

Hearing the Stories of Latina Graduates in Utah



Utah Women and Education Project

Nicolle M Johnson

Utah Valley University



Purpose



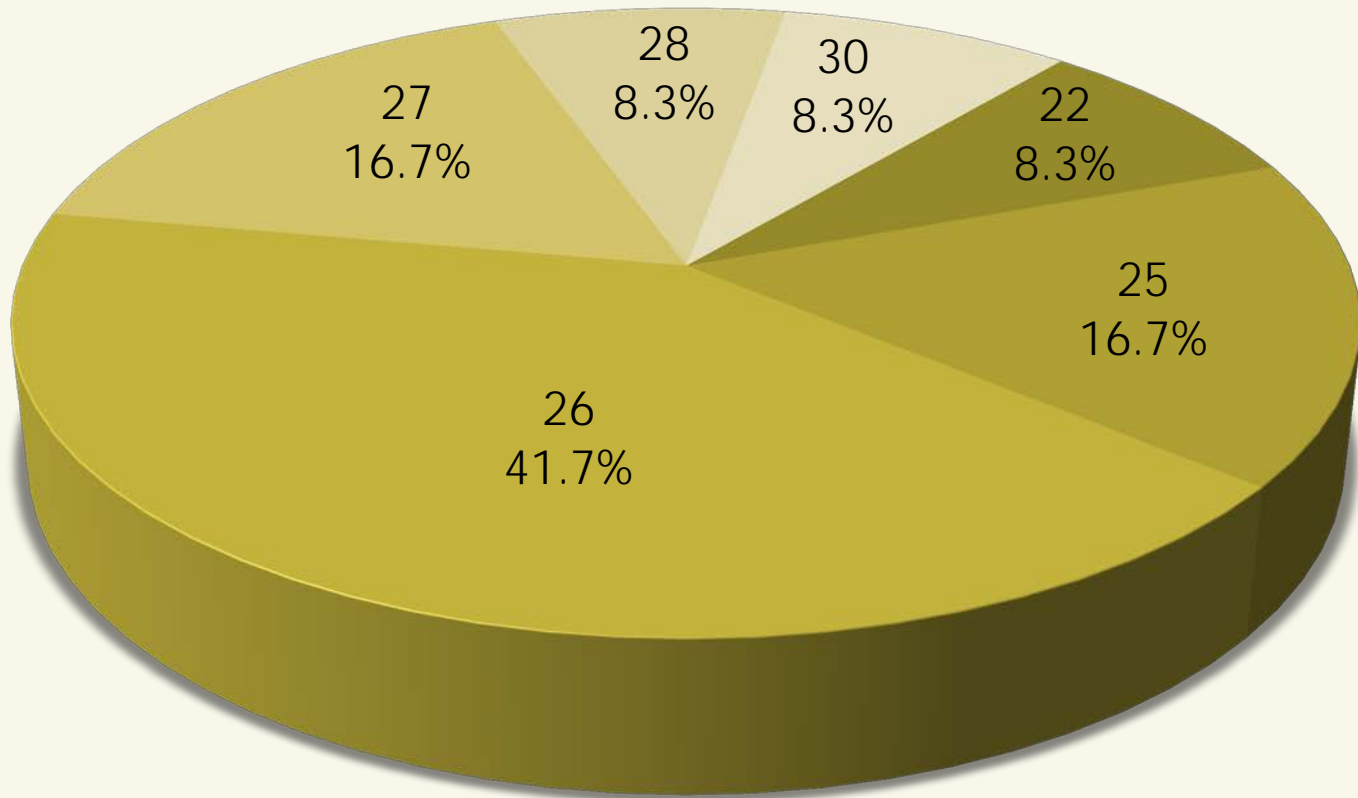
The purpose of this study is to understand the educational experiences and choices of Latina women in Utah that lead to their successful completion of post-secondary degrees.

Participants: Overall

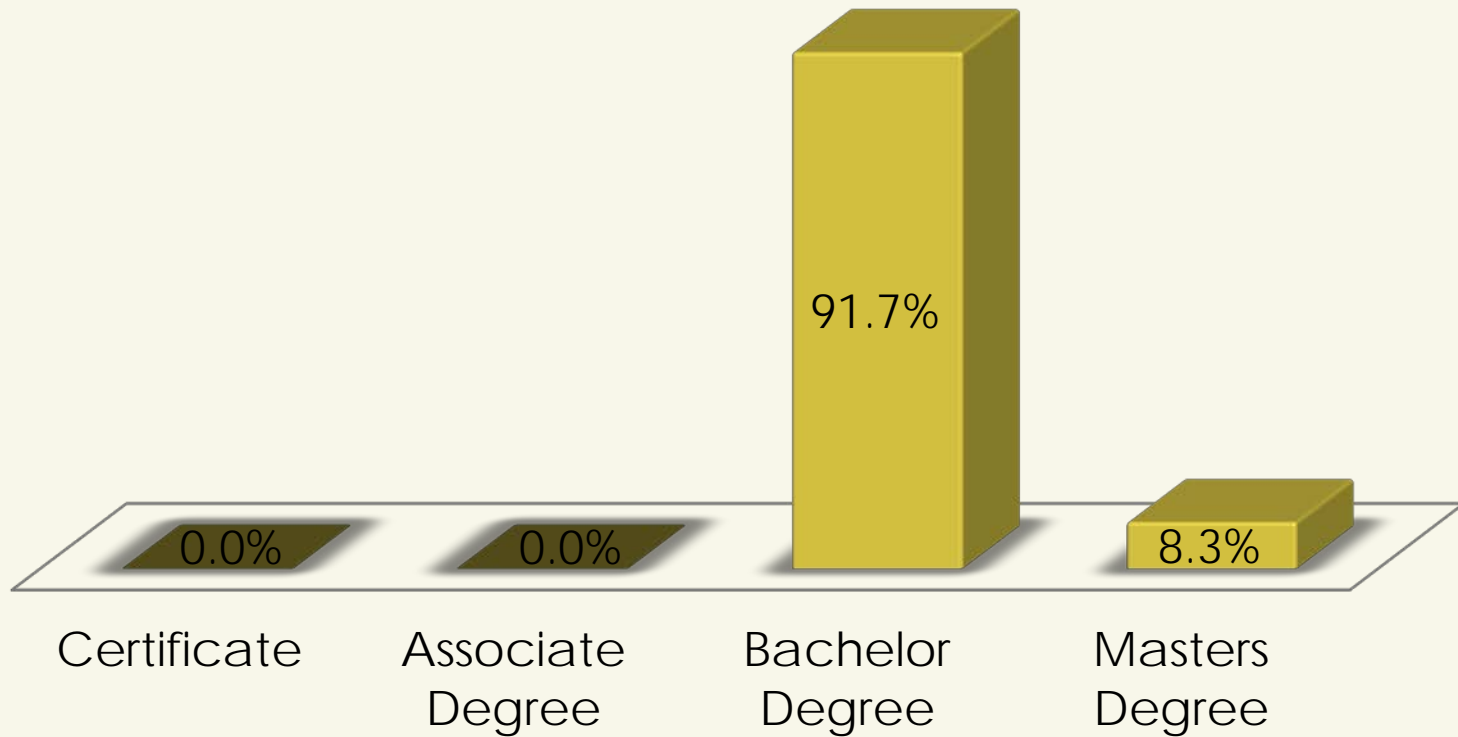


- ❧ 12 Participants (final)
- ❧ Protocol: used the same instrument as the larger UWEP group with an additional seven questions targeting minority populations.
- ❧ Recruitment: done through UVU Institutional Research list, email requests to contacts on various Utah campuses, and phone calls made to local religious groups.

