



CAPE BRETON ISLAND  
CENTRE FOR IMMIGRATION

# International Student Research Study:

Identifying Challenges, Needs,  
Aspirations and Intentions to Stay in  
Cape Breton Post-Graduation



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## INTRODUCTION

**Of Cape Breton University's 4700 students, 2600 have come to Canada to study from other countries. With more than 55% of the student body coming from outside of Canada, CBU is one of the most international of all Canadian campuses.<sup>1</sup> For both Cape Breton University and the Island, the attraction and retention of international students and graduates is critical to our long-term vitality, sustainability and prosperity.**

With student spending averaging \$30,000 per year, the retention of half of the currently enrolled student population would mean an additional \$39 million/year in spending in the local economy.

As part of an international student retention initiative launched in 2018, the Cape Breton Island Centre for Immigration commissioned the survey research that follows to gain a better understanding of international students' aspirations and challenges, and those things about the Island that students connected with and found compelling.

With an international student enrollment of 1400 at the time the research was conducted, the research team sought a response rate of 10% of the international student body to provide an adequate sample size for analysis. The team exceeded this target, with 151 survey questionnaires completed.

This study provides the Centre with a baseline for student satisfaction/dissatisfaction and intentions to stay after graduation that can be reassessed annually. At the same time, this study provides the community — and other community and government agencies — with some insight into obstacles to retention.

An overwhelming number of survey respondents (87%) indicated a desire to stay in Cape Breton after graduation. This finding is consistent with previous research, in particular, the 2016 Urban Rural Task Force International Student Survey. And yet, our international graduate retention rates continue to be low.

While this research highlights several complex challenges faced by both newcomers and long-time residents alike (employment opportunities and climate), it also highlights other challenges that can, with concerted community effort in the coming years, be overcome: inadequate public transportation and housing, and a lack of activities, entertainment, services, and shopping facilities.

Lastly, it reaffirms those qualities about the Island that make it unique in the world and make us all so proud to continue to call this place home and to invite others to do the same: the beautiful landscapes, the friendly people, the lifestyle, the quality of life, and the peace and cleanliness that we can sometimes take for granted.

This is a very hopeful study; one that suggests that this Island is a highly desirable place for newcomers and that some of the barriers to increasing retention (once immigrants find their way here) are surmountable.

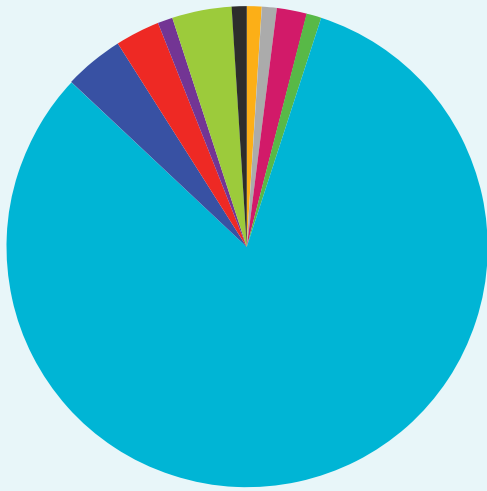
<sup>1</sup> <https://immigration.newdawn.ca/students>

## RESULTS

A series of background questions were asked to provide demographic information on the research participants such as: Nationality, Gender, Age, Program of Study, Year of Study.

### QUESTION #1 ASKS, What is your nationality?

Of the 151 participants, 148 responded and 3 did not.



NATIONALITY	#	%
Bahamas	1	0.7
Bangladesh	1	0.7
Chinese	3	2
Egypt	1	0.7
India	127	84
Kenya	5	3.3
Nigeria	4	3
South Africa	1	0.7
Vietnam	5	3.3
No Response	3	2

### QUESTION #2 ASKS, What is your gender?

Of the 151 participants, 151 responded.

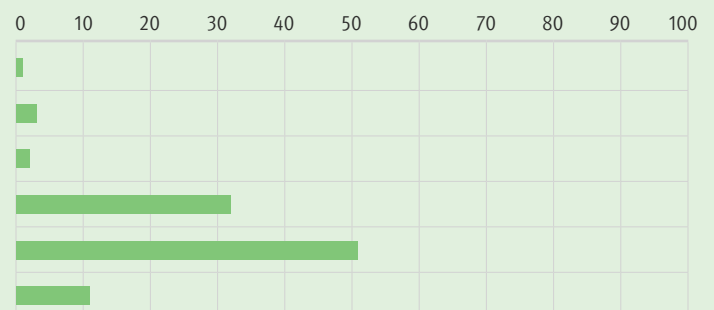


GENDER	#	%
Female	63	42
Male	88	58

### QUESTION #3 ASKS, What is your age?

Of the 151 participants, 151 responded.

NATIONALITY	#	%
40 and over	1	0.5
35 to 39	0	0
30 to 34	4	2.5
25 to 29	49	32
20 to 24	81	54
19 and under	16	11

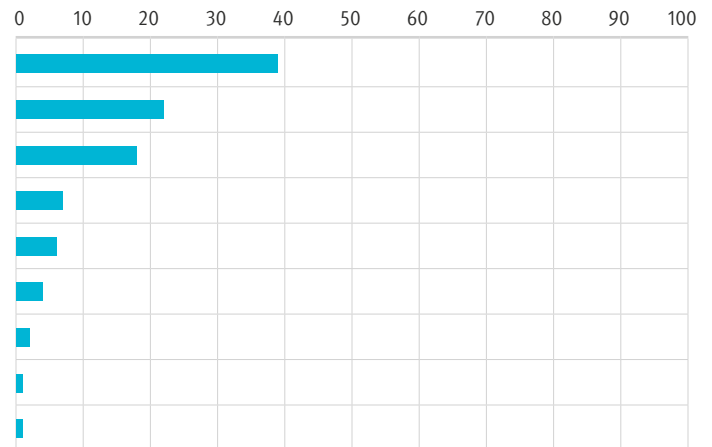


**QUESTION #1 ASKS,**

# What program are you studying at CBU?

Of the 151 participants, 150 responded and 1 did not.

PROGRAM*	#	%
BET <sup>1</sup>	58	39
BHSc <sup>2</sup>	33	22
BBA <sup>3</sup>	28	18
BHTM <sup>4</sup>	10	7
BA <sup>5</sup>	9	6
BSc <sup>6</sup>	6	4
BEng (Transfer) <sup>7</sup>	4	2.5
MBA <sup>8</sup>	1	0.7
BACS <sup>9</sup>	1	0.7

**QUESTION #5 ASKS,**

## What year did you start studying at CBU?

Of the 151 participants, 145 responded and 6 did not. Of the 145 responses, 3 were incomplete.

YEAR BEGAN STUDY	#	%
2016	4	3
2017	22	15
2018	119	82

**QUESTION #6 ASKS,**

## What year do you plan to graduate from CBU?

Of the 151 participants, 150 responded and 1 did not.

YEAR OF GRADUATION	#	%
2018	6	4
2019	25	16.5
2020	88	59
2021	22	14.5
2022	9	6

\* Because respondents did not differentiate between degree or diploma, the responses are collapsed.

