

Overview

These three informal surveys were deployed through the Perks platform, achieving 1629 points of contact (630 unique respondents). All three surveys focused on the student experience during Fall 2020's largely-online delivery. Due to the Perks platform's back-end functionality, we were able to correlate unique anonymous respondents and cross-tabulate between surveys to find basic trends.

SURVEY	TIME PERIOD	RESPONDENTS	MULTIPLE CHOICE	TEXT FIELDS
A	Sept 28-Oct 4, 2020	606	3 questions	0 questions
B	Sept 29-Oct 4, 2020	595	2 questions	1 question
C	Sept 30-Oct 2, 2020	428	12 questions	0 questions

This report faithfully reproduces the informal language of the survey questions and answer options.

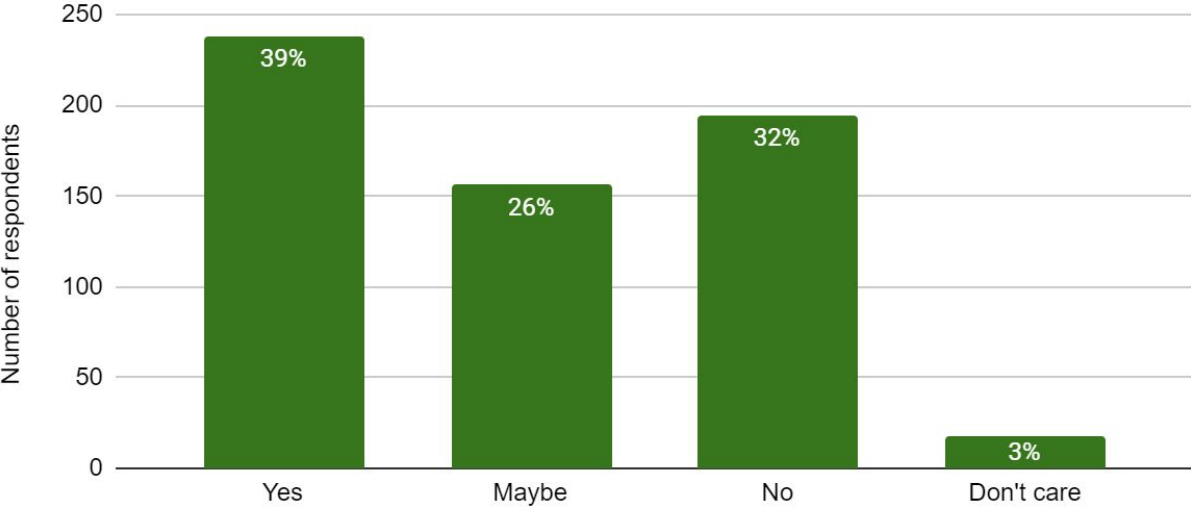
Trends

- By and large, students were evenly split between 'yes,' 'no,' and 'maybe' when asked whether they would lean toward more in-person classes in Winter term.
- One out of eight respondents had witnessed harassment and discrimination in the chat bar of an online class.
- One out of five respondents was not comfortable participating in breakout rooms, and another one out of five answered 'maybe.'
- Six out of seven respondents reported that much or all of their grade rested on final exams.
- Sentiment analysis of a 10,000-word corpus suggests that students dislike taking online exams. 63% of students had used online exam/proctoring software. Students overwhelmingly reported discomfort, privacy violations, and accessibility concerns.
- Students who witnessed 'someone shouting offensive nonsense,' harassment or discrimination in a text chat, or inappropriate doodles were all more likely to feel uncomfortable when participating in breakout groups.
- Witnessing harassment or discrimination in an online class's text chat made students more likely to lean toward more in-person classes.

