# Guided Pathways Student Voices Focus Group Findings

# Self- Reflection

What do you think about students' experience at Cañada College?

How do you contribute to their success on campus?

# Our Approach

❖ 39 real student experiences
❖ 5 Focus Groups
  ❖ 2 day time, 3 evening
  ❖ 2 sessions happened during a hybrid Career Course
❖ Recruitment
❖ CCSSEE will be administered Spring 19

# Research Question

What are the barriers to entry, persistence, and completion at Cañada College?

# Interview Protocol Topics

❖ Motivation to attend college

❖ Choosing a major

❖ Choosing classes

❖ Obstacles students face in completion

❖ Student recommendations

# Our Students

We compared our Focus Group participants to our general student population

# Focus Group students are:

- Slightly less diverse (less Asian, in particular)
- Half as likely to be male
- Twice as likely to be full-time
- Younger (71% v. 51% in the 18-24 age group)
- More likely to be an EOPS student (21% v. 6%)
- More likely to be a first-year student (55% v. 44%)
- Twice as likely to be a College Promise student (11% v. 5%)
- More than twice as likely to be an international student (13% v. 5%)
- More likely to be working at least 20 hours/week while going to school
- Slightly less likely to be a first generation college student (45% v. 52%)
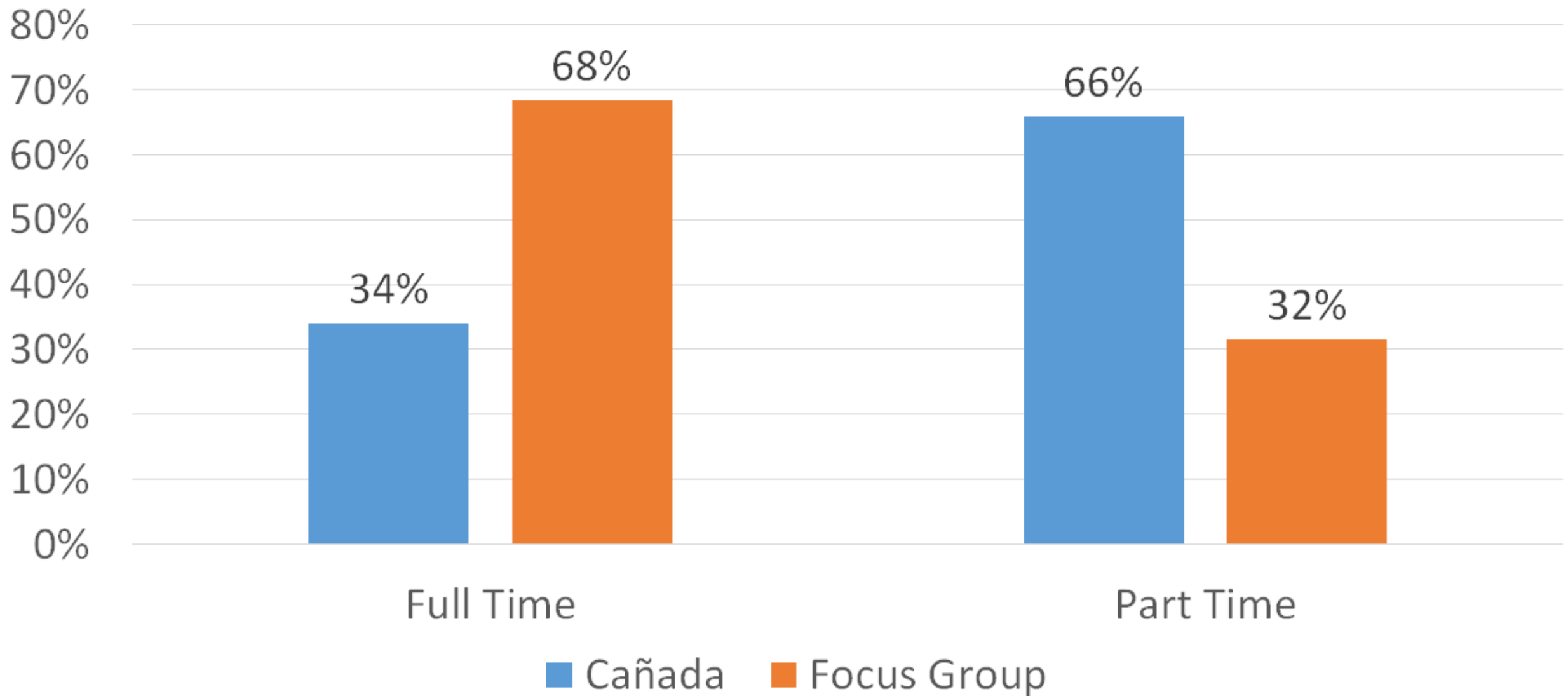
...than the typical Cañada student

