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# A Descriptive Survey Study of International Students' Experiences at a Canadian University: Challenges, Supports, and Suggested Improvements Étude descriptive par sondage sur les expériences des étudiants internationaux dans une université canadienne : défis, soutiens et améliorations suggérées

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### Résumé de l'article

Cette étude descriptive par sondage porte sur les expériences des étudiants étrangers – défis, soutiens personnels et institutionnels – au cours de leurs études dans une université canadienne, ainsi que sur leurs suggestions quant aux soutiens supplémentaires qui, selon eux, pourraient se montrer utiles. Une enquête en ligne ( $n = 712$ ) a permis d'examiner les difficultés rencontrées par les étudiants étrangers dans un certain nombre de domaines : langue, finances, études, environnement et culture, aspects personnels et sociaux, et discrimination. La majorité des étudiants étrangers ont déclaré avoir eu peu de difficultés linguistiques et scolaires, mais beaucoup ont déclaré avoir rencontré des difficultés financières et personnelles. La COVID-19 a présenté des défis supplémentaires pour la plupart des étudiants internationaux. Les diverses stratégies d'adaptation (p. ex., rester en contact avec leur famille) et de soutiens institutionnels (p. ex., centre pour étudiants étrangers) utilisées par les étudiants ont également été examinées. Des analyses bivariées ont révélé que les étudiants qui avaient moins de 30 ans, ou qui résidaient au Canada depuis plus de deux ans ou étaient étudiants de premier cycle étaient plus susceptibles de faire état de diverses difficultés comparés aux étudiants de plus de 30 ans, qui étaient au pays depuis 2 ans ou moins ou étaient étudiants de cycle supérieur, et que les étudiants de premier cycle et les étudiantes en général étaient plus susceptibles de faire appel à des services d'orientation scolaire et de counseling. L'importance de promouvoir la sensibilisation aux services d'orientation et d'accroître la prestation de ces services en fonction de la culture est discutée. Enfin, en résumant les suggestions des étudiants interrogés, un certain nombre de recommandations sont formulées quant à la manière d'améliorer le soutien aux étudiants étrangers.

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## A Descriptive Survey Study of International Students' Experiences at a Canadian University: Challenges, Supports, and Suggested Improvements

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# **A Descriptive Survey Study of International Students' Experiences at a Canadian University: Challenges, Supports, and Suggested Improvements**

## **Étude descriptive par sondage sur les expériences des étudiants internationaux dans une université canadienne : défis, soutiens et améliorations suggérées**

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### **Abstract**

The current descriptive survey study focuses on international students' experiences—challenges, personal and institutional supports—during their studies at a Canadian university, as well as their suggestions for what additional supports they think would be helpful. An online survey ( $n = 712$ ) examined international students challenges within a number of domains: language, financial, academic, environmental and cultural, personal-social, and discrimination. The majority of the international students reported few language and academic challenges, but many reported financial and personal-social challenges. COVID-19 presented additional challenges for most international students. Student use of various coping strategies (e.g., staying in touch with family) and institutional supports (e.g., international students centre) were also examined. Bivariate analyses revealed that students under 30 (vs. 30 or over), students who had been in Canada for more than 2 years (vs. 2 years or less), and undergraduates (vs. graduates) were more likely to report various challenges and that undergraduate students and female students were more likely to seek academic guidance and counselling services. The importance of promoting awareness of, and increasing culturally attuned provision of, counselling services is discussed. Finally, summarizing the suggestions of student respondents, a number of recommendations are made regarding how to improve supports for international students.

### **Résumé**

Cette étude descriptive par sondage porte sur les expériences des étudiants étrangers – défis, soutiens personnels et institutionnels – au cours de leurs études dans une université canadienne, ainsi que sur leurs suggestions quant aux soutiens supplémentaires qui, selon eux, pourraient se montrer utiles. Une enquête en ligne ( $n = 712$ ) a permis d'examiner les difficultés rencontrées par les étudiants étrangers dans un certain nombre de domaines : langue, finances, études, environnement et culture, aspects personnels et sociaux, et discrimination. La majorité des étudiants étrangers ont déclaré avoir eu peu de difficultés linguistiques et scolaires, mais beaucoup ont déclaré avoir rencontré des difficultés financières et personnelles. La COVID-19 a présenté des défis supplémentaires pour la plupart des étudiants internationaux. Les diverses stratégies d'adaptation (p. ex., rester en contact avec leur famille) et de soutiens institutionnels (p. ex., centre pour étudiants étrangers) utilisées par les étudiants ont également été examinées. Des analyses bivariées ont révélé que les étudiants qui avaient moins de 30 ans, ou qui résidaient au Canada depuis plus de deux ans ou étaient étudiants de premier cycle étaient plus susceptibles de faire état de diverses difficultés comparés aux étudiants de plus de 30 ans, qui étaient au pays depuis 2 ans ou moins ou étaient étudiants de cycle supérieur, et que les étudiants de premier cycle et les étudiantes en général étaient plus susceptibles de faire appel à des services d'orientation scolaire et de counseling. L'importance de promouvoir la sensibilisation aux services d'orientation et d'accroître la prestation de ces services en fonction de la culture est discutée. Enfin, en résumant les suggestions des étudiants interrogés, un certain nombre de recommandations sont formulées quant à la manière d'améliorer le soutien aux étudiants étrangers.

**Keywords:** international students, challenges, supports

**Mots clés :** étudiants internationaux, défis, soutiens

## Background

Given the well-documented association between education and quality of life (Edgerton et al., 2012, Antoniuk et al., 2019), many students aspire to attain postsecondary education (PSE) from universities, polytechnics, colleges, technical institutions, and other government-authorized institutions and training programs (Johnston & Lee, 2017). A growing number of students move abroad every year to pursue PSE credentials. Globally the demand for higher education has risen rapidly in recent decades (Wilkins et al., 2012, Bannier, 2016) and is expected to continue (Lee, 2014; Zhou & Cole, 2017). According to the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organisation (2019), there are over 5.3 million students worldwide pursuing university education abroad.

Numerous studies have examined the factors that influence students' decision to pursue higher education outside their home country. These are often categorized into "push" or "pull" factors. Push factors are those present in the home country that force students to pursue higher education in a different country, while pull factors are present in the destination country and attract students from other countries (Levent, 2016; Chen & Barnett, 2000; Wadhwa, 2018). Some documented push factors include barriers of entry into PSE in the home country, limited employment opportunities in the home country, while pull factors include the high quality of PSE in the destination country, and immigration and settlement policies (Levent, 2016; Chen & Barnett, 2000).

Traditionally, the main source countries of foreign students worldwide have been China, India, Germany, South Korea, Nigeria, and Saudi Arabia (Canadian Bureau for International Education [CBIE], 2018) whereas top destination countries for foreign students include the United States, United Kingdom, France, Australia, and Germany (Ahmad & Hussain, 2017). Canada was ranked fourth among the top destination countries for international students in 2017 (CBIE, 2018). International students enter foreign countries, especially Western countries, to pursue university education with high hopes and great expectations—informed variously by media, migrants, peers, family members, etc. Upon arrival, they face a variety of challenges such as language barriers, discrimination, financial difficulty, adjusting to the new educational system, among others. Despite studies on the benefits derived by international students from international education, concerns regarding the challenges they face studying in a foreign country persist. (Ahrari et al., 2019; Dimandja, 2017).

The majority of studies on the challenges confronting international PSE students during their studies have been carried out in the United States, United Kingdom, and Australia, with relatively fewer focusing on Canada. Although the growth of international student enrollments in Canada has been identified as major policy issue (e.g., Anderson, 2015; Sabzalieva, 2020) there is still a need to further understand the experiences of international students in our universities. In one study conducted by Calder et al. (2016) on the challenges experienced by international students in Canada, they reported difficulties with housing, finances, employment, and integrating into a new university. Erkan and Walker (2016) conducted a study on the experiences of Muslim students in a Canadian university. They found out that majority of the respondents had encountered, observed, or experienced unfairness at least once in the university environment. Scott et al. (2015) investigated the lived experiences of international students in Canada, their findings revealed adjustment problems related to language abilities, poor connectedness to host communities, and perceived employer discrimination against international students.

Other recent Canadian studies have used secondary data (Anderson, 2020) or qualitative analyses (Guo & Guo, 2017) to explore international students' experiences, but there remains a

gap in terms of quantitative data on the experiences of international students in Canadian universities. As such, the present survey study aims to contribute to literature in the regard and to help inform policy intent on improving the experiences of the international students in Canada. This study was conducted at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, Canada. Like many Canadian universities, the international student population at the University of Manitoba has grown substantially in recent years. In 2013, international students made up 13% of the overall student population at the University of Manitoba, and at the time of data collection in 2020, the number had risen to 20.7% (6,345); making up 19.3% of undergraduates and 26.7% of graduate students (Office of Institutional Analysis, 2020).

Although this study samples a single university, the findings may still be relevant for helping universities and policy makers across Canada and beyond to better understand the challenges international students face. Universities should not only be concerned with promoting the benefits of international education but also with how to foster the academic experience and general quality of life of the international students they attract.

Canada has a well-organized federal government funded settlement sector that offers free services to newcomers to help them integrate into the Canadian system and overcome their settlement challenges, but international students are not eligible for these services (Akbar, 2022). They turn to their postsecondary institutions for academic, financial, health, immigration, among other supports, but find very limited supports and services available (Arthur, 2017). To the extent that Canada and host postsecondary institutions fail to adequately address the integration challenges of international students in the internationalization of education policy of Canada, they risk future reduction in international student enrollments. In host countries and postsecondary institutions with well-established international student recruitment track-records, it is understood that providing sufficient supports, resources, and services to international students leads to positive experiences which are key to attracting and retaining other international students (Ammigan & Jones, 2018). The importance of enhancing international student experiences is magnified by an increasingly competitive market for international students (Baranova et al., 2011).

In this study, an international student is defined as a university student who is neither a Canadian citizen nor a permanent resident. Upon receiving student permit authorization from the Canadian government, they migrated to Canada to pursue university education in a specific institution (in this study, the University of Manitoba).

### **Challenges International Students Encounter**

Some of the challenges that have been documented in previous studies include:

#### ***Language and Communication Problems***

Research points to significant challenges experienced by non-native English-speaking international students pursuing higher education in Western countries (Martirosyan, 2015; Akanwa, 2015). Language proficiency is a major detriment to academic success for international students and struggles in this area make studies and integration difficult for international students (Palmer, 2016).

According to Liu (2015), when students apply to pursue university education in a different country (with a different language) they should be aware of what to expect and find ways to avoid becoming isolated due to problems with acquiring conversational proficiency in that country's primary language (e.g., English in Canada or the United States). In terms of academic setting, difficulty in understanding and fluently speaking the English language hampers foreign students'

ability to understand lectures, contribute to class discussions, engage in required readings, and complete assignments (Ozoglu et al., 2015). Results from some studies suggest that limited English language proficiency levels have cumulative effects on international students' adjustment, and that not being proficient in the English language was found to be a single predictor of academic stress, difficulties which later leads to various forms of depression or anxiety (Martirosyan et al., 2019).

Most English-speaking universities require foreign students to write language tests to prove their level of mastery in reading, writing, listening, and speaking the English language. Even when international students passed these minimum competency tests, many continue to have difficulties understanding lectures, expressing ideas, and completing reports (Liu, 2015). In a study carried out by Scott et al. (2015) on the lived experiences of international students in Canada, their findings revealed adjustments problems related to language abilities of international students both in school and at the workplace.

### ***Academic Challenges***

For international students, host-language competency and academic skills are closely related (Martirosyan et al., 2015). These can include difficulty in learning and understanding a foreign language, lack of familiarity with the host institution or country educational system, faculty-student interaction, inability to meet lecturers' expectations, difficulty in articulating ideas in writing and oral presentations, and limited level of interaction with fellow students during class discussions (Ozoglu et al., 2015; Martirosyan et al., 2015).

A number of studies in the United States have found that the majority of international students encounter various academic barriers and challenges such as communication with professors, classmates, and other university staff (Gartman, 2016; Martirosyan et al., 2015; Wu et al., 2015). Other studies (Singh, 2019; Kotamjani et al., 2018) have found that non-native English speakers encountered problems in their academic writing practices in the instructional settings where English was used as the medium of communication. Such academic difficulties also tend to translate into general adjustment challenges (Mohamed, 2020). Some international students struggle to adjust to foreign pedagogical practices and processes (Liu, 2015). In a study of international doctoral students, Myburgh et al. (2006) found students reported difficulties in adjusting to academic requirements and expectations of the host country when the teaching and learning methods differed substantially from their home country.

### ***Financial Difficulties***

Numerous studies have shown that financial difficulties pose one of the greatest challenges to international students (Ozoglu et al., 2015; O'Reilly et al., 2015). According to McLachlan and Justice (2009), financial difficulties are more prominent during the early years of study. Rising tuition fees, lack or loss of funding, accommodation costs, among others, place substantial burden on international students, especially in Western countries (Sullivan, 2015). A study conducted by Calder et al. (2016) on the challenges of international students in Canada reported finances as a major difficulty the respondents faced while in school. According to a report by Mehra (2017) on the financial difficulties of international students in the United States, they do not receive sufficient financial support from the state and university institutions as compared to domestic students and this included inadequate job opportunities, high cost of health insurance, and high cost of textbooks. In Canada, international students are permitted to work 20 hours per week off campus and unlimited hours on campus (Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, 2020). The 20 hours per week restriction holds when classes are in session but not during scheduled academic breaks

(such as summer and mid-semester breaks) (IRCC, 2020). Full-time or part-time international students admitted to a recognized tertiary institution in Canada and enrolled in a postsecondary academic, professional, or training program that is at least 6 months long are eligible to work while attending school (IRCC, 2020). However, there are some international students who are not permitted to work, including those who pursue only general programs, are enrolled in only English or French as a second language program, or are taking courses only to attain full-time student status (IRCC, 2020). Failure to comply with these work requirements leads to termination of student's status, refusal of a postgraduate work permit, or permanent residence applications (IRCC, 2020).

