FACULTY OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

Survey Diversity PSW Faculty
Community Service Learning 2022-2023

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1   INTRODUCTION

This survey was conducted as part of the Community Service-Learning course (CSL) and on behalf of the Diversity Committee of the Faculty of Political and Social Sciences (PSW in Dutch). The CSL course is an elective course, that we chose as part of our educational programme of Conflict and Development. The Diversity Committee came up with the idea and demand for the project. In 2021, the DIVSCAN or diversity scan was made to let professors check the diversity in their courses and their educational practice. The goal is to make the courses wide-ranging and more extensive by including non-western perspectives and authors but also to create a safe learning environment for the students. The Diversity Committee required a more systematic way of gathering data on diversity within the faculty to see if students want to see more inclusivity in their courses and what they think of the current initiatives and contact points. Additionally, the committee wanted to gather more data on the diversity characteristics of the students themselves.

The survey was made together with four students from the Master in Sociology, Laetitia Henau, Elke Daemen, Siel De Bruyn and Febe Gardeyn and under the supervision of Professor Lesley Hustinx, Sam Gorleer, Professor Fabienne Bossuyt and Professor Tony Valcke. We started developing the survey on Qualtrics between October and December 2022. The survey was divided into five topics (student content, representation, discrimination, contact points and, diversity characteristics) to answer these five core questions:

1. What do the students think about the diversity of the content of their classes?
2. Do the students (with diversity characteristics) feel like they belong (/are represented) at the faculty PSW?
3. What are the experiences of the students with discrimination at the faculty?
4. How do the students experience the accessibility of contact points?
5. How diverse are the students of the faculty PSW?

The first set of questions (student content) was made to answer the question of the diversity committee: "Is it important to stimulate the professors to use the DIVSCAN to make their courses more inclusive and diverse?" The second set of questions (representation) focused on the student's sense of belonging at our faculty. The feeling of belonging can have an impact on the social and psychological well-being of the students, academic achievement, and student retention (Ahn & Howard, 2019). If the faculty wants to give all students the same chances and opportunities, is important that all students, regardless of their gender, migration background, or disability… can feel like they belong at the faculty. The third set of questions was made to map out how prevalent discrimination (in the broad sense) is at our faculty and on what bases this occurs. This included questions on discrimination from educational staff members towards students as well as discrimination from students towards other students. Following up, questions were asked on the accessibility of contact points (hotlines) to report these discriminatory practices. Lastly, questions on the different diversity characteristics were asked to correlate a sense of belonging with different diversity characteristics and give an overview of how diverse the student population is.

We interpreted diversity broadly, based on the definition the Ghent University uses:

> *Ghent University opts for a broad approach to diversity: any type of variety is included. This means that diversity must not be reduced to e.g. cultural diversity alone. Every student and staff member has their own, unique combination of visible and less visible personal traits. To deal with diversity means to make the most of the qualities, talents, experiences and competencies of all students and staff, and to take into account the differences and similarities of individuals and groups within our university community.* (Universiteit Gent, n.d.)

The questions in the first draft of the survey were inspired by other diversity surveys conducted in higher education such as the research at the University of Antwerp (Lens, 2016), the University of Amsterdam (Wekker, Slootman, Icaza, Jansen, & Vasques, 2016), and Vives Hogeschool (Poeze, Calleuw,

Dejonckheere, & Teijsen, 2021). Additionally, we were inspired by two surveys which were being carried out around the time of our survey. These were one conducted at the University of Ghent, on Understanding racial literacy by Annie Sarwar and a survey about school culture, inclusiveness and diversity of the Royal Academy of Fine Arts Antwerp, Royal Conservatory of Antwerp, and AP Hogeschool Antwerp.

After developing a first draft, we got feedback on the questions and topics from several professors such as Professor Bart Van de Putte, Professor Tom Verhelst, Professor Jeroen Huisman, from the ethical commission, and asked for feedback from an expert on diversity surveys, Katrien De Bruyn. In addition, we received feedback from members of the Learning Network on Decolonization and the Diversity Committee.

In December 2022 we conducted a pilot survey of the Dutch and English version of the survey with more than thirty students. This group consisted of friends, students with a disability and students with a migration background at our faculty. In the pilot study, we could gather feedback on the time it took students to fill in the survey, bugs in the display logic, and the content and sensitivity of the questions. We also made sure the whole survey was anonymous.

The survey was launched at the start of the second semester on 21 February 2023. All the 3536 students at the PSW faculty (the international students included) received an email. There were flyers shown on the screens in the faculty building and paper flyers. We also contacted professors from all the different educational programmes to stimulate the students to complete the survey. After two weeks a reminder email was sent.

On the 28th of March 2023, a presentation of the first results was held in the context of the diversity week at the faculty. Those present gave us feedback on further data analysis and recommendations for the diversity commission. After this presentation we wrote this extensive report which concluded this year-long and very interesting project. For more information you can contact the Diversity Committee of the faculty or professor Fabienne Bossuyt (Fabienne.Bossuyt@ugent.be).

2 RESPONSE

Getting a high response rate from students is a challenging task. Students in higher education are among the most researched populations in society which can create a survey fatigue. Over the past few decades, the response rate on web surveys among students has been steadily declining, with response rates below 10% becoming common (van Mol, 2014). The Diversity survey at the UAntwerp reached a response rate of 12.7% (Lens, 2016). To ensure a representative survey, our objective was to reach a response rate of at least 10%. Out of the total population of 3536, we received 604 responses, resulting in a response rate of 17.08%. After filtering out the students who only completed the initial few questions, the total number of usable responses for analysis was 414 students, equating to a response rate of 11.71%.

As the survey was announced as a survey about diversity and discrimination, it could attract a group with more diversity characteristics or experiences of discrimination than the general population at the PSW faculty. On the other hand, research shows that female students, students with high socioeconomic status and students belonging to majority groups have a higher response rate in online surveys (Lens, 2016). If the survey attracts more students interested in diversity at the university, it could potentially counteract the (generally) lower response rate for minority groups and students with a lower SES.

Katrien De Bruyn annually publishes various statistics on the student population across the different faculties at the University of Ghent. In our survey, we utilized her statistics for the academic year 2021-2022 to determine whether our survey sample adequately represented the entire student population at the PSW faculty. Our survey indicated a higher proportion of female students (69.4% compared to 63.9%) and a higher percentage of students with a migration background (20.6% versus 13.7%). However, the percentages for students with a 'lower' SES, based on scholarship recipients and parental education levels, were similar. We employed a chi-square (goodness of fit) test to assess the significance of these differences. For gender and migration background, the chi² value was higher than 3.841 (df=1), indicating that the p-values were smaller than 0.05. Therefore, we can conclude that there is a significant distinction between our findings and those of De Bruyn (2022). In our survey sample, there is a higher proportion of women and more students with a migration background compared to the whole student population at the faculty. For scholarship students, parental education levels and disability, no significant differences were found, the proportion of these students in our survey could be representative of the whole student population. (De Bruyn, 2022)

	Diversity Survey	De Bruyn (2022)	Chi² Value	Representative?
Gender (n=350)	69,4 %	63,9%	8,96	Overrepresented
Migration background (n=297)	20,6%	13,7%	11,75	Overrepresented
Scholarship students (n =350)	20,8%	19,9%	0,80	Accurate
No high school degree (parents) (n=351)	22,2%	23,1%	0,27	Accurate
Disability (n=339)	10,14%	7,8%	2.23	Accurate

Table 1: Representativeness survey

3 DEMOGRAPHICS

3.1   Study programme

Within the PSW faculty, students have the option to choose between various study programmes. Since different professors teach these programmes, significant variations in results can arise based on the specific study programme chosen. To facilitate data analysis, we aggregated the data of the 27 study programmes into smaller groups as presented in **Graph 1.** In this process, the linking and preparatory programmes were aggregated together with their respective master programmes. The Master in political science is a combination of the Master in national politics, the Master in EU Studies, and the Master in international politics. Similarly, the Master in Sociology encompasses both the Dutch and English Master programmes in Sociology. Furthermore, the Master's in communication sciences incorporates all four master programmes: communication management, film and television studies, journalism and new media and society.

IN WHICH STUDY PROGRAMME DO YOU TAKE UP THE MOST COURSES?

■ Percentage student population   ■ Percentage survey sample

Programme	Percentage student population	Percentage survey sample
Educational Master	0%	2%
Master in Global studies	3%	2%
Master Communication Sciences	17%	9%
Master in Sociology	7%	8%
Master Conflict and Development	9%	13%
Master Political Sciences	9%	12%
Bachelor Social Sciences	22%	8%
Bahelor communication sciences	12%	7%
Bachelor in Sociology	8%	16%
Bachelor Political Sciences	13%	23%

Graph 1: Division of respondents among study programmes

This graph shows the percentages of students from different educational programmes in our survey sample, as well as the percentage of students in these programmes compared to the total student population. As depicted, certain educational programmes were overrepresented or underrepresented in the survey. The bachelor students in Political Science and Sociology and the master students in political sciences and Conflict and Development were overrepresented in the survey. Conversely, the bachelor students of social sciences and communication sciences were underrepresented as well as the students of the master in communication sciences. The underrepresentation of the social sciences (771 students) could be contributed to the fact that a lot of classes are given at the VUB. As none of the students working on this survey was from communication sciences, this could also explain a smaller reach in these educational programmes. A chi² test (goodness of fit) was conducted which showed that these differences are significant, so the survey sample is not an accurate representation of all the educational programmes.

3.2   Study years

The number of study years can have an impact on the outcomes of the survey. The longer the students are present at the faculty, the more experiences they can have with discrimination, and the more knowledge they have on the diversity of the courses throughout the years, … The graph below illustrates that most of our survey respondents were either in their first or second year of study at the faculty. This encompasses both bachelor students as well as master students who have followed the linking or preparatory courses.
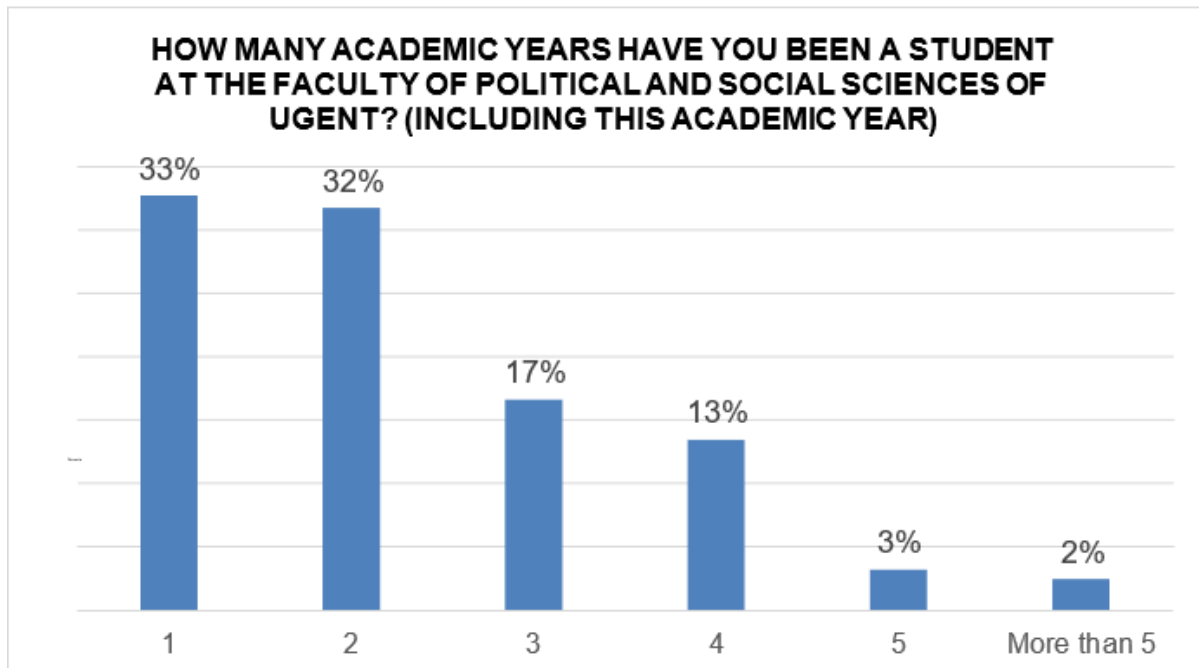
Graph 2: Academic years students

3.3   Study delay

The inquiry about study delay served as a follow-up question on the previous question regarding the duration of a student's enrolment at the faculty. For respondents who indicated a study duration of 4 years, 5 years or more than 5 years, we further inquired about the number of years it took them to obtain their bachelor's degree. Out of the respondents on this question (N=79), 23,1 percent of the students indicated having some degree of study delay. On the other hand, 60,3 percent of the students answered that they were able to complete their degree within a span of 3 years.

3.4   International students

It was a deliberate choice to include international students in the survey. Especially for the questions on the diversity of the courses, the experienced discrimination, and the accessibility of contact points… international students can have different and unique experiences. As the goal of the survey is to make recommendations to make the faculty more inclusive, it was important to include this group.

Of the 415 respondents, 55 international students (13.3%) filled in our survey. Additionally, the nationalities of international students were asked. This data was congregated into the continents. As expected, most of the international students (N= 41) came from Europe (48.8%), followed by Asia (34.1%) and Latin America (7.3%).
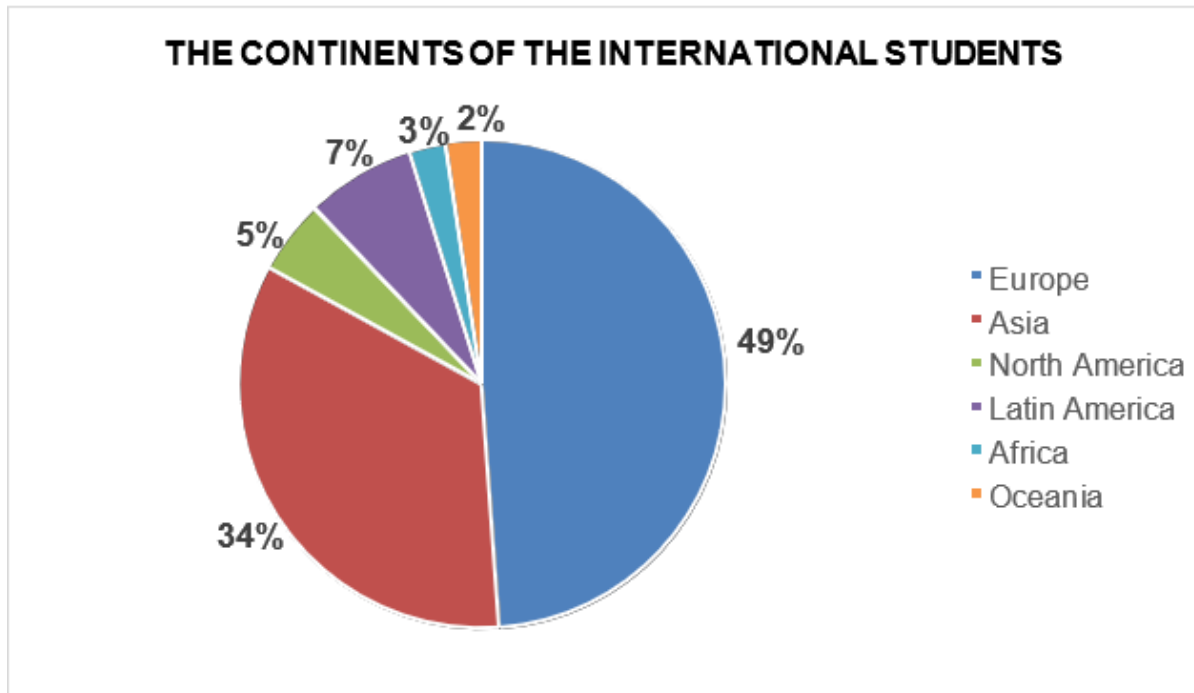
Graph 3: Continents international students

3.5 Gender

De Bruyn has collected data on gender over the years within the different faculties of Ghent University. At the PSW faculty in the academic year 2021-2022, there were 63.9% women and 36.1% men. In the numbers of inflow of students at the faculty women are even more overrepresented, namely 68.5% women versus 31.5% men. In the survey, more options were added to make a third category for gender non-conforming, transgender, non-binary, or genderqueer students. In our survey sample of 350 students, 69.4% identified as female, 27.4% as male and 3.1% as transgender, non-binary, or genderqueer.
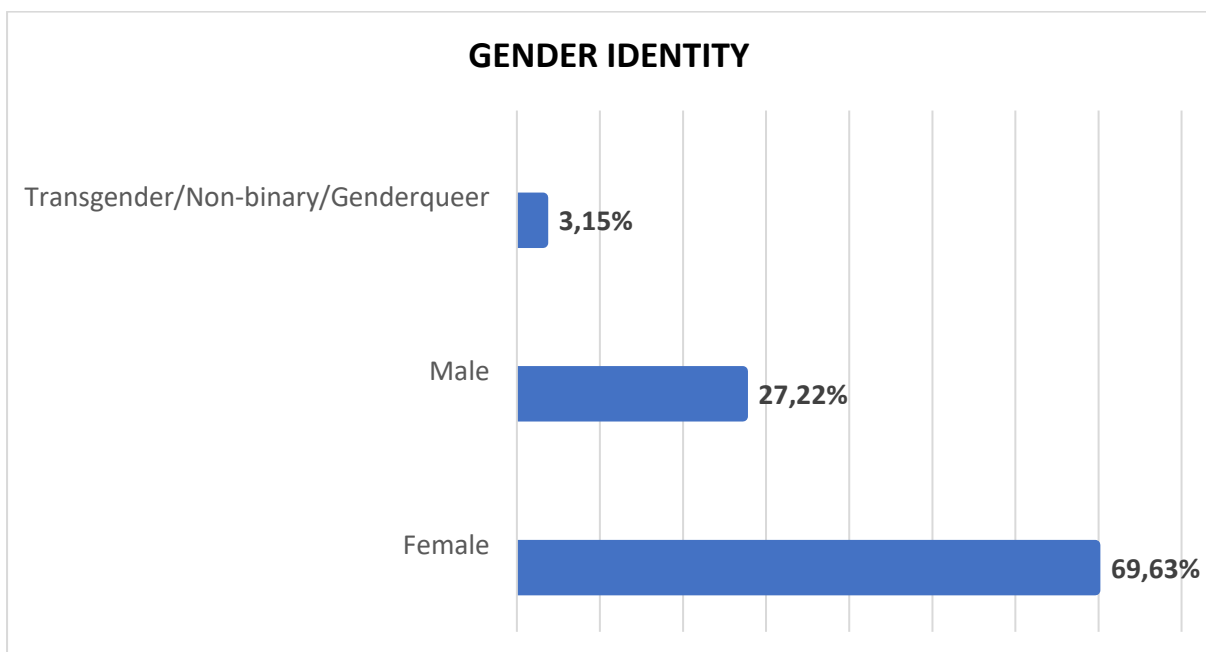
Graph 4: Gender identity students

