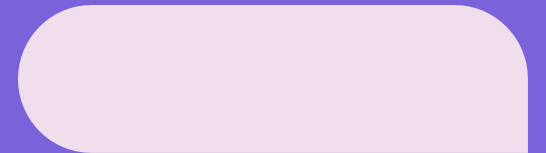
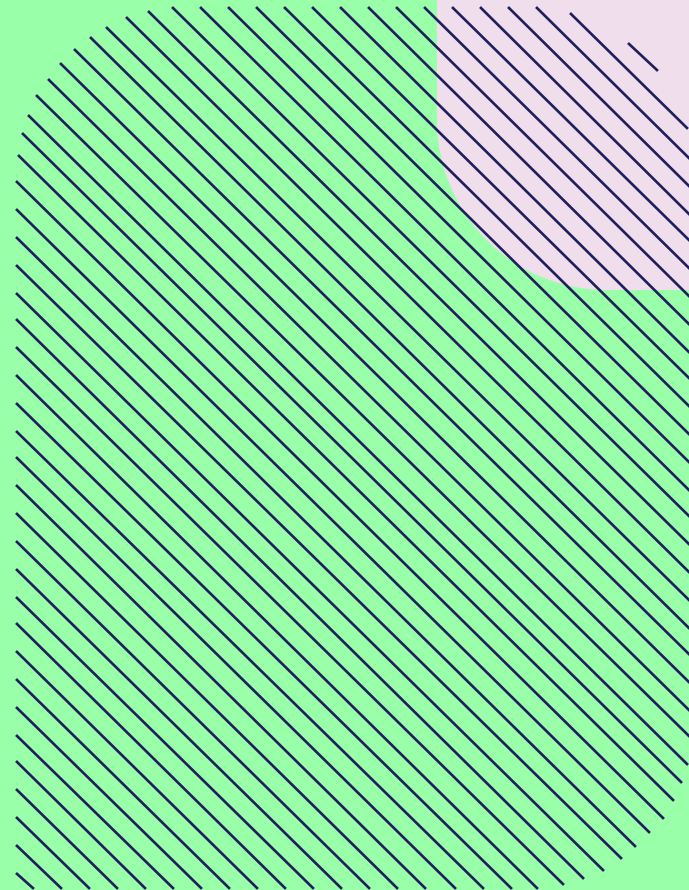


Home vs halls:  
understanding the factors  
shaping students'  
decisions



# Introductions



# Overview

- Why we decided to do the research
- Homes v Halls insights
- Cost of living
- Questions, comments and feedback

## On The Student Room...

“I’m thinking of applying to a uni that’s relatively close to home but then I don’t know if I should live at home or there, the maintenance loan I could get if I lived at home would cover the cost of transport with some left over and I love where I live but at the same time I want to have the student experience!”

“I’ve applied to uni and intend on commuting because it’s cheaper and works out better for me but I’m concerned about making friends. People have said that commuting makes it difficult to make friends. Is this true, because I don’t want my time at uni to be lonely?”

“I’ve firmed [X] and I’m looking at picking my accommodation but my maintenance loan doesn’t even cover the cheapest option...

I’m planning to work full time post A-Levels to save up and will find a job at uni, but it’s still stressing me out that for some accommodation I’m a few thousand short and will still have to make more to actually live in the city”

## In the news...

**Student maintenance loans almost entirely used up by rent, report warns**

### **Soaring rents may force students to turn down top university choices or live at home**

EXCLUSIVE

President of Universities UK tells i that prospective students will face 'very tough' competition for accommodation this year

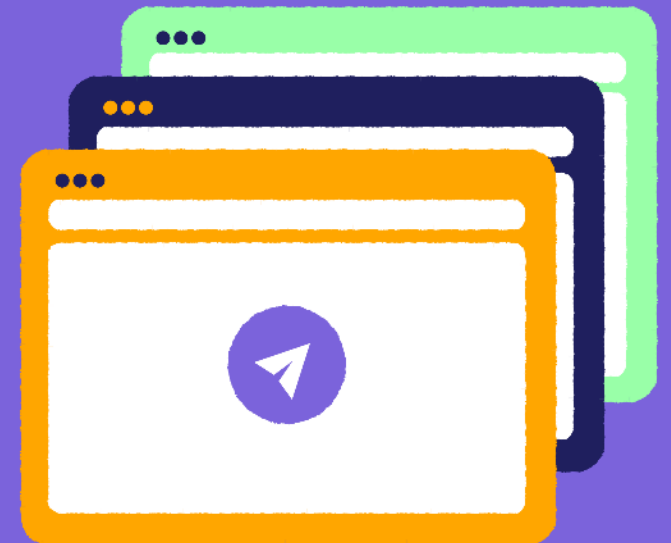
## What we see on site

We have a lively student accommodation forum which since the start of the academic year (Sept) has seen 190,000 pageviews and 2,250 posts.

In addition to this, even more conversations about moving away, staying at home and accommodation options are happening across other threads in university forums and the Applications and Clearing forum with 1 MILLION pageviews to threads tagged as 'accommodation' across the whole site in the same period.

"I got into a uni that's 30 mins away on train. I want to stay at home but am really worried about being lonely in uni. Is it worth staying in accommodation for first year or term to get to know people. Or is it easy to meet people even when staying at home?"

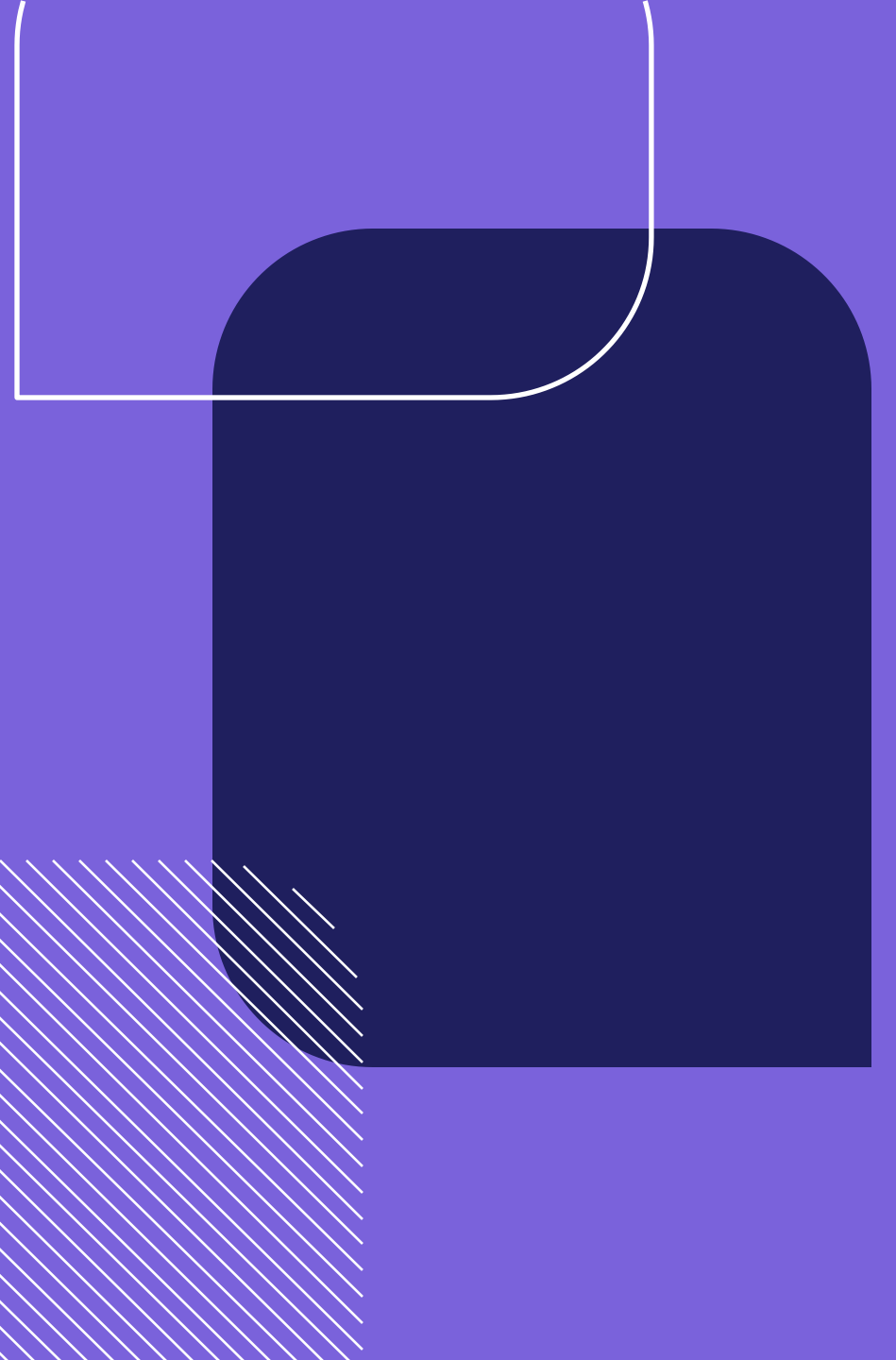
"I'm currently trying to decide whether I should live at home when doing my uni education or do accommodation. Anyone who has lived at home during uni, that could provide me with some pros, cons and their overall experience?"



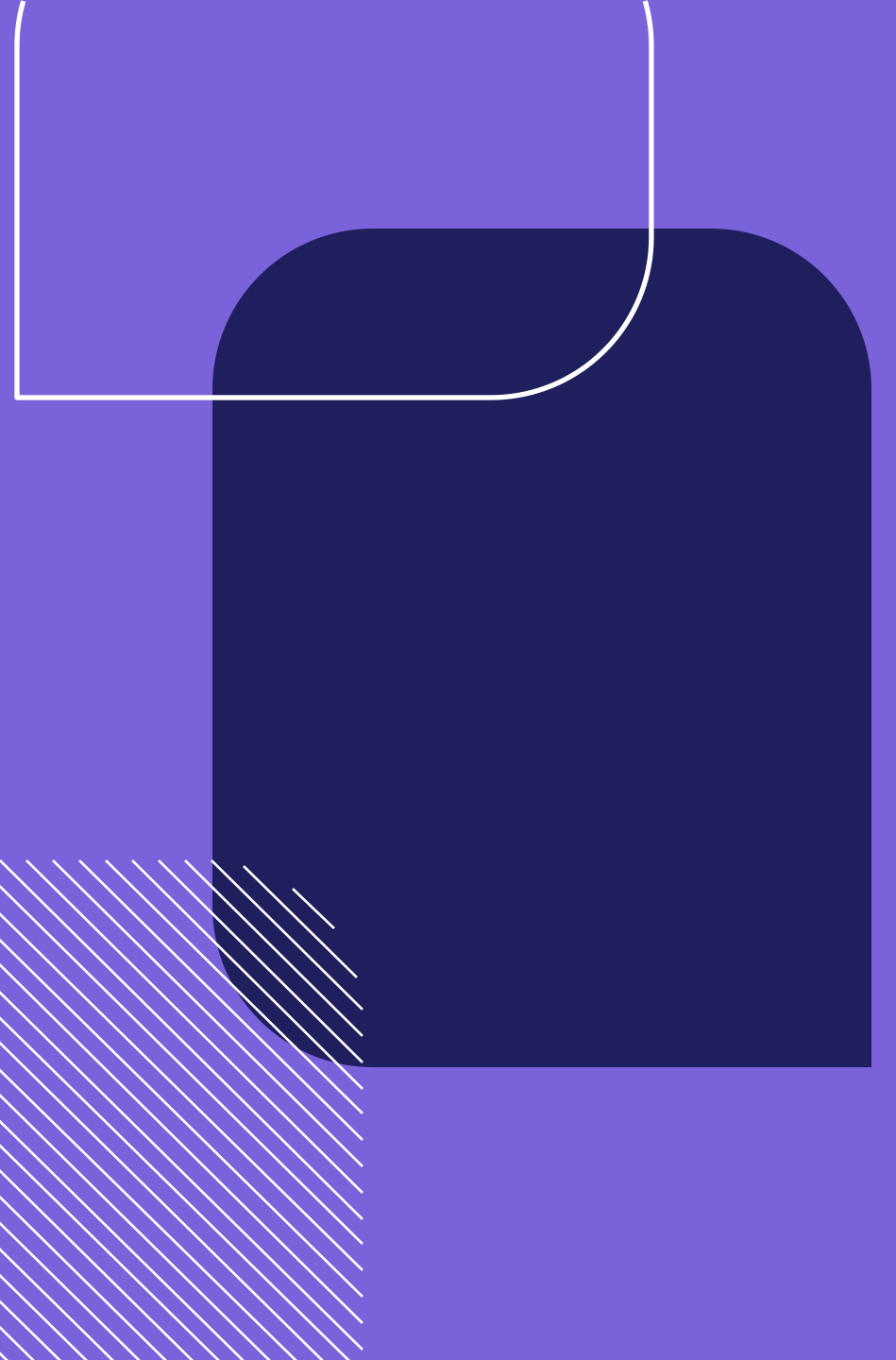
## Objectives, methodology and target audience

