



CMU Fall 2024 Sustainability Survey

Central Sustainability (CS) is the office of sustainability at Central Michigan University (CMU). CS focuses on making CMU's campus more sustainable through projects, policies, and programming. Every fall semester, CS administers a survey to gauge student knowledge about sustainability on CMU's campus. This information helps guide CS's projects and programming to provide the most benefit to students across campus.

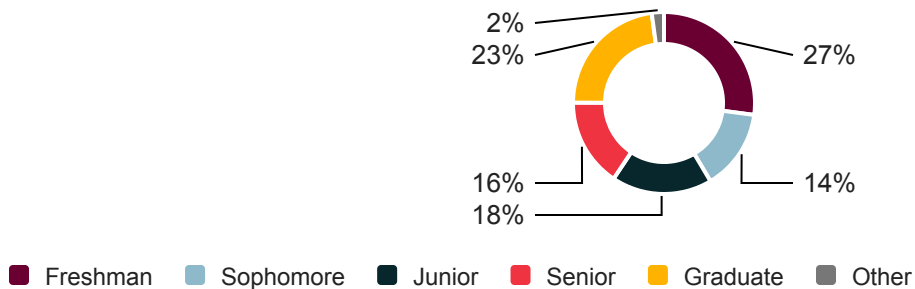
CS uses the United Nations Brundtland Commission's definition of sustainability, which is "meeting the needs of the present without compromising the needs of the future." CS believes that sustainability is intersectional, encompassing human, economic, and social/cultural sustainability, beyond environmental sustainability. While this survey emphasizes environmental sustainability, it also addresses other pillars, recognizing that an environmentally sustainable future must also be equitable, inclusive, healthy, supportive, and accessible.

CS randomly selected a sample of 25% of student emails and distributed the survey through Qualtrics. The survey received 382 responses, resulting in an 11% response rate.

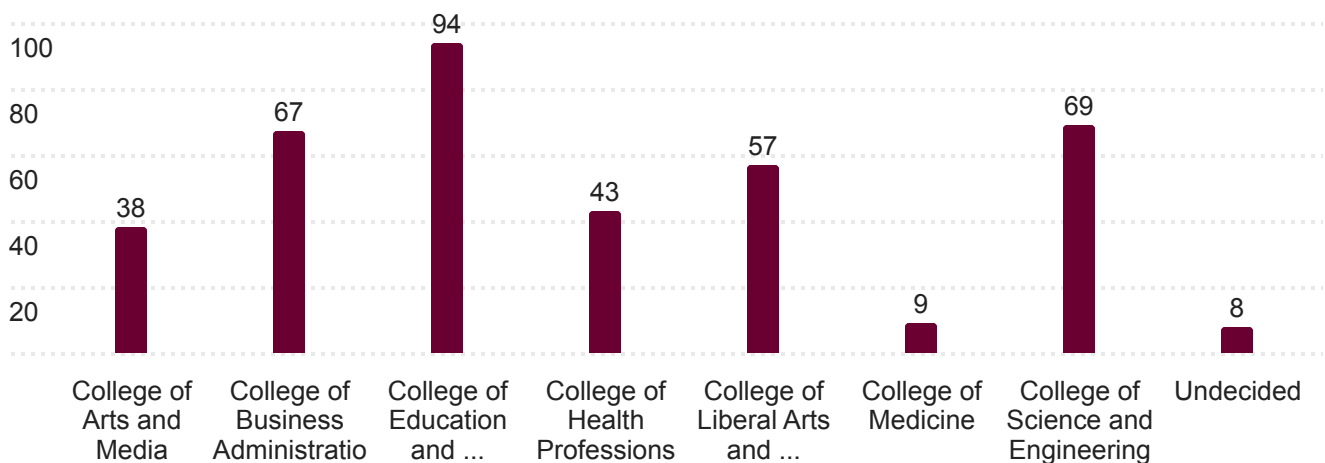
Demographic Data

The survey began with several demographic questions to better understand participants. These questions included the student's year (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, graduate), academic college, residential hall or off-campus living situation, and gender identity. The results indicated that the majority of respondents were freshmen (27%), while seniors constituted the smallest group (16%). Additionally, most respondents belonged to the College of Education and Human Services, the College of Science and Engineering, or the College of Business Administration. The data also revealed that most respondents lived off-campus and identified as female.

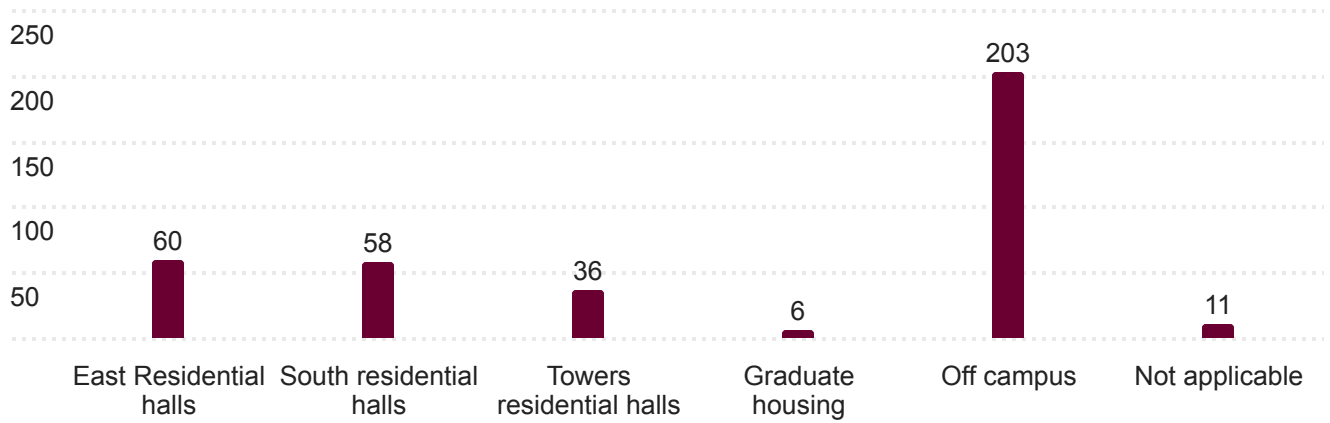
If you chose student, what year are you?



