

2024 UK Student Wellbeing Survey



Research carried
out by YouGov

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The education sector has the greatest potential to change the world - students become future researchers, teachers, business owners, leaders, carers, and more, contributing to the rich societal fabric that the world needs. To protect and grow the education sector, listening and responding to the feedback, concerns, and recommendations of university students is a necessary challenge.

It is evident that students are navigating a changing academic terrain. Personalised support, a heightened sense of belonging, and rapid adaptation to AI supports are paramount.

This survey captures the voices of students, to support education leaders in their ongoing efforts to offer students an educational experience that aligns with both their study expectations and aspirations for the future.



Foreword



The survey investigates key areas of student wellbeing in 2024. We carry out the survey in order to better understand and discuss the motivations, emotions, and demands of university students. We hope that you will find the data and findings supportive of your own initiatives and solutions.

This year, the survey focused on topics such as experiences of study stress, reasons for university choice, belonging, peer connection, institutional support, and future employability. In addition, where possible, results have been benchmarked with previous survey outcomes, to understand how behaviours and attitudes have changed over time.

In partnership with many UK institutions, the Studiosity team continues our core mission of increasing life chances for all students. In this spirit we are committed to making this contribution to the sector and putting the spotlight on student wellbeing again this year.

Isabelle Bristow

Managing Director UK and Europe, Studiosity

Studiosity

Foreword



Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for your interest in Studiosity's 2024 Student Wellbeing Report, which captures insights from over 2,400 students in UK universities.

Student wellbeing is very much at the heart of universities' concerns, and support for wellbeing takes many forms across the sector. This report highlights three key messages from the students surveyed, none of which is surprising, but each serves as a reminder of what matters to students and how challenging their lives can be.

Students tell us that they need to work, and therefore need more flexibility and support to help them to thrive. The survey shows the extent to which students need to take paid employment during their studies, with nearly three quarters of students in part-time and a quarter in full-time work. Inevitably, balancing work and study is a cause of stress and this is an increasing trend.

Nearly two thirds of the respondents felt that their university is not adapting quickly enough to provide AI tools for learning support. Universities are very much alert to the rapid advance of AI and its impact on student behaviour, particularly in relation to assessment, but its potential for enhanced pedagogy and learner support is less well addressed.

A sense of belonging is key to student success. Students report that their experience of feeling stressed is significantly worsened if they also feel "adrift", that they don't belong in their university. They tell us that more personalised, 24/7 assignment and study support would improve their sense of belonging. Confidence in being able to ask for help; flexibility of study; access to mental health support and being able to connect with peers are also important considerations raised in the responses.

I hope that the student voices evident in this survey are helpful in your own deliberations about student wellbeing, as we adapt to the rapidly changing context in which our sector finds itself.

Professor Rebecca Bunting

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, University of Bedfordshire
Studiosity UK Academic Advisory Board member

Studiosity

Introduction



Background

YouGov

YouGov is a global public opinion and data company, international market research and data analytics firm headquartered in the UK with operations in Europe, North America, the Middle East, and Asia-Pacific.

Studiosity

Universities around the world partner with Studiosity to grow student success at scale, via 24/7 formative writing feedback, discussion about core skills, and peer-to-peer connection.

Studiosity has run Student Wellbeing Surveys with UK university students since 2019. In November 2023, YouGov was commissioned by Studiosity to conduct a global wave of this research, with students surveyed across the UK, Australia, New Zealand, Canada, USA, Singapore, Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.



Objectives

The survey investigates key areas of student wellbeing in 2024. This annual survey seeks to better understand and discuss the motivations, emotions, and demands of university students, to provide the data and findings to higher education leadership, to support initiatives and solutions.

This year, the survey focused on topics such as experiences of artificial intelligence, connection to other students, stress, importance of grades, experiences of cheating, optimism for the future, and institutional belonging.



Methodology

Sample & Target Group:

Studiosity produced the questions for this survey with advice from YouGov to ensure robust data collection. YouGov gathered the responses from students via an online survey.

The survey ran from 23 November to 29 December 2023 and gained 10,189 responses, of which 2,422 were in the UK, with 149 higher education institutions represented.

This survey was collected on the YouGov Panels, where each member has accepted to participate in online interviews and has received an email invitation with a link to the survey.

The sample definition is created in order to provide a representative cross-section of the UK population, based on the target group and the purpose of the survey.

**The survey was conducted by
the YouGov analysis institute.**

23rd November – 29th December 2023

Weighting:

The figures have been weighted and are representative of all UK adults aged 18+. Data was weighted according to the dimensions of gender, level of university studies finished and geography on the basis of an ideal weighting from Statistics UK, so that the results are representative of the population in relation to the aforementioned target group.



Key findings

Demographics: Diversity and study-life pressures

Most of these UK students responding in the survey are 18-25 (54%), 69% are undergraduate, and 58% of all respondents are female across all age groups, consistent with the national average. Amongst international students, the gender is more evenly split, 49% male to 49% female. In this survey, 3% of students self-reported being non-binary, transgender or other; this number was halved for international students.

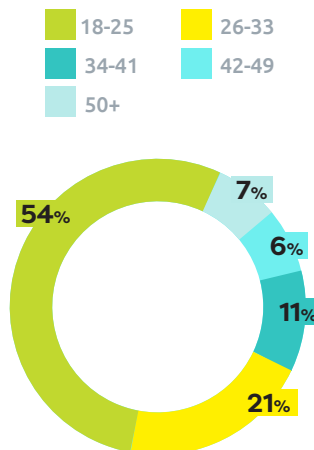
The students are majority domestic (89%), and 41% of students are studying on campus only, 18% are carers - people who provide unpaid care or other support to family members and friends at the same time as study.

UK students have high rates of employment during study (71%), close to the global average, but lower than Australia (86%), Canada (82%), or US at (79%), and 74% are full-time students.

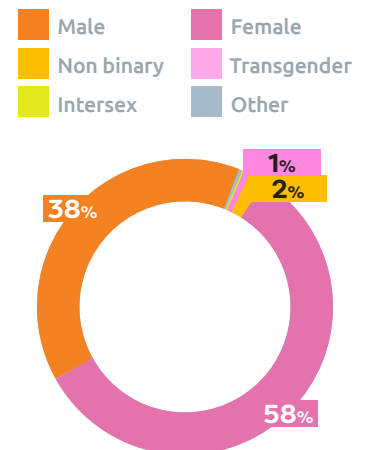
Of respondents, 23% of students are in a STEM degree, 22% Humanities and Social Sciences; 19% Health (Psychology, Medicine, Nursing) and 8% Psychology.

Regionally 22% are from London; 19% are from Yorkshire & the Humber with the third largest region being 18% in the Midlands.

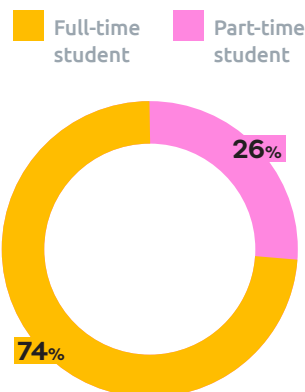
AGE



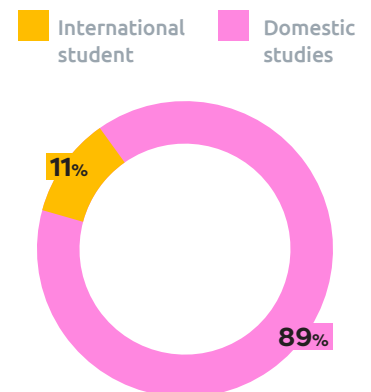
GENDER



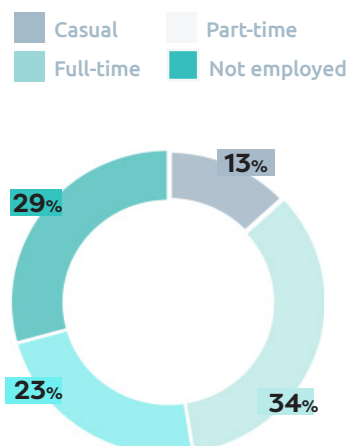
STUDENT STATUS



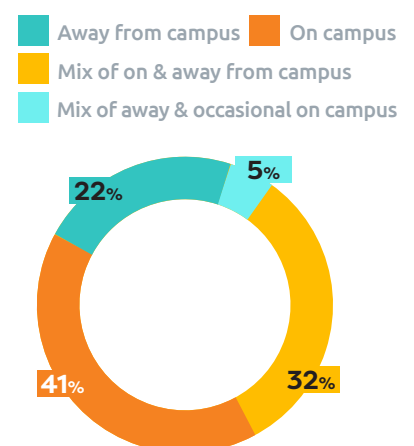
STUDENT STATUS



EMPLOYMENT STATUS

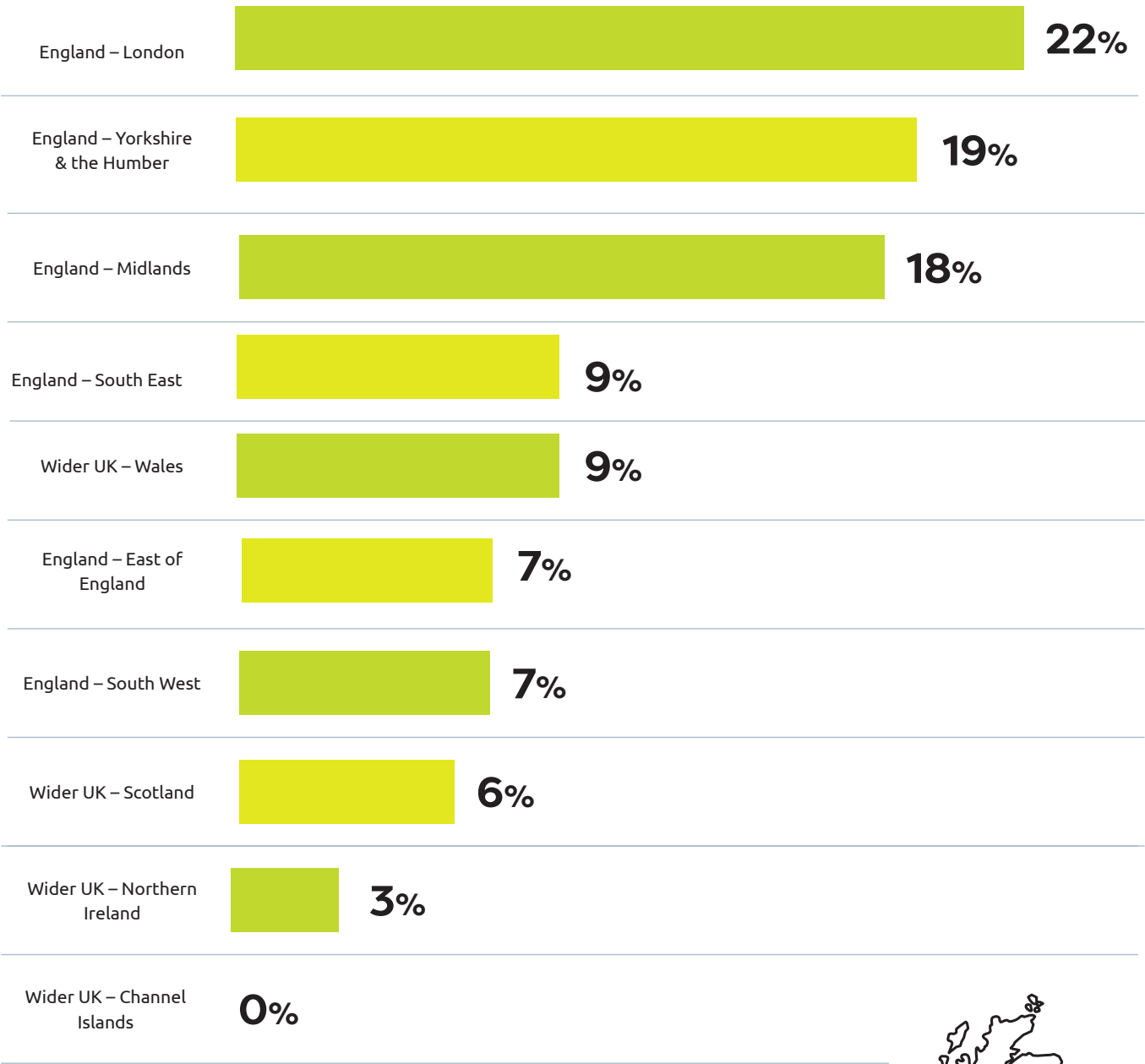


STUDY MODE



Demographics: Diversity and study-life pressures

REGION STUDENT LIVED FOR MOST OF 2023



Chapter 1: Artificial intelligence

Generative AI was the theme of 2023; now, 2024 should see that year of fact finding and planning turn to a year of action in higher education. As complex institutions, universities acknowledge that speed of adoption can be an issue. This slower pace is also exacerbated by student expectations. Increasingly, students from all demographics are proficient consumers of technology, bringing assumptions into their study experience.

More students are also engaged in employment while studying (24% full-time; 34% part-time; 13% casual) and the changing student experience, including that specifically of international students, is well documented and discussed. This survey section dives into these student expectations for their universities, focusing on AI-based support as a critical area of change and innovation this year.

Most (57%) international students expect their university to provide them with AI study support tools.

Q. Do you expect your university to offer AI (*artificial intelligence*) support tools to students? AI or artificial intelligence refers to a trained, digital helper that gives personal feedback and other 24/7 study help.

Whilst the majority (61%) of the surveyed students across all demographics have said they do not expect their university to offer AI support tools, a large proportion (39%) of students surveyed said they do. This majority pattern is consistent across all of the age groups.

