

**nus**

**student eats**

# **Sustainable Food Survey 2018-19**

# Summary

A national online survey looking at attitudes, awareness and behaviours linked to sustainable food issues was completed by c. 1500 students studying in further and higher education across the UK. The research was completed in September 2018 as part of NUS' Student Eats programme which helps students to develop their own growing sites and food enterprises, embedding sustainable food production across campuses, curriculums and communities.

### Food purchasing

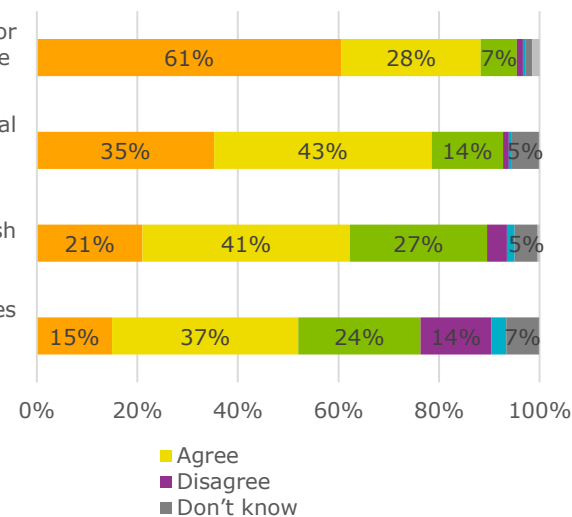
- Half of respondents (50%) are responsible for buying all their own food
- The vast majority (88%) of respondents report that they use supermarkets in a town/village to do their food shopping at least once a month
- Price (80%) and location/convenience (75%) are the two main factors which influence where respondents decide to do their food shopping.
- Food to cook or prepare at home represents the biggest weekly spend for respondents with approximately a third (35%) spending £31 or more on average per week.
- Price is also reported as the strongest influence on what food respondents buy with 87% saying they consider this when buying food.

I think it's important that animals bred for food are treated as humanely as possible (n=1480)

It's better for the environment to eat local fruit and vegetables grown in season (n=1486)

Where possible I try to support British producers (n=1481)

I have a good understanding of the issues surrounding buying local / seasonal produce (n=1480)



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

### Sustainable food and food poverty

- Two fifths of respondents say they make a conscious effort to buy Fairtrade products (42%) and a third say they try to buy food that is in season in the UK (34%).
- Respondents perceive locally produced food / food products to be a way of purchasing food that is as fresh as possible (36%) and also a way of supporting the local economy (35%), however only around a quarter say that these products are worth paying a bit extra for (22%).
- Only 5% of respondents say that how animals are reared is not important to them.
- 78% agree that it's better for the environment to eat local fruit and vegetables grown in season.
- Half (52%) agree that they have a good understanding of the issues surrounding buying local and seasonal produce.
- 32% have been hungry but did not eat because of a lack of money or other resources in the last 12 months.

# Introduction

# Research objectives and methodology

## Objectives

Student Eats puts sustainable food at the heart of universities and colleges across the UK. We work with students to develop their own growing sites and food enterprises, embedding sustainable food production across campuses, curriculums and communities.

Together, we produce loads of low-carbon, fresh, healthy food on campuses across the country. With more and more students growing their own food, we make a hugely positive impact on campus life – across enterprise, community, wellbeing, education and sustainability.

This survey gathered data on student attitudes, awareness and behaviours linked to sustainable food issues.

## Methodology

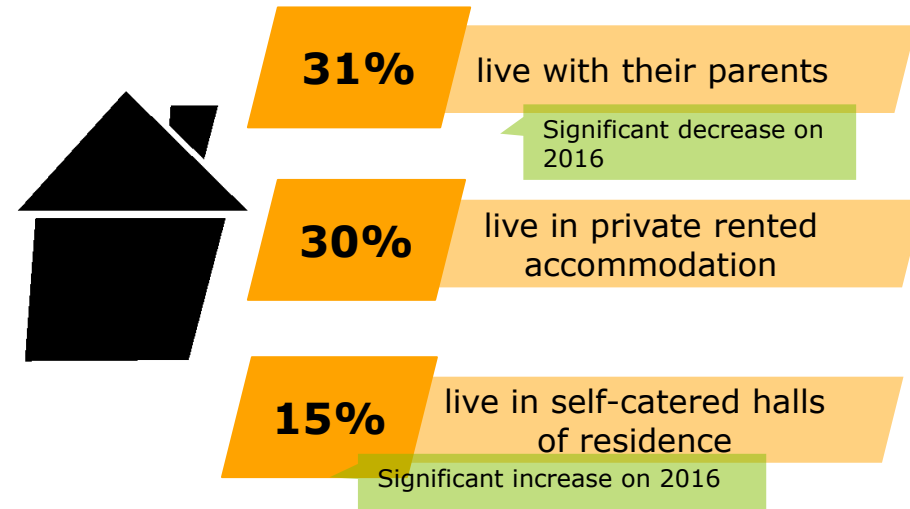
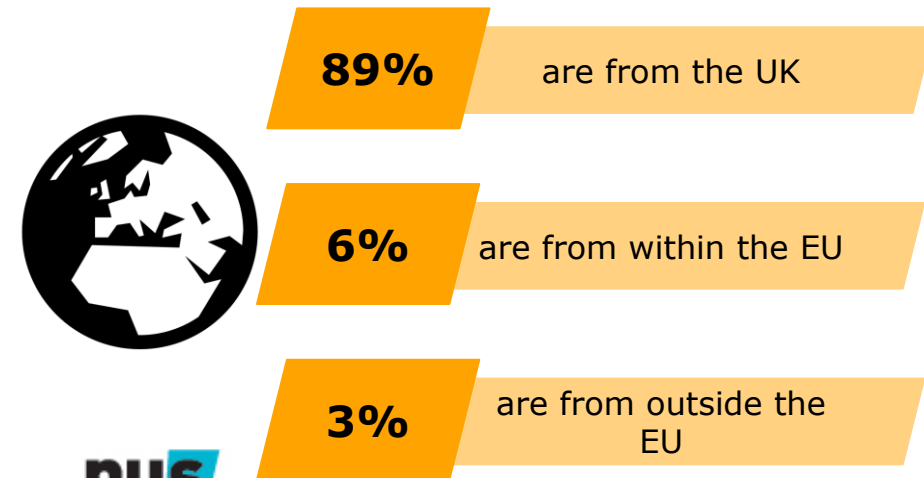
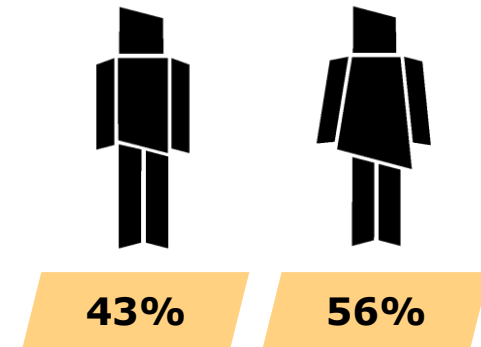
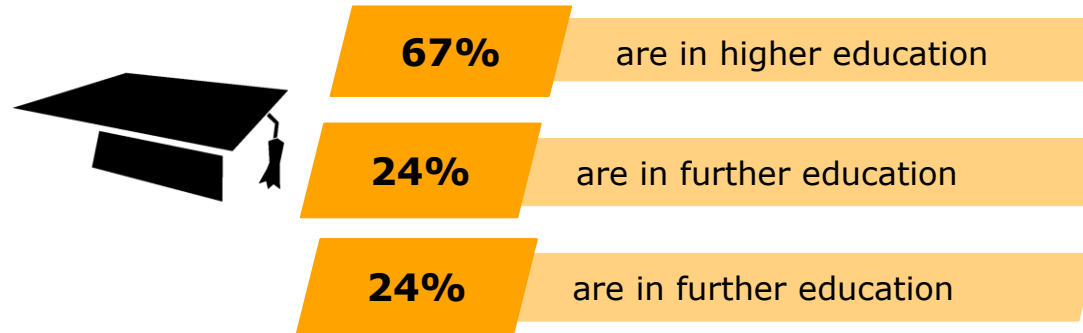
The online survey was promoted to NUS' database of NUS Extra cardholders in September 2018. The survey took approximately 10 minutes to complete and was incentivised with a cash prize draw. 1561 respondents completed the survey.

Within the report, a number of questions have been broken down for particular types of respondents and compared with a similar survey conducted in 2016. Where there are any statistical significant differences between answers, they are reported where applicable and to large enough base size ( $n > 30$ ) and are valid at a confidence level of 99%.

**nus**

**student eats**

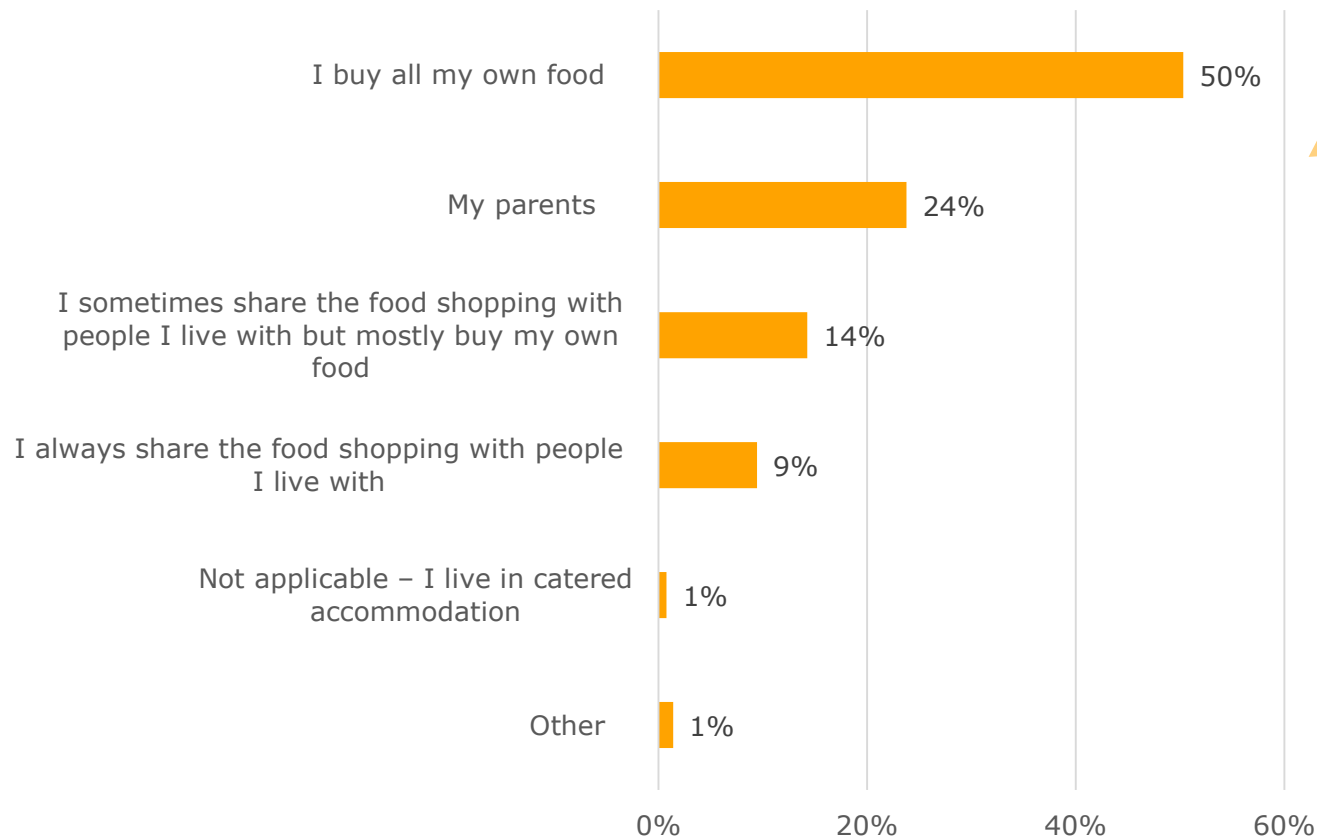
# The respondents...



