



# **From Application and Beyond: Tracking Aspirations, Motivations, and Experiences of Ontario's Transfer Students**

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# Introduction

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- There has been a priority placed by the provincial government on a more seamless postsecondary education system in Ontario.
- Announcement in 2011 by Ontario's Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) of a new provincial credit transfer framework, committing \$73.7 million over five years.
- MAESD continues to fund transfer activities through ONCAT and Credit Transfer Institutional Grants for every post-secondary institution.
- Within this framework, the number of transfer agreements has grown and institutions have increased initiatives to foster student mobility.
- Has led to a great deal of interest in finding out who transfers, and the transfer experience from the student perspective.

Funded by the Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer



# What do we know about transfer students?

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- Diverse population, more likely to come from underrepresented groups.
- More likely to be older, have dependents, work for pay, have less discretionary time.
- More likely to be academically engaged and academically confident (Pendleton & Lambert-Maberly, 2006, UBC) and more academically resourceful (Kennett & Maki, 2014, Trent) than direct entry
  - However, qualitative research has shown that college transfers express concern about their preparedness academically (Gawley & McGowan, 2006 (Ontario); Carleton University, 2013)
- Less interested in general orientation programs (generally target younger students); more interested in program specific/ academic orientation
- Difficulties integrating socially (peer groups already established)
- Face admission and registration challenges (Carleton, 2013)

# Research questions

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## Phase 1: University and College Applicant Survey

- How do the sociodemographic, academic, and decision-making profiles of Ontario college applicants who aspire to university compare to those who do not?
- How do the sociodemographic, academic, and decision-making profiles of Ontario university applicants who had previously completed a college credential compare to those with no previous PSE?

## Phase 2: Follow up survey of applicants

- What are the outcomes and experiences of college applicants with degree aspirations?
- How do the transition experiences compare between college-to-university transfer students and those with no previous PSE?

**Project funded by ONCAT**

# Study Design

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# Phase 1 methodology: Survey and administration

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Source: Academica's University and College Applicant Survey (UCAS™) for the years 2010-2015. The UCAS explores a range of applicant views concerning:

- Motivations for PSE; factors influencing choice, use of information sources, key decision factors, demographics, and aspirations.
- The same survey is administered annually to college and university applicants across Canada. Response rate averages ~20%.
- This analysis focussed on applicants (residing from inside or outside Canada) to Ontario colleges and universities.

## 1. Applicants to Ontario Colleges N= 72,419

All Ontario colleges are represented in all years, with Ontario College Application Services (OCAS) overseeing the distribution of email invitations to applicants who opt-in to participate.

## 2. Applicants to Ontario's Universities N= 78,062

Universities decide annually whether to participate, resulting in a variable university applicant pool.



# Transfer Aspirants (College Applicants)

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Label	College applicants who are University transfer aspirants: “Aspire for degree”	College applicants who “Do not aspire for degree”	Other pathways: Remainder of applicant sample (Excluded from analysis)
Sample size	22,600	35,239	14,579
Description	Plan to attain a degree or postgrad credential; did not have a degree already	Plan to attain a 1, 2, or 3 year cert/ diploma; did not have a degree already	Indicated they already had a degree

# Transfer Students (University Applicants)

Label	Transfer Students: College Graduates	High School Graduates	Other Pathways: Remainder of applicant sample (excluded from analysis)
Sample size	2,759	68,054	7,249
Description	Applicants to an Ontario university whose highest level of education was a college or trades credential	Applicants to an Ontario university whose highest level of education was a high school diploma*	University applicants with incomplete PSE, or university degrees

\*Those who indicated their highest education was HS diploma, but also indicated they attended PSE in the previous year were placed in “other pathways”; includes both direct and delayed entrants from HS.



# Phase 2 methodology: Criteria for inclusion

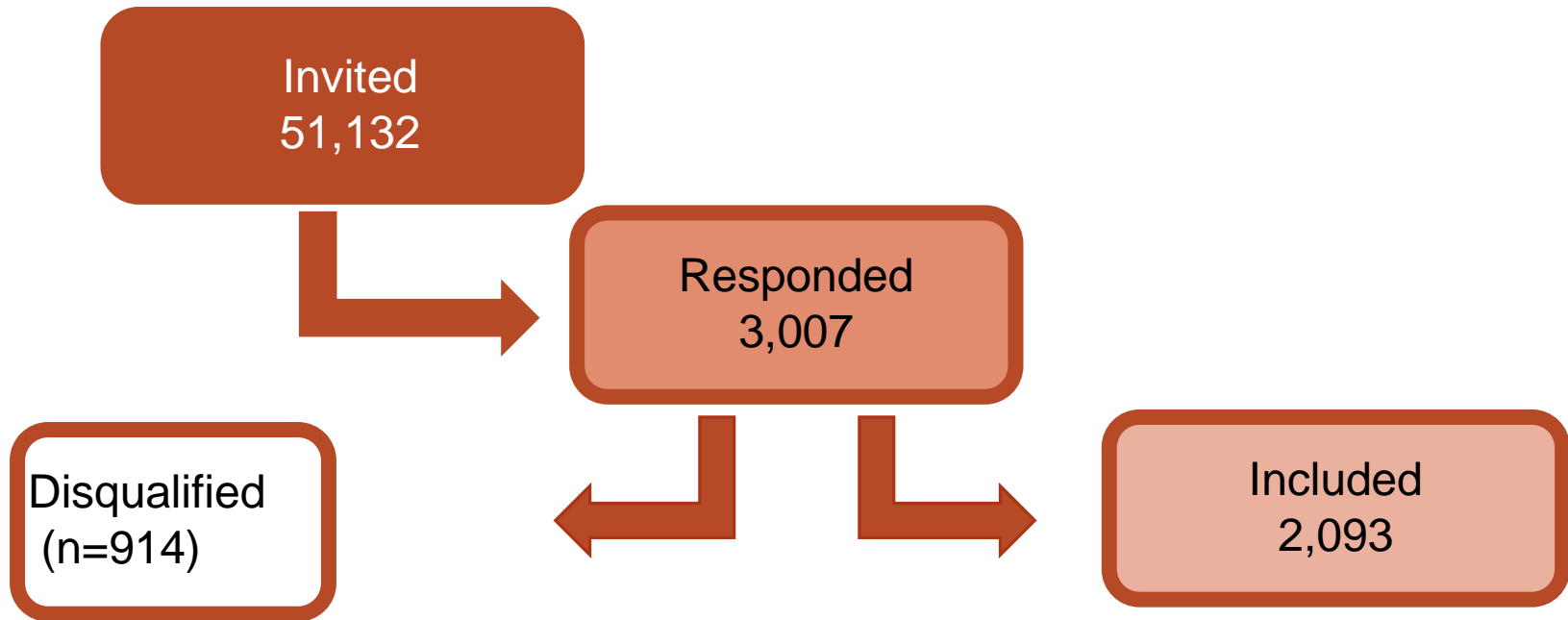
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UCAS respondents (2010-2015) who:

- were College applicants who “aspired to a degree”, or
  - were University applicants
    - Phase 1 only asked if respondent has incomplete college *or* university; 2<sup>nd</sup> phase further probed if college or university; college only was included
  - indicated on the UCAS that they were interested in further research and provided a valid email address.
- 51,132 email invitations sent November 1, 2016; in the field until December 9, 2016

# Phase 2 methodology: Survey and administration

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- Respondents from the 'university applicant' pool were disqualified if: they attended a university outside of Ontario or did not attend university, or indicated they previously attended university.
- Respondents from the 'college applicant' pool were disqualified if they indicated that they did not end up attending college.

