



Coronavirus Student Survey phase III

November 2020

Mental health and wellbeing

Commissioned by NUS, NUS Charity, TOTUM and the Co-op

Delivered by NUS Insight

Embargoed until 9 December 2020

Project Overview

Objectives

This is the third survey in the series commissioned by NUS, NUS Charity and TOTUM to understand more about how students and recent graduates feel about the current Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic and the impacts they are experiencing. The Co-op is also now a partner in this study. Previous surveys – phases I and II – took place in March and July 2020 respectively.

What we look for

Within this report, a number of questions have been broken down by demographics, which have been compared with each other. Where applicable and the base size is large enough ($n > 50$), statistically significant differences between demographics and their answers have been shown. A difference is significant when it is likely to have been caused by something other than random chance.

Methodology

A sample of 4,193 was achieved.

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

The survey was promoted via the NUS Student database, the TOTUM database, and through social media in November 2020.

The survey took around 25 minutes to complete and was in field from noon 6 November to 9.00 am 23 November.

Sample weighting

Explanation of weighting

NUS achieved an original sample of **4,241** students. The response rate reflected the trend that females participate more than males in completing surveys - the initial gender split was: 65% female and 27% male.

While this survey sampled both HE and FE, our practice is to reflect a student population where possible. In the absence of any national FE statistics, NUS practice is to use HESA. According to HESA statistics the gender split within Higher Education is 56% female and 45% male. In order to reflect this, 'weighting' was applied to the data in this report. In this case, we adjusted the profile of the sample by applying weights so that the over represented group, females, are down weighted and the under represented group, males, are up weighted. This resulted in a gender split in this survey of 56% female and 36% male and a sample of **4,193**.

Health, wellbeing & welfare

Summary

Key findings:

Students fear of contracting Coronavirus remains stable and is not their biggest concern; they are **more worried about their family** than themselves.

On the whole the physical needs of students are being met, but when it comes to mental health and wellbeing it is a different story.

Many are **not getting enough sleep** and feelings of **self esteem and achievement are low**. Worryingly the proportion of students who agree they have **sufficient contact with others since their studies have resumed has dropped**; indeed, **large proportions of students are interacting** with friends, course mates and other students **far less** than they did before.

Loneliness appears to be having a huge impact on students' wellbeing.

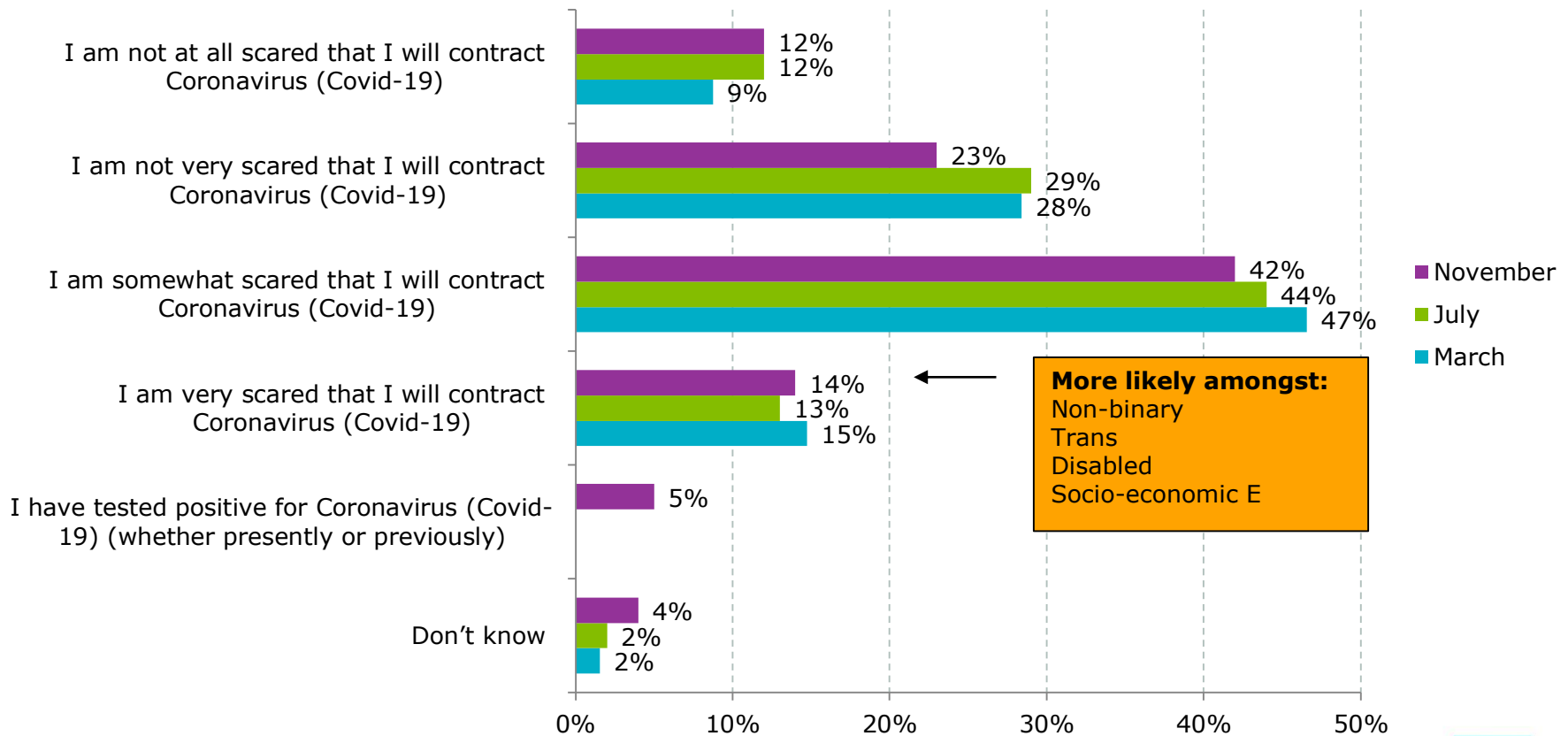
Half of students say their mental health is worse than what it was before the Coronavirus pandemic, with **loneliness, anxiety, stress and depression** among some of the key emotions being identified as behind this. **Over three in five have not sought support**, suggesting a lack of awareness or availability of who or what can help them. The main thing students want is **someone to talk to!**

Disabled students, those in **higher education**, living in **university accommodation/other rented accommodation** and who identify as **non-binary or gay, lesbian, bi or queer**, appear to be more likely to be affected by negative mental health.

Fear amongst students of contracting Coronavirus is remaining fairly stable over time. Similar to March and July, the largest proportion (two in five) feel 'somewhat scared' about contracting Coronavirus and around a quarter feel 'not very scared'. 5% say they have tested positive for Coronavirus (a new option in this wave of the survey).

Tracked

Feelings towards contracting the Coronavirus (Covid-19)

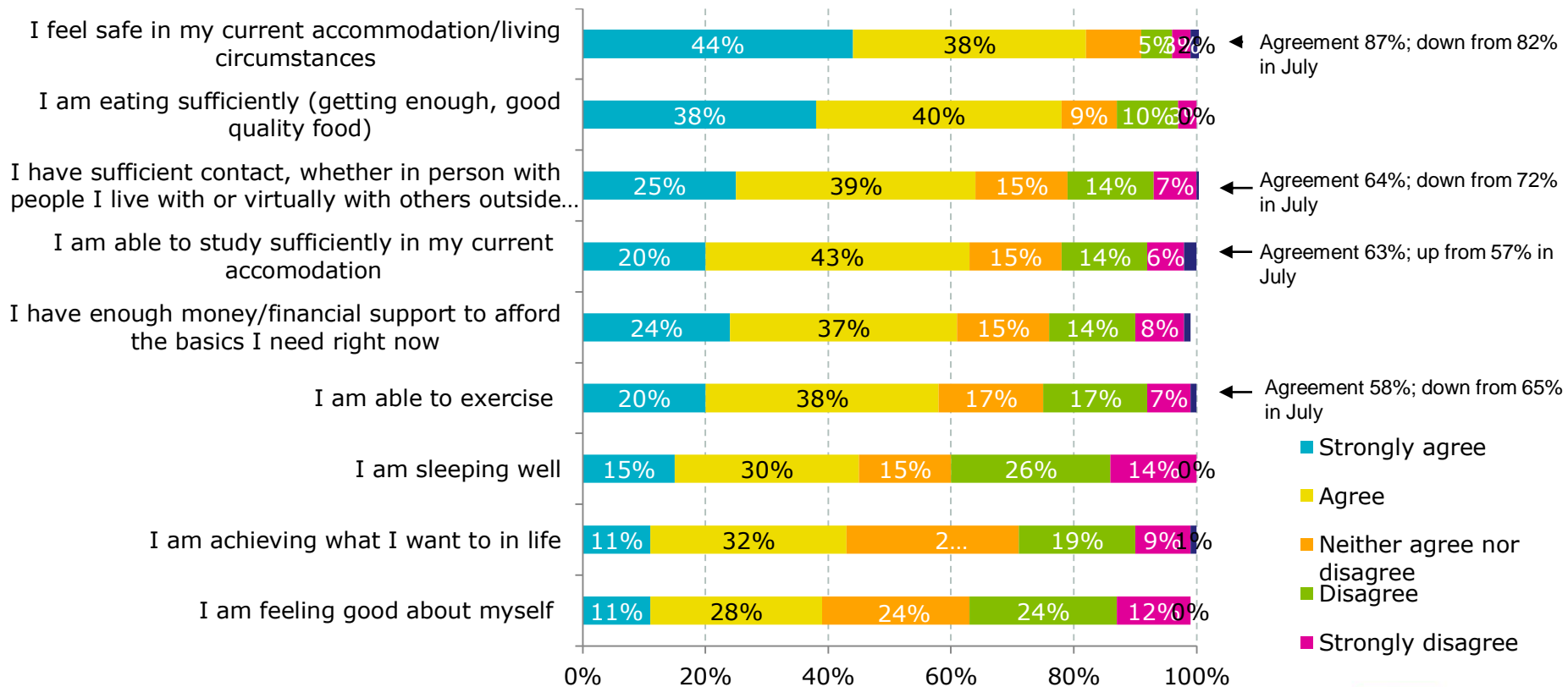


Weighted Base: 4180 respondents. Balance: no response

Within the context of Maslow's hierarchy of needs students largely agree that their basic (food, water, warmth) & safety needs (resources, health, property) are being met. This is with the exception of sleep - only 45% agree to some extent that they are sleeping well. Feelings of love and belonging have fallen since the summer, with under two thirds feeling they have sufficient contact with others.

