

## Pursuing Education After a First Degree

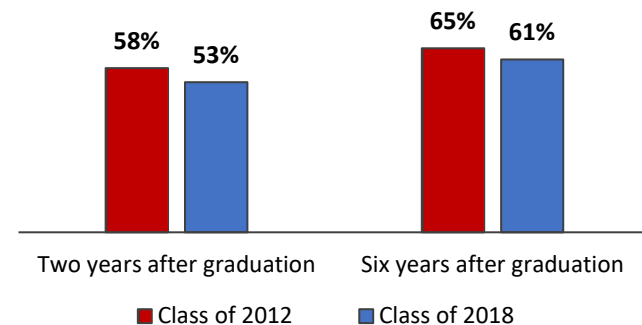
## Highlights

- Overall, 61% of first-degree holders (FDH) from the Class of 2018 pursued further education leading to a degree, diploma, or certificate within six years of completing their bachelor's degree. Among these FDH, 73% had completed their programs at the time of the 2024 survey, while 27% had not yet completed their programs.
- Compared to the Class of 2012, a smaller proportion of FDH from the Class of 2018 (61% vs 65%) pursued further education within six years of completing their bachelor's degree.
- Among FDH who pursued further education, 48% pursued a graduate degree (master's or PhD) as their highest credential, 6% enrolled in a professional health doctorate, 4% pursued an undergraduate law degree, and 15% pursued a second bachelor's degree, including 5% who pursued a Bachelor of Education.
- First-degree holders from Physical and Life Sciences, and Mathematics (PLSM) programs were the most likely to pursue further education (82%), followed by those from Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) programs (70%), Commerce and Administration (CA) programs (48%), and Applied Arts and Sciences, and Professional (AASP) programs (46%).
- Most employed FDH (79%) considered their post-2018 education necessary for their employment, while 73% indicated that it was greatly or considerably related to their current job, and 77% reported that they applied the skills acquired during their post-2018 education to a great or considerable extent.
- Factors such as gender, parents' educational attainment, and borrowing for the first degree were significantly linked to the pursuit of further education. Women, FDH whose parents' educational attainment was a bachelor's degree or above, and those who did not borrow for their first degree were more likely to pursue further education than their counterparts.

## Introduction

Pursuing education after completing a bachelor's degree is a common pathway for graduates seeking to specialize in their field, expand career opportunities, improve financial prospects, or pursue personal development. This report examines trends in education following a first degree and highlights differences in educational pathways across various discipline clusters. The data for this analysis were extracted from a survey of the Class of 2018 Maritime university graduates, conducted in 2024, six years after graduation. This cohort was initially surveyed in 2020, two years after graduation. Where possible, findings are compared to those of the Class of 2012. The study focuses on graduates who had not completed any prior post-secondary credential before earning their bachelor's degree in 2018 (i.e., first-degree holders).

Proportion of FDH who pursued further education two and six years after graduation by graduating Class



**Trends in Further Education:** Two years after graduation, 53% of FDH from the Class of 2018 had pursued at least one additional post-secondary credential. Six years after graduation, this percentage increased to 61%. In comparison, 58% and 65% of FDH from the Class of 2012 had pursued further education two and six years after graduation, respectively<sup>1</sup>.

**Highest Credential Attained or Pursued:** Among FDH who pursued further education, 48% pursued a graduate degree (master's or PhD) as their highest credential, 6% pursued a professional health doctorate, 4% pursued an undergraduate law degree, 15% pursued a second bachelor's degree, including 5% who pursued a Bachelor of Education, and 13% pursued a college credential or apprenticeship certificate.

**Further Education Pathways Across Discipline Clusters:** Within six years of completing their bachelor's degree, 70% of FDH from HASS programs pursued additional post-secondary education. They were more likely than those from other clusters to pursue a Bachelor of Education (7%) or a second bachelor's degree (13%). First-degree holders from PLSM programs were the most likely to pursue further education (82%). They differed from other discipline clusters in the relatively higher percentage who pursued a professional health doctorate (13%) or a PhD (14%). First-degree holders from AASP programs were the least likely to pursue further education (46%). Among those who did, nearly half (46%) pursued a master's degree. Forty-eight percent of FDH from CA programs pursued further education within six years of graduation. The most common type of program pursued by CA FDH was a professional designation (35%).

**Main Reason for Pursuing Further Education:** First-degree holders primarily pursued further education for career-related reasons. The largest proportion (29%) indicated that "career advancement or promotion" was their main motivation, while 27% pursued further education as "part of their chosen career path". Other common reasons included "a requirement for a position currently held" (12%), "an interest in learning more about the subject" (12%), and a desire "to make a career change" (9%).

**Importance and Relevance of Further Education:** First-degree holders acknowledged the value of their further education in relation to their current employment. Among employed FDH who pursued further education, 79% stated that their post-2018 programs were necessary for their jobs, while 73% reported that their current job was greatly or considerably related to their post-2018 studies. Moreover, 77% of FDH indicated that they used the skills acquired during their post-2018 programs to a great or considerable extent.

**Financing Further Education:** First-degree holders identified the top two sources of funding for their post-2018 education. Of these, "government student loans" (44%) and "employment earnings or personal savings" (42%) were the most common.

Other significant sources included support from "parents or family" (21%), "awards based on merit" (21%), financing from a "bank or other financial institution" (17%), and funding from an "employer" (12%). First-degree holders from CA programs were more likely than those from other discipline clusters to rely on support from an "employer" (39%) and "parents or family" (28%), while they were less likely to depend on "government student loans" (18%).

Most FDH (56%) who pursued further education reported borrowing money from various sources to finance their studies. The same percentage (56%) reported receiving scholarships, grants, or bursaries for their post-2018 programs. Borrowing rates for the pursuit of further studies varied by discipline cluster, with 61% of PLSM, 60% of AASP, and 59% of HASS first-degree holders borrowing, compared to only 31% of CA first-degree holders. Similarly, scholarships, grants, or bursaries were more commonly received by first-degree holders from PLSM (68%), HASS (58%), and AASP (53%) programs, compared to just 32% of CA first-degree holders. The median value of scholarships, grants, or bursaries received was \$10,000.

#### Factors linked to the Pursuit of Further Education:

- **Gender:** Women (68%) were significantly more likely than men (51%) to pursue further education after their first degree. Within each discipline cluster, the proportion of women who pursued further studies was higher than the proportion of men, but the difference was only significant in HASS (76% of women vs. 54% of men) and for AASP discipline clusters (53% of women vs. 37% of men).
- **Region of Origin:** A higher percentage of FDH originally from outside the Maritimes pursued further education compared to those from the Maritimes (64% compared to 60%), although the difference was not statistically significant. This variation is primarily attributed to graduates originally from the rest of Canada, rather than those from outside the country. Sixty-eight percent of FDH from the rest of Canada pursued further studies, compared to 48% of those from outside Canada.
- **Parents' Educational Attainment (PEA):** FDH whose PEA was a bachelor's degree or above (66%) were significantly more likely to pursue further education than those whose PEA was post-secondary diploma or certificate (59%) or a high school diploma or less (50%).
- **Borrowing for the First Degree:** First-degree holders who had not borrowed for their first degree (66%) were significantly more likely to pursue further education than those who had borrowed (57%).

