WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT THE CONDITIONS THAT HELP STUDENTS THRIVE?

JIM DICKINSON

By Cibyl & Wonkhe

It’s all about the money

On average, students need

£621 extra

a month to feel confident they will be able to complete their degree

The financial gap between what students have and need is

89% larger

than in 2021

Just

3%

of today’s students feel they have enough money

blackbullion student money and wellbeing 2024

Belong

By Cibyl & Wonkhe

It’s all about the money

blackbullion student money and wellbeing 2024

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It’s all about the money

3 in 4
students

are worried the cost of living crisis could have a negative impact on their final degree grade

of students have received a lower grade than expected in the last 12 months because they felt too cold to study or concentrate. 56% have because they were too hungry

1 in 2
students

have received a lower grade than expected due to cutting down on going to campus

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It’s all about the money

2 in 3

students say not having enough money has negatively impacted their university experience

1 in 3

students are less able to socialise or get involved in university activities as a result of lacking money

1 in 10

students regret their decision to go to university

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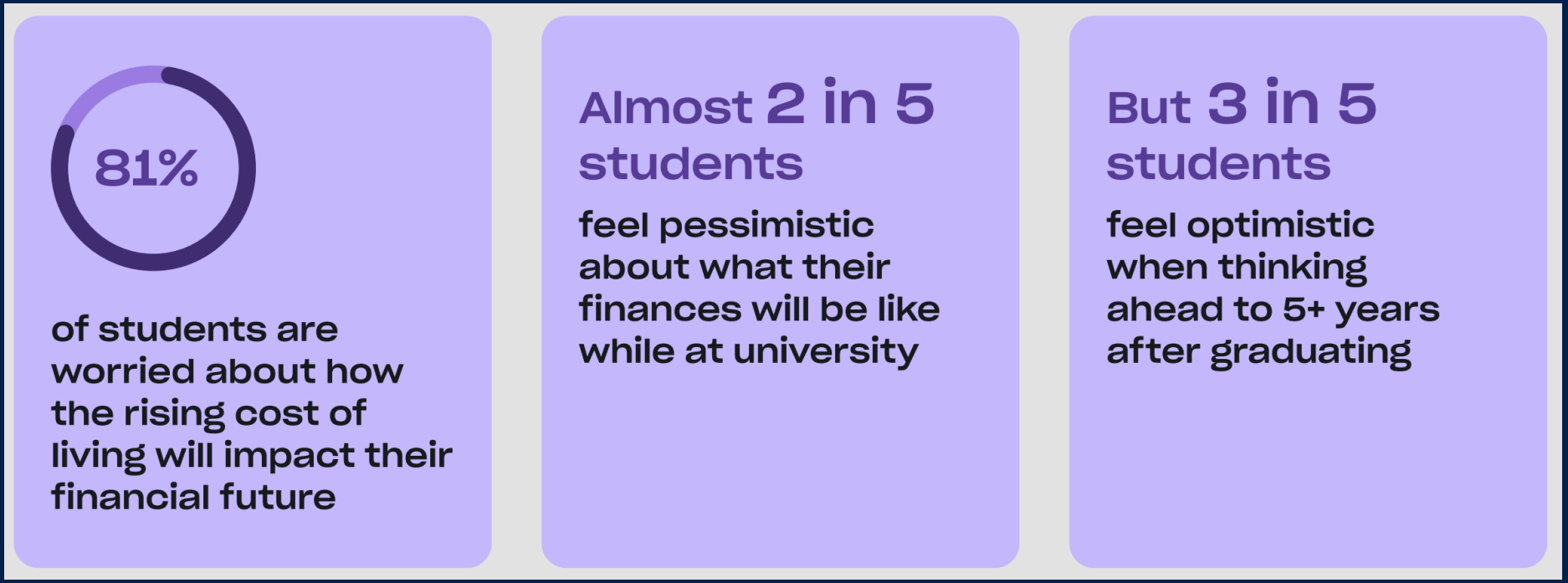
It’s all about the money