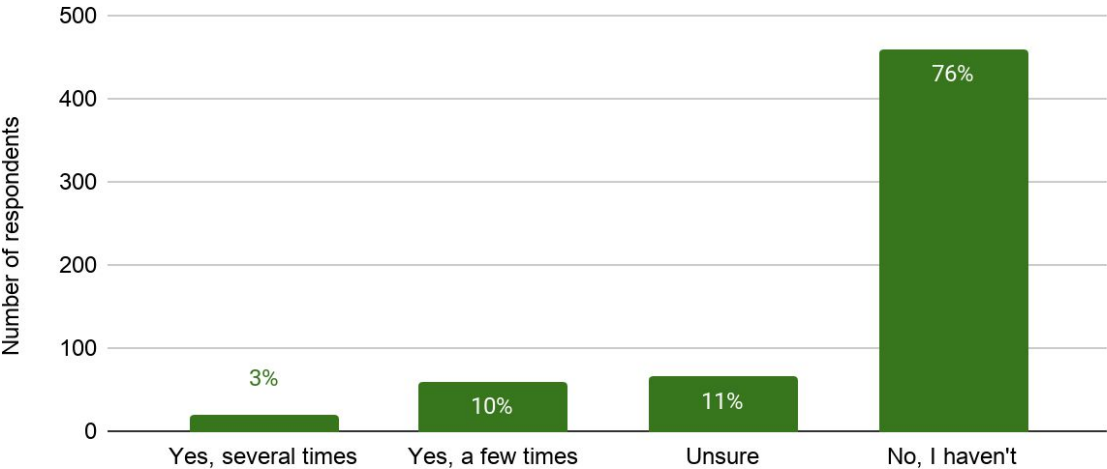
- Students who felt uncomfortable speaking in breakout groups were more likely than their comfortable peers to lean toward more in-person classes.
- Whether a student had used online exam software had no effect on their likelihood of being comfortable with more in-person classes.
- The following percentages of students personally experienced these issues during online classes:
 - Someone shouting offensive nonsense: 9.8%
 - Sexual harassment: 1.2%
 - An instructor 'ghosting' a class - never showing up with no notice: 4.9%
 - A class cancelled due to technical difficulties: 32.7%
 - An instructor cancelling class after losing control: 1.6%
 - An instructor trying hard and doing their best: 90.0%
- When instructors introduced their students to houseplants, pets, family members, etc., those students were more likely to say that their instructors were trying hard.
- Students who did not report seeing instructors try hard were much more likely to lean toward in-person classes.

Survey A: Comfort Levels (n=606)

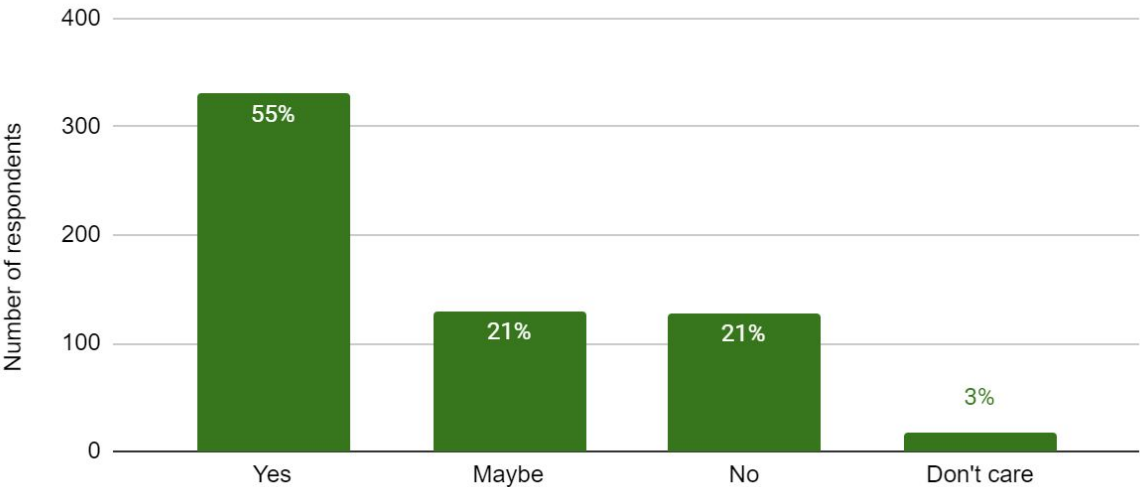
Question A1: "Would you be comfortable with having a higher number of in-person classes in the Winter term?"



Question A2: "Have you witnessed any form of harassment or discrimination in an online class's text chat?"

