

Overview and Key Findings

This fully bilingual survey ran from March 11 to 18 on the SurveyMonkey platform. It reached 1138 self-selected points of contact through a URL on UASU Perks, which yielded 438 respondents on SurveyMonkey. The survey comprised nine multiple-choice questions on 'brain drain,' student debt, food insecurity, and experiences/attitudes specific to Francophone students. Some points of interest:

- 61% of respondents said they had a 50/50 chance of leaving Alberta, or planned to probably or definitely leave Alberta. This proportion rose to:
 - 85% for gender non-binary students or other gender identities. (Statistically significant with 95% confidence.)
 - 100% for transgender students.
 - 85% for students who skip meals at least once a week due to the cost of food. (Statistically significant with 99% confidence.) Any degree of food insecurity made students more likely to plan to leave. Seriously food-insecure students were especially likely to leave.
 - 70% of respondents with Government of Alberta student loans who would have at least \$30,000 in student loan debt by graduation.¹ (Statistically significant with 90% confidence.)
 - For clarity, this means that over two-thirds of respondents with at least the average Government of Alberta student loan burden have a strong chance of leaving the province. Just under forty percent of respondents with that debt burden probably or definitely intend to leave.
- The most common reasons for probably or definitely intending to leave the province were feelings/opinions about the provincial government and chances of employment in a given field.
 - Half (48%) of those who intend to leave Alberta are motivated by pursuing graduate studies or other education outside the province. We are deeply concerned that this reflects the perceived and real impact of successive cuts to the post-secondary sector.
- The most common reasons for probably or definitely intending to stay in Alberta were chances of employment in a given field, close ties to family and friends, and optimism about cost of living.
- Student loan burdens varied widely by gender and food insecurity experiences. They also strongly affected the likelihood of planning to leave the province.

¹ As of the latest available Statistics Canada numbers (2015), \$30,000 was the average government student loan debt at graduation in Alberta, compared to \$23,000 across Canada. See Statistics Canada table 37-10-0036-01.

Demographics

A [previous survey](#) on similar subject matter had noted that gender-minority students were far more likely than other students to intend to leave Alberta after graduation, so we decided to make gender a focus of this survey. The sample (n=438) had the following demographics:

- 27.9% men, 67.7% women, 3.0% gender non-binary or other gender identity, 1.4% preferred not to say.
- 1.4% identified as transgender in a separate question.

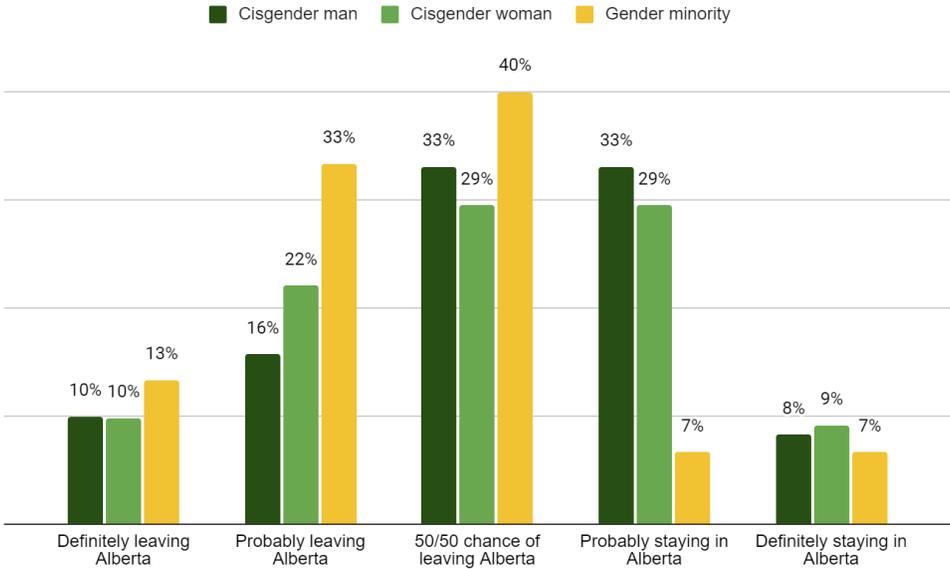
These questions allowed us to cross-tabulate the data for cisgender men (27.6%), cisgender women (67.4%), and gender minorities (3.4%, encompassing transgender men and women, gender non-binary, and other gender identity).