November 2020

Agreement with statements



When looking at the data across different demographics we can see some significant differences within the levels of needs being met

Agreement with statements

I am eating sufficiently (getting enough, good quality food)

Less likely to agree: Aged 18-22, UG, those living in halls or rented property, non-binary, trans, disabled, carers, socio-economic groups D and E

I am sleeping well

Less likely to agree: UG, UK, living in halls, full time, non-binary, queer, gay/ lesbian or bi, disabled, carers, white

I am able to exercise

Less likely to agree: 18-22, commuting on public transport, living in halls, full time, Trans, non-binary, queer, gay/ lesbian or bi, disabled, BAME

Less likely to agree: 18-22, UG, International, Commuting, living in halls, non-binary, queer, gay/ lesbian or bi, disabled, carer, BAME

I feel safe in my current accommodation/living circumstances

Less likely to agree: 23-29, FE, International, Commuting by public transport, Living in halls or rented, full time, Disabled, Parent or carer, Socio-economic groups C2, D E, BAME

I have enough money/financial support to afford the basics I need right now

Less likely to agree: 23-29, FE, International, Commuting by public transport, Living in halls or rented, full time, Disabled, Parent or carer, Socio-economic groups C2, D E, BAME

When looking at the data across different demographics we can see some significant differences within the levels of needs being met

Agreement with statements

I have sufficient contact, whether in person with people I live with or virtually with others outside my home, to make me feel connected and/or loved

Less likely to agree: 18-29, HE, living in halls or rented, Non binary, Trans, queer, gay/ lesbian or bi, disabled

I am feeling good about myself

Less likely to agree: 18-29, UG, living in halls, rented or with parents, full time, non-binary, Trans, or rented, Non binary, Trans, queer, gay/ lesbian or bi, disabled, White

I am able to study sufficiently in my current accommodation

Less likely to agree: 18-22, living in halls or rented, full time, non-binary, Trans, queer, gay/ lesbian or bi, disabled

I am achieving what I want to in life

Less likely to agree: 18-22, HE, living in halls or rented, Trans, queer, gay/ lesbian or bi, disabled

Average weighted Base: 4116. Balance: No response

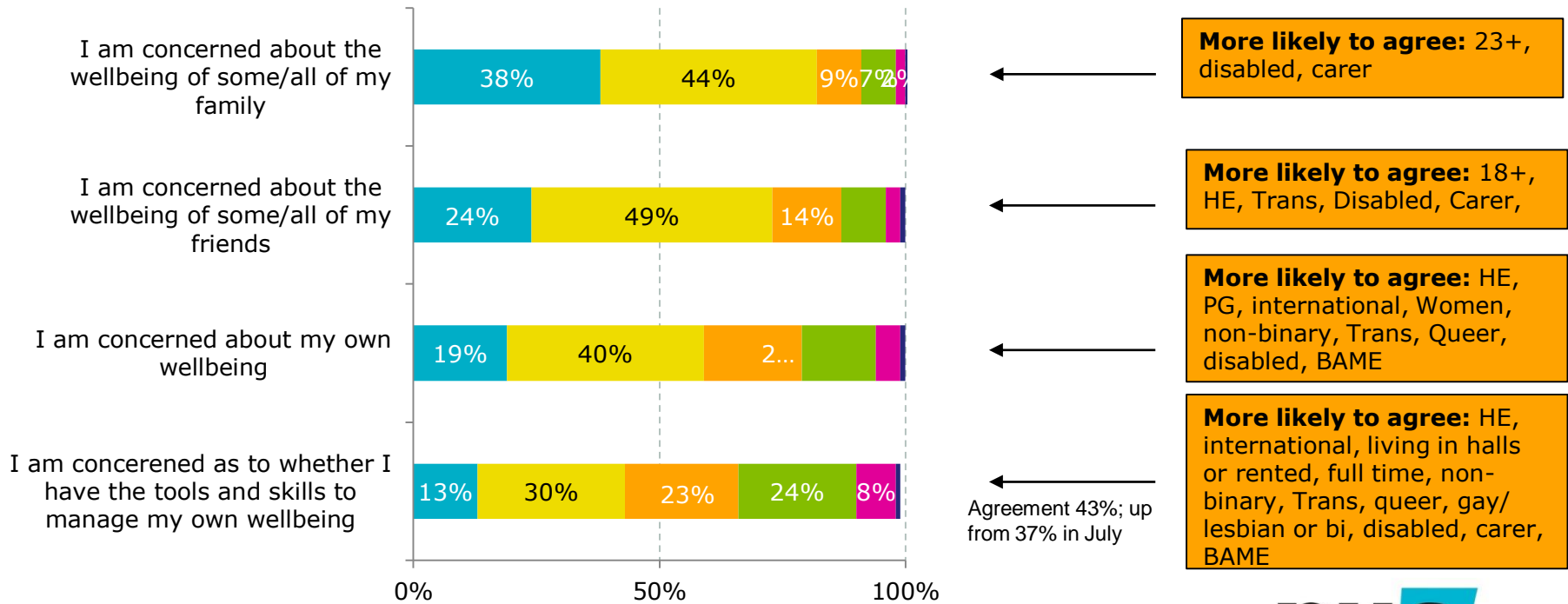
B2. Please tell us how far you agree, if at all, with the statements below within the context of the current Coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic?

Continuing the pattern of previous phases, students are more likely to be concerned about the wellbeing of their family than of themselves or their friends

November 2020

Agreement with statements

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



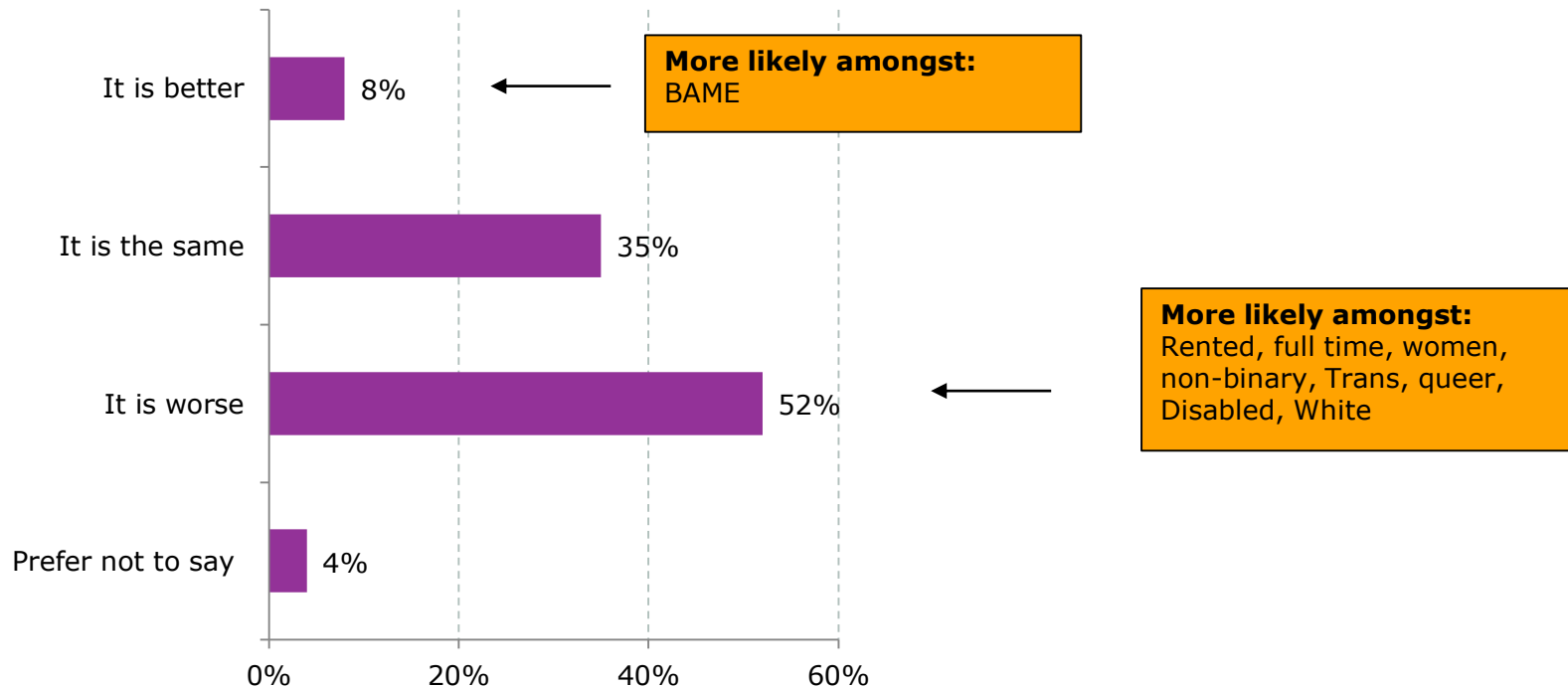
Weighted average base: 4124 Balance: No response

B3. How far do you agree or disagree with the following statements as a result of Coronavirus (Covid-19)?

Worryingly, over half of students indicate that their mental health is worse than it was before the coronavirus pandemic

New to phase 3

Current mental health and wellbeing



Weighted Base: 4180. Balance: No response

B4. How would you describe your mental health and wellbeing currently compared to life before the Coronavirus pandemic

Students who feel the impacts of Covid on their mental health have had a multitude of negative experiences. Not being allowed to see people is causing isolation and loneliness, leading to increased anxiety, stress and worry.

New to phase 3

Negative impact on mental health

Key themes:

- Isolated / lonely
- Anxiety and panic attacks
- Can't see or make new friends
- Stress and worry
- Not seeing family
- Depression

"My online lectures have placed me in **virtual isolation** as I moved to a **new area, knowing no one**. I am in a self-contained flat so unless I shop for food or check for postal deliveries, **I no longer 'see' anyone.**"

"**Self isolation, away from family and friends**, in an unfamiliar city, only online teaching sessions - **no integration**, struggled with moving into halls where I was constantly monitored and felt guilty - blamed by media and politicians."