Similarly, in New Zealand international students are only allowed to work 20 hours per week, and a study done by Mahler (2020) on the study-work balance of international students in New Zealand showed that due to this restriction most of the international students experienced financial difficulty because of their inability to acquire enough money to pay off academic and nonacademic bills.

### ***Environmental Challenges***

Pursuing higher education in a country with weather and living conditions different from the home country is a challenge to some international students. Either for foreign students moving from warmer regions to very cold regions or students moving from very cold regions to warmer regions (Martirosyan et al., 2015). Arguably, most international students may face feelings of disorientation, confusion, and even spiritual displacement during such period of adjusting to changes in the length of daytime, climatic conditions, and the like (Martirosyan et al., 2015). Similarly, international students are also exposed to different foods and diets and while some are able to adjust others find it more difficult to do without (or with reduced access to) their culturally preferred foods. Limited research exists on assessing the climatic and practical (e.g., access to traditional foods) challenges of international students in other countries.

### ***Discrimination and Stereotyping***

Non-Western and non-European foreign students are at increased risk of experiencing discrimination and racism in Western countries (Erkan & Walker, 2016; Sato & Hodge, 2015). Also, due to the different normative behaviours and attitudes foreign students have relative to Westerners, these students may experience greater feelings of alienation (Erkan & Walker, 2016). Some international students are religiously discriminated against, and this is a particular risk for Muslim women who wear veils, as well as students whose dress is culturally distinct, for example, female international students who wear saris (Erkan & Walker, 2016). Erkan and Walker's (2016) study of Muslim students in a Canadian university found that many Muslim students reported being treated unfairly in the university environment.

The racial discrimination and stereotyping encountered by many international students makes it difficult for them to integrate into a Western country. Racial discrimination and neo-racism (based on culture, language, and religion) constitute some of the negative forces that confront some international students (Wu et al., 2015). In a study carried out by Maleku et al. (2021) on the discrimination challenges of international students in the United States, they found that many international students reported experiencing discrimination which was associated with high levels of anxiety, loneliness, and depression. A similar study undertaken by Suh et al. (2019) in Korea also reported high levels of discrimination as well as anxiety and depression. Johnson's (2016) findings on the prejudice and discrimination experienced by international students in a

geography class at a university in the United States posited that about a fifth of the respondents experienced discrimination around their gender, race, or nationality through communication with advisors and other faculty members. They concluded that the greatest number of discriminatory experiences involved interactions with other students and individuals outside the university.

Some citizens of the destination country possess various negative perceptions about the culture, way of life, and marginal position of non-Western international students' home countries, and this can influence how they react and treat international students from these countries (Erkan & Walker, 2016; Wu et al., 2015). According to Charles-Toussaint and Crowson (2010), some domestic students feel that international students pose a threat to their educational opportunities, job opportunities, and other sociocultural values.

### ***Moving to a New Sociocultural Environment***

Relocating to a new place with different sociocultural norms and rules can also present challenges to international students (Ozoglu et al., 2015). Foreign students who have difficulty socializing effectively or who do not establish strong relational ties as a result of language and communication barriers are more likely to experience loneliness and homesickness (Ozoglu et al., 2015). According to Martirosyan et al. (2019), international students are more likely to experience anxiety, homesickness, and stress in adjusting to community life at the university. Some international students may experience culture shock as they try to bridge the sociocultural gap between their home country and the host country (Mesido & Sly, 2016). The greater the degree of cultural difference between the student's country of origin and the host country, the more stressful and challenging it is for them to adjust (Mesido & Sly, 2016).

Similarly, differences in culture can result in misinterpretations and misunderstandings that can hamper students' psychosocial adjustment, integration, and formation of friendships (Sherry et al., 2010). A 2018 survey by the Canadian Bureau for International Education found that cultural misinterpretation often hindered the formation of relationships among Canadian students and international students (CBIE, 2018). According to the CBIE survey, most international students indicated fear or shyness about having Canadian students as friends due to cultural differences. They worried about being misinterpreted and preferred to mix with those who shared their own culture. The survey found that the majority of students from the United States and Europe were more willing to have friendships with Canadians than they were with students from Africa, South Asia, East Asia, Middle East, and Northern Africa—evidence that international students' concerns have some basis in reality. A study conducted by Wu et al. (2015) showed that international students in a U.S. university encountered cultural adjustment problems. When entering a new culture, international students needed to deal with different value systems, communication patterns, signs and symbols of social contact, and interpersonal relationships patterns, and inability to adjust well lead to misunderstanding and uneasiness.

### ***COVID-19-Related Challenges***

As of June 2, 2022, 531 million COVID-19 cases have been reported globally, with 6.3 million infections resulting in death (Infection, Prevention and Control Canada, 2022). While individuals with weakened immune systems from underlying medical conditions, the aged above 60 years, Indigenous people, and low-income Canadian families are deemed the most vulnerable to the pandemic (Firang & Mensah, 2022), one group of people conspicuously missing from the vulnerable groups list is international students (Firang, 2020).



The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic has attracted the attention of migration scholars documenting the experiences of international students. However, while this research exists elsewhere in the world, there is very limited research on international students' experiences with COVID-19 in Canada. So far, the works of Firang (2020), Firang and Mensah (2022), Hari et al. (2021), and Hagar (2020) have explored this area. Only Hari et al. (2021) have, at this time, conducted an empirical study with primary data, the others relied on secondary data. The present study adds to the literature by using primary data to describe international students' experiences in Canada during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Some of the pandemic-related challenges experienced by international students in Canada are related to housing, financial difficulties, psychological concerns, academic challenge due to remote or online learning, and inability to travel as a human rights restriction (Firang & Mensah, 2022; Hari et al., 2021). The pandemic has led to high unemployment rates among international students and associated financial difficulties (Firang & Mensah, 2022). The federal government of Canada introduced financial and safety programs such as the Canadian Emergency Student Benefit (CESB) and the Canada Emergency Response Fund (CERB), in addition to the Employment Insurance (EI) in response to the financial need of affected families and individuals. Whereas some international students qualified for the CESB, the majority of them were not eligible to access it (Firang & Mensah, 2022). Also, international students are ineligible for employment insurance (EI) because, per their study permit conditions, they are not allowed to work more than 20 hours per week and hence do not meet the required working hours for EI benefits. The loss of work during the pandemic, plus ineligibility for EI compounded the financial burden for many international students.

In addition to pandemic-related financial stresses, international students also faced psychological problems such as anxieties, depression, and other mental health problems (Firang & Mensah, 2022), and these were further compounded by financial difficulties, travel restrictions, and remote learning challenges, among others. Whereas some students preferred remote/asynchronous learning, others found a challenge with adjusting to this new approach of studies especially with international students who have travelled to their home countries and have different time zones with Canada (Firang & Mensah, 2022).

### **Coping Strategies and Supports for International Students (Social Support and Institutional Support)**

There is some research on the coping strategies and supports used by international students to overcome challenges they encounter during university education (Wu et al., 2015). Among various support strategies employed by international students to overcome their challenges, social support, including friends and community groups, is cited as an important support mechanism. Social support is even highlighted as the most essential contributor to the psychological well-being of international students (Martirosyan et al., 2019). Scholars argue that successful adjustment of international students to a new environment is contingent on how well international students are able to establish social networks through peer groups, clubs, recreation sports, and other activities (Martirosyan et al., 2015). Mesidor and Sly (2016) argued that having a social support system leads to better cross-cultural transition.

Community groups in the destination country may assist international students with financial support, language support, and psychological support, etc. (Wu et al., 2015). Foreign students may participate in activities organized by community groups and learn how to integrate in the destination country, access opportunities, among others, to effectively complete their studies.

International students may overcome feelings of loneliness and insecurity in a foreign country as they reach out to family members back home, peers, and community members in the destination countries (Roberts et al., 2018).

Aside social support, some universities support international students through relief funds, bursaries, international student centres, the use of writing tutors and writing groups, academic learning centres, counselling centres, and the like (Wu et al., 2015). Cho and Yu (2015) analyzed the role of university support in determining international students' well-being in the United States. They found that university support improved the college life satisfaction of international students and reduced their psychological stress. International students tend to be more positively engaged with the university and their academics when they receive university-based support (Cho & Yu, 2015). In a survey conducted by Redden (2014) in the United States on the views of international students about best university support practices, they mentioned scholarships, campus-based jobs along with career services, academic advising, and campus life activities. In their study on the support services offered by targeted universities to international students in the United States, Martirosyan et al., (2019) found out that the most commonly identified services included: English language programs, academic support, targeted writing support, social and cultural events, professional development programs, and family member programs such as day care.

### ***The Local Context***

The University of Manitoba, where this study was conducted, offers various resources and support services to international students to help them adjust to their new environment and succeed academically. The international student's centre is one of the core supports for international students at the university, facilitating access to various programs and resources intended to help international students. Some of their programs include immigration sessions, career-related workshops, banking in Canada, housing in Canada, and university rules and policies (International Students Centre, 2019).

The academic learning centre of the University of Manitoba also provides support to help international students overcome language-related academic challenges. Some of their services include linking international students with writing tutors and academic advisors to help international students locate a research supervisor. There are also English language learning centres for non-native English speakers to learn more about English reading, writing, and speaking (University of Manitoba, 2022a).

Aside from these academic and information-related supports, the university also has various funding opportunities internally, and externally from the federal government (such as Pierre Elliot Trudeau foundation) and other stakeholders for international students. There are also entrance scholarships, department funding opportunities, and the like, intended to support international students financially. Most of these funding opportunities are for graduate international students and not undergraduate international students (University of Manitoba, 2022b). Additionally, the university has been supporting international students with COVID-19-related funding to enable them to overcome financial challenges due to the pandemic (University of Manitoba, 2022b).

### **Research Questions**

In this study, the following questions were explored:

1. What are the challenges international students encounter during the pursuit of their studies at the University of Manitoba?

2. What are the personal strategies and institutional supports international students rely on to overcome some of the challenges they encounter?
3. What recommendations would they make for improving supports for international students during their university studies?

## Methods

### *Participants and Procedures*

The target population was international students enrolled at the University of Manitoba who (a) were living in Winnipeg (the city where the university is located) during the time of the study or (b) had been living in Winnipeg but due to COVID-19 restrictions were not currently in Canada (and were continuing their studies remotely). Hence, international students who had never been to Canada, or had not begun or had any in-person studies at the University of Manitoba were excluded from the sample. This is because most of the survey questions pertain to the experiences of those who lived or had lived in Winnipeg while pursuing their studies in-person at the University of Manitoba.

The questionnaire (which was adapted from Majid et al., 2017) was administered online (using Qualtrics) and asked a number of questions about international students' experiences while studying at the University of Manitoba, including their challenges, coping strategies, and supports. The COVID-19 pandemic arose during the planning of this study, and so questions about the effects of COVID-19 on the lives of international students at the University of Manitoba were added. Additionally, an open-ended question asked participants what recommendations they would make for improving supports for international students during their university studies.

This study was approved by the Psychology and Sociology Research Ethics Board (PSREB) at the University of Manitoba. International students at the University of Manitoba were recruited for this study with the assistance of the vice-provost office at the University of Manitoba. The vice-provost's office distributed the recruitment email to all students at the University of Manitoba. After completing a filter question, students who met the inclusion criteria were taken to a webpage that introduced the purpose of the study. Those international students who were interested in participating were then instructed to click on a link at the bottom page that took them to an informed consent page. Those who agreed to participate clicked on another link that took them to the actual survey questions (participation was anonymous and voluntary). The initial recruitment email was sent by the vice-provost office in the last week of September (2020) and a reminder email was sent 10 days later. Thus, data was collected on two consecutive different times. The survey was open for 3 weeks from late September to early October 2020. In short, the sample for this study was a convenience sample of international students at the University of Manitoba. In total, 712 international students at the University of Manitoba completed the survey.

### Measures

Likert-type question matrices (items are presented in Tables 1 to 9) asked international students about various challenges they may have faced while attending the University of Manitoba, and about the supports and coping mechanisms they could access to overcome their challenging experiences. Regarding questions on challenges experienced by international students, each question matrix focused on a particular class of challenges—language, academic, personal and social, environmental and cultural, financial, and discrimination challenges. The response options were *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree*, *strongly agree* (coded 1–4). An additional set of questions addressed COVID-19-related issues with the response options: *not at all*, *not really*, *somewhat*,

*very much* (coded 1–4). The final two sets of questions focused on students’ use of coping strategies and institutional supports (with response options: *strongly disagree*, *disagree*, *agree*, *strongly agree* —coded 1–4).

## Data Analysis

Data cleaning and analyses were carried out in SPSS 26. Descriptive statistics including frequencies and percentages were generated to describe the data. A bivariate analysis using the Chi-square test of independence was conducted to test for demographic differences in reported challenges and coping strategies. The tested demographic variables were gender, number of years in Canada, age, program of study, and relationship status.<sup>1</sup>

## Results

### *Selected Demographic Profile of Respondents*

In this study, females constituted the majority of the sample at 61.9%, while 36.5% were males and 1.3% identified as nonbinary. The age of respondents ranged from 17 to 56, with a mean of 24. The majority of respondents (80.0%) were between the ages of 17 and 29 whereas the remaining (20.0%) were between the ages of 30 and 56. Most (71.7%) were undergraduate students, 24.9% were graduate students, and 2.4% were in professional degree programs. More than half of the international students (60.4%) had been attending the university for 2 years or less whereas a third (39.6%) have been attending for more than 2 years, and the majority of international students (60.1%) reported being single.

Table 1 Language Challenges				
Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I am not able to present orally in English in class due to the fear of making grammatical mistakes	386 (54.4%)	183 (25.8%)	99 (14.0%)	41 (5.8%)
I am not able to verbally communicate confidently with others in English	415 (58.4%)	203 (28.6%)	74 (10.4%)	19 (2.7%)
I am not able to write assignments and research projects in English	462 (64.9%)	205 (28.8%)	37 (5.2%)	8 (1.1%)
I am not able to read and understand academic materials in English	504 (70.8%)	170 (23.9%)	32 (4.5%)	6 (.8%)

<sup>1</sup> For the bivariate analyses examining demographic differences, the gender nonbinary category was removed because it had a very small percentage, and professional programs were merged into the graduate category.