## Phase 2 pathways of interest

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	<b>Pathways</b>	<b>n size</b>
Current or previous college students, but not university	No longer aspire to university	185
	Still aspire to university	221
Current or previous university students	Previously attended college	122
	No previous PSE	1,449
	Other pathways (non college)*	102

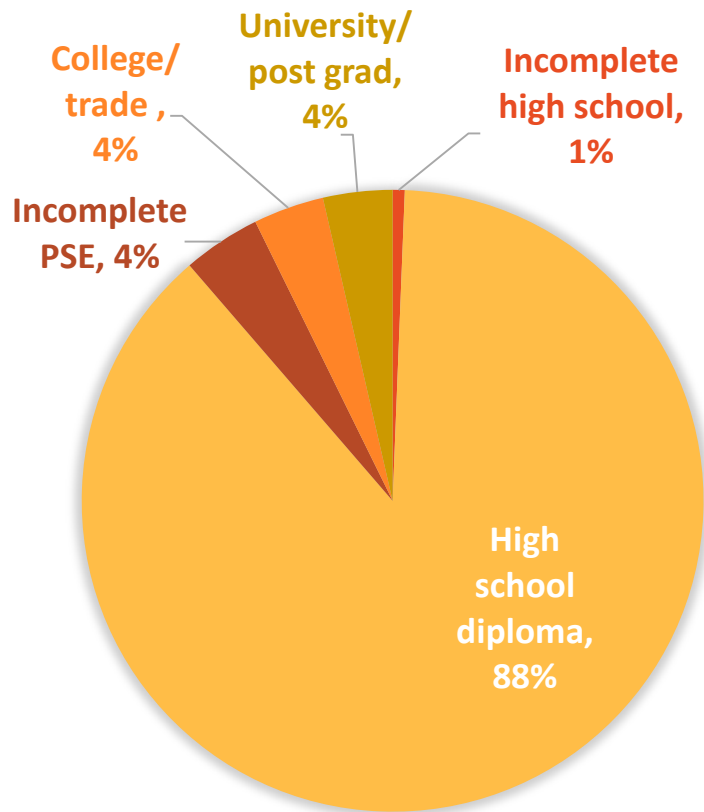
\*excluded from analysis

# Results

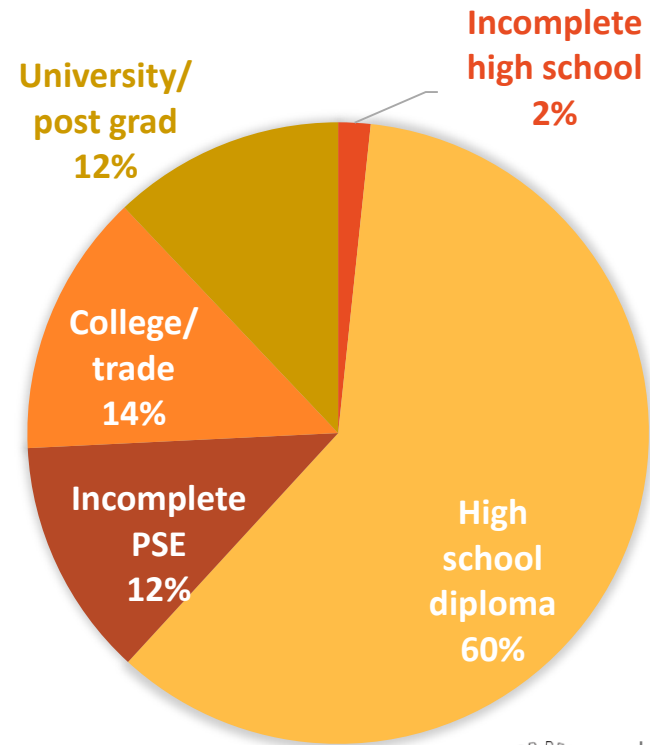
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# Previous education of college and university applicants, 2010-2015 (phase 1)