#### References

1. MPHEC. Trends in Maritime Higher Education. *The Class of 2012 Six Years On: Pursuing Education after a First Degree*. Volume 17, Number 2, Fredericton, NB; June 2020.

## Methodological Notes

### What You Should Know About This Survey

The follow-up survey of the Class of 2018 was conducted in the fall of 2024, six years after graduation. This cohort had previously been surveyed two years after graduation in 2020. The total sample for the 2024 survey included 2,243 graduates, representing 23.5% of the total Class of 2018 bachelor's graduate population (9,542 graduates) across the 14 Maritime universities. This report focuses on first-degree holders, defined as graduates who enrolled in a bachelor's degree program without a prior post-secondary credential and completed their first degree in 2018. The sample size for first-degree holders was 1,603, with a margin of error of  $\pm 2.2$  percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

All statistics presented in this report have been generated from weighted data; the data were weighted based on the university of graduation and gender, as reported in universities' administrative data. Non-responses were excluded from the analyses. Percentages in charts may not sum to 100% due to rounding. Statistical differences were determined using the Chi-square test (SPSS version 28). More information about the methodology of the Class of 2018 survey in 2024 is available at:

[https://www.mphec.ca/media/235138/class-of-2018-in-2024\\_profile-of-first-degree-holders\\_trends.pdf](https://www.mphec.ca/media/235138/class-of-2018-in-2024_profile-of-first-degree-holders_trends.pdf)

### Definitions

**Pursuit of Further Education:** Graduates were asked whether they had pursued an educational program of at least three months in duration, leading to a diploma, certificate, or degree after completing their 2018 degree. They were also asked whether they had completed the program or were still enrolled at the time of the survey.

**Highest Credential Attained or Pursued After the First Degree:** The highest diploma, certificate, or degree completed or pursued by graduates after earning their first degree. If a graduate had completed or was pursuing multiple programs, the highest credential attained or pursued was considered. Credentials were categorized into the following levels:

- 1) PhD/Doctorate (e.g., PhD, Ed.D, Mus.D, LLD, D.Psy)
- 2) Master's degree (e.g., MA, MSc, MBA, MEd) (including those who pursued both a master's degree and a professional degree)
- 3) Professional health doctorate (e.g., MD, DVM, DDS, OD, DC, ND, PharmD)
- 4) Undergraduate law degree (LLB, JD)
- 5) Bachelor of Education (BEd)

- 6) Bachelor's degree (excluding education) (e.g., BA, BSc, BBA)
- 7) University diploma or certificate
- 8) College diploma or certificate, or apprenticeship certificate (including programs from public colleges, CEGEPs, private colleges, or training schools)
- 9) Professional designation (e.g., Chartered professional accountant, dietetics)
- 10) Other (e.g., any other certificate or diploma)

**Reason for Pursuing Further Education:** Graduates reported their primary reason for continuing each educational program pursued after completing their 2018 degree. For graduates who had pursued multiple programs, the reason associated with the highest credential attained or pursued was considered.

**Top Financial Sources for Further Education:** Graduates identified up to two primary sources of funding for the programs they pursued after completing their first degree. The statistics presented in charts add up to more than 100% since each respondent could select up to two funding sources.

**Discipline Cluster of Degree Completed in 2018:** Major fields of study are grouped into four broad discipline clusters for analytical purposes:

- Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences (HASS) (n = 546)
- Physical and Life Sciences, and Mathematics (PLSM) (n = 317)
- Applied Arts and Sciences, and Professional Programs (AASP) (n = 470)
- Commerce and Administration (CA) (n = 270)

A list of majors within each discipline cluster can be found at:

[https://www.mphec.ca/media/234967/Discipline-Cluster-and-CIP\\_Regroupement-de-disciplines-et-la-CPE\\_2021.pdf](https://www.mphec.ca/media/234967/Discipline-Cluster-and-CIP_Regroupement-de-disciplines-et-la-CPE_2021.pdf)

**Gender:** This variable is obtained from the universities' administrative data. In some cases, the only available information is "sex at birth", which is used as a proxy for "gender." Additionally, some institutions categorize "non-binary genders" under the "unknown gender" category, which makes it impossible to publish data on the non-binary population.

**Region of Origin:** Graduates reported their primary place of residence during the 12 months prior to enrolling in the degree program from which they graduated in 2018. Based on their responses, they were categorized into two groups:

- Maritimes: Graduates who resided in New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, or Prince Edward Island.
- Outside Maritimes: Graduates who resided elsewhere in Canada or in another country.

Parents' Educational Attainment: Parents' educational attainment comprises three categories:

- High school diploma or less
- Post-secondary certificate or diploma (includes trade, college, CEGEP or other post-secondary certificate or diploma).
- Bachelor's degree or above (includes bachelor's, professional, master's or PhD degrees) .

These categories combine the parents or guardians' highest level of education, and the category is assigned based on the highest level of education between them.

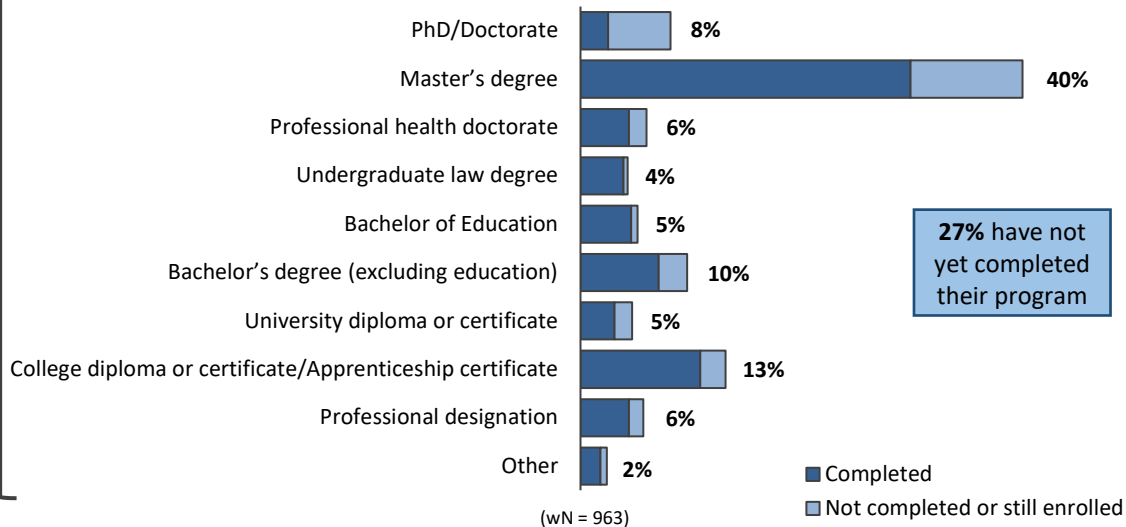
For further information, please contact:  
Maritime Provinces Higher Education Commission  
P.O. Box 6000, 401-82 Westmorland Street, Fredericton, NB, E3B 5H1  
Telephone: (506) 453-2844 E-mail: [mphec@mphec.ca](mailto:mphec@mphec.ca)  
Web: [www.mphec.ca](http://www.mphec.ca)



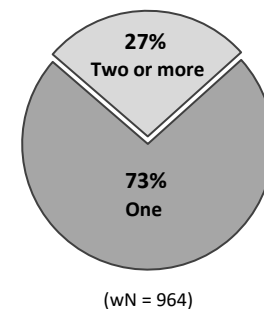
# The Class of 2018 Six Years On: Pursuing Education After a First Degree