- **The aim of the research was to explore the decision to stay at home or move away for university, and the reasons for this choice**
- An online survey with the Student Room Community.
- Fieldwork: 24<sup>th</sup> April to 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024
  - Prospective undergraduates
    - UK students aged 16+
    - Planning to start university in 2024, 2025, or beyond
- **993 respondents completed or partially completed the survey.**

# Decision-making factors for both accommodation options



**The big question...**  
**Stay at home or move**  
**away for university?**

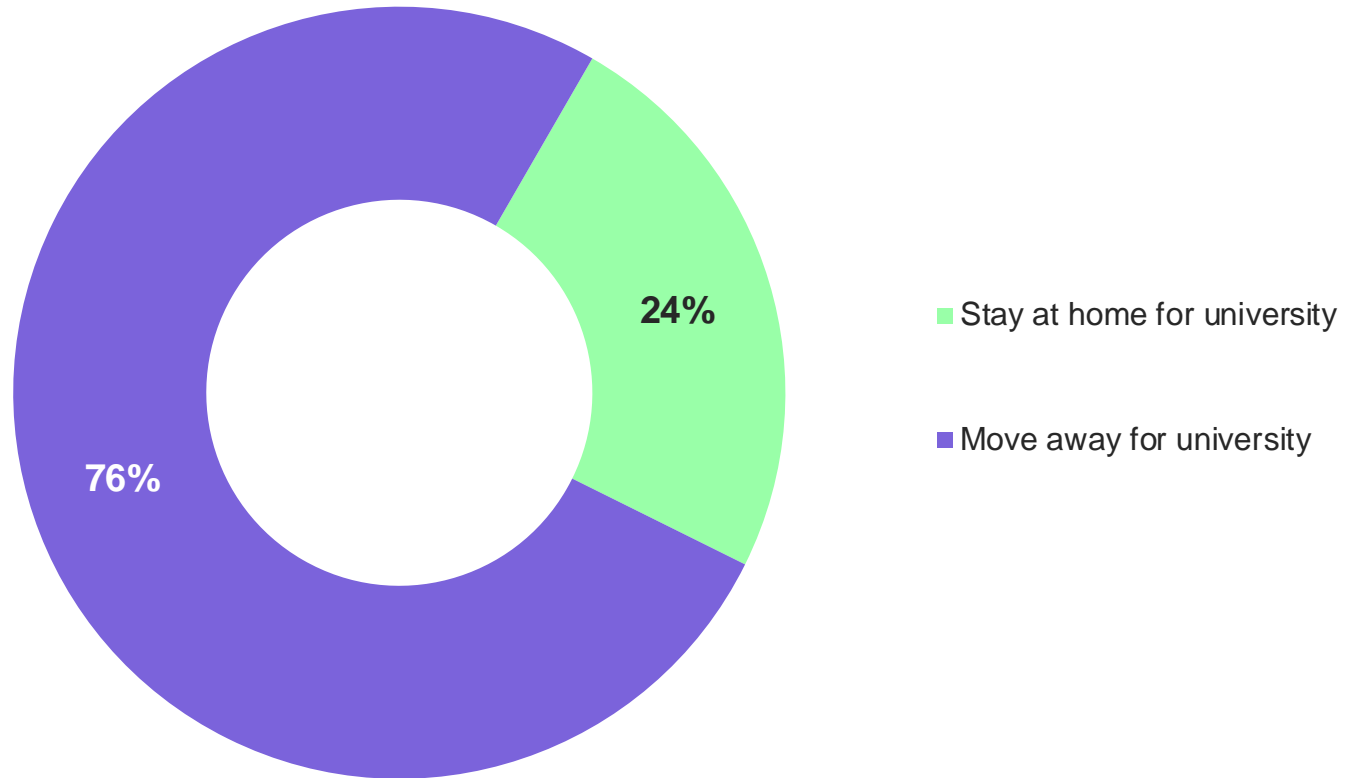




**Almost a quarter of our sample (24%) were planning to stay at home for university, the remainder (76%) were planning to move away for their studies**



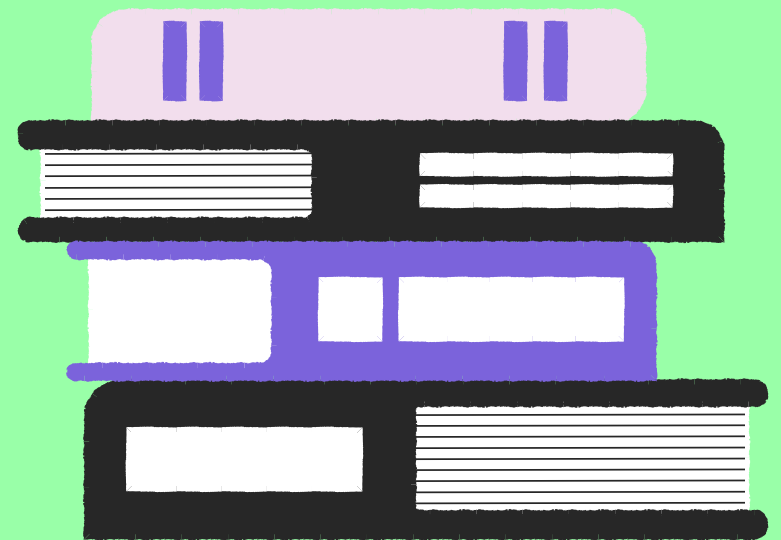
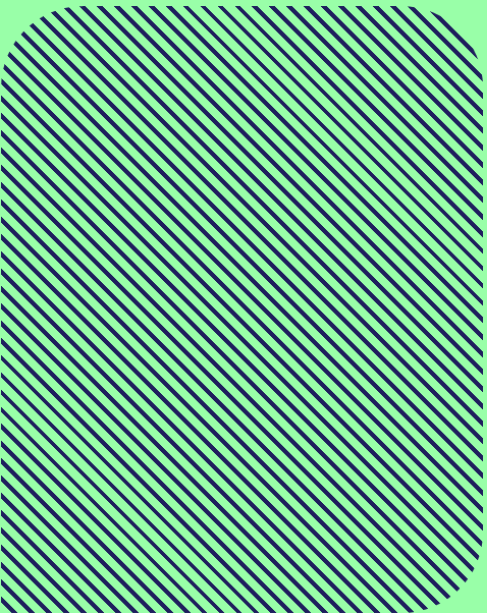
### Planned living arrangements



# Who is staying at home for University?

Those planning to stay at home were more likely than those moving away to;

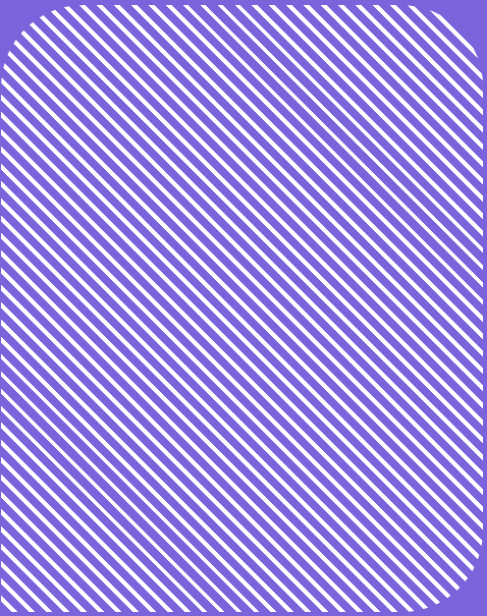
- Be the **first in their family** to go to university
- Have **received free school** meals
- Live in **London** or the **North East**
- Live in a **city**
- Be interested in **Clinical subjects**



## Who is moving away for University?

Those planning to move away were more likely than those staying at home to;

- Have had **parent(s)/carer(s) who attended university**
- Live in the **South West** or **South East**
- Live in a **village or rural area**
- Be interested in **Arts & Humanities** subjects



# Activity: Why might students choose to stay at home or move away for university

Pink: Stay at home

Blue: Move away



## In their own words...

### Reasons for **staying at home** for university

- 1) Financial / saving money
- 2) Having support around them
- 3) There's no need to move away, there are good universities nearby
- 4) To keep their existing commitments

"Money is a significant factor but I also don't feel ready to move out."

"Accommodation is very expensive on top of fees. Staying at home means that I don't have as much added expense as I would staying in student accommodation. Also the universities near to me are very good for the courses I am considering so don't see a reason to move."

"Closer to family and place i know best, if anything happens to me I can go straight home."

"I'm not willing to get myself into even more debt than university will already put me in by moving out. Staying at home allows me to save more money."

"University is already quite expensive and moving away to a new city and having to pay for accommodation along with groceries and possibly transport is a lot."

"I like the city and I think the university there is very good. I wouldn't want to move."

## In their own words...

### Reasons for moving away for university

- 1) **Gaining independence / responsibility**
- 2) **Experiencing new things / meeting new people**
- 3) Can't do course locally / 'better' universities further away
- 4) Not practical / would be too expensive (e.g., commute)

"I feel as though a fresh start would be needed to make the most out of studies, I think that meeting new people encourages you to socialise with those that you wouldn't normally consider talking to. Thus making the university experience more memorable."

"I don't want to limit my boundaries for education to somewhere local, I would be willing to go most places for education. Plus, it's an experience to be independent and to mature.."

"The course I want is not available locally. Living in halls will be an exciting experience, and hopefully help me to make friends outside my course."

