

AdvanceHE



Higher
Education
Policy
Institute

STUDENT

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

SURVEY

The Student Academic Experience Survey 2026

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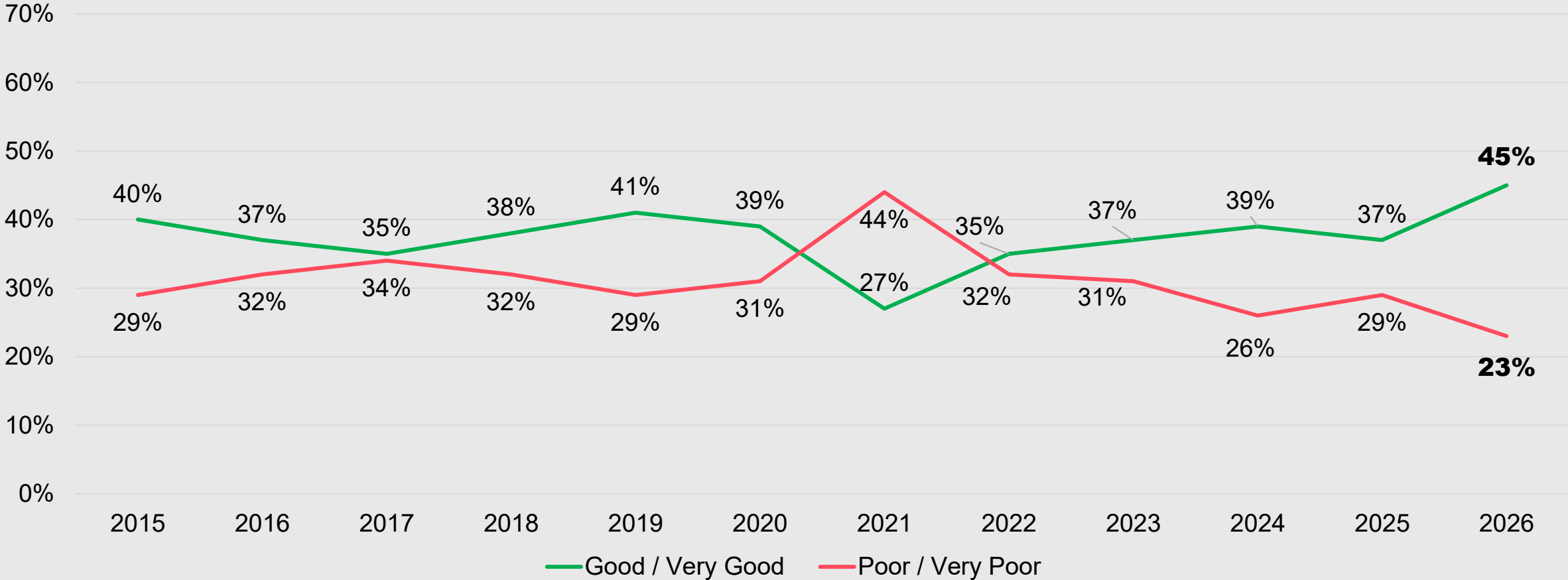
Rose Stephenson, HEPI



Perceptions of value-for-money are at their highest since 2013. The increase over the past year is significant but does not yet represent a consistent trend.



Value for money of your present course

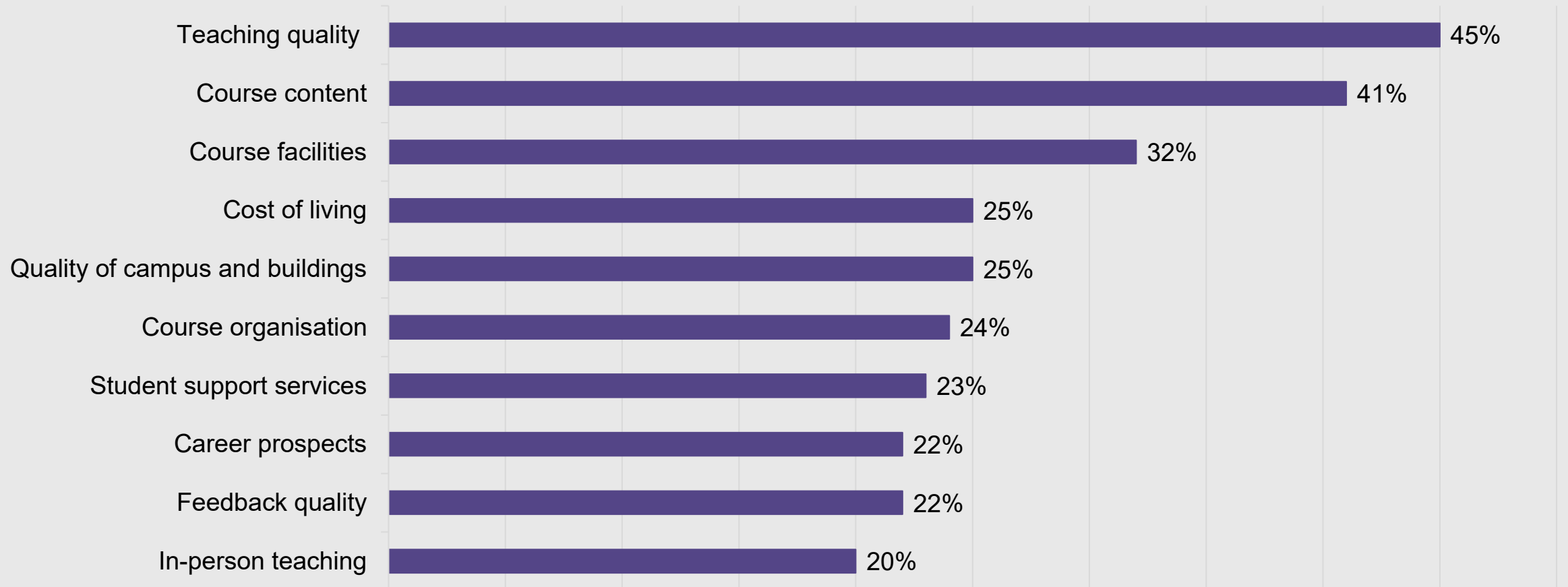


Quality of teaching, course content and facilities are driving perceptions of good value.

