

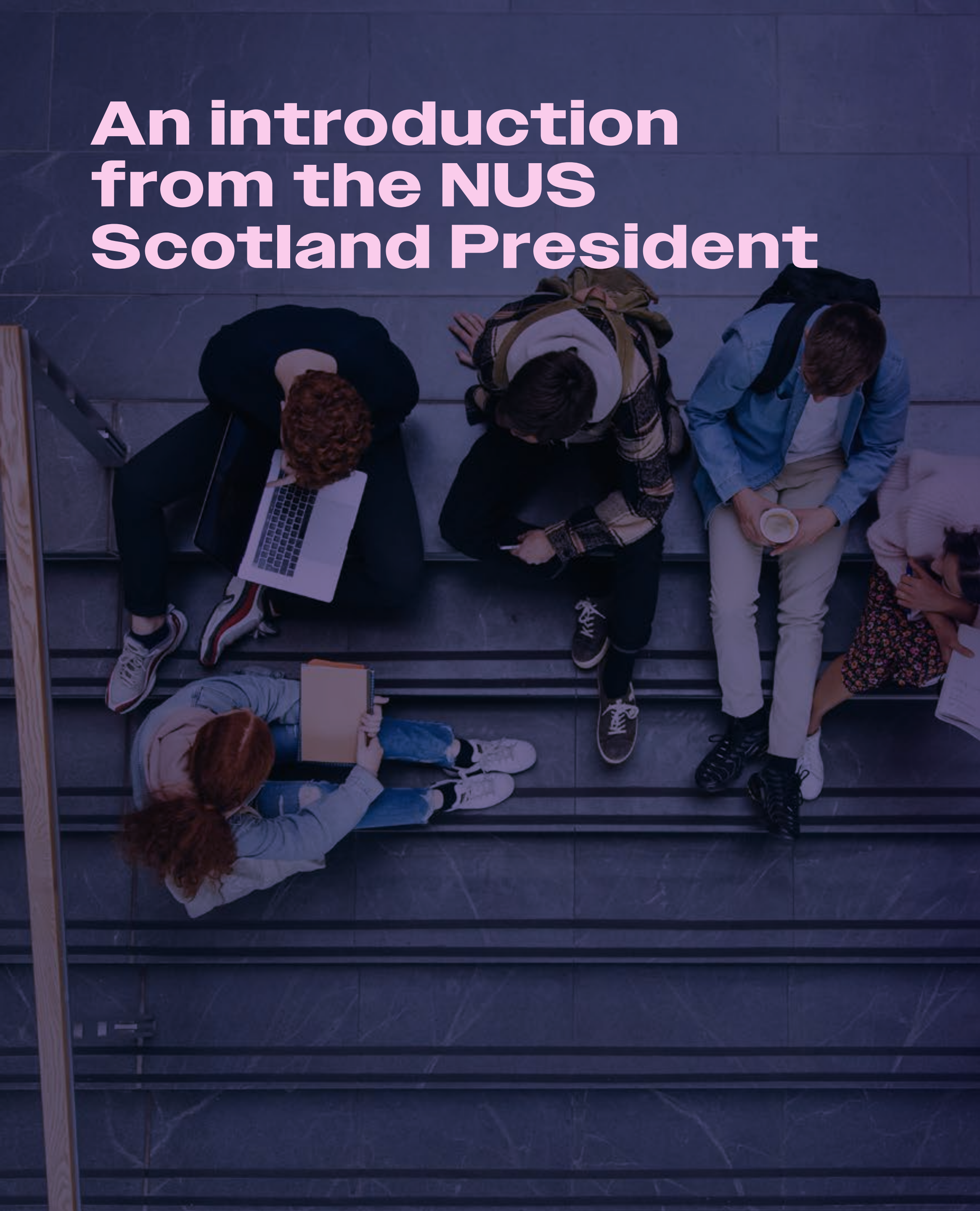


FIGHTING FOR STUDENTS: THE COST OF SURVIVAL

2023

nus *scotland*
national union of students

An introduction from the NUS Scotland President



Last year the Broke report starkly set out the poverty and homelessness amongst students in Scotland. A year ago, we were hopeful of a recovery from the pandemic, only now to face a cost-of-living crisis. This report sets out how deep that crisis is for students.

Over half (52%) of students surveyed have skipped a meal because of lack of money, 45% have gone without heating and a third (35%) have been unable to pay their rent in full. Experience of homelessness remains stubbornly high at 12%, including 2% who were homeless at the time of the survey.

The difficult choice between heating, eating or shelter has undoubtedly had an impact on their studies: 37% have considered dropping out for financial reasons, with the cost of living cited by 1 in 5 who considered dropping out.

Inflation is running at over 10% but undergraduate student support was

increased by just 4.5% for the poorest students and FE student bursaries increased by just 4.1%. Shamefully, no increase has been announced for next year.

We've had enough of warm words. We need this SNP-Green government to act: to deliver their promise of student support that meets the real Living Wage; to freeze student rent; and introduce half-price bus and train travel for students and apprentices all day.

Scotland's students cannot wait any longer, my message to Ministers is simple: *get on with it.*



Ellie Gomersall
NUS Scotland President
2022-24



Project Overview

Objectives

NUS Scotland have carried out this research to look into how the cost of living crisis is continuing to impact students.

Methodology

Online Survey: A total of 5306 students and apprentices were consulted via an online survey. The survey was promoted via NUS Scotland and their member students' associations.

The survey took around 10 minutes to complete and was in field in November 2022. Respondents were offered the chance of winning £150 for taking part.

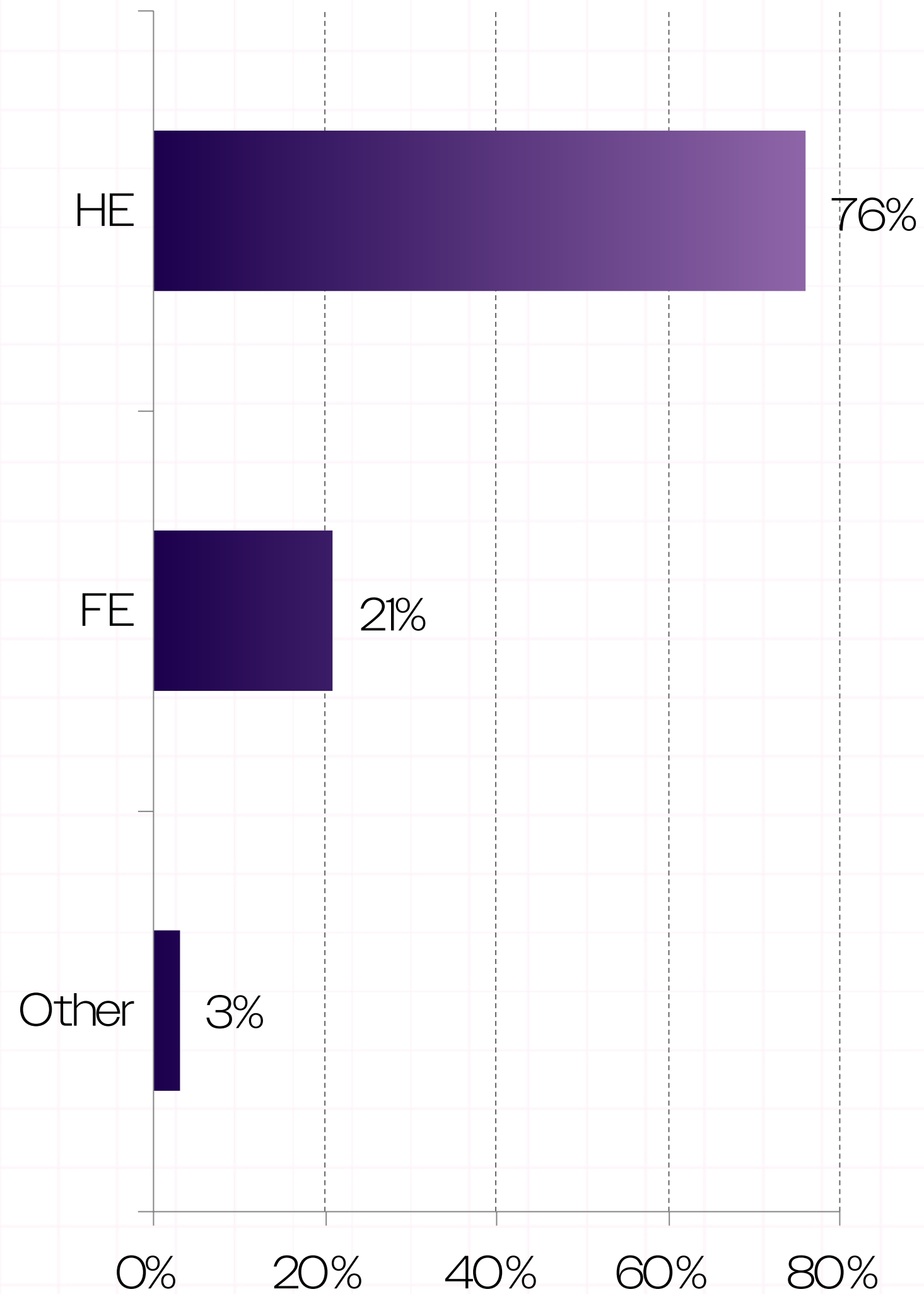
Reading the report

Were there are any **significant differences** within demographic groupings, particularly those identified as Widening Access characteristics, selected differences are highlighted on the chart.

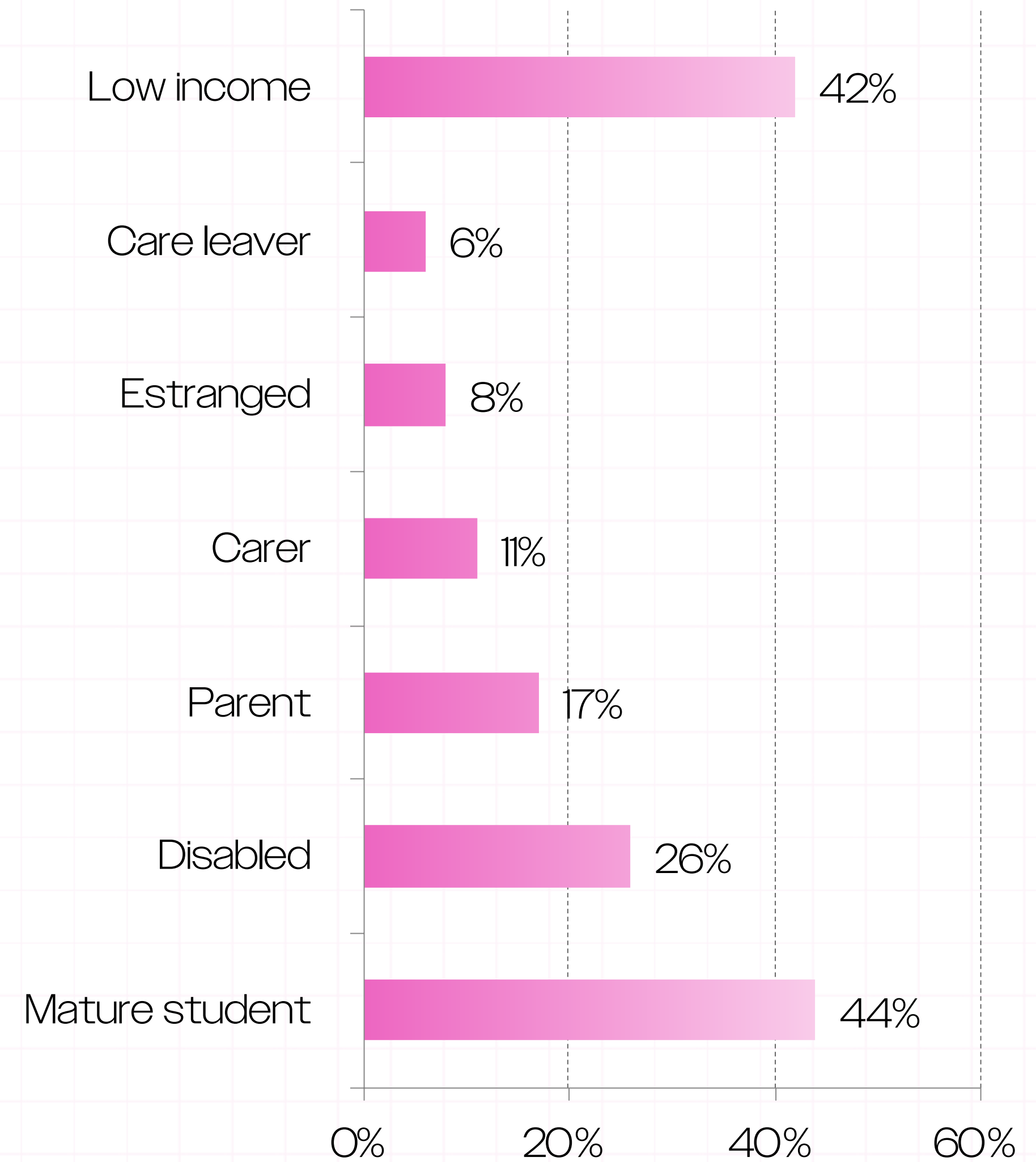
Tracked the data from previous reports is clearly marked. Data is tracked in order to understand any changes over the past terms

Data Breakdowns

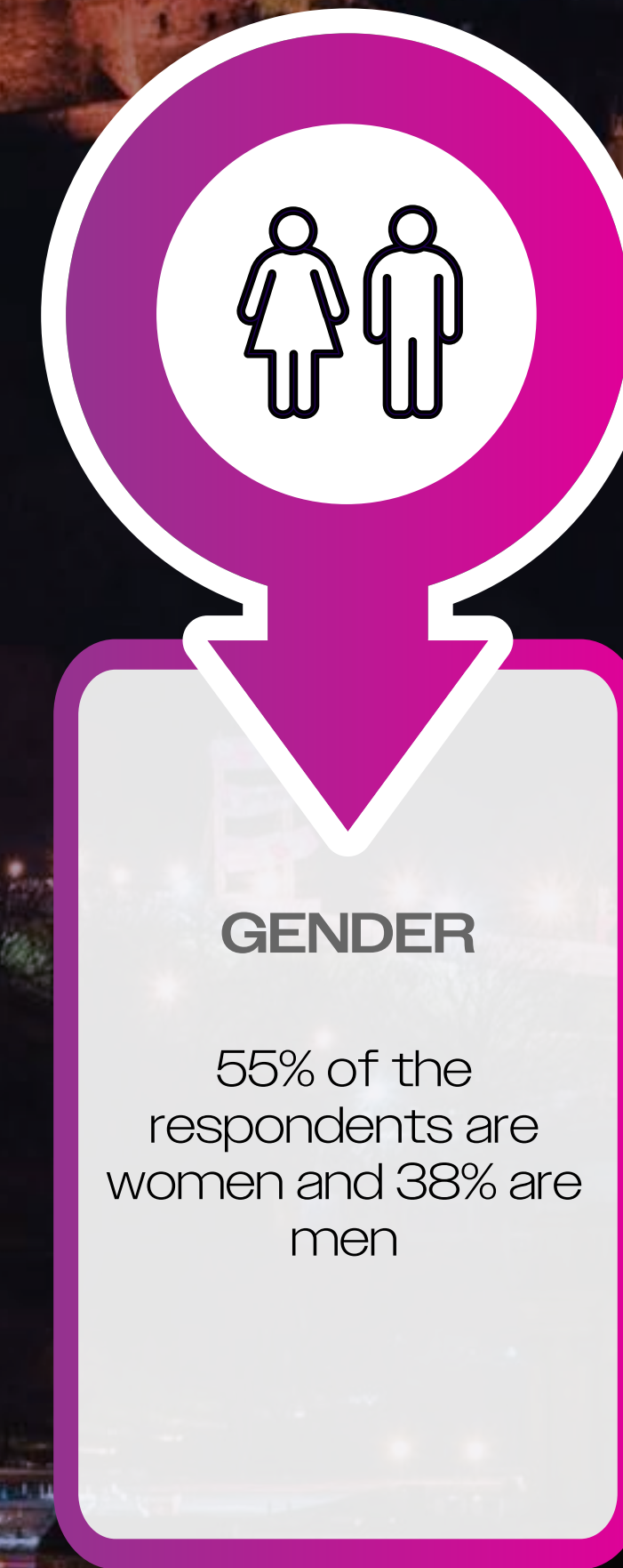
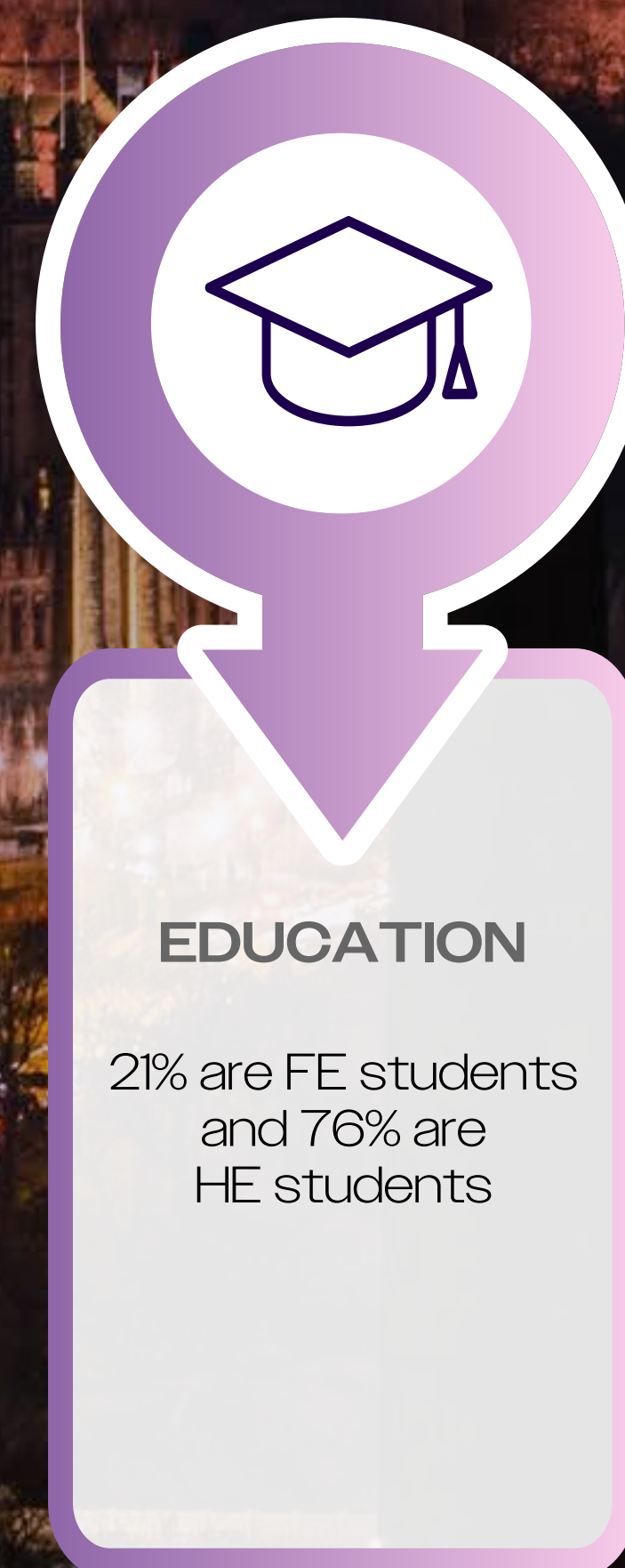
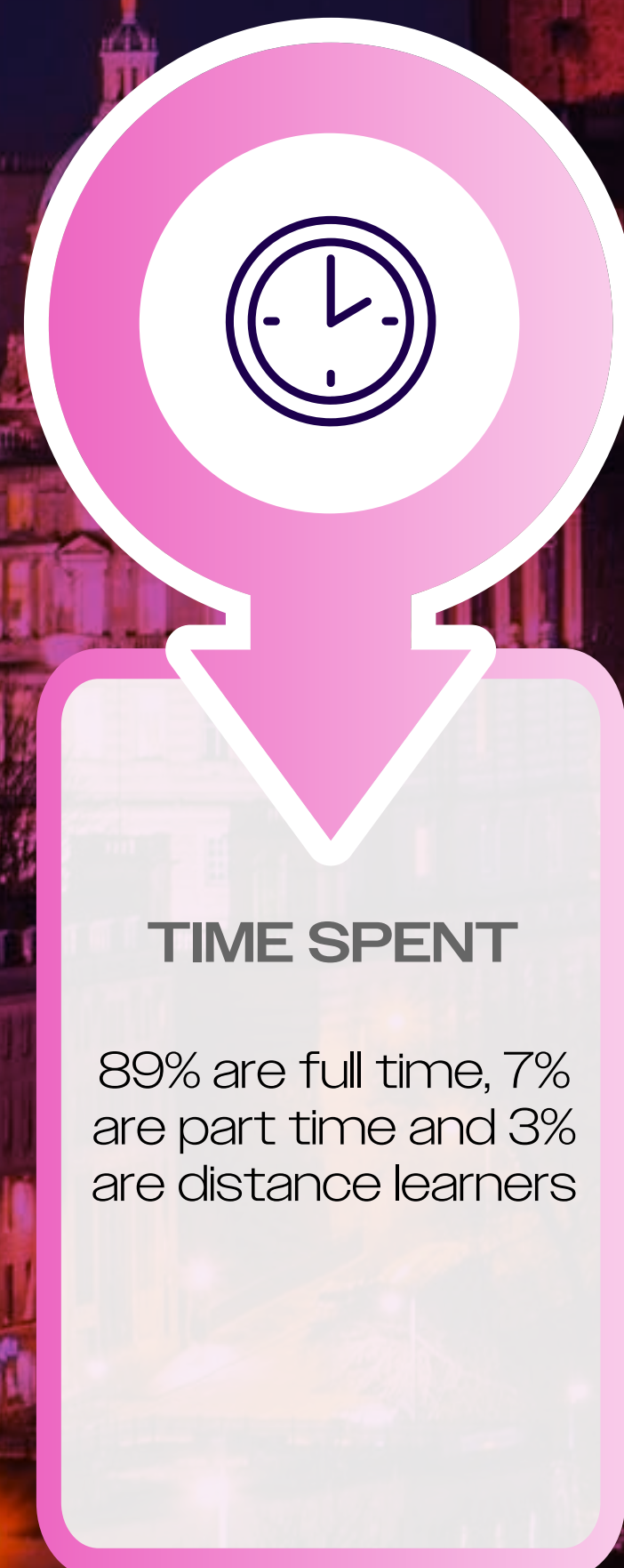
Level of study



