
The 2022 student mindset

16th March 2022



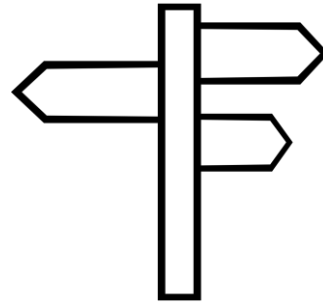
The Applicant Mindset



We explored...



The applicant
mindset



What would change
applicants' decisions



Impact of exams/
assessments

A reminder of our methodology

Online survey

587

Applicants (those who are on the UCAS database and have submitted an application)

All to be **planning to go to university this year** (Sept 2022)

All sample from **UCAS's applicant database**, from across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and both international and UK students.

Fieldwork **1st – 10th February 2021**

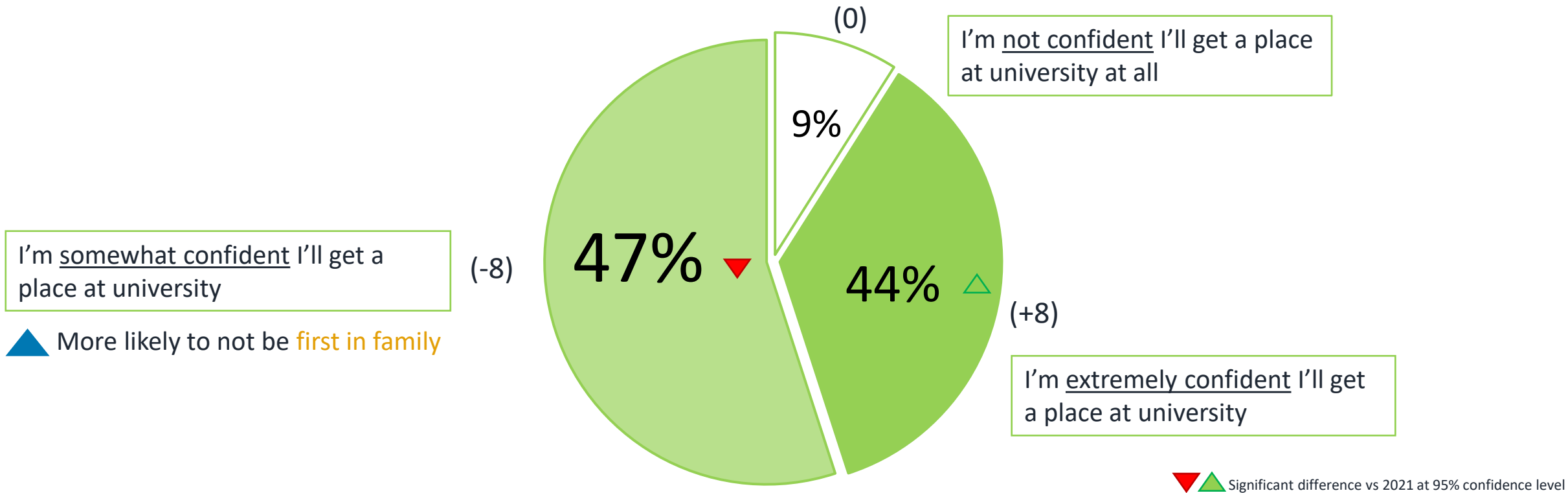
The vast majority of applicants are confident of getting a place at university, and are more sure this time around



91%
are confident they will
get a place

Overall confidence is stable - and to a greater extent compared to 2021

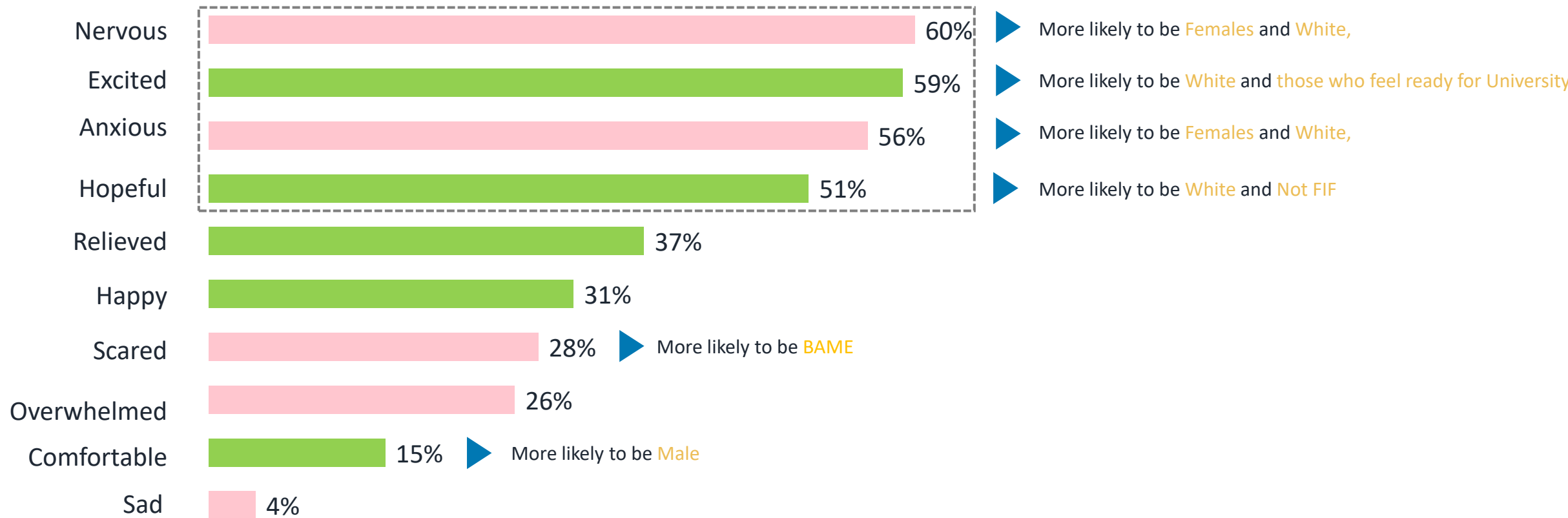
Confidence in getting a university place, % selected



Following their application to university, applicants are feeling nervousness and anxiety. But most are also positive about the outcome

Some feel a sense of anxiety about their application, but many are looking forward to the future

