

# **First-Year Experiences During Remote Learning and Assessing Student Needs for Fall 2021**

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**First-Year Experience  
San Francisco State University  
Summer 2021**



**SAN FRANCISCO  
STATE UNIVERSITY**

# Purpose

The purpose of the study was to examine first-year student experience during the pandemic and to assess needs for fall 2021.

Study goals:

- Check-in with first-year students and show them that SF State cares;
- Gather information about students:
  - Experiences during remote learning;
  - Student plans for the upcoming fall 2021 semester;
  - Concerns as a rising second-year student;
- Offer support and assess needs to better prepare the campus.

# Methodology

- Telephone survey outreach during Summer 2021
- Data collected through the Qualtrics Survey Platform
- Mixed-methodology approach (qualitative & quantitative items)
- Population:
  - fall 2020 first-year student cohort (n = 2,719)
- Data collected through a telephone survey with the assistance of seven student interns, three FYE Peer Mentors, and one Graduate Student Assistant.

# Methodology

The survey instrument was 20 items in length and was intended to measure to following five areas:

1. First-year student experiences during remote learning;
2. Intent to return in fall 2021;
3. Why students are not planning to return in fall 2021 (where applicable);
4. Student plans & concerns about the upcoming semester;
5. Identify/follow-up with students with support

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# Results

**Response Rate: 34%**

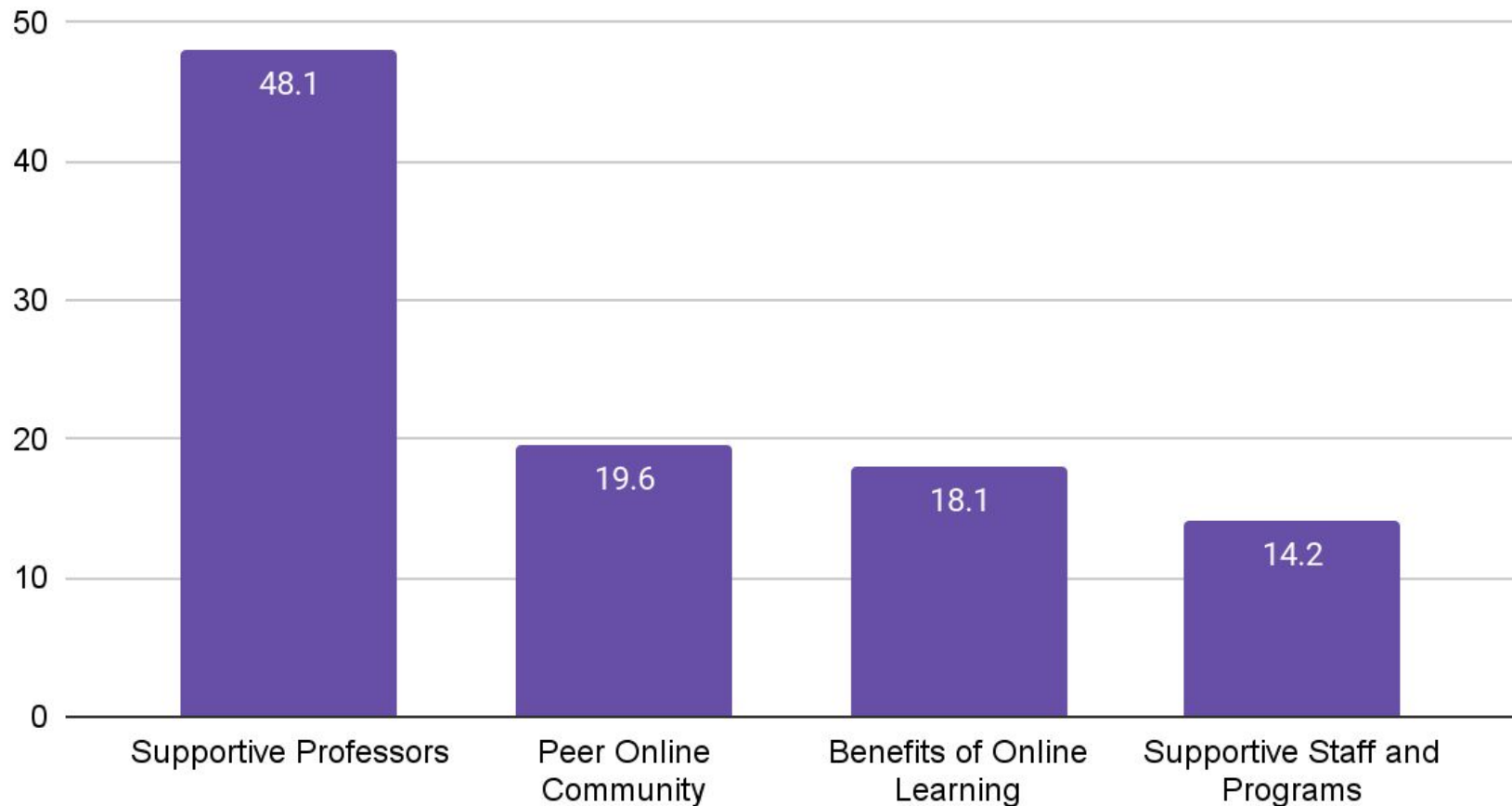
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# **First-Year Experiences during Remote Learning**

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## Positive Aspects of First Year



# Quotes

“It was a positive experience. At first, it was stressful, but the zoom classes helped me have a routine. All the teachers were flexible and understanding because they understood the pandemic and online learning. They let us turn in late homework and fewer assignments.”

“I had a positive experience as a first year student. My teachers on Zoom were great! They were very flexible and understanding when it came to late assignments and having cameras on. I was nervous about the online experience, but having supportive teachers made it easier to learn online.”

“I mean I like that I didn't have to commute from where I live, I also liked that I could immediately wake up and not have to get out of bed to go to class and I like that I could stay in my pajamas.”



