

Sociology Undergraduate Program Evaluation and Renewal: Pilot Findings

Silvia Bartolic, Ph.D., Hailey Craig, B.A.

Stakeholder Engagement: Enhancing the Process of Curriculum Renewal

In 2019, the Department of Sociology received funding to undertake a curriculum evaluation and renewal of the Sociology undergraduate program which includes a major and minor in Sociology and a minor in Family Studies (FMST). This poster focuses on findings from the FMST minor which was used to pilot the data collection process.

For program evaluation and renewal to be effective, it is critically important to include stakeholder perspectives in the process (Hansen & Borden, 2006). To date, we have consulted with current students, alumni, and employers in the Greater Vancouver area who are current or potential employers of individuals with a background in Family Studies. Engaging with these various groups allows us to explore what gaps, if any, exist between the knowledge and skills acquired in the classroom and the knowledge and skills sought after by employers who work with families.

Project Methodology

We are using a **program action research approach** where researchers and stakeholders are involved in the process of curriculum renewal.

Data includes:

- Document analysis (i.e., environmental scans, course syllabi, program analytics);
- Self-administered survey questionnaires to students, alumni, and employers (using Qualtrics software);
- Interviews and focus groups (using Zoom).



Data come from:

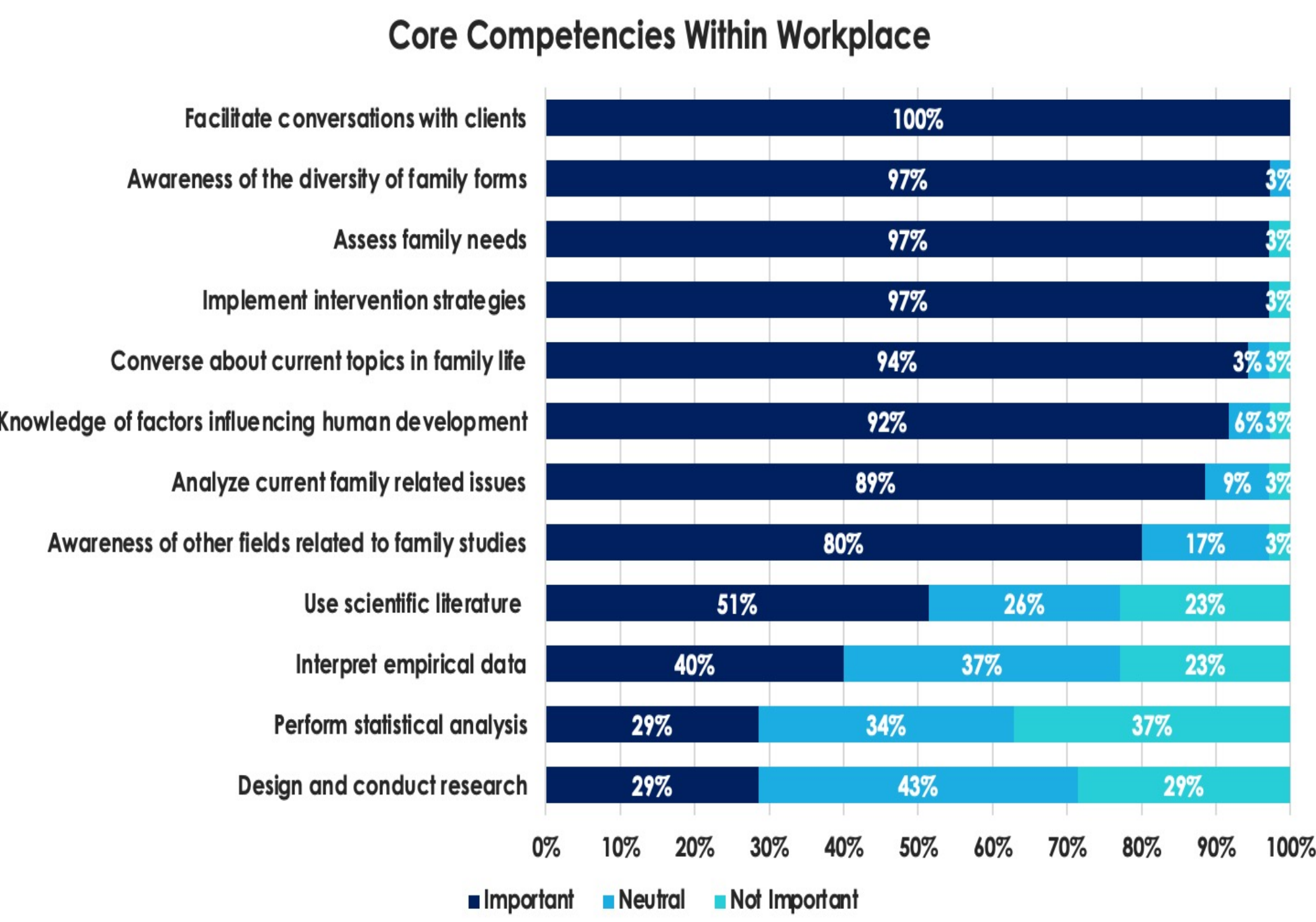
- Alumni who graduated from the FMST program;
- Current students enrolled in the FMST program (2020);
- Employers who have hired or would hire individuals with a background in family science.