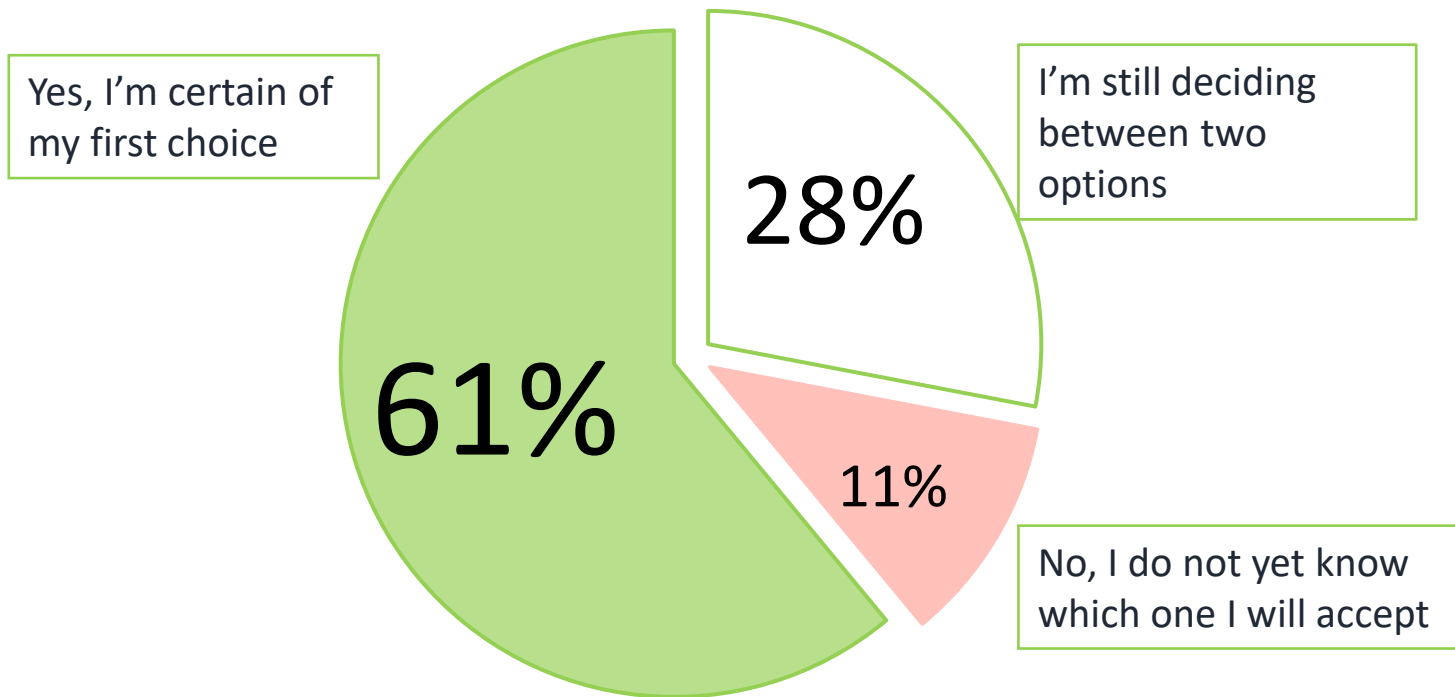
Which emotions, if any, describes how you feel now you've applied, % selected



Applicants this year are also more committed to their preferred university and many are certain of their first choice

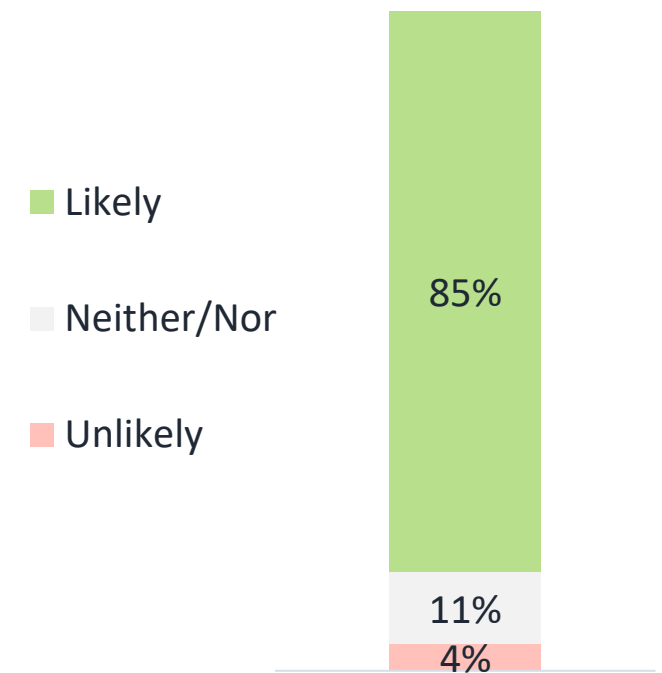
Many applicants have already made their decisions and are confident in getting the required grades

Certainty over first choice, % selected



Confidence in getting required grades, % selected

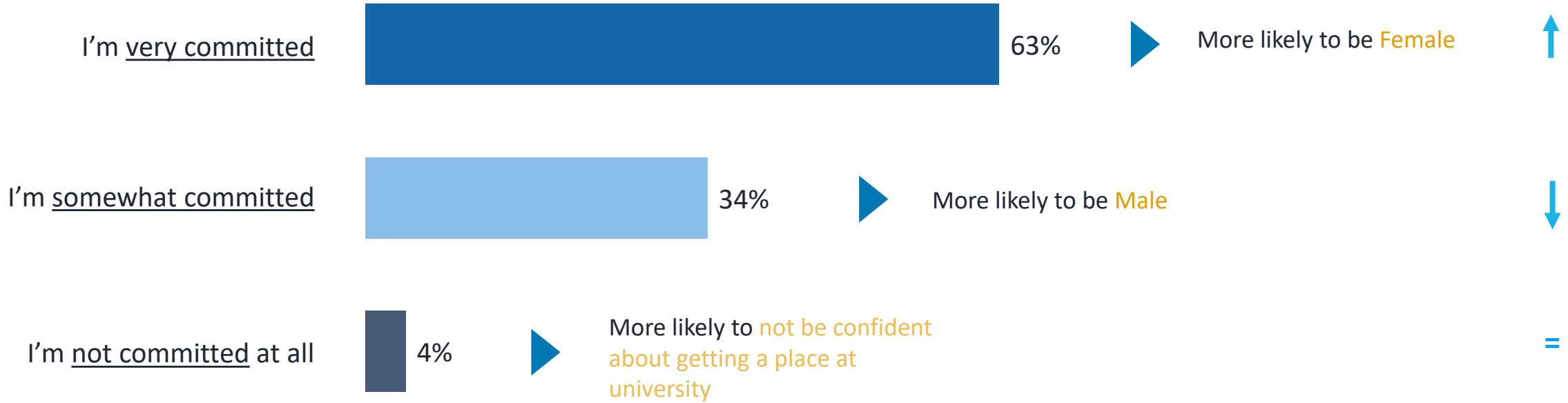
(Base: Those certain of first choice)