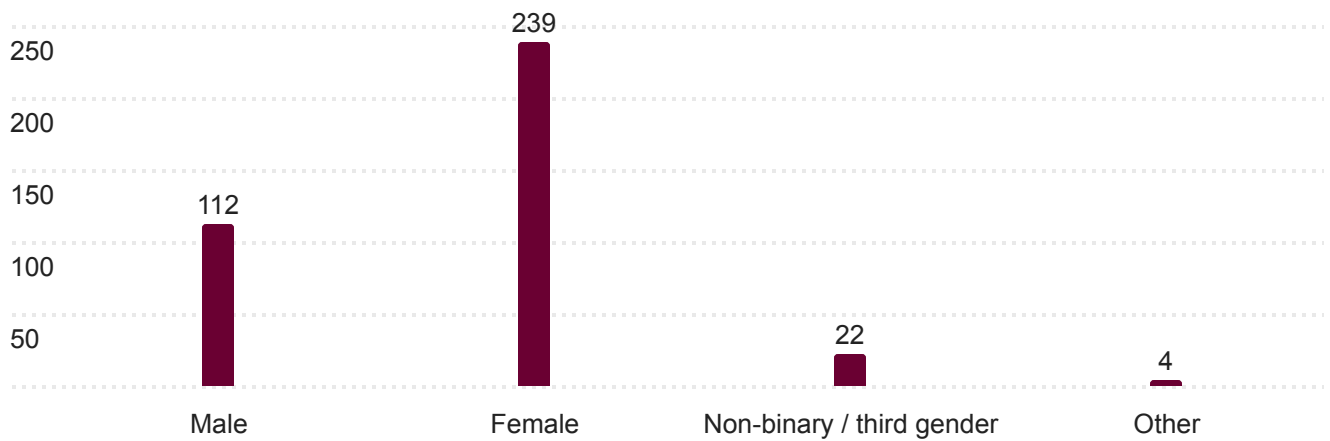
If you chose student, which academic college do you primarily belong to?



If you chose student, where do you live?



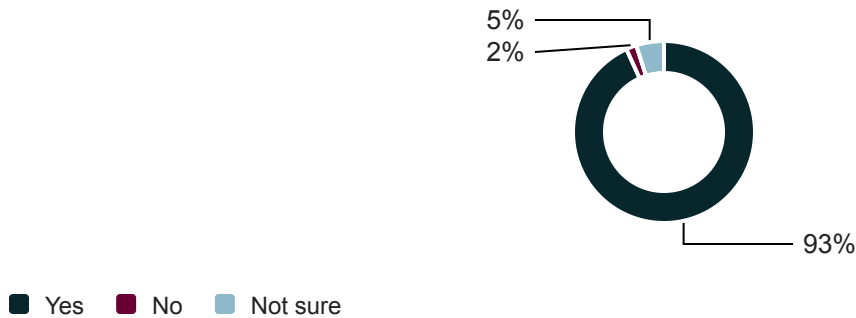
What gender do you identify with?



Current Sustainability Knowledge

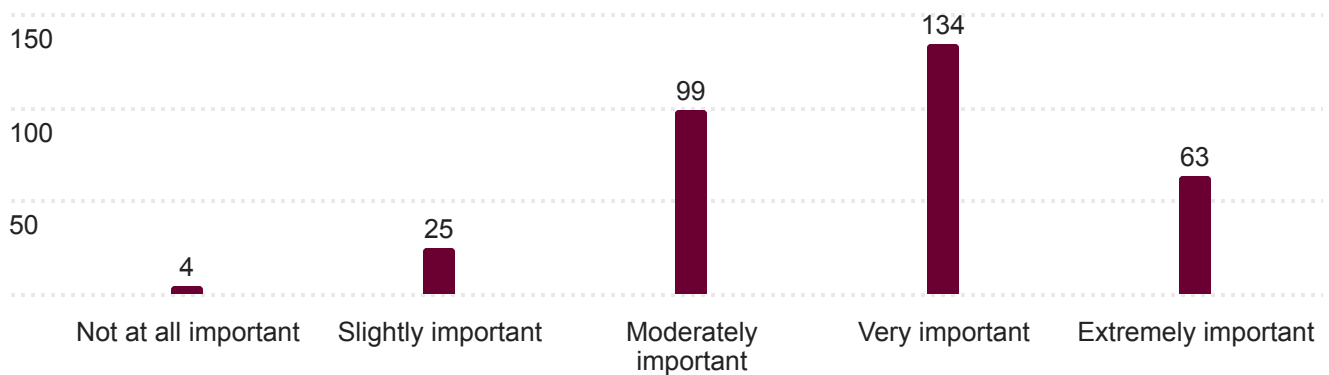
The survey assessed students' current understanding of sustainability to determine how much they knew about it. When asked if they were familiar with the term "sustainability," 93% of respondents said yes, indicating widespread awareness of the concept.

Are you familiar with the term "sustainability?"



