

International Student Personal Finances Survey Report

January 15, 2024

Prepared for UASU Executive Committee by
Department of Research and Advocacy



Overview

This survey ran on the UASU Perks platform from January 8th to 15th. It used redundant methods to focus on international students while eliminating incentives for domestic students to misrepresent themselves to receive the (small) Perks point value. This approach produced 88 international respondents with a very high degree of certainty, representing 10% of total survey contacts. This report focuses exclusively on international respondents. Several questions included text summarizing parts of [IRCC's December 7th announcement](#).

Key Results

Note that all Likert scales were five-point with a neutral option.

- 46% somewhat/strongly agreed they would probably work off-campus this semester for over 20 hours per week.
- 49% believed that at least 50% of students like them worked over 20 hours per week off campus, while class was in session, when the limit was in force.
- 69% somewhat/strongly agreed that international students should have the option to work more than 20 hours per week while class is in session.
- 40% (a plurality) supported a 30 hour per week limit; 45% believed it was somewhat/much too high; 16% believed it was somewhat/much too low.
- 46% somewhat/strongly agreed that advocating to the government on the work limit is a worthwhile use of time and resources; 17% somewhat/strongly disagreed.
- When asked about potential positive and negative impacts of the new cost-of-living financial requirement:
 - 48% believed fewer international students would want to come to Canada.
 - 51% believed international students would have a more accurate idea of the cost of living in Canada.
 - 32% believed international students will be less likely to face serious financial pressure, but 39% believed international students and their families won't be able to afford this, and 38% believed international students will go into more debt.
 - 35% believed international students will just borrow more money and then give it back after they prove they have the funds.
 - 40% somewhat/strongly agreed, and 41% somewhat/strongly disagreed, that this increase will have a net positive impact on new international students.

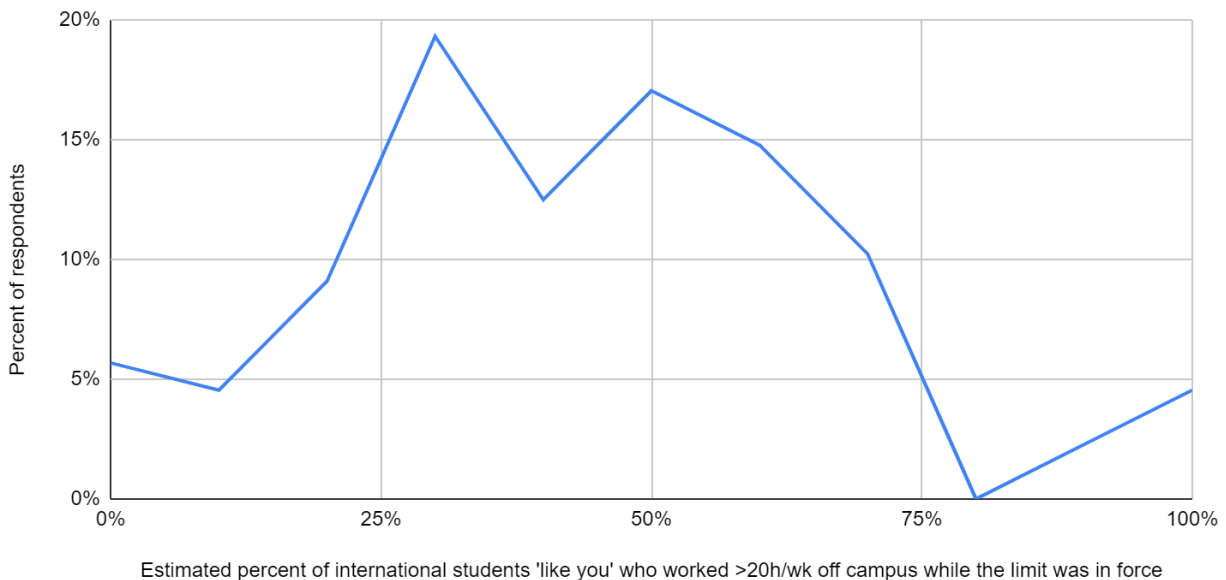
Workforce Participation

"Normally, international students are only allowed to work off campus for 20 hours per week or less while class is in session. That limit has now been suspended until the end of April 2024. Agree or disagree? This semester, I will probably work off campus for more than 20 hours per week."

- Strongly agree: 27%
- Somewhat agree: 19%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 19%
- Somewhat disagree: 16%
- Strongly disagree: 18%

"When the 20-hours-per-week limit was in force, in your opinion, what percent of international students like you worked more than 20 hours a week, off campus, while class was in session?"

