

# CAWG SNAPSHOT OF STUDENT EXPERIENCES FRESHMEN'S PERCEPTIONS OF DIVERSITY

University of Maryland

2015 – Issue 4, November

This Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) Snapshot reports findings on freshmen's experiences with diversity on UMD's campus.<sup>1</sup> The data included represent results from the Beginnings Student Survey (BSS), an annual survey administered by the CAWG Beginnings subgroup. Respondents complete the survey during the fall semester in courses such as English 101 and UNIV100. For the BSS 2014, out of 4,129 first-time, full-time freshmen, 2,380 (58%) completed the survey. Of the respondents, 53% were White; 16% were Asian; 13% were Black or African American; 8% were Hispanic; 5% were Foreign; 4% were Two or More Races; 1% were Unknown. Additionally, 53% were male and 47% were female. The demographic breakdown of respondents is representative of the university as a whole. The data below represent only the responses of survey respondents, not all UMD students; therefore, use caution when generalizing. Percentages may not sum to 100 due to rounding. Unless otherwise indicated, diversity refers to racial/ethnic diversity.

<sup>1</sup> This snapshot was edited in March 2024 to fix errors that were found in the diversity chart on page 3.

## Diversity before coming to UMD

### ➤ How would you compare the racial/ethnic composition of UMD with the following?



Neighborhood where you grew up

High school from which you graduated

	UMD is less diverse	UMD is about the same	UMD is more diverse	N
Neighborhood where you grew up	8%	26%	67%	2374
High school from which you graduated	11%	31%	58%	2375

### ➤ How would you compare the race/ethnicity of the friends you have made at UMD to those you had before?



Friends you had before coming to UMD

	Friends at UMD are less diverse	Friends at UMD are about the same	Friends at UMD are more diverse	N
Friends you had before coming to UMD	10%	54%	36%	2372

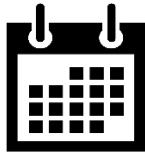
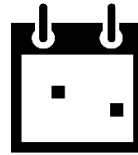
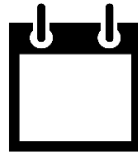
- Two thirds (67%) said that UMD is more diverse than the neighborhood where they grew up and more than half (58%) said that it's more diverse than the high school from which they graduated.
- More than half (54%) of respondents said that their friend group is about the same with regards to diversity than the friends they had before UMD, and just over one third (36%) reported a more diverse group of friends at UMD.

#### Questions to consider:

- How might individuals' definitions of diversity affect their perceptions of diversity around them? Would an individual consider a predominately Hispanic high school diverse?
- How do students value friendships with persons who have different perspectives and points of view, or would students prefer to be with persons who are similar to themselves?



## Frequency of interactions



	Never / almost never	Occasionally	Weekly	Daily	N
➤ How often do you interact IN CLASS with people of a race/ethnicity different than yours?	1%	13%	19%	67%	2376
➤ How often do you interact OUTSIDE OF CLASS with people of a race/ethnicity different than yours?	3%	13%	15%	69%	2356

- Interactions with those of a different race/ethnicity were reported as happening at similar frequencies whether they occur inside or outside of the classroom.
- When the data were broken down by race/ethnicity, fewer than expected White respondents reported daily in class interaction (65%), whereas more than expected Black or African American (73%) and Asian American (75%) respondents reported the same. No differences were found for Hispanic respondents. No differences were found for daily outside of class interactions.

### Questions to consider:

- What might account for the fact that there are statistically significant differences by race for daily interactions in class but none for outside of class?
- In what ways might students have considered their instructors when they answered this question?



➤ **NOTE:** Other CAWG subgroups recently surveyed UMD students on the topic of diversity. Questions that were asked across multiple surveys are marked with the yellow arrow symbol to facilitate cross-group comparisons. In Spring 2014 ACES surveyed juniors and seniors and RetComp surveyed alumni who graduated between Fall 2012 and Spring 2013; both reports are available at <https://www.irpa.umd.edu/CAWG/CAWGReports.html>.

