

# COST OF LIVING INFLUENCE ON STUDENT DECISION MAKING



UCAS

# COST OF LIVING AND DECISION MAKING

We spoke to prospective applicants through a survey and focus groups, alongside our regular tracking, to understand the **impact of rising costs on their decisions about their futures**



3,812 UK students  
3,045 International students



Prospective university applicants for entry 2023



Fieldwork dates: November 2022

**66%**

Worried about the cost of living at university (+13 percentage points compared to the previous year)

**75%**

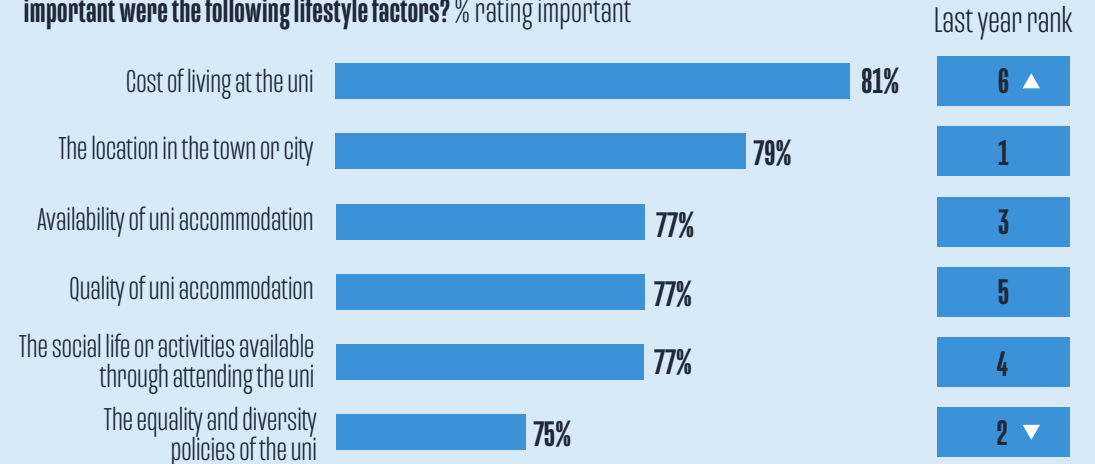
Have concerns about starting university or college (+7 pp compared to previous year)

**73%**

Said these concerns related to finances (+4pp compared to previous year)

**Source:** 2022 Placed end of cycle survey, 6259 respondents.  
**Q:** How do you feel about the following financial aspects of going to university? Q Do you have any concerns about starting university or college? Which is any of the following do these concerns relate to?

## When deciding which universities and colleges to apply to, how important were the following lifestyle factors? % rating important



"I have always wanted to go to University, and it is what my family would have wanted too. Increase in price doesn't change my decision but only makes the journey a little harder."