# Cañada Students: Gender

## Fall 2018



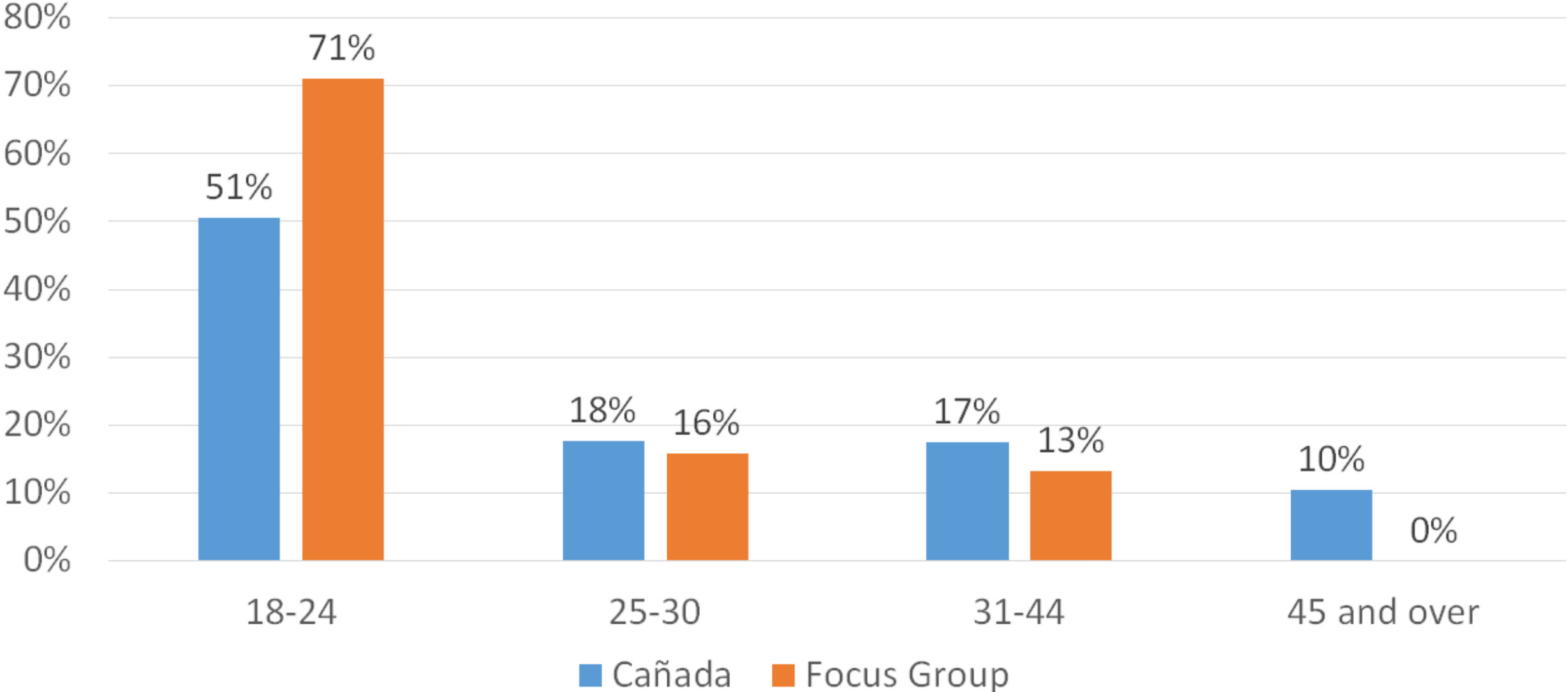| | Focus Group | Cañada |
|---|---|---|
| Other/No Response | 3% | 2% |
| Male | 18% | 38% |
| Female | 79% | 60% |
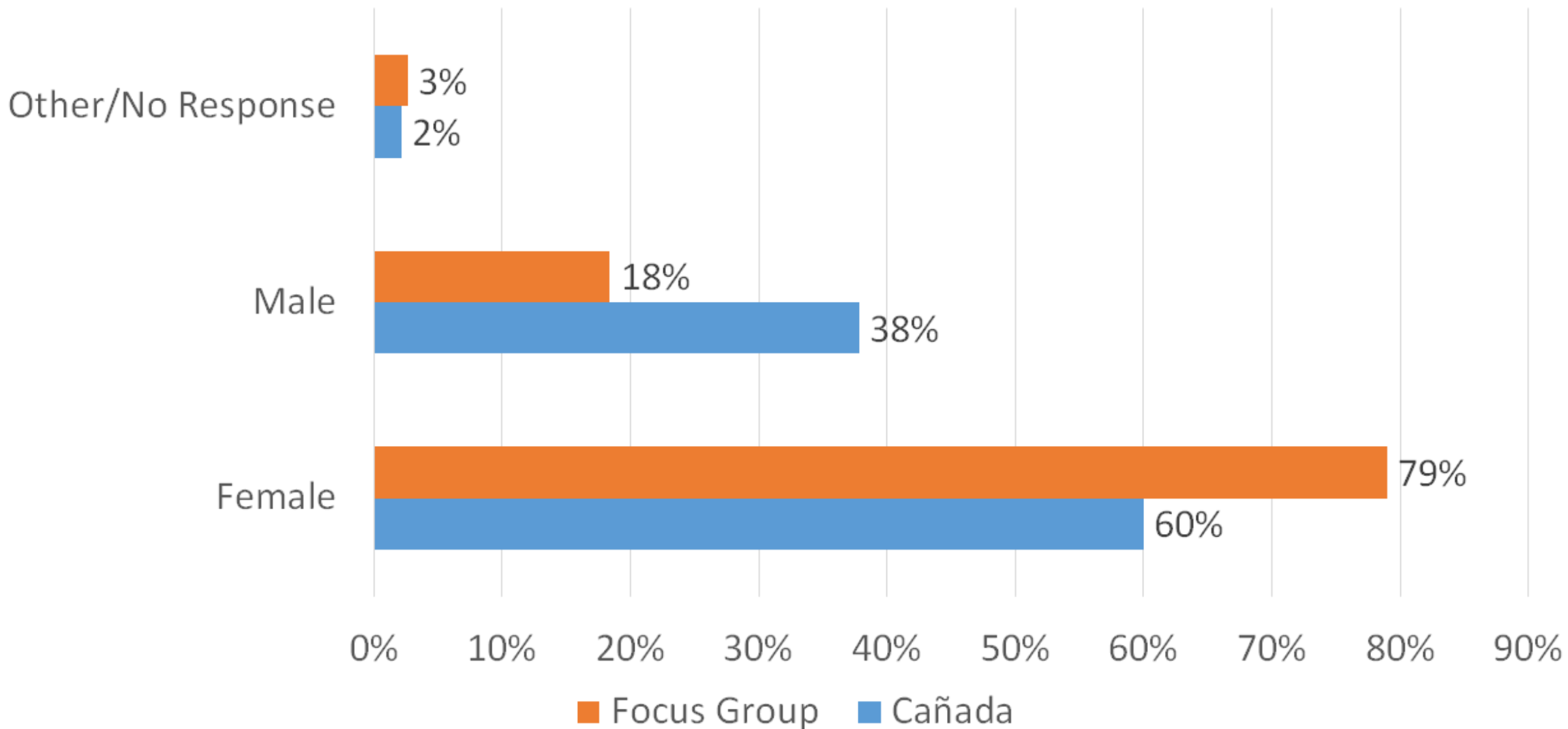
Cañada Students: Full Time Status