Widening Access



OTHER DEMOGRAPHICS AND CHARACTERISTICS

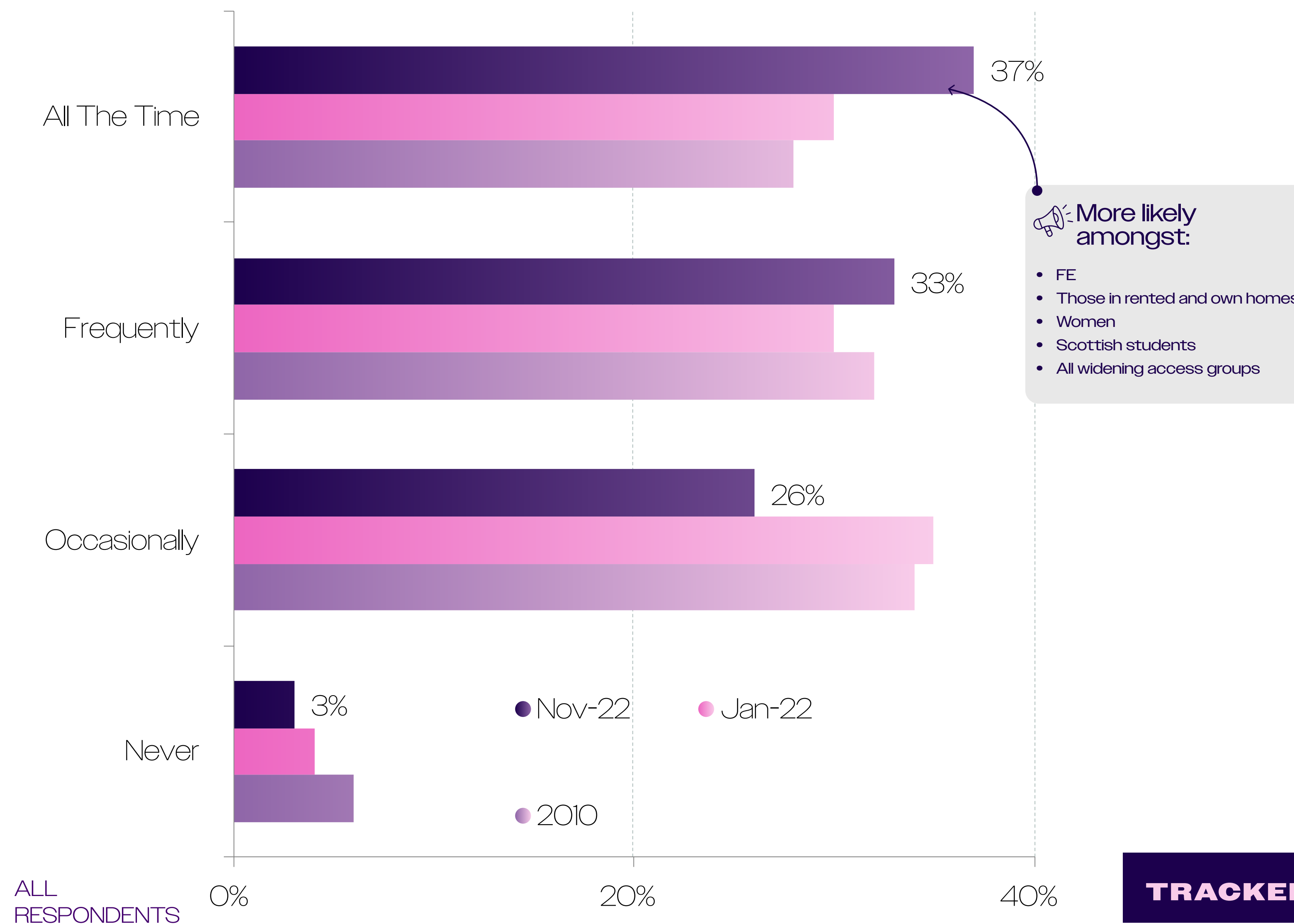


A group of people are shown from the chest up, holding their hands together in a circle. The hands are of various skin tones, suggesting a diverse group. The background is dark and out of focus. The text 'MONEY & STRESS' is overlaid on the left side of the image in a bold, white, sans-serif font.

MONEY & STRESS

MONEY WORRIES

Almost **two fifths** worry **about their finances all the time**; this proportion has increased since the beginning of 2022. All widening access groups are more likely than their demographic counterparts to worry all the time.

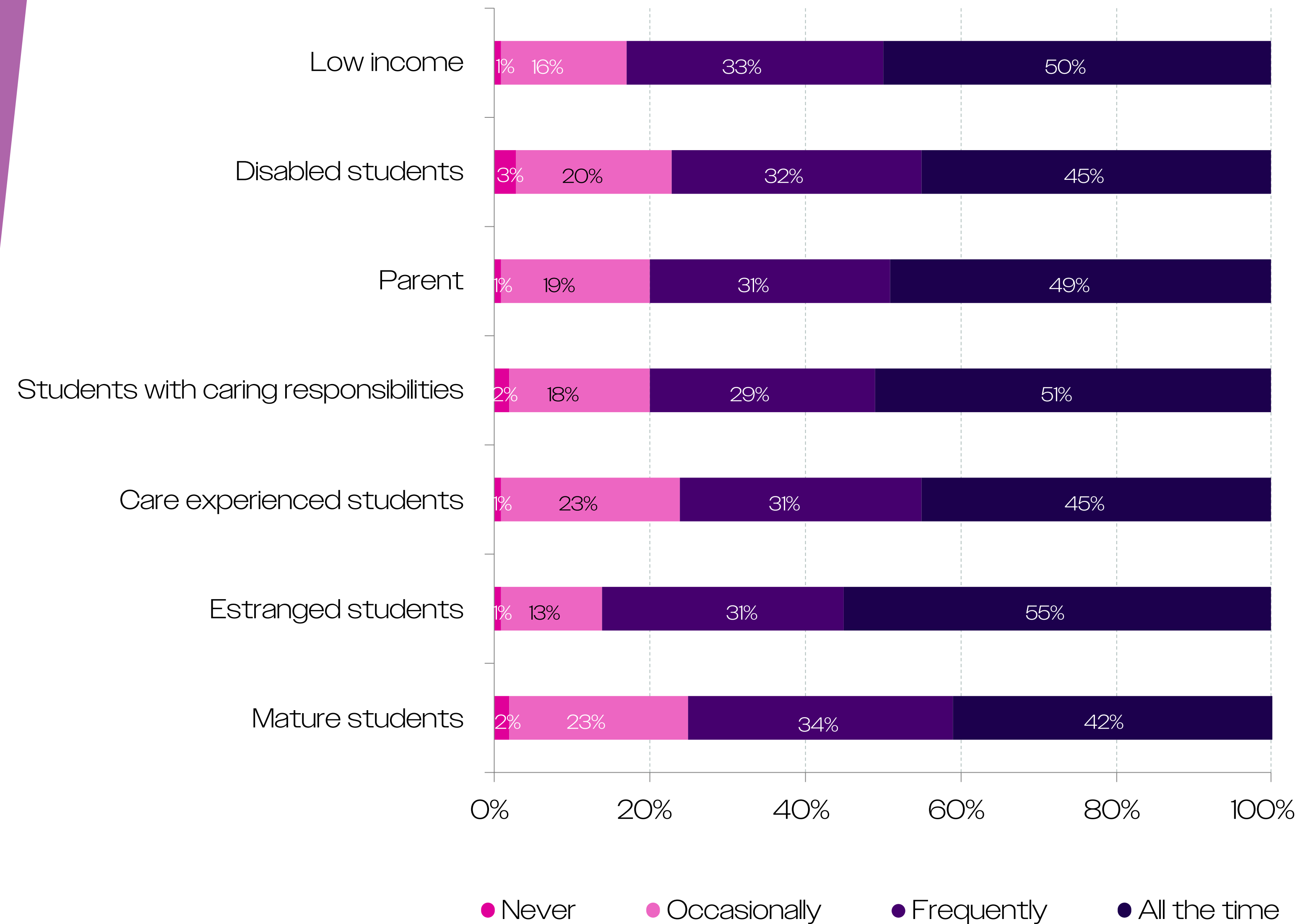


Base: 5177 Respondents. Balance: No response about
B1. Do you worry or stress your finances?

TRACKED

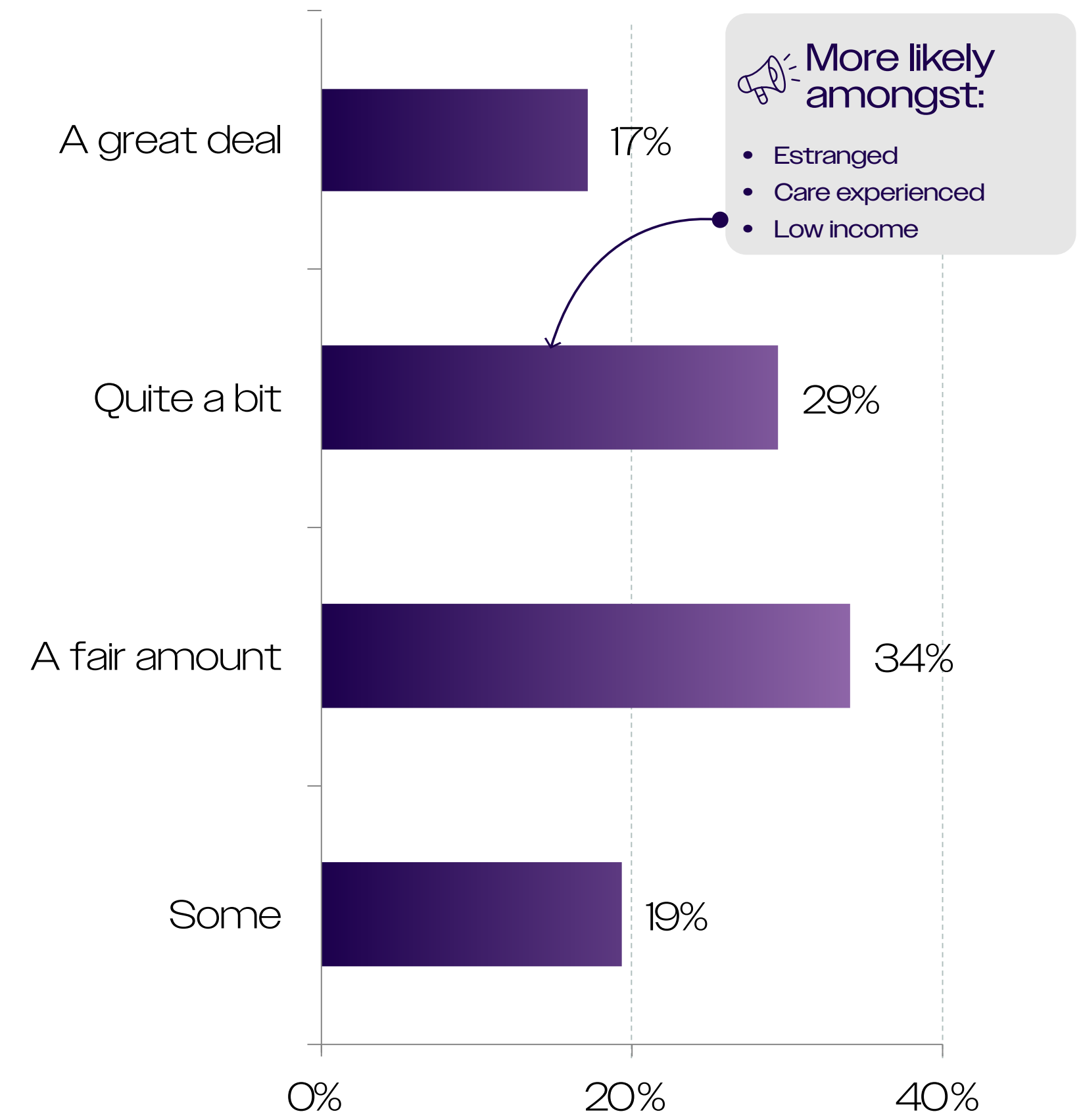
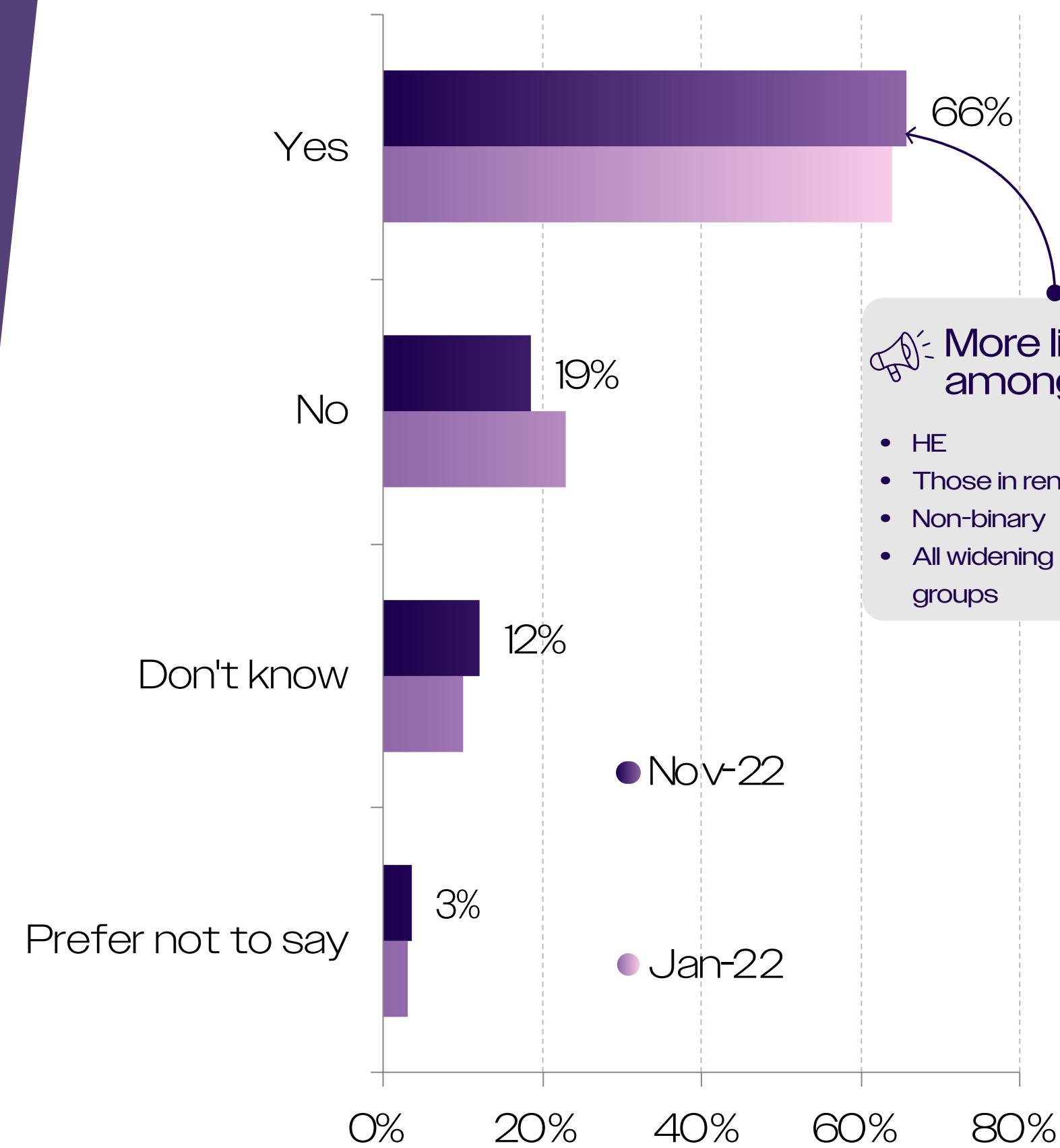
MONEY WORRIES

WIDENING ACCESS



IMPACT OF MONEY WORRIES ON MENTAL HEALTH

Two thirds of students claim that since the start of their studies, their mental health has been impacted by their money worries, with almost one in five indicating it has been impacted a great deal. All widening access groups are more likely to be impacted, along with those in HE, rented homes and identifying as non-binary.



Base: 5146 Respondents. Balance: No response
B2a. Since you began your studies, has your mental health been impacted by worrying about money?

