

Building first year undergraduate provisioning through strategic institutional research: The Wits case study

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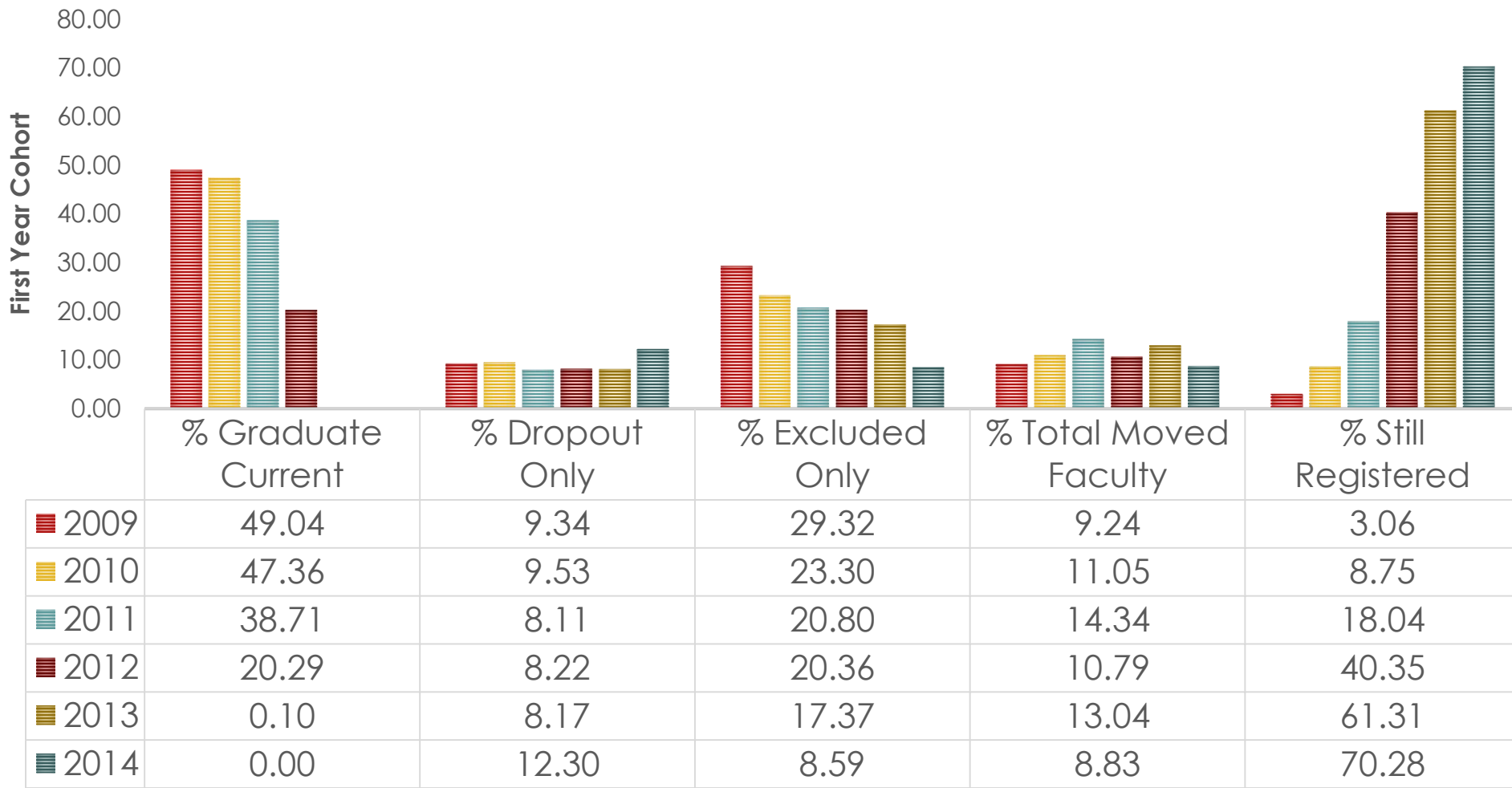


Background Information

Various factors contribute to unpleasant first-year student experience

- **Transition from high school to university**
- **High school preparedness and University performance**
- **Financial recourses**
- **Anxiety and motivation**
- **University support mechanisms**
- **Epistemological access**

Background Information



Background Information



Methodology – Critical Questions

- What is the nature of the student experience, perception gained through interacting with the University prior to enrolment as first-year students at Wits?
- What is the nature of the student experience, perception gained by students upon entering Wits in 2013?
- Are students satisfied with nature of administrative and support services that they receive during their first year at Wits?
- Are students satisfied with the nature of and access to facilities that are made available to support academic activities and student social life on campus?
- How satisfied are students with the educational and institutional experience they receive during their first year at Wits?

Conceptual Framework

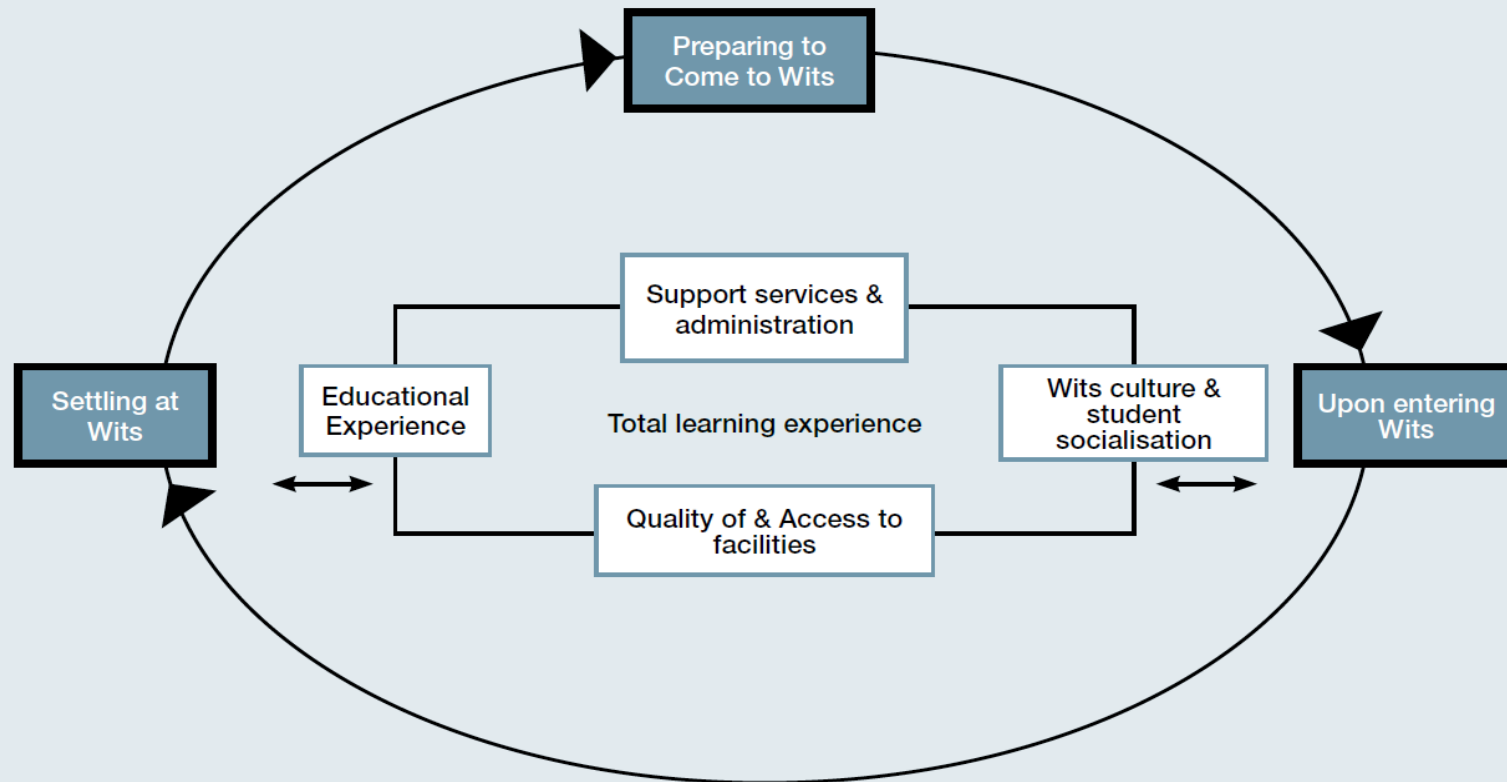


Figure 1: The Wits Model of Student Satisfaction with the First-year Experience

Methodology – Research Design & Sample

- Survey targeted all Wits undergraduate first-year first-time students
- Web-based survey platform
- Quantitative and qualitative questions