We also explored food insecurity as a dimension:

- 11.4% skipped meals once or twice a month due to the cost of food.
- 7.1% skipped meals once or twice a week due to the cost of food.
- 3.9% skipped meals more than twice a week due to the cost of food.
- 3.0% preferred not to say.

Food insecurity was significantly higher among the 47 students (10.7% of respondents) who self-identified as Campus Saint-Jean students. 8.5% skipped meals once or twice a week; 6.4% skipped meals more than twice a week.

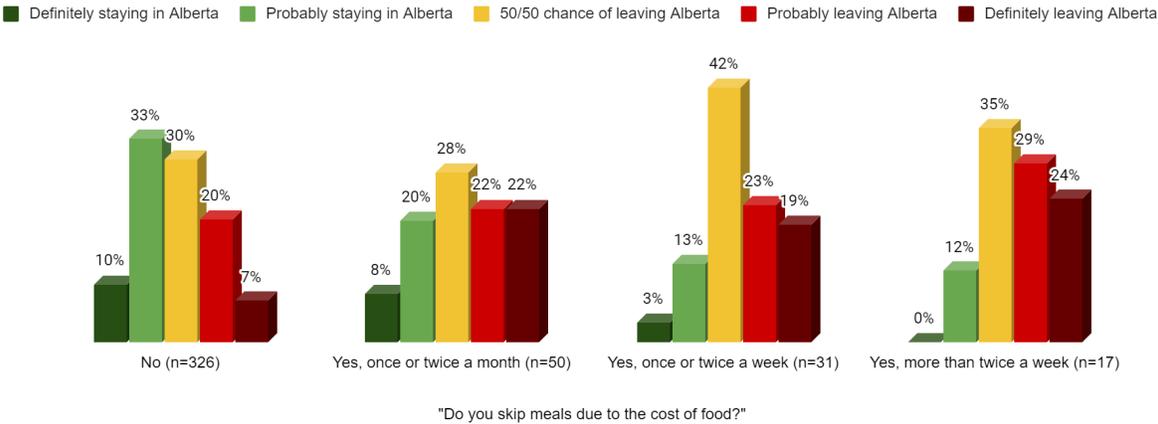
*"Where do you see yourself living and working after you leave UAlberta?
Où vivrez-vous et travaillerez-vous après avoir quitté UAlberta?"*



As in the previous survey, gender-minority students were much more likely than other students to ‘probably’ or ‘definitely’ intend to leave Alberta after graduation. Cisgender women were significantly more likely than cisgender men to say they were probably leaving Alberta.

We also examined intentions to leave Alberta through a food insecurity lens, using the question about skipping meals due to cost of food:

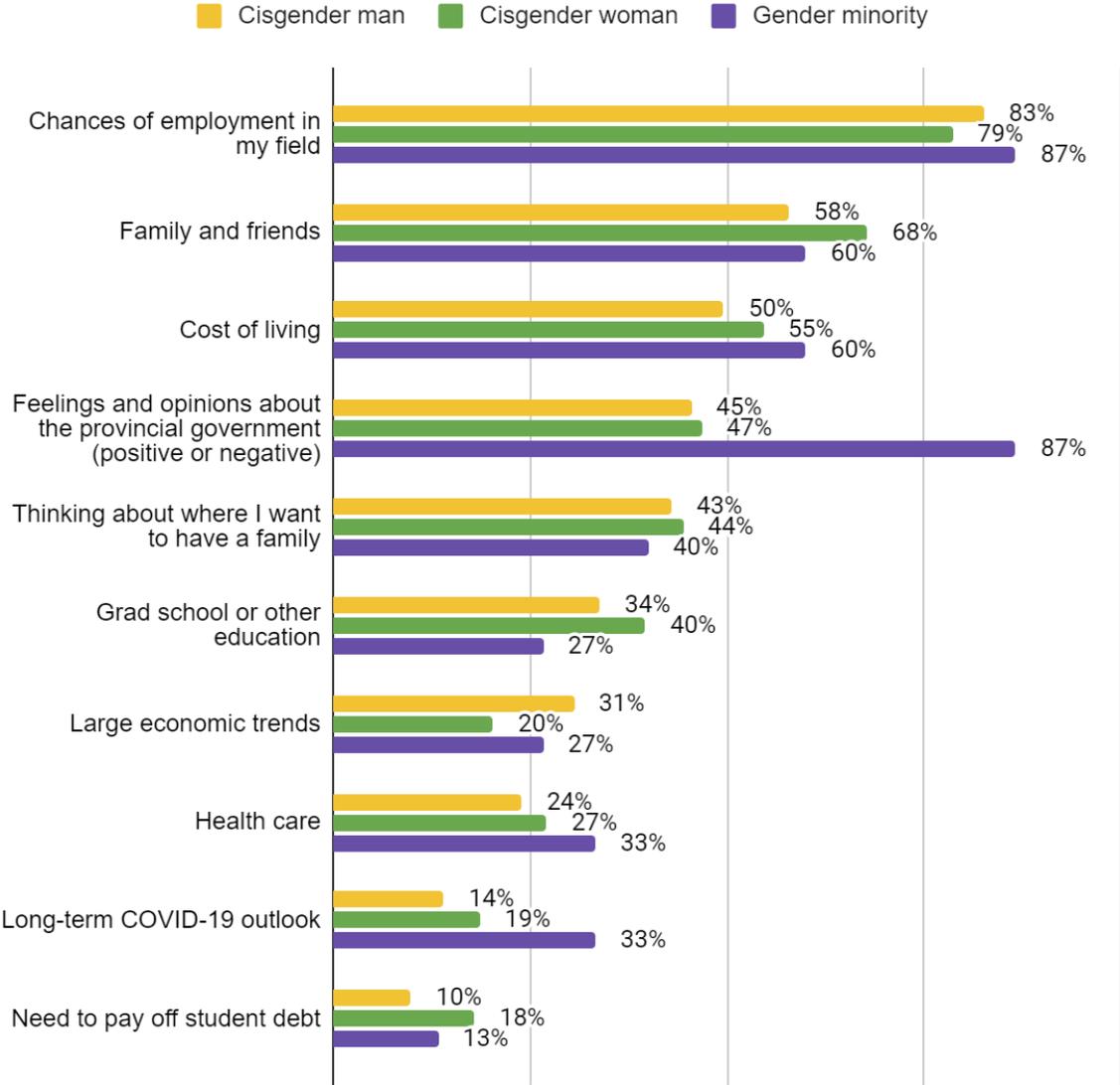
"Where do you see yourself living and working after you leave UAlberta?"