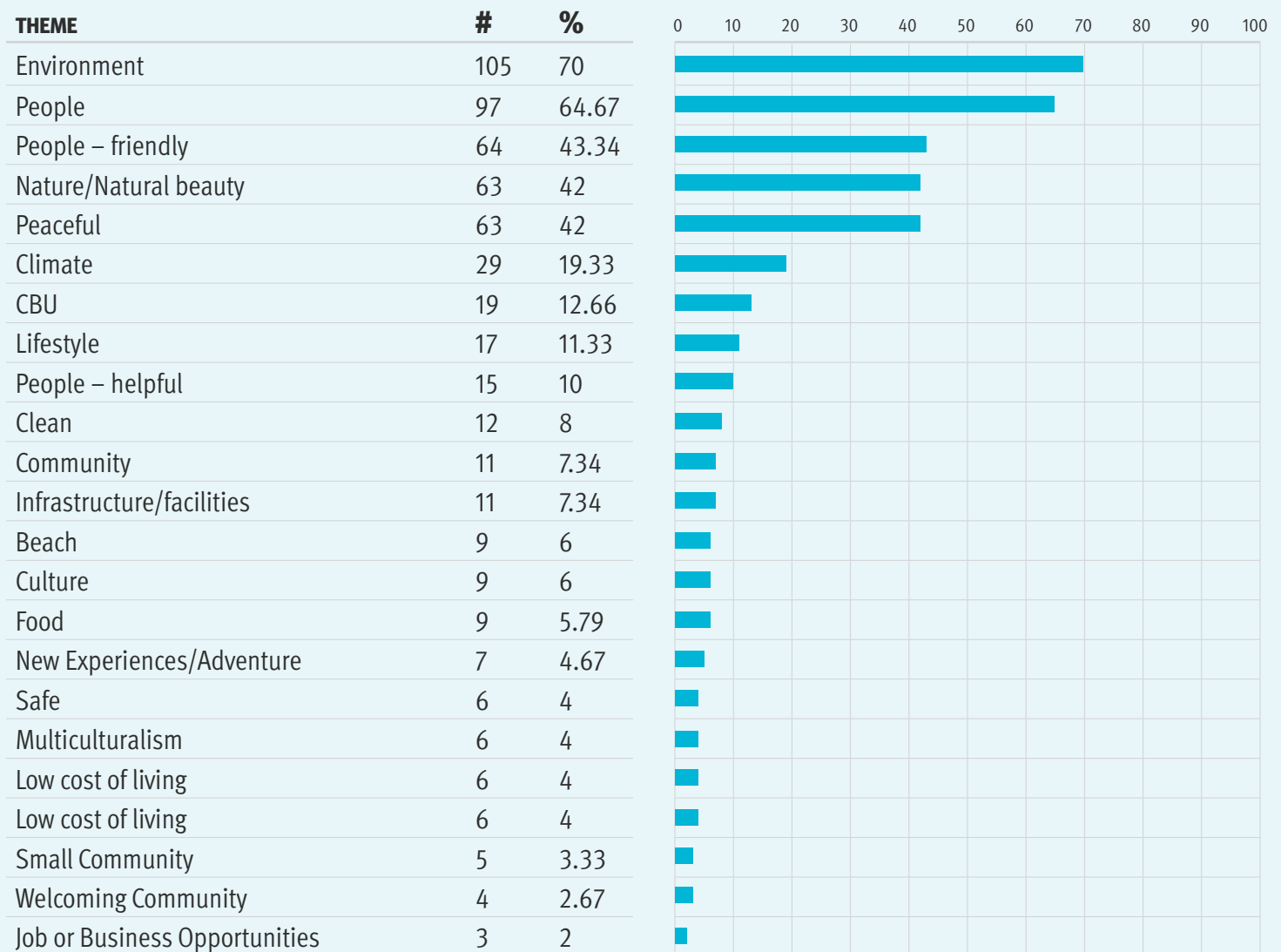
- 1 Bachelor of Engineering Technology (Degree & Diploma)
- 2 Bachelor of Health Sciences (Degree & Diploma)
- 3 Bachelor of Business Administration (Degree & Diploma)
- 4 Bachelor in Hospitality & Tourism Management
- 5 Bachelor of Arts (Degree & Diploma)
- 6 Bachelor of Science
- 7 Bachelor of Engineering Transfer Program
- 8 Masters of Business Administration
- 9 Bachelor of Arts in Community Studies (Degree & Diploma)

## QUESTION #7 ASKS,

# What do you like most about living in Cape Breton? (Name 3)

Of the 151 participants, 149 responded and 2 did not. Of the 149 responses, 1 was incomplete.

It is important to note that some responses are included under more than one theme. For example, if a participant mentioned nature or natural beauty, this response is tallied under the Nature/Natural Beauty theme as well as the Environment theme; if a participant mentions only the environment, the response is included only under the Environment theme. This was done because some participants were specific in their responses while others were very general. The same technique is true for all subsequent questions.

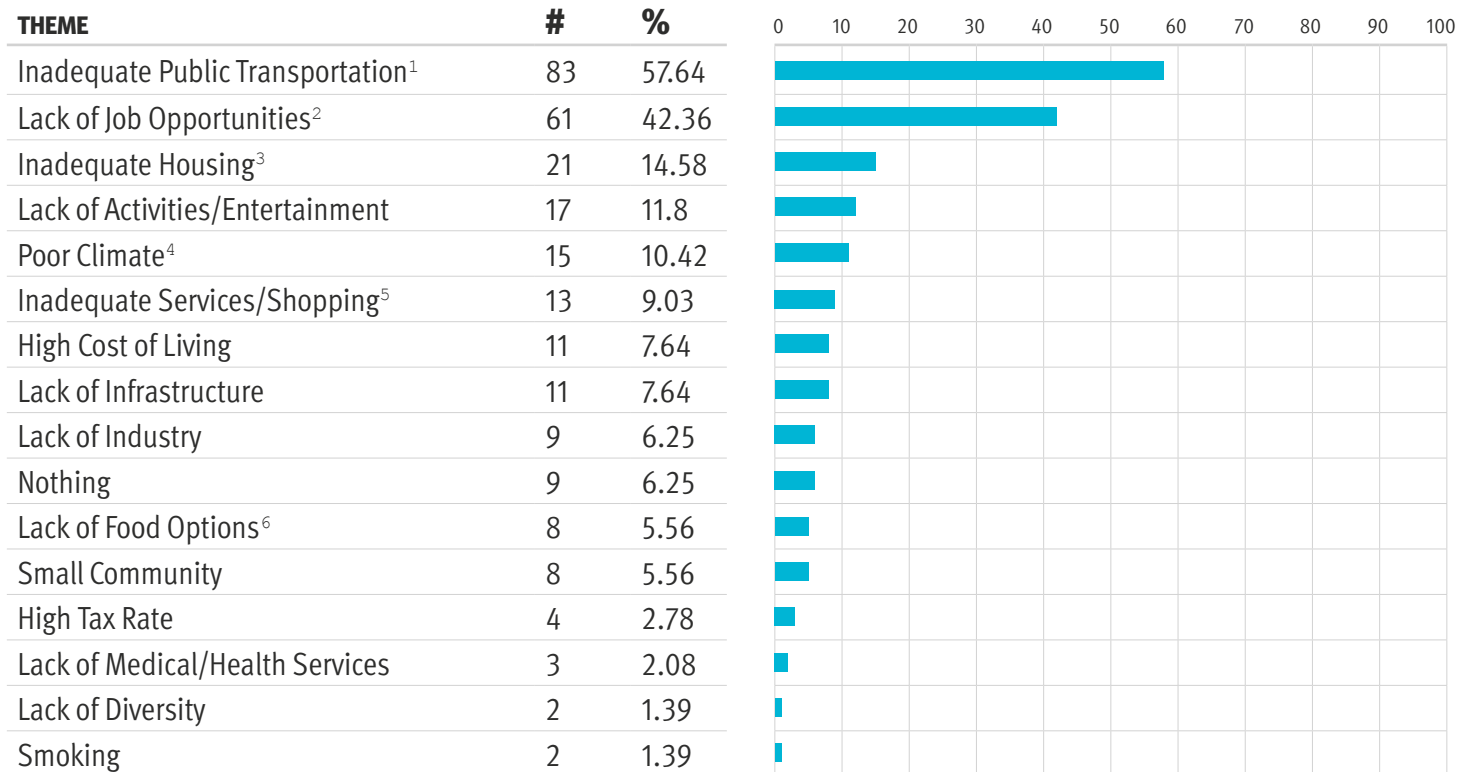


The following themes were not included because they were cited by only 1 individual each:  
Downtown Sydney; New Waterford; Better Wage

**QUESTION #8 ASKS,**

# What do you like least about living in Cape Breton? (Name 3)

Of the 151 participants, 144 responded and 7 participants did not. Of the 144 responses, 3 were incomplete.