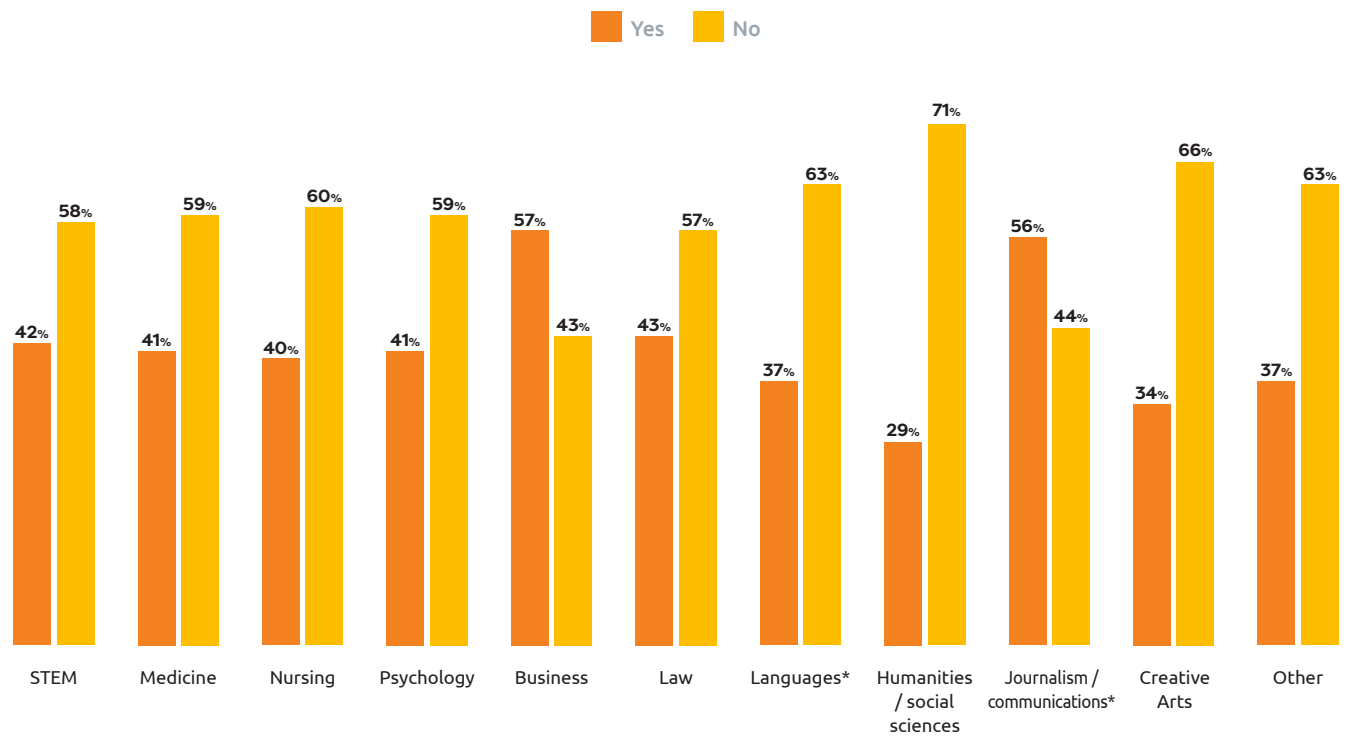
Males are more likely (48%) to expect their university to offer AI tools. Amongst those that identify as female, more than one third

(35%) say they do expect their university to provide AI-based support.

For international students at UK universities, 57% do expect their university to offer AI support tools, 20 percentage points higher than domestic counterparts

Business students are more likely to expect their university to innovate and provide AI support (57%) and the Humanities and Social Sciences students least likely (29%).

EXPECT UNIVERSITY TO OFFER AI SUPPORT TOOLS TO STUDENTS



*Interpret data with caution due to low base size.

Chapter 1: Artificial intelligence

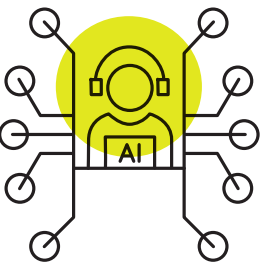
Q. What is the main reason you would use the university's AI (artificial intelligence) support or feedback?

Speed of feedback is the top reason students would use AI (26%), followed by improving confidence (17%).

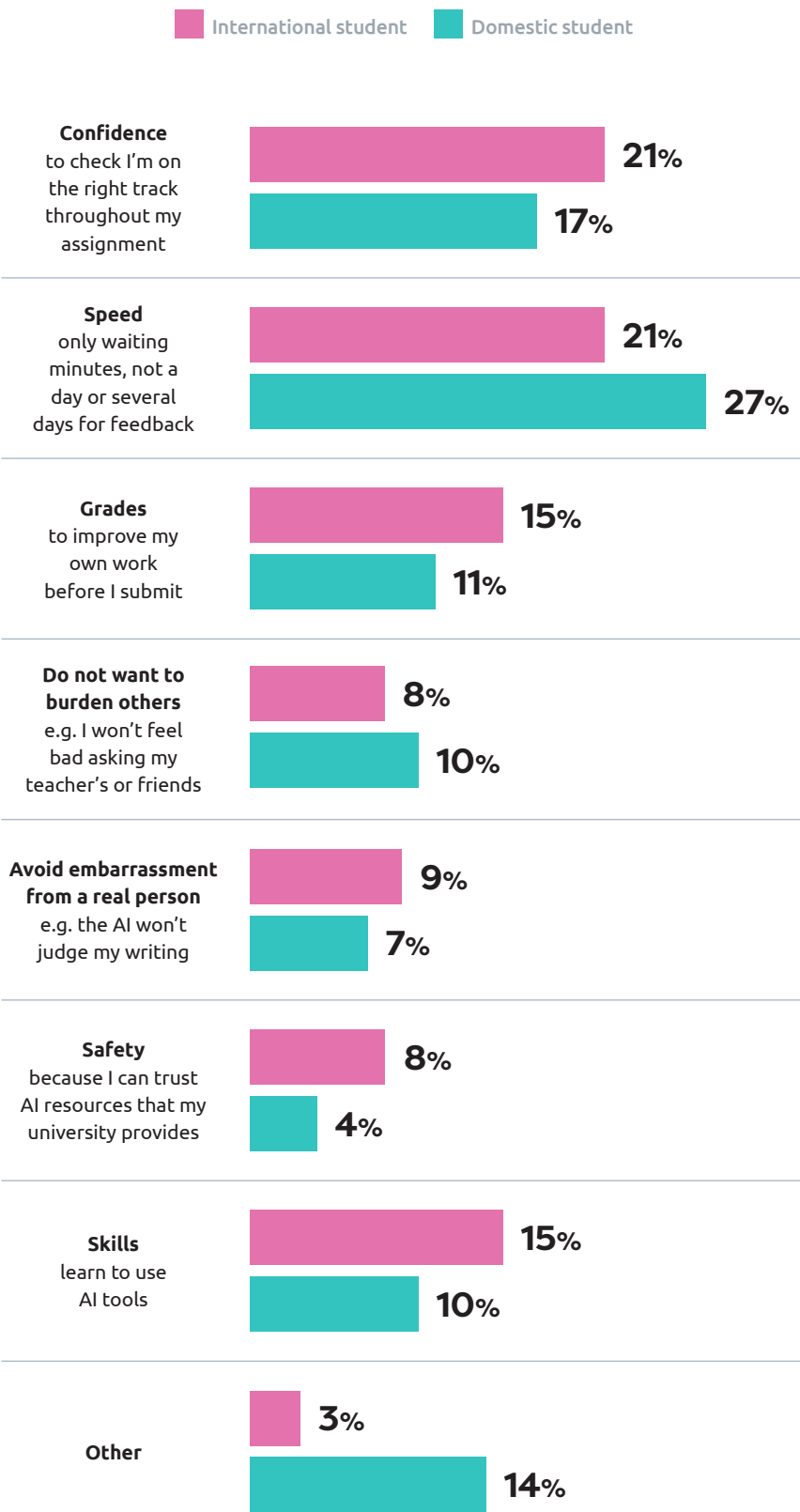
Speed of feedback is the main reason that students would use the university's AI support or feedback (26%), followed by improving confidence (17%).

Both speed and improved confidence are universal across all demographics of the students surveyed. The exception is that international students are slightly more likely to choose 'confidence' over speed (22% vs 21%).

Post-graduates have the highest amount of need for speed of feedback and support. As a large proportion of postgraduates are in full-time employment (38%) this is perhaps not surprising to educators.



QD5. MAIN REASON FOR USING UNIVERSITY'S AI SUPPORT OR FEEDBACK



Chapter 1: Artificial intelligence

Q. Is your university adapting quickly enough to include AI (*artificial intelligence*) support tools to help with your study?

Help improve stress levels: most UK students (64%) believe their universities are not adapting fast enough to include AI support tools for study.

A large majority of students (64%) say their university is not adapting fast enough - this was the picture across the board.

Students in London were evenly split, with only a 5% difference between those who believed their university was acting fast enough, and those who were not.

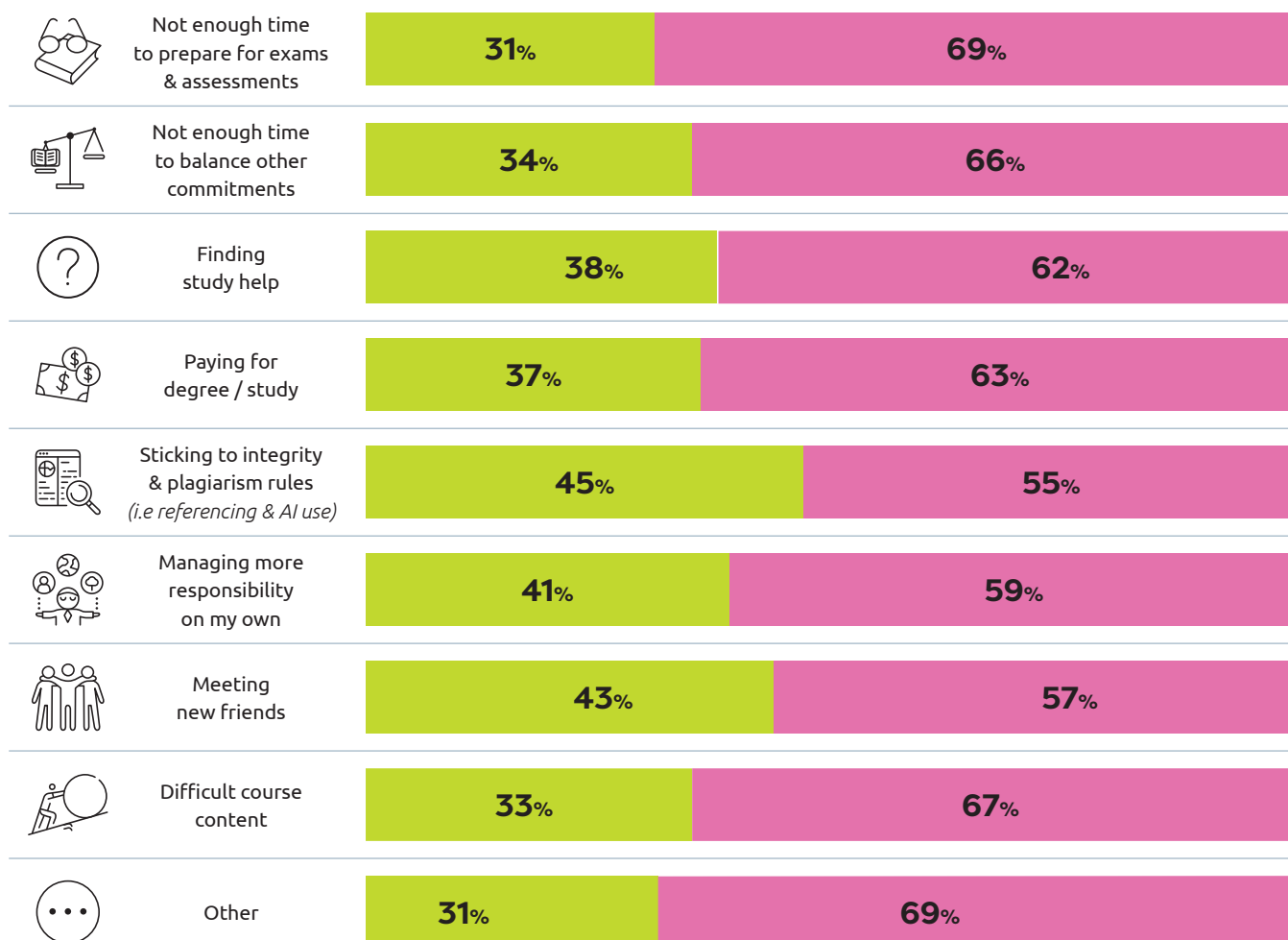
The greatest disparity (44%) was from students in Yorkshire & the Humber.

However, students from 27 out of the 149 UK universities resisted this trend by saying their university was adapting fast enough.

Students who feel stressed - ranging from 'more than a few times a year' all the way through to 'constantly' (i.e. more than twice a day) - say speed of feedback would be the biggest driver for them to use AI support or feedback, followed by building confidence by being able to check they are on the right track.

UNIVERSITY ADAPTING FAST ENOUGH TO INCLUDE AI SUPPORT TOOLS FOR STUDY (according to the top 3 important reasons students felt most stressed about studying)

Yes No



Chapter 1: Artificial intelligence

Students' qualitative comments on AI

A large proportion of students are confused about what AI is, or how it can be used in their educational setting. Many students expressed concerns about the ethical use of AI or its reliability. Students have concerns over AI potentially replacing human support, and there were also reports of university-wide bans. However some students did believe AI can have an ethical and valid role in supporting their studies, but felt their university did not have this understanding yet, and are being slow to react.

STUDY SUPPORT:

"AI could be utilised because there is not enough study support at the moment"

"Yes I feel I would trust the answers from AI and sometimes I could ask without being embarrassed"

"Students should be given support to understand how AI (doesn't) work - i.e. its limitations and the problems with using AI to write essays for you."

"AI could be used to create engaging learning experiences, provide personalised feedback, and connect students with resources and experts."

