



SSMU Fall Reading Week – JED Implementation Analysis

March 14, 2019

Presented to Legislative Council Committee

AGENDA

Survey Methodology and Analysis

Survey Results - Testimonials

Focus Group Methodology and Results

Importance of Mental Health: EUS Survey

Key Takeaways

Problems per Faculty

DISCLAIMER: *There will be mentions of suicide*

Survey Methodology and Analysis



Survey Methodology and Analysis

Survey Results - Testimonials

Focus Group Methodology and Results

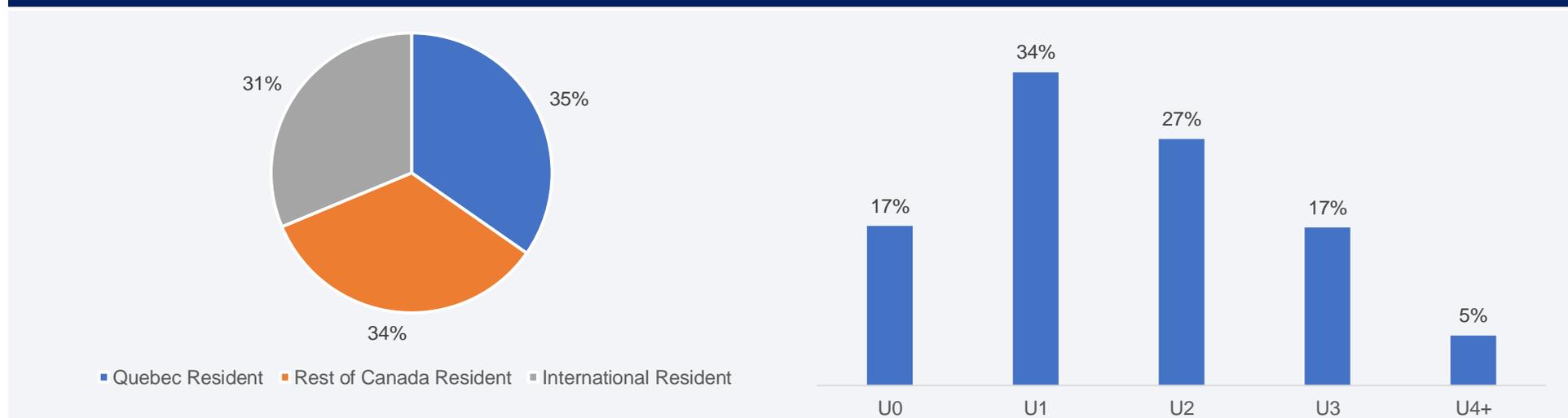
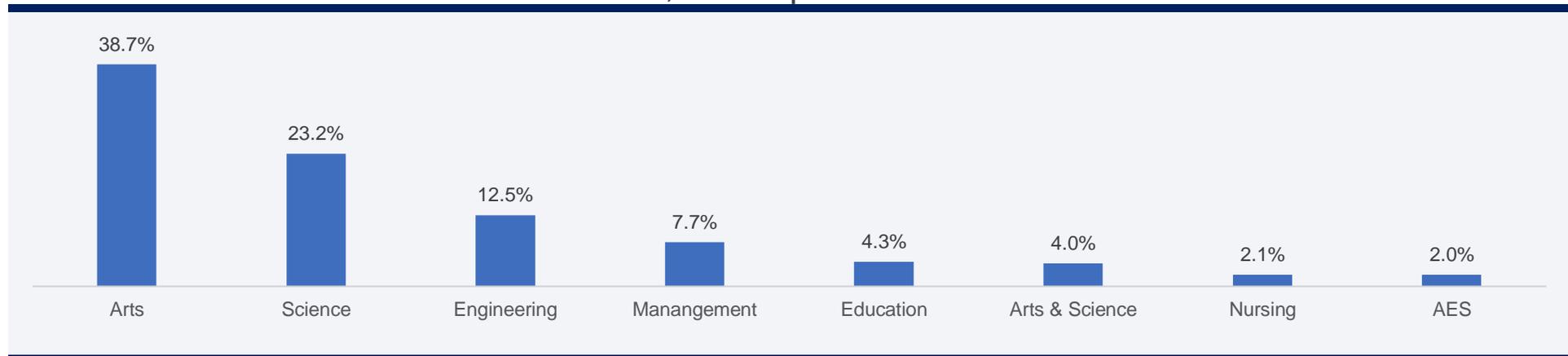
Importance of Mental Health: EUS Survey

Key Takeaways

Problems per Faculty

Survey Demographics: All Faculties well Represented

4,338 respondents



Survey Demographics: in Numbers

Year of Program	N	%	Faculty	N	%
U0	746	17%	Arts	1658	39%
U1	1466	34%	Science	993	23%
U2	1154	27%	Engineering	534	12%
U3	739	17%	Manangement	331	8%
U4+	233	5%	Education	185	4%
			Arts & Science	173	4%
			Nursing	88	2%
			AES	87	2%
			Music	83	2%
			Law	60	1%
			PT/OT	48	1%
			Medicine	29	1%
			Dentistry	18	0.4%

Lease Length	N	%
12 months	1961	45%
I live in a McGill Residence	954	22%
I am not renting/I do not have a lease	869	20%
8 months	397	9%
Other	157	4%

Residency	N	%
Quebec Resident	1506	35%
Rest of Canada Resident	1475	34%
International Resident	1357	31%

About 15.7% of McGill undergraduates were surveyed and only 9% of students have an 8 month lease.

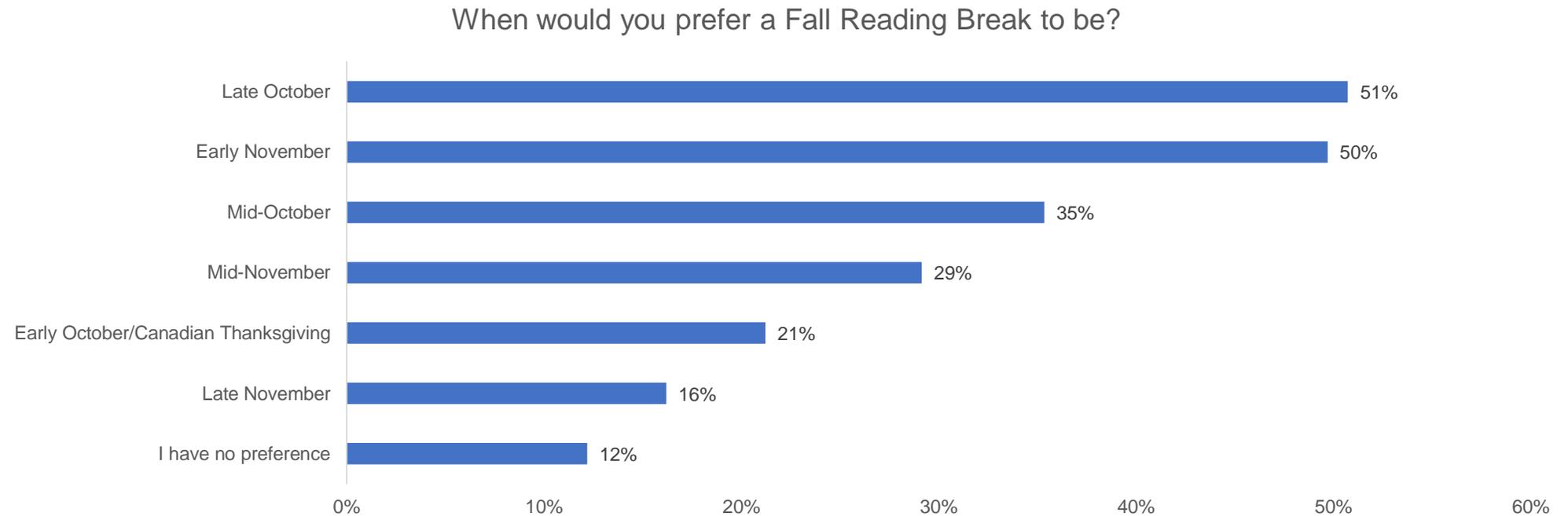
Survey Demographics: in Numbers

The overall response rate was 15.7%. Program breakdown as follows:

Faculties of Arts and Science	33%
Faculty of Arts	18%
Faculty of Science	16%
Faculty of Engineering	11%
Desautels Faculty Management	10%
Schulich School of Music	9%
Faculty of Dentistry	7%
Faculty of Education	7%
Faculty of Law	7%
Faculty of Agric Environ Sci	4%
Faculty of Medicine	1%

There was a good diversity of faculties and a high turnout from the major faculties.

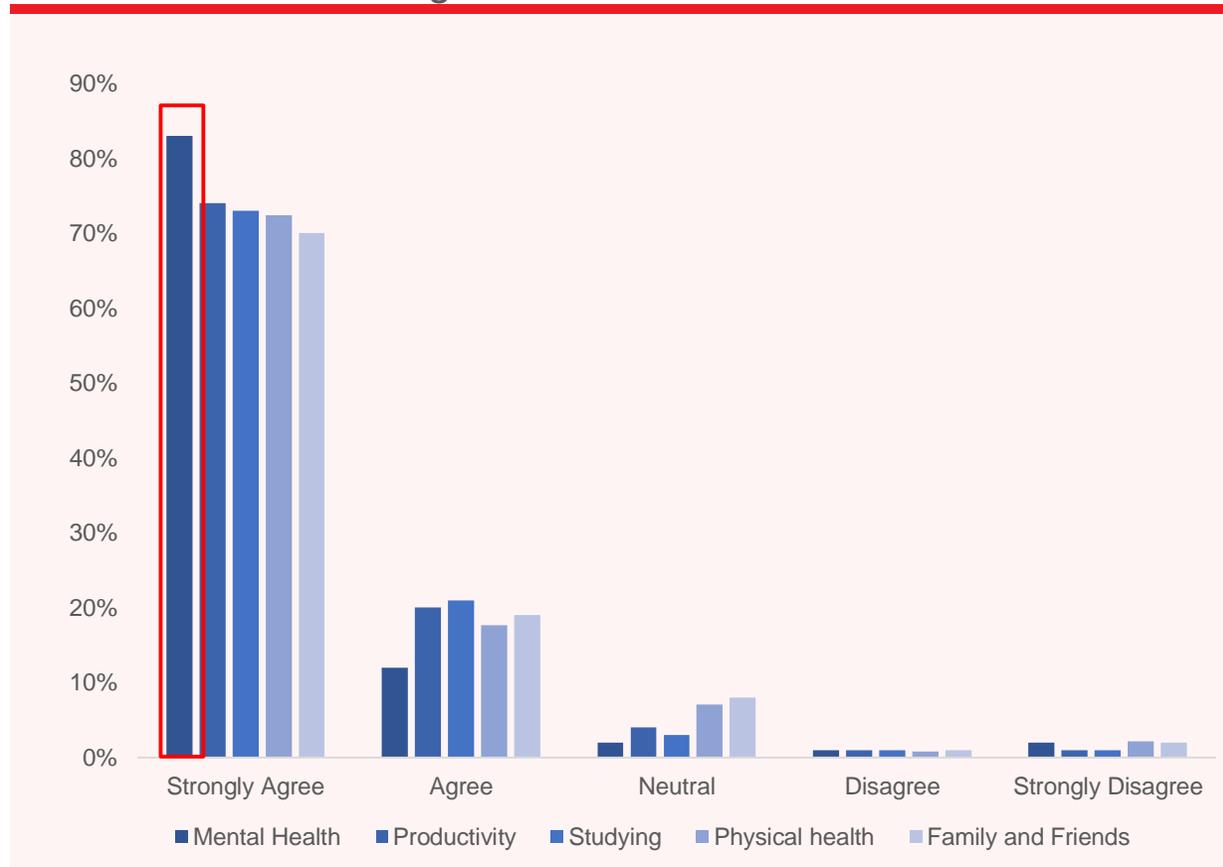
Fall Reading Week Placement



15% of those who said late November mentioned “thanksgiving” in their reasons why they want a reading week (American thanksgiving is late November so likely correlation).

What would a fall reading week be used for?

A Fall Reading Break will allow me to focus on...



Insights

- The majority of students agreed that a reading week would benefit each polled category.
- Mental Health is the greatest concern for students since it is **10% greater** than the next category.

Survey Results: Methodology

GOAL: To determine the favourite solutions among students and learn about the sacrifices they would accept.

QUESTION: For a Fall Reading Break, I would be willing to:

- ① Have the earliest morning classes start earlier than 8:30 AM
- ② Have Fall exams start the day after the last day of classes (remove study day)
- ③ Have more condensed midterm schedules
- ④ Have weekend exams during the Fall exam period
- ⑤ Have slightly longer class times
- ⑥ Have classes start before Labour Day but within the month of September
- ⑦ Have classes start in late August

