

FINDINGS FROM THE TRANSFER INTENT SURVEY



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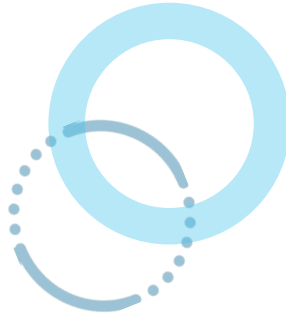
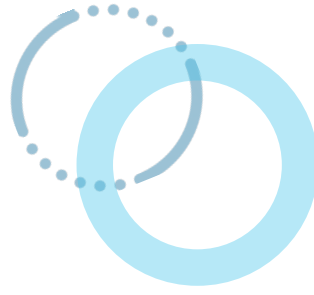


Table of Contents

Introduction	2
Methodology	2
Results	3
Background and Demographics	3
Transfer-Specific Information	9
Other Transfer Measures	12
COVID-Related Transfer Information	13
Experiences With ONTransfer.ca	14
References	16



List of Tables

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics	3
Table 2: Highest Parental Education	4
Table 3: Ethnicity, Language, and Immigration Status.	4
Table 4: Household Characteristics	5
Table 5: Employment Status and Income	5
Table 6: Geographic and Residential Characteristics	6
Table 7: Previous and Expected Credential Completion	7
Table 8: Registration Status and Program Type	7
Table 9: Current and Intended Field of Study	8
Table 10: Students' Transfer Pathways	9
Table 11: When Did You Start Thinking About Transferring?	9
Table 12: How Easy Do You Think Transferring Might Be?	9
Table 13: Why You Think the Transfer Process May Not Be Easy?	10
Table 14: How Much Difficulty, if Any, Have You Had in Getting the Transfer-Related Information You Need?	10
Table 15: What Type of Programs Are You Considering Transferring Into?	10
Table 16: The Number of Program Types Considered.	11
Table 17: How Likely Is It That You Will Transfer?	11
Table 18: If You Do Transfer, Would You Be Enrolled Full-Time or Part-Time in Your New Program?	11
Table 19: If You Do Transfer, Do You Prefer Taking Courses Primarily?	11
Table 20: Why Are You Interested in Transferring?	12
Table 21: To What Extent Is Your Interest in Transferring (to a Different Discipline, Credential or School) Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic?	13
Table 22: How Did the COVID-19 Pandemic Affect Your Decision to Transfer?	13
Table 23: How Did You First Learn About ONTransfer.ca?	14
Table 24: How Did You First Learn About ONTransfer.ca: Social Media/Vlogs/ Blogs/Online Forums	14
Table 25: Is This the First Time You Have Visited ONTransfer.ca?	15
Table 26: How Satisfied Are You With Your Overall Experience Using ONTransfer.ca?	15

Introduction

This report presents results from the Transfer Intent Survey (TIS), an online survey conducted by ONCAT of students interested in transferring to postsecondary institutions in Ontario. The purpose of the TIS was to generate insights into the early stages of transfer-related decision-making. The results cover a variety of topics on potential transfer students, such as their backgrounds, intended transfer destinations and programs of study, experiences and expectations regarding the transfer process, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their decisions, and their engagement with ONTransfer.ca.

The TIS was the first wave of data collected as part of a larger project known as the ONCAT Longitudinal Study of Transfer Students (OLSTS). The broader OLSTS project was a mixed-methods data collection initiative that followed students from the initial stages of considering transfer through their first semester of study at their receiving institution. The key objectives of OLSTS were to:

- Enhance our understanding of Ontario's unique transfer landscape.
- Gain insights about the transfer process from the perspectives of students.
- Collect data at multiple timepoints along the transfer journey to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' experiences.
- Inform transfer policies and practices at postsecondary institutions.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations to the government.

This first-of-its-kind initiative facilitated detailed analyses of the transfer process which were impossible with existing data sets. Additional findings from OLSTS are available on the [ONCAT.ca website](#) (e.g., LaCroix & Napierala, 2025).

