

Should I stay or should I go? A look at students who consider leaving their school — Academica Forum

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In a recent survey of nearly 4,000 postsecondary students and graduates, we discovered that a shockingly high percentage of students had considered leaving their institution in this past year. A whopping 23% of current students said that in this academic year, they'd seriously considered leaving their current institution. For even the most optimistic administrator, this is a distressingly high number.

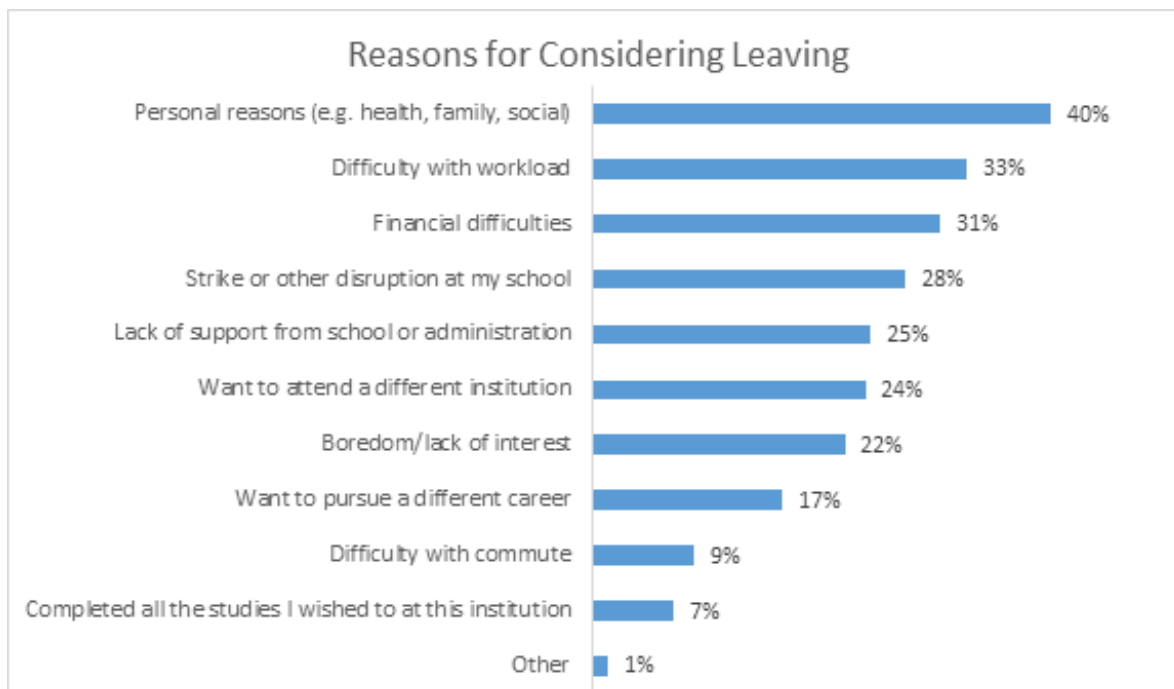
So we asked those students the question everyone wants to ask a student who's eyeing the door: *why?*

The most common answer among those 606 students was 'personal reasons' (40%). Many students went on to explain in their comments that this was due to a physical or mental health matter that seriously impacted their ability to continue their studies, or a family crisis that had drawn them back home. Other commonly cited reasons included difficulty with the workload at the institution or program in question (33%) and financial difficulties (31%).

"I'm in an intensive program where I am in classes/practicum full time, have a part time load of homework, extensive group work in all three classes, plus three kids, household responsibilities and a commute. It is overwhelming to say the least," commented one student who had considered dropping out this year. "I knew it would be intensive, but there are not enough hours in the day to even possibly budget out a healthy balance with the time out of the home for classes and placement in combination with homework, let alone any other life duties. It is very stressful and I am developing intense anxiety and physical problems."

Given this school year's major strikes and labour disruptions, such as the Ontario college strike, it will come as no surprise that the fourth most common reason for students to consider leaving their institution was a "strike or other disruption at the school."

"Please try and figure out something other than a strike," pleaded one current student who'd considered leaving. "After the 5 week strike I was diagnosed with severe depression which really made it hard to want to continue this course. It also made it so that my teachers were very pissy and didn't feel like giving extensions or other accommodations."



So, faced with these stressors, what did these students choose to do?

Of those 606 students, two-thirds said that they were not transferring and would be continuing at their current postsecondary institution.

As for the third of respondents who'd considered leaving their institution, the story was a little different. Some ultimately decided to leave: 15% said they would be attending a different school to continue their PSE, and 3% had no plans to continue at all. Another 15% said that they were still undecided about their future plans.

In their comments, these students who were leaving often commented about not feeling cared about - or worse, having faculty, staff, or administration treat them adversarially.

"Pay attention to part-time students. We are often an afterthought," suggested one student who was uncertain about whether or not they'd continue in PSE. The student went on to explain how a medical emergency and surgery drove them into studying part-time, which in turn cost them their OSAP funding. "I called and booked appointments with my school's financial and student loans department to ask for assistance, or at least to find out what my options were, and they never returned my calls."

"They should think about hiring instructors that are actually passionate about teaching and are willing to go the extra mile to impart their knowledge to their students," commented another student who was not sure about whether or not they'd stay at their institution. "It (*sp*) amazing how many instructors within my program are seemingly only employed at [institution] to collect their paycheque. There is little consideration given to students who need extra help or mentoring."

Additional research could lend further insight into the differences between students who do and don't consider leaving their postsecondary institutions, as well as between students who do and don't actually leave. Institutional early alert systems and campus-wide surveys such as Academica's Postsecondary Experience Survey (PSES) can also help identify situations on your campus where students feel the need to pursue their postsecondary studies elsewhere, or abandon them altogether. If you'd like to discuss these opportunities, please don't hesitate to [contact us](#). Or if you'd rather chat on the phone, give us a call toll-free at 1-866-922-8636 ext. 228.

Method:

The Wellness Survey was conducted with 3,732 respondents from the Academica Research Panel and StudentVu. These respondents represent both current students and alumni of postsecondary institutions from across Canada. The survey was in-field online in January 2018. All data were weighted by institution type, gender, and age for current postsecondary students as per Statistics Canada data.