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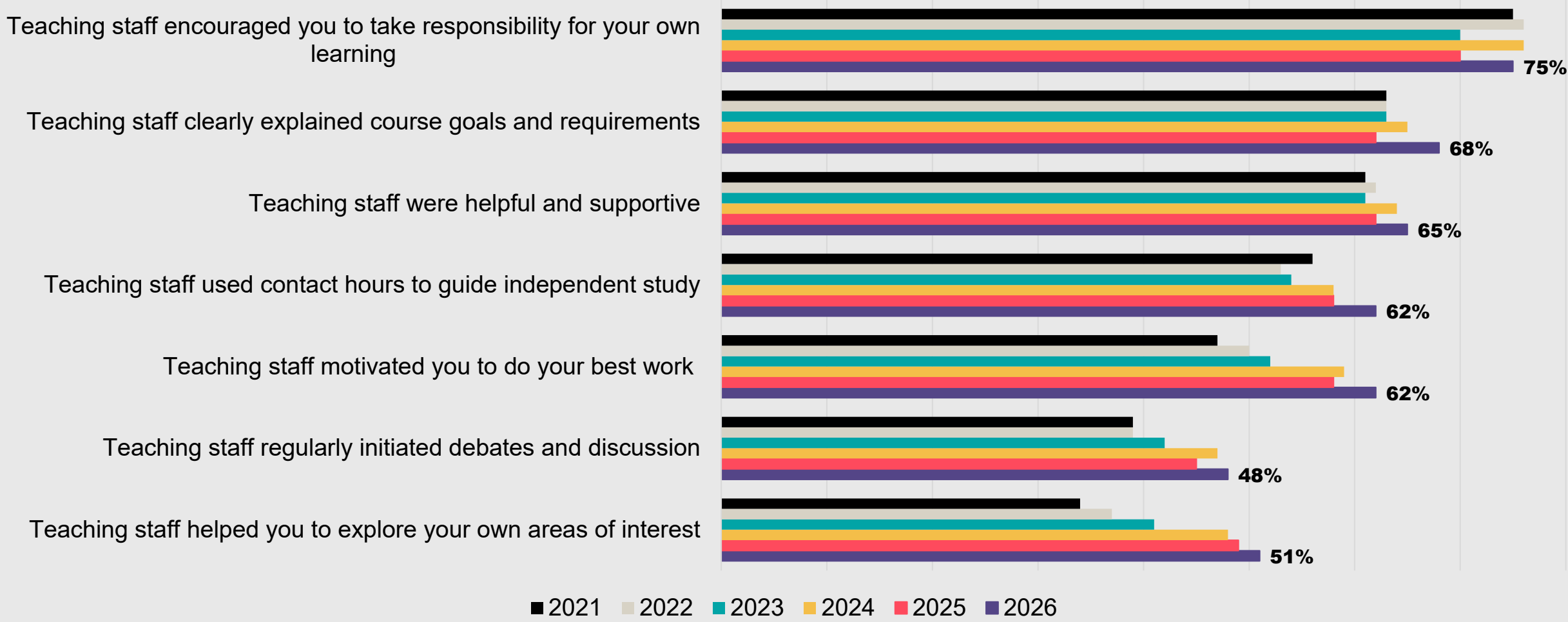
When saying you received good value / very good value, what were you thinking about?



As a contributing factor to strong value-for-money, teaching quality achieves its highest ratings for some time.

