2022-2023

IDEA Climate Survey

Survey of University of Toronto Mississauga psychology undergraduates

ABOUT UTM PSYCHOLOGY IDEA CLIMATE SURVEY

This report was conducted by the UTM Psychology IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, Access) Community is to examine experiences with inclusion, diversity, equity, and access for undergraduate students enrolled in psychology courses at the University of Toronto Mississauga.

Contributors

Contributors are listed in alphabetical order, and contributions follow CrediT (Contributor Roles Taxonomy).

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Executive summary

This survey report, conducted among 272 participants, provides an in-depth analysis of inclusion, diversity, equity, and access among undergraduate psychology students at the University of Toronto Mississauga. We identify three key strengths and three areas of improvement.

Strengths:

1. High overall satisfaction among students in our sample with their experience at UTM.
2. Positive perceptions of diversity, with students noting UTM's student body as more diverse than their previous environments.
3. Feelings of inclusion and safety on campus, with students frequently feeling welcomed and rarely feeling unsafe.

Areas for improvement are:

1. Concerns about academic stress and workload among students in our sample, indicating a need for better academic support systems.
2. Some students felt excluded or disrespected, particularly those from certain minoritized groups.
3. Low engagement with campus support services, suggesting a need for improved communication and accessibility of these resources.

In summary, while students at UTM appreciate the diverse and inclusive environment, there is room for improvement. Additionally, there are concerns about academic stress and a need for better engagement with campus support services, particularly for minority groups.

Methodology

The survey was conducted with N = 272 UTM Psychology students from March 8th to July 18th, 2023. The survey was constructed by several members of the IDEA committee and was approved by the REB. Study information was posted on PsychED, and respondents received course credit for their participation. Respondents answered questions about a range of issues related to inclusion, diversity, equity, and access.

Respondents also answered demographic questions. We note here a distinction between *visible minority*—a designated category used by the [Canadian government for federal employment equity purposes](#) that refers to a person who is not Indigenous and is non-white—and *self-identified visible minority* that directly asked students if they identify as a visible minority. Self-identifying one's own visible minority status may allow individuals to personally affirm their experiences, backgrounds, and identities within the sociocultural landscape of Canada. It recognizes that people of diverse ethnicities might experience systemic barriers or discrimination based on their appearance, and self-identification can allow them to voice their unique experiences and challenges. We did not provide the Canadian government designation.

Quotations from open-ended responses are lightly edited for capitalization, spelling, and punctuation.

Sample details and limitations

Our convenience sample consists of 50% first year students (27% second, 11% third). Most respondents (76%) were women (21% men; 2% gender non-conforming), and most (77%) were heterosexual (7% bisexual, 3% pansexual). More than half of the respondents (53%) self-identified as a visible minority (13% not sure, 2% *prefer not to say*). The largest ethnic group (35%) in our sample were South Asians. The next largest groups were White or European (18%), East Asian (17%), and Middle Eastern/West Asian (10%). In terms of political views, more than one-third of the respondents were liberal (15% very liberal and 20% somewhat left/liberal; 16% moderate; 26% no political views). At the time of this report, we were unable to obtain data regarding the UTM student population we were drawing from. However, it is important to keep in mind the sample characteristics, as they may limit the generalizability of the results.

Respondents by class year gender, self-identified visible minority, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, and political views.

	Count	Percent
Overall	272	100%
Class year		
First	136	50%
Second	74	27%
Third	30	11%
Fourth	7	9%
Fifth and beyond	1	<1%
Gender		
Women	207	76%
Men	58	21%
Gender non-conforming (gender fluid)	3	1%
Gender non-conforming (gender non-binary)	4	1%
Questioning	2	1%
Transgender	0	0%
Two-spirit	0	0%
Self-identified Visible Minority		
Yes	143	53%
Not sure	36	13%
Prefer not to say	5	2%
Race/ethnicity		
South Asian	95	35%
White or European	50	18%
East Asian	47	17%
Middle Eastern / West Asian	26	10%
African	22	8%
Southeast Asian	22	8%
North American	16	6%
Caribbean	16	6%
Afro-Caribbean	12	4%
South American	12	4%
Afro-European	5	2%
South and Central American	3	1%
North African	3	1%
Prefer not to Answer	2	1%
Central American	1	0%
"Punjabi" (open-ended response)	1	0%
"Native" (open-ended response)	1	0%

	Count	Percent
Overall	272	100%
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual or straight	209	77%
Bisexual	20	7%
Pansexual	9	3%
Questioning	6	2%
Queer	5	2%
Gay or Lesbian	4	2%
Asexual	3	1%
No label/unlabeled (open-ended response)	2	1%
Fluid	1	1%
I prefer not to answer	12	4%
Political Views		
No political views	70	26%
Somewhat left/Liberal	53	20%
Moderate	44	16%
Very Liberal	40	15%
Somewhat right/conservative	23	9%
Very right/conservative	5	2%
"Leftist" (open-ended response)	1	0%
"Progressive beyond politics" (open-ended response)	1	0%
I prefer not to say	34	13%

General Experience

Respondents in our sample reported on their experience as a student at UTM, concerns about UTM, and aspects of their student experience that they found difficult and stressful.

