

An applicant's view: Inside the mind of the 2020 applicant

June 1st 2020



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A partnership approach between YouthSight and UCAS

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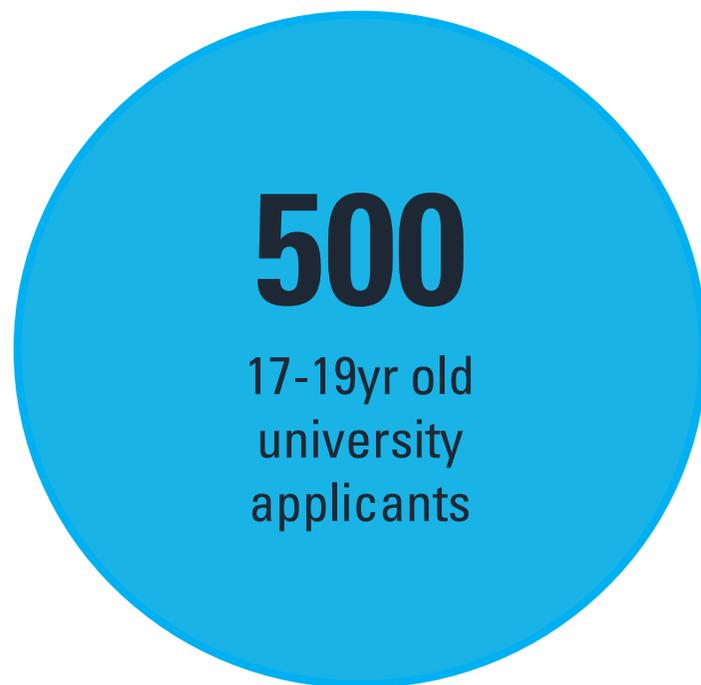
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A reminder of our methodology



Online survey

Representative sample of applicants,
by gender and school type, and
including the UK regions

All sample from YouthSight's
OpinionPanel Community

Fieldwork **21st May – 26th May 2020**

We explored...



Uncertainties slowing
down university
decision-making



Decision-making
changes applicants are
considering



How applicants feel
about Clearing and
self-release

June 1st 2020

A photograph of three young people (two men and one woman) jumping joyfully in a snowy field. They are all smiling and have their arms raised in the air. The background shows a snowy landscape with bare trees and a building in the distance.

