Supplemental Survey Report: Pandemic Layoffs
June 22, 2022

Overview

The latest UASU Annual Survey, conducted November-December 2021, reached 4032 students, around 12% of UAlberta undergraduates.
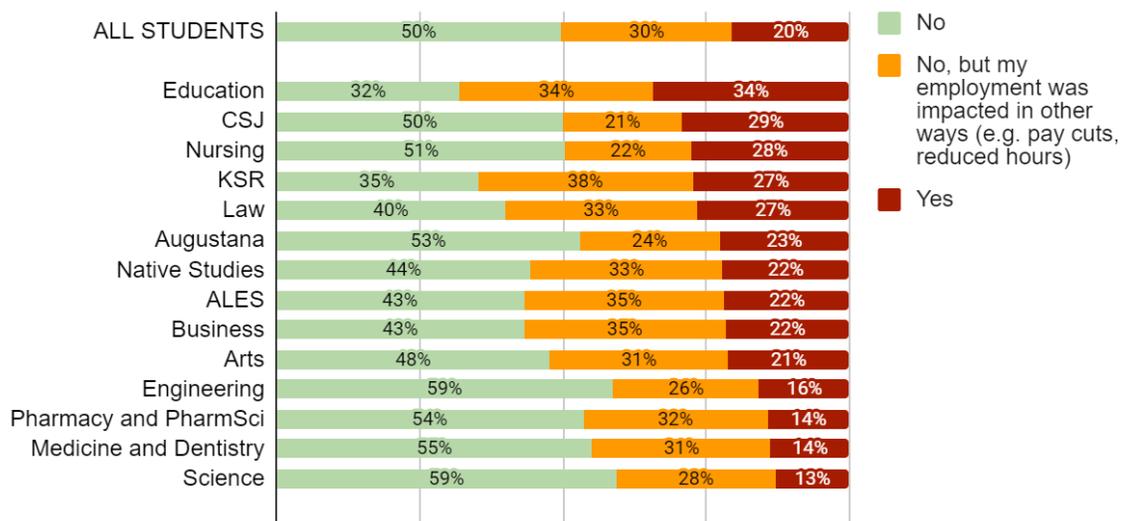
Near the end of the survey, 2903 students opted to answer a specific multiple choice question: "Did you get laid off due to the pandemic?" The main survey report (see page 41 in particular) examines that question. Both in the full sample and in the 1500-student Stratified Random Sample, around 20% of students answered 'yes,' and another 30% noted that their employment was impacted in other ways (e.g. fewer hours or pay cuts). The main survey report pointed out that pandemic layoffs disproportionately impacted women and gender minorities and disabled students, especially in intersection.

This supplemental report sheds more light on which groups of students have been especially likely to experience employment impacts due to the COVID-19 pandemic.
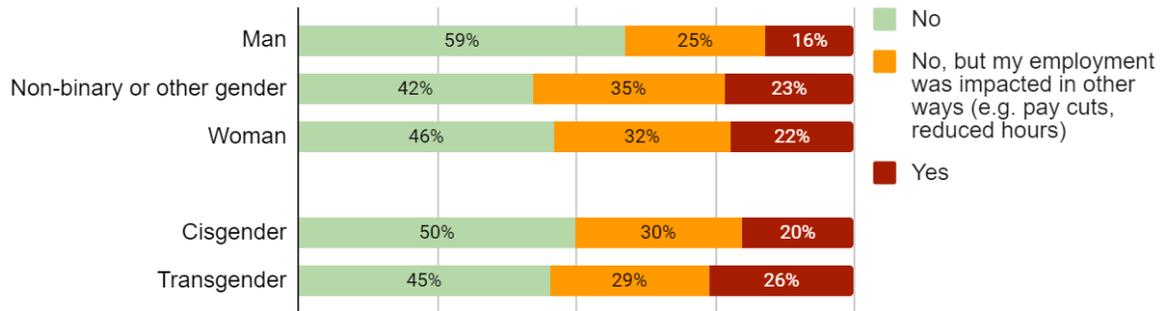
Impact by Faculty

Looking at layoffs specifically, impacts were most common in Education, followed by a close group of CSJ, Nursing, KSR, and Law. Layoffs were least common for students in Science, Medicine and Dentistry, Pharmacy and Pharmaceutical Sciences, and Engineering.

Looking at employment impacts more broadly (layoffs or other impacts), Education remained the most impacted faculty, followed by KSR and Law.

Impact by Gender

As noted in the main survey, gender was a major predictor of pandemic layoffs. Both women and gender minorities (comprising 'non-binary or other gender' in the main gender question, and transgender students who self-identified in a separate question) were especially likely to lose their jobs due to the pandemic. Transgender students comprised fully 3% of respondents, and non-binary/other-gender students comprised 5%, with some overlap between the two self-identified categories.

One contributing factor to the high rate of women losing their jobs may be their strong representation in the heavily impacted faculties of Education and Nursing. However, once these two faculties were removed, women's layoffs only fell from to 22.4% to 19.9%, demonstrating gender imbalances in student layoffs across several faculties.

For a closer look inside large faculties:
- Arts: 15% of men were laid off, compared to 23% of women
- Education: 25% of men, 37% of women
- Science: 12% of men, 12% of women
- Engineering: 14% of men, 18% of women
- KSR: 26% of men, 28% of women
- ALES: 21% of men, 22% of women
- Business: 20% of men, 22% of women

Impact by Disability

Disability was a major predictor of pandemic layoffs, especially in combination with gender. 6% of respondents self-identified as disabled. Disabled women and gender minorities were twice as likely as non-disabled men (30% versus 16%) to be laid off due to the pandemic, statistically significant with 95% confidence.

Impact by Race/Ethnicity

The survey's race/ethnicity question offered a wide variety of potential responses, limiting reliable comparisons when cross-tabulated with gender. However, some points of concern emerged:

- Across most races and ethnicities, women were more likely than men to have experienced pandemic layoffs (e.g. 1.4x for white women, 1.6x for South Asian women, 1.8x for Southeast Asian women, 2.6x for Indigenous women).
- Indigenous women were the single most likely demographic (at the intersection of race and gender) to have experienced pandemic layoffs (28%). This variation from the average was statistically significant with 95% confidence; it also varied from the average non-Indigenous woman, significant with 90% confidence.
- Middle Eastern or North African (MENA) men were also especially vulnerable to layoffs (22%, the highest of any group of men). Due to the small number of respondents (37 MENA men at this point in the survey) the variation was not statistically significant.