

A survey on behalf of **hepi**
Higher Education Policy Institute

Investigating the potential impact of funding scenarios on the likelihood of applying for higher education.

Survey Data

March 2024





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1 Research Objectives

HEPI wanted to understand students' likelihood of applying to university based on different funding scenarios amongst English and Scottish students. This online survey was conducted by UCAS on behalf of HEPI.

The findings from this survey cover:

- Perceptions of six different funding scenarios amongst English students.
- Perceptions of two funding scenarios amongst Scottish students.

Potential applicants and applicants were involved in the research.

2 Methodology Aims

3,155 prospective students who are considering higher education (or have applied to attend university in the future) were involved in the research. The audience comprised of the following:

- **Potential applicants:** Year 13 students aged 17/18 who have registered on the UCAS Hub and/or attended a UCAS event but have not yet started a UCAS application.
 - 760 potential applicants were English domicile.
 - 330 potential applicants were Scottish domicile.
- **Applicants:** Applicants of all ages who have registered on the UCAS Hub and have submitted a UCAS application.
 - 1695 applicants were English domicile.
 - 370 applicants were Scottish domicile.

In addition, the distribution of respondents were:

- Diverse in terms of gender, age, country, ethnicity, disability/accessibility.
- Diverse across the POLAR4 quintiles.
- Diverse across government office regions.

POLAR4 is a geography-based measure of disadvantage. It classifies local areas into five quintiles based on the proportion of the population (18- and 19-year-olds) who enter higher education (HE) from that area. Those in quintile 1 are from areas with the lowest rates of HE participation (most disadvantaged areas), while those in quintile 5 are the most advantaged areas.

Respondents were presented with each scenario, one at a time. They were asked a series of questions about each of the scenarios before being presented with the subsequent scenario.



3 Sample

Audience coverage:

- **Potential applicants:** Year 13 students aged 17/18 who have registered on the UCAS Hub and/or attended a UCAS event but have not yet started a UCAS application.
- **Applicants:** Applicants of all ages who have registered on the UCAS Hub and have submitted a UCAS application.

| | |
|--|--|
| English Potential Applicants No. respondents: 760 Weighted no. respondents: 47,365* | Scottish Potential Applicants No. respondents: 330 Weighted no. respondents: 9,830* |
| English Applicants No. respondents: 1,695 Weighted no. respondents: 119,050* | Scottish Applicants No. respondents: 370 Weighted no. respondents: 5,590* |

*Results are weighted to ensure a fair representation of each target group. Unweighted base sizes have been rounded to the nearest 5. The data has been analysed and presented using weighted data.

Weighting applicant data: *The survey responses are weighted up to be representative of the population of students who are eligible to receive the survey. The weighting process uses a logistic regression model to assign each respondent a weight, considering differences in response rates observed in different characteristic groups, including gender, age, ethnic group, POLAR4 quintile, country, the type of school a student attended, and (for students from the UK) the region where the students are originally from.*

Weighting potential applicant data: *The survey responses are weighted up to be representative of the population of students who are eligible to receive the survey. The weighting process uses a logistic regression model to assign each respondent a weight, considering differences in response rates observed in different characteristic groups, including gender, age, country, and (for students from the UK) the region where the students are originally from.*



4 English Students

4.1 Baseline Scenario, England

The following definition for Baseline Scenario, English was provided to respondents:

Tuition fees cost £9,250 per year and you can access a tuition fee loan to pay for this.

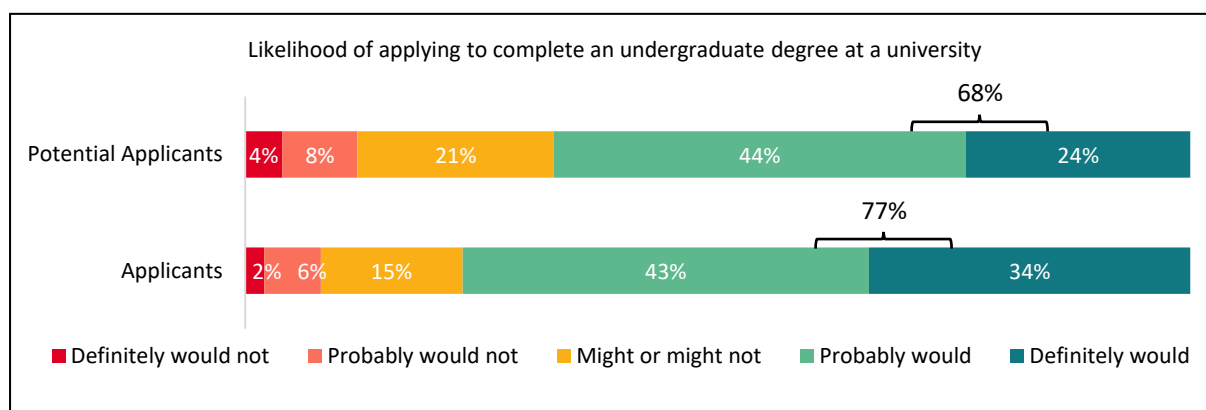
Maintenance loans are available.

You will re-pay your tuition fee loan and maintenance loan as follows:

- You will repay at a rate of 9% on everything you earn over £25,000 per year.
- The debt will be wiped out after 40 years.
- You will be charged interest on your loan.

Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - Potential applicants vs applicants.

Based on the baseline scenario, a greater proportion of applicants stated that they would be inclined to apply to university than potential applicants. Specifically, 68% of potential applicants indicated that they would apply for university under the baseline scenario, while 77% of actual applicants stated that they would.



Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 760; **Applicants** Respondent Numbers: 1,695

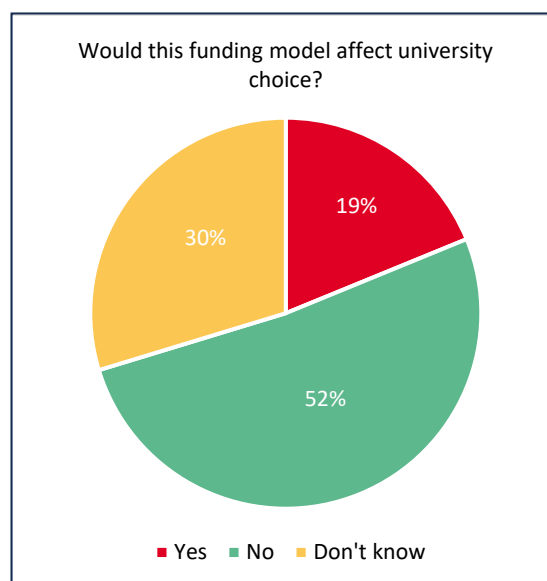


The findings suggest that only 77% of applicants would apply to university under the baseline model. The following reasons may explain this disparity:

- Some applicants may not be aware of the finer details of the repayment terms of both the student and maintenance loans; they may not feel it necessary to understand the repayment details before applying to university.
- Parents/ guardians may have investigated the details but not discussed the details with the applicants.
- Some may be self-funding.
- There is also a religious aspect; paying or receiving interest is not permissible in Islam and there may have been some Muslim students taking part in the survey. They would not consider applying to university and accepting a loan if there is interest associated with the loan.

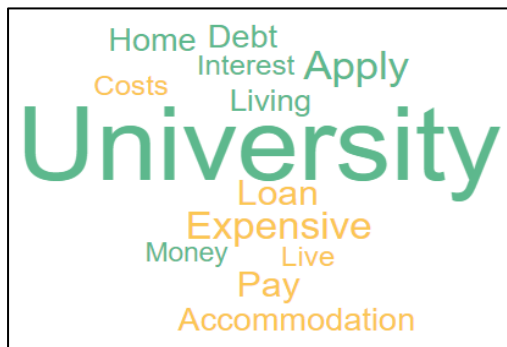
Would this funding model affect university choice? - Potential applicants.

Although half of potential students stated that the baseline scenario would not affect university choice, 19% think that this scenario may have an impact.



Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 760

Those who did think the scenario would affect choice demonstrated additional financial considerations. These included looking at universities in cheaper locations and some might consider living at home to reduce the costs associated with accommodation. In addition, some may consider the value of the education they would receive and may think about applying to more prestigious universities to ensure their education is worthwhile.



"It is already an expensive option that would put you into debt, I would not want to go to an expensive area or university or a further area and increase my costs. It would need to be realistic in comparison to my financial needs as well as other factors."

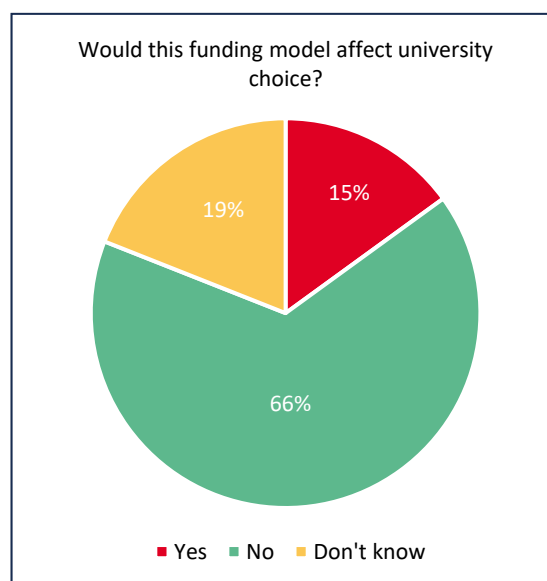
"I would want to go to a top university so that my experience and degree are worth all the money"

"Might need to apply to a local place to avoid paying rent as my student loan most likely wouldn't cover my rent"

Potential Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 135

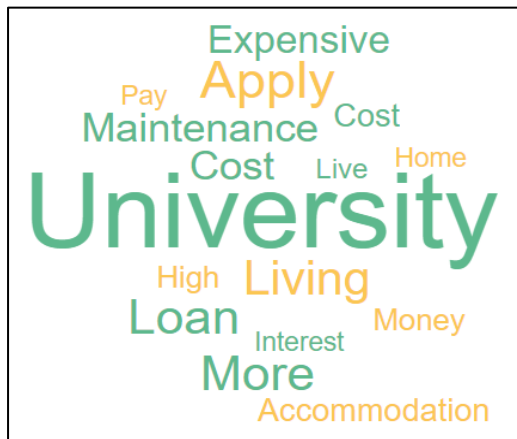
Would this funding model affect university choice? - Applicants.

66% of applicants think that the baseline scenario would not affect their choice of university, but 15% indicated that this model would have an impact.



Applicants Respondent Numbers: 1,695

Some applicants who did think that the baseline scenario would affect choice would consider universities situated in more affordable locations. Some students would assess the value of their education and the potential career opportunities associated with their chosen institution.



"I'd want to apply to a higher level university to ensure that I'm paying interest on the best possible level of education I can achieve."

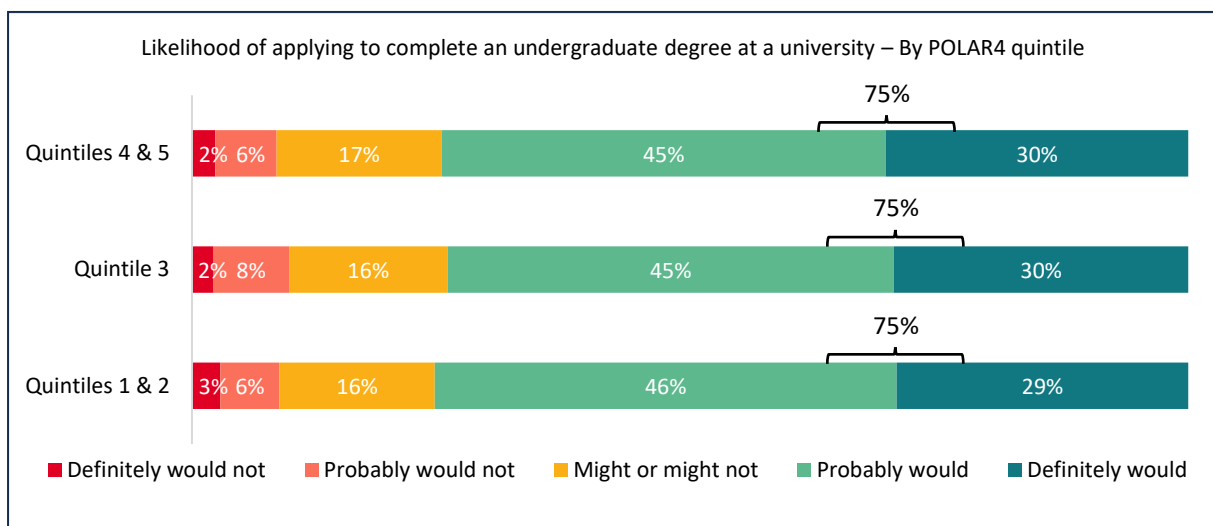
"Cost of living in certain areas are higher than others, so this on top of tuition fee debt after university would impact where I choose to study"

"I would be less likely to apply to live somewhere with a high cost of living, as the maintenance loan wouldn't cover enough."

Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 305

Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

There are no differences in the likelihood of applying to a university with the baseline scenario in place between the POLAR4 quintiles.

