

# Student Mental Health: Life in a Pandemic.

Research Wave III

38% of respondents felt that being at university in Autumn term had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.



student  
minds

# Contents

[About the Research – page 3](#)

[Headline Findings – page 4](#)

[Key Comparisons – page 5](#)

[Mental Health – page 7](#)

[Community, Relationships and Belonging - page 14](#)

[Academic Experience – page 17](#)

[Support – page 20](#)

[Wider University Experience – page 23](#)

[Covid-19 – page 27](#)

# About the Research

In August 2021, we shared our report [University Mental Health: Life in a Pandemic](#), which included the findings of our first wave of research conducted in April/May 2021. Since then, we have conducted two further waves of research; the second in [September 2021](#) and the third in January 2022. This report includes the findings of the third wave.

The online survey was conducted by [Alterline](#) between 13<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022. We received 1000 responses from a sample broadly representative of the UK student population, including both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

The findings provide a snapshot of how some students are/were feeling at the beginning of 2022. The sample is relatively small and, given the nature of the research, may be impacted by a self-selection bias. As such, we encourage readers to view our findings critically, with consideration of the above limitations, as well as systemic inequalities, stigmas and biases which may impact our findings.

# Headline Findings

- 38% of respondents felt that being at university in Autumn term had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing.
- 64% of respondents felt that the Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing during Autumn term.
- Academic performance continues to be students' biggest concern, and students are also worried about managing their time and keeping up with study commitments.
- Academic/learning support was the most common form of support students accessed during Autumn term.
- 1 in 5 students disagreed with the statement "My university is taking steps to improve student mental health".
- 52% of respondents said they often felt lonely or isolated during Autumn term.

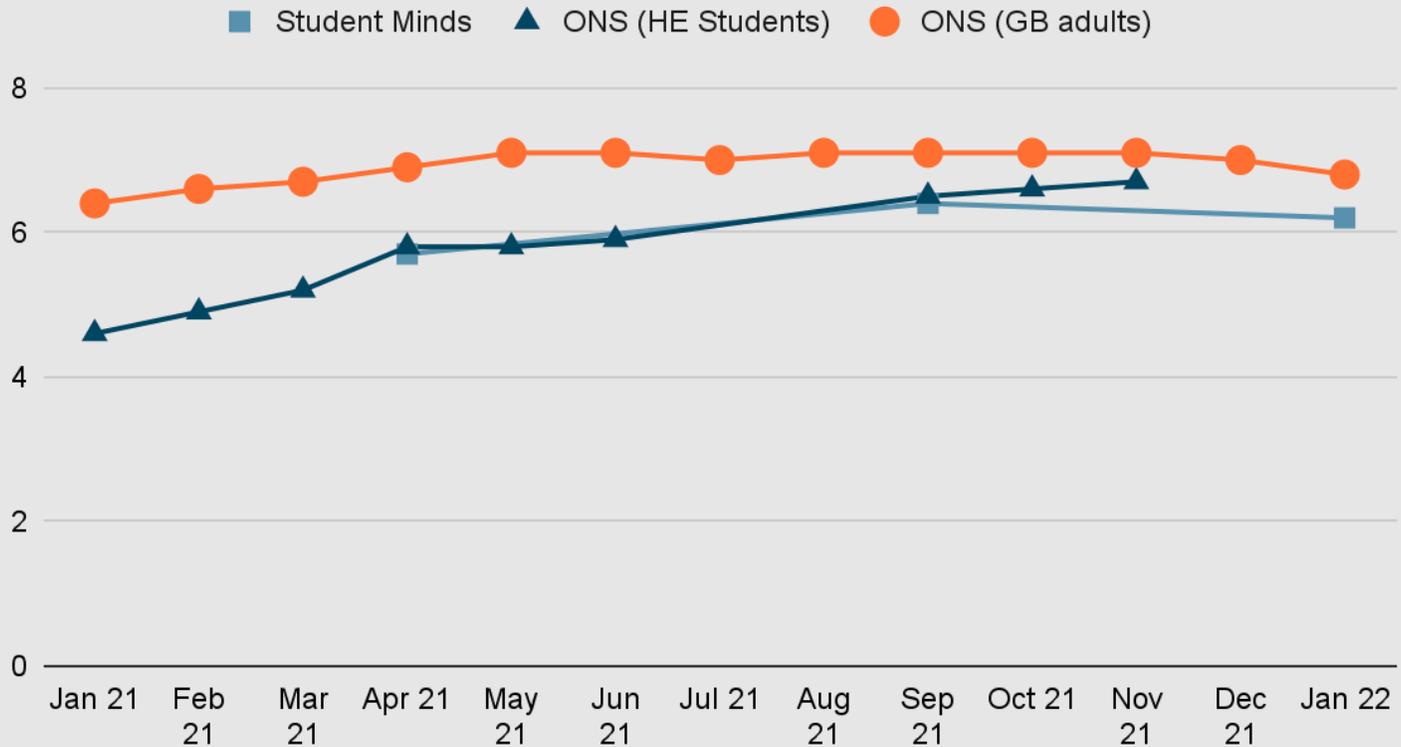


# Key Comparisons

Question	May 2021 (Wave I)	September 2021 (Wave II)	January 2022 (Wave III)
Life Satisfaction (% reporting low life satisfaction)	27%	 17%	 20%
Covid-19's impact on mental health. (% reporting a negative impact)	74%	 63%	 64%
Top concerns (% concerned or v.concerned about ___)	Performing well academically (84%)  Mental wellbeing (80%)  Friends/family catching Covid (78%)	Performing well academically (79%)  Keeping up with study commitments (69%) AND Friends/family catching Covid (69%)  The possibility of the Gov reintroducing restrictions (67%) AND managing my time (67%)	Performing well academically (81%)  Managing my time (74%)  Keeping up with study commitments (73%)
Experiencing mental health issues currently.	60%	 53%	 59%

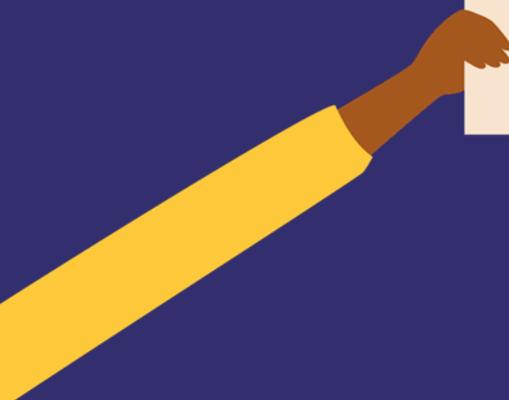
# Key Comparisons

## Average Life Satisfaction



This Graph shows the average life satisfaction scores from research by Student Minds and the Office for National Statistics (ONS). The data from the ONS comes from two surveys - the Covid Student Insights Survey, which is conducted with Higher Education students, and the Opinions and Lifestyle Survey (Covid-19 Module), which is conducted with individuals aged over 16 in Great Britain.

# Mental Health



# Life Satisfaction

Overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?



In Wave I, 27% reported low life satisfaction and 40% reported scores between 7 and 10.

