

Student Minds Research Briefing – February '23



About the Research

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Student Minds partnered with [Alterline](#) to conduct their national [‘Being Well, Doing Well’](#) survey online with a representative sample of 1037 students in November 2022. The aim was to better understand the current state of student mental health and explore the factors which contribute to students’ mental health and wellbeing.

If you’re a university or students’ union interested in gathering insight into your own students’ mental health and wellbeing, Alterline can run its ‘Being Well, Doing Well’ research programme with you. They would conduct the same survey used in this national research with your students, and you would receive your own comprehensive report with comparisons to the national data set so you can understand how your students' needs compare and differ.

As with all of our research, we encourage readers to view these findings with an awareness of possible limitations, as well as the impacts of systemic biases, stigmas and inequalities which may impact our work.

Executive Summary

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- Over half of students surveyed said they have a current mental health issue.
- 1 in 3 have poor mental wellbeing, according to the Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS).
- One quarter of students surveyed said they have a current, diagnosed mental health issue.
- 30% of students surveyed said their mental health had got worse since beginning university
- 59% of students surveyed said that managing money was a cause of stress 'often' or 'all of the time' - an increase of thirteen percentage points compared to 2020/21.
- 83% of students surveyed were either 'very' or 'quite' concerned about the current cost of living crisis and 41% said this was having a negative impact on their wellbeing.
- 1 in 4 students surveyed would not know where to go to get mental health support at university if they needed it.

Mental health and wellbeing

Life Satisfaction

Life satisfaction scores on a scale of 0-10

Average life satisfaction scores have consistently been lower for students compared to adults in Great Britain.

Average life satisfaction score: 6.03



0 – 4 (low)

5 – 6 (medium)

7 – 8 (high)

9 – 10 (very high)



- 23% of respondents reported low life satisfaction (0 – 4 on a scale of 0 – 10).
- In 2020/21, this figure was 38%.
- In 2019/20, this figure was 19%

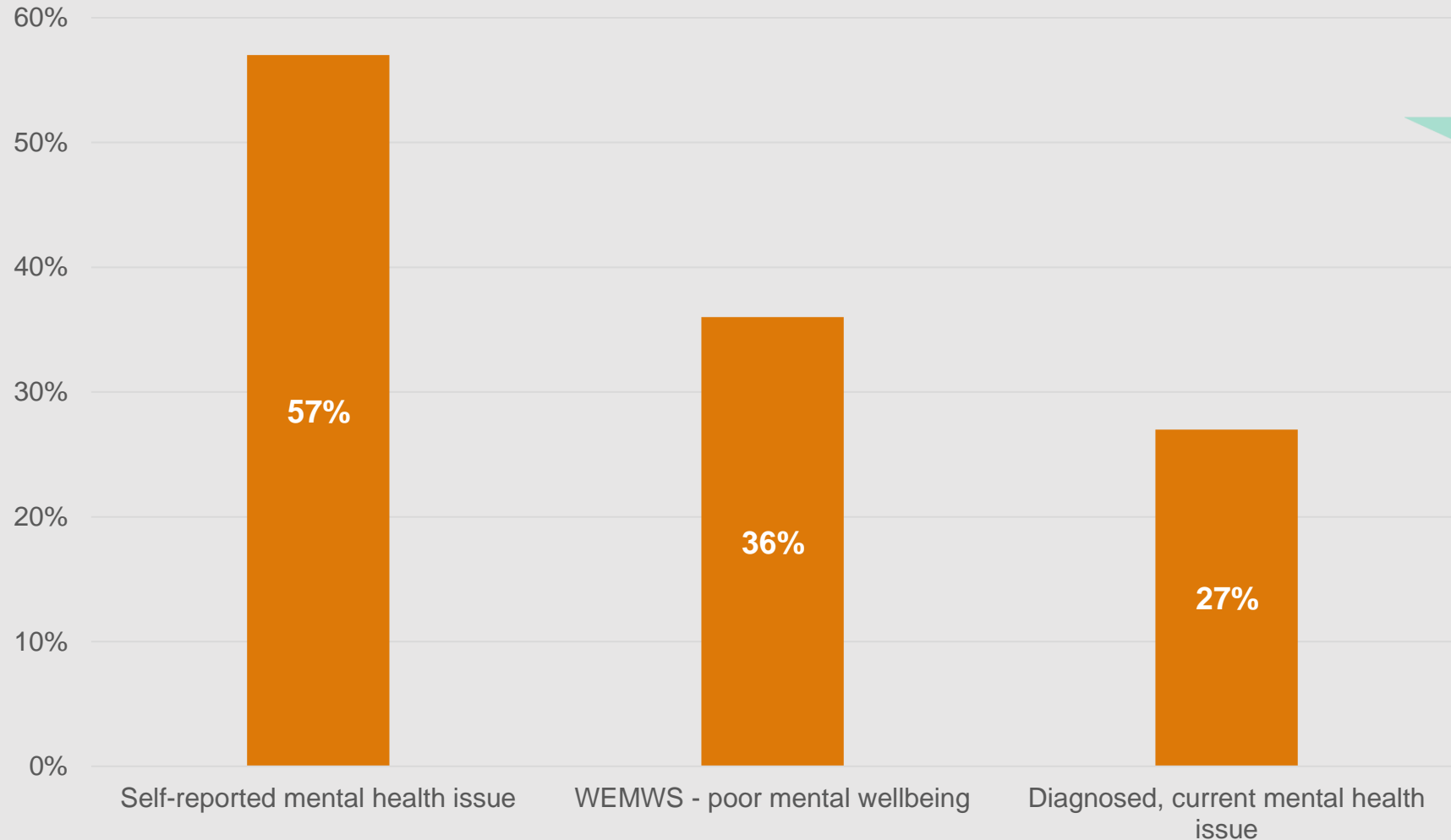


- 46% of respondents reported high or very high life satisfaction (7 - 10 on a scale of 0 – 10).
- In 2020/21, this figure was 29%.
- In 2019/20, this figure was 54%.

Students' average life satisfaction scores (out of 10) according to ONS data:

- October '21: 6.6
- Feb/March '22: 6.6
- October/Nov '22: 5.9

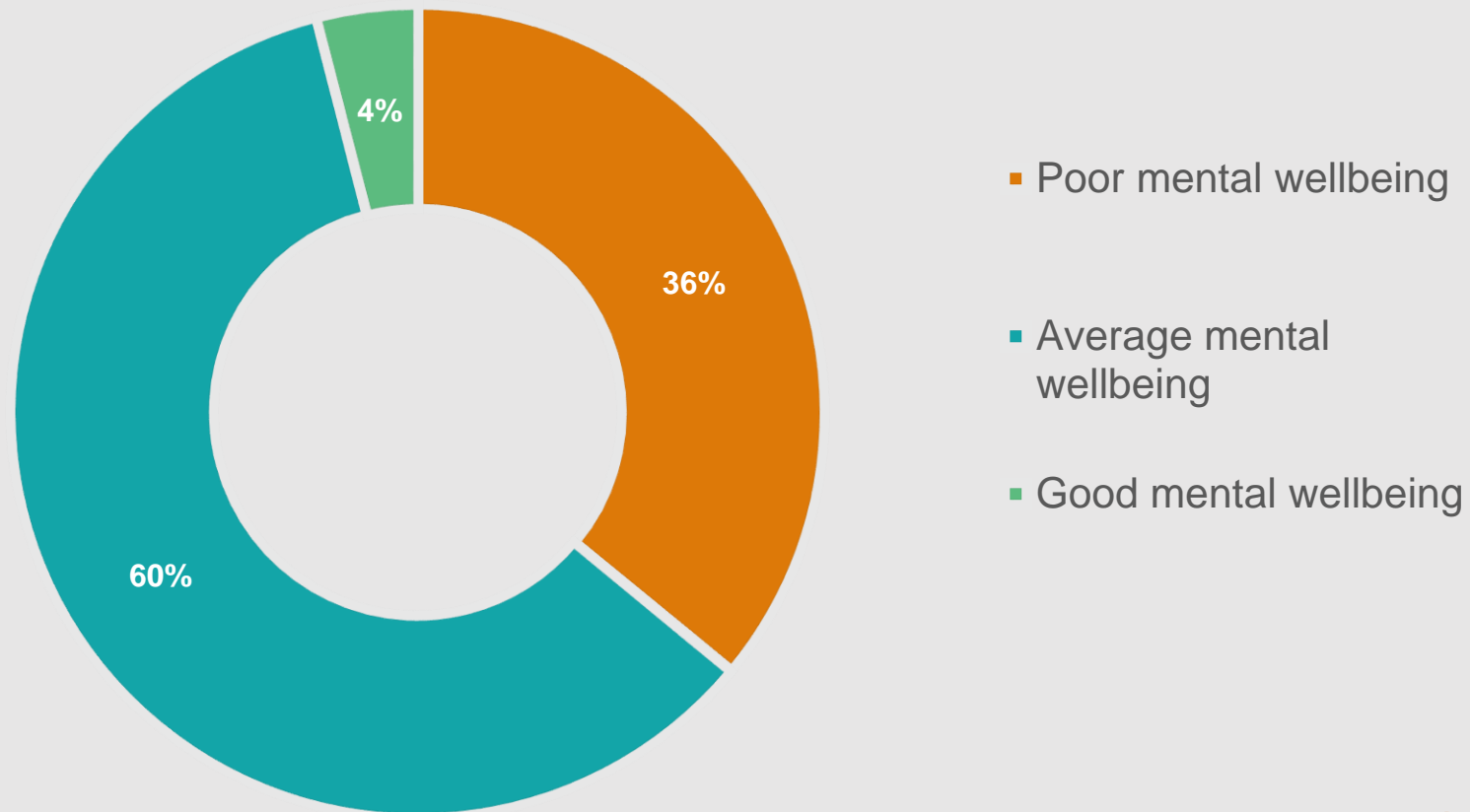
Mental Health Issues



In July 2022, we found 57% of students surveyed reported having a current mental health issue. Of these, 24% had a diagnosis.

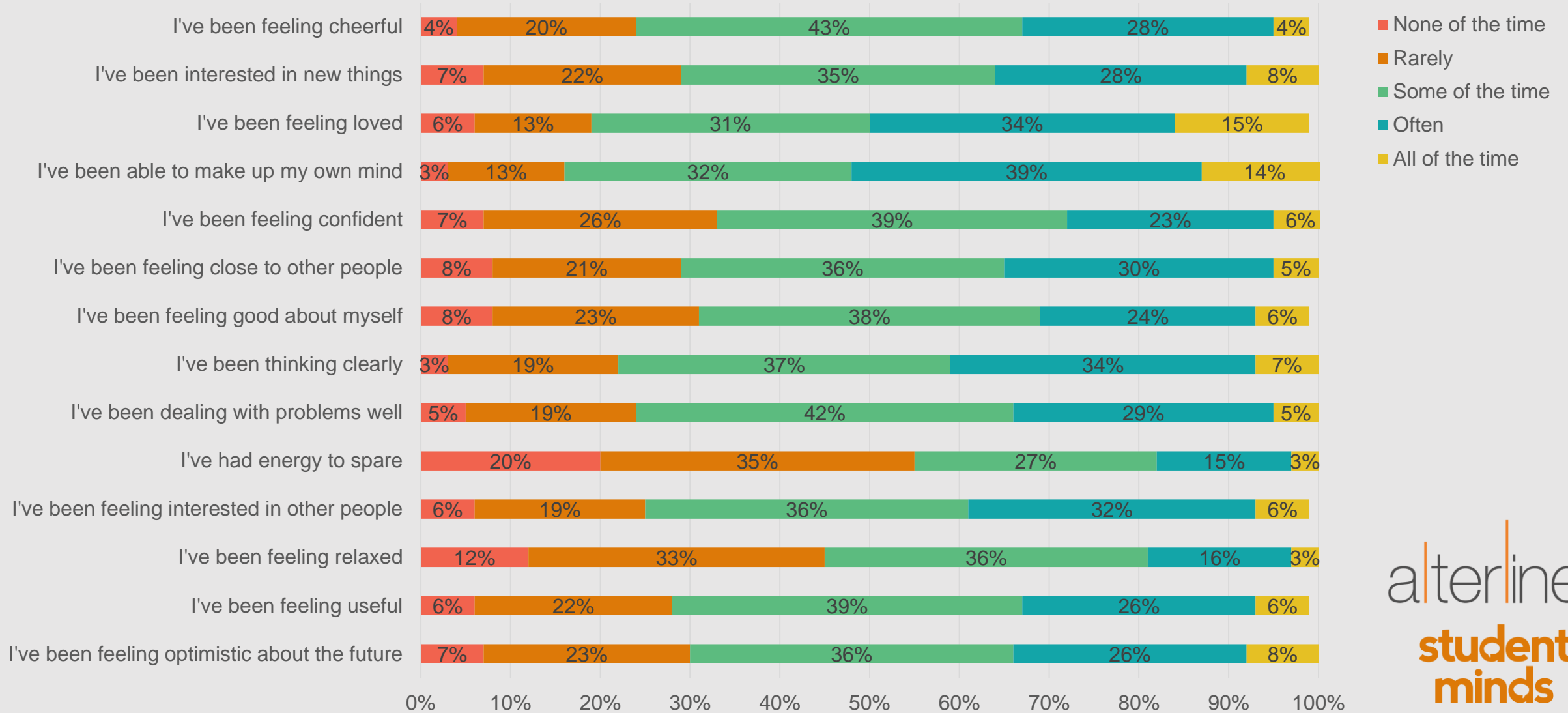
Mental Wellbeing

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Score (WEMWBS)



