

Institutional Trust Survey

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*Prepared for UASU Executive Committee by
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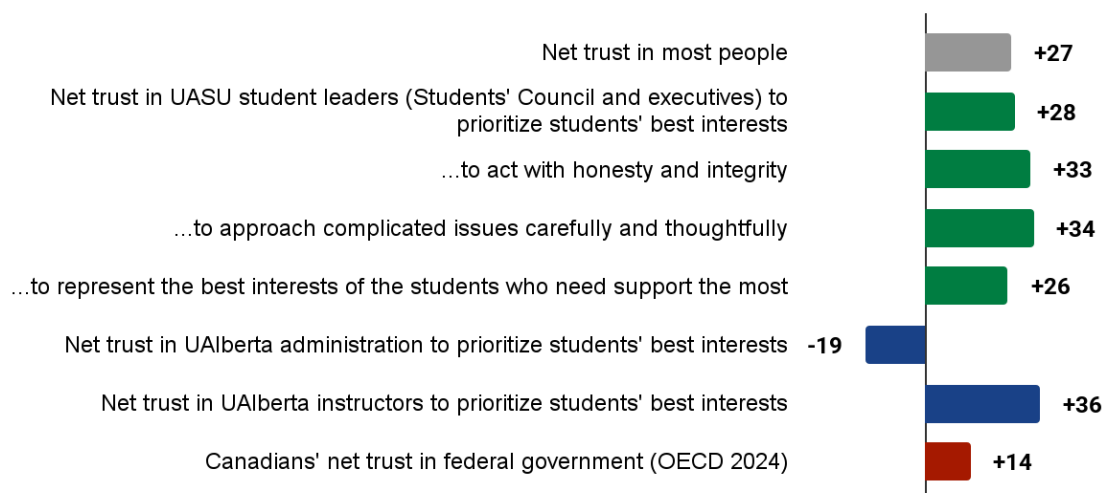
Overview

As part of the UASU's strategic planning cycle, this survey ran on the UASU Perks student engagement platform from January 14th to 21st, 2025. It reached 1,079 respondents, a 60% response rate based on the unique Perks users who were active during this period. Questions were derived from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) [Survey on Drivers of Trust in Public Institutions](#).

This project had three goals:

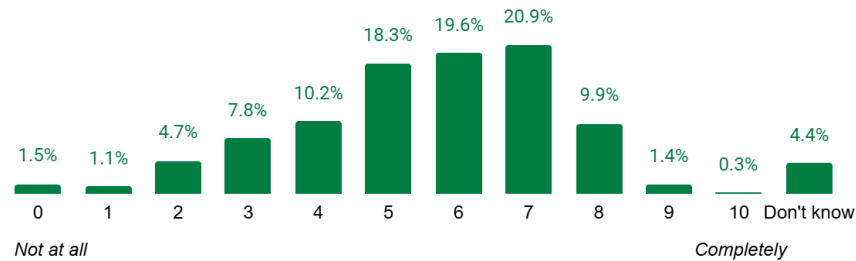
- Set a baseline for trust in the UASU's elected student leaders (Students' Council and Executives), allowing long-term measurement.
- Benchmark against levels of trust in University of Alberta administrators and instructors, as well as general trust in other people.
- Explore key facets of trust to inform student engagement, potentially including elections, student-facing communications, public-facing Executive advocacy work, and leadership development programming.

Net positive ratings (6-10 responses minus 0-4 responses, without removing 'don't know')



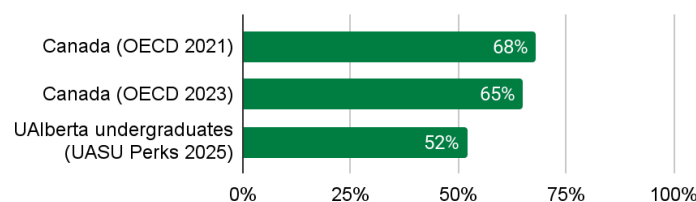
All four questions about UASU student leaders fell off somewhat by year of study: third-year students and above had average scores 5-7% lower than students in their first or second year. Upper-year respondents' trust in administration declined by 20%, but trust in instructors and general trust in most people stayed steady by year of study.