Age



Educational Level

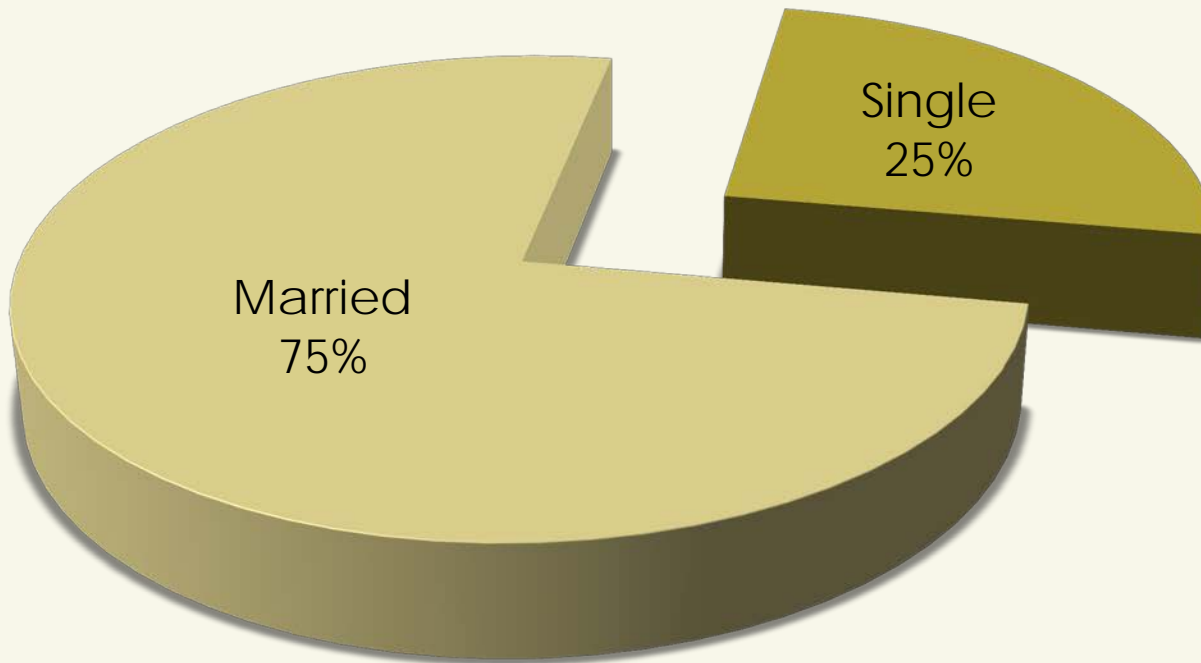


Why Education is Important

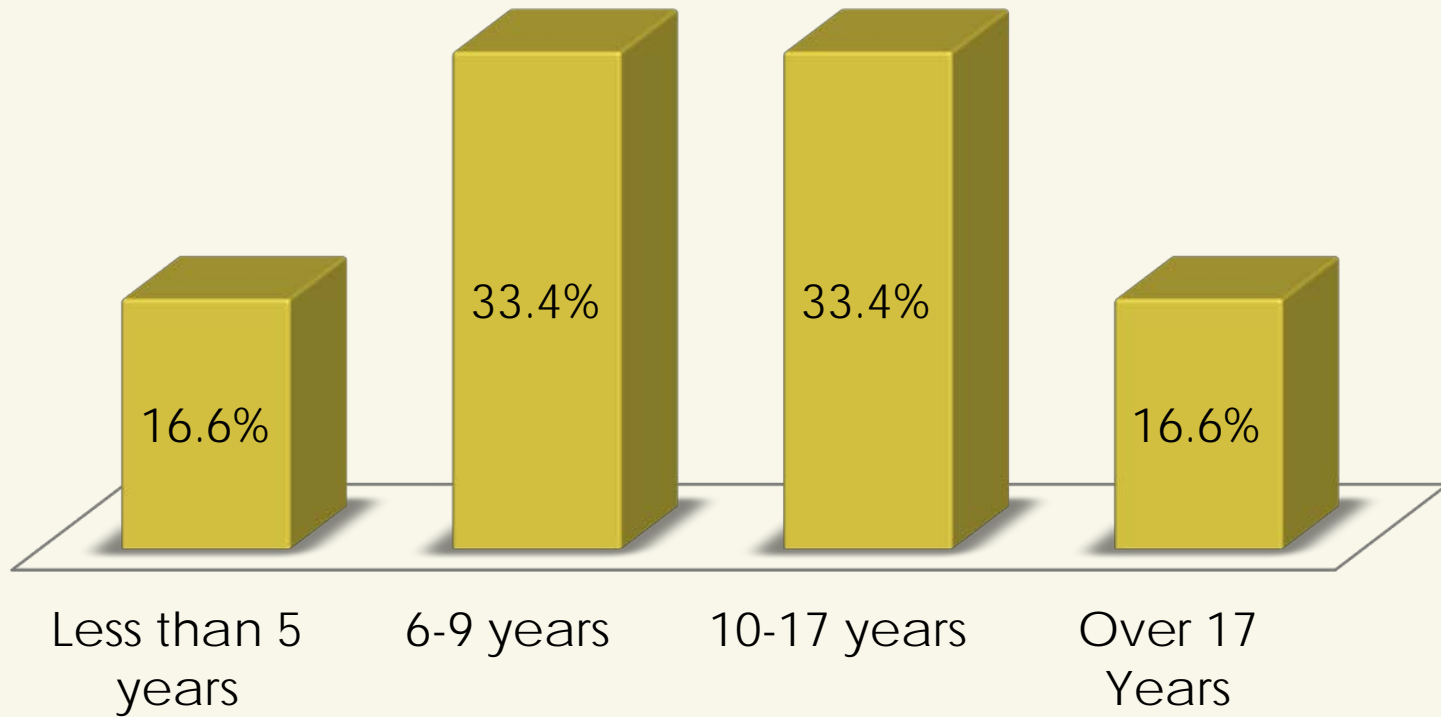


"I have been taught by my parents and close family that no matter how smart you are it will not account for anything if you do not have that little piece of paper backing it up. With higher education many doors are opened and it allows people to not only make more money but to have more leverage in making changes in our society. If we do not motivate our young Latino students to go on and get an education we will not have a voice in our community."

