

A person with dark, wavy hair is seen from behind, wearing a white t-shirt and a dark green backpack. They are looking out over a vast cityscape at sunset or sunrise, with the sun low on the horizon and the sky a mix of blue and orange. The city lights are visible in the distance, and the overall atmosphere is contemplative.

An applicant's view: The post-deadline mindset

July 13th 2020

YouthSight

UCAS
Media

Security marking: PUBLIC

A partnership approach between YouthSight and UCAS

Sarah Barr Miller



Head of Insight & Consulting
UCAS Media

s.barmiller@ucas.ac.uk

Josephine Hansom



Managing Director
YouthSight Research

josephine.hansom@youthsight.com

YouthSight

UCAS
Media

A reminder of our methodology



Please note:
the majority of the data does not
include those who have decided to defer

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

All sample from YouthSight's
OpinionPanel Community

Fieldwork **27th June – 6th July 2020**

We explored...



Feelings toward going to university this year



Commitment to their firm choice

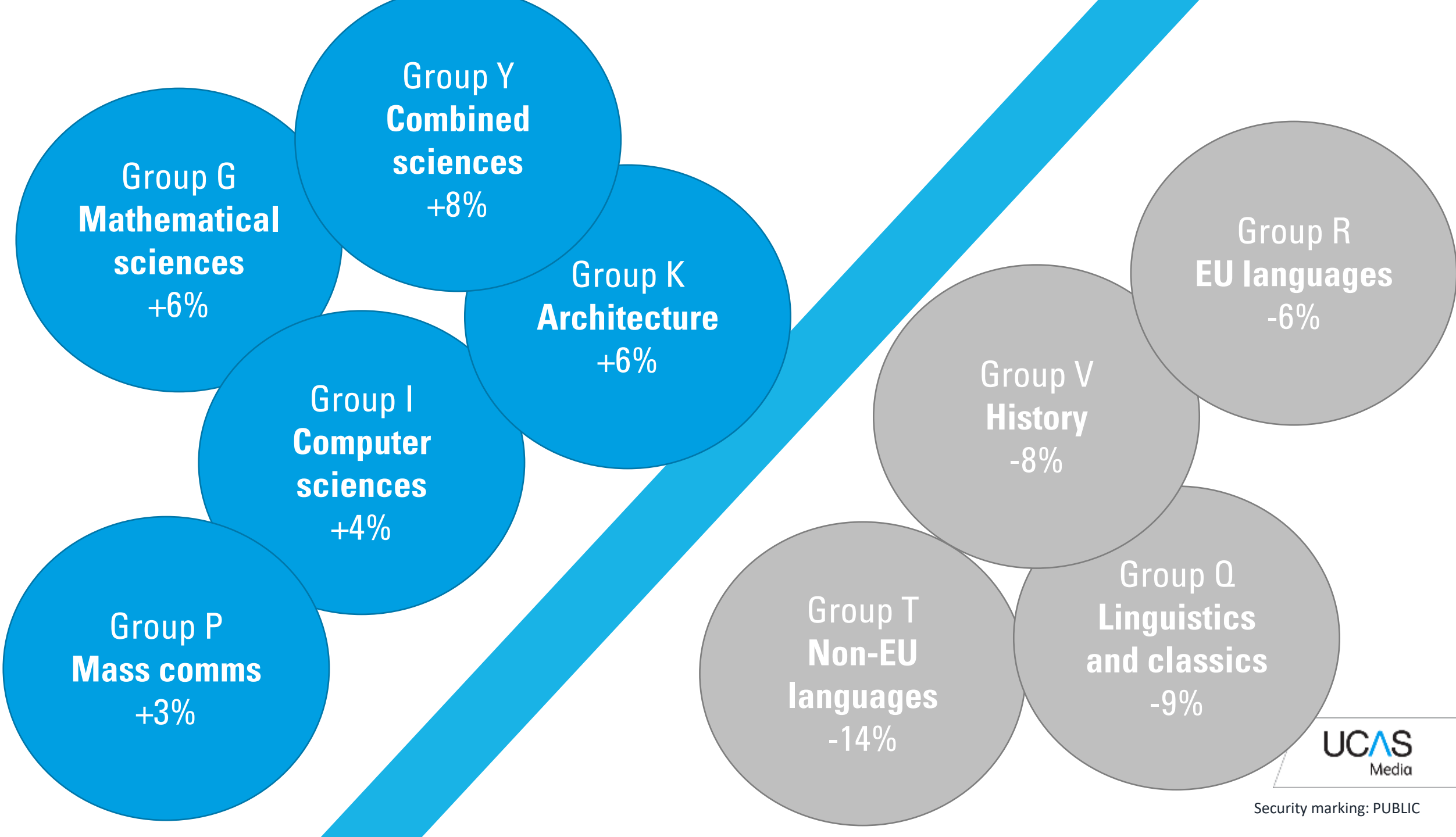


How applicants feel about Clearing and deferral

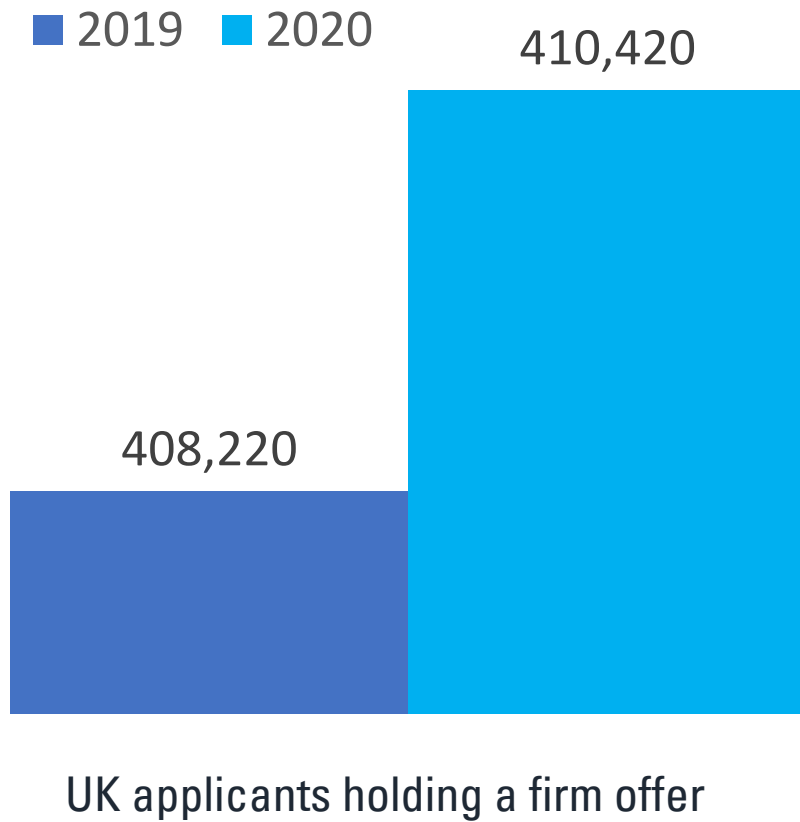
A record 40.5% of all UK 18 year olds have applied to University despite there being 1.5% fewer 18 year olds

**Applicant
numbers for
nursing are up
15% year-on-year,
to reach 58,550**





The data suggests commitment to university choices is high



Those holding a deferred start date have gone down by 1%

Internationals firm offer holders are up by 12%

UK applicants holding a firm offer are up by 1%

Why defer?

Why defer?

Travel

*"After lockdown ends, I want the **opportunity to experience the world** a bit better before I re-enter education. I feel like this will prepare me for university better and make me feel more ready to pursue my degree."*

Female, White

*"I was advised to defer after confirming my firm and insurance choices just in case it limited my offers. I'm working up until Christmas and then (hopefully) **travelling around Australia and New Zealand** with two friends."*