"Currently AI usage is getting more popular so an adapted learning instead of banning it can help greatly. We need to rise on the shoulders of giants and AI know what we as human race have learned so far/ Getting AI help is going to help us get to a better place than behind."

UNIVERSITY AI UNDERSTANDING:

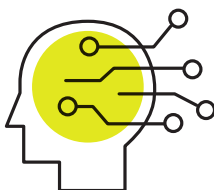
"Don't feel like they've grasped it's potential"

"AI was deemed the enemy, not the help"

"Too slow. They are worried about assessment impact, not about using AI as an opportunity."

"I don't think any education institutions are adapting quickly enough to AI and other technological advancements."

"I think that universities in general are not adapting quickly enough to AI. Universities are very hung up on warning students not to use AI to write essays for students. While this is a threat to academic integrity they don't put enough emphasis on the value AI brings in helping students formulate, and bounce off ideas to the AI."



INTEGRITY, ETHICS, AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE:

"Important to make sure the tools are robust and don't affect academic integrity"

"There seems to be a fear about it, rather than embrace it for what it could be, making it outlawed which will inevitably lead to misuse"

"They are allowing us to use them as long as we properly reference that we have used them. However, they are not providing their own AI tool."

"It does seem to be an 'arms race' on AI generated essays and the University's plagiarism tools. I can't see essay based learning lasting - I think written exams will displace them as AI can't help a student in the exam hall."

"The University are actively against AI in studying, seeing it only as a tool to cheat for marks. It is a hard slope for them"

"I have had specific lectures on the use of AI in education and for assignments and I feel the university is adapting well to this rapidly changing technology; yet they are still working on the ethics and practicality of it."

"Stressed about the possibility of false positives with GAI checkers at university"

Chapter 2: Connection to other students

Being able to connect with peers and be part of the academic community is a critical part of university life and a facilitator of student success and wellbeing, with personalised peer mentoring correlated with lower reported stress. Yet the survey reports that the majority (69%) of UK university students did not have access to a student mentor, suggesting that leadership can turn their attention to scaling the benefits of peer mentoring to first year cohorts.

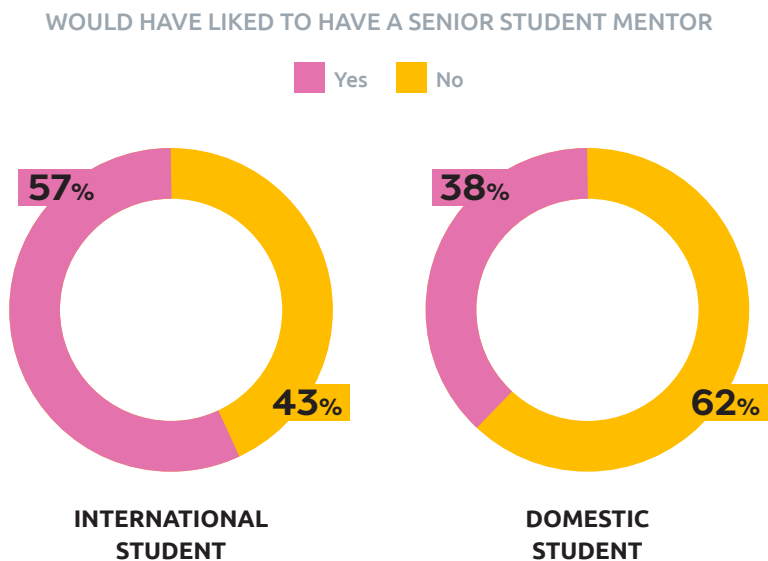
Q. Did you have a student mentor (for example – a student in a senior year who could provide study advice anytime you needed it)?

Female students in particular would benefit from a senior mentor (n=1,109) - nearly a third have not got one, but would like one.

69% of UK students do not have access to a student mentor. This is consistent regionally and regardless of study mode (on/off/hybrid campus) and by subject.

Drilling down to individual universities, students from just 3 out of the 149 universities unanimously say they have a student mentor, with 31 stating they do not.

Almost three quarters of all female students (73%) do not have a student mentor, yet 42% would like one. Whilst the percentage of male students that do not have a mentor is lower (62%), their need deficit (26%) is only slightly lower than their female counterparts need deficit (31%).



Q. Would you have liked to have a senior student mentor?

Access to student mentors can reduce stress; 40% of all UK students would like to have a senior mentor.

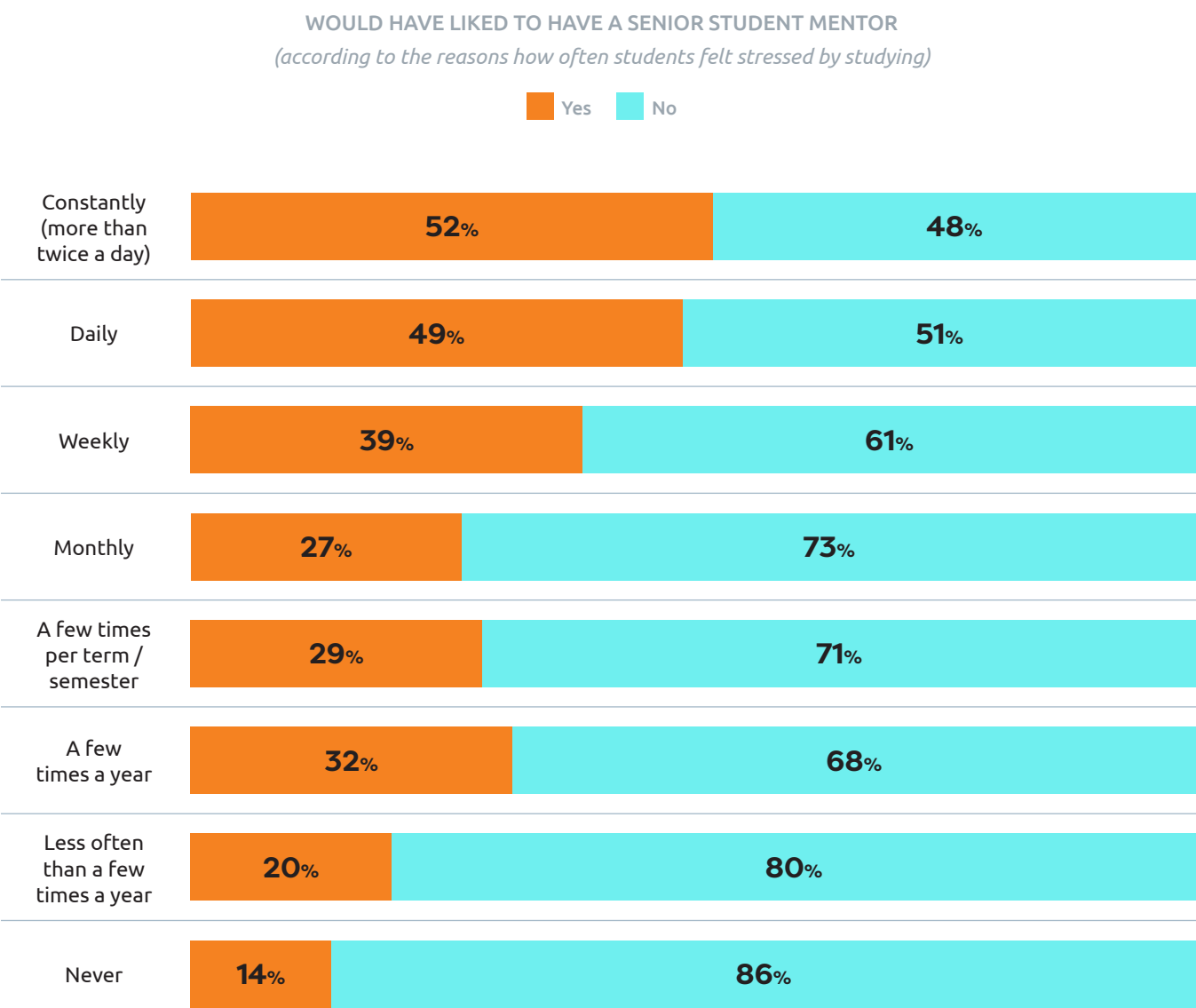
When asked, 40% of students would like to have access to a senior mentor. This preference for a mentor more than doubles for female students compared with their male counterparts.

57% of international students would like a mentor - this creates an 11% need deficit from those international students that do actually have one.

Students that are constantly stressed (i.e. more than twice a day) would like to have a senior mentor (52%).



Chapter 2: Connection to other students



Q. When you started your degree, how easy was it to ask other students questions, on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is very easy and 1 is very hard.

The number of female students finding it harder to ask another student is more than double than for males (n=382 vs n=164).

43% of students found it easy to ask another student in comparison to those that struggled (24%).

Students that identify as female found it harder to ask another student (28%) than their male counterparts (18%).

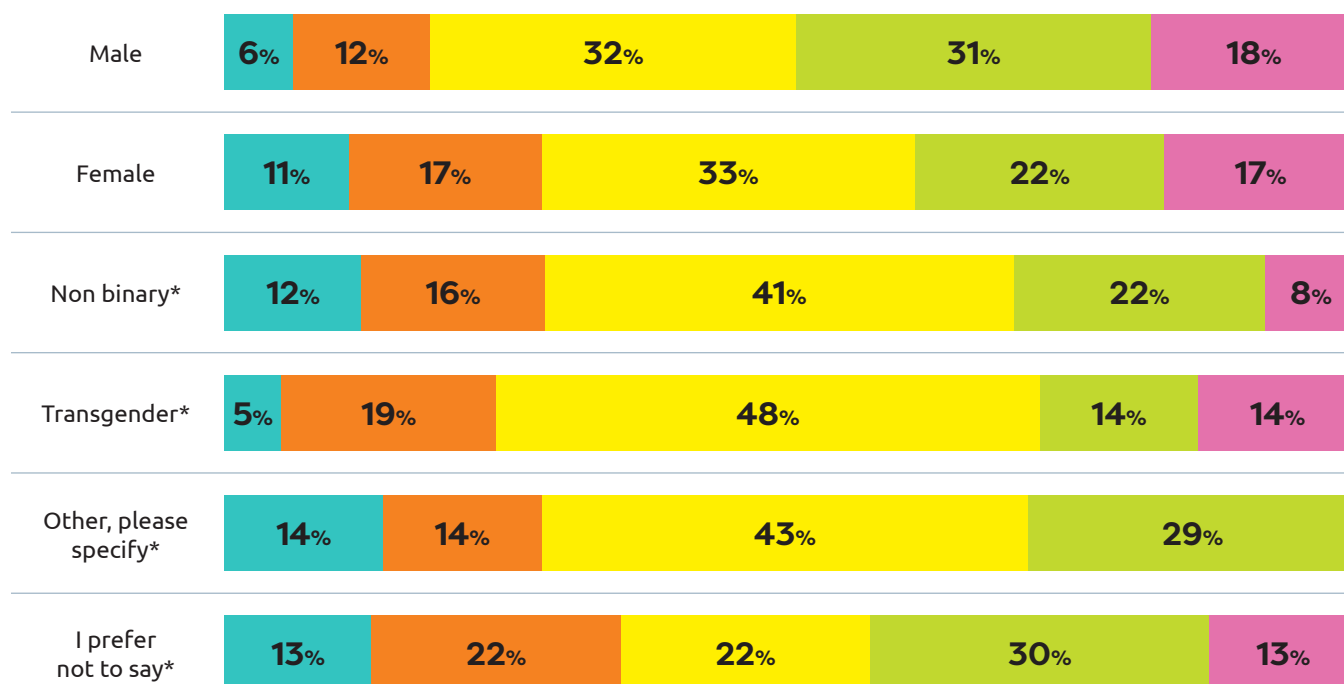
Students who found it easy to ask another student a question were in the majority across all regions. The gap between finding it easy and finding it hard was the greatest for London students (32%), with students from the Midlands having the smallest gap (13%).

Medical students found asking another student the easiest (54%) whilst the number of psychology students finding it easy were the lowest across all areas of study (38%).

Chapter 2: Connection to other students

EASE OF ASKING QUESTIONS TO OTHER STUDENTS

1. Very hard 2 3 4 5. Very easy



Students' qualitative comments on connection to other students

I would like to see...

"A check in place or a place to talk to senior students"

"Offering activities to bring students together"

"Connection with other students"

"Quicker access to counseling services/ peer support mentors"

"More organised events for my degree programme - other degree programs had Christmas/Summer balls etc. but mine didn't. This meant it was more difficult to become friends with my peers"

"Connect with my peers, pastoral support"

"More peer support groups. More compassion from course leaders. Maybe mental health training for staff that goes beyond the basics and tries to foster compassion."

"Stronger solidarity/peer support networks for marginalised students"

*Interpret data with caution due to low base size.

Chapter 3: Study stress

The cost of living crisis is well documented; with seven out of ten students in employment (with nearly one quarter of all students working full-time) it is not surprising therefore that the biggest cause of study stress is time pressures, significantly over and above financial pressures. In order to support students whenever and wherever they are making the time to study, university leaders can look to improve the availability of support outside of core university hours.

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

Feeling stressed weekly seems to be the norm. However, the number of students that feel stressed 'constantly' doubles if they also feel like they don't belong.

When asked, one third of all students said they feel stressed weekly (33%). Feeling stressed 'weekly' was the most common response across all student demographics and has risen considerably since 2023 (19%).

However, feeling stressed 'daily' (21%) has reduced drastically since 2023 (81%).

Feeling stressed 'constantly' (i.e. more than twice a day) (18%) has also reduced since 2021 (24%), but slightly increased since 2023 (16%).

18-25 year old students are the most likely group to feel stressed - constantly (20%), daily (24%) or weekly (35%).

The number of students that feel stressed 'constantly' almost doubles when they also feel like they don't belong in their university (30%), compared with students that also feel stressed constantly, but do feel like they belong (16%).