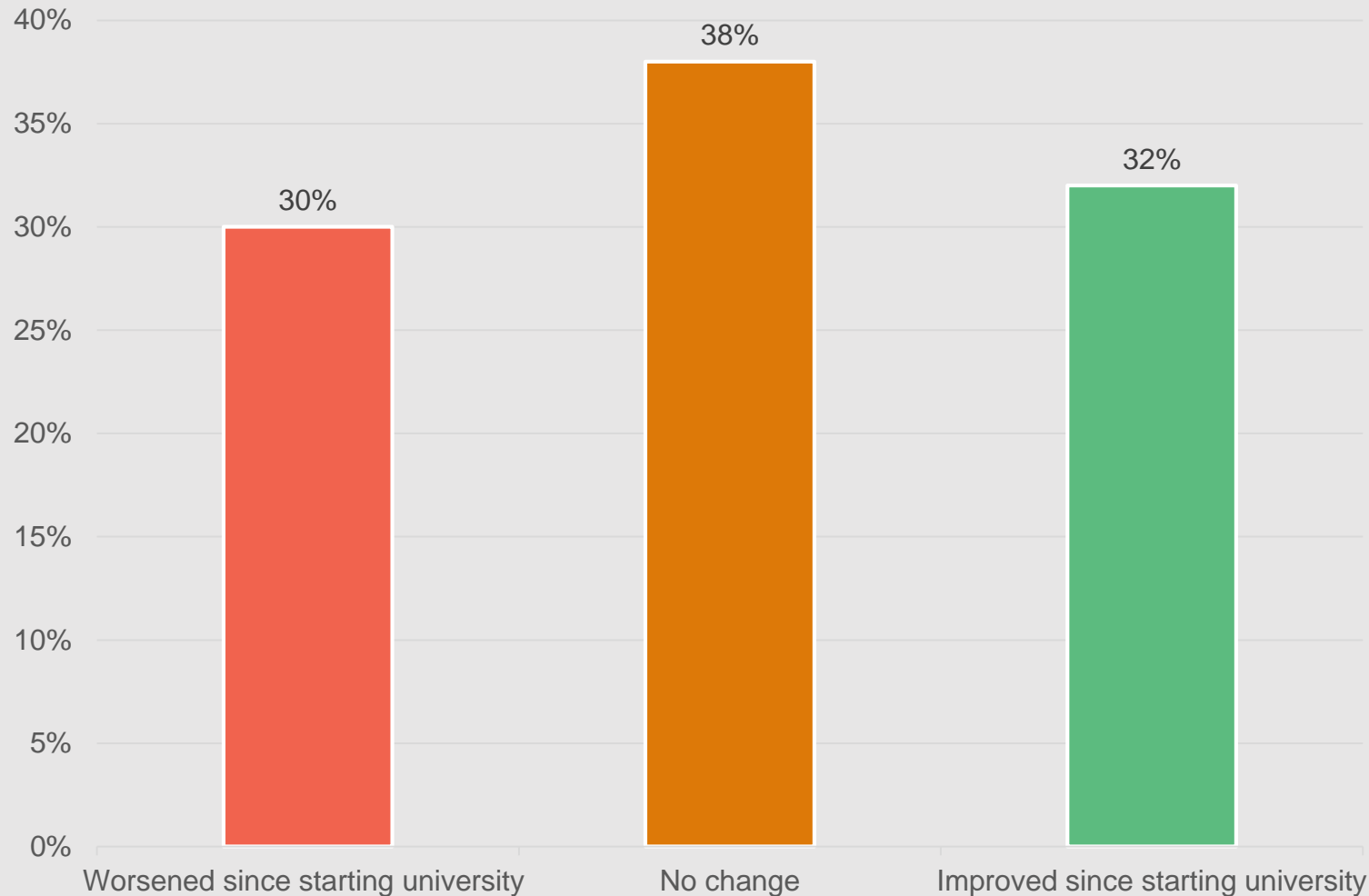
Mental Wellbeing

Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Score (WEMWBS)



Mental wellbeing at university

Thinking about how you've been feeling on a day-to-day basis since you started university, compared to how you felt before you started university (at your current university on your current course), has your wellbeing...



In our July research, 33% of students said being at university negatively impacted their mental wellbeing; 30% said there was no impact and 37% reported a positive impact.

Causes of stress

Causes of stress

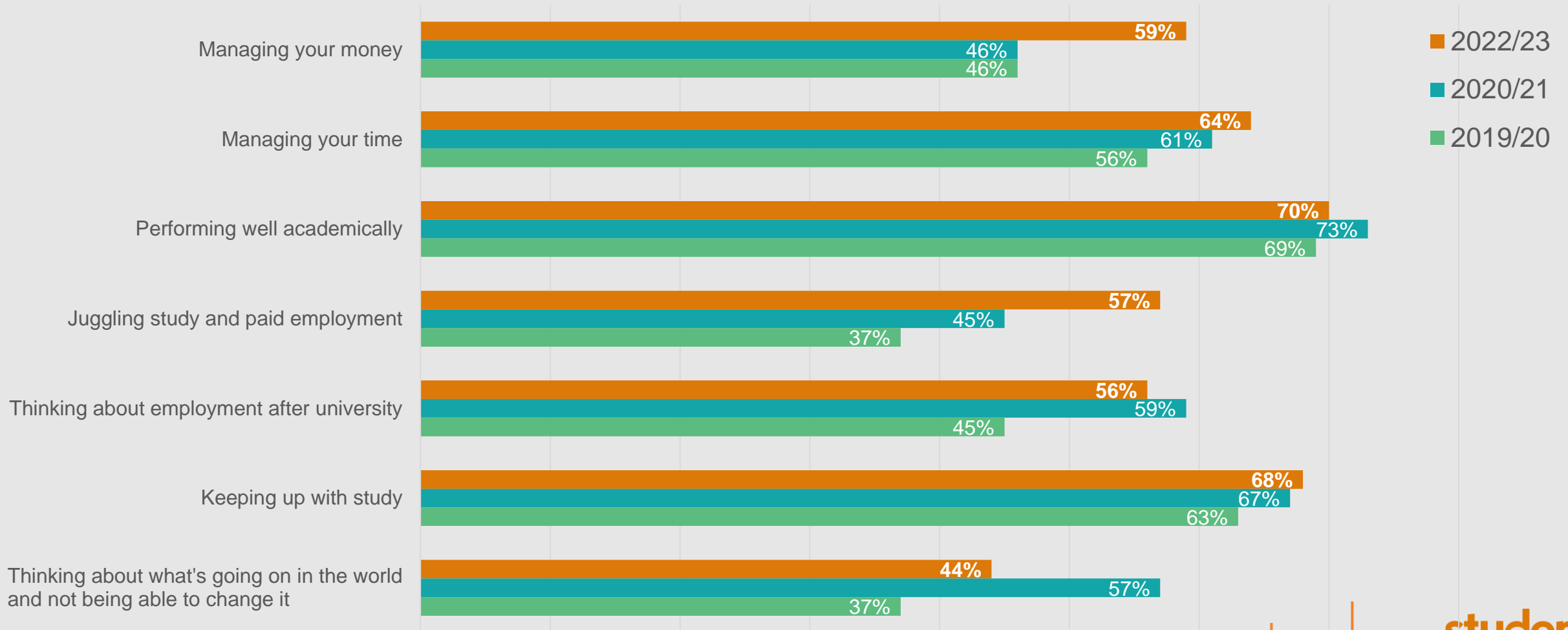
How often do the following cause you stress while at university? (% who said 'all of the time' or 'often')

The most common causes of stress in 2022/23:

1. Performing well in coursework, exams and assessments
2. Keeping up with study
3. Managing time
4. Managing money
5. Juggling study and paid employment .