### ***Challenges International Students Encounter***

*Language challenges* As shown in Table 1, the vast majority of the participants indicated that they did not experience language challenges. Over 90% of respondents indicated that neither reading and understanding academic materials in English (94.7%), nor writing assignments and research projects in English (93.7%) were a problem. Similarly, 87.0% reported no challenges verbally communicating confidently with others in English, and 80.2% reported no difficulties in presenting orally in English in class.

Despite the majority of the participants not reporting difficulty with most of the language challenge items, a notable minority of respondents indicated experiencing some challenges, for example, 19.8% reported difficulty in presenting orally in class due to the fear of making grammatical mistakes, and 13.1% indicated difficulty in verbally communicating with others confidently in English.

<b>Table 2 Academic Challenges</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
I do not actively engage in class presentations and discussions	219 (30.8%)	275 (38.6%)	177 (24.9%)	41 (5.8%)
Some of my lecturers do not respond well to my academic concerns	192 (27.0%)	332 (46.6%)	140 (19.7%)	48 (6.7%)
I am not accustomed to the teaching methods used in Canada	235 (33.0%)	313 (44.0%)	123 (17.3%)	41 (5.8%)
I am not comfortable working in groups with Canadian students	315 (44.4%)	294 (41.4%)	77 (10.8%)	24 (3.4%)
I am not able to complete all required assignments and projects	302 (42.5%)	319 (44.9%)	79 (11.1%)	11 (1.5%)
I am not comfortable working in groups with students from other countries	365 (51.3%)	289 (40.6%)	47 (6.6%)	10 (1.4%)
I am not comfortable working in groups with students from my home country	400 (56.3%)	251 (35.3%)	41 (5.8%)	19 (2.7%)

*Academic challenges* Related to language challenges are academic challenges faced by international students. As reported in Table 2, nine in 10 respondents reported no problems working in groups with students from other countries (91.9%), working in groups with students from their home country (91.6%), or completing all required assignments and projects (87.4%). Similarly, the vast majority of respondents reported no problems working in groups with Canadian

students (85.8%) or adjusting to the teaching methods used in Canada (77.0%). Three quarters of respondents (73.6%) indicated no problems with how their lecturers responded to their academic concerns, while just over two thirds (69.4%) indicated no problems actively engaging in class presentations and discussions.

Although the majority of students reported little or no academic problems, a sizable minority of students indicated difficulties in the following areas: I do not actively engage in class presentations and discussions (30.7%), some of my lecturers do not respond well to my academic concerns (26.4%), and I am not accustomed to the teaching methods used in Canada (23.1%).

**Table 3 Personal and Social Challenges**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
I feel stressed because of some challenges I face off campus	81 (11.4%)	171 (24.0%)	311 (43.7%)	149 (20.9%)
I feel stressed because I am away from my family and loved ones back home	104 (14.6%)	201 (28.2%)	243 (34.1%)	164 (23.0%)
I find it difficult to make friends with Canadian students	102 (14.3%)	212 (29.8%)	233 (32.8%)	164 (23.1%)
I feel stressed because of some challenges I face on-campus	99 (13.9%)	240 (33.8%)	239 (33.6%)	133 (18.7%)
I find it difficult to make friends with students from other countries	175 (24.6%)	342 (48.0%)	141 (19.8%)	54 (7.6%)
I find it difficult to make friends with students from my home country	325 (45.7%)	283 (39.8%)	72 (10.1%)	31 (4.4%)

*Personal and social challenges* According to the data presented in Table 3, the four most common personal and social level problems reported by the participating international students were: I feel stressed because of some challenges I face off campus (64.6%), and I feel stressed because I am away from my family and loved ones back home (57.1%). Over half of the respondents (55.9%) stated that making friends with Canadian students is difficult for them, and that they feel stressed by challenges they face on campus (52.3%). The two least problematic items were: I find it difficult to make friends with students from my home country (14.5%), and I find it difficult to make friends with students from other countries (27.4%).

<b>Table 4 Environmental and Cultural Challenges</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
I find it difficult to access my traditional foods and ingredients	141 (19.8%)	266 (37.4%)	199 (28.0%)	105 (14.8%)
I have not adapted to the weather conditions	154 (21.7%)	311 (43.7%)	166 (23.3%)	80 (11.3%)
It is difficult to acquire accommodation off campus	147 (20.7%)	307 (43.3%)	203 (28.6%)	52 (7.3%)
It is difficult to acquire accommodation on campus	135 (19.3%)	338 (48.3%)	162 (23.1%)	65 (9.3%)
I have not adapted to the local social norms and behavior	205 (28.9%)	372 (52.4%)	104 (14.6%)	29 (4.1%)
I am not familiar with the local bus system	261 (36.7%)	332 (46.7%)	84 (11.8%)	34 (4.8%)
I have not adapted to the rules and regulations at University of Manitoba	306 (43.0%)	356 (50.1%)	38 (5.3%)	11 (1.5%)

*Environmental and cultural challenges* The majority of international students reported little to no adjustment difficulties related to the environment and culture in Canada and at the university. According to the data in Table 4, 93.1% indicated that adapting to the rules and regulations at the University of Manitoba had not been problematic, 83.4% of respondents reported that they were familiar with the local bus system in Winnipeg, and 81.3% reported no problems adjusting to local social norms and behaviour. About two-thirds of the respondents reported having little or no difficulties in the acquisition of accommodations on campus (67.6%), or off campus (64.0%). 65.4% reported that they had no issues adapting to the weather conditions in Canada, and 57.2% reported no difficulties in accessing their traditional foods and ingredients. Despite most international students reporting little or no problems, a considerable number did indicate experiencing difficulties accessing traditional foodstuffs (42.8%), adapting to local weather conditions (34.6%), and acquiring accommodations (32–36%).

<b>Table 5 Financial Challenges</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
I do not have sufficient scholarship opportunities compared to my Canadian peers	42 (5.9%)	135 (19.1%)	229 (32.4%)	300 (42.5%)
The 20 hours part-time work for international students is a challenge to my finances	69 (9.7%)	204 (28.8%)	220 (31.0%)	216 (30.5%)
I find it difficult to pay my tuition fees	62 (8.7%)	238 (33.4%)	252 (35.4%)	160 (22.5%)
I find it difficult to pay my rent	75 (10.5%)	299 (42.0%)	231 (32.4%)	107 (15.0%)
I borrow money from friends and relatives to be able to survive	166 (23.4%)	291 (41.0%)	161 (22.7%)	92 (13.0%)

*Financial challenges* As reported in Table 5, study respondents indicated a number of financial challenges, with insufficient scholarship opportunities compared to Canadian peers (74.9%) being the most common. The other two most-noted financial challenges were the 20 hours per week part-time work limit for international students (61.5%), and difficulty in paying tuition fees (57.9%). Almost half of respondents indicated difficulties with paying rent (47.4%), and a third reported needing to borrow money from friends and relatives to be able to survive (35.7%).

<b>Table 6 Discrimination Challenges</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Disagree</b>	<b>Agree</b>	<b>Strongly agree</b>
I feel I have been discriminated against by Canadian students	224 (31.5%)	301 (42.3%)	135 (19.0%)	51 (7.2%)
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my ethnic group	255 (36.0%)	294 (41.5%)	111 (15.7%)	49 (6.9%)
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my place of birth	245 (34.5%)	323 (45.5%)	100 (14.1%)	42 (5.9%)
I feel I have been discriminated against by my professors	271 (38.1%)	323 (45.4%)	83 (11.7%)	34 (4.8%)
I feel I have been discriminated against by other university staff	271 (38.2%)	330 (46.5%)	74 (10.4%)	35 (4.9%)
I feel I have been discriminated against by other international students	274 (38.6%)	348 (49.1%)	65 (9.2%)	22 (3.1%)
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my religious affiliation	310 (43.5%)	325 (45.6%)	49 (6.9%)	28 (3.9%)



*Discrimination challenges* Discrimination is another area of potential concern. In the current sample (as shown in Table 6), 89.1% of the respondents indicated that they did not feel discriminated against due to their religious affiliation, 87.7% reported not feeling discriminated against by other international students. Most reported not feeling discriminated against by other university staff (84.7%) and their professors (83.5%). Most did not report feeling discriminated against due to their place of birth (80.0%) or their ethnicity (77.5%), while 73.8% indicated feeling no sense of discrimination from Canadian students.

Although, most students report not experiencing discrimination, a significant minority did report feeling discriminated against in one way or another; for example, a quarter of respondents (26.2%) indicated that they felt discriminated against by Canadian students, while a fifth felt discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity (22.6%) or place of birth (20%).

<b>Table 7 COVID-19-Related Challenges</b>				
<b>Item</b>	<b>Not at all</b>	<b>Not really</b>	<b>Somewhat</b>	<b>Very Much</b>
Ability to study and concentrate	59 (8.3%)	103 (14.5%)	279 (39.4%)	268 (37.8%)
Plans to return to my home country	116 (16.4%)	120 (17.0%)	133 (18.8%)	338 (47.8%)
Understanding lectures and readings	106 (14.9%)	142 (20.0%)	294 (41.4%)	168 (23.7%)
Social gatherings (i.e., churches, parties, student's union meetings)	116 (16.4%)	128 (18.1%)	205 (29.0%)	259 (36.6%)
Ability to earn money	97 (13.7%)	155 (21.9%)	207 (29.3%)	248 (35.1%)
Keeping up with course assignments	87 (12.3%)	144 (20.3%)	263 (37.1%)	214 (30.2%)
Ability to locate suitable space to study independently	104 (14.7%)	141 (19.9%)	217 (30.6%)	246 (34.7)
Writing papers and/or theses	88 (12.4%)	178 (25.1%)	281 (39.6%)	162 (22.8%)
Accessing healthcare services	103 (14.6%)	187 (26.5%)	252 (35.7%)	164 (23.2%)
Ability to pay rent on time	111 (15.7%)	198 (28.0%)	214 (30.3%)	184 (26.0%)
Ability to pay bills on time	115 (16.2%)	203 (28.7%)	207 (29.2%)	183 (25.8%)
Ability to buy healthy foods	122 (17.3%)	185 (26.2%)	226 (32.0%)	174 (24.6%)
Arranging meeting times with my professor or supervisor	112 (15.8%)	193 (27.3%)	238 (33.6%)	165 (23.3%)
Ability to return to Canada to resume my studies in person	188 (26.9%)	146 (20.9%)	140 (20.0%)	225 (32.2%)

*COVID-19-related challenges* This study also aimed to gauge the social, academic, and financial challenges caused by COVID-19 in the lives of international university students at the University of Manitoba. As shown in Table 7, academically, three-quarters (77.2%) of respondents reported that the pandemic had made it difficult for them to study and concentrate. Two thirds of respondents said that the pandemic restrictions had made it more difficult to keep up with course assignments (67.3%), to locate suitable study space (65.3%), and to understand lectures and read effectively (65.1%). Over half reported increased difficulty writing and completing thesis/research papers on time (62.4%), arranging meeting times with their advisor/supervisor (56.9%), and returning to Canada to resume their studies in person (52.2%).

Financially, just under two-thirds of respondents (64.4%) indicated that the pandemic had affected their ability to make money. Just over half of the respondents indicated that the pandemic had affected their ability to purchase healthy foods (56.6%), to pay rent on time (56.3%), and to pay bills on time (55.0%).

In terms of the effects of the pandemic on the social lives of international students at the University of Manitoba, two-thirds of respondents reported that the pandemic had disrupted their plans to return to their home country (66.6%) and their ability to attend social gatherings such as churches, parties, and student union meetings (65.6%).

**Table 8 Personal Strategies for Adjusting/Coping**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Very Unimportant</b>	<b>Unimportant</b>	<b>Important</b>	<b>Very Important</b>
Staying in touch with family and friends back home	15 (2.1%)	25 (3.5%)	213 (30.2%)	453 (64.2%)
Seeking additional funding opportunities	19 (2.7%)	52 (7.4%)	165 (23.4%)	469 (66.5%)
I am personally motivated to succeed at all cost	6 (.8%)	48 (6.8%)	263 (37.3%)	389 (55.1%)
Staying in touch with local friends	11 (1.6%)	47 (6.7%)	279 (39.6%)	367 (52.1%)
Engaging in recreational activities (e.g., movies, games, sightseeing, etc.)	17 (2.4%)	79 (11.2%)	280 (39.7%)	330 (46.7%)
Seeking personal counselling (for stress, depression, etc.)	36 (5.1%)	99 (14.0%)	229 (32.4%)	343 (48.5%)
Seeking academic guidance (writing groups, academic workshops, writing tutor, etc.)	31 (4.4%)	100 (14.1%)	265 (37.5%)	311 (44.0%)
Interaction/engagement with specific student group or association	31 (4.4%)	155 (22.0%)	299 (42.4%)	220 (31.2%)
Partaking in community events (e.g., festivals,	41 (5.8%)	158 (22.4%)	271 (38.4%)	236 (33.4%)

student union organisations, parties etc.)				
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*Personal strategies for adjusting/coping* The second research question guiding this study concerned identifying the strategies employed by international students at the University of Manitoba to overcome the challenges they encounter. As reported in Table 8, the four most popular strategies were: staying in touch with family and friends back home (94.4%), maintaining personal motivation to succeed at all costs (92.4%), staying in touch with local friends (91.7%), and seeking additional funding opportunities (89.9%).

Other important strategies included engaging in recreational activities (86.4%), seeking academic guidance (81.5%), seeking personal counselling (80.9%), interaction/engagement with specific student group or association (73.6%), and partaking in community events (71.8%).

