

How College And University Students And Faculty Think About Course Materials

Studentawards Inc. / Stepwise Research Report for the Canadian Publishers' Council

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Note: Since most slides have notes, ensure notes are visible to see all available content

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Background and Objectives

- Studentawards Inc. and Stepwise Research were engaged by the Canadian Publishers' Council in early 2009 to conduct a research study on student and faculty attitudes towards textbooks and other course materials at Ontario colleges and universities
- The research study had the following objectives:
 - Understand student attitudes and behaviors with respect to course materials and course material options such as online delivery, with specific emphasis on the decision whether or not to purchase course materials required by their instructors
 - Understand faculty attitudes and behaviors with respect to course materials, with specific emphasis on the decision to require materials in their courses
 - Compare students and faculty on a variety of attitude measures, with a view to identifying gaps that may address why more students are not purchasing required course materials
 - Generate input for a possible communication plan for students and instructors , including interesting talking points that publishers' representatives may find useful to start conversations with faculty

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Methodology

- A student Web survey and a faculty Web survey were conducted between March 18 and April 5, 2009. Sample for the student survey was provided by Studentawards Inc., and faculty sample was provided by the Canadian Publishers' Council.
- To maximize response rates, each survey was designed to take no more than 10-15 minutes to complete. The student survey also was pre-tested and minor design changes were made to increase clarity and usability.
- E-mail invitations were sent to 24,091 faculty and 30,748 students at more than 60 Ontario colleges and universities. Students and faculty both received one e-mail reminder to boost the response rate.
- Response rates for both surveys were good, considering that they occurred during exam season:
 - 9% of faculty (2,096) and 15% of students (4,735) opened their e-mail invitations and clicked on their respective survey links
 - 76% of faculty (1,586) and 34% of students (1,587) who clicked on the survey link went on to complete the survey
 - Overall, 6.6% of faculty and 5.2% of students who were e-mailed invitations completed the survey
 - The surveys closed on April 5, 2009
- After data cleaning, there remained 1550 faculty responses and 1531 student responses
 - Margin of error = +/- 2.5%, 19 times out of 20 (error is higher for sub-groups)
- Throughout the report, open-ended responses in the "Other" category for variables such as faculty and program were reallocated to existing categories where it made sense (and in consultation with CPC). The balance of these open-ended responses were too miscellaneous to justify additional categories and thus were left in "Other".

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Executive Summary

- Two Web surveys (Student N=1531, Faculty N=1550) were conducted in April, 2009 to explore attitudes and behaviors concerning course materials at the post-secondary level.
- Although students report spending about \$750 per semester on leisure activities, they still are quite price-sensitive when it comes to the cost of course materials. Arguments that course materials aren't that expensive compared to how much students will earn after they graduate, or that they have long-term value as reference materials, have yet to find a receptive audience among students.
- That said, most students say that they and other students in their courses generally buy required course materials, and that doing so will help them get better grades. Overall, students claim to purchase required course materials in 91% of the courses where they are required (this 91% figure will be referred to in this report as the "buy-rate").
- This buy-rate figure seems high, and we suspect that diligent students may be somewhat over-represented in the sample. But the real story in this report is less about the absolute buy-rates themselves, and more about what causes significant differences between buy-rates, and options that are revealed for increasing buy-rates.

Executive Summary

- With the exception of chemistry, students in the hard sciences generally have above average buy-rates, while students in programs such as humanities and social sciences generally have below average buy rates. University students have higher buy-rates than do college students, and students at certain institutions such as Western and Queen's have buy-rates that are higher than those of students at other schools such as Humber College and Sheridan College.
- Students said they would value being able to access course materials online, but few would be willing to pay the full hard-copy price for the convenience. Most would be interested in online versions of course materials if they were half the hard copy price. Most students see the environmental benefits of online course materials and said they'd want 12-month access to such materials.
- Students do not generally believe that instructors are making a serious effort to find course materials that are reasonably priced or that are user-friendly. Indeed, they doubt that instructors generally even check the price of course materials before requiring them in their courses.
- Barely half of students say instructors test enough from required course materials to make them worth purchasing. Less than half say that instructors teach enough from them to make them worth buying. Factors like these are significantly linked to buy-rates.
- Indeed, students who feel their instructors generally teach (and test) enough from course materials to make them worth purchasing have higher buy rates than students who feel otherwise (93% versus 88%).

Executive Summary

- Students who have received the message from instructors that buying and using the required course materials leads to better grades have much higher buy-rates than those who say they have not received this message (93% versus 86%).
- Students who believe other students are generally buying the required materials tend to have higher buy-rates than those who believe otherwise (93% versus 87%) and students who see the connection between required course materials and grades have a much higher buy-rate than those who do not (94% versus 85%).
- Turning to faculty, most said their students generally buy required materials, and that doing so will help their students get better grades.
- Interestingly, almost a third of faculty said buying the latest editions of textbooks is usually a waste of money. While not as high as that for students, this figure indicates some room for improvement in showing the value of new textbooks.
- Most faculty claim they only require clearly written and visually appealing course materials, and that required course materials are used enough in class to make them worth buying.
- A little more than half of instructors say they regularly use supplementary course materials such as PowerPoint slides provided by textbook publishers.

Executive Summary

- Interestingly, more instructors than students say they think about environmental issues (such as paper waste) in connection with course materials (54% versus 46%). Almost half of instructors acknowledge that their campus bookstore marks up course material prices by at least 20%.
- Most faculty said they've made it clear to students that buying required course materials will improve their grades and that students should keep these materials for reference after graduation.
- Faculty are under the impression that selling used course materials is easier than it is (according to students anyway).
- When we look closely at how students and faculty compare when asked essentially the same questions with respect to course materials, we see some significant gaps.
- At 50%, one of the largest gaps between student and faculty is on the question of whether instructors only require course materials that are student-friendly. Only a third of students say instructors only require materials that are clearly written and visually appealing, while 83% of faculty claim they do just this.
- Another large gap between students and faculty concerns whether instructors teach enough from required course materials to make them worth purchasing. Almost all instructors (92%) say yes they do, while less than half the students (47%) say no they don't.

Executive Summary

- At 57%, the second largest gap between faculty and students concerns how price-aware instructors are. Three-quarters of faculty claim they check prices before requiring course materials but only 19% of students believe them.
- At 59%, the single largest gap between faculty and students again concerns how price-aware instructors are. Almost all faculty (89%) claim they try to avoid requiring expensive course materials, but only 29% of students believe them.
- Still, on some questions students and faculty have essentially identical views. For example, 71% of each group agree that students generally buy course materials when they're required. They also generally agree there's a connection between good grades and getting the required course materials is being articulated by instructors. That said, faculty still see required course materials and good grades being more closely linked than students do.

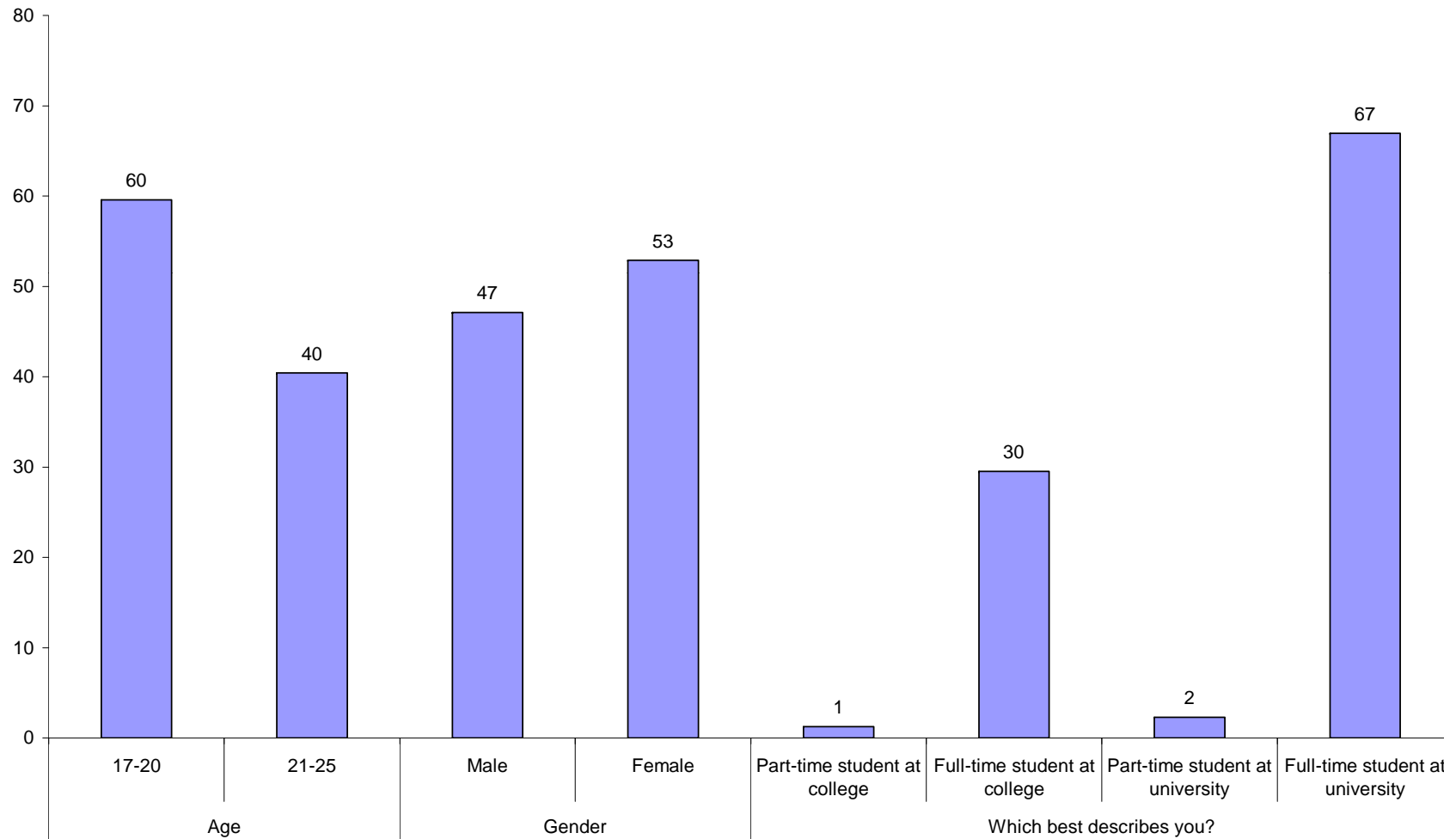
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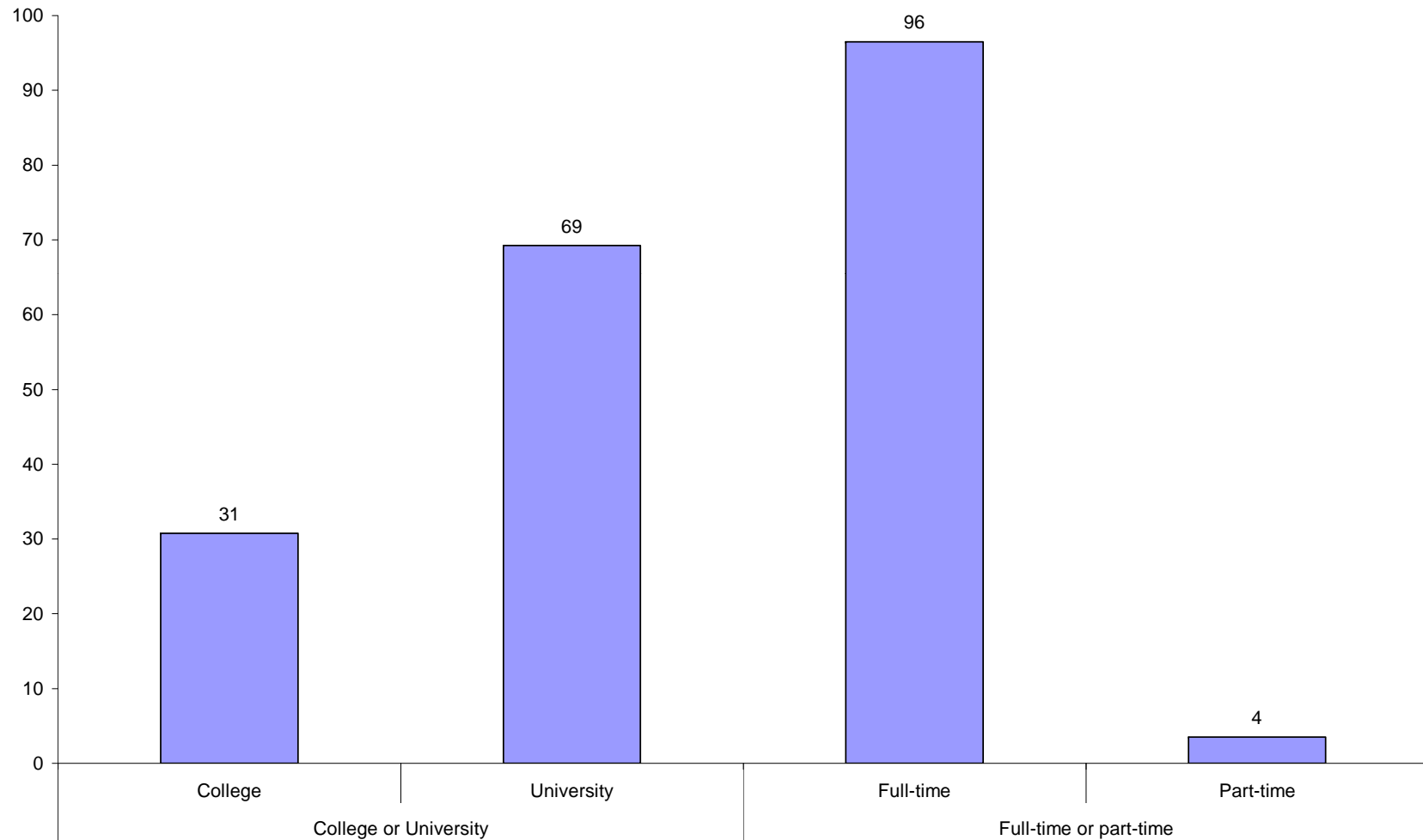
Student Demographics

Age, Gender, Student type (%)



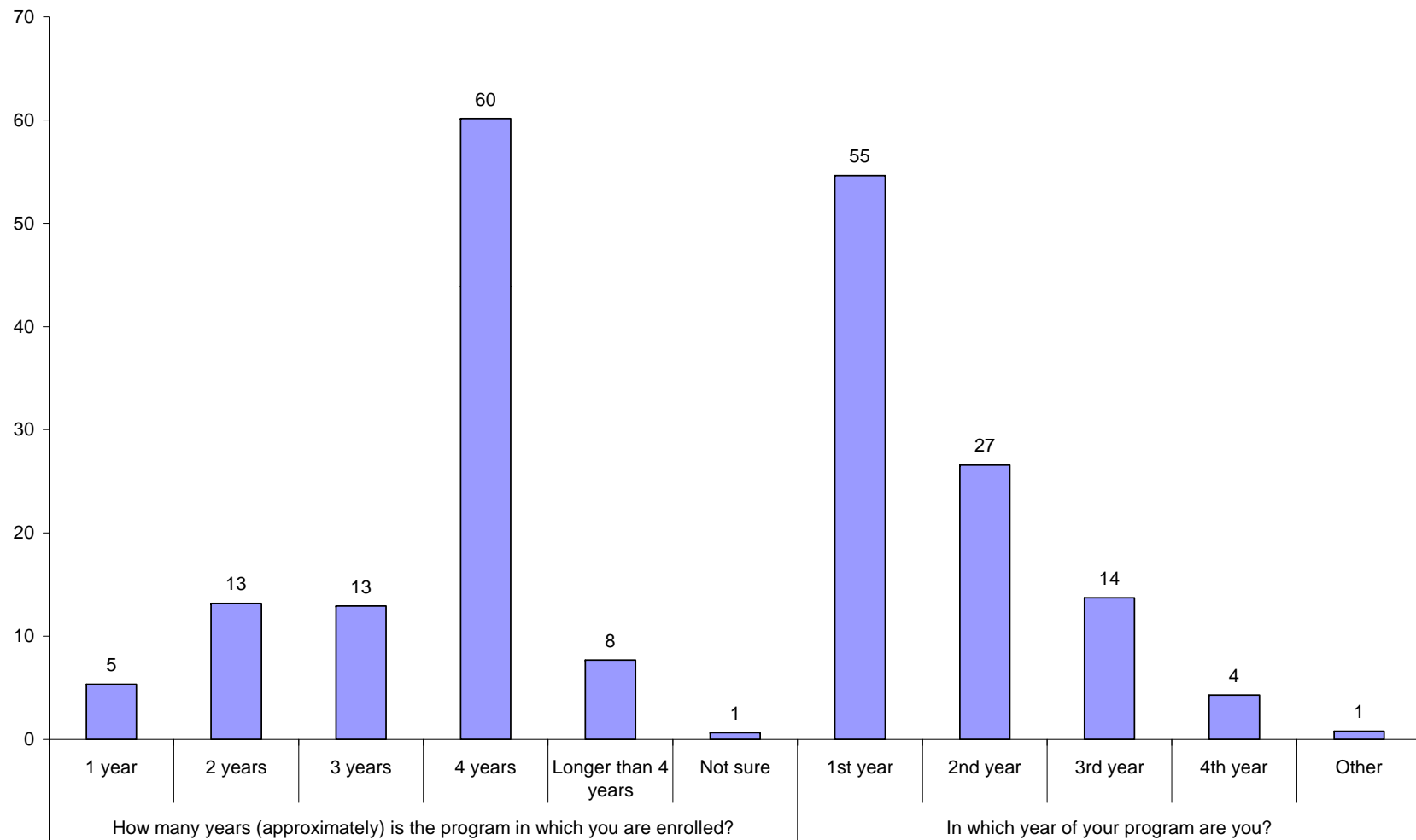
Student Demographics

College / University, Full / Part-time (%)



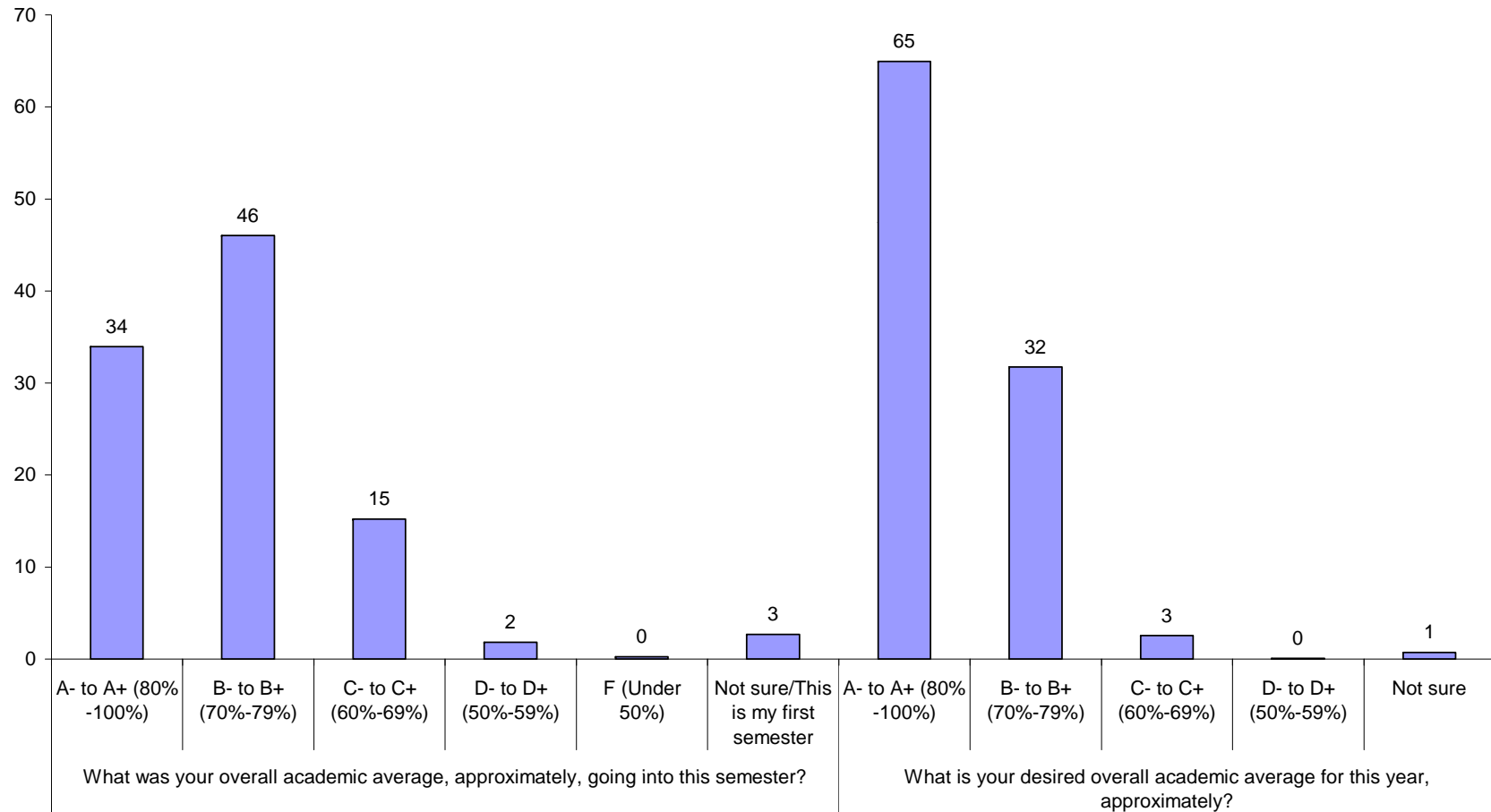
Student Demographics

Program Years (%)