Causes of stress

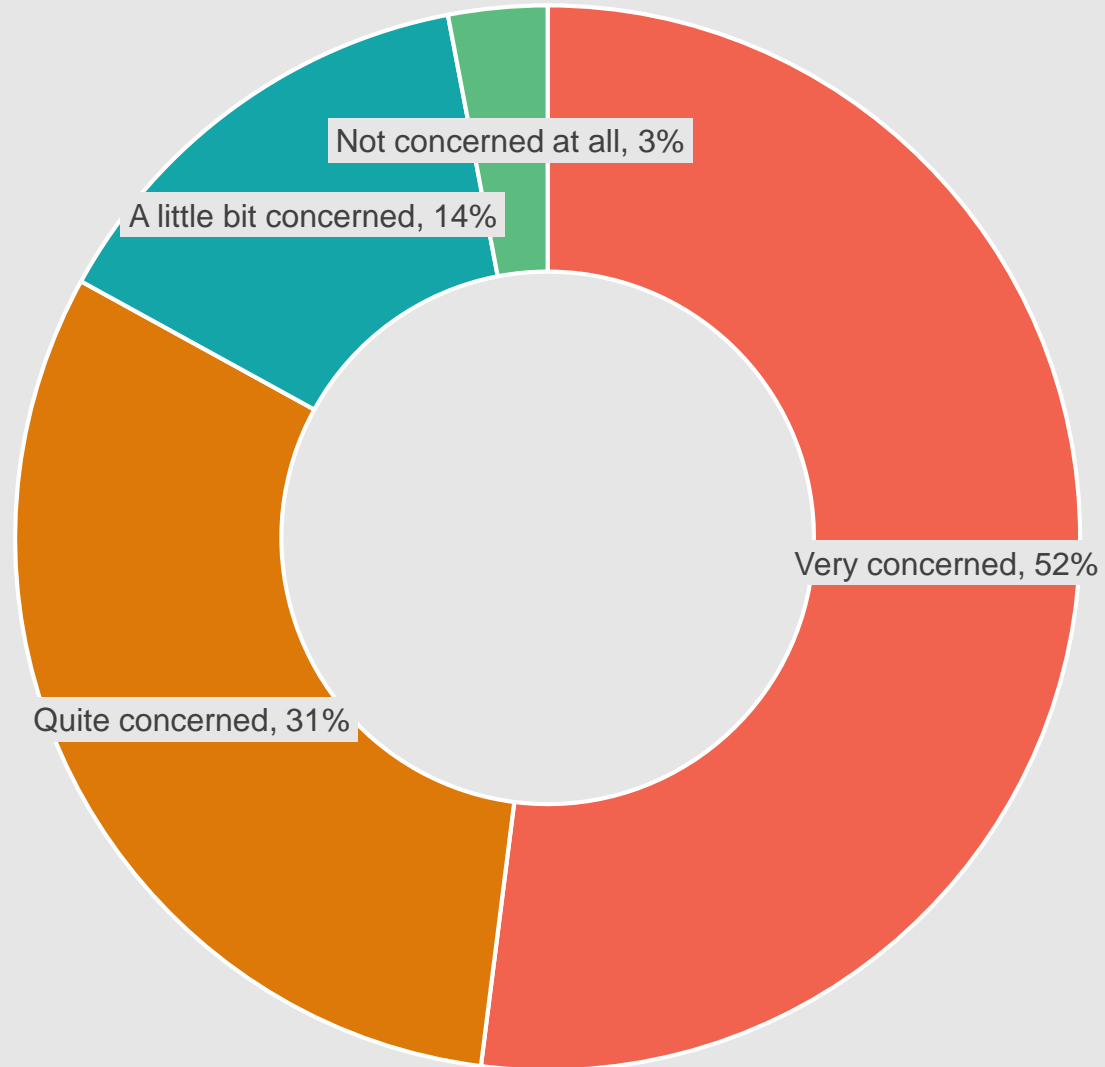
How often do the following cause you stress while at university? (% who said 'all of the time' or 'often')



The cost of living

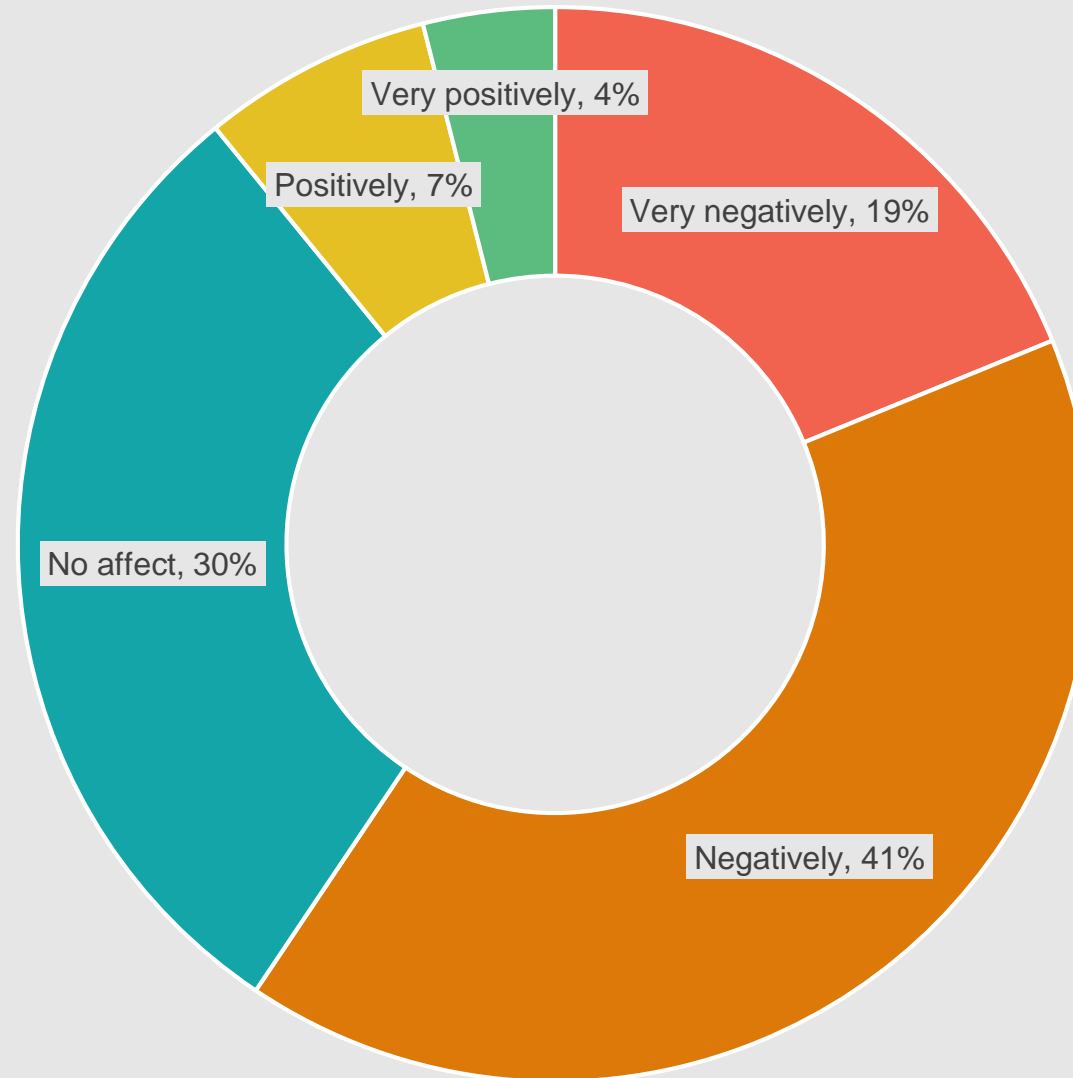
Cost of living

How concerned or unconcerned are you about the current cost of living situation?