4 STUDY CONTENT

4.1 Full programme

We sought to gather the students' perspectives on the diversity of the course material throughout their entire educational programme. Additionally, we wanted to gather data on whether students believed sufficient background information was provided concerning classical theories and any possible discriminatory, sexist, or racist views embedded in them or their founders. This statement was included, as it can be difficult for some courses to diversify their curriculum consisting of classical theories.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENTS? (CONTENT OF THE ENTIRE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME AT YOUR FACULTY)							
	Strongly disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Undecided (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly agree (5)	Subtotal	
	Row N %					Mean	Standard Deviation
There is enough attention in the content of my courses to non-male scholars.	5,9%	**41,8%**	16,9%	24,4%	11,0%	2,93	1,16
There is enough attention in the content of my courses concerning scholars of colour or scholars with a migration background.	10,5%	**41,9%**	16,7%	21,4%	9,5%	2,78	1,18
Non-western perspectives are sufficiently addressed in the content of my courses	16,7%	**41,3%**	16,5%	20,4%	5,2%	2,56	1,14
Enough attention is being paid to any discriminatory/sexist/racist views embedded in classical theories and the views/practices held by their founders	9,6%	27,0%	22,5%	**31,9%**	9,1%	3,04	1,16
There is enough attention in my courses to language accessibility." (e.g. the required literature, PowerPoints, communication etc. is written in a language everyone can understand)	4,7%	19,9%	21,6%	**37,5%**	16,4%	3,41	1,12
My educational program provides me with a sufficiently diverse curriculum to take on an inclusive attitude in society.	3,7%	13,2%	20,3%	**41,3%**	21,5%	3,64	1,07
My educational program challenges me to think critically about prejudices.	2,9%	8,3%	12,2%	**43,5%**	33,0%	3,95	1,02

Table 2: Content of the entire educational programme

Next, we focused on language, a sufficiently diverse curriculum for an inclusive attitude in society and an educational programme that challenges students to think about their prejudices. The answers ranged from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Regarding the content of their courses, the students

mainly disagreed with the first three statements. With **41.8%** saying there is not enough attention for non-male scholars and **41.9%** feeling that there is not enough attention for scholars 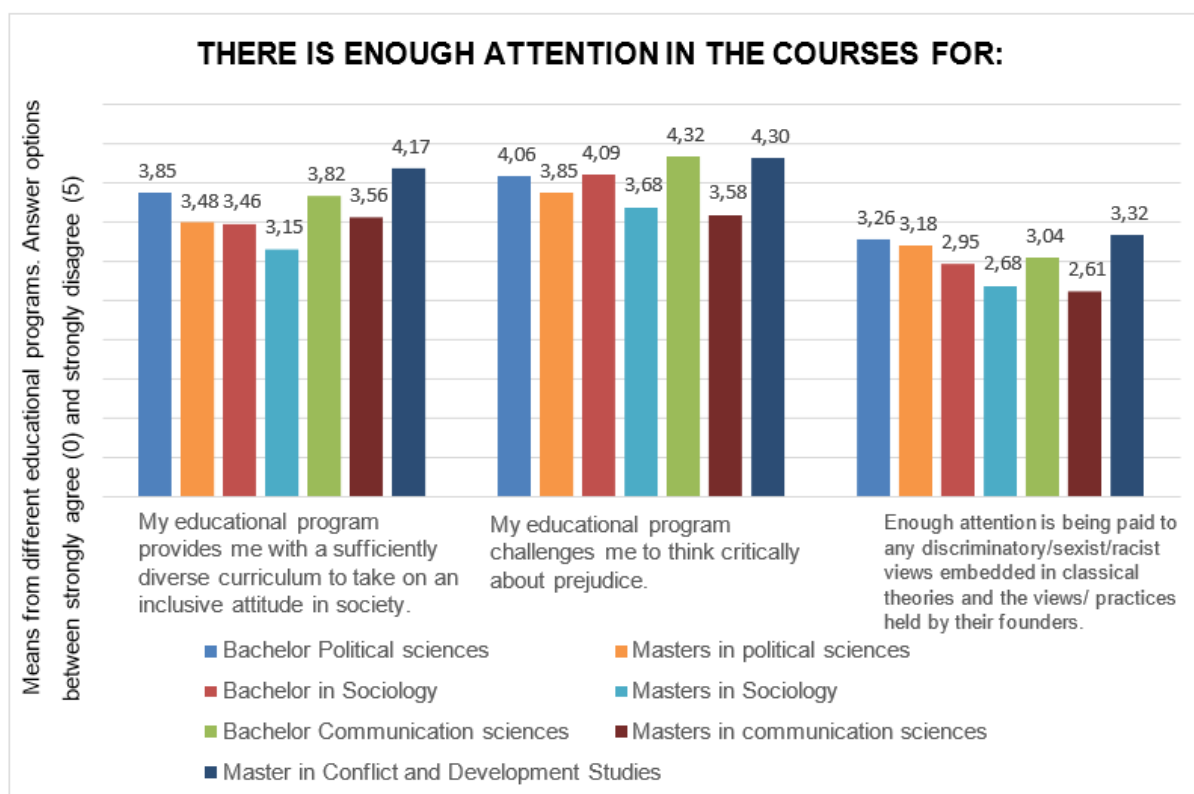of colour or with a migration background. Similarly, **41.3%** of the students felt that there is not enough attention to non-westerns perspectives. The students were a bit more divided on the next statements about classical theories and language. Students generally agree that their curriculum is sufficiently diverse for an inclusive attitude in society and that their programme challenges them to think about prejudices.

Furthermore, we compared the students' perceptions concerning content diversity across various educational programmes within the faculty. **Graph 5** illustrates noteworthy disparities among these different study programmes. Notably, the bachelor's programme in sociology (*M*=2,45, *M*=2,18, *M*=2,20) and the Master's programme in sociology (*M*=2,59, *M*=2,35, *M*=2,29) exhibit comparatively lower average ratings when contrasted with other educational programmes. These lower scores pertain to the inclusion of non-male scholars, scholars of colour, and the incorporation of non-western perspectives within the courses. Notably, the Master's programme outperforms the Bachelor's programme marginally. As anticipated, the Master's programme in Conflict and Development Studies garners the highest averages (*M*=3,45, *M*=3,72, *M*=3,40), given its pronounced emphasis on using different perspectives. Furthermore, both the Master's programmes in Political Sciences and Communication Sciences display lower average ratings compared to the preceding Bachelor's programmes.
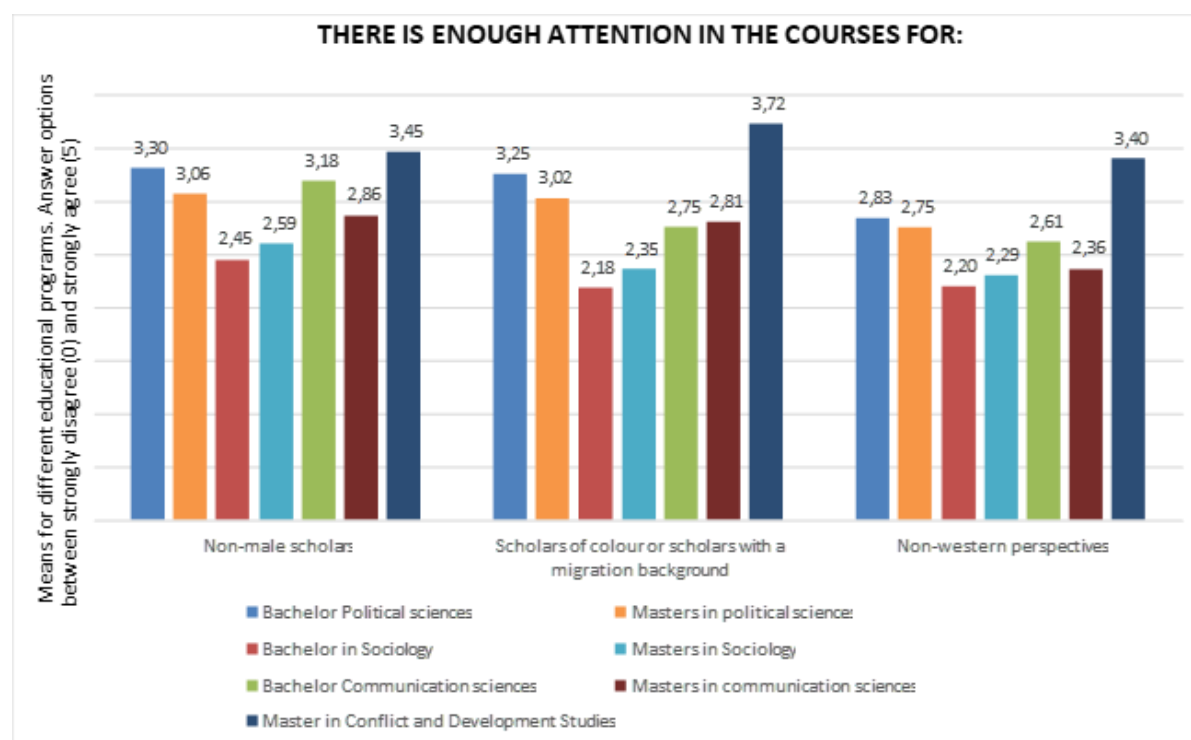
Graph 5: Statements across educational programmes 1

The observed distinctions among the educational programmes did not reach a level of statistical significance warranting the inclusion of language accessibility in the accompanying graphs. **Graph 6** delineates the variations in means across the educational programmes for the subsequent set of inquiries. Notably, the means for these inquiries are higher, indicating that students agree more with those statements. It is noteworthy that a trend emerges where all master's programmes exhibit slightly lower scores than their respective preceding bachelor's programmes, with the exception of the Master's programme in Conflict and Development. This trend is unexpected, considering that Master's programmes typically provide greater opportunities for fostering critical thinking and confronting preconceived notions compared to the foundational courses offered during the initial years of the bachelor programme.

THERE IS ENOUGH ATTENTION IN THE COURSES FOR:

Legend:
- Bachelor Political sciences
- Masters in political sciences
- Bachelor in Sociology
- Masters in Sociology
- Bachelor Communication sciences
- Masters in communication sciences
- Master in Conflict and Development Studies

Graph 6: Statements across educational programmes 2

4.2 This academic year

For the current academic year, we asked students to determine if there was enough attention given to certain topics or authors across their courses. Concerning attention to non-male scholars, scholars of colour or with a migration background and non-western perspectives, most students indicated that this is present in less than half of the courses. Nearly half of the students said this about non-male scholars (**45.0%**), half of the students said this regarding scholars of colour or with a migration background (**51.1%**) and **48.2%** indicated this for non-western perspectives. Opinions among students were more evenly divided regarding the contextual background of classical theories and their founders. However, most of the students thought that there was attention to language accessibility in half of the courses or more.

T0 WHAT EXTENT DO YOU THINK THERE IS ENOUGH ATTENTION IN THE CONTENT OF THIS ACADEMIC YEAR IN YOUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR…?							
	No attention	Less than half of the courses	Half of the courses	More than half of the courses	(Almost) all courses	Subtotal	
			Row N %			Mean	Standard Deviation
Non-male scholars	5,5%	**45,0%**	21,2%	14,7%	13,7%	2,86	1,16
Scholars of colour or scholars with a migration background	7,5%	**51,1%**	18,2%	10,4%	12,7%	2,70	1,16
Non-Western perspectives	7,8%	**48,2%**	17,9%	15,0%	11,1%	2,73	1,15
Language accessibility (e.g. the required literature, PowerPoints, communic	4,6%	16,3%	22,5%	25,7%	**30,9%**	3,62	1,21
Contextual background of classical theories and their founders with discriminative/sexist/racist views	8,1%	**31,6%**	21,2%	21,2%	17,9%	3,09	1,25

Table 3: Statements study content academic year

For this series of questions, the average answers of the students from different educational programmes were also compared. This examination revealed a distinct pattern compared to the aforementioned graphs. When questioned about the extent to which various courses incorporated perspectives from non-male scholars, scholars of colour, non-western viewpoints, and contextual backgrounds, the master's programmes in political sciences and sociology exhibited higher average scores. This suggests that these master's programmes integrated these perspectives into a greater number of courses during the current academic year. In contrast to the previous section on the whole educational programme, a converse trend was observed in political sciences. While bachelor's students in political sciences expressed a higher average agreement regarding the adequacy of attention given to alternative perspectives in their courses compared to subsequent master's programmes, there were actually fewer courses within the bachelor's programme that incorporated these perspectives, as opposed to the master's programme. This discrepancy might be attributed to master's students adopting a more critical stance toward their curriculum compared to their counterparts in the bachelor's programme.

In the fields of sociology and communication sciences, the bachelor's and master's programmes displayed similar trends as illustrated in the prior graphs on the whole educational programme. Notably, the Master's programme in Sociology embraced a wider array of diverse perspectives compared to the bachelor programme, whereas the Master programmes in Communication Sciences featured a more limited inclusion of diverse viewpoints compared to their bachelor programme.

THE NUMBER OF CLASSES IN THIS ACADEMIC YEAR THAT HAVE ATTENTION FOR THE FOLLOWING IN THEIR COURSES:
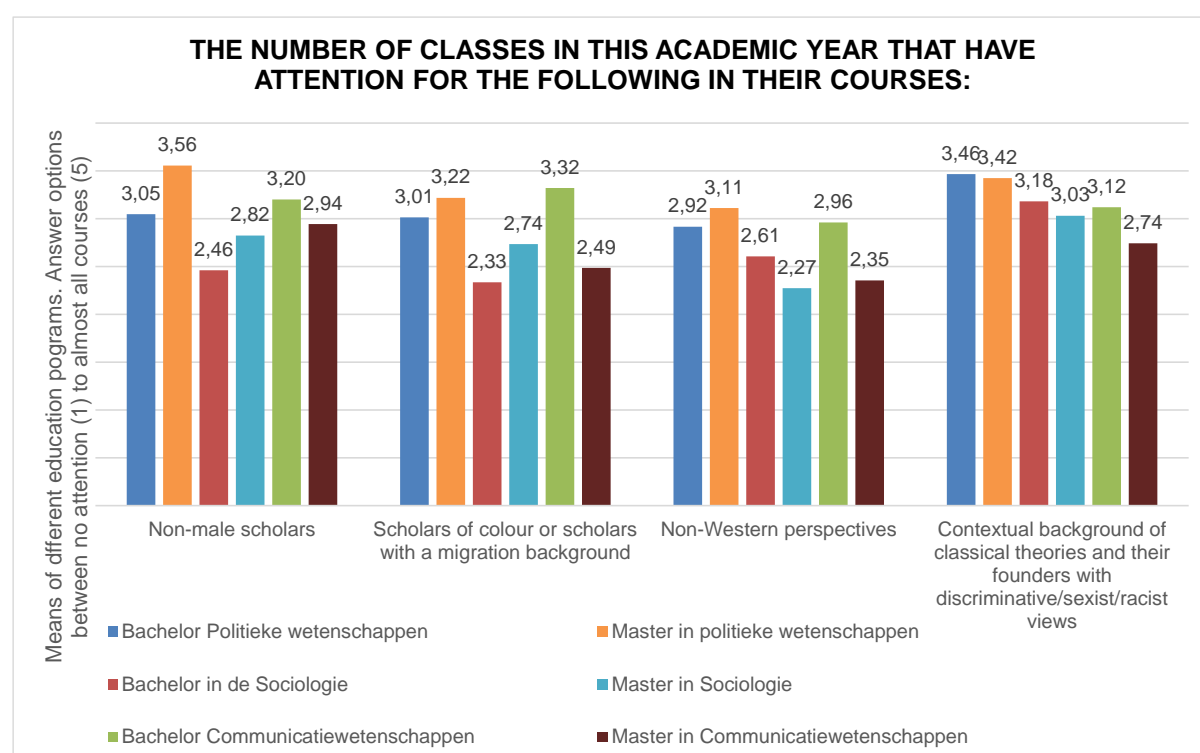
Graph 7: Statements study content academic year

4.3   Comments students from survey

The students were provided with the option to share their thoughts, comments, or any remarks about the content of the courses in an empty text box. Although this qualitative feedback does not represent the entire student population, it offers insights into how some students perceive the course content. Most of the comments received, focused on the Eurocentric perspective prevalent in the courses, highlighting a lack of attention given to decolonial perspectives. Students expressed their desire to see more inclusion of non-Western authors and theories. While some classes briefly discussed these perspectives as alternative ways of thinking, students thought they were not consistently integrated

throughout the curriculum. Furthermore, a student pointed out the need for more activities centred around decolonizing the university and the curricula. Another comment emphasized the importance of avoiding stereotypes about people from the Global South, such as portraying them as "unhappy".

"Adding more authors who are from different parts of the world is critical to maintain and include a diverse perspective. Most of the content in lectures revolves only around Western thinkers. I believe this provides not only a narrow view but takes away from the complexity of the world- and knowledge of the rest of the world that is forgotten."

"It is very Eurocentric, everything we read is from scholars from Europe and when looking at decolonisation it's always from the coloniser's perspective."

Not all comments were 'negative' feedback, some students also gave positive remarks. A student noted that the courses now seemed more connected to society and aimed to foster critical thinking compared to the past. Some students also acknowledged the efforts made by certain professors to include more female and non-Western scholars, suggesting that they should serve as examples for the entire educational staff.

"There is a lot of representation of other ethnicities in class slides and examples. This helps a bit to make me feel like I belong."