More applicants are very committed to their first choice university this year

Commitment to preferred university choice, % selected

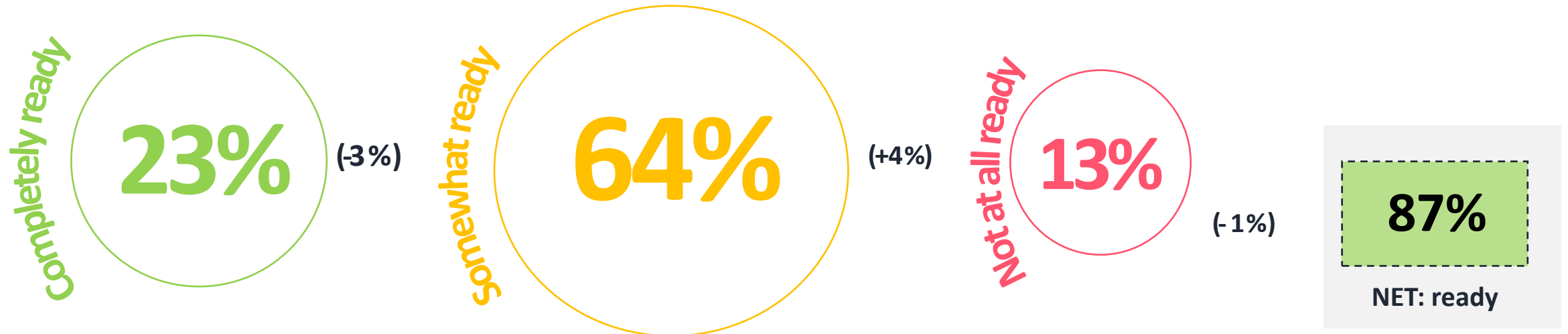
+/- vs 2021*



*Last year this question was framed around in person visits

Almost all applicants feel at least somewhat ready for university, particularly among those who are feeling confident about getting a place

With only a quarter feeling completely ready for university, there is scope for universities to help applicants feel more prepared



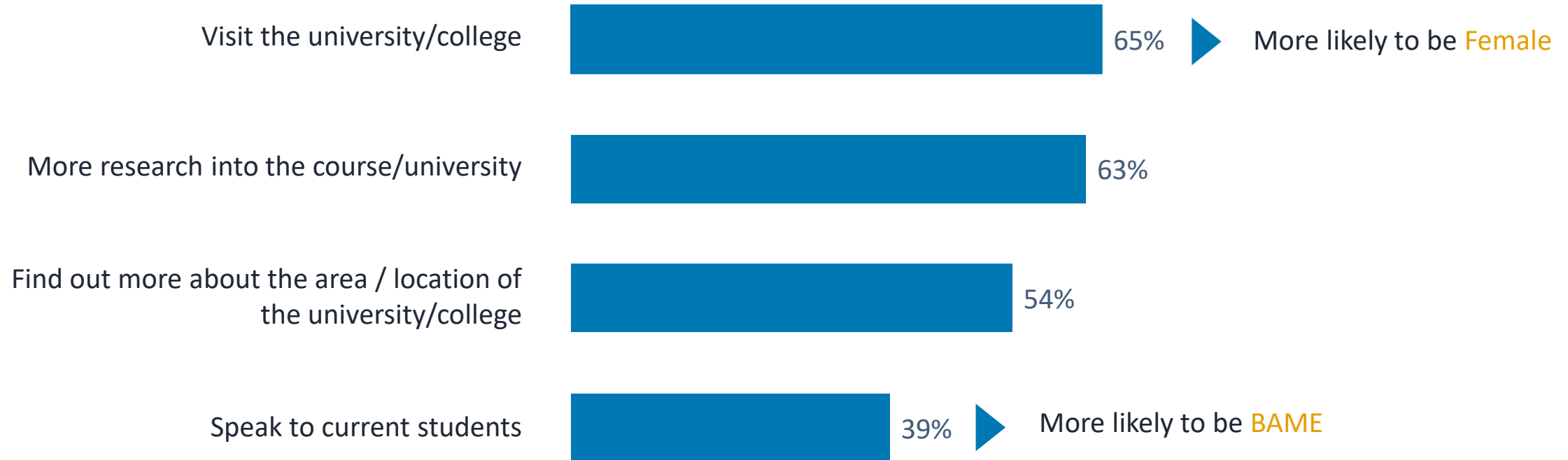
▲ More likely to be BAME

▼ Less likely to be ready among those who feel less confident about getting a place

(+/-) = Difference vs 2021

Applicants still want to find out more, largely through visits and researching the course/ university

What will applicants do now in the application process, % selected



Applicants want to engage with universities directly and receive more information

More open days and in-personal events

*“Provide **open days in person**, not online if possible”*

*“Encourage **open days** and give advice and an outlook on certain courses”*

Chances to speak with current students

*“Show the facility’s that they have and have more **current student speak to potential future students**”*

More information beyond the courses

*“I think that they should look away from the academics and **focus on what the university has to offer E.g. facilities, accommodation and clubs / activities on campus**. Help understand the new environment!”*

*“I’m very interested in how universities **support students** aside from their courses”*

What does this tell us about applicants?

As COVID restrictions have eased, applicants are feeling more confident about getting a place and are also more certain in their decision making

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Many feel ready for university, but encouraging university visits and giving information will make them feel more prepared

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PROVIDERS

For those still deciding between choices, there is opportunity to influence their decision

Positive, reassuring comms – with clear steps and actions – will help to alleviate any nerves and anxiety

While students are in a positive place, we need to be mindful that this may not reflect the reality of results