	Employer	Alumni	Student
Survey's Sent (N)	127	114	68
Responses Received (N)	63	37	33
Response Rate (%)	49.6%	32.5%	48.5%

Employer Perspectives: Interpersonal Skills

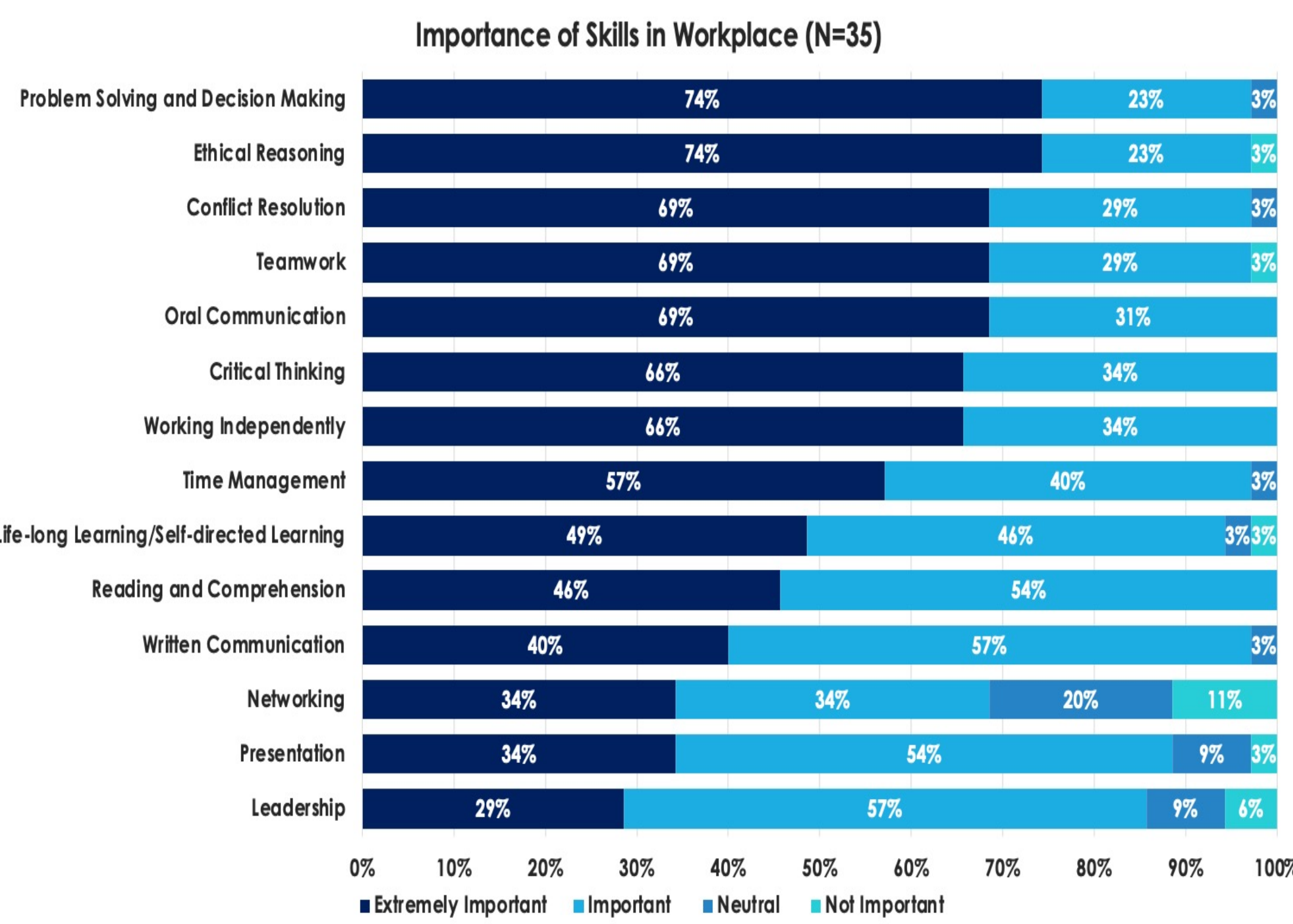
Understanding the importance employers place on core competencies helps us determine the skills we should teach and/or reinforce within curricula.