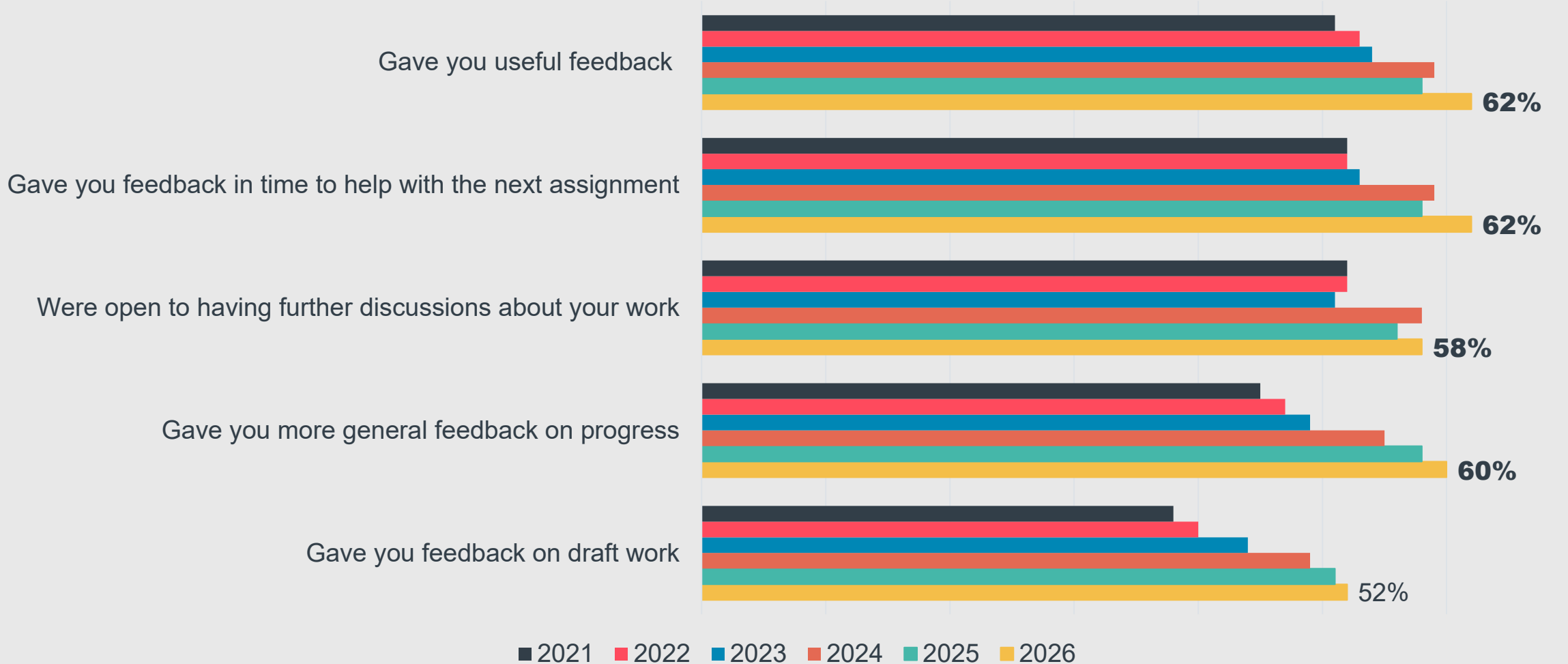


Teaching staff characteristics



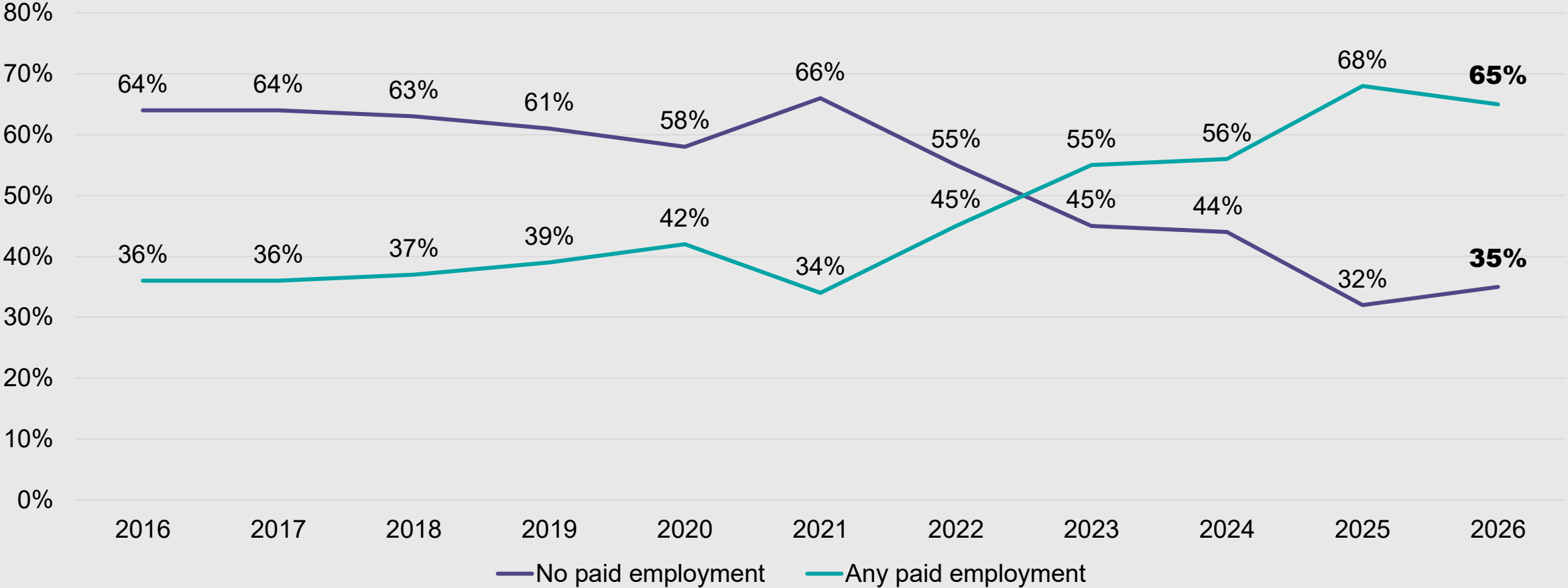
Ratings of feedback on assessments are also very strong.

Rating of how teaching staff provide assessment



Paid employment during term time has consolidated at very high levels.

Students in paid employment in term time



Encouragingly, data from a new question shows students' paid work challenges are often well supported by their institutions.



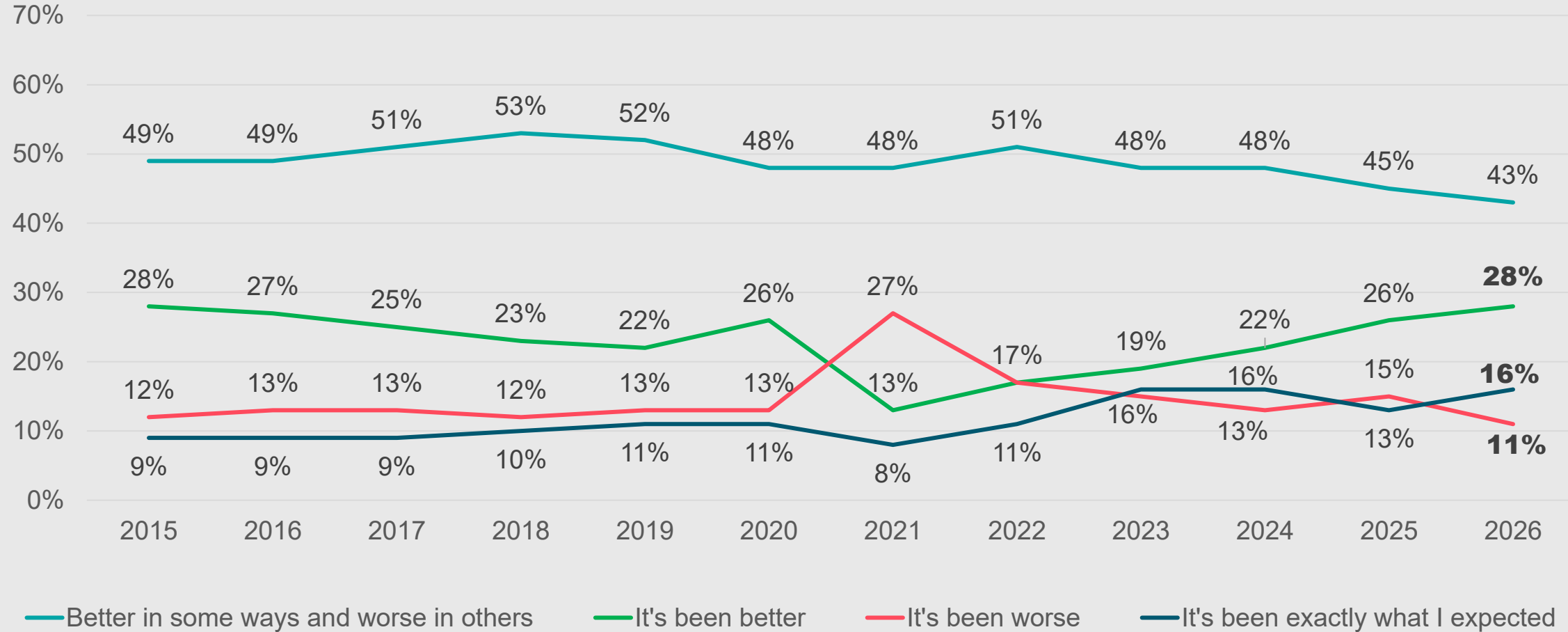
Ways in which institutions provide support around paid employment



