

Introduction

COVID-19 has caused most universities in New England to move to online learning in March 2020. Higher education institutions all made similar changes to their operations, but student perceptions of the unique experience of this transition exposes nuances in the preparedness of different universities. The breakout has forced universities to modify their classes in the span of a couple weeks. Due to the suddenness of the changes, students have had to adapt their expectations of academics, living situations, and financial situations alongside the abruptness of decision-making.

Mission & Objectives

Determine college student's perspectives, reactions, and transition leading up to, during, and after their college's change in operations, and compare WPI responses to other higher education institutes in New England.



Compare Responses



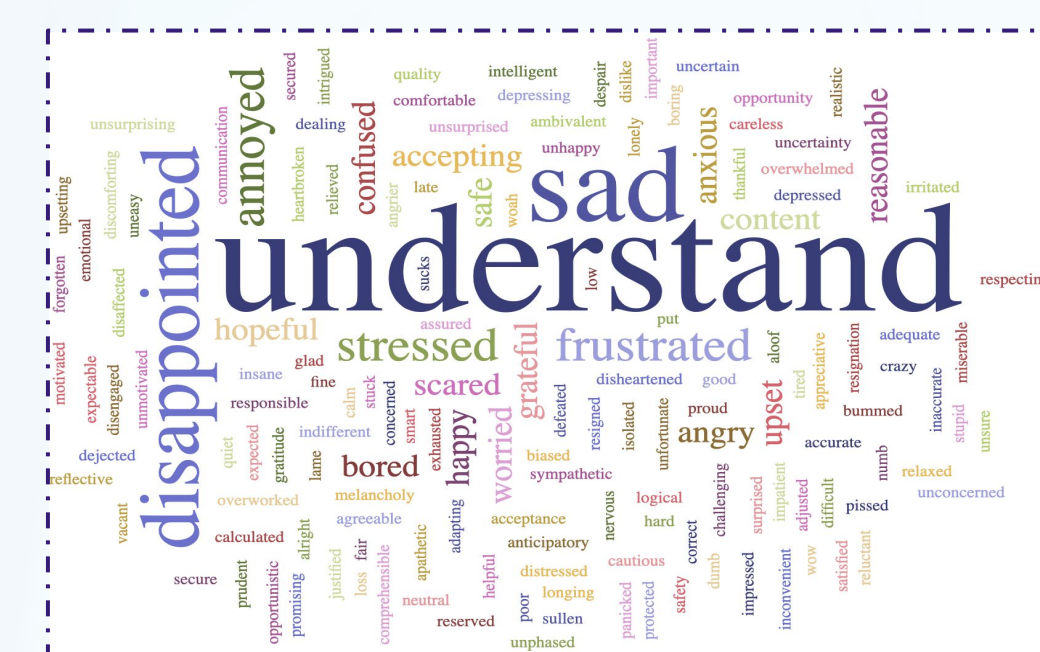
Responses to Change in Operations

The survey of WPI students had 298 responses, leading to several trends that were both expected based on our own opinions, and unexpected in some different perspectives the students expressed. WPI students were originally sad and disappointed, when WPI made the decision to transition to online, but now they are more understanding. In addition, 94% of students agreed or strongly agreed that WPI made the correct decision to close the school and move to online learning.