For example, **one hundred percent of employers** stated that **facilitating conversations** with clients is 'important.'



Employer Perspectives: Core Competencies

Seventy-four percent of employers reported that **ethical reasoning** and **problem-solving/decision-making** skills are 'extremely important.'



Employer Suggestions to Faculty

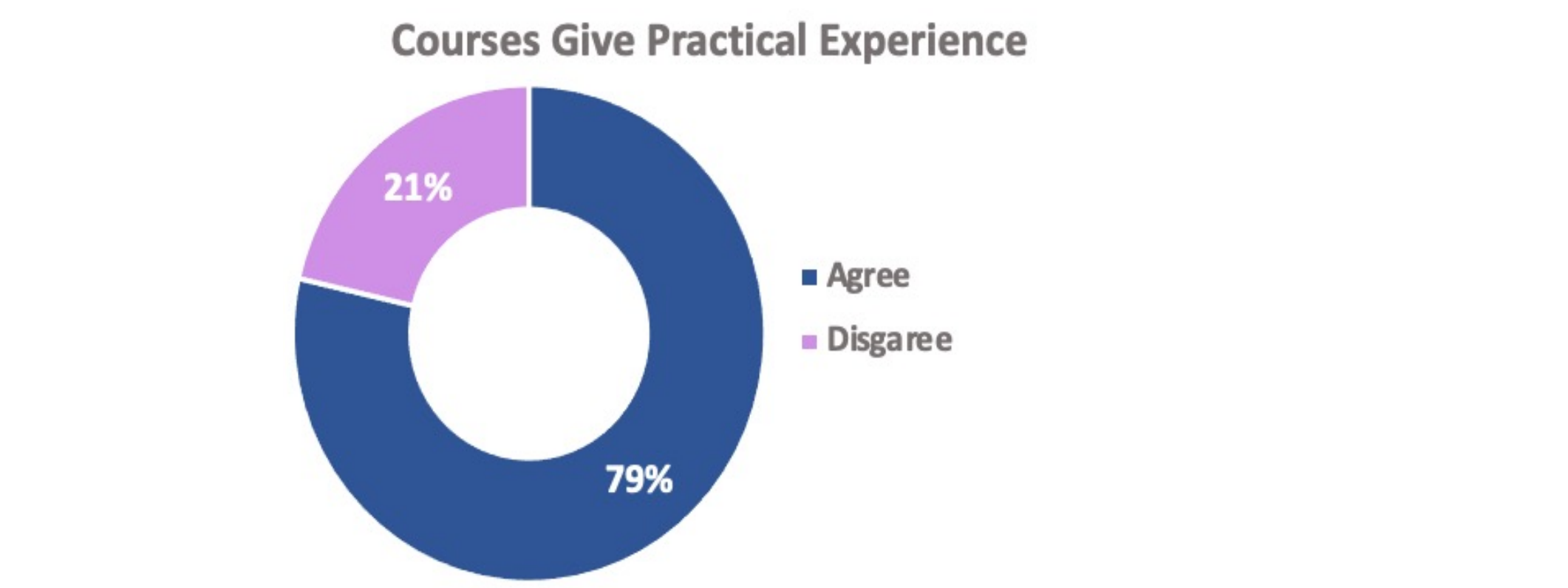
“Ensure knowledge is cross-cultural.”

“Provide job search coaching.”

“Critical thinking skills and problem solving in real-world scenarios.”

Student Perspectives

79% of students agree that the courses within the program provide practical experience.



