



# Orientation for Student Success

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# Introduction: Orientation Programmes

- **University student orientation** programmes play a critical role in **bridging the gap** from high school to university.
- **Student Orientation Programmes** are often designed to take place **one to two weeks** prior to start of the academic year.
- **The programmes usually entail a range of activities that are aimed at helping students acclimatize to** the university environment and also help them get through their first year of study.
- However, there is **limited data** on how **students experience these programmes** and how **they can be continuously improved** to enrich the student experience.



# O-Week at Wits University

- ✓ Development and Leadership Unit is responsible for organising Orientation Week (O-Week) at Wits University.
- ✓ Other stakeholders involved in planning O-Week include;



Student Affairs  
Division

ALL of the 5  
Faculties

The Wits  
Library

Marketing  
Department

Financial Aid  
Office

Centre for  
Teaching,  
Learning and  
Development

Wits ICT &  
Institutional  
Research

Alumni Office

# Objectives

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1

Explore the experiences of first-year students regarding O-Week at Wits University.

2

Share best practices for the delivery of Orientation Week programmes using an intentional datacentric approach.



# Theoretical Framework

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The study is underpinned by **Lizzio's 5 Senses of a Successful Transition** which states that student success at university depends on the following five senses;

1. Sense of Connectedness
2. Sense of Capability
3. Sense of Resourcefulness
4. Sense of Purpose
5. Sense of Academic Culture

# Methods: Data Collection

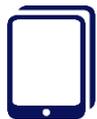
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The O-Week Survey was **administered on the RedCap** online platform and sent out via email to **5595 first year students**, registered on a full-time basis, for the very first time.



The email with the survey link was sent out on **Tuesday the 5<sup>th</sup> of February 2019** and the students were given until Friday the **25<sup>th</sup> of February 2019** to **complete the survey**.



The **incentive** for completing the survey was the chance to win an **electronic smart tablet**.



The students received a **total of 4 reminders to complete the survey**. Reminders were only sent to the students who had not completed the survey at the time when the reminder was sent out.

# Methods: Analysis

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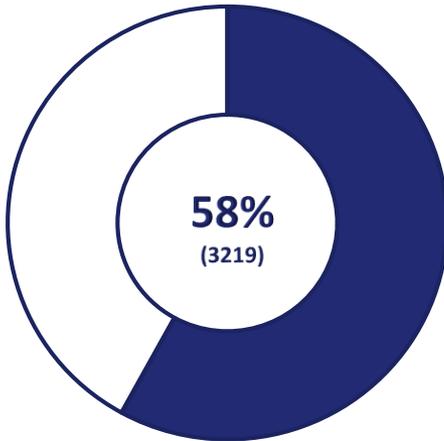


**Descriptive statistics** were used to analyze the quantitative data, while **thematic analysis** was used to analyze the qualitative data.

