

A person with glasses is seen from the side, sitting at a desk and working on a laptop. A desk lamp is positioned above the desk, casting a warm glow. The person is wearing a dark jacket. The background is slightly blurred, showing a calendar on the wall.

# 2021 UK Student Wellbeing Survey

Research carried out by Red Brick Research agency  
February 2021

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# Foreword



Dear Colleague

We don't know how long this pandemic will last, or what its full effects will be, but we do know that it has forced us to grow in ways that may otherwise have taken us years. It's allowed us to create new flexibilities to support our employees and new tools to help us optimize. This situation presents an opportunity to accelerate cultural change and transformation to create resilience for the future. For us as individuals, and as universities, the challenge has been in learning how to survive through this uncertainty. The opportunity is to learn how to thrive.<sup>1</sup>

This report contains the results of a second independent survey to over 2,000 UK students to understand student attitudes and feelings towards study, their study patterns, and their expectations and experiences in their university courses. 32% of UK students have described their overall wellbeing as poor/very poor. A worrying 71% of students have considered withdrawing completely as a result of struggling with studying when alone; up from 56% in 2019. Whilst universities pivoted at a monumental pace shifting to online wholesale, it is clear that we must evolve further in order to redress this imbalance.

However, within these survey outcomes there are rays of light and clear indicators to what can help reduce study anxiety for UK students. We hope the insights - both quantitative and qualitative - are able to assist you and your university on your own journey to reimagine the student experience as we head towards the next academic year and beyond.

We look forward to hearing your feedback and comments. To contact us, please email [marketing@studiosity.com](mailto:marketing@studiosity.com).

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Judyth Sachs".

**Professor Judyth Sachs**  
Chief Academic Officer, Studiosity

Former Deputy Vice-Chancellor,  
Provost Macquarie University and  
Former Pro Vice-Chancellor Learning  
and Teaching at Sydney University

<sup>1</sup>: DeSpain, B . (2020) "Transforming A Work Culture During A Pandemic". Forbes, 11 December [online]. Available at: <https://www.forbes.com/sites/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2020/12/11/transforming-a-work-culture-during-a-pandemic/?sh=6be938f35eec> (Accessed: 3 Aug 21)

# Introduction

## Background:

Studiosity partners with universities, colleges, schools and libraries around the world to provide online academic writing and core skills support 24/7, connecting students to specialists online, on-demand. They currently work with 16 universities in the UK as well as 75% of universities in Australia, and have recently started providing support in Canada. As of 2021 their services are available worldwide to over 1.6 million students.

In February 2021 Studiosity commissioned Red Brick Research agency to conduct a survey to students studying at UK universities. Red Brick were also commissioned to run a similar survey in January 2019. These findings have provided robust insight via this independently written report.

The survey ran from 5th January 2021- 22nd January 2021 and gained a total of 2,045 responses.

## Participants:

- The survey was completed by current students studying at a broad range of universities across the UK.
- Demographical data was collected on
  - Gender (Male/Female)
  - Student type (UG/PG/Other)
  - Nationality (UK/EU/International)

## Objectives:

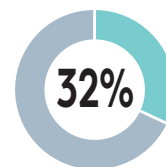
- To understand student experiences and struggles in relation to academic study and demonstrate the need for Studiosity services as a means to support wellbeing and help students maximise their academic performance.
- To compare findings to the previous survey released in 2019.

# Executive summary

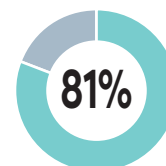
## Section 1: Student wellbeing in a global pandemic

With only a third feeling supported by their university and a third feeling that their overall wellbeing is poor, there is a clear need for both academic and emotional support. The pandemic is undeniably having an impact on all aspects of the university experience and as a result, there is a clear appetite for more academic support for when they're not in class or on campus. Further to this, universities could develop larger support networks for students to take advantage of such as course related chat rooms and resource sharing platforms. A virtual library where students can meet to discuss work, share resources or just catch up in a new take on familiar surroundings may also be beneficial to student welfare.

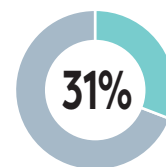
**59%** ...of those who have felt a negative impact due to the pandemic say this is because they've struggled to get adequate support with academic work.



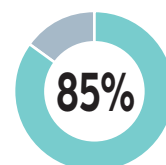
...describe their overall wellbeing as poor / very poor.



...say the pandemic has had a negative impact on their university experience.

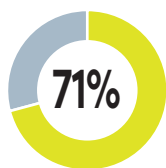


...feel supported by their university.



...of those who have felt a negative impact due to the pandemic say this is because they've had less face to face contact with academics.

## Section 2: Study stressors and how to combat them



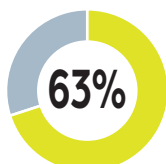
...have considered dropping out at least once in a while as a result of struggling studying alone.



...feel stressed by studying at least once a day.



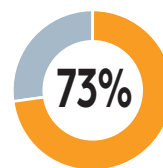
...feel comfortable studying alone. A 32 percentage point decrease from 2019.



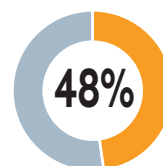
...would use a 24/7 online study support service if it were made available to them.

There has been a significant drop in the proportion of students who feel comfortable studying alone. For many this can leave them feeling isolated, anxious, unmotivated and doubtful of themselves. There is also an element of students not knowing where to go when they do find they are struggling financially or academically. To help combat these struggles, universities need clear signposting to services which can help with financial issues and emotional support. Universities should continue to encourage lecturers / tutors to be in contact with their students as much as possible as this interaction and help is highly sought after. If lectures are unable to respond to student queries in a timely manner, then automatic responses should be in place to direct students to helpful resources or further support.

## Section 3: Looking to the future



...think it will be harder to find a job after graduating.



...are optimistic for their long term career prospects

**74%** ...hope universities will offer more out of office support services in the future

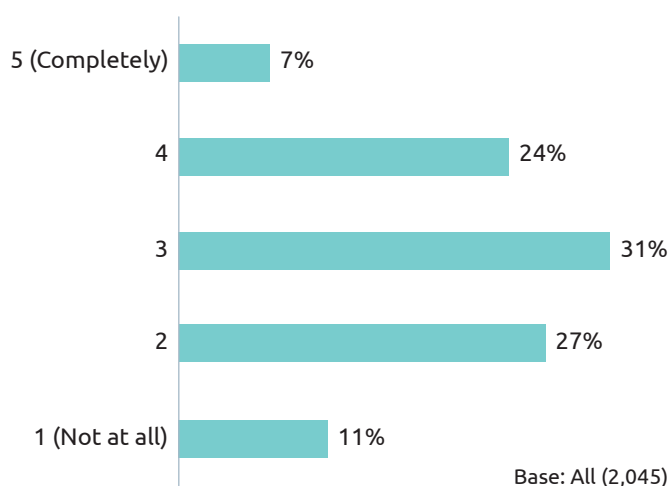
With most looking to find work after graduating but feeling negative about their immediate job prospects, universities should focus their efforts on providing career advice in such an adverse job hunting environment. In the short term students are worried about their job prospects, so insight into what can be achieved with their degree and presenting a broad selection of options could help reassure students. Alongside this, there are some concerns about what the study experience looks like in the future not all students are keen for online lectures to become the norm. There is a balance to be struck here to make sure universities provide a safe environment for students but one that also allows them to thrive. Improvements to online infrastructure may need to be made to make online learning more user friendly such as all sessions being recorded, interactive resources, and translation services. This will also need to be underpinned with facilitating more out of office support services.

# Wellbeing

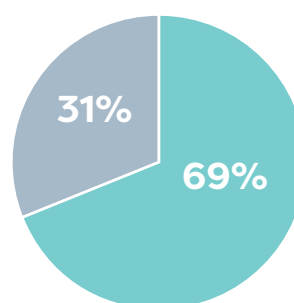
## 1. Support for students

Q1a. How supported do you feel by your university? (where 1 is not at all and 5 is completely)

Whilst nearly a third do feel supported by their university, 69% cannot say the same. Negative or neutral feelings dominate how students currently view university support.



Positive feelings towards university support



Negative / Neutral feelings towards university support



Males are more likely than females to feel supported.



Postgraduates are significantly more likely than Undergraduates to feel supported. First year undergrads feel more supported than final years



UK students feel less supported than both EU and International students.

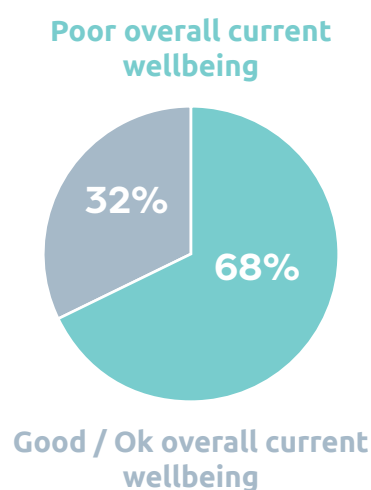
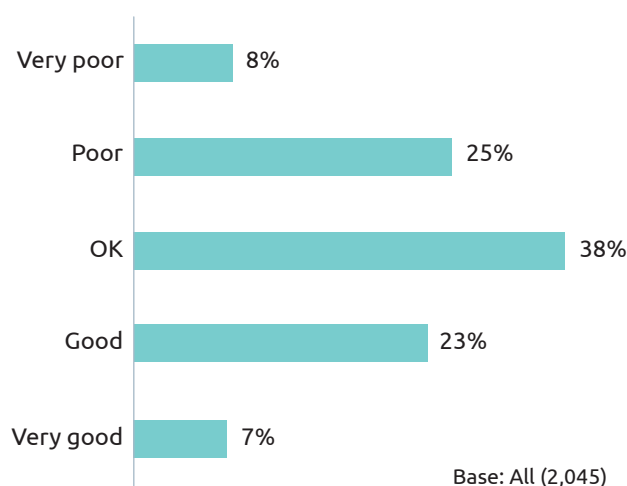


Those based in the South West are the most likely to feel unsupported.

## 2. Overall wellbeing

Q2. How would you describe your overall wellbeing at the present time?

Although 68% say that their current overall wellbeing is Good / OK, this is largely made up of those who said it is only ok at 38%. Nearly a third say that their current overall wellbeing is poor.



Females are more likely than males to rate their overall wellbeing as 'poor'.



Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduates to rate their overall wellbeing as 'poor'.



International students are more likely to rate their wellbeing as good.



