



Accommodation Hunting Report

November 2025

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Referencing

If you wish to reference this report, please use 'Exeter Students' Guild' as the author/organisation.

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Introduction

Survey Superheroes gathers monthly feedback from 1000 student volunteers regarding their opinions on a variety of pre-planned and developing issues in exchange for financial compensation.

The Student's Guild Insight Team uses this feedback to influence decisions by the University, inform our projects and empower students to create change for their community.

One of our key topics for November was Accommodation Hunting. We wanted to find out:

1. How have students found their living experience at university so far?
2. How knowledgeable and confident do students feel when searching for accommodation?
3. What is accommodation hunting like for students in Exeter?

This report will analyse the feedback given in relation to the above questions and provide recommendations for both the Student's Guild and the University of Exeter to action in order to improve Accommodation Hunting.

All text in quotations marks are comments provided by students showing their individual thoughts and opinions; they have been included as they largely reflect the quotes within the same topic.

Summary

We saw that nearly one third of students live in the area immediately surrounding Streatham campus (Duryard and St James) (Fig. 1). 50% of Exeter students are currently renting a flat or house and 25% are living in university owned accommodation (Fig. 2). 4% of students are currently living with guardians/carers/ family, most of these students intend to continue with this for their remaining time at university (Fig. 2 and Fig. 5).

When looking for accommodation, cost and proximity to campus are most often ranked as two of the most important factors considered (Fig. 9). 76% of students feel confident that they can identify 'red flags' in accommodation and 66% feel confident that they can understand a rental contract (Fig. 10 and Fig. 12). Only 23% of students had heard of the Move Smart campaign before (Fig. 14). 82% of students have never used any of the Move Smart resources, even when filtered by students who had heard of the Move Smart campaign, 54% still had not used any of the resources (Fig. 16 and Fig. 16).

Most students have used letting agent websites, the university portal, Rightmove, Accommodation for students and Unihomes when searching for accommodation (Fig. 18). 26% of students took 3-4 weeks to find their current accommodation, 24% took 1-2 weeks and 12% took less than a week (Fig. 20). Most frequently, students viewed 3-5 properties before choosing their current accommodation (Fig. 21). 7% of students felt that their gender had a negative impact on their accommodation search, 8% felt the same way but regarding their citizenship/visa status (Fig. 23). Students do not like how early accommodation hunting starts in Exeter (Fig. 26). Students want the University and the Guild to support them by providing information, including signposting the timeline that accommodation hunting happens on (Fig. 27).

Analysis

1. How have students found their living experience at university so far?

Which area of Exeter do you live in? If you're not sure, you can use the map below to help you find out roughly which ward you're in.

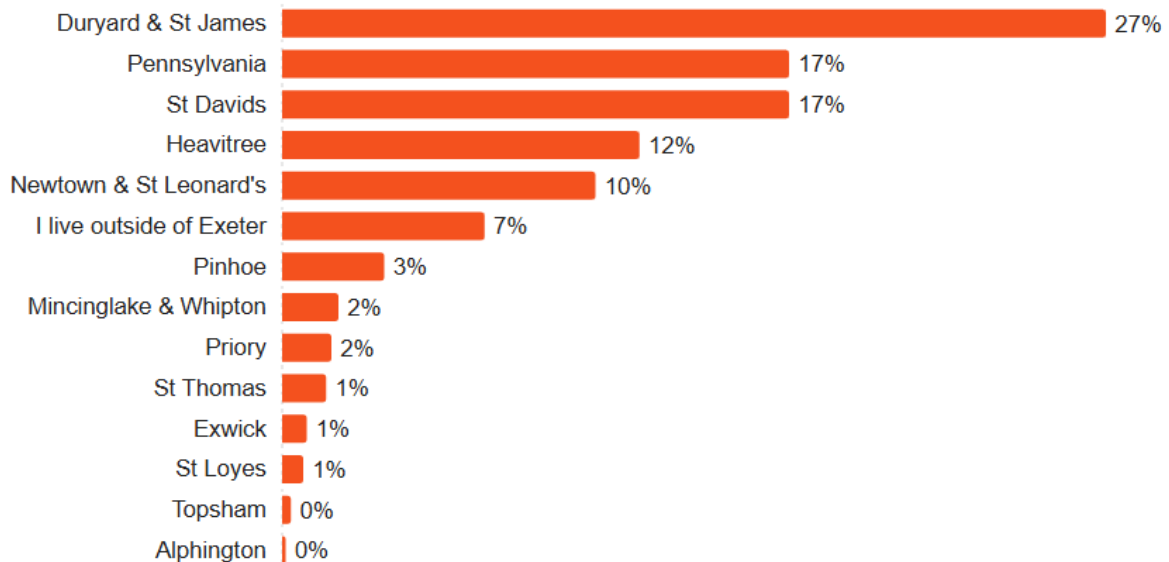


Figure 1 – What area of Exeter do you live in?

The majority of students, 27%, live in the Duryard and St James areas of Exeter, which is the area immediately around Streatham campus. An equal number of students at 17% each live in the Pennsylvania and St Davids area, which both border on the Duryard and St James area. 12% of students live in Heavitree and 10% of students live in Newtown and St Leonard's. (Fig. 1)

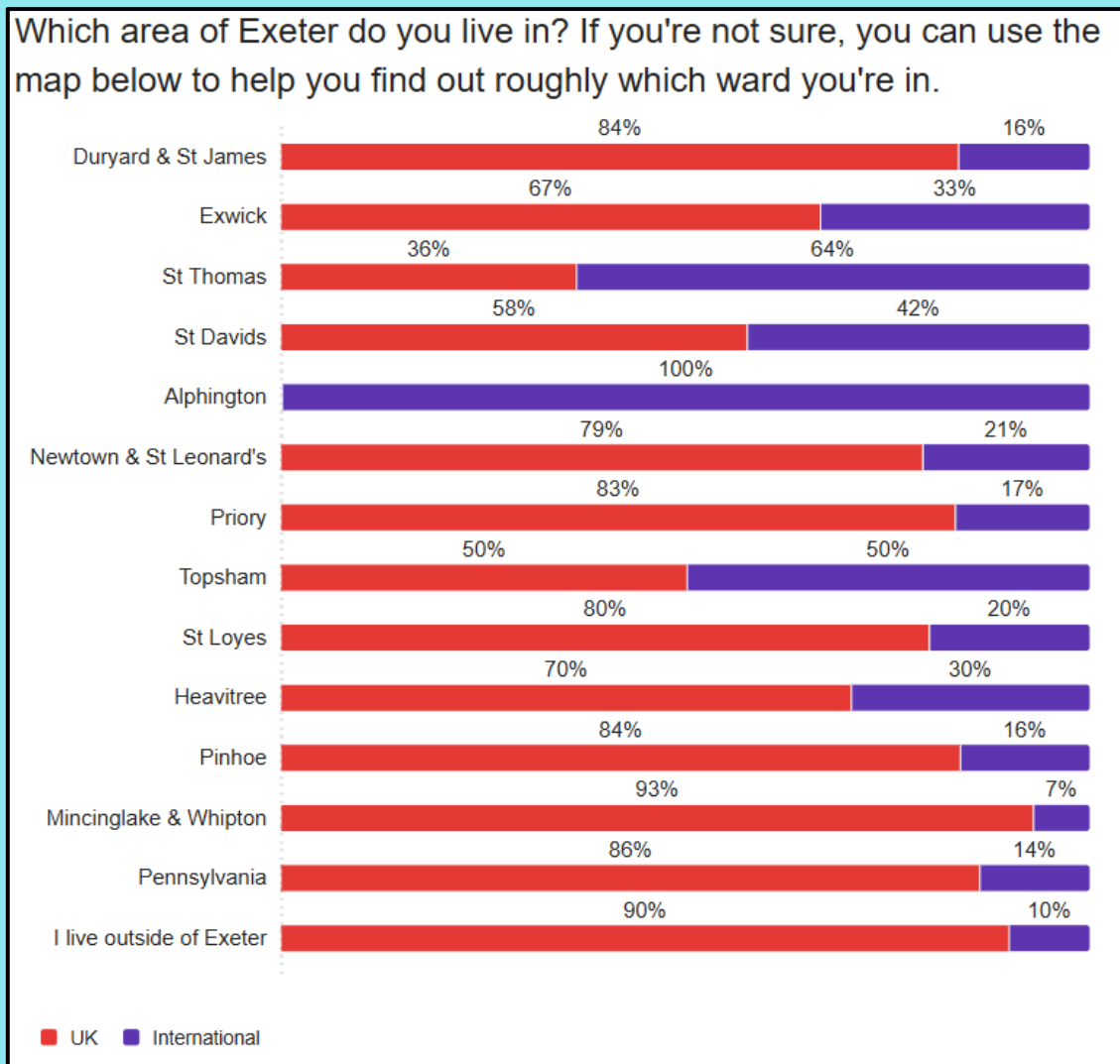


Figure 2 - What area of Exeter do you live in? (Breakout: Domicile)

If we look at area of living by domicile, we can see for the 27% of students who live in the Duryard and St James area that 84% of these students are home status. We also see that 86% of the students living in the Pennsylvania area are home students. St David's, which also had 17% of students living there, has a more even split with 58% home students and 42% international students. (Fig. 2)

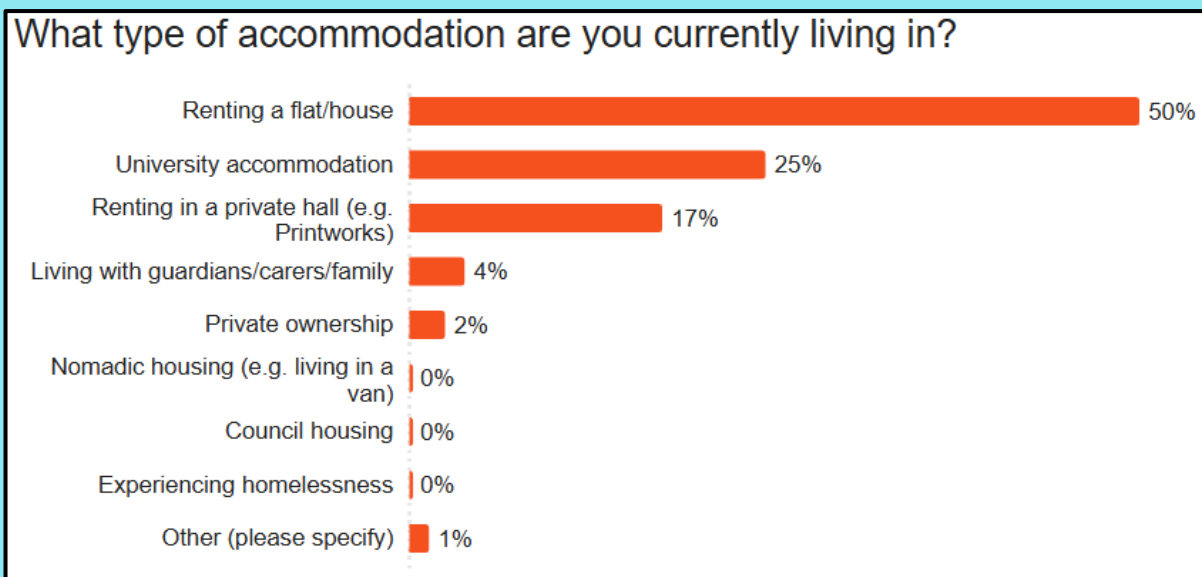


Figure 3 - What type of accommodation are you currently living in?

Students were then asked what type of accommodation they currently live in. 50% of Exeter students are renting a flat or house. 25% of students live in University accommodation, 17% of students live in privately rented halls. Reassuringly 0% of respondents are currently experiencing homelessness.

