

# Virus situation and students' needs

Students' situation, wishes and needs in times of virus

April 2020 - short version



**tn**analyse

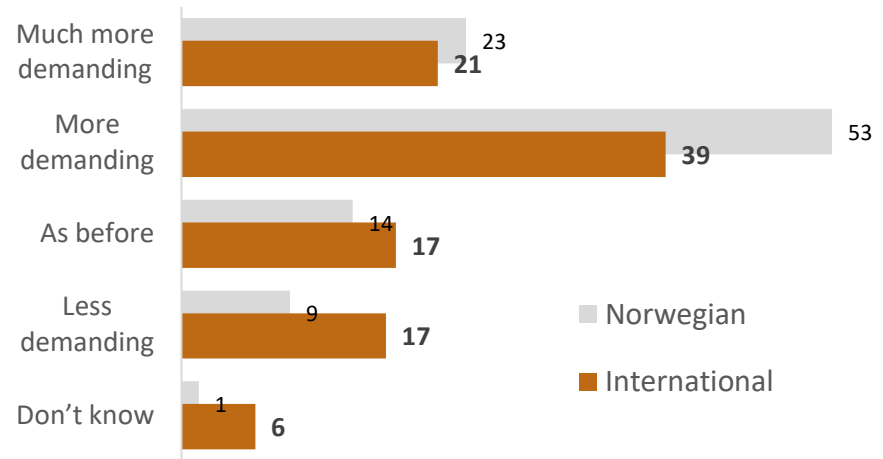
- *The study maps the students' situation, wishes and needs for a period from a couple of weeks after the virus situation started (the government's first action on March 12th).*
- *There were 631 interviews (over the internet) with international students (response rate of 47 %) and 2701 interviews with Norwegian students (response rate of 24 %), March 30th to April 6th. This short version focuses on the international students, with some overall comparisons against Norwegian students.*
- *Details can be found in the main report (in Norwegian), or by contacting Sit.*

# A more demanding time

The students naturally perceive the situation as more demanding than before. There are six main areas that international students experience among the biggest problems:

- 1) challenges in the study situation and concern for study progression
- 2) social conditions
- 3) sense of unpredictability and general concern about the situation
- 4) cancellation of travel plans
- 5) limitations in physical activity/exercise routines
- 6) personal financial problems

How do you experience the life as a student under the virus situation compared to the time before? %



Note that this question does not tell everything about how concerned they are, but about change. Although Norwegian students, to a greater extent than international, say that the situation is more demanding in general, international students report more stress symptoms in various specific areas. International students to a greater extent than Norwegians feel problems due to canceled plans, financial conditions and a general discomfort about the situation.

9 out of 10 international students still live in the study accommodation, although several wish they could go home. 4 out of 10 Norwegian students have moved home to the family and report fewer stress symptoms than those still living in the study accommodation.

Temporarily laid off students from Africa and Asia report to a greater extent that the situation is much more demanding, whereas European students in general do so to a relatively small extent. There is an underlying difference between Europeans and others, where the former to a much larger extent is in Norway for short-term stays.