Methodology

The TIS was designed by ONCAT and administered by York University's Institute of Social Research between September 2021 to September 2023. Students who were interested in transferring were recruited¹ through random advertisements on [ONTransfer.ca](#), an online resource that provides information about credit transfer and academic pathways at colleges, universities, and Indigenous Institutes across the province. After screening out problematic cases,² approximately 2,946 university undergraduates and college students³ are retained for analysis, representing 51 Ontario postsecondary institutions.

¹ Respondents were offered a \$10 Amazon gift card for participation.

² A small number of cases are filtered out due to inaccurate or incomplete data for key covariates, such as whether they had previously completed postsecondary study. Additional cases were removed when it was indicated that they were interested in postgraduate programs of study.

³ The number of observations (n) for individual tables below may vary due to item non-response.

There were three versions of the TIS:

- Version 1: the original survey.
- Version 1.5: included a small number of additional questions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Version 2: expanded on previous versions with additional questions about students' educational backgrounds and included minor modifications to existing items. This version contained 47 questions and required approximately 10 minutes to complete.

Results

The tables containing TIS results are grouped into four different categories: Background and Demographics, Transfer-Specific Information, Other Transfer Measures, and Experiences with ONTransfer.ca. Note that variables derived through combining multiple survey questions are denoted with a * symbol.

Background and Demographics

TABLE 1
Demographic Characteristics

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Gender ^a		
Man	1,257	42.93
Woman	1,581	54.00
Another gender	90	3.07
Age ^b	2,888	24.63
Have disability or continuing health condition ^c		
Yes	727	24.79
No	2,206	75.21

^a *n* (Gender) = 2,928 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

^b *n* (Disability) = 2,933 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

^c *n* (Age) = 2,888 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2). The mean is shown for age (Max = 16, Min = 65, & SD = 7.0).



TABLE 2
Highest Parental Education

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Did not finish high school	179	6.54
Graduated from high school	417	15.25
Some or completed college or CEGEP	695	25.41
Attended university without earning deg	149	5.45
Completed Bachelor's Degree (e.g., B.A., B.Sc., etc.)	764	27.93
Completed Master's Degree (e.g., M.A., M.Sc., etc.)	352	12.87
Completed a Doctoral Degree (e.g., Ph.D., etc.)	91	3.33
Completed a Professional Degree	88	3.22

Note. *n* = 2,735 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

TABLE 3
Ethnicity, Language, and Immigration Status

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Race ^a		
White	968	32.86
South Asian	665	22.57
Another race	564	19.14
Black	269	9.13
East Asian	191	6.48
Southeast Asian/Filipino	153	5.19
West Asian/Arab	136	4.62
Language spoken at home ^b		
English	2,066	70.37
French	43	1.46
Another language	827	28.17
Born in Canada ^c		
Yes	1,714	58.66
No	1,208	41.34
Not born in Canada, but: ^d		
I was born a Canadian citizen	11	4.95
I am a Canadian citizen	75	33.78
I am a Canadian permanent resident	53	23.87
I have a Canadian work visa	9	4.05
I have a Canadian student visa	74	33.33

^a *n* (Race) = 2,946 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

^b *n* (Language spoken at home) = 2,936 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

^c *n* (Born in Canada) = 2,922 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

^d *n* (Not born in Canada, but) = 222 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

TABLE 4
Household Characteristics

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Marital status ^a		
Single	2,461	84.31
Married	374	12.81
Separated or divorced	71	2.43
Widowed	13	0.45
Number of dependent children under age 19 ^b	2,424	0.25

^a *n* (Marital status) = 2,919.

^b *n* (Number of dependent children under age 19) = 2,424 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2). The mean is shown for the number of dependent children under age 19 (Min = 0, Max = 6, & SD = 0.7).