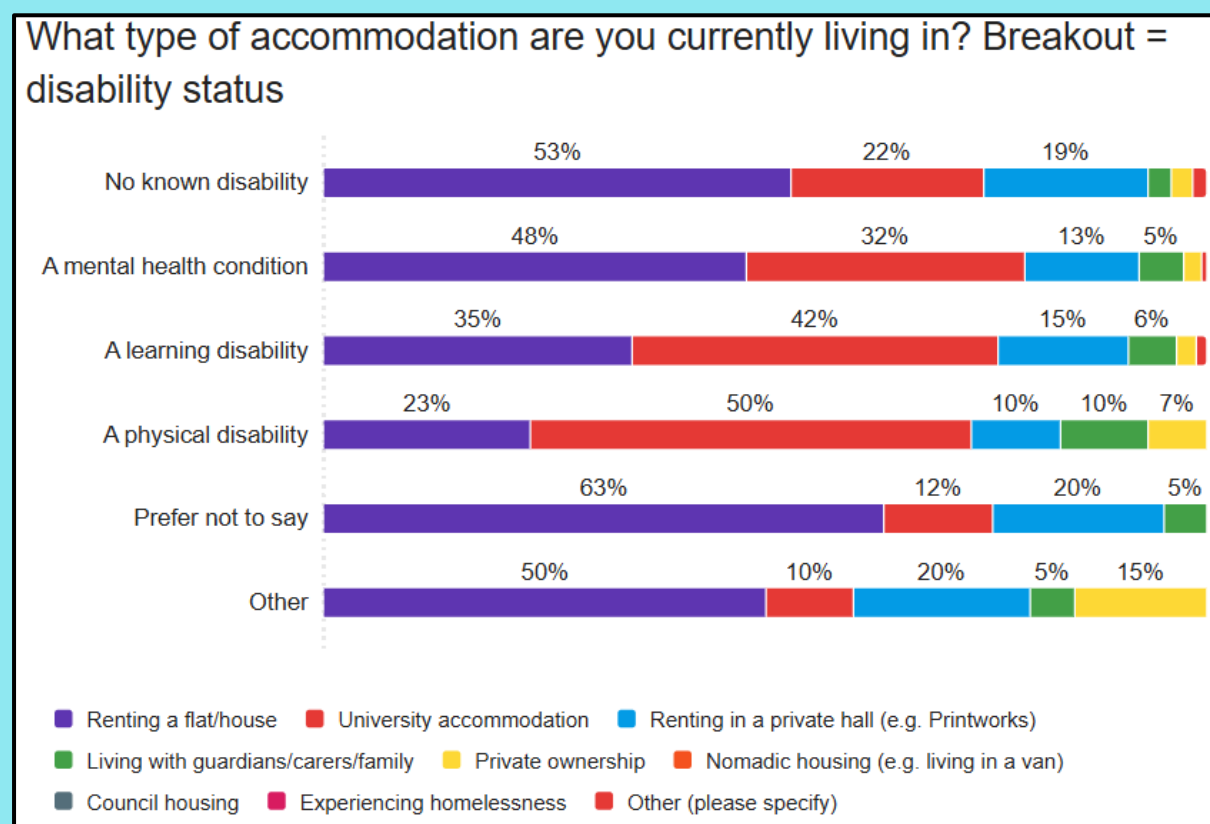


Figure 4 - What type of accommodation are you currently living in? Breakout - disability status

When we look at this by disability, we can see that all students reporting at least one disability are more likely to be living in University accommodation than those reporting none (Fig. 4). 50% of students with a physical disability, 42% of students with a learning disability and 32% of students with a mental health condition live in University accommodation, compared to only 22% of students with no disability reported. (Fig. 4)

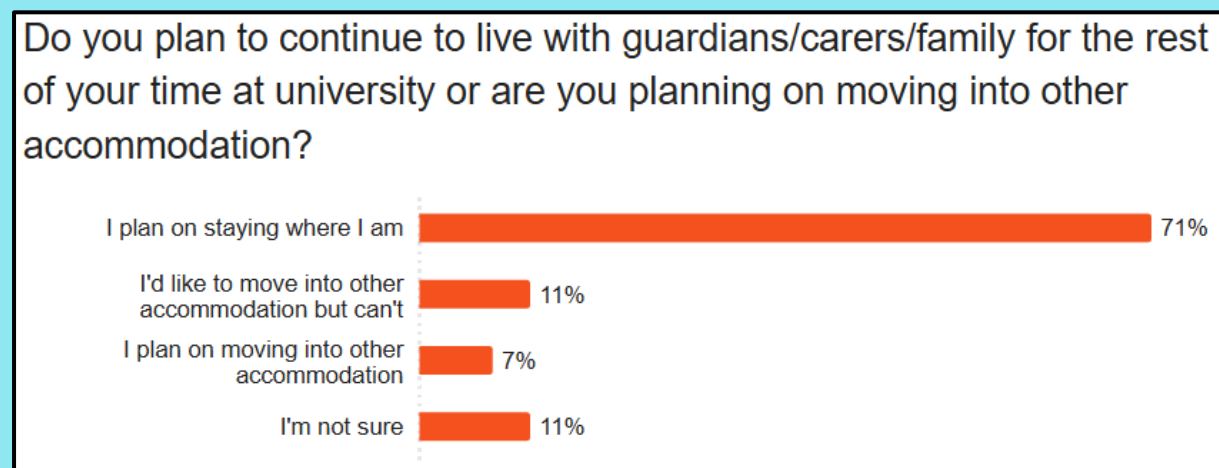


Figure 5 - Do you plan to continue to live with guardians/carers/family for the rest of your time at university or are you planning on moving into other accommodation?

Students who reported living with guardians, carers or family were then asked if they plan to continue living with them for the rest of their time at University. 71% of students reported that they plan to continue with this living situation. 11% of students want to move into alternative accommodation but can't, 7% plan to move into other accommodation and 11% were unsure. (Fig. 5)

Students were then asked to describe how living with guardians, carers or family has affected their university experience.

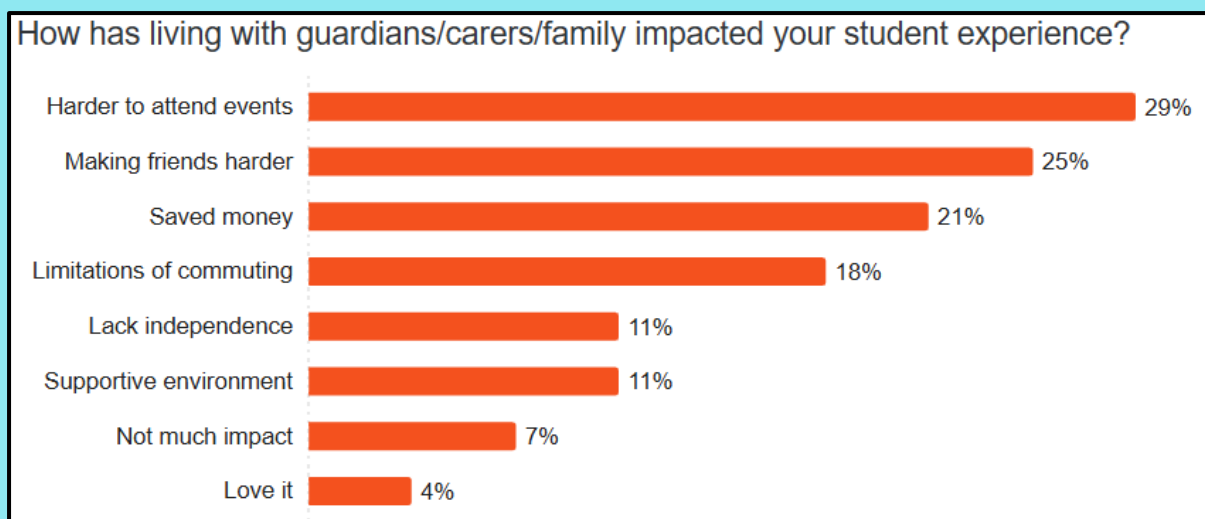


Figure 6 – How has living with guardians/carers/family impacted your student experience?

The largest perceived impact of this living situation was on students' ability to engage with events, with 29% of responses mentioning this topic.

"I also miss out on social events with societies as I live far away and don't always feel comfortable driving alone late at night or walking back to my car from events." ~ Year 4, HASS Student

"Cheaper but not able to attend events in the evening" ~ Masters, HLS Student

25% of students felt that this living arrangement has made it harder for them to make friends.

"Harder to make friends - but nice to be at home with family at the end of a stressful day" ~ Other, HASS Student

"I would say I have missed out on the so called "uni-life". The first few weeks were tough as I hadn't made friends with flatmates seeing as I wasn't in student halls. I also couldn't experience the hype of freshers week without a place to stay in town " ~ Year 1, HLS Student

On a more positive tone, 21% of responses reported that living with guardians/carers/family has allowed them to save money they otherwise wouldn't have.

"It has been great. It has enabled me to save money I would have otherwise spent on rent and other bills" ~ Other, ESE Student

"I lived in student accom in my first year so made lots of friends and stuff that way but now just trying to save money!" ~ Year 2, HLS Student

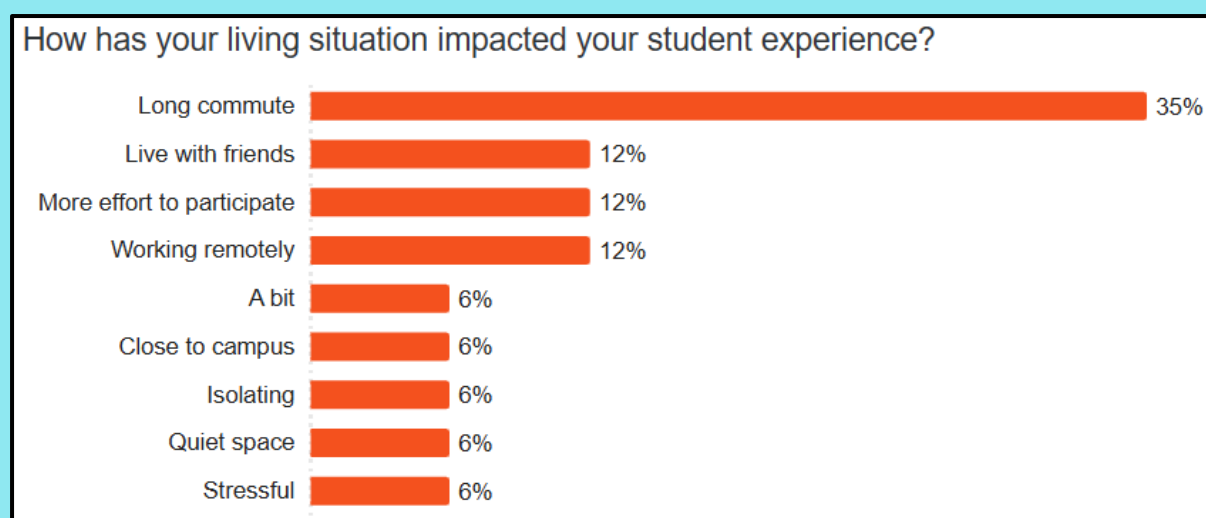


Figure 7 - How has your living situation impacted your student experience?

Similarly, we also asked students who live in private ownership, council housing, nomadic living or experiencing homelessness to describe how this affected their university experience. As 0% of students responded that they live in council housing, nomadic housing or are currently experiencing homelessness, all responses to this question came from students who privately own their accommodation.

35% of students said that their long commutes impacted their experience.

"Good but its a bit far from campus" ~ Year 1, HLS Student

"It's been really difficult. I have to commute an hour and a half on the train from Barnstaple [to] Exeter. The days are long" ~ Masters, HASS Student

12% of respondents reported that their situation allows them to live with friends.

"Nice to live with friends and not worry about availability of washing etc" ~ Year 2, HASS Student

12% of students said that their living situation led to more effort required to participate in events.

“Living outside of Exeter has made it more difficult to attend evening events” ~ Other, HASS Student

“You have to make a conscious effort to get involved” ~ Other, HLS Student

12% of students discussed how it has influenced working remotely.

“It restricted me to distance learning” ~ Masters, HLS Student

“It hasn’t, I work remotely as my course is mainly online” Masters, HLS Student

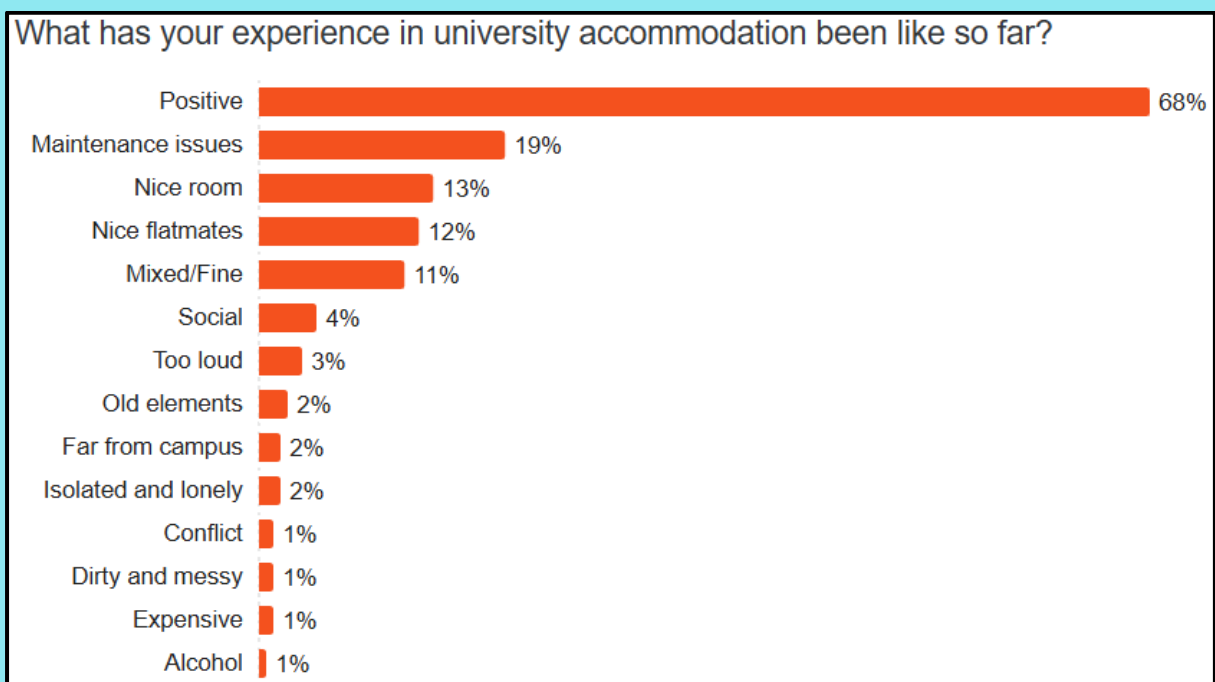


Figure 8 - What has your experience in University accommodation been like so far?

