

UCAS

STUDENT
MINDSET
CONFERENCE

2024

CLEARING INSIGHTS 2024:
NAVIGATING STUDENT DECISIONS

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WHAT WE'LL TALK ABOUT TODAY

01

EARLY RESEARCH:

When and why students start considering Clearing.

02

DECISION-MAKING PROCESS:

Key influences during Clearing.

03

MIND-CHANGERS:

what influences their Clearing choices.

04

HOW WOULD YOU IMPROVE CLEARING?

05

KEY TAKEAWAYS:

When and how to make the biggest impact.

IN THE 28 DAYS SINCE RESULTS DAY

68,810 people have found a place in Clearing (+1.2%), including

5,320

are international
(+2.9%)

10,290

are mature
(+3.5%)

14,880

are from IMD Q1
(+1.9%)

THE CLEARING POOLS

MIND-CHANGERS

24,780
+15%
on 2023

DIRECT TO CLEARING

17,640
+12%
on 2023

TRADITIONAL

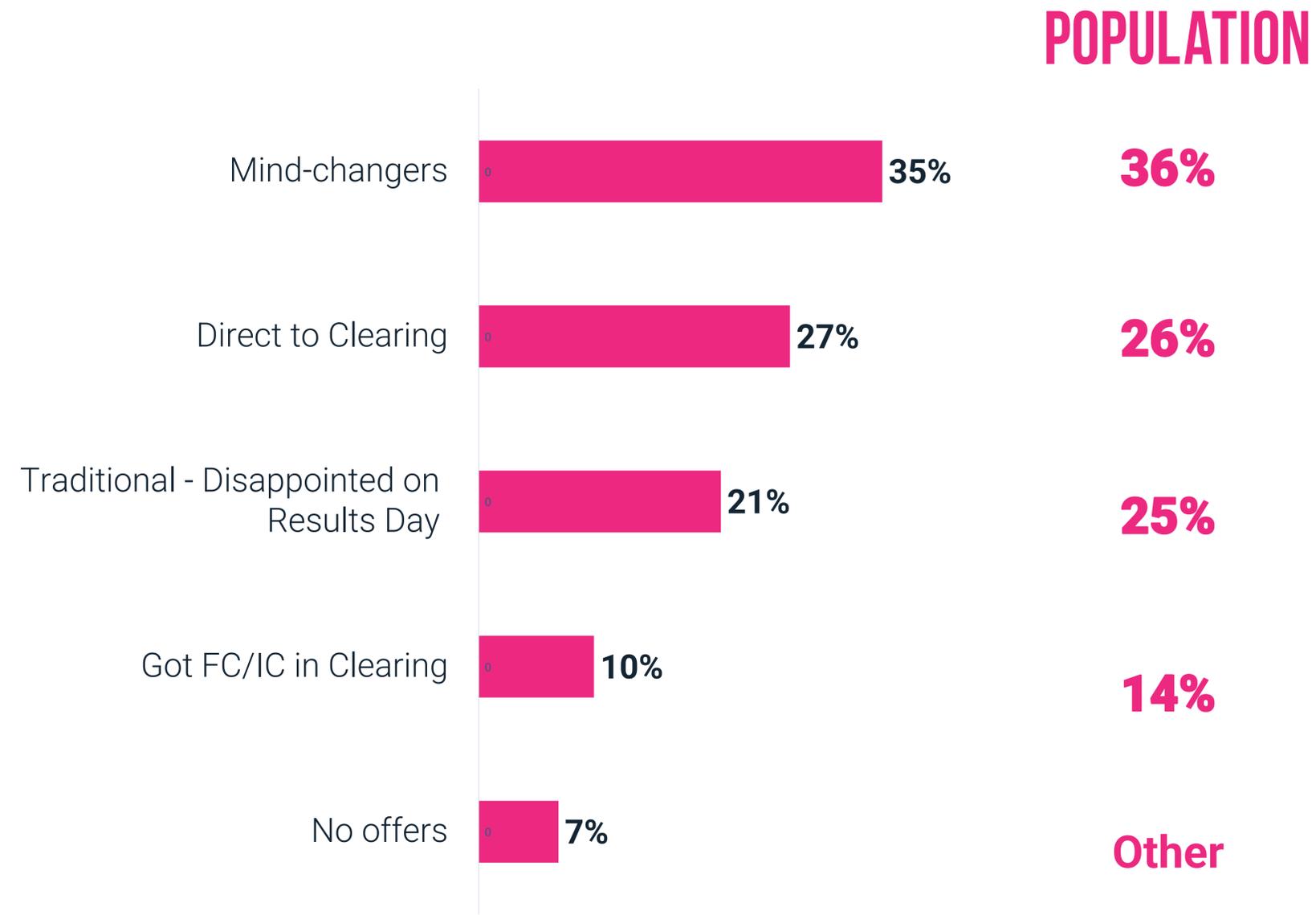
16,940
-17%
on 2023

OTHER

9,450
-10%
on 2023



REAL-TIME CLEARING SURVEYING



WHO?