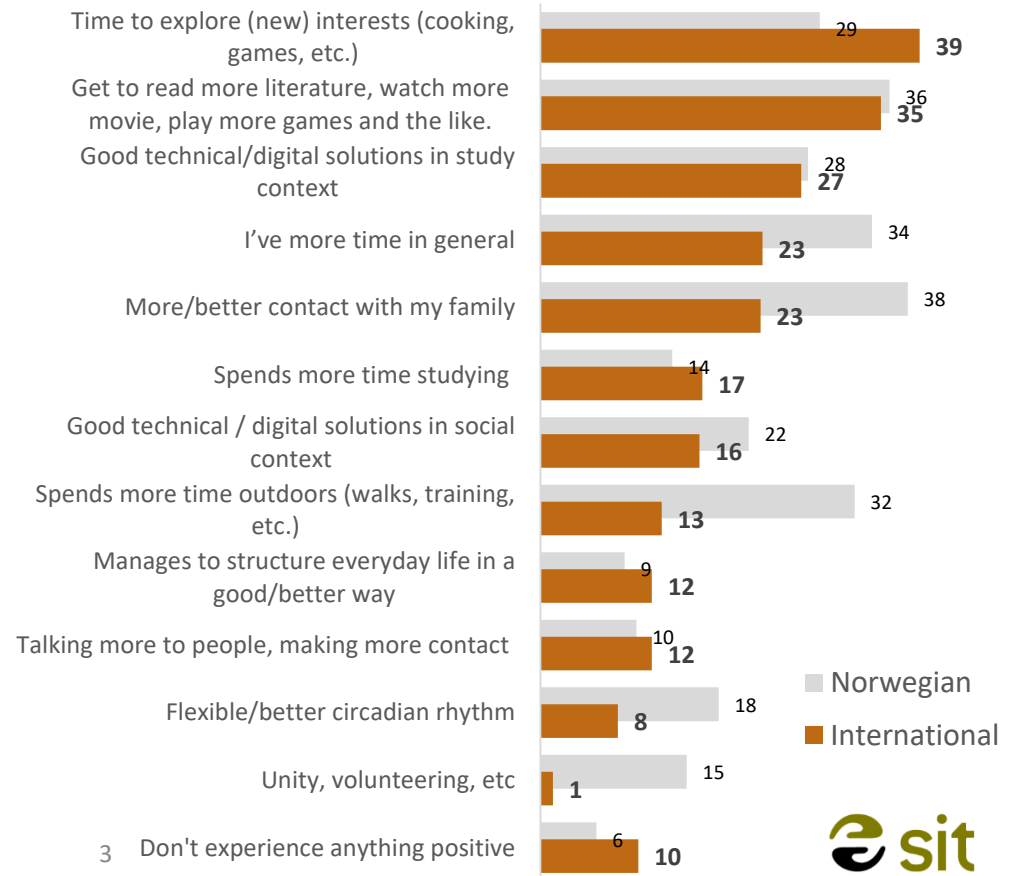
# Most students also experience conditions that have been positive during the period

The international students mention a wide range of positive things, such as having more time to explore other meaningful activities, positive experiences with digital solutions in study context and better contact with the family.

A majority say that the ability to reflect and "gather the threads" is unchanged or better than before.

However, the students report to a relatively large extent that the "feeling of stress" in everyday life has worsened.

Are there any conditions that you experience have been positive during this period, for example good ways you have found to handle the new everyday life? %



## Despite a more demanding situation, there are no signs of increased symptoms of anxiety and depression among Norwegian students, but it is among international students

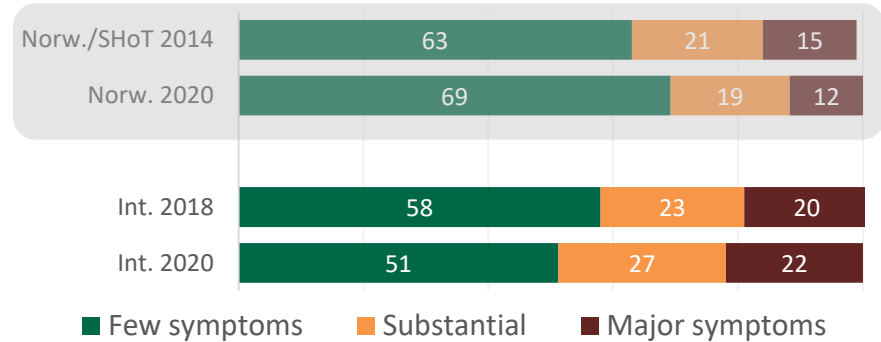
HSCL-5 is used to measure psychological symptoms of depression and anxiety and is recommended for screening purposes. The extent of psychological symptom-problems is higher among international students than Norwegians, and they appear to have increased since an NTNU survey conducted in 2018.

International students also to a lesser extent describe their health as excellent in 2020, and a larger proportion say that it is not good. This proportion is now more similar to that of Norwegian students.