Expectations are being met more often – suggesting students are expecting, and learning to balance, their paid employment workload.



Experience compared to expectations



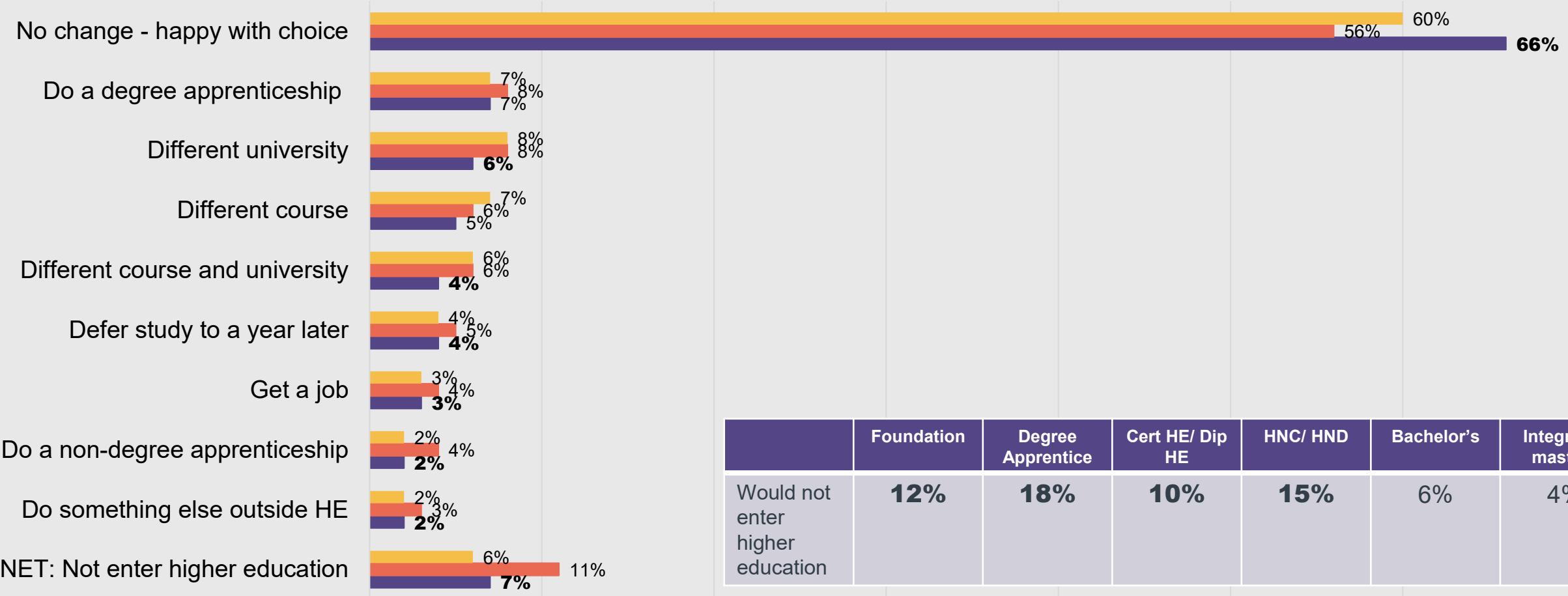
Results suggest students are managing paid employment by further reducing time spent on independent study – potentially AI is playing a role here.



	Total study workload hours (in a typical week)	Timetabled hours attended	Independent study hours	Placements or fieldwork hours
2022	30.7	11.3	14.8	4.6
2023	33.4	13.4	14.5	5.6
2024	33.5	13.3	13.6	6.6
2025	30.8	13.1	11.6	6.2
2026	29.4	12.8	11.1	5.5

In keeping with the positive scores this year, a high proportion of students would make exactly the same choice again if given a second chance.