Methodology – Research Design & Sample

	2011	2012	2013
New to Wits	5575	4887	4 782
Survey participants	747	989	462
Participation rate (%)	13.40%	20.24%	9.66%

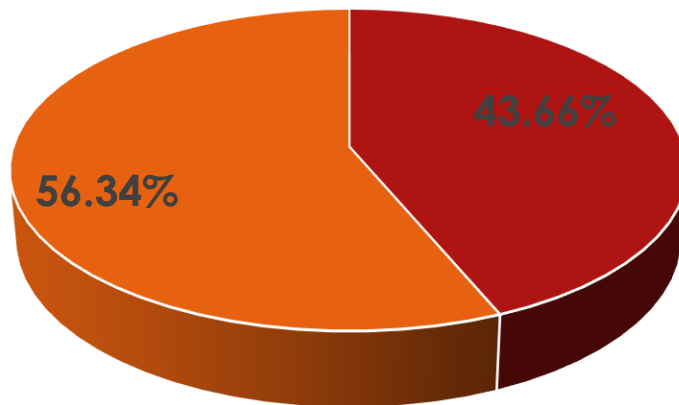
Excludes dropouts

Benefits of the study

- Influence expectations and perceptions of other students
- An improved quality of service and total learning experience at Wits
- Enhanced responsiveness through strategic planning
- An indication of future student success and throughput
- The nurturing of a long-lasting graduate sense of pride and attachment to Wits
- Contribution to reduced dropout rates