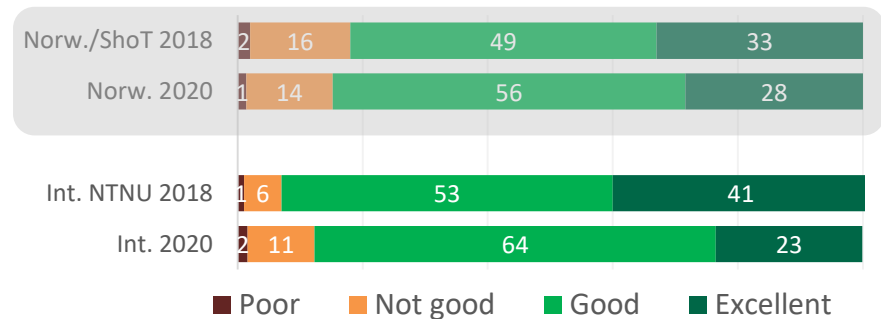
Thus the development is opposite for Norwegian and international students, and this may be an indication that the virus situation to a greater extent affects symptoms of depression and anxiety among international students.

The percentage with major symptoms is lowest among European students (15%), and 25-30% among international students from other regions, and among temporarily laid-offs.

Psychological symptoms of anxiety and depression (HSCL-5) %



How would you rate your general health today? %



# The students live social lives, but still miss the direct social dimension and routines of their lives

International students largely express that they miss meeting friends, social gatherings and after-school activities. In addition, exercise routines and other routines that provide structure in everyday life are missed. Of course, many miss the physical lectures.

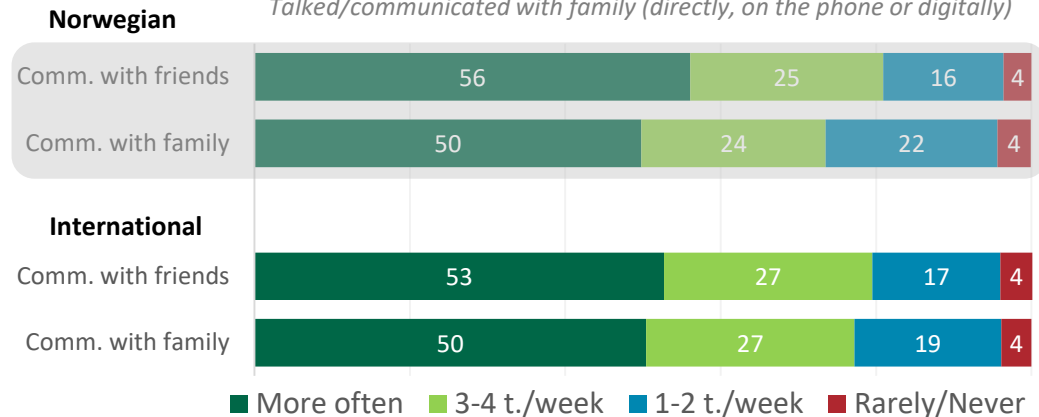
At the same time, many of the same things give them energy during this time (physical activity, contact with friends and family). Family contact is especially important for students from Africa and Asia, while physical activity and contact with friends is most important for Europeans and Americans.

The students have been in frequent contact with both friends (less often by students from Africa and Asia) and family during the virus period so far. It is only in exceptional cases that students are virtually isolated.

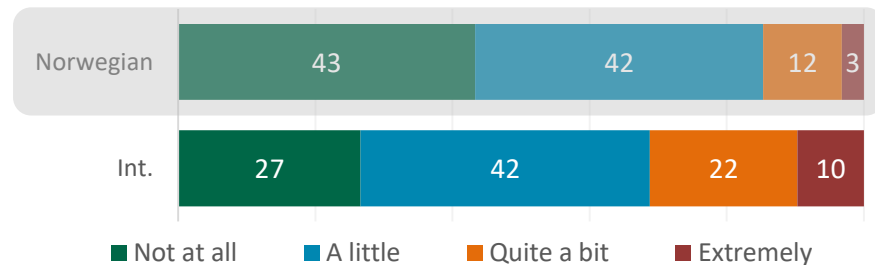
However, both Norwegian and international students largely say that contact with friends has deteriorated, while contact with family has improved.

3 % of Norwegian students say that they are very much bothered by loneliness, while this applies to 3 times as many (10 %) among the international students (21 % among Africans and 6 % among Europeans). There is a clear link between strong feelings of loneliness and major psychological symptoms of anxiety and depression.