"As there are not many unis around where I live and affording the train every day would add up"

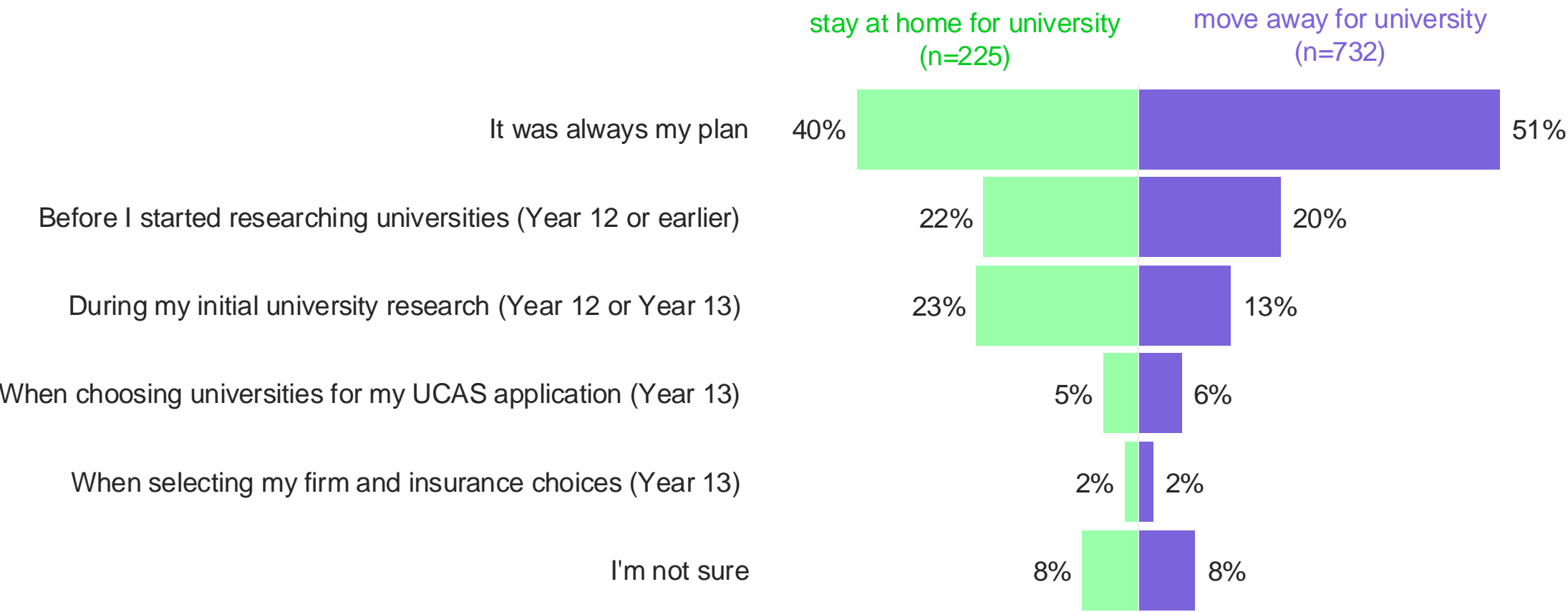
"For independence and to learn necessary life skills not just rely on my parents."

"Because i think it is time to leave my home town, and both my siblings left for uni so i feel like it is my time."

The decision to stay at home or move away was generally made early in the cycle.  
Most (90% of each audience) had made this decision prior to submitting their UCAS application



Timing of decision: Stay at home / move away



Q: At what point did you/will you decide that you want to move away or stay at home for university? (Single Response Question) (Base: 957 – Stay at home: 225, Move away: 732)

Despite decisions generally being made early, the majority of both those staying at home and moving away had also considered or were actively considering the alternative option

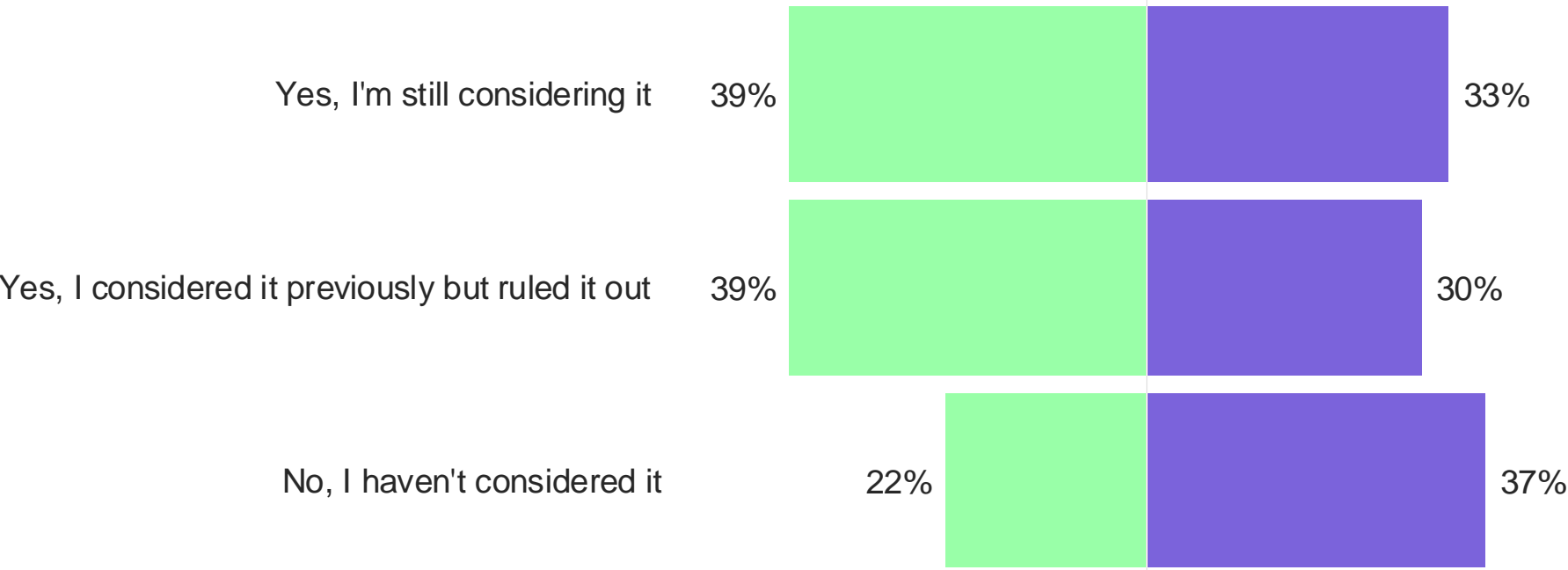
Respondents planning to stay at home appear to be more open to moving away than those planning to move away appear to be staying home.



Consideration of alternative options

Respondents staying at home for university: **was moving away also considered?** (n=211)

Respondents moving away for university: **was staying at home also considered?** (n=719)



Q: Did you also consider / are you also considering staying at home for university? (Single Response Question) (Base: 719 move away students)

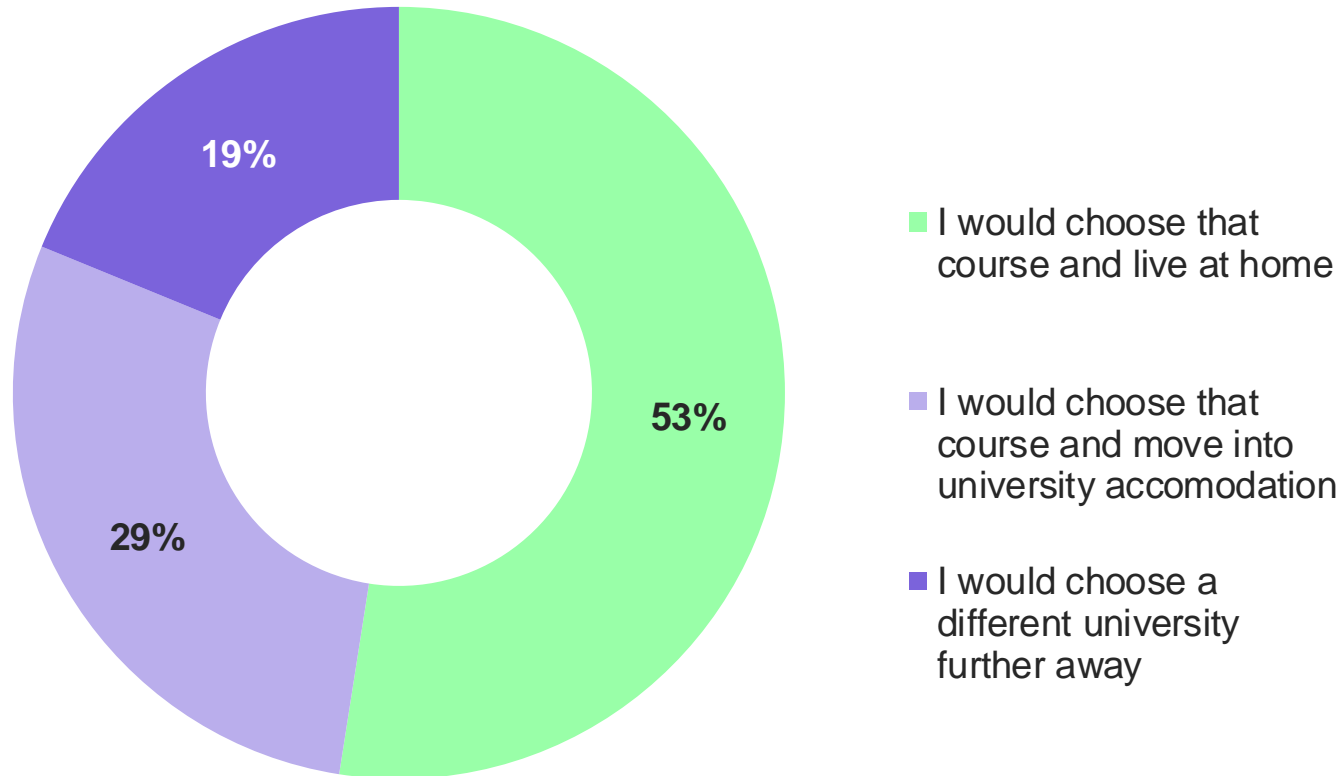
Q: Did you also consider / are you also considering moving away for university? (Single Response Question) (Base: 211 stay at home)



**It also appears that the majority of those planning to move away would be flexible on their decision for the right course.** If the perfect course was available a mile away, more than half (53%) of those planning to move away would instead stay at home.



Move away respondents: What if the perfect course was available a mile away?