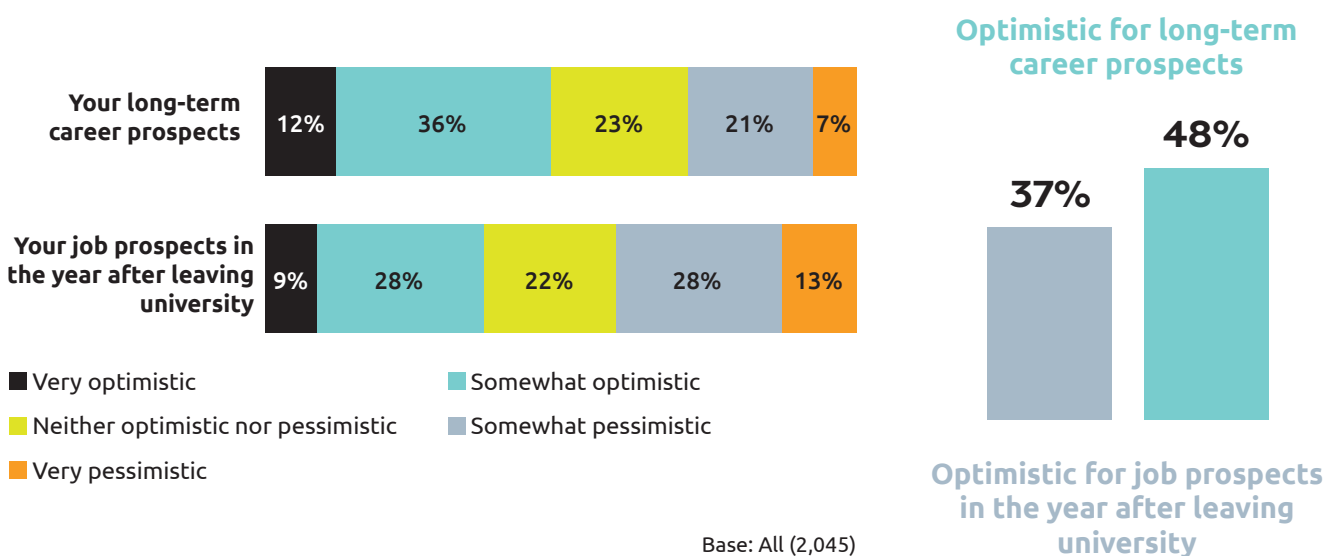
Those based on London and Scotland are most likely to rate their wellbeing as 'good'.



### 3. Optimism for the future

Q3. Thinking about the future, how optimistic or pessimistic are you about the following?

Students are a lot more optimistic about their long term career prospects than their more immediate career prospects after graduating. 41% say that they are pessimistic about their job prospects in the year following university.



Males are more likely than females to be optimistic about both their long term and immediate career prospects after university.



Postgraduates are more likely than undergraduates to be optimistic about both their long term and immediate career prospects after university. First year UGs are more optimistic about their short term and long term career prospects than final year UGs.



UK students are more likely to be pessimistic about both their long term career prospects and their immediate career prospects after university.



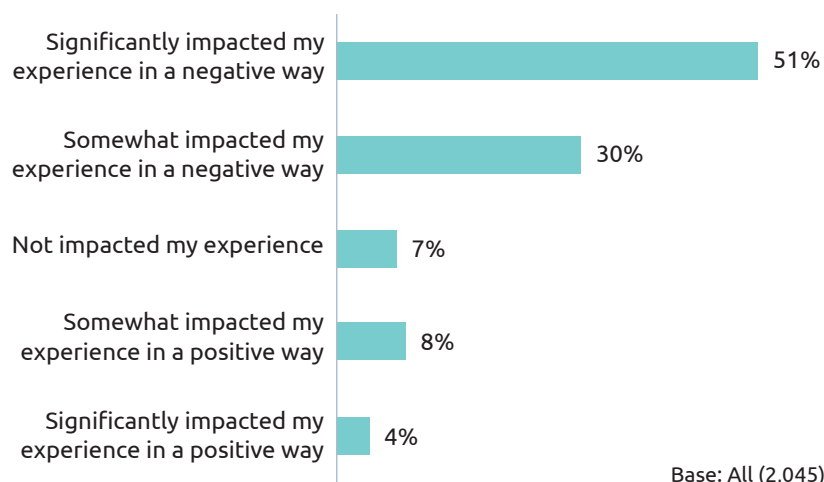
Those based on London and Scotland are most likely to be optimistic about their immediate career prospects after university.

## 4. Impact of Coronavirus pandemic

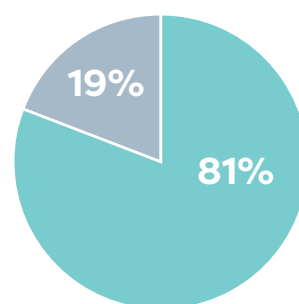
Q4. What impact, if any, has the coronavirus pandemic had on your university experience?

Q5. In which of the following ways has the coronavirus pandemic impacted your university?

Overall, the coronavirus pandemic has had a negative impact on university experiences with over half saying it has done so significantly. 81% say that it has had either a significant or somewhat negative effect on their university experience. The main factors contributing to this next impact are less face to face contact with academics (85%), less time on campus (80%) and more online learning (79%).



Positive / no effect on university experience



Negative effect on university experience



Males are more likely to have experienced a positive impact on their university experience due to the pandemic (20%).



Postgraduates are more likely than undergraduates to have experienced a positive impact on their university experience due to the pandemic (24%).

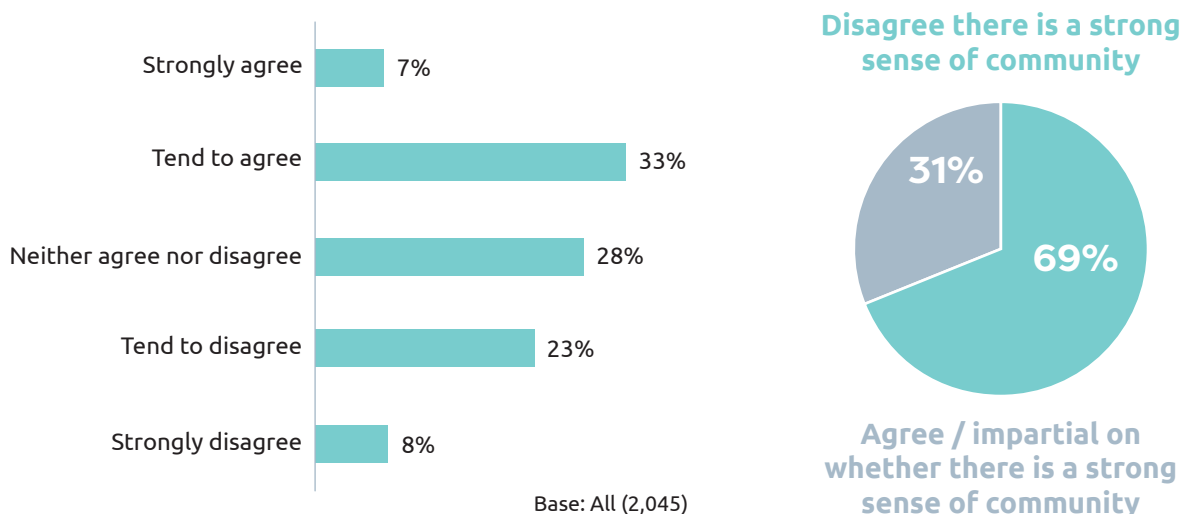


UK students are more likely to say coronavirus has had a positive impact on their university experience.

## 5. Community at university

Q6. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement 'There is a strong sense of community at my university'?

Generally students tend to agree that there is a strong sense of community at their university however just under a third feel that there isn't.



Males are more likely than females to feel that there is a strong sense of community at their university.



Postgraduates are more likely than undergraduates to feel that there is a strong sense of community at their university.



UK students are more likely to feel that there isn't a strong sense of community at their university.



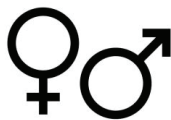
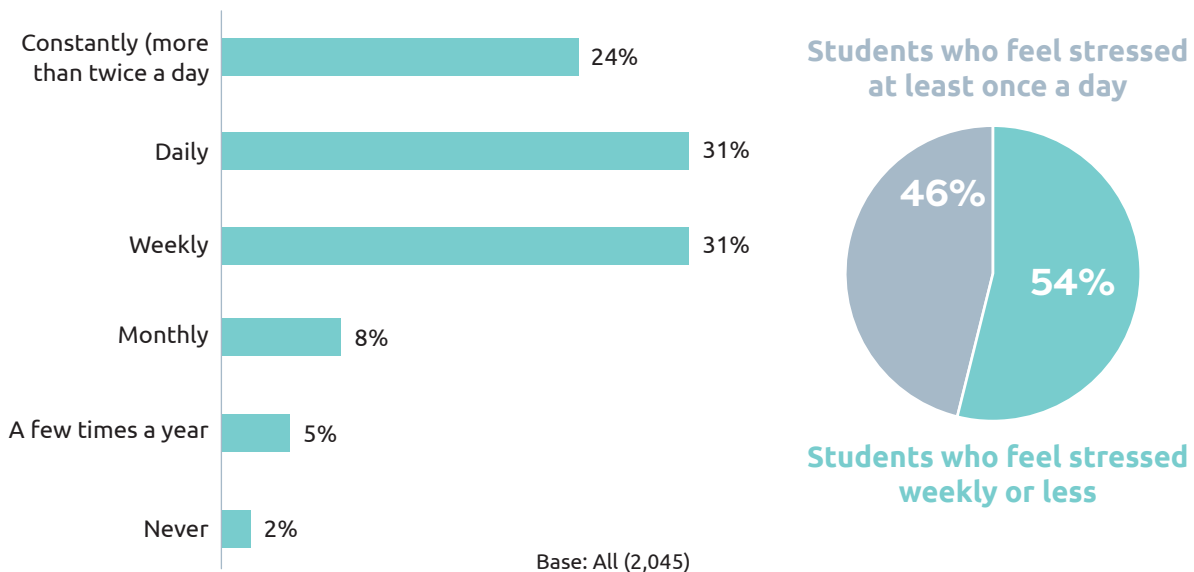
Those based in Yorkshire and the Humber are the most likely to feel that there isn't a strong sense of community at their university.

# Study Experience

## 6. Study stress Regularity

Q7. On average, how often do you feel stressed by studying?

46% of students are feeling stressed at least once a day with nearly a quarter feeling constantly stressed.



Females are more likely than males to be feeling stressed at least once a day.



Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduates to be feeling stressed constantly.



UK students are more likely than EU and international students to be feeling stressed at least once a day.