# Research Findings

## Food purchasing

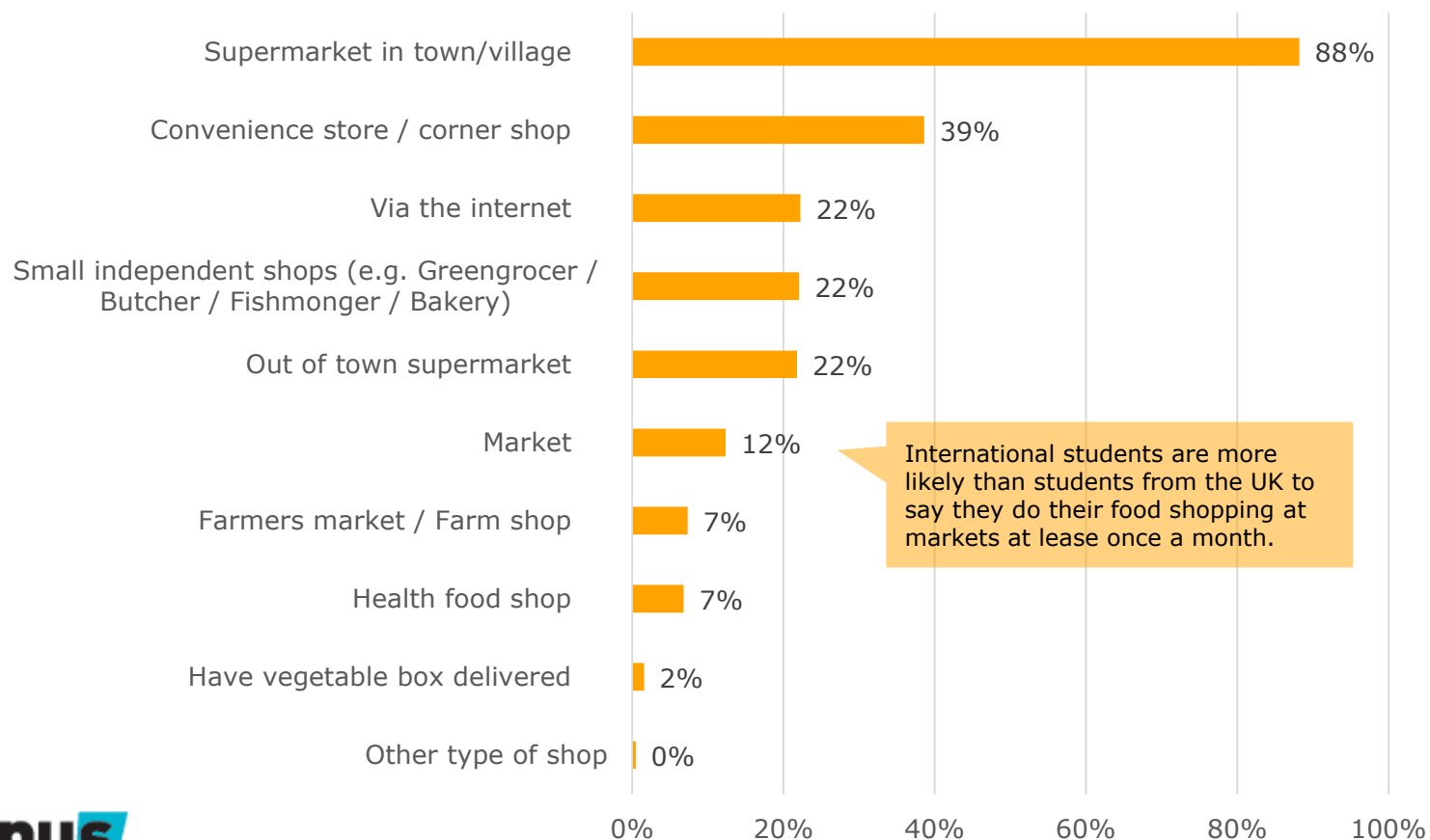
Half of respondents say they are responsible for doing the main food shopping where they live (50%). 1 in 6 respondents say their parents are responsible for food shopping.



• Respondents who are women are more likely to say they buy their own food (59% compared with 55% men). International students (69%) are also more likely than UK respondents (54%) to do their own shopping,



The vast majority (88%) of respondents report that they use supermarkets in a town/village to do their food shopping, at least once a month. Over a third (39%) use convenience stores and just under a quarter (22%) use small independent shops for their food shopping, at least once a month. 7% use farmer's markets or farm shops.

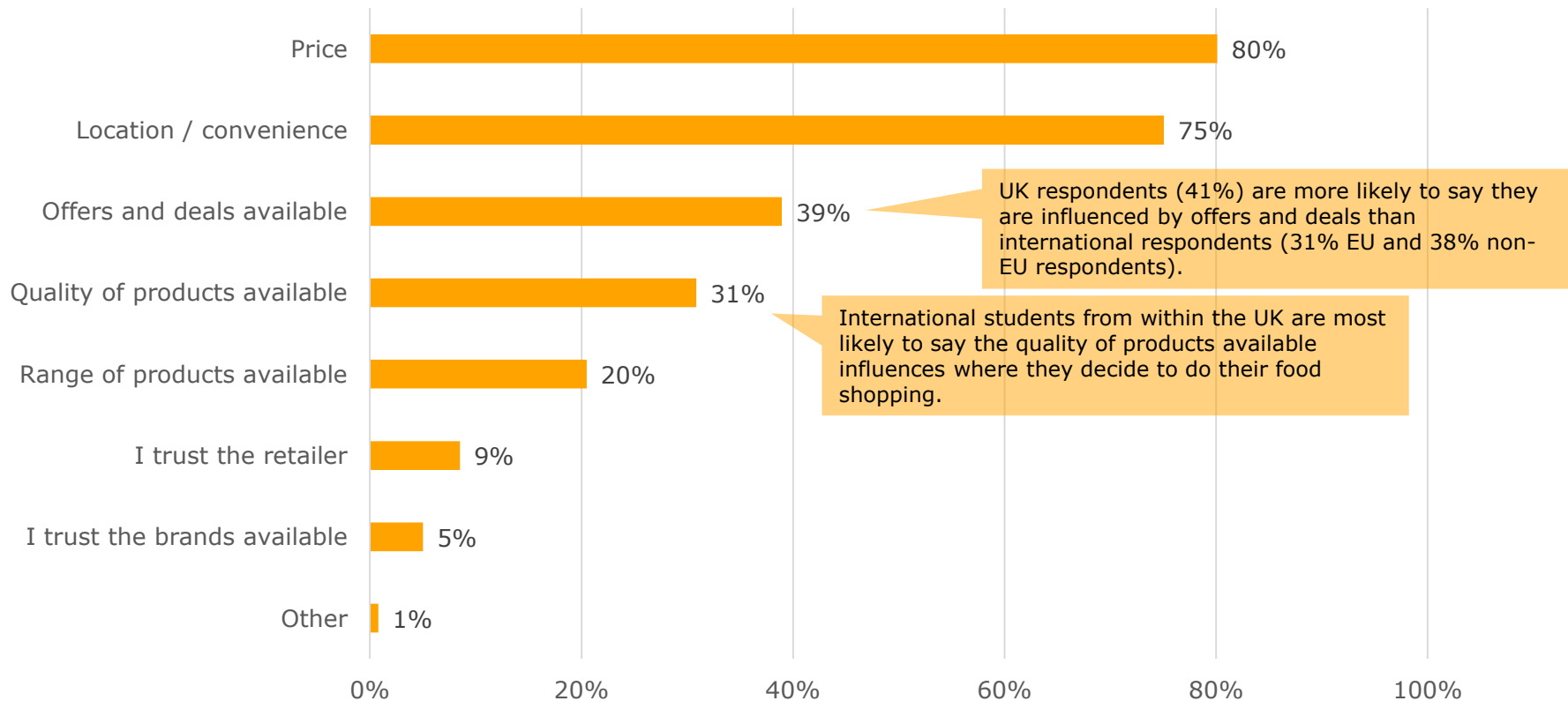


Q. At which of these types of shop do you do food shopping at least once a month?  
(Weighted base: 1498 Balance: No response)

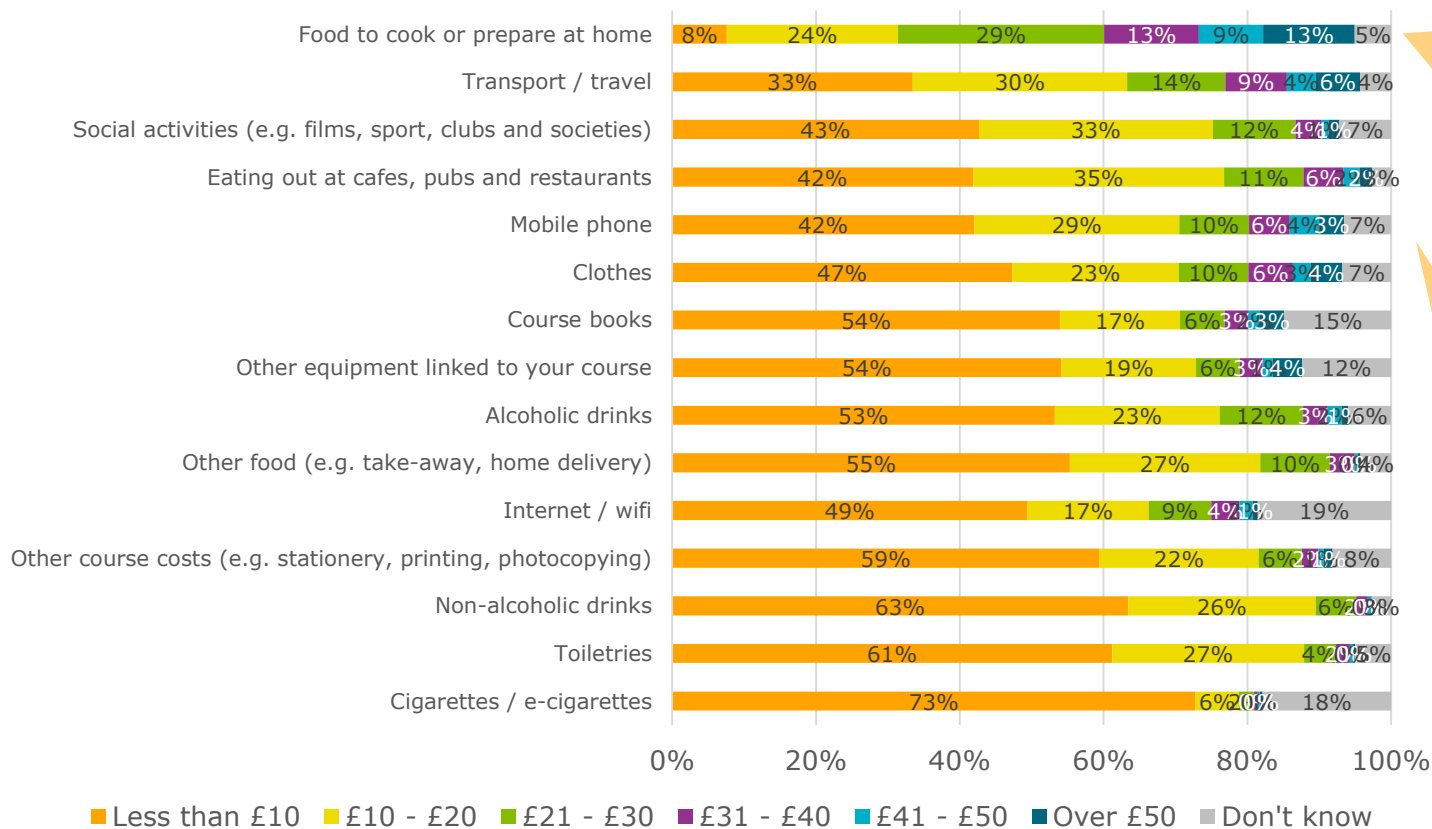
nus

student eats

Price (80%) and location/convenience (75%) are the two main factors which influence where respondents decide to do their food shopping. The offers and deals available (again linked to price) influence where two fifths (39%) of respondents do their food shopping.