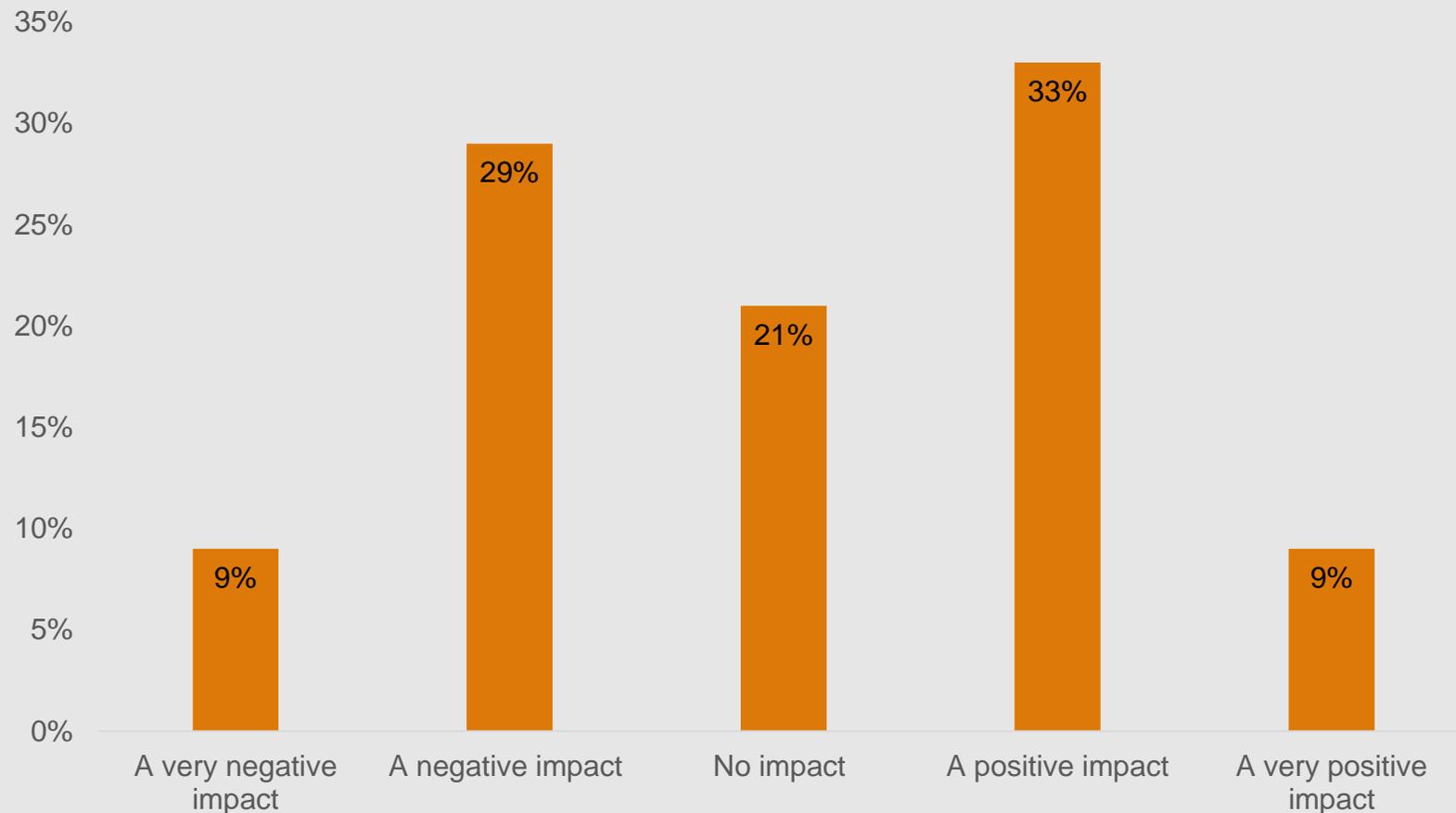
In Wave II, 17% reported low life satisfaction and 56% reported scores of between 7 and 10.

In Wave III, 20% reported low life satisfaction and 50% reported scores between 7 and 10.

# Autumn Term 2021

## Impact on mental health

How do you think being at university in Autumn term impacted your mental health and wellbeing?



In September 2021, 64% said they expected starting or returning to university to have a positive impact on their mental health. 26% expected this to have a negative impact.

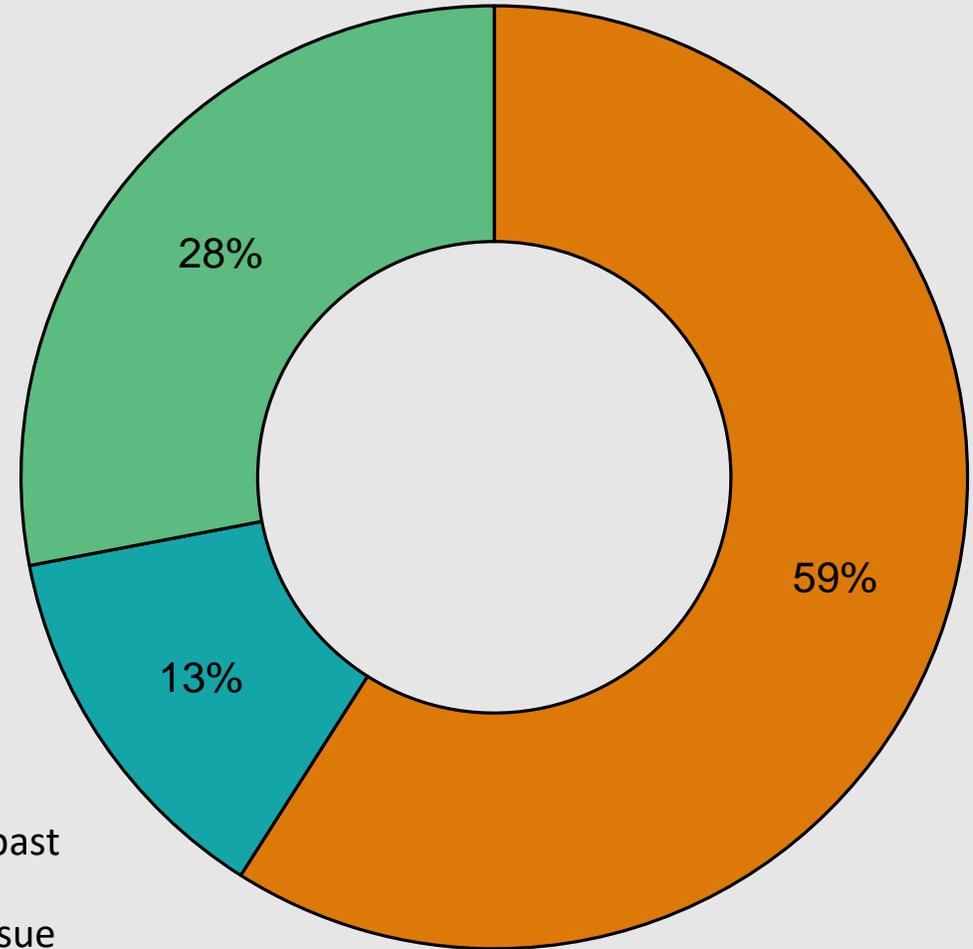
First year undergraduates were more likely to report a positive impact (47%) and less likely to report a negative impact (37%) than second+ year undergraduates (40% positive, 41% negative).

# Experiences of mental health issues

The proportion of students who reported that they **currently** have a mental health issue has increased compared to September 2021 (Wave II), when this figure was 53%. The percentage of students who reported having a diagnosed mental health issue also increased (see next page).

Remember: these figures are self-reported and may be affected by self-selection bias.

- Has a current mental health issue
- Has had a mental health issue in the past
- Never experienced a mental health issue



# Experiences of mental health issues

- 29% of students said they currently experience problems with their mental health for which they have received a diagnosis from a healthcare professional.
- 37% of students said they currently experience problems with their mental health for which they have not received a diagnosis.
- 18% of students said they currently take prescribed medication for their mental health problems.
- 18% of students said they currently receive counselling or therapy to help with their mental health problems.
- The most commonly reported mental health problems were anxiety and depression.

