



# Global learning after COVID-19: Student interest and opportunities for the future

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## BACKGROUND

Since 2016, SDSU has consistently been ranked among the top 10 US institutions in the nation for study abroad participation (Institute of International Education, 2019). At SDSU, 31 academic programs currently include participating in an international experience as a graduation requirement. Global learning through study abroad is identified as a high-impact practice that contributes to student success because it challenges students to explore cultures, life experiences, and worldviews different from their own (Kuh, 2008).

SDSU strives to develop global citizens, compassionate leaders and ethical innovators. Since the coronavirus pandemic has limited students opportunities for international travel, there is a current need to forge new paths for global learning. At the same time, the need for cross-cultural understanding remains critical to bridge current societal divisions and inequities. We remain committed to students exploring and engaging with the world to further their development of these skills to contribute to positive change in a diverse society.

SDSU's Strategic Plan aims to "expand our global impact", strives for "equity and inclusion in all that we do". This project examines ways of promoting SDSU's global impact through global learning, and expanding access to these opportunities for more students. We explore the continuing interest of SDSU students in study abroad, additional ways in which SDSU can engage students in global learning during the pandemic, and implications for equitable access to global learning in the future.

## DEFINITIONS

**Study Abroad:** Physically taking courses, volunteering, interning or conducting research at an international destination(s)

**Global Learning :** "... a critical analysis of and an engagement with complex, interdependent global systems and legacies (such as natural, physical, social, cultural, economic, and political) and their implications for people's lives and the earth's sustainability" (Association of American Colleges & Universities, n.d.)

- Inclusive of, but not limited to, programs that take place at international destination(s)

**Glocal Programs:** "local action to engage global challenges and opportunities", which includes all SDSU courses taught on the San Diego or Imperial Valley campus that focus on the connection between global issues and the local community

**Virtual Study Abroad:** (online without leaving the U.S.) - distance learning coursework through a foreign institution, or focused on engagement at an international destination facilitated through learning technology

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What are currently the most significant barriers to study abroad?
- Are SDSU students still interested in future participation in study abroad?
- To what degree do future SDSU decisions about health and safety influence likelihood of participation in 2021?
- Which global learning alternatives to study abroad are the most popular?
- Do these responses vary according to gender, race/ethnicity, or whether students have an international experience requirement at SDSU?
- What are the implications for making global learning more inclusive?