TABLE 5
Employment Status and Income

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Employment status ^a		
Full-time job	810	27.65
Part-time job	995	33.97
Self-employed	150	5.12
Not in labour force	974	33.25
Annual income before taxes (for the year ending Dec.31, 2022) ^b	2,559	\$25,315.54

^a *n* (Employment status) = 2,929 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

^b *n* (Annual income) = 2,559 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2). The mean is shown for annual income (Min = \$0, Max = \$1,000,000, & SD = \$40,836).

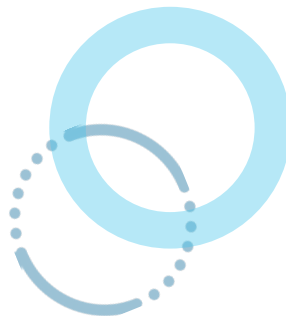


TABLE 6
Geographic and Residential Characteristics

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Province of residence ^a		
Ontario	2,768	94.37
Outside of Canada	62	2.11
Quebec	24	0.82
British Columbia	18	0.61
Alberta	17	0.58
Nova Scotia	11	0.38
Manitoba	9	0.31
Saskatchewan	7	0.24
New Brunswick	7	0.24
Newfoundland and Labrador	4	0.14
Prince Edward Island	4	0.14
Territories (Northwest Territories, Nunavut, and Yukon)	2	0.07
Region (within Ontario) ^b		
Central	1,032	39.59
Toronto	642	24.63
Southwestern	491	18.83
Eastern	324	12.43
Northern	118	4.53
Type of area ^c		
Urban	2,773	94.35
Rural	166	5.65

^a *n* (Province of residence) = 2,933 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

^b *n* (Region) = 2,607 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

^c *n* (Type of area) = 2,939 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).



TABLE 7
Previous and Expected Credential Completion

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Did you complete your certificate, diploma, or degree? ^a		
Yes	539	77.89
No	153	22.11
Do you plan to complete your certificate, diploma, or degree? ^b		
Yes	422	92.75
No	33	7.25
How likely is it that you will graduate before transferring? ^c		
Very likely	1290	47.22
Somewhat likely	458	16.76
Not very likely	414	15.15
Not at all likely	570	20.86

^a Students previously enrolled in PSE only. *n* = 692 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

^b Students currently enrolled in PSE only. *n* = 455 (TIS v2).

^c Students currently enrolled in PSE only. *n* = 2,732 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

TABLE 8
Registration Status and Program Type

Characteristics	<i>n</i>	%
Are/were you studying full-time or part-time? ^a		
Full-time	2,650	91.98
Part-time	231	8.02
Type of program currently/previously in: ^b		
Certificate (1-Year)	182	6.18
Diploma (2-Year)	1,092	37.09
Advanced diploma (3-Year)	682	23.17
Graduate certificate (1-Year)	78	2.65
Bachelor's degree (3-Year)	175	5.94
Honours bachelor's degree (4-Year)	708	24.05
Professional degree (e.g., J.D.)	4	0.14
Master's degree	16	0.54
Doctoral degree	7	0.24
Intending to change their field of study? ^c		
Same field of study	2,041	71.09
Changed field of study	372	12.96
Don't know/don't have a program in mind	458	15.95

^a *n* = 2,881 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

^b *n* = 2,944 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

^c *n* = 2,871 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

TABLE 9
Current and Intended Field of Study

Field of study	Current/previous field of study ^a		Intended next field of study ^b	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Personal improvement and leisure	22	0.77	18	0.72
Education	123	4.28	104	4.14
Visual and performing arts, and communications technologies	89	3.10	84	3.34
Humanities	125	4.35	76	3.02
Social and behavioural sciences, and law	459	15.99	423	16.83
Business, management, and public administration	637	22.19	547	21.76
Physical and life sciences and technologies	219	7.63	154	6.13
Mathematics, computer and information sciences	384	13.38	374	14.88
Architecture, engineering, and related trades	406	14.14	383	15.23
Agriculture, natural resources, and conservation	36	1.25	31	1.23
Health and related fields	297	10.34	272	10.82
Personal, protective, and transportation services	42	1.46	30	1.19
Other	32	1.11	18	0.72

^a *n* = 2,871 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

^b *n* = 2,514 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).



