

Coronavirus and students survey

April 2020

NUS Insight

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Executive summary: Contents

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Executive summary: Background and context

- The Coronavirus pandemic in H1 2020 has had a profound impact on UK society, with students forming part of this picture.
- The UK public is being asked to socially distance and to stay at home, and large public gatherings are not allowed. Many shops and all bars, cafes and restaurants are closed.
- Where it is possible, citizens are working at home, and there has been a national rise in unemployment, and the implementation of the coronavirus job retention scheme (which furloughs workers) where demand for jobs has dropped as a direct result of coronavirus.
- This presents specific questions around the student experience:
 - For many students, teaching has ceased, and for others, their learning opportunities have moved online. 2020 exams have been cancelled.
 - Some students were living in shared or rented accommodation, presenting queries around current living circumstance.
 - And the financial circumstances of some students has changed as a direct result of the pandemic.

Executive summary: Methodology

- NUS and OneVoice Digital, who run the TOTUM product for students, jointly conducted a survey of students to listen to and understand the student voice during the Coronavirus pandemic.
- A sample of 9872 students was achieved and it was weighted to reflect the student population in HE (54% female, 46% male).
- Respondents were given a chance to win £500 to encourage response, and the survey was live from 27 March until 6 April 2020. It took most respondents around 20 minutes to complete.
- Promotion was via NUS databases, students' union databases and the TOTUM member database.
- All research was conducted in line with the market research society code of conduct and all applicable data protection laws.

Executive summary: Key findings – Covid 19

- 62% of students are somewhat or very scared of contracting Covid-19
 - This increases with age
- **Only 23% of students** feel prepared for how they would manage their health if they did contract Covid-19
- Almost all (93%) are practicing social distancing
- But 40% of students tell us they are not at all, or only somewhat aware of guidance around living in shared accommodation
- 74% are experiencing a negative impact on family life, and 88% are experiencing a negative impact on their social lives
 - Almost all are constantly connected to their friends and families on their phones through social media and phone/videocalls

Executive summary: Key findings – Wellbeing

- In a worrying time, **91% of students tell us** they are worried about someone in their family.
- **83% of students worry** for some or all of their friends and 63% of students are worried for themselves.
- Students take a variety of approaches to help manage these concerns and their mental health:



Executive summary: Key findings – Support

- 73% of students tell us their institutions are keeping students up to date
 - However there is a role for SUs, NUS and TOTUM to help support student welfare and issues, which are not being addressed by the institution
- **International students** feel much less confident that they have the information they need and are left with uncertainties around accommodation, visas and finances
- 25% of students are volunteering in their communities
- And they feel that their communities are strongly complying with social distancing

Executive summary: Key findings – Learning

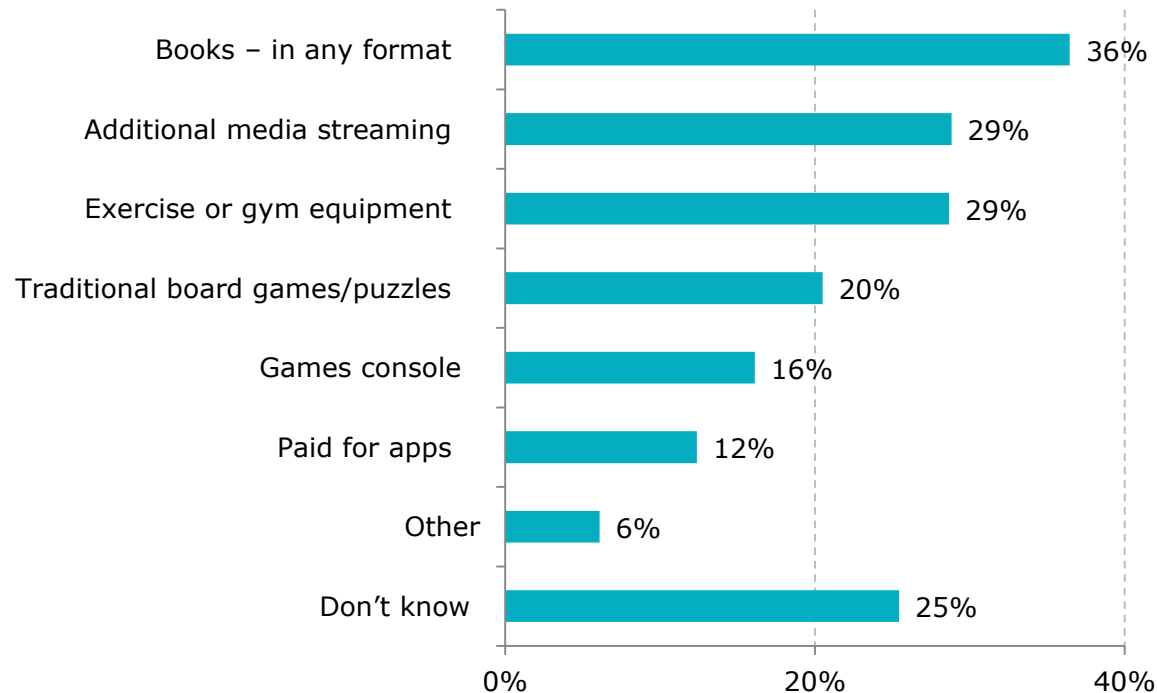
- **Three quarters of students** are worried about the effect of coronavirus on their final qualification
- And 78% of students are currently receiving some form of online learning.
 - 80% of those students are able to access this online learning adequately, but **only 65% of these students believe** that the online learning content is good quality
- 79% of students doing vocational courses believe that coronavirus is having a negative impact on the vocational element of their course
- And 78% of those who intended to undertake or are undertaking a placement as part of their course think that coronavirus will have a negative impact on their placement element of their course

Executive summary: Key findings – Money matters

- 62% of students sampled hold jobs of some sort alongside their courses, and of these **87% have had to make adjustments to their working** since the start of the coronavirus pandemic, leading to a reduction of income, for example via furlough (18%), unpaid leave (14%), reduction in hours (12%) and redundancy (11%) – meaning many are experiencing a negative impact on their finances.
- Additionally, **55% of students tell us** that the income of those who provide financial support to the student to help them study has been negatively impacted by the coronavirus pandemic.
- **80% of students are worried** how they will manage financially as a result of coronavirus with **77% of students cutting back on spending**.

Executive summary: Key findings – Student essentials

- 27% of students tell us they have purchased more of something than usual, and of this 67% tell us the items they are buying more of are long life food groceries – in line with the wider UK public!
 - They also tell us they are buying more of snacks (40%), toilet roll (38%), meat (38%), soap (36%) and pain relief (36%)
- Many students (n=9077) tell us that they have purchased particular items to help them manage social distancing:

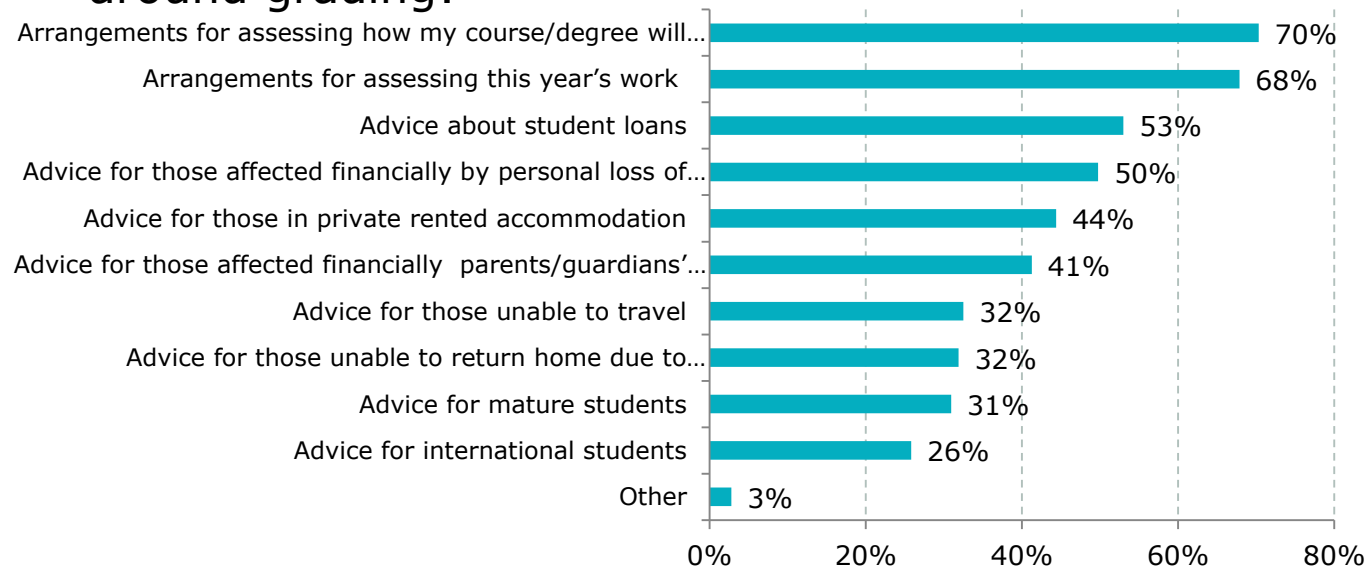


Executive summary: Key findings – Accommodation

- **27% of students are likely** to stay in their accommodation for longer than expected, citing reasons such as travel restrictions and self-isolation.
- **72% of students are worried** about their ability to pay rent.
- 70% of students are worried about their ability to pay bills.
- This has driven 46% of students in rented accommodation to contact their landlords, around issues such as rent payments, tenancy length and their own health.
- Whilst 35% of students would like to be released from their rental contracts early as a result of coronavirus, overwhelmingly 89% of their landlords have not given them the option to do so.

Executive summary: Key findings – Views on the government

- **Only 35% of students are confident** that the government is acting in the best interest of students
- And only **22% of students agree** that the government has adequately considered the difficulties that students might face as a result of coronavirus
- They would overwhelmingly like further advice from the government around grading:



Executive summary: Key findings – The future

- Students tell us they are **very worried about the future.**
 - 95% are concerned about the wider economy
 - 85% are worried about their exams and assessments
 - 81% are concerned about their job prospects
 - 70% are concerned about their employability
 - 65% are concerned about their applications for jobs or college/university
- There is little confidence that enrolment for next year's studies will take place in person on campus, with only 5% saying that they are extremely or very confident that enrolment will happen in this way.
- And students most commonly (45%) believe they will next return to studying at their college/university in September (with 27% not being sure when they will go back to study).
- Only 15% of students agree that this return to study will be 'business as usual' as most envisage a study landscape that is very different to the one known before the coronavirus pandemic.

Project overview

Objectives

NUS Insight conducted a survey alongside One Voice Digital who run the TOTUM product for students, and NUS member students' unions to understand more about how students feel about the current Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic.

Methodology

A sample of **9872** was achieved.

Respondents were given a chance to win £500 to encourage response.

The survey was promoted via the NUS student database, the TOTUM database, through social media and via NUS' member unions at the end of March 2020.

The survey took **20 minutes** to complete and was in field from Friday 27 March until Monday 6 April 2020.

What we look for

Within this report, a number of questions have been broken down and compared with each other. Where applicable and the base size is large enough ($n > 30$), statistically significant differences between answers have been shown. A difference is significant when it is likely to have been caused by something other than random chance.

Sample weighting

Explanation of weighting

NUS achieved an original sample of **9695** students. The response rate reflected the trend that females participate more than males in completing surveys - the initial gender split was: 73% female and 25% male.

This survey sampled both HE and FE and our practice is to reflect a student population where possible. In the absence of any national FE statistics, NUS practice is to use HESA¹ data. According to HESA statistics the gender split within Higher Education is 54% female and 46% male. In order to reflect this, 'weighting' was applied to the data in this report. In this case, we adjusted the profile of the sample by applying weights so that the over represented group, females, are down weighted and the under represented group, males, are up weighted. This resulted in a gender split in this survey of 53% female and 46% male and a sample of **9872**.

Other HESA statistics are highlighted in the demographic section where relevant and comparable.

¹ <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/>

Health, wellbeing and welfare

Summary

Fear of contracting Coronavirus amongst students is at a moderate level, with around half feeling somewhat scared. The vast majority feel prepared to some degree to deal with any health concerns they have should they get the virus. Almost all have adhered to the guidance on social distancing and avoiding crowding crowded places over the past few weeks.

Students largely feel that Coronavirus is having a negative impact on their family life and also on their friends and social life. They are choosing to stay in touch with loved ones in the main via instant/text messaging and phone calls.

Students are keeping up to date with the latest developments and guidance on the whole via news channels and websites.

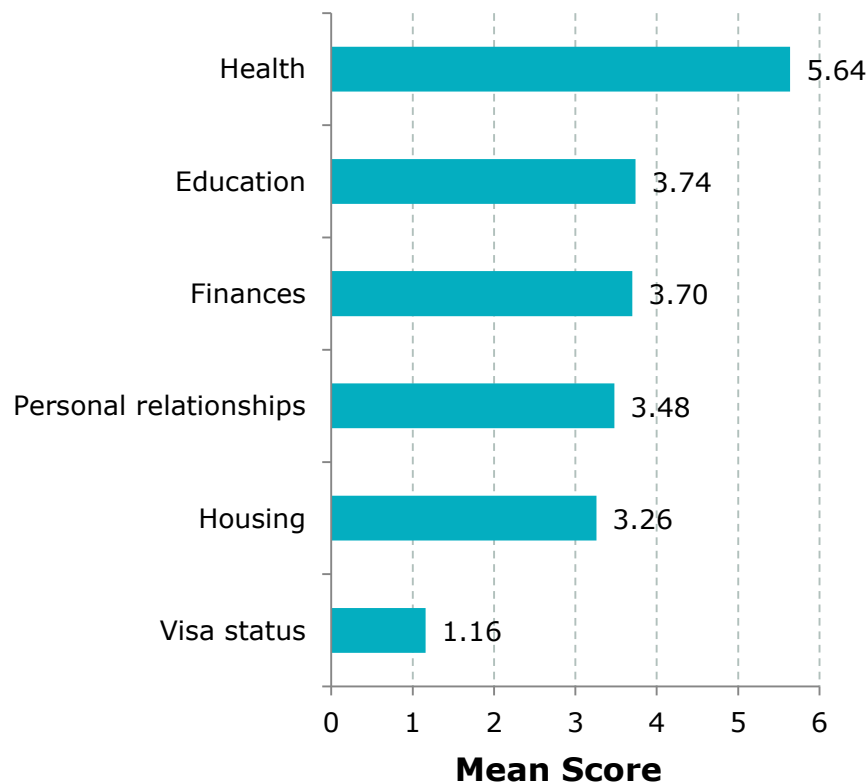
In terms of individual priorities throughout this pandemic, students rank their health first, followed by education and then finances.

Key finding:

Students in **Northern Ireland** are showing some more extreme responses seemingly being more likely to feel very scared at the prospect of catching Covid-19, to feel not at all prepared to deal with any pre-existing health conditions should they get the virus and to feel that Coronavirus has had a very negative impact on family life.

Unsurprisingly four in five students ranked their health as the number 1 priority during the Covid-19 outbreak. Education was most likely to be ranked the 2nd most important concern, followed by finances, personal relationships and then housing and Visa status (which is only relevant for certain international students)

Ranking of importance for yourself during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak

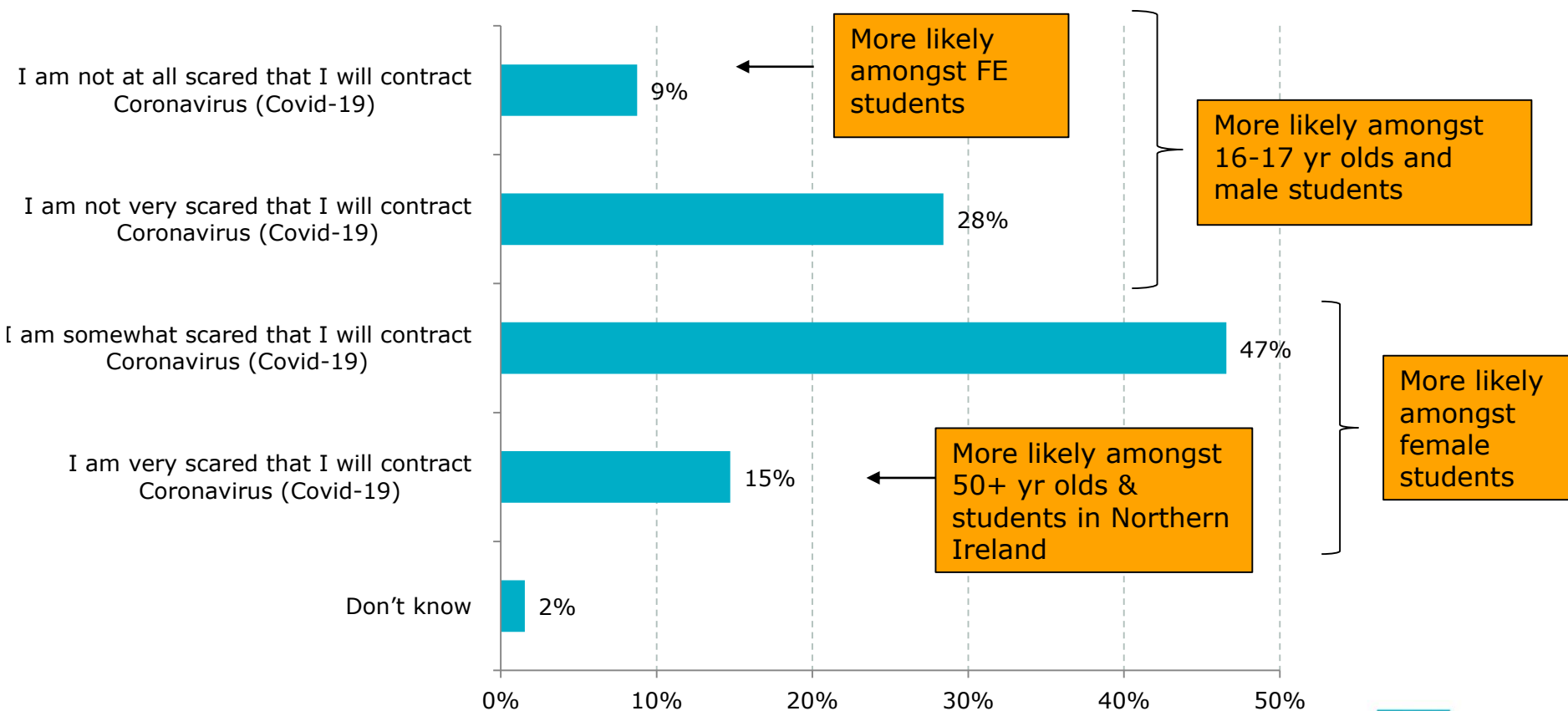


Base:8632 Balance: no response

D10. Please rank the following in order of importance for yourself during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak. 6 is most important.

Students appear to have a moderate fear of contracting Coronavirus, with nearly half feeling somewhat scared that they will contract Coronavirus and a further 15% very scared. FE students, those aged 16-17 and males are significantly less likely to feel scared. In contrast females, those aged 50+ and students in Northern Ireland are significantly more likely to feel scared.

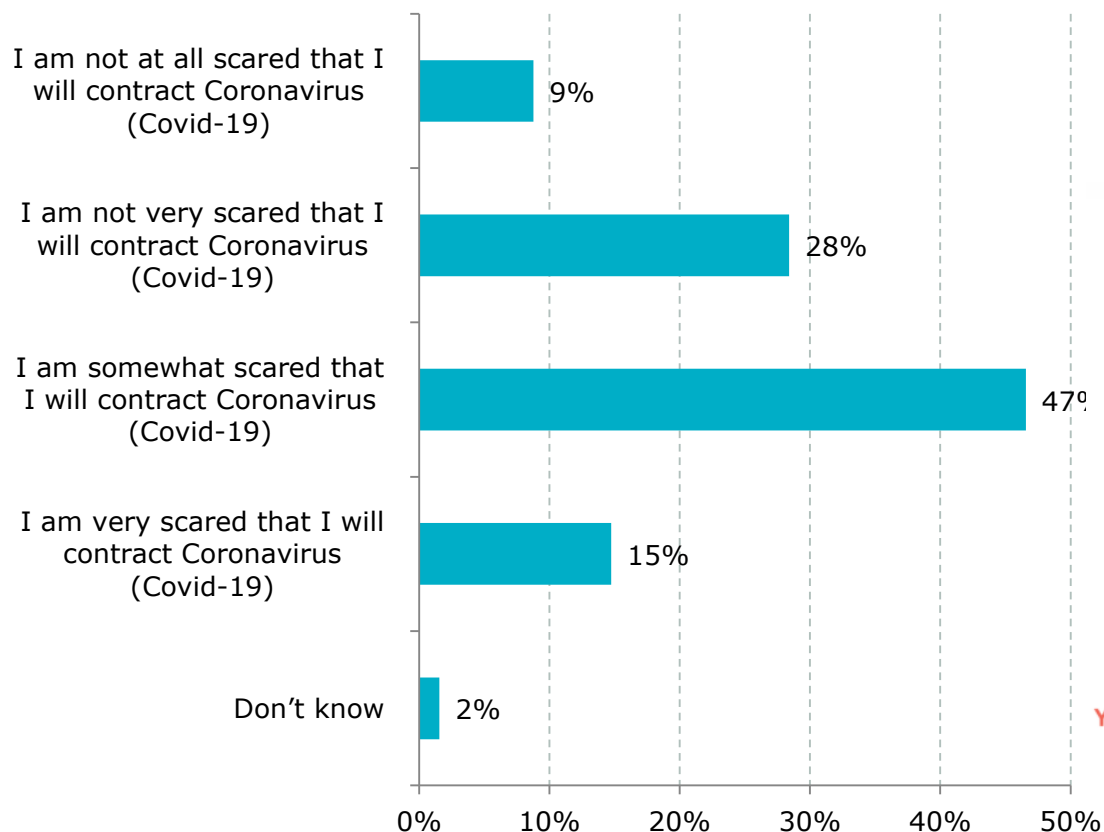
Feelings towards contracting the Coronavirus (Covid-19)



Weighted Base: 9870 respondents. Balance: no response

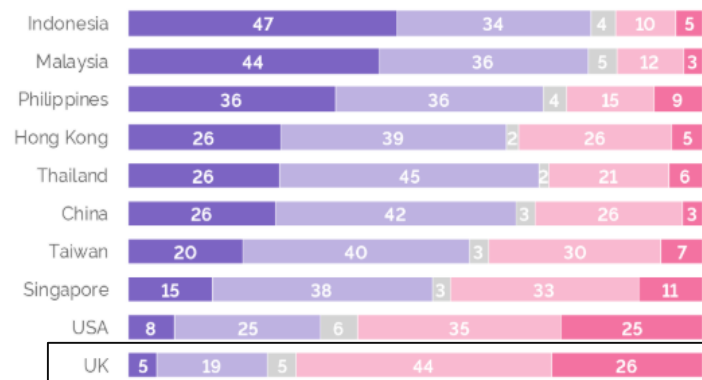
When compared to YouGov's¹ survey, students are seemingly more concerned about getting Covid-19 than the general UK population. However it is important to point out that YouGov's survey was conducted at least a month prior to NUS' survey and before the national lockdown.

Feelings towards contracting the Coronavirus (Covid-19)



YouGov Survey on Covid-19

I am...
 Very scared Somewhat scared Don't know Not very scared Not at all scared
 ...that I will contract the Coronavirus (COVID-19)



YouGov

28 February - 2 March 2020

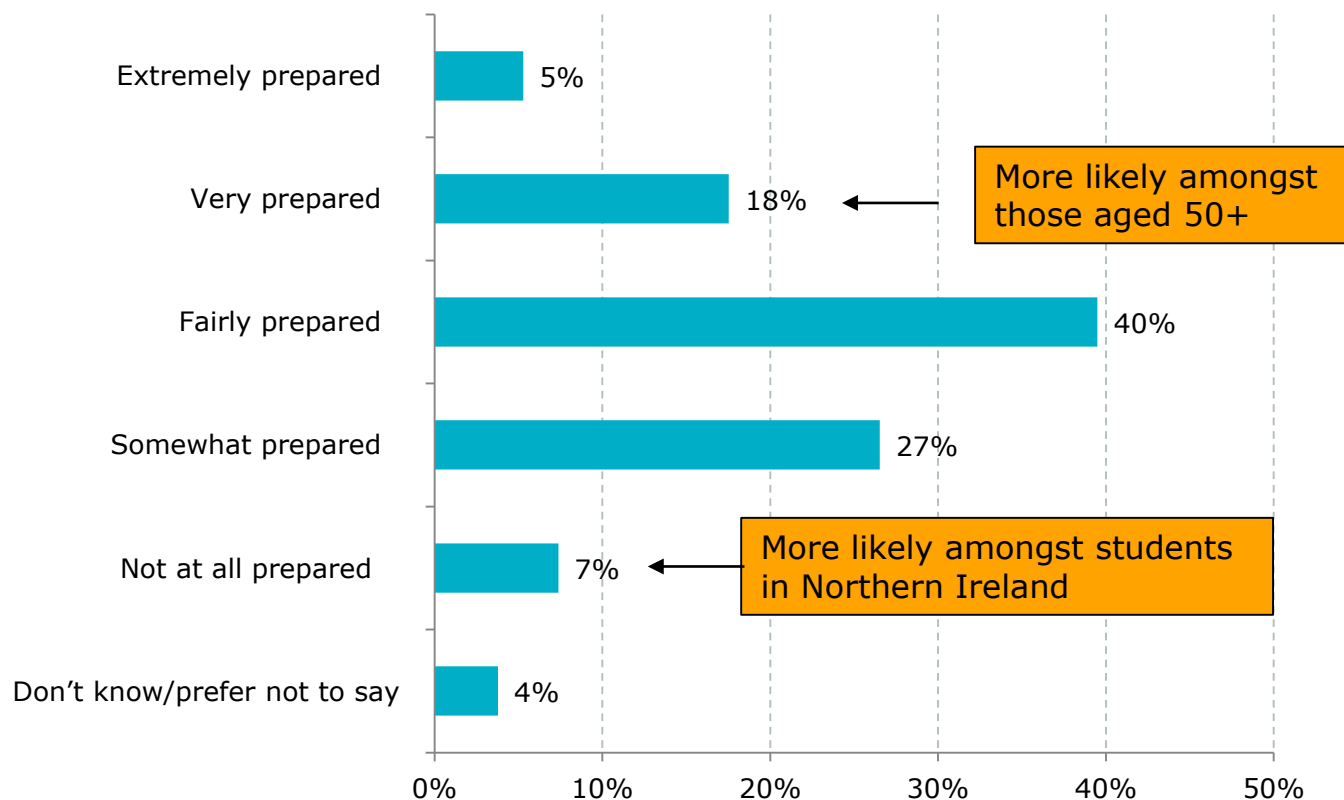
Weighted Base: 9870 respondents. Balance: no response

B1. Which, if any, of the following statements best describes your feelings towards contracting the Coronavirus (Covid-19)?

¹YouGov: [Coronavirus: how do attitudes differ across the world](#), 4 March 2020

Three in five students claim to feel 'somewhat' or 'fairly' prepared to manage any health conditions they have should they contract Covid-19. Encouragingly only 7% feel 'not at all prepared'. Those aged 50+ are significantly more likely to feel very prepared whereas students in Northern Ireland are significantly more likely to feel not at all prepared.