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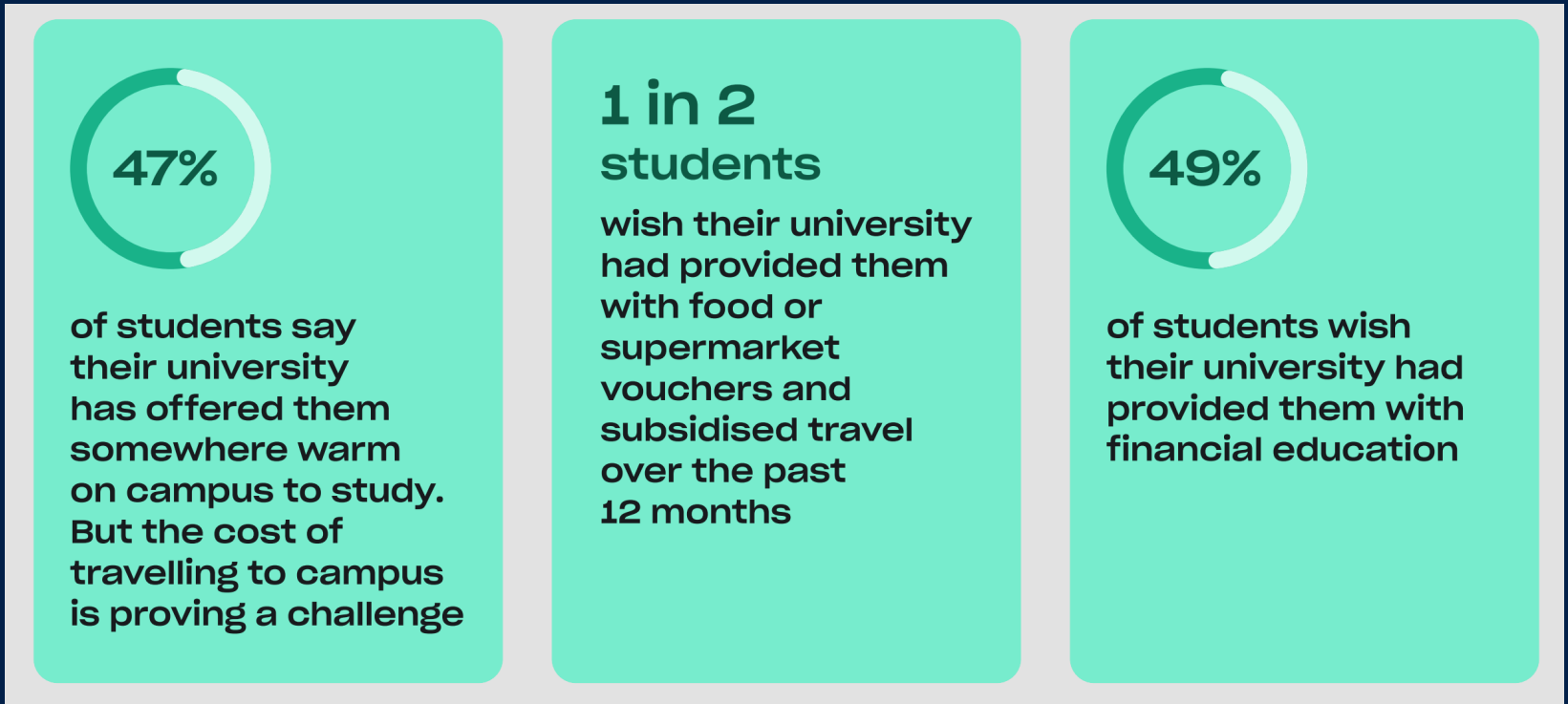
It’s all about the money