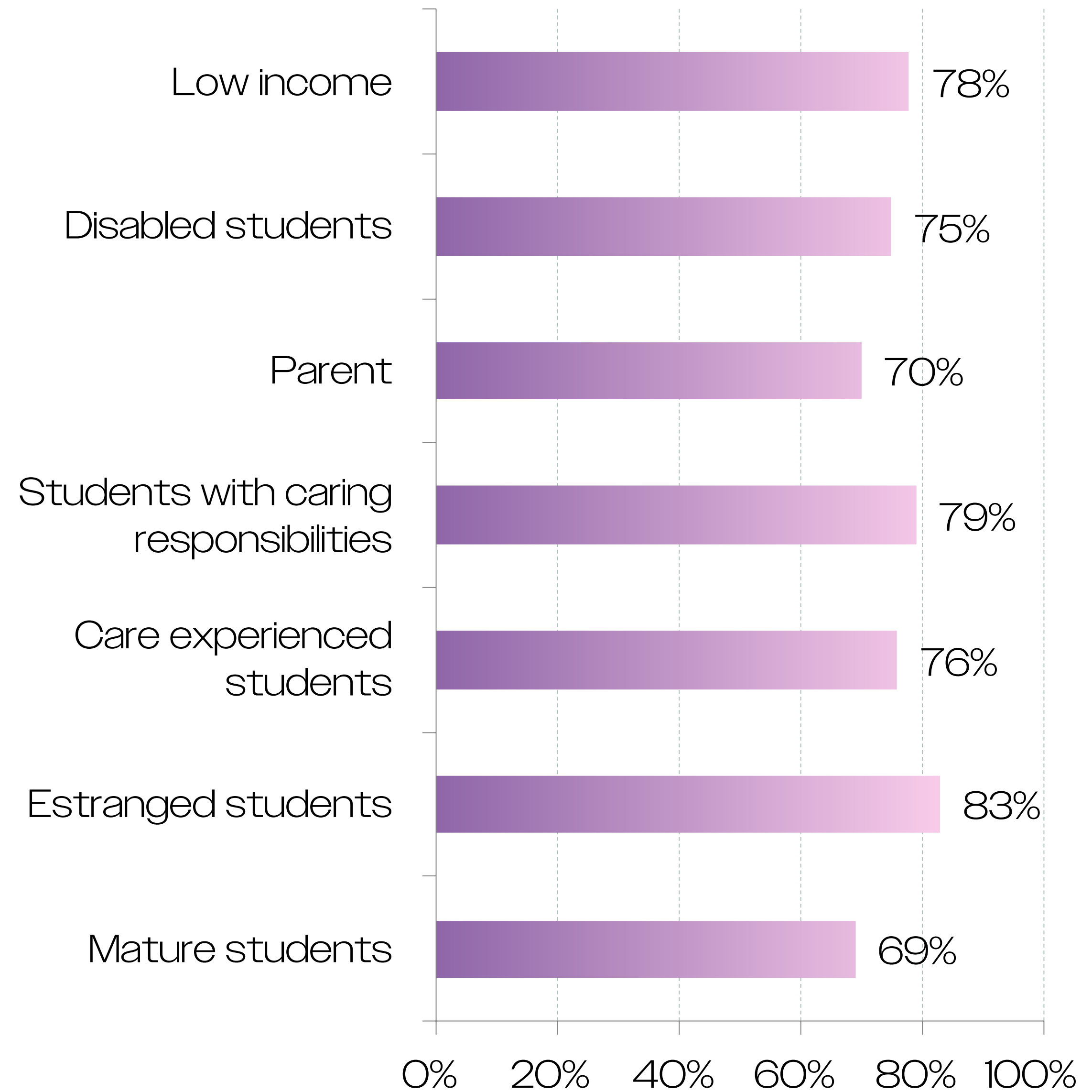
Base: 332 Respondents. Balance: Mental health not impacted
B2b. To what extent has your mental health been impacted?

ALL RESPONDENTS

TRACKED

IMPACT OF MONEY WORRIES ON MENTAL HEALTH

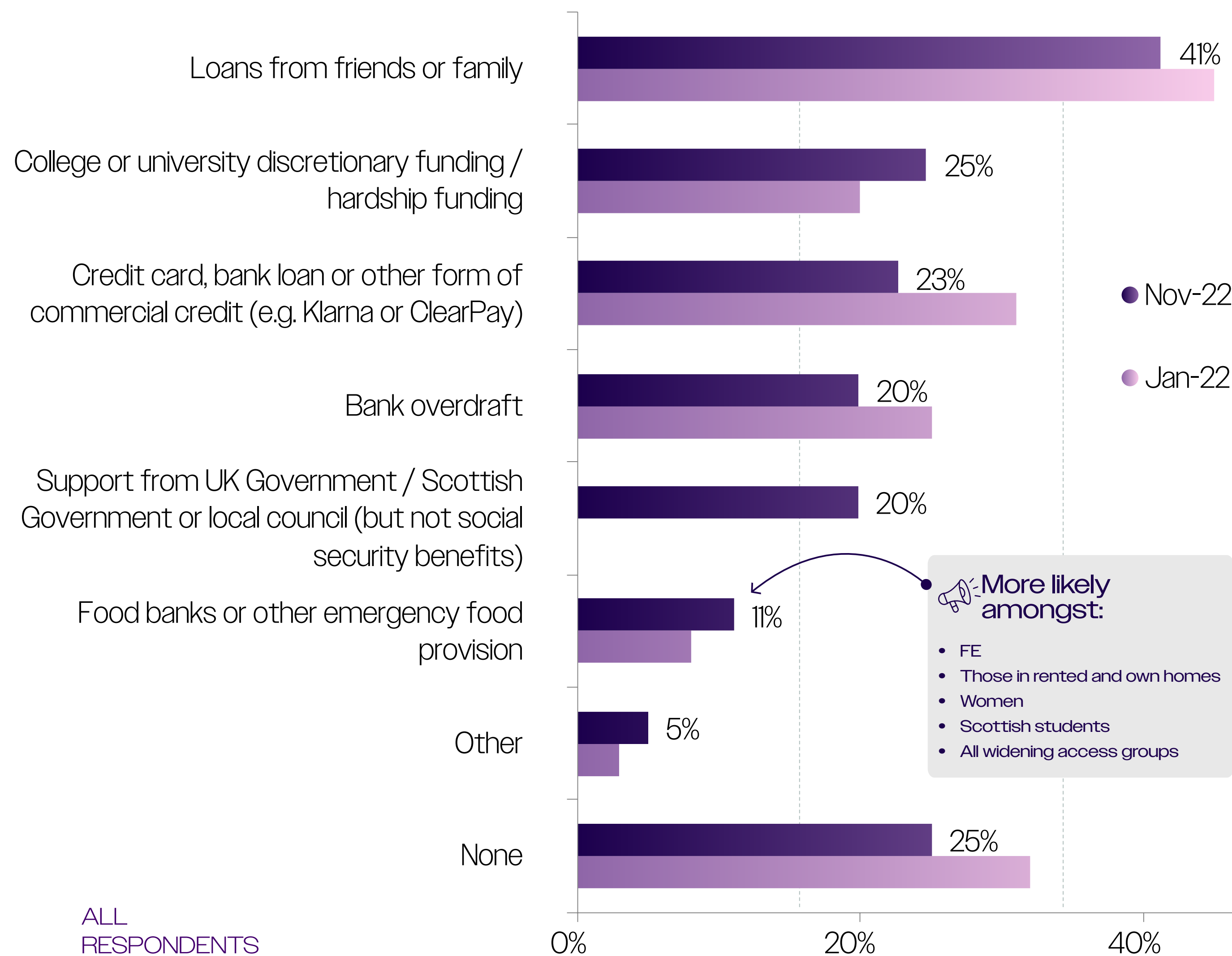
WIDENING ACCESS



B2a. Since you began your studies, has your mental health been impacted by worrying about money? Those saying yes

ADDITIONAL SUPPORT / ASSISTANCE

Loans from family and friends continue to be the main source of additional support or assistance. **11%** claim to use foodbanks, use of which is more likely amongst widening access groups.

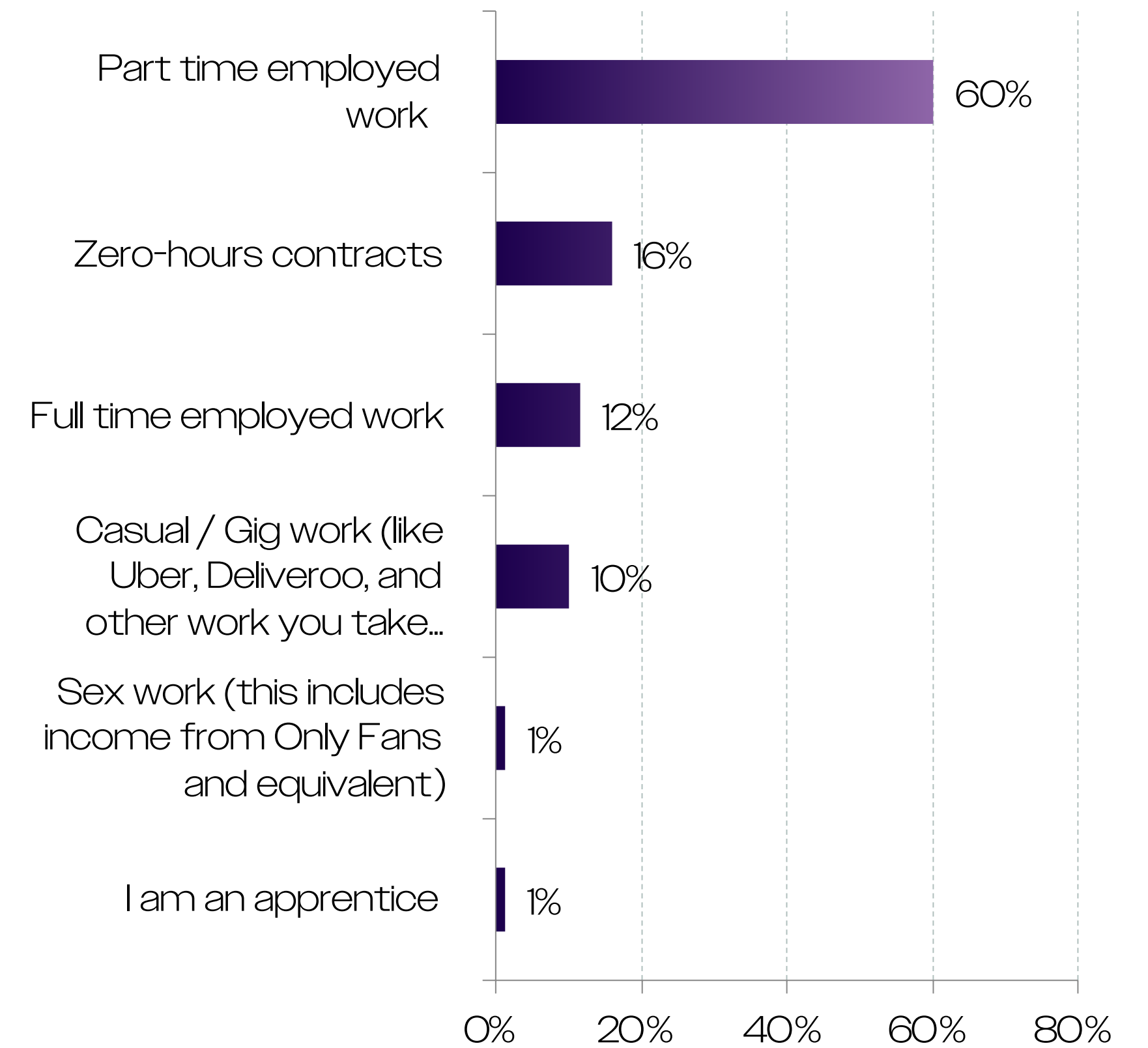
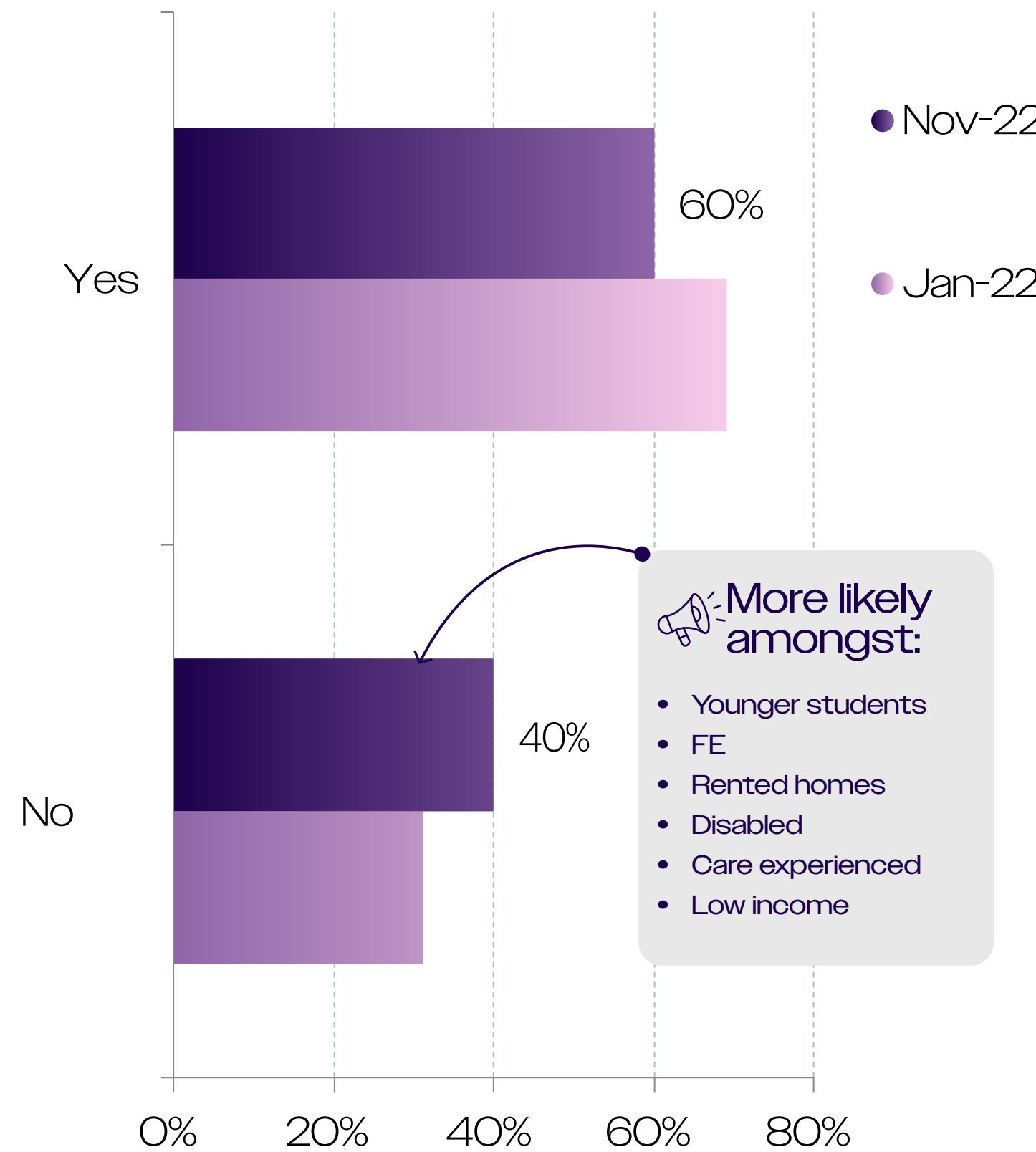


Base: 4939 Respondents. Balance: No response
B3. Which of the following, if any, have you sought support / assistance from during your studies?

TRACKED

WORK

Three in five students work alongside their studies, with the majority of those who do work taking on part time hours. Younger students, those in FE, rented homes, disabled, care experienced and from low income families are more likely not to work.



Base: 5087 Respondents.
B4. With regards to working, what do you currently do alongside your study (throughout the year)?

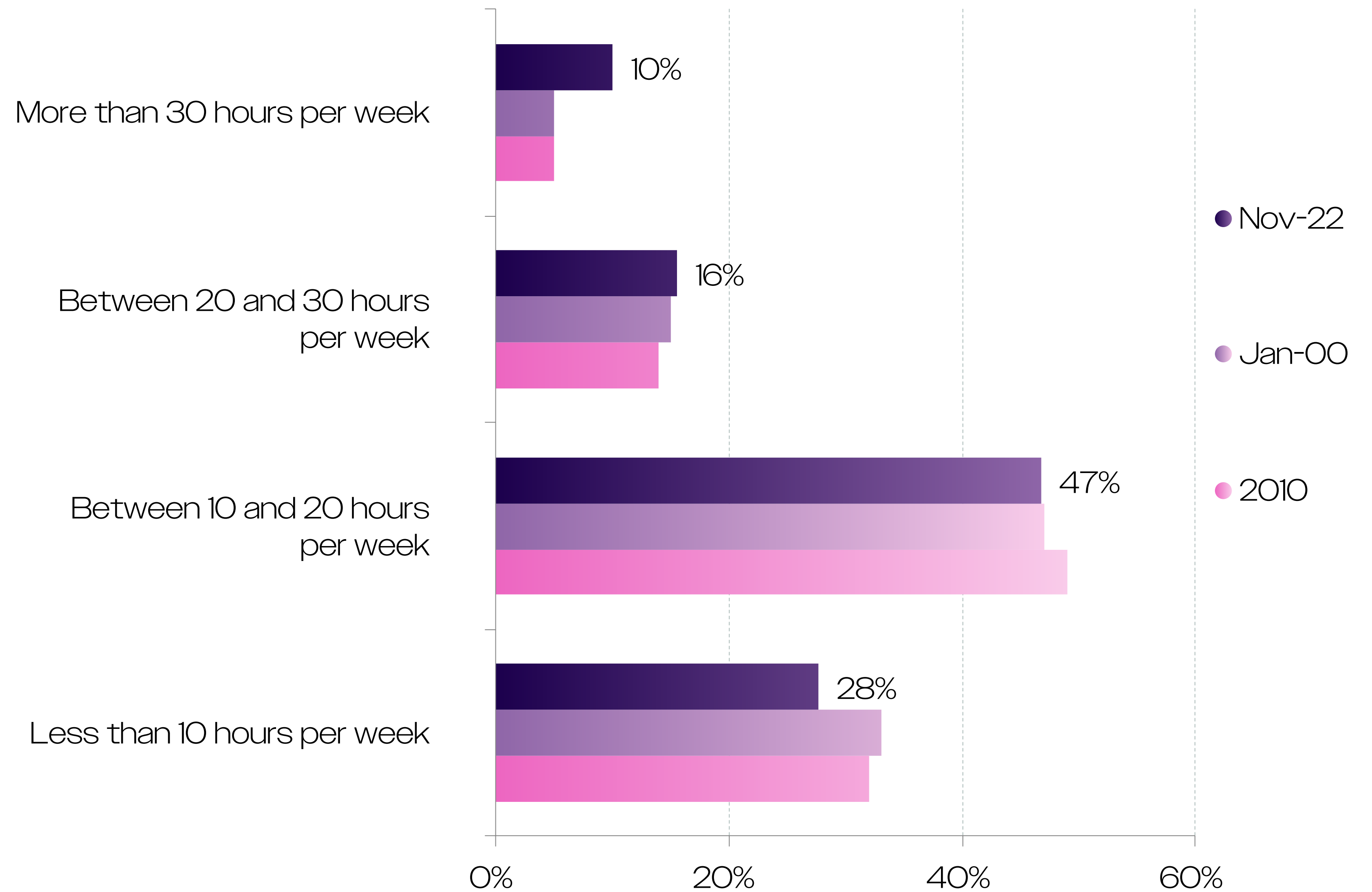
Base: 3341 Respondents. Balance: Don't work
B4. Type of work

ALL RESPONDENTS

TRACKED

HOURS OF WORK

Students who work most commonly do around **10 - 20 hours a week** alongside their studies.



