of work/research from

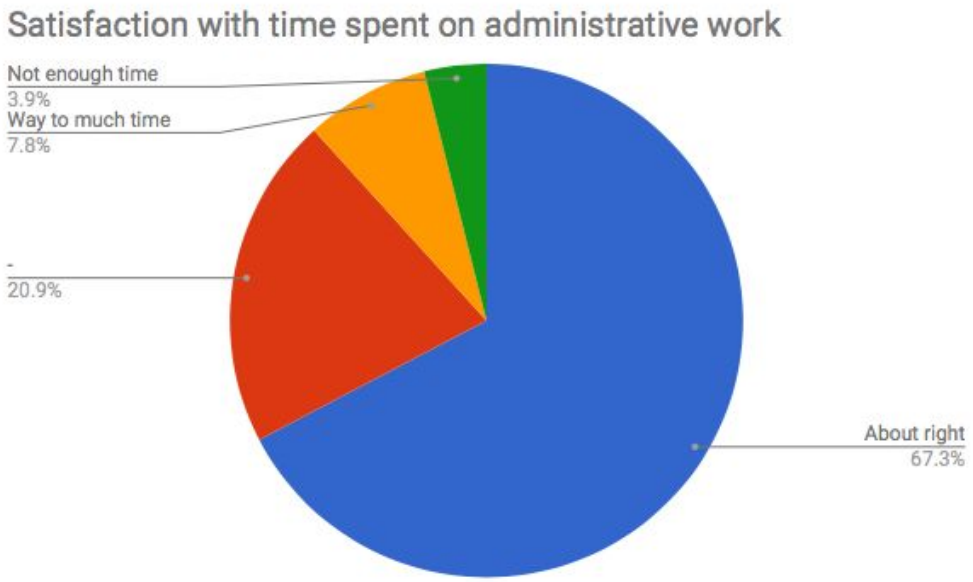
the prior question, namely “Research” (N=401), “Classes” (N=305), “Teaching” (N=359), “Administrative Work” (N=358) and “Other Employment” (N=345).

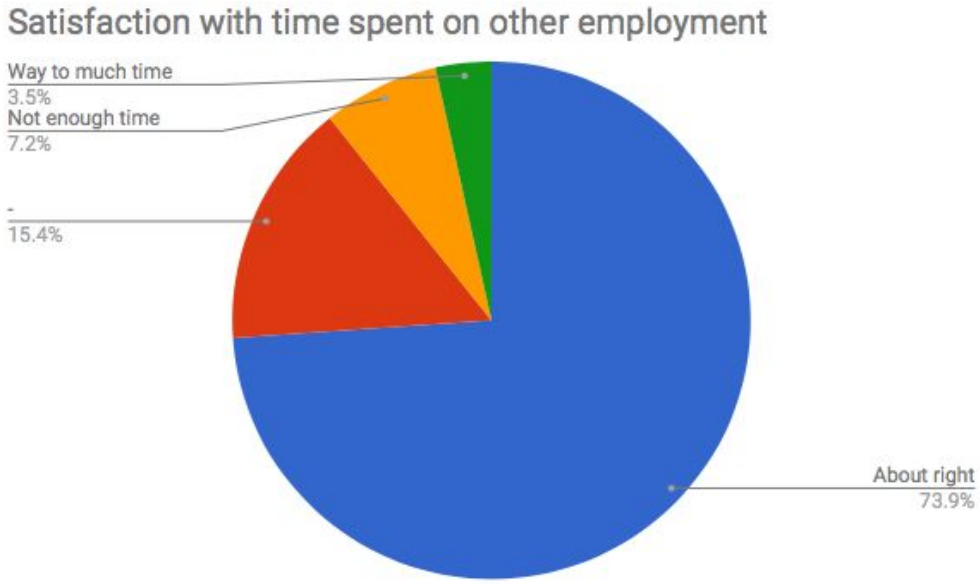
Due to a flaw in survey design, the category between “not enough” and “about right” blended into the category between “about right” and “way too much time:” unfortunately, both are marked as “-” and should be disregarded as it cannot be deduced from the data which designation the respondent checked. We remain, however, able to distinguish between “not enough,” “about right,” and “way too much.” Percentage breakdowns per category follow in the charts below.




Satisfaction with time spent on classes
Way to much time
3.5%
Not enough time
7.2%
-
15.4%
About right
73.9%


Satisfaction with amount of time spent on teaching
Way to much time
7.2%
Not enough time
9.5%
-
17.8%
About right
65.5%



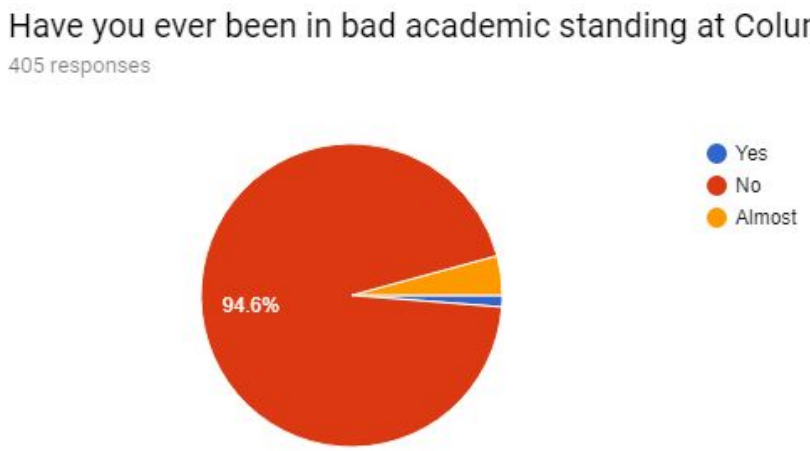


Of all of the above, the only significant concern might be the fact that 31.8% of students believe that they spend too little time on research. The most represented group among these respondents (42.9%) were PhD students in the humanities.

Academic standing

Bad academic standing

This is a multiple-choice question. The three options are "Yes," No," and "Almost." N=405.

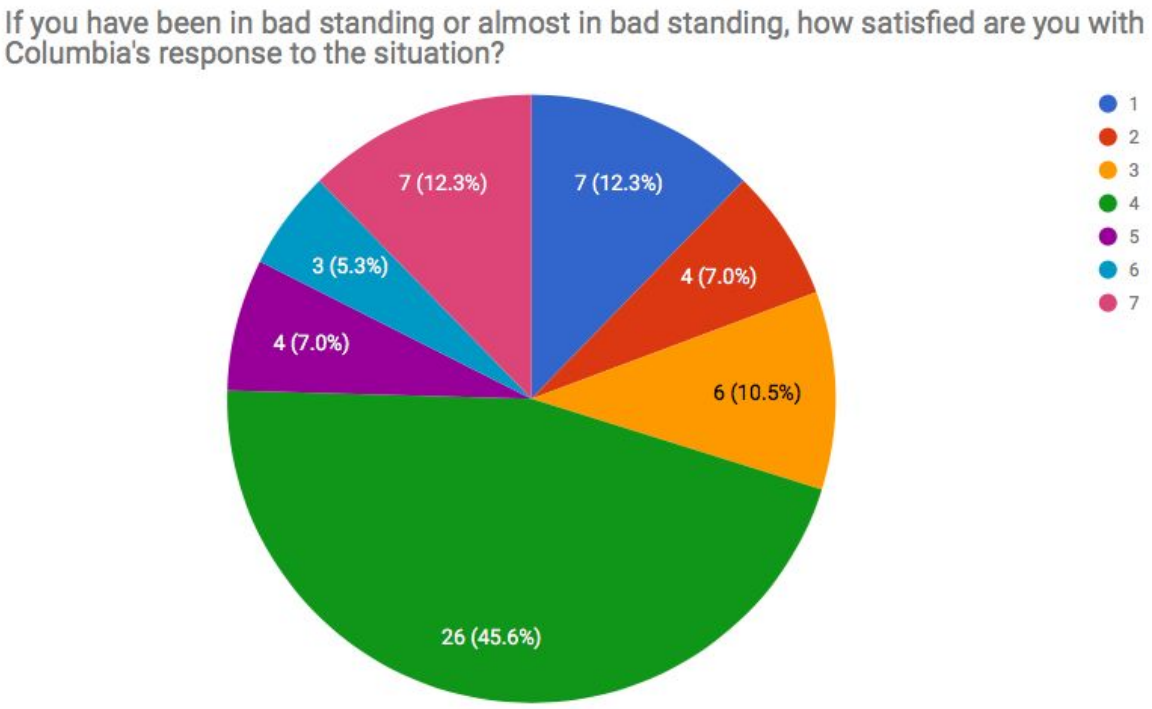


The overwhelming majority of respondents (94.6%) have never been in bad academic standing. 4.2% have almost been and 1.2% have actually been in bad academic standing.

Satisfaction with Columbia's response to bad academic standing

This is a scaled question. The scale ranges from 1 ("very unsatisfied") to 7 ("very satisfied"). N=57 (despite only 22 people stating that they have ever been or almost been in BAC in the previous question).

The progression from "very unsatisfied" to "very satisfied" is as follows: 12.3%, 7%, 10.5%, 45.6% (i.e. the middle between the two poles), 7%, 5.3%, and 12.3%. This means that almost half of the respondents was somewhat acceptably satisfied with Columbia's response whereas 29.8% were rather unsatisfied and 24.6% rather satisfied with it.



General comments on academic life at Columbia

There were 50 comments, most of which were very critical. Common complaints include but are not limited to: too little money, too much TA work, general lack of relevant information, resources, emotional support, and communication.

Section summary

This section has two main focuses: a) the graduate students' relationships with their advisors and departments, and b) the use of and satisfaction with work time and work spaces.

Regarding point a) the satisfaction rate is generally higher. More than 80% of the respondents deem their relationship with their advisor to be rather satisfactory, and more than 72% of the respondents feel rasther satisfied with their department. As may be expected, students who meet their advisors rather often (once or more than once per month) are generally more satisfied. Much of the dissatisfaction arises from a perceived lack of support, communication and

transparency within the departments, i.e. from students feeling that they are being left alone, not cherished or exploited.

Regarding point b) especially the work space situation has been subjected to harsh criticism. This does not seem to be a big surprise and to a certain degree inevitable given that Columbia's main facilities are compressed on relatively little space in Manhattan. However, it seems that this problem could be at least somewhat alleviated if more libraries were open 24/7, and if more work spaces specifically for graduate students were created.

While the majority of students seem to feel that they spend about the right amount of time on university-related work, a slight tendency towards feeling overtaxed is equally visible. Especially the TA work is at times regarded as too time-consuming or distracting from research (especially when compared with other top-tier universities) and is thus sometimes considered to amount to exploitation on the part of Columbia.

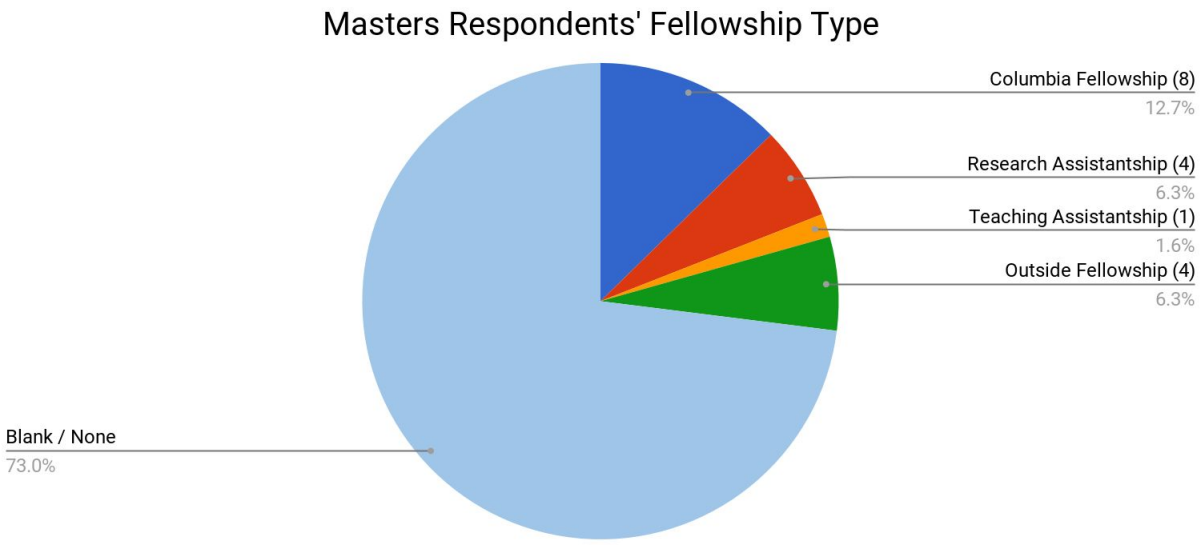
Very few respondents have ever been in or close to bad academic standing, and those who have mostly attribute this to bureaucratic failings on the part of the registrar/departments.

Funding

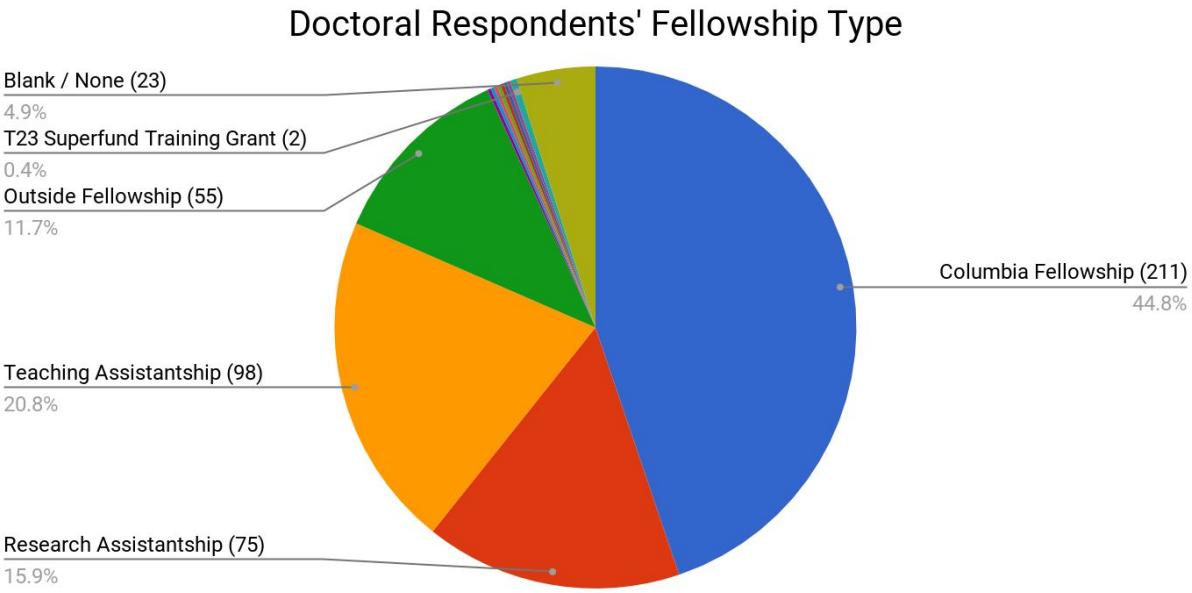
Section overview

Fellowship Type

The multiple-choice question posed was "Are you supported by any of the following? (select all that apply)." Respondents could choose among "Columbia Fellowship," "Research Assistantship," "Teaching Assistantship," "Outside Fellowship," and "other," which would given them the option to write in a response. N=404.



65 Masters students provided responses regarding whether they are supported by a Columbia Fellowship or Assistantship. 12.7% of Masters students are funded by a Columbia Fellowship, 6.3% are funded by a Research Assistantship, 1.6% (one respondent) are funded by a Teaching Assistantship, and 6.3% are funded through an Outside Fellowship. 73% of Masters students are not supported by any of the above.

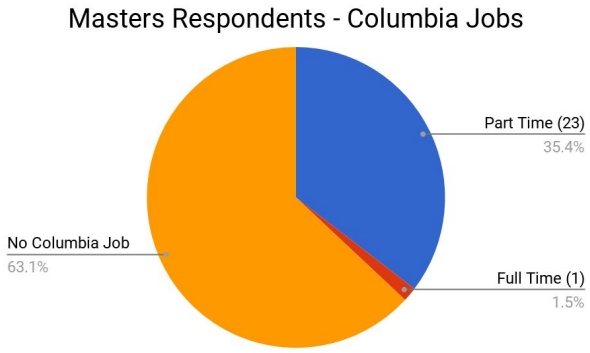


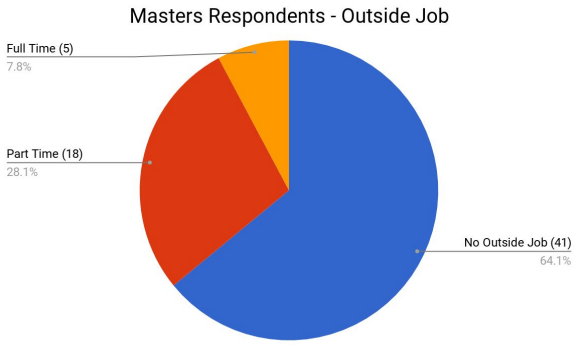
339 Doctoral students provided responses regarding whether they are supported by a Columbia Fellowship or Assistantship. 44.8% are funded by a Columbia Fellowship, 20.8% are funded by a Teaching Assistantship, 15.9% are funded by a Research Assistantship, and 11.7% are funded by an unspecified Outside Fellowship. 115 (33.9%) doctoral student respondents reported being funded by more than one fellowship or assistantship. There were some respondents who reported being funded by internal Columbia fellowships or grants not listed in the survey's provided response options. One student each were funded by the following: Dean's Fellowship, CTL Teaching Fellowship, CTL Senior Teaching Observation Fellowship, Department Training Grant, CC Preceptor Teaching Fellowship, Core Proctoreship. One student responded being funded by an NIH training grant, and two reported being funded by T32 Superfund Training Grants. Only 4.9% of PhD respondents are not supported by any of the above, nor did they supply information about any other funding sources.

Employment

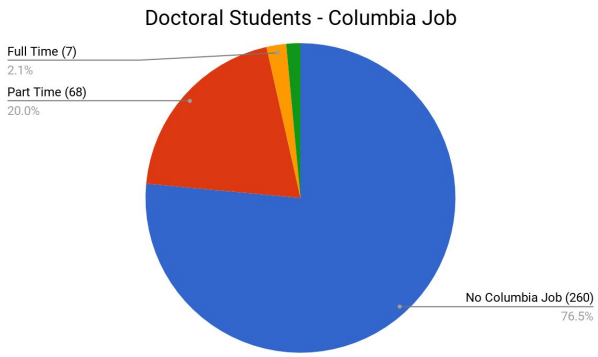
The first multiple-choice question posed was "Do you have a job at Columbia not directly required by your academic program?" Respondents could choose one from the answers "Yes, full time," "Yes, part time," and "No." N=404.

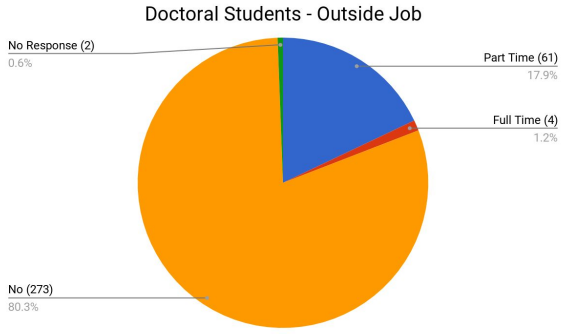
The second multiple choice question posed was "Do you have a job outside of Columbia?" Respondents could choose one from the answers "Yes, full time," "Yes, part time," and "No." N=404.





Of 65 Masters respondents, 35% reported having a part time Columbia job not required by their academic program, 1.5% (1 respondent) reported having a full time Columbia job not required by their academic program, and 63% reported having no Columbia employment not required by their academic program. Of those same 65 Masters respondents, 28.1% reported having an outside part time job, 7.8% reported having a outside full time job, and 64.1% reported having no outside job.

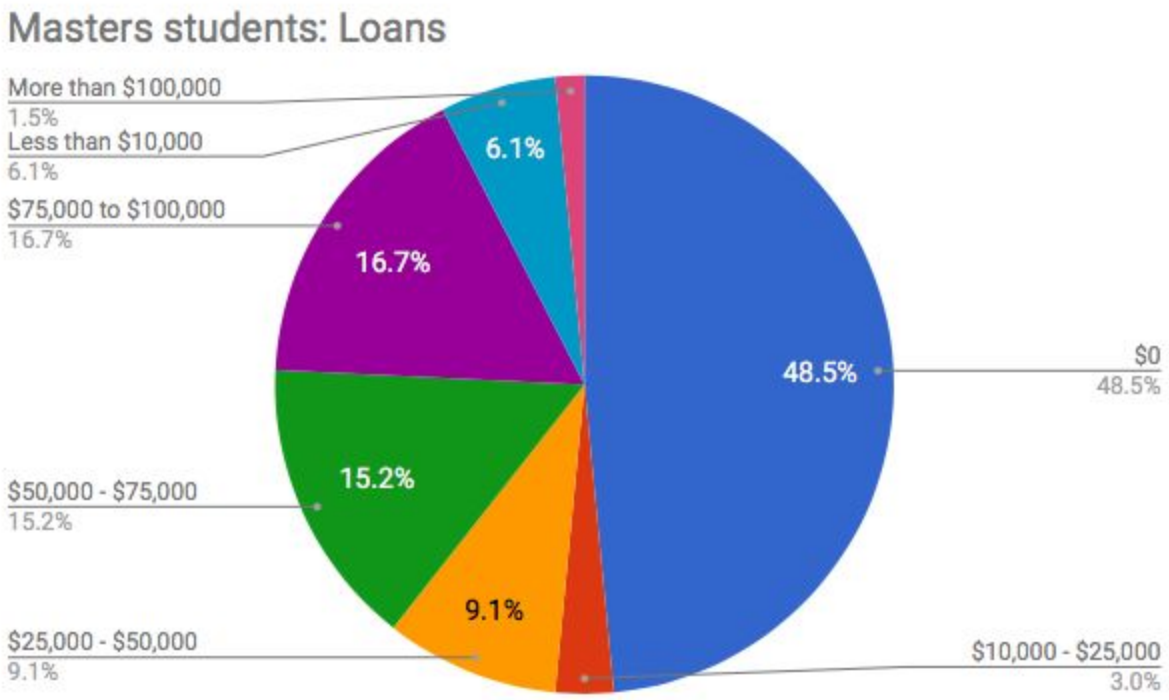




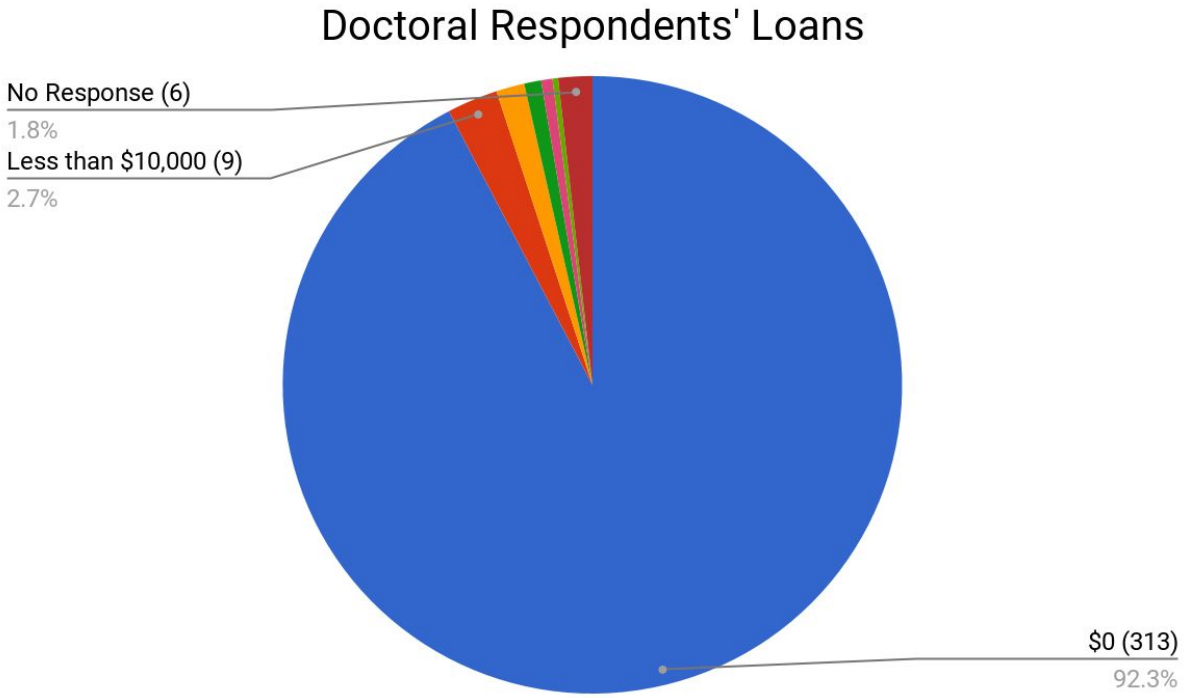
Of 339 Doctoral respondents, 2.1% reported having a full time Columbia job not required by their academic program, 20% reported having a part time Columbia job not required by their academic program, and 76.5% reported having no Columbia job not required by their academic program. (1.4% of Doctoral students gave no response). Of those same 339 Doctoral respondents, 1.2% reported having a full time outside job 17.9% reported having a part time outside job, and 80.3% reported having no outside job. (0.6% of Doctoral students gave no response).

Loans

The multiple-choice question posed was "What amount of loans have you taken out to finance your current program of study?" Respondents could choose one of the following answers: "$0," "Less than $10,000," "$10,000-$25,000," "$25,000-$50,000," "$50,000-$75,000," "$75,000 to $100,000," "More than $100,000," and "other," which gives reponsdents the option to write in a response. N=404.



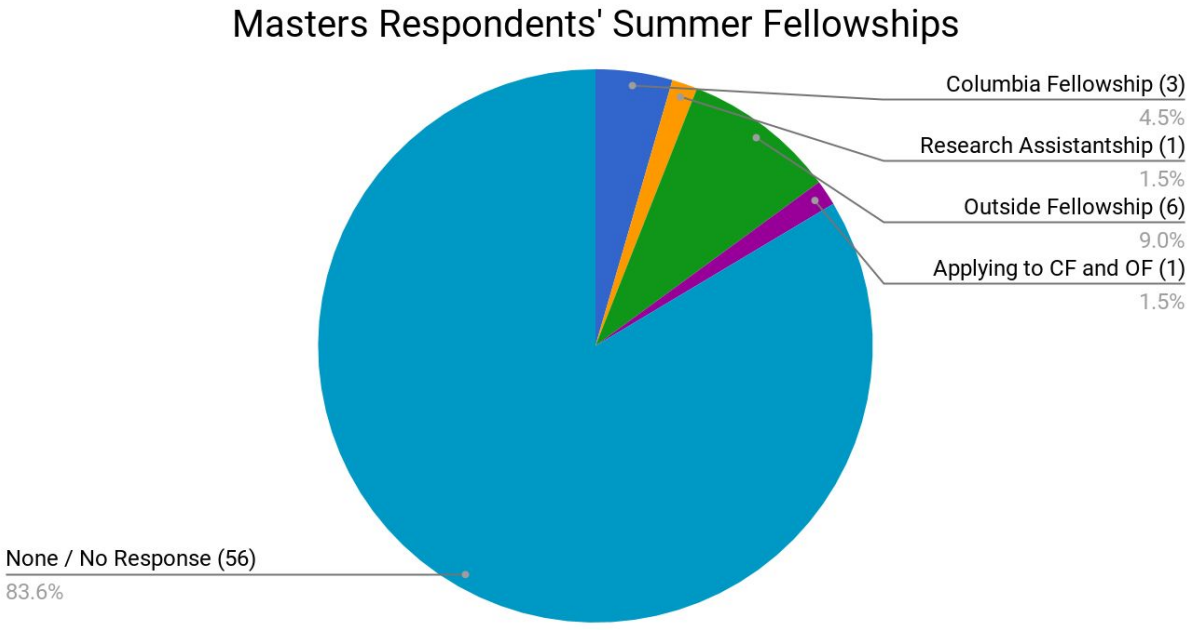
66 Masters students provided information regarding the amount of loans they have taken out to finance their current program of study. Of those 66 Masters respondents, 58.8% took out no loans, 6.1% have taken out loans amounting to less than $10,000, 3% took out loans amounting to between $10,000 and $25,000, 9.1% took out loans amounting to between $25,000 and $50,000, 15.2% took out loans amounting to between $50,000 and $75,000, and 1.5% (one respondent) took out loans amounting to more than $100,000.



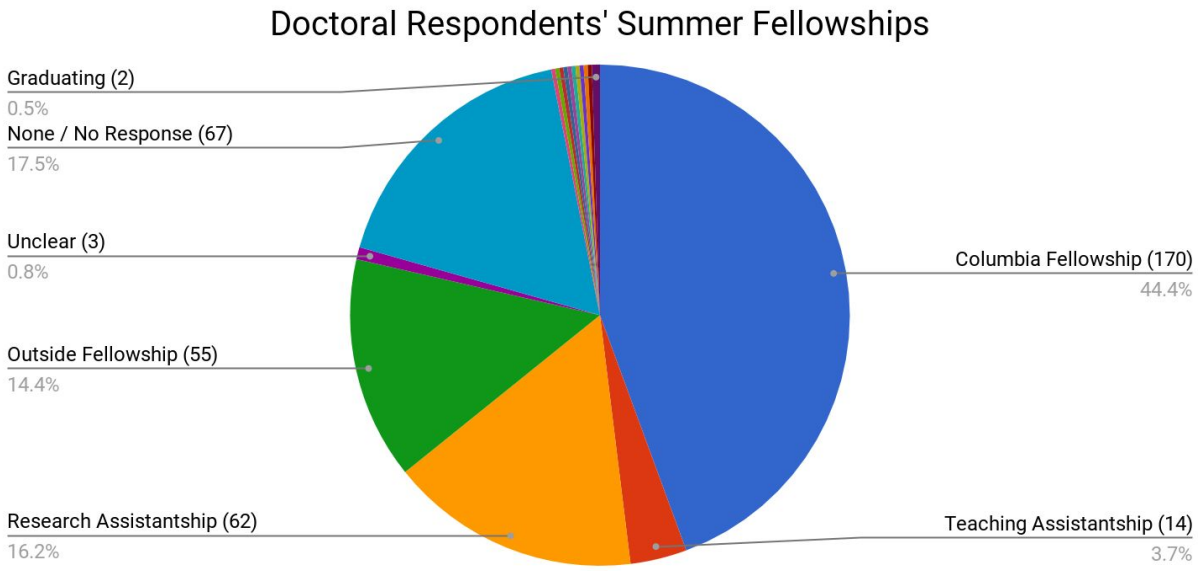
339 Doctoral students provided responses regarding the amount of loans they have taken out to finance their current program of study. Of those 340 Doctoral students, 92.3% took out no loans, 2.7% have taken out loans amounting to less than $10,000, 1.5% took out loans amounting to between $10,000 and $25,000, 0.9% took out loans amounting to between $25,000 and $50,000, none took out loans amounting to between $50,000 and $75,000, and 0.6% (two respondents) took out loans amounting to more than $100,000. (1.8% (six respondents) provided no information, and one student reported “my working husband supports me”).

Summer Fellowships

The multiple-choice question posed was "Will you be supported in the summer by any of the following? (select all that apply)." Respondents could choose among "Columbia Fellowship," "Research Assistantship," "Teaching Assistantship," "Outside Fellowship," and "other," which would given respondents the option to write in a response. N=404.



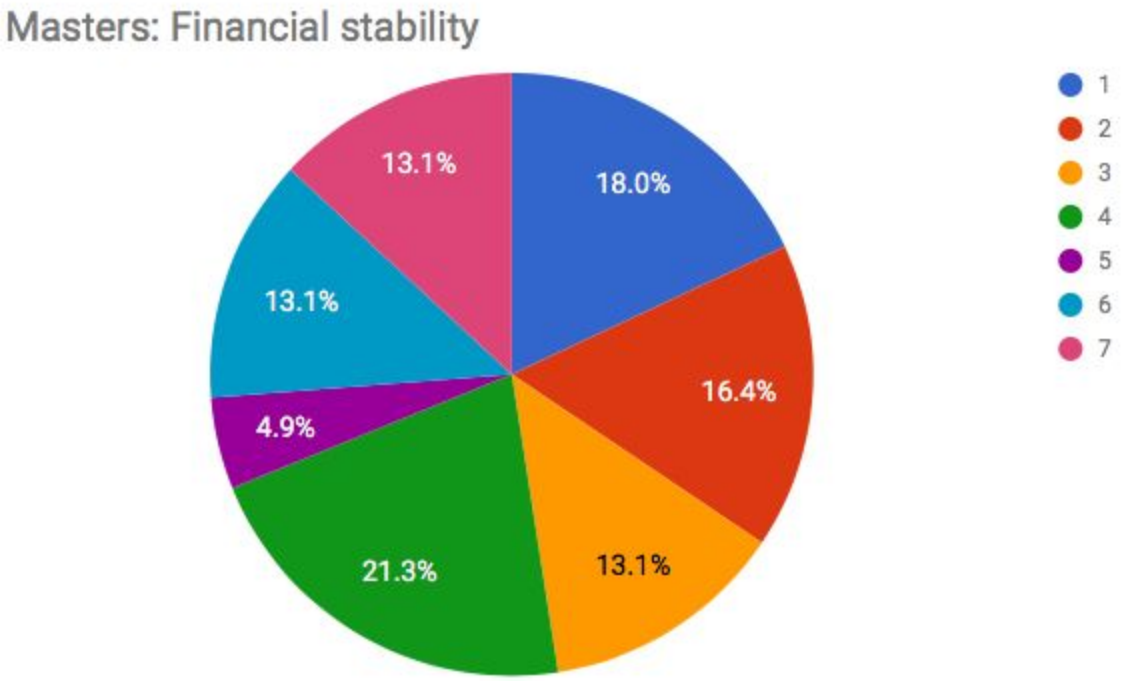
65 Masters students provided information regarding the types of fellowships they will be supported by during the summer. Of those 65 Masters students, 83.6% are not funded by any of the options offered and did not supply information on other sources of funding, 4.5% will be supported by a Columbia Fellowship, none will be supported by a Teaching Assistantship, 1.5% (one respondent) will be supported by a Research Assistantship, 9% will be supported by an outside fellowship, and one student will be applying to both a Columbia Fellowship and an outside fellowship.