## UNIVERSITY APPLICANTS

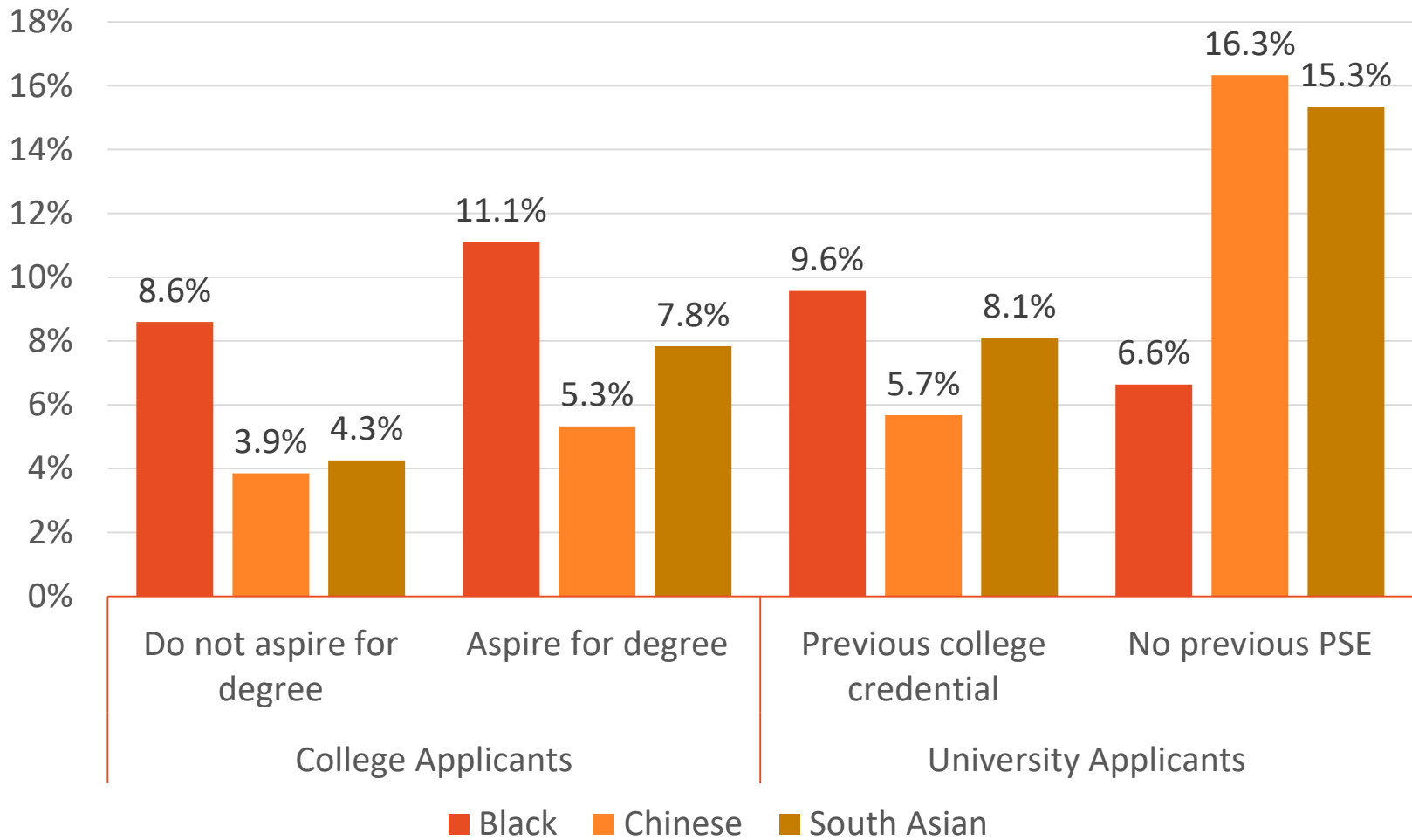


## COLLEGE APPLICANTS

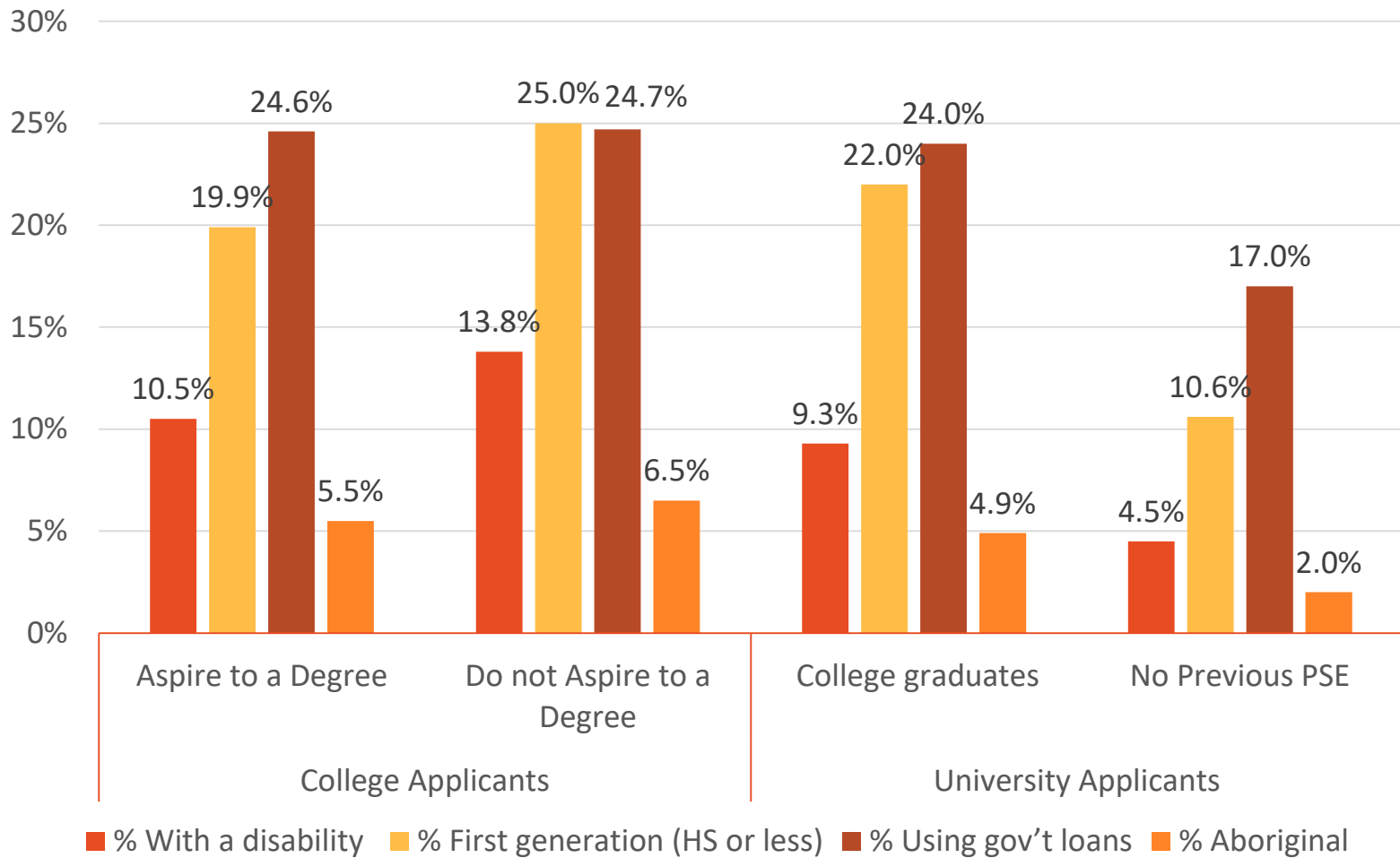


Note: High school graduates include delayed and direct entry

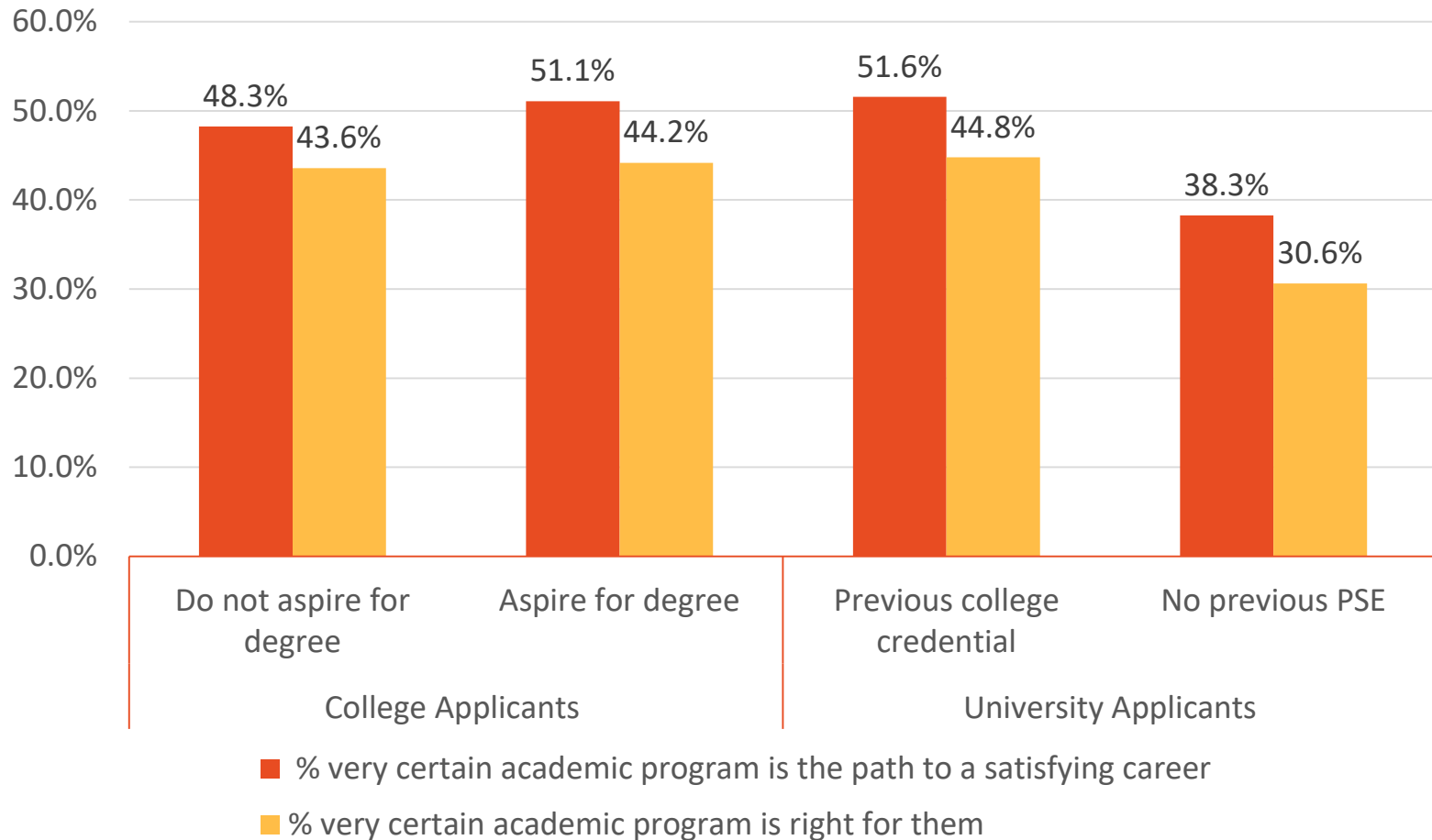
# Visible minority group by pathway (selected groups)