Whether students would make the same choice again

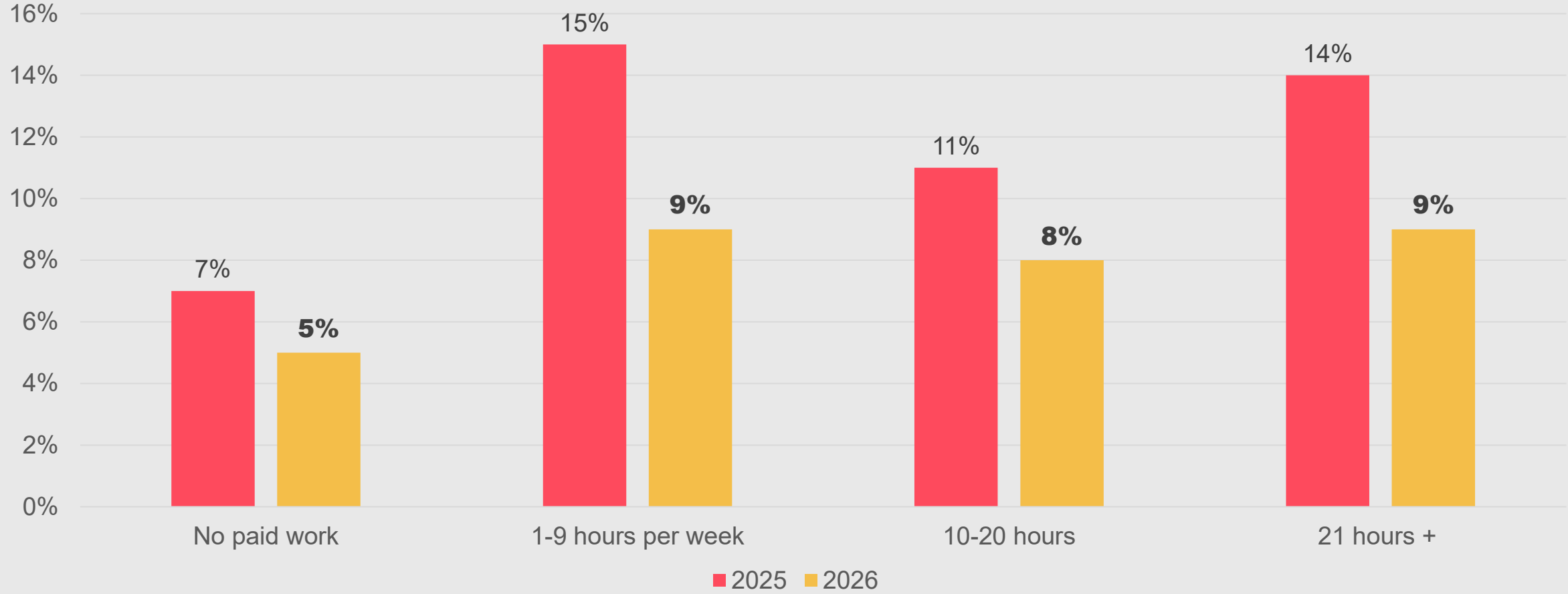


	Foundation	Degree Apprenticeship	Cert HE/ Dip HE	HNC/ HND	Bachelor's	Integrated masters
Would not enter higher education	12%	18%	10%	15%	6%	4%

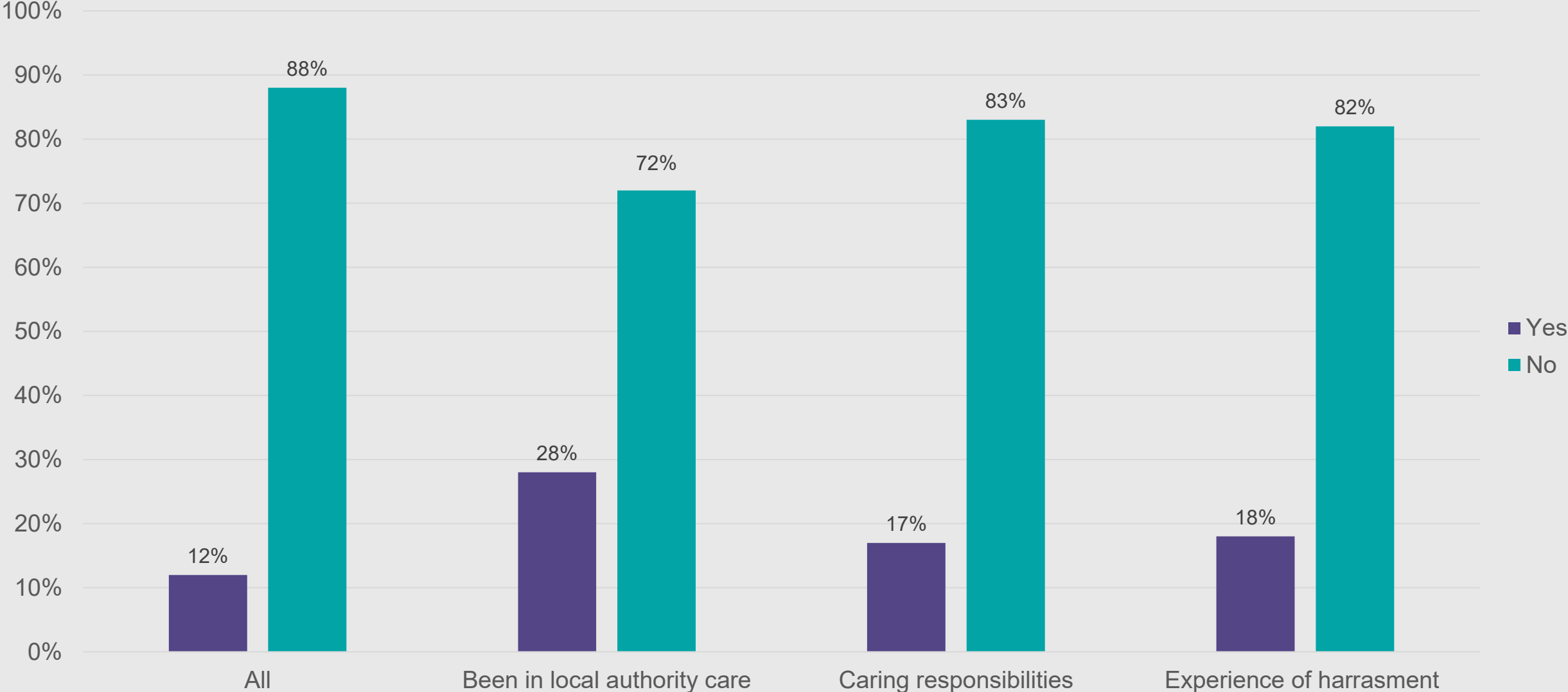
2024 2025 2026

In 2025, students with high levels of paid employment were a lot more likely to question their choice of entering HE – this is much less the case this year.