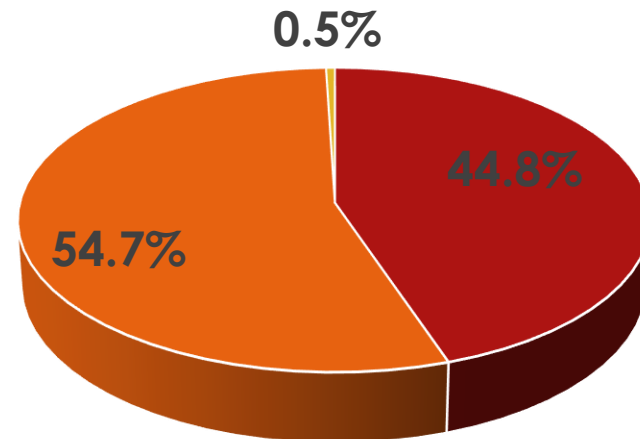
Student Demographics

Overall gender profile



■ Male ■ Female

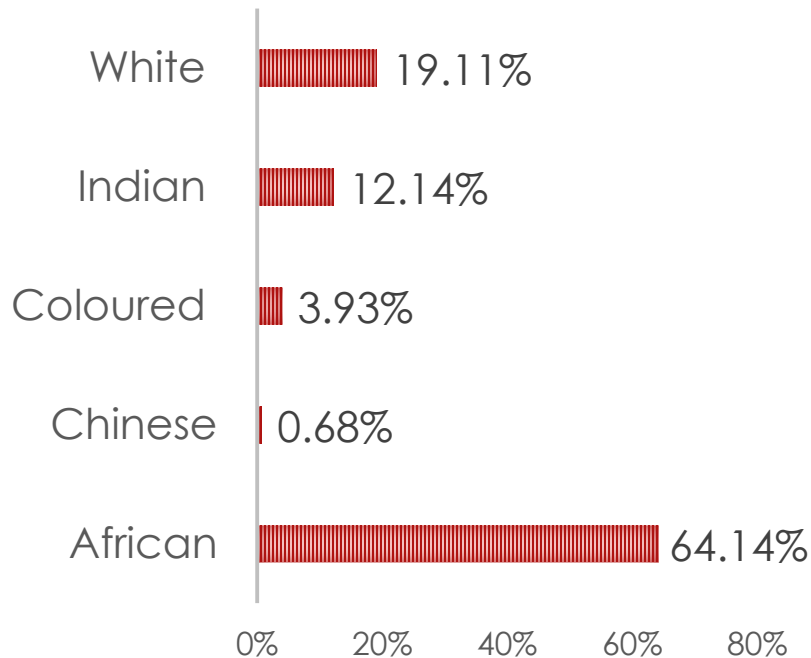
Respondents gender profile



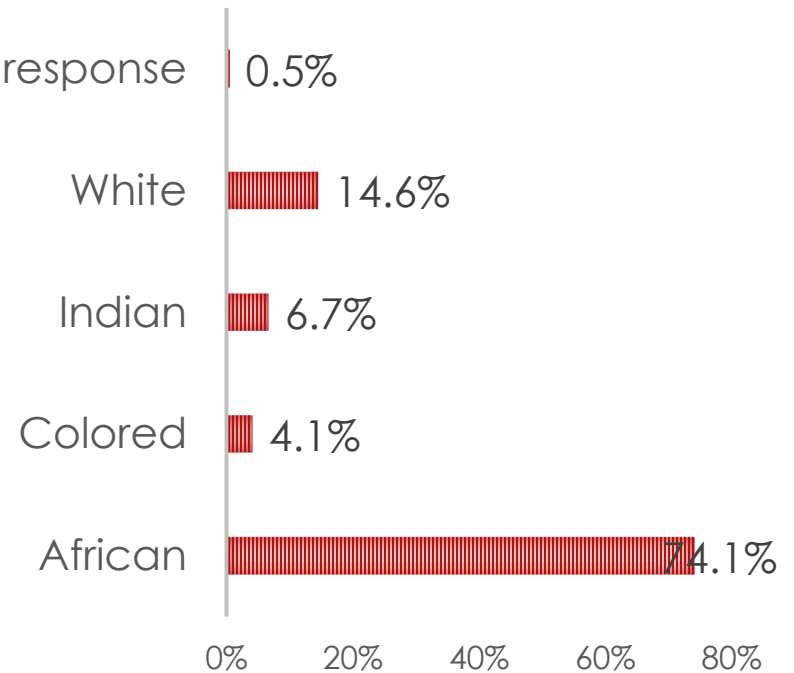
■ Male ■ Female ■ No response

Student Demographics

Overall Race profile

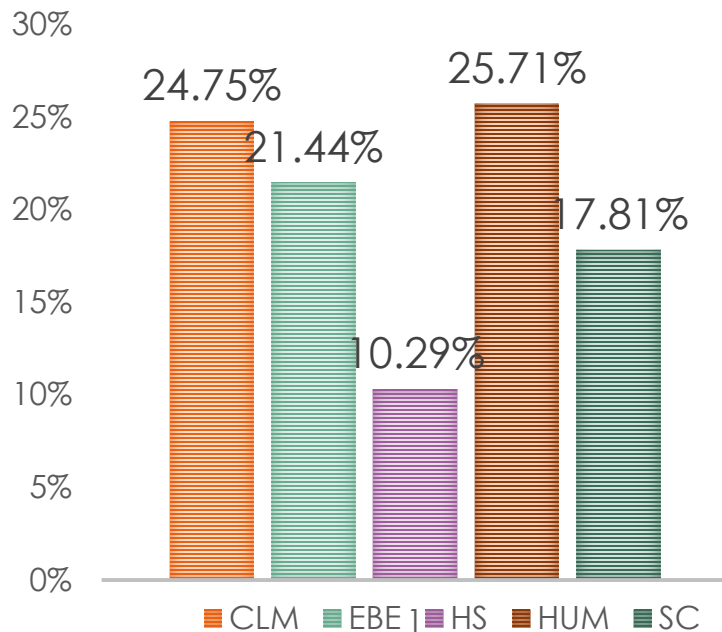


Respondents race profile

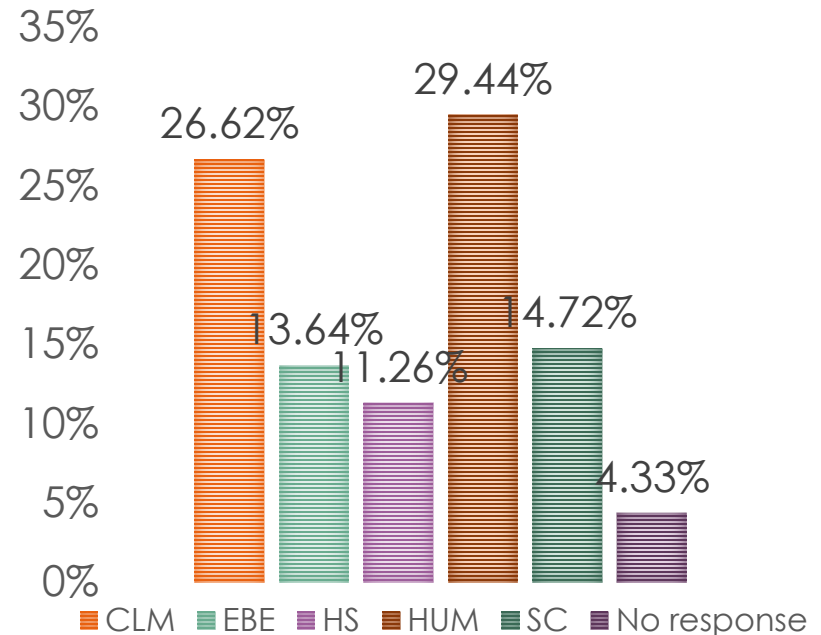


Student Demographics

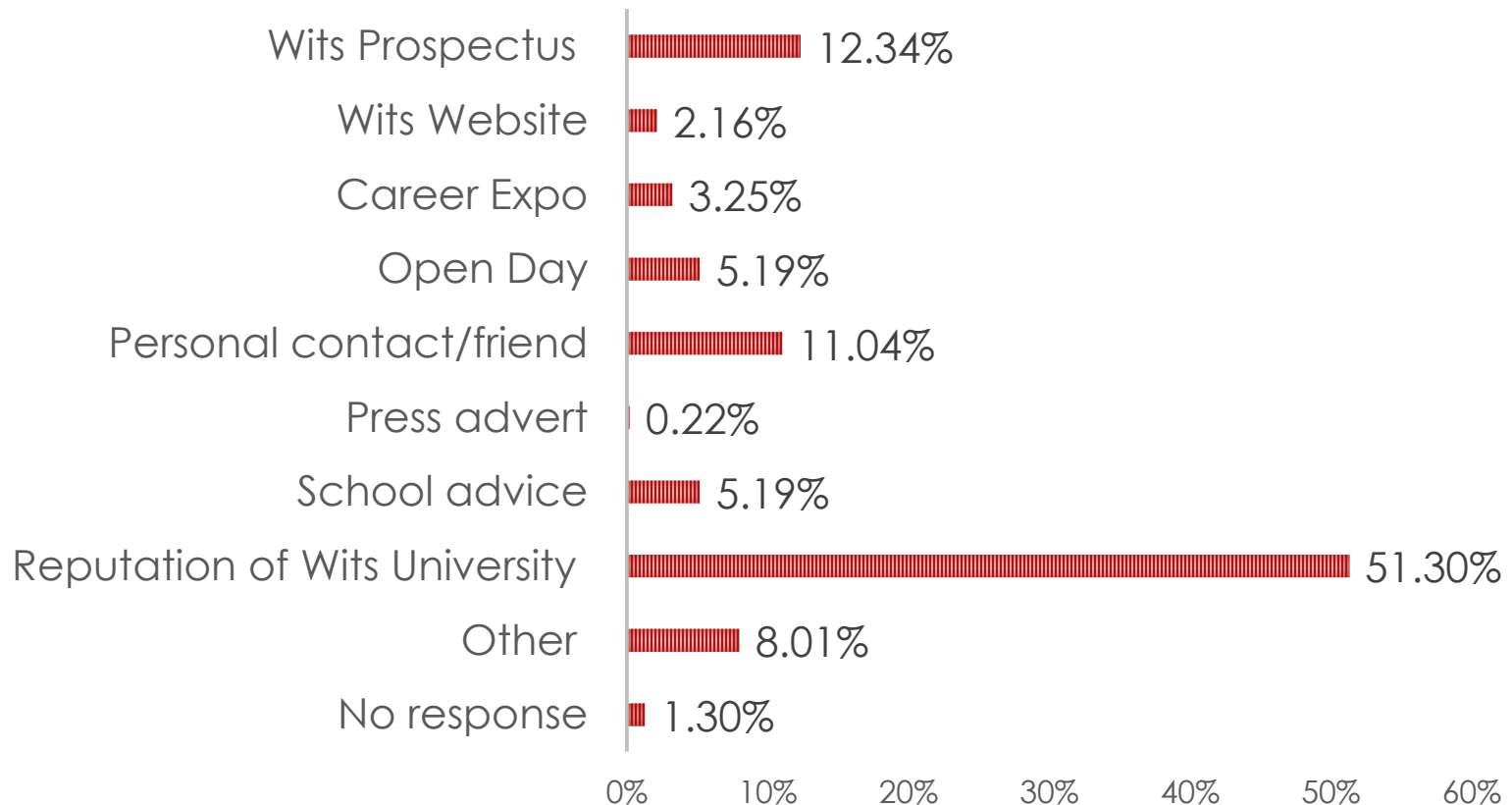
Overall profile by Faculty



Respondents profile by Faculty

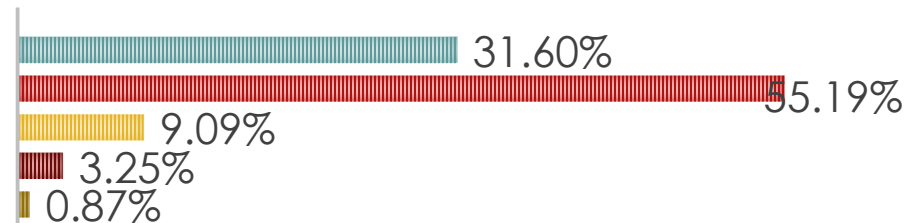


Why do students choose Wits?