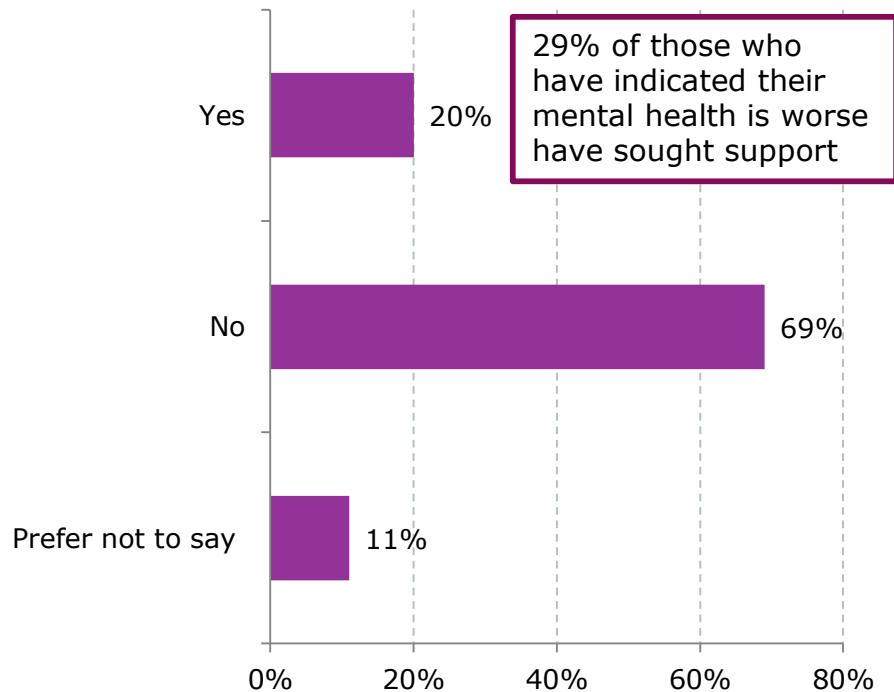
"My **anxiety and depression has taken a turn for the worse**, so I'm having more **trouble sleeping and studying**. While I'm staying on top of my work to the best of my ability and I'm carrying on, I miss live music and making music with friends, I miss socialising, and I miss seeing my family on a regular basis. Some days **the stress of my degree on top of the stress caused by covid-19 can be unbearable.**"

"**Loneliness, social isolation** and staying at home the whole day cause me more **stress, anxiety, sudden drops of self-esteem and loss of confidence.**"

Only 20% of students have sought mental health support (29% of those with worsening mental health) during the pandemic

New to phase 3

Seeking mental health support



More likely amongst: 23+, UK, Rented, non-binary, Trans, Queer, Disabled, carers, White

Weighted Base: 4166. Balance: No response

B6. Have you sought any mental health support throughout the Coronavirus pandemic?

Students who have accessed support listed a range of help including counselling, their GP, services offered by their institution, medication and CBT therapies

New to phase 3

Mental health and wellbeing support

Key themes:

- Counselling:
 - NHS
 - Institution
 - Private
 - Work
- GP / Psychiatrist
- Institution support and services
- Medication
- CBT / mindfulness

"The **university counselling service** which has moved **online.**"

"**Counselling** due to struggling to manage uni work as a result of feeling **overwhelmed and not being able to cope.**"

"My **Dr** has provided **emotional support** and **signposted** me to more focused help, already on **antidepressants.**"

"During first lockdown I contacted my **GP** who **prescribed me antidepressants** and got me in contact with **mental health support** services. I have also had a **counselling session with my university wellbeing** service."

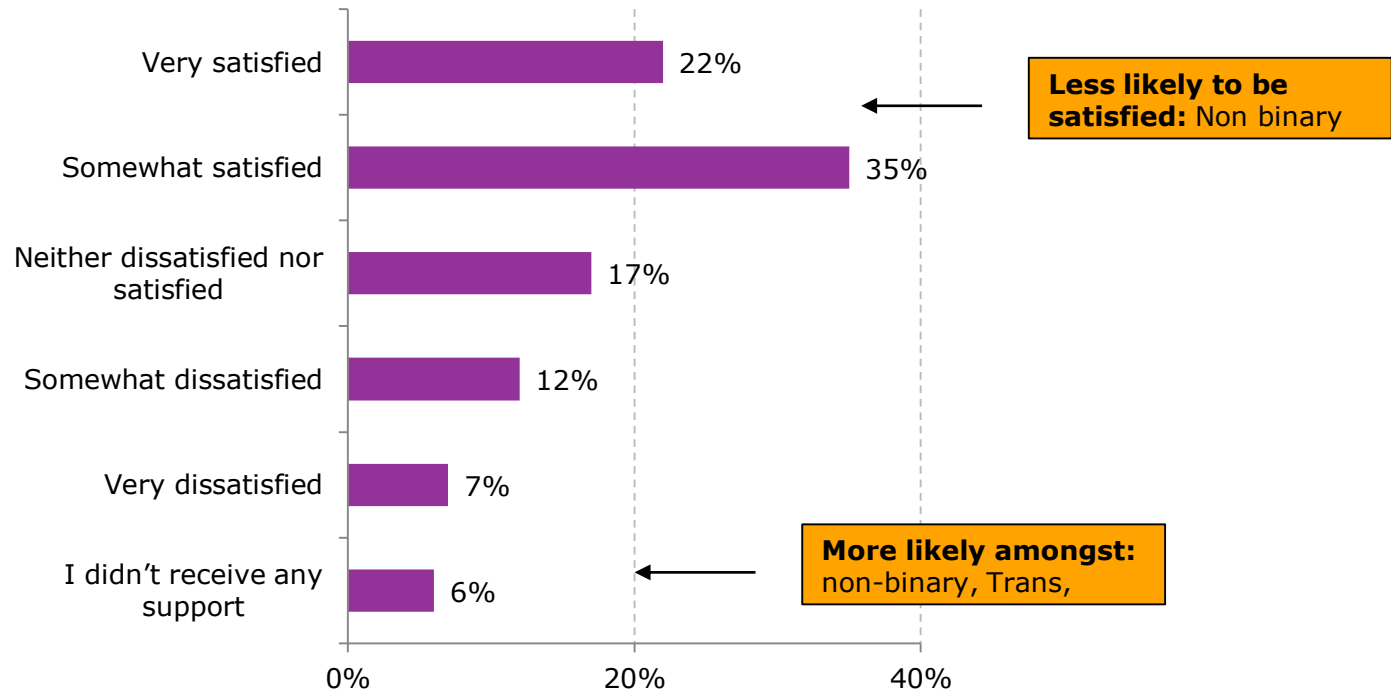
"Support with wellbeing, I have **read up on ways to manage my wellbeing and develop a more positive mindset.**"

"**Online CBT Counsellor** through **university** via zoom calls."

Of those who have sought support, around three in five have been satisfied with what they have received

New to phase 3

Satisfaction with support



Weighted Base: 850. Balance: Those not seeking support

B8. How satisfied are you with the mental health support you have received?

Regarding desired support, students would simply like someone to talk to

New to phase 3

Desired mental health and wellbeing support

Key themes:

- Access to a counsellor
- Someone to talk to
- Online support
- Support from institution

*"I would like to start seeing a therapist however I am on a **waiting list and am uncertain about when I may start seeing one.**"*

"Being able to talk to somebody and details of who that might be at university."

"Free online counselling. Maybe group counselling to meet people that could help me to improve my mental health."

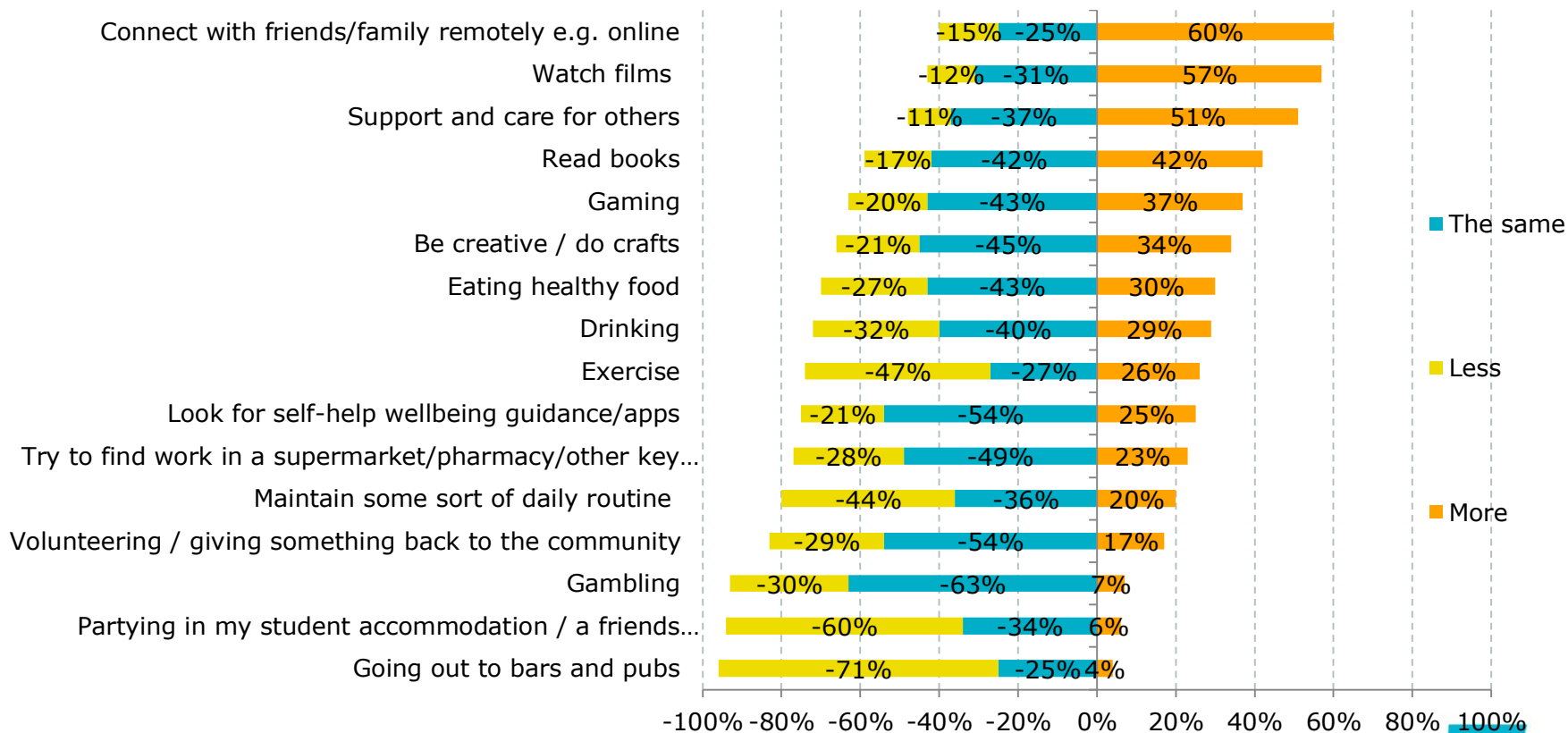
*"Just **simply someone different to talk to**, I keep everything bottled up and push my thoughts to the back of my head to not deal with them at the time."*

*"I just think there should be **more awareness on how it has affected people and also arranging online therapy** for people who really need it but **aren't able to leave their house.**"*

Students are connecting more with family and friends online since the pandemic began. They are also watching films and reading books. Over half have found their caring duties have increased. While drinking has increased for around a third, partying and going out has, for obvious reasons, decreased.