Food to cook or prepare at home represents the biggest weekly spend for respondents, relative to other items, with approximately a third (35%) spending £31 or more on average per week.



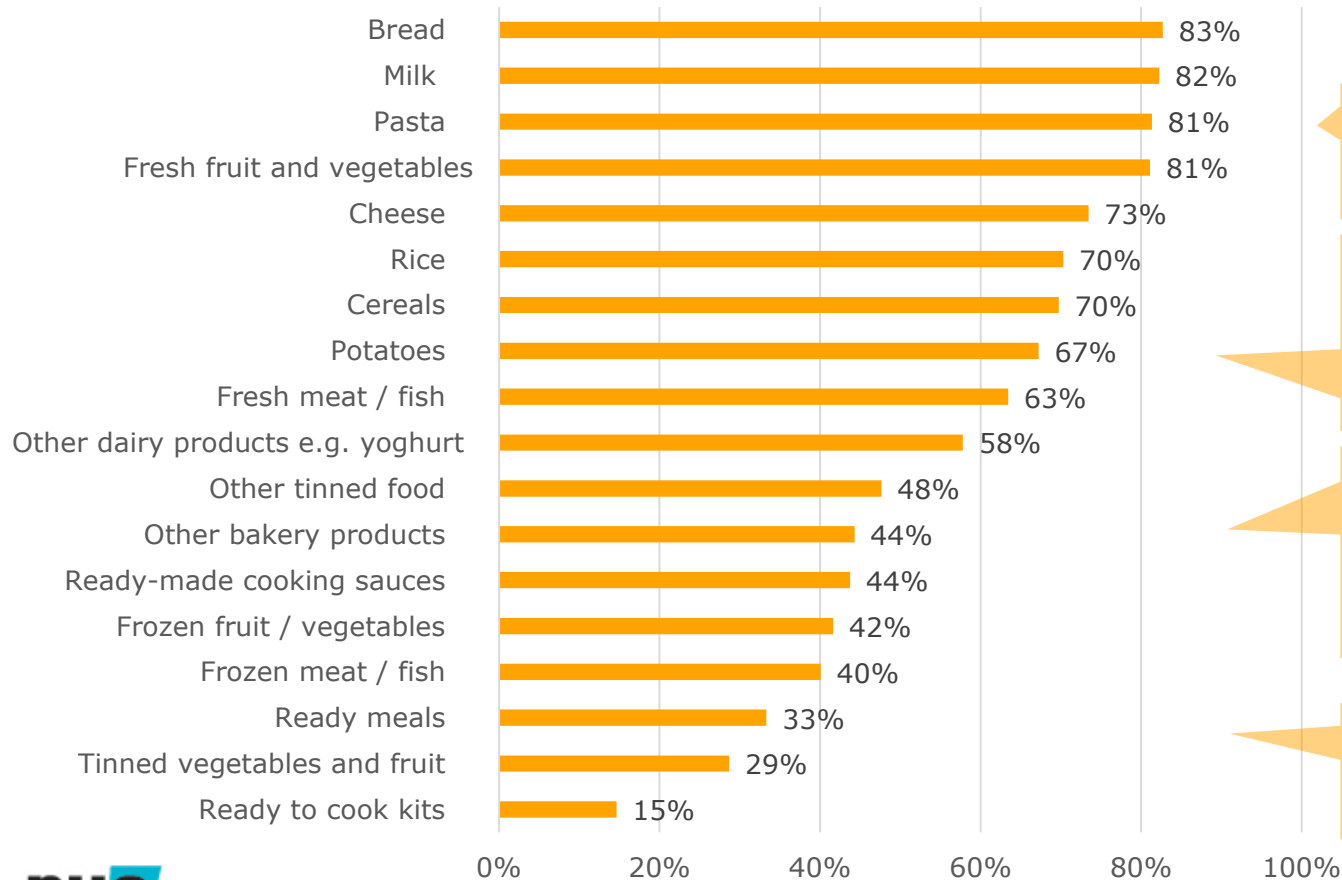
- Respondents who are men are more likely to say they spend less than £20 on average per week on food to cook or prepare at home (37% compared with 33% women).

- International respondents are less likely to say they spend over £50 on average per week on food to cook or prepare at home compared with UK respondents (10% EU respondents and 5% non-EU respondents compared with 13% UK respondents).



Q. Now thinking about what you spend your money on, how much is your weekly average spend on the following items:  
(Weighted base: c. 1472 Balance: No response)

Bread (83%), milk (81%), pasta (81%) and fresh fruit and vegetables (81%) are the most commonly reported food items that respondents tend to buy. Prepared food, such as ready meals, tinned vegetables and fruit and 'ready to cook' kits are less likely to be purchased by respondents (33%, 29% and 15% respectively).



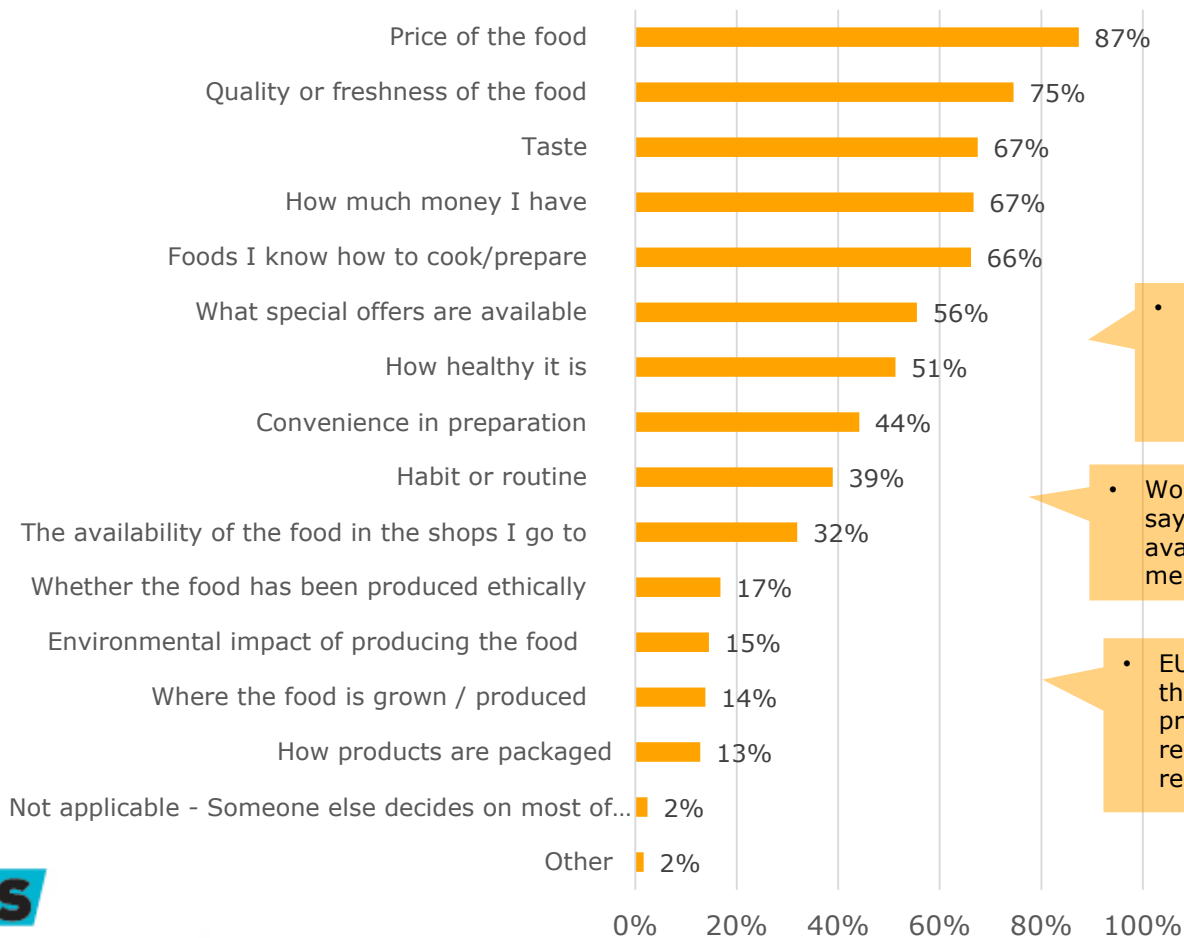
- Women respondents are more likely to say they tend to buy fresh fruit and vegetables (86% compared with 73% men).

- UK and EU respondents are more likely to say they tend to buy fresh meat and fish than international respondents (62% and 61% respectively) compared with 48% non-EU respondents.

- Female and UK respondents (45% of each) are more likely to say they tend to buy ready-made cooking sauces than males (40%) and international respondents (30% EU and 36% non-EU respondents).

- Women respondents are less likely to say they tend to buy ready meals (27% compared with 35% men).

As well as influencing where respondents do their shopping, price is also reported as the strongest influence on what food respondents buy (87% say they consider this when buying food). Quality/freshness (75%) and foods they know how to cook or prepare (66%) are also important considerations, however very few respondents report considering the environmental impact of their food (12%).



- International respondents are more likely to say they consider the quality or freshness of food (82% EU, 81% non-EU respondents compared to 70% UK respondents).

- Non-EU international respondents are more likely to say they are influenced by foods they know how to cook or prepare (75% non-EU compared with 69% EU and 65% UK respondents).

- Women respondents are more likely to say they consider what special offers are available (56% compared with 51% men).

- EU respondents are most likely to say they consider where food is grown / produced (16% compared with 14% UK respondents and 10% non-EU respondents).