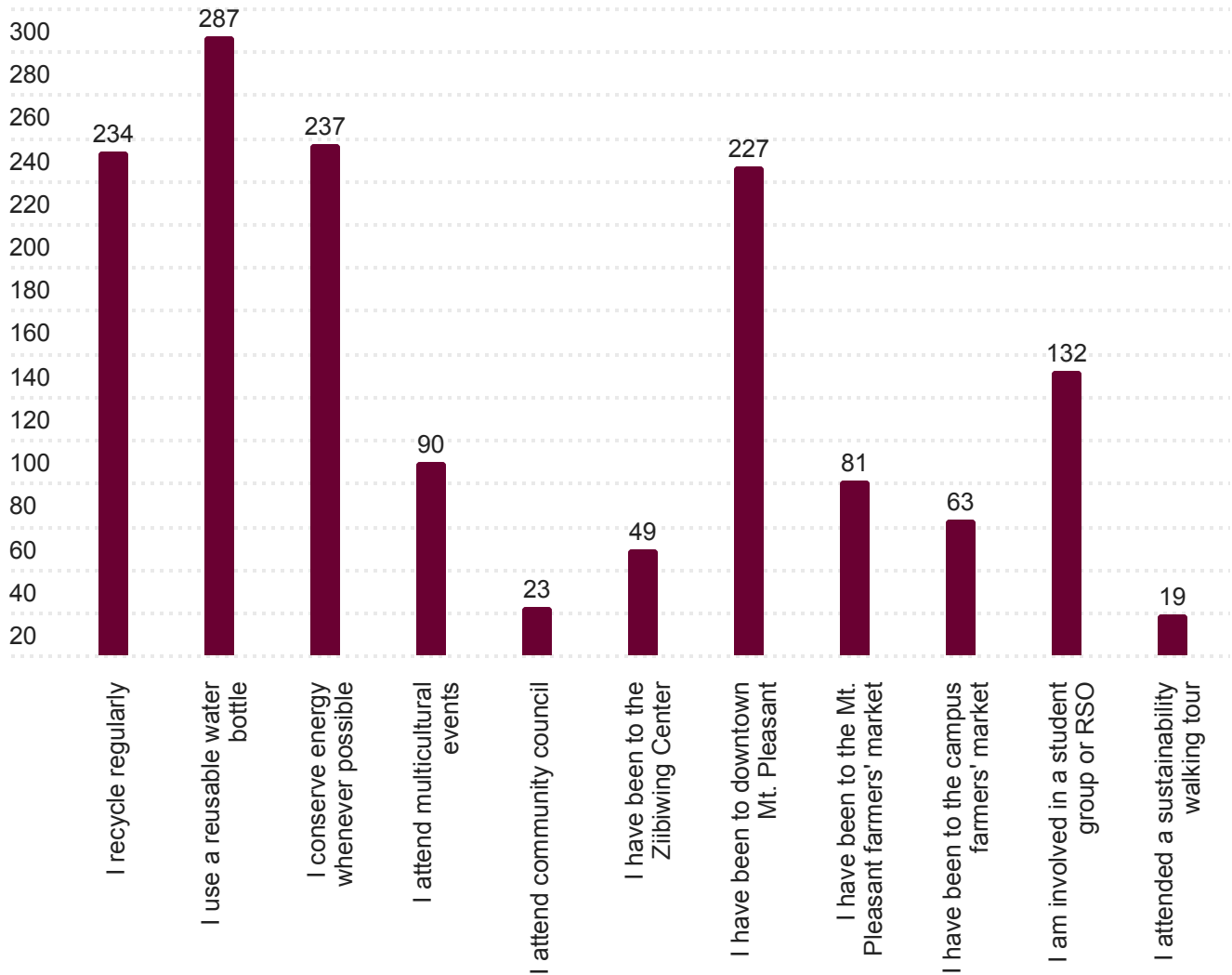
Respondents were then asked how important sustainability was to them. The results showed that 89% of respondents considered sustainability moderately, very, or extremely important.

How important is sustainability to you?



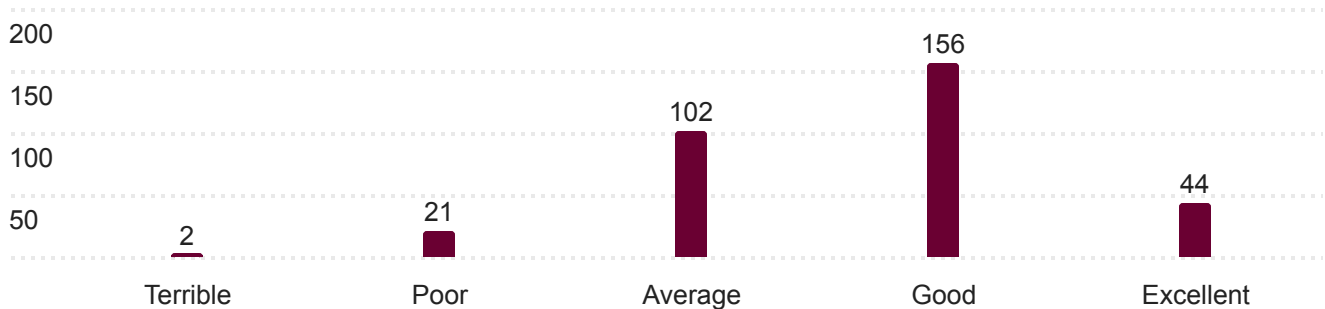
The survey also explored specific sustainability practices students engaged in, such as recycling, conserving energy, or attending community events. The most common practice was using a reusable water bottle, followed by conserving energy, recycling, and visiting downtown Mt. Pleasant. The least popular activity was participating in sustainability walking tours hosted by Central Sustainability, which is understandable as these are only offered a few times a semester.

Check all that apply:



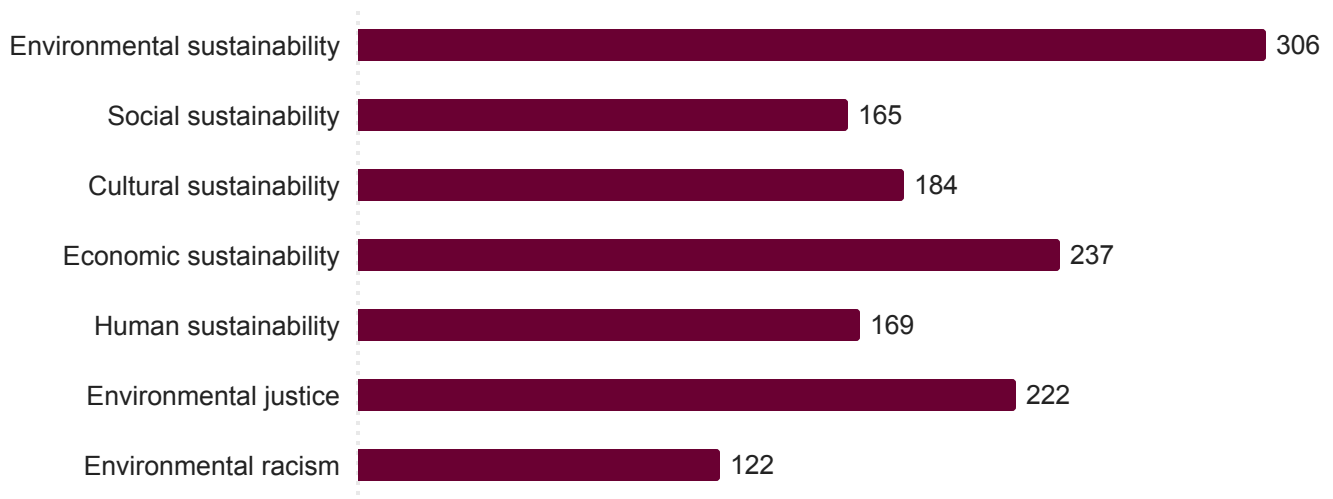
In another effort to understand how students have been engaging with environmentally friendly practices on campus, they were asked how proficient they were at identifying what can and cannot be recycled. Most students (41%) felt they were good at identifying what can and cannot be recycled, while only 12% felt they were excellent at it. However, a very small 6% of students felt they were poor at identifying recyclable materials.