Preparedness to manage health conditions if contract Coronavirus (Covid-19)

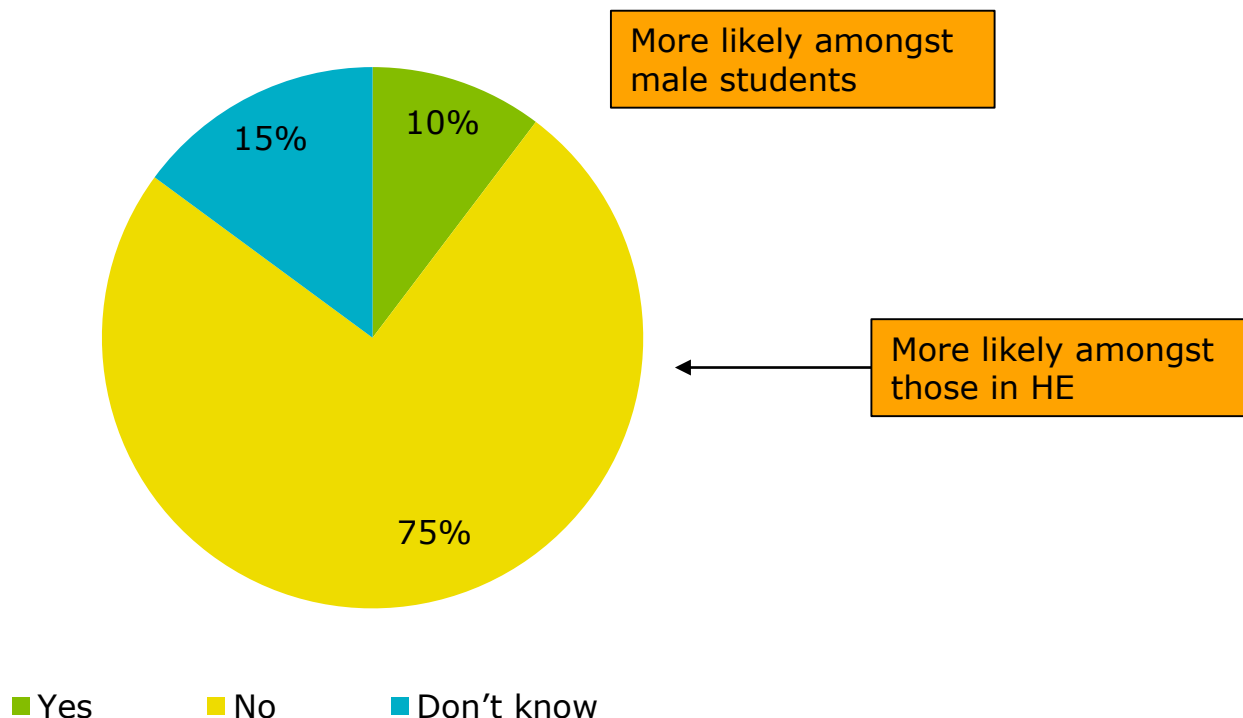


Weighted Base: 9856 respondents. Balance: no response

B2. How prepared are you personally to manage any health conditions you have should you contract Coronavirus (Covid-19)?

Only a tenth of disabled students have been asked to confirm or declare any impairments that may relate specifically to Covid-19 and their ability to study. HE students are significantly less likely than FE students to have been asked to declare any impairments. In contrast male students are significantly more likely to say they have been asked to declare impairments than females.

Declaration of any impairments



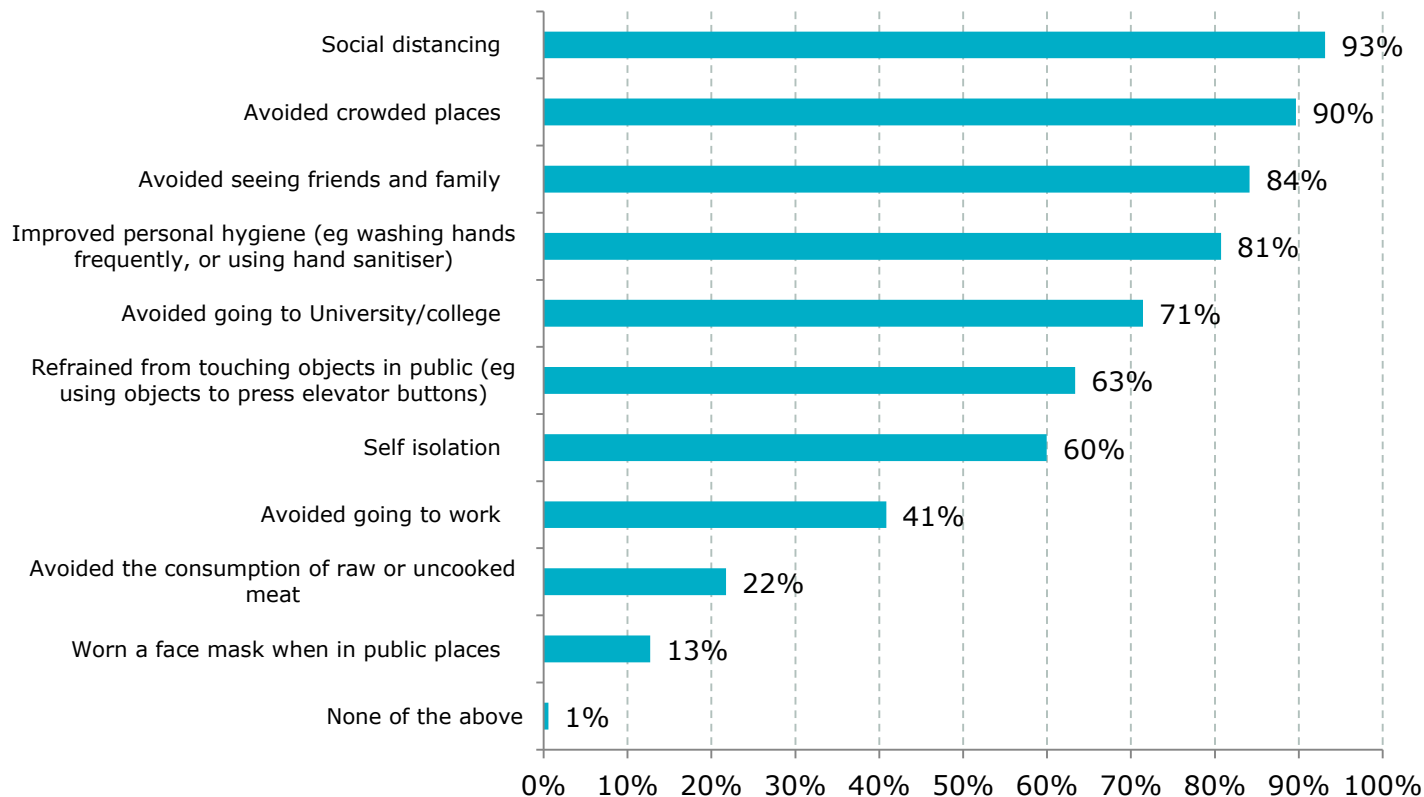
■ Yes ■ No ■ Don't know

Weighted Base: 3083 respondents. Balance: those with no known disability, impairment or long term health condition, no response

B3. Have you been asked to confirm or declare any impairments that may relate specifically to Coronavirus (Covid-19) and your ability to study?

Almost all students have practiced social distancing and have avoided crowded places in the past two weeks. Four in five have avoided seeing friends and family and have improved personal hygiene. Almost three in four have avoided going to their place of study.

Measures taken in the past 2 weeks specifically to protect yourself from the Coronavirus (Covid-19)



Weighted Base: 9872 respondents. Balance: no response

When looking at the data across different demographics we can see some significant differences

Measures taken in the past 2 weeks specifically to protect yourself from the Coronavirus (Covid-19)

HE students

- Avoided crowded places
- Avoided going to place of study
- Refrained from touching objects in public
- Avoided going to work

Female students

- Avoided seeing friends and family
- Improved personal hygiene
- Refrained from touching objects in public

International students

- Avoided the consumption of raw or uncooked meat
- Self isolated
- Worn a facemask in public

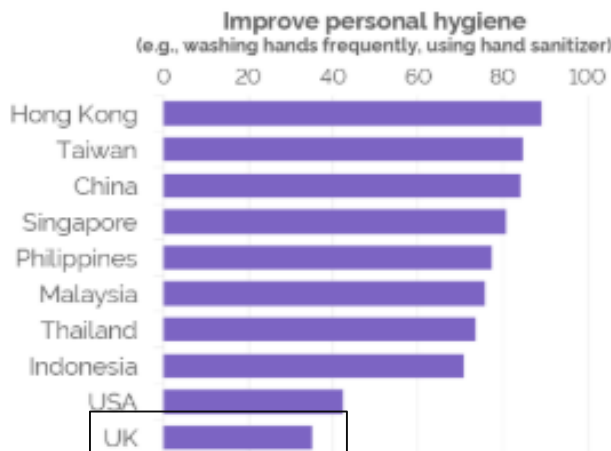
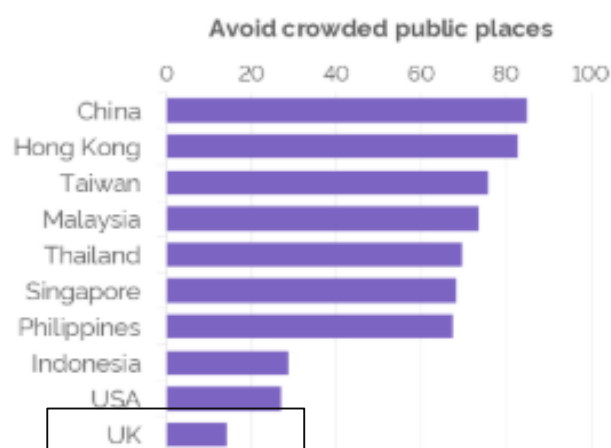
18-22 year olds

- Avoided going to place of study

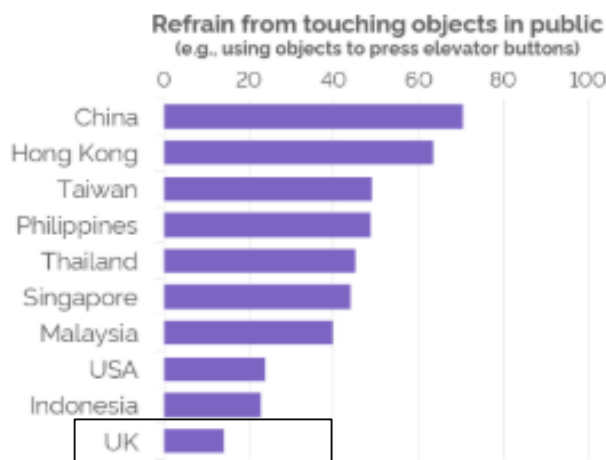
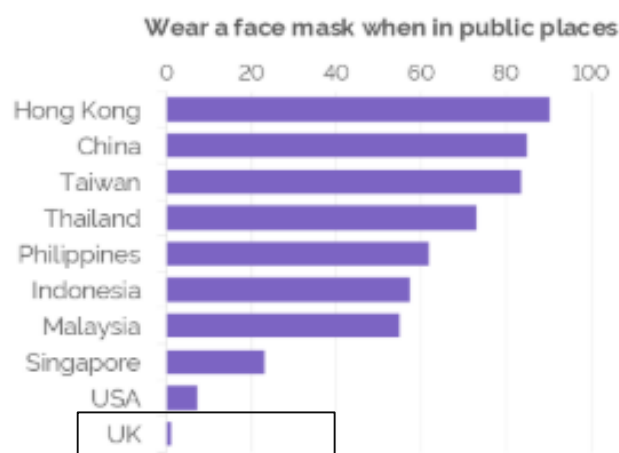
18+ year olds

- Avoided crowded places

In comparison to the general UK population, students are far more likely to have avoided crowded public places, improved personal hygiene, refrained from touching objects in public and worn a face mask in public. However, as noted previously the YouGov survey was conducted at least a month prior to NUS' and prior to the national lockdown.

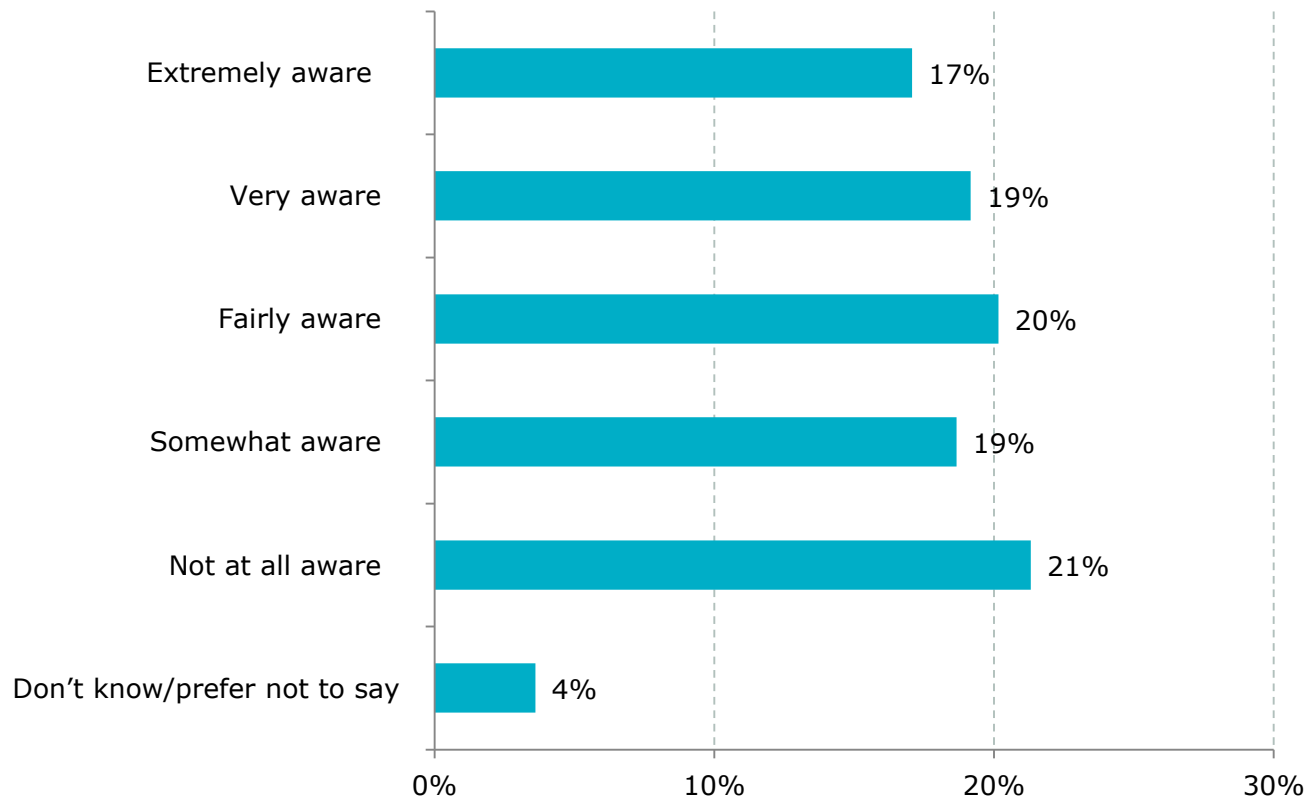


**YouGov Survey
on Covid-19¹**



Encouragingly three in four students are aware to some extent of the public health guidance on living in shared accommodation in relation to Covid-19. Over one in three claim to be 'very' or 'extremely' aware.

Awareness of the public health guidance on living in shared accommodation in relation to the Coronavirus (Covid-19)

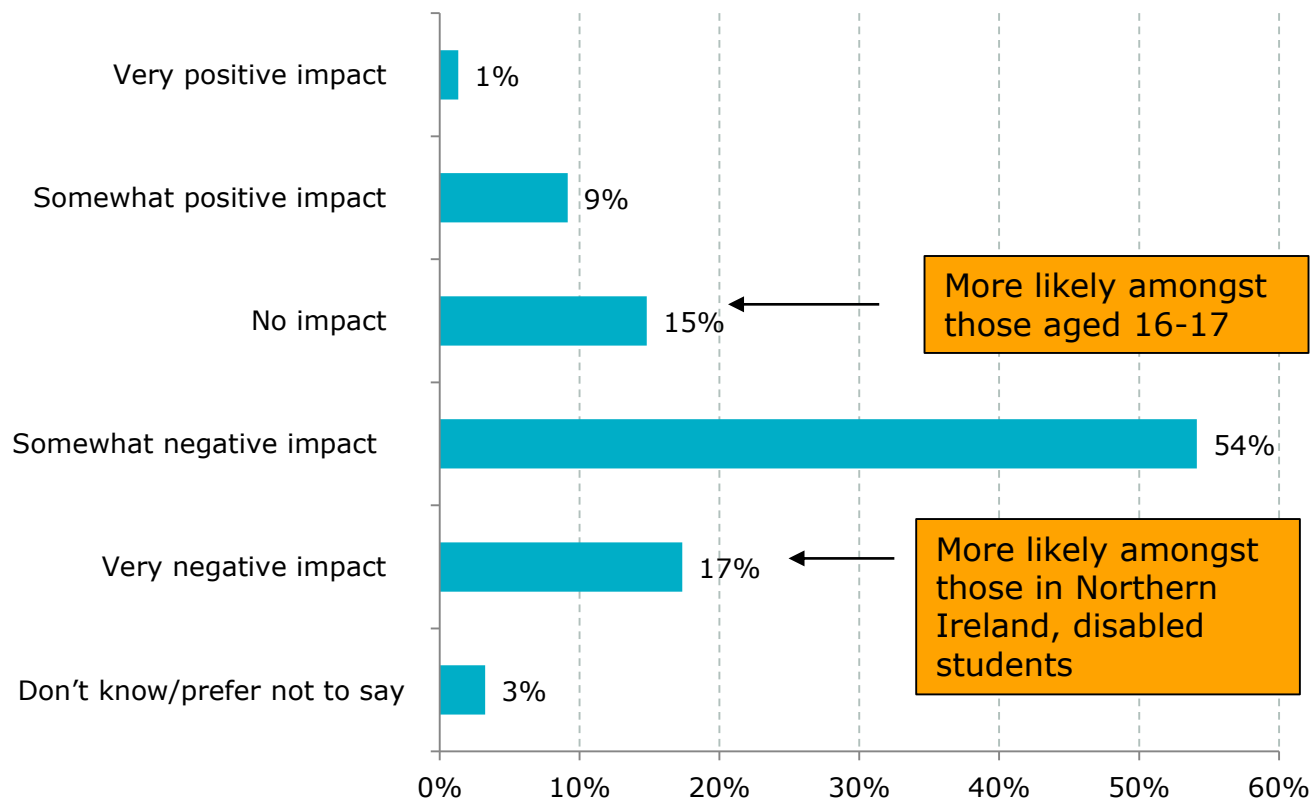


Weighted Base: 9843 respondents. Balance: no response

B5. Are you aware of the public health guidance on living in shared accommodation in relation to the Coronavirus (Covid-19)?

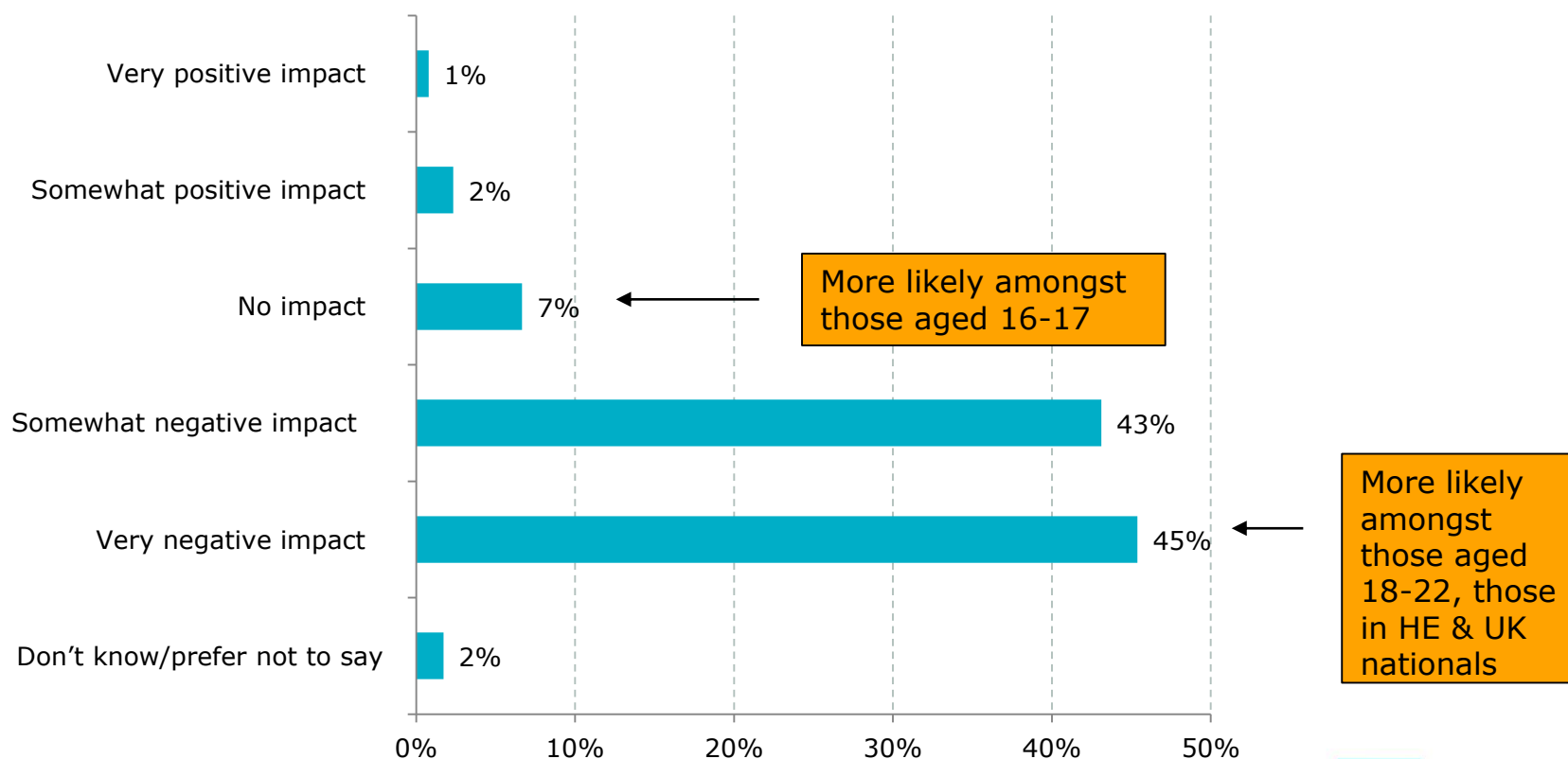
Nearly three in four students say that Covid-19 has had a negative impact on their family life; this is more likely to be the case for students in Northern Ireland and disabled students.

Impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on family life



Over four in five students say that Covid-19 has had a negative impact on their friends and social life, particularly for those aged 18-22, students in HE & UK citizen students.

Impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on friends and social life

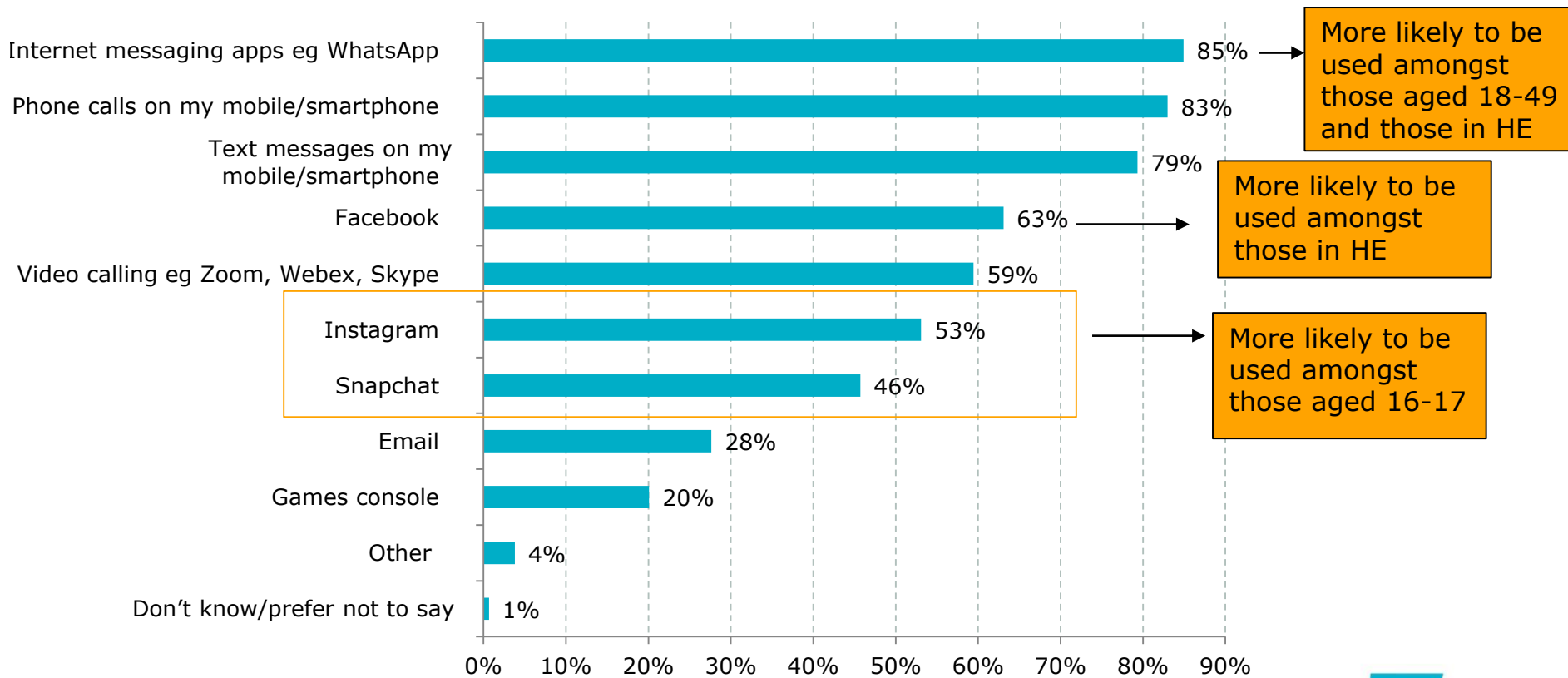


Weighted Base: 9843 respondents. Balance: no response

B7. And, what has been the impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on your friends and social life?

Students are most likely to be keeping in touch with friends and family via internet messaging apps (e.g. WhatsApp), phone calls and text messaging. Facebook and video calling are also popular options for over half of students.