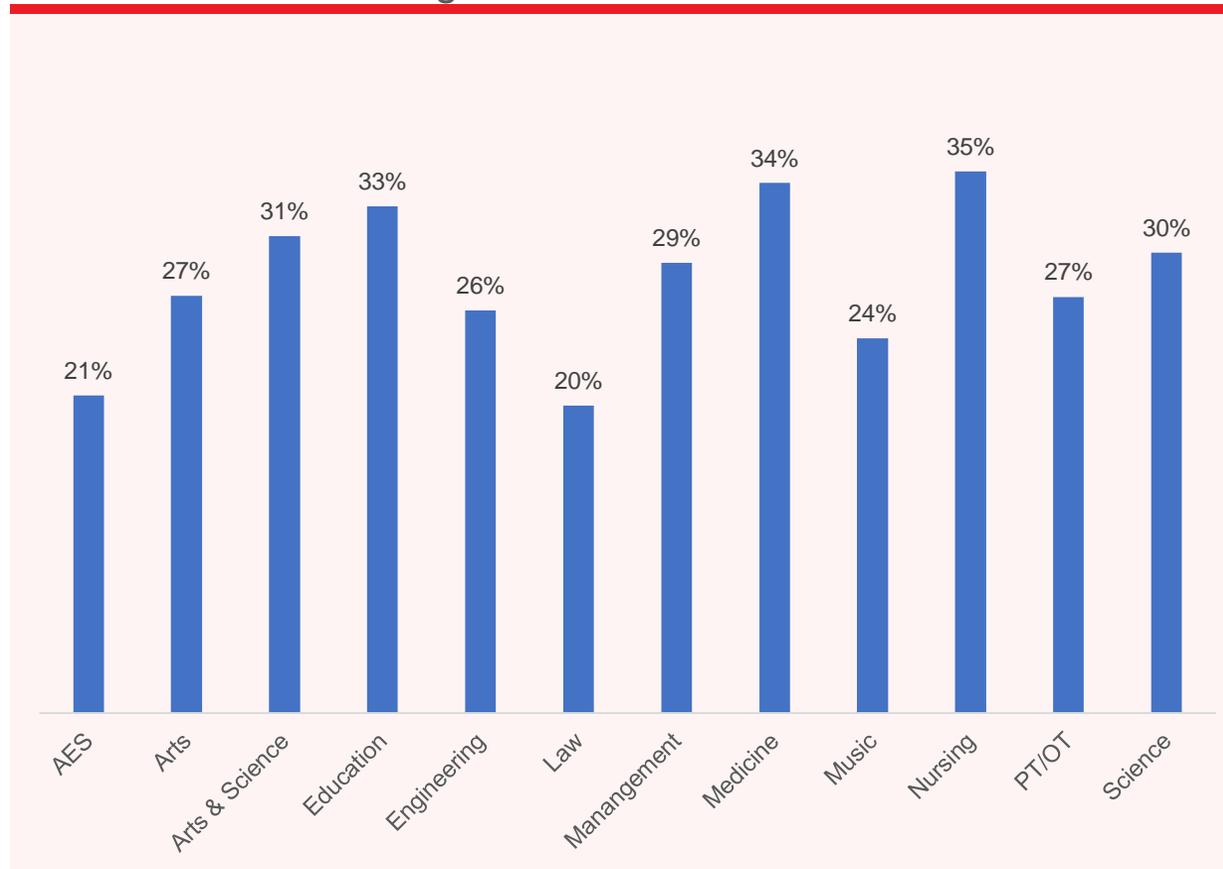
Response options were broken down into:

- 1 Week
 - 4 day
 - 5 days
 - I would not be willing to do this → NO*
- } YES

* If respondents answered “yes” and “no” – qualified as no (approx. 255)

Survey Results

Willingness to Start before 8:30

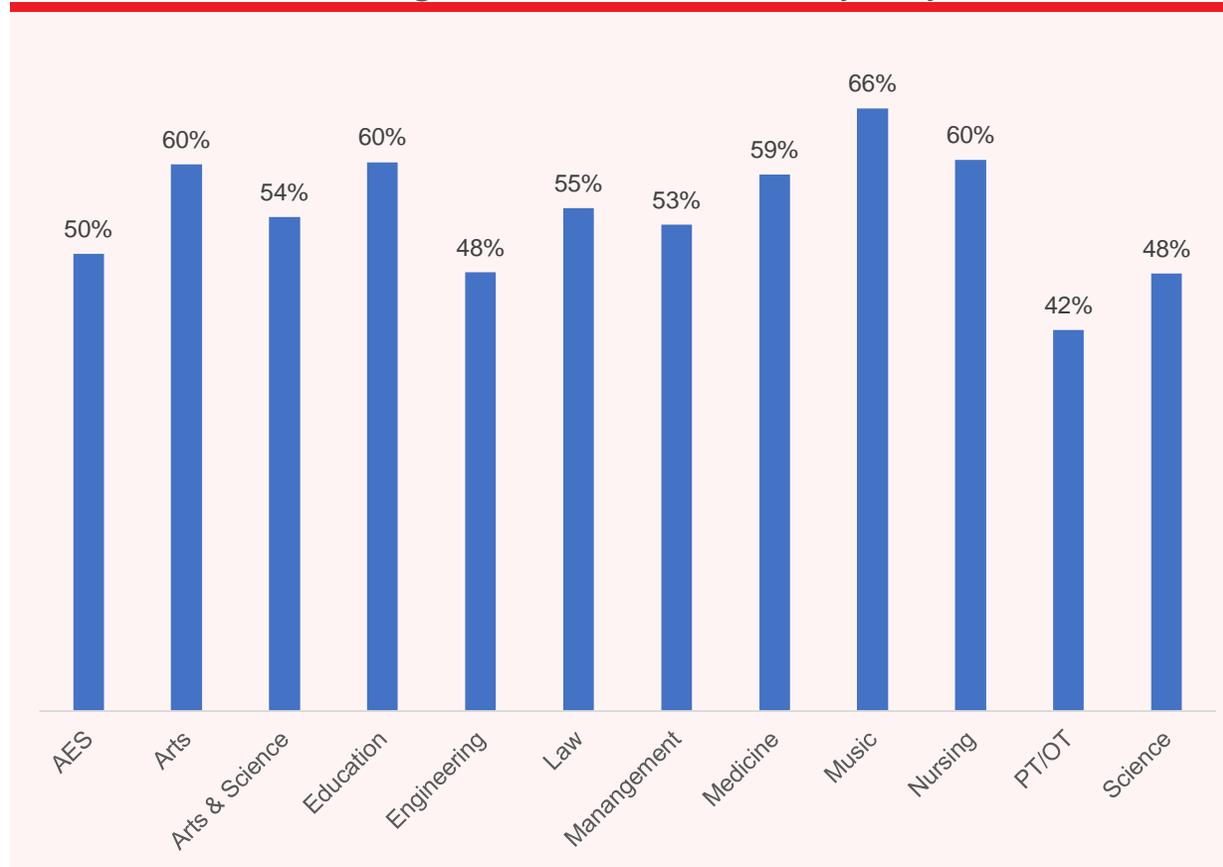


Insights

- BY FAR lowest overall willingness – standard deviation is 5%: not much variation in the dislike of the option
- AES: 79% unwilling to start 8:30 – many would have to commute to mac campus