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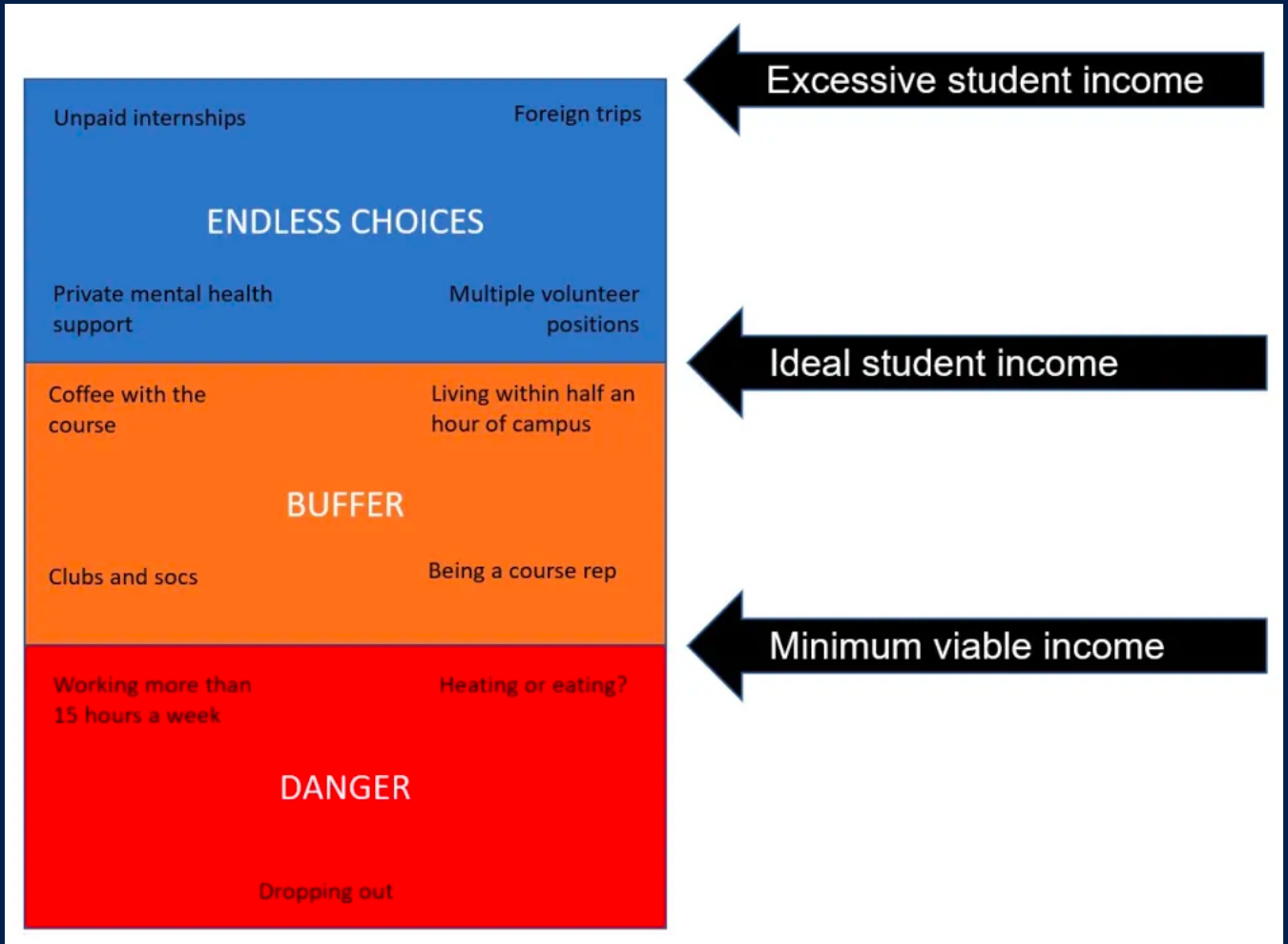
Student presents



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		Round trip to campus in minutes					
I am able to devote most of my time to being a student		0	1-15	16-30	31-60	61-90	91+
	Totally	35%	35%	27%	30%	22%	18%
	Mostly	48%	55%	61%	55%	56%	55%
	Not really	17%	11%	12%	15%	21%	27%

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I am able to devote most of my time to being a student	Term time part time work					
	0	1-5	6-10	11-15	16-20	21+
Totally	34%	30%	25%	26%	25%	15%
Mostly	57%	60%	54%	58%	54%	37%
Not really	9%	11%	21%	16%	20%	48%

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Why aren’t students attending?

1. Health (esp mental health)
2. Paid employment
3. Public transport and/or long journey
4. Teaching quality/format
5. Busy with assignments/independent study

Time is more precious now – students are weighing up best use of their time, and that is often not coming to campus.

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Why not (last 3 missed)

- Combination of a waste of time, depression hitting hard, my physical state being ignored by the university with regards to walking back and forth from campus (it's too painful sometimes).
- Because the other lectures by that staff member had been very dull and about very simple concepts, so I felt I would be better served by just reading the content in my own time.
- Work, I'm come from a low social economic family and therefore have to work to afford living in Brighton (expensive city without the London maintenance loan).
- I either felt unmotivated, depressed, unprepared or anxious - scared to be asked questions and have to speak
- I don’t need to so I spend the time I have working or taking part in societies for networking
- Sometimes staff are funny about lateness - I commute an hour by car and occasionally would be 10 minutes late , if they were rude in class about it I just wouldn't turn up next time I was late because I don't see the point when it's our money paying them they shouldn't really care.