We then asked students who lived in university accommodation how they have found this experience so far. 68% of responses reported a general positive sentiment. These responses often didn’t specify an element that had influenced their experience, just reflected on the experience as a whole.

“Really good, I haven’t encountered any issues” ~ Masters, HASS Student

“Very good! I don’t have anything bad to say about it” ~ Year 1, HASS Student

19% of students reported that they had experienced maintenance issues, some of which were fixed quickly and others not.

"Pretty good, only had 1 major issue (broken fridge-freezer) which was fixed within a couple days" ~ Year 1, HLS Student

"I have had a very good experience and found the maintenance teams to be very quick and always fix any problems" ~ Year 1, ESE Student

"I've enjoyed my time in university accommodation so far. I've never had issues with hot water and the people in my flat are great. However, as with all flats the kitchen can get dirty and the appliances can be a problem. Our fridge has been leaking for a while and despite reporting it nobody has ever come to have a look." ~ Year 1, HLS Student

13% of students liked the room that they had been assigned.

"Excellent, lovely room, great facilities, large kitchen" ~ Year 1, HASS Student

"Extremely lovely! I live in an en-suite accommodation and the bathroom was in good condition when I first arrived, and my room and desk are very well sized" ~ Year 1, HLS Student

"It took me some time to adjust to it, but I love it now. Living with so many flatmates has meant it's very social which I enjoy and the room has everything I need." ~ Year 1, ESE Student

12% of students reported that they liked the flatmates that they are living with.

"Amazing, my flatmates are so nice and comforting and the kitchen/ living area is spacious and social. my room is nice and big" ~ Year 1, ESE Student

"My flatmates have also been great and we have quite a nice community with the other people in our accommodation who live in neighbouring flats." ~ Year 1, HLS Student

"I have really enjoyed living in accommodation, my flatmates are great and I've loved getting to know them" ~ Year 1, HASS Student

11% of responses were mixed, reporting some positives and negatives within the response or more neutral in the general sentiment reported.

"Fine- feels v expensive for what it is considering we have silverfish and our office hasn't done much apart from blame us for bringing them in (despite them being there from the first day). However, I do like my roommate and my roommates are (mostly) nice" ~ Year 1, HLS Student

"It's been a mixed bag. The people I live with aren't my type of people but the facilities are great" ~ Year 1, HASS Student

"It's been alright. But I didn't get the halls I wanted, and I am on the ground floor, which I didn't want. This means it gets very loud. My group of flatmates is not the most compatible either." ~ Year 1, HLS Student

2. How knowledgeable and confident do students feel when searching for accommodation?

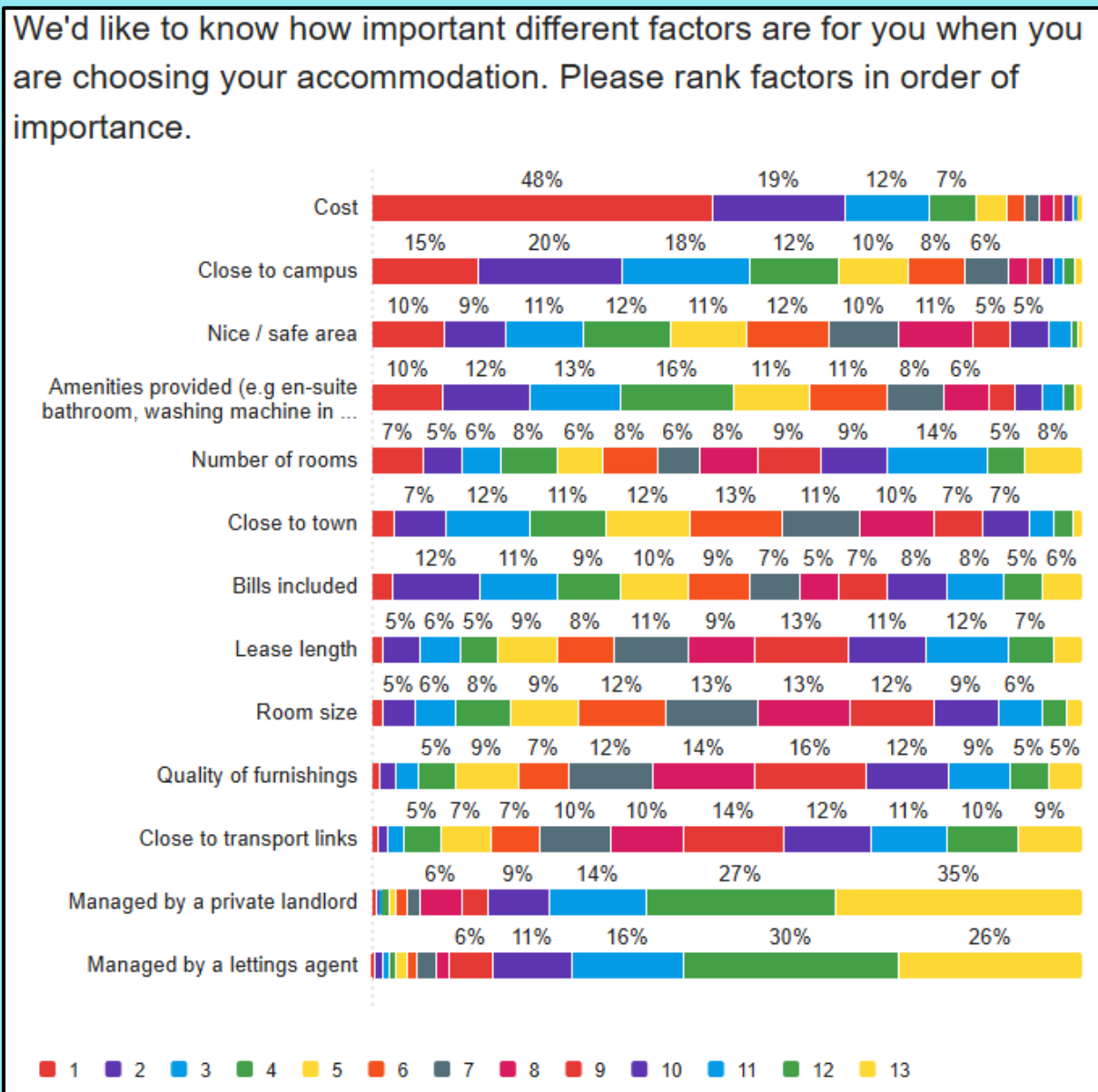


Figure 9 - We'd like to know how important different factors are for you when you are choosing accommodation. Please rank factors in order of importance (1=most, 13=least).

Looking what factors students think are most important when choosing their accommodation, we can see that cost is most frequently chosen as the most important at 48%. The next most important factor is being close to campus, ranking number 1 15% of the time. Then at 10% each is a nice/safe area and the amenities provided. Least important is that the property is managed by a private landlord or that it is managed by a letting agent (Fig. 9).

How confident do you feel that you know what 'red flags' to look out for when searching for accommodation?

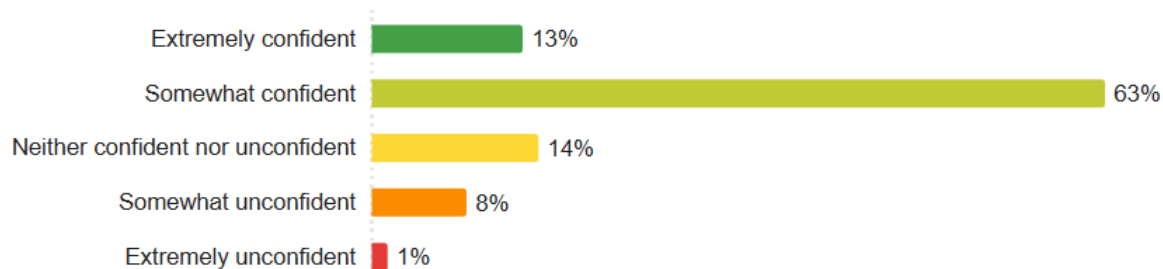


Figure 10 - How confident do you feel that you know what 'red flags' to look out for when searching for accommodation?

76% of students feel confident that they can identify 'red flags' when searching for accommodation, with 13% of students feeling extremely confident. Showing that the student cohort feel well educated in what to look for in accommodation. Only 9% of students report feeling unconfident. (Fig. 10)

How confident do you feel that you know what 'red flags' to look out for when searching for accommodation?

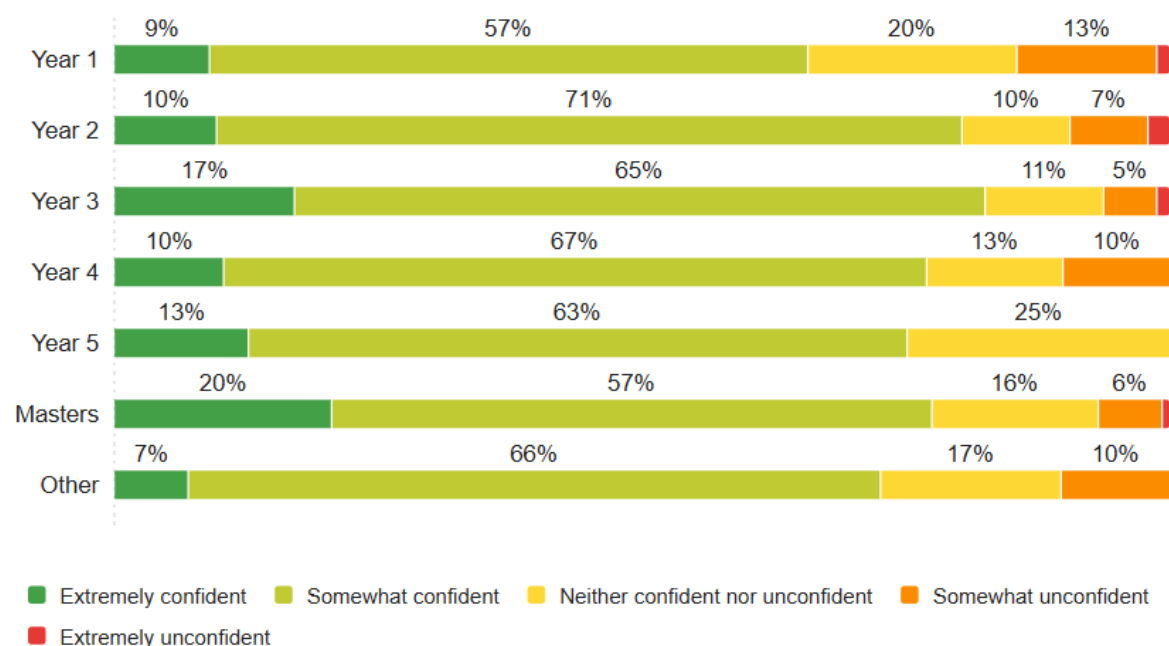


Figure 11 - How confident do you feel that you know what 'red flags' to look out for when searching for accommodation? Breakout - year of study

When looking at this by year of study we see that generally a similar pattern of confidence emerges amongst Year's 2-3 with these groups being the most confident in looking out for red flags (Fig. 11). This is likely because they have already been living in rented accommodation so have received guidance on what to look for.