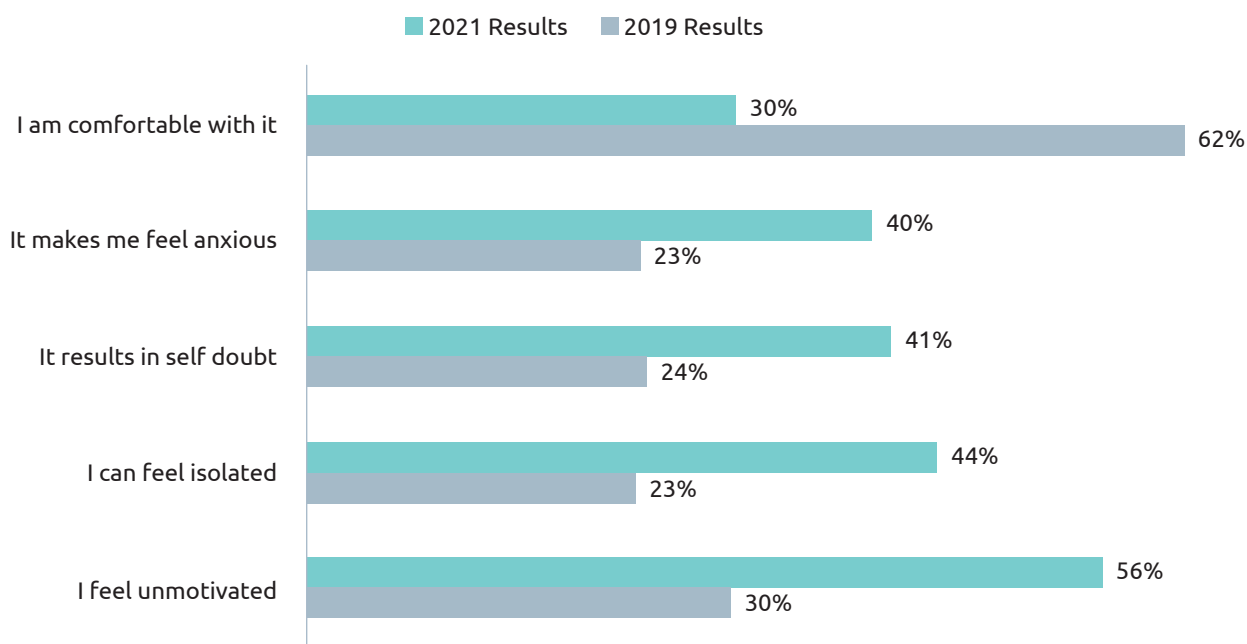


Those in the North West are the most likely to be feeling stressed constantly.

## 7. Study stress Impact

### Q8. How does studying by yourself make you feel?

Here we can see a stark difference between how students feel about studying by themselves now compared to the previous survey in 2019. Students feel a lot less comfortable with studying alone in 2021, dropping from 62% down to 30%. They also feel a lot more isolated, anxious, doubtful and demotivated.



Base: All (2,045) 2021, (2,228) 2019



Females are more likely than males to feel a range of impacts as a result of studying alone.



Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduates to feel a range of impacts as a result of studying alone. First year undergrads are more likely to feel unmotivated when studying alone.



UK students are the least likely to feel comfortable with studying by themselves.



## 7. Study stress Impact

Q9. Do you have any additional comments about how studying by yourself makes you feel?

Many feel that working alone can result in distractions taking hold more easily than if they were around other focused students. Motivation also seems to drop without the influence of their friends, course mates and lecturers. Despite this, there is a message that studying alone provides some benefits such as the ability to work at your own pace and increased productivity. This does seem to coincide with loneliness however and is often followed with an appreciation of the help offered by working with others.

### MORE DISTRACTION PRONE

*"I can easily get distracted, if I get bored I end up playing games and getting carried away with it."* (Male, UG, UK)

*"I get distracted easily and then feel bad because I've wasted the day doing nothing."* (Male, UG, UK)

*"You get distracted easier and waste time. Watching other people focus makes you more likely to work too."* (Male, UG, UK)

*"I find it so challenging to study alone and at home, as there are more distractions and I cannot easily ask my peers for clarification and support"* (Female, UG, UK)

### MOTIVATION DROPS

*"I sometimes need to study by myself in order to concentrate, but I tend to lack motivation to study and can become overwhelmed if I get confused and have no one there to ask about it."* (Female, UG, UK)

*"I procrastinate a lot and struggle to find motivation for it."* (Male, PG, UK)

*"It can be difficult to spend long hours without a friend to motivate me to keep going."* (Female, PG, UK)

*"It's less motivating when there is no one from the academic setting to discuss your ideas in daily or twice a week basis."* (PG, International)

### STUDYING ALONE CAN BE MORE PRODUCTIVE AT THE COST OF LONELINESS

*"It can vary. I do prefer to work alone but I also like to have reassurance that I am doing things correctly. Some discussion groups would be helpful as I am a humanities student "* (Female, UG, UK)

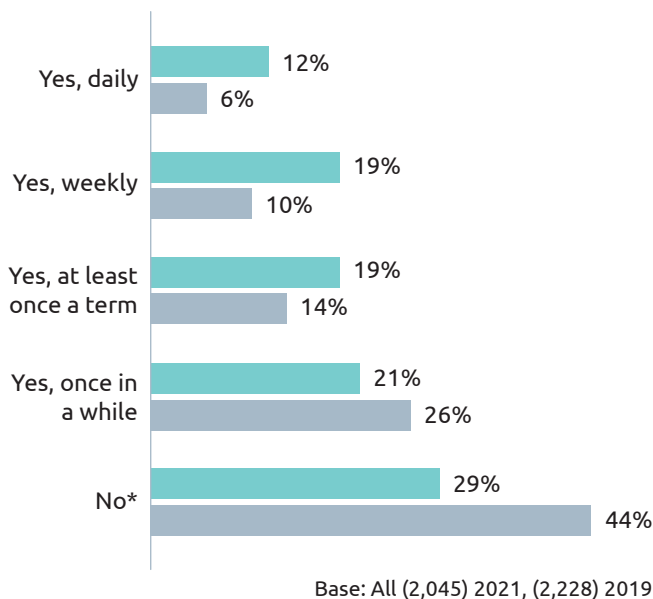
*"Although sometimes studying alone can be productive, this pandemic has forced us to study in isolation for an extended period of time . It has made me feel extremely lonely and unmotivated. I don't feel like a university student anymore."* (Female, UG, International)

*"I work better alone as I can work at my own pace. But when there is coursework, I like to work with others as any help I can get, is greatly appreciated. My course is incredibly helpful, from both my peers and my lecturers."* (Male, UG, UK)

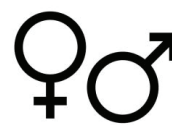
## 8. Isolated study and intent to quit

Q10. Have you ever found that struggling with study when you're alone (after class or when you leave campus) has made you think about quitting your course?

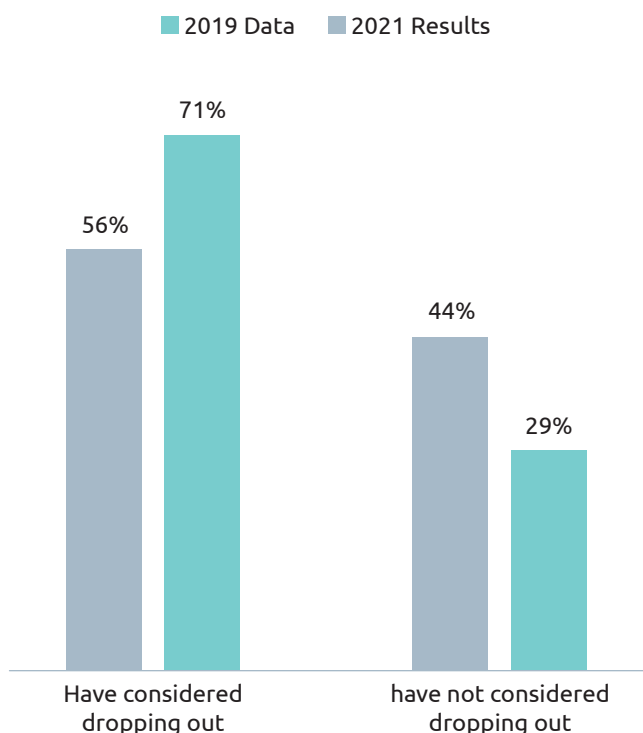
Comparing the 2021 findings to 2019 shows another shift in the mentality of students and how they are dealing with stress and struggling with university work. We can see a 15 percentage point increase in those who have considered dropping out as a result of struggling with studying when they are alone. The amount of people who consider quitting their course daily has also doubled.



PGs are more likely than UGs to have considered dropping out at least weekly. 2nd year undergrads are more likely to have not considered quitting as a result of studying alone.



Males are more likely than females to have considered dropping out at least weekly.



UK students are more likely than EU or international students to have considered dropping out.

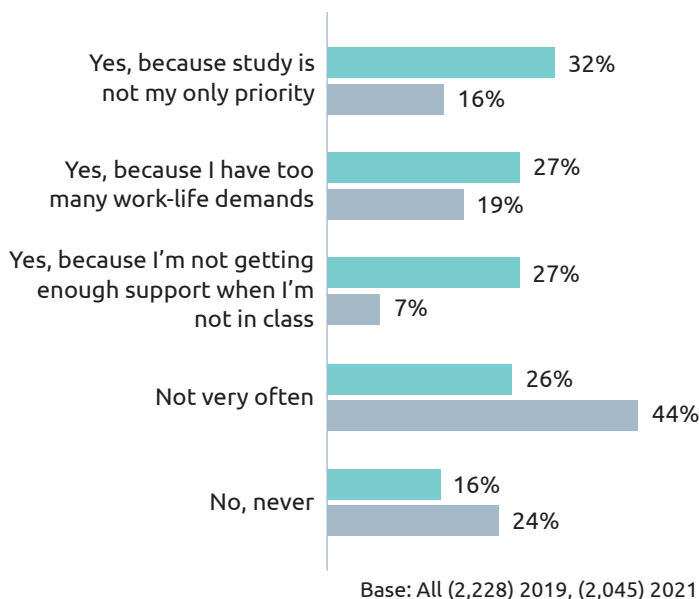


Those based in London are the most likely to have considered dropping out at least weekly.

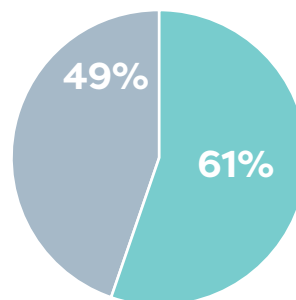
## 9. All night study and workload

### Q11. Have you ever had to study all night to get through your workload?

Since 2019, the number of students who have had to study all night at some point has increased by 8 percentage points. The largest increase is in those not getting enough support when they're not in class, 27% up from 7%. The amount of people who now have other responsibilities than just their work and as a result have ended up studying all night has also doubled.