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Students and food

Worried food would run out in next two weeks	Overall
Very or Somewhat	32%
Not very or Not at all	52%
DN/PNTS	15%

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Students and food

Worried food would run out in next two weeks	How it differs by domicile			
	Overall	**UK**	**EU**	**Non-EU**
Very or Somewhat	32%	31%	26%	40%
Not very or Not at all	52%	53%	61%	46%
DN/PNTS	15%	16%	14%	14%

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Students and food

Worried food would run out in next two weeks		Home domiciled			
		Overall	**First in family**	**Bursary**	**State educated**
	Very or somewhat	31%	33%	39%	32%
	Not very or not at all	53%	52%	47%	53%
	Don't know or PNTS	16%	14%	14%	16%

(UK-domiciled PGTs particularly feeling pinch)

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Relationship between food and NSS

How good are staff at explaining things?	All taught	
	No food emergency	Experienced food emergency
VERY POSITIVE NSS	33%	25%
POSITIVE	57%	57%
NEGATIVE	8%	15%
VERY NEGATIVE	1%	3%

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Relationship between food and community

	All students	
	Positive about community	Negative about community
Has experienced food emergency	14%	23%
Not experienced food emergency	82%	57%
Don't know or PNTS	4%	14%

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Campus life

		All students						
		All sample	Sports	Societies	Rep'n	Media	Liberation	None
I feel part of a community of staff and students	Positive re community	78%	82%	84%	88%	94%	83%	**67%**
	Negative re community	22%	18%	16%	12%	6%	17%	**33%**

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Campus life

		All students					
I feel part of a community of staff and students		Volunteering	Night events	Day events	Enterprise	Leader	None
	Positive re community	83%	86%	90%	95%	82%	67%
	Negative re community	17%	14%	10%	5%	18%	33%

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Problems with food?

- ONS poll of first-year students in 2021
- 23 percent of students suggested possible issues with food or body image
- 27 percent suggested that they may have an eating disorder

SCOFF questionnaire: five-item measure to assess the possible presence of an eating disorder.

- Do you make yourself sick because you feel uncomfortably full?
- Do you worry you have lost control over how much you eat?
- Have you recently lost more than one stone (6.4kg) in a 3 month period?
- Do you believe yourself to be fat when others say you are too thin?
- Would you say that food dominates your life?

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SCOFF

- no sign of possible issue – eating disorder (SCOFF) score of 0
- possible issues with food or body image – eating disorder (SCOFF) score of 1
- possible eating disorder – eating disorder (SCOFF) score of 2 to 5
- NHS 17-23 y/os more than six in ten 17- to 23-year-olds had score of 1 or more

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Students and food

Do you make yourself sick because you feel uncomfortably full?		ONS2021	BELONG2023
	Yes	9%	12%
	No	91%	88%

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Students and food

Do you worry you have lost control over how much you eat?		ONS2021	BELONG2023
	Yes	29%	30%
	No	71%	70%

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Students and food

Have you recently lost more than one stone (6.4kg) in a 3 month period?		ONS2021	BELONG2023
	Yes	10%	15%
	No	90%	85%

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Students and food

Do you believe yourself to be fat when others say you are too thin?		ONS2021	BELONG2023
	Yes	9%	12%
	No	91%	88%

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Students and food

Would you say that food dominates your life?		ONS2021	BELONG2023
	Yes	20%	28%
	No	80%	72%

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SCOFF scores

In our sample, the percentages were as follows:

- no sign of possible issue – 51% (ONS 50%)
- possible issues with food or body image – 26% (ONS 23%)
- possible eating disorder – 23% (ONS 27%)

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Support for students

- Academic support and “support services”
- NSS academic support questions
  - Easy to contact
  - Supporting learning
- NSS comms question
- B2 factors
  - Enough staff
  - Support for decision making
  - Avoiding academic misconduct
  - Equipment and space
- Support services comms
- Support services suitability

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Support for students

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- Support services suitability

Belong

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Academic support

How easy is it to contact teaching staff when you need to?