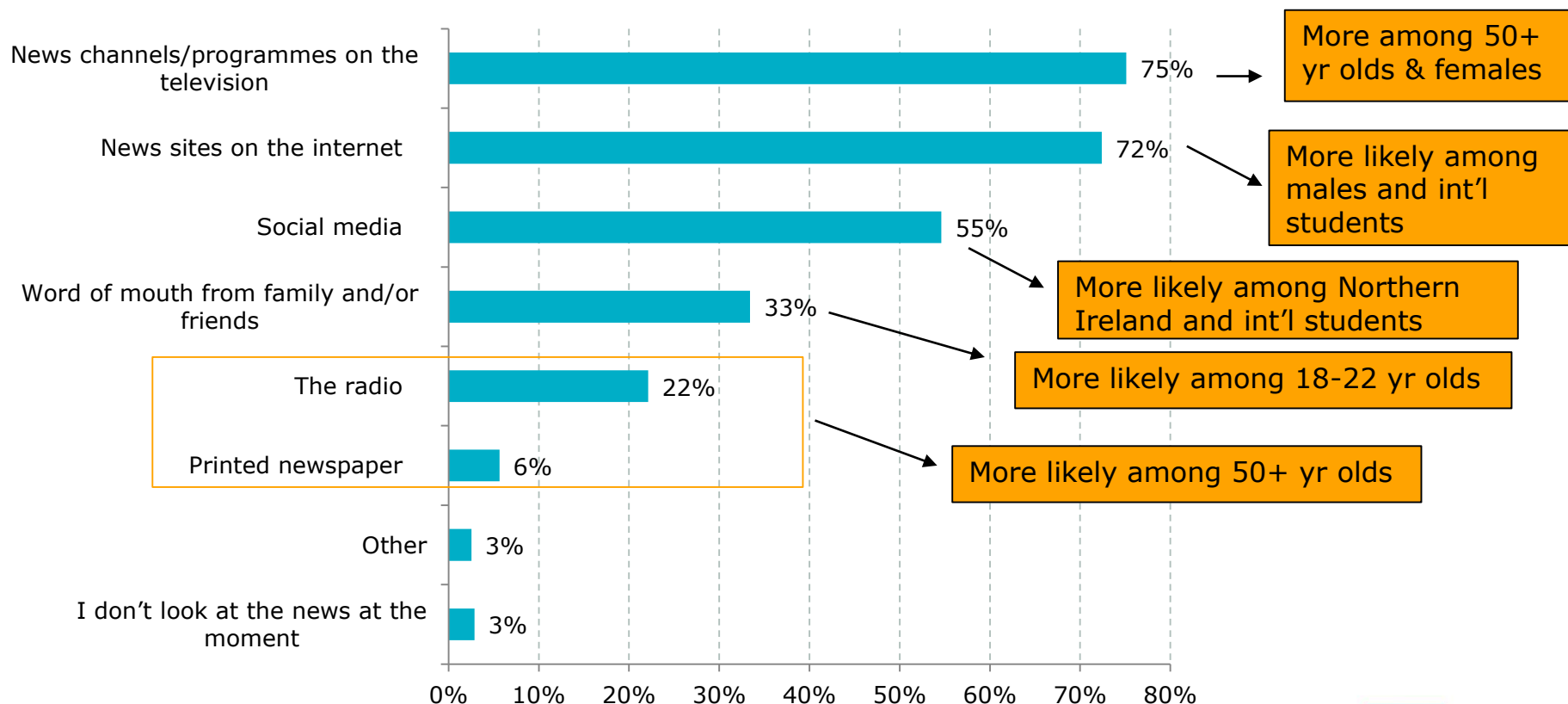
How students are staying in touch with friends and family



Weighted Base: 9867 respondents. Balance: no response

Students are most likely to be keeping up to date with developments or latest government advice via news outlets on TV or online. Around half use social media and one in three keep up to date via word of mouth.

How students are keeping up to date with developments or latest government advice on the Coronavirus (Covid-19)



Weighted Base: 9865 respondents. Balance: no response

B9. Which of the below do you use to keep up to date with developments or latest government advice on the Coronavirus (Covid-19)?

Self isolating, your health and movement restrictions

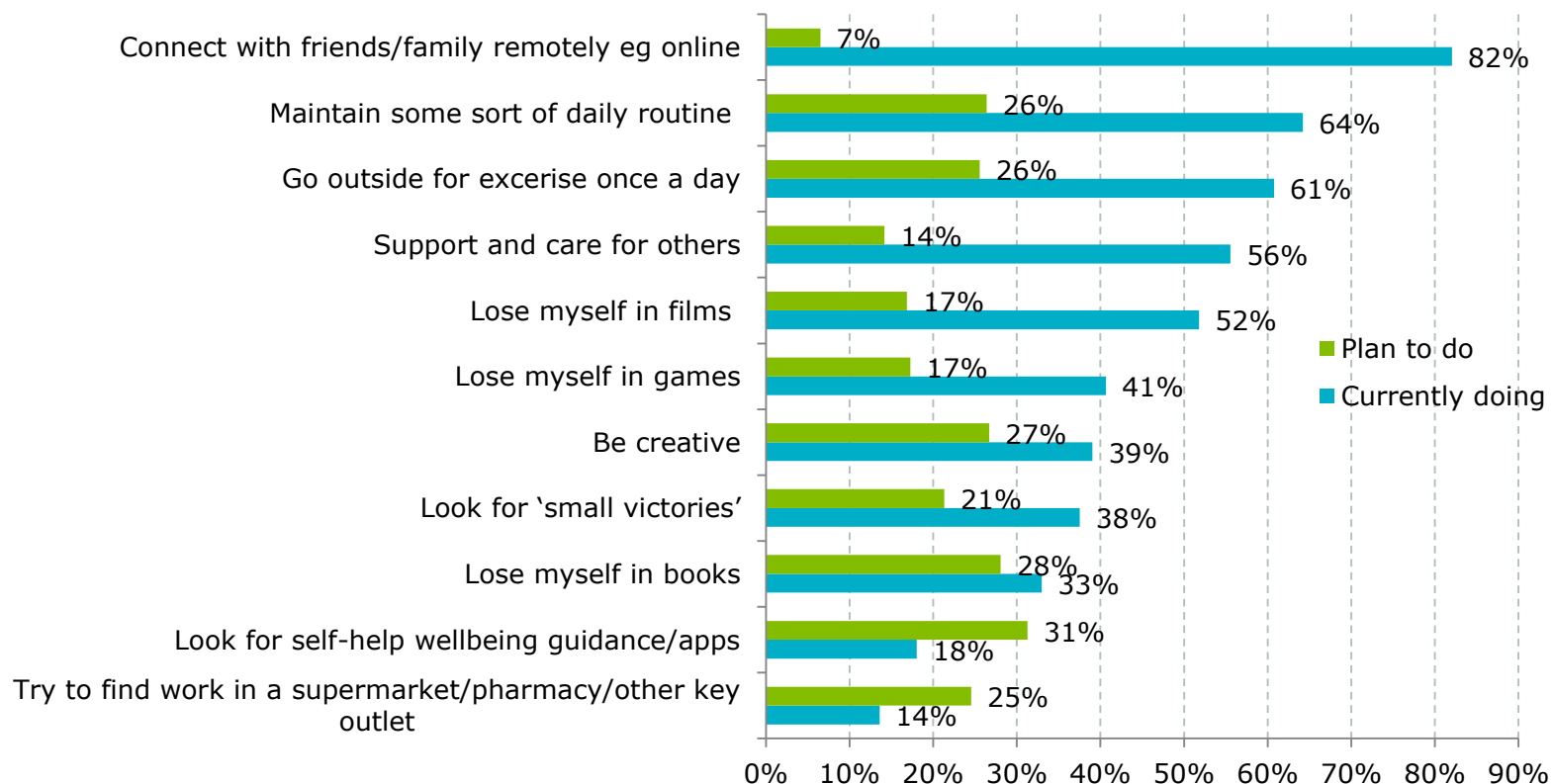
Summary

Students appear to be keeping themselves busy during lockdown, with the majority of students continuing to keep in touch with their friends and family online. Around two thirds maintain some sort of routine and get outside for exercise.

Concern is relatively higher for family members, and this is more evident amongst older students and women.

The vast majority of respondents currently connect with friends and family online. They are less likely to look for self help, although a third plan to do this, or work in a supermarket, although a quarter plan to do this.

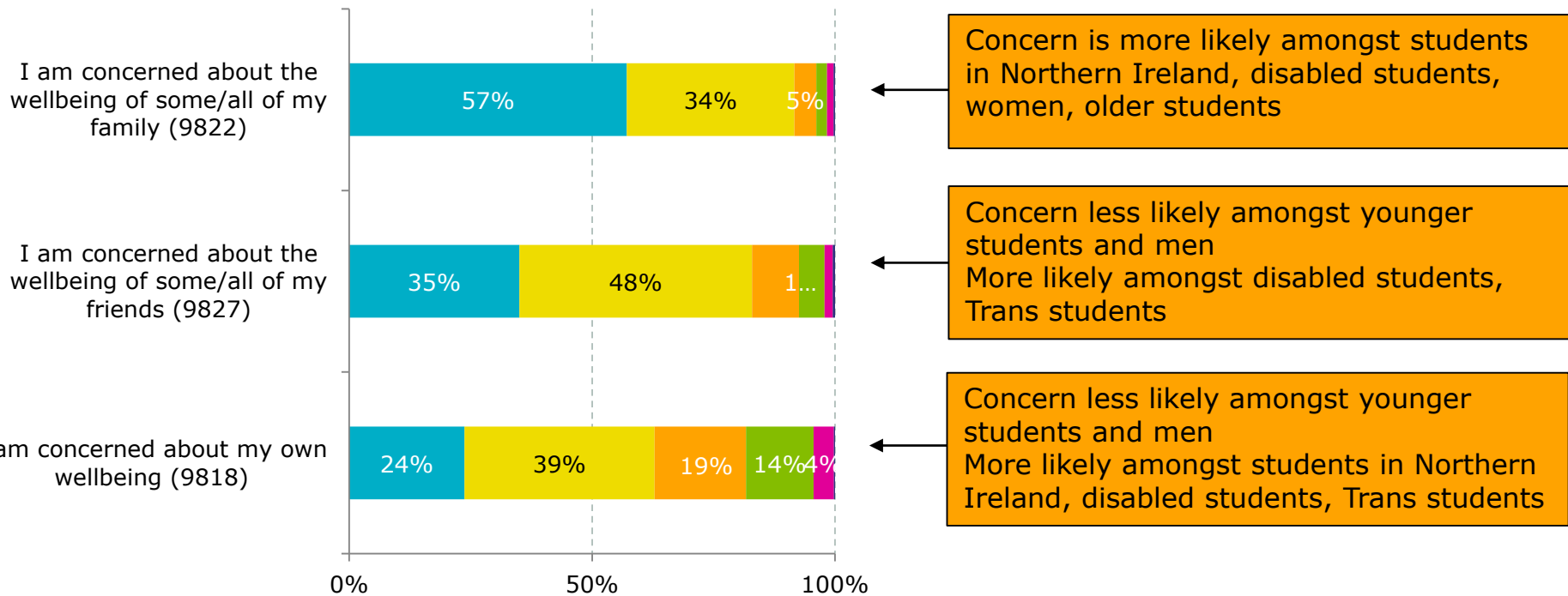
What are you currently doing/plan to do to support your well being?



Respondents are more likely to be concerned about the wellbeing of their family than of themselves or their friends.

Agreement with statements

Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree Don't know/Not applicable



Weighted Base: (in brackets). Balance:

12. How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements as a result of Coronavirus (Covid-19)?

Support received from education institutions about Coronavirus (Covid-19)

Summary

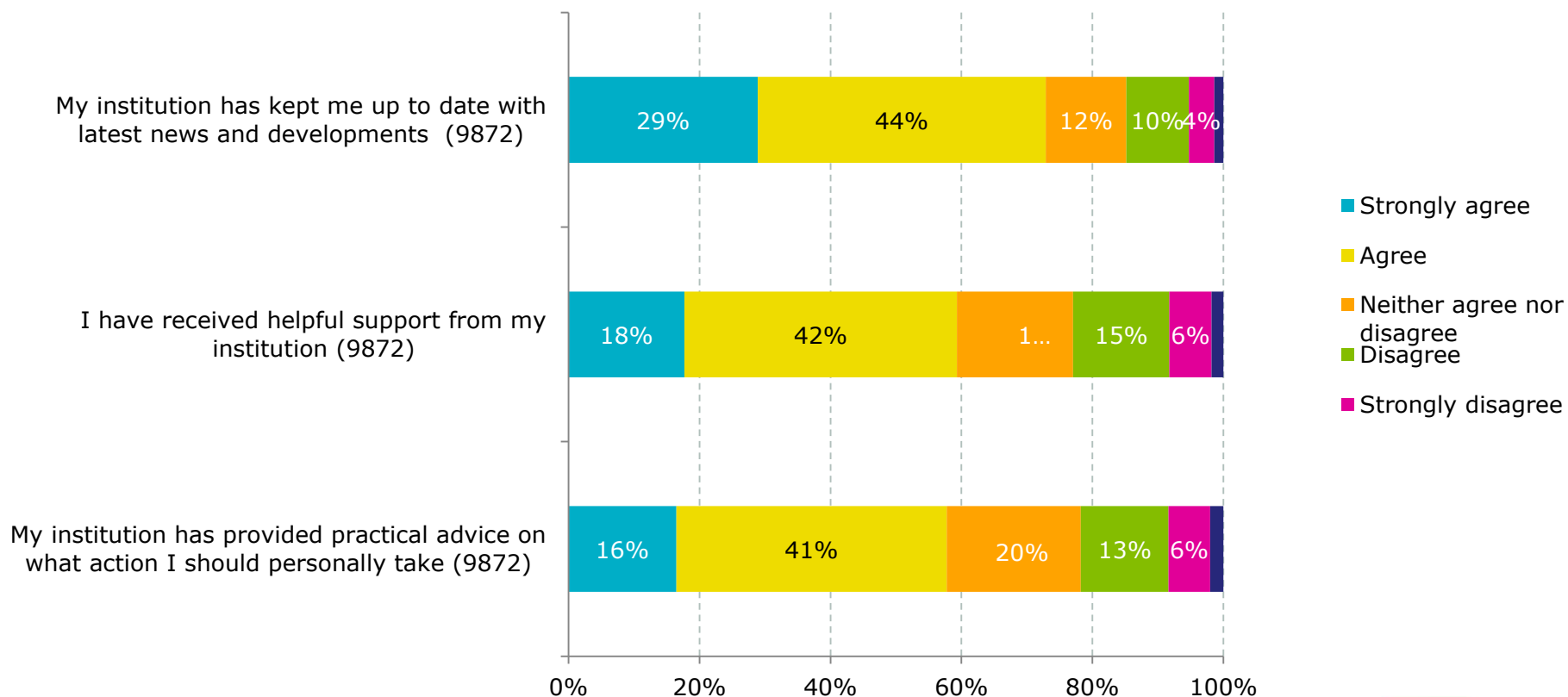
Students generally feel they are being kept up to date by their institutions on news/developments and are being provided with helpful support and practical advice on what action to take.

International students largely agree they have received sufficient information in order to continue studying remotely and what they should do regarding any missed learning due to sickness. However information around Tier 4 visas appears to be patchy.

Half of students have either already started, or plan to, volunteer within their community to help those who are vulnerable or who are self isolating.

On the whole students agree that their institution has provided up to date news/developments, helpful support and practical advice on what action to take.

Agreement with statements

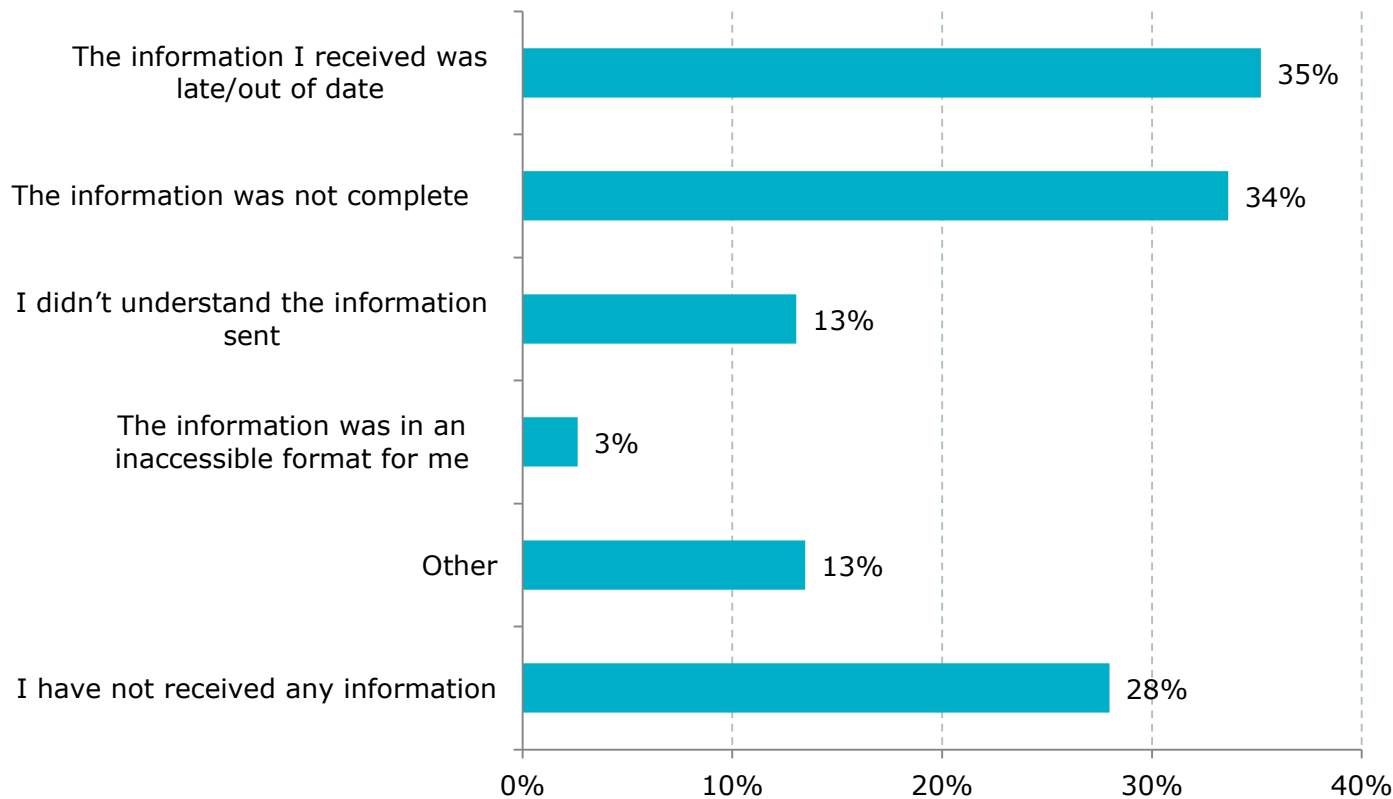


Weighted Base: (in brackets).

C1. Please tell us how far you agree, if at all, with the statements below?

Where students disagreed that their institution kept them up to date with the latest news/developments this was largely down to receiving information that was late or out of date, incomplete information or that they had simply not received any information.

Reasons for disagreement that institution has kept you up to date with latest news and developments



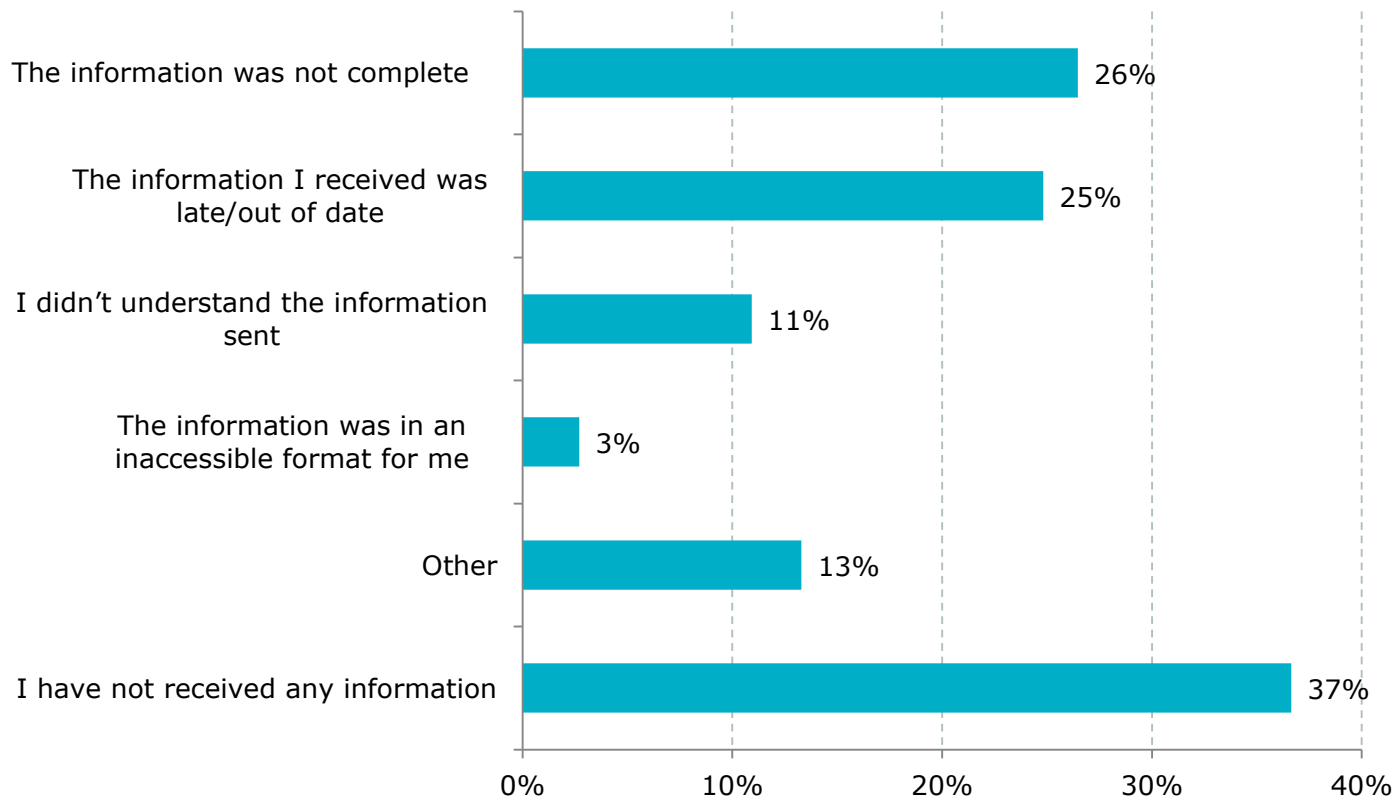
**14%
disagreed**

Weighted Base: 1317 respondents. Balance: those who agreed that their institution had kept them up to date with latest news and developments, no response

C2. You've told us that you don't agree that your institution has kept you up to date with latest news and developments, why is that?

Where students disagreed that their institution had provided them with practical advice on what action to take, this was largely down to simply not having received any information at all, or receiving incomplete or late/out of date information.

Reasons for disagreement that institution has provided you with practical advice on what action you should personally take



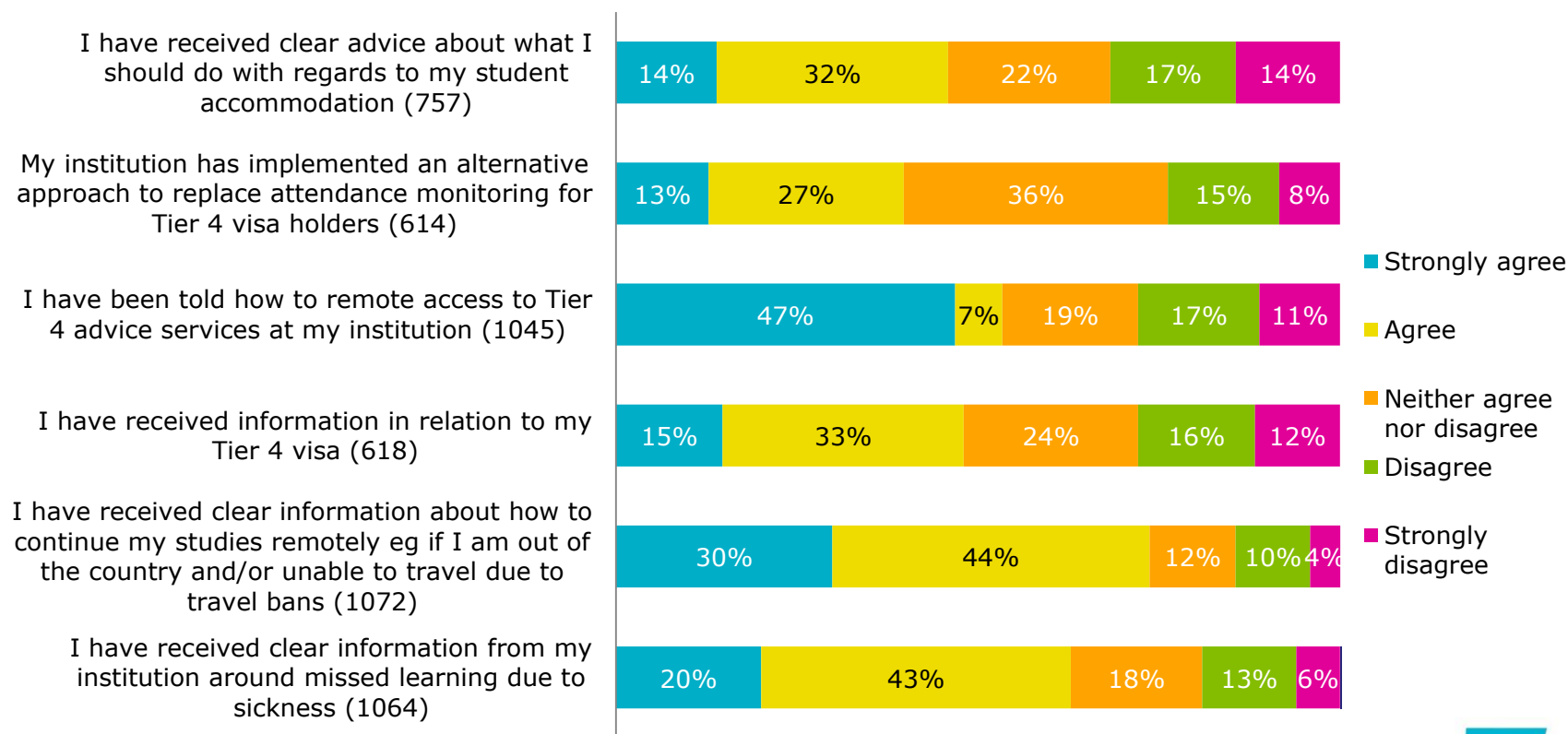
**19%
disagreed**

Weighted Base: 1911 respondents. Balance: those who agreed that their institution had provided practical advice on what action they should personally take, no response

C3. You've told us that you don't agree that your institution has provided you with practical advice on what action you should personally take, why is that?

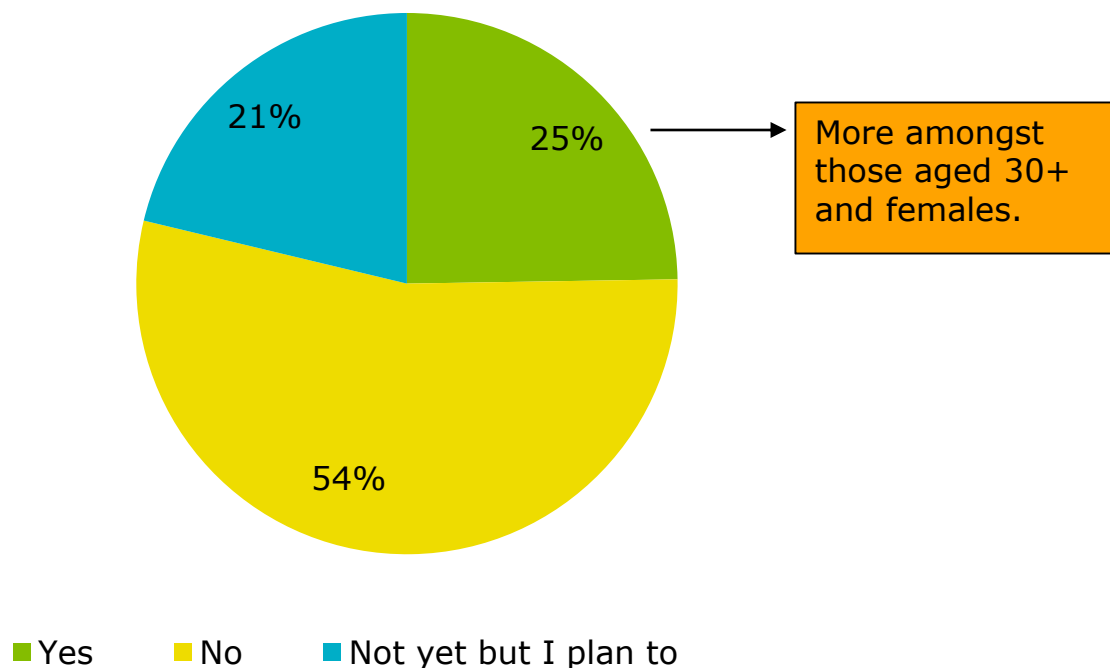
Encouragingly nearly three in four international students feel that they have received clear information about how to continue their studies remotely. Three in five feel they have received clear information from their institution around missed learning due to sickness.