This question ran on a slider scale in increments of 10%. 49% of international respondents believed that at least 50% of students like them did this. The average estimated percent of students who did this was 44%. While this is a small sample size, inherently limited in terms of indirect reporting, and likely overestimating other students' behavior, advocates frequently point out that the 20-hours-per-week limit can drive international students in financial need toward sometimes-hazardous employment under the table.



Opinions on Work Limit Policy

"Agree or disagree? I think international students should have the option to work more than 20 hours per week while class is in session."

- Strongly agree: 47%
- Somewhat agree: 22%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 14%
- Somewhat disagree: 9%
- Strongly disagree: 9%

"Understanding that international students need to make money, but also that working too many hours can prevent students from having a quality academic experience, how do you feel about a potential 30-hour-per-week limit on off-campus work while class is in session?"

- 30 hours a week is much too high; it's too hard to work 30 hours per week and still be in school: 23%
- 30 hours a week is somewhat too high: 22%
- 30 hours a week is just right: 40%
- 30 hours a week is somewhat too low: 6%
- 30 hours a week is much too low; students who need to work full-time during school should have the option: 10%

"When the government announced that the 20-hours-per-week limit would continue to be suspended until April, the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations (CASA) helped make that happen. Agree or disagree? Advocating to the government on this issue is a worthwhile use of time and resources."

- Strongly agree: 26%
- Somewhat agree: 20%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 36%
- Somewhat disagree: 11%
- Strongly disagree: 6%

"Anything else you think we should know about international student work limits?"

- *Full time work should be allowed and co-op programs should be encouraged for Masters students as well.*
- *Give them what they want*
- *International students are a group vulnerable to labor exploitation and precarious work conditions. We face discrimination in employment opportunities and are forced to accept any contract offered to us.*

- *Less working hours and higher tuitions fees are unaffordable*
- *More opportunities*
- *Students working on campus go over the 20 hour work limit so, I don't see why off campus can't be the same.*
- *The ball should be in our court. Putting a limit on the number of hours we're working does not make sense. Why do you need to decide how much we can work?*
- *The pays on job make them want to pick up more hours*
- *The work limit can be raised to 30 hours a week.*
- *We should have the same rights as all students*

Opinions on Cost-of-Living Financial Requirement

"The government has now announced that "the cost-of-living financial requirement for study permit applicants will be raised...The cost-of-living requirement for study permit applicants has not changed since the early 2000s, when it was set at \$10,000 for a single applicant. As such, the financial requirement hasn't kept up with the cost of living over time, resulting in students arriving in Canada only to learn that their funds aren't adequate. For 2024, a single applicant will need to show they have \$20,635, representing 75% of [the low-income cut-off], in addition to their first year of tuition and travel costs. This change will apply to new study permit applications received on or after January 1, 2024. This means that new study permit applications will need to prove much more funding than before. This change was not the result of student advocacy, and we want to know how international students see it. What do you think the most likely results of this change will be? Choose all that apply."

- International students will be less likely to face serious financial pressure: 32%
- International students will have a more accurate idea of the cost of living in Canada: 51%
- International students will just borrow more money and then give it back after they prove they have the funds, so they won't be any better off: 35%
- International students and their families won't be able to afford this: 39%
- International students will go into more debt: 38%
- Fewer international students will want to come to Canada: 48%

"Agree or disagree? Raising the cost-of-living financial requirement from \$10,000 to \$20,000+ will generally have a positive impact on the international students who arrive and study in Canada."

- Strongly agree (net POSITIVE impact on new international students): 25%
- Somewhat agree: 15%
- Neither agree nor disagree: 19%
- Somewhat disagree: 16%
- Strongly disagree (net NEGATIVE impact on new international students): 25%

"Anything else you think we should know about the change to cost-of-living financial requirements?"

- *Almost everything is stated in the questions above.*
- *I think the increase in financial requirements will only benefit Canadians.*
- *I understand why the requirements were increased but maybe they should look at increasing minimum wages too in lieu of the rising prices.*
- *It will put more pressure on parents.*
- *It's going to negatively impact the students coming to Canada and Canada being the hub of international students and intellect. Moreover, students are helping economy providing service to the industry.*
- *It's too high and not fair for international students as we are already contributing to the economy*
- *It's too expensive*
- *Lower the price for rent and tuition*
- *More scholarships*
- *Reduce prices for international students*
- *Reduce the tuition fee to support them*
- *Rent should be low on campus as compared to city rentals.*
- *That's really expensive...*
- *The increase in the financial stability to be proven just will make us students not want to come to Canada*
- *The University should not only entice students with an entrance scholarship but also provide more renewable scholarships or grants for international students to reduce their tuition so that they can solely focus on academics.*
- *The University should offer more scholarships and financial support for students - not increasing tuition and fees and cutting important academic services.*
- *Yes, give more scholarships to international students please.*