

Factors influencing university decisions

Completed in Spring, the 2019 *First-Year Student Survey* focused on undergraduate university students who started at the University of Regina during the 2018 – 2019 academic year. The survey was distributed to over 53,000 students at 46 universities across Canada. In total, 18,092 first-year university students completed the survey, including 444 from the University of Regina.

This report focuses on the University of Regina’s first-year students, comparing them to students nationally and to students attending institutions comparable to the University of Regina (see final page for a listing). Where possible, this report also compares results with the 2016, 2013, and 2010 CUSC surveys of first-year students. Unless stated otherwise, all differences reported are not statistically significant.

This second report in a series of six examines students' motivations and factors influencing their decision to attend university, their application behaviour and their main reasons for selecting their particular university.

Most important reasons for attending university

First-year students were asked to rate the importance of fifteen different reasons to attend university. Results are shown in the following table:

Motivation for attending university (% important or very important)	National (n=18,092)	Comparable universities (n=6,712)	University of Regina	
			2019 (n=444)	2016 (n=657)
I am more likely to get a job with a degree	90%	91%	90%	93%
To get a more fulfilling job than I probably would if I didn't go	89%	89%	87%	91%
To prepare for a specific job or career	88%	88%	91%	92%
Learning new things is exciting	79%	80%	72%	74%
To get a broad education	76%	76%	71%	72%
To apply what I will learn to make a positive difference in society or my community	76%	75%	75%	78%
To satisfy my intellectual curiosity	73%	74%	68%	72%
To earn more money than if I didn't go	72%	72%	71%	72%
To meet new people	60%	64%	49%	45%
The satisfaction of doing challenging academic work	57%	56%	50%	46%
To meet my family's expectations	56%	59%	58%	56%
To explore whether university is right for me	51%	52%	52%	43%
Most of my friends are going	20%	22%	23%	19%
I didn't have anything better to do	14%	15%	14%	9%
The chance to participate in varsity athletics	11%	12%	13%	13%

After ranking each motivator individually, students were asked to select the most important reason for why they decided to attend university. Not surprising, given the information in the previous table, *preparing for a specific job or career* was the most important reason for students nationally (30%), at comparable universities (27%), and also at the University of Regina (33%). Although the percentage decreased from 2016 to 2019, over the years, *preparing for a specific job or career* has been the most important reason for University of Regina students to attend university, as shown in the table below:

Most important reason for attending university	National (n=18,092)	Comparable universities (n=6,712)	University of Regina			
			2019 (n=444)	2016 (n=657)	2013 (n=668)	2010 (n=612)
To prepare for a specific job or career	30%	27%	33%	54%	50%	53%

Application Behaviour

Nationally, 75% of students applied to a university other than the one they are currently attending. On average, they applied to about two other universities. Although only about 4 in 10 of first-year students at the University of Regina said they applied to more than one university, the proportion has been increasing over the years, from 19% in 2004 to 39% in 2019.

Although many students applied elsewhere, 86% of University of Regina first-year students said they are attending their first choice, compared to 81% nationally and 78% at comparable universities. The table below shows the results:

Application behaviour	National (n=18,092)	Comparable universities (n=6,712)	University of Regina			
			2019 (n=444)	2016 (n=657)	2013 (n=668)	2010 (n=612)
Applied to other universities	75%	87%	39%	45%	32%	24%
Currently attending first choice	81%	78%	86%	85%	82%	88%

Choosing a university

First-year students rated 18 aspects concerning their importance in selecting their university. When the aspects were ranked by the proportion of who answered important or very important, students across Canada were most likely to say that their university *has the program they wanted to take* (88%) followed by their *university's academic reputation* (69%) and *the city/town it's in* (60%). University of Regina students were more likely to say that their university *has the program they wanted to take* (80%) followed by *I wanted to live close to home* (64%) and *the city/town it's in* (61%). All results are shown on the next table:

Importance for selecting their university (% important or very important)	National (n=18,092)	Comparable universities (n=6,712)	University of Regina	
			2019 (n=444)	2016 (n=657)
It has the program I want to take	88%	89%	80%	79%
The academic reputation of the university	69%	71%	47%	52%
The city/town it's in	60%	53%	61%	62%
The size of the university suits me	52%	51%	44%	53%
Cost of tuition and fees	52%	48%	43%	42%
It offered a scholarship	51%	54%	49%	55%
The program I want has a co-op, practicum, or other work experience	51%	62%	43%	52%
Availability of public transportation	50%	49%	31%	27%
It has a good reputation for campus life	49%	48%	36%	37%
I wanted to live close to home	45%	42%	64%	67%
It offered other financial assistance	38%	39%	30%	37%
The program I want offers study/work experience abroad	38%	41%	30%	32%
It offered a place in residence	31%	35%	25%	19%
I wanted to live away from home	28%	32%	17%	14%
Cost of university residence	22%	23%	22%	17%
It's where my family wanted me to go	20%	21%	29%	26%
It's where my friends are going	14%	13%	21%	22%
The chance to participate in varsity athletics	10%	10%	11%	10%