How often have you done the following in the last 2 weeks?%  
 Talked/communicated with friends (directly, on the phone or digitally)  
 Talked/communicated with family (directly, on the phone or digitally)



To what extent have you been bothered or distressed by a feeling of loneliness over the past two weeks? %



## **(Digital) services they want Sit to offer in the virus situation - grouped**

*The services the students demand can to a large extent be grouped into 6 main categories.*

*Sit can play a more important role for students in terms of food and nutrition. Advice on cooking, as well as ordering and delivery of food can be an offer that also has interest when the situation is normalized. This have interest across subgroups. Interest is greatest for cooking advice, especially among Europeans and Americans .*

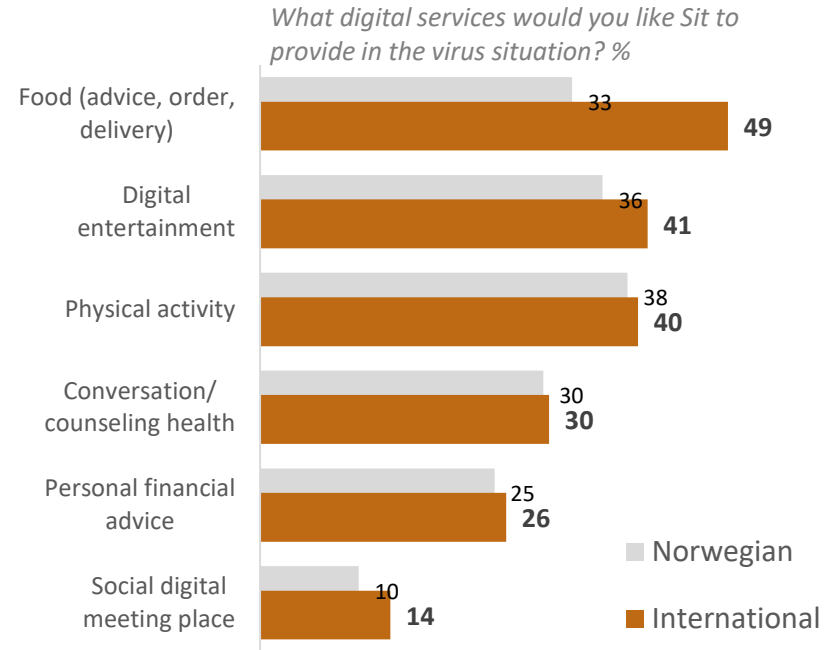
*Digital entertainment is suggestions for movies, series etc., as well as digital gatherings with movies, concerts, gaming, quiz and the like.*

*4 out of 10 want offers related to physical activity. Norwegian students have the greatest focus on digital group lessons/training guidance (students from Africa is not interested in this), while international students to a greater extent focus on organization of outdoor activities (trips etc.) in small groups.*

*3 out of 10 students request counseling/consultation services (counselor, health nurse, therapy calls, emergency phone with advice on life management).*