Initially

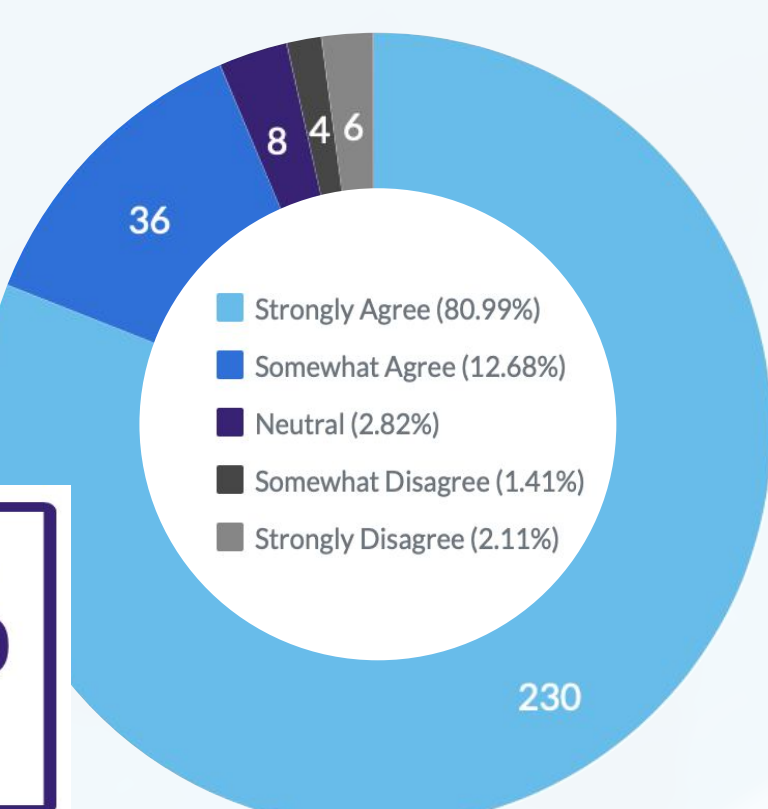


Now



Overall, WPI made the Right Decision

94%
AGREE

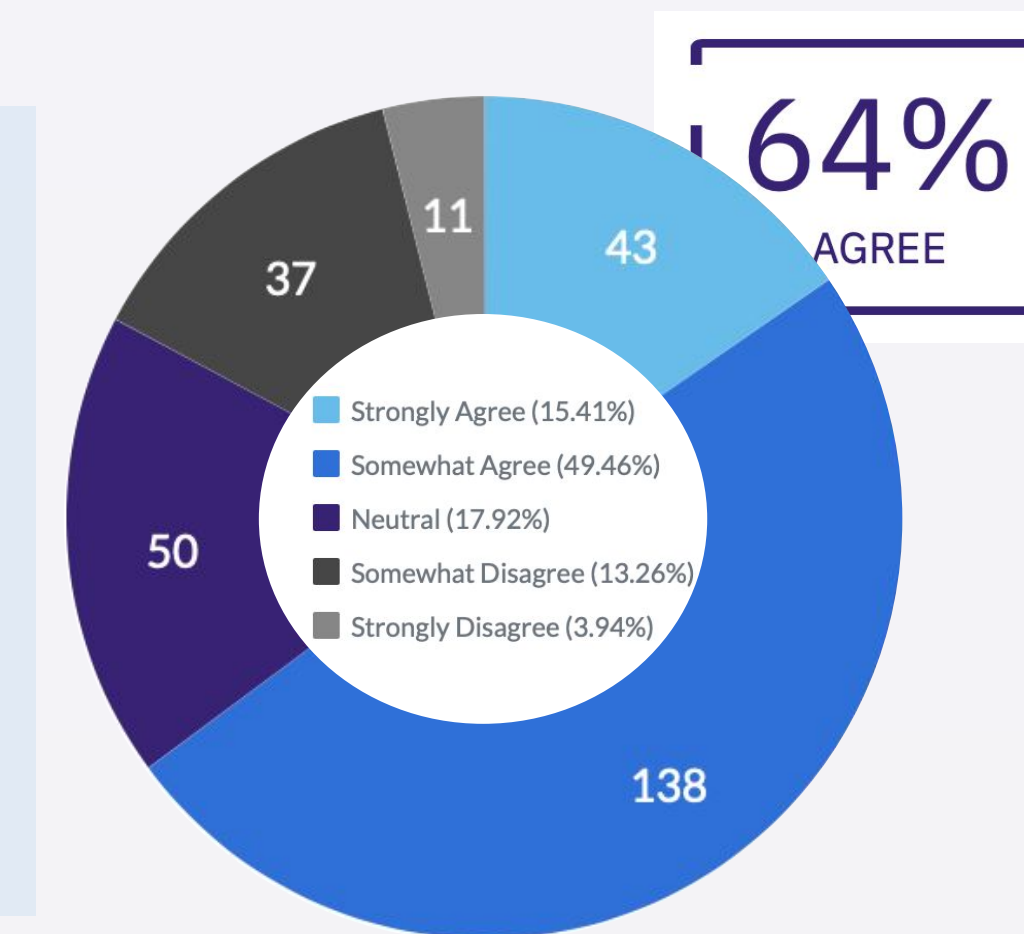


"WPI did what it needed to do for all things COVID. What WPI did wrong, in my opinion, was prepare the students on possible decisions being made... They forgot to be compassionate and emotional at first and didn't advertise resources like the SDCC until later." - WPI Class of 2020 MS Student

Transition and Quality

Students responded favorably to the way that WPI handled the move to online learning. However, students overwhelmingly felt that their current classes online were not up to the same quality academically as the traditional in-person setting. These two sets of answers lead to a sharp contrast in student opinions. We wanted to explore the dichotomy in the pattern of these results.