## All First-Degree Holders

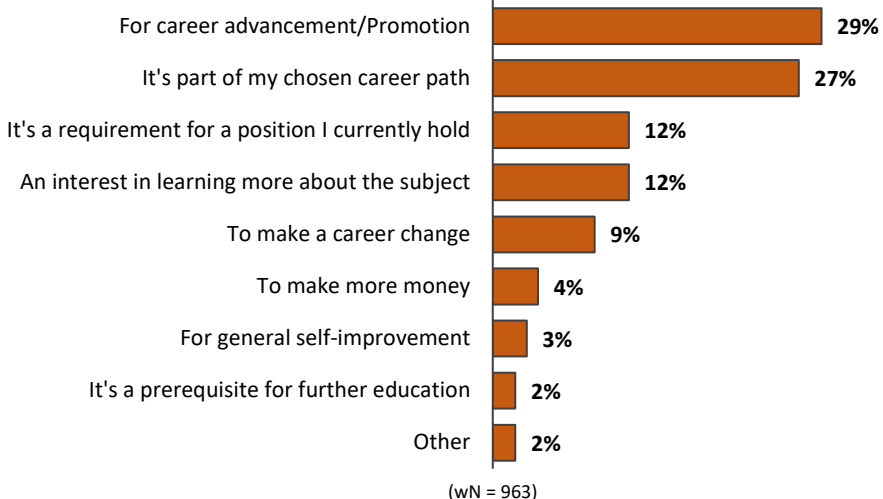
### Highest credential attained or pursued after the first degree



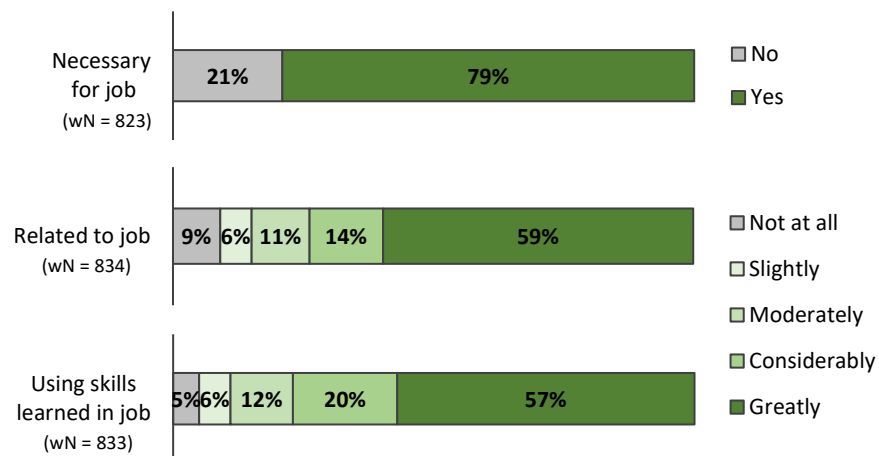
### Number of programs pursued after the first degree



### Main reason for pursuing further education



### Perceived importance and relevance of further education to current employment (among employed graduates)

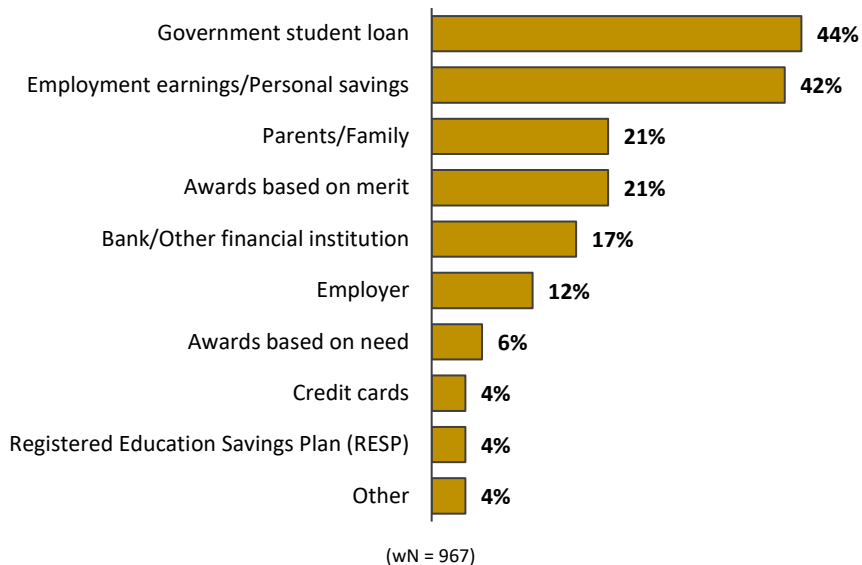




# The Class of 2018 Six Years On: Pursuing Education After a First Degree

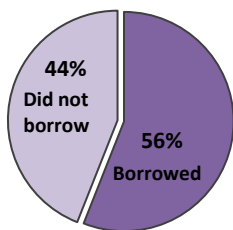
## All First-Degree Holders

### Top financial sources for further education

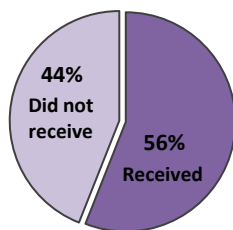


Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could choose up to two options.

