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## Introduction

Although undergraduate nursing students continue to engage in paid employment while studying<sup>1</sup>, the duration of time spent working during term-time may have a negative effect on academic performance<sup>2</sup>.

### Aim

This study aims to examine working while studying and its relationship to academic performance across diverse student groups, and across various higher education institutions in Australia and New Zealand.

The first stage of the study involved the collection of survey data at Orientation sessions for commencing nursing students in 2017 across four participating tertiary institutes.

This preliminary quantitative data provides a unique snapshot of the similarities and differences among students at each institute.

## Methods

### Sample and data collection

In 2017, commencing nursing students from four tertiary institutes (3 Australian and 1 New Zealand) were invited to complete a brief survey during Orientation sessions which collected socio-demographic data (including age, gender, language spoken at home, educational background, first in family, nursing as first choice and care-giving responsibilities) (Table 1 & Figure 1). In particular, the survey collected the type and anticipated number of hours students engaged in paid work during the semester (Figure 2).

### Data Analysis and Ethics Approval

Data were analysed using SPSS version 24. Descriptive statistics and Chi-square were used to describe and compare for differences between groups. Statistical significance was set at  $p < 0.05$ . Ethical approval was sought and received from each tertiary institutes' Human Research Ethics Committee before recruitment.

## Results

Across the four tertiary institutes 1314 students completed the brief survey.

Age	Mean: 25.98 years (SD: 8.48, range: 16-62)
Gender	1122 (87%) were females; 165 (13%) males
Birth country	655 (50%) overseas born; 641 (38%) Aust. or NZ (local) born
Enrolment classification	1115 (87%) domestic; 167 (13%) international
Language usage	429 (33%) English only; 885 (67%) other than English
First-in-family	513 (40%) Yes; 767 (60%) No
Nursing is first choice	1168 (91%) Yes; 123 (9%) No
Paid work engagement	858 (67%) Yes; 425 (33%) No
Type of paid work*	354 (43%) nursing-related; 465 (57%) non-nursing-related
Hours in paid work*	20.60 (SD: 9.48, range: 2 to 66, paid work during term-time)
* Paid work respondents only	

Table 1. Sample Characteristics (n = 1314)