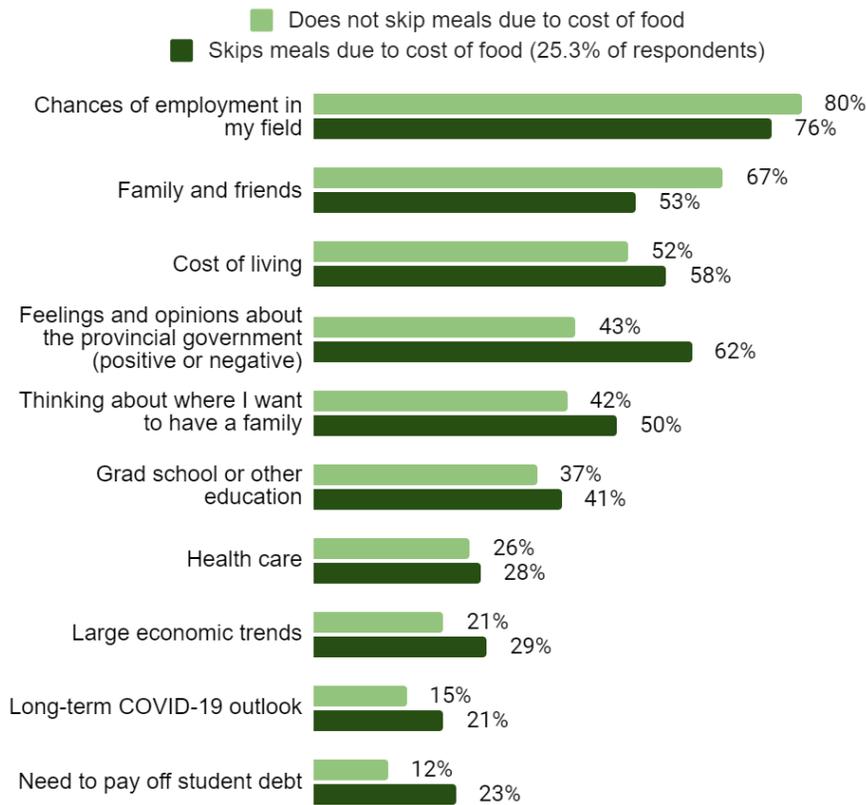


Seriously food-insecure students were especially likely to leave Alberta. In fact, any degree of food insecurity affected plans to leave.

“What are the most important factors when you're deciding whether or not to live/work in Alberta? (Choose all that apply.) *Quels sont les facteurs les plus importants pour décider de vivre et de travailler en Alberta?*”

First, we looked at priorities for all students, regardless of their intentions. Chances of employment in their field of study, family ties and friendships, and cost of living were standout leaders. We also note that for the overwhelming majority of gender-minority students, feelings and opinions about the provincial government were just as common a decision-making factor as chances of employment.





Though food-insecure students and other students had similar decision-making priorities, food-insecure students put more emphasis on the provincial government, long-term plans for a family, long-term economic and COVID-19 outlook, and long-term need to pay off student debt. It seems clear that food-insecure students are taking a long view when deciding whether to live and work in Alberta after graduation. Again, food-insecure students are more likely to leave the province.

Next we looked at which decision-making factors were associated with ‘brain drain’ - the students who probably or definitely intend to leave Alberta, compared to those who probably or definitely intend to stay.

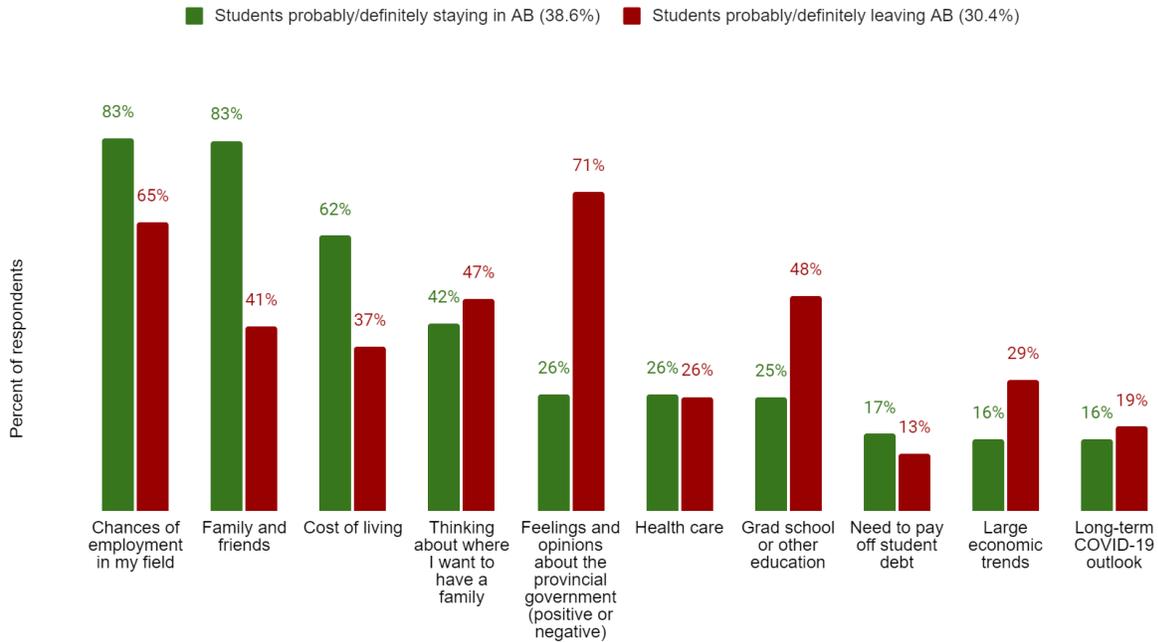
An average student who intends to stay:

- Believes that staying will lead to employment in their field (the most common decision-making factor).
- Has strong ties to family and friends in Alberta.
- Is optimistic about the cost of living in Alberta.
- Is less interested in pursuing further education.
- Is less concerned about economic trends.

