

The Mitacs logo is displayed in white on a blue background. It features the word "Mitacs" in a bold, sans-serif font, with a small white dot above the letter 'i'.

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## Mitacs Globalink Research Internship Outcomes: Intern Survey

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**Mitacs Evaluation**

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# Mitacs Globalink Research Internship Outcomes: Intern Survey

## Contributing Authors

Jackie Hallet, B.A., Junior Evaluation Officer, Mitacs

Véronique Dugas, PhD, Evaluation Officer, Mitacs

Val Walker, PhD, Policy Director, Mitacs

## Contact

Questions or comments on this document or related matters may be directed to [evaluation@mitacs.ca](mailto:evaluation@mitacs.ca).

## Acknowledgements

This evaluation report is the result of voluntary feedback from many of Mitacs' past Globalink interns and applicants. Mitacs is grateful to all of the study participants. The perspective of international students is invaluable to understanding how international research programs like Mitacs Globalink help shape the future of Canada's global economy.

## Executive Summary

### Report Objectives

The goal of this report is to summarize and present findings from a recent longitudinal survey of past Mitacs Globalink Research Internship (GRI) interns and applicants. This survey allows Mitacs to capture intermediate and long-term outcomes and impacts of its GRI program.

Mitacs is proud to share these results as they demonstrate the significant and tangible impact that Globalink is having on the recruitment and retention of top foreign students to Canada from Mitacs partner countries.

### Key Results

#### Recruitment:

- In the absence of the GRI program, only 7% of GRI interns would have still come to Canada for a research internship.
- 95% of GRI interns spoke positively about their experience in Canada and encouraged fellows and friends to come to Canada for an internship, graduate studies and/or employment.
- More than three quarters of GRI interns have successfully convinced at least one fellow student or friend to come to Canada for a research internship.
- 75% of all respondents listed the availability of the Globalink Research Internship support as the top factor influencing their decision to apply to a research internship in Canada.

#### Retention:

- 22% of GRI interns enrolled in a new degree are currently studying in Canada – compared with only 9% of applicants.
- 91% of GRI interns studying in Canada indicated their GRI experience convinced them or reinforced their decision to select Canada as a destination for their studies.
- Over 70% of GRI interns enrolled in a new degree in Canada have applied or will apply for permanent residency.

#### Collaboration, Professional Skills and Career Prospects:

- 65% of GRI interns intend to develop or have already developed collaborations with Canadian researchers as a result of their participation in the internship.
- More than two thirds of GRI interns feel more employable and have improved their professional skills set.
- 71% of all GRI interns strongly feel their experience has had, or will have, a significant impact on their career.

### Conclusion

The Globalink Research Internship program provides a positive experience for the majority of interns, and has a significant impact on the recruitment of top international students to Canada.

GRI is a large part of the reason why past participants return to Canada, and many interns will continue to collaborate on research with their Canadian networks using the skills acquired from the internship.

We expect that as the Globalink Research Internship continues to grow, the impacts it is having on international recruitment, retention and collaboration for Canada will continue to grow as well.

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## Introduction

### Rationale

Canada's overall labour productivity lags significantly behind other western economies. This long-standing challenge has a negative impact on both Canada's ability to grow its economy and to create jobs<sup>1</sup>. To overcome this productivity challenge and bolster Canada's global competitiveness, promoting knowledge transfer through international connections and collaborative partnerships is essential.

The Mitacs Globalink Research Internship program strengthens Canada's capacity for knowledge transfer and international collaboration by building international research partnerships that support innovation. The outcomes described in this report stem from the Globalink Research Internship program goals: to attract, recruit, train and retain the best talent from around the world to Canada's top universities, and to ultimately contribute to a stronger and more vibrant economy.

### Objectives

The goal of this report is to summarize and present findings from a recent longitudinal survey of past Mitacs Globalink Research Internship (GRI) interns and applicants. This survey allows Mitacs to capture intermediate and long-term outcomes and impacts of its GRI program. The results supplement the rich data that is already collected through participant exit surveys, which are limited to immediate program satisfaction, outputs, and short-term participant outcomes.

Mitacs is proud to share these results as they demonstrate the significant and tangible impact that Globalink is having on the recruitment and retention of top foreign students from Mitacs partner countries. These results will also be used internally to inform program improvements and identify new or changing client needs.

### Report Format

Survey results are presented based on the current status of respondents. After presenting respondent demographics, the report highlights that Canada is seen as an attractive destination for international students by presenting key factors that influenced interns' decisions to come to Canada. The report then specifically explores how the GRI program impacts the recruitment and retention of international research talent. Next, we examine the extent to which new international research networks and collaborations were formed as a result of the GRI program. Finally, the impacts of the GRI program on participant professional skills development and career prospects are presented.

## Methodology

### Design

The survey instrument was designed by the Mitacs Evaluation Team and reviewed by representatives from multiple Mitacs departments. It was created, managed and distributed using FluidSurveys, an online tool with which program participants and Mitacs staff are familiar. Upon completion, the survey instrument was programmed online and underwent internal pre-testing.

Along with a list of interns that have completed a GRI internship, a list of eligible program applicants that did not complete a GRI internship was created as a control group for comparative purposes. As this control group met the same criteria for a GRI internship in Canada as their participant counterparts, the data from this group provides a relevant comparison for some of the questions asked in the survey. Throughout the report, alumni of the GRI program who completed the survey will be referred to as "GRI Interns" and our control group will be referred to as "Applicants".

In the applicant control group, all foreign students that applied to the GRI program for participation between 2012 and 2014, who submitted a valid application, and were deemed eligible for the program but did not end up participating were

<sup>1</sup> Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. (2015). Gross domestic product (GDP) (indicator). doi: 10.1787/dc2f7aec-en

targeted. Reasons for not participating included the inability to match the student with a suitable academic supervisor, or the award being declined.

## Distribution

The list of survey participants was created using the Globalink program database. All foreign students that participated in the GRI program between 2009 and 2014 were targeted. A total of 1,221 GRI Interns were reached. A modified and shortened version of the survey was distributed to the applicant group. In total, 3,460 Applicants were reached.

The survey was active between April 16 and May 26, 2015. Direct email invitations with an embedded survey link were sent on April 16. The original email invitation and subsequent email reminders outlined the goals of the survey, as well as survey procedures. A first reminder targeting GRI Interns who had not completed the survey was sent on May 13 and a final reminder was sent on May 20. No email reminders were sent to the control group of eligible program applicants.

## Response Rate

A total of 566 GRI Interns responded to at least one question of the survey, with 498 respondents completing the questionnaire. This resulted in an overall response rate of 41% of all past GRI Interns.

A total of 341 Applicants responded to at least one question of the survey, including 290 complete questionnaires. This resulted in an overall response rate of 9% of Applicants.

Table 1 provides a detailed breakdown of survey respondents.