### Demographic differences explained

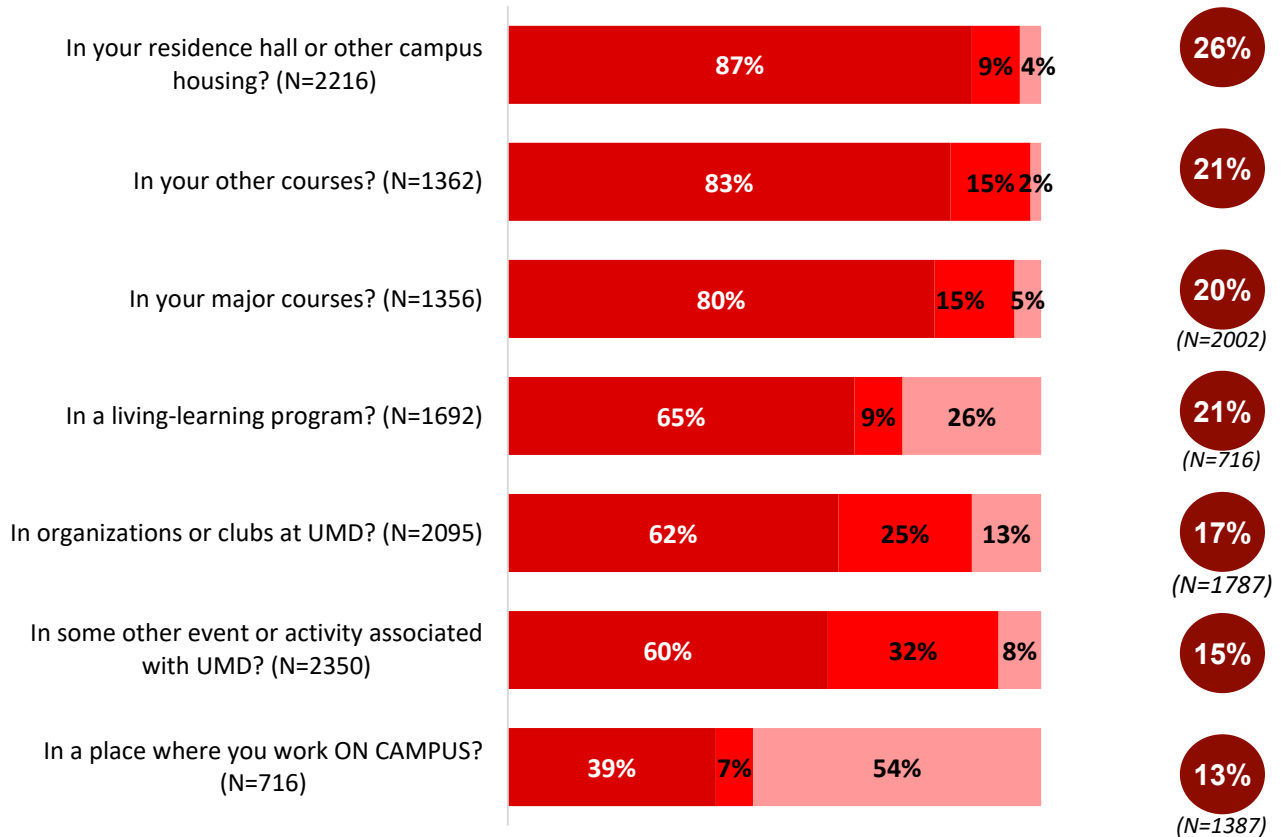
*Differences (tested with chi square analyses) are reported where the responses across the demographic categories (e.g., male and female) are significantly different than expected relative to the overall response pattern. For example, if 70% of all respondents agreed with a statement, we would expect 70% of both males and females to agree, if sex were not a factor. However, if we found a significant difference with only 65% of males agreeing, then we would report that “fewer males than expected” agreed with the item.*

*The American Indian/Native Hawaiian, Unknown, and Foreign racial/ethnic/citizenship groups were not included due to small sample sizes that make statistical analyses unreliable.*

While at UMD, how often have you interacted with people of a race/ethnicity different from yours:

% who indicated the experience caused them to think about new perspectives and points of view in a significant way

■ Weekly or Daily ■ Occasionally ■ Never / Almost Never



Note: Respondents had the option to select N/A for residence hall, on-campus work, organizations and clubs, and living-learning program. Those responses were excluded from analysis.