The following themes were not included because they were cited by only 1 individual each: CBU facilities; Environment; High Tuition; Lack of Young People; Litter; Lack of Guidance

**QUESTION #9 ASKS,**

## Are you interested in staying in Cape Breton after you graduate?

Of the 151 participants, 146 responded and 5 did not.

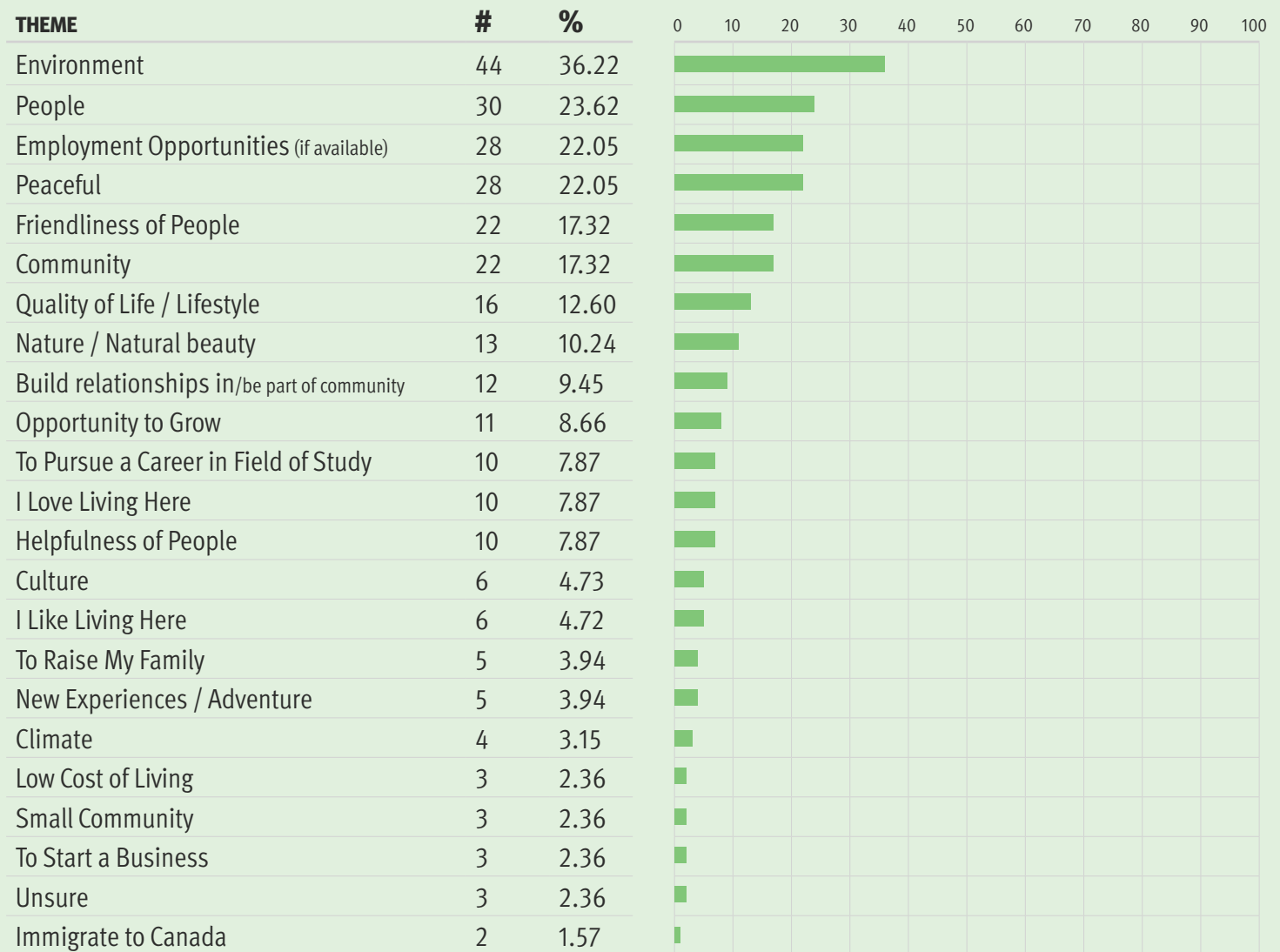


- 1 Includes availability, frequency, crowding
- 2 includes part-time
- 3 Includes availability, cost
- 4 Includes winter, wind
- 5 Includes limited hours, distance
- 6 Includes ethnic, Indian, vegetarian

## QUESTION #10 ASKS,

# If you answered yes to Question #9, why are you interested in staying in Cape Breton after you graduate?

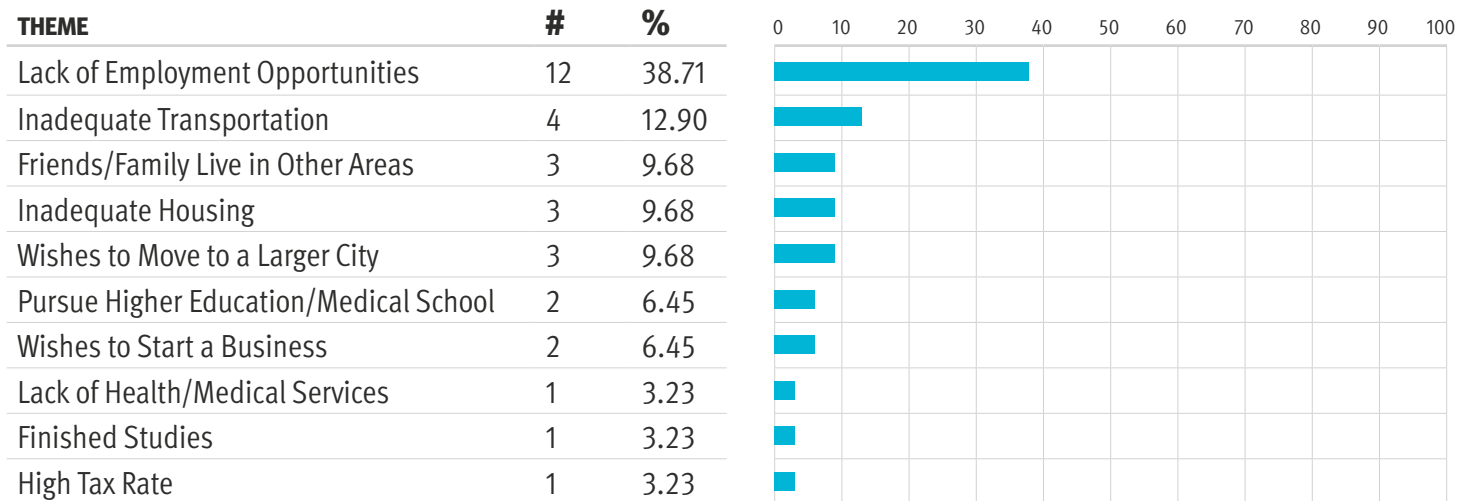
Of the 151 participants, 127 responded and 24 did not. Of the 127 responses, 5 were incomplete.