# “Underrepresented” groups by pathway



# Program certainty by aspirations and pathway





# Information sources for PSE decision: key findings

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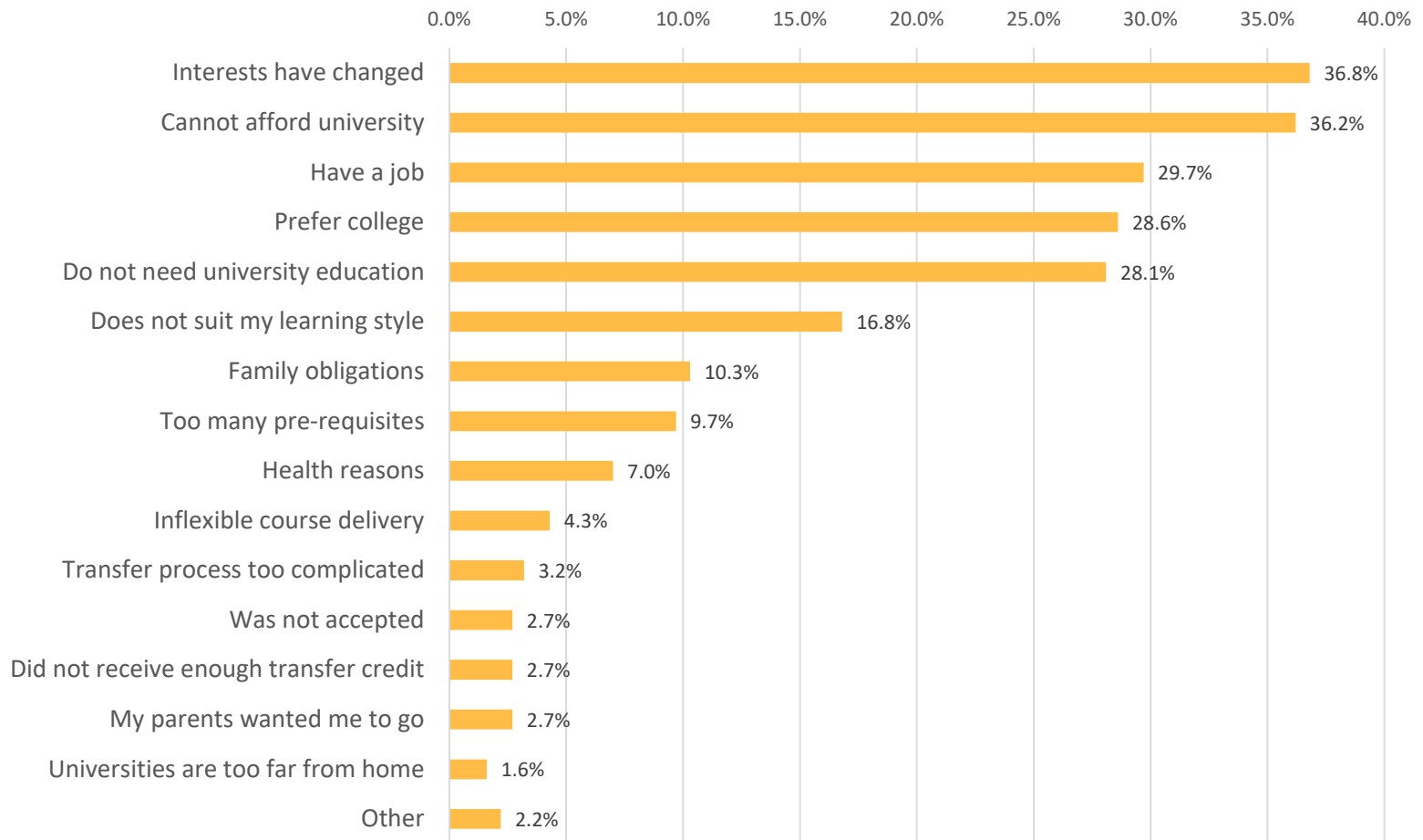
- College applicants who aspire to a degree versus those who do not, differ little on sources of information used.
- However, university applicants with a college credential, compared with those without PSE are:
  - More likely to use professor consultations; less likely to use recruitment activities related to high school
  - Less likely to use institutional specific materials except course calendar and website
  - Rely on personal contact rather than broader institutional contact, i.e. email, phone calls, regular mail, informal visits, professors, and friends
    - May be indicative of requiring specific information related to their individual case, i.e credits transferred