The least confident group are Year 1 students who have the lowest overall confidence (66%) and highest overall lack of confidence (14%). This is likely because majority of these students have not had to live away from home before and are looking to rent for the first time.

Year 1 students and Year 5 students also index more highly in feeling neither confident nor unconfident than other groups (20%, and 25% respectively)

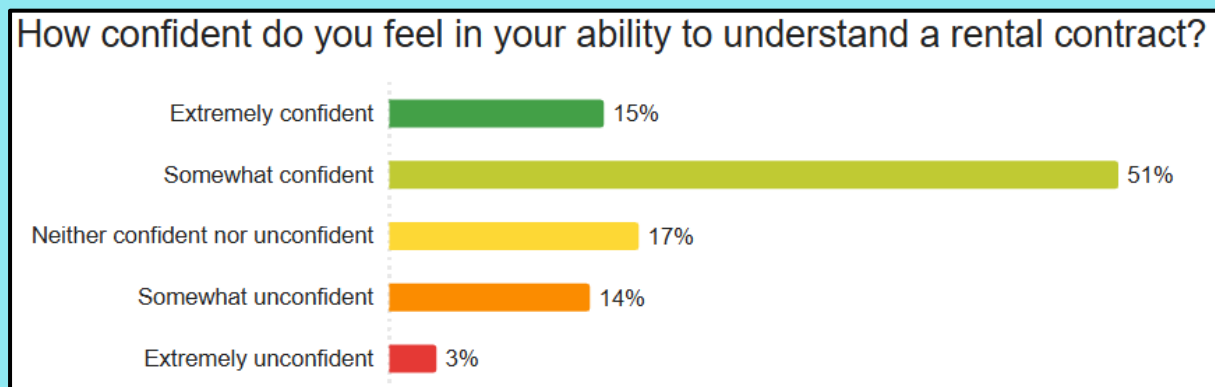


Figure 12 - How confident do you feel in your ability to understand a rental contract?

Students generally feel confident that they can understand a rental contract, with 66% of students reporting this. 17% of students were neither confident nor unconfident and 17% of students were unconfident. Whilst still generally confident, we see that compared to the previous question students are less confident in their ability to understand a rental contract than their ability to spot 'red flags' (66% and 76% respectively). (Fig. 10, Fig. 12)

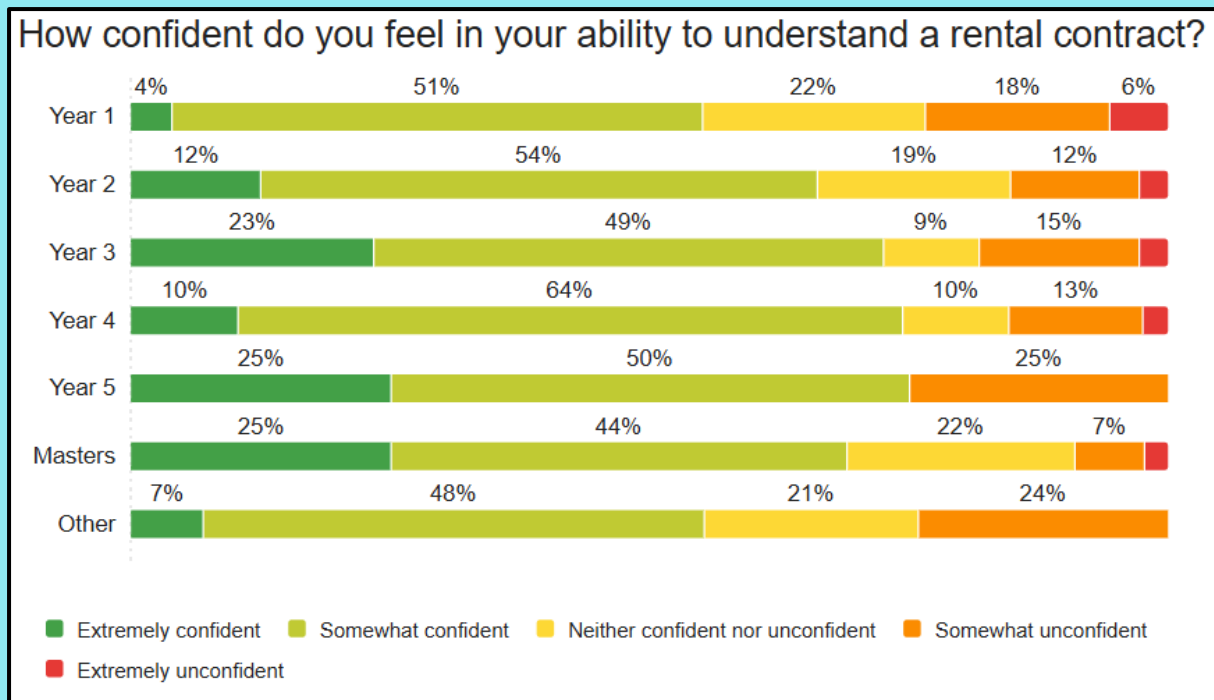


Figure 13 - How confident do you feel in your ability to understand a rental contract? Breakout - Year of study

Generally, as we move higher in year of study, we see confidence in ability to understand a rental contract growing. There is a dip in extreme confidence in Year 4 students however this is offset by 64% reporting somewhat confidence. Interestingly, Year 5 students appear to be polarised in their confidence, 75% report confidence, compared to 66% of total student population, but 25% report feeling unconfident, compared to 17% of the total student population (Fig. 13).

We then shifted focus to the Move Smart campaign which aims to provide resources, events and advice to students to help them with accommodation in Exeter.

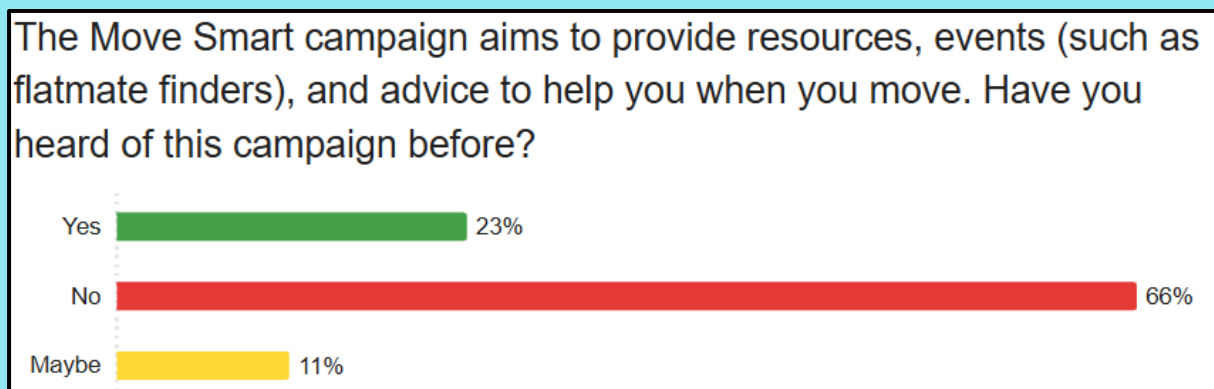


Figure 14 - The Move Smart campaign aims to provide resources, events (such as flatmate finders), and advice to help you when you move. Have you heard of this campaign before?

Only a minority, at 23%, had heard of the Move Smart campaign before. 66% of students had not heard of the campaign before. Showing that there is a need to increase awareness and advertise this campaign better (Fig. 14).

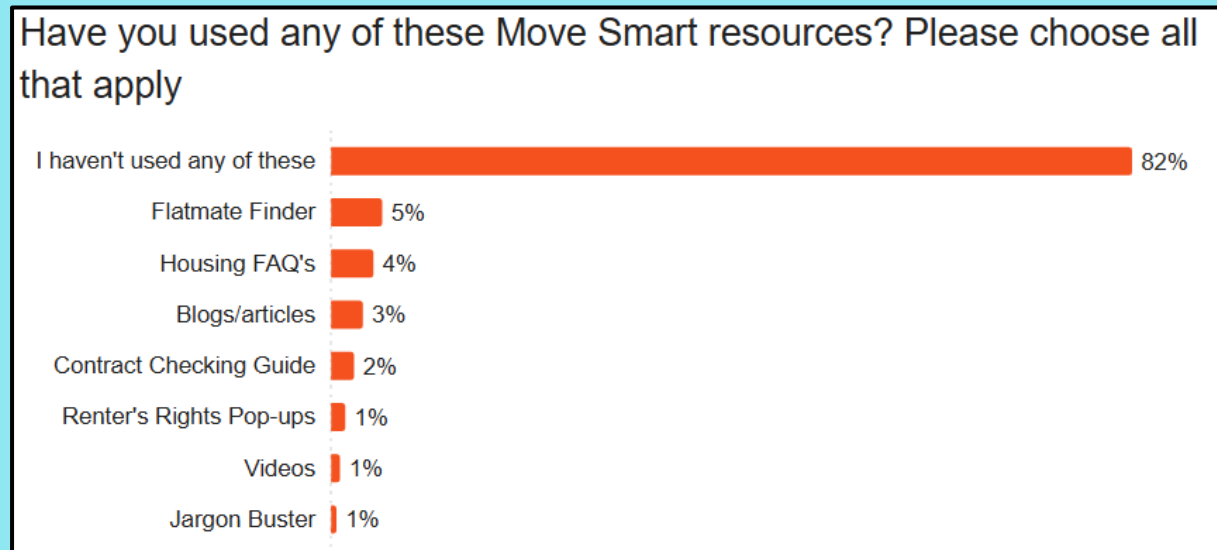


Figure 15 - Have you used any of these Move Smart resources? Please choose all that apply.

Likely due to the lack of awareness identified in Fig 13, 82% of students have not used any of the resources that the Move Smart campaign provides (Fig. 15). To get a clearer understanding of how students interact with this campaign we looked at how this question was answered only by students who had indicated that they had heard of the campaign (Fig. 16).

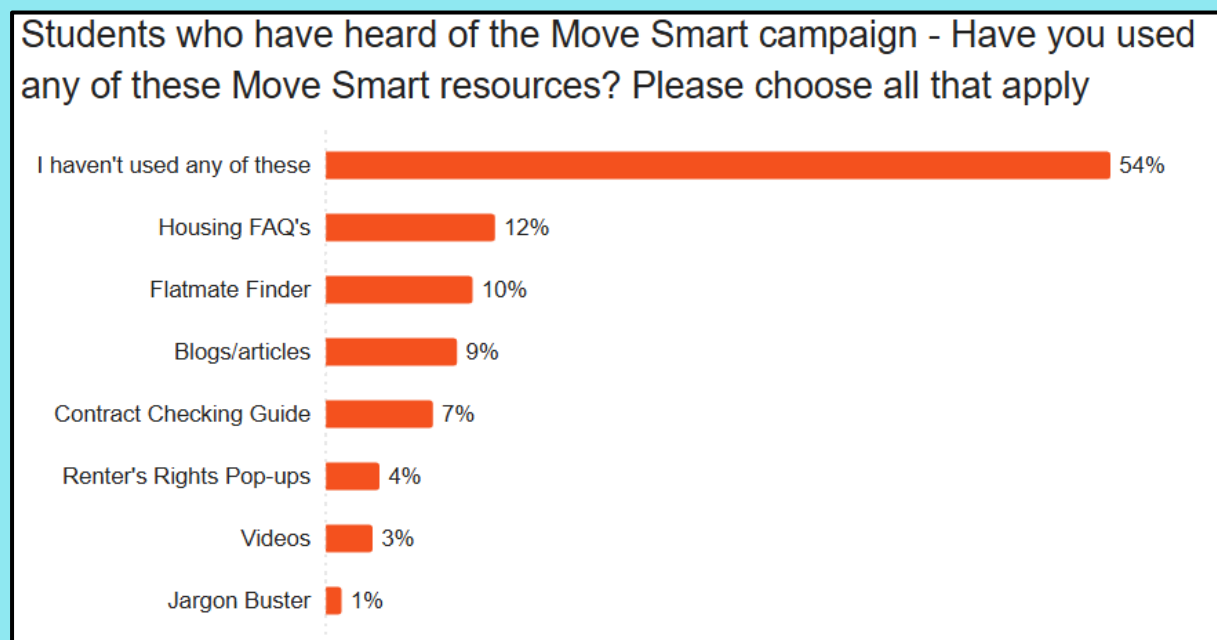


Figure 16 - Have you used any of these Move Smart resources? Breakout - Students who responded 'yes' to have you heard of the Move Smart campaign?