Assessing alternatives

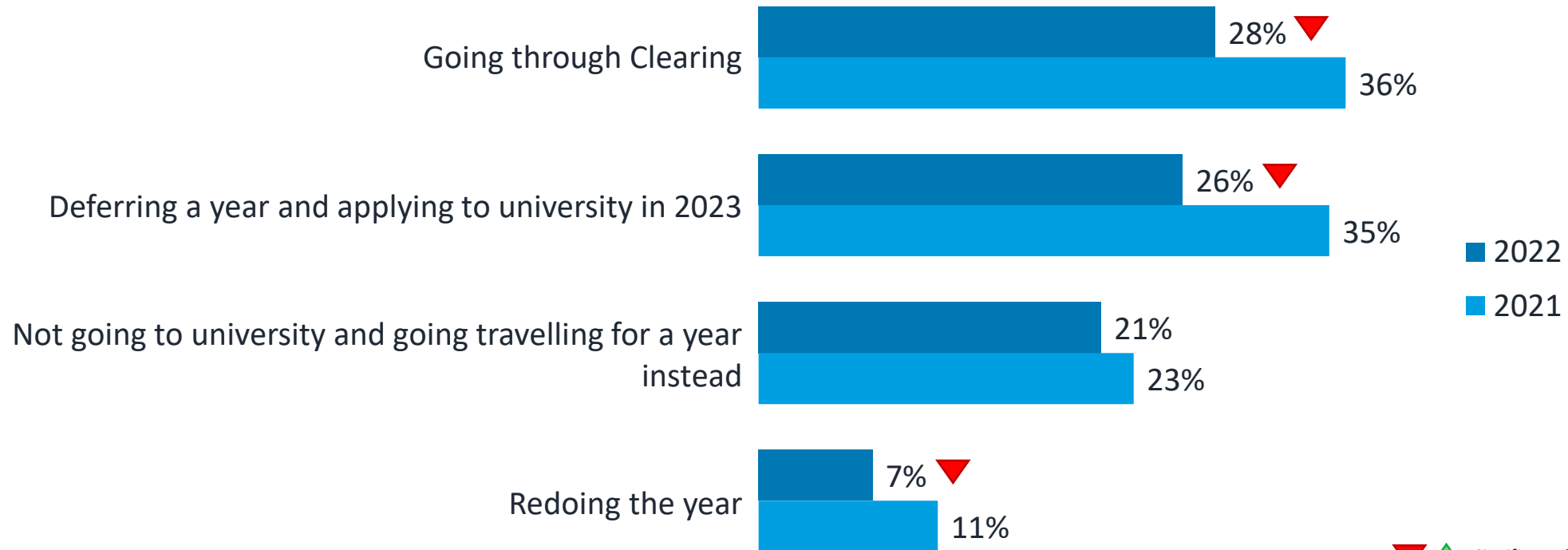


With greater certainty over university/college places this year, applicants are less worried about needing to delay their application

Far fewer applicants are concerned they will need to change their plans about going to university/college

Consideration of changing decisions about university, % yes

(NET: I'm seriously considering this, I'm thinking about this)



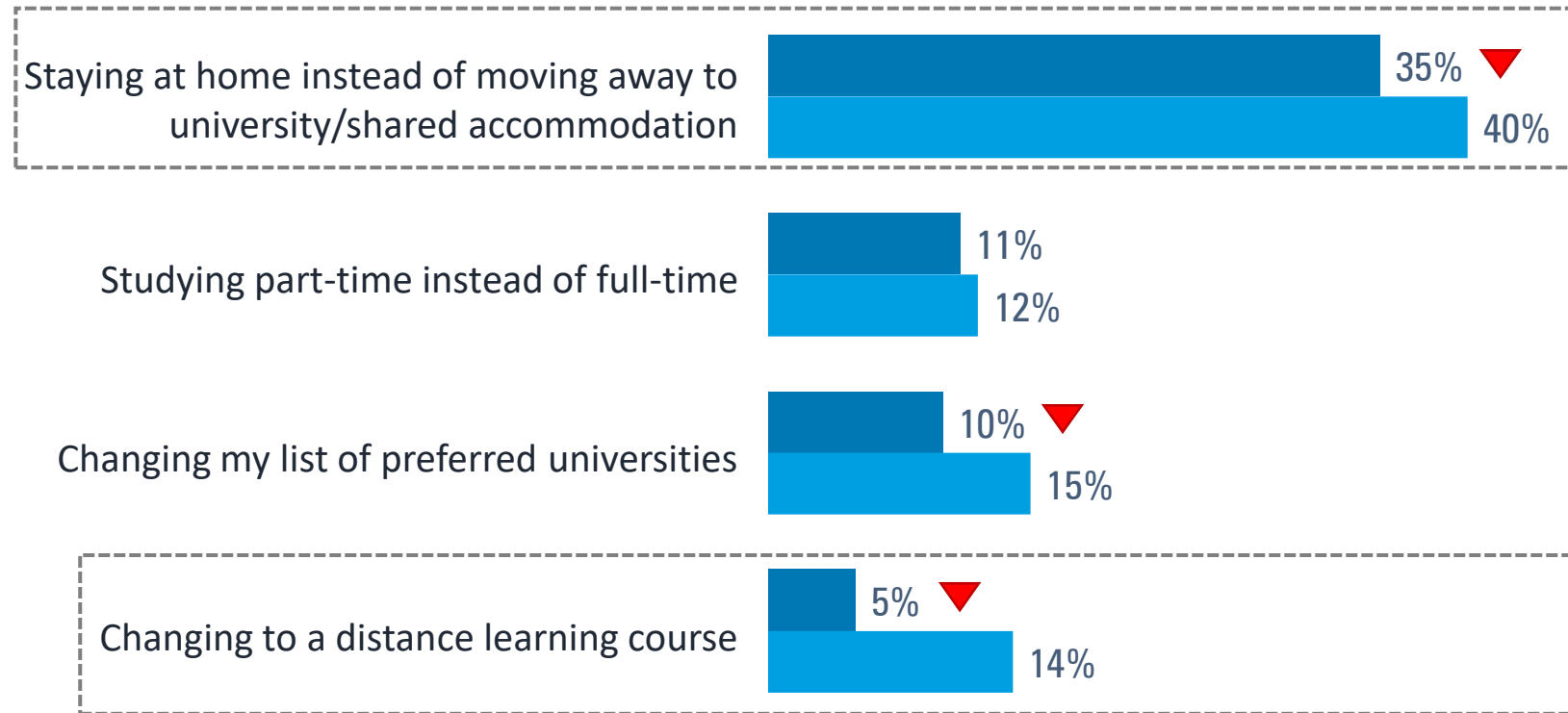
Significant difference vs 2021 at 95% confidence level

The changing outlook on the pandemic also means that applicants are less concerned about moving away to study

Far fewer are considering switching to a distance learning course or staying home to study