"We've got a few anonymous questions about trust so we can see where we stand and how we can grow. On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust MOST PEOPLE?"



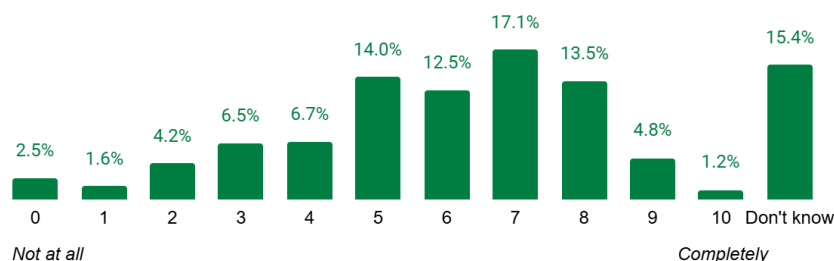
Only 12% of respondents gave a rating of 8 or higher. Compared to OECD data, respondents were less likely than the average Canadian to trust most people.

Percent of respondents noting high or moderately high trust (6-10/10).



This difference likely reflects a young, diverse, and often financially precarious population. The OECD's [2024 results for Canada](#) note "Levels of trust in other people...show significant variations across various socio-economic and demographic groups," including economic status, marginalization, and age.

"...how much do you trust UASU student leaders (Students' Council and Executives) to prioritize students' best interests?"

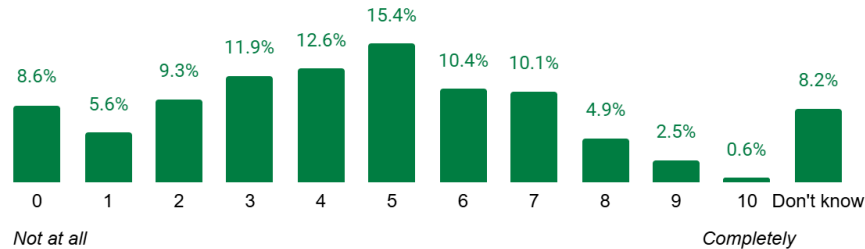


With a relatively high share of 'don't know' and a 5 being the second-highest numerical response, there is clearly room to grow. However, UASU student leaders still had strongly net-positive results (+28, rising to +33 after removing 'don't know' responses).¹

¹ This is one area where the survey is not representative: Perks users are probably more likely than other students to have formed an opinion about the UASU and its leadership.

"...how much do you trust University of Alberta administration to prioritize students' best interests?"

This was the only question to see a net negative result (-19, sinking to -21 after removing 'don't know' responses).