Fall 2018

Cañada Students:  Age Group

Fall 2018

Cañada Students: Special Program Participation
Fall 2018

| Program | Focus Group | Cañada |
|---|---|---|
| Adult Education | 5% | 3% |
| College for Working Adults | 3% | 4% |
| EOPS | 21% | 6% |
| International Student (Visa Type 20) | 13% | 5% |
| Promise Scholars | 11% | 5% |
| Puente | 3% | 8% |
| STEM Academy | 3% | 3% |
| TRiO | 16% | 1% |
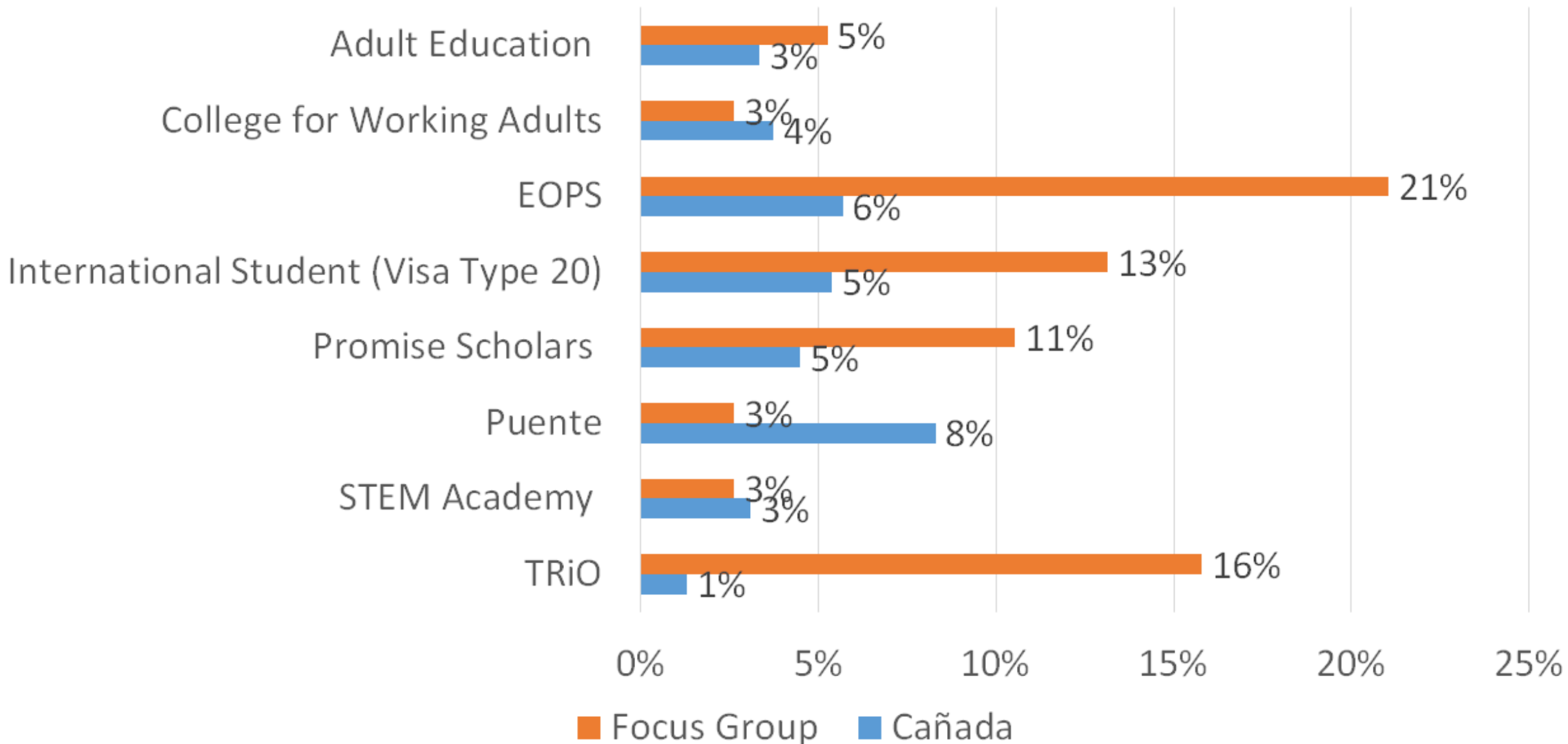
■ Focus Group  ■ Cañada