Consideration of changing decisions about university, % yes

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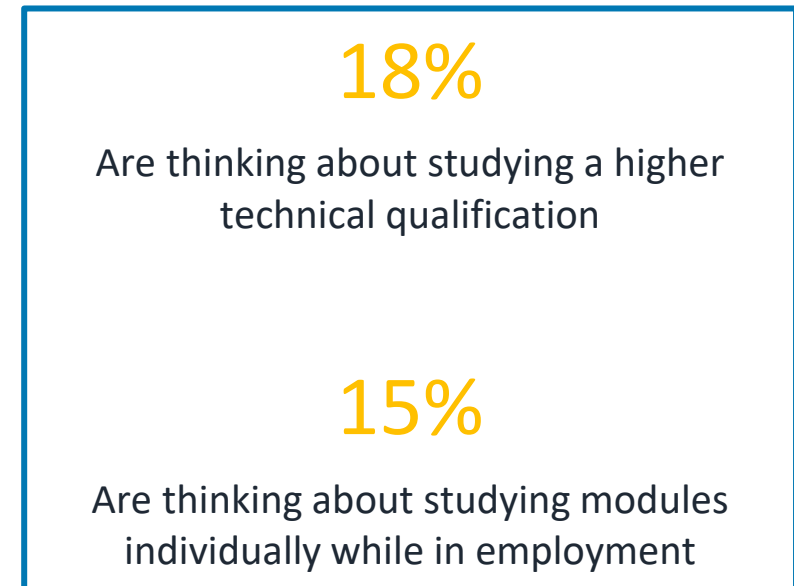
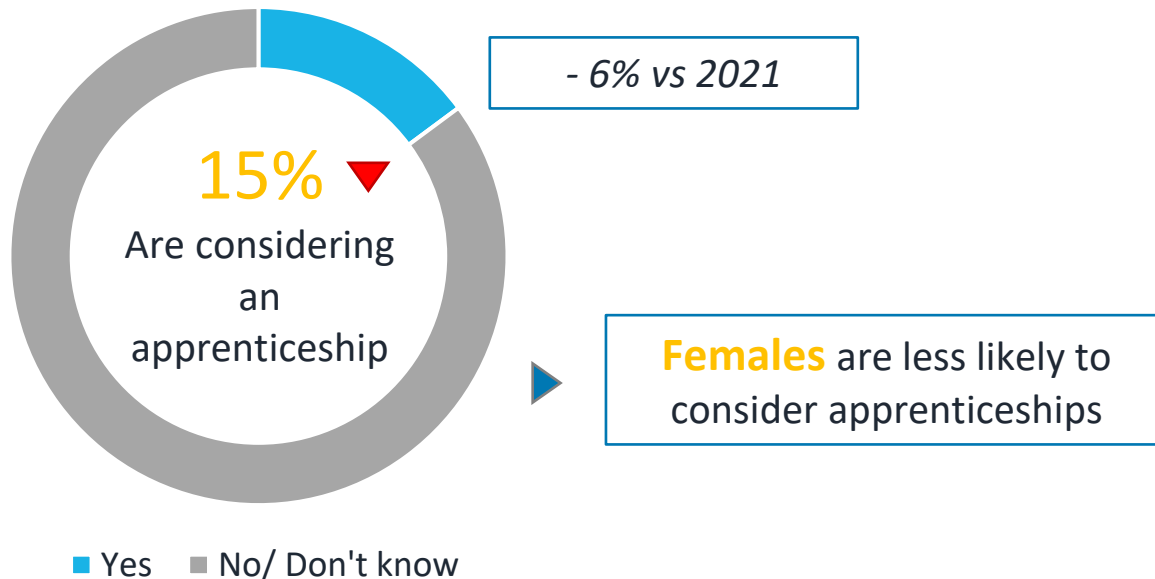


Significant difference vs 2021 at 95% confidence level

Consideration of apprenticeships also declines, and those who are thinking about it are most likely to prefer the option of going to university/ college

Consideration of apprenticeships declines, females are much less likely to think about this option

Consideration of changing decisions about university, % yes
 (NET: I'm seriously considering this, I'm thinking about this)

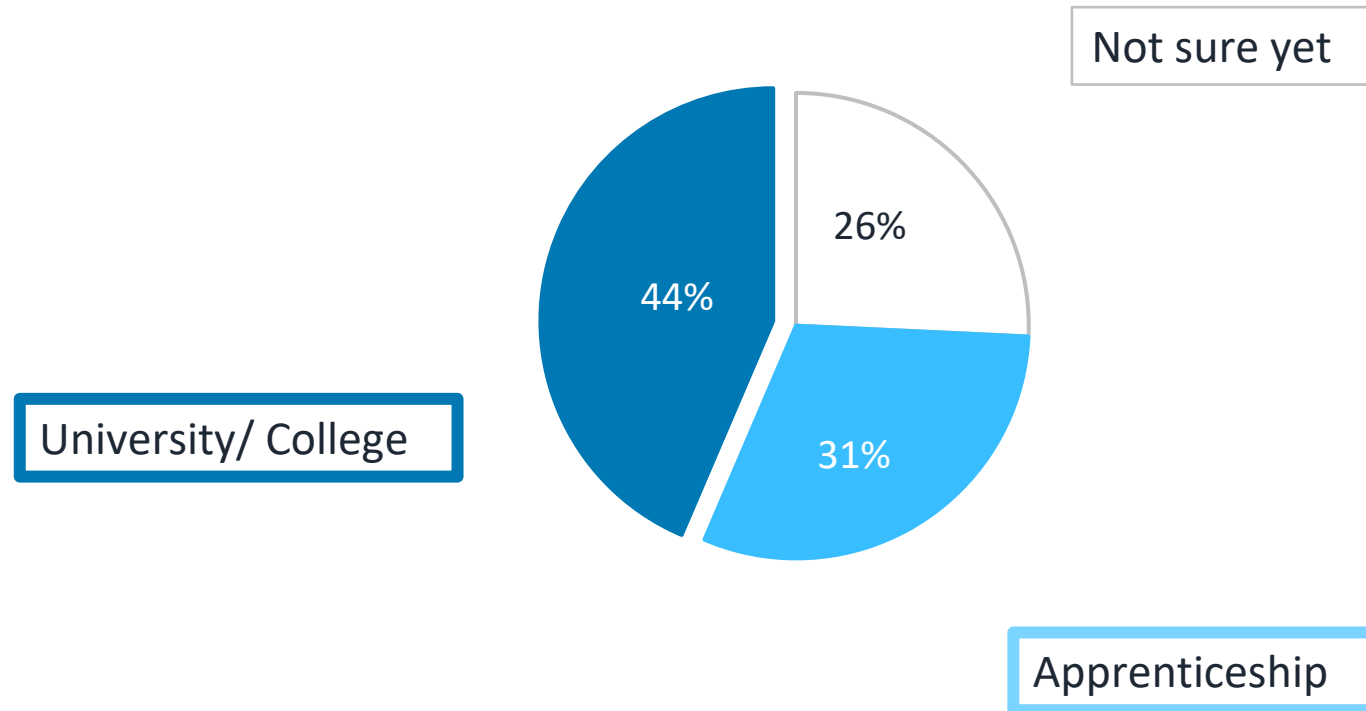


▼ ▲ Significant difference vs 2021 at 95% confidence level

Those considering an apprenticeship are most likely to prefer university

Preference, apprenticeship vs university/ college

(Base: Those considering an apprenticeship)



What does this tell us about applicants?

Applicants are feeling more secure in their decision to go to university/ college which is reflected in a decline in the proportion considering alternatives

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For many who would consider an apprenticeship, uni/ college appears to be the preferential option

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PROVIDERS

Overall it's a positive picture in terms of expected numbers for 2022 – with fewer considering alternatives

Students considering moving away has increased – your accommodation could help to sway their decisions

Although the volume interested in an apprenticeship has declined, a third with serious interest would choose an apprenticeship

Impact of exams and assessments



Getting back to normal methods of assessment appears to be boosting confidence among applicants