# Phase 2: Follow up survey

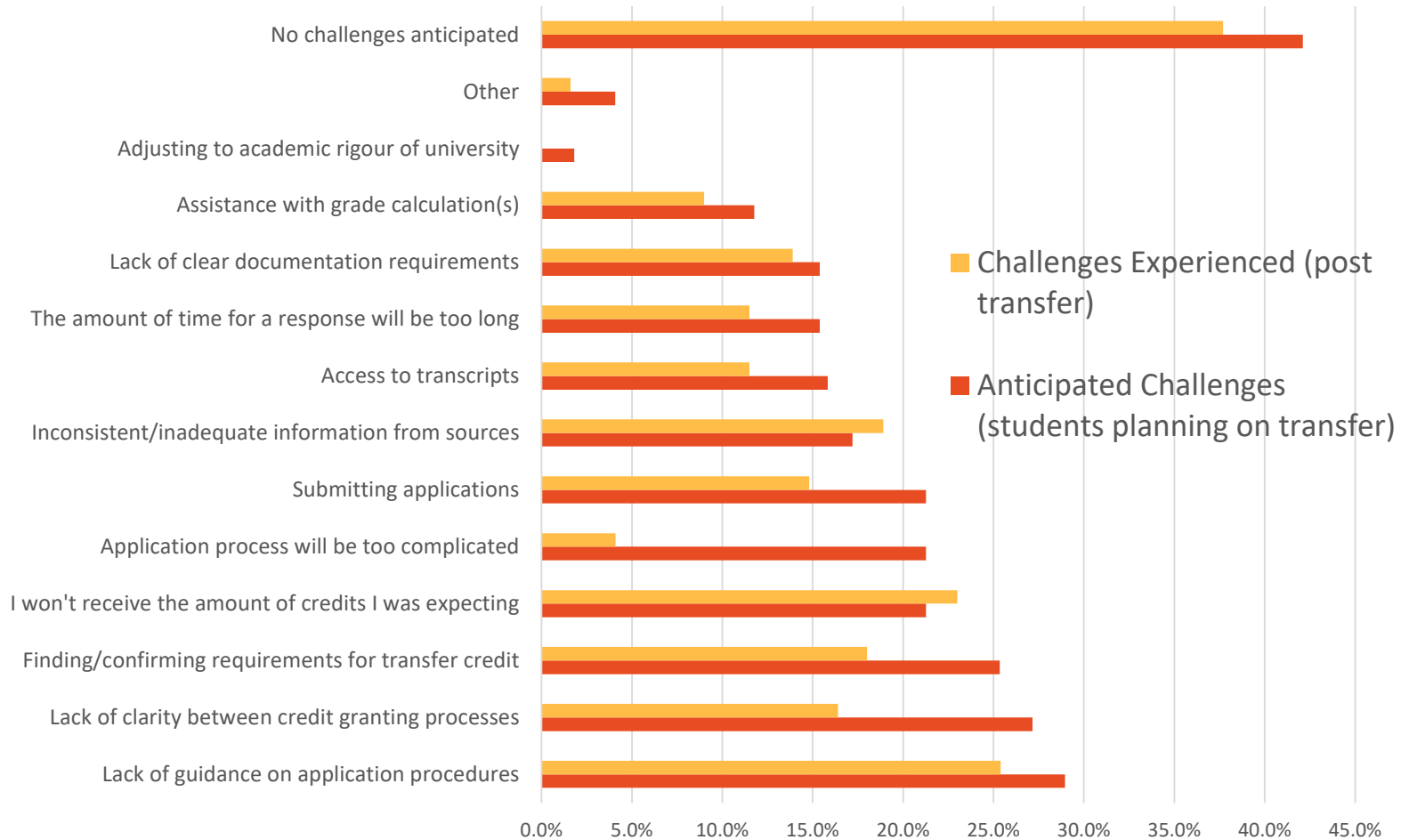
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# “No longer aspire”: Reasons for no longer wanting to attend university



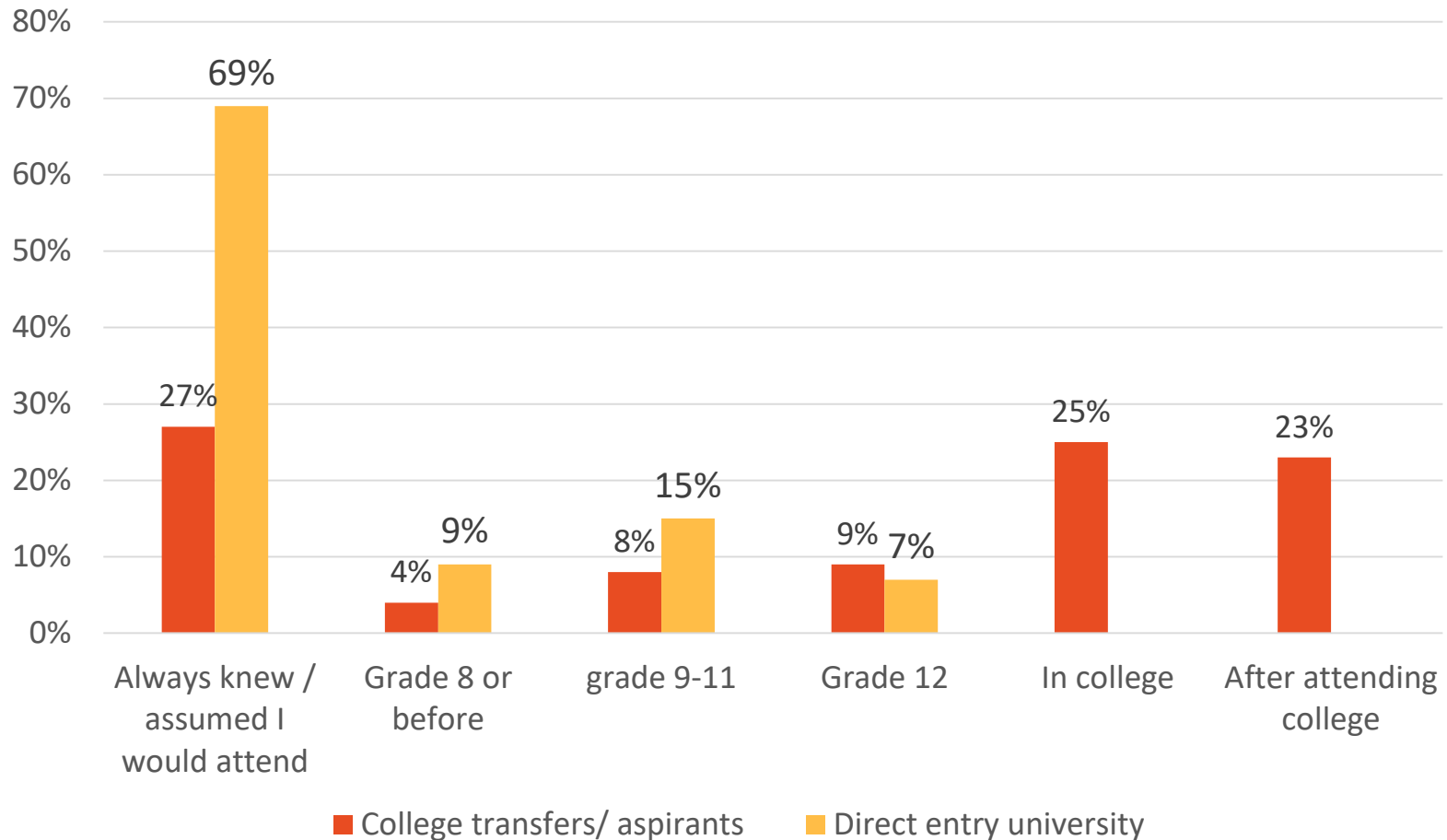
n=185, previous or current college students who no longer aspire to transfer