UTM Psychology students in our sample rate their student experience highly.

"How would you rate your experience as a student at UTM? Please respond on a scale from 0 (worst possible experience) to 10 (best possible experience)."
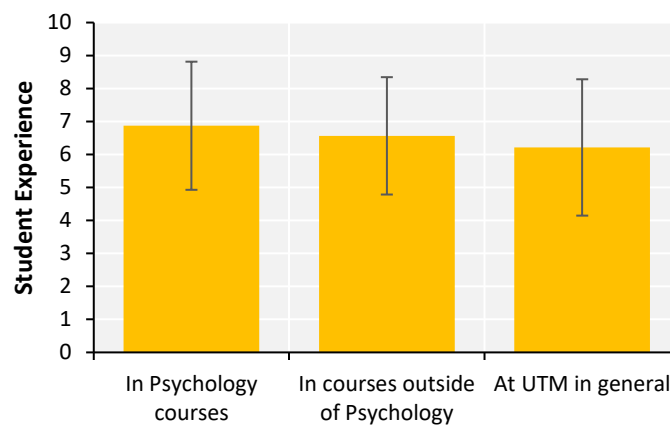
Error bars represent standard deviations.

> "So far, I have had great experience at UTM. Many instructors are easy to reach and show willingness to help when I ask them for help. Students as well are welcoming and kind most of the time!"

> "UTM is overall a great university. I see the efforts that students and staff make, however there are always some individuals who are not kind and welcoming."

> "UTM so far, has been a very positive experience for me, with very welcoming and diverse individuals!"

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However, meaningful percentages of students responding to the survey have strong concerns about UTM.

43%
Have seriously considered leaving UTM "sometimes" or more often

15%
Would not recommend UTM to someone they knew interested in studying psychology

29%
Have regretted coming to UTM to take psychology courses "sometimes" or more often

> "I have found that UTM is a very hard place to feel like you fit in comparison to the other two U of T campuses specifically. Personally, I feel that both academically, socially and possibility wise UTM falls short in regard to the other two campuses. My experience specifically is that students who don't fall into the major programs like the sciences (Life science, Psychology, etc.) feel out of place at UTM."

> "I have found that UTM has very experienced faculty who are absolutely experts and very passionate about their fields. In the psychology department this can sometimes come across as patronizing and condescending which makes it difficult to feel safe to ask questions. Overall, my experience in other classes (especially CHM120 and BIO153) have been extremely positive."

> "I would like to share the unnecessary demands of some courses which contribute heavily to a negative experience. Not exactly with PSY100, which is relatively more laid back, but some courses which are heavily weighted on tests. You don't get a chance to show your true knowledge of the material, only 2-3 tests which dictate your GPA/future. This contributes to a very negative experience in some courses. A positive experience would be courses like PSY100, which have many different ways to show your knowledge of the subject, outside of just tests."

UTM Psychology students in our sample are most stressed by academic issues and least stressed by harassment.

Error bars represent standard deviations.

Academic difficulties were also the most frequently mentioned in open-ended responses. Common themes include heavy workload, professors and teaching assistants not being helpful or accommodating, and tests and grades.

"Are there any other aspects of your UTM student experience that you find difficult/stressful? If so, please describe them here."

> "There is a large workload and very little time to complete, causing stress."

> "I noticed that most courses (and professors) are very disorganized when it comes to how the class and assessments are set up, as in the teaching, test formatting, and assignments. This makes it very difficult to not only enjoy the class but also complete the assigned work because everything is all over the place."

> "Lack of proper support and knowledge on assignments and course work from most TA's. They are often not well informed and can give misleading information that result in submitting coursework that is inadequate."

> "I believe that some professors and TAs can be more considerate to students. I have had negative and rude encounters with TAs, which made me have some anxious situations."

> "Too many readings."

> "The course progress it too fast and I need to study a lot for each test."

Inclusion

Respondents in our sample reported on their perceptions of inclusion (e.g., welcomed, valued) and exclusion (e.g., excluded, disrespected, unsafe, uncomfortable) as well as their class engagement.

When thinking about their on-campus experience, UTM Psychology students in our sample often feel welcomed, sometimes feel valued and pressured to change, rarely feel excluded and disrespected, and almost never feel unsafe.