International students agreement with statements



One in four students have already volunteered to help those within the community who are vulnerable or who may be self isolating since the outbreak of Covid-19. A further one in five say they plan to volunteer in such a way.

Volunteered within community to help those who are more vulnerable or those who may be self isolating since the outbreak of Coronavirus (Covid-19)

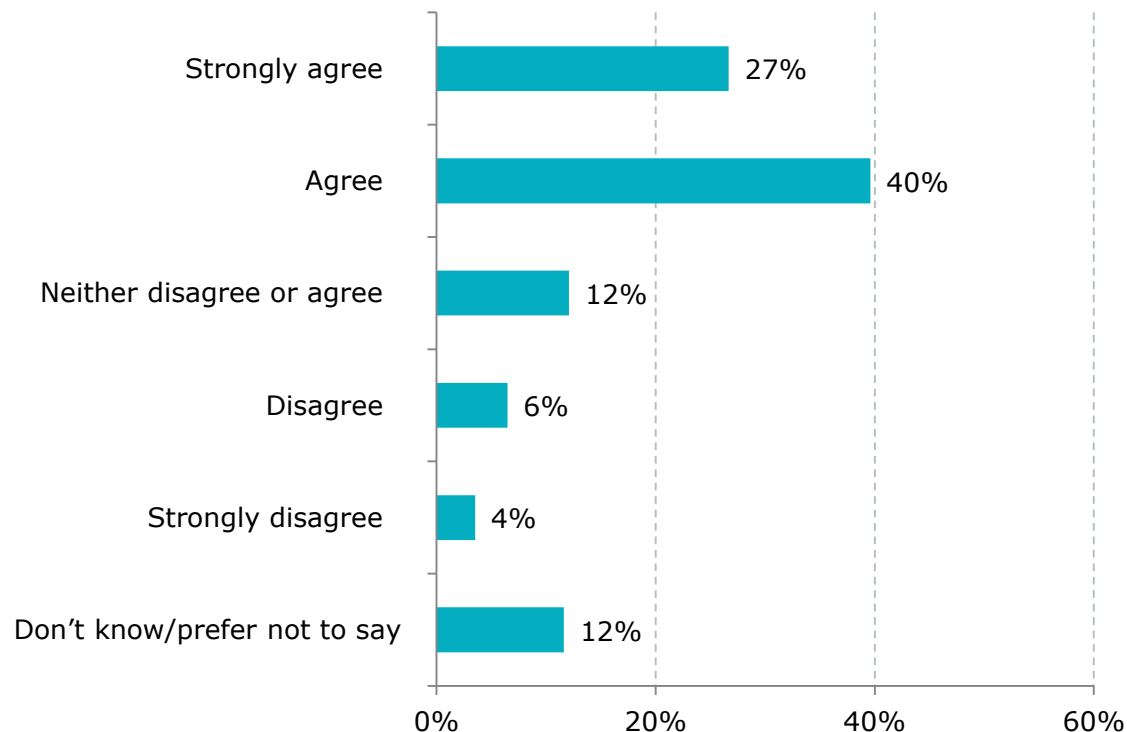


Weighted Base: 9845 respondents. Balance: no response

C7. Since the outbreak of Coronavirus (Covid-19) have you volunteered within your community to help those who are more vulnerable or those who may be self isolating?

Over three in five agree that people at their institution are adhering to the Government advice and guidance on social distancing and self isolation. Encouragingly only one in ten disagreed with this statement.

Agreement that people at your institution are adhering to the Government advice and guidance on social distancing and self isolation



Weighted Base: 9847 respondents. Balance: no response

C8. To what extent do you agree that people at your institution are adhering to the Government advice and guidance on social distancing and self isolation?

Education: teaching and learning
experience and academic success

Summary

The majority of students, and especially those in their final years, are concerned about the effects of Coronavirus on their final course/degree qualification. The majority agree that their institution has provided online learning in response to the Coronavirus outbreak although a significant number of students cannot access this or feel it is not of good quality.

Students who have placements as part of their course or are on a vocational course largely feel that the Coronavirus outbreak will have a negative impact on these elements of their studies.

Only half of students who get additional learning support as part of their studies feel they have received adequate support to allow them to continue to the best of their abilities.

Three in four students are concerned about the effect of Covid-19 on their final degree/course qualification. Just over three in four agree that their institution has provided online learning required as a result of the Covid-19 crisis and two in three are confident that their institution is managing the crisis well.

Agreement with statements

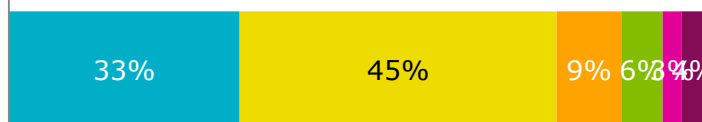
■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree
■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree ■ Not applicable

I am concerned about the effect on my final degree/course qualification (9714)



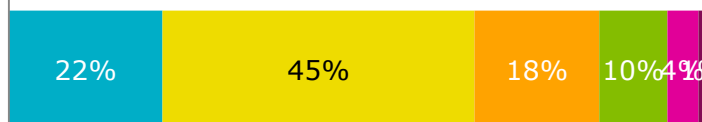
Those aged 18-22, UK nationals, 3rd + yr and female students more likely to strongly agree.

My institution has provided online learning required as result of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis (9828)



Those aged 16-17 and int'l students are more likely to strongly agree.

I am confident that my institution is managing the Coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis well (9838)



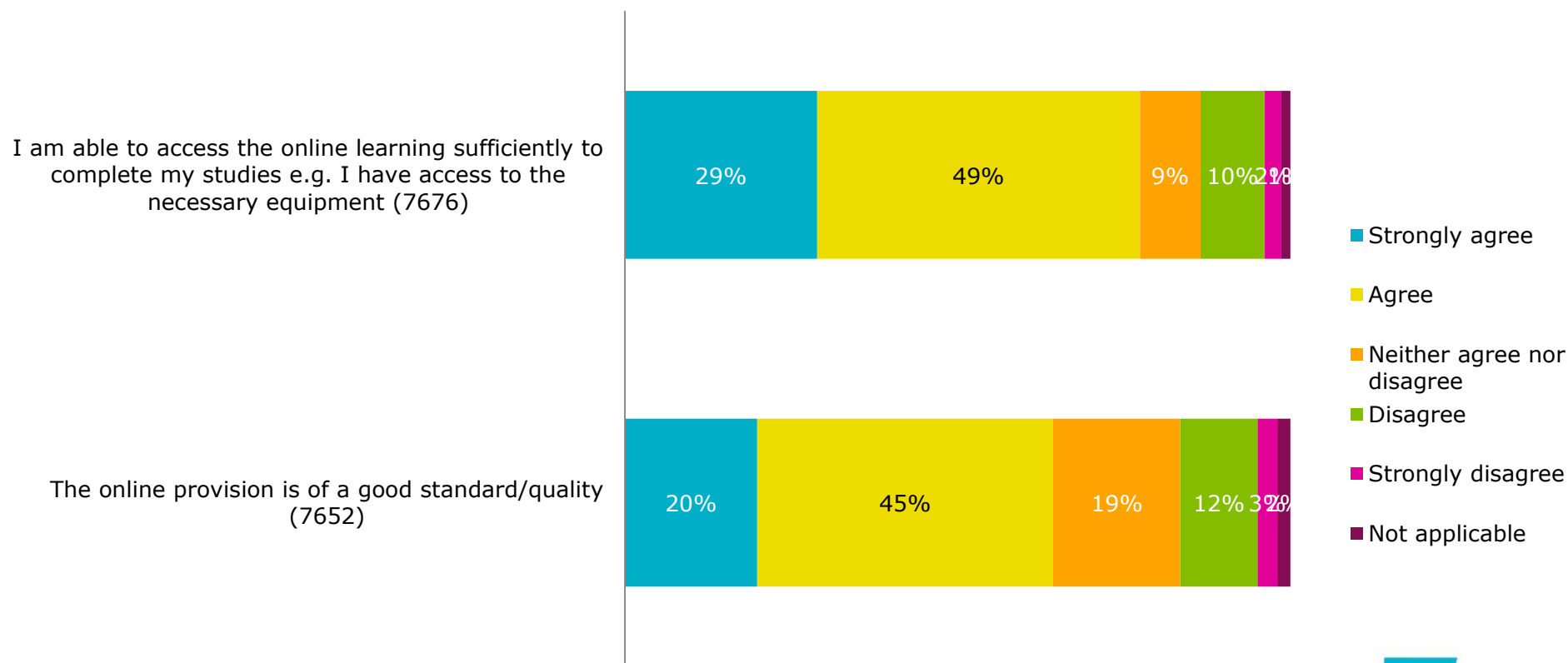
Those FE students aged 16-17 are more likely to agree. Those aged 30 yrs+ are more likely to strongly agree.

Weighted Base: (in brackets). Balance: no response

D1. Please tell us how far you agree, if at all, with the statements below ?

Of those who have access to online learning, it appears to be working for many students. However, over 20% of those who've been provided online learning don't have sufficient access to it and more than 30% do not feel their education is of a good standard or quality.

Agreement with statements – online learning has been provided

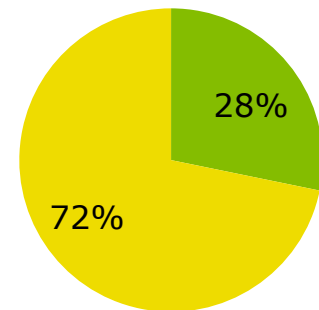


Weighted Base: (in brackets). Balance: those whose institution has not provided online learning in response to Coronavirus (Covid-19), no response

D2. You mentioned that your institution has provided online learning in response to the Coronavirus (Covid-19). How far do you agree with the following statements?

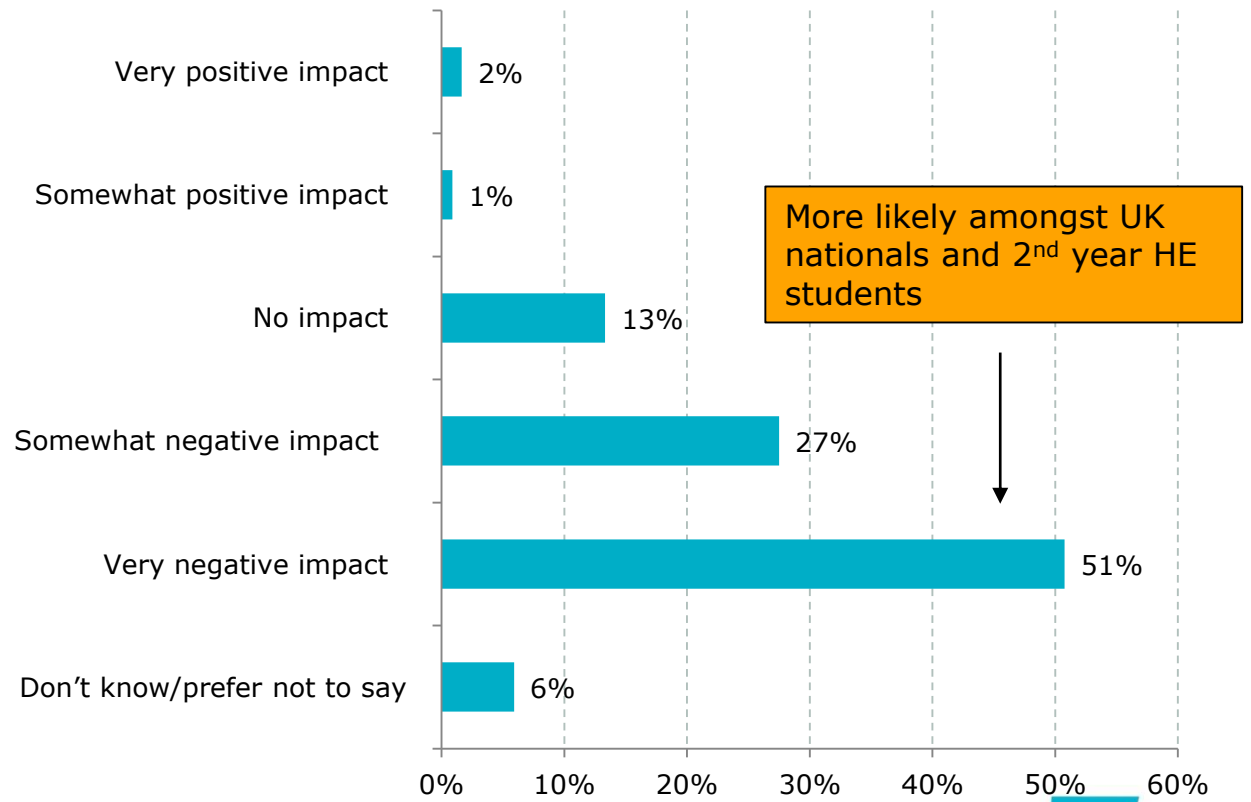
Of those who have a placement as part of their course (just over one in four), over three in four believe the current Covid-19 outbreak will have a negative impact on their ability to complete their placement.

Placement as part of course



■ Yes ■ No

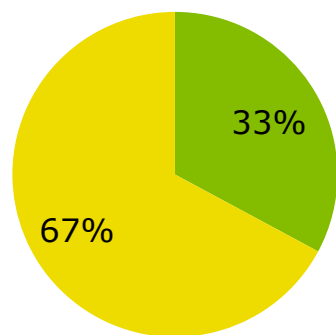
Impact you think Coronavirus (Covid-19) will have on your ability to complete your placement



More likely amongst UK nationals and 2nd year HE students

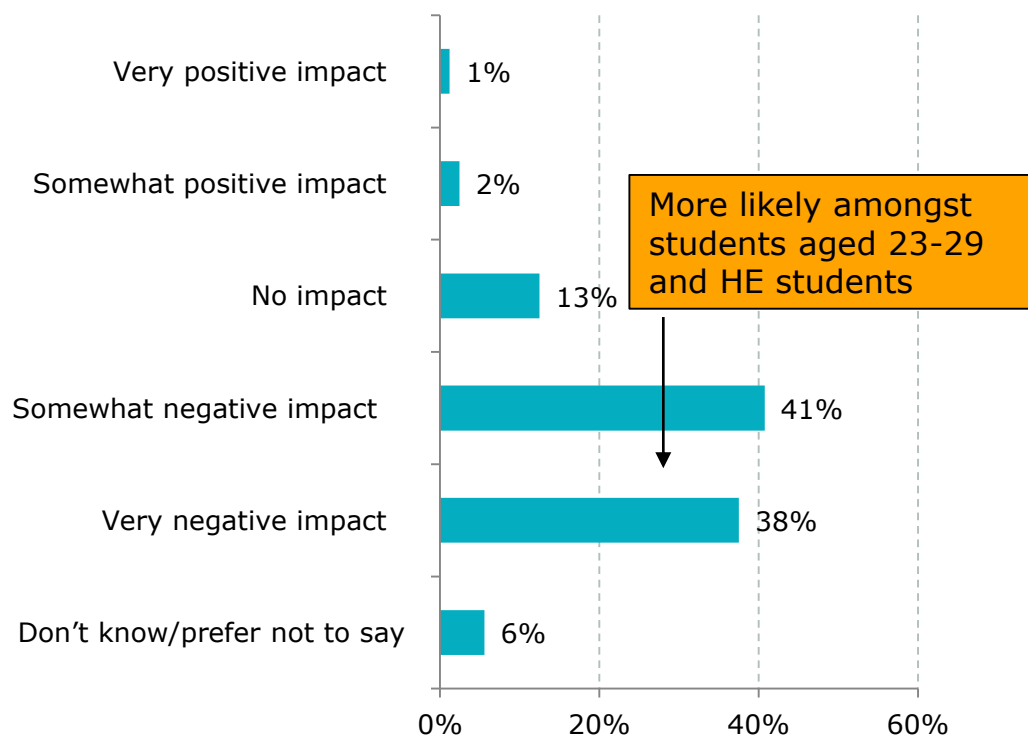
Of those who are on a vocational course (one in three), around four in five believe the Covid-19 outbreak will have a negative impact on the vocational element of their course.

Vocational / vocational component



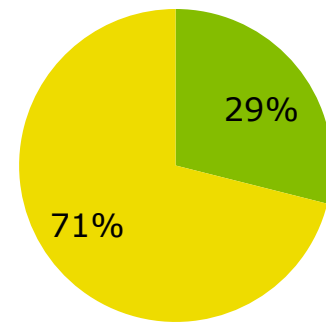
■ Yes ■ No

Impact you think Coronavirus (Covid-19) will have on the vocational element of your course



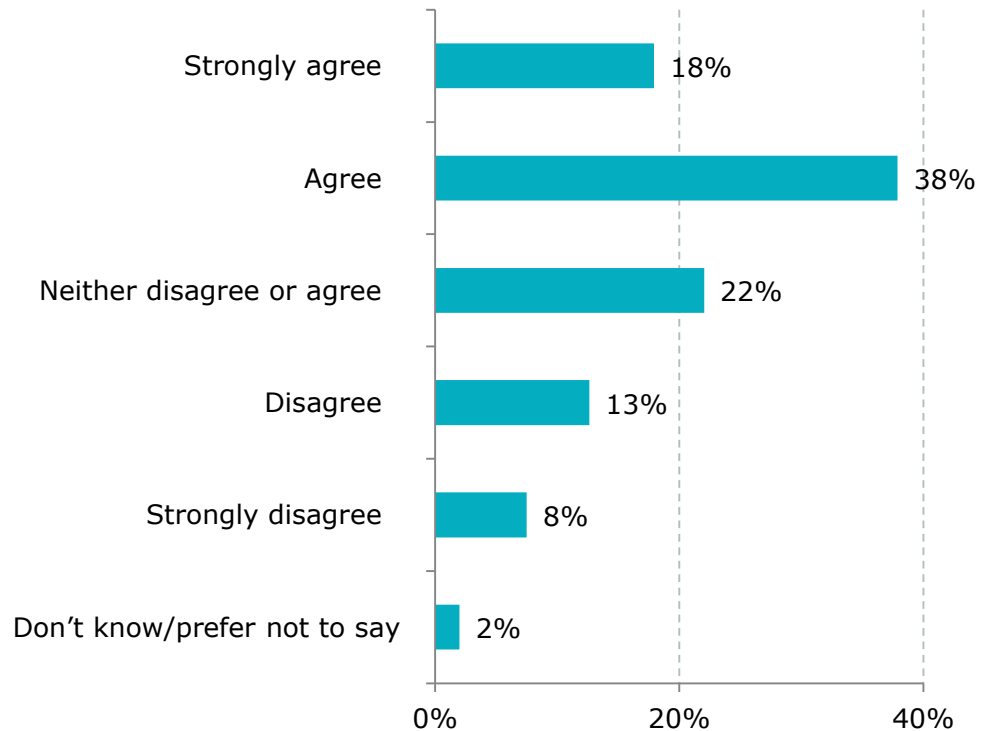
Of those who receive learning support from their institution, just over half feel they have received adequate support to enable them to continue their work to the best of their ability throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Learning support



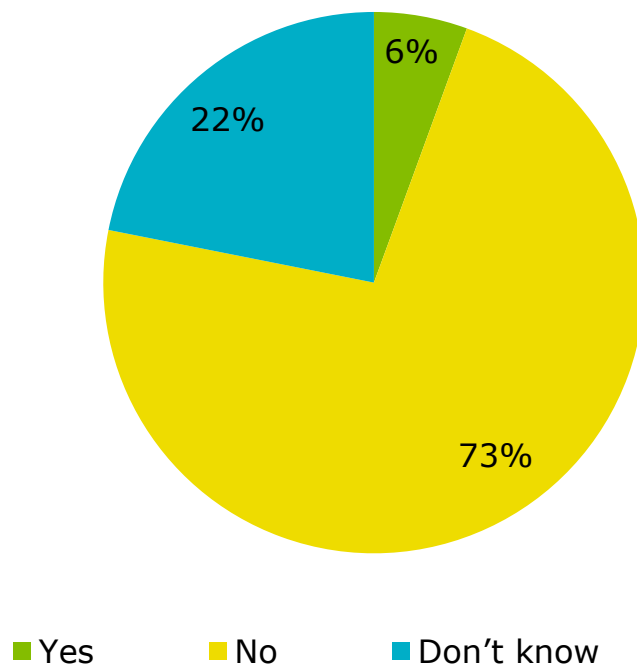
■ Yes ■ No

Agreement that you have received adequate support from your institution to enable best ability



Only 6% have themselves, or known of someone who has, been disciplined for non-attendance as an attempt to minimise social interaction since the Covid-19 outbreak.

Have you, or anyone you know been disciplined for non-attendance as an attempt to minimise social interaction since the outbreak of Coronavirus (Covid-19)?



■ Yes

■ No

■ Don't know

Weighted Base: 9641 respondents. Balance: no response

D9. Have you, or anyone you know been disciplined for non-attendance as an attempt to minimise social interaction since the outbreak of Coronavirus (Covid-19)?

Income and financial circumstances

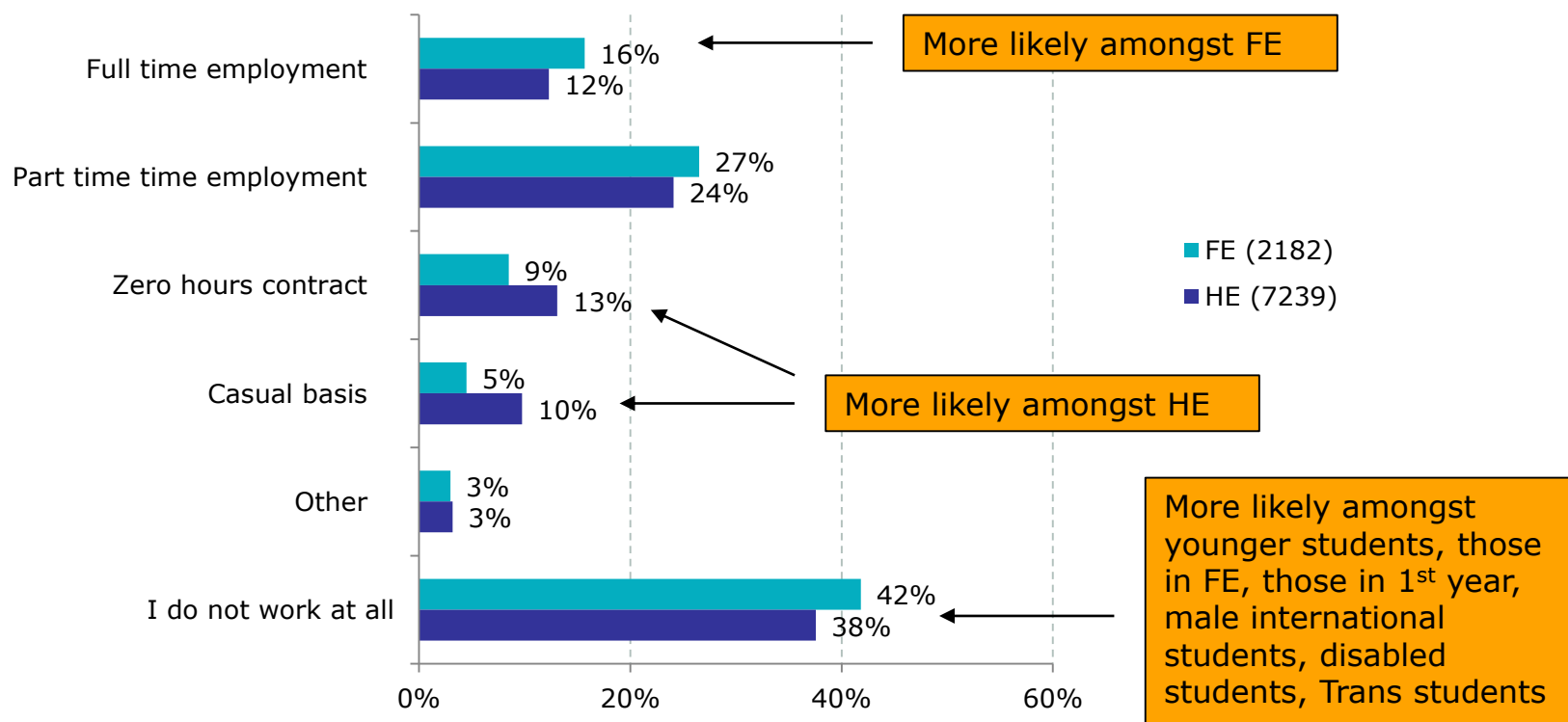
Summary

Finances are a real concern for students right now; whether that is the result of their own employment being negatively impacted or someone who supports them financially being impacted negatively by the outbreak.

Consequently the majority admit they have cut back on spending on non-essential, luxury items.

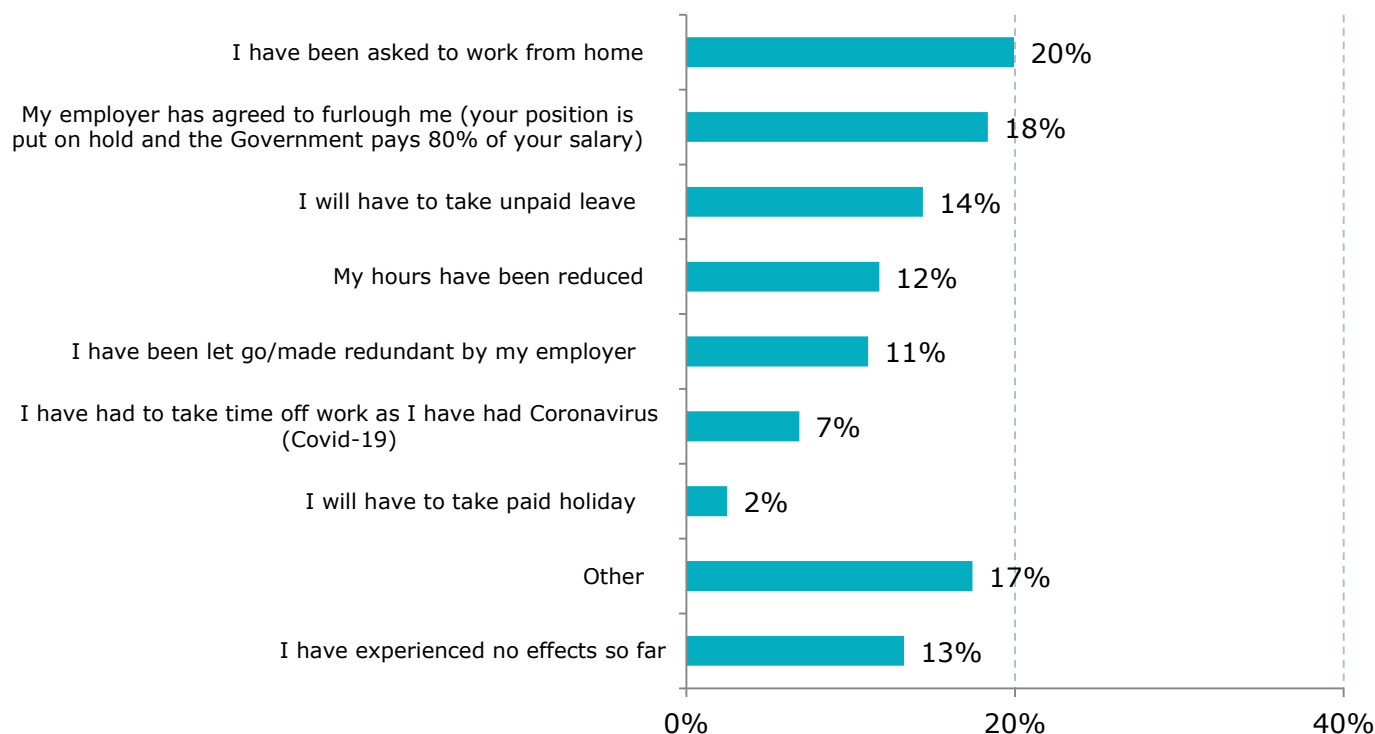
Nearly two in five students are in either full or part time employment. One in five work on a casual basis or have a zero hours contract. Nearly two in five do not work at all. FE students are more likely to be in full-time employment or to not work at all. Whereas HE students are more likely to have a zero hours contract or work on a casual basis.