Female, White

Avoid online learning/a lower standard of teaching

Earn money

Get work experience

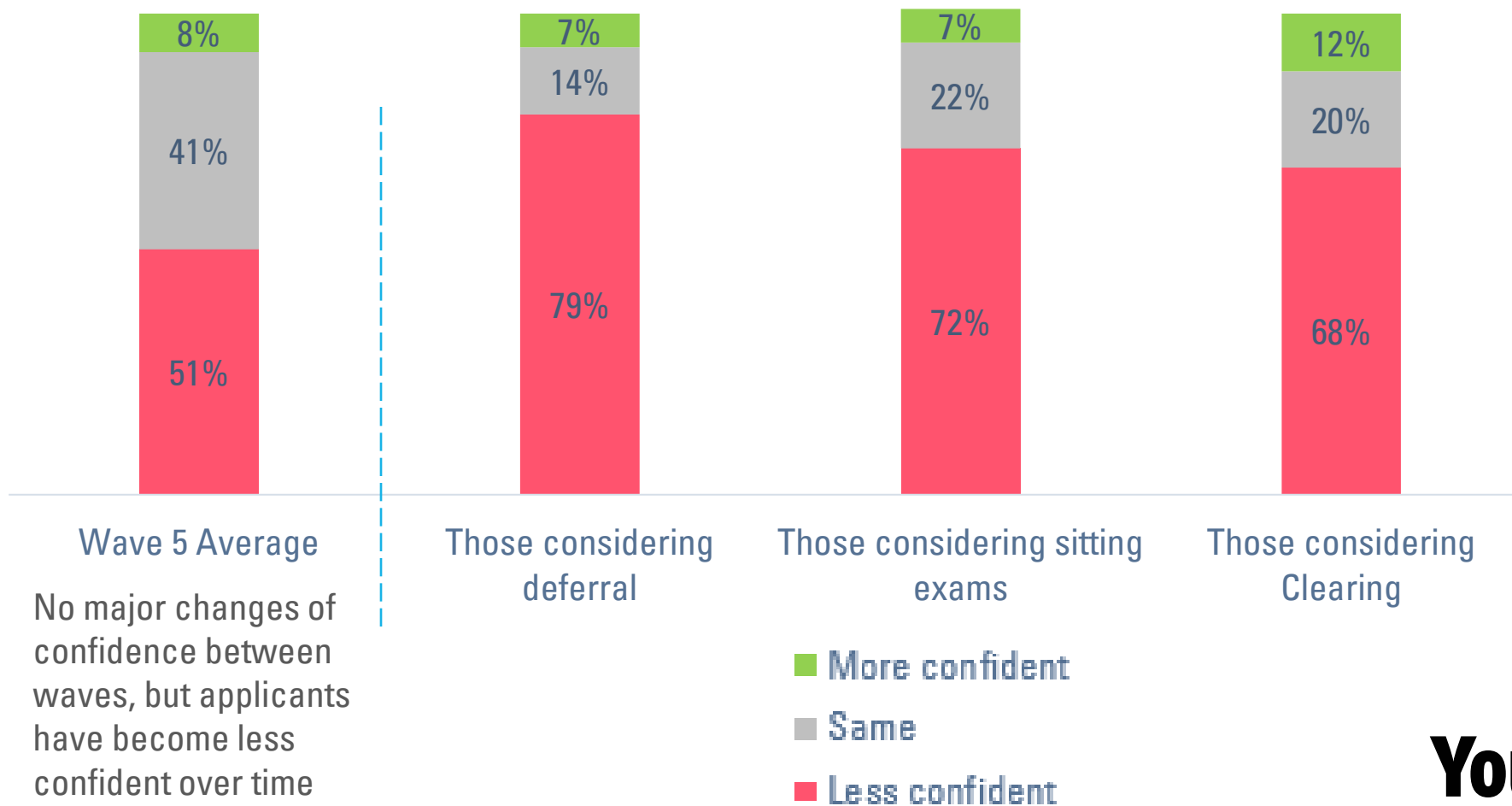
Mental health

Family reasons

Confidence in going to university has remained stable however less confident applicants are still considering their options

Applicants still considering changing their decisions are less confident about going to university compared to the average

% feeling more/same/less confident



Females and those from a BAME background also reported less confidence in going to university; 57% and 59% accordingly

Wave 5 Average
 No major changes of confidence between waves, but applicants have become less confident over time