Transfer-Specific Information

TABLE 10
Students' Transfer Pathways

Pathway type	<i>n</i>	%
College-to-college	521	18.42
College-to-university	1,283	45.37
University-to-college	158	5.59
University-to-university	658	23.27
College-to-college or university	147	5.20
University-to-college or university	61	2.16

Note. *n* = 2,828 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

TABLE 11
When Did You Start Thinking About Transferring?

Started thinking about transfer	<i>n</i>	%
In the last month	1,171	39.80
2 to 6 months ago	852	28.96
More than 6 months ago	919	31.24

Note. *n* = 2,942 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

TABLE 12
How Easy Do You Think Transferring Might Be?

Level of ease	<i>n</i>	%
Very easy	75	2.55
Somewhat easy	598	20.33
Not too easy	1,150	39.10
Not at all easy	715	24.31
Don't know	403	13.70

Note. *n* = 2,941 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

TABLE 13
Why Do You Think the Transfer Process May Not Be Easy?

Reason	<i>n</i>	%
Uncertainty about how to go through the process	1,462	52.10
Inability to transfer part of or all credits	1,141	40.66
Financial costs	926	33.00
Length of the process	899	32.04
Difficult application process	824	29.37
Communication between postsecondary institutions	816	29.08
Required to take extra courses	815	29.04
From what I've seen or heard of other students' experiences	330	11.76
Other	45	1.60

Note. *n* = 2,806 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

TABLE 14
How Much Difficulty, if Any, Have You Had in Getting the Transfer-Related Information You Need?

Level of difficulty	<i>n</i>	%
A great deal of difficulty	495	16.83
Quite a bit of difficulty	979	33.29
A little difficulty	1,187	40.36
No difficulty	280	9.52

Note. *n* = 2,941 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

TABLE 15
What Type of Programs Are You Considering Transferring Into?

Type of program	<i>n</i>	%
Honours bachelor's degree (4-Year)	1,621	57.77
Bachelor's degree (3-Year)	1,032	36.78
Diploma (2-Year)	476	16.96
Advanced diploma (3-Year)	277	9.87
Certificate (1-Year)	153	5.45
Graduate certificate (1-Year)	145	5.17
Master's degree	139	4.95
Professional degree (e.g., J.D.)	62	2.21
Doctoral degree	19	0.68

Note. *n* = 2,806 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

TABLE 16*The Number of Program Types Considered*

Number of program types*	<i>n</i>	%
1	2,195	74.51
2	527	17.89
3	142	4.82
4	44	1.49
5	27	0.92
6+	11	0.37

Note. *n* = 2,806 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).**TABLE 17***How Likely Is it That You Will Transfer?*

Likelihood of transfer	<i>n</i>	%
Very likely	1,043	35.50
Somewhat likely	1,537	52.31
Not very likely	319	10.86
Not at all likely	39	1.33

Note. *n* = 2,938 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).**TABLE 18***If You Do Transfer, Would You Be Enrolled Full-Time or Part-Time in Your New Program?*

Intended future registration status	<i>n</i>	%
Full-time	2,082	71.87
Part-time	439	15.15
Don't know	376	12.98

Note. *n* = 2,897 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).**TABLE 19***If You Do Transfer, Do You Prefer Taking Courses Primarily?*

Preferred course delivery mode	<i>n</i>	%
Online	1,031	35.56
In-person	1,005	34.67
Doesn't matter	863	29.77

Note. *n* = 2,899 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

Other Transfer Measures

TABLE 20

Why Are You Interested in Transferring?