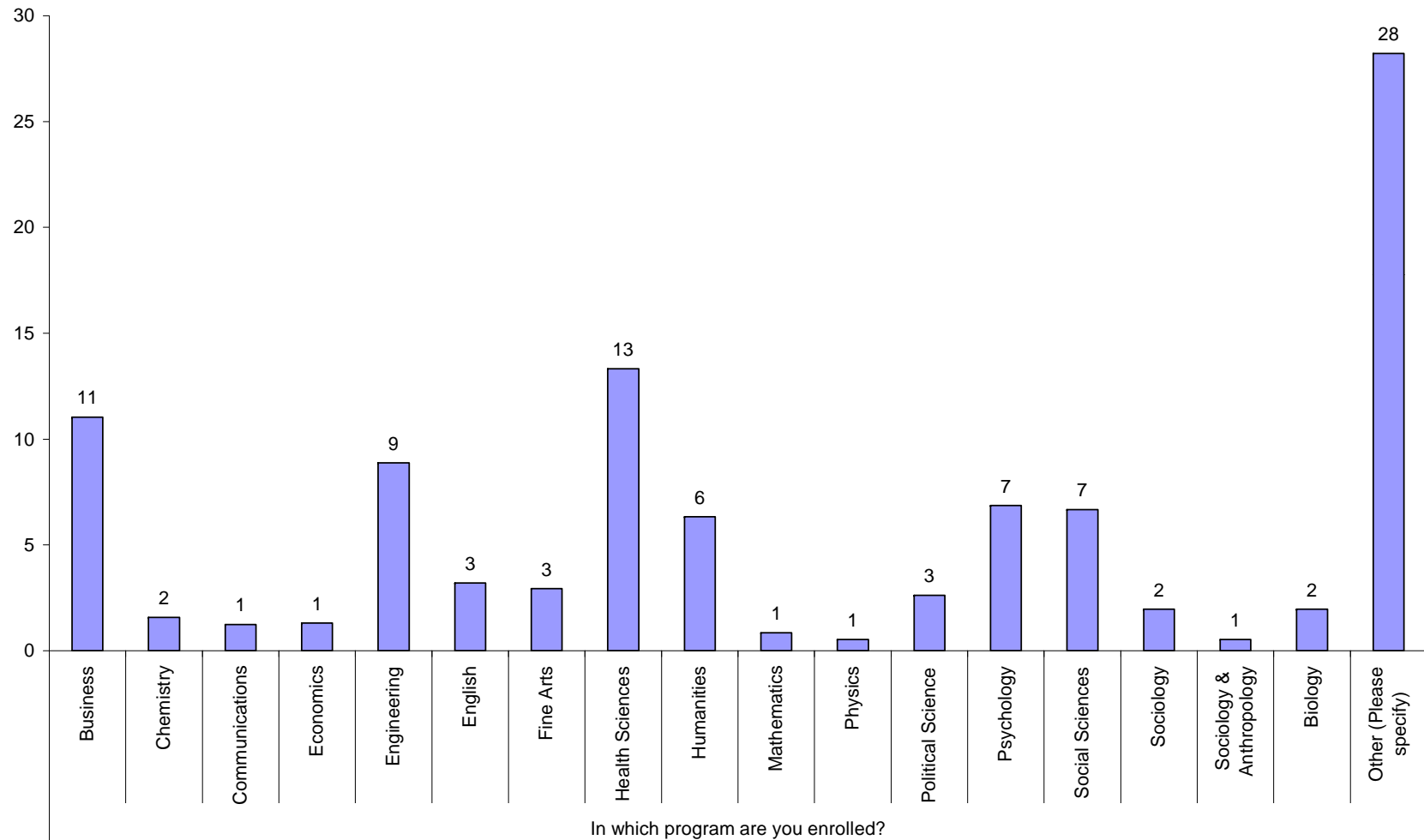
Student Demographics

Grades (%)



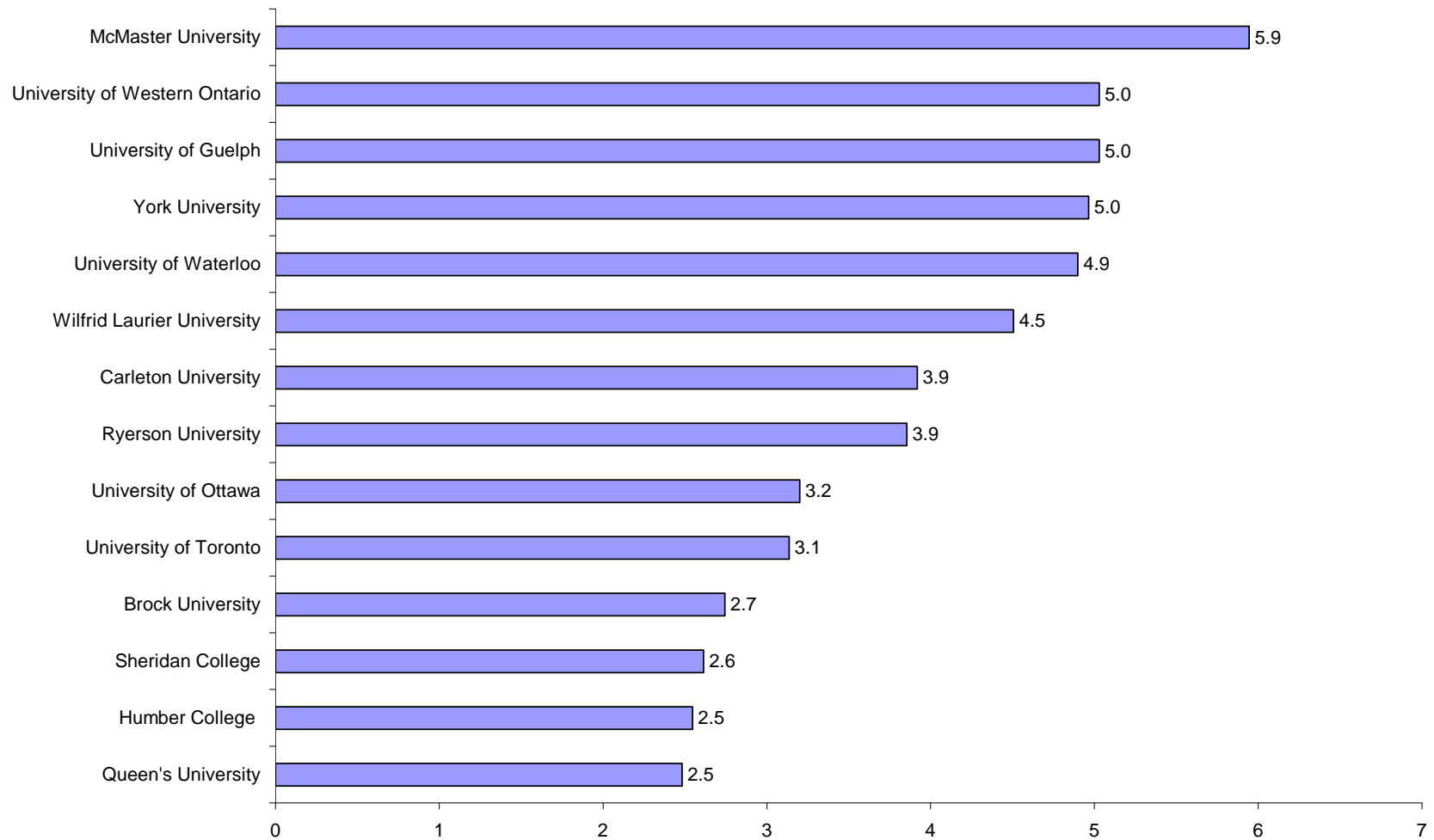
Student Demographics

Program (%)



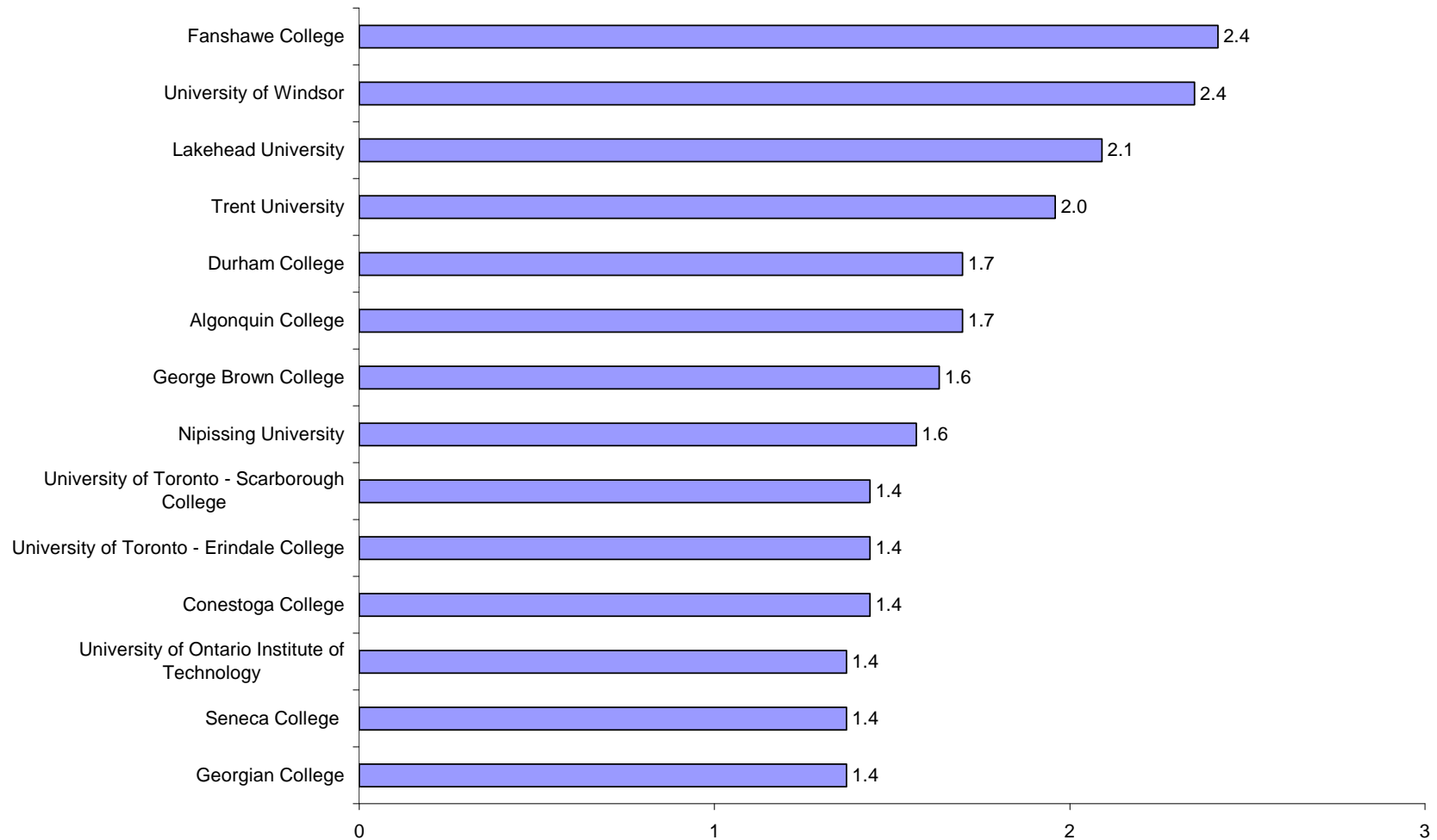
Student Demographics

Institution (%)



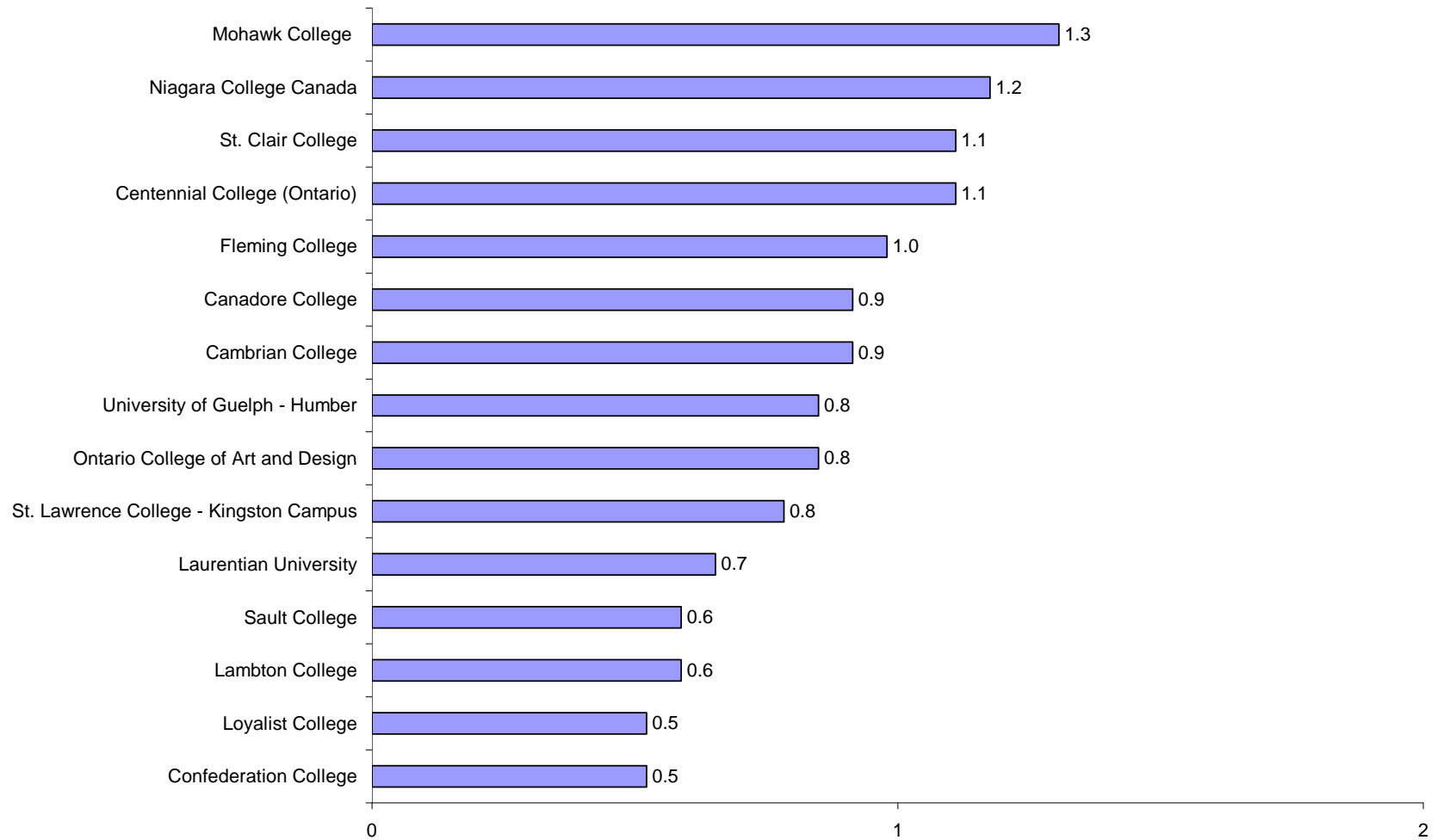
Student Demographics

Institution (%)



Student Demographics

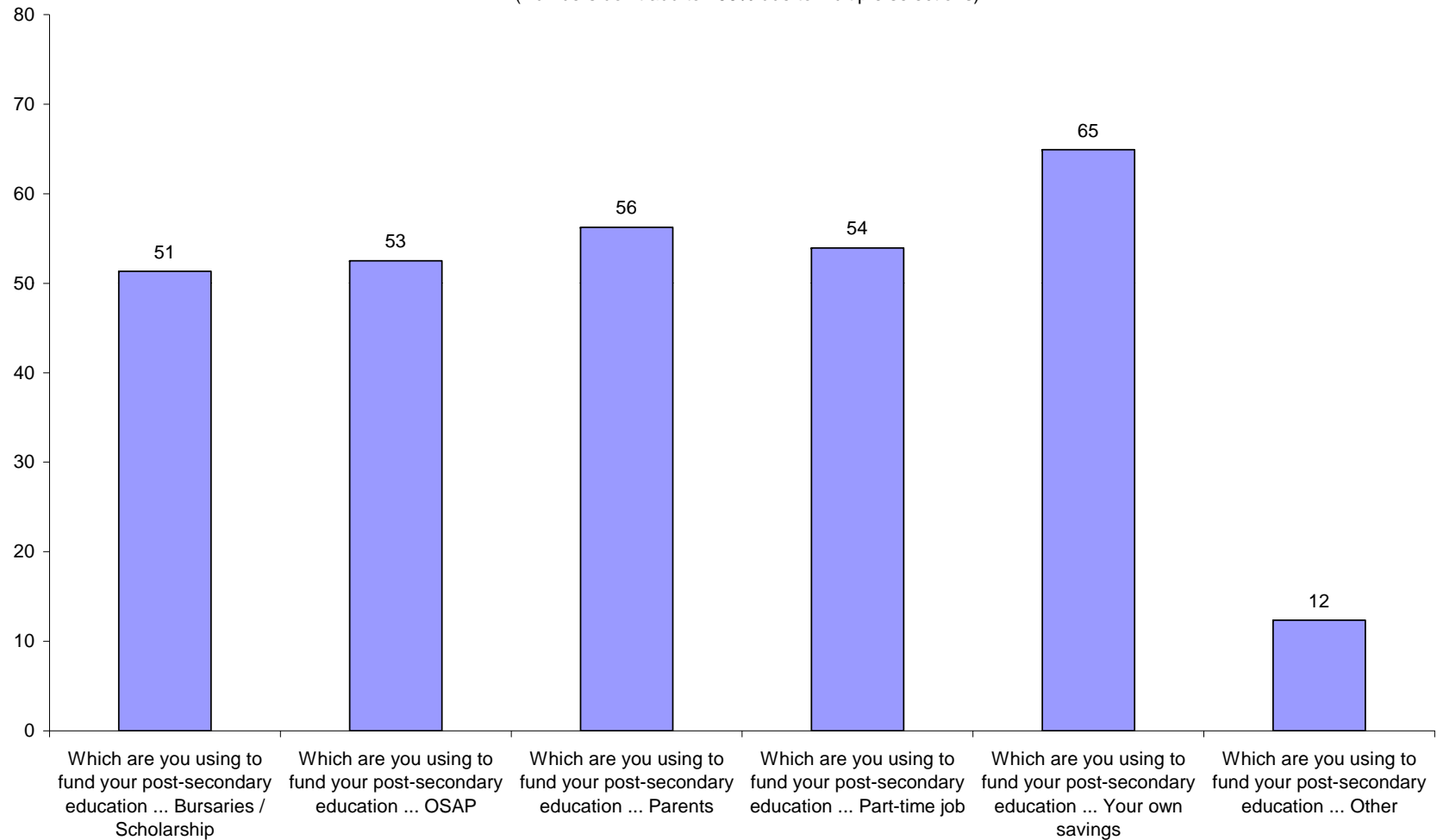
Institution (%)



Student Demographics

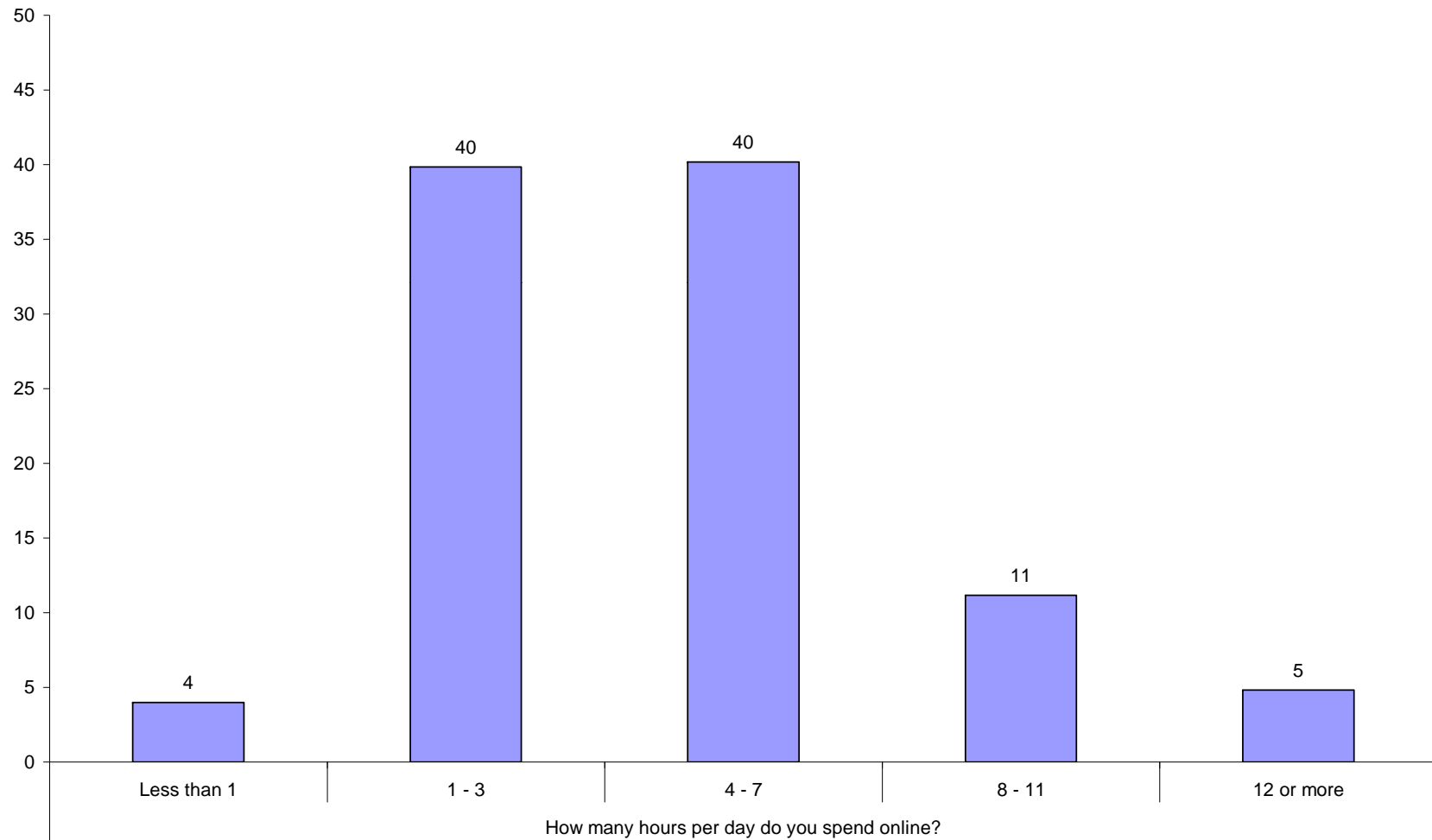
Funding Sources (%)