Those considering deferral

Those considering sitting exams

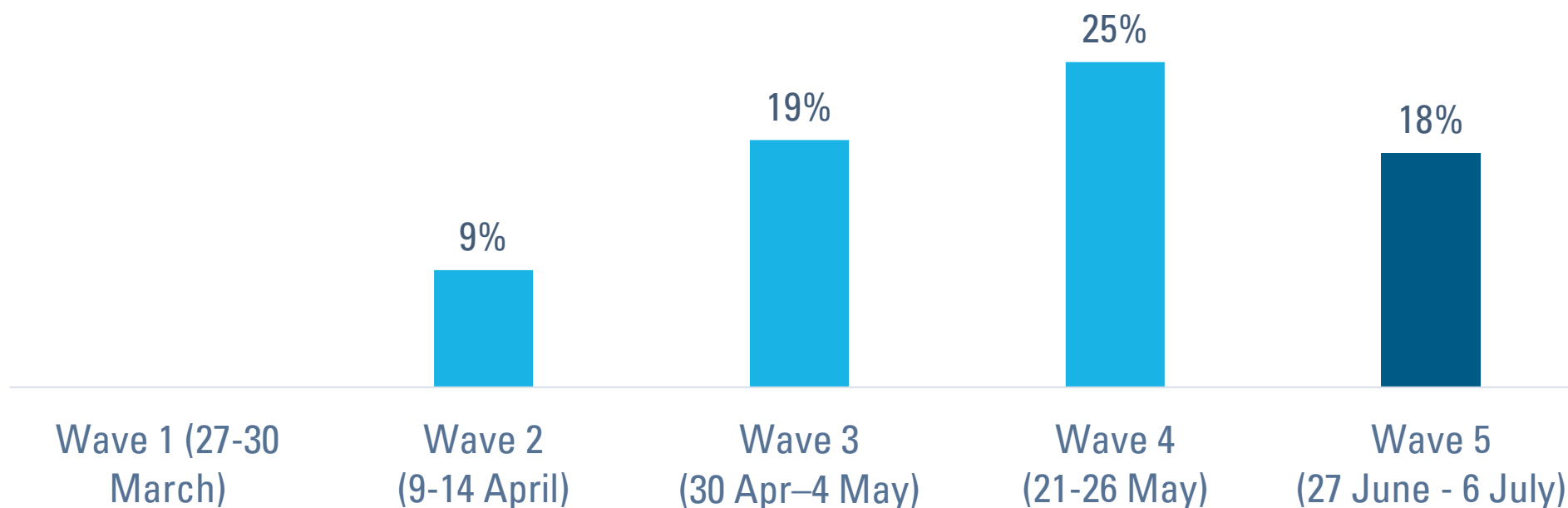
Those considering Clearing

Q4. Compared to before Coronavirus, how are you feeling about going to university this year?
 Base: All respondents (494), Considering deferral (89), Considering sitting exams (64), Considering clearing (55) July 13th 2020

It's human nature to keep your options open if you're not completely confident about the future

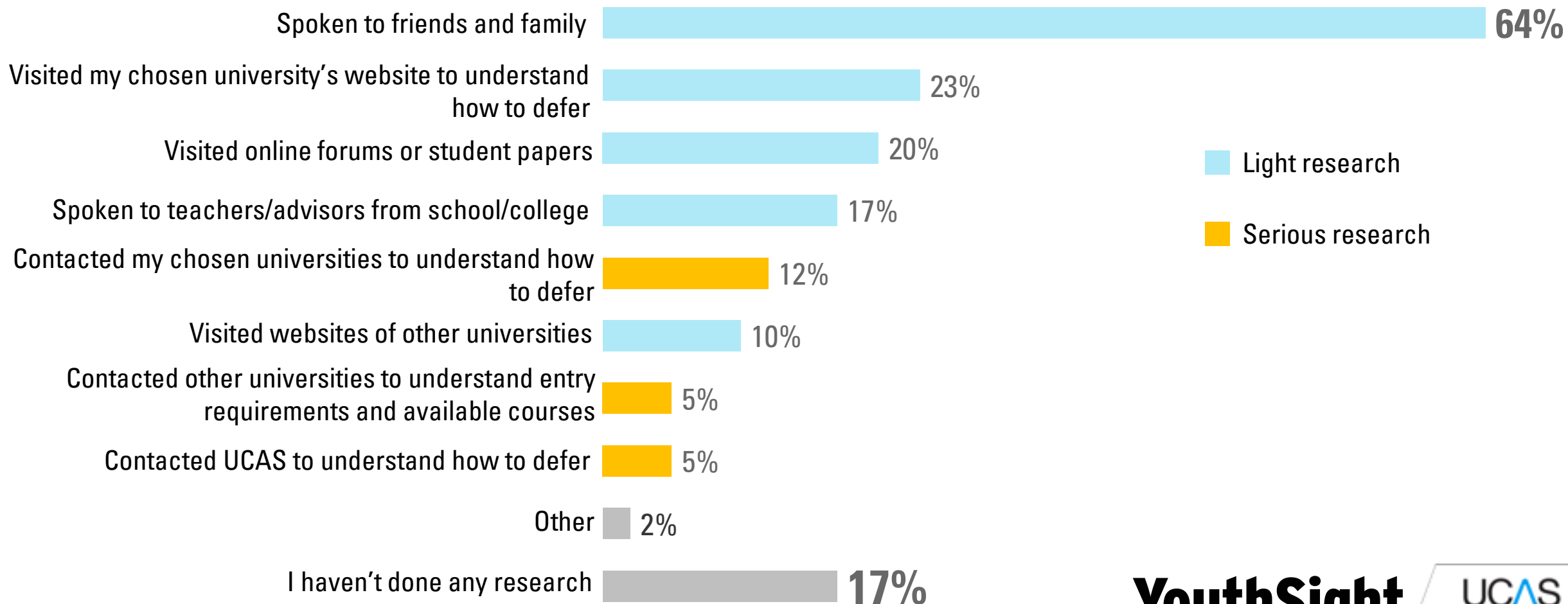


Fewer applicants are considering deferring but it's still an option for some

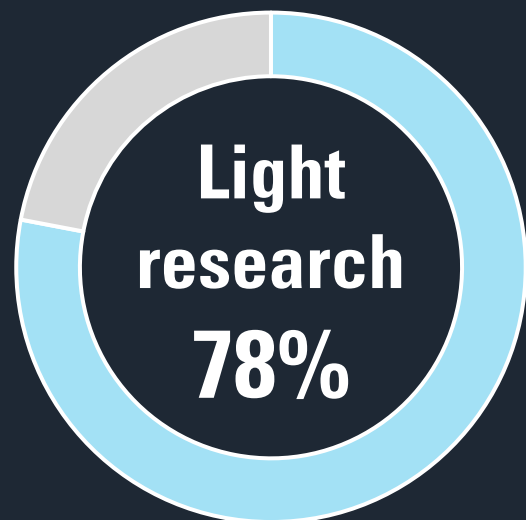


Q7. Since the UCAS deadline (18th June), are you actively considering changing any of your decisions about university?
Base: All respondents (494) July 13th 2020
W2, W3 and W4: Q4. Since the start of lockdown, are you thinking about changing any of your decisions about university?
Base: All respondents (519, 522, and 509)