Amended for Phase 3

Activities

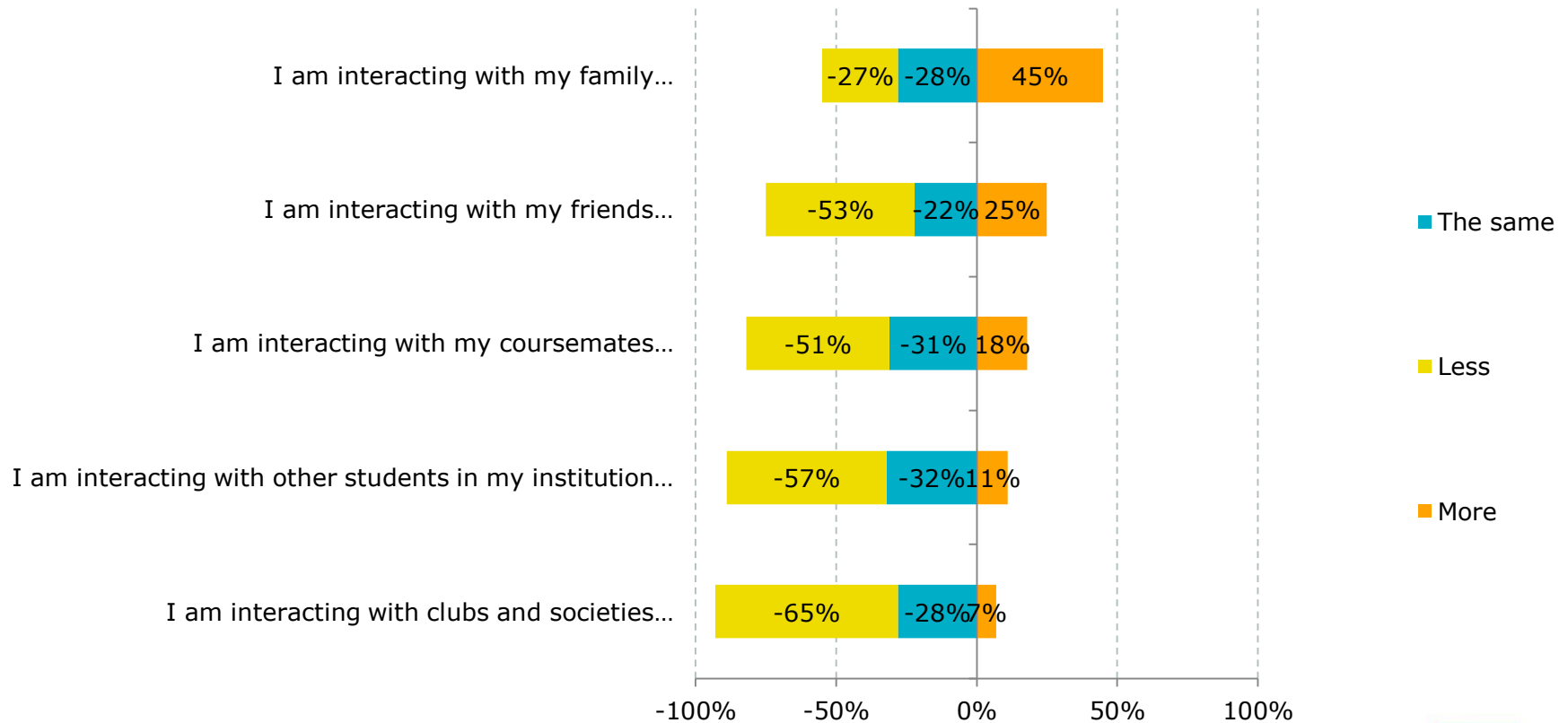


Weighted average base: 4075. Balance: No response

Family interactions have increased for almost half of students since the pandemic began while interactions with fellow students, course mates and friends are down dramatically

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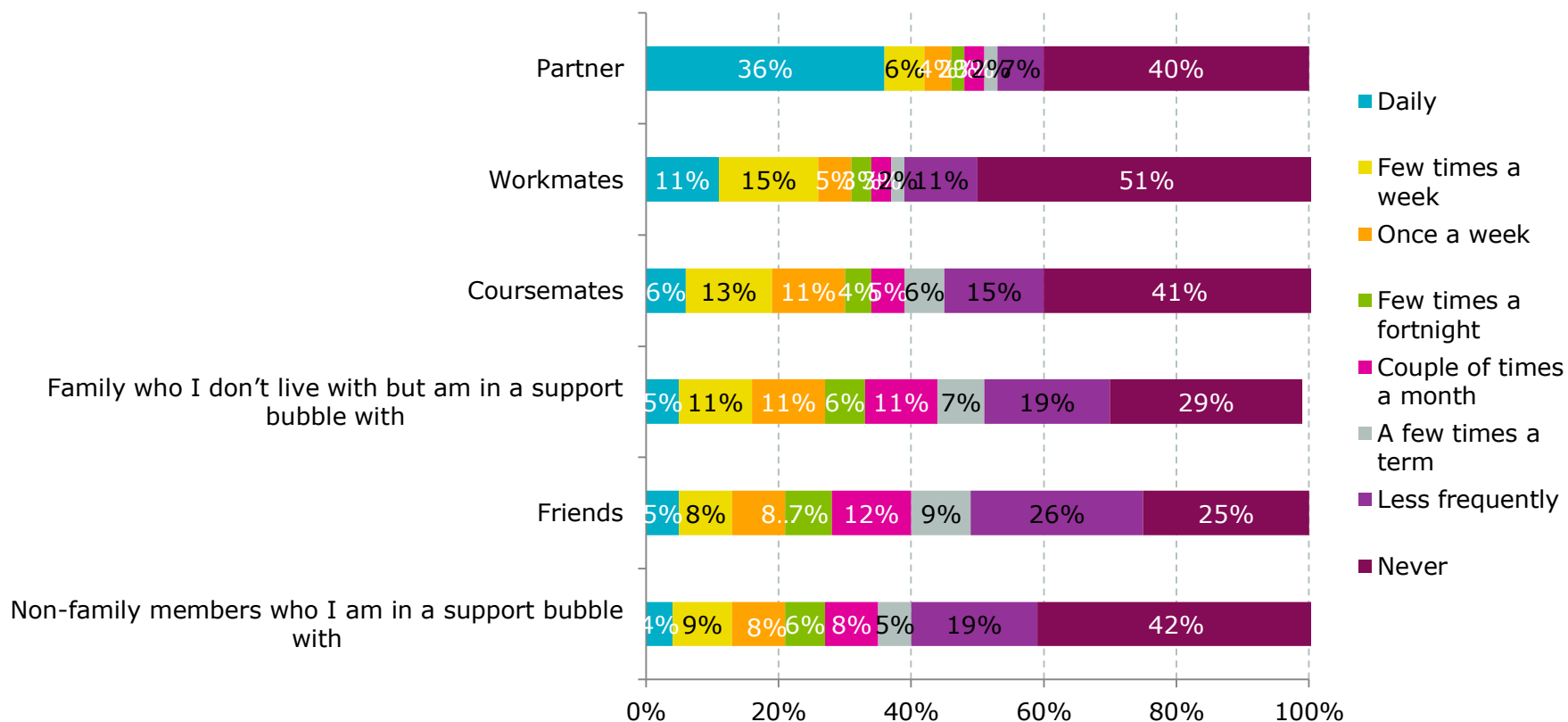
Interactions...



Students most commonly see their partners face to face on a daily basis – however, two in five also indicate they never see their partner – likely to be reflective of those not living with their partner at present. Workmates are the most likely never to be seen face to face. Friends are most likely to be seen semi-regularly

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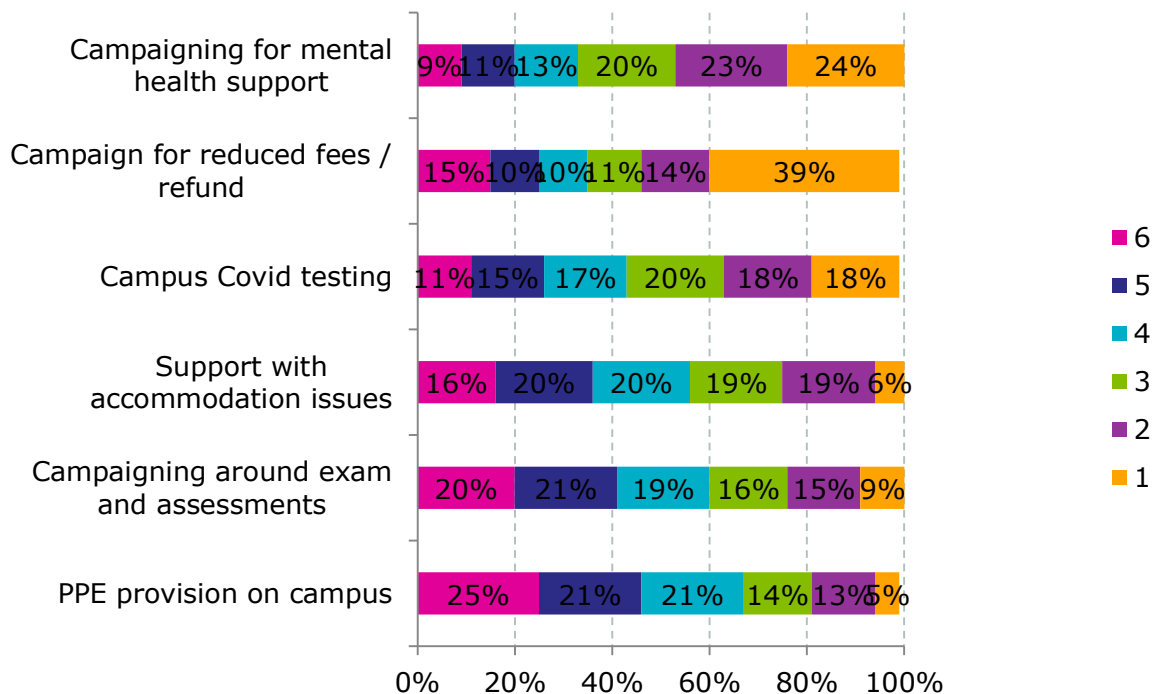
Face to face meetings