# The transfer process: Anticipated versus actual challenges experienced



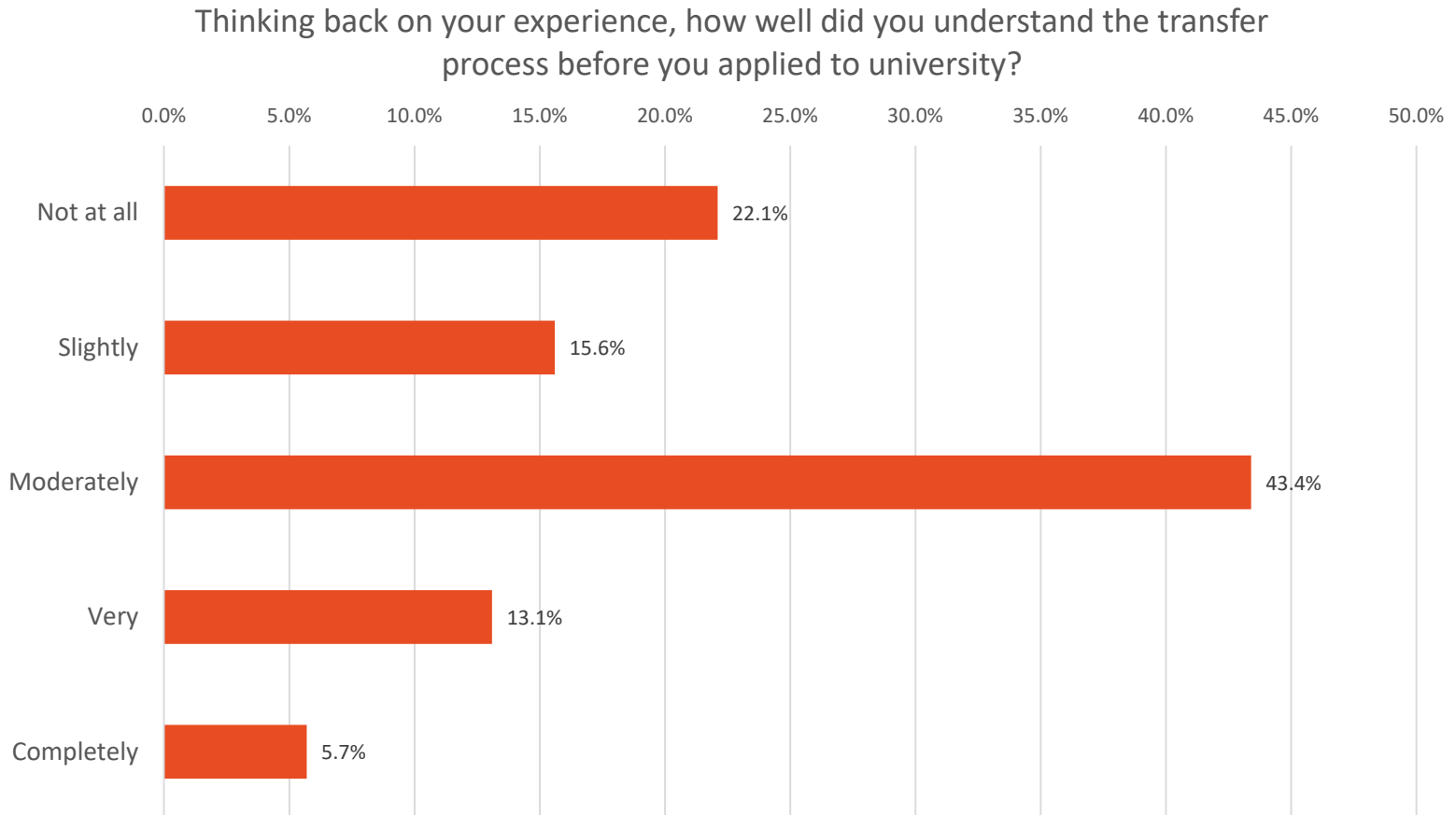
n=122 college to university transfer students (post-transfer); n=221 college students pre-transfer

# Evolution of university plans by pathway



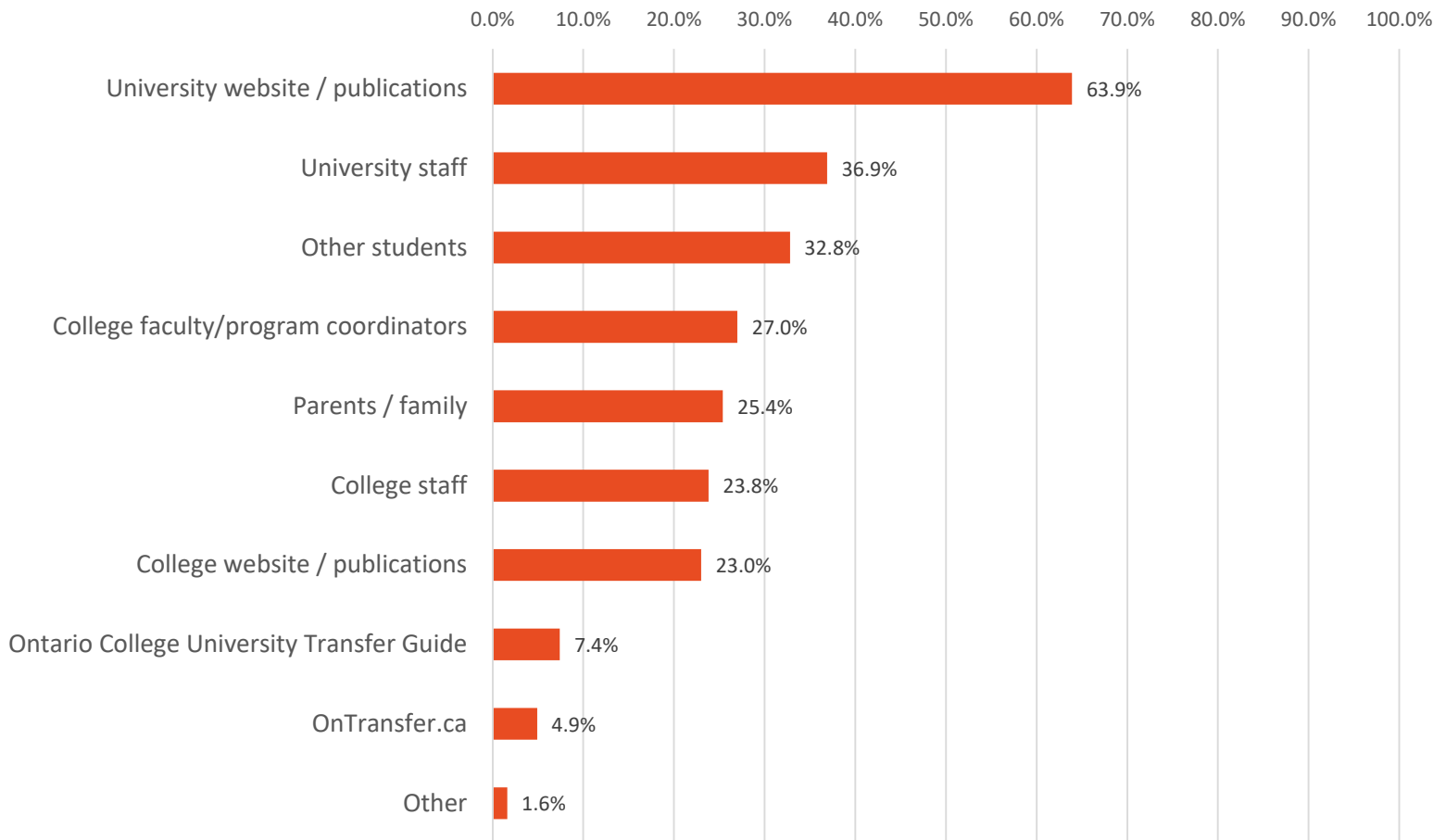
College transfers/ aspirants include both those who “still aspired” to university and those who had transferred, n=343

