

# What influence do prospective undergraduates' peers have on their decision making?

We asked prospective undergraduates how their friends and classmates were supporting their university application and decision making

**Methodology:**

TSR Asks monthly omnibus survey of students currently planning to start university in 2024 or 2025, aged 16+

**Fieldwork:**

5<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> January 2024

**Base:**

734 responses

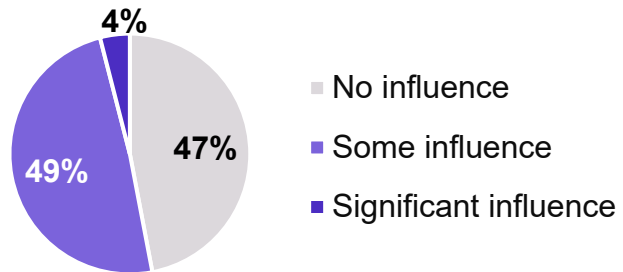
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# What influence are friends and classmates having on university decision-making?

While 47% said they would have no influence, more than half (53%) of respondents said that their friends or classmates would influence their university choice, including 4% who felt they would have a significant influence.

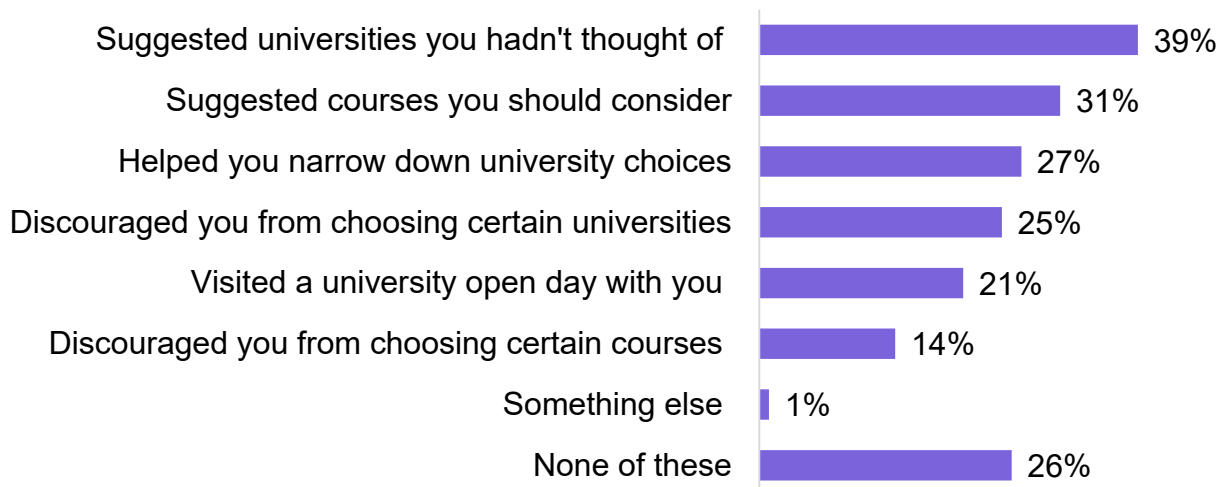
Interestingly, 2025 entry prospective undergraduates were more likely than 2024 entry respondents to say that their friends/classmates would have an influence on their university choice (57% cf. 49%).

**Q: How much influence, if any, do you feel your friends/classmates will have on your university choice?**  
(Single response)



Almost three-quarters (74%) mentioned steps their friends had taken to support their choices. Word of mouth recommendation among peers was both positive and negative, with almost two-fifths saying their friends had suggested universities to consider and conversely around one quarter saying friends had helped them narrow their choices (27%) or discouraged them from choosing certain universities (25%). Friends were also a source of support in course choice, with 31% saying friends had suggested courses to consider.