### Borrowing for further education

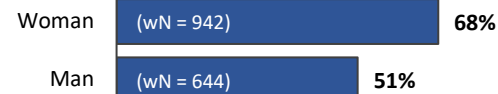


### Receiving scholarships, grants, or bursaries for further education

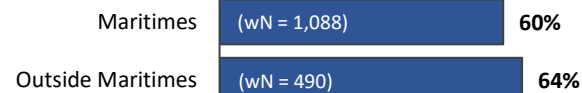


### Percent of first-degree holders who pursued further studies

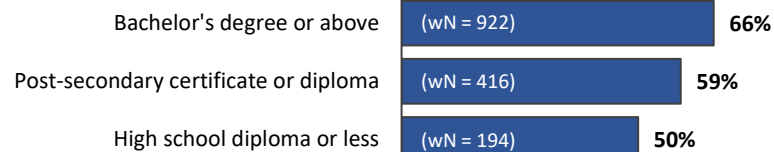
#### Gender<sup>†</sup>



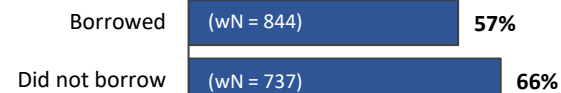
#### Region of origin



#### Parents' educational attainment<sup>†</sup>



#### Borrowing for the first degree<sup>†</sup>



<sup>†</sup> Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

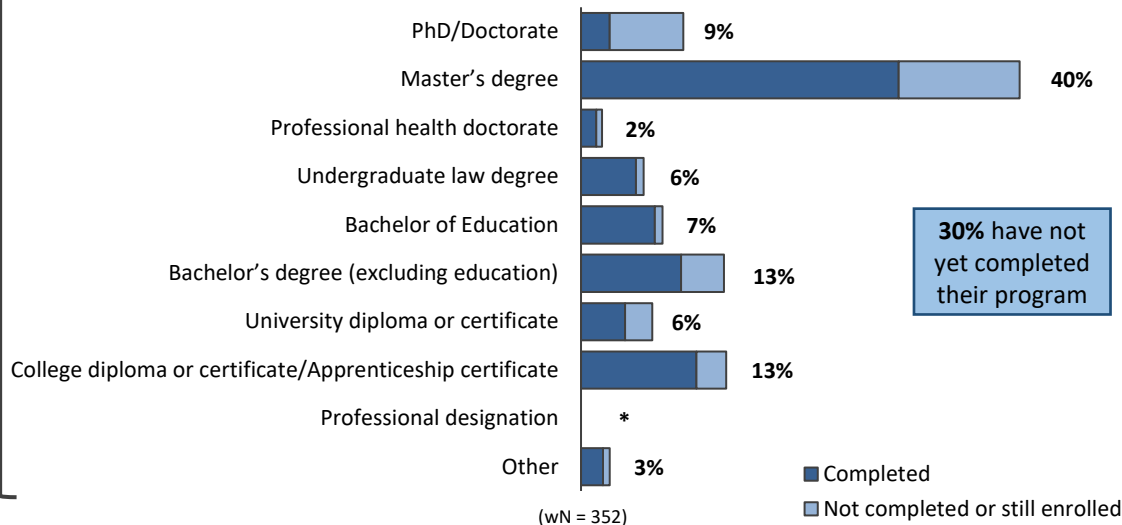




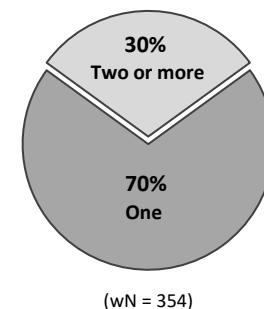
# The Class of 2018 Six Years On: Pursuing Education After a First Degree

## Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences First-Degree Holders

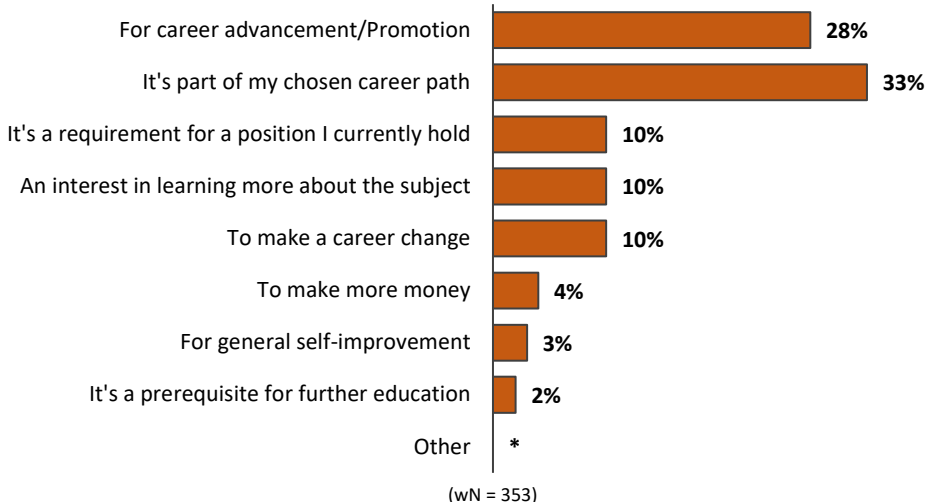
### Highest credential attained or pursued after the first degree



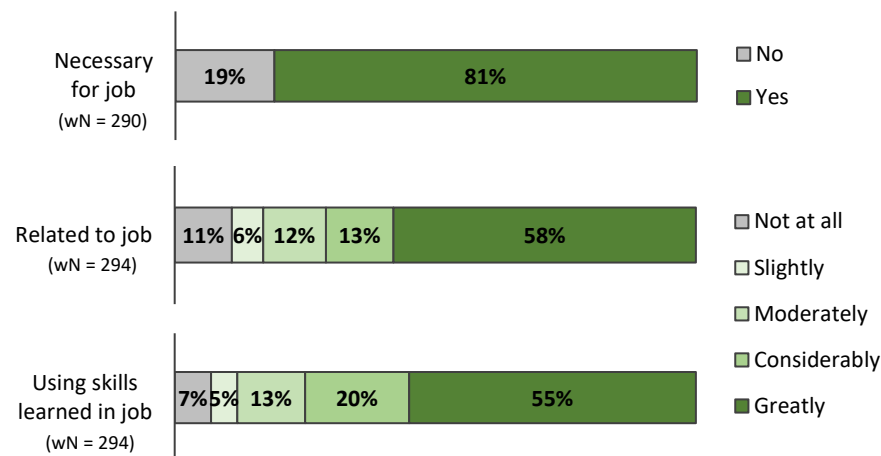
### Number of programs pursued after the first degree



### Main reason for pursuing further education



### Perceived importance and relevance of further education to current employment (among employed graduates)

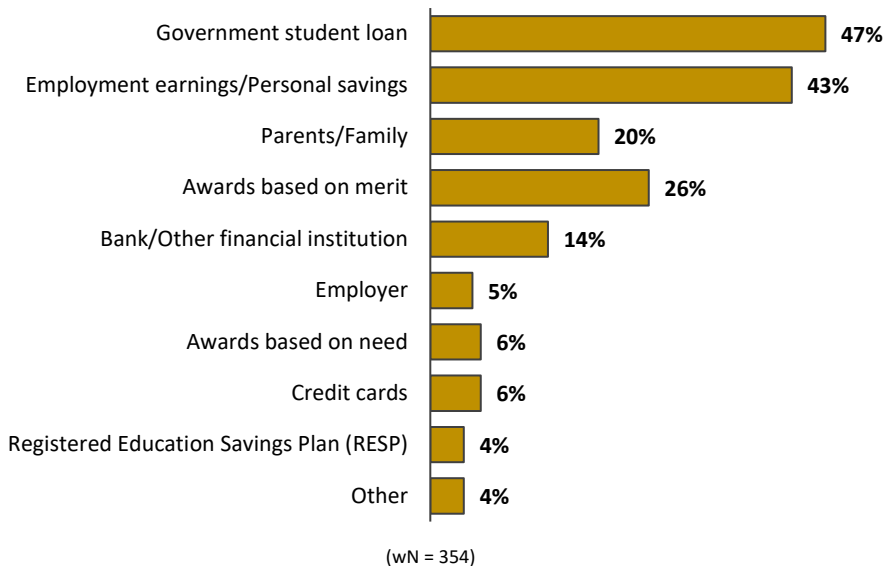




# The Class of 2018 Six Years On: Pursuing Education After a First Degree

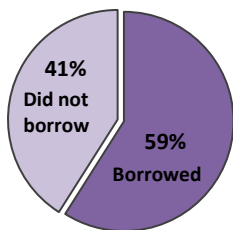
## Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences First-Degree Holders

### Top financial sources for further education

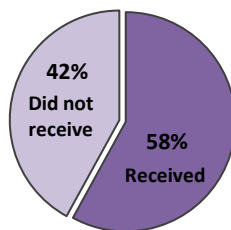


Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could choose up to two options.