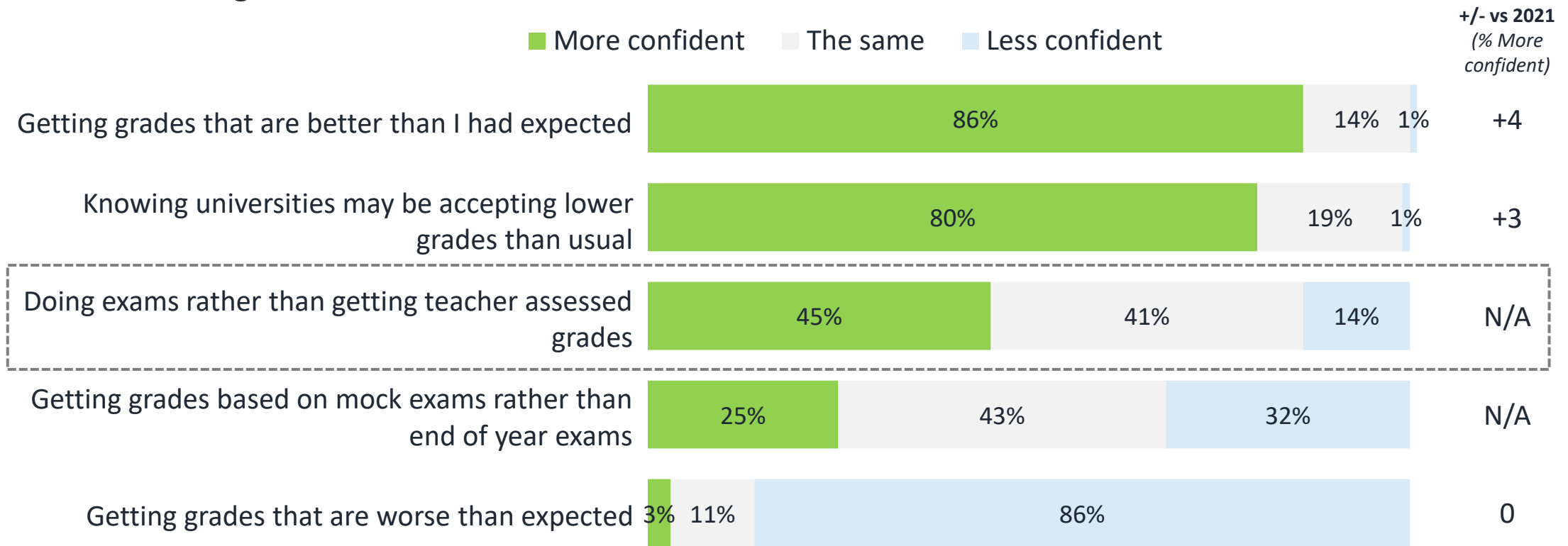


45%

**of all applicants feel more
confident doing exams rather than
getting teacher assessed grades...**

Almost half of applicants feel more confident doing exams rather than getting teacher assessed grades

Scenarios affecting confidence, % selected

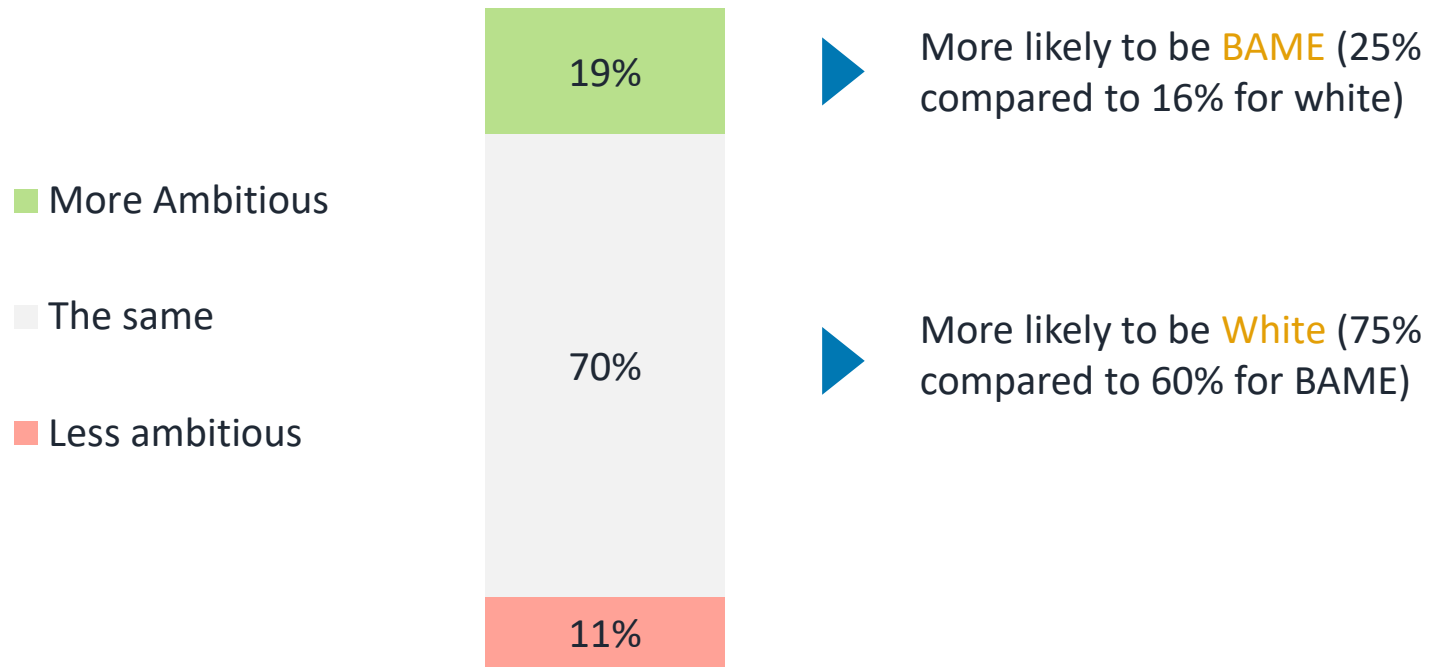




But there remains a significant minority who would have been more ambitious in their choices if they were given teacher assessed grades

Teacher assessed grades have little impact for most, but a minority would have been more ambitious

Impact of teacher assessed grades on ambition, % selected





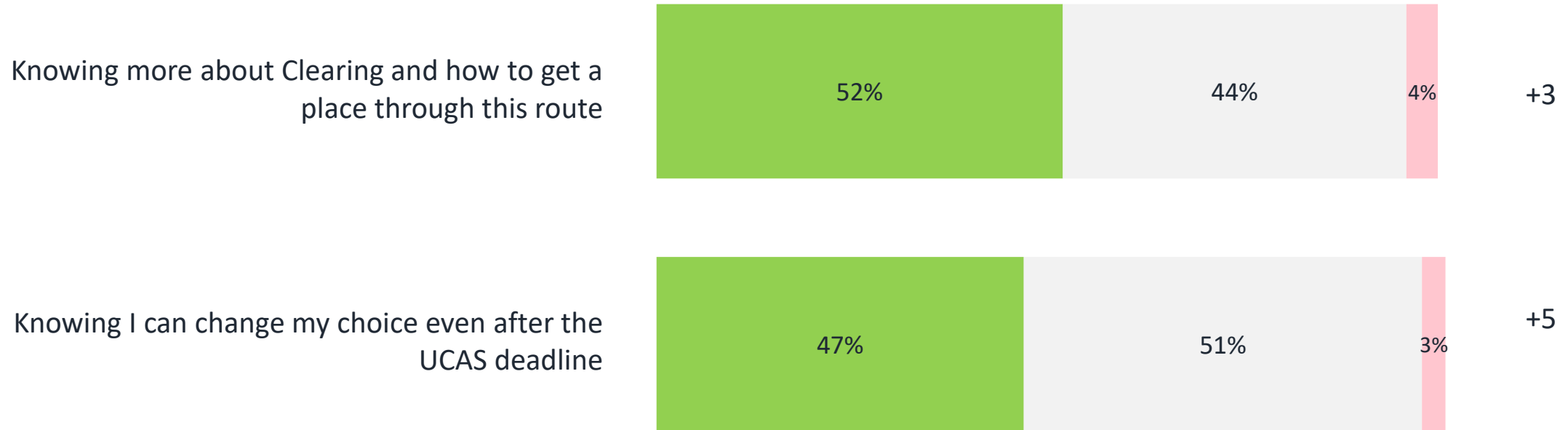
Informing applicants about their options during and after the application process is likely to boost confidence