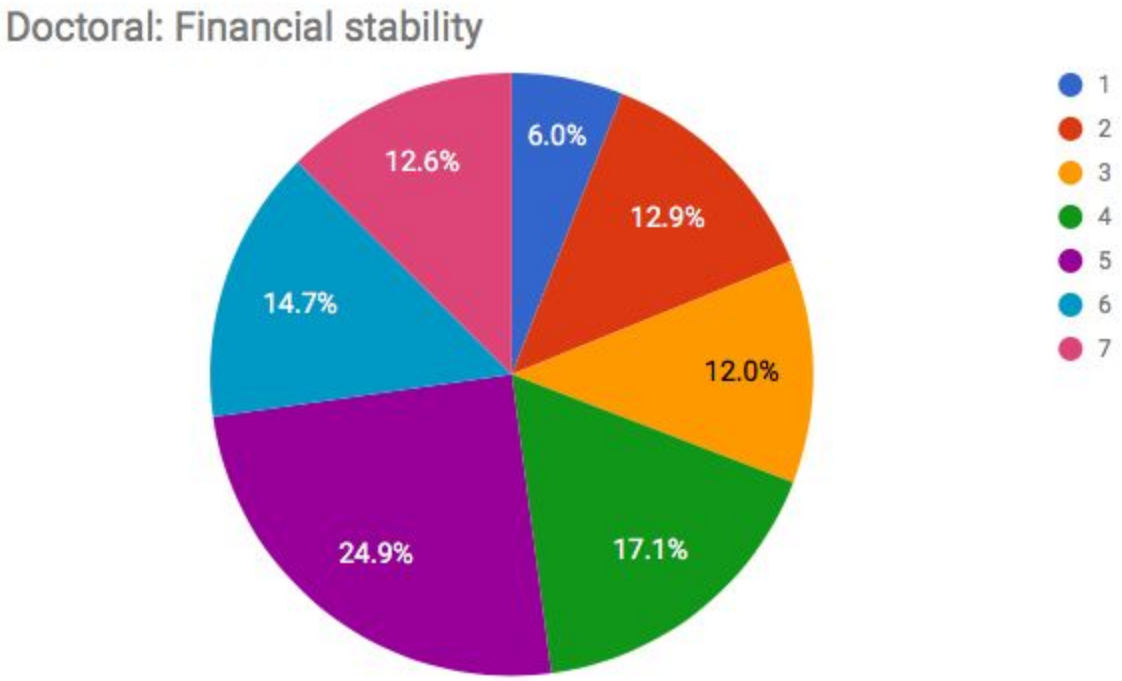
339 Doctoral students provided response regarding the types of fellowships they will be supported by during the summer. Of those 339 Doctoral students, 17.5% are not funded by any of the options offered and did not supply information on other sources of funding 44.4% will be supported by a Columbia Fellowship, 3.7% will be supported by a Teaching Assistantship, 16.2% will be supported by a Research Assistantship, and 14.4% will be supported by an outside fellowship. 0.8% (three respondents) are unsure of their summer funding and two will be graduating. 39 (11.5%) doctoral student respondents reported being funded by more than one fellowship or assistantship. One student each will be funded by the following: Dean's Fellowship, NIH training grant, department fellowship, department summer grant, GRA, department raining grant, unspecified department funding, freelance writing, an internship, a teaching job, and their own savings.

Financial Stability

The scaled question was "To what extent do you feel financially stable?" Respondents could choose one number among "1," "2," "3," "4," "5," "6," and "7," which are all placed on a horizontal continuum. "1" is indicated as being "Very Unstable" and "7" is indicated as being "Very Stable." N=62 for Masters students, N=334 for Doctoral students, to a total of N=396.



Of the 62 Masters students who responded to this question, 13.1% reported a 7, 13.1% reported a 6, 4.9% reported a 5, 21.3% reported a 4, 13.1% reported a 3, 16.4% reported a 2, and 18% reported a 1. Overall, 31.1% of Masters students feel themselves to be mostly financially stable at Columbia (ratings of 5 and above); but almost half of them, at 47.5% experience some form of financial precarity (ratings of 3 and below).

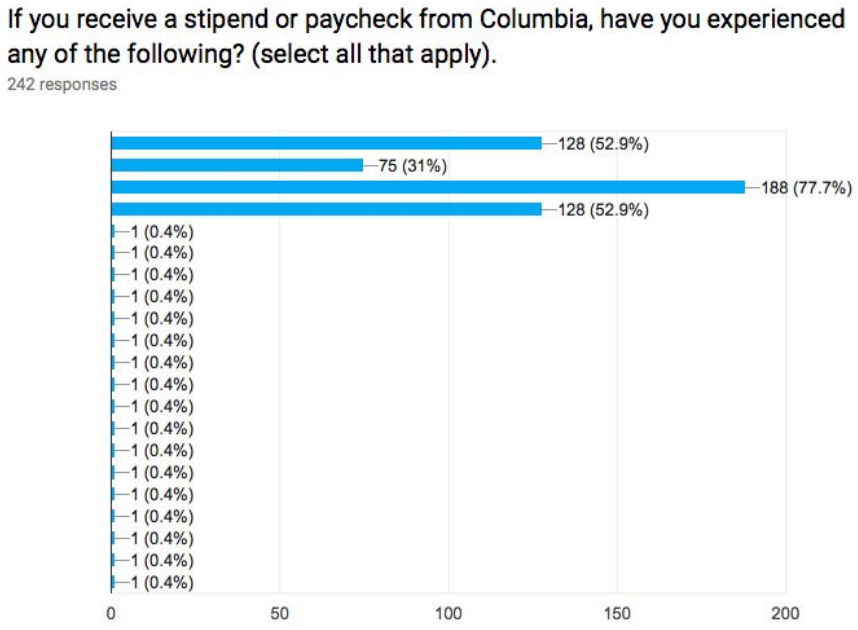


334 Doctoral students provided information regarding their sense of financial stability. They ranked their sense of financial stability on a scale from 1-7, with 1 representing "very unstable," and 7 representing "very stable." 12.6% reported a 7, 14.7% reported a 6, 24.9% reported a 5, 17.1% reported a 4, 12% reported a 3, 12.9% reported a 2, and 6% reported a 1. 1.5% of Doctoral respondents provided no rating. Overall, 52.2% feel themselves to be relatively financially stable at Columbia (ratings of 5 and above); but a substantial proportion of 30.9% feels themselves to be financially unstable (ratings of 3 and below).

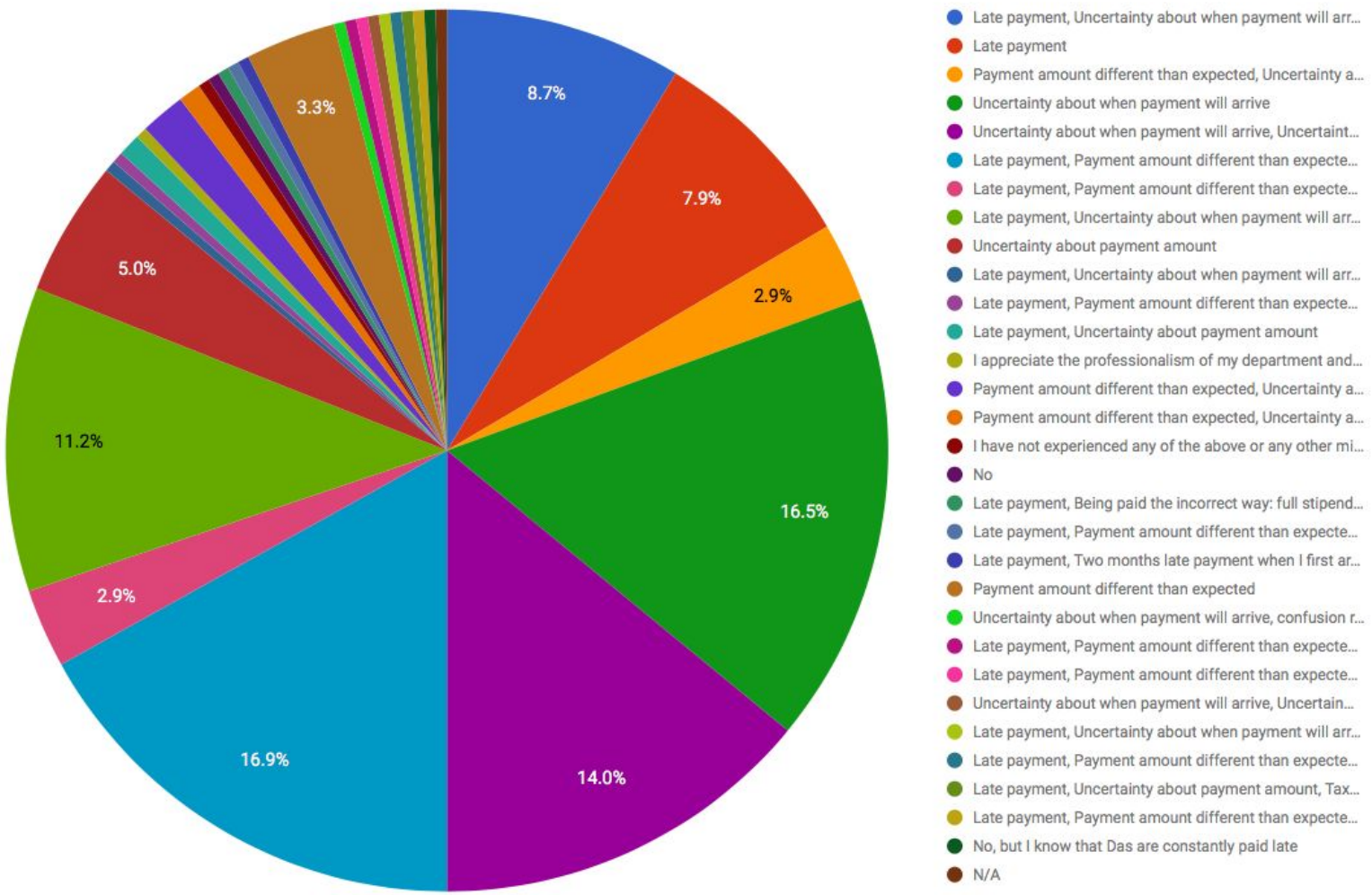
Stipend & Paycheck Problems

The multiple-choice question posed was "If you receive a stipend or paycheck from Columbia, have you experienced any of the following? (select all that apply)." Respondents could choose among "Late payment," "Payment amount different than expected," "Uncertainty about when payment will arrive," "Uncertainty about payment amount," and "other," which would give respondents the option to write-in a response. N=241.

Among the 241 students who reported payment issues, the vast majority (93.7%) were PhD students. The chart below shows that 77.7% of respondents experienced uncertainty about time of payment; 52.9% experienced late payment, and as many experienced uncertainty about payment amount. Finally, a substantial proportion of 31% received different payment amounts than expected.



However, few students reported only one of these issues in isolation; for a more detailed breakdown, consult the chart on the following page.


8.7%
7.9%
2.9%
16.5%
14.0%
16.9%
2.9%
11.2%
5.0%
3.3%
Late payment, Uncertainty about when payment will arr...
Late payment
Payment amount different than expected, Uncertainty a...
Uncertainty about when payment will arrive
Uncertainty about when payment will arrive, Uncertaint...
Late payment, Payment amount different than expecte...
Late payment, Payment amount different than expecte...
Late payment, Uncertainty about when payment will arr...
Uncertainty about payment amount
Late payment, Uncertainty about when payment will arr...
Late payment, Payment amount different than expecte...
Late payment, Uncertainty about payment amount
I appreciate the professionalism of my department and...
Payment amount different than expected, Uncertainty a...
Payment amount different than expected, Uncertainty a...
I have not experienced any of the above or any other mi...
No
Late payment, Being paid the incorrect way: full stipend...
Late payment, Payment amount different than expecte...
Late payment, Two months late payment when I first ar...
Payment amount different than expected
Uncertainty about when payment will arrive, confusion r...
Late payment, Payment amount different than expecte...
Late payment, Payment amount different than expecte...
Uncertainty about when payment will arrive, Uncertain...
Late payment, Uncertainty about when payment will arr...
Late payment, Payment amount different than expecte...
Late payment, Uncertainty about payment amount, Tax...
Late payment, Payment amount different than expecte...
No, but I know that Das are constantly paid late
N/A

In the "other" section of the question, one student reported confusion about the status of their payment, one expected their payment in bi-weekly payments but instead received a single lump payment, one student was confused about their tax obligations, and one student reported that their payment was sent to a different student who cashed it.

Other comments about funding or finances at Columbia

Student respondents were given the opportunity to provide any further comments they may have about their financial situation. The open-ended write-in response question posed was "Do you have any other comments about funding or finances at Columbia?" Some of the more frequent responses are noted here. N=121.

47% of Masters students who provided a comment spoke about the lack of scholarships available through the university for masters students. At least one complained that scholarships through the university ought to be renewable. At least two complained that scholarships are not available to international students. Two students noted that they were uncertain about what the future costs of their program would be. Two students made comments complaining about fees being withheld from their stipend payments.

The most common type of comment made by doctoral students concerned perceptions that the stipend provided by the university is too low. Around 30.1% of doctoral students who made a comment spoke about stipends; they often stated that the stipend is not sufficient when accounting for the cost of living in New York City or the rents charged by university housing. 20.4% of doctoral students who made a comment spoke about problems with late stipend payments, paychecks, or travel reimbursements. 18.4% of doctoral students who made a comment remarked that there is a lack of accountability and transparency regarding the disbursement of payments and the costs charged by the university to students. Nine students stated that there should be more transparency regarding their taxes on stipends and teaching or research assistantship paychecks. Four students noted that they believe the summer stipend is insufficient to support their activities during that semester. Three students commented that the

health benefits offered by the university are not sufficient. Three students stated that they believe funding should be offered past year five.

Section summary and remarks

Overall, there is a clear and significant gap between the Masters and the Doctoral students when it comes to finances. As a rule, Masters students receive significantly less funding from the university, take out significantly more loans to finance their educations, are more likely to hold a part-time or a full-time job not required by their degree, and report a greater sense of financial instability. While better supported on the whole, a substantial proportion of doctoral students who report a sense of financial instability suggests that support is lacking for them as well. Overall, there seems to be a need for increased funding and better funding options for Masters students (especially international students); as well as an increase of doctoral stipends, especially in the summer months. Comments calling for extension of guaranteed PhD funding into year six are also pertinent.

241 students, which is 59.5% of our total survey population, reported experiencing some form of irregularities in payments from the University, and individuals often experienced more than one type of irregularity. This raises significant concerns and should be investigated further.

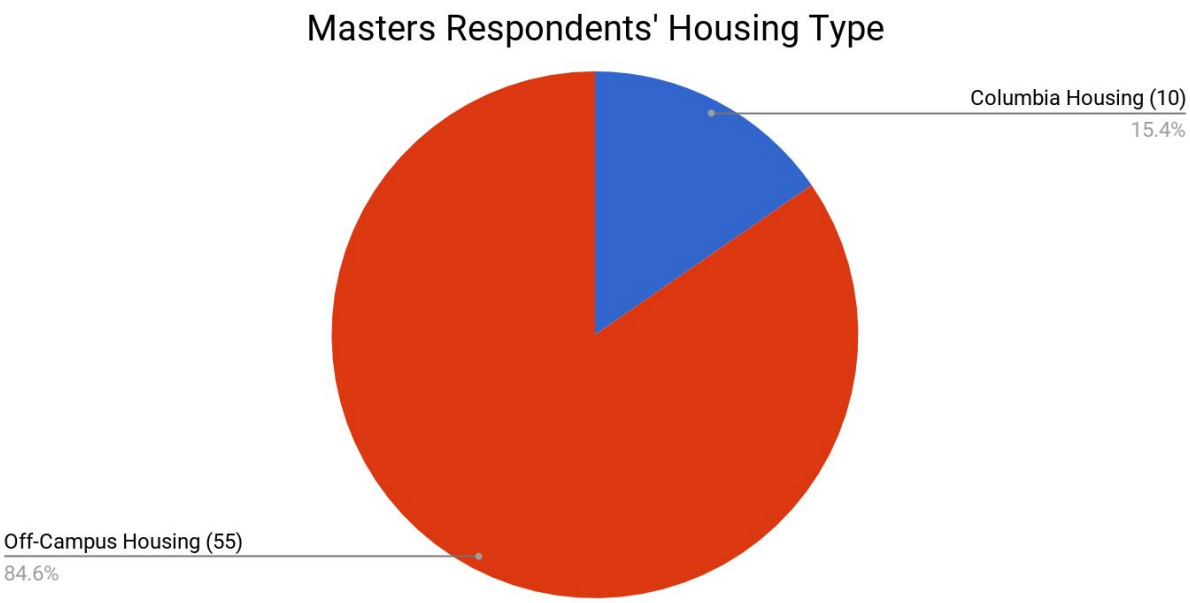
Housing

Section overview

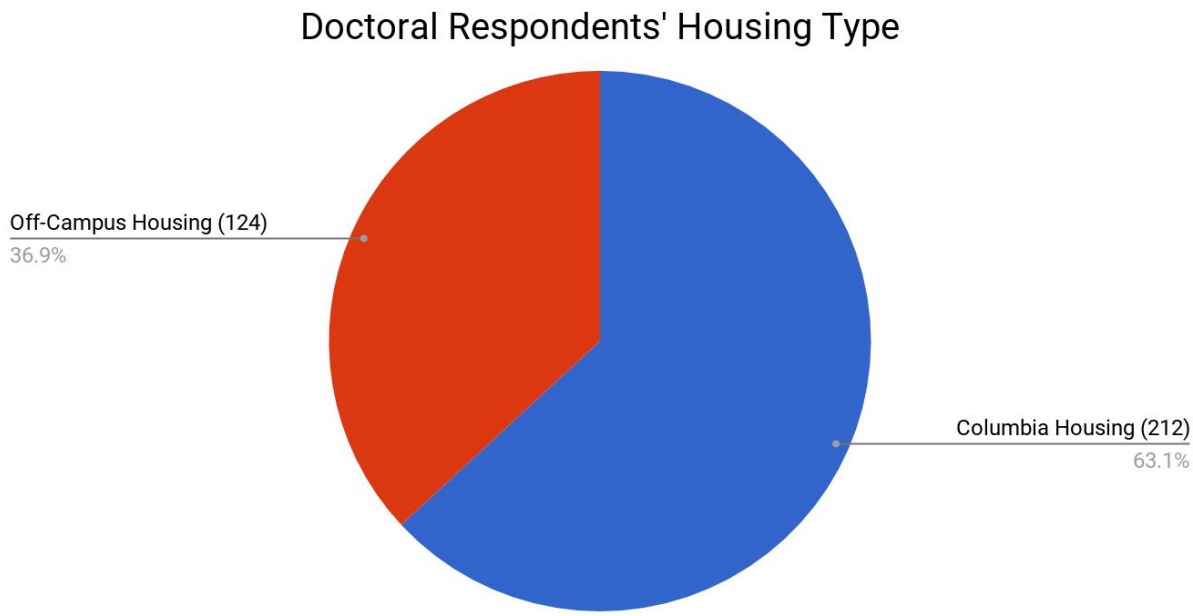
The questions in this section address 1) general housing issues, like location, cost of rent, and commutability, and 2) experiences in Columbia housing and with the Columbia Housing Office.

Housing Type

The binary choice question posed was "Do you live in Columbia Housing or Off-Campus?" Respondents were given the options of "Columbia Housing" and "Off-campus Housing." N=404.



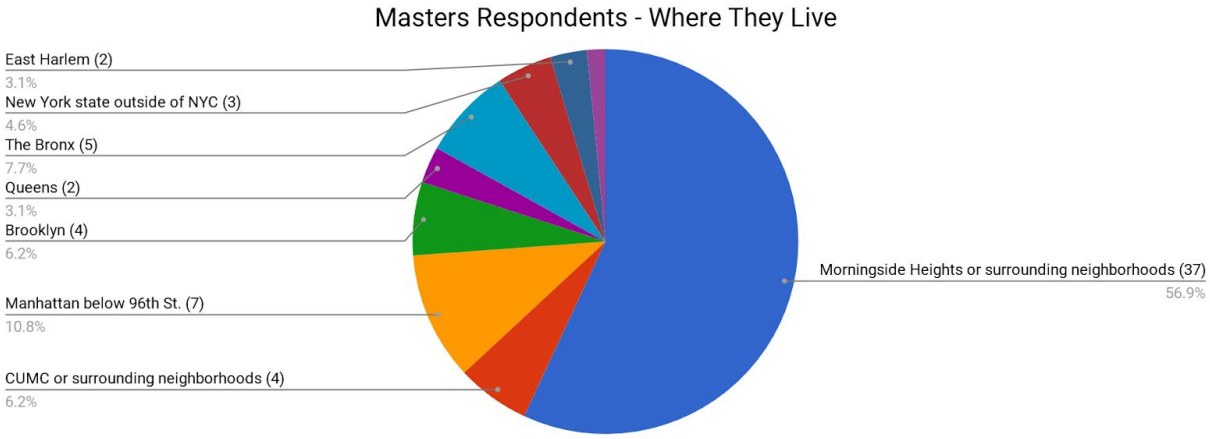
65 Masters students provided a response regarding what type of housing they live in. Of those 65 Masters respondents, 15.4% live in Columbia housing and 84.6% live in off-campus housing.



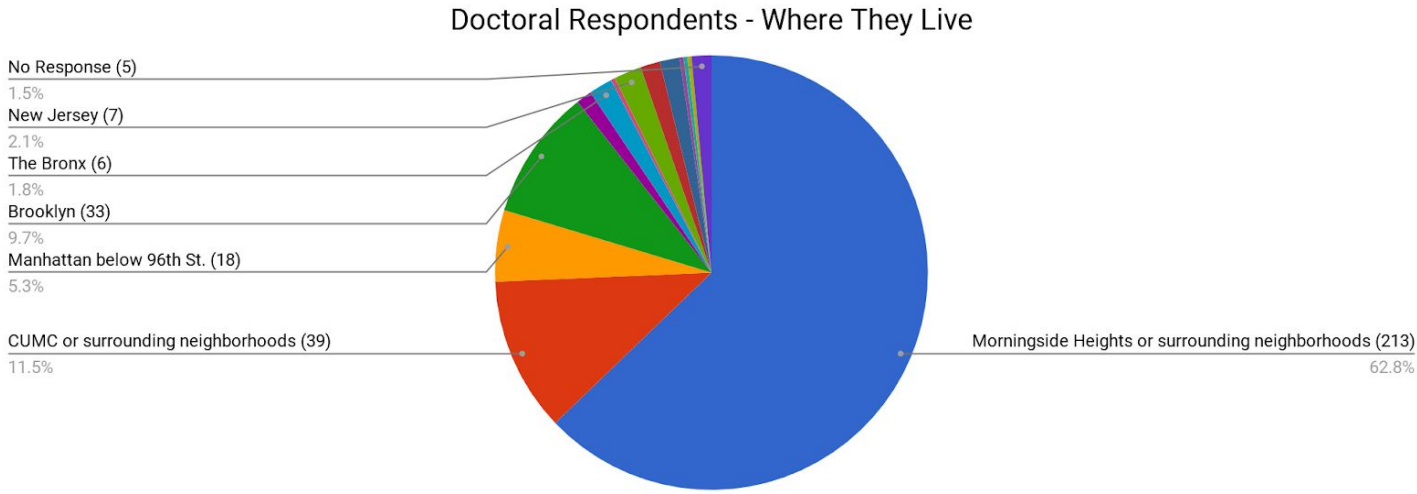
339 Doctoral students provided a response regarding the type of housing they live in. Of those 339 Doctoral students, 63.1% live in Columbia housing and 26.9% live in off-campus housing.

Where Students Live

The multiple-choice question posed was "Where do you live?" The respondents could choose among "Morningside Heights or surrounding neighborhoods," "CUMC or surrounding neighborhoods," "Manhattan below 96th st.," "Brooklyn," "Queens," "The Bronx," "Staten Island," "New Jersey," "New York state outside of NYC," "Other," which would given respondents the option of writing in a response. N=404.



65 Masters students provided response about where they live. Of those 65 Masters students, 56.9% live in Morningside Heights or the surrounding neighborhoods, 6.2% live near the CUMC or surrounding neighborhoods, 10.8% live in Manhattan below 96th St., 6.2% live in Brooklyn, 3.1% live in Queens, 7.7% live in the Bronx, and 4.6% live outside of NYC but in New York state. Two reported living in East Harlem, and one reported living in Inwood. No one reported living in Staten Island or New Jersey.

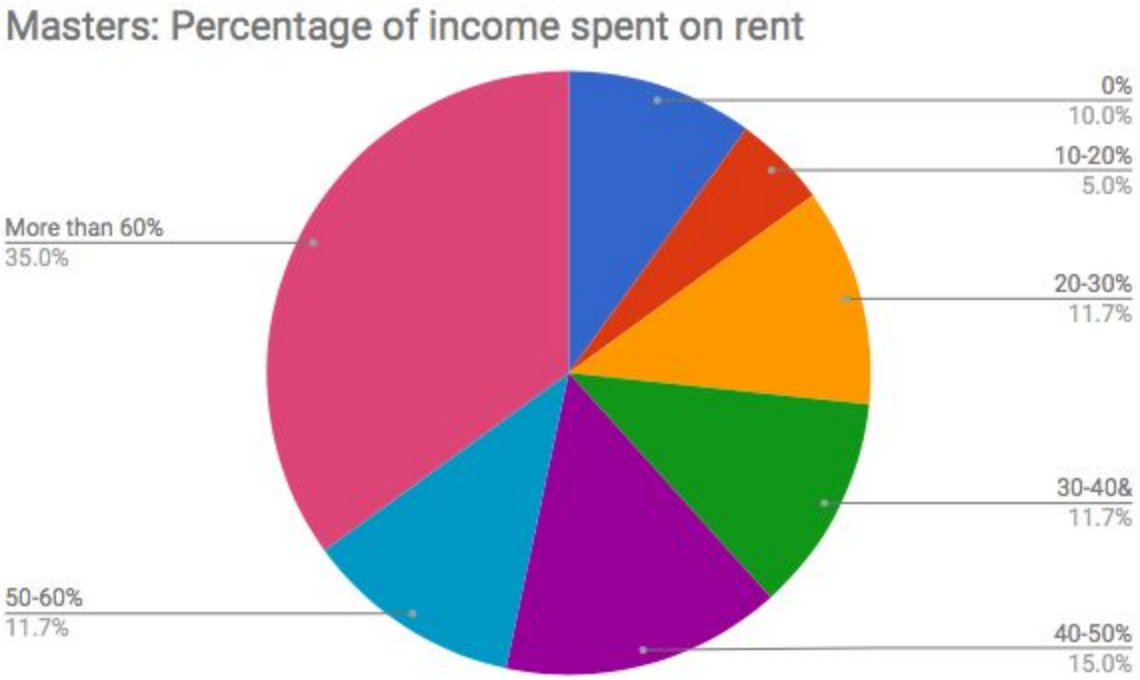


339 Doctoral students provided response about where they live. Of those 339 Doctoral students, 62.8% live in Morningside Heights or the surrounding neighborhoods, 11.5% live near the CUMC or surrounding neighborhoods, 5.3% live in Manhattan below 96th St., 9.7% live in Brooklyn, 1.2% live in Queens, 1.8% live in the Bronx, 0.3% (one respondent) live in Staten Island, 2.1% live in New Jersey, and 1.5% live outside of NYC but in New York state. Five reported living abroad, one lives in Inwood, one lives in California, one lives in Illinois, and 5 gave no response.

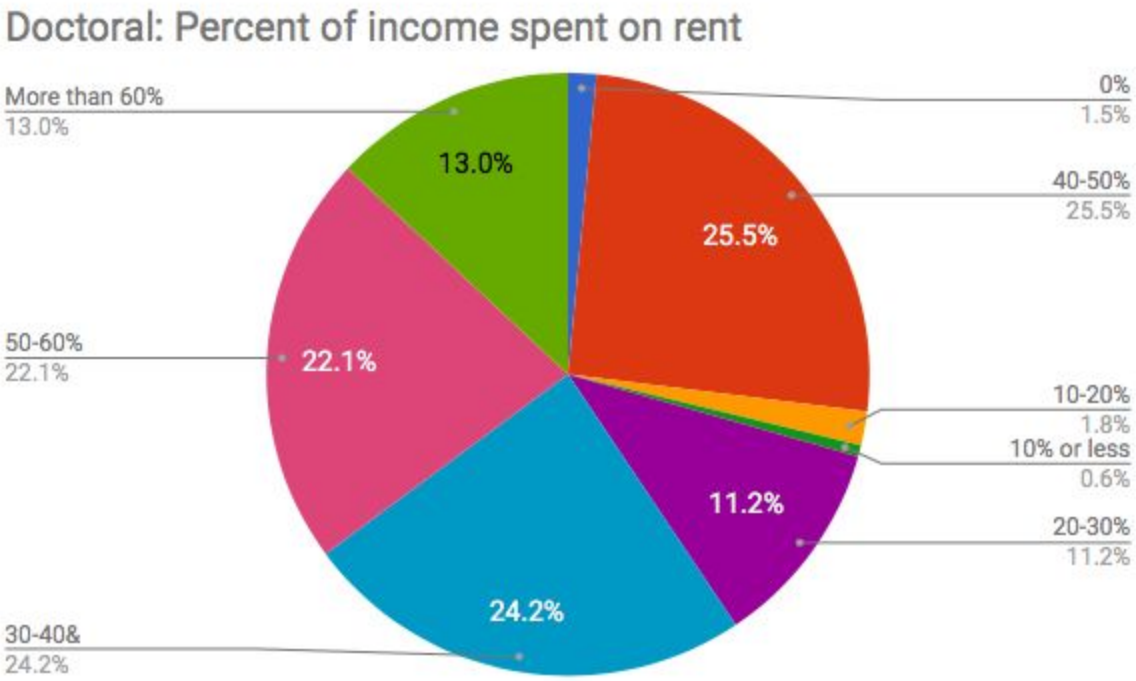
Income Spent on Rent

The multiple-choice question posed was "What percentage of your income do you spend on rent?" Respondents could choose among "0%," "10% or less," "10-20%," "20-30%," "30-40&

[sic],” “40-50%,” “50-60%,” and “More than 60%.” N=60 for Masters students, N=330 for Doctoral students, to a total of N=390.



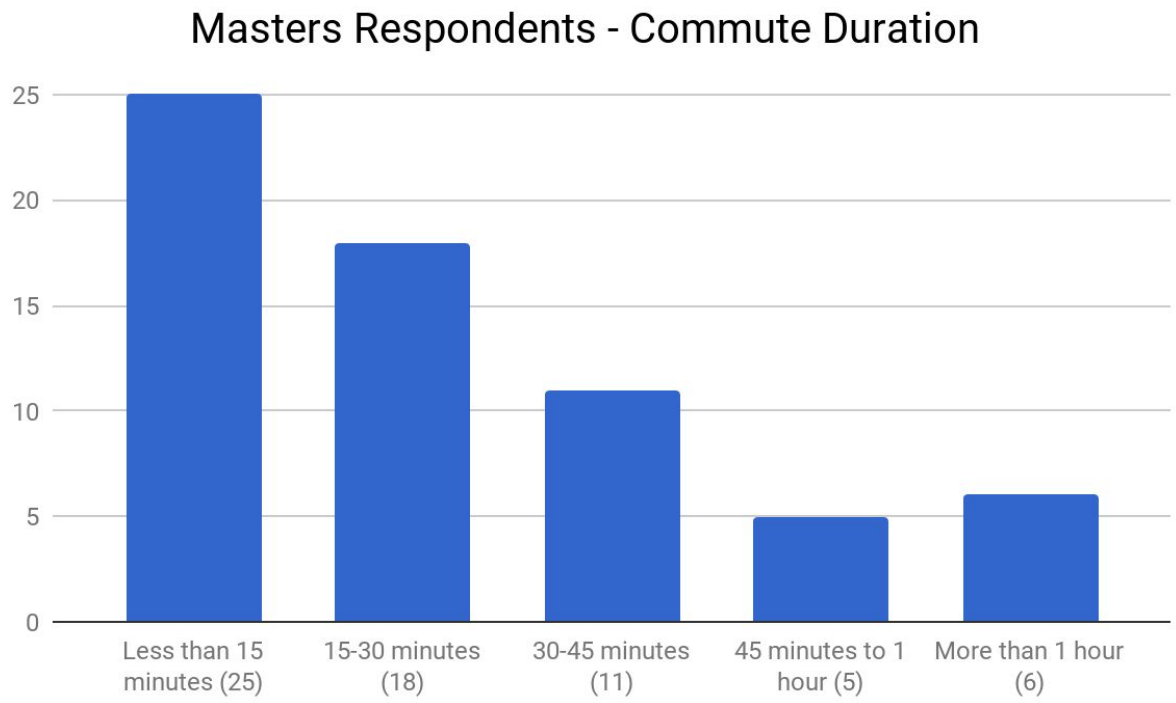
60 Masters students provided information regarding how much of their income they spend on rent. 10% reported spending 0% of their income on rent, 5% reported spending 10-20%, 11.7% reported spending 20-30%, 11.7% reported spending 30-40%, 15% reported spending 40-50%, 11.7% spend 50-60% on rent and, quite alarmingly, 35% spend more than 60% of their income on rent.