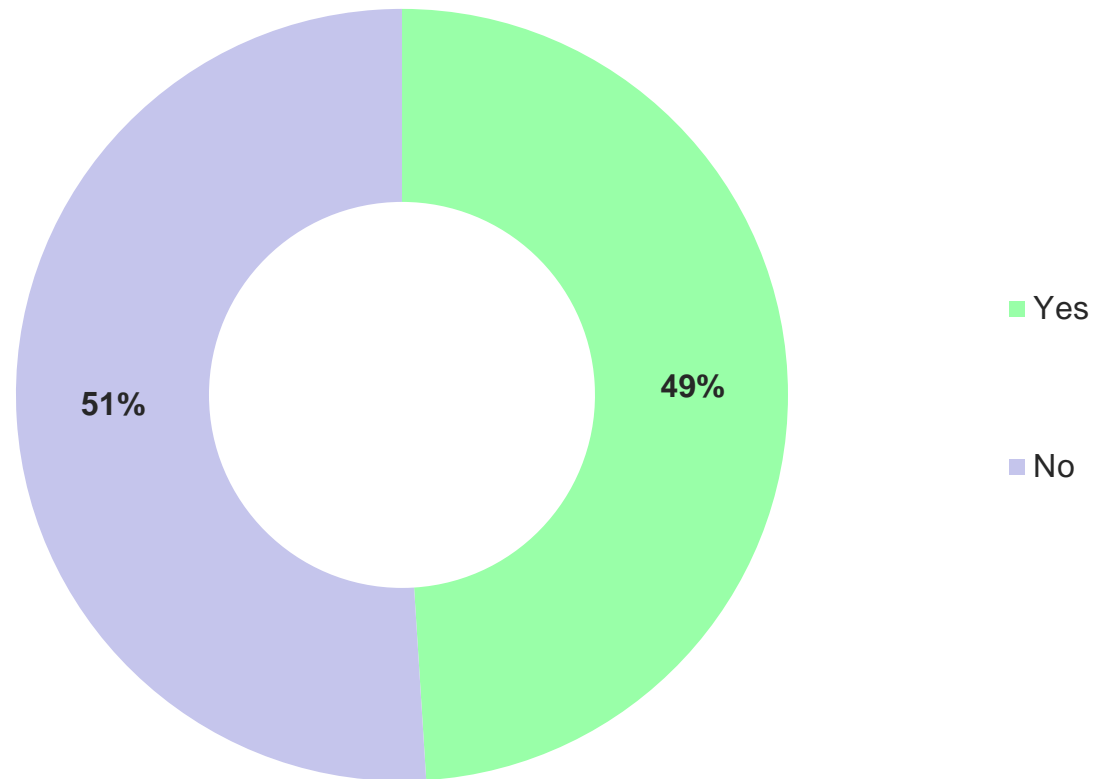


**Q: If your perfect course was available one mile away from your home at a university that met your needs, what would you do?** (Single Response)  
(Base: 714 move away students)

## If money and personal circumstances were no object, around half of respondents planning to stay at home would have made the same decision

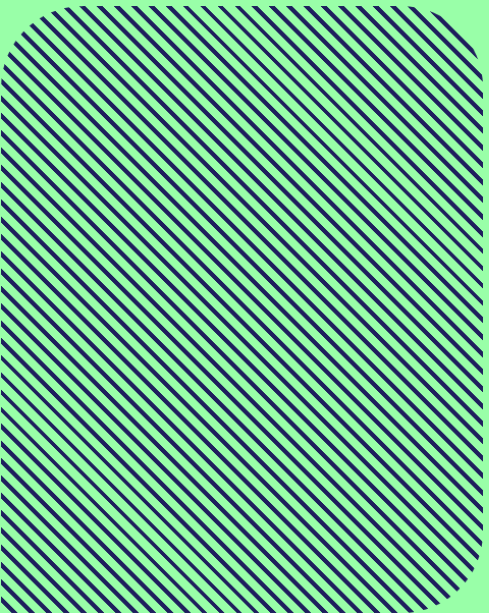


Stay at home respondents: What if money/circumstances were no option?

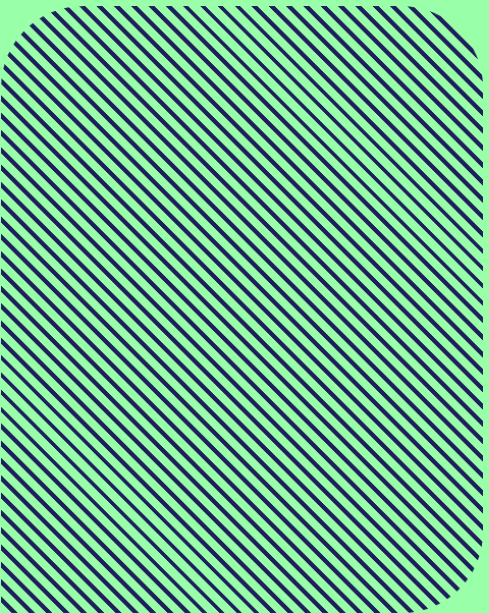


Q: If money / personal circumstances were no object, would you still live at home for university? (Single Response) (Base: 210 stay at home students)

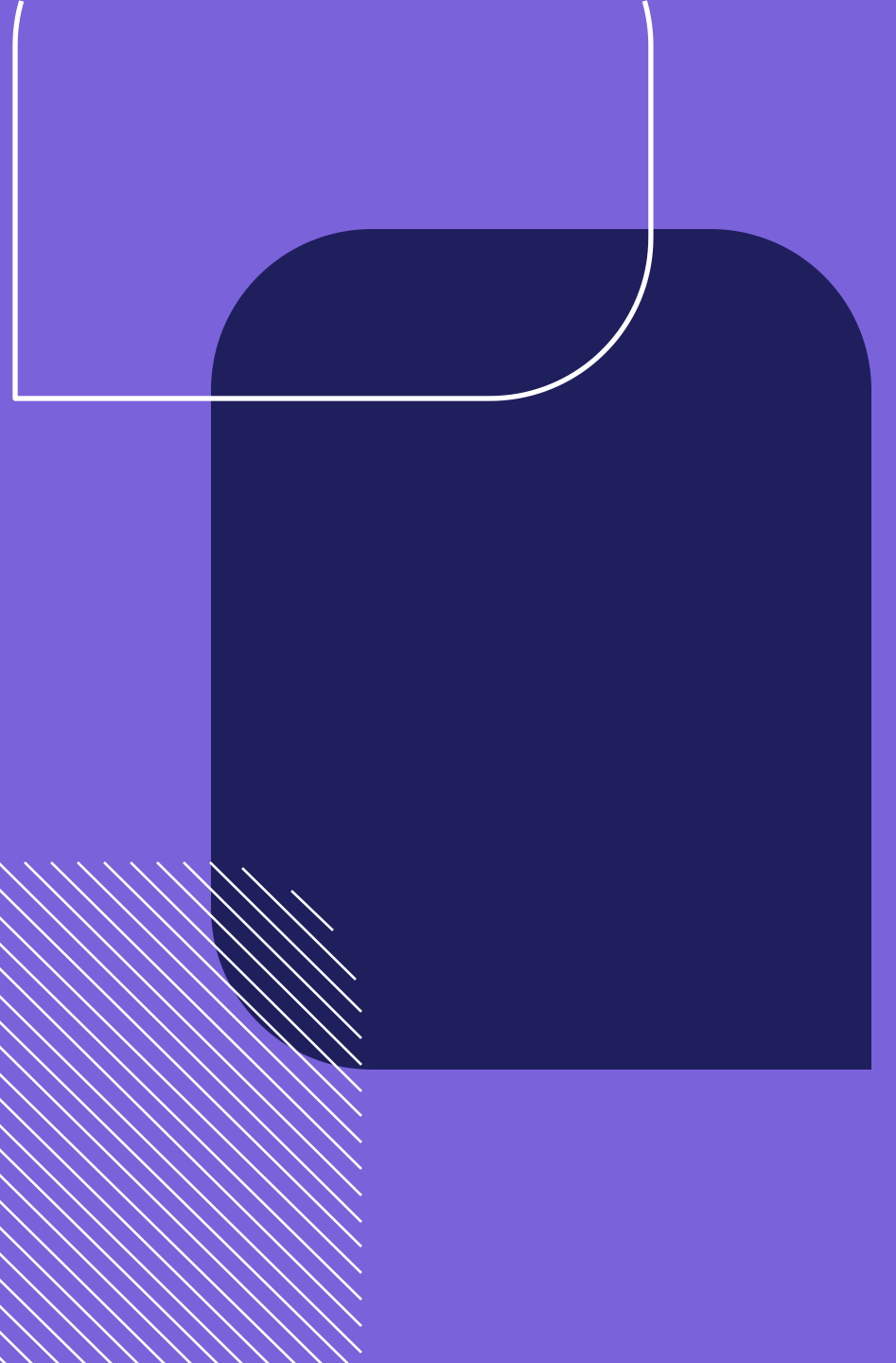
**Is this what you expected?  
Any surprises?**



# Our key takeaways



# How rising costs of living are affecting students' decisions



"My son has applied for a degree and wants to move out as opposed to staying at home..., but we live 5 miles away!

Pretty expensive, our household income isn't very high...so I'm worried about the financial side of things, and whether he will be able to afford it even with the living costs loan. I'm even considering taking out a loan to help him! Advice appreciated, thanks"

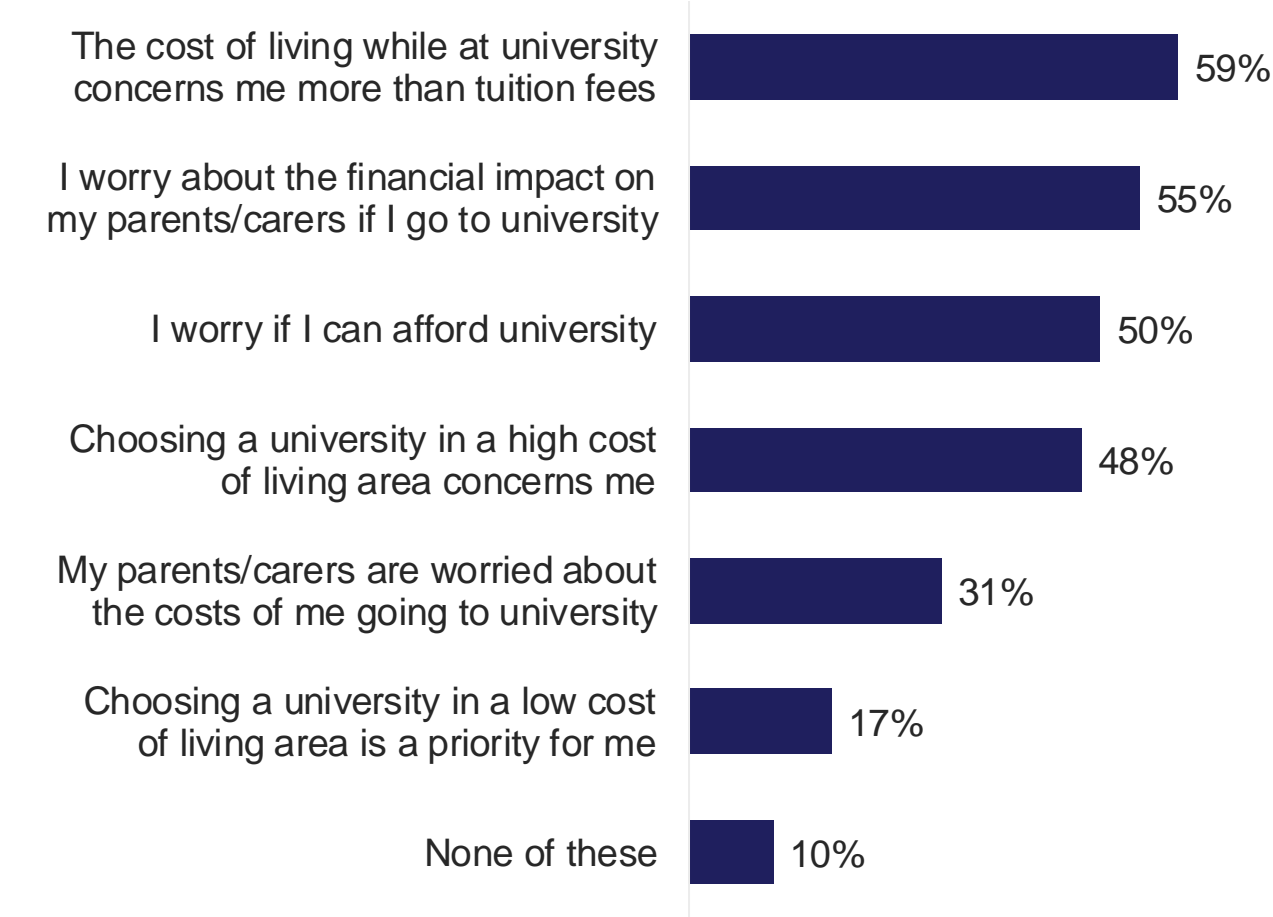
"I don't know whether to choose to stay at home and commute to uni or move out and live in halls.