How proficient are you at identifying what can and cannot be recycled?



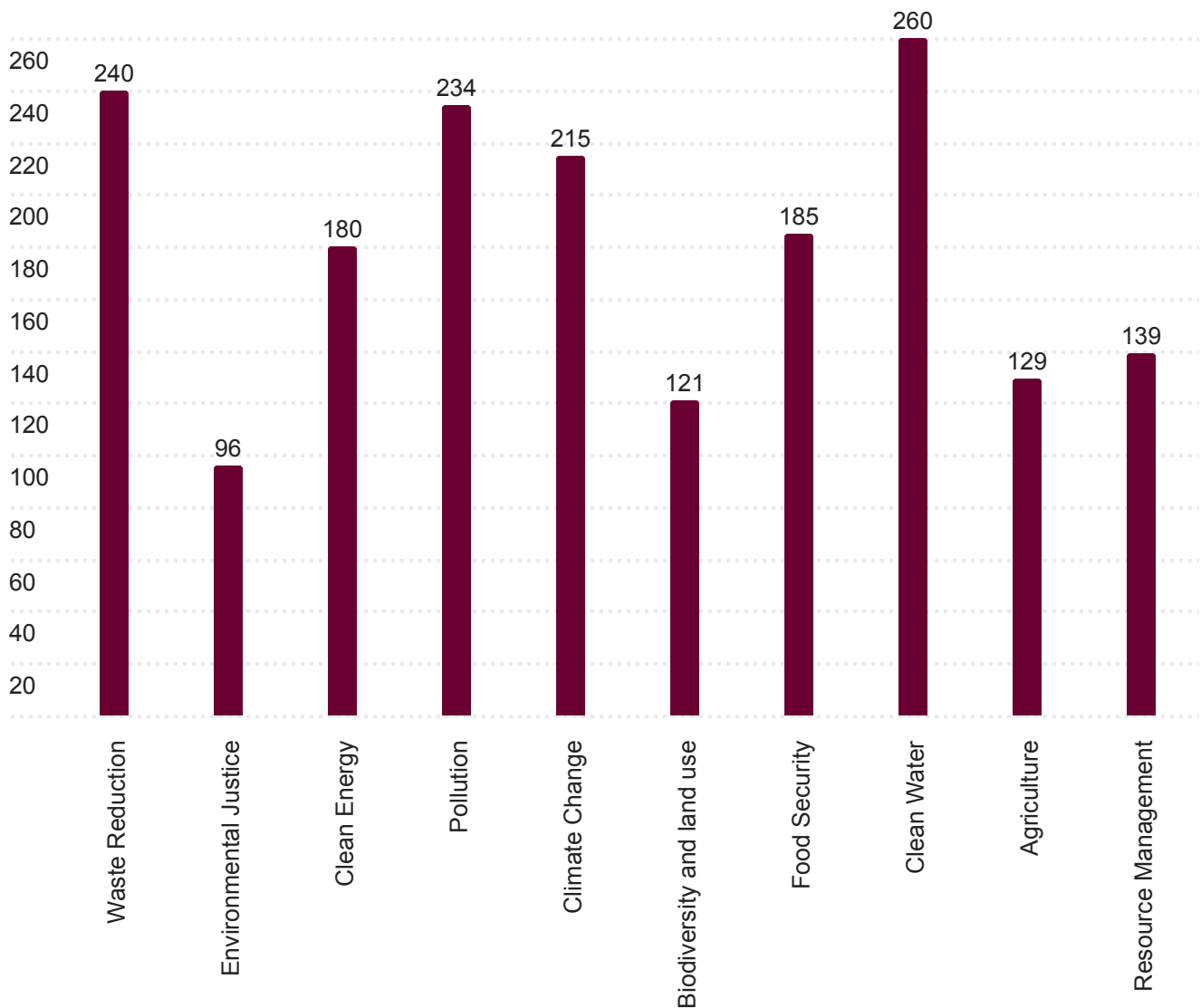
As sustainability is interdisciplinary and multi-faceted, we wanted to assess which forms of sustainability students had heard of the most. As expected, respondents had heard of environmental sustainability the most (80%), with economic sustainability being the second most popular at 62%. Central Sustainability also wanted to assess if students had heard of environmental justice and racism. While 58% of students had heard of environmental justice before, a smaller percentage (32%) had heard of environmental racism.

Check the terms you have heard of before



Next, we asked students to identify which sustainability issues they cared the most about. This is important for ensuring that the projects that Central Sustainability develops are addressing problems that students view as important. Unsurprisingly, being a university from Michigan, clean water was the issue students cared the most about, with 68% of respondents indicating they cared about this. Right below that, with 62% of respondents marking it as important, was waste reduction and pollution. The issue that respondents cared the least about is environmental justice, with only 25% of respondents indicating they cared about it. This shows that many students may not have been educated about environmental justice, do not consider it a priority, or do not believe it affects them personally.

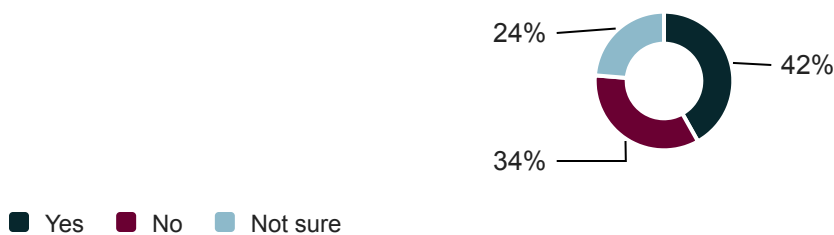
What sustainability issues do you care most about?