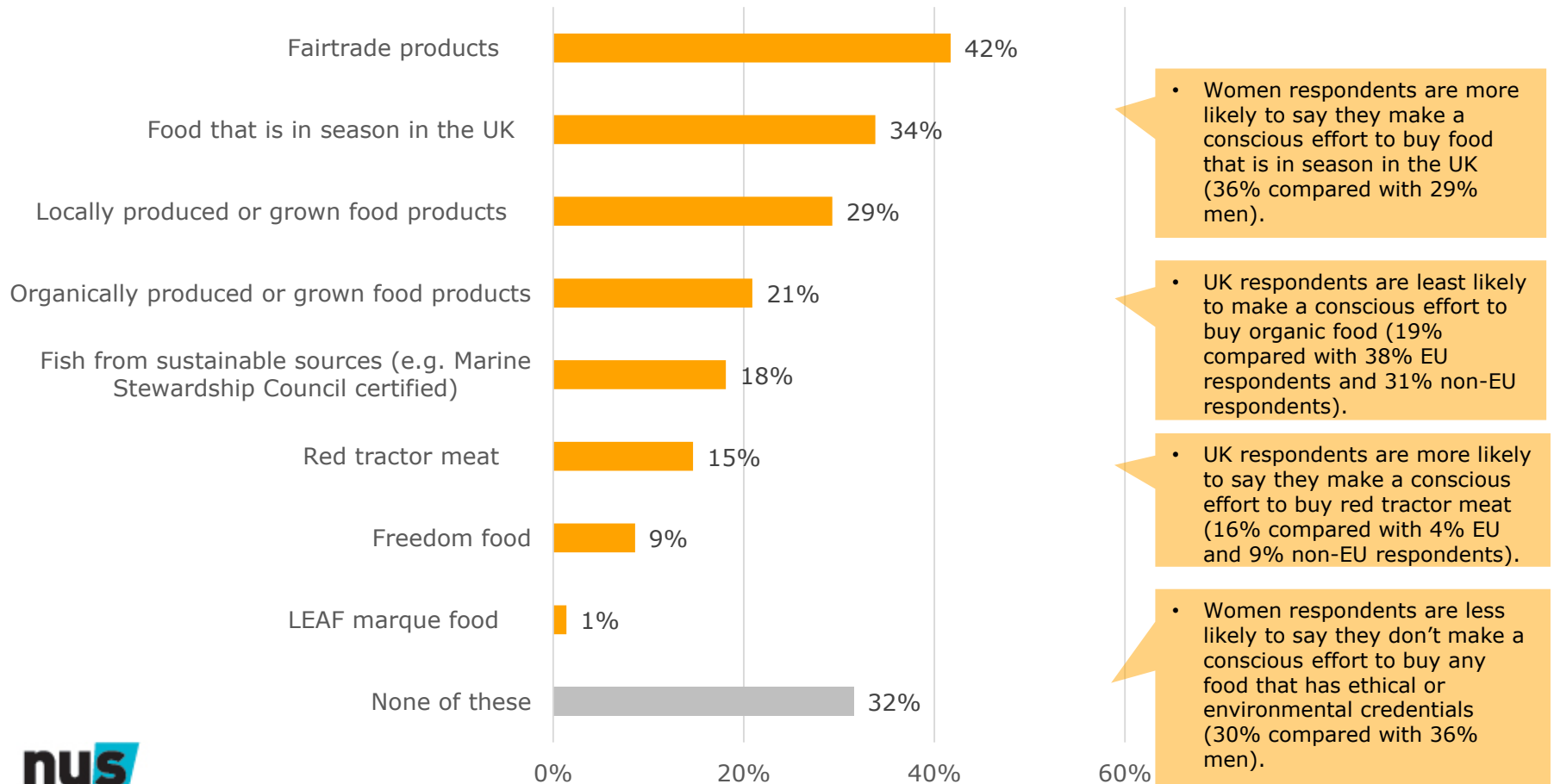


Q. What factors do you take into consideration when buying food? (Weighted base: 1494 Balance: No response)

# **Research Findings**

## Sustainable food habits and attitudes

Over two fifths of respondents say they make a conscious effort to buy Fairtrade products (42%) and a third say they try to buy food that is in season in the UK (34%). A third of respondents report that they do not make a conscious effort to buy food with any of the environmental or ethical accreditations or characteristics (32%).

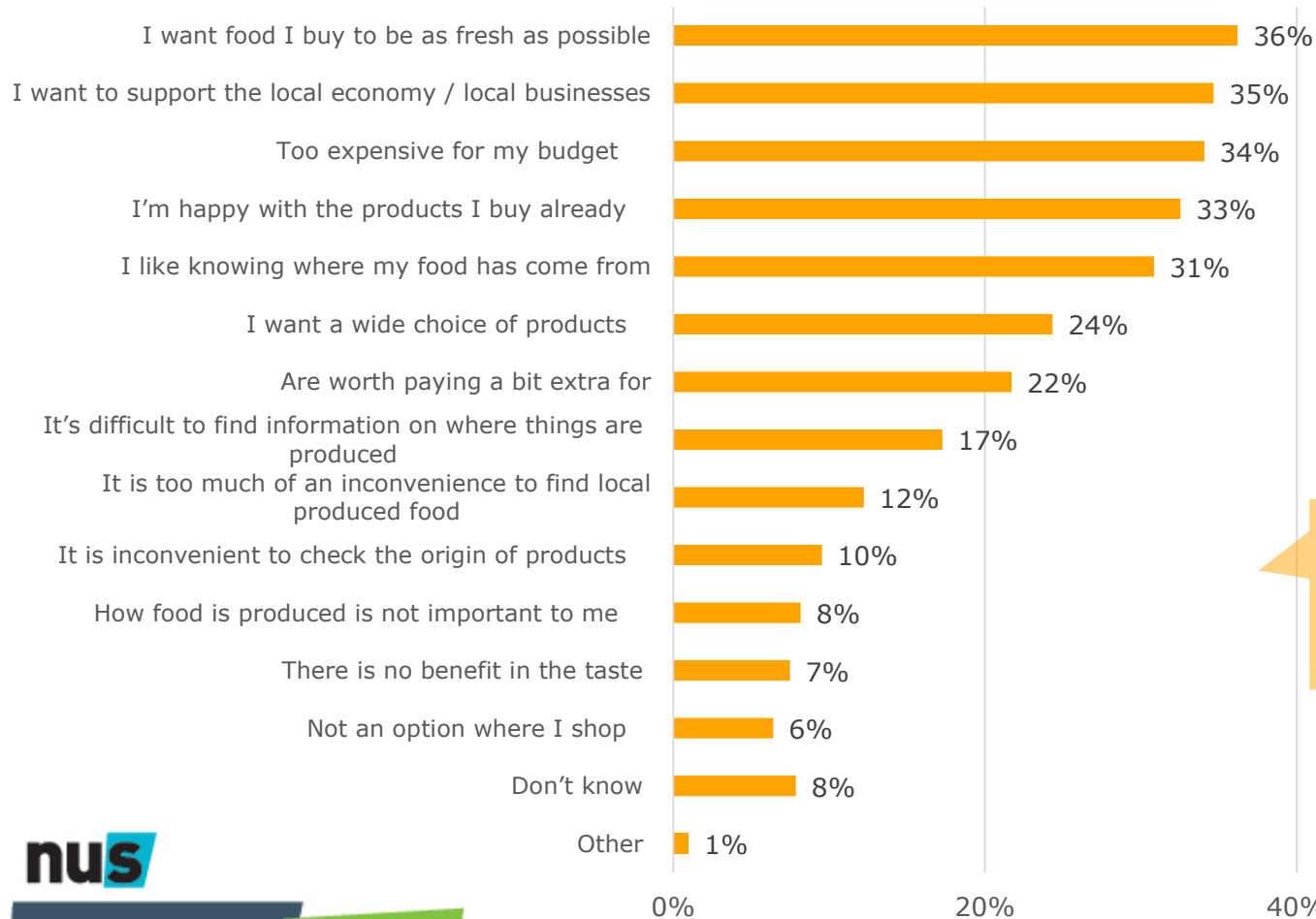


nus

student eats

Q. Which, if any, of these do you make a conscious effort to buy?  
(Weighted base: 1470 Balance: No response)

Respondents perceive locally produced food / food products to be a way of purchasing food that is as fresh as possible (36%) and also a way of supporting the local economy (35%). However, only around one in five say that these products are worth paying a bit extra for (22%) and a third think they're too expensive for their budgets (34%).

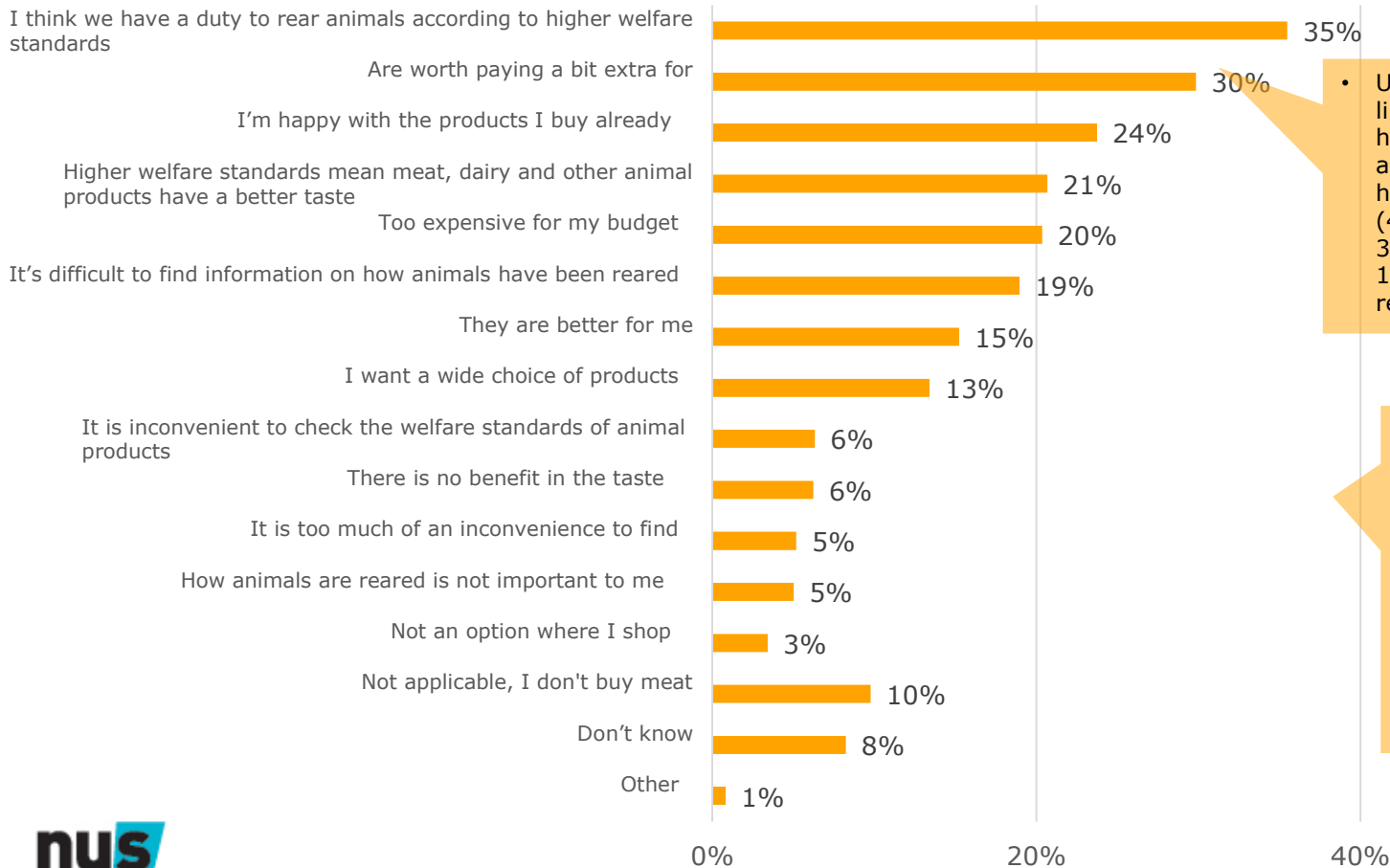


- UK respondents are most likely to say they want to support the local economy / businesses through locally produced food (36% compared with 30% non-EU respondents).

- Non-EU international respondents are more likely to say how food is produced is not important compared with UK respondents (12% compared with 8%).



When thinking about higher welfare meat and animal products, only 5% of respondents say that how animals are reared is not important to them. Around a third (30%) report that higher welfare products are worth paying extra for. A over a third (35%) say we have a duty to rear animals according to higher welfare standards.