Job(s) held alongside studies



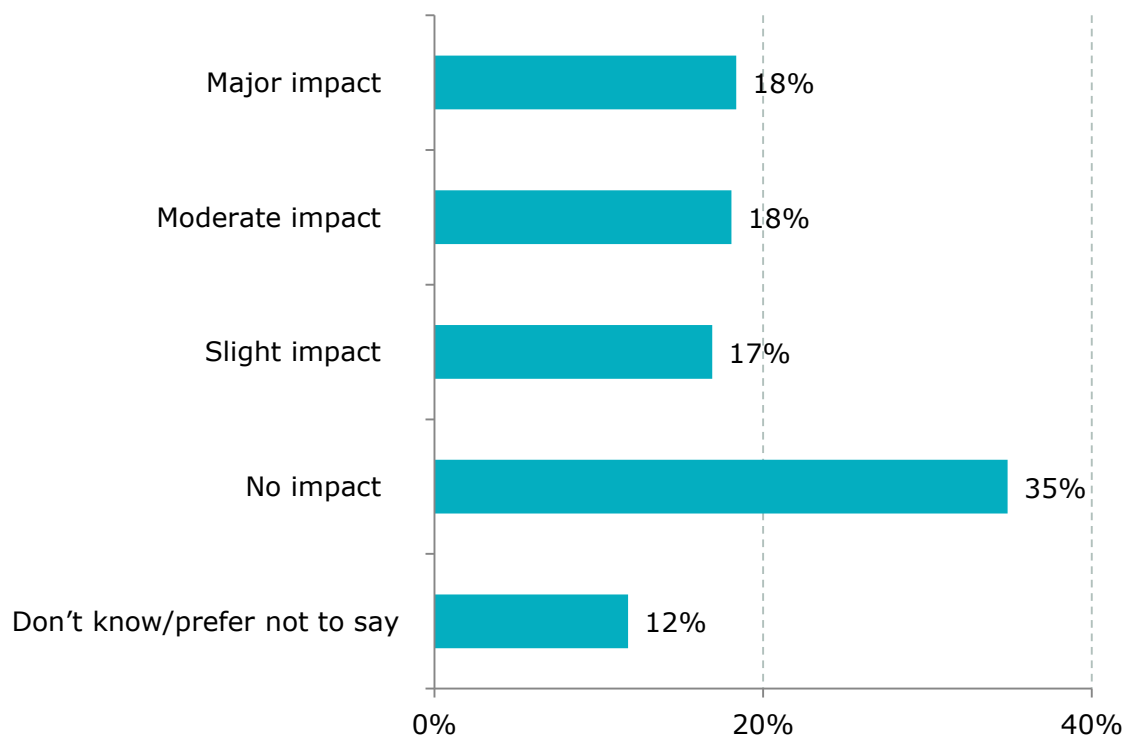
Of those students who currently work, one in five have been asked to work from home and a similar proportion have been furloughed. Around one in ten have each lost their jobs, had their hours reduced and have had to take unpaid leave.

How work has been affected by Coronavirus (Covid-19)



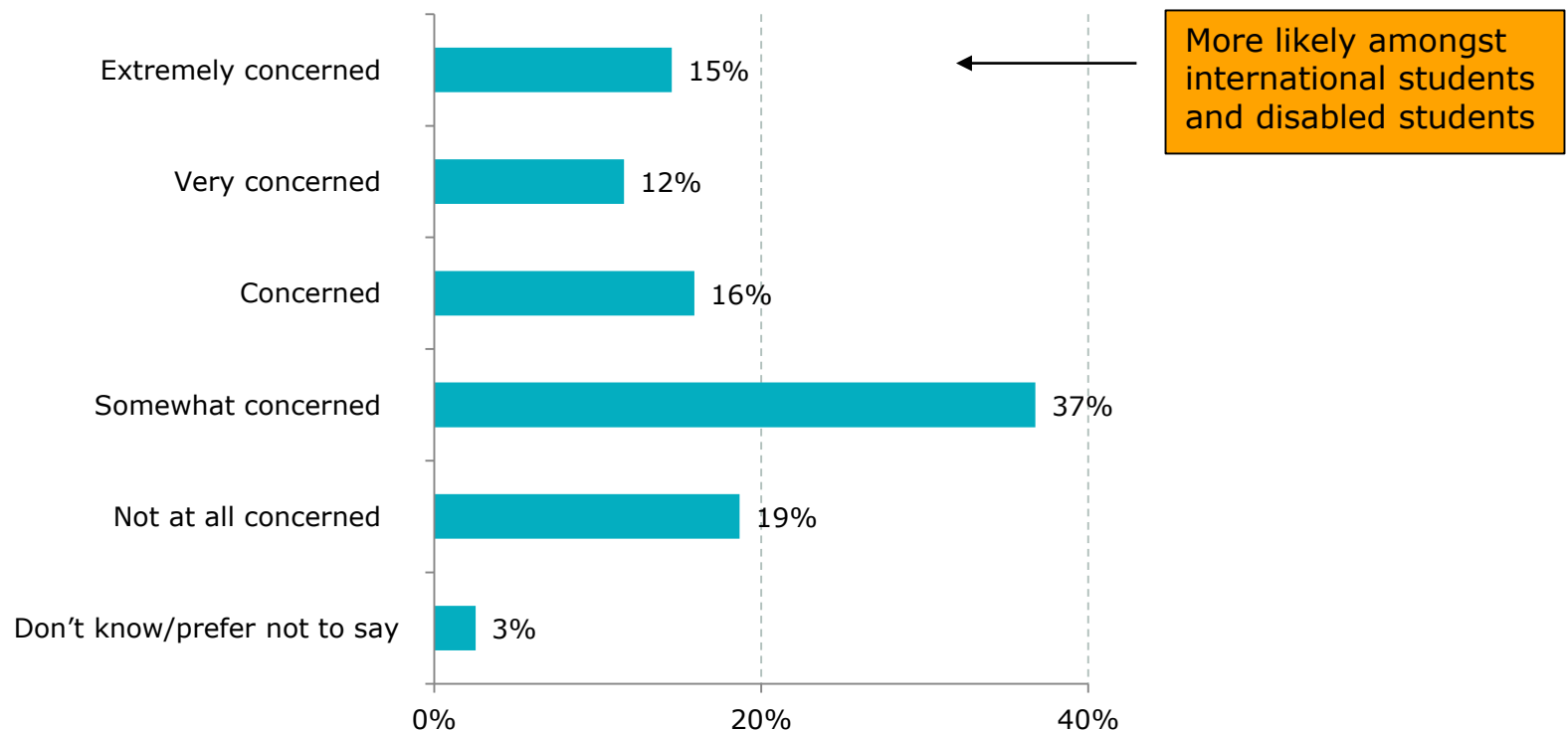
Half of students say that the income of someone who supports them financially has been impacted by Covid-19, with one in five saying it has had a major impact.

Has the income of someone who helps support you financially been impacted by Coronavirus (Covid-19)?



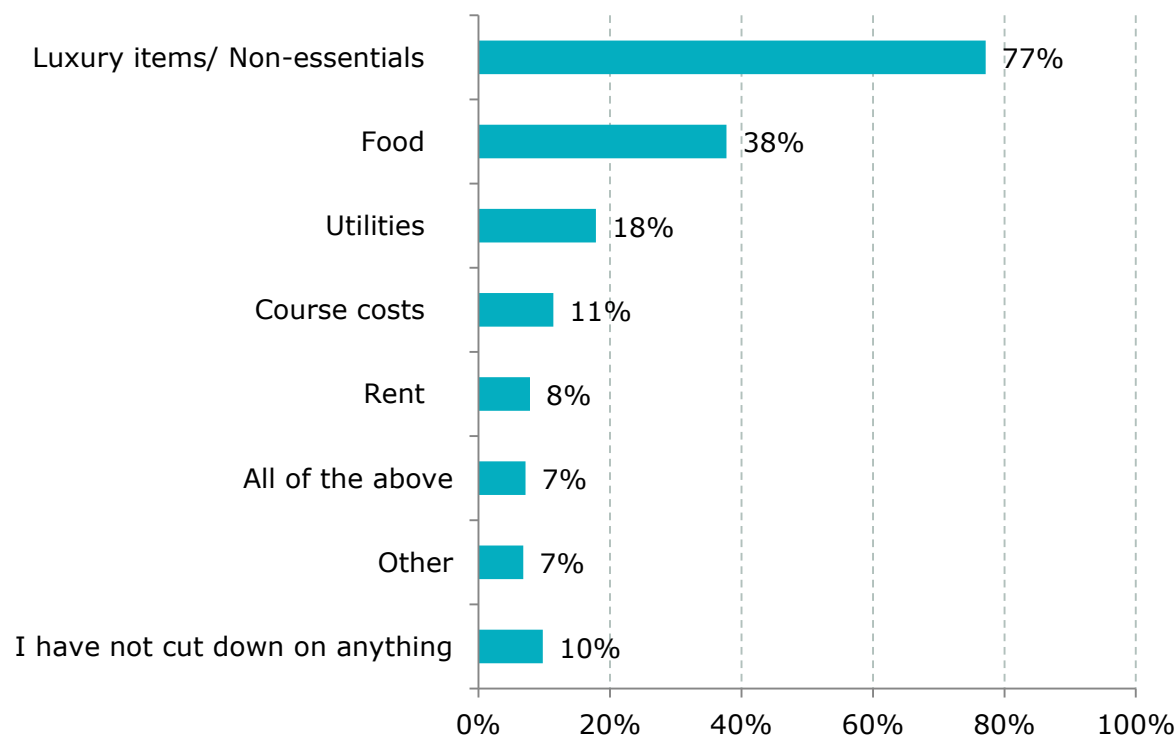
Four in five students are concerned about their ability to manage financially during the Covid-19 outbreak. One in five are 'very' or 'extremely' concerned.

Concern about ability to manage financially during outbreak



Three in four students have cut back on luxury and non-essential items since the Covid-19 outbreak. Nearly two in five have also cut back on food expenditure and around a fifth have cut back on utilities.

Cutting back in terms of spending since Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak



Impact of Coronavirus pandemic on financial hardship

Case Study

Students can't claim benefits so are at an added disadvantage

*"Make it known that postgraduate students will suffer the most as we don't get maintenance loans. Also, **ALL students cannot claim any sort of benefit or help** (as standard) but in this current situation, with students not being able to make enough money to cover rent, we can't claim LHA or housing benefit, I think this should be relaxed for 3 months and with a cap (not sure on cap figure)."*

*"Help for those like myself who are out of work due to being part time and because I'm **zero hour contract** I get paid nothing at all, so need financial help from the government as **I can't claim benefits as a full time student**"*

Impact of Coronavirus pandemic on financial hardship

Case Study

Relying on parents / family members

*"List the options for students who had part time jobs which they've not lost income from. Yes, we're students, so yes we "get a loan" but the reason students get jobs alongside their studies is because **their loan doesn't make ends meet**. I've yet to meet ANY student who has a part time job and who is well off. All of us work because we HAVE to, and so without that income, many of us are going to have to **rely on loans from friends and family members**, which in turn will leave us in so much debt when quarantine is over. There needs to be clear guidance, with a list of everything students can do to get support financially. Not just a "contact your uni" - because contact them about what? What happens **when your parents can't loan you any money** to make ends meet, and you **can't move home** - like me - and **you've lost your job**, and your freezer food is beginning to run out. What on earth happens then?"*

*"Help drive the government into caring for the students. Financially this is such a difficult time for me. And **my parents have had to take pay cuts and I get the lowest student loan**, meaning affording my rent is so difficult and I **feel guilty having to relying on my parents** who are already struggling."*

Impact of Coronavirus pandemic on financial hardship

Case Study

Relying on parents / family members

*"Please please please can we make sure students still get their maintenance loans and grants. I am privately renting and have **nowhere else to go...** I **can't return to parents even if I wanted to!!** I appreciate all your help so far! This is a really big deal for me. I am due to graduate this year and am so concerned about firstly how I'm going to pay the next 3 rents (if the loans/ grants aren't released) but then the architecture industry (my masters subject) is going to suffer severely from this. So I have no idea how I'm going to find work following the end of my student finance (if granted). The next 6 months look very uncertain for me!"*

Caring responsibilities

*"I am a mature student, full time study, single parent, look after a 13 year old child, and commute to University. I am **struggling to pay my rent, schools are closed and am home looking after my child and home schooling her,** if I decide to go to work there is no one who will look after her at home. I once applied for housing benefit they told **me I do not qualify as I receive maintenance loan.** Currently I am **using my credit card** to pay for rent and food waiting for my next student loan to be paid in. **I do not know how the future holds but I am so scared.**"*

Impact of Coronavirus pandemic on financial hardship

Case Study

Stuck in limbo

*"I know many international students, including myself, are in a state of limbo right now. I cannot return back home. **I'm stuck here, paying rent** for the uni halls. I might have to extend my graduation by 3 months, which means I will need to find the financial resources to pay for 3 extra months that I had not budgeted for when I moved to London. I know these in these times, its nobody's fault, but we have to share losses so its not devastating for one particularly vulnerable group, which I do feel I belong to. I was self-financing and paying out of my savings. I haven't had a job since I moved here in September and now **I'm extremely concerned about how I will fun my stay here for longer than planned.** If I get refunded on some of my tuition fee, it might be possible. A refund is very reasonable considering I'm taking classes online now and that's not the service I paid for. I'm a very very stressed out international student and I don't feel like anyone's hearing people like me."*

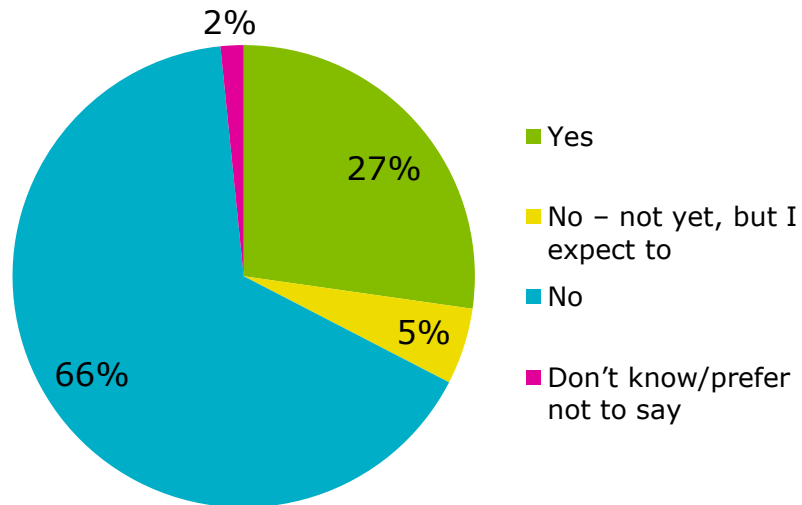
Consumption, goods and purchases

Summary

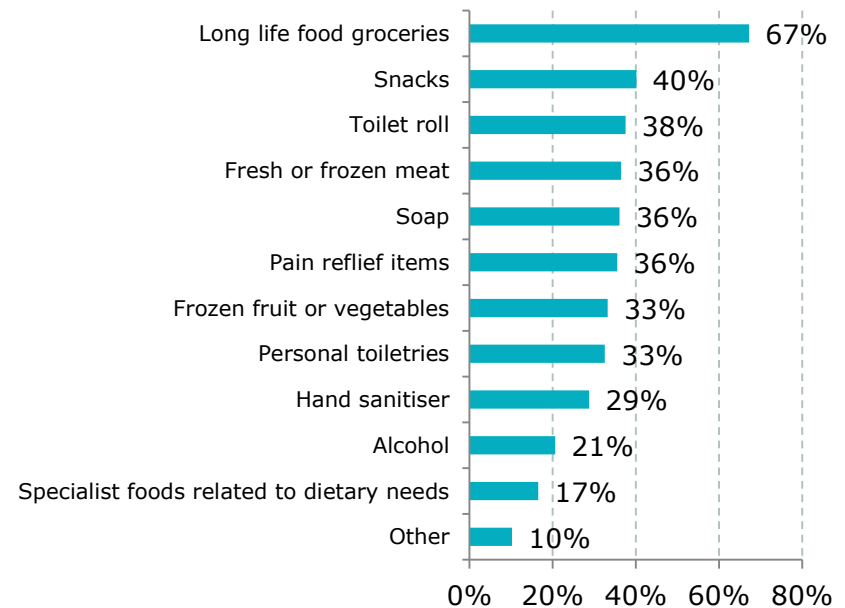
Around a quarter of students have felt the need to purchase more than usual, particularly groceries, while books are the most popular item considered to help ease with potential lockdown boredom.

One in four students say they have purchased something more than usual. In the main this has related to long life groceries. Snacks and toilet roll were also mentioned by around two in five students as items that they have purchased more of than usual.

Have you purchased more of anything than usual?



What items have you bought/are considering buying more of in the last 3 weeks?



Weighted Base: 3201 respondents. Balance : those who have not bought/don not expect to buy more than usual

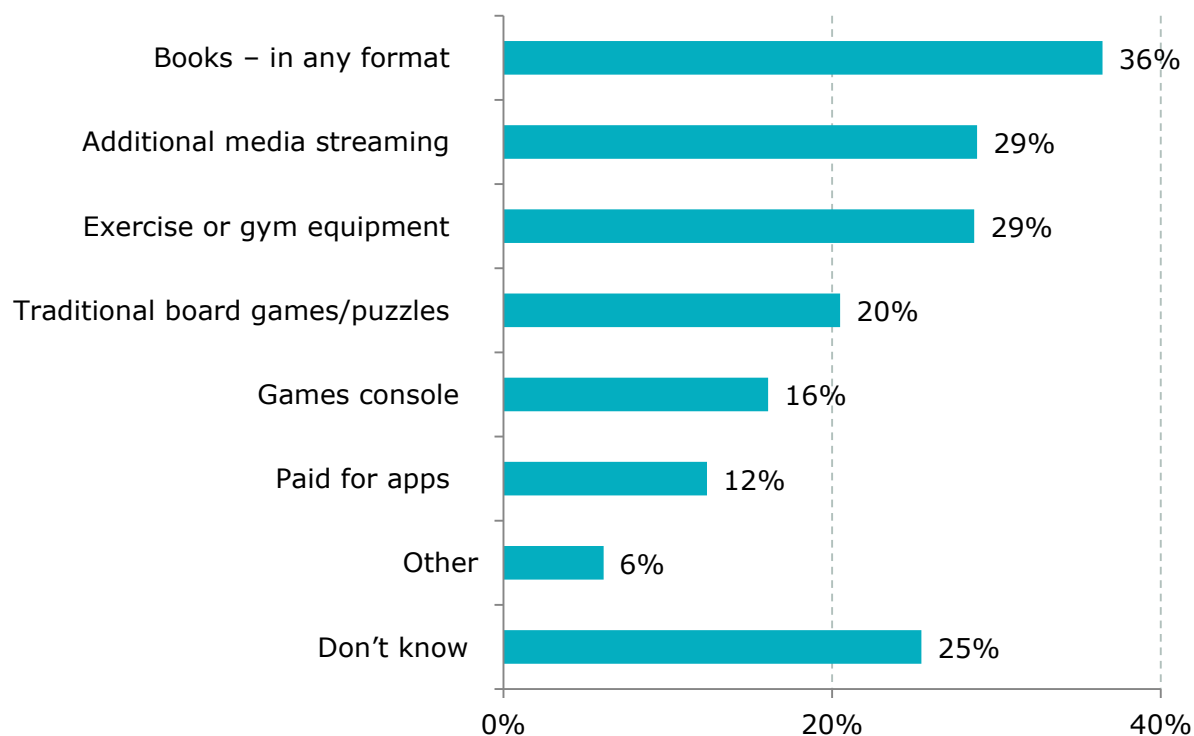
G2. Please tell us what items you have bought more of in the past 3 weeks, or are considering buying?

Weighted Base: 9872 respondents. Balance:

G1. Have you recently purchased more of anything than usual?

In an attempt to manage self-isolation and movement restrictions students are most likely to be buying books, things to watch or equipment to aid exercise.

What have you/are you considering buying to manage self isolation or movement restrictions?



Weighted Base: 9077 respondents. Balance: no response

G3. Have you, or are you considering buying any of the below to manage either self isolation or the newly announced movement restrictions?

Accommodation

Summary

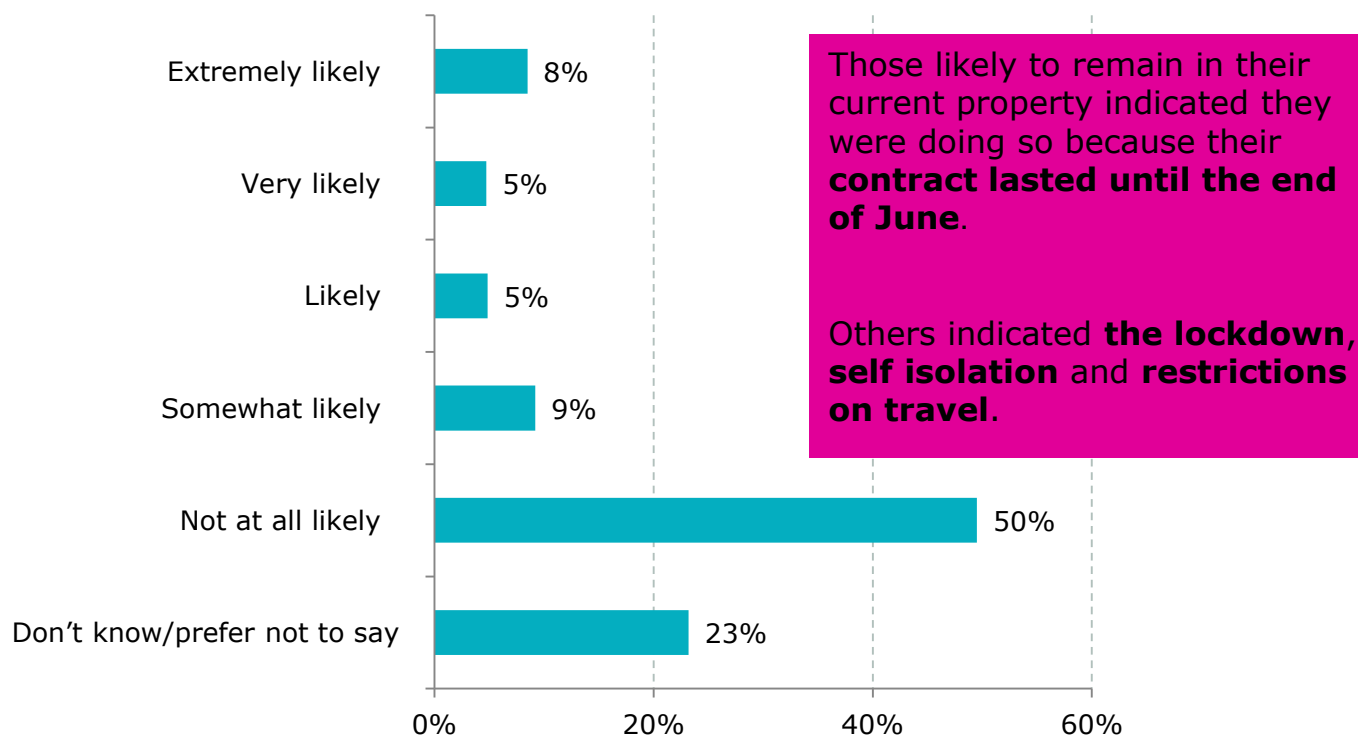
Accommodation is an area of concern for some students; in particular meeting rental payments and/or utility bills.

Around a third are keen to be released early from their rental agreements. However, fewer than a tenth have been provided with the opportunity to leave early.

Around a quarter feel they may need to stay longer in their accommodation than the period outlined in their original contract agreement.

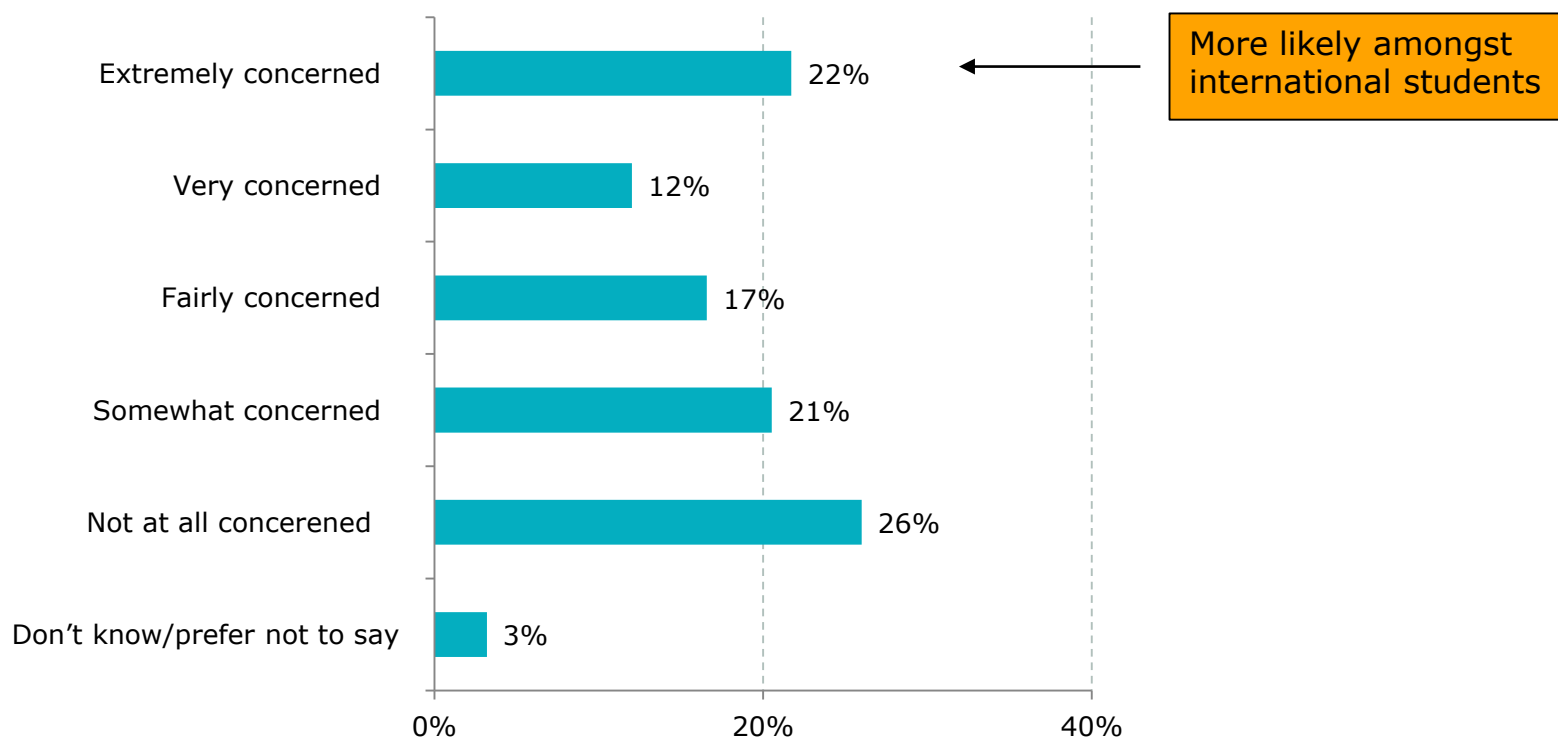
One in four students who are living in privately rented accommodation/owned halls of residence say there is some likelihood that they will need to stay in their current property beyond the original planned contract date. Reasons given for doing so are because they can't travel, need to self isolate or are restricted by the lockdown which will likely take them beyond their end of June contract end date.