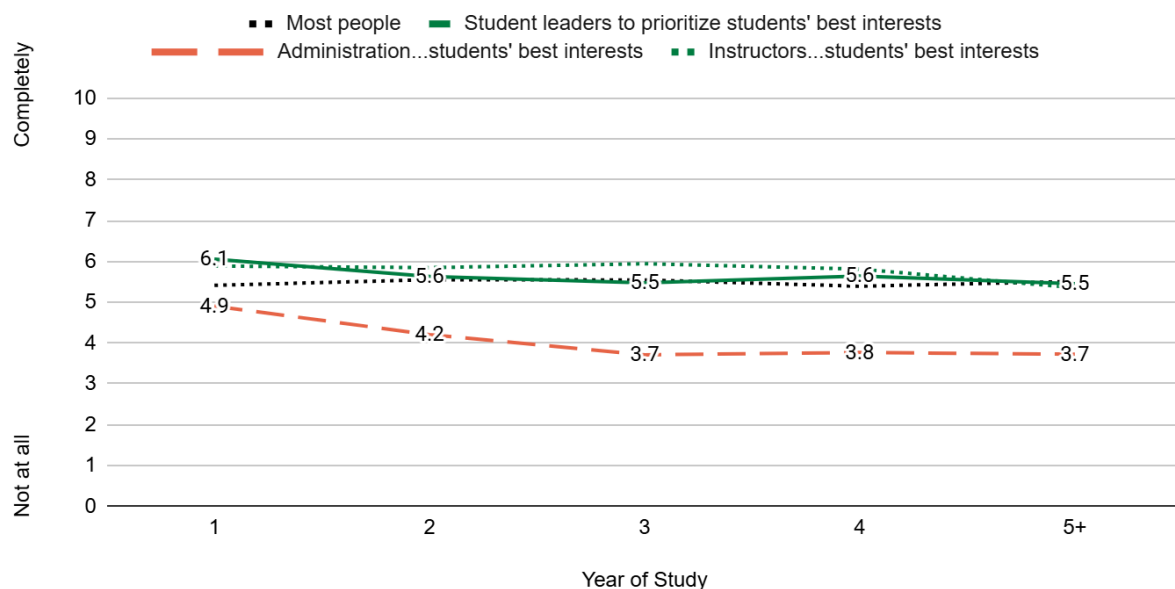


These results are not surprising. In the unusual year leading up to this survey, the University of Alberta saw a long list of events with consequences for student trust, including large public vigils and protests; the forcible clearing of an encampment; challenges to public confidence in senior administration, UAPS, the Crisis Management Team, the Board's investments, and official communications; an ASIRT investigation and a third-party review; and persistent concerns around the administration of the Sexual Assault Centre. As students graduate and new students arrive, it remains to be seen how long this net distrust will persist.

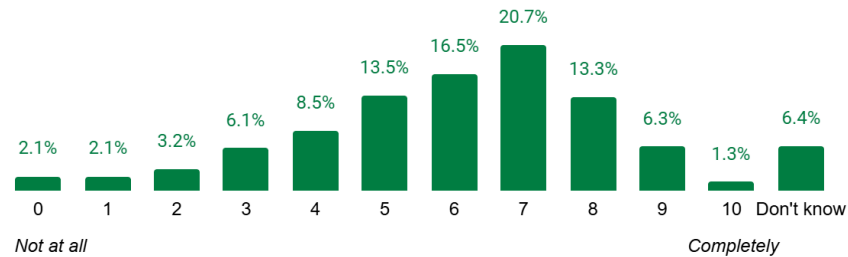
As noted above, trust in University of Alberta administration decreased strongly in the first two years of study:

'...how much do you trust ___?'

Mean scores excluding 'don't know' responses



"On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust University of Alberta instructors to prioritize students' best interests?"

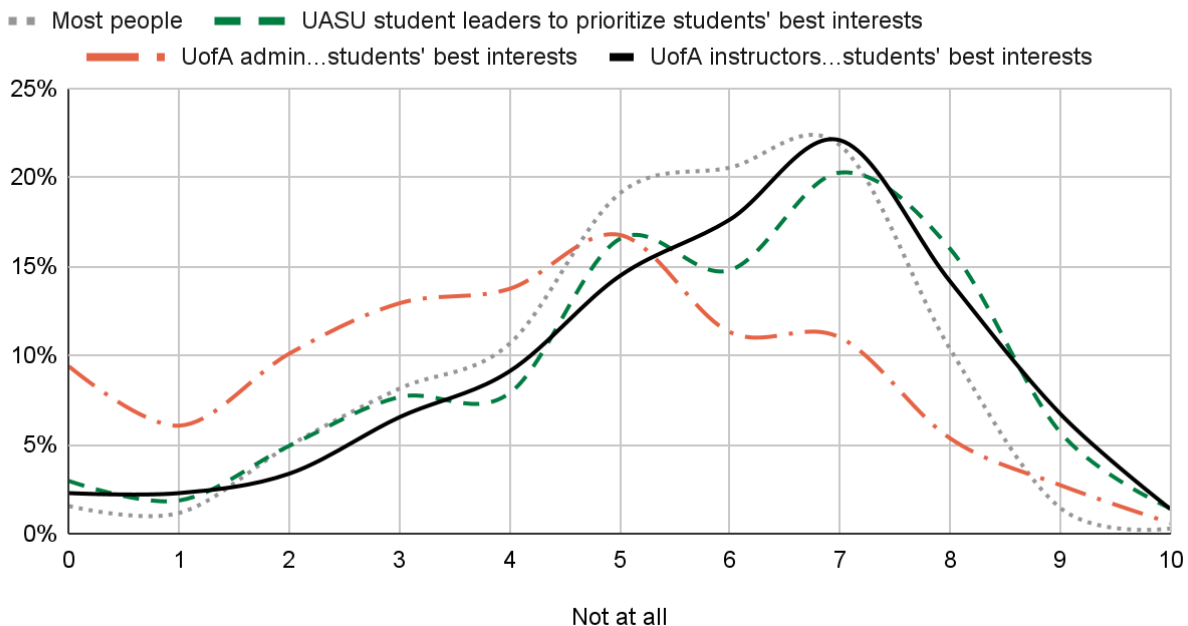


While there is still nuance to this picture, the overwhelming majority of respondents generally trust their instructors to prioritize their best interests.