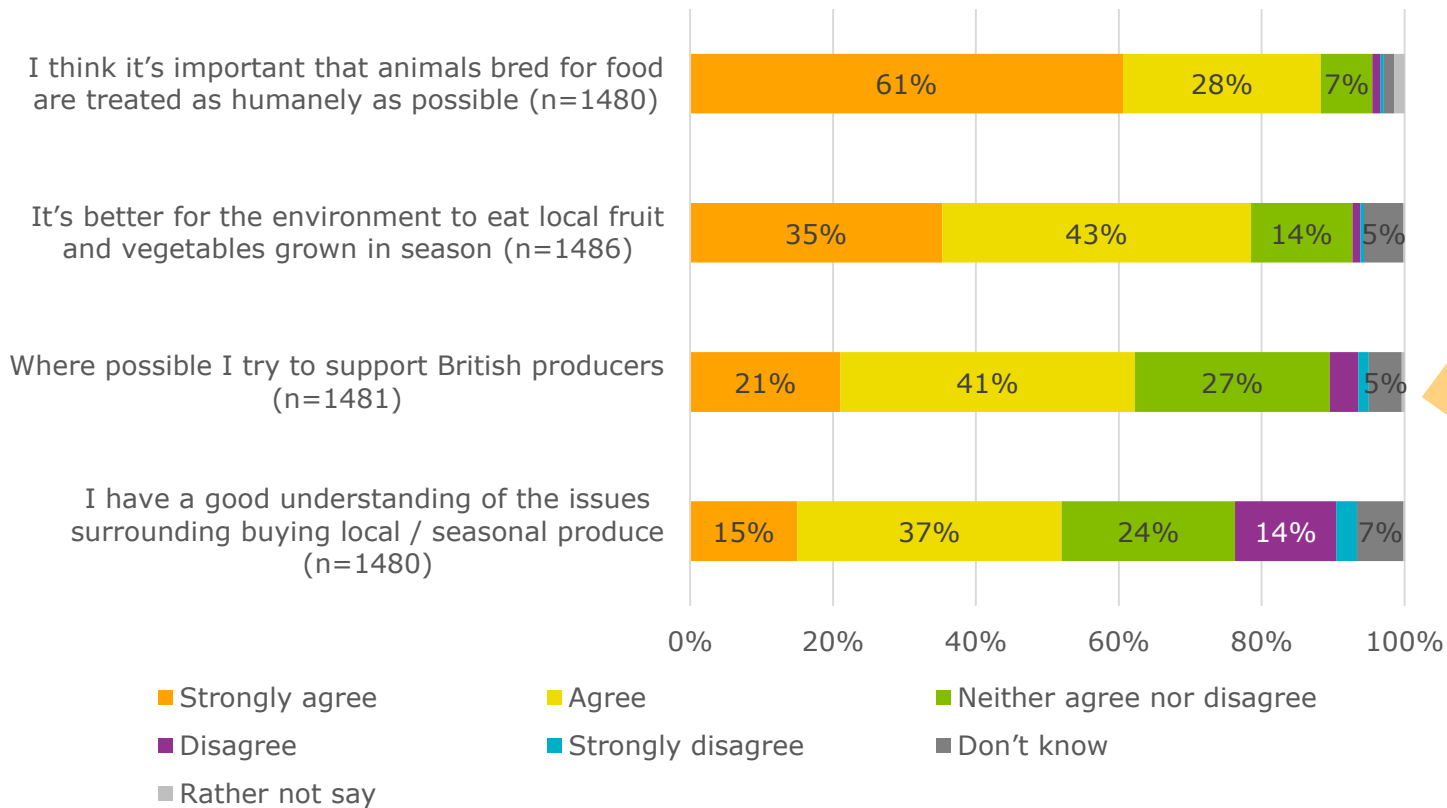
- UK respondents are most likely to say they think we have a duty to rear animals according to higher welfare standards (44% compared with 31% EU respondents and 19% non-EU respondents).

- Non-EU respondents are most likely to say its inconvenient to check the welfare standards of animal products (9% compared with 6% EU and 5% UK respondents).
- For non-EU respondents it is not an option where they shop (9%) compared to 3% for UK and 4% EU respondents.



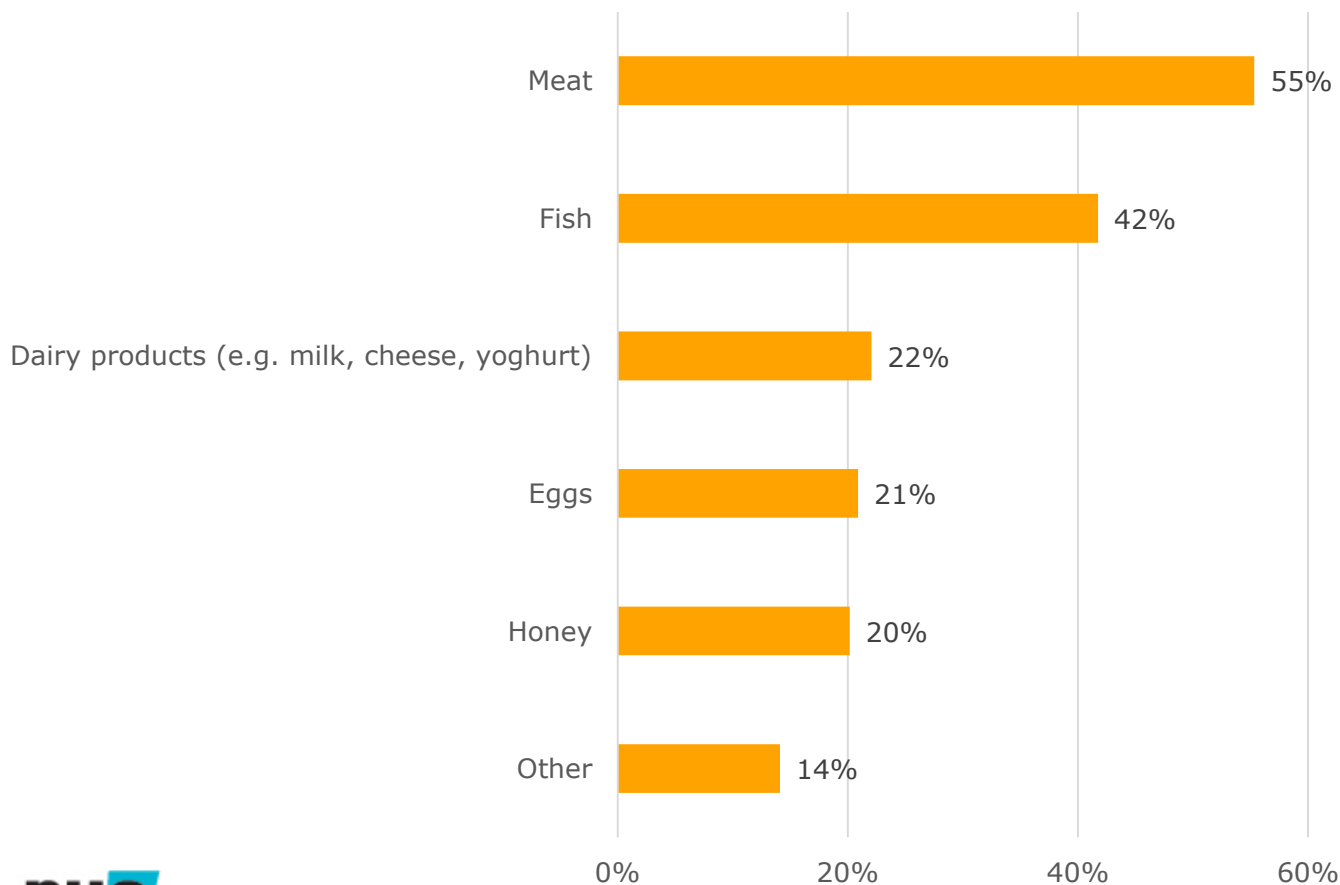
**Q. Which, if any, of these statements matches how you think about buying meat, dairy and other animal products (e.g. eggs) that have higher welfare standards?**  
 Please select all that apply  
 (Weighted base: 1487 Balance: No response)

The majority of respondents agree to some extent (89%) that it is important to treat animals bred for food humanely. There is also strong agreement that it is better for the environment to eat locally grown fruit and vegetables that are in season (78%), however just half (52%) of respondents say they have a good understanding of the issues surrounding buying local / seasonal produce.



• UK respondents are most likely to agree that they try to support British producers where possible (63% compared with 53% EU respondents and 55% non-EU respondents).

Over half (55%) of respondents say they avoid eating meat for ethical or environmental reasons. Two fifths (42%) avoid eating fish for the same reasons.



- Female respondents are most likely to say they avoid eating meat for ethical or environmental reasons, compared to men (57% compared to 43%). EU respondents are also significantly more likely to say they avoid eating meat (67%) compared to UK (50%) and non-EU (49%) respondents.

nus

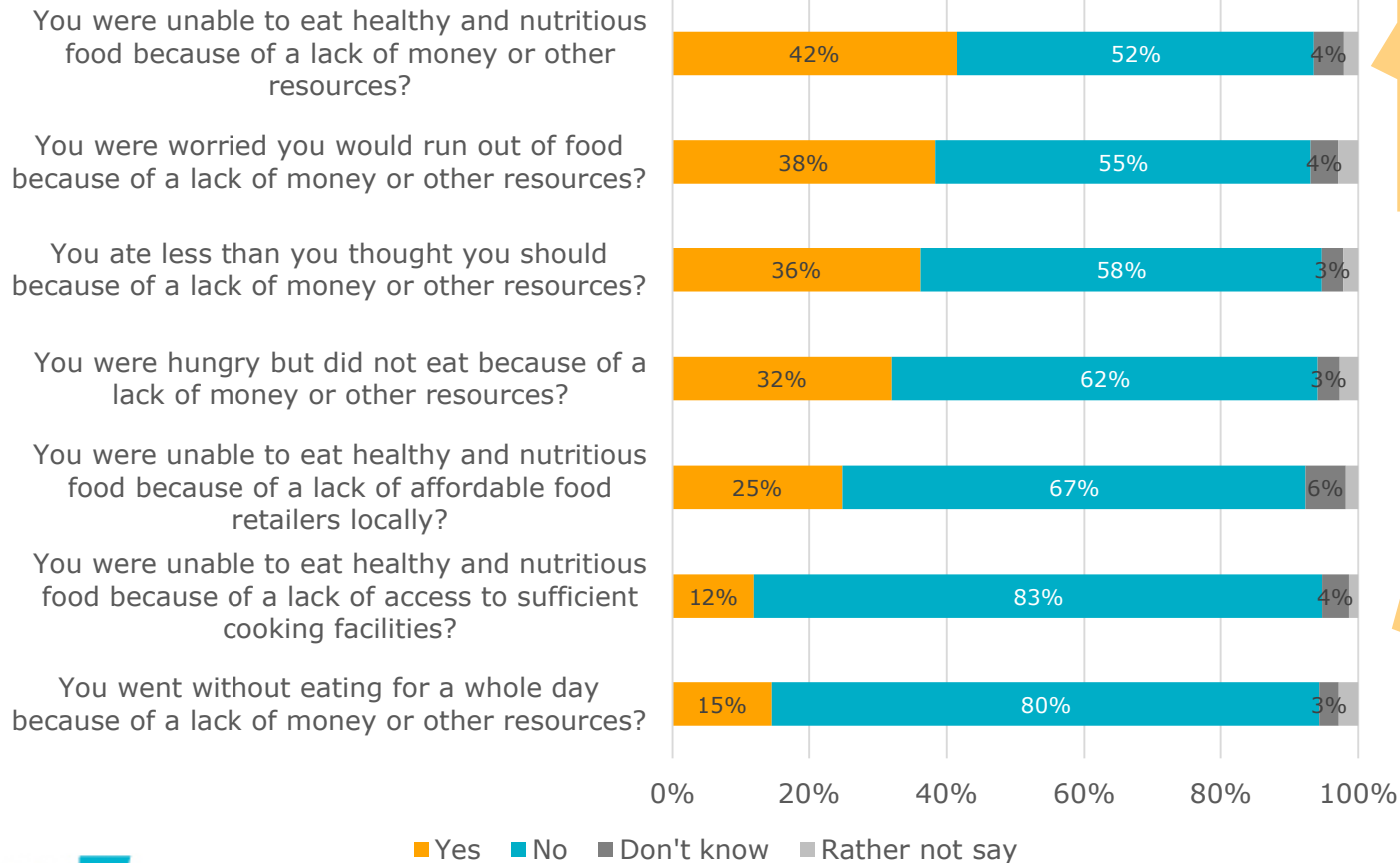
student eats

Q. Do you avoid eating any of the following foods for ethical or environmental reasons?  
(Base:1561 Balance: No response)

# Research Findings

## Students and Food Poverty

Two fifths of respondents (42%) report being unable to eat healthy and nutritious food in the last 12 months due to a lack of money or other resources, and a similar proportion (38%) have been worried they would run out of food for the same reason. A third (32%) report having been hungry but did not eat because of a lack of money or other resources and 15% say they have gone a whole day without eating for this reason.