**Table 1: Response rates of Globalink Research Internship survey**

	Total	Overall number of surveys filled	Complete surveys only	Response Rate Overall	Response Rate Complete Only
Reachable GRI Interns	1,221	<b>566</b>	<b>498</b>	<b>46.4%</b>	<b>40.8%</b>
Reachable Applicants	3,460	<b>341</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>9.9%</b>	<b>8.4%</b>

## Limitations

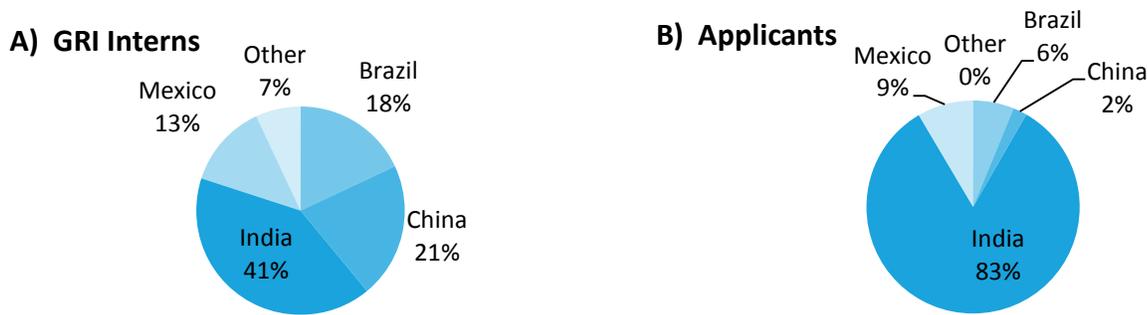
While unlikely to have a significant impact on the results of this survey, the following limitations are noted:

- The Globalink program database did not include contact information of Applicants prior to 2012. Of note, 86% of survey respondents from the GRI Interns' group completed their internship between 2012 and 2014, thus limiting the discrepancy between groups. To further mitigate the contribution of year-specific effects on the results, the report categorizes students from both groups based on their current occupation rather than on the year they participated in, or applied to, the program.
- Students from India are overrepresented in the applicant group, when compared to GRI Interns. This is likely due to a higher number of applications received from India.

## Results

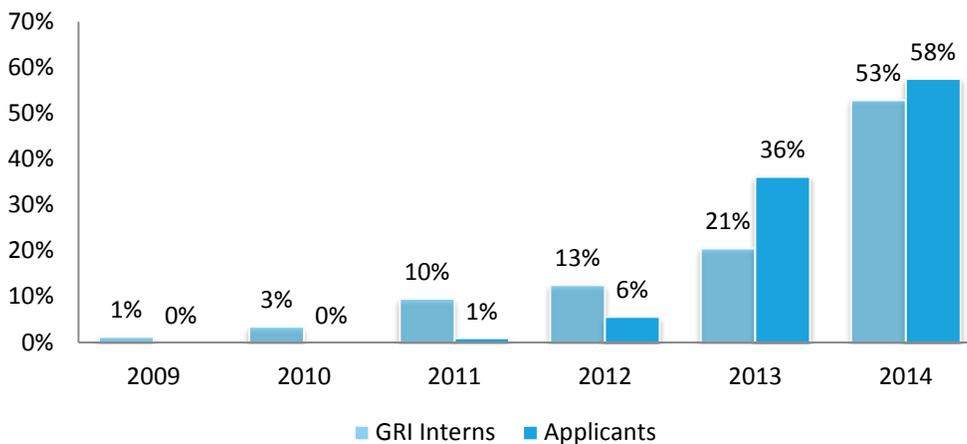
### Demographics

Survey respondents include GRI Interns and Applicants from eight and five countries, respectively (Figure 1). A high number of respondents, particularly from the applicant group, indicated being from India. This is not unexpected, as the relationship between India and Canada represents the first Globalink partnership developed (in 2009), and Mitacs typically receives a higher number of GRI applications from Indian students relative to other Mitacs partner countries.



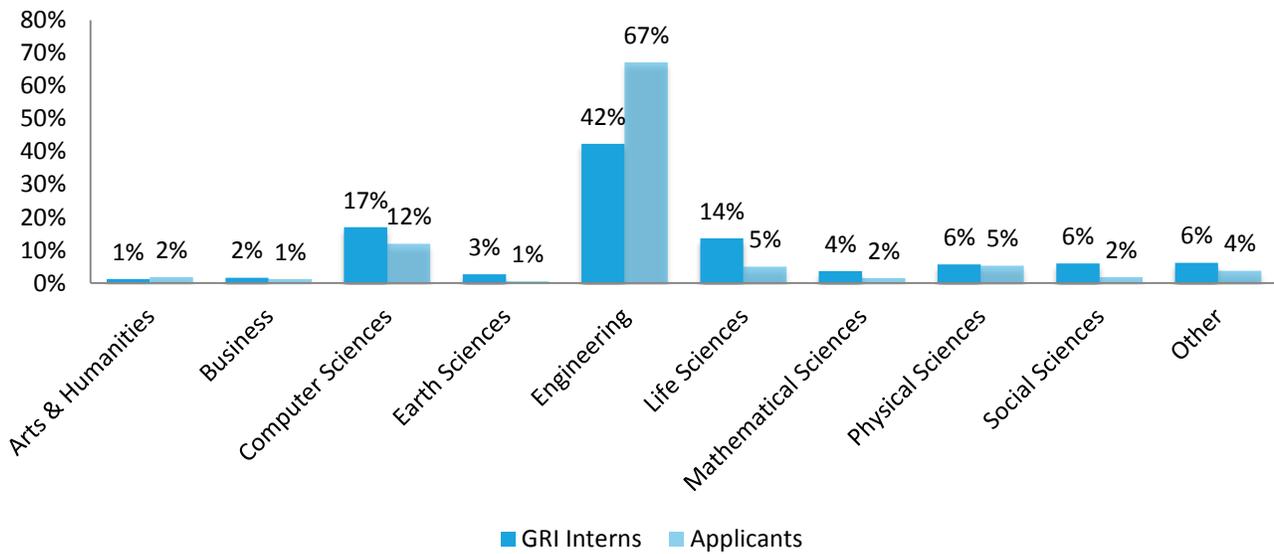
**Figure 1: Home country of A) GRI Interns and B) Applicants (“Other” includes France, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Vietnam)**

Although the GRI program has existed since 2009, Figure 2 shows that most survey respondents participated in, or applied for participation in, the GRI program over the last two years. This is most likely due to program growth, where numbers of applicants and participants have steadily increased since program implementation. Academic discipline associated with respondents’ undergraduate program<sup>2</sup> is presented in Figure 3.



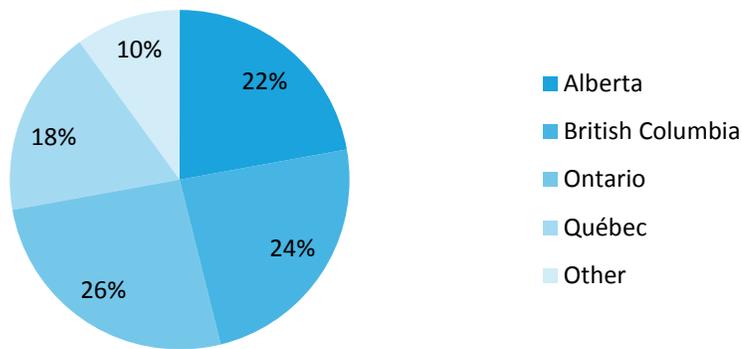
**Figure 2: Year respondents participated in, or applied to, GRI**

<sup>2</sup> In some instances, respondents were enrolled in a combined undergraduate/graduate program at the time of their participation in, or application for participation in, Globalink. For clarity and consistency, “undergraduate program” refers to the program respondents were enrolled in at the time of their application for an internship, and includes both undergraduate and undergraduate/graduate combined programs.