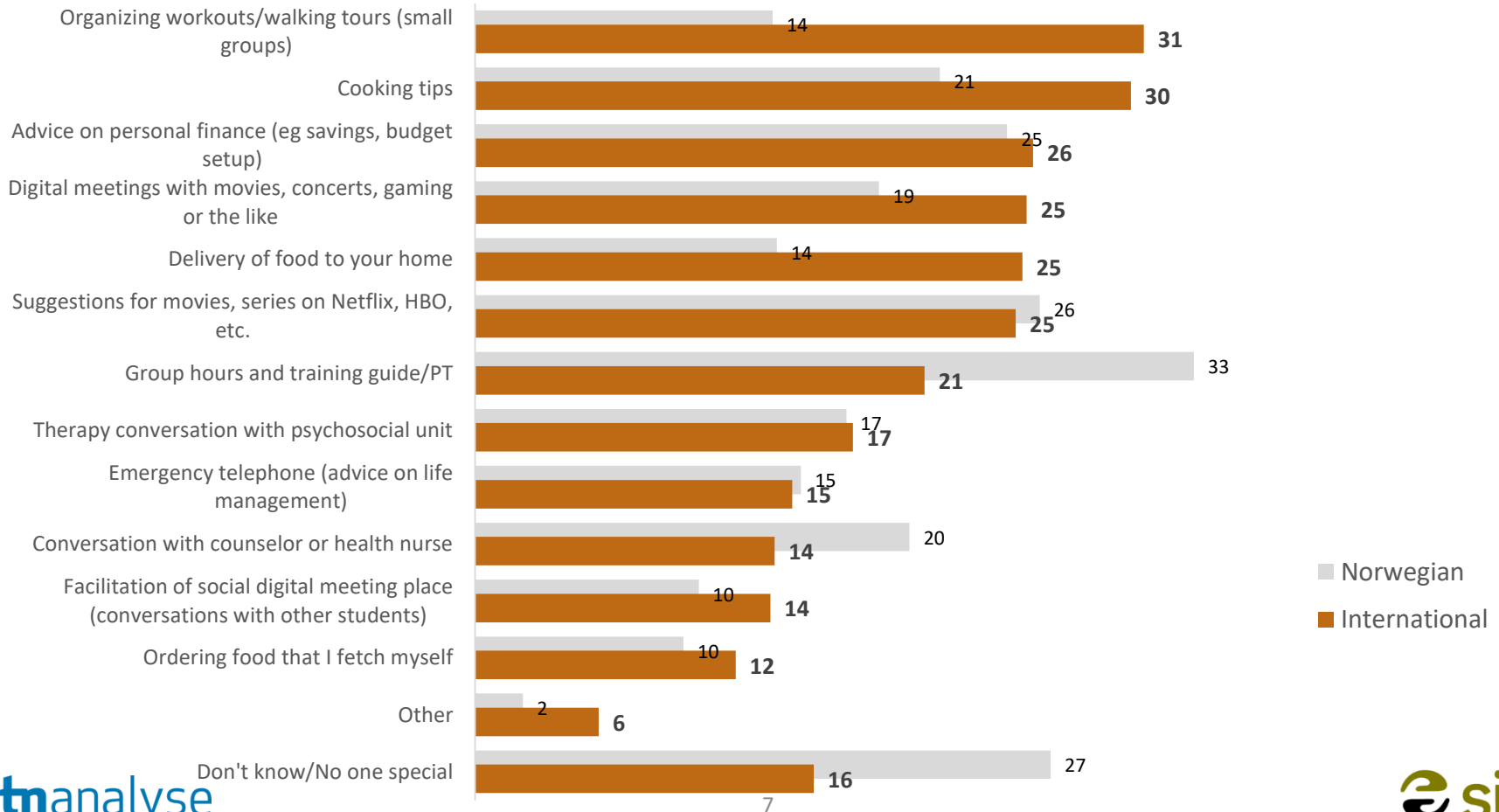
*¼ wish Sit had an offer of personal financial advice.*

*1 in 10 among Norwegian and 14 % among international students (29 % among Africans) wish that Sit could facilitate social digital meeting places/ conversations with other students. This must be seen in light of that there are already a number of good solutions in the market.*



# What services they want Sit to offer - original

What digital services would you like Sit to provide in the virus situation? %



# Home studies are demanding for many students

83 % of Norwegian students say they want to continue with the planned study progression, while 10 percent points fewer among international students will.

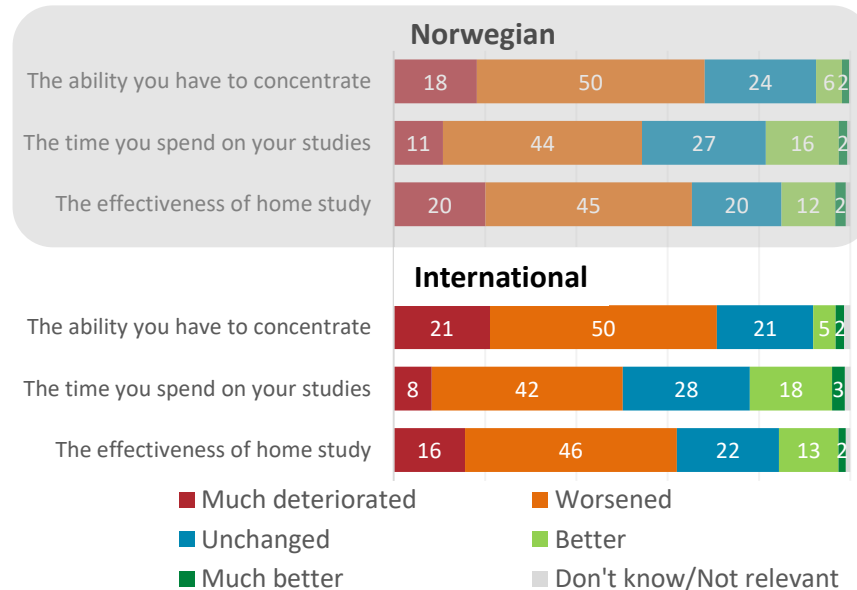
Both Norwegian and international students say to a great extent that it is worse than before to concentrate, spend enough time on the studies and that the efficiency decreases, even though proportions of up to about 1/5 say that the situation has improved in the area.