(Numbers don't add to 100% due to multiple selections)



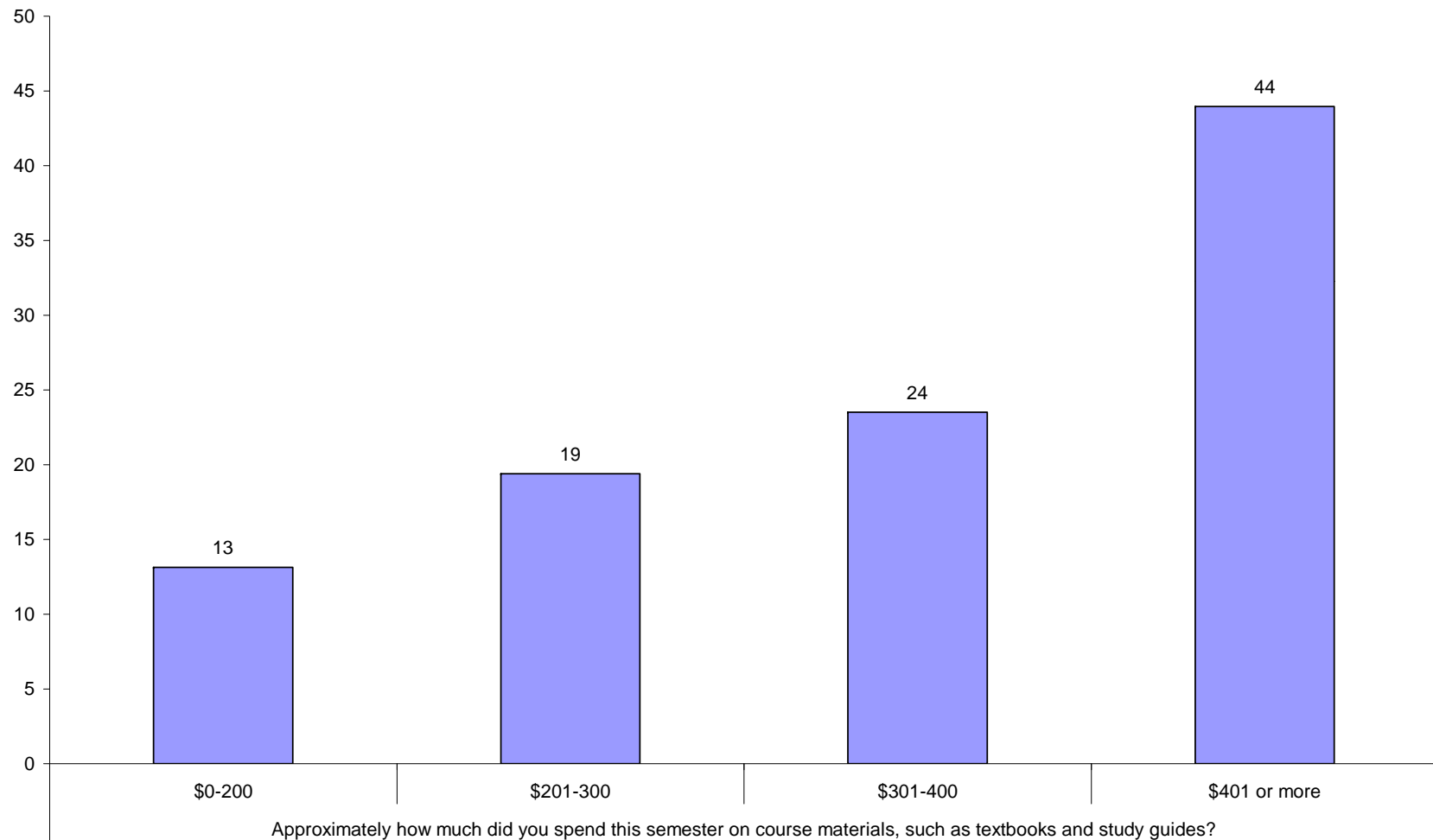
Student Demographics

Hours Online (%)



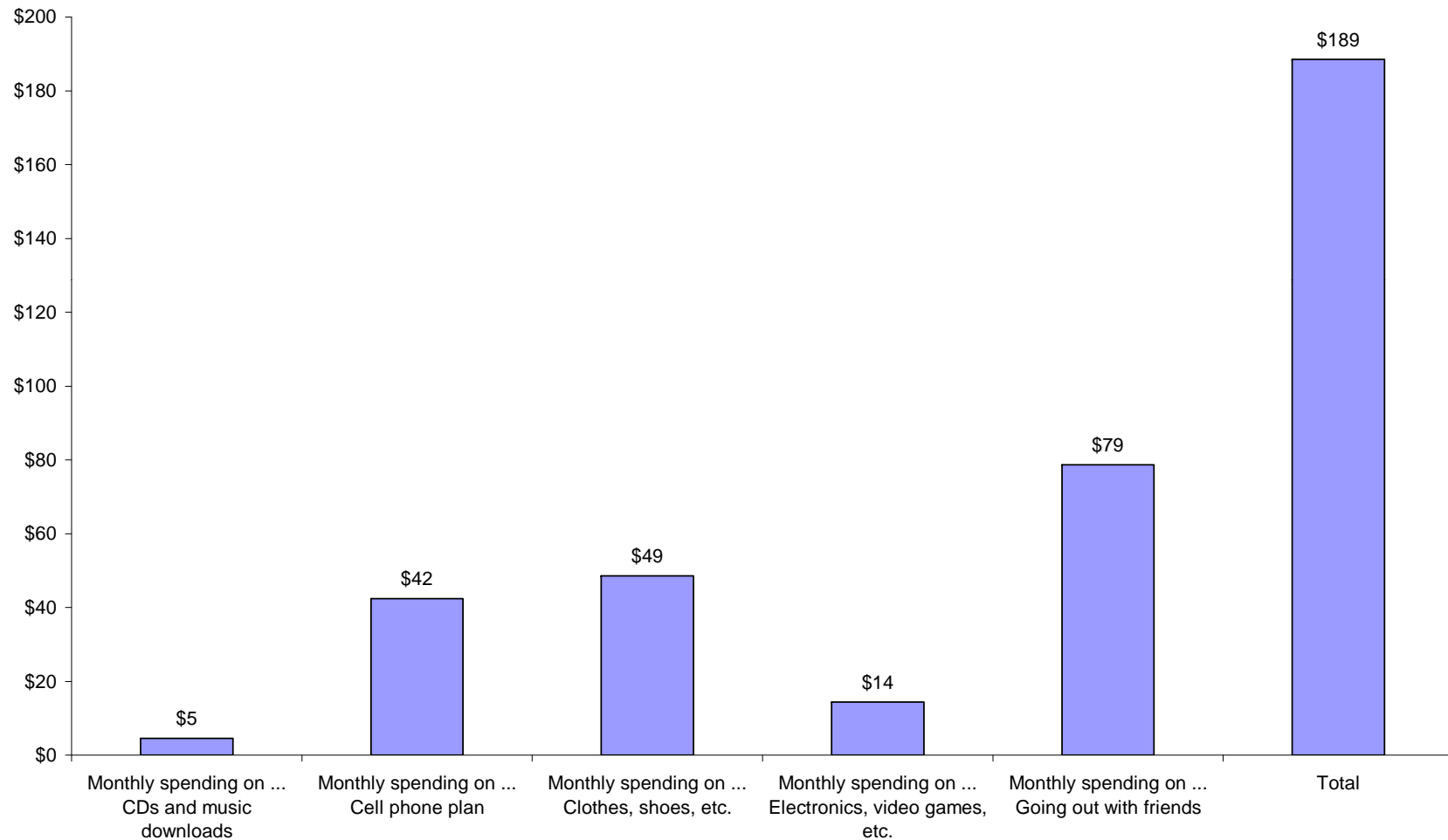
Student Demographics

Spending on Course Materials (%)



Student Demographics

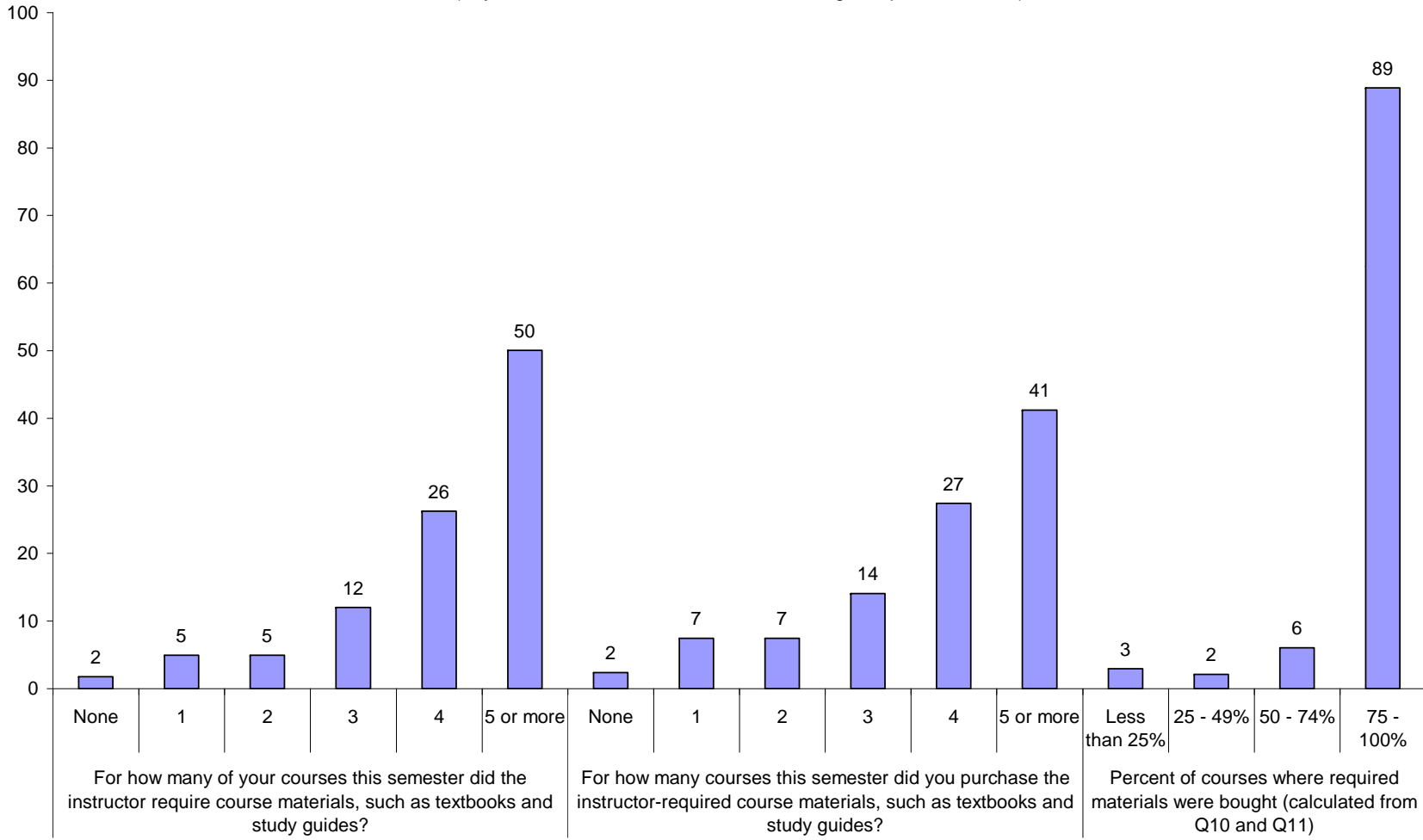
Average Monthly Spending on Selected Leisure Items (\$)



Students and Course Materials

Required Course Materials and Buy Rate (%)

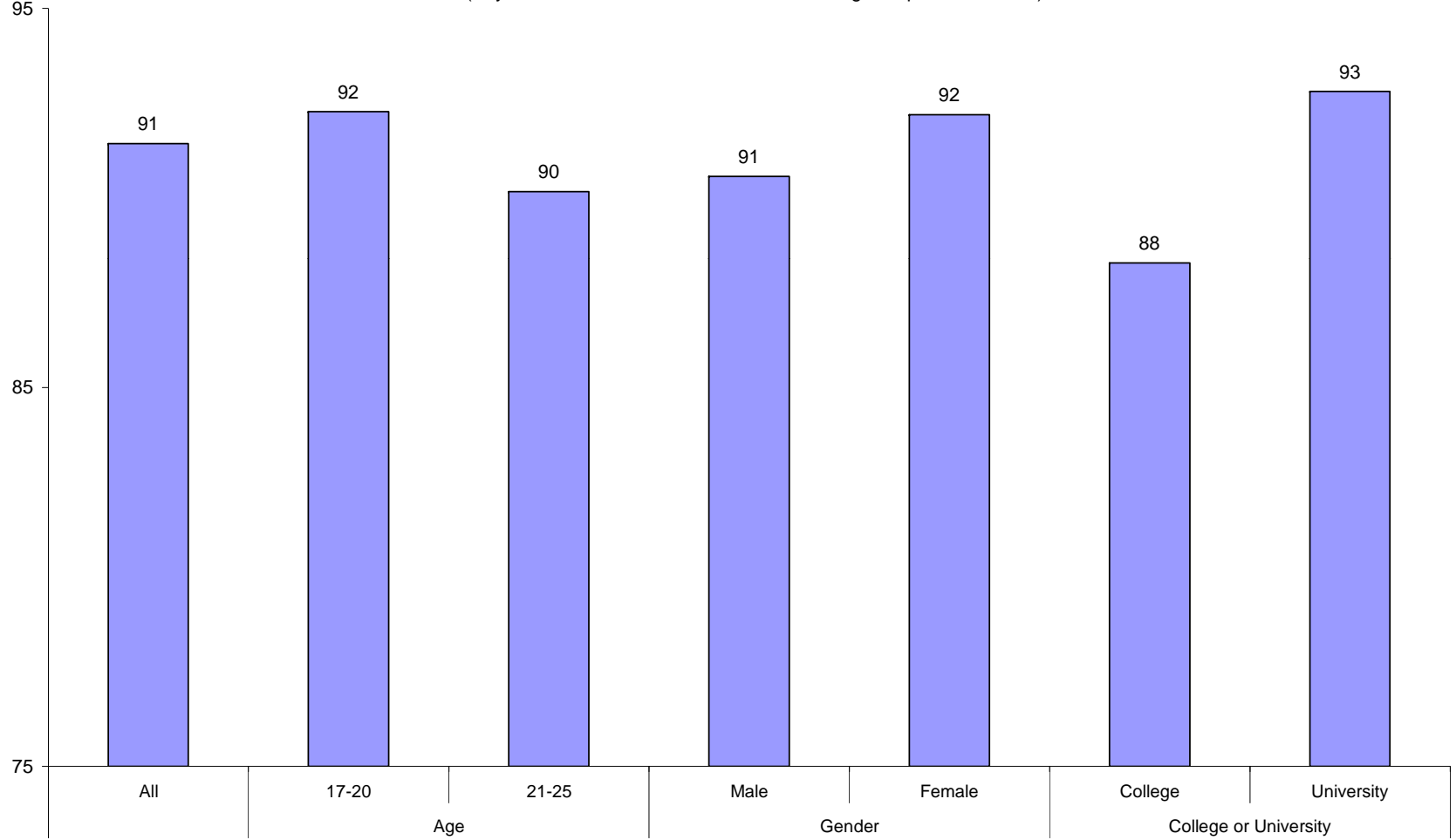
(Buy rate = % courses for which students bought required materials)



Students and Course Materials

Required Materials Buy Rate,
by Age, Gender and College / University (%)

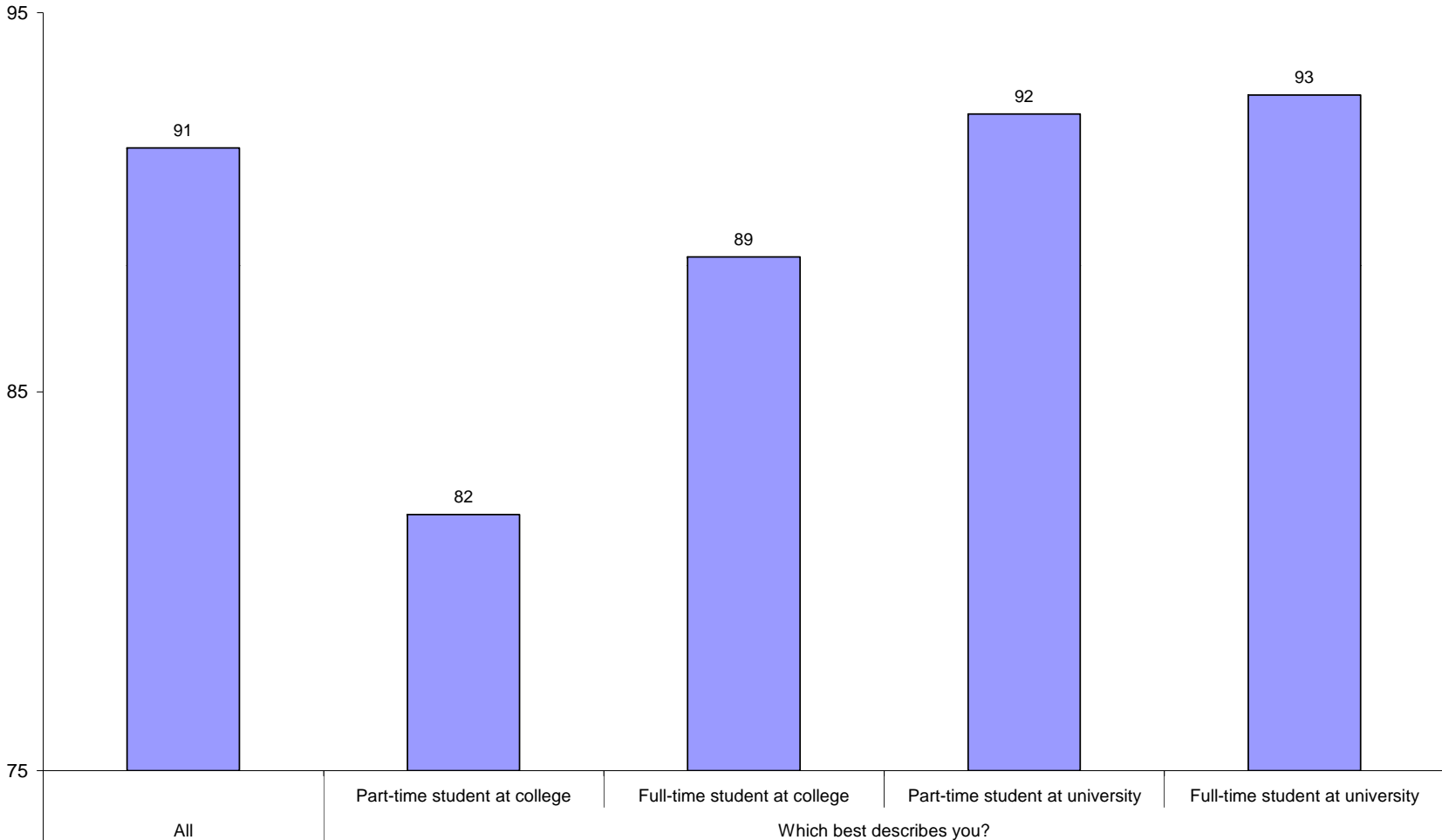
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Students and Course Materials

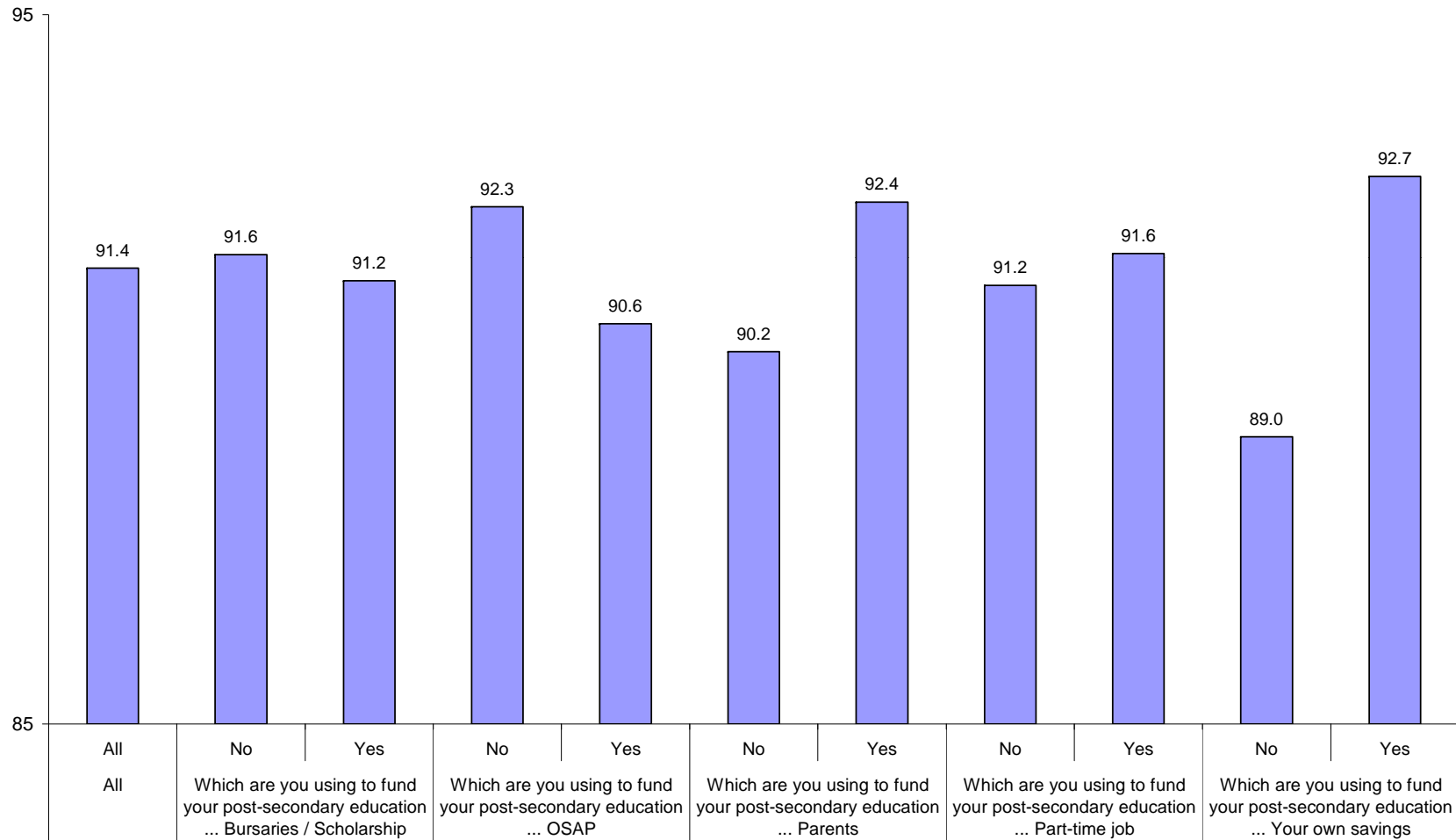
Required Materials Buy Rate, by Student Type (%)