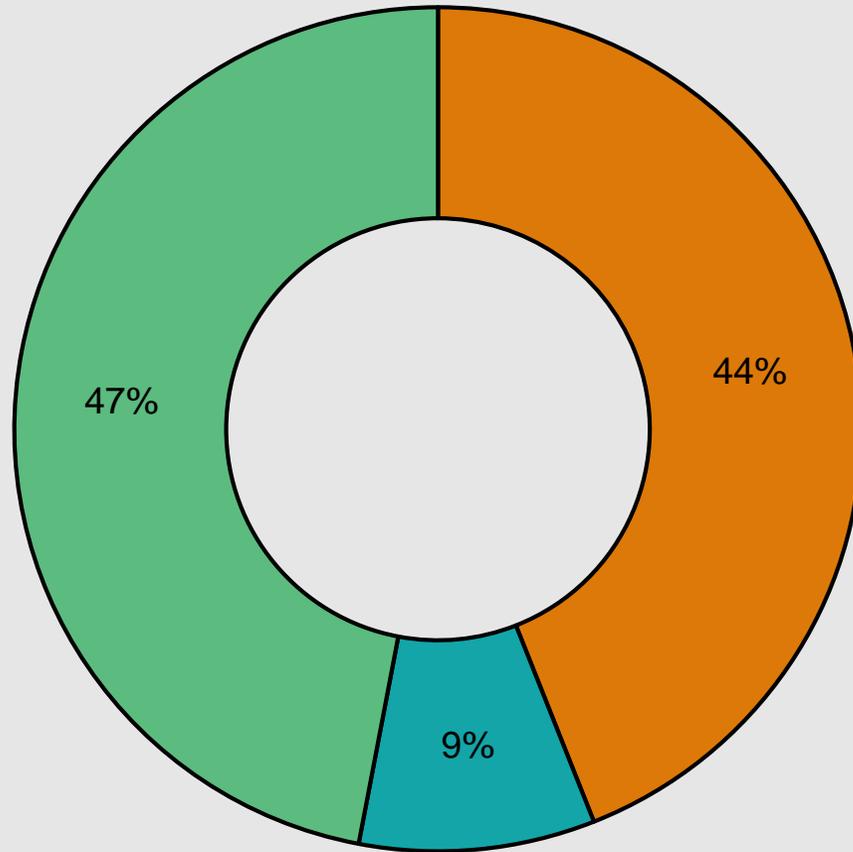


In Wave II, 23% of students reported a diagnosed mental health problem. In Wave I, this figure was 26%.

# Disclosure

## Have you disclosed your mental health condition(s) to your university?

Base: Respondents who have experience of a mental health issue (n=717).



- Yes, I have disclosed my mental health issue(s) to my university
- Not yet, but I intend to
- No and I don't plan to

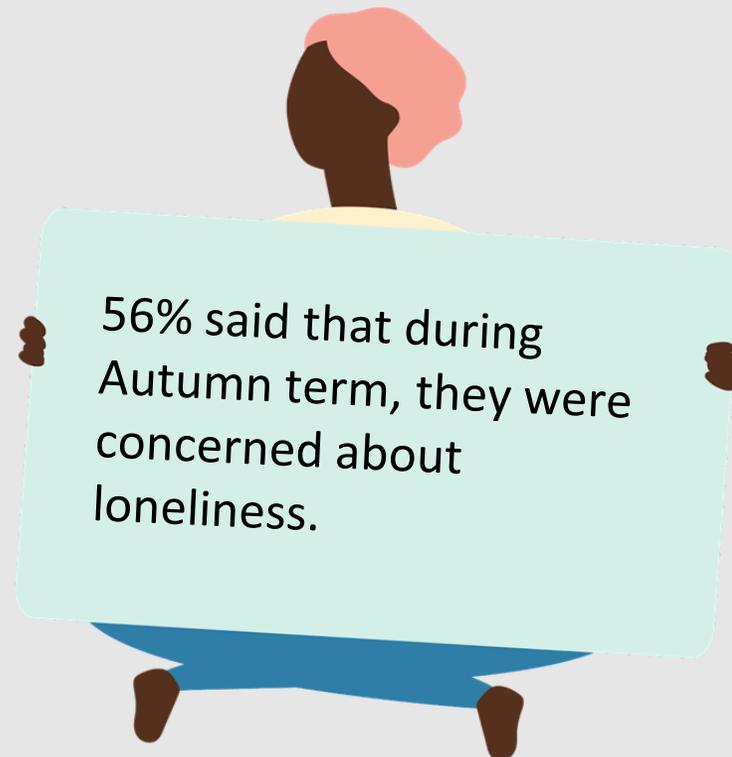
In September 2021 (Wave II), just 33% of students with experience of mental health issues had disclosed their condition(s) to their university.

The most common reasons for non-disclosure are “I don’t think it’s serious enough” and “I don’t feel they need to know”.

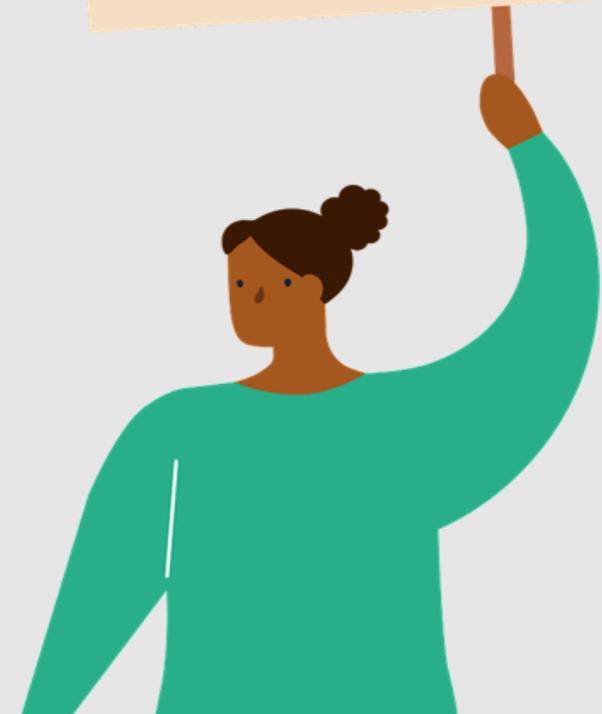
# Loneliness

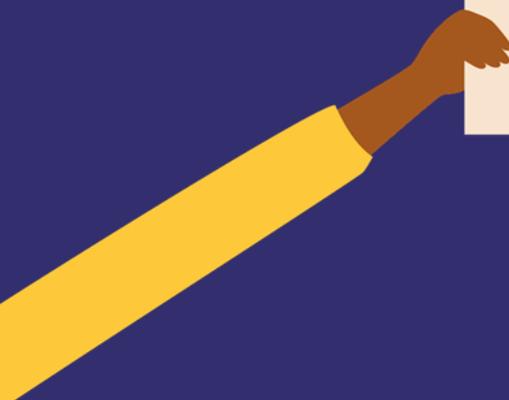
**“Student loneliness has been shown to be the strongest overall predictor of mental distress in the student population”**

University Mental Health Charter.



52% agreed with the statement “I have often felt lonely or isolated” when asked to think about their experience of university during Autumn term.



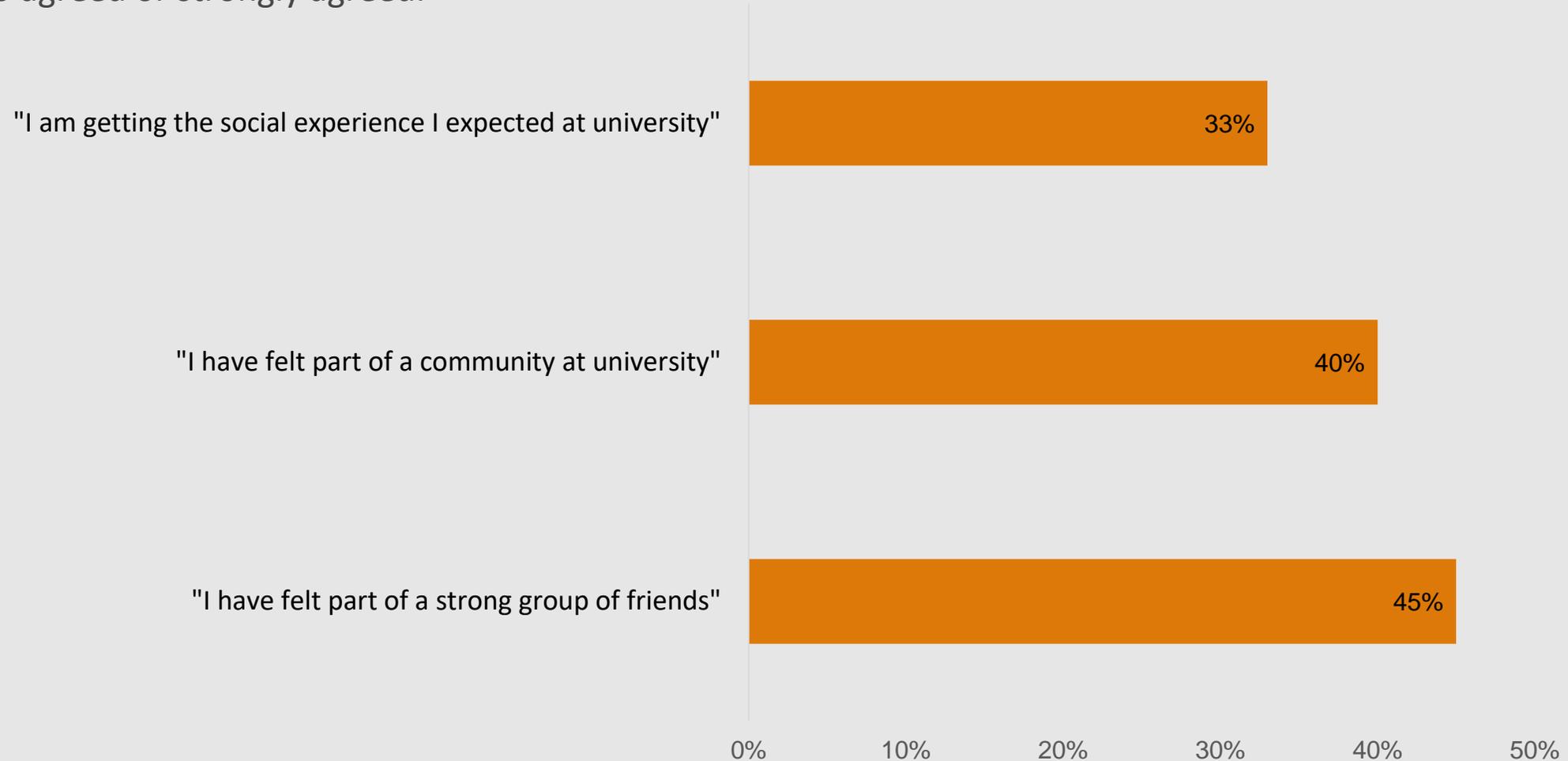
A stylized illustration of a hand holding a sign. The hand is brown and is holding the left edge of a light yellow rectangular sign. The arm is yellow and extends from the bottom left towards the sign.

