

# The University of Winnipeg's 2024 Sustainability Knowledge and Culture Survey: Summary Report

*Prepared by the University of Winnipeg Campus Sustainability Office*

## **Introduction**

This document reports the results of the University of Winnipeg 2024 Knowledge and Culture Survey. It was undertaken to fulfill the requirements for the following credits from the Association for the Advancement of Sustainability in Higher Education's Sustainability Rating and Tracking System (AASHE STARS):

- AC 6: Sustainability Literacy Assessment
- EN 6: Assessing Sustainability Culture

In addition to fulfilling STARS requirements, this survey has captured some of the information the University has set out to collect in the Institutional Sustainability Strategy. This includes data to direct Goal 3, Target 2, which states that the University should “undertake a research project using appreciative inquiry to better understand the learning process, learning outcomes, and interests of students who act and lead.” This survey can be used to understand and better frame what students may respond to in the appreciative inquiry process. Goal 4, Target 3 also calls for the University to “engage faculty, staff and students with relevant expertise to develop workshops and courses that support campus community members in better understanding how their day-to-day work on campus relates to, and can impact positively or negatively on, key sustainability issues.” Data captured can tell Campus Sustainability Office (CSO) staff what areas students and staff are most interested in, where knowledge gaps exist, and levels of engagement both on and off campus.

This is the first time this survey has been administered. The CSO intends to administer a similar survey in two years to see the affects of sustainability programming and sustainability course uptake, as well as follow any changes in student cohorts as the progress through the University.

## **Methods**

The survey was available from January to April 2024. It was advertised across campus e-mails as well as in the CSO newsletter and social media. Respondents had the option to be entered into a draw for one of five \$100 Amazon gift cards. The survey had 65 questions total and used conditional branching to save respondents time and effort where possible. A list of all survey questions (and correct answers for knowledge-testing questions) can be found in the Appendix. 793 respondents finished the survey and consented to have their answers used in this report; this included 402 students, 367 staff and faculty, and 24 respondents that were both students and employees. As such, this document will report answers for 793 respondents when describing all data, and 426 students and 391 staff and faculty when breaking the data out.

Questions 7-19 and questions 25-27 were considered knowledge testing questions, or questions for which a correct answer could be assigned. Each question was assigned a value of 1, and respondents were given a “Sustainability Knowledge Score,” the percentage value based on how many questions were answered correctly. Questions left blank were assigned a value of “0.”

Remaining questions that did not collect demographic information were considered sustainability culture questions. Questions 20, 22 and 31 explored individual actions taken by respondents, and questions 30 and 32-37 looked at involvement in environmental groups and activism. Finally, questions 21, 23, 28, and 29 examined the University’s sustainability culture and respondent familiarity with University sustainability policies and initiatives.

### **Knowledge-Testing**

The average Sustainability Knowledge Score for all respondents was 61% for all knowledge-testing questions. Questions 27, 15, and 7 were answered correctly by the most respondents, and questions 17, 25, and 19 were answered incorrectly by the most respondents (Table 1).

Table 1. The survey questions with the highest (top 3) and lowest (bottom 3) number of correct responses. Percentages reflect the percent of respondents that answered correctly.

---

<b>Top 3 correct survey response questions</b>	
1. Does the University of Winnipeg have a formal land acknowledgement? (q. 27)	86%
2. What is an invasive species? (q. 15)	85%
3. In 2016, seventeen goals were established by an international organization to encourage governments and industry to implement sustainability. These goals are called the: (q. 7)	81%

---

---

### Bottom 3 correct survey response questions

---

- |   |     |
|---|-----|
| 1. Takeaway food containers, coffee cups, and utensils from UWinnipeg's cafeterias and restaurants should be placed into which waste bin: (q. 17) | 25% |
| 2. Within which Treaty Territory does UWinnipeg reside? (q. 25)   | 32% |
| 3. Tim Hortons' hot beverage cups (and lids) are recyclable in Manitoba. True or False? (q. 19)   | 32% |
- 

The average Sustainability Knowledge Score for all employees was 61%, with the majority of scores concentrated between 60-70% (see Figure 1). Questions 27, 15, and 7 were answered correctly by the most respondents, and questions 17, 25, and 19 were answered incorrectly by the most respondents (Figure 1). The average Sustainability Knowledge Score for students was also 61%, but a wider range of scores can be observed across student respondents (Figure 2).