(Buy rate = % courses for which students bought required materials)



Students and Course Materials

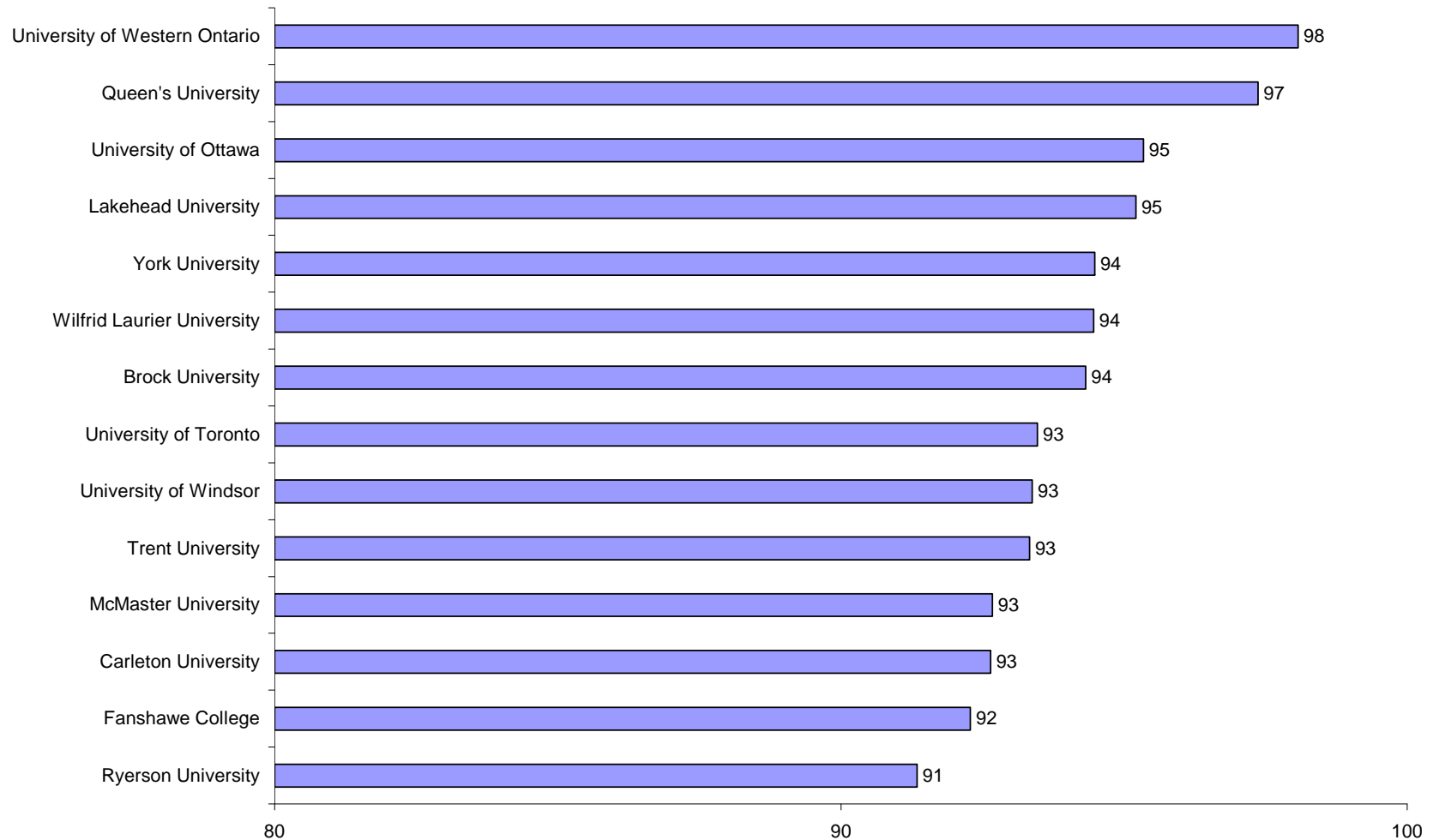
Students Using Own Savings to Pay for PSE Bought A Significantly Higher % of Required Course Materials



Students and Course Materials

Required Materials Buy Rate, by Institution (%)

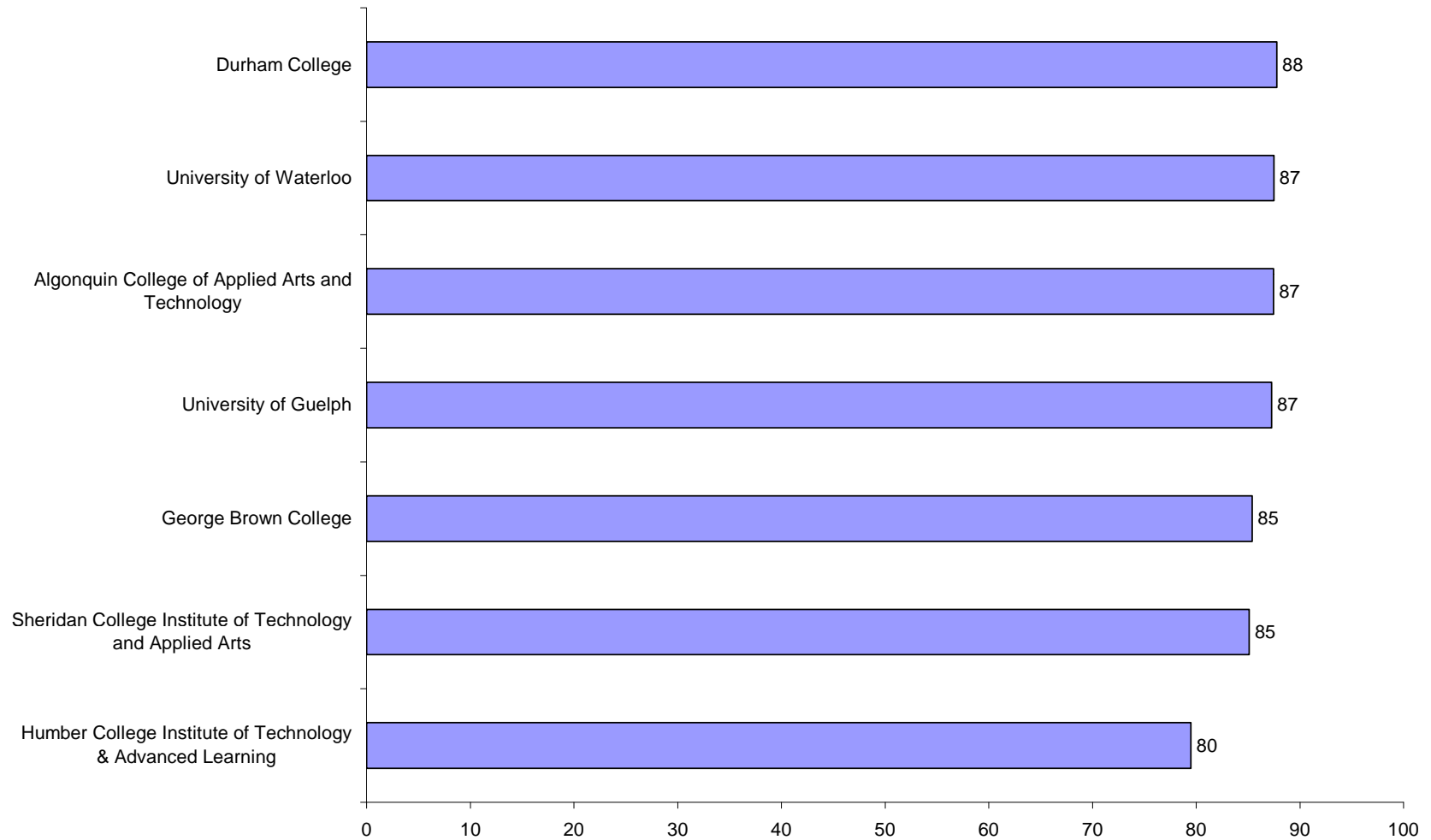
Buy rate = % courses for which students bought required materials
(Only institutions where 25 or more students responded are reported)



Students and Course Materials

Required Materials Buy Rate, by Institution (%)

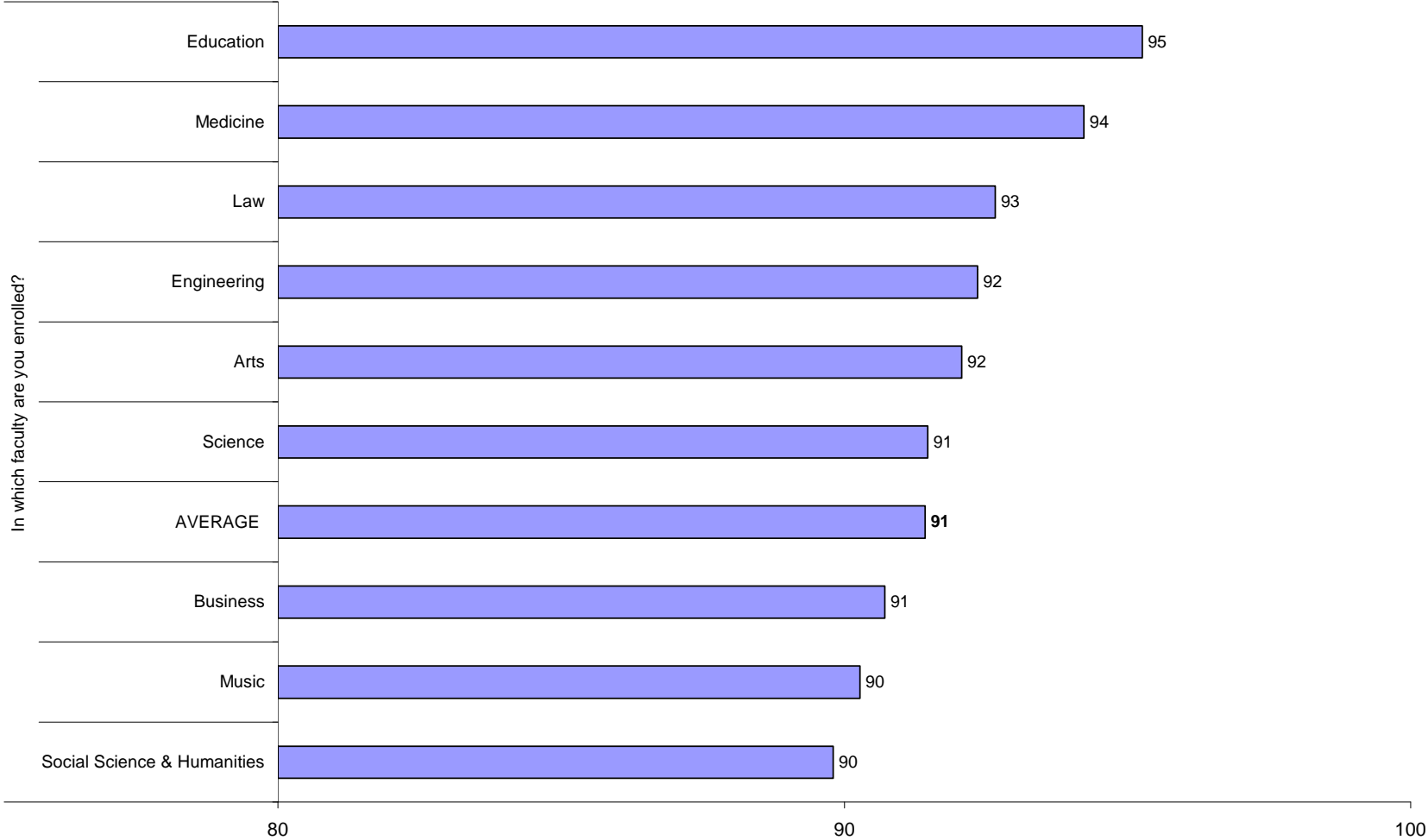
Buy rate = % courses for which students bought required materials
(Only institutions where 25 or more students responded are reported)



Students and Course Materials

Required Materials Buy Rate, by Faculty (%)

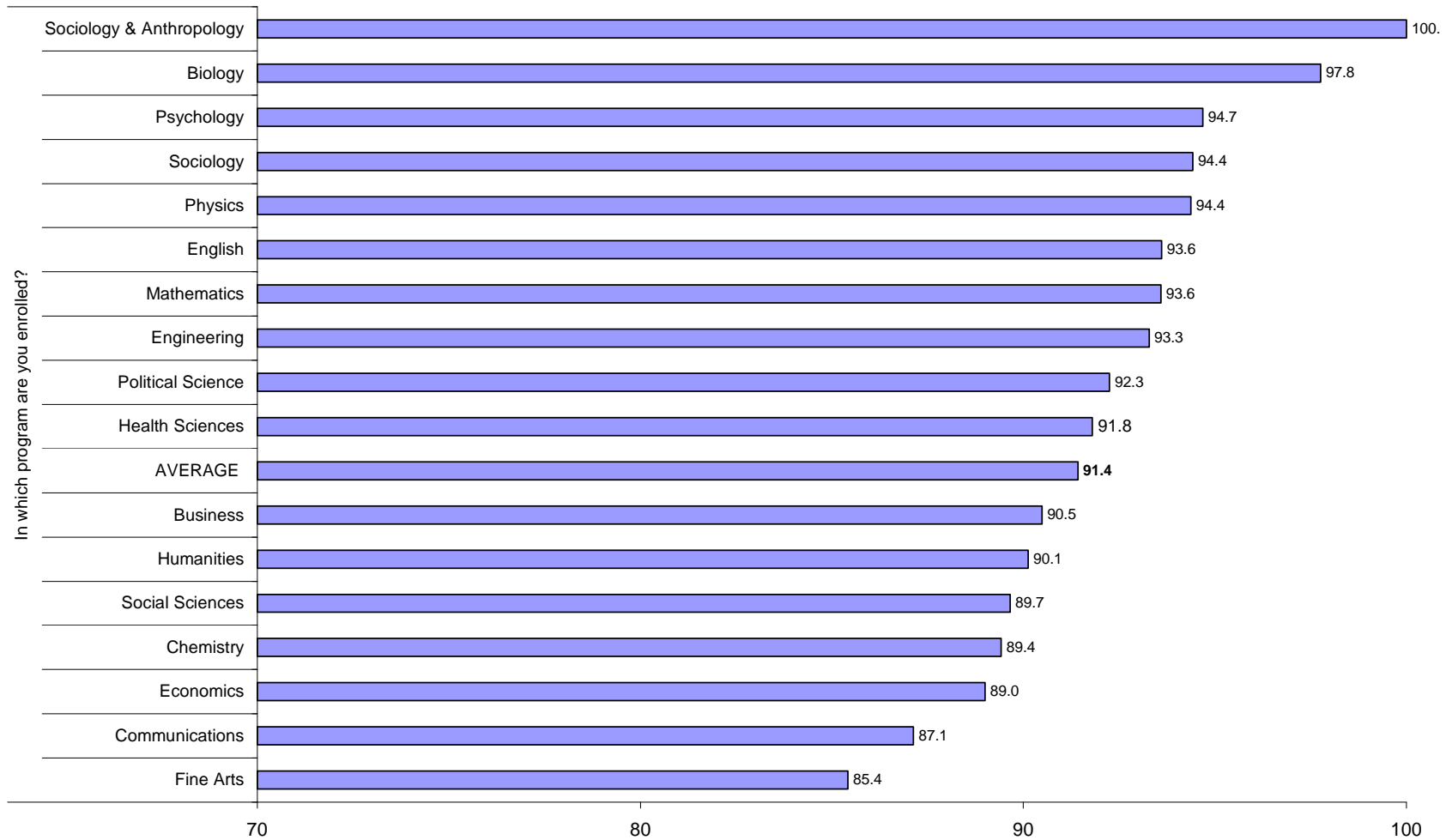
Buy rate = % courses for which students bought required materials
(Only faculties where 25 or more students responded are reported)



Students and Course Materials

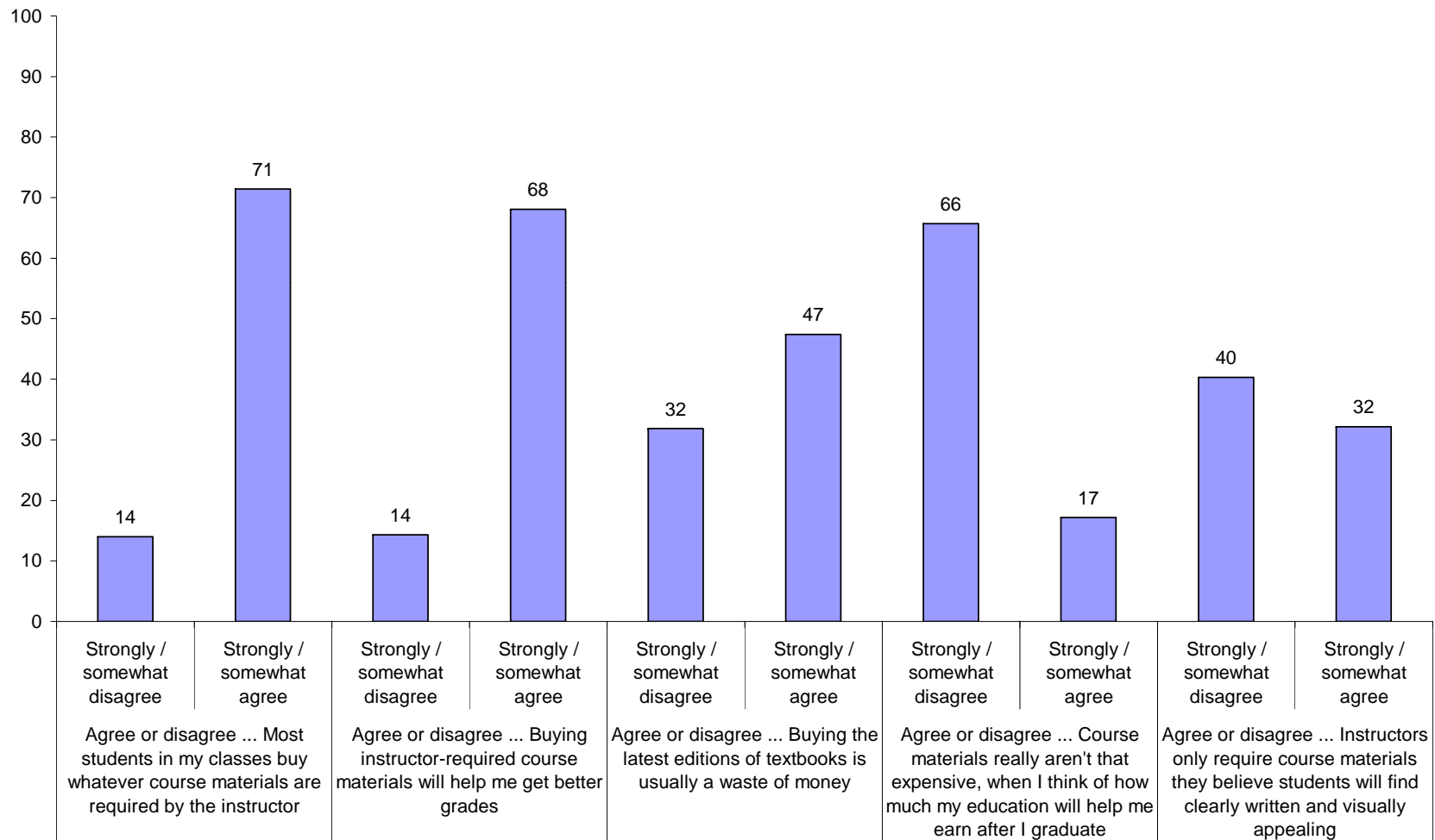
Required Materials Buy Rate, by Program (%)

Buy rate = % courses for which students bought required materials
 (Only programs where 25 or more students responded are reported)