Likelihood of remaining in current property beyond original planned contract data



Nearly three in four are concerned to some extent about their ability to pay rent as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. One in three are 'very' or 'extremely' concerned.

Level of concern about financial impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on ability to pay rent

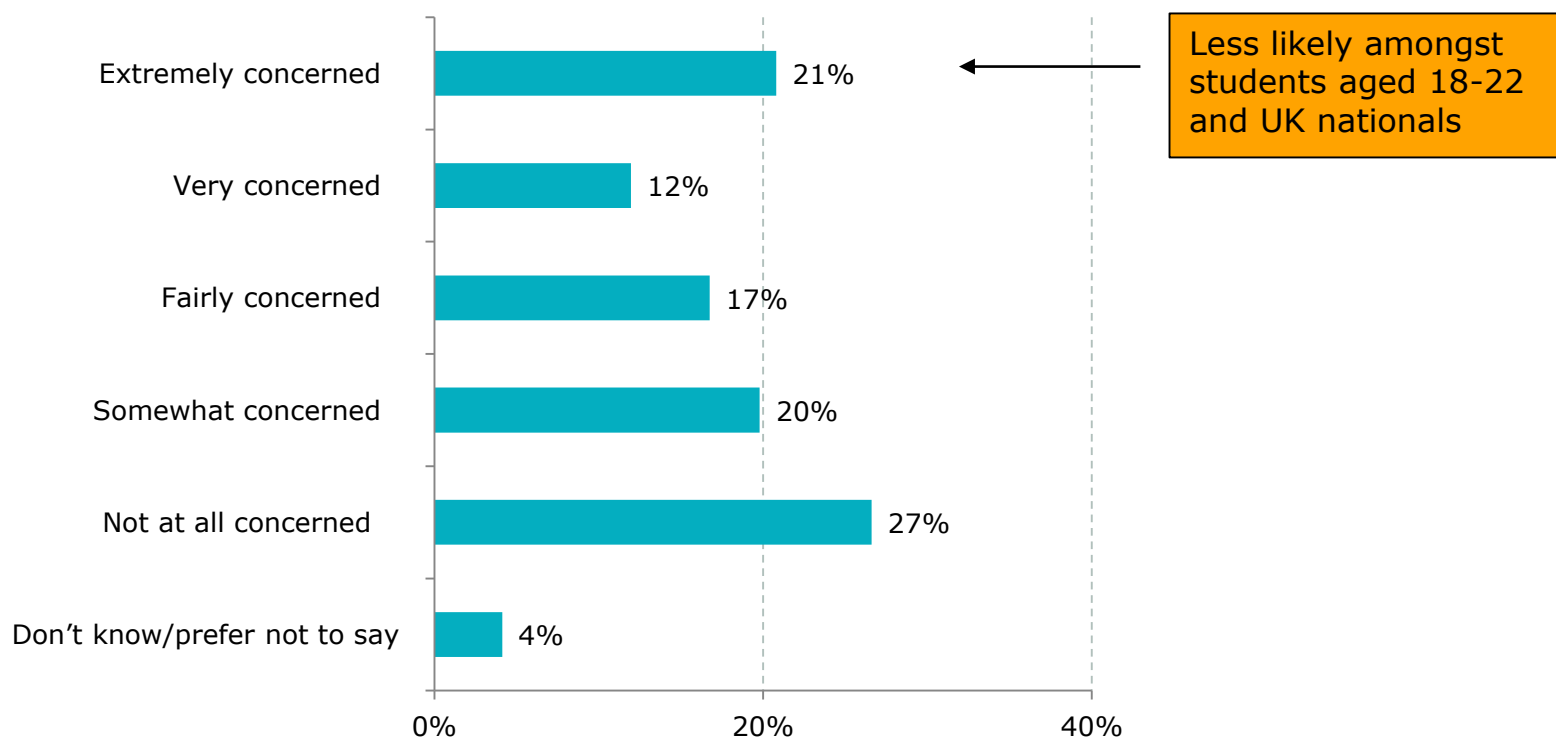


Weighted Base: 4499 respondents. Balance : those not living in privately rented accommodation or owned halls of residence

F3. How concerned are you, if at all, about the financial impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on your ability to pay rent?

Just under three in four students are concerned to some extent about their ability to pay their bills as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak. Again one in three are either 'very' or 'extremely' concerned.

Level of concern about financial impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on ability to pay bills

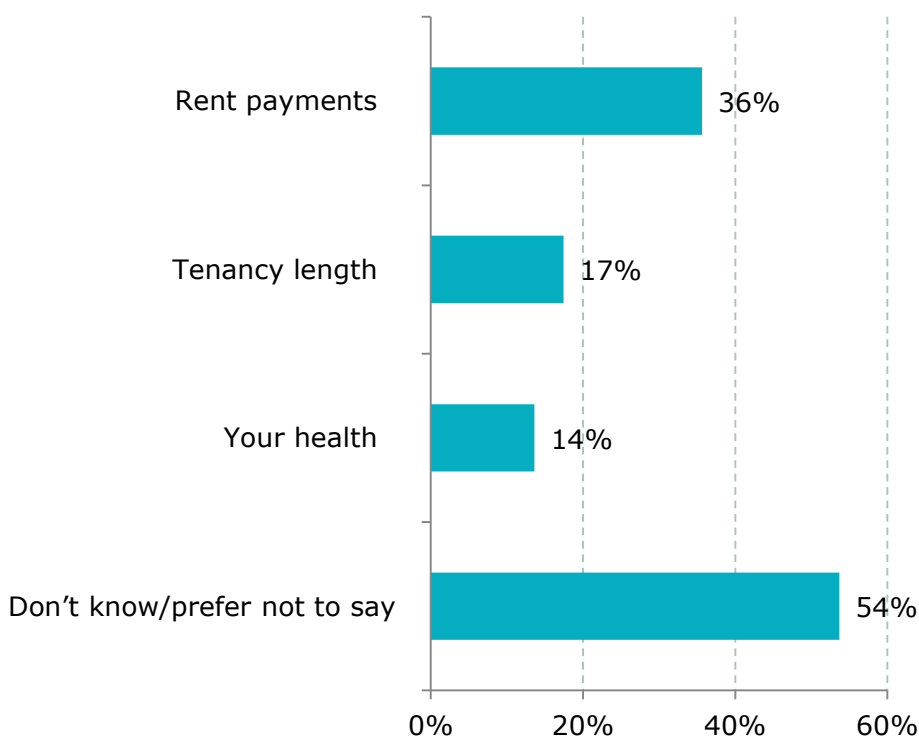


Weighted Base: 4493 respondents. Balance : those not living in privately rented accommodation or owned halls of residence

F4. How concerned are you, if at all, about the financial impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on your ability to pay bills?

One in three students have communicated with their landlord about rent payments, but fewer than one in five have communicated about their tenancy length or health. The communication with landlords was mixed; some had negative outcomes where tenancies were not extended and landlords were inflexible whereas others had a positive outcome with tenancies extended, cut short without penalty or genuine concern shown.

Have you spoken to your landlord about these issues?



Respondents indicated that their communication revolved around:

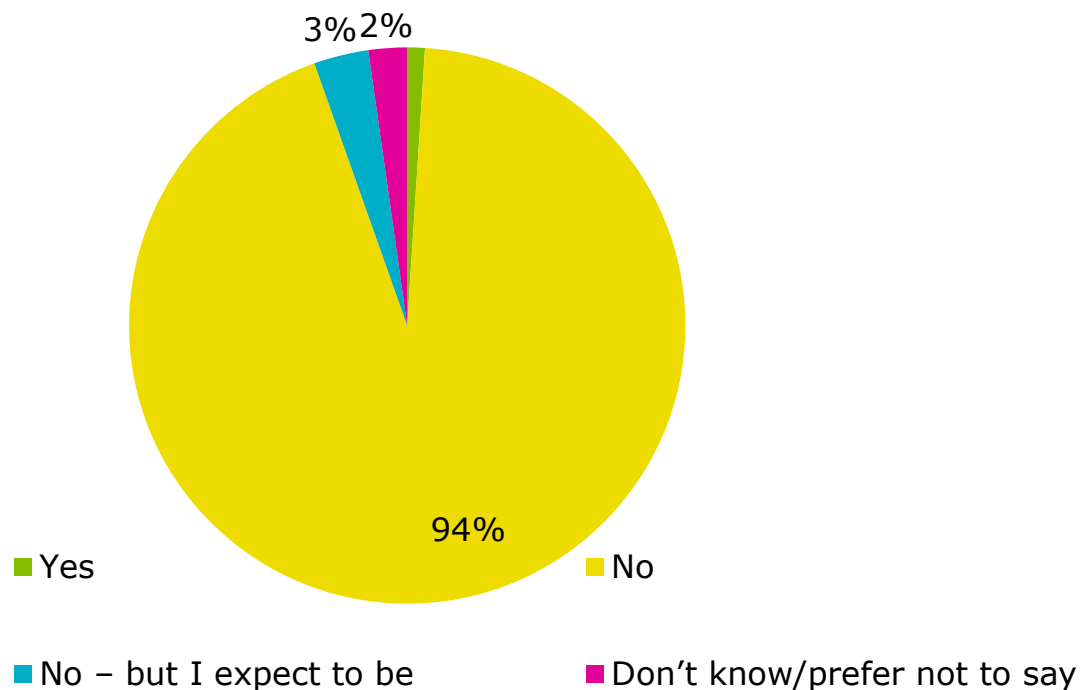
- No support given
- Discussions around contract with a negative outcome – where landlords were not flexible and there was no reduction in length or rent, or contracts were not extended
- Discussions around contract with a positive outcome – where contracts were extended where requested or cut short with no penalties
- Positively a number of landlords were concerned that their tenants were staying safe and offered support and advice on how to deal with the current situation

Weighted Base: 3907 respondents. Balance : those not living in privately rented accommodation or privately owned halls of residence

F5 and F6. Have you discussed or had any communication with your landlord/accommodation provider on any of the following issues during the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic?

Encouragingly the vast majority of students in private rented accommodation/owned halls of residence have not been issued with an eviction notice.

Have you been issued with an eviction notice?

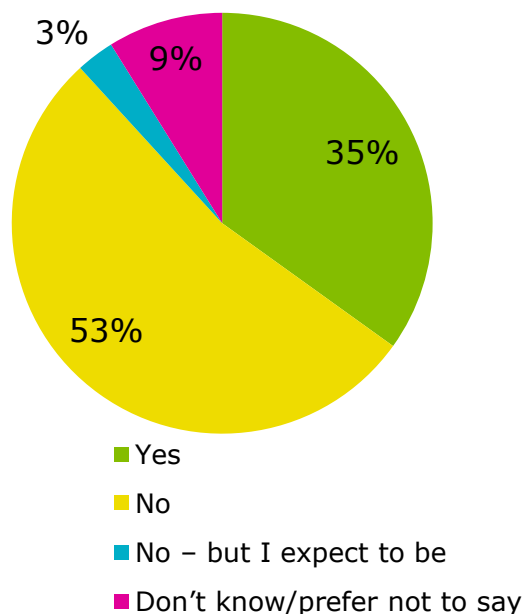


Weighted Base: 4495 respondents. Balance : those not living in privately rented accommodation or privately owned halls of residence

F7. Have you been issued with an eviction notice?

Around one in three students would like to be released early from their rental obligations. The main reason given for this preference is that learning has now moved online. The desire to be with their family is also a key reason for two in three students saying they would like to be released early from their contracts. Fewer than one in three say they feel unsafe in shared accommodation.

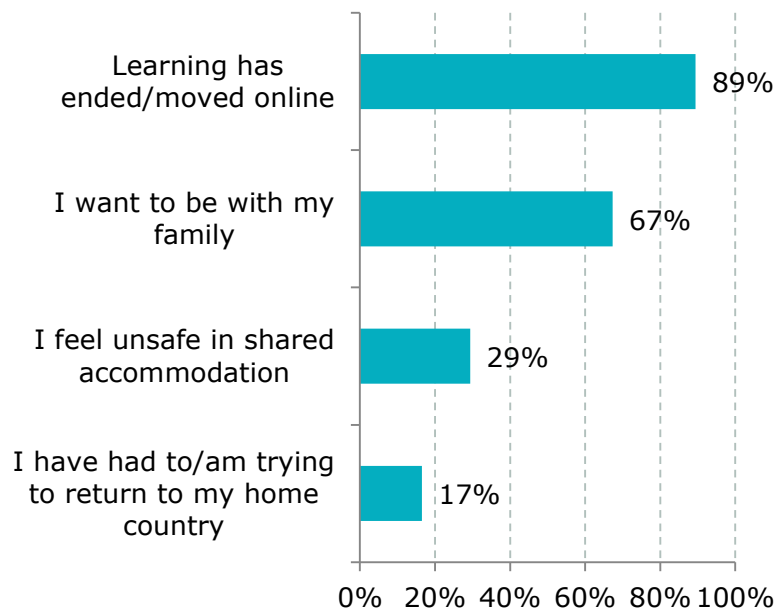
Preference for being released from rental early?



Weighted Base: 4435 respondents. Balance : those who have been issued with an eviction notice

F8. As a result of Coronavirus, would you like to be released from your current tenancy contract/rent obligations early and move out?

Why do you want to be released from your contract?

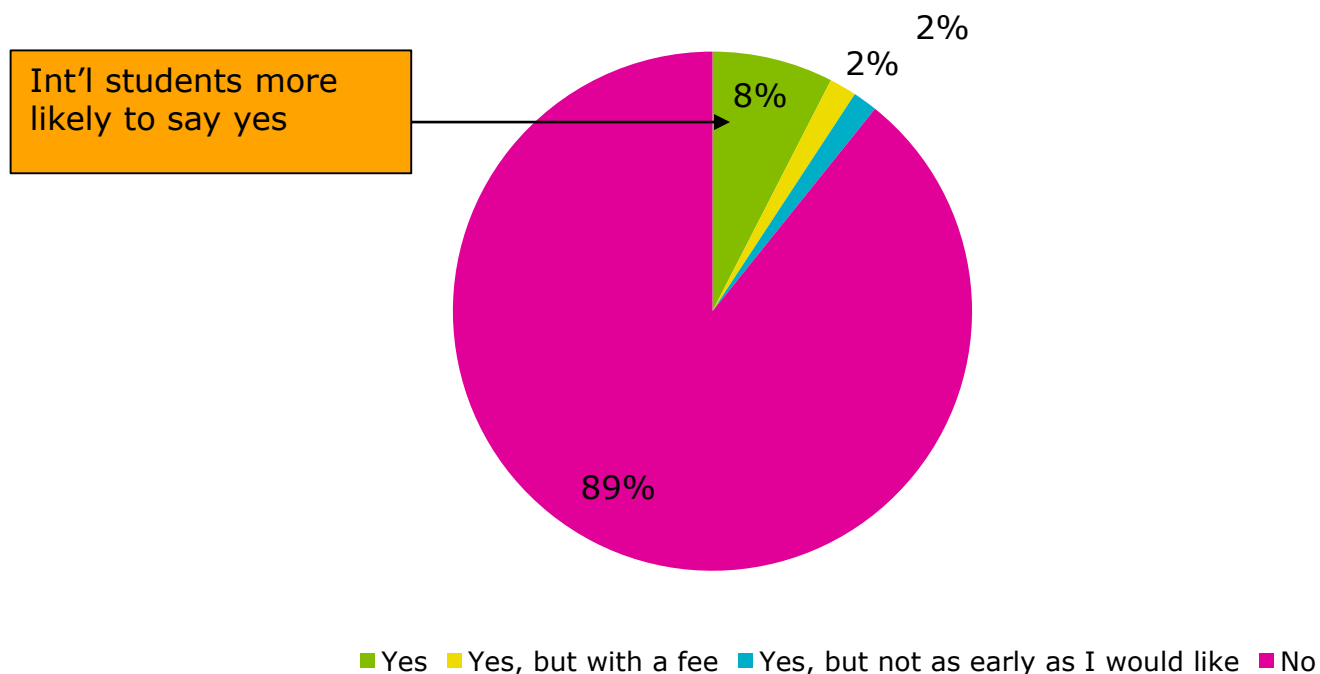


Weighted Base: 1537 respondents. Balance : those who do not want to be released from their contract

F9. Why do you want to be released from your contract?

However, fewer than one in ten have been given the opportunity to be released early from their tenancy/rental obligations.

Has your landlord given you the option to release early from your current contract?



Weighted Base: 4498 respondents. Balance : those not living in privately rented accommodation or privately owned halls of residence

F10. Has your landlord/accommodation provider offered you the opportunity to be released early from your current tenancy/rent obligations as a result of Coronavirus?

Government actions

Summary

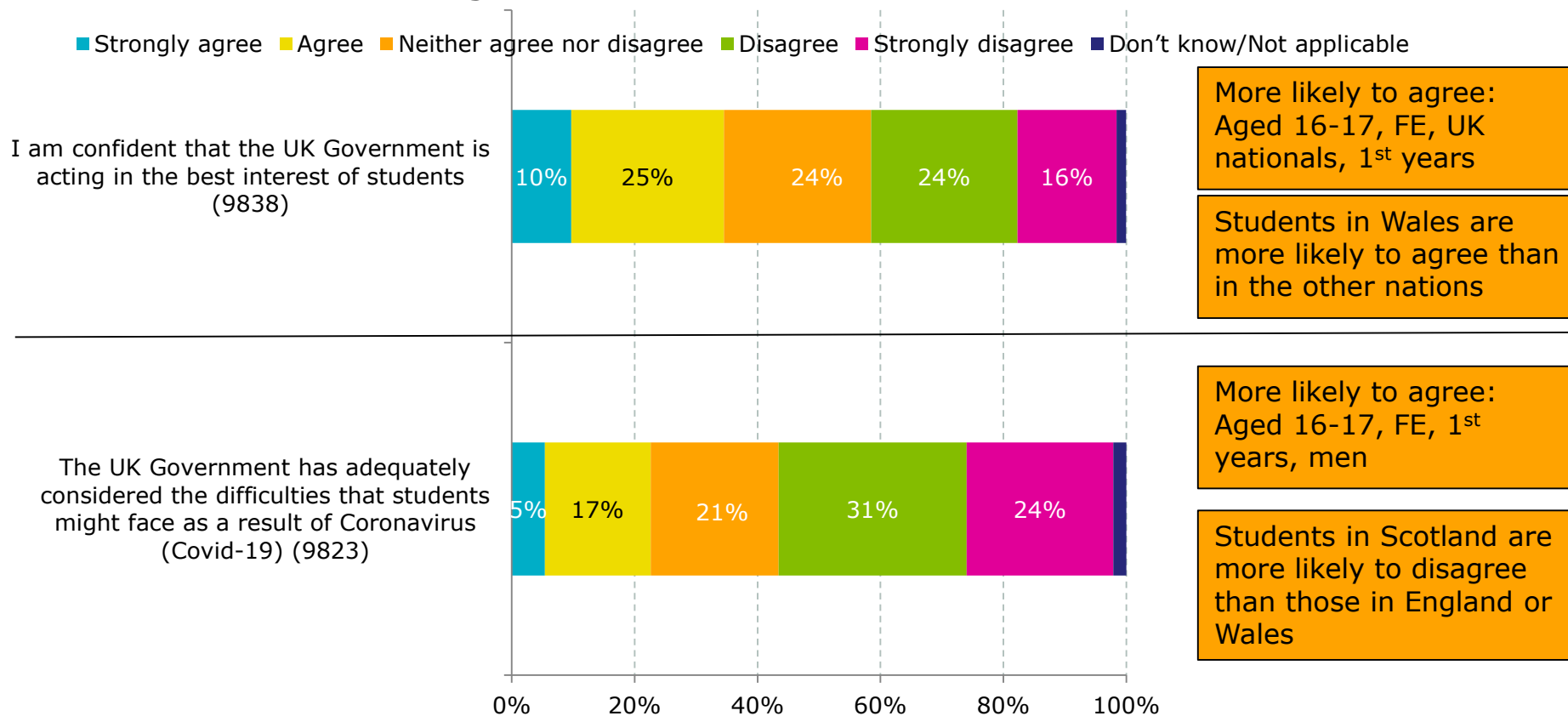
The vast majority of students are aware to some extent of the measures their governments are taking so far to combat the economic impacts of the pandemic.

Students in Northern Ireland are less likely to demonstrate confidence in their government's actions with regards to students best interests than those commenting on the other nation governments or the UK government as a whole. However, there is least confidence with the UK government considering the difficulties students face at this time.

The majority of students want to know how they will be graded and what assessments will involve.

40% of students disagree that the UK Government is acting in the best interests of students compared to 35% who agree. Over half disagree that the UK Government has adequately considered the difficulties students face as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Agreement with statements – UK Government

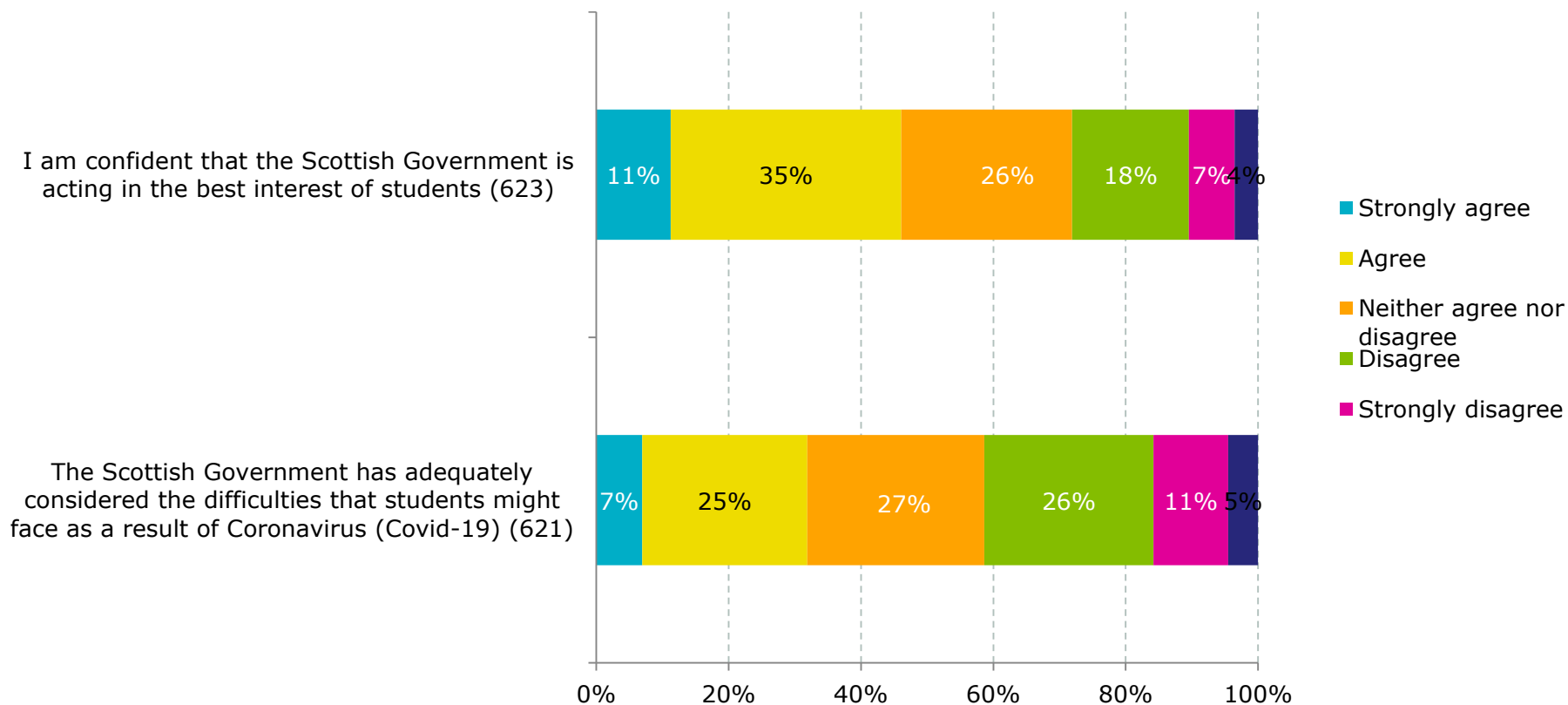


Weighted Base: (in brackets). Balance: no response

H1. Please tell us how far you agree, if at all, with the statements below in relation to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic?

46% of students in Scotland agree that the Scottish Government are acting in the best interests of students compared to 25% who disagree. Similar proportions (one in three) either agree or disagree that the Scottish Government are adequately considering the difficulties students are facing as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Agreement with statements – Scottish Government



Weighted Base: (in brackets). Balance: students not studying in Scotland

H2. Please tell us how far you agree, if at all, with the statements below in relation to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic?

35% of students studying in Wales agree that the Welsh Government are acting in the best interests of students compared to 27% who disagree. A similar proportion disagree that the Welsh Government are adequately considering the difficulties students are facing as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Agreement with statements – Welsh Government

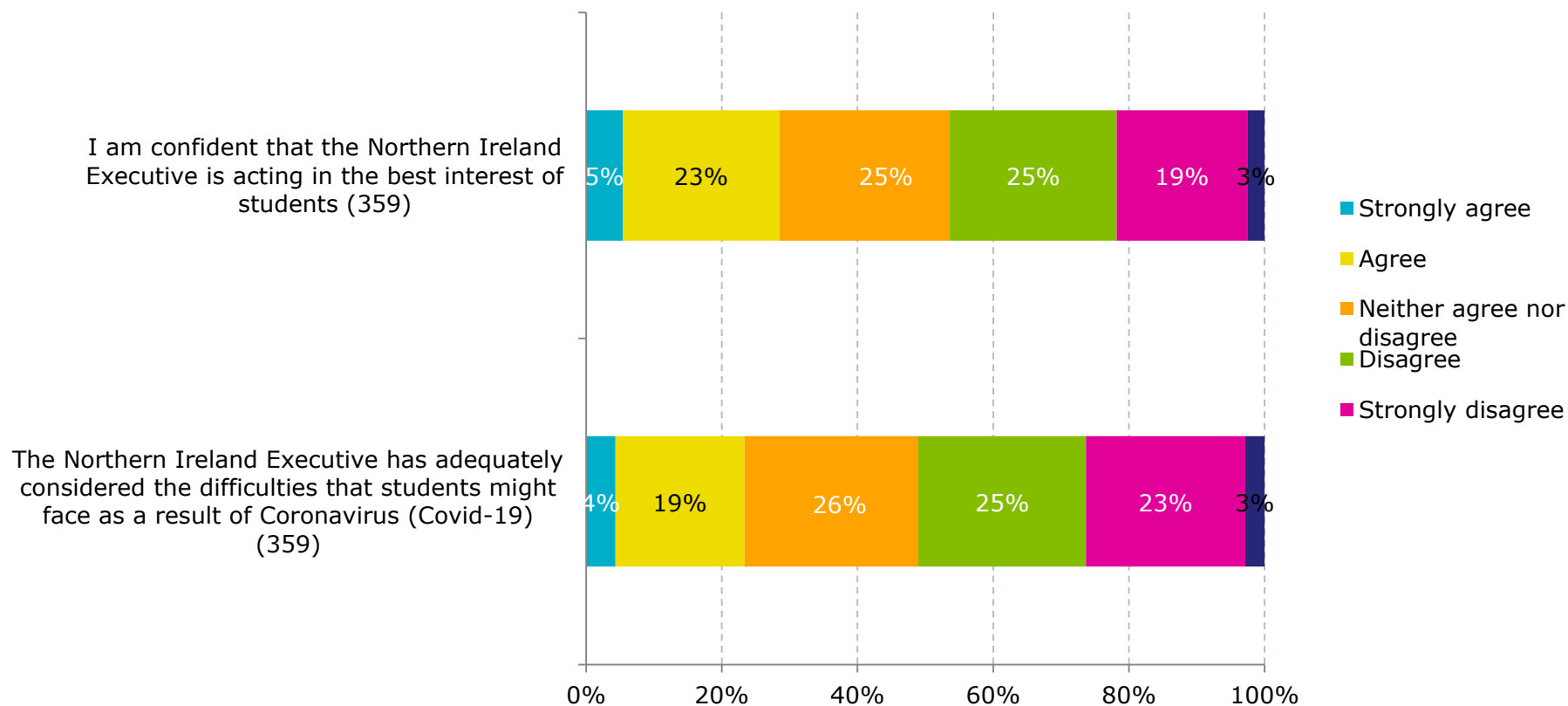


Weighted Base: (in brackets). Balance: students not studying in Wales

H3. Please tell us how far you agree, if at all, with the statements below in relation to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic?