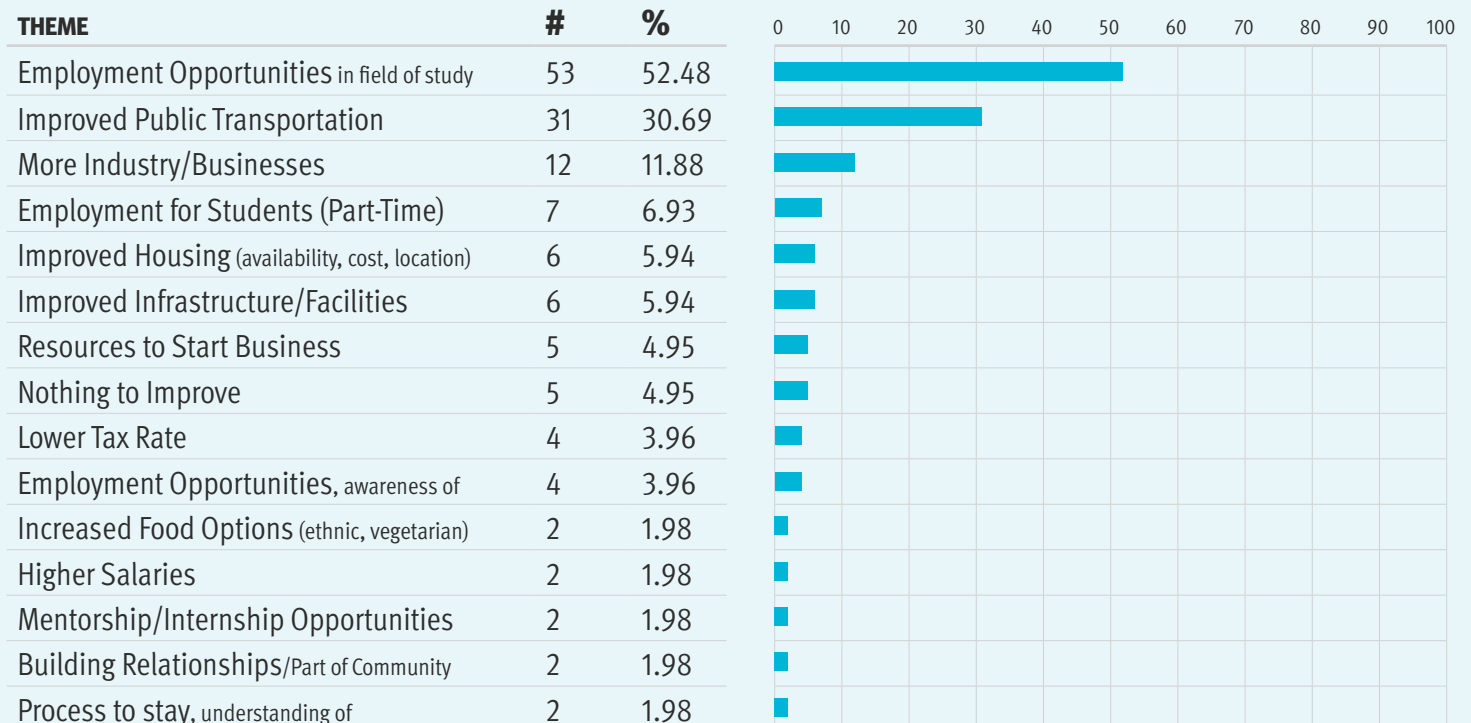
The following themes were not included because they were cited by only 1 individual each:  
Pursue Master's Degree; My family moved here; Safe

**QUESTION #11 ASKS,****If you answered no to Question #9, why are you not interested in staying in Cape Breton after you graduate?**

Of the 151 participants, 31 responded and 120 did not. Of the 31 responses, 4 were incomplete.

**QUESTION #12 ASKS,****Whether you answered yes or no to Question #9, is there anything that could be done to help make it easier for you to stay in Cape Breton?**

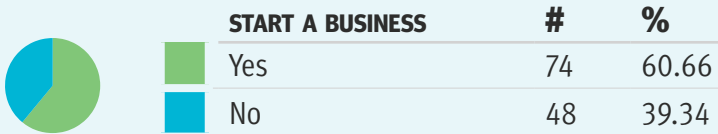
Of the 151 participants, 101 responded and 50 did not. Of the 101 responses, 5 were incomplete.



The following themes were not included because they were cited by only 1 individual each: CBU facilities; Environment; High Tuition; Lack of Young People; Litter; Lack of Guidance

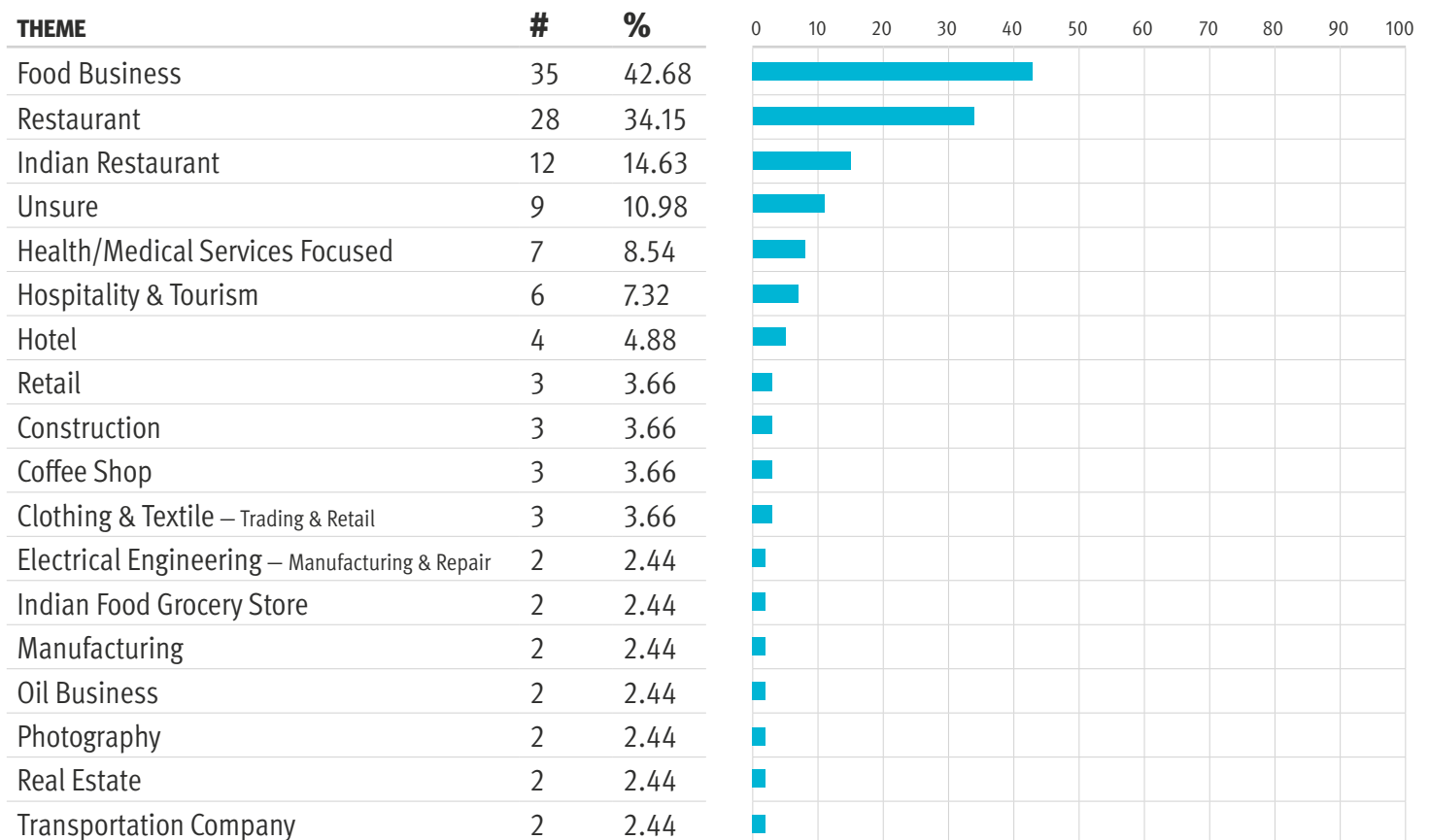
## QUESTION #13 ASKS, Are you interested in starting a new business in Cape Breton?