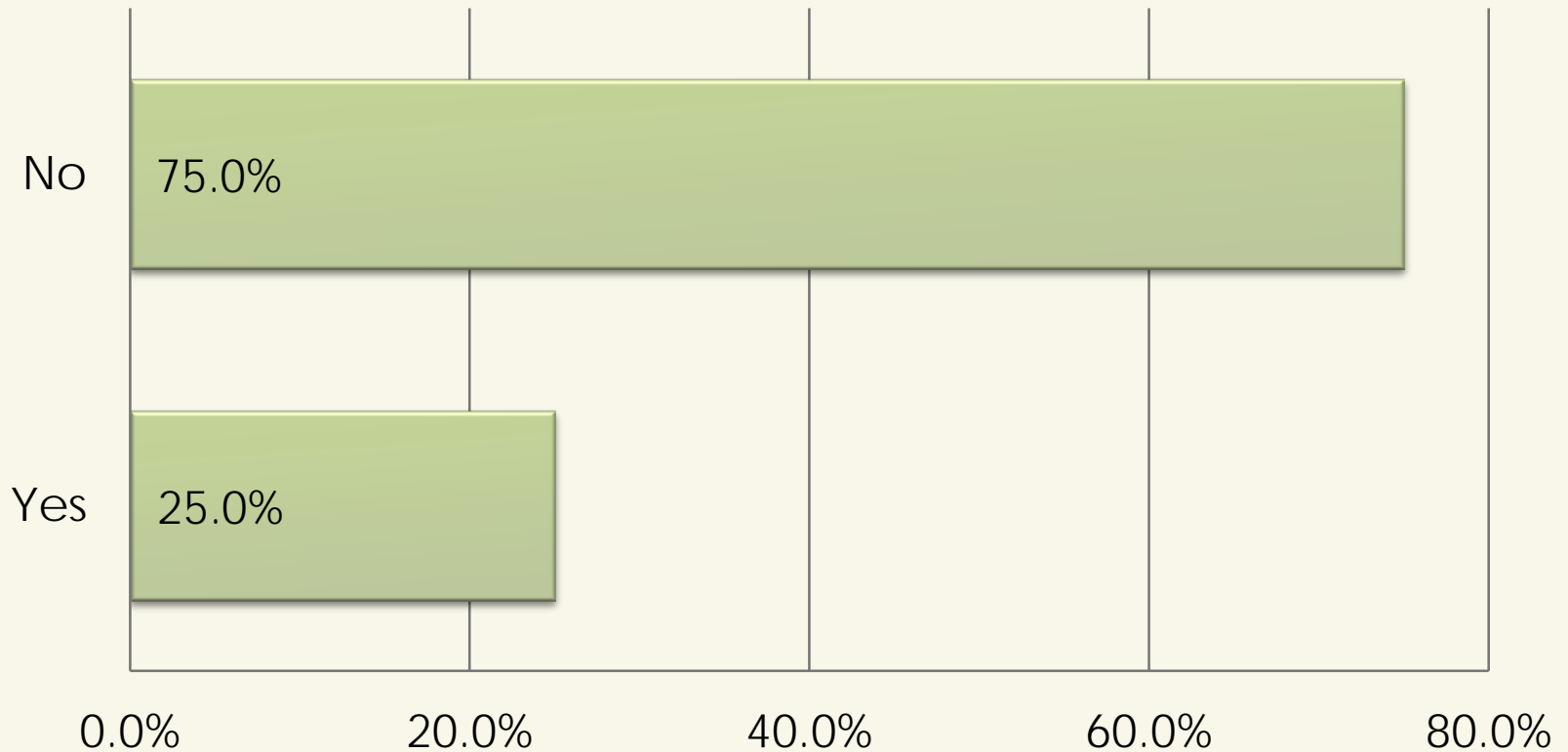
Marital Status



Years in Utah



First Generation Students

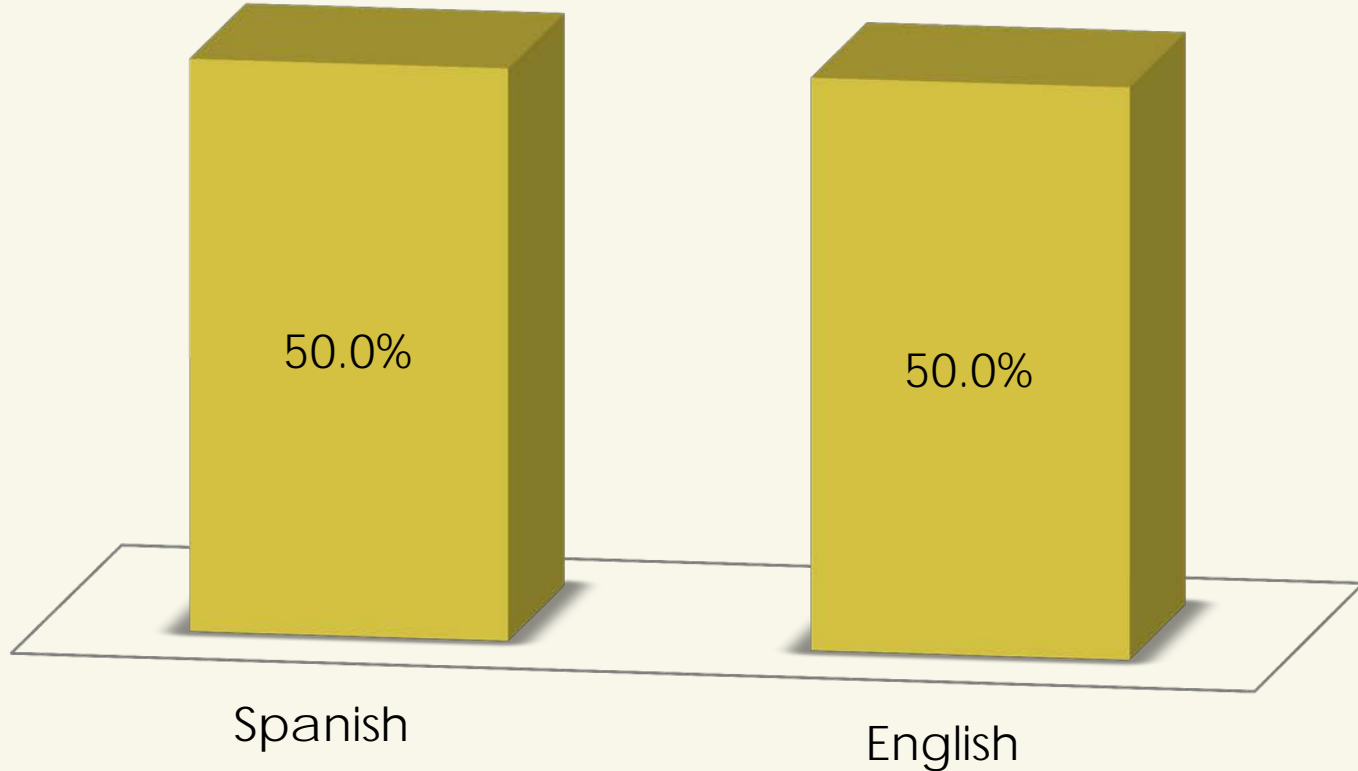


A First Generation Student Perspective



"I grew up in a family that had no education. My mother does not know how to write or read and my father only finished 3rd grade of elementary school in MX, so when we came to the U.S.A., I noticed the challenges they both faced with the language and with their education...I wanted a different life for me, not because I grew up desiring better things, but because I knew that there was more out there than just being a babysitter/cleaning houses (like my mother) or working out in the field picking strawberries (like my father). I wanted to work in a suit, I wanted to look nice when I leave home and when I would come back home. I wanted to be someone important in life."

Native Language



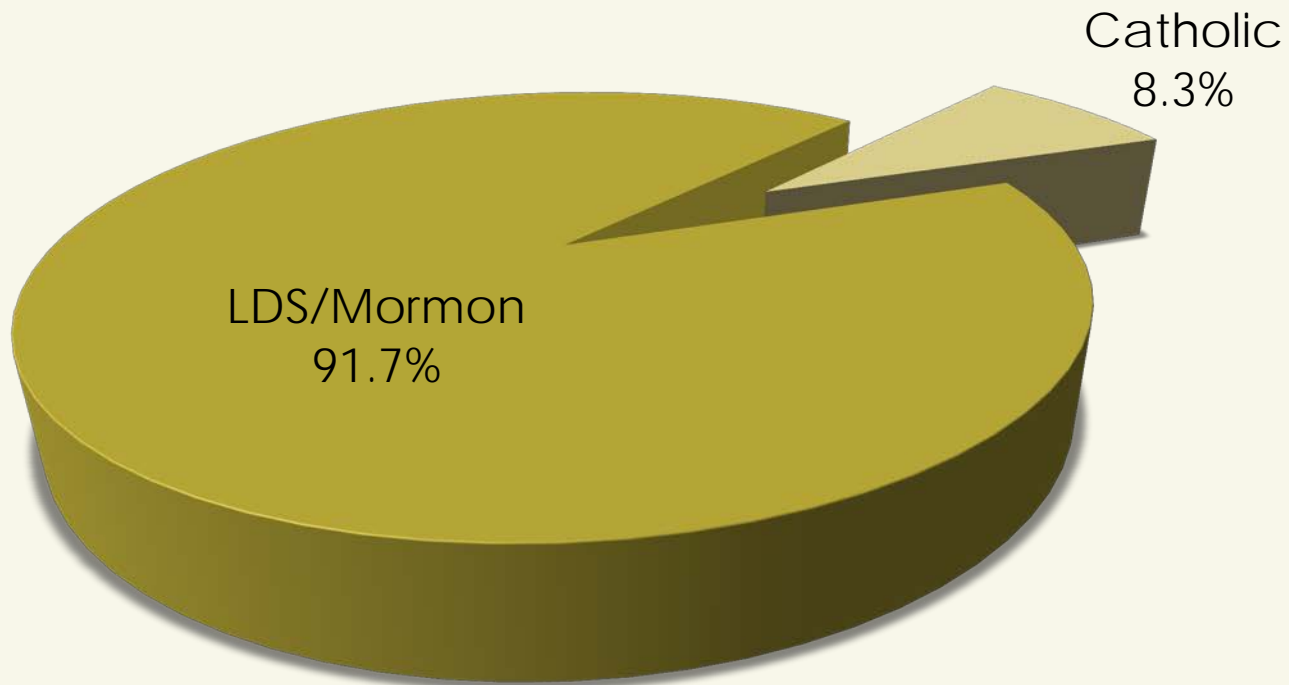
English as a Second Language



“The main difficulty in the first couple of years in college here in the US came as a result of differences in the education system and the lack of orientation and understanding of such. For example, I didn't understand very well that I could choose the classes I wanted to take. Also, I took some unnecessary courses because of lack of orientation and knowledge of the classes I needed to take or electives that will benefit me in my career the most.”

Although I spoke Spanish at home primarily, I learned English at school without a problem. The reason for that I think is because my dad always encouraged us to read.

Religion



What My Religion Teaches About Education



"I was always encouraged by my church leaders and peers to attend college and to get an education not just for myself but also to provide a better quality of life to my future family."

"My religion strongly recommends and encourages education and learning in general for both men and women. However, education for women is perhaps not as critical for providing as it is for men, or at least that's the way I see it. Education for women is critical as an emergency plan and also fundamental for raising children intelligently."

"It is really important in my religion to get as much education as possible. My church leaders encourage me to be smart, to pursue knowledge. Even women need an education because they will eventually raise a family. This has encouraged me to value education and recognize the importance of it."

What My Religion Teaches About Education (2)