#### Students who have not had to study all night



#### Students who have had to study all night



Males are more likely than females to have studied all night because they have too many work life demands whereas females are more likely to have done so because of not getting enough support.



Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduates to never have had to work all night to get through their workload.



Those based in London are the most likely to have studied all night because of too many work life demands.

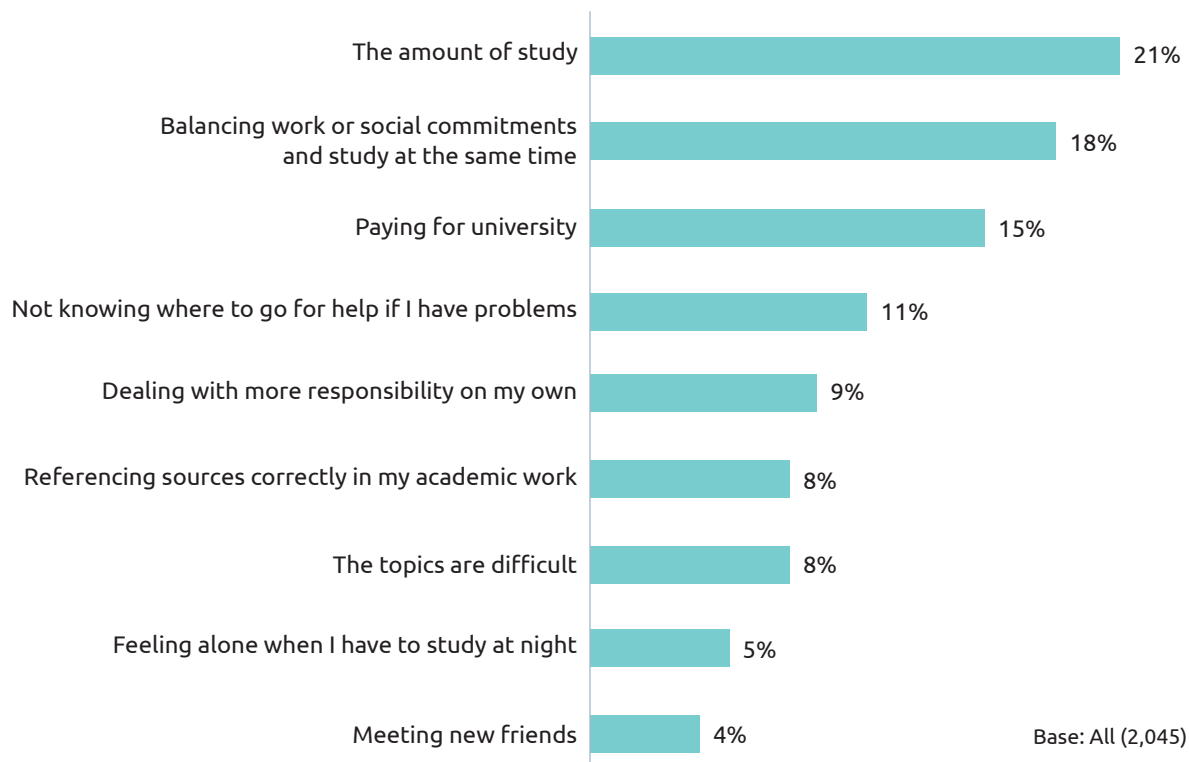


Final year undergrads are more likely than first and 2nd year students to have studied all night because of too many worklife demands.

## 10. Study stress – Causes

### Q12. What do you find is the most stressful part of studying?

The top three factors which are causing the most stress as part of studying remain the same as those in the 2019 survey, namely 'The amount of study', 'Balancing work or social commitments and study at the same time' and 'Paying for university'.\*



Males find 'Paying for university' the most stressful part of studying whereas females find 'The amount of study' their most stressful factor.



Undergraduates find 'The amount of study' the most stressful part of studying whereas postgraduates find 'Paying for university' their most stressful factor.



UK students are most likely to find 'The amount of study' the most stressful part of studying whereas both EU and international students find 'Paying for university' their most stressful part.

\*Previously shown as 'it's part of the study journey' in 2019

## 10. Study stress – Causes

Q13. Do you have additional comments about what you find the most stressful parts of studying?

Financial worries in combination with balancing a heavy study workload often result in a large degree of stress for many students. Many mention the government maintenance loan does not cover their rent for accommodation, let alone any other living expenses meaning they will spend less time working on their university course and more time in a part-time job. Timetabling of assignment deadlines also play a big part in study stress as they often do not account for each other or other factors such as placement.

### FINANCIAL WORRIES

*"Paying huge amounts of school fees but having lessons through online video calls not sure if it's worth the money" (Female, PG, International)*

*"I will say its not with the study, its with financial problems that comes up every time and it puts a lot of pressure on you ." (Male, PG, International)*

*"I really stress about financial aspects of uni which I feel distracts me from my studies." (Female, PG, EU)*

*"Paying a lot of money for nothing stresses me out." (Male, UG, International)*

### ASSIGNMENT TIMETABLING

*"Coursework assessments and exams often occur around the same time meaning I feel very overwhelmed." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"Sometimes it can be a lot to study and complete assignments while on placement ." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"The source of stress is normally the omnipresence of various deadlines as well as the need to work a full time job to pay for my upkeep." (Male, PG, UK)*

*"The time duration till the submission deadline tends to be too short for me to finish the assignments on time, so I tend to become stressed out and even more overwhelmed and worried, overworking myself ." (Male, UG, EU)*

### UNMANAGEABLE WORK LIFE BALANCE

*"Its hard to live a balanced life and maintain a decent level of mental health while university is causing so much anxiety due to their handling of Covid 19." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"My workload has drastically increased this year, and I tend to study through the night, where there's so much to get through, and have found it difficult to balance my studies and find the time to relax." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"I find it difficult to balance work and my relaxing time, as I often get quite anxious and stressed due to my mental health." (Female, UG, UK)*

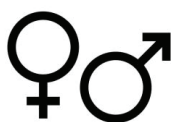
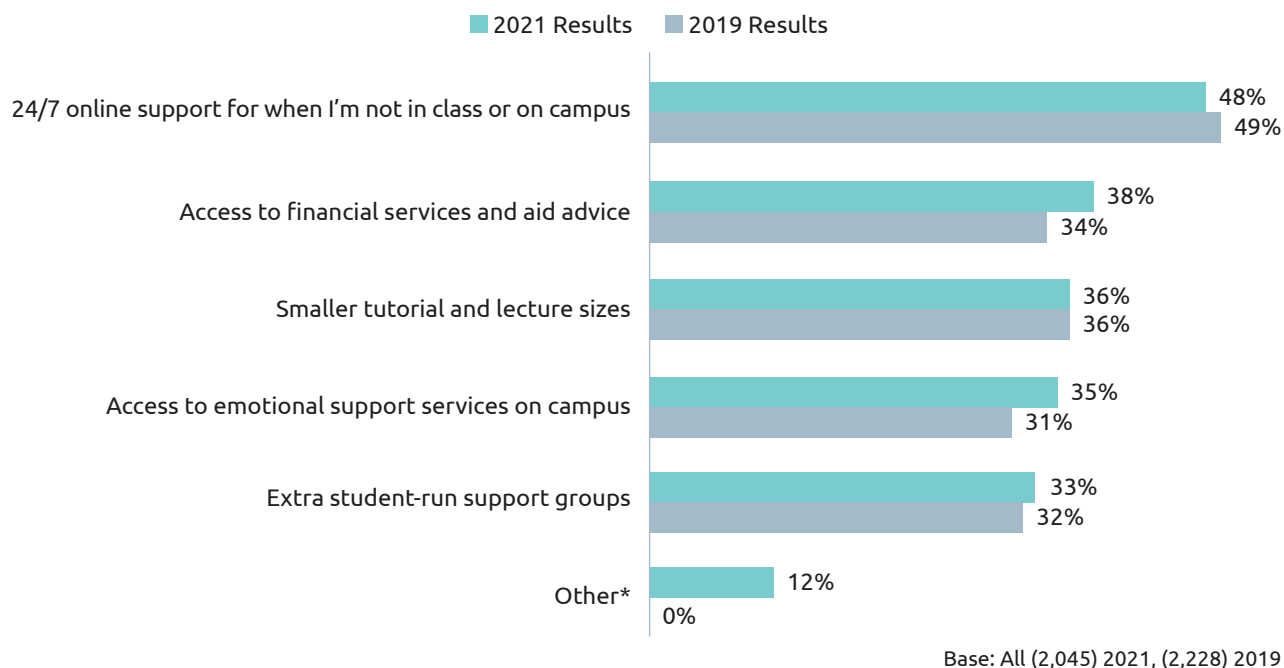
*"It can be very difficult finding a balance between studying and having time off. I find I am always on the extreme side of either or." (Female, UG, UK)*



# 11. Study stress – Prevention

## Q14. What could help combat these issues?

24/7 online support remains the most effective way of combating the issues raised in Q12, consistent with the 2019 survey. There are no significant changes in the data compared to the 2019 survey.



Females are more likely than males to feel that 24/7 online support will help combat study stress issues.



Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduates to feel that 24/7 online support will help combat study stress issues.



UK students are more likely than EU and international students to feel that 24/7 online support will help combat study stress issues.



There are no significant differences in the data concerning region.

\* 2019 data has not been added to this chart as the answer options were not all comparable and would skew the data.

## 12. Study stress – Prevention

Q15. Do you have any additional comments about what could help combat the stresses of studying?

Many feel that if their university actively encouraged or put together study groups this would be beneficial and help to combat study stress related to working alone. This highlights that currently it may be hard for those who do want to work as a group to find others who are inclined the same way. A clearer sense of community would also help many remove this as a stressful factor adding to their study stress. Mental health support needs to be more actively encouraged for many as well.