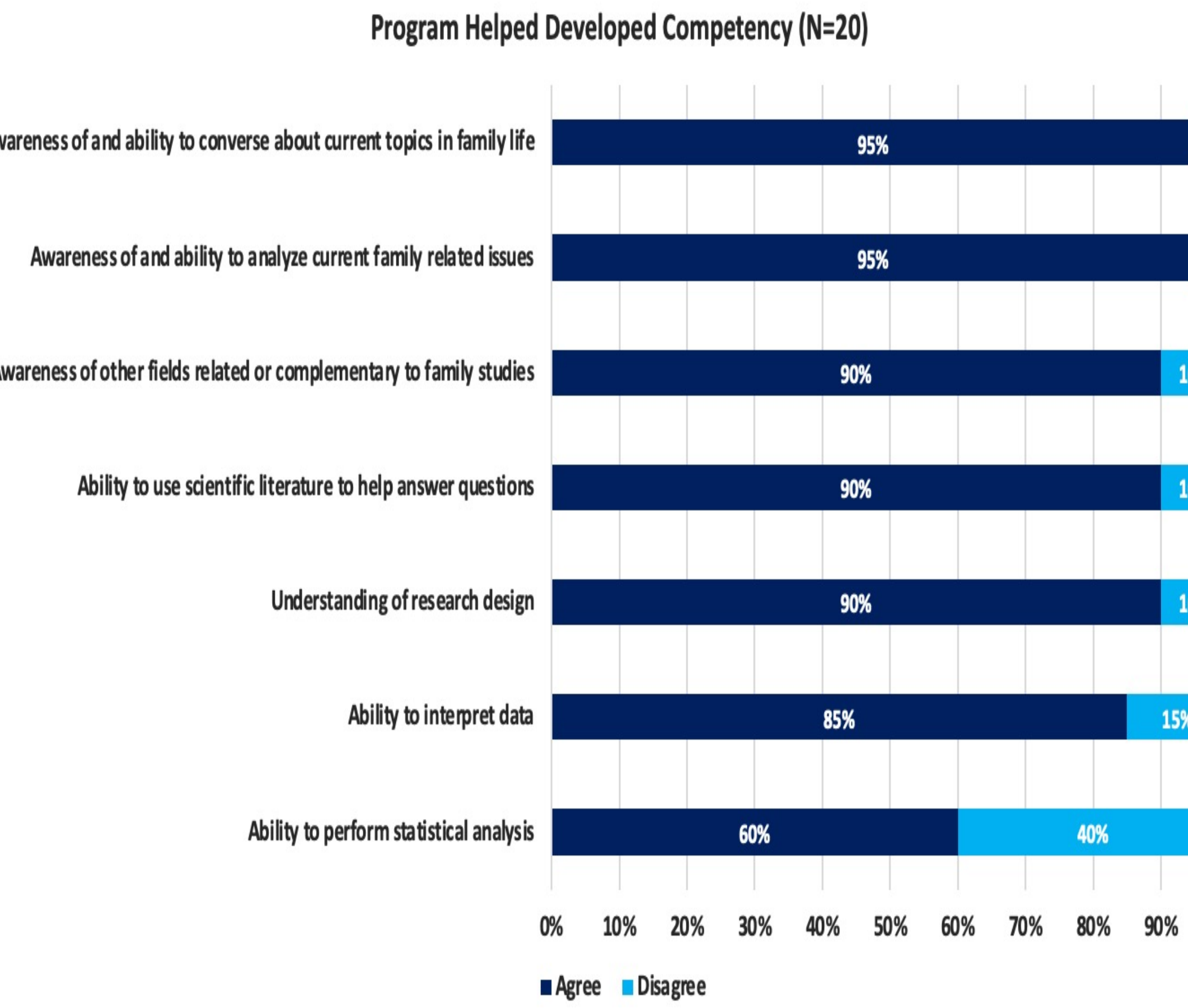
Student Suggestions for Faculty

“Students need more information regarding what careers they can pursue and what research options are available for them while they are at UBC.”

“...more community engagement, or assignments that encouraged interviews or family program assessments.”