ALL
RESPONDENTS

TRACKED

Base: 5087 Respondents.

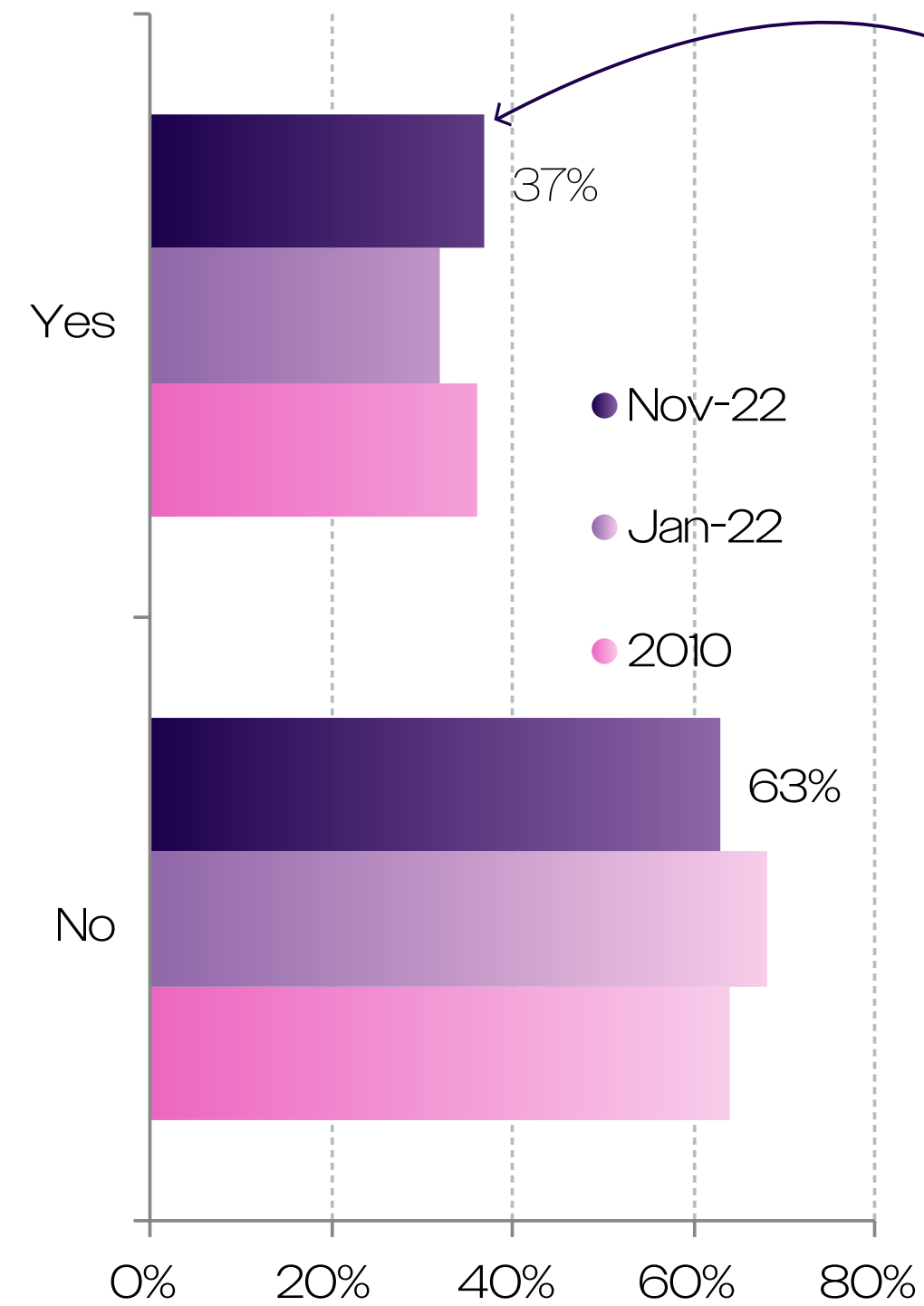
B4. With regards to working, what do you currently do alongside your study (throughout the year)?

Base: 3341 Respondents. Balance: Don't work

B4. Type of work

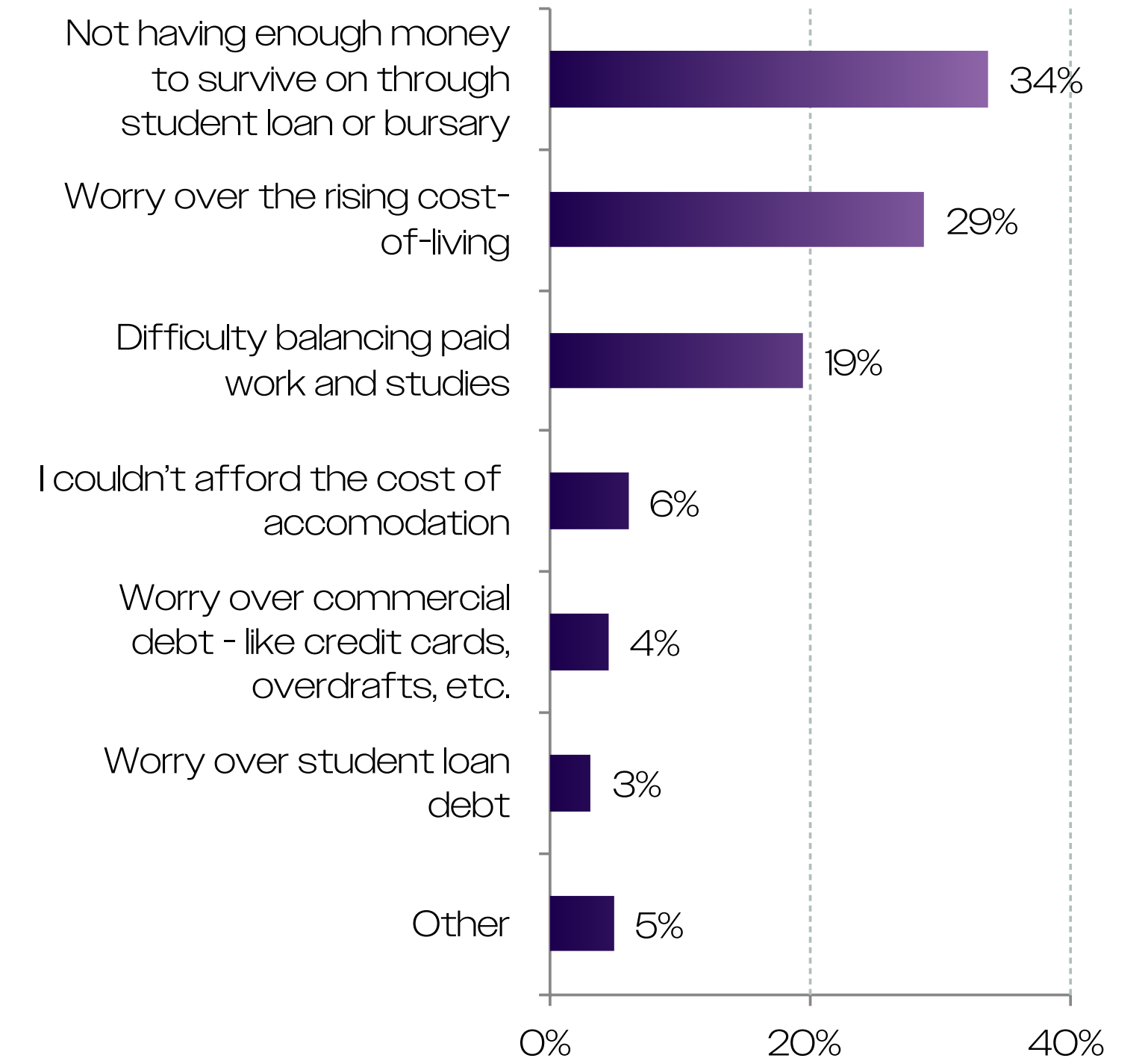
LEAVING STUDIES BECAUSE OF FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

Over a third have considered leaving their course because of financial difficulties including not having enough money from their loan or bursary and worries about the rising cost of living. Those from all widening access groups are more likely to have considered leaving their course.



More likely amongst:

- FE
- Living in rented accommodation, with parents, own home
- Scottish students
- All widening access groups



Base: 5020 Respondents.

B6. Have you ever considered leaving your course due to financial difficulties?

Base: 1835 Respondents. Balance: Not considered leaving
B7. Why?

ALL RESPONDENTS

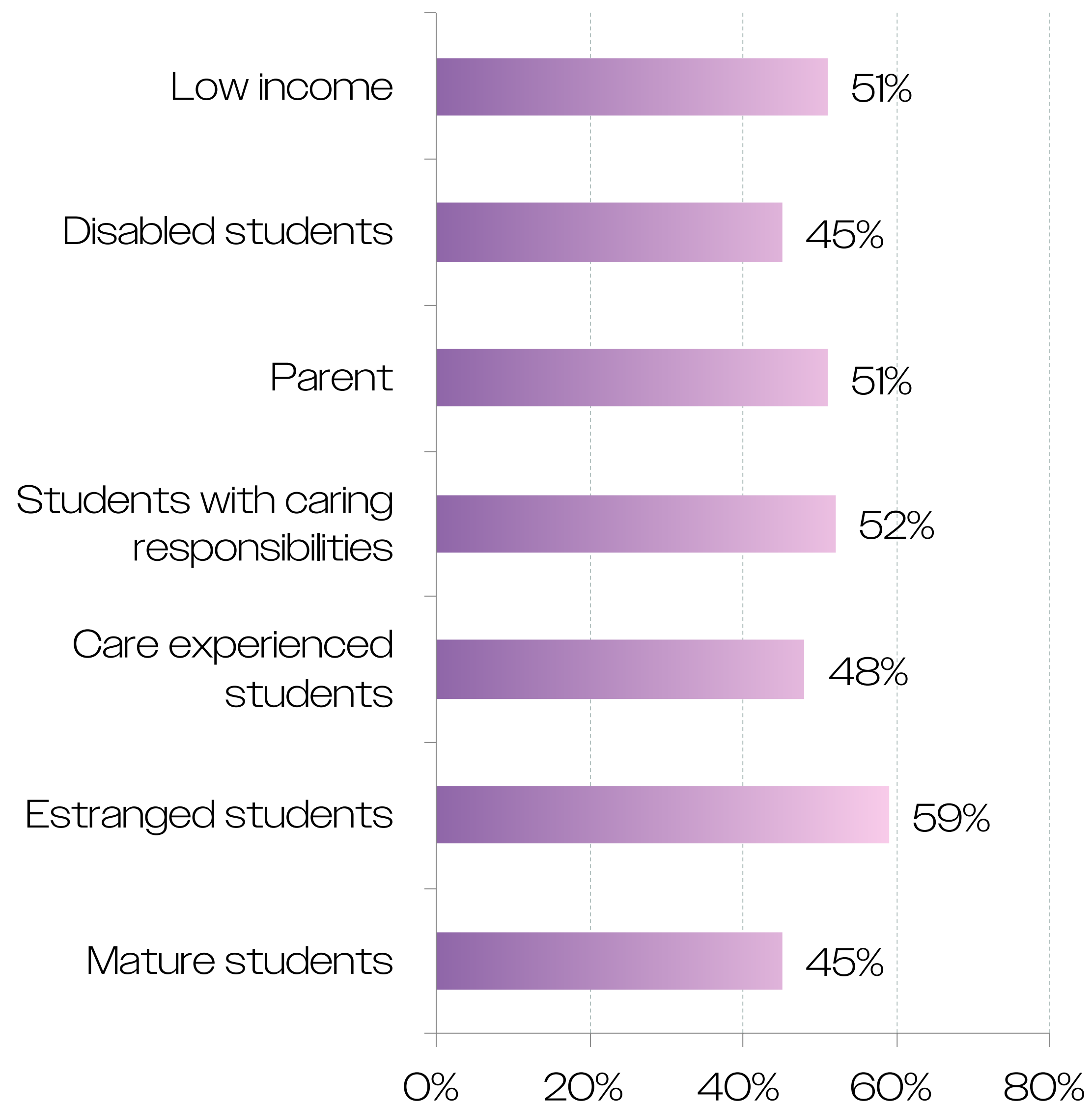
15 students have actually left

TRACKED

LEAVING STUDIES BECAUSE OF FINANCIAL DIFFICULTIES

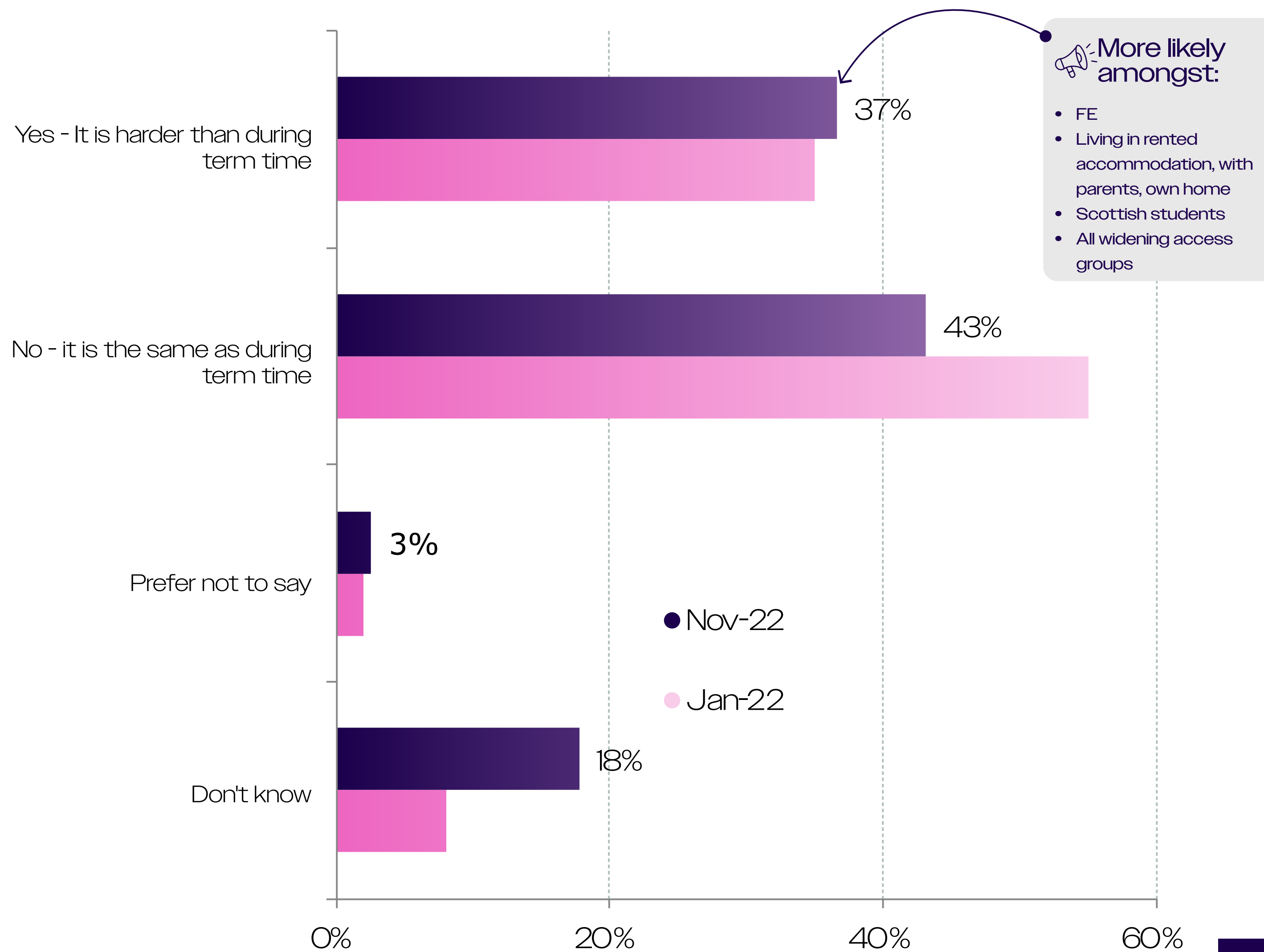
WIDENING ACCESS

B6. Have you ever considered leaving your course due to financial difficulties? (those answering yes, I have considered it)



FINANCIAL DIFFICULTY OVER SUMMER HOLIDAYS

Over **two fifths** of students believe it is just as difficult financially in the summer months as it is during term time, particularly widening access groups, FE, non-binary and living in rented accommodation.



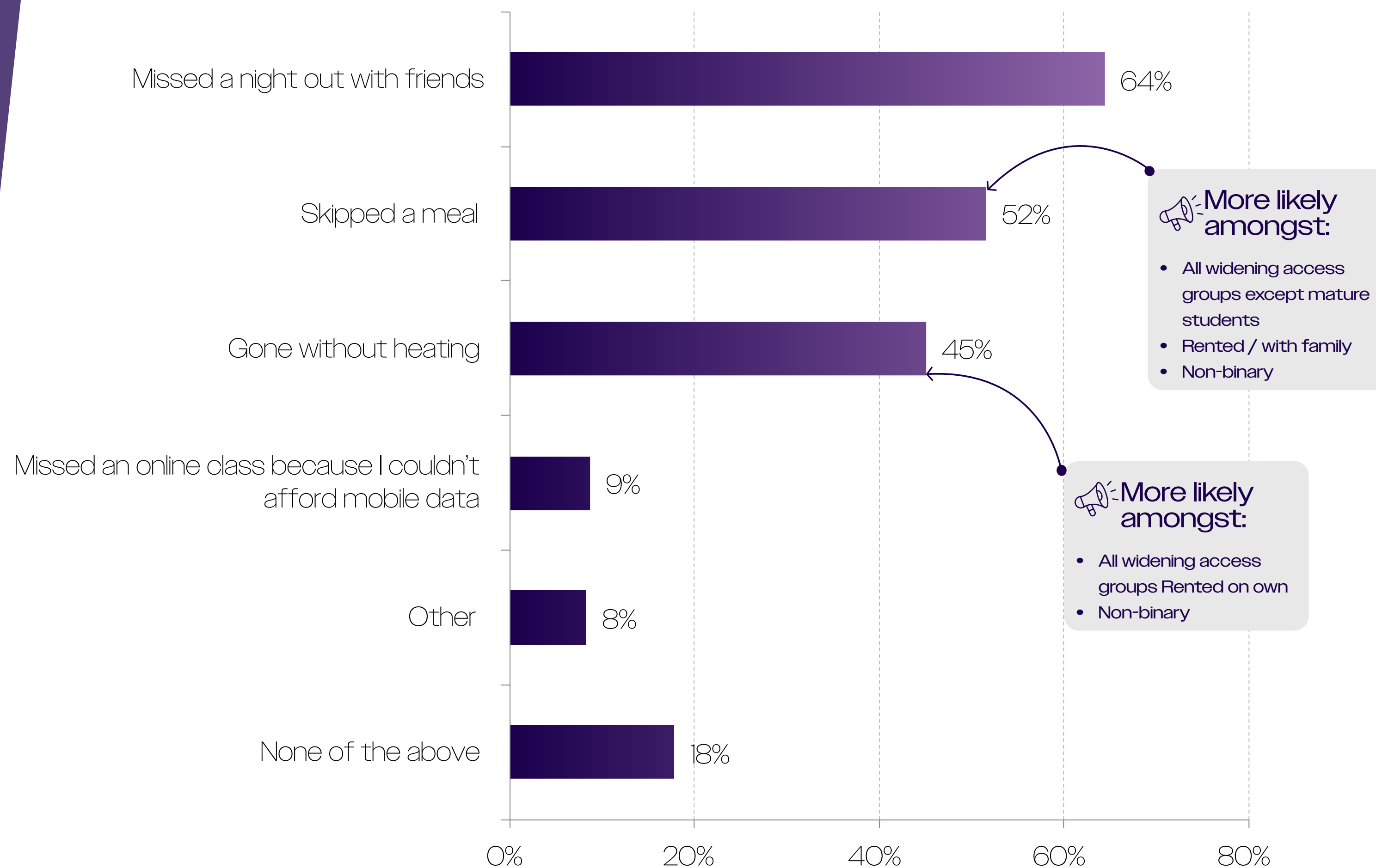
ALL RESPONDENTS

TRACKED

Base: 5066 Respondents. Balance: No response
B8. Do you find coping financially over the summer holiday period difficult?