	Overall	UG	PGT
Very easy	42%	41%	43%
Easy	48%	48%	48%
Not very easy	8%	9%	7%
Not at all easy	2%	2%	1%

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Academic support

How well are teaching staff supporting your learning	Overall	UG	PGT
Very well	32%	30%	38%
Well	56%	57%	53%
Not very well	9%	10%	7%
Not at all well	2%	2%	2%

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Academic support

	Equipment and space		
	Overall	UG	PGT
Strongly agree	34%	37%	36%
Agree	51%	51%	51%
Disagree	7%	6%	7%
Strongly disagree	2%	3%	3%

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Academic support

	Enough staff		
	Overall	UG	PGT
Strongly agree	32%	32%	32%
Agree	51%	51%	50%
Disagree	11%	11%	11%
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	3%

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Enough staff – top 5 subjects

- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Medicine
- Education
- Methematics

Belong

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Enough staff – bottom 5 subjects

- Psychology
- Allied to medicine
- Computing
- Design, create, perform
- Physical Sci (inc Chem)

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Academic support

Staff support for decision making			
	Overall	UG	PGT
Strongly agree	27%	26%	27%
Agree	55%	55%	57%
Disagree	11%	11%	10%
Strongly disagree	2%	2%	1%

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Academic support

Support to avoid academic misconduct			
	Overall	UG	PGT
Strongly agree	35%	35%	35%
Agree	54%	53%	56%
Disagree	5%	5%	3%
Strongly disagree	1%	1%	1%

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Academic support

Enough staff and contacting staff		
	Enough staff	Not enough staff
Easy to contact staff	91%	71%
Not easy to contact staff	8%	27%

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Academic support

Support for learning, enough staff		
	Supporting learning well	Not supporting learning well
Agree enough staff	92%	69%
Disagree enough staff	7%	29%

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Academic support – qual

What underpins + and – ?

Positives

- Familiarity of staff, availability of staff
- Availability of online resources (and technical assistance to use)
- Equipment and specialist resources

Negatives

- Dissertation supervision (uneven, inadequate, sessional, unreliable)
- SSRs and availability of staff
- Availability of space, insufficient quiet study areas
- Technical reliability of campus infrastructure
- Placement support (while on and obtaining)

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Support services

Support services communication	
Very well	30%
Well	52%
Not very well	14%
Not at all well	3%

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Support services

	Support services		
	Communication	Satisfaction	PGT Satisfac
Very positive	30%	24%	20%
Positive	52%	60%	48%
Not very positive	14%	12%	18%
Not at all positive	3%	4%	14%

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Positivity on support services

Access and Responsiveness: Quick response times, accessibility of mental health services both in-person and online

- "Very accessible in person and online, once a meeting is booked there is quick response times."

Proactive and caring approach: Outreach and care from services

- "When I was ill a couple of weeks ago the services actually reached out to me even though I didn't reach out to them to just check in to see if I was okay."

Regular and clear communication: Updates and information dissemination through emails, social, online

- "We constantly have emails coming through about the help that we can have."

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Negativity on support services

Complex Issues: Inappropriate for students with complex mental health issues or neurodivergence, indicating a gap in specialized support

- "I don't think the structure... is particularly great for neurodivergent people or those who are actively mentally ill."

Service quality and empathy: Unhelpful, dismissive, or insensitive interactions with support staff

- "The counsellors at the counselling service make it seem like you are an inconvenience for being there."

Serious issues: Bullying, harassment, suicidal ideation, being mishandled or ignored

- "I reported the bullying and harassment... they reassured me that they'd investigate it and then told me they couldn't."

Communication and Coordination Flaws: Frustration over being directed from one service to another without clear guidance or resolution,

- "They show no empathy, they always direct you to other places without helping you directly."

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Negativity on support services

Access and waiting: Long waiting times for counselling services and other forms of support

- "It took them 6 months to get me in contact with their domestic abuse officer and counselling has a long waiting list."

Limited sessions: Restrictions on number of support sessions, students feeling abandoned once those sessions were exhausted

- "The university only offers CBT counselling... you get a limited number of sessions."

Specific needs: Specific student populations, such as mature, working, and medical students, felt neglected or underserved by generic support structures

- "The support for mature students/working students is very poor."

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Where students find friends

	International	Home domicile
Has course friends	62.8%	65.9%
Has no course friends	37.2%	34.1%
Has hobby/interest friends	68.1%	47.3%
Has no h/l friends	31.9%	52.7%
Has international friends	52.2%	8.5%
Has no intl friends	47.8%	91.5%

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Friends and support

	Staff are supporting my learning well	Staff not supporting my learning well
Has course friends	67.1%	51.3%
Has no course friends	32.9%	48.7%

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Friends and support

	Support services are appropriate and adequate	Support services not appropriate and adequate
Has course friends	67.5%	56.9%
Has no course friends	32.5%	43.1%

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Who’s happy with support?