"How often have you felt…?" (1 = Never, 2= Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very often, 6 = Extremely often)

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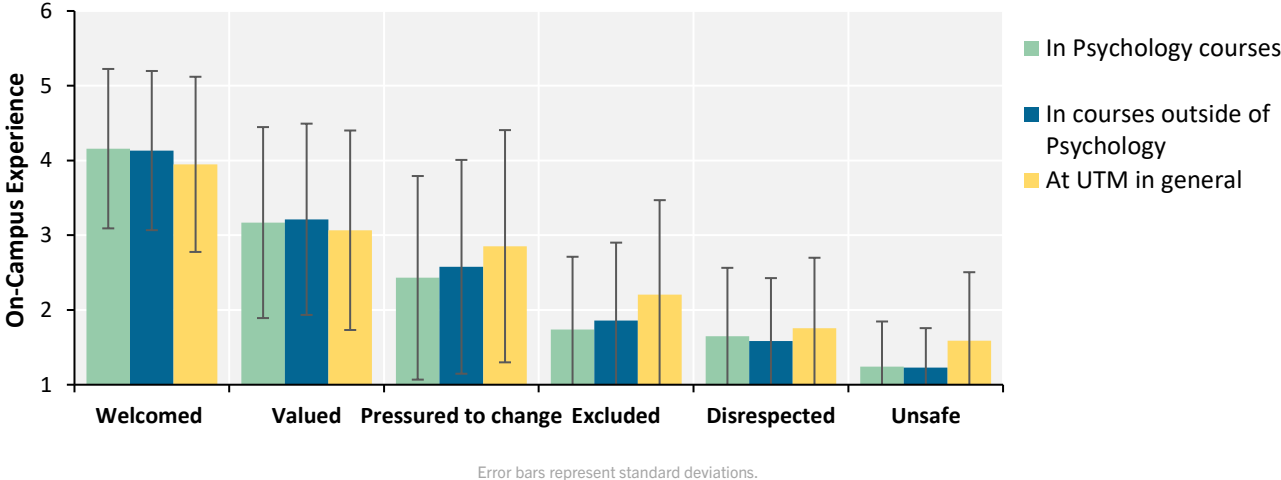
When thinking about their in-class experience, UTM Psychology students in our sample rarely feel like they are not free to voice their true opinion and almost never feel excluded or disrespected.

"How often have you felt…?" (1 = Never, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very often, 6 = Extremely often)

Error bars represent standard deviations.
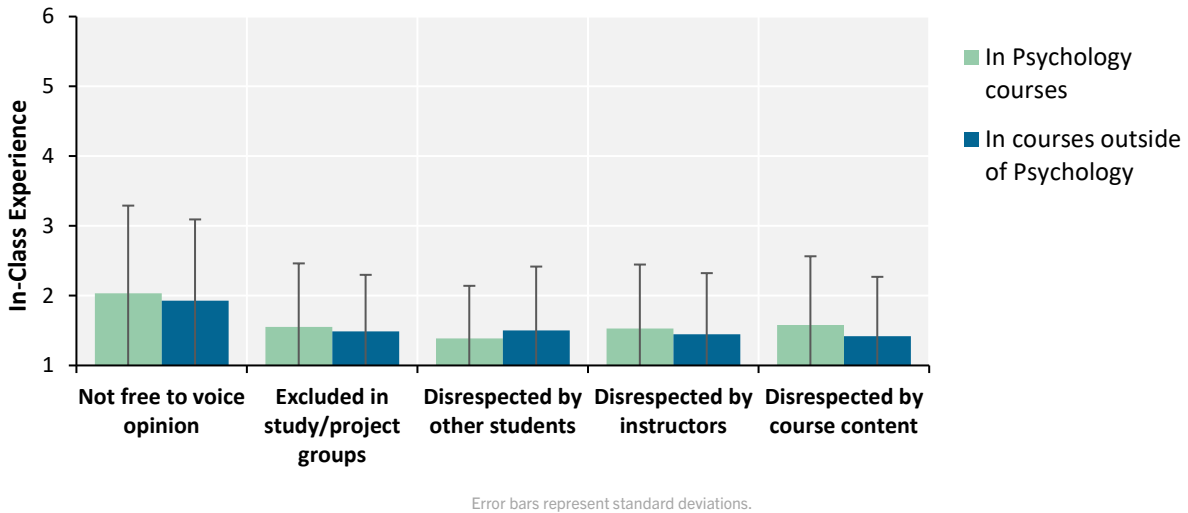
Some groups of students in our sample more frequently feel excluded and disrespected in Psychology courses, including students who identify as Muslims, North African or Middle Eastern, visible minorities, and gender minorities.

Aggregate across items assessing how often students feel excluded and disrespected in psychology courses when thinking about their on-campus experience and in-class experience (1 = Never, 2= Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, 5 = Very often, 6 = Extremely often)