ACTIONS AS A RESULT OF LACK OF MONEY

Over a half have skipped a meal because of a lack of money and over two fifths have gone without heating; this is more likely amongst widening access groups.



ALL RESPONDENTS

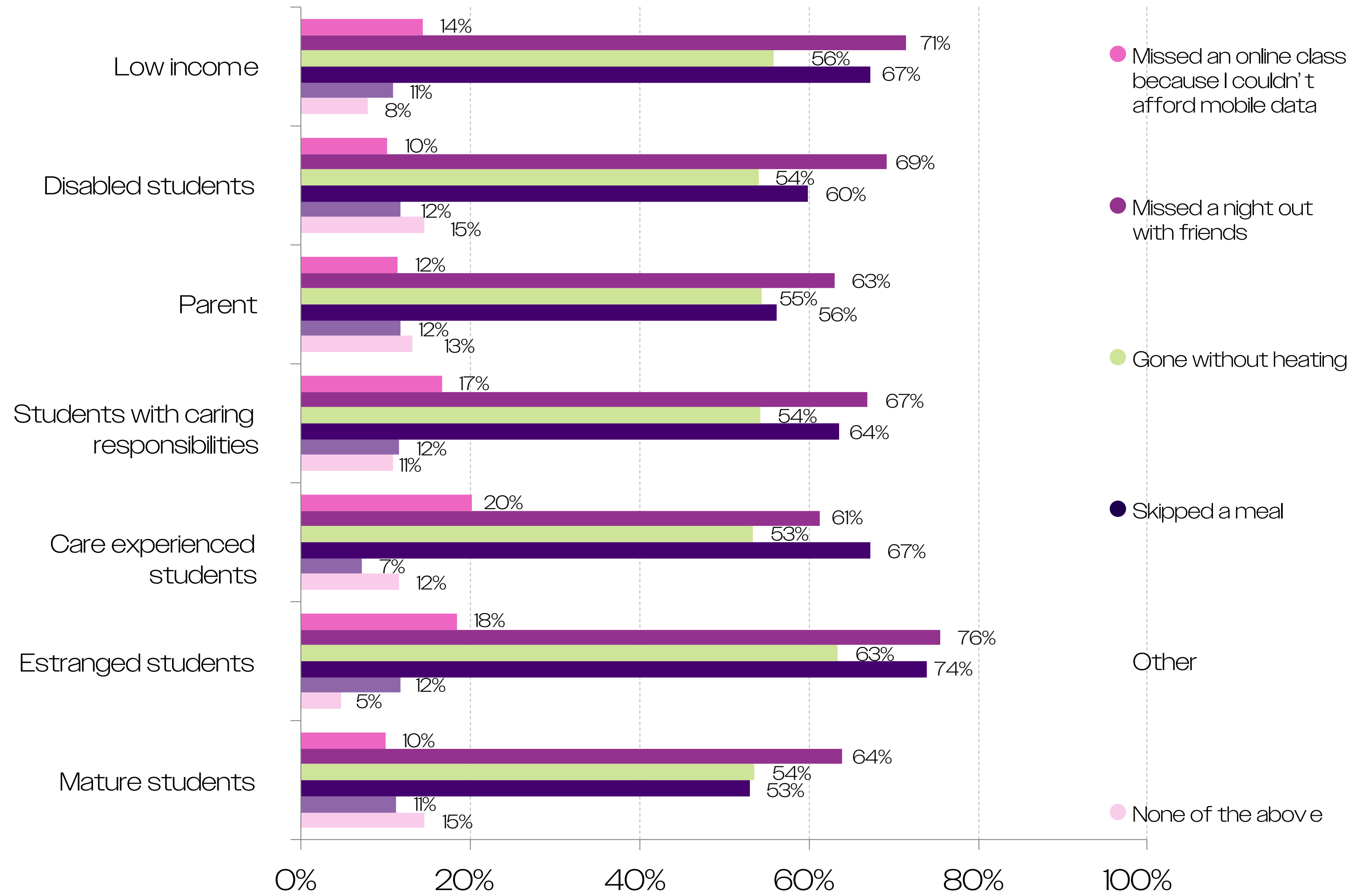
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Base: 5107 Respondents.

B9. Have you ever done any of the following because of a lack of money?

ACTIONS AS A RESULT OF LACK OF MONEY

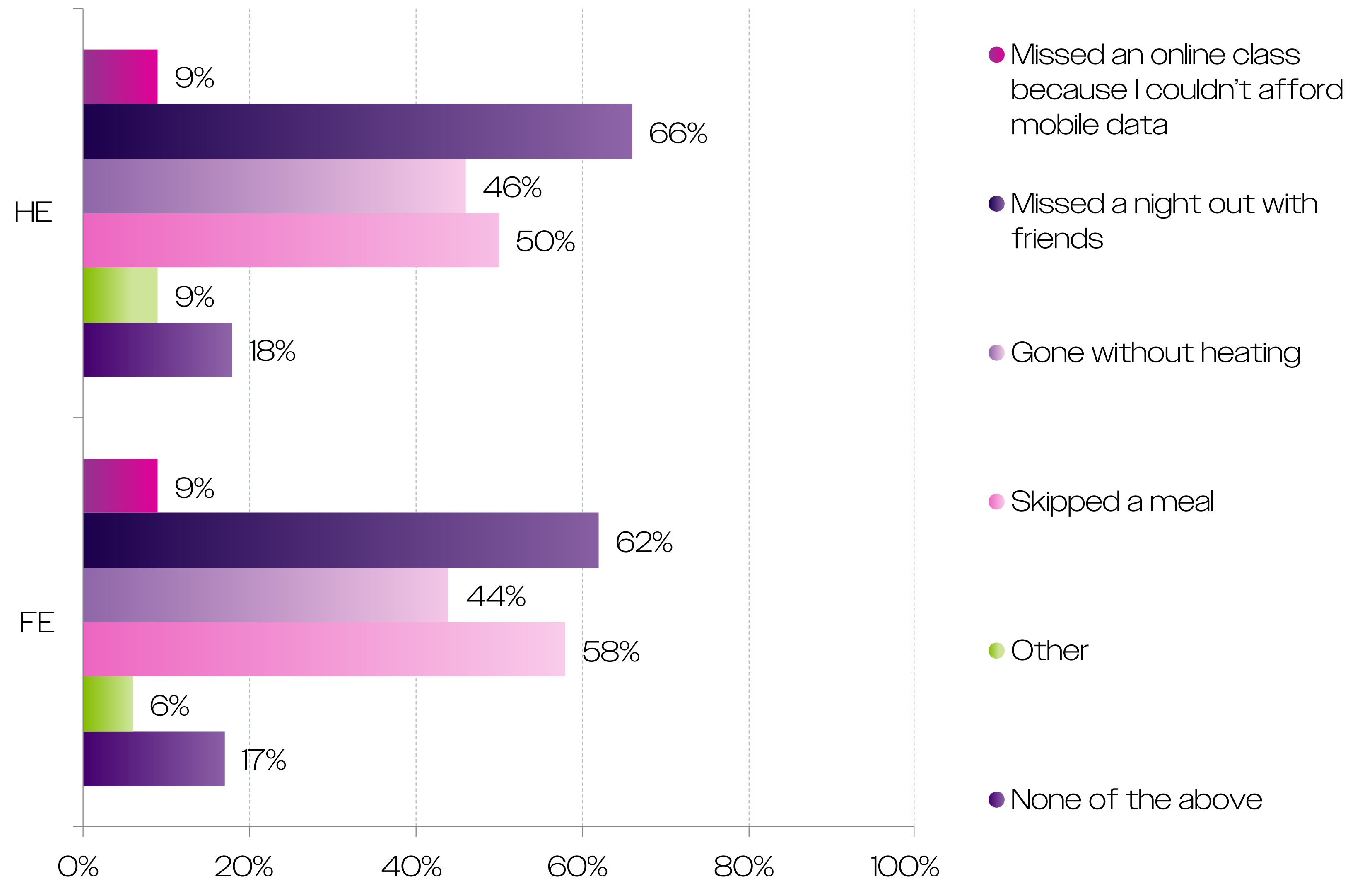
WIDENING ACCESS



B9. Have you ever done any of the following because of a lack of money?

ACTIONS AS A RESULT OF LACK OF MONEY

LEVEL OF STUDY



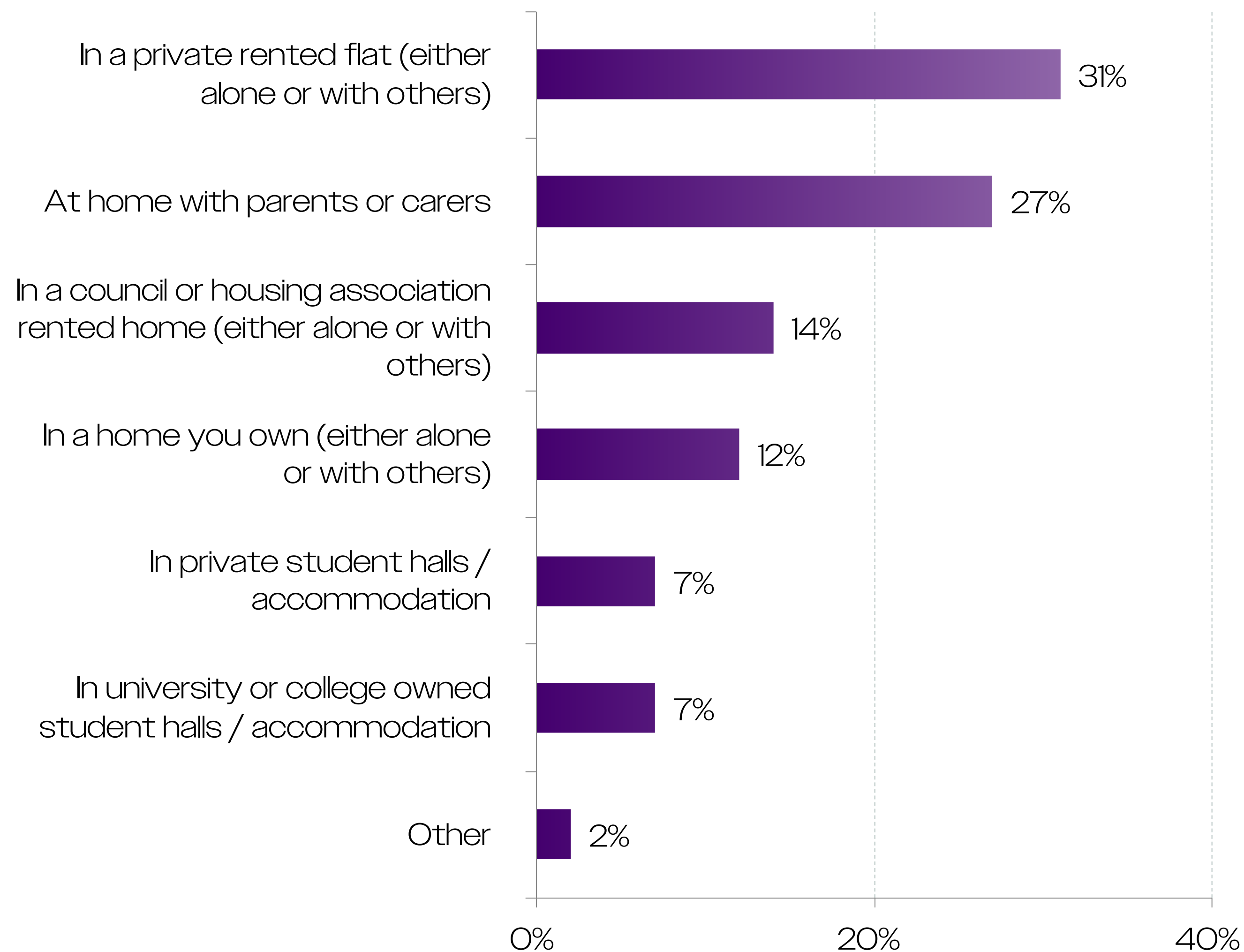
B9. Have you ever done any of the following because of a lack of money?

HOUSING & BILLS

NINGSTUDENTS
NINGSTUDENTS

LIVING CIRCUMSTANCES

Students most commonly live in rented accommodation or with parents / carers.



ALL RESPONDENTS

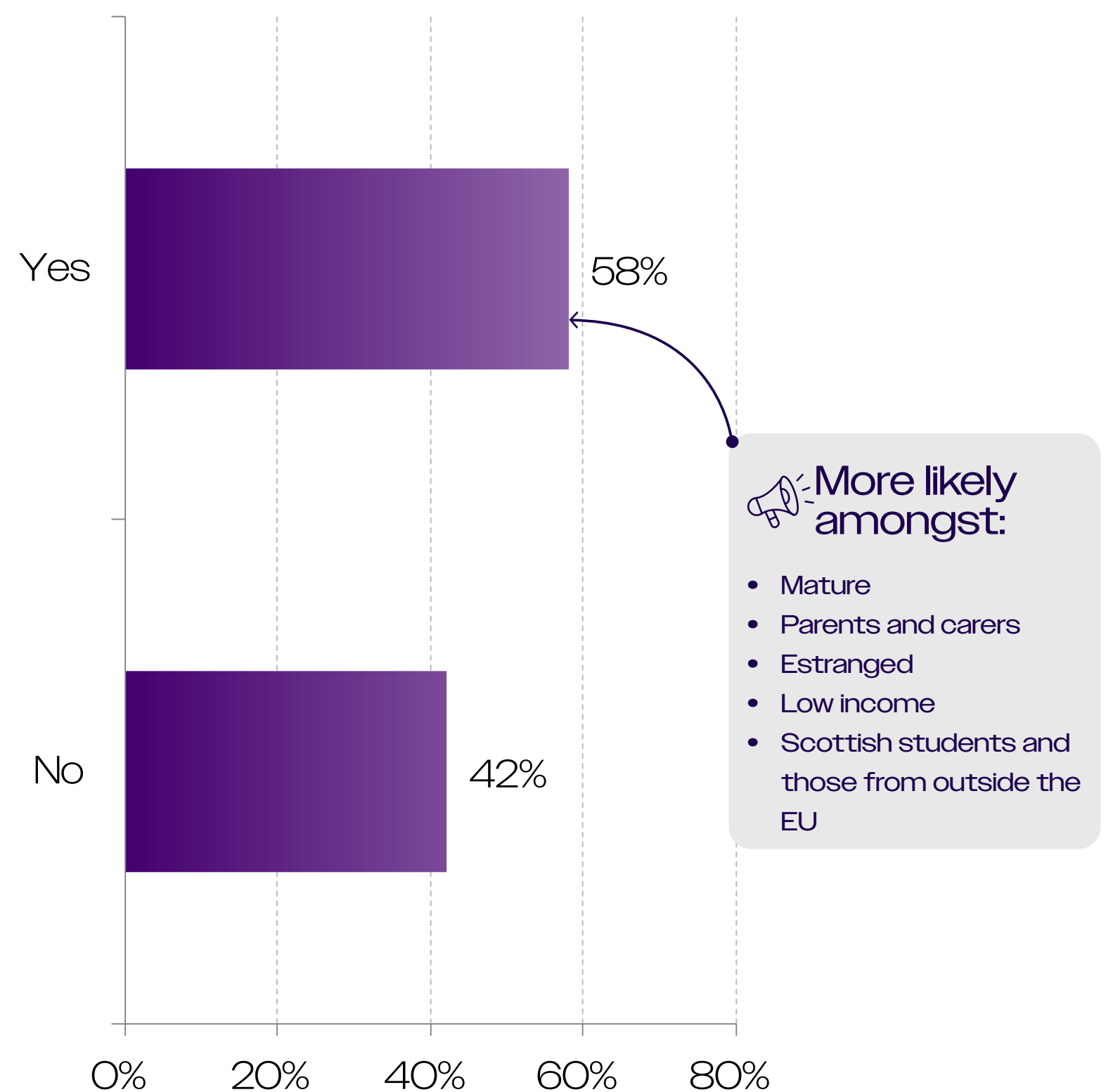
Base: 5160 Respondents.

C1. Where do you normally live during term time?

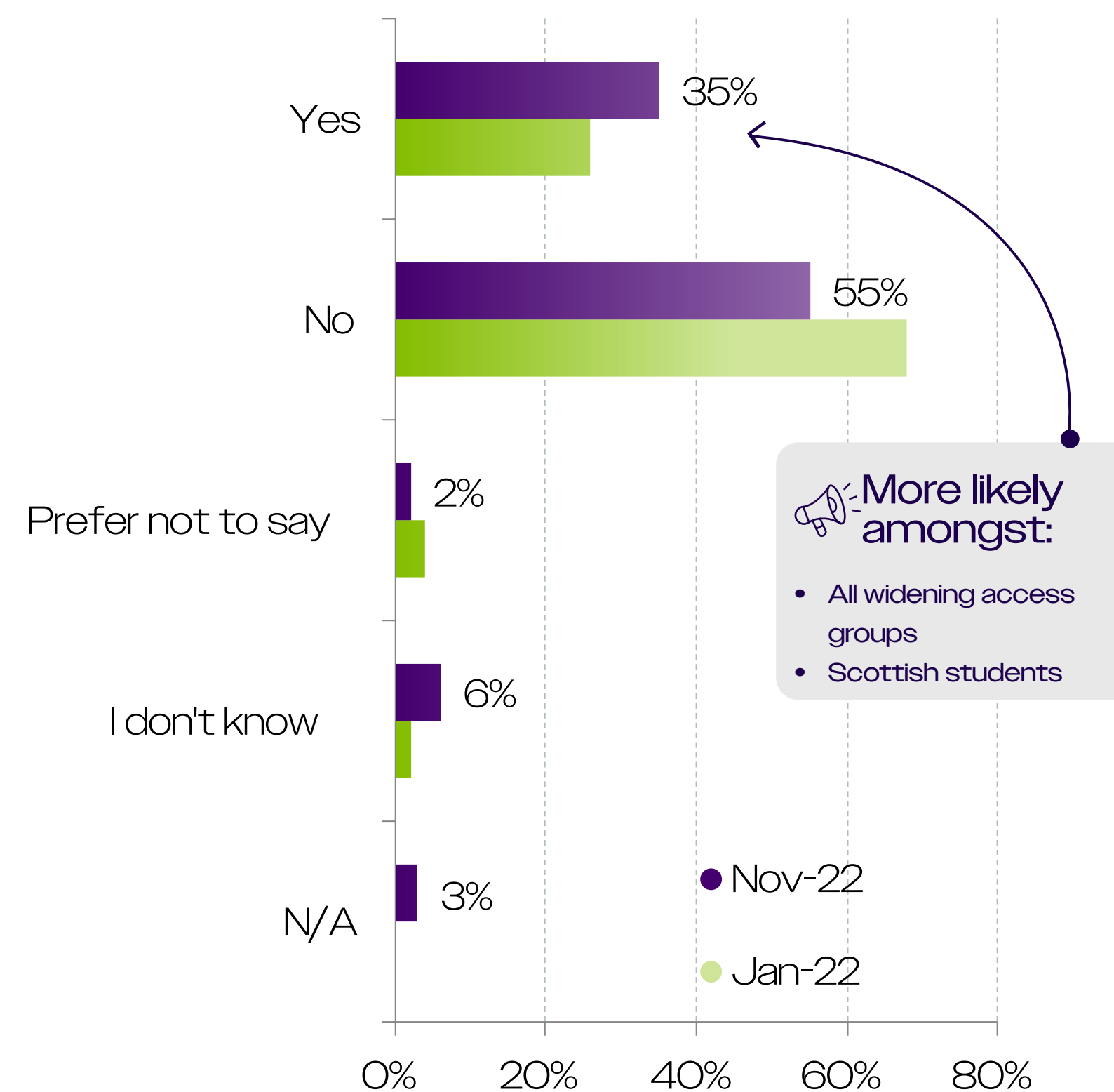
LIVING CIRCUMSTANCES

Of those living in rented accommodation, over a half have seen an increase in rent since last year while **a third have been unable to pay their rent in full** at some point, particularly those from all widening access groups.