## METHODS

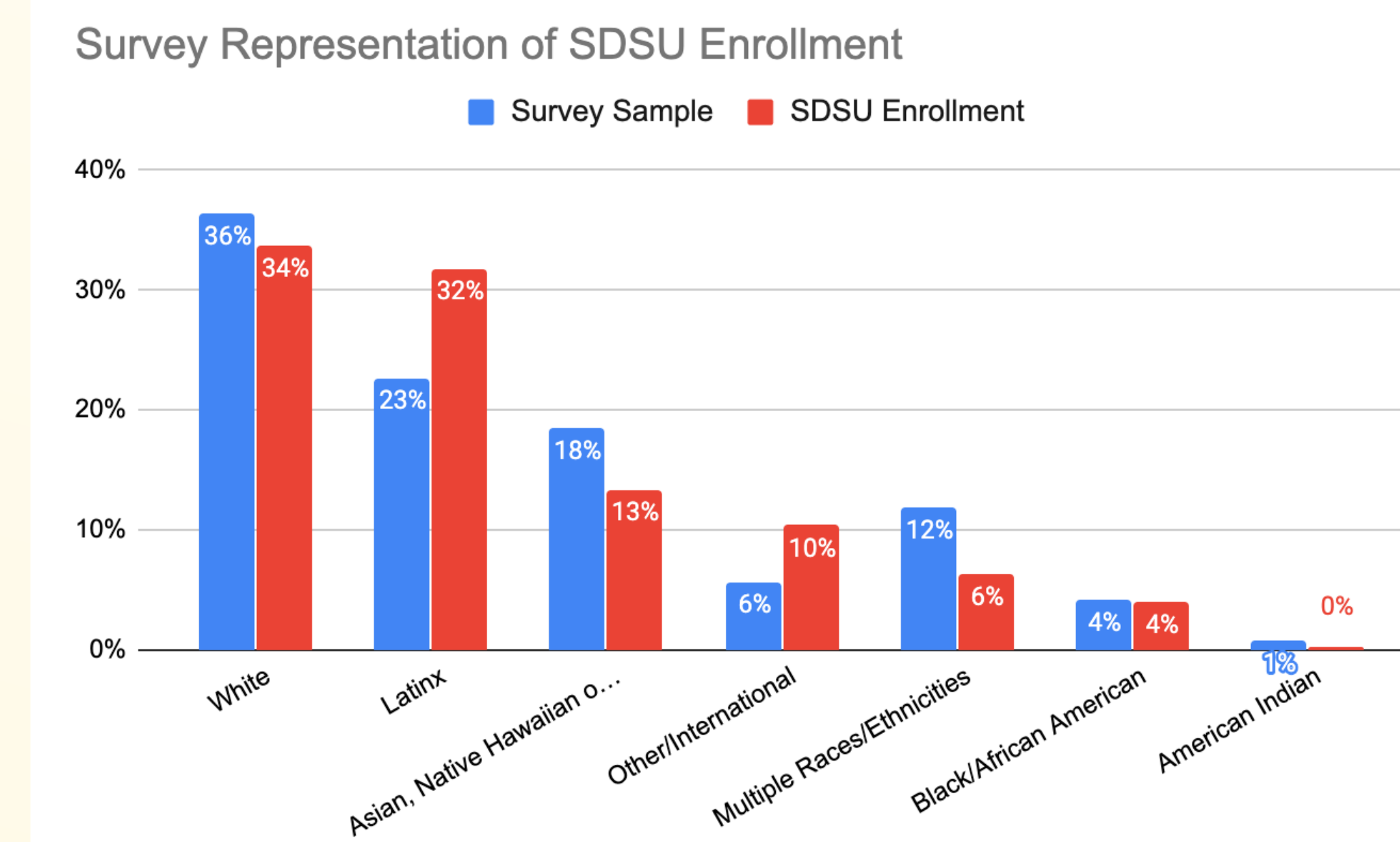
In May 2020, SDSU International Affairs launched a Qualtrics survey to all current SDSU undergraduates at SDSU San Diego and Imperial Valley campuses to gauge their interest in future study abroad opportunities. The survey also solicited feedback on barriers to participation.

Given the uncertainty about future travel restrictions and global health conditions, the survey also measured student interest in locally and virtually based global learning alternatives.

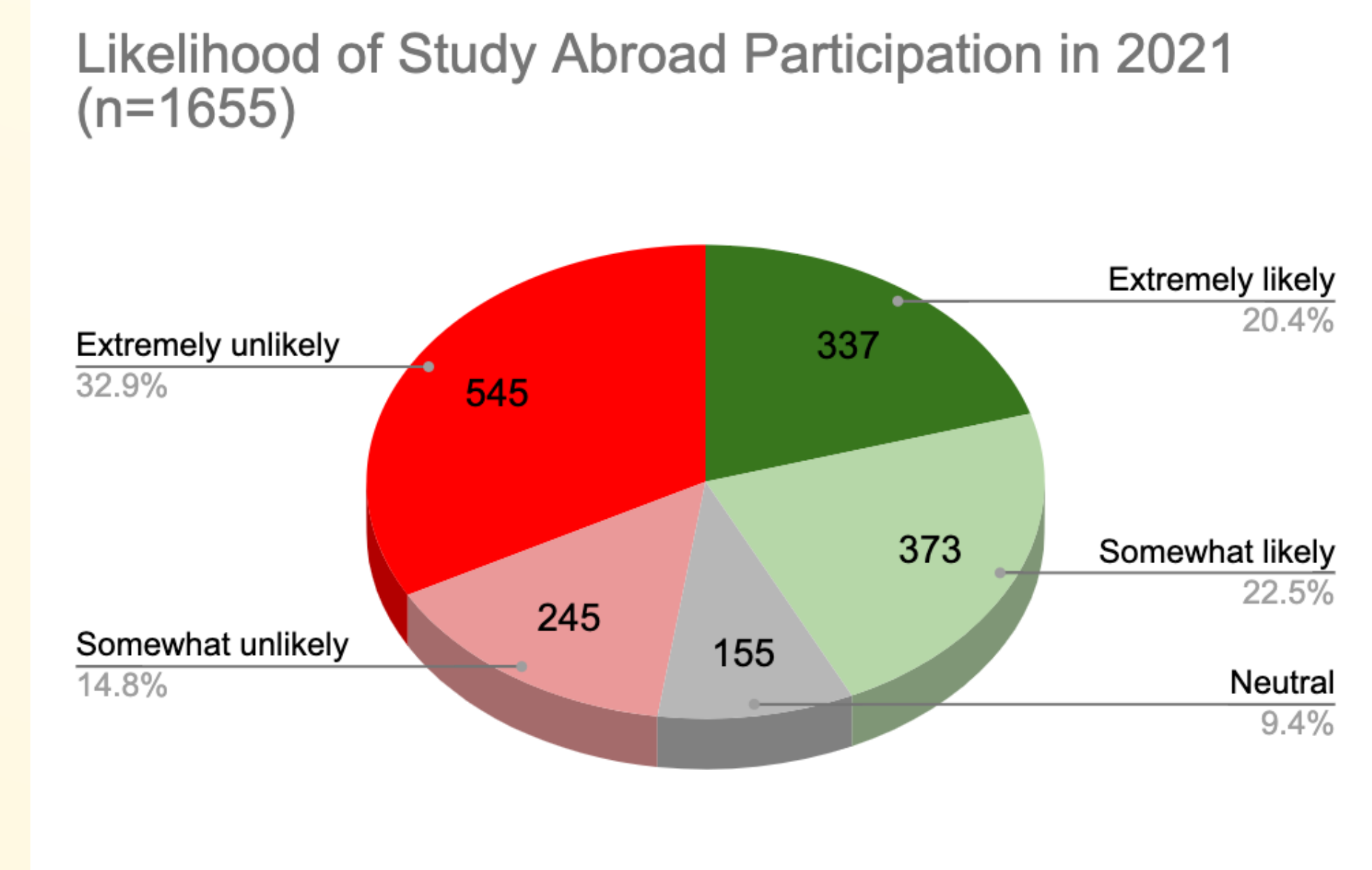
Responses from more than 1600 SDSU students offer insight into how SDSU International Affairs and the campus community can focus global learning efforts and resources in areas most beneficial to all of our students.