54% of students studying in Northern Ireland disagree that the NI Executive are acting in the best interests of students compared to 28% who agree. A similar proportion disagree that the NI Executive are adequately considering the difficulties students are facing as a result of the Covid-19 outbreak.

Agreement with statements – Northern Ireland Executive

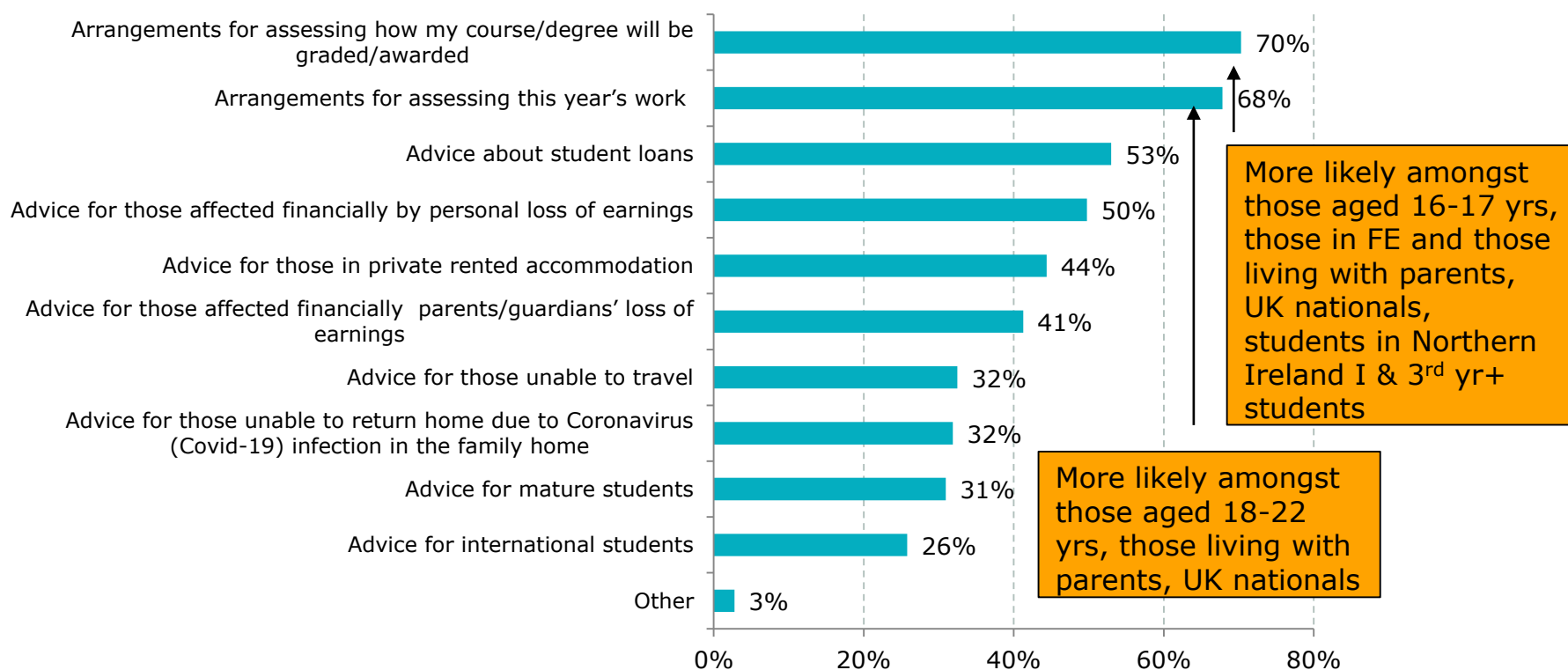


Weighted Base: (in brackets). Balance: students not studying in Northern Ireland

H4. Please tell us how far you agree, if at all, with the statements below in relation to the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic?

Over two in three would like further information and guidance from governments on how their course/degree will be graded/awarded. A similar proportion would like further info/guidance on how this year's work will be assessed. Half would like info on their student loans and advice on being financially impacted by loss of earnings.

Other information/guidance would like from governments

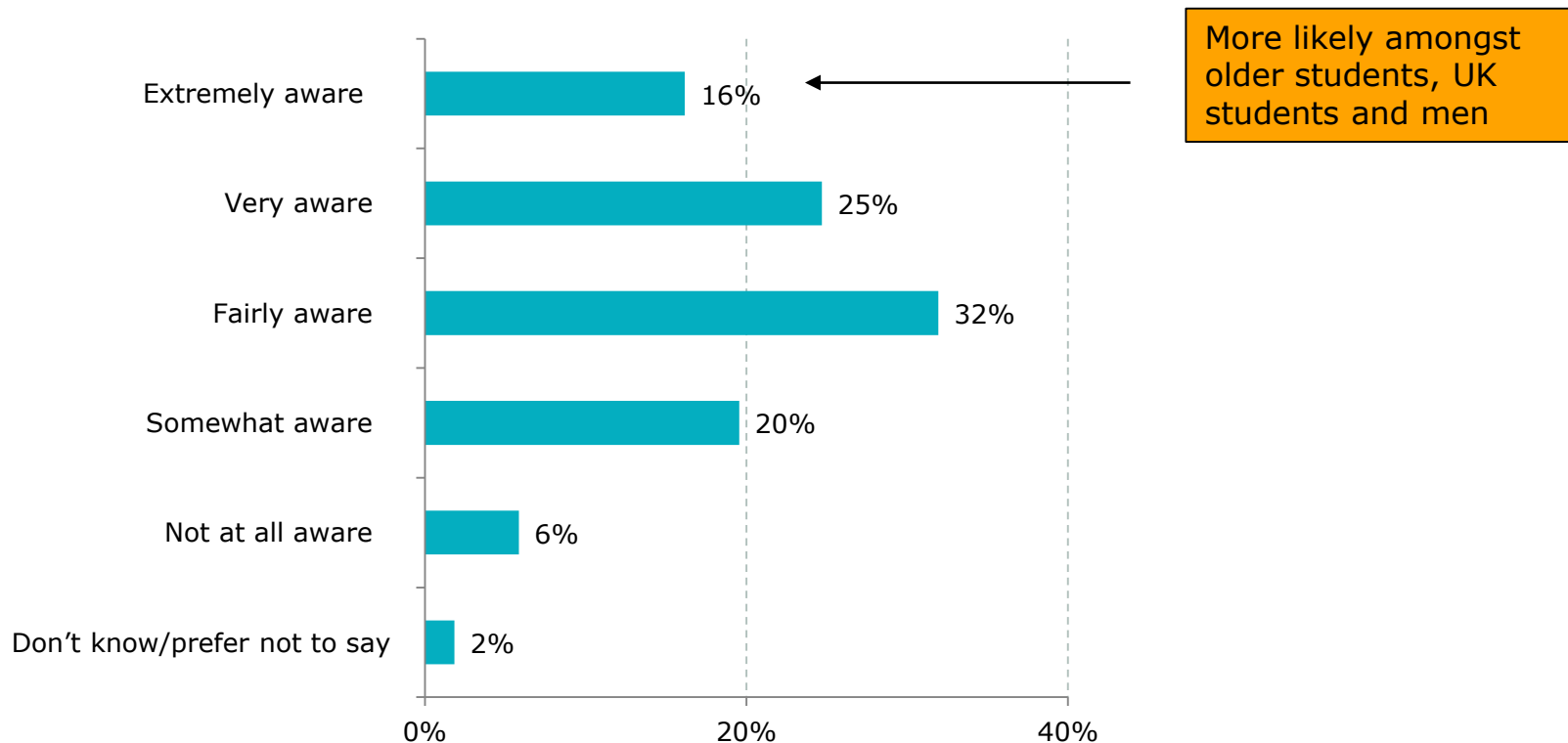


Weighted Base: 9561 respondents. Balance: no response

H5. What further information or guidance would you like the relevant Governments (UK, Scottish, Welsh and NI) to issue for students?

The vast majority of students are aware to some extent of the measures the governments are taking so far to combat the economic impacts of the Covid-19. Two in five are either 'very' or 'extremely' aware.

Awareness of Government measures to combat economic impacts



Weighted Base: 9830 respondents. Balance: no response

H6. How aware are you, if at all, of the measures that the relevant Governments (UK, Scottish, Welsh and NI) have taken so far to combat the economic impacts of the Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic?

The future

Summary

Students are more likely to be concerned with the impact of the Coronavirus pandemic on the wider economy, particularly older students, those in HE, disabled students, international students and those in their 3rd year or later in their studies.

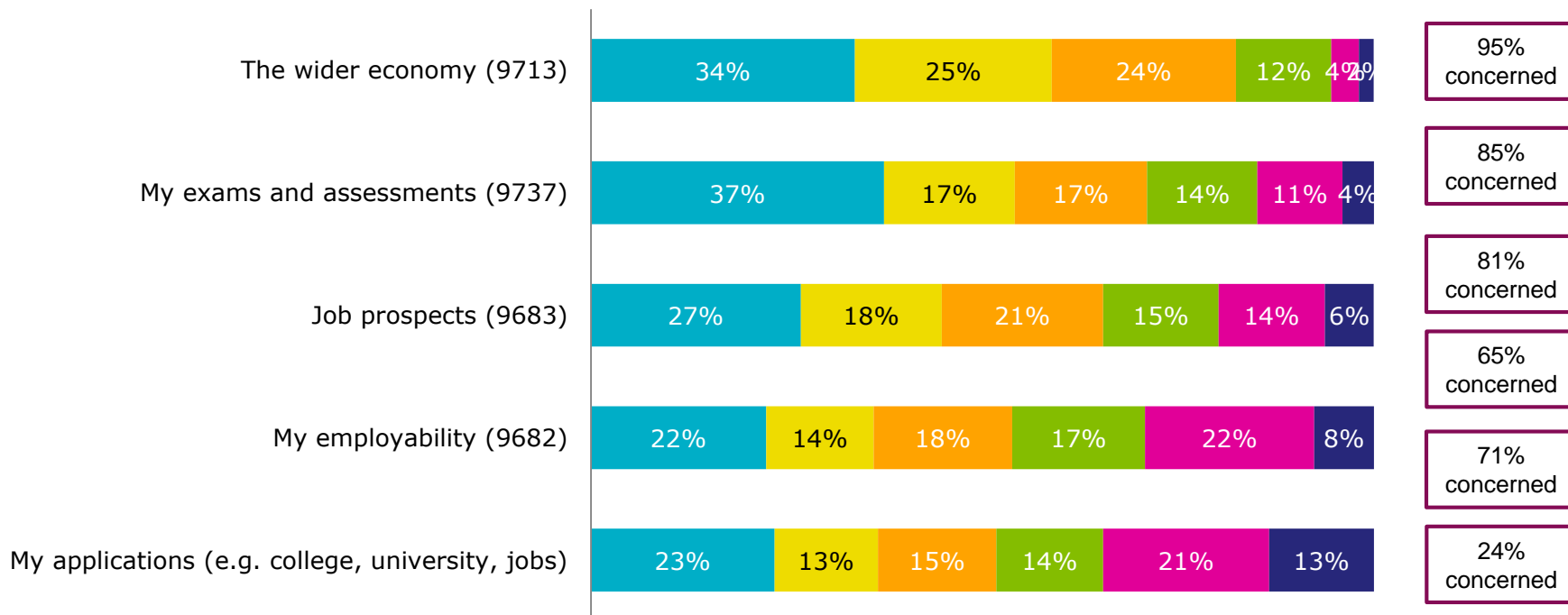
A high proportion are also concerned with exams and assessment, and this is in regards to new methods and ways of working and studying, having to adapt to these, learning how to work and submit papers online whilst trying to remain motivated and focused with little time. Stress and impact on mental health is another factor added to the mix.

Most students seem confident to some extent that studies will be enrolled for in person in the coming academic year, with older students, those in Northern Ireland and disabled students less positive about this than other students. However, the largest proportion of students believe that the pandemic will result in changes to the way studies are conducted in future.

Students are most likely to show a level of concern for the wider economy. Over a third are extremely concerned about the impact of coronavirus on their exams and assessment.

Levels of concern about impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19)

■ Extremely concerned
 ■ Very concerned
 ■ Concerned
 ■ Somewhat concerned
 ■ Not at all concerned
 ■ Don't know/Not applicable



Weighted Base: (in brackets) respondents. Balance : no response

J1. How concerned are you about the impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on the following?

When looking at the data across different demographics we can see some significant differences.

Levels of concern about impact of Coronavirus (Covid-19)

More likely to be concerned by impact on exams and assessment:

- Those aged 18-22
- Those in HE
- Students in Northern Ireland
- Students in 3rd year

More likely to be concerned by impact on applications:

- Students in Northern Ireland
- Students in 3rd year

More likely to be concerned by impact on employability:

- Students aged 23-29
- Students in HE
- International students
- Students in 3rd year
- Women

More likely to be concerned by impact on wider economy:

- Those aged 50+
- Student in HE
- International students
- Students in 3rd year
- Disabled students

More likely to be concerned by impact on job prospects:

- Those aged 23-29
- Those in HE
- International students
- Students in 3rd year

Students are concerned about the impact of the virus on many aspects of their studies and student life. These are just the main areas highlighted.

Key themes:

- **Lack of time** to prepare / meeting deadlines
- Having to **work / submit online**
- Ultimate **grades** / predicting grades
- Impact on **stress and health**
- Lack of **motivation / focus / concentration**
- **Limits on ability** to carry out work / assessment
- Accessing **resources**

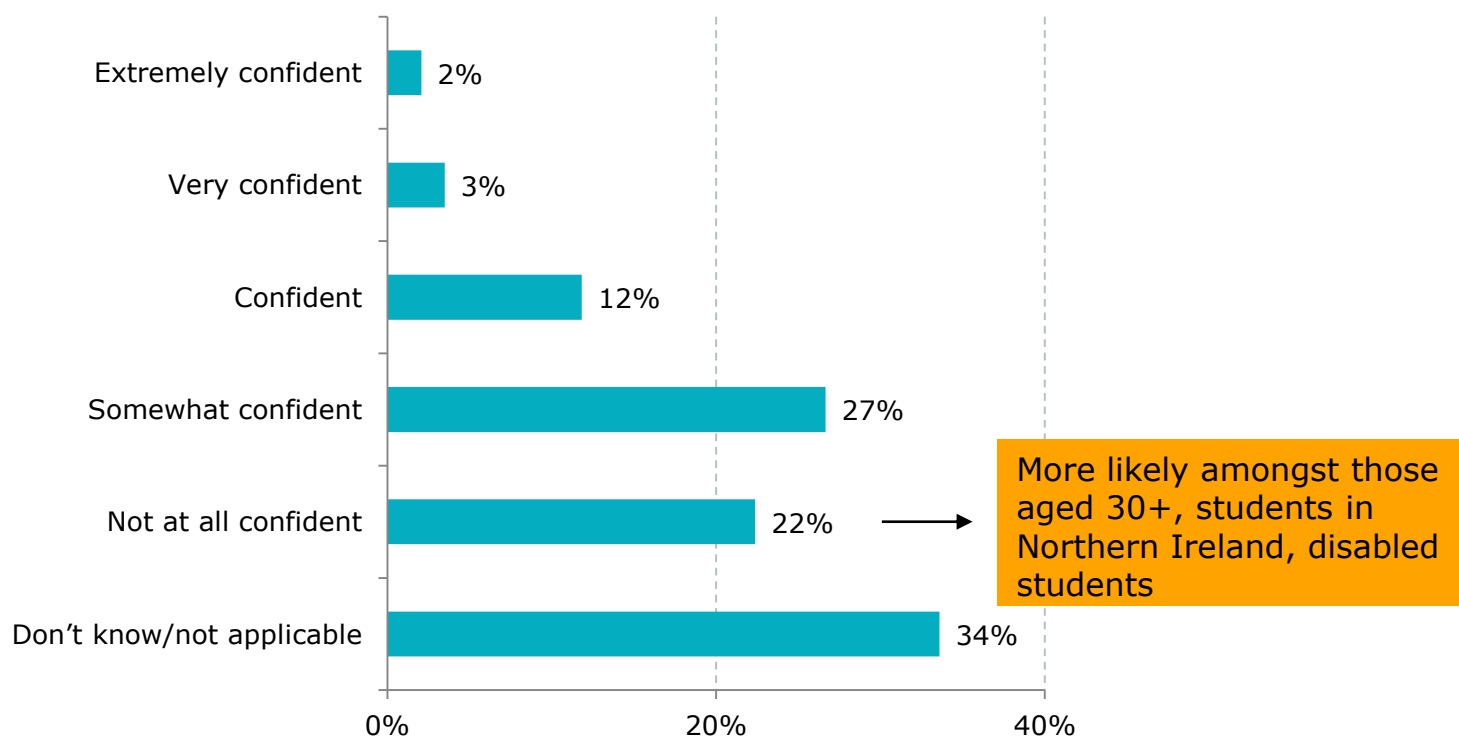
"Not having full resources online. Online teaching is not the same so how can we understand the work nevermind write a 2000 word on something that is brand new to us..."
Female, 18-22, FE

"My mental ability to stay focused and calm whilst completing assessments at home in an environment I struggle to work. As normally I would spend a great deal of time in the library."
Male, 23-29, HE

"I am missing out on lectures. Group assignment work is impossible. I have no access to printing and no hard copies of handouts that would normally receive in seminars and lectures. I am unable to have face to face tutorials with subject or personal tutors. This on top of four long term chronic health problems is very difficult."
Female, 40-49, HE

Over a third of students simply don't know whether enrolment for next year's studies will take place in person on campus or remotely.

Confidence that next year of study enrolment will take place in person on campus

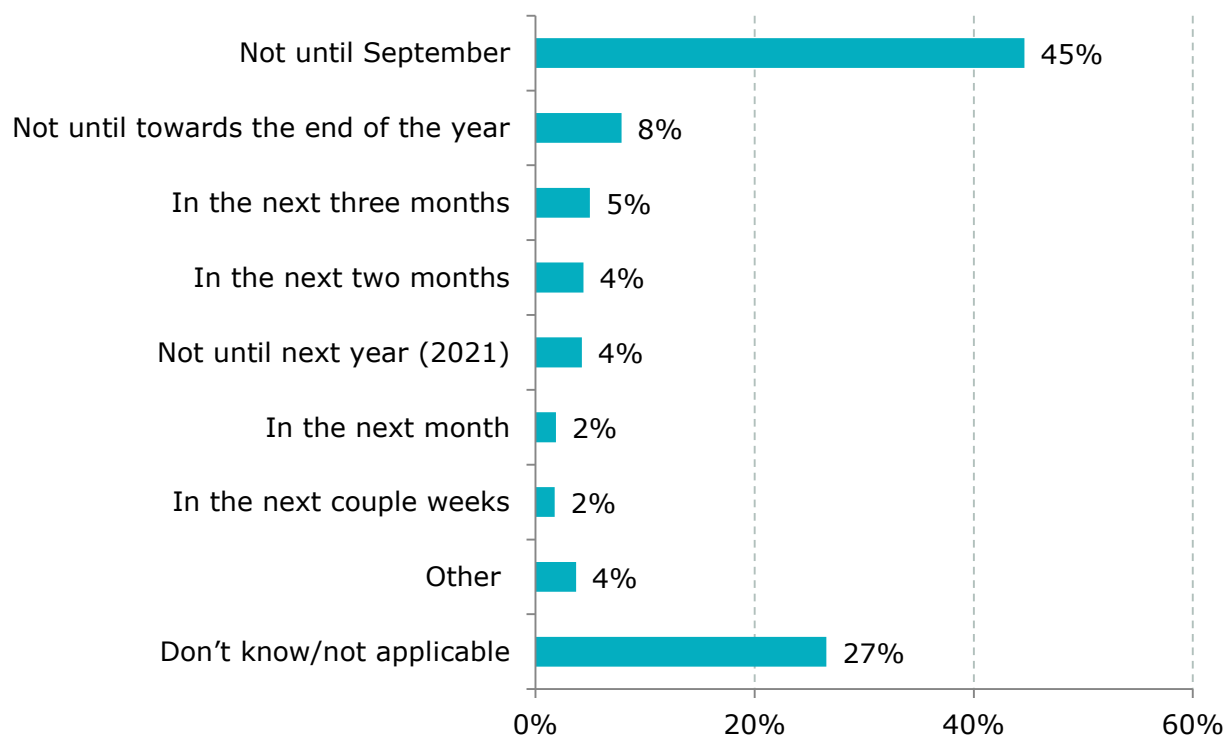


Weighted Base: 9808 respondents. Balance : no response

J3. Thinking ahead to your next year of study, how confident are you that enrolment will take place in person on campus as opposed to remotely?

Students most commonly believe that they will return to study in September.

When expect to return to studying?

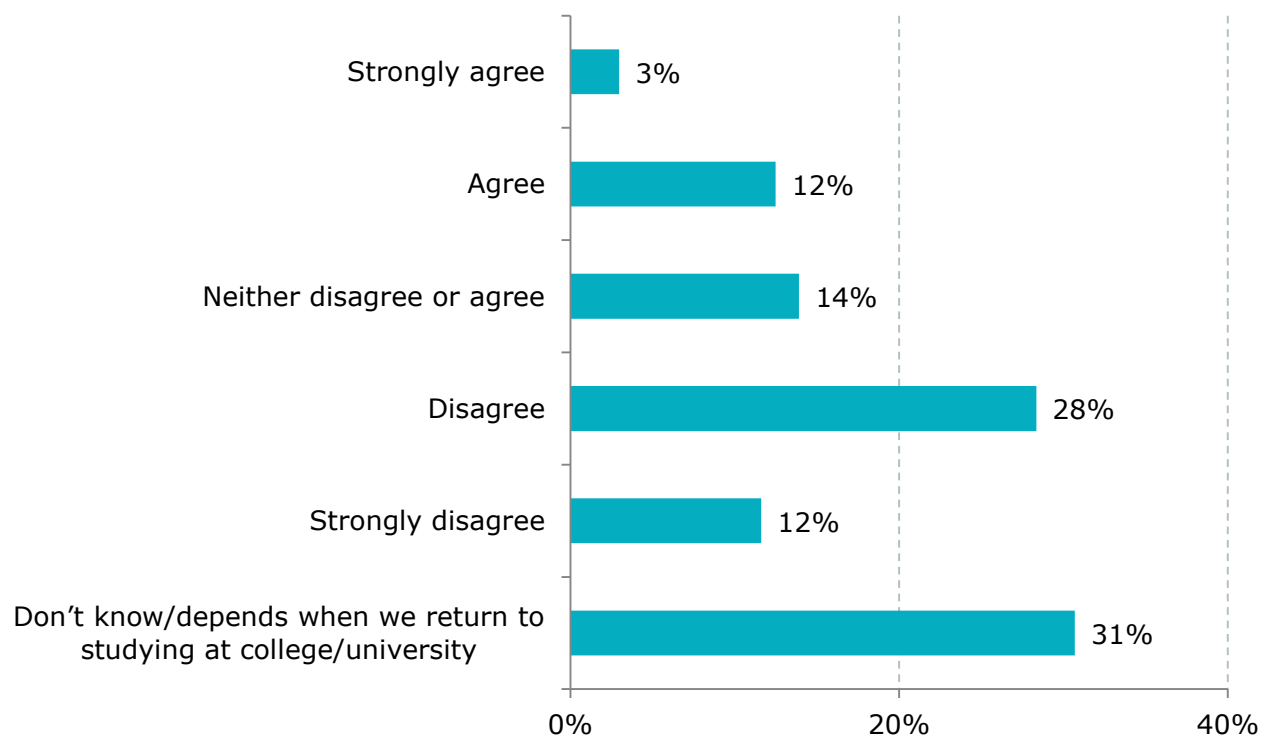


Base: 9857 respondents. Balance : no response

J4. When do you expect to return to studying at your college/university?

Over a quarter do not expect that they will return to 'business as usual' when they recommence their studies. A third are unsure and believe it will be down to when they actually return to their course.

Expectation that when you return to studying it will be 'business as usual'



Weighted Base: 9800 respondents. Balance : no response

J5. When you return to studying at your college/university how far do you agree or disagree that it will be 'business as usual' e.g. Fresher's Fairs taking place, Clubs & Societies running as normal, large scale events happening etc.

Demographics

Key demographics (weighted base)

Gender



Women **53%**

Men **45%**

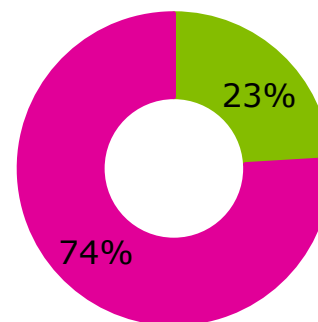
Age



Level of study

FE

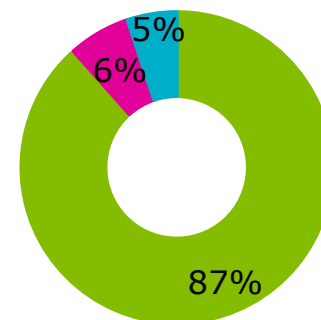
HE



UK citizen studying in the UK

International student from within the EU studying in the UK

International student from outside the EU studying in the UK



Our survey slightly oversampled on students from the UK; HESA statistics indicate that students from the UK account for 80% of the higher education population.



