



Navigating Changing Options

Current Students report – Spring term 2023

Wave Ten – Fieldwork March 2023

Report Prepared by:

Liam Clements, Research Executive
Barbara Bradshaw, Senior Market Research Consultant
Beth Wiles, Research Manager

Summary of findings

University Experience

- When asked for one word to describe their feelings about their university experience so far this academic year, current undergraduate student respondents' reaction was mixed. The most frequently mentioned words were Stressful, Challenging, and Exciting. Other frequently mentioned words included Interesting, Busy, and Overwhelming.
- Overall, around four-fifths (83%) of respondents reported being happy on their course so far this academic year. However, among final year respondents more than one quarter said they were not happy.
- Respondents most frequently indicated that they were happy with their university's approach to providing the resources they need to do their course (88%), teaching and learning (85%), and providing careers support (79%). Respondents were least happy with their university's approach to supporting students with rising costs of living (50%).
- 80% of respondents felt supported by their university at this time.
- Around three-quarters of respondents felt their university was doing the best it could (74%), and 59% felt their university experience was better than expected. However, only around half (47%) felt they were getting value for money. Final year respondents were however less likely to agree with the statements than those at the start of their university life.
- Respondents had a number of concerns, the cost of living (68%), getting the grades they want/need (66%), and managing their workload (61%) were the most frequently cited issues worrying respondents.

Accommodation

- 82% of current student respondents living away from home for university were satisfied with their accommodation this academic year and over half (53%) felt they were getting value for money for their accommodation.
- Three-quarters (75%) of respondents planned to arrange their accommodation for the next academic year privately, 77% were planning to move to a different accommodation next year.
- Respondents most frequently described their ideal university accommodation as clean, cheap, safe, modern, and comfortable.
- Proximity to campus (78%), affordable prices (78%), and bills included (67%) were the leading influences over respondents' choice of accommodation for next year.

Summary of findings

Postgraduate Study

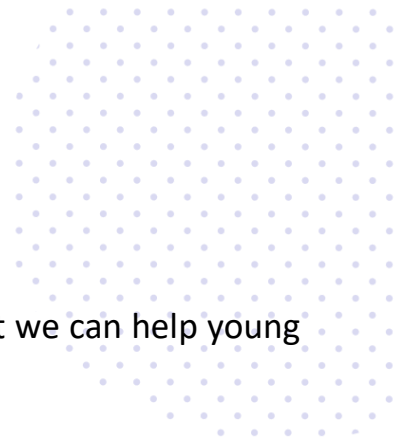
- Around two-fifths (41%) of respondents indicated that they were currently considering or would consider postgraduate study. However, 44% felt that the increased cost of living has made them less likely to consider it. Over half (53%) suggested that the increased cost of living had made no difference to their likelihood to consider postgraduate study.
- Of respondents interested in postgraduate study, 84% planned to take a course related to or continuing on from their undergraduate degree - Less than one in ten (8%) planned to study an unrelated subject area.
- Respondents were most frequently motivated to take a postgraduate course to develop their knowledge and skills (62%). This was closely followed by wanting to enhance their employment options (59%) or to specialise in an area of interest (59%).
- Respondents were most likely to indicate that they went/will go to university websites to find out about postgraduate study (76%). This was followed by attending on campus open days / events (57%) and seeking information from lecturers/academic staff on their undergraduate course (50%).
- Reflecting on their information needs regarding postgraduate study, respondents were most likely to suggest that they wanted information concerning entry requirements / subject requirements (87%), module information (77%), and student satisfaction (62%).

Careers and Employability

- Nearly half (49%) of current undergraduate student respondents said they didn't feel prepared to enter the workforce.
- Just over a third (36%) of respondents had already decided on a career path. Similar proportions indicated that they had maybe (35%) or not (28%) made this decision.
- Considering their existing skills and qualifications (65%) and speaking to parent(s)/carer(s) (37%) were popular among respondents as methods of deciding their chosen career path.
- A good work life balance (59%), a high salary (49%), and a sense of purpose in what they do/job alignment with their values (46%) were the most frequently identified desirable characteristics of an ideal career by respondents.



Background and Target Audience



Background and Approach

These findings are from the 10th wave of The Student Room's Navigating Changing Options Research. We developed this survey so that we can help young people navigate these challenging times, to track changes over time and to deliver value to our clients and The Student Room.

Methodology and target audience

An online survey was shared with relevant members of The Student Room Community.

- The target audience was current undergraduate students studying a degree at a UK university.
- Fieldwork took place between 7th March and 28th March 2023.



Respondent Profile



363 complete and partial responses were received, all were UK students aged 17 or over currently studying at university. Any significant differences by year of study are identified throughout this document.

Age

17	1%
18	29%
19	32%
20	24%
21 or over	15%

Parent(s)/carer(s) went to university?

Yes	51%
No	48%
Prefer not to say	1%

Gender

Male	18%
Female	78%
I identify my gender in another way	3%
Prefer not to say	1%

Current year of study

Foundation Year Student	7%
First Year Undergraduate Student	58%
Continuing Undergraduate Student	23%
Final Year Undergraduate Student	11%
Prefer not to say	<1%

Living arrangements

Staying at home and commuting to university	29%
Living away for university	71%

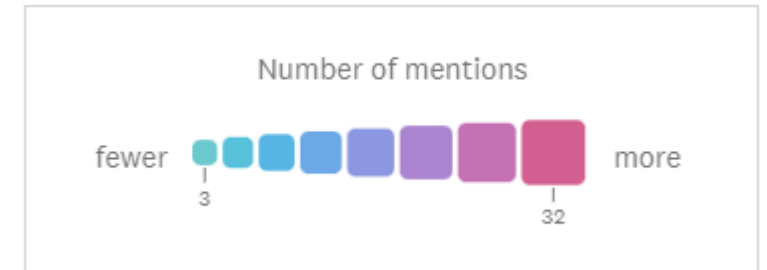


University Experience

When asked for one word to describe their feelings about their university experience this year, reaction was somewhat mixed, with 41% of all responses being positive. The most frequently mentioned words were Stressful, Challenging, and Exciting. Other frequently mentioned words included Interesting, Busy, and Overwhelming.