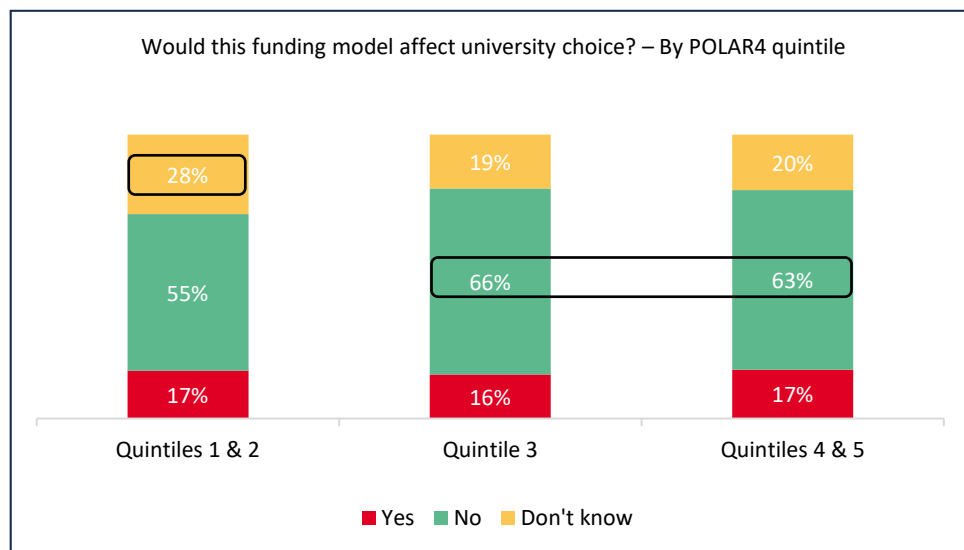


Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 570; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 365; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 1,150



Would this funding model affect university choice? - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

More students within quintiles 1 and 2 stated that they are unsure whether this model would impact their choice of university, whilst a larger proportion of students within quintiles 3, and 4 and 5 indicated that they would not reconsider their choice of university because of the baseline scenario.



Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 570; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 365; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 1,150

Please note that the Potential Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 57,000 whilst the Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 125,000. There is a 1:2 ratio of Potential Applicants to Applicants.



4.2 Increasing Tuition Fees In Line With Inflation

The following definition for Increasing Tuition Fees In Line With Inflation was provided to respondents:

Tuition fees will cost £9,250 initially, and you can access a tuition fee loan to pay for this. This is the same as the current system. However, tuition fees will rise each year in line with inflation. At the current rate, tuition fees would be:

- £9,250 in 2024/25.
- £9,814.25 in 2025/26.
- £10,413 the following year.

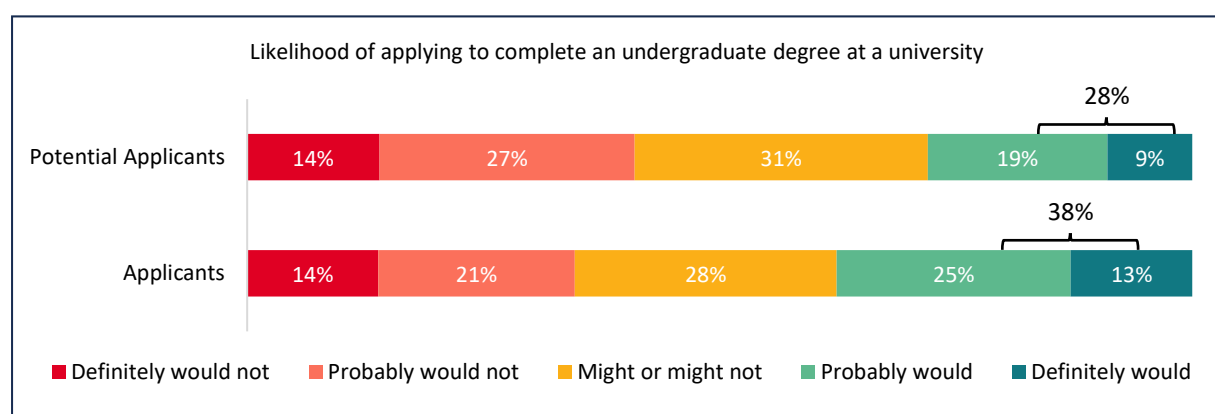
Maintenance loans are available.

You will re-pay your tuition fee loan and maintenance loan as follows:

- You will repay at a rate of 9% on everything you earn over £25,000 per year.
- The debt will be wiped out after 40 years.
- You will be charged interest on your loan.

Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - Potential applicants vs applicants.

More applicants than potential applicants think that they would apply to university with this model in effect. A significant proportion of students believe they would refrain from applying to university if this model is utilised.

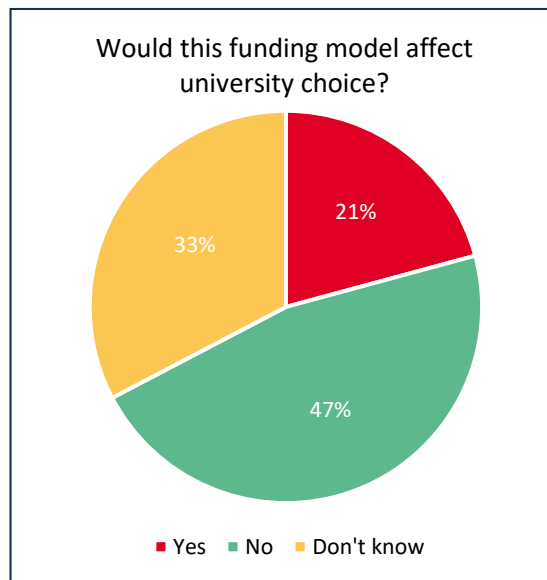


Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 760; **Applicants** Respondent Numbers: 1,690



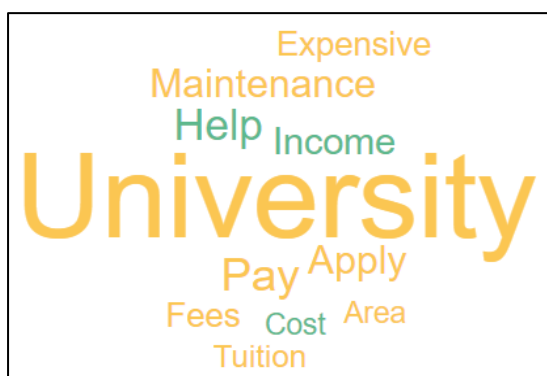
Would this funding model affect university choice? - Potential applicants.

Although 47% of potential applicants do not think that they would be influenced by the adoption of this model, 21% of students stated that the model would impact their decision on which university to choose.



Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 760

Some who did think the model would impact the university they applied to may be concerned about the expense of education, driven by the uncertainty of inflation and the possibility of annual tuition fee increases. This may prompt some students to choose universities that are closer to home or those situated in more budget-friendly locations.



"Interest rates are very high right now by the time you end up finishing paying the original loan there may be way more to pay"

"Any funding I receive would be pointless due to inflation, being aware of how many students are living currently it is already difficult enough excluding inflation"

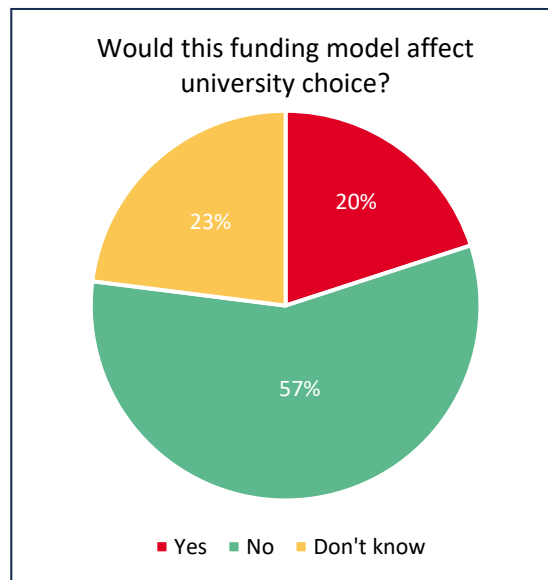
"Potentially may not even apply to any or wouldn't go to unis that weren't my top two choices."

Potential Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 130



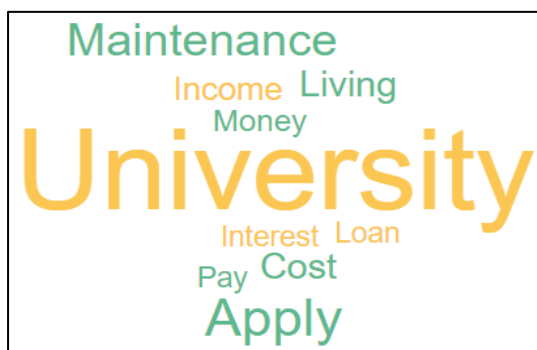
Would this funding model affect university choice? - Applicants.

More than half of applicants indicated that they would not alter their decisions on their choice of university if this model is adopted. However, 20% of students think that the implementation of this model would shape their decisions.



Applicants Respondent Numbers: 1,695

Some students may be apprehensive about the potential long-term debt tied to this model. Consequently, some may opt to apply to universities in regions with a more affordable cost of living and may consider living at home to reduce accommodation expenses. In addition, some students may even reconsider whether they would apply to university altogether.



"Would affect if I applied at all as I would be unsure of money wasted if I did not complete degree because I didn't have enough funds"

"I would apply somewhere in a region with lower cost of living since I wouldn't be able to afford to live away if fees were too high."

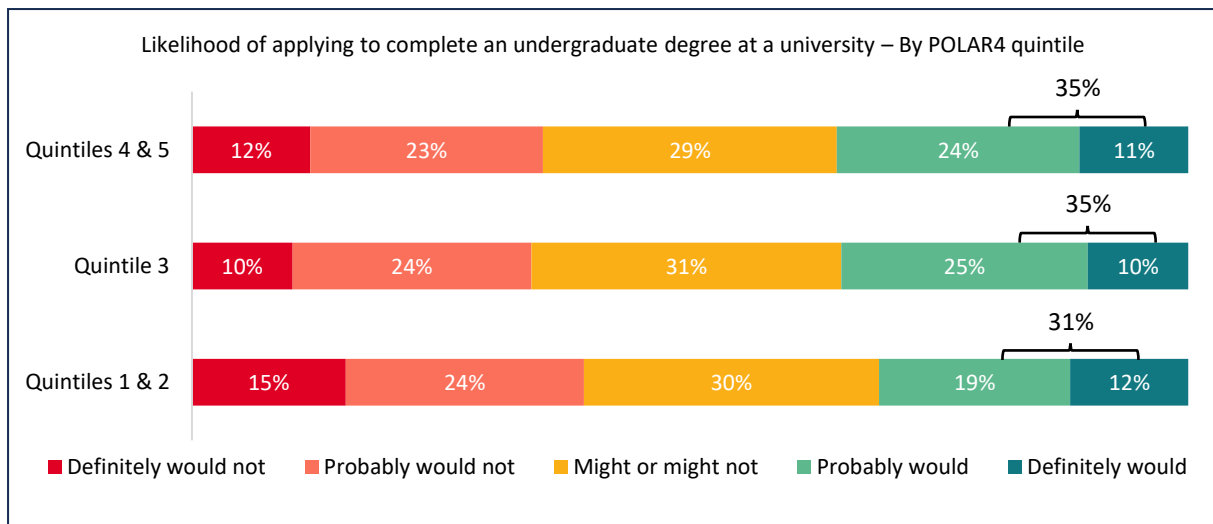
"The increase of tuition with inflation + interest rates combined with salaries not rising proportionately with inflation would make me hesitant to take on this debt"

Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 345



Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

POLAR4 quintiles 3, and 4 and 5 have similar attitudes towards applying to university with the adoption of this model.

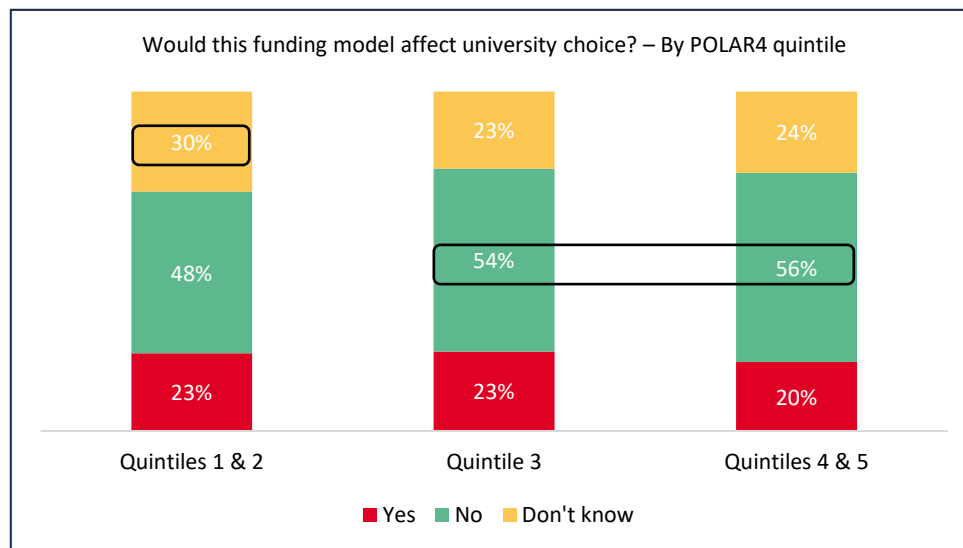


Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 570; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 365; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 1,150



Would this funding model affect university choice? - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

If this model is introduced, those in quintiles 3, and 4 and 5 think that they are less likely to reconsider their choice of university than quintiles 1 and 2. A greater proportion of students within quintiles 1 and 2 indicated that they are unsure whether the introduction of this model would impact their choice.



Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 570; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 365; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 1,150

Please note that the Potential Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 57,000 whilst the Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 125,000. There is a 1:2 ratio of Potential Applicants to Applicants.



4.3 Scenario 1 – The Abolition Of Tuition Fees

The following definition for Scenario 1 – The Abolition Of Tuition Fees was provided to respondents:

Tuition fees are paid for by the government, and you won't be required to repay your tuition fees.

Maintenance loans are available.