N=727-2136, depending on item and unless indicated otherwise

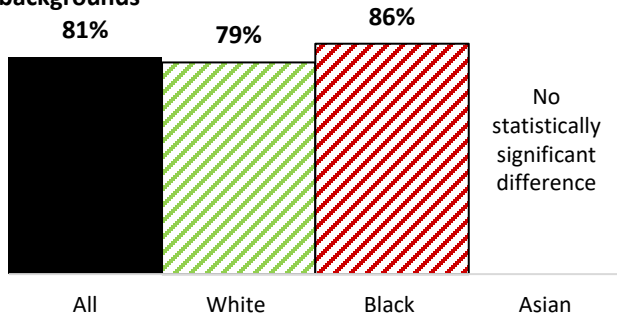
- More than four out of five respondents interact weekly or daily with people of a different race/ethnicity in their residence halls or other campus housing (87%) or in other courses (83%).
- For all situations, approximately one-quarter or less of students found the experiences cause them to think significantly about new perspectives and points of view. Note that low percentages for the “significant way” question may be because students were exposed to diversity at a place other than UMD. It could also mean that students have not been exposed to diversity.
- There are relatively few racial group differences
- No obvious patterns of racial group differences emerged for daily/weekly interaction with people of a different race/ethnicity. However, patterns did emerge when students were asked whether diverse interactions caused them think about new perspectives or points of view differently. In general, fewer White and more Black or African American respondents than expected indicated a “significant” impact.
- For all situations except “in your major courses” where there was no difference, White respondents were less likely than expected to report the experience caused them to think about new perspectives and points of view in a significant way. For all situations except “in a place where you work ON CAMPUS” where there was no difference, Black or African American respondents were more likely than expected to report the experience caused them to think about new perspectives and points of view in a significant way.



**Since coming to UMD, how often have you done the following?**

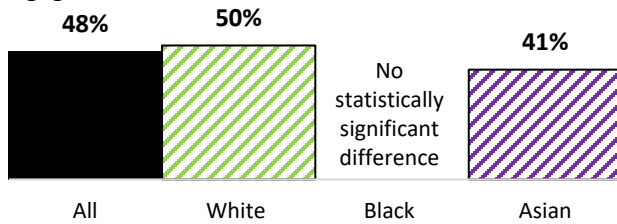
■ Sometimes or frequently

**Made efforts to get to know individuals from diverse backgrounds**



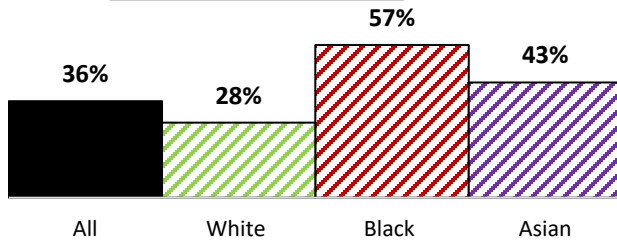
- Results for all respondents are represented by black bars. Most (81%) reported making an effort to get to know others from diverse backgrounds, but far fewer participated in a variety of cross-cultural activities.

**Engaged in discussions about racial/ethnic issues in class**



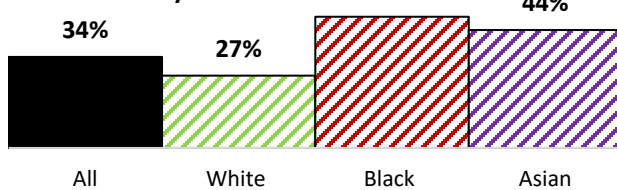
- Racial/ethnic group difference trends emerged (see striped bars). With few exceptions, White respondents reported less frequent participation and Black/African American and Asian American respondents reported more frequent participation across activities when compared to the overall percentage for each item. These differences are indicated by the height of the striped bars in comparison to the solid black bar representing all respondents.