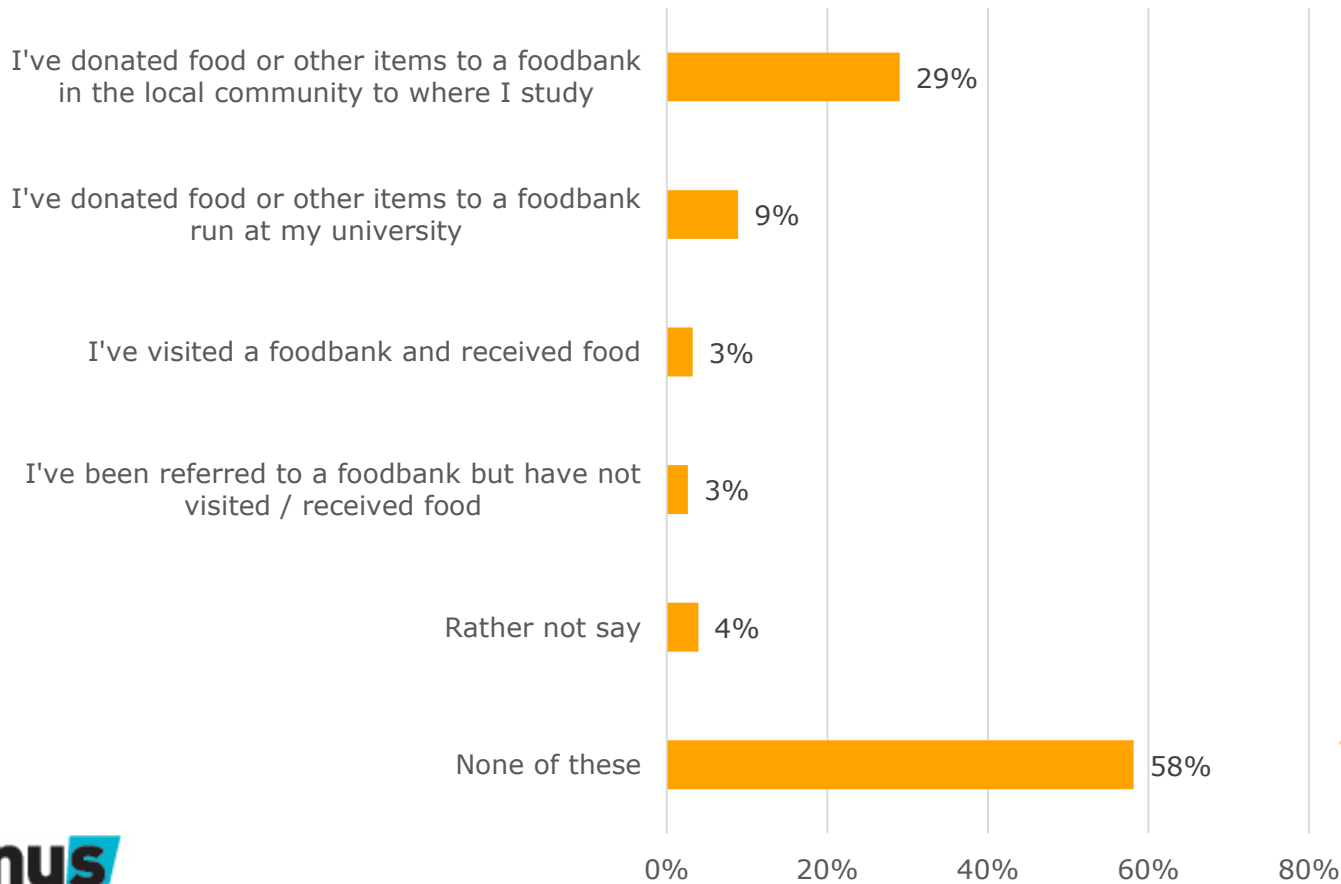
- Female respondents (39%) were more likely than male respondents (33%) to say they were unable to eat healthy and nutritious food because of a lack of money or other resources.

- International respondents are more likely to say they have been unable to eat healthy and nutritious food because of a lack of access to sufficient cooking facilities in the last 12 months (26% non-EU and 17% EU respondents compared 10% UK respondents).



**Q. Now we'd like to ask some questions about your food consumption in the last 12 months.**  
**During the last 12 months, was there a time when:**  
**Please pick one for each statement**  
**(Weighted base: c. 1480 Balance: No response)**

Over half of respondents (58%) say they haven't been involved with foodbanks. Over a quarter (29%) have donated food or other items to a foodbank in the local community where they study.



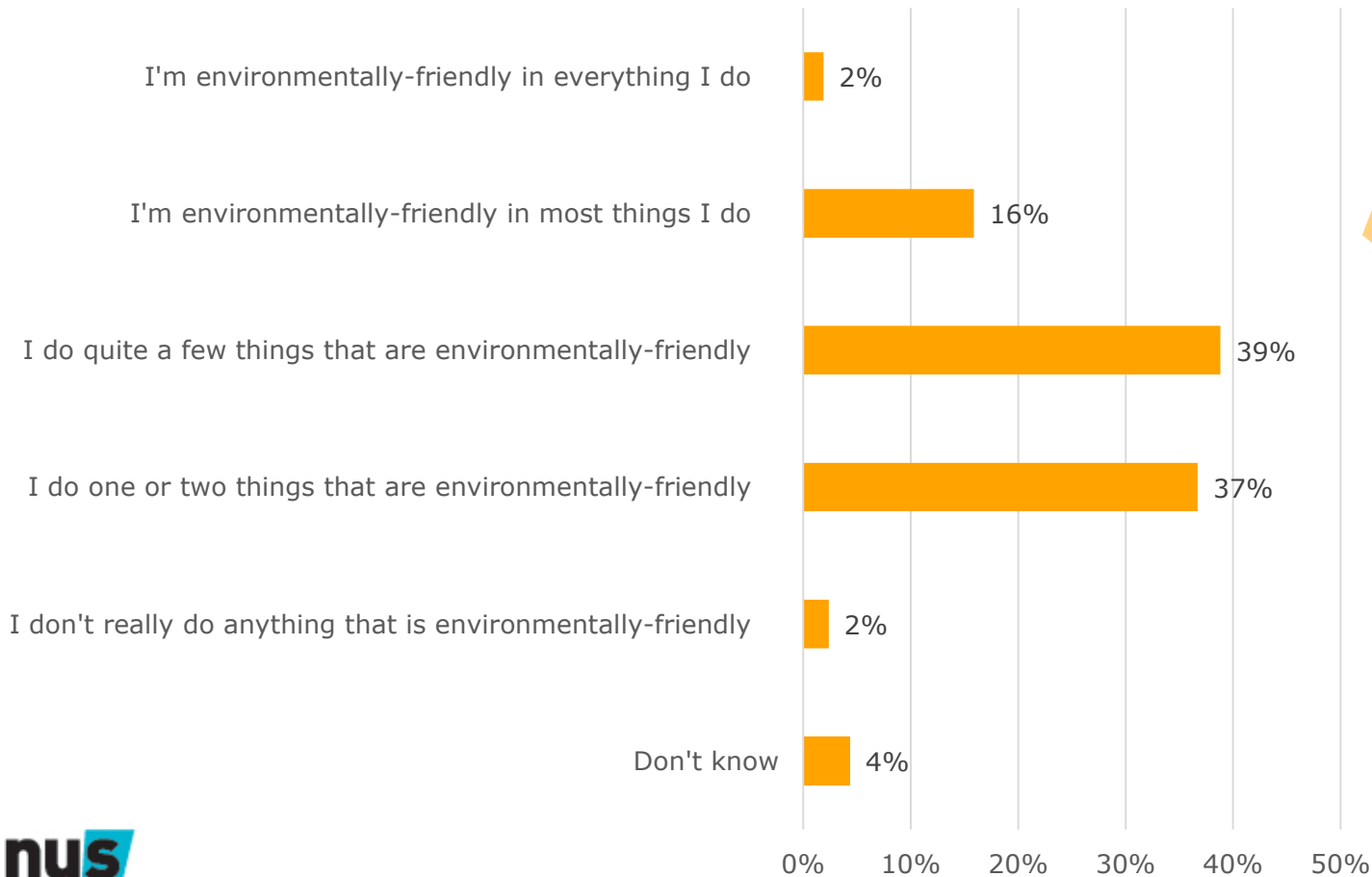
- Female respondents are most likely to have donated food or other items to a foodbank in the community where they study (27% women compared to 21% males)

- International students are least likely to have done any of these charitable actions (74%) compared to UK respondents (65%).

# **Research Findings**

Pro-environmental  
attitudes and  
behaviours

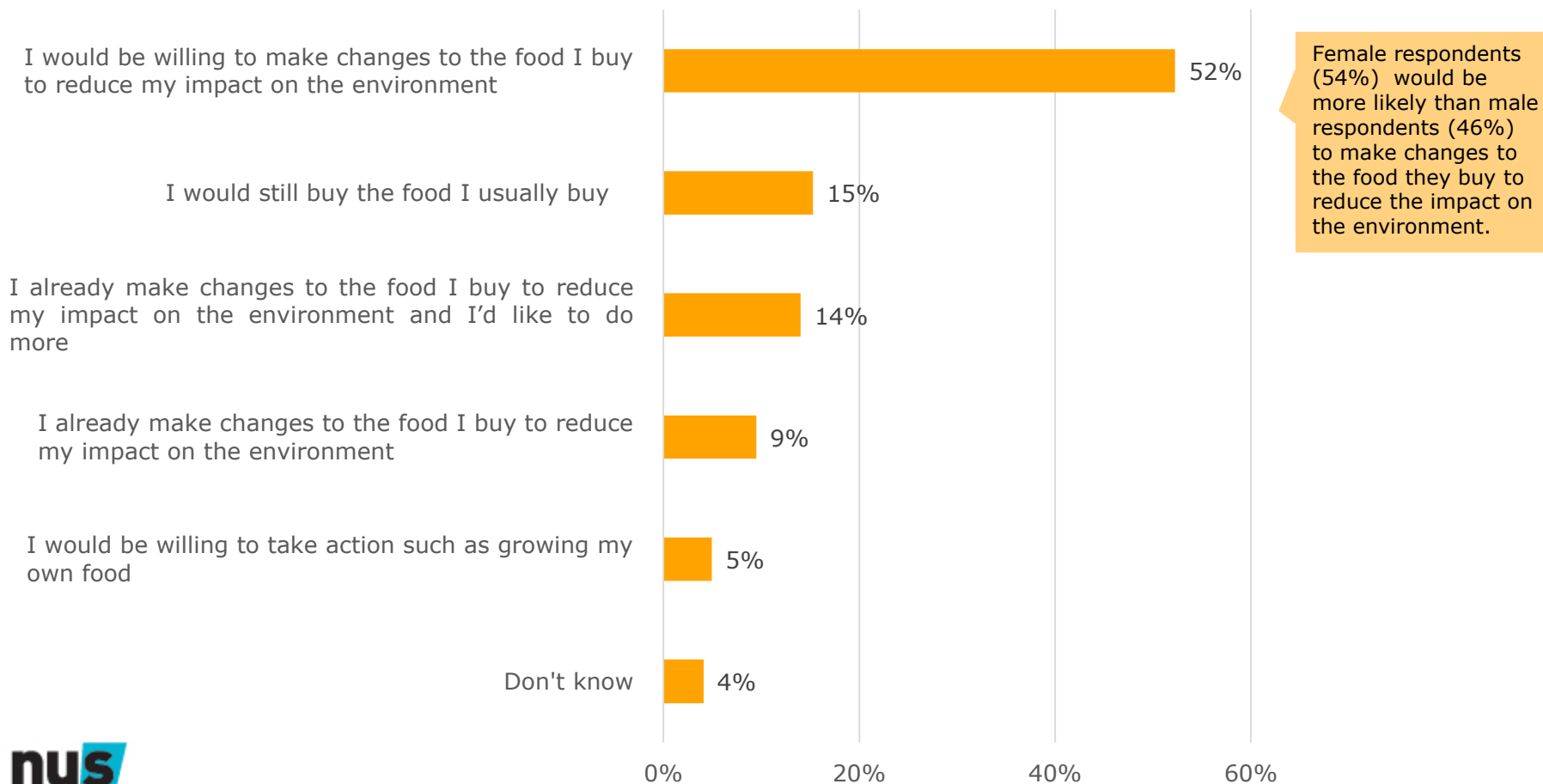
The majority of respondents report doing at least one or two things that are environmentally-friendly (94%). 2% say they don't really do anything to help the environment.