**Figure 3: Discipline associated with respondents' undergraduate program**

Figure 4 shows that 90% of Globalink research internships took place in Ontario (26%), British Columbia (24%), Alberta (22%) or Québec (18%). Overall, respondents participated in internships in a total of nine provinces (all but Prince Edward Island – data not shown). The list of Canadian institutions where GRI Interns completed their internship is included in Appendix A.



**Figure 4: Province in which GRI Interns completed their research internship (“Other” includes all provinces with 3% or fewer respondents)**

A majority of GRI Interns and Applicants had completed their undergraduate degree at the time of responding to this survey. Figure 5 shows that the proportion of students currently enrolled in a new program appears similar between both groups.

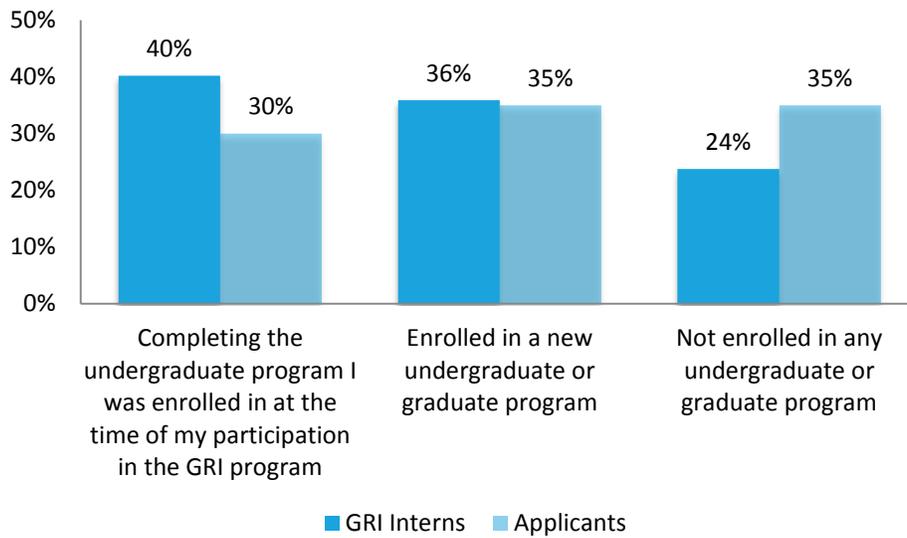


Figure 5: Current occupation

## Canada as a Destination for Top International Research Talent

### Why Canada?

75% of all respondents listed the availability of the Globalink Research Internship support as the top factor influencing their decision to apply to a research internship in Canada.

There are many players in the international education sphere; students have several reputable countries to choose from when deciding where to pursue their post-secondary education. One of the objectives of this study was to identify the specific reasons international undergraduate students would consider coming to Canada for a summer research internship. To determine this, we asked all survey respondents what factors influenced their decision to apply for a research internship in Canada.

Table 2 shows that the top factor listed by survey respondents (results collapsed over GRI Interns and Applicants groups) was the availability of the GRI support, followed by Canada’s reputation in general, and the quality of education in the country, up to par with opportunities for graduate studies.

*“Mitacs Globalink, being such a competitive internship, would add value to my resume, apart from giving me world-class training in cutting-edge research” [sic]*

– GRI Intern, on factors that influenced the decision to apply for a research internship in Canada

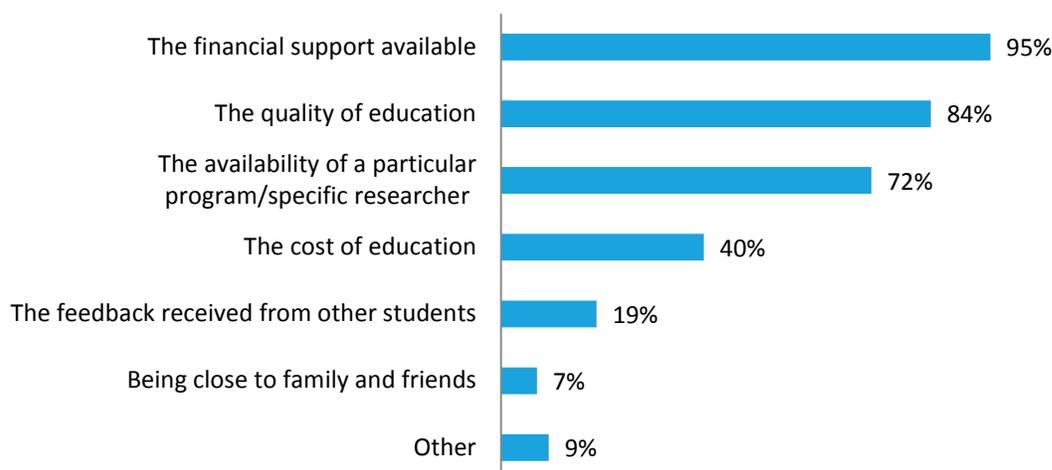
**Table 2: Factors that influenced decision of survey respondents to apply for a research internship in Canada**

	Great to Very Great extent	Little to Fairly Great extent	Not at all to Very Little extent
<b>Availability of the GRI support</b>	<b>75%</b>	23%	2%
<b>Canada's reputation in general</b>	<b>59%</b>	38%	3%
<b>High quality of education in Canada</b>	<b>55%</b>	43%	2%
Opportunity to work with a specific professor or in a specific field	54%	40%	5%
Opportunities for graduate studies in Canada	54%	39%	7%
High quality of research in Canada	52%	46%	2%
The prestige of a Canadian internship	52%	45%	4%
Post-graduation work opportunities in Canada	47%	38%	15%
Opportunity to improve English language skills	36%	33%	32%
Opportunities for permanent residence in Canada	26%	36%	37%
Opportunity to improve French language skills	13%	24%	63%
A relative/friend/teacher lives in Canada	10%	26%	64%

Not only does the support available and Canada's reputation and research strengths contribute to students' reasons for applying to research internships in Canada, they are also factors which influence the decisions of GRI Interns to come back to Canada for graduate school (Figure 6).

When coming to Canada for a summer internship, GRI Interns create new connections not only with their academic supervisors, but also with other researchers at their host institution and/or at other universities. This exposure to other potential supervisors and research projects influences their decision when it comes to selecting a researcher to supervise their graduate studies.

Other important factors for selecting Canada as a destination for additional studies include the financial support available, including Mitacs' Globalink Graduate Fellowship, as well as the quality of the education system (Figure 6).



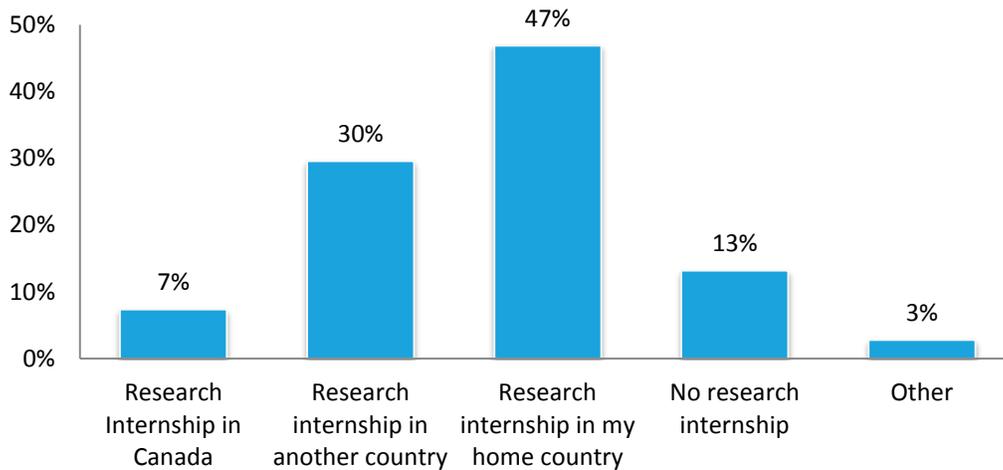
**Figure 6: Factors that influenced the decision of GRI Interns currently studying in Canada to pursue additional studies in Canada**

## Recruiting top international students to Canada

In the absence of the GRI program, only 7% of GRI Interns would have still come to Canada for a research internship.