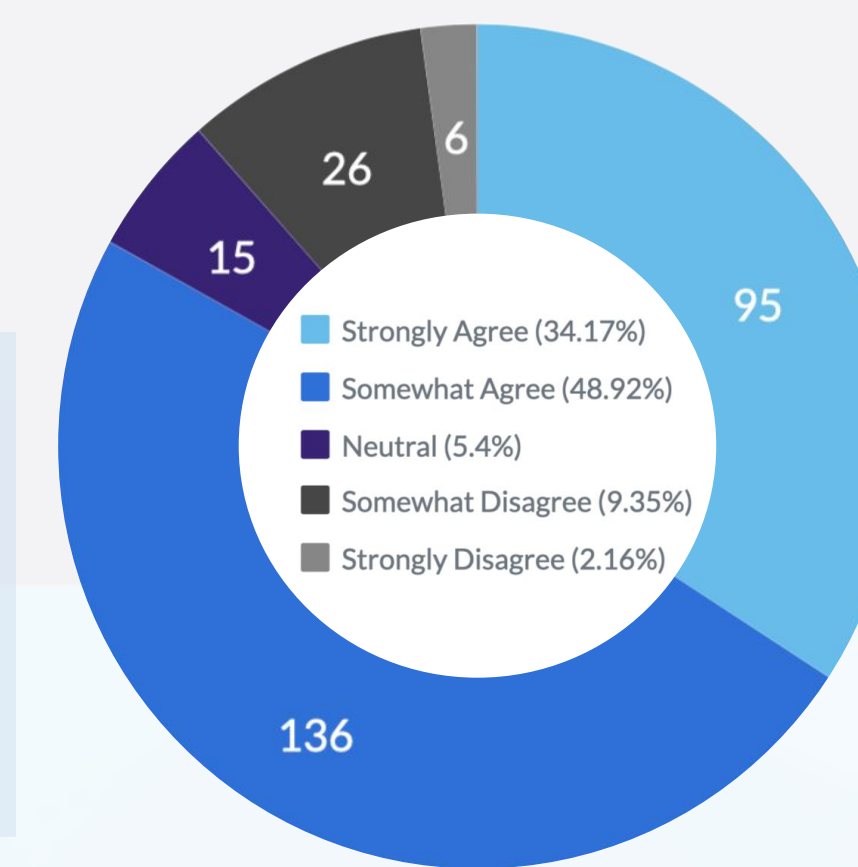
WPI Adapted Well to Online Learning



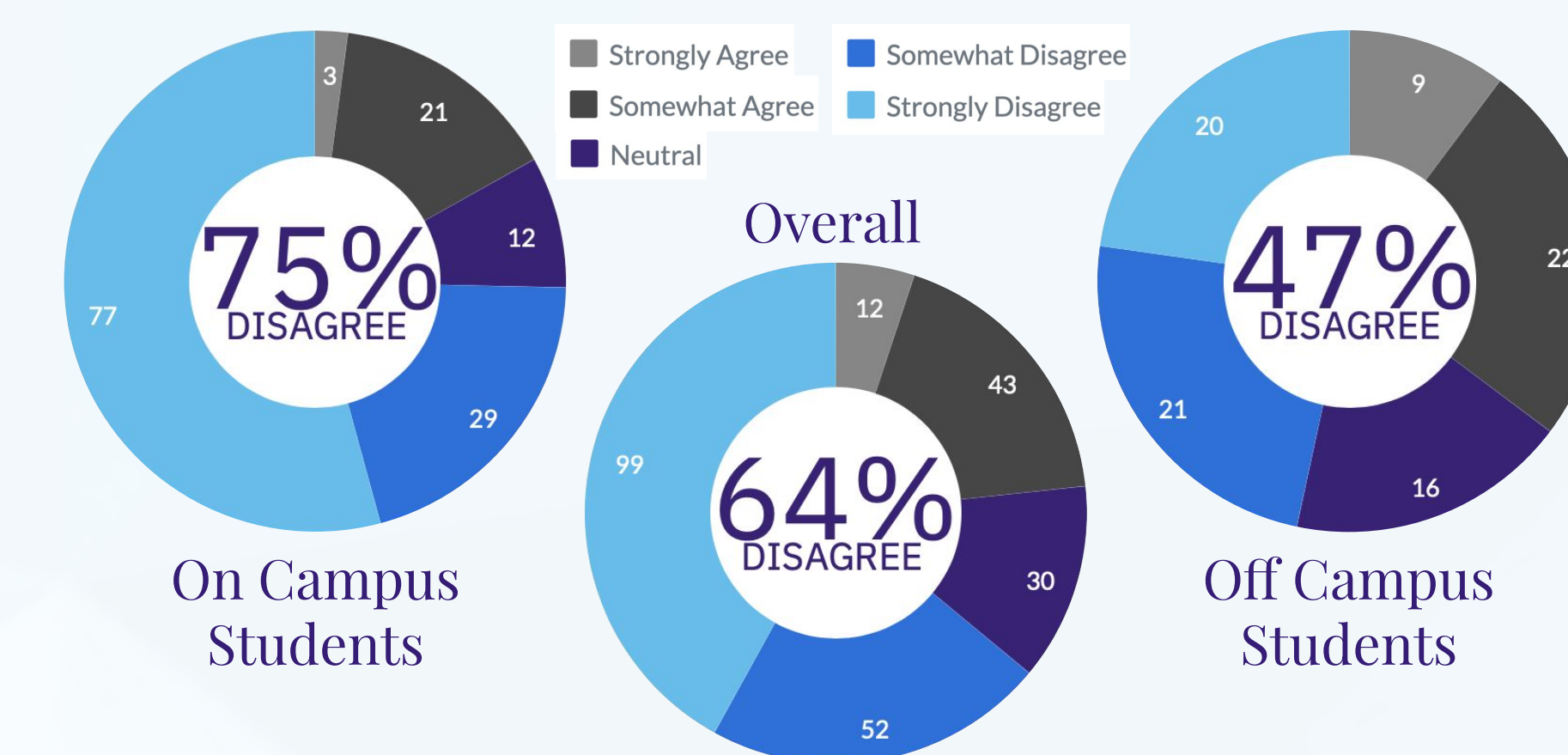
But... the Quality of Online Education is Not the Same

83%
AGREE

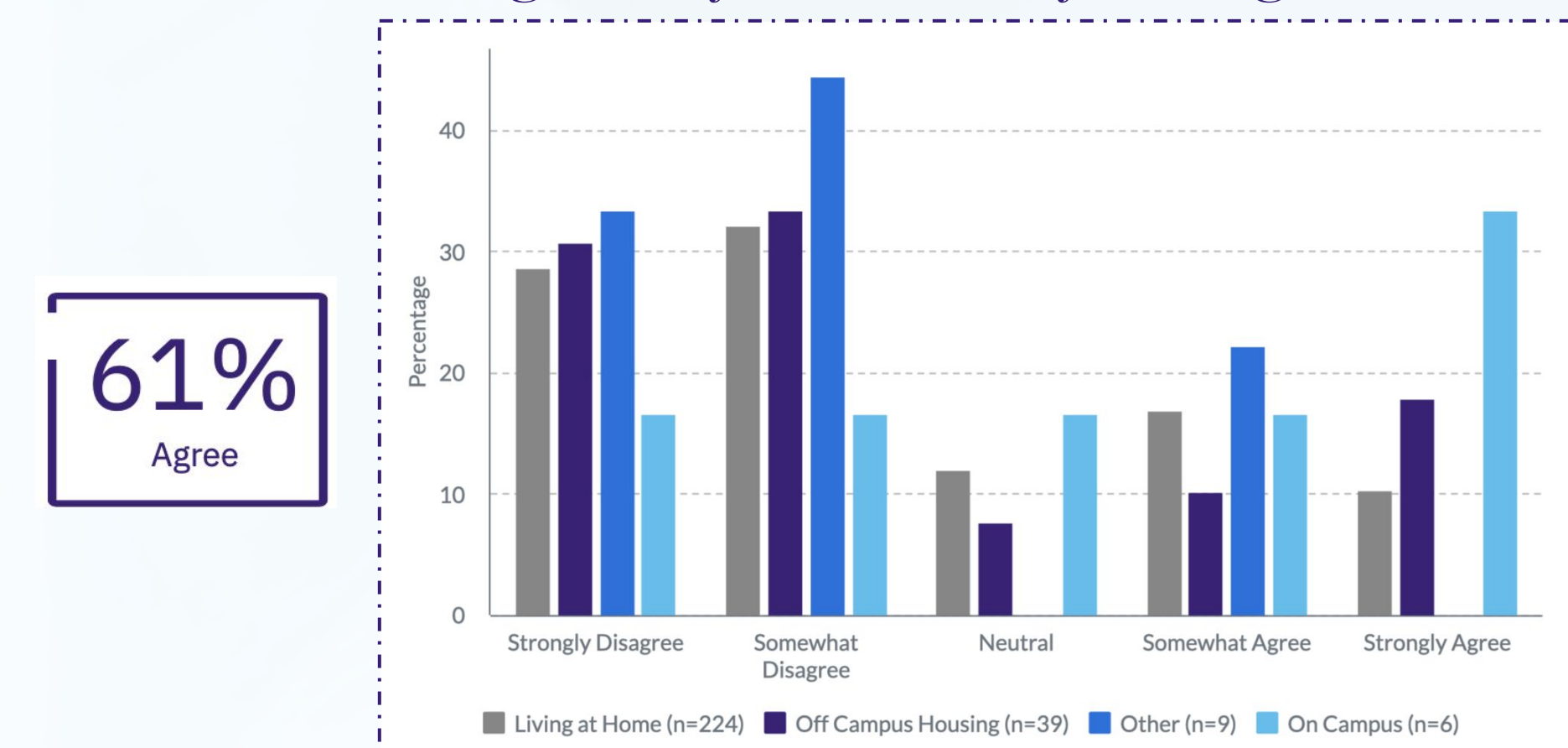
"I really want this experience to lay to rest the idea that online classes are an equivalent substitute to in person learning."
- WPI Class of 2022 BCB Student



Did WPI Students Have Enough Time to Move Out?



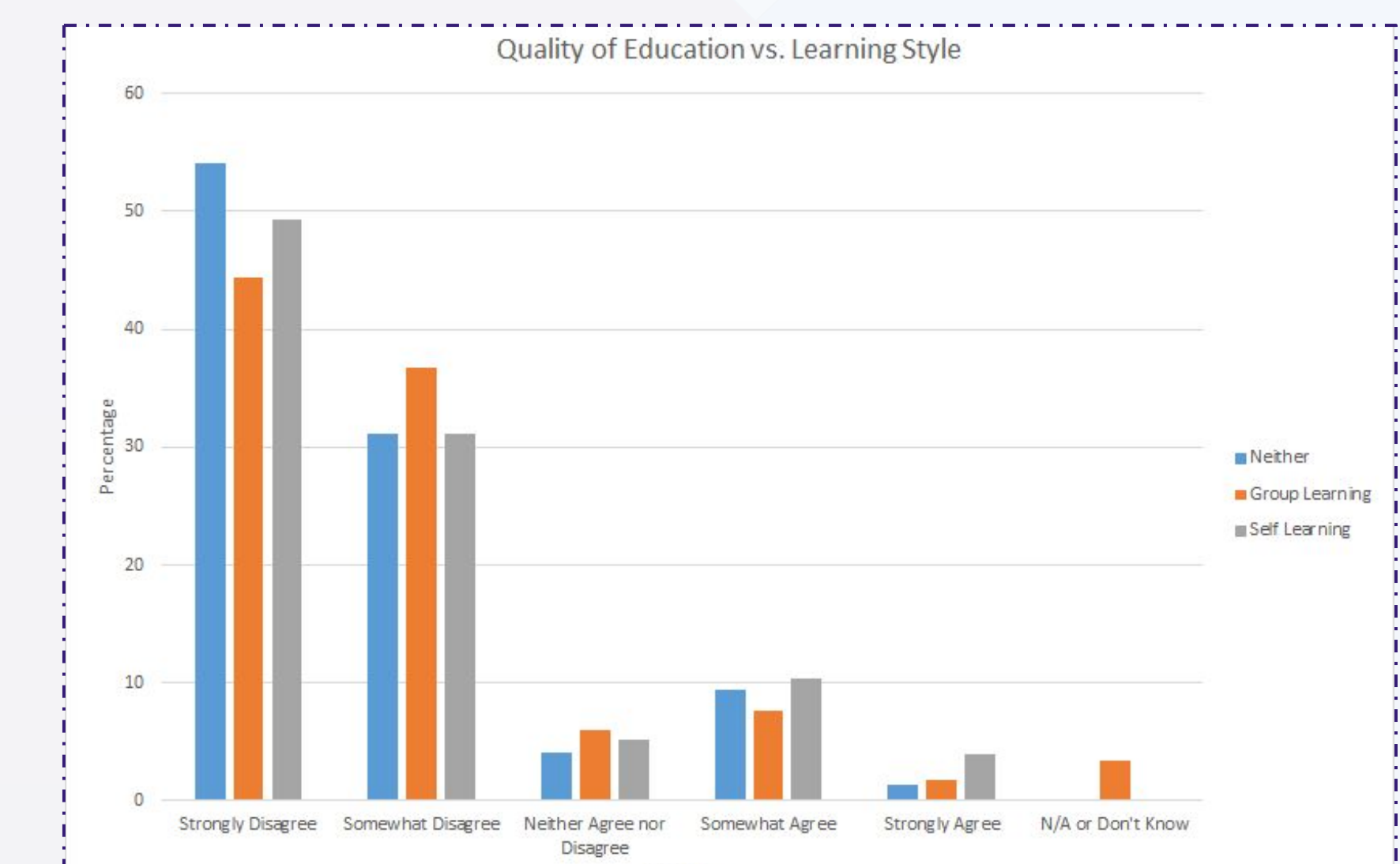
Class Work is Negatively Affected by Living Situations



Learning Styles

Learning style in this transition was another area we investigated to determine how it would influence students who were managing the changes.

- Self-learning students have generally been successful in maintaining the same level of effort, being able to motivate themselves without the pressures of other students working around them.
- Those that rely heavily on external motivators, such as the social environment of a college campus, have had a harder time maintaining a schedule and the same work ethic in an unstructured setting.



Main Takeaway: Students enjoyed being given an option for some aspects of their classes, for example: optional Zoom lectures, choice of working individually or in a group, giving students all assignments at the beginning and giving structured dates, and office hour Zoom calls with professors.

Conclusions

Initially: Disappointed Sad & Now: Understand

Schools that provided

- Time to Transition
- Resources

had smoother transitions

Quality of Education

Options Satisfy More Learning Styles

Students Futures are Uncertain

2020 2021 2022 2023

Acknowledgements

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