Interestingly, we see that not interacting with the Move Smart resources cannot be attributed purely to a lack of awareness. 54% of students who had heard of the Move Smart campaign had not used any of the resources. This demonstrates that there is work to be done to drive engagement as well as awareness. Of those who had used resources, 12% had used Housing FAQ's, 10% had used Flatmate Finders, 9% had used the Blogs and Articles and 7% had used the contract checking guide. (Fig. 16)

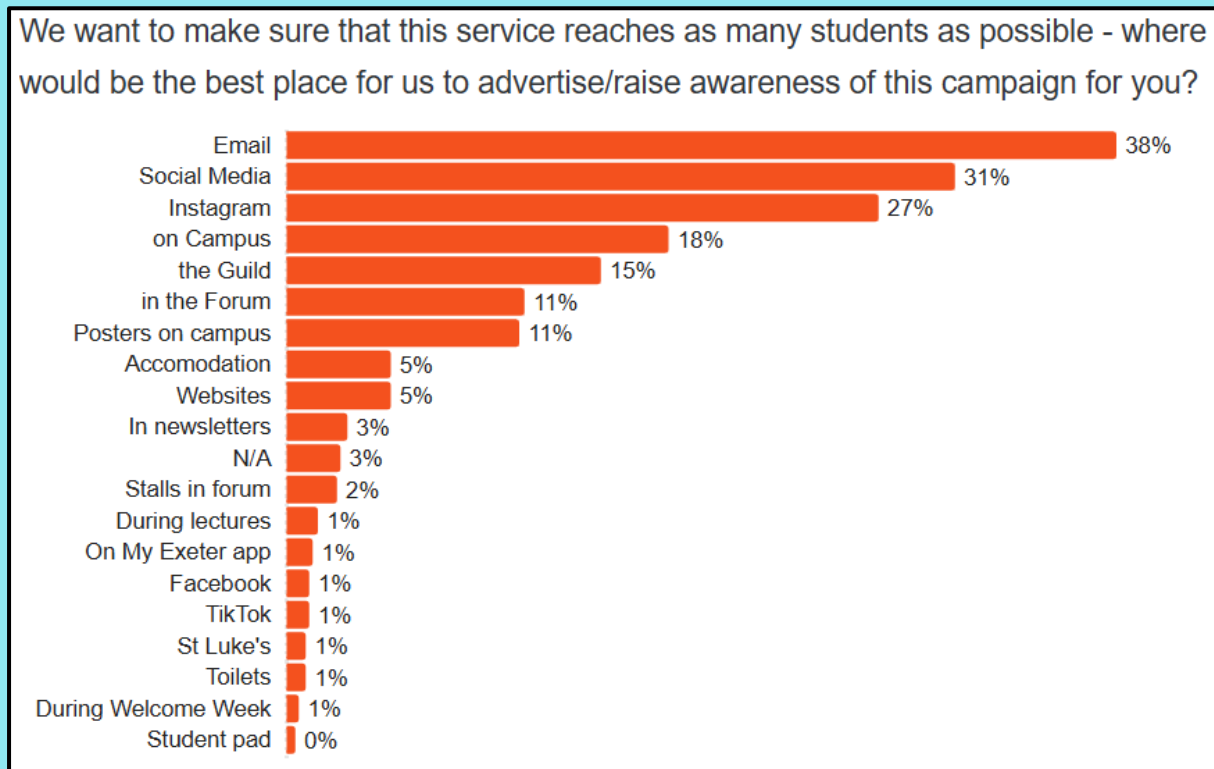


Figure 17 - We want to make sure that this service reaches as many students as possible - where would be the best place for us to advertise/raise awareness of this campaign for you?

We asked students where they would like the Move Smart campaign to be advertised. 38% of students said email would be the best place to advertise this campaign.

"Emails around the time in the year when accommodation hunting begins" ~ Masters, ESE Student

"In the update emails as I read those quite a lot" ~ Masters, HLS Student

31% indicating social media would be their preferred. 27% of students specifically mentioned Instagram, 1% mention Facebook and 1% mention TikTok specifically.

"I get a lot of my information from the Guild Instagram and social media channels" ~ Year 4, HASS Student

"on the social media (maybe thru videos that highlight top tips for finding accommodation)" ~ Year 1, HASS Student

"Think they almost start too late but on Instagram is a quick way for most people to see it" ~ Year 2, ESE Student

18% said on campus, 11% said in the forum and 11% said posters around campus.

"Posters on campus in the Forum/toilets" ~ Year 3, HASS Student

"Leaflets and posters would be good to do students can see this as they walk across campus to lectures and seminars" ~ Year 1, HASS Student

3. What is accommodation hunting like for students in Exeter?

Where did you go/have you gone previously to look for accommodation?
Please choose all that apply

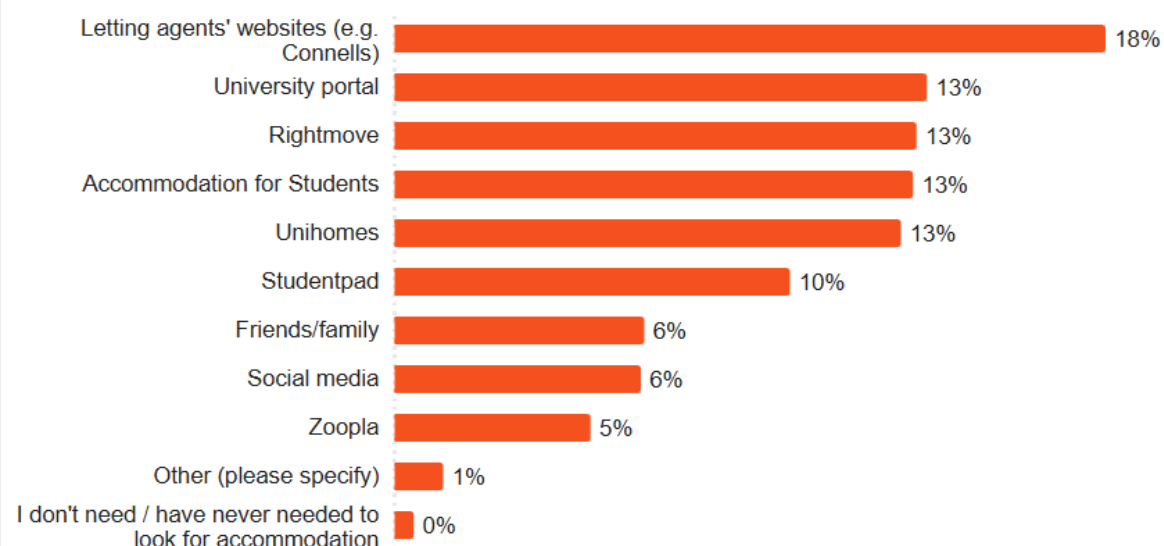


Figure 18 - Where did you go/have you gone previously to look for accommodation? Please choose all that apply

Students were asked where they have gone previously to look for accommodation. 18% have gone to letting agent's websites, 13% used the university portal, 13%

used Rightmove, 13% used Accommodation for Students, 13% used Unihomes and 10% have used Studentpad (Fig. 18).

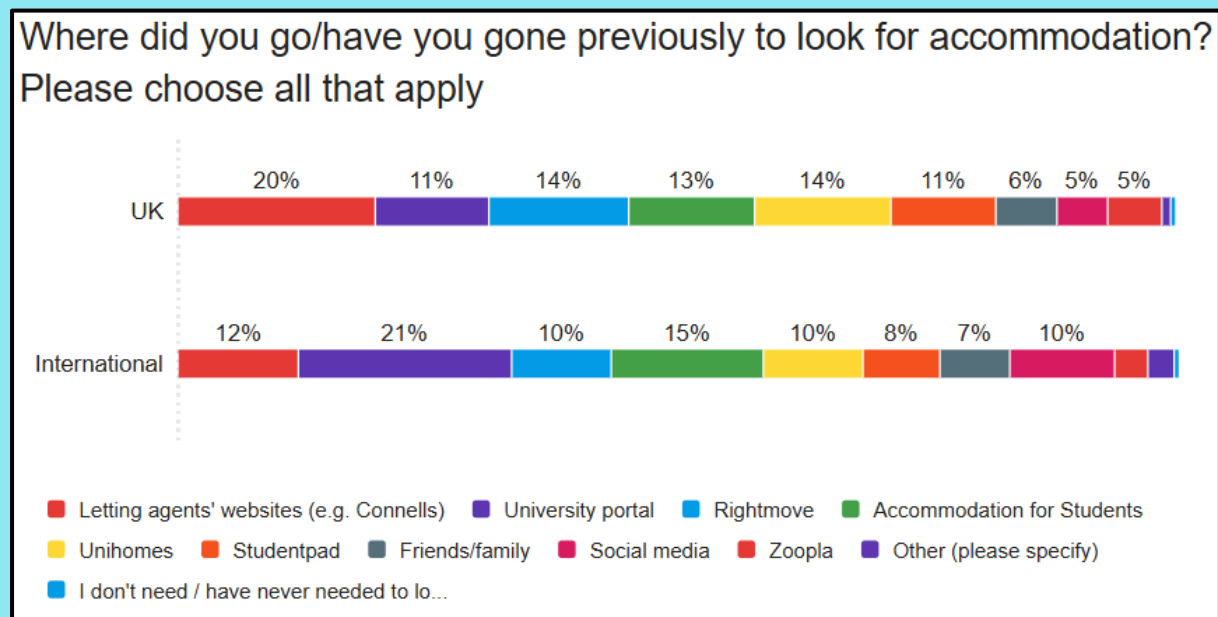


Figure 19 - Where did you go/have you gone previously to look for accommodation? (Breakout: Domicile)

If we look at where students have looked by domicile, we can see there's differences between UK students and international students. UK students were more likely to look at letting agent websites (20%) than international students (12%). International students were more likely to go through the University portal (21%) than UK students (11%). More UK students (14%) went through Rightmove than international students (10%). (Fig. 19)

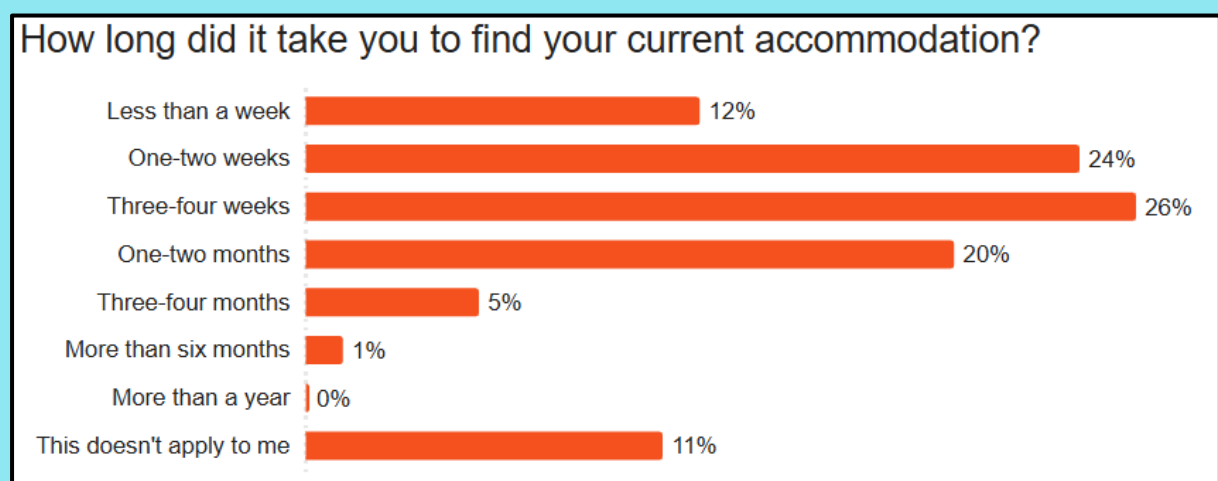


Figure 20 - How long did it take you to find your current accommodation?

26% of students took 3-4 weeks to find their current accommodation. 24% of students took 1-2 weeks and 20% of students took 1-2 months. 12% of students took less than a week to find their current accommodation (Fig. 20).