While a campaign for reducing fees is the main priority, over two thirds of students rate NUS campaigning for mental health support as priority 1, 2 or 3

New to phase 3

Ranking of NUS campaign priorities



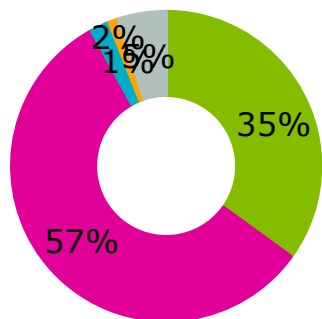
Weighted Base: 3789. Balance: No response

I5. During the last phase of this research, students told us that NUS should concentrate on the following priorities for students. Can you please rank them, where 1 is top priority for you and 6 is lowest priority.

Demographics

Key demographics (weighted base)

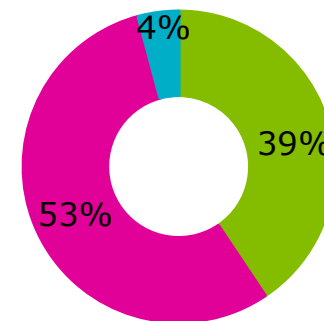
Gender



- Man
- Woman
- Non-binary
- I prefer to self-describe
- Prefer not to say

Level of study

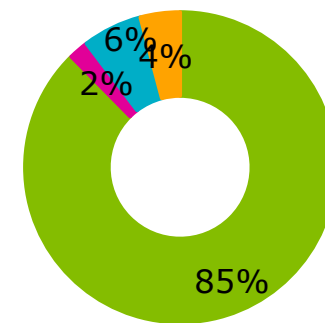
- FE
- HE
- Apprentice



Age



- I am a UK citizen studying in the UK
- I am an Irish citizen from the UK studying in the UK
- I am an international student from within the EU studying in the UK
- I am an international student from outside the EU studying in the UK



Full time: 69%
Part time: 21%
Distance learner: 15%

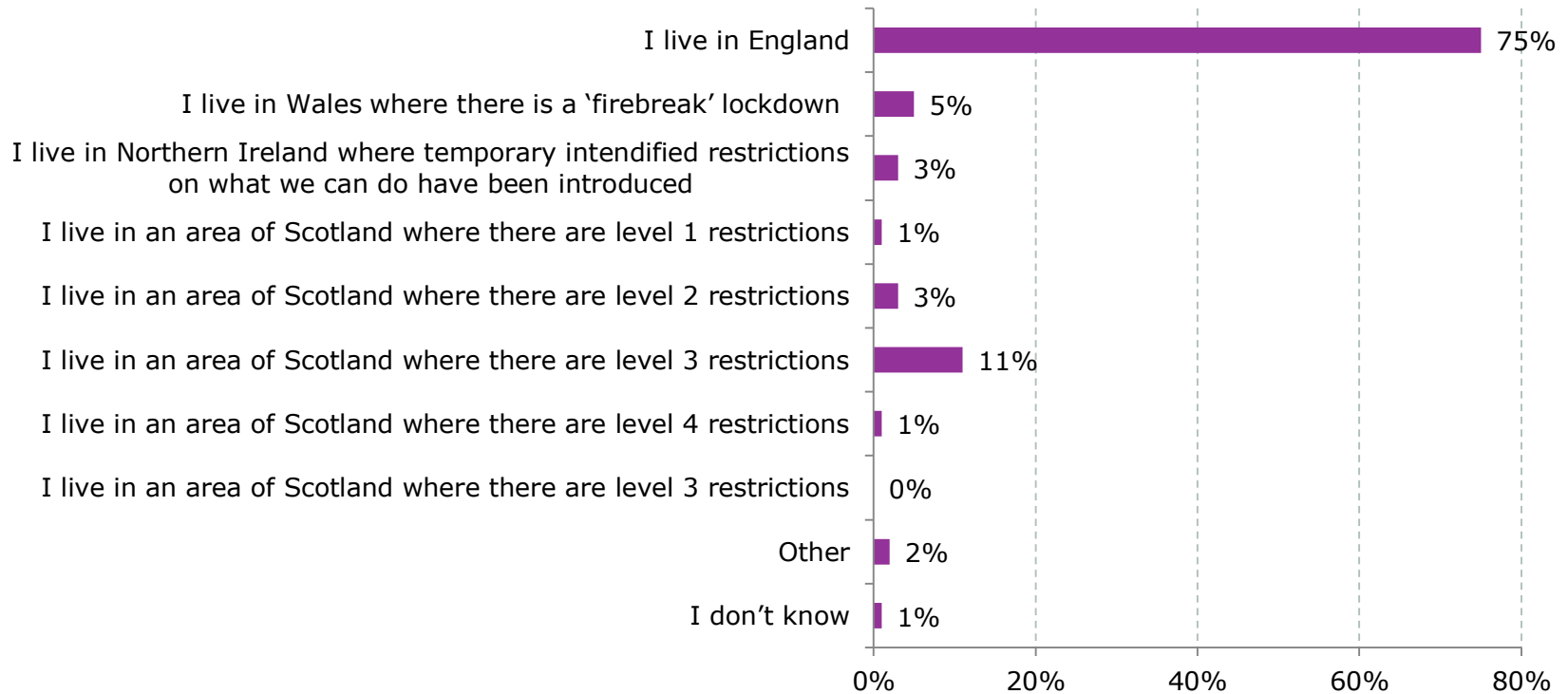
Demographics

Region	Percentage
North East	5%
North West	13%
Yorkshire and the Humber	7%
East Midlands	7%
West Midlands	8%
London	12%
East of England	4%
South West	10%
South East	11%
England Total	77%
Scotland	15%
Wales	5%
Northern Ireland	3%



Demographics

Living in areas of lockdown

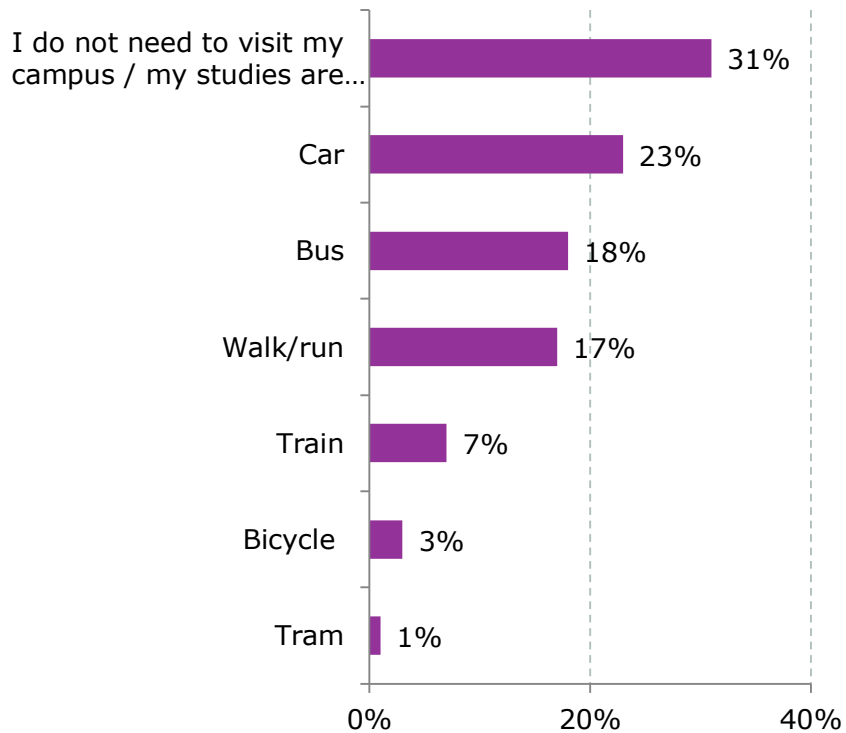


Weighted Base: 4193 respondents

A5. Please tell us which of the following applies to where you live during term time:

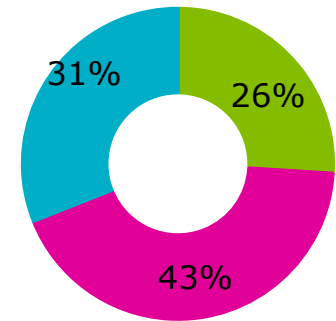
Demographics

Mode of transport to commute



Commuters

- Commuting on public transport
- Commuting in own transport
- Don't commute

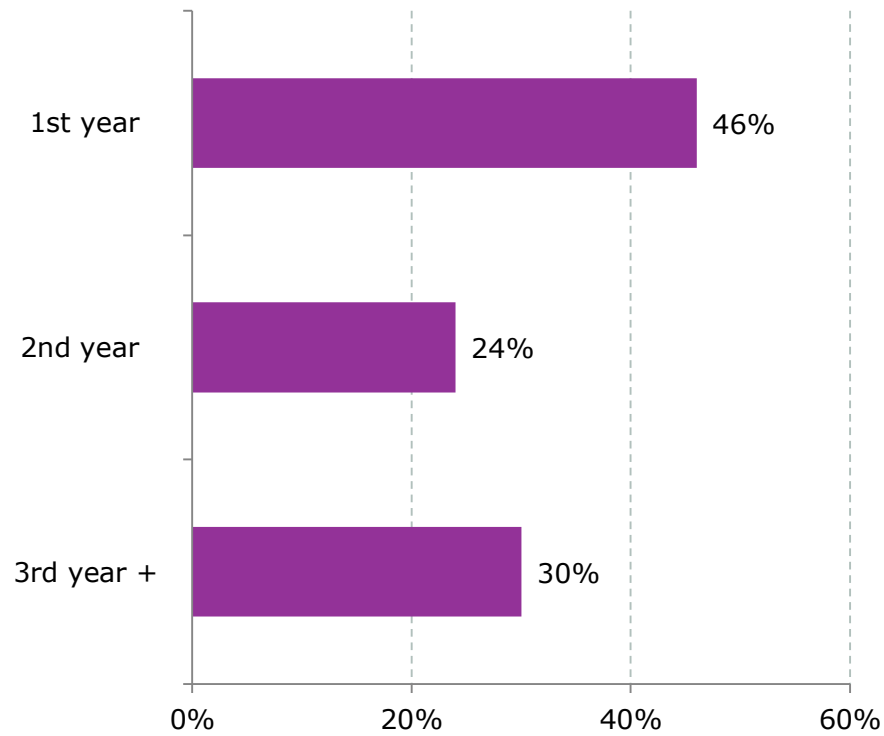


Weighted Base: 4185 respondents Balance : FE students, no response

A6. Which of the following modes of transport do you use regularly in order to get to and from your campus?