Survey Respondent, UK

**39%**

Have cut down on the number of open days they attended

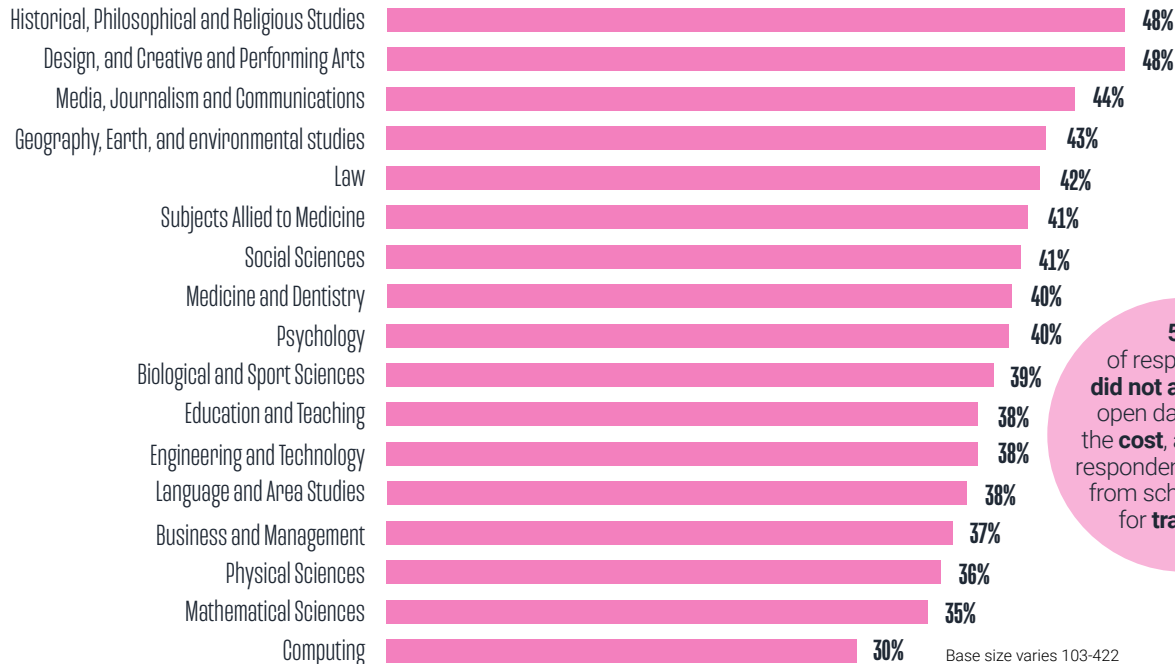
**THIS RISES TO 42%**

for those from POLAR Quintiles 1+2

**BUT ONLY 53%**

of those who have cut down on the number of open days have attended virtual visits instead

## % agree they have had to cut down on the number of open days they attended because of the expense



5% of respondents **did not attend** any open days due to the **cost**, and **<5%** of respondents **got help** from school to pay for **transport**

"[Open days] are really expensive and I couldn't afford the trains so I only got to visit one"

Focus group respondent, UK

"[Virtual open days] gave me an insight into the subject that I wanted to do, but not in terms of the university... the lifestyle... and the area"

Focus group respondent, UK

"In my search I decided that I didn't want to live in London due to the cost of that so I just ignored any universities in London... As soon as I found out how much it would cost... I put it to one side"

Focus group respondent, UK

Base size varies 103-422

## REASONS PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS SAID THEY WERE MORE LIKELY TO GO TO UNIVERSITY/ COLLEGE IN RESPONSE TO THE COST OF LIVING

### University as a goal that cannot be disrupted

"Regardless of what happens I've always been committed to get a degree from university in something in which I enjoy"



### Seeking a degree for its own sake

"The cost of living makes me more determined to go to uni and study for the Job that can help me make a difference in society"

### Seeking a degree for additional security

"I am worried about future debt but I know getting a degree will allow me to get a more skilled job"



### Seeking a degree to earn more money

"I come from a low income family, the faster I get my education, the faster I can support myself and my family"

### Believe universities are responding well

"Because the universities I have applied to are providing better financial support"

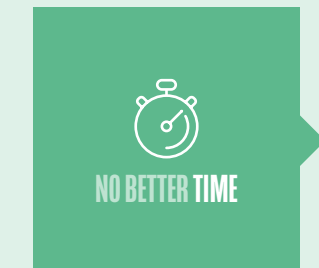


### Made changes to secure their degree

"I will be staying at home so wont have [as many] costs"

### The belief that now may be the only chance

"feel like I have to go this year before the costs get higher and the time to pay back the loan gets bigger"



Q: Can you tell us a bit more about why you feel this way?

## REASONS PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS SAID THEY WERE LESS LIKELY TO GO TO UNIVERSITY/ COLLEGE IN RESPONSE TO THE COST OF LIVING

### Day to day costs are too high

"Because it will be hard to afford to move to a new place and afford bills all alone"



### Overall cost is too high

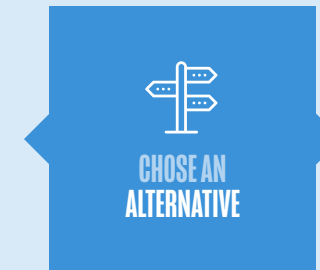
"University is financially impossible without loans for housing, attending uni itself, food etc... It's very daunting knowing I'll never be able to repay these loans"

### Would have to lose money to attend

"Studying full time will mean a decrease in working hours thus less income."

### Saving prior to going

"I may have to take gap year for financial reasons"

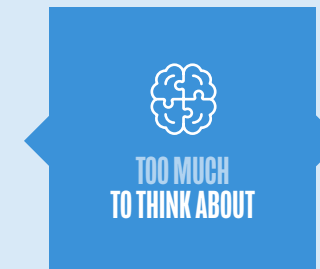


### Would prefer education that pays to participate

"Apprenticeship pays you and pays for your education"

### Questioning the value of a degree subject

"If we can barely afford to eat, why should I put stress on not just me, but my mother all for a degree that our own government see's no use for?"