Another objective of this study was to determine the impact that the GRI program has on the recruitment of top international students to Canada. While it is clear that the availability of the GRI support is a strong influence on students' decision to apply for research internships in Canada, we wanted to know what GRI Interns would have done if the Globalink Research Internship had not been available.

Figure 7 shows that, when asked about their alternative in the absence of GRI, only 7% of all GRI Interns surveyed would have still come to Canada for a research internship. Their most likely alternatives were to conduct research in their home country (47%) or another country (30%). 13% of GRI Interns would not have participated in any research internship, either in their home country, Canada or another country, in the absence of GRI. Thus, GRI clearly has a significant impact on the attraction of international talent to Canada.



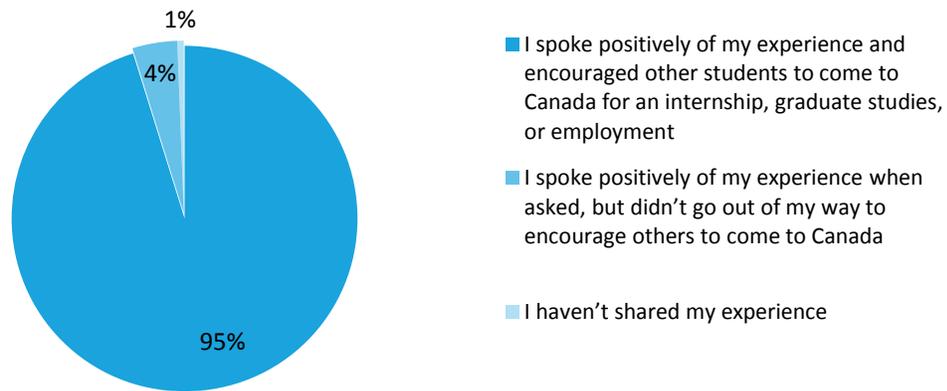
**Figure 7: GRI Interns' alternatives for conducting a research internship in the absence of the GRI program**

The GRI program plays an important role in international undergraduate student mobility, not only through its impacts on GRI Interns when they are in Canada, but also in the way it influences those who engage with GRI Interns following the completion of the internship. As demonstrated in Figure 8, participation in GRI affects recruitment of top talent to Canada through the positive message spread by GRI Interns after they have returned to their home country.

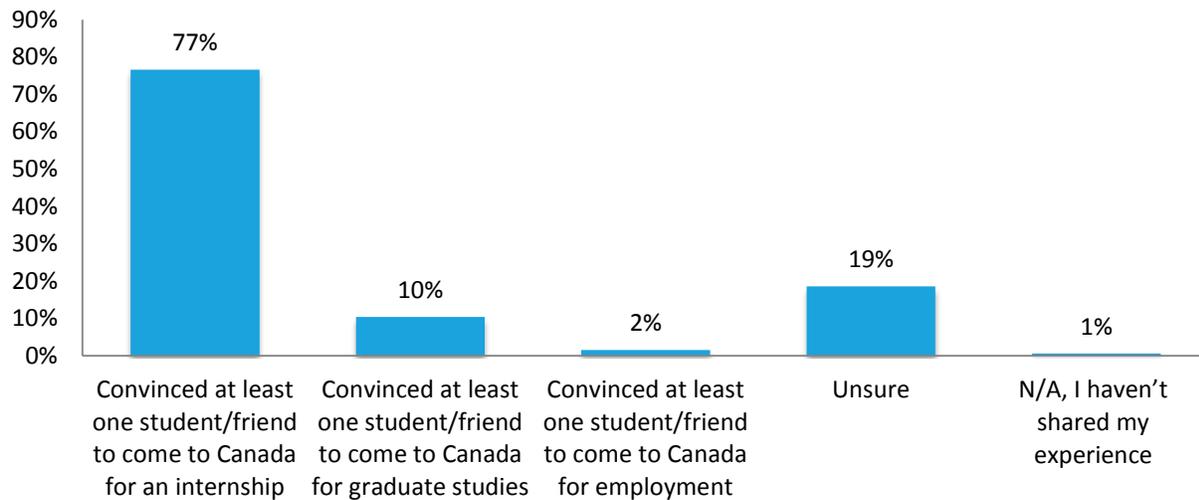
Figure 8 shows that 95% of GRI Interns spoke positively about their experience in Canada and encouraged fellow students and friends to come to Canada for an internship, graduate studies and/or employment. Furthermore, more than three quarters of GRI Interns have successfully convinced at least one fellow student or friend to come to Canada for a research internship (Figure 9).

*“My room-mate from undergrad is now a PhD student at McMaster University and he gladly credits this to mine convincing him” [sic]*

– GRI Intern who convinced a friend to come to Canada for graduate studies



**Figure 8: Proportion of GRI Interns who have shared their experience with other students from their home country**



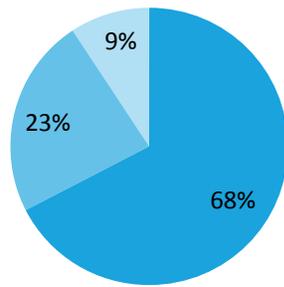
**Figure 9: Proportion of GRI Interns who have convinced other students or friends to come to Canada**

### Retaining international research talent in Canada

22% of GRI Interns enrolled in a new degree are currently studying in Canada – compared with only 9% of Applicants.

While attracting international students to Canada is an important aspect of increasing Canada's capacity for global innovation and research, we wanted to know whether the students we brought to Canada for a GRI also decided to come back to Canada to pursue further studies or employment.

When asked, the majority of GRI Interns surveyed attributed their positive GRI experience as a key reason to return to Canada for graduate studies. Specifically, when asked whether their participation in the GRI program contributed to their decision to come back to Canada for additional studies, 91% of interns currently studying in Canada indicated their experience convinced them or reinforced their decision to select Canada as a destination for their studies (Figure 10).