## Results

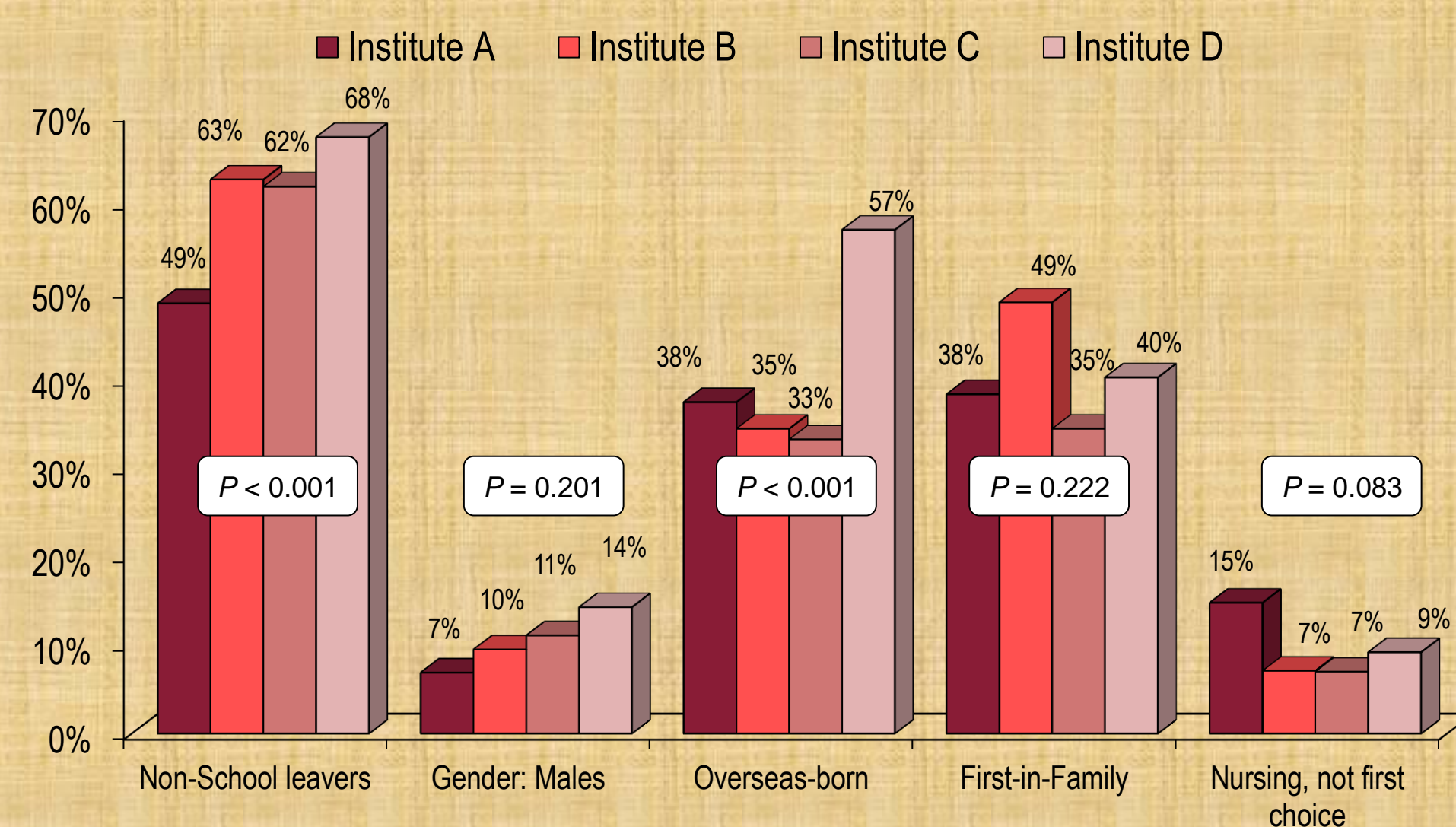


Figure 1: Socio-demographic group comparisons across 4 institutes

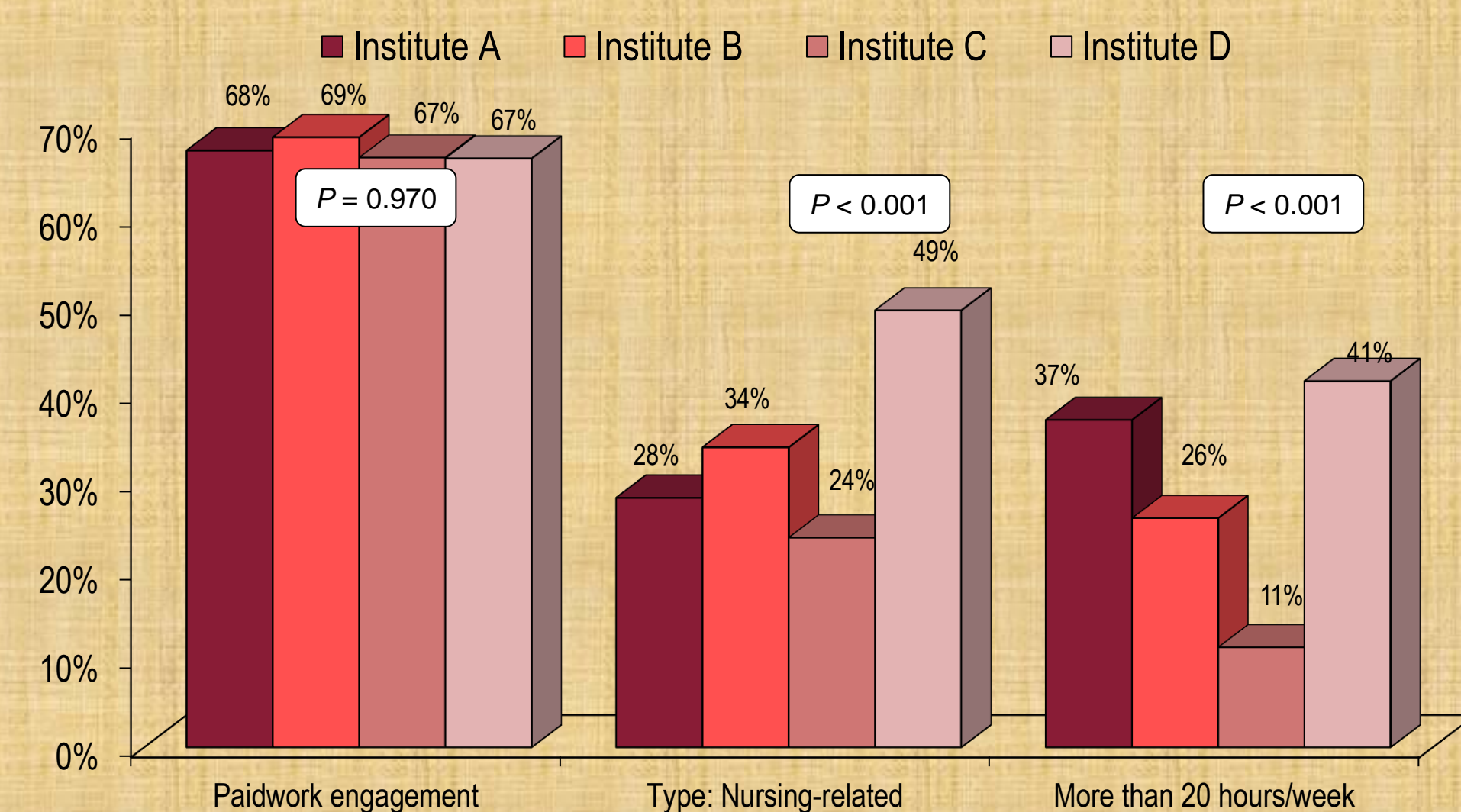


Figure 2: Type and hours engaged in paid work across 4 institutes

## Conclusion

The preliminary quantitative survey results show the socio-demographic differences and working patterns among nursing students across the 4 tertiary Australian and New Zealand institutes. Despite the similarities, there were wide variations in percentages of non-school leavers ( $p < 0.001$ ) and overseas-born students ( $p < 0.001$ ) as shown in Figure 1.

Although the percentages (67% to 69%) of paid work engagement were similar, there were wide variations in the type of paid work engagement, and the amount of time spent in term-time work across institutes. For example, less than one-quarter (24%) of respondents in Institute C but nearly half (49%) in Institute D were in nursing-related work. Similarly, only 11% of respondents in Institute C, but 41% in Institute D spent over 20 hours per week in term-time employment (Figure 2).

While there is diversity, it is apparent that many students need to engage in paid work while studying for various reasons. It is vital these students are supported and are able to find the right balance for academic success.

## References

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