**Table 9 Institutional Supports**

Item	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
The International Centre has been supporting international students by organizing career-related workshops	54 (7.7%)	145 (20.7%)	384 (54.9%)	117 (16.7%)
University of Manitoba has been supporting international students to overcome difficulties in their academics	66 (9.4%)	173 (24.6%)	353 (50.1%)	112 (15.9%)
University of Manitoba has been supporting international students to integrate into the Canadian society after arrival	66 (9.4%)	189 (26.9%)	354 (50.4%)	93 (13.2%)
The International Centre has been providing international students with adequate information on immigration and settlement policies	75 (10.7%)	186 (26.6%)	334 (47.8%)	104 (14.9%)
University of Manitoba has been supporting international students financially during the COVID-19 pandemic	215 (30.8%)	214 (30.7%)	195 (28.0%)	73 (10.5%)

*Institutional supports* In addition to the personal coping strategies, a set of questions were asked to determine perceptions of how helpful institutional supports had been to international students. Responses were somewhat mixed (see Table 9). In terms of academics, most of the international students' respondents indicated that the university supported them in overcoming their academic challenges (66.0%) and helped them to integrate well into the Canadian society since their arrival (63.6%). However, when it came to financial support due to COVID-19, less than half (38.5%) felt that the university had been sufficiently helpful.

The international students' centre, as noted previously, is a key university resource designed to assist international students to deal with issues such as academics, work, and immigration. Concerning work/career-related issues, the majority of respondents (71.6%) reported that the centre had been of assistance through organizing workshops for international students. When it came to immigration-related questions and issues, 62.7% felt that the centre has been helpful by providing adequate information on immigration and settlement issues. Except for the issue of financial aid, where 61.5% of respondents were not satisfied with the university's support, the majority of international student respondents reported being relatively satisfied with available institutional supports. Even so, a sizable minority were not satisfied, with approximately a third of respondents reporting dissatisfaction with support in the areas of career (28.4%), academics (34%), integration (36.3%), and information on settlement and immigration issues (37.3%).

### ***Demographic Differences***

Chi-square tests were conducted to determine whether there were significant demographic differences in terms of (a) the challenges international students encounter during their pursuit of studies at the University of Manitoba and (b) the personal and institutional supports they rely on to overcome the challenges they encounter. The demographic variables assessed were age (17–29 years old vs. 30 years or older), gender orientation (male vs. female), program of study (graduate vs. undergraduate), number of years studying in Canada (2 years or less vs. more than 2 years), and relationship status (single or divorced/separated vs. married/common law or in a relationship). Although we tested for demographic differences on all the administered items, for the sake of space, only a few key general findings are noted below (tables with all the chi-square tests are in Appendix A).

Some of the key demographic differences are:

- Students under 30 generally reported more challenges than did older students.
- Females were more likely than males to use institutional supports (counselling services, academic guidance) to overcome challenges.
- International students who had been in Canada for more than 2 years at the time of this study generally reported more challenges than students who had been here for 2 years or less.
- Undergraduate students generally reported more challenges than did graduate students, and they were more likely to seek academic guidance and counselling services.

### ***Improving Institutional Supports for International Students***

This section summarizes the suggestions made by respondents when asked what improvements could be made to the institutional supports available for international students. This question was an open-ended option in the online survey—145 survey respondents provided written responses. Written responses from international students were summarized and categorized under the following thematic areas: university level and government level of supports.

#### ***University level of supports***

- The university should offer regular workshops on adapting to the Canadian culture.
- The university should increase funding opportunities for international students.
- Reduction in tuition fees for international students.
- Improvement in counselling services for students.
- Increase in events for only international students.

- Improvement in workshops through the international students' centre on immigration and settlement policies (e.g., participation by immigration officer/agents).
- More stipends for research-based programs.
- Increase in teaching assistant wages.
- Improvement in international students' ability to access loans.
- Changes/flexibility in the timing for exams/quizzes due to different time zones (for students who are studying online back home).
- Designate university staff to welcome and assist new international students to the community.
- Increase in funding opportunities from the host institution to help overcome COVID-19-related financial challenges.
- Increase in access to scholarship opportunities.
- Reduction in charges on textbooks.

#### *Government level of supports*

- Public health insurance coverage for international students.
- Reduction in public transit fees for students.
- Permit international students to work increased hours (>20 hours).
- Increase international students' ability to access some of the COVID-19 funding programs in Canada.
- Improve policies and programs to effectively address discrimination.

## **Discussion**

### ***Challenges International Students Encounter***

Questions regarding the challenges international students experience during their university education were originally organized into six categories: language challenges, academic challenges, personal- and social-level challenges, environmental and cultural challenges, financial challenges, and discrimination challenges. Additionally, two categories of questions concerned coping strategies and institutional supports available to students, and in light of the COVID-19 pandemic and associated restrictions, an additional set of questions pertaining to pandemic-related challenges was added.

The findings of this study show that the most commonly reported difficulties for international students in this sample were in the personal, social, and financial domains. The data corroborates existing research that shows that international students experience personal, social, and financial challenges (CBIE, 2018; Ozoglu et al., 2015; Mesido & Sly, 2016; Calder et al., 2016; Mehra, 2017).

In terms of personal and social domains, international students reported substantial difficulty with the following issues: stress because of challenges encountered on campus and off campus, stress due to being away from family and loved ones back home, and difficulty making friends with Canadian students (making friends with other international students was less difficult). The problem of stress faced by international students is mentioned by Martirosyan et al., (2019), where they argued that international students are more likely to experience anxiety, homesickness, and stress in adjusting to community life at the university.

Further to this, our data indicated that most international students reported more difficulty making friends with Canadian students compared to making friends with other international students. This is consistent with the findings of a survey conducted by CBIE in 2018. The CBIE survey found that most international students showed a reticence to have Canadian, American, and European students as friends due to concerns about cultural differences, misinterpretation, stereotyping, and they were more willing to be friends with students from their home country and other non-Western countries. This finding is consistent with Wu et al.'s (2015) U.S. findings which revealed that international university students encountered sociocultural adjustment problems. International students in Wu and colleagues' (2015) study reported that they had to adjust to different value systems, communication patterns, signs and symbols of social contact, and interpersonal relationship patterns. Inability to adjust well led to cultural misunderstanding from domestic students and other international students.

Financially, international students in this sample indicated the following challenges as most common (reported by between half to three-quarters of those sampled): limited funding opportunities for international students as compared to Canadian students, difficulty in payment of tuition fees and rent, and earning constraints due to the 20-hours part-time work policy for international students in Canada. These results are consistent with previous studies that identify financial difficulties as one of the greatest challenges confronting international students (Mehra, 2017; Calder et al., 2016). According to a report by Mehra (2017) on the financial difficulties of international students in the United States, they do not receive sufficient financial support from the state and university institutions as compared to domestic students, and this included inadequate job opportunities, high cost of health insurance and high cost of textbooks. Similarly, Calder et al. (2016) found that international students in Canada reported finances as a major difficulty facing them while in school.

Restrictions on international students' study permits in Canada prevent them working more than 20 hours during school session, but they are allowed more than 20 hours during scheduled breaks (IRCC, 2020). The majority of the international students indicated that this policy is an impediment to them. They are not able to work more hours if they need to, and because almost all jobs in Canada pay hourly, limited hours means limited income. Consequently, they face difficulty in paying for their fees, bills, etc.<sup>2</sup>

In this study, the majority of the respondents indicated few or no challenges with language, academics, the environment and culture, or discrimination. These findings are somewhat inconsistent with previous research that has found that most international students face language, academics, environmental and cultural, and discrimination challenges during university education in other. Even so, it should be noted that there was still an appreciable minority of students in the present sample who indicated problems in some areas.

Regarding challenges with language, about a third reported difficulty presenting orally in class due to the fear of making grammatical mistakes and not being able to verbally communicate with others confidently in English. These results align with existing research that shows that international students face English communication challenges (Ozoglu et al., 2015) which can result in adjustment problems both in school and at the workplace (Scott et al., 2015).

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<sup>2</sup> The Honourable Sean Fraser, Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, announced on October 7, 2022, the temporary lifting of the 20-hour-per-week cap on the number of hours that eligible postsecondary students are allowed to work off-campus while class is in session. This is from November 15, 2022, until December 31, 2023 (IRCC, 2022).

In terms of academics, about a quarter of international students indicated the following difficulties—not actively engaging in class presentations and discussions, having lecturers that do not respond well to their academic concerns, and not being accustomed to the teaching methods used in Canada. These findings are consistent with the existing literature. Some international students, due to fear or shyness among others, do not engage in collegial discussions and presentations (Singh, 2019; Kotamjani et al., 2018), while some may find it difficult adjusting to the new methods of teaching which are very different from what they are used to (Myburgh et al., 2002; Liu, 2015). The finding that some international students reported uncomfortable experiences with professors is similar to that found by Wu et al. (2015) in the United States where the majority of the international students dealt with academic challenges including poor communication with professors.

The main environmental and cultural challenges identified were, in order of frequency: difficulty in accessing traditional foodstuffs, difficulty obtaining accommodations, and difficulty adapting to local weather conditions. According to Martirosyan et al. (2015), most international students find it difficult to adjust to the weather conditions in the host country (adjusting either from warm to cold, or from cold to warm) and others find it problematic to access their traditional dishes.

Finally, most international students in this sample did not report feeling discriminated against. Although, this data appears less supportive of previous related studies showing that foreign students, especially non-Western and non-European students, are at increased risk to experience discrimination in Western countries (Erkan & Walker, 2016; Maleku et al., 2021; Johnson, 2016; Suh et al., 2019; Sato & Hodge, 2015), there was still a notable minority of international students, about one in five, who did report that they had felt discriminated against by Canadian students, and discriminated against because of their ethnicity or place of birth. This confirms a study carried out by Johnson (2016) in the United States on the prejudice and discrimination experienced by international students in a geography class, where about a fifth of the respondents responded that they faced discrimination around their race and nationality. Although the frequency may be less than in some countries, the results suggest that discrimination against international students is still an issue in Canada and at the University of Manitoba. For instance, a study undertaken by Erkan and Walker (2016) on the discrimination experiences of Muslim students in a Canadian university found that a majority of them reported experiencing unfair treatment in the university environment due to their religion. Many foreign students continue to face some degree of discrimination and stereotyping due to their place of birth, and ethnicity; and mostly from Western domestic students (Maleku et al., 2021).

### **COVID-19-Related Challenges**

Due to the recent COVID-19 pandemic and its generally restrictive effects, the study also explored the social, financial, and academic difficulties that international students have been experiencing as a result of the pandemic. The majority of the international students sampled indicated that the pandemic has had a serious negative effect on their social, academic, and financial lives. Academically, some of the identified academic challenges in order of frequency are—difficulty studying and concentrating, understanding lectures and assignment, keeping up with assignments, difficulty in finding study space, and trouble arranging a suitable time to meet with academic supervisors. Social difficulties included inability to attend social events such as parties, churches etc., and inability to return home. Financially, the respondents stated that the pandemic has negatively affected their ability to make money, to pay rent and bills on time, and to buy healthy

food for themselves. Accessing healthcare was also an issue for some as was the inability to return to Canada to resume studies.

Studies in Canada by researchers (Firang & Mensah, 2022; Hari et al., 2021) corroborate the present data indicating that the COVID-19 pandemic led to increased financial challenges for international students such as difficulty paying rent, buying healthy foods, finding a job, and/or qualifying for COVID-19-related government financial support, as well as increased academic challenges and reduced ability to travel.

### **Coping and Supports**

In this study, a number of strategies were regarded by respondents as important or very important. These included staying in touch with family and friends back home, seeking additional funding opportunities, being personally motivated to succeed at all cost, staying in touch with local friends, engaging in recreational activities (e.g., movies, games, sightseeing, etc.), seeking personal counselling (e.g., for stress or depression), seeking academic guidance (writing groups, academic workshops, writing tutor, etc.), interaction/engagement with a specific student group or association, and partaking in community events (e.g., festivals, student union organisations, parties). These results are generally consistent with previous research (Wu et al., 2015; Martirosyan et al., 2019; Roberts et al., 2018; Mesidor & Sly, 2016) on the strategies employed by international students. In terms of institutional supports for international students, the majority of respondents felt that their university had supported them in their academics, in their integration into Canadian society, in providing them career-related information, and information about immigration and settlement policies. A sizable minority were dissatisfied with these supports, while a majority felt that the university had not helped them sufficiently with COVID-19-related financial difficulties.

### **Demographic Differences**

Chi-square analyses indicated that students under 30 (vs. 30 or over), students who had been in Canada for more than 2 years (vs. 2 years or less), and undergraduates (vs. graduate students) were more likely to report various challenges and that undergraduate students and female students were more likely to seek academic guidance and counselling services. This suggests that particular groups may benefit from targeted support; for example, undergraduates (who tend to be younger) may need more supports to deal with adjustment challenges, or students whose study time is extended (for example, past 2 years) may benefit from enhanced, ongoing institutional support to deal with transition and integration issues and challenges that persist and accumulate over the duration of their stay (Guo & Chase, 2011). Also, some segments of the international student body, such as males and graduate students, may benefit from encouragement and education about available counselling supports.

### **Study Limitations**

This study is not a comprehensive or exhaustive study of international student experiences and accordingly has a number of limitations. The research used a convenient sample drawn from a single university in Canada, and hence caution should be exercised in generalizing to the larger body of students at this university or other Canadian universities. Future related studies may focus on sampling more than one university.

Also, this study used only a survey methodology to collect data. Qualitative data collection techniques such as interviews or focus groups should be employed in subsequent studies to allow for the possibility of unexpected and novel responses that are not elicited by survey questions. A



longitudinal study should also be conducted to acquire detailed information on the experiences (challenges) of international students over the course of their studies; for example, interviewing them annually from their first year through to their final year of study.

The current study conducted bivariate analyses of selected demographic variables, future studies in this area would do well to conduct multivariate analyses of demographic factors and various outcome variables related to academic, social, and psychological adjustment. There is very limited comparative study of demographic differences in international students' higher education experiences and this study revealed a number of interesting, if somewhat mixed, findings in this regard.