Five questions related specifically to reconciliation and knowledge around Indigenous issues on campus, questions 8, 11, 25, 26, and 27. The average score on these questions was 46% for employees and 59% for students. Table 2 shows a breakdown of correct responses for each question.

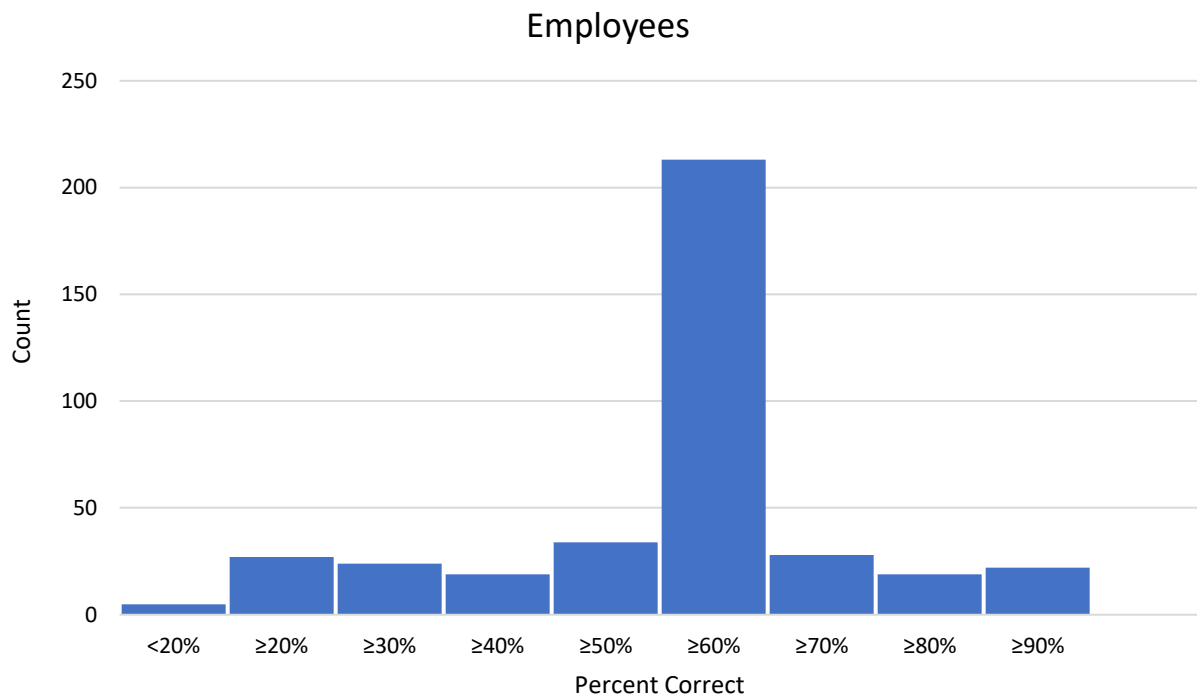


Figure 1. Sustainability Knowledge Score distribution among employees.