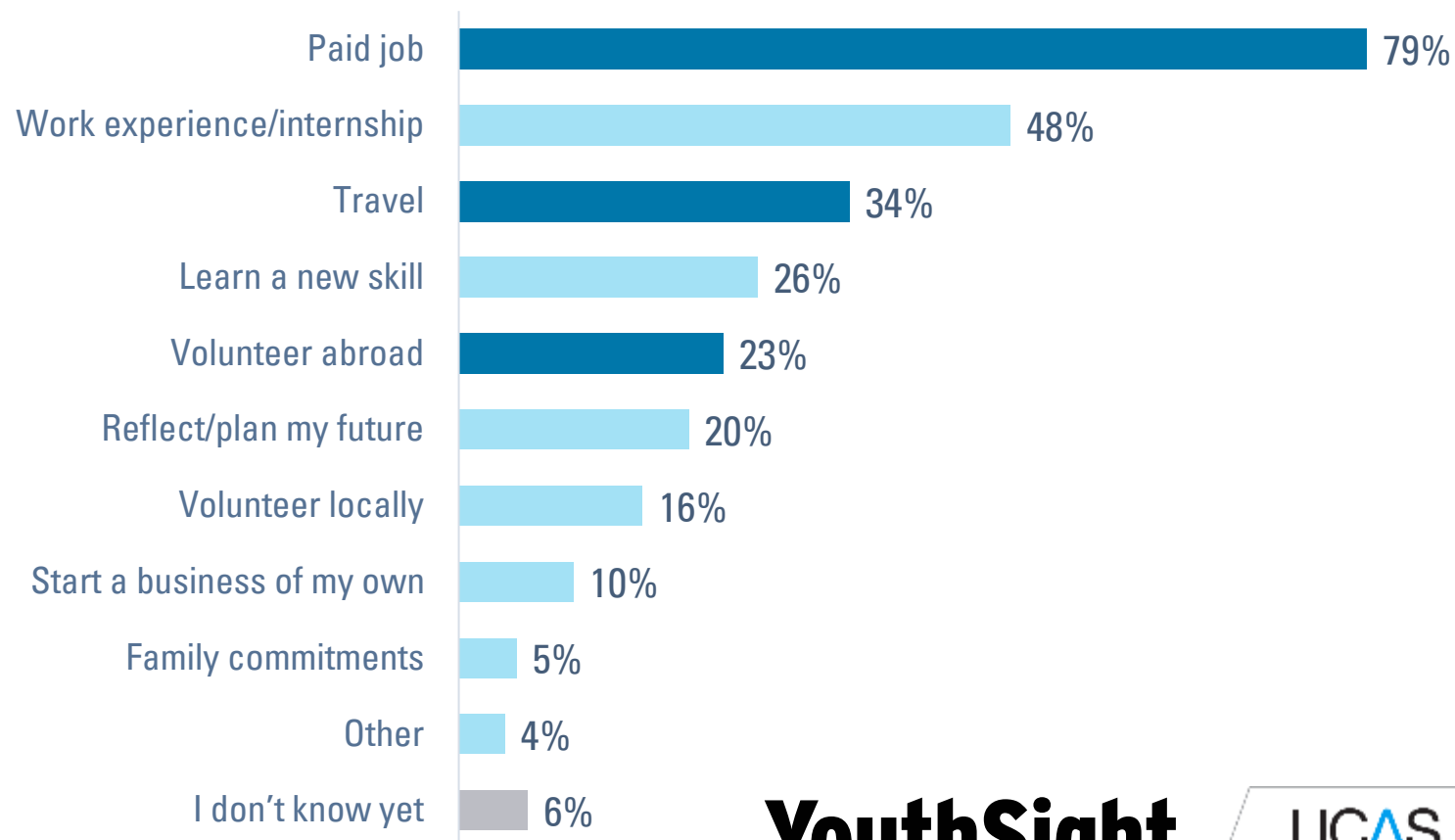
Deferring is still a big topic of conversation



Only a small minority have undertaken serious research about a possible future year off