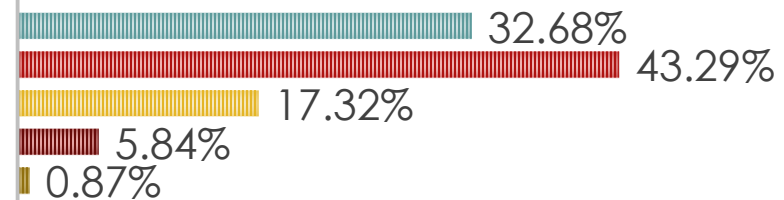


Applying to Wits

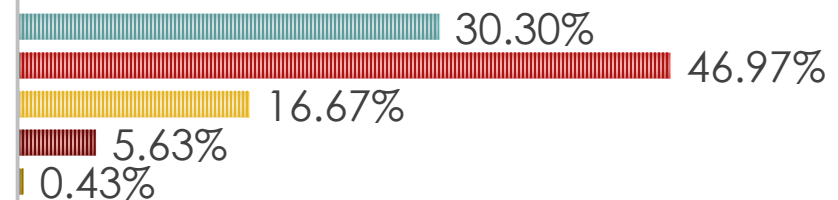
Information I received from Wits after submitting an application



Efficiency with which the offer was confirmed



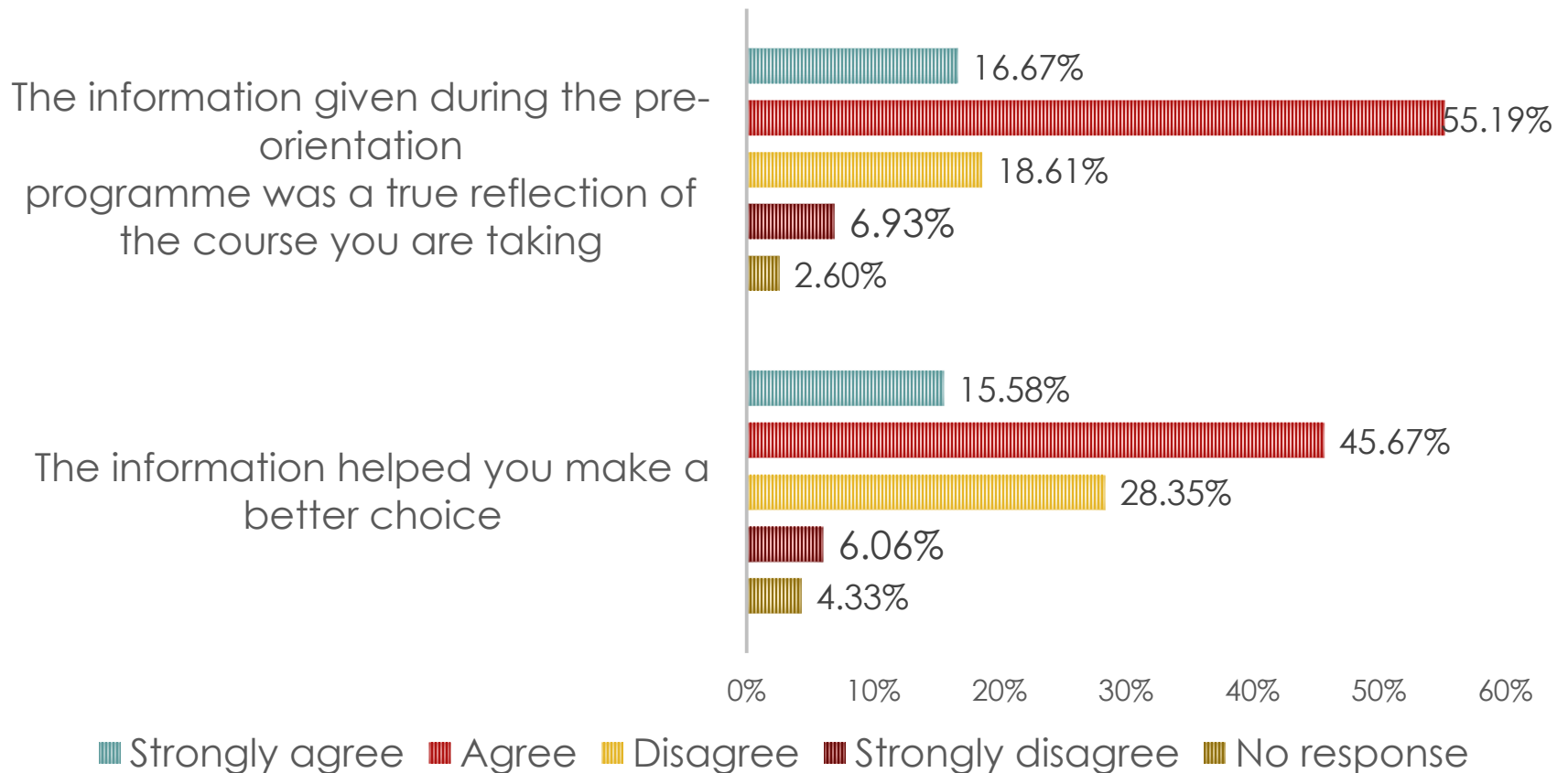
Clarity on the admission and registration procedures provided with an admissions offer



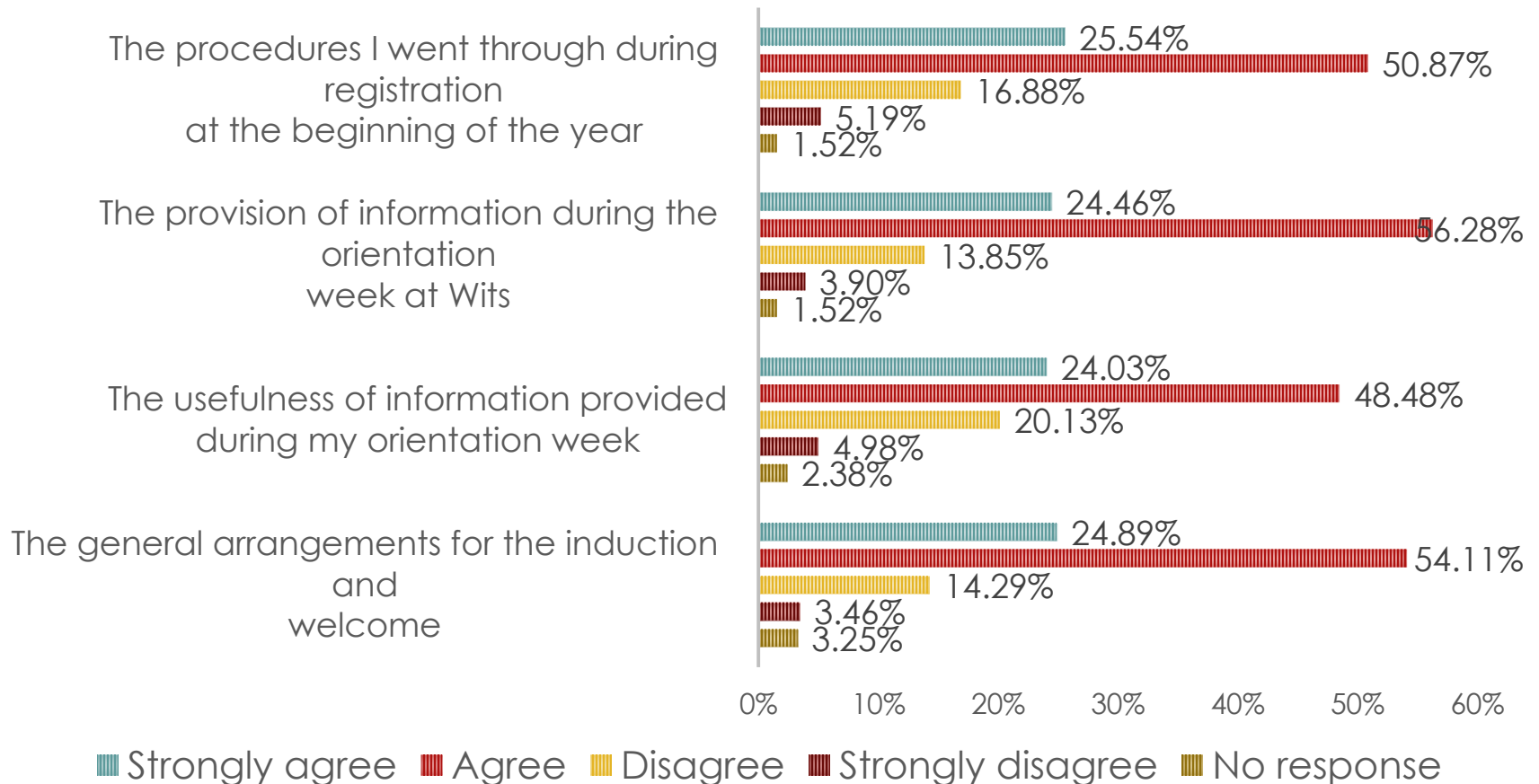
0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60%