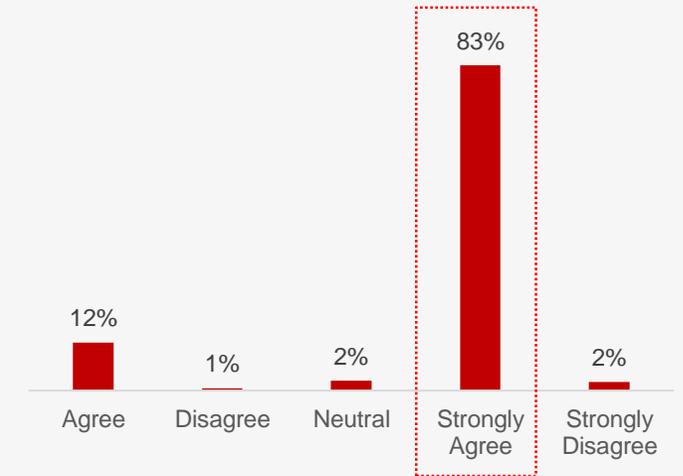
Survey Results

Willingness to Remove Study Day



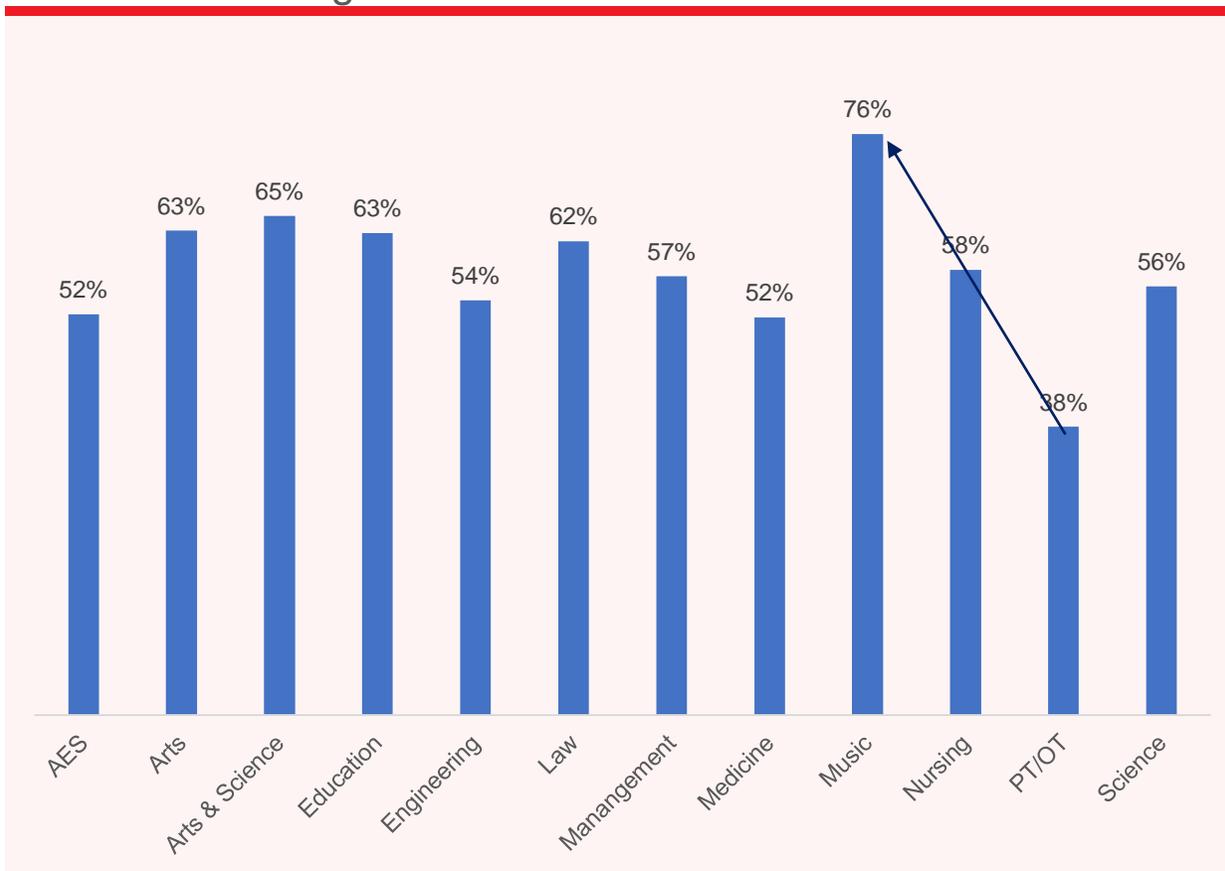
Insights

- The second worst option for the biggest faculties (arts, management, science, engineering, arts & science)
- 83% of respondents said the reading week will help them with mental health



Survey Results

Willingness to Have Condensed Midterms

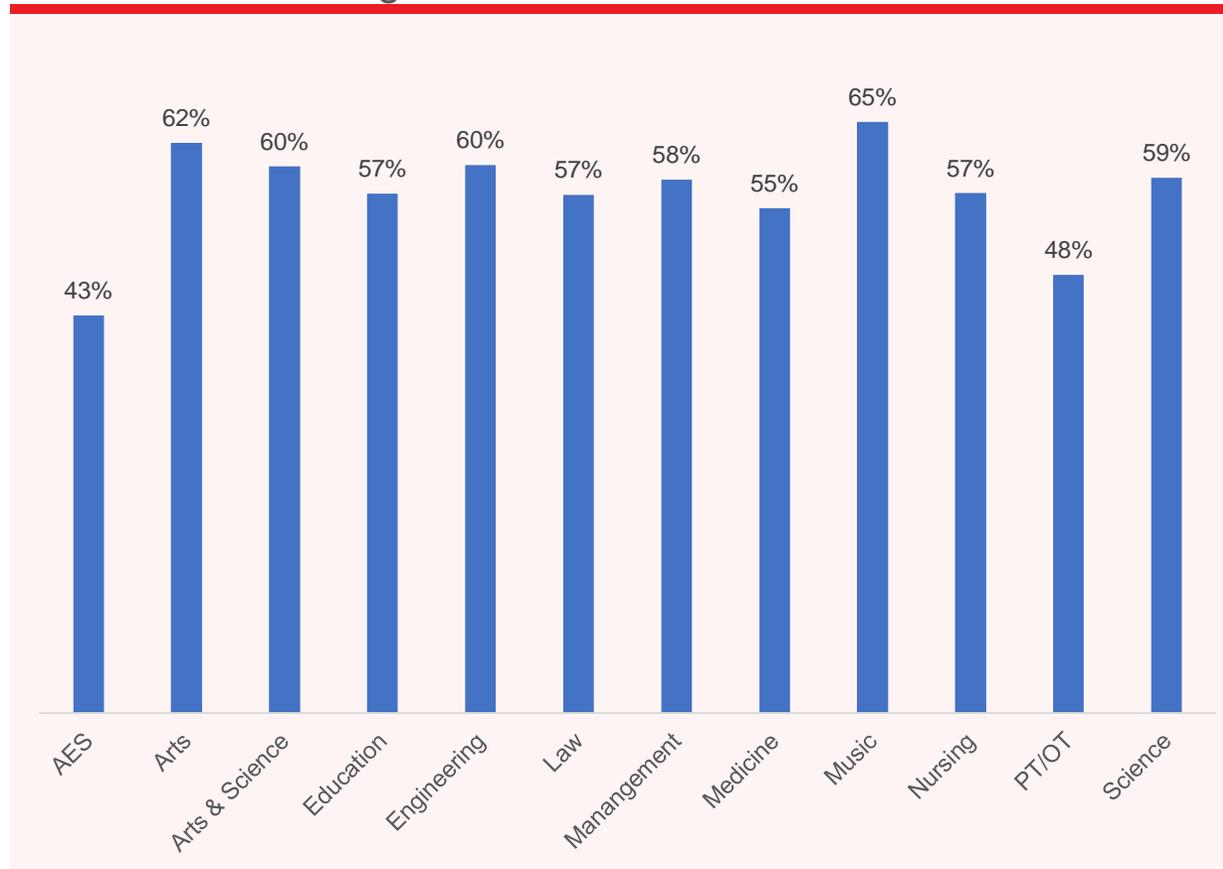


Insights

- Music department's second highest option, but overall a bad option for other faculties
- Extremely high spread – 38% spread in responses
- May be part of a faculty-tailored response. Not recommended university-wide