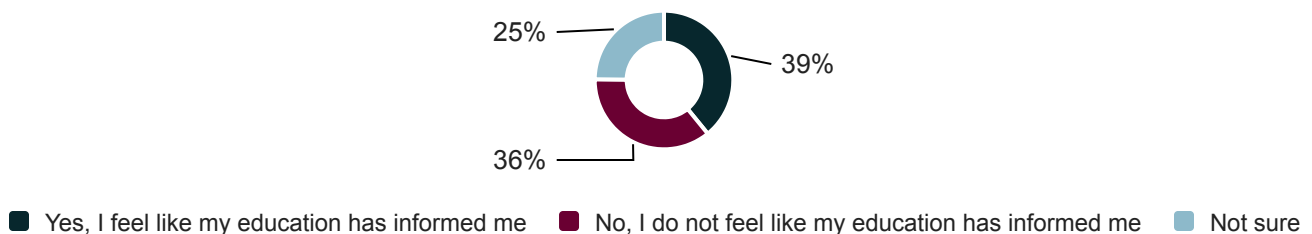
In this section, we also asked students if they believed their education prior to CMU had educated them enough on sustainability or environmental issues. To this, 42% said yes, while 34% said no, and an additional 24% said they were not sure. This helps CS gauge how much knowledge students think they have about these problems coming from high school or other institutions.

This question also leads into the next question, which asked respondents to reflect on how their education at CMU has informed them on sustainability and environmental issues. To this, 39% of respondents said yes, 36% said no, and 25% said they were not sure. This shows that many people feel they are not receiving adequate education surrounding sustainability once they arrive at CMU, and that perhaps environmental and sustainability ideas need to be better woven into the curriculum.

Do you feel like your education prior to Central Michigan University has informed you enough on sustainability and environmental issues?

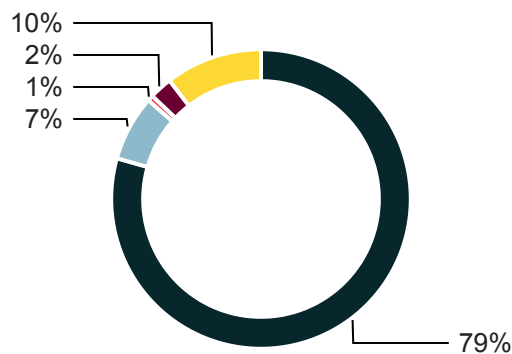


Do you feel like your academic education at CMU has informed you enough on sustainability and environmental issues?



The next question was dealing with climate change, and whether or not the respondents believed it to be a human created issue that needed to be addressed. This provides CS with useful data regarding how students feel about climate change and helps CS understand the number of students who don't believe it is human caused or don't believe it needs to be addressed. The largest portion of students (79%) believed that it was a human caused issue that needs to be addressed, while the remaining 21% either felt it was not human caused, did not need to be addressed, both, or were unsure. This indicates that the overwhelming majority of the student population agrees climate change is a problem that requires action to address.

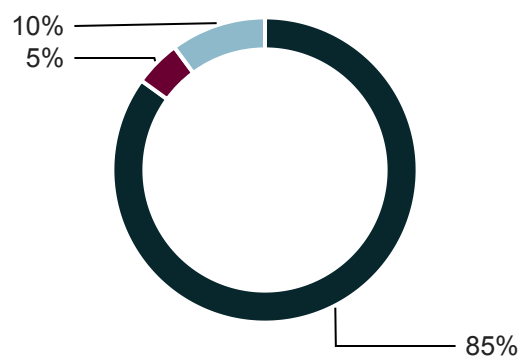
Do you think that climate change is a human-created issue that needs to be addressed?



- I think that climate change is a human-created issue, and needs to be addressed
- I think that climate change is NOT a human-created issue, but still needs to be ...
- I think that climate change is a human-created issue, but does NOT need to be ad...
- I think that climate change is NOT a human-created issue, and does NOT need to b...
- Not sure

The last question in this section asked respondents if they thought that having a community was important for being sustainable. The goal with this question was to assess if students could see the connection between community and sustainability, and to see if students view sustainability as more than just environmental sustainability. The majority of respondents (85%) said that yes, having a community is important for being sustainable, which shows that many students at least have a basic understanding of the connection between community and sustainability.

Do you think having a community is important for being sustainable?



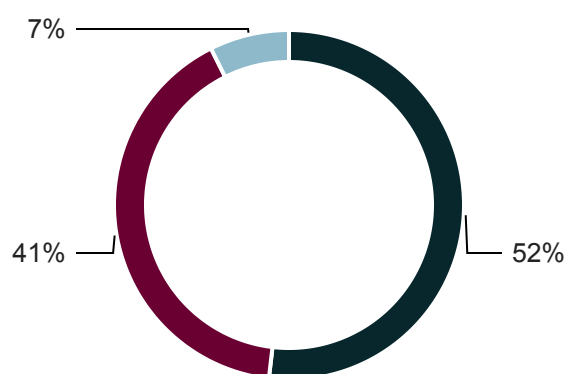
■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure

Sustainability at Central Michigan University

The next section addresses students' opinions and perceptions about the current sustainability efforts happening at CMU.

The first question in this section asked respondents if they had heard of Central Sustainability. This was to assess the marketing and advertisement efforts of CS, and how well CS is making its mission known. The majority of respondents (52%) had heard of Central Sustainability before, however the remaining 48% either had not heard of it or were not sure. This shows that there is still some work to be done to communicate the ideas of Central Sustainability with students and ensure they know that Central Sustainability is a resource on campus.

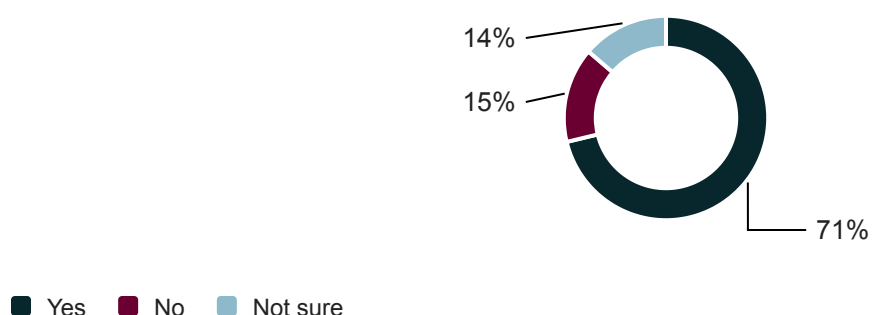
Have you heard of Central Sustainability?