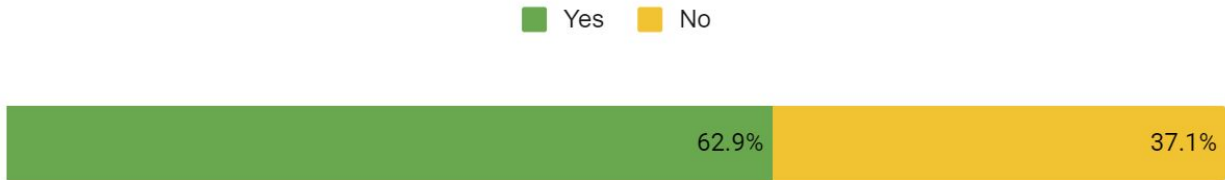


Question A3: "Generally, do you feel comfortable speaking in your online lecture breakout groups?"

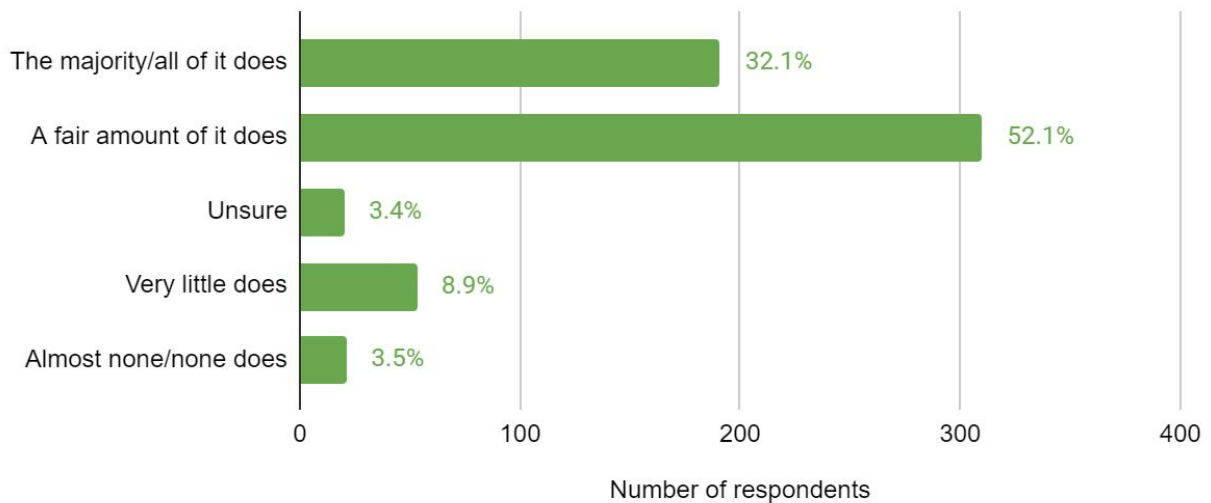


Survey B: Online Exams

Question B1: "Have you had the opportunity to use online exam software for your courses this term?"



Question B2: "Generally, does a lot of your grade rest on exams this term?"