The personal and social level challenge items in this study referred to stress experienced by international students due to various challenges, but no actual mental health measures were administered as part of the survey. Future research may focus on specific measures of dimensions of mental health such as well-being, depression, and anxiety. Mental health is a pressing issue in Northern America and international students are at a greater risk of experiencing mental health issues compared to their domestic counterparts (Acharya et al., 2018). A sizable minority of our sample indicated experiencing various adjustment challenges; research shows that such difficulties can have a marked influence on students' psychological well-being and can negatively impact their academic performance and success (Acharya et al., 2018). To mitigate such mental health risks, international students should be made aware of and strongly encouraged to utilize counselling and mental health services offered off campus and on campus (Schwitzer et al., 2018; Tung, 2011). Further to this, a recent Canadian study (de Moissac et al., 2020) argued that universities should not provide counselling services without taking into consideration ethnolinguistic and other cultural differences of international students. Such considerations will enhance the usefulness and effectiveness of services for international students and might make them more likely to use these services whenever they experience a mental health challenge. There is evidence that some students are less likely to use counselling services (de Moissac et al., 2020). Similarly, the present study found that some students (females and undergraduates) were more likely to report using counselling services. Previous studies have reported that some international students underutilize on-campus and even off-campus counselling services because they either do not understand the benefits of counselling or they have a cultural mistrust towards mental health professionals (Mesidor & Sly, 2016). Educating students about what counselling services are and how they work may help reduce hesitancy in international students while provision of therapeutic services that are culturally sensitive might make the therapy more effective (Mesidor & Sly, 2016).

## **Conclusion**

This study has identified numerous challenges reported by international students during their studies at the University of Manitoba. In addition, it has identified numerous personal, social, and institutional supports they have used to overcome the various challenges they encounter. Although the majority of students did not seem to encounter significant language and academic challenges, many of them did report various personal, social, and financial difficulties. Given the connection between such adjustment challenges and mental health, it is advisable for universities to ensure that they are raising awareness among international students about the nature and availability of counselling services, as well as making sure to provide services that are responsive to international students' diverse backgrounds. International student respondents also suggested a number of changes they thought would improve institutional supports for international students. These include adding workshops on topics such as adapting to Canadian culture, dedicating university

staff and implementing programming focused on helping international students integrate into the local community, and financial assistance (e.g., allowing them to work more than 20 hours per week, increased access to scholarships, student loans and COVID-19 financial aid, reduced tuition and subsidized public transit fees). Although the study was conducted at a single university, some of the findings are likely relevant in some degree to many other universities in Canada and beyond. International students contribute significantly to the economy as workers (part-time employees) and consumers (tuition fees, rent, groceries, and other expenditures). Universities and governments that host international students are motivated to retain these students as well as attract additional international students. The current findings suggest that a key to retaining international students is to help them overcome the challenges they encounter while here. There could be personal means that international students employ to overcome their challenges, but the host university and government should also do their best to assist them. It is ultimately not only to the students' benefit, but also to the benefit of each university and the Canadian economy to help international students succeed, as it signals to the world that the university and Canada in general are indeed a desirable destination for the pursuit of a quality university education.

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## APPENDIX A

\*Significant differences are bolded

### Age of Respondents Significant Differences

Academic Challenges									
Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	30+	≤29	30+	≤29	30+	≤29	30+	≤29	
I do not actively engage in class presentations and discussions	57 (53.8%)	155 (26.6%)	39 (36.8%)	226 (38.8%)	9 (8.5%)	163 (28.0%)	1 (0.9%)	38 (6.5%)	40.130, 3df p = .000
Some of my lecturers do not respond well to my academic concerns	51 (48.1%)	135 (23.2%)	35 (33.0%)	284 (48.8%)	15 (14.2%)	124 (21.3%)	5 (4.7%)	39 (6.7%)	28.232, 3df p = .000
I am not able to complete all required assignments and projects	67 (63.2%)	229 (39.4%)	35 (33.0%)	267 (46.0%)	3 (2.8%)	75 (12.9%)	1 (0.9%)	10 (1.7%)	23.550, 3df p = .000
I am not accustomed to the teaching methods used in Canada	58 (54.7%)	170 (29.2%)	38 (35.8%)	264 (45.4%)	7 (6.6%)	111 (19.1%)	3 (2.8%)	37 (6.4%)	29.499, 3df p = .000
I am not comfortable working in groups with Canadian students	70 (66.0%)	239 (41.2%)	28 (26.4%)	250 (43.1%)	6 (5.7%)	69 (11.9%)	2 (1.9%)	22 (3.8%)	22.545, 3df p = .000
I am not comfortable working in groups with students from other countries	72 (68.6%)	285 (49.0%)	29 (27.6%)	245 (42.1%)	4 (3.8%)	42 (7.2%)	0 (0.0%)	10 (1.7%)	14.598, 3df p = .002
I am not comfortable working in groups with students from my home country	75 (70.8%)	317 (54.6%)	28 (26.4%)	209 (36.0%)	2 (1.9%)	37 (6.4%)	1 (0.9%)	18 (3.1%)	11.170, 3df p = .011
Personal- and Social-Level Challenges									

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	30+	≤29	30+	≤29	30+	≤29	30+	≤29	
I feel stressed because I am away from my family and loved ones back home	23 (21.7%)	78 (13.4%)	34 (32.1%)	160 (27.5%)	26 (24.5%)	207 (35.6%)	23 (21.7%)	137 (23.5%)	8.229, 3df p = .042
I feel stressed because of some challenges I face on campus	27 (25.5%)	69 (11.9%)	37 (34.9%)	193 (33.2%)	26 (24.5%)	209 (36.0%)	16 (15.1%)	110 (18.9%)	16.087, 3df p = .001
I feel stressed because of some challenges I face off campus	23 (21.7%)	57 (9.8%)	30 (28.3%)	135 (23.2%)	38 (35.8%)	260 (44.7%)	15 (14.2%)	130 (22.3%)	16.366, 3df p = .001
I find it difficult to make friends with Canadian students	26 (24.5%)	76 (13.1%)	38 (35.8%)	165 (28.4%)	28 (26.4%)	196 (33.7%)	14 (13.2%)	144 (24.8%)	16.293, 3df p = .001
I find it difficult to make friends with students from other countries	41 (38.7%)	128 (22.0%)	51 (48.1%)	280 (48.1%)	9 (8.5%)	126 (21.6%)	5 (4.7%)	48 (8.2%)	19.527, 3df p = .000
I find it difficult to make friends with students from my home country	57 (53.8%)	258 (44.4%)	38 (35.8%)	235 (40.4%)	7 (6.6%)	63 (10.8%)	4 (3.8%)	25 (4.3%)	3.833, 3df p = .280

#### Environmental and Cultural Challenges

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	30+	≤29	30+	≤29	30+	≤29	30+	≤29	
I find it difficult to access my traditional foods and ingredients	33 (31.4%)	105 (18.0%)	43 (41.0%)	211 (36.3%)	20 (19.0%)	174 (29.9%)	9 (8.6%)	92 (15.8%)	15.343, 3df p = .002
It is difficult to acquire accommodation off campus	33 (31.4%)	109 (18.8%)	43 (41.0%)	253 (43.6%)	24 (22.9%)	173 (29.8%)	5 (4.8%)	45 (7.8%)	9.589, 3df p = .022

I have not adapted to the weather conditions	29 (27.4%)	122 (21.0%)	47 (44.3%)	255 (43.9%)	23 (21.7%)	134 (23.1%)	7 (6.6%)	70 (12.0%)	4.098, 3df p = .251
I am not familiar with the local bus system	45 (42.9%)	207 (35.6%)	45 (42.9%)	276 (47.4%)	8 (7.6%)	74 (12.7%)	7 (6.7%)	25 (4.3%)	4.694, 3df p = .196
It is difficult to acquire accommodation on campus	27 (26.5%)	102 (17.8%)	39 (38.2%)	288 (50.2%)	(25 24.5%)	133 (23.2%)	11 (10.8%)	51 (8.9%)	6.395, 3df p = .094
I have not adapted to the local social norms and behaviour	35 (33.0%)	165 (28.4%)	57 (53.8%)	302 (52.1%)	10 (9.4%)	90 (15.5%)	4 (3.8%)	23 (4.0%)	2.975, 3df p = .395
I have not adapted to the rules and regulations at University of Manitoba	55 (51.9%)	240 (41.3%)	46 (43.4%)	299 (51.5%)	3 (2.8%)	34 (5.9%)	2 (1.9%)	8 (1.4%)	5.178, 3df p = .159

### Financial Challenges

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	30+	≤ 29	30+	≤ 29	30+	≤ 29	30+	≤ 29	
I find it difficult to pay my tuition fees	16 (15.1%)	44 (7.6%)	39 (36.8%)	191 (32.8%)	31 (29.2%)	214 (36.8%)	20 (18.9%)	133 (22.9%)	<b>8.326,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .040</b>
I do not have sufficient scholarship opportunities compared to my Canadian peers	11 (10.5%)	29 (5.0%)	30 (28.6%)	102 (17.7%)	33 (31.4%)	188 (32.6%)	31 (29.5%)	258 (44.7%)	<b>14.820,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .002</b>
I find it difficult to pay my rent	21 (19.8%)	52 (8.9%)	45 (42.5%)	246 (42.3%)	28 (26.4%)	193 (33.2%)	12 (11.3%)	91 (15.6%)	<b>12.384,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .006</b>
I borrow money from friends and relatives to be able to survive	35 (33.0%)	126 (21.7%)	38 (35.8%)	245 (42.2%)	21 (19.8%)	132 (22.8%)	12 (11.3%)	77 (13.3%)	6.372, 3df p = .095
The 20-hours part-time work for international students is a challenge to my finances	12 (11.4%)	55 (9.5%)	29 (27.6%)	171 (29.5%)	42 (40.0%)	170 (29.3%)	22 (21.0%)	184 (31.7%)	7.163, 3df p = .067



Discrimination Challenges									
Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	30+	≤ 29	30+	≤ 29	30+	≤ 29	30+	≤ 29	
I feel I have been discriminated against by my professors	55 (51.9%)	208 (35.8%)	30 (28.3%)	280 (48.2%)	19 (17.9%)	63 (10.8%)	2 (1.9%)	30 (5.2%)	19.752, 3df p = .000
I feel I have been discriminated against by other university staff	57 (53.8%)	208 (35.9%)	31 (29.2%)	283 (48.8%)	15 (14.2%)	58 (10.0)	3 (2.8%)	31 (5.3%)	17.519, 3df p = .001
I feel I have been discriminated against by Canadian students.	51 (48.1%)	169 (29.1%)	33 (31.1%)	257 (44.2%)	19 (17.9%)	110 (18.9%)	3 (2.8%)	45 (7.7%)	16.926, 3df p = .001
I feel I have been discriminated against by other international students	56 (52.8%)	213 (36.8%)	39 (36.8%)	295 (50.9%)	8 (7.5%)	55 (9.5%)	3 (2.8%)	16 (2.8%)	9.928, 3df p = .019
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my ethnic group	50 (47.2%)	198 (34.1%)	34 (32.1%)	249 (42.9%)	17 (16.0%)	92 (15.9%)	5 (4.7%)	41 (7.1%)	7.511, 3df p = .057
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my religious affiliation	58 (54.7%)	243 (41.8%)	38 (35.8%)	276 (47.4%)	8 (7.5%)	38 (6.5%)	2 (1.9%)	25 (4.3%)	7.541, 3df p = .057
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my place of birth	48 (45.3%)	190 (32.8%)	39 (36.8%)	272 (46.9%)	14 (13.2%)	84 (14.5%)	5 (4.7%)	34 (5.9%)	6.379, 3df p = .095
COVID-19-Related Challenges									
Item	Not at all		Not really		Somewhat		Very Much		Chi-Sq
	30+	≤ 29	30+	≤ 29	30+	≤ 29	30+	≤ 29	
Understanding lectures and readings	36 (34.0%)	70 (12.1%)	27 (25.5%)	107 (18.4%)	28 (26.4%)	256 (44.1%)	15 (14.2%)	147 (25.3%)	41.618, 3df p = .000

Keeping up with course assignments	31 (29.2%)	54 (9.3%)	26 (24.5%)	113 (19.6%)	30 (28.3%)	222 (38.4%)	19 (17.9%)	189 (32.7%)	<b>38.558,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .000</b>
Ability to study and concentrate	16 (15.1%)	41 (7.1%)	10 (9.4%)	89 (15.4%)	49 (46.2%)	220 (38.0%)	31 (29.2%)	229 (39.6%)	<b>13.152,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .004</b>
Ability to locate suitable space to study independently	23 (21.7%)	80 (13.8%)	16 (15.1%)	120 (20.8%)	37 (34.9%)	168 (29.1%)	30 (28.3%)	210 (36.3%)	7.785, 3df p = .051
Writing papers and/or theses	25 (23.6%)	61 (10.5%)	18 (17.0%)	151 (26.1%)	33 (31.1%)	239 (41.3%)	30 (28.3%)	128 (22.1%)	<b>18.972,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .000</b>
Arranging meeting times with my professor or supervisor	27 (25.5%)	80 (13.8%)	23 (21.7%)	165 (28.5%)	39 (36.8%)	188 (32.5%)	17 (16.0%)	145 (25.1%)	<b>12.862,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .005</b>
Ability to buy healthy foods	28 (26.4%)	89 (15.4%)	25 (23.6%)	153 (26.5%)	35 (33.0%)	184 (31.9%)	18 (17.0%)	151 (26.2%)	<b>9.701,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .021</b>
Social gatherings (i.e., churches, parties, student's union meetings)	15 (14.2%)	99 (17.1%)	14 (13.2%)	106 (18.3%)	25 (23.6%)	174 (30.1%)	52 (49.1%)	199 (34.4%)	<b>8.352,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .039</b>
Accessing healthcare services	22 (20.8%)	76 (13.2%)	15 (14.2%)	166 (28.8%)	44 (41.5%)	196 (34.0%)	25 (23.6%)	138 (24.0%)	<b>12.248</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .007</b>
Ability to earn money	15 (14.2%)	77 (13.3%)	28 (26.4%)	119 (20.6%)	26 (24.5%)	173 (30.0%)	37 (34.9%)	208 (36.0%)	2.386 3df p = .496
Ability to pay rent on time	21 (19.8%)	85 (14.7%)	34 (32.1%)	159 (27.6%)	31 (29.2%)	176 (30.5%)	20 (18.9%)	157 (27.2%)	4.587 3df p = .205
Ability to pay bills on time	23 (21.7%)	87 (15.1%)	33 (31.1%)	165 (28.5%)	31 (29.2%)	167 (28.9%)	19 (17.9%)	159 (27.5%)	5.833 3df p = .120
Plans to return to my home country	24 (22.6%)	88 (15.3%)	19 (17.9%)	96 (16.6%)	16 (15.1%)	111 (19.2%)	47 (44.3%)	282 (48.9%)	4.279 3df p = .233
Ability to return to	33 (31.7%)	149 (26.1%)	25 (24.0%)	117 (20.5%)	17 (16.3%)	117 (20.5%)	29 (27.9%)	188 (32.9%)	3.019

