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## Profile of students who dropped out of the Administration course at the Federal University of Santa Catarina during the COVID-19 pandemic

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** This study aims to identify the profile of students who dropped out of the Administration courses, daytime and evening, at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC) during the COVID-19 pandemic. **Methodology:** For that purpose, a cross-sectional and descriptive study was carried out using secondary data generated by the Graduation Academic Control System (CAGR). **Results:** There were 193 evasions during the pandemic, 74 from the day course and 119 from the evening course. **Conclusion:** The profile of evaders was predominantly composed of white male students, between 22 and 26 years old, who lived in the metropolitan region of Florianópolis. In addition, we can also conclude that most students belonged to the evening course, had attended 1 semester before the pandemic and were admitted through the general classification of the entrance exam.

### KEYWORDS

Evasion. University education. COVID-19.

## Perfil dos estudantes que evadiram do curso de Administração da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina durante a pandemia da COVID-19

### RESUMO

**Objetivo:** O presente estudo tem por objetivo identificar o perfil dos estudantes que abandonaram os cursos de Administração, diurno e noturno, da Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) durante a pandemia da COVID-19. **Metodologia:** Para tanto, foi realizado um estudo transversal e descritivo através da utilização de dados secundários gerados pelo Sistema de Controle Acadêmico da Graduação (CAGR). **Resultados:** Verificou-se 193 abandonos durante a pandemia, sendo 74 do curso diurno e 119 do curso noturno. **Conclusão:** O perfil dos evasores era predominante composto por estudantes do sexo masculino, brancos, entre 22 e 26 anos, que residiam na região metropolitana de Florianópolis. Além disso, também se pode concluir que a maioria dos estudantes eram pertencentes ao curso noturno, haviam cursado 1 semestre antes da pandemia e ingressaram por meio da classificação geral do concurso vestibular.

### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

Evasão. Educação superior. COVID-19

## Perfil de los estudiantes que abandonaron el curso de Administración en la Universidad Federal de Santa Catarina durante la pandemia de COVID-19

### RESUMEN

**Objetivo:** El presente estudio tiene como objetivo identificar el perfil de los estudiantes que abandonaron los cursos de Administración de Empresas, diurnos y nocturnos, en la Universidad Federal de Santa Catarina (UFSC) durante la pandemia de COVID-19. **Metodología:** Para ello se realizó un estudio transversal y descriptivo utilizando datos secundarios generados por el Sistema de Control Académico de Graduación (CAGR). **Resultados:** Hubo 193 deserciones durante la pandemia, 74 del curso diurno y 119 del curso nocturno. **Conclusión:** El perfil de los evasores estaba compuesto predominantemente por estudiantes varones blancos, entre 22 y 26 años, que vivían en la región metropolitana de Florianópolis. Además, también se puede concluir que la mayoría de los estudiantes pertenecían al curso nocturno, habían cursado 1 semestre antes de la pandemia e ingresaban por la clasificación general del examen de ingreso.

### PALABRAS CLAVE

Evasión. Educación superior. COVID-19.

### CRedit

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## 1 Introduction

In the year 2020, the COVID-19 virus ravaged the world infecting and killing millions of people. In order to reduce virus transmission, several governments and organizations adopted sanitary measures aimed at preserving life in light of the high transmission rates of the disease. In Brazil, public universities were among the institutions that most took a prominent place in confronting the pandemic (Santos; Leal; Búrigo, 2021).

Sanitary measures, with an emphasis on social isolation, directly affected the educational system. According to data from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the pandemic has affected the education of almost 1.6 billion students in more than 190 countries. In Brazil, almost 20 million students had their classes suspended due to the pandemic (DATASENADO, 2020; UNESCO, 2020).

In order to respond to this problem, the Ministry of Education, through Ordinance No. 343, of March 17th, 2020, authorized the replacement of face-to-face classes by digital means, with the exception of professional internship and laboratory practices, as long as the pandemic state persisted (BRASIL, 2020). It is worth noting that in 2019, 4.3 million students did not have access to the internet, with 95.9% of them belonging to the public education network (IBGE, 2020).

The Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), object of this study, authorized non-face-to-face classes through normative Resolution No. 140/2020/CUn, of July 21st, 2020 (UFSC, 2020). Thus, after planning and training, the classes returned remotely on August 31st, 2020, remaining this way until April 18th, 2022, when they went back to being face-to-face, according to normative Ordinance No. 430/2022/GR, of March 15th, 2022 (UFSC, 2022b). However, with the return to face-to-face classes at UFSC, we observed that a significant number of students in the courses of Administration in the daytime and evening courses offered at the Florianópolis campus were not enrolled in the disciplines, thus gaining the status of course abandonment in the Undergraduate Academic control System (CAGR) (UFSC, 2022c).