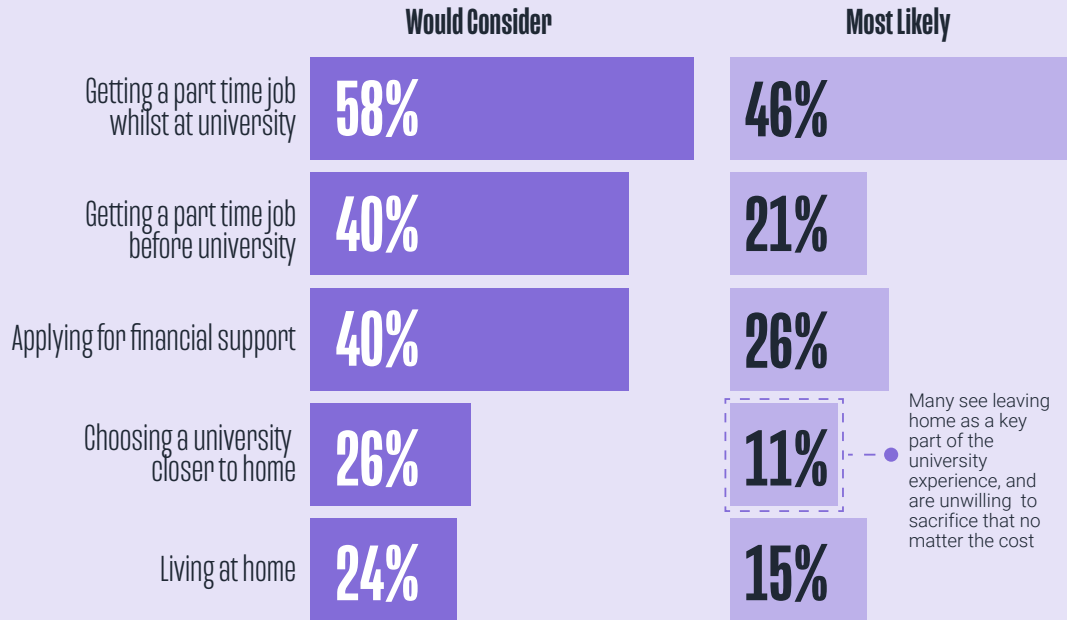


### Would add to existing stress

"I don't want the additional stress with university and working only to then panic about having to feed and warm myself."

Q: Can you tell us a bit more about why you feel this way?

# CONSIDERATION AND LIKELY CHANGES



"I just want to throw myself into a completely different space"  
Focus group respondent, UK

"I'd like to get away from here!"  
Focus group respondent, UK

"I've always wanted to move out and go to universities that are further away as I feel it would be a nice step up and a challenge"  
Focus group respondent, UK

"Obviously I'm going to be there for a couple of years. I didn't want to be somewhere that yes the course was good, but I didn't enjoy living there"  
Focus group respondent, UK

Q: Thinking about the increased cost of living, which of the following, if any, are you now considering? Respondents: 3,526 (UK)  
Q: And which of the below, are you most likely to do? Please select no more than 2 options Respondents: 2,869 (UK)

# COST OF LIVING IS IMPACTING EXPECTATIONS

**51%**  
Have lowered their expectations of student life

**52%**  
Expect to cut back on extra-curricular activities

**68%**  
Expect part time work to give less time to socialise

**58%**  
Considering getting part-time work

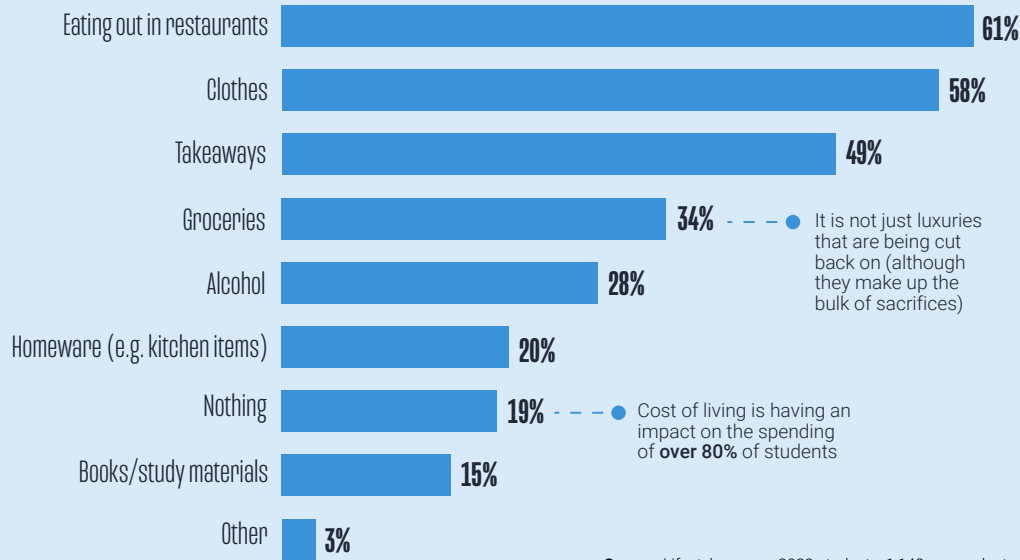
**66%**  
Expect part time work to give less time to study