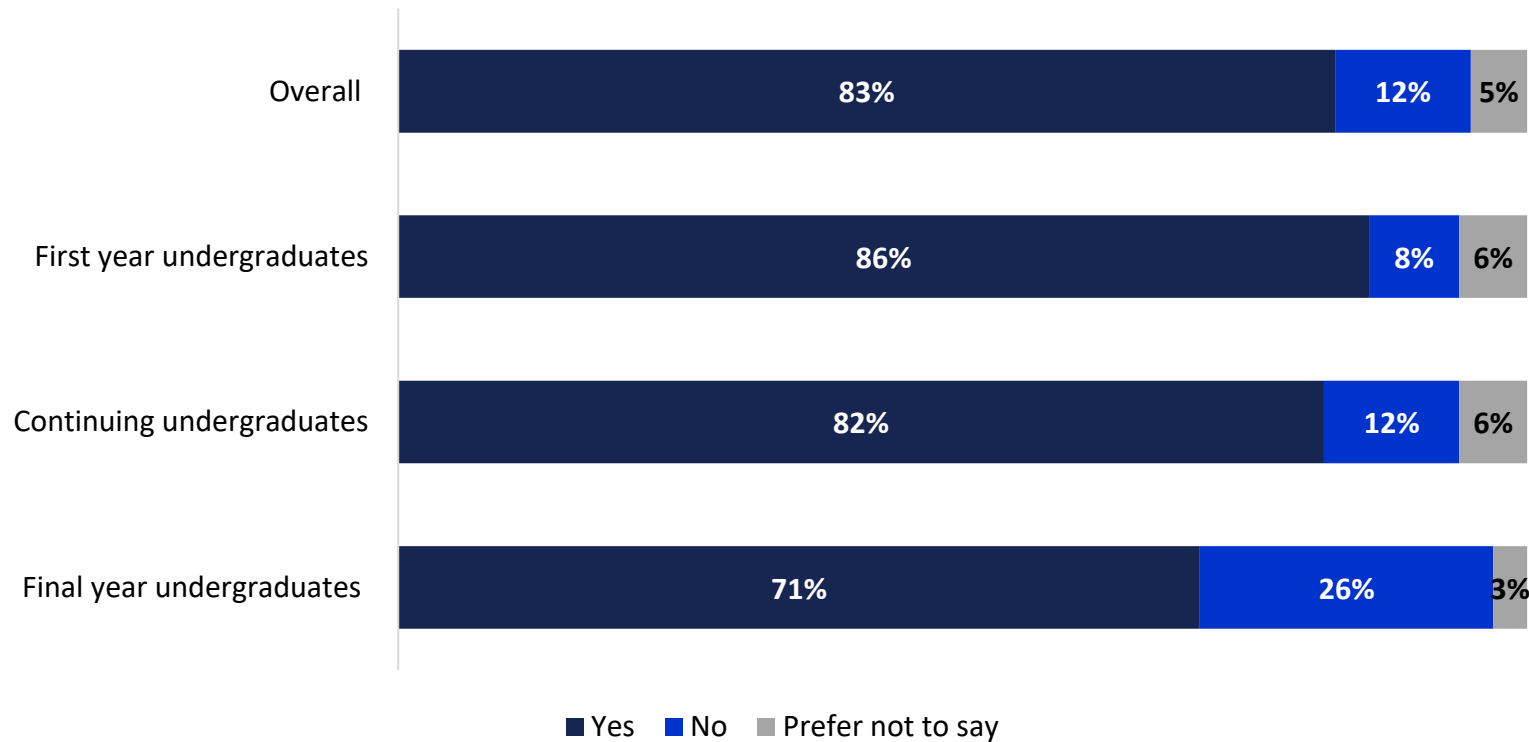
University experience this year



Overall, around four-fifths (83%) of respondents reported being happy on their course so far this academic year. However, among final year respondents more than one quarter were not happy



Happiness on course



Happiness with the course appeared to decline slightly as respondents progressed through their studies; Final year undergraduate students were slightly more likely than first year undergraduate students to report not feeling happy on their university course this academic year (26% cf. 8%)

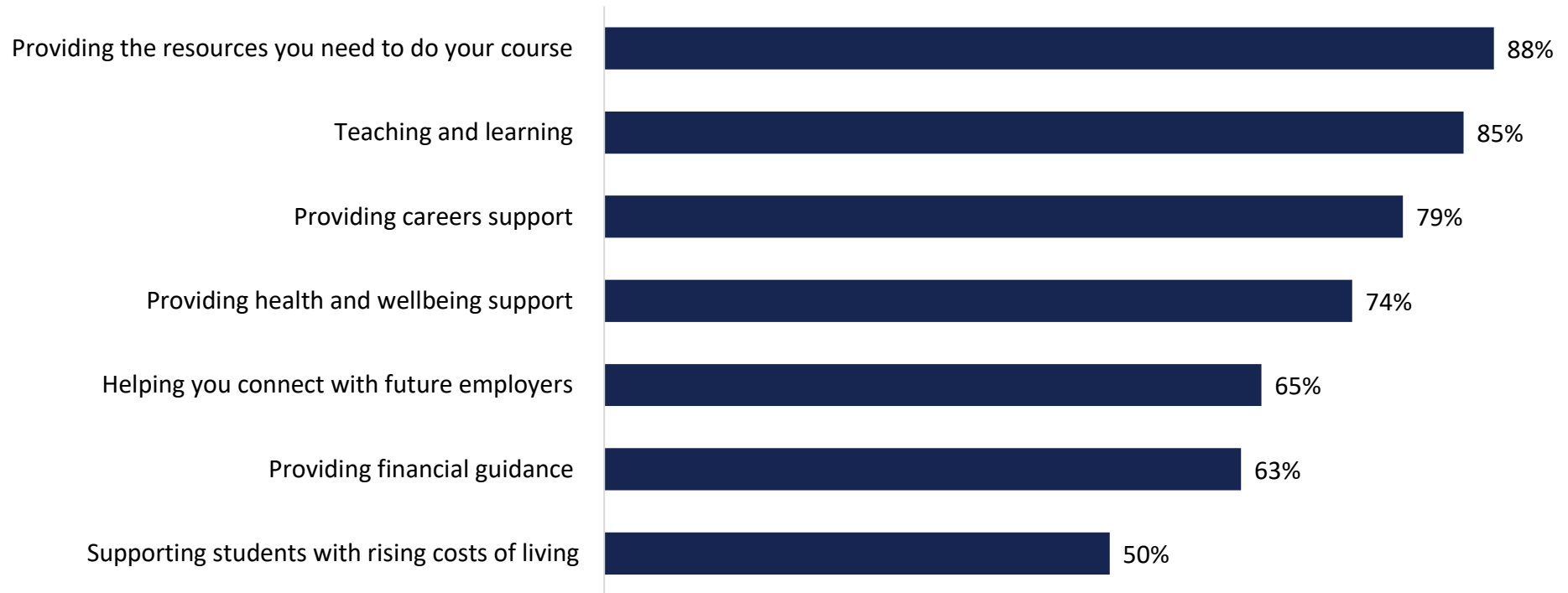
Q: Are you happy on your university course so far this academic year? (Single Response) (Overall Base: 355, First year undergraduate base: 207, Continuing undergraduate base*: 82, Final year undergraduate base*: 38)

*Low base

Respondents most frequently indicated that they were happy with their university's approach to providing the resources they need to do their course (88%), teaching and learning (85%), and providing careers support (79%). Respondents were least happy with their university's approach to supporting students with rising costs of living (50%)



Happiness with their university's approach

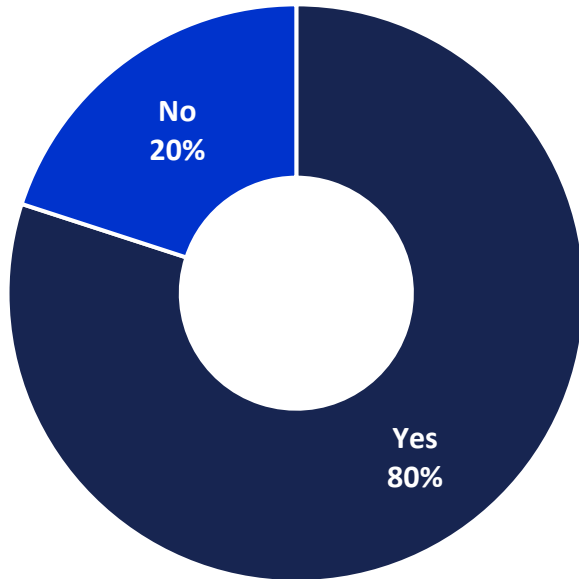


Q: Are you happy with how your university has approached the following? Yes/No (Grid Question) (Base: 346)

Around four-fifths (80%) of respondents felt supported by their university at this time