# Understanding of transfer process before applying to university



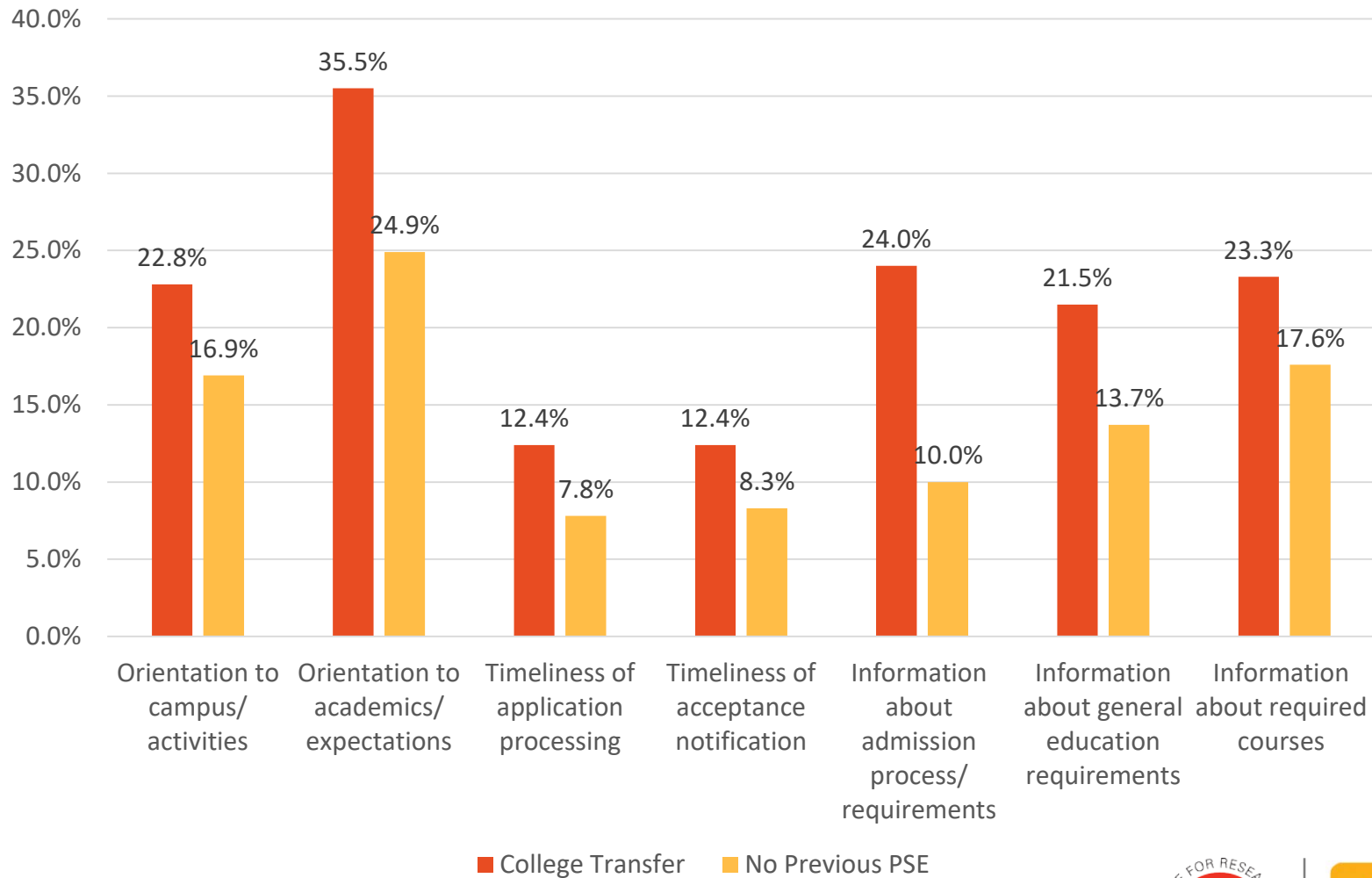
n=122 college to university transfer students

# Sources of information used by transfer students



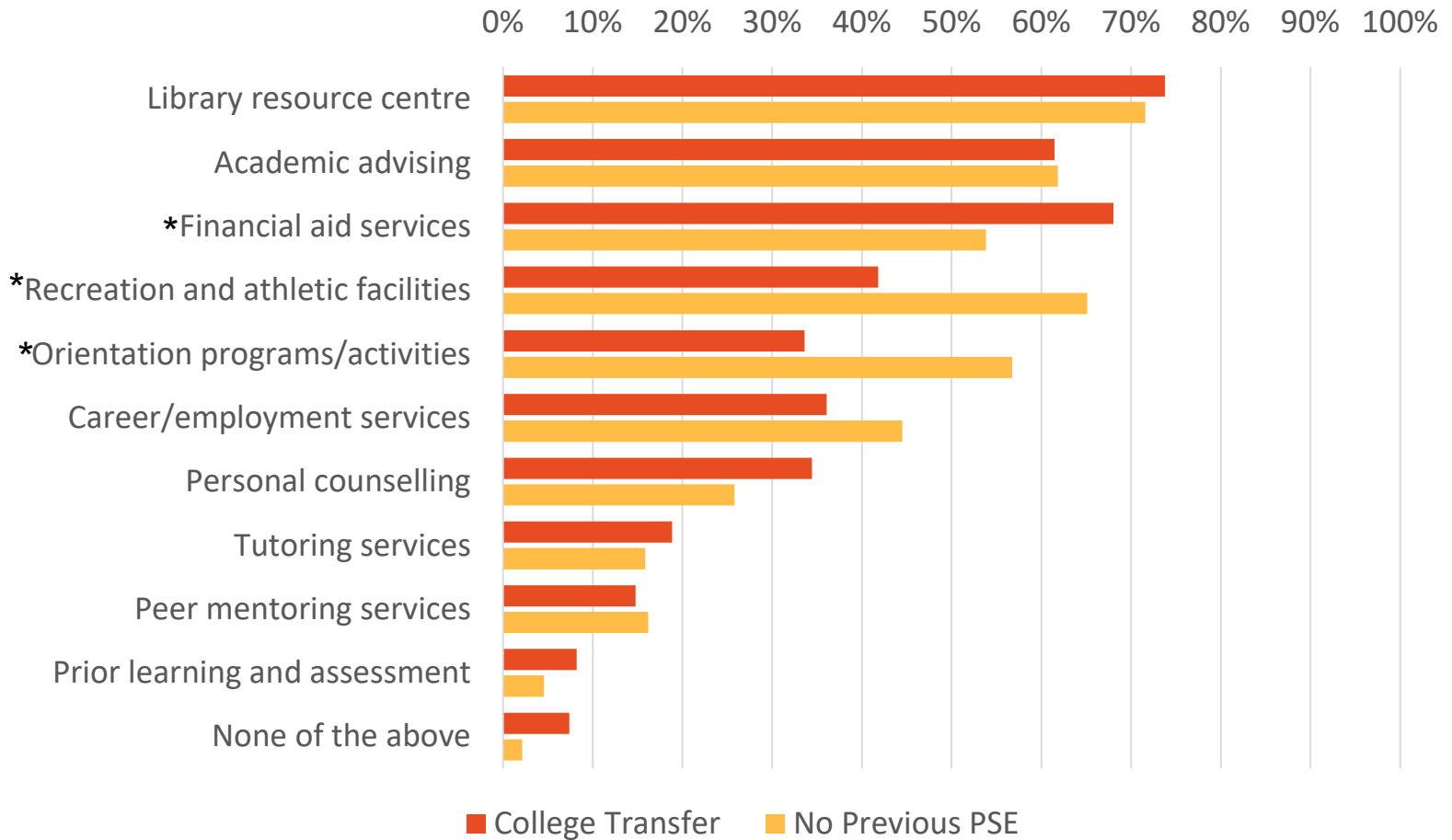
n=122 college to university transfer students