**Participated in events or activities sponsored by groups reflecting your own cultural heritage**

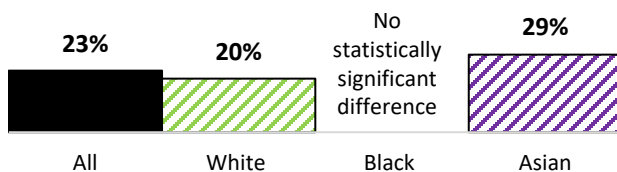


*Note: Analyses were conducted for Hispanic respondents but yielded no statistically significant differences.*

**Actively participated in an organization that promotes cultural diversity**



**Participated in events or activities sponsored by groups reflecting a cultural heritage other than your own**



**Question to consider:**

- Should increasing these numbers be a goal of UMD? If so, how can we encourage participation in these events?



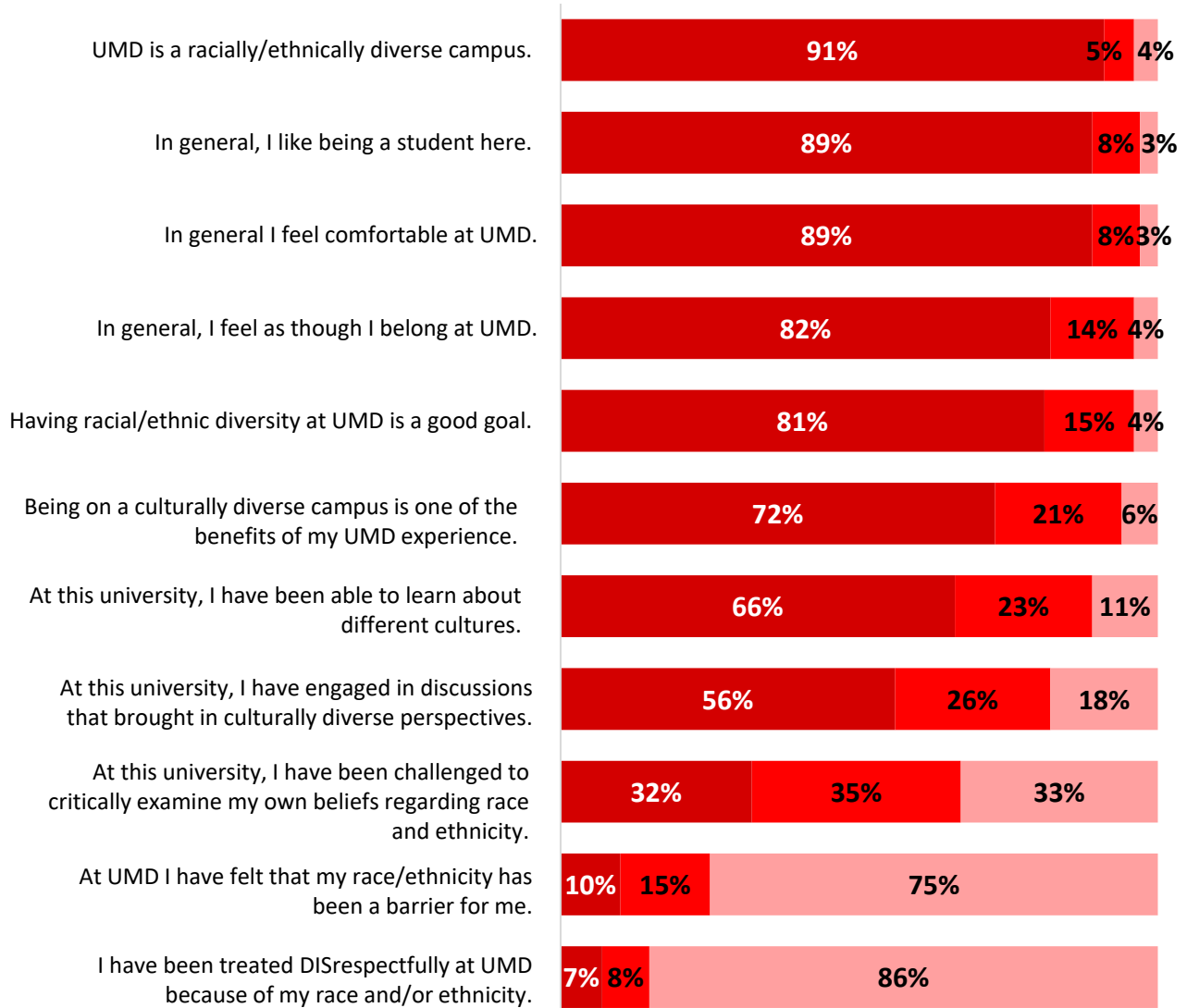
# Perceptions of campus climate for diversity