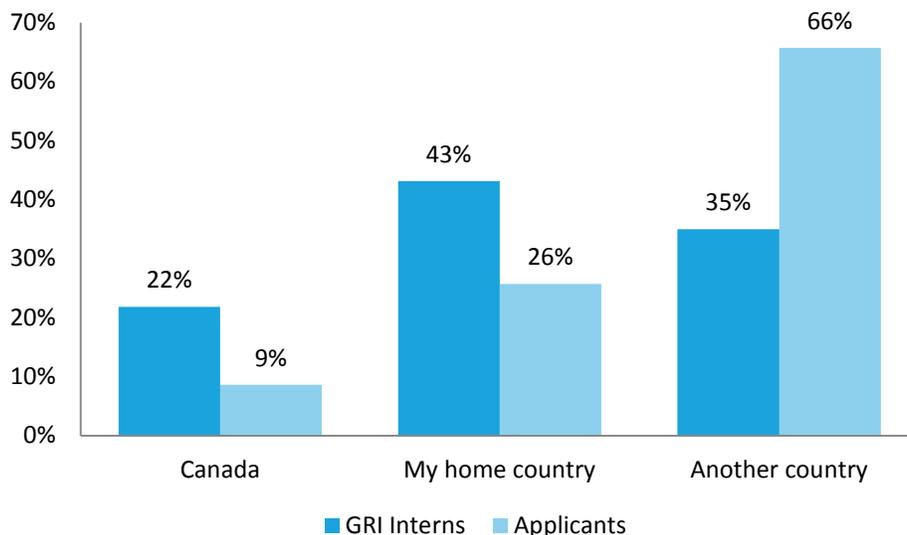
- Participation in the GRI program clearly changed my perception and convinced me to pursue additional studies in Canada
- Participation in the GRI program reinforced my decision to pursue additional studies in Canada
- Somewhat. I was already almost convinced I would pursue additional studies in Canada anyway

**Figure 10: Extent to which participation in GRI influenced GRI Interns' decision to pursue additional studies in Canada**

*"I had never really considered graduate research in Canada before my Globalink internship. My interaction with Canadian researchers during my internships as also my great experience living in the country for those 10 weeks convinced me to apply to programs in Canada and eventually come here for graduate studies" [sic]*

– GRI Intern, on how the GRI program changed their perception and convinced them to come to Canada for additional studies

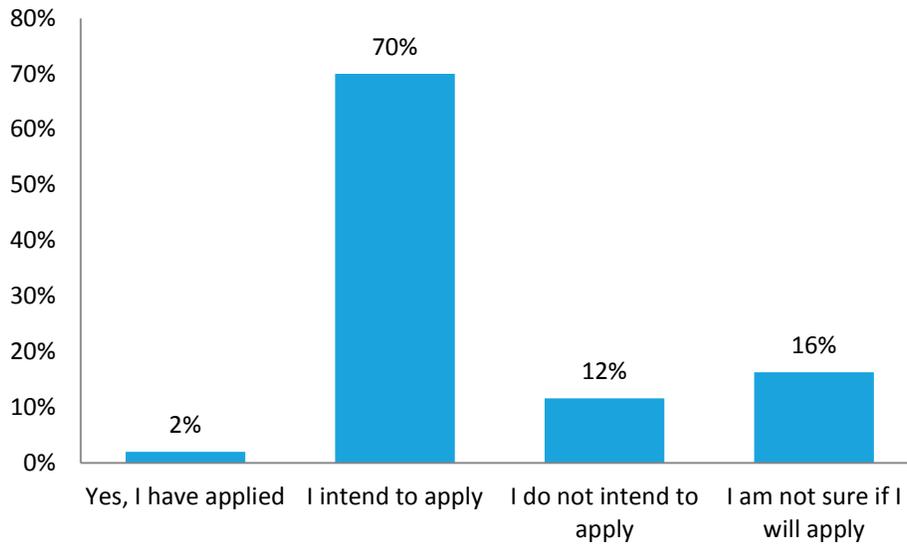
This change or reinforcement in GRI Interns' perception of Canada as a result of their internship is, in part, realized by the number of past GRI Interns now studying in Canada. As Figure 11 shows, 22% of GRI Interns enrolled in a new degree are currently studying in Canada, whereas only 9% of those who did not participate in the GRI program (Applicants) are currently studying in Canada.



**Figure 11: Current location of GRI Interns and Applicants who are enrolled in a new degree**

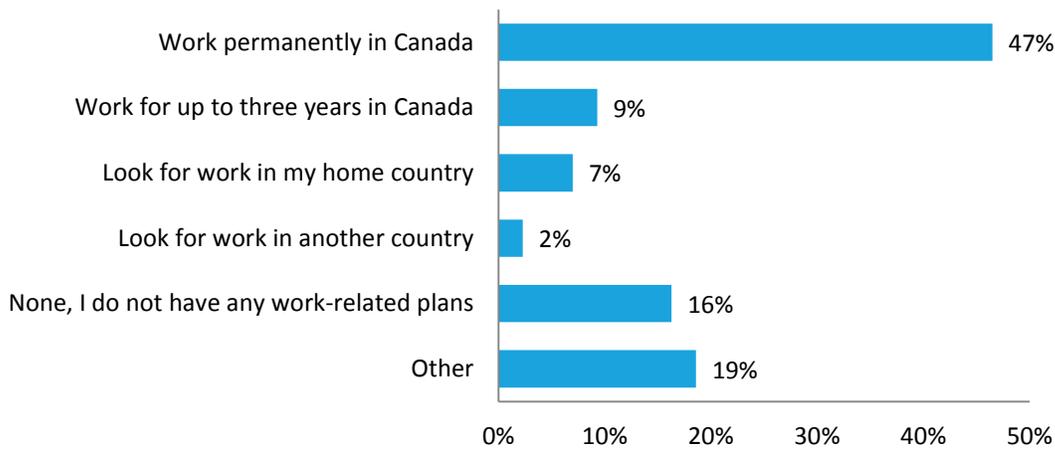
Further, over 70% of this group of GRI Interns currently enrolled in a new degree in Canada indicated that they have applied or intend to apply for permanent residency (Figure 12). This is a particularly strong result given that, according to

the Canadian Bureau of International Education’s 2013 survey of international students in Canada, only 46% indicated that they plan to apply for permanent residency<sup>3</sup>.



**Figure 12: Proportion of GRI Interns currently studying in Canada who have applied for permanent residency**

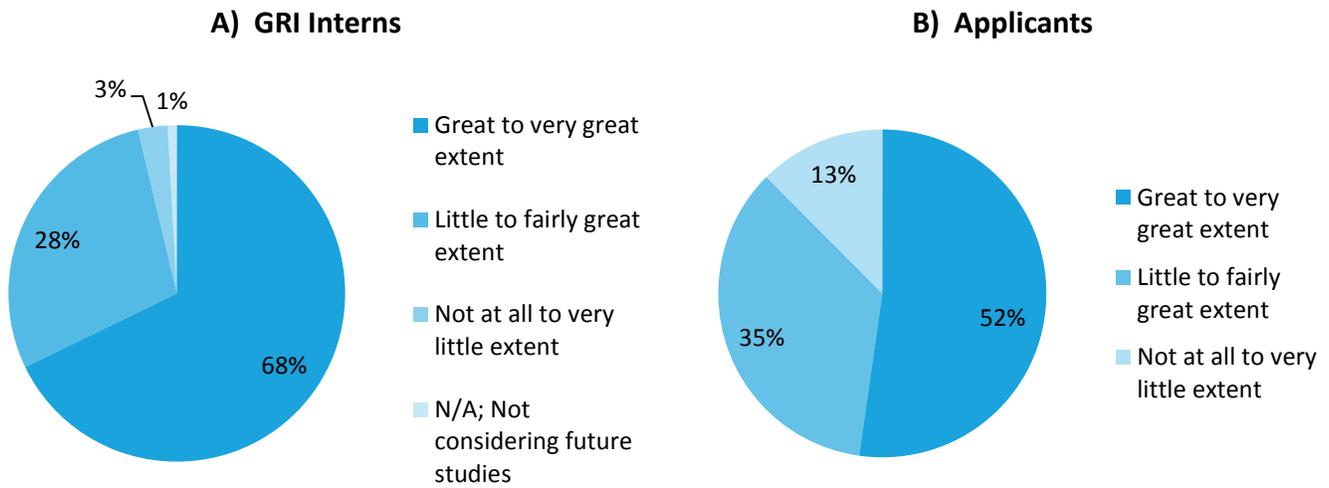
However, retention is about more than just bringing students back to Canada for further studies; we were also interested to know how many of those GRI Interns currently enrolled in a new degree in Canada were considering staying in Canada for future employment. Our survey found that more than half of these GRI Interns plan to work in Canada for at least three years after completion of their studies (Figure 13).