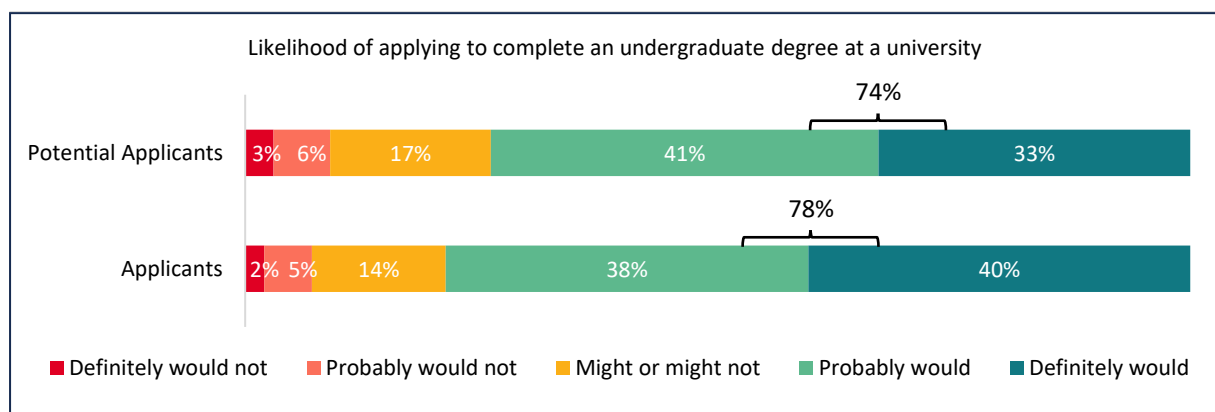
You will re-pay your maintenance loan as follows:

- You will repay at a rate of 9% on everything you earn over £25,000 per year.
- The debt will be wiped out after 40 years.
- You will be charged interest on your loan.

Maintenance grants (which do not need to be repaid) will be available to students from lower-income households.

Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - Potential applicants vs applicants.

Having government-funded tuition fees and therefore removing the requirement for students to repay the fees is appealing to both potential applicants and applicants. A substantial 74% of potential applicants and 78% of existing applicants express a likelihood to apply to university under the adoption of scenario 1.

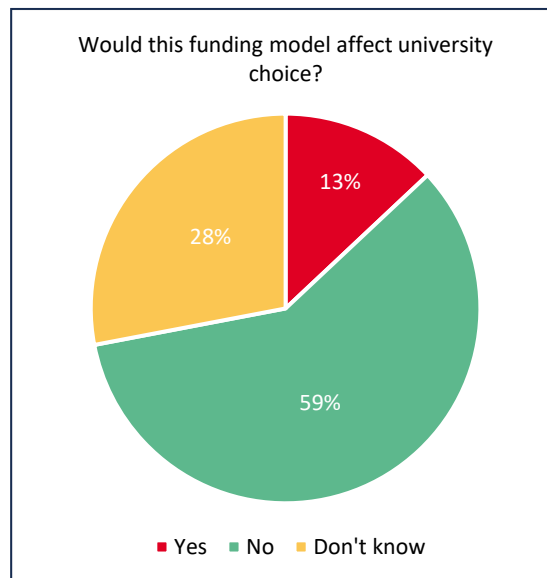


Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 760; **Applicants** Respondent Numbers: 1,690



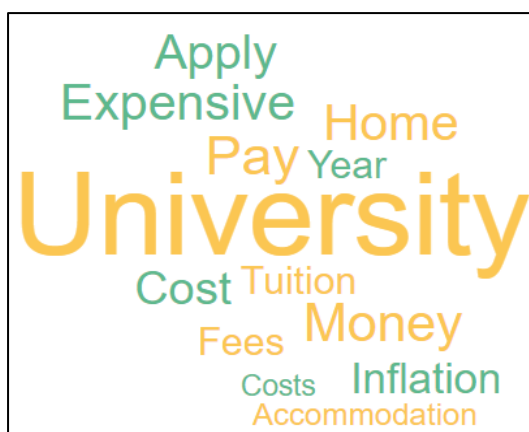
Would this funding model affect university choice? - Potential Applicants.

59% of potential applicants indicated that the adoption of scenario 1 is unlikely to affect their university choice, however, 13% think that the use of scenario 1 would impact their choice.



Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 760

For some students, the prospect of government-funded tuition fees may alleviate anxieties about accumulating long-term debt. This, in turn, may empower students to consider applying to more prestigious universities located in higher-cost areas.



"I would be more willing to adventure further out from where I live"

"Coming from a low-income household, the extra help from the government could play an important role in helping me get the education I need to be able to work in the field of study I'm interested in."

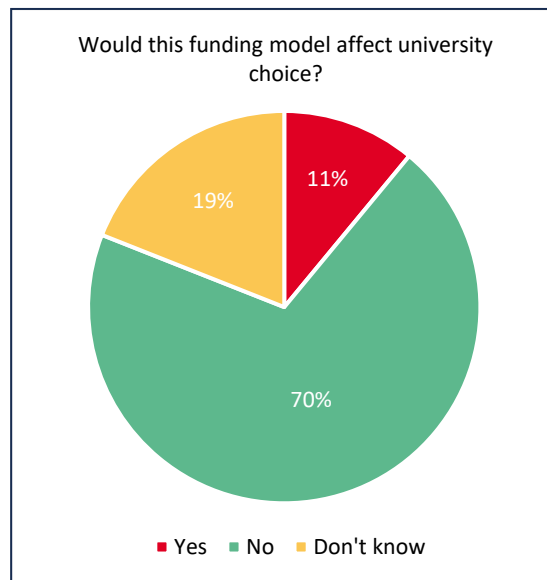
"It would encourage me to apply to any university as I would be worried less by finances such as how expensive the local area is and prices of rent"

Potential Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 75



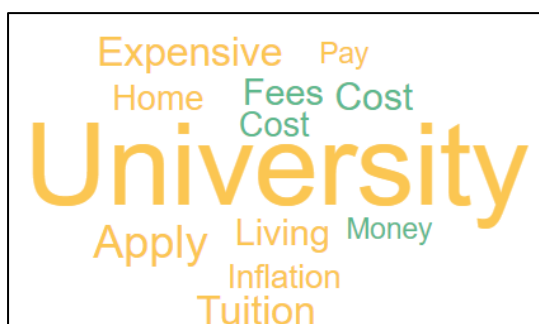
Would this funding model affect university choice? - Applicants.

Most applicants do not think this scenario would impact the university they applied to. 11% indicated that the incorporation of this scenario would sway their university choice.



Applicants Respondent Numbers: 1,695

Without the obligation to pay tuition fees, some students believe that they would feel financial flexibility, which may allow them to consider applying to more esteemed universities situated in areas with higher living costs.



"I believe I would be more confident in my university choice in the sense that I would relocate to a region further from the one that I come from, or I would consider a university that is located in an area that is more expensive to live in than others, such as London."

"Not needing to pay the tuition fees back would make me want to apply to that uni more"

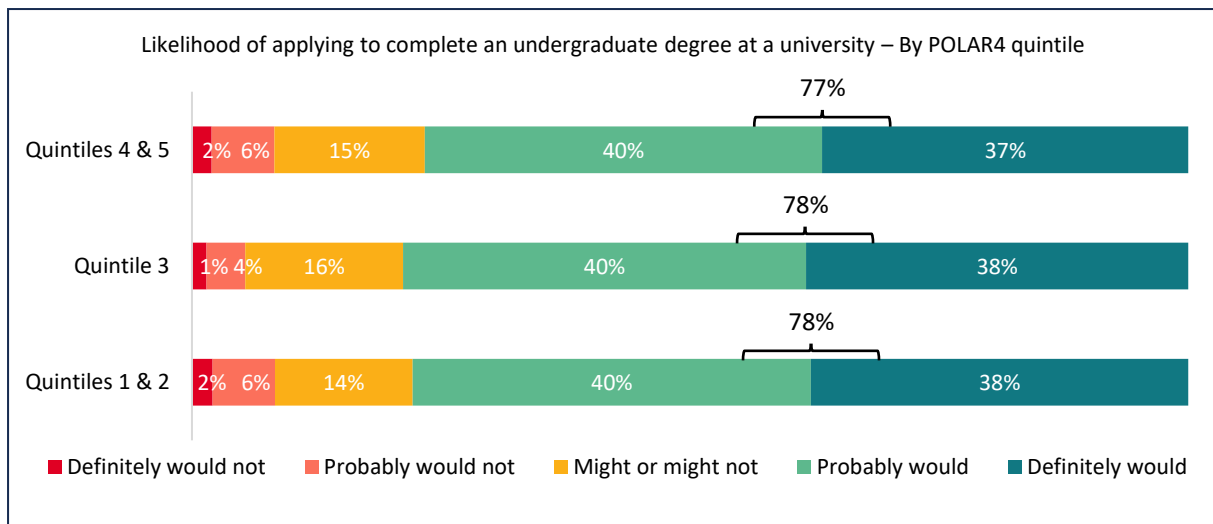
"I could apply to whatever University I wanted to, rather than one that offered a relevant bursary etc."

Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 195



Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

The likelihood of applying to a university with scenario 1 in place is similar between the POLAR4 quintiles.

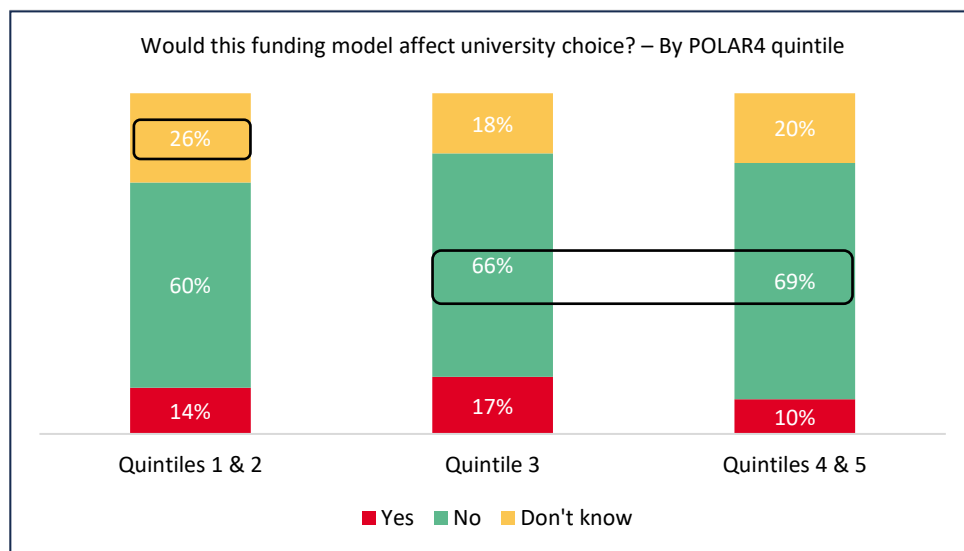


Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 570; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 365; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 1,150



Would this funding model affect university choice? - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

A greater proportion of those within quintiles 1 and 2 indicated that they are unsure whether this scenario would impact their choice of university, whilst those in quintiles 3, and 4 and 5 think that university choice is less likely to be reconsidered with the adoption of scenario 1.



Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 570; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 365; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 1,150

Please note that the Potential Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 57,000 whilst the Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 125,000. There is a 1:2 ratio of Potential Applicants to Applicants.



4.4 Scenario 2 – Tuition Fees Increase With Inflation, Linked To The TEF Award

The following definition for Scenario 2 – Tuition Fees Increase With Inflation, Linked To The TEF Award was provided to respondents:

Tuition fees cost £9,250 per year and you can access a tuition fee loan to pay for this. However, tuition fees may be able to rise each year.

Universities that gain a gold or silver award for the quality of their teaching will be able to increase their tuition fees each year in line with inflation. At the current rate, tuition fees would be:

- £9,250 in 2024/25.
- £9,814.25 in 2025/26.
- £10,413 the following year.

Universities that gain a bronze award for the quality of their teaching will be able to increase their tuition fees each year in line with half the measure of inflation. At the current rate, these tuition fees would be:

- £9,250 in 2024/25.
- £9,532 in 2025/26.
- £9,822 the following year.

Universities that didn't gain a gold, silver, or bronze award for their teaching quality, would not be able to increase their tuition fees, which would remain at £9,250.

Maintenance loans are available.

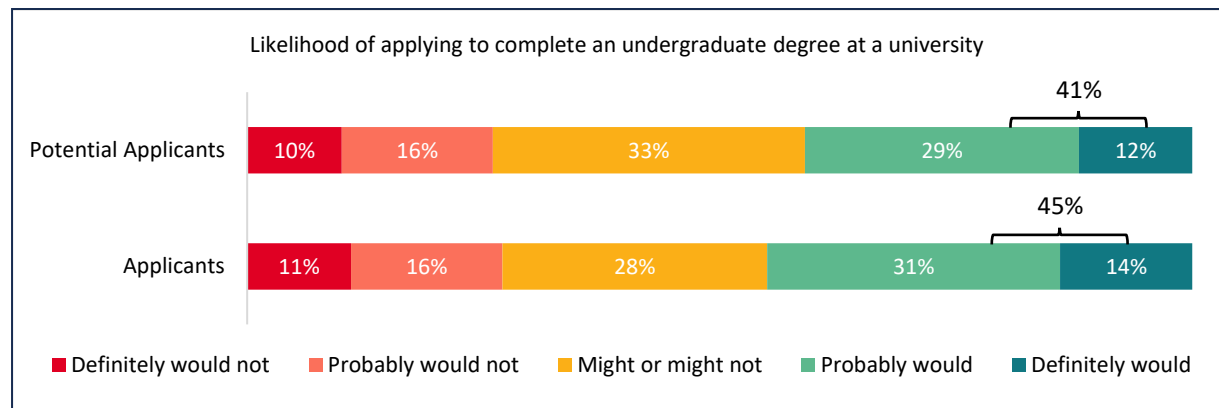
You will re-pay your tuition fee loan and maintenance loan as follows:

- You will repay at a rate of 9% on everything you earn over £25,000 per year.
- The debt will be wiped out after 40 years.
- You will be charged interest on your loan.



Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - Potential applicants vs applicants.

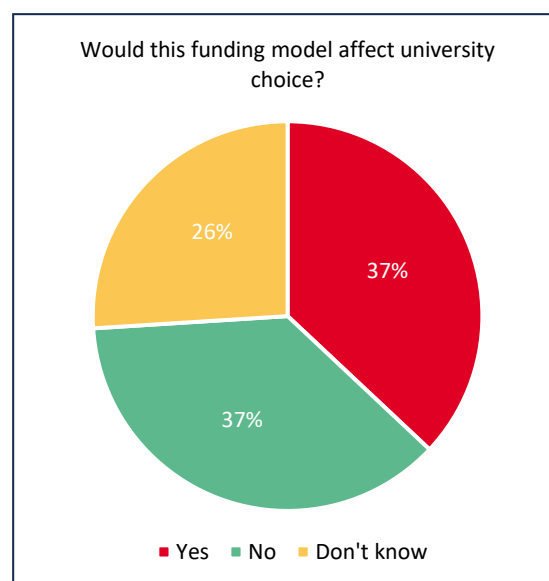
With the introduction of tuition fees linked to the TEF awards, fewer than half of both potential applicants and current applicants think that they may apply to university if scenario 2 is implemented.



Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 760; **Applicants** Respondent Numbers: 1,690

Would this funding model affect university choice? - Potential Applicants.

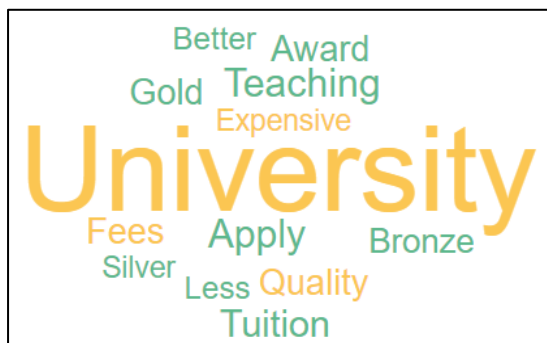
A large proportion of potential applicants think that the adoption of scenario 2 would impact their choice of university.



Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 760



Some students may be inclined to apply to universities with a lower TEF award to combat the heightened fees, which some feel may potentially compromise the overall quality of their education. Additionally, some students have concerns about economic inequality and class segregation, with a focus on how financial constraints could impede access to high-quality education.



"I would be less inclined to go to a university that achieved a silver or gold in quality of teaching."

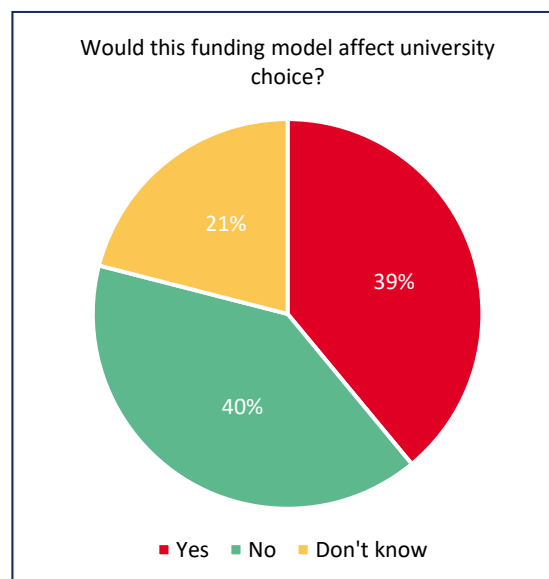
"Although people should not be paying more based on how well their university performs they personally have the upper hand at getting jobs due to going to a more prestigious university"

"I have applied to top universities and the courses have silver and gold awards. However if the tuition fees rose I would have to consider lower tariff universities purely for financial reasons"

Potential Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 220

Would this funding model affect university choice? - Applicants.

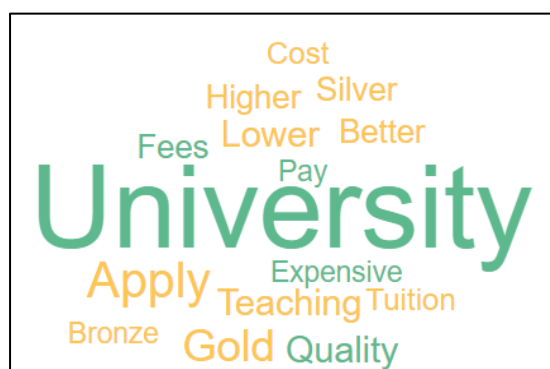
A large proportion of applicants think this scenario would impact the university they applied to.



Applicants Respondent Numbers: 1,695



Some applicants believe that individuals from lower-income households would be penalised, which could make it challenging for them to afford to go to university. Moreover, some students believe that they may opt to apply to universities with lower TEF awards to reduce the financial strain.



"University is expensive. If I had to pay a premium on going to a better university, I would avoid going to a better university. Further, this scheme would result in more of a pay to win structure where the most privileged students go to the top universities, And that in and of itself would put me off attending the top universities"

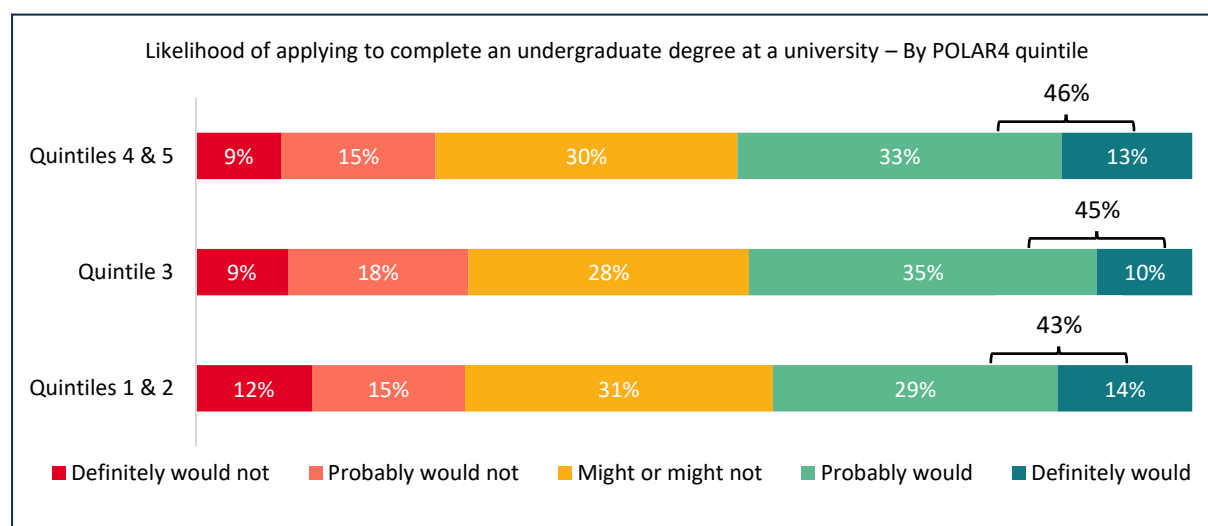
"Since the costs of the gold/silver award unis are higher, I would probably apply for a university with a bronze award due to financial reasons."

"The tuition fee price will influence my learning opportunities and overall student experience. Depending on my financial situation, I would not apply to a gold university if I was from a low income household."

Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 675

Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

Similar to the other scenarios, there is little difference between the POLAR4 quintiles in terms of the likelihood of applying to university with the adoption of scenario 2.

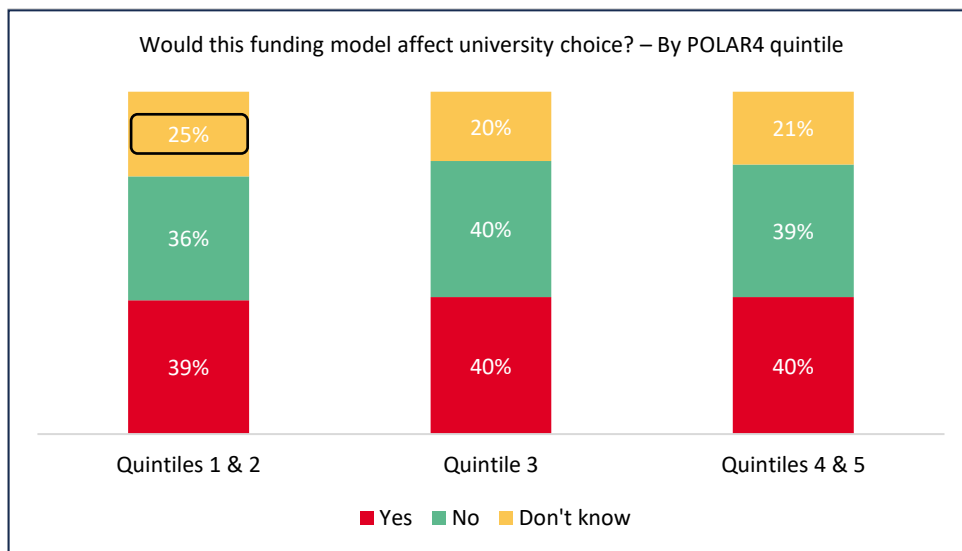


Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 570; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 365; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 1,150



Would this funding model affect university choice? - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

A greater proportion of those within quintiles 1 and 2 stated that they are unsure whether scenario 2 would influence their choice of university.



Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 570; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 365; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 1,150

Please note that the Potential Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 57,000 whilst the Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 125,000. There is a 1:2 ratio of Potential Applicants to Applicants.



4.5 Scenario 3 – Stepped Repayment Model

The following definition for Scenario 3 – Stepped Repayment Model was provided to respondents:

Tuition fees cost £9,250 per year and you can access a tuition fee loan to pay for this.
Maintenance grants (which do not need to be repaid) will be available to students from lower-income households.

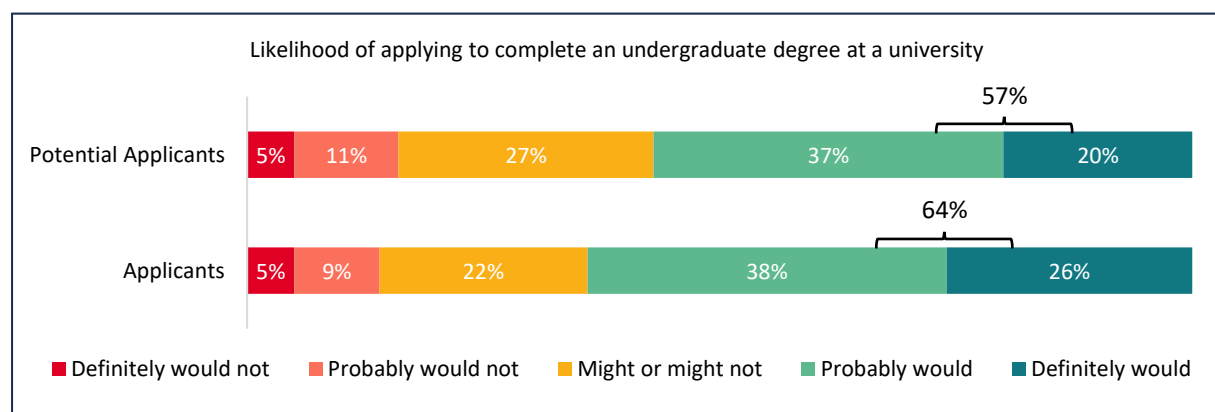
Maintenance loans are available.

How you repay your loans will differ. Under the current system, higher earners pay off their loans more quickly and therefore end up paying less overall. In this model, even the highest-earning graduates continue making repayments until the end of the repayment period. The increased repayments of the highest earning graduates therefore subsidise the lower/middle-income graduates.

- The debt will be wiped out after 31 years.
- You will be charged a higher rate of interest on your loan.

Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - Potential applicants vs applicants.

With the implementation of scenario 3, over half of both potential applicants and current applicants think that they would choose to apply to university. Notably, a higher proportion of applicants stated that they would opt to apply compared to potential applicants.

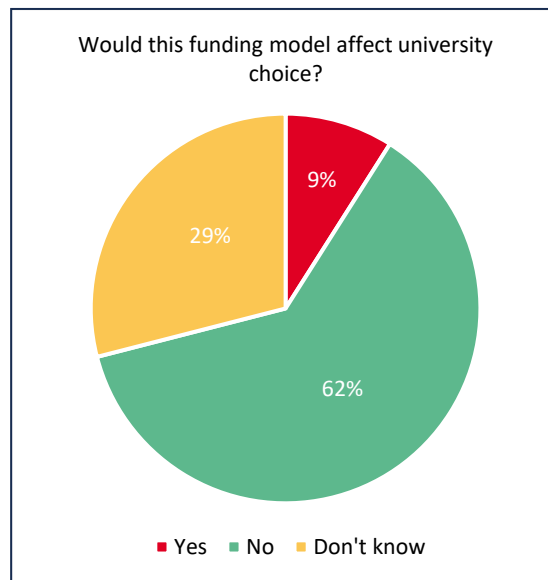


Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 760; **Applicants** Respondent Numbers: 1,690



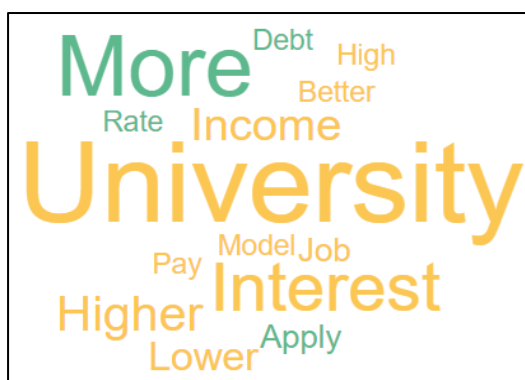
Would this funding model affect university choice? - Potential Applicants.

Most potential applicants think that they would not be swayed on university choice with the adoption of scenario 3, although 9% stated that their selection of a university would be impacted.



Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 760

For those who did think the scenario would affect choice, the extended repayment period for tuition fees among higher earners could be discouraging; some think that this is a penalty that makes the overall cost too expensive.



"I want to work hard and earn myself a good salary so I don't see how I should be paying for someone who can do a less stressful job than me in something they can truly enjoy but I have to work extra."