- Prospective undergraduates
- 2024 entry
- Placed during Clearing
- 5,890 completed responses
- Weighted data – representative

WHEN?

- Fieldwork 16th August – 21st October 2024
- Sent to students after they are placed on a course in Clearing

KEY STATS

91%

Confident they had made the right choice for them in Clearing

(92% in 2023)

88%

Had a positive experience of finding a university or college place through Clearing

(85% in 2023)

72%

Said it was easy to find a course they wanted to study in Clearing

(68% in 2023)



88% HAD A GOOD OR VERY GOOD EXPERIENCE WHEN CONTACTING UNIVERSITIES

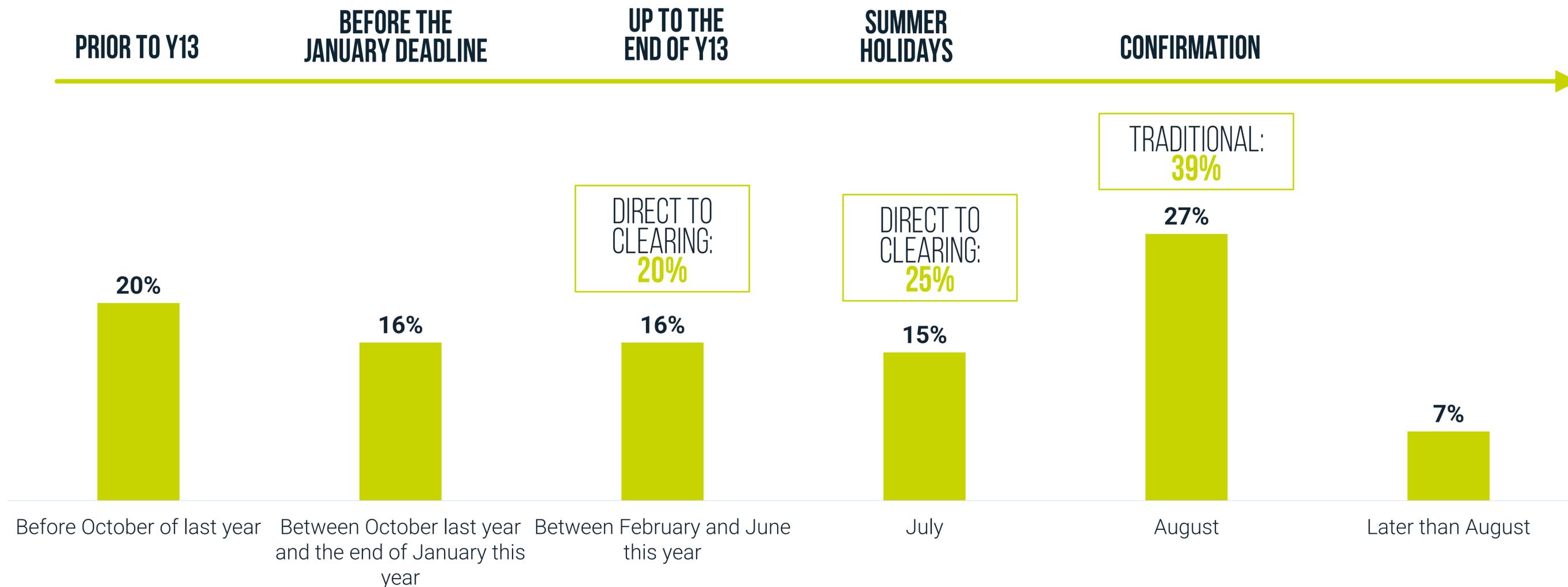


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EARLY RESEARCH: WHY AND WHEN?