Demographics

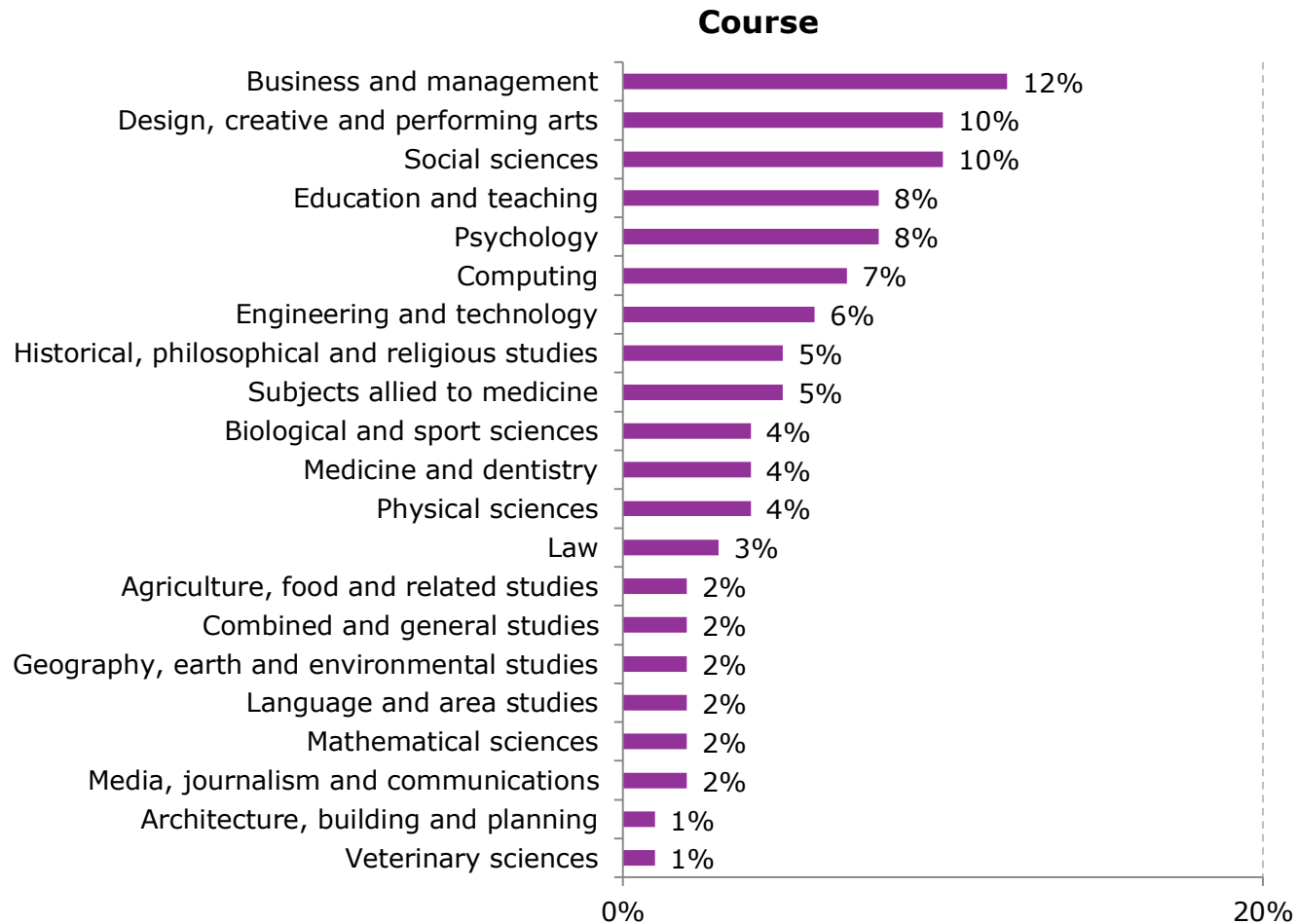
Year of study



Weighted Base: 1522 respondents Balance : FE students, no response

K1. What year of study are you in?

Demographics

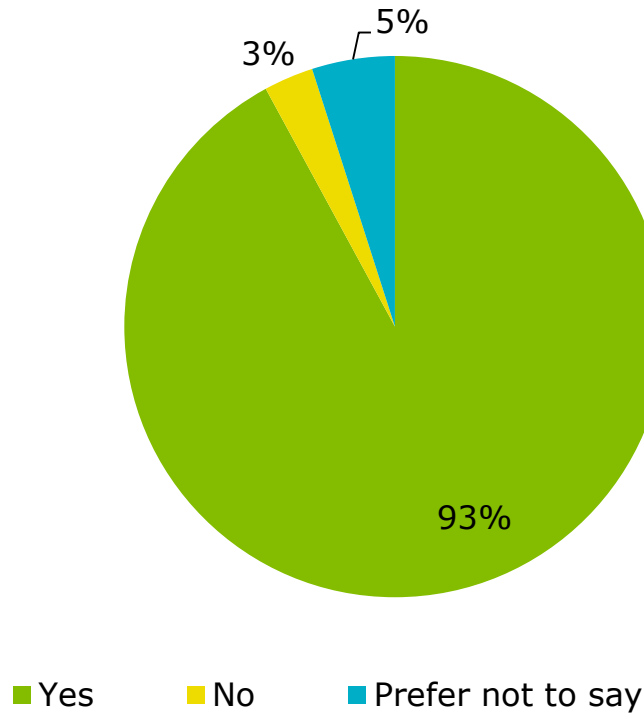


Weighted Base: 4048 respondents Balance: no response

K4. Which of the following best describes your course (or your most recent course)?

Demographics

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

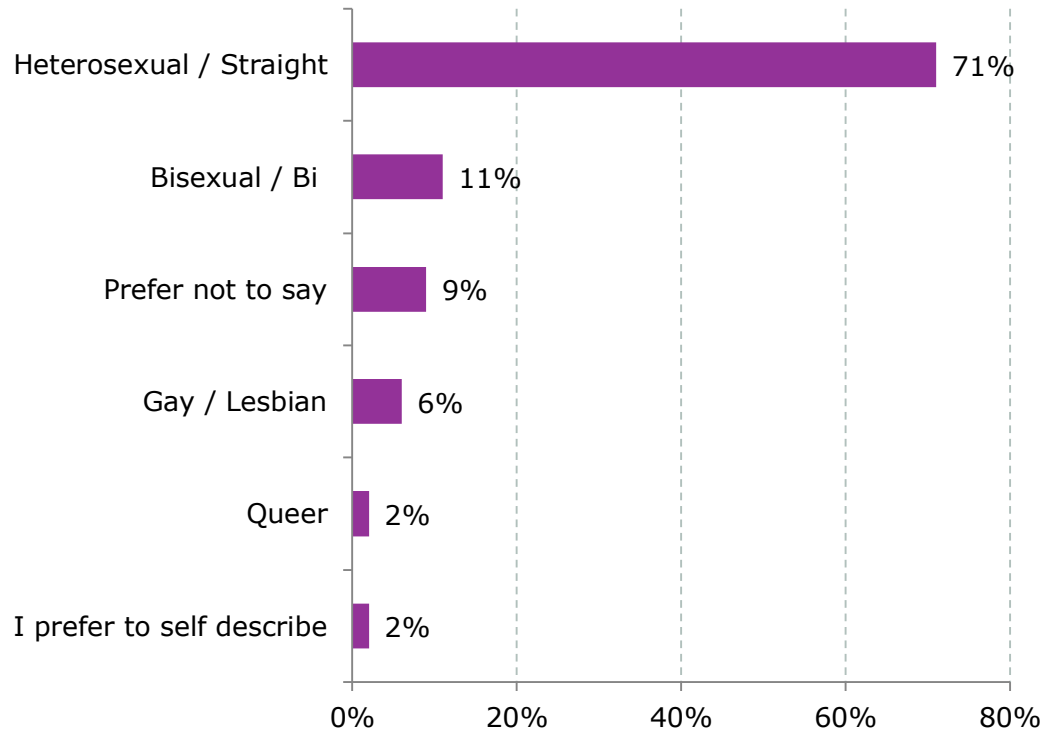


Weighted Base: 4193 respondents.

K6. Does your gender identity match the gender you were assigned at birth?

Demographics

Sexual orientation/preference

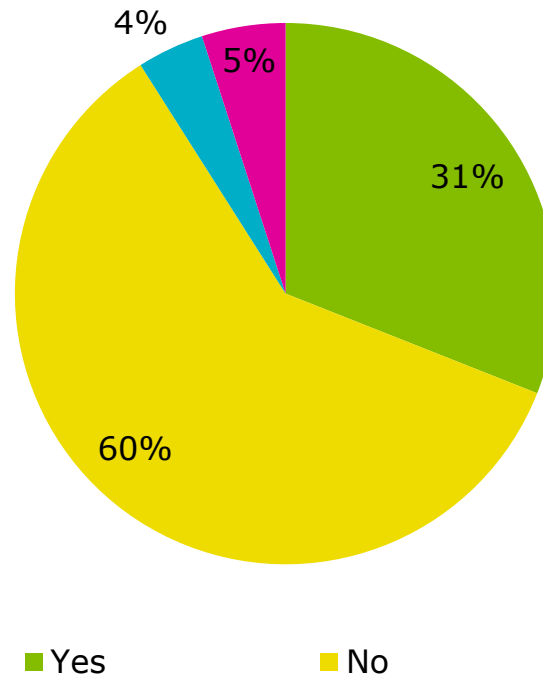


Weighted Base: 4193 respondents.