I know it's obviously going to be more expensive moving out but I think it's worth it for the experience. But my parents are worried about the debt I'll get, which I could easily use on something else if I stay at home. Any thoughts??"

"Does anyone know of any unis in UK that offer a biological sciences course with the A Level grades BBB? I can't touch London with a bargepole as it's too expensive."

**90% agreed with at least one of the statements around cost of living.** For around three fifths of respondents (59%) the cost of living was more of a concern than the tuition fees

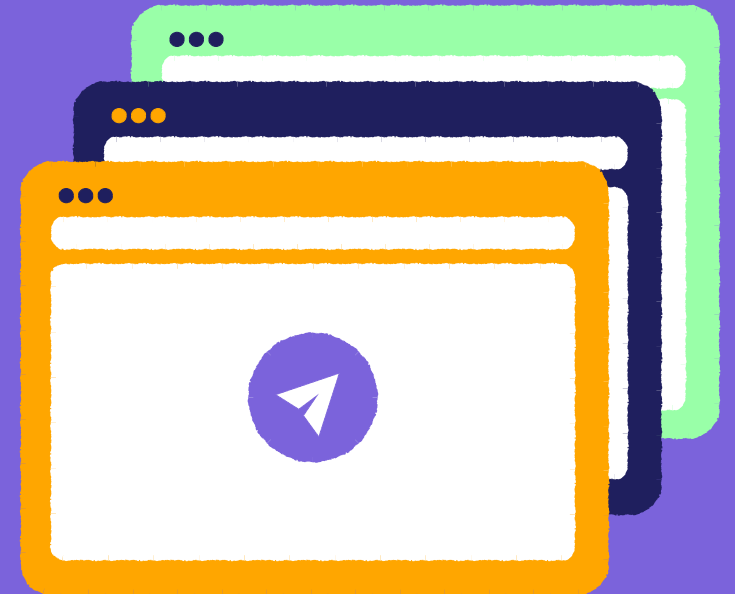
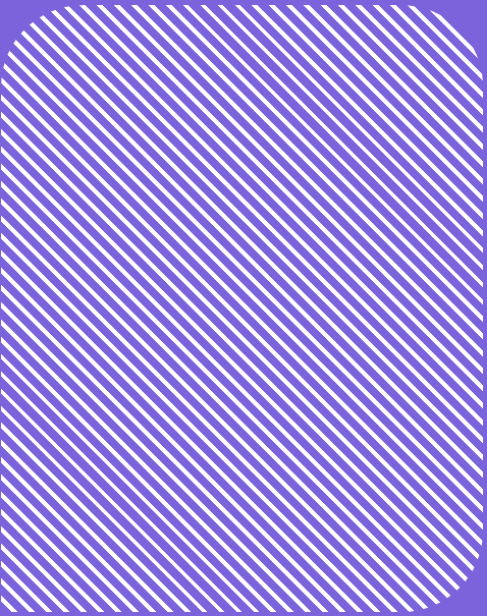
£ Cost of living concerns



Q: Which of the following statements do you agree with? Please select all that apply (Multiple Response) (Base: 945)

**How are you supporting students with rising costs of living?**

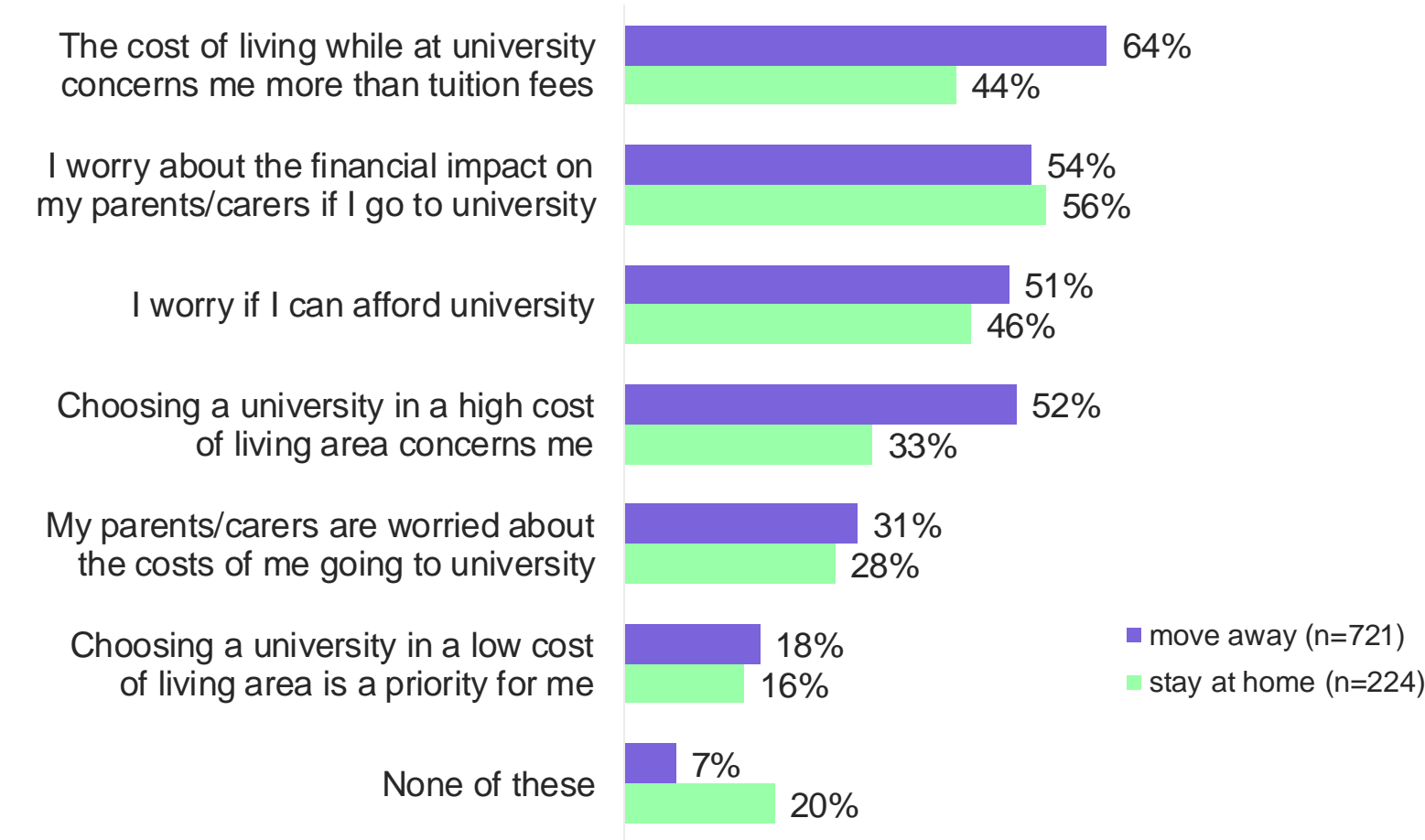
**Does the support you offer vary depending on a students' living arrangements?**





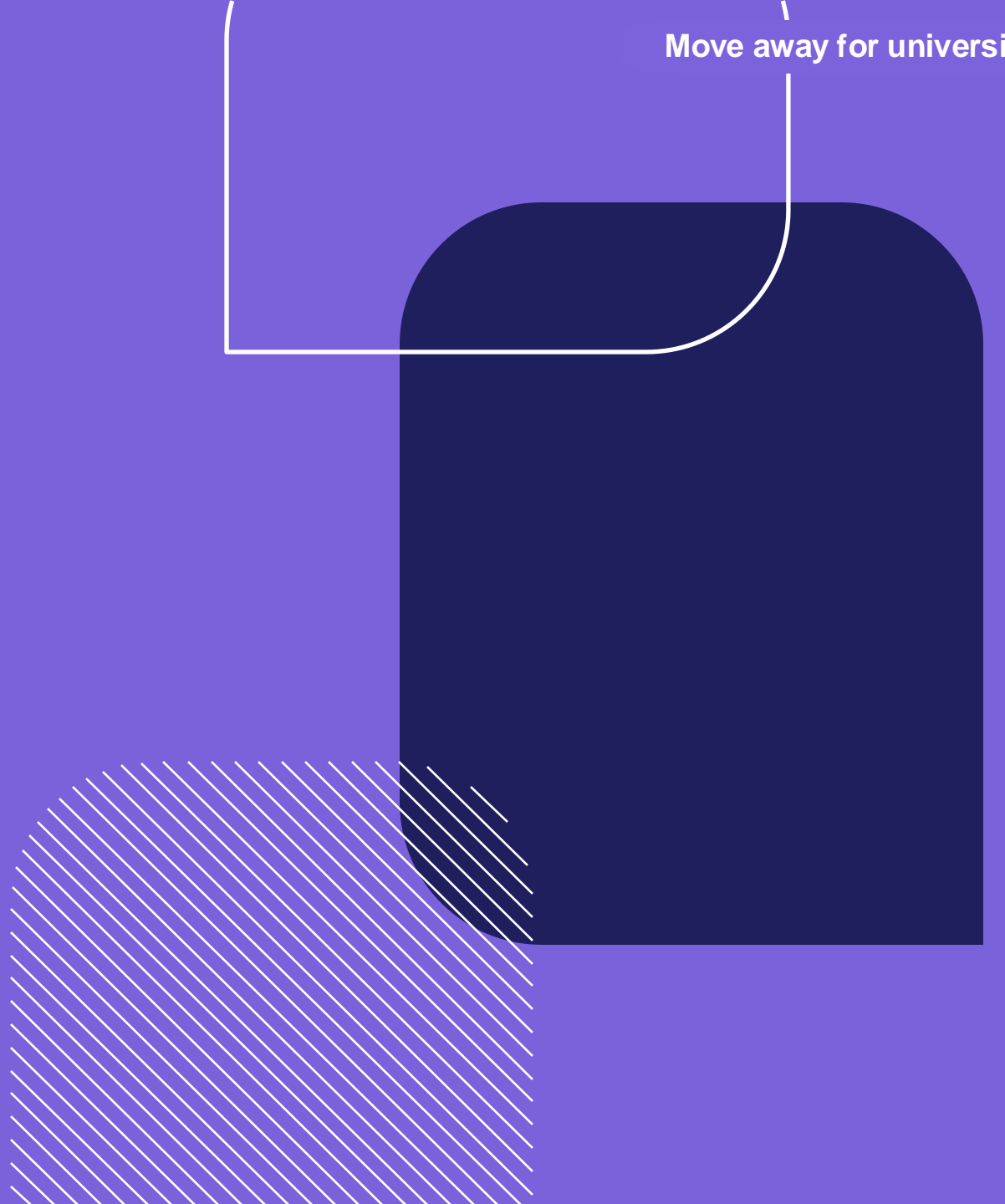
**Those planning to move away were more likely to have cost of living concerns than those planning to stay at home.** 93% of those planning to move away felt that at least one of these areas was a concern, compared to 80% of those planning to stay at home.