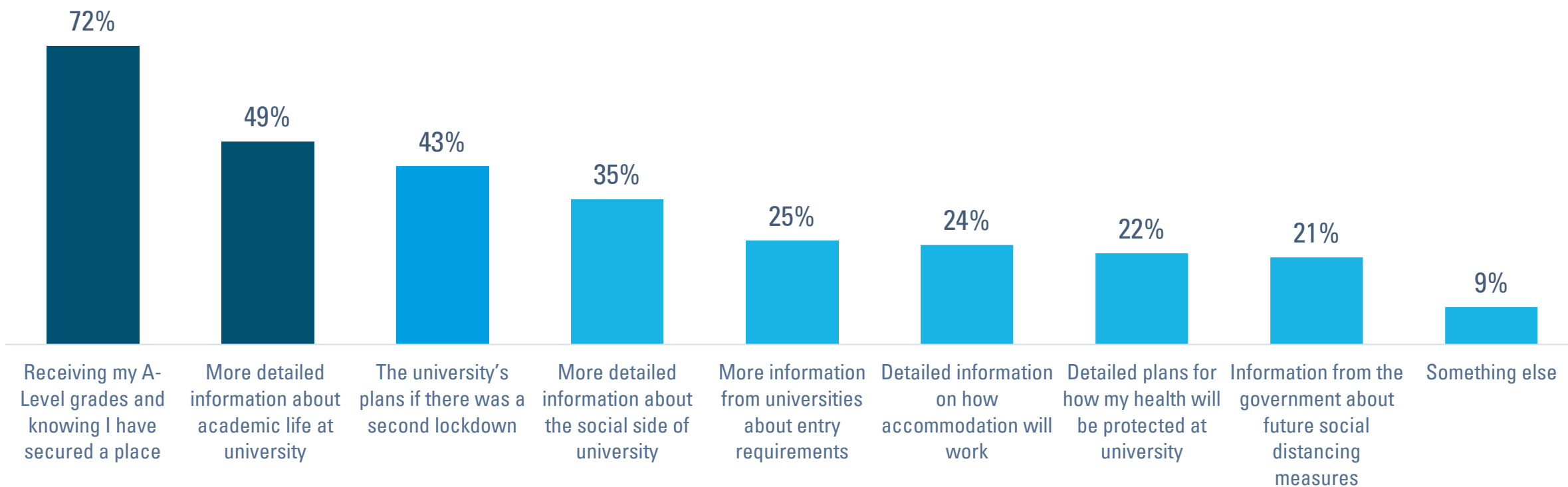


Applicants are optimistic about their gap year opportunities



For the biggest impact, talk about the academic side of university as much as possible

What would make you more committed to your firm choice?



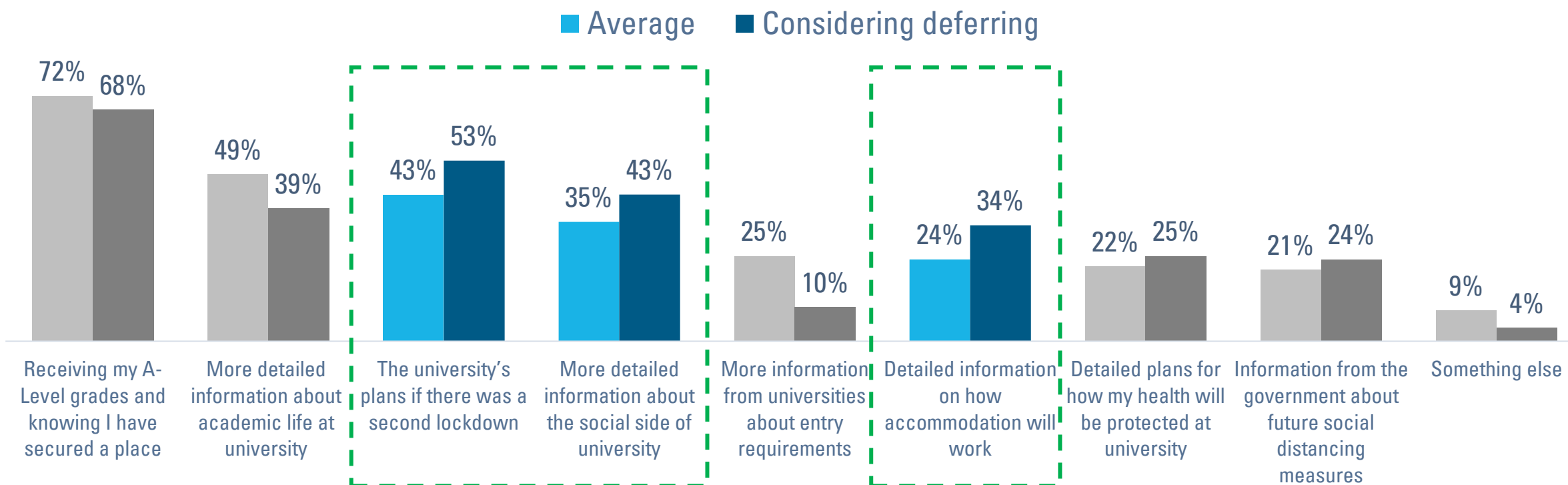
YouthSight

UCAS
Media

Q6. You mentioned you are not fully committed to your firm choice decision. What would make you more committed?
Base: All somewhat or not committed to their firm choice (172)

But for those considering deferring, information about the university experience is key

What would make you more committed to your firm choice?