# Student ratings of university application/ transition process, % needing improvement



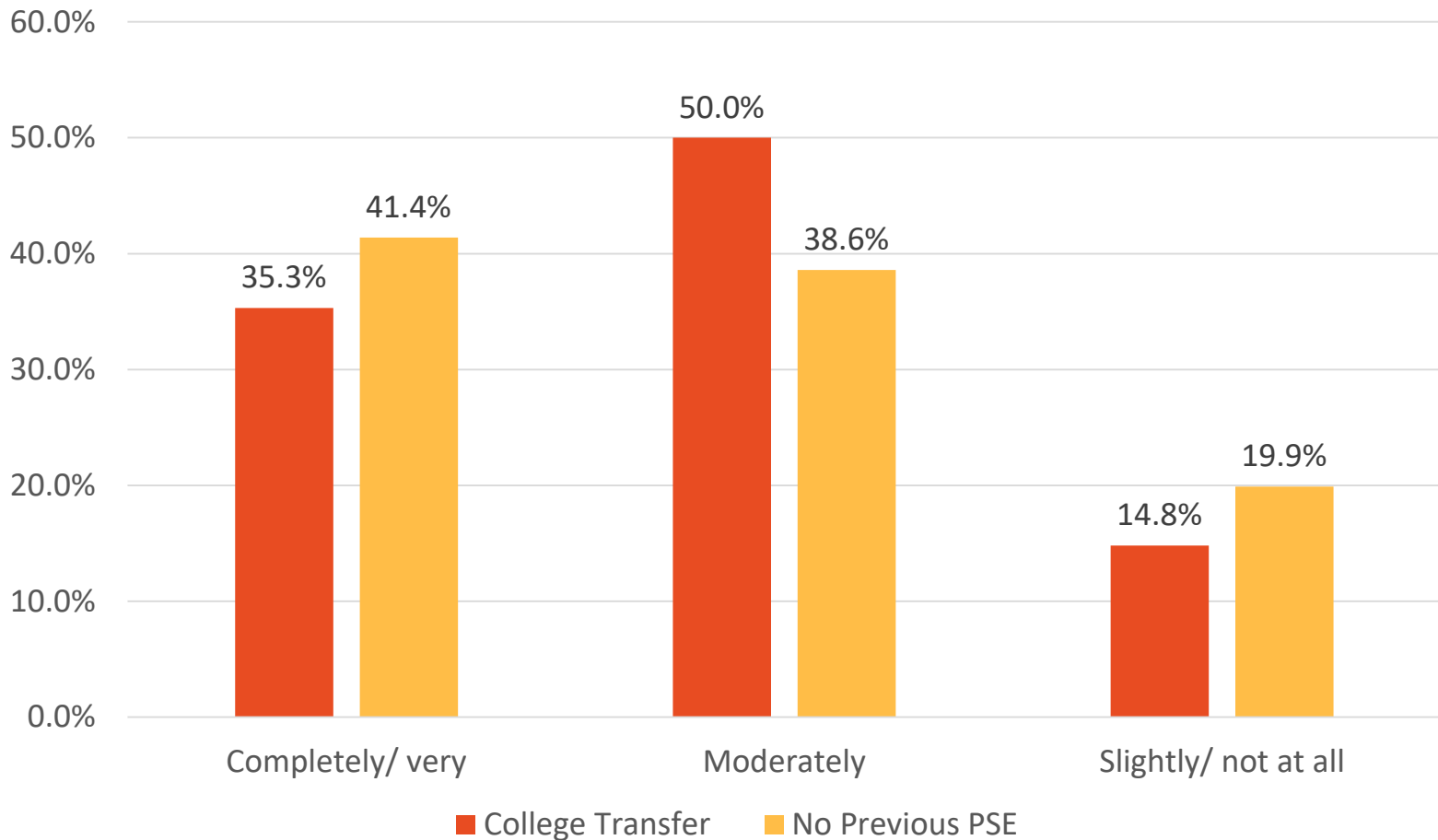


# Use of university services



\* significantly different

# How academically prepared do you feel you were for University?



# Transfer students are more academically engaged

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Transfer students were more likely to:

- participate in classroom discussion (59.8%) than non-transfer students (40.2%)
- discuss their assignment and/or grades with instructors (31.1% vs. 21.9% non-transfer students)
- discuss ideas with a faculty member (38.5% vs. 26.5% non-transfer students)
- discuss their career plans and ambitions with faculty (21.3% vs. 16.4% non-transfer students)

## However, non-transfer students are more socially engaged on campus

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Non-transfer students were more likely to:

- participate in on-campus community service or volunteer activities (25.4% vs. 13.1% transfer students)
- engage in student clubs or special interest groups (32.6% vs. 12.3% transfer students)
- attend campus cultural events (16.7% vs. 10.7% transfer students)

# Conclusions and recommendations

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- The college-to-university transfer student population has a relatively large proportion of traditionally under-represented groups
  - ✓ college-to-university pathway may serve as a vehicle for under-represented students to access university
- Transfer students rely less on traditional channels for information provision and rely more on interpersonal contact for their individual circumstances
  - ✓ orientation in particular needs to be targeted to transfer students
- Transfer students were shown to be highly engaged in their learning and academically confident, however, engagement outside of the classroom is a challenge
  - ✓ Likely associated with more mature students- more responsibilities
  - ✓ Developing flexible ways to enrich the non-academic experience of college-to-university transfer students should be priority.
  - ✓ College students may have a mentorship role for direct entry students?

# Thank you!

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Final report posted on ONCAT website:

<http://www.oncat.ca/>