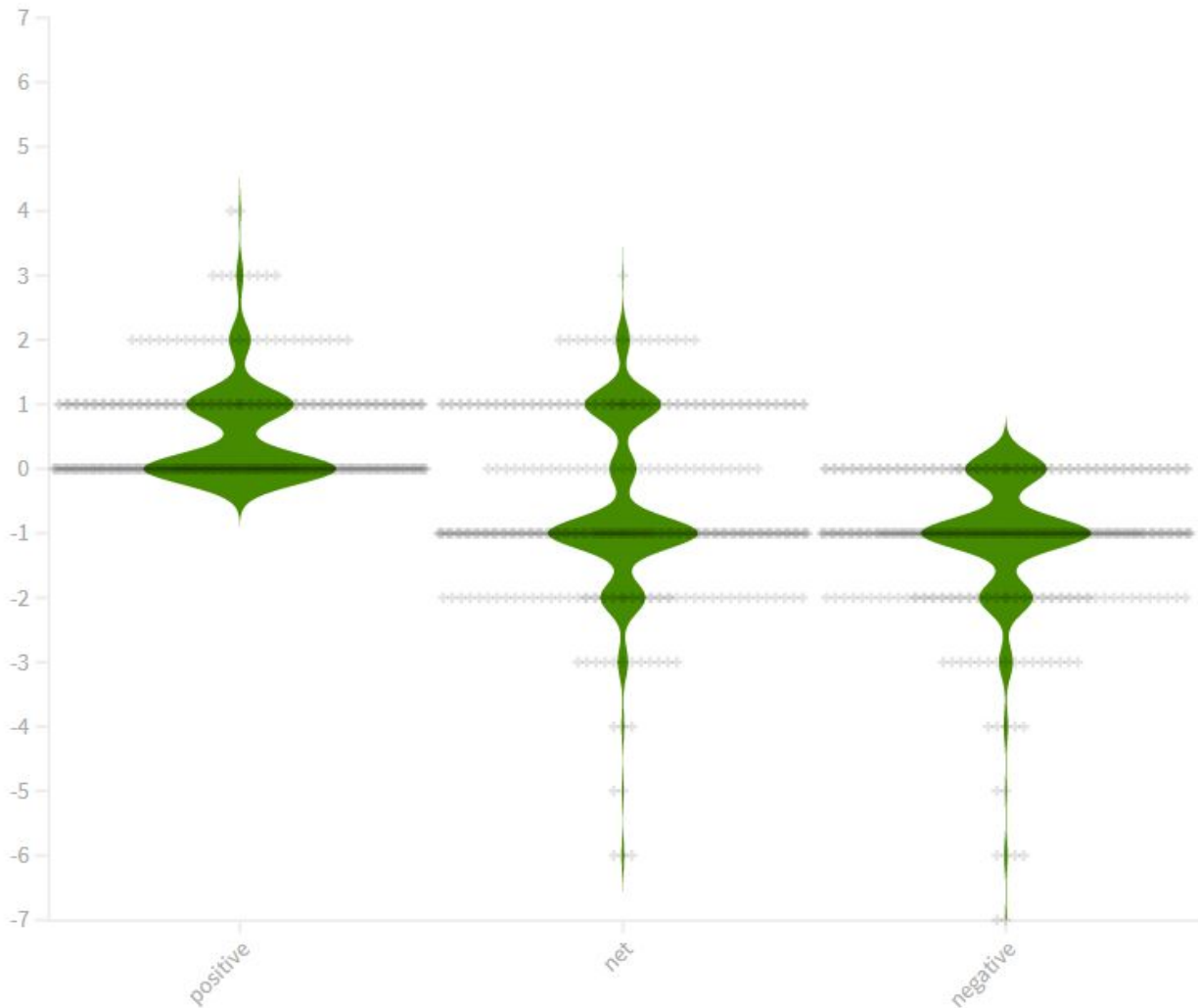


In this context, we note [the following material](#) from the UAlberta Centre for Teaching and Learning: "Is an exam the most effective method to assess learning outcomes? Exams can be an efficient way of assessing student learning. However, the traditional, written examination is very difficult to replicate in the online environment."

A full 84% of Survey B respondents, 500 students, noted that 'a fair amount' or 'the majority/all' of their grade rested on exams. While our questions did not speak to alternative arrangements like open-book, take-home, or oral exams, we suspect that many instructors may not be paying appropriate attention to CTL recommendations and resources.

Question B3: "How do you feel about taking your exams remotely?"

Student responses totaled 10,073 words. We used the *bing* sentiment analysis lexicon in R to estimate each respondent's feelings. Each response received a positive (high-end), negative (low-end), and net sentiment score. Overwhelmingly, student responses were somewhat negative.



Some noteworthy or representative responses:

- Closed-book exams were stupid in-person and are even more stupid now.
- It feels like it comes down to the prof being willing to put in work to make exams that work asynchronously.
- Taking exams remotely is fine. Most professors have platforms or mediums in which it is easy to upload documents to show your work for questions. Only issue is proctoring. I understand that SEM is used to deter cheating but there is a significant concern for privacy with SEM having access to your webcam and microphone. Recording the activity on your computer screen is agreeable to

deter cheating but the university having data of our webcam and microphone is a little concerning and invasive.