# Community, Relationships and Belonging

# Community, Relationships and Belonging

Thinking about your experience during Autumn term, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

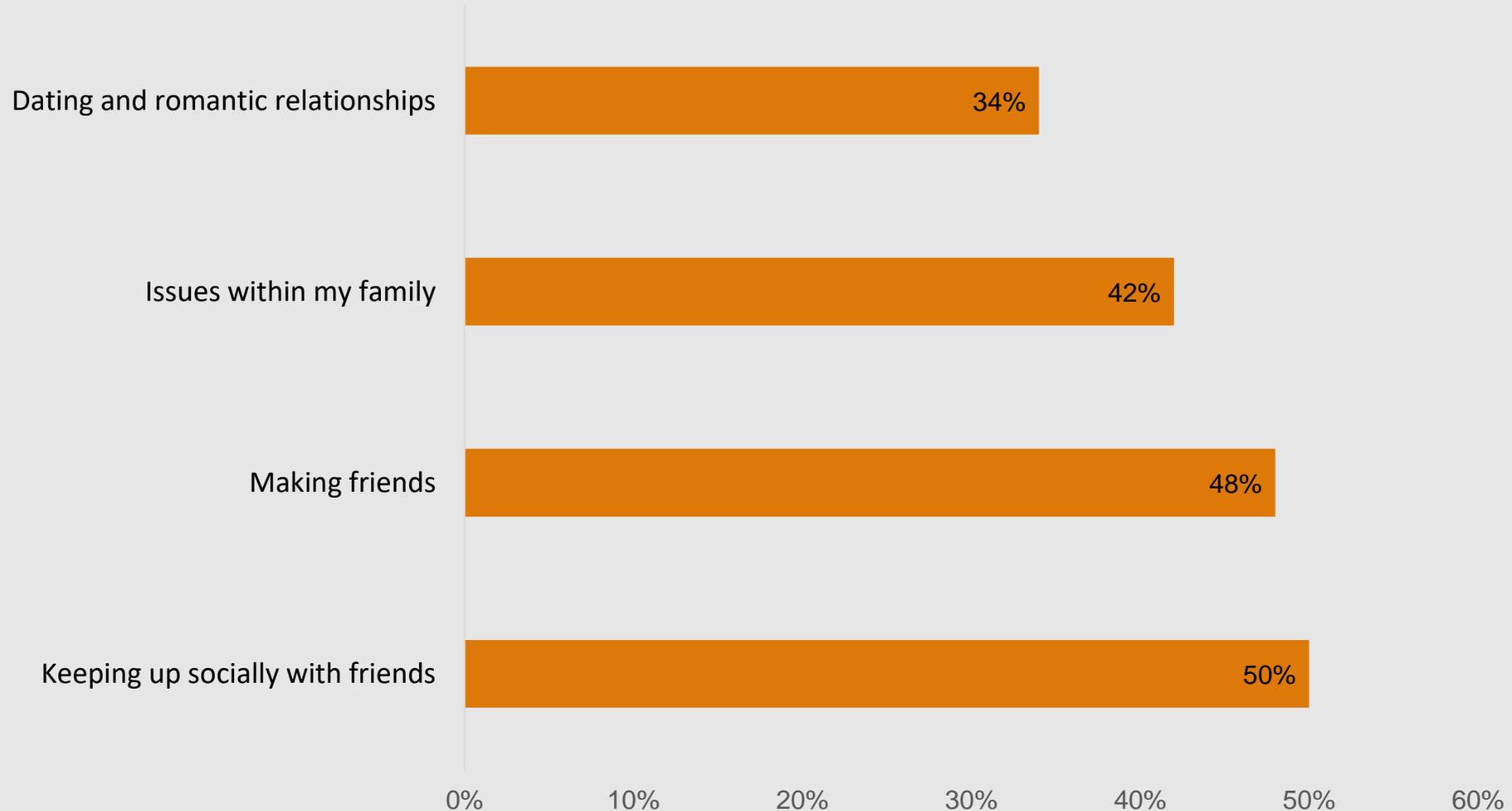
% who agreed or strongly agreed.

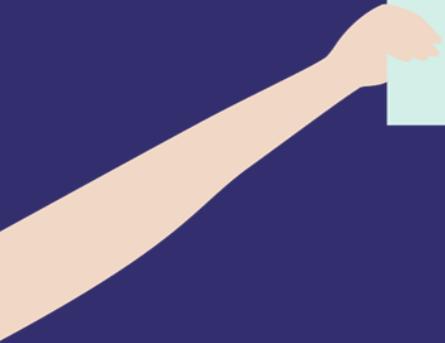


# Community, Relationships and Belonging

Thinking about your experience during Autumn term, how concerned or unconcerned were you about the following issues?

% who were concerned or very concerned.