## FINDINGS

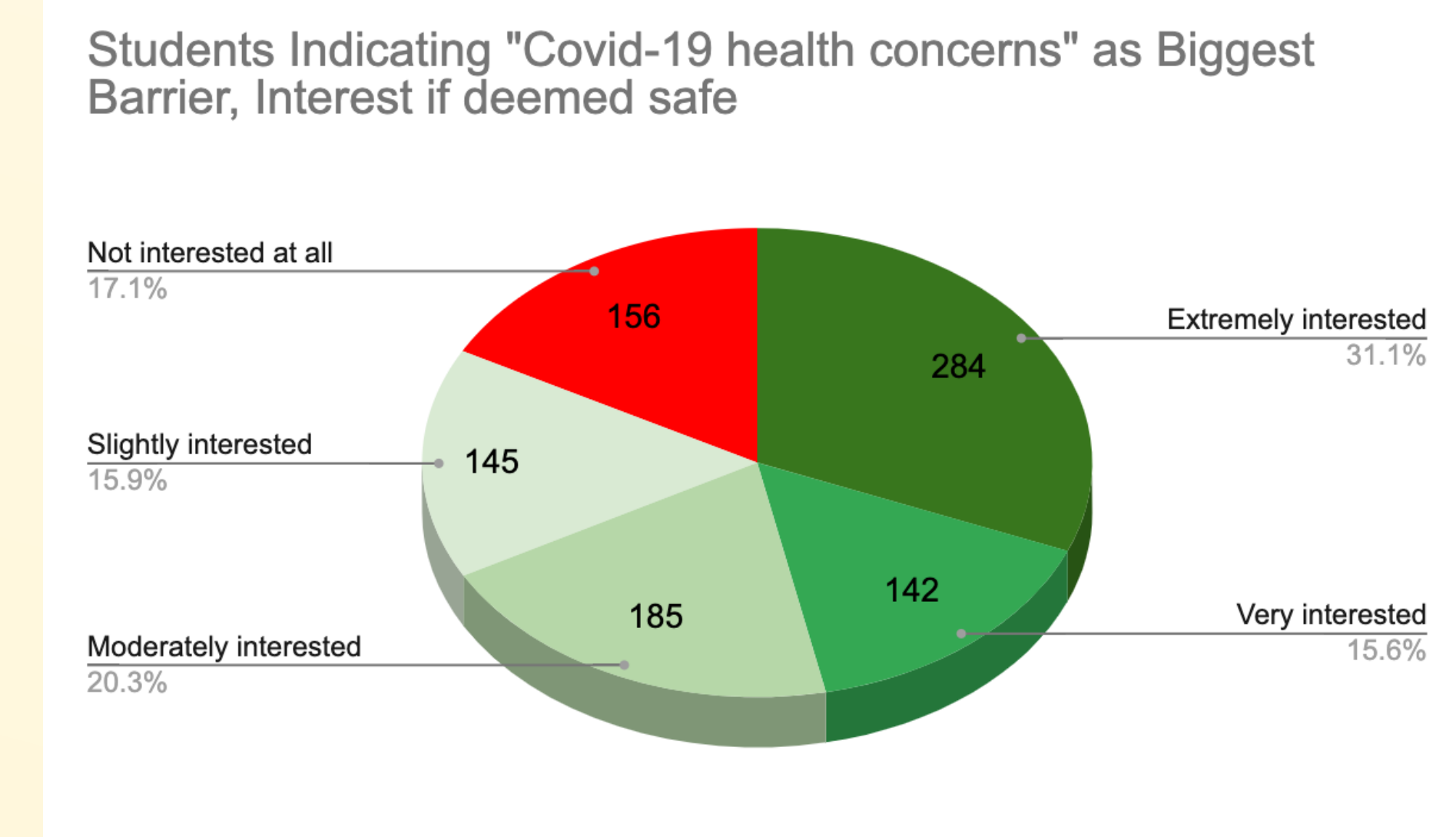
- The survey sample (n=1657) was 51.7% students with an international experience requirement, 96% students between sophomore and senior standing, and 3% from the Imperial Valley campus.
- Survey respondents were 74% female, compared with 72% female representation in study abroad at SDSU, 66% female participation in study abroad nation-wide, and 55% female enrollment at SDSU.
- When compared to SDSU enrollment, White & Asian students were overrepresented in the survey sample, while Latinx students were underrepresented:



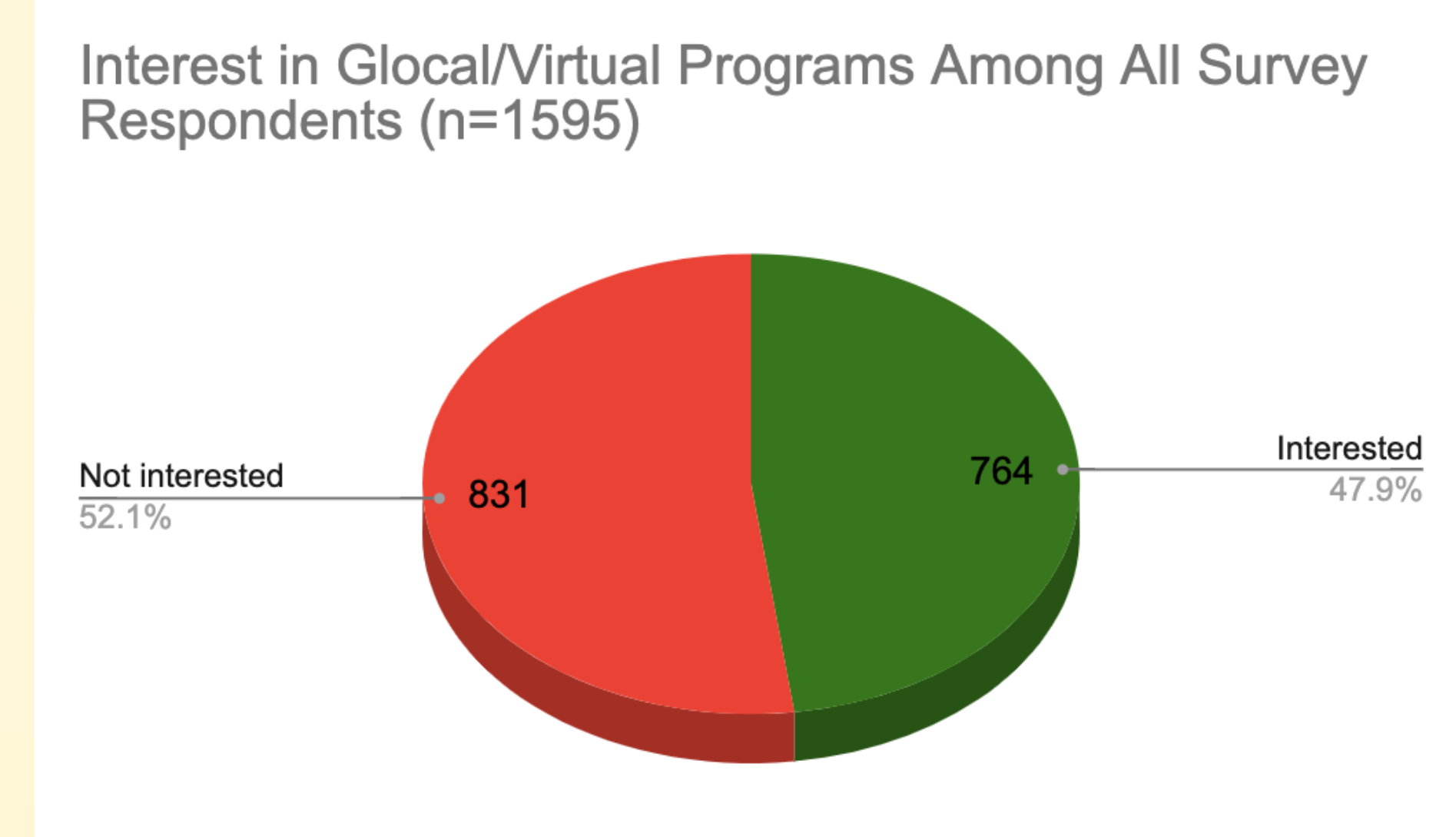
Less than half of the total sample of students surveyed thought it was likely they would participate in study abroad in 2021:



When considering only students who indicated that the biggest barrier to their participation was "Covid-19 health concerns" (n=912), strong interest (extremely interested or very interested) decreased by 8%, even if travel is deemed safe.

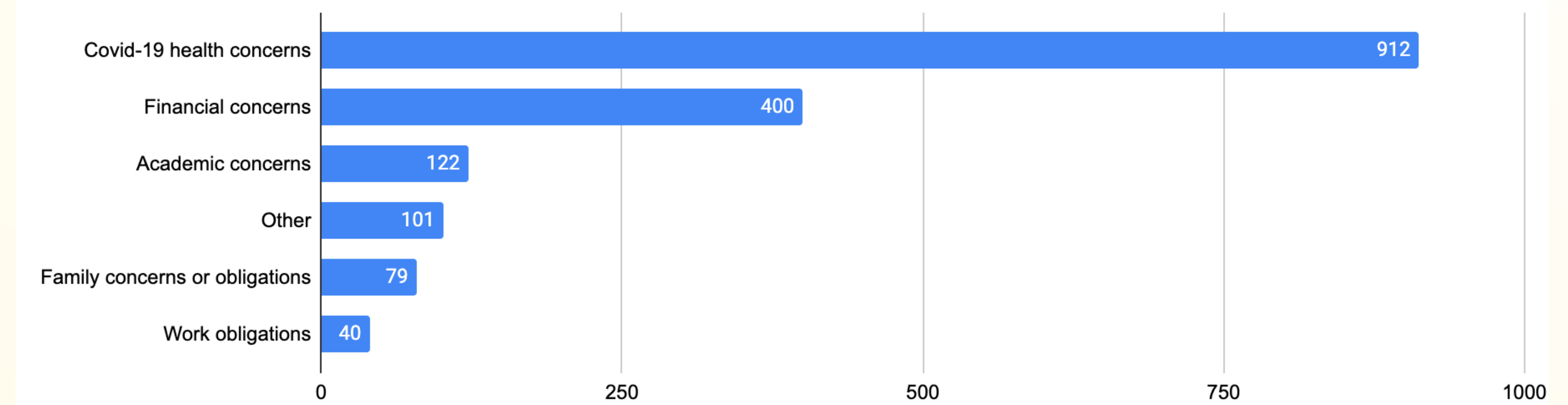


Nearly half of the students surveyed responded that they would be interested in at least one type of Glocal or Virtual program