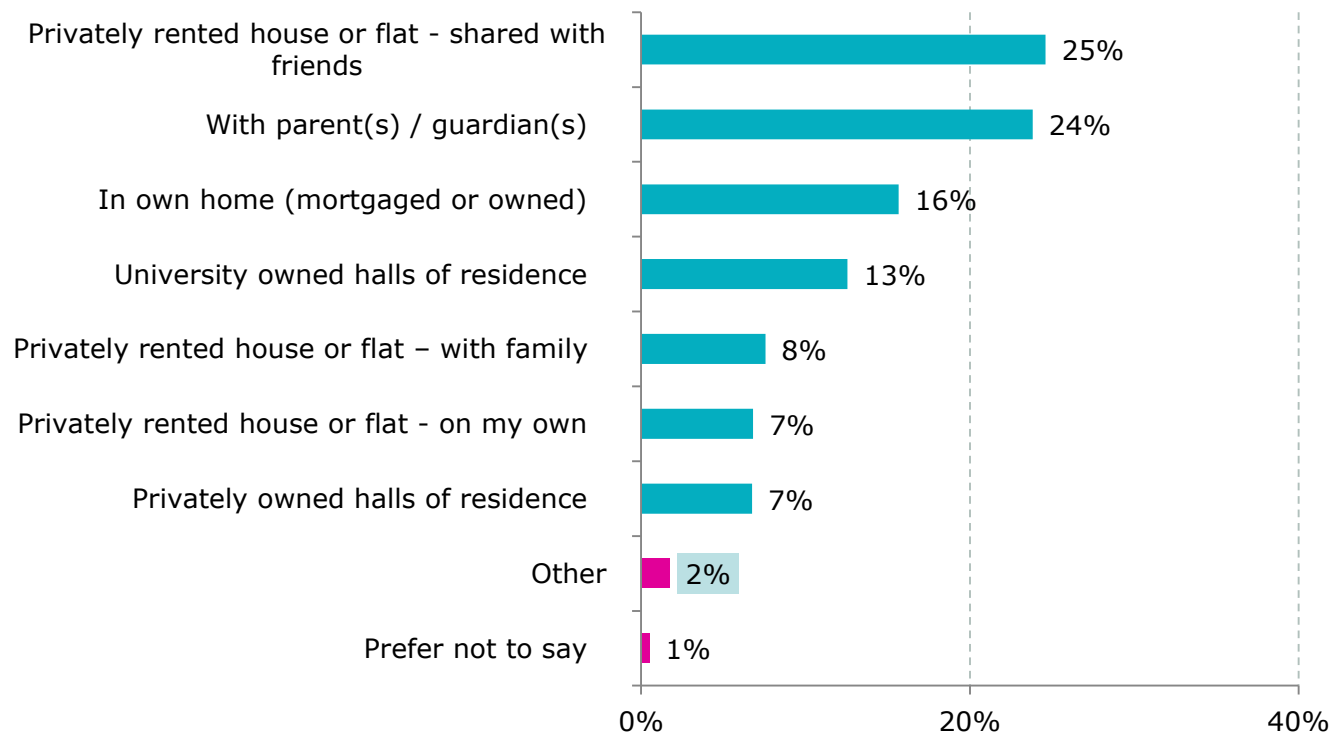
Full time: 79%

Part time: 15%

Distance learner: 8%

Demographics

Usual term time living circumstances before the Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak

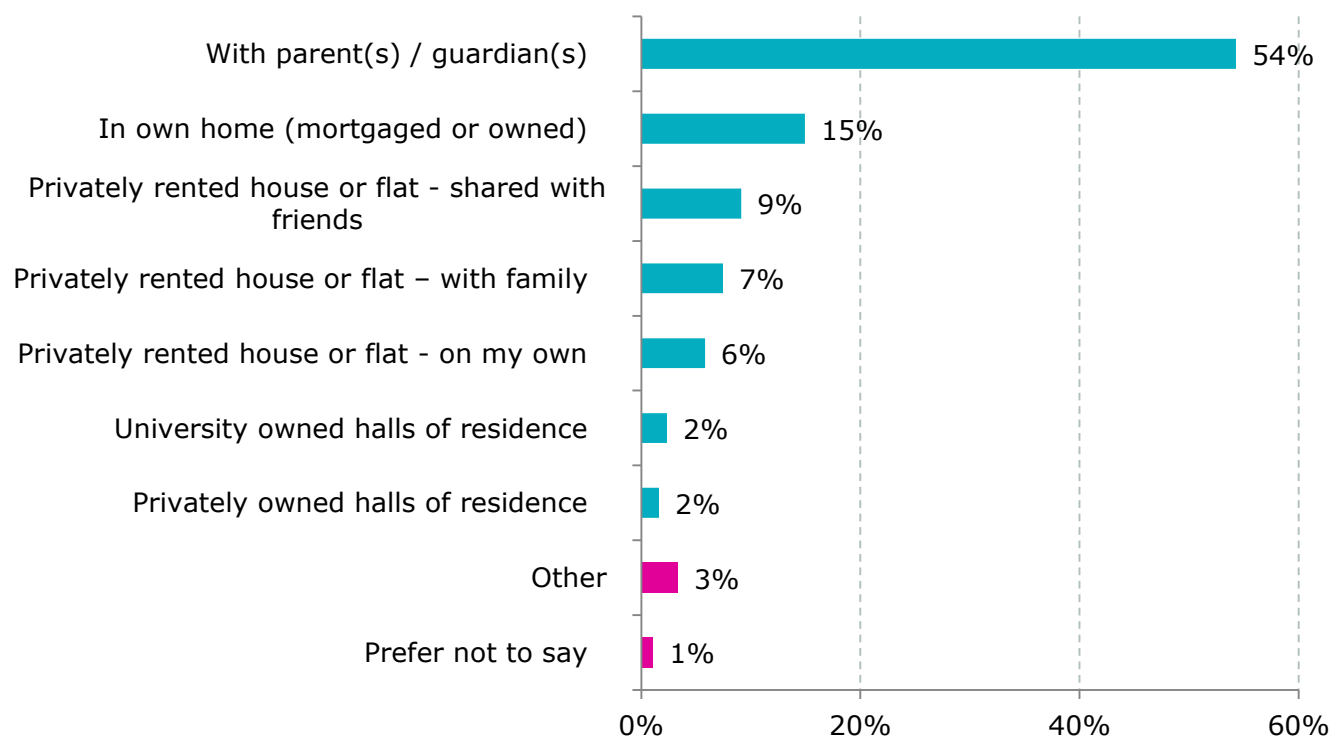


Weighted Base: 9872 respondents

A3. Which of the following statements best describes your usual term time living circumstances before the Coronavirus (Covid-19) outbreak?

Demographics

Current living circumstances

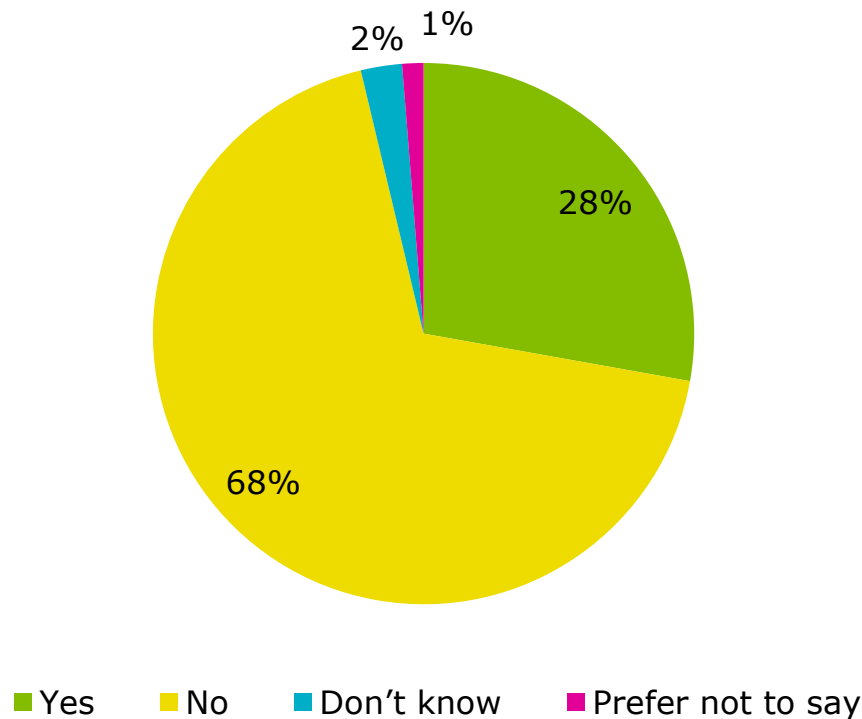


Weighted Base: 8916 respondents Balance : circumstances not changed, no response

A4. If your living circumstances have recently changed as a result of Coronavirus (Covid-19), please select the option which best reflects where you now are.

Demographics

Disability, impairment or long term health condition



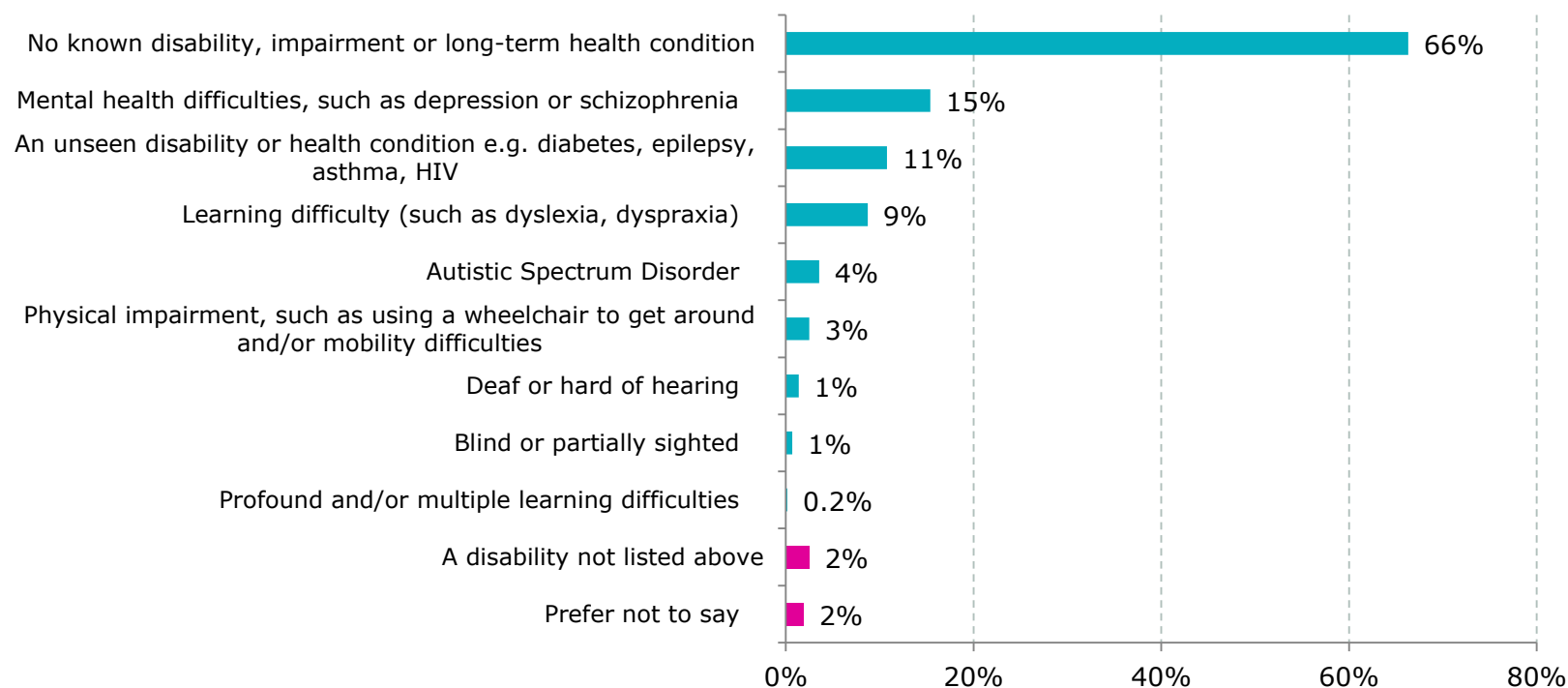
Our survey oversampled on disabled students; HESA statistics indicate that disabled students account for 14% of the higher education population.

Weighted Base: 9872 respondents.

A6. Do you consider yourself to have a specific learning disability, other disability, impairment or long-term health condition?

Demographics

Disability, impairment or long term health condition



Weighted Base: 9872 respondents

A7. Please describe your disability, impairment or long-term health condition

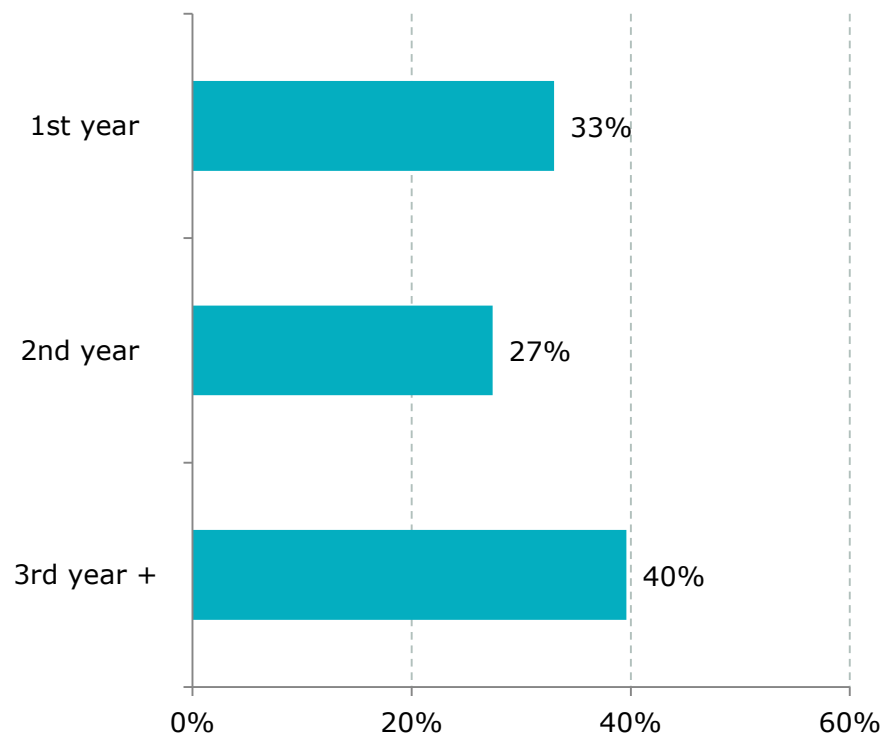
Demographics

Region	Percentage
North East	5%
North West	18%
Yorkshire and the Humber	6%
East Midlands	5%
West Midlands	10%
London	10%
East of England	3%
South West	18%
South East	12%
England Total	87%
Scotland	6%
Wales	3%
Northern Ireland	4%



Demographics

Year of study

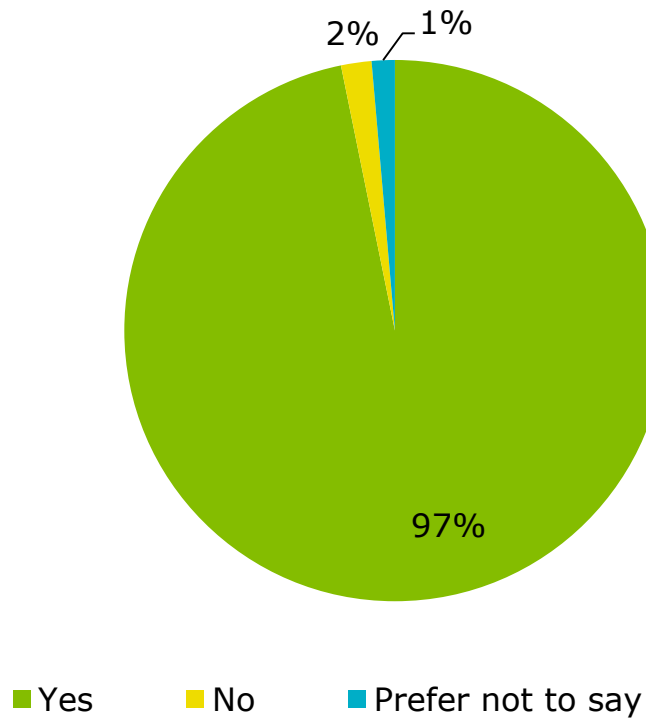


Weighted Base: 5691 respondents Balance : FE students, no response

L1. And what year of study are you in?

Demographics

Does your gender identity match the gender you were assigned at birth?

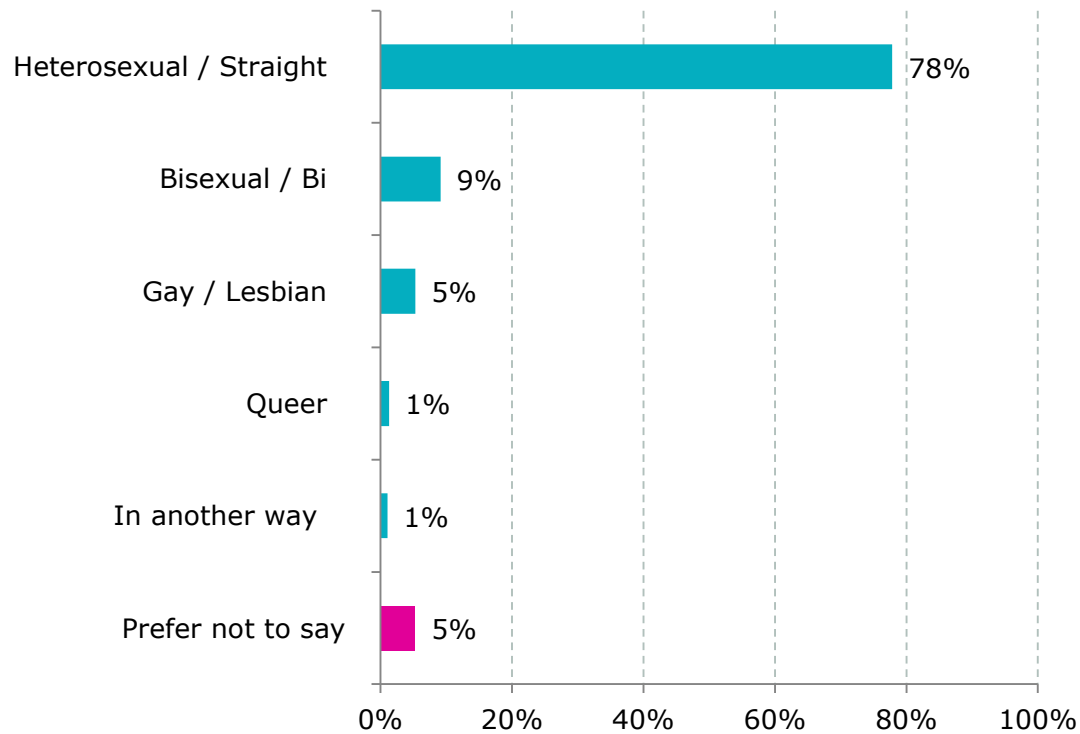


Weighted Base: 9872 respondents.

L5. Does your gender identity match the gender you were assigned at birth?

Demographics

Sexual orientation/preference

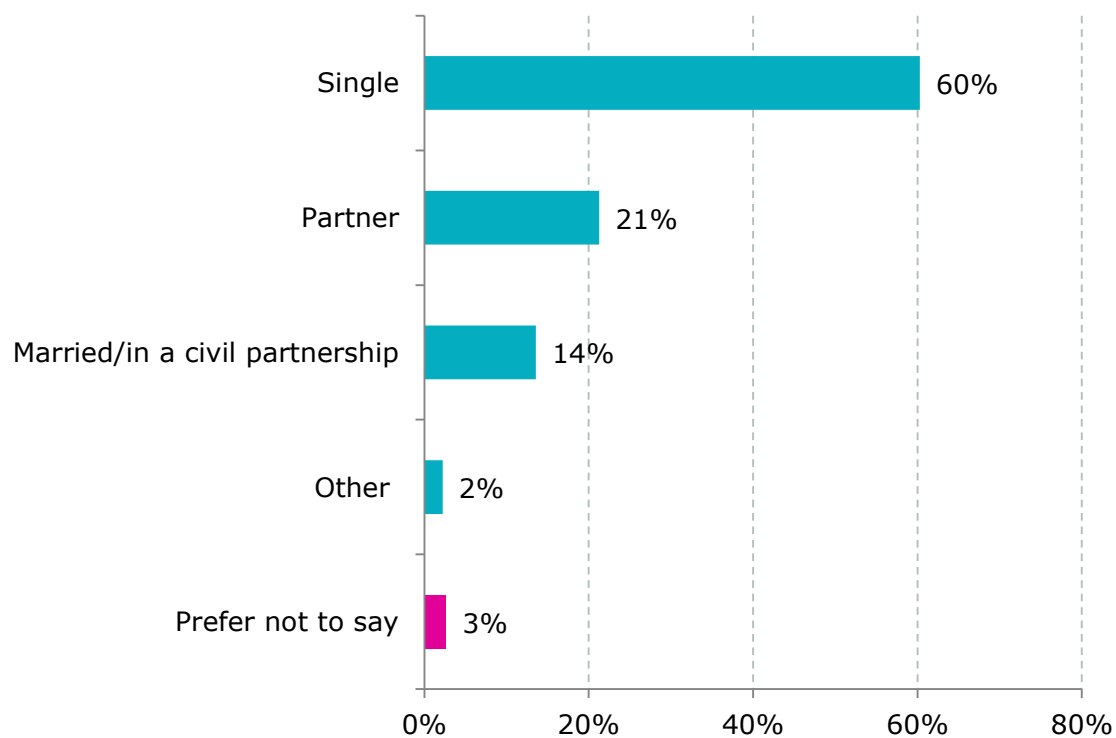


Weighted Base: 9872 respondents.

L6. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation/preference?

Demographics

Marital status

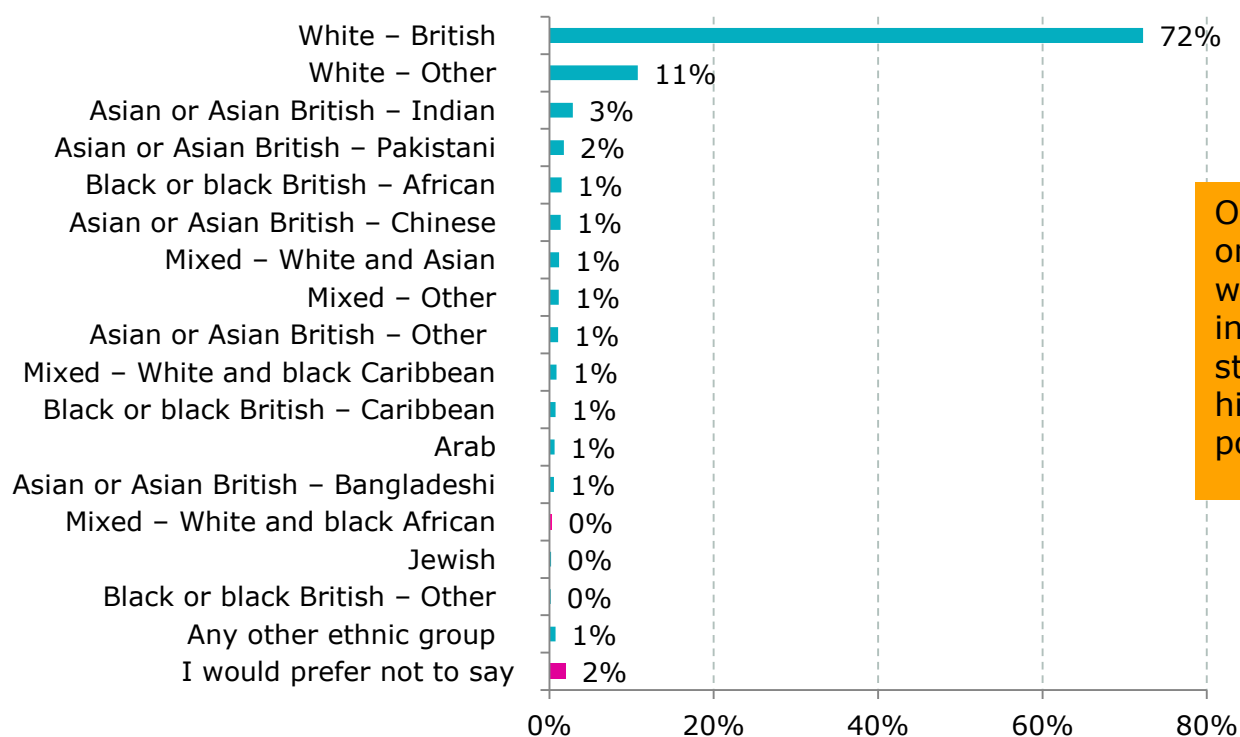


Weighted Base: 9872 respondents.

L7. Which of the following best describe your marital status?

Demographics

Ethnicity



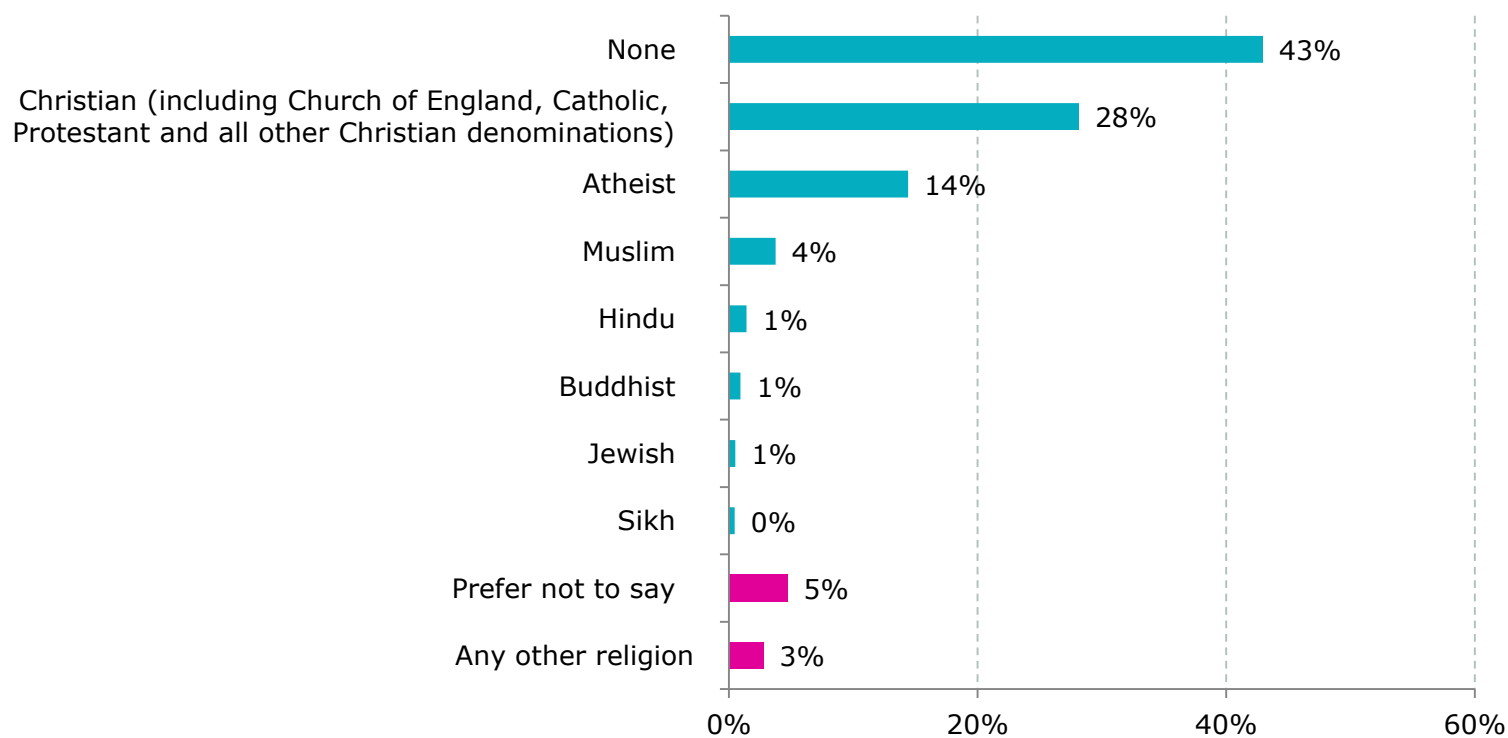
Our survey oversampled on students identifying as white; HESA statistics indicate that white students for 76% of the higher education population.

Weighted Base: 9872 respondents.

L8. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?

Demographics

Religion, faith or belief



Weighted Base: 9872 respondents.

L9. What is your religion, faith or belief?

Coronavirus and students survey

April 2020

NUS Insight