Error bars represent standard deviations. *p < .05, **p < .01

Error bars represent standard deviations. *p < .05, **p < .01
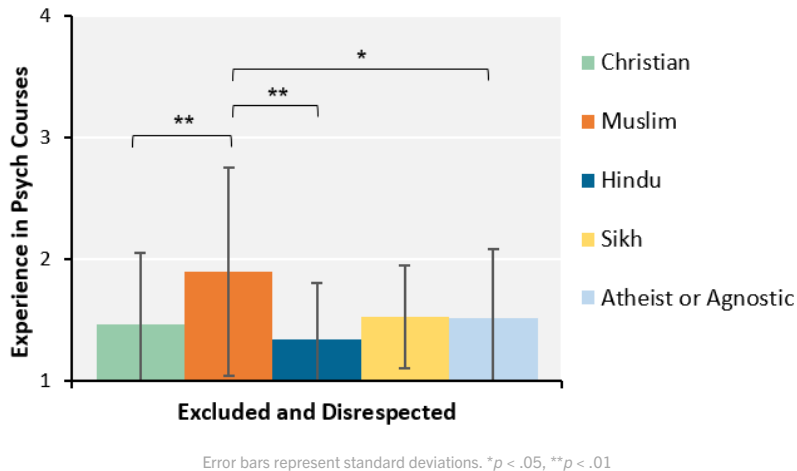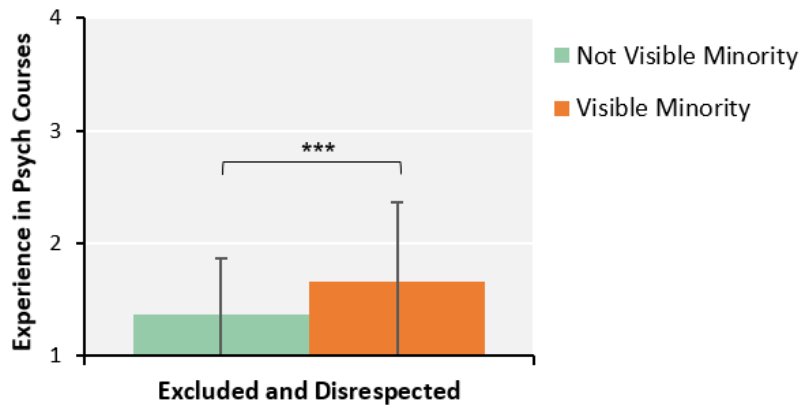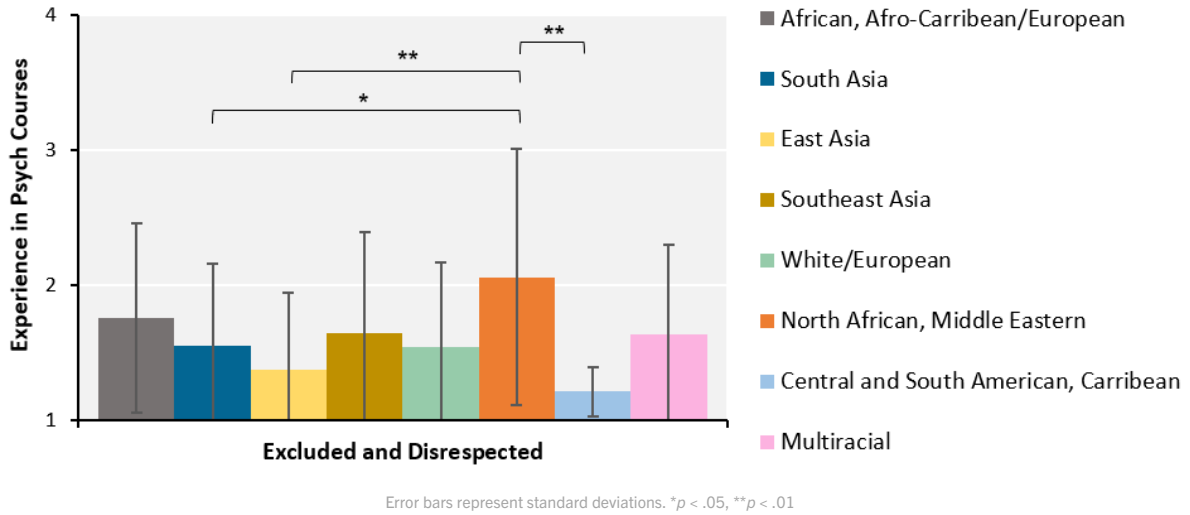
We assessed students' *self-identified* visible minority (note that we did not provide the Canadian government designation). Error bars represent standard deviations. ***p < .001

Error bars represent standard deviations. ***p < .001
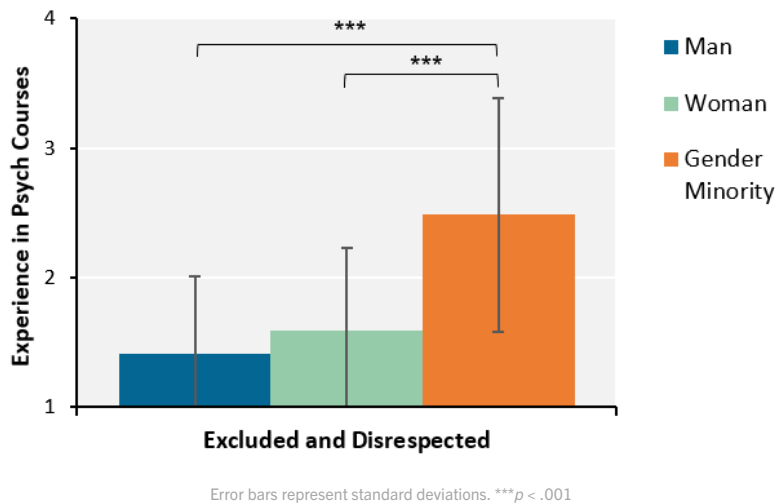
No significant differences in feeling excluded and disrespected were found between:
- first year vs. upper year students
- international vs. domestic students