Whether respondents felt supported by their university

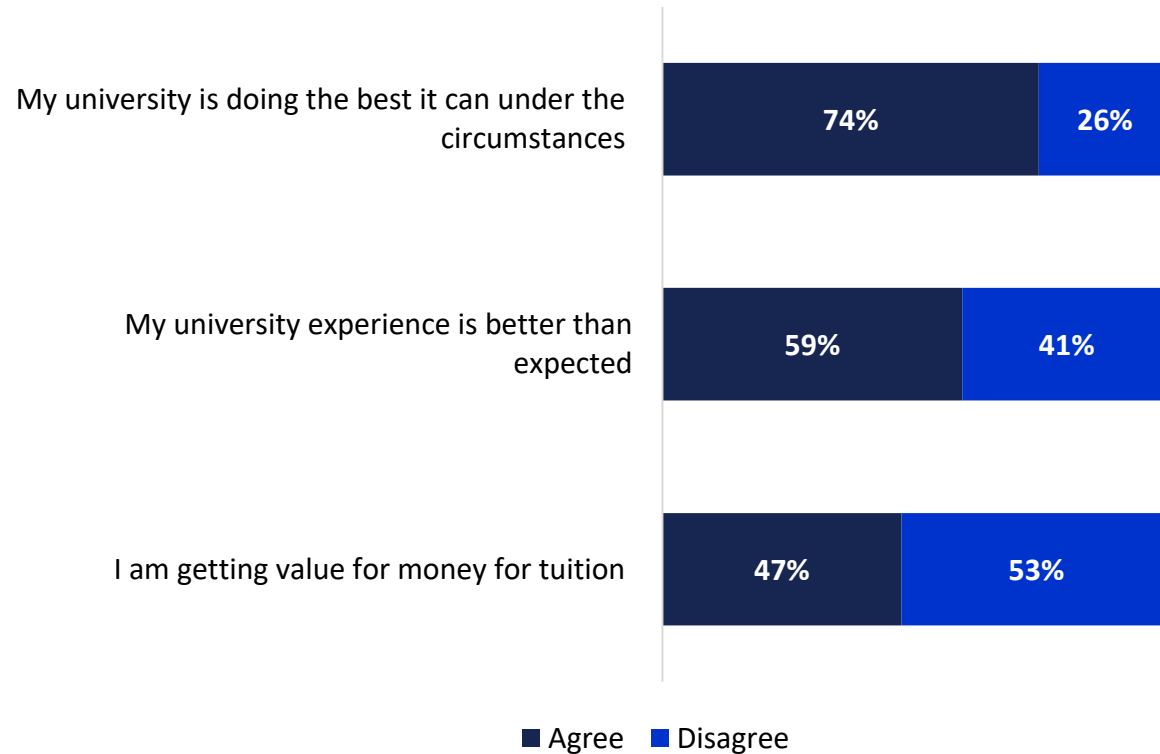


Q: Do you feel supported by your university at this time? (Single Response) (Base: 345)

Around three-quarters of respondents felt their university was doing the best it could (74%), and 59% felt their university experience was better than expected. However, only around half (47%) felt they were getting value for money. Final year respondents were however less likely to agree with the statements than those at the start of their university life



Extent of respondent agreement with statements about their university experience



First year undergraduate respondents were more likely to agree that their **university is doing the best it can under the circumstances** (77%) than final year respondents (57%).

First year undergraduate respondents were also more likely to agree that their **university experience is better than expected** than final year undergraduate respondents (61% cf. 42%).

Q: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? (Grid Question) (Base: 341)

Respondents had a number of concerns, each selecting an average of around six of those listed. The cost of living (68%), getting the grades they want/need (66%), and managing their workload (61%) were the most frequently cited issues worrying respondents.



Current worries



First year undergraduate respondents were more likely to report feeling worried about the **finding suitable accommodation** (19%) than continuing undergraduate respondents (9%).

First year undergraduate respondents were more likely to be worrying about **being accepted by their peers** than final year respondents (22% cf. 8%).

Both first year (45%) and continuing undergraduate respondents (44%) were more likely to report worrying about **accessing work placements / industry experience** than final year undergraduate respondents (19%).

Reflecting on the prospect of **getting a part-time job**, first year undergraduate respondents were more likely (43%) than both continuing (27%) and final year undergraduate respondents (24%) to be worrying about this.

Q: Which of the following, if any, are worrying you at the moment? Please select all that apply (Multiple Response) (Base: 340)

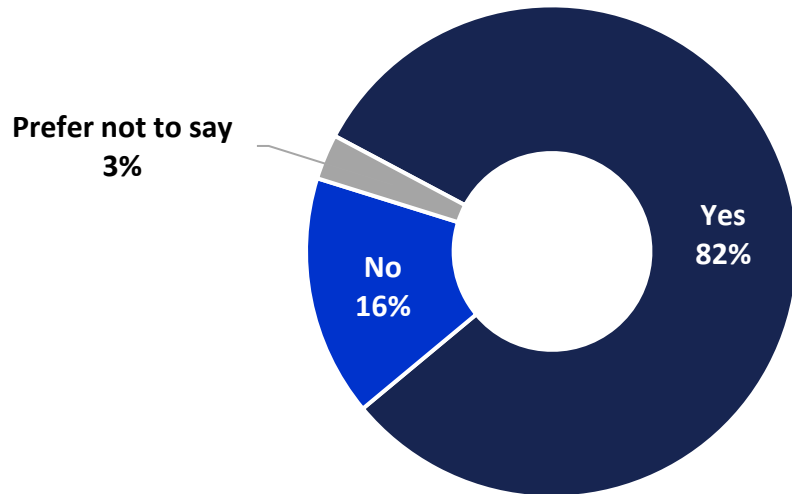


Accommodation

82% of respondents currently living away for university were satisfied with their accommodation this academic year



Satisfaction with accommodation



Arrangement of accommodation



First year undergraduate respondents were more likely to have arranged their current accommodation **through their university** than continuing undergraduate respondents (82% cf. 14%). Similarly, first year undergraduate respondents were more likely to be satisfied with their accommodation this academic year than continuing undergraduate students (87% cf. 65%)

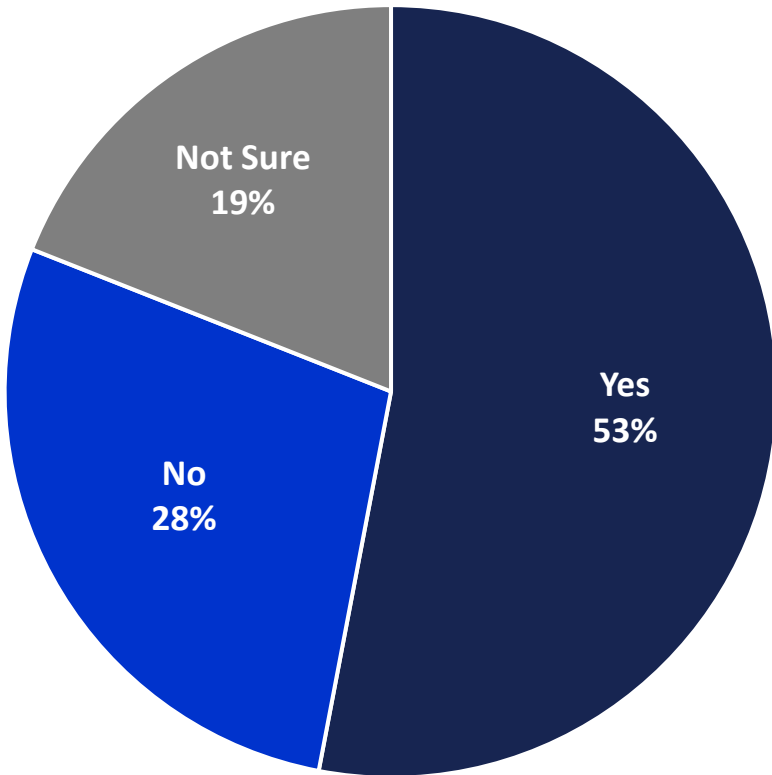
Q: Are you satisfied with your accommodation this academic year? (Single Response) (Base: 229, respondents living away for university)