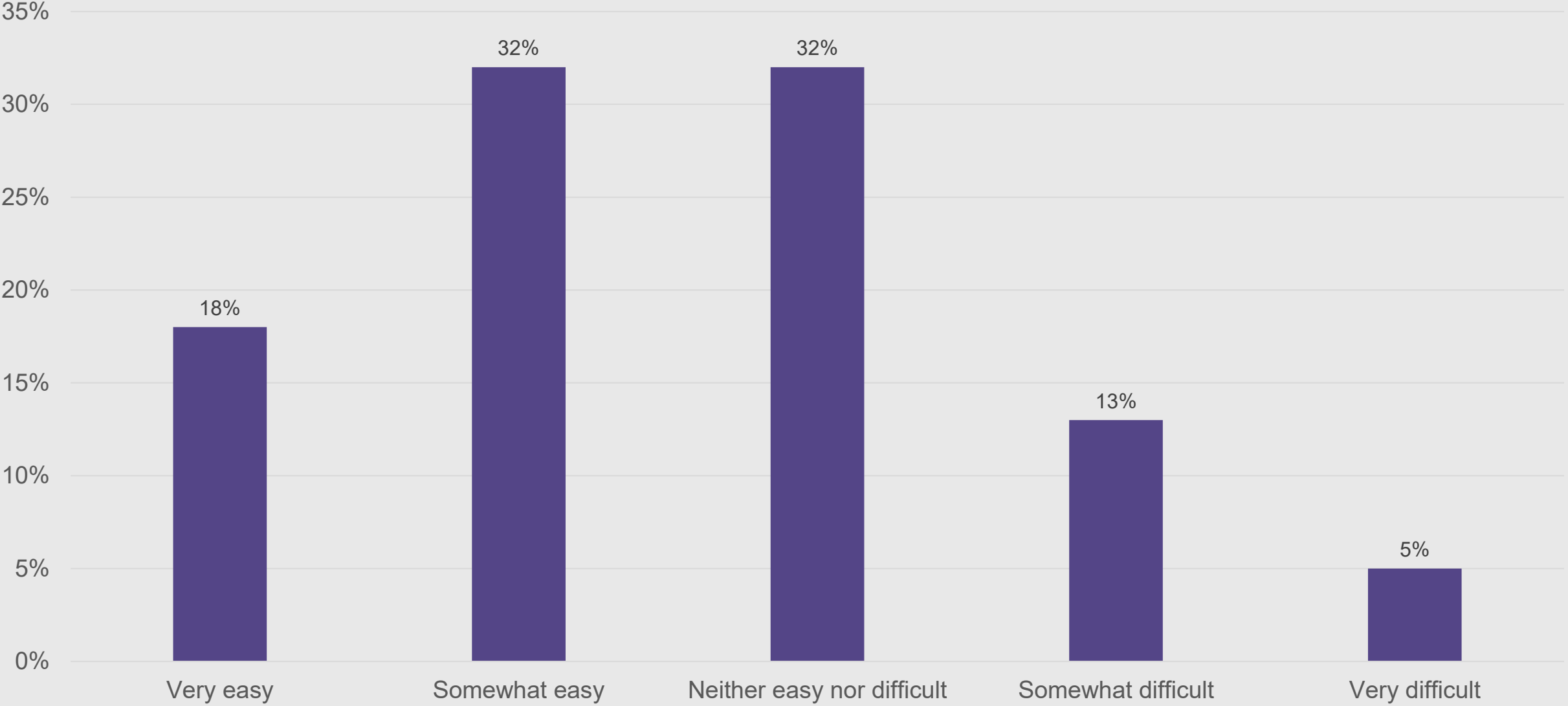
Proportion who would have chosen options outside higher education (given the choice again) – by levels of paid work



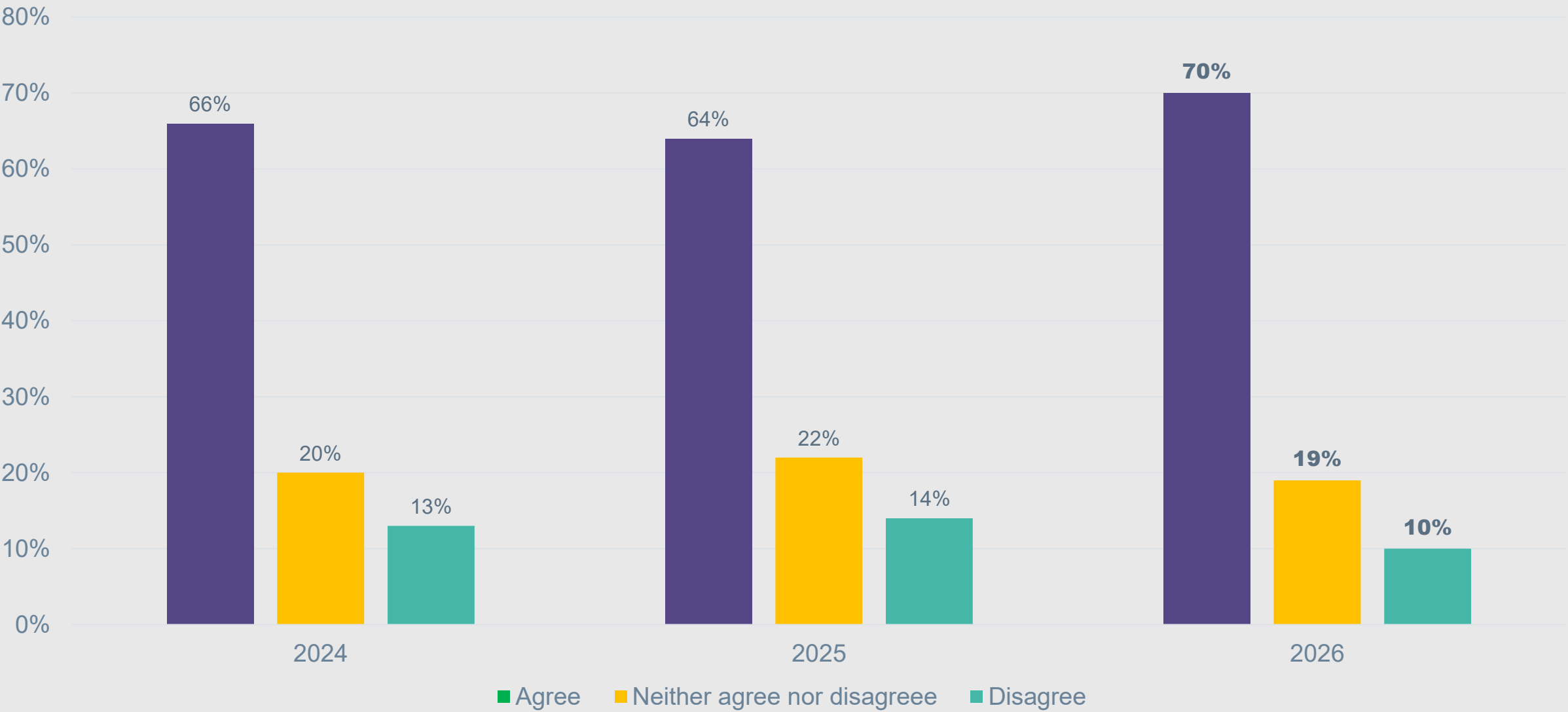
Students who have experience of being in local authority care are more likely to have changed course or institution than others.