At UFSC, according to Article 47 of Resolution No. 17/CUn/97, of September 30th, 1997, such status is conferred on the student by virtue of non-renewal or suspension of enrollment within the deadlines provided for in the school calendar, undoing the student's bond with the University (UFSC, 1997).

Thus, the present study aims to identify and analyze the profile of students who dropped out of the UFSC administration courses during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## 2 Theoretical Framework

### 2.1 The role of Universities

According to Chaui (2003, p.5), “Universities are social institutions and as such they express in a determined way the structure and mode of functioning of society as a whole”. In this way, they must be attentive to the challenges imposed by reality in order to seek effective solutions to the problems that emerge in society.

Among these challenges, student evasion is a recurring social problem within Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Brazil. According to Tinto (1975), the strategic action that each institution uses in the face of this problem is a primary factor for the control of evasion. It is worth mentioning that it is the role of HEIs to worry about the evasion of their students, not only from an internal perspective, analyzing the institutional factors that caused evasion, but also from a social perspective, considering the impacts it will have on society.

Therefore, surveys focusing on permanence and evasion in higher education have become essential for studies that seek to mitigate the problems that university management faces. After all, the main problem ceased to be the entrance to higher education and became the permanence of the student (Almeida Filho, 2007).

In turn, university managers should continue to assist in the development and implementation of institutional strategies and policies that seek to combat university evasion. After all, it pertains to university management:

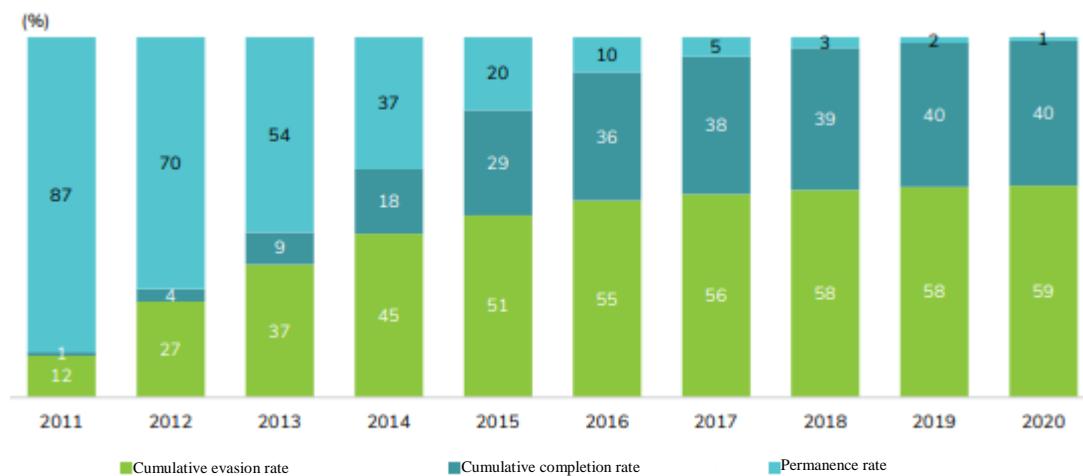
[...] the process of planning, organizing, leading and controlling the work of the members of the University, and of using all its available resources to achieve the objectives of: training professional staff at a higher level; conducting research and extension; as well as mastering and cultivating human knowledge (Schlickmann; Melo, 2013).

That way, the search for greater efficiency in universities has been a constant concern of managers who work in these institutions (Meyer; Meyer JR, 2013).

### 2.2 Student evasion

University evasion is a recurring problem in HEIs. According to the National Institute of Educational Studies and Research Anísio Teixeira (INEP) (INEP, 2021), about 60% of the students enrolled in higher education who entered in 2011 ended up dropping out by 2020, as shown in Chart 1.

**Chart 1.** Average evolution of the trajectory indicators of the 2011 first-year undergraduate in Brazil until 2020



Source: INEP (2021, p. 46)

Student evasion is characterized by a student's temporary or definitive abandonment of the institution, or of one of its courses in which they are enrolled, for any reason, except for graduation (Scremin, 2008).

According to the Secretariat of Higher Education/Ministry of Education (SESU/MEC), evasion can occur on three levels: on the first, the student is disconnected only from the course in which he was enrolled. On the second, the student ends the bond he has with the educational institution. Finally, on the third level, the student temporarily or permanently abandons higher education (Brasil, 1996, p.20).