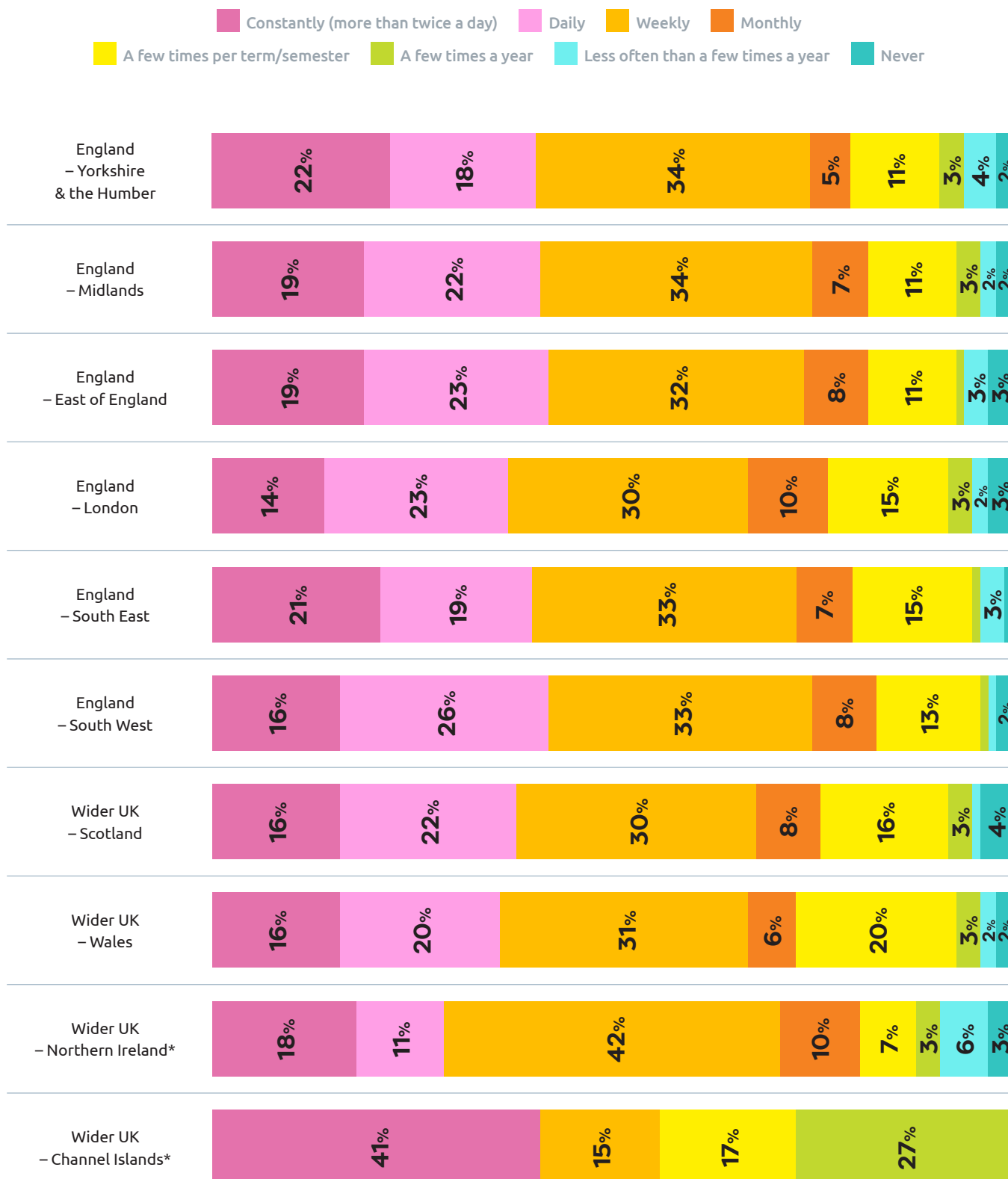
Students from the South West region are more likely to be feeling stressed 'daily' (26%).

Female students are more noticeably stressed 'constantly' (22%) compared to their male counterparts (12%).



Chapter 3: Study stress

HOW OFTEN FELT STRESSED BY STUDYING



*Interpret data with caution due to low base size.

Chapter 3: Study stress

Q. Out of the following options, what makes you feel the most stressed about studying? Please rank in order of importance your top 3.

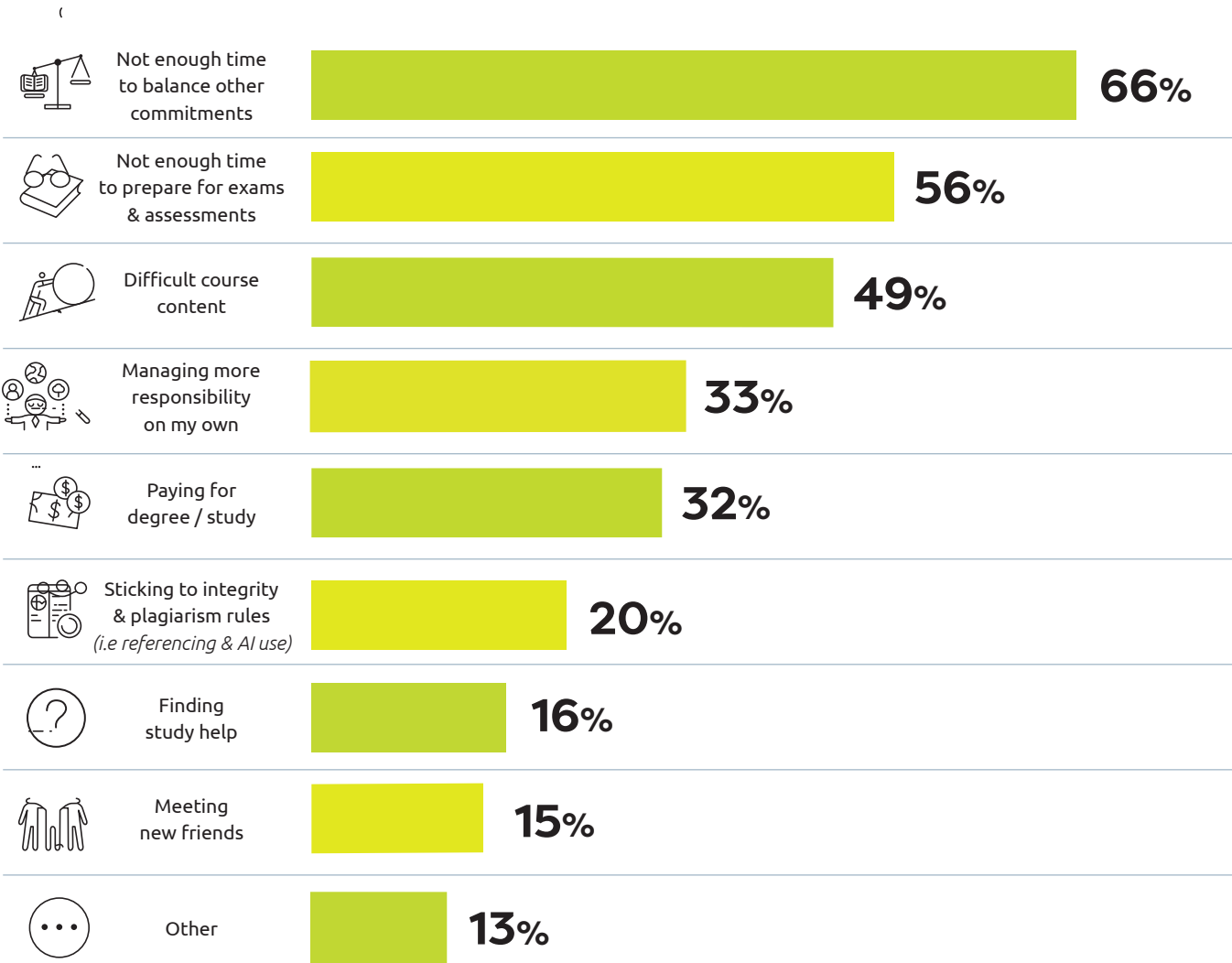
Students are struggling to balance their studies with exam and assessment preparations and their other commitments - an increasing trend since 2021

Time-based reasons - coded separately to both commitments and preparation - were the biggest reasons chosen by UK students overall. Difficulty with course content was the next cause of stress, with managing

more responsibilities on their own a fairly distant third place. Just behind in fourth place was financial stress ("paying for my degree") - a five percentage drop from 2023.



TOP 3 IMPORTANT REASONS FELT MOST STRESSED ABOUT STUDYING



Chapter 3: Study stress

Looking at 'first ranked' reasons:

When asked, the majority of students said they are stressed due to not having enough time to balance other commitments (29%) or to prepare for exams and assessments (22%). When asked a similar question in 2023, 28% of all students said that 'balancing work or social commitments and study' were their biggest cause of stress; which was a significant increase from 2021 (18%).

22% of 18-25 year olds male students identified difficult course content as being

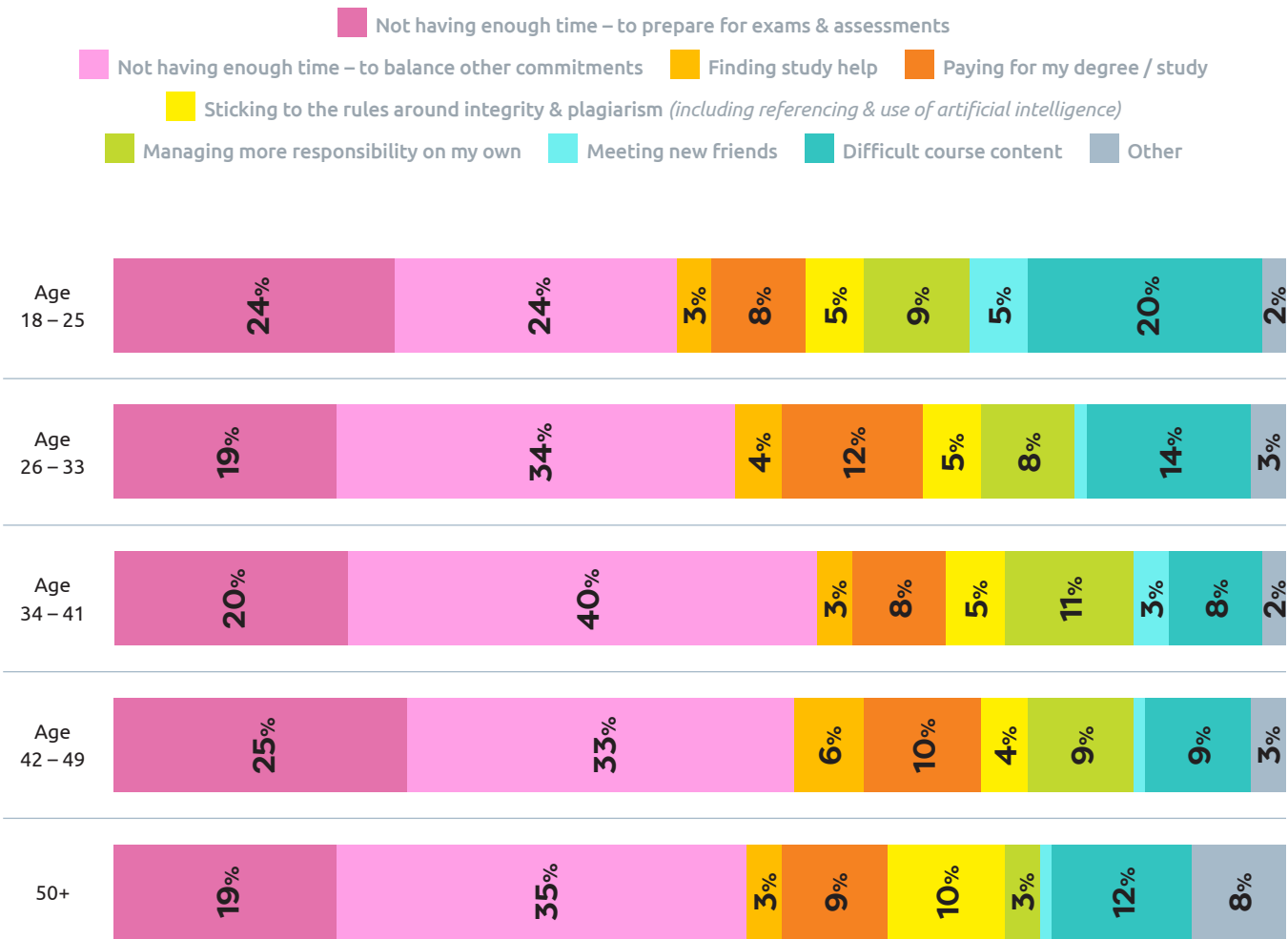
the primary cause of feeling stressed about study.

10% of international students say sticking to the rules around integrity and plagiarism as the primary cause of feeling stress about study compared to 5% for their domestic student counterparts.

9% of students said that paying for their degree/study was their primary reason for feeling stressed. This shows a reducing trend from 2023 (14%) and 2021 (15%).



REASONS FELT MOST STRESSED ABOUT STUDYING – AGE



Chapter 3: Study stress

Students' qualitative comments on study stress

There were many additional comments from students on stress/study stress, with frequent comments about home/work/life balance pressures; the volume and pace of course requirements; preparation time; study support provision; perceived inconsistencies in marking; physical and mental wellbeing issues - with many students specifically citing ADHD; and financial pressures.

Time based:

"Trying to find time to study is also stressful without missing out on basic necessities such as sleep or food."

"Managing with two young children was the hardest thing I have had to do. Not getting the support from work also made it difficult, financially and personally. Not something I would do again, unless I had the appropriate support from my employer."

"Difficult to balance studying with commuting and family/carer commitments. The volume of reading required each week. Exams and assessments."

"I spend more time dealing with bureaucracy and admin (ethics applications, setting up teams meetings for studies etc) than I do actually learning about the subject."

"Studying part time whilst in full time employment was far harder than I expected!"