Survey Results

Willingness to Have Weekend Exams

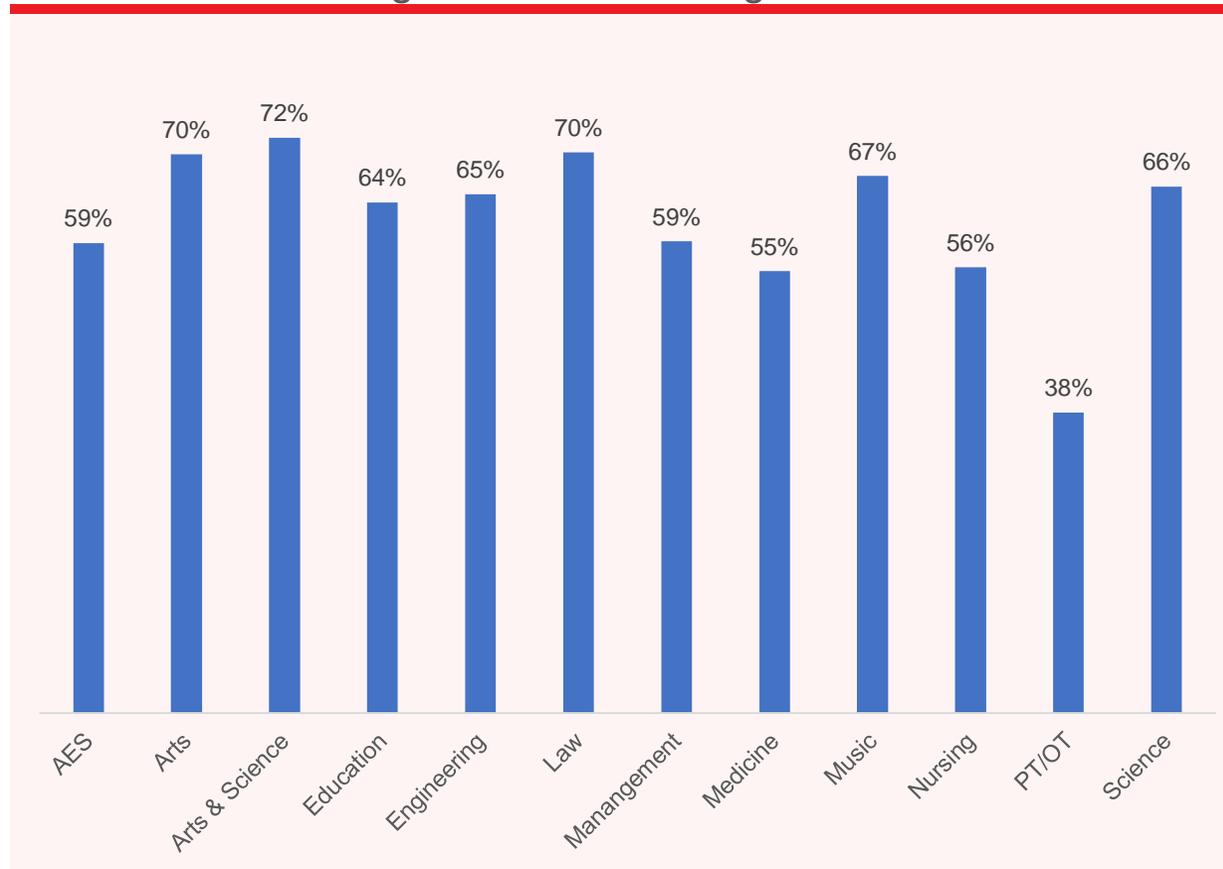


Insights

- Engineering is 60% willing to have weekend exams → could make weekend exams faculty specific?
- Agriculture not willing → would have to commute to mac.

Survey Results

Willingness to Have Longer Classes

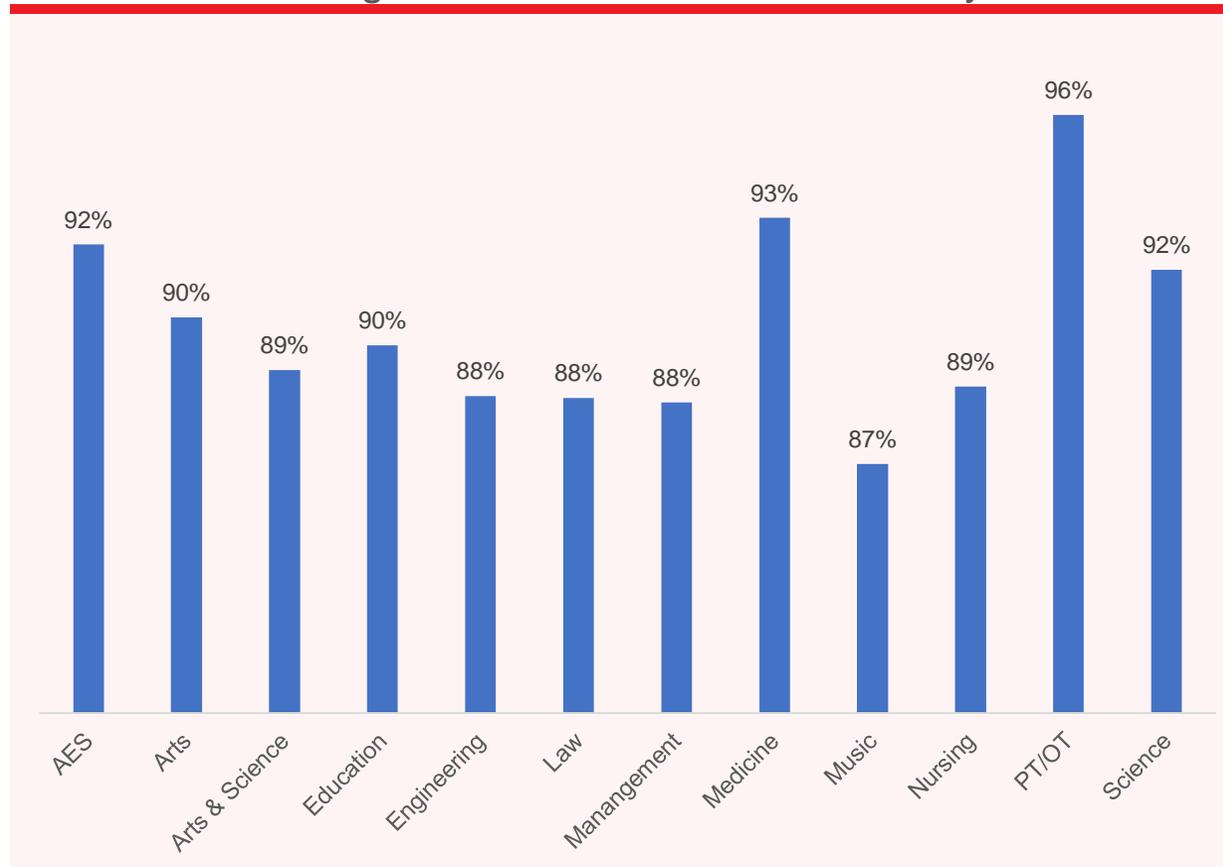


Insights

- One of the two "second most popular" options – average of 62%
- Arts/Arts & Science likes this option the most – unlike management, they have no classes after 6pm.