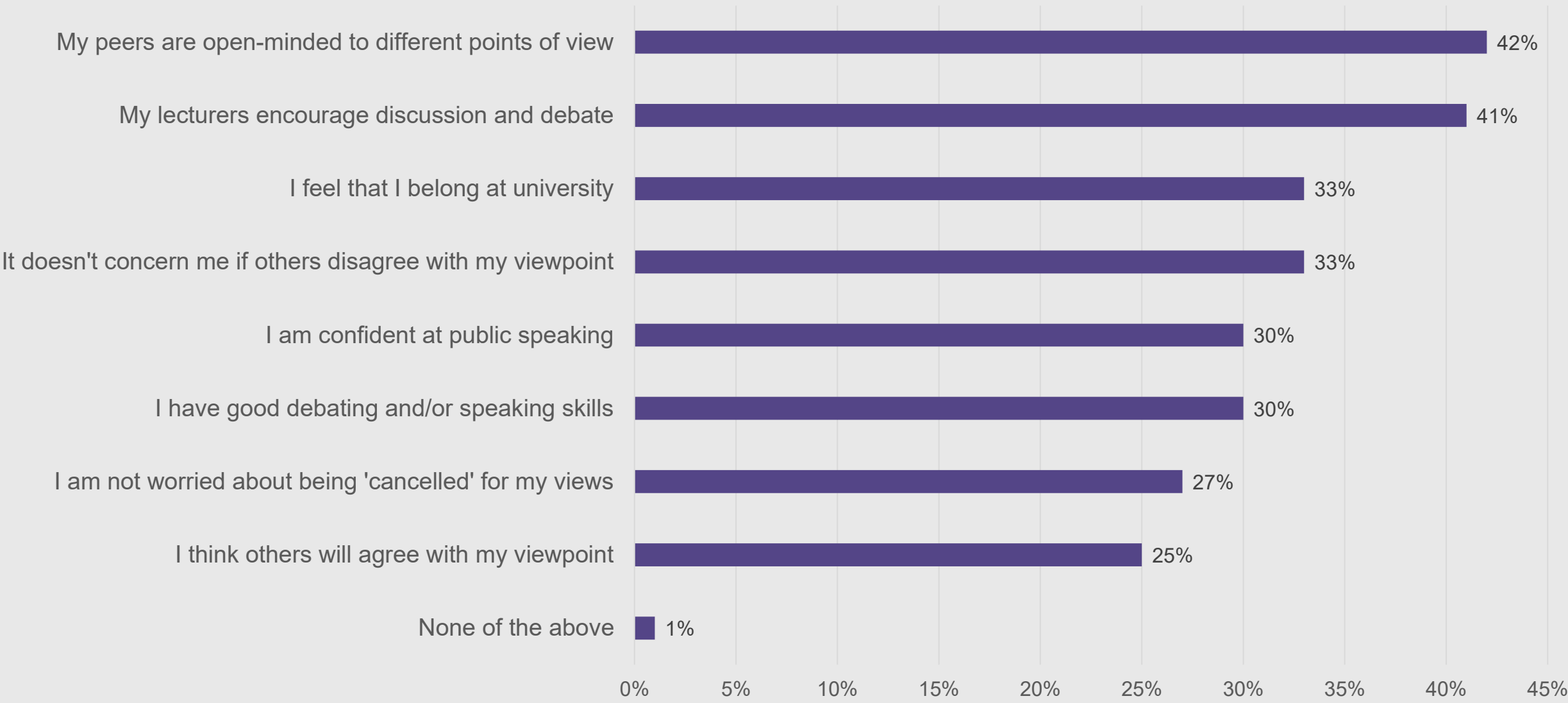
The majority of students who changed course or institution did not find the process difficult.



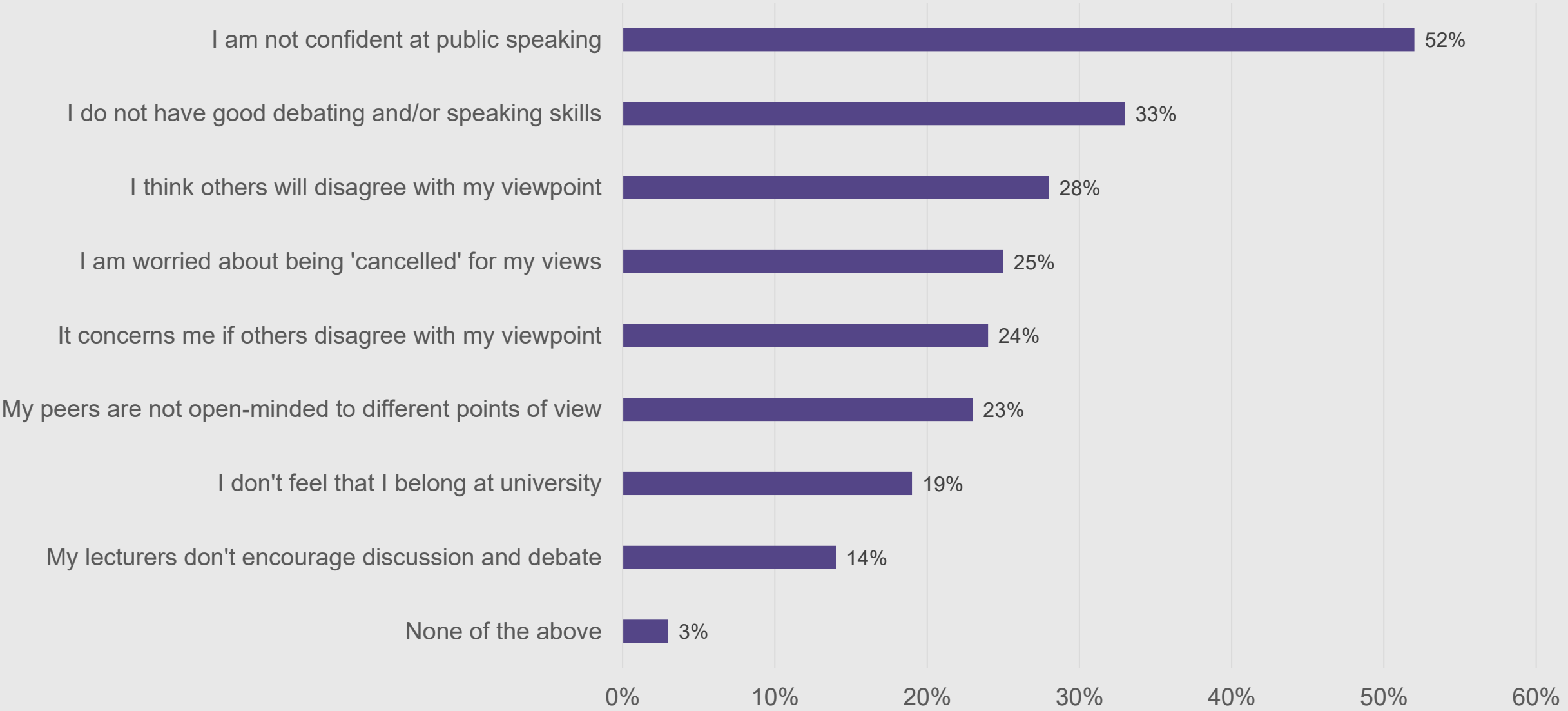
Students are more comfortable expressing their views, even if others disagree, than ever before.