"I'm a new student, returning to education nearly 30 years after I left school so it's a bit of an adjustment. I'm still learning to balance everything. It's difficult to realise that I need to say no to more things than I used to try and ensure I can study adequately."

"Balancing study and full time work, 3 children, a house and a husband with a busy job who is out of the house for 12 hours a day. In a nutshell - time!"

Study / support based:

"I tend to procrastinate so I get stressed about starting assignments."

"The return to study after a break of 25 years from completion of first degree was also very daunting"

"Not having the support I needed from tutors."

"I felt very stressed to achieve a high grade above all else."

"Not knowing how to prepare for exams, having enough time to study."

"Marking is unpredictable and since there are so many markers, it makes me stressed not knowing their thoughts on writing."

"It is ridiculously stressful that once you receive the grade and feedback, you cannot make improvements. It would be good if we had the option to learn from our work and improve it to gain an even better grade, but it seems that the university doesn't allow the time for this to happen."

"Stressed over deadlines and lack of understanding of how to write essays, they do not tell you and markers change their expectations"

"I sometimes worry that I haven't cited something correctly, also that I have misunderstood what I'm being asked in assignments."

"Long turnaround of assignments meaning I am preparing for my next assignment without receiving marks or feedback for the previous assignment."

Wellbeing:

"Balancing studying, a part-time job, mental illness, chronic illness and general life stress"

"Not being able to speak to anyone face to face - even online. Not having a community"

Chapter 3: Study stress

“Lack of support for physical health & mental health”

“When you live at uni and it’s not possible for you to go home whenever you want, you literally cannot escape that stress because you’re constantly living in it”

“It can be overwhelming because everything is due at once so certain times of the year become really busy. Feedback can be condescending and unhelpful at times which makes starting the next assignment stressful because it can be unclear how to improve.”

“The hostile environment caused by the Home Office’s

policies, the rising cost of living, the general racism and discrimination that me and other non-white PhD’s experience in the city we live in and institutional racism from the University.”

“I find making friends to study with stressful, I feel there is not enough on for students to meet one another.”

“Distance learning comes with its own unique set of challenges, particularly if you need additional course structure and thrive off more frequent open discussion groups and seminars. DL can be quite a lonely experience, and it’s easy to go a week before realising you haven’t visited

the VLE site (virtual learning environment) simply because of other life commitments etc.”

Financial:

“The government cutting funds and the cost of living is going up means I’m feeling out of my depth money-wise”

“The amount an International student needs to pay to study in the UK is borderline ridiculous.”

“The cost of heating my home at the minute has gone through the roof and I am getting a bit stressed about being able to afford it.”



Chapter 4: Academic integrity

A positive learning experience in academic integrity avoids using a deficit model. 62% of all students have learnt about academic integrity from their university workshop, a 16% increase from last year. University leaders can see further improvement by providing students the ability to apply and test skills learnt from workshops via scaled formative feedback on their draft academic writing, before their final submission which also relieves this burden on staff who can then focus on more in-depth, topical support.

Prevention vs policing? 9% of students claimed to have not received an explanation from their university of what academic integrity actually is

Q. In 2023, did you hear about the following from your university?

66% of students with a high pass rate (85 - 100%) attended a workshop to improve their referencing skills compared to 55% with a lower pass rate (50 - 64%).

The majority of students (58%) have learned about academic integrity - what it is, how to avoid plagiarism (73%) and where to get referencing help (69%). Although there is work still to be done; despite the majority of students (62%) saying they attended a workshop (up by 16 percentage

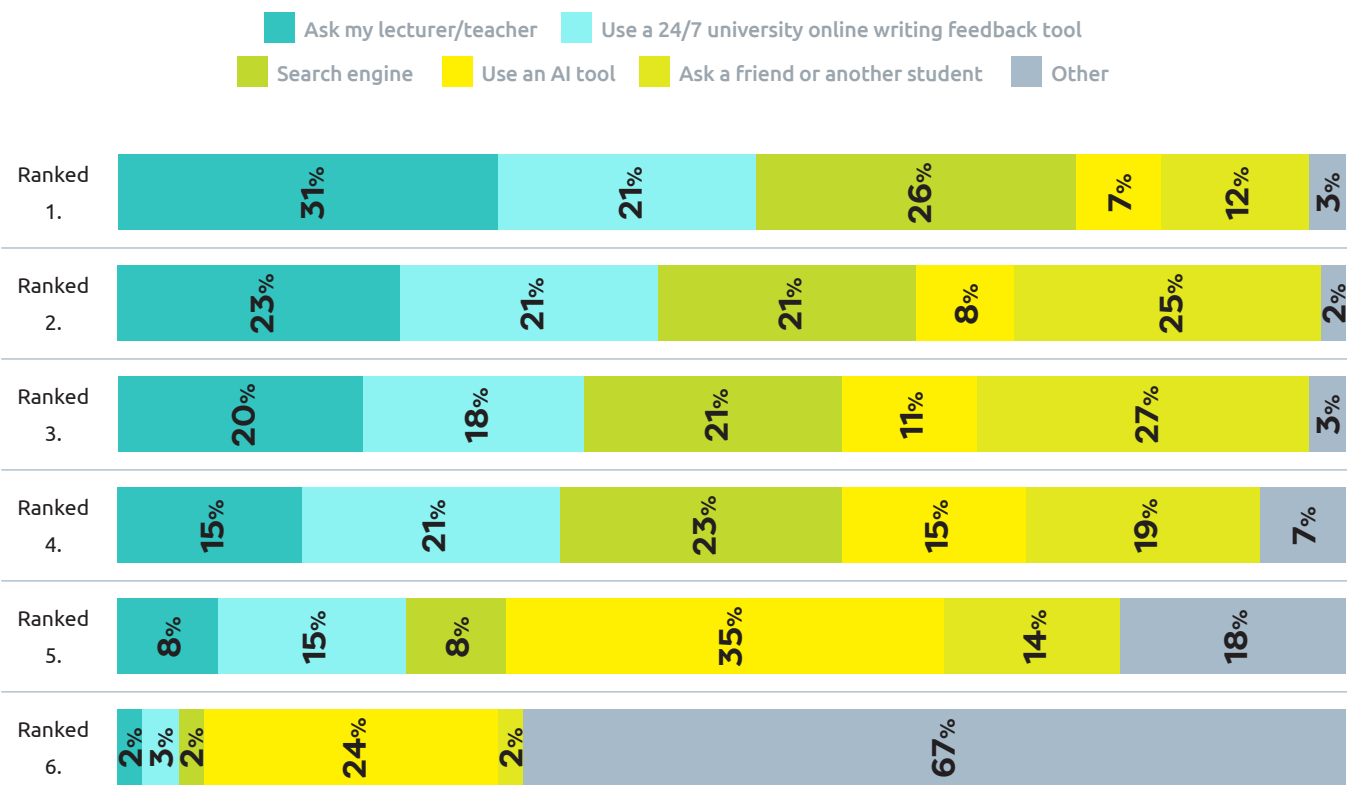
points since 2023), there is a 15 percent difference among those who know how to avoid plagiarism, and what academic integrity actually means. This gap is the most pronounced amongst females (20%), and all students aged 42-49 (23%).

Avoidance: there has been a significant increase in the number of students that know how to avoid plagiarism (73%) since 2023 (69%), and 2021 (65%).

Understanding: there has been a significant increase in the number of students that understand what academic integrity is (58%) since 2023 (45%), and 2021 (40%)

58% of international students do know where to get reference help - 12% less than domestic students (70%). This gap is more pronounced between international and domestic female students (16% difference) than male international and domestic students (5% difference).

PREFERENCE FOR HELP WITH PLAGIARISM OR REFERENCING – RANKING



Chapter 4: Academic integrity

Preference for help with plagiarism or referencing

Supporting students with referencing help can reduce the burden on staff

When looking for help with referencing, almost a third of all students' first choice preference is to ask their lecturer (31%).

Just over a quarter of students say they would use a search engine (26%) with a fifth then choosing to use their university's 24/7 online writing feedback tool (21%).

Only 12% of students said they prefer to ask a friend or another student, with just 7% turning to an AI tool for referencing help.

When asked, students aged 18-25 said their preference is to use a search engine (30%) - just ahead of asking their lecturer (29%).

Students' preference to ask a lecturer increases with age - 42-49 (38%); 50+ (45%).

34% of first year students ask a lecturer - 67% of first years are 18-25 year olds.

There is a seven point percentage difference between part-time students (26%) using the university online tool vs their full-time counterparts (19%).

Students' additional comments on Academic Integrity

"This I find is one of the most difficult parts of university. There are lots of rules about referencing and plagiarism but learning how to do this is slow and finding help often comes from outside sources and websites and not the uni itself"

"I would have really liked to know more about how they check for plagiarism, specifically AI generated content, because I've seen essays that were not AI generated get flagged and marked down and I'm worried about it happening to me."

"Teacher's don't seem to be able to spot when students are using AI, even when it's very obvious to us (other students)"

"We did a course on academic integrity but got zero help on referencing"

"Big emphasis on AI at the moment, but detection is flawed, not enough advice on what to do to avoid false accusation / how the university responds to use of AI"

"The University is extremely adept at navigating these topics with students, and makes it abundantly clear that there are no excuses for misunderstanding plagiarism, academic integrity and referencing when there are whole weeks dedicated to it, consistent reminders and resources permanently on the website to access."

"There is no guidance on the use of chat GPT and AI - and they can't track its use in any case!"



Chapter 5: Student experience

With pockets of improvement areas amongst certain student demographics, the majority of students (61%) do feel like they belong. The most important factors to students are confidence in being able to reach out for help, and study flexibility. Access to mental health support and being able to connect with a peer are also important to a third of all students. Just under half (46%) of students said an improvement to the feeling of belonging would be the provision of 24/7 study support. As seen in the responses this can reduce stress as well as create a sense of belonging; university leaders can look to providing personalised study help which can support students when they need to study online or remotely, and when they are trying to balance work commitments.

Q. Thinking about the factors you considered when selecting your degree / university, please rank the following in order of importance.

University advertising has more influence than friends or family in university selection.

University advertising was the top influencing factor when choosing a university for nearly three quarters of all students (72%).

Friends attending the same university was the second most influencing factor when

choosing a university for more than half of all students (59%).

Family attending the same university was the third most influencing factor when choosing a university for nearly two thirds of all students (67%).

Q. Influencers when selecting degree / university.
Importance of university global ranking vs activities.

Rankings count in the selection process - more than the expected student experience.

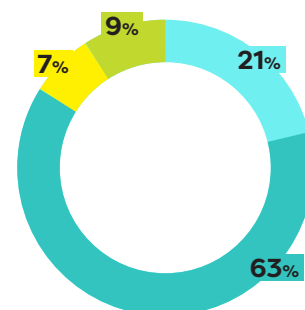
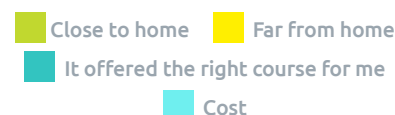
When asked, nearly half of all students (49%) said that the global ranking or the university's reputation was the most important factor.

Having lots of activities and ways to make friends, and support (a good student experience) was the most important factor for over a third of all students (35%).

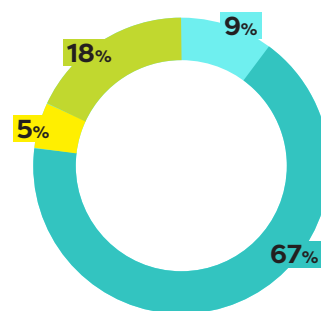
The choice between 'global rankings' and 'a good student experience' was the least

pronounced between 18-25 year students (6% difference) compared with all other ages of students, in particular students aged 42-49 (39% difference) who also cited 'other' reasons of importance (42%).

FACTORS CONSIDERED WHEN SELECTING A DEGREE/UNIVERSITY



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT

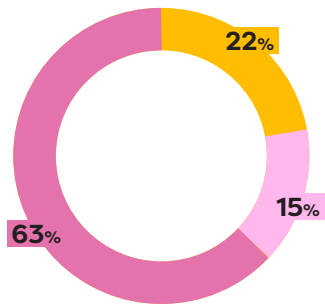


DOMESTIC STUDENT

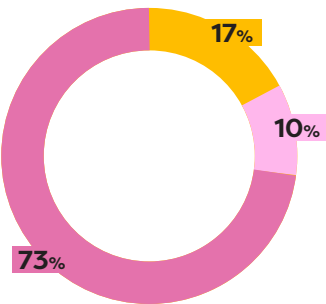
Chapter 5: Student experience

FACTORS CONSIDERED WHEN SELECTING A DEGREE/UNIVERSITY

University advertising Family went there Friends went there



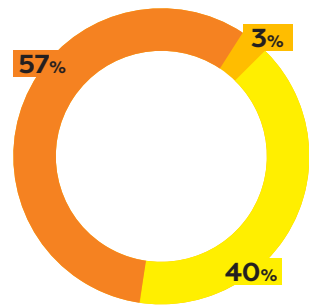
INTERNATIONAL STUDENT



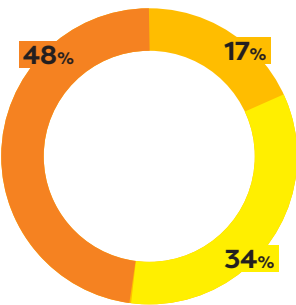
DOMESTIC STUDENT

FACTORS CONSIDERED WHEN SELECTING A DEGREE/UNIVERSITY

Global ranking or the university's reputation Lots of activities, ways to make friends, and support (a good student experience) Other, please specify



INTERNATIONAL STUDENT



DOMESTIC STUDENT



Q. Do you feel like you 'belong' in your university community? (for example, do you feel supported and included?)

Feeling of belonging is lower for older students, female students, distant and part-time students.

61% of students said they feel like they belong in their university, compared with 20% who said they didn't.

This is similar to the pattern in 2023 when 62% of students said they felt that they did belong and 16% said that they didn't.