Canada to resume my studies in person									3df p = .389
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### Gender of Respondents Significant Differences

Academic Challenges									
Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
I do not actively engage in class presentations and discussions	85 (32.7%)	131 (29.7%)	111 (42.7%)	158 (35.8%)	52 (20.0%)	123 (27.9%)	12 (4.6%)	29 (6.6%)	7.637, 3df p = .054
I am not comfortable working in groups with Canadian students	133 (51.4%)	177 (40.2%)	96 (37.1%)	193 (43.9%)	24 (9.3%)	52 (11.8%)	6 (2.3%)	18 (4.1%)	<b>8.843,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .031</b>
I am not able to complete all required assignments and projects	102 (39.4%)	197 (44.7%)	107 (41.3%)	205 (46.5%)	42 (16.2%)	36 (8.2%)	8 (3.1%)	3 (0.7%)	<b>17.568,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .001</b>
I am not comfortable working in groups with students from other countries	144 (55.6%)	217 (49.2%)	93 (35.9%)	191 (43.3%)	15 (5.8%)	30 (6.8%)	7 (2.7%)	3 (0.7%)	<b>8.428,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .038</b>
Some of my lecturers do not respond well to my academic concerns	79 (30.4%)	111 (25.2%)	112 (43.1%)	214 (48.5%)	86 (19.6%)	137 (19.5%)	18 (6.9%)	30 (6.8%)	2.690, 3df p = .442
I am not accustomed to the teaching methods used in Canada	91 (35.0%)	139 (31.5%)	108 (41.5%)	201 (45.6%)	44 (16.9%)	77 (17.5%)	17 (6.5%)	24 (5.4%)	1.673, 3df p = .666
I am not accustomed to the teaching methods used in Canada	91 (35.0%)	139 (31.5%)	108 (41.5%)	201 (45.6%)	44 (16.9%)	77 (17.5%)	17 (6.5%)	24 (5.4%)	1.673, 3df p = .666
Personal- and Social-Level Challenges									
Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
I feel stressed	51 (19.6%)	53 (12.0%)	65 (25.0%)	129 (29.3%)	90 (34.6%)	150 (34.0%)	54 (20.8%)	109 (24.7%)	

because I am away from my family and loved ones back home									8.545, 3df p = .036
I feel stressed because of some challenges I face off campus	40 (15.4%)	41 (9.3%)	59 (22.7%)	109 (24.7%)	107 (41.2%)	198 (44.9%)	54 (20.8%)	93 (21.1%)	6.060, 3df p = .109
I find it difficult to make friends with Canadian students	47 (18.1%)	55 (12.5%)	75 (29.0%)	128 (29.0%)	80 (30.9%)	152 (34.5%)	57 (22.0%)	106 (24.0%)	4.526, 3df p = .210
I feel stressed because of some challenges I face on campus	42 (16.2%)	57 (12.9%)	95 (36.7%)	141 (32.0%)	76 (29.3%)	156 (35.4%)	46 (17.8%)	87 (19.7%)	4.445, 3df p = .217
I find it difficult to make friends with students from other countries	69 (26.5%)	105 (23.8%)	119 (45.8%)	216 (49.0%)	50 (19.2%)	89 (20.2%)	22 (8.5%)	31 (7.0%)	1.362, 3df p = .715
I find it difficult to make friends with students from my home country	124 (47.9%)	198 (44.9%)	102 (39.4%)	176 (39.9%)	22 (8.5%)	48 (10.9%)	11 (4.2%)	19 (4.3%)	1.260, 3df p = .729

#### Environmental and Cultural Challenges

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
I am not familiar with the local bus system	113 (43.6%)	147 (33.3%)	117 (45.2%)	209 (47.4%)	23 (8.9%)	57 (12.9%)	6 (2.3%)	28 (6.3%)	12.628, 3df p = .006
I find it difficult to access my traditional	64 (24.7%)	74 (16.8%)	93 (35.9%)	168 (38.1%)	66 (25.5%)	130 (29.5%)	36 (13.9%)	69 (15.6%)	6.677, 3df p = .083

foods and ingredients									
I have not adapted to the weather conditions	66 (25.5%)	83 (18.8%)	116 (44.8%)	191 (43.3%)	51 (19.7%)	115 (26.1%)	26 (10.0%)	52 (11.8%)	6.739, 3df p = .081
It is difficult to acquire accommodation off campus	58 (22.3%)	89 (20.3%)	114 (43.8%)	187 (42.7%)	76 (29.2%)	123 (28.1%)	12 (4.6%)	39 (8.9%)	4.539, 3df p = .209
It is difficult to acquire accommodation on campus	51 (19.8%)	82 (19.0%)	112 (43.6%)	218 (50.5%)	65 (25.3%)	96 (22.2%)	29 (11.3%)	36 (8.3%)	3.793, 3df p = .285
I have not adapted to the local social norms and behavior	82 (31.7%)	119 (27.0%)	120 (46.3%)	246 (55.9%)	46 (17.8%)	57 (13.0%)	11 (4.2%)	18 (4.1%)	6.628, 3df p = .085
I have not adapted to the rules and regulations at University of Manitoba	122 (46.9%)	179 (40.7%)	121 (46.5%)	229 (52.0%)	15 (5.8%)	23 (5.2%)	2 (0.8%)	9 (2.0%)	4.254, 3df p = .235

#### COVID-19-Related Challenges

Item	Not at all		Not really		Somewhat		Very Much		Chi-Sq
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Understanding lectures and readings	49 (18.8%)	56 (12.8%)	43 (16.5%)	98 (22.3%)	101 (38.8%)	186 (42.4%)	67 (25.8%)	99 (22.6%)	7.946, 3df p = .047
Keeping up with course assignments	42 (16.2%)	44 (10.0%)	40 (15.4%)	101 (23.1%)	103 (39.8%)	155 (35.4%)	74 (28.6%)	138 (31.5%)	10.993, 3df p = .012
Ability to study and concentrate	28 (10.8%)	30 (6.8%)	35 (13.5%)	68 (15.5%)	108 (41.5%)	167 (38.1%)	89 (34.2%)	173 (39.5%)	5.175, 3df p = .159
Plans to return to my home country	39 (15.0%)	76 (17.4%)	38 (14.6%)	80 (18.3%)	55 (21.2%)	76 (17.4%)	128 (49.2%)	204 (46.8%)	3.342, 3df p = .344
Social gatherings (i.e., churches, parties, student's union meetings)	44 (16.9%)	71 (16.2%)	48 (18.5%)	78 (17.8%)	70 (26.9%)	133 (30.4%)	98 (37.7%)	155 (35.5%)	.991, 3df p = .803

Ability to earn money	36 (13.9%)	60 (13.7%)	64 (24.7%)	88 (20.1%)	70 (27.0%)	134 (30.7%)	89 (34.4%)	155 (35.5%)	2.351, 3df p = .101
Ability to locate suitable space to study independently	46 (17.8%)	55 (12.6%)	46 (17.8%)	95 (21.7%)	78 (30.1%)	136 (31.1%)	89 (34.4%)	152 (34.7%)	4.335, 3df p = .227
Writing papers and/or theses	43 (16.5%)	44 (10.0%)	61 (23.5%)	113 (25.8%)	96 (36.9%)	183 (41.8%)	60 (23.1%)	98 (22.4%)	6.875, 3df p = .076
Accessing healthcare services	41 (15.8%)	62 (14.2%)	68 (26.3%)	115 (26.4%)	94 (36.3%)	154 (35.3%)	56 (21.6%)	105 (24.1%)	.753, 3df p = .861
Ability to pay rent on time	37 (14.3%)	70 (16.0%)	78 (30.1%)	119 (27.2%)	74 (28.6%)	136 (31.1%)	70 (27.0%)	112 (25.6%)	1.268, 3df p = .736
Ability to pay bills on time	42 (16.2%)	69 (15.8%)	88 (33.8%)	114 (26.1%)	65 (25.0%)	139 (31.8%)	65 (25.0%)	115 (26.3%)	6.091, 3df p = .683
Ability to buy healthy foods	46 (17.8%)	74 (16.9%)	61 (23.6%)	120 (27.4%)	83 (32.2%)	141 (32.2%)	68 (26.4%)	103 (23.5%)	1.495, 3df p = .101
Arranging meeting times with my professor or supervisor	47 (18.1%)	64 (14.6%)	61 (23.6%)	127 (29.0%)	92 (35.5%)	144 (32.9%)	59 (22.8%)	103 (23.5%)	3.439, 3df p = .329
Ability to return to Canada to resume my studies in person	68 (26.4%)	118 (27.4%)	52 (20.2%)	94 (21.9%)	51 (19.8%)	84 (19.5%)	87 (33.7%)	134 (31.2%)	.624, 3df p = .891

### Personal Strategies for Adjusting/Coping

Item	Very Unimportant		Unimportant		Important		Very Important		Chi-Sq
	M	F	M	F	M	F	M	F	
Staying in touch with family and friends back home	7 (2.7%)	8 (1.8%)	13 (5.1%)	9 (2.0%)	88 (34.5%)	125 (28.4%)	147 (57.6%)	298 (67.7%)	9.917, 3df p = .019
Seeking additional funding opportunities	4 (1.6%)	14 (3.2%)	27 (10.6%)	24 (5.5%)	60 (23.5%)	102 (23.2%)	164 (64.3%)	299 (68.1%)	7.744, 3df p = .052
I am personally motivated to succeed at all costs	1 (0.4%)	5 (1.1%)	26 (10.2%)	22 (5.0%)	85 (33.3%)	172 (39.1%)	143 (56.1%)	241 (54.8%)	8.844, 3df p = .031
Seeking personal counselling (for stress, depression etc.)	20 (7.8%)	16 (3.6%)	45 (17.6%)	53 (12.0%)	85 (33.2%)	140 (31.8%)	106 (41.4%)	231 (52.5%)	13.185, 3df p = .004

Seeking academic guidance (writing groups, academic workshops, writing tutor, etc.)	18 (7.0%)	13 (3.0%)	41 (16.0%)	53 (12.0%)	92 (35.9%)	171 (38.9%)	105 (41.0%)	203 (46.1%)	<b>9.253,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .026</b>
Staying in touch with local friends	4 (1.6%)	7 (1.6%)	22 (8.7%)	23 (5.2%)	107 (42.3%)	170 (38.6%)	120 (47.4%)	240 (54.5%)	5.078, 3df p = .166
Engaging in recreational activities (e.g., movies, games, sightseeing etc.)	7 (2.7%)	10 (2.3%)	24 (9.4%)	54 (12.3%)	106 (41.4%)	170 (38.7%)	119 (46.5%)	205 (46.7%)	1.665, 3df p = .645
Interaction/engagement with specific student group or association	15 (5.9%)	16 (3.6%)	49 (19.3%)	105 (23.9%)	108 (42.5%)	184 (41.8%)	82 (32.3%)	135 (30.7%)	3.524, 3df p = .318
Partaking in community events (e.g., festivals, student union organisations, parties etc.)	16 (6.3%)	25 (5.7%)	59 (23.1%)	95 (21.6%)	92 (36.1%)	176 (40.0%)	88 (34.5%)	144 (32.7%)	1.068, 3df p = .785

### Number of Years in Canada for Respondents Significant Differences

Personal- and Social-Level Challenges									
Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	
I feel stressed because of some challenges I face off campus	42 (9.9%)	39 (14.0%)	117 (27.6%)	53 (19.1%)	177 (41.7%)	128 (46.0%)	88 (20.8%)	58 (20.9%)	8.233, 3df p = .041
I feel stressed because of some challenges I face on campus	61 (14.4%)	37 (13.3%)	161 (38.1%)	76 (27.3%)	131 (31.0%)	104 (37.4%)	70 (16.5%)	61 (21.9%)	10.541, 3df p = .014
I feel stressed because I am away from my family and loved ones back home	62 (14.6%)	40 (14.4%)	125 (29.5%)	75 (27.0%)	141 (33.3%)	97 (34.9%)	96 (22.6%)	66 (23.7%)	.596, 3df p = .897
I find it difficult to make friends with	59 (13.9%)	42 (15.1%)	128 (30.3%)	80 (28.8%)	146 (34.5%)	86 (30.9%)	90 (21.3%)	70 (25.2%)	2.050, 3df p = .562

Canadian students									
I find it difficult to make friends with students from other countries	95 (22.4%)	80 (28.8%)	209 (49.3%)	128 (46.0%)	83 (19.6%)	55 (19.8%)	37 (8.7%)	15 (5.4%)	5.622, 3df p = .132
I find it difficult to make friends with students from my home country	199 (47.0%)	124 (44.6%)	164 (38.8%)	113 (40.6%)	40 (9.5%)	31 (11.2%)	20 (4.7%)	10 (3.6%)	1.344, 3df p = .719

### Discrimination Challenges

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	
I feel I have been discriminated against by my professors	179 (42.3%)	86 (30.9%)	187 (44.2%)	132 (47.5%)	39 (9.2%)	44 (15.8%)	18 (4.3%)	16 (5.8%)	13.107, 3df p = .004
I feel I have been discriminated against by other university staff	173 (41.0%)	93 (33.5%)	203 (48.1%)	123 (44.2%)	33 (7.8%)	41 (14.7%)	13 (3.1%)	21 (7.6%)	17.560, 3df p = .001
I feel I have been discriminated against by Canadian students	145 (34.3%)	75 (27.0%)	184 (43.5%)	113 (40.6%)	64 (15.1%)	70 (25.2%)	30 (7.1%)	20 (7.2%)	12.037, 3df p = .007
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my ethnic group	167 (39.7%)	85 (30.6%)	180 (42.8%)	109 (39.2%)	48 (11.4%)	63 (22.7%)	26 (6.2%)	21 (7.6%)	18.191 3df p = .000
I feel I have been discriminated against by other international students	169 (40.0%)	101 (36.3%)	206 (48.8%)	140 (50.4%)	31 (7.3%)	32 (11.5%)	16 (3.8%)	5 (1.8%)	6.130, 3df p = .105