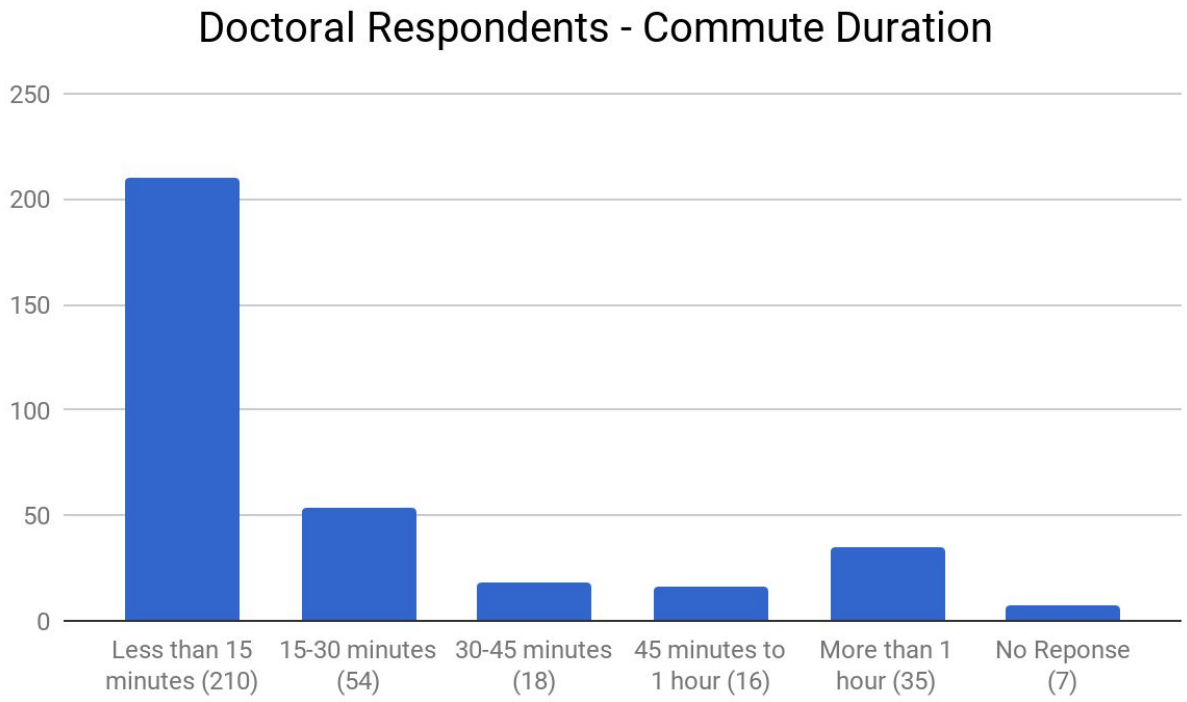
330 Doctoral students provided information regarding how much of their income they spend on rent. 1.5% reported spending 0% of their income on rent, 0.6% reported spending 10% or less of their income on rent, 1.8% reported spending between 10-20% of their income on their rent, 11.2% reported spending 20-30% of their income on their rent, 24.2% reported spending 30-40% of their income on their rent, 25.5% reported spending 40-50% of their income on their rent, 22.1% reported spending 50-60% of their income on their rent, 13% reported spending more than 60% of their income on their rent.

Commute Duration

The question posed was “How long is your daily commute?” Respondents could choose among “Less than 15 minutes,” “15-30 minutes,” “30-45 minutes,” “45 minutes to 1 hour,” “More than 1 hour.” N=389.



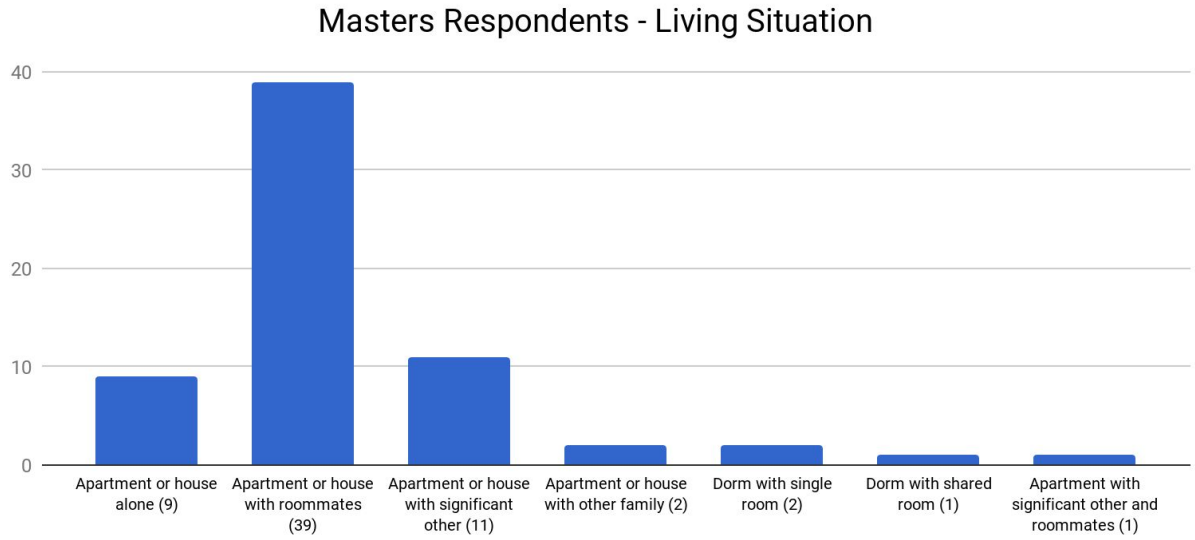
65 Masters students provided information regarding how long their daily commutes are. Of those 65 Masters respondents, 38.5% have a commute of less than 15 minutes, 27.7% have a commute of 15-30 minutes, 16.9% have a commute of 30-45 minutes, 7.7% have a commute of 45 minutes to 1 hour, and 9.2% have a commute of more than 1 hour.



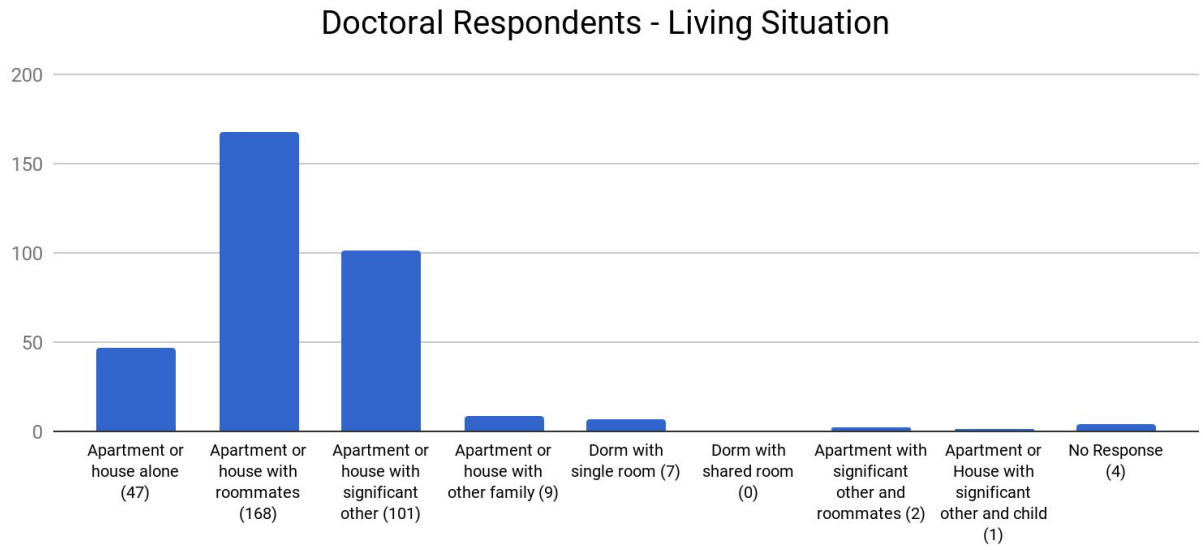
333 Doctoral students provided information regarding how long their daily commutes are. Of a total number of 340 Doctoral respondents, 61.9% have a commute of less than 15 minutes, 15.9% have a commute of 15-30 minutes, 5.3% have a commute of 30-45 minutes, 4.7% have a commute of 45 minutes to 1 hour, and 10.3% have a commute of more than 1 hour. 2.1% gave no response.

Living Situation

The question posed was "What is your living condition?" Respondents could choose among "Apartment or house alone," "Apartment or house with roommates," "Apartment or house with significant other," "Apartment or house with other family," "Dorm with a single room," "Dorm with shared room," and "Other," which gave respondents the option to write-in a response. N=400.



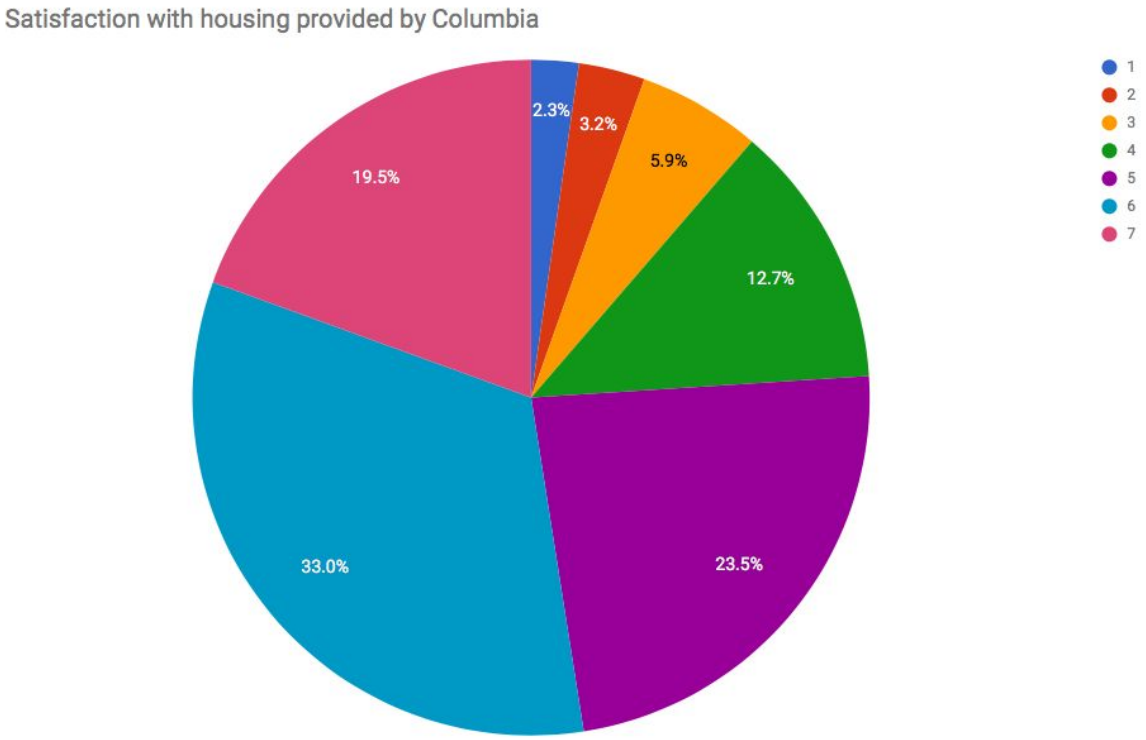
65 Masters students provided information regarding their living situation. Of those 65 Masters respondents, 13.8% live in an apartment or house alone, 60% live in an apartment or house with roommates, 17% live in an apartment or house with a significant other, 3.1% live in an apartment or house with other family, 3% live in a dorm with a single room, 1.5% (one respondent) lives in a dorm with a shared room, and 1.5% (one respondent) lives in an apartment with both a significant other and roommates.



Of a total of 339 Doctoral respondents, 335 provided information regarding their living situation. 13.9% live in an apartment or house alone, 49.6% live in an apartment or house with roommates, 29.8% live in an apartment or house with a significant other, 2.7% live in an apartment or house with other family, 2.1% live in a dorm with a single room, none live in a dorm with a shared room, 0.6% (two respondents) live in an apartment with a significant other and roommates, 0.3% live in an apartment or House with a significant other and child, and 1.2% provided no response.

Columbia Housing Satisfaction

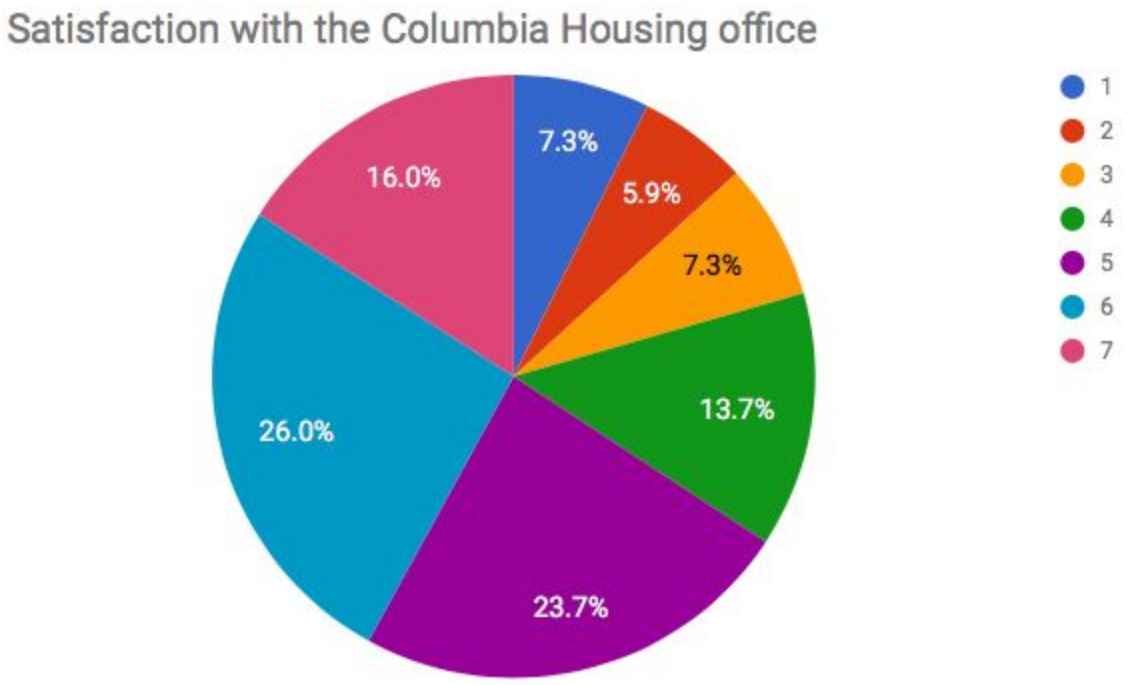
The scaled question posed was "How would you rate the housing provided for you by Columbia?" Respondents could choose among the following responses, which were placed on a horizontal continuum: "1," "2," "3," "4," "5," "6," and "7." "1" was indicated as being "Very bad," and "7" was indicated as being "Very good." N=221, and of this N=10 for Masters students, while the rest are PhD students.



19.5% respondents rated their Columbia-provided housing with a 7, 33% with a 6, 23.5% with a 5, 12.7% with a 4, 5.9% with a 3, 3.2% with a 2, and 2.3% with a 1. Overall, those whose housing is provided by Columbia are largely satisfied by their accomodation.

Columbia Housing Office Satisfaction

The scaled question posed was "How satisfied have you been with your interactions with the Columbia Housing Office?" Respondents could choose among the following responses, which were placed on a horizontal continuum: "1," "2," "3," "4," "5," "6," and "7." "1" was indicated as being "Very bad," and "7" was indicated as being "Very good." N=220.



16% of respondents rated their interactions with Columbia Housing with a 7, 26% with a 6, 23.7% with a 5, 13.7% with a 4, 7.3% with a 3, 5.9% with a 2, and 7.3% with a one. While there are clearly some bad experiences, interactions with Columbia Housing are largely positive.

Other comments about Columbia housing and housing situation in general.

Student respondents were given the opportunity to provide any further comments they may have about Columbia housing and their housing situations. The open-ended write-in question posed was "Do you have any other comments about housing?" Some of the more frequent responses are noted here.

Among masters students, there were complaints that they were de facto barred from receiving Columbia housing since they understand that doctoral and undergraduate students are given priority before them. Some also reported that the rents charged by Columbia housing were too high for them to afford. One student noted confusion regarding the pet policy.

Among doctoral students, the most frequent complaint concerned the rent rates, which are perceived as being too high. Around 42% of comments in this section spoke solely to the rents being set too high to be affordable. Many of the students commenting on rent either stated that there should be university subsidies for rent, or that they had their rent increased without prior warning or in contradiction to prior assurances they received from the university tat rate increases would be within a certain range. There were also many comments regarding the poor response of housing administrators and the poor state of Columbia housing buildings. At least two students reported that the gas in their building had been shut off without remedy. Five students made comments regarding problems with assigned roommates; in particular, one PhD student noted that he was unhappy being assigned with significantly younger masters and GS students as roommates. One student reported confusion over the pet policy in Columbia housing, noting that despite a stated no-pets policy many of her/his colleagues in Columbia housing do have pets. One student reported applying for, but never receiving disability housing. Four students reported consternation with the limits on housing eligibility past their seventh year.

Student respondents were also given the opportunity to provide any further comments with the open-ended write-in question "Do you have any comments about your experience with Columbia Housing?" Some of the more frequent responses are noted here.

Among masters students, there was one comment that students should not be required to keep housing over the summer semester if they will not be doing work on campus. There was

also another comment from a student who had trouble ensuring that their rent was paid properly out of their stipend, and who had to meet several times with the housing office to resolve the issue.

Among doctoral students, at least 12 students noted that they experienced trouble contacting the housing office, receiving a response from the office, or getting an issue resolved through the office. Five students commented that their apartments were worn-out or dirty when they moved in. One student noted that she had trouble obtaining couples' housing with her same-sex partner because staff with the housing office implied they were simply friends and not in a relationship. Another student felt sexually harassed by a member of staff with the housing office who came to complete repairs in their apartment. The student reported the incident to the office, which stated that it was a serious matter and would take care of it; however, the student never heard back from the housing office regarding the matter.

Section summary and remarks

Overall, both Masters and Doctoral students at Columbia University live either on campus, or within easily commutable distance. While Masters and Doctoral students are approximately equally likely to live alone or live with with family other than a significant other, far more Doctoral students than Masters students share a dwelling with a significant other (29.8% vs. 17%).

Despite some negative experiences described in the comment sections, communication with Columbia Housing Office and satisfaction with accommodation provided seems to be good overall. For Masters students, however, there is a strong sense of frustration about the lack of available university housing; increasing affordable or subsidized housing options for Masters students might alleviate the alarming fact that 46.7% of them spend more than 50% of their income on rent. Indeed, the income to rent ratio for both Masters and Doctoral students is cause for concern, as 35.1% of PhD students likewise spend 50% or more of their income on rent.

Family

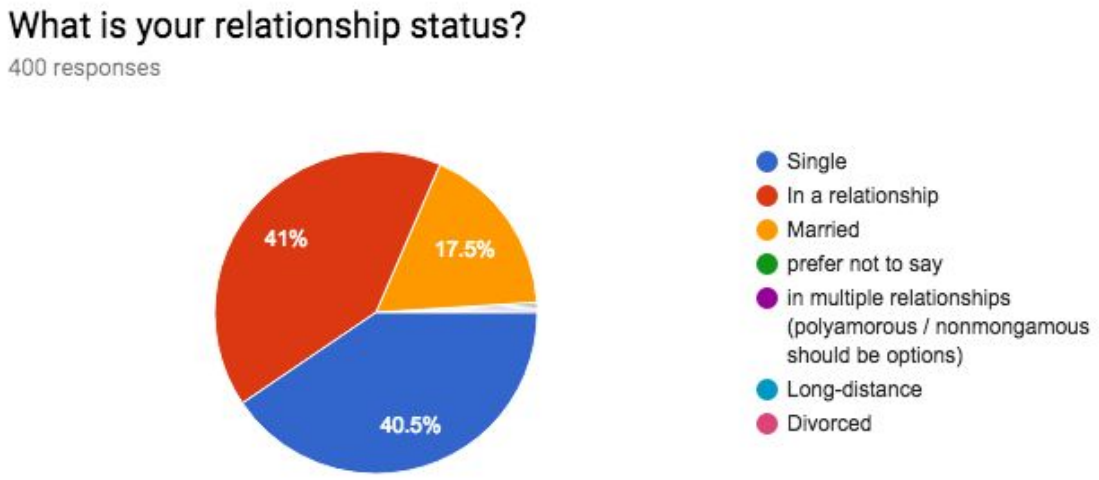
Section overview

This section focused on respondents' family and relationship statuses. All respondents saw the first two questions, but only those who reported having children saw the second set of questions.

Family 1

Relationship Status

This was a multiple choice question asking respondents to report their current relationship status. The choices were "in a relationship," "married," "single," or "other" with a write-in option. 400 people responded to this question.

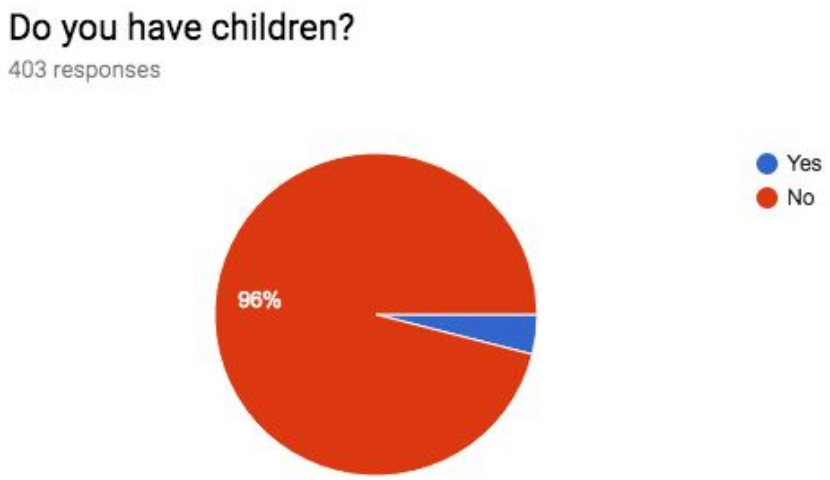


Overall, 41% reported being in a relationship, with an additional 17.5% who were married. Another 40.5% of participants were single. The remaining 2% chose the write-in other option, and these alternative responses are shown in the legend below. These counts differed slightly between PhD and Masters students. While 50% of Masters students were single, only

37% of PhD students were. 19.8% of PhD students were married, while only 4% of masters students were. The proportion of respondents who chose "in a relationship" was more equal (44% of Masters Students, 37% of PhDs).

Children

The next question asked if respondents had children. It was a yes or no question, with 403 responses. In total, only 16 people responded yes, with the rest reporting no. All of the people who answered yes were PhD students, and 14 reported being married while the other 2 were single.

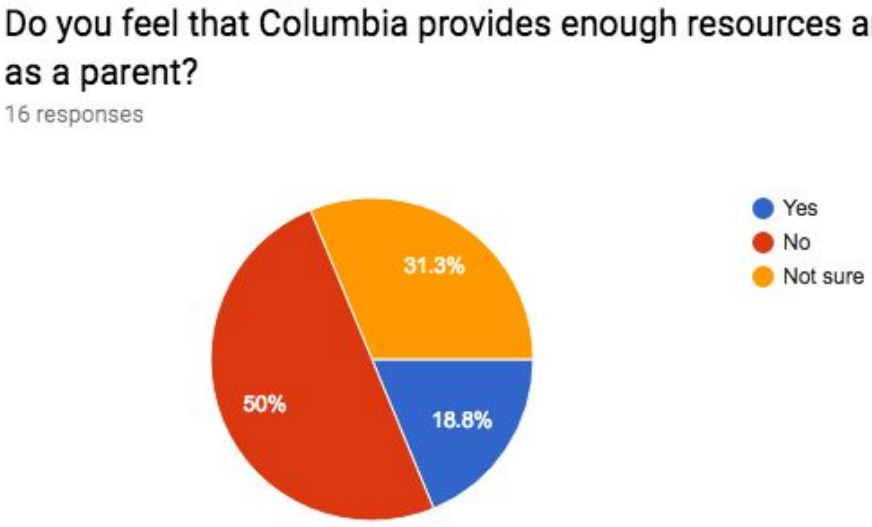


Family Continued

Only the 16 respondents who had children were directed to the next set of questions.

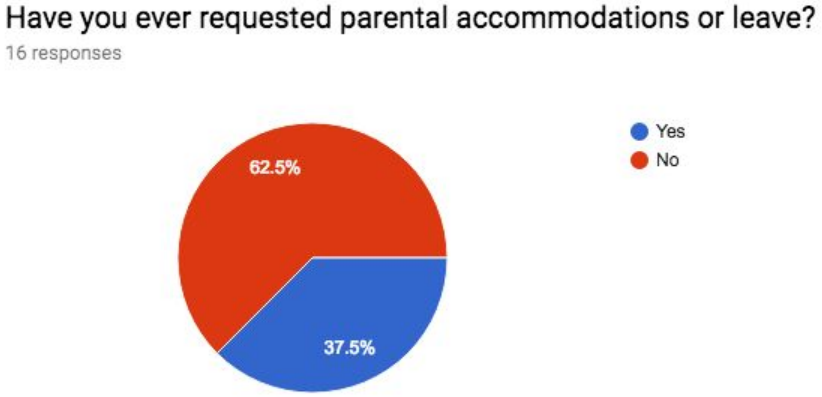
Resources for Parents

The first questions was a Yes/No/Not sure question about whether Columbia provided adequate resources for parents. The majority of people responded No, with the next largest category being Not Sure. Only 3 students said Yes.



Parental Leave

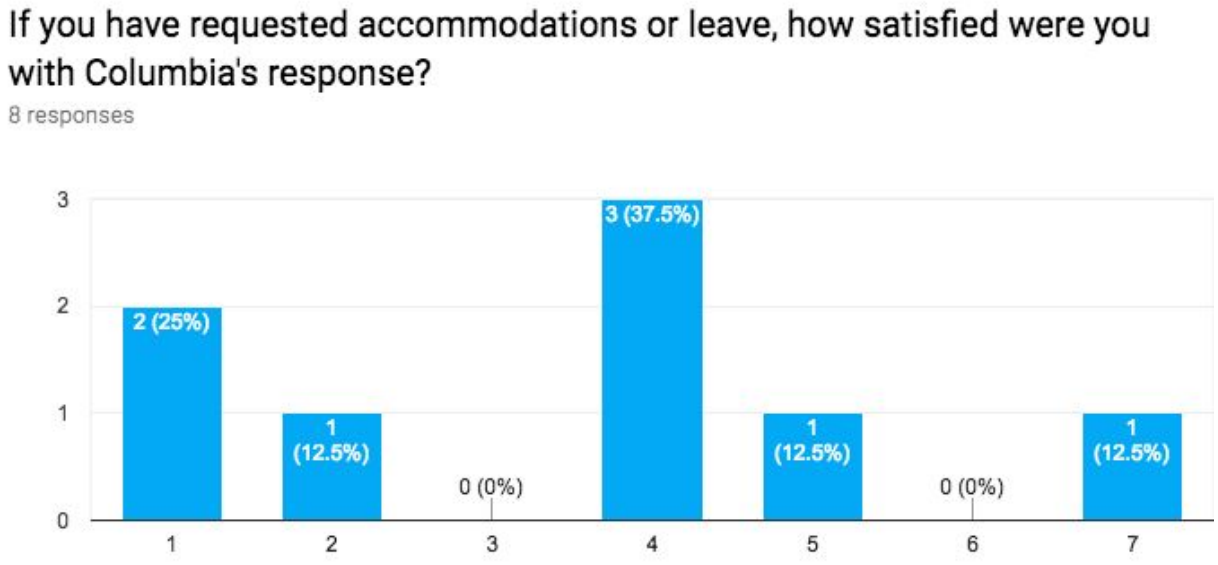
The next question asked if the respondents with children had ever requested parental leave from Columbia. 6 reported that they had, while the remaining 10 had not.



Satisfaction with Leave Process

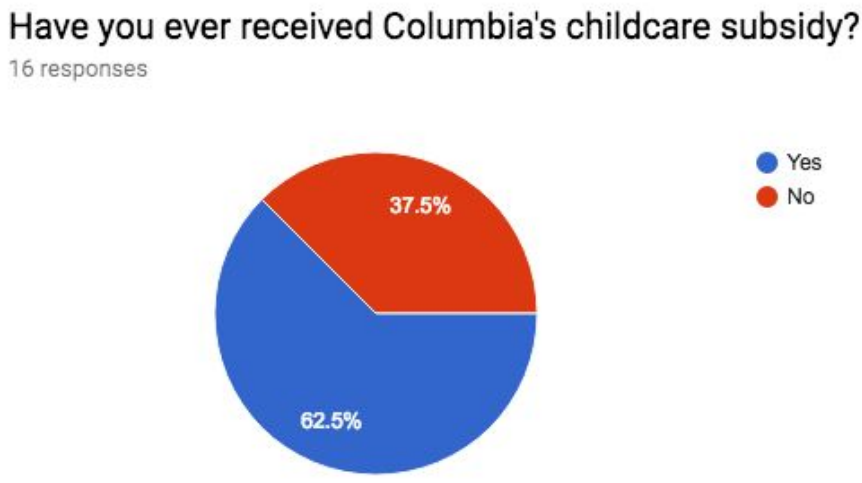
The next question was a satisfaction scale asking respondents to rate how satisfied they were with Columbia's process for leave, if they'd taken it. Eight people answered this question. Two people who had said they did not take leave answered this question anyway, both rating it at "4", the midpoint of the scale. Responses from those who had taken leave were very mixed. Three

were at the unsatisfied end of the scale, rating the responses a 1 or 2. Of the three remaining, one gave a 4, one a 5, and one a 7 (highly satisfied).



Childcare Subsidy

The final question asked if the respondents had received the child-care subsidy from Columbia. This was a yes or no question. Six had taken the subsidy, while the other 10 had not.



Section summary and remarks

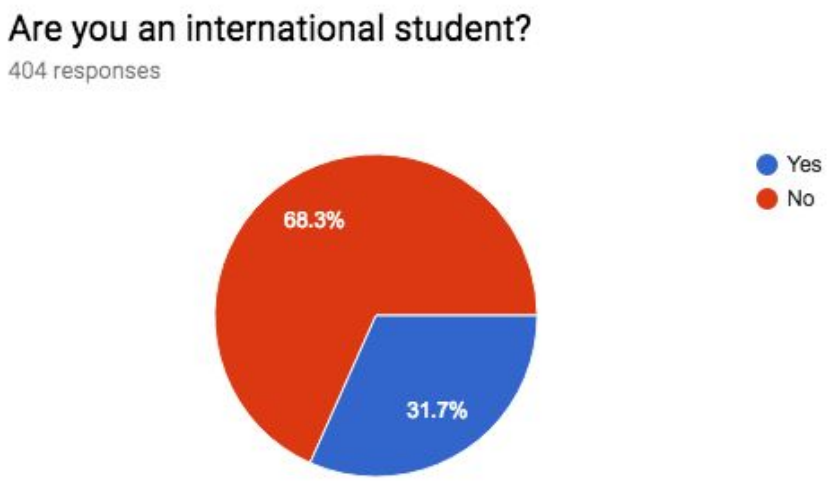
While the number of respondents with children was low, they present an interesting picture of what parenting as a student is like at Columbia. Responses ranged from very positive to very negative, and the comments left suggest that this experience varies widely from person to person. Several commenters focused on the childcare subsidy, stating that it was nice but not enough to offset the high cost of childcare in NYC. They also stated that since the subsidy only applies to children who are not yet in school, parents with older children do not receive it. However, they point out that high costs continue even when children are in school, especially if the parent's program requires them to work evenings, weekends, and summers. Several also brought up the possibility of having more childcare options through Columbia, such as expanded access to daycare and the ability to enroll school-aged children in the Columbia School, which is currently not an option.

Other comments focused on difficulty obtaining parental leave, and confusion about the implications taking leave would have for academic progress. One respondent expressed frustration that departments and programs still expect students who have taken a semester of parental leave to finish on schedule, and/or are not extended funding for the additional extra semester required at the end of the program.

Overall, this was a very small sample of students, but it suggests that students who are parents face numerous challenges and difficulties when balancing school and family. Increased resources and policy clarity may be helpful, but this also points to the need to further study this population of students, perhaps with another survey targeted directly at students with families to figure out how to better address these needs.

International Students

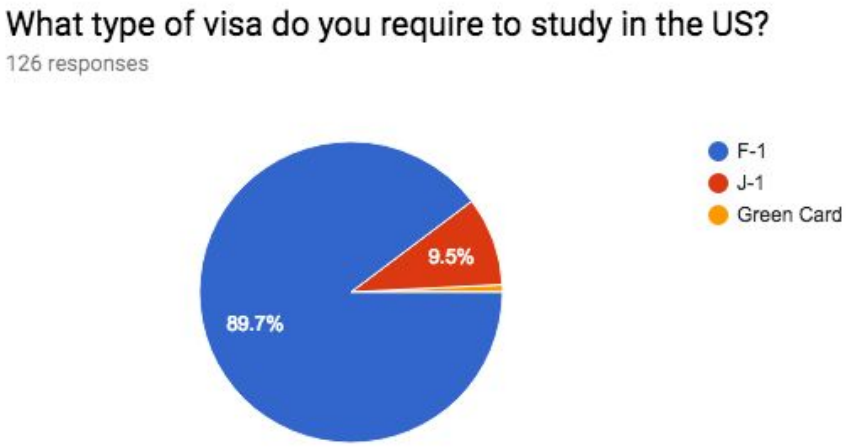
Section overview



Of the 404 respondents, 128 (31.7%) identify as an international students. The remainder of the questions in this section was only given to those 128 students.