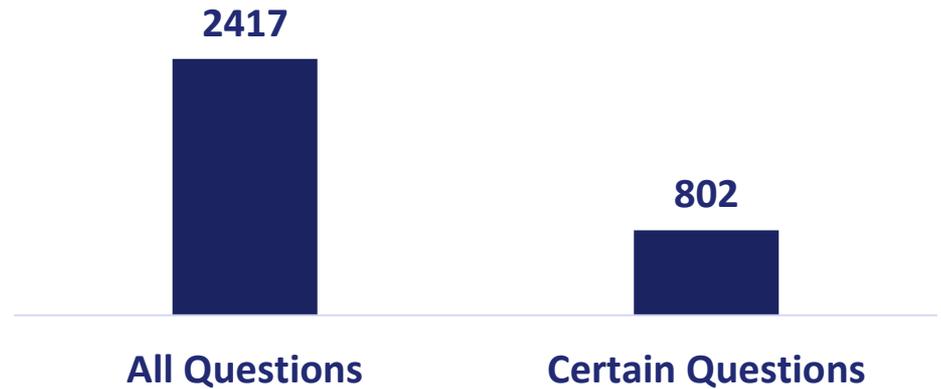
# Results: Response Summary



## Response Rate



## Questions Completed by Respondents



*Note: None of the questions in the survey were compulsory*

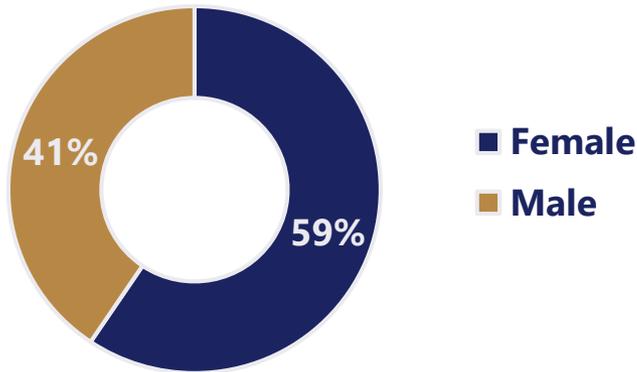


The response rate for the O-Week survey has increased by 17% from 2018 to 2019.

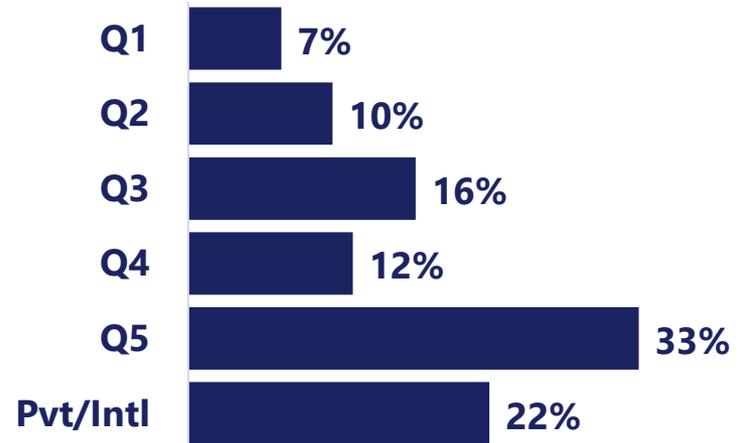
# Results: Demographic Profile of Respondents



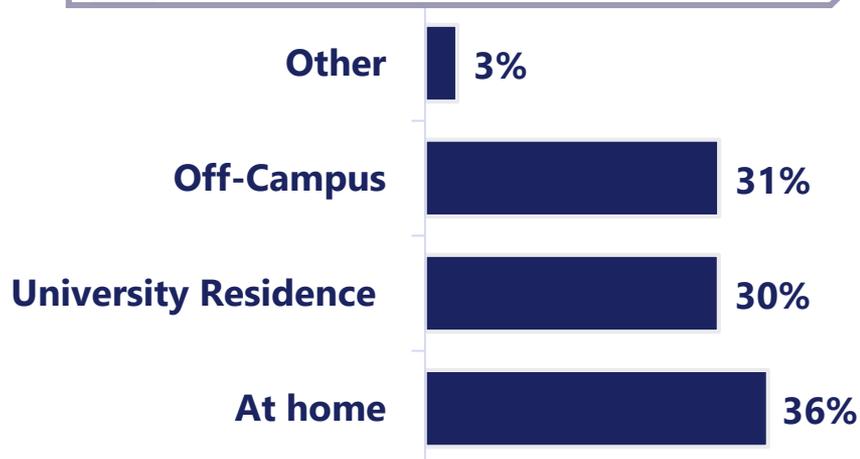
## Gender Distribution



## School Quintile



## Place of Residence



Demographic profile of respondents remains more or less **consistent** with the **enrolment patterns** of first year students at Wits.

Respondents who indicated “other” place of residence were either **staying with a friend/family** or they were **homeless**.