	Has friends	Has friends, no course friends	No friends
Happy with support	83.9%	76.9%	56.3%
Not happy with support	16.1%	23.1%	43.8%

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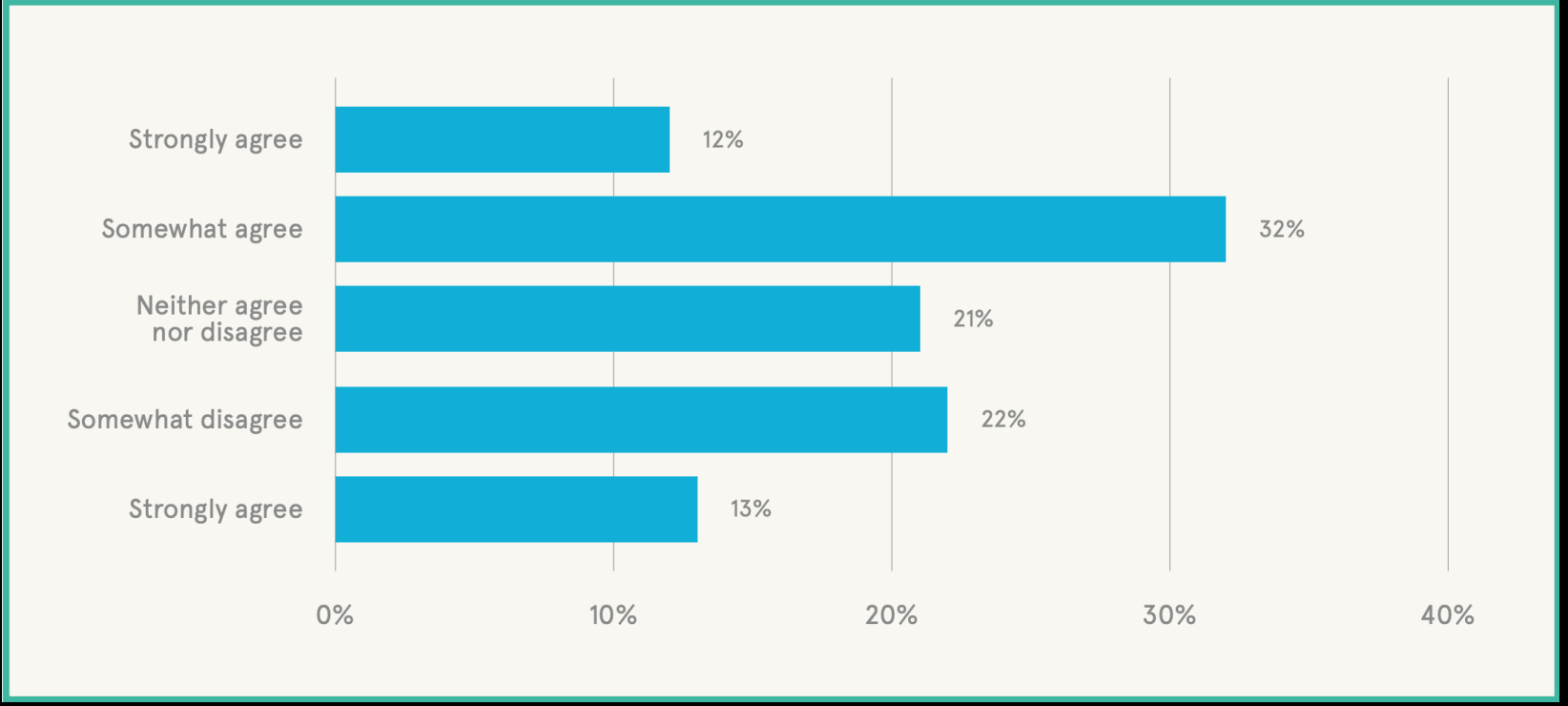
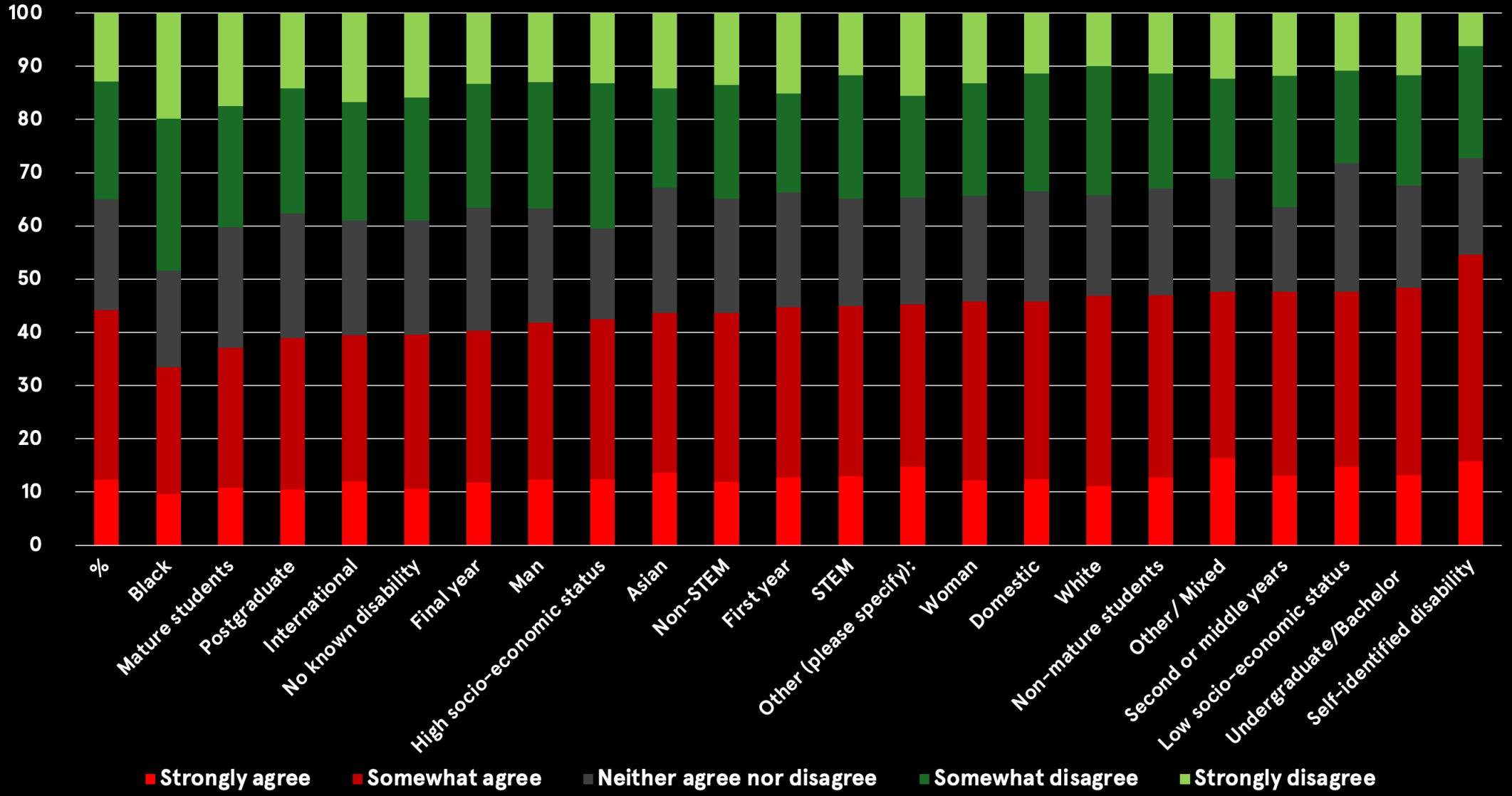
Students are lonely