Visa required to stay in the US

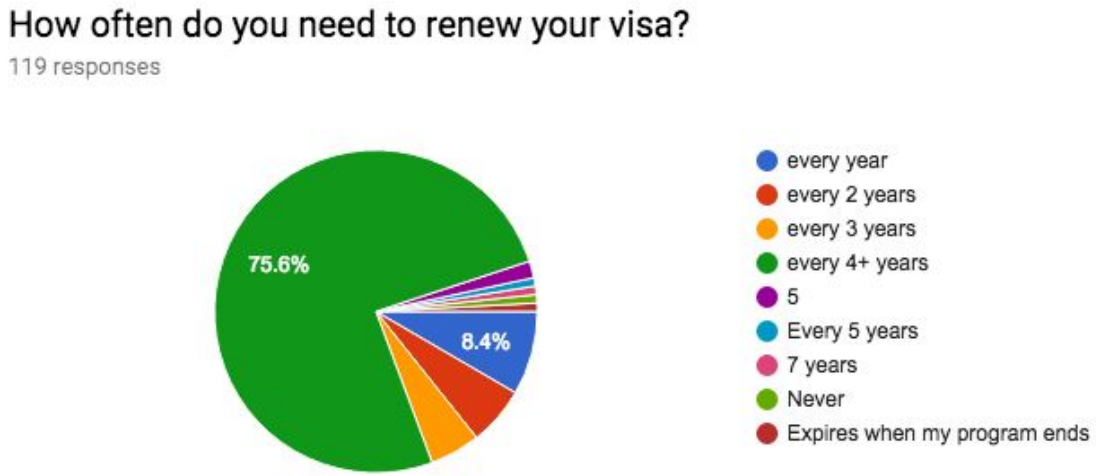
This was a multiple-choice question that asked students what kind of visa they require to study in the US. Options offered included F1, J1, and Green Card. N=126.



Of the 126 international student who responded, 113 (89.7%) indicated that they require an F-1 visa, 12 (9.5%) indicated that they require a J-1 visa, and 1 student requires a green card.

How often do you need to renew your visa?

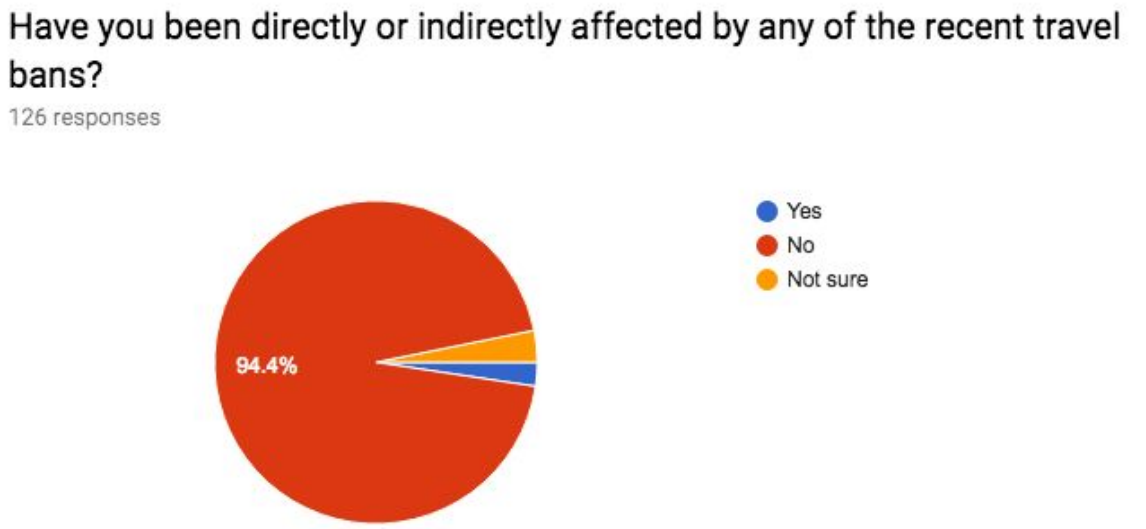
This was a multiple-choice question that asked about the required frequency of renewing the student's visa. Options offered were "every year," "every 2 years," "every 3 years," "every 4+ years," and a write-in "other" option. N= 119.



A majority of respondents (75.6%) need to renew their visa every 4+ years, with 1.7% specifying that they renew every 5 years, 5% need to renew every 3 years, 5.9% need to renew every 2 years, and 8.4% need to renew their visa every year. The remainder of the respondents wrote in other answers, all listed in the chart legend above.

Directly or indirectly affected by travel bans?

This is a multiple-choice question that asked whether the students have been directly or indirectly affected by any of the recent travel bans. Options offered were "yes," "no," and "not sure." N=126.

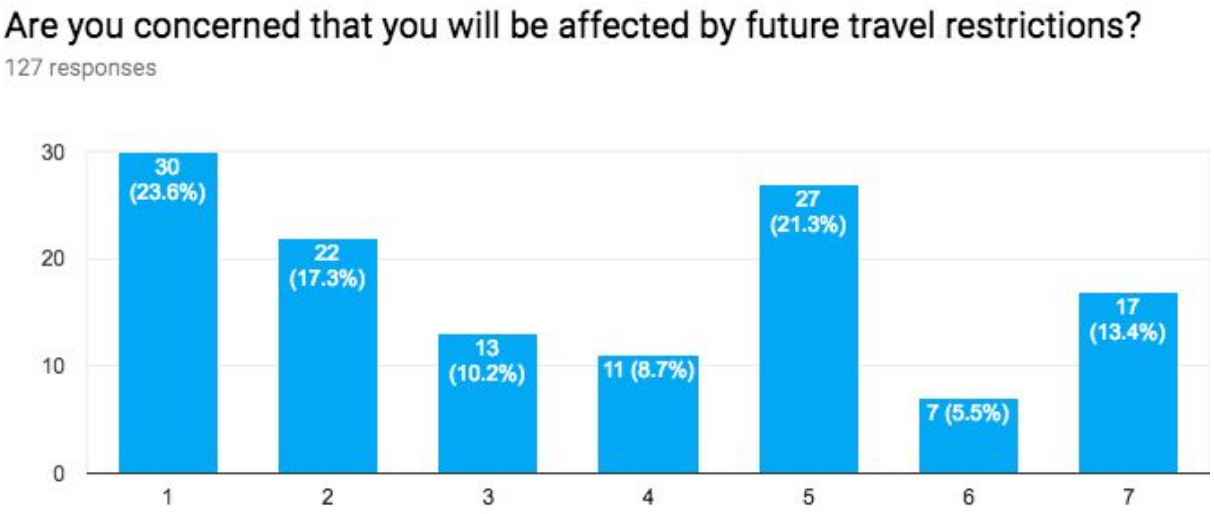


A large majority (94.4%) indicate that they are unaffected by the recent travel bans. 2.4% of students indicated that they were/are affected, and 3.2% are unsure if they are affected.

Concerns over future travel restrictions

This is a scaled question that asked respondents to rate their level of concern regarding future travel restriction on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being "not at all concerned," and 7 being "extremely

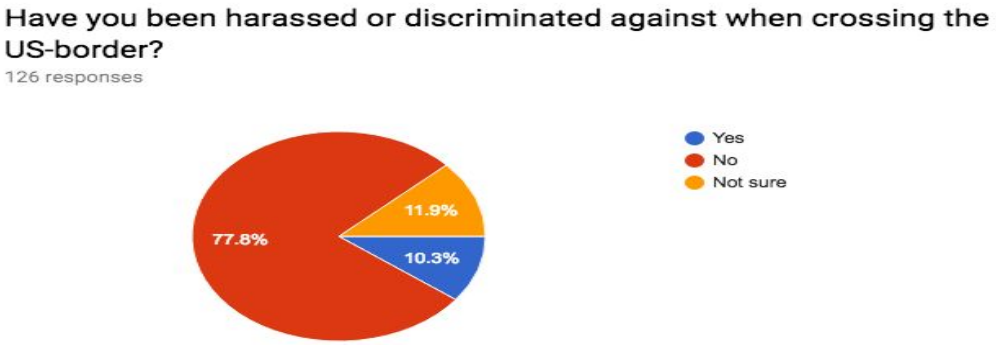
concerned." N=127.



23.6% of respondents rate their level of concern with a 1, 17.3% rate it with a 2, 10.2% rate it with a 3, 8.7% rate it with a 4, 21.3% rate it with a 5, 5.5% rate it with a 6, and 13.3% rate it with a 7. Overall, 51.1% are largely unconcerned about future travel restrictions (ratings 3 or below), and 40.2% are somewhat to extremely concerned (ratings 5 or above), while 8.7% are neutral.

Harassment or discrimination at US border

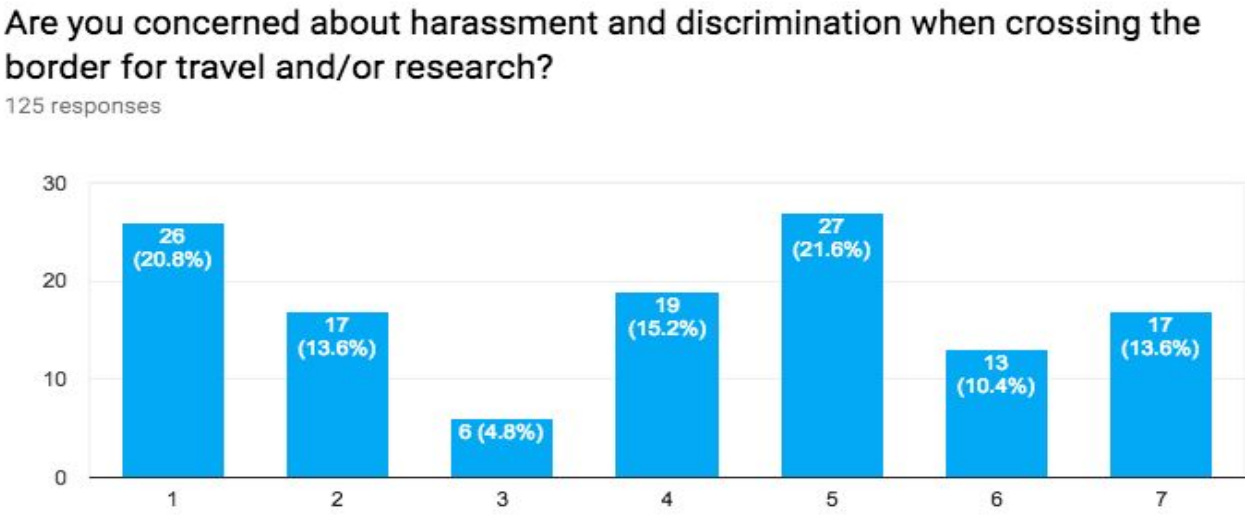
This is a multiple choice question that asks about personal experiences of harassment or discrimination at the US border. Options offered are "yes," "no," and "not sure." N=126.



77.8% of respondents report no incidents of harassment when crossing the US border, while 10.3% of people indicate experiences of harassment and 11.9% are unsure if they have experienced harassment at the US border.

Concerns about harassment and discrimination at the border

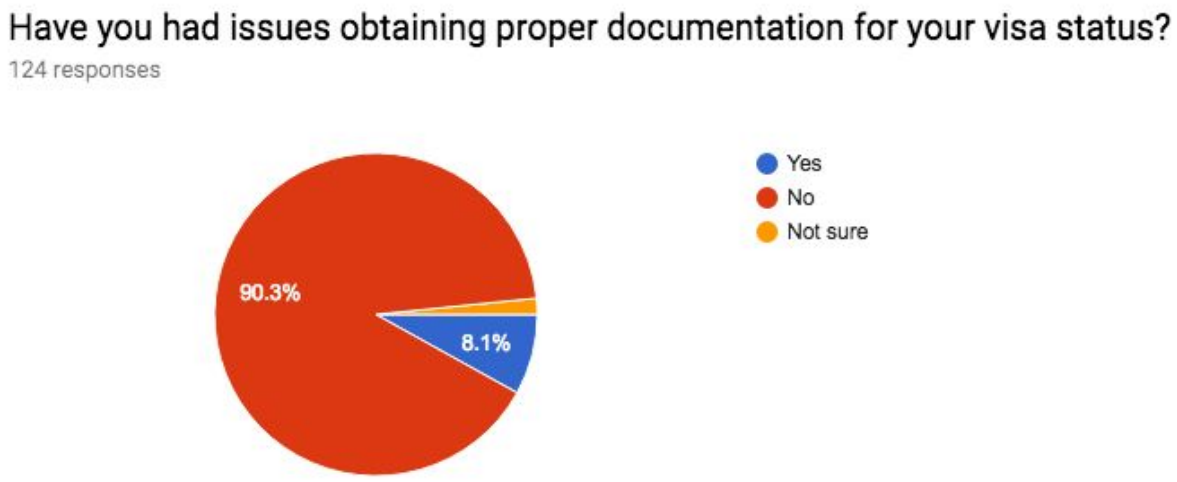
This was a scaled question that asked respondents to rate the level of their concern about possible harassment and discrimination they might experience at the US border on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being "not at all concerned," and 7 being "extremely concerned." N=125



20.8% of respondents rated their level of concern with a 1, 13.6% with a 2, 4.8% with a 3, 15.2% with a 4, 21.6% with a 5, 10.4% with a 6, and 13.6% with a 7. Overall, 39.3% are not very concerned, while 45.6% are at least somewhat concerned, and 15.2% are neutral on the matter.

Issues obtaining proper documentation for visa

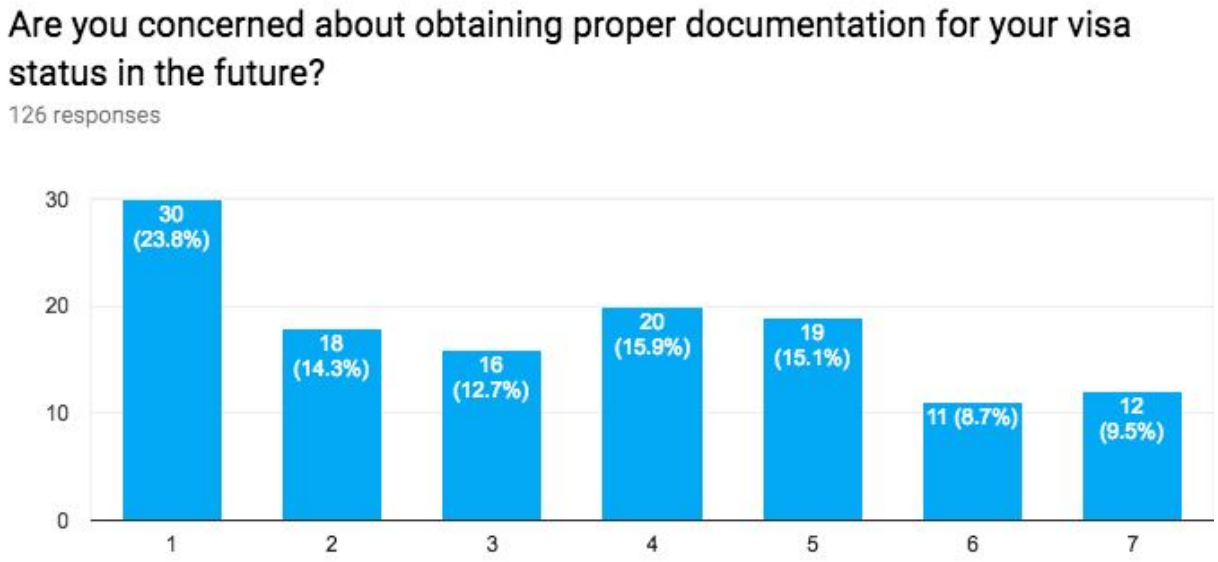
This is a multiple choice question that asked whether the students ever had issues obtaining proper documentation for their visa status. Answers offered were "yes," "no," and "not sure." N=124.



Of the 124 respondents, a majority (90.3%) had no issues obtaining proper documentation for their visa. However, 8.1% have had issues, and 1.6% are unsure.

Concerns about obtaining proper documentation in the future

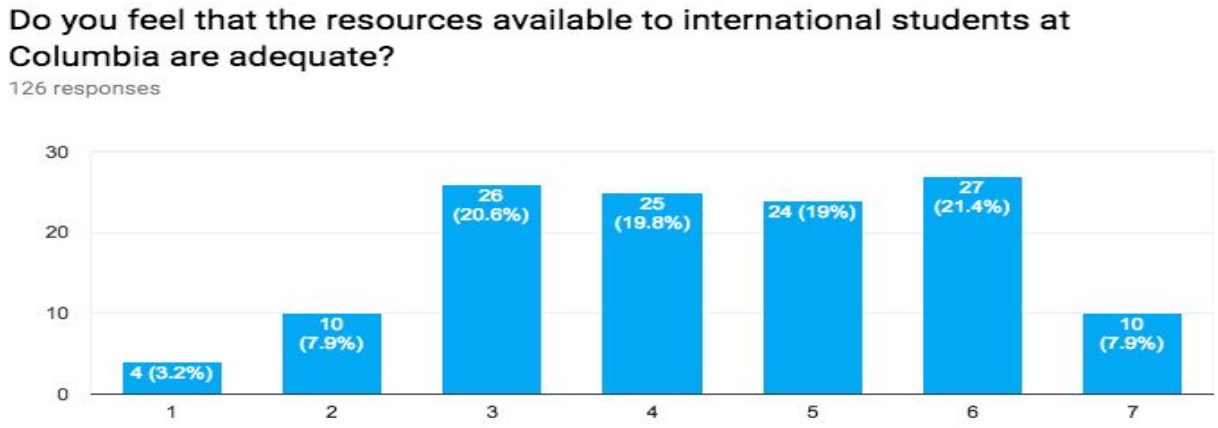
This was a scaled question that asked respondents to rate their concerns about obtaining proper documentation for their visa status in the future on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is "not at all concerned," and 7 is "extremely concerned." N=126



23.8% of respondents rate their concern level with a 1, 14.3% with a 2, 12.7% with a 3, 15.9% with a 4, 15.1% with a 5, 8.7% with a 6, and 9.5% with a 7. Overall, 50.8% are largely unconcerned over the matter, whereas 33.3% are at least somewhat concerned, and 15.9% are neutral.

Are resources available to international students at Columbia adequate?

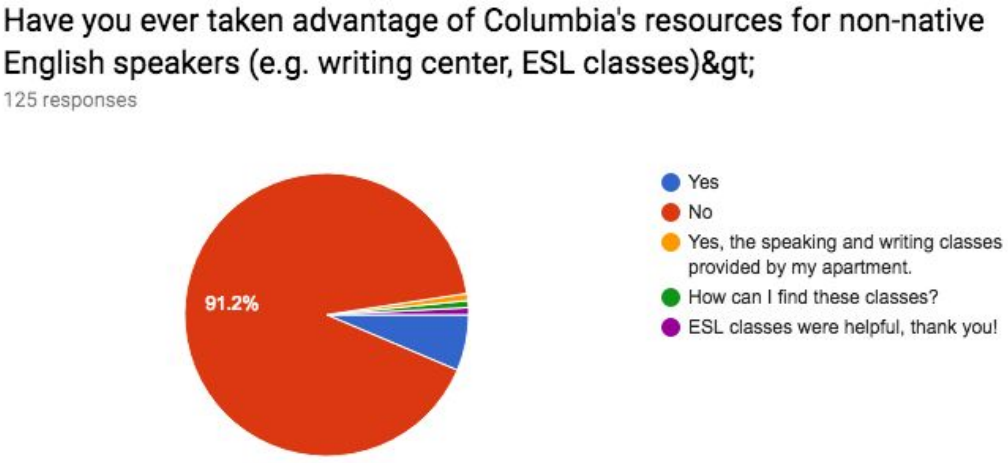
This is a scale question that asked respondents to rate the adequacy of resources available to international students at Columbia on a scale of 1-7, with 1 being "not at all adequate" and 7 "very adequate." N=126.



The exact percentages for each response are shown in the diagram above. Overall, 31.7% of respondents were dissatisfied with the resources available (ratings 3 and below), while 48.3% found them sufficiently adequate or better (ratings 5 and above), with 19.8% giving them a neutral grade of 4.

Using Columbia resources for non-native English speakers

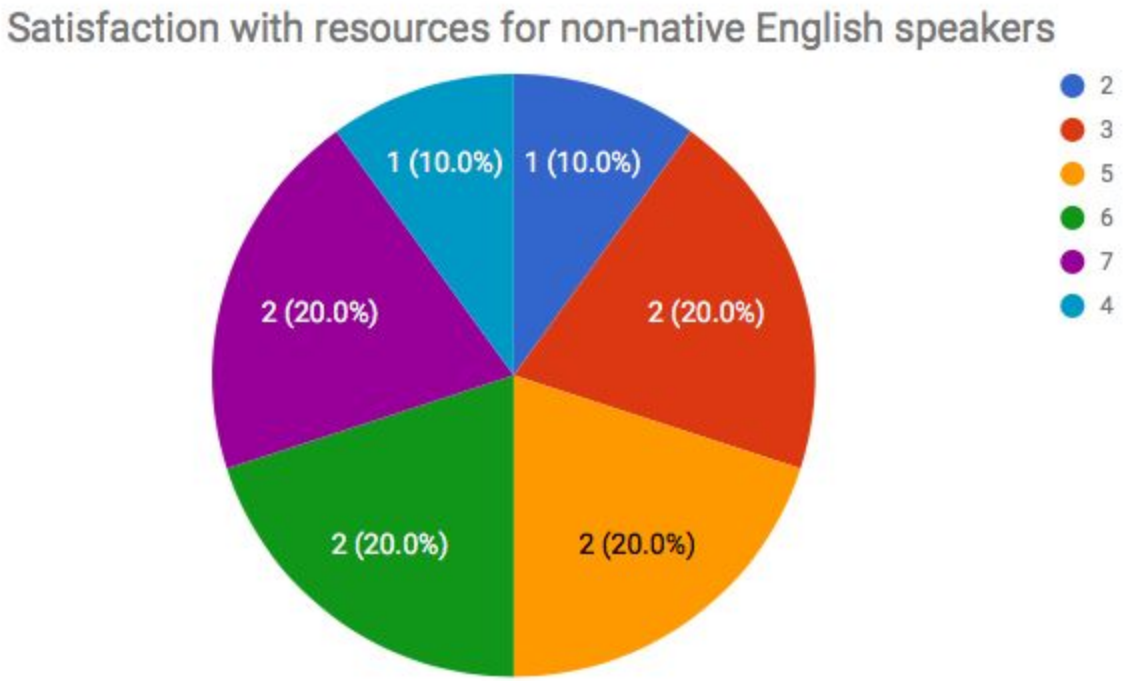
This is a multiple choice question that asked respondents whether they have ever used Columbia resources for non-native English speakers. Responses offered were "yes," "no," and a write-in "other" option.



A large majority (91.2%) have not taken advantage of Columbia's resources for non-native English speakers. Only 10 people (6.4%) have used these resources. Write-in options are shown in the legend on the chart above.

Adequacy of resources for non-native English speakers

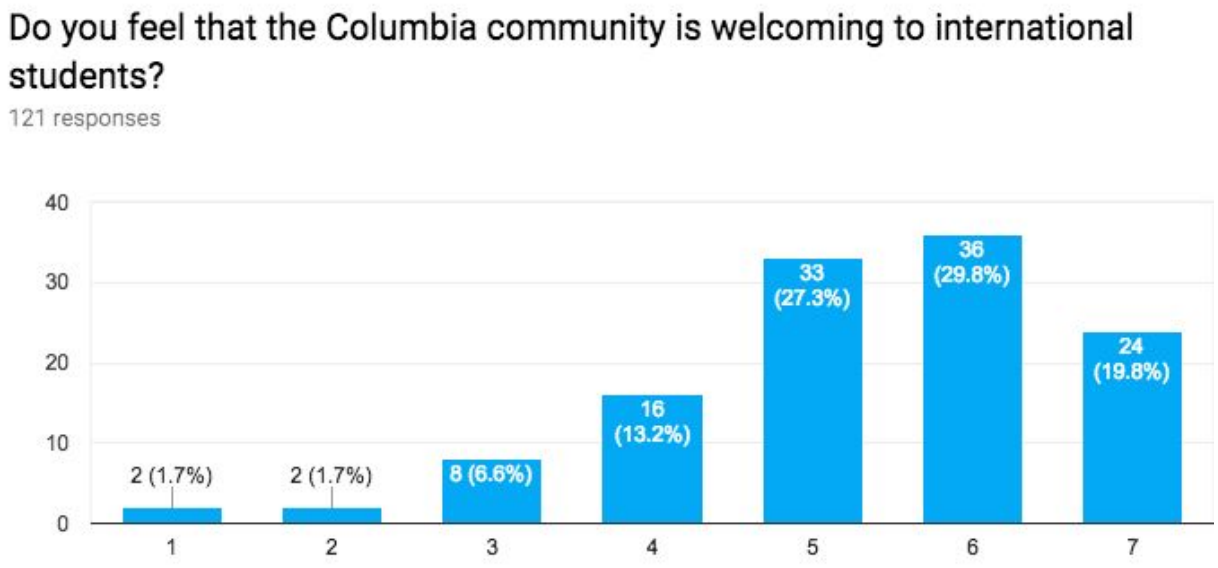
This was a scale questions that asked those respondents who have taken advantage of Columbia's resources for non-native English speakers to rate their adequacy on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being "completely inadequate" and 7 being "very adequate." Some people who answered "no" to the previous question still rated these services, but the breakdown shown below only includes those students who reported actually taking advantage of the resources in question. N=10



60% of respondents were largely satisfied with the services available (ratings 5 and above), whereas only 30% were somewhat dissatisfied (ratings 3 and below).

Is the Columbia community welcoming to international students?

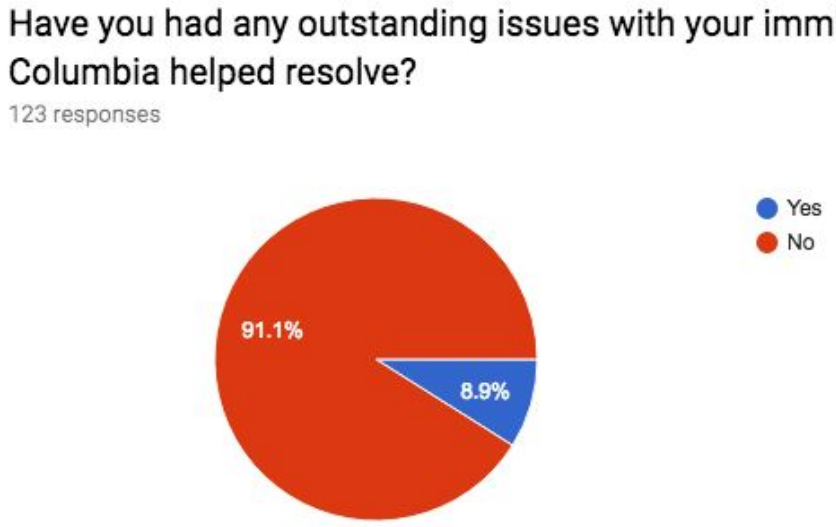
This is a scale question that asked international students to rate their personal impressions of how welcoming they found the Columbia community on a scale of 1 to 7, where 1 is "not at all welcoming" and 7 is "extremely welcoming." N=121.



The exact percentages for each response are shown in the diagram above. Overall, only 10% of international student respondents found the Columbia community unwelcoming (ratings 3 and below), while 76.9% found it to be largely welcoming (ratings 5 and above), with 13.2% giving them a neutral grade of 4.

Outstanding issues with immigration status that Columbia helped resolve

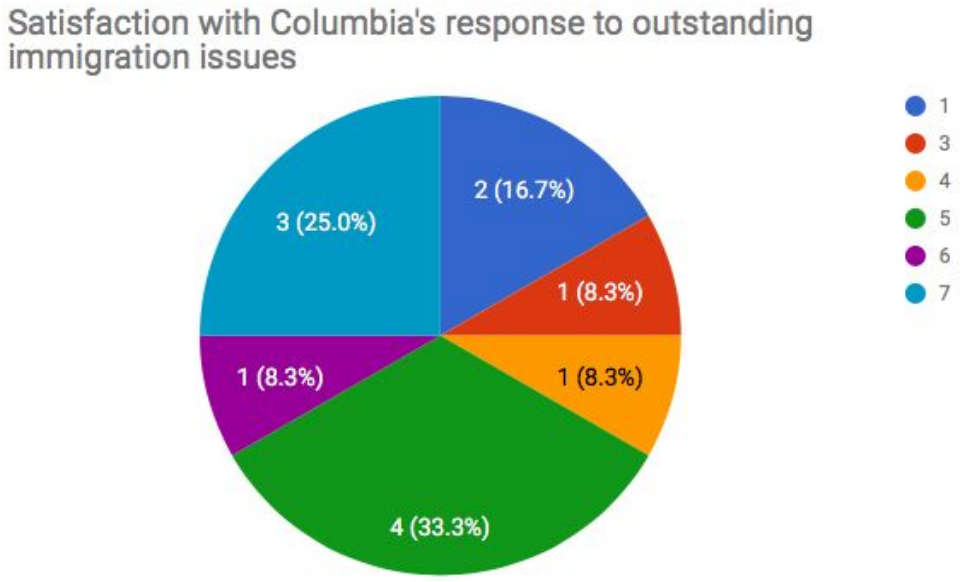
This was a multiple choice question that asked international students whether they ever experienced any outstanding immigration-related issues that Columbia helped resolve. Options offered were "yes" and "no." N=123.



A large majority of 91.1% respondents have not had immigration status issues that Columbia helped resolve. However, 8.9% of people did seek help from Columbia with their immigration status.

If yes, how satisfied were you with Columbia's response to your issue?

This is a scaled question that asked respondents who have sought Columbia's help in resolving an outstanding visa-related issue to rate Columbia's response on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 being "extremely dissatisfied," and 7 being "extremely satisfied." Although some respondents who answered "no" to the previous question did answer this one, they were filtered out in the analysis; only the responses of those students who answered "yes" to the previous question or did not answer to it at all were counted in this instance. N= 12.



The exact percentages for each response are shown in the diagram above. Overall, 25% of students were dissatisfied with Columbia's response (ratings 3 or 1), whereas 41.4% were largely satisfied (ratings 5 and above), and 8.3% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied (rating 4).

Comments regarding

At the end of this section, international students were invited to offer any additional comments on international student issues, and 16 people took that opportunity, many of them addressing more than one issue in their individual comments. This is a summary of pertinent points brought up in these comments.

Two students expressed concerns about obtaining visa in the future, or maintaining appropriate documentation, given the current domestic and global political climate. Four students complained that the ISSO is often unhelpful or gives contradicting or untimely information; two remarked that the ISSO is often more helpful and better equipped to help international students from Europe (one of them spoke as a European themselves). Another four made positive remarks about the performance of the ISSO or Columbia in general when it comes to helping international students. Three commenters complained that there were insufficient resources to help international students navigate the US tax system; and one remarked that orientation events for international students focused on too many insignificant administrative details, while

neglecting to include some extremely pertinent information. Lastly, one commenter spoke of facing hostility from undergraduate students in a class she was TA-ing for.

Section summary and remarks

Of the survey participants, 32% identified as international students. A majority (90%) of the self-identified international students require a F-1 visa, while 9.5% require a J-1 visa. 76% of international students are required to renew their visa every 4+ years, while the remaining need to renew their visas more (or less) frequently. 90% of the international students who participated in the survey indicated they have not had issues obtaining proper documentation for their visa. Of the participants, a vast majority of 91% have not taken advantage of Columbia's ESL resources and class offering. A common (5/16 responses) response left in the comments section is that tax support for international students is lacking.

94% of international students who participated in the survey reported not being affected by the recent travel bans, however 40% are concerned that it could be an issue in the future. A majority (78%) of respondents reported not experiencing harassment when crossing the US border, however 22% either have experienced harassment or were unsure if they have.

Overall, 75% of respondents feel that Columbia is a welcoming place for international students.

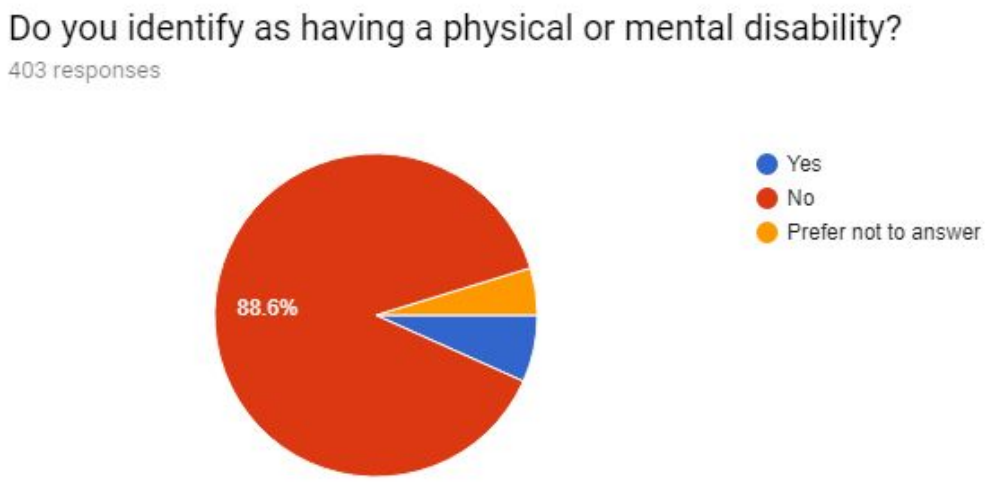
Disabilities

Section overview

There are two blocks in this section. The first contains one question that was offered to everybody who took the survey whereas the second block was reserved for people who identify as having a disability and mainly concerns the respective students' satisfaction with accommodation, communication, and support on the part of ODS, housing and the departments.

Self-identification as disabled (Block 1)

There is only one question in this block. It is a multiple-choice question, and the options are "Yes," "No," and "Prefer not to answer." N=403.