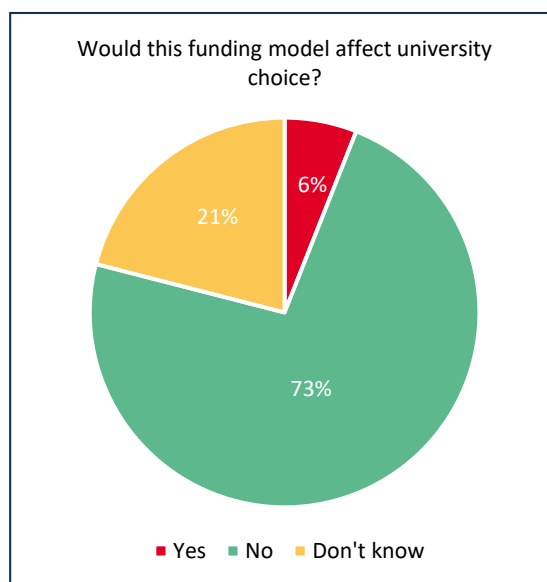
"Higher interest would make me less likely to apply, but the debt being wiped out earlier would be better"

"I do not know how I would afford this as well as a lifestyle in specific locations due to transport, job opportunities etc. I would feel as if I was starting on a leg down."

Potential Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 45

Would this funding model affect university choice? - Applicants.

A significant proportion of applicants stated that they would not be influenced on their choice of university with the adoption of scenario 3. Despite this, 6% of students think they would be swayed.



Applicants Respondent Numbers: 1,695

Some students believe that this scenario could impose penalties on higher earners, and some disagree with the idea that individuals with higher incomes should subsidise the loans of those with lower incomes.



"Would reduce motivation to go to top universities and enter high paying jobs - not fair on those who have worked hard to get a good job, should not have to pay more in loans than those who went through the exact same system but made different job choices"

"Why would you want to pay other people's university debt, just because you got a higher paying job afterwards? Your being disadvantaged for doing well."

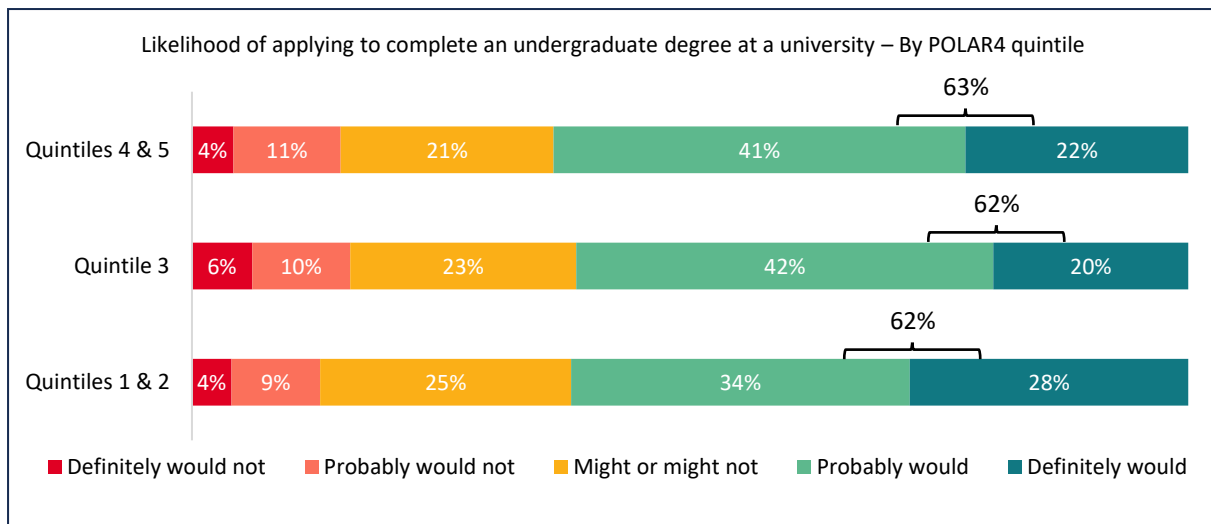
"I like the subsidised model in theory but in practice I think it would lead to resentment, and I would be hesitant to take on a loan that has no "paid off" sum, it would feel I'd be penalised for entering a higher income field."

Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 90



Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

The POLAR4 quintiles have similar attitudes towards applying to university with the adoption of scenario 3.

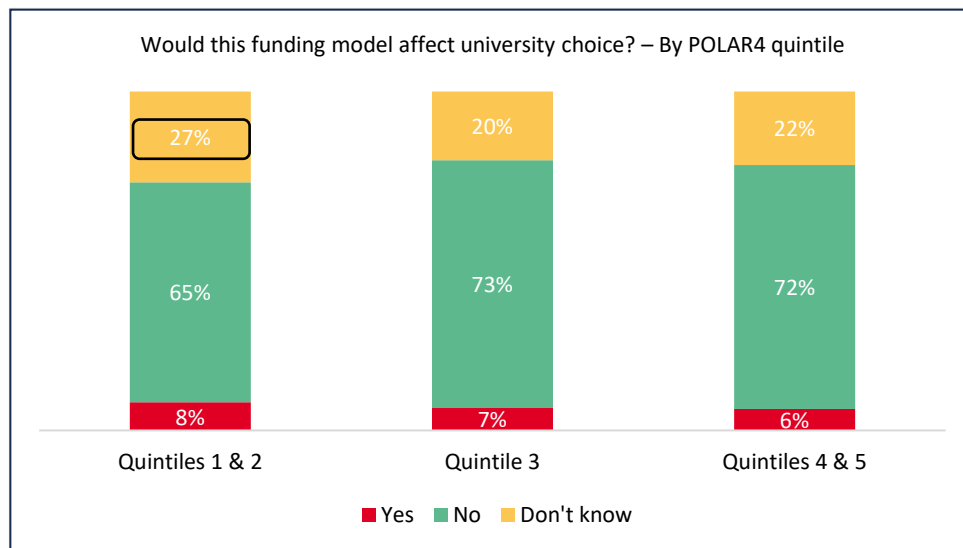


Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 570; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 365; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 1,150



Would this funding model affect university choice? - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

Likewise, there is little disparity between the quintiles in terms of whether the scenario would affect their choice of university, although those in quintiles 1 and 2 stated that they are unsure whether the adoption of this scenario would impact their choice of university.



Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 570; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 365; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 1,150

Please note that the Potential Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 57,000 whilst the Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 125,000. There is a 1:2 ratio of Potential Applicants to Applicants.



4.6 Scenario 4 – Graduate Employer Levy

The following definition for Scenario 4 – Graduate Employer Levy was provided to respondents:

You will not be required to pay tuition fees.

Maintenance loans are available.

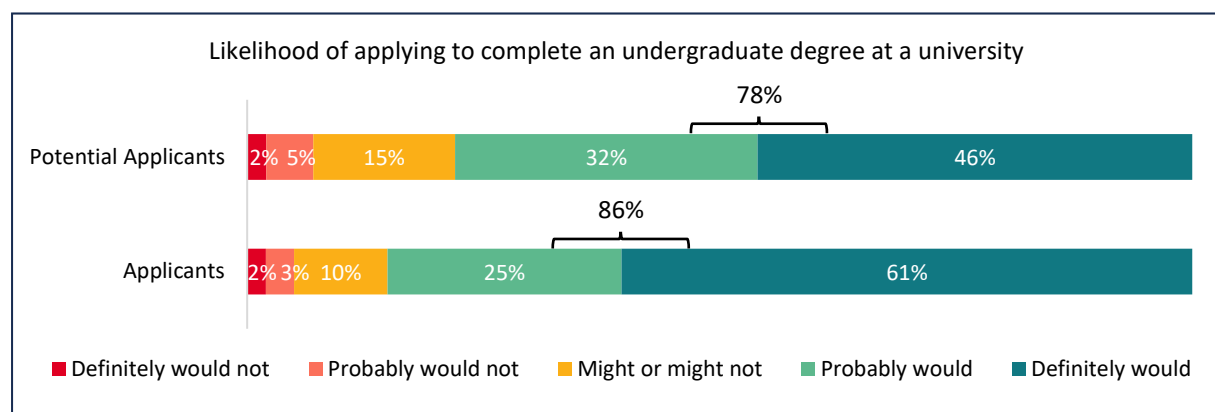
You will re-pay your maintenance loan as follows:

- You will repay at a rate of 3% on everything you earn over £25,000 per year.
- The debt will be wiped after 40 years.
- You will be charged interest on your loan.

The cost of your undergraduate degree education will be funded by companies that employ graduates. These companies will pay a levy (for example, of 3%) on top of graduate employees' wages, to the Government, who will pass this on to universities.

Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - Potential applicants vs applicants.

Scenario 4 is the most attractive scenario. This is due to company sponsorship which removes the requirement for students to repay tuition fees as well as the reduced repayment rates. A substantial portion of both potential applicants and current applicants would be inclined to apply to university if scenario 4 is adopted.

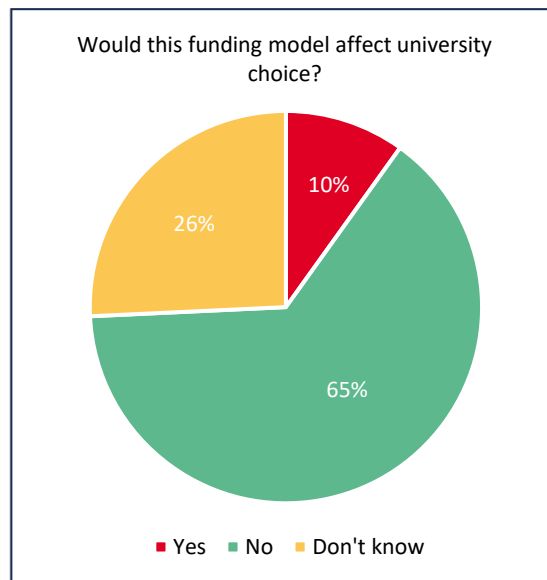


Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 760; **Applicants** Respondent Numbers: 1,695



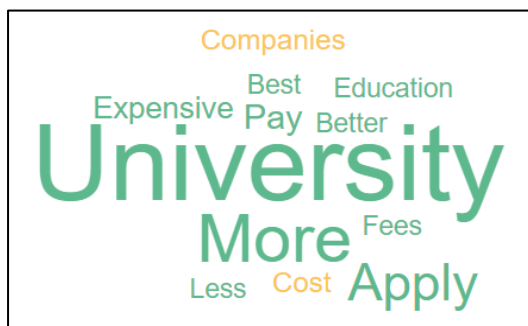
Would this funding model affect university choice? - Potential Applicants.

Two-thirds of potential applicants indicated that the implementation of scenario 4 is unlikely to affect university choice, whilst 10% of students may reconsider their choice of university.



Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 760

Some students indicated that they would be inclined to apply to universities deemed more 'prestigious,' granting them the flexibility to relocate to areas associated with a higher cost of living. Additionally, with companies paying a levy on graduate employee wages, some believe there may be greater career opportunities upon graduating.



"I would be more likely to apply to a university e.g., in London or Bath (expensive places to live) as I would be in less debt and so I would be able to spend more money to live e.g., in London. In general, it would mean I could go to a uni further away as I would have more money for renting a house/uni accommodating as I would be less worried about money as I'm not in debt from tuition fees."

"I might apply for more expensive universities as I will only have to pay off one set of loans so I will be able to support myself better in a more expensive city."

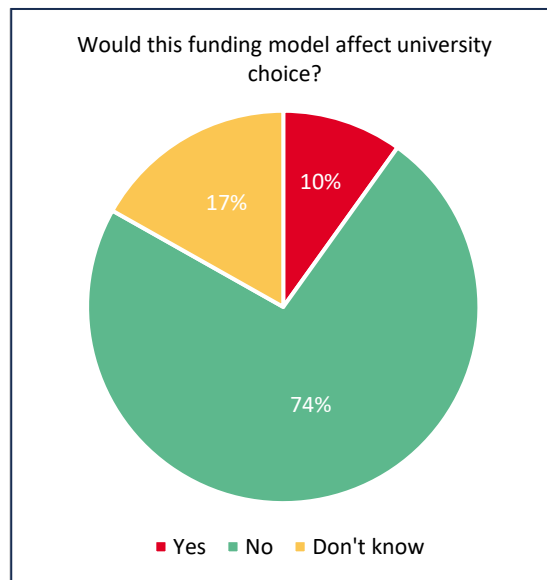
"I would apply to all my desired universities even further out of my local area, will feel comfortable and anxiety free due to the repayment plan"

Potential Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 50



Would this funding model affect university choice? - Applicants.

Most applicants stated that they would not alter their choice of university with the adoption of scenario 4, however, 10% of students think that it would play a role in shaping their university preferences.



Applicants Respondent Numbers: 1,695

Some students indicated that they may feel financial freedom due to debt reduction and feel more positive about applying to more prestigious universities and relocating to areas associated with higher living costs. In addition, some students feel that the employer-funded solution is positive; they think that there may be more career opportunities once they have graduated.



"I would apply to a more aspirational university to ensure a high quality graduate position. This may also provide an easier route for graduates into company's and employment enabling me to pay off the maintenance loan I would need to take out."

"I would apply to higher ranked universities in hopes of being scouted by larger companies.."

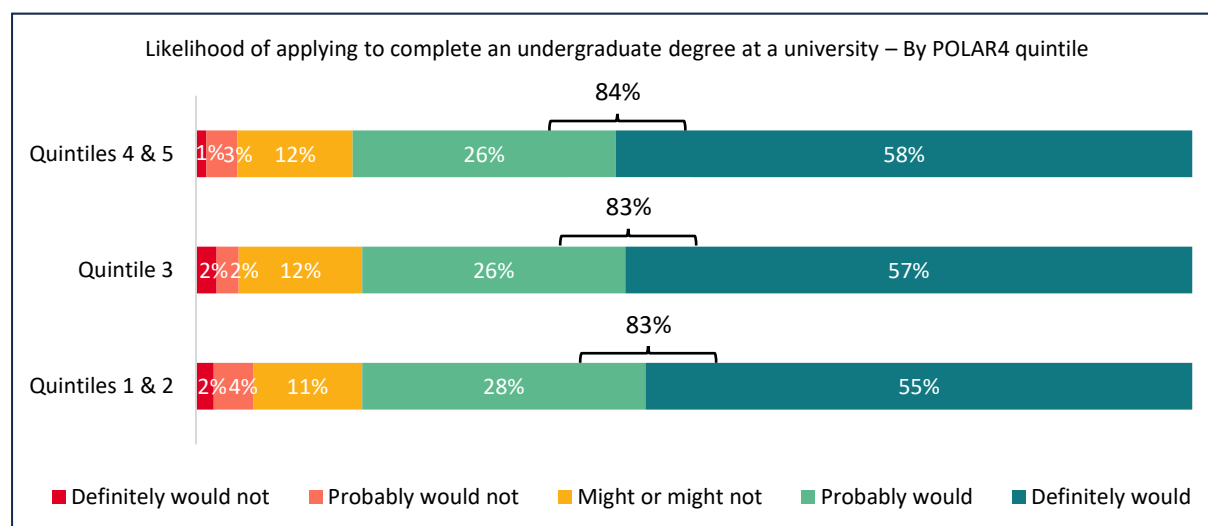
"This model would make university much more accessible to everyone, and would allow me free reign to apply to courses of any length and more or less any location"

Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 160



Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

There is little difference between the POLAR4 quintiles in terms of the likelihood of applying to university with the adoption of scenario 4.

