

How is the rising cost of living impacting university decision-making now?

This is the third iteration of our Cost of Living summary. [September 2022](#) and [June 2023](#) findings are available for download.

Methodology:

TSR Asks monthly omnibus survey of prospective undergraduate students planning to start a university course in 2024 or 2025, aged 16+

Fieldwork:

5th – 8th April 2024

Base:

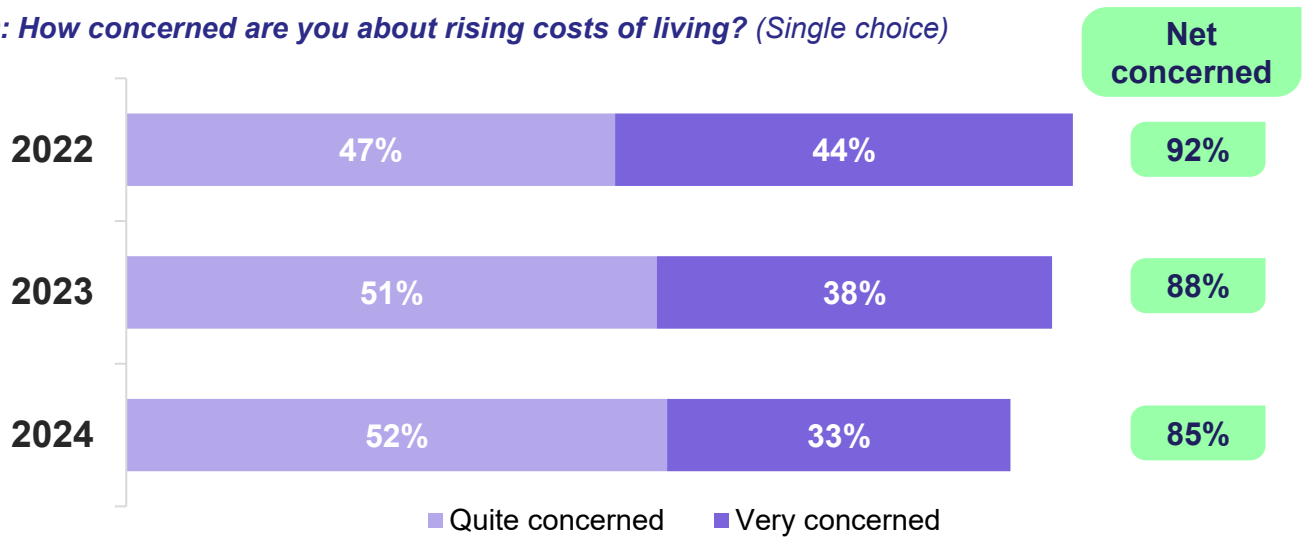
365 responses

How are prospective undergraduates feeling about the rising costs of living?

The majority of respondents in the 2024 research were concerned about rising costs of living (85%), although this represented the continuation of a slight downward trend compared to previous years (92% September 2022, 88% June 2023).

First in family respondents were more likely to be *very concerned* about rising costs of living than those whose parent(s)/carer(s) had attended university (44% cf. 28%).

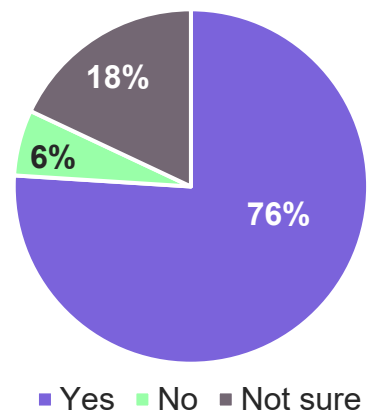
Q: How concerned are you about rising costs of living? (Single choice)



Q: Do you feel the rising cost of living will impact your experience of student life? (Single choice)

Thinking ahead, more than three-quarters (76%) of respondents in April 2024 expected that the rising cost of living would have an impact on their experience of student life, in line with the proportion that felt this way in May 2023 (77%).

Those considering studying Arts and Humanities subjects were significantly more likely than those considering Social Sciences to feel that these rising costs would impact their university life (83% cf. 69%).



Interestingly, when asking current undergraduates about their experiences in a separate study, the same proportion (76%) felt that their student life *had* been impacted by the rising cost of living, suggesting concerns are borne out once students begin their studies.