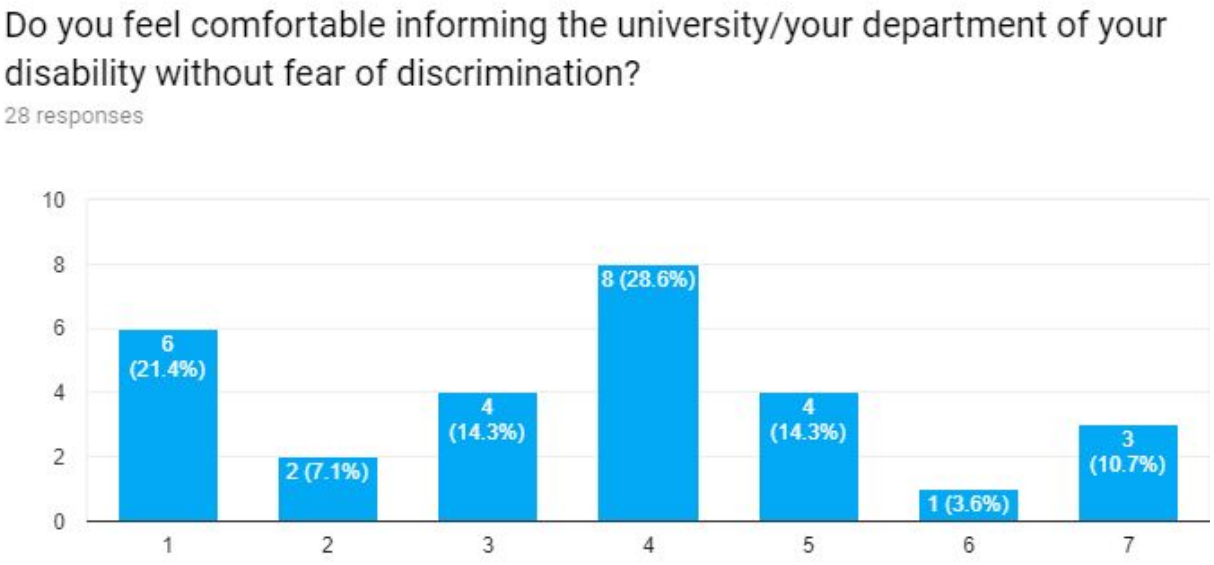


Of the 403 respondents, 88.6% do not identify as having a physical or mental disability whereas 4.7% do. 6.7% prefer not to answer. 8% of all female respondents and 3.57% of all male respondents identify as having a disability.

Disabilities and university life (Block 2)

Comfort with informing the university

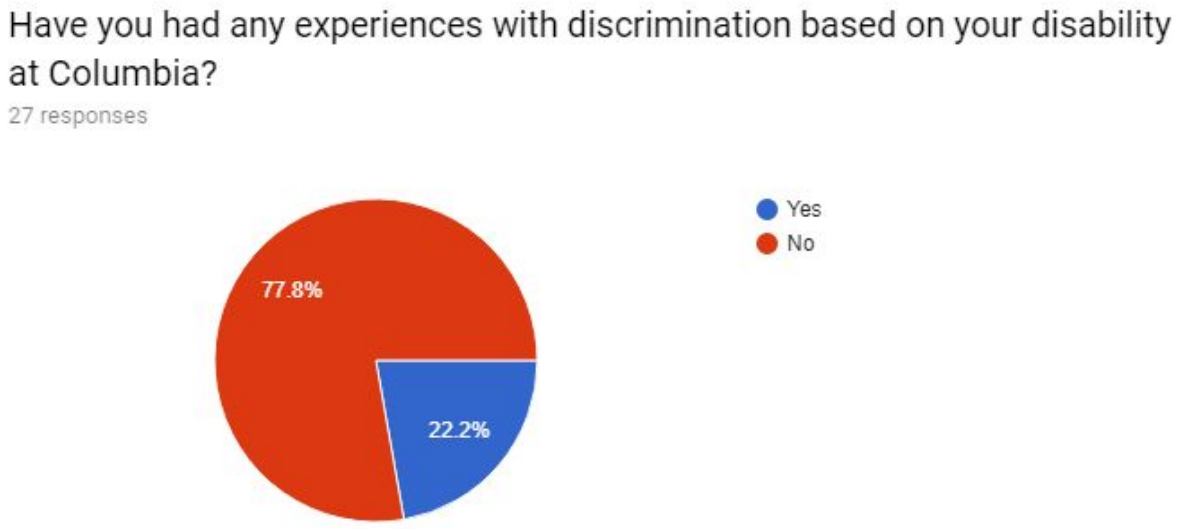
This is a scaled question. The scale ranges from 1 ("not at all comfortable") to 7 ("very comfortable"). N=28.



The progression from "not at all comfortable" to "very comfortable" is as follows: 21.4%, 7.1%, 14.3%, 28.6% (i.e. the middle between the two poles), 14.3%, 3.6%, and 10.7%. More than one fifth of the respondents are thus not at all comfortable informing the university without fear of discrimination, and 42.8% are rather uncomfortable, Only 28.6% are rather comfortable with it whereas 28.6% are neither comfortable nor uncomfortable.

Experienced discrimination

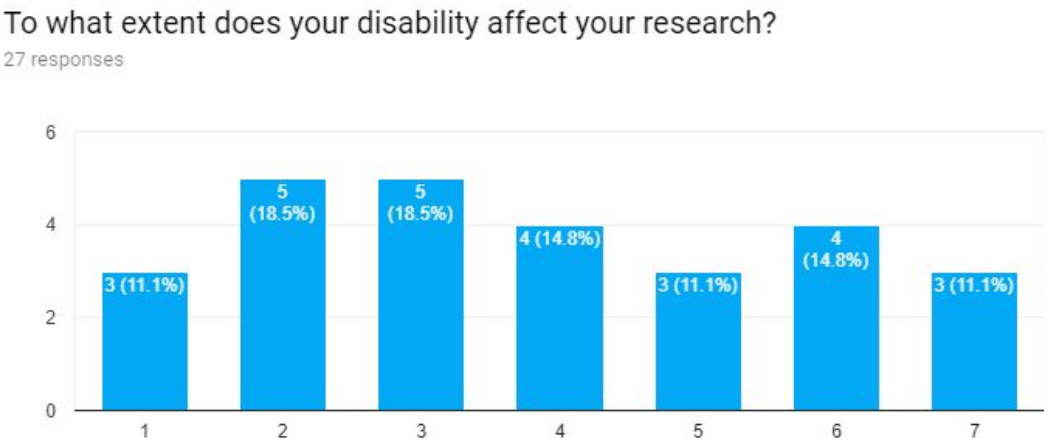
This is a two-choice question with "Yes" and "No" as options. N=27.



Of the respondents, 77.8% state that they have not experienced discrimination whereas 22.2 state that they have.

Disability affecting research

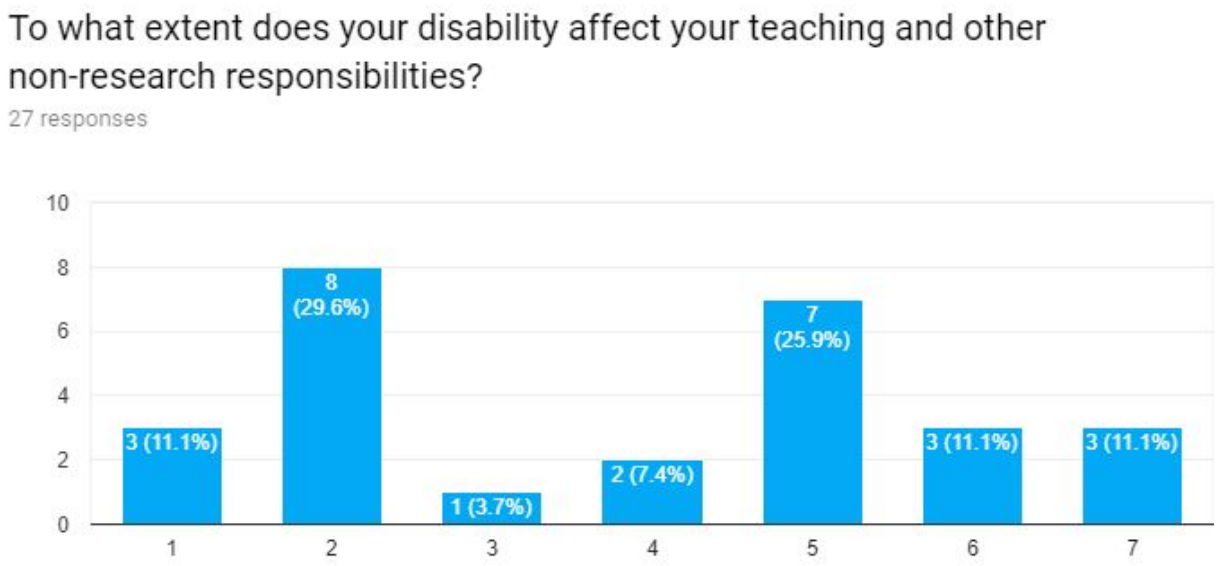
This is a scaled question. The scale ranges from 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“to a great extent”). N=27.



The progression from “not at all” to “to a great extent” is as follows: 11.1%, 18.5%, 18.5%, 14.8% (i.e. the middle between the two poles), 11.1%, 14.8%, 11.1%. The distribution of the votes over the seven options is thus relatively even.

Disability affecting teaching/non-research

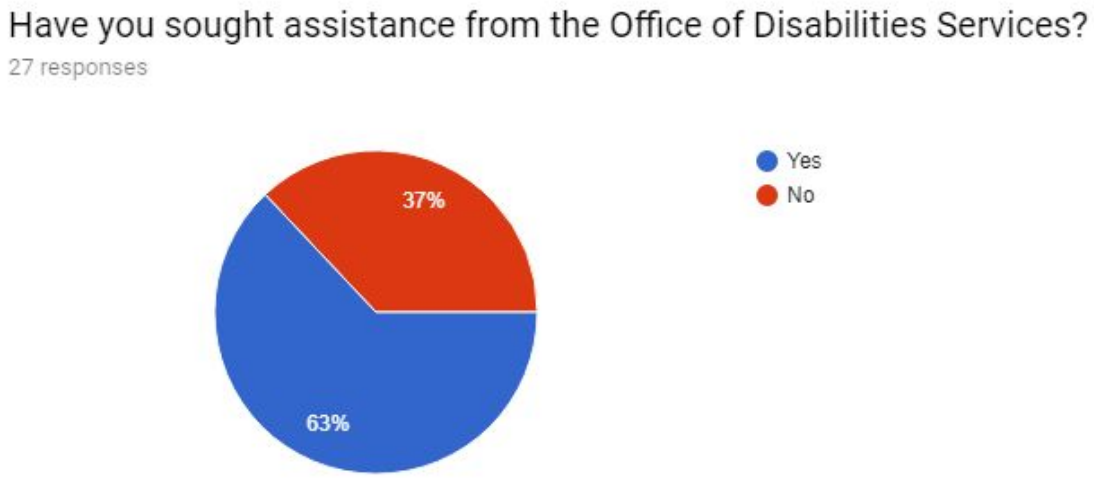
This is a scaled question. The scale ranges from 1 ("not at all") to 7 ("to a great extent"). N=27.



The progression from "not at all" to "to a great extent" is as follows: 11.1%, 29.6%, 3.7%, 7.4% (i.e. the middle between the two poles), 25.9%, 11.1%, 11.1%. Points 2 and 5 of the scale have received a significant amount of votes, indicating starkly different experiences on the part of rather large blocks of the respondents.

Seeking assistance from ODS

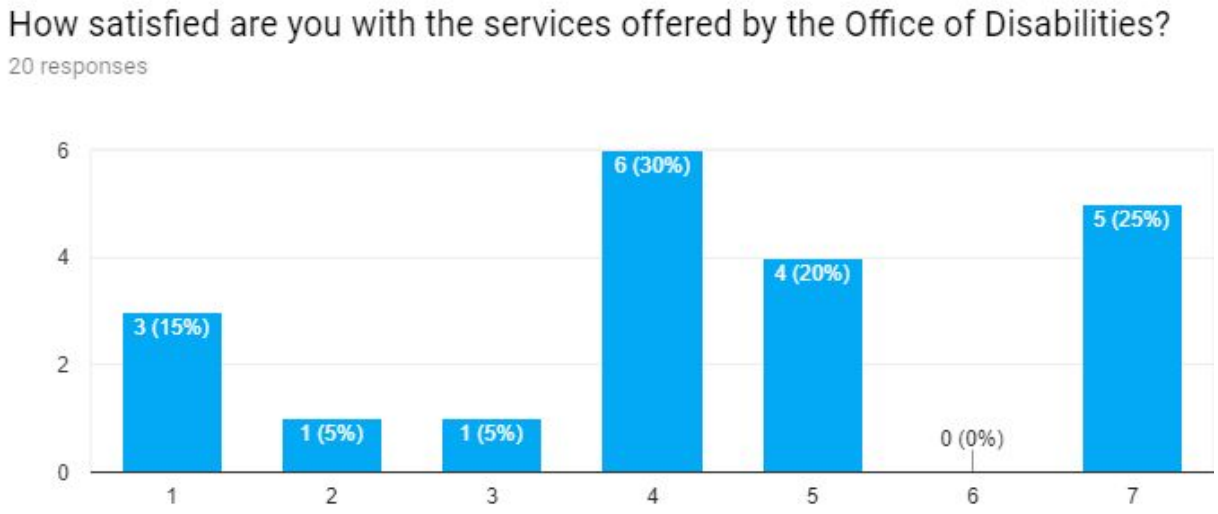
This is a two-choice question with "Yes" and "No" as options. N=27.



Of the 27 respondents, 63% have sought assistance whereas 37% haven't.

Satisfaction with ODS

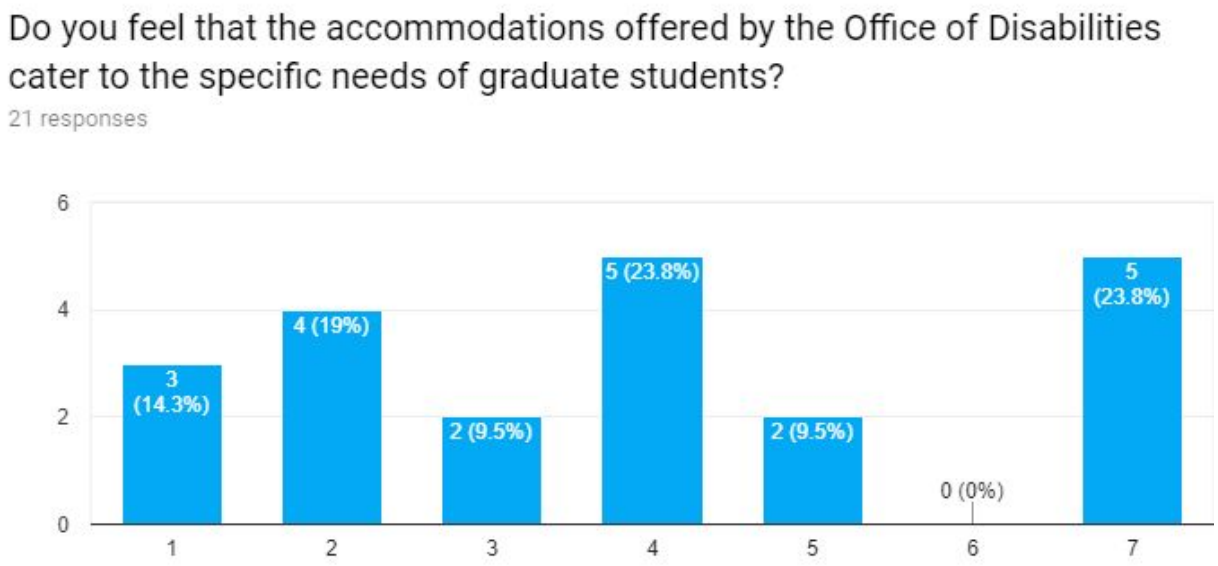
This is a scaled question. The scale ranges from 1 ("very unsatisfied") to 7 ("very satisfied"). N=20.



The progression from "very unsatisfied" to "very satisfied" is as follows: 15%, 5%, 5%, 30%, 20%, 0%, 25%. This shows a general tendency towards dissatisfaction; only 25% of the respondents are rather satisfied.

ODS accommodations catering to specific needs of graduate students

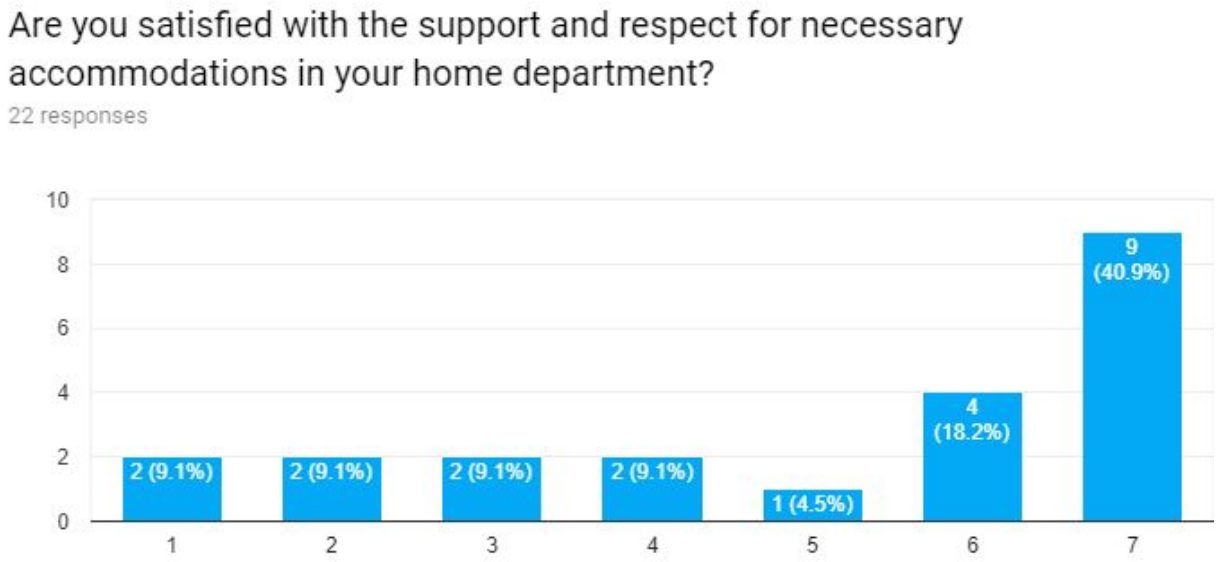
This is a scaled question. The scale ranges from 1 (“not at all”) to 7 (“very much so”). N=21



The progression form “not at all” to “very much so” is as follows: 14.3%, 19%, 9.5%, 23.8 (i.e. the middle between the two poles), 9.5%, 0%, 23.8%. 42.8% of the respondents have a rather negative view, and 33.3% a rather positive view. 23.8% are undecided.

Satisfaction with support of accommodations in home department

This is a scaled question. The scale ranges from 1 (“not at all satisfied”) to 7 (“very satisfied”). N=22.



The progression from “not at all satisfied” to “very satisfied” is as follows: 9.1%, 9.1%, 9.1%, 9.1%, 4.5%, 18.2%, 40.9%. Of the respondents, 27.3% are rather unsatisfied whereas 63.6% are rather satisfied. 40.9% are even very satisfied. This shows that the satisfaction with the respective home departments is significantly higher than that with ODS.

Comments about accommodations

There was a total of 5 comments, all of them negative. A common theme was the bad coordination between ODS, departments, and housing as well as generally opaque bureaucracy. The lack of respect for privacy was also criticized.

Section summary and remarks

It is striking that 8% of all female respondents but only 3.57% of all male respondents (out of 403 respondents, i.e. almost everybody who participated in this survey) identify as having a disability. It seems a worthwhile endeavor to inquire further into this issue. A possible reason might be a higher degree of comfort on the part of women to identify as having a disability or to share this piece of information.

More than three fourths (77.8%) of respondents identifying as having a disability state that they have not experienced any discrimination at Columbia. This also means, however, that almost one fourth have, which is an alarmingly high number.

The respondents' relationship with ODS seems more strained than that with the individual departments. As stated above, a common problem is the bad coordination between ODS, departments, and housing as well as generally opaque bureaucracy. The lack of respect for privacy is also viewed as problematic.

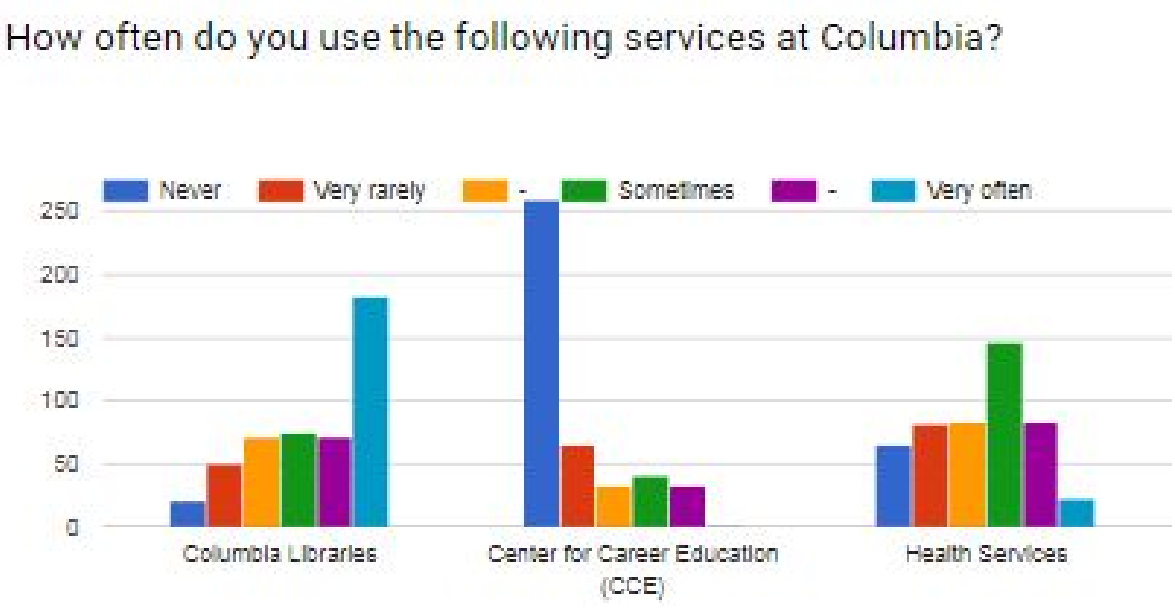
Columbia Services

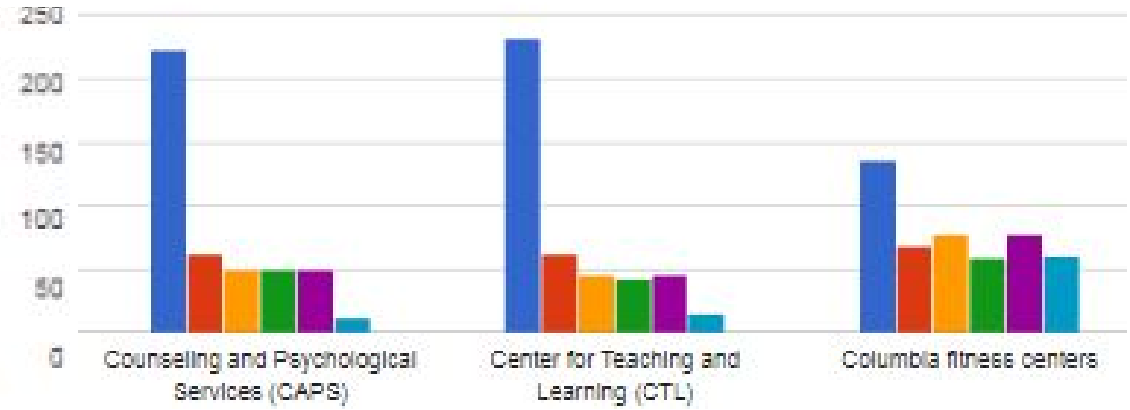
Section overview

This section has three parts A: Frequency of use of Columbia Services B: Satisfaction with Columbia Services, and C: Columbia Services Columbia students complained about.

Frequency of Use of Columbia Services

This is a grid question that asked Columbia students how frequently they used six different Columbia services: Libraries, CCE, Health Services, CPS, CTL, and Columbia Fitness Centers. Options offered were "never," "very rarely," "rarely," "sometimes," "often," and "very often;" unfortunately, due to a flaw in survey design, the "rarely" and "often" categories became truncated into one. It is therefore only possible to deduce how many students have never used a service, use it very rarely, or use it very often.

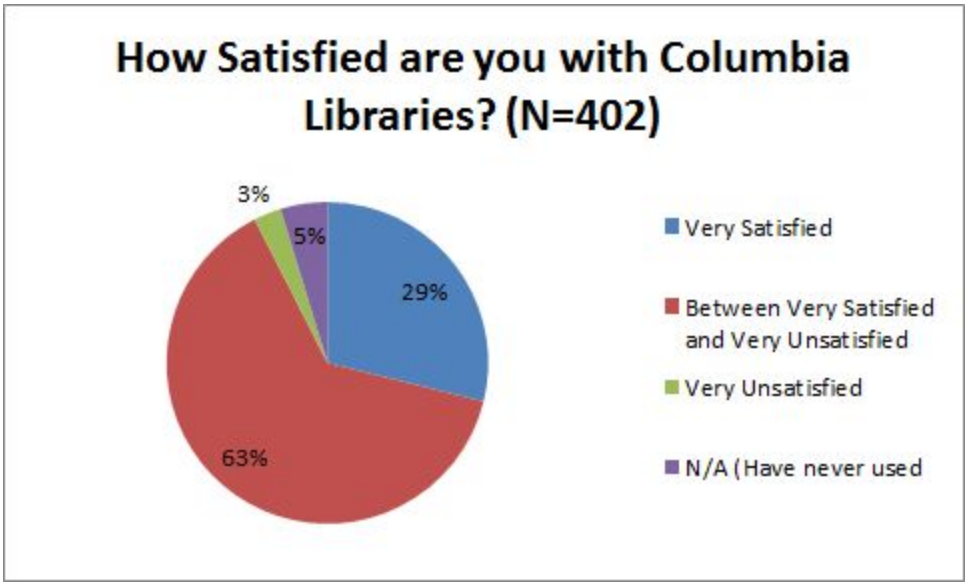


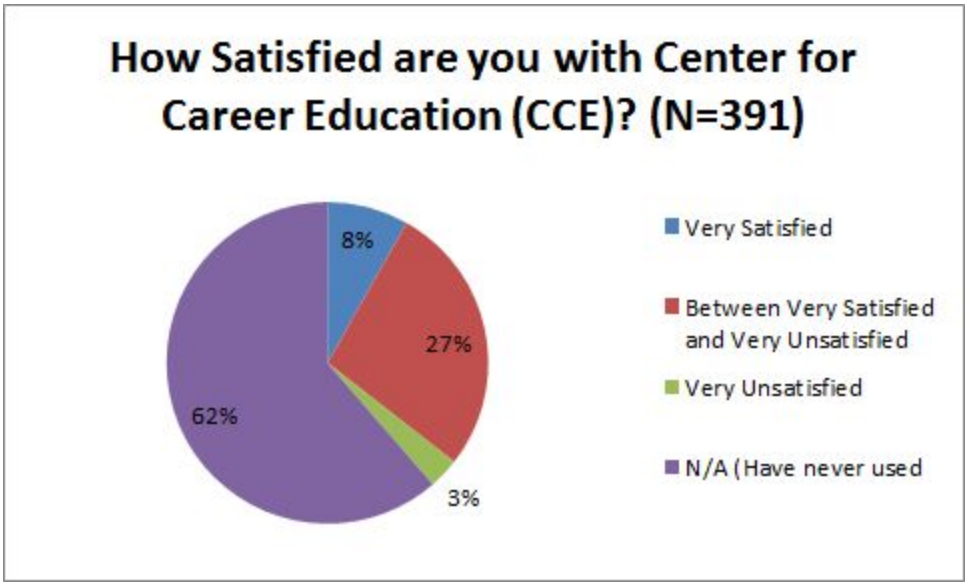


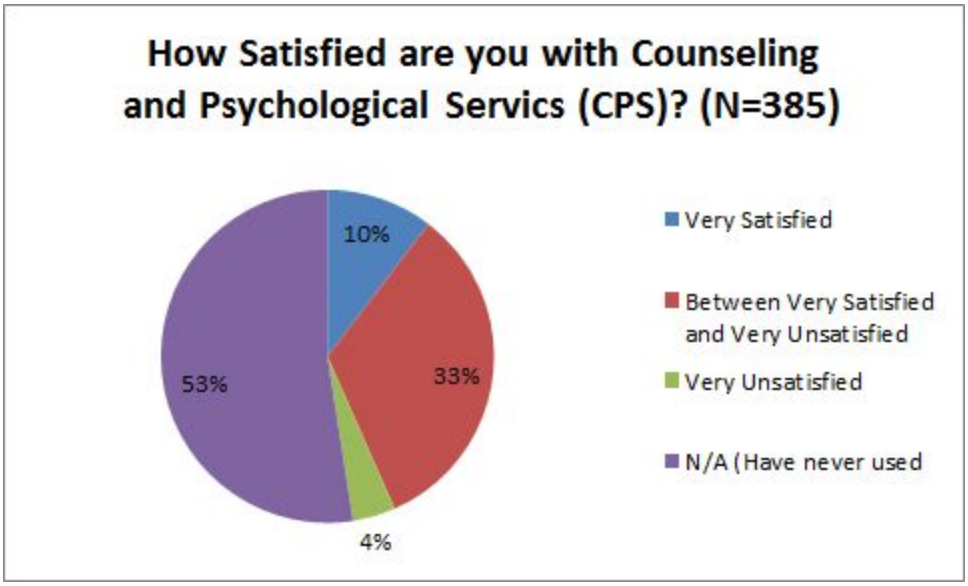
The above graphs show that students most frequently visit the libraries, followed by health services, the fitness centers, the Center for Teaching and Learning, and counseling services. The Center for Career Education, on the other hand, seems to be severely underused, with an overwhelming majority of respondents reporting that they have never used it.

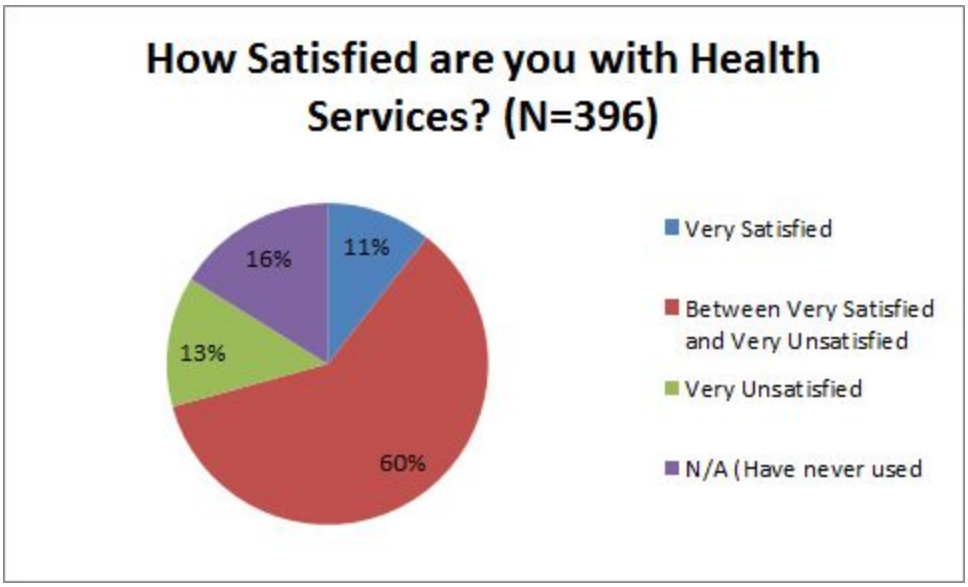
Satisfaction with Columbia Services

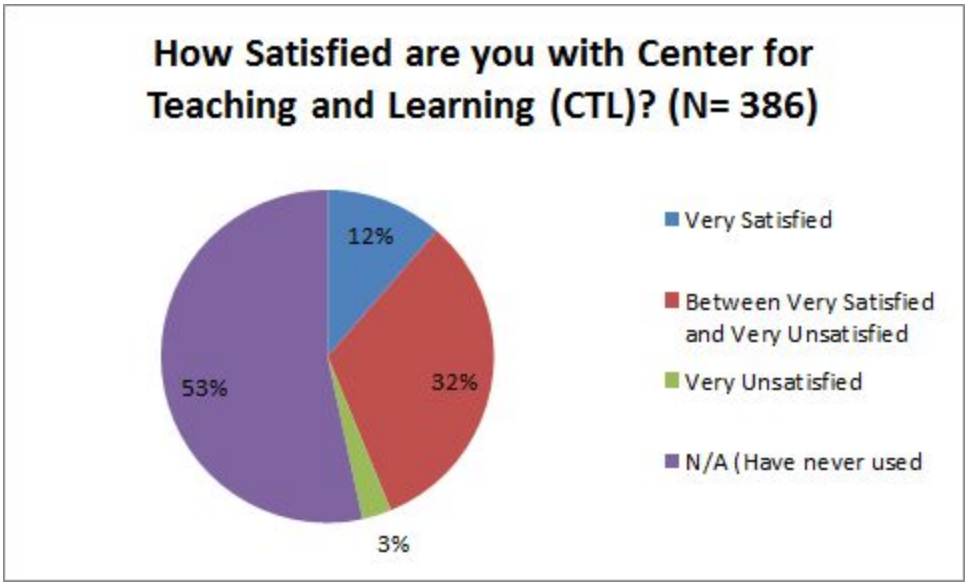
Columbia students were asked how satisfied they were in their use of the above named six different Columbia services. Unfortunately, the survey design flaw extended onto this section as well, truncating all three categories between "very unsatisfied" and "very satisfied" into one. The data below can therefore only give insight into the two extremes, and the "did not use" section; the in-between metrics, sadly, have to be disregarded. Below is a set of graphs of satisfaction with each particular service.