Of the 151 participants, 122 responded and 29 did not.



## QUESTION #14 ASKS, If you answered yes to Question #13, what kind of business would you like to start?

Of the 151 participants, 82 responded and 69 did not. Of the 82 responses, 9 were incomplete.

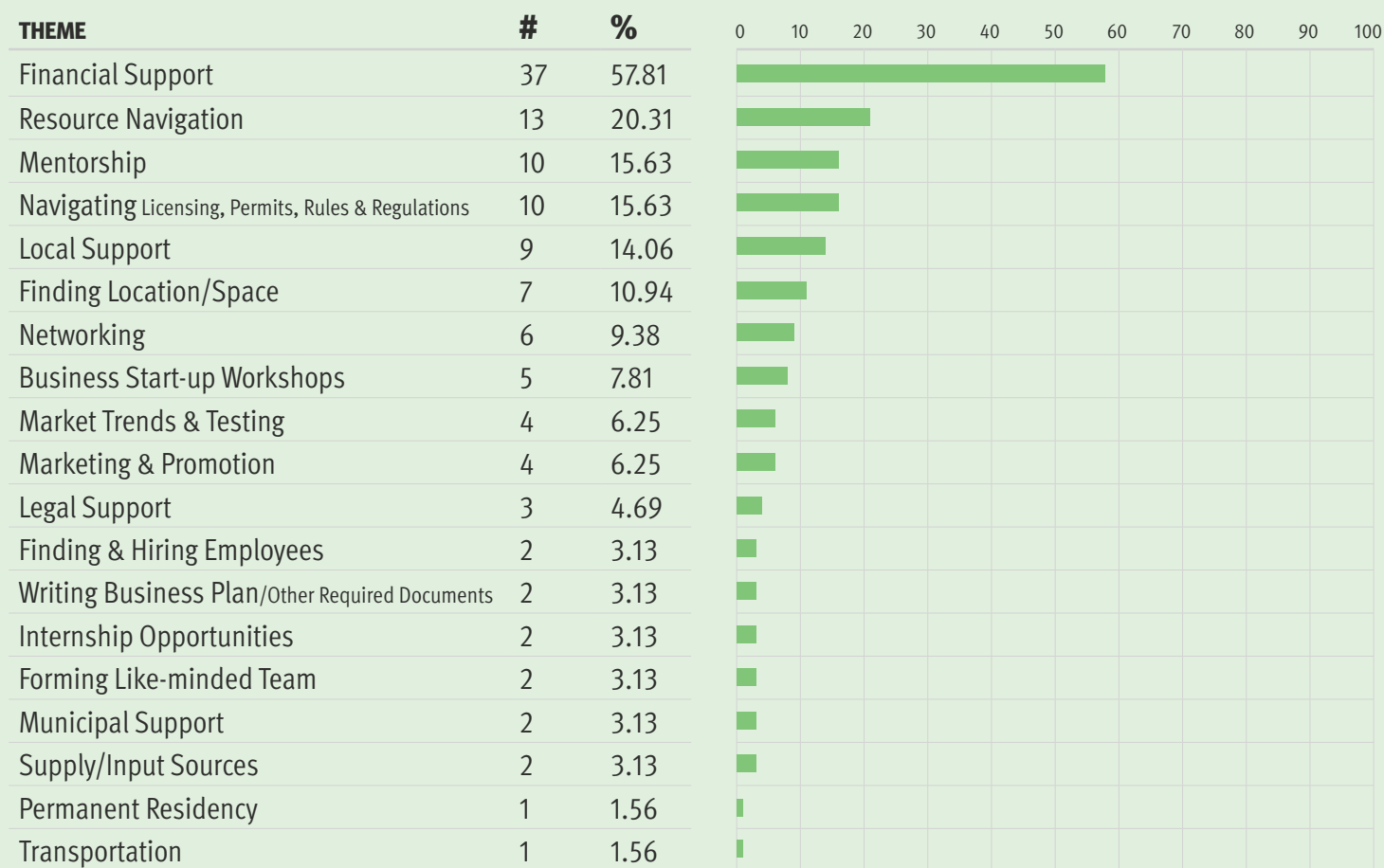


The following themes were not included because they were cited by only 1 individual each: Agriculture Industry; Bakery; Bar; Cosmetic Company; Design firm; Export Business; Food Supply Management; Grocery Store; Hair salon; Health Education; Health Maintenance; IT Firm; Mechanical Products; Media; Mental Health Clinic; Nursing Home; Pharmacy and Pharmacovigilance; Support organization for women entrepreneurs; Textile design academy

QUESTION #15 ASKS,

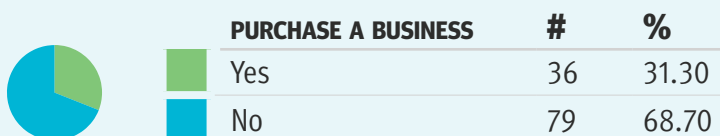
# If you answered yes to Question #13, what kind of help do you need to start a new business in Cape Breton?

Of the 151 participants, 64 responded and 87 did not. Of the 64 responses, 5 were incomplete.