**Missing out on the real
university experience is the
biggest worry for
applicants**

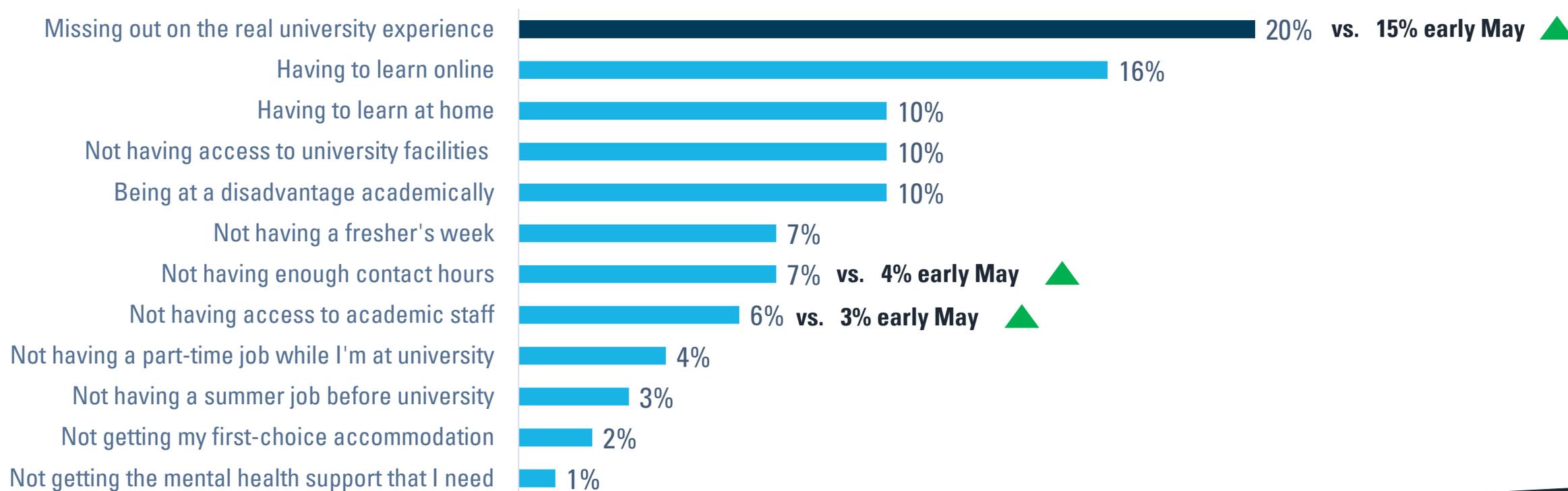
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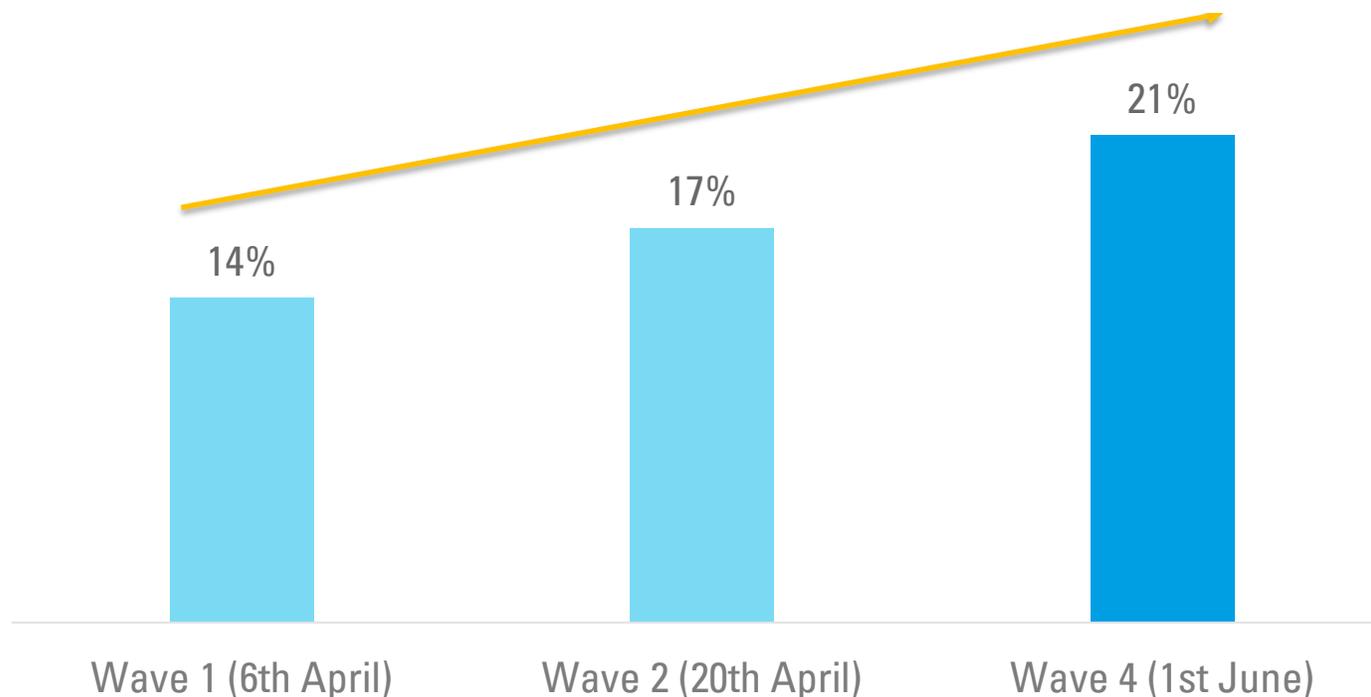
Missing out on experience has overtaken learning online as the number one worry for applicants

% who ranked each 1st in their top 3 worries



One in five have already changed their decisions

% who have changed any of their university decisions



Those who are most likely to have changed:

BAME

Haven't made firm/ insurance choices

Have done some research about changes

Are open to clearing and self-release

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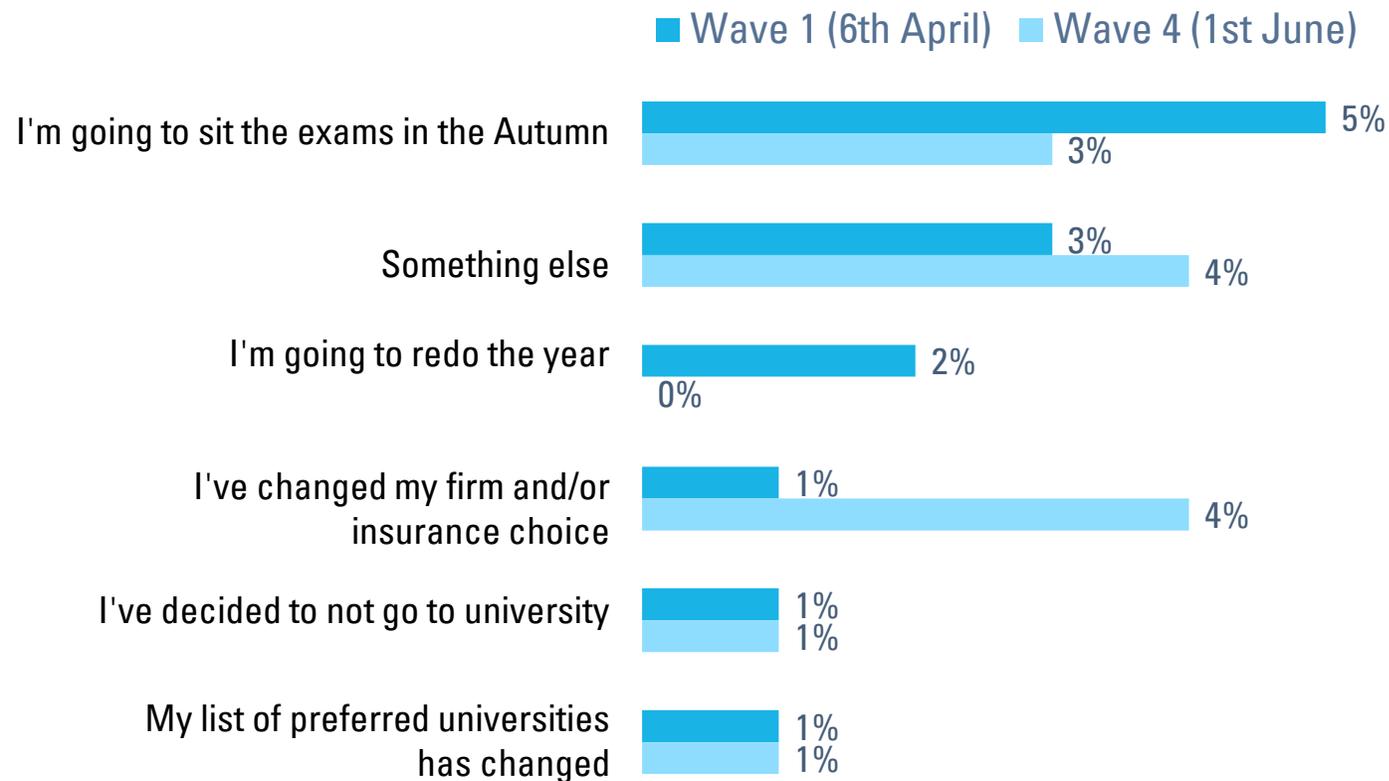
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There has been an increase in the number choosing to defer a year



have decided to defer a year

▲ **vs 3% early April (Wave 1)**



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The trend for deferrals is not as alarming as the sentiment may suggest

So far this cycle
12,660 choices have
been deferred through
UCAS – this compares
to 13,020 last year

There is actually a small amount of evidence that among UK 18 applicants there is a greater tendency to **un-defer** this cycle