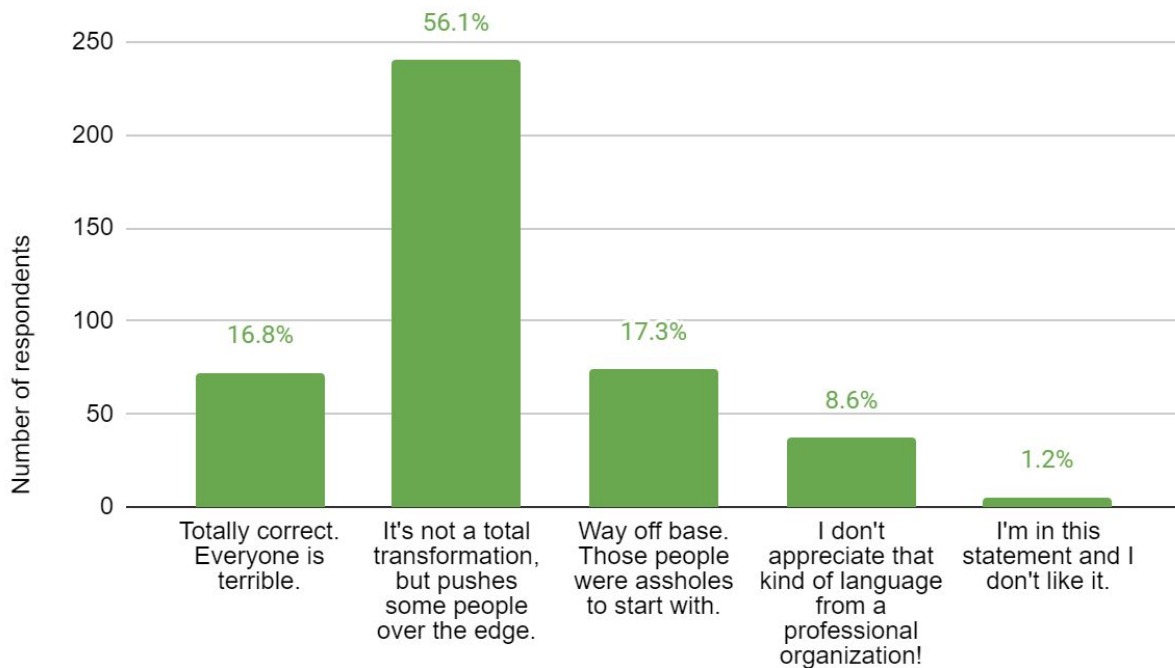
- Ok, kind of stressful, because you could be flagged for talking to yourself or looking around, and the possibility of internet connection dropping.
- Remote exams: cool. Proctored remote exams: NOT cool.
- Nervous about my internet connection.
- I really don't like all the steps that are needed to write an online exam. Sometimes, it's a challenge to find a quiet spot to write the exam when there are 4 other people working from home, some of which have meetings, class, etc.
- So nerve-wracking with proctoring, like a long blink could set the system off for you supposedly cheating.
- It causes a lot of anxiety and honestly I constantly worry about failing a test due to a technical glitch.
- I really hate when the questions are sequential, because it goes against every single piece of advice that I've ever been given about how to take a test. It's very stressful and while it might stop a couple people from cheating, I feel like overall it doesn't benefit the students. This method of test taking was recommended by the U of A's Learning and Education something board (sorry I forget the name, but it's something along those lines) which is ridiculous to me, because obviously they didn't talk to any students before recommending this method. Overall it just adds more stress and leads to worse outcomes because you can't skip questions or review questions at the end of the test, and you don't know how to properly manage your time because you can only see the questions as they come up, and you don't get to do a quick survey of the questions before starting so you know what questions to spend the most time on.
- I really don't like it. There's no guarantee that your family will not end up accidentally walking in on you writing your test. I don't like that I have to show pretty much my entire room to my prof. And for people that live in apartments and small houses like that, it's probably hard to find a quiet and uninterrupted place to write their exam, which really isn't fair to them. Furthermore, there is always the fact that some people have flaky internet, so it's possible that they could get kicked out of their test because their internet isn't stable enough. It's also just really weird writing exams in such an informal situation. However, considering the current situation with Covid-19, I'm more comfortable taking a test at home than in a room surrounded by dozens or hundreds of other random people.
- Not that good, since I get nervous that I may get flagged for just random stuff like scratching my ear :)
- I don't really like SEM it kind of feels like an invasion of privacy and extra work for students and professors, but I understand it is the precautions taken to ensure some kind of integrity from those who can't do it on their own.
- I wish profs/faculties had taken the 4 month break to put together exams which *didn't* require remote proctoring to operate properly. Take home exams, written response, etc.