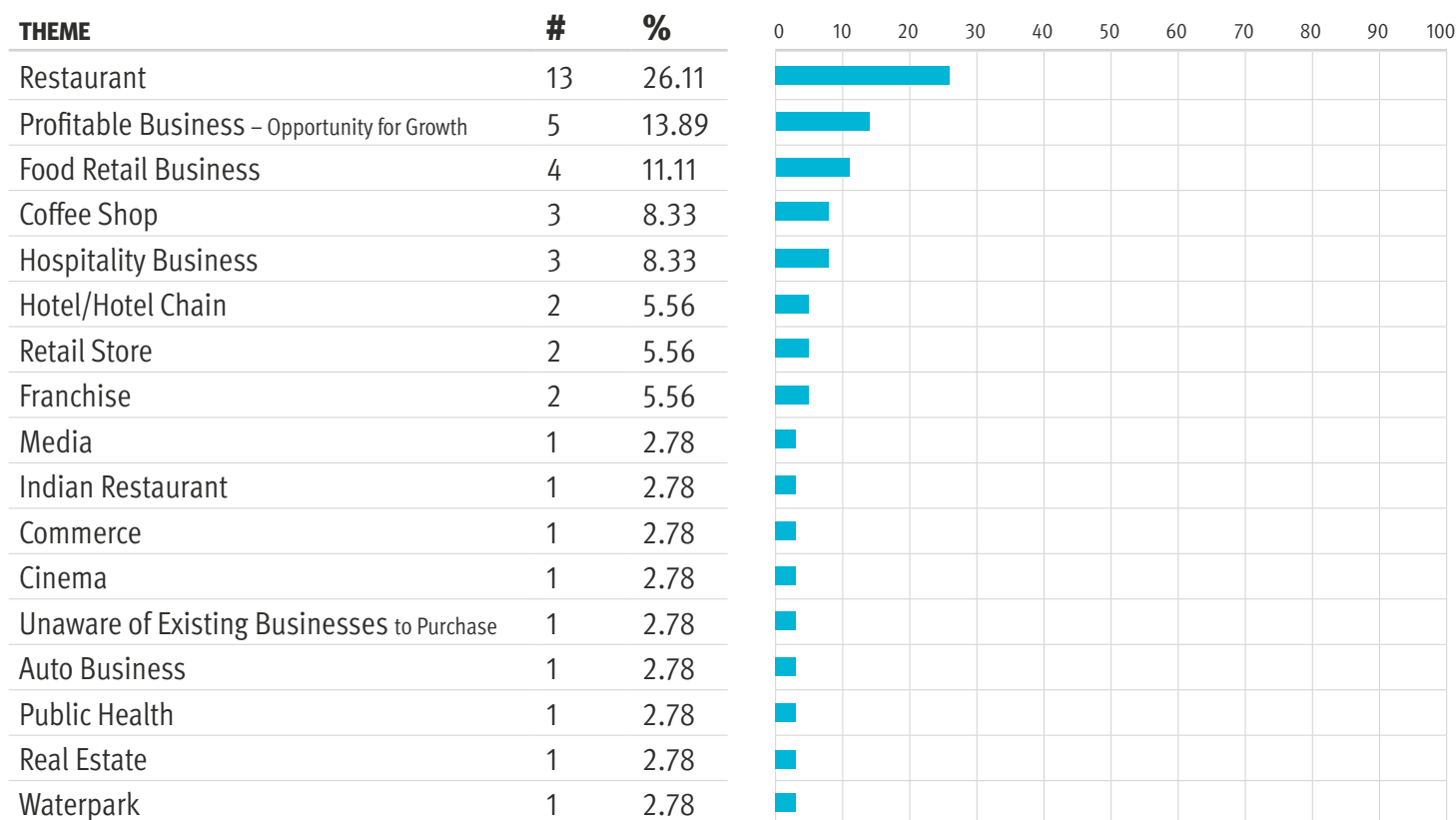
## QUESTION #16 ASKS, Would you be interested in purchasing an existing business?

Of the 151 participants, 115 responded and 36 did not.



## QUESTION #17 ASKS, If you answered yes to Question #16, what kind of existing business would you be interested in purchasing?

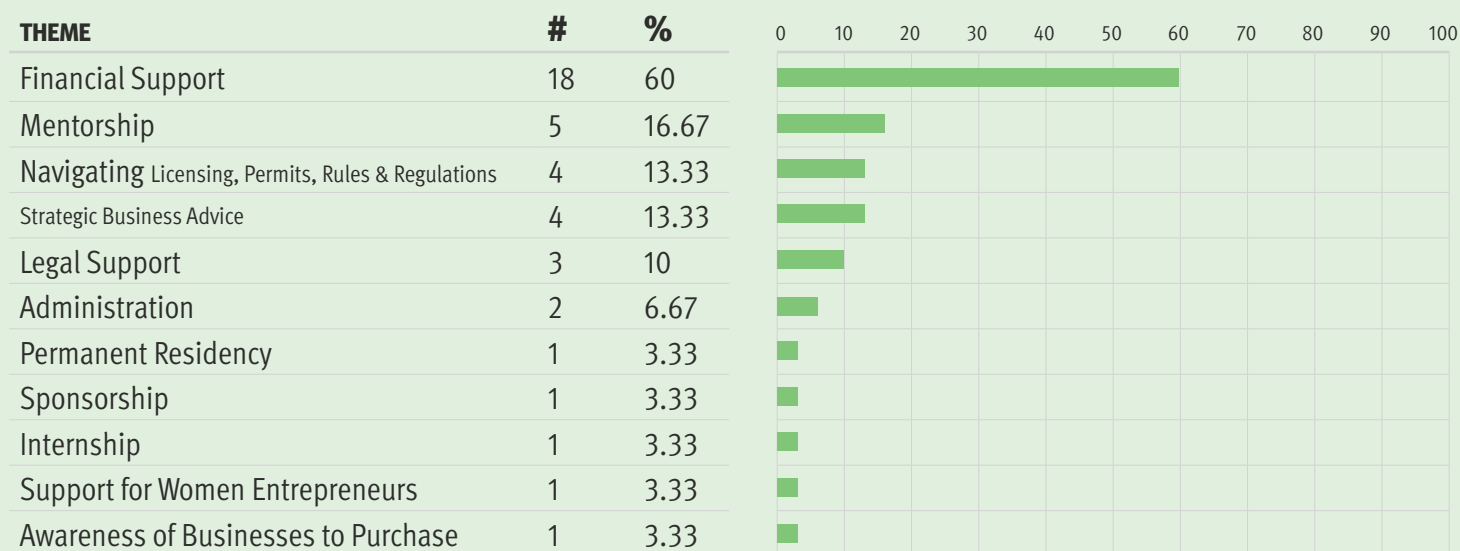
Of the 151 participants, 36 responded and 115 did not. Of the 36 responses, 4 were incomplete.



QUESTION #18 ASKS,

# If you answered yes to Question #16, what kind of help do you need to buy an existing business?

Of the 151 participants, 30 responded and 121 participants did not. Of the 30 responses, 4 were incomplete.