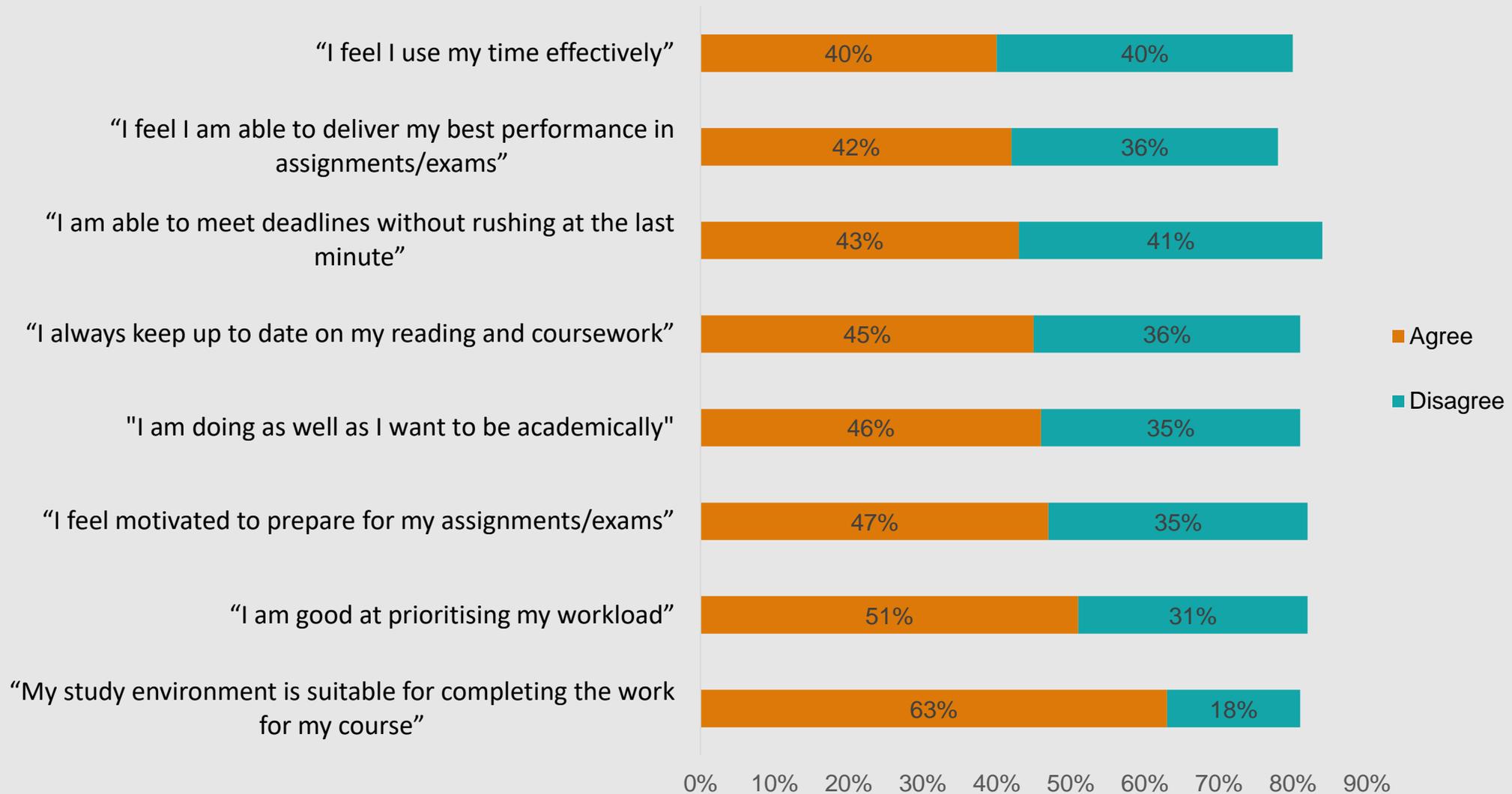
A stylized illustration of a hand holding the left edge of a light green rectangular sign. The hand is rendered in a simple, flat style with a light skin tone.

# Academic Experience

# Academic experience

We asked students to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements.

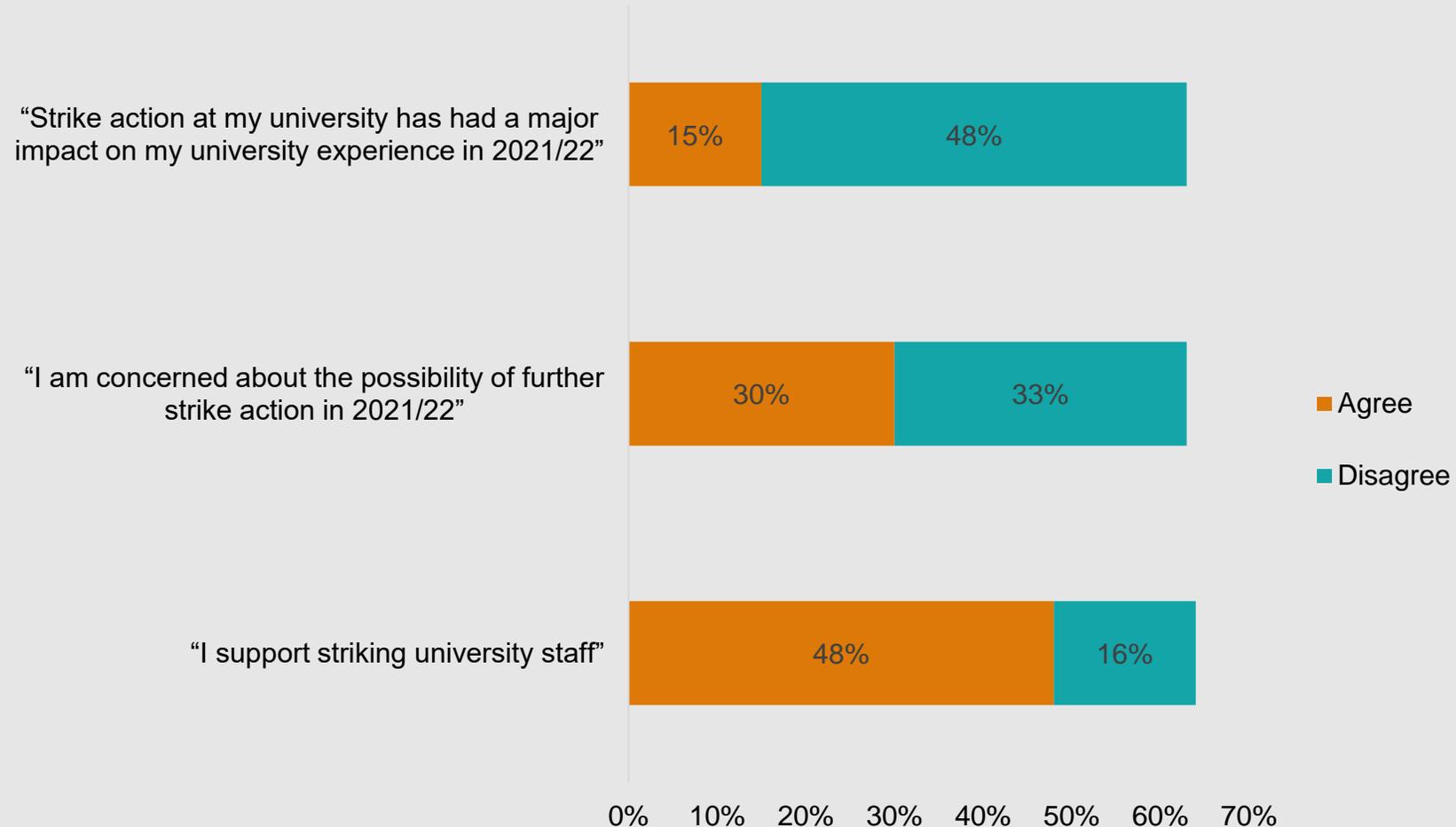
'Neither agree nor disagree' not shown.



# Strikes

Following the period of strike action by the University and College Union (UCU) in December 2021, we asked a series of questions around students' attitude to strikes and their impact.

'Neither agree nor disagree' not shown.