All respondents

(See the following page for analyses of this question by race.)

■ Agree or Strongly Agree    
 ■ Neither Agree nor Disagree    
 ■ Disagree or Strongly Disagree



N=2370-2376, depending on item

- Between 82% and 89% of all respondents report feeling comfortable, liking being a student, or feeling a sense of belonging at UMD.
- Though 81% say diversity is a good goal, fewer report it as a benefit (72%), that they have been able to learn about different cultures (66%), that they have engaged in discussions (56%) and that they have critically examined their own beliefs (32%).
- There are differences between the rates of exposure and experience. For example, two-thirds (66%) feel that they have been able to learn about different cultures and one-third (32%) feel they have been challenged to critically examine their own beliefs regarding race and ethnicity.
- The freshman response trends displayed here align with the junior/senior trends in the ACES Snapshot, available at: [https://www.irpa.umd.edu/CAWG/Reports/2015/snapshot\\_april15.pdf](https://www.irpa.umd.edu/CAWG/Reports/2015/snapshot_april15.pdf).

## Respondents by race

The “all respondents” column lists the percentage of all respondents who selected that they “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement. The percentages under the “Race in comparison to all other races” heading are the percentage of respondents of that race who “agreed” or “strongly agreed” with the statement. Where the “---” image appears indicates that there was no statistically significant difference between the way respondents of that race answered in comparison to respondents of different races.

	All respondents	Race in comparison to all other races			
		White	Black or African American	Asian	Hispanic
UMD is a racially/ethnically diverse campus.	91%	95%	79%	---	83%
In general I feel comfortable at UMD.	89%	92%	---	---	85%
In general, I like being a student here.	89%	---	---	---	---
In general, I feel as though I belong at UMD.	82%	87%	76%	78%	---
Having racial/ethnic diversity at UMD is a good goal.	81%	77%	91%	88%	---
Being on a culturally diverse campus is one of the benefits of my UMD experience.	72%	70%	---	---	---
At this university, I have been able to learn about different cultures.	66%	---	71%	60%	---
At this university, I have engaged in discussions that brought in culturally diverse perspectives.	56%	---	62%	---	---
At this university, I have been challenged to critically examine my own beliefs regarding race and ethnicity.	32%	---	39%	---	---
At UMD I have felt that my race/ethnicity has been a barrier for me.	10%	6%	20%	---	---
I have been treated <u>DIS</u> respectfully at UMD because of my race and/or ethnicity.	7%	5%	13%	---	---

- Respondents generally felt a sense of belonging on campus but further analyses by race revealed that not all students felt the same level of inclusion.
  - When considering all respondents, fewer than 10% have been treated disrespectfully but that number doubles for Black or African American respondents (20%).
  - While 76% of Black or African American respondents feel that they belong at UMD, 20% say that race has been a barrier.
  - While an overwhelming majority of all respondents (91%) say that UMD is a racially/ethnically diverse campus, lower percentages of Black or African American (79%) and Hispanic respondents (83%) agree.