18-25 year old students feel like they belong the most (67%) in their university community.

65% of male students feel like they belong, compared with female students who feel like they belong (59%).

The percentage of students who are unlikely to feel like they belong marginally increases with each age group, with the highest percentage being 50+ aged students (28%) compared with 18-25 year olds students (16%).

Students from London (70%) feel like they belong the most, whereas students from Scotland (26%) and Yorkshire & the Humber (26%) feel the most like they don't belong.

There is a 13% difference between full-time students that feel like they belong (65%) compared to part-time students that feel like they belong (52%).

A higher percentage of distance learners said that they do not feel like they belong (28%) in comparison to on-campus (17%) or hybrid student counterparts (19%) who said the same thing.

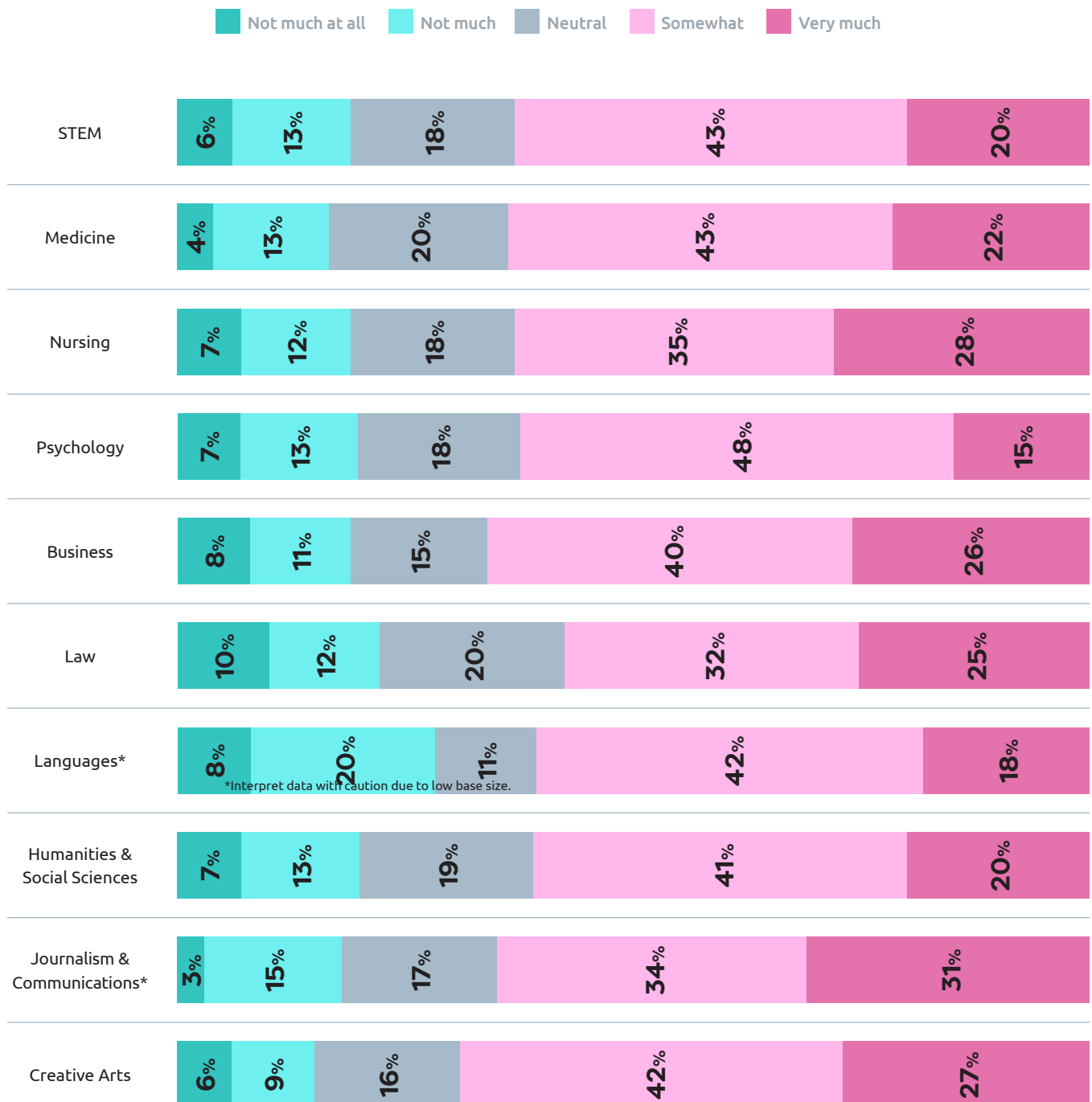
Chapter 5: Student experience

Looking at study areas, creative arts had the highest percentage of students that said they feel like they belong (69%) which is 12% difference to law students (57%).

student counterparts with 66% saying they feel like they belong compared to 61%, and 14% saying they don't belong compared with 21% of domestic students.

When asked, international students feel like they belong more than their domestic

DO YOU FEEL LIKE YOU 'BELONG' IN YOUR UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY? – AREA OF STUDY



*Interpret data with caution due to low base size.

Chapter 5: Student experience

Q. In which of the following ways, if any, has your university made you feel like you belong? Please rank your Top 3.

Flexibility, and the ability to reach out and get help are the most popular reasons for students feeling like they belong.

70% of students selected confidence in being able to reach out to their teachers within their top three reasons for their university making them feel like they belong.

Flexibility was the next popular reason within students' top 3 choices; specifically, 'being able to study online/remotely when needed' (57%) and 'a schedule that allows for balance between work and study' (52%).

Access to mental health was also frequently selected (36%) as well as being able to easily connect with a student mentor (33%).

27% students said that access to 24/7 study and assignment support improves their sense of belonging, increasing by six percentage points for male students.

The ability to reach out to teachers first, and flexibility second, were the most popular order of choices across most demographics.

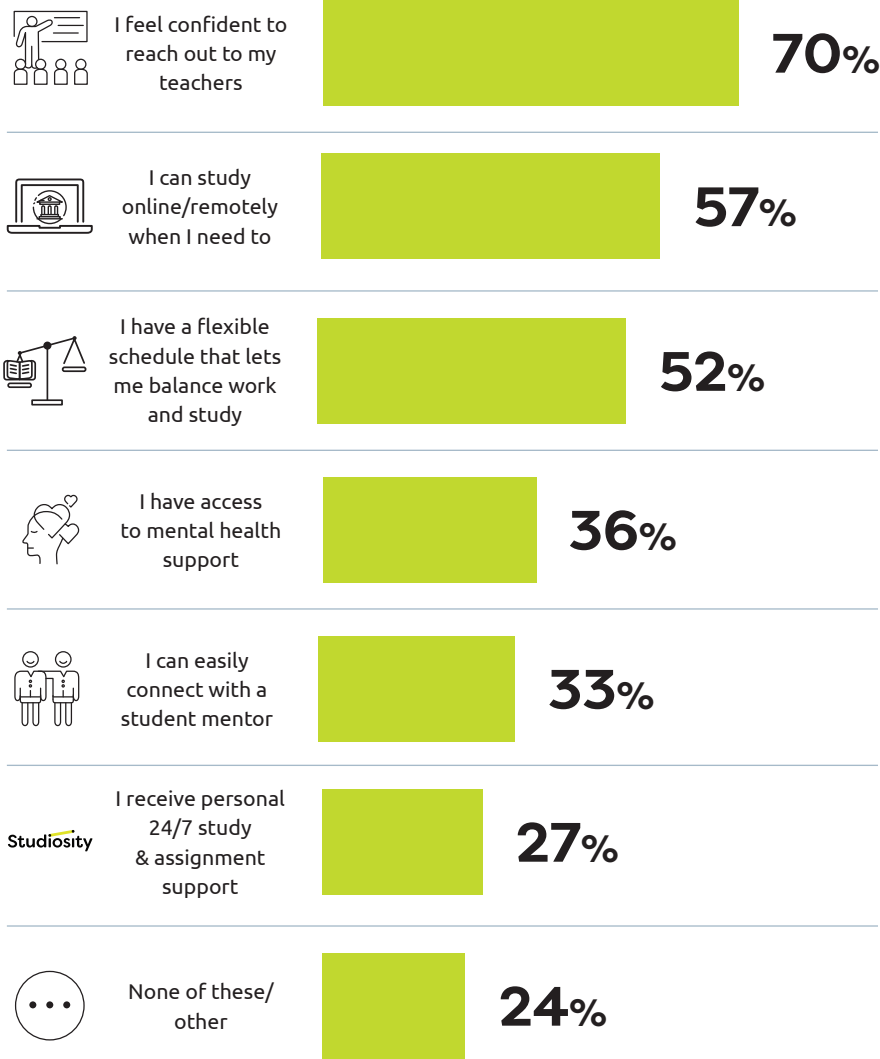
Significantly more part-time students (72%) said being able to study online or remotely increases their sense of belonging compared to full-time students (53%).

Unsurprisingly, this is also true for students who are off campus (76%) or with only occasional campus visits (74%), and full-time working students (66%) compared to students not in paid employment (59%).

International students favoured more confidence to reach their teachers as their most common top 3 reasons for feeling like they belong (64%).

The most common top 3 choices for domestic students was feeling confident to reach out to a teacher (71%).

BELONGING REASONS



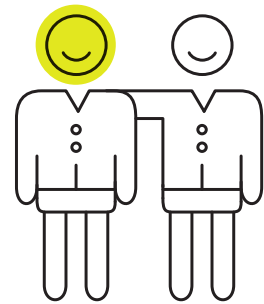
Chapter 5: Student experience

Q. Which of the following would make you feel like you belong at your university? Please rank your Top 3.

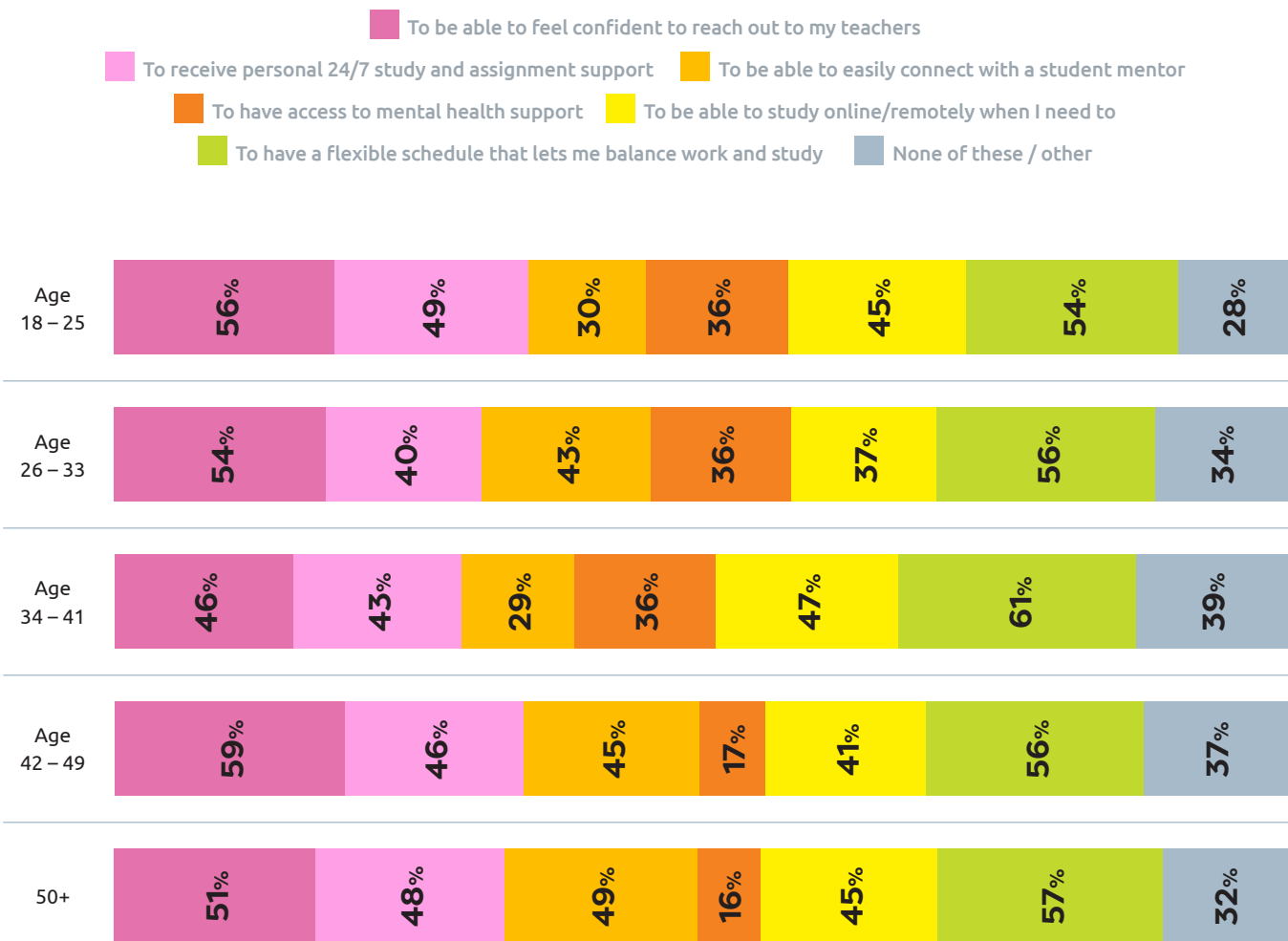
46% of students said the provision of personal, 24/7 study and assignment support would improve their sense of belonging.

Whilst the pattern of the top three reasons students are made to feel like they belong at their university are similar to the top three improvements they would like to see, the most notable and significant difference is the provision of personal, 24/7 study and assignment support.

46% of students said this would increase their sense of belonging, increasing by 6% for female 18-25 year old students, 12% for female 50+ students, and 19% for male students aged 34-41.