Q: Did you arrange your current accommodation...? (Single Response) (Base: 229, respondents living away for university)

Over half (53%) of current student respondents living away for university felt they were getting value for money for their accommodation



Value for money of accommodation

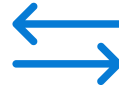


Q: Do you feel like you are getting value for money for your accommodation? (Single Response) (Base: 229, respondents living away for university)

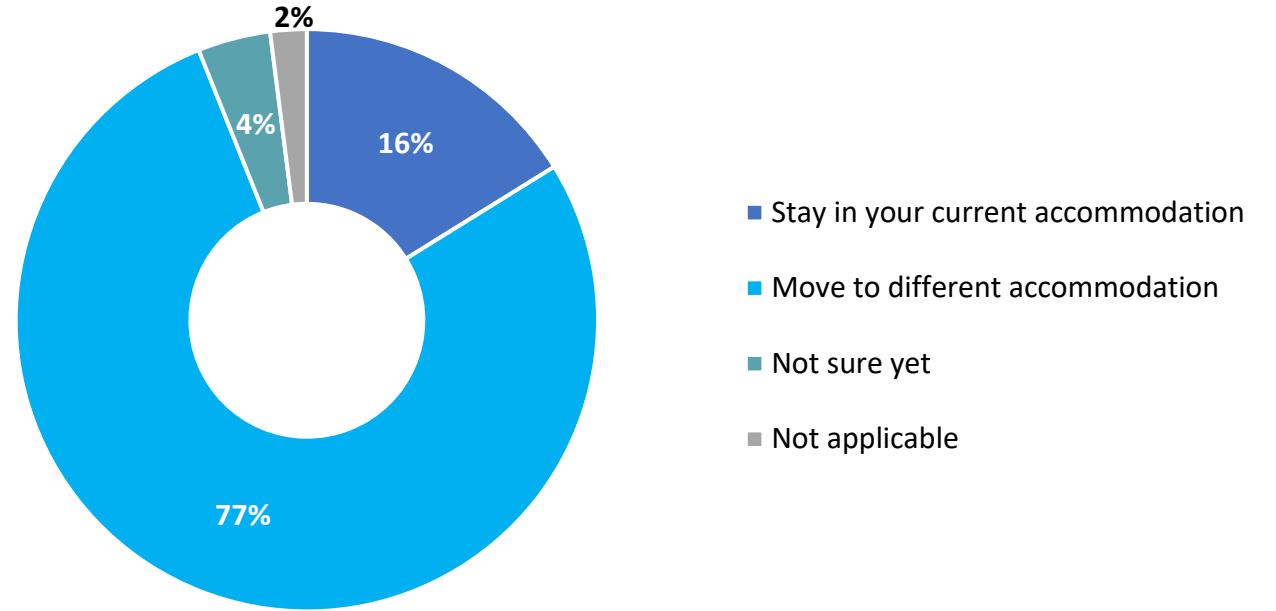
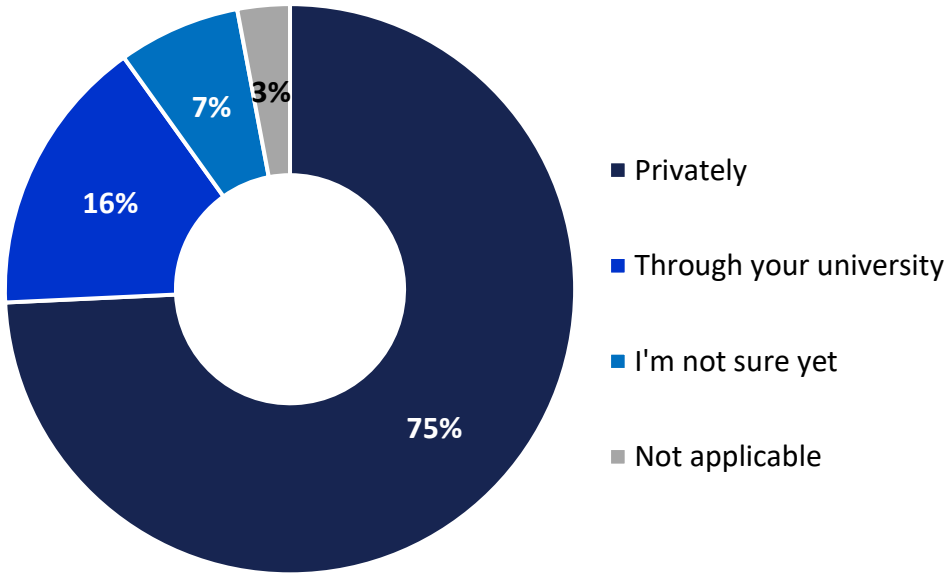
Three-quarters (75%) of respondents planned to arrange their accommodation for the next academic year privately, and a similar proportion (77%) were planning to move to a different accommodation



How respondents plan to arrange next year's accommodation



Plans to change accommodation

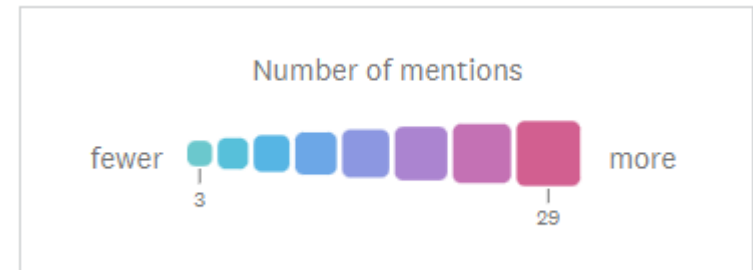


Q: Next academic year, do you plan to arrange your accommodation...? (Single Response) (Base: 200, respondents living away for university, excluding final year undergraduate respondents)

Q: And are you likely to...? (Single Response) (Base: 201, respondents living away for university, excluding final year undergraduate respondents)

Respondents most frequently described their ideal university accommodation as clean, cheap, safe, modern, and comfortable