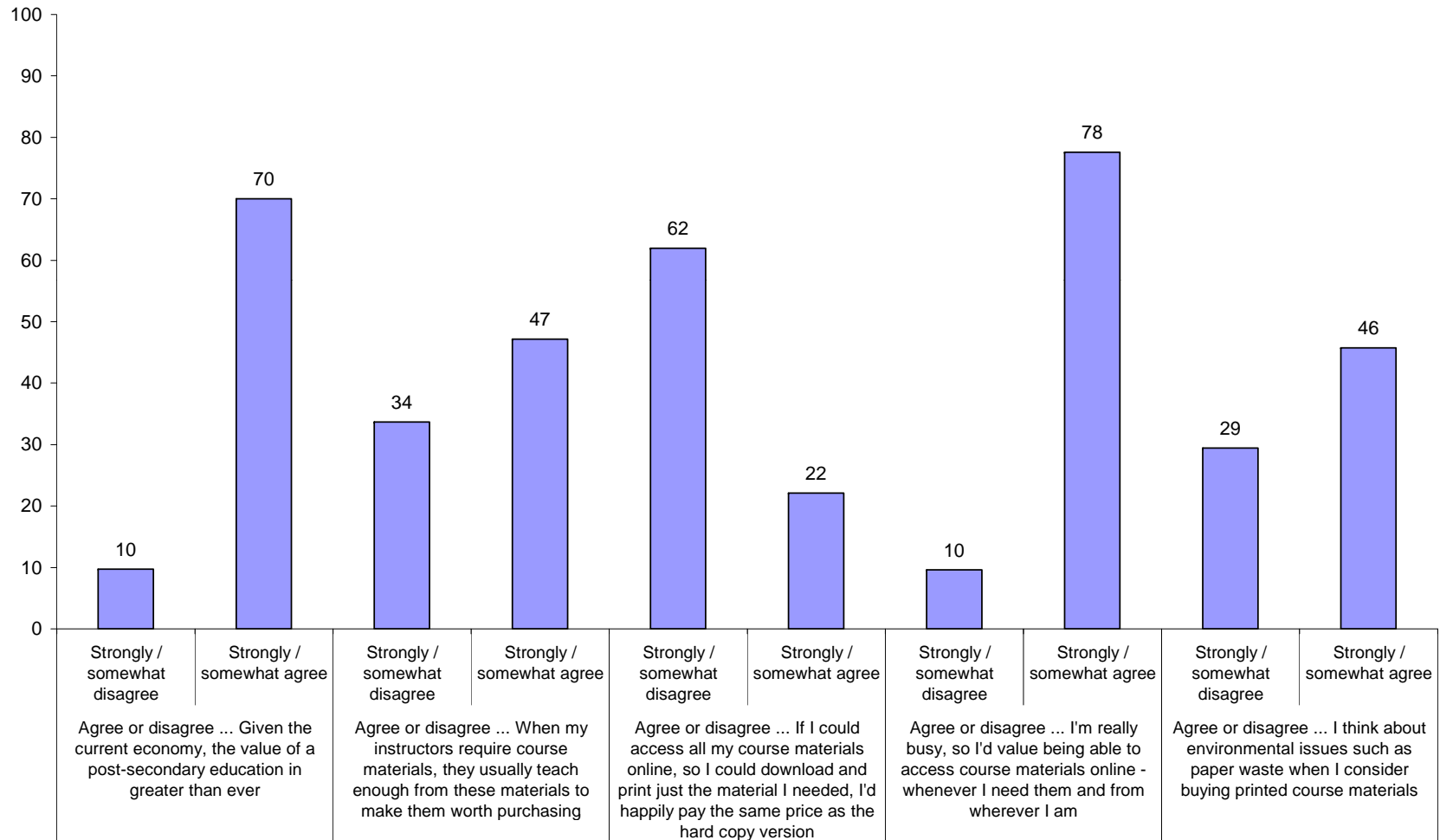
Students and Course Materials

Attitudes About Course Materials (%)



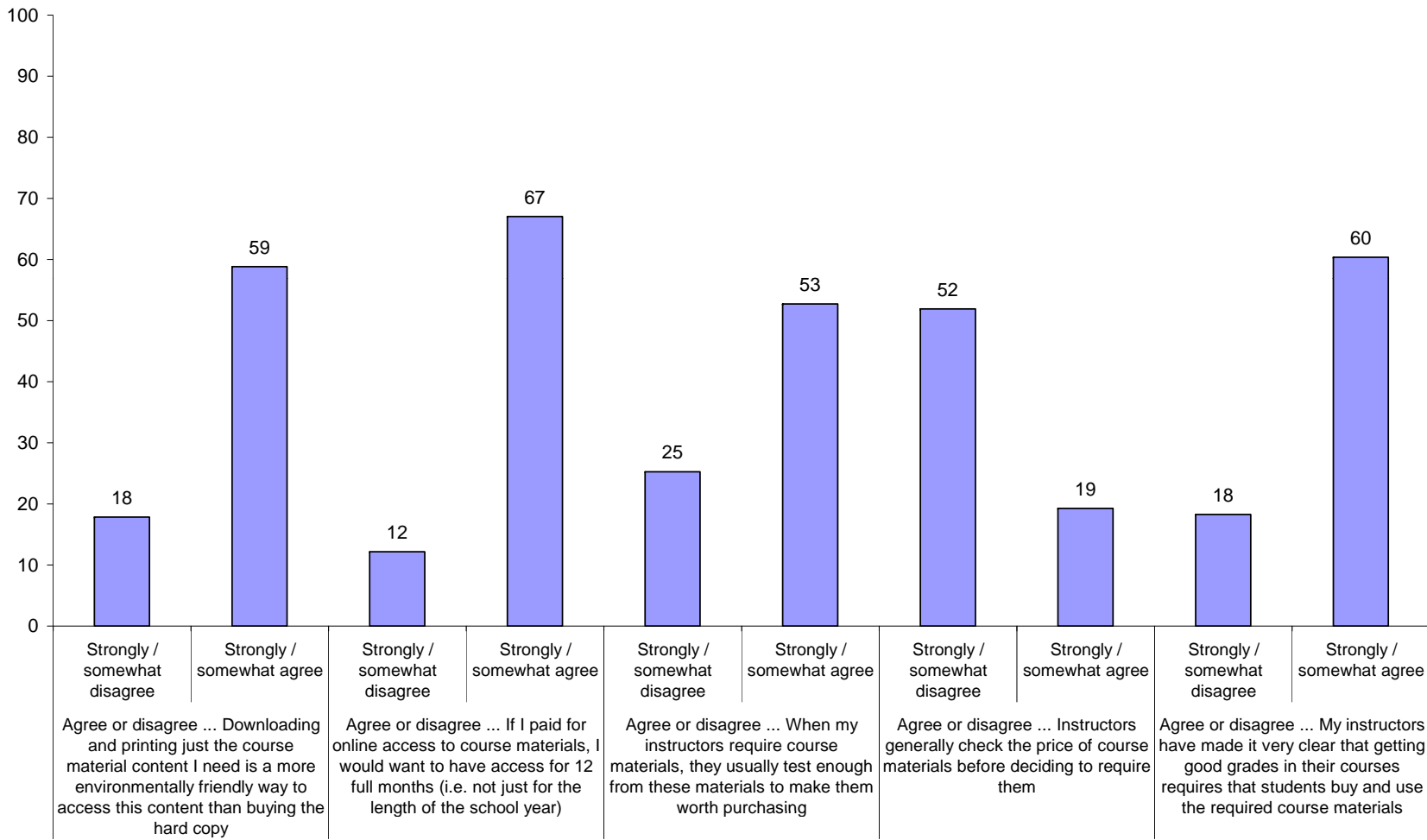
Students and Course Materials

Attitudes About Course Materials (%)



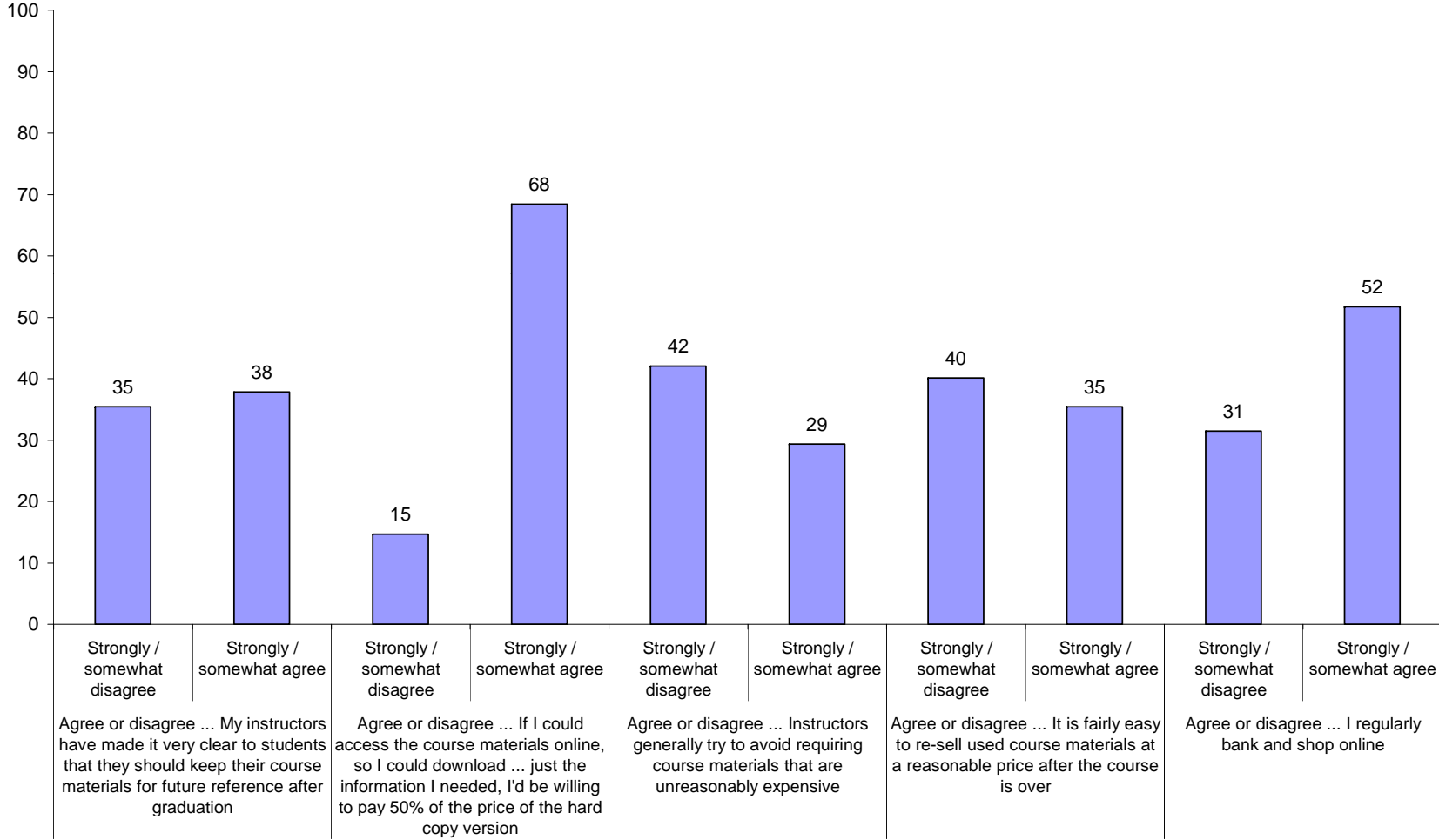
Students and Course Materials

Attitudes About Course Materials (%)



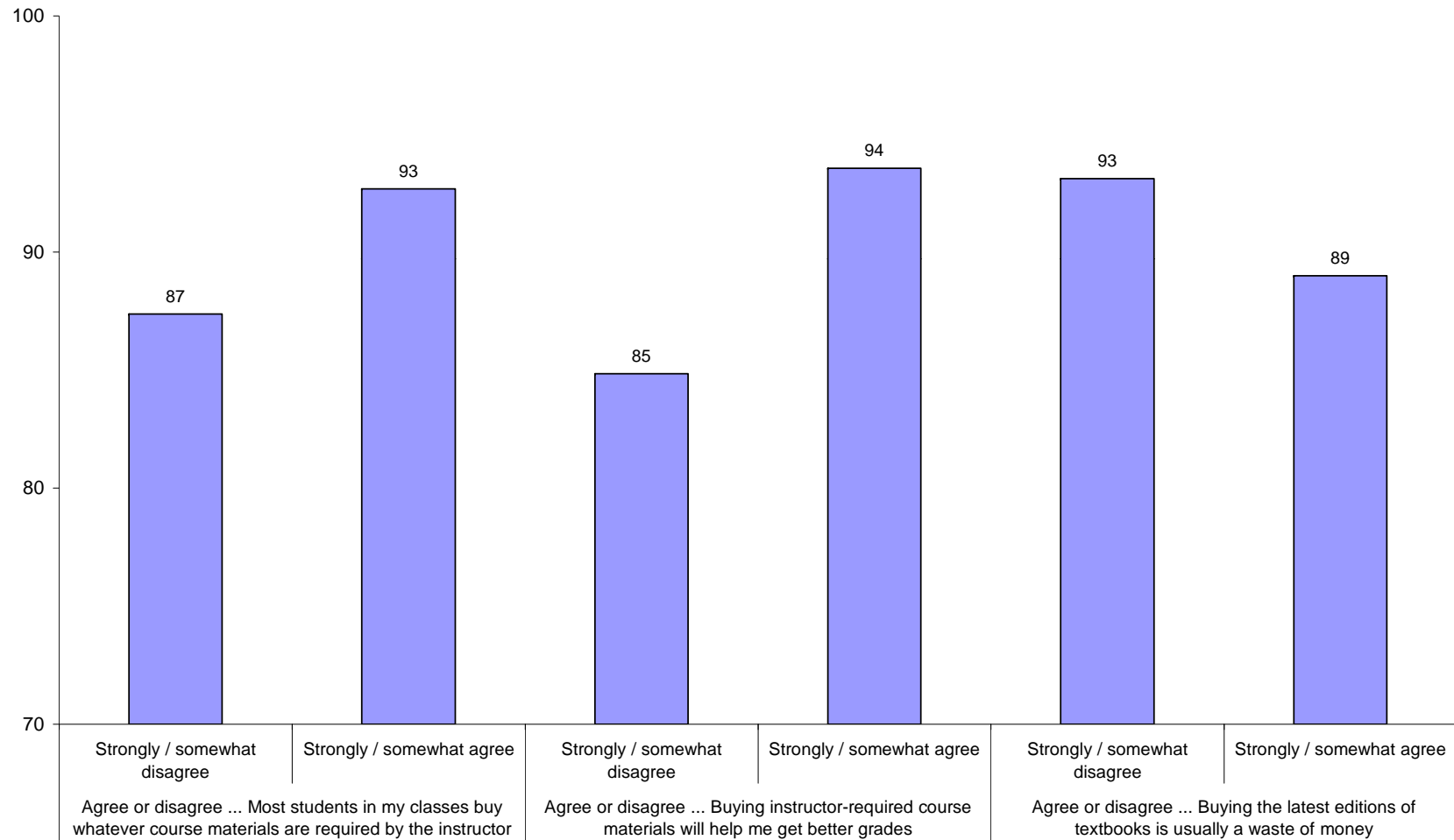
Students and Course Materials

Attitudes About Course Materials (%)



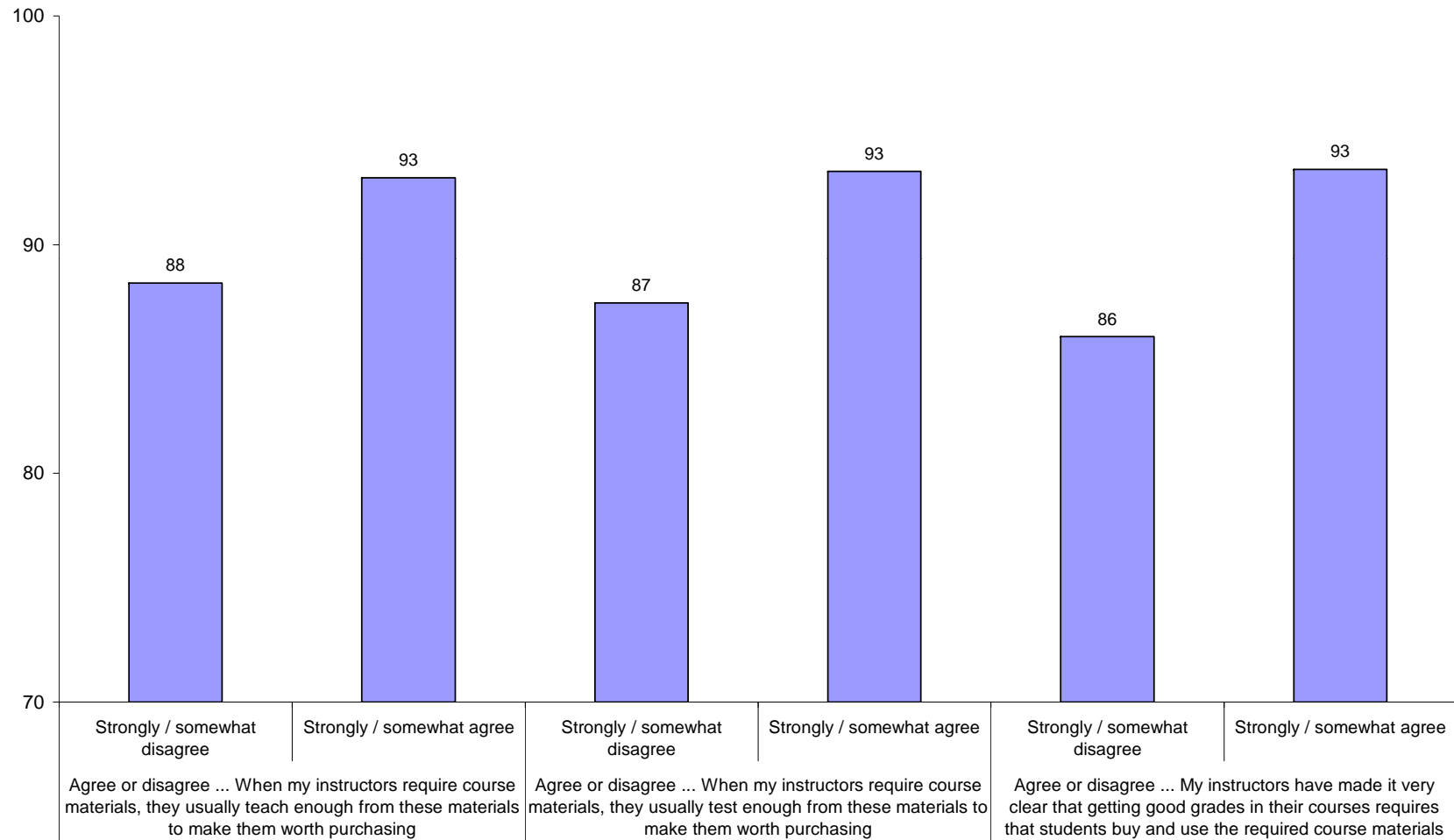
Students and Course Materials

Students Who Agreed with These Statements Bought a Significantly Higher % of Required Course Materials



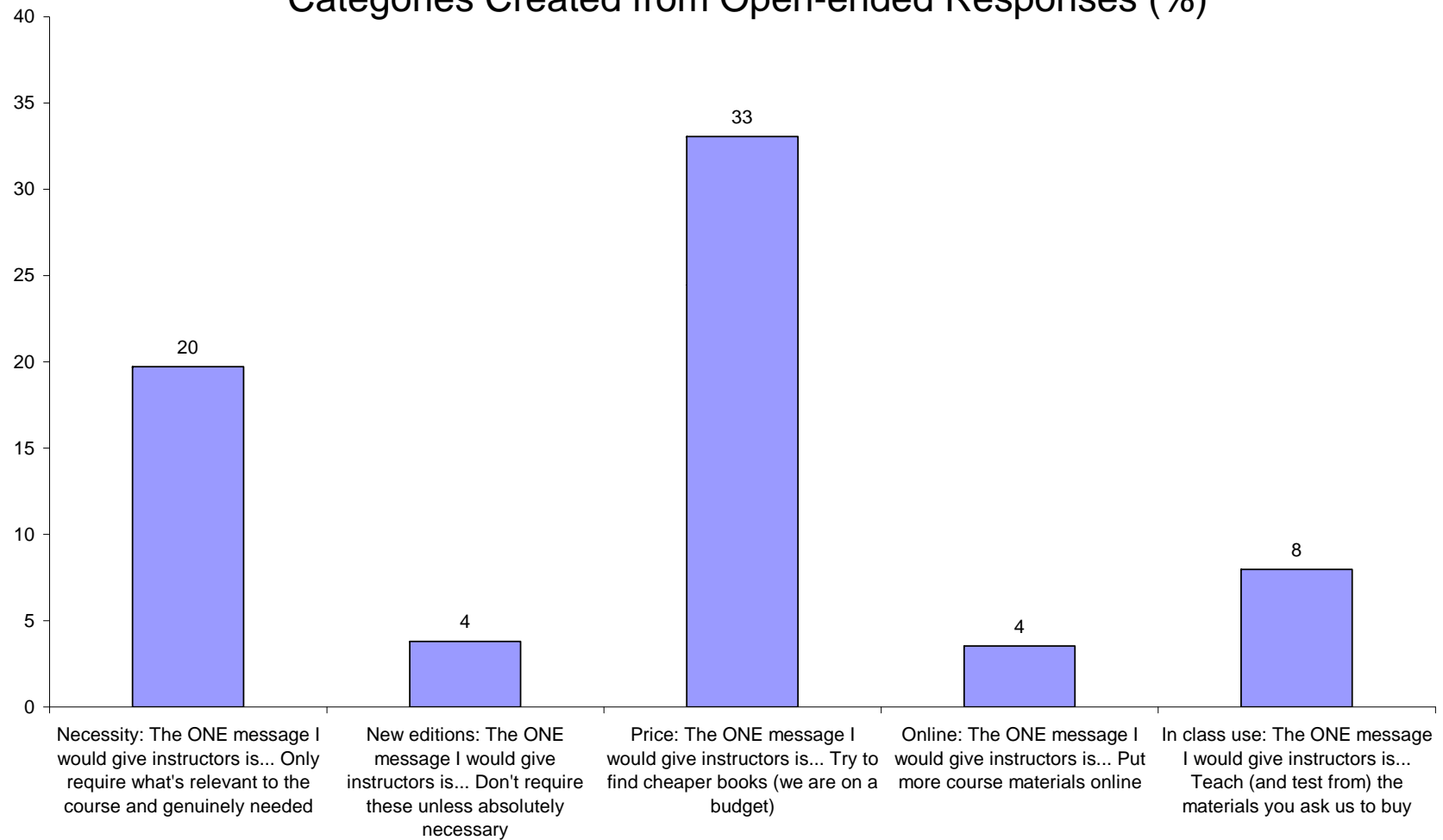
Students and Course Materials

Students Who Agreed with These Statements Bought a Significantly Higher % of Required Course Materials