"One of my professors really tries his best to be as inclusive as possible. The small effort to actively include female and non-western scholars and naming them should happen in each course."
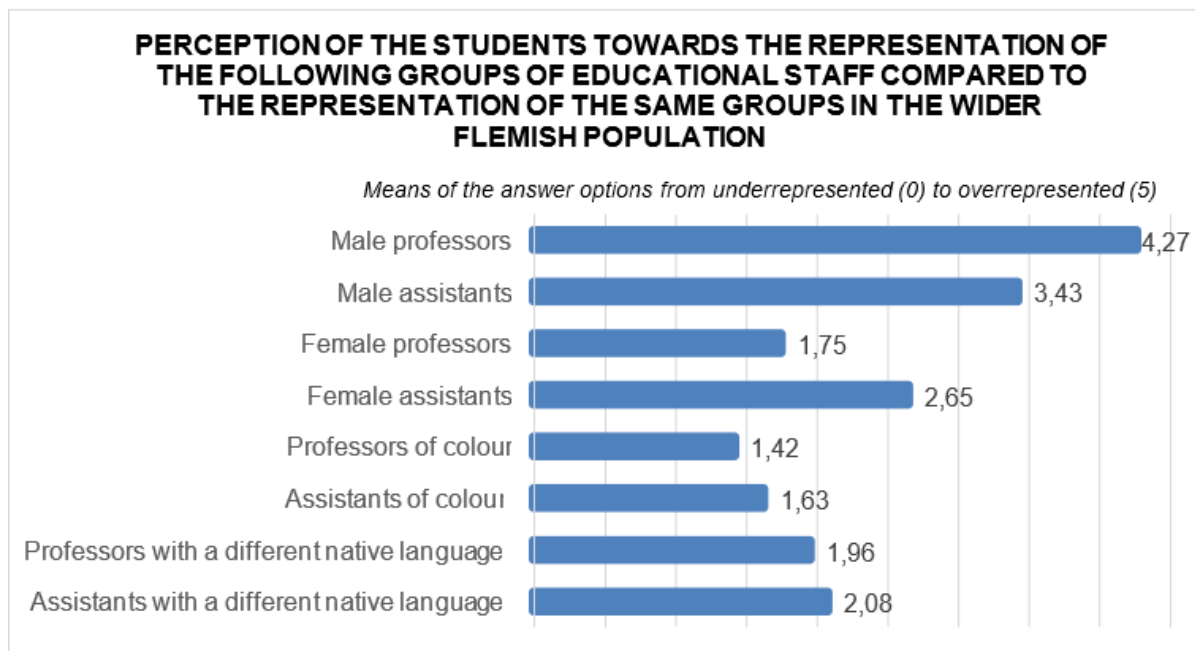
5 REPRESENTATION

5.1 Students

Due to an oversight, the following question on how students perceive the representation of the following groups at the faculty compared to these same groups in the broader Flemish population was only asked in the Dutch survey. The students were asked to range their perceptions on a scale ranging from underrepresented (1) to overrepresented (5). It is important to note that these perceptions do not provide an accurate reflection of the actual representation of these groups at the faculty, but rather reflect how the students perceive it. The accurate numbers can be found in the yearly statistics published by (De Bruyn, 2022). Students (N=310) perceive that female students are more over-represented than male students (43.6% versus 12%). Conversely, students of colour or students with a migration background were perceived as underrepresented (88.8%), with only of few students (4.2%) perceiving this group as overrepresented. Similarly, students who speak a different native language than Dutch were also perceived as rather underrepresented (79.6%).

PERCEPTION OF THE STUDENTS TOWARDS THE REPRESENTATION OF OTHER STUDENTS COMPARED TO THE REPRESENTATION OF THESE STUDENTS IN THE WEIDER FLEMISH SOCIETY							
	Onder-vertegen-woordigd	Eerder onder-vertegen-woordigd	Gelijkaardig	Eerder over-vertegen-woordigd	Over-vertegen-woordigd	Subtotal	
	Row N %					Mean	Standard Deviation
Mannelijke studenten	13,5%	30,0%	**44,5%**	9,4%	2,6%	3,57	0,93
Vrouwelijke studenten	1,9%	8,4%	**46,1%**	32,6%	11,0%	4,42	0,87
Studenten van kleur of studenten met een migratieachtergrond	**51,6%**	34,1%	10,1%	2,9%	1,3%	2,68	0,87
Anderstalige of meertalige studenten	**42,4%**	37,2%	11,7%	6,5%	2,3%	2,89	1

Table 4: Representation students

5.2 Educational Staff

The same set of questions was asked to students regarding their perceptions of the representation of educational staff compared with the Flemish population. The answers ranged on a scale from underrepresented (1), rather underrepresented (2), similar (3), rather overrepresented (4) to overrepresented (5). Based on the responses of the students (N= 370) male professors (M= 4.26, SD=0.84) and male assistants (M=3.42, SD=0.94) were perceived as the most overrepresented on average. Conversely, female professors were perceived as underrepresented (M=1.7, SD=0.82), and female assistants were also seen as underrepresented but scored a little higher (M= 2.65, S=0.85). Professors (M=1.42, SD=0.7) and assistants (M=1.62, SD=0.8) of colour or with a migration background were perceived as the most underrepresented on average. Although professors (M= 1.95, SD=0.97) and assistants (M=2.08, SD=0.97) who have a different native language than Dutch had slightly higher averages, they still fell within the underrepresented category.

PERCEPTION OF THE STUDENTS TOWARDS THE REPRESENTATION OF THE FOLLOWING GROUPS OF EDUCATIONAL STAFF COMPARED TO THE REPRESENTATION OF THE SAME GROUPS IN THE WIDER FLEMISH POPULATION

Means of the answer options from underrepresented (0) to overrepresented (5)

Male professors	4,27
Male assistants	3,43
Female professors	1,75
Female assistants	2,65
Professors of colour	1,42
Assistants of colour	1,63
Professors with a different native language	1,96
Assistants with a different native language	2,08

Graph 8: Representation staff

5.3   Sense of Belonging

At the opening event of 'Durf Divers Denken' at Ghent University, an emphasis was put on the importance of the sense of belonging for students. The research of Ahn & Howard (2019) shows that the feeling of belonging is positively linked with aspects of student's experiences in higher education such as social and psychological function, academic achievement, and student retention…. If we want to give students with a variety of diversity characteristics the same chances, they must feel like they belong here as well (Ahn & Howard, 2019).

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU FEEL A SENSE OF BELONGING AT THIS FACULTY? SLIDE BETWEEN 0% AND 100%

	0,5%
	3,0%
	2,7%
	6,0%
	5,7%
	7,9%
	9,5%
	22,6%
	23,9%
	12,0%
	6,3%
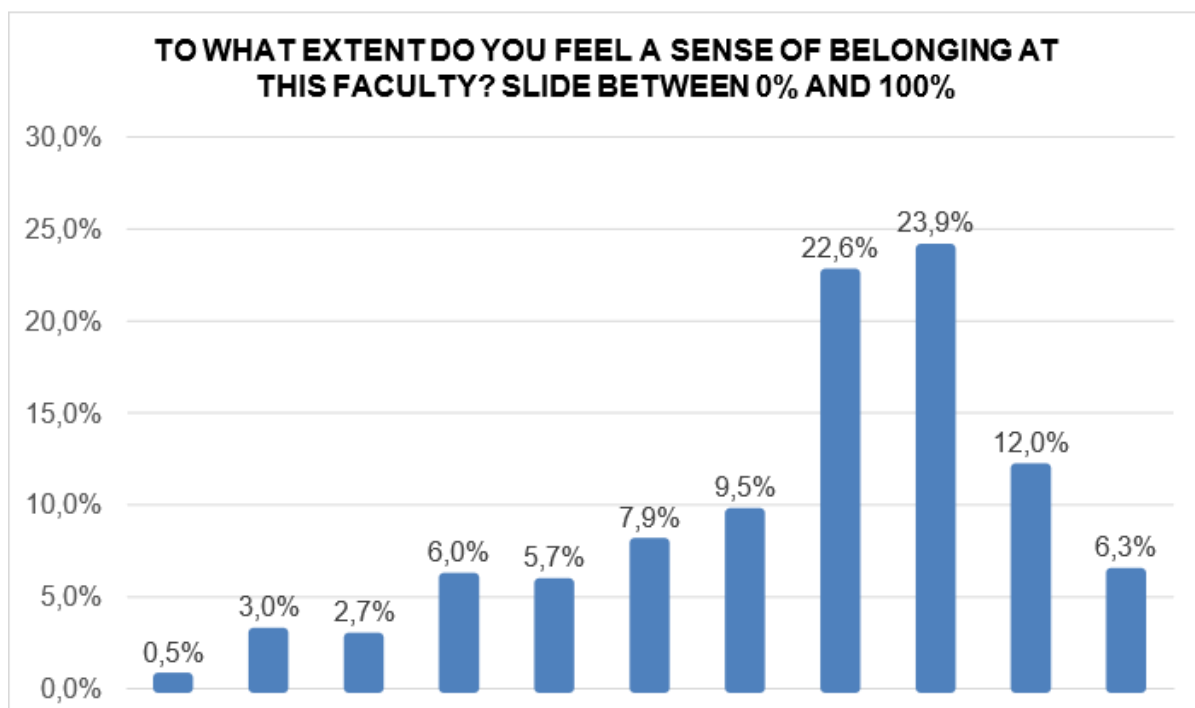
Graph 9: Sense of belonging

We asked all the students to indicate to what extent they felt like they belonged at our faculty. This by using a slider between 0 and 100. The average sense of belonging of the students (N= 367) was 66.65 with a standard deviation of 22.36.

To examine if there is a significant difference in the sense of belonging among students with diversity characteristics, one-way ANOVA tests accompanied by a post hoc Bonferroni test were conducted. Various diversity factors yielded statistically significant differences.

The largest difference was found in the sense of belonging of **international students** (M=47,33, SD=26,06) compared to the Belgian students (M=69,35, SD=20,43). This is a troublesome observation. Islamic students, students of colour and students who have two parents with a migration background show similar gaps towards their reference groups. The average sense of belonging for students who identify as **Muslim** (M=49.29, SD=28.95) appeared significantly lower compared to the other religions, particularly non-religious students (M=69.24, SD=19.98). In contrast, the average sense of belonging for categories such as Christianity, atheism, and spirituality was close to that of non-religious students. Using an inclusive approach, students were asked whether they perceived themselves as a **person of colour**, allowing for self-identification rather than presuming based on nationality or migration background. The results indicated a significant difference (p<.001) in the sense of belonging among the surveyed students (N=350) who identified themselves as a person of colour (M=49,5, SD=25,61) compared to those who did not perceive themselves as a person of colour (M=69,20, SD=20,94). However, no significant difference (p=1.000) was found between the 'I don't know' group (M=52,73, SD=20,05) and the groups that responded either yes or no.

To determine whether students had a **migration background**, inquiries were made regarding their (first) nationality and the (first) nationality of their parents. Based on this data, three groups were distinguished. The first group comprised students whose parents had Belgian nationality by birth. The second group consisted of students where one parent has a migration background, while the last group comprised students where both parents have a migration background (based on having a different nationality than the Belgian nationality by birth). A significant difference (p<.001) in the average sense of belonging was found between the students (N=395) of whom both parents had Belgian nationality by birth (M= 72.47, SD=17.83) and students of whom both parents didn't have Belgian nationality by birth (M=50.00, SD=28.28). Furthermore, a significant difference (p=0.007) was found between students without migration background and the students with one parent didn't have Belgian nationality by birth (M= 62.73, SD=23.56). No significant difference (p=0.077) was found between students who had one parent who didn't have Belgian nationality by birth compared to students with both parents that didn't have Belgian nationality by birth.

Significantly lower (P<0,001)	M	Reference group	M
International students	47,33	Belgian students	69,35
Islamic students	49,29	Not religious	69,24
Students of coulour	49,5	Not a student of coulour	69,20
Two parents with migration background	50,00	No parents with migration background	72,47
Chronic illness	54,17	No disability	68,96
Multilingual students who speak another language than Dutch at home	61,67	Dutch speaking students	71,86
Commuting students	62,97	Students with a room	69,54

Table 5: Sense of belonging categories

The calculation for **disability** is based on self-identified students with a disability, regardless of whether they have an official special status at the university for this disability. To compare the means with significant testing, the categories were recoded as some students indicated having multiple disabilities combined. A significant difference (p=0.022) in the average sense of belonging was found for students with chronic illness *(M*=54.17, *SD* = 27.78) compared to students without disabilities *(M*= 68.96, *SD*=21.34). However, no significant differences were found for students with ASS, AD(H)D, learning disabilities….

Initially, **multilingual students** (international students not included) were presented with five categories, ranging from 'never' to 'always', to indicate the frequency with which they spoke a language other than Dutch at home. These categories were congregated into two groups: "never-rarely", which we interpret as students predominantly speaking Dutch at home and "sometimes-always" which encompasses students who do not primarily use the Dutch language at home. A significant difference (p<.001), based on an independent sample T-test, was found between the average sense of belonging among these two categories of students (N= 311). Students who speak Dutch at home have a higher average sense of belonging (*M*=71.86, *SD*=18.02), compared to students who speak other languages at home (*M*= 61.67, SD= 25.05).

Lastly, **commuting students** *(M*=62,97, *SD*=22,33) also have a significant lower sense of belonging compared to students with a room/studio in Ghent (*M*=69,54, *SD*=21,37). More research could indicate whether this is due to the schedules and the commuting time or the possibilities to connect with other students.

It is worth noting that the sense of belonging could even be lower for students with intersecting characteristics. To ensure student anonymity within our relatively small sample, we decided against combining these characteristics, as it may risk making individuals identifiable. This lower sense of belonging could impact students' social and psychological well-being, academic achievement… (Ahn & Howard, 2019), meaning the faculty has an important task to make sure everyone can feel like they belong.

No significant differences in sense of belonging
Gender (male/female/non-binary/transgender/genderqueer)
Sexuality (straight, LGBTQ)
Scholarship (full, semi or non)
Disability (ASS, AD(H)D, learning disability,….)
Region migration background

Table 6: Sense of belonging remaining categories

There were also categories where no significant difference in the average sense of belonging of the students was found. First, no significant difference (p=0.354) was found in the average sense of belonging among the three categories of gender (male, female, transgender/genderqueer/non-binary) (N= 346). Second, no significant difference (p= 0.395) was found in the sense of belonging between the two categories of sexuality (straight and LGBTQ+) (N=340). Third, no significant difference (p=0,026) was found for scholarship students (full, semi or no scholarship). As discussed above for the other disabilities no significant difference was found. Even though students how significant differences in sense of belonging, the region of the migration background doesn't have an impact on the sense of belonging.

5.4   Necessary efforts by UGent

To gauge students' openness to additional initiatives and measures aimed at promoting inclusivity, students (N=370) were asked whether they believed UGent should make the necessary efforts to ensure that all students feel at home at UGent, regardless of their ethnicity, native language, gender identity, disability, sexuality, and SES. The answers ranged on a scale from strongly disagree (1), disagree (2), undecided (3), agree (4) to strongly agree (5). The response was overwhelmingly consistent across all categories, with students advocating for UGent to undertake the necessary efforts to create an inclusive environment where everyone can feel at home. This unified sentiment can serve as a powerful message to policymakers, demonstrating that students support efforts towards more inclusivity.

TO WHAT EXTENT DO YOU AGREE WITH THE FOLLOWING STATEMENT: "I BELIEVE UGENT SHOULD MAKE THE NECESSARY EFFORTS SO THAT EVERYONE CAN FEEL AT HOME AT UGENT, REGARDLESS OF THEIR....

Category	Mean
Ethnicity	4,55
Native language	4,24
Gender identity	4,42
Disability	4,56
Religion	4,28
Sexuality	4,46
SES	4,57

Means from answer options from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5)
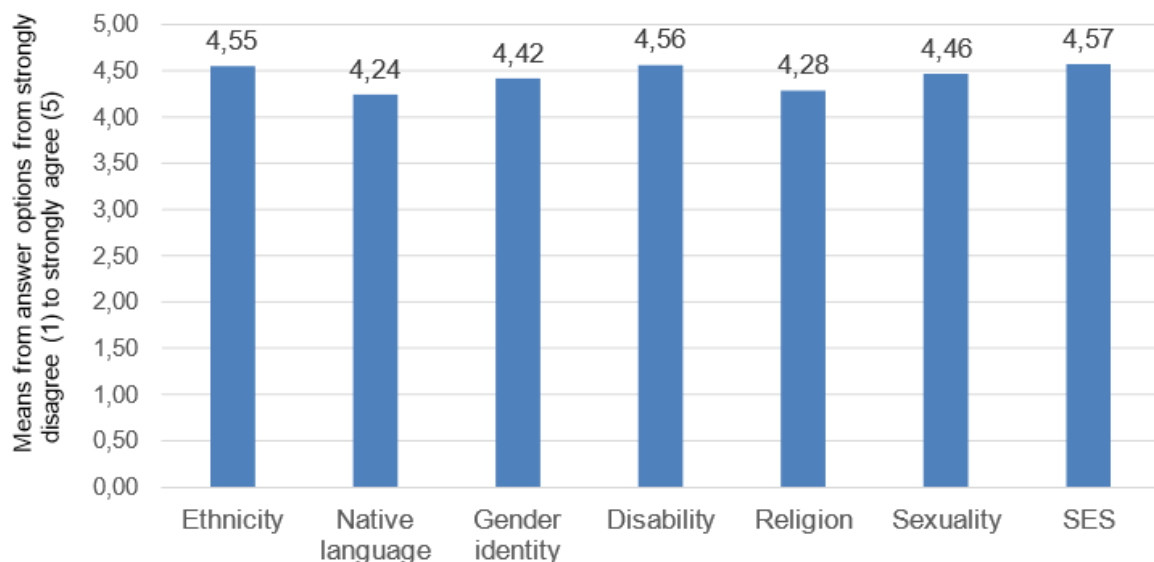
Graph 10: Necessary efforts

5.5   Comments students from survey

Towards the end of the questionnaire section on representation, students were given another opportunity to share their remarks, comments, feedback, or frustrations. It is important to note that this data does not represent the entire student population but aims to provide a broader perspective. One sentiment expressed in several comments was the unexpectedly low number of female professors.

"*In my first semester, I noticed an underrepresentation of female teaching staff. However, I believe it was dependent on the courses I had elected. But in mandatory courses, I found the underrepresentation of female teaching staff too.*"

"*I have seen a lack of female professors which was highly unexpected.*"

Furthermore, several students highlighted the lack of professors with a migration background.