- Female respondents (38%) were more likely than male respondents (35%) to say they do one or two things that are environmentally friendly. UK respondents (39%) are more likely than EU (31%) and non-EU (26%) respondents to do one or two things.



Half of respondents (52%) say they that if they knew more about the environmental impacts on how food is produced they would be willing to make changes to the food they buy, to reduce their impact on the environment. For 15%, their food shopping behaviours would not change even if they understood the environmental impacts on how food is produced.

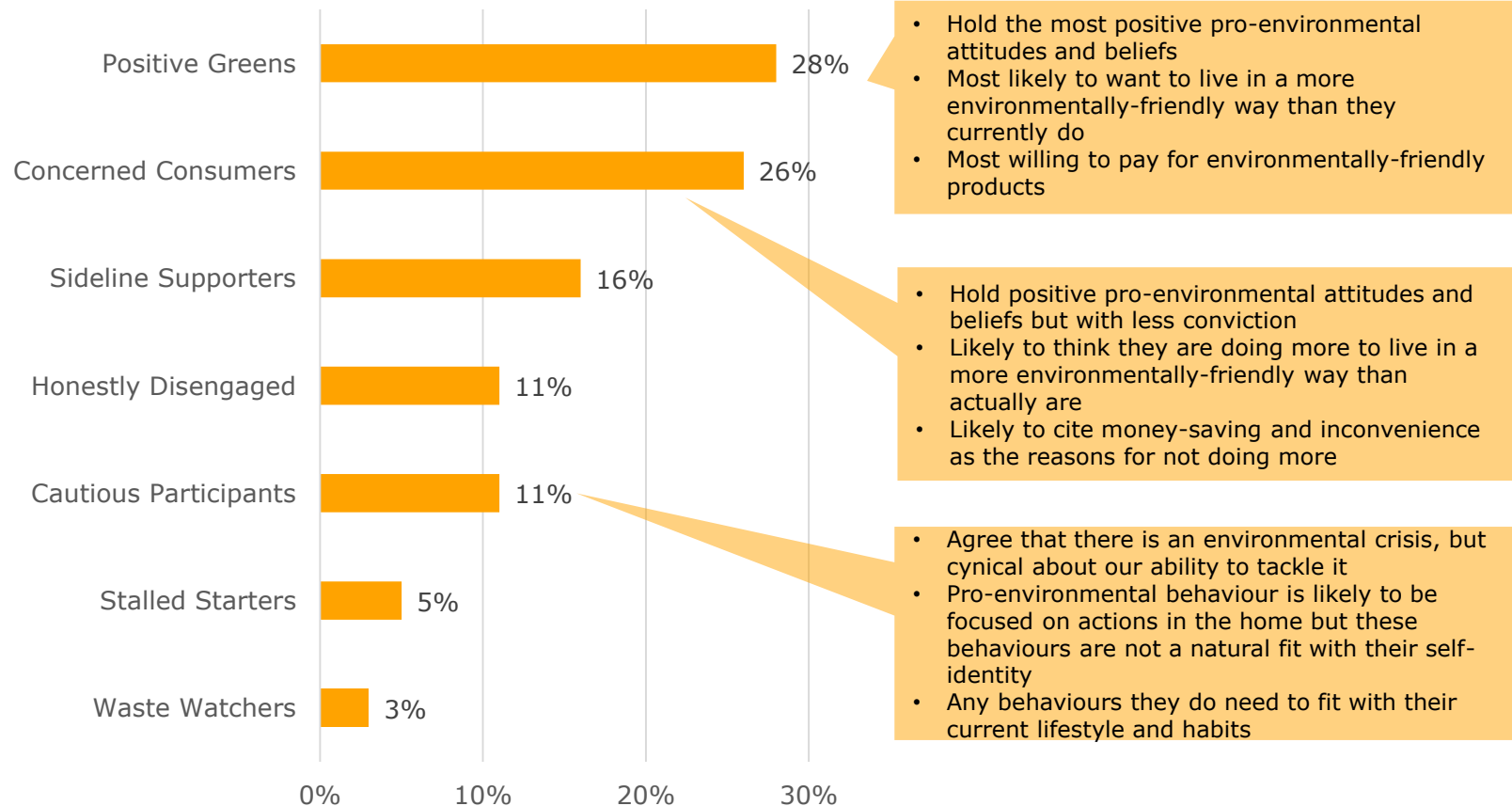


nus

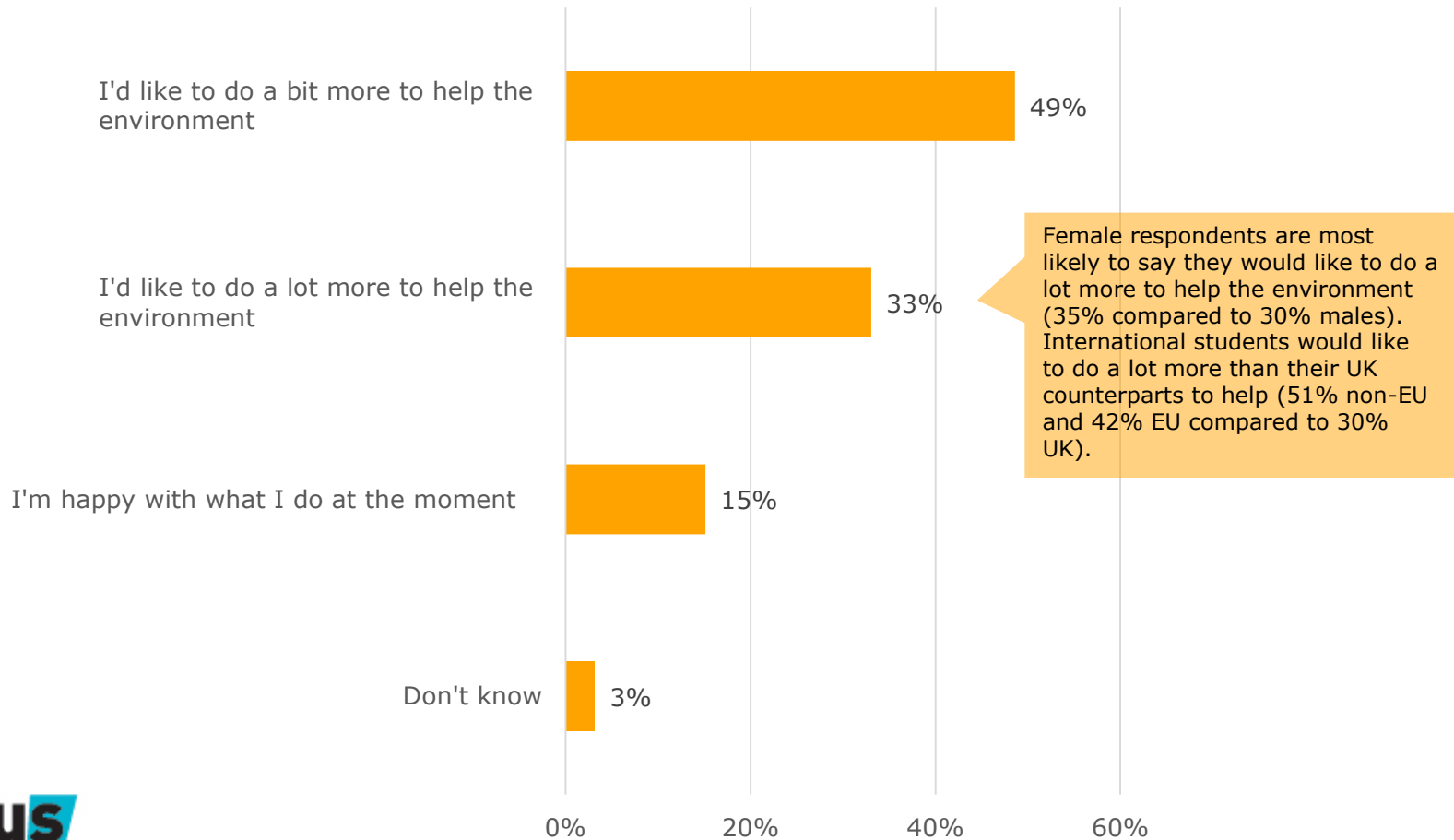
student eats

Q. Please read the statement below and tell us which of the options best applies to you. If I had a better understanding of the environmental impacts of how food is produced... Please select one only (Weighted base: 1483 Balance: No response)

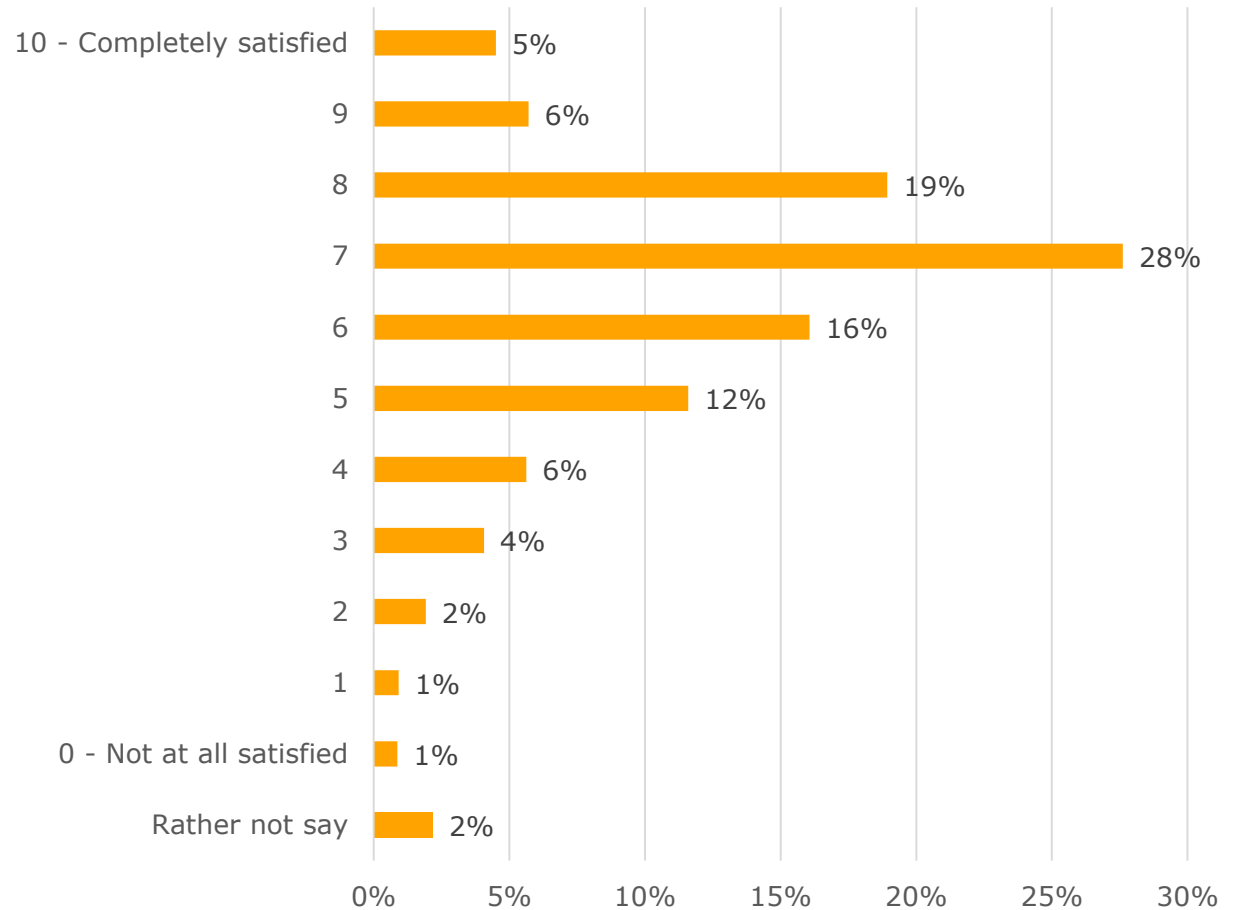
Using a segmentation model of environmental attitudes and behaviours, over a quarter (28%) of respondents are categorised as Positive Greens. This group hold the most positive pro-environmental attitudes and beliefs.