### SENSE OF COMMUNITY

*"Student community groups, get togethers to discuss work and the week you've had" (Male, PG, UK)*

*"I think the sense of community is crucial. Every once in a while, we get a formal email from the vice principal about how he acknowledges our stress and worries regarding how things are being handled at the university. This is an effort to provide a sense of community but in my opinion it feels impersonal." (Male, UG, EU)*

*"Club activities, exercise sessions or any activity with other people not necessarily involving studying would bring about a sense of normality or community." (Female, PG, UK)*

### GREATER INFORMATION PROVIDED ON MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT SERVICES

*"Better mental health support and the option for extensions and extra help with work." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"Just more support for students struggling with mental health and being alone. It would be helpful if we could be pointed in the direction of this support as well because at the moment it feels like we've just been left alone." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"Just emotional/mental health support would help a massive amount." (Male, PG, UK)*

### GROUP WORKING AND STUDY SUPPORT

*"Remote services have been of some help during this pandemic. Face-to-face support services can be stressful." (Male, PG, UK)*

*"I attend online writing forum groups to find support and solidarity. I would love if the university arranged these so that people local to me were there – some familiar faces." (Female, PG, UK)*

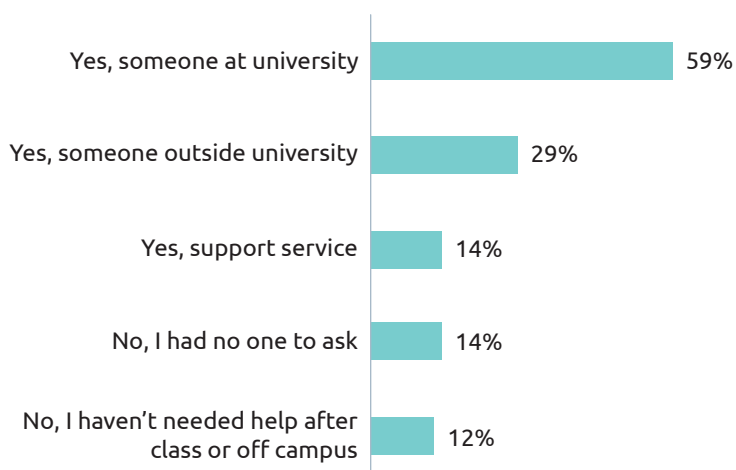
*"I think group sessions, bookable 1 to 1s and drop-ins for anything university related really that you need help with or want to settle your mind would be good." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"Perhaps more lecturer-study support as this can help us feel more supported and feel that the university is treating us well." (UG, UK)*

## 13. Support from personal networks

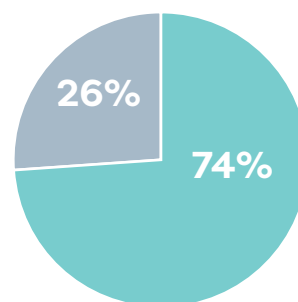
Q16. Have you ever needed study help after class or off campus, and asked someone you know for help?

Over half asked someone at university for study help after class or off campus whilst only 14% went to study support service. Those who haven't needed help after class or off campus has risen by 14 percentage points.



Base: All (2,045)

Students who have not sought study help after class / off off-campus



Students who have sought study help after class / off off-campus



Males are more likely than females to say that they haven't needed help. However, those who have are more likely to have sought help from a support service compared to females.



Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduates to have sought help from someone at university.



UK students are more likely to have sought help from someone at university or outside university.

# 14. Support from personal networks

Q17. Do you have any additional comments, or anyone else who you might have asked for help?

Students tend to go to their coursemates or parents for study support. Some highlight that even though their parents are often not able to give them the academic feedback they require, it is nice to speak to them about it as they are close and familiar. Course mates provide a much more in depth knowledge base to refer to however are not always accessible. This is where online forums / study aids seem to help many other students.

## ONLINE STUDENT CHAT ROOMS / TUTORS

*"Online tutors." (Female, UG, International)*

*"I ask other students on a group chat." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"I mostly consult online resources to complement my learning." (Male, PG, UK)*

*"My tutors? Rarely though, online forums are usually okay I normally just work my way through them." (Female, UG, UK)*

## PARENTS / CLOSE FAMILY

*"My parents are always here to help." (Male, PG, EU)*

*"I'll ask for opinions from my family and friends from high school." (UG, UK)*

*"It was actually my parents as my father did the same degree." (Male, PG, UK)*

*"My parents also they give me a huge support." (Female, PG, UK)*

## COURSE MATES

*"I always just ask the students on my course because lecturers always just seem to direct you back to online resources." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"Friends and other people on my course." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"Friends on the same course who are going through the same thing." (Female, UG, UK)*

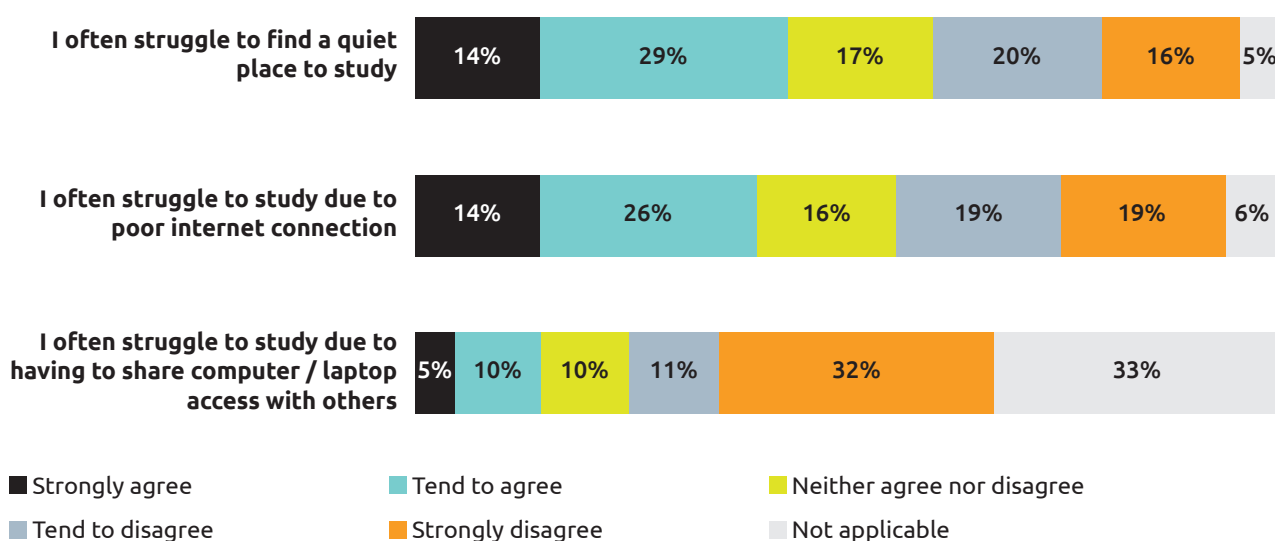
*"My friends on my course." (Male, UG, UK)*

# 15. Study struggles

Q17b. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- I often struggle to find a quiet place to study
- I often struggle to study due to poor internet connection
- I often struggle to study due to having to share computer / laptop access with others

Overall , the most prominent study struggle is finding a quiet place to study, whereas only 15% of students actively struggle with having to share access to a laptop / computer. 40% also struggle with poor internet connection.



Males are more likely than females to be struggling with sharing a computer or laptop, while females are more likely to struggle with finding a quiet place to study.



Postgraduates are more likely than undergraduates to be struggling with sharing a laptop or computer.



UK students are more likely than EU and international students to be struggling with a poor internet connection.



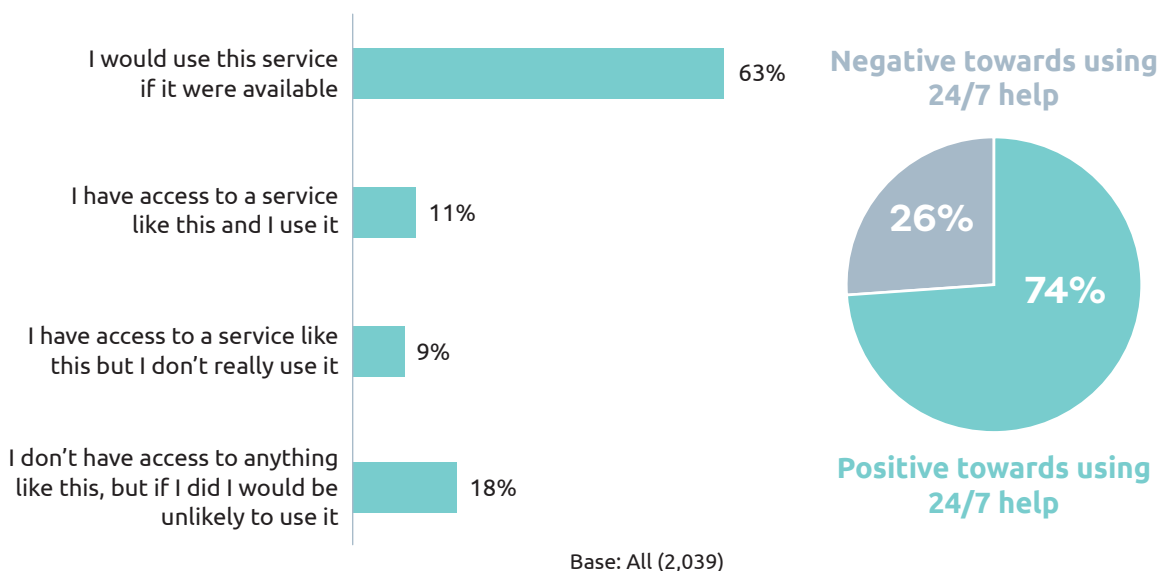
Those in London are most likely to be struggling with sharing a computer or laptop.



## 16. Feelings towards 24/7 study help

Q18. How would you feel about on demand 24-7 online study support from a real person?

63% would use this service if it were available to them and 74% express positive feelings towards a service like this. This is up by a 11% from the 2019 survey.\*



Females are more likely than males to use this service if it were available to them.



Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduates to use this service if it were available to them, however, 1 in 4 postgraduates already use a service like this which could explain why they are less likely to say they would use a service if it were available to them.



Those describing their wellbeing as poor say they would be more likely to use this service if it were available to them.



Those based in the North East are the most likely to use this service if it were available to them.

\*2019 data has not been added to this chart as the answer options were not all comparable and would skew the data.

# 17. Feelings towards 24/7 study help

Q19. Do you have any additional comments about on demand 24-7 online study support?

A large proportion of students feel that this kind of service would be extremely beneficial as currently they feel that they are lacking any kind of study support at all. Some feel that face to face interaction is a key part of study support and find online only support off-putting. The main issue raised with 24/7 support seems to be the worry of lack of specialist knowledge which some feel they could only receive from their personal tutors. This seems to match the 2019 survey which also found quality of support as a key concern.