 Ideal university accommodation

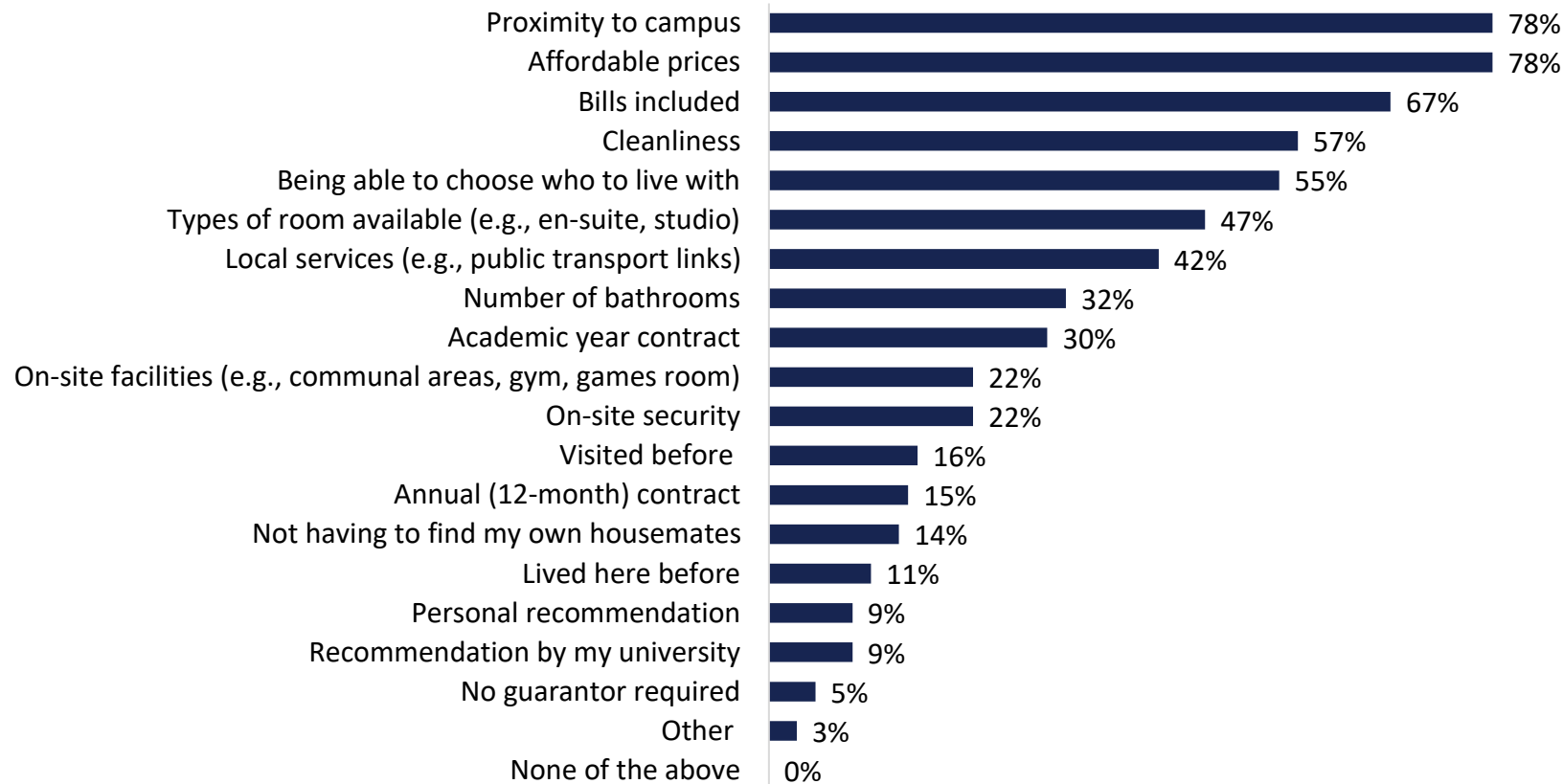


Q: What one word describes your ideal university accommodation? (Open Comment) (Base: 193, respondents living away for university)

Proximity to campus (78%), affordable prices (78%), and bills included (67%) were the leading influences over respondents' choice of accommodation for next year



Factors influencing the choice of next year's accommodation



First year undergraduate respondents were less likely to have had their choice of accommodation for next year influenced by **affordable prices** (73% cf. 88%) and whether they had **lived there before** (8% cf. 19%) than continuing undergraduate respondents.

First year undergraduate respondents were however more likely to have had their choice of university accommodation next year influenced by **on-site facilities (e.g., communal areas, gym, games room)** (24%) than continuing undergraduate respondents (10%).

Q: Which of the following factors have influenced / will influence your choice of accommodation for next year? Please select all that apply (Multiple Response) (Base: 199, All foundation, first and continuing students living away)

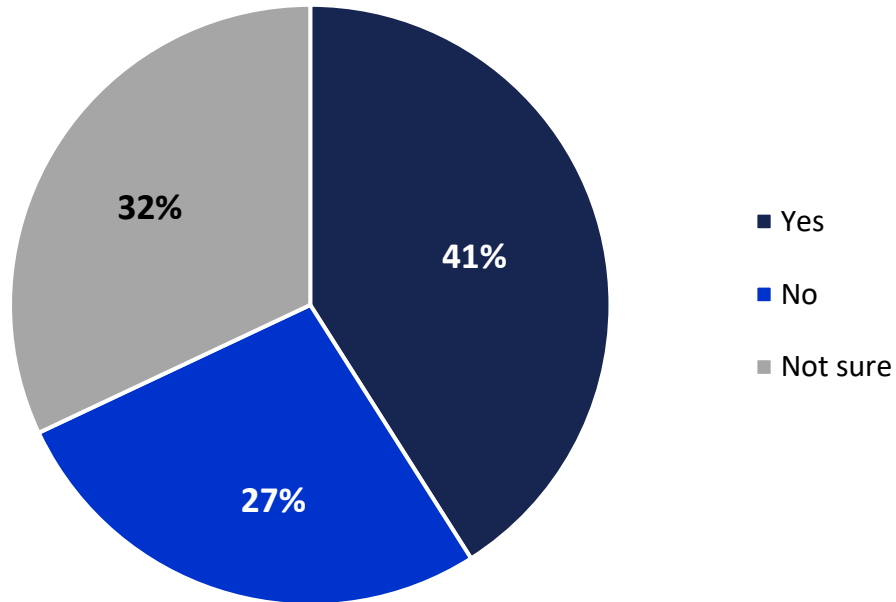


Postgraduate Study

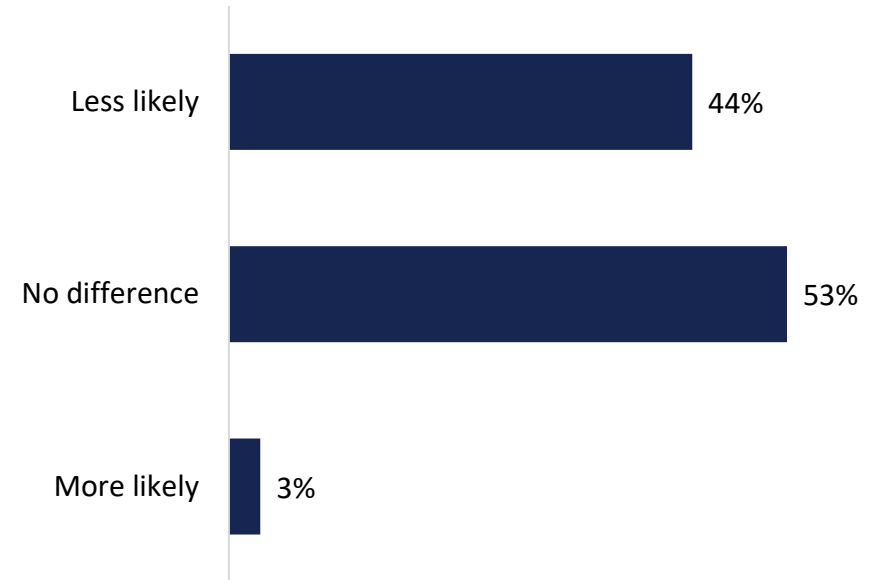
Around two-fifths (41%) of respondents indicated that they were currently considering or would consider postgraduate study. However, 44% felt that the increased cost of living has made them less likely to consider it. Over half (53%) suggested that the increased cost of living had made no difference to their likelihood to consider postgraduate study