- Love it. It's nice not having all the distractions of others coughing, sneezing and breathing. Also, I feel less judged being at home than in an exam room since I have trouble sitting still.
- Kinda sucks cuz i can't do them anywhere other than at campus.
- I don't love it at all, my motivation to study for them is low and my expectations for myself to succeed is lower.
- Pretty good to be honest. I can write in my PJ's and that's always a win.
- It is not the most ideal situation but I know I have to do it anyways because I need to pass the course and get the credit. I do feel as though the SEM software to some extent invades students' privacy which I strongly disagree with.
- I hate it. I hate how little time we get, I hate the fact that SEM recordings are saved for 2 years, it all just gives me more anxiety than in person exams. The professors that give open book timed exams are great, the take home ones even better. Profs that give 1 min/question proctored exams are honestly the worst.
- I have like 4 different kinds of proctoring software installed on my computer. Having to navigate through it all isn't it chief.
- My exams will all be open book take home format which I prefer to using exam lock software. I do think it will be a lot easier for people to cheat by communicating with each other this year though. I am still happier writing open book exams than dealing with exam lock software though, it sounds like a nightmare.
- Terrible. Anxiety inducing. I have a friend who got kicked out of their exam and now the weight is all on her final even though she practiced with SEM and was prepared for the midterm.
- I think the concept of remote exam security is a little naive, regardless of exam monitoring software it is incredibly easy to circumvent and cheat, and I was still required to use exam monitoring software for an open book exam, which just seems ridiculous.
- I despise using the software. I am a student parent, I cannot get accommodations because 'having children is not a disability'. Yet I have to parent while taking exams. This costs me time and is distracting.
- I get flagged on proctored exams for talking to my children who need me. Usually the exams are at dinner or bedtime.
- I almost failed an exam because my youngest son closed his finger in a drawer and needed to be comforted and I ran out of time leaving half my exam empty.
- I hate it. I have a shitty internet connection so it's so stressful and I am paranoid that they are going to think I am cheating if I accidentally look off the screen.
- I have no complaints about taking exams remotely. Faculties have done their best to ensure that it is done in the most efficient way possible, and currently the important thing is to keep ourselves safe.
- I enjoy taking exams remotely because I feel comfortable in my own house and I save time by not having to take the bus to the university.

- I fucking hate it. Hot fucking garbage, there is not a single way that you could convince me that the software did not crawl out of Satan's asshole and spawn this awful, no good, software.

Survey C: Experiences during Online Classes

Question C1: "According to John Gabriel's Greater Internet F***wad Theory (Penny Arcade 2004), otherwise normal people, when granted anonymity and an audience, turn into total f***wads. How do you feel about this theory?"



Questions C2-C12: “There have been a lot of stories going around about things happening in online classes. Some weird, some wholesome, some worrying. We want to figure out what is just rumor, and how widespread things are. Pick as many answers as you need.”