## IMPORTANCE OF FACE TO FACE INTERACTION

*"I would prefer in person support; you can't get what you need across online." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"While its a great idea, I don't know how incentivized students would be to use it as its not in person." (Male, UG, UK)*

*"If it's online I don't think it would be beneficial." (Female, UG, EU)*

## PRAISE FOR THE IDEA

*"That would be really helpful because sometimes I don't know who to ask and it can feel very overwhelming." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"I would really find this very beneficial." (Male, UG, UK)*

*"It would ease stress." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"Would be helpful especially because time-management is more difficult during the pandemic which leads to many late nights." (Female, UG, International)*

*"It would be really useful knowing someone is always there to help." (Female, UG, UK)*

## WORRIES AROUND SUBJECT SPECIFICITY AND LACK OF IN-DEPTH KNOWLEDGE

*"This would be a great service however depends on what topics/subjects they can support with." (Male, UG, UK)*

*"They would have to know the course I was doing though." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"It depends what the support is. If it was someone who could help explain concepts, read through work and help build on work that would be great." (Female, UG, UK)*

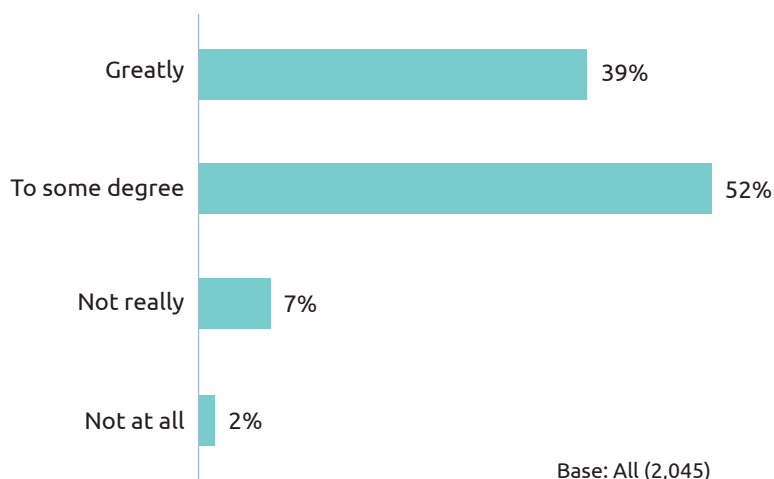
*"As an occupational therapist it would be nice if there was support for our subjects. There's often support resources but only for major and well-known degrees." (Female, UG, International)*

*"This would be helpful if the staff were trained in the specific types of assessment I was doing." (Female, UG, UK)*

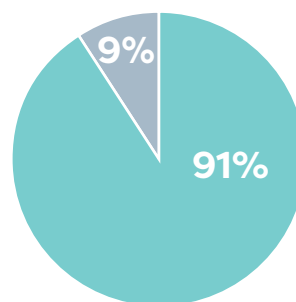
## 18. Credibility and academic integrity

Q20. If you were to consider using study support, to what extent would you think about the credibility of the provider?

9 in 10 consider the credibility of a study support provider to at least some degree. For over a third, this is something that they consider greatly when considering study support options.



Wouldn't think about credibility of the provider



Would think about the credibility of the provider



Females are more likely than males to greatly consider the credibility of the provider.



Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduates to greatly consider the credibility of the provider.



There are no significant differences in the data concerning fee status.

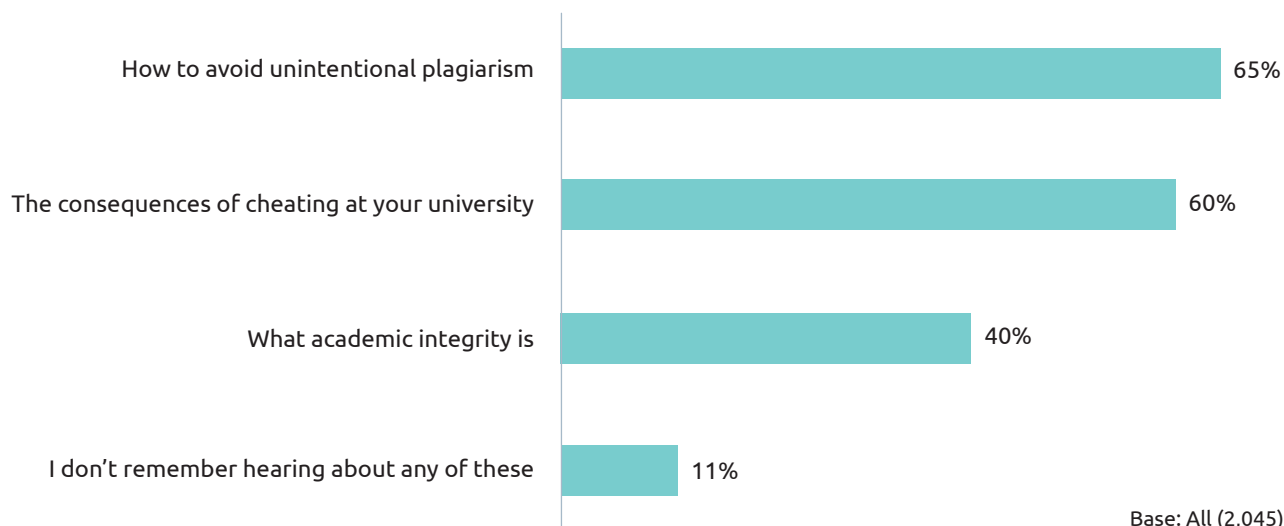


There are no significant differences in the data concerning region.

## 19. Credibility and academic integrity

Q21) Which, if any of the following, do you recall hearing about from your university?  
Please select all that apply.

Two thirds have heard about how to avoid unintentional plagiarism through their university and 3 in 5 have heard about the consequences of cheating. 1 in 10 have not heard about any of these.



Females are more likely than males to have heard about how to avoid unintentional plagiarism and the consequences of cheating.



Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduates to have heard about how to avoid unintentional plagiarism and the consequences of cheating.

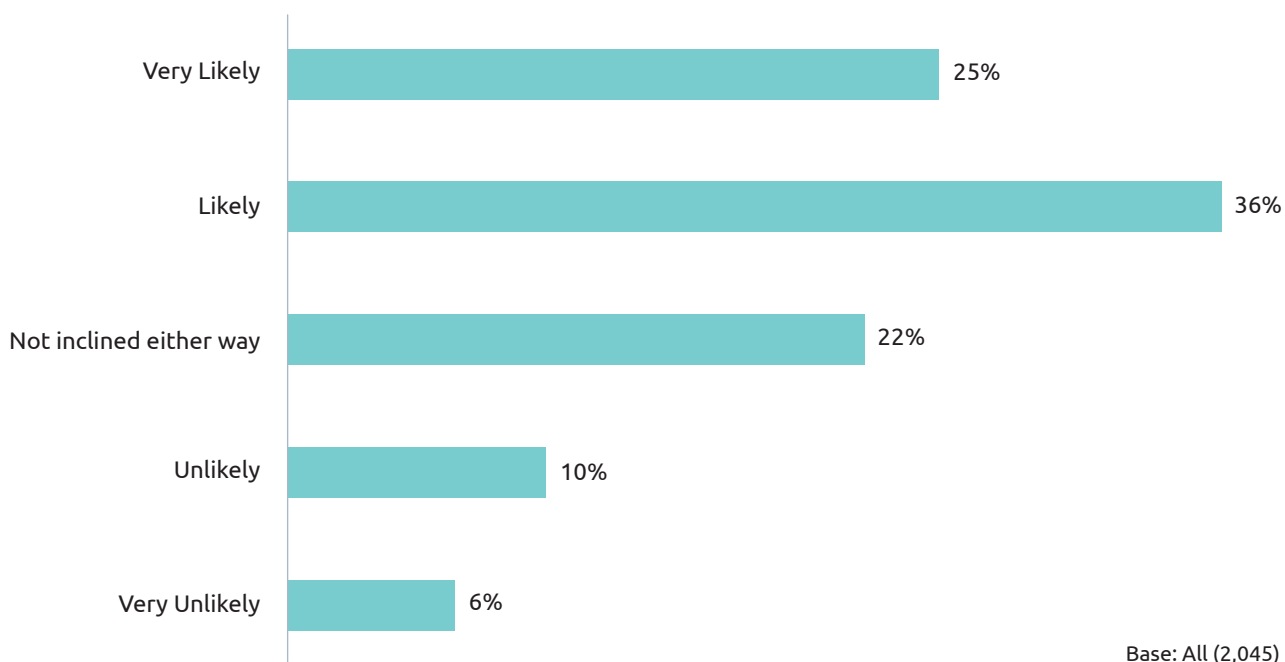


EU students are more likely to have heard about how to avoid unintentional plagiarism and the consequences of cheating.

## 20. University choice

Q22. How likely would you be to choose the same university again?

Over half would be likely to choose the same university again while 16% would not choose their university again.



Females are less likely than males to choose the same university again.



Postgraduates are more likely than undergraduates to pick the same university again.



There is no significant difference in the data concerning fee status.



Those based in Wales are the least likely to choose the same university again.

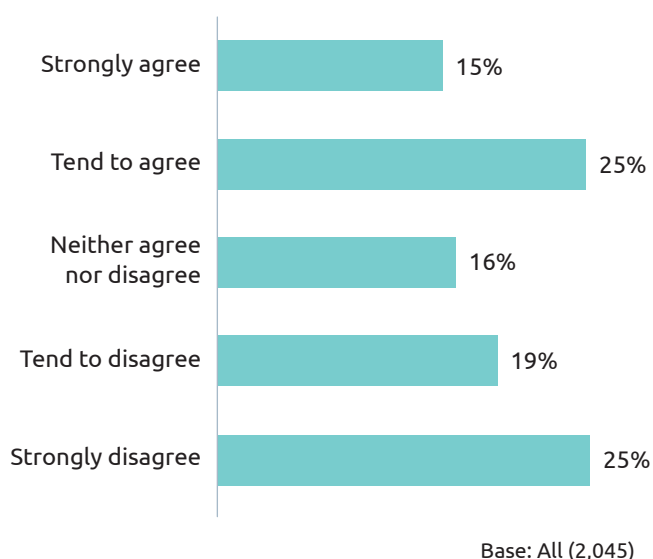


## 21. Likelihood to dropout

Q23. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the statement "I have seriously considered dropping out of university"?

Q24. If you did consider dropping out, who did you talk to about it, if at all?

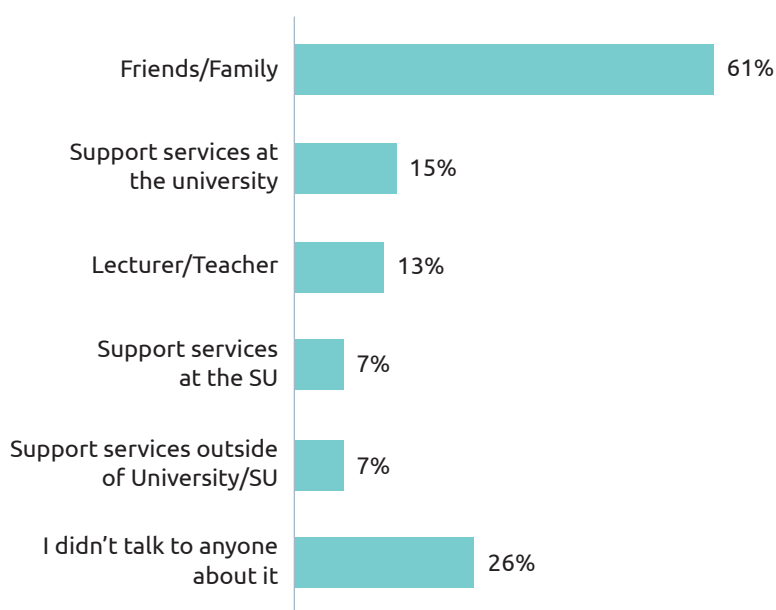
40% have seriously considered dropping out of university; a larger proportion than Red Brick typically see in their work across the sector. For those who did consider dropping out, two thirds spoke to their friends and family about it and quarter did not talk to anyone at all. Only 14% talked to support services provided inside and outside of university. Final year undergrads are more likely than first and second year students to have seriously considered dropping out.