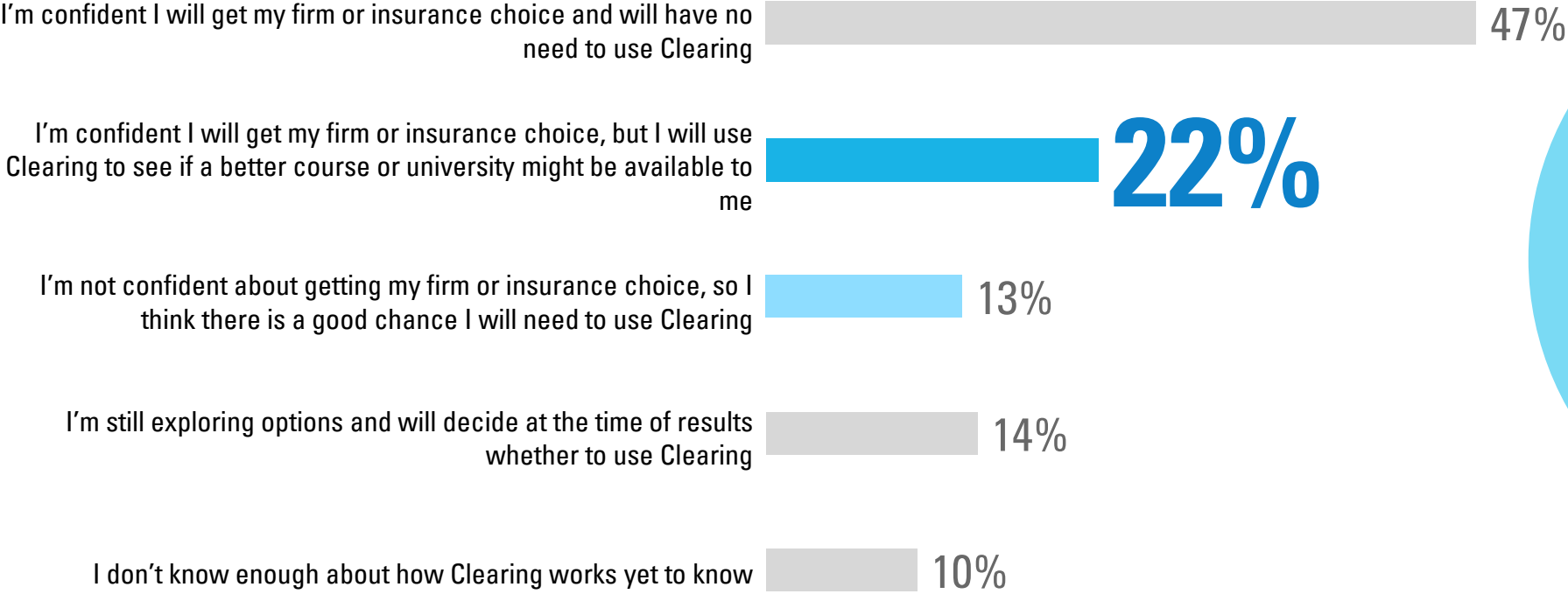
YouthSight

UCAS
Media

Q6. You mentioned you are not fully committed to your firm choice decision. What would make you more committed?
Base: All somewhat or not committed to their firm choice (172), Somewhat or not committed to their firm choice and thinking about deferral (50)

Almost a quarter of applicants anticipate using Clearing to trade up

% Considering Clearing



35% anticipate using Clearing

Q10. Thinking ahead to the future, under what circumstances would you use Clearing?
Base: All respondents (494) | July 13th 2020