Survey Results

Willingness to Start before Labour Day:

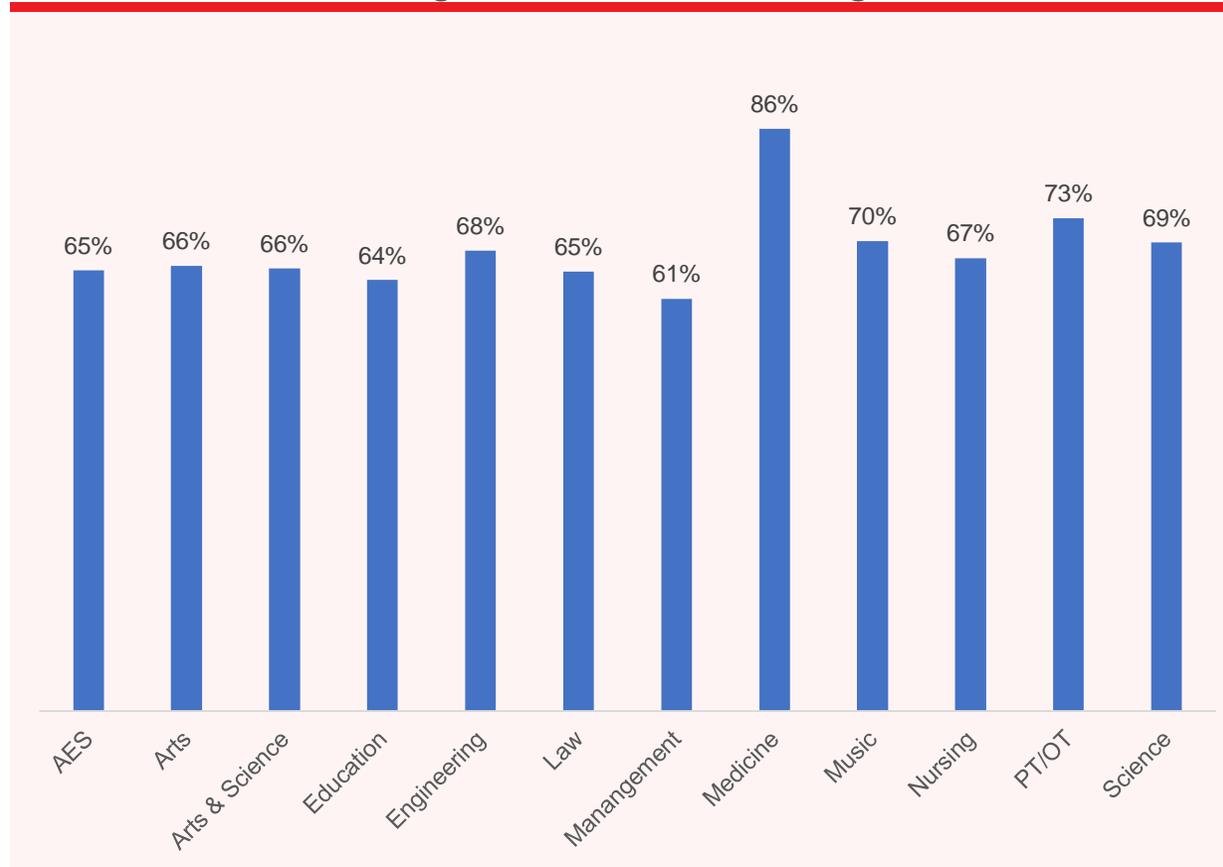


Insights

- BY FAR highest overall willingness: grand majority of each faculty willing to do this (min: 87%)
- PT/OT and Medicine faculties like this option the most
- AES responded highest to this option, compared to all other responses (drop in 27% to second best option)

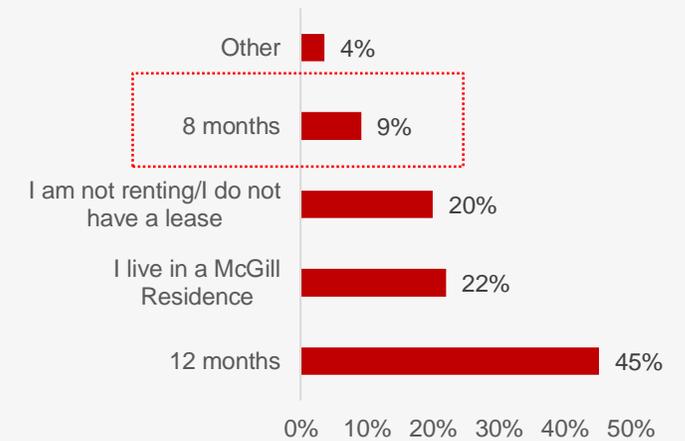
Survey Results

Willingness to Start Late August



Insights

- One of the two "second most popular" options – average of 68%
- Feasible since only 9% have 8 month leases



Survey Results - Testimonials

Survey Methodology and Analysis



Survey Results - Testimonials

Focus Group Methodology and Results

Importance of Mental Health: EUS Survey

Key Takeaways

Problems per Faculty

Popular student responses

1st Order Consequences

- 1 Allow more time to study and catchup on semester deadlines
- 2 Allow students to go home and visit their families
- 3 More time to do extra-curriculars and to deal with post graduation (i.e. Recruitment, Grad School)

Student Responses

“This was incredibly helpful to **catch up** and to revise material. Without the breaks we are just trying to **keep up instead of actually learning.**”

“I often get **homesick and struggle with depression**, It’s difficult for me to travel home for the short amount of time and I often feel like a miss out and it makes me very **unhappy at McGill.**”

“**Recruitment** for consulting happens right during this time frame, and is pretty intense on top of juggling with school work.”

“It is essential to have a couple days off to refocus on applications, **catch up on school work** or classes missed because of tight interview timelines.”

“Would have given me the chance to catch up on my **extracurricular responsibilities** running a club that organizes workshops for high schoolers.”

Students are suffering in the fall from a higher pressure in their schedules and are forced to remain behind in their studies.

Popular student responses

2nd Order Consequences

- 1 It will reduce the burnout, and help with students mental health.
- 2 Allow students to recover from physical illness from stress or sudden change of weather.
- 3 Allow students to take or manage a full course load during the fall semester.

Student Responses

"I feel completely **burnt out after midterms** and need some time to get it together before finals."

"I experienced **mental breakdowns** and even **physical illnesses** during those periods."

"If not given the chance to catch up on our work, have some time to see our families, and recoup, the effects on our **mental health and well-being** will be **detrimental**."

"I always took one fewer classes in the fall semester because **without the break**, it was just **not possible** to take a full load."

"This year my physical health is declining and I have **lost weight** to the point of a **sickly BMI** but I feel like I have no time to manage meals and get myself on a **healthy track**."

The lack of a fall reading in turn has affected students mental and physical health pushing students to very unhealthy and unenjoyable lifestyles.

Impactful Testimonials

“I question my decision to **remain at McGill** as I simply feel as though I am **not cared for.**”

“People have seriously talked about **suicide and feeling pointless** at that point due to the amount of **pressure and workload** they are put under with no seeming benefit.”

“For the past three years, the Fall semesters have driven me to **contemplate suicide** and that I have had to **seek help.**”

“I had just come back to start my 2nd year after tragically losing my older brother to suicide less than 2 months earlier. The previous year, I had a 4.0 GPA and then, I was **deferring exams, crying everyday, and considering dropping out.** I am from Vancouver, a 6 hr flight away, and although my parents are more than willing to fly me home, doing so for 2 days is just not as realistic as people who live closer.”