Table 3: To what extent would you agree/disagree with the following statement: "I feel lonely at university"



upp Foundation

I feel lonely at university



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Self -identified Disabled students made up a third of the sample

I feel lonely at university

	Lonely	Not lonely
Feel they belong	**48%**	**84%**
NAND	**27%**	**13%**
Feel they don't belong	**25%**	**4%**

I belong at university

	Those who belong	Those who don't
Say they are not lonely	**46%**	**9%**
NAND	**21%**	**13%**
Say they are lonely	**33%**	**78%**

Happiness and loneliness

	Those who are lonely	Those who are not lonely
Say they are happy at uni	**36%**	**78%**
NAND	**21%**	**12%**
Say they are not happy at uni	**43%**	**10%**

My course has prepared for the world of work

	Those who are lonely	Those who are not lonely
Say they feel prepped for work	**39%**	**60%**
NAND	**21%**	**16%**
Say they don't feel prepped for work	**40%**	**24%**

Where the lonely live

	A property that you own	Halls of residence/ accommodation off-campus	Halls of residence/ accommodation on-campus	Parental/ guardian home	Private rented house/ flat/ accommodation
Say they are lonely	**39%**	**58%**	**61%**	**60%**	**51%**

Has uni impacted your mental health?

	Those who are lonely	Those who are not
Impacted it negatively	**43%**	**10%**
Impacted it positively	**56%**	**90%**

Did you have an induction/welcome week?

	Those who did have one	Those who didn't have one
Say they're lonely	**61%**	**53%**
Say they're not lonely	**39%**	**47%**

Should induction last all term?

	Those who are lonely	Those who are not lonely
Yes it should last all term	**73%**	**61%**
No it shouldn't last all term	**27%**	**39%**

I engage in extracurriculars

	Weekly	Monthly	Now/again	Never
I belong at my university	**75%**	**74%**	**63%**	**44%**
I don't belong at my university	**8%**	**9%**	**12%**	**27%**

What would help you feel more connected?

	Say they are not lonely
Mental health support	**18%**
Mentoring	**19%**
Sport	**22%**
Staff open door hours	**22%**
Better pastoral care	**23%**
Socials with staff	**24%**
SU events	**34%**
Faculty/department events	**42%**
Extra curricular activities	**43%**
Freshers	**49%**
Social with other students	**51%**
More time on campus	**61%**

What would help you feel more connected?

	Say they are not lonely	Say they are lonely
Mental health support	18%	21%
Mentoring	19%	22%
Sport	22%	22%
Staff open door hours	22%	23%
Better pastoral care	23%	26%
Socials with staff	24%	26%
SU events	34%	33%
Faculty/department events	42%	38%
Extra curricular activities	43%	42%
Social with other students	51%	53%
More time on campus	61%	56%

What would help you feel more connected?

	Say they are not lonely	Say they are lonely	Very lonely
Socials with staff	**24%**	**26%**	**19%**
Staff open door hours	**22%**	**23%**	**20%**
Mental health support	**18%**	**21%**	**21%**
Better pastoral care	**23%**	**26%**	**20%**
Sport	**22%**	**22%**	**22%**
Mentoring	**19%**	**22%**	**25%**
SU events	**34%**	**33%**	**30%**
Faculty/department events	**42%**	**38%**	**35%**
Extra curricular activities	**43%**	**42%**	**35%**
Social with other students	**51%**	**53%**	**43%**
More time on campus	**61%**	**56%**	**48%**

Reasons for lack of engagement

7. **Perceptions and preferences**: Some lack of interest, sometimes related to transaction attitude to course.
- *"Just not interested in all that".*

6. **Information and access**: Lack of information or difficulty accessing updates on extracurricular activities, esp on large campuses.
- *"After welcome week it's all too late".*

5. **Health and Disability**: Physical injuries or conditions, mental health challenges like stress, depression, and anxiety. Need for inclusive activities that accommodate diverse health requirements and promote well-being.
- *"I can't access what is on offer due to my health"*

Reasons for lack of engagement

4. **Financial**: Costs associated with joining activities or travelling to venues. Financial stress, compounded by the need to work part-time jobs, limits resources to engage.
"Just can't afford the equipment/uniform/fee/social costs"

3. **Logistical**: Inconveniences related to time, location, and scheduling conflicts. Clashes with coursework, part-time jobs, or personal responsibilities. Physical distance from events or cost of travel, esp for commuting students.
"It's all too far away or hard to get to"

2. **Social and cultural**: Feelings of isolation or not fitting in, often due to ethnicity, cultural background, age, personal interests. Social dynamics within activities, esp risky behaviours and/or drinking a problem.
"They are not like me", "Not a welcoming environment for me"

Reasons for lack of engagement

1. Anxiety: Fear of joining in, nobody to go with, fear of being judged, fear of large events, disability preventing participation. Closely related to (perception) of welcome week events.

“Avoid the deep end, I might drown”1.

Conclusions

- Loneliness and belonging related to health and outcomes
- It is an APP issue – Risk 7
- Time, money and interest matter – but not as much as overwhelm and avoidance of “deep ends”
- Scaffolding for mass/compulsory small/informal is the ultimate goal
- School/faculty/programme events matter a lot (academic societies, SU structures) – because they’re small
- The campus matters a lot – if they are to come less often, make it better (magical) when they’re there