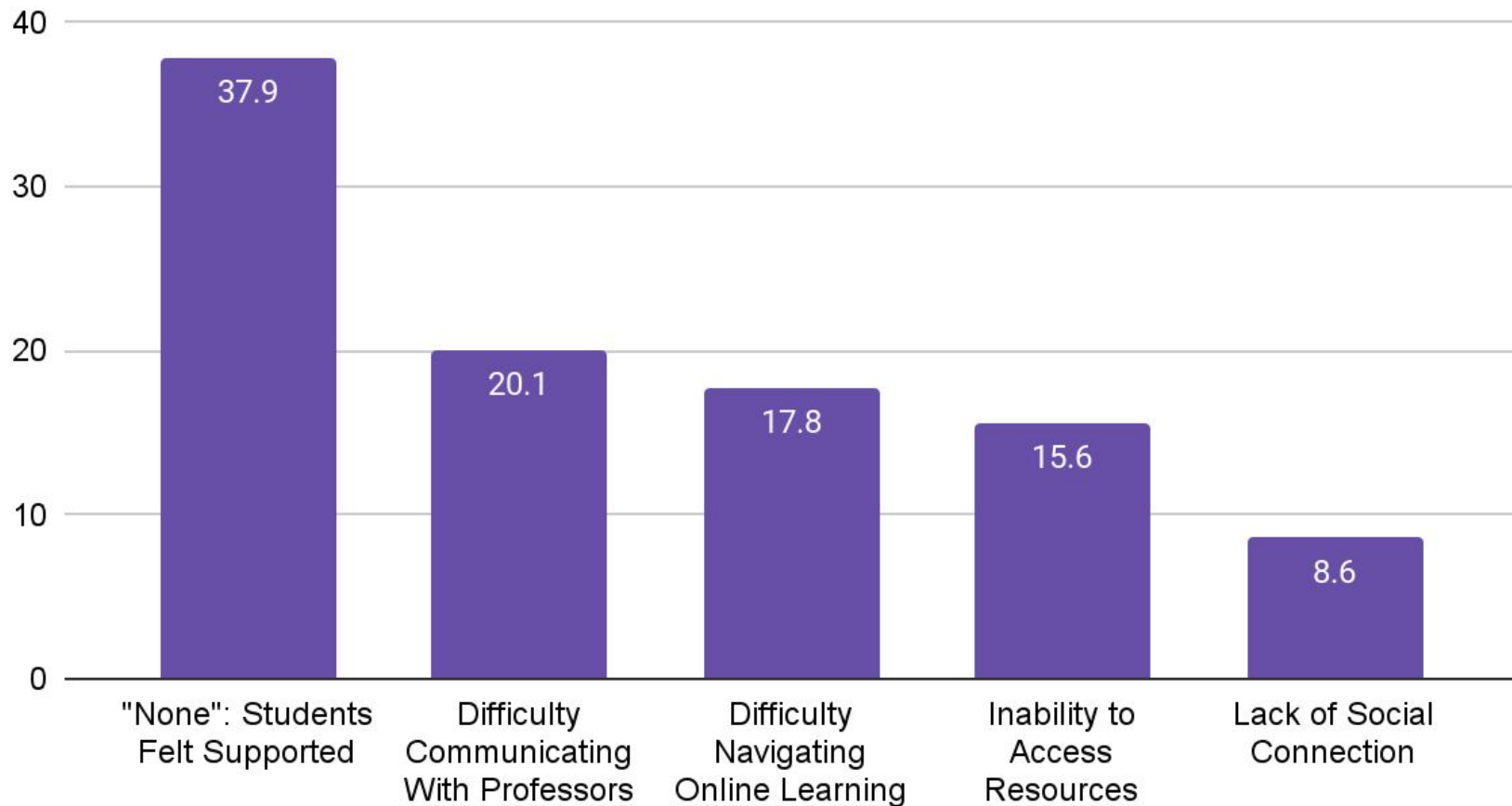
## Quotes

“The Metro and EOP program were really helpful. They were very supportive with first generation students, they made me feel very comfortable over zoom.”

“I liked having a first-year advisor, so for any questions I had, I could go ask one specific person, and I didn't have to go ask five different people to get something answered.”

“My first-year was not bad because my academic advisor and my teachers were really responsive! They were really nice and willing to help me out with online classes and questions that I had.”

## Areas With a Lack of Support



# Quotes

“I did not feel like there was a lack of support in anything for me because the counselors always helped me with everything and the professors as well.”

“Most students, including myself, felt a lack of support in the online area because we went from in-person learning to online learning abruptly. There was support [from professors] but I don't think there was enough support to help students succeed. A lot of my professors offered extensive office hours which was helpful, but a lot of students were reserved.

“Because it was online, I felt like I didn't get to know my peers. It didn't feel like it was a social classroom environment.”

# Quotes

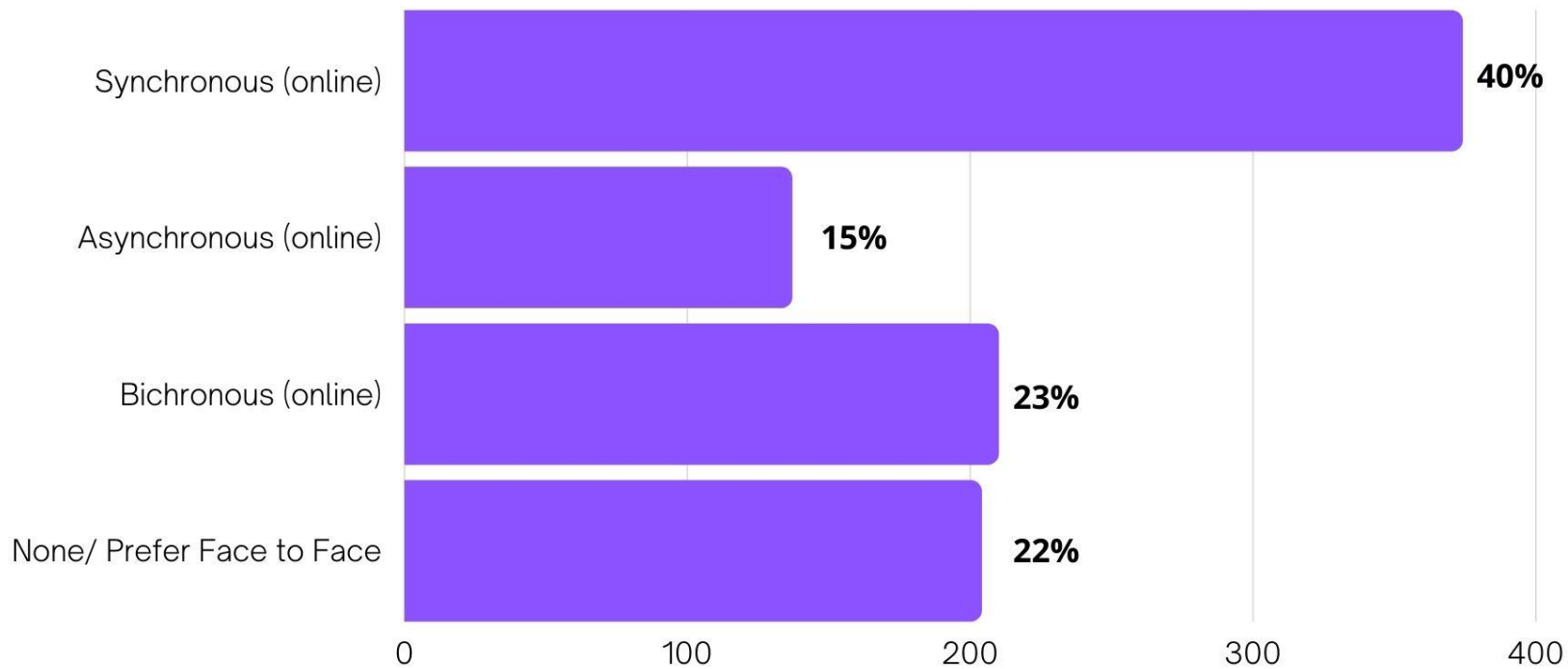
“I Learn at first was confusing to navigate and there was no one to teach me how to use it and I had to figure it out on my own.”

“Motivation-wise, but I feel like that was all on me. I had counselors I could go to, but I didn't reach out and I didn't have motivation to do work because it was all on screen.”

“Sometimes communicating to teachers is hard because they wouldn't respond on time. And when it came to instructions for assignments, it wasn't clear.”