Postgraduates are more likely than undergraduates to have spoken to a support service about dropping out.



Males are more likely than females to have talked to a support service about dropping out.



UK students are more likely than EU and international students to have considered dropping out.

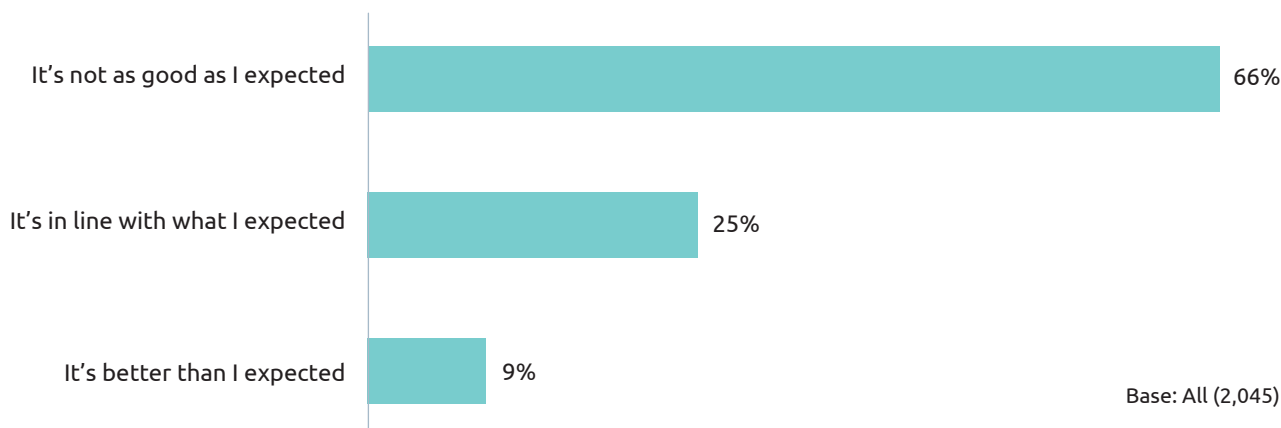


Those based in Wales are the most likely to have considered dropping out.

## 22. University experience expectations

Q25. Has your university experience in 2020/21 been better or worse than you expected?

The majority (66%) have found that university is not as good as they expected in 2020/2021. A third have found it has either matched or exceeded their expectations.



Males are more likely than females to say that university has matched or exceeded their expectations, though 50% still report that it's not as good as they expected.



Postgraduates are more likely than undergraduates to say that university has matched or exceeded their expectations.



There is no significant difference in the data concerning fee status.



Those based in London are the most likely to say that university has exceeded their expectations.

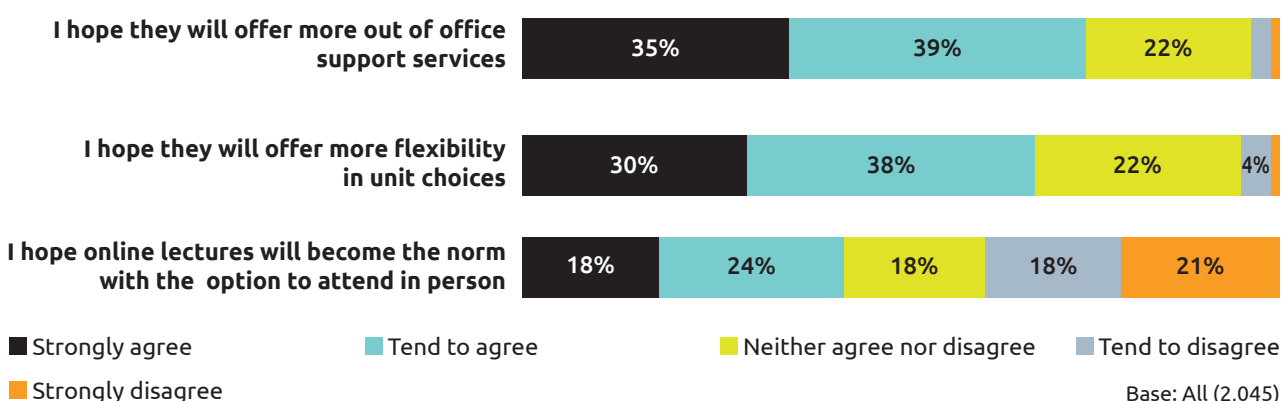
# The university of the future

## 23. The future of the campus and students' hopes for change

Q26. To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

- I hope they will offer more flexibility in unit choices
- I hope online lectures will become the norm with the option to attend in person
- I hope they will offer more out of office support services

Almost three quarters want more out of office support services. More flexibility in unit choices remains highly desirable as it was in 2019. There is a small increase in the number of people who think physical universities won't exist in 20 years time.



Males are more likely than females to hope for online lectures to become the norm.

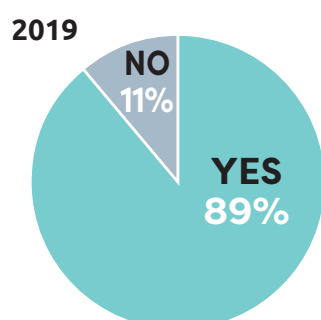


Postgraduate students are more likely than undergraduates to hope for online lectures to become the norm.

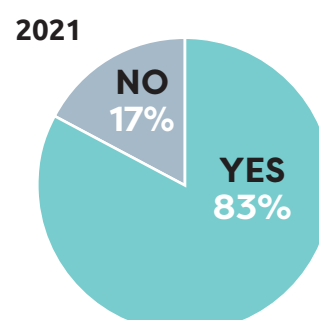


UK students are the most likely to hope for more out of office support services.

Q27. Do you think physical universities will exist in 20 years' time?



Base: All (2,228)



Base: All (2,045)

## 24. The future of the campus and students' hopes for change

Q28. Do you have additional comments about how you hope your university will evolve?

The majority of students feel that online course materials, resources and study support will need a vast overhaul to become more readily available if their university is to evolve. There is a divide between those who want universities to return to face-to-face lectures only and those who enjoy and benefit from online study however all seem to agree that some kind of blended learning would be beneficial. Mental health and financial support continue to be key areas in which many feel universities are still lacking and could do with greater awareness of their students' struggles.

### LECTURE RECORDING AND MORE READILY AVAILABLE ONLINE COURSE MATERIALS AND RESOURCES

*"I hope we will see increased focus on accessibility and allowing those who need to work remotely to do so even after social distancing has ended." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"I hope to see more online lectures as they can be helpful especially if you can't make it onto the campus one day this should be available instead of having to catch up." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"If they are going to become online learning environments then the infrastructure needs to be there, a wider range of online facilities and tutorial sessions, meeting rooms to chew over learning objectives to fully understand concepts and build in support services." (Male, UG, UK)*

*"I hope online learning doesn't become the norm because it's very difficult, but I hope online learning becomes better and easier to cope with if needed." (Female, UG, UK)*

### MENTAL HEALTH AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

*"Better mental health and financial support." (Male, UG, UK)*

*"More support for mental health – counseling sessions and wellbeing services are limited. Be good to have more sessions available to students and shorter wait times. More flexible times to access support services & better liaison with the university health centre and wellbeing team." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"I hope they'll take students' mental health and well being more into consideration and provide more guidance especially when it comes to exams as we've never had proper exams due to covid last year." (Female, UG, International)*

*"They'll offer more financial support and mental support." (Male, UG, UK)*

*"I hope that the university will take into consideration everything that has happened when it comes to exams and assessments. The pressure is immense and sometimes I don't feel that there is much regard for our mental health." (Female, UG, UK)*

*"Providing more help, financially and study wise, it's feels like i'm not worthy to be at the university." (Female, UG, UK)*

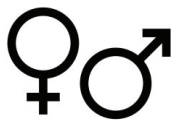
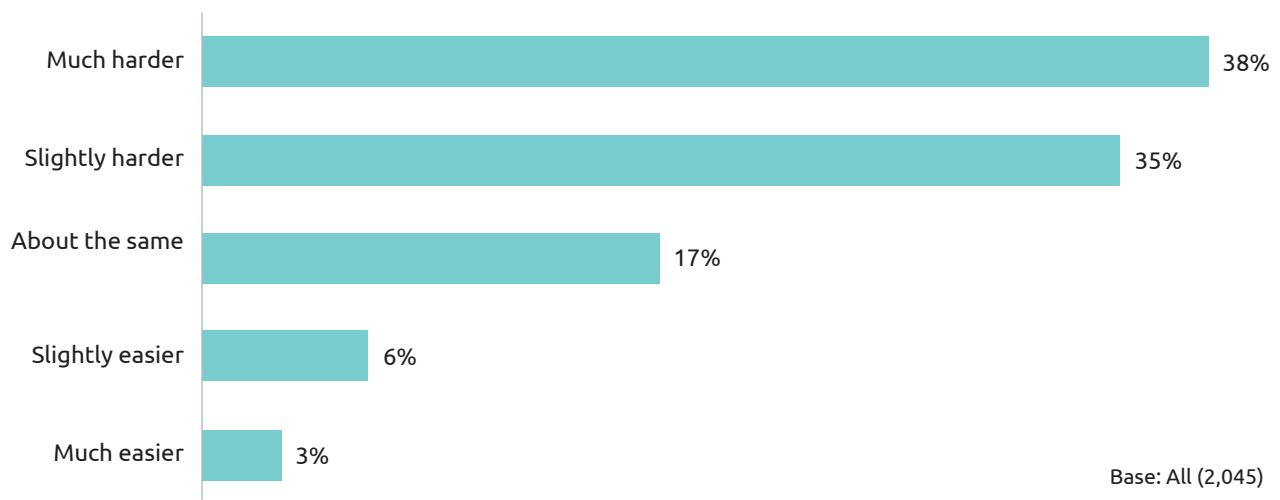
*"Many students are from a difficult background and cannot afford it – reduced student finance will encourage students to attend uni and not drop out." (Female, UG, UK)*

# Employment

## 25. Future plans and the impact of Coronavirus

Q29. When you finish your studies, do you think it will be easier or harder to get a job upon graduating than it previously was?