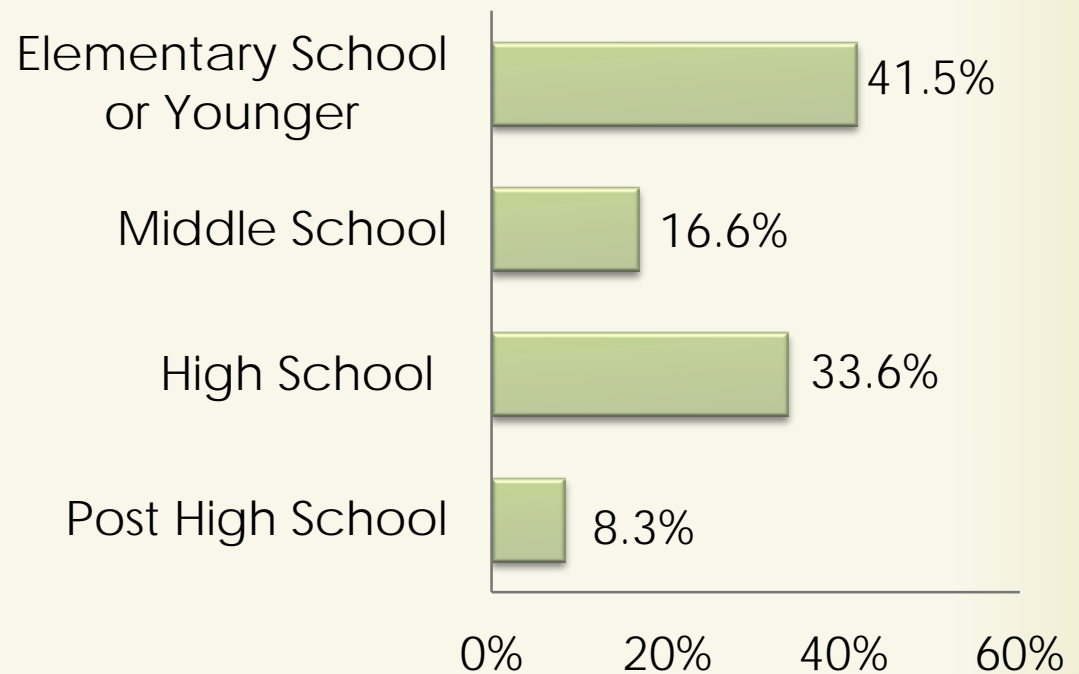


"In recent years leaders of the LDS faith have encouraged young women to earn all the education they can, including attending college if the opportunity is available. They often discuss that education is not only valuable to women who pursue careers, but also to women who choose to stay home full time. I have always felt encouraged by my church leaders to develop my talents through education and felt that educated women are highly appreciated in my church. Even though as women in the LDS faith we are encouraged to make our homes and families our greatest priorities, never have I felt or been told that I was not a good Latter-day Saint because I chose to complete my education before having children. I think in the LDS faith it is the role of husbands and parents that are having the greatest influence in a young woman's choice to attend college. I believe that many LDS women do not finish college because they put their husband's education first or they choose to follow the example of their mother's that did not attend college."

Age of Decision

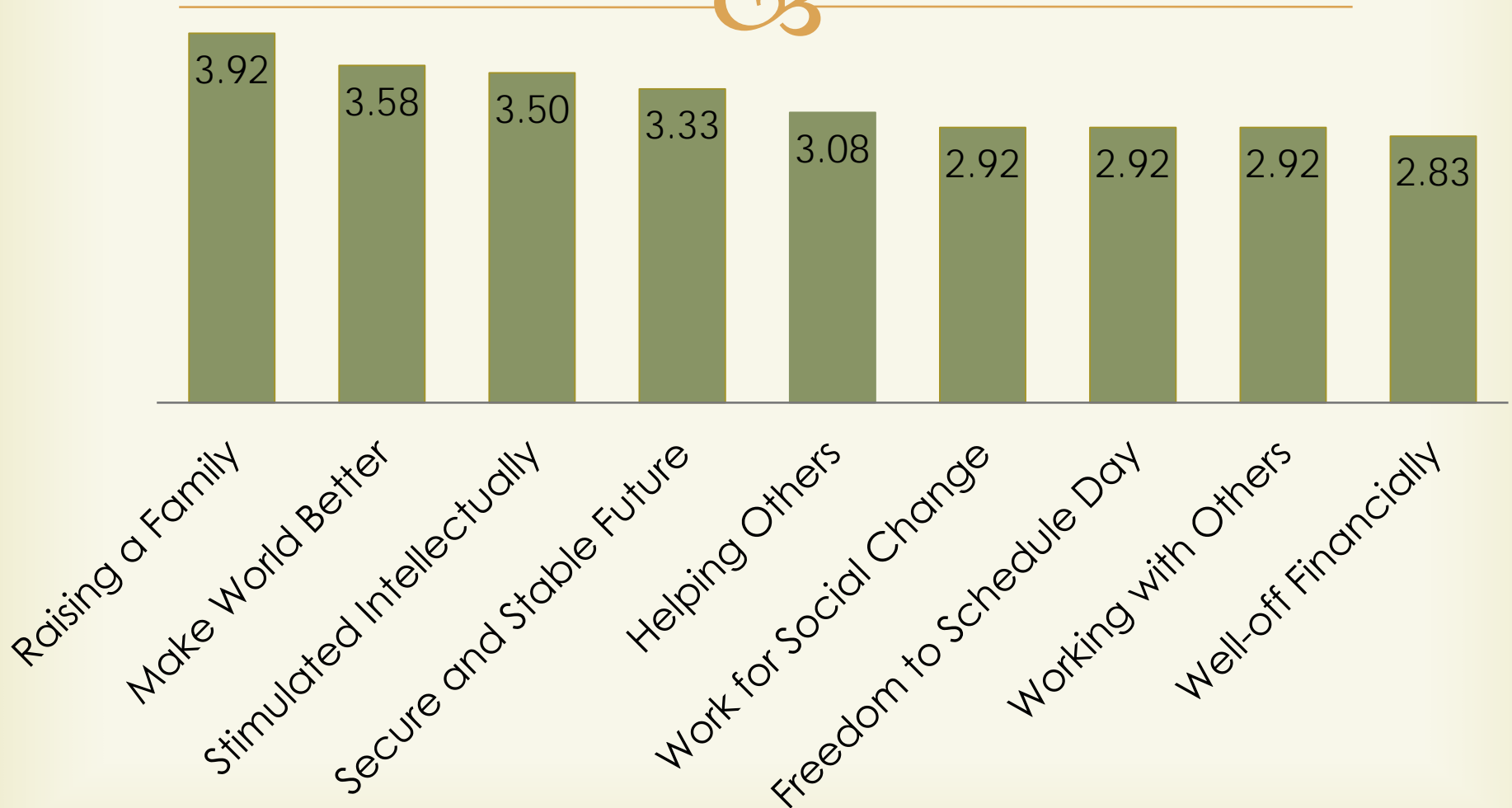


"It was never IF I was going to college, it was WHAT WOULD I BE STUDYING."