**Figure 13: Plans for work once GRI Interns currently studying in Canada complete all of their studies**

Although the GRI Interns and Applicants who are still completing their undergraduate degrees are currently located in various countries, some of them plan to come to Canada for future studies. Figure 14 shows that more than two thirds of GRI Interns still completing their undergraduate program, compared to only 52% of Applicants, are very likely to consider Canada as a destination for future studies.

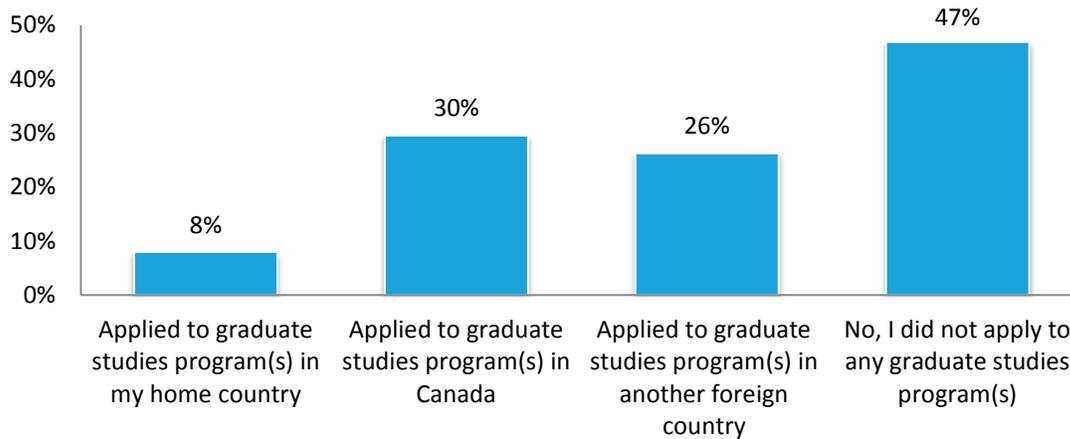
<sup>3</sup> Canadian Bureau of International Education. (2013). *A World of Learning: Canada’s Performance and Potential in International Education*. CBIE. Retrieved from [http://net.cbie.ca/download/CBIE\\_A%20World%20of%20Learning\\_English\\_web%20high%20res.pdf](http://net.cbie.ca/download/CBIE_A%20World%20of%20Learning_English_web%20high%20res.pdf)



**Figure 14: Likelihood that A) GRI Interns and B) Applicants still completing their undergraduate degree will consider Canada as a destination for future studies**

Some of those past interns who are considering Canada for future studies have already put their intentions into action. We asked those GRI Interns who are still completing their undergraduate degrees if they have applied for scholarships to graduate studies programs. One third of respondents indicated that they have applied for graduate studies programs in Canada, while only 8% have applied for graduate studies in their home country (Figure 15).

The positive impact of GRI is apparent in the intentions and actions of past GRI Interns, many of whom would like to come back to Canada for future studies or employment.



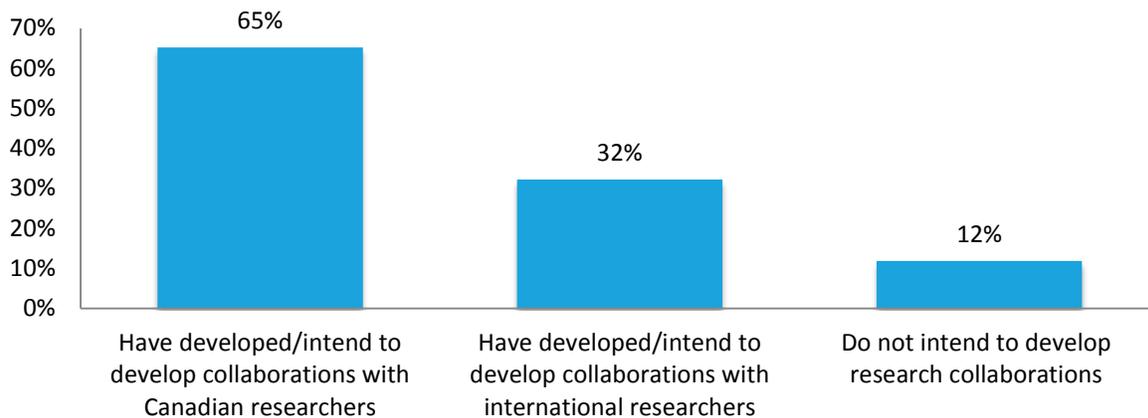
**Figure 15: GRI Interns' still completing their undergraduate degree; decision to apply for graduate studies program(s) (multiple responses permitted)**

## Creating Global Networks for International Research Collaborations

65% of GRI Interns intend to develop or have already developed collaborations with Canadian researchers as a result of their participation in the internship.

It is clear that GRI attracts, recruits and retains top international talent to Canada. However, the research which takes place during an internship often does not only include Canadian researchers, and the outcomes of research can have global implications. Thus, we wanted to know what sort of impacts the program has on the creation of international research collaborations.

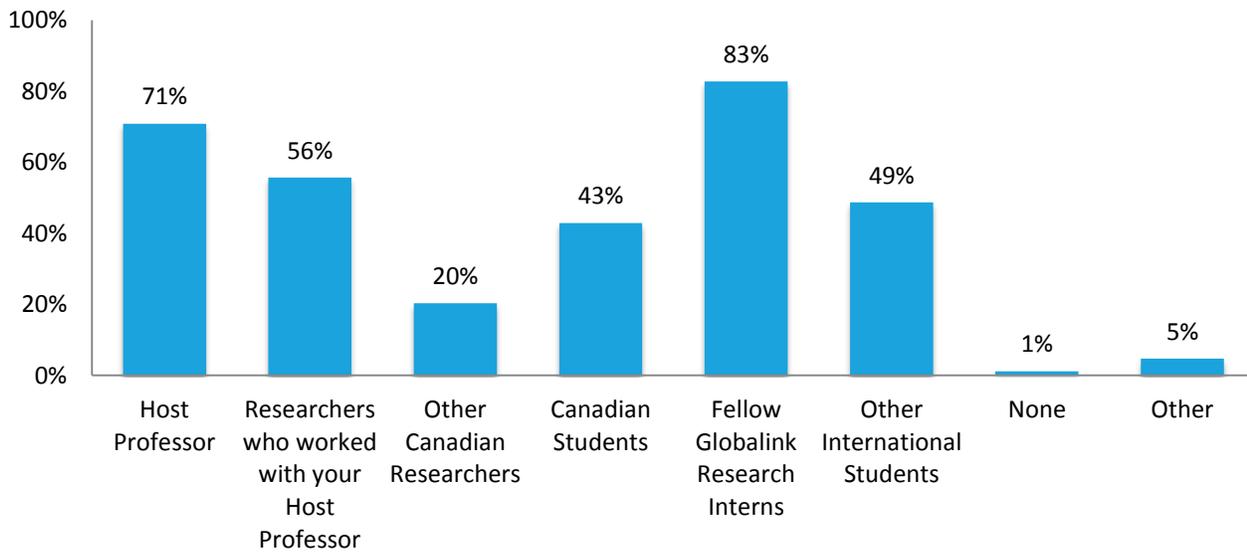
When asked about the research collaborations that GRI Interns had formed, two thirds indicated that they have developed or have intentions to develop collaborations with *Canadian* researchers, and almost a third intend to develop or have developed collaborations with *international* researchers (Figure 16). Therefore, we conclude that the GRI program fosters international research collaborations and creates networks from the relationships built during the research internship.