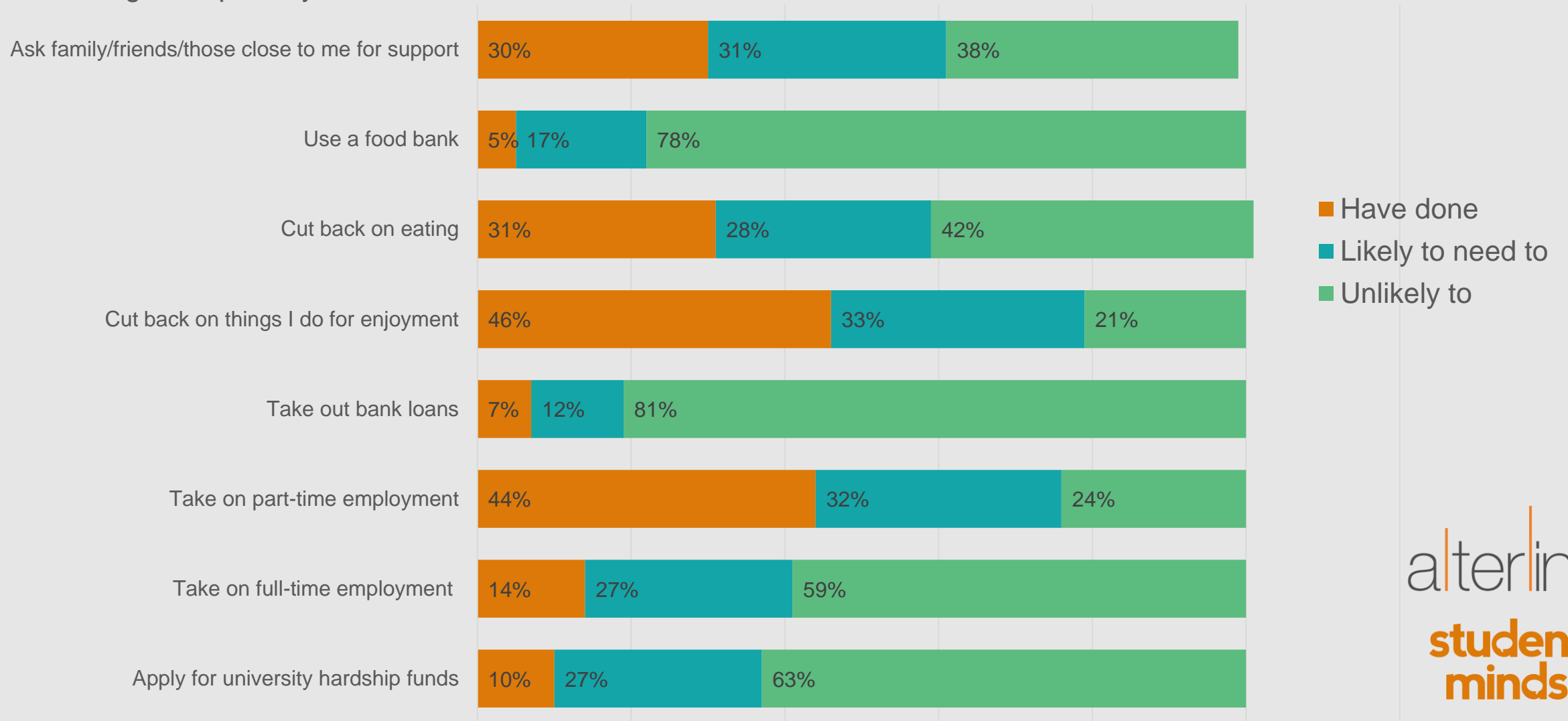
Cost of living

How, if at all, do you think your financial situation is affecting your wellbeing currently?



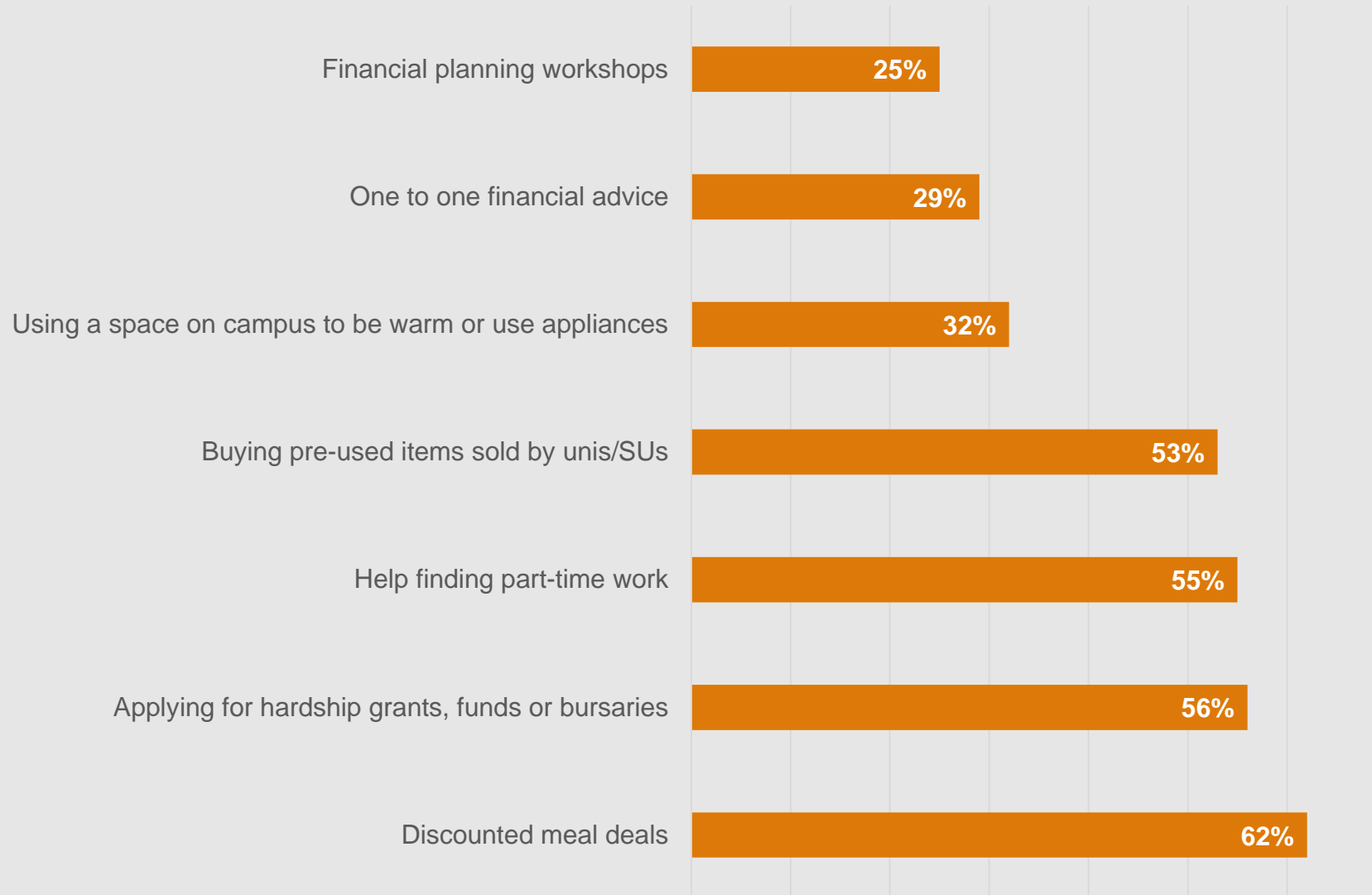
Cost of living

In the past 6 months and the next 6 months to come, have you done or do you think you are likely to need to do any of the following to help with your financial situation?



Cost of living

If you were struggling financially, which services would you use if they were provided by your university or students' union?



Cost of living

- 30% of respondents said they had bought things with credit that they cannot really afford.
 - This has increased from 25% in 2020/21 and 24% in 2019/20.
- Students are particularly concerned about paying for basics and essentials over the next six months:
 - 35% respondents said they are very concerned about paying their rent or mortgage
 - 39% are very concerned about paying their energy bills
 - 32% are very concerned about paying for groceries and food costs
 - 29% are very concerned about paying for commuting or travel costs

Respondent Quote

“I currently receive a stipend as part of my PhD studies but I am concerned I will not finish my PhD before my stipend runs out. If that happens I will need to get another job which will be hard to do while managing my mental health and still doing my PhD. I am mainly concerned about what to expect in the future.”



Respondent Quotes

“I am constantly stressed about money. I rarely use heating to save money so am often cold.”

“I can't do all the things I want to do. Sometimes I don't eat because it means I'll have to buy more food I can't afford.”