### Borrowing for further education



### Receiving scholarships, grants, or bursaries for further education

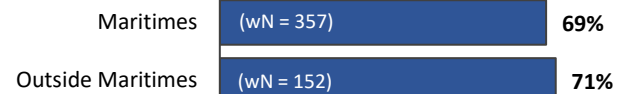


### Percent of first-degree holders who pursued further studies

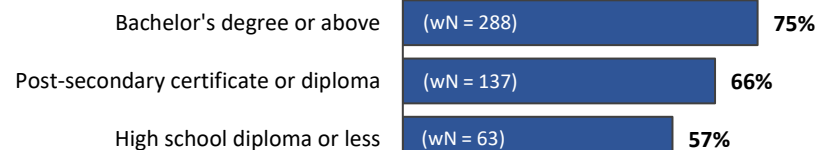
#### Gender<sup>†</sup>



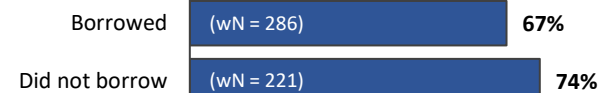
#### Region of origin



#### Parents' educational attainment<sup>†</sup>



#### Borrowing for the first degree



<sup>†</sup> Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

\* Data suppressed due to small subsample (n < 50) or cell size (n < 5).



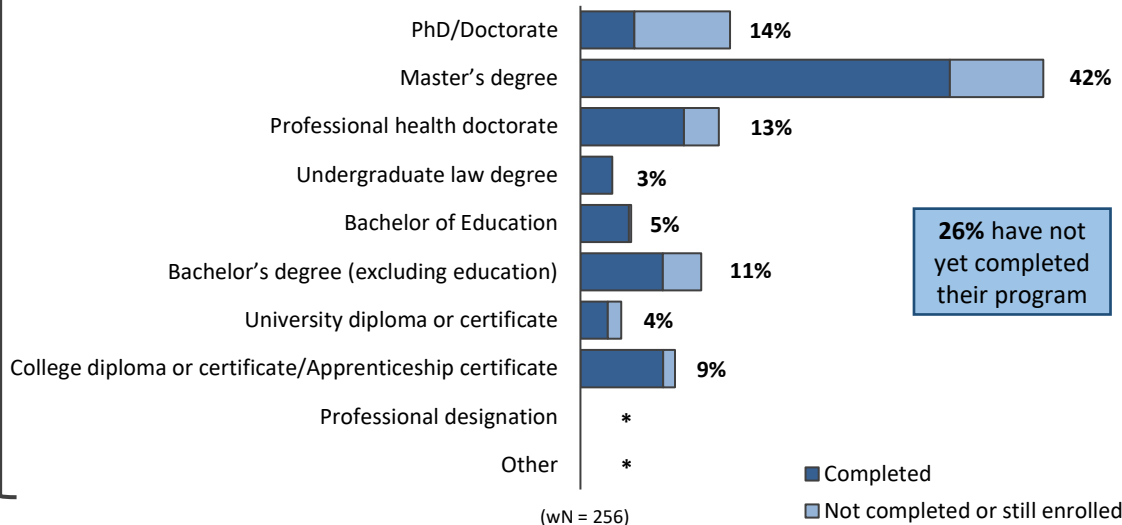




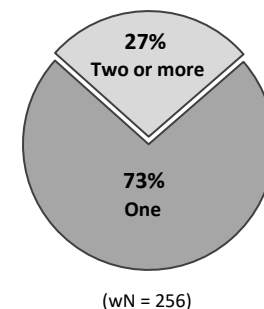
# The Class of 2018 Six Years On: Pursuing Education After a First Degree

## Physical and Life Sciences, and Mathematics First-Degree Holders

### Highest credential attained or pursued after the first degree



### Number of programs pursued after the first degree

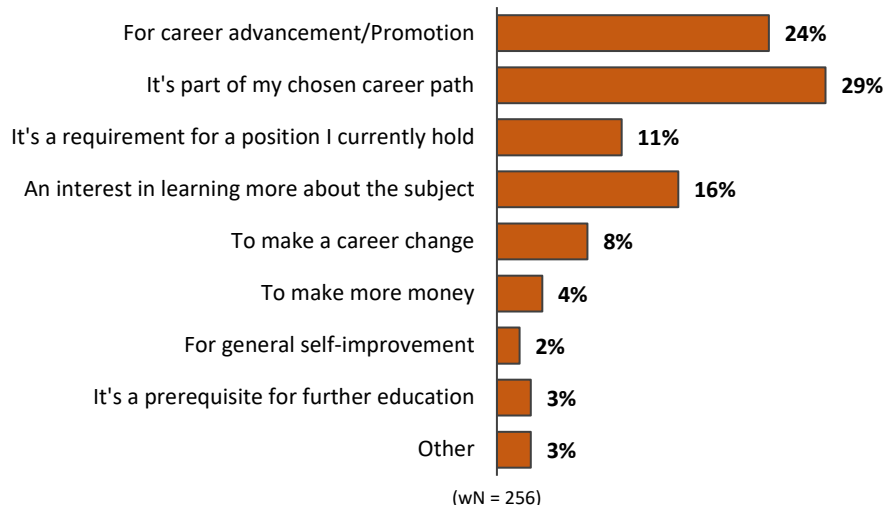


18%  
did not  
pursue  
further  
education

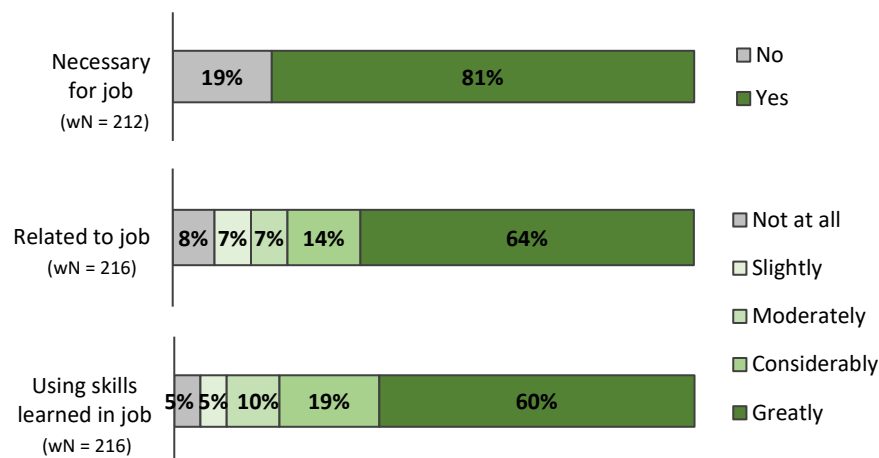
82%  
pursued  
further  
education

(wN = 314)