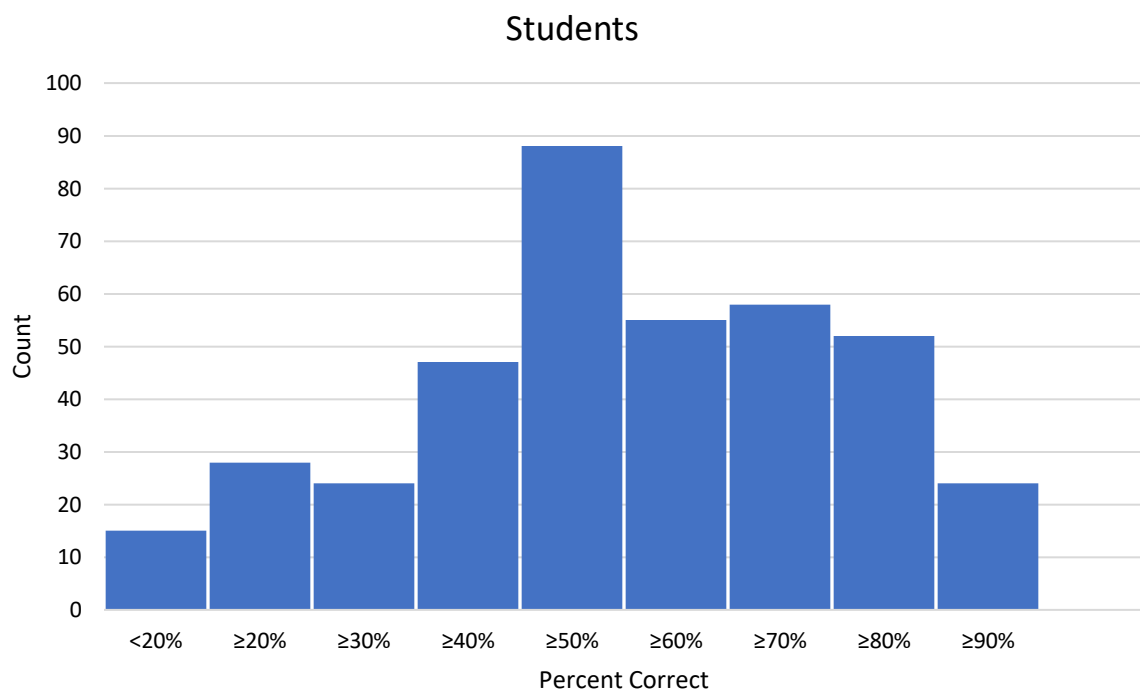


Figure 2. Sustainability Knowledge Score distribution among students.

Table 2. Knowledge testing questions pertaining to Indigenous issues and reconciliation on campus. Percent correct answers are shown for both employees and students.

Question	% Correct Employees	% Correct Students
The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples' (UNDRIP) states (choose the best answer): (q. 8)	77%	57%
Where does the City of Winnipeg source its water? (q. 11)	27%	38%
Within which Treaty Territory does UWinnipeg reside? (q. 25)	15%	46%
Which of the following best fits the description of land acknowledgements? (q. 26)	26%	68%
Does the University of Winnipeg have a formal land acknowledgement? (q. 27)	86%	87%

Student answers were further broken out by faculty (Table 3) and year in school (Table 4). No apparent difference was observed between faculties. Students did exhibit a range of average Sustainability Knowledge Scores, with a 14% difference between the lowest average score for a cohort (second year) and the highest (fourth year or higher). Fourth year had the highest average Sustainability Knowledge Score, which could be related to sustainability education at the University, among other factors.

Table 3. Average Sustainability Knowledge Scores for students across University faculties.

<b>Faculty</b>	<b>Average Sustainability Knowledge Score</b>
Arts	60%
Business and Economics	57%
Education	65%
Kinesiology	57%
Science	59%
Undeclared	63%

Table 4. Average Sustainability Knowledge Scores for students by year of study.

<b>Year</b>	<b>Average Sustainability Knowledge Score</b>
First Year	61%
Second Year	55%
Third Year	64%
Fourth Year or Higher	69%

## **Sustainability Culture**

To assess sustainability culture, questions were grouped into three categories: confidence and self-reported individual actions towards sustainability, involvement in environmental groups and/or activism, and perceptions and awareness concerning the University's sustainability performance.

### *Individual Actions*

Survey questions explored respondents' relationship to everyday actions towards sustainability. 62% of respondents said they felt either personally "very responsible" or "somewhat

responsible” for helping to mitigate environmental and social harm through choices and actions in everyday life (Figure 3).