Respondent Quotes

“I don't have enough money to afford shopping each week, I cannot wash my clothes regularly at all, and I am constantly in an overdraft or close to needing a loan.”

“I am stressed when spending money and worry about how much money I have almost constantly, leading me to not go out with friends as often.”



Respondent Quote

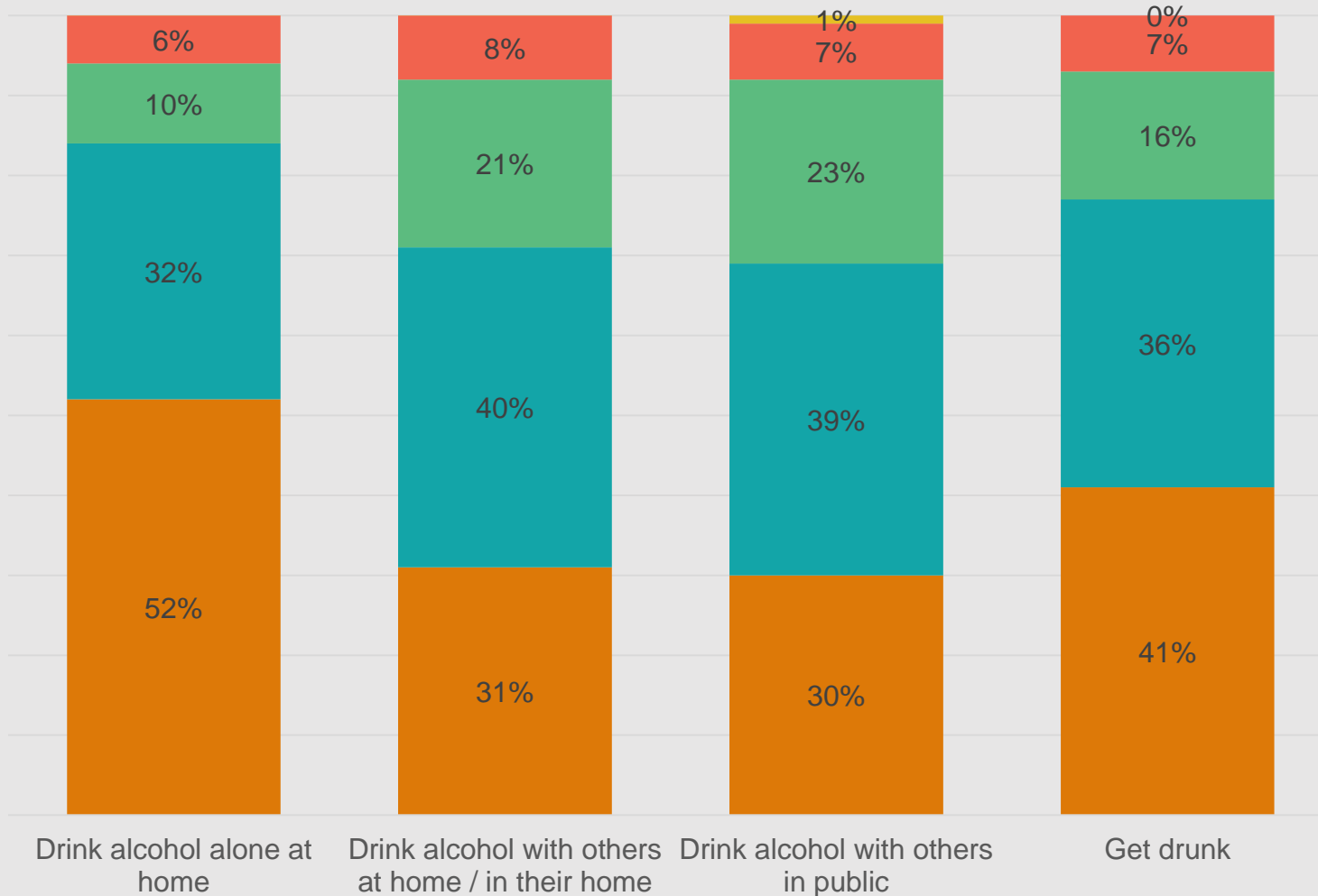
“I have to work part time in order to afford to be at university. My part time job takes away a lot of time from being able to focus on my degree and I’m falling behind as a result.”



Behaviours

Behaviours

How often do you do the following?



Respondents were less likely to report legal or illegal drug use than in 2020/21:

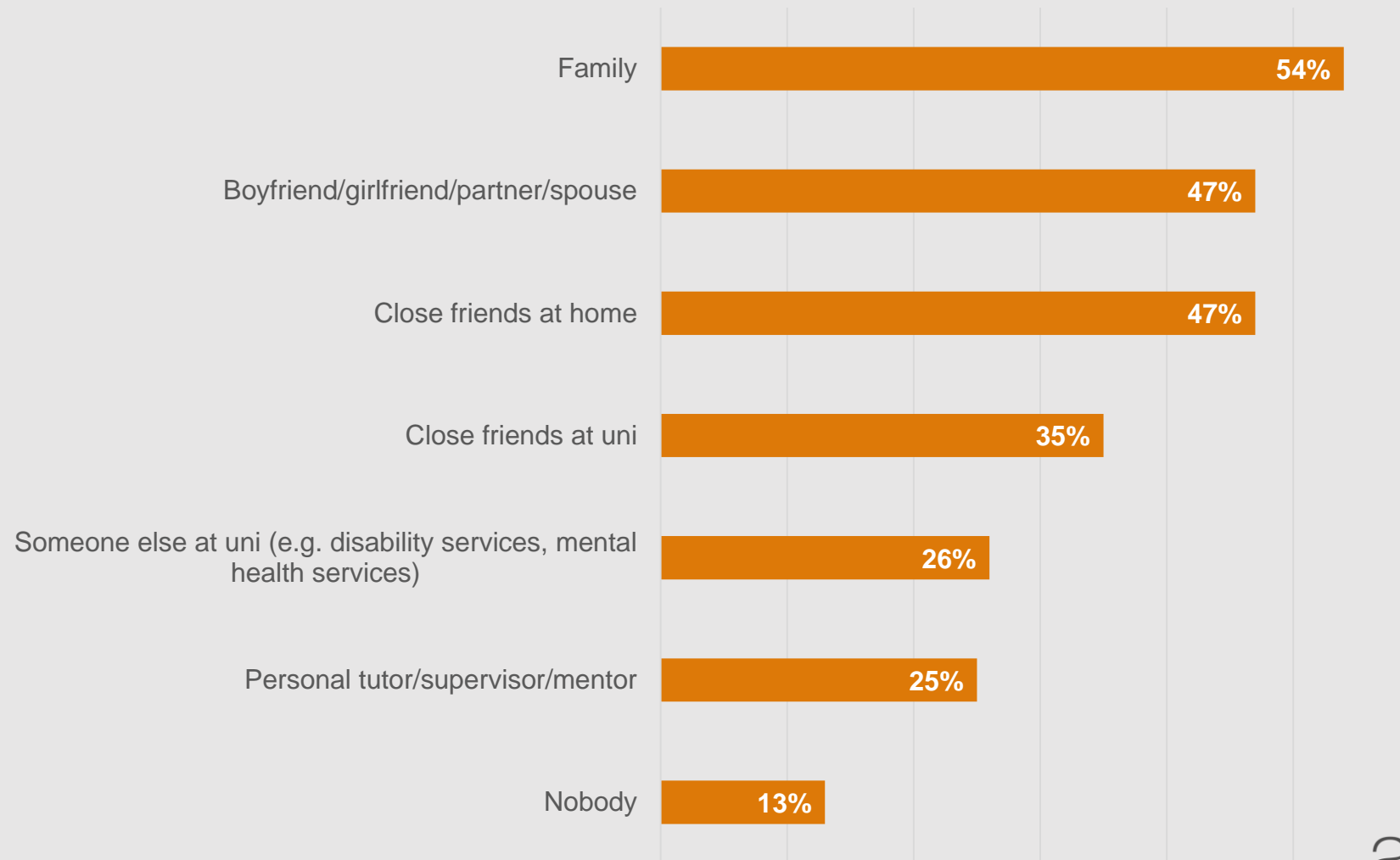
- 15% said they take or smoke illegal drugs with others at least once a month
- 10% said they take or smoke legal highs with others at least once a month