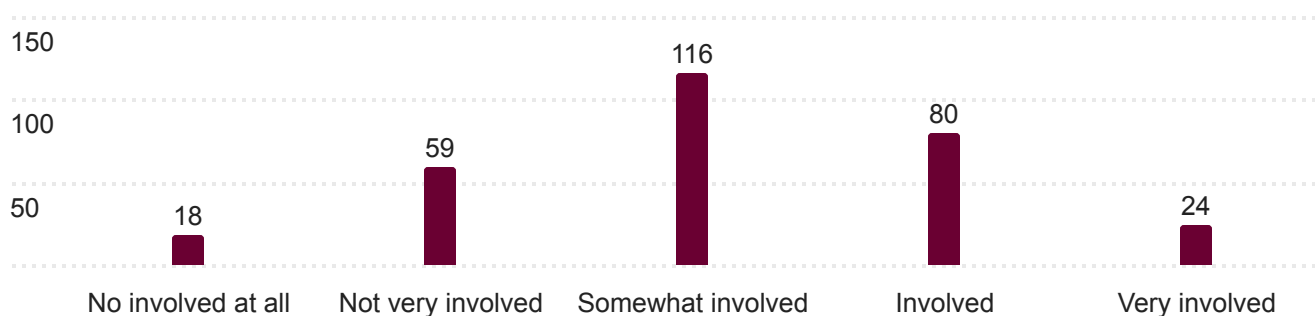
■ Yes ■ No ■ Not sure

Respondents were then asked if they felt like they were part of a community. This provides Central Sustainability with an understanding of how connected students feel to campus and the relationships they have built in their time at CMU. For this question, 71% of respondents said they did feel like they were part of a community. However, the remaining 29% either did not feel like they were part of a community or were not sure, which shows that these students might feel a little disconnected from campus and, therefore, sustainability efforts. We then asked students how involved they were in their community, and most respondents said they were somewhat involved.

Do you feel like you are part of a community?

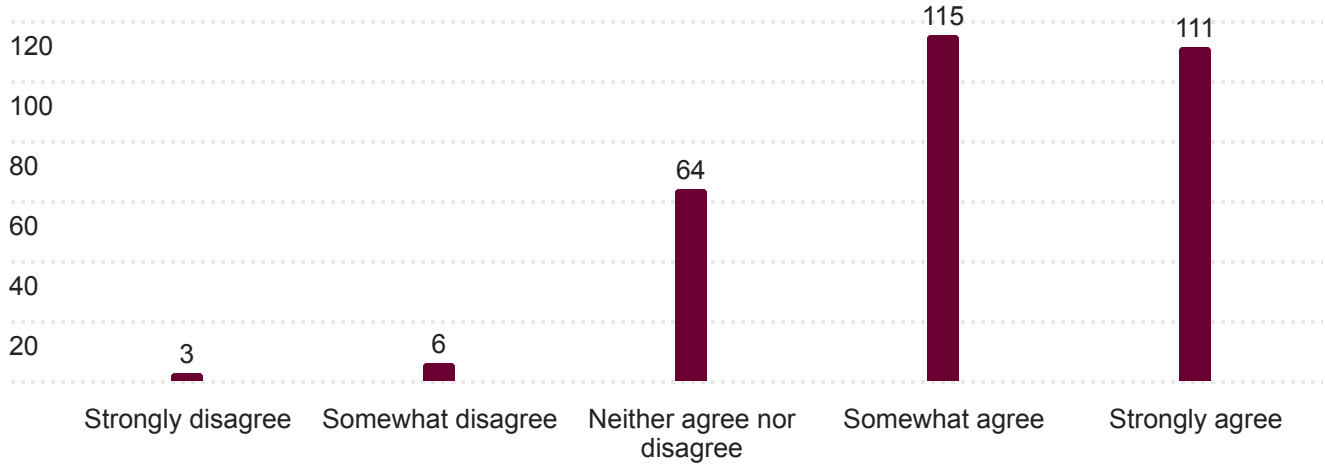


How involved would you say you are in your community?



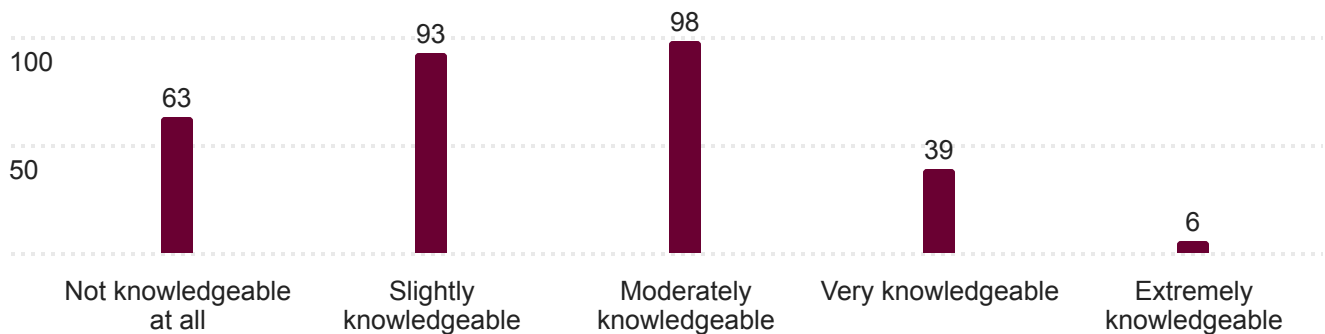
The next question assessed if students viewed a sustainable campus as more welcoming and comfortable. Most students either somewhat agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, which shows students do value a sustainable campus and actually feel that a sustainable campus is a better environment.