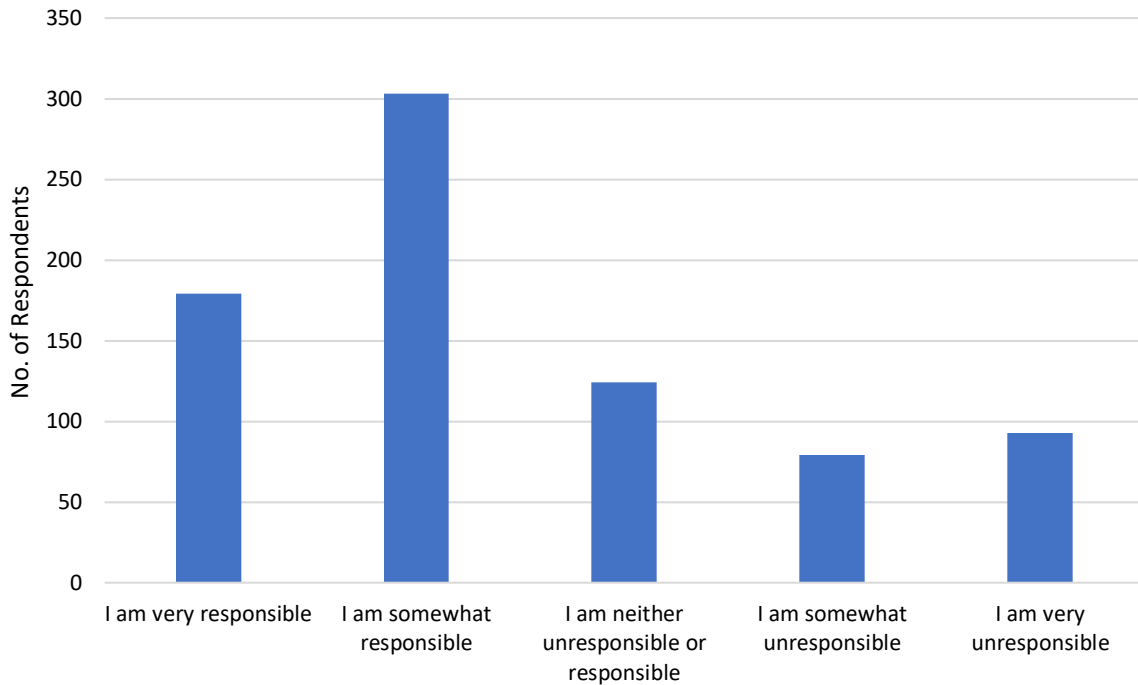


Figure 3. Responses to question 31, “Do feel you are personally responsible for helping to mitigate environmental and social harm through your choices and actions in your everyday life?”

The survey also examined respondent confidence in taking everyday actions towards sustainability (Question 20). Answers were assigned a value of 0-4, where 0 was “Unconfident” and 4 was “Very confident.” Average values for all actions fell between 2 and 3, with respondents feeling most confident in recycling plastic, glass, and paper, and least confident recycling special items like printer ink and batteries (Table 5).

The survey then asked how often respondents take a range of everyday actions towards sustainability. Again, answers were assigned a scale of 0-4, with 0 as “Never” and 4 as “Always.” The average value for each action fell between 2 and 3, with respondents most frequently sending digital documents instead of printing and composting food scraps less frequently.

Table 5. Average score for respondents on questions 20 and 22 (answers range from 0-4, with higher values indicating higher confidence/higher frequency of taking action).

---

**How confident are you in your ability to take the following actions?**

---

---

Recycle plastic, glass, and paper products	2.55
Access health and/or wellness resources (physical, mental, etc.)	2.39
Choose the most sustainable product when purchasing items for a university department or student organization	2.25
Report energy issues or water leaks (e.g., heat or A/C running too much or too little)	2.22
Recycle special items (e.g., printer ink cartridges, batteries, electronics, personal protective equipment)	2.18

---



---

**How often do you complete the following actions on campus?**

---

Send digital documents whenever you can, in place of printing	2.67
Bring a reusable water bottle and/or mug to campus	2.65
Powering off your laptop or computer at the end of the day	2.57
Turn off lights in rooms when you are the last person to leave (meeting room, lab, classroom, etc.)	2.53
Unplug chargers and other small electronics when not in use	2.42
Compost food scraps and campus takeout containers when possible	2.35

---

*Involvement in Environmental Groups and Activism*

Three questions (30, 32, 33) asked respondents to gauge their interest and concern around large-scale sustainability and environmental issues generally. Approximately three-quarters of students consistently answered that they were “very” or “somewhat” concerned/interested in these issues, while just under half of employee respondents answered the same (see Table 6).



Question	“Very Interested/ Concerned” or “Somewhat Interested/Concerned”		
	Students	Staff	All
What is your level of interest in sustainability, climate change and other social and environmental topics? (Question 30)	76%	51%	64%
How concerned are you about the social, environmental and economic impacts of climate change? (Question 32)	77%	49%	64%
How concerned are you that climate change will impact your local community/economy in the next 5 to 10 years? (Question 33)	78%	47%	63%

Table 6. Percentage of students, employees, and all respondents that responded “Very Interested” or “Somewhat Interested” to question 30 and “Very concerned” or “Somewhat Concerned” to questions 32 and 33.

Next, the survey explored ways respondents engage with their communities (Question 35) on environmental issues, as well as their drive to become more involved both on (Question 36) and off campus (Question 37). In this section, we report student responses only by year.

Student engagement varies widely by year (Table 7). First and second year students are most likely to identify as environmental/social activists, third years as active community volunteers, and fourth years as active members of a political party.