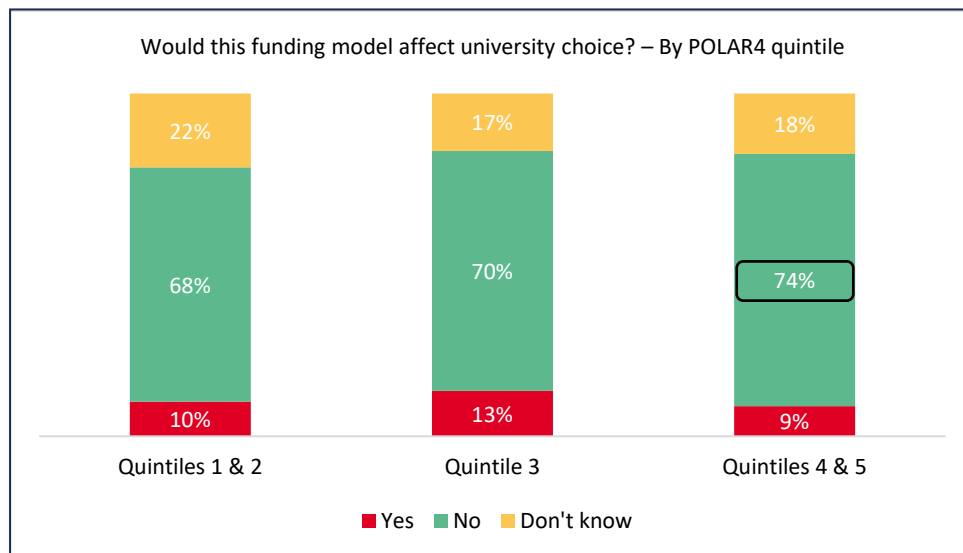


Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 570; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 365; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 1,150



Would this funding model affect university choice? - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

However, those within quintiles 4 and 5 think that they are less likely to reconsider their choice of university compared to the other quintiles.



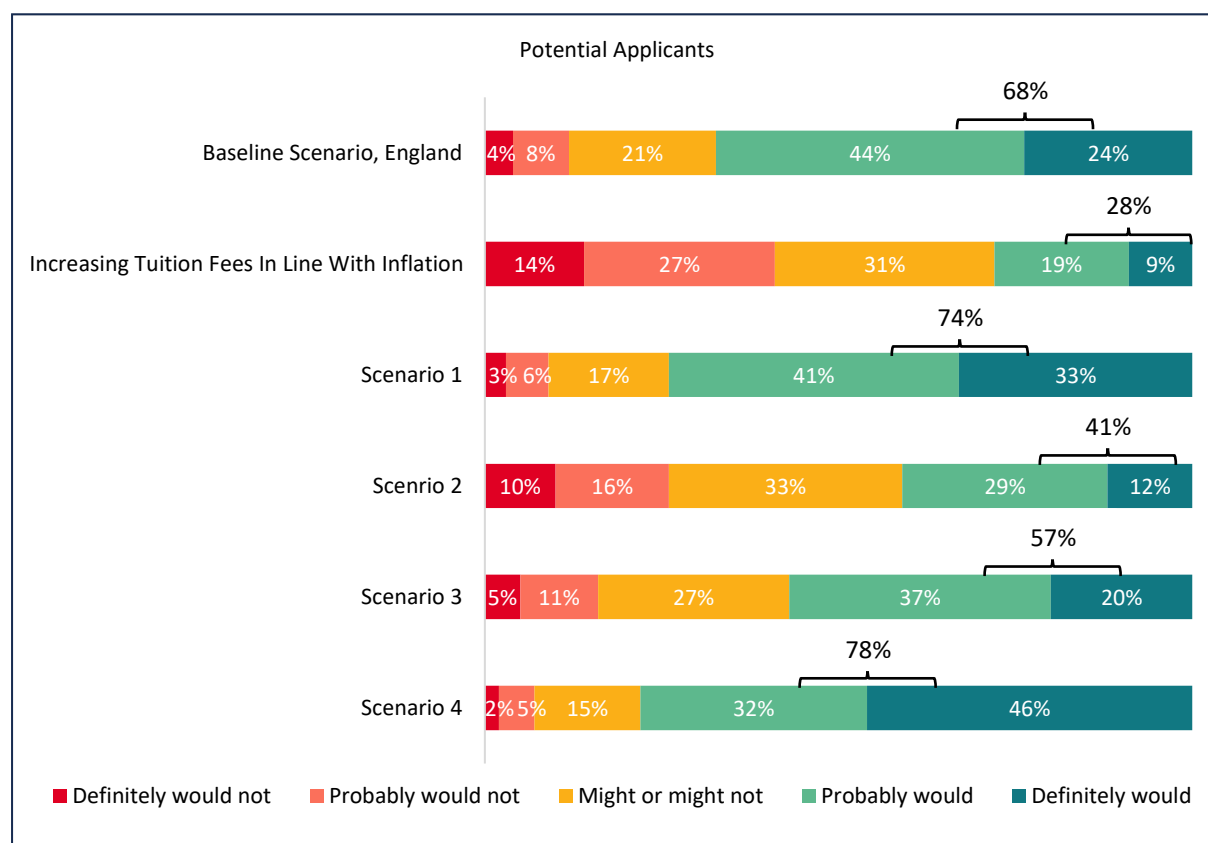
Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 570; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 365; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 1,150

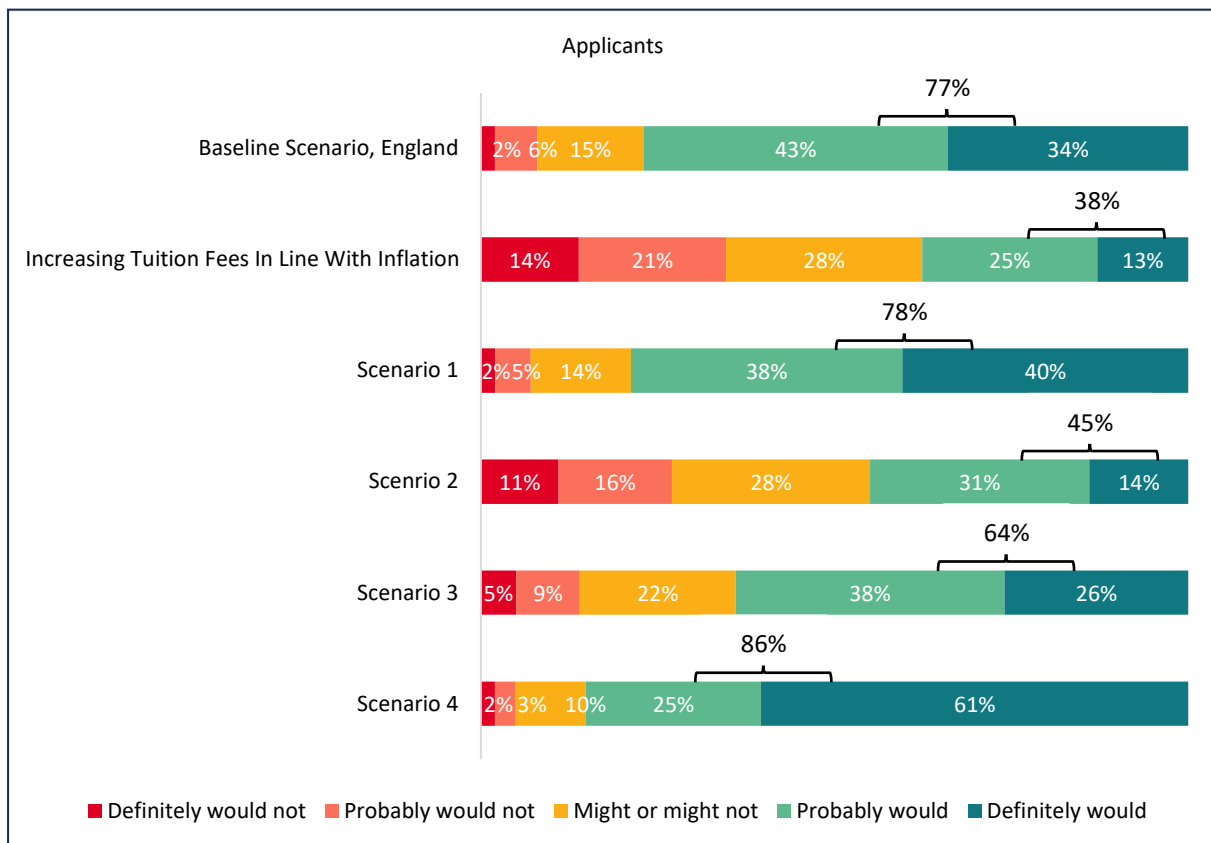
Please note that the Potential Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 57,000 whilst the Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 125,000. There is a 1:2 ratio of Potential Applicants to Applicants.



4.7 Comparison Of English Scenarios

Scenario 4 is the most attractive scenario for both potential applicants and applicants. Students indicated that they are less likely to apply to university if the scenario that involves tuition fees rising in line with inflation or scenario 2 are implemented.

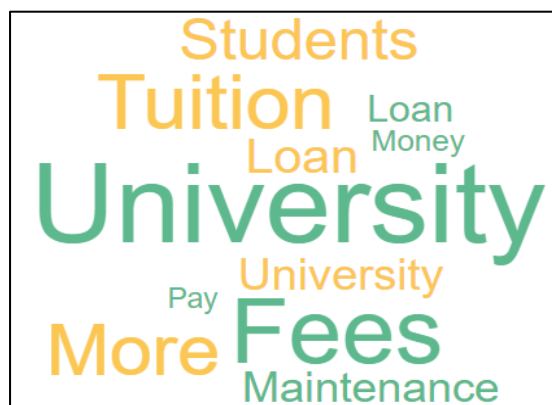






Additional comments from potential applicants

When prompted, some potential applicants gave examples of how their decision to apply to university is influenced by factors such as tuition fees, maintenance loans, grants, and repayment terms. Furthermore, some are apprehensive about the escalating costs of accommodation and living expenses which may prompt some students to reconsider the value of pursuing higher education.



"I think accessing information on tuition fee and maintenance loans is extremely difficult. I am a mature student and as such I need clear information on what I am able to get in maintenance loans as I have a household to support."

"Too much money - easy for high earners but people who struggle will be in debt for years whilst others are free from it. Unfair system."

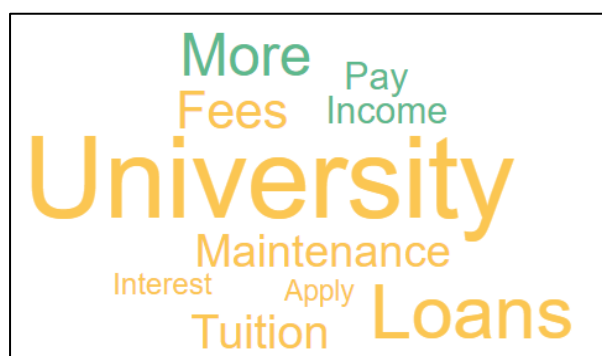
"People who come from middle class household who get the bare minimum maintenance loan but their parents cannot spare the money for them to go to uni need more support."

"The price puts a lot of students off of university. I know most of my friends don't want to go to university because the pricing so they're either not going or doing an apprenticeship."

Potential Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 175

Additional comments from applicants

Like potential applicants, when prompted, some applicants provided examples of how their decision to apply to university is influenced by financial aspects such as tuition fees, and some are apprehensive about the feasibility of applying to university.



"I come from a middle class background so I don't get a massive loan which means I am struggling with applying to unis for more expensive places, which is a bit not fun."

"Tuition fees and all the money associated around universities is a constant worry for myself and the people of the same age as me around me. Everyone is worrying about the cost of university and very few my age are actually in a position to pay it."

"If tuition fees continue to rise, less and less people who may have come from disadvantaged backgrounds will be unable to attend university despite them being intelligent and an asset to our economy."

"A lot of people are worried about finances for uni, many people are giving up on education and careers due to finances and I feel that's wrong when we should strive to make education more accessible."

Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 515



5 Scottish Students

5.1 Baseline Scenario, Scotland

The following definition for Baseline Scenario, Scotland was provided to respondents:

As a Scottish student, you do not need to pay tuition fees to study in Scotland.

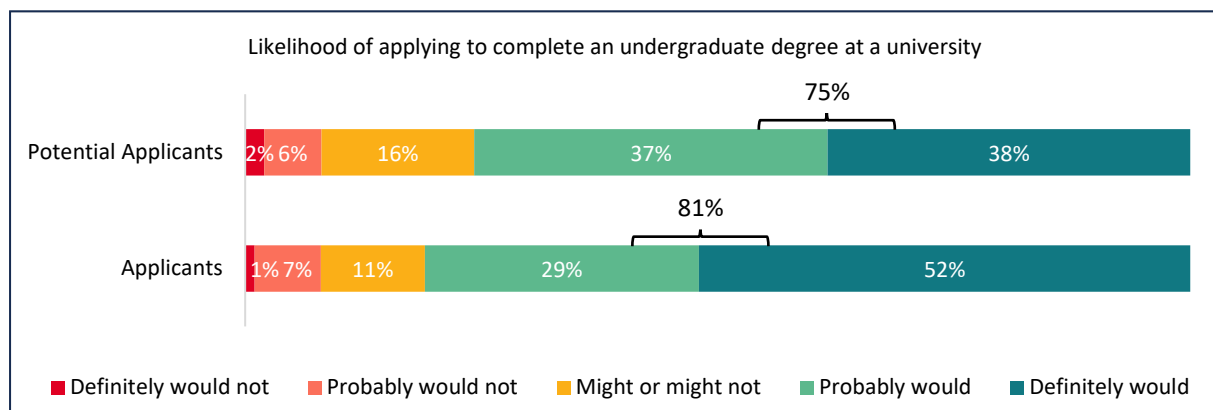
Maintenance loans are available.