Alumni Perspectives

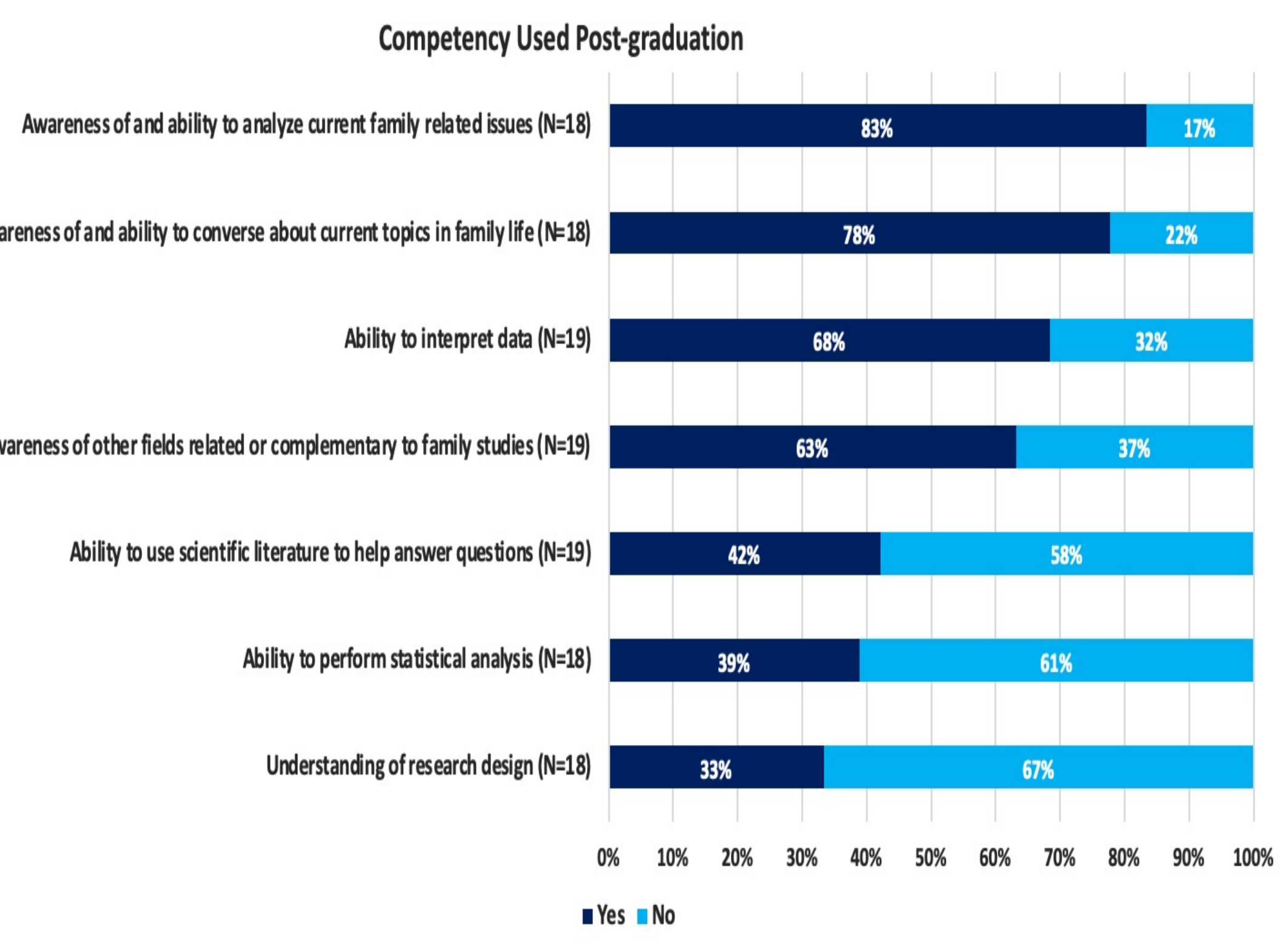
Ninety-five percent of alumni reported that the program helped them be **aware of and have the ability to analyze current family-related issues**, as well as **converse about family topics**.



Alumni Perspectives

Eighty-three percent of alumni reported that within the workplace they need to be **aware of and have the ability to analyze current family-related issues**.

We see here the importance of developing the following skills within the minor program.



Alumni Suggestions

“Preparing workshops before graduation to show some tools and skills to find employment (CV writing sessions, how to answer job interview questions).”

“More mentorship opportunities.”

Outcomes

As a result of this pilot, we have:

- Developed program objectives for the FMST minor;
- Began the development of new courses (in both FMST and SOCI);
- Began a redesign of several existing courses;
- Developed a ‘family’ rivulet (course collection and pathway) to assist students with course selection and sequencing; and
- Made adjustments to the data collection instruments and began collection of Sociology program data.

Our aim is to address the skills and topic areas desired by employers to ensure our graduates are meeting these needs.

References

Hansen, M. J., & Borden, V. M. H. (2006). Using action research to support academic program improvement. *New Directions for Institutional Research*, 130, 47-62.

Walker, K., & Blankemeyer M. (2013). Where are they now? The results of an HDFS alumni survey. *Family Science Review*, 18 (2), 19-45.

Acknowledgement

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