"*We are racialised in that there is no professor of colour at the whole University. The University talks about diversity and inclusion but in practice it is not done.*"

"*More professors with a migration background and from ethnic minorities are needed.*"

Students also commented on the lack of diversity within the student population, specifically noting the absence of individuals with migration backgrounds, low socioeconomic status (SES), or disabilities. This lack of diversity can impact students' sense of belonging within the faculty. Additionally, a student mentioned that this lack of diversity seems to increase each year in their educational programme, as students with diverse characteristics are more likely to drop out.

"I often feel different at this university because I know nobody else with a migration background."

"The student population is not diverse at all (in terms of ethnicity/SES especially), which kind of shocked me when I started studying in Gent."

"I think in the first year there should be more attention and help for students with a lower SES and/or a migration background. In the 4 years I have studied I have seen a decline in diversity, to finally graduate with a nearly completely white and middle-class group of students. I think with more customized help, this could change."

6 DISCRIMINATION

For the part about discrimination, we asked students multiple questions. We asked them if they had experienced any form of discrimination by staff, or by fellow students, if they had witnessed discrimination by staff towards fellow students and if they had witnessed discrimination by students towards fellow students.

6.1 Own experiences

6.1.1 Educational Staff

6.1.1.1 Types of behaviour(s)

For this question, students could choose multiple options. Out of the 368 students who filled in this question, 62.3% indicated they had experienced none of the following behaviours in their current programme by educational staff, meaning **37.7%** of the students had personally experienced them. Educational staff was clarified so students knew we were asking about experiences with professors or assistants. Verbal attacks/threats, sexually inappropriate comments, bullying and sexually inappropriate behaviour experienced by staff, only have small percentages but these are severe transgressive behaviours. In total 16 students out of 368 indicated having experienced these, which is still way too many. If this would be representative of the whole student body at the faculty, this would mean that 152 students at the faculty would have experienced one of these behaviours.
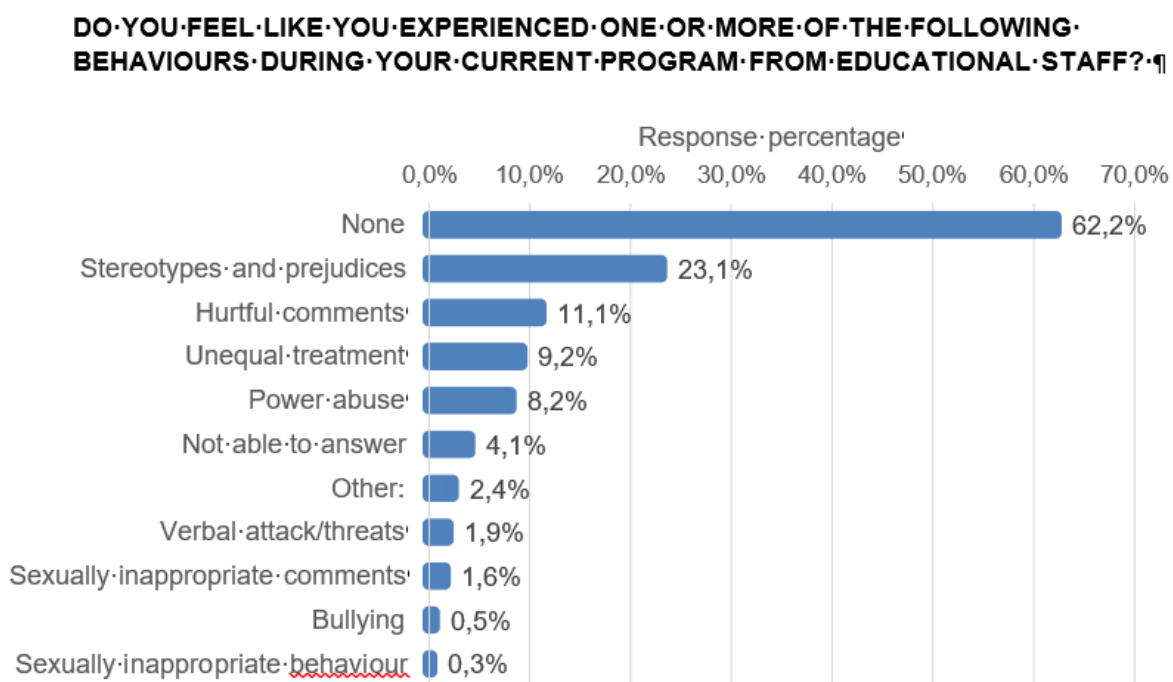
Graph 11: Own experiences staff

6.1.1.2 Basis for behaviour(s)

The following questions were only shown to respondents who indicated they had experienced any of the behaviours listed above. This means that wasn't shown if they chose 'none' or 'not able to answer'. This question, on which basis/bases the students think these behaviours occurred, was answered by 123 students, they could again indicate multiple options. In 41.5% of the cases, so nearly half of the

cases, students attributed the behaviour of the educational staff member to their ethnicity and in 39.0% of the cases to their gender. The following bases were also indicated, SES (18,7%), Religion (10,6%), not able to answer (10,6%), Sexuality (9,8%), Disability (8,1%) and Native language (8,1%), non (5,7%) and other (5,7%).
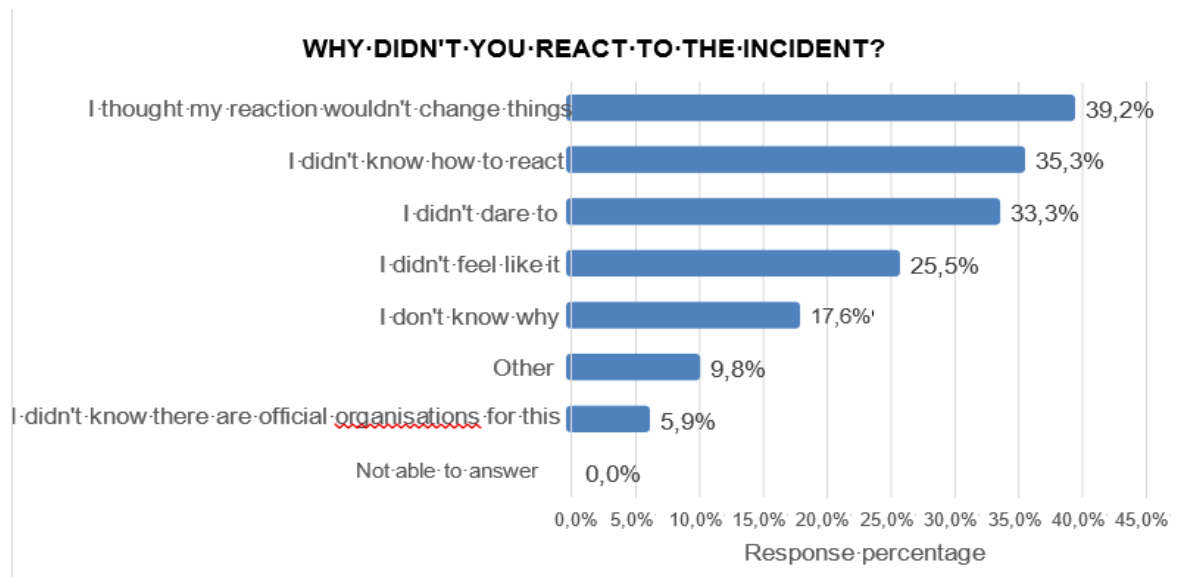
6.1.1.3   Reactions to the last incident

When students indicated they experienced any of the listed behaviours by the educational staff, we asked them how they reacted to the last incident, with the possibility of indicating multiple answers. Out of the 123 students who answered this question, in most of the cases, they shared it with someone close to them (61.0%) but in 41.5% of the cases, they indicated that they didn't react. The graph shows that only in a small percentage of the cases student spoke to the person/organisation in question, filed a complaint at an institution of UGent or shared it with a student representative. Because of this, a lot of discrimination probably remains under the radar of the faculty.

HOW·DID·YOU·REACT·TO·THE·LAST·INCIDENT?

I·shared·it·with·someone·close·to·me	61,0%
I·didn't·react·to·it	41,5%
I·spoke·to·the·person(s)·in·question/organisation	5,7%
I·filed·a·complaint·at·an·institution·of·UGent	4,1%
Not·able·to·answer	3,3%
I·shared·it·with·a·student·representative	3,3%
Other	1,6%
I·filed·a·complaint·at·an·institution·outside·of·UGent	0,0%

Response·Percentage'
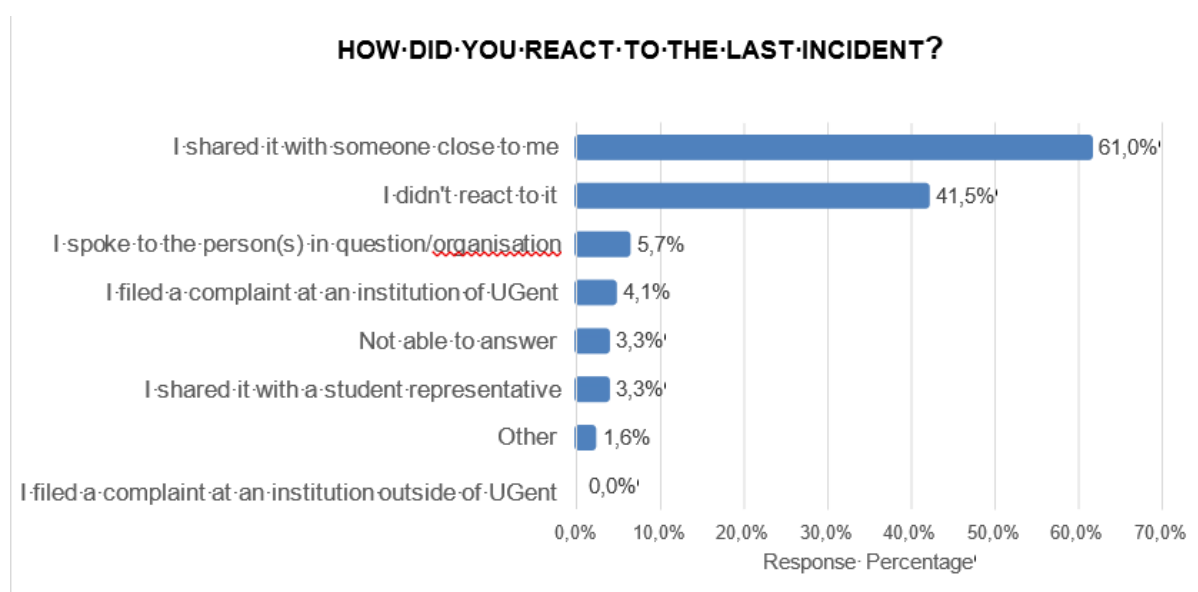
Graph 12: Reaction own experiences staff

6.1.1.4   No reaction to the last incident

After the last question, we asked students who chose the option 'I didn't react to it' why they didn't react because we wanted to get an insight into what the underlying mechanisms are. Out of our total group, 51 students answered this question. They could again indicate multiple answers. The accompanying graph indicates that the reasons for not reacting among students are varied. However, the most common response expressed by students is the belief that their reaction wouldn't change this, implying a sense of powerlessness, of which some examples can be seen in the comments. Another common reason is that students don't know how to react or didn't dare to. Contact points with clear communication and made more accessible could potentially help these students.

WHY·DIDN'T·YOU·REACT·TO·THE·INCIDENT?

- I·thought·my·reaction·wouldn't·change·things — 39,2%
- I·didn't·know·how·to·react — 35,3%
- I·didn't·dare·to — 33,3%
- I·didn't·feel·like·it — 25,5%
- I·don't·know·why — 17,6%'
- Other — 9,8%
- I·didn't·know·there·are·official·organisations·for·this — 5,9%
- Not·able·to·answer — 0,0%

Response·percentage

Graph 13: No reaction own experiences staff

6.1.2 By Fellow Students

6.1.2.1 Types of behaviour(s)

For this question, students could again choose multiple options and if they chose 'none' or 'not able to answer', they went on to the next question. Out of the 362 students who filled in these questions, 61.9% indicated they had experienced none of the following behaviours in their current programme by fellow students, meaning **38.1%** of the students had personally experienced them.

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING BEHAVIOURS DURING YOUR CURRENT PROGRAM AT THE FACULTY FROM FELLOW STUDENTS?

- None — 61,9%
- Stereotypes and prejudices — 26,8%
- Unequal treatment — 10,5%
- Hurtful comments — 8,3%
- Not able to answer — 6,9%
- Sexually inappropriate comments — 2,8%
- Verbal attack/threats — 2,8%
- Power abuse — 1,7%
- Bullying — 1,7%
- Other — 1,1%
- Physical attack/threats — 0,8%
- Sexually inappropriate behaviour — 0,6%

Response percentage

Graph 14: Own experiences fellow students

6.1.2.2   Basis for behaviour(s)

The following questions were again only displayed to students who indicated they had experienced any of the behaviours listed above. This question was answered by 116 students, and they could again indicate multiple options. In 49.1% of t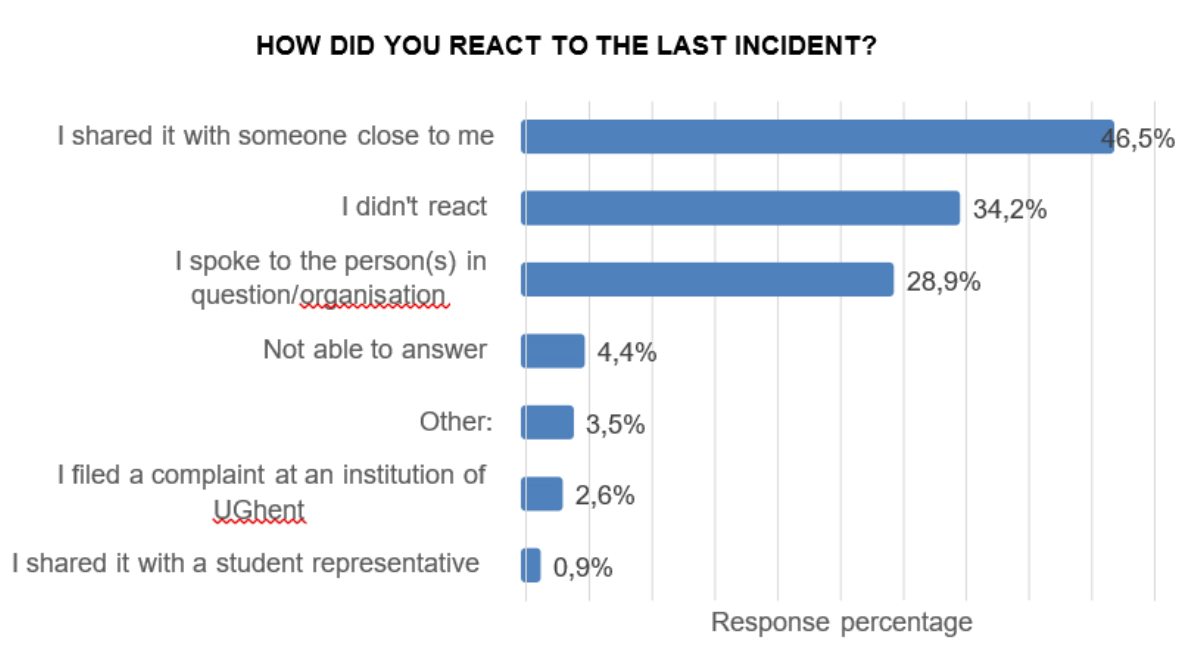he cases, so again nearly half of the cases, students attributed the behaviour of their fellow students to their ethnicity and in 40.5% of the cases to their gender. Followed up by Sexuality (20,7%), Religion (14,7%), Native language (12,9%), SES (12,1%), Other (10,3%), not able to answer (8,6%), Disability (6,0%) and none (3,4%).

6.1.2.3   Reactions to the last incident

Identical to the situation in the part of their own experiences of discrimination by staff, respondents could choose multiple answers. The respondents (N=114) again in most of the cases (46.4%) shared it with someone close to them and didn't react in 32.4% of the cases. The option of talking to the person or organisation in question was also chosen quite often compared to the own experiences with staff, in 28.9% of the cases.

HOW DID YOU REACT TO THE LAST INCIDENT?

Response	Percentage
I shared it with someone close to me	46,5%
I didn't react	34,2%
I spoke to the person(s) in question/organisation	28,9%
Not able to answer	4,4%
Other:	3,5%
I filed a complaint at an institution of UGhent	2,6%
I shared it with a student representative	0,9%

Response percentage

Graph 15: Reaction own experience fellow students

6.1.2.4   No reaction to the last incident

This time the respondents (N=39) mainly gave 'I didn't feel like it' as the reason why they didn't react when experiencing discrimination by their fellow students, with 'I thought my reaction wouldn't change things' as the second most frequent reason. It's important to note that they could again choose multiple answers. Future research is needed to go deeper into these reactions to see how the faculty can best help these students.
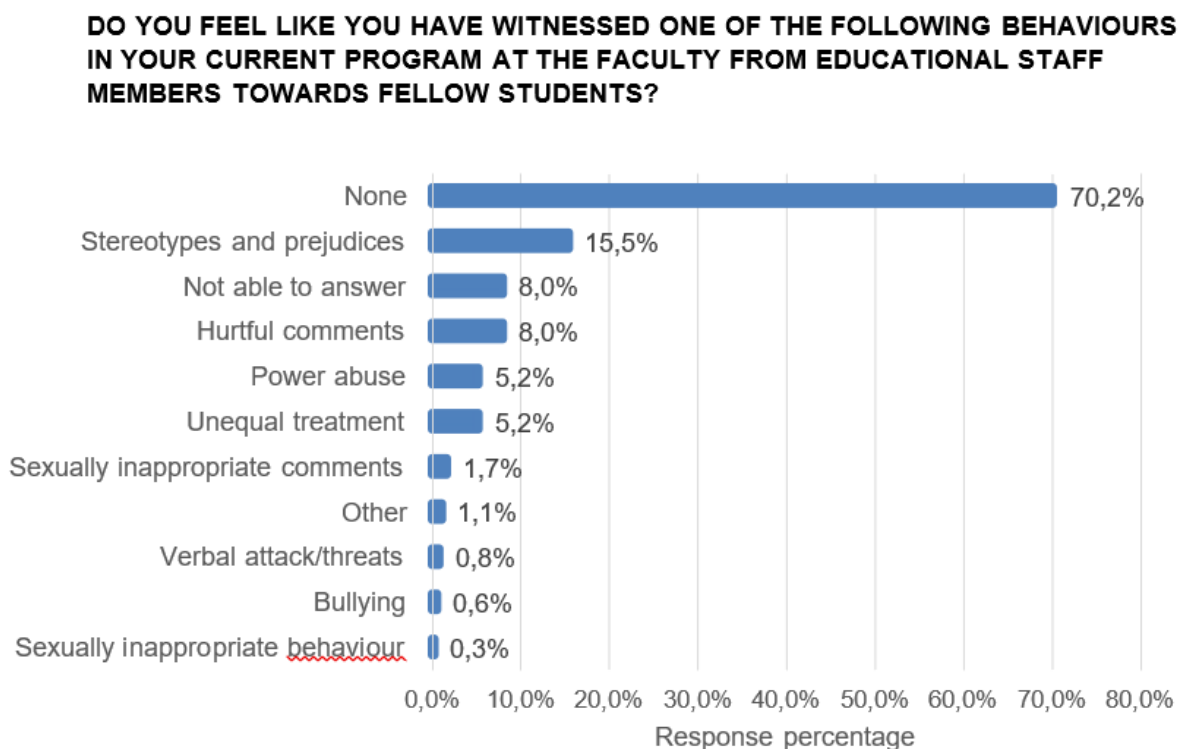
6.2   Witness

6.2.1   Educational Staff

6.2.1.1   Types of behaviour(s)

With this question, we wanted to know if students had witnessed behaviours by educational staff towards fellow students for example during class or in another situation. The same principles are applied as in the previous questions. Of the students (N=362), 70.2% responded they hadn't witnessed any of the following behaviours by staff, towards fellow students. This means that it was the case for **29.8%**.