- Their net trust is +36, rising to +38 once 'don't know' respondents are excluded.
- Trust in instructors stayed stable by year of study.
- The average response was 5.9, compared to 5.7-5.9 for student leaders, 5.5 for 'most people,' and 4.2 for University of Alberta administration.

On a scale from 0 to 10, where 0 is not at all and 10 is completely, how much do you trust ...?

'Don't know' responses excluded



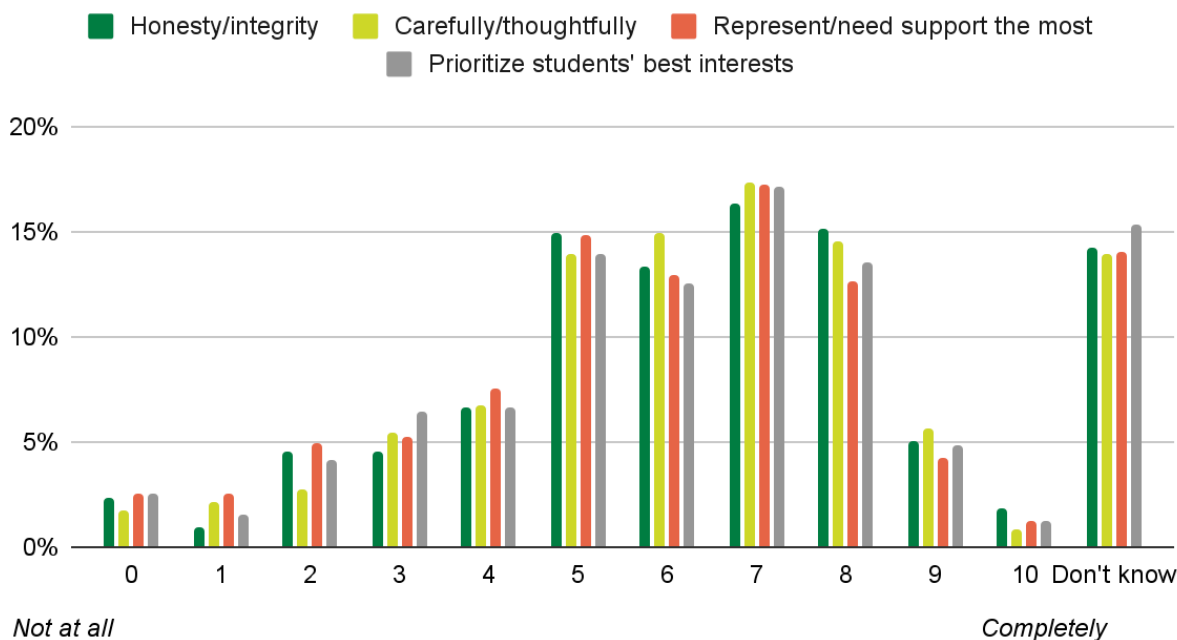
Facets of Trust

Inspired by the OECD surveys and discussions with UASU leadership, three additional questions focused on critical aspects of students' trust in Students' Council and UASU Executives:

- "...how much do you trust UASU student leaders (Students' Council and Executives) to act with honesty and integrity?"
- "...how much do you trust UASU student leaders to approach complicated issues carefully and thoughtfully?"
- "...how much do you trust UASU student leaders to represent the best interests of the students who need support the most?"

These questions produced similar results to the initial question about acting in students' best interests, with the highest net results attached to approaching complicated issues carefully and acting with integrity:

"...how much do you trust UASU student leaders (Students' Council and Executives) to...?"



These results affirm consistent moderate-to-high levels of trust in student leaders' character, priorities, and approaches to complex issues. As each facet of trust shows significant room to grow, these facets can be considered priorities for student engagement.