Students and Course Materials

Messages to Instructors About Course Materials:
Categories Created from Open-ended Responses (%)



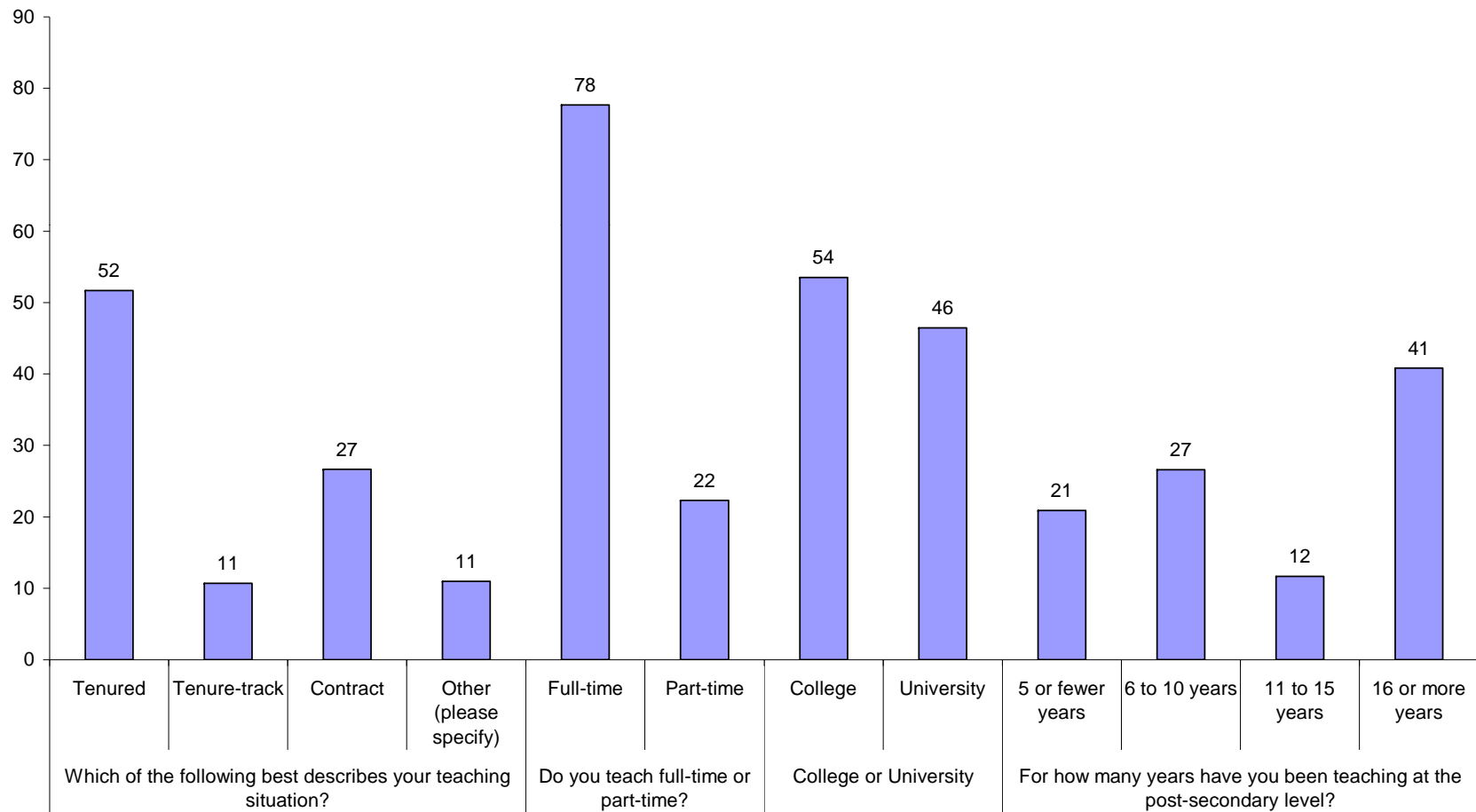
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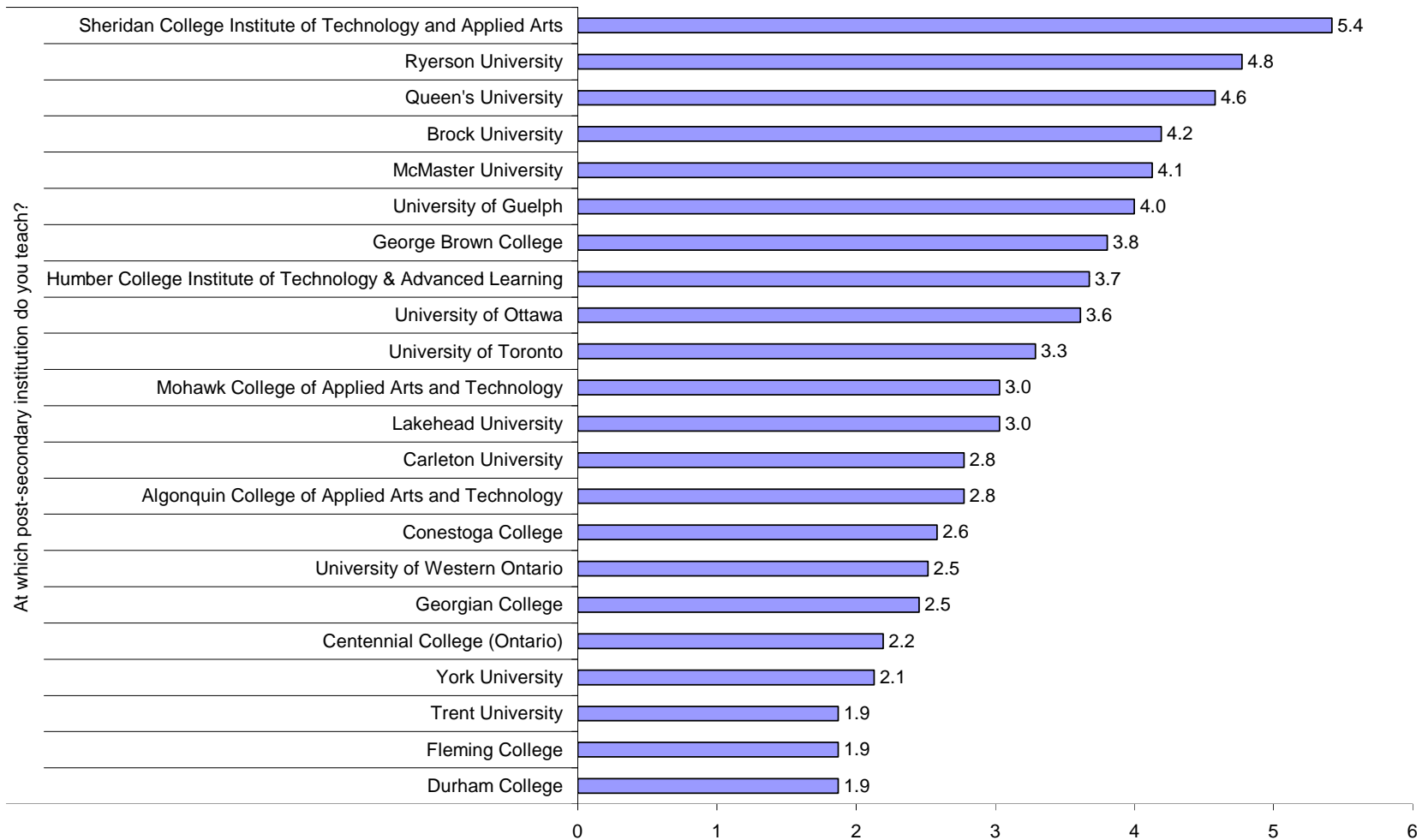
Faculty Demographics

Teaching Situation, Part / Full-time, College / University,
Years Teaching (%)



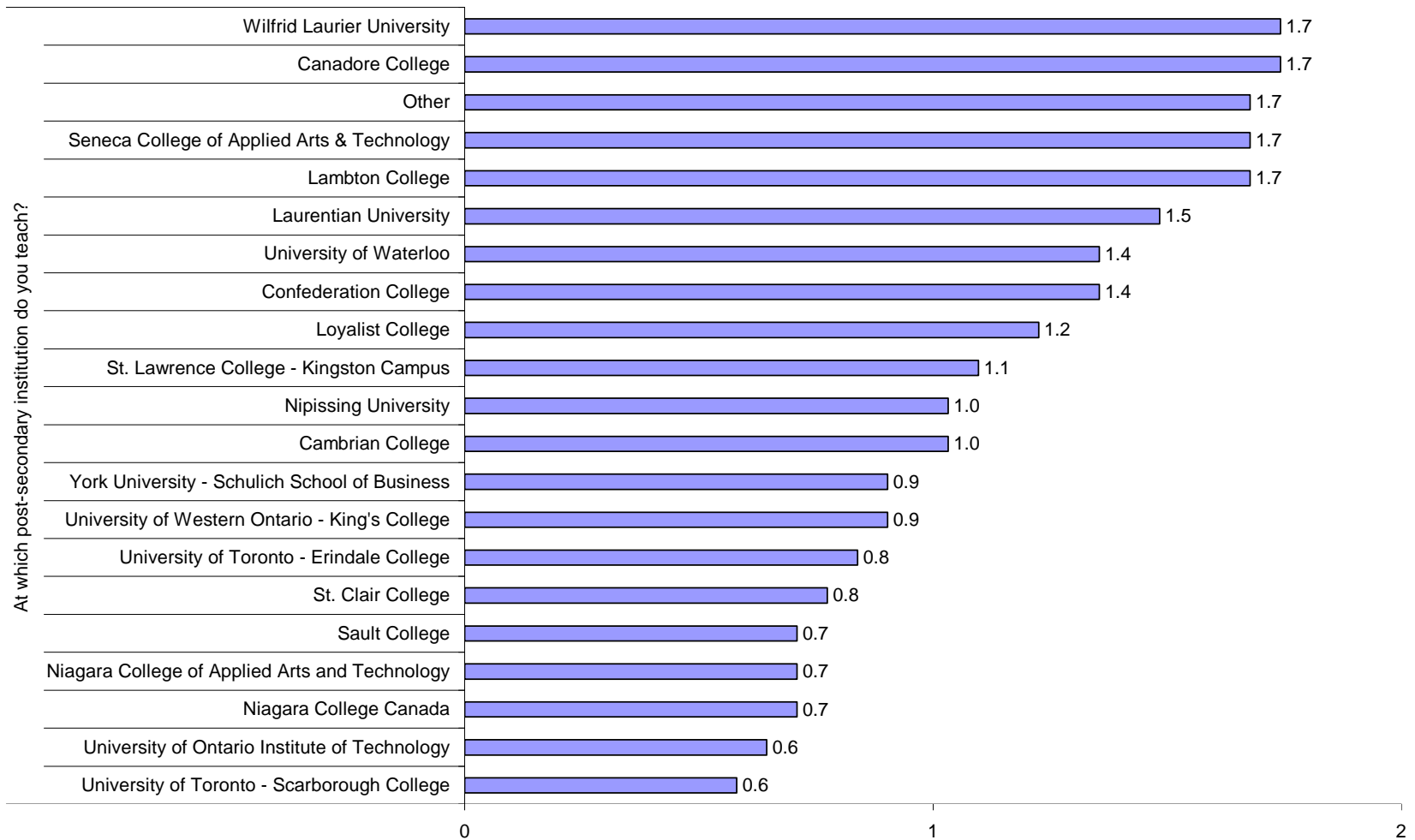
Faculty Demographics

Faculty, by Institution (%)



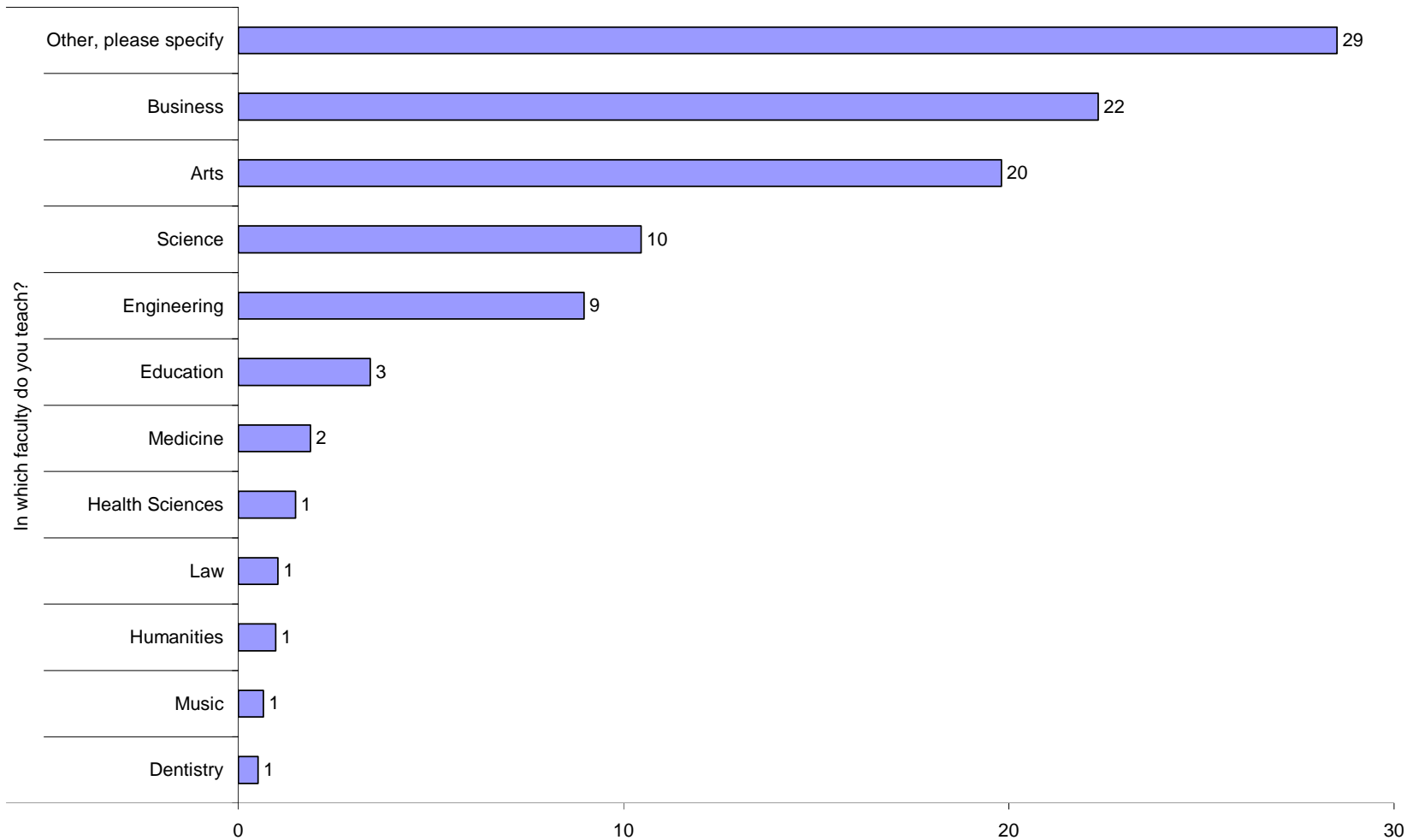
Faculty Demographics

Faculty, by Institution (%)



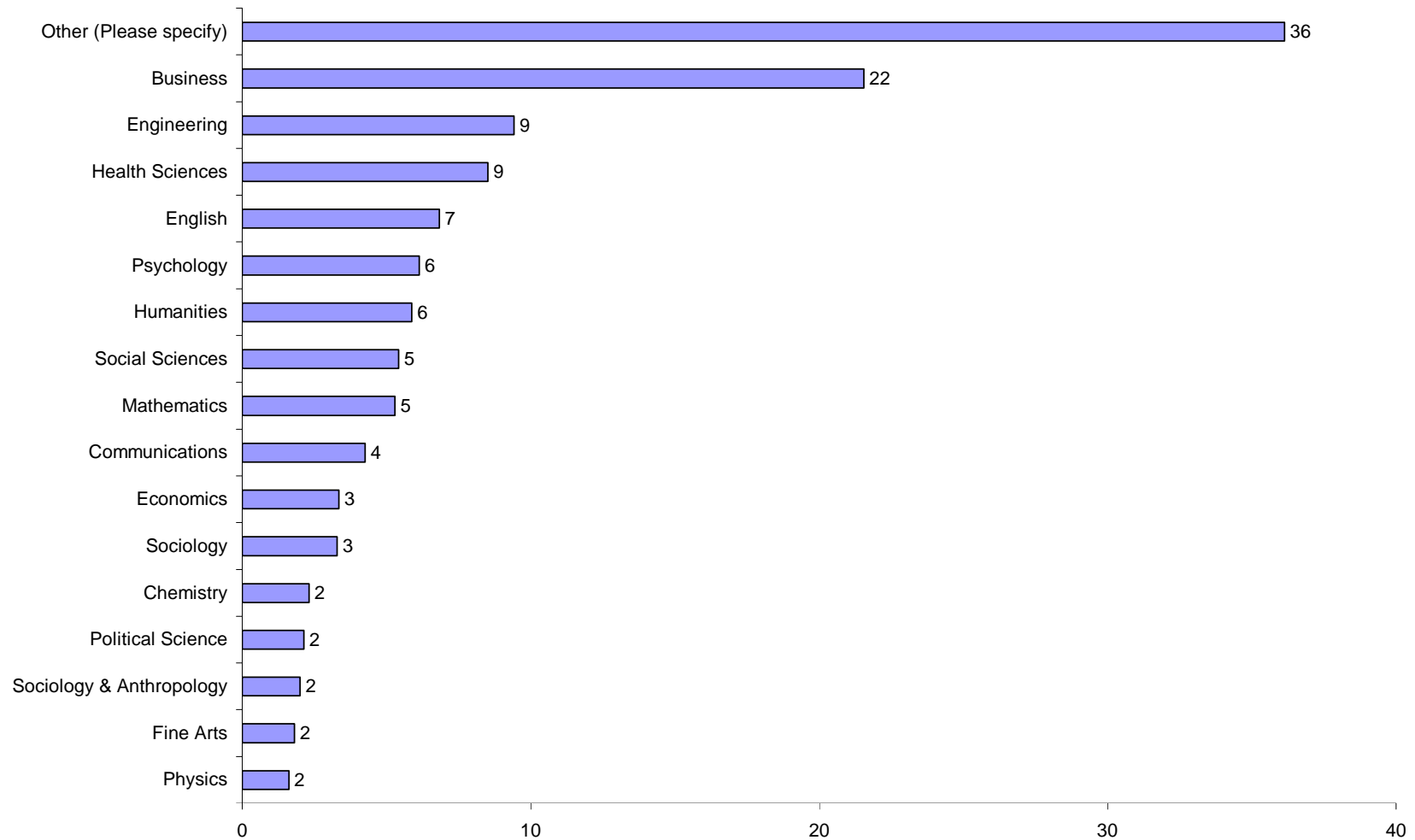
Faculty Demographics

Faculty, by Faculty (%)



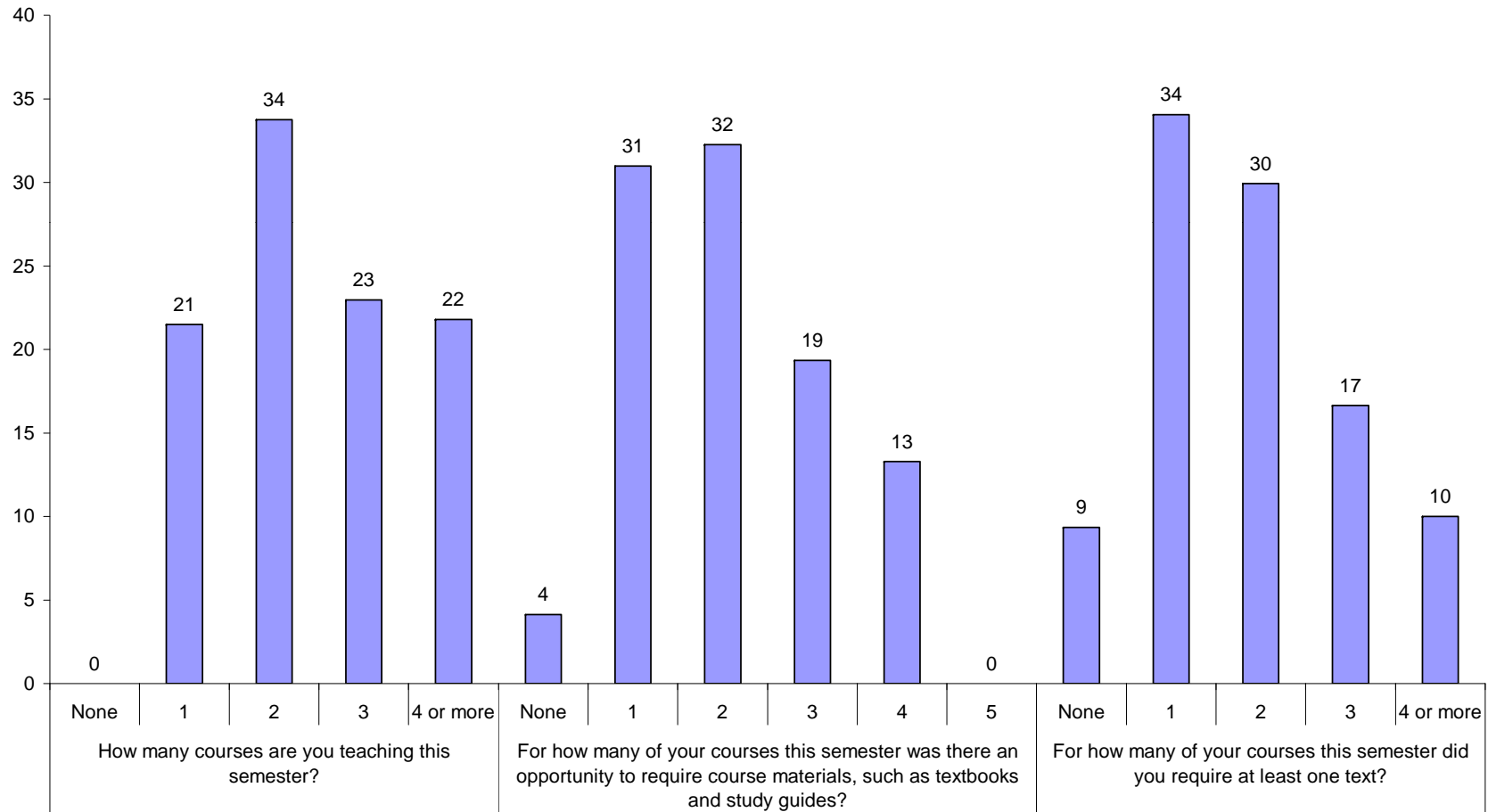
Faculty Demographics

Faculty, by Program (%)