### Main reason for pursuing further education



### Perceived importance and relevance of further education to current employment (among employed graduates)

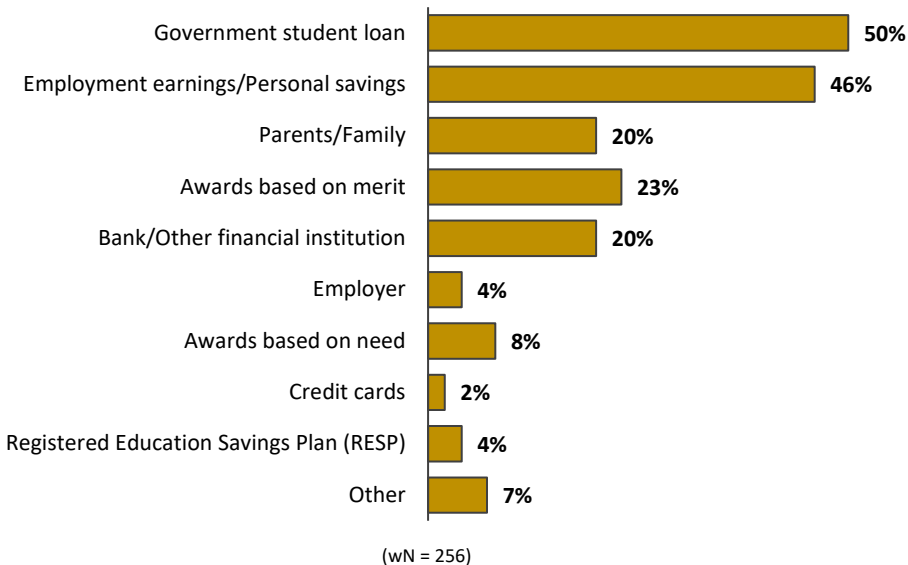




# The Class of 2018 Six Years On: Pursuing Education After a First Degree

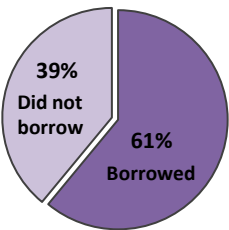
## Physical and Life Sciences, and Mathematics First-Degree Holders

### Top financial sources for further education

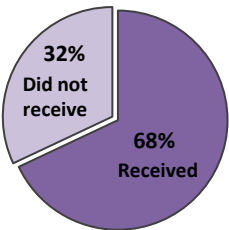


Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could choose up to two options.

### Borrowing for further education



### Receiving scholarships, grants, or bursaries for further education

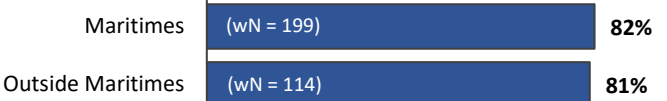


### Percent of first-degree holders who pursued further studies

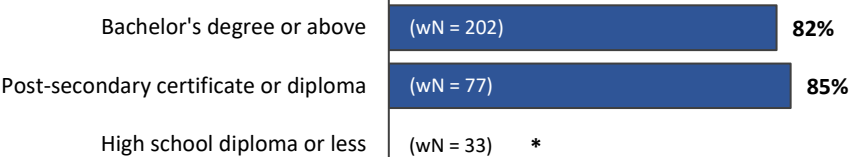
#### Gender



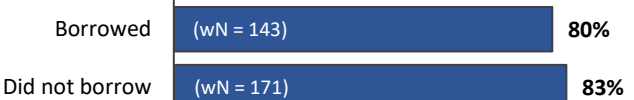
#### Region of origin



#### Parents' educational attainment



#### Borrowing for the first degree



\* Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

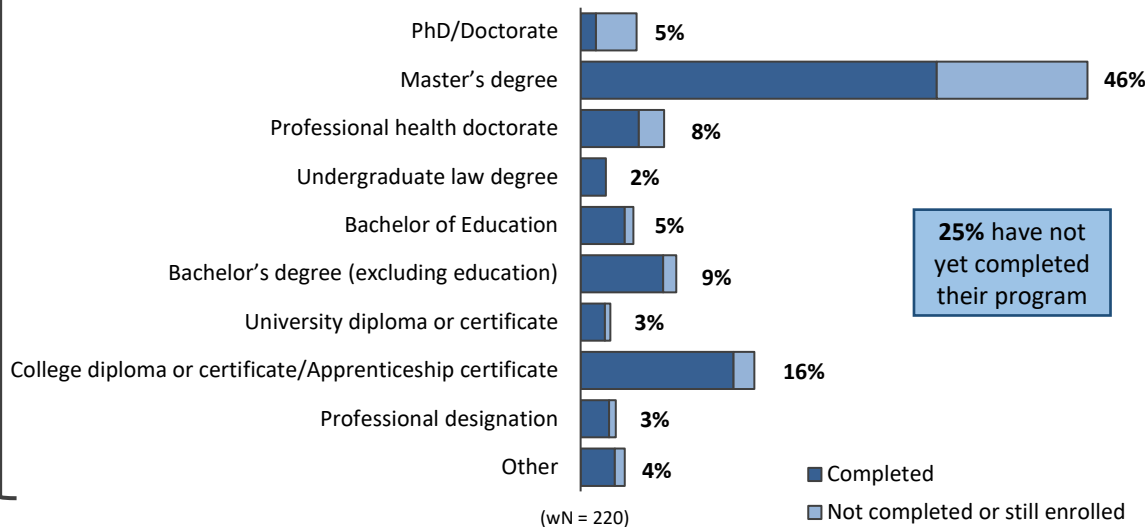
\* Data suppressed due to small subsample (n < 50) or cell size (n < 5).



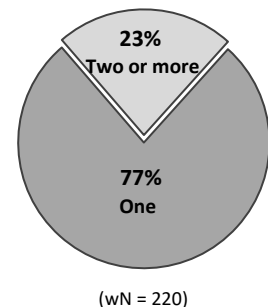
# The Class of 2018 Six Years On: Pursuing Education After a First Degree

## Applied Arts and Sciences, and Professional Programs First-Degree Holders

### Highest credential attained or pursued after the first degree



### Number of programs pursued after the first degree

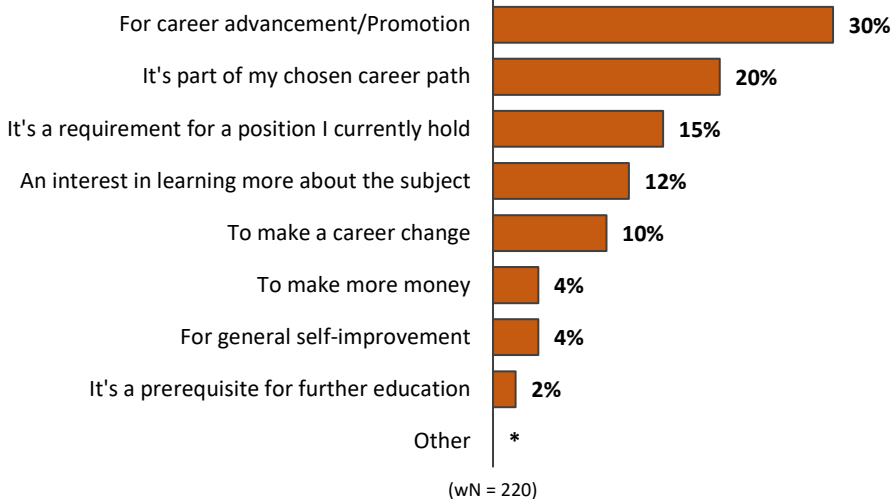


54%  
did not  
pursue  
further  
education

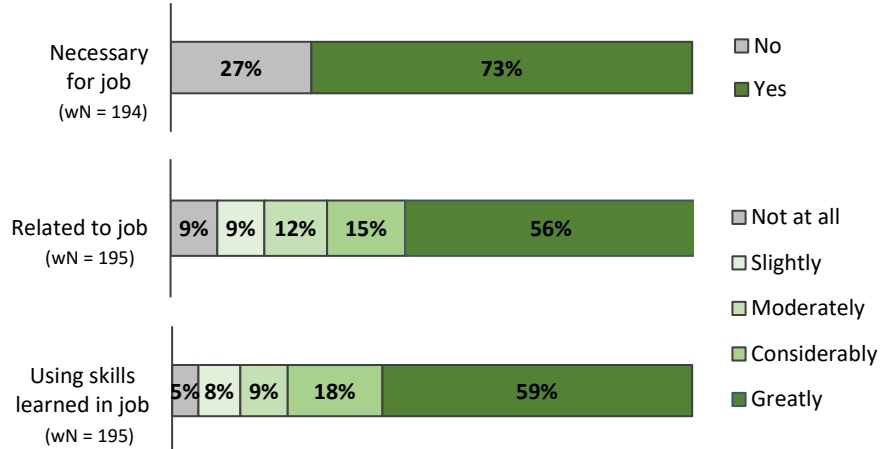
46%  
pursued  
further  
education

(wN = 474)