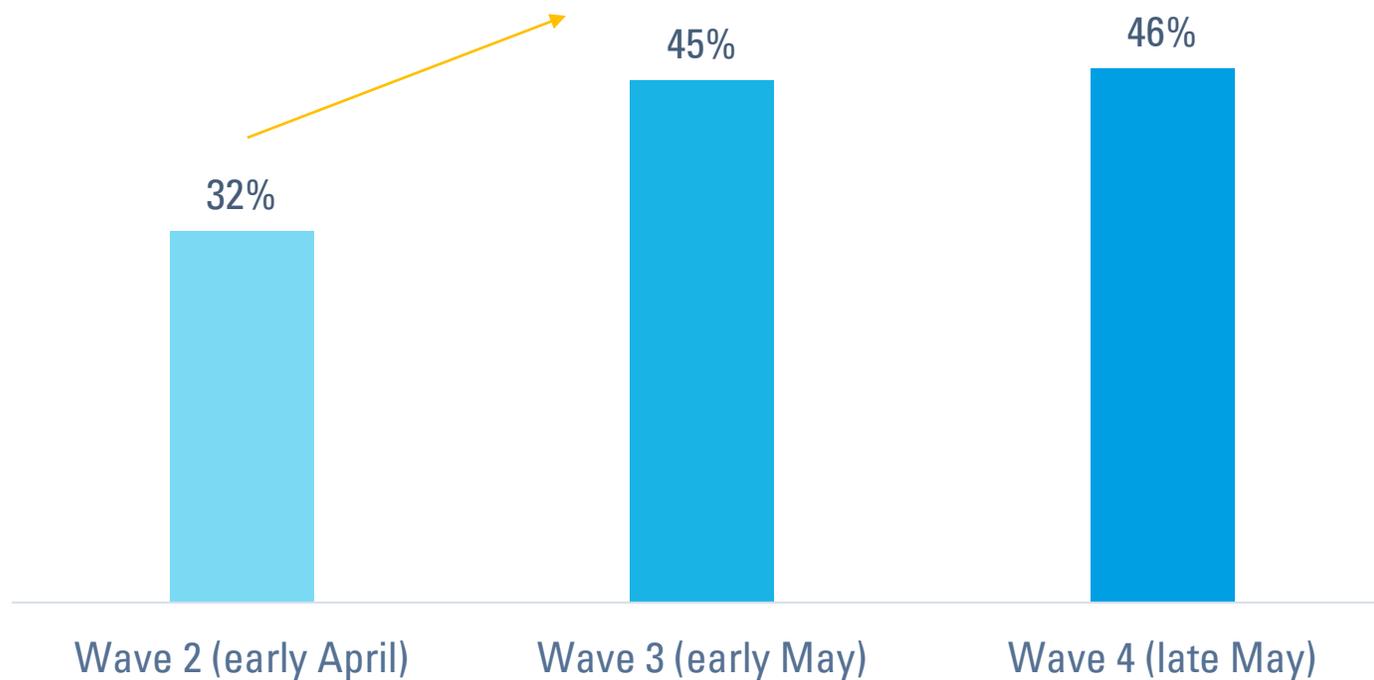
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We are seeing no increase in applicants considering changing their choices

% who are considering changing any of their university decisions



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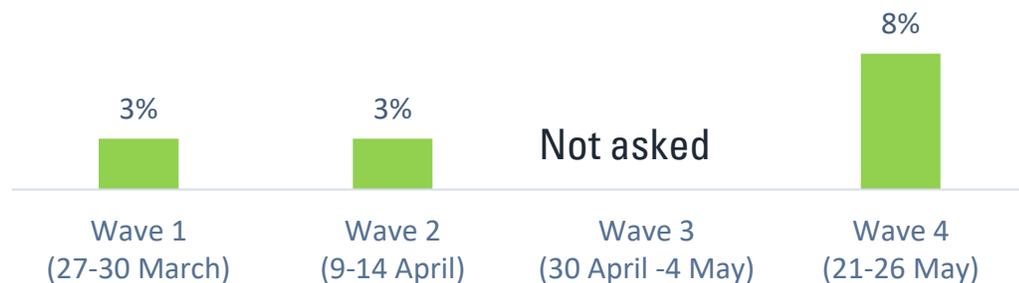
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Q4. Since the start of lockdown, are you thinking about changing any of your decisions about university?
Base: All respondents (509) June 1st 2020

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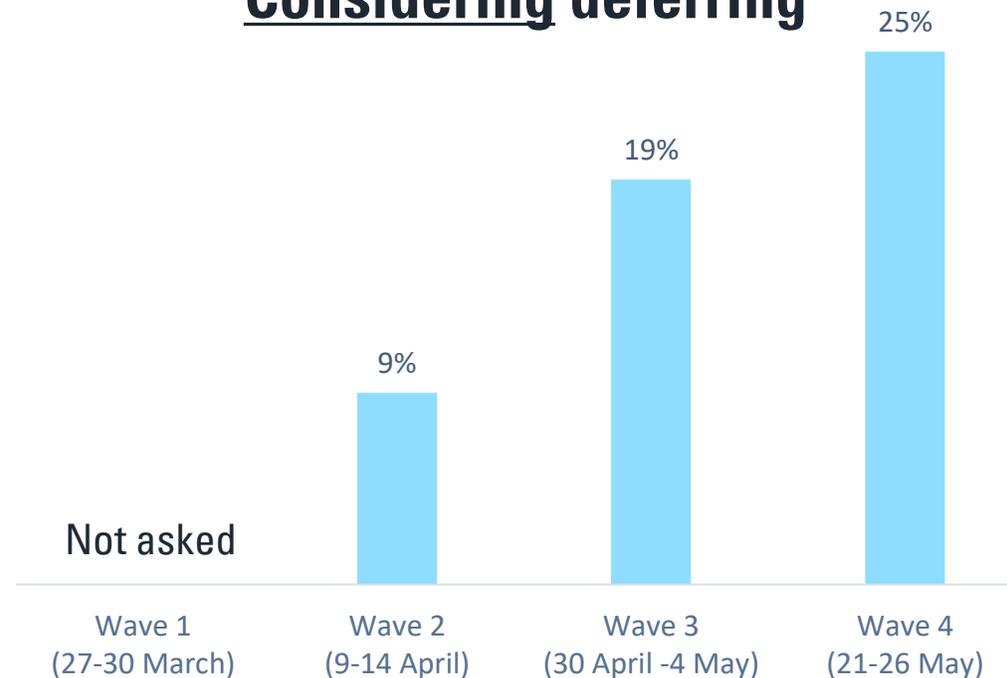
Keeping track on deferral sentiment