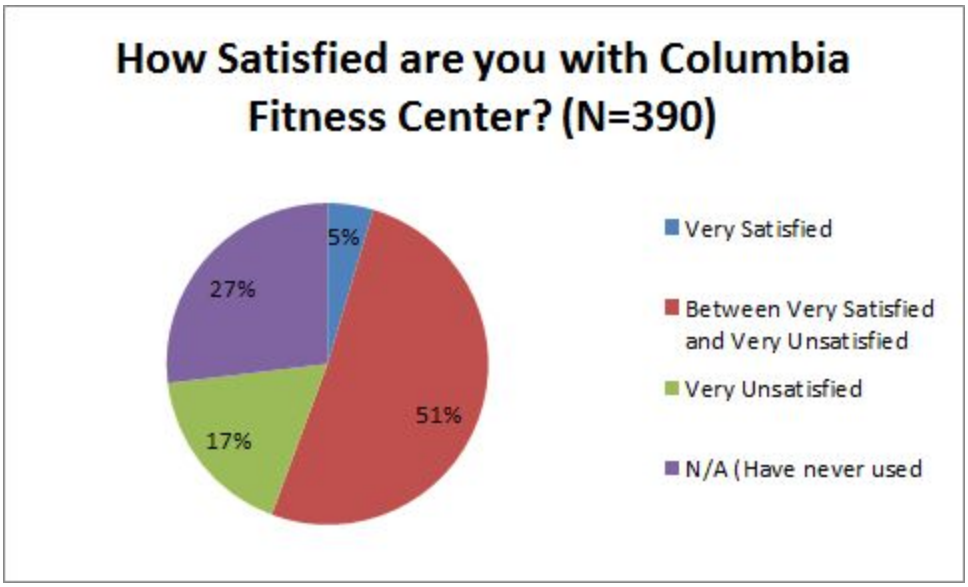

How Satisfied are you with Columbia Libraries? (N=402)
3%
5%
29%
63%
Very Satisfied
Between Very Satisfied and Very Unsatisfied
Very Unsatisfied
N/A (Have never used


How Satisfied are you with Center for Career Education (CCE)? (N=391)
8%
27%
62%
3%
Very Satisfied
Between Very Satisfied and Very Unsatisfied
Very Unsatisfied
N/A (Have never used


How Satisfied are you with Counseling and Psychological Servics (CPS)? (N=385)
10%
33%
4%
53%
Very Satisfied
Between Very Satisfied and Very Unsatisfied
Very Unsatisfied
N/A (Have never used


How Satisfied are you with Health Services? (N=396)
11%
60%
13%
16%
Very Satisfied
Between Very Satisfied and Very Unsatisfied
Very Unsatisfied
N/A (Have never used





The above graphs show that students are the most satisfied with Columbia Libraries, followed by the Center for Teaching and Learning and Counselling and Psychological Services (the latter two

are underutilized, but popular among those who do use them nonetheless). Students express the most dissatisfaction with Columbia fitness centers and Health Services, with a substantial amount of dissatisfaction expressed against CPS (although there are still more very satisfied than very dissatisfied students when it comes to that service).

Columbia Services students complained about (out of 98 comments)

Below is a table of the services students complained about, the number of complaints made about each service, and the common complaints students made in order of frequency.

Place Mentioned	**Number of complaints**	**Common complaints in order of frequency) (Bolded are 3 or more)**
Fitness Centers	54	**Too small, old, dirty/unsanitary, want summer access**, **need longer hours,** poor machine sign-up policy, unclear locker policy for trans students, gendered physical activities, wamt free exercise classes like public universities
Libraries	17	**Not enough space/crowded, not long enough hours**, Missing books from shelves, finding books is difficult, poor maintenance of books, no bathrooms in Starr Library
Health Services	17	**Hard to get appointments, poor online appointment system, referral policy/getting referrals**, **small waiting space,** rude staff, services for spouses, anti-union practices against health workers, misdiagnosed, large bruise from blood test, unfair

		segregation in terms of LGBTQ students having to use a separate facility for AIDS testing
Counseling services	6	**Need for long-term counseling**, not enough therapists, unkind therapists, need better promotion of counseling services
CTL (Center for Teaching and Learning)	3	Need more support for fellows, need more workshops, waste of money
Career Services	2	Not equipped for graduate students, handshake app violates FIRPA

98 out of the total 404 students left comments regarding Columbia services. Of these 98 students, 54 had complaints/suggestions about Columbia fitness centers, 17 had complaints/suggestions about libraries, another 17 had complaints/suggestions about health services, 6 had complaints/suggestions about counseling services, 3 had complaints/suggestions about the Center for Teaching and Learning, and 2 had complaints/suggestions about Career Services.

Section summary and remarks

Based on the responses, students who filled out the survey are most unsatisfied with Columbia Fitness Centers, Libraries and Health Services. This is particularly the case for Columbia Fitness Centers (meaning Dodge Fitness Center for the most part), which received negative feedback from over half of students who left comments. It is important that the GSAC (ASGC) address student concerns in these three places because these are also the services that students who filled out the survey visit the most.

It is worth mentioning that in all three of these areas (fitness, libraries, and health), a lack of space was a common concern. Therefore, simply rearranging, remodeling and/or improving

the conditions, of places may not be enough. It may be a good idea to encourage the administration to open more facilities for fitness, health or libraries or move these services to bigger or more appropriate locations. Opening up underused areas of the Dodge Fitness Center (there seem to be some left of the entrance) may free up some space.

Extended hours was another desire among some students for all three of these areas (for Health Services, this meant having weekend hours). Several students also felt strongly about having summer access to fitness facilities. Considering that the Office of the Provost has recently announced they will pay the internet utility fee in University Student Housing for PhD students and covering the insurance of their dependents, this is an area that might have some potential. Allowing PhD students to use fitness centers in the summer would be a huge boost to quality of life considering how hot it may be to exercise outside.

Another service that should not be disregarded is Counseling Services. While the number of complaints/suggestions for Counseling Services was comparably smaller, there were a number that were detailed and showed signs of having experienced great distress. This is something that they had in common with health services. For both, there were difficulties in getting appointments and getting referrals for outside services. The online system for scheduling appointments for Health Services makes it hard for students who don't have emergencies (who need something like referrals to outside clinics) to be able to see someone and get the service they need. Part of this though may be due to not having enough information, so the GSAC (ASGC) should take steps to make sure students know about these services and details regarding them.

A success story appears to be the Center for Teaching and Learning. This was the only area in which more commented good things (4 students) than gave complaints or suggestions (3 students). The CTL's experience in incorporating student feedback and improving their services might be of use to other university facilities that need improvement.

Very few students said anything about Career Services and it is also one of the least utilized places if not the least utilized place. Perhaps this is a telling sign that more can be done to connect students with this service.

Health

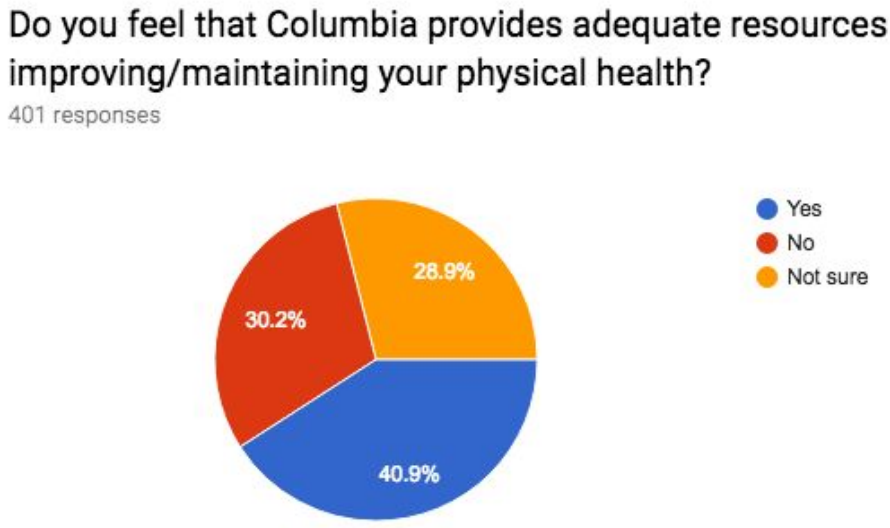
Section overview

This was a short section with four main questions seen by all respondents and four follow-up questions seen only by those who had taken medical leave. The goal of this section was to gauge respondent's feelings about the resources provided by Columbia to support their physical and mental health, and their feelings about the process of medical leave, if applicable. While the section was short, it generated a high volume of comments, which shed light on health-related areas where resources are lacking or not well targeted for graduate students.

Health Resources

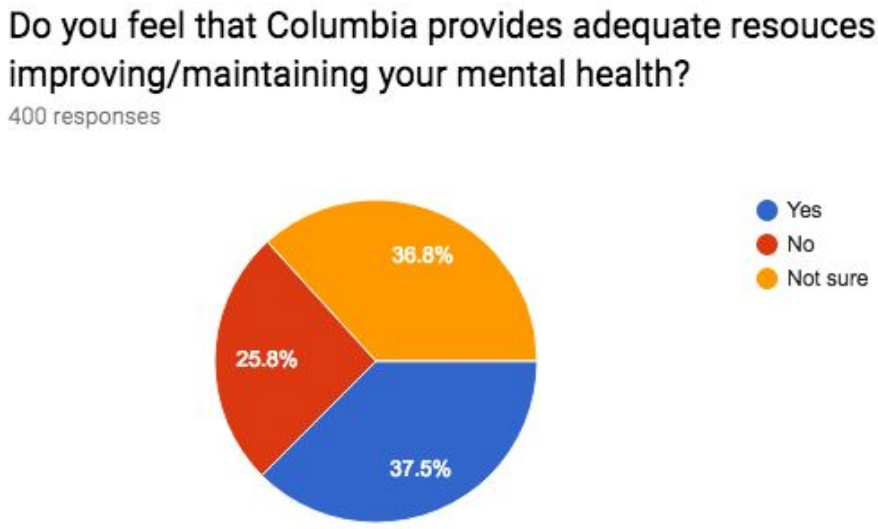
Physical Health Resources

The first question asked if respondents felt that Columbia provided adequate resources related to physical health for students. This was a Yes/No/Not sure question. The responses were quite evenly split, with roughly 30% answering No, 30% Not sure, and 40% answering Yes. N=401.



Mental Health Resources

The second question used the same format as the first but focused on mental health. These responses were similarly divided, with 25% No, 37% Yes and 37% Not Sure. The responses for these two questions, and the high number of Not Sure responses, may indicate that many students are not aware of what resources are available regarding physical and mental health, or are not making use of them. N=400



Medical Leave

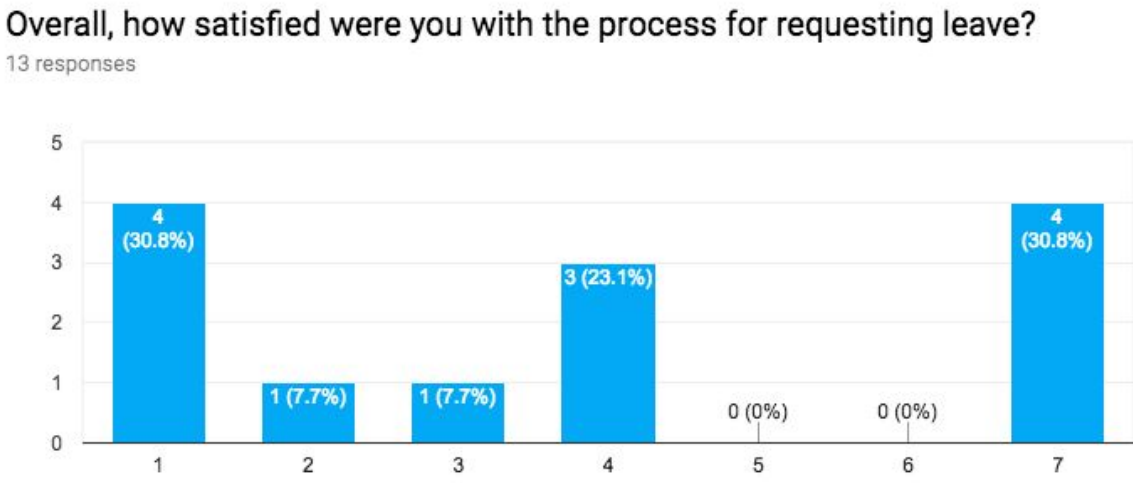
The third question asked if students had ever requested personal or medical leave from their studies. The overwhelming majority had not, with only 13 people answering Yes. Of these, two were Masters students and the rest were PhDs.

Medical Leave Continued

These thirteen students were then directed to fill out additional questions about the leave process. The four questions were all satisfaction scales, ranging from very unsatisfied (1) to very satisfied (7). All thirteen students answered each question.

Satisfaction with Leave

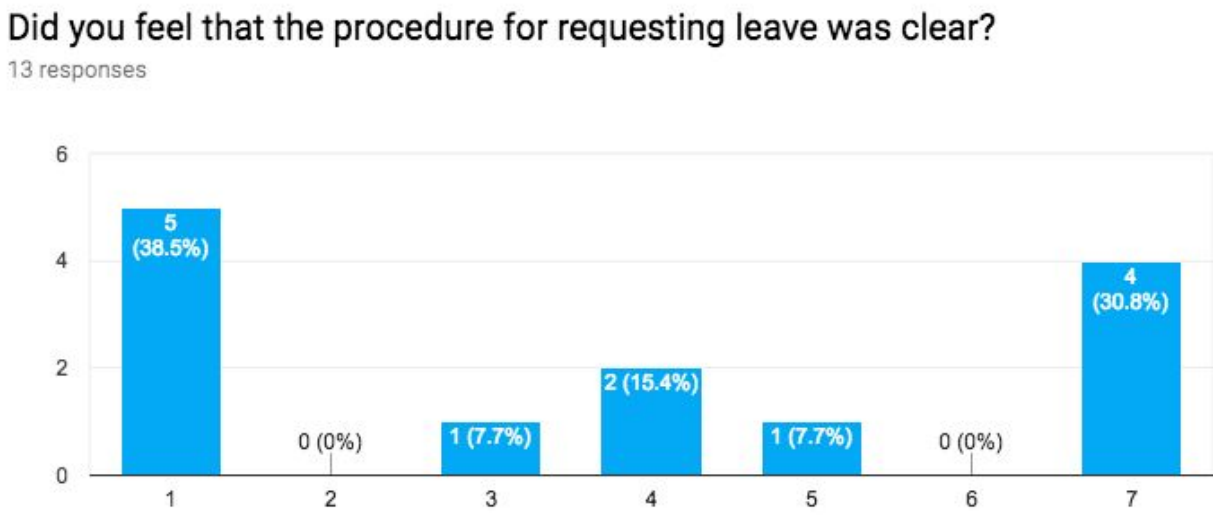
This was a scaled question that asked students to rate their overall satisfaction with the process for requesting leave on a scale of 1 ("very dissatisfied") to 7 ("very satisfied"). N=13.



The exact percentages for each response are shown in the diagram above. Overall, 6 out of 13 students were mostly dissatisfied with the response (ratings 3 and below), 4 found it very satisfying (rating it 7), and 3 gave it a neutral grade of 4.

Clarity of Leave Process

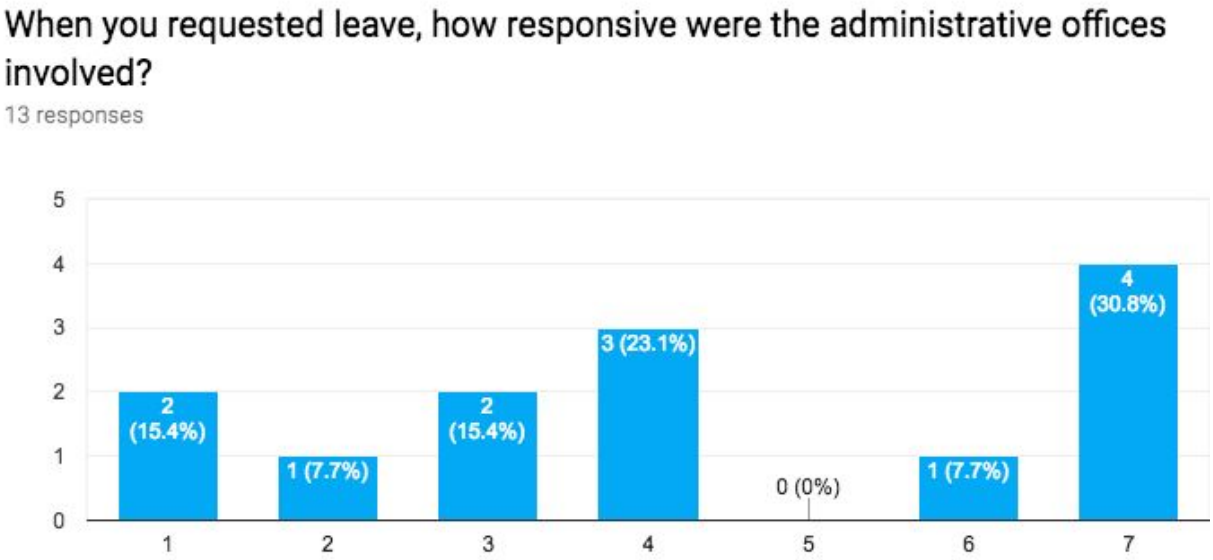
This was a scaled question that asked students to rate clarity of leave process on a scale of 1 ("very unclear") to 7 ("very clear"). N=13.



The exact percentages for each response are shown in the diagram above. Overall, 6 out of 13 students found the process mostly unclear, (ratings 3 and below), 5 found it fairly or very clear (ratings 5 and 7), and 2 gave it a neutral grade of 4.

Administrative responsiveness to leave requests

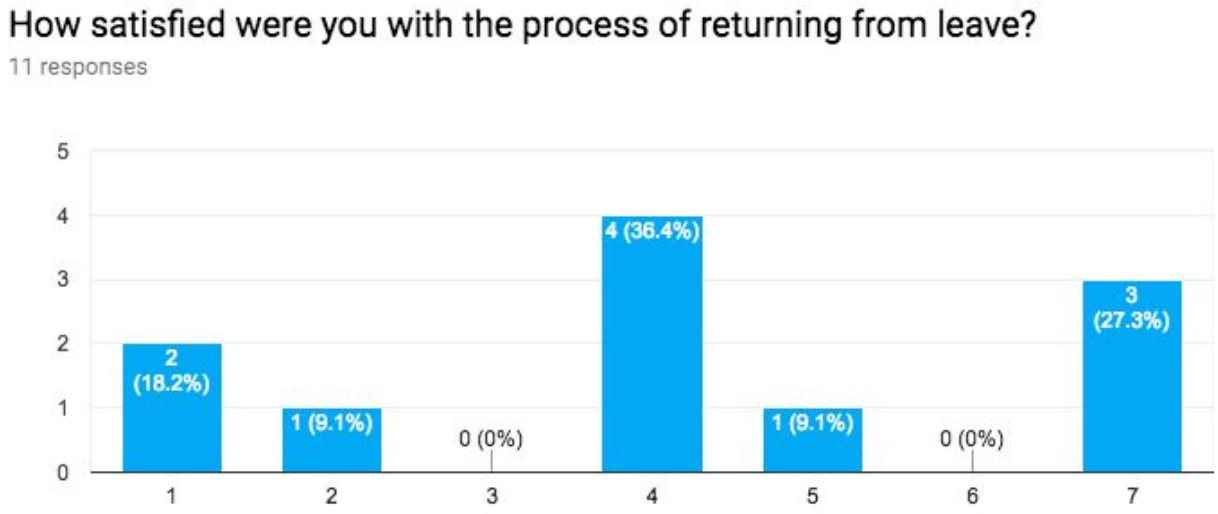
This was a scaled question that asked students to rate the responsiveness of the administrative offices involved after leave was requested on a scale of 1 (“very unresponsive”) to 7 (“very responsive”). N=13.



The exact percentages for each response are shown in the diagram above. Overall, 4 out of 13 students found the administrative offices largely unresponsive (ratings 3 and below), 5 found them very responsive (rating them 6 or 7), and 3 gave administrative responsiveness a neutral grade of 4.

Returning from Leave

This was a scaled question that asked students to rate their satisfaction with the process of returning from leave on a scale of 1 ("very dissatisfied") to 7 ("very satisfied"). N=13.



The exact percentages for each response are shown in the diagram above. Overall, 3 out of 13 students were mostly dissatisfied with the response (ratings 3 and below), 4 found it mostly satisfying (ratings 5 and 7), and 4 gave it a neutral grade of 4.

Comments on possible improvements of physical or mental health resources

In the end of this section, survey participants were asked whether they had any other comments on how Columbia could improve physical or mental health resources. The comments were very informative. 100 people chose to leave a comment on this topic, out of the 405 who viewed it. In general, there were four main themes:

1. Improving resources for physical fitness like the Dodge Fitness Center
2. Frustration with the Health Center and student insurance plan, including difficulty scheduling appointments and feeling that the doctors there did not adequately address they type of health problems faced by older students (e.g. chronic conditions that went beyond the usual services of treating the flu and giving std tests). Several also pointed out that the requirement to visit the health center before seeing a specialist or other doctor placed an extra burden on graduate students who live off campus.
3. Difficulty with medical leave, discussed above.

4. Lack of mental health resources, and a general feeling that Columbia wasn't doing enough to address the specific issues faced by graduate students, including stressful work environments and high pressure. Several requested more resources and support groups directed at graduate students, and more action within departments to address the mental well-being of their graduate students. Others discussed more generally the difficulty of obtaining long-term counseling from the counseling center, and having to wait weeks for appointments, even for acute psychiatric issues.

Section summary and remarks

Overall, graduate students are either dissatisfied with the available resources for their physical and mental health, or are not quite sure whether they are sufficient. This suggests that room for improvement in this matter is substantial, and many potential improvements are articulated in student comments. In all, the results of this section indicate that students are potentially underutilizing the existing resources, or are having negative experiences when they do make use of them. Especially important is the issue of resources designed to meet the specific needs of graduate students, that would take into account the realities of their academic and personal lives.

Responses to all four questions regarding medical leave were mixed, with responses scanning the whole scale and relatively equal numbers of satisfied and unsatisfied. Two of these respondents also elaborated on their medical leave in the comments section. One stated that they had wanted to take FMLA but was concerned about losing housing, and the other described how the process was very difficult and unclear due to inconsistencies between department policies and GSAS ones. In addition, one respondent who answered No to the leave question stated in the comments that they had tried to take leave but had encountered difficulty because of their status as an international student. Of the students who did take leave, only one is an international student.

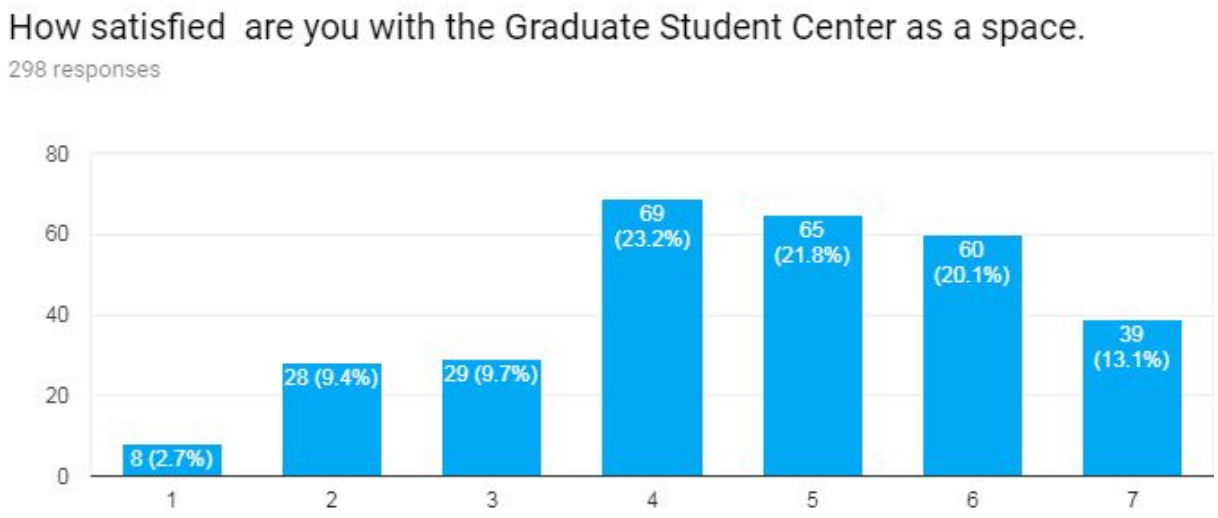
Graduate Student Center

Section overview

This section has five parts: A:Satisfaction with the Graduate Student Center as a Space, B: Reasons for Use of the Graduate Center, C: Satisfaction with Nous Cafe, D: Hosting and Event, and E: Common Concerns/Complaints about the Graduate Student Center

Satisfaction with the Graduate Student Center as a Space

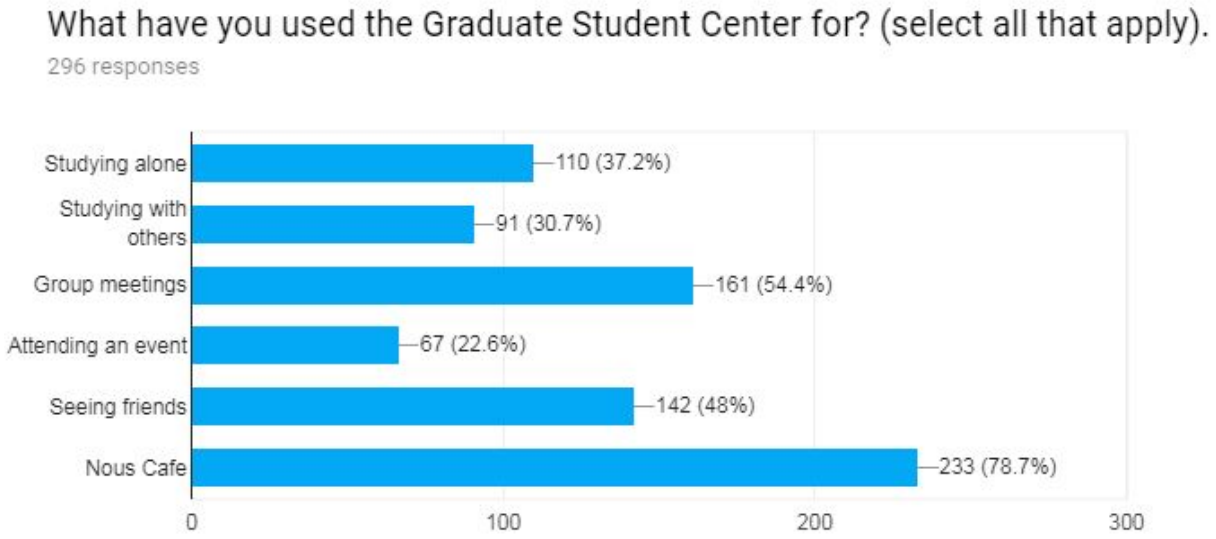
This was a scaled question that asked students to rate their satisfaction with the process of returning from leave on a scale of 1 ("very dissatisfied") to 7 ("very satisfied"). N=298



52% of students are more satisfied than dissatisfied, 21.8% of students are more dissatisfied than satisfied, and 23.2% have about the same amount of satisfaction as dissatisfaction

Reasons for use of the Graduate Center

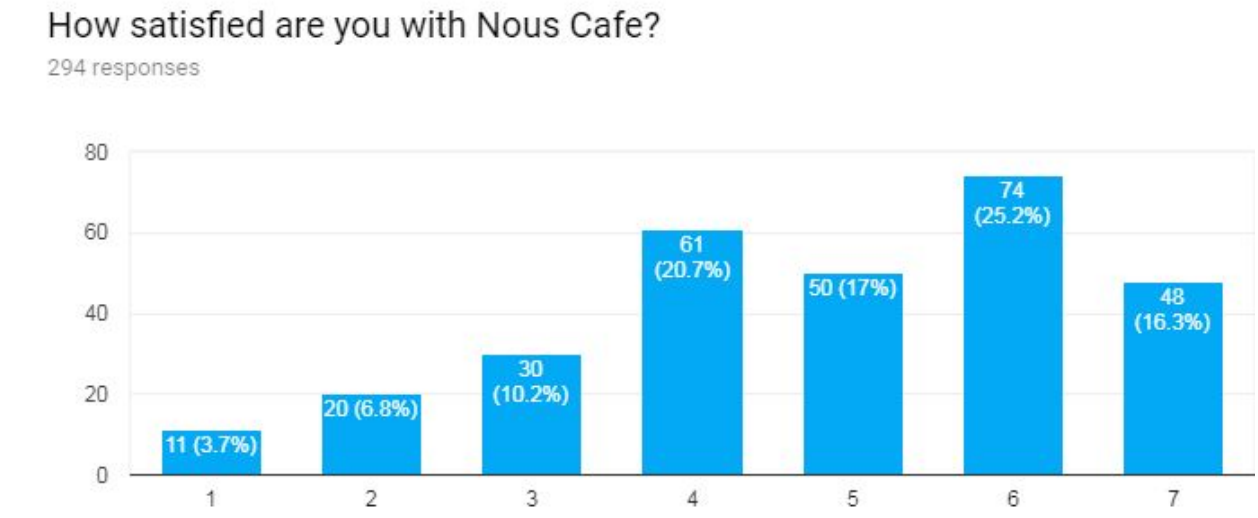
Students were given a list of reasons to use the graduate center and were asked to select all the uses that apply to them. N=296.



The most common use of the Graduate Student Center is for Nous Cafe, followed by Group Meetings, Seeing friends, Studying alone, Studying with Others, and Attending an event.

Satisfaction with Nous Cafe

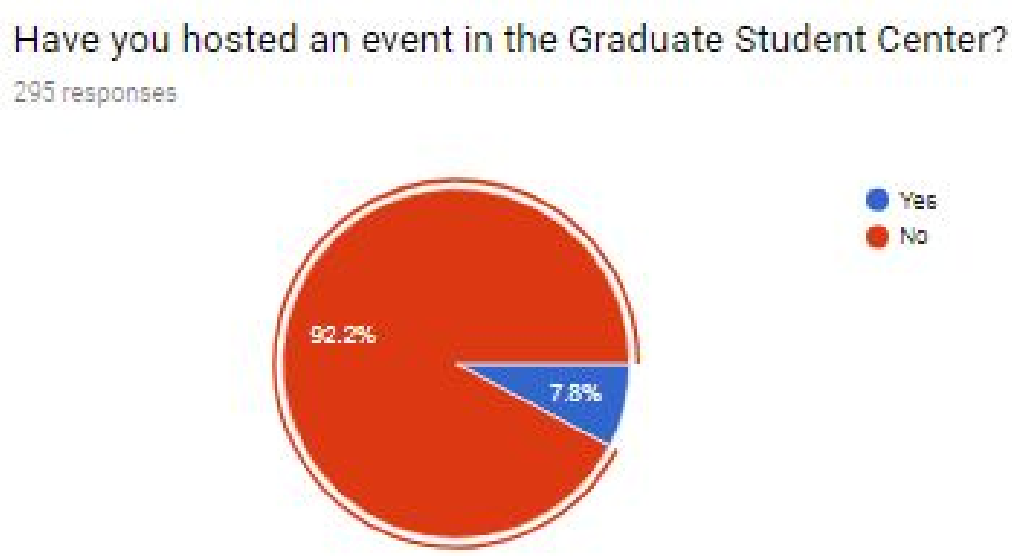
Students were asked to give their satisfaction level of Nous Cafe with 1 being least satisfied and 7 being most satisfied. N=294.



58.5% of students are more satisfied than dissatisfied, 20.7% are more dissatisfied than satisfied and 20.7% are about as satisfied as dissatisfied.

Hosting an event

Students were asked if they had ever hosted an event in the Graduate Student Center and were given the options Yes and No. N=295.



92.2% of students have never hosted an event in the Graduate Student Center, while 7.8% have.

Common Concerns/Complaints about the Graduate Student Center (of 95 total comments)*

Below is a table of the common concerns and complaints students made, and the number of times students made these complaints.

Point Mentioned	Number of Students who expressed this concern
Expensive, overpriced	37
Crowded, full, not enough space	28
Loud, noisy	7
Dirty, not clean	5

Needs to be more restricted to Graduate Students (too many undergraduates, faculty and staff)	5
Uninviting/ poorly designed and lighted	4
Reservations process for events (needs to be available for reservation after 5 PM, didn't know center could be reserved)	2
Other (no sense of community, not enough activities, need places to store and heat food, no giftcards, need one at medical campus, need more chairs, wants a printer, needs more staff)	7

*A number of students raised concerns about more than one issue

The most common area of concern for the Graduate Student Center were expensive/overpriced menu items at Nous Cafe, followed by not enough space, noisy atmosphere, lack of cleanliness, not restrictive enough access, an uninviting atmosphere, and other issues.

Section summary and remarks

The fact that so many students have utilized this space for multiple purposes (Nous cafe, a study space, a meeting space, and an event space) demonstrates that this is an important place for students, and it is fulfilling its functions to many students.

However, around 1/5th of students who filled out the survey (about 80) are more unsatisfied than satisfied for both the Graduate Student Center as a whole and Nous Cafe. The biggest complaint is expensive prices. Almost half of students who left comments about the Graduate Student Center complained about prices and did so with a great deal of emphasis. Several students mentioned how the amount of their stipend was not enough to indulge in the selections of the cafe. This could be addressed by requesting the cafe offer more affordable options, asking the university to subsidize the cost of the menu options, or encouraging the university to make a contract with another company that can offer more affordable options.