Strongly agree Agree Disagree Strongly disagree No response

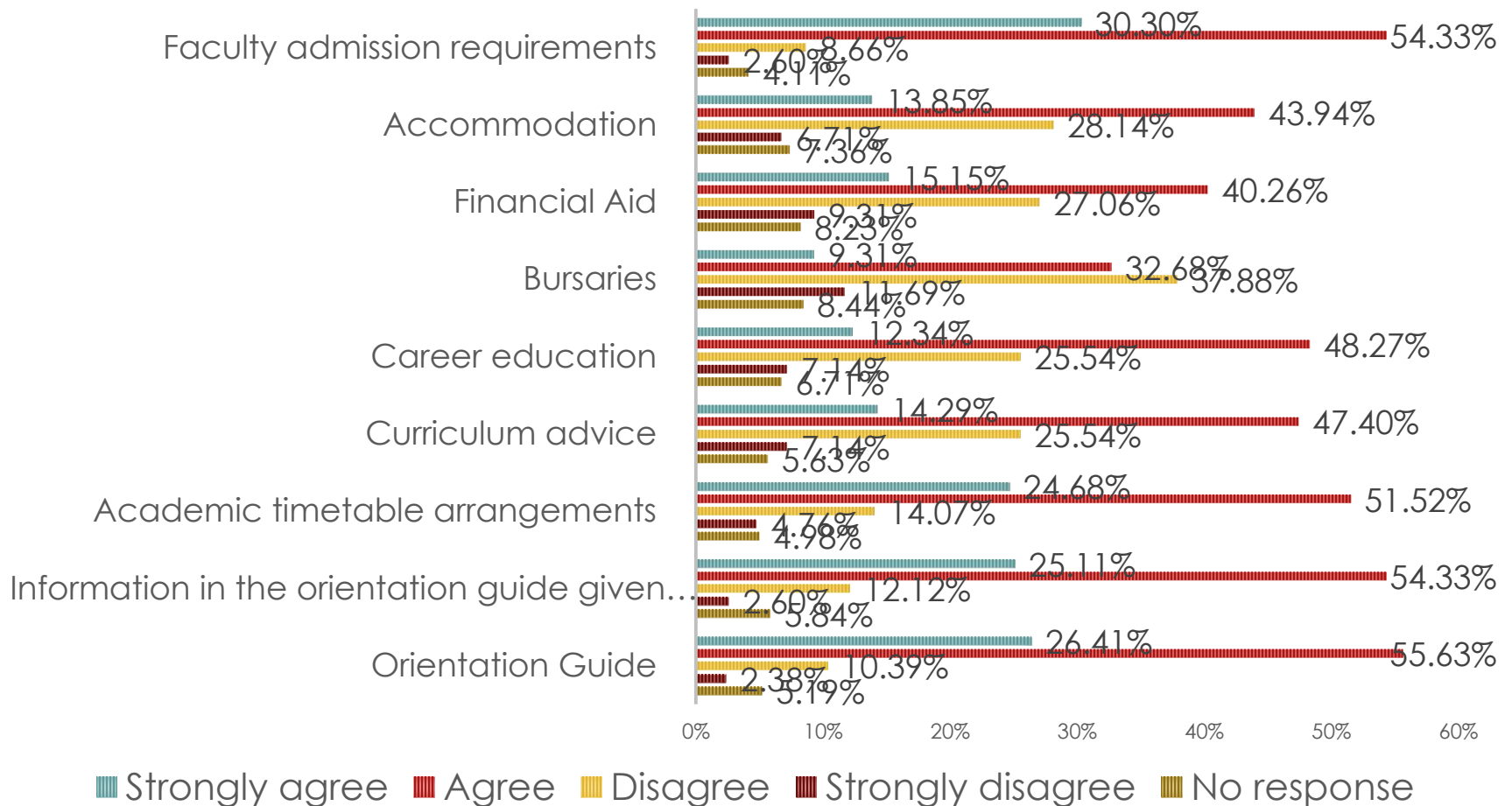
Upon Joining Wits – Pre-registration orientation