Still, it is possible to analyze evasion through five different perspectives: from the perspective of the student, of the university as a social institution, of the University as an operational organization, of the State and from a social point of view.

From the student's perspective, evasion occurs when there is one or more factors, internal or external to the linked institution, that cause the student to leave the course. They are commonly related to dissatisfaction with the course, lack of infrastructure, financial difficulties, psychosocial problems, among others. These factors may provoke in the student feelings of demotivation, disappointment, frustration and loss of interest in returning to higher education, seeing as the student invested time and resources that could have been better applied in other activities (Barlem *et al.*, 2012; Cunha; Nascimento; Durso, 2016).

According to Chauí (2003), for whom the university is considered a social institution, student evasion can be characterized as a reflection of society. That way, the factors that generate evasion are the same as those that reveal the problems experienced by society, such as saturated markets, financial crises and social problems. It is worth mentioning that, according to this view, the greater the problems faced by society, the greater the evasion in universities. This theory could be observed during the COVID-19 pandemic: in 2020, 37,2% of private

school students dropped out of higher education, compared to 32,4% the previous year (SEMESP, 2022).

On the other hand, considering the university as an operational organization, the most important factor generated by university evasion is the financial loss it causes. Thus, the organization will seek to understand what generated the loss of capital, whether it is public (with State investment) or private (with student investment), in order to develop measures that seek to avoid further losses and, at the same time, seek new students to replace the damage caused by those who evaded (Silva, 2021, P.32).

From the perspective of the State, the student who permanently abandons higher education is just another number to make up the high evasion rates. However, they characterize the inefficiency of the State in relation to the policies and incentives for student permanence. In addition, evasion can represent failure in basic educational structures, since, from this perspective, the student can be seen as unprepared (Diogo *et al.*, 2016).

Finally, from the social perspective, university evasion can harm both the student and the progress of society, because people with complete higher education are more likely to effectively participate in social development, in addition to contributing more to economic growth, creating a larger economic cake for, in theory, everyone to share (Tinto, 2004).

### 2.3 The COVID-19 pandemic

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization characterized COVID-19 as a pandemic disease, emphasizing the global crisis that was being established due to a new strain (type) of coronavirus that had not been identified before in humans (PAHO, 2021).

In view of the pandemic state of the world, several sectors of society immediately suspended their face-to-face activities, including HEI, instituting quarantine measures. However, the quarantine that was expected to last a few days turned into social isolation with no prediction of ending, according to the high rates of contamination and deaths caused by COVID-19 (Oak *et al.*, 2020; Simon *et al.*, 2021).

In order to return to their activities, higher education institutions began to adopt remote education as an emergency measure of partial return. Various discussions then emerged concerning the socio-economic inequality among students, especially regarding access to technology and the internet, since a good part of the students was negatively affected for not having the necessary means to follow online classes (Appenzeller *et al.*, 2020).

It is worth noting that during the pandemic many students returned to the municipalities in which their families reside, and due to the financial crisis and unemployment that was established in 2020, they ended up having to acquire a source of income to help family

expenses. That way, supplying basic needs became more important than studying, which forces the students to leave it behind (Zago, 2016; Silber, 2020; IBGE, 2022).

Still, it should be noted that, according to Santos (2021, p. 25), the COVID-19 pandemic has only aggravated a crisis situation which the world population was already subjected to in their "normal" state. This is because the crisis, while temporary, must be explained by the factors that provoked it. However, when it becomes lasting or permanent, it becomes the reason that explains everything else.

### 3 Methodological Procedures

This research has a cross-sectional and descriptive character, aligned with the quantitative approach (GIL, 2010). Cross-sectional research is characterized by being carried out in a single analysis period. The descriptive research seeks to describe the reality of a phenomenon studied, in this case, the evasion from the course. The quantitative approach was chosen with the intention of greater generalization of the result of the chosen case study.

It is also applied research, with a case study conducted at UFSC. For that, the subjects that make up the research population were the students of the evening and daytime Administration courses that acquired the status of course abandonment in the 2022/1 semester, which that marks the return to face-to-face teaching at the University.

To that end, we sought the support of the Coordination of Administration courses (UFSC) through the academic system to identify students who dropped out of the course during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using the data generated by the system, we analyzed the profile of the students and contacted them in order to present them with the exceptional opportunity to return to the course.