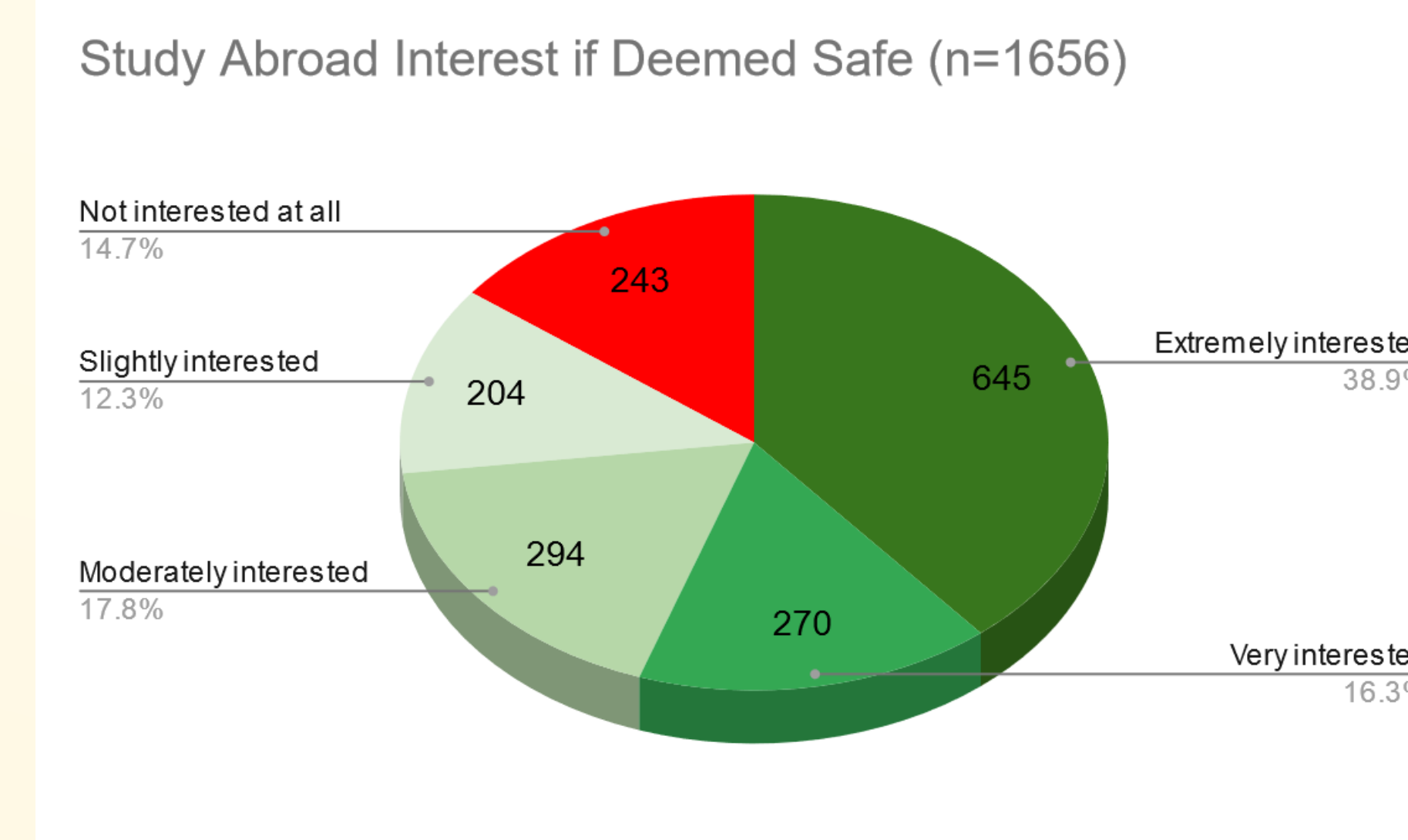


Although health concerns topped the list of barriers to participation, financial barriers continue to be significant, in keeping with national trends before Covid-19:

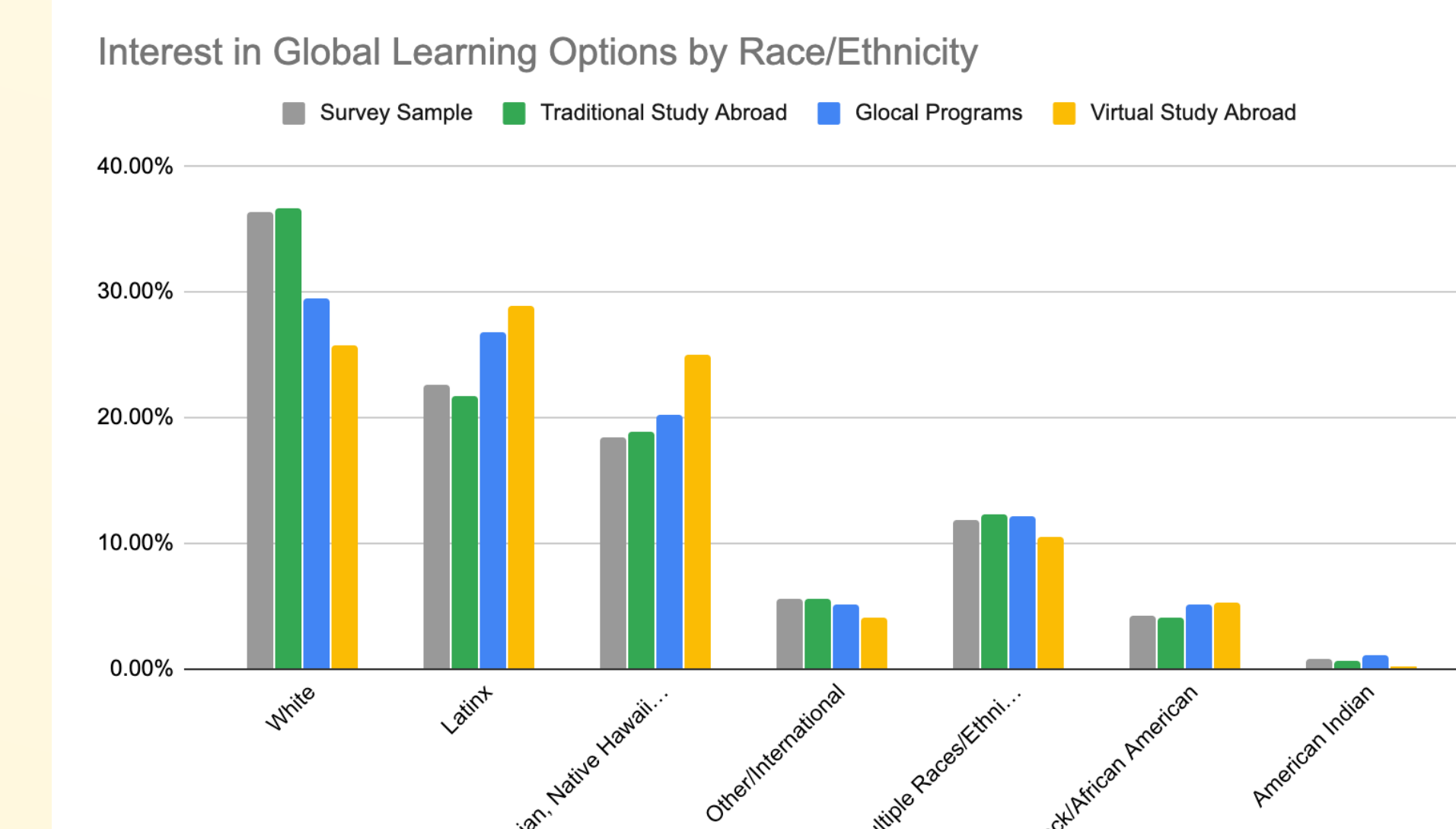
### Biggest Barriers to Participation (n=1654)