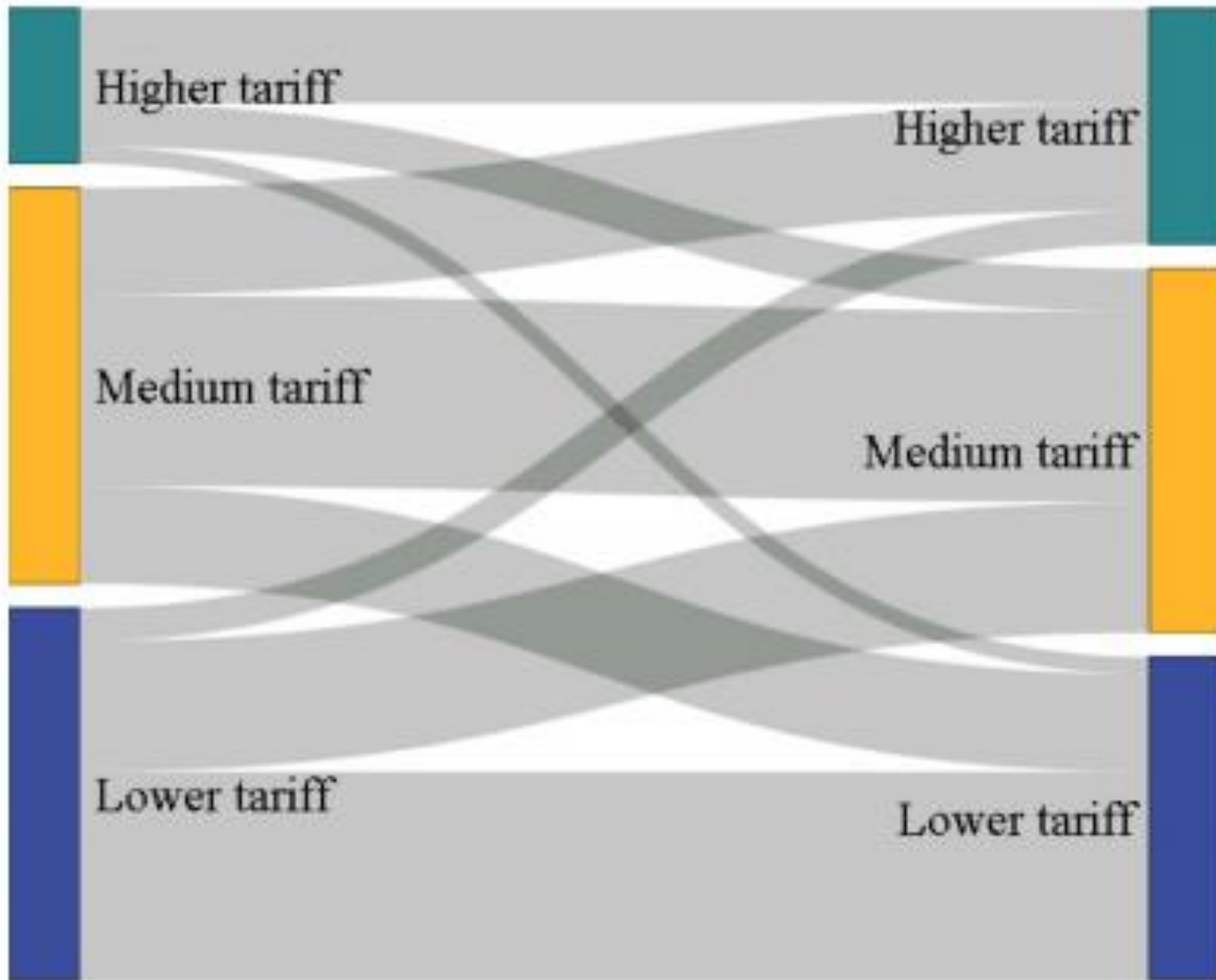
What does the UCAS data say about motivations around Clearing?



Clearing in 2019

... a reminder of this record breaking cycle

- A total of 73,320 applicants used Clearing to secure their place in the 2019 cycle.
- Of these over 35,000 were initially rejected by their chosen universities.
- A total of 28,030 applicants who had a confirmed place used the new online self-release. Of those, 18,690 applicants were subsequently accepted into HE
- Applicants were much more likely to self release if they were placed through their insurance choice (**28%** self-released) than through their firm choice (**4%**).
- More than half of those who did use self release (**54%**) were placed at a university they had applied to in the main scheme



UK 18 year olds with a place at a medium tariff provider were almost equally as likely to be subsequently placed at a higher tariff provider (27%) as they were at lower tariff provider (25%).

95% of those
who went to a
high tariff
university after
using self release
had already
applied to a high
tariff university



When asked why they changed their mind...

12%

I exceeded the offer conditions, so had a rethink about my options

4%

Thought the course would be "too easy"

47%

Wanted to be closer to home or to study in a different location



WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PROVIDERS

Commitment to go to university is high this year, despite everything that is going on – so we have reason to be cautiously optimistic

Given the time remaining, our job is to plan communications which detail what we know about academic and social life – tailor these to the audience to build confidence

There is likely to be a smaller pool of applicants who are released by their firm and insurance choices

While sentiment suggests 'trading up' could be a trend, past behaviour does not support this

51% are now less confident about going to university – and this affects applicants' decision making, with 18% considering deferral

65% are fully committed to their UCAS choices, with only 5% not committed at all

49% want more information on how their academic life will work in practice – but this is different for different cohorts

22% say they want to use Clearing to get a 'better' course or university

The majority, however, change their mind in clearing due to factors relating to location