“Walk in McConnell starting **Mid October** and ask every person you see if they have any will to **live anymore**, and that question will answer itself.”

Students' mental health is affected most heavily from the high workload and lack of a break, which in some cases even lead to suicidal thoughts.

Survey Results - Testimonials

"Why do you want a fall reading week" qualitative responses:

Factor (word used)	Frequency
"Stress or mental health or burnout"	39.66%
"Study"	25.74%
"Family or Friends"	16.44%
"Physical health or gym or exercise"	5.80%

This relates to responses about benefits from reading week:

- **83% strongly agree it will help them focus on mental health**
- 73% strongly agree it will help them focus on **studying**
- 72% strongly agree it will help them focus on **physical health**
- 70% strongly agree it will help them focus on **family & friends**

Mental health is the **most** crucial factor. Reading week could potentially **reduce** spending on the Student Mental Health Action Plan.

Focus Group Methodology and Results

Survey Methodology and Analysis

Survey Results - Testimonials



Focus Group Methodology and Results

Importance of Mental Health: EUS Survey

Key Takeaways

Problems per Faculty

Focus Groups: Methodology

GOAL: How would people's opinions change based on the scarifies that would have to be made?

SCHEDULE:

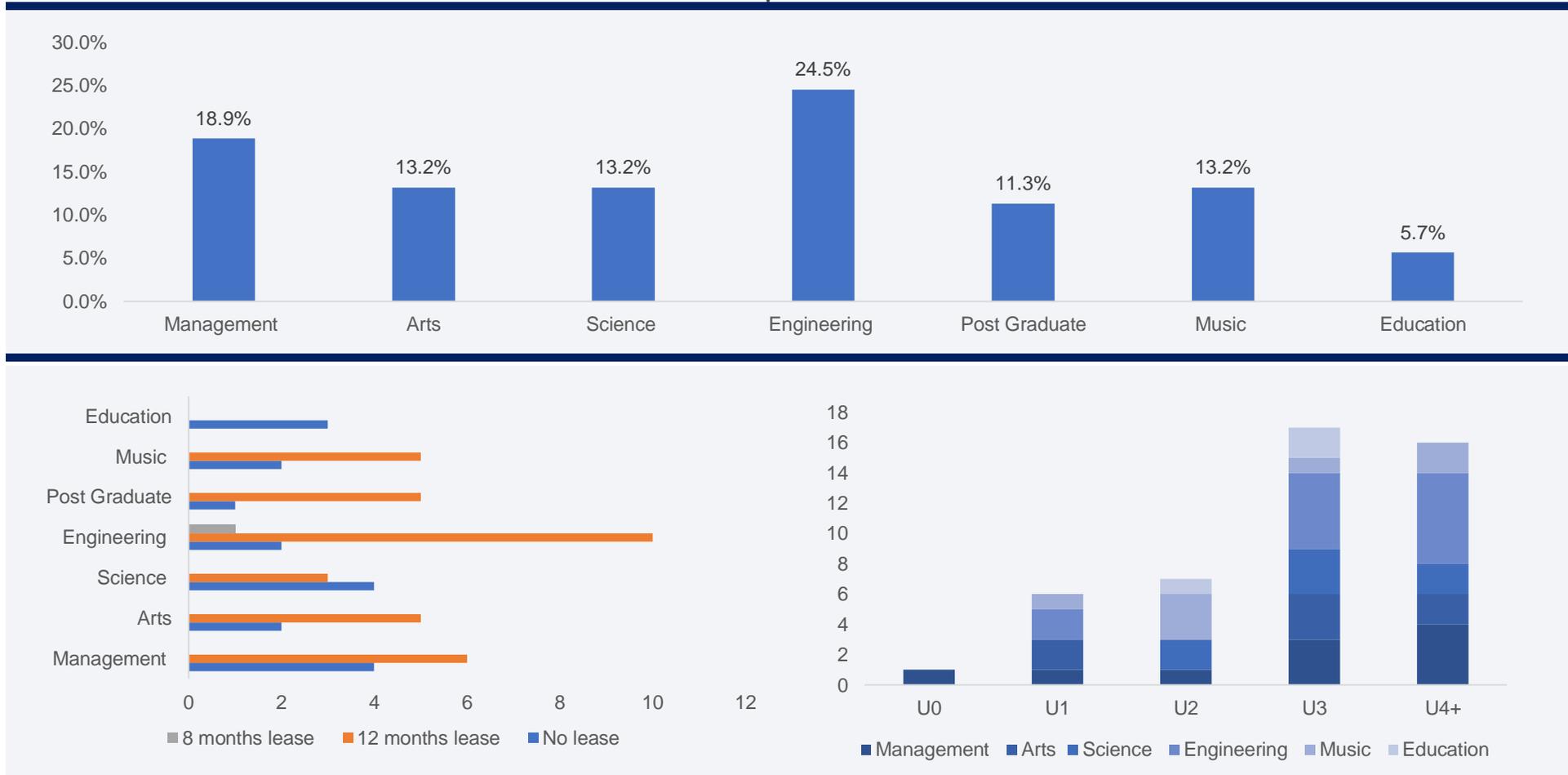
Time	Title	Description
1 minutes	Intro	- Introduction to the project and its goals - Description of the current situation
2 minutes	Group Info	- Gather data on the students
15 minutes	Round Table Discussion	- Pros and cons of a Fall Reading Week - Find out: what are the recurring themes about why students need this break. Don't mention the options yet - let them chat and discuss first - What do you think the restrictions could be?
2 minutes	Present Solutions	- Present the current solutions on the table - Explain restrictions
12 minutes	Debate	- Discuss impact of the solutions (pros/cons specifically for faculty) - Ask probing questions
3 minutes	Outro	- Did anybody change their mind about a fall reading week? - Thank participants and encourage them to vote later

KEY QUESTIONS:

- 1 Why do you want a Fall Reading Week?
- 2 What would you use your reading week for?
- 3 When would you want a reading week?
- 4 What is your biggest concern/problem with a reading week?
- 5 Would you start earlier or mind having longer class times?
- 6 How would you be affected with starting before August?

Focus Groups: Methodology

53 respondents



Focus Groups: Analysis

Why do you want a Fall reading week and what would you use it for?

Key Points

- 1 Key benefits: Improving students mental health and preventing burnout or depression
- 2 The primary motivation for a Fall reading week is to catchup on work.
- 3 Engineering students found that the Fall semester was more difficult than the winter
- 4 Most students would use the break to study or work on personal projects.

Focus Group Insights

"I'm an **anxious person** and the break would really allow me to catchup on things"

"I believe it would really help with our **mental health** by giving us sufficient time to **relax** and work at our **own pace**."

"I need time to **regroup** after midterms and **catchup** on material I may have missed"

"After a tough midterm period, I need **time to recover** from bad midterm"

"The break would really allow me and everyone to study at their **own pace** or just **study leisurely** without too much stress"

"I would use it to get more **involved at McGill** and join new clubs knowing that I have a little **extra time**"

A reading week would strongly impact students ability to handle the course load and prevent a lot of the added stress from keeping up with the constant flow of work.

Focus Groups: Analysis

When would you like a Fall reading week and what are your concerns?