Through searches in the system, we found that 193 students of Administration, day and night, acquired the status of course abandonment during the pandemic, characterizing an evasion of 17,67% of the 1.092 students enrolled in both courses in the 2021/2 semester. With the identification of students by the coordination, the collection of secondary data occurred on July 1st, 2022 through reports issued by the academic system. However, in order to keep students' identification confidential, the data provided did not present name, registration, email, address or other personal documents.

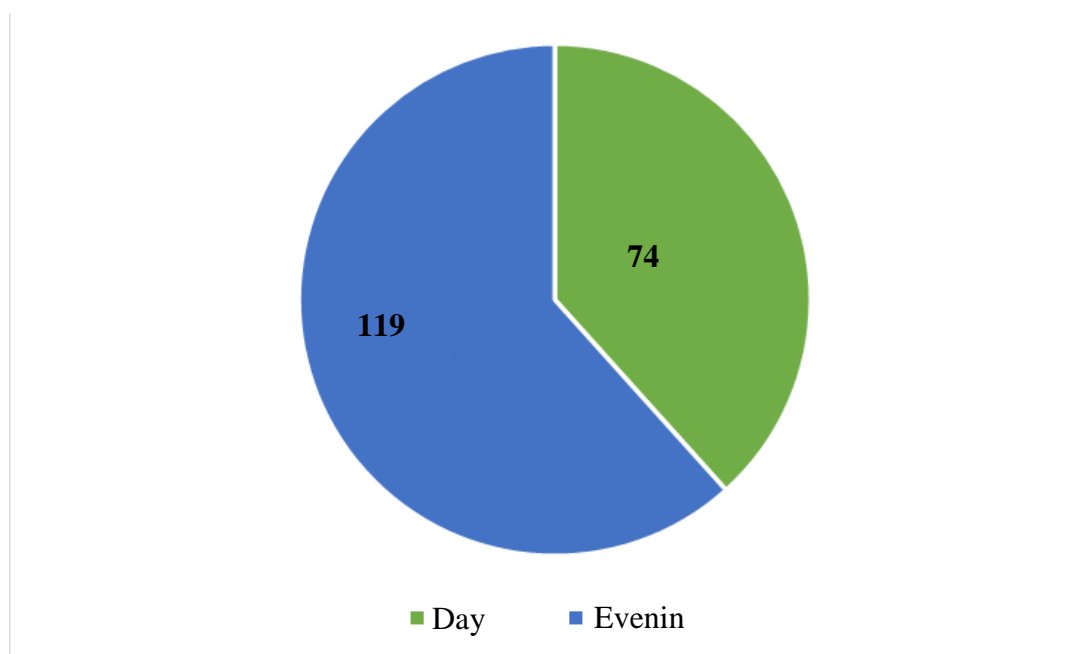
The analysis of the research data was conducted in the light of descriptive statistics (Barbetta, 2019), with frequencies and means. For the storage and processing of these data, as well as for the preparation of graphs and tables, we used the Microsoft Excel 2020 software. Together with the data presentation, we carried out the interpretative analysis of the results and the comparison with the relevant bibliography.

Finally, at the initiative of the collegiate of Administration courses, the Coordination of Administration courses (UFSC) made contact with the students analyzed in this study in order to present them with an opportunity to return to the course, and the results of this reaching out will be presented after the analysis and discussion of the results.

## 4 Results

After data collection, data analysis began by verifying the shift that administration students who dropped out during the COVID-19 pandemic were admitted, and we observed that most of the students belonged to the evening course (Chart 2).