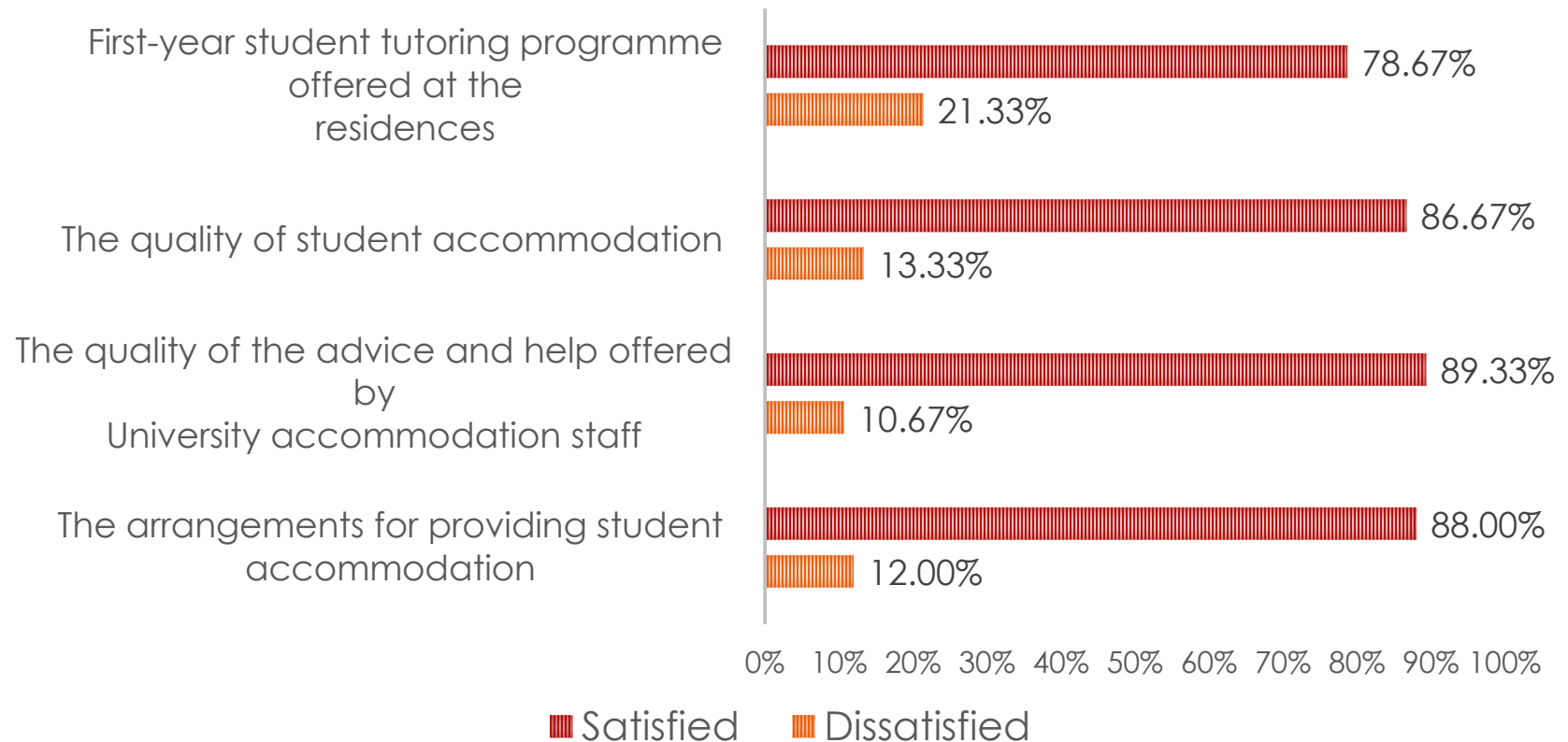
Upon Joining Wits – Registration



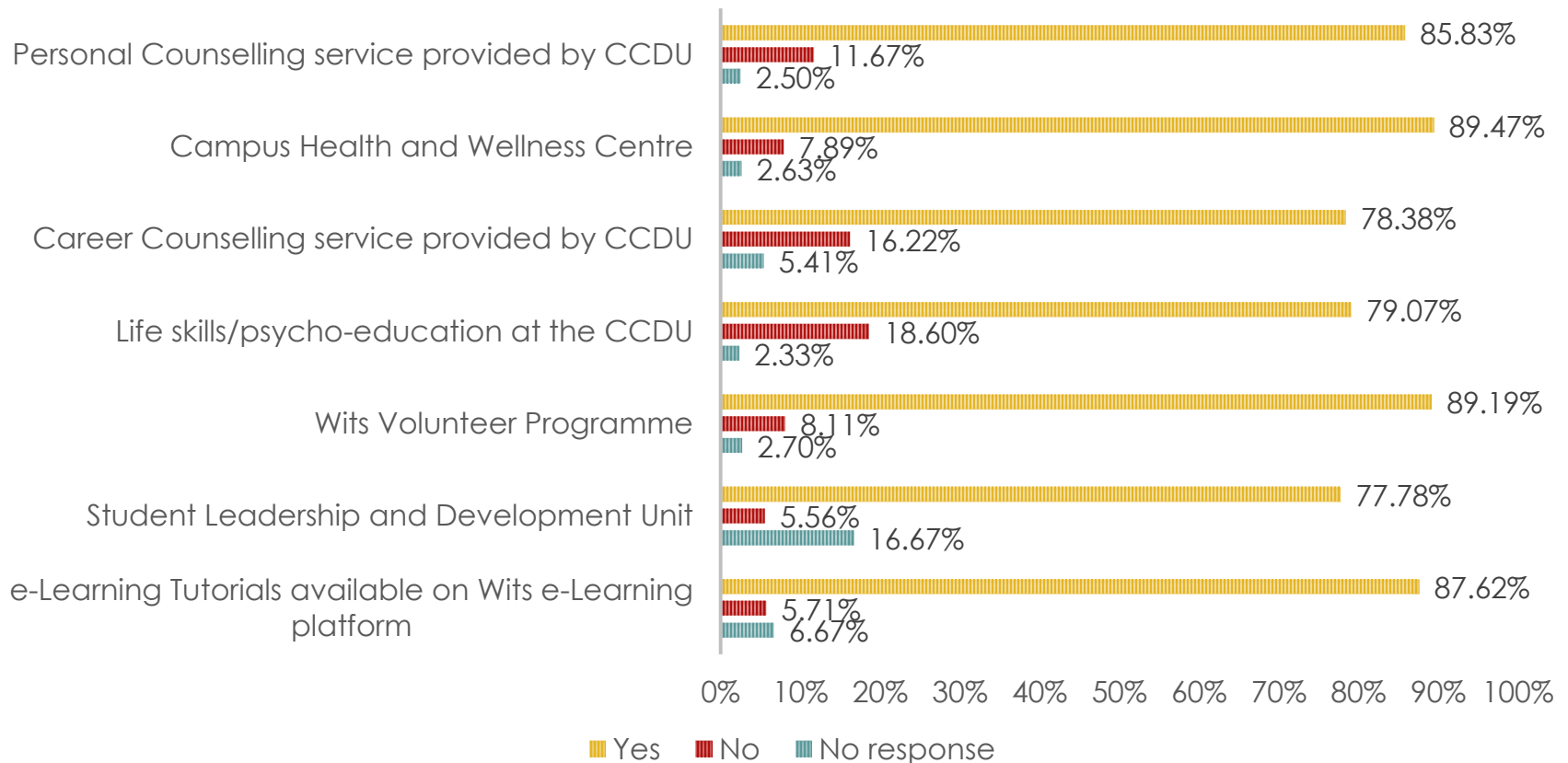
Upon Joining Wits- Orientation Week ("O-Week")



Settling-in at Wits - Accommodation



Settling in at Wits – Psycho-social Support

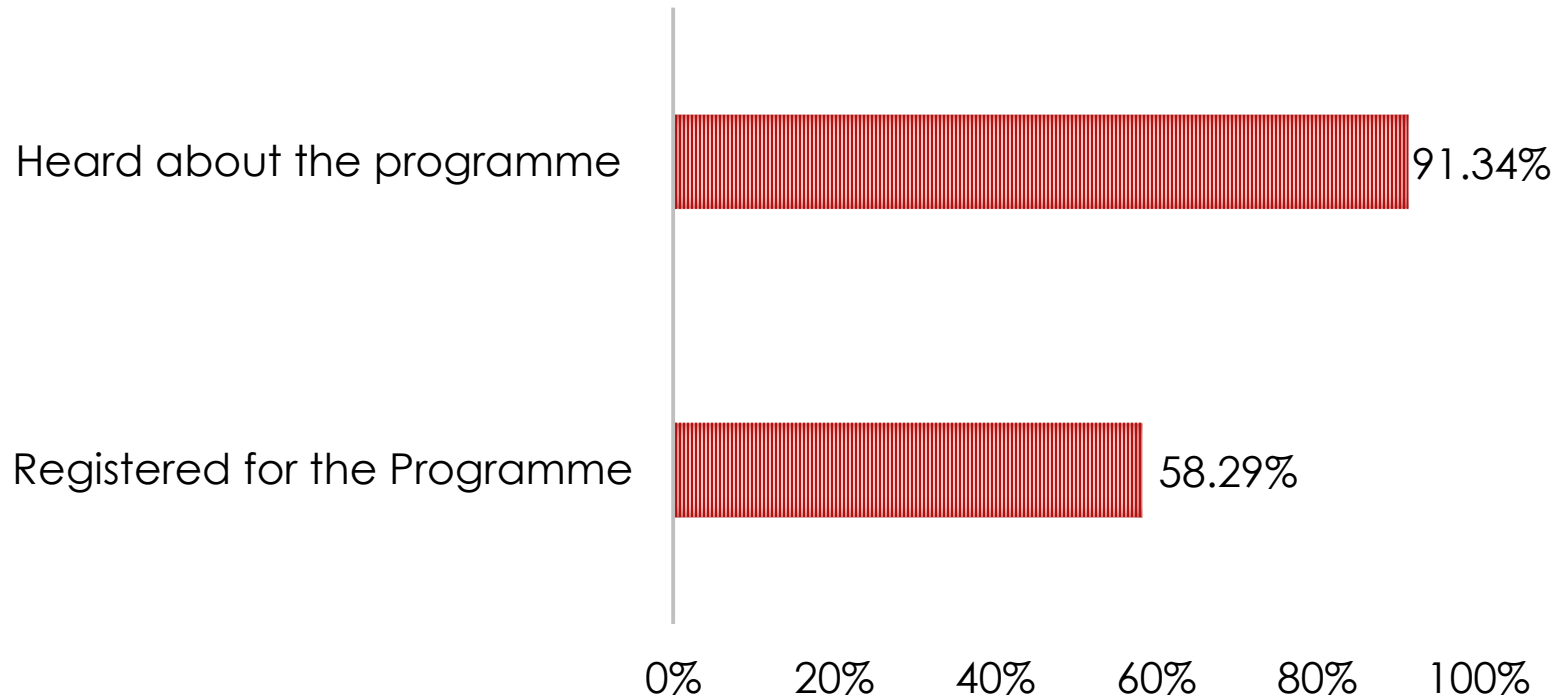


The First Year Experience Programme (FYE)

An attempt to mitigate the risks that first-year students face, includes:

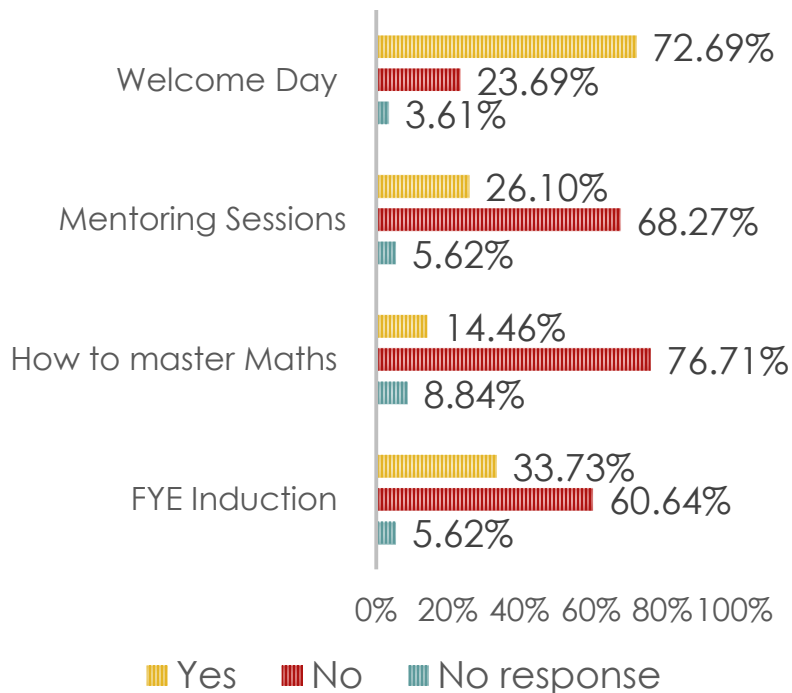
- **Student counseling services**
- **Devolved academic development programmes**
- **e-Learning tutorials**
- **First-year students tutoring programme @ residences**