# Cañada Students: Number of Years Since First Enrolled

## Fall 2018

| | Focus Group | Cañada |
|---|---|---|
| More than 10 | 8% | 13% |
| Between 5 and 10 | 13% | 16% |
| 4 | 11% | 6% |
| 3 | 3% | 9% |
| 2 | 11% | 13% |
| 1 year or less | 55% | 44% |
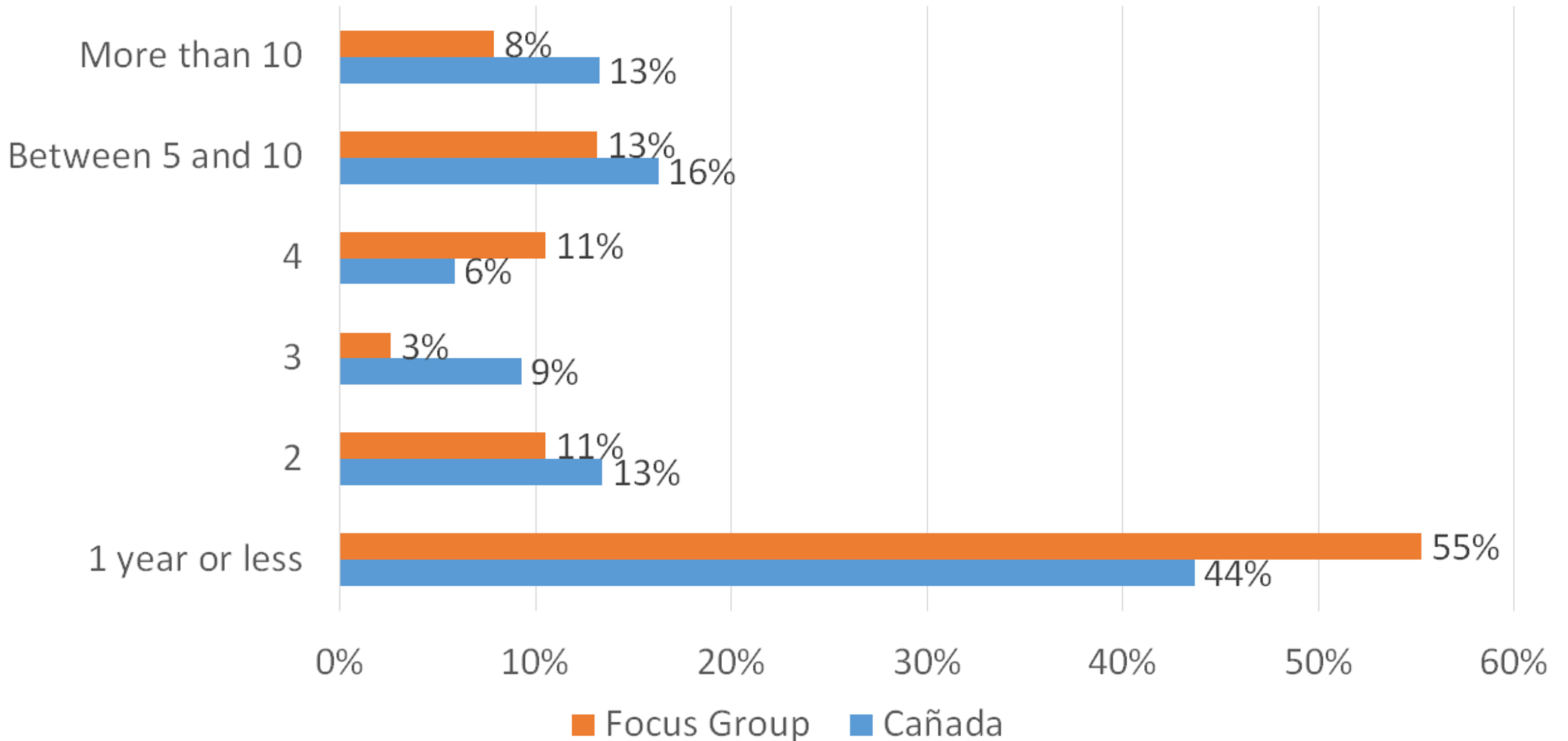
■ Focus Group  ■ Cañada