Increase in rent



Payment of rent



Base: 2297 Respondents. Balance: Those not in rented accommodation
C6. Has your rent gone up this year compared to last year?

Base: 2304 Respondents. Balance: Those not in rented accommodation
C2. Have you ever been unable to pay your rent in full?

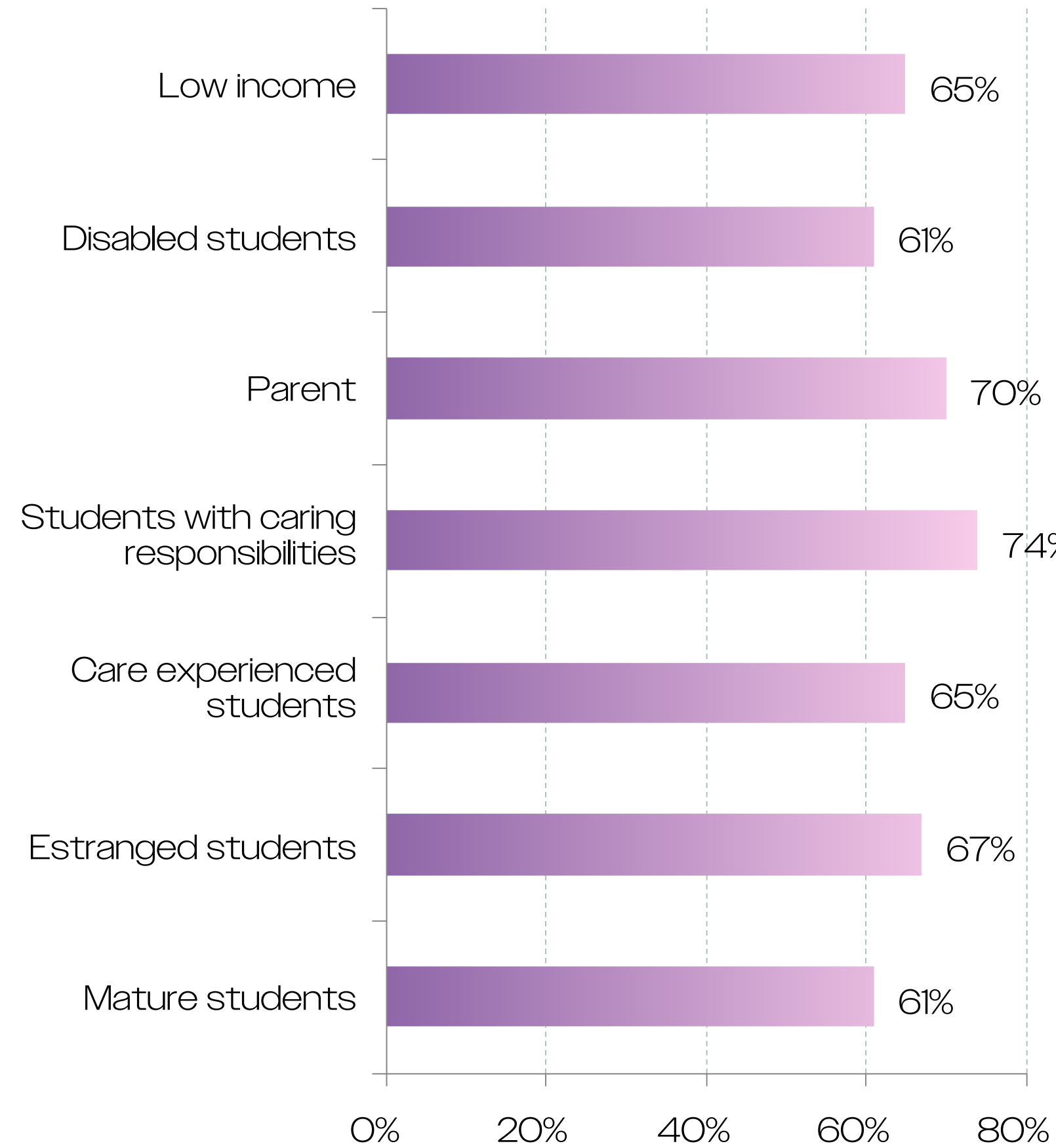
ALL RESPONDENTS

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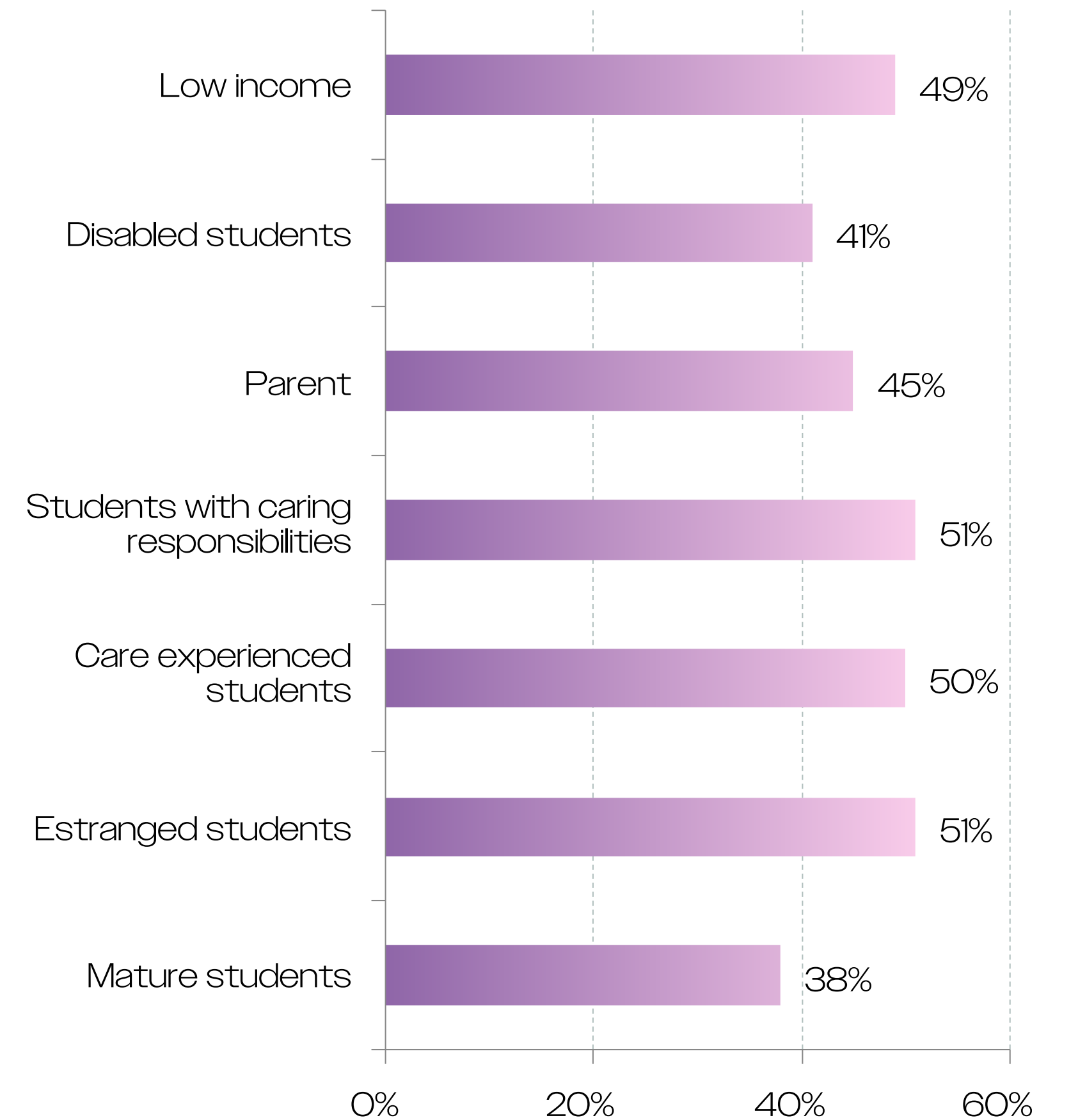
LIVING CIRCUMSTANCES

WIDENING ACCESS

Increase in rent



Payment of rent

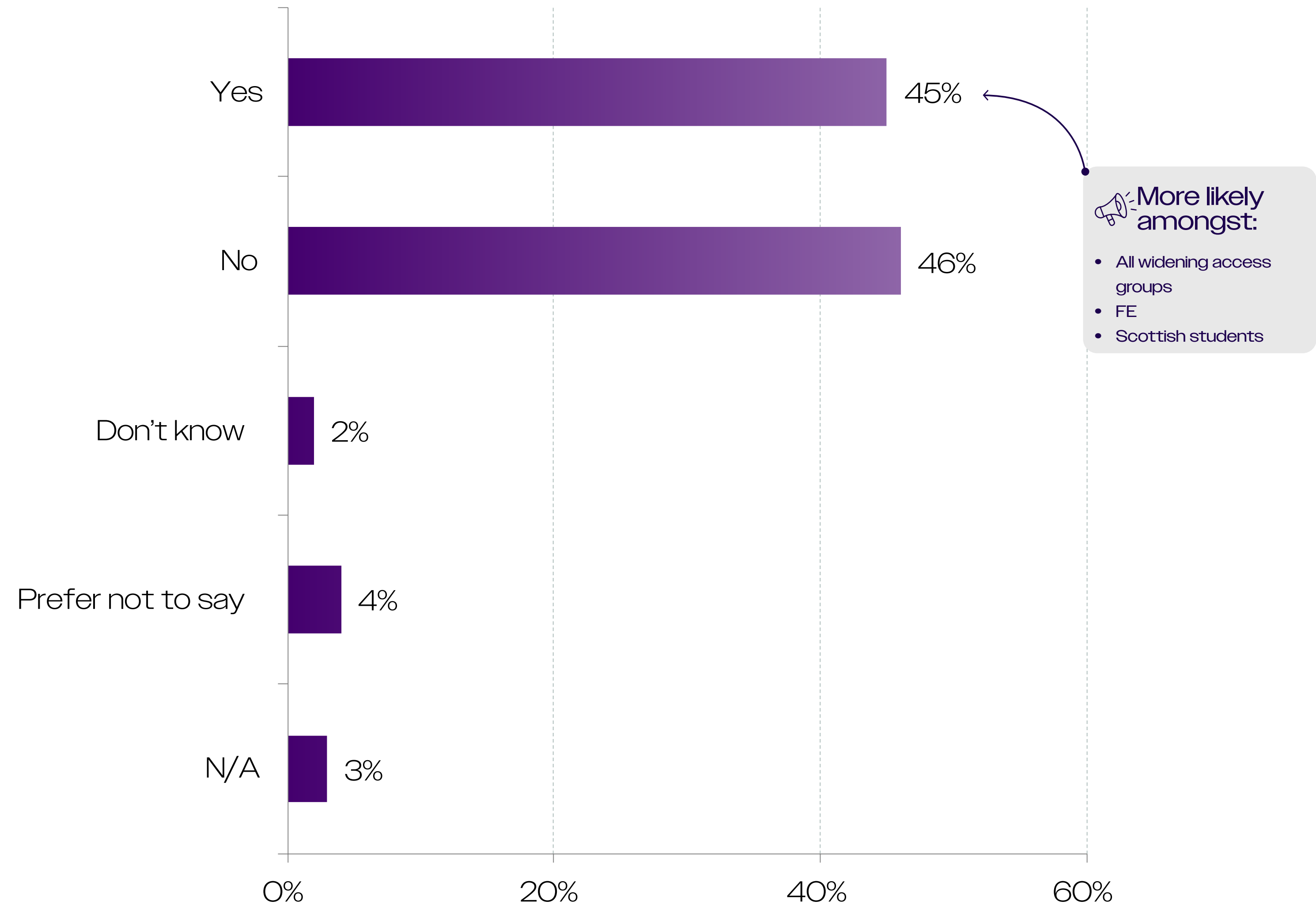


C6. Has your rent gone up this year compared to last year? (those answering yes)

C2. Have you ever been unable to pay your rent in full? (those answering yes)

PAYMENT OF ENERGY BILLS

Over **two fifths** have been unable to pay their energy bills at some point, particularly all widening access groups.

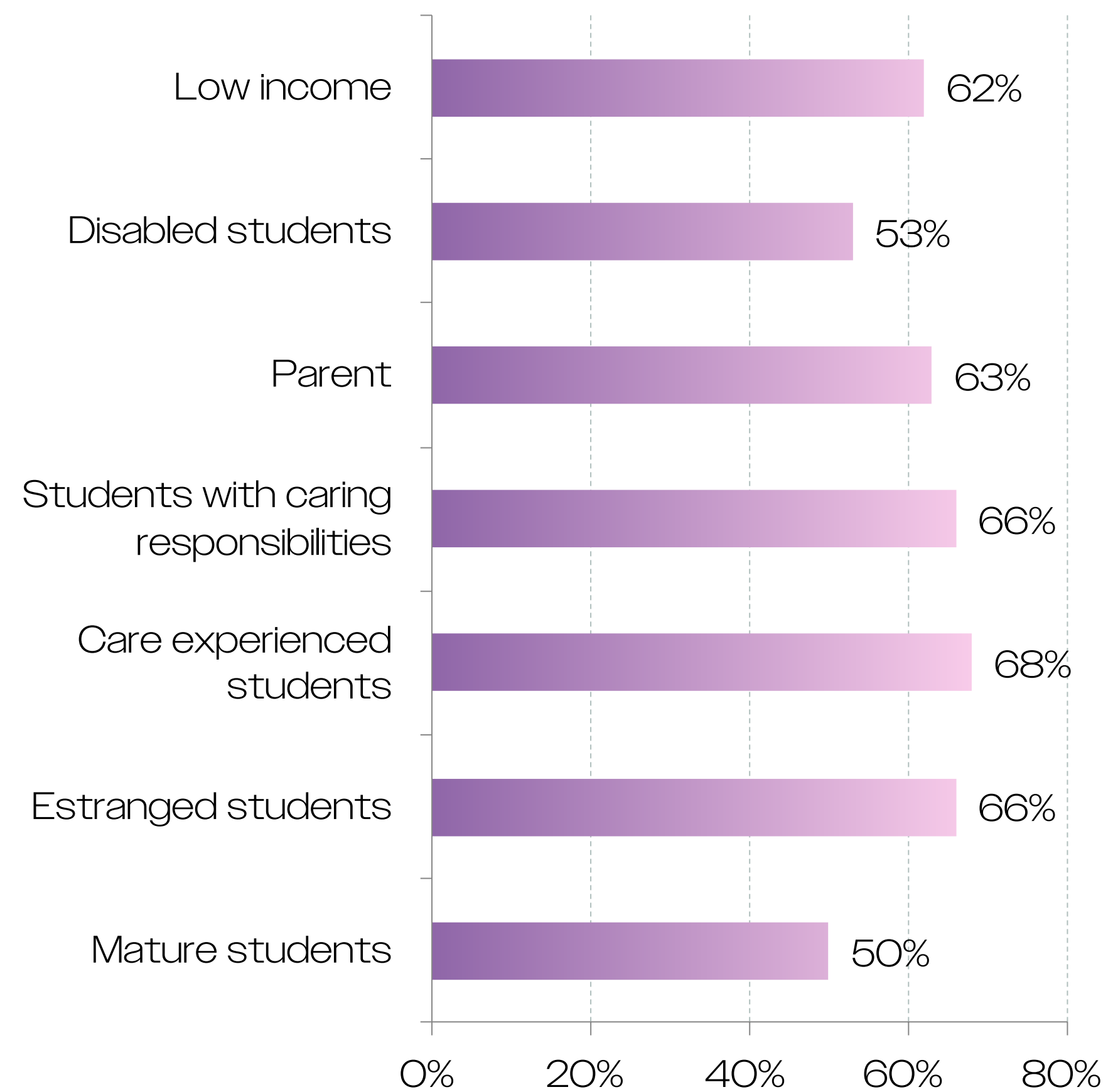


ALL
RESPONDENTS

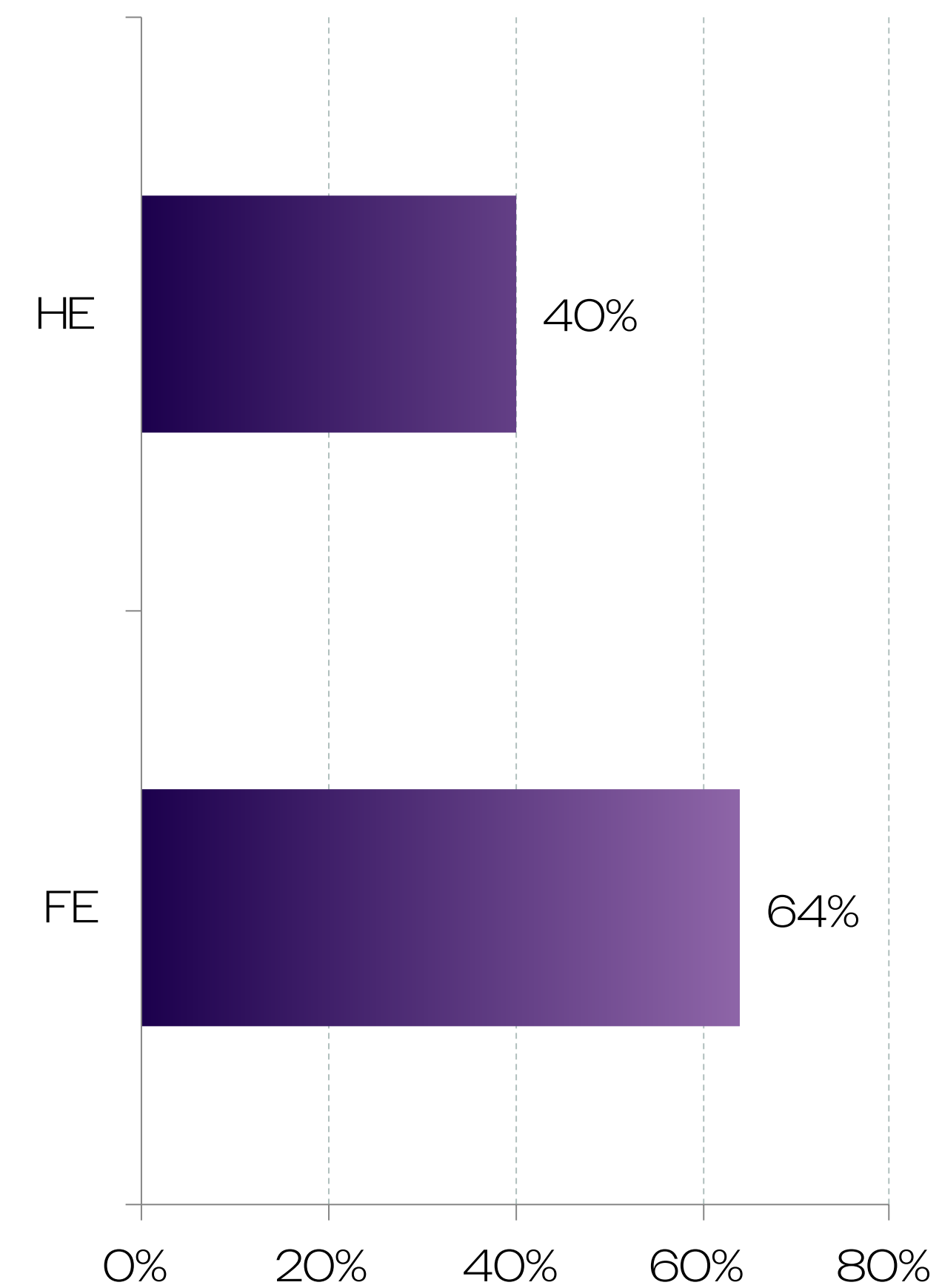
Base: 2306 Respondents. Balance: Don't pay bills
C3. Have you ever been unable to pay your energy bills in full?