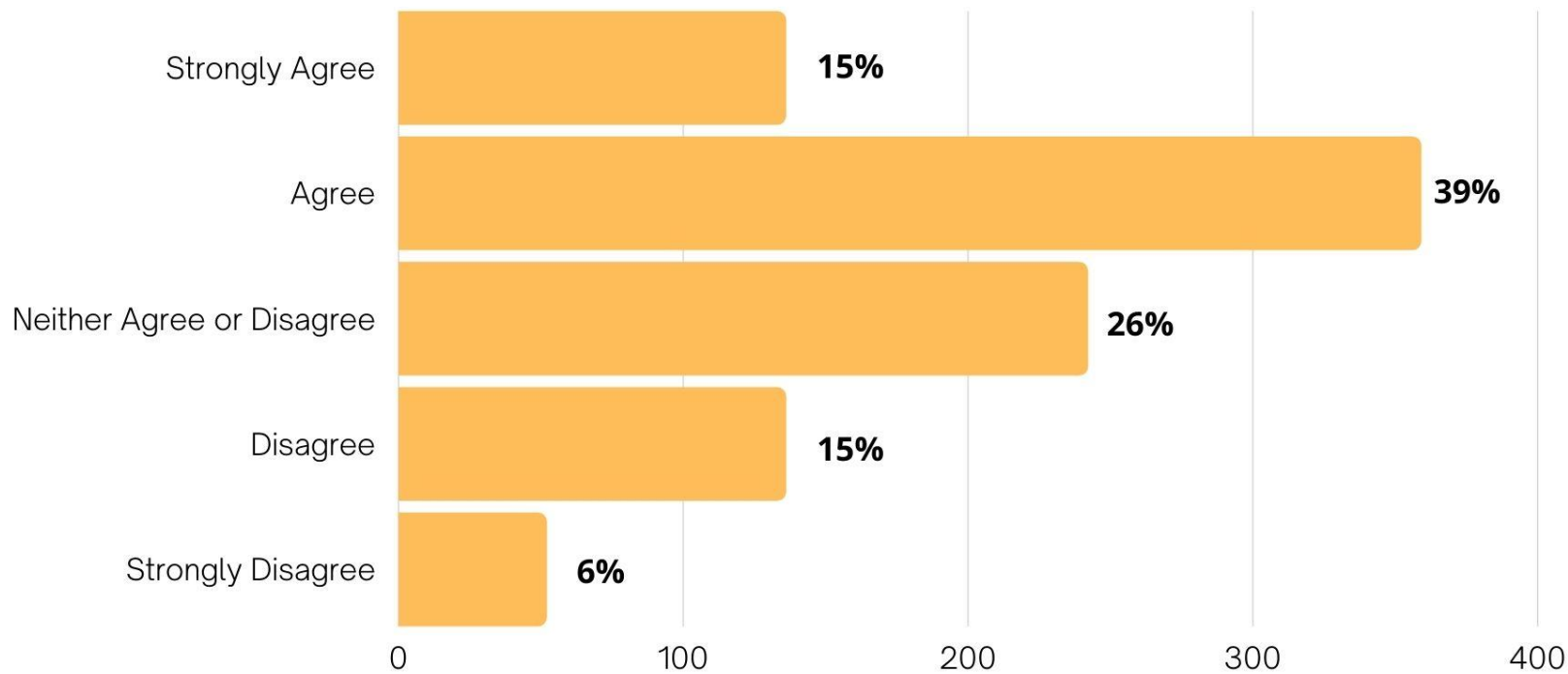
“I would say everything's harder because it's online so it was hard to reach out for resources like tutoring.”

What was your favorite online modality during this last academic year (2020-2021)?



Please rate the following item:

I found community at SF State in a virtual modality.

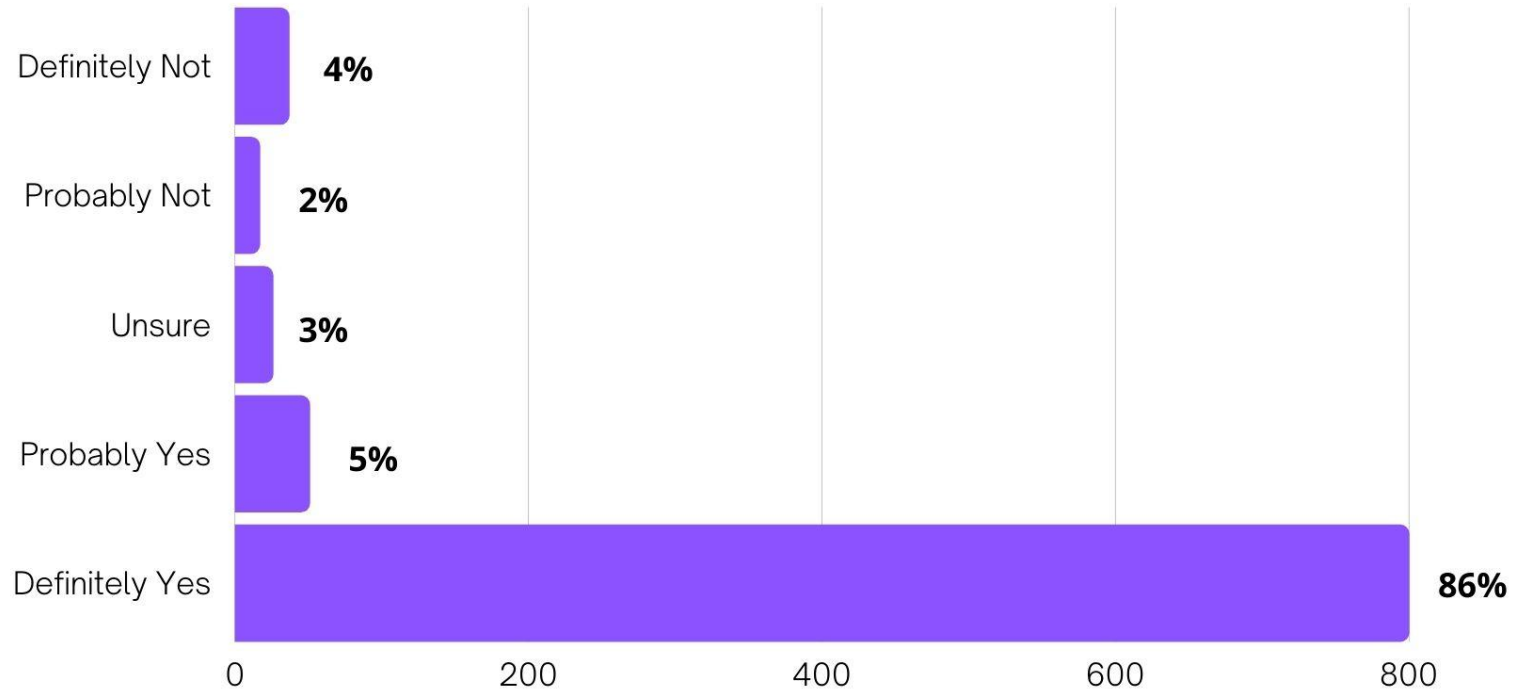


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# **Intent on Returning: Fall 2021**

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## Do you plan on taking classes at SF State in the Fall?