The average time spent on studies last week is relatively low at 21-22 hours among international and Norwegian students respectively. The average varies little between most subgroups among international students but is substantially lower at Dragvoll (15 hours) than at Gløshaugen and Tyholt (23 and 25 hours respectively).

The most important reasons for home studies being perceived as demanding are the lack of structure, concentration and motivation. Many say it is difficult to get started. 3 out of 10 say it is more difficult to get professional help with subjects when needed (57 % among African students). The same proportion - 3 out of 10 - struggle with the daily rhythm/sleep.

When international students are asked for good advice, many mention that you must treat yourself to something good (good food, etc.), in combination with conditions related to structure (getting up in time, being disciplined, making realistic schedules, putting away temptations such as the mobile), as well as the importance of physical activity and fresh air (especially among Europeans and Americans).

This unusual situation can affect various conditions in life both positively and negatively. How do you feel that the virus situation has affected your situation in the following areas so far? %





## The private economy is a stress factor

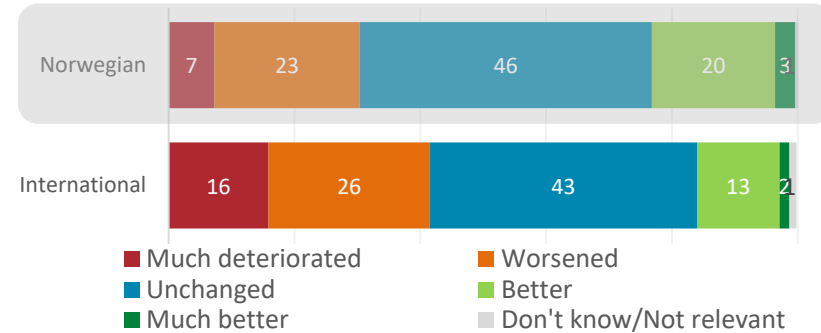
The international students experience a greater deterioration in the financial situation than Norwegians. 86 % of international students that are temporarily laid off say that the financial situation has worsened. There is a big difference between international students in their first semester (29% worsened) and those who have been here longer (about 45% worsened). Behind this is a distinction between the main categories that are here for short and long term stays respectively.

½ of the Norwegian students and 1/3 of the international students have jobs next to the studies. 21-22 percent points of these respectively are temporarily laid off.

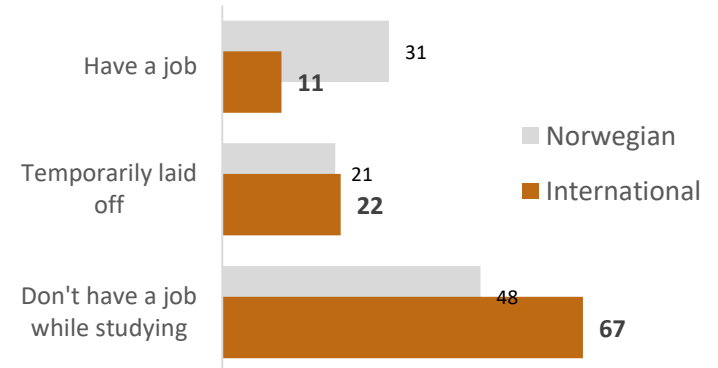
Among international students there is a high proportion of temporarily layoffs in Ålesund (51 %), and among African (45 %) and Asian students (36 %).