K7. Which of the following best describes your sexual orientation/preference?

Demographics

Disability, impairment or long term health condition

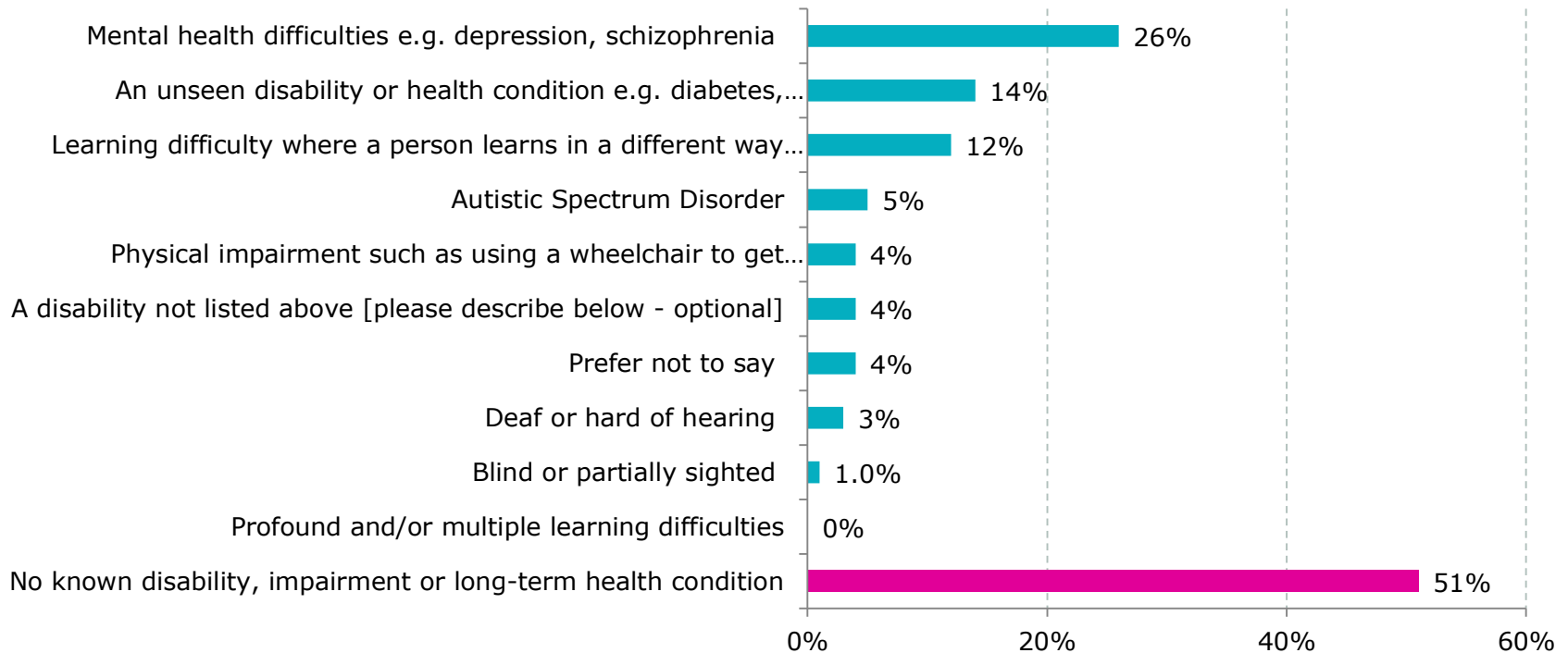


Weighted Base: 4193 respondents.

K11. Do you consider yourself to have a specific learning disability, other disability, impairment, long-term illness or health condition?

Demographics

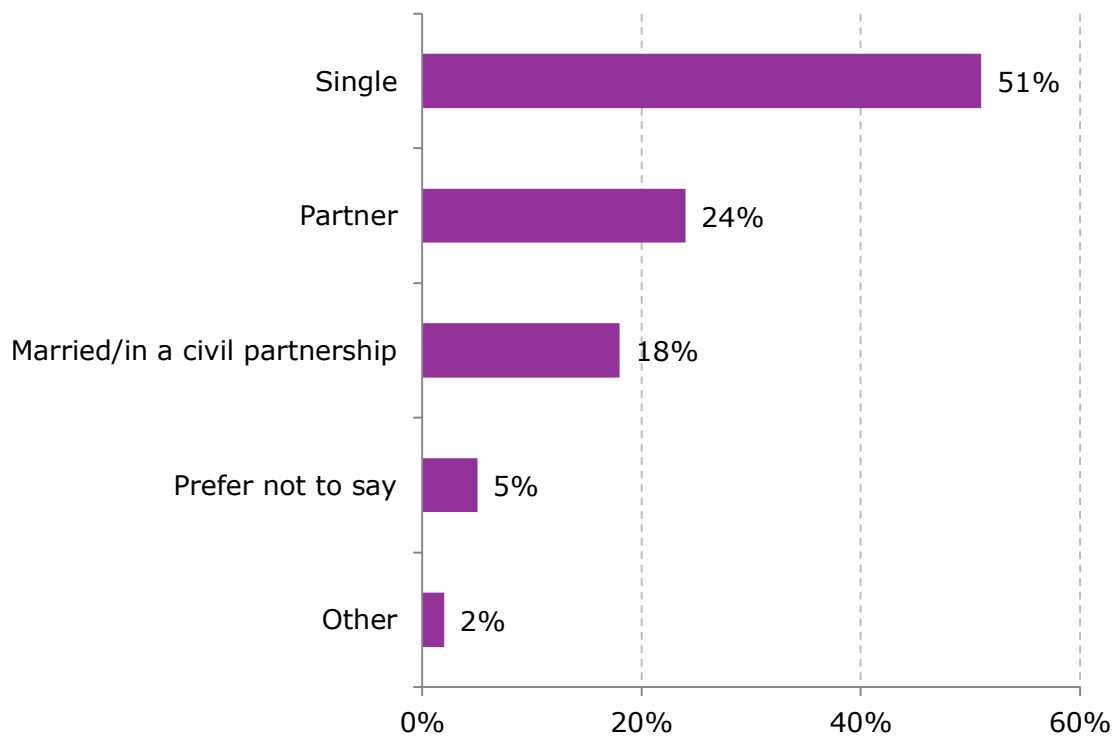
Disability, impairment or long term health condition



Weighted Base: 3502 respondents

Demographics

Marital status

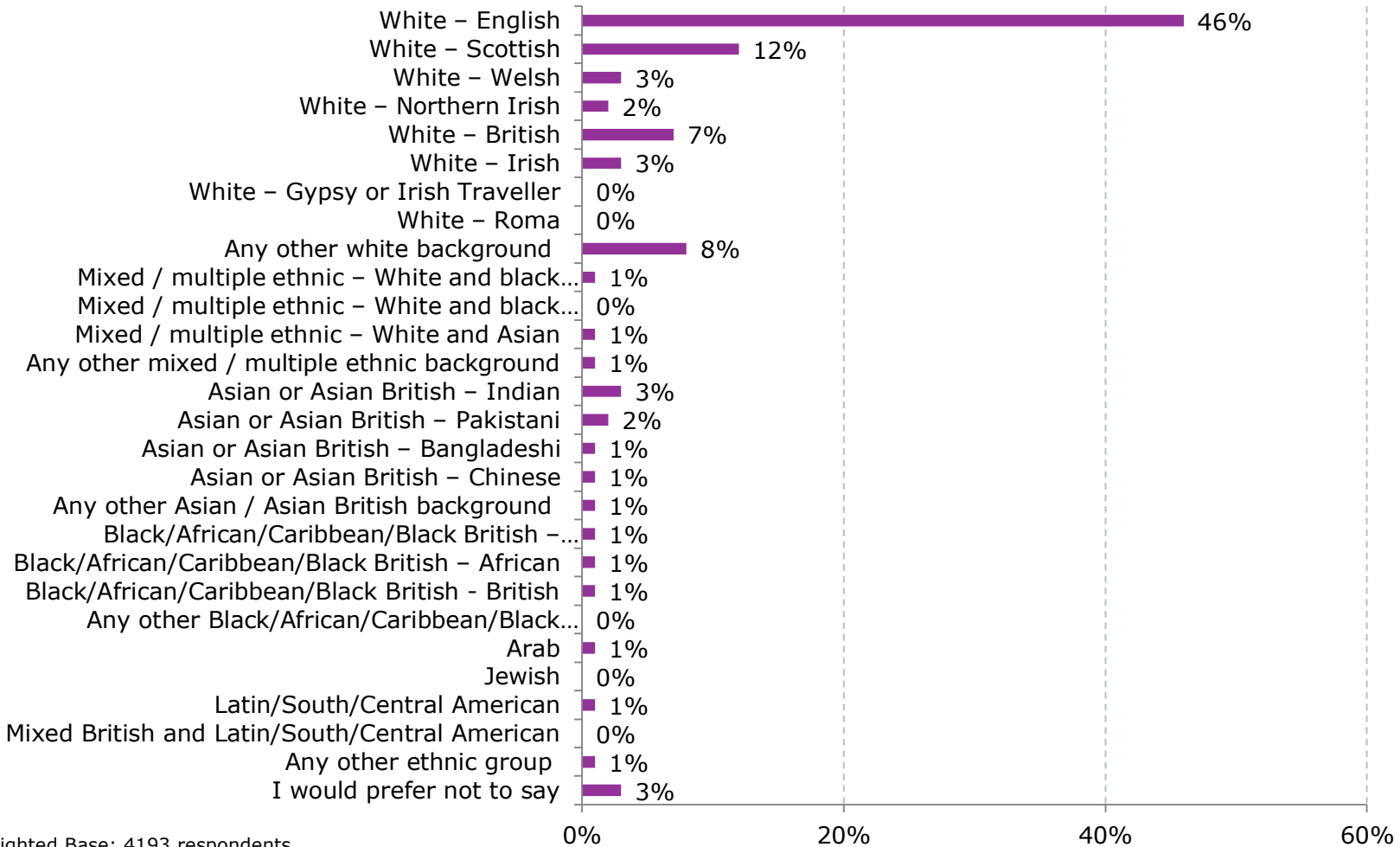


Weighted Base: 4193 respondents.