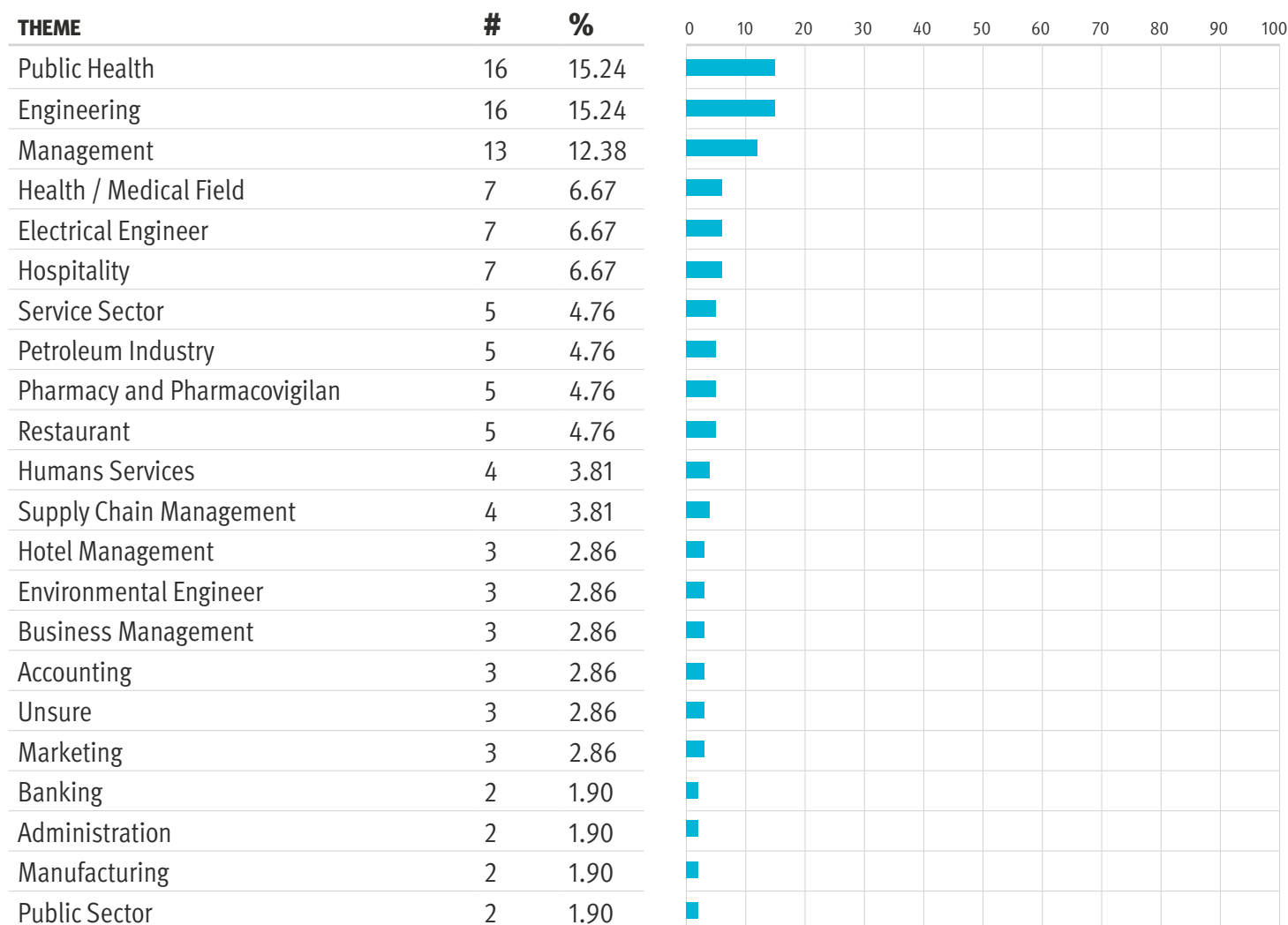
## QUESTION #19 ASKS, Are you interested in being employed in Cape Breton?

Of the 151 participants, 122 responded and 29 did not.



## QUESTION #20 ASKS, If you answered yes to Question #19, what would you like to do?

Of the 151 participants, 105 responded and 46 did not. Of the 105 responses, 10 were incomplete.

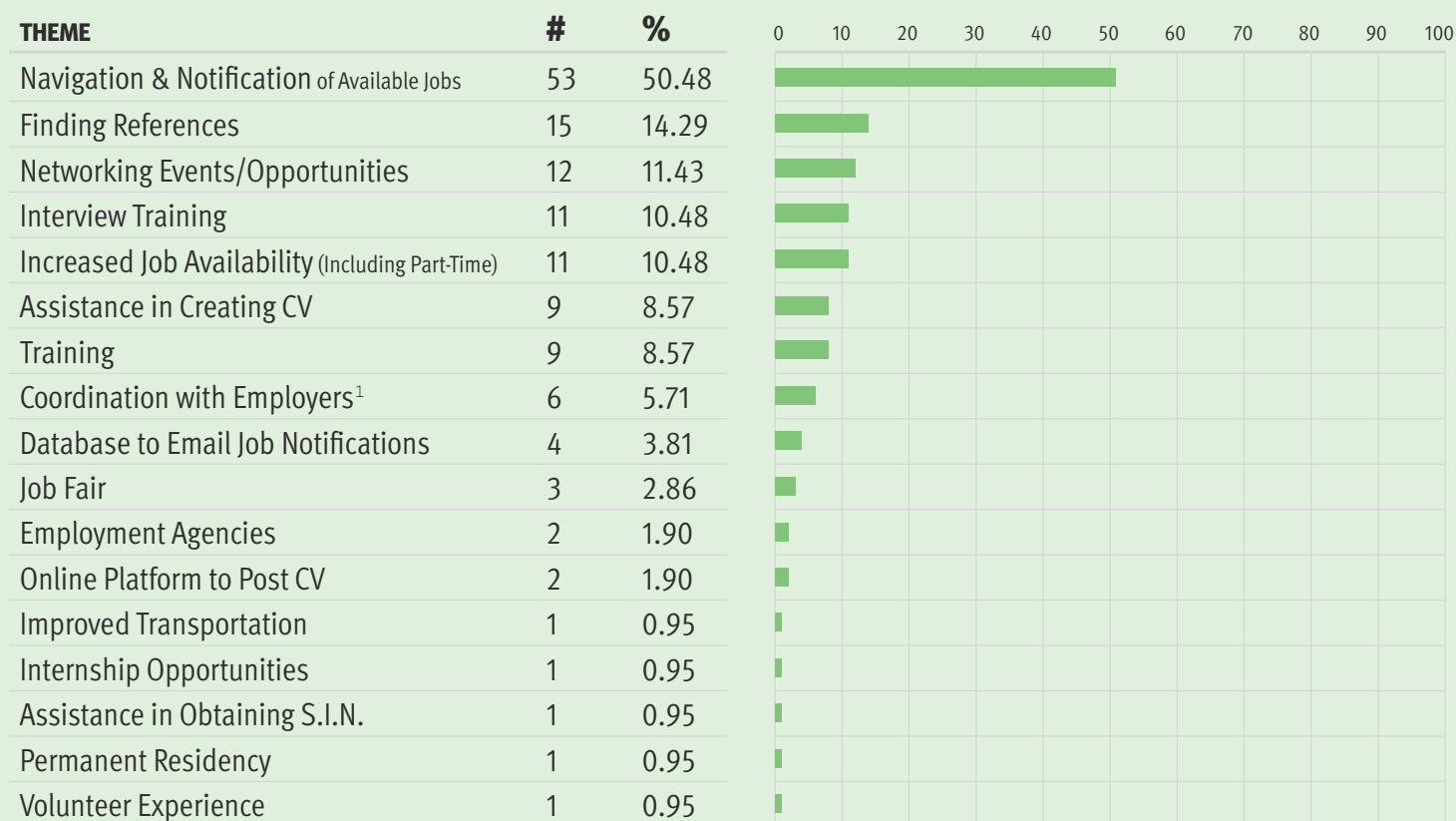


The following themes were not included because they were cited by only 1 individual each:  
Business Analyst; Call Centre; Construction; CCA; Cosmetic Company; HR; Lab Technician;  
Librarian; OH; Performance Arts; Photography; Psychology; Social Work; Teacher

QUESTION #21 ASKS,

# If you answered yes to Question #19, what kind of help do you need to get a job in Cape Breton?

Of the 151 participants, 105 responded and 46 participants did not. Of the 105 responses, 11 were incomplete.



1. On Job Availability & Hiring International Students/Graduates

## SUMMARY

### Background

A majority of the respondents (83%) are from India.

58% of the respondents are male and 42% of the respondents are female.

A majority of the respondents (54%) are between the ages 20 and 24.