**Chart 2.** Course that dropout students were previously admitted to

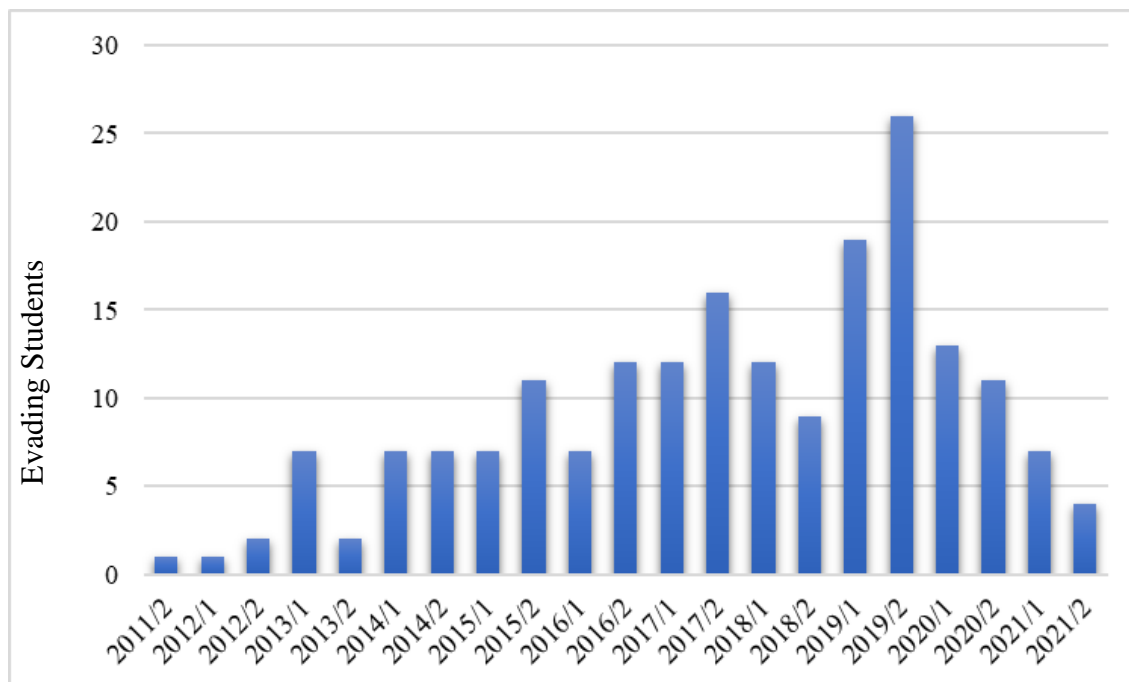


Source: prepared by the authors (2022).

According to Vargas and Paula (2013), students who choose this shift usually reconcile their studies with professional activities during the daytime. It should be noted that one of the main causes of evasion during the pandemic was the obligation to focus on work and assist in family income, in view of the financial crisis established. (Rangel; Pierotte, 2021).

In addition to analyzing evasion numbers per shift, another factor that can also be analyzed through the data was the semester of admission of students who dropped out. This way it is possible to identify how many semesters they had previously attended (Chart 3).



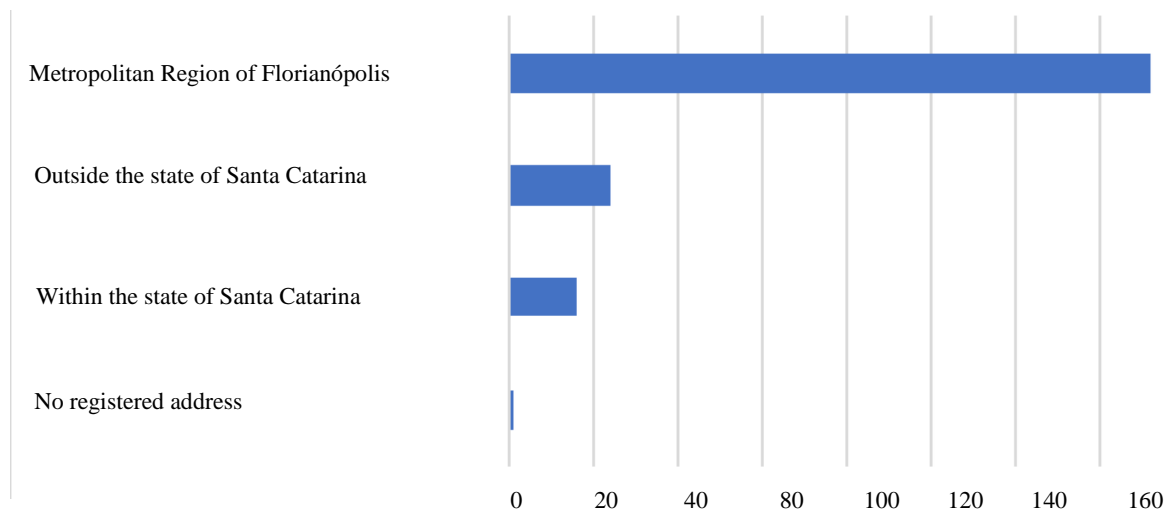
**Chart 3.** Semester of admission of dropout students

Source: prepared by the authors (2022).

It is possible to observe that the semesters with the highest dropout rates were 2019/1 and 2019/2, which make up students who attended one or two semesters before the start of the pandemic. Thus, it is possible to affirm that these students were still in the adaptation phase to the course when they were surprised by the pandemic, which brought several uncertainties, especially during the period when there was no prospect of a returning to school.