Reasons	TIS v1 & v1.5		TIS v2	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Want to obtain a higher level credential	1399	60.77	329	63.03
Want to increase chances of getting a job			196	37.55
Want to attend a better/different school	592	25.72	160	30.65
Have moved/am considering moving	378	16.42	102	19.54
Want to study online/remotely			83	15.90
Lost interest in current/previous program	435	18.90	76	14.56
Want to change career			73	13.98
The school's location (e.g., to be close to family/friends, reduce commute time)			68	13.03
Other	138	5.99	36	6.90

Note. *n* = 2,302 (TIS v1 & v1.5); *n* = 522 (TIS v2).



COVID-Related Transfer Information

TABLE 21

To What Extent Is Your Interest in Transferring (to a Different Discipline, Credential or School) Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic?

Extent of interest	<i>n</i>	%
A great deal	163	14.30
Somewhat	225	19.74
Very little	220	19.30
Not at all	532	46.67

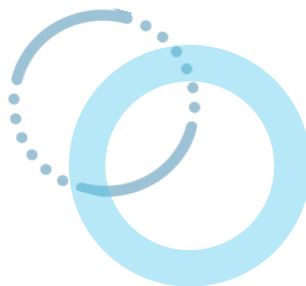
Note. *n* = 1,140 (TIS v1.5 & v2).

TABLE 22

How Did the COVID-19 Pandemic Affect Your Decision to Transfer?

Reason	<i>n</i>	%
Changes to course delivery (online/hybrid) makes it possible to attend a different institution	305	51.35
Desire to be closer to home for personal reasons related to COVID-19 (e.g., feeling isolated living closer to campus)	160	26.94
COVID-19 made it difficult to attend my current/former institution	124	20.88
Courses or work study at my current/former institution were canceled or delayed, but were being offered at the institution I would like to transfer to	75	12.63
I did not agree with my current/former institution's COVID-19 policies	62	10.44
Other	81	13.64

Note. *n* = 594 (TIS v1.5 & v2).



Experiences With ONTransfer.ca

TABLE 23

How Did You First Learn About ONTransfer.ca?

Source	<i>n</i>	%
College/University/Indigenous Institute website	882	42.92
Google ads/Google search	684	33.28
Link from postsecondary institution	386	18.78
Word of mouth	263	12.80
Transfer advisor	248	12.07
High school guidance counsellor	179	8.71
Social media/vlogs/blogs/online forums	132	6.42
Banner ad online	38	3.02
College/University information fair	32	1.85
Newsletter	20	1.56
Transit ad (on subway/bus)	11	0.97
Other	62	0.54

Note. *n* = 2,937 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).

TABLE 24

How Did You First Learn About ONTransfer.ca: Social Media/Vlogs/Blogs/Online Forums?

Social media platform	<i>n</i>	%
Reddit	32	27.12
LinkedIn	22	18.64
Instagram	20	16.95
Facebook	13	11.02
TikTok	12	10.17
Spotify	7	5.93
Snapchat	6	5.08
Twitter	5	4.24
YouTube	1	0.85

Note. *n* = 118 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).



TABLE 25*Is This the First Time You Have Visited ONTransfer.ca?*

First time visiting ONTransfer.ca	<i>n</i>	%
Yes	1,782	60.65
No	1,065	36.25
Don't know	91	3.10

Note. *n* = 2,938 (TIS v1, v1.5 & v2).**TABLE 26***How Satisfied Are You With Your Overall Experience Using ONTransfer.ca?*

Level of satisfaction	<i>n</i>	%
Very satisfied	194	31.44
Somewhat satisfied	355	57.54
Somewhat dissatisfied	57	9.24
Very dissatisfied	11	1.78

Note. *n* = 617 (TIS v2).

References

LaCroix, E., & Napierala, J. (2025). *How Do Students Learn About Transfer? Postsecondary Students' Use of Transfer Information Sources in Ontario*. Ontario Council on Articulation and Transfer. https://oncat.ca/assets/oncat/ONCAT_HowDoStudentsLearnAboutTransfer_2025.pdf