# Cañada Students, Fall 2018



| Ethnicity | Focus Group | Canada |
|---|---|---|
| White Non-Hispanic | 21% | 23% |
| Unknown | 16% | 7% |
| Pacific Islander | 0% | 1% |
| Multi Races | 21% | 18% |
| Hispanic | 34% | 31% |
| Filipino | 0% | 5% |
| Black - Non-Hispanic | 5% | 3% |
| Asian | 3% | 13% |
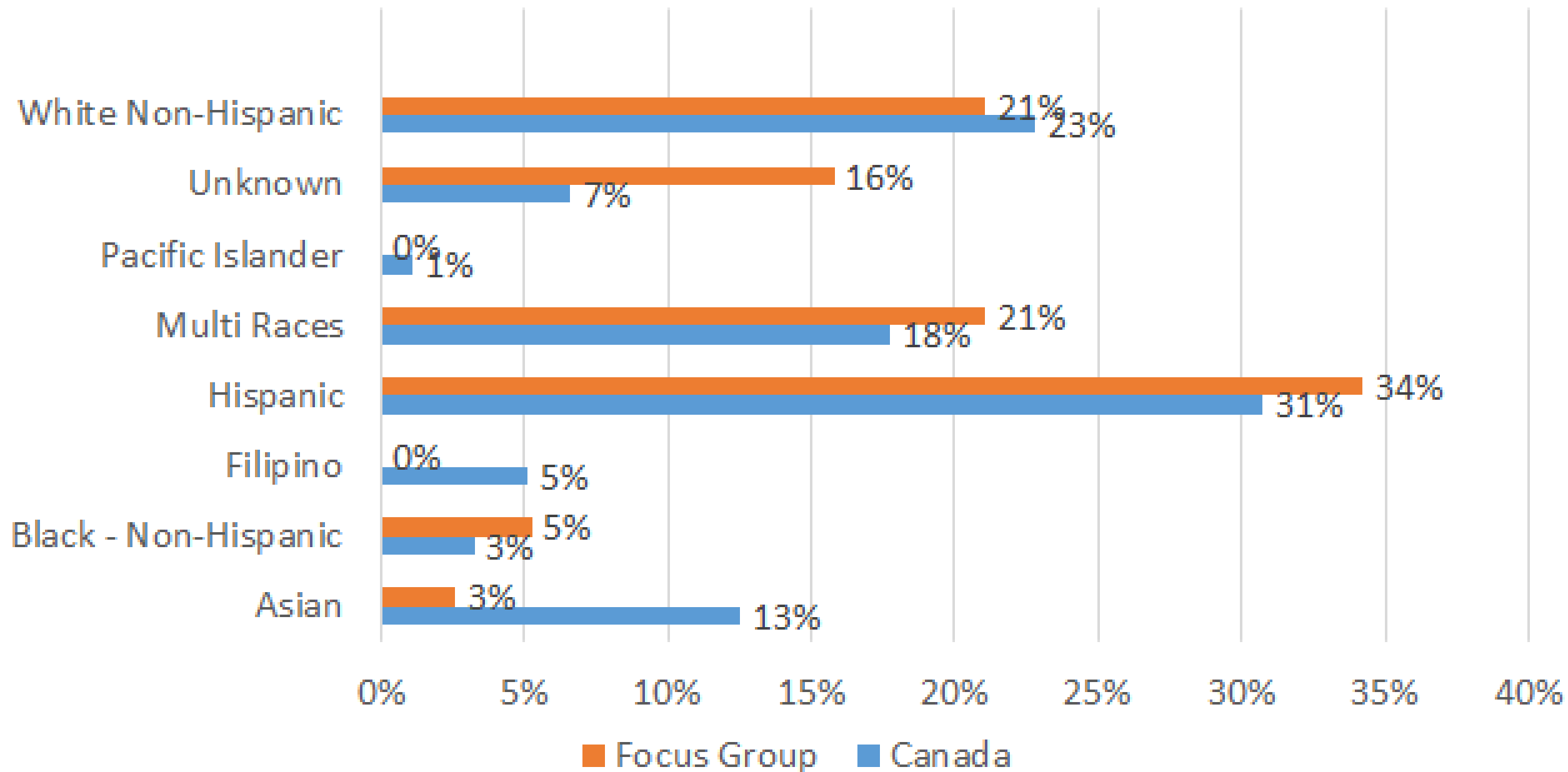
■ Focus Group   ■ Canada