**Q: Have your friends/peers done any of the following in relation to your university application / decision making?** (Multiple response)



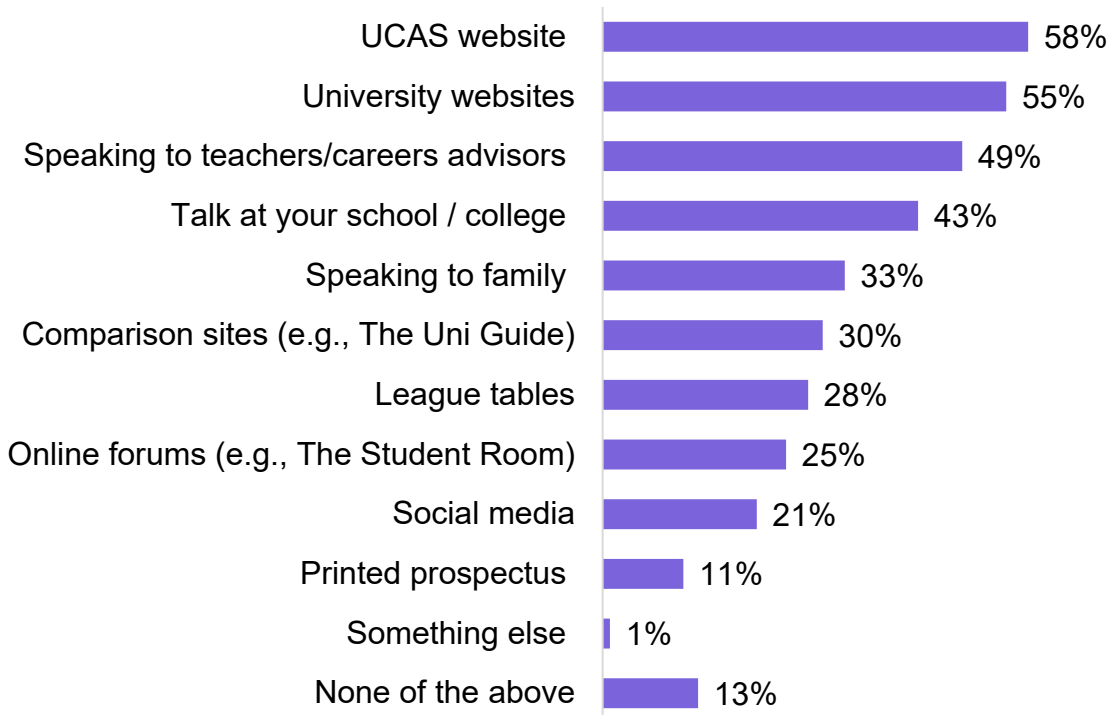
# Which information sources are friends recommending?

The majority of respondents (87%) had had at least one information source recommended by their friends or classmates in relation to their university decision making. UCAS (58%) and university websites (55%) were most likely to be recommended.

Around a third (30%) said their friends had recommended comparison sites such as The Uni Guide, while a quarter (25%) had been recommended online forums such as The Student Room.

Only around one in ten (11%) had been recommended a printed prospectus by their friends or classmates.

**Q: Which, if any, of the following information sources have your friends/classmates suggested you use in relation to your university application / decision? (Multiple response)**