Another important area of concern is a lack of space. Several students said they liked the Graduate Student Center but wanted a larger space or more spaces like it. Other students said they avoided the space precisely because it was too crowded. This issue was occasionally raised in conjunction with the belief that faculty, staff, and undergraduates are unfairly accessing the space and making things more crowded and uncomfortable for the graduate students it is meant to be for. Some believed that the luxurious menu items were bringing in too large of a crowd and would instead prefer a place that was more for studying and quiet relaxation. While the access is in fact restricted to graduate students already, it is clear that there are a number of people who aren't graduate students using the space gaining access through waiting until someone exits or coming in with a graduate student. While it might be impossible to prevent this completely, perhaps a more conspicuous sign reminding people that the space is strictly for graduate students would cut down the traffic slightly.

Noise and cleanliness were other areas of concern, and these are related to a lack of space. While a social marketing campaign or additional staff might help with the cleanliness issue, the noise issue is unlikely to be resolved with the number of students who visit the place particularly around lunch time.

All of the issues regarding space, cleanliness and noise (combined with responses about services like the Dodge Fitness Center and libraries) perhaps suggest that Columbia University is at or beyond its carrying capacity. However, in view of the consequences that the university's expansion might have on the neighboring communities, we should ensure that all available space is efficiently utilized before advocating for expansions.

Finally, while it is not something many of students have committed on specifically, there were a couple of students who made comments about not knowing about the process of reserving the student center for events or seeking more clarification regarding it. Since GSAC uses the space regularly, perhaps it could take the lead helping other groups understand how to use it as well. Nevertheless, an unintended consequence of more students knowing how to reserve the space might be that students who like to use the space on their own might be unhappy.

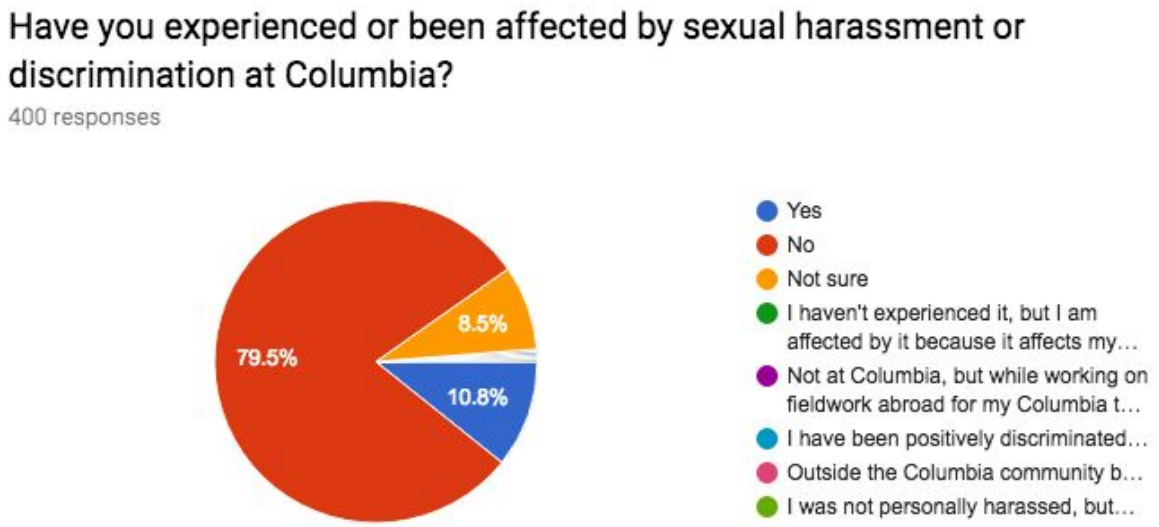
Harassment

Section overview

This section addressed experiences of harassment and discrimination among the graduate student population, with a special focus on the adequacy of administrative and departmental response. In addition to this, a cross-section analysis looks at the demographics of students who report being affected by harassment in order to identify the most vulnerable groups.

Have you experienced or been affected by sexual harassment or discrimination at Columbia?

This was a multiple choice question inquiring specifically about experiences of sexual harassment or discrimination. Options offered were "yes," "no," "not sure," and a write-in "other" option. N=400.

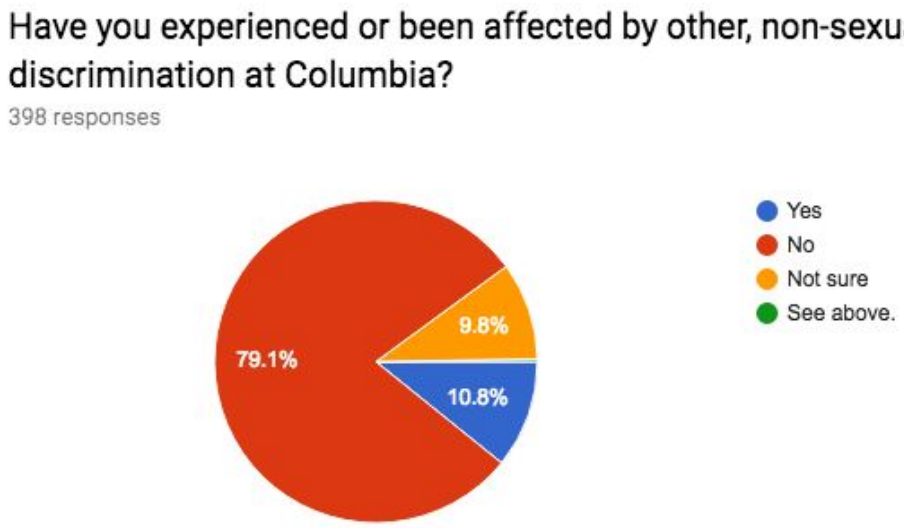


Of the 400 people who responded to this question, 43 (~11%) people reported being affected by sexual harassment/discrimination while 34 (~9%) people were unsure if they were affected. Of

the 43 people who reported being affected, 32 identified as female, 8 as male, and 3 as genderqueer, non-binary, or prefer not to say. Considering race, 32 of the 43 who reported sexual harassment self-identified as white, while 9 identified as non-white, and 1 did not identify their race. Lastly, 12 of the 43 (~28%) who reported sexual harassment also identified as LGBTQ. Five respondents left descriptive comments recounting their experiences of harassment through witnessing it or being exposed to it second-hand; two reported harassment off-campus or abroad, but within the context of Columbia-related research or persons; one person reported positive discrimination, i.e. the belief that they were treated more generously by advisors because they were male-presenting.

Have you experienced or been affected by other, non-sexual, harassment or discrimination at Columbia?

This was a multiple choice question inquiring specifically about experiences of harassment or discrimination that were not sexual in nature. Options offered were "yes," "no," "not sure," and a write-in "other" option. N=398.

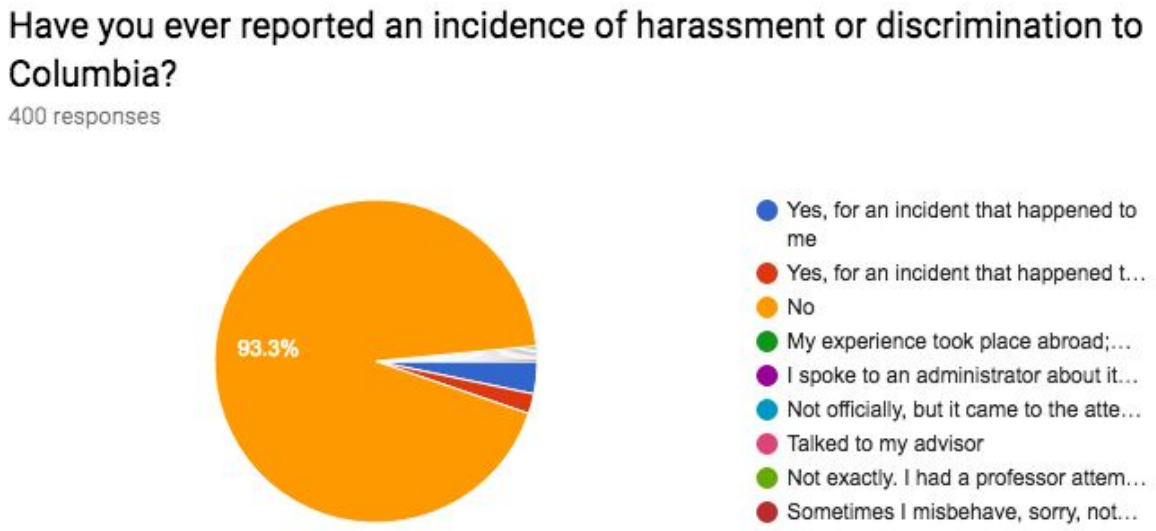


Of the 398 people who responded to this question, 43 (~11%) people reported being affected by other harassment/discrimination while 39 (~10%) people were unsure if they were affected. Of the 43 people who reported being affected, 26 identified as female, 13 as male, and 4 as

genderqueer, non-binary, or prefer not to say. Considering race, 29 of the 43 who reported non-sexual harassment self-identified as white, while 12 identified as non-white, and 2 did not identify their race. Lastly, 11 of the 43 who reported non-sexual harassment also identified as LGBTQ. 20 people reported experiencing both sexual harassment (in the last question), and non-sexual harassment (as per this question).

Have you ever reported an incidence of harassment or discrimination to Columbia?

This was a multiple choice question inquiring specifically about experiences of sexual harassment or discrimination. Options offered were "yes, for an incident that happened to me," "yes, for an incident that happened to someone else," "no," and a write-in "other" option. N=400.

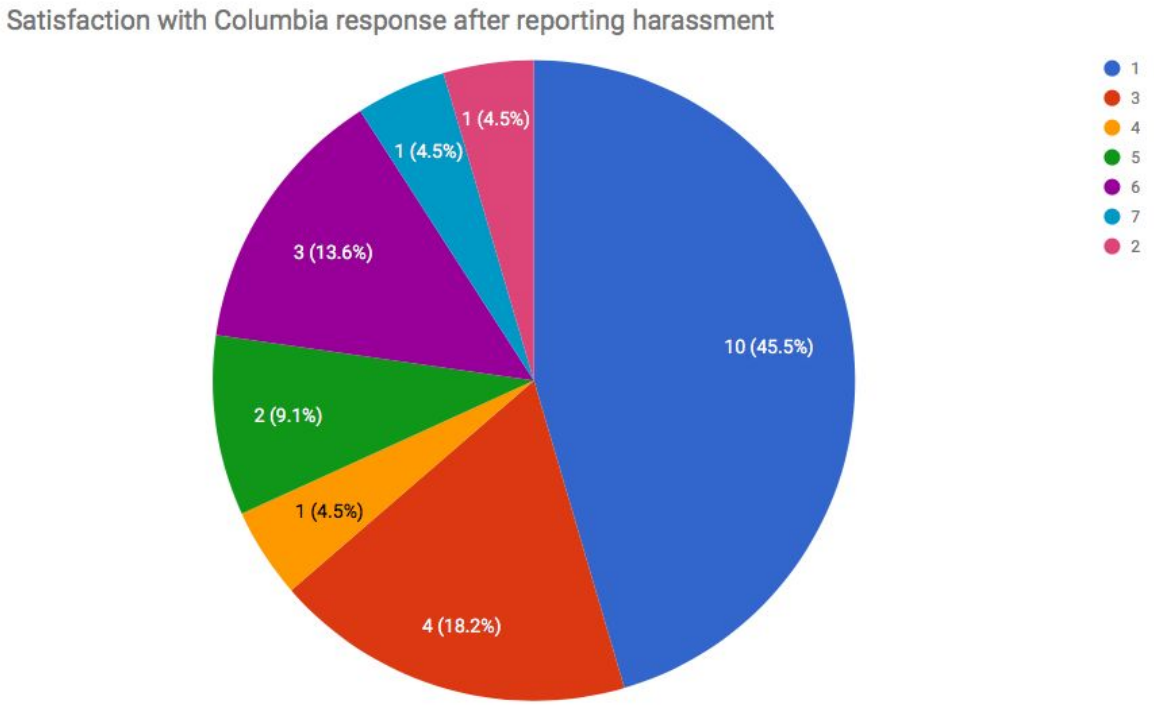


Of the 400 people who responded to this question, 13 (~3%) people indicated that they reported harassment/discrimination that affected themselves to Columbia, while 8 (2%) people indicated that they reported on behalf of someone else. Of the 13 people who reported their own incidents of harassment/discrimination to Columbia, 11 identified as female and 2 as male, and 10 identified as white and 3 identified as non-white. Of the 13, 2 identified as LGBT, 10 as not LGBT, and 1 selected 'prefer not to say'. Four students used the write-in option to report instances where they spoke about their experiences of harassment unofficially to their advisors or

their department, and encountered a lack of support; one student left a flippant remark reporting, unapologetically, that he "sometimes misbehaves."

Satisfaction with Columbia response when reporting an incident involving harassment or discrimination

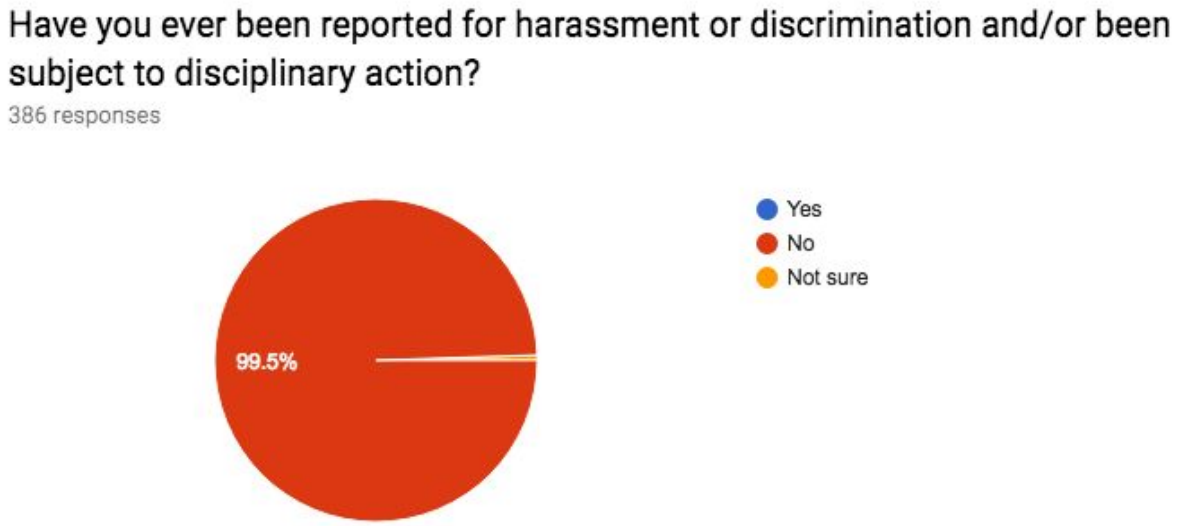
This was a scaled question that asked respondents to rate their satisfaction with Columbia's response after they had reported harassment or discrimination. Although 50 people responded to this question, most of them had responded "no" to the previous question on whether they had reported any incidents themselves; the graph below filters out such responses, and only includes responses by those who answered "yes" to the previous question or did not answer it at all. N=22.



Most respondents (45.5%) are extremely dissatisfied with Columbia's response to their report, and only 27.2% rate Columbia's response to a harassment or discrimination report with a grade of 5 or above.

Have you ever been reported for harassment or discrimination and/or been subject to disciplinary action?

This was a multiple choice question asking students whether they were themselves ever reported or disciplined for harassment or discrimination. Options offered were "yes," "no," and "not sure.". N=386.



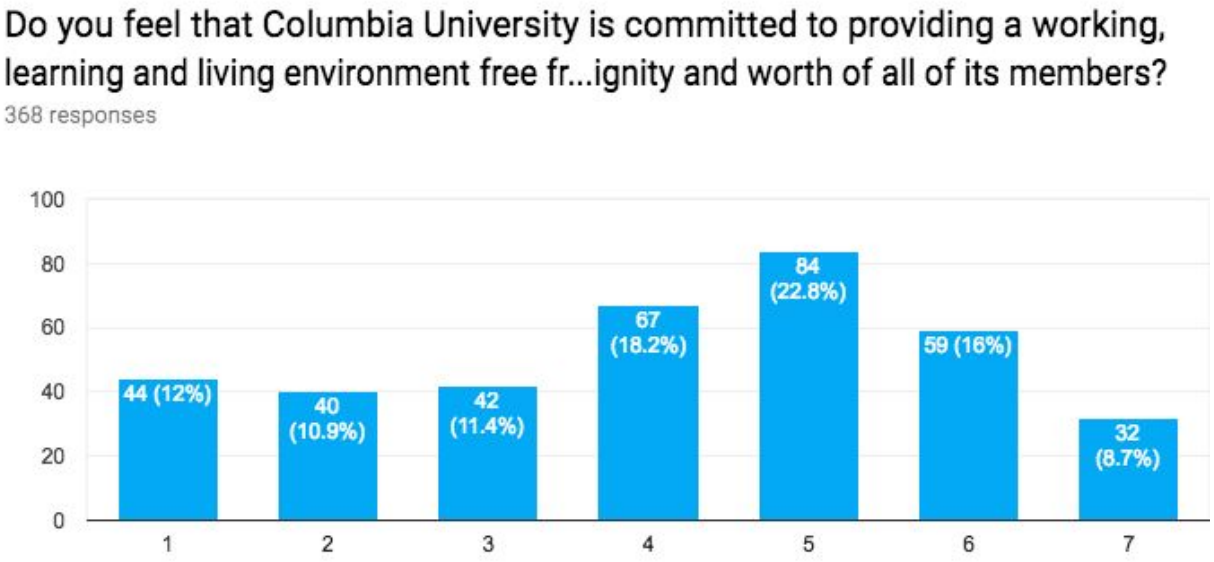
Of the 386 people who responded to this question, 384 indicated that they have never been subject to disciplinary action regarding their own discriminatory behavior, while 2 were unsure.

If you have been reported for harassment or been subject to disciplinary action, how satisfied were you with Columbia's response?

Despite the fact that nobody answered "yes" to the previous question, 20 people rated their satisfaction with Columbia's response to harassment reports from the perspective of the accused party. However, none of these responses are valid as the question referred specifically to persons who have first-hand experience of the administration's response in such situations.

Do you feel that Columbia University is committed to providing a working, learning and living environment free from discrimination and harassment and to fostering a nurturing and vibrant community founded upon the fundamental dignity and worth of all of its members?

This was a scaled question that asked respondents about the extent to which they agreed with the statement quoted in the question, on a scale of 1 ("completely disagree") to 7 ("completely agree"). N=368



Of the 368 people who responded, 126 (34%) disagreed with the statement to at least some extent, 67 (18%) felt neutral, and 175 (47%) mostly or completely agreed with the statement.

Of the 126 people who disagreed with the statement: 81 (64%) identified as female, 37 as male, and 3 identified as genderqueer/non-binary. 93 identifies as white, 26 as non-white, and 7 didn't indicate their race. 90 identified as non-LGBT, 30 as LGBT (24%), 6 identified as unsure/prefer not to say. Also, of these 126 people who agreed with the statement, 30 reported experiencing sexual harassment and 27 reported experiencing other non-sexual harassment/discrimination.

Of the 175 people who agreed with the statement: 107 (61%) identified as female, 64 as male, 3 didn't say, and 1 identified as genderqueer. 104 identifies as white, 60 as non-white, and 11 didn't indicate their race. 153 identified as non-LGBT, 20 as LGBT (11%), 1 identified as unsure, and 1 preferred not to say. Also, of these 175 people who agreed with the statement, only 7 reported experiencing sexual harassment and only 9 reported experiencing other non-sexual harassment/discrimination.

Final comments on harassment, discrimination, and/or Columbia's response

As in other sections, students were invited to make additional remarks on the topic of this survey section. 66 students used the opportunity, and the vast majority of comments were extremely critical of the administration's policy for dealing with harassment and discrimination, especially against women and LGBT persons. Several of them named specific professors accused of harassment, and decried the administration's lukewarm reaction; overall, the sentiment among these commenters is that the university is more interested in its image than the genuine well-being of its students and employees. Most critical comments referred to the higher Columbia administration, but a substantial number complained about the reluctance in the departments to enforce existing policies against their own colleagues. Some mentioned the graduate student union as a potential way to improve harassment protections at the university. One comment praised the support received from the University Ombudsman's office in a matter regarding discrimination and harassment, and a couple suggested that anti-harassment training could be improved.

Section summary and remarks

Based on the above responses, ~10% of the survey participants reported being affected by sexual harassment at Columbia, and ~10% of participants reported by affected by other, non-sexual harassment and discrimination. In total, ~17% of the survey respondents reported being affected by either type of harassment at Columbia.

In comparison to the percentage of the survey respondents (62%) who identify as women, women account for a disproportionate 74% of the respondents who reported being affected by sexual harassment at Columbia. More similar to their percentage of the survey respondents, women account for 60% of those who report being affected by other, non-sexual harassment at Columbia.

Considering race, while non-white students of all races (Black/African-American, Asian, American Indian, Pacific Islander) make up 34% of the respondents, 21% of respondents who reported being affected by sexual harassment identified as non-white. However, non-white students constitute a higher percentage, 28%, of respondents who report being affected by other, non-sexual harassment and discrimination. However, the statistics might be different looking at different subgroups.

Perhaps most surprising is that while only 17% of survey respondents identified as LGBT, LGBT students are disproportionately represented, at 28%, among those who report being affected by sexual harassment at Columbia. LGBT students also constitute 26% of those who report non-sexual harassment and discrimination.

Of the 66 people who reported experiencing either sexual or non-sexual harassment at Columbia, only 11 (~17%) indicate that they reported the incident to Columbia. Of these 11 people, 9 (~82%) identified as women, 2 (~18%) identified as non-white, and 2 (~18%) as LGBT. **So women report harassment at a percentage that is greater than their share of those who reported experiencing harassment, while non-white and LGBT people under-report their incidents compared to their percentage of those who report being affected by harassment.**

Regarding how respondents perceived Columbia's commitment to creating an environment free of harassment, 47% of respondents agreed to some degree that Columbia is committed. The majority of people who reported sexual or non-sexual harassment at Columbia did not agree that Columbia is committed enough to providing an environment free of harassment.

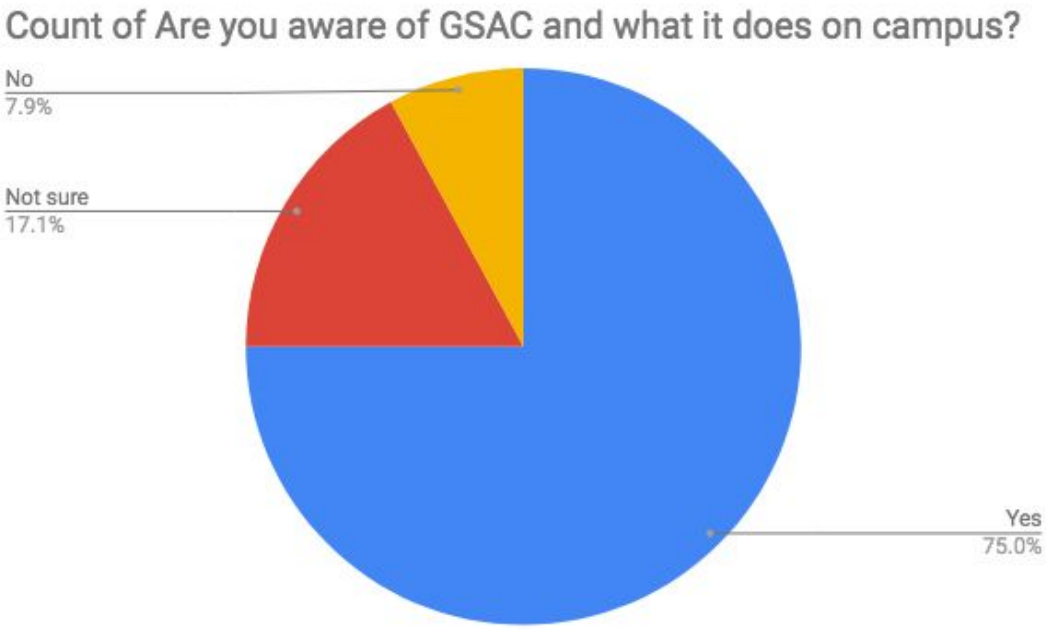
GSAC

Section overview

This section focuses on students' awareness of and satisfaction with GSAC, as well as open response questions for students to indicate areas where GSAC is doing well and areas for improvement.

Are you aware of GSAC and what it does on campus?

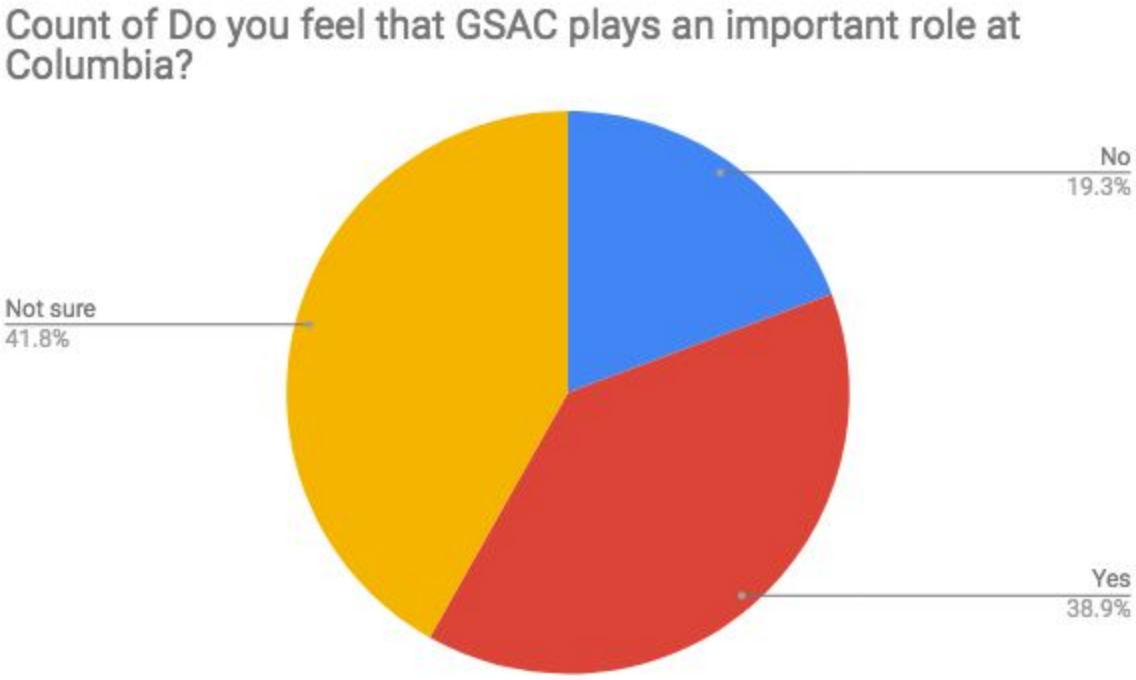
This is a multiple choice question. Responses include "Yes", "No", and "Not sure". N=405.



Of the 405 total responses, 303 (75%) of students indicated they were aware of GSAC and what it does on campus, 69 (17.1%) were not sure, and 32 (7.9%) indicated they were not aware of GSAC or what it does on campus.

Do you feel that GSAC plays an important role at Columbia?

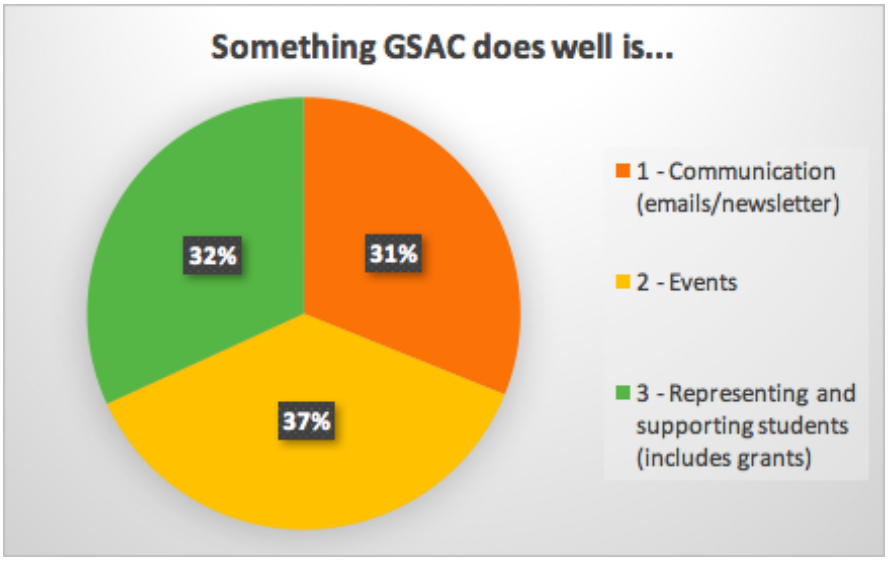
This is a multiple choice question. Responses include "Yes", "No", and "Not sure". N=405.



Of the 405 total responses, 157 (38.9%) agreed that GSAC plays an important role at Columbia, 78 (19.3%) did not feel that GSAC plays an important role, and fully 169 (41.8%) indicated they were not sure.

Something GSAC does well is…

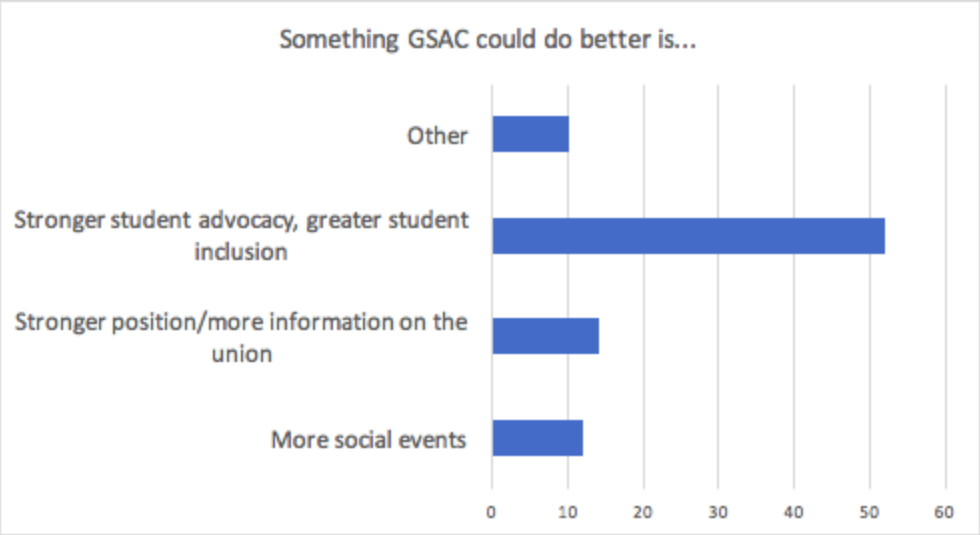
This is a write-in question. Students were not provided with any suggested responses or categories. N=123 (out of 126 write-in responses, 3 indicated "I don't know").



Of the 126 responses to this write-in question, 3 indicated some variation of "I don't know." Of the 123 remaining responses, 42 responses (31%) related to GSAC communication with students, including emails and the newsletter, 50 responses (37%) related to social and cultural events, and 43 responses (32%) related to GSAC's role in representing or supporting students, including mentions of travel and workshop grants. Fifteen responses touched on more than one category, and three responses fell outside of the three broad categories, which is why the total number of responses within each category exceeds to total of student responses. The three outlier responses touched on GSAC organization, including "meetings" (n=1).

Something GSAC could do better is…

This is a write-in question. Students were not provided with any suggested responses or categories. N=99.



Out of the 99 total responses to the write-in question, 10 indicated various versions of "not sure" or "I don't know" and one indicated GSAC was doing a great job. The majority of responses (n=52, 52.5%) were suggestions related to increasing GSAC's political power in relation to the university or administration, or working to improve inclusion among students across departments and programs. Twelve responses (12.1%) called for more social events sponsored by GSAC. Fourteen (14.1%) related to the union, suggesting GSAC take a stronger position or provide more information related to the union. Ten responses (10.1%) were unrelated to these broader categories.

Section summary and remarks

It is heartening that two-thirds (75%) of students indicate they are aware of GSAC and what it does. However, there is a relatively even split between students who indicated that what GSAC does is important (38.9%) and those who indicated they were "not sure" (41.8%). According to the write-in responses for the question "Something GSAC does well is…", social events (37% of responses) and communication through emails and newsletters (31% of responses) are the most salient GSAC activities, perhaps because the most students are exposed to them. Close to one-third of responses (32%) indicated that GSAC does a good job of supporting and/or representing students, specifically noting GSAC support through grants and communicating

student complaints and issues to the administration (one student went further, appreciating "so I don't have to").

In response to the write-in question, "Something GSAC could do better is…" the majority of response (about 52%) called for GSAC to strengthen its student support, student representation, and student inclusion. Four responses (about 4%) indicated that GSAC does not have enough "power" to make effective changes, especially when it comes to confronting administration and making changes. While this is a valid concern, given that around 2 out of 5 respondents are "not sure" if what GSAC does is important, students may not be aware of GSAC accomplishments or may not have a clear understanding of GSAC's purpose and powers. Indeed, one response suggested GSAC "explain very very simply what it does." Five responses called for greater inclusion of masters' students, though the broader theme of inclusion across departments was raised in 11 responses.

Given that 14% of responses related to the union (12 of the 14 suggested stronger support or activism related to the union), it seems that GSAC (ASGC) will want to be clear about its relationship to the union, whatever that may be.