73% feel that it will be harder to get a job upon graduating than it previously was with over a third feeling it will be much harder to get a job upon graduating.



Females are more likely than males to think it will be harder to secure a job.



1 in 4 postgraduate students think it will be about the same trying to get a job upon graduating. 77% of undergraduates think it will be harder compared to only 65% of postgraduates.



International students are more likely to think it will be easier to secure a job.

## 26. The future of the campus and students hope

Q30. Do you have any additional comments about how you feel about securing a job after graduation?

COVID-19 has played a huge role in how students now feel about securing a job after graduating with the majority feeling it will be much harder. On the back of this many are now considering entering different fields to what they had planned with some completely unrelated to their degree or the area of study which they love. Lack of careers advice from universities also seems to be hindering some in making the right choices of which path to take next. Many areas of work also require networking opportunities to make contacts which are also unavailable or severely lacking at this current time.

### LACK OF CAREERS ADVICE AND SUPPORT

*"The university should provide more career support and advertise more job opportunities to us."*  
(Female, PG, International)

*"We have not been given any advice about how to apply or what roads we can take."*  
(Female, UG, UK)

*"I'm not getting the support and advice I need now to help me with that."* (Female, UG, UK)

### RELUCTANT CHANGE OF CAREER PATH

*"Very pessimistic. I thought I knew what I wanted to do or where to go but not now due to no placements."* (Female, UG, UK)

*"I feel very stressed about the lack of job prospects and don't feel I will find a job related to what I'm interested in."* (Female, UG, UK)

*"I'm planning on doing a masters now due to being unsure about the job prospects. Before covid, I wanted to get straight into industry."* (Male, UG, UK)

*"The credibility of a corona virus degree will tarnish my success in an Engineering job, so I may have to look elsewhere."* (Male, UG, UK)

### NETWORKING / EXPERIENCE HARD TO COME BY

*"We won't have the practical skills and experience we need to get a job."* (Female, UG, UK)

*"Feel like I haven't learned practical methods e.g. using camera equipment due to Covid, which would be necessary for getting a job."* (Female, UG, UK)

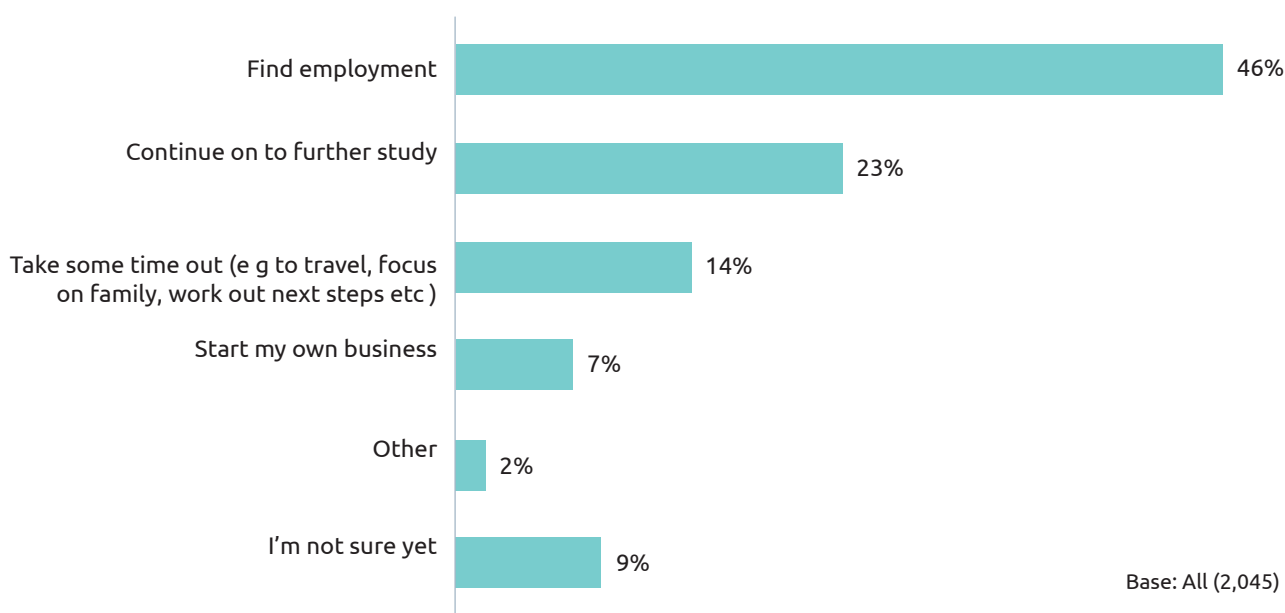
*"We are not getting the same quality of teaching so will not not gain the same experience ready for employment."* (Female, UG, UK)

*"The lack of networking opportunities will greatly affect me, and the online equivalents are not the same and often clash with classes."* (Female, UG, UK)

## 27. Future plans and the impact of Coronavirus

Q31. Which of the following best describes your current plan for what you might do after you graduate?

Most will look to find employment after they graduate with roughly a quarter looking to pursue further study. 1 in 10 are still unsure what they hope to pursue upon graduating.



Females are more likely to continue onto further study while males are more likely to take some time out or start their own business.



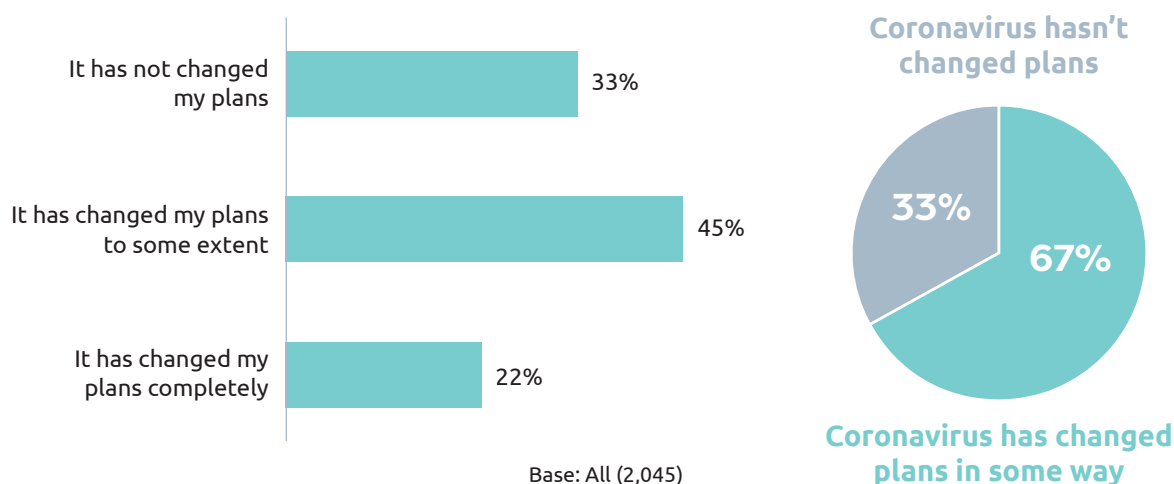
Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduates to be uncertain about what they are going to do after graduating.



International students are more likely than EU and UK students to find employment after graduating.

## 28. Future plans and the impact of Coronavirus

Q32) And to what extent has the coronavirus pandemic changed your plans for what you intend to do after graduation?



Females are more likely than males to say that coronavirus has not changed their plans.



Undergraduates are more likely than postgraduates for coronavirus to have not changed their plans, while postgraduates are more likely to say it has changed their plans completely.



There are no significant differences in the data concerning fee status.



Those based in London are most likely to say that coronavirus has changed their plans completely.



# Conclusion



We undertook the same study in 2019 and unquestionably there is a stark difference between how students feel about their overall higher education study experience now, compared to two years prior. Students feel a lot less comfortable with studying alone; they also feel a lot more isolated, anxious, doubtful and demotivated. There is a shift in the mentality of students and how they are dealing with stress and struggling with university work.

However, within these 2021 survey outcomes there are also rays of light and clear indicators of what might help reduce study anxiety for UK students. Anecdotally via students at our partner institutions we have heard strong praise at their support and how well their lecturers and various support teams have reacted to the pandemic. Clearly there is an urgent need for HEIs across the UK to offer flexible academic and emotional support.

This survey of course directly relates to UK students' wellbeing and without doubt university lecturers, support and library staff and senior leaders have all felt the impact. In spite of this, through necessity, the pandemic did force us to adapt incredibly quickly. Projects implemented almost overnight; plans that may otherwise have taken months if not years to come into fruition, were in place in a matter of days. A true testament of the pure resilience and sheer dedication of all those that work across the sector.

Now is the time to evaluate all that we have learned, listen to what students and higher education staff are saying, and build on this in order to thrive. I for one am confident this can and will happen.

**Isabelle Bristow**

Managing Director, UK and Europe  
Studiosity

For more information contact [marketing@studiosity.com](mailto:marketing@studiosity.com)

“ There is no doubt that the last academic year has been incredibly challenging for university and college students across the world, and it comes as no surprise that students have felt anxious and have not found remote learning easy.

As we contemplate both the return to campus and the longer term prospect of growth in blended learning, universities will be looking for innovative ways to support their students, to rebuild their academic confidence and provide additional learning support when students need it most. This research is a timely reminder that students do not lead nine to five lives and are looking for online academic support that is available when they need it. Such support can and does transform the learning experience for students, as I have seen in my own university. ”

**Professor Rebecca Bunting, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive of the University of Bedfordshire and Studiosity UK Academic Advisory Board Member**

“ Although Universities mobilised quickly to negate the effects of the pandemic as best they could, there is no doubt that Covid has still had a hugely negative effect on the University experience - as shown by Studiosity's research. Constant lockdowns coupled with remote lectures and virtual seminar groups are not what students originally signed up for so it comes as no surprise that this is a group that have felt the effects of the pandemic very acutely.

While Universities themselves have had to pivot drastically in a short space of time to accommodate for remote learning, what is overwhelmingly apparent from this research is that the time has come for more out of hours study support for students. The insights show that the vast majority of students have cited lack of face-to-face time with academics and not getting adequate support with academic work as their main reasons for finding this past year of university such a struggle. While the past 12 months has been a testing year for so many, and in so many ways, the opportunity now is to look to the future and the solutions we can offer for tomorrow's students; it's time for a blended learning environment with more digital support for students outside of the traditional 9 to 5 university structure. ”

**Sir Eric Thomas, Studiosity UK Academic Advisory Board Member and former Vice-Chancellor, University of Bristol**



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