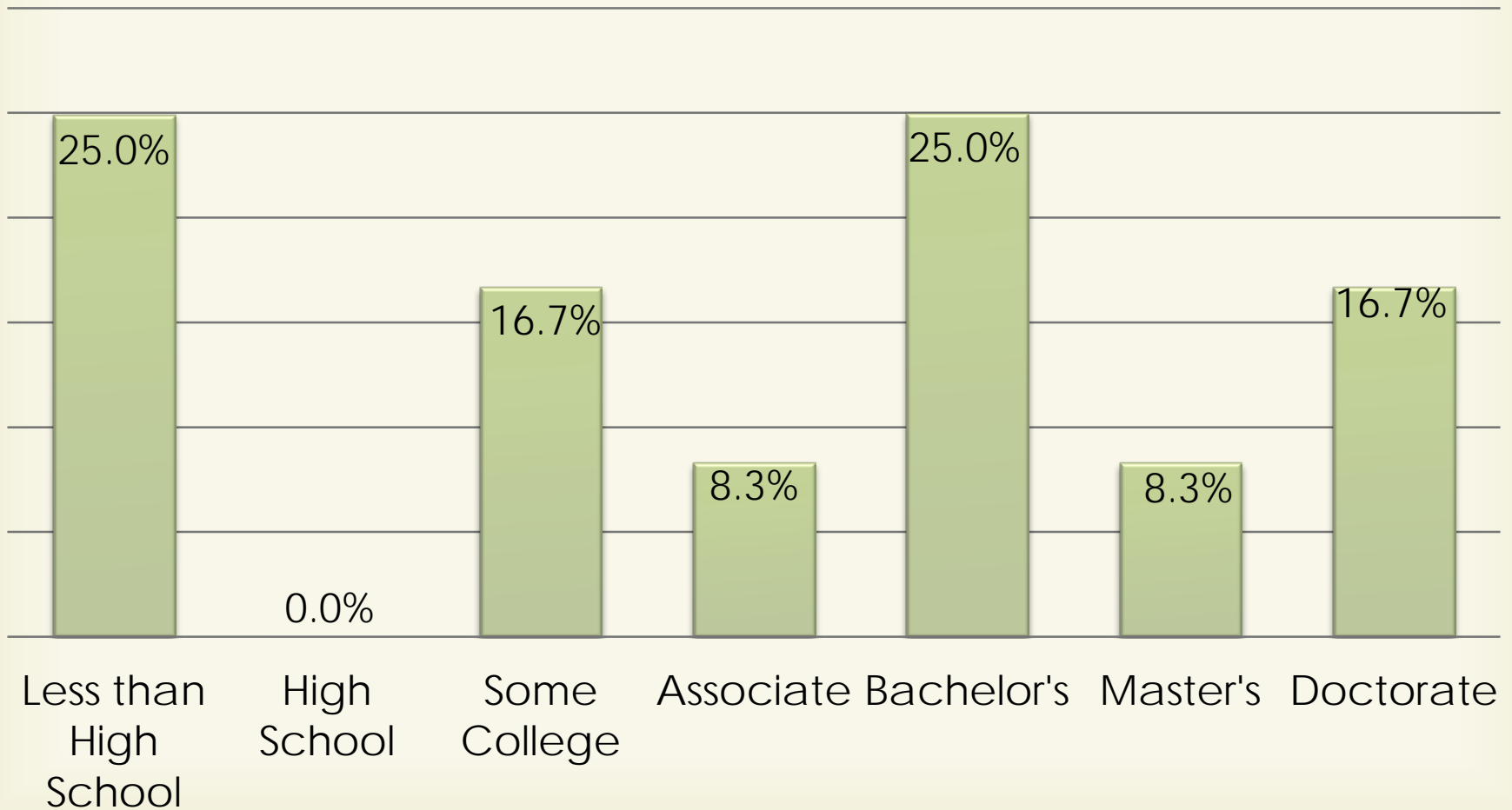


Aspirations / Lifestyle

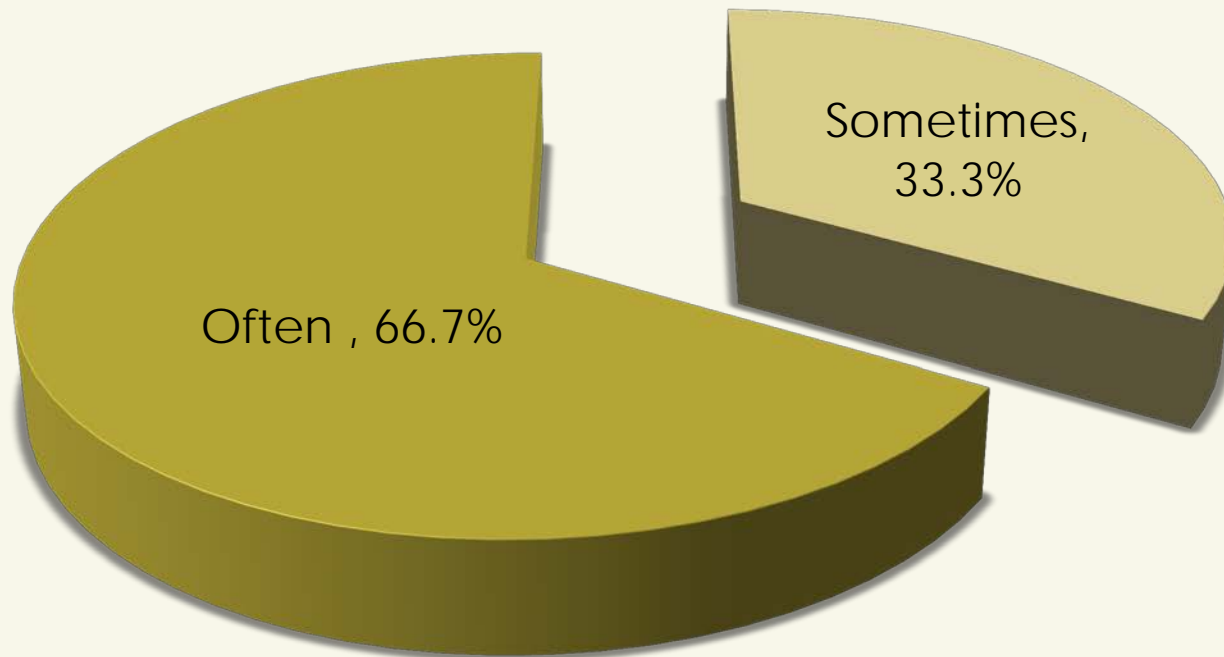
Scale: 1 (Not Important) - 4 (Essential)



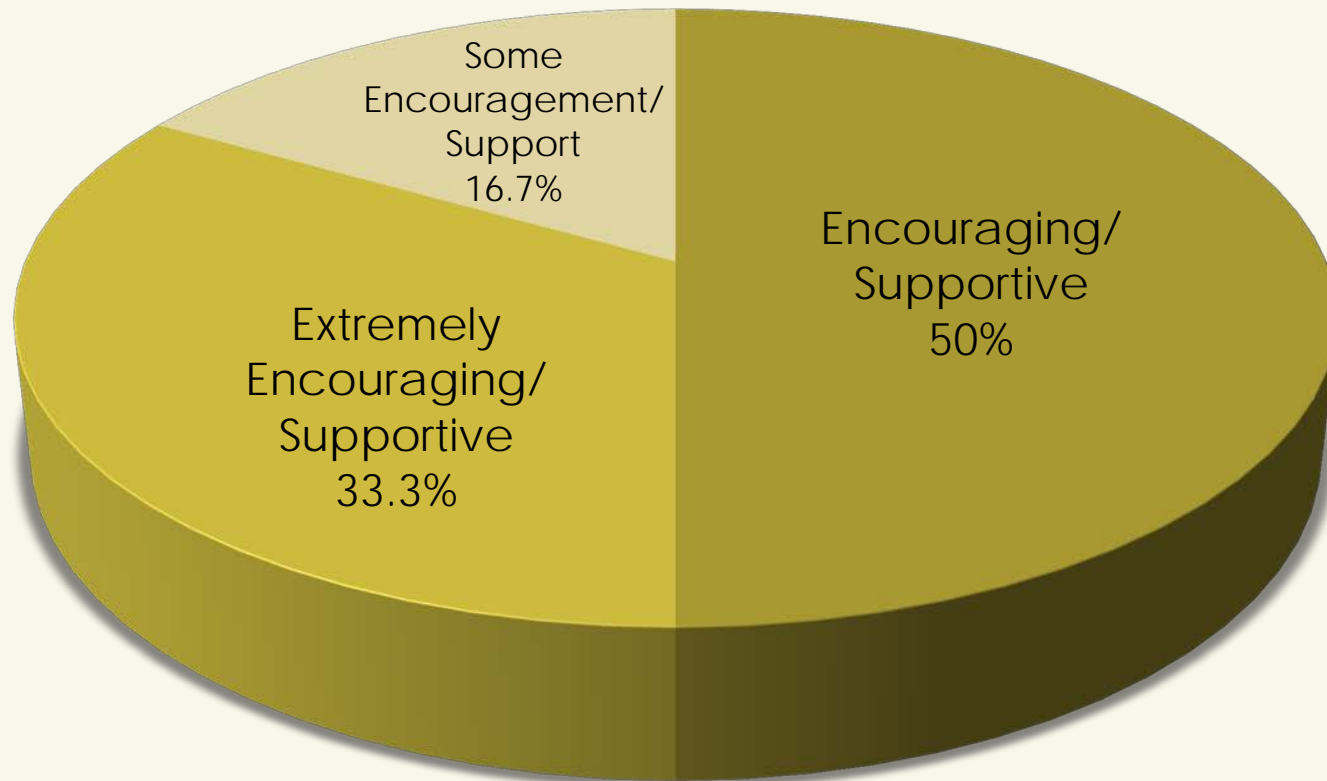
Fathers' Education



Father Talked About College



Provided Encouragement/Support



Influence of Fathers



"My dad influenced me a lot. He always said if you want to be someone in this world you need to go to college."

"My father is a lifelong learner. He loves school and has the desire to always learn new things. Higher education is extremely important to him and he has made it a point to stress that in his children's lives. He has had a huge impact on the way I live my life and my educational choices."

"He wanted me to have all the things he didn't have; however, financially he could not help me."

"He always worked typical immigrant jobs to put himself through school and to give us a better life. He always encouraged us to take advantage of our opportunities and go to school."

Influence of Fathers (2)



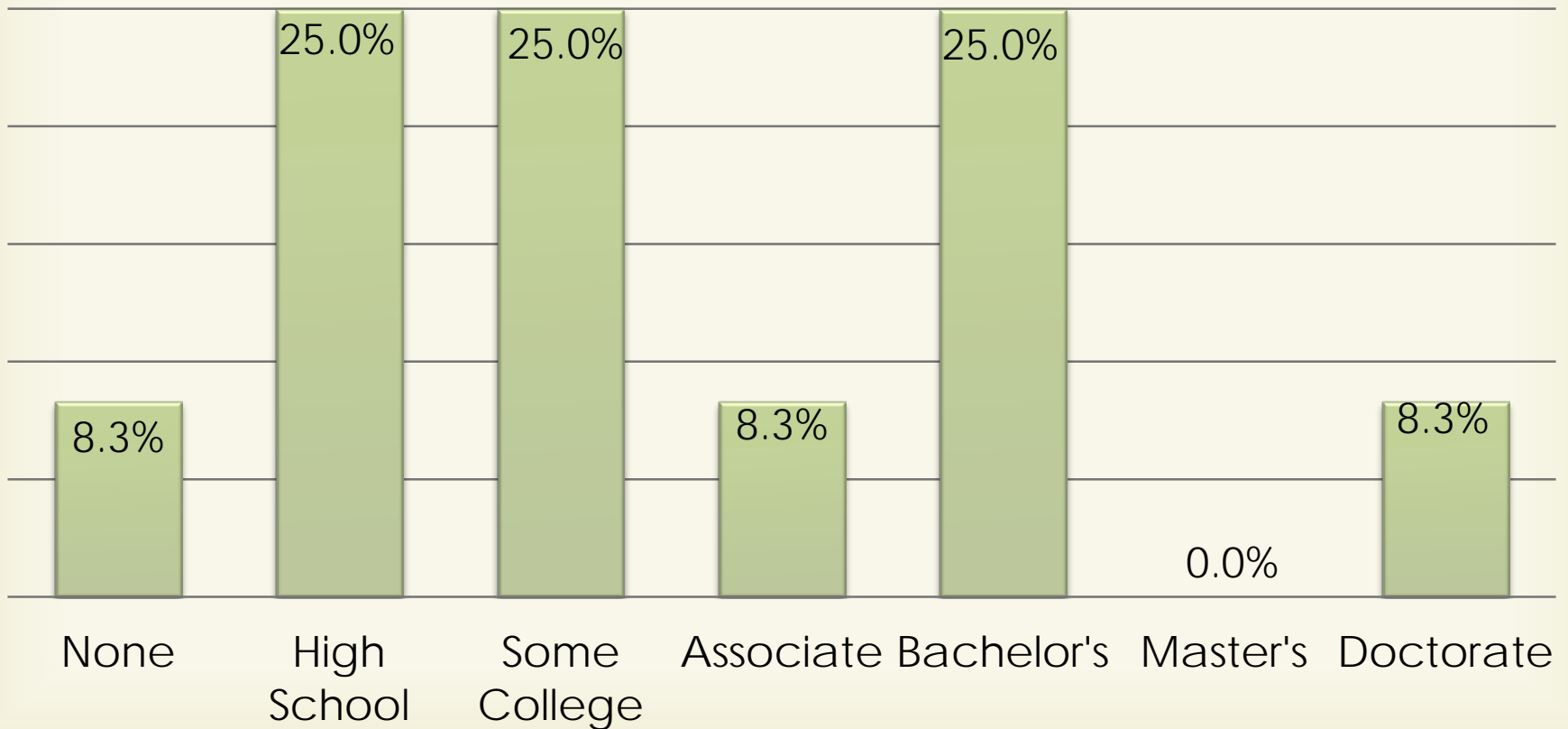
"My father has influenced my love for learning although he does not think you need to have a degree to have a good job."