You will repay your maintenance loans as follows:

- You will repay at a rate of 9% on everything you earn over £27,660 per year.
- The debt will be wiped out after 30 years.
- You will be charged interest on your loan.

Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - Potential applicants vs applicants.

The majority of both potential applicants and current applicants stated that they are inclined to apply to university under the existing baseline scenario.

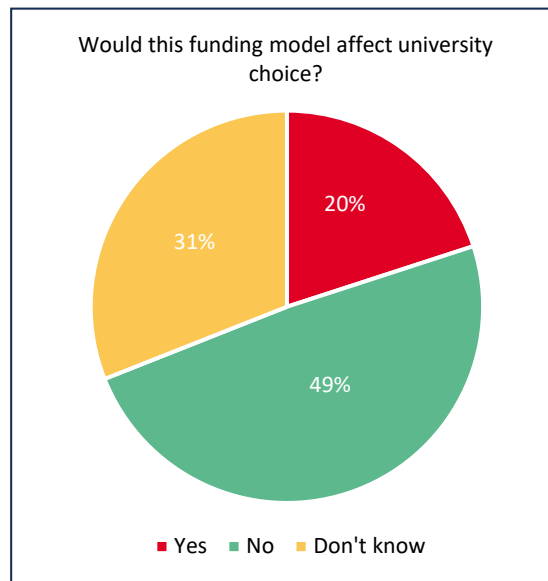


Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 330; **Applicants** Respondent Numbers: 370



Would this funding model affect university choice? - Potential Applicants.

Half of the potential applicants indicated that they would not be influenced in their choice of university with the baseline scenario in place. 20% of potential applicants indicated that the baseline scenario would impact their choice of university.



Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 330

Some students stated that they would only consider universities in Scotland, given the costs associated with English universities. However, they indicated that they would still apply to universities close to home to alleviate the financial strain associated with accommodation.



"As you could only be funded if you are going to a university within Scotland I do not get the point of going elsewhere to study where there are already so many good universities here in Scotland."

"I wouldn't look further away from home as cost of accommodation and university fees would be too much."

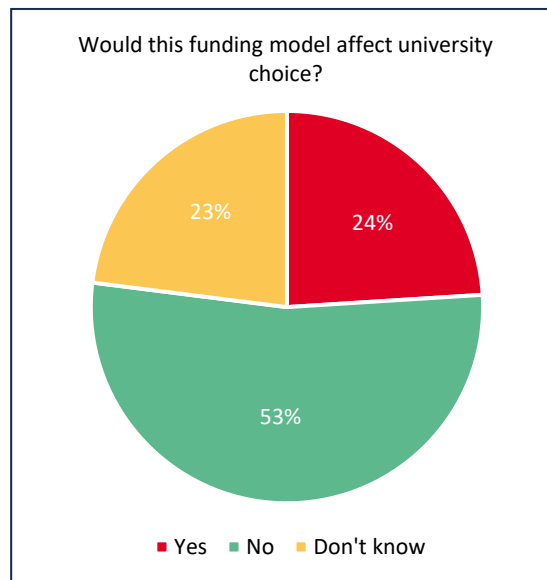
"I'm less likely to apply to universities in England as it would be far more expensive for me, I also need to think about cost of living within cities."

Potential Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 70



Would this funding model affect university choice? - Applicants.

53% of applicants stated that they would not be affected by using the baseline scenario, but 24% indicated that this scenario would impact their university choice.



Applicants Respondent Numbers: 370

For some students, the absence of tuition fees at Scottish universities factors into their university choices. They may opt for studying in Scotland instead of England, indicating that this is primarily due to the tuition fees associated with English universities. In addition, considerations of the cost of living in various cities and accommodation fees are shaping university choice for some students, stating that cities with lower living costs to better manage expenses is preferable.



"I would rather study in Scotland. This is because of the fact that you are only set to start repaying the maintenance loan once you have reached the threshold income. Also, the government covers tuition fees which in a significant amount of money."

"I would be conscious of the price of living in the city that my Uni is in, and I'd make a smart financial decision in which uni I choose."

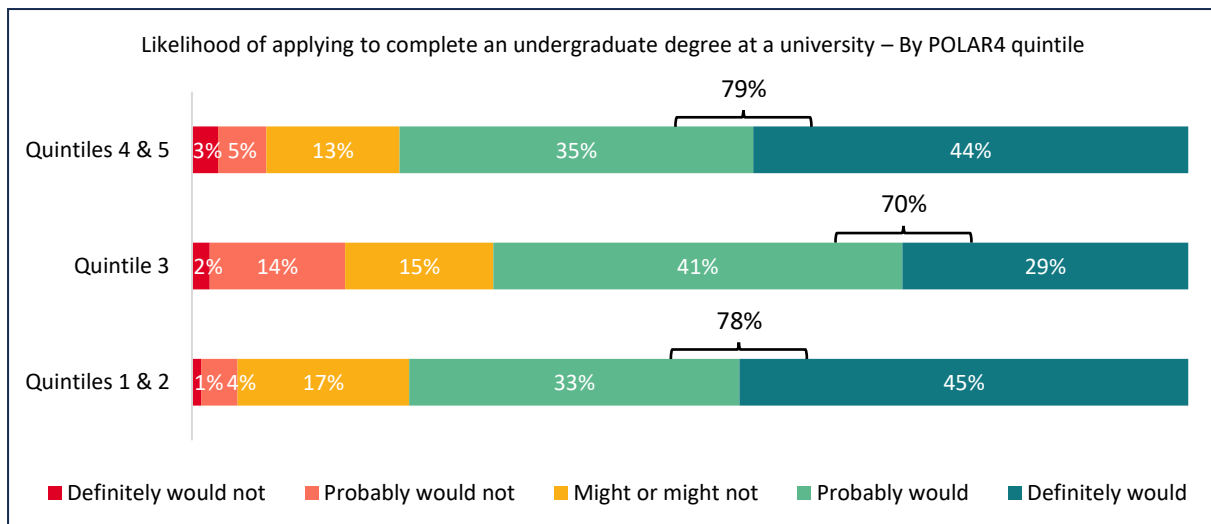
"I would solely apply to Scottish universities."

Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 95



Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

A smaller proportion of those within POLAR4 quintile 3 indicated that they are likely to apply to a university with the baseline scenario in place.

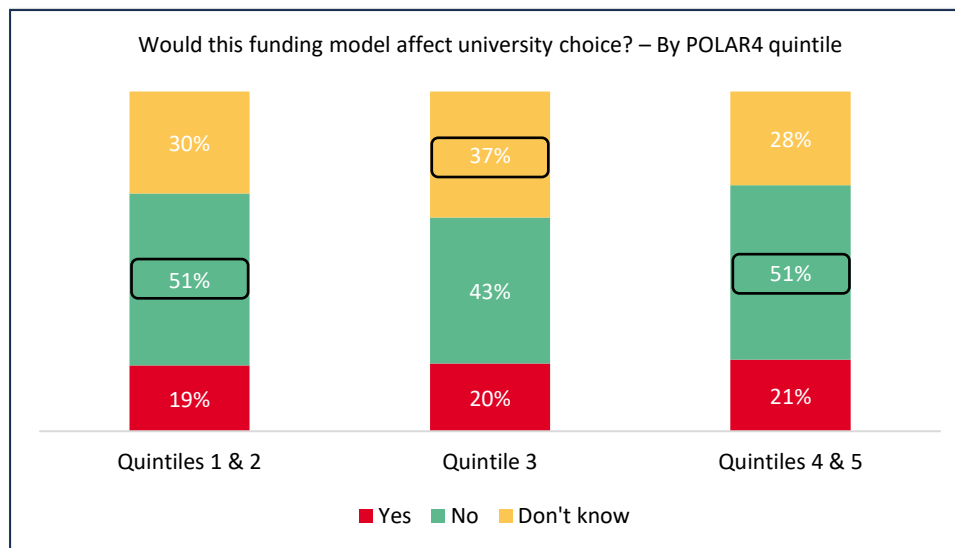


Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 115; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 85; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 385



Would this funding model affect university choice? - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

More students within quintile 3 indicated that they are unsure whether this scenario would impact their choice of university. A greater proportion of those in quintiles 1 and 2 as well as 4 and 5 think that they are unlikely to reconsider which university to apply to than those in quintile 3.



Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 115; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 85; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 38

Please note that the Potential Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 57,000 whilst the Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 125,000. There is a 1:2 ratio of Potential Applicants to Applicants.



5.2 Scenario 5 – A Fee After Graduation

The following definition for Scenario 5 – A Fee After Graduation was provided to respondents:

In this model, Scottish students will need to pay tuition fees to go to university in Scotland.

As an example, tuition fees could be charged at £5,500 for a 4-year course (note, this is £5,500 for the whole course, not per year).

You will not need to pay these fees upfront – you will pay them after you graduate.

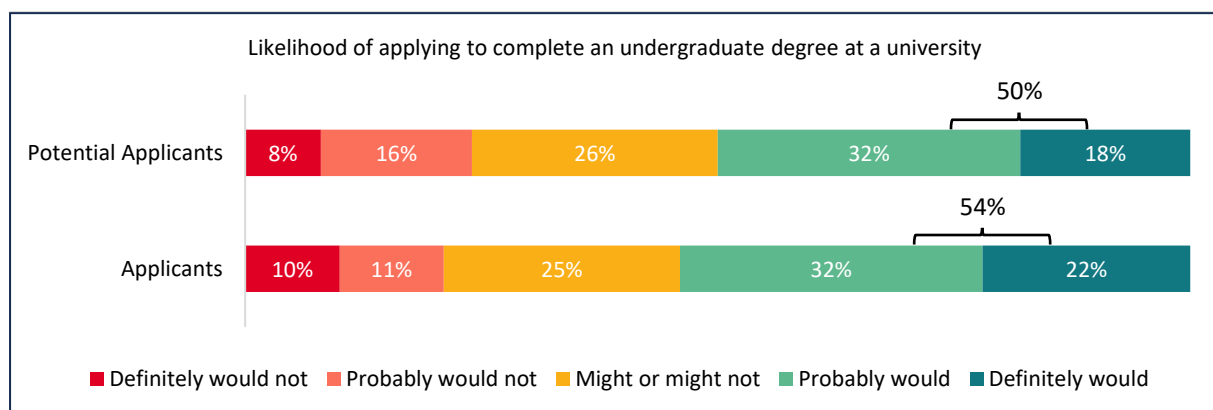
Maintenance loans are available.

You will re-pay your tuition fee loan and maintenance loan as follows:

- You will repay at a rate of 9% on everything you earn over £27,660 per year.
- The debt will be wiped out after 30 years.
- You will be charged interest on your loan.

Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - Potential applicants vs applicants.

Both potential applicants and current applicants indicated that the introduction of tuition fees may decrease the likelihood that they would apply to university.

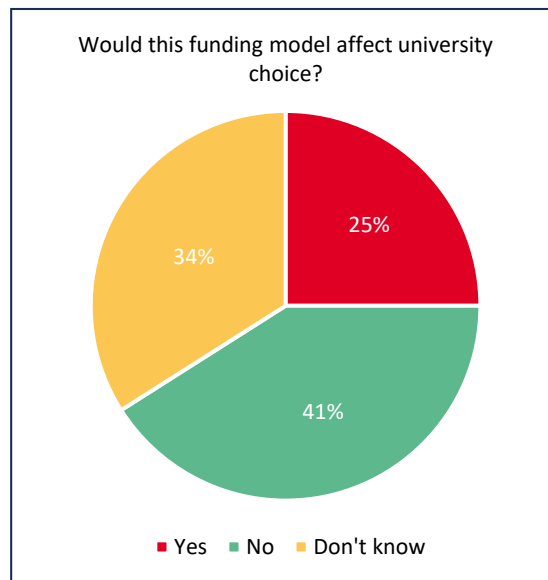


Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 330; **Applicants** Respondent Numbers: 365



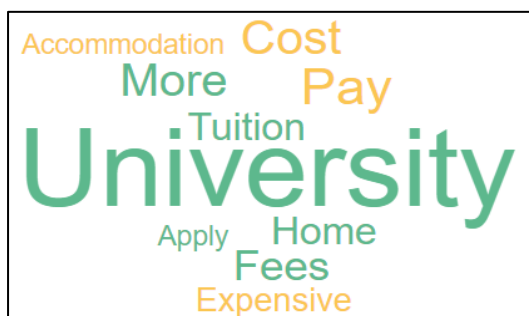
Would this funding model affect university choice? - Potential Applicants.

41% of potential applicants stated that they would not be influenced by the adoption of scenario 5. However, 25% of students indicated that scenario 5 would impact their choice of university.



Potential Applicants Respondent Numbers: 330

Some students indicated that they would be apprehensive about the financial strain associated with tuition fees. Some may hesitate to apply to university if tuition fees are imposed, highlighting the potential impact on their overall financial well-being. Furthermore, some students may opt for universities closer to home to avoid incurring accommodation expenses.



"I wouldn't be able to go to any. Not everyone is given a good start in life. Cost of living is so high I wouldn't be willing to pay for an even bigger loan. It would therefore limit my life trajectory. My crappy circumstances have done that enough already!"

"Knowing your education costs quite a bit might make you want to live cheaper, such as by living at home, and going to a nearby uni."