£ Cost of living concerns (move away / stay at home comparison)



Q: Which of the following statements do you agree with? Please select all that apply (Multiple Response) (Base: 945 - Stay at home: 224, move away: 721)

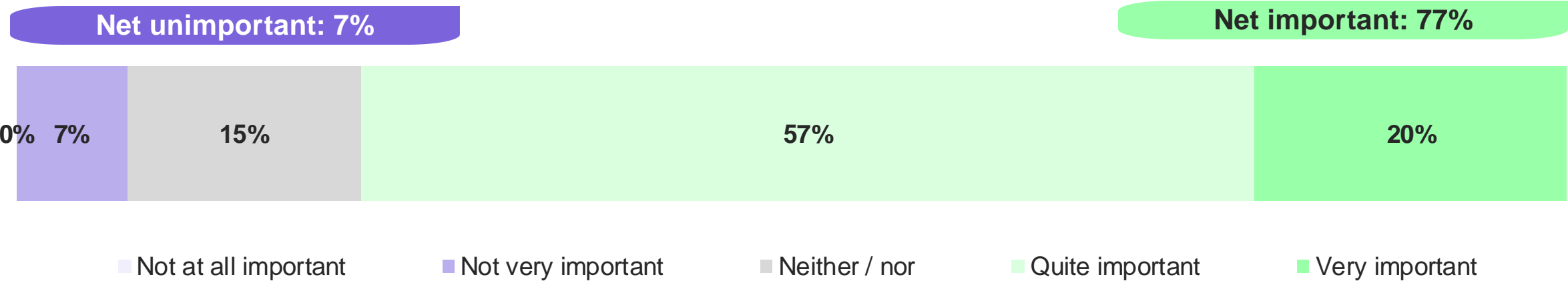
# Accommodation preferences



More than three quarters (77%) of those moving away felt that accommodation was important in their university choice, including 20% who felt accommodation was very important in their decision



Importance of accommodation in university choice

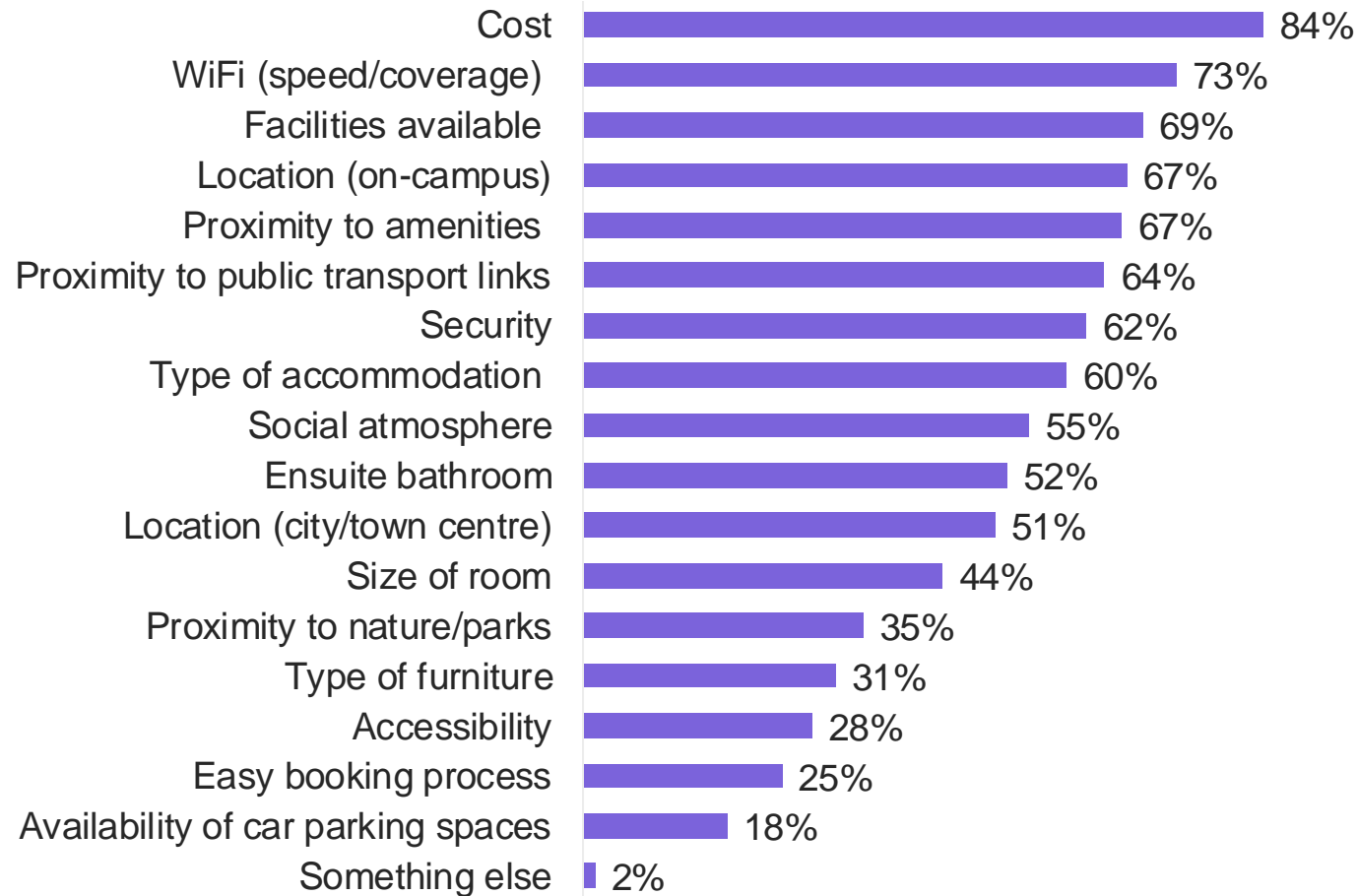


Q: How important is accommodation in your university choice (Single Response) (Base: 691 move away respondents)

**Cost was the most likely to be considered important when choosing accommodation, selected as an important feature by 84% of respondents. WiFi speed and coverage was selected by 73%, facilities available were selected by 69%**



### Accommodation preferences



**Average options selected  
from the list = 8.9**

# What do you think was most important in their choice?

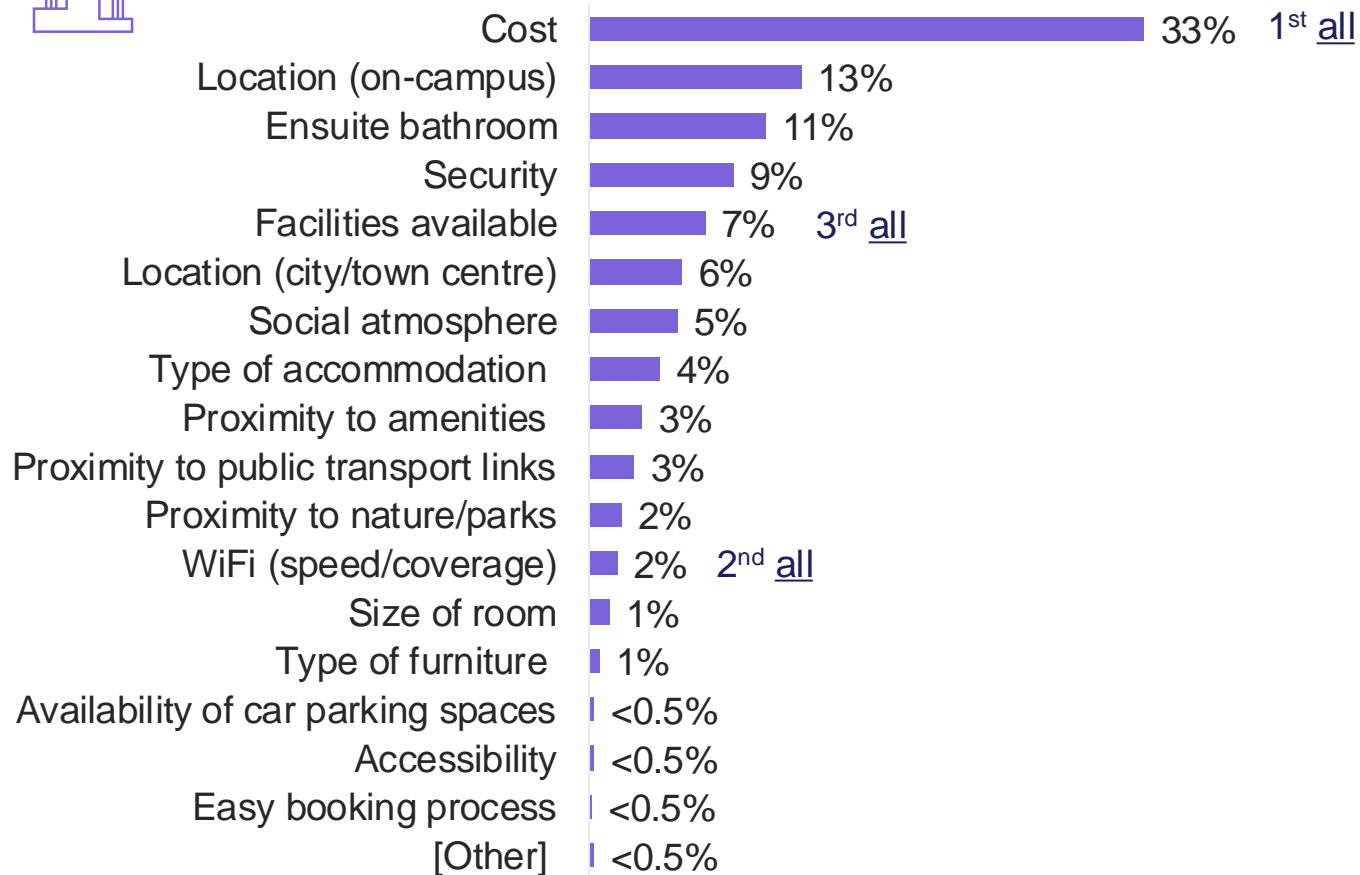
- Cost
- WiFi (speed/coverage)
- Facilities available
- Location (on-campus)
- Proximity to amenities
- Proximity to public transport links
- Security
- Type of accommodation
- Social atmosphere
- Ensuite bathroom
- Location (city/town centre)
- Size of room
- Proximity to nature/parks
- Type of furniture
- Accessibility
- Easy booking process
- Availability of car parking spaces



When selecting the one factor most important in their accommodation choice, cost was the most likely to be considered important, selected by a third (33%), followed by on-campus location (13%) and ensuite (11%)



### Accommodation preferences (most important)



Q: And which of these would you say was most important? Please select one answer only (Single response question) (Base: 659 move away respondents)