Decided to defer



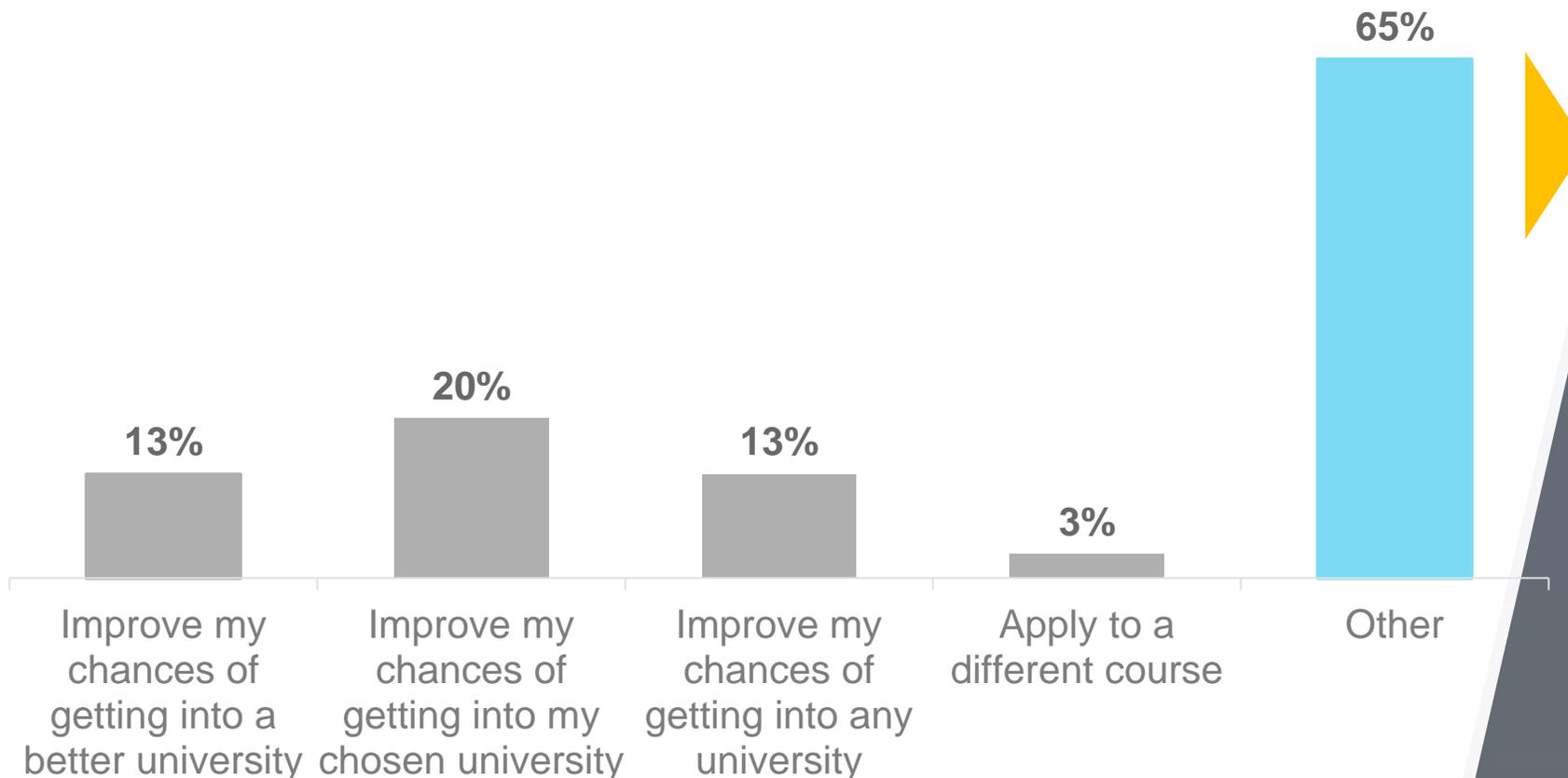
In the last week/since the start of lockdown, have you changed any of your decisions about university?
Base: All respondents c.500 per wave