Students were presented with the same list of 18 aspects and asked to select the reason that was most important for selecting their university. On the national level, students said that *their university has the program they wanted to take* (29%), but also *wanting to live close to home* (12%) and *their program had a work experience program* (13%) were important. For University of Regina students the most important reason in choosing the university was because they *wanted to live close to home* (27%). This proportion is more than double that reported by students nationally (12%) and at comparable universities (10%). The second most important reason for University of Regina students was because *it has the program I want to take* (24%), compared to students nationally (29%) and at comparable universities (29%). The following table shows the results:

Most important reason for selecting university	National (n=18,092)	Comparable universities (n=6,712)	University of Regina			
			2019 (n=444)	2016 (n=657)	2013 (n=668)	2010 (n=612)
It has the program I want to take *	29%	29%	24%	26%	27%	26%
The program I want has a co-op, practicum, or other work experience	13%	20%	7%	7%	3%	4%
I wanted to live close to home	12%	10%	27%	36%	36%	36%

* In 2010 and 2013 the option was: *Specific career related program*

Important sources of information

First-year students rated the importance of 19 sources of information they may have used when making a decision about whether or not to attend their university. Across Canada, the top three sources of information include *their university's website* (51%), *visits to campus for an open house* (46%), and *parents* (45%). For University of Regina students the most important source of information was their *parents* (53%), compared to nationally (45%) and at comparable universities (45%). The table below shows all sources of information for U of R students compared to students across Canada and at comparable universities:

Importance of sources of information (% important or very important)	National (n=18,092)	Comparable universities (n=6,712)	University of Regina	
			2019 (n=444)	2016 (n=657)
The university's website	51%	50%	43%	40%
Visit to campus for an open house	46%	47%	43%	47%
Parents	45%	45%	53%	53%
Students attending the university	42%	44%	39%	41%
Printed university brochure, pamphlet, or view book	37%	38%	27%	29%
Other visit to campus	35%	37%	29%	33%
High school/CEGEP counsellors or teachers	33%	32%	35%	43%
Contact with admissions staff on campus	32%	30%	32%	40%
Friends	32%	31%	40%	35%
Visit by a university representative to your high school or CEGEP	29%	28%	26%	27%
Contact with professors	25%	24%	29%	25%
Macleans university rankings	24%	28%	9%	10%
QS World University Rankings	19%	20%	11%	7%
The university's other social media sites	18%	19%	14%	9%
The Times Higher Education World University Rankings	18%	18%	9%	8%
Academic Ranking of World Universities	17%	19%	11%	7%
Globe and Mail Canadian University Report	14%	15%	10%	8%
The university's Facebook site	12%	13%	10%	8%
Contact with university athletic coaches	8%	7%	8%	11%

About CUSC

The 2019 CUSC survey is the 25th cooperative study undertaken by the *Canadian University Survey Consortium / Consortium canadien de recherche sur les étudiants universitaires* (CUSC/CCREU) and the 20th study in which the University of Regina has participated. Prior to 2014, the surveys ran in a three-year cycle, targeting first year, graduating, and all students in separate years. In 2014, the All Students survey was changed to a survey of middle-year students (i.e., students in the second or third year of a four-year program, second year of a three-year program, or second to fourth year of a five-year program).

This study focuses on first-year students and compares results to previous surveys conducted in 2016, 2013, and 2010. The survey involved 46 participating universities and over 18,000 students from across Canada, yielding an overall response rate of 34.1%. Participating students from the University of Regina numbered 444, which represents a 29.6% rate of response.

University comparisons

For comparison purposes, CUSC categorizes the participating universities into three groups:

- ▶ Group 1 consists of universities that offer primarily undergraduate studies and have smaller student populations.
- ▶ Group 2 consists of universities that offer both undergraduate and graduate studies and tend to be of medium size in terms of student population.
- ▶ Group 3 consists of universities that offer both undergraduate and graduate degrees, with most having professional schools as well. These tend to be the largest institutions in terms of student population.

The University of Regina is included in Group 2. In 2019, twelve Group 2 universities participated in the survey. Along with the University of Regina, they included Brock, Carleton, Lakehead, Ryerson, Simon Fraser, Thompson Rivers, Moncton, New Brunswick (Fredericton), Victoria, Waterloo and Wilfred Laurier. Because different universities participate each year, differences in results among similar surveys from earlier years may result from the inclusion of different universities rather than changes over time.

Statistically significant differences

In order to term an association as statistically significant, the Pearson's chi-square must have probability of a type 1 error of less than .001 and either the Phi coefficient or Cramer's V must have a value of .150 or greater.

Non-response

Non-responses have not been included in the analysis. Therefore, throughout this report, unless explicitly stated as a subpopulation, overall results do not include those who did not respond to a particular question. However, for questions where "don't know" is a valid response, overall results include those who selected "don't know" to a particular question.

Note: Tables in this report might not add up to one hundred percent due to rounding errors and/or because some categories (such as "Other") are not reflected in the table.

For more information about CUSC/CCREU, visit the website at www.cusc-ccreu.ca.