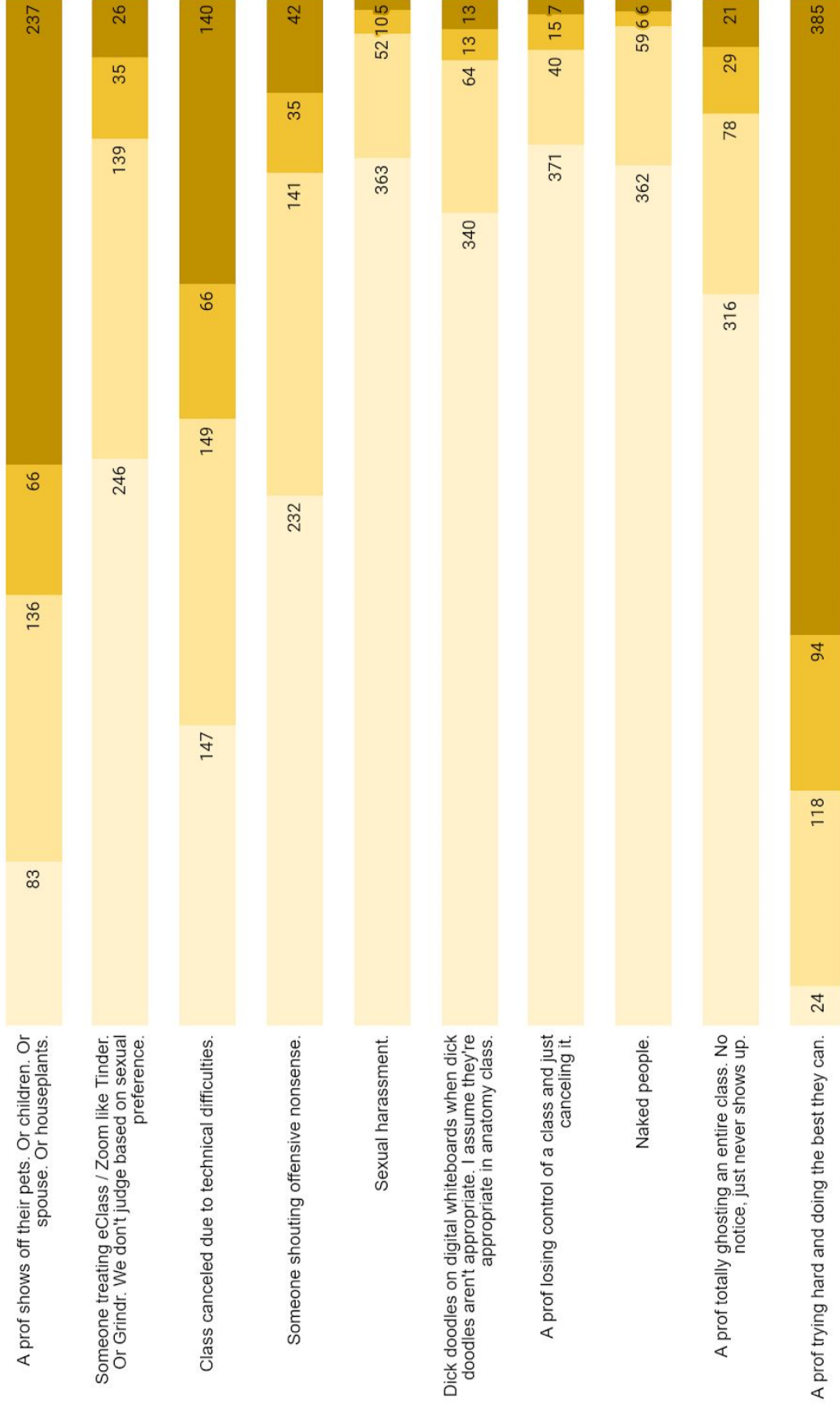
Students noted high incidences of inappropriate behaviour from both instructors and students. Note that we do not desire to stigmatize instructors introducing students to pets, children, spouse, or houseplants; indeed, previous surveys suggest that many or most students appreciate this behaviour.

Percentages of all respondents (n=428).
 Note: As these were 'choose all that apply' questions, rows will not add to 100%.

	Haven't heard about	Heard about	Experienced by friend	Experienced
A prof shows off their pets. Or children. Or spouse. Or houseplants.	19.4%	31.8%	15.4%	55.4%
Someone treating eClass / Zoom like Tinder. Or Grindr. We don't judge based on sexual preference.	57.5%	32.5%	8.2%	6.1%
Class canceled due to technical difficulties.	34.3%	34.8%	15.4%	32.7%
Someone shouting offensive nonsense.	54.2%	32.9%	8.2%	9.8%
Sexual harassment.	84.8%	12.1%	2.3%	1.2%
Dick doodles on digital whiteboards when dick doodles aren't appropriate. I assume they're appropriate in anatomy class.	79.4%	15.0%	3.0%	3.0%
A prof losing control of a class and just canceling it.	86.7%	9.3%	3.5%	1.6%
Naked people.	84.6%	13.8%	1.4%	1.4%
A prof totally ghosting an entire class. No notice, just never shows up.	73.8%	18.2%	6.8%	4.9%
A prof trying hard and doing the best they can.	5.6%	27.6%	22.0%	90.0%

Note: As these were 'choose all that apply' questions, each row does not represent 100% of respondents or n=428

■ I haven't heard about this happening
 ■ I've heard about this happening
 ■ A friend of mine experienced this in a class
 ■ I experienced this in a class



Number of respondents per answer option