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE WITNESSED ONE OF THE FOLLOWING BEHAVIOURS IN YOUR CURRENT PROGRAM AT THE FACULTY FROM EDUCATIONAL STAFF MEMBERS TOWARDS FELLOW STUDENTS?

Behaviour	Response percentage
None	70,2%
Stereotypes and prejudices	15,5%
Not able to answer	8,0%
Hurtful comments	8,0%
Power abuse	5,2%
Unequal treatment	5,2%
Sexually inappropriate comments	1,7%
Other	1,1%
Verbal attack/threats	0,8%
Bullying	0,6%
Sexually inappropriate behaviour	0,3%

Graph 16: Witness staff

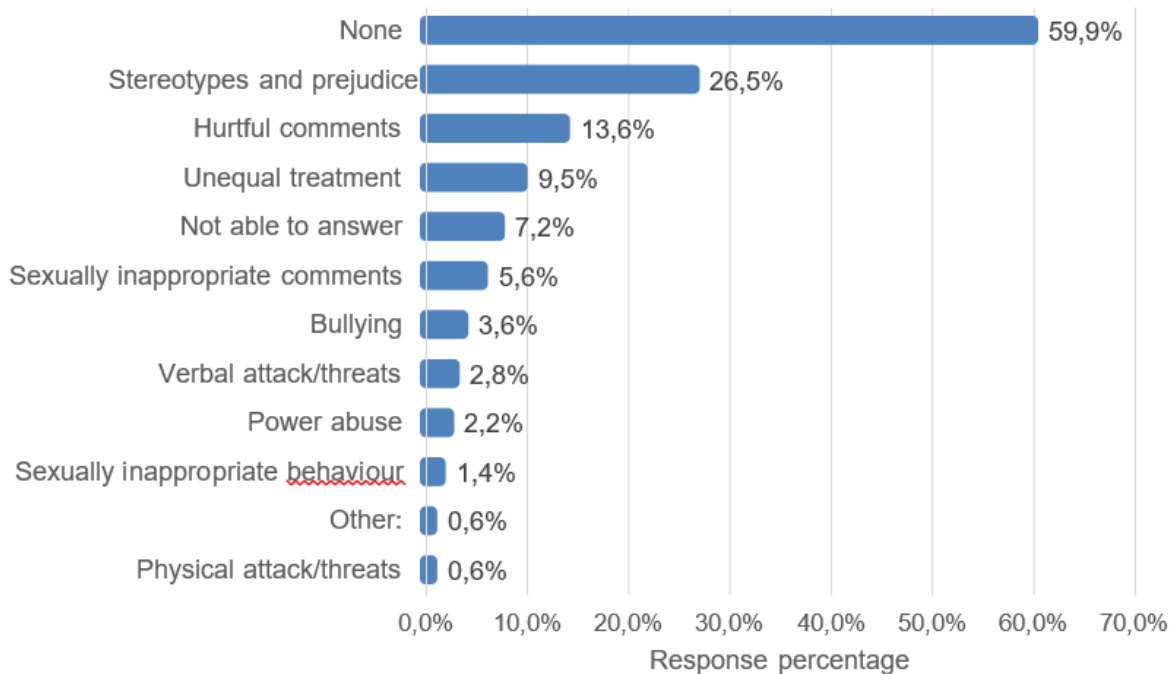#### 6.2.1.2   Basis for behaviour(s)

Out of the 79 students who indicated they had witnessed any of the behaviours in the list by educational staff, in 51.9% of the cases they linked it to the ethnicity and in 49.4% of the cases to the gender of their fellow students. Religion and SES (both 12,7%) are also common experienced bases, followed by disability (11,4%), sexuality (7,6%) native language (6,3%) and not able to answer (6,3%).

6.2.2   By Fellow Students

6.2.2.1   Types of behaviour(s)

This question was asked to survey whether students had witnessed the following behaviours by fellow students towards other fellow students like in group work or other situations. The same principles applied again and 59.9% of the students (N=359) responded they hadn't witnessed any of the following behaviours by fellow students, towards fellow students. This means that it was the case for **40.1%**.

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU HAVE WITNESSED ONE OR MORE OF THE FOLLOWING BEHAVIOURS IN YOUR CURRENT PROGRAM AT THE FACULTY FROM STUDENTS TOWARDS OTHER FELLOW STUDENTS?

Behaviour	Response percentage
None	59,9%
Stereotypes and prejudice	26,5%
Hurtful comments	13,6%
Unequal treatment	9,5%
Not able to answer	7,2%
Sexually inappropriate comments	5,6%
Bullying	3,6%
Verbal attack/threats	2,8%
Power abuse	2,2%
Sexually inappropriate behaviour	1,4%
Other:	0,6%
Physical attack/threats	0,6%

Graph 17: Witness fellow students

6.2.2.2 Basis for behaviour(s)

In total 130 students indicated they had witnessed any of the listed behaviours by fellow students, towards other fellow students. Ethnicity and gender were again the most prevalent bases, with ethnicity accounting for 54.6% of the cases and gender 43.8% of the cases. The base sexuality (26,2%) was also prevalent among students, followed by religion (20,8%) and SES (16,2%), native language (11,5%), disability (8,5%) were bases also experienced by the students.

6.3 Comparisons

6.3.1 Types of Behaviour

In the next table, the differences between the most prevalent behaviours students experienced or witnessed by staff or fellow students are shown. The most striking results are marked in blue. As shown in the table, for each of the questions the most prevalent experiences were 'none', stereotypes and prejudices, hurtful comments, and unequal treatment. While for each of the questions 60 – 70% of the students indicated they had experienced none of these behaviours, stereotypes and prejudices accounted for 15 – 27% of the cases. This shows that this behaviour is quite prevalent among staff, but also among students. A type of behaviour that was only in the top five types of behaviours from the educational staff was power abuse, accounting for 5 – 8% of the cases. In questions about fellow students and also in the question about witnessing behaviour by educational staff, in 7 – 8% of the cases, students indicated they were not able to answer the question. This could mean that is harder for students to define what type of behaviour they experienced or witnessed by fellow students or when witnessing interactions between educational staff and fellow students.

Own experiences – staff	
Type	**Percentage**
1. None	**62.3%**
2. Stereotypes & prejudices	**23%**
3. Hurtful comments	11.1%
4. Unequal treatment	9.2%
5. Power abuse	8.1%

Own experiences – students	
Type	**Percentage**
1. None	**61.9%**
2. Stereotypes & prejudices	**26.8%**
3. Unequal treatment	10.5%
4. Hurtful comments	8.3%
5. Not able to answer	6.9%

Witness – staff	
Type	**Percentage**
1. None	**70.2%**
2. Stereotypes & prejudices	**15.5%**
3. Hurtful comments	8.0%
4. Not able to answer	8.0%
5. Power abuse	5.2%

Witness – students	
Type	**Percentage**
1. None	**59.9%**
2. Stereotypes & prejudices	**26.5%**
3. Hurtful comments	13.6%
4. Unequal treatment	9.5%
5. Not able to answer	7.2%

Table 7: Comparison behaviour

6.3.2   Bases for behaviour(s)

The following table displays the differences between the most frequent bases that are attributed to the behaviours of educational staff or fellow students. The most striking results are again marked in blue. The table clearly shows ethnicity and gender as reasons n.1 and n.2 for the behaviours students have experienced or witnessed by educational staff and by fellow students, with ethnicity ranging from 42% to even 55% of the cases. Gender also ranges from 39% to 49%, undeniably showing that discrimination on these bases, whatever the type, is very frequent. In nearly each of the groups, religion and SES are part of the main bases for discrimination. Among the bases for behaviour by staff, a percentage of students has again indicated 'not able to answer' in their own experiences of discrimination by staff, maybe again pointing to the difficulty of identifying the reason for discrimination. Students also report a disability as a basis for discrimination from educational staff against fellow students as witnesses. It's noticeable that sexuality is a basis only present among students, while it is not in the top 5 by professors. Language is also only in the top 5 of own experiences of discrimination by fellow students and in none of the other top 5's. When analysing these bases for behaviours of staff and students, it's important to keep in mind that students might have multiple of these characteristics at the same, which might make them even more vulnerable to discrimination.

Own experiences – staff	
Basis	**Percentage**
1. Ethnicity	41.5%
2. Gender	39.0%
3. SES	18.7%
4. Not able to answer	10.6%
5. Religion	10.6%

Own experiences – students	
Basis	**Percentage**
1. Ethnicity	49.1%
2. Gender	40.5%
3. Sexuality	20.7%
4. Religion	14.7%
5. Language	12.9%

Witness – staff	
Basis	**Percentage**
1. Ethnicity	51.9%
2. Gender	49.4%
3. SES	12.7%
4. Religion	12.7%
5. Disability	11.4%

Witness – students	
Basis	**Percentage**
1. Ethnicity	54.6%
2. Gender	43.8%
3. Sexuality	26.2%
4. Religion	20.8%
5. SES	16.2%

Table 8: Comparison bases for behaviour

6.3.3 Reactions to the last incident

In the following table, a comparison is shown between how students reacted when they experienced discrimination either by educational staff or fellow students. In both groups in most of the cases, students said they shared the last incident with someone close to them, although there is quite a big difference between both groups in the percentage. The second most selected answer was that they didn't react to the last incident, with similar results for both groups. A very striking result is the difference in percentage between students who spoke to the person in question when the discrimination was in contact with educational staff or with fellow students. With fellow students, it was in nearly 30% of the cases, while with educational staff only 6%. Future research could investigate the high barrier to speaking to staff compared to students, as well as the high barrier to filing a complaint.

Own experience – staff	
Reaction	**Percentage**
1. I shared it with someone close to me	**61.0%**
2. I didn't react to it	**41.5%**
3. I spoke to the person in question	**5.7%**
4. I filed a complaint at an institution of UGent	4.1%
5. I shared it with a student representative	3.3%
6. Not able to answer	3.3%
7. Other	1.6%

Own experiences – students	
Reaction	**Percentage**
1. I shared it with someone close to me	**46.5%**
2. I didn't react to it	**34.2%**
3. I spoke to the person in question	**28.9%**
4. Not able to answer	4.4%
5. Other	3.5%
6. I filed a complaint at an institution of UGent	2.6%
7. I shared it with a student representative	0.9%

Table 9: Comparison reactions to the last incident

6.3.4 No reaction to the last incident

When comparing the reasons why students didn't react to the last incident of discrimination by educational staff or fellow students, the most chosen reasons differ. The option 'I thought my reaction wouldn't change things' is either first or second place in both groups, indicating a sense of powerlessness. Toward fellow students 'I didn't feel like it' was most selected, future qualitative research is needed to address the underlying reasons behind this sentiment. In contact with educational staff, a percentage of students didn't know how to react to the incident or didn't dare to react, something possibly influenced by the power difference as a student towards an educational staff member. Students also didn't dare to react toward fellow students, so these seem like important results for recommendations and future interventions.

Own experience – staff	
Reason	**Percentage**
1. I thought my reaction wouldn't change things	**39.2%**
2. I didn't know how to react	**35.3%**
3. I didn't dare to	**33.3%**
4. I didn't feel like it	25.5%
5. I don't know why	17.6%
6. Other	9.8%
7. I didn't know there are official organisations for this	5.9%

Own experience – students	
Reason	**Percentage**
1. I didn't feel like it	**43.6%**
2. I thought my reaction wouldn't change things	**30.8%**
3. I didn't dare to	**23.1%**
4. I didn't know how to react	17.9%
5. Other	15.4%
6. I don't know why	12.8%
7. Not able to answer	2.6%

Table 10: Comparison no reaction to the last incident

6.4 Comments students from survey

Following this set of questions, we provided an opportunity for students to share additional insights about discrimination and/or prejudices, and we received a substantial number of both negative and positive comments. One notable aspect was the prevalence of international students expressing their experience of discrimination due to a lack of communication in English. This highlights the significance of addressing language barriers and fostering inclusive communication practices to ensure a welcoming and equitable environment for all students.

"UGent performs so poorly about inclusion and diversity. Please look at the events of the Inclusion and Diversity month, more than half of the events are in Dutch. Including the kick-off event "Sense of Belongingness", ironically. Also, most of the emails from our faculty are in Dutch, but I cannot understand Dutch. In this sense, I cannot read more than half of the emails"

"Being a non-EU student, I've experienced unequal access to housing and financial aid; when I reached out to the student psychologist, I did not feel understood by her and she was unable to actually help me, this was frustrating and forced me to not reach out to the university for help ever again, in my opinion if you don't speak Flemish here, you're at an immense disadvantage"

Furthermore, some students felt discriminated against because of their migration background.

"I am a student without the Belgian nationality, and I also don't look Belgian, while I was born and raised in Gent. So many times, I get the question where I come from or sometimes professors just start talking to me in English, because they think that I am an Erasmus student or that I don't speak Dutch"

Students also left several comments on forms of discrimination in the class. For example, there were several comments on professors using the n-word in class.

"A professor who uses the n-word during class or in the slides or the textbook I don't think is ok and very unnecessary. I think saying this word as a white person is always unnecessary and inappropriate".

"One of the UGent professors used the n-word in class and then refused to accept students' protests and thoughts about why this was harmful."

Besides this, students also shared situations of discrimination based on gender in their classes.

"Misogynistic comments during the class where among others, anticonception was presented as bad and 'stupid'."

"I had a course that is a sequence of gender stereotypes and misogynistic comments."

Moreover, some professors project a certain image of the university and university students which excludes certain groups.

"One professor clearly shows that some students don't deserve it to study at university according to him. He describes university students as the elite of society and wants to make a university education less accessible to people (who struggle with big quantities of study material). This results in people with disabilities, mental health problems… feeling quickly excluded."

Students also commented on things that are and aren't done for students with a disability.

"I personally have a special status and I feel very helped and I have never had serious problems (nothing that couldn't be solved by an email or talking to a professor)."

"I notice there is not a lot being done for students with a disability. Students who can't be in class because of a disability, illness, overlap, problems with transport or working students don't get access anymore to class recording 'because corona is over, and it has no use anymore'. It is also sad that you can only get help for your disability if you have a diagnosis. This is not accessible for everyone."

"I see that certain measures are being introduced for people with a disability, but I can imagine it is sometimes very difficult for people with a disability to follow a regular programme. I notice how it is sometimes difficult to be on time when going from one class to another, there are classes that immediately follow each other with only 15 minutes to go from one building to another."

Students also had some more general comments, on the system for filing complaints, but also about their educational programme.

"During a couple of classes statements were made by professors which were discriminating against certain social groups from prejudices or stereotypes. This bothered me very much. I mentioned this in the feedback each time, but as far as I know, nothing was done about it. Very disappointing!"

"The UGent does too little about discrimination/prejudices. It is also very unclear how you can file for a complaint, and it is not transparent. If something happens, we don't know what to do with it."

"I'd say that most of my classmates are pretty progressive (and, for Belgium, we are quite diverse). So, I feel as though it occurs less in my programme than it would in other programmes/faculties, however, it still occurs and it's a pity considering we are the ones who know the consequences of discrimination best and we don't even set an example."

"I feel like there is no balance. I have courses that only talk about diversity and other courses only discuss the 'white old man' without including more diverse people."

Finally, regarding discrimination by fellow students, in the comments, students mainly reported this in group work.

"It is especially bad in group work. As an outsider there is little good you can do, or it is reduced. If you do it, it's not good, if you are for example absent, it is immediately that you don't work on the group work. But if a native Belgian goes on holiday for a week, nothing negative is said about it. So, it mostly comes to down to unfair treatment of non-Belgians (in my experience, but also in the experience of other foreign students or students of colour that I've talked with about this). With professors most of the time I don't feel like I'm being treated unfairly. "

7 CONTACT POINTS & COMMUNICATION

We wanted to survey the students' knowledge of contact points & communication at UGent to see where there are gaps and what is working well. As a part of this block of questions, we also asked the student's opinions on the possibility of a quiet room on the faculty.