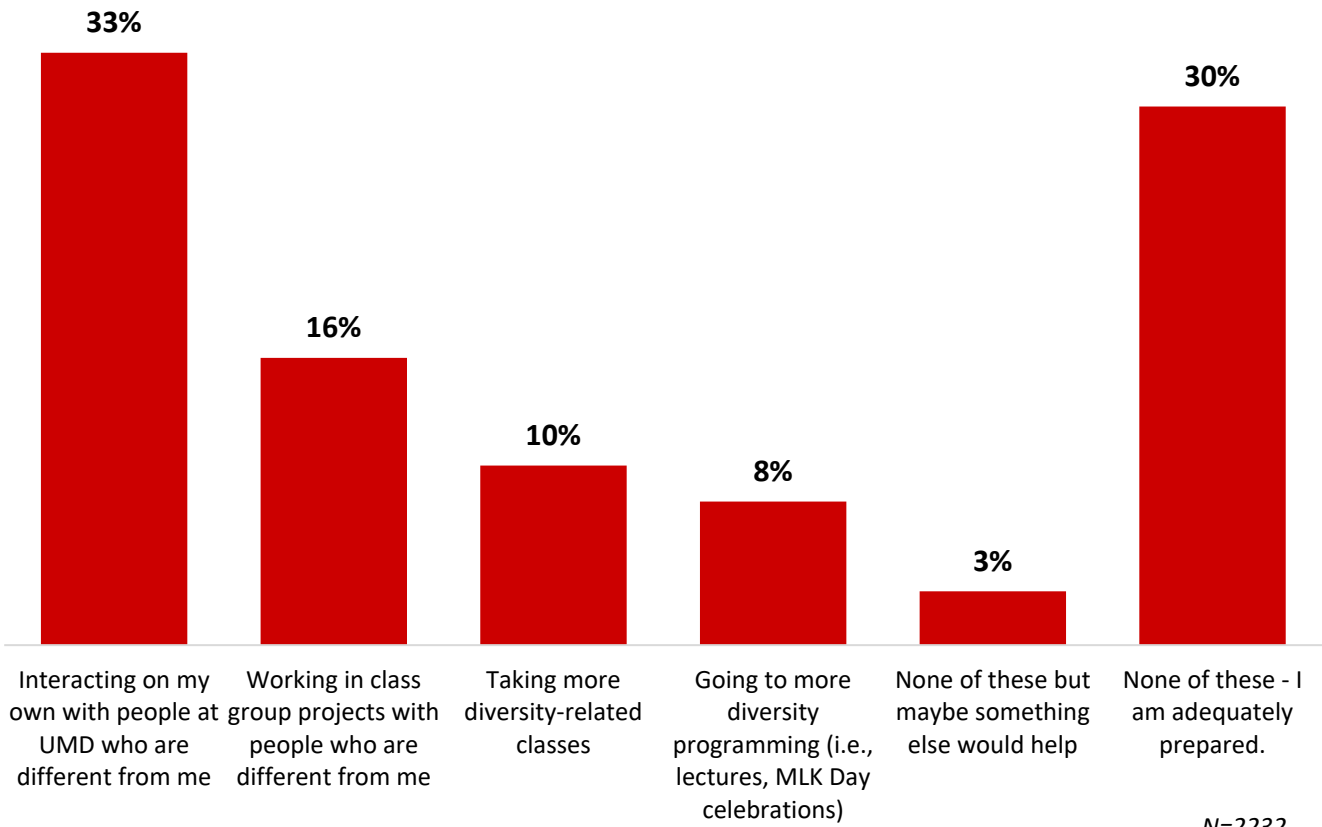
### Question to consider:

- How do students' previous experiences influence their perception of UMD?
- Where are students having discussions about race?
- To what extent has discussion about diversity been influenced by recent news events in Ferguson, New York City, Baltimore, and on UMD's campus?



## Cultural competencies

➤ Which of the following do you think will best prepare you to succeed in a racially/ethnically diverse work/educational environment? (CHOOSE ONE.):



N=2232

- One-third of respondents believe that their interactions with others on their own will best prepare them. Almost another third (30%) feel that they are adequately prepared already. This leaves roughly one-third who acknowledge that they may benefit from opportunities organized by the University of Maryland.

### Question to consider:

- How can we help students understand that opportunities at UMD are unique and that they should capitalize on them?