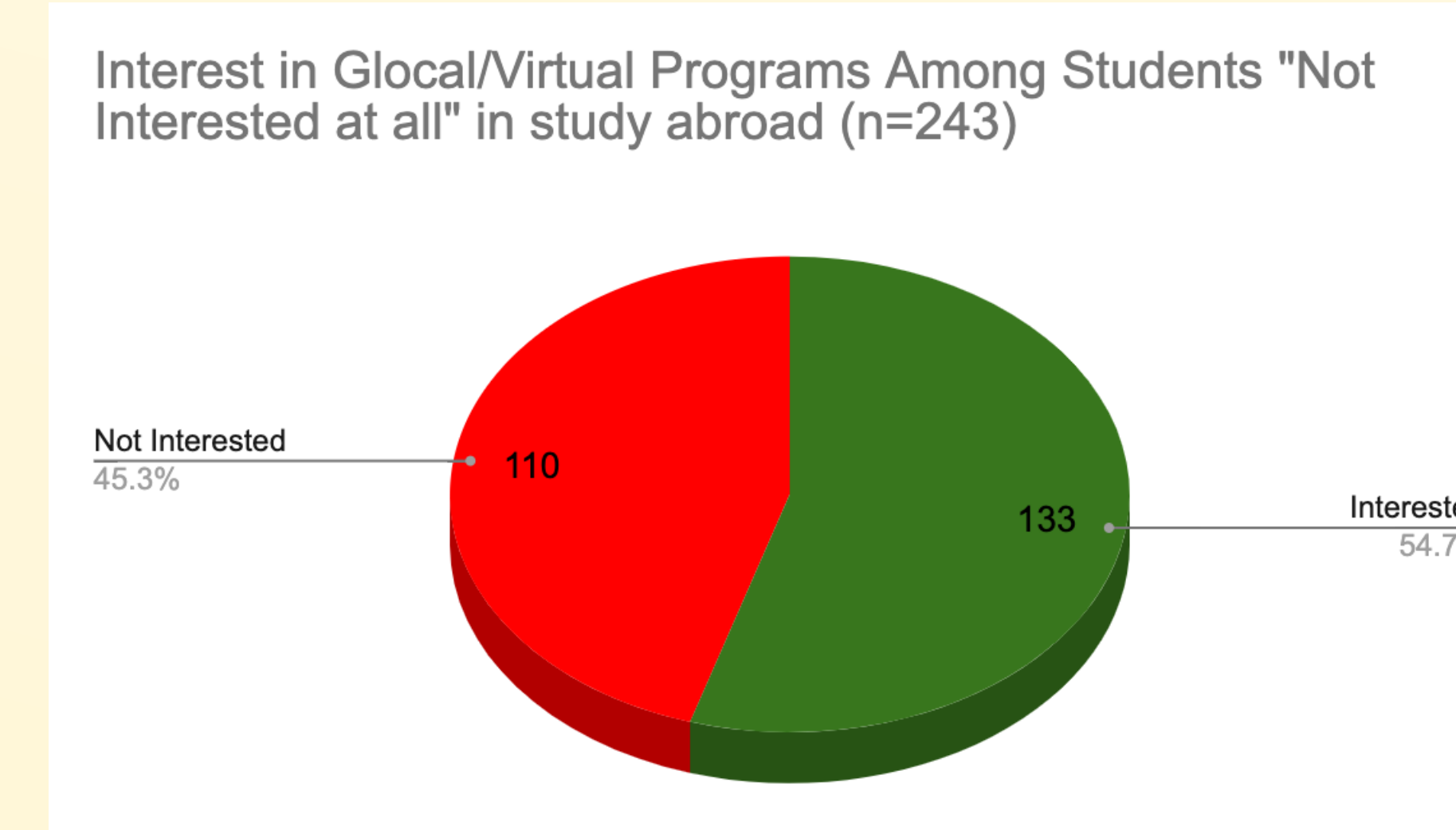
However, the majority of students demonstrated interest in participating once the university deems it safe, with more than half very interested or extremely interested.



Compared with their representation in the survey sample, Latinx students and Asian students were more interested in Glocal and Virtual global learning than traditional study abroad programs. These affordable and safe alternatives to traditional study abroad can make global learning a more inclusive high-impact practice.



Even among the 243 respondents who stated no interest in study abroad once it is deemed safe, more than half expressed interest in at least one type of Glocal or Virtual program



## CONCLUSIONS & FUTURE DIRECTIONS

- Strong interest in traditional study abroad remains**, in spite of the current Covid-19 situation, and we must be prepared once international travel resumes.
- Covid-19 safety concerns, as well as current societal divisions and inequities, illustrate that the **need for global learning is ongoing**, and should not be paused due to travel restrictions.
- SDSU should continue to focus on offering global learning opportunities, but be **creative and innovative about the modalities** in which students can continue to engage with global learning.
- We need to **better explain Glocal and Virtual programming** and communicate their benefits to the entire campus community, in order to continue building interest in participation
- Glocal and Virtual programs are not a "substitute" for traditional study abroad, and must be intentionally designed and executed to promote global learning. **Outcomes assessment is essential** to ensure the quality of all types of global learning options.
- High-quality Glocal and Virtual programs **can be an equitable alternative**, and according to interest indicated, could be a way to engage more underrepresented students in global learning as a high-impact practice that contributes to student success.
- Offering Glocal and Virtual programs that are based in San Diego and do not require travel **helps eliminate the most prominent barriers to participation** in global learning, increasing equity and inclusion in global learning.
- We recommend **continuing to survey students regularly** about interest in various global learning options during the constantly changing pandemic environment, as we strategize for safety, academic continuity and student success.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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