- Everyday
- More than once a week
- Once a week or less
- Once a month or less
- Never

Support

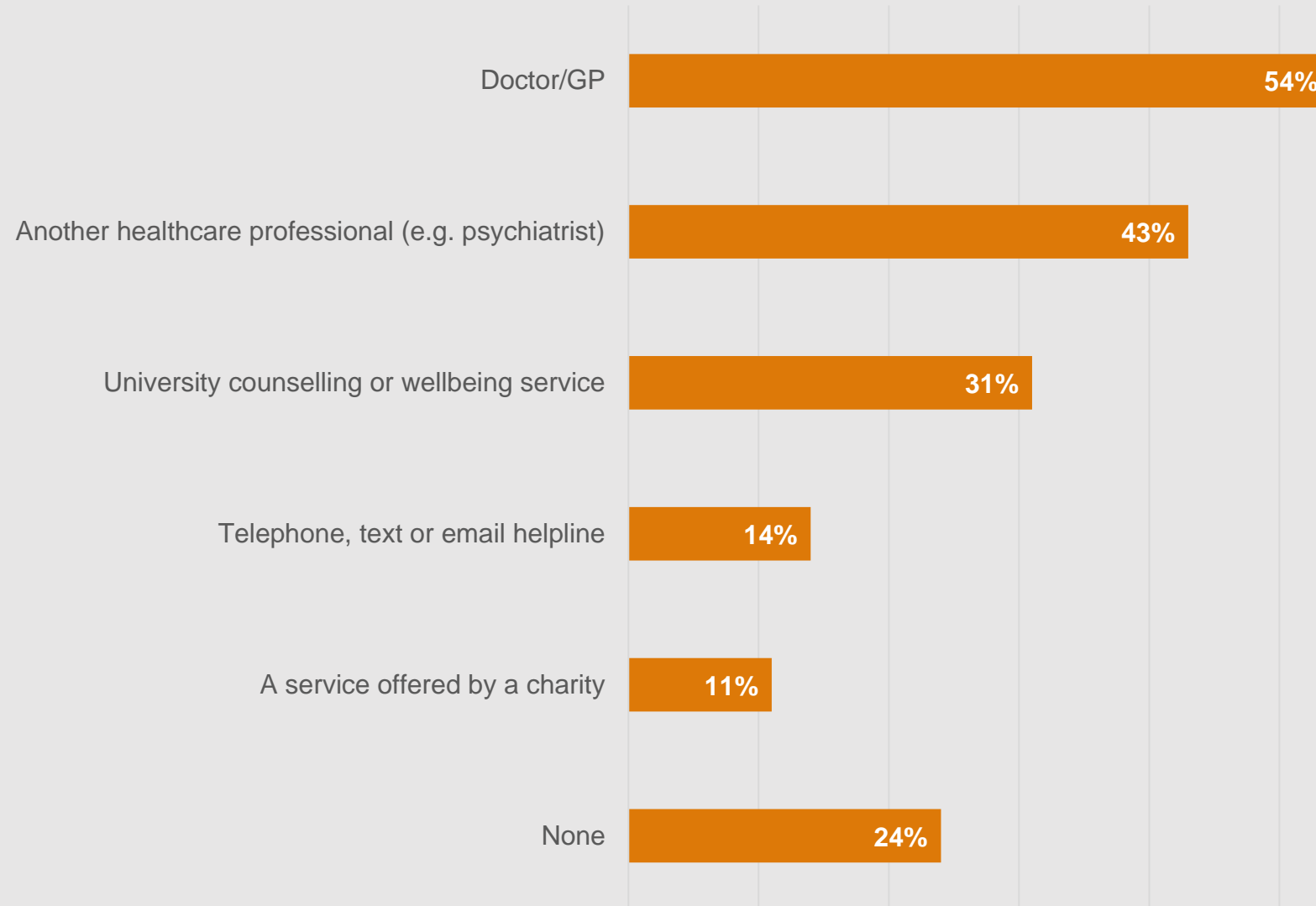
Support

Of those with a current or past mental health issue ($n=760$) – Who have you told about your mental health issue(s)?



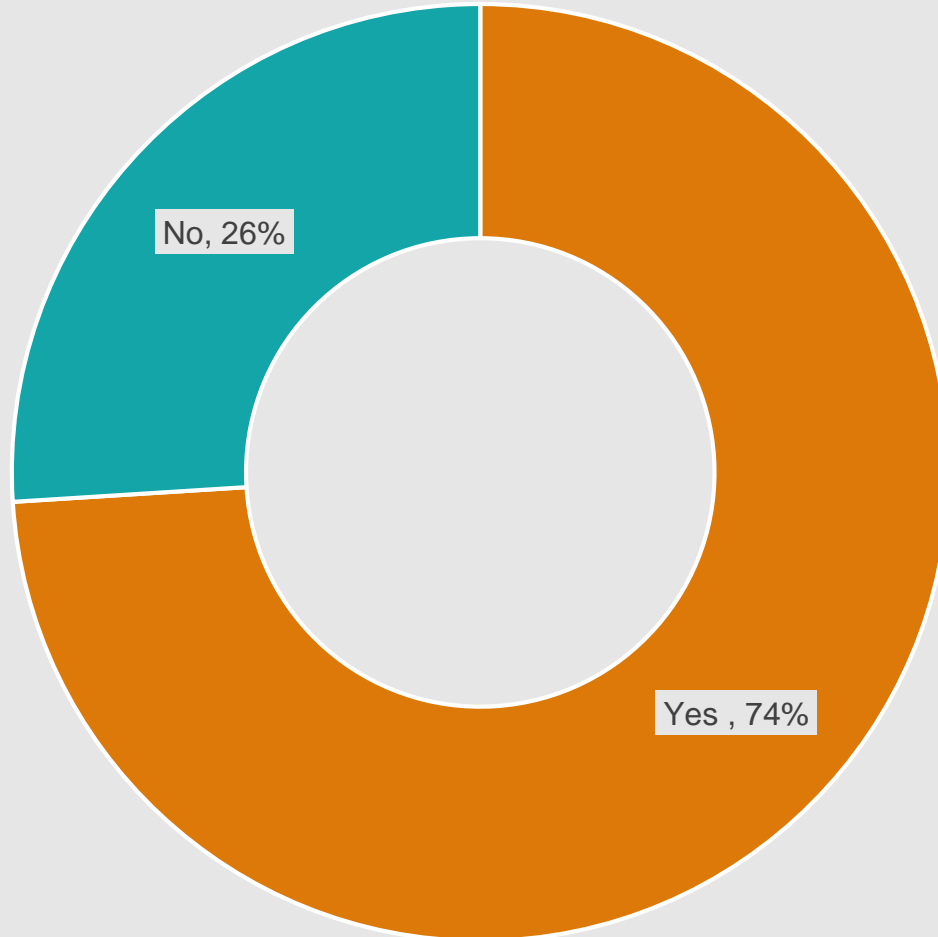
Support

Of those with a current or past mental health issue ($n=760$) – Which of the following have you used in relation to your mental health issues?