"My father wants me to pursue a masters degree and get as much academic preparation as I can, especially while I'm young and have no family to support. He helped me develop a love for learning."

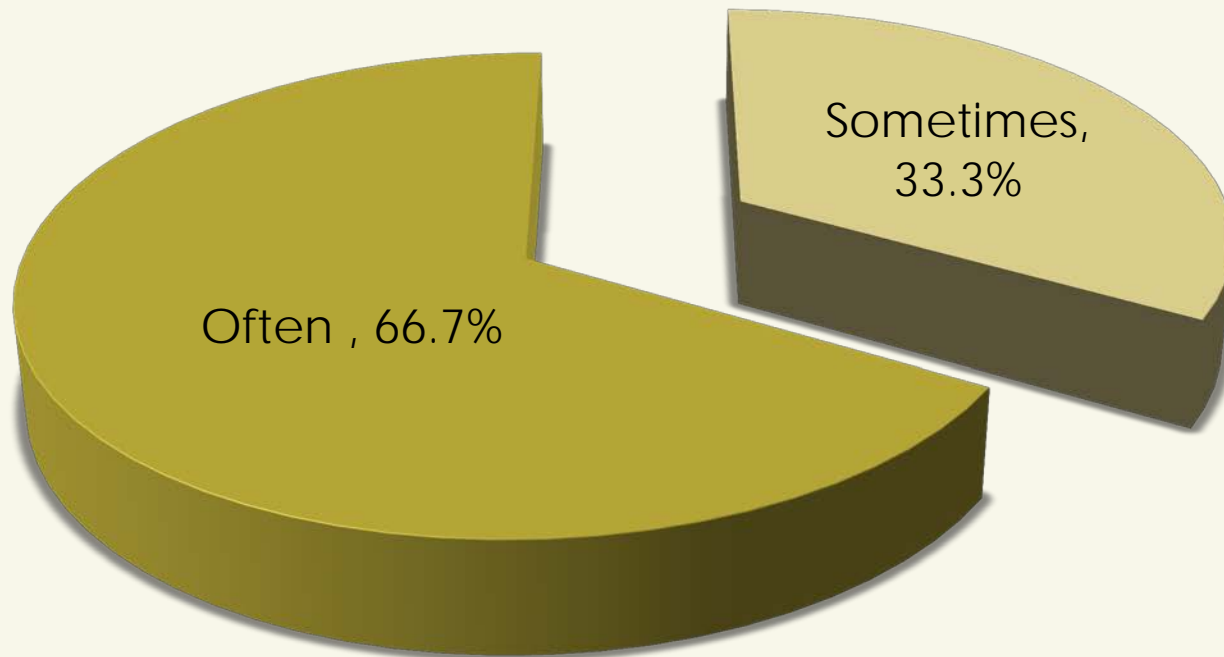
"My father helped me a lot with school projects and reports and made them for me to complete."

"My dad was definitely supportive of college and learning in general. He believes in the importance of education. He encouraged us to read and study different subjects."

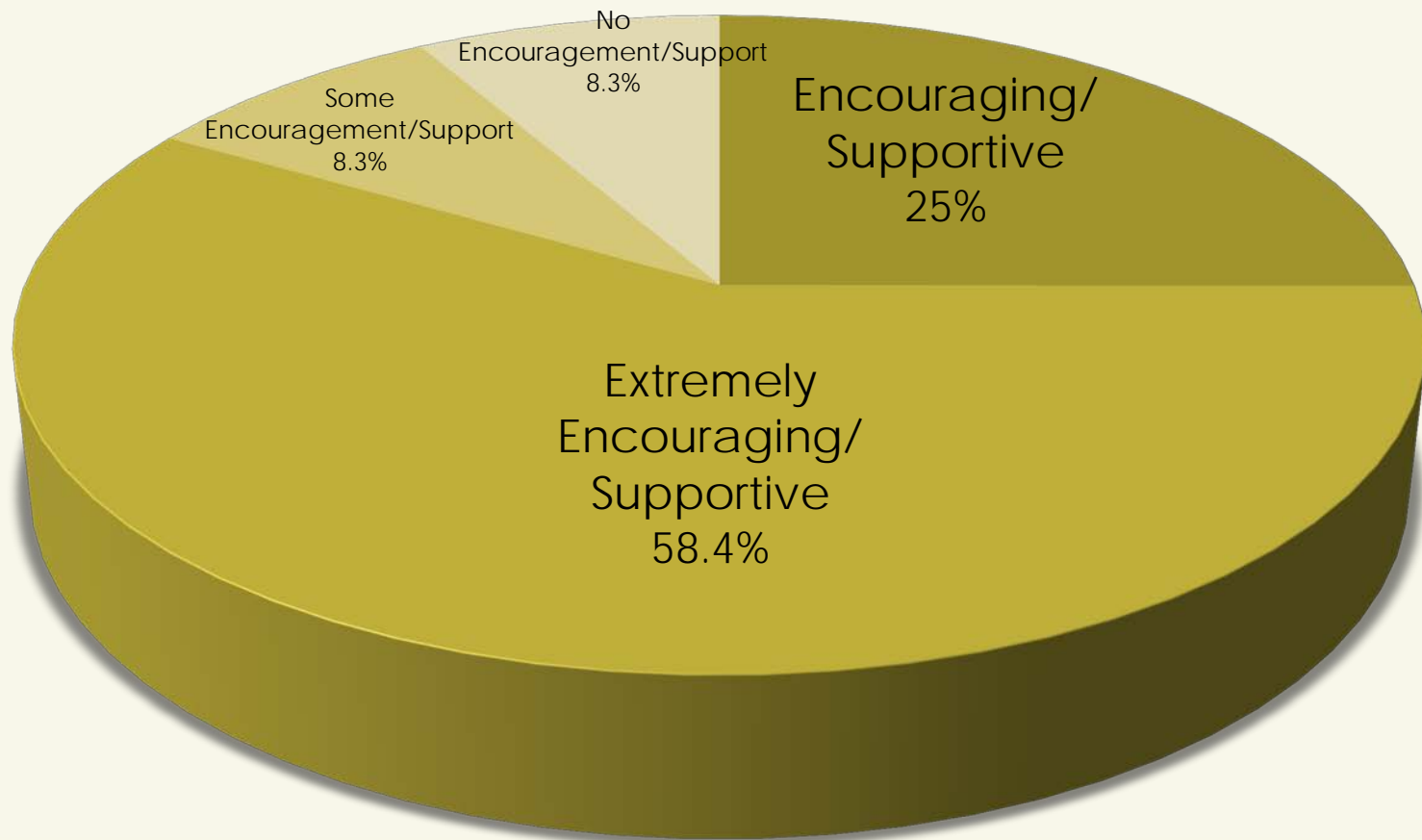
Mothers' Education



Mother Talked About College



Provided Encouragement/Support



Influence of Mothers



"She helped me enjoy school by providing lessons at home during the summer that were fun. She would read to us before bed time and was buying educational tools to help us advance."

"My mom influenced me a lot to go to college and most importantly to finish. My mom thinks college is really important because you gain a profession."

"She thinks college is great and is now finally trying to get her own degree. She wants me to be happy and do what I want. She taught me a lot of things, not necessarily academic, but a lot of other things that encouraged me to love learning-like reading. She read to us a lot and would take us to the library."