It should be noted that, according to Lima (2021), most UFSC students who abandon their courses do so during the second or third semester. That means the pandemic has not changed the pre-existing pattern.

Another important factor we identified was that, despite the course being offered in the city of Florianópolis, a good part of the students did not reside in the city when they obtained the status of course abandonment, as shown in Chart 4, below.

**Chart 4.** City of residence of dropout students

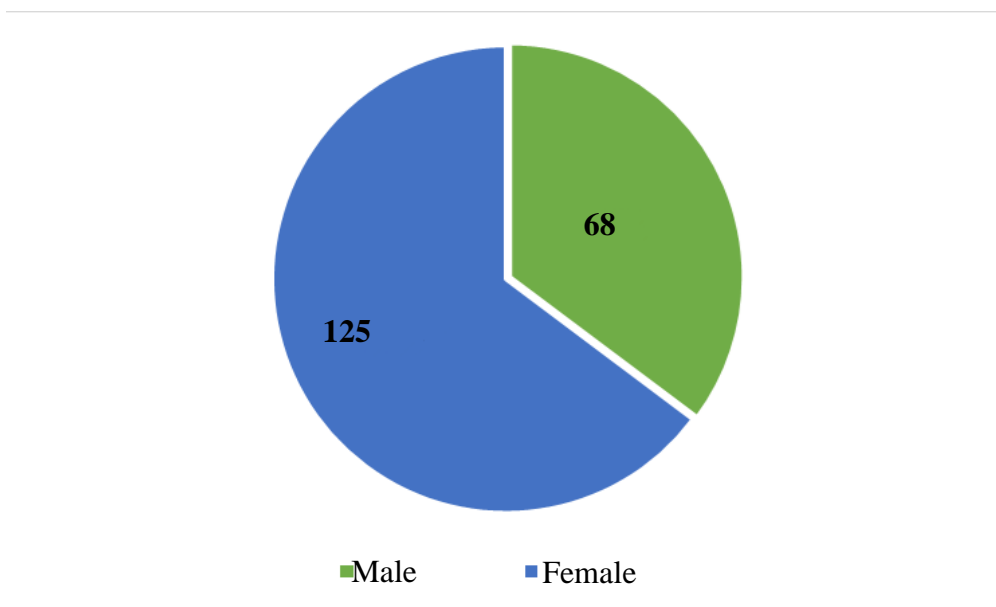
Source: prepared by the authors (2022).

The data highlights another problem caused by the of COVID-19 pandemic, which are the students who did not even know the daily life of the University and their respective courses. Because of the emergency remote education, they were able to attend classes without the need to move to the city of Florianópolis.

That way, the vision these students had of the course was limited to online video classes, often hampered by the lack of interactivity of students, problems related to the connection, study environment and unpreparedness for the use of technology, both by teachers and students (Appenzeller *et al.*, 2020; Bastos, *et al.*, 2020).

Evasion during the pandemic also showed discrepancy in relation to the sex of students, with 64.77% of students being male and 35.23% being female (Chart 5).

**Chart 5.** Sex of residence of dropout students

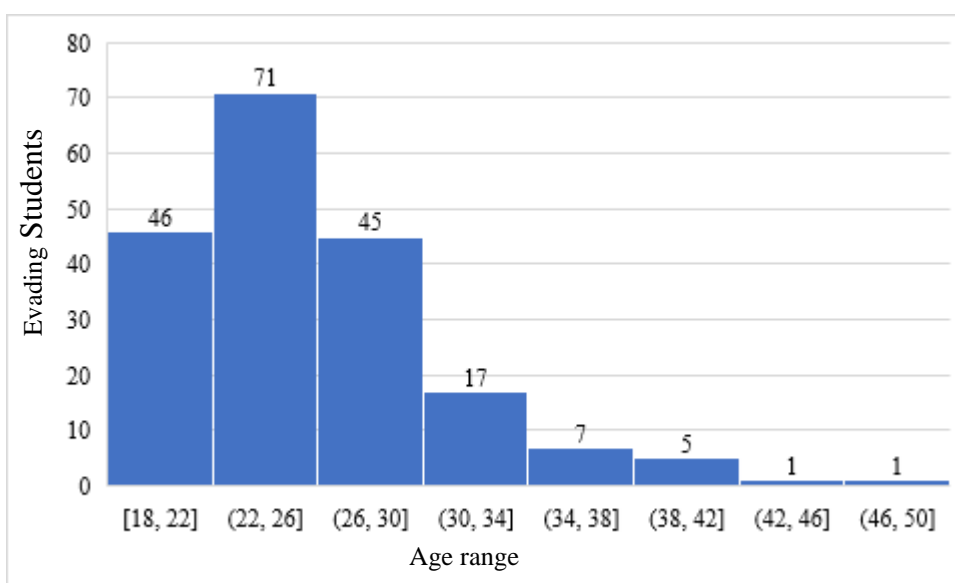


Source: prepared by the authors (2022).