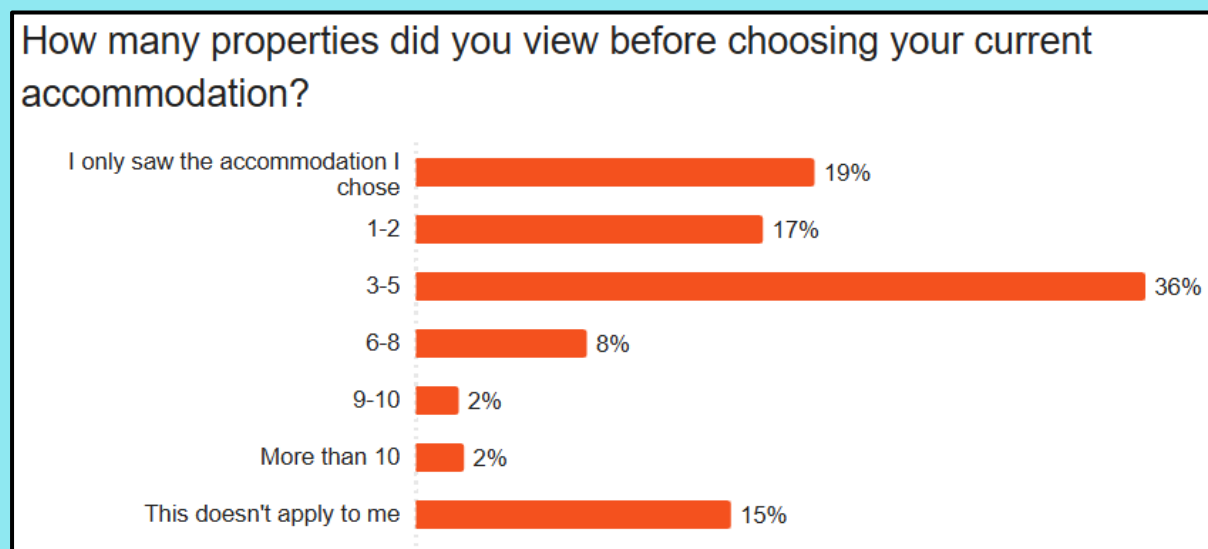


Figure 21 - How many properties did you view before choosing your current accommodation?

When looking at how many properties students viewed before choosing their current accommodation, most students (36%) saw 3-5 accommodations. 19% of students only saw the accommodation they chose. 17% of students saw 1-2 properties, 8% saw 6-8 and only 4% saw more than 8 (Fig. 21).

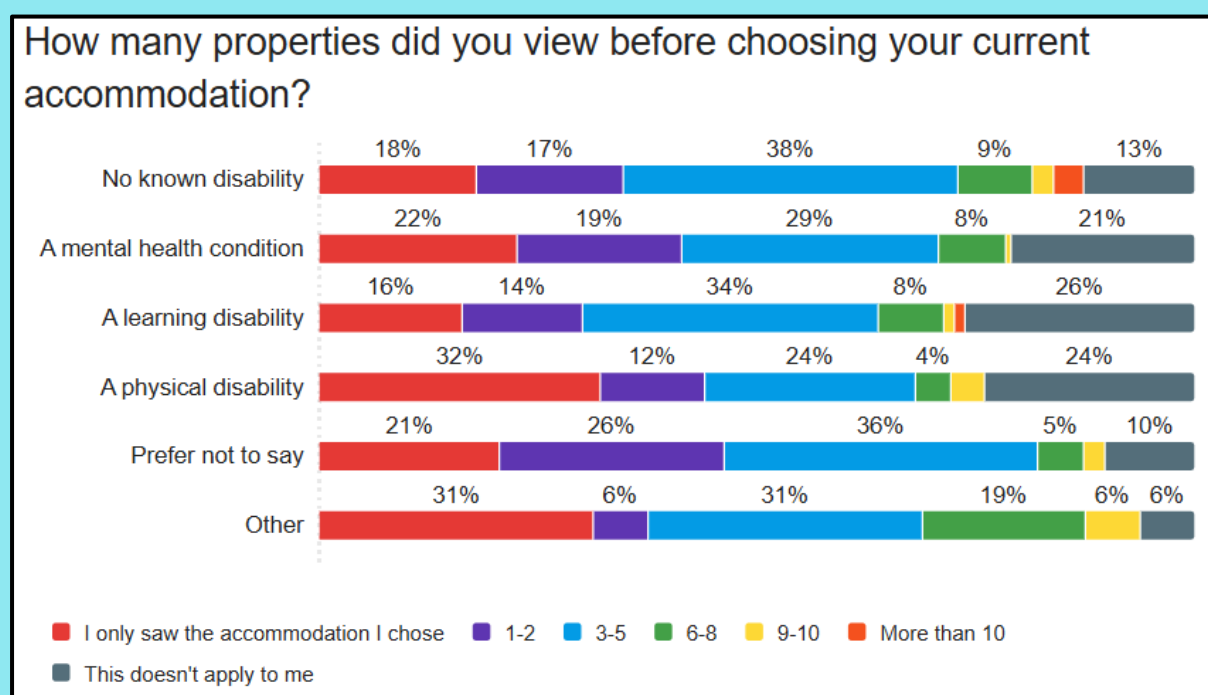


Figure 22 - How many properties did you view before choosing your current accommodation? Breakout - Disability status

When we look at the number of properties viewed split out by disability status there are some differences. 18% of students with no known disability only saw the accommodation that they chose whereas 32% of students with a physical disability only saw the accommodation that they chose. This could suggest that students with a physical disability more thoroughly vet a property before booking an accommodation viewing, but additional exploration would be needed to confirm this. On average of students with a mental health condition or a disability 24% reported that this question did not apply to them. This is possibly due to the additional support and assistance that the University can offer related to accommodation so it could be assumed that these students are accessing this support. (Fig. 22)

Then we asked students if they thought any of their personal characteristics affected their accommodation search in anyway.

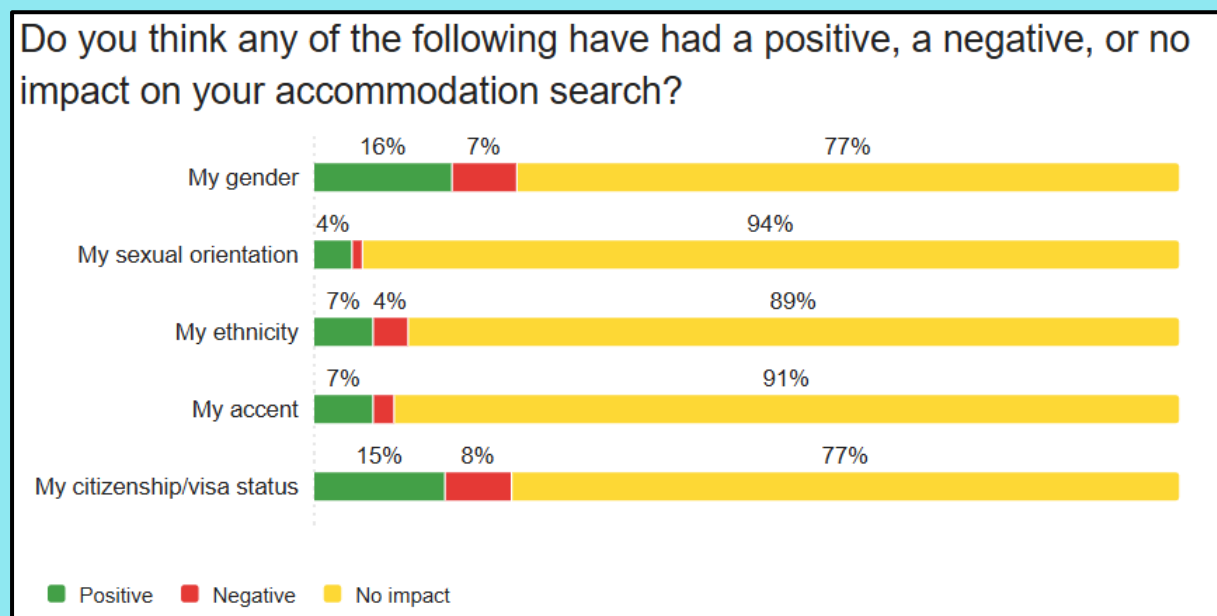


Figure 23 - Do you think any of the following have had a positive, a negative, or no impact on your accommodation search?

Positively, we can see that most students felt these characteristics had no impact on their accommodation search (yellow on the graph). For gender, 16% of students felt it had a positive impact and 7% felt it had a negative impact. This is explored further in Fig. 24, as we see qualitative discussion surrounding landlord gender preferences. 4% of students felt their sexual orientation had a positive impact. For ethnicity, 7% of students felt it had a positive impact and 4% felt it had a negative impact. 7% of students felt their accent had a positive impact. For citizenship and visa status, 15% felt it had a positive impact and 8% felt it had a negative impact (Fig. 23).

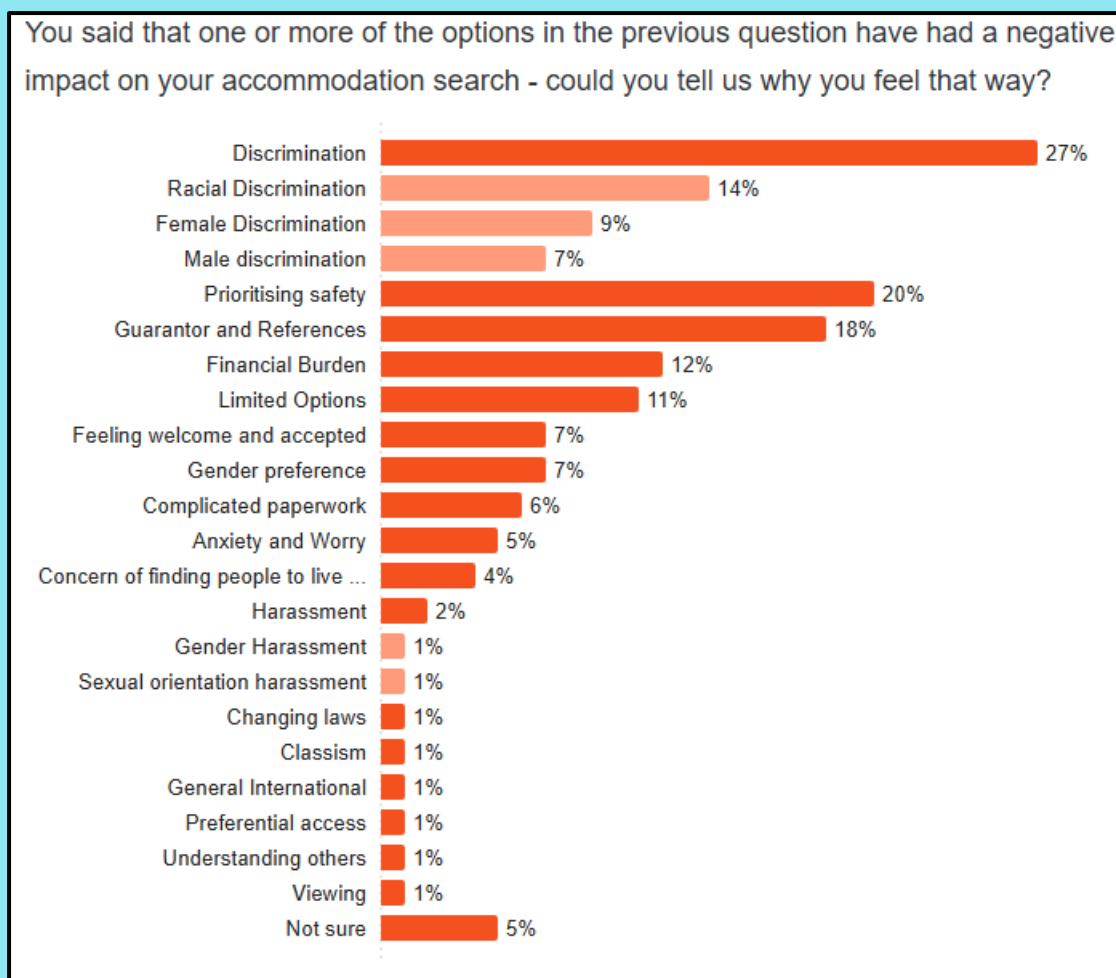


Figure 24 - You said that one or more of the options in the previous question have had a negative impact on your accommodation search - could you tell us why you feel that way?

27% felt that one or more of the characteristics in Figure 23 resulted in discrimination in the accommodation search process. 14% of students experienced racial discrimination, 9% experienced discrimination because they were female and 7% experienced discrimination because they were male (Fig. 24).

"We were an all girl house and we experienced sexual discrimination in the form of being patronised by various landlords." ~ Year 3, HASS Student

"I am in an all guys house and there are some landlords that wouldn't let to an all guys flat." ~ Year 1, ESE Student

"My ethnicity and accent often trigger bias from landlords. They assume I'm unreliable or a risk, leading to instant rejections, ghosting, or demands for extra deposits despite strong references and income. This discrimination narrows options and prolongs my search." ~ Masters, ESE Student

"Landlord assumed we didn't know anything about bills and house furnishings and amenities and so was upcharged, now been corrected." ~ Year 2, HLS Student

It is important to note that different key groups reported these different types of discrimination impacting them in different ways.