- students who endorse very liberal political views vs. other students; students who endorse conservative political views vs. other students
- heterosexual vs. sexual minority students
- students with vs. without a disability
- first generation vs. other students
- students with lower parents' household income (<$49,000) vs. middle or higher household income

While most UTM Psychology students in our sample feel comfortable approaching their instructors "sometimes" or more often, only around half of the students participate in the classroom "sometimes" or more often. Most students "never" and "rarely" attend office hours or engage in online discussions with other students.

Numbers below represent %.

| Never | Rarely | Sometimes or more often |

How comfortable have you been approaching your instructors with questions or concerns?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes or more often
In psych courses	12	19	68
In non-psych courses	8	16	76

How often have you asked questions or made comments in your classes?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes or more often
In psych courses	24	32	44
In non-psych courses	14	30	57

How often have you attended office hours?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes or more often
In psych courses	51	26	23
In non-psych courses	32	31	36

How often have you taken opportunities to engage with other UTM students online (e.g. on discussion boards)?

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes or more often
In psych courses	36	29	35
In non-psych courses	21	29	50

> "So far, I have had great experience at UTM. Many instructors are easy to reach and show willingness to help when I ask them for help. Students as well are welcoming and kind most of the time!"

> "I also would like professors to be less arrogant and more approachable regarding questions."

Around 20% of UTM Psychology students in our sample reported that at least one instructor or student in the Psychology department has made them feel uncomfortable because of some aspect of their identity.
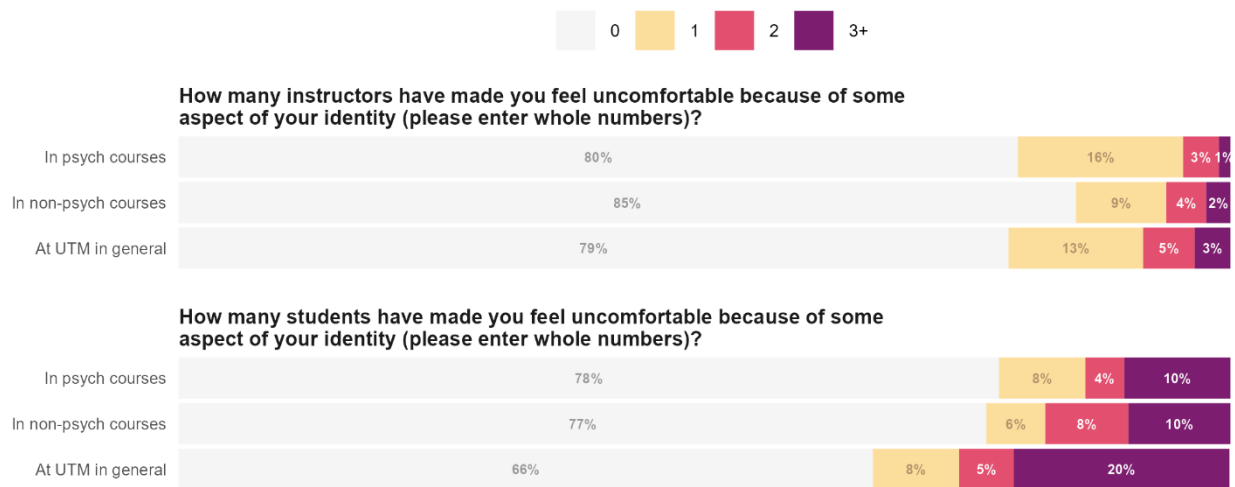
The number of instructors who have made students feel uncomfortable range from 0 to 6. The number of students who have made respondents feel uncomfortable range from 0 to 50.

> "For the most part, I enjoyed my experiences in all of the psychology courses I had taken here at UTM, with the exception of this one particular course. The instructor was very highly opinionated and speaks as if whatever he says is the ultimate truth. Other than that, I've had positive experiences so far."

Diversity

Students in our sample reported on how diverse UTM is and their experiences interacting with other students of different identities.

For most students in our sample, UTM matches or surpasses the diversity of their childhood neighborhoods and high schools, with peers at UTM being notably more diverse.

Percentages are displayed.

Legend: A lot less diverse | Somewhat less diverse | About the same amount of diversity | Somewhat more diverse | A lot more diverse

How does UTM compare to the neighborhood you grew up in with regards to diversity?