**Figure 16: Research collaborations GRI Interns have developed or will develop as a result of their participation in the program (multiple responses permitted)**

While some research collaborations have already been established, we also wanted to know whether future collaborations may still come about as a result of the internship. Additionally, GRI Interns make connections with each other and with those with whom they worked on the research project. We therefore asked GRI interns if they maintained any of the relationships made during their internship.

More than two thirds of participants continued to stay in contact with their host professor following the completion of their internship (Figure 17). As well, a high percentage of participants kept in touch with their fellow Globalink Research Interns: 83% remained in contact with each other after completion of their internship. These results suggest that the networking activities for GRI cohorts provide ample opportunity for GRI Interns to connect and establish lasting relationships with each other. Overall, the level of maintained connections between interns and other academic individuals involved in the internship suggests that future collaborations are likely.



**Figure 17: Individuals with whom GRI Interns remained in contact after completion of their internship (multiple responses permitted)**

### Building Professional Skills and Improving Career Prospects

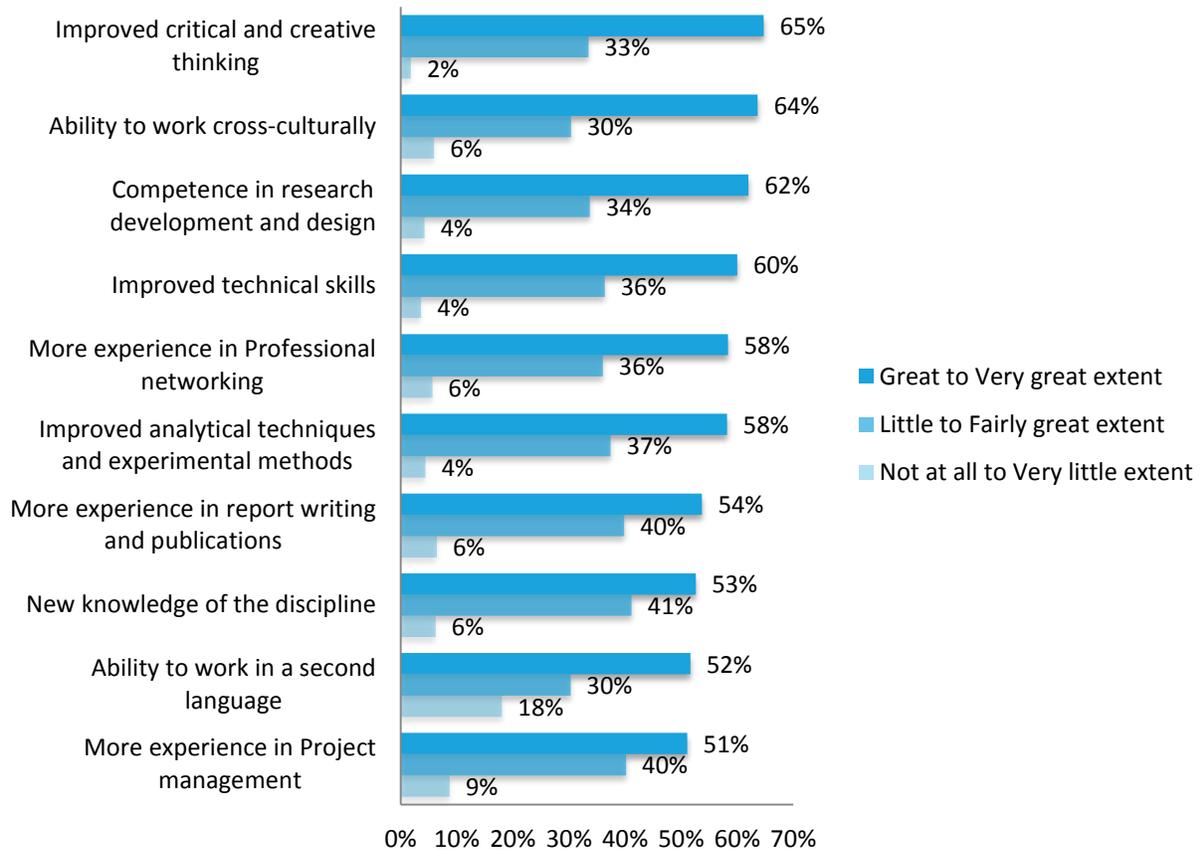
The students who are recruited to come to Canada to participate in the GRI program are already the top talent from their country. After the completion of their internship, these Globalink program alumni are even more highly-skilled and qualified to work or study in Canada due to the professional skills development training which all GRI Interns complete as a complement to their research.

Participation in the GRI program is meant to be a learning experience for the international undergraduate coming to Canada, and a number of skills gained were reported by our past participants. Specifically, the ability to work cross-culturally, new knowledge of the discipline and competence in research development and design were the top three skills identified by GRI Interns (see Appendix B for a complete list of skills acquired).

When asked about the extent to which they were now making use of the skills gained through their experience, GRI Interns indicated that their improved creative and critical thinking, their ability to work cross-culturally as well as their competence in research development and design were the most useful skills developed (Figure 18).

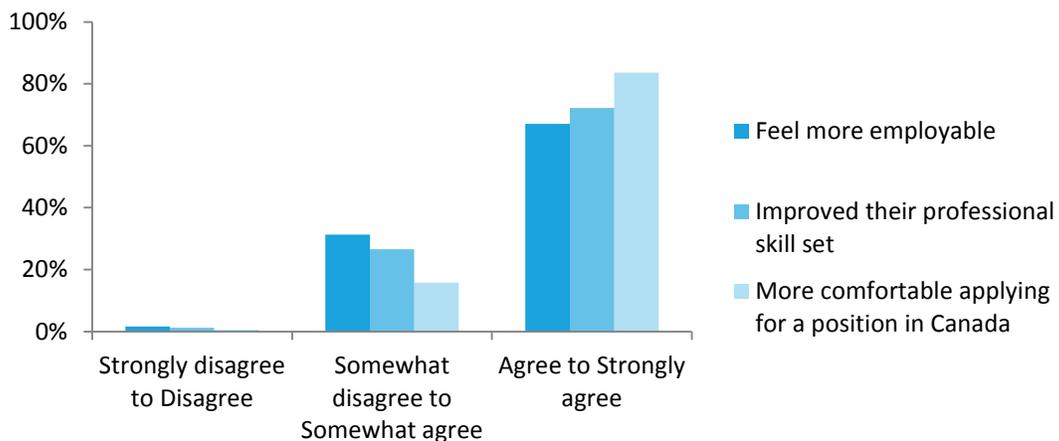
*“I think one of the most important things I learned was actually how to be completely involved in actual research full-time. Before my participation in the GRI program I had only be able to participate in research projects for a limited amount of time because of my studies. And then I got to experience the difference when you are actually applying everything you learned in research and experiment design, but also learning at the same time” [sic]*

– GRI Intern, on other types of knowledge/skills gained during their internship



**Figure 18: Extent to which GRI Interns are making use of the skills gained as a result of their GRI experience**

It is not surprising that, given the acquisition and use of the skills developed during their internship, over two thirds of GRI Interns feel more employable and have improved their professional skill set, with more than three quarters reporting that they feel more comfortable applying for a position in Canada (Figure 19).