PAYMENT OF ENERGY BILLS

Widening Access



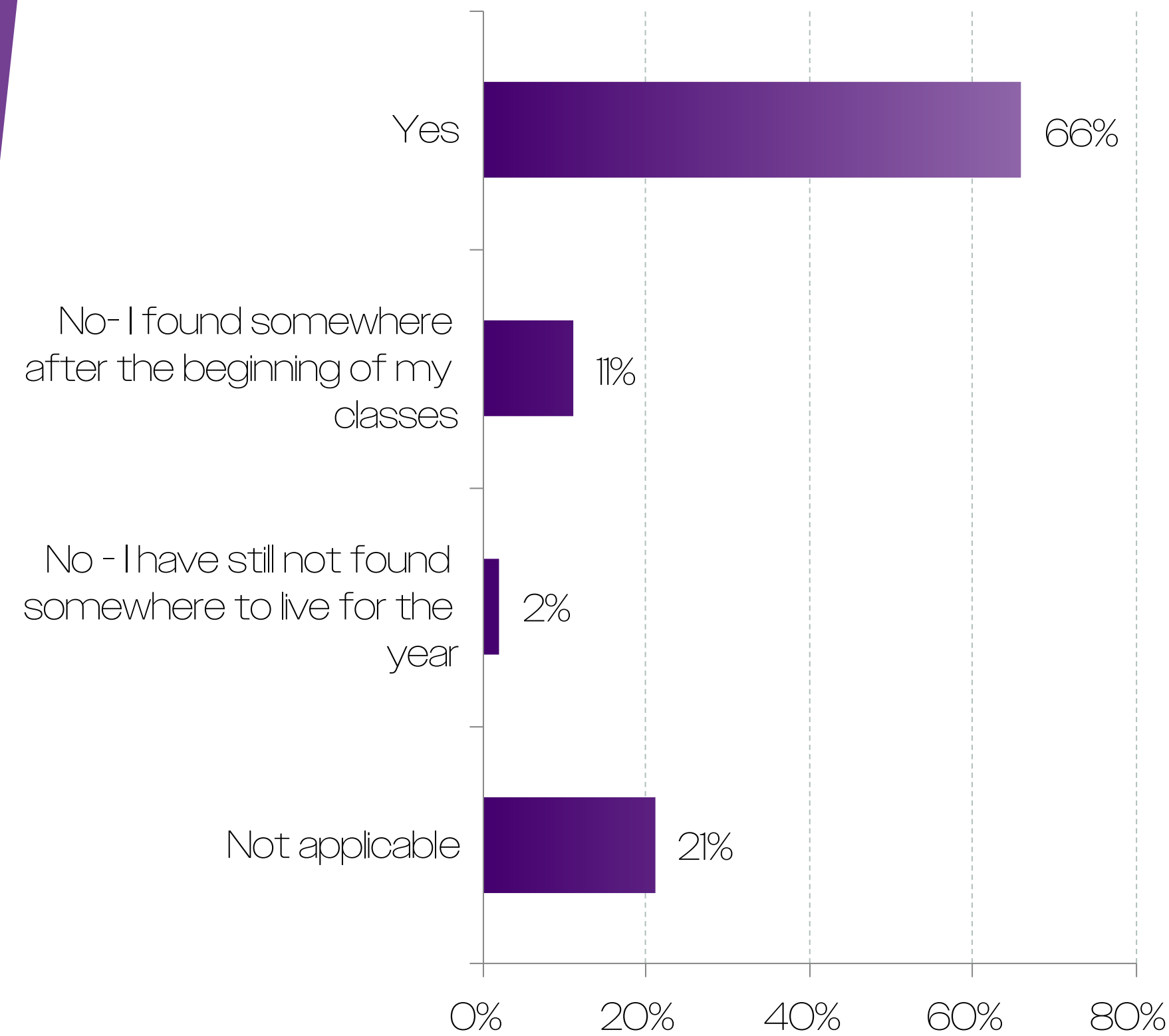
Level of Study



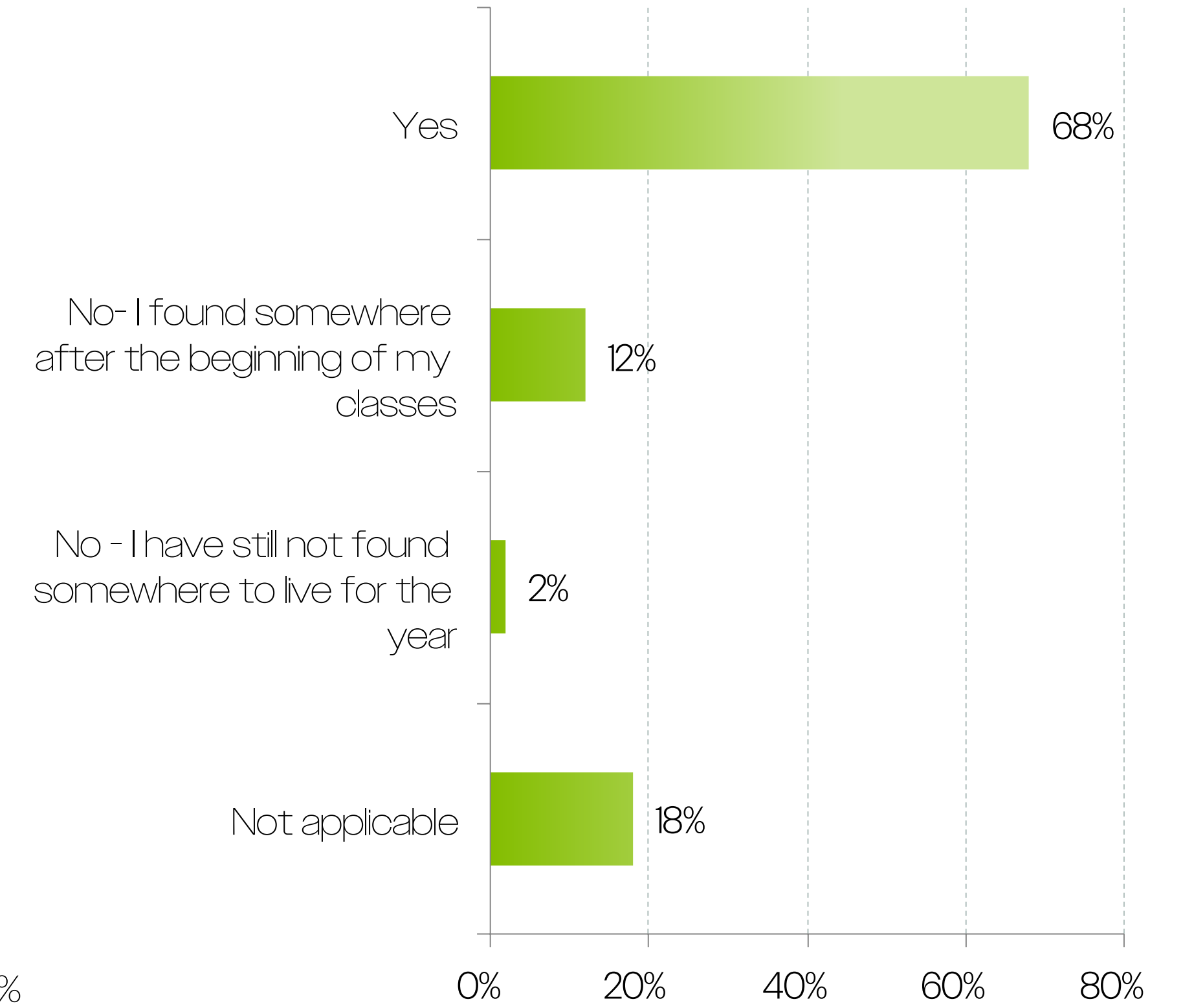
C3. Have you ever been unable to pay your energy bills in full? (those answering yes)

ABILITY TO FIND SOMEWHERE TO LIVE BY START OF TERM

11% struggled to find somewhere to live by the start of the term and a further 2% are still looking.



ALL RESPONDENTS

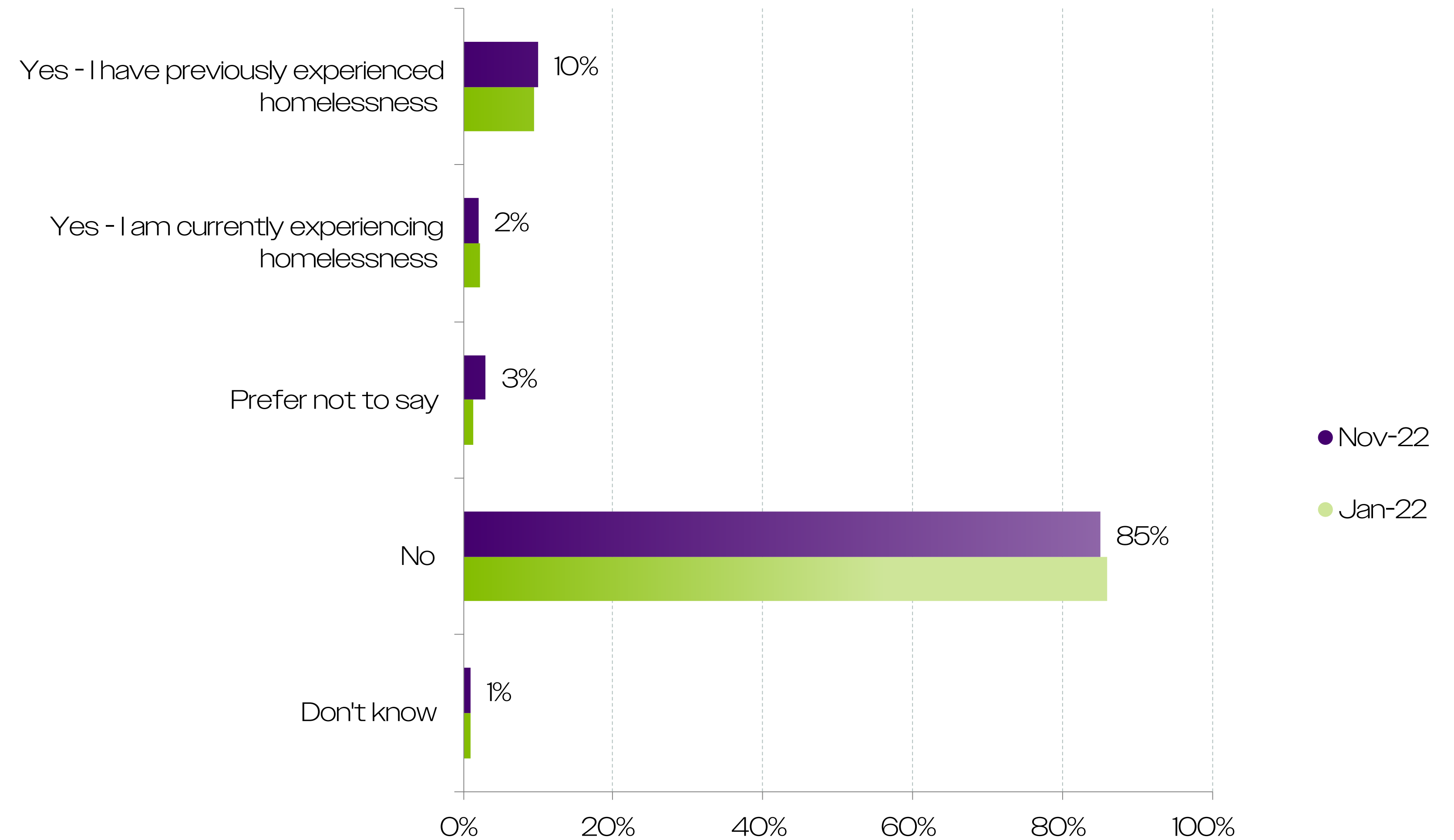


HIGHER EDUCATION

Base: 3031 Respondents. Balance: Not looking for accommodation
C4. Were you able to find somewhere to live by the beginning of this term?

EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

2% are currently homeless while one in ten have experienced homelessness in the past.



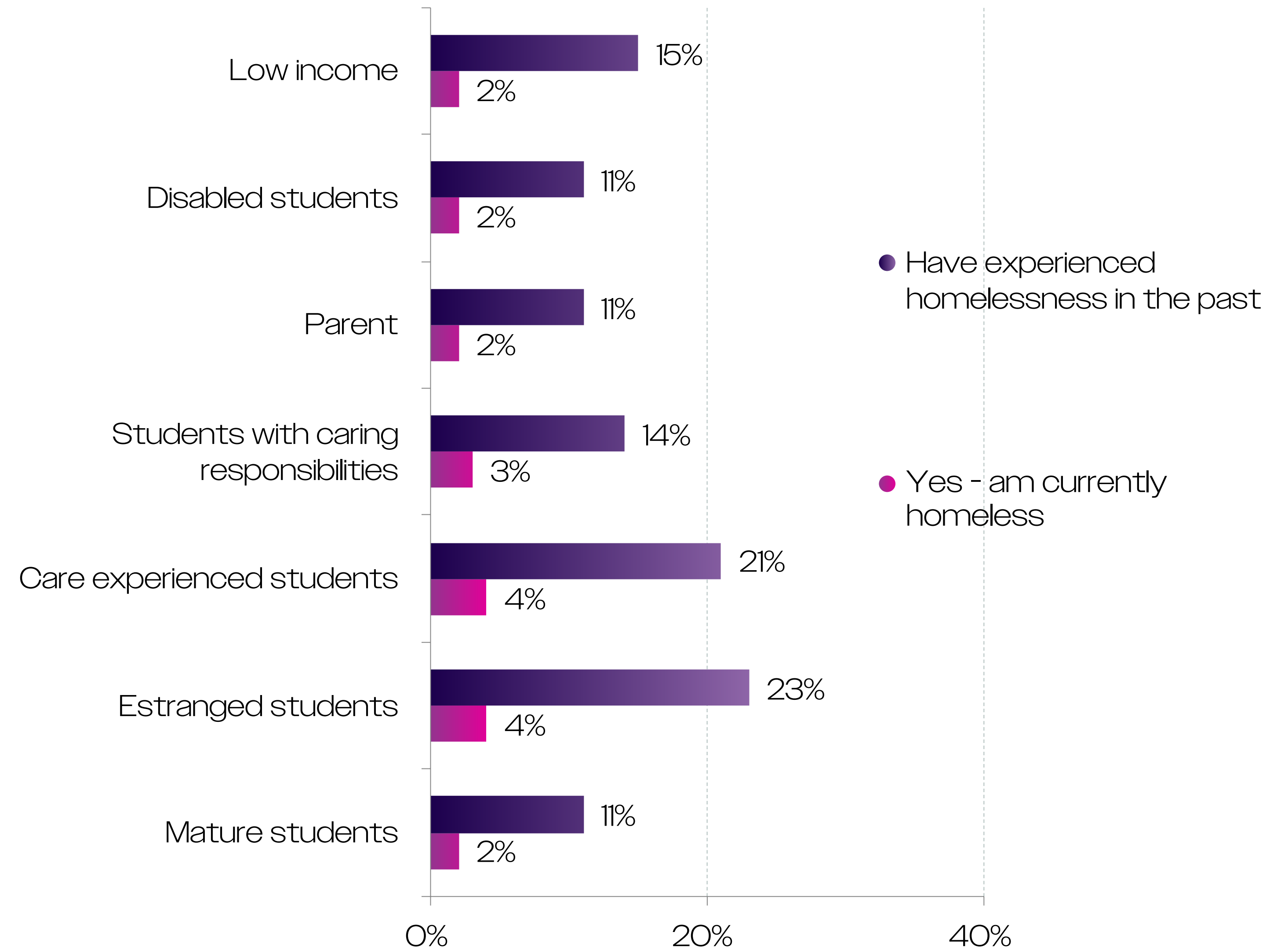
ALL
RESPONDENTS

TRACKED

Base: 5159 Respondents.
C5. Since starting your studies, have you ever experienced homelessness?

EXPERIENCE OF HOMELESSNESS

WIDENING ACCESS



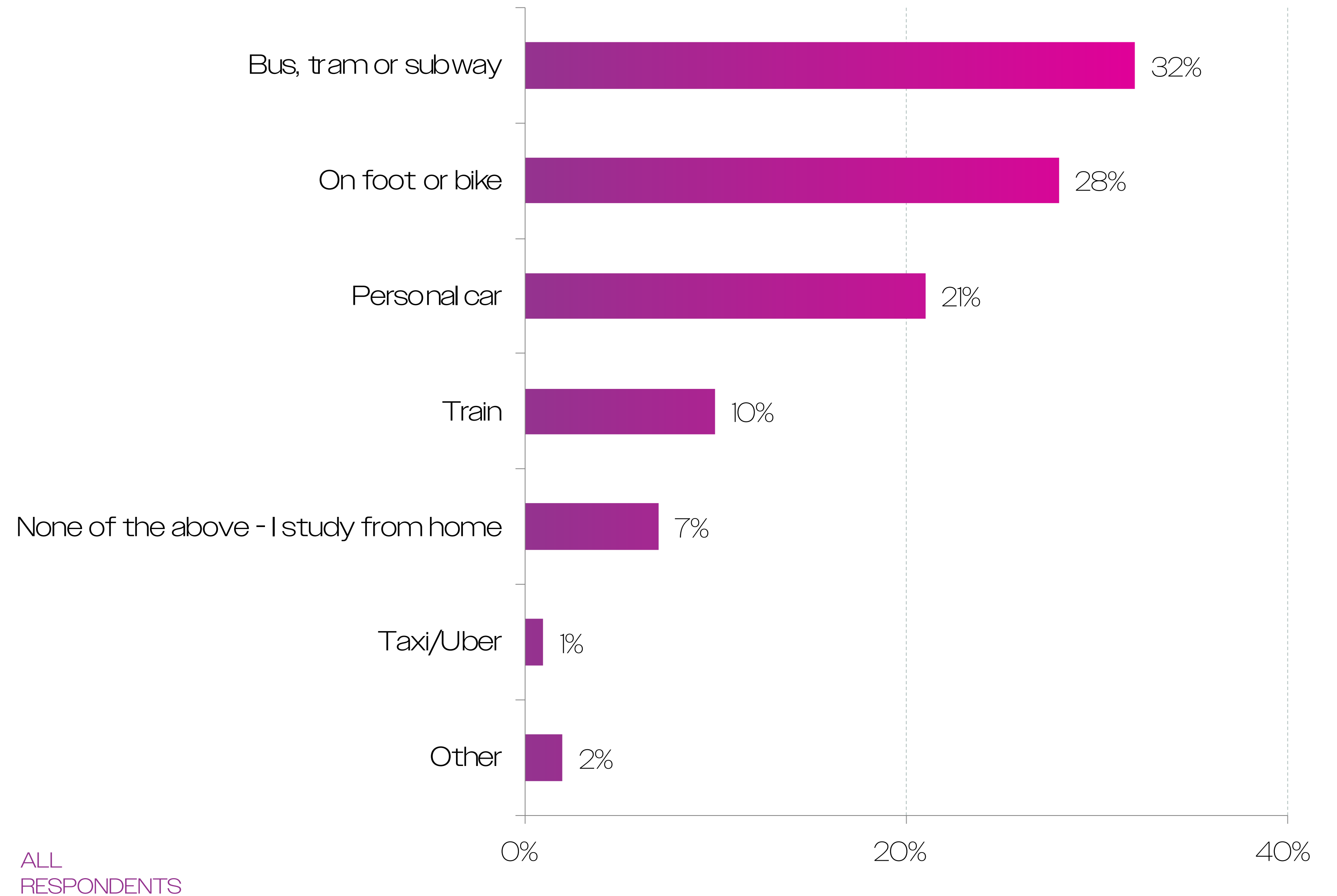
C5. Since starting your studies, have you ever experienced homelessness?