A lot less diverse	Somewhat less diverse	About the same amount of diversity	Somewhat more diverse	A lot more diverse
2	8	36	24	30

How does UTM compare to your high school with regards to diversity? - Instructors at UTM

6	18	34	21	21

How does UTM compare to your high school with regards to diversity? - Instructors teaching my psychology courses

11	16	40	17	16

How does UTM compare to your high school with regards to diversity? - Staff and faculty at UTM

7	13	38	22	20

How does UTM compare to your high school with regards to diversity? - Staff and faculty in the psychology department

8	13	41	20	17

How does UTM compare to your high school with regards to diversity? - Students at UTM

3	8	28	25	36

How does UTM compare to your high school with regards to diversity? - Students in my psychology courses

3	10	30	25	30

> "I have really enjoyed my time at UTM and, as much as there is always space to grow, it is wildly more inclusive and diverse than any space I had access to growing up, and I am grateful for this opportunity :)"

> "I want to see more people of color in the psychology department."

> "Overall, UTM showed more diversity from the three campuses. The people are lovely, however, I did notice a lack of diversity in professors or TA's."

Most UTM Psychology students in our sample "sometimes" or more often spend time with other students from a different country and of a different race/ethnicity. Students are less sure about other students' political orientation and socioeconomic status.

"How often have you spent time with people from the following groups outside of class? [Target group] – [in Psychology courses/in courses outside of Psychology/at UTM in general" (%)

Legend: Never | Rarely | Sometimes | Often | Very often | Extremely often | Not sure

Students — M (SD)

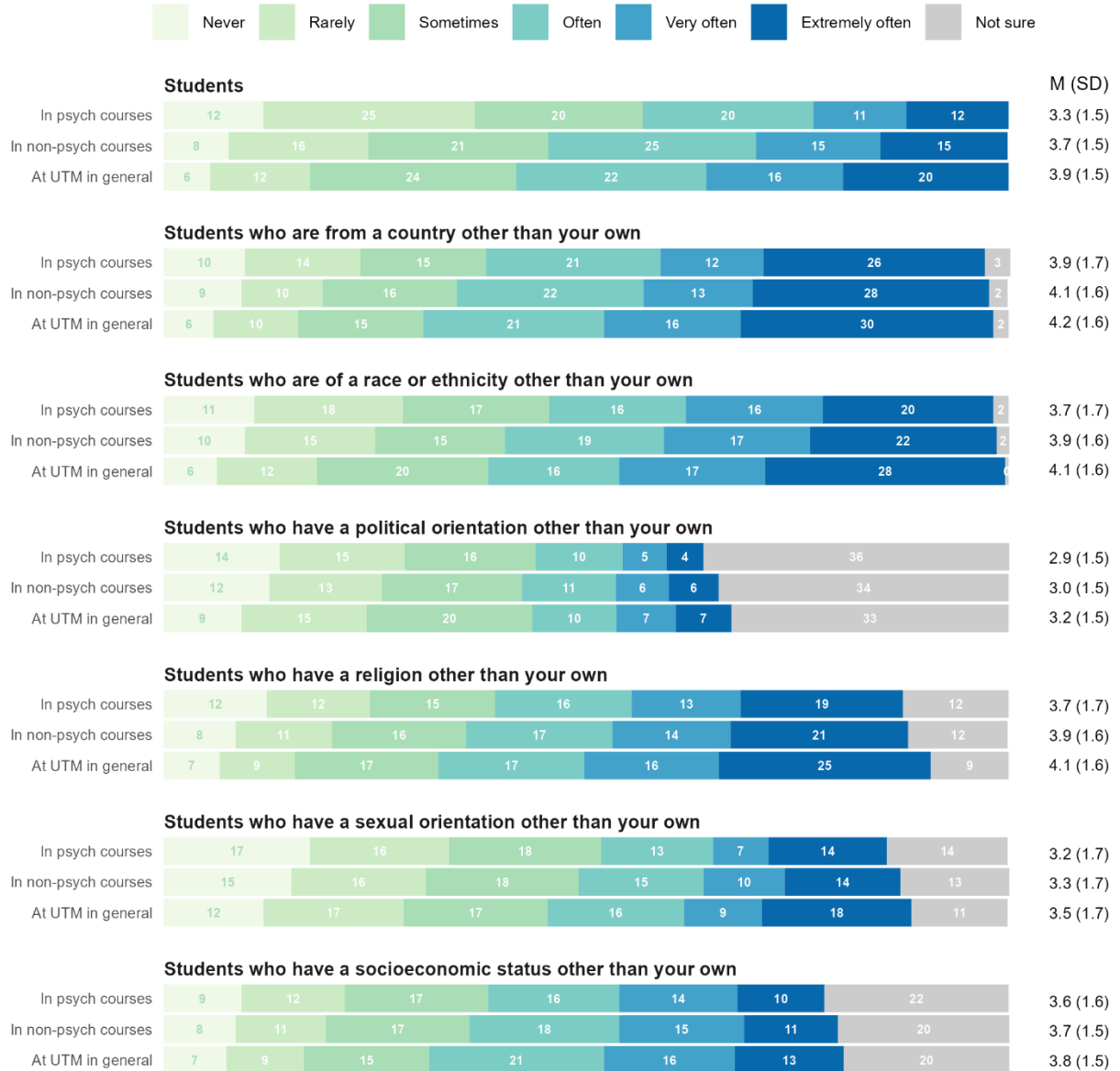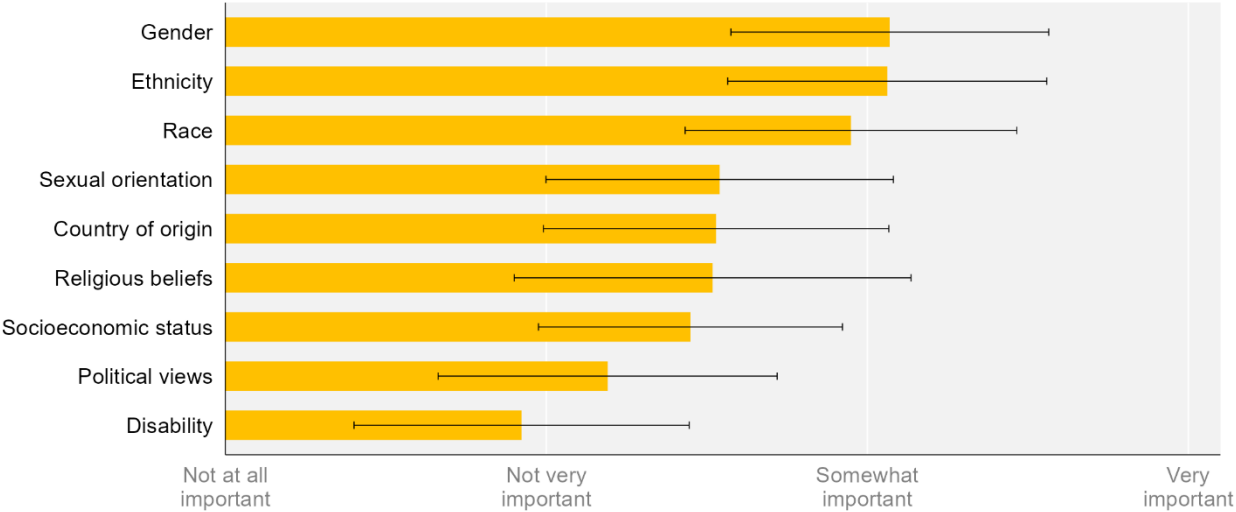|	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Extremely often	Not sure	M (SD)
In psych courses	12	25	20	20	11	12		3.3 (1.5)
In non-psych courses	8	16	21	25	15	15		3.7 (1.5)
At UTM in general	6	12	24	22	16	20		3.9 (1.5)