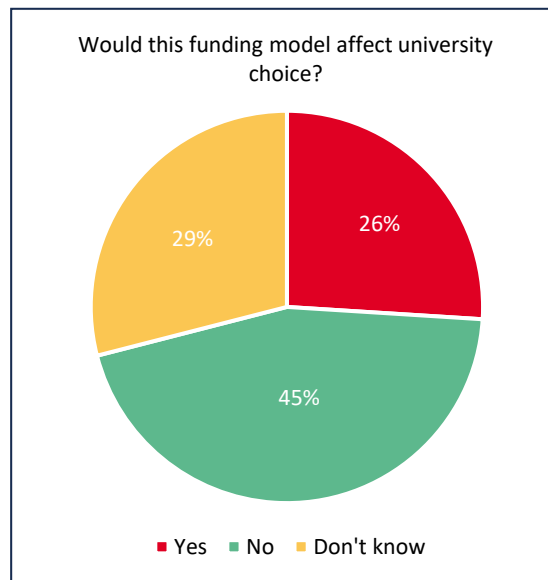
"Depending on the quality or demand I would not expect to pay as much for certain universities as other more prestigious ones."

Potential Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 80



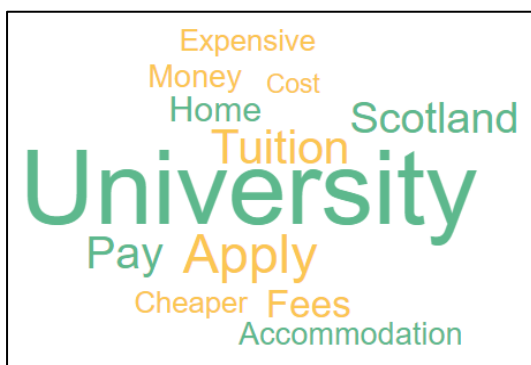
Would this funding model affect university choice? - Applicants.

Although 45% of applicants think that they would not be influenced by the adoption of scenario 5, 26% of students highlighted that it would play a role in shaping their decisions about which university to apply to.



Applicants Respondent Numbers: 370

For some, the prospect of paying tuition fees may reduce the likelihood of applying to university. Faced with the financial constraints associated with tuition fees, students may lean towards universities closer to home to minimise accommodation expenses.



"Distance from home would make a difference as having to pay for both education and accommodation would mean a lower budget for my time at uni."

"Just the worry of money in the future"

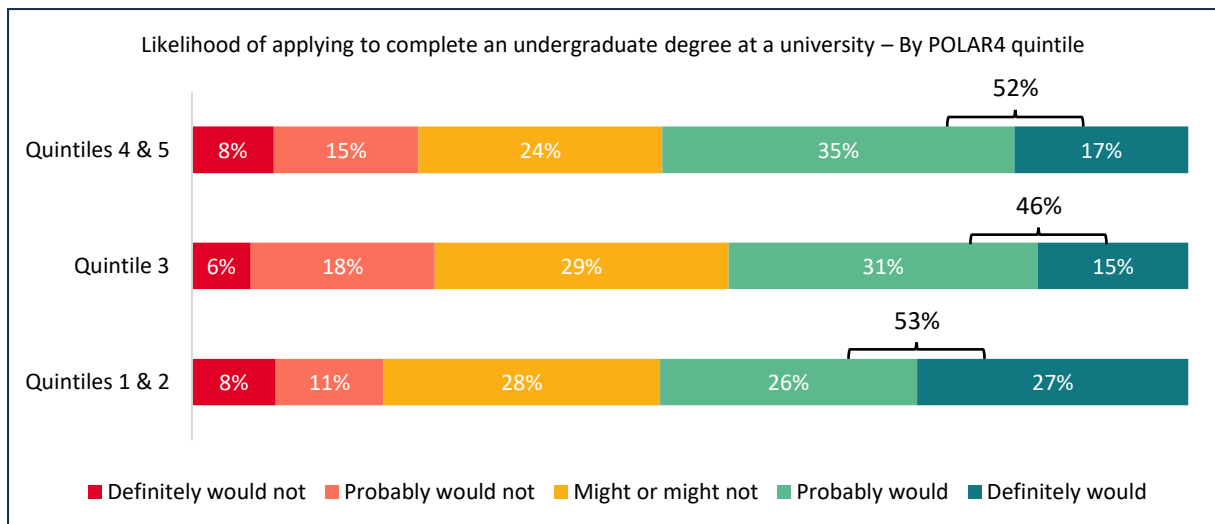
"As adding the cost of accommodation and general maintenance could prove to be very expensive. If I were to pay for a university course then I would choose a University close to my home to save money on travel and accommodation expenses."

Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 95



Likelihood of applying to complete an undergraduate degree at a university - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

Students within POLAR4 quintile 3 think that they are less likely to apply to university with the adoption of scenario 5.

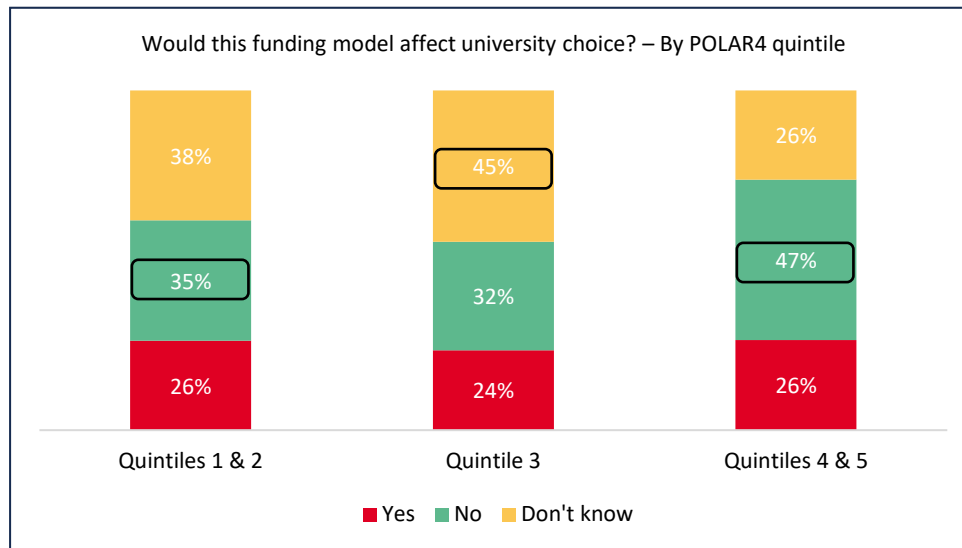


Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 115; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 85; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 385



Would this funding model affect university choice? - By POLAR4 quintile for potential applicants and applicants.

Those within quintiles 4 and 5 indicated that they are less likely to reconsider their choice of university compared to the other quintiles.



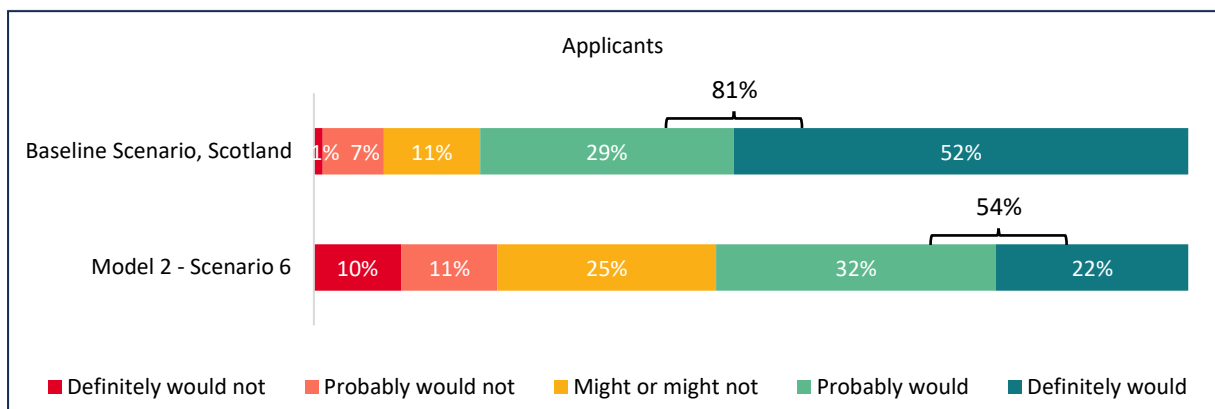
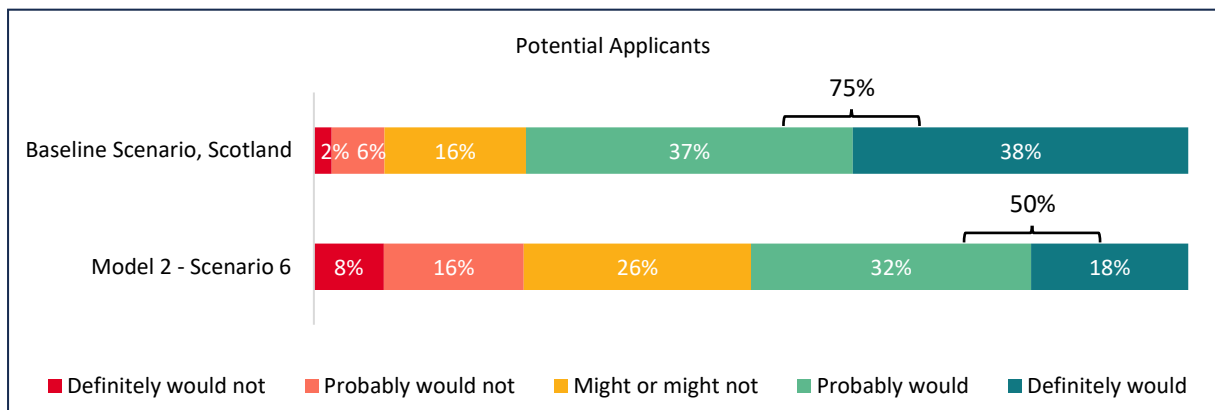
Quintiles 1 & 2 Respondent Numbers: 115; **Quintile 3** Respondent Numbers: 85; **Quintiles 4 & 5** Respondent Numbers: 385

Please note that the Potential Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 57,000 whilst the Applicant responses are weighted to a population of around 125,000. There is a 1:2 ratio of Potential Applicants to Applicants.



5.3 Comparison Of Scottish Scenarios

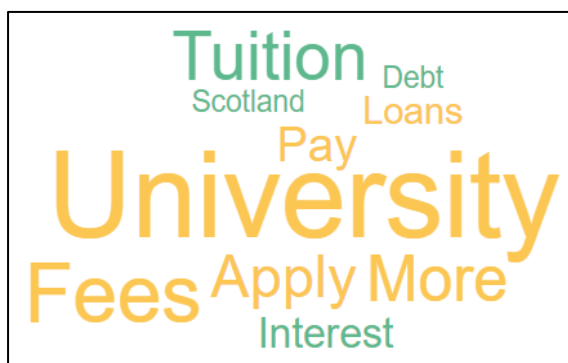
The baseline scenario is the most attractive scenario for both potential applicants and applicants. Students stated that they are less likely to apply to university if scenario 5 is introduced.





Additional comments from potential applicants

Comments demonstrated a level of satisfaction with the current funding system. By incorporating tuition fees, some feel that it would become inaccessible for some students to apply to university. There are some concerns about the increased debt associated with paying tuition fees, with some students indicating that they would need to consider the location of where they choose to study.



"The Scottish schemes allow for me and more importantly people from lower income families to be able to achieve further education which I believe is hugely beneficial to the country."

"To make university accessible to people from different family backgrounds and wealth I think it becomes way out of reach and unaffordable having to pay tuition fees."

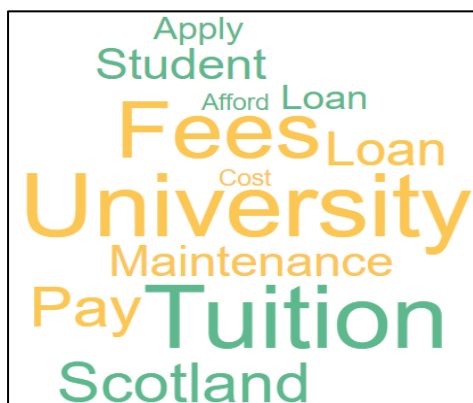
"Loans have a big interest rate so it's very tricky on whether I should pursue my education at risk of scraping for change or to wait a few years and then continue my education but by then, it could be too late."

"I think there should be more scholarships and grants. The interest on the student loan must be low or no interest. Poor students, the disabled, immigrants, the elderly, orphans and minorities should be exempted from the fees of tuition."

Potential Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 110

Additional comments from applicants

Like potential applicants, some current applicants are content with the present funding system. The introduction of tuition fees may become a barrier for some who wish to study higher education, with some stating they may reconsider whether they would apply to university.



"Different people from different families will be affected more than others depending on jobs and how they manage their money. I think making it free makes it much more accessible."

"They could pose as barriers for those already struggling to afford University; paying for accommodation, cost of living and providing for one's self and in later years living off campus."

"If tuition fees continue to rise, less and less people who may have come from disadvantaged backgrounds will be unable to attend university despite them being intelligent and an asset to our economy."

"Yes. I'm grateful for any financial help the government/uni provides on top of not having to pay for tuition. It means that I can go to uni and can lower my work hours so I can stay afloat."

Applicants Word Cloud Respondent Numbers: 95



6 Appendix

Reporting & Interpretation

- The data has been weighted to be representative of the potential applicant and applicant populations. UCAS makes every effort to provide representative information. All results are based on a sample and are therefore subject to statistical errors normally associated with sample-based information.
- The qualitative open comments were analysed via an inductive approach and therefore may be open to interpretation.
- Applicant survey margin of error: $\pm 2\%$ at a 95% confidence level, based on receiving 2,060 responses for a population of 124,640 applicants who were eligible to receive the survey.
- Potential applicant survey margin of error: $\pm 3\%$ at a 95% confidence interval, based on 1,090 responses for a population of 57,240 potential applicants who received the survey.
- Significant testing has not been applied between the Potential Applicant and Applicant groups, or between the POLAR4 quintiles.