Highlights are that, during the 2021/2 semester, the courses had 622 male students (56.96%) and 470 female students (43.04%). According to Lima (2021), the chance of male dropout is 12% higher than the chance of female dropout at UFSC.

The data also included the date of birth of the students, so it was possible to calculate the age they were when they obtained the status of abandoning the course by 04/14/2022. The following histogram (Chart 6) presents the age group of students who dropped out during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Chart 6.** Age of students who dropped out

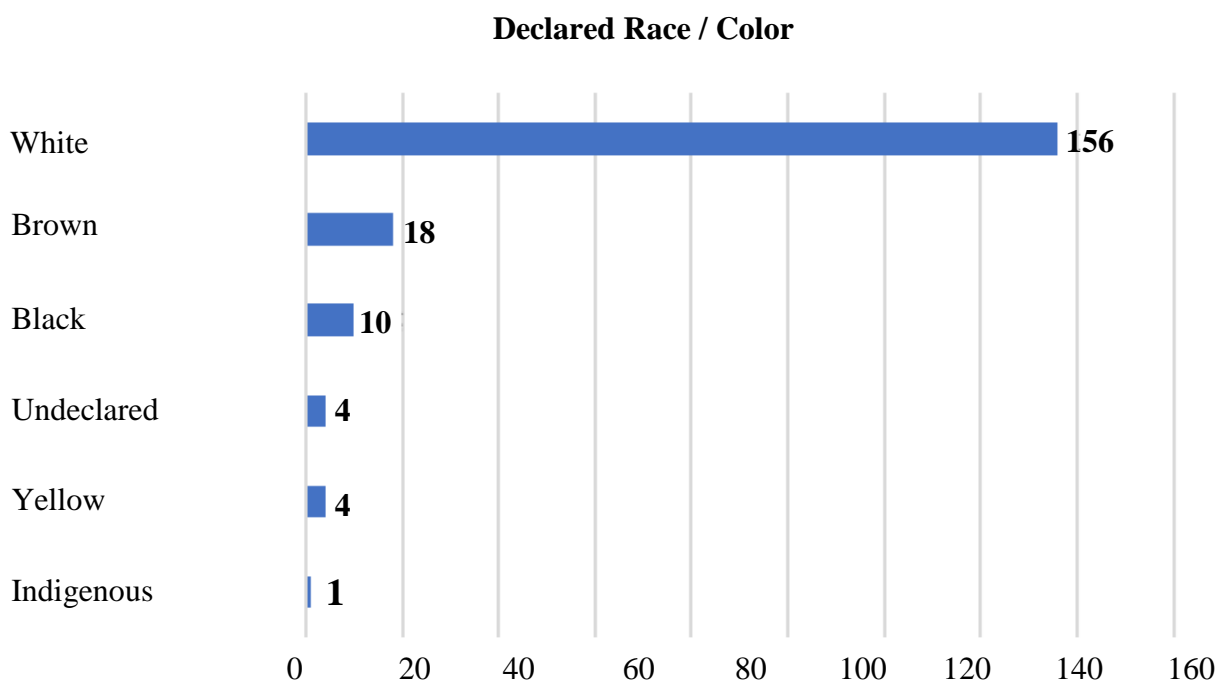


Source: prepared by the authors (2022).

As observed, most of the students who evaded were between 22 and 26 years old. According to studies conducted by Silva (2013) and Souza, Silva and Gessinger (2017), the sex and age of students are factors that increase the chance of evasion. The authors also point out that the higher the student's age, the easier for evasion to occur.

Additionally, considering that the University guarantees at least 16% of the spots in undergraduate courses for black, brown and Indigenous students, we analyzed the self-declared race/color of the students who evaded in the act of their respective enrollments (Chart 7) (UFSC, 2021).

**Chart 7.** Race / color of students who dropped out



Source: prepared by the authors (2022).

According to the chart presented, the vast majority of students were self-declared white (80,83%). This data shows a great discrepancy to other studies that have already conducted such analysis. Some examples are Benatti and Aguiar (2018), Costa and Picanço (2020) and Klitzke (2020), wherein there is parity between the evasion rate of white and black students (brown students also included here).