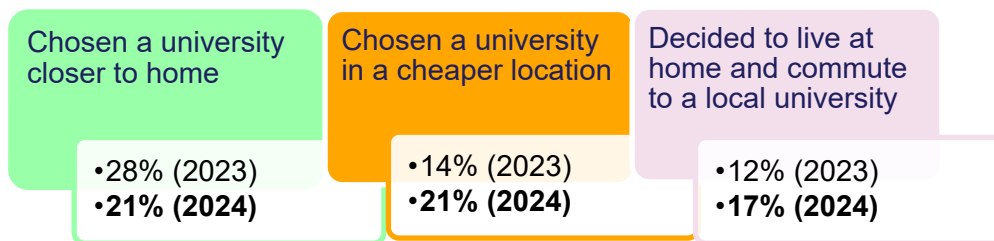
What impact are rising costs of living having on firm choice university and course?

In total, over three-quarters (78%) had made some changes to their plans as a result of the rising costs of living.

University choice: For half of 2024 entry respondents (50%) rising costs of living impacted their firm choice **university** decision-making. More than one-fifth had chosen a university closer to home and the same proportion reported choosing a university in a cheaper location.

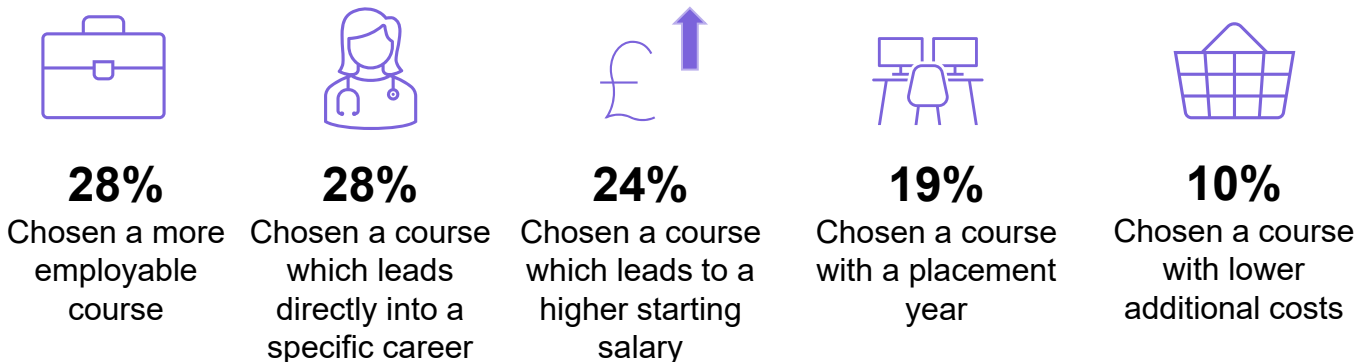
Compared to 2023, there appears to have been a slight shift away from choosing a university closer to home and towards either living at a home or choosing a university in a cheaper location.

Q: Thinking about your Firm Choice university, have you made any of the following decisions because of the rising cost of living? (Multiple choice) (Base: 123, 2024 entry respondents)



Course choice: Firm choice **course** decision-making was impacted in some way by the rising costs of living for 61% of respondents. And among first in family respondents the impact was greater, three-quarters (75%) had made at least one of the following decisions because of the cost of living, compared to just over half (52%) of those whose parent(s)/carer(s) had attended university.

Q: Thinking about your Firm Choice course, have you made any of the following decisions because of the rising cost of living? (Multiple choice) (Base: 122, 2024 entry respondents)



Got questions? For further information, to find out **how we can meet your research needs** or to add your own confidential ad hoc or tracking questions to our monthly TSR Asks surveys, please contact us: hello@tsrinsight.com

How have rising costs of living over the last year impacted university decision-making?

Chosen a cheaper accommodation option

- 26% (2023)
- 33% (2024)

Accommodation choice: Compared to June 2023, 2024 entry respondents were more likely to have chosen a cheaper accommodation option as a result of the rising cost of living.

Reflecting ongoing concerns around cost of living and the potential impact on the university experience, almost three-fifths (59%) of respondents said they were now more likely to consider at least one of the following changes to their plans, including 25% planning to attend open days virtually rather than in person.

Q: Compared to the plans you had in mind for university this time last year, are you more or less likely to...? (Single response grid - % more likely shown)



Consider a degree apprenticeship
30%



Attend open days virtually, rather than attending in person
25%



Defer starting university
24%



Consider an online course
10%

A higher proportion of first in family respondents said they were more likely to defer starting university (34% cf. 19%) or to consider an online course (17% cf. 7%) than those whose parent(s)/carer(s) had attended university.

What information is needed from universities?

Providing information to prospective students to support their decision making in relation to the rising cost of living would be welcomed. In a separate report we look at the information prospective undergraduates wanted from universities now (April 2024), three quarters (75%) wanted information related to finances. More specifically, 62% wanted information about **funding their studies** and 55% wanted information about **how to budget**.

Find out more about prospective undergraduates' university decision making, including the information they need, [in our summary here](#)