Q24: Thinking ahead to your student experience, how far do you agree with the following statements? Because of the cost of living increase:  
Source: Cost of living survey, 2023 prospective applicants



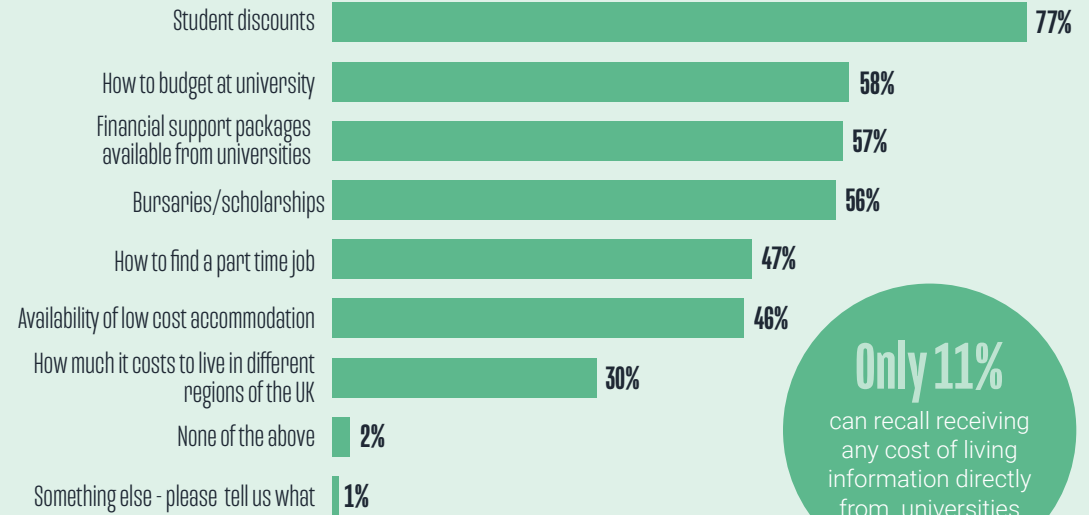
# EATING OUT, CLOTHES AND TAKEAWAYS ARE BEING CUT BACK ON, DUE TO THE COST OF LIVING

Since moving to university, have you had to cut back on any of the following items because of the cost of living? Please select all that apply



Source: Lifestyle survey, 2022 students, 1,142 respondents

Thinking about the cost of living increases, what information would help you? Please select all that apply



**Only 11%** can recall receiving any cost of living information directly from universities

Source: UCAS Cost of Living Survey, 2023 prospective applicants

## COST OF LIVING IS IMPACTING EXPERIENCE

**55%**  
Says their university life has been negatively affected

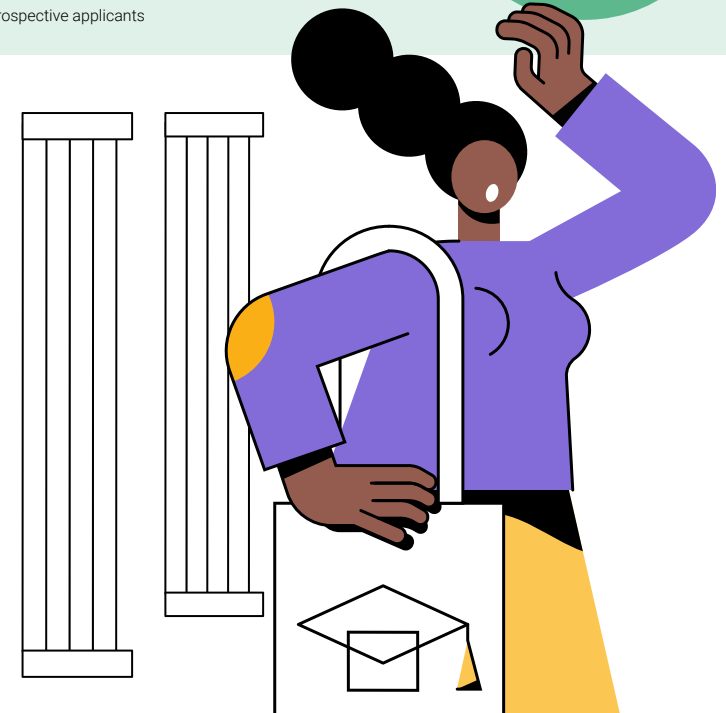
**43%**  
Say they are working part time because of the cost of living

Student spend per week dropped from **£235 to £219**

**79%**  
Students concerned about finances

**42%**  
shop at Lidl and Aldi (up from 37%)

Source: Lifestyle survey, 2022 students, 1,200 respondents



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For more information or to discuss further please contact your  
**Customer Success Director** or email [educationsservices@ucas.ac.uk](mailto:educationsservices@ucas.ac.uk)