5 % of the Norwegian students and 15 % of the international students experience their personal finances as critical. This percentage is 29 % and 37 % among Asians and Africans respectively. There is a strong connection between temporarily layoffs and this.

This unusual situation can affect various conditions in life both positively and negatively. How do you feel that the virus situation has affected your situation in the following areas so far? %  
Your financial situation



Do you have a job/part-time job while studying? %



## «Stress index»

The stress index gives a general picture of how students feel in the virus situation, and how this has affected them negatively.

The indicators and stress points have been selected for discretion. In total, it is possible to get 18 stress points.

The basis for the index is 92 % of international students who gave consent to be asked about health issues.

The average is 3.7 for Norwegian and 4.4 for international students.

<i>"Stress points"</i>		
Experiencing life as a student	Much more demanding	2
	More demanding	1
Do not feel that any conditions have been positive during the period		1
Private economic situation	Much deteriorated	2
	Worsened	1
Contact with friends and family	Average up to 1.5 (Much deteriorated/deteriorated)	2
	Average 1.6-2.0 (Worsened)	1
Physical activity and exercise	Much deteriorated	2
	Worsened	1
Concentration, time spent on study and effectiveness in home study	Average up to 1.5 (Much deteriorated/deteriorated)	2
	Average 1.6-2.0 (Worsened)	1
Experience personal economy as	Kritisk	1
Describes own health situation as	Poor	2
	Not good	1
Psychological symptom-problems	Major	2
	Substantial	1
Loneliness	Extremely	2
	Quite a bit	1

# "Stress index" in subgroups – international students

Mean	Total	Trondheim	Gjøvik	Ålesund	Dragvoll	Gløshaugen	Valgrinda	Tyholt	Øya	Other	Female	Male	-21 years	22-23 years	24-25 years	26 years +	Married/cohabitant	Boy-/girlfriend, live alone	Single	1. sem.	2-3 sem.	4 sem. +	Have a job	Temp. laid off	Not working while studying	Europe	America/Oceania	Asia	Africa
	4,4	4,3	4,5	5,1	4,7	4,0	5,6	4,3	5,4	4,3	4,3	4,5	3,6	3,9	4,1	5,3	5,2	4,2	4,3	3,6	4,9	4,2	4,3	5,8	4,0	3,6	4,9	5,4	5,6

*The situation is most challenging among temporarily laid off students, students at Valgrinda/Lerkendal and students from Africa and Asia. These conditions are not independent of each other. Students from Africa and Asia are overrepresented among international students at Valgrinda/Lerkendal, and among international students who are laid off.*

## After the Korona crisis

- *The ongoing crisis causes changes in attitudes and behavior. People are naturally more concerned about - and have a greater focus on the private economy and their own health. We have changed our behavior and are increasingly using technological solutions to communicate and get things done. Some of these changes will only affect us temporarily, while others will persist or be strengthened.*
- *Two existing mega trends that can be strengthened by the crisis are*
  - **Digitalisation** *is likely to occur with increasing strength, as more and more digital solutions are being developed in new areas and more digital skills are being acquired. Digital teaching was quickly adopted. In the long term, what does this mean for the time students spend at campus? What lasting changes will result from the digitalization of group hours and training advice in the fitness centers? What are the consequences and opportunities for increased e-commerce in Sit's various business areas? Can Sit provide digital consulting services to a greater extent?*
  - **Health, diet and nutrition.** *Focus on physical and mental health, nutrition and food security is likely to increase. What are the challenges and opportunities for Sit?*
- *Fundamental new changes can be conceived, for example:*
  - **Hygiene.** *This will constitute a larger part of the concept of health than before, and the standards for and expectations of hygiene will probably change permanently. This is something that businesses in all areas need to adapt to. What does this mean for Sit's buffet concepts? Will there be an increased potential for take-away (or the opposite), possibly with a delivery option?*
  - **Corporate social responsibility and sustainability.** *Consumers will increasingly demand that companies take corporate social responsibility. Business ethics are becoming more important, and businesses must document that they are contributing positively to society to a greater extent. Sit has a good starting point in this area.*