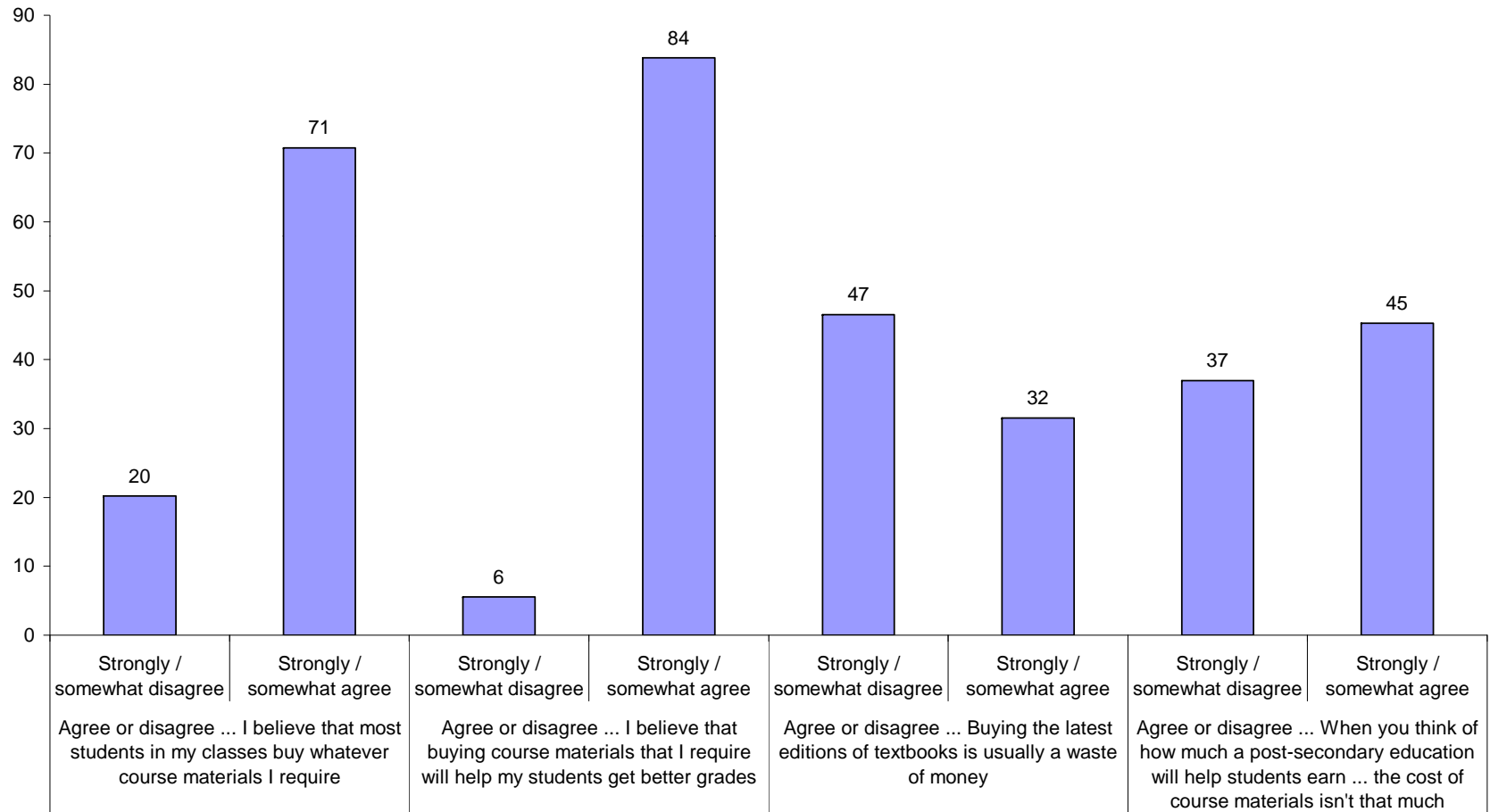
Faculty Demographics

Number of Courses and Material Requirements (%)



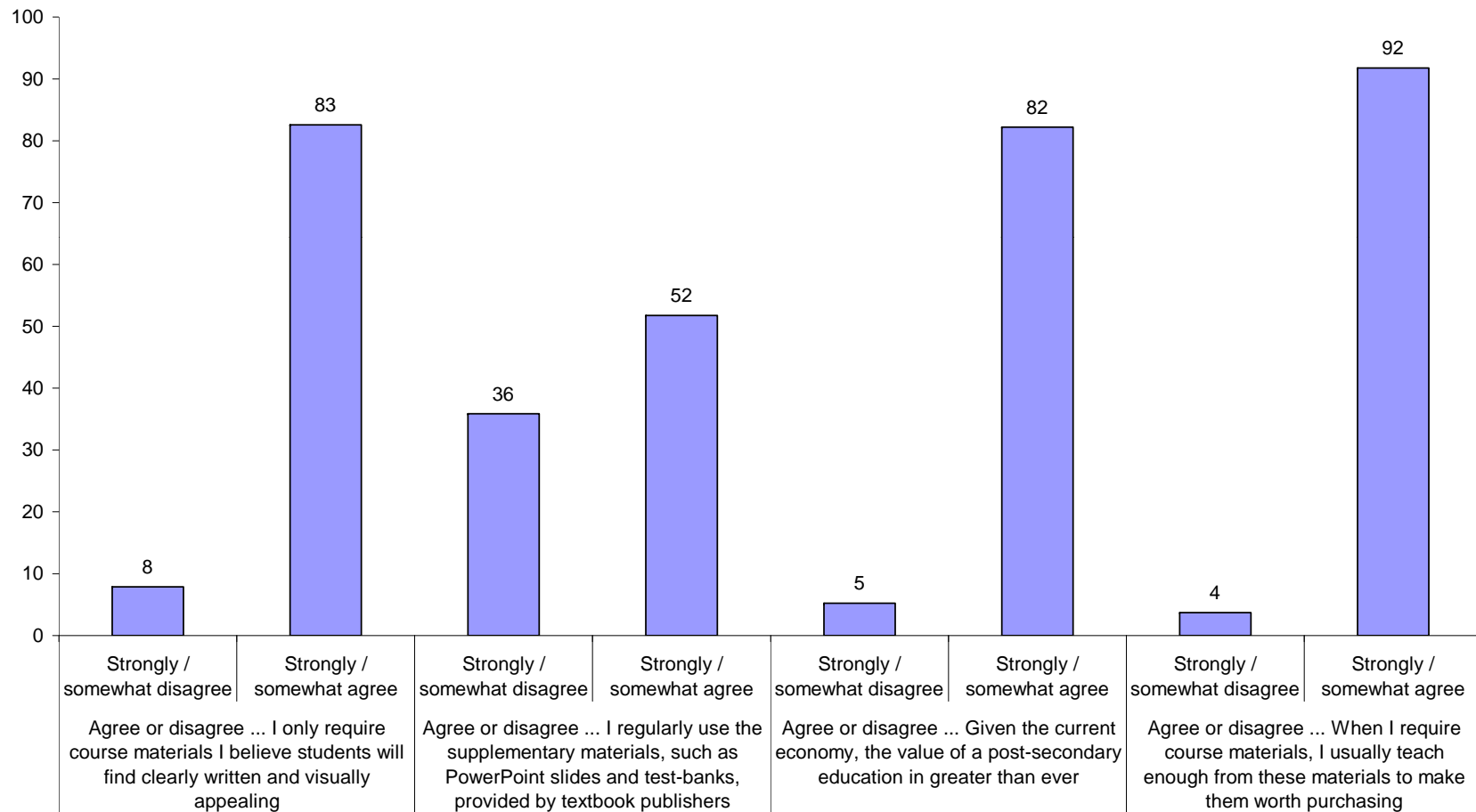
Faculty and Course Materials

Attitudes About Course Materials (%)



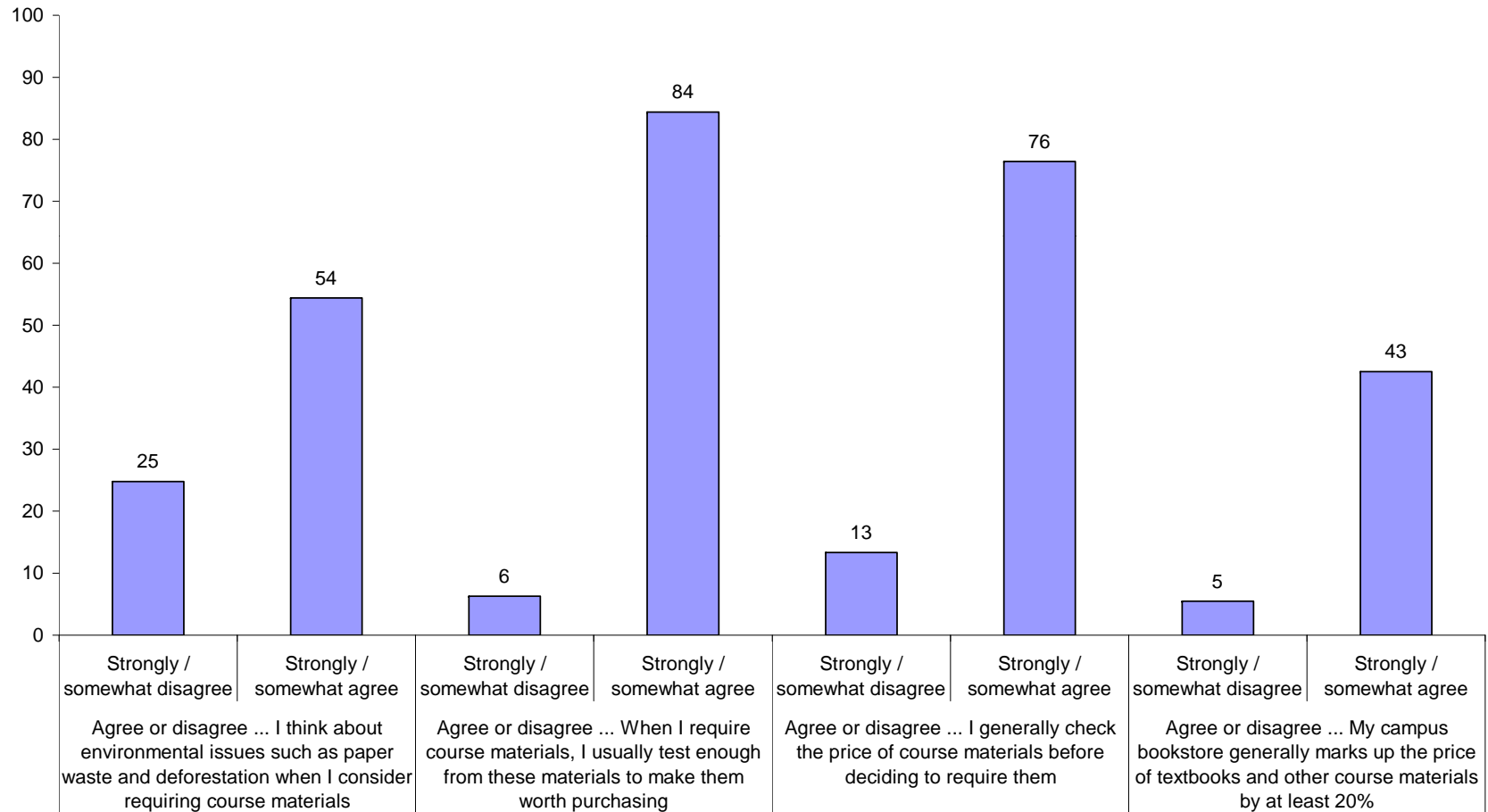
Faculty and Course Materials

Attitudes About Course Materials (%)



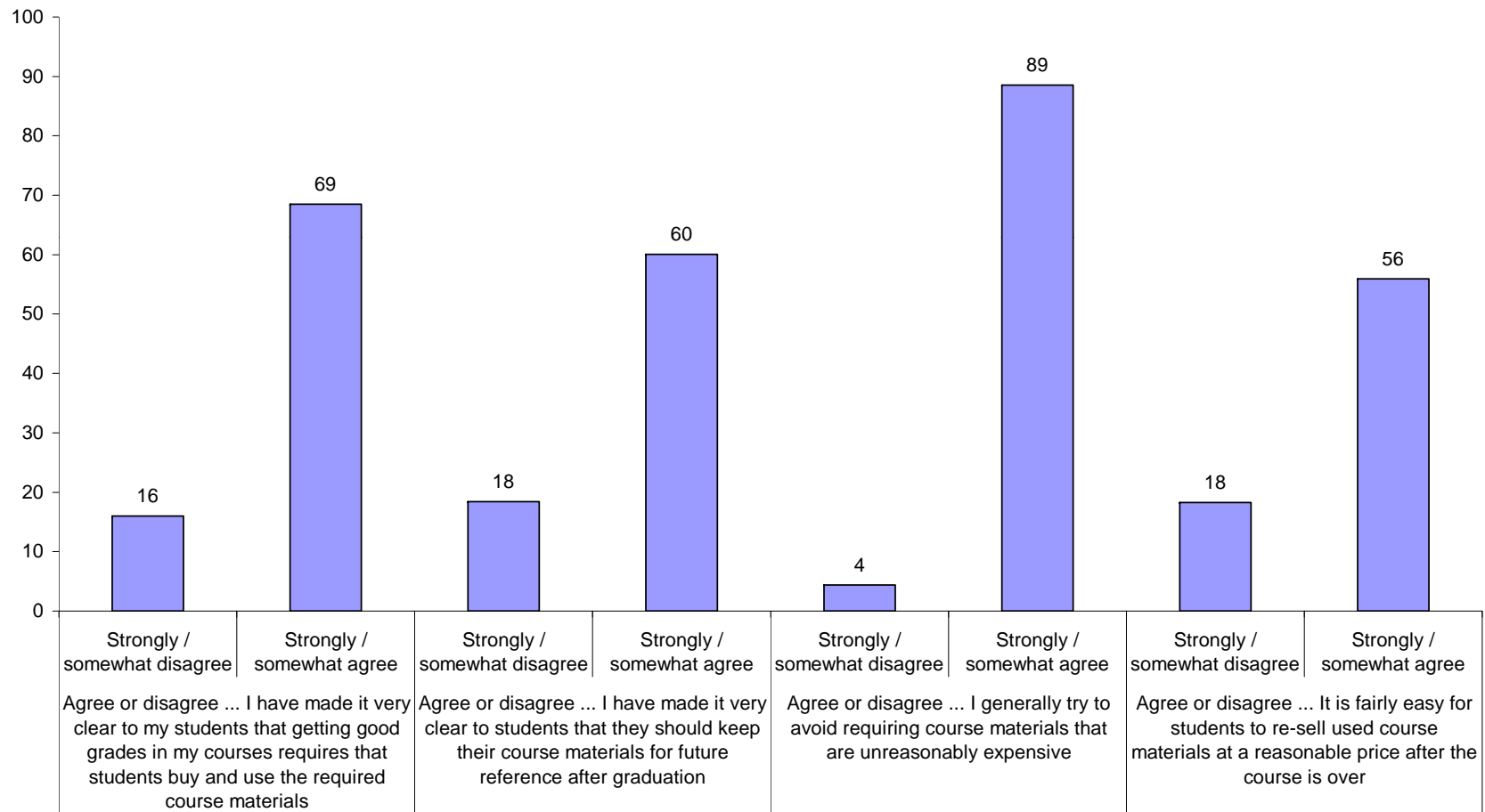
Faculty and Course Materials

Attitudes About Course Materials (%)



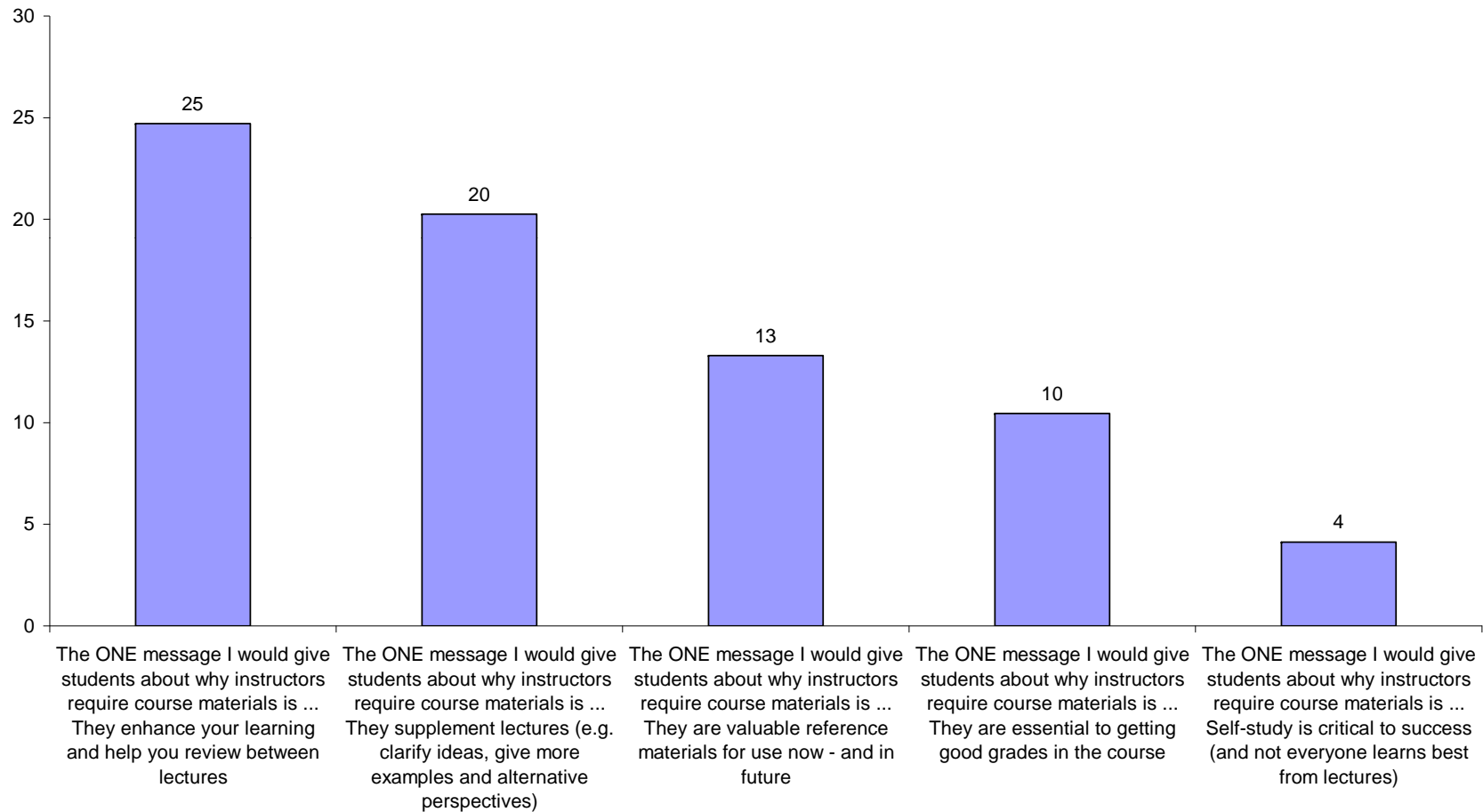
Faculty and Course Materials

Attitudes About Course Materials (%)



Faculty and Course Materials

Messages to Students About Course Materials:
Categories Created from Open-ended Responses (%)