A sustainable campus is a more welcoming and comfortable campus



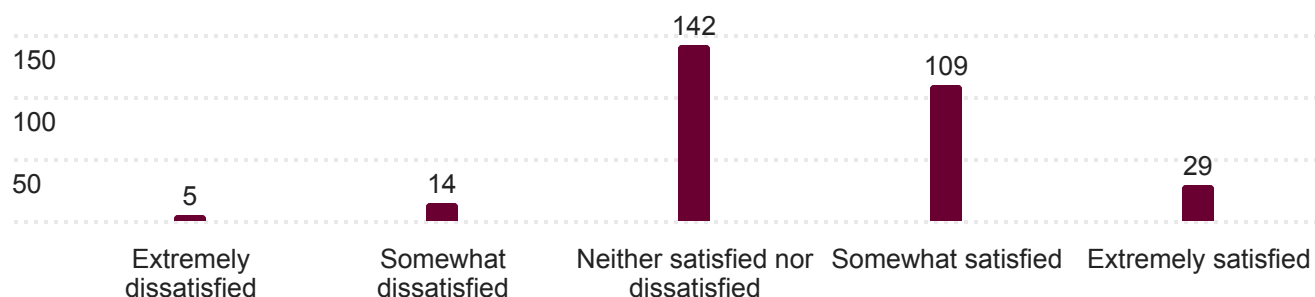
Respondents were then asked how knowledgeable they were about sustainability efforts on campus. The results show that most students are on the less knowledgeable side when it comes to sustainability efforts on campus. The answer that most respondents chose (25%) was moderately knowledgeable. The next highest option was slightly knowledgeable with 24% of the responses, and the third highest was not knowledgeable at all, with 16% of the responses. This shows us that while many students value sustainability at CMU, they do not feel that they have an accurate knowledge base about sustainability on campus. This also means that CMU could do more to promote the ways it is already sustainable and broadcast those efforts more clearly to students.

How knowledgeable are you about sustainability efforts on campus?



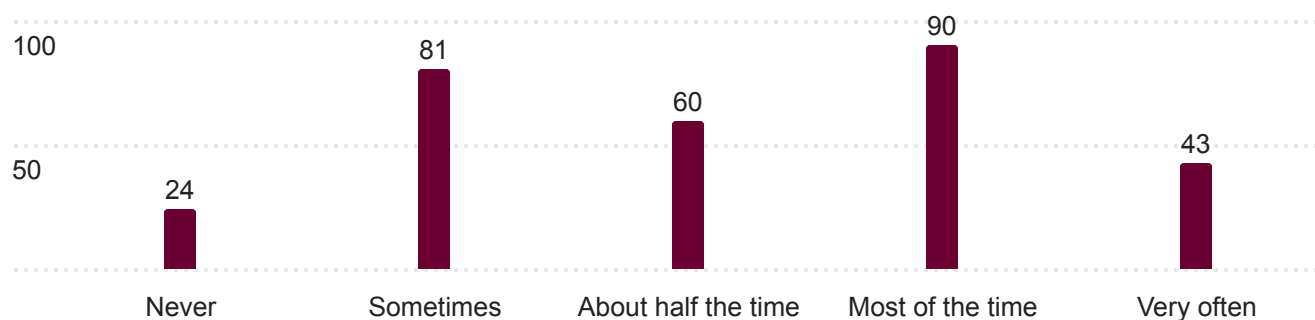
Respondents were then asked to describe their level of satisfaction with CMU's sustainability efforts. The majority of respondents (37%) chose neither satisfied nor dissatisfied. This signals that many students may not have considered the ways that CMU could do better regarding sustainability, and so they do not feel either completely happy or unhappy with the efforts. The next largest percentage (29%) of people chose somewhat satisfied, which indicates that while they are happy with the efforts on campus, they do believe there is more that could be done.

How satisfied are you with Central Michigan University's sustainability efforts?

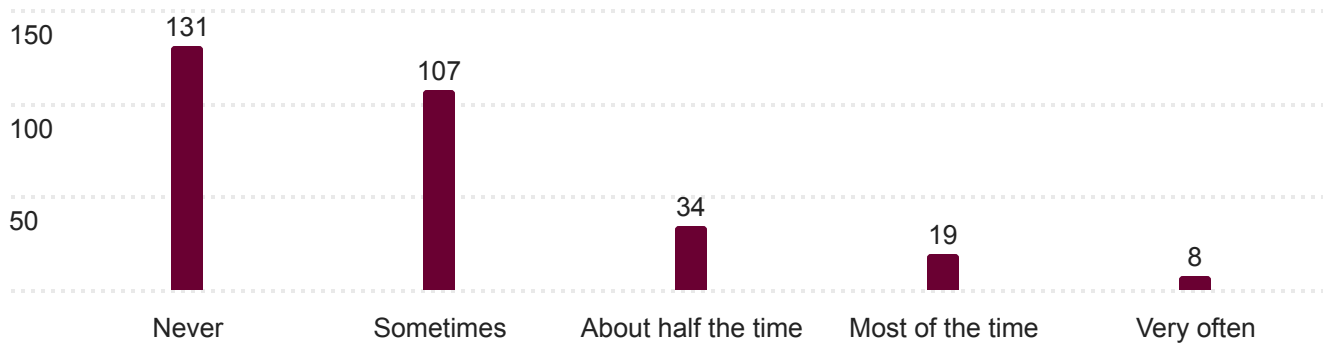


The next two questions focus on cultural sustainability. Respondents were asked how often they hear about different cultural events on campus and then how frequently they attend them. The results from these questions show that, while students hear about cultural events sometimes to most of the time, this does not mean that they will attend the events, as 34% of respondents said they never attend events, and 28% said they sometimes attend events, which were the two selections that had the most indicated responses. This shows that outreach is not the largest barrier to getting students to participate and that increasing student engagement is an issue beyond just marketing efforts.

How often do you hear about cultural events on campus?



How often do you attend cultural events on campus?