7.1 Knowledge of and contact with initiatives
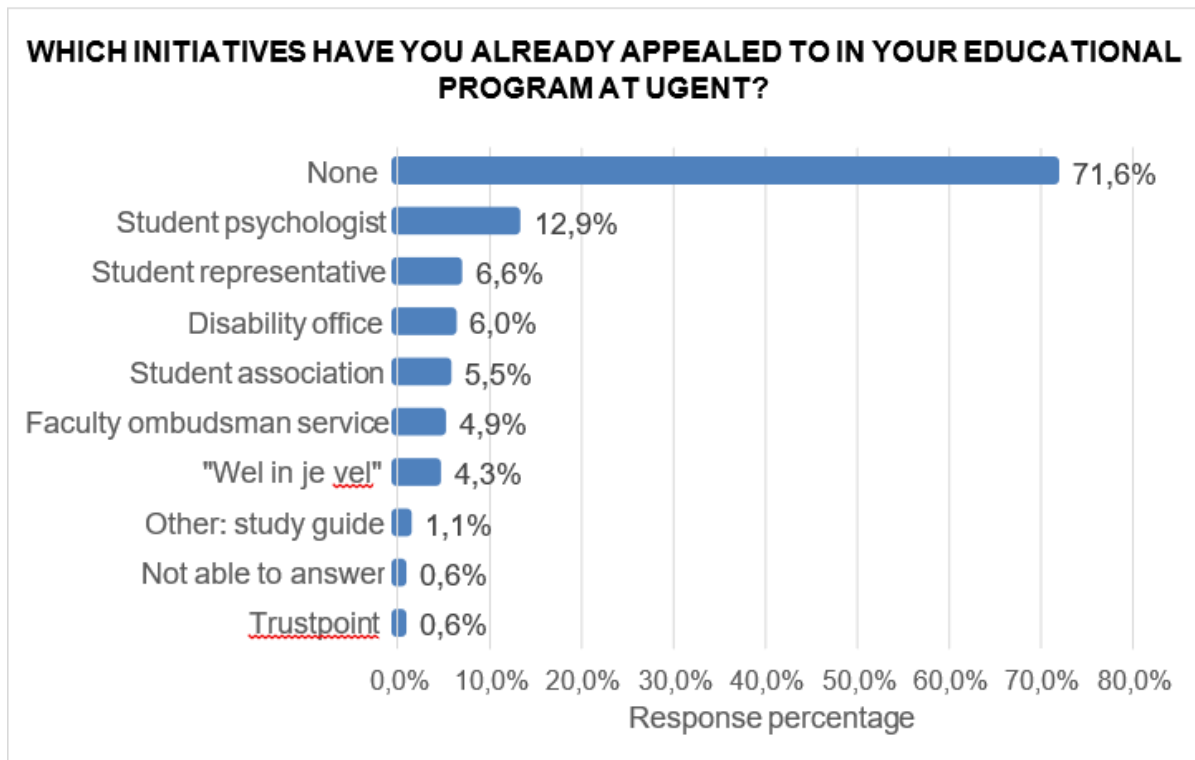
7.1.1 Knowledge of Initiatives

The following graph shows that the students (N=353) know most of the initiatives, with 'Wel in je vel' as the most known, and the Trust point as known by the least number of students. The faculty ombudsman service and the disability office are also not that known, although they are, just like Trust Point, very important initiatives when students deal with discrimination.
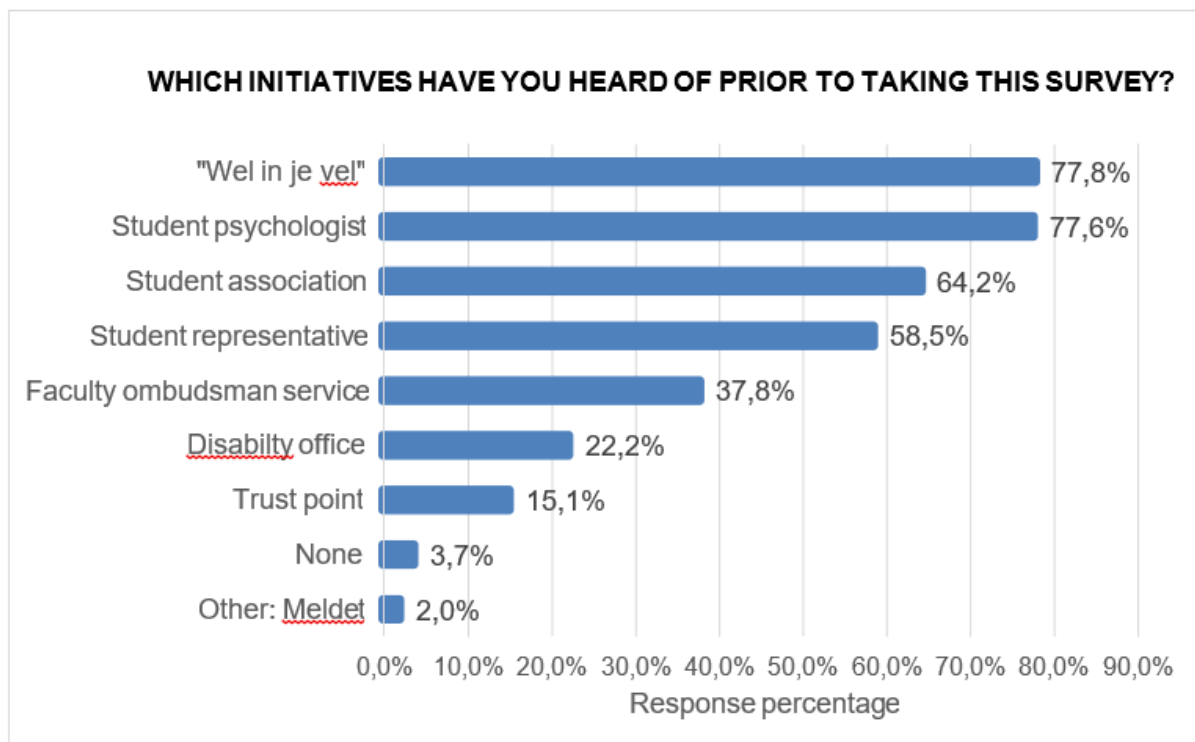
Graph 18: Knowledge of initiatives
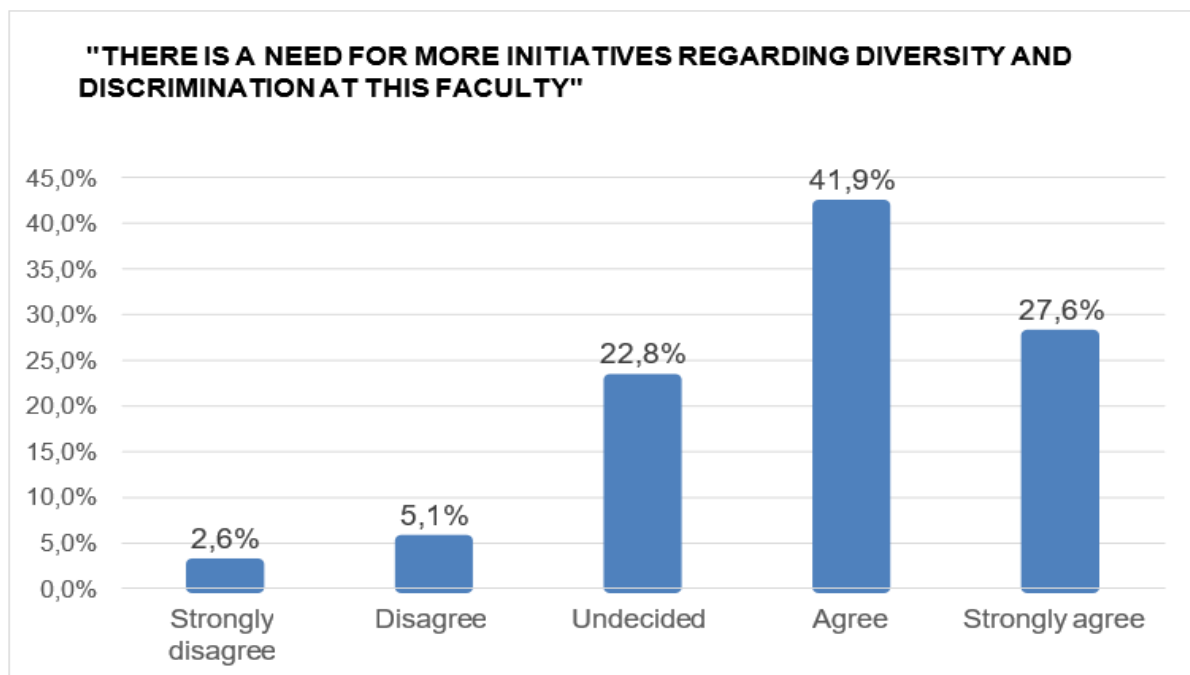
7.1.2 Contact with Initiatives

Next, we asked students (N=349) which of the initiatives they had already appealed to during their educational programme at UGent. In most of the cases (71.6%) students had appealed to none of them, with the student psychologist (12.9%) being the second most frequent. This indicates that even though the students know of these initiatives, there could still be barriers towards accessing them. Future research would be advised to see where the barriers lie.

WHICH INITIATIVES HAVE YOU ALREADY APPEALED TO IN YOUR EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM AT UGENT?

Initiative	Response percentage
None	71,6%
Student psychologist	12,9%
Student representative	6,6%
Disability office	6,0%
Student association	5,5%
Faculty ombudsman service	4,9%
"Wel in je vel"	4,3%
Other: study guide	1,1%
Not able to answer	0,6%
Trustpoint	0,6%

Graph 19: Contact with initiatives

## 7.2   Need for more initiatives

In this section, an even more important question was posed to the students regarding their perception of the need for additional initiatives addressing diversity and discrimination at the faculty. The graph illustrates that a significant majority, approximately 70% of the students, strongly agree or agree that there is indeed a need for more initiatives. This sentiment was further echoed by the comments shared by the students during the survey.

"THERE IS A NEED FOR MORE INITIATIVES REGARDING DIVERSITY AND DISCRIMINATION AT THIS FACULTY"

Response	Percentage
Strongly disagree	2,6%
Disagree	5,1%
Undecided	22,8%
Agree	41,9%
Strongly agree	27,6%

Graph 20: Need for more initiatives

7.3   Need for clarity regarding contact points

In addition to students expressing their desire for more initiatives, the following graph indicates that 81% of the students feel there is a need for greater clarity regarding contact points where they can seek guidance or address questions and remarks about diversity and discrimination at UGent. This significant percentage underscores the evident lack of clarity and highlights the importance of establishing accessible and transparent contact points for students to seek support.
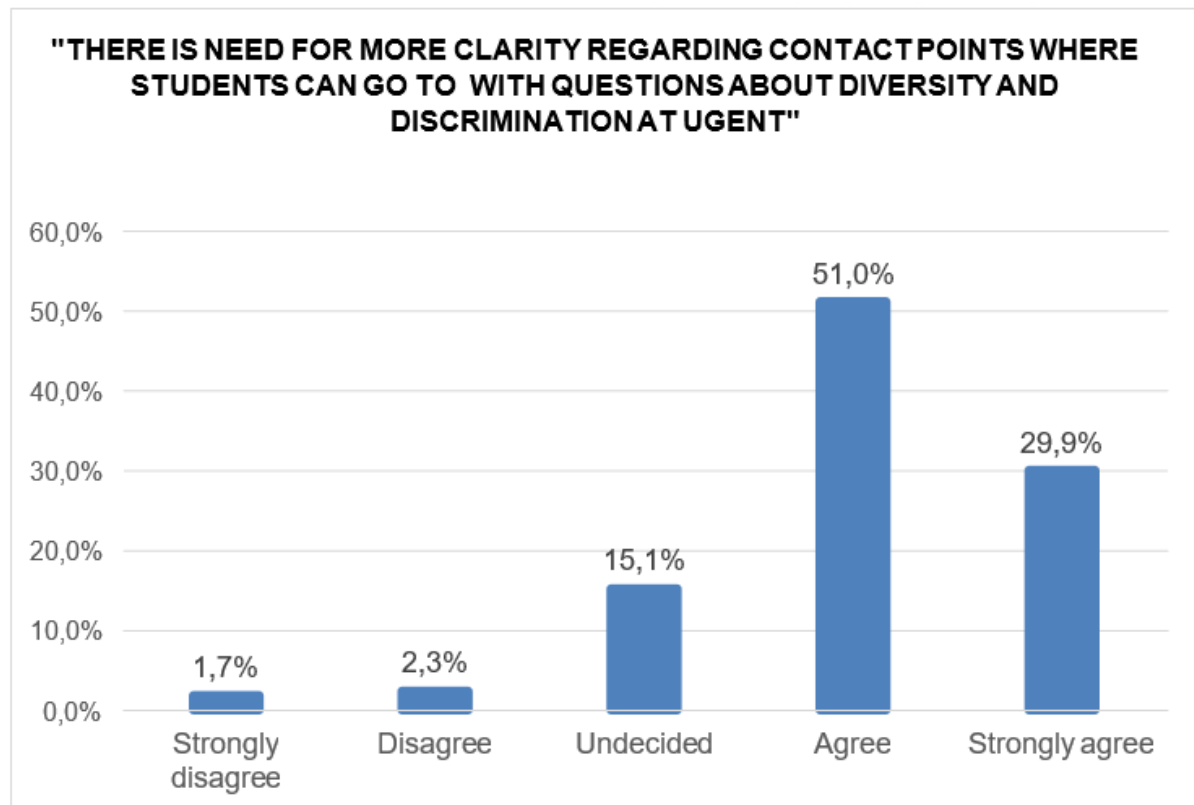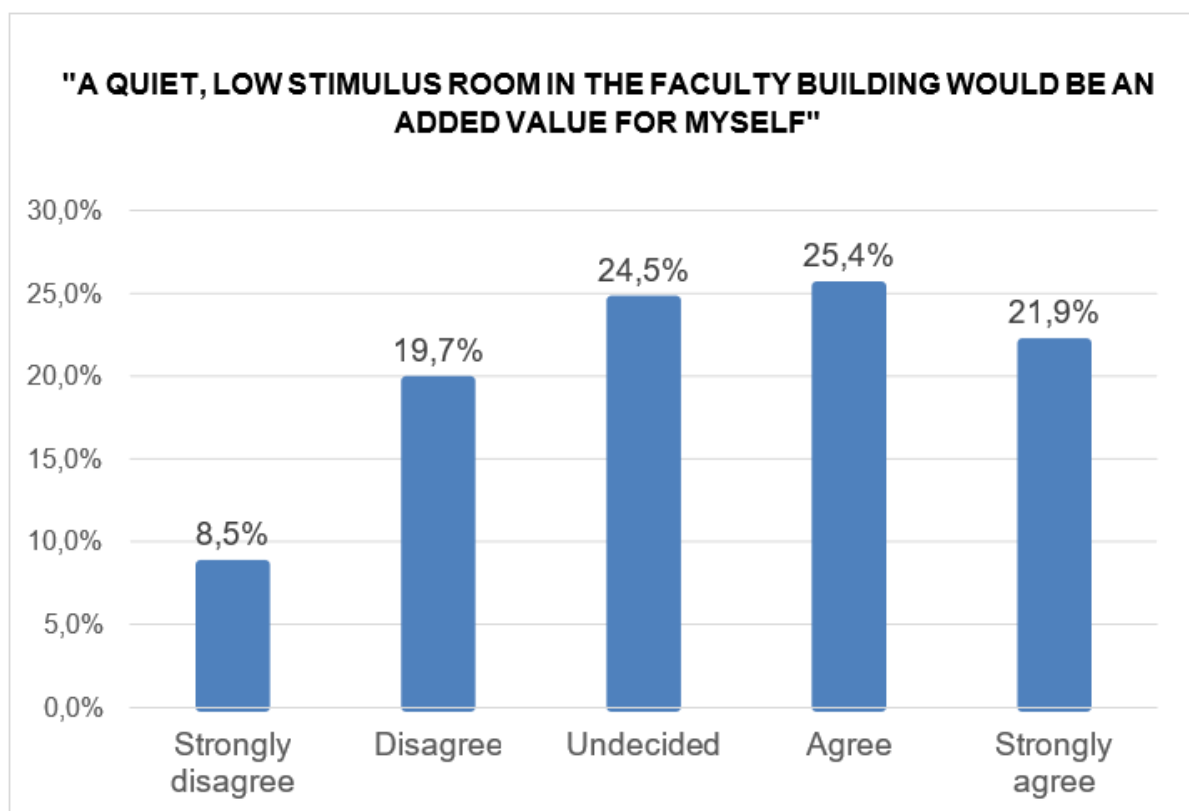

Graph 21: Clarity regarding contact points

7.4   Quiet room

Lastly, we asked students' opinions on a quiet room in the faculty building. The following graphs show that the students (N=352) predominantly (80%) agree that a quiet room in the faculty building would be an added value. On the quiet room being an added value for themselves, the students are a bit more divided, with 48% agreeing that this would be the case for them. In the comments of the survey, someone also wrote that they saw a few international students looking for a secluded place in the library to pray. This person thinks a quiet room would be appreciated by students with these needs.

A quiet, low-stimulus room is meant for all students to rest, read a book, pray in silence or de-stress. To what extent do you agree with the following statements?