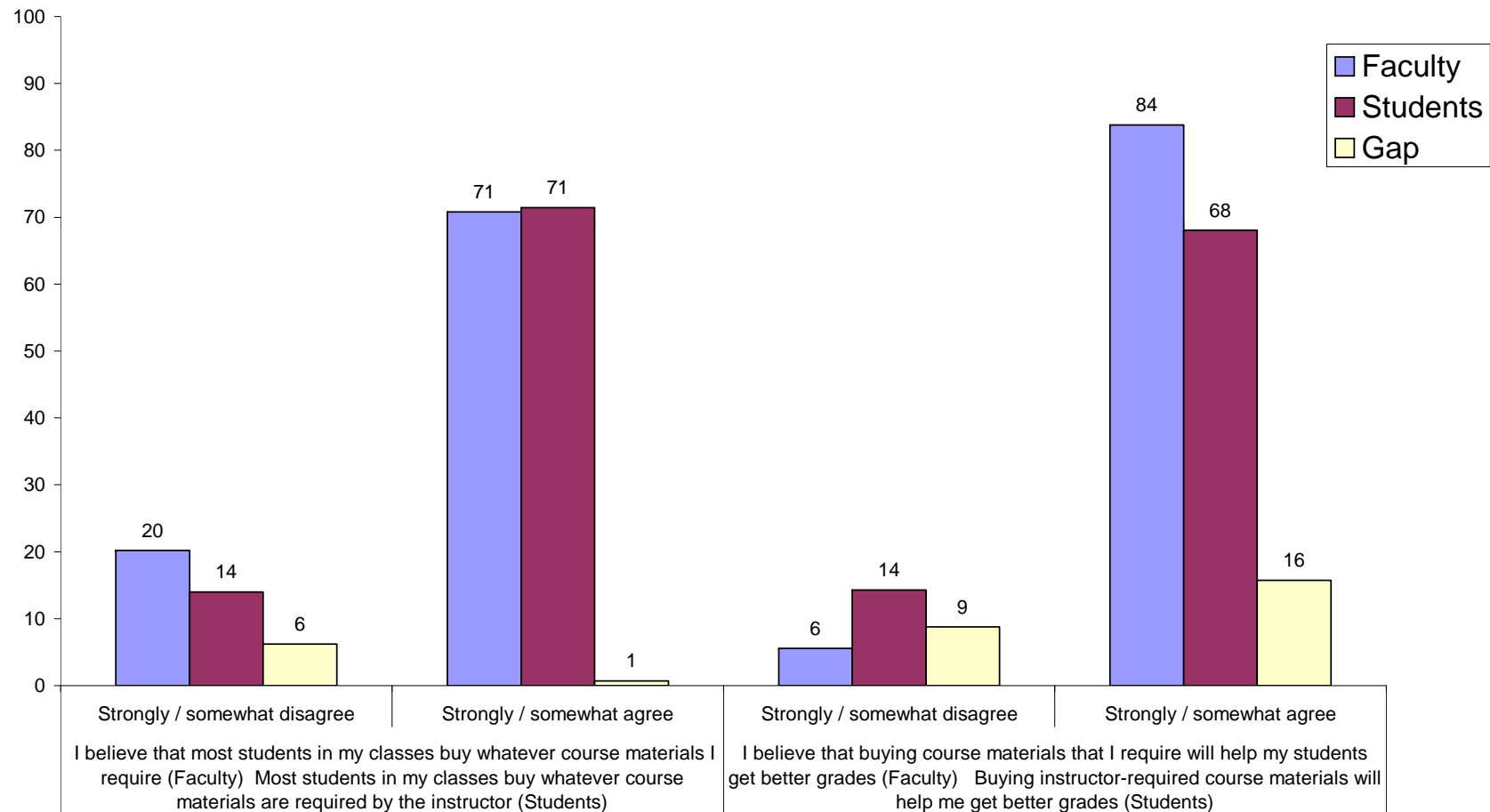
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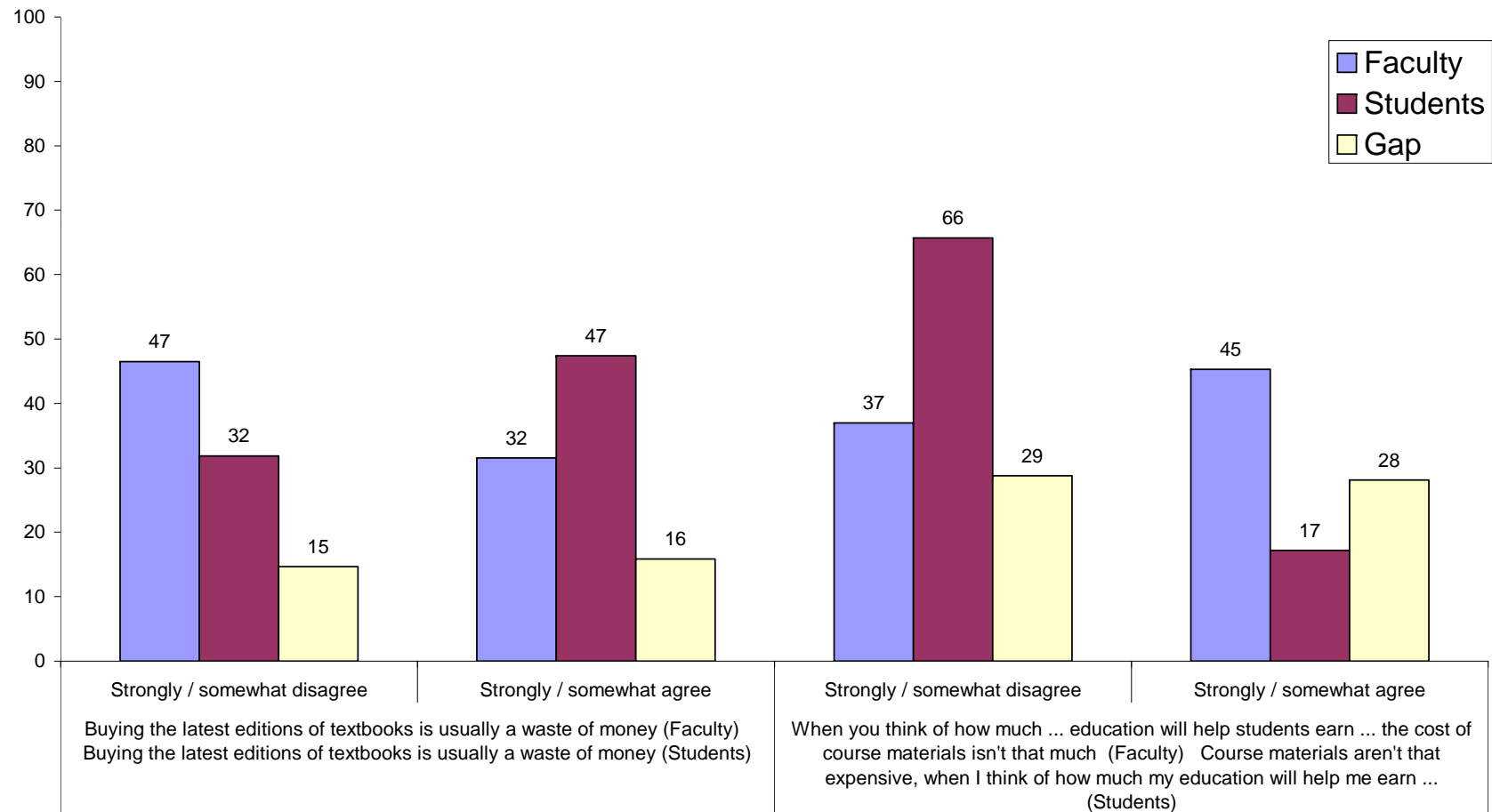
Students and Faculty Comparison

Gap Analysis of Faculty and Student Attitudes About Course Material Requirements (%)



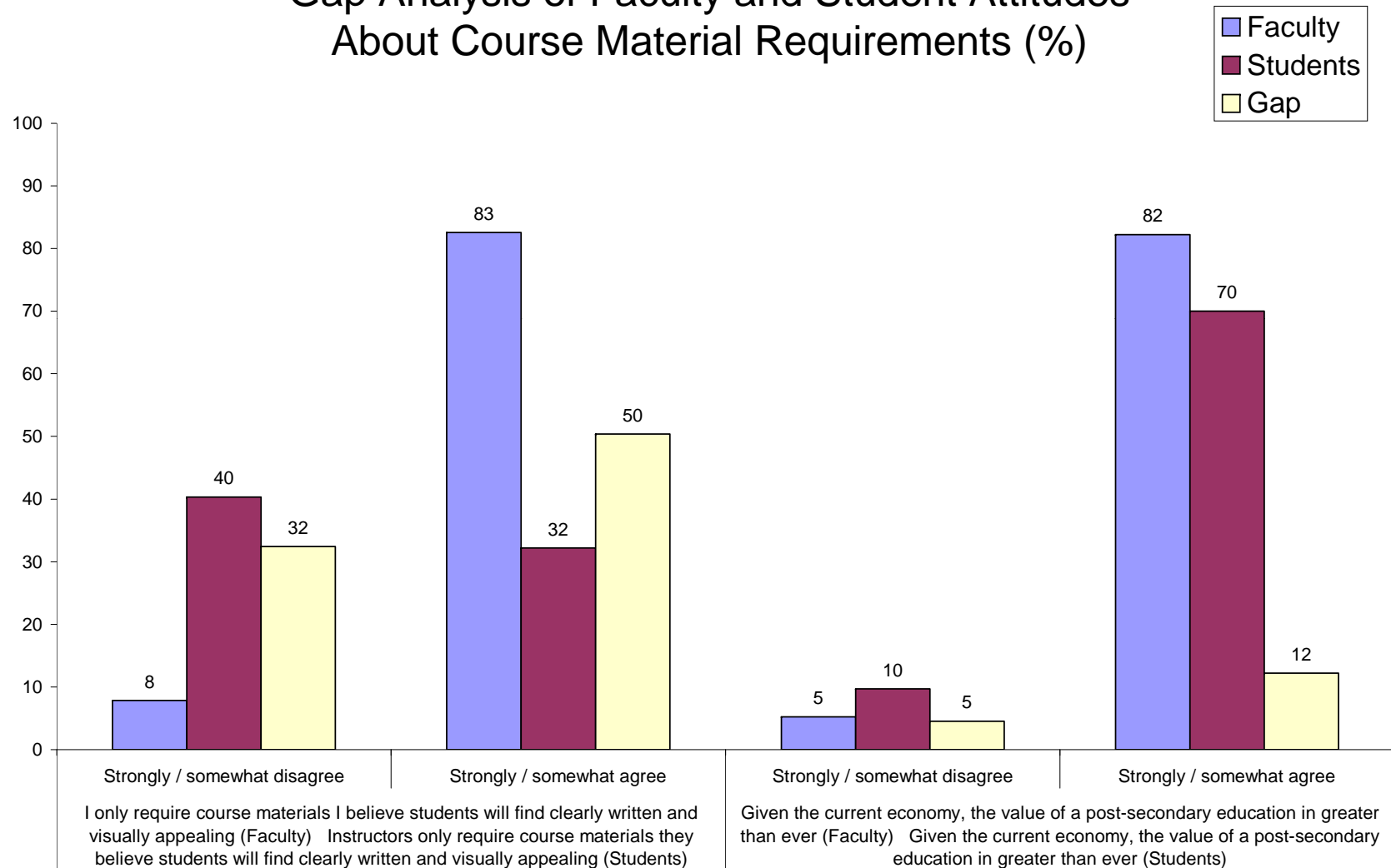
Students and Faculty Comparison

Gap Analysis of Faculty and Student Attitudes About Course Material Requirements (%)



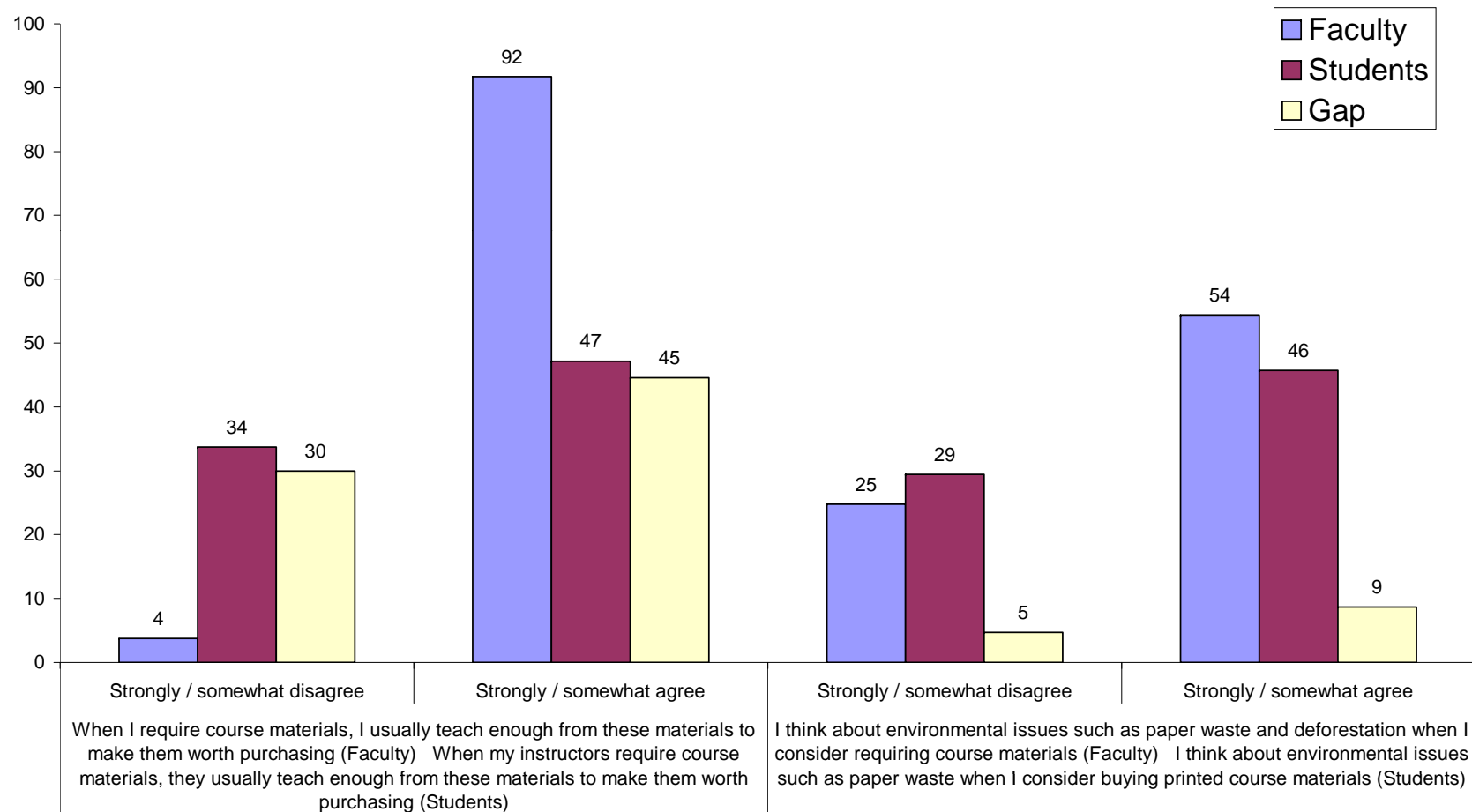
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Gap Analysis of Faculty and Student Attitudes About Course Material Requirements (%)



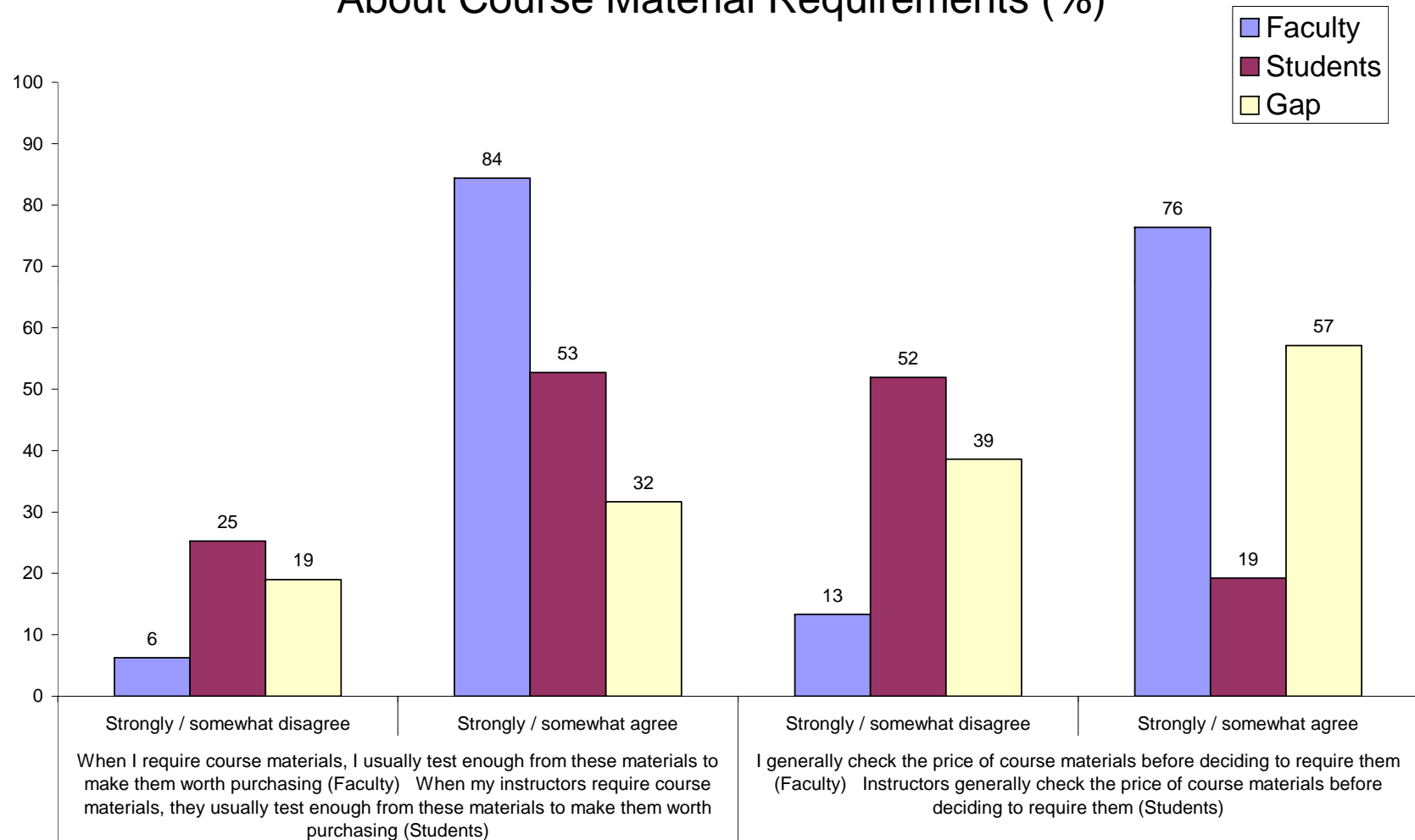
Students and Faculty Comparison

Gap Analysis of Faculty and Student Attitudes About Course Material Requirements (%)



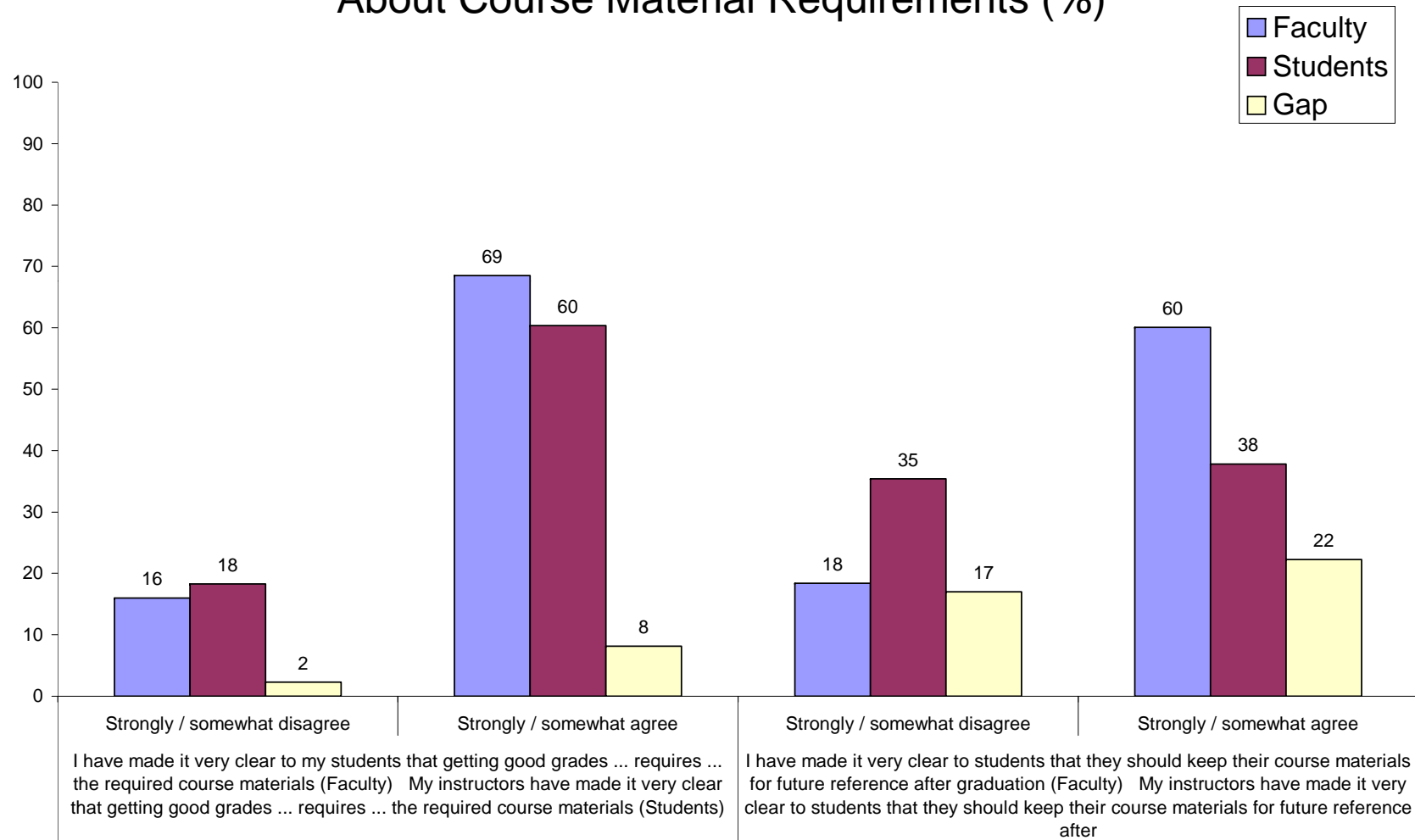
Students and Faculty Comparison

Gap Analysis of Faculty and Student Attitudes About Course Material Requirements (%)



Students and Faculty Comparison

Gap Analysis of Faculty and Student Attitudes About Course Material Requirements (%)



Students and Faculty Comparison

Gap Analysis of Faculty and Student Attitudes About Course Material Requirements (%)