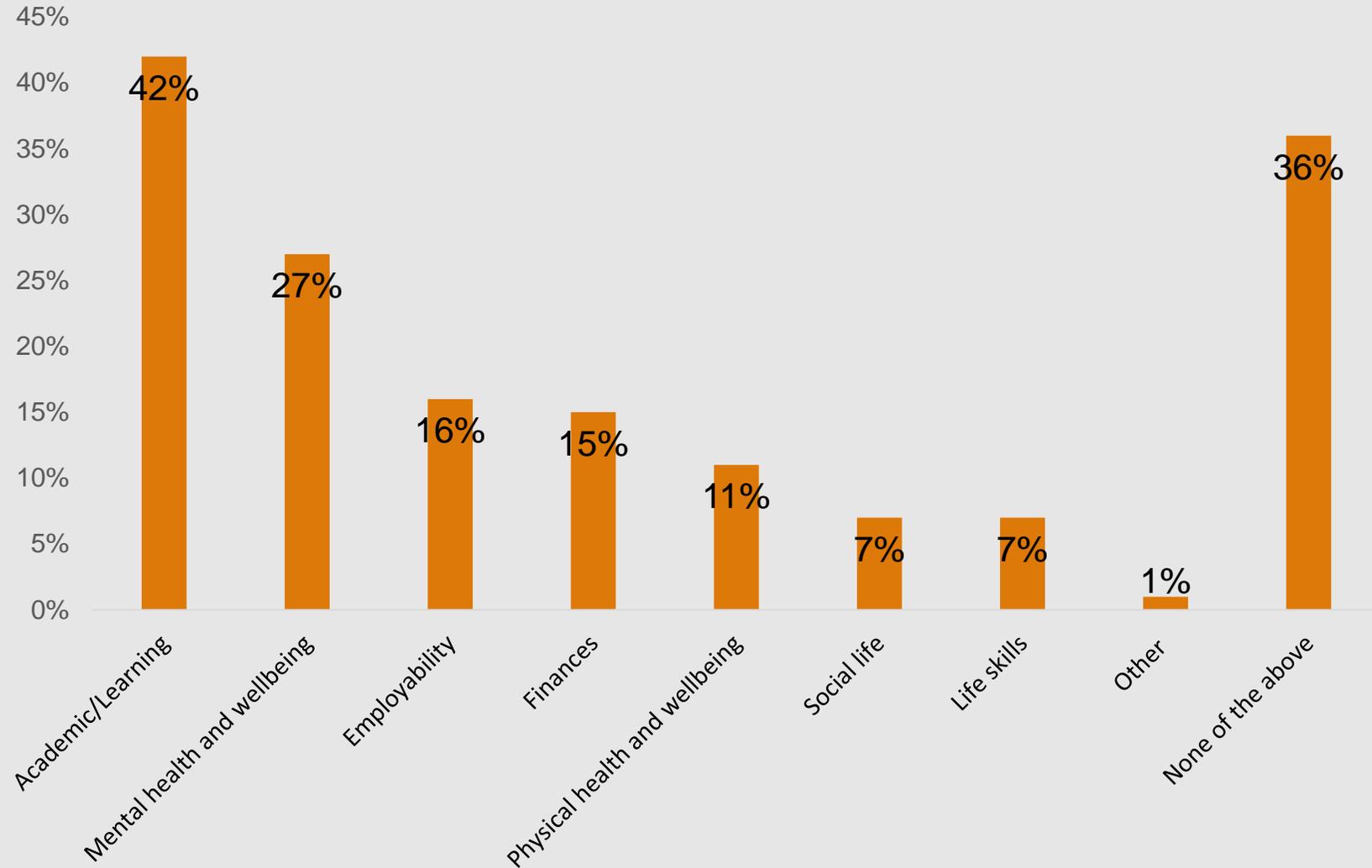
Note: the survey was conducted prior to the announcement of further upcoming strike action in February/March 2022.

A hand with a brown skin tone is shown on the left side of the image, holding the left edge of a large, horizontal, light yellow rectangular sign. The sign is centered on a dark blue background. The word "Support" is written in the center of the sign in a bold, black, sans-serif font.

**Support**

# Support

Areas in which students had accessed support during Autumn term

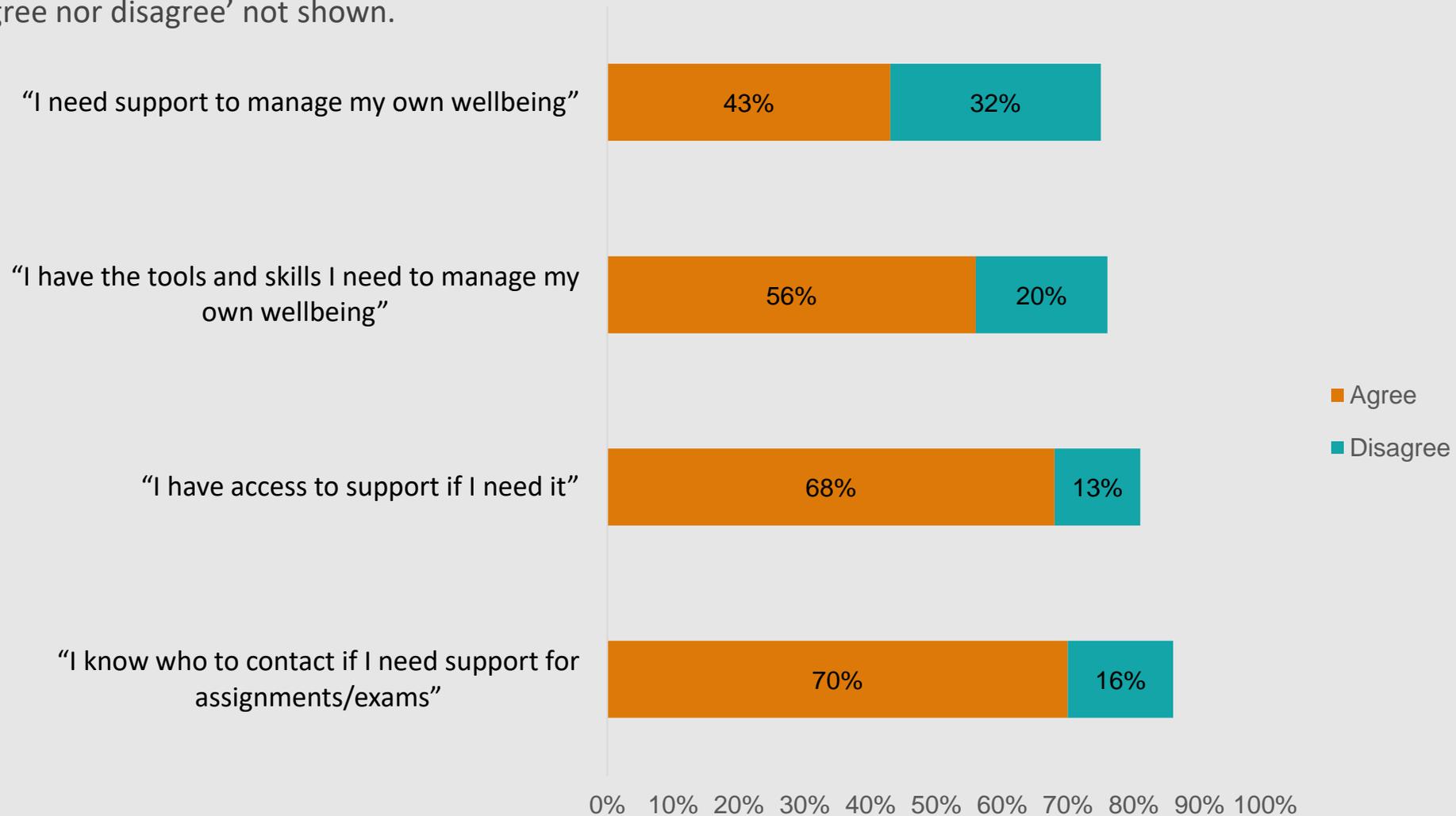


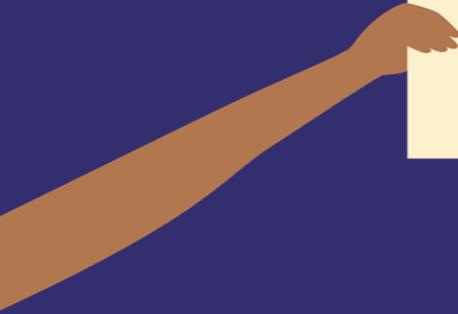
Of those who had accessed support for their mental health and wellbeing, the majority had accessed this via their GP/Doctor or university counselling service.

# Support

We asked students to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements.

'Neither agree nor disagree' not shown.



A stylized illustration of a hand holding the left edge of a yellow rectangular sign. The hand is brown and positioned on the left side of the sign.

# Wider University Experience

# Student Concerns

We asked students how concerned or unconcerned they were about a particular issue, both during Autumn term and looking ahead to Easter term.

The top five concerns which students had both during Autumn term and looking ahead to Easter term were:

- Performing well in coursework, assessments or exams
- Keeping up with study commitments
- Managing my time
- My mental wellbeing
- Feeling behind academically

This is generally consistent with what students told us they were concerned about at the beginning of the year as they looked ahead to 2021/22.