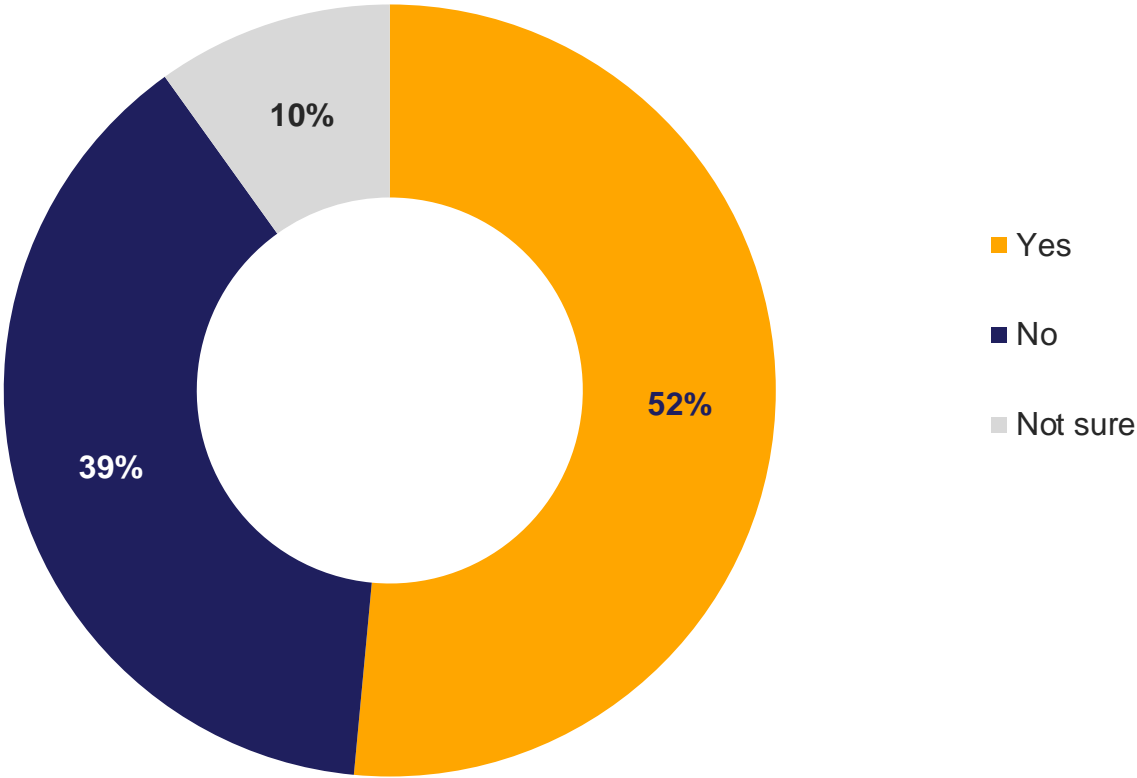
# Accommodation challenges



More than half of respondents (52%) had seen reports about a shortage of student accommodation in the media



Seen media reports about accommodation shortages?



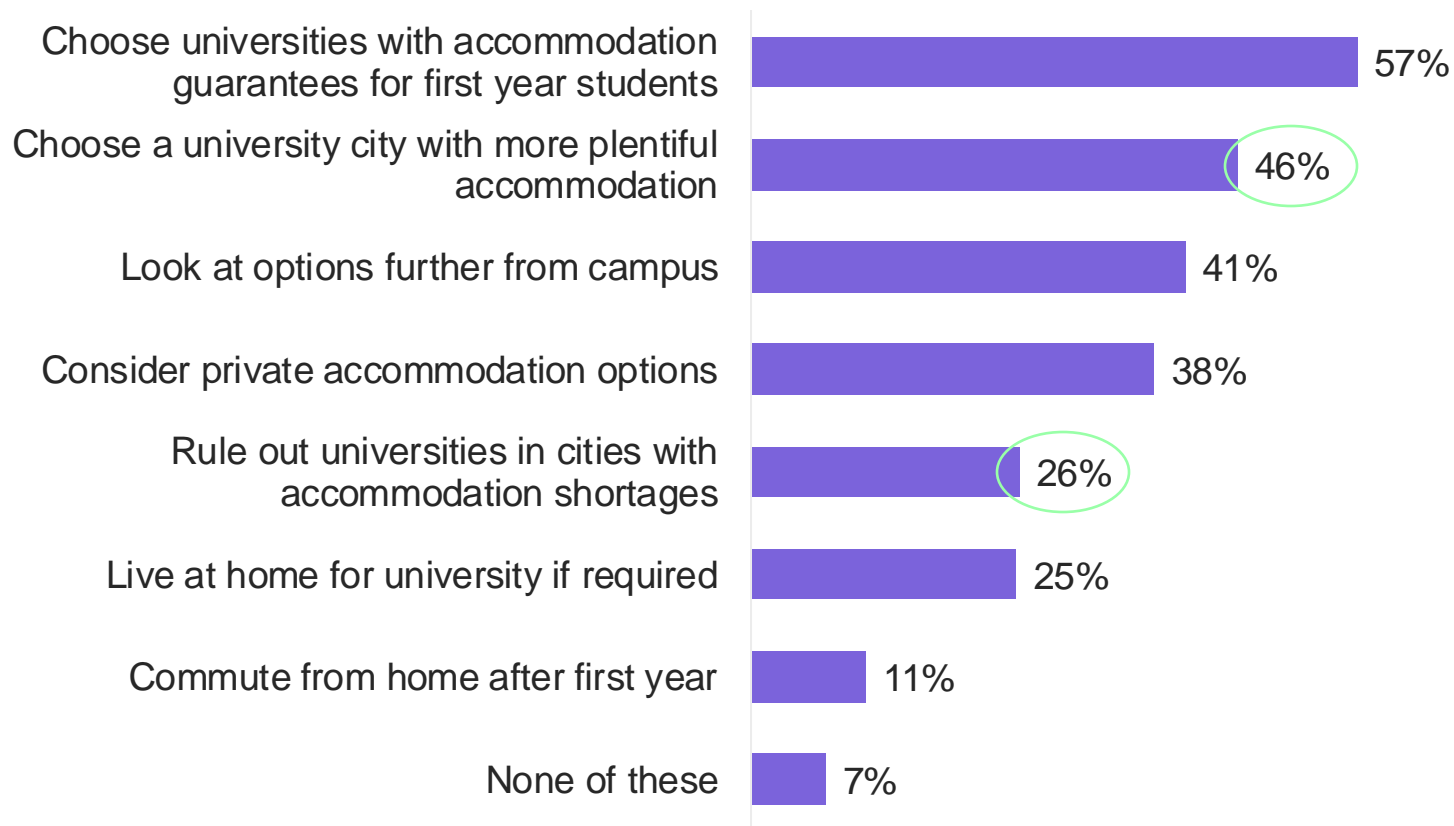
Q: There have been reports in the media recently of shortages of student housing.  
Have you seen these reports in the media? (Single Response) (Base: 871, move away 657, stay at home 214)



**The majority (93%) of move away students who aware of the shortages had made changes to their plans as a result, most often choosing universities with first year accommodation guaranteed (57%)**



### Actions of a result of shortages (move away students aware of shortages)



**In total, 55% of move away respondents aware of the reported shortages had made a change to their choice of university city as a result of accommodation shortages**

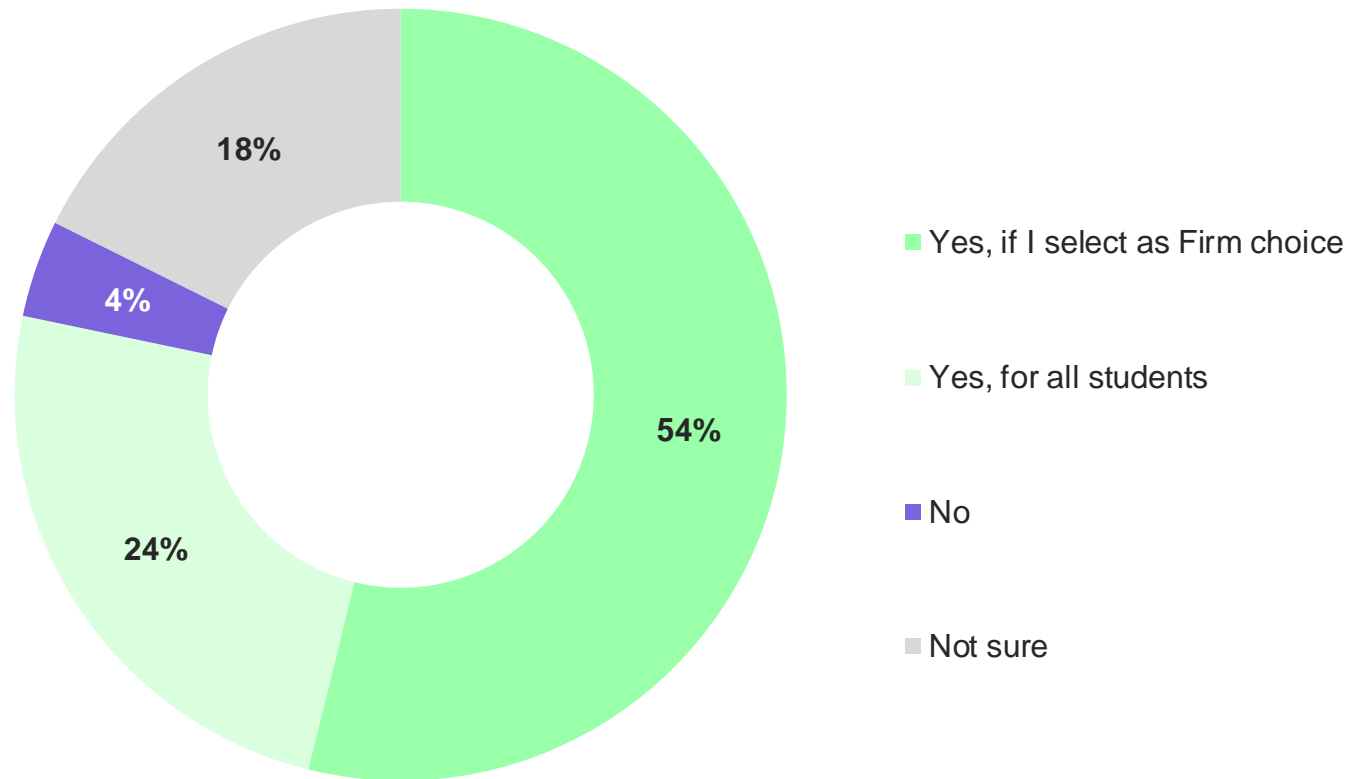
**Q: Which of the following, if any, would you do/have you done as a result of reported shortages?** (Multiple response question) (Base: 346 move away respondents aware of shortages)

## There appears to be relatively high awareness of accommodation guarantees.

More than three quarters (78%) of 2024 entry respondents who were moving away believed their Firm choice university to offer an accommodation guarantee for first year students