" A QUIET LOW STIMULUS ROOM IN THE FACULTY BUILDING WOULD BE AN ADDED VALUE"

- Strongly disagree: 2,6%
- Disagree: 4,6%
- Undecided: 13,1%
- Agree: 41,9%
- Strongly agree: 37,9%
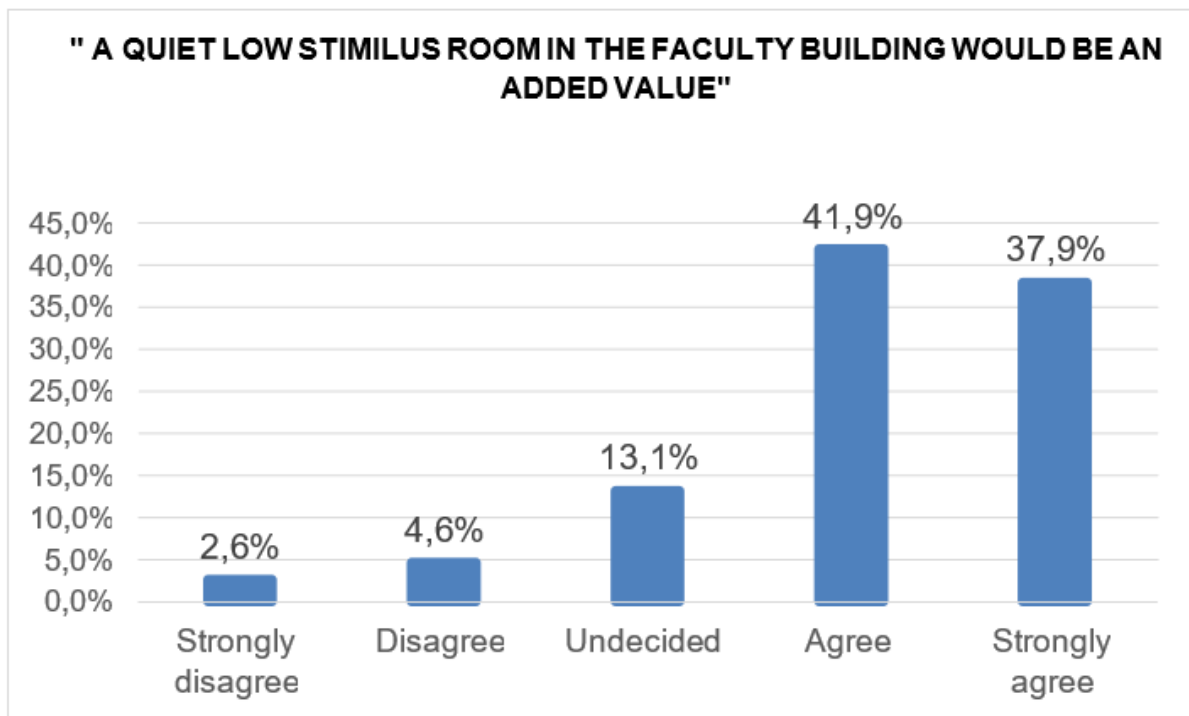
Graph 22: Added value quiet room

"A QUIET, LOW STIMULUS ROOM IN THE FACULTY BUILDING WOULD BE AN ADDED VALUE FOR MYSELF"

- Strongly disagree: 8,5%
- Disagree: 19,7%
- Undecided: 24,5%
- Agree: 25,4%
- Strongly agree: 21,9%

Graph 23: Added value for myself quiet room

8   DIVERSITY CHARACTERISTICS

8.1   Sexuality

As discussed in Chapter 6 on discrimination, sexuality serves as one of the bases for stereotypes, hurtful comments, and discrimination among students. In addition, we explored whether sexuality had any impact on the sense of belonging (as detailed in Chapter 3), but no sigificant difference was found. Students were provided with various options to identify their sexuality, including heterosexual, bisexual, lesbian/homosexual, asexual, pansexual, and questioning. Among the students (N=345), 62,9% identified themselves as straight and 39.42% chose another category. The largest groups within the latter category were bisexual (15,4%), questioning (8.6) and lesbian/homosexual (7.4%).
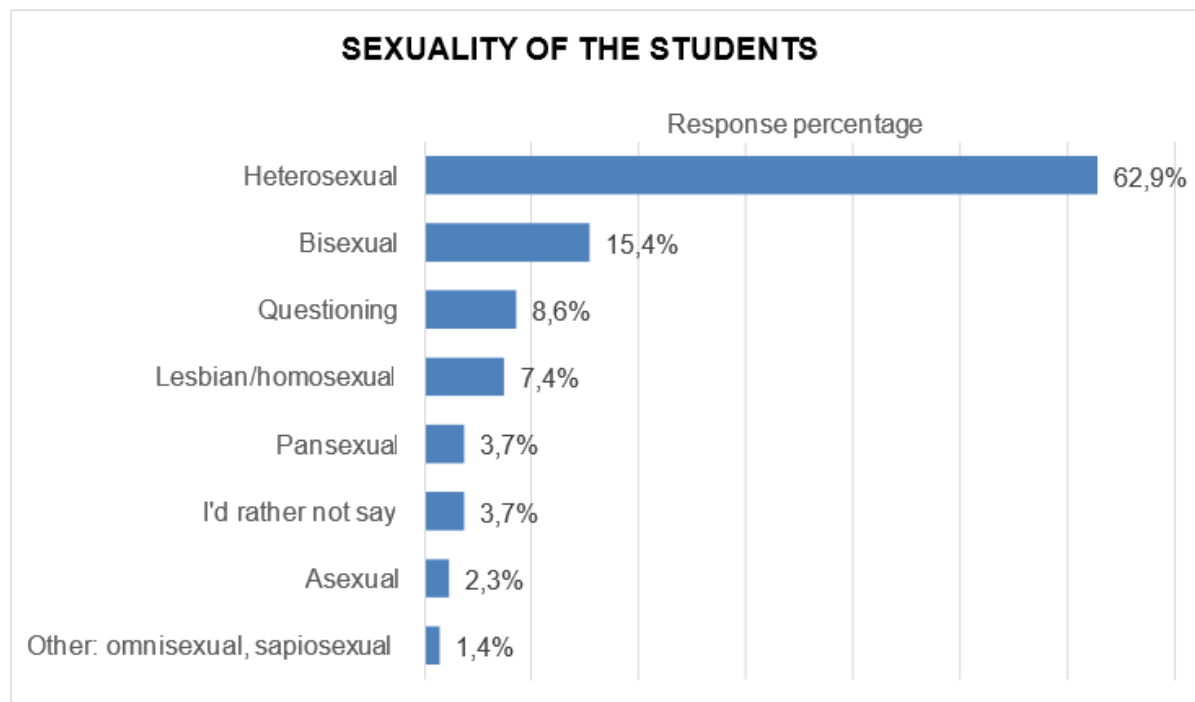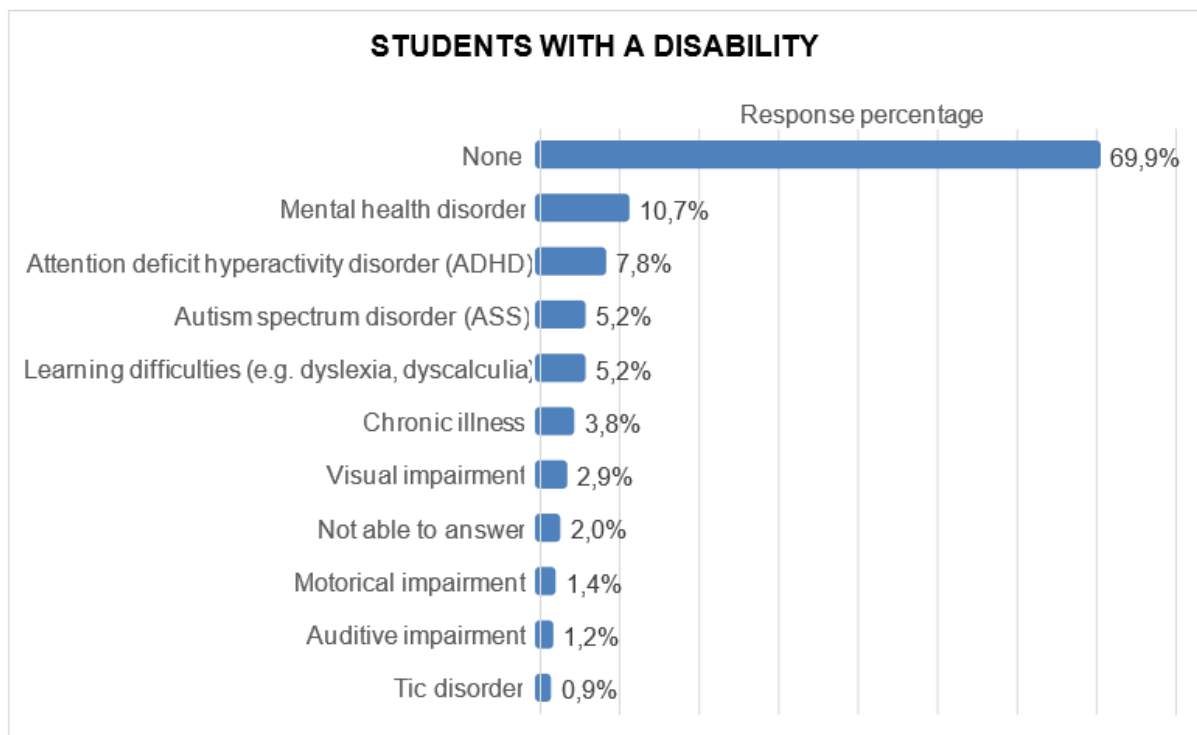

Graph 24: Sexuality of the students

8.2   Disability

In this category, we utilized the list of disabilities officially recognised as a basis for a special status at the University. First, the students were asked if they had a disability from this list. Then, we inquired whether they had obtained a special status for their disability at the faculty. This provided insight into the accessibility and effectiveness of this status. Given that some students had multiple diagnoses, they were provided multiple options. Of the 350 students, 69.9% indicated that they did not have a disability (from the provided list), implying that 30.1% of the students have one or more of the disabilities listed. The most prevalent disabilities were 'mental health disorder' (10.7%), 'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder' (7.8%), 'Autism Spectrum Disorder' (5.2%), and 'learning difficulties' such as dyslexia, dyscalculia… (5.2%).

Only 33.7% of these students (the 30,1%) have a special status for their disability. This explains why our number of students with disabilities is higher than the number reported by De Bruyn (2022) where 7.8% of the students have a disability status at our faculty. To determine if there was a significant difference, a Chi² test was conducted comparing the proportion of students with disabilities who had obtained status in our sample (10.45%). No significant difference was found, suggesting that our sample may be representative of the entire student population at this faculty.

STUDENTS WITH A DISABILITY

Response percentage

None	69,9%
Mental health disorder	10,7%
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)	7,8%
Autism spectrum disorder (ASS)	5,2%
Learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dyscalculia)	5,2%
Chronic illness	3,8%
Visual impairment	2,9%
Not able to answer	2,0%
Motorical impairment	1,4%
Auditive impairment	1,2%
Tic disorder	0,9%

Graph 25: Students with a disability

An additional question was asked to students with a disability (N=98) to assess how much these disabilities interfere with life as a university student. For **83.7%** of the students with a disability, this disability interfered now and then very often in their life as university students. We chose to define life as a university student broadly as going to university is more than just going to classes and taking exams. As depicted in Table 2, ADHD has a slightly higher average *(M*=3.93*, SD*=0.17) of interference with the life of a university student than other disabilities.

TO WHAT EXTENT DOES YOUR DISABILITY INTERFERE WITH YOUR LIFE AS A UNIVERSITY							
	Never	Rarely	Now and then	Often	Very often	Subtotal	
	Row N %					Mean	Standard Deviation
Mental health disorder	0,0%	8,3%	**44,4%**	22,2%	25,0%	3,64	0,96
Attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)	0,0%	3,7%	29,6%	**37,0%**	29,6%	3,93	0,87
Autism spectrum disorder (ASS)	5,6%	0,0%	27,8%	**44,4%**	22,2%	3,78	1,00
Learning difficulties (e.g. dyslexia, dyscalculia)	0,0%	11,1%	**55,6%**	27,8%	5,6%	3,28	0,75
Chronic illness	0,0%	23,1%	23,1%	**38,5%**	15,4%	3,46	1,05

Table 11: Impact of disability

8.3 Mental Health

We also asked the students about the extent to which their mental health interferes with their life as university students. Even though 10.7% of the students indicated having a mental health disorder, more students can struggle occasionally with their mental health without having an official diagnosis. Only 36.7% of the students indicated never or rarely having their mental health interfering with their life as university students (N=332). 61.2% have now and then, often, or very often suffered with their mental health in their life as a university student.

| To what extent does your mental health interfere with your life as a university student?					
	Never	Rarely	Now and then	Often	Very often
Percent	6.3%	30.4%	**38,9%**	16.3%	6.0%

Table 12: Impact of mental health

8.4 Migration background

In the survey, the students were presented with questions regarding their own (first) nationality, as well as the (first) nationality of their parents and grandparents. This data allowed us to categorize the students into first, second and even third generations. It is important to note that international students were not included in this analysis, as their inclusion could potentially overestimate the number of (Belgian) students with a migration background. In total, 24.2% of the students in the survey have a migration background. Specifically, 20.2% of the students reported having at least one parent who didn't have a Belgian nationality by birth and 4.0% stated having at least one grandparent who didn't have the Belgian nationality by birth (when both parents had the Belgian nationality by birth).
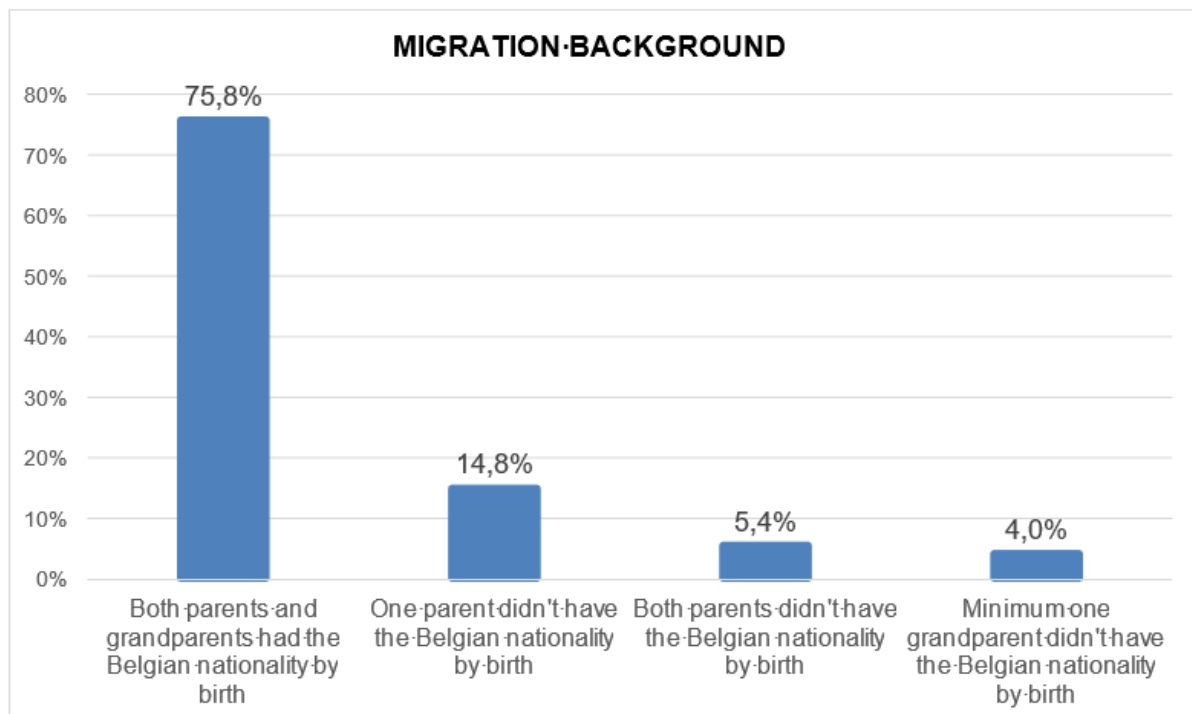
**Graph 26: Migration background**

Additionally, we made an overview of the regions of the migrant background of the parents and grandparents to gain a deeper insight. As expected, most people have a migration background in Europe (47.5%), followed by Africa (28.81%) and Asia (15.25%). The percentages of the regions of the grandparents were very similar.
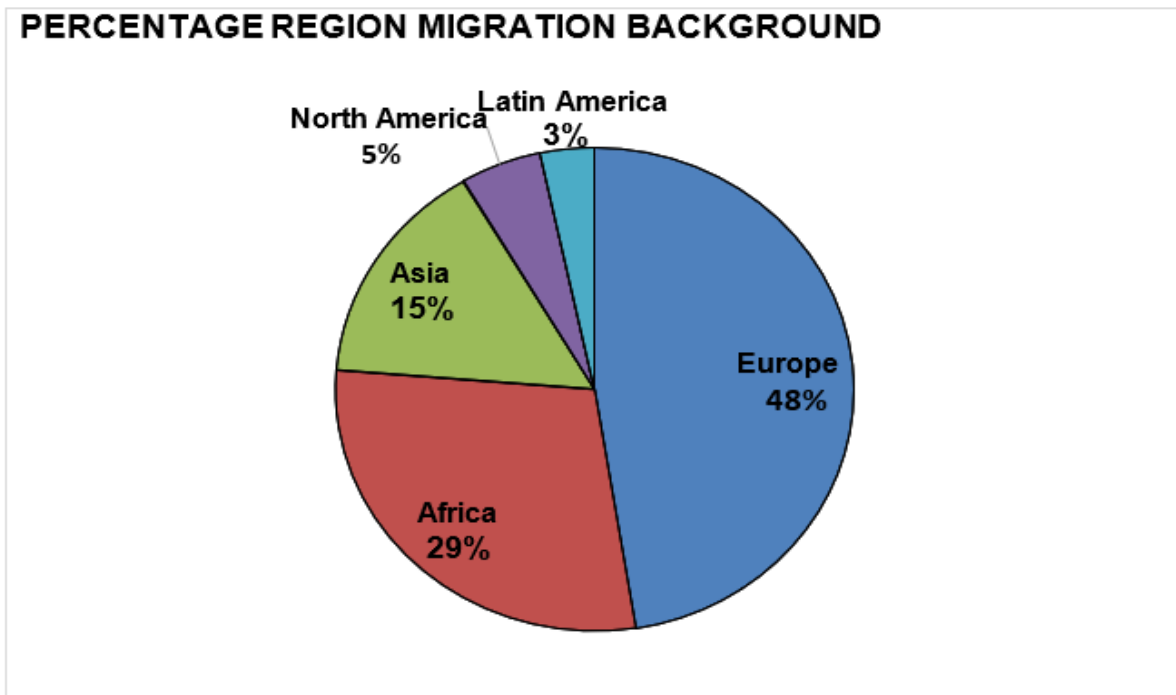
Graph 27: Region migration background

8.5 Language

Next to having a migration background, speaking a different language at home than Dutch can also impact the sense of belonging at the faculty (chapter 3). As students are often multilingual, we asked how often they speak a different language than Dutch at home. Of the surveyed students (N=315), 61.1% indicated primarily speaking Dutch at home, while 21.9% speak other languages at home as well.
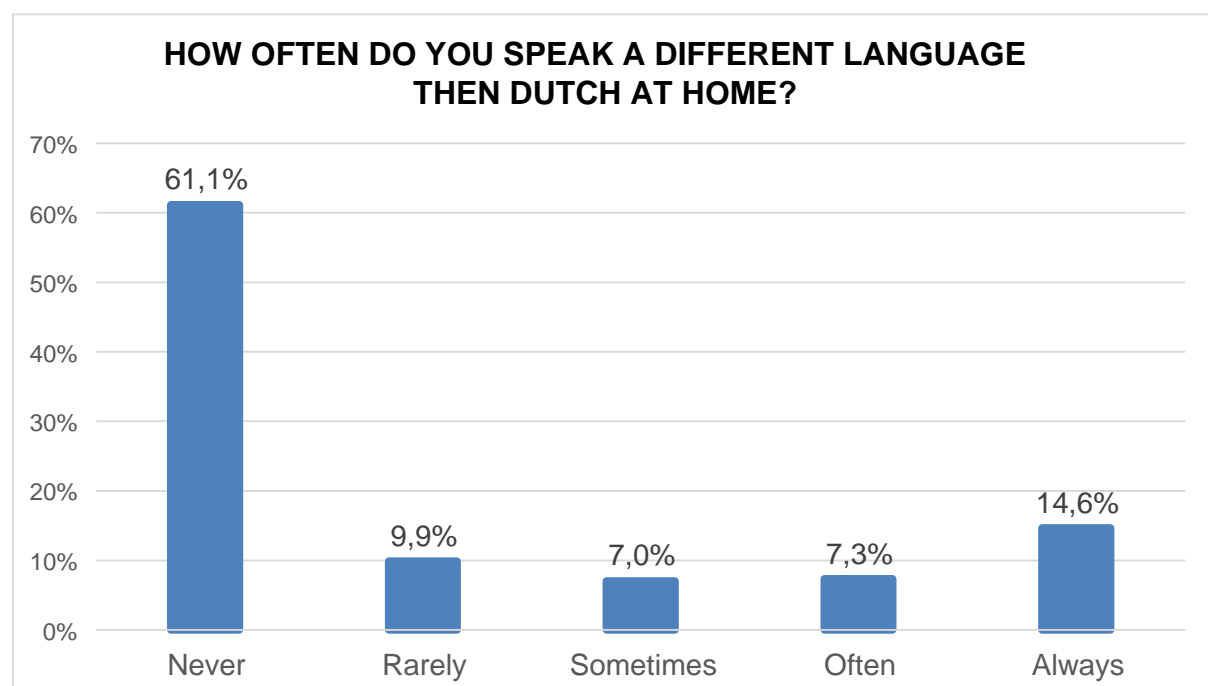
Graph 28: Frequency language

The students who indicated that they also speak other languages at home were asked how many languages they speak. Most of the students (N=156) spoke only one other language at home than Dutch (66%). Some students spoke two (28.8%) or even three (5.1%) other languages than Dutch at home.