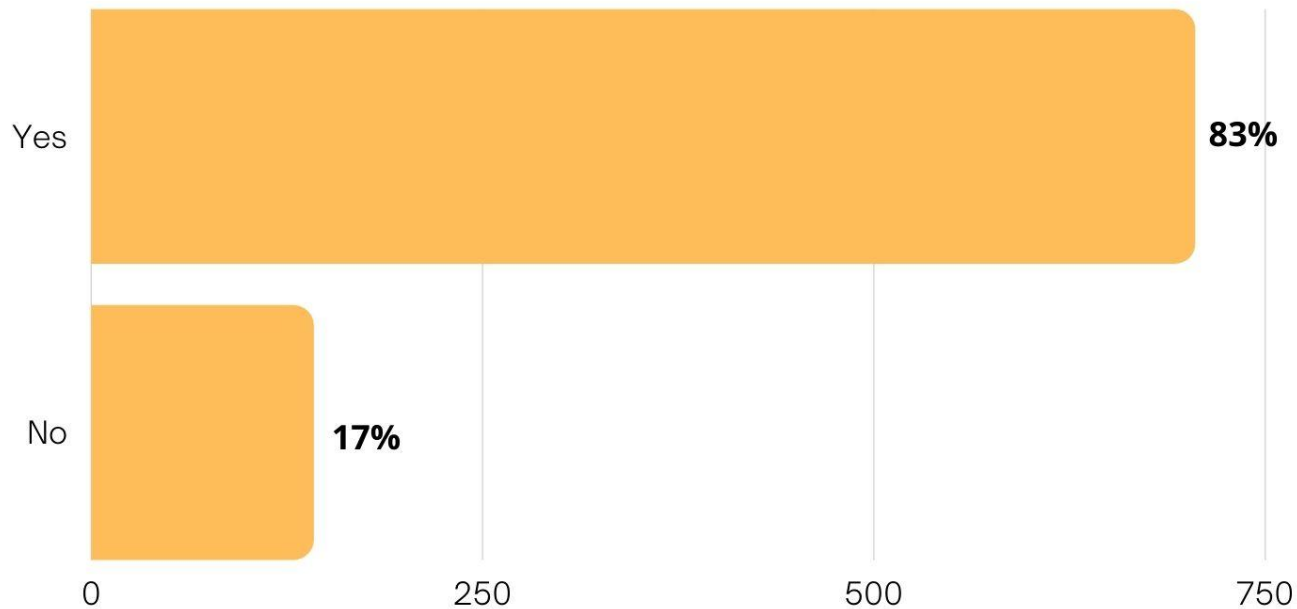
**Why are you  
unsure/probably/definitely  
not returning  
in Fall 2021?**

- 1) Financial Reasons**
- 2) Transferring to Community College**
- 3) Personal/Family Issues**

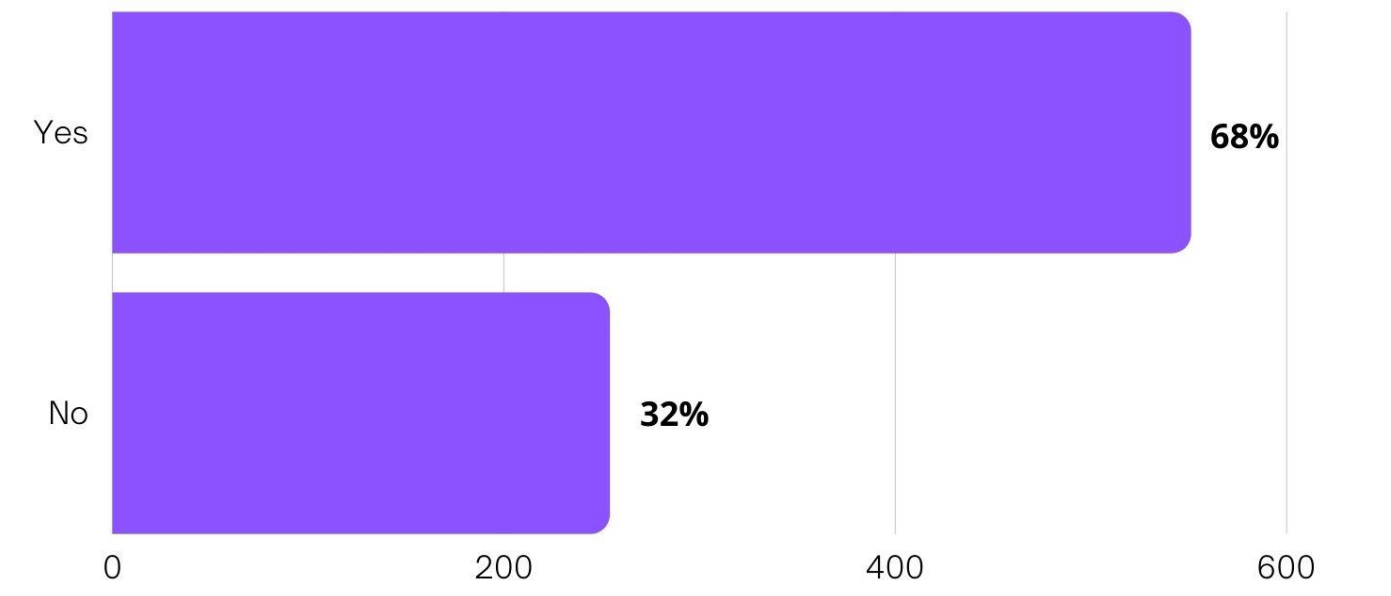
**If you are not taking classes  
this Fall 2021, what are your  
plans?**

- 1) Transferring to Community College**
- 2) Working**
- 3) Transferring to Another University**

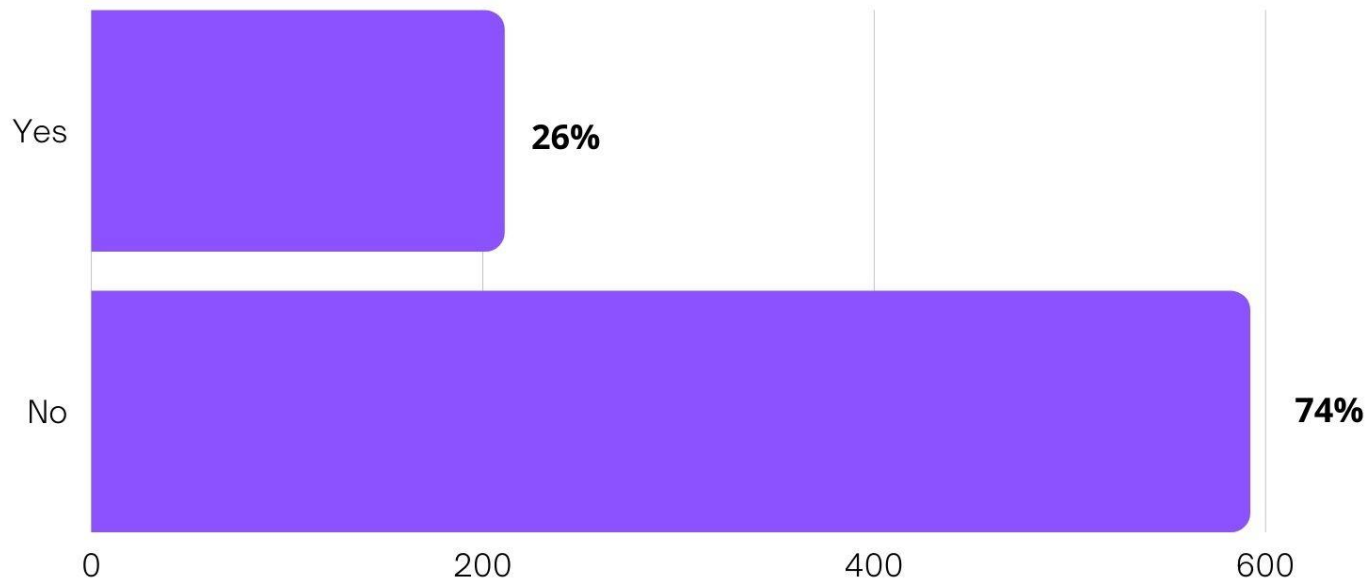
Have you already registered for classes for Fall 2021 at SF State?



Did you get all the classes you wanted for your second year?



[If NOT registered] Do you need academic advising assistance for help with planning your classes? [If registered] Do you need academic advising assistance for other needs (e.g. changing majors, planning for classes)?