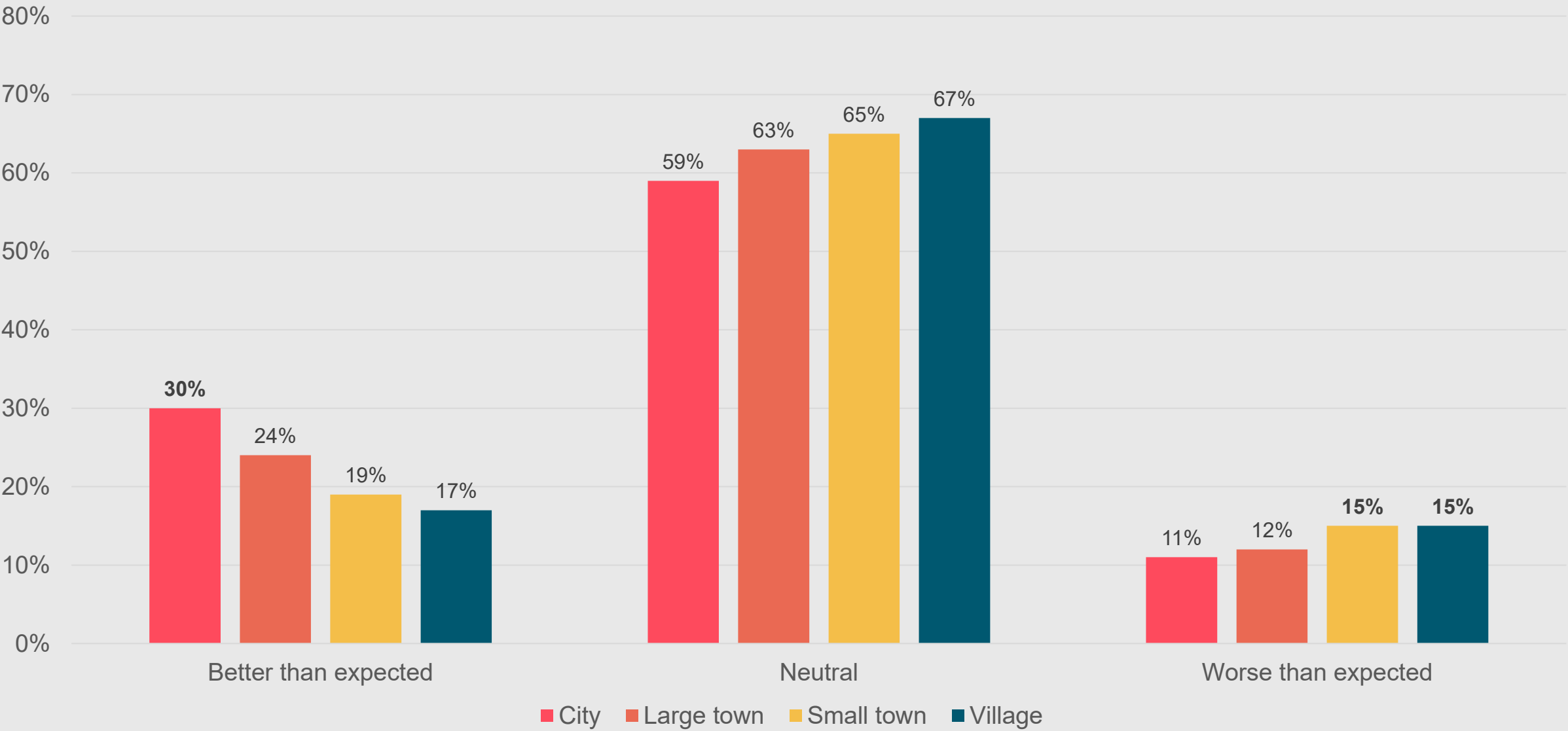
A sense of belonging, peers being open minded, and lecturers encouraging debate all contribute to students feeling comfortable expressing their viewpoint...



...whilst a lack of confidence in their public speaking skills was a common reason students feel uncomfortable expressing their viewpoints.



Rural students are more likely to report that their experience was worse than expected.



Identify and support students with a poor sense of belonging

Continue to improve assessment feedback timeframes

Support informed choices and stability for care-experienced students

Research why Degree Apprentices demonstrate more 'choice-regret'

To improve freedom of speech, develop public speaking skills

Continue to support students who work

Research whether there is a link between rurality and outcomes

The DfT should focus on transport links for higher education

Improve student financial support

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