PUBLIC TRANSPORT



TRAVEL TO CLASS

Bus, tram or subway is the most common way to travel to class, followed by on foot or bike.

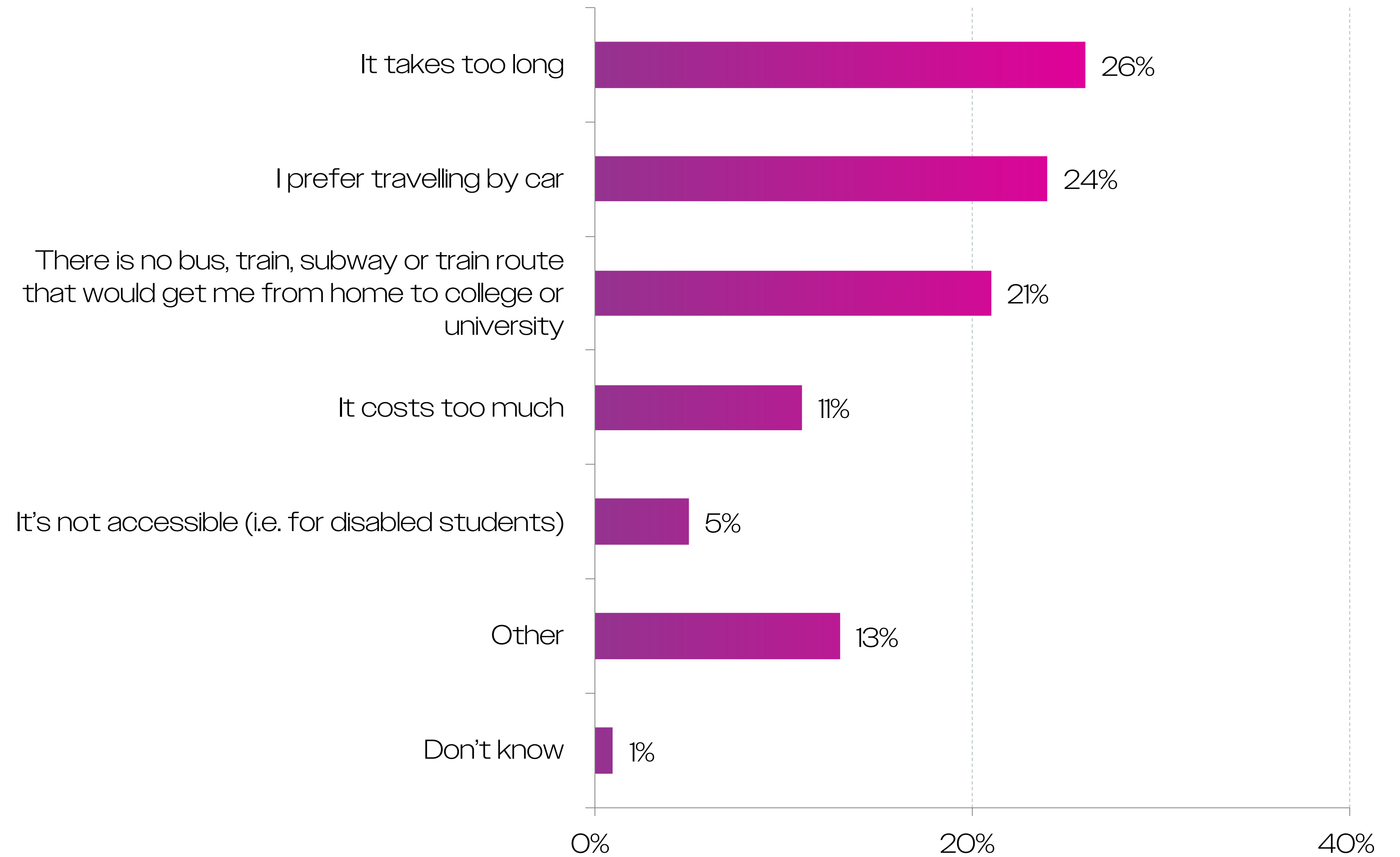


Base: 5166 Respondents.
D1 How do you usually travel to your classes?

USE OF CAR OR TAXI INSTEAD OF PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Students opt for car or taxi over public transport because public transport takes too long, they prefer travelling by car or there is no public transport available.

Base: 1084 Respondents. Don't use car or taxi
D2 Why do you use a car or a taxi instead of public transport to travel to your classes



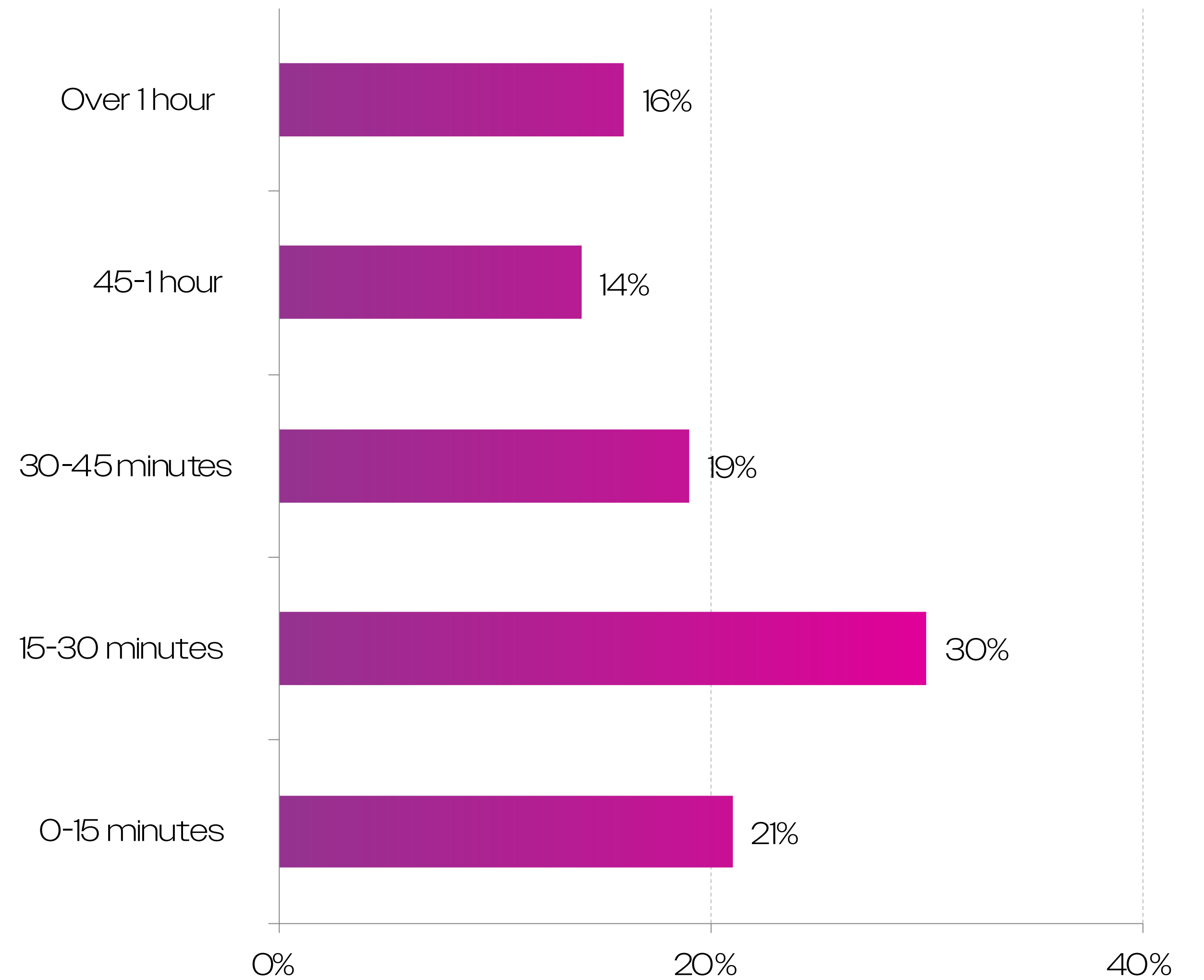
ALL RESPONDENTS

TIME TAKEN TO TRAVEL TO CLASS

Almost a third of students take between 15 and 30 minutes to travel to class.

Base: 4795 Respondents. Don't travel far / no response
D3 How long does it take you to travel to college or university (from leaving your home to getting to your class)?

ALL RESPONDENTS



COST OF TRAVEL

Students most commonly don't spend anything on their travel costs.

Base: 4807 Respondents. Don't travel far / no response
D4 How much do you spend on travelling to college or university on average per month?

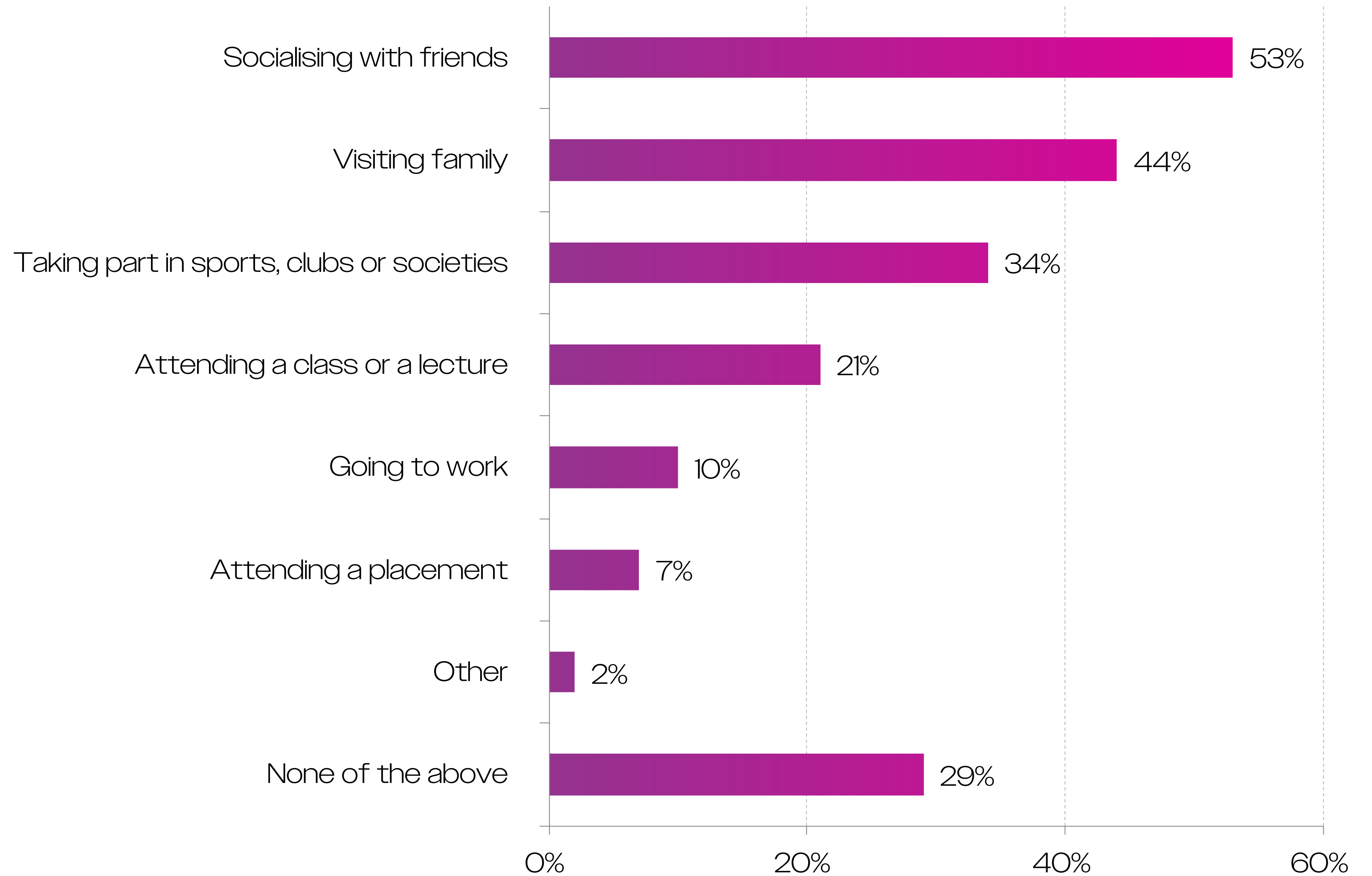
ALL RESPONDENTS



MISSED OUT ON BECAUSE OF COSTS OF TRAVEL

The cost of travel has meant that over half of students have missed out on socialising with their friends, while just over two fifths have missed out on visiting their family.

Base: 5147 Respondents.
D5 Which of the following have you ever missed out on because of the cost of travel



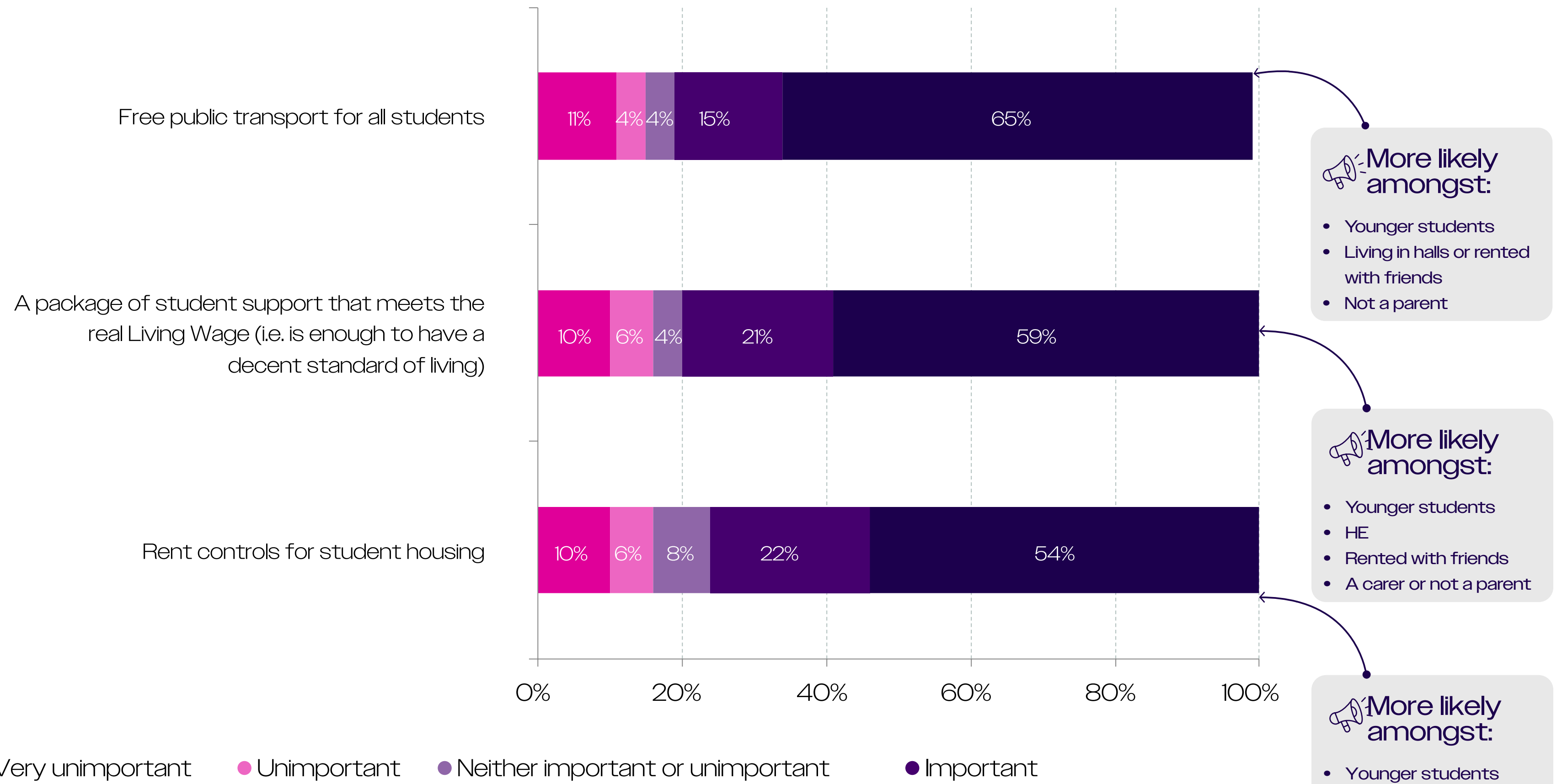
ALL RESPONDENTS

THE FUTURE OF OUR EDUCATION SYSTEM



IMPORTANCE OF POTENTIAL SCOTTISH GOVERNMENT POLICIES

Free public transport for all students is the number one priority for two thirds of students.



More likely amongst:

- Younger students
- Living in halls or rented with friends
- Not a parent

More likely amongst:

- Younger students
- HE
- Rented with friends
- A carer or not a parent

More likely amongst:

- Younger students
- HE
- Rented with friends
- No caring responsibilities

ALL RESPONDENTS

Base: x Respondents.
E1. How important is it to you that the Scottish Government introduce the following policies

A diverse group of people, including a woman with a shaved head and hoop earrings, a man with a beard, and a woman with curly hair in a yellow jacket, are looking forward. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent pink rectangle. The word "RECOMMENDATIONS" is written in large, white, bold, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the pink overlay.

RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the immediate cost-of-living crisis, the Scottish Government must deliver:



an increase in grants and bursaries



a student rent freeze, then rent controls



half-price bus and train fares for students and apprentices all day



discretionary funding (hardship funds) that is available to international students



funding for student mental health counsellors in colleges and universities beyond July 2023

A woman with a shaved head and large hoop earrings is shown in profile, looking towards the right. She is smiling slightly. The background is dark with some blurred lights.

In the longer-term, we need the Scottish Government to deliver on its own promises to students:

- an increase in student support to the level of the real Living Wage, for further and higher education students – we believe this should be year-round and based on grants not loans.
- the introduction of an Estranged Students Bursary, which is also paid year-round and at the current Real Living Wage.
- a Student Housing Strategy that addresses quality, availability and affordability, our proposals are set out here: www.nus-scotland.org.uk/student_housing_strategy_scotland.
- extend travel discount schemes, including free bus travel, to all students regardless of age.
- introduce a special support payment for students who are entitled to UK social security benefits to ensure they do not lose out because of entitlement to student support.

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2023