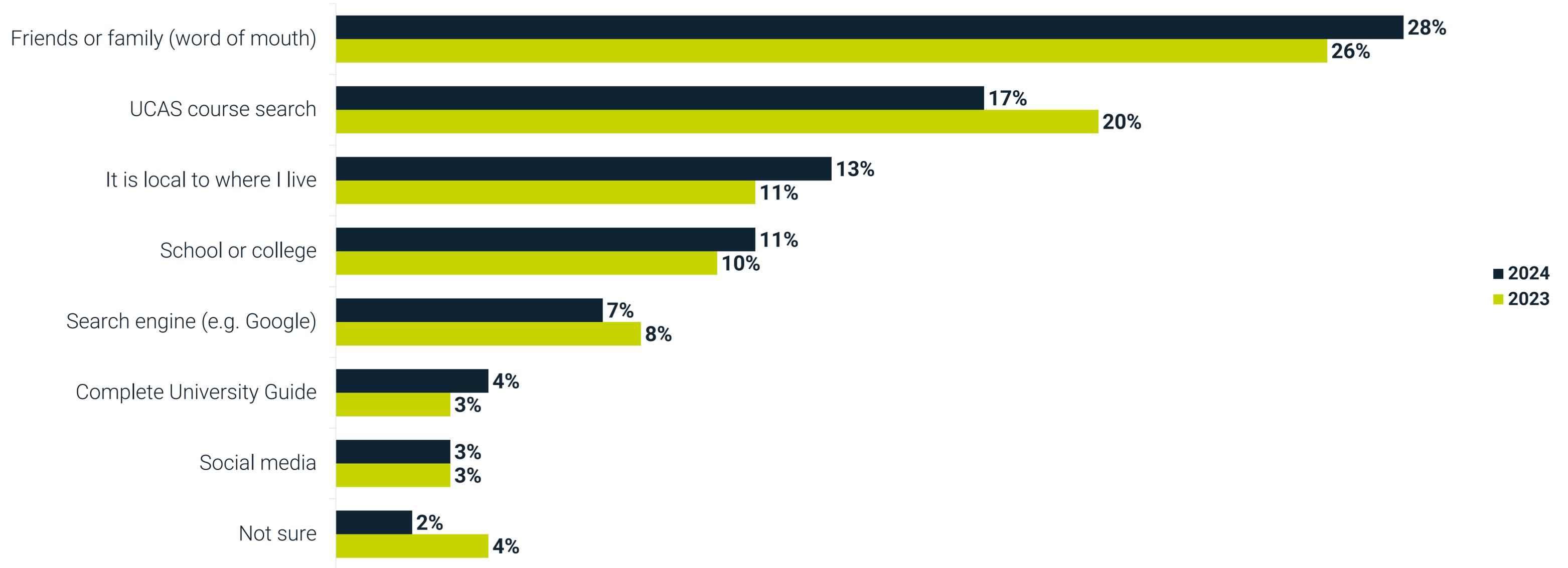


67% HAD STARTED RESEARCHING THE UNIVERSITY THEY WERE PLACED AT BEFORE AUGUST



Q: When did you start researching the university or college you were placed at through clearing? (Base 5972)

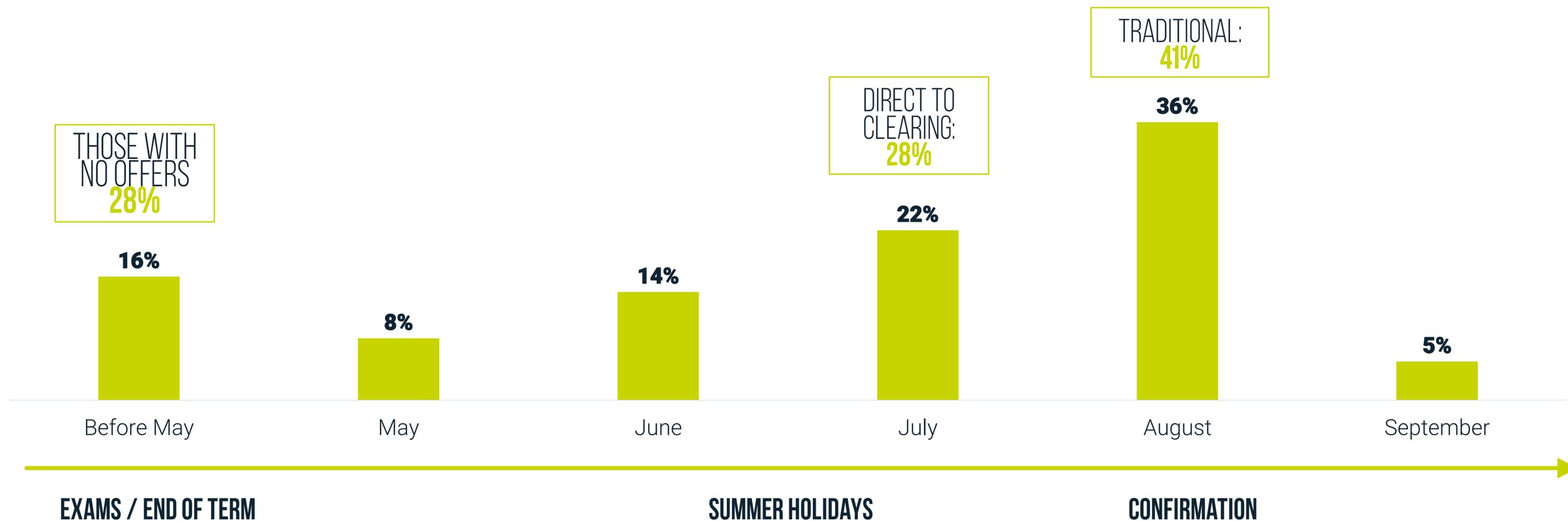
WORD OF MOUTH WAS MOST COMMONLY THE FIRST WAY RESPONDENTS FOUND OUT ABOUT THEIR CLEARING UNIVERSITY FOLLOWED BY UCAS COURSE SEARCH