Racial discrimination

- Students spoke about landlords or estate agents showing immediate discrimination towards them based on their race and thus not being considered for tenancy
 - Many of these comments also overlapped with comments that spoke about students being discriminated against because of their accent

Female discrimination

- Female students spoke mostly about being perceived, largely by male landlords, as not knowledgeable about contracts or their rights so feeling as though they were being possibly taken advantage of

Male discrimination

- Male students who reported gender-based discrimination spoke mostly about all-male student groups being turned away by landlords preferring mixed-gender or all-female tenants

20% felt they had to prioritise safety in a way that other students do; this was very prevalent amongst female students (Fig. 24).

"I feel being a woman has limited my options. Past experiences with male flatmates has made me feel certain options like private halls are safer" ~ Masters, HASS Student

"As a female, certain areas I felt restricted to live by, whether by other flatmates or friends. For example, living near the prison or Sidwell street was a hard no" ~ Masters, HASS Student

"I feel that, as women, you have to be so much more careful in choosing housing to ensure that you will be safe and comfortable. I think you have to be much more alert to the area you live in, the behaviour of the people you rent from, and potential safety issues with the property. Also, some options just aren't available, or at least desirable- I know via studentpad people looking for housemates can advertise, but I would be extremely wary about renting with people I'd only just met." ~ Year 2, HASS Student

18% of students mentioned guarantors and references (Fig. 24)

"As a non-UK citizen, some rentals require that each house mate have a UK residing rent guarantor which I don't have, meaning that me and my house mates are forced to exclude some properties from our options" ~ Year 1, HLS Student

"For second year renting you need to provide a UK guarantor which is very difficult/impossible for international students" ~ Year 1, ESE Student

"My international citizenship plus the fact that I do not have a UK based guarantor means that I have to pay a year's worth of rent in one, which is a huge financial toll" ~ Year 4, HLS Student

12% of students mentioned the additional financial burden that they faced. These responses primarily came from international students or students who do not have a UK-based guarantor (Fig. 24)

"Because of my international status, I am required to pay a large upfront payment, including a deposit worth around five weeks' rent and even the full year's rent in advance, which places a significant financial burden on me." ~ Other, ESE Student

"Have to pay a full year of rent ahead of time if you're not a uk citizen." ~ Year 1, HASS Student

"I had to pay all my rent up front in advance due to not having a British citizen guarantor, even though I myself am a British citizen" ~ Year 4, HASS Student

On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being 'extremely easy' and 10 being 'extremely difficult' how have you found your accommodation hunting experience?

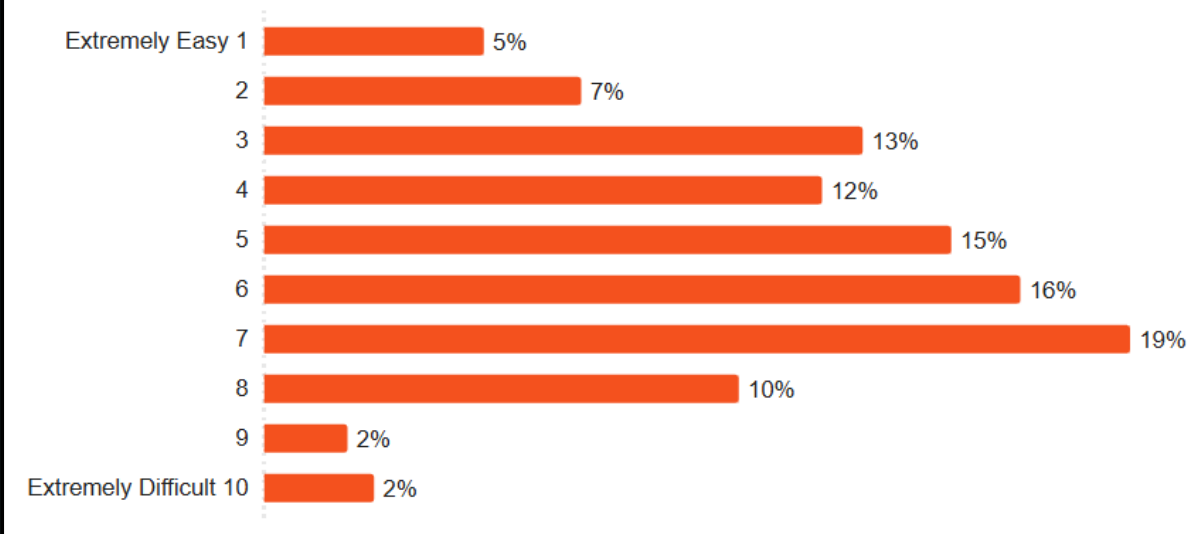


Figure 25 - On a scale of 1-10, with 1 being 'extremely easy' and 10 being 'extremely difficult' how have you found your accommodation hunting experience?

We asked students how easy they found accommodation hunting on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is extremely easy and 10 is extremely difficult). Between 1-7 we see an almost linear pattern with more students rating accommodation hunting a 7, at 19%, than a 1, at 5%. After 7 the percentages drop down again to 10% rating it an 8, 2% rating it a 9 and 2% rating it a 10. This data shows that students generally find accommodation hunting to be somewhat difficult with most students rating it between a 5 and 7 on a scale of 1-10 (Fig. 25).

We asked students what about their experience made them feel this way (Fig. 26).

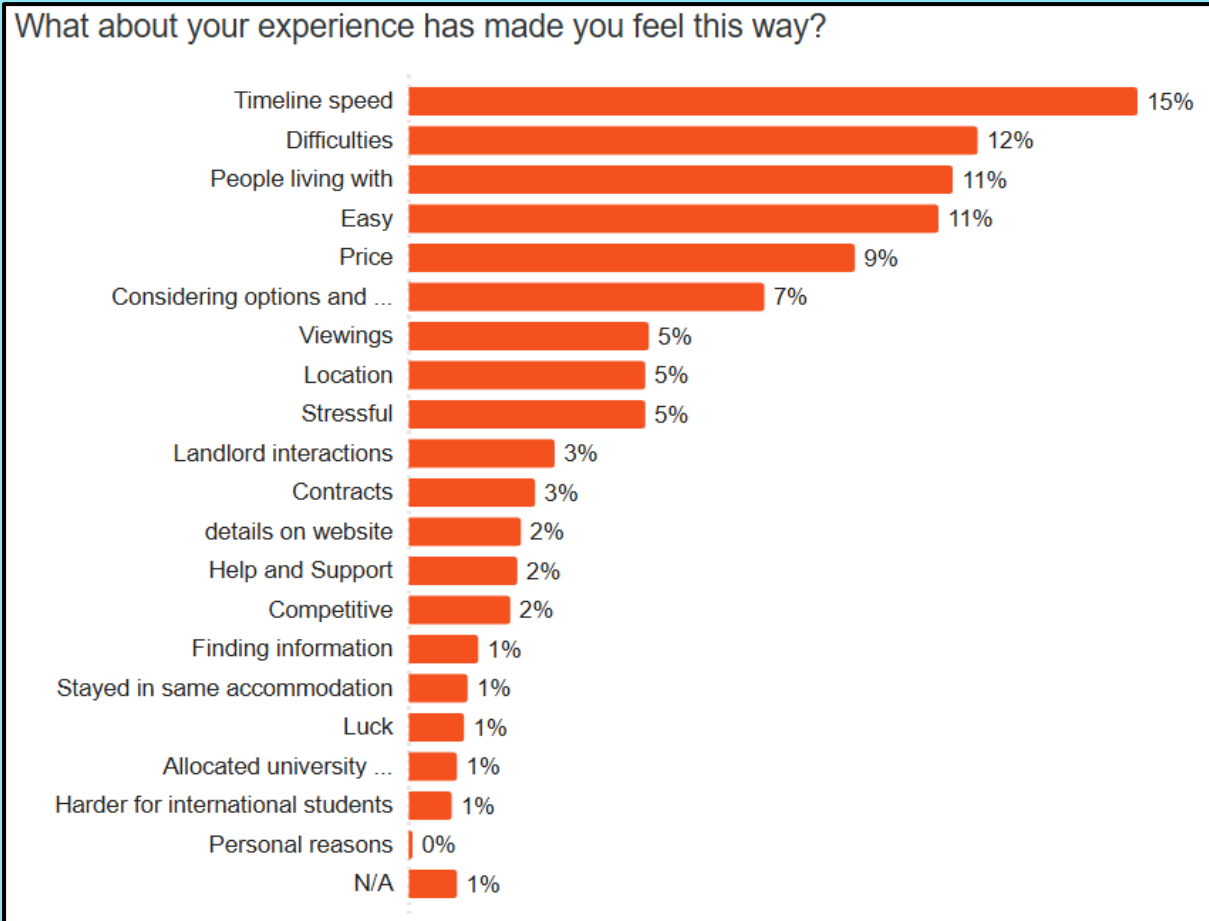


Figure 26 - What about your experience has made you feel this way? Related to Fig. 25

15% of students spoke about the speed of the timeline for accommodation hunting as an influence on how easy they found it (Fig. 26).

"I feel accommodation hunting in exeter is super stressful and you're made to feel like you have to rush into a contract with strangers or end up homeless" ~ Masters, HLS Student

"Its the need to have a place sorted by November December time since most places get taken between September and December. I found this hard especially during my first year as I was really introverted and it took me a long time to come out my shell" ~ Year 3, HASS Student

"Too early to know who I want to share with and I feel pressured" ~ Year 1, HASS Student

12% of students spoke more generally about difficulties that they faced in the process (Fig. 26).

"The information is always available. I live alone, so it was easier for me this year. In previous years, when there were more people, I found it harder." ~ Year 4, HLS Student

"Hard to find accommodation that everyone agrees on, some are really far" ~ Year 1, ESE Student

"Done it three times. Horrible. Time consuming. Difficult when no friends. Difficult when disabled" ~ Year 4, HASS Student

"In terms of looking for a house for next year, it was hard to begin with when trying to understand the process but it has begun to make a lot more sense as the process continues." ~ Year 1, HASS Student

11% mentioned the people that they were looking to live with or finding people to live with (Fig. 26).

"Left it too late so had to look on social media to find housemates" ~ Year 2, ESE Student

"Our budget being low because that's all we (myself & housemates) can afford on the maintenance loan, (under 140 excluding bills). Finding people to live with, because price increases with the fewer number of housemates we have been aiming to rent a 5 bed but are having difficulty finding more people" ~ Year 1, HLS Student

"There is a lack of 6 people houses, and there was too many differences in priorities. Some said only within 20 minutes of campus, others couldn't afford those ones etc. We had to split up the group and move in to 4 and 5 person houses respectively." ~ Year 2, HLS Student

11% found elements of process easy (Fig. 26).

"Private halls made it very easy to book a flat with a group of friends, especially as we didn't have quite enough for a full flat" ~ Year 4, ESE Student

"looked at one house, liked it and sent an email and got the house sorted within basically a week" ~ Year 2, ESE Student

"It was easy to find my house through overheard on Facebook and it was a smooth process." ~ Year 3, HASS Student

"I had a lot of support around me from friends and people who had experience looking for accommodation so it was a relatively smooth process. Having people tell me what to do/expect made this much easier" ~ Masters, HASS Student

What do you think the university or the Guild could do to improve your accommodation hunting experience?