Consideration of postgraduate study



Likelihood to consider postgraduate study in light of increased cost of living



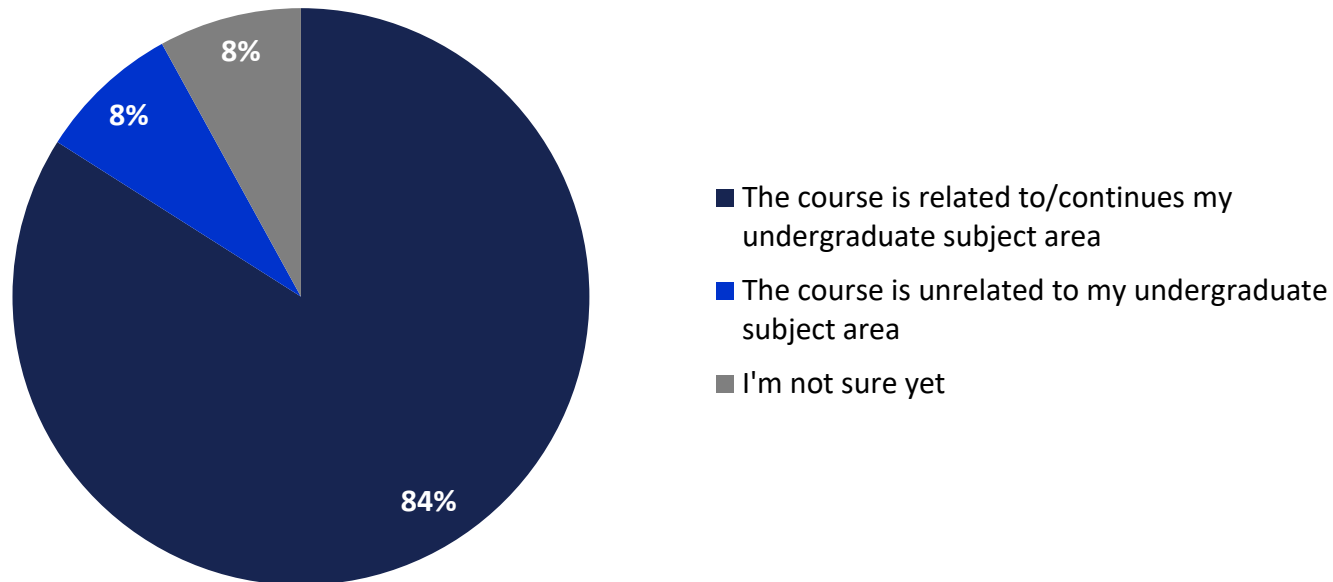
Q: Are you currently considering or would you consider postgraduate study? (Single Response) (Base: 312)

Q: Has the increased cost of living made you more or less likely to consider postgraduate study? (Single Response) (Base: 310)

Of respondents interested in postgraduate study, 84% planned to take a course related to or continuing on from their undergraduate degree - Less than one in ten (8%) planned to study an unrelated subject area



Postgraduate plans

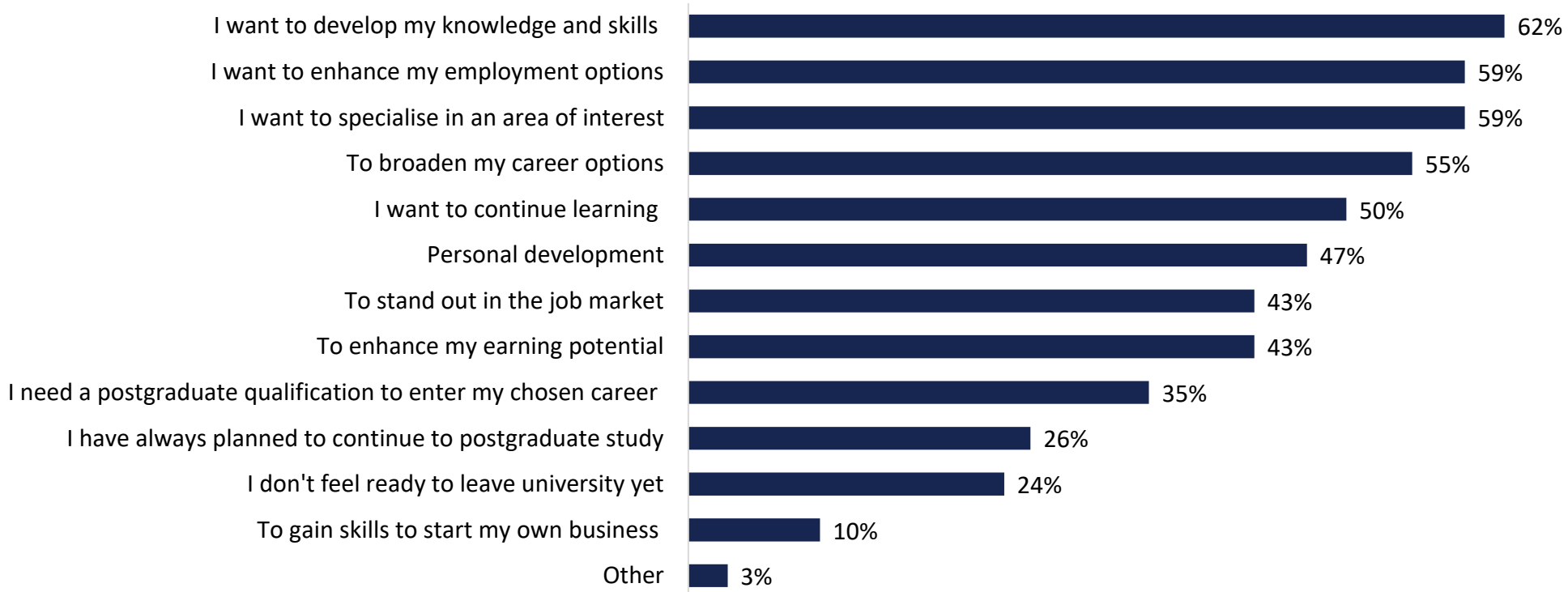


Q: Which of the following best describes the postgraduate study you are thinking of undertaking? (Single Response) (Base: 127, those interested in postgraduate study)

Respondents were most frequently motivated to take a postgraduate course to develop their knowledge and skills (62%). This was closely followed by wanting to enhance their employment options (59%) or to specialise in an area of interest (59%)