Students who are from a country other than your own

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Extremely often	Not sure	M (SD)
In psych courses	10	14	15	21	12	26	3	3.9 (1.7)
In non-psych courses	9	10	16	22	13	28	2	4.1 (1.6)
At UTM in general	6	10	15	21	16	30	2	4.2 (1.6)

Students who are of a race or ethnicity other than your own

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Extremely often	Not sure	M (SD)
In psych courses	11	18	17	16	16	20	2	3.7 (1.7)
In non-psych courses	10	15	15	19	17	22	2	3.9 (1.6)
At UTM in general	6	12	20	16	17	28		4.1 (1.6)

Students who have a political orientation other than your own

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Extremely often	Not sure	M (SD)
In psych courses	14	15	16	10	5	4	36	2.9 (1.5)
In non-psych courses	12	13	17	11	6	6	34	3.0 (1.5)
At UTM in general	9	15	20	10	7	7	33	3.2 (1.5)

Students who have a religion other than your own

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Extremely often	Not sure	M (SD)
In psych courses	12	12	15	16	13	19	12	3.7 (1.7)
In non-psych courses	8	11	16	17	14	21	12	3.9 (1.6)
At UTM in general	7	9	17	17	16	25	9	4.1 (1.6)

Students who have a sexual orientation other than your own

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Extremely often	Not sure	M (SD)
In psych courses	17	16	18	13	7	14	14	3.2 (1.7)
In non-psych courses	15	16	18	15	10	14	13	3.3 (1.7)
At UTM in general	12	17	17	16	9	18	11	3.5 (1.7)

Students who have a socioeconomic status other than your own

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very often	Extremely often	Not sure	M (SD)
In psych courses	9	12	17	16	14	10	22	3.6 (1.6)
In non-psych courses	8	11	17	18	15	11	20	3.7 (1.5)
At UTM in general	7	9	15	21	16	13	20	3.8 (1.5)

Means and standard deviations exclude "Not sure" responses.

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UTM Psychology students view gender, ethnicity, and race as the most important to their sense of identity, and political views and disability the least important.