Open text response themes

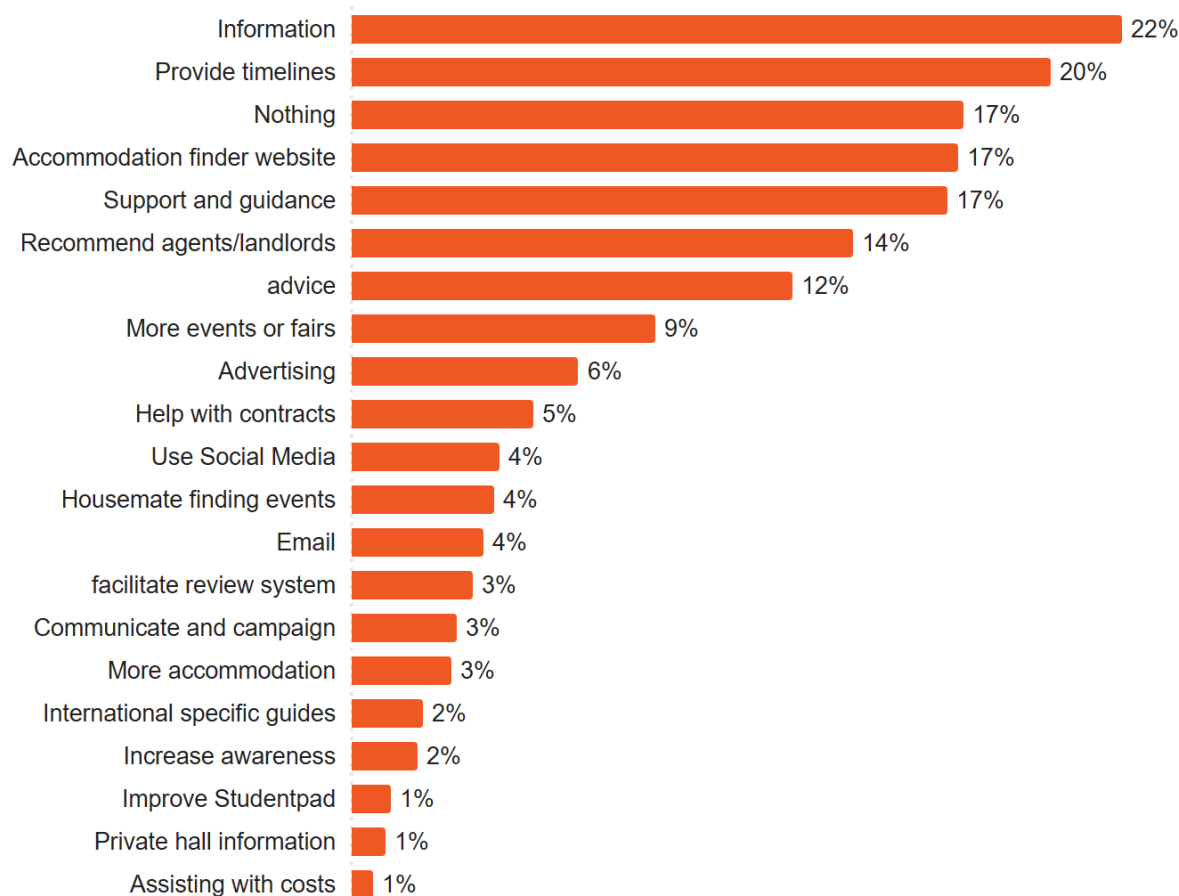


Figure 27 - What do you think the university or the Guild could do to improve your accommodation hunting experience?

13% of students wanted help with information surrounding accommodation hunting (Fig. 27).

“More information on where to look and red flags to look out for” ~ Year 1, HLS Student

“Hosting information nights to educate students who are moving out for the first time about accommodation hunting. Ideally this would include, where to look for accommodation (websites etc.), How utility bills work & understanding how they are billed based on usage/how to keep them low, Red flags in house hunting, Green flags that a good house will have (I think this would be helpful in allowing students to understand what a good place will look like) & Understanding a rental contract” ~ Year 1, HLS Student

“Provide resources of the best websites to use, and maybe a list of trusted private accommodations.” ~ Year 2, ESE Student

12% of students want more help understanding the timeline for accommodation hunting. Many of these comments mention wanting reassurance that in Exeter they don't need to rush into accommodation (Fig. 27).

"Provide more information about when is best to look for accommodation and reiterate the message that students don't need to start looking for accommodation so early in the year!" ~ Year 2, HASS Student

"Reassure people that not signing a contract really early is not a bad thing and there will still be places left beyond the first few weeks of term" ~ Year 3, HASS Student

"I think letting first year students know how fast you need to act to find a decent place the following year! It is a very quick turn around." ~ Year 4, HLS Student

"Provide dates for house releases, basic housing information at start of the year" ~ Year 1, HASS Student

10% of students said there was nothing the university or the Guild could do. This was primarily either because students couldn't think of anything else they wanted, they thought there was enough support or they felt that the issues couldn't be solved by the university or the Guild (Fig. 27).

"I'm not sure - I've never had issues!" ~ Masters, HASS Student

"I don't think there's much they can do. its not your fault the housing crisis is the way it is in Exeter" ~ Year 3, HASS Student

"No guild is doing so much already" ~ Masters, ESE Student

"Not much they already provide a lot of support, unless they can make housing more affordable for students!" ~ Year 4, HASS Student

10% of students suggested an accommodation finding website or a more centralised place they could find accommodation. Many cited awareness of studentpad but wanted it to be improved.

"Advertise StudentPad to more landlords as its one of the most useful websites for looking for houses (mainly due to the map), but has much less properties than other websites such as rightmove" ~ Year 2, HASS Student

"... It would also help to have a centralized platform listing verified student housing options, along with reviews from previous tenants." ~ Other, ESE Student

"Provide websites at the beginning of the year for where to look for accommodation e.g. private, company managed, hall-like accommodation" ~ Year 3, HLS Student

"Improve the studentpad offering to actually include most properties available, as at the moment you have to use lots of different websites." ~ Year 2, HASS Student

Conclusion

1. How have students found their living experience at university so far?

We found that 27% of students live in Duryard and St James, the area immediately surrounding Streatham campus. 17% live in the Pennsylvania area and 17% live in the St David's area (Fig. 1). Half of Exeter students are currently renting a flat or house, 25% live in University owned accommodation and 17% live in private halls (Fig. 3). Compared to students with no known disability we found that a greater percentage of students with a disability live in University owned accommodation (Fig. 4). We found that for those who live in University accommodation, many found this to be positive, citing that the room and the people they live with has been good. However, 19% reported that they had had maintenance issues (Fig. 8).

4% of students currently live with a guardian, carer or family (Fig. 3). Of these, 82% see them selves staying in this living situation (Fig 5). Students living with a guardian, carer or family state that it makes it harder to attend events and make friends. However, it does allow them to save money and live in a supportive environment (Fig. 6).

2. How knowledgeable and confident do students feel when searching for accommodation?

The two most important factors for students when choosing their accommodation is cost and proximity to campus (Fig. 9). 76% of students feel confident that they can identify 'red flags' in accommodations and 66% of students feel confident that they can understand a rental contract (Fig. 10 and Fig. 12). For understanding a rental contract, we see confidence grow across year of study, although Year 5 students seem to be more polarised than other years of study (Fig. 13).

Only 23% of students had heard of the Move Smart campaign (Fig. 14). 82% of students had never used any of the Move Smart resources and of those who had heard of the campaign 54% still hadn't used any of the resources (Fig. 15 and Fig. 16). Of those who had used the resources, the housing FAQs, Flatmate Finders, blogs and articles and the contract checking guides were the most interacted with (Fig. 16). Students suggested that this service should be advertised via email and on social media, specifically citing the Guild Instagram. Students also wanted to see advertisement on campus in spaces like the forum (Fig. 17).

3. What is accommodation hunting like for students in Exeter?

Students use a variety of sources when searching for accommodation, including: letting agent's websites, university portal, Rightmove, Accommodation for students, Unihomes and Studentpad (Fig. 18). International students were more likely to go via the university portal than UK students whereas UK students were more inclined to use letting agent websites (Fig. 19).

For most students it took 3-4 weeks to find their current accommodation, for many it was less than this (Fig. 20). Most students saw 3-5 properties before choosing their current accommodation, 19% only saw the accommodation that they chose (Fig. 21).

7% of students felt that their gender had a negative impact on their accommodation search, 4% felt their ethnicity had a negative impact and 8% felt their citizenship/visa status had a negative impact (Fig. 23). When asked to expand on this negative impact, students discussed being discriminated because of their gender (both male and female), being discriminated because of their race, prioritising safety and the financial burden that can come with being an international student (Fig. 24).

When asked to rank the ease of finding accommodation on a scale of 1-10 (where 1 is extremely easy and 10 is extremely difficult) most students rate the process a 7 (Fig. 25). Showing a somewhat difficult experience. As a reason for this, students discuss the timeline speed, specifically how quickly it is, finding people to live with and price as top reasons for their rating (Fig. 26).

Students want the University and the Guild to help them by providing more information, including a rough timeline, a centralised website for finding accommodation or at least a collection of websites they can use and support and guidance (Fig. 27).

Recommendations

1. How have students found their living experience at university so far?

- The University and the Guild to consider how they can support students living with a guardian, carer or family
 - Running events targeting this group, during the day (as cited evenings as a prohibitor for attendance) to connect these students
- The University to maintain timely response rate to maintenance issues in accommodation
 - Consider more thorough evaluations of accommodations prior to students moving in to prevent maintenance issues

2. How knowledgeable and confident do students feel when searching for accommodation?

- The Guild to take lead on Move Smart campaign to ensure its integration into the student experience
 - Advertise this on the Guild Instagram, via email and on campus

- Crucially, driving awareness of this campaign needs to start early in term 1, students want to know about accommodation before they start looking (often as early as late September/October)
- Even students who are aware of the campaign don't often engage so run more interactive events and sessions so that more students have the opportunity to engage.
- Share information regarding red and green flags to look for when searching for accommodation
- Share contract guides so that students feel more confident reviewing rental contracts
- The University to share the Move Smart campaign via email and encourage departments to share this information with their students

3. What is accommodation hunting like for students in Exeter?

- The University and/or the Guild to create a more centralised resource of websites that students can use to find accommodation
 - Facilitate a review system so that students can review specific properties and letting agents
- The University and/or the Guild to work with local letting agencies on DE&I initiatives to ensure Exeter students are not facing discrimination and harassment in the accommodation searching process
- The University and/or the Guild to educate international students on how the accommodation search will be different for them and the options they have when navigating the guarantor process
- Share information with students, potentially through the Move Smart campaign, with a rough timeline they can follow. Students acknowledge that accommodation hunting starts very early, they want to be prepared with a realistic timeline.

External Resources

If you want to read some more around this topic, you could start with the following articles:

- [Student Accommodation – a tale of two cities, and 2point4 students](#), WonkHE
- [Everything SU's need to Know from the UK Student Accommodation Survey 2025](#), WonkHE
- [Racial inequality plays out in university accommodation as well as the classroom](#), WonkHE

If you are a current University of Exeter student, please find some resources below to help you with accommodation:

- [Accommodation in Exeter](#), University of Exeter
- [Your Housing](#), Exeter Students' Guild
- [Renter's Rights Bill: explained for students](#), Accommodation for Students
- [Accommodation](#), Save the Student

Demographics

Our panel of 1000 students is demographically representative of the University of Exeter's student population but, due to varying response rate on a month-to-month basis, the demographics of this data change survey-to-survey.

The demographics of this report's respondents are illustrated below.

*PNS = Prefer not to Say

Category	Panel Total	Response Total	Category	Panel Total	Response Total
Faculty			Gender		
ESE	363	262 (72%)	Female	721	559 (78%)
HAS	379	295 (78%)	Male	236	152 (64%)
HLS	248	184 (74%)	Non-Binary/ Genderfluid	31	25 (81%)
INTO	10	5 (50%)	PNS*	12	10 (83%)
Campus					
Streatham	831	626 (75%)	Identification with Gender Assigned at Birth		
St Luke’s	142	106 (75%)	Yes	946	702 (74%)
Distance	27	14 (52%)	Sometimes	22	18 (82%)
			No	23	18 (78%)
Domicile			PNS*	9	8 (77%)
UK	739	575 (78%)	Ethnicity		
International (EU)	47	27 (57%)	White	625	499 (80%)
			Latin	13	10 (77%)
International (Rest of World)	214	144 (67%)	Black	36	21 (58%)
Mode of Study			Asian	240	155 (65%)
Full-Time	951	715 (75%)	Arab	12	8 (67%)
Part-Time	49	31 (63%)	Mixed	51	37 (73%)

Study Level			Other	11	8 (73%)
1 st Year	250	170 (68%)	PNS*	12	8 (67%)
2 nd Year	228	186 (82%)	Sexual Orientation		
3 rd Year	172	146 (85%)	Gay	18	14 (78%)
4 th Year	54	42 (78%)	Lesbian	24	21 (88%)
5 th Year	13	10 (77%)	Bisexual	142	117 (82%)
Masters	220	147 (67%)	Pansexual	18	17 (94%)
Other	63	44 (70%)	Asexual	19	17 (89%)
			Queer	30	21 (70%)
Age Bracket			Heterosexual	636	461 (72%)
Under 20	553	427 (77%)	Other	2	2 (100%)
21-30	396	285 (72%)	Unsure	23	19 (83%)
31-40	35	23 (66%)	PNS*	88	57 (65%)
41-50	15	11 (73%)	Disability Status		
51+	1	0 (0%)	No known disability	647	467 (72%)
Widening Participation			Learning disability	110	89 (81%)
Parent	17	9 (53%)	Physical disability	45	30 (67%)
Carer	21	19 (90%)	Mental health condition	190	159 (84%)
Care experienced or care leaver	4	3 (75%)	Other	23	20 (87%)
Estranged from family	12	9 (75%)	PNS*	56	41 (73%)
Refugee or asylum seeker	1	1 (100%)			
None of the above	945	705 (75%)			