Motivations for undertaking postgraduate study

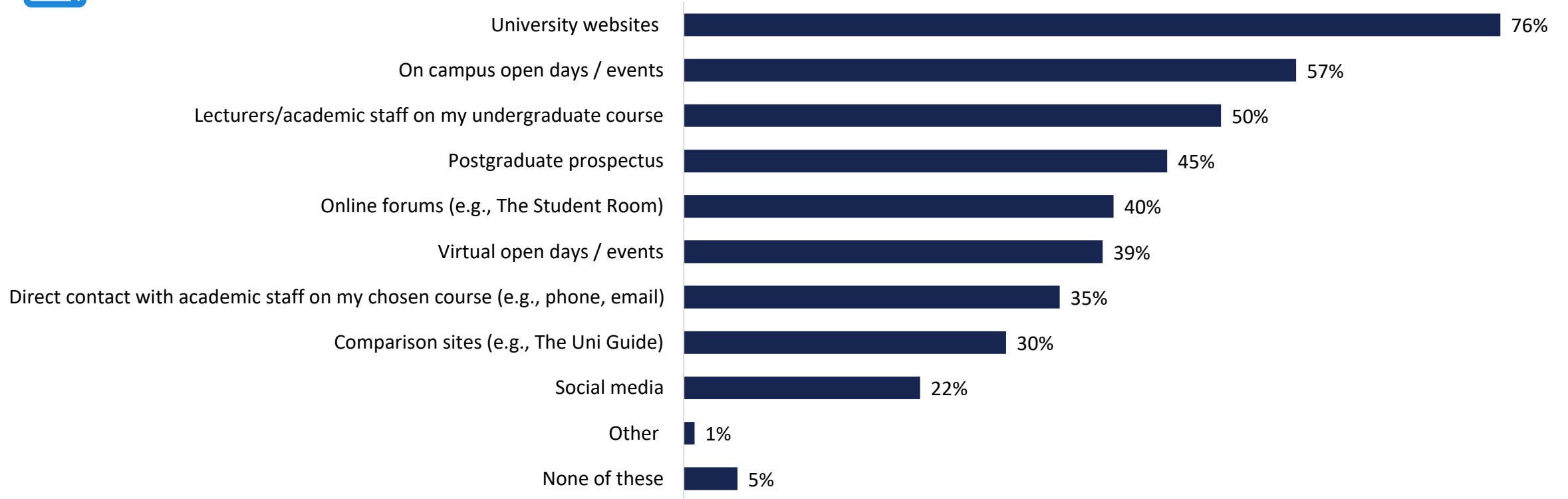


Q: What are your motivations for taking a postgraduate course? Please select all that apply. (Multiple Response) (Base: 127, those interested in postgraduate study)

Respondents were most likely to indicate that they went/will go to university websites to find out about postgraduate study (76%). This was followed by attending on campus open days / events (57%) and seeking information from lecturers/academic staff on their undergraduate course (50%)



Postgraduate study information sources

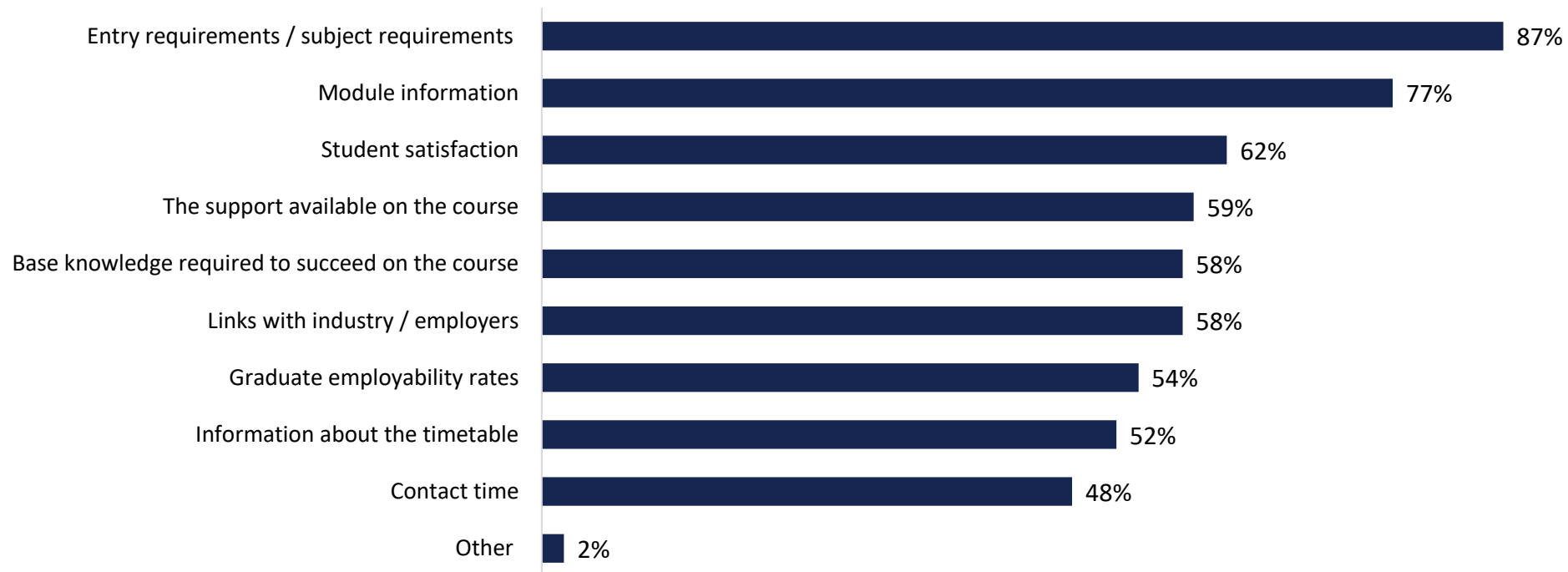


Q: Where did you go / will you go to find out about postgraduate study? Please select all that apply (Multiple Response) (Base: 126, those interested in postgraduate study)

Reflecting on their information needs regarding postgraduate study, respondents were most likely to suggest that they wanted information concerning entry requirements / subject requirements (87%), module information (77%), and student satisfaction (62%)



Postgraduate information needs



Q: What information do you need about postgraduate study? Please select all that apply. (Multiple Response) (Base: 125, those interested in postgraduate study)

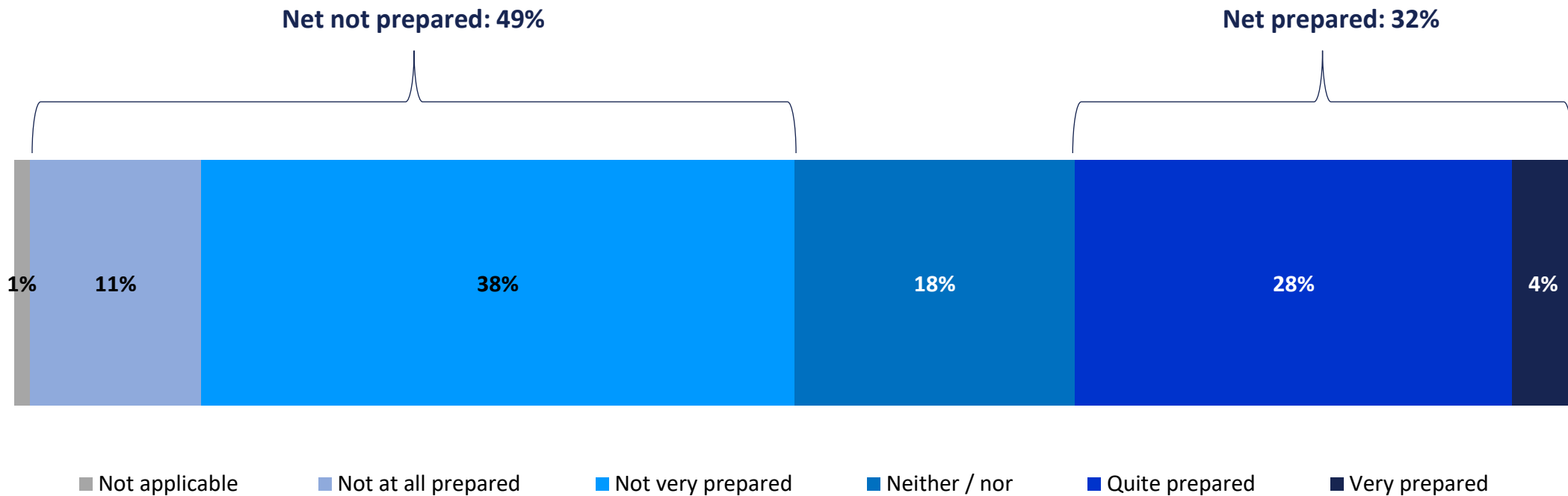


Careers and Employability

49% of current undergraduate respondents said they didn't feel prepared to enter the workforce, only around one third (32%) felt quite or very prepared.