BELONGING IMPROVEMENTS – AGE



Chapter 5: Student experience

Students' qualitative comments on student experience

I would like to see...

"High quality and availability of student support, both with studies and pastoral care".

"Extracurricular activities to enhance my portfolio on the way"

"A supportive wider community"

"More cultural belonging"

"Being able to see faculty and other support staff in person when needed - offices on campus are completely unstaffed most days, making it impossible to get help"

"If it was more inclusive of very mature students"

"More understanding for people with anxiety"

"More people from working class backgrounds visible in roles across the university hierarchy. More assistance for students coming from non traditional educational backgrounds (ie not coming from GCSE to a levels to undergrad to postgraduate)."

"Mixing with domestic students"

"I would feel more like I belong if I got more regular feedback from tutors/teachers."

"Having a mature student network"

"Ability to move deadlines around work/life commitments"

"Tutors who are to provide more personal feedback"

"Allow more space for quiet areas to eat/study"

"Having a tutor I can receive a reply from within a maximum of 24 hours".

"I think the support for assignments from the uni would make me feel more belonging. Doing a distance course can be lonely and you end up relying on social media and student led groups which are not always the best way forward for information factual to the course."



Chapter 5: Student experience

Q. Have you ever used one of your university's academic support services? (for example, consult meeting, workshop, writing feedback)

Despite 13% more students using their support services compared to last year, half (49%) of all male students are still not reaching out.

More than half of all students have used their university academic support services (53%). This is a significant increase from 2023 (40%).

Notably more 34-41 year old students have used their academic support services (58%) than not.

More than half of all male first year students have not used their academic support services (57%).

The majority of students - i.e. more than half - have used their university academic support services across all regions.

The highest percentage of use is by students from the East of England and London (both 56%).

Medicine students are the highest percentage of students not using their academic support services (54%).

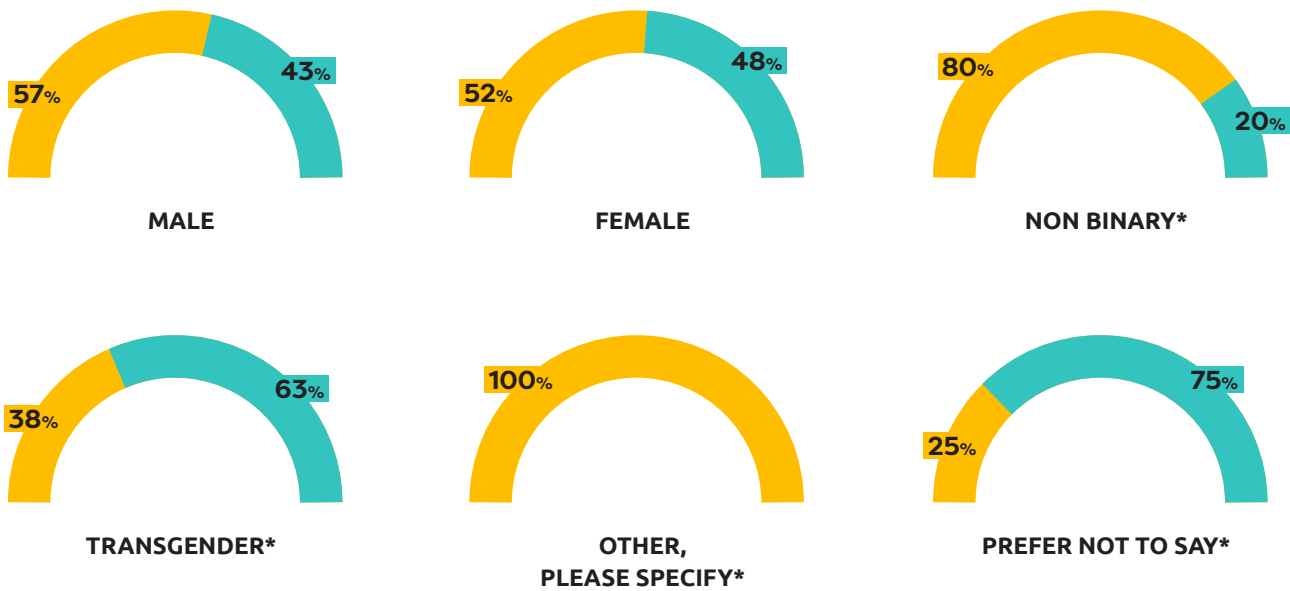
Business students are the highest percentage of users (64%).

Just over half of all full-time employed students are not reaching out to their academic support services (51%).

International students are using their academic support services (64%) significantly more than their domestic counterparts (52%).

USED UNIVERSITY'S ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES – GENDER (FIRST YEARS)

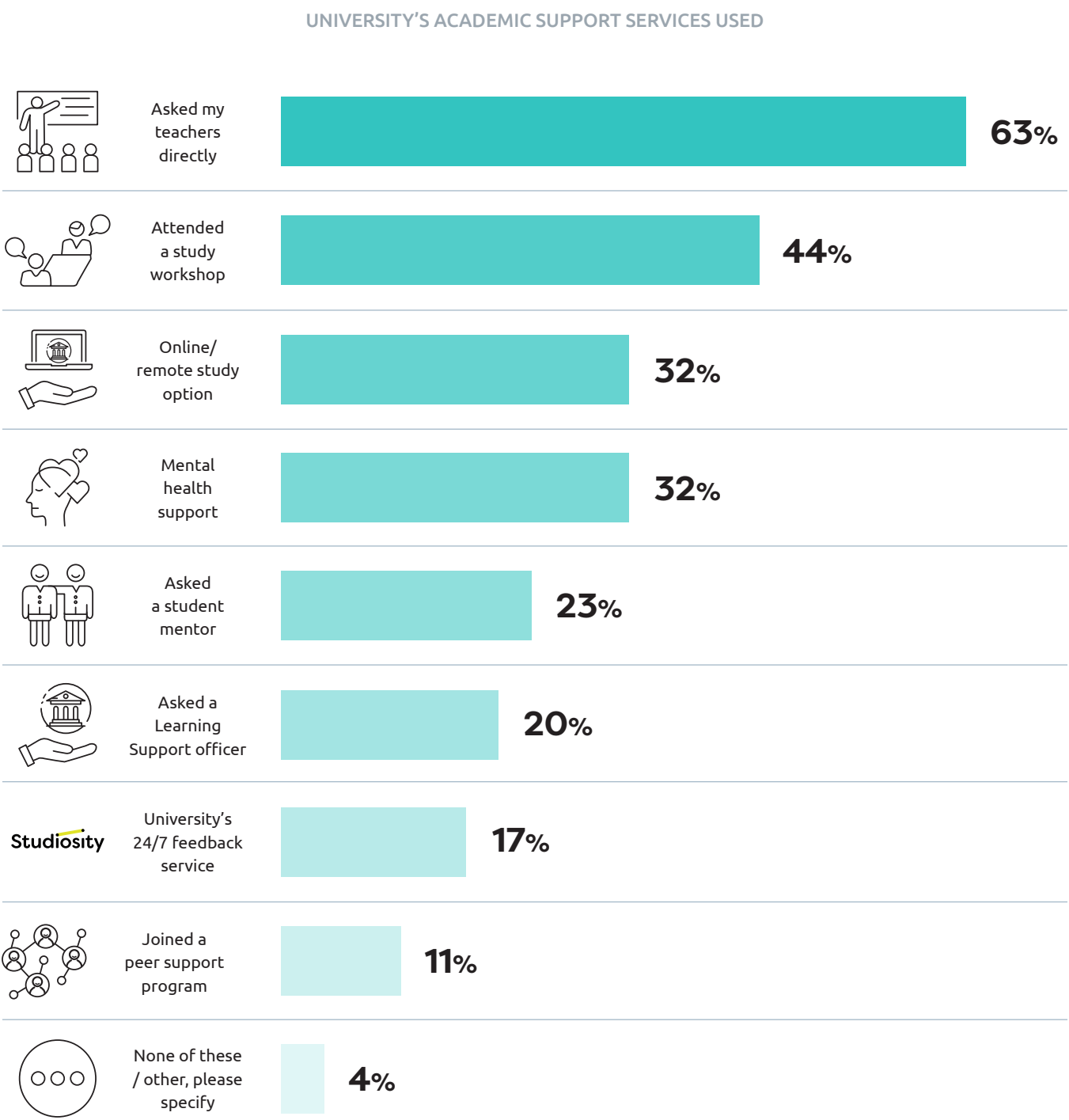
Yes No



*Interpret data with caution due to low base size.

Chapter 5: Student experience

Q. Which of the following have you used before?

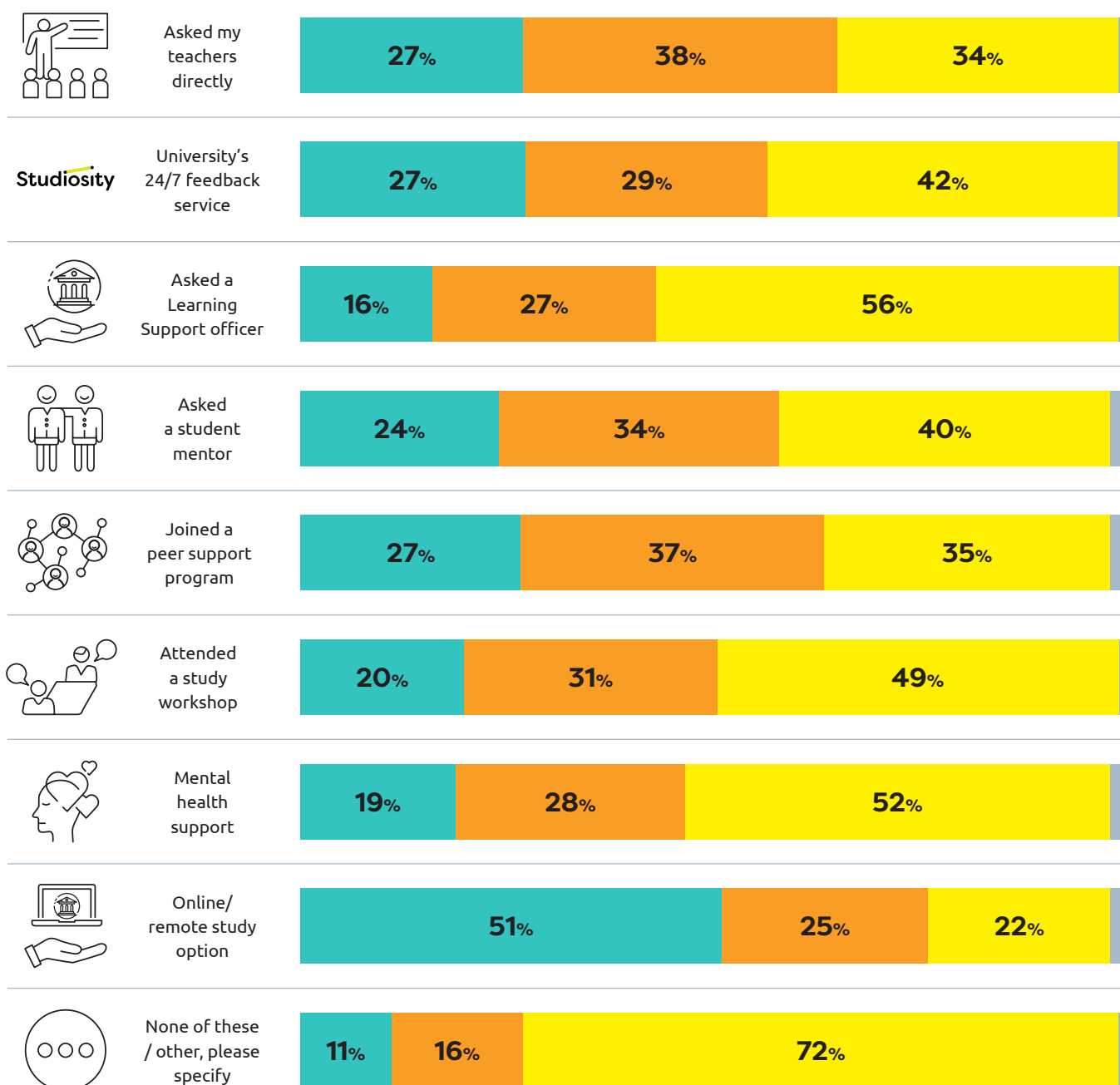


Chapter 5: Student experience

Q. Which of the following most closely reflects how frequently you use the support services?

FREQUENCY OF USE OF UNIVERSITY'S ACADEMIC SUPPORT SERVICES

Once a week Once a month Once a semester/trimester Never



Chapter 5: Student experience

Students' qualitative comments on academic support services

"The University has an amazing suite of support tools and learning to use them is a compulsory part of my course. It's really helped me to feel comfortable and supported."

"Very helpful and can help clear and organise my mind particularly in stressful points of term"

"I feel embarrassed to reach out for help"

"I used the Learning Development Centre to help with my essay."

"I would like to use the service more, but the number of appointments available is extremely limited."

"The University definitely did not fund this department enough"

"Would be helpful to get more feedback from lecturers about assignments"

"There should be 24/7 student support"

"Student support services are good/helpful, but not much

is done to prevent problems, more focus on solving them"

"The support services were not effectively set up for online learning."

"The support services for writing help were quite difficult to access because they were often over subscribed."



Chapter 6: Employability

Students are feeling positive about their employment preparation - that their degree is developing the right skills they will need to succeed in their future job (65%), and they are confident they have strong English writing and communication skills needed to apply for/get a job (81%).

Looking ahead however, only half of all students said they feel confident they will get a job related to their degree within six months of graduation (50%), over a quarter of all students are on the fence (27%), leaving just under one in four students saying they are not feeling confident (23%).

Q. Please rate how confident you feel about the following statements on a scale of 1 to 5 where 5 is very confident and 1 is not confident at all.

Despite feeling prepared, only half of all students feel confident they will get a job related to their degree within six months of graduation

65% of all students feel that their degree is developing the right skills they will need to succeed in their future job.