Key Points

- 1 Most students agreed that the ideal time would be in between midterms.
- 2 Students are most concerned about a condensed exam or midterm schedule.
- 3 Some Students are also worried about starting school before labour day due to financial reasons.

Focus Group Insights

"In engineering we have typically have 2 midterms in classes and it would be perfect for it to **break up both periods.**"

"I am really scared about **losing time** in between in midterms, especially when I already have so many."

"I've had exam periods where I had 3 exams in 24 hours and it's really unbearable and **my grades suffered** because of it"

"I don't mind having to start **before labour day** and I know all my employers are **super flexible** on ending my internships."

"Starting classes in August is unfair to students who are of less **financial means** and have to pay for more of their lives themselves."

Main concern: The effect on midterms and exam schedules.

Focus Groups: Analysis

How do you feel about the two possible solutions?

Key Points

- 1 Students would hesitate starting at 8 AM but would be fine to start at 8:15.
- 2 Students would not mind having longer classes.
- 3 The main concerns with starting before labour day are financial. (I.e. less work hours, subletting)
- 4 Finding accommodations before labour day was not a major concern amongst students.

Focus Group Insights

"I live an **hour and a half away** and I wouldn't mind starting as early as 8AM for a morning class."

"As children we were expected to **sit for hours in class**, why when we are graduate students can we not do the same"

"I don't think any **Quebec student** will have any **issues with before labour day** since we did both in high school and Cegep and UDM is doing it now."

"The **extra costs** would have to be made up by working more during the semester, which will take up critical school work/study time, ultimately impacting grades or to take on study-related extracurricular activities."

"I would lose out on a **months rent** from subletting if I can't sublet for the month of august."

"Most of the time when I sublet the **person leaves halfway** through August anyways"

The only hurdle from the solutions is ensuring that financially sensitive students would be able to handle or wouldn't be affect much by the changes.

Focus Groups: Analysis

Important stats

- 2 out of 53 students started off against the fall reading week and remained against it.
- 1 out of 53 students changed their mind throughout the process. (e.g. they started off as a yes and changed their mind to a no)
- 91% of students cited mental health or stress when reasoning for a fall reading week

Most students minds were not changed after talking about the potential solutions to come but it's important to keep in mind some students will be unmoved regardless of the benefits of reading week.

Importance of Mental Health: EUS Survey

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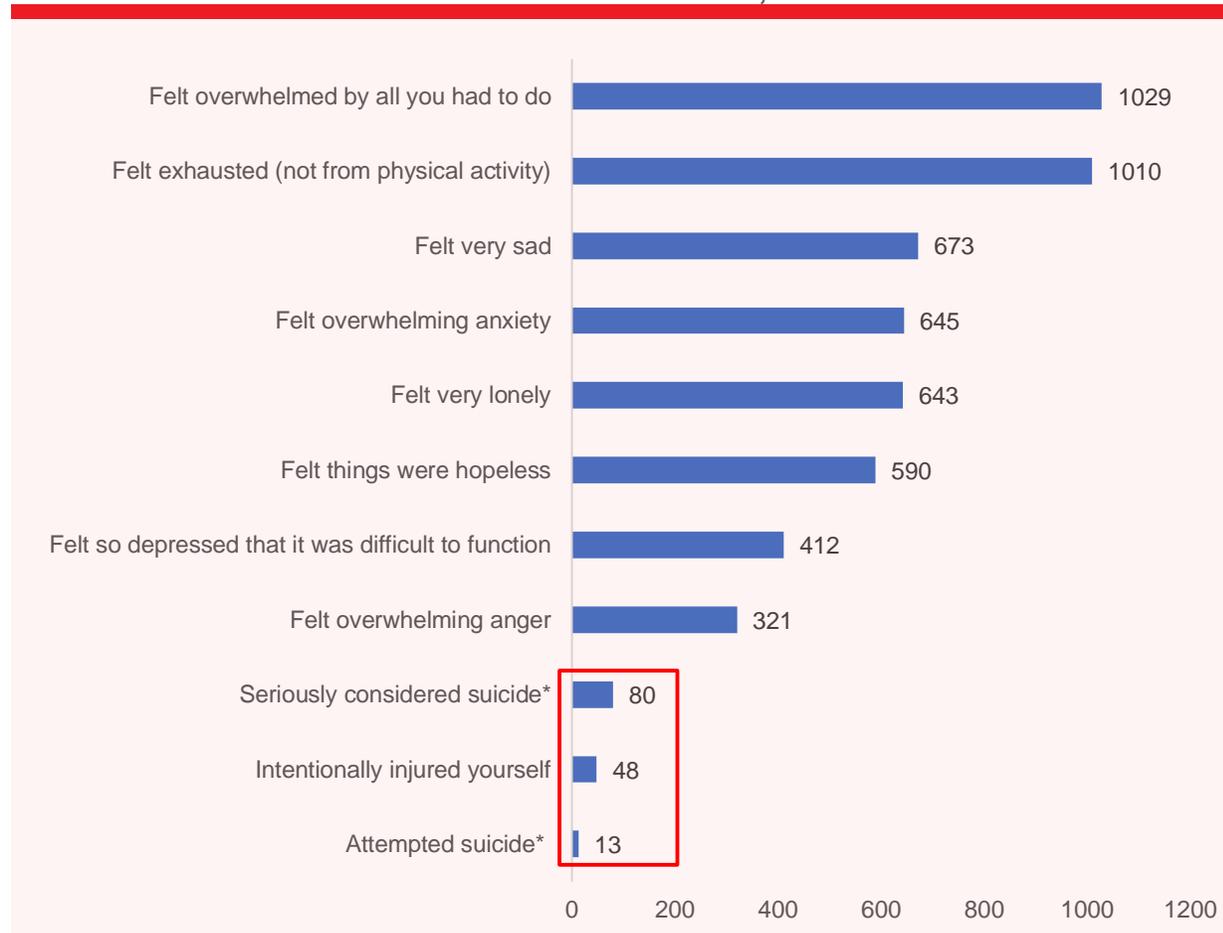
Importance of Mental Health: EUS Survey

Key Takeaways

Problems per Faculty

Overview of EUS survey: 1182 Respondents

In the last 12 months, I have:



Insights

- 69% of respondents cited “lack of time to prioritize self-care” as top barrier for accessing on-campus resources
- 63% of respondents feel pressured to maintain unhealthy habits to keep up with workload
- 36% of respondents spend 0-5 hours per week on social activities/leisure (less than an hour per day)

Key Takeaways

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Key Takeaways

Importance of Mental Health: EUS Survey

Problems per Faculty

Key Takeaways

- 1** Mental Health is a key benefit for a Fall reading week.
- 2** Students will benefit from reading week in their unique way.
- 3** Financial concerns impacting a subset of the student population must be addressed when implementing the Fall reading week.
- 4** Students are very open to the various ideas for a Fall reading week.

Problems per Faculty

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Key Takeaways

 Problems per Faculty

PROBLEMS AND RESTRICTIONS PER FACULTY

Two main issues:

- 1 Must reach a required amount of contact hours for accreditation
- 2 Must accommodate summer or field study classes that run to the end of August

Things to keep in mind

- Starting in late August and introducing a fall reading week does not affect contact hours or number of class days
- There can be an issue with summer courses that run until the last week of August, however, these courses are flexible



Thanks.