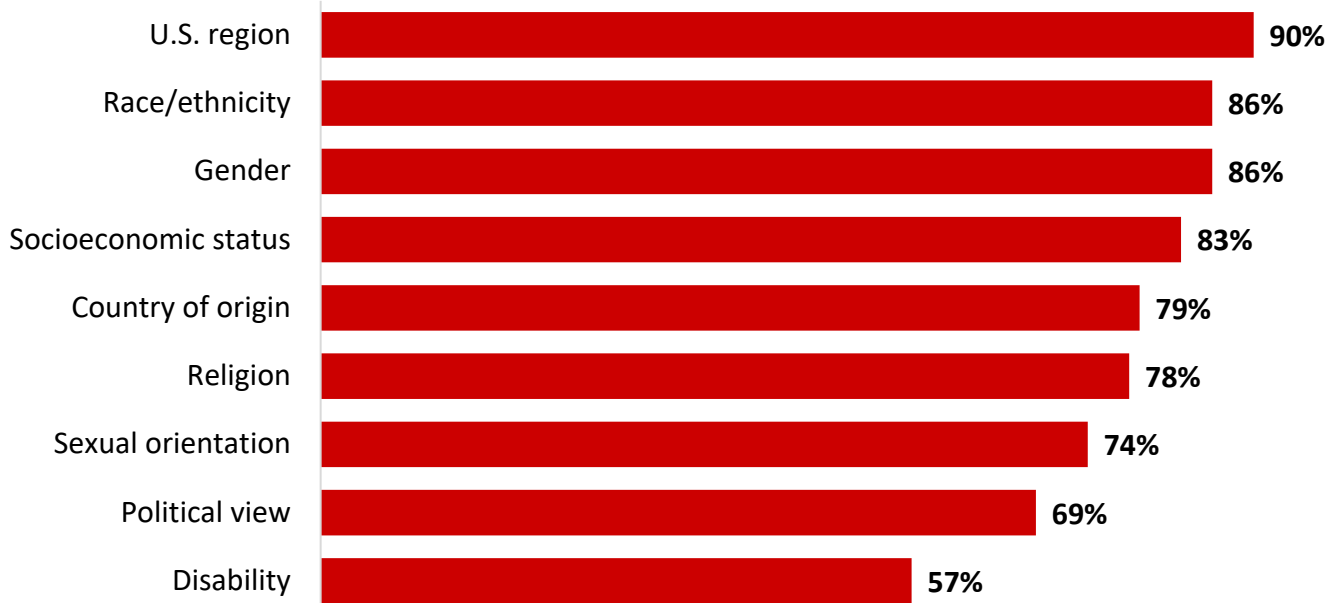


## Interactions with others

For this question we expanded the definition of diversity to incorporate other aspects of diversity.



**Students reported being very confident in their ability to interact effectively with people different from them with respect to:**



*N=2224-2352 depending on item*

- Students had the option of selecting “somewhat” or “not at all” confident as their answer choices. The “not at all confident” responses ranged from 1-5% on all indicators.
- Students appear very confident in their ability to interact effectively with others, from those with differing political views (69%) to U.S. regions (90%). They report being less confident with regards to disability (57%).
- Analyses by race indicate that White students are more confident than expected in all cases except for country of origin, where there is no statistically significant difference. Asian American students are lower than expected in U.S. region, race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, sexual orientation, and disability. There were no other patterns of statistically significant difference by race.

### Questions to consider:

- Some of these differences are often visible (gender) while some are often invisible (political view). How might that affect student answers?
- How will student confidence change after their UMD experience and after they leave?



The Campus Assessment Working Group (CAWG) regularly gathers and exchanges information about UMD student and alumni experiences. The group is charged with developing a campus “Culture of Evidence” in which data and assessment can inform campus decision making. Its three subgroups focus on freshman experiences, junior/senior student experiences, and retention and completion efforts. For more information, to view past reports, or to join a CAWG subgroup, please visit [www.umd.edu/cawg](http://www.umd.edu/cawg).