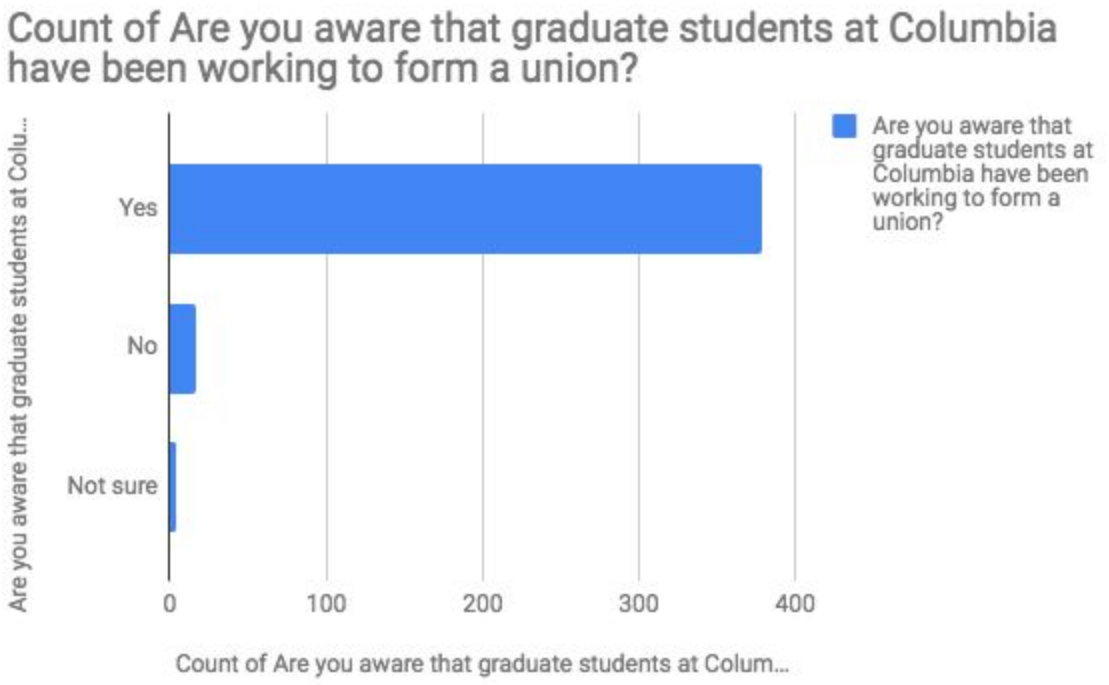
Union

Section overview

This section relates to the union, including students' perceptions of how the union will impact their own lives, as well as the response from the Columbia administration.

Are you aware that graduate students at Columbia have been working to form a union?

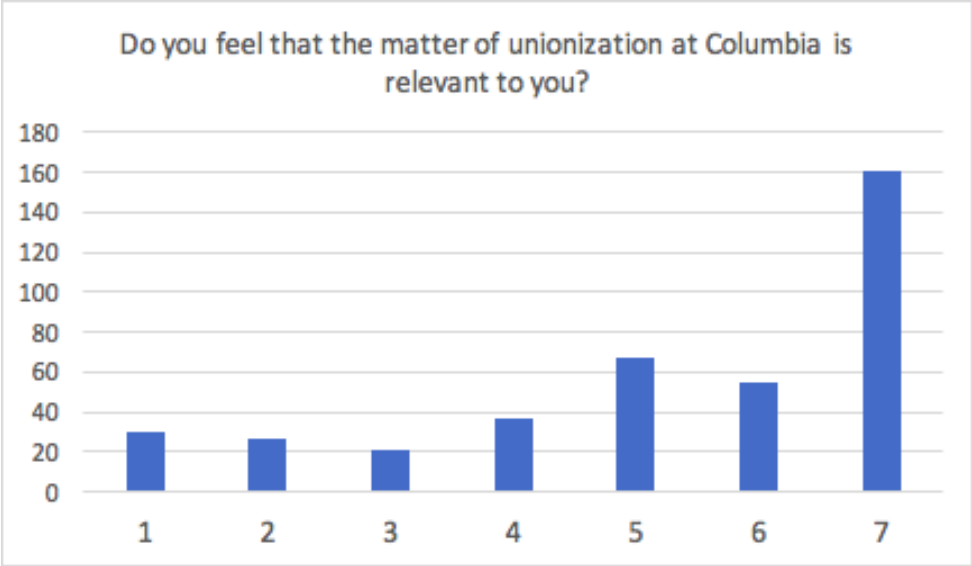
This is a multiple-choice question. Responses were limited to "Yes", "No", and "Not sure". N=401..



Of the total 401 responses, 379 (94.5%) responded "Yes" to the multiple choice question "Are you aware that graduate students at Columbia have been working to form a union?," 17 (4.2%) indicated "No," and only 4 (1%) were "not sure."

Do you feel that the matter of unionization at Columbia is relevant to you?

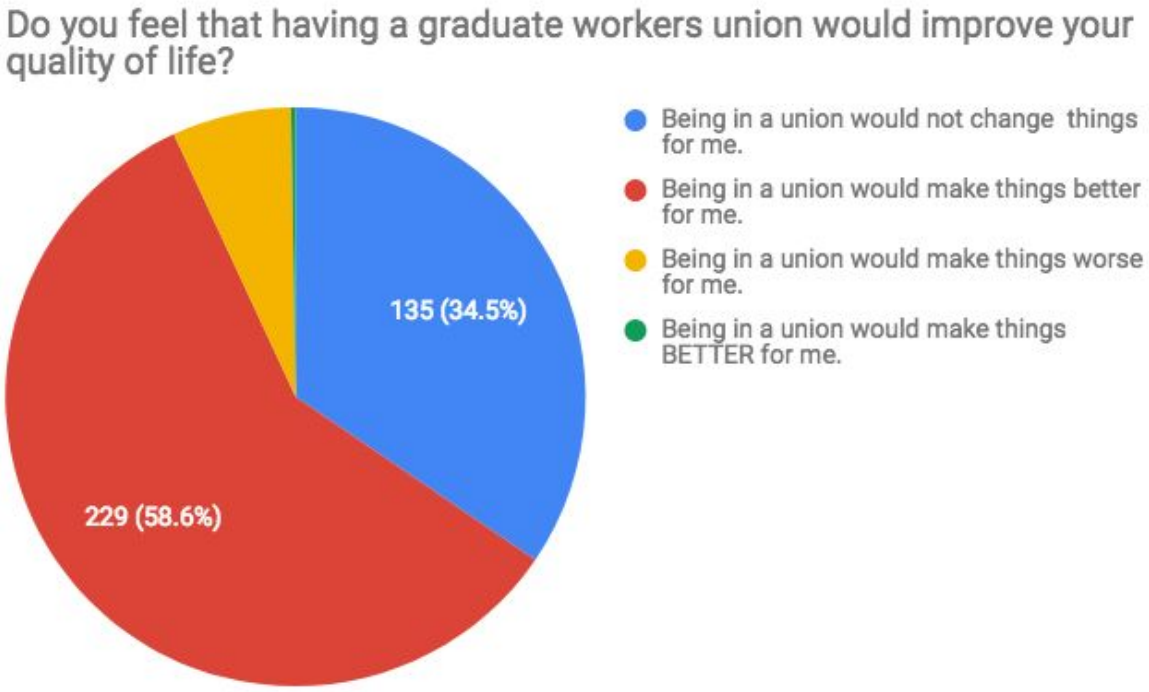
This is a rating scale question, using a likert-scale from 1 to 7. N=397.



On a scale from 1 to 7, out of a total of 397 responses, 161 (40.6%) indicated that "the matter of unionization at Columbia" is "highly relevant"; 55 (13.9%) indicated a 6; 67 (16.9%) indicated a 5; 37 (9.2%) indicated a 4; 21 (5.3%) indicated a 3; 26 (6.5%) indicated a 2; and 30 (7.5%) indicated a 1. Note that due to rounding the percentages do not add up to 100. The average is 5.2 and the median is 6.

Do you feel that having a graduate workers union would improve your quality of life?

This is a multiple choice question. Responses were limited to: "Being in a union would make things better for me"; "Being in a union would not change things for me"; "Being in a union would make things worse for me". N=392.

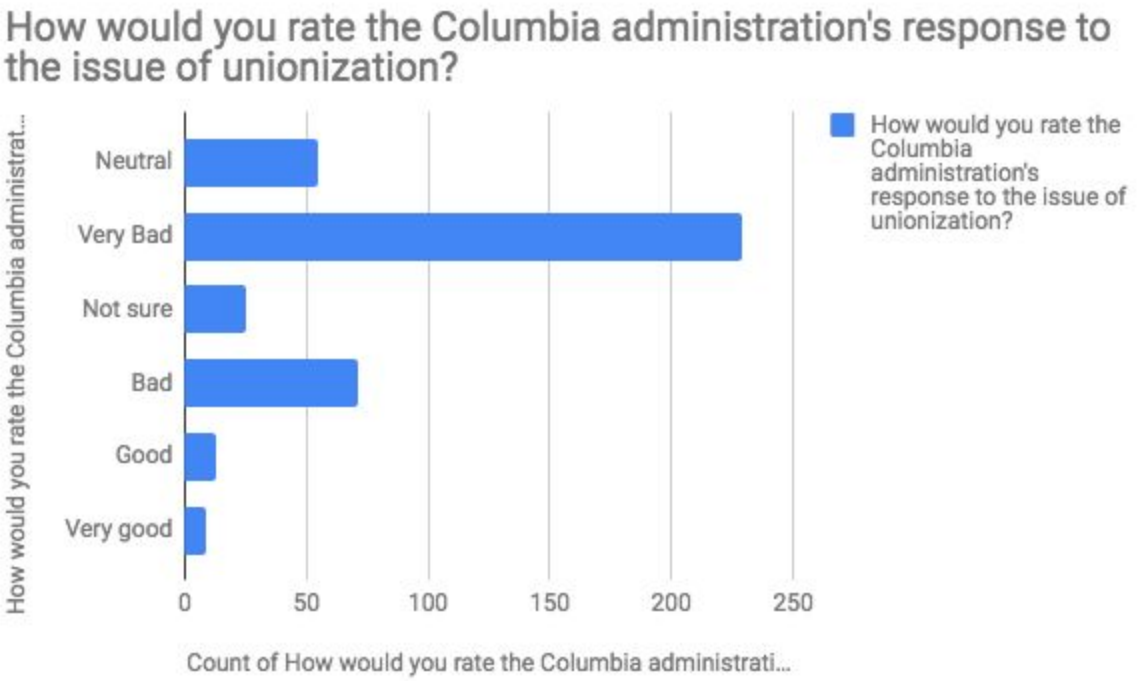


(Yellow/unlabeled): Being in a union would make things worse for me: 26 (6.6%)

Out of a total of 392 responses, 229 (58.6%) indicated that "Being in a union would make things better for me," while 136 (34.7%) indicated "Being in a union would not change things for me" and 26 (6.6%) indicated "Being in a union would make things worse for me." Note that due to an issue with the font in the responses, the fourth option indicated in the chart ("Being in a union would make things BETTER for me") has been incorporated into the standard font response category (shown in the chart as a total of 135 responses); there was only one response in the last category, indicated in the chart in green.

How would you rate the Columbia administration's response to the issue of unionization?

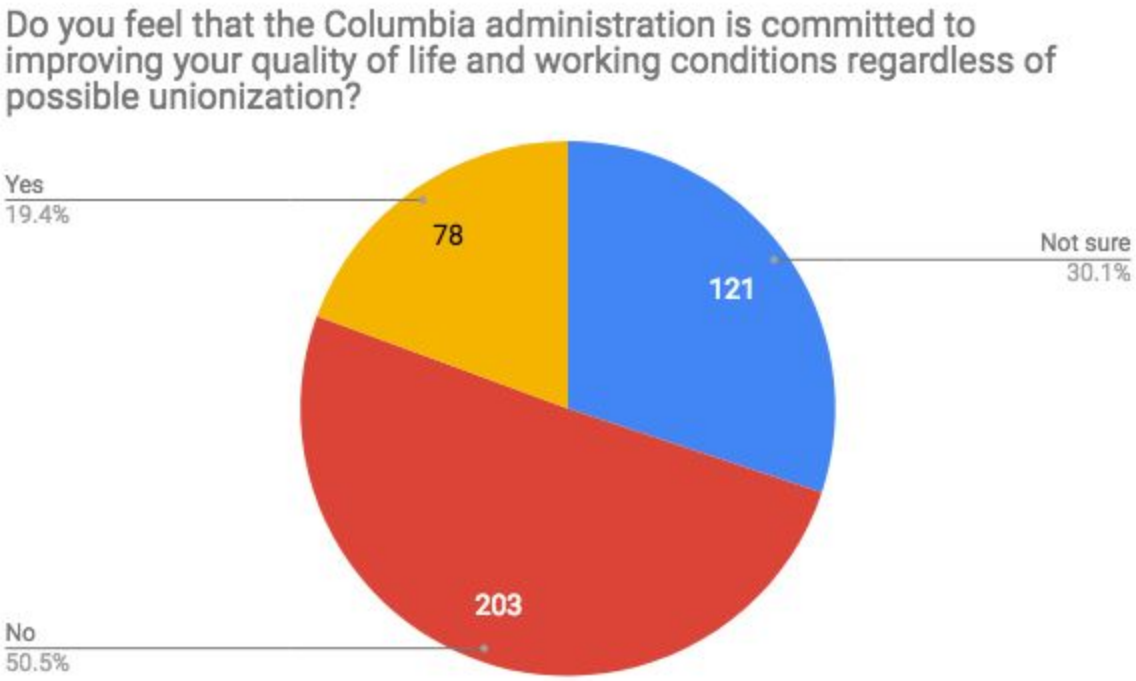
This is a rating scale question. Responses represented a range: "Very Bad"; "Bad"; "Neutral"; "Good"; "Very Good" as well as an option for "Not sure". N=403.



Of a total of 403 responses, 229 (56.8%) indicated that the Columbia administration's response to the issue of unionization was "Very Bad"; 71 (17.6%) rated the response "Bad"; 55 (13.6%) rated the response "Neutral"; 13 (3.2%) rated the response "Good"; and 9 (2.2%) rated the response "Very good". Of the total response, 6.2% (25) indicated "Not sure".

Do you feel that the Columbia administration is committed to improving your quality of life and working conditions regardless of possible unionization?

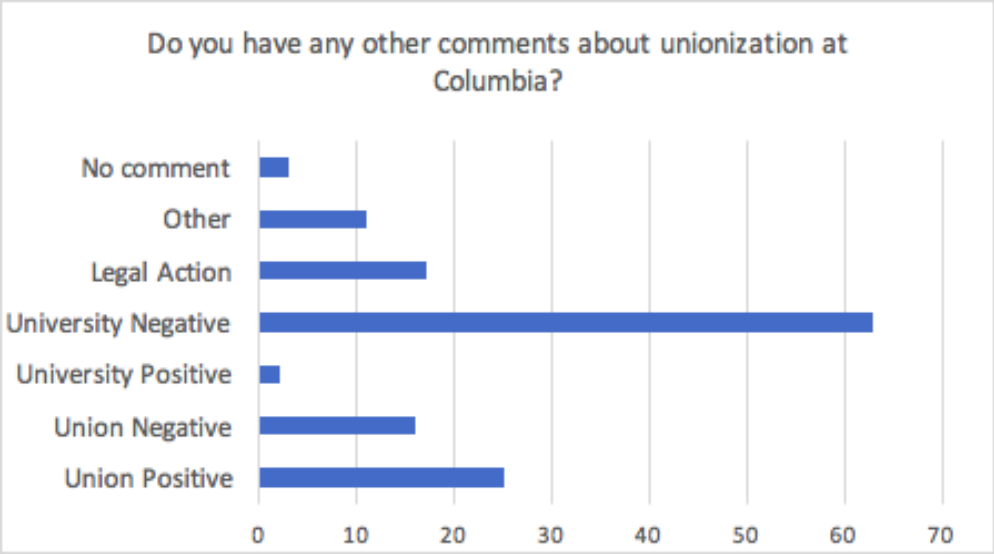
This is a multiple-choice question. Responses were limited to "Yes", "No", and "Not sure". N=403.



There were 403 total responses to the multiple choice question "Do you feel that the Columbia administration is committed to improving your quality of life and working conditions regardless of possible unionization?" 203 (50.5%) indicated "No", 78 (19.4%) indicated "Yes", and 121 (30.1%) indicated "Not sure".

Do you have any other comments about unionization at Columbia?

This is a write-in response. Students were not provided with suggested responses or categories. N=120.



There were 120 write-in responses to the open question "Do you have any other comments about unionization at Columbia?" The above chart represents 134 total comments, due to the fact that some responses contained comments related to more than one category and three responses indicated "No comment". Of the 134 total, 63 (47.0%) expressed a negative opinion about the administration; 2 (1.5%) comments expressed a positive opinion about the administration (neutral comments were not counted separately). Twenty-five comments (18.7%) expressed a positive opinion of the union; 16 comments (11.9%) expressed a negative opinion of the union. Seventeen comments (12.7%) specifically mentioned the University's legal status with regard to bargaining and the NLRB decision. Eleven comments (8.2%) did not fall into any of these broader categories, most of which expressed lack of interest or relevance, or a relatively neutral position, such as broad support for the democratic process.

Section summary and remarks

It is clear from the survey responses that unionization has elicited some strong opinions from students, 95% of whom are aware that the process is underway. It is important to note that developments in unionization have continued to evolve between when the survey questions were created and the close of the response period. There are two closely related issues reflected in the responses: students' position concerning unionization and students' perspective of the administration as related to the unionization process. Around 40% of students indicated that the

issue of a union is "highly relevant," and while 60% of students indicated "being in a union would make things better for me," close to 35% indicated that "being in a union would not change things for me." While there is a broadly positive assessment of unionization, it is not personally relevant to all students. This may make unionization seem like a deeply polarizing issue as voices from extreme ends of the spectrum may dominate, even as just under 30% of students responded with a four or lower on the seven-point scale indicating relevance of the union. This could prove helpful going forward in considering how GSAC provides information to students.

Most strikingly, about two-thirds of respondents rated the University's response to unionization as "Very Bad" or "Bad" and fully half of respondents indicated they did not believe the administration is committed to improving quality of life and working conditions regardless of unionization. This sentiment is borne out in greater detail in the additional comments, where close to half of the responses expressed a negative opinion of the administration, some quite incensed. Overall, students express disappointment, exasperation, and even disgust, concluding that the administration's response to unionization is a demonstration of "how much they value us" and relate this directly to issues that affect quality of life. The negative impact on students' perception of the administration outweighs students' positive perceptions of the union or unionization. It is clear that unionization is a integral issue in assessing and addressing quality of life.

Final Comments

In this section, the respondents were prompted to provide additional feedback regarding quality of life in their department, their school, or the University in general. All these were optional.

Something my department could do to improve my quality of life is…

A total of 187 students offered additional comments about improvements they would like to see on the departmental level. Of these, 29 are Masters students, and 159 are PhD students.

These comments are broadly descriptive in nature, and many of the points raised are department-specific, and will be addressed with the department in question whenever appropriate. These specific concerns regard the amount or structure of the course load; temperature in specific buildings; calls for more or better workspaces; and other improvements to department resources or logistics.

What follows is a summary of the general trends that emerge across the comments, and may provide useful feedback to all graduate departments.

Across the board, these respondents felt that communication was lacking within the departments in some way, especially as it concerns a timely and clear delivery of information regarding degree requirements, registration, and other administrative issues. Transparency seems to be a pertinent matter: in the humanities especially there seems to be a lack of clarity regarding the allocation of TA-ships, as well as the expectations, responsibilities, and hours required by these positions.

A significant number of students called for more professional training: academic as well as oriented towards jobs outside the academia. Others mentioned the difficulty of getting faculty to engage with them or care about their work: some suggested that this might be remedied by hiring more permanent faculty, but some simply expressed frustration with the perceived lack of engagement, interest, and respect for their work.

Overwhelmingly, both Masters and PhD students suggested that departments should improve communication between faculty and graduate students so as to improve a sense of community within the department; Masters students in particular mention feeling excluded from the departmental community, and express feelings of alienation, isolation, and confusion: they ask for clearer communication, as well as more opportunity to connect to both faculty and the doctoral student body. Students' suggestions included more department events like happy hours and similar gatherings, more platforms for voicing grievances to faculty, and several insisted on respecting the existing policies that protect against harassment and discrimination.

In this section as elsewhere, several respondents called for recognition or support of the graduate student union.

Finally, a significant number of comments, coming especially from the Masters students as well as the PhDs in the humanities, called for more funding, as well as for better communication regarding the sources of funding currently available for the academic year, summer, and travel. The call for better communication regarding funding sources ties into the overarching trend: while the numbers in our qualitative data show that most graduate students are not unhappy with their advisors, there is definitely room for improvement when it comes to creating meaningful and intellectually stimulating academic communities and connections within the departments.

Something my school/dean could do to improve my QoL

A total of 148 students offered additional comments about improvements they would like to see on the school level. These comments are broadly descriptive in nature, and many of the points raised are school-specific, and will be addressed with the school in question whenever appropriate. What follows is a summary of the general trends that emerge across the comments, and may provide useful feedback to all graduate departments.

Across all schools and degree types, there is a strong call for more financial support, both in terms of the amount of compensation for each individual year, and for the extension of funding through six years of the PhD degree. More summer funding and more support options for students beyond year six is also called for. The concerns regarding funding are often tied to calls for improvement of housing: specifically, negotiating a lower price of housing with the UAH, or increasing stipends and fellowships to make housing more affordable. A somewhat smaller number of remarks mentions health insurance, notably calling for the addition of dental insurance, and the expansion of coverage for dependents. One commenter calls for an increase in childcare subsidy. The financial difficulties expressed by the students are aggravated by payroll issues: late fees, a lack of comprehensible account statements, and unexplained charges have all been repeatedly mentioned. As elsewhere, transparency and better communication about payment schedules, sources of funding, and amounts, is called for.

Some students used this section to call for more control over their departments, highlighting the fact that it is hard to ensure faculty accountability and compliance with GSAS

policy without a clear mechanism that would address any negligence or non-compliance. This matter regards a wide variety of department issues: from reading student work, to appropriately reacting to and managing harassment and discrimination violations. It seems that at least some of the students would welcome more administrative control over their department faculty in a way that would ensure the timely and orderly completion of faculty responsibilities, and enhance intradepartmental organization. Career training -- academic and non-academic alike -- was once again brought up by students across various departments.

As in the comment section that pertained to departments, students expressed a desire for improved mental health support, improved training for handling harassment and discrimination, more networking events. Some also called for better training in time-management and other practicalities of working towards the degree, as well as resources for ensuring a better work-life balance.

Finally, a substantial number of respondents demand that their school's administration support the graduate student union. The demand to bargain with the union was repeated even more forcefully in the following comment section, where University matters are addressed.

Something Columbia could do to improve my quality of life is…

A total of 168 students offered additional comments about improvements that they would like to see on the University level. The majority of respondents used this section to express their anger about the administration's refusal to bargain with the graduate student union; in general, these comments express anger and distrust for the current university administration, and frequently allude to the belief demonstrated in the quantitative section of the survey that the administration will not prioritize graduate student quality of life without collective bargaining.

The rest of the comments of the section mostly reiterated the sentiments expressed in the comment section pertaining to specific schools and deans: they called for improved financial support, more accessible housing, better health insurance options, dental insurance, resolving existing payroll issue, and transparency in communicating requirements, funding options, and faculty responsibilities. Once again, Masters students express the most frustration about the availability and the extent of funding options.

A small number of comments called for improvements to the existing gym facilities, or enhanced membership funding (i.e. funding for summer membership, or discounted class passes).

Final remarks

Of the 59 students who used the opportunity to deliver final remarks on quality of life at Columbia, 12 expressed positive sentiments about the quality of life at Columbia. Most, however, remained antagonistic towards the institution, expressing hostile distrust of the administration's commitment to ensuring good quality of life for graduate students. Many express disillusionment, animosity, and frustration with the administration; once again, the matter of unionization is heavily emphasized, as are the matters of adequate mental health care and support, harassment, and discrimination.

Conclusion and suggestions

The following section contains a general summary of pertinent insights garnered from the survey report above, accompanied with suggestions for administrative action, or advocacy issues for graduate student councils in the coming years.

Overall, the 2017-2018 Quality of Life survey has improved compared to the one conducted in the year prior, both in terms of design and in the number of respondents (there has been an increase of about 10% compared to last year). While this is promising, 405 responses still comprise a relatively small proportion of the student body. Hopefully, this can be solved through more thorough outreach in the coming years. However, the sample is mostly representative of the graduate student population in terms of proportional representation of different demographic and academic categories.

Future outreach efforts are crucial, however, when it comes to Masters students, who are not only underrepresented in the survey population (only 16.8% of respondents), but seem to be especially vulnerable in terms of financial stability, housing, and overall quality of life at the university. Looking towards crafting an platform of advocacy policies at ASGC, an increased representation of Masters students in both student government and surveys such as this one is a top priority. Demographically, they are very distinct from the doctoral students: the vast majority of them are in their early twenties, they are less likely to be married or cohabiting with a partner, more likely to work a job unrelated to their degree both on and off campus, less well-funded by the university and more likely to take out loans, have less access to university housing, and express a greater sense of financial precarity. The dissatisfaction with communication regarding policies and expectations within the university, pervasive among the survey population as a whole and across different facets of university life, is especially precarious for Masters students, who only spend 1-3 years on campus, and for whom miscommunication and unclarity can have

severe consequences. GSAC has been working to get more Masters students involved with the graduate student government, and is hopeful about the success of its initiatives in that respect.

Doctoral students, on the other hand, are much more involved in graduate student government as well as other aspects of university life - not in the least due to the greater number of years they spend working and studying at Columbia. The duration of study (usually 6 or 7 years) makes for a slightly older demographic: most doctoral students are in their late twenties or early thirties, and they are more likely to share a dwelling with a partner or start a family during their studies. The extent and affordability of health insurance, both for the students themselves and their dependents, becomes a matter of greater importance; and while PhD students have better access to university funding, it is largely insufficient to support a family, or invest in a stable financial future.

On the whole, graduate students are happy with their academic life and their relationship with their advisers, although there is room for improvement. Notably, over a half of respondents are unaware or uncertain of GSAS mentor-advisee expectations, and a substantial number of comments in the final section of the survey indicates that the lack - or at least the perceived lack - of accountability mechanisms for faculty's non-compliance with mentoring guidelines can cause significant difficulties. GSAC therefore proposes a wider and more regular dissemination of GSAS policies to both faculty and students, as well as instituting a mechanism of support for those students whose advisers or mentors might not fulfil their obligations. One notable insight regarding adviser-advisee relationship was the fact that the level of satisfaction appears to be directly correlated to the frequency of meetings: open and welcoming communication, as many aspects of the survey have shown, is of quintessential to graduate student well-being. On the departmental and school level, Masters students are once again at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in doctoral programs, as they often feel left out from the departmental community; across the board, there is a strong call for ensuring that all departments are welcoming and supportive intellectual communities that provide resources for the graduate students' overall well-being. Alongside greater faculty involvement, ensuring well-maintained

and adequately sized workspaces is an essential part of improving quality of life during academic work. Currently, there are many complaints regarding a dire lack of suitable workspaces for graduate students, with those available being overcrowded, cramped and ill-kempt, or, as in the case of the Graduate Student Lounge, better suited for socializing in large groups than for doing quiet work and research. Among all Columbia resources geared towards academic or professional development, the Center for Career Education is vastly underused; GSAC is aware that the CCE has been working hard over the past year to organize more events and workshops relevant to graduate students of all disciplines, and intends to continue to encourage its constituents to utilize them more often. It may be advisable for GSAS to reach out to the departments and encourage a closer relationship with CCE as part of improving students' professional development.

One of the most frequent student complaints is bad communication involving the distribution of ill-timed, misleading, or incorrect information regarding academic or administrative matters; this seems to be especially problematic when students report being harmed by the discrepancies between school and departmental policies, or several separate administrative offices at Columbia. It is GSAC's strong position that all rules that govern a graduate student's academic and administrative standing should be consolidated unambiguously across all relevant offices; that in all cases where discrepancies or ambiguities seem to occur there ought to be a clear path towards their swift resolution; and that there should be an accessible and transparent way for a student to report administrative irregularities, ensuring accountability if an investigation finds an administrator or a faculty member responsible of wrongful action or neglect. In Fall 2017, the GSAC Quality of Life committee has made detailed annotations of existing policies as published on the GSAS website, as part of an initiative to create a definitive policy handbook. These annotations were forwarded to the Dean's Office, which has made a commitment to correct, clarify, expand, and streamline the presentation of existing policy in order to make it more accessible and intuitively intelligible to all its users. ASGC intends to follow up on this project in the future, and extends the recommendation to all partnering councils to initiate similar improvements with their respective schools.

Given the high rate of satisfaction with department life and adviser relationships, unpleasant experiences, neglect, and harassment on behalf of the faculty are relatively rare; when they happen, however, they have an extremely adverse effect on the quality of life of those experiencing them as well as their friends and community. Moreover, while departmental and academic life is overall satisfactory for most, as many as 17% of graduate students have experienced some form of harassment or discrimination during their stay at Columbia, with women and LGBT-identifying students being more vulnerable than others. For that reason, the numerous reports of slow or inadequate response on the part of administration or faculty in instances of reported harassment is cause for grave concern and needs to be urgently addressed. Notably, non-white and LGBT students who experience harassment are less likely to report it, indicating a possible lack of information regarding avenues of recourse for non-sexual types of harassment and discrimination. In addition to that, a number of students recount being discouraged from reporting incidents by faculty, or being met with a hostile atmosphere at the department following a filed report - a practice that once again raises the question of the extent to which students feel faculty can be held accountable for any type or degree of transgression.

Columbia offices tasked with supporting students facing various kinds of challenges can likewise be improved. Most significantly, there is a strong demand for expanding health insurance to include dental and visual benefits, making health and counseling services more available by extending their hours of operation, and creating an easier way of scheduling non-urgent appointments, especially for issues like routine check-ups, chronic condition follow-ups, and referral requests to outside specialists. Notably, neither of these two services are seen as accommodating of graduate students - especially doctoral students who are on average older than both masters students and undergraduates, and come in experiencing different types of health issues. The Office of Disability Services is likewise perceived as being unhelpful in addressing the concerns and accommodation needs specific to graduate students, in addition to often delaying or being unable to provide adequate resources overall. While it is heartening to know that most students with disabilities found their departments overwhelmingly supportive, it

is essential that the ODS improves its services as well. Lastly, the bad state of Columbia's fitness facilities - another important facet of students' physical health - has been one of the most common causes of complaint.

Leaves of absence and parental accommodations are relatively rare on the whole, and students who made use of them are not well-represented in the overall survey sample; conclusions regarding these matters are therefore only tentative. However, with that caveat, students report not making use of leaves and accommodations, as the former often threaten financial stability, housing, or visa eligibility; and the latter is applied inconsistently (for example, contrary to stated GSAS policy, some students report that they would not be allowed extra time for the completion of degree requirements - a confusion that might be explained by the fact that timely progress to degree is measured in 14-week semesters, whereas the parental accommodation can be taken to a maximum of 12 weeks).

Financial support, is widely reported as lacking and anxiety-inducing, especially in relation to housing prices. The type and extent of financial issues are different between masters and doctoral students: the former taking out more loans and having less access to funding, but only spend a relatively short amount of time at the university and are overall younger when they graduate; the latter do mostly receive funding from the university, but have to rely on those relatively small funds for a longer period of time and at a later stage of their lives. The graduate student stipends are widely judged to be insufficient, especially with regard to high costs of living in New York City. The cost of housing, even in university housing where 63% of doctoral students reside, is a large source of financial anxiety. Finance-related comments across all sections of the survey call for either increased stipends, or reduced or subsidized housing prices - and some mention both, as viable alternatives to one another. Lastly, the small amount of funding allocated for the summer is another cause for concern; international students, who often do not have the right to work in the United States outside of the University, might be particularly burdened by the dearth of summer funding.

Support for unionization within the graduate student body is by no means unanimous. GSAC remains committed to its position of neutrality in order to retain its ability to fairly and openly represent the interests of all its constituents; the newly formed ASGC and other student councils will continue to maintain this position unless its representatives vote otherwise. Having said that, the outcomes of the present survey show that the student body favors unionization with a strong majority, and that the continued denial of bargaining with union representatives generates strong feelings of frustration, distrust, and animosity among the students; confidence in the administration's commitment to improving the quality of life of the graduate student body is severely lacking. For example, respondents with favorable views about unionization were more likely to express hostility or distrust of the administration, than articulate support for the union; although only 58.8% were confident in the belief that unionization would improve their quality of life, 74.4% rated the administration's response to unionization as either "bad" or "very bad," and fewer than 20% felt like the administration was committed to improving their quality of life regardless of unionization.

The source of this disaffection might be garnered from the insights into finances, housing, healthcare, leave policies, childcare, and harassment provided by the present survey. Combined, they all suggest that any serious attempt at the improvement of graduate student quality of life must be based on concrete solutions - not small perks and symbolic gestures. Meanwhile, during the time of this survey's running, the Office of the Provost issued an email outlining enhancements for the benefit of PhD students that would come in effect as of Fall 2018. Only one of them addressed the matter of high cost of living that persists even in university-owned housing: one highlighted as highly problematic by our survey participants. As many as 85% of PhD students reported spending 30% or more of their income on rent, and of that number, 35% spend more than 50% on rent; meanwhile, the United States Bureau of Census considers a household to be "burdened" if it spends more than 30% of its income on housing.[1] Seeing as prices of university housing continue to rise along with inflation, the 3% yearly stipend increase cannot be counted as a measure directed to alleviating costs of living; and while the

[1] https://www.census.gov/housing/census/publications/who-can-afford.pdf

Provost did commit to cover the internet utility charge for all PhD students in university-owned housing, this reduces the cost of living by a mere $29 monthly, or $348 yearly. These measures hardly address the level of concern expressed by the students, and highlighting such measures in the present circumstances raises concerns about the administration's awareness about the extent of financial hardship faced by its students.

When it comes to assessing the effectiveness and the successes of GSAC, students expressed a strong desire for the council's more vigorous advocacy on behalf of its constituents. Following through on that feedback, ASGC intends to use the insights garnered from the present survey to create a clear advocacy platform for the years to come and, with that in mind, hopes to continue its productive collaboration with the Dean's Office and other administrative facilities across Columbia.

Milica Iličić
GSAC Quality of Life Committee Chair
PhD Student, Slavic Languages and Comparative Literature