Considering deferring



Since the start of lockdown, are you thinking about changing any of your decisions about university?
Base: All respondents c.500 per wave

However, applicants considering deferral, are doing so for a different reason



26% said they wanted a **true university experience**

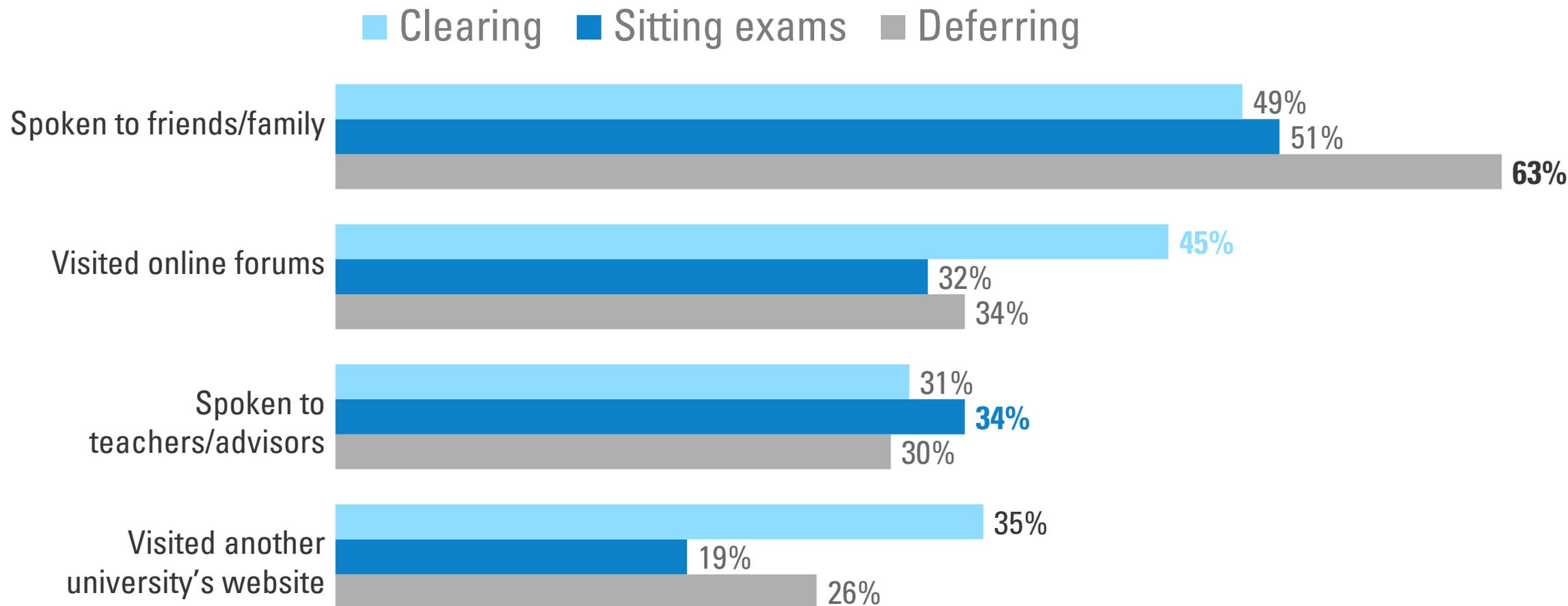
38% said they did **NOT** want to be **taught online**

Q5.1. You mentioned you're thinking about deferring a year and applying to university in 2021. Please tell us what you are hoping to achieve by doing this.