**Figure 19: Outcomes reported by GRI Interns as a result of their GRI experience**

In terms of future employment overall, 71% of all GRI Interns strongly feel their experience has had, or will have, a significant impact on their career (Figure 20).

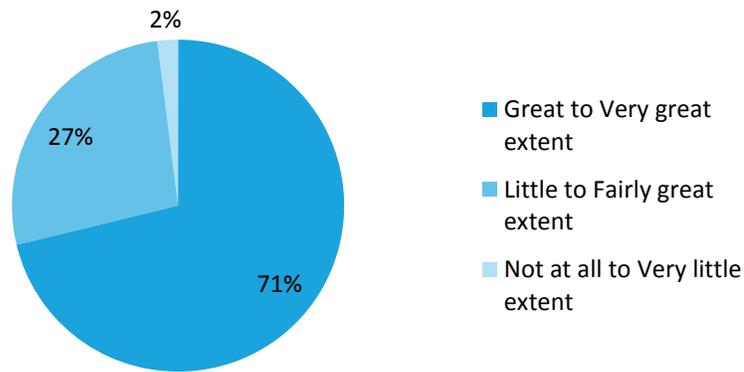


Figure 20: Extent to which GRI Interns believe their experience has had, or will have, a significant impact on their career

### Conclusion

The Globalink Research Internship program provides a very positive experience for the vast majority of interns, and has a significant impact on the recruitment of students to Canada. GRI is a large part of the reason why past participants return to Canada, and many interns will continue to collaborate on research with their Canadian networks using the skills acquired from the internship. We expect that as the Globalink Research Internship continues to grow, the impacts it is having on international recruitment, retention and collaboration for Canada will continue to grow as well.

## Appendices

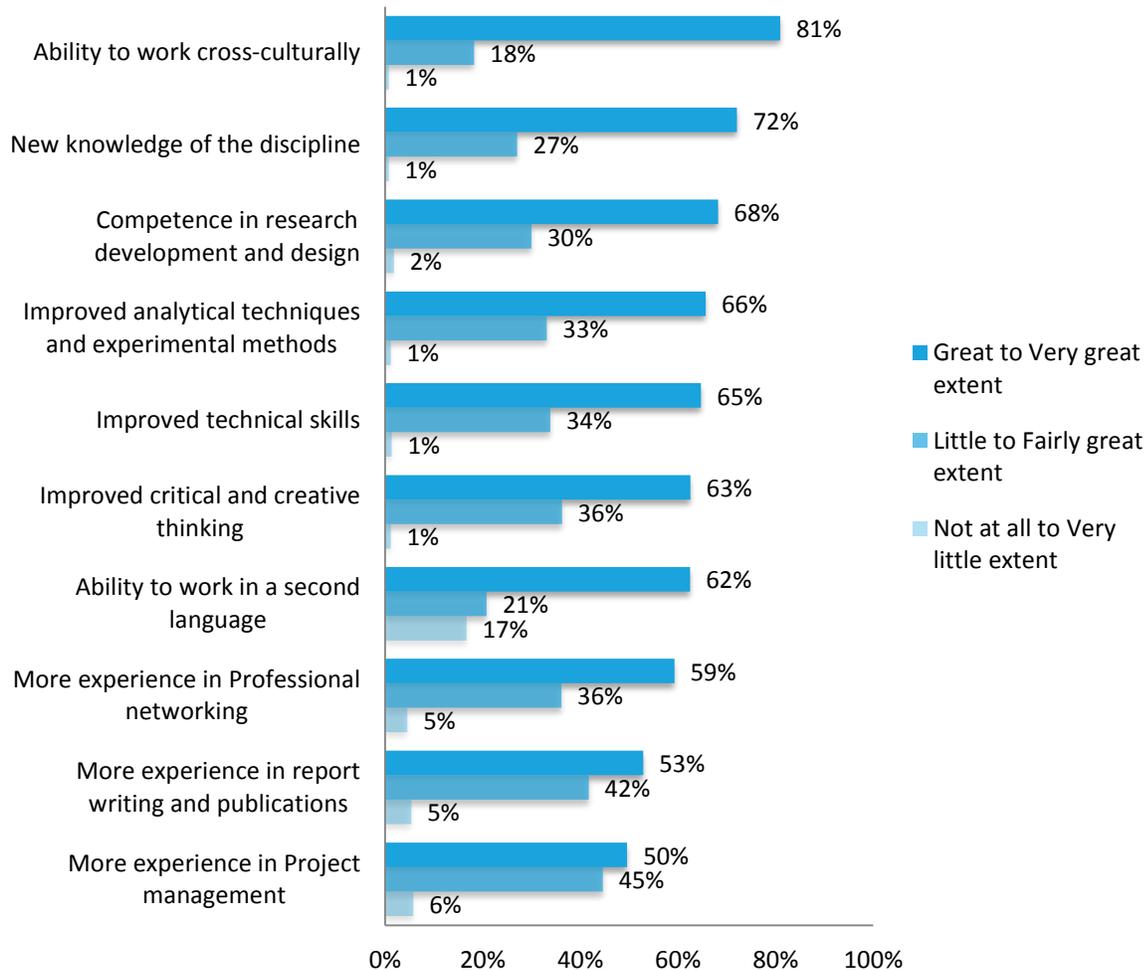
### Appendix A: Demographics

#### Canadian university where the Globalink Research Internship took place

Canadian University	Number of GRI Interns
University of British Columbia	71
University of Calgary	58
University of Alberta	44
Simon Fraser University	35
University of Victoria	25
University of Toronto	23
University of Waterloo	21
Western University	19
École de Technologie Supérieure	15
École Polytechnique de Montréal	15
University of Manitoba	14
Université de Montréal	13
University of New Brunswick	13
University of Ottawa	13
McMaster University	12
Memorial University of Newfoundland	12
University of Lethbridge	12
York University	12
Athabasca University	11
Université de Sherbrooke	11
Concordia University	10
McGill University	10
University of Saskatchewan	10
Queen's University	9
Dalhousie University	8
Ryerson University	8
University of Windsor	8
Université du Québec : Institut national de la recherche scientifique	7
Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières	7
Carleton University	6
Université du Québec à Montréal	5
University of Ontario Institute of Technology	5
Université Laval	4
University of Guelph	4
Wilfrid Laurier University	4
Université du Québec en Abitibi-Témiscamingue	2
Université du Québec en Outaouais	2
University of Regina	2

OCAD University	1
Université du Québec à Chicoutimi	1
Other	4

### Appendix B: Skills



Extent to which participation in GRI enabled the GRI Interns to gain skills