# Cañada Students: Hours Worked Per Week
## Fall 2018



| Category | Focus Group | Cañada |
|----------|-------------|--------|
| Unknown | 29% | 36% |
| Don't expect to work this term | 5% | 6% |
| 40 - or more Hours/week | 0% | 10% |
| 30 - 39 Hours/week | 3% | 7% |
| 20 - 29 Hours/week | 11% | 11% |
| 10 - 19 Hours/week | 24% | 9% |
| 1 - 9 Hours/week | 29% | 19% |
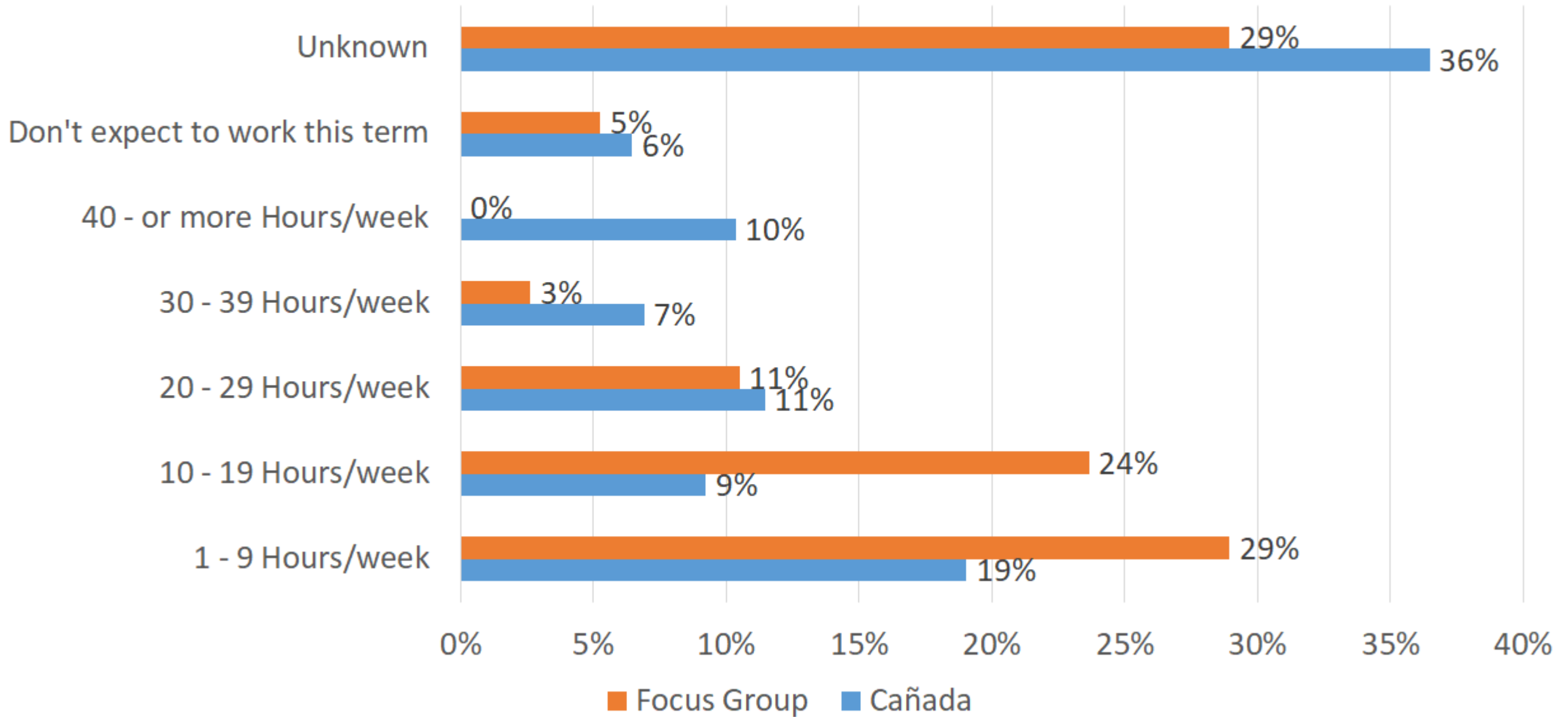
■ Focus Group  ■ Cañada