Over four fifths (82%) of respondents say they would like to do either a bit more, or a lot more to help the environment.



Over half (58%) of respondents gave a score of 7 or above to rate their level of satisfaction with their life nowadays.

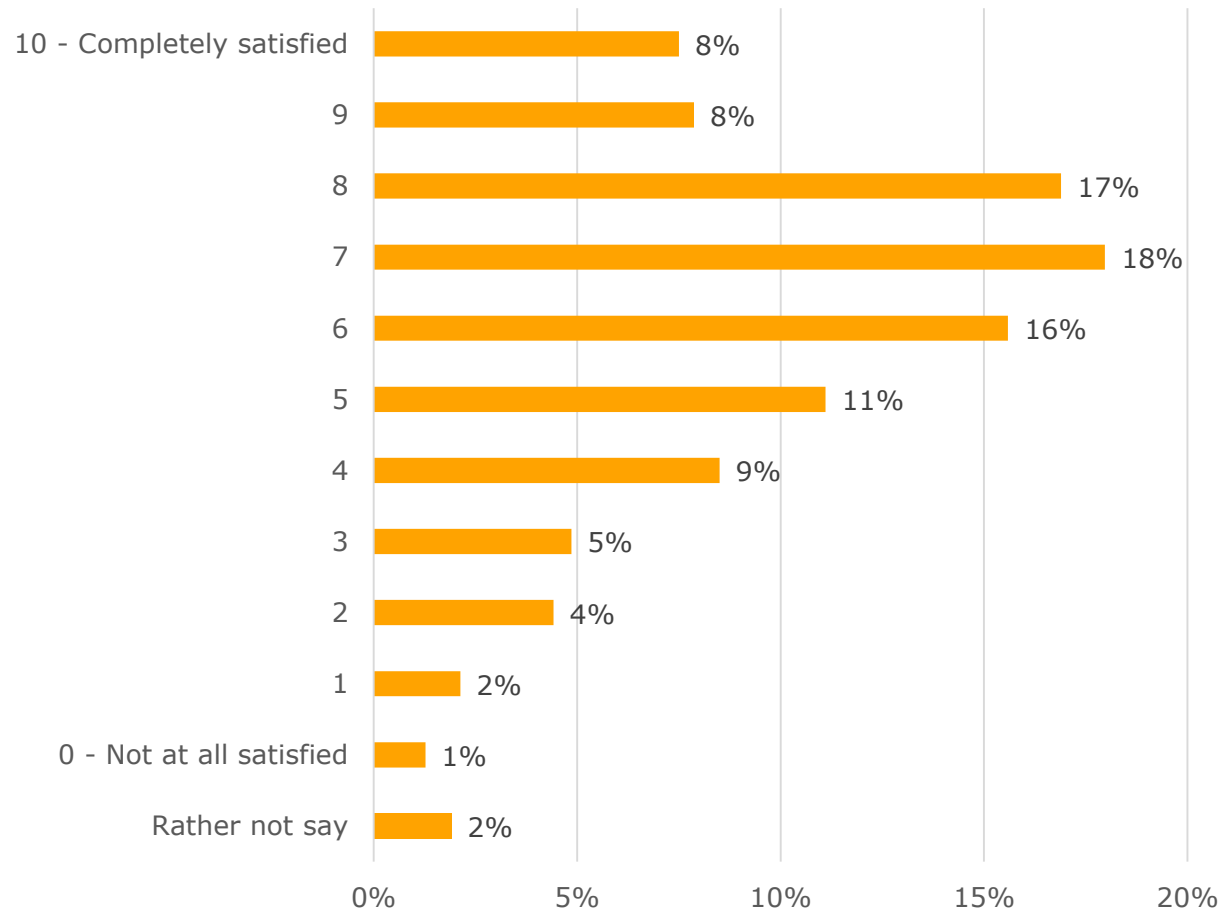


nus

student eats

Q. On a scale of 0-10, where 0 is not at all satisfied and 10 is completely satisfied, overall, how satisfied are you with your life nowadays?  
(Weighted base: 1487 Balance: No response)

Slightly fewer (51%) gave a score of 7 or above to express how satisfied they were with their happiness yesterday.

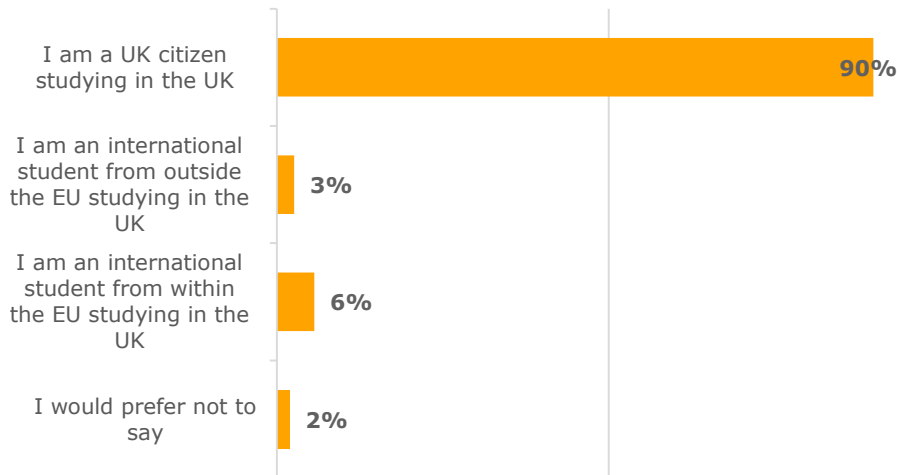


# **Annex**

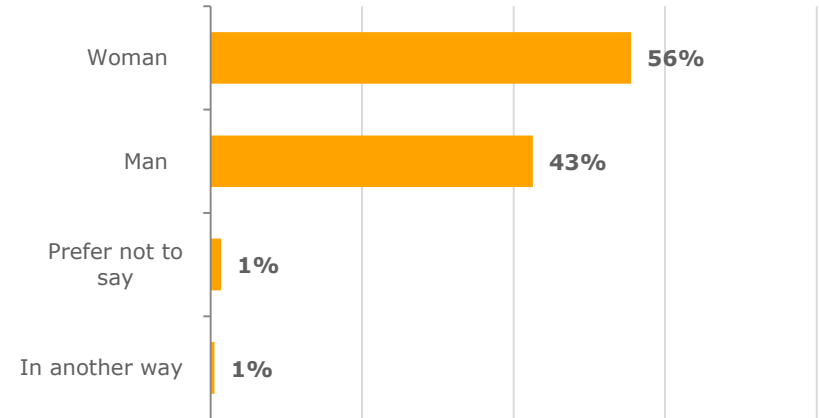
## Full Demographics

# Respondent demographics

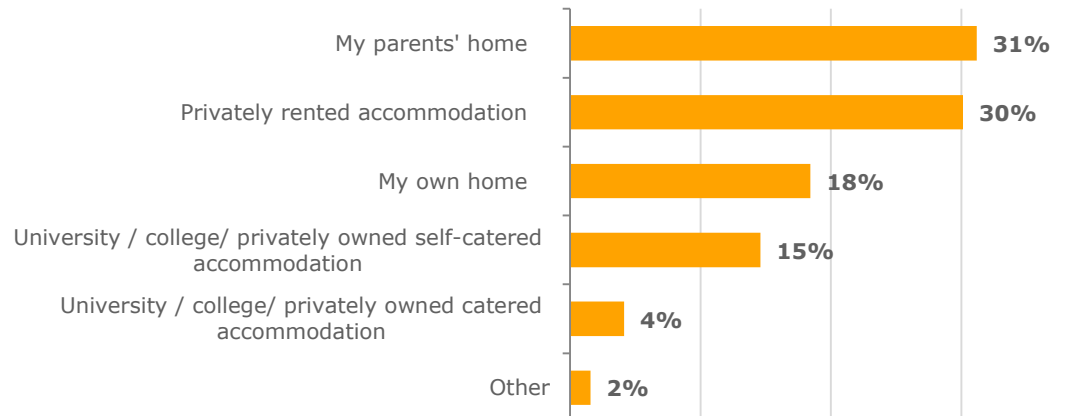
## Nationality



## Gender

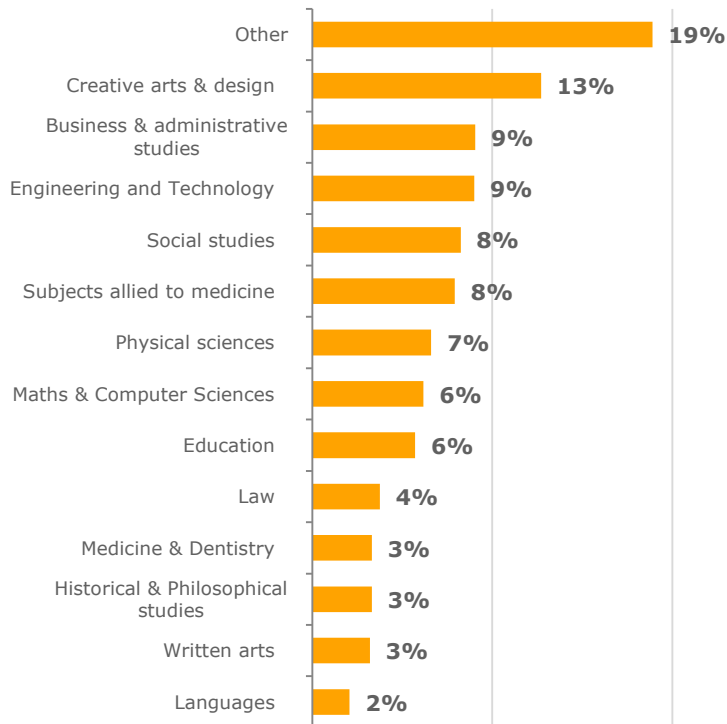


## Accommodation type

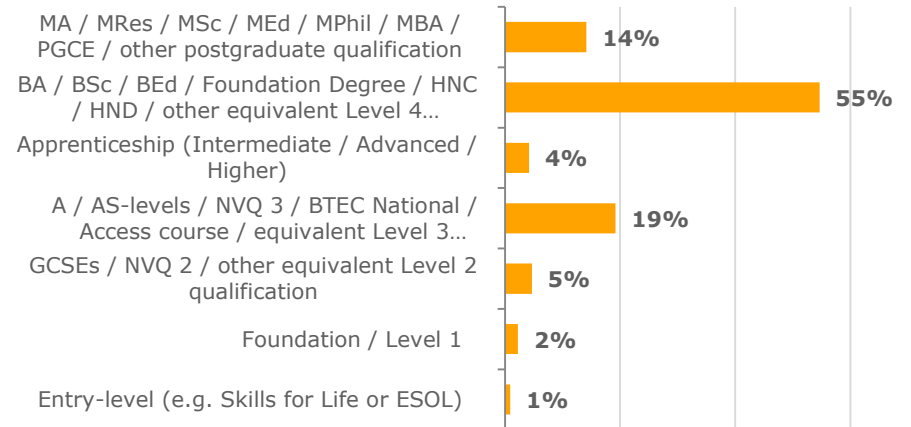


# Respondent demographics

## Subject (all)



## Level of study



## Year of study (HE)