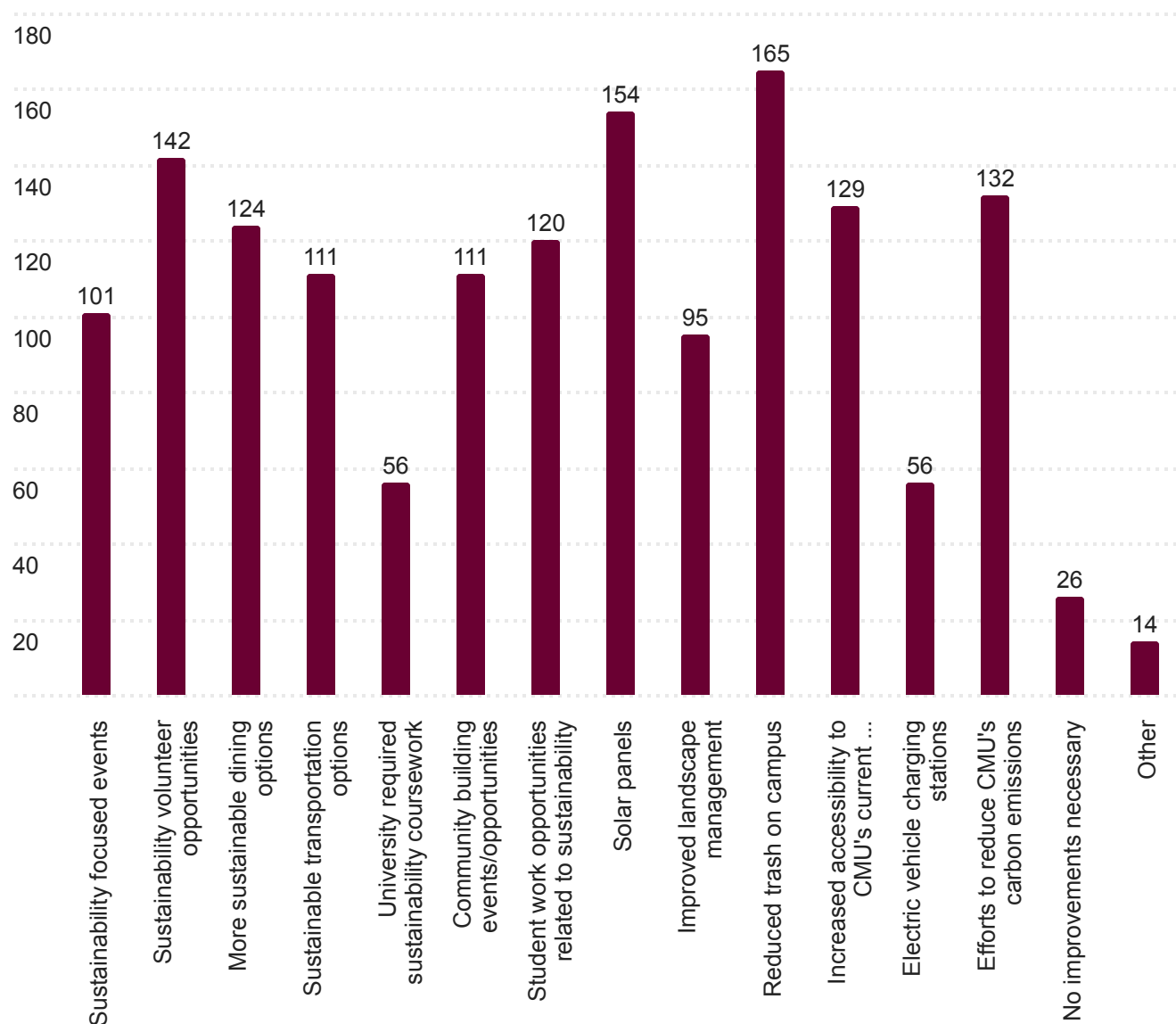
The next question was focused on human sustainability. Central Sustainability wanted to understand how many students were utilizing the free health services that CMU provides, such as counseling, physicals, etc. The results indicate that most students do not utilize CMU's health services. This could be because students prefer to use their own doctors, do not need to use the health services, or do not know about the offered services available.

Do you utilize CMU's health services?



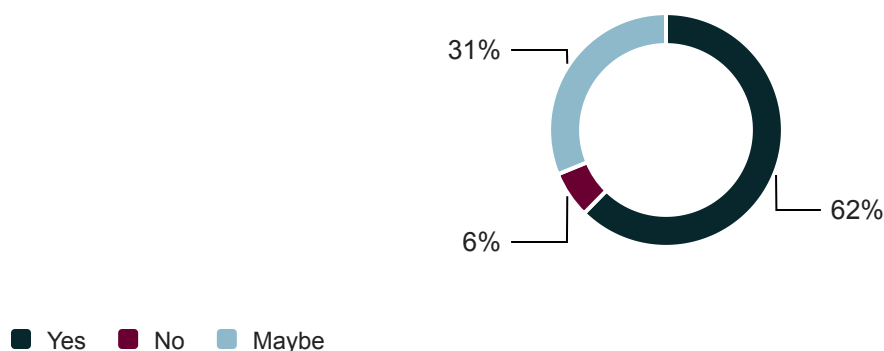
The next question asked respondents what they would like to see at CMU regarding specific sustainability initiatives. The answer that had the most responses was reduced trash on campus, followed by solar panels, sustainability volunteer opportunities, and efforts to reduce CMU's carbon emissions. Many of these options involve tangible, visible changes to campus that require investment, but have the potential to make the highest impact for students. The option that the least number of respondents wanted to see at CMU was university required sustainability curriculum and electric vehicle charging stations. These make sense, as many students would not willingly add more course work than necessary for their major, and many college students do not have electric vehicles, so they would not see the benefits to having EV chargers on campus. It is worth noting that 14 respondents typed an alternate suggestion in the "other" section, but there were no overall trends with these responses.

Select all that you would like to see at CMU:



The last question we asked respondents was if they would support CMU adopting a sustainability plan. Central Sustainability has wanted to draft and implement a campus-wide sustainability plan but wanted to assess students to see if they would be in favor of this initiative. The majority of respondents (62%) said yes, they would support it, while some (31%) said they would maybe support it, and very few (6%) said they would not support it.

Would you support CMU adopting a campus-wide sustainability plan?
This sustainability plan would help guide CMU and Central Sustainability with sustainability initiatives through concrete goals and metrics (i.e. academics, operations, engagement, planning and administration)



Conclusion

This survey demonstrates that while students overall do care about sustainability, they feel they do not have the knowledge or resources available to participate. While student engagement is always a problem, it is unclear whether or not lack of knowledge about opportunities to participate is what prevents students from participating in sustainable behaviors and events. Additionally, when it comes to sustainability related changes on campus, students would prefer to see tangible changes that benefit everyone, rather than more abstract ideas, such as curriculum involving sustainability, or changes that only benefit a few people, such as EV chargers. There seems to be a consensus among the majority of students that sustainability is important and that we need to address environmental problems, but there is a wide range of knowledge on these issues, and many students feel they lack the proper education to properly understand sustainability as a multi-faceted issue that involves everyone and not just those who are committed to the environment.