The top 5 most common programs participants are studying are:

- 39% Bachelor of Engineering Technology (Degree and Diploma)
- 22% Bachelor of Health Sciences (Degree and Diploma)
- 18% Bachelor of Business Administration (Degree and Diploma)
- 7% Bachelor of Hospitality & Tourism Management
- 6% Bachelor of Arts (Degree and Diploma)

A majority (82%) of the students started studying in 2018.

### Open-Ended Questions

The top 5 reasons why the respondents like living here:

- 70% The Environment
- 65% The People (43% — especially the friendliness of the people)
- 42% Nature and Natural Beauty
- 42% Peaceful
- 19% Climate (It should be noted that the survey was administered in September)

The top 5 reasons why the respondents don't like living here:

- 58% Inadequate public transportation (availability, frequency, overcrowding)
- 42% Lack of job opportunities (Including part-time)
- 15% Inadequate housing (availability, cost)
- 12% Lack of activities/entertainment
- 10% Poor Climate

A majority (88%) of the respondents are interested in staying in Cape Breton after graduation.

### The top 5 reasons why respondents are interested in staying in Cape Breton graduation:

- 36% TheEnvironment
- 24% ThePeople
- 22% Potential employment opportunities (if available)
- 22% Peaceful (17% — especially the friendliness of the people)
- 17% Community

### The top 5 reasons why respondents are not interested in staying in Cape Breton after graduation:

- 39% Lack of employment opportunities
- 13% Inadequate transportation
- 10% Friends and family live elsewhere
- 10% Inadequate housing
- 10% Prefer to live in a bigger city

### The top 5 things to make it easier to stay in Cape Breton:

- 52% Employment opportunities (specifically in field of study)
- 31% Improved public transportation
- 12% More Industry/Businesses
- 7% Employment opportunities for students (specifically part-time)
- 6% Improved housing (availability, cost, location)

### A majority (61%) of respondents are interested in starting a new business in Cape Breton.

#### The top 5 businesses respondents wish to start:

- 43% Food Businesses (34% — specifically restaurants; 15% — specifically Indian restaurants)
- 9% Unsure
- 9% Health/Medical Services focused
- 6% Hospitality/Tourism (5% — specifically hotel focused)
- 4% Retail

#### The top 5 resources needed to start a new business:

- 58% Financial support
- 20% Resource navigation
- 16% Mentorship
- 16% Navigating licensing, permits, rules & regulations
- 14% Local support

**A majority (69%) would not be interested in purchasing an existing business (31% are interested).**

**The top 5 businesses respondents would be interested in purchasing:**

- 26% Restaurant
- 14% Sector not specified — Only a profitable business with opportunity for growth
- 11% Food Retail Business
- 8% Coffee Shop
- 8% Hospitality Business (6% — specifically hotel/hotel chain focused)

**The top 5 resources needed to purchase an existing business:**

- 60% Financial support
- 17% Mentorship
- 13% Navigating licensing, permits, rules & regulations
- 13% Strategic business advice
- 10% Legal support

**A majority (95%) of respondents are interested in being employed.**

**The top 5 employment preferences:**

- 15% Public Health
- 15% Engineering (7% — electrical engineering)
- 13% Management
- 7% Health/Medical Field
- 7% Hospitality

**The top 5 resources needed to get a job:**

- 51% Navigation & notification of available jobs
- 14% Finding references
- 11% Networking events/opportunities
- 10% Interview training
- 10% Increased job availability (including part-time)

## METHODOLOGY

The International Student Research Study utilizes a quantitative approach by employing a survey questionnaire based on a well-crafted conceptualization of the research objectives.

Research study participants were given the option to complete the survey questionnaire online or via paper copy. Over a one-day period, the research team set-up a station at Cape Breton University to invite students to participate. This eliminated physical barriers to participation and the research team was also present to answer any questions that may have arisen about the survey questionnaire.

With an international student enrollment of 1400 (when surveyed, September 2018), the research team sought to a response rate of 10% of the international student body to ensure an adequate sample size to be analyzed. In fact, the research team exceeded this number, with 151 survey questionnaires completed. All surveys were completed via paper and uploaded to an online research tool for analysis.

The survey questionnaire applied open-ended questioning to reach a better understanding of international students' challenges, needs and aspirations. The reason for this is that open-ended questions have the following advantages:

- Response error is typically reduced by enabling participants to respond in their own words.
- Respondents are able to include more information, such as feelings, attitudes, and their understanding of the subject. (Closed-ended questions, because of the simplicity and limit of the answers, may not offer the respondents choices that reflect their real feelings).
- Respondents are given the opportunity to explain if they do not understand the question or do not have an opinion on an issue.
- May yield more candid information and unique insight for researchers as respondents may find them less threatening than scaled questions.

Each survey questionnaire included an explanatory note to convey the necessary background information to the participant. The explanation included the survey's purpose and goals to help respondents understand the context of the research project, as well as the time requirement for completion and the measures taken to ensure confidentiality of participants. No identifying marks were included on the surveys ensuring confidentiality and anonymity.

The questionnaires were constructed as simply as possible, using colloquial vocabulary and sentence structure to maximize readability, and the respondents' understanding of what is being asked.

To ensure the best research design and to rule out any potentially irrelevant paths of inquiry, the research team administered a pilot test to a small group of individuals who are similar to the group being sampled to gauge the type of responses being received for each question and to ascertain whether any questions are ambiguous or are misinterpreted.

Answers collected via paper were data entered by a member of the research team in order to allow for statistical analysis. The results from the survey were anonymously aggregated and the responses for each question were coded (the process of taking the open-end responses and categorizing them into group). Consistent coding of the questions and answers was used in order to ensure accuracy of data analysis.

Based on the analysis of data collected the research team provides suggestions on steps required to address the needs, aspirations, and concerns, of international students with the intention of retaining a 7% increase of international students post-graduation.

**See Appendix 1 for the survey questionnaire**

## APPENDIX 1

Hi, my name is Deeno Tuggar.

I am the Retention Coordinator at the Cape Breton Island Centre for Immigration at New Dawn.

We are conducting a brief survey to help us identify ways to help International Students settle on the Island easily.

The survey should only take approximately ten minutes of your time, depending on the depth you'd like to give to your answers. Any information that is shared will be confidential. The data will be shared only in aggregate form and no response will be associated with a specific person or business.

If you have any questions, or would like to add anything after the interview, please feel free to contact me at dtuggar@newdawn.ca.

### Background Questions

1. Nationality?
2. Gender?
3. Age?
4. What program are you studying at CBU?
5. In what year did you start studying at CBU?
6. When do you expect to graduate from CBU?

### Open-Ended Questions

7. What do you like most about living in Cape Breton? (Name 3)
8. What do you like the least about living in Cape Breton? (Name 3)
9. Are you interested in staying in Cape Breton after you graduate? Yes or No.
  - a) If yes, why?
  - b) If no, why?
10. Whether you answered yes or no, is there anything that could be done to help make it easier for you to stay in Cape Breton?

#### **\* IF YOU ANSWERED NO TO QUESTION #9, THE SURVEY IS COMPLETE \***

11. Are you interested in starting a new business in Cape Breton? Yes or No.
  - a) If yes, what kind of business?
  - b) What kind of help do you need to start a new business in Cape Breton?
12. Would you be interested in buying an existing business? Yes or No.
  - a) If yes, what kind of existing business?
  - b) What kind of help do you need to buy an existing business?
13. Are you interested in being employed in Cape Breton? Yes or No.
  - a) If yes, what would you like to do?
14. What kind of help do you need to get a job in Cape Breton?