Influence of Mothers(2)

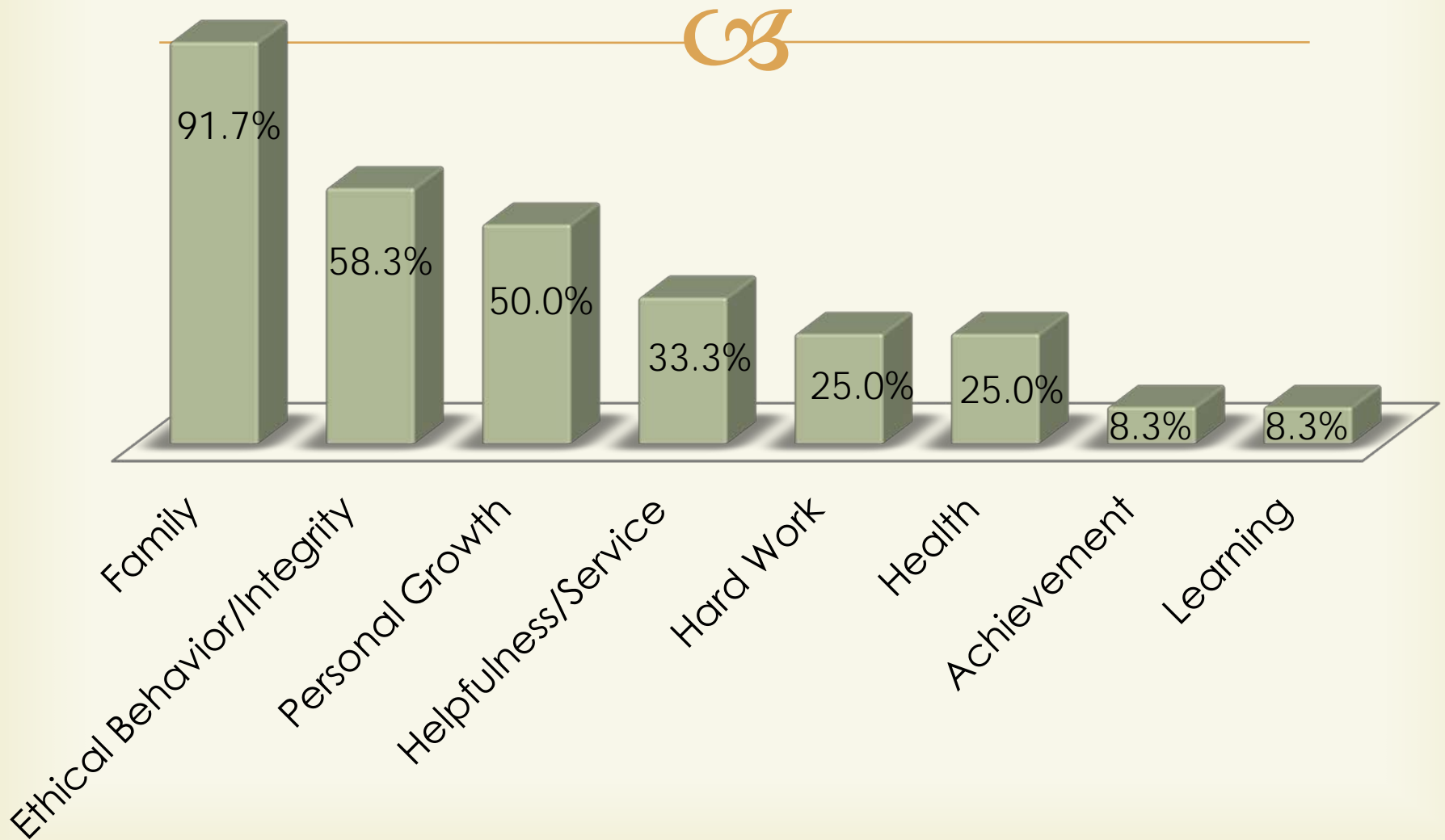


"She values education and wants her children to complete higher education even though she didn't have the opportunity to complete it herself."

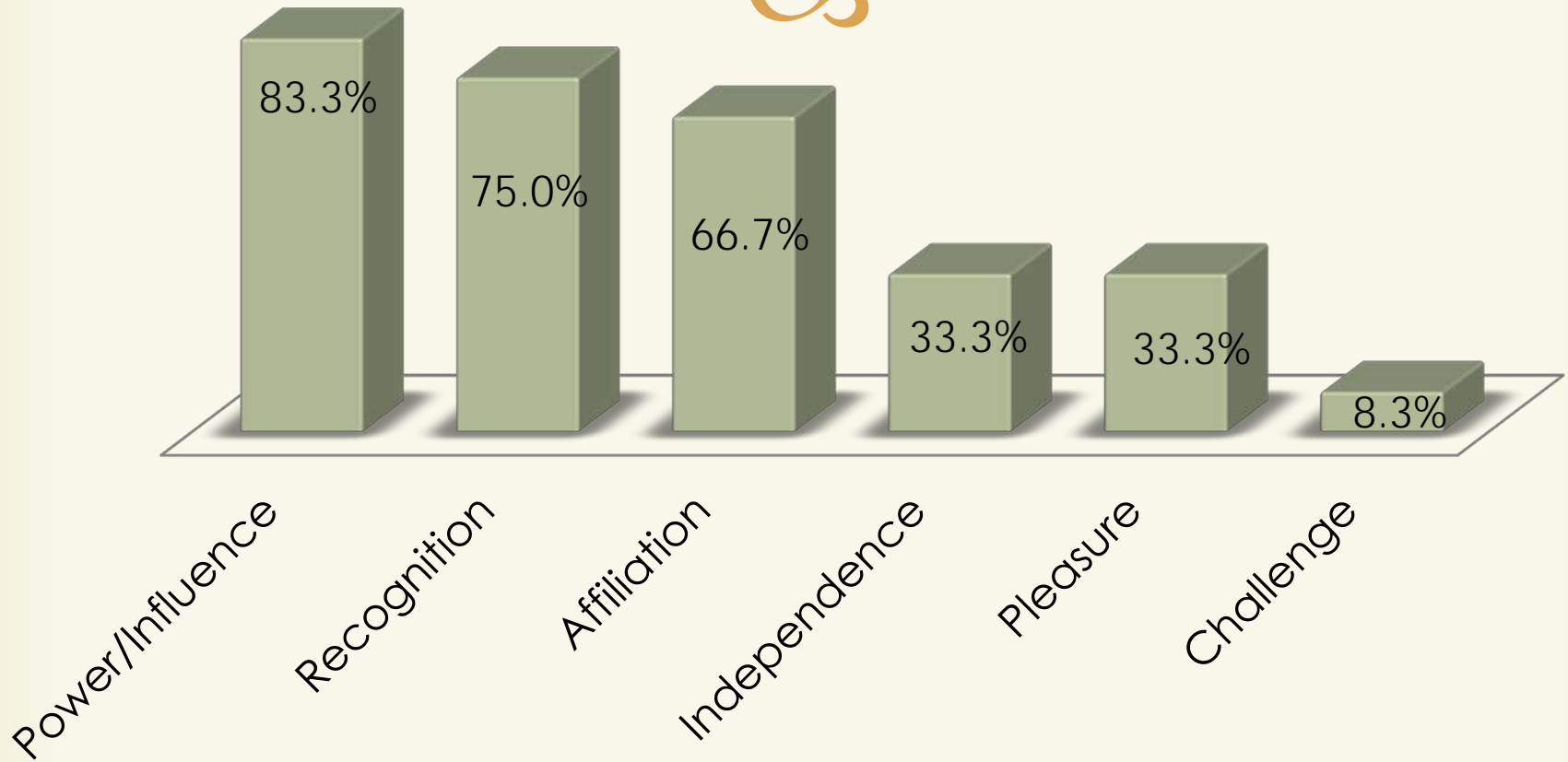
"My mother didn't want me to go to college. She knew that it was very expensive and that they would not be able to afford it...She would get very upset when I would mention that I wanted to go to college, even when I would tell her that I would pay my own way to it and also try to help them out with the needs of the house."

"She always helped me financially and morally to continue until graduating. She helped me develop a love for school by reminding me of the quality of life I could have if I was prepared. "

Most Important Values



Least Important Values



High School Activities



66.7%	Religious Youth Organization/Group
58.3%	Music (orchestra, band, or choir)
58.3%	Volunteer Service
50.0%	High School Athletics/Sports
50.0%	School Clubs or Associations
33.3%	Club or Community Sports
16.7%	Drill/Cheer
16.7%	Professional Organizations/Associations
8.3%	Honor Society
8.3%	Political Group
8.3%	Student Government
8.3%	Student Newspaper
8.3%	Theater/Drama Group

How did your relationships in high school and/or college with people from different races, ethnicities, or cultures influence your educational choices?