Base: All thinking of deferring (131)

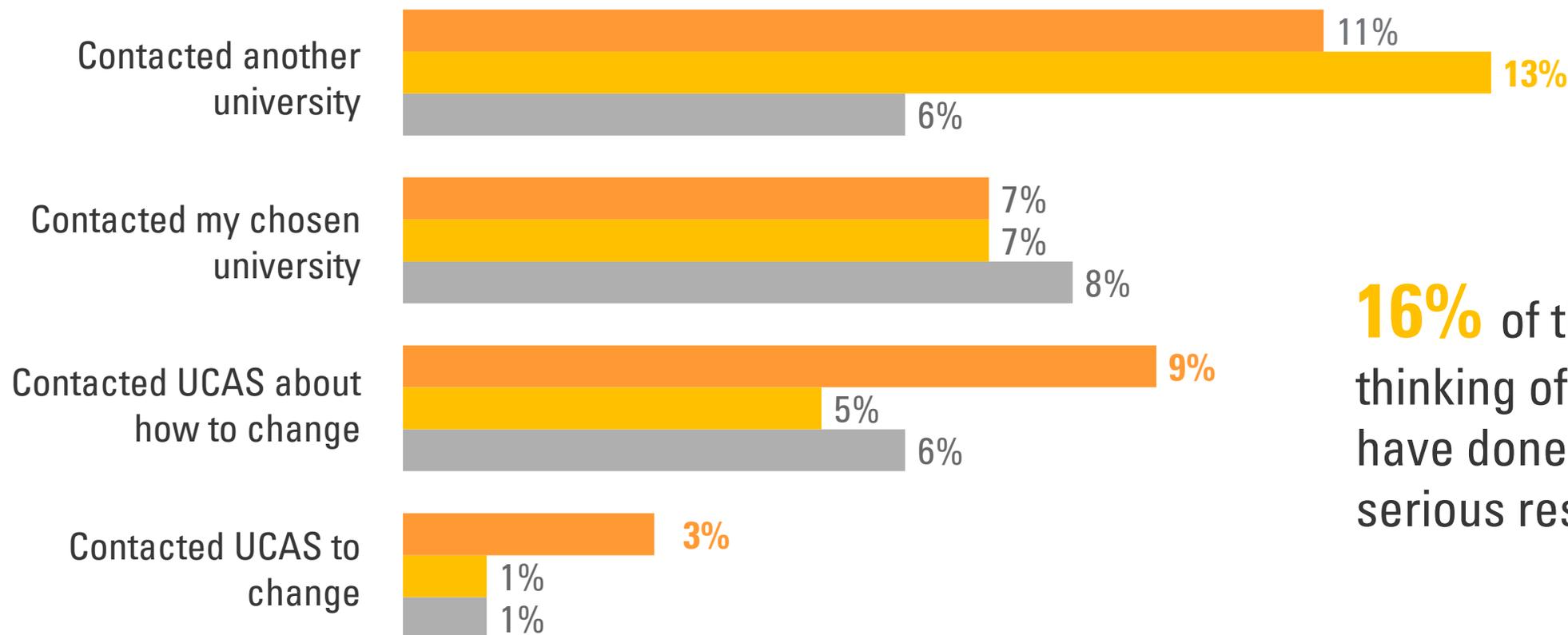
What research have applicants been doing?