Another factor that can be analyzed through the data was the students' form of admission, since it allows us to verify whether the majority of students who evaded had joined via the entrance exam, the Unified Selection System (SISU), transfer or abandonment return systems (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Students' Form of Admission

Form of admission	Number of students	%
Entrance Exam	110	57
Entrance Call	33	17,1
Sisu Call	22	11,4
Sisu Entrance Exam	16	8,3
Abandonment Return	4	2,07
External Transfer	4	2,07
Internal Transfer	4	2,07
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>	<b>100,0</b>

Source: prepared by the authors (2022).

As noted, the vast majority of students entered through the entrance exam competition. However, one fact that draws attention refers to the fact that four students had previously abandoned the course and abandoned again during the pandemic.

Finally, in order to complement the analysis of the students' form of admission, Frame 1 presents in descending order the category used to enter the course.

**Frame 1.** Student admission category

Admission category	Students
General Classification	99
PAA - Public School - income above 1,5 minimum wages - others without disabilities**	18
PAA - Public School - income up to 1.5 Minimum Wages - other*	17
PAA - Public School - income above 1.5 Minimum Wages - other*	13
PAA - Public School - income up to 1.5 minimum wages - others without disabilities**	11
PAA - Public School - income above 1.5 minimum wages - BBI (Black, Brown and Indigenous)*	6
PAA - Public School - income up to 1.5 minimum wages -BBI (Black, Brown and Indigenous) without disability **	4
Racial Quota - Black***	3
PAA - Public School - income above 1.5 minimum wages - BBI (Black, Brown and Indigenous) without disability**	3
PAA - Public School - income up to 1.5 minimum wages - BBI (Black, Brown and Indigenous)*	3
Public School****	2
Additional Vacancies - Indigenous	1
Additional Vacancies - Black	1
No Category	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>193</b>

Subtitles: \* admission between 2013 and 2017; \*\*admission between 2018 and 2021; \*\*\*admission between 2008 and 2015; \*\*\*\*admission between 2008 and 2012.

Source: prepared by the authors (2022).

When we verified the category of admission, we notice that these students were mostly admitted through the general classification, data that shows a great difference to the history of evasion between 2015 and 2018, when non-quota students (general classification) represented only 28% of evasions (Lima, 2021). We should note that the twelve students who appear without category are those who joined through abandonment return, external transfer and internal transfer.

In order to minimize the evasion rate verified post-pandemic, the collegiate course of Administration, through the ordinary session held on June 27th, 2022, instituted an exceptional locking modality for students who acquired dropout status at the beginning of the 2022/1 semester (UFSC, 2022a). With the dropout status, students would be disconnected from the University.

Therefore, in order to contact these students, an e-mail was sent to them all on July 1st, 2022. The e-mail informed of the exceptional possibility of locking the registration, so that the student would not lose their connection with the institution and, consequently, return to academic activities in the 2022/2 semester. To this end, the e-mail requested the student's response showing interest in the opportunity in order for the exceptional locking to be carried out.

By July 8th, 2022, they had received 38 (thirty-eight) replies, 30 (thirty) of which were interested in the opportunity and 8 (eight) said they had no interest in returning to the course.

As stated, the 30 (thirty) students who showed interest had their registrations locked. However, it was found that only 13 (thirteen) students still had their enrollment in a regular situation in the 2022/2 semester, presenting a return rate of 6,74% considering the 193 (one hundred and ninety-three) students.

## 5 Final considerations

With the results obtained in this study, we were able to identify the profile of students who dropped out of the Administration course at UFSC during the COVID-19 pandemic. The results showed that most of these students belonged to the evening course, were male and aged between 22 and 26 years old.

We observed that most of the students had attended one or two semesters before the interruption of activities due to the pandemic. Additionally, given that the administration courses at UFSC are offered at the Florianópolis campus, most students resided in the Metropolitan Region of Florianópolis. However, it should be noted that 20,73% of the students, due to remote education, did not reside in Florianópolis (or in the state of Santa Catarina) and, in this way, did not get to know the course up close.

Moreover, we could verify through the results that 80,83% of the students who dropped out during the pandemic were self-declared white. The majority of these students joined in higher education through the entrance exam, with the general classification as an admission category, without the use of any form of quotas.

Finally, we suggest new studies to verify the impacts caused by emergency remote teaching in the lives of students who remained in their respective institutions and then returned to face-to-face education. They would be especially timely considering that this emergency system was established by several higher education institutions during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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