K8. Which of the following best describe your marital status?

Demographics

Ethnicity

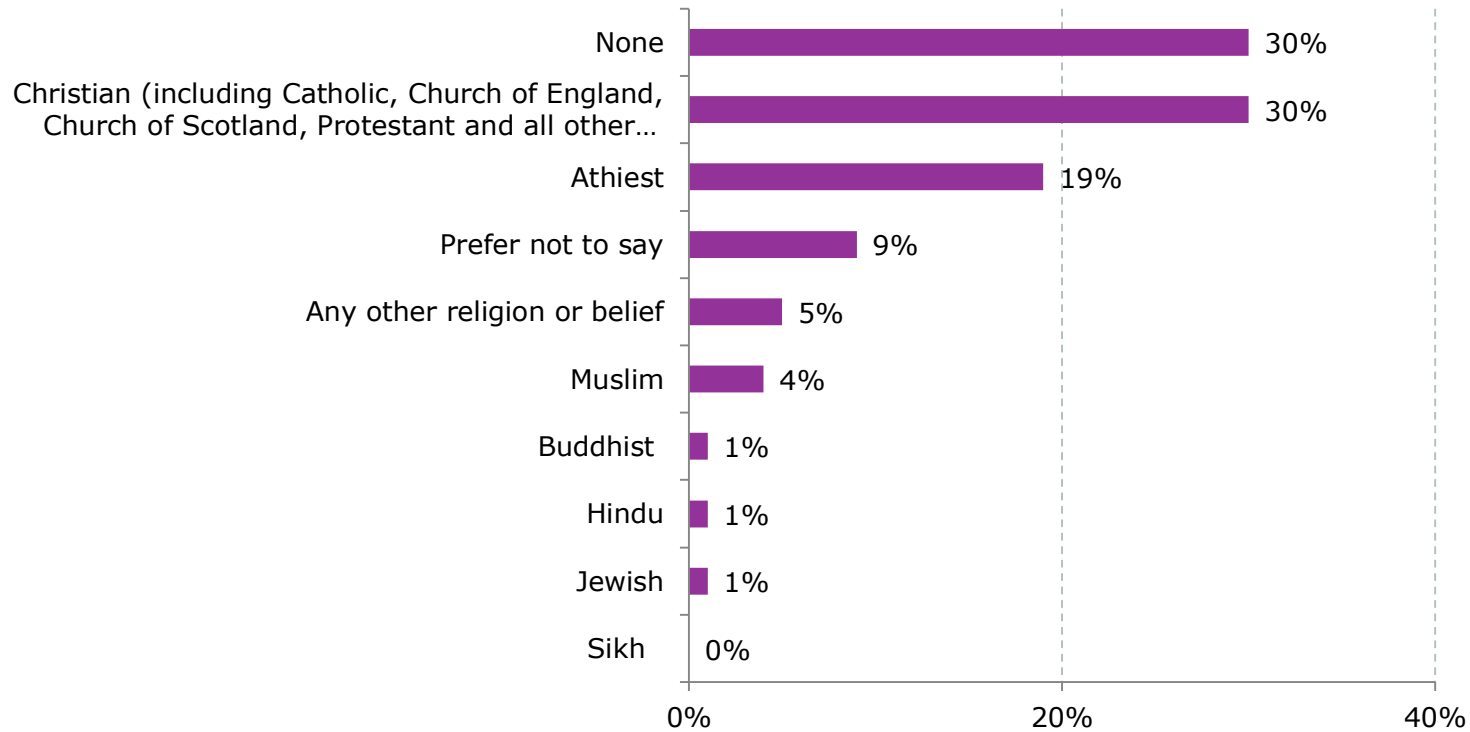


Weighted Base: 4193 respondents.

K9. Which of the following best describes your ethnic group?

Demographics

Religion, faith or belief

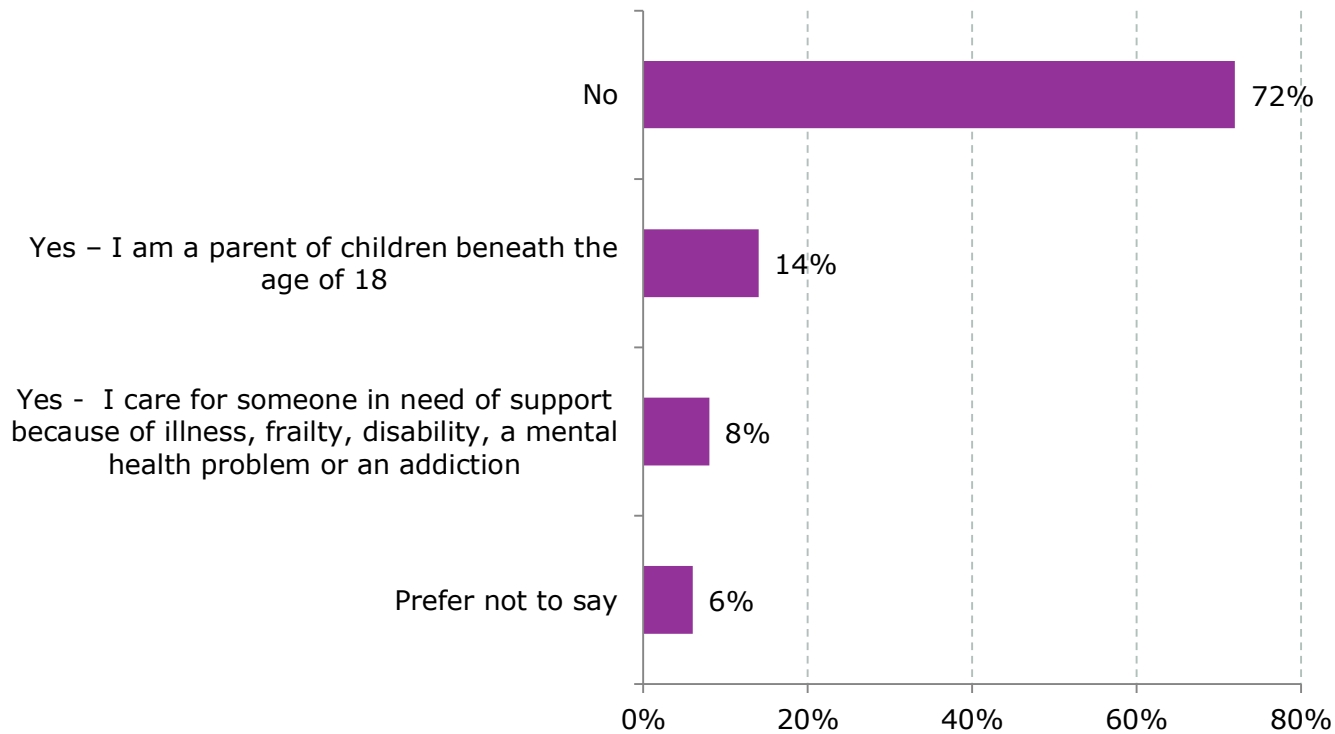


Weighted Base: 4193 respondents.

K10. What is your religion, faith or belief?

Demographics

Caring responsibilities

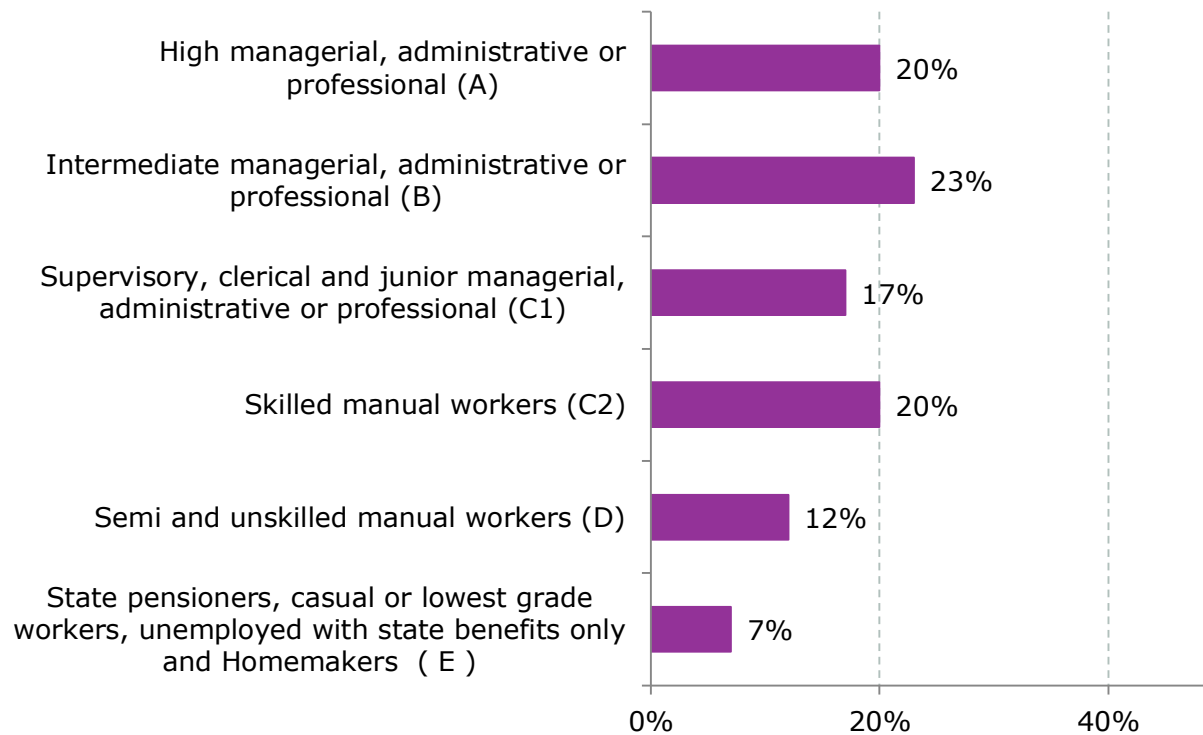


Weighted Base: 4193 respondents.

K13. Do you have any caring responsibilities?

Demographics

Social Grade



Weighted Base: 3113 respondents. Balance: Don't know / would rather not say



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Mental health and wellbeing

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