# Results: Learning Sessions

Key:



Learning Session Attendees

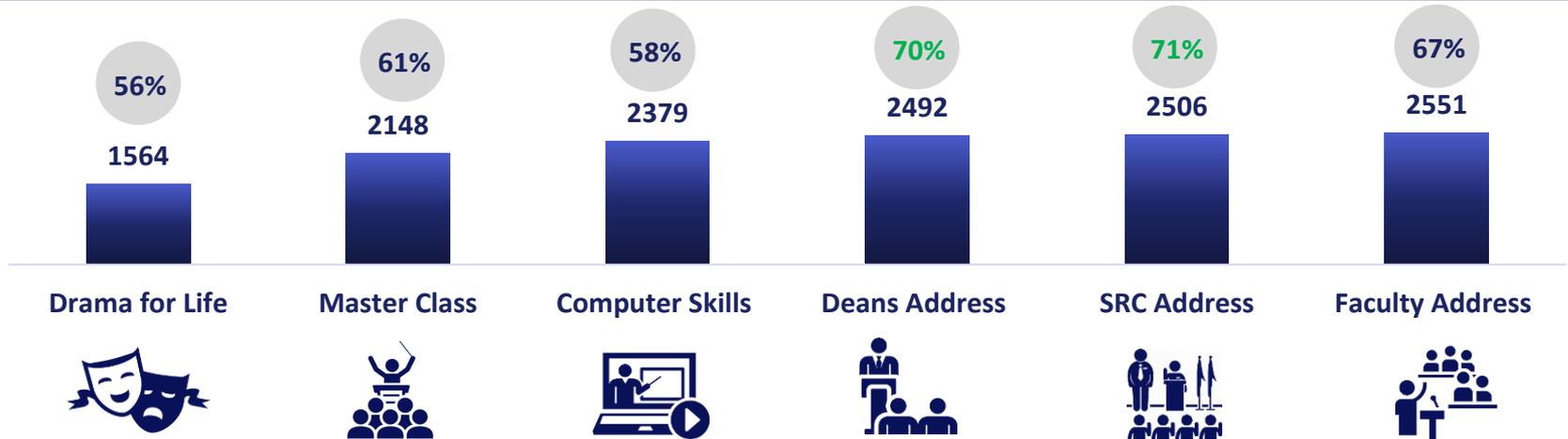


Social Activities Attendees

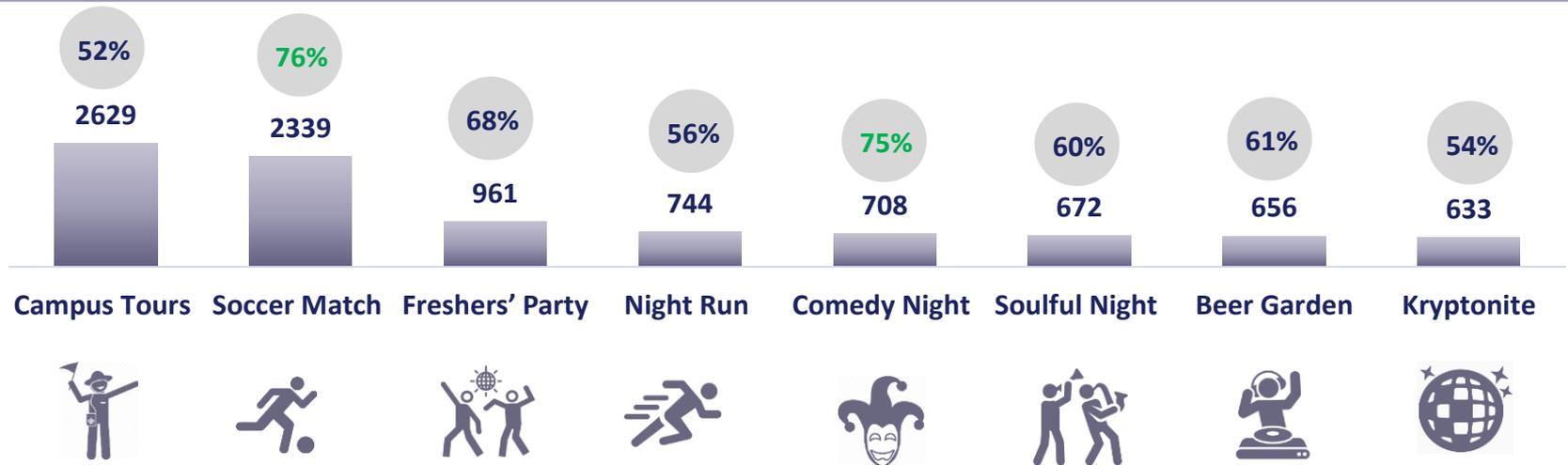


Very Informative/ Satisfied

## Number of Attendees per Learning Session



## Number of Attendees per Social Activity







# Results: Non-Attendance of O-Week Sessions

## Students who did not attend sessions

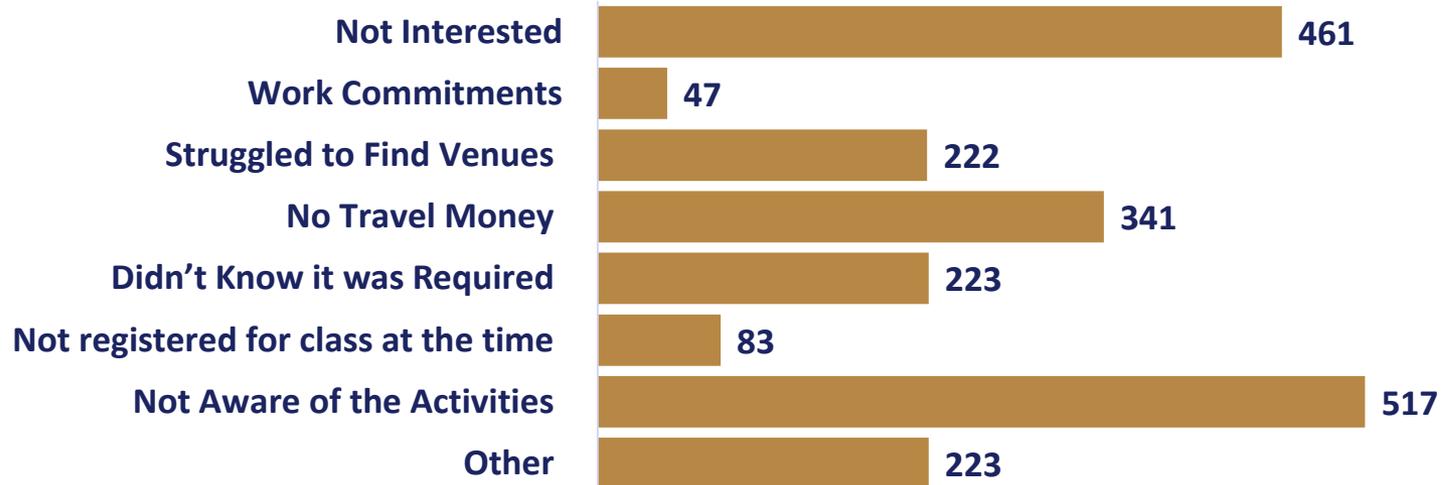


Learning Sessions= 18%



Social Activities= 35%

## Reasons for Not Attending Sessions



## Other reasons for not attending O-Week Sessions

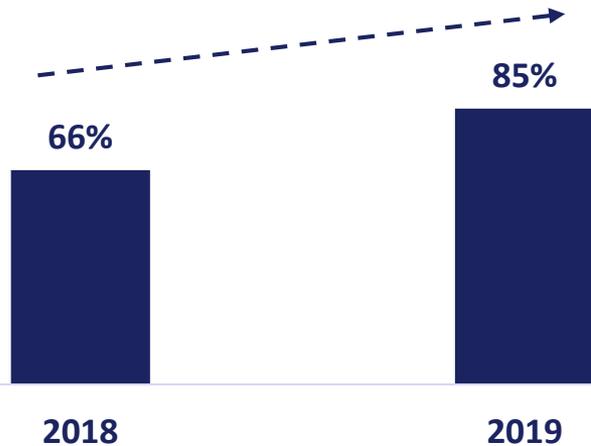
*"At my residence they also had some few initiation activities to do"*

*"Evening activities are a problem if you rely on affordable public transport."*

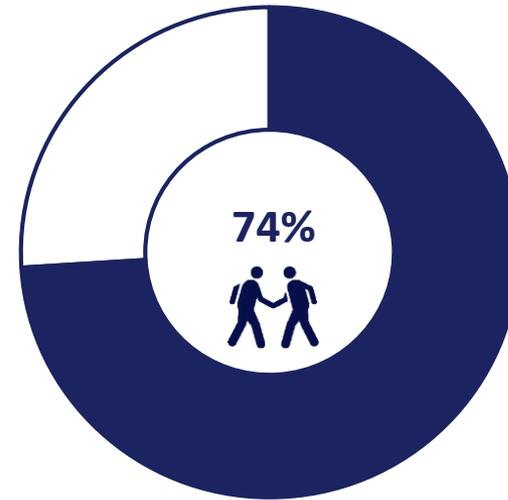
*"I had nobody to go with"*

# Results: First Year Experience Programme

## Students Aware of FYE



## Interaction with FYE Ambassadors



- Awareness of the FYE programme increased from 66% in 2018 to 85% in 2019.
- More than 70% of the students interacted with FYE ambassadors.

# Results: Overall Experience of O-Week



## Least Enjoyed Aspects of O-Week

Cost of/Access to  