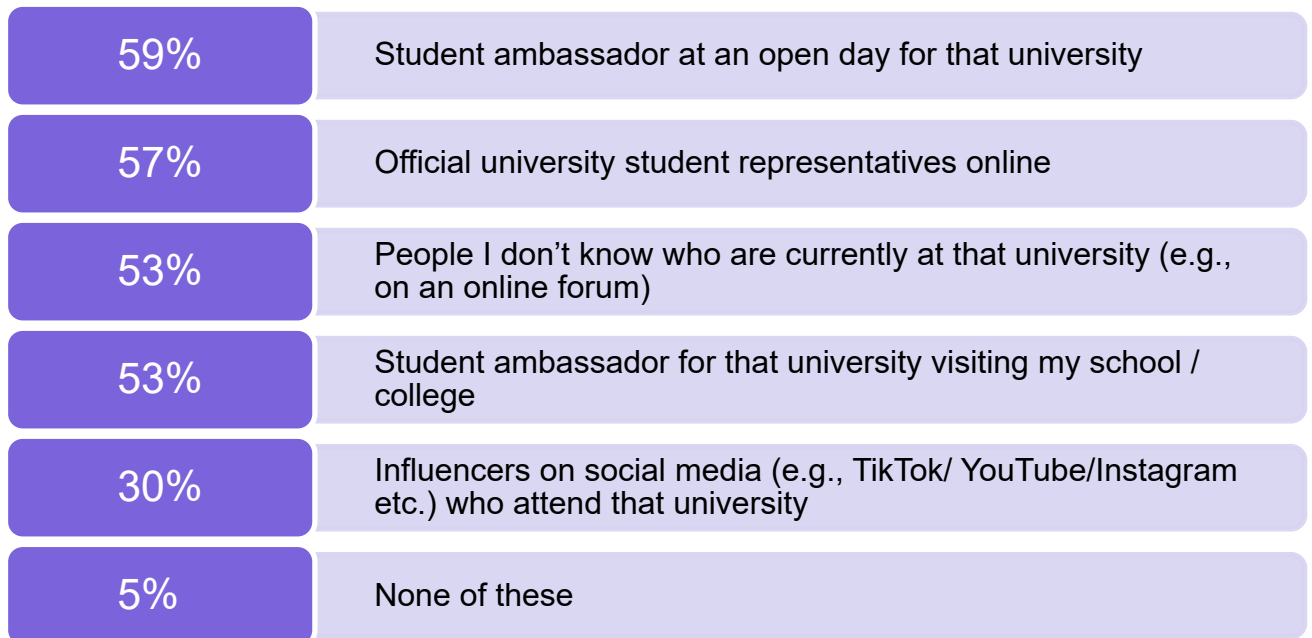
# Who do prospective UGs trust to provide information about universities?

Current student voice appears to be trusted. Almost all respondents (95%) trusted at least one of the peer-to-peer information channels listed to provide information about the universities they were considering. Student ambassadors at open days were the most trusted source, selected by almost three fifths (59%), closely followed by official university student representatives online, selected by 57%.

82% of respondents trusted at least one of the **online peer-to-peer sources** listed (student reps online, people they don't know who are currently at the university, or influencers on social media).

2024 entry respondents were more likely than 2025 entry respondents to trust people they didn't know who are currently at that university (57% cf. 49%) and influencers on social media (33% cf. 26%) to provide information about a university they are considering.

**Q: Who would you trust to provide information about a university you're considering?**  
(Multiple response)



# How do peers influence university decision-making?

Nearly two-thirds (65%) of respondents agreed it was helpful to hear student opinions about universities online. Over half of respondents (53%) often spoke to their friends about their university application. Perhaps reflecting their later stage in the process, 2024 entry respondents were more likely than 2025 entry respondents to often speak to their friends about their university application (65% cf. 41%). Interestingly, only 28% trusted their friends' opinions about universities.

Around two-fifths (38%) said they would be more likely to attend a university open day if their friends were also going, suggesting communications encouraging/supporting prospective students to visit as a group may be well received. While one in five would be more likely to choose a university if their friends were also interested in studying there this proportion increased among those staying at home for university.

**Q: Which of the following statements do you agree with? Please select all that apply**  
(Multiple response)



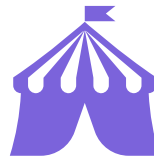
**65%**

It's helpful to hear student opinions about universities online



**53%**

I often speak to my friends about my university application



**38%**

I'd be more likely to attend a university open day if my friends were also going



**28%**

I trust my friends' opinions about universities



**19%**

I'd be more likely to choose a university if my friends are also interested in studying there

A significantly higher proportion of those staying at home for university (28%) were more likely to choose a university if their **friends were also interested in studying there** (compared to 18% of those planning to move away).

# When do prospective undergraduates want peer-to-peer support?

**88% of prospective undergraduates have sought or will seek peer-to-peer support during the university application process.**

Respondents were most likely to seek peer to peer support when deciding where to apply (46%) and after receiving an offer, but before choosing their firm choice (43%). In total, 70% sought peer-to-peer support prior to making an application, 63% sought this after making their application.

2025 entry respondents were more likely (93%) than 2024 entry respondents (85%) to say they would seek peer-to-peer support during the university application process.

**Q: At what points in the application process have you/will you seek peer-to-peer support e.g., from current university students at a university, in person or online. (Multiple response)**  
(Base: 418 – December 2023 research)