How prepared respondents feel for entering the workforce

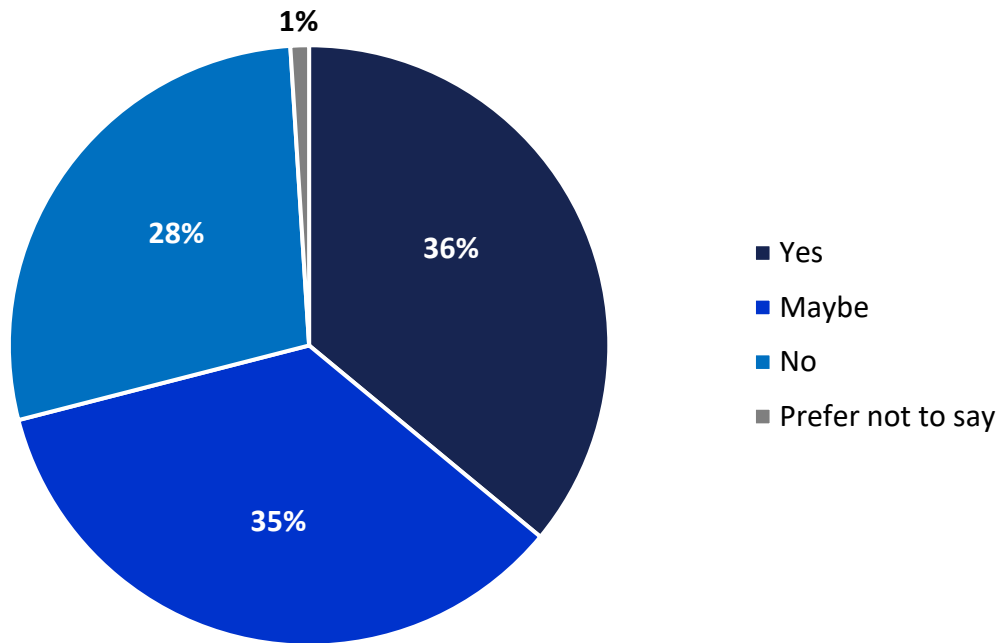


Q: How prepared do you feel for entering the workforce? (Single Response) (Base: 329)

Just over a third (36%) of current undergraduate student respondents had already decided on a career path. Similar proportions indicated that they had maybe (35%) or not (28%) made this decision



Whether respondents have decided on a future career path



There were no significant differences recorded among respondents by year of study for this question, though interestingly under half (46%) of final year undergraduate respondents indicated that they had decided on a future career path.

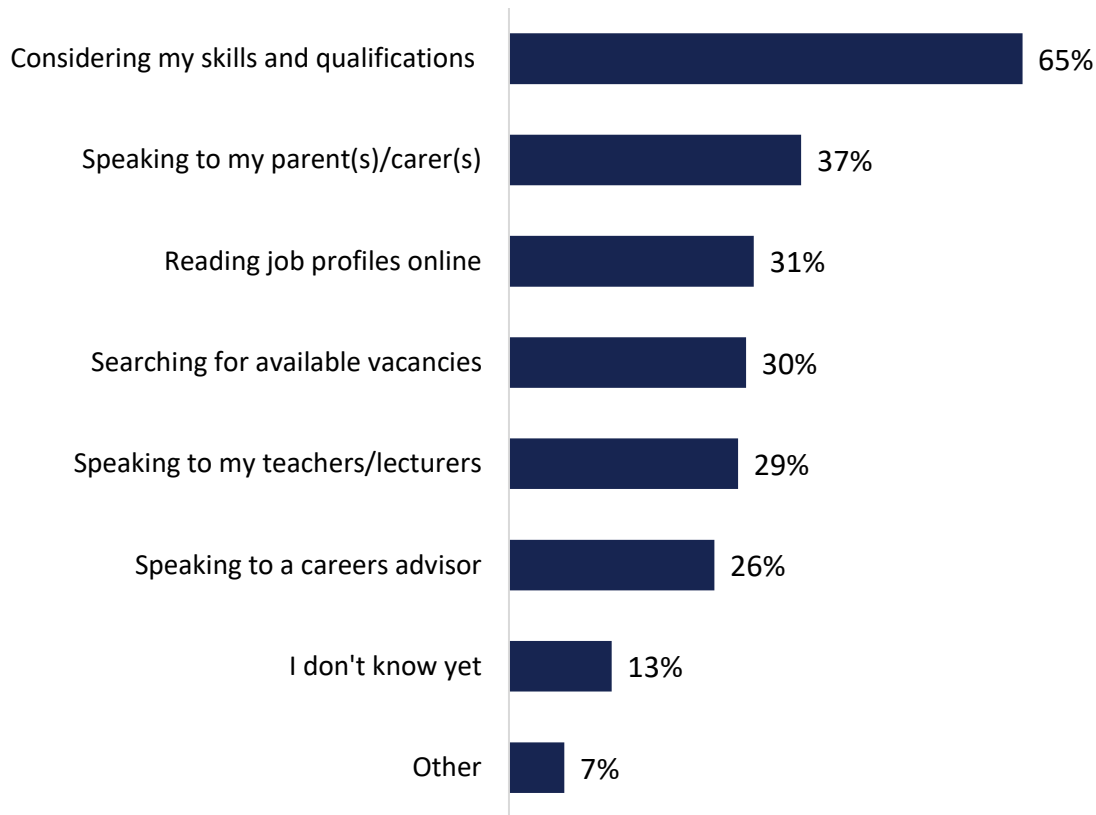
Q: Have you decided on your future career path? (Single Response) (Base: 337)



When deciding on a career path respondents were most likely to considering their existing skills and qualifications (65%). Speaking to parent(s)/carer(s) (37%) and reading job profiles online (31%) were mentioned to a lesser degree



How respondents decided/will decide on their chosen career path



Final year undergraduate respondents were more likely than first year undergraduates to suggest that **searching for available vacancies** (46% cf. 27%) was how they had decided/ would decide on their chosen career path.

Where respondents indicated that they had decided/will decide their career path by other means, this included an enduring interest in the sector and seeking out careers that would provide enjoyment and fulfilment.

Q: How did you decide / will you decide on your chosen career path? Please select all that apply (Multiple Response) (Base: 335)

A good work life balance (59%), a high salary (49%), and a sense of purpose in what they do/job alignment with their values (46%) were the most frequently identified desirable characteristics of an ideal career



Features of respondents' ideal future careers



Final year undergraduate students were more likely than first year undergraduate students to identify **a sense of purpose in what they do / the job being aligned with their values** as a feature of their ideal future career (64% cf. 43%)

Both final year (33%) and continuing undergraduate students (30%) were more likely than first year undergraduate students (17%) to suggest that the availability of **learning and development opportunities (e.g., training)** would be a feature of their ideal future career.

Continuing undergraduate students (32%) were more likely than first year undergraduate respondents (18%) to identify **clear progression routes** as a feature of their ideal future career.

Q: What are you looking for in your ideal career? Please select up to three (Multiple Response) (Base: 333)



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Thank you

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hello@tsrinsight.com

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