Q: Where did you first hear about the university or college you found a place at in Clearing? (Single response) (Base 5,973)

60% HAD FIRST THOUGHT CLEARING MAY BE AN OPTION FOR THEM BEFORE AUGUST

THERE WERE SOME DIFFERENCES BY RESPONDENT TYPE



PRE-CLEARING PREPARATION

63%

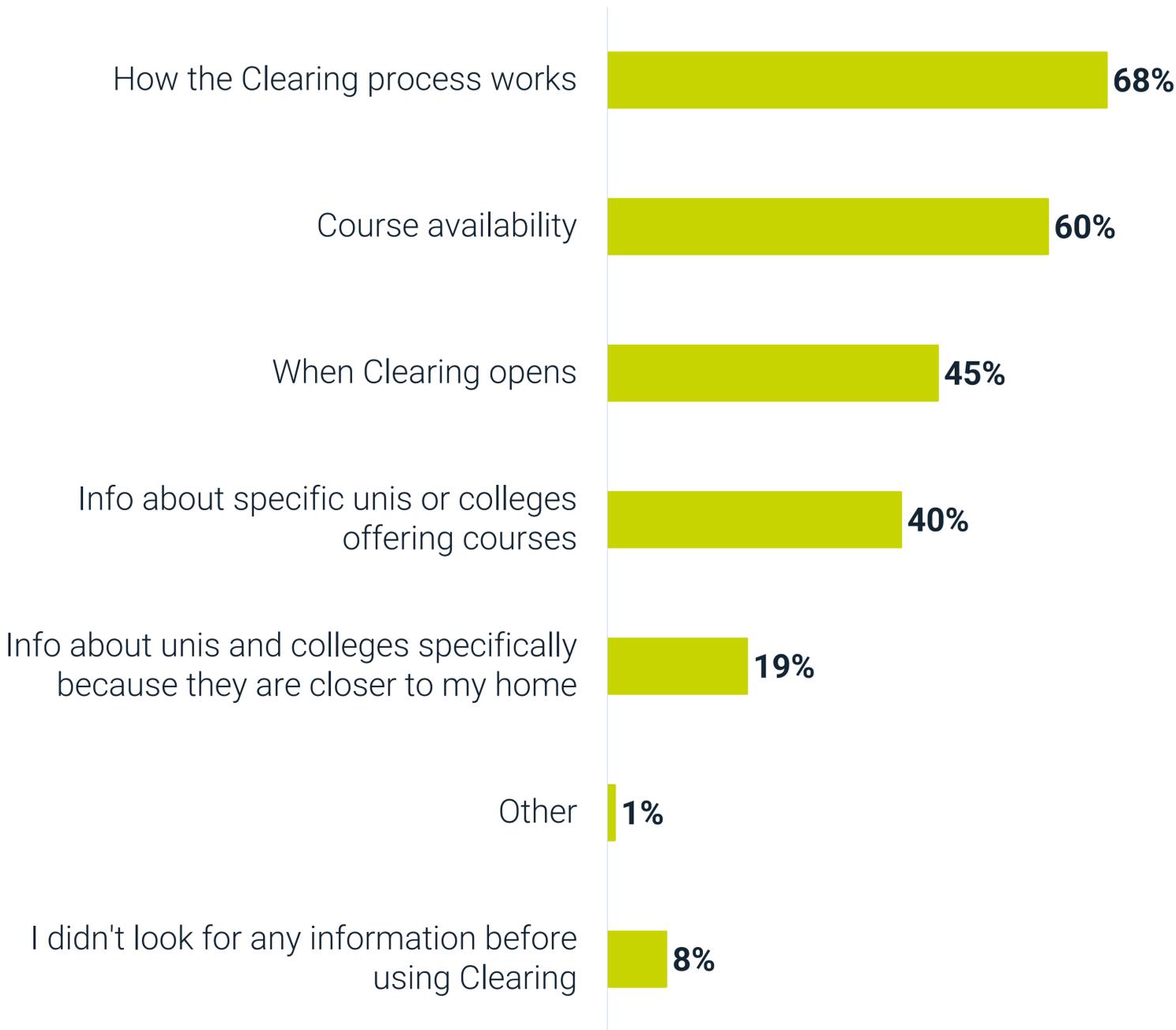
Had already researched available places and knew which universities or colleges they wanted to contact