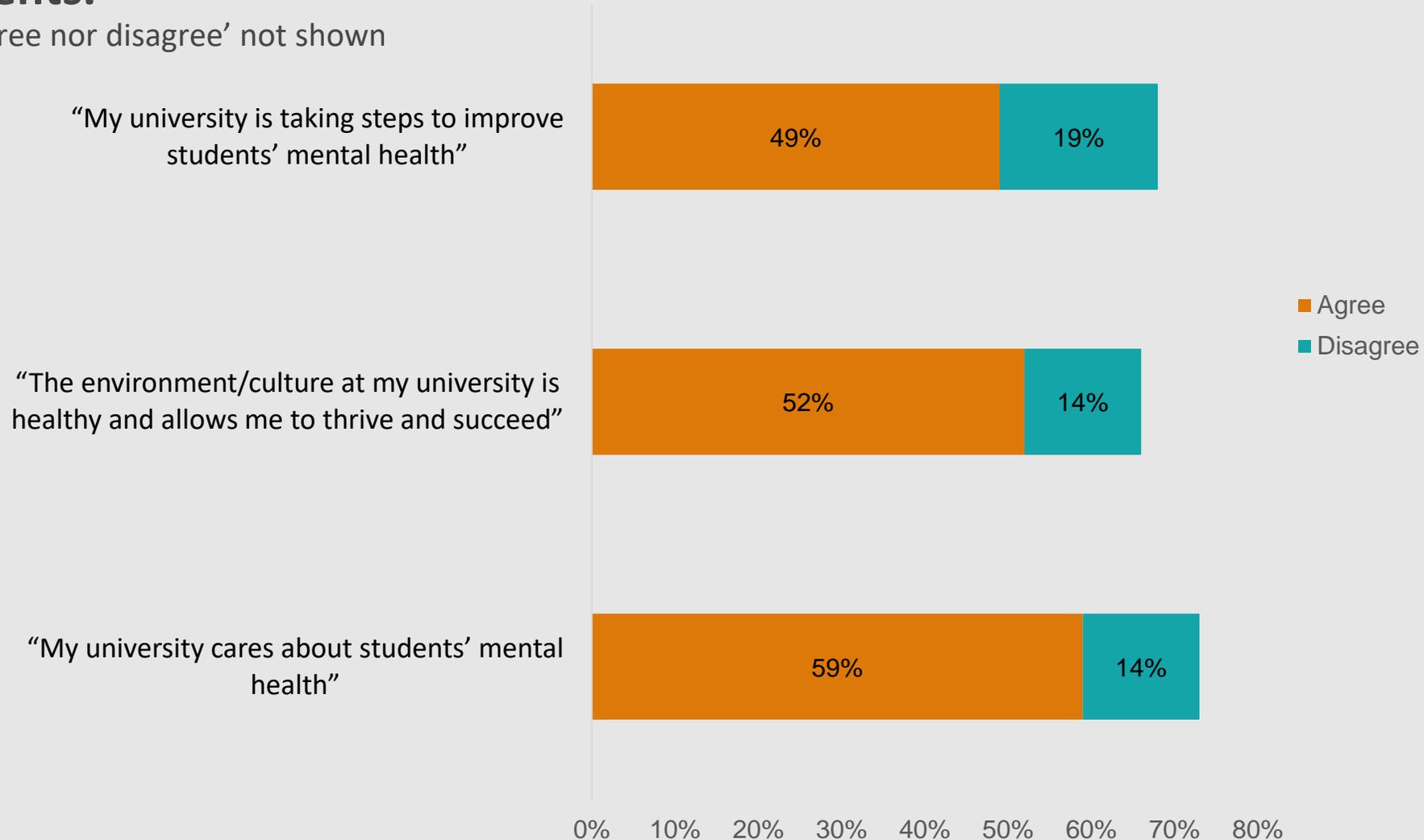
48% of students said they were worried about making friends during Autumn term, but just 38% said they were concerned about making friends looking ahead to Easter term.

56% of students said that they were concerned about loneliness during first term, but this dropped to 49% students ahead of second term.

# Perceptions of Culture

We asked students to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements.

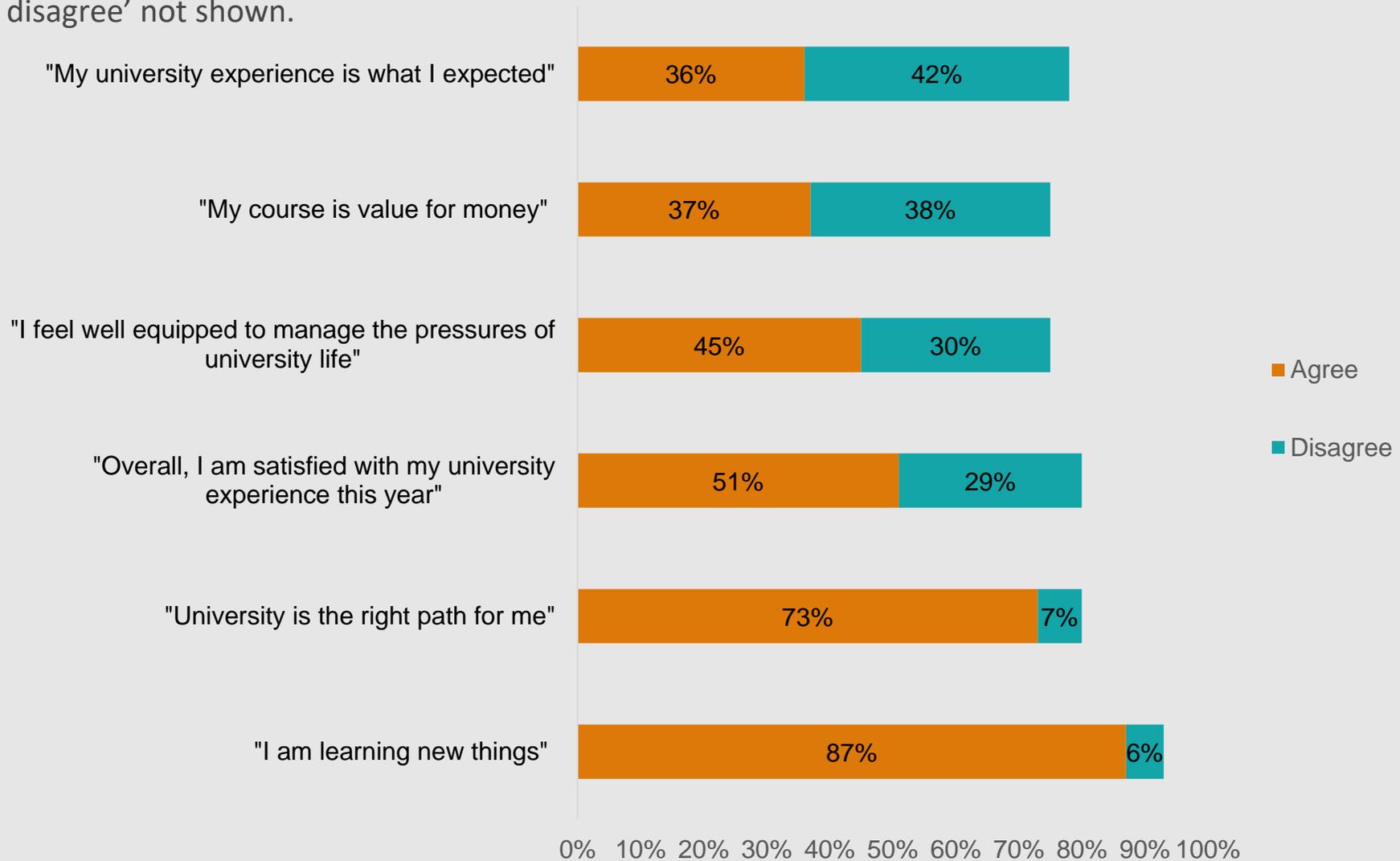
'Neither agree nor disagree' not shown

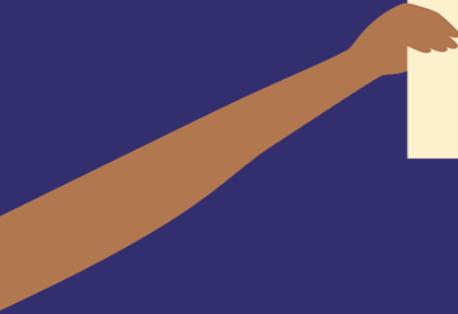


# Student Experience

We asked students to what extent they agreed or disagreed with a series of statements.

'Neither agree nor disagree' not shown.



A stylized illustration of a hand holding the left edge of a yellow rectangular sign. The hand is brown and positioned on the left side of the sign.