Questions 36 and 37 explored students’ current involvement in environmental and social initiatives and organizations (see Figure 4). 50% of students were involved either on or off campus, and 35% of students are involved both on and off campus. Only 12% of students reported no interest in activities either on or off campus.

Table 7. Student engagement by year in response to question 35, “Do you identify as any of the following?”

---

**Do you identify as any of the following?**

---

<b>Response</b>	<b>First Year</b>	<b>Second Year</b>	<b>Third Year</b>	<b>Fourth Year or Higher</b>
Active community volunteer	66.7%	18.8%	70.2%	35.7%
Active member of a political party	11.1%	6.3%	19.1%	50.0%
Committed to sustainable lifestyle (regularly make personal based on environmental and social impact)	55.6%	43.8%	27.7%	24.7%
Community organizer or leader	11.1%	25.0%	20.2%	21.4%
Environmental/social activist	66.7%	50.0%	17.0%	20.8%
Student leader	22.2%	0.0%	46.8%	25.3%

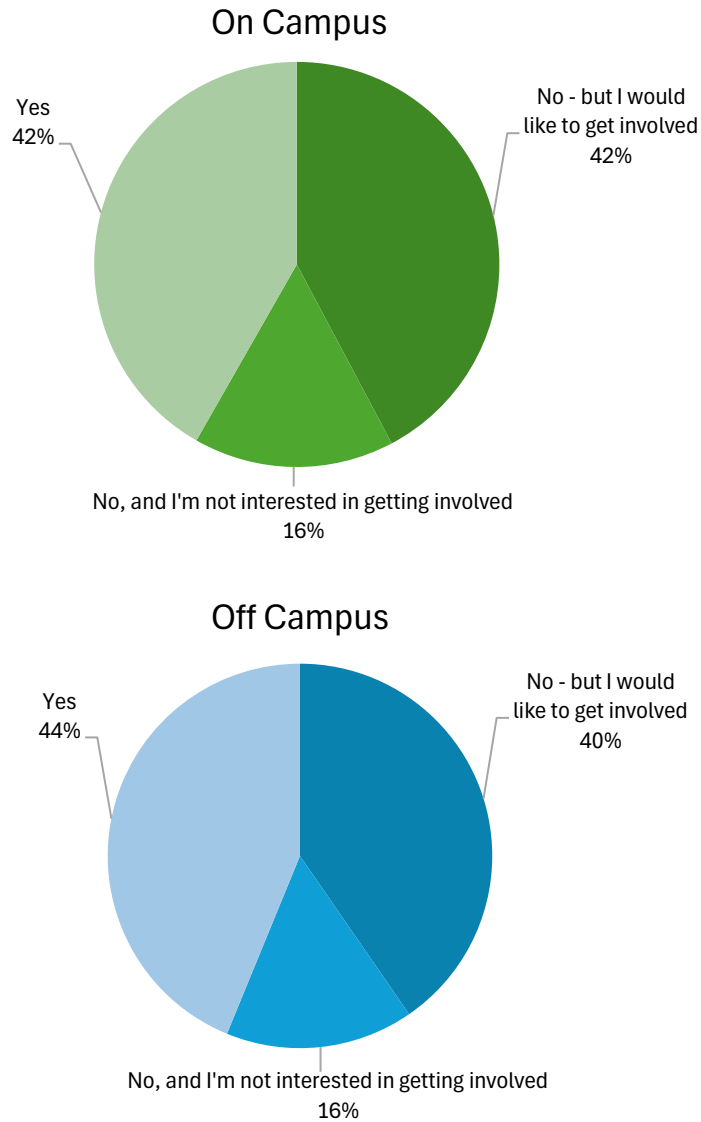


Figure 4. Responses to questions 36 and 37, “Are you currently involved with any organization, groups, projects, or initiatives focused on social and environmental challenges and solutions?”

### *University Sustainability Culture*

The last set of questions addressed respondent awareness of University of Winnipeg sustainability initiatives (Question 21) and gauged respondent participation in sustainability culture on campus (Question 23). We also explore respondent satisfaction with sustainability-related opportunities (Question 28) and career preparation (Question 29) on campus.

In question 21, respondents were asked to rank their awareness of a variety of sustainability initiatives and policies at the University (Table 8). Answers were assigned a value of 0-3, where 0 was “Unaware, and I am not interested in knowing more” and 3 was “Very aware.” Average values for all actions fell between 1 and 2, with respondents reporting being most aware of the Campus Sustainability Office and least aware of the Institutional Sustainability Strategy.

Table 8. Average score for respondents on question 21 (answers range from 0-3, with higher values indicating higher awareness).

<b>What is your level of awareness of the following UWinnipeg Sustainability goals, policies, and initiatives?</b>	
UWinnipeg's Campus Sustainability Office	1.73
UWinnipeg's battery recycling program	1.68
UWinnipeg's Sustainability and Wellness Account	1.68
UWinnipeg's Sustainable Purchasing Guidelines	1.63
UWinnipeg's 2017 Institutional Sustainability Strategy	1.55

Respondents were also asked how often they encounter a range of sustainability-related situations on campus. Answers were assigned a scale of 0-4, with 0 as “Never” and 4 as “Always.” The average value for each action fell close to 2 (“Sometimes”), with respondents most frequently modelling sustainable behaviors and discussing sustainability topics in class least often (Table 9).

Table 9. Average score for respondents on question 23 (answers range from 0-4, with higher values indicating higher frequency).

---

**How often do you encounter the following situations on campus?**

---

You and your peers model sustainable actions and behaviours on campus	2.20
You engage with sustainability resources and initiatives such as events, online information, and contests like Commuter Challenge at UWinnipeg	2.13
Sustainability related topics are mentioned in your conversations with your peers	2.11
Sustainability topics and concepts are discussed in your classes	2.08

---

Finally, the survey asked questions to gauge satisfaction with sustainability-related learning opportunities (Question 28) and environmental career preparedness (Question 29). Figures 5 and 6 compare student and employee responses. More students responded that they were “Very satisfied” or “Satisfied” with learning opportunities than their employee counterparts (48% vs 36%), and more students also responded that they felt “Very prepared or “Somewhat prepared” to address sustainability issues that may arise in their career (57% vs 42%).

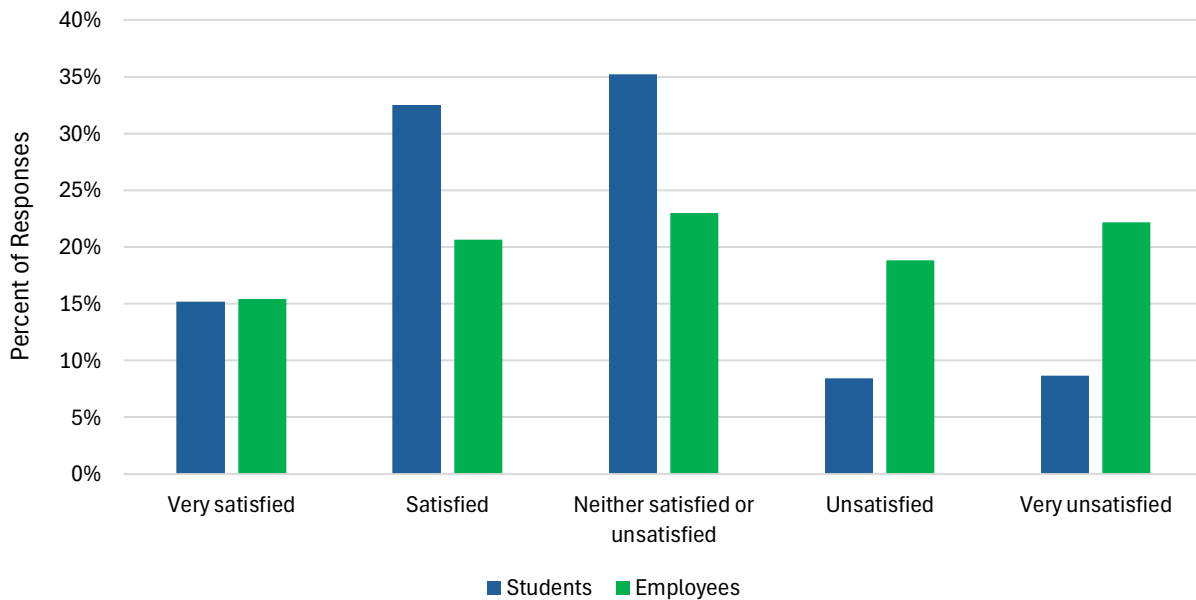


Figure 5. Student and employee responses to question 28, “How satisfied are you with non-academic/cocurricular learning and development opportunities relating to sustainability available at the UWinnipeg?”

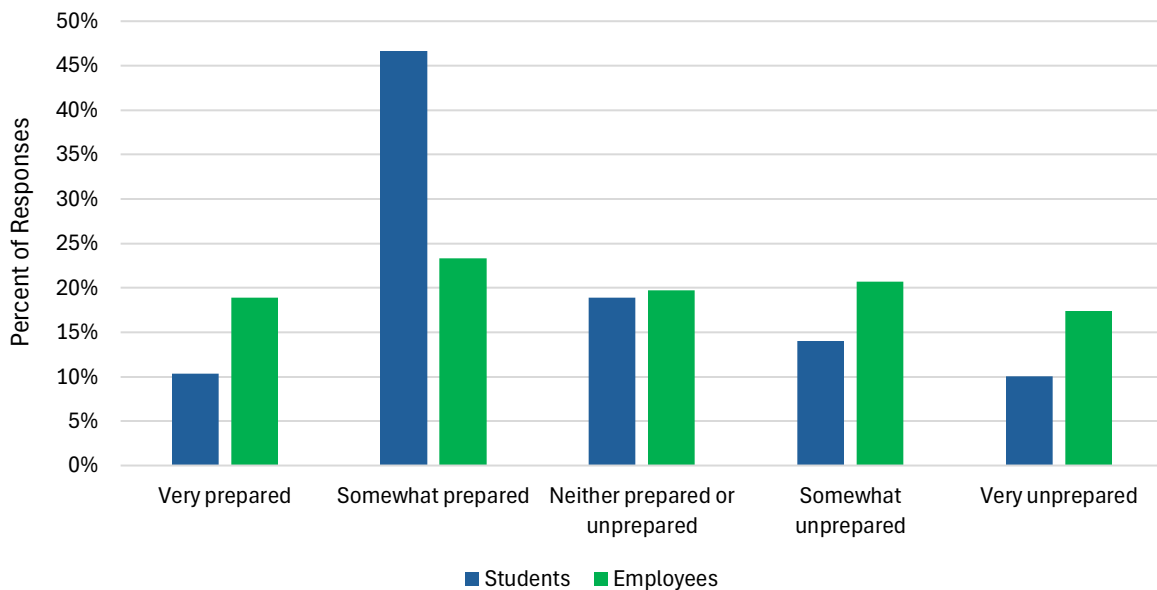


Figure 6. Student and employee responses to question 29, “How well prepared do you feel to address environmental and sustainability issues that may emerge in your current or future career?”

## Conclusion

The 2024 Sustainability Knowledge and Culture Survey has provided valuable insights into the current state of sustainability literacy and culture among students, staff, and faculty at the University. By evaluating both knowledge and attitudes towards sustainability, this survey fulfills important STARS credits and supports the University’s broader Institutional Sustainability Strategy.

The findings reveal a mixed picture of sustainability knowledge. With an average Sustainability Knowledge Score of 61%, respondents demonstrated a solid foundation of knowledge in key areas, though notable gaps remain, particularly concerning Indigenous issues and campus-specific sustainability practices. For instance, while awareness of formal land acknowledgements and general sustainability goals is relatively high, there are significant gaps in knowledge related to waste management and settler-Indigenous relationships.

In terms of sustainability culture, respondents exhibit a generally positive attitude towards personal responsibility for sustainability. Many report feeling confident in their ability to engage in sustainable practices, although actual behavior shows room for improvement. Engagement with environmental and sustainability organizations is higher among students, with varying levels of involvement across different years. This variability suggests that as students progress

through their studies, their engagement and knowledge about sustainability may evolve, potentially influenced by their academic and extracurricular experiences.

The survey also highlights areas where the University can enhance its sustainability efforts. Respondents show varying degrees of awareness and involvement in University-led sustainability initiatives, indicating a need for more effective communication and integration of sustainability practices into daily campus life. The differences in satisfaction and preparedness between students and employees underscore the importance of tailored approaches to sustainability education, career preparation, and employee training.

Moving forward, the Campus Sustainability Office plans to use these insights to refine sustainability programming and to conduct follow-up surveys to track progress. By addressing the identified knowledge gaps and enhancing engagement strategies, the University can foster a more informed and active sustainability culture on campus. This ongoing commitment will be crucial in advancing both institutional sustainability goals and the broader societal imperative for environmental stewardship.