Keeping applicants informed on their options will boost confidence for many

Scenarios affecting confidence, % selected

More confident The same Less confident

+/- vs 2021
(% More confident)



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Applicants feel more confident being assessed based on exams, as they will be this year, which appears to be aiding their university decision making

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However, this is not universal, there is a proportion would have been more ambitious with teacher assessed grades, particularly those from BAME backgrounds

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But applicants still want reassurance, so making sure they know about all of the options available to them is crucial

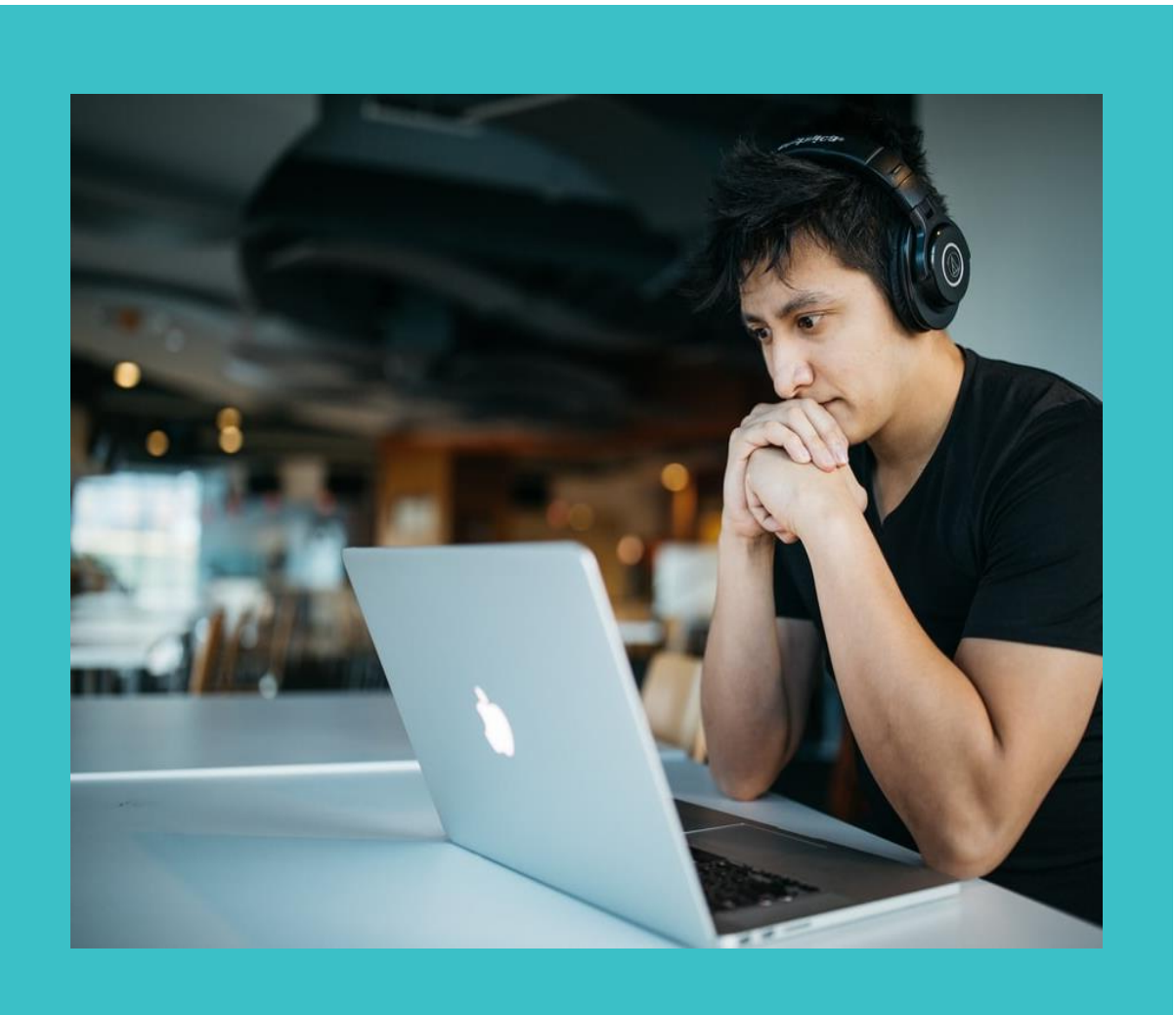
WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PROVIDERS

Students appear to feel more in control doing exams – but still want reassurance from universities and colleges

While they may be feeling more confident and committed, they still want to have options and flexibility

Some students played it safe, so Clearing could be a mix of under and over achievers

The Registrant Mindset



Online survey

124

Registrants (those who are on the UCAS database but haven't submitted an application)