+5% from 2021

92%

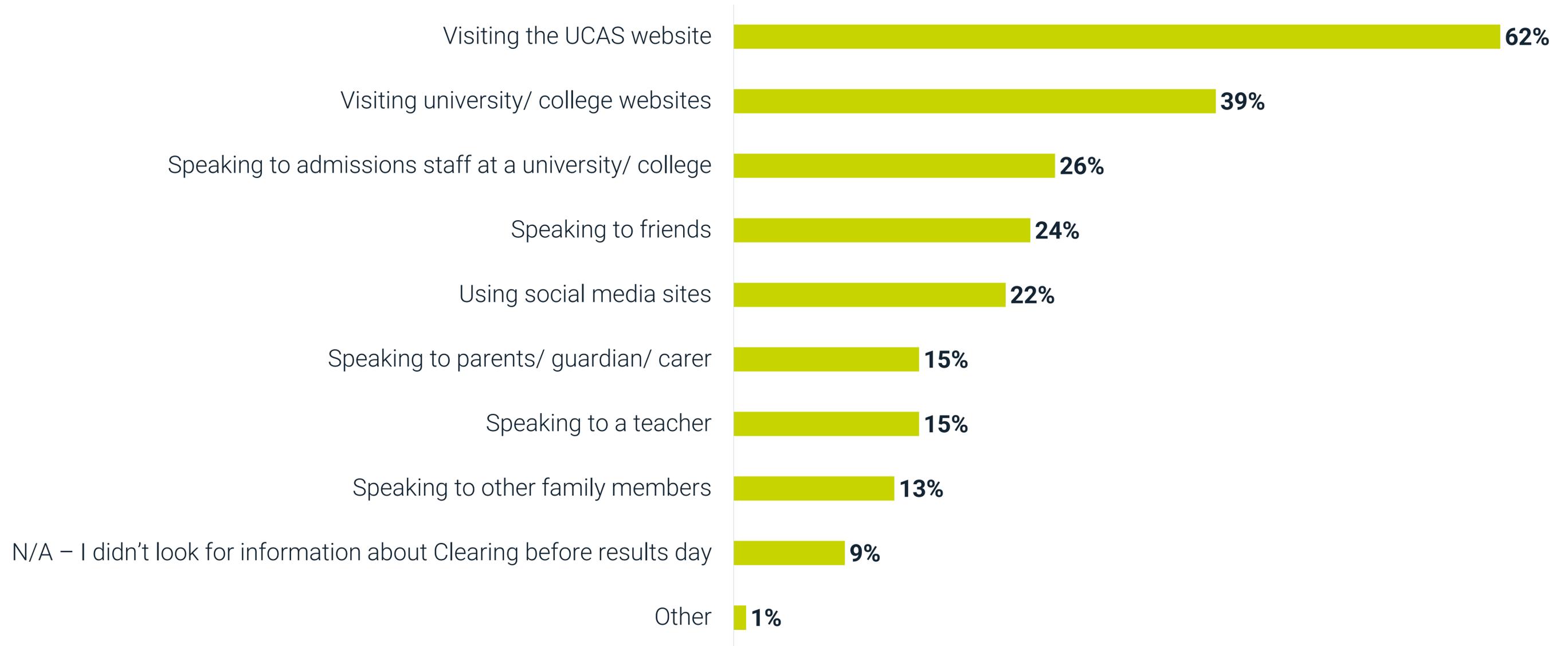
Had looked for information about Clearing beforehand

WHAT INFORMATION HAD THEY LOOKED FOR?



Q: What information did you look for about Clearing before you used the Clearing service? Multiple response (Base: 5965)

THE UCAS WEBSITE WAS THE MAIN SOURCE USED TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT CLEARING IN THE RUN UP TO RESULTS DAY



2

DECISION MAKING PROCESS



**WHERE THEY
GO ON THE DAY
AND WHAT THEY
ARE LOOKING
FORWARD TO**