Cañada Students: First Generation College Student
Fall 2018

| | No | Yes | Unknown |
|---|---|---|---|
| Cañada | 20% | 52% | 28% |
| Focus Group | 26% | 45% | 29% |
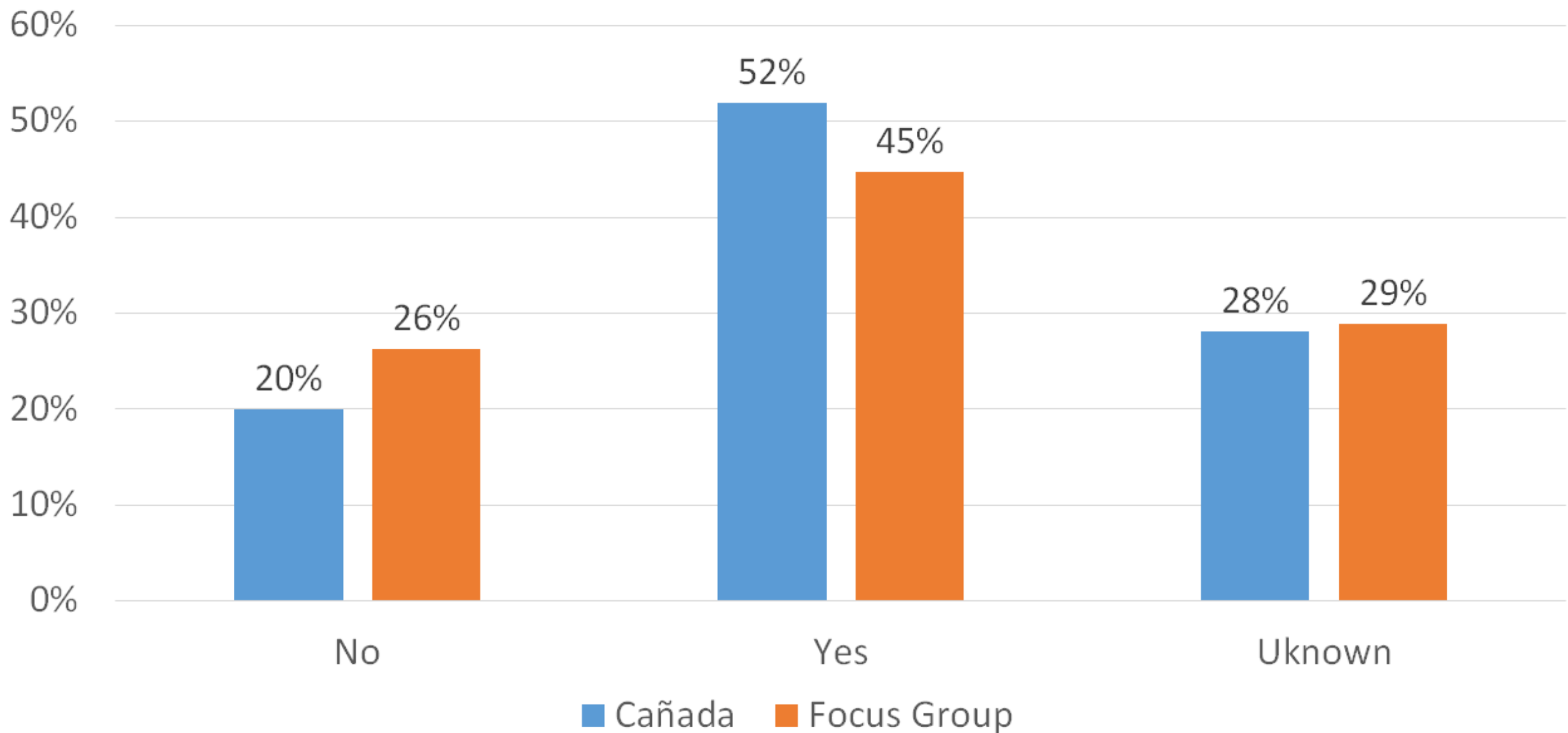
# Focus Group Findings

1. Finding the right career and major is a journey where students negotiate personal fulfillment and financial/familial pressures
2. Experiential learning is key for major and career exploration and decision making
3. Students found available support services and resources important and stressed the need for early and improved awareness of available resources
4. Personal and specialized support is important in the exploration and decision making process. Students who do not receive clear and consistent information from college staff, faculty, & counselors experienced harmful and negative effects.
5. Students who are connected to a student services program or campus community feel more supported and successful. Students not involved expressed desire for a sense of community and peer connection

# Finding 1

Finding the right major and career is a journey where students negotiate personal fulfillment and financial/familial pressures

    a. <mark>Students determined major by career interest/goal</mark>
    b. Personal passion and happiness
    c. Desire to support others and making an impact
    d. Financial security
    e. Familial expectations and pressure

It's kind of like...walking into a dark room. I graduated a year early from my high school and I had a year to kind of try to figure things out like hunker down and branch out and do my research and I ended up not really getting anywhere. And it did have all my family telling me like doctor, lawyer, engineer. But it's not what I want to do. And I know that I can't handle that stress. So it's like I'm not momentarily sure. I'm just trying to-- just trying to get through the classes that I have now. And kind of re-evaluate like, "Okay, what classes did I not like, and which ones did I like?" And kind of branch out from there. Just kind of taking it step-by-step.

I'm a nursing major after a long, long road of changing like five or six different times. Hopefully, I stick to this one and it's not a major of the month, but right now is nursing. I decided to go to college because I think having an education is very important, especially in today's age and with technology advancing, if you want to have a stable home life and eventually I want to be able to support my own family I'm going to need to have a degree to like take care of rent and taxes. So that's what an education can do for you. It can kind of like help you build up to all of those like life stones...then hopefully, it can be something that you enjoy doing so you don't try (hate?) getting up in the morning.

I started off as psych because I really enjoy taking care of people and having that human contact, but that was quickly shot down by family. So then I went to bio to go pre-med. But after taking the entire general chem series, and knowing that I would have to take o-chem, I was kind of, I cried, I kid you not. I cried every single day taking general chemistry, the second one. Just because I was so unhappy doing it, and then I thought to myself, I'm not going to-- I know myself enough that I can't do med school. So I told them, I was like, "You know what, I can't do it." So then I was thinking, I was like, "What can I do that kind of encompasses both?" So I was like, "Nursing." Because you're having that human contact, you're taking care of people, and it's kind of like a medical field, and it makes good money at Somerset and you have flexible hours, and people always need nurses, so.

I was at my like all-time low. But just because I'm so depressed and I was so-- I don't know what to do. No one's really helping me. I went in to like get some guidance from the counselors. But the counselors didn't [laughter] really help that much, so I don't know. I kind of just chose my major because I felt I was running out of time even though that's kind of bad to say. But like, it makes sense economically timewise. So you just got to choose it. And I mean, a lot of people still have opinions on the major I chose. But I'm just trying to walk it out and do what I have to do and get my degree and not have to listen to anyone.