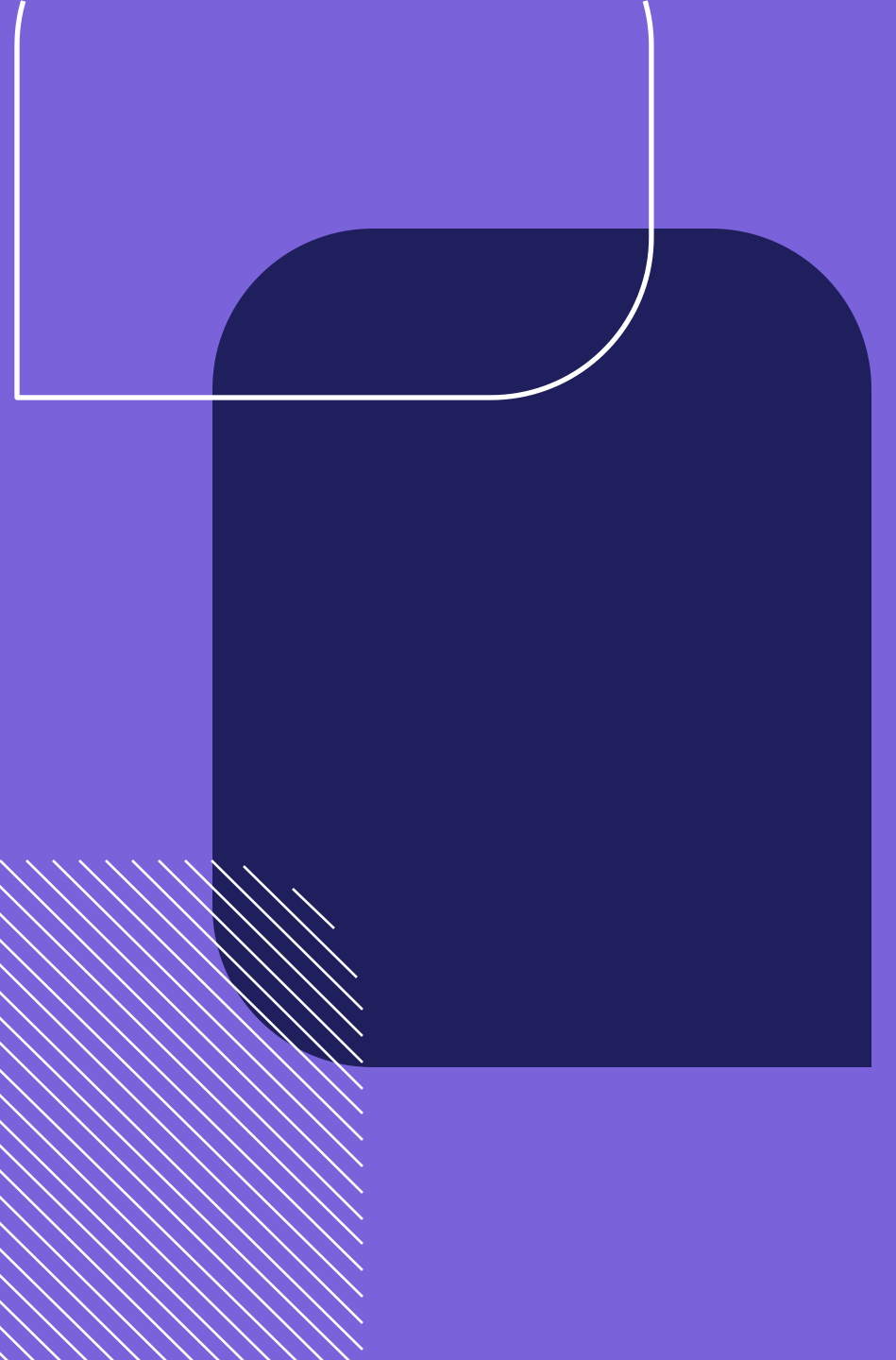


Does your Firm choice offer an accommodation guarantee?



Q: Does your Firm (first) choice university offer an accommodation guarantee for first year students? (Single response) (Base:221 2024 entry move away respondents)

**What can your teams do  
on The Student Room to  
help?**



## Help make a balanced decision

This is a typical question we see from users on site.

### accomodation in a london uni



LuxuriousAngel

10

hi i just want to know what is better?

as a student living in london already and possibly going to a uni in london is it better to live at home with parents but travel to the london uni or go and live in student halls/accomodation in a london uni and is there pros and cons for both?



Durham Students ✓ Official Rep

14



Original post by LuxuriousAngel

hi i just want to know what is better?...

[See more](#)

Hiya

For one, there's a huge amount of rent, utility bills and groceries money you'll save by living at home. Accommodation costs in London are already quite high and add to that the rising costs of living.

Also how long is the commute from your home to uni? Sometimes you might wake up late or feel lazy and if the uni is quite far, then it'll hamper you from reaching on time or going at all. If it's within reasonable distance considering the London traffic, home would be a better option.

As someone who's lived out from the first year, I've found the need to put more effort into meeting people. Sometimes I slacked off and didn't attend events just because I was too tired to walk 15 minutes or catch a bus. In that case, I missed out on potential opportunities to make friends. If you're willing to put in that extra effort, living at home would be better.

Are you at all motivated to live away from your parents or home? For some students, uni is the stepping stone to being independent and living by yourself. You develop very essential life skills like cleaning, cooking for yourself, doing your laundry and much more. That's something you might not develop while you're still being catered for at home.

That's all I can think of- weigh up your options and see what works better!

-Himieka

## And another....

This is a typical question we see from users on site.

☆ Watch

1 day ago

### How expensive is it to study at the University of Exeter?



Sammy.ch

1 🗳️ 🗳️ 🗳️ 🗳️

I've got an offer to study at Exeter, and I'm thinking of putting it as my second choice. The one thing that I am worried about, however, is the cost of living there. I understand that accommodation and other costs can be quite expensive there, compared to other cities (especially in the north).

So to anyone that has study there/is currently studying there, are the costs reasonable there. I won't be able to get much financial support so any input would be much appreciated!

👍 0 🚩 Report

Reply



Reply 1

21 hours ago



ExeterStudentRep ✓ Official Rep

12 🗳️ 🗳️ 🗳️ 🗳️

Hi Sammy.ch,

Congratulations on your offer! I completely understand the financial concern. I was quite worried too, coming from Liverpool, but I have found that it is actually more manageable than I expected.

In terms of accommodation, there are a range of prices for a range of different accommodation options. I would definitely say to have a look at the accommodation we offer, but just because one is cheaper than the other doesn't necessarily mean it's 'worse'. From my experience, I have stayed on campus for two years in different accommodation due to medical reasons and I overall do prefer the less expensive option. In terms of going off-campus for second year and beyond, prices do vary. I have seen some really nice houses for around £150 a week with some bills included, so it just depends how you play the game.

In terms of other costs, it is a step up but not ridiculously so. Aldi and Lidl are a bus journey away, but if it's too far then M&S and Tesco in the city centre aren't as bad as I thought they'd be. A lot of people do order their food shopping to campus, and if you can order with your flatmates and split the fees then it's definitely a good option to consider. I spend no more than £35 on a pretty decent shop, which lasts me around a week and a half (or more, since I will get some freezer bits as well).

You can even save some money by bulk-buying, or getting stuff from home, if it's a cheaper price. Personally, when I go home, I'll stock up on some more of the durable goods (e.g., instant noodles or pasta) to bring back to Exeter so I have a backup option in the long run. I don't live off instant noodles or pasta, but they're pretty convenient to have in.

If you're on a night out, drinks are a bit more expensive than what you would find in the North, but we also have 3 Wetherspoons which are pretty popular student spots thanks to their cheaper prices, and our student bar, the Ram, is also very reasonable.

Don't forget though, that with the higher prices, you are paid more for working! The university and the Guild are constantly hiring students in permanent roles (until graduation), and pay more than my job at home. The jobs they offer are just one of many ways to make some money. A lot of my friends also take part in market research, where they can earn from £60 - £200 just for a few hours of their time.

If you feel you will struggle in terms of finance, even with a job, you may be eligible for the Success for All (SFA) Bursary. You can apply for this each year, and if successful, the university will pay you a certain amount each term to help with your needs. They do want to see you succeed, so are very helpful. You can access any information regarding financial support here: <https://www.exeter.ac.uk/students/financialhelp/> . It may also be worth contacting our Students' Guild if you need any advice: <https://www.exeterguild.com/find-support> .

If you have any other questions, please do let me know!

Grace

University of Exeter Student Ambassador

## Not just first year students...

Forums > Universities and HE colleges > Midlands > University of Warwick > Am I making the right living decision?

☆ Watch

3 weeks ago

### Am I making the right living decision?



Anonymous #1

Hiya, I am a second-year Uni of Warwick student and I chose to live in on-campus halls again in my second year. The circumstance of this was because it took me a while to settle into uni properly and by the time I had made friends with flatmates and coursemates, most already had a plan for the second year. It was also made worse when my closest friend had to drop out because she wanted to change her course.

I am quite honestly anxious about this decision and feel like maybe I should have just asked around, but since I am in leaving in just over a week to go back to uni, I feel like I made the wrong decision. It's so nerve-racking bc although I know people, I feel isolated because I don't live near them (most are in Leam or Cov). I also have heard bad things about the kind of people I could share with (all will also be in second-year) and that they will be just bad people 😞

Can anyone offer guidance on whether this is the right choice or maybe if I can make a last-minute change? I am very lost on if it's a good idea or not at this point and I don't want the second year of uni to be as bad as the first?

👍 0 🚩 Report

Reply

## Role of an Official Rep

- Official Rep from another university
- Relates to their situation, shares own experiences
- Provides encouragement and support

Reply 1

3 weeks ago



Lancaster Student Ambassador ✓ Official Rep

16 🗳️ 🗳️ 🗳️ 🗳️ 🗳️ 🗳️

Original post by Anonymous



Hiya, I am a second-year Uni of Warwick student and I chose to live in on-campus halls again in my secon... See more

Hi,

Like you, I struggled to settle in in first year. I missed a lot of the first term due to a family bereavement and by the time I returned it seemed that everybody else had already made friends and looked at houses and I hadn't even attended my first lecture. Because of this, I chose to stay in university accommodation just off campus (Lancaster has halls in the city centre for 2nd and 3rd years so I stayed there last year).

This decision was one that at the time, and after discussing with my parents, was the best option for me given the circumstances but I still felt anxious and like it was the wrong decision and that I could've found someone who needed an extra person to fill a place in a house.

The weekend I was supposed to move in I was away and so my Mum and sister collected my keys and moved some of my stuff in for me. I remember keep asking them who my new flatmates where, what they were like, what they studied, whether she thought I would fit in or get on with them etc. The week between her going up and then me moving fully in the next weekend felt like the longest week ever. On the day that I actually moved in I was a bag of nerves and so unsure of my decision. My worries and doubts were short lived - my flat mates were lovely and respectful and it was a totally different experience than that of first year.

I'm sorry to hear you feel isolated but please speak to someone at your university if this affecting you. Hopefully you'll find friends within your new flat and it be the experience that you deserve! You say that you have said that you have heard bad things about people you could be sharing with which is an understandable worry but hopefully they will not be in your flat. I found that in first year you "had" to stay in halls but in second year it's a choice to stay in halls - this means they will too want to be living where you will be living and be like minded in terms of this so hopefully their behaviour will reflect this choice.

Obviously this is just my experience and yours may be different but hopefully it isn't. If you were wanting to make a last minute change you would need to do it ASAP as I'm assuming you will have signed an accommodation contract so a replacement would be needed to be found and you may also have to pay for the room if you can't find one so please do bare this in mind.

I hope this helps and reassures you. I hope everything goes well with your accommodation too.

Ella - Lancaster University Student Ambassador


👍 1 🗳️ Report

Reply

# Student response


Reply 2

3 weeks ago



Anonymous #1

OP



Original post by Lancaster Student Ambassador


Hi,...


See more

Thank you so much for the response! The end of my first year was so positive that I am worried it will reset, but hearing about your experience has totally made me more hopeful so thank you so much!

I have never thought about it being people who would have **chosen** to stay in halls again. I am defo more hopeful now that they are respectful and easy to get along with. Lowkey hoping for a nice girl or something who I can just hang out with!

Thank you so much once again <3

 0

 Report

Reply



## Key takeaways

- Personalise where possible, how can you optimise information provided to stay at home and move away students?
- Cost is still a major concern and unlikely to go away
- Student experience is important to both audiences, but in slightly different ways.
- Don't presume students are staying at home because they don't have a choice, it's not just about necessity
- Decisions are made early, How can you influence Year 12s and younger?
- Download our report:



**Thank you for  
your time...**

**are there any  
questions?**