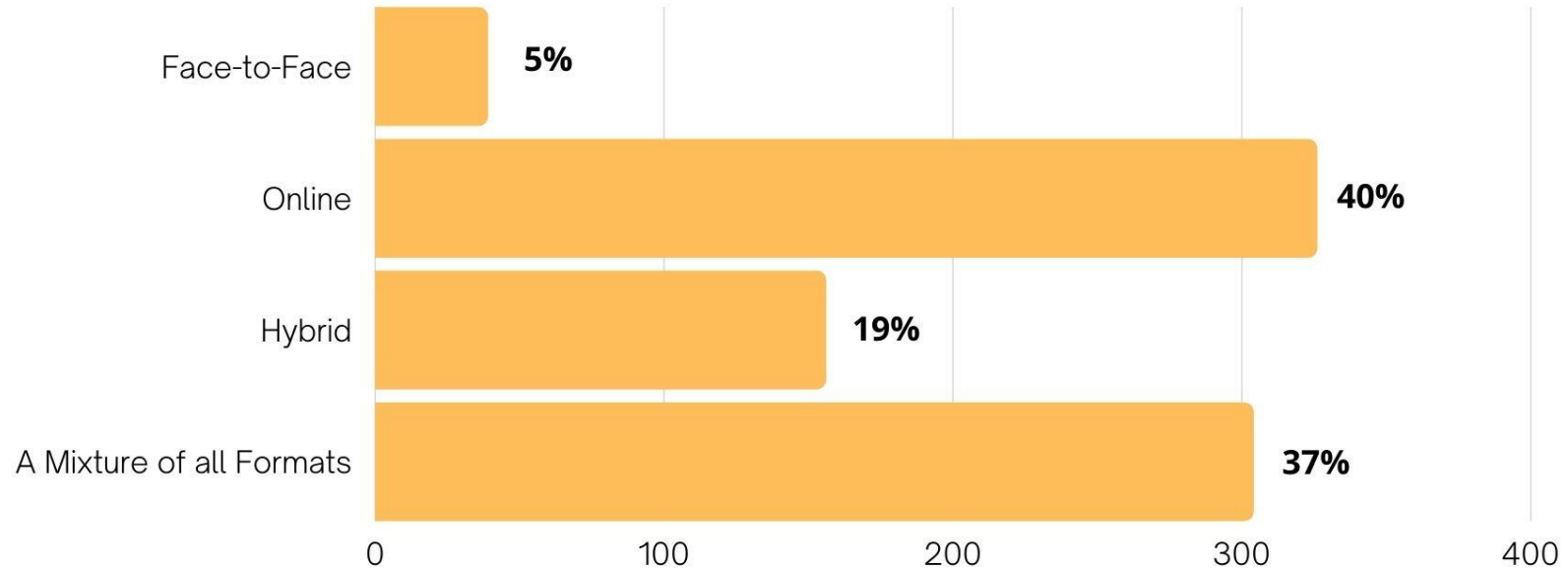


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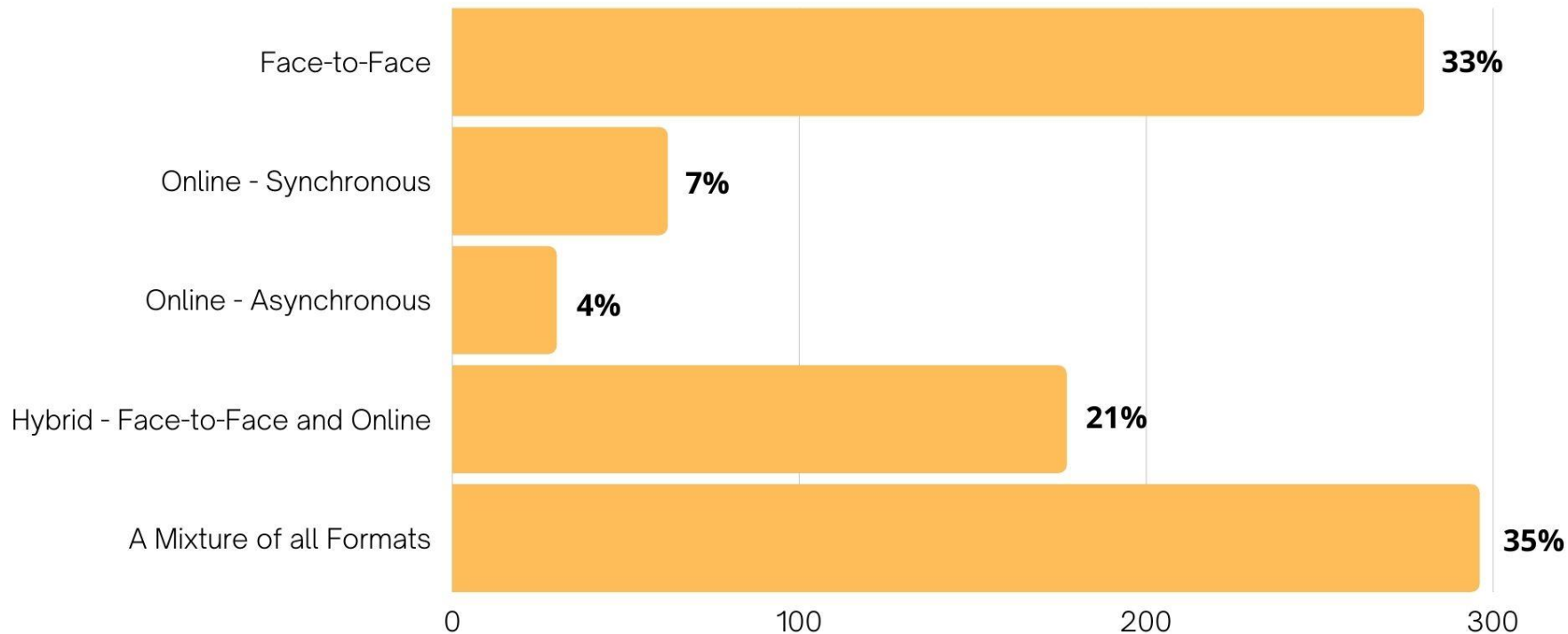
# **Student Plans: Fall 2021**

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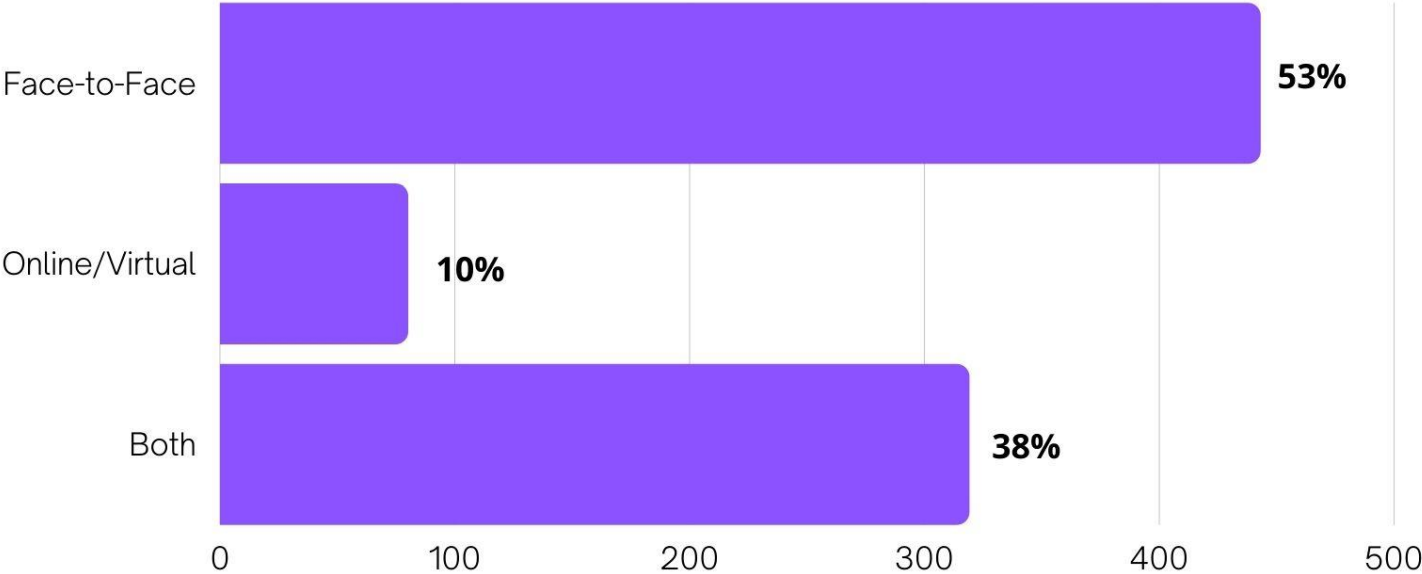
In Fall 2021 will you be taking your classes:



Moving forward, would you prefer classes:

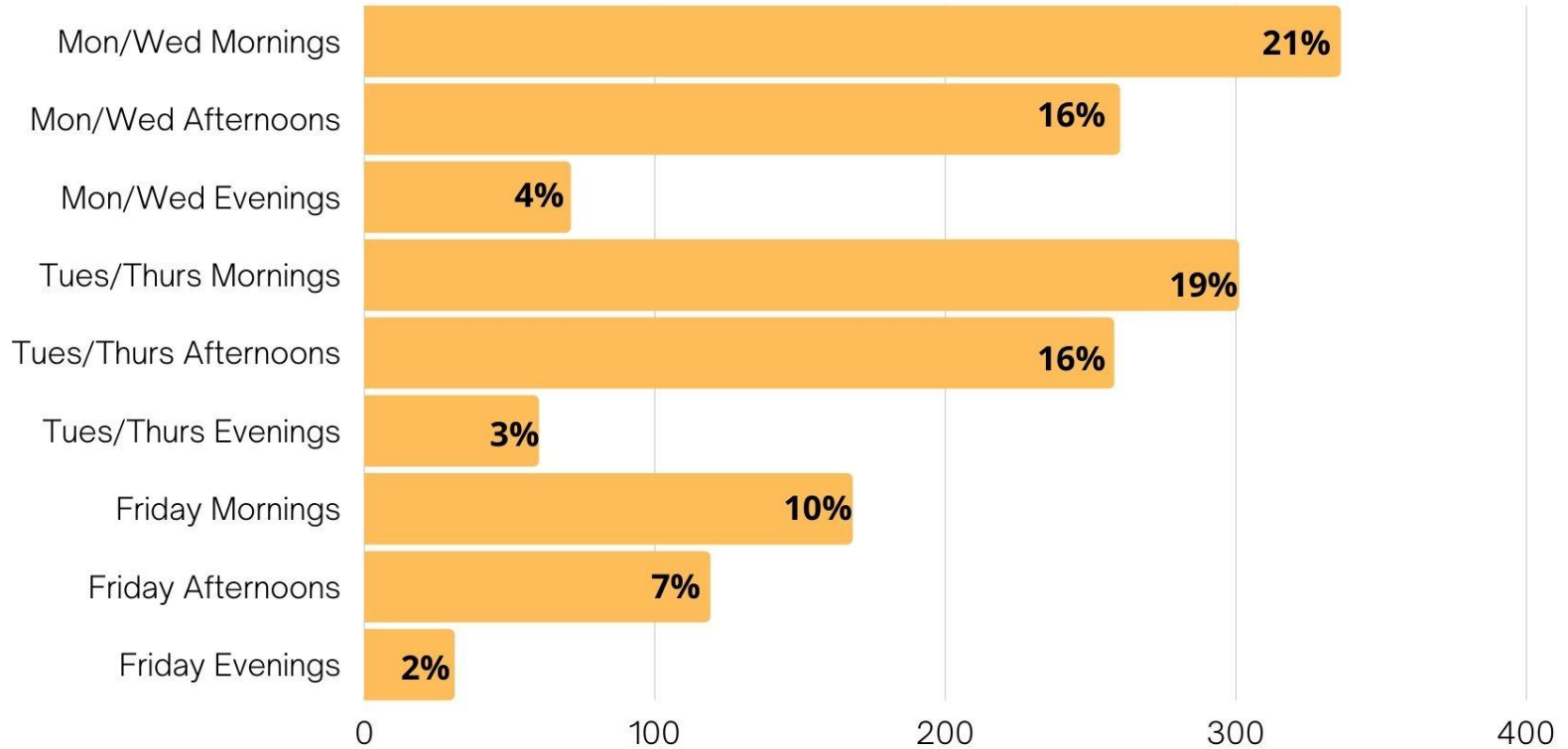


In Fall 2021, would you prefer to attend social student events that are:

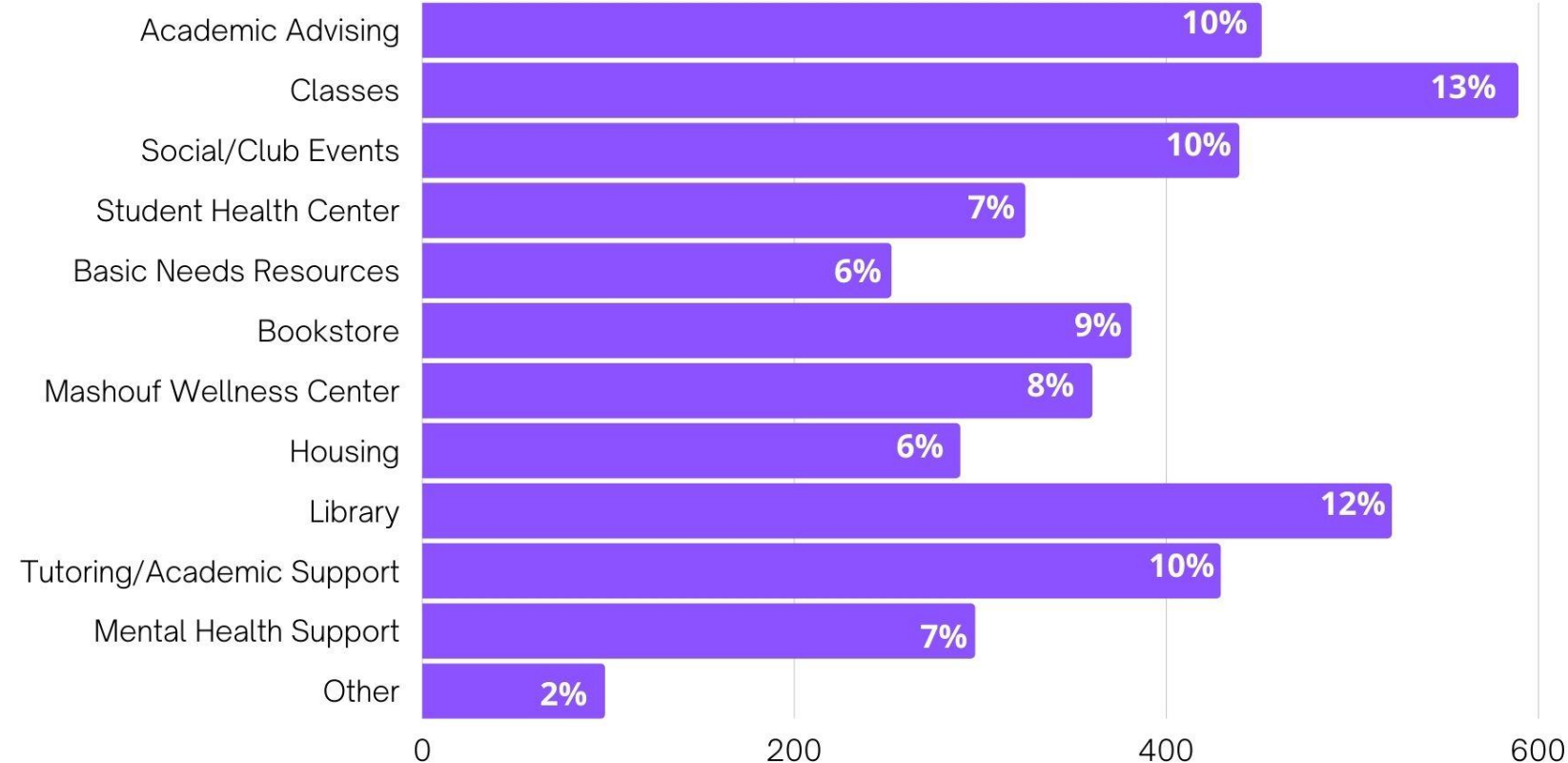




If you are coming to campus in the Fall, what days and times do you think you will be on-campus for classes (Check all that apply)?



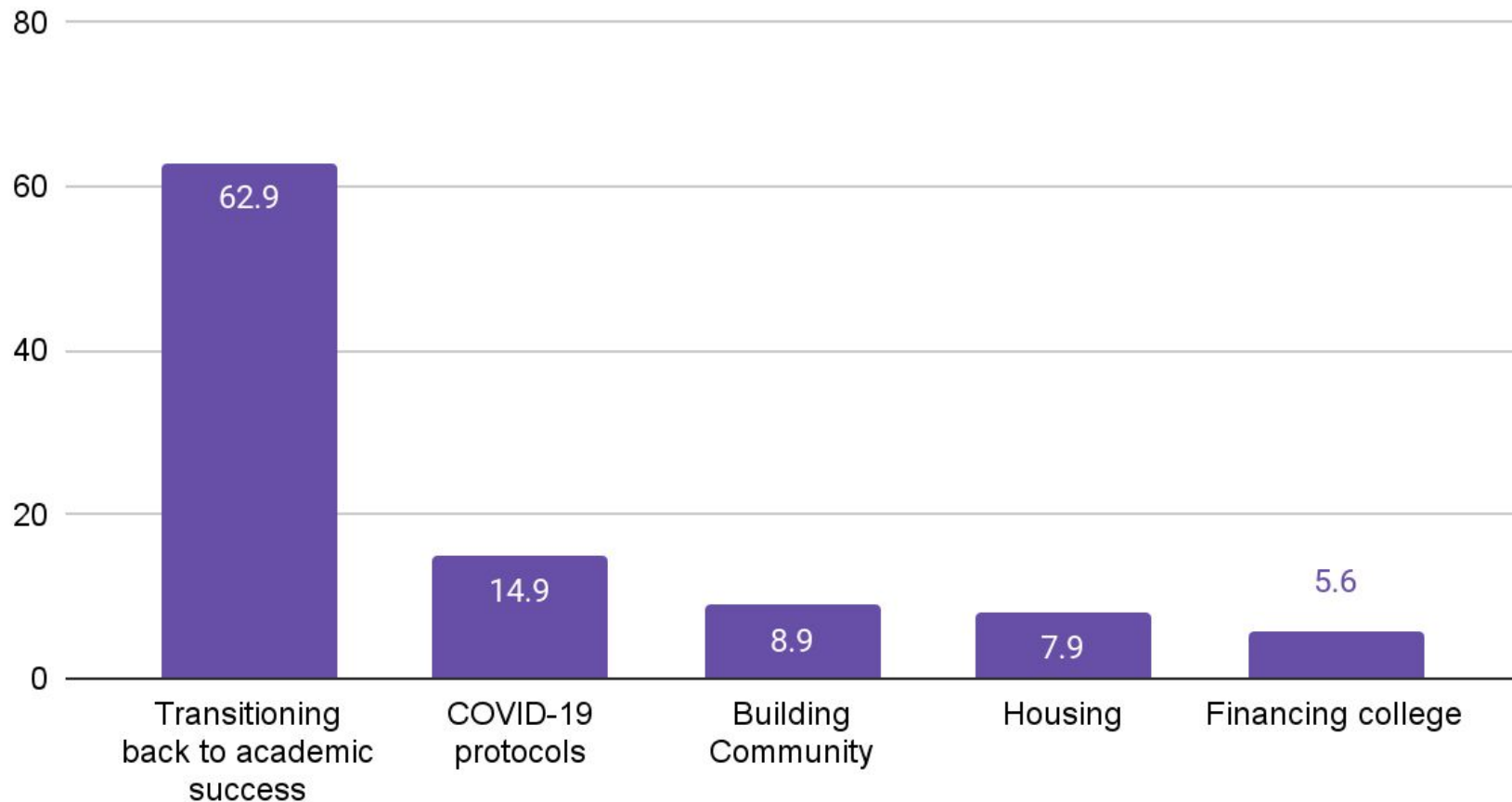
If you are coming onto campus, what are reasons you will be coming to campus (check all that apply):



# **Top Concerns: Fall 2021**

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## Top concerns for Fall 2021



# Transitioning Back & Being Academically Successful

1. “I'd say just keeping up with my professors and in general with classes and assignments. Understanding each class and getting ready for upper division courses.”
2. “Because everything has been online, we never got a proper orientation to the campus, so figuring out where everything is, and learning how to fit in, is the big thing.”
3. “If the in-person classes will be as good as online ones are, and if it will be just as hard to get through the classes in person as the online ones, which I struggled with. I might need tutoring services.”

# COVID-19 Protocols

1. “Covid related: if we have to follow guidelines and such. They are lifting mask requirements so I'm worried about that.”
2. “I suppose one [concern] would be identifying a clear health policy in relation to masks, etc. I want to readily know what I need to have on campus, or if it is on a person to person basis.”
3. “I am worried about my own safety and [the] safety of others because of COVID.”

# Building Community

1. “I think getting to know the community on campus and trying to figure out social activities and clubs. I want to see if I can do that, but it has been hard online.”
2. “Building a better community with the students. This is [a] concern because the class will be online and not many people like to contribute online.”
3. “It's my first time being away from home, so getting involved in a new environment and making friends is kind of daunting.”

# Housing

1. “The biggest concern is waiting to hear back from housing because I applied for housing in April. I really am waiting to hear back because I feel like I am in limbo right now. I may have to move to the city and look for housing off-campus and I really am concerned about that.”
2. “I’m just concerned about getting there because I was not chosen for student housing so I have to live at home (about an hour and a half away). I know I’ll just have to drive to school but I’ve never driven in SF so I’m just super anxious about that.”
3. “My housing application was denied but I have in person classes so that's an issue.”