Participation in the FYE

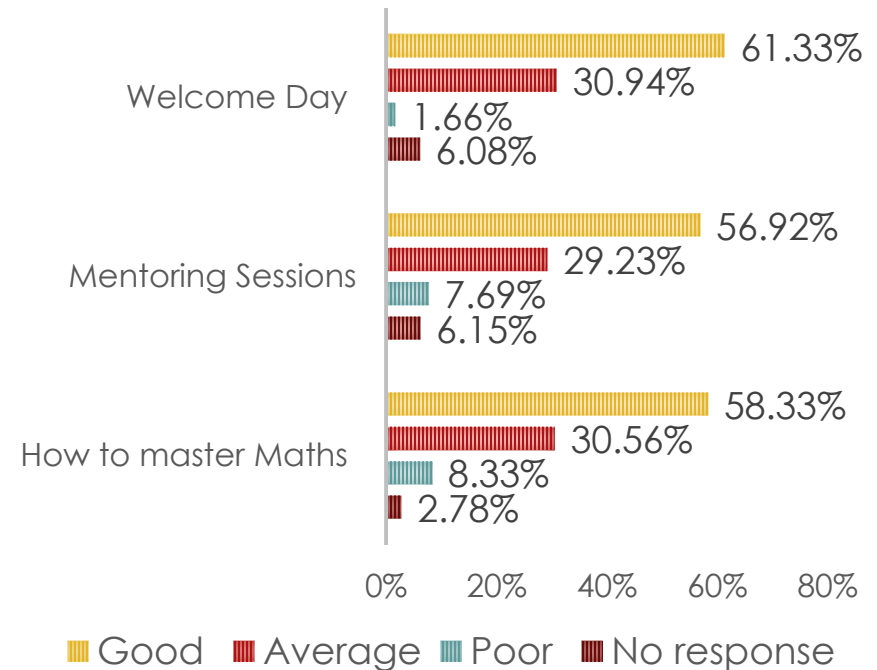


Experience of the FYE Modules

Sessions attended

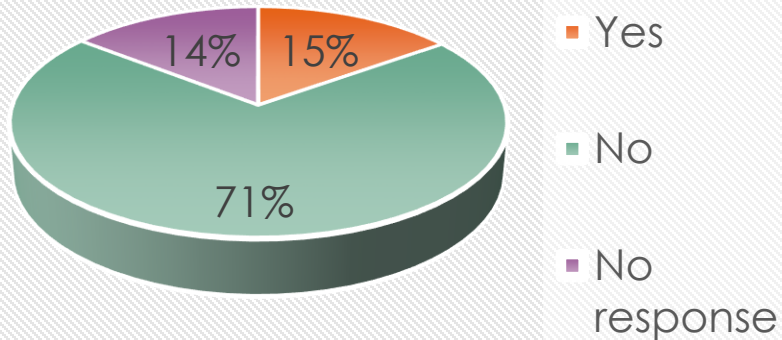


Rate of overall experience

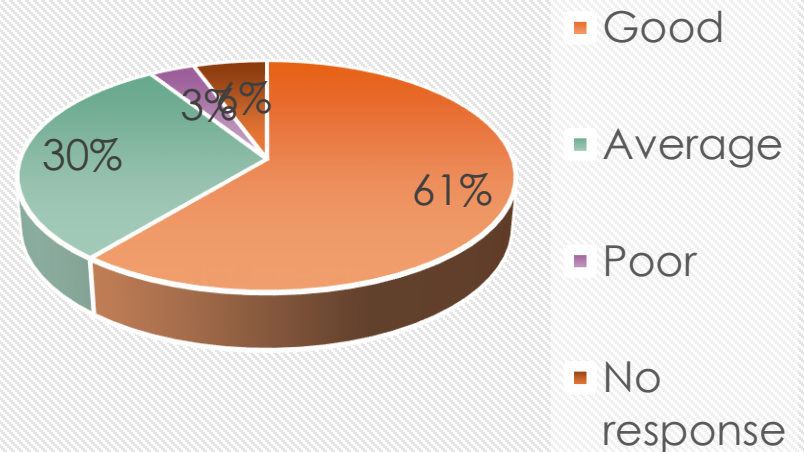


Participation in Voluntary Programs

Participation in modules



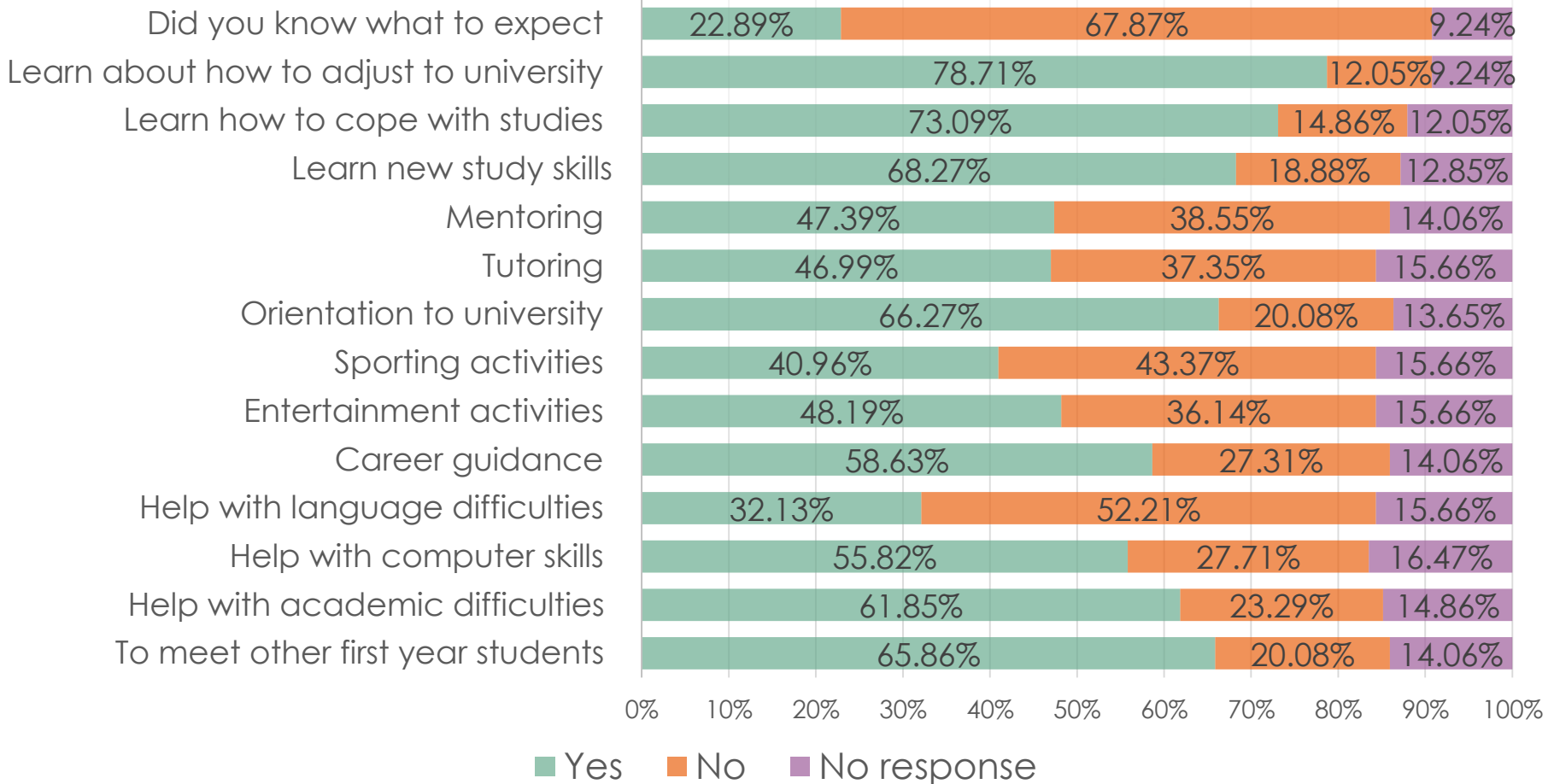
Module experience rating



Voluntary Modules

- Winter Leadership Camp (An Emerging Leaders Programme)
- Coping with Exam Anxiety
- Exam Preparations - Ukufunda
- Writing skills and note taking
- Stress Management
- Career Development
- What to do after lectures
- Copyright and Plagiarism
- FYE Camp
- Computer Skills
- Community engagement
- Personal Action Plans
- How to master Chemistry
- Time Management and Balance
- Ukufunda Study Skills

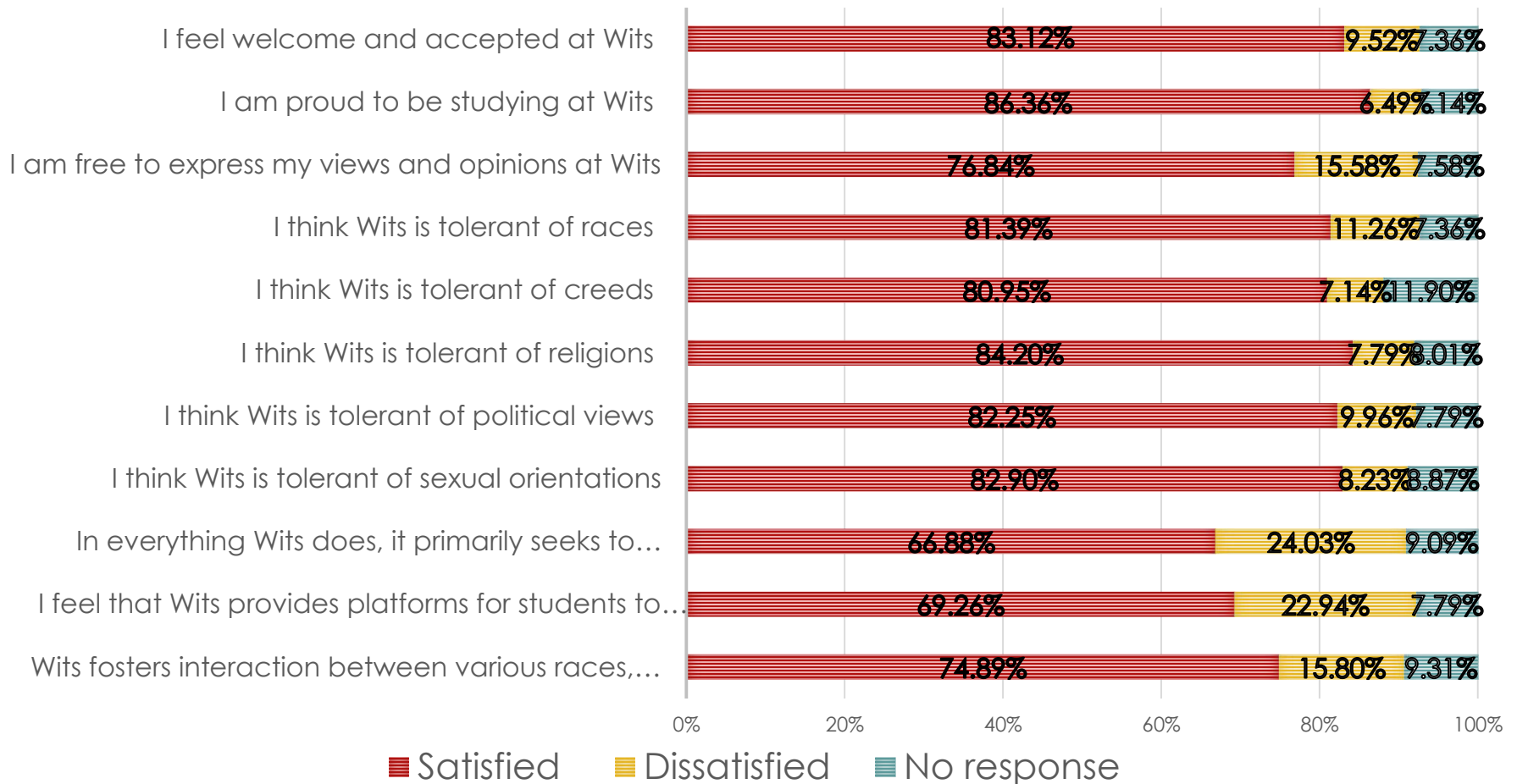
Expectations of the FYE Programme



Difficulties with attending the Programme

- Weekends are an inconvenience
- Did not get any notification about the events
- Off-campus accommodation
- Events clash with the academic timetable

Settling-in at Wits – Institutional Culture



Research Findings

Areas that need special attention and strategic investment of resources:

- becoming more student-centred to improve the student experience of first-year students
- exploring more mechanisms to reduce the drop-out rate and improve student throughput
- improving the quality of feedback on student assessment tasks for purposes of enhancing learning
- developing understood principles of teaching and learning premised on student-centeredness

Research Findings...

- improving the quality of student support across all professional and administrative services
- putting in place mechanisms mitigating against the high first-year drop-out rate
- improving student participation in the Wits First-Year Experience Programme
- providing guaranteed University residence accommodation to all first-year students
- helping students to develop better studying skills to cope with curriculum demands in their individual programmes



“

an ambition to educate global citizens with critical thinking skills and a rich knowledge base – should be premised on good-quality resources, a vibrant culture and an embracing institutional culture. If the University is able to create an educational environment that helps first-year students become successful in their studies, it could be a guarantee of achieving the ideal of becoming an institution of intellectual achievers.”

THE WITS NOTION OF GRADUATENESS

Some comments about FYE

"I feel Wits is a good institute and has lived up to its expectations, promises etc. It's a rather interesting place to be at. One really learns to appreciate diversity and open-mindedness here. Everyday there's something new."

"Wits does not only encourage educational programmes but also the importance of socialising and interacting with different students, and also participating in different sports and recreational activities that are offered at the university"

"I did not expect the programme to cover such a variety of issues that concerned first-year students and I did not know of how involved it would be in our everyday activities and studies."



THE END