Light research typically involves speaking to others



More serious research involves contacting universities or UCAS

■ Clearing
 ■ Sitting exams
 ■ Deferring

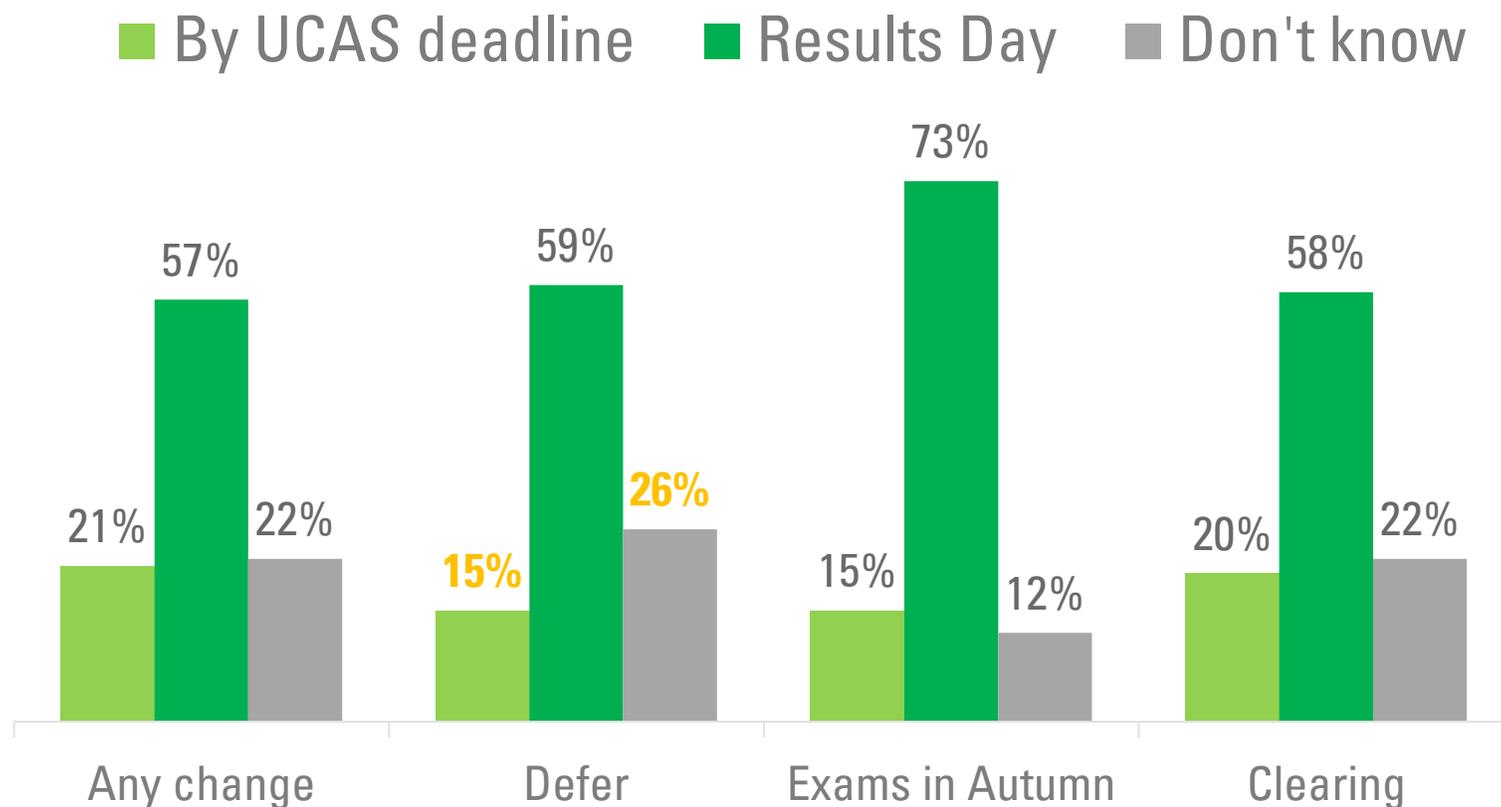


16% of those thinking of **deferring** have done some serious research

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The majority of decisions will be made on Results Day



A quarter of those who are considering **deferral** are **unsure** when they will make this decision

An applicant's view

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**How busy will
Clearing and
self-release be
this year?**



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A quarter are more open to Clearing compared to before Coronavirus



Those more open to Clearing:

BAME

Haven't made choices yet

**Have already changed/
considering changing
decisions**

Once hearing about what self-release is, around half of applicants are somewhat open to it



18% were aware of self-release before we discussed this with applicants

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Summary of applicant personas that the research is suggesting

The Unconvinced

Uncertain and worried
about next steps

On the fence about which
offers to accept

Confused about which
decision is best for them

The Hunters

Want the best possible
outcome for themselves

Willing to go back to the
drawing board if it means
they can attend a better
university

The Dream Chasers

Willing to halt their plans
if it will mean they get into
their chosen university in
2021

Not prepared to miss out
on the university
experience they hoped for

The Hopefuls

Trust their own judgement
and decisions so far

Have faith that they will
get what they want

Aware that all is not lost
after Results Day and they
do still have options

WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PROVIDERS

Sentiment is not yet action – this is your opportunity to build trust with applicants and reassure them you have their interests at your core

Ensure that you have clear ways for applicants to communicate with you and seek to reassure at all turns

The key narrative for providers and UCAS is that applicants are in a stronger position if they have made a decision

Applicants are chiefly concerned with missing a real University experience

8% have decided to defer the year; though this isn't yet reflected in the data

46% are now considering changing their choices; a theme that is stable over time, and reflected in the different personas

Though only 26% have actually done any concrete research

57% are waiting till A level results day, and circumstances are likely to be very different by then