An average student who intends to leave:

- Believes that leaving will find them employment in their field (the second most common decision-making factor).

- Has strong feelings and opinions about the provincial government (the most common decision-making factor).
- Wants to pursue further education outside Alberta.
- Is twice as likely as 'staying' students to be worried about economic trends.
- Is much less likely than 'staying' students to be motivated by family/friend ties.



Half of those who intend to leave Alberta are motivated by pursuing graduate studies or other education outside the province.

Chances of employment are a major factor for both those who choose to go and those who choose to stay. Further research could examine differences across fields of study.

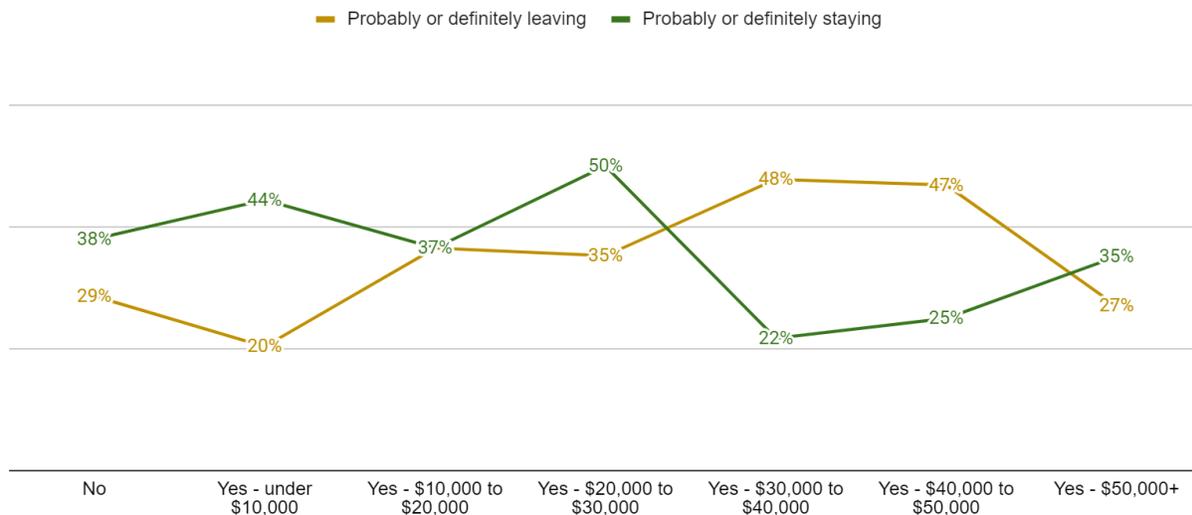
Student Debt

53% of respondents will have student loan debt by the time they graduate; 45% of respondents will have student loans from the Government of Alberta.

Around 9% of respondents chose not to answer the debt question. One out of five respondents who were willing to answer the question owe at least \$30,000. This varied by food insecurity and gender.

- 18% of cisgender men.
- 25% of cisgender women.
- 36% of gender minorities.
- 44% of students who skip meals due to the cost of food at least once a month.

As a general trend, carrying student loan debt made students increasingly likely to leave Alberta. 28.7% of students who will carry no student loan debt at graduation intended to probably or definitely leave Alberta. For students carrying \$10,000 or more, that proportion rose to 37.6%, and the difference was statistically significant to 90% probability.



“If you are a French-speaker who is considering leaving Alberta, which of the following factors may be influencing your decision? (Choose all that apply.) *En tant que personne d’expression française qui considère quitter l’Alberta, quels facteurs parmi les suivants influencent votre décision?*”

54 students opted to answer this question with something other than ‘this question does not apply to me.’