I feel I have been discriminated against due to my place of birth	154 (36.5%)	88 (31.7%)	192 (45.5%)	126 (45.3%)	52 (12.3%)	48 (17.3%)	24 (5.7%)	16 (5.8%)	4.005, 3df p = .261
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my religious affiliation	193 (45.5%)	113 (40.6%)	188 (44.3%)	131 (47.1%)	29 (6.8%)	20 (7.2%)	14 (3.3%)	14 (5.0%)	2.496, 3df p = .476

### COVID-19-Related Challenges

Item	Not at all		Not really		Somewhat		Very Much		Chi-Sq
	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	
Arranging meeting times with my professor or supervisor	70 (16.6%)	40 (14.4%)	127 (30.2%)	64 (23.0%)	144 (34.2%)	90 (32.4%)	80 (19.0%)	84 (30.2%)	12.802, 3df p = .005
Accessing healthcare services	69 (16.5%)	34 (12.2%)	117 (27.9%)	69 (24.8%)	156 (37.2%)	90 (32.4%)	77 (18.4%)	85 (30.6%)	14.450, 3df p = .002
Understanding lectures and readings	57 (13.5%)	48 (17.3%)	85 (20.1%)	55 (19.8%)	170 (40.3%)	118 (42.4%)	110 (26.1%)	57 (20.5%)	3.954, 3df p = .267
Keeping up with course assignments	47 (11.2%)	38 (13.7%)	96 (22.8%)	47 (16.9%)	155 (36.8%)	104 (37.4%)	123 (29.2%)	89 (32.0%)	4.158, 3df p = .245
Ability to study and concentrate	37 (8.8%)	21 (7.6%)	64 (15.2%)	38 (13.7%)	160 (37.9%)	114 (41.0%)	161 (38.2%)	105 (37.8%)	.972, 3df p = .808
Ability to locate suitable space to study independently	64 (15.2%)	40 (14.4%)	86 (20.4%)	55 (19.8%)	129 (30.6%)	82 (29.5%)	142 (33.7%)	101 (36.3%)	.508, 3df p = .917
Writing papers and/or theses	53 (12.6%)	33 (11.9%)	102 (24.2%)	72 (25.9%)	174 (41.2%)	104 (37.4%)	93 (22.0%)	69 (24.8%)	.508, 3df p = .917

Ability to earn money	54 (12.9%)	43 (15.5%)	84 (20.0%)	68 (24.5%)	142 (33.8%)	63 (22.7%)	140 (33.3%)	104 (37.4%)	10.222, 3df p = .017
Ability to pay rent on time	66 (15.7%)	44 (15.9%)	115 (27.3%)	81 (29.2%)	133 (31.6%)	78 (28.2%)	107 (25.4%)	74 (26.7%)	.985, 3df p = .805
Ability to pay bills on time	65 (15.4%)	49 (17.7%)	118 (28.0%)	82 (29.6%)	130 (30.8%)	75 (27.1%)	109 (25.8%)	71 (25.6%)	1.489, 3df p = .685
Ability to buy healthy foods	72 (17.1%)	50 (18.0%)	107 (25.4%)	76 (27.3%)	139 (33.0%)	83 (29.9%)	103 (24.5%)	69 (24.8%)	.846, 3df p = .838
Plans to return to my home country	64 (15.2%)	49 (17.6%)	77 (18.3%)	43 (15.5%)	80 (19.0%)	49 (17.6%)	199 (47.4%)	137 (49.3%)	1.697, 3df p = .638
Ability to return to Canada to resume my studies in person	111 (26.6%)	73 (26.8%)	77 (18.4%)	67 (24.6%)	93 (22.2%)	46 (16.9%)	137 (32.8%)	86 (31.6%)	5.449, 3df p = .142
Social gatherings (i.e., churches, parties, student's union meetings)	73 (17.3%)	41 (14.8%)	73 (17.3%)	54 (19.5%)	118 (28.0%)	83 (30.0%)	158 (37.4%)	99 (35.7%)	1.448, 3df p = .694

### Financial Challenges

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	
I find it difficult to pay my tuition fees	37 (8.7%)	25 (9.0%)	158 (37.3%)	76 (27.3%)	146 (34.4%)	101 (36.3%)	83 (19.6%)	76 (27.3%)	9.615, 3df p = .022
I do not have sufficient scholarship opportunities	24 (5.7%)	18 (6.5%)	95 (22.7%)	39 (14.1%)	141 (33.7%)	83 (30.0%)	159 (37.9%)	137 (49.5%)	12.461, 3df p = .006

compared to my Canadian peers									
I find it difficult to pay my rent	41 (9.7%)	34 (12.2%)	201 (47.4%)	92 (33.1%)	131 (30.9%)	97 (34.9%)	51 (12.0%)	55 (19.8%)	<b>16.785,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .001</b>
I borrow money from friends and relatives to be able to survive	97 (22.9%)	65 (23.5%)	186 (44.0%)	101 (36.5%)	90 (21.3%)	70 (25.3%)	50 (11.8%)	41 (14.8%)	4.636, 3df p = .201
The 20-hours part-time work for international students is a challenge to my finances	38 (9.0%)	31 (11.2%)	135 (32.1%)	66 (23.7%)	129 (30.6%)	89 (32.0%)	119 (28.3%)	92 (33.1%)	6.196, 3df p = .102

### Environmental and Cultural Challenges

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	
I am not familiar with the local bus system	160 (37.8%)	98 (35.3%)	178 (42.1%)	148 (53.2%)	60 (14.2%)	23 (8.3%)	25 (5.9%)	9 (3.2%)	<b>12.213,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .007</b>
I find it difficult to access my traditional foods and ingredients	96 (22.7%)	44 (15.8%)	153 (36.2%)	107 (38.5%)	105 (24.8%)	91 (32.7%)	69 (16.3%)	36 (12.9%)	<b>9.226,</b> <b>3df p</b> <b>= .026</b>
I have not adapted to the weather conditions	97 (22.9%)	55 (19.8%)	177 (41.8%)	129 (46.4%)	97 (22.9%)	66 (23.7%)	52 (12.3%)	28 (10.1%)	2.338, 3df p = .505
It is difficult to acquire accommodation off campus	91 (21.6%)	54 (19.5%)	185 (43.8%)	116 (41.9%)	111 (26.3%)	90 (32.5%)	35 (8.3%)	17 (6.1%)	3.767, 3df p = .288
It is difficult to acquire accommodation on campus	82 (19.8%)	51 (18.5%)	201 (48.4%)	133 (48.4%)	94 (22.7%)	65 (23.6%)	38 (9.2%)	26 (9.5%)	.212, 3df p = .976
I have not adapted to the local social norms and behavior	119 (28.2%)	82 (29.5%)	215 (50.9%)	152 (54.7%)	67 (15.9%)	36 (12.9%)	21 (5.0%)	8 (2.9%)	3.300, 3df p = .348

I have not adapted to the rules and regulations at University of Manitoba	180 (42.6%)	121 (43.5%)	215 (50.8%)	136 (48.9%)	21 (5.0%)	17 (6.1%)	7 (1.7%)	4 (1.4%)	.618, 3df p = .892
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### Program of Study of Respondents Significant Differences

Personal- and Social-Level Challenges									
Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	
I feel stressed because of some challenges I face off campus	42 (9.9%)	39 (14.0%)	117 (27.6%)	53 (19.1%)	177 (41.7%)	128 (46.0%)	88 (20.8%)	58 (20.9%)	8.233, 3df p = .041
I feel stressed because of some challenges I face on campus	61 (14.4%)	37 (13.3%)	161 (38.1%)	76 (27.3%)	131 (31.0%)	104 (37.4%)	70 (16.5%)	61 (21.9%)	10.541, 3df p = .014
I feel stressed because I am away from my family and loved ones back home	62 (14.6%)	40 (14.4%)	125 (29.5%)	75 (27.0%)	141 (33.3%)	97 (34.9%)	96 (22.6%)	66 (23.7%)	.596, 3df p = .897
I find it difficult to make friends with Canadian students	59 (13.9%)	42 (15.1%)	128 (30.3%)	80 (28.8%)	146 (34.5%)	86 (30.9%)	90 (21.3%)	70 (25.2%)	2.050, 3df p = .562
I find it difficult to make friends with students from other countries	95 (22.4%)	80 (28.8%)	209 (49.3%)	128 (46.0%)	83 (19.6%)	55 (19.8%)	37 (8.7%)	15 (5.4%)	5.622, 3df p = .132

I find it difficult to make friends with students from my home country	199 (47.0%)	124 (44.6%)	164 (38.8%)	113 (40.6%)	40 (9.5%)	31 (11.2%)	20 (4.7%)	10 (3.6%)	1.344, 3df p = .719
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### Discrimination Challenges

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	
I feel I have been discriminated against by my professors	179 (42.3%)	86 (30.9%)	187 (44.2%)	132 (47.5%)	39 (9.2%)	44 (15.8%)	18 (4.3%)	16 (5.8%)	13.107, 3df p = .004
I feel I have been discriminated against by other university staff	173 (41.0%)	93 (33.5%)	203 (48.1%)	123 (44.2%)	33 (7.8%)	41 (14.7%)	13 (3.1%)	21 (7.6%)	17.560, 3df p = .001
I feel I have been discriminated against by Canadian students	145 (34.3%)	75 (27.0%)	184 (43.5%)	113 (40.6%)	64 (15.1%)	70 (25.2%)	30 (7.1%)	20 (7.2%)	12.037, 3df p = .007
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my ethnic group	167 (39.7%)	85 (30.6%)	180 (42.8%)	109 (39.2%)	48 (11.4%)	63 (22.7%)	26 (6.2%)	21 (7.6%)	18.191 3df p = .000
I feel I have been discriminated against by other international students	169 (40.0%)	101 (36.3%)	206 (48.8%)	140 (50.4%)	31 (7.3%)	32 (11.5%)	16 (3.8%)	5 (1.8%)	6.130, 3df p = .105
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my place of birth	154 (36.5%)	88 (31.7%)	192 (45.5%)	126 (45.3%)	52 (12.3%)	48 (17.3%)	24 (5.7%)	16 (5.8%)	4.005, 3df p = .261
I feel I have been discriminated	193 (45.5%)	113 (40.6%)	188 (44.3%)	131 (47.1%)	29 (6.8%)	20 (7.2%)	14 (3.3%)	14 (5.0%)	2.496, 3df

against due to my religious affiliation									p = .476
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**COVID-19-Related Challenges**

Item	Not at all		Not really		Somewhat		Very Much		Chi-Sq
	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	
Arranging meeting times with my professor or supervisor	70 (16.6%)	40 (14.4%)	127 (30.2%)	64 (23.0%)	144 (34.2%)	90 (32.4%)	80 (19.0%)	84 (30.2%)	12.802, 3df p = .005
Accessing healthcare services	69 (16.5%)	34 (12.2% )	117 (27.9%)	69 (24.8%)	156 (37.2%)	90 (32.4%)	77 (18.4%)	85 (30.6%)	14.450, 3df p = .002
Understanding lectures and readings	57 (13.5%)	48 (17.3%)	85 (20.1%)	55 (19.8% )	170 (40.3%)	118 (42.4%)	110 (26.1%)	57 (20.5%)	3.954, 3df p = .267
Keeping up with course assignments	47 (11.2%)	38 (13.7%)	96 (22.8%)	47 (16.9%)	155 (36.8%)	104 (37.4%)	123 (29.2%)	89 (32.0%)	4.158, 3df p = .245
Ability to study and concentrate	37 (8.8%)	21 (7.6%)	64 (15.2%)	38 (13.7%)	160 (37.9%)	114 (41.0%)	161 (38.2%)	105 (37.8%)	.972, 3df p = .808
Ability to locate suitable space to study independently	64 (15.2%)	40 (14.4%)	86 (20.4%)	55 (19.8%)	129 (30.6%)	82 (29.5%)	142 (33.7%)	101 (36.3%)	.508, 3df p = .917
Writing papers and/or theses	53 (12.6%)	33 (11.9%)	102 (24.2%)	72 (25.9% )	174 (41.2%)	104 (37.4%)	93 (22.0%)	69 (24.8%)	.508, 3df p = .917
Ability to earn money	54 (12.9%)	43 (15.5%)	84 (20.0%)	68 (24.5%)	142 (33.8%)	63 (22.7%)	140 (33.3%)	104 (37.4%)	10.222, 3df p = .017
Ability to pay rent on time	66 (15.7%)	44 (15.9%)	115 (27.3%)	81 (29.2%)	133 (31.6%)	78 (28.2%)	107 (25.4%)	74 (26.7%)	.985, 3df p = .805

Ability to pay bills on time	65 (15.4%)	49 (17.7%)	118 (28.0%)	82 (29.6%)	130 (30.8%)	75 (27.1%)	109 (25.8%)	71 (25.6%)	1.489, 3df p = .685
Ability to buy healthy foods	72 (17.1%)	50 (18.0%)	107 (25.4%)	76 (27.3%)	139 (33.0%)	83 (29.9%)	103 (24.5%)	69 (24.8%)	.846, 3df p = .838
Plans to return to my home country	64 (15.2%)	49 (17.6%)	77 (18.3%)	43 (15.5%)	80 (19.0%)	49 (17.6%)	199 (47.4%)	137 (49.3%)	1.697, 3df p = .638
Ability to return to Canada to resume my studies in person	111 (26.6%)	73 (26.8%)	77 (18.4%)	67 (24.6%)	93 (22.2%)	46 (16.9%)	137 (32.8%)	86 (31.6%)	5.449, 3df p = .142
Social gatherings (i.e., churches, parties, student's union meetings)	73 (17.3%)	41 (14.8%)	73 (17.3%)	54 (19.5%)	118 (28.0%)	83 (30.0%)	158 (37.4%)	99 (35.7%)	1.448, 3df p = .694