81% of all students feel confident they have strong English writing and communication skills needed to apply for/get a job.

50% of all students feel confident they will get a job related to their degree within six months of graduation.

Over one in four students are on the fence (27%), leaving just under one in four students feeling unconfident (23%).

Since 2021 and 2023 there is an upward trend in confidence: when asked if students think it will be easier or harder to get a job upon graduation, 17% said it would be easier in 2021 rising to 27% in 2023.

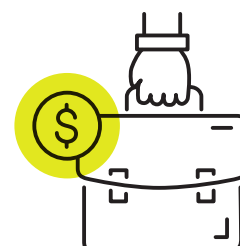
26-33 year old students feel the most confident about their job prospects in six months time (61%) and 50+ students are the most unconfident (30%) with this being more pronounced in female 50+ students (33%).

London students are the most confident in their job prospects (57%) whilst students in the South East are the most unconfident (29%).

Across all subject areas students were significantly confident that their degree is developing their necessary skills, this was particularly significant for medicine students (81%) and nursing students (79%).

Not a single nursing student said they are not confident in their job prospects in six months time - 87% are confident, leaving the rest neither confident or unconfident. This is almost the same pattern with medicine students with only 2% not confident.

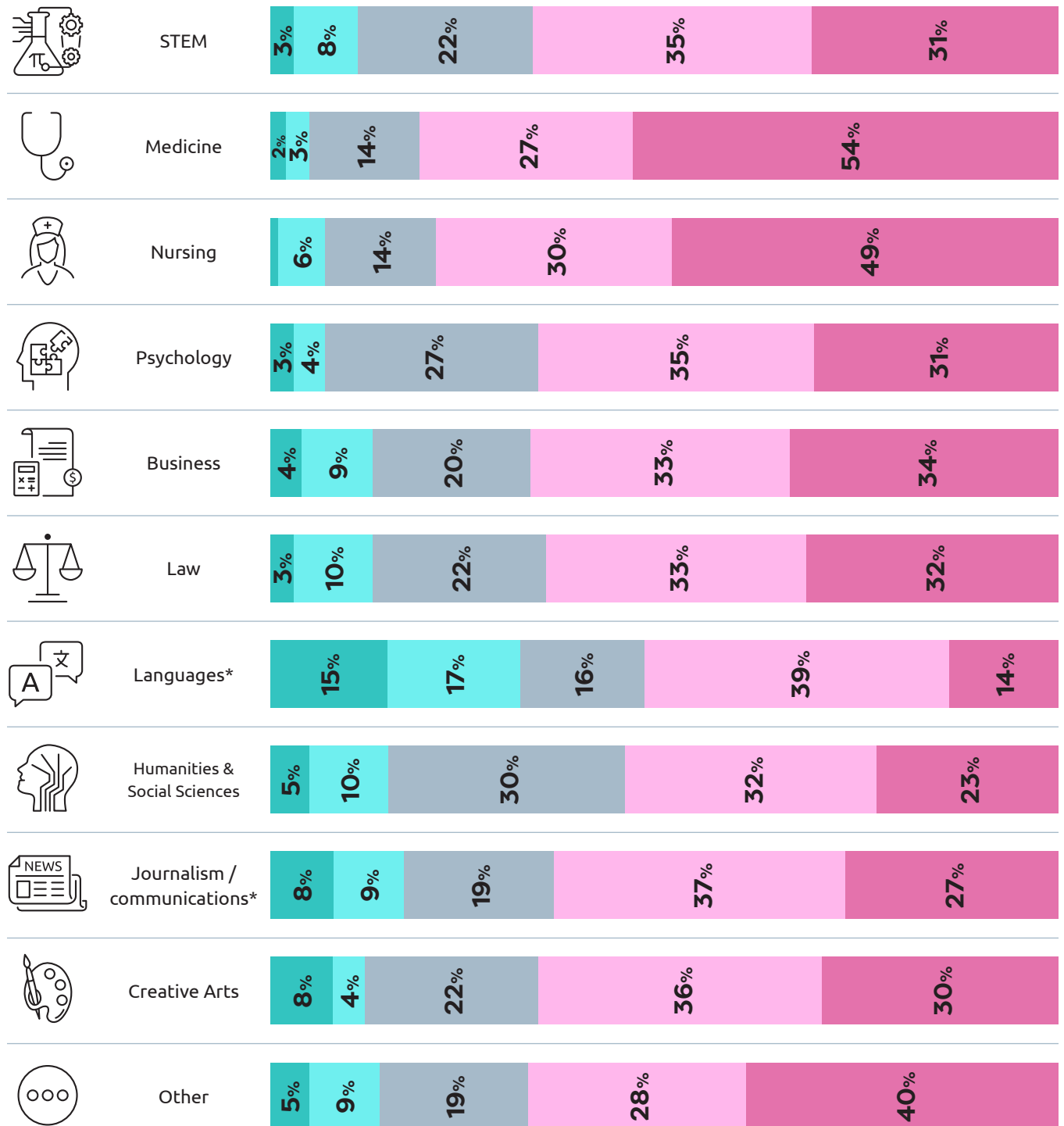
The majority of humanities and social sciences (36%) and creative arts (40%) students when asked said they are not confident about their job prospects in six months time.



Chapter 6: Employability

MY DEGREE IS DEVELOPING THE SKILLS I NEED TO SUCCEED IN MY FUTURE JOB

1. Not confident at all 2. 3. 4. 5. Very confident

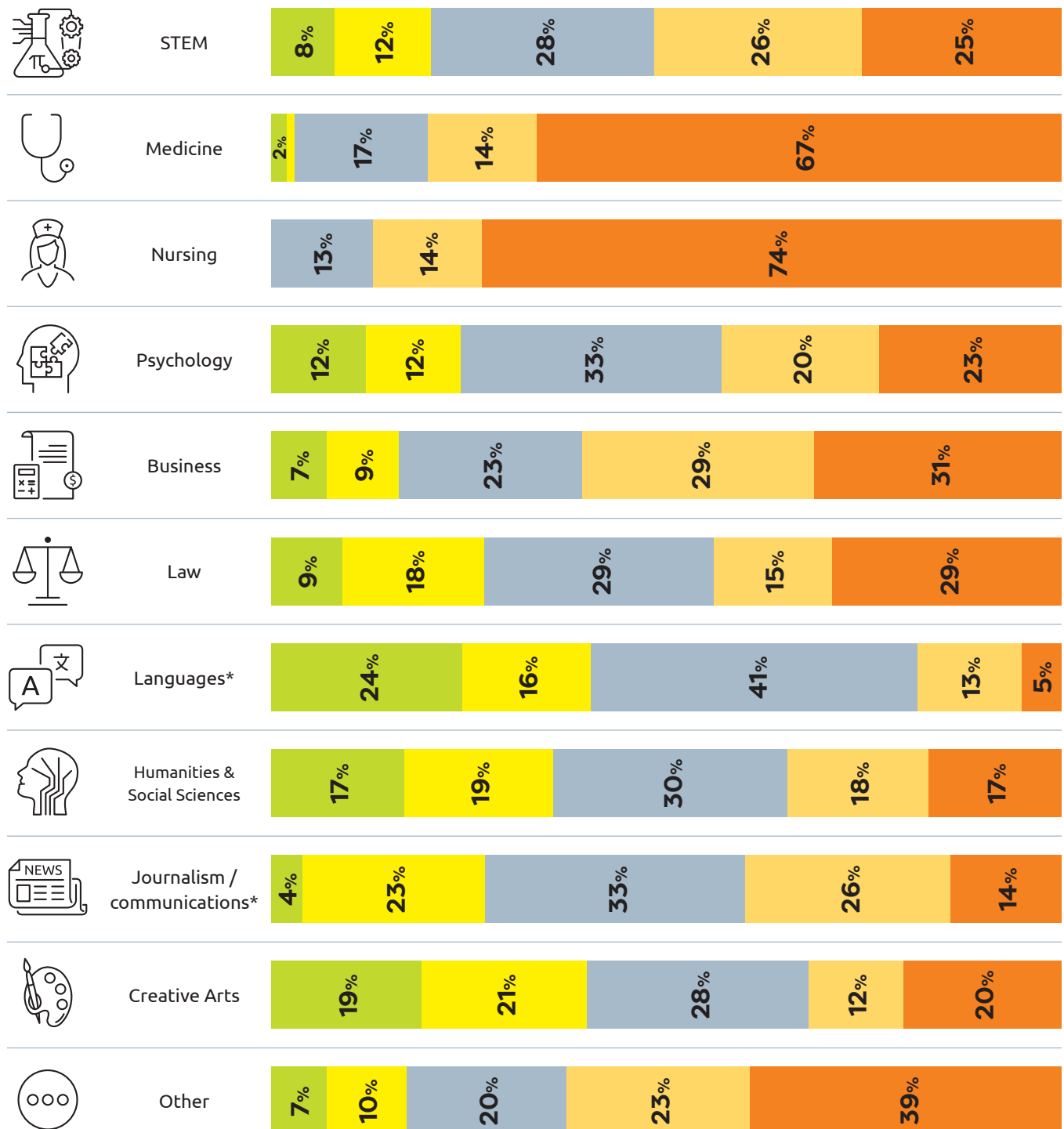


*Interpret data with caution due to low base size.

Chapter 6: Employability

I WILL BE ABLE TO GET A JOB RELATED TO MY DEGREE WITHIN 6 MONTHS OF GRADUATION

1. Not confident at all 2. 3. 4. 5. Very confident



*Interpret data with caution due to low base size.

Chapter 6: Employability

Students' qualitative comments on employability

"Jobs are just so competitive and now I feel overqualified for jobs that are available but there are no jobs for where I feel justifiably qualified"

"Getting a job is proving quite difficult currently but that's more the nature of the economy"

"I have become a more confident communicator - going to university in a new city and new country helped me to come out of my shell."

"Not a lot of support for me as an international student to support and show me the right

direction on where and how to apply. Not enough work related experience offered while studying."

"Although I now have the academic skills and knowledge to get a job in my desired field, I am personally not very confident and certainly not experienced in my desired field other than to get a starting position on the very bottom rung of the ladder."

"My degree has helped with getting work, but could have had more practical job advice, rather than constantly telling us how difficult it would be to find work."

"My university could improve their support to students whose first language is not English"

"I'm not completely confident of getting a job related to my degree, purely because my specialism area is one that is threatened by AI tools. The human-made work is still vastly superior to the AI-generated ones, but I expect many employers to be keen to cut costs by cutting humans out of the equation."



Students' recommendations to their education providers:

This year, students were asked to offer their qualitative comment on how to improve students' wellbeing, success and overall experience. Within each of the following headers, themes have been grouped based on frequency, and a selection of representative comments have been included.

Overall, students ask their institutions to consider providing more one-to-one connection, to prioritise mental health supports, improve communication and transparency and awareness of resources, reduce financial pressure, and offer more feedback mechanisms.

24/7 support / personal tutor:

"More 1-1 support from tutors"

"My course is online and part-time and whilst support is available, it would be beneficial to have a personal tutor/mentor to offer extra support and guidance."

"Make it mandatory for each student to see a personal tutor or wellbeing officer at least once per term"

"Not having the library be open 24/7 which creates expectation"

"Open phone lines 24/7, don't rely on an AI tool to try to diagnose or ask questions about a student's issues; 9 times out of 10 it's an emotional human reaction rather than a physical illness or easily identifiable mental disorder"

"More regular meetings with a personal tutor and less emphasis on scaring students with how difficult the course is"

"Create a supportive and inclusive learning environment. This means fostering a sense of belonging among students, valuing diversity, and providing opportunities for students to connect with each other and with faculty and staff."

Formative feedback / academic writing:

"Have a quicker turnaround on assignments so that we can access and work on the feedback while the topic is still relevant"

"Emphasis on more transferable skills and why they're important. Eg developing writing and referencing skills, research and lit search skills, critical and scientific thinking. More focus on independent study and development, to improve problem-solving ability"

"Help students faster- it normally takes 2 weeks to get feedback."

"More sessions offered on academic writing and referencing. It was assumed that we would know this being postgrad"

"More detailed feedback on assessments and an explanation about how specific things could be improved"

"In the first year, we weren't really taught how to write essays - we just gave it a go and did not get very detailed feedback. I would argue we, as students, essentially taught ourselves how to write essays/ references etc."

"More support with assignments. It's all so vague and it's really hard to judge what they want from us. I think every essay should have a full feedback and initial mark which students have the ability to improve on to gain extra marks. It would reduce my stress to then know that I'm on the right track or if not I have the chance to change it."



Mental health support:

"More personalised mental health support, that's more anonymous"

"More often checkups on students through their tutors, more publicly available mental health support, more effort to make students work together and encourage them to socialise in classes"

"More obvious ways to access support and an effort to reduce stigma around needing mental health support. Mental health and wellbeing should be treated as important as physical health."

"Implement wellness programs and initiatives that promote physical health, stress management, and work-life balance".

"Foster a supportive and inclusive environment by organising social activities, clubs, and events that encourage social interaction and a sense of belonging."

"Easier access to wellbeing services on nights and weekends for students not on campus"

Flexibility:

"Allow students, as adults, to make decisions around attendance and offering more flexibility."

"For distance learning students, more flexibility on deadlines"

"More flexibility around working from home or attending in person"

Financial support:

"More targeted support for postgraduate students; more targeted support for student parents; more financial support"

"Tailored support for students, offer more financial help/services for international students"

"Provision of more active scholarships and extra-curricular financial support"

"Understand the high-pressure environment that the university promotes and try to lessen it. Not having so many barriers and red-tape around asking for financial support."

Communications:

"Better communication of assignments and deadlines for some classes"

"Improving communication channels between students and faculty/staff can help address any concerns or issues in a timely manner."

"More open and regular communication to showcase offerings on and off campus"

"Providing clear and transparent communication channels for students to voice their concerns or seek assistance."





Acknowledgments

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