Social Activities

Long Speeches

Pressure of Being  
Wits

Campus Tours



## Most Enjoyed Aspects of O-Week

FY Cohort  
interaction

Exposure to  
Computers

Programme level  
Interactions

Learning from  
Year 2- 3 Students

*“The **computer** lab session was **slow** and had lots of **problems with computers** so it took very long.”*

*“The **computer literacy** was boring and not very informative, **no new skills were obtained for me.**”*

*“I did not enjoy how **brief the campus tours were** and I think **longer and more in depth** tours would be **more informative**”*

*“Being with a bunch of **people who are experiencing the same things** as I for the first time whilst being **guided by people who've been through everything we went through.**”*

*“I enjoyed **computer skills learning** because truly speaking i was not a fan of computers but now i **actually know a thing or two about computers** like how to **log into my emails** and how to **check the announcements** and a lot more,”*

# Results: Overall Experience of O-Week



How have students initial fears and concerns regarding university changed following the O-Week experience?

**Core Themes:** Motivated, Determined, Comfortable and Fearless

*“After attending O week I literally had **no fear** because I **got used to the environment** and I also happened to **make friends with many people**”*

*“Apart from **some academic fears**, majority of my **concerns have been cleared**. I am **much more positive** now **knowing all the resources and facilities** I have at my disposal.”*

*“I **was a bit overwhelmed** and anxious but now I am ready I am not afraid to take this new step in my life.”*

*“I thought I’d be on my own through everything.. But there are **many supporting groups**.”*

*“I really enjoyed the **experience and how friendly and welcoming** everyone was, especially the **First Year Experience Ambassadors**. Thank you so much!”*



*“...I’m still however **not getting used** to the “**paperless education**” system that Wits is implementing. My WiFi sometimes doesn't connect and Sakai is sometimes blank even when I use a computer.”*

# How are we using data to improve O-Week?

Using data from the 2018/2019 O-Week Survey, we have made the following changes to the O-Week programme