### Financial Challenges

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	
I find it difficult to pay my tuition fees	37 (8.7%)	25 (9.0%)	158 (37.3%)	76 (27.3%)	146 (34.4%)	101 (36.3%)	83 (19.6%)	76 (27.3%)	9.615, 3df p = .022
I do not have sufficient scholarship opportunities compared to my Canadian peers	24 (5.7%)	18 (6.5%)	95 (22.7%)	39 (14.1%)	141 (33.7%)	83 (30.0%)	159 (37.9%)	137 (49.5%)	12.461, 3df p = .006
I find it difficult to pay my rent	41 (9.7%)	34 (12.2%)	201 (47.4%)	92 (33.1%)	131 (30.9%)	97 (34.9%)	51 (12.0%)	55 (19.8%)	16.785, 3df p = .001
I borrow money from friends and relatives to	97 (22.9%)	65 (23.5%)	186 (44.0%)	101 (36.5%)	90 (21.3%)	70 (25.3%)	50 (11.8%)	41 (14.8%)	4.636, 3df p = .201

be able to survive									
The 20-hours part-time work for international students is a challenge to my finances	38 (9.0%)	31 (11.2%)	135 (32.1%)	66 (23.7%)	129 (30.6%)	89 (32.0%)	119 (28.3%)	92 (33.1%)	6.196, 3df p = .102

### Environmental and Cultural Challenges

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	2 years or less	More than 2 years	
I am not familiar with the local bus system	160 (37.8%)	98 (35.3%)	178 (42.1%)	148 (53.2%)	60 (14.2%)	23 (8.3%)	25 (5.9%)	9 (3.2%)	12.213, 3df p = .007
I find it difficult to access my traditional foods and ingredients.	96 (22.7%)	44 (15.8%)	153 (36.2%)	107 (38.5%)	105 (24.8%)	91 (32.7%)	69 (16.3%)	36 (12.9%)	9.226, 3df p = .026
I have not adapted to the weather conditions	97 (22.9%)	55 (19.8%)	177 (41.8%)	129 (46.4%)	97 (22.9%)	66 (23.7%)	52 (12.3%)	28 (10.1%)	2.338, 3df p = .505
It is difficult to acquire accommodation off campus	91 (21.6%)	54 (19.5%)	185 (43.8%)	116 (41.9%)	111 (26.3%)	90 (32.5%)	35 (8.3%)	17 (6.1%)	3.767, 3df p = .288
It is difficult to acquire accommodation on campus	82 (19.8%)	51 (18.5%)	201 (48.4%)	133 (48.4%)	94 (22.7%)	65 (23.6%)	38 (9.2%)	26 (9.5%)	.212, 3df p = .976
I have not adapted to the local social norms and behavior	119 (28.2%)	82 (29.5%)	215 (50.9%)	152 (54.7%)	67 (15.9%)	36 (12.9%)	21 (5.0%)	8 (2.9%)	3.300, 3df p = .348
I have not adapted to the rules and regulations at University of Manitoba	180 (42.6%)	121 (43.5%)	215 (50.8%)	136 (48.9%)	21 (5.0%)	17 (6.1%)	7 (1.7%)	4 (1.4%)	.618, 3df p = .892

### Relationship Status of Respondents Significant Differences

Language Challenges	
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Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	
I am not able to verbally communicate confidently with others in English	233 (53.8%)	180 (65.2)	139 (32.1%)	64 (23.2)	49 (11.3%)	25 (9.1%)	12 (2.8%)	7 (2.5%)	<b>9.301</b> , 3df p = .003
I am not able to read and understand academic materials in English	295 (68.1%)	207 (74.7)	109 (25.2%)	61 (22.0)	26 (6.0%)	6 (2.2%)	3 (0.7%)	3 (1.1%)	7.569, 3df p = .056
I am not able to present orally in English in class due to the fear of making grammatical mistakes	216 (50.2%)	168 (60.6)	124 (28.8%)	59 (21.3)	66 (15.3%)	33 (11.9%)	24 (5.6%)	17 (6.1%)	<b>8.574</b> , 3df p = .036
I am not able to write assignments and research projects in English	266 (61.4%)	194 (70.0)	132 (30.5%)	73 (26.4)	29 (6.7%)	8 (2.9%)	6 (1.4%)	2 (0.7%)	<b>8.293</b> , 3df p = .040

### Academic Challenges

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	
I do not actively engage in class presentations and discussions	113 (26.1%)	105 (37.9)	174 (40.2%)	101 (36.5)	118 (27.3%)	58 (20.9%)	28 (6.5%)	13 (4.7%)	<b>11.913</b> , 3df p = .008
Some of my lecturers do not respond well to my academic concerns	100 (23.1%)	92 (33.2)	214 (49.4%)	117 (42.2)	86 (19.9%)	53 (19.1%)	33 (7.6%)	15 (5.4%)	<b>9.528</b> , 3df p = .023

I am not able to complete all required assignments and projects	171 (39.6%)	130 (46.9%)	199 (46.1%)	119 (43.0%)	55 (12.7%)	24 (8.7%)	7 (1.6%)	4 (1.4%)	5.049 , 3df p = .168
I am not accustomed to the teaching methods used in Canada	127 (29.3%)	107 (38.6%)	203 (46.9%)	110 (39.7%)	78 (18.0%)	45 (16.2%)	25 (5.8%)	15 (5.4%)	6.745 , 3df p = .080
I am not comfortable working in groups with Canadian students	181 (42.0%)	133 (48.0%)	183 (42.5%)	111 (40.1%)	48 (11.1%)	29 (10.5%)	19 (4.4%)	4 (1.4%)	6.239 , 3df p = .101
I am not comfortable working in groups with students from other countries	213 (49.3%)	151 (54.5%)	180 (41.7%)	108 (39.0%)	30 (6.9%)	17 (6.1%)	9 (2.1%)	1 (0.4%)	4.905 , 3df p = .179
I am not comfortable working in groups with students from my home country	236 (54.6%)	163 (58.8%)	160 (37.0%)	90 (32.5%)	24 (5.6%)	17 (6.1%)	12 (2.8%)	7 (2.5%)	1.660 , 3df p = .646

### Discrimination Challenges

Item	Strongly disagree		Disagree		Agree		Strongly agree		Chi-Sq
	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	
I feel I have been discriminated against by Canadian students	131 (30.3%)	93 (33.6%)	200 (46.3%)	100 (36.1%)	75 (17.4%)	59 (21.3%)	26 (6.0%)	25 (9.0%)	8.217 , 3df p = .042
I feel I have been discriminated against by my professors	157 (36.3%)	114 (41.2%)	203 (47.0%)	118 (42.6%)	49 (11.3%)	34 (12.3%)	23 (5.3%)	11 (4.0%)	2.511 , 3df p = .473
I feel I have been discriminated against by other university staff	158 (36.7%)	113 (40.8%)	203 (47.1%)	126 (45.5%)	50 (11.6%)	24 (8.7%)	20 (4.6%)	14 (5.1%)	2.299 , 3df p = .513

I feel I have been discriminated against by other international students	159 (36.9%)	115 (41.7%)	212 (49.2%)	134 (48.6%)	46 (10.7%)	19 (6.9%)	14 (3.2%)	8 (2.9%)	3.697, 3df p = .296
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my place of birth	143 (33.2%)	102 (36.8%)	205 (47.6%)	118 (42.6%)	63 (14.6%)	35 (12.6%)	20 (4.6%)	22 (7.9%)	5.136, 3df p = .162
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my ethnic group	150 (34.8%)	105 (38.0%)	194 (45.0%)	100 (36.2%)	60 (13.9%)	49 (17.8%)	27 (6.3%)	22 (8.0%)	5.919, 3df p = .116
I feel I have been discriminated against due to my religious affiliation	179 (41.3%)	130 (46.9%)	205 (47.3%)	119 (43.0%)	33 (7.6%)	16 (5.8%)	16 (3.7%)	12 (4.3%)	2.932, 3df p = .402

### COVID-19-Related Challenges

Item	Not at all		Not really		Somewhat		Very Much		Chi-Sq
	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	
Social gatherings (i.e., churches, parties, student's union meeting)	73 (17.0%)	42 (15.2)	87 (20.2%)	41 (14.9)	133 (30.9%)	71 (25.7%)	137 (31.9%)	122 (44.2%)	<b>11.557, 3df p = .009</b>
Understanding lectures and readings	58 (13.4%)	48 (17.4%)	85 (19.7%)	56 (20.3%)	178 (41.2%)	115 (41.7%)	111 (25.7%)	57 (20.7%)	3.614, 3df p = .306
Keeping up with course assignments	43 (10.0%)	44 (15.9%)	87 (20.2%)	56 (20.3%)	164 (38.1%)	98 (35.5%)	136 (31.6%)	78 (28.3%)	5.759, 3df p = .124
Ability to study and concentrate	34 (7.9%)	25 (9.1%)	67 (15.5%)	35 (12.7%)	177 (41.1%)	102 (37.0%)	153 (35.5%)	114 (41.3%)	3.454, 3df p = .327

Ability to locate suitable space to study independently	68 (15.8%)	35 (12.7%)	95 (22.1%)	46 (16.7%)	128 (29.8%)	89 (32.2%)	139 (32.3%)	106 (38.4%)	5.736 , 3df p = .125
Writing papers and/or theses	50 (11.6%)	38 (13.8%)	109 (25.3%)	67 (24.3%)	182 (42.2%)	99 (35.9%)	90 (20.9%)	72 (26.1%)	4.405 , 3df p = .221
Arranging meeting times with my professor or supervisor	63 (14.7%)	49 (17.8%)	124 (28.8%)	69 (25.0%)	140 (32.6%)	97 (35.1%)	103 (24.0%)	61 (22.1%)	2.509 , 3df p = .474
Ability to earn money	61 (14.2%)	36 (13.0%)	103 (24.0%)	52 (18.8%)	114 (26.6%)	93 (33.7%)	151 (35.2%)	95 (34.4%)	5.140 , 3df p = .162
Ability to pay rent on time	66 (15.3%)	45 (16.4%)	115 (26.7%)	83 (30.2%)	130 (30.2%)	83 (30.2%)	119 (27.7%)	64 (23.3%)	2.068 , 3df p = .559
Ability to pay bills on time	70 (16.2%)	45 (16.4%)	121 (28.1%)	82 (29.8%)	121 (28.1%)	85 (30.9%)	119 (27.6%)	63 (22.9%)	2.081 , 3df p = .556
Ability to buy healthy foods	75 (17.5%)	47 (17.0%)	106 (24.7%)	79 (28.6%)	132 (30.8%)	92 (33.3%)	116 (27.0%)	58 (21.0%)	3.819 , 3df p = .282
Plans to return to my home country	67 (15.6%)	48 (17.4%)	70 (16.3%)	50 (18.1%)	88 (20.5%)	45 (16.3%)	204 (47.6%)	133 (48.2%)	2.234 , 3df p = .525
Ability to return to Canada to resume my studies in person	116 (27.2%)	70 (25.9%)	95 (22.2%)	51 (18.9%)	88 (20.6%)	52 (19.3%)	128 (30.0%)	97 (35.9%)	2.950 , 3df p = .399
Accessing healthcare services	64 (15.0%)	39 (14.1%)	122 (28.5%)	64 (23.2%)	146 (34.1%)	105 (38.0%)	96 (22.4%)	68 (24.6%)	2.951 , 3df p = .399

**Personal Strategies for Adjusting/Coping**

Item	Very Unimportant	Unimportant	Important	Very Important	Chi-Sq
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	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	Not in a relationship	In a relationship	
Interaction/engagement with specific student group or association	23 (5.3%)	8 (2.9%)	95 (22.1%)	59 (21.6%)	193 (44.9%)	105 (38.5%)	119 (27.7%)	101 (37.0%)	<b>8.494</b> <b>, 3df</b> <b>p</b> <b>= .037</b>
Seeking academic guidance (writing groups, academic workshops, writing tutor, etc.)	20 (4.6%)	11 (4.0%)	54 (12.5%)	45 (16.4%)	172 (39.9%)	92 (33.6%)	185 (42.9%)	126 (46.0%)	4.107 <b>, 3df</b> <b>p</b> <b>= .250</b>
Seeking additional funding opportunities	11 (2.6%)	8 (2.9%)	33 (7.7%)	18 (6.6%)	109 (25.3%)	56 (20.5%)	277 (64.4%)	191 (70.0%)	2.790 <b>, 3df</b> <b>p</b> <b>= .425</b>
Seeking academic guidance (writing groups, academic workshops, writing tutor, etc.)	26 (6.0%)	10 (3.6%)	55 (12.8%)	42 (15.3%)	145 (33.6%)	84 (30.7%)	205 (47.6%)	138 (50.4%)	3.395 <b>, 3df</b> <b>p</b> <b>= .335</b>
Staying in touch with family and friends back home	10 (2.3%)	4 (1.5%)	18 (4.2%)	7 (2.6%)	135 (31.4%)	77 (28.1%)	267 (62.1%)	186 (67.9%)	3.360 <b>, 3df</b> <b>p</b> <b>= .339</b>
Staying in touch with local friends	9 (2.1%)	2 (0.7%)	31 (7.2%)	16 (5.9%)	175 (40.8%)	102 (37.4%)	214 (49.9%)	153 (56.0%)	4.158 <b>, 3df</b> <b>p</b> <b>= .245</b>
Partaking in community events (e.g., festivals, student union organisations, parties, etc.)	31 (7.2%)	9 (3.3%)	100 (23.3%)	58 (21.2%)	156 (36.3%)	114 (41.6%)	143 (33.3%)	93 (33.9%)	6.124 <b>, 3df</b> <b>p</b> <b>= .106</b>
Engaging in recreational activities (e.g., movies, games, sightseeing, etc.)	13 (3.0%)	3 (1.1%)	46 (10.7%)	33 (12.0%)	179 (41.6%)	100 (36.5%)	192 (44.7%)	138 (50.4%)	5.286 <b>, 3df</b> <b>p</b> <b>= .152</b>

I am personally motivated to succeed at all cost.	4 (0.9%)	2 (0.7%)	26 (6.0%)	22 (8.0%)	162 (37.7%)	99 (36.1%)	238 (55.3%)	151 (55.1%)	1.153 , 3df p = .76 4
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