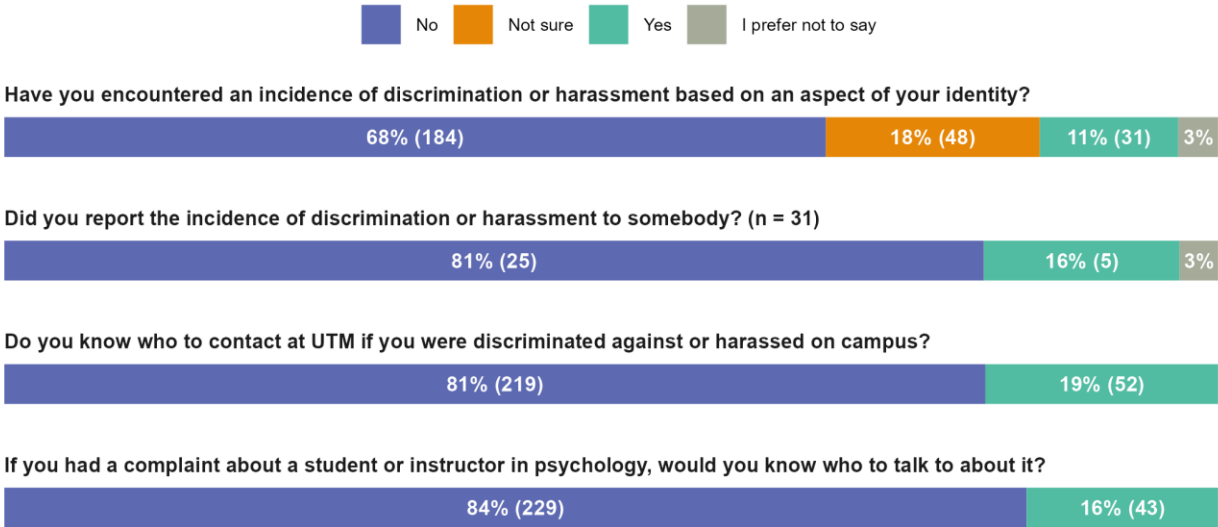"How important have the following been to your sense of identity? — [target]"

Error bars represent standard deviations.

Equity

Students in our sample reported on their experiences with discrimination at UTM.

11% of UTM Psychology students have experienced discrimination or harassment, and out of these students, 81% did not report the incident. Most students did not know who to contact if they experienced discrimination or harassment.

Legend: No | Not sure | Yes | I prefer not to say

Have you encountered an incidence of discrimination or harassment based on an aspect of your identity?
68% (184) | 18% (48) | 11% (31) | 3%

Did you report the incidence of discrimination or harassment to somebody? (n = 31)
81% (25) | 16% (5) | 3%

Do you know who to contact at UTM if you were discriminated against or harassed on campus?
81% (219) | 19% (52)

If you had a complaint about a student or instructor in psychology, would you know who to talk to about it?
84% (229) | 16% (43)

Frequent reasons for why students did not report incidents include being used to harassment and discrimination, perceiving these incidents as minor, and not wanting to make a big deal out of the incident.

"What were some reasons that you did not report the incidence of discrimination or harassment to somebody?"

> "I wasn't sure who to report it to."

> "I did not want to make a big deal out of it, and I was very uncomfortable."

> "I thought it [was] most likely not going to make a difference reporting it since the person has a high authority."

> "I'm used to being treated like this."

> "It wasn't anything serious, just unwelcoming if anything, I could endure it."

Access

Most UTM Psychology students in our sample are aware of the following campus services, but contact knowledge is lower than awareness. Contact knowledge is particularly low for the Community Safety Office, Sexual Violence Prevention Support Centre, and EDI Office.

"Are you aware of the following services on campus?"/ "Do you know how to contact the following services on campus?" (Yes/No)

	Aware of	Know how to contact
Community Safety Office	52%	30%
Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Office	54%	27%
Sexual Violence Prevention & Support Centre	59%	31%
Robert Gillespie Academic Skills Centre	81%	64%
UTM Health & Counseling Centre	90%	64%
Accessibility Services	94%	60%
Campus Police	96%	67%

Frequent reasons for not feeling comfortable contacting campus services include general anxiety, uncertainty with the process, privacy, and fear of being judged.

"What are your reasons for not feeling comfortable contacting campus services?"

> "I get stressed about needing to contact services."

"I just don't know enough about them or how to contact them to feel comfortable doing so."

"Unsure how they work, mostly."

"I am not sure how to contact them and the processes I will have to go through because usually university processes are confusing."

"As much as campus loves to advocate for student privacy, it's very hard to believe such things."

"Worried about privacy."

"Don't trust Canadian privacy regulations, especially when it comes to delicate issues such as mental health (for the HCC) or sexual violence."

"Fear of being judged, or my own perception and expectations of myself."

"I don't want to be judged."

"Sometimes I feel like I might be judged, even though they claim to be judgement free zones."

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