**Covid-19**

# Covid-19

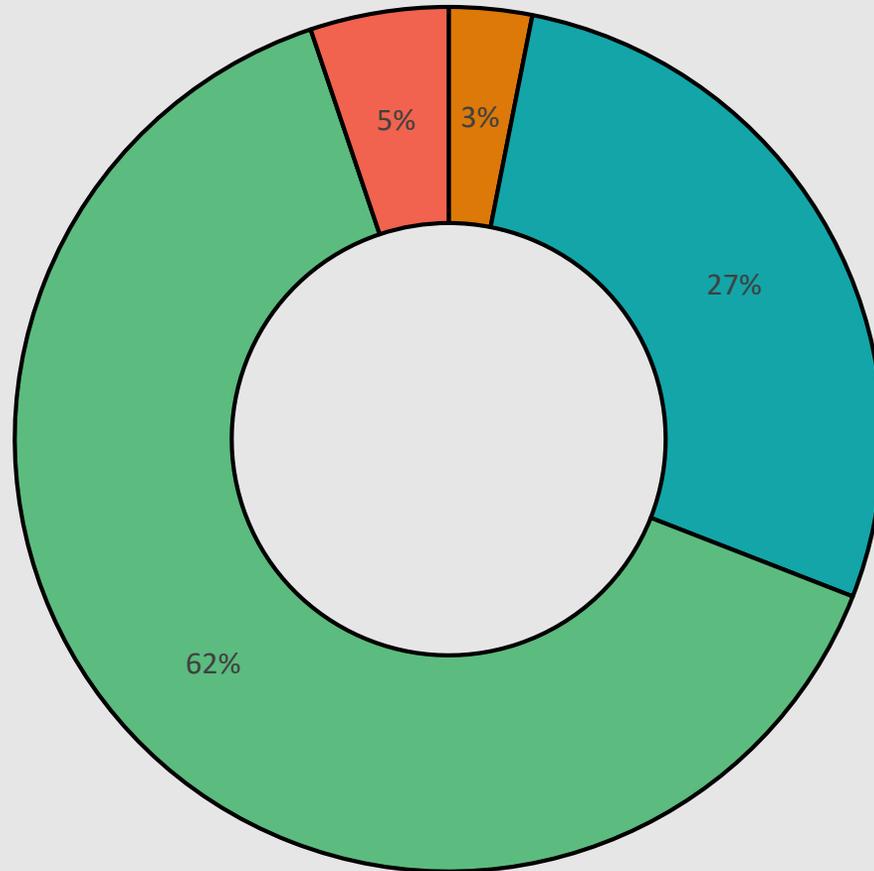
- 64% of students reported that the Covid-19 pandemic had a negative impact on their mental health and wellbeing during Autumn term. 50% reported a negative impact on their physical health and 61% reported a negative impact on their overall university experience.
- 55% of respondents were concerned about catching Covid-19. 63% were concerned about the possibility of Government-imposed restrictions being re-introduced, and 59% were concerned about the possibility of University-imposed restrictions being introduced.
- Most students agreed they felt safe attending in-person teaching or social events during Autumn term. 70% felt safe attending in-person lectures, 65% felt safe living in university accommodation (base = 412), 58% felt safe attending organised indoor social events, and 51% agreed they felt safe in social venues such as pubs, bars or clubs.



In September 2021 (Wave II), 63% reported that the pandemic had negatively impacted their mental health over the past month.

# Covid-19 Vaccination

Vaccine uptake



■ One dose   ■ Two doses   ■ Two doses + Booster   ■ None

In September 2021 (Wave II), 72% of respondents had received two doses of the Covid-19 vaccine. This was prior to the introduction of Booster jabs.

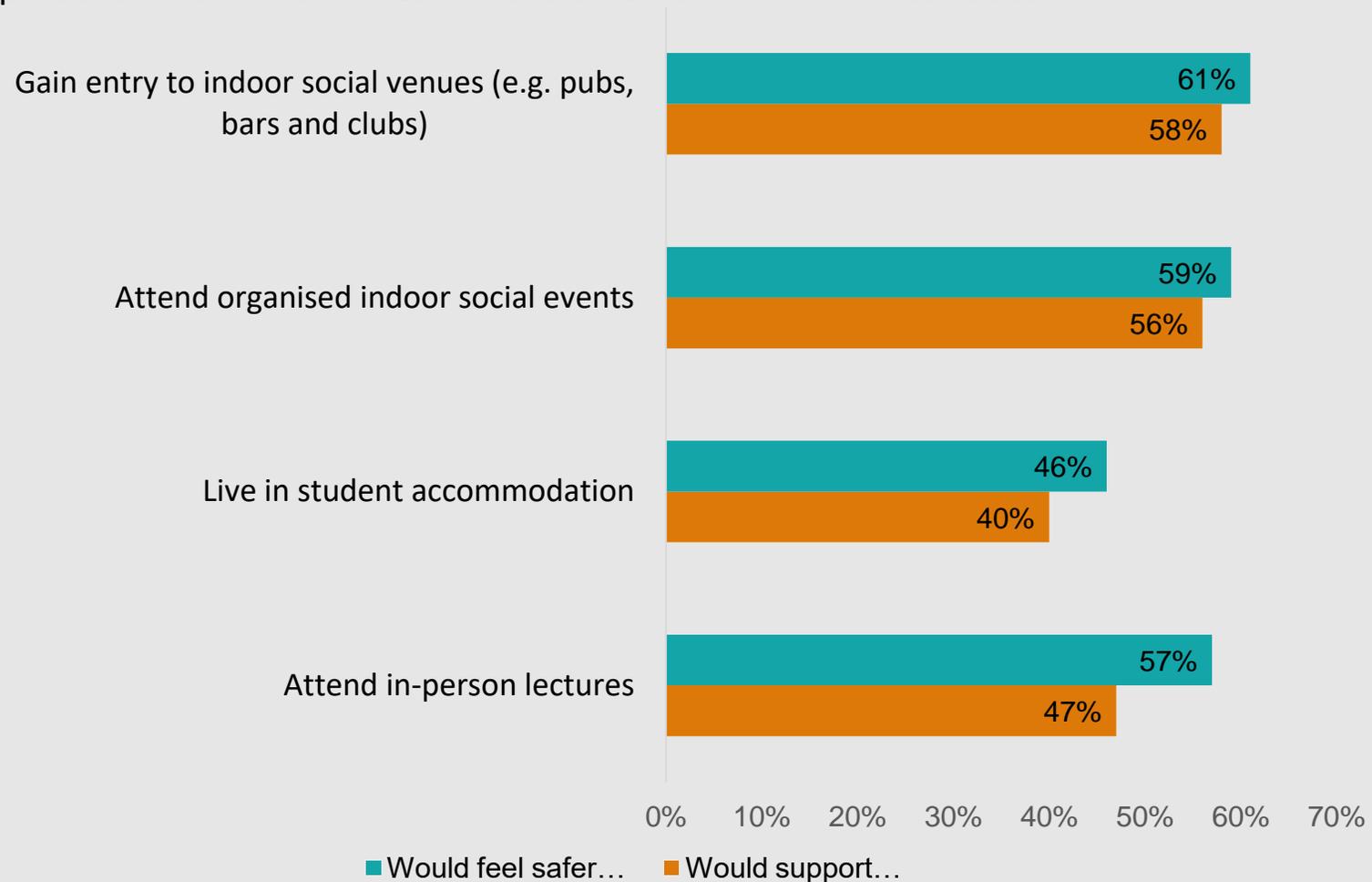
In January 2022 (Wave III), 89% of respondents had received at least two doses of the vaccine, with the majority (62%) having also received the Booster jab.

# Covid-19

## Vaccine passport attitudes

Respondents were asked about their attitudes towards Covid-19 restrictions based on vaccination status. We asked whether:

- a) Students would feel safer if students had to be vaccinated to...
- b) Students would support the introduction of restrictions based on vaccination status to...



If you have any comments, questions or feedback,  
please get in touch by emailing  
[info@studentminds.org.uk](mailto:info@studentminds.org.uk)

[@StudentMindsOrg](#)  
[www.studentminds.org.uk](http://www.studentminds.org.uk)

A stylized illustration of a person with dark hair, wearing a yellow long-sleeved shirt, holding a white rectangular sign with a wooden stick. The person is positioned in the lower right quadrant of the image. The background is a solid dark blue color.

**Thank you  
for reading.**