# Finding 2

Experiential learning is key for major and career exploration and decision making
  a. Work and Internship experience
  b. Life experience
  c. Career Courses and Non-academic support programs

I'm a computer science major and I was working at a software company in tech support. The way I came around to my major is, my life was really hard when the engineers made really bad decisions and didn't talk to us, the people that talk to our customers. I had some of the worst days of my life to this day working at that company, and I thought, "I know I can do a better job than they can do it, and so I'm going to do that." I switched my major to computer science. I was taking business classes online while I was working there, and then I switched to computer science and I quit the job, and now I'm here full time.

For me, it took working and actually being outside of the academic world for a while to really find out what I didn't want to do. And then, from there, my opportunities changed and moved, and I was able to find a part of something that I liked that I now left. I don't think there's anything academically that would have brought me to where I was. I had to go out into the world and come back to find where I needed to be.

# Finding 3

Students found available support services and resources important and stressed the need for early and improved awareness of available resources

I changed my major three times and I've actually considered changing it again but then...I have to choose something and go with it and there's just so many things I'm interested in. But what really helped me feel comfortable enough to change my major was the fact that I was part of a community that I felt wouldn't judge me if I changed my major. I was comfortable enough with the retention specialist in the stem center. My whole community at the stem center, I was comfortable enough with them that I didn't feel like I'd be disappointing anyone if I decided to go after my dream so being part of a community here at school that I was comfortable with was a really big deal for me. Otherwise, I think I would have just stuck through one major because I didn't want to disappoint my parents or anything like that.

# Finding 4

Personal & specialized support is important in the exploration and decision making process. Students who do not receive clear and consistent information from college staff, faculty, and counselors experienced harmful & negative effects.

  a. Student relied heavily on peers
  b. Desire for assigned and specialized counseling
  c. Supportive counseling and instructional faculty members made a significant impact

I get a lot of advice from other students who have been through the class. It's like, "Hey, could you do these three classes in the same semester? Yes or no." And sometimes it's no, sometimes it's yes, so I think that getting a student's opinion I value more than a counselor's opinion.

I also relate to not knowing what direction to go. But I just kind of decided to take classes I'm generally interested in. See what I'm the most passionate about. And then just kind of see what careers that could lead to. What major would be needed for that. So that's my plan right now, I don't really know. (seeking happiness and passion)

What I like doing is talking to people that seem to have it figure it out [laughter]. I like to talk to them and say, "Hey, what was your process?" I feel like it makes me feel a bit better because most of the time people, they say, "I don't have it figure it out." Even people who are sat in their careers, they still are unsure about it. So I guess it's just-- I like talking to random people. I don't like just talking to my parents because they have a very [laughter] set opinion. So I don't think that's good for my personal growth.

I think be more transparent about the way things work. I feel there's a lot of students, especially first time-- first-generation college students who don't have a parent who's been through these-- doesn't have somebody who can't give them guidance to show them the ropes. And I feel like the orientation does what it does, it orients you to the first minute, but there's so much more that you have to learn how to navigate. How do I get tutoring? How do I do this? How do I do that? So I think that if the college is more transparent about that and it's not such a maze on the website to find that information and communicating better. Because I know there's been situations where I find out about something after it happens. And I'm like, "I could have really used this experience, this opportunity but because it wasn't communicated in a timely manner or communicated in a way that I could read it, I missed out on it.

I went to Burlingame High School, so it's within the San Mateo High School district. And they sent out representatives to help people get enrolled and stuff and guide you through the community college. And I remember them telling you like, "Oh it's a two year transfer." It's not a two-year transfer if you're in STEM, I've noticed. And I think that was the biggest slap in the face that I got because there's people that are at four years and stuff and they're like, "Oh, why are you still at community college?" And I think it's just that propaganda that is almost sold that it's a guarantee-- it just at least should be elaborated on that if you're going into a STEM field, you're not going to be here for two years. And if you were, you'd be taking 19 to 20 units, trying to fulfill all those prerequisites which, I'm sure, maybe some people can do but personally that just is detrimental to my mental health.

# Finding 5

Students who are connected to a student services program or campus community feel more supported and successful. Students not involved expressed desire for a sense of community and peer connection

So one of the biggest issues is...we do have a lot of resources at Canada but even I don't know about all the resources, and I'm pretty well connected here. So how do we get people to know all the resources that there are here?

We're all hanging out with our individual cool spaces. And I don't think there's a lot of opportunities for the entire student body to get together, and it's probably like a junior college or community college situation because we all are here for a reason. We're all here for our classes. We're here to do what we need to do and we have to go, but I feel like there's a lot of interdisciplinary connections that are just being missed.

# Recommendations from Students

- ❖ Sharing syllabus for review before registration period
- ❖ Ice breakers in course
- ❖ Course evaluation
- ❖ Alumni panels
- ❖ FYE/Sampler course

Okay. How when you to sushi restaurant, you have the opportunity to order a sampler plate? I wish there was a career sampler plate [laughter]. That gave you an accurate description of what different careers might feel like.