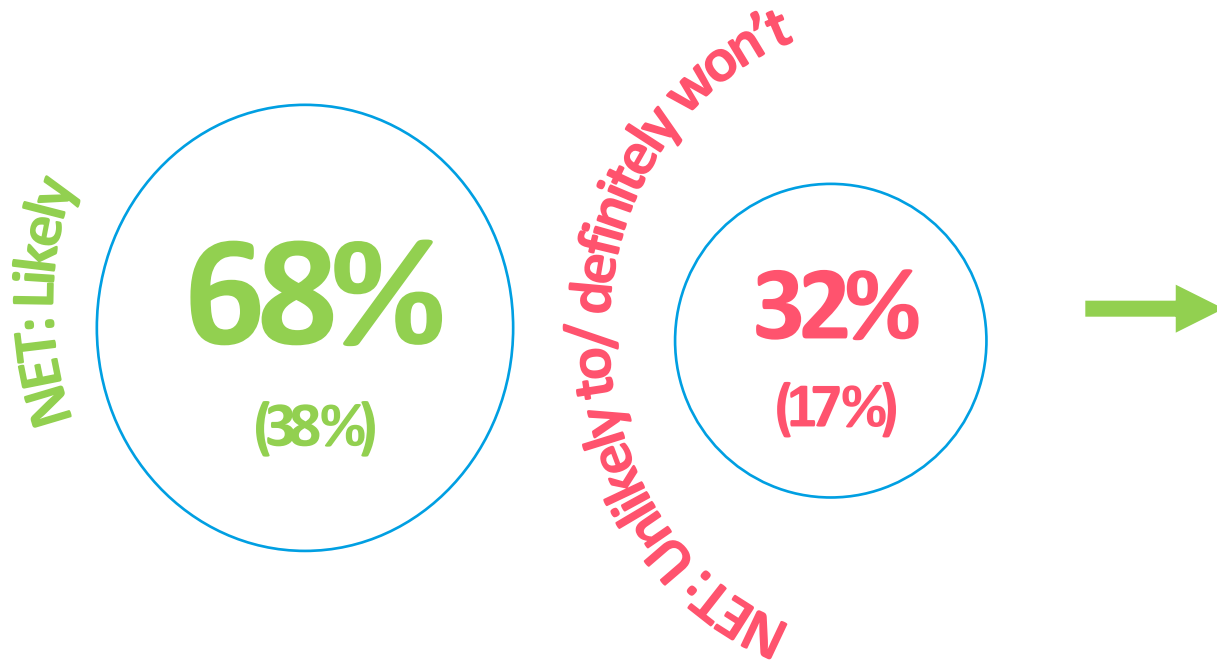
All to be registrants **aged 21 and under** and non-rejectors of university.

All sample from **UCAS's registrant database**, from across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and both international and UK students.

Fieldwork **1st – 14th February 2021**

Many registrants are still likely to apply to university/ college and have made their decisions

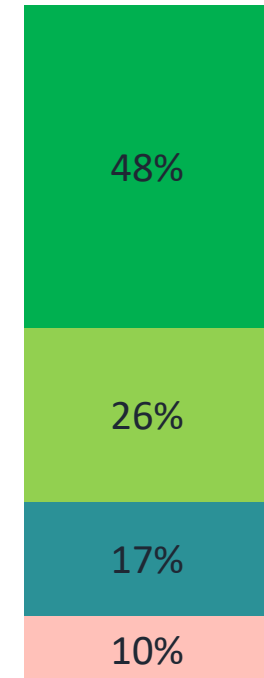
Likelihood to still apply, % selected



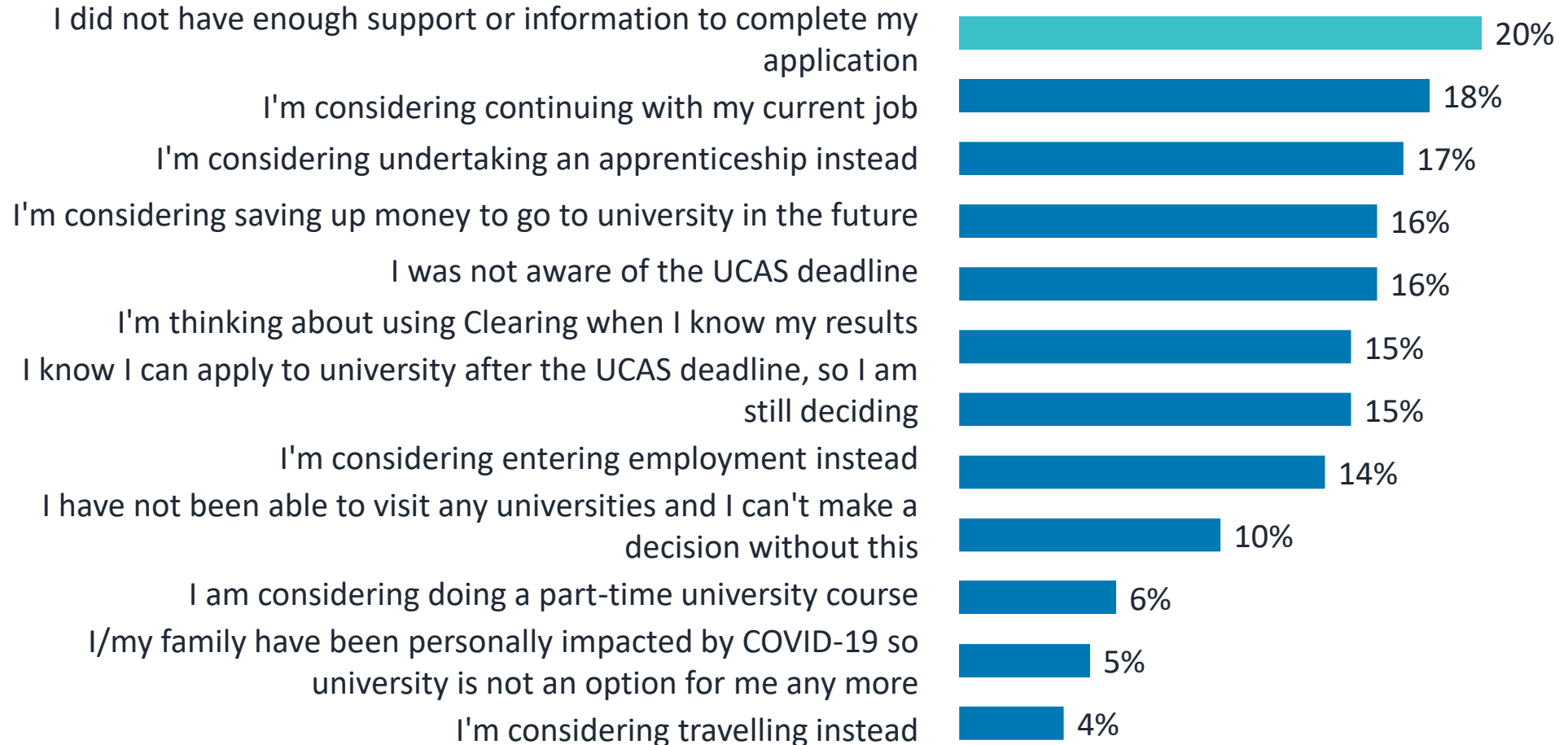
Status of those likely to apply, % Selected

(Base: Those likely to complete app)

- I've firmly decided on universities/courses
- Identified some I'm interested but haven't made my final decisions
- Started researching, but haven't made any decisions yet
- Undecided on universities or courses



Ensuring they have all necessary information is key in getting these applications over the line



What does this tell us about applicants?

Registrants generally still
want to apply to
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Registrants generally still want to apply to university/ college and have made all of their decisions

However, some feel there are gaps in their knowledge which need to be filled in order to complete their applications

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PROVIDERS

There's opportunity to convert late applications – with an upward trend this year

Key Takeouts



91% are confident they will get a place and are more committed to their choices

Fewer students are concerned about needing to change their plans

We need to be mindful that confidence may not reflect the reality of results

Applicants want to receive more information from universities and colleges

68% of registrants are still likely to apply