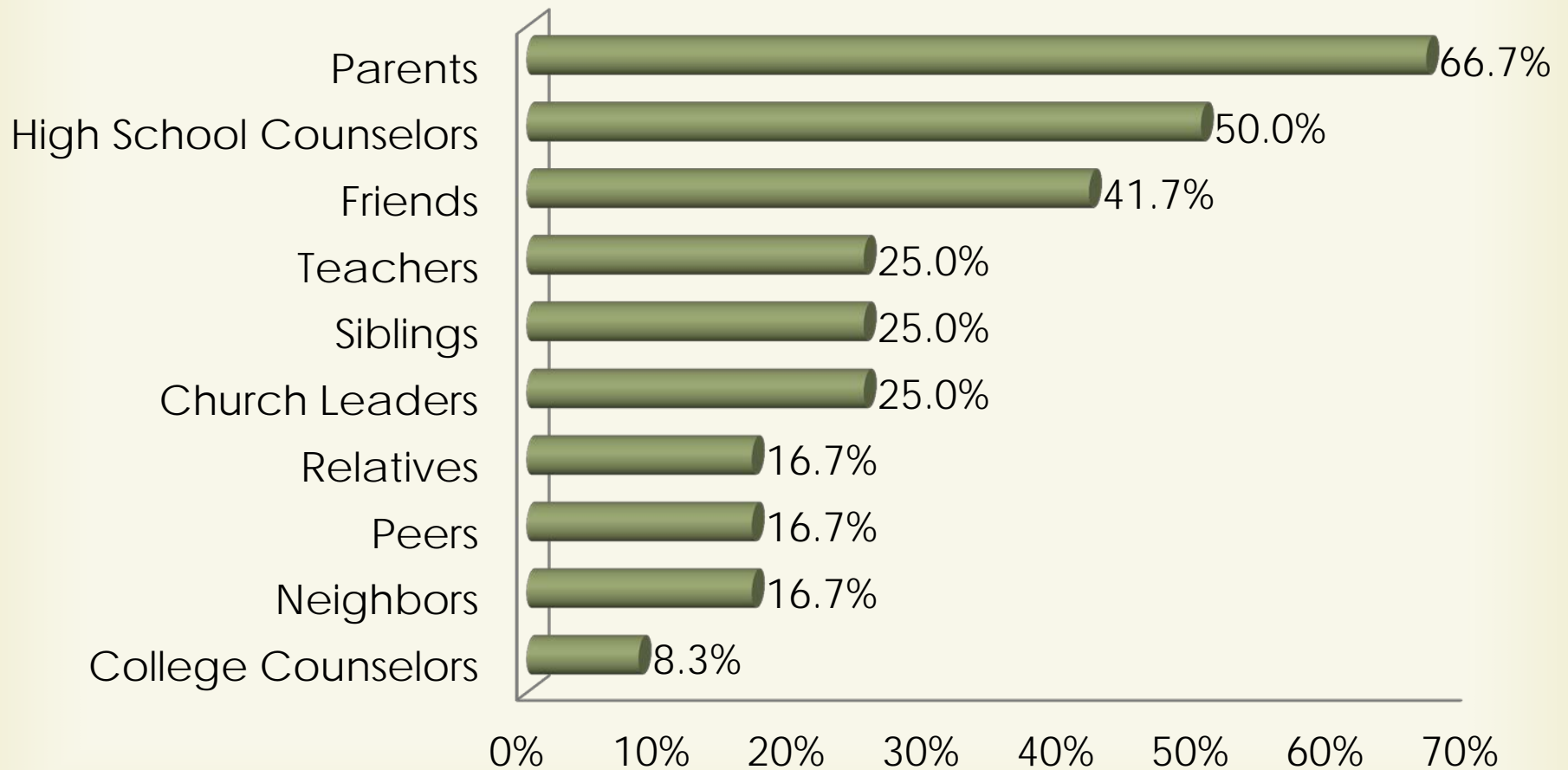


"Because my mother is from the Latin culture I wanted to choose a career where I could make life better for the Latino people. I knew I needed a college education to do this."

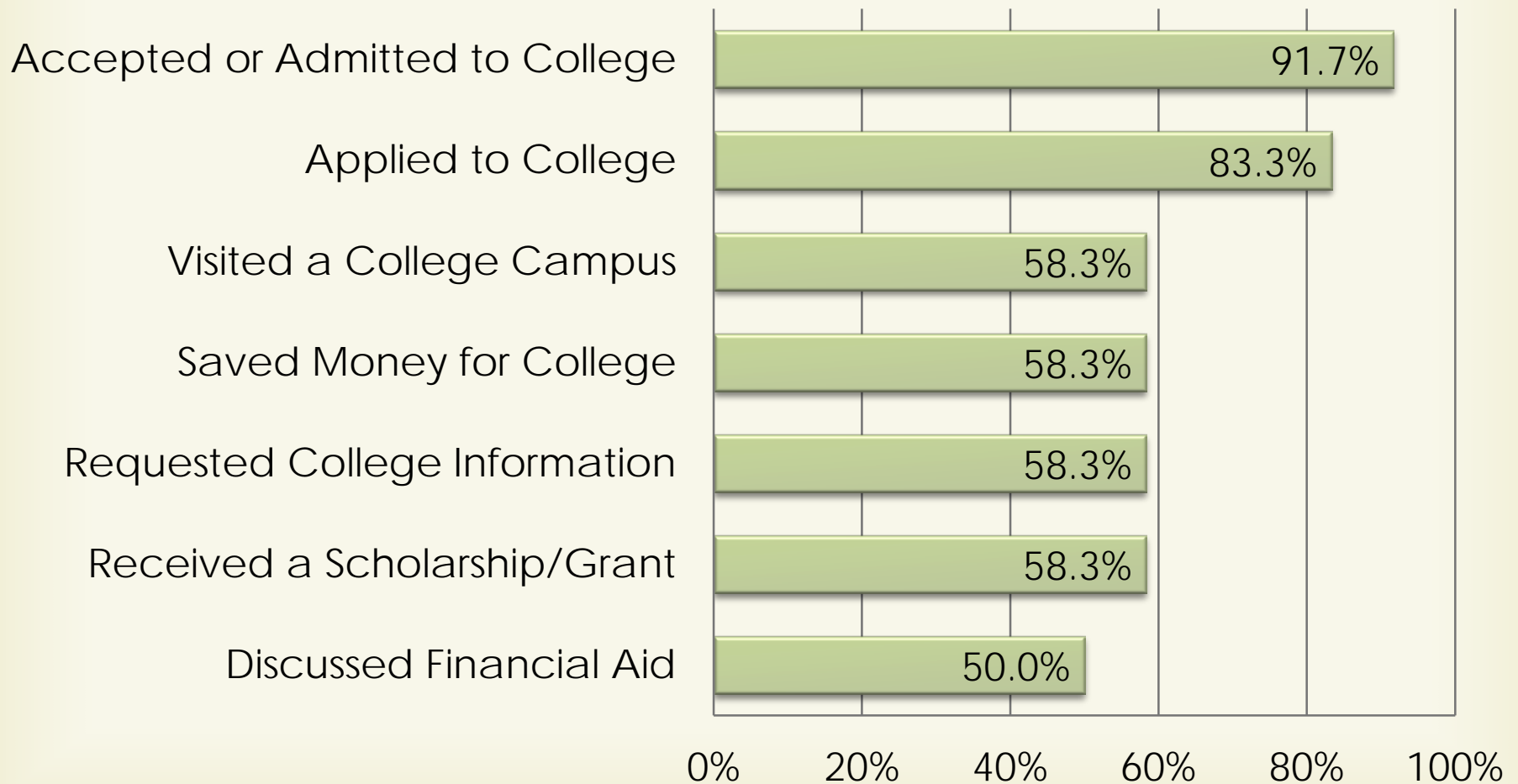
"I knew there was more to life than working to pay your credit cards. I wanted to serve and make a difference."

"In high school I was embarrassed to speak Spanish because I went to school with a lot of white kids who thought it wasn't cool to speak another language or to be Hispanic. In college it was completely different. Most of my friends were of many different ethnicities and cultures and I realized I was proud of my ethnicity and that I could speak another language. I wanted to help Hispanic kids in high school learn that they have so many opportunities out there and that they need to go to college and learn."

Questions About College



College Activities Done Before Graduating From High School



Influences for Graduating from College



83.3%	To develop skills
75%	To be a better parent
75%	To get a better job
58.3%	Spouse wanted me to go
58.3%	To make more money
50%	Parents wanted me to go
50%	To become a more cultured person
50%	To gain a general education
25%	Role model/mentor encouraged me
25%	To improve study skills
8.3%	To be with my friends

Final Thoughts



"Getting an education is the most important thing we can do because that is the only thing that can make everyone equal. It breaks the barriers of language, race, and culture, and puts everyone on the same level. If we expect our opinions and our voice to be heard we need to prepare ourselves in order for people to listen. With a degree backing you up it is more likely for people to listen to what you have to say. It also provides an environment that is conducive to discussion which allows people to learn to respect the views of others and to be more tolerant in their opinions. An education gives you the information necessary to be successful in your chosen field but it also provides you with the social skills necessary to compliment the information you have.

"A quality education has the power to transform societies in a single generation. [It] provides people with the protection they need from the hazards of poverty and disease by giving them the knowledge, skills, and confidence to reach their full potential."

Utah Women and Education Project



For more findings on Latina graduates
in Utah please contact:

Nicolle M Johnson
Utah Valley University
njohnson@uvu.edu