



Student Lifestyle Report 2023



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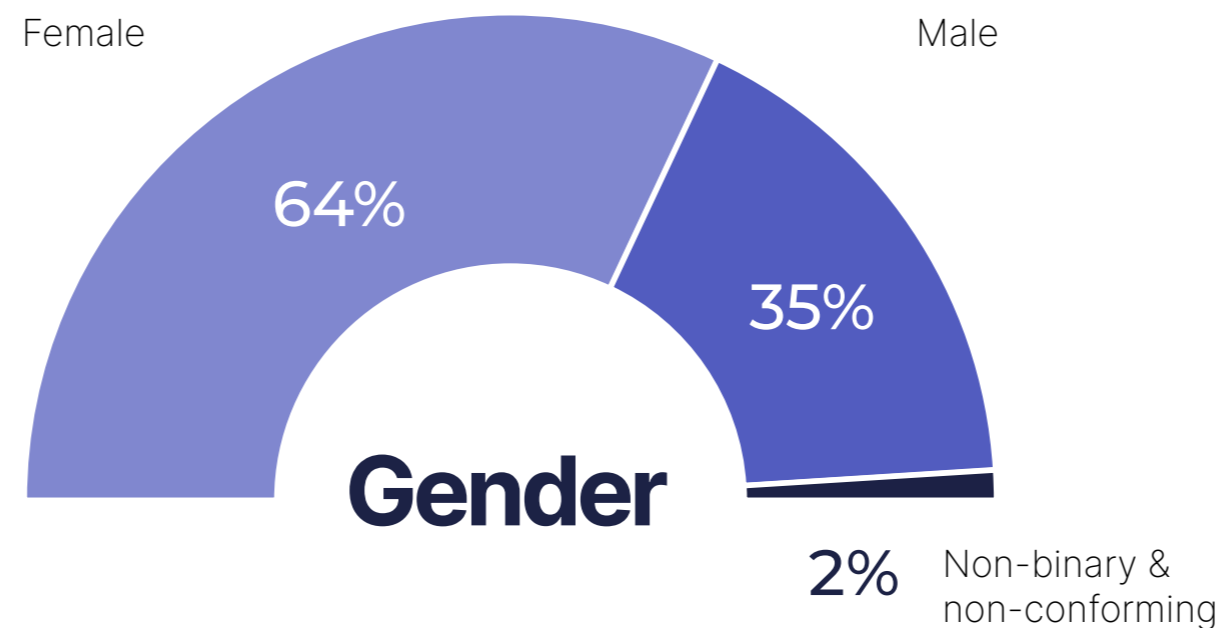
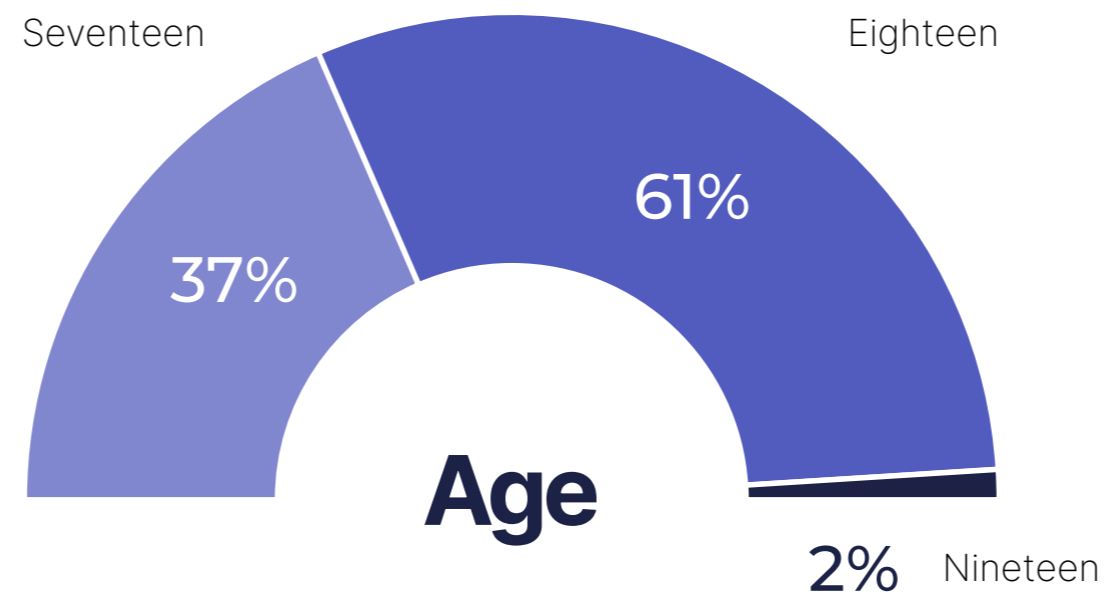
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Survey profile

This year we surveyed 14,206 Year 12 students completing their secondary schooling in every state and territory in Australia between November 2022 and February 2023.



What we do and why we do it.

The Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) is responsible for managing the university application process for students seeking admission to most undergraduate and many postgraduate courses at participating higher education institutions.

UAC processes applications, assesses eligibility, facilitates offers from universities and calculates and provides the Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) to Year 12 students in NSW and the ACT.

Our centralised platform simplifies the admissions process for students, schools and participating institutions, ensuring a more efficient and accessible experience.

We care about learning and we're passionate about helping people access their potential through education. It's why we exist and it's why we'll continue to deliver platforms and services that meet the needs of all communities.

Education

Universities are rich and complex environments that offer students a wide range of opportunities for academic, social and personal growth.

In this section we share what students want from their university experience, how they choose what to study, and what they are most looking forward to.

Students told us they are eager to escape the perceived limitations of their high school lives and start a new chapter with greater control over their learning.

They are hungry for new experiences and enthusiastic about forging new friendships and engaging in scholarship based on their own unique interests.

There is an expectation that their time on campus is both safe and fun and that their investment in their education will lead to meaningful career opportunities after they graduate.

Universities serve as fertile grounds for the cultivation of diverse ideas and invest significant resources in attracting and enrolling students and ensuring their success.

We hope the insights in this section will help our partners in the sector as they develop policy and deliver services, facilities and curricula.

It's the vibe.

While location and reputation were important factors last year, students choosing where to enrol are now placing greater emphasis on campus culture (58%), graduate employment outcomes (56%), and the location and ease of commute (54%).

What students want.

Students want 24/7 access to facilities such as libraries, study rooms and computer labs (81%). They also desire free campus-wide Wi-Fi (79%) and low-cost or free food options on campus (77%).

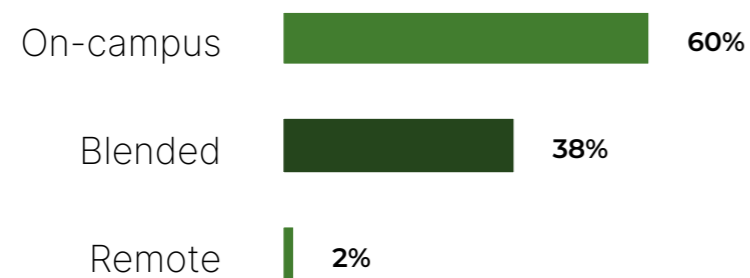
Live your passion.

A passion for the subjects to be studied was once again the dominant factor for students building their course wish list (81%), an increase of 12% from 2022.

Access and opportunities.

One-third of students applied for scholarships to provide financial assistance during their studies, and 25% said that scholarship availability influenced their choice of university. Close to 40% expressed interest in participating in work experience or internship opportunities during their tertiary studies.

Preferred study mode



Where next?

Students consider a range of factors when choosing a uni or college. Here are some of the most common considerations.

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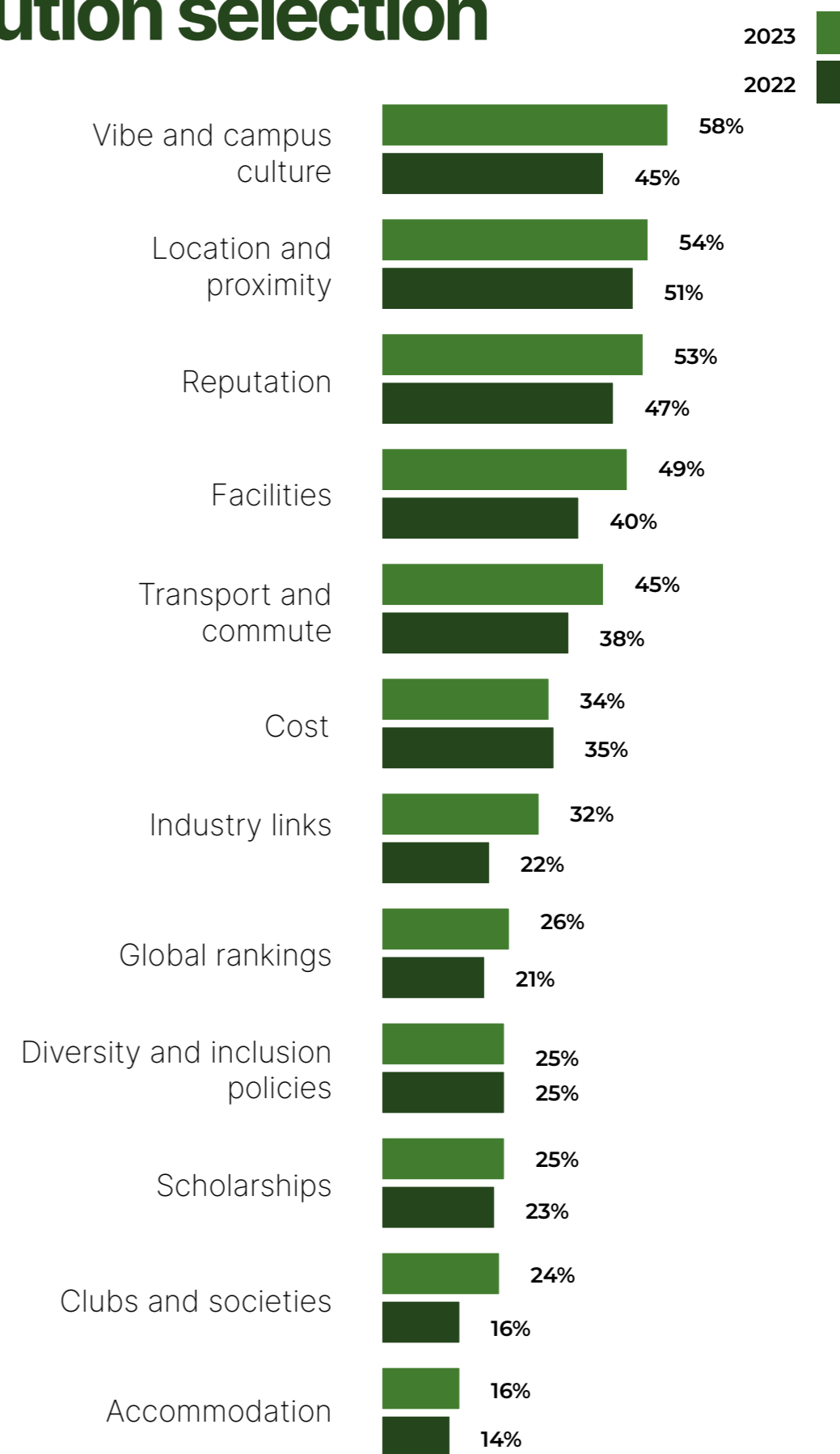
'The overall vibe and whether a campus feels welcoming and supportive.'

'The social justice and sustainability initiatives on offer.'

'Location, ease of access and cost of living in the area.'



Considerations guiding institution selection





The subject of choice

As they plan their academic journey for the next three years, school leavers primarily focus on aligning their passions and interests with the subjects they will be studying.

Passion significantly influenced the course choices of 83% of students in 2023 and 81% in 2022, underscoring its significance in the course selection process.

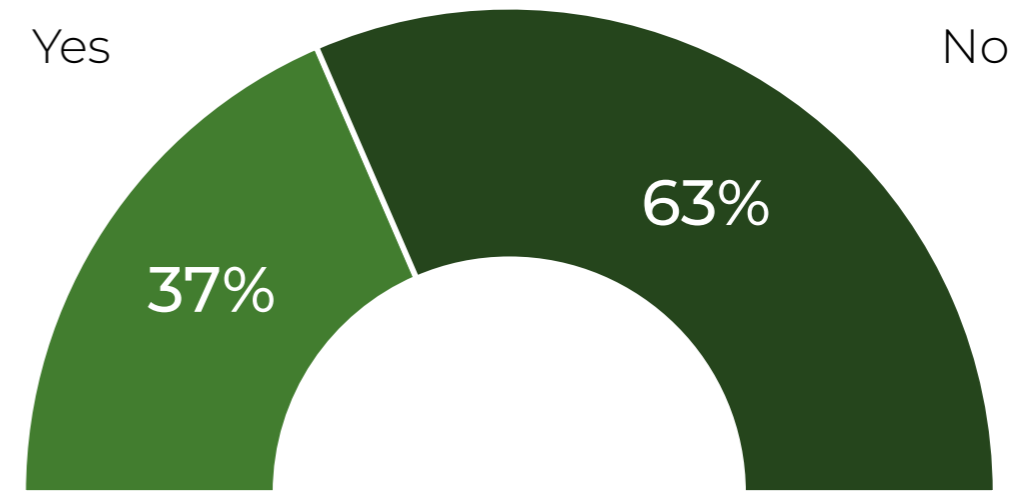
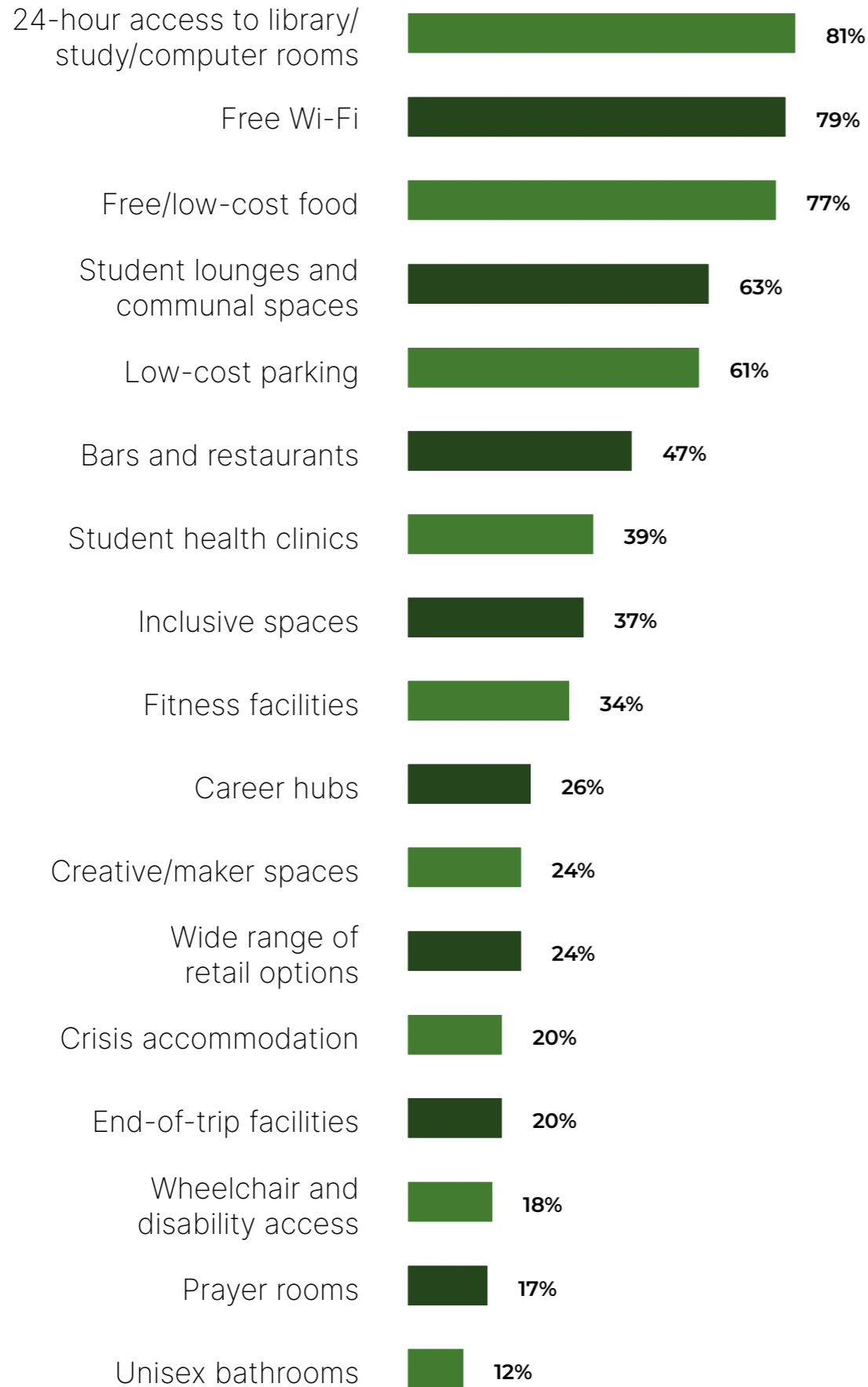
The importance of graduate employment outcomes has surged this year, increasing from 44% in 2022 to 56% in 2023.

This shift reflects the growing emphasis they place on securing employment after completing their studies. Students also consider available internship opportunities to equip themselves with real-world skills for their chosen profession.

What matters when choosing a course



Facilities students expect



Students who applied for scholarships

25% of students consider the scholarships on offer when deciding where they want to study.



The adventure ahead.

After leaving high school behind, students are eager to start their university experience, with all the new-found freedom and independence that entails. Here are some of the things they say they are most looking forward to.

“

‘Meeting new people, creating new friendships and learning new things while finding my life purpose.’

‘Beginning a new chapter of my life and feeding my drive for education and knowledge.’

‘Being able to focus on the subjects that will help me in my career rather than doing a range of diverse subjects like in high school.’

Digital credentials.

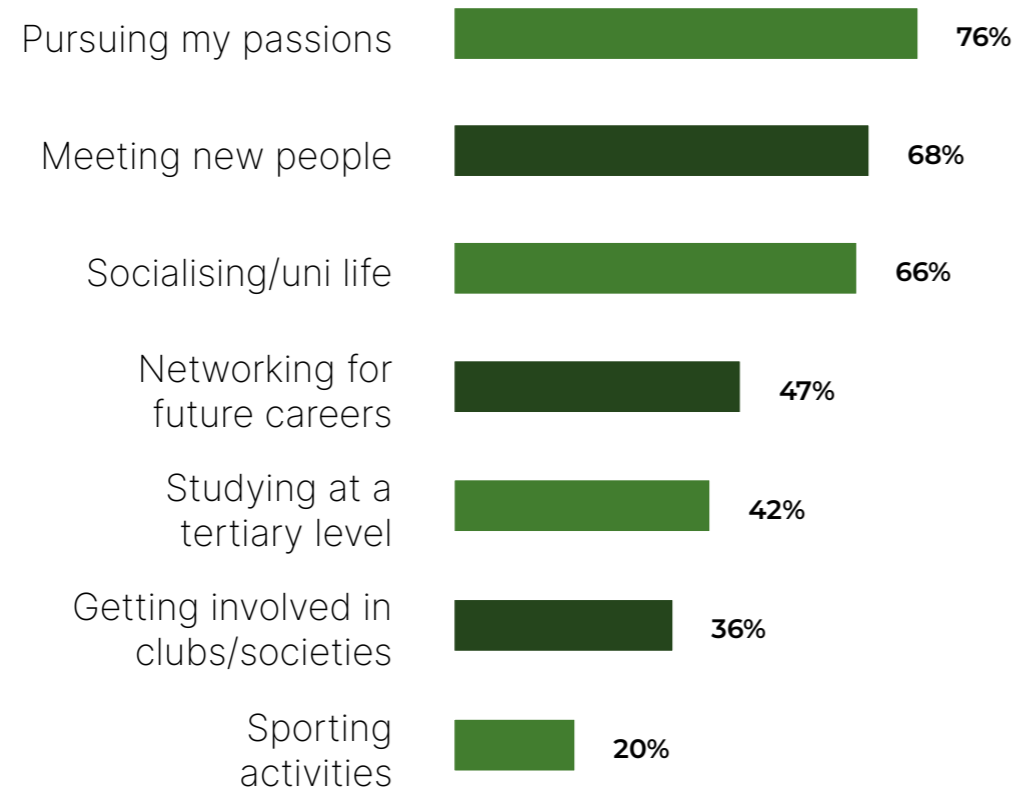
91% of students have never received a digital credential.

While over 90% of students say they haven't used or received any digital credentials or badges, we expect uptake to rapidly increase as governments and the education and employment sectors invest in new credentialing solutions such as learner passports and portfolios.

After conducting this survey, UAC released ATARs to NSW HSC students into CredFolio, UAC's digital credentials wallet.

To date, 13,215 Year 12 students have claimed their ATAR through CredFolio.

What are students most looking forward to?



Friendship, freedom, and fresh starts

Students starting university look forward to much more than lectures, textbooks, and examinations. They are filled with a sense of eagerness and anticipation, ready to embrace new experiences and opportunities at uni where each day brings something new to explore, learn and grow from.

Growth.

'Expanding my knowledge, learning about the world around me and stepping into the adult world.'

Sarah, 18

'Putting my head down and working nonstop until I achieve my goals and aspirations. I have no interest in wasting time by going out this year so I only look forward to pushing myself to the limits, seeing how far I can take myself and to begin to support my family in any way I can.'

Nik, 18

'I am looking forward to an avalanche of growth and prosperity. I aim to achieve my short-term goals and make myself proud. I want to prosper in my studies and allow myself to have less doubt in myself and excel to my highest capacity.'

Amira, 18

Career.

'I am eager to learn new things and implement those skills into my future career. Getting a shot at making a good life for myself. A good career is important to me as I want my children to live a nice life and not do it as tough as I have.'

Claudia, 18

'Advancing towards my goals and my future career becoming a commercial pilot.'

Alex, 18

'Starting my university experience and chasing my dream job as a paediatric nurse!'

Bonnie, 17

Friendship.

'Meeting new people, starting in a new community and looking forward to starting to study my dream career.'

Karan, 18

'Finding and talking to new friends that share the same values and responsibilities as me.'

Ryan, 18

'Being able to form new connections and friendships through university and studying my specific interests at a tertiary level with like-minded peers.'

Sully, 18

Independence.

'I'm excited for the freedom to be able to determine my future. University is a fresh start with more opportunities to pursue my interests and gain more independence.'

Olivia, 18

'Moving away from home and learning to live independently! Being able to experience city life and live in a more diverse area.'

Meghan, 18

'Embracing change due to moving four hours away. A big move to study my dream career and become more independent while meeting many new friends.'

Amelia, 18

Personal passions.

'Starting fresh and doing a course that I am truly passionate about at my dream university to build a career that I have always dreamed of. As well as being independent and happy physically, socially and emotionally.'

Ana, 17

'I'm excited about diving into all my interests with more autonomy, getting to further my education in a less stuffy environment and developing myself and my skills.'

Ena, 18

'Studying a degree that I am passionate about as I will be more motivated to study more. Also representing the state in football with my fellow teammates.'

Antonia, 18

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Spend

The typical undergraduate experience is often funded by a mix of part-time or casual jobs, often with a dash of government or parental financial assistance.

First-year students start making new friends, managing their own lives and often moving away from home or living in a new area. Indeed, for many, this will be the first time they have needed to manage a budget.

As newly independent consumers they represent a powerful force in the economy.

However, their limited financial resources mean they are among the groups most affected by the cost-of-living challenges playing out across Australia.

Escalating prices for food, transport and petrol and mounting costs for rent and bills are leading to significant financial strain for students and a pull back on discretionary spending.

After all, it's hard to justify a new pair of shoes or a knees-up at the uni bar when the trade-off means you might not be able to buy groceries for the next week.

As students focus on making their money go further, why are some brands succeeding while others are falling off?

With every dollar being counted and considered, read on to explore the factors that influence price-sensitive students' saving and purchasing habits, their brand affinities, and why sustainability and value are proving to be powerful drivers of brand loyalty.

No way flexi-pay.

Buy now, pay later services have a limited appeal among high school seniors, with more than 80% of students opting to pay upfront and avoid deferred payment options.

Super savers.

According to the data, 92% of students make a conscious effort to save money every week. During Year 12, over half of students held part-time or casual jobs (57%) and had a superannuation fund (56%).

Spending trends.

A substantial majority of student shoppers (76%) are willing to pay a higher price for sustainably produced goods. Almost one-third (31%) are loyal to brands they believe offer good value for money.

Tertiary toolkit.

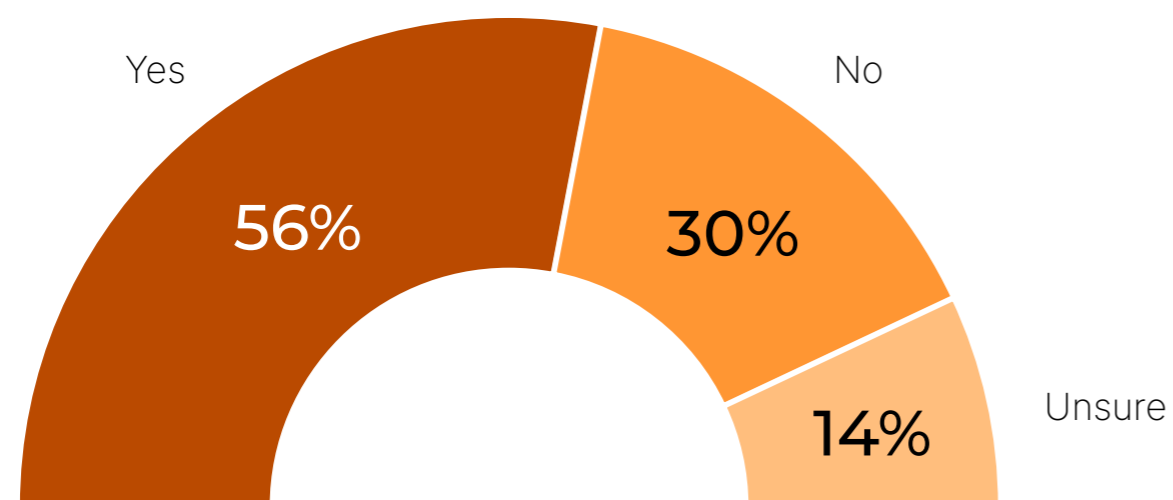
In the fortnight leading up to the start of university, almost half of future students (45%) begin purchasing essential items such as textbooks (71%), stationery (68%), and laptops (47%).



Income, savings, and super

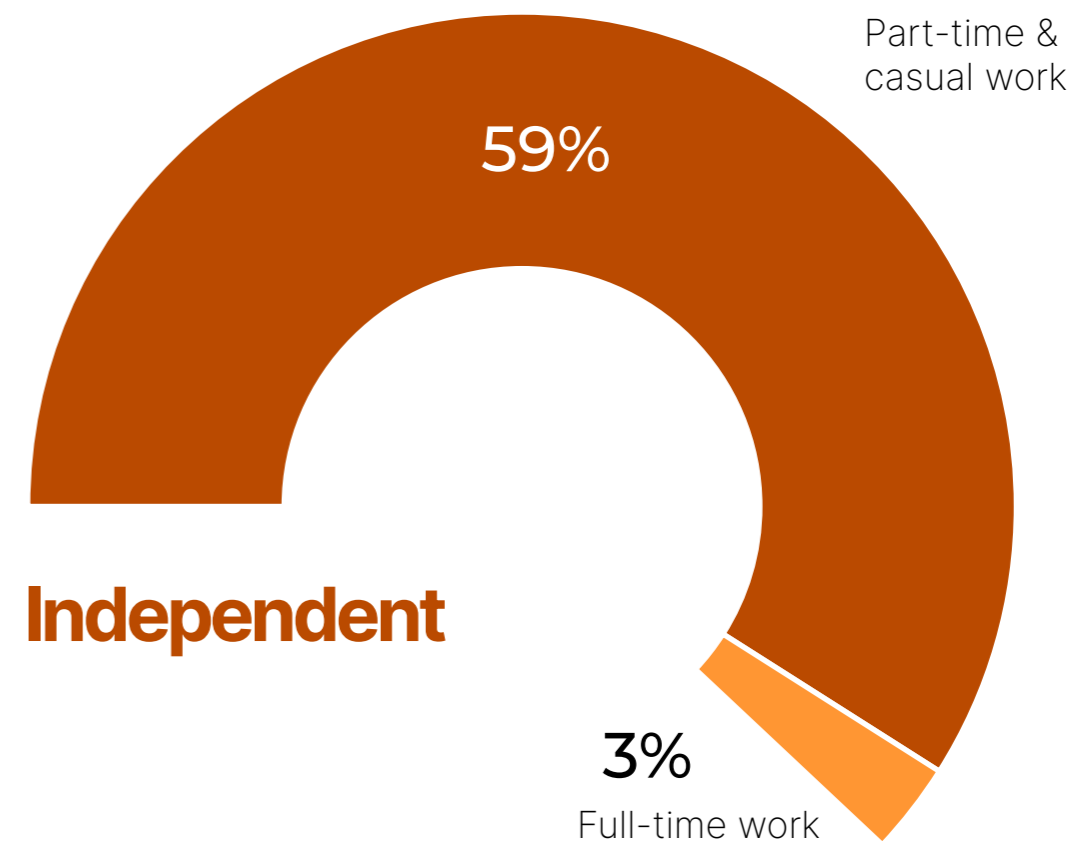
92% of students try to save money each week.

15% have considered changing funds in the last 12 months, seeking lower fees or stronger investment returns.

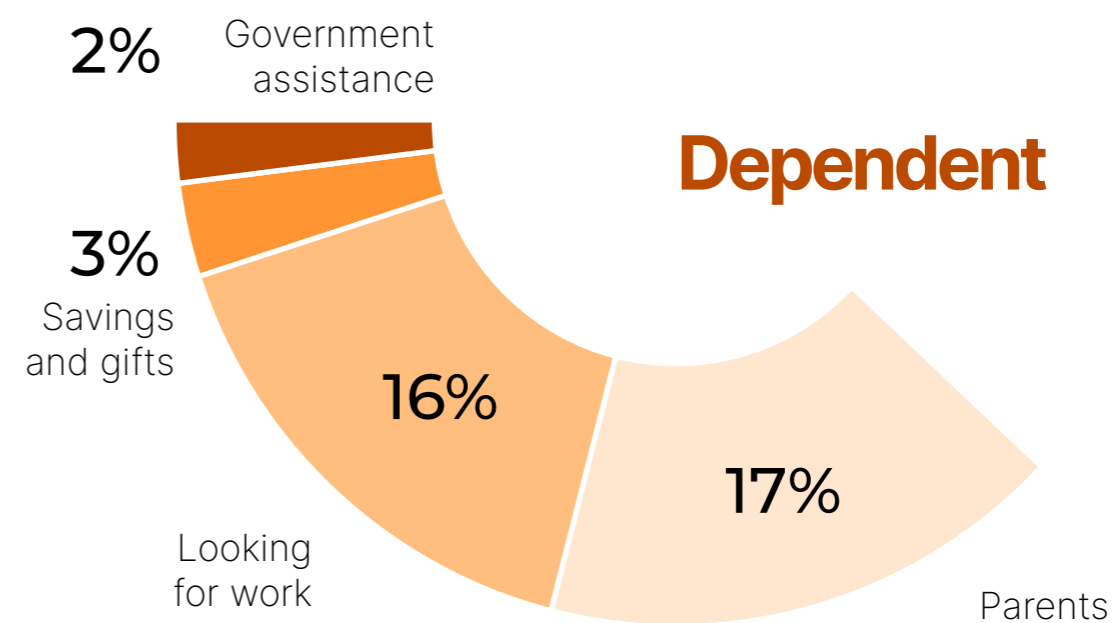


Students with a super account

Primary income sources



Independent

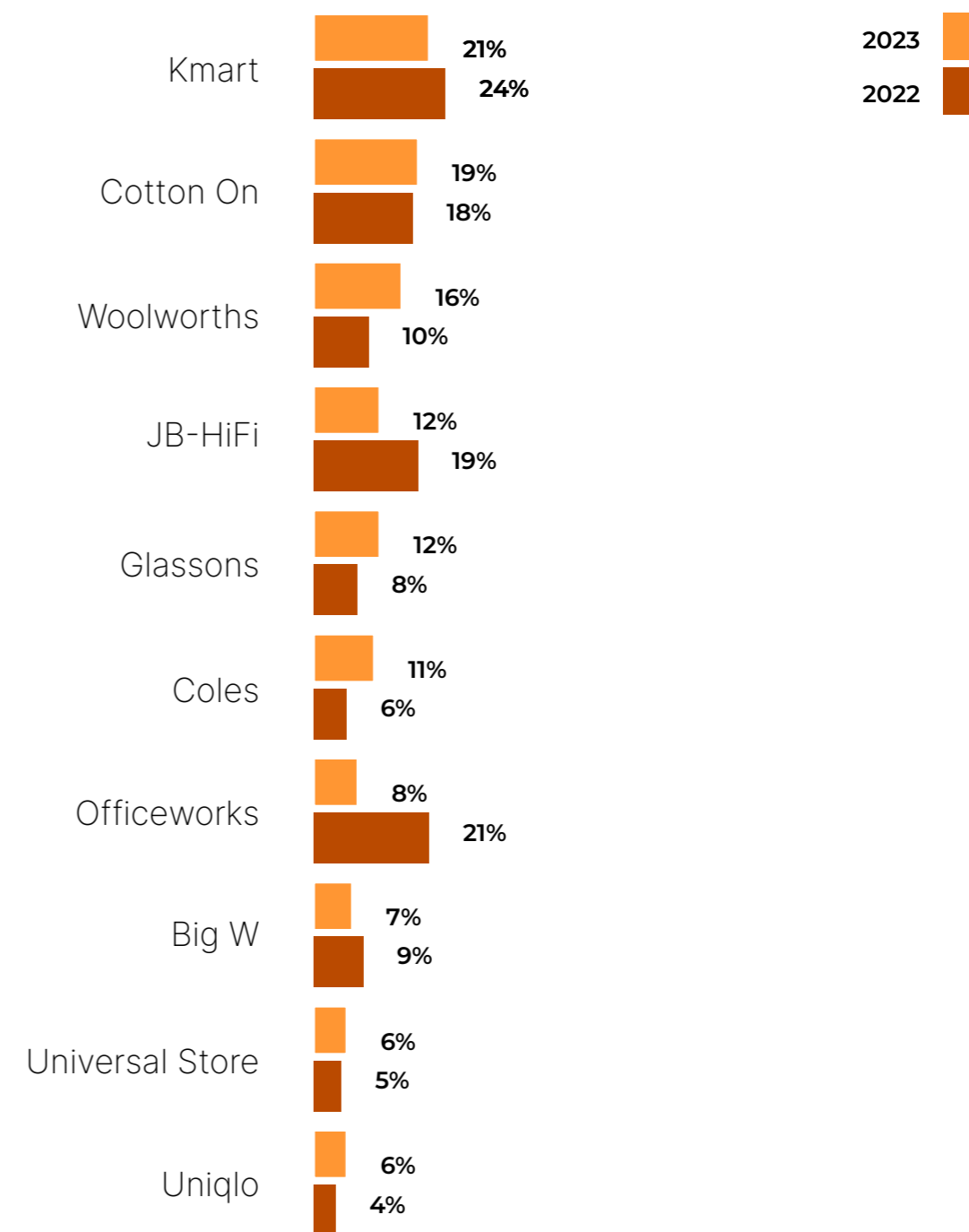


Dependent





Favourite stores

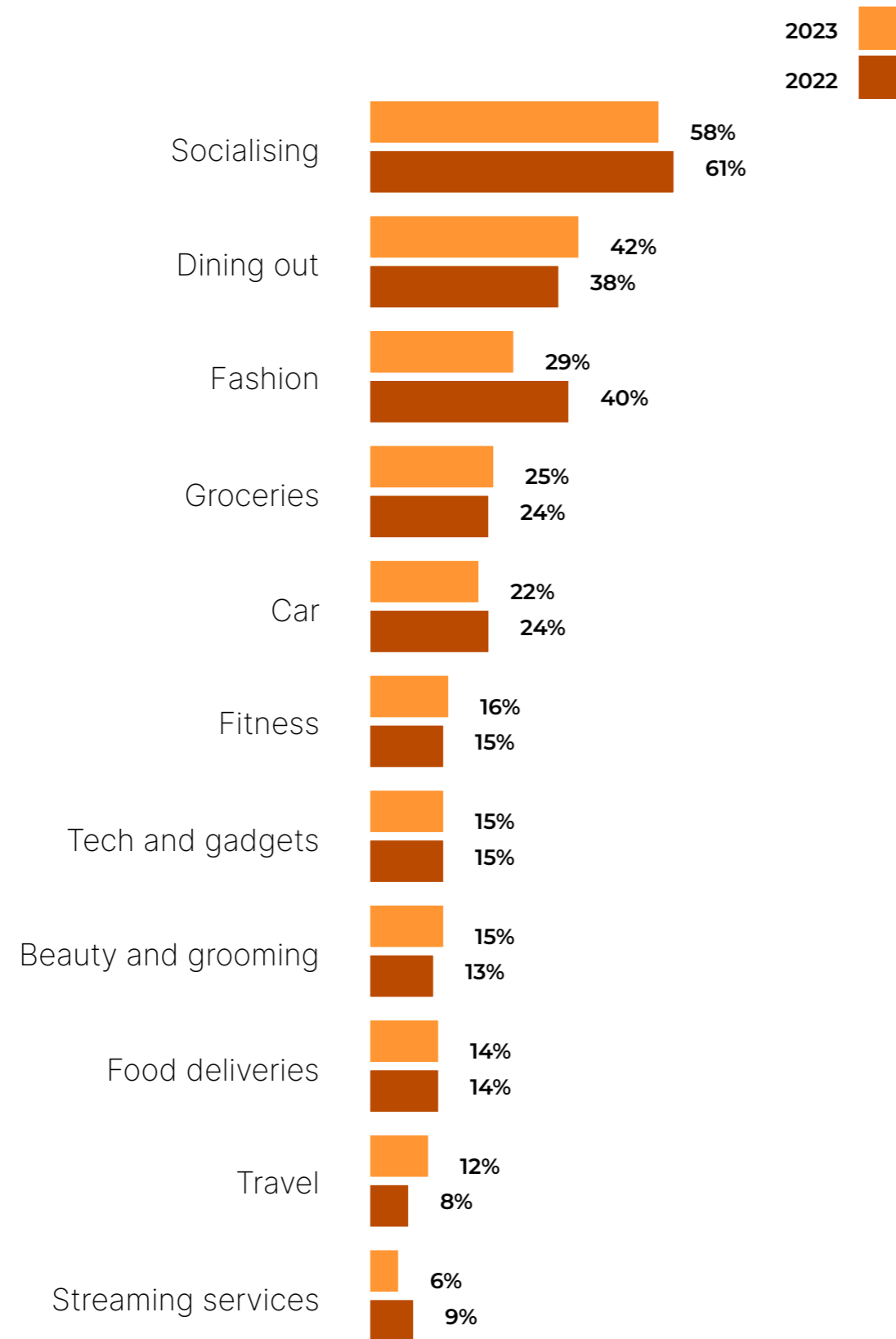


Preferred ways to shop



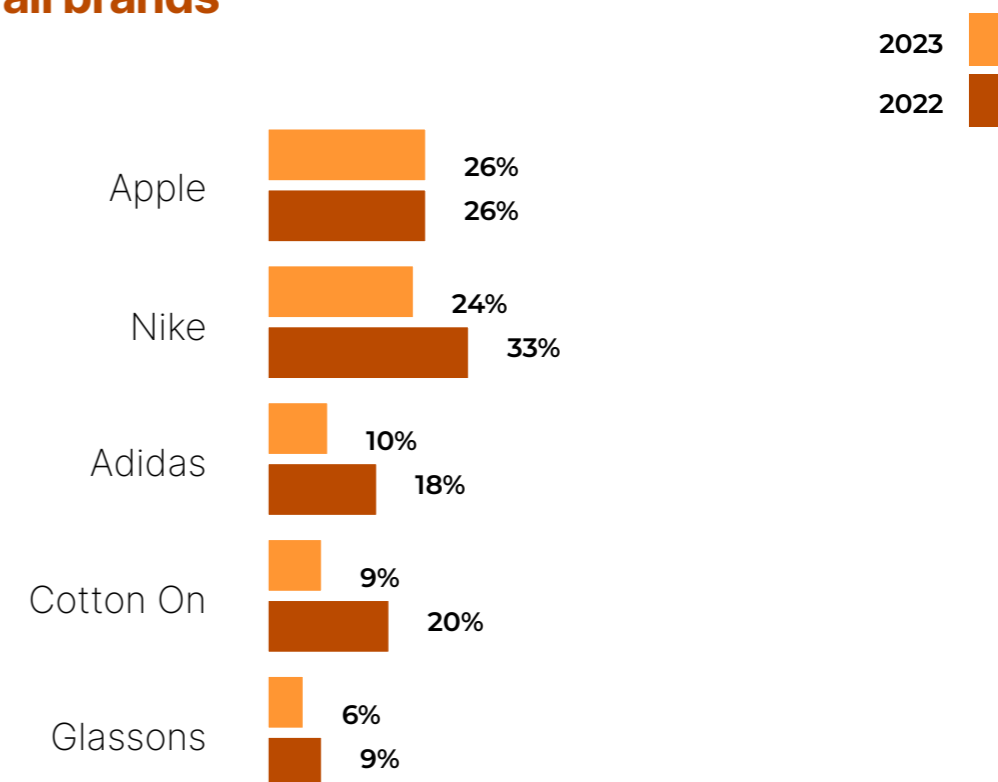
Student budget breakdown

Spending on travel, eating out and fitness increased this year, while socialising, fashion, car expenses and streaming saw cuts.

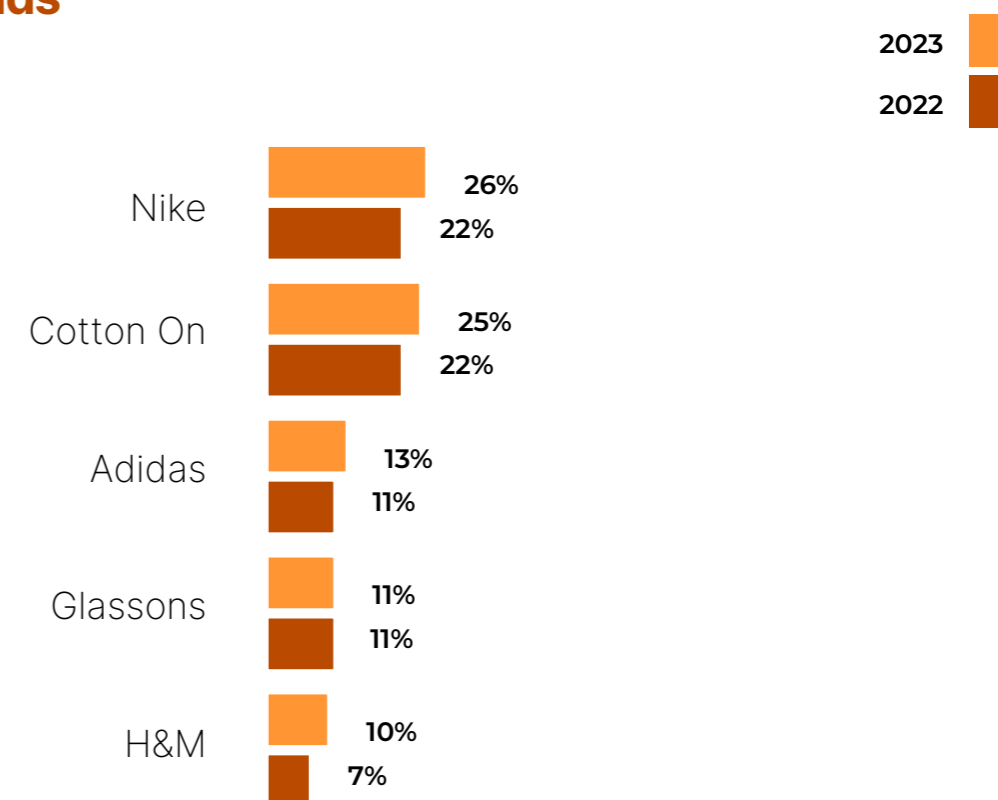


Cool brands on campus

Top five overall brands

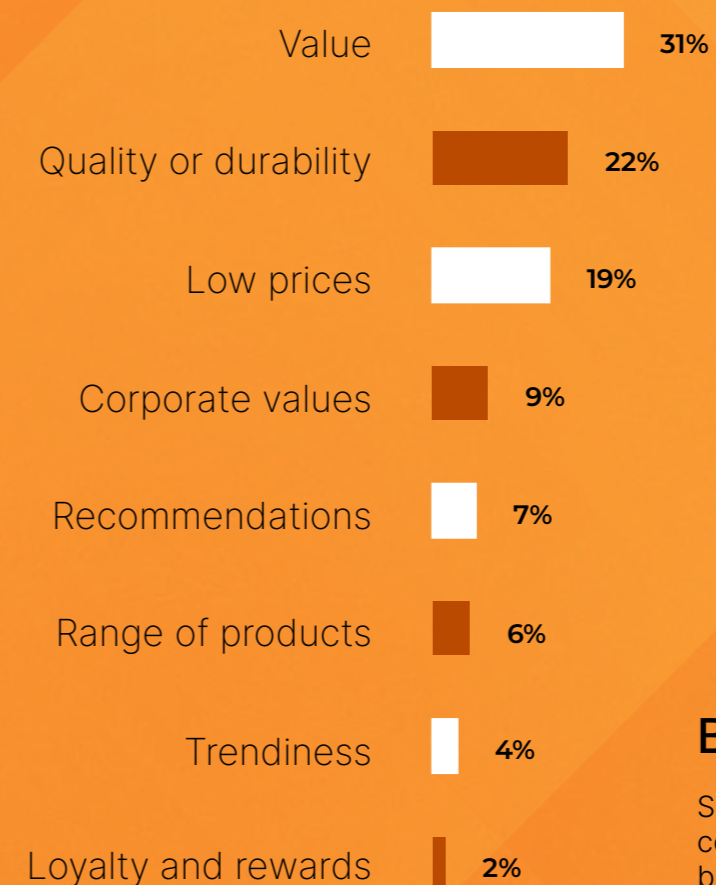


Fashion brands





Factors driving brand preferences



Brand matters.

Some of the factors students consider when choosing which brands to support.

'I prefer quality and functionality and I'm not paying for expensive stuff that functions the same as cheaper products.'



'Ethical business practices are the most important factor when I choose to buy from a brand. I try to avoid brands that use child labour, sweatshops or that encourage overconsumption.'

'I'm on a budget so price is most important, the cheaper the better.'

'It depends what I'm buying but I usually choose based on a mix of low prices, value for money, and durability.'

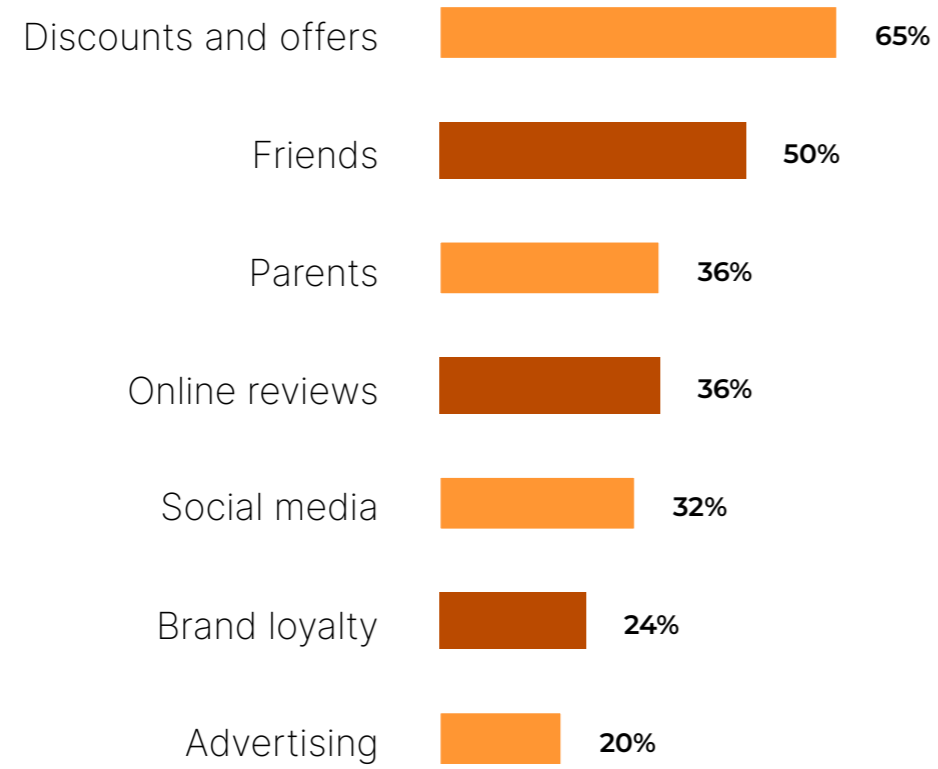
Sustainable shoppers.

Sustainability is a major factor for students making purchasing decisions.

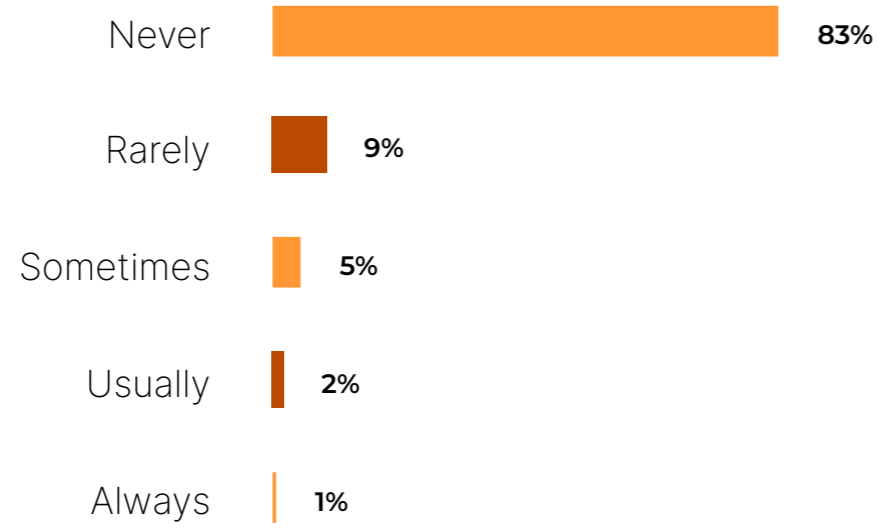
Students will pay a premium of 40% for goods that are sustainably produced.

76% of students are willing to pay more for sustainable products.

Key spending drivers

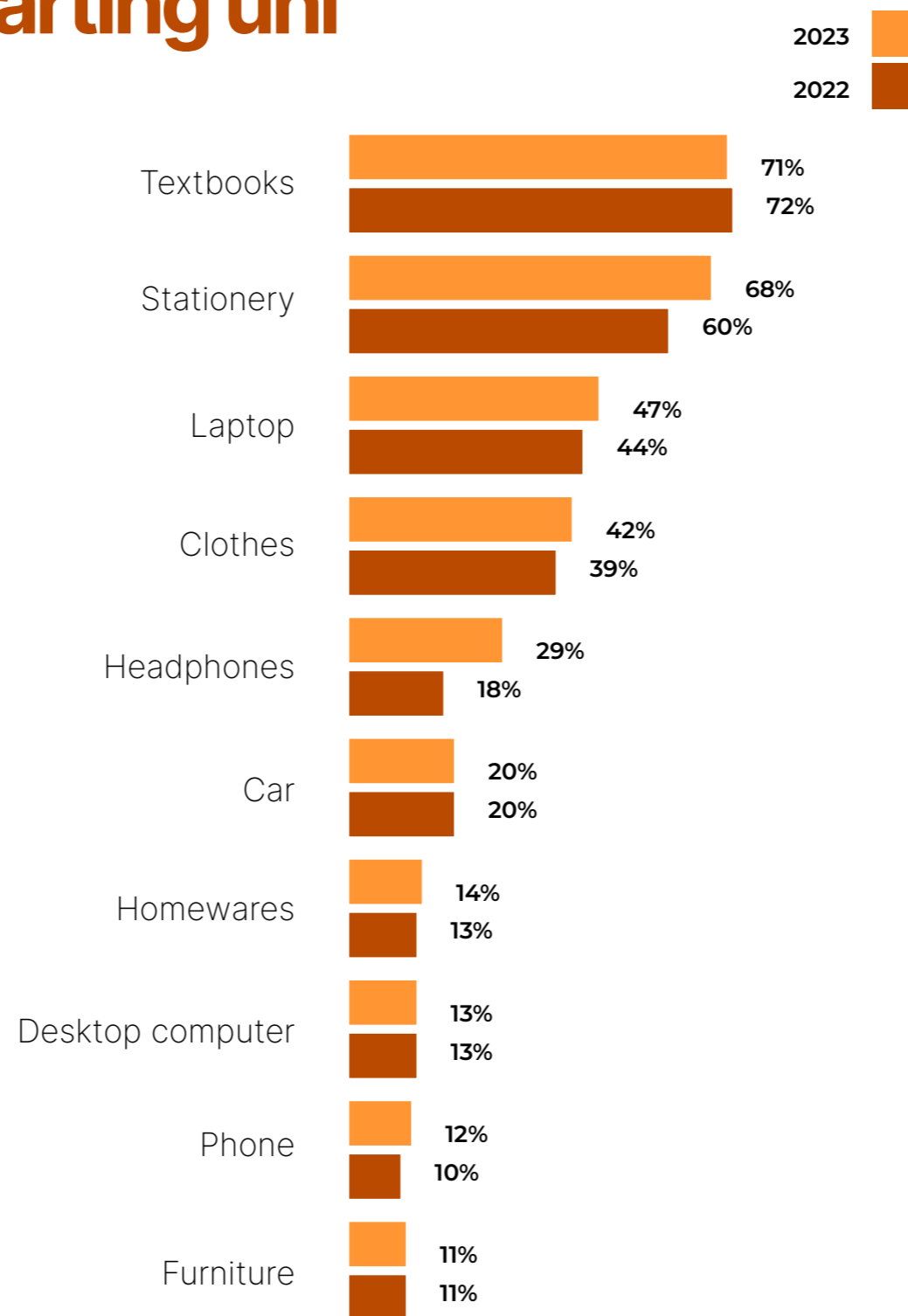


Use of buy now, pay later services



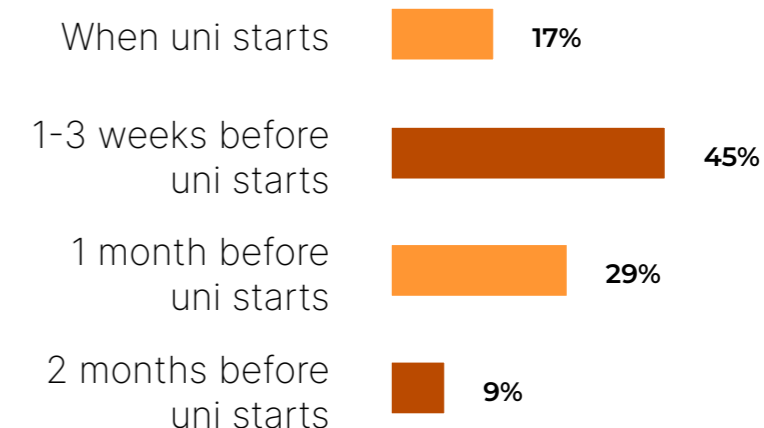


What students buy before starting uni



Unsurprisingly, textbooks are the most commonly purchased item by students about to enter university. There has been a notable increase in the purchase of stationery, laptops and headphones compared to 2022.

Purchasing timeline



Uni essentials.

A selection of items that students plan to purchase prior to commencing university or college.

'Cutlery and basic cleaning products.'

'E-bike, backpack and new shoes.'

'Film camera, a mini fan and mattress and sheets for my college room.'

'Music scores, a music stand and phone holder for recording.'

'Memory cards, notebooks, and a new pair of headphones.'

'A Nintendo Switch, film camera and new laptop.'

'Microwave, a toaster, blender, an entire kitchen really.'

'Sewing equipment and fabrics and diaries.'

'Kindle to carry my books and ink cartridges for assignments.'



Pleasurable pastimes

A selection of the many pastimes that students enjoy.

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'Shopping, collecting Beatles memorabilia and watching classic films from the 1920s to 1970s.'

'Making videos, designing and prepping art pieces, yoga and restoring old books.'

'Collecting and creating eco-friendly fashion accessories using recycled materials.'

'Tabletop roleplaying games like Dungeons & Dragons and Magic: the Gathering.'

'Postcrossing: sending postcards all over the world.'

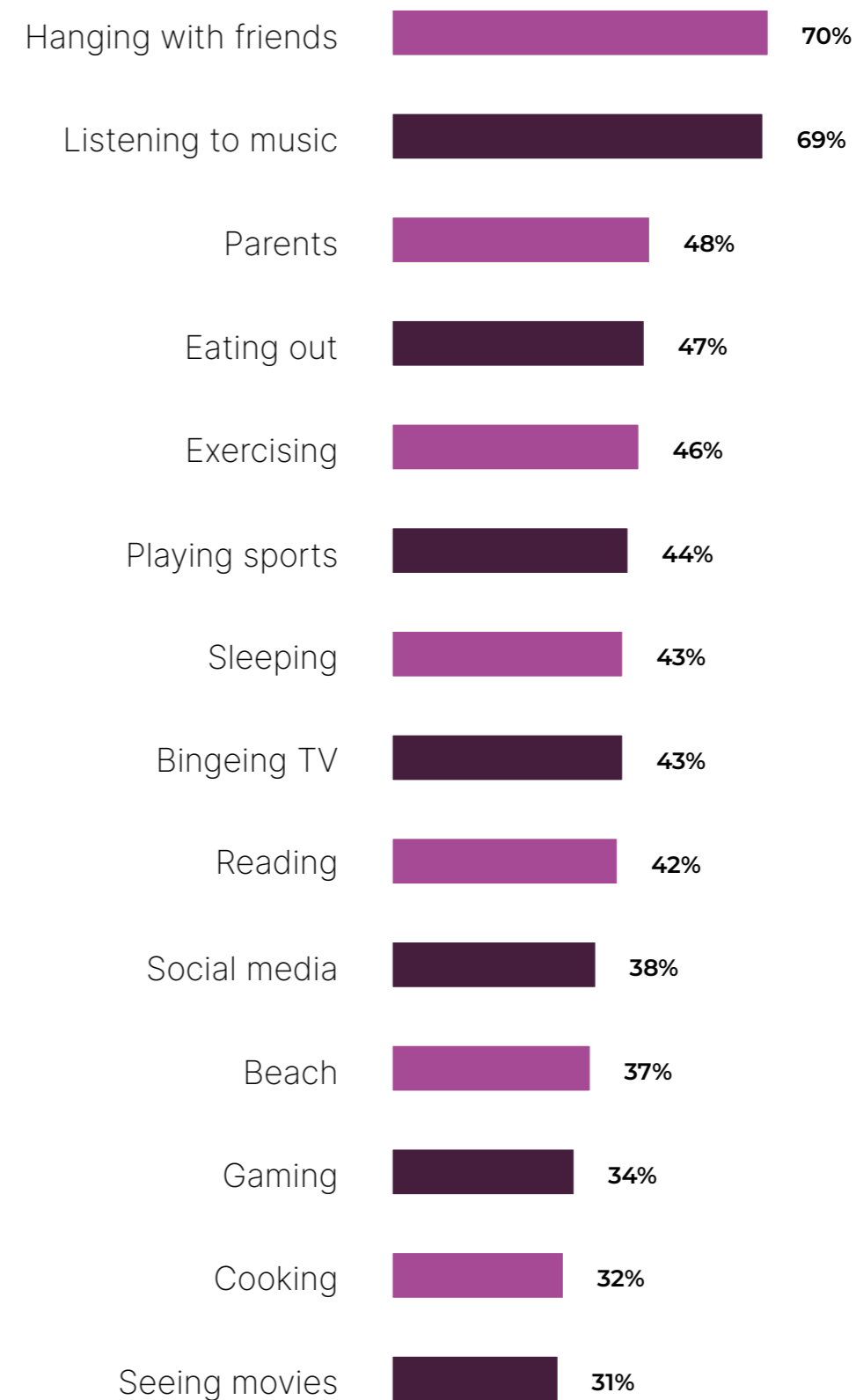
'Building computers and other electronic gadgets.'

'Reading manga and light novels as well as watching anime.'

'Working on cars, dirt bikes and guitars.'



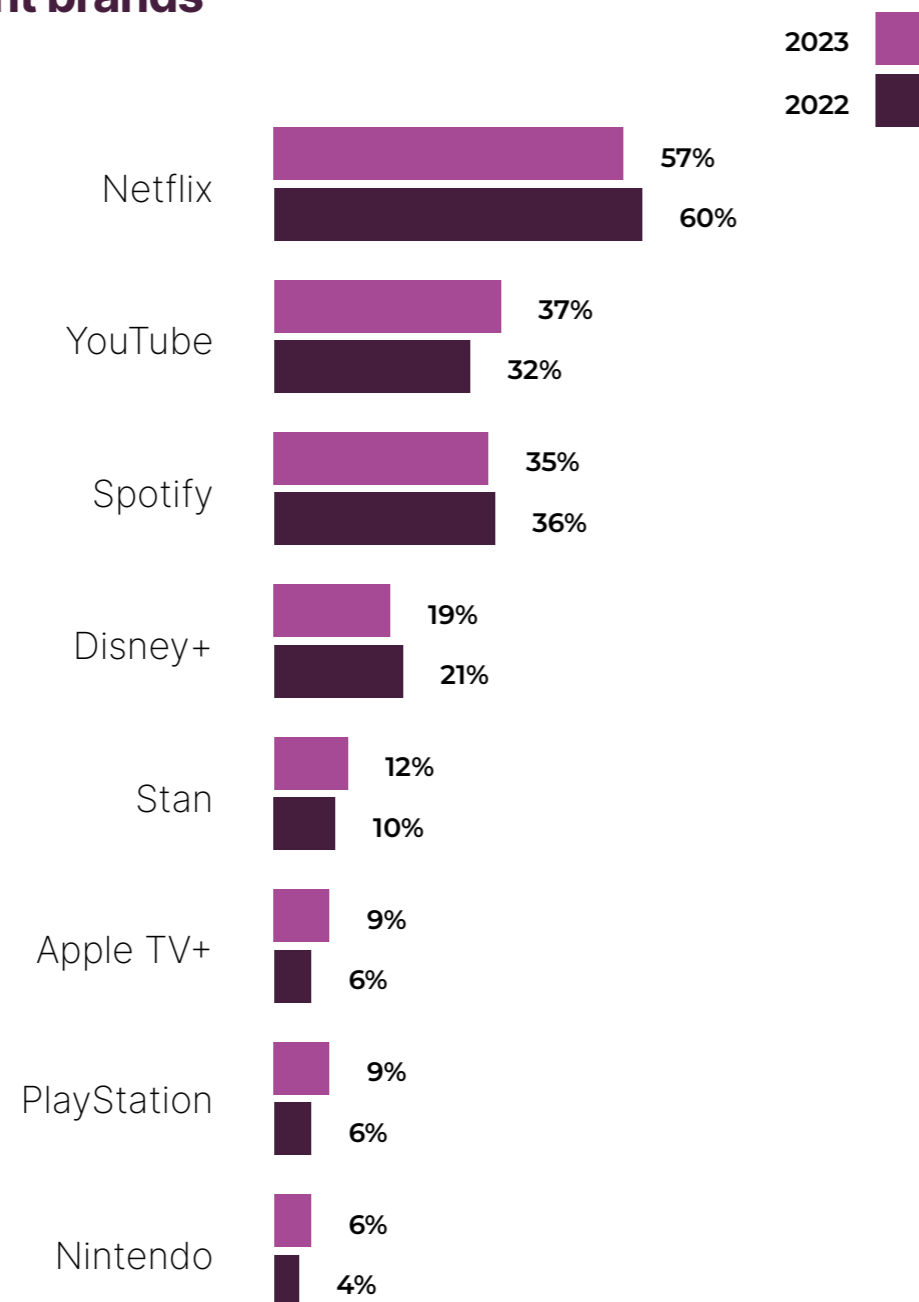
How students spend their free time



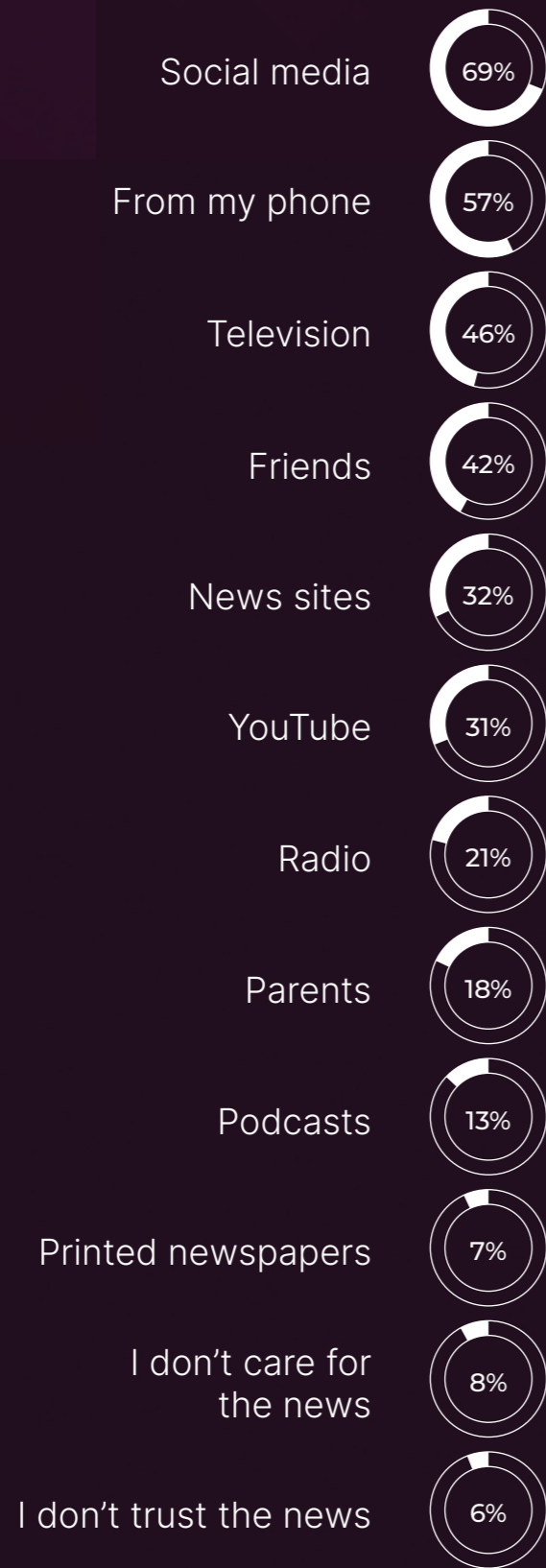
The best in entertainment

For the third consecutive year, students have chosen Netflix as their top entertainment brand of choice. YouTube is gaining ground, however.

Top entertainment brands



Where students turn for news



News consumption varies greatly.

'I don't actively seek out the news, but if something is important, I'll hear about it.'

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'News makes me anxious and I try and avoid it.'

'The news provides me with no benefit so I choose not to watch it.'

'I don't always trust major news sources so I cross check with more minor, citizen-run news accounts/websites. I also often avoid news sources that have heavy socio-political bias.'

'I don't really watch the news but I hear it from friends and family.'

'I often seek out government sites to get facts directly and draw my own conclusion in terms of politics as I recognise the bias and controlling hold that individuals and parties have on the mainstream media.'

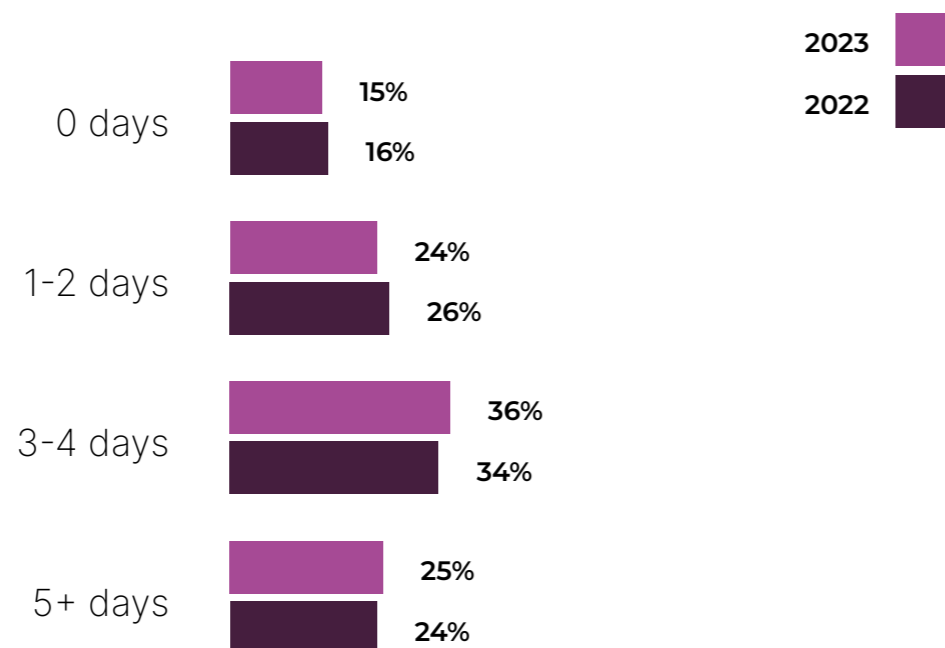
'I try to get news from non-mainstream, independent or modern, less-popular news sites that I can understand as a teenager because they appeal to my values, attention span, or they aren't overwhelming and are less concerned with the rapid pace of 24-hour news.'

'I like to stay informed and make sure I'm getting a well-rounded view of the world, so I try to read articles from a variety of perspectives and sources, especially from young people or from working class people.'

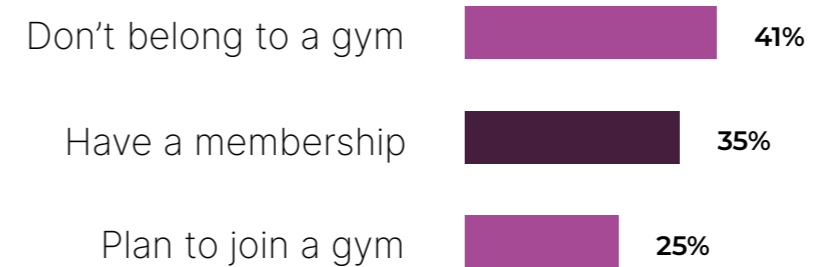


Exercise and activities

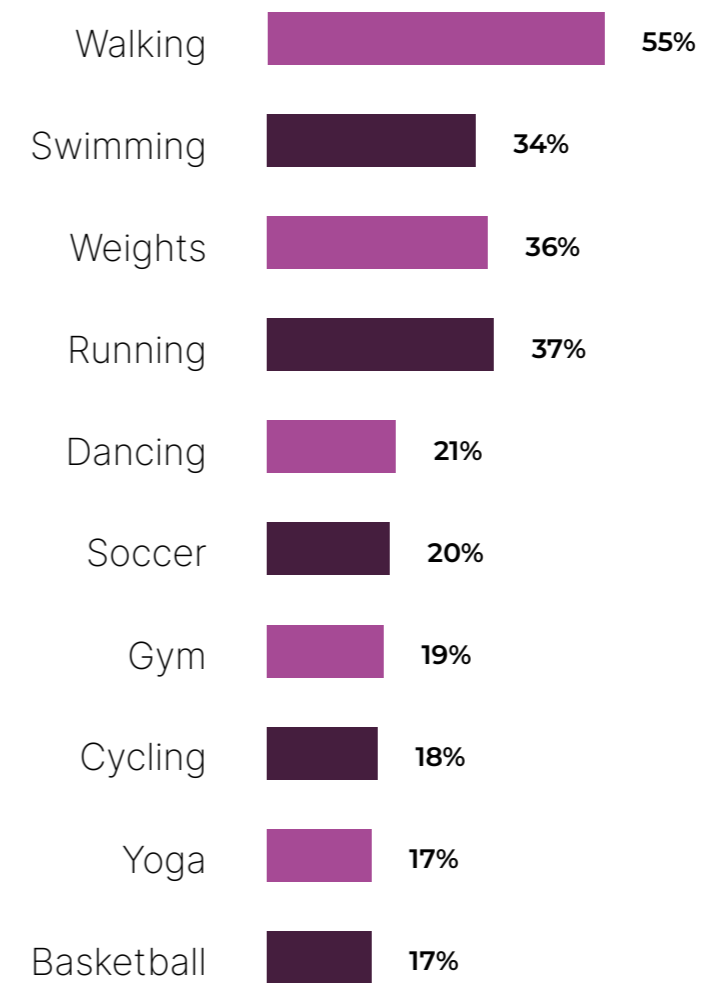
Weekly exercise frequency



Fitness club membership

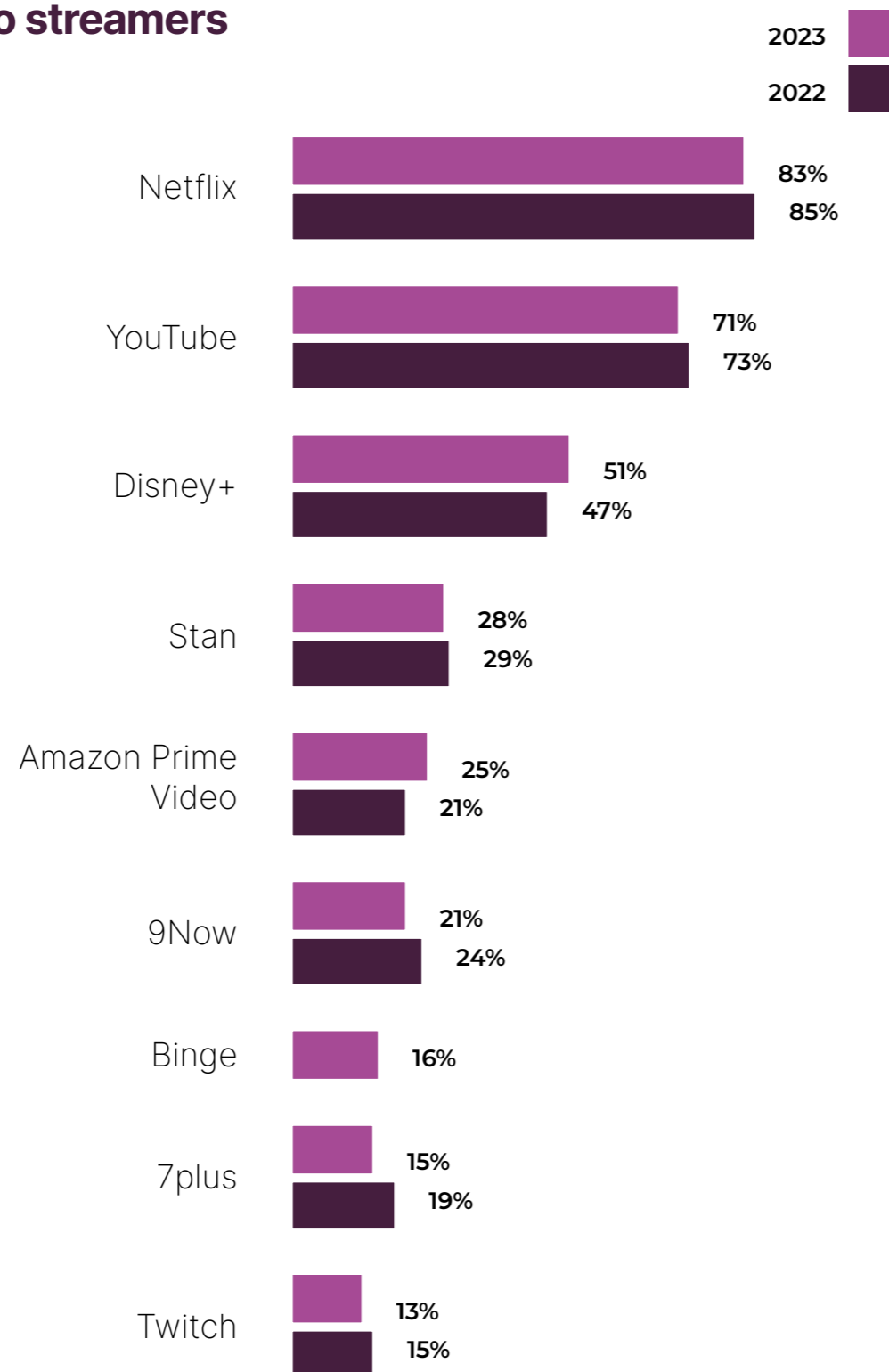


Popular fitness activities



The streaming elite

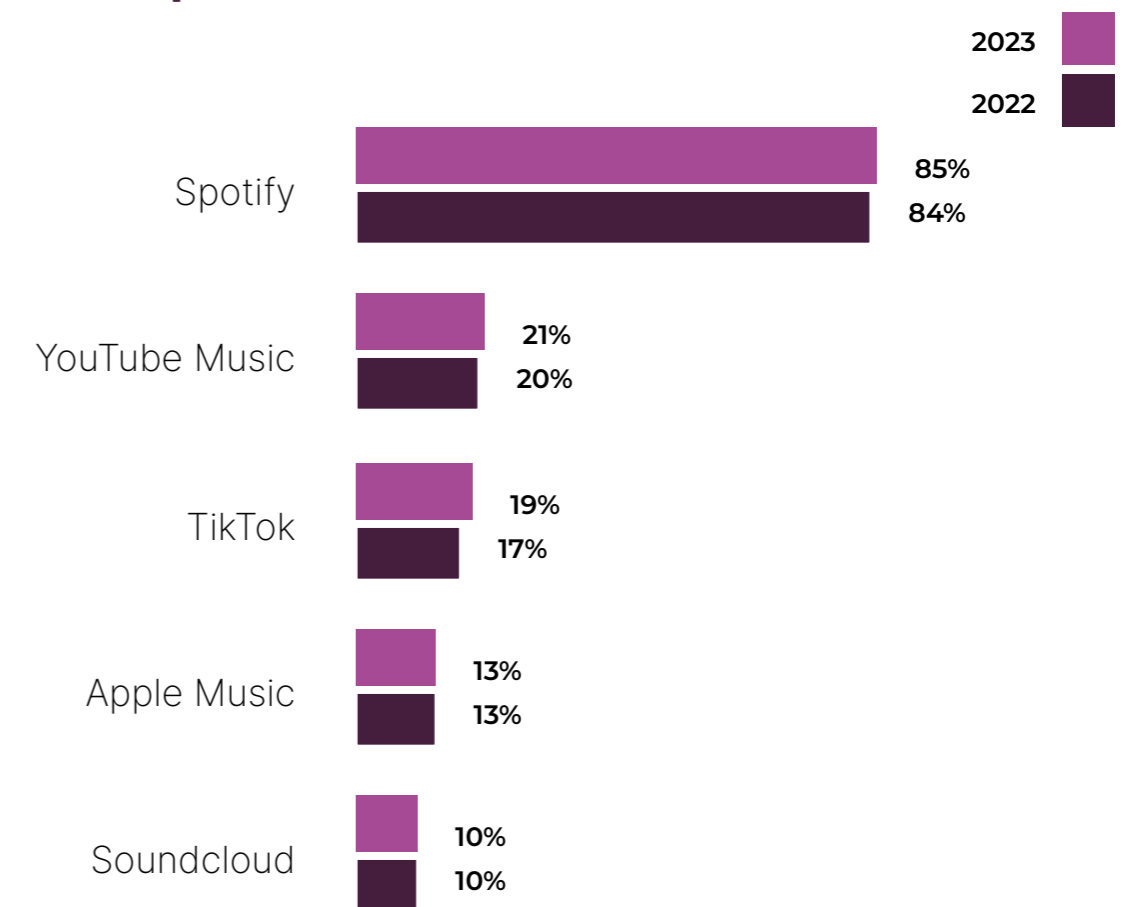
Favourite video streamers



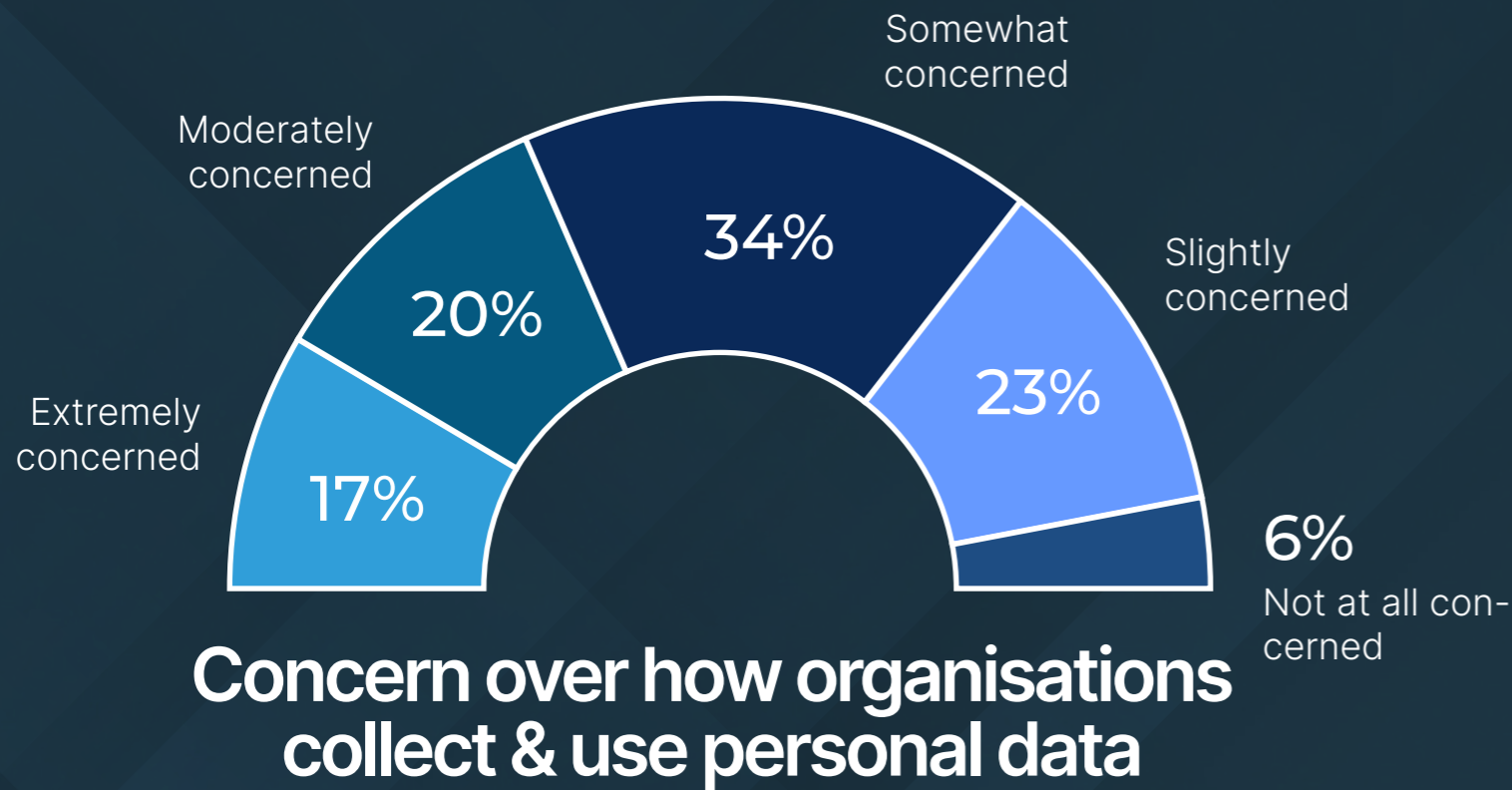
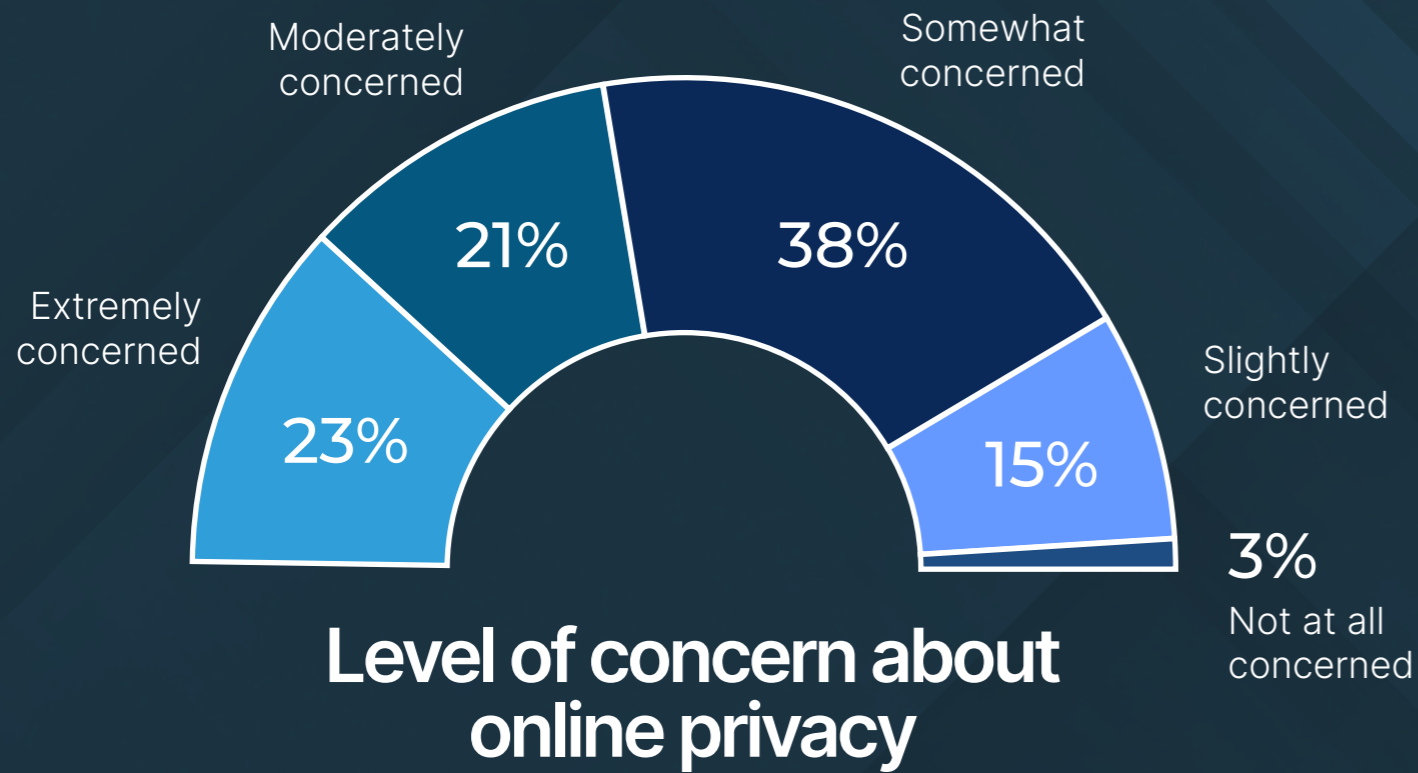
Physical media has proven its staying power, with a considerable 12% of students still appreciating the tangible experience of buying and listening to CDs.

Remarkably, 9% are still drawn to the warm, nostalgic sounds of vinyl records and a devoted few (0.2%) even revel in the retro charms of cassettes.

Favourite music platforms



Privacy and personal data



It's chill.

'I think about it sometimes but there's nothing I can really do about it, so I just let it be.'

'I am realistic enough to understand this is the digital age and most places can access my stuff so why be stressed about it.'

'It's not a big deal so it doesn't really bother me.'

'I like that they can recommend me things specific to my interests although it also confuses me how they get some information I've only thought about not typed.'

'It varies from organisation to organisation. If I know the organisation well, I tend to trust it more.'

'The benefits that these organisations give me outweigh any concerns I might have about the privacy of my data. If I had information to hide, it would be a different story, however since I do not, it's merely something that is concerning when the fleeting thought comes, and is otherwise unimportant.'

It's creepy.

'I'm not that well versed in cybersecurity, so I really don't know but everything and everyone is stealing your data.'

'Online privacy only exists to a degree. I don't know the full extent, but I only know that most of what I do is being stored on some server anyways. So I've come around to being somewhat lackadaisical about it.'

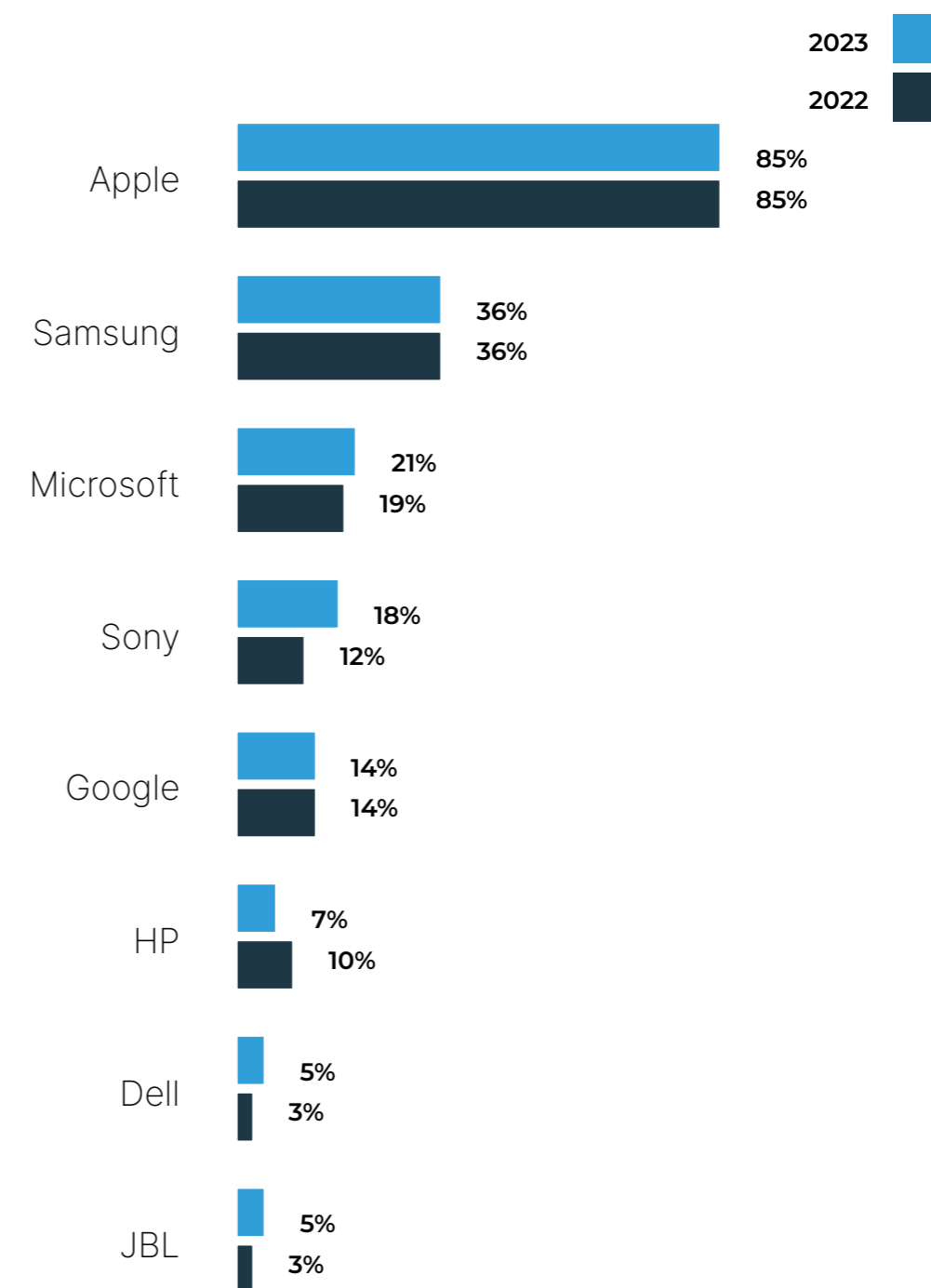
'It dramatically depends on who. For example Google, I don't mind since I use almost all their services and it shows they collect mainly for convenience. If I don't want monitoring, I use a VPN. Other small brands, small websites, etc that do collect, it's unsettling due to the purpose. Why would they? I'm using their product/service once or a few times. Why is my data of great interest?'

'I think it is very concerning and unethical that companies exploit consumer trust, however I'm not particularly concerned about what they are doing with my data personally. They should definitely be held accountable, and legislation should be introduced to reduce capitalist agendas encroaching on people's right to privacy.'





Must-have tech brands



The data reveals a strong preference amongst students for Apple’s products, placing Apple as the overwhelming favourite brand, with a favourability rating over double that of their nearest competitors.

Both tech juggernauts Apple and Samsung have a solid foothold amongst student customers, with their favourability remaining consistent from 2022 to 2023, at 85% and 36% respectively.

Sony experienced a notable rise in interest between 2022 and 2023, increasing from 12% to 18%. This is the largest growth among students’ top tech brands over the last few years and perhaps a sign of Sony’s growing brand power.

Can't stop scrolling.

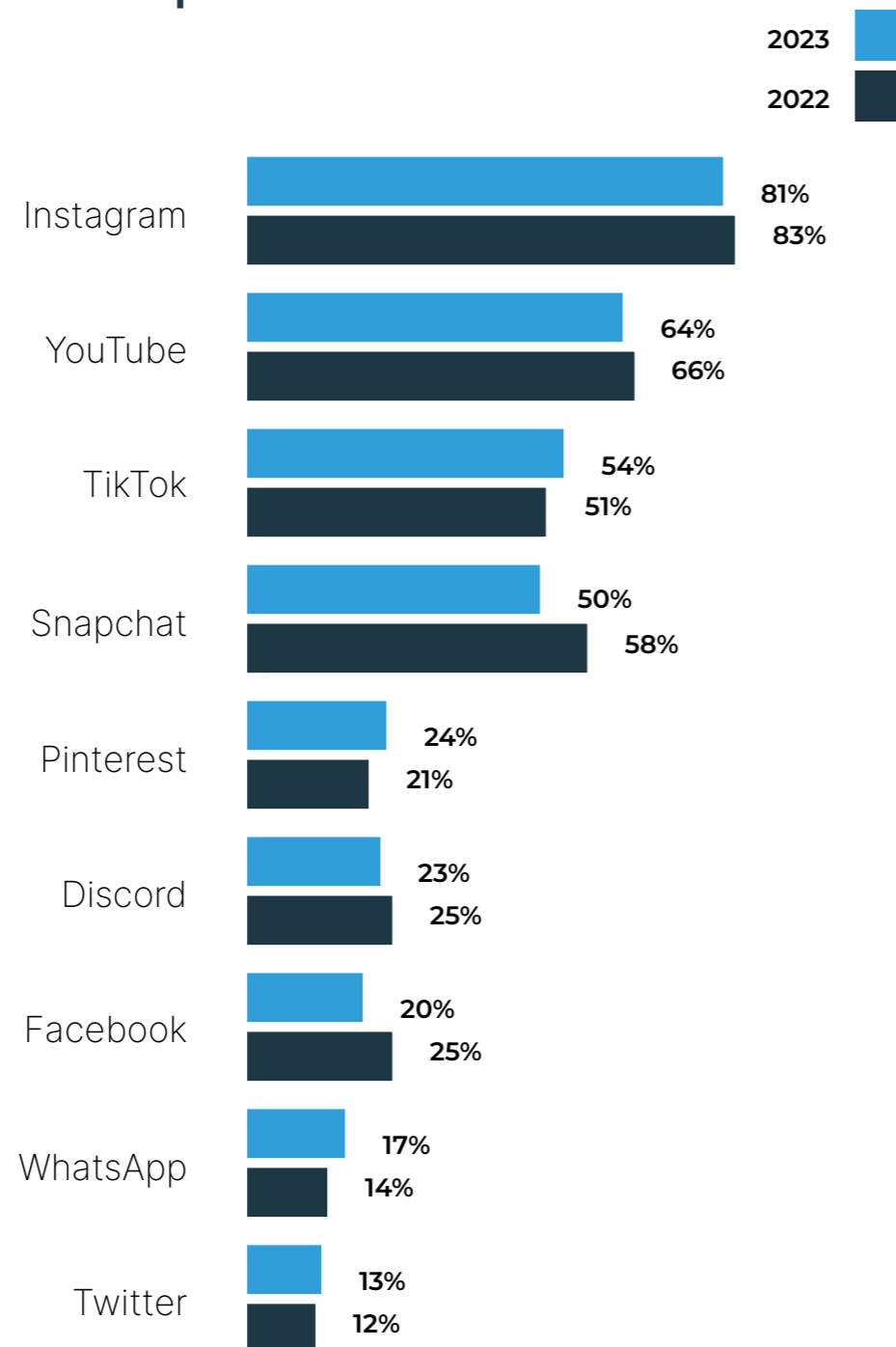
Instagram and YouTube have maintained their top rankings. However, TikTok, continuing its upward trend from previous years, has now surpassed Snapchat to secure the third spot.

Facebook's popularity has significantly decreased, indicating a loss of engagement with the younger demographic.

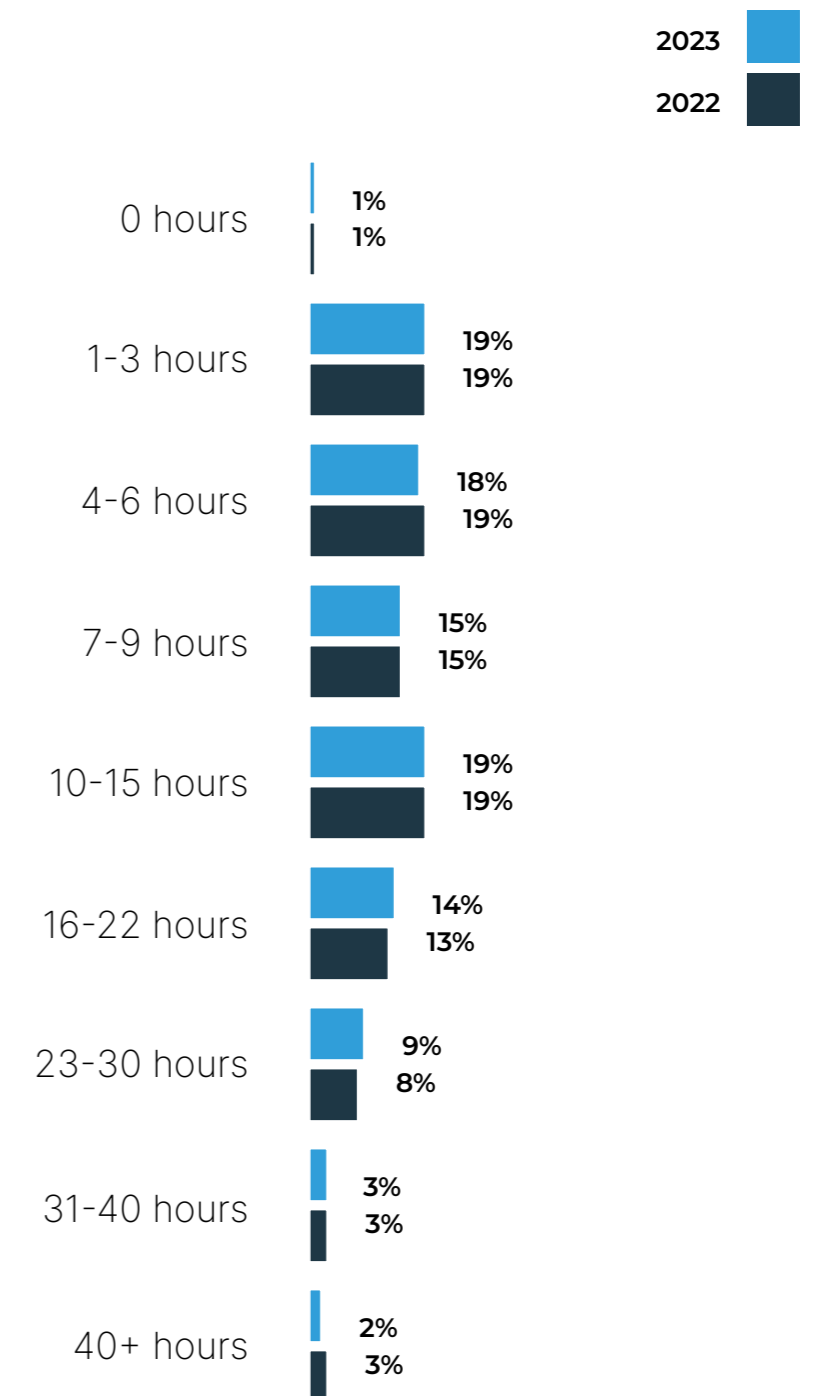
Overall social media usage has persisted at levels comparable to those seen during lockdowns, with the majority of students dedicating several hours each week to these platforms.



Favourite social media platforms

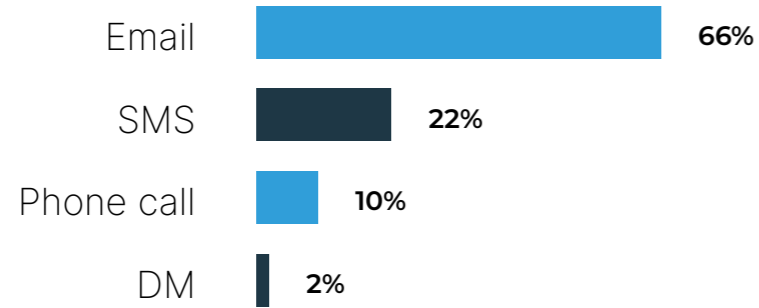


Weekly time spent on social media

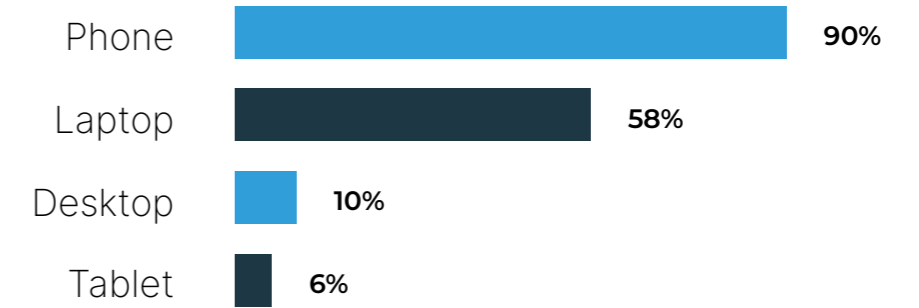


Email endures

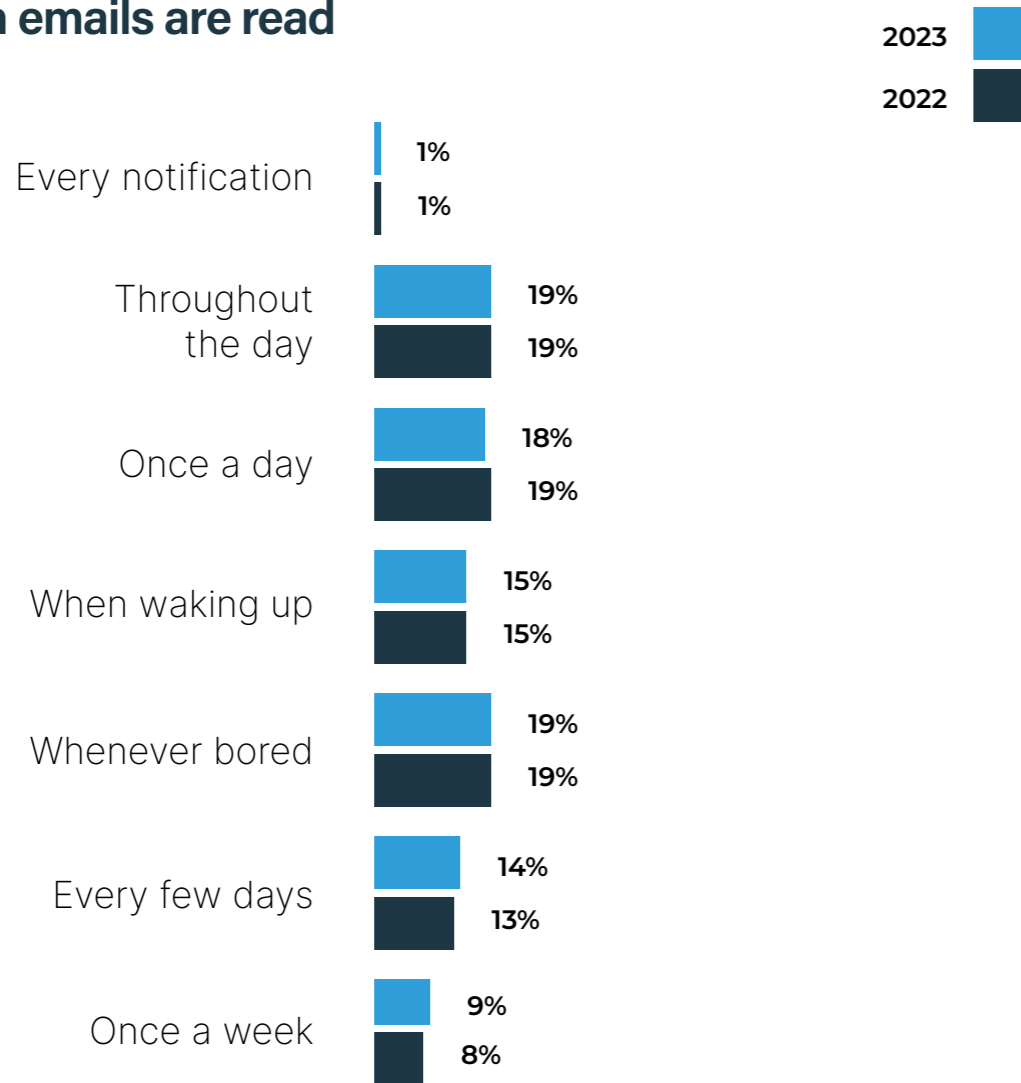
Preferred contact method



Where emails are read



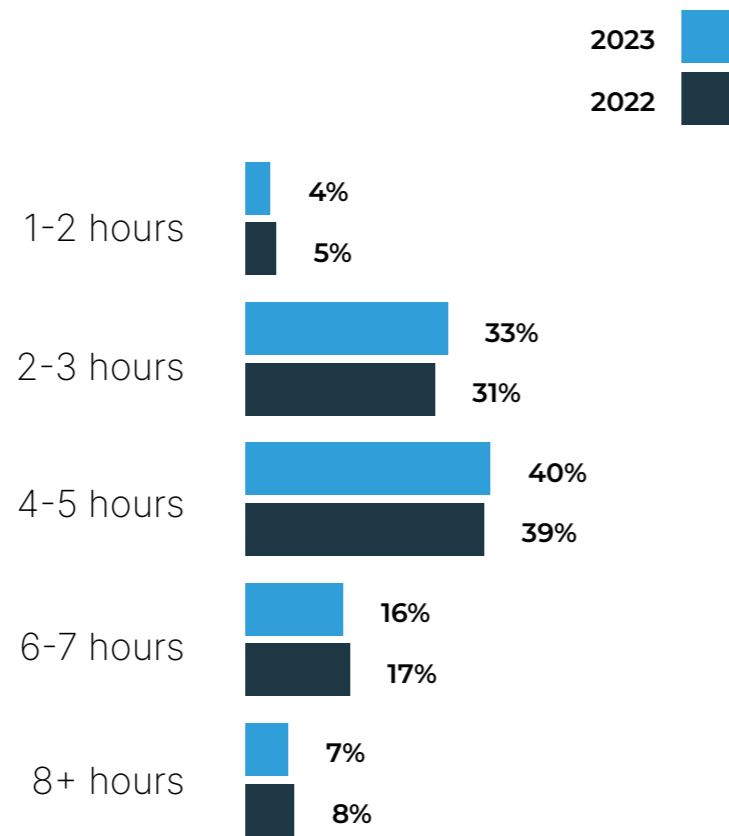
When emails are read



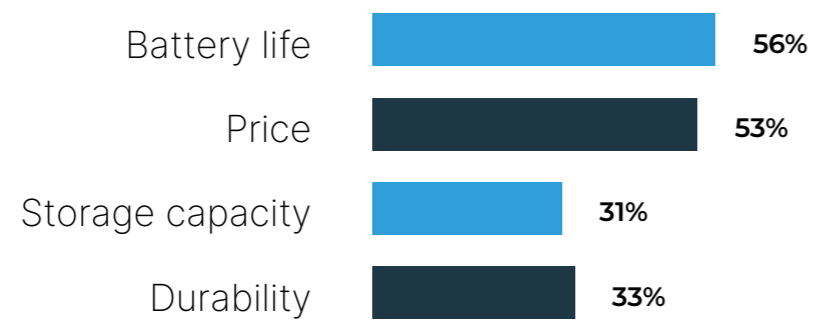
59% of students prefer in-person communication above any other method.



Daily phone time



Main considerations when buying a new phone



Other features or factors students consider when selecting their devices include the capabilities of the included camera (31%), powerful performance (19%) and whether the phone is made by a brand they know and trust (17%).

Apple continues to dominate the smartphone market for this age group, with a staggering 81% of students using an iPhone as their device of choice.

Samsung, while still popular among some students, lags

behind with only 12% of students currently using their smartphones.

The significant preference for Apple products showcases the brand's strong appeal to young consumers.



Future

As students leave high school, they find themselves standing on the precipice of what seems like a world of limitless possibilities.

This new chapter brings both excitement and apprehension and is characterised by an array of opportunities for personal growth, intellectual exploration, and the forging of life-long connections.

Students told us they relished the opportunity to broaden their horizons and challenge their perspectives.

Most importantly, they couldn't wait to develop their independence, chart their own path and start to take charge of their lives.

We asked students to share with us the things that matter most to them, their experiences of stress and their attitudes towards the COVID-19 pandemic.

In this final section, we delve into their aspirations for the future, examining their dreams and goals, as well as the steps they plan to take in order to achieve them.

We also share their biggest concerns and what's keeping them up at night, recognising the anxieties and uncertainties that accompany this pivotal transition in their lives.

By understanding not only their passions and ambitions but also what they'd like to see changed or improved, we can work to better support and empower these young individuals as they embark on their journey beyond high school.

Fair dinkum.

Students value individuality and authenticity, with 86% saying they consider being true to themselves as a vital aspect of their lives. They also have a strong inclination towards social justice, with 80% identifying inequality as a major concern.

A stress mess.

Stress is prevalent among students, with 31% feeling stressed at least half of the time. Students continue to express significant concern for their mental health, with 50% identifying mental wellbeing as a key issue, mirroring last year's results.

Safety & security.

Students identified feeling safe as their top priority (93%), followed closely by affordable housing and rentals (88%), and having secure employment (87%).

COVID & the new normal.

Indicating a sense of optimism about the future, over half (56%) believe that COVID-19 will have minimal or no impact on their lives in 2023.



What are students most looking forward to?

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'A new chapter in life and exploring the world without school in it. Getting rid of the 8am to 3pm schedule and having new work experiences that I couldn't do while at school.'

I'm also looking forward to learning more about myself as a person which may help me understand what I want to do in the future. Also investing more time in doing things I enjoy such as reading and beach days and exploring new places around Australia I haven't seen before.'

Lucy, 18

'My next chapter in life and enjoying what life has to offer in 2023. Playing sport, meeting new people, studying my passion. Growing independence, learning how to live and financially support myself.'

Jet, 18

'Starting uni and even though I know it'll be difficult, renting my first place to stay. Also, I'm getting my first tattoo tomorrow.'

Sam, 18

'Fitting well into university and making new friends. Also, earning enough money to spend on goods and family, saving up for a car, and hopefully finding a girlfriend.'

Kevin, 18

Concerns over career prospects, financial stability, and mental wellbeing surfaced as the foremost worries among students.

The importance of COVID has diminished this year, reflecting a sense of fatigue with the pandemic that has dominated the public consciousness over the past three years.

'I look forward to having more freedom in life and my studies whilst having a part time job to become self-sufficient or capable of fending for myself.'

Sarah, 18

'Becoming more independent and being accountable to myself in terms of finance, responsibility and connections which were previously determined or heavily influenced by my parents. I feel this will be the next stage of my life which will mould my character and motivations as an adult, so I am excited for this new challenge.'

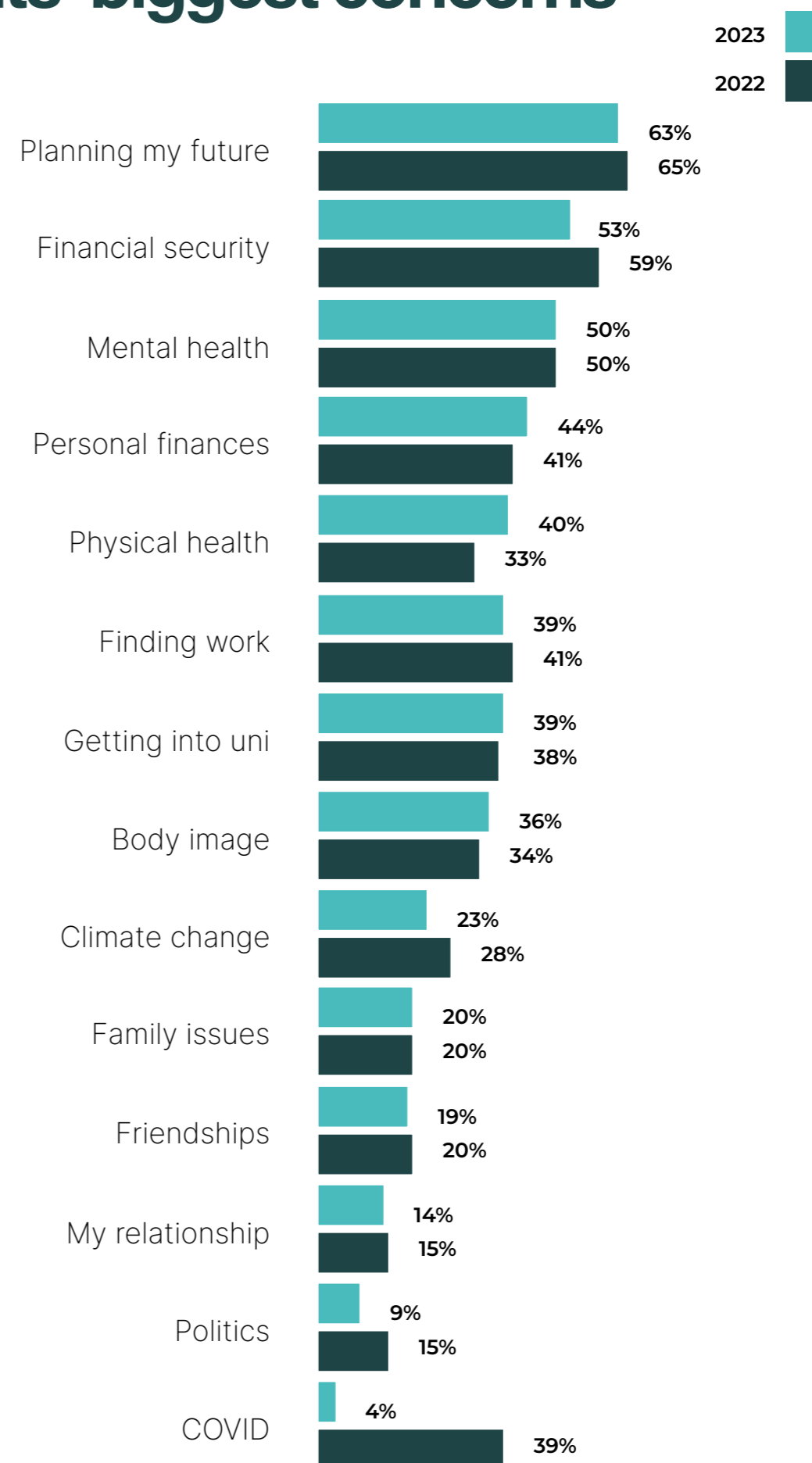
Yashwanth, 18

'Attending university and starting a new life in the city. I live outside a small town and have been completely isolated for my entire life and have not gotten any memorable moments from my high school life.'

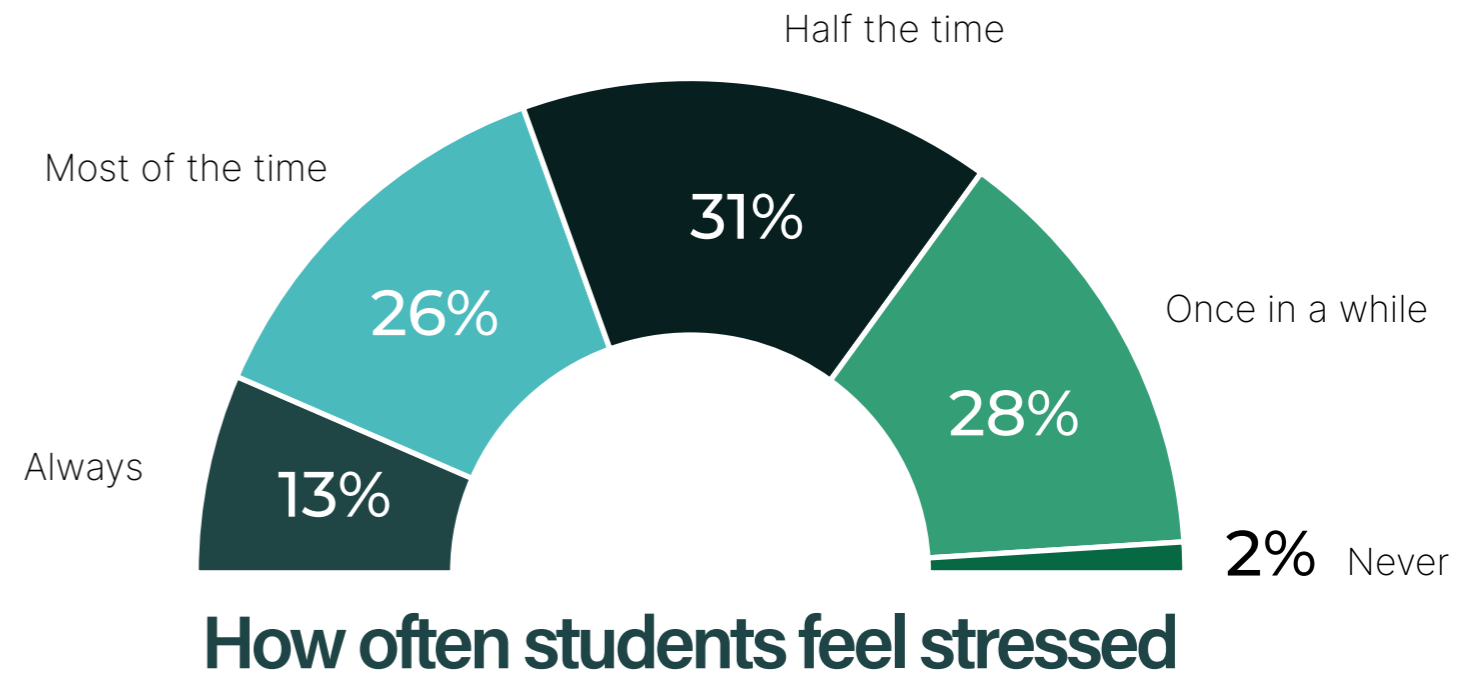
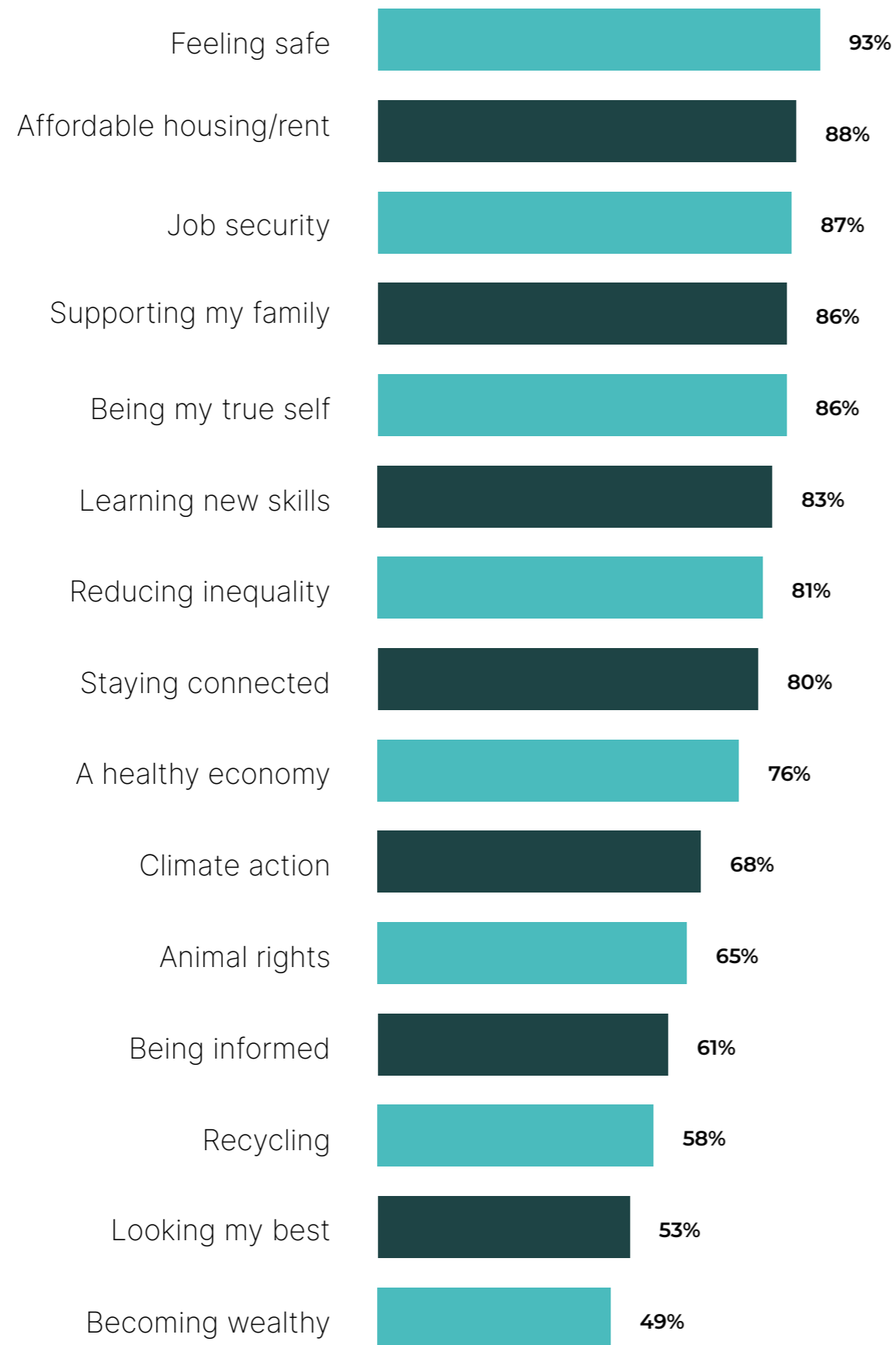
I hope 2023 can rectify that and give me the experiences I've always wanted. Living in the city, I will be able to explore and pick up new hobbies. Being able to socialise in a great environment by living on campus I hope to attend all the events and parties I can.'

Cooper, 17

Students' biggest concerns



What matters most





The COVID cohort

COVID impacts in 2022 in 2023.

2022 saw students emerging from two years of rolling lockdowns and back in classrooms full-time.

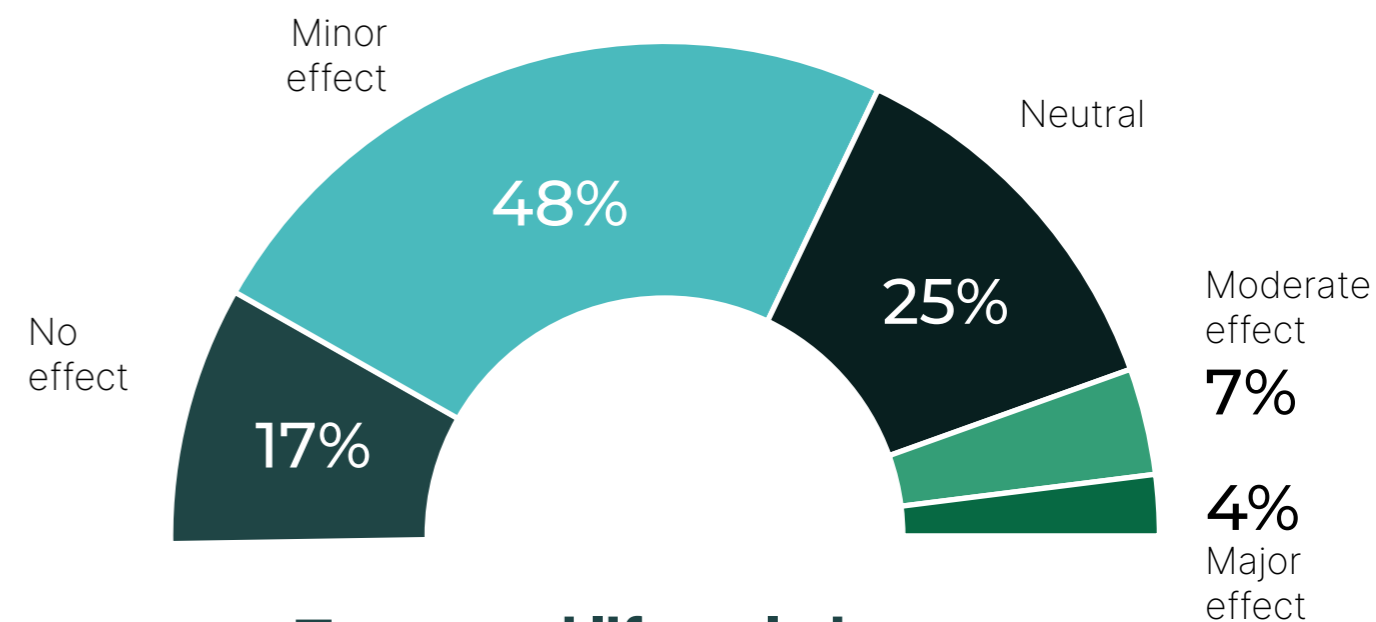
Restrictions around public gatherings, mask wearing, and travel were rapidly wound back, and a steady lightening of the public mood took place throughout the year.

These changing circumstances meant that over half of students (56%) told us they expect COVID to have minimal or no impact on their lives throughout 2023.

The top three negative impacts students identified were a reduced ability to take part in activities (68%), educational impacts (60%) and adverse effects on their mental health (51%).

Almost half (48%) also felt their physical health suffered as a result on the ongoing restrictions.

Two notable positives were identified. Over half enjoyed having more leisure time (53%) and nearly a quarter (23%) relished the opportunity to spend more quality time with their family.



Expected lifestyle impact of COVID in 2023

Mixed experiences of the pandemic

'Had it twice, second time sent me to the hospital. It's not great.'

'I've become really ill since COVID, and doctors suggest I have long COVID. It scares me.'

'Although it wasn't something great to go through, a lot of people were able to discover new hobbies, start new businesses, spend more time with pets and loved ones, so at least something good came out of it.'

'It was full on and scary but has taught society so much about what the flaws are and how we need to come together in a crisis. We also need to remember that it is not over yet.'

'It's the worst thing to happen. My Year 11 grades dropped really badly in 2021, I went into a depressive episode due to 2021 lockdown right as my psychiatrist retired and didn't have access to mental health services in 2022 (during my HSC). I lost contact with my friends, my parents worked in retail and had more shifts due to COVID. I got COVID two days before my talent quest performance and never got to perform in my last year of school. I took too much absence due to COVID isolation and flooding and had to get my wisdom teeth taken out but was told I wasn't allowed be absent from school anymore. The only good thing has been being able to spend time with my dog.'

'COVID showed me that people can be selfish and put others in danger. It also showed me that I can do a lot more home activities in my spare time.'

'It was a hard three years that definitely had a large impact on who I am today and how I feel about myself.'

'I am a little fed up with it, it's just becoming the common cold.'

'I remember when they first announced the pandemic on television. It was very scary. I was thankful that after a while the world was able to adapt, and it seemed there were accessible ways that I could keep myself and my family safe. However, COVID greatly impacted my feeling of safety and security in society. It also restricted opportunities that I would have had if the pandemic never hit.'

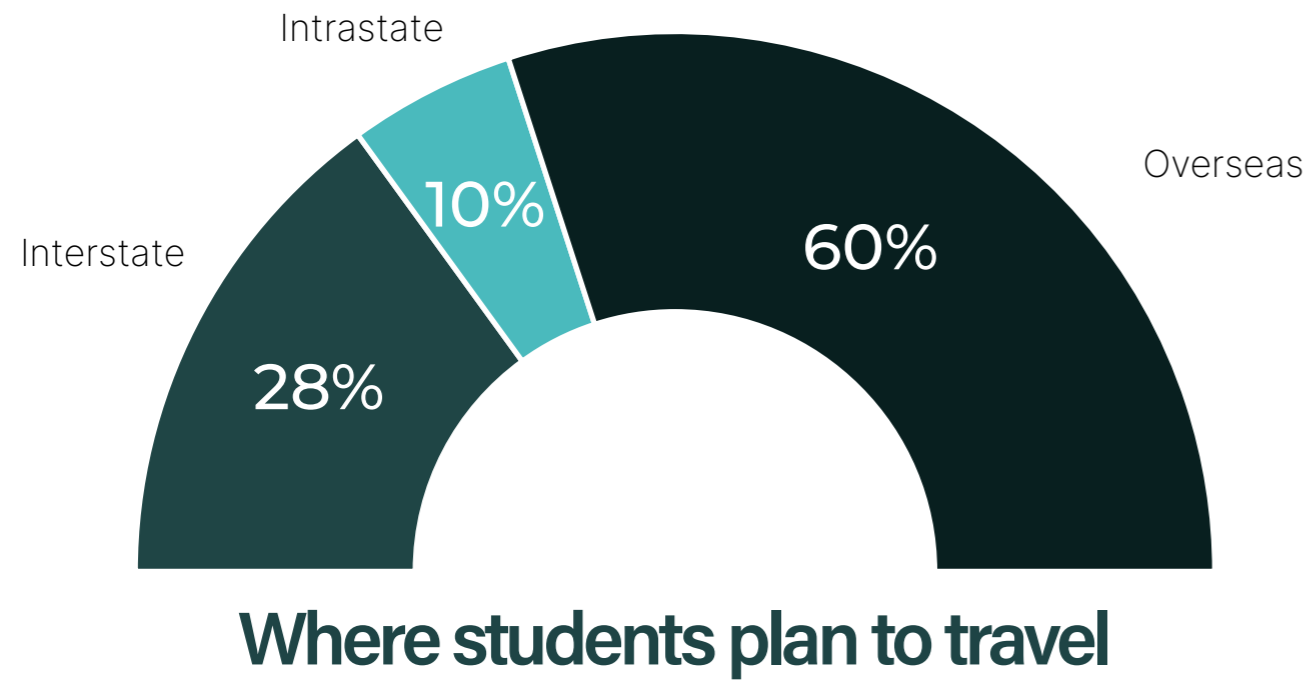
'I feel anxious about what COVID may do to my elderly grandparents and immunocompromised members of my family. However I have little concern over the effects of COVID on my day-to-day life in 2023.'

'COVID definitely changed the way I live my everyday life but it has made me better at adapting to new things.'

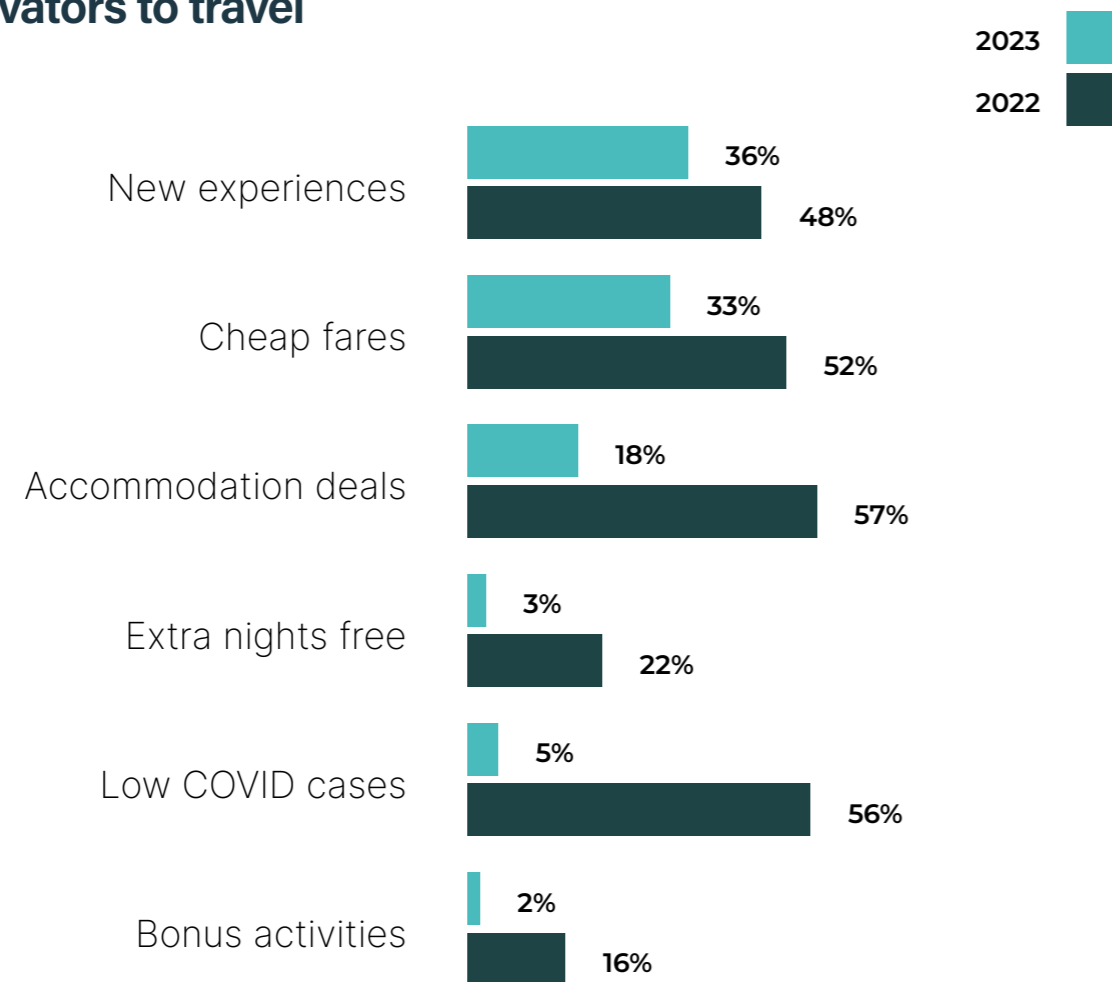
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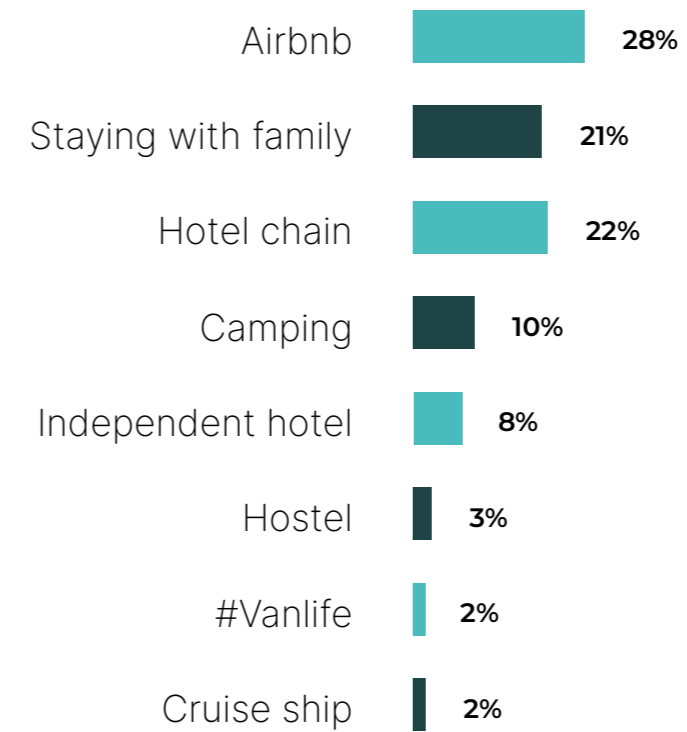
How about a holiday?



Key motivators to travel



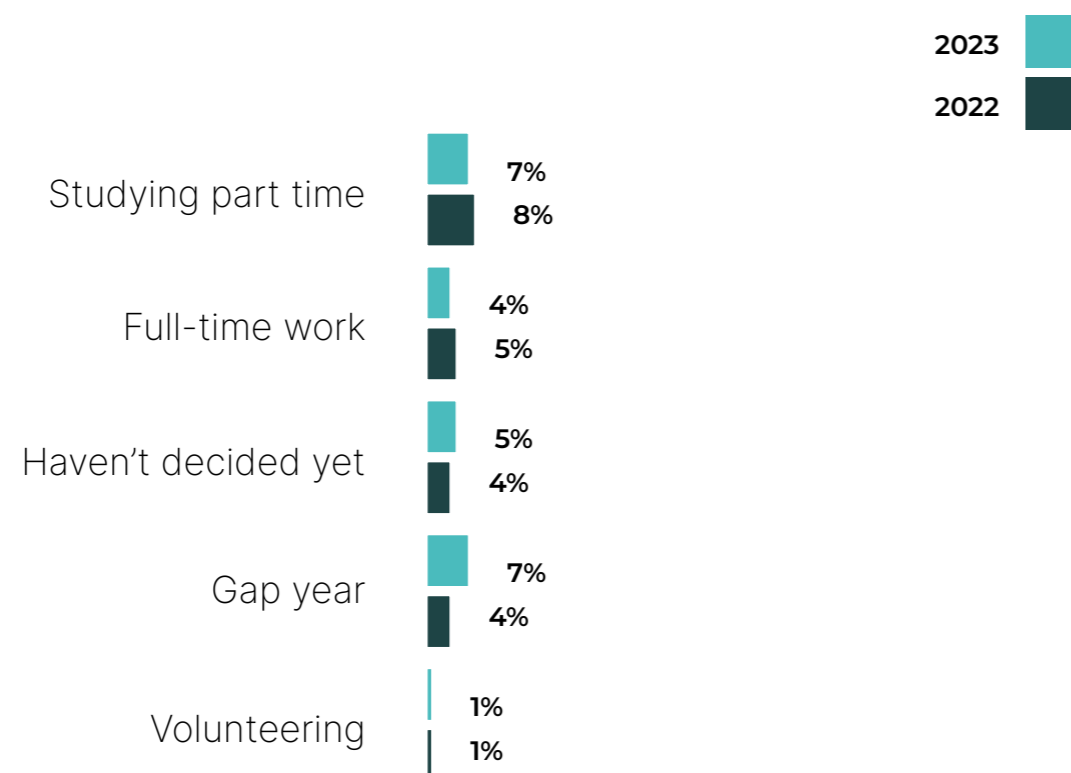
Plans for their next Australian holiday



The alternative options

In 2023, a significant 77% of students planned to pursue full-time studies. This is a slight increase from the three-quarters of students who followed the same path in 2022.

The number of students opting for a gap year following their graduation increased by 3% in 2023 compared to 2022, indicating a growing interest in a year off likely due to international borders becoming much more open to travellers during the last 12 months.



Students' plans for the year ahead

Studying.

'Learning fascinating and exciting new things with people who are passionate.'

Lauren, 18

'Beginning a new chapter of my life and feeding my drive for education and knowledge.'

Isabella, 18

'Moving to university and hopefully having my own place, while also studying something of great interest.'

Cooper, 18

Gap year.

'I am completing a gap year in 2023 in the UK. I am very excited to travel, meet new people and gain more life experience. I will be working full time and learning what it's like to support myself and live independently.'

Emma, 18

'Starting a new job in America as a camp counsellor in June!'

Ella, 17

'Taking time off school and study to do a gap year at my church, as well as focus on photography and videography.'

Noah, 18

Still figuring it out.

'Truthfully, I still don't know. I'm looking forward mostly to the possibility of perhaps finding a sense of direction.'

Simet, 18

'I am still unsure what is to come but whatever it is I am excited to embrace it and start life outside of school.'

Sophia, 17

'I have no idea what will happen this year, but leaving the stress of school behind and having my life back is awesome.'

Anton, 17

Working.

'Getting a good full-time job that allows me to use my skills as a qualified drone pilot.'

Kayne, 18

'Working full time to save and travel before I settle down again to study to be a registered nurse.'

Caitlin, 17

'Moving out, working full time, and playing soccer when the winter season starts.'

Lachlan, 18



Thank you for reading

Continue the discussion

If you would like to discuss any of the findings or information presented in this report, please contact:

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About UAC

The Universities Admissions Centre (NSW & ACT) Pty Ltd (UAC) was established in 1995 and is the largest tertiary admissions centre in Australia. Owned by universities in NSW and the ACT, our mission is to provide excellence in admissions services and promote equity of access to tertiary education.