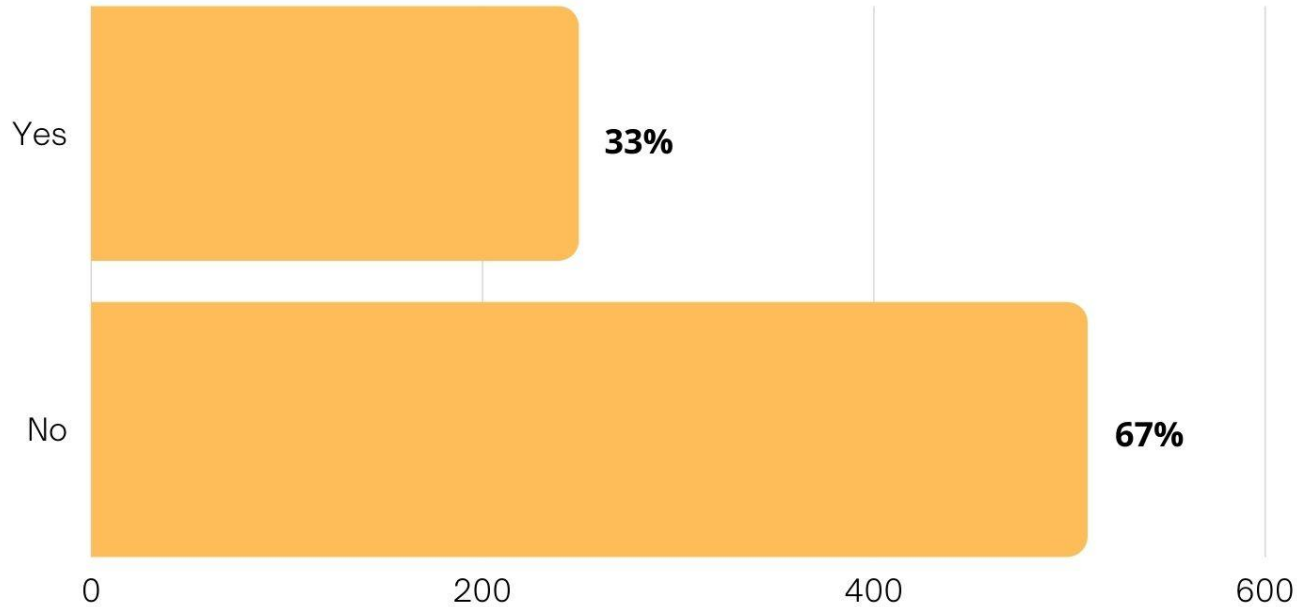
# Financial Aid

1. “The only concern I would have is financial aid. They are really strict when it comes to what you earn, and depending on what you've earned, they only care about what you made in a particular year. So my parents have different financial circumstances this year than last year, and my financial aid is drastically different this year because of that.”
2. “Financial aid- last year I let them know my EFC wasn't realistic since my parents don't support me and I've been talking to them but my parents claim me as a dependent so there's nothing I can do.”
3. “I'm struggling a lot with financial aid/affording to be with SFSU so I have to do a lot online right now but that's even a struggle because I still have to pay for classes.”

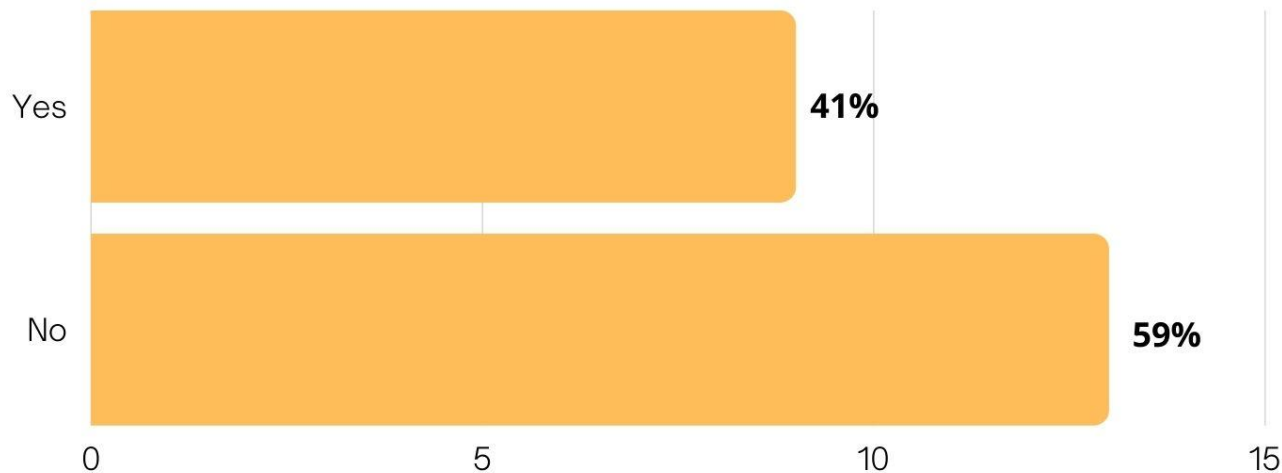
# Intervention

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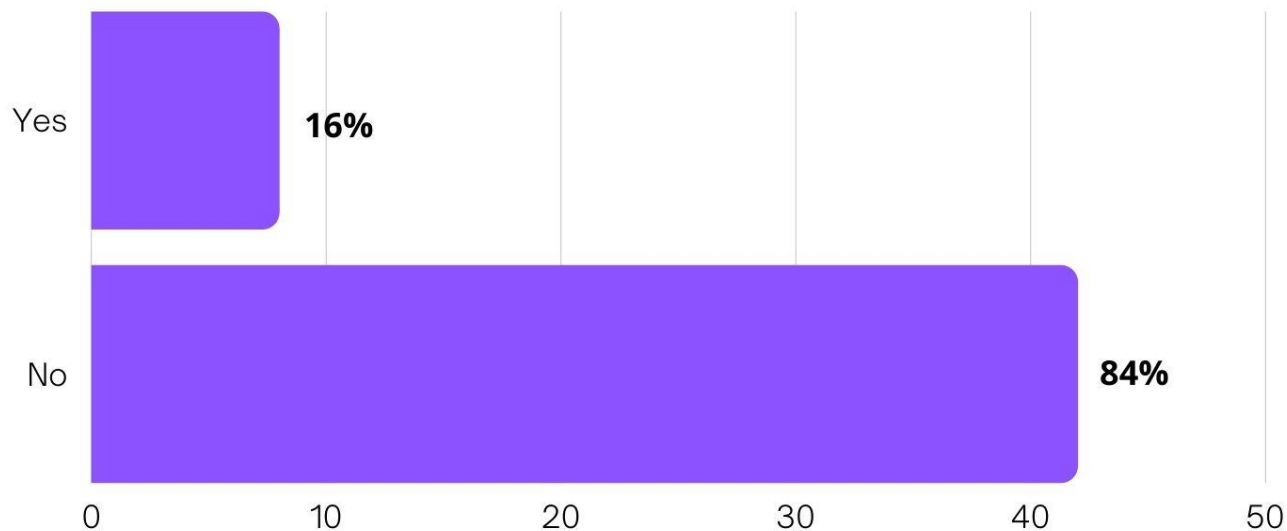
Would like some support on any of these concerns? Can we share your name and email with someone at San Francisco State University?



We hope you will consider enrolling for Fall 2021. SF State is providing support for faculty around online teaching as well as additional resources to support student learning online. Additionally, our academic advisors are ready to support students who are unsure about returning to school in the fall and help them enroll for fall classes. Would you like to speak with an academic advisor?



We hope you will consider enrolling for Fall 2021. Our academic advisors are ready to support students who are thinking about not returning to school in the fall and help them explore their options. They can also help you enroll for fall classes if you decide to return. Would you like to speak with an academic advisor?



# Intervention

- We were able to catalogue the majority of students' concerns into the following offices, who then did follow-up:
  - Academic Advising, Enrollment Management, Financial Aid, New Student Programs, and Tutoring Services (TASC).

# Recommendations

- Continually support students as they transition to campus especially in the areas of getting acquainted to the campus.
- Help students understand how to be academically successful in face-to-face and hybrid formats.
- Build connection & community with students.
- Provide support and information around COVID-19 protocols and financing college/financial aid, and housing.