Furthermore, we asked what language the multilingual students spoke at home. The top five languages were English (16.9%), French (11.1%), German (2.2%), Albanian and Russian (1.1%) and Arabic, Berber, and Spanish (0.8%)

8.6   Religion

When it comes to religion, students were given the option to select multiple beliefs as some students may have a combination of belief systems. Most of the students indicated that they were not religious (71.2%). Among the religious students, the largest group identified as Christian (15.4%), followed by Muslim (4.6%). Other students identified as atheists (3.7%) or spiritual (2%).

8.7   Socio-economic status

8.7.1   Degrees

One way to assess the socio-economic status (SES) of students and evaluate the accessibility of the university for students with a low SES, is by looking at the highest degree of the parents. For 77.8% of the students (N=351), their parents had received higher education. Parents who did not receive higher education either had completed secondary education (10.8%) or a 7th-year vocational training (4%). Only a small percentage of 4.6% had lower education or no formal education.

Furthermore, students were asked about their educational background, starting with their previous high school education. A significant number of students (N=308), 89.3% attended ASO in high school, 6.2% attended TSO, 1.6% attended KSO and 1.3% pursued second-chance education or completed exams through an examination committee. None of the students had followed a BSO or DBSO higher school education. The sample size is smaller in this case because international students were excluded from this question, as high school education systems vary across countries.

In addition, some students already held higher degrees before enrolling in their education programme at the PSW faculty. Among the students (N=350), 12%, had already obtained a master's degree and 15,4% had completed a professional bachelor's degree.

8.7.2   Financial situation studies

Another way of measuring the SES is by examining how the students finance their studies. The first question asked if the students received a scholarship. Out of 350 students, 17.1 % had a full scholarship and 3.7% a partial scholarship, which in total amounts to 20.8%. These numbers align with the statistics of De Bruyn (2022) where 19.9% of the students at the PSW faculty received either a partial or full scholarship (De Bruyn, 2022). Most students (76.3%) did not receive a scholarship.

Most of the students (69.6%) relied on financial support from their parents to cover the cost of their education, while 15.1% of the students funded their education themselves and 11.6% contributed partially to their education. Overall, 26.7% of the students had to finance at least a portion of the studies themselves.

To be able to pay for their studies or leisure activities… many students worked alongside their studies. Only 16.0% of the students did not have an additional job next to their studies. Among the working students, a significant portion (31.1%) only worked during holidays. At Gent University, students are eligible for a special work status if they work at least a part-time job (around 20h each week). Therefore, around 12.3% of the students in our sample would meet the requirements for this status.
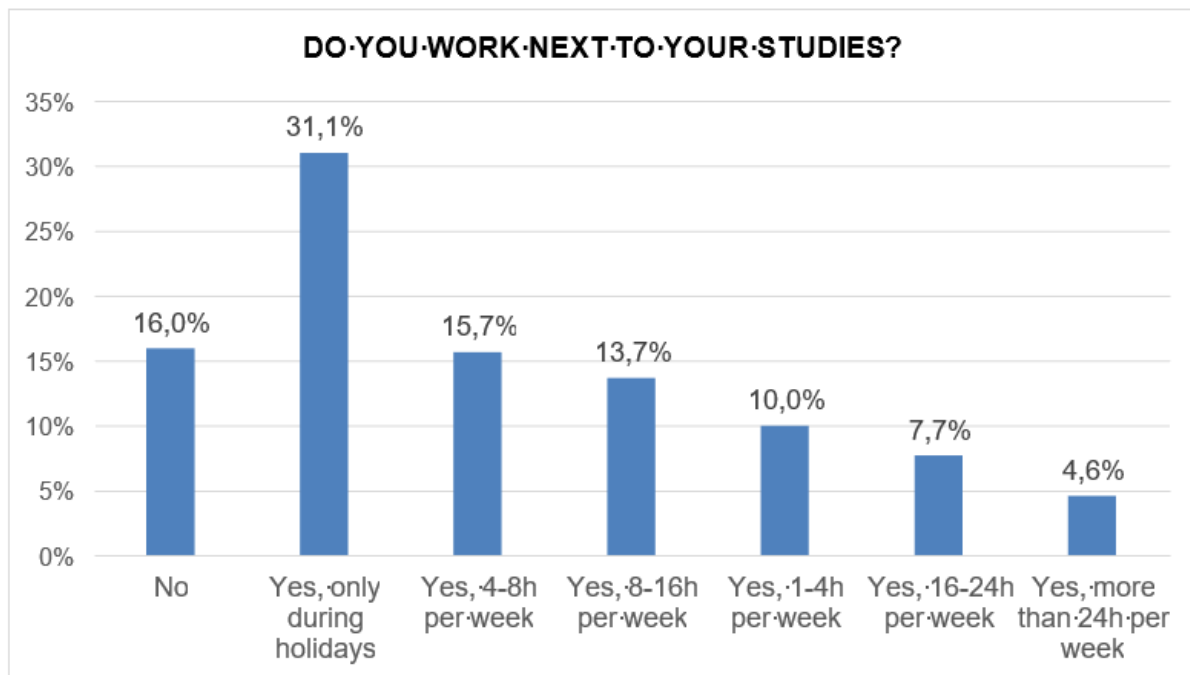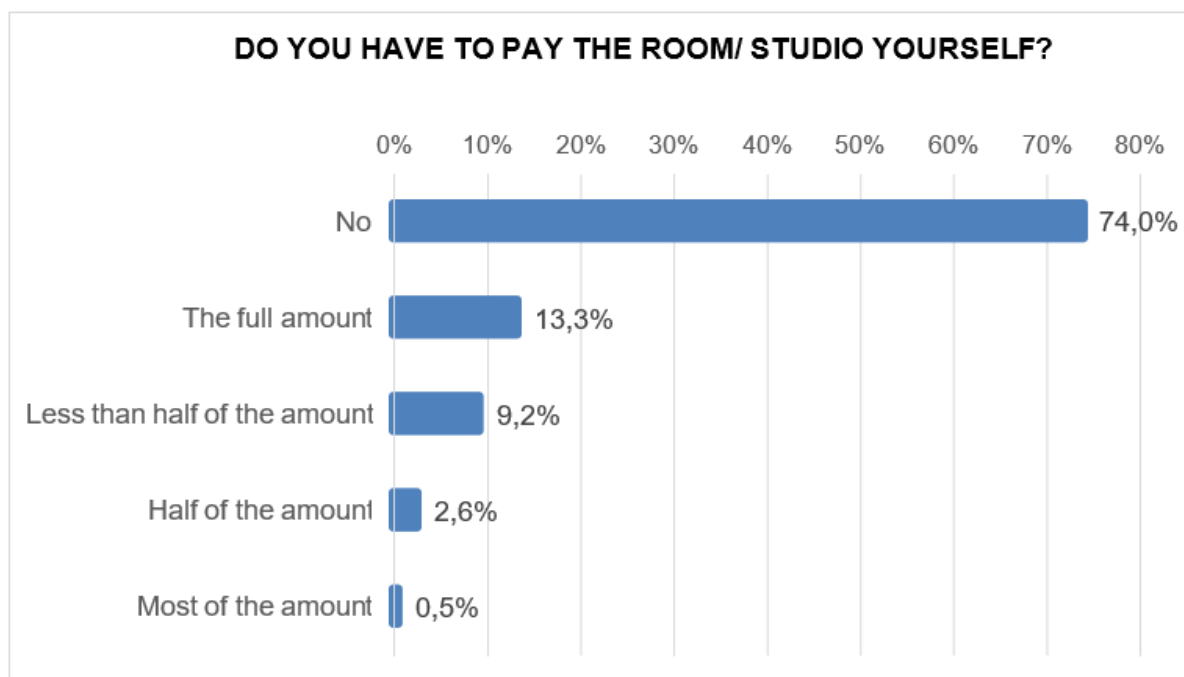
Graph 29: Hours of work

Understanding the motivations behind student employment is also crucial in interpreting the numbers. In a follow-up question, working students were asked about their reasons for working (multiple answers possible). The most common reasons chosen students were to be able to afford personal expenses (78.2%), and to gain work experience (43.9%). Additionally, 16.3% of the students indicated that they worked to cover the costs of their studies, and 4.2% worked to provide financial support to others. Some students (8.3%) identified themselves as work students, balancing their studies with part-time employment.

8.7.3   Student room

One of the largest expenses among various expenses that students face is student accommodation such as a student room or studio. In our survey, slightly over half of the student population (N=350) reported living in a student room (55.8%). For these students residing in student accommodation, the majority (73.98%) don't have to cover the cost themselves, presumably with their parents covering the expenses. On the other hand, 12.24% of the students had to contribute partially to the rent, while 13.27% have to pay the full amount themselves.

DO YOU HAVE TO PAY THE ROOM/ STUDIO YOURSELF?

No	74,0%
The full amount	13,3%
Less than half of the amount	9,2%
Half of the amount	2,6%
Most of the amount	0,5%

Graph 30: Student room

9 CONCLUSIONS

9.1   Response

We received a response rate of 11,71% among the students of the PSW faculty, including international students. We received a higher proportion of female students and non-international students with a migration background in our survey sample compared to their proportion in the student population at the PSW faculty. Our survey sample had a higher proportion of female students and students with a migration background compared to their representation in the overall student population at the PSW faculty. The proportion of students with a 'lower' socioeconomic status (SES) based on scholarship recipients and parental education levels, as well as students with disabilities, was similar to the numbers of De Bruyn (2022), indicating that these groups were properly represented in our survey.

9.2   Content

When it comes to the content of the courses, students were asked about the diversity of the content for the current academic year and their entire educational programme. Nearly half of the students indicated that only half of their classes addressed non-male scholars, scholars of colour or with a migration background, and non-Western perspectives in the current academic year. On the other hand, students positively evaluated the attention given to language accessibility. Opinions were divided when it came to the contextual background of classical theories and their founders. For the full educational programme, students mainly agreed that there is insufficient attention given to non-male scholars, scholars of colour or with a migration background, and non-Western perspectives. However, they generally agreed that their curriculum challenges them to think about prejudices and is sufficiently diverse to foster an inclusive attitude in society.

9.3   Representation

Students were asked about the perceived representation of students and educational staff with diversity characteristics compared to the Flemish population. It is important to note that these perceptions do not provide an accurate reflection of the actual representation of the faculty but reflect the students' perceptions. Students perceived students of colour or with a migration background and students who speak a different language than Dutch as underrepresented (88.8% and 79.6%, respectively). Female students were seen as more overrepresented than male students. Perceptions regarding diversity within the educational staff showed differences in the representation of gender. Male professors and male assistants were perceived as overrepresented, while female professors and female assistants were perceived as underrepresented. Professors and assistants of colour or with a migration background were perceived as the most underrepresented. Although professors and assistants who have a different native language than Dutch received slightly higher averages, they still fell within the underrepresented category.

There were significant differences in the average sense of belonging for students with diversity characteristics such as students of colour, students with a migration background, students who don't speak Dutch at home, students identifying as Muslim, and students with chronic illnesses. This means that students with these characteristics feel less like they belong at the faculty. It is worth noting that the sense of belonging could be even lower for students with intersecting characteristics. However, no significant differences were found regarding gender, sexuality, and the region of the migration background. This lower sense of belonging can impact students' social and psychological well-being and academic achievement (Ahn & Howard, 2019). The faculty has an important task to ensure that everyone can feel a sense of belonging. Students shared the unified sentiment that the UGent should make necessary efforts to ensure that all students feel at home at UGent, regardless of their ethnicity, native language, gender identity, disability, sexuality, and SES.

9.4   Discrimination

Concerning discrimination, it was clear that although most of the students haven't experienced or witnessed discrimination by educational staff members or by fellow students, 1/3 of our respondents or more have experienced or witnessed discrimination. When students were discriminated against, this was primarily based on their gender and their ethnicity in each of the four groups. As a reaction to these incidents, in most cases, students shared it with someone close to them, but they rarely reacted to the incident, either by speaking to the person in question or filing a complaint within UGent. This is mainly due to the students thinking that their reaction wouldn't change things. Because of this, a lot of discrimination probably remains under the radar of the faculty. This also means that recommendations and interventions could be aimed at on the one hand preventing discrimination, but also empowering students and providing accessible communication points about discrimination and diversity.

9.5   Contact points

We can conclude from the part about contact points that a few initiatives are quite known, but equally important ones like Trust Point or the disability office should be more known by students. It is striking that very few students have appealed to these initiatives during their educational programme, although many of our respondents experienced forms of discrimination. Students expressed a need for more initiatives regarding diversity and discrimination at the faculty. But even more so, there is a need for more clarity regarding contact where students can go with questions/remarks about diversity and discrimination at UGent. Most of the students (80%) agree that a quiet room in the faculty building would be an added value, although only 48% agree that this would be an added value for themselves.

9.6   Diversity characteristics

The survey also aimed to map out the diversity of students at the PSW faculty, considering gender, sexuality, disability, migration background, and socioeconomic status (SES). Regarding gender, an additional category of transgender/genderqueer and nonbinary was included, with 3.1% of the survey sample identifying themselves within that category. This suggests the need for inclusive language towards gender within the faculty and diversity statistics. When it comes to sexuality, 60.58% identified as straight, while 39.42% chose another category, with the largest groups being bisexual (16.0%), questioning (8.9%) and lesbian/homosexual (7.7%). Regarding disability, 30.1% of surveyed students indicated having one or more officially recognized disabilities, with were 'mental health disorder' (10.7%), 'Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder' (7.8%), 'Autism Spectrum Disorder' (5.2%), and 'learning difficulties' such as dyslexia, dyscalculia… (5.2%) being the most prevalent. However, only one-third of these students had a special status at the university for their disability. Further research should be conducted to understand why some students do not have a status to improve accessibility. Additionally, mental health was reported to interfere with the lives of 61.2% of all students as university students.

In terms of migration background, 24.2% of the students had a migration background, with 20.2% having at least one non-Belgian parent by birth and 4.0% having at least one non-Belgian grandparent (when both parents had Belgian nationality by birth). Most parents with a migration background were from Europe, followed by Africa and Asia. Regarding language, 61.1% primarily spoke Dutch at home, while 21.9% spoke other languages as well. In terms of religion, the majority of students indicated that they were not religious (71.2%), with Christians (15,4%) and Muslims (4,6%) being the most common among religious students.

To assess the socioeconomic status (SES) of students, information on parental education, previous educational background, and scholarship recipients was collected. About 23.1% of students had parents who did not receive higher education. None of the students came from a BSO education programme, with 89.3% attending ASO in high school. Among the surveyed students, 12% already had a master's degree, and 15.4% had completed a professional bachelor's degree. A total of 20.8% of

students had either a full or partial scholarship. The majority of students (69.6%) relied on financial support from their parents, while 15.1% of the students funded their education themselves and 11,6% contributed partially to their education. Approximately half of the students lived in a student room, with most of them (84%) not having to cover the cost themselves. About 16% of the students did not have a job alongside their studies, while others worked to afford personal expenses, gain work experience, cover the costs of their studies, or provide financial support to others.

10 RECOMMENDATIONS

Overall, the survey aimed to capture the diversity characteristics of students at the PSW faculty, shedding light on representation, discrimination, contact points, and various aspects related to diversity. The results provide valuable insights for the faculty to promote inclusivity, address underrepresentation, and improve the sense of belonging for all students. Based on the results of this survey and the existing diversity policy at Ghent University we formulated some recommendations for the faculty.

Recommendations
Listen to the students. Students are open for extra measures to create a more inclusive university environment (for example the silent rooms) and want the faculty to do more.
Apply the good tools and the guidelines that already exist, like the DIVSCAN and the training for staff
Decolonize the course material and offer different perspectives
Increase efforts so every student can feel like they belong, including international students
Take action against discrimination by staff and by students. There are too many cases of discrimination, and too little notifications, an accessible and trustworthy hotline/centre is needed

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