Support

Would you say you know where to go to get mental health support at your university if you needed it?

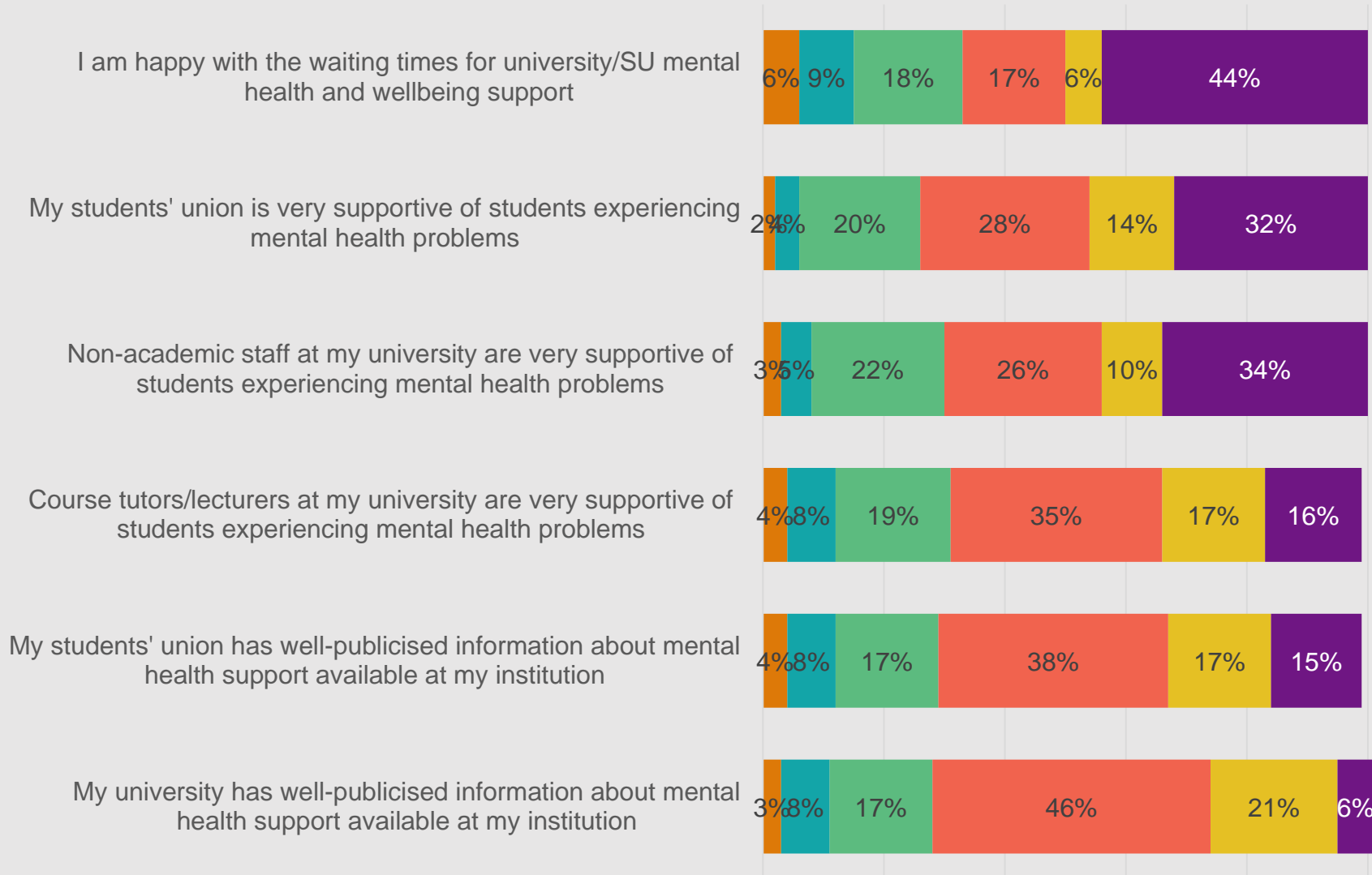


Understanding of where to get support has increased compared to 2020/21, when 63% said they would know where to get support.

In 2019/20, 72% of respondents said they would know where to go for support.

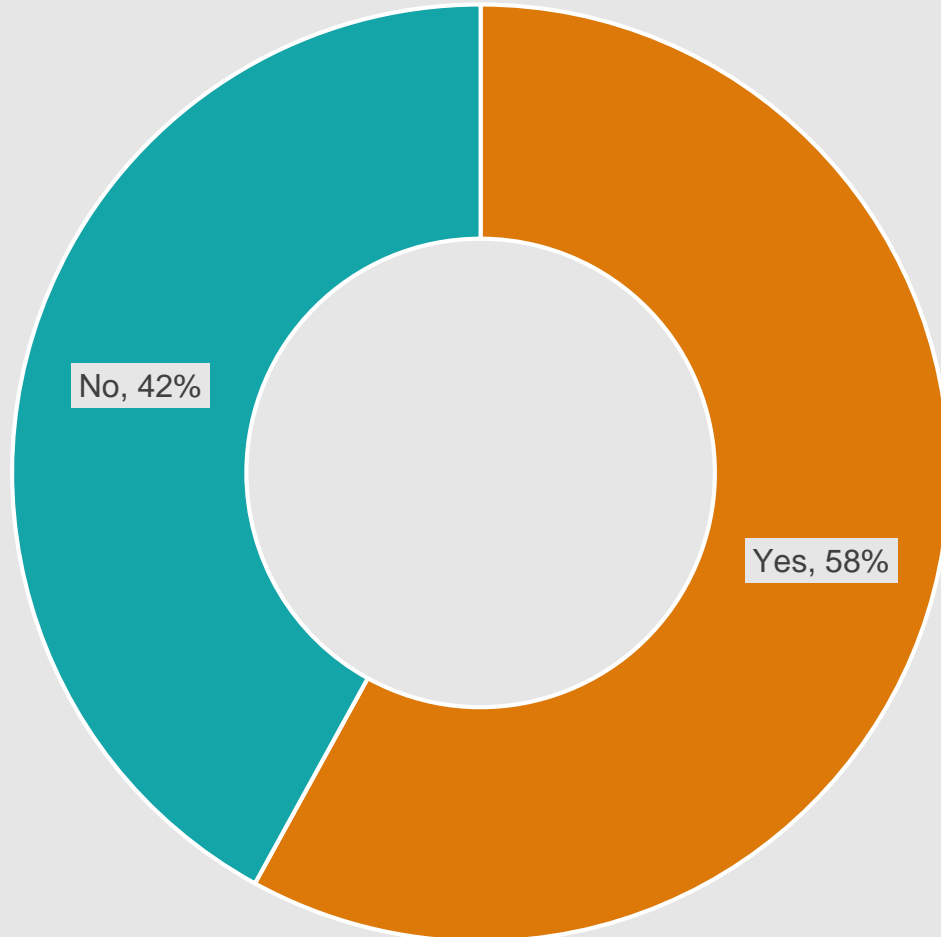
Support

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?



Support

Since being at university, have you ever supported someone else who has been experiencing mental health issues?



Of those who said they have
($n=598$):

- 55% said they felt well equipped to support this person. 22% said they did not.
- 47% said that supporting this person caused them stress. 33% said it did not.

Respondent Quote



“More social activities in our classes where [we] can make friendships and social connections, that would help me feel less alone and less pressured into making friends.”

Want to hear more?

Email: info@studentminds.org.uk

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