### Main reason for pursuing further education



### Perceived importance and relevance of further education to current employment (among employed graduates)

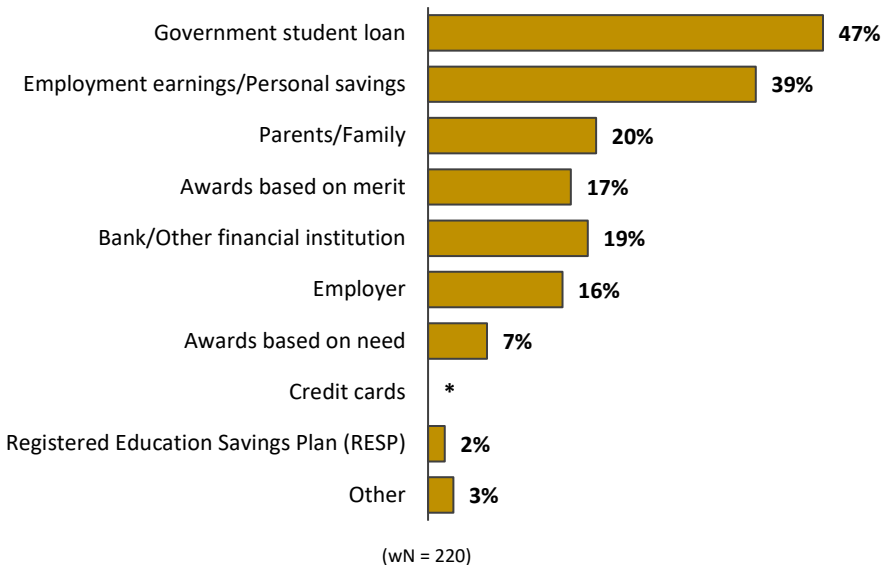




# The Class of 2018 Six Years On: Pursuing Education After a First Degree

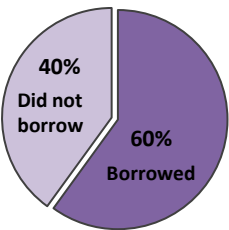
## Applied Arts and Sciences, and Professional Programs First-Degree Holders

### Top financial sources for further education

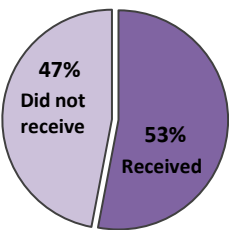


Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could choose up to two options.

### Borrowing for further education

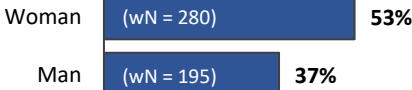


### Receiving scholarships, grants, or bursaries for further education

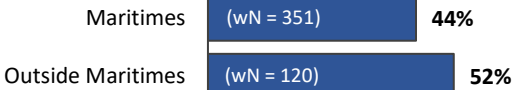


### Percent of first-degree holders who pursued further studies

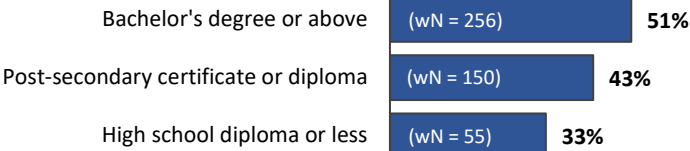
#### Gender<sup>†</sup>



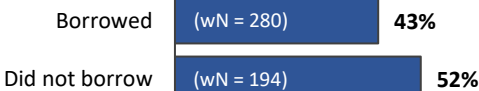
#### Region of origin



#### Parents' educational attainment<sup>†</sup>



#### Borrowing for the first degree



<sup>†</sup> Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

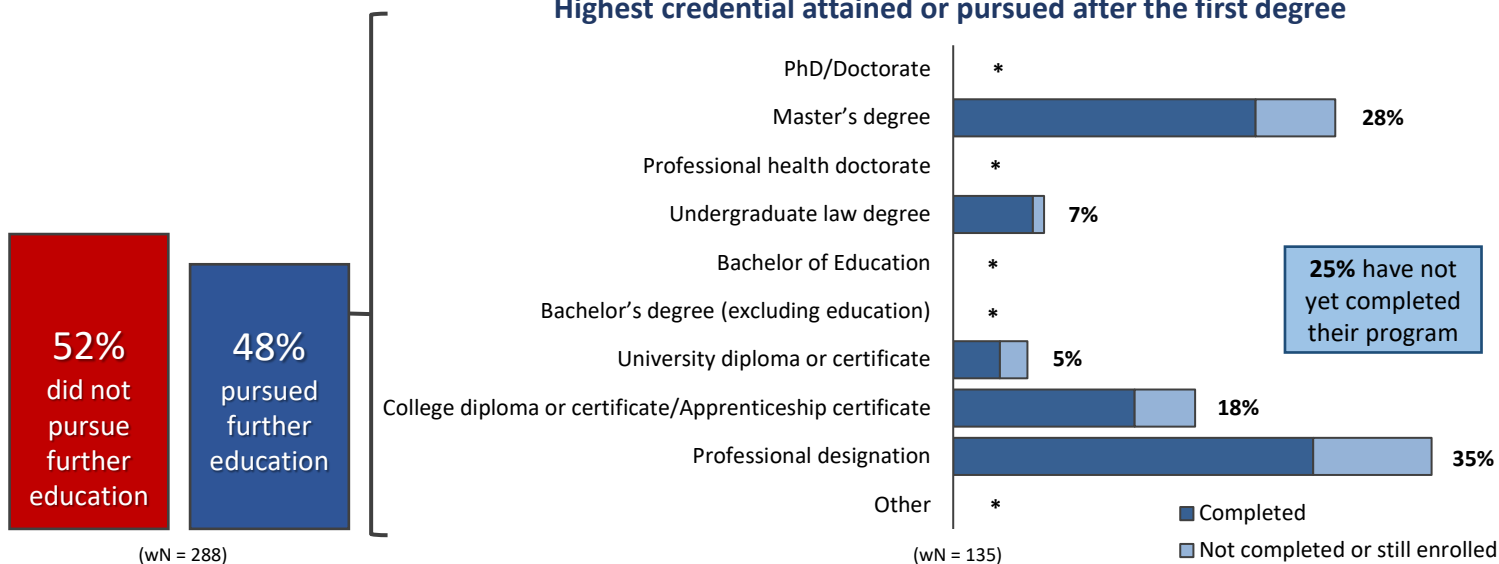
\* Data suppressed due to small subsample (n < 50) or cell size (n < 5).



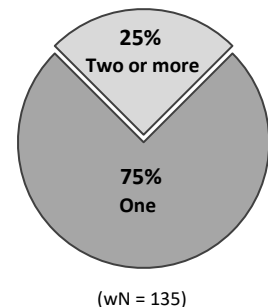
# The Class of 2018 Six Years On: Pursuing Education After a First Degree

## Commerce and Administration First-Degree Holders

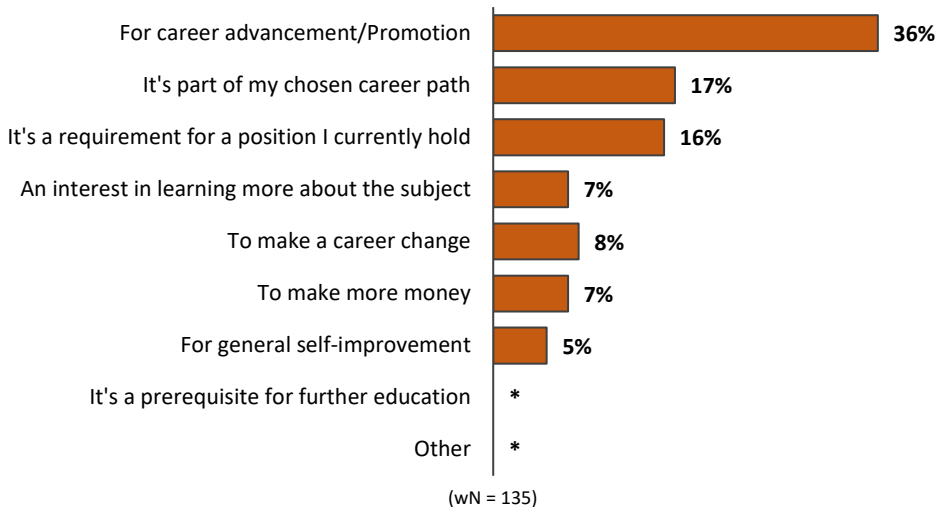
### Highest credential attained or pursued after the first degree



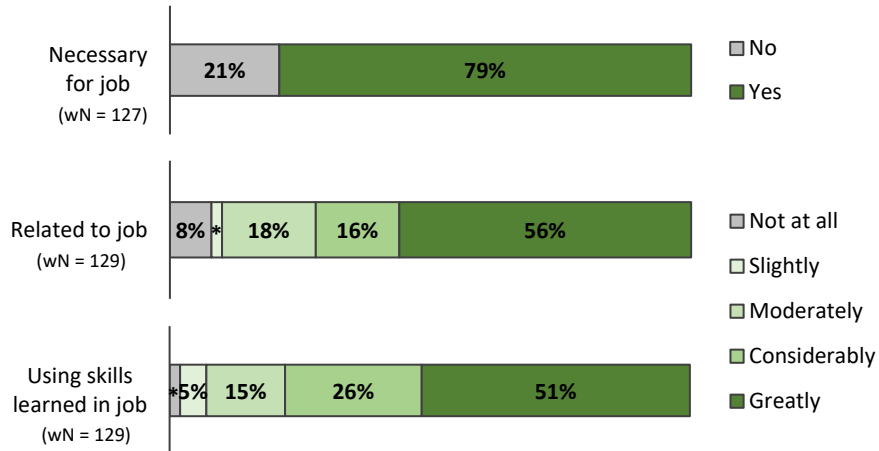
### Number of programs pursued after the first degree



### Main reason for pursuing further education



### Perceived importance and relevance of further education to current employment (among employed graduates)

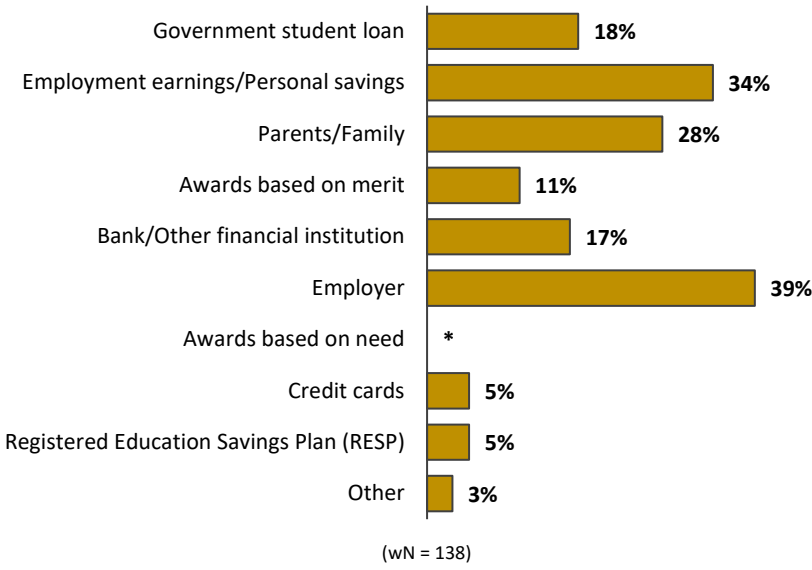




# The Class of 2018 Six Years On: Pursuing Education After a First Degree

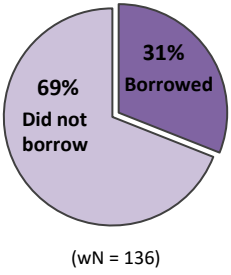
## Commerce and Administration First-Degree Holders

### Top financial sources for further education

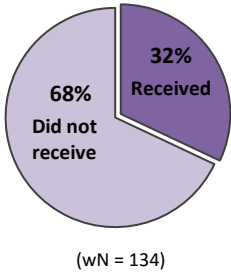


Percentages add up to more than 100% because respondents could choose up to two options.

### Borrowing for further education

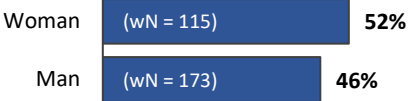


### Receiving scholarships, grants, or bursaries for further education

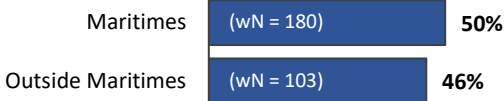


### Percent of first-degree holders who pursued further studies

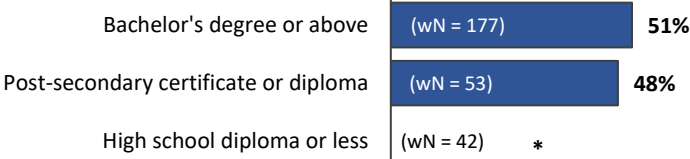
#### Gender



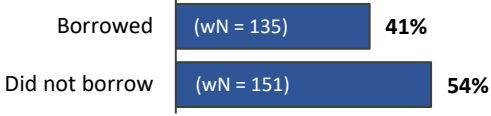
#### Region of origin



#### Parents' educational attainment



#### Borrowing for the first degree<sup>†</sup>



<sup>†</sup> Denotes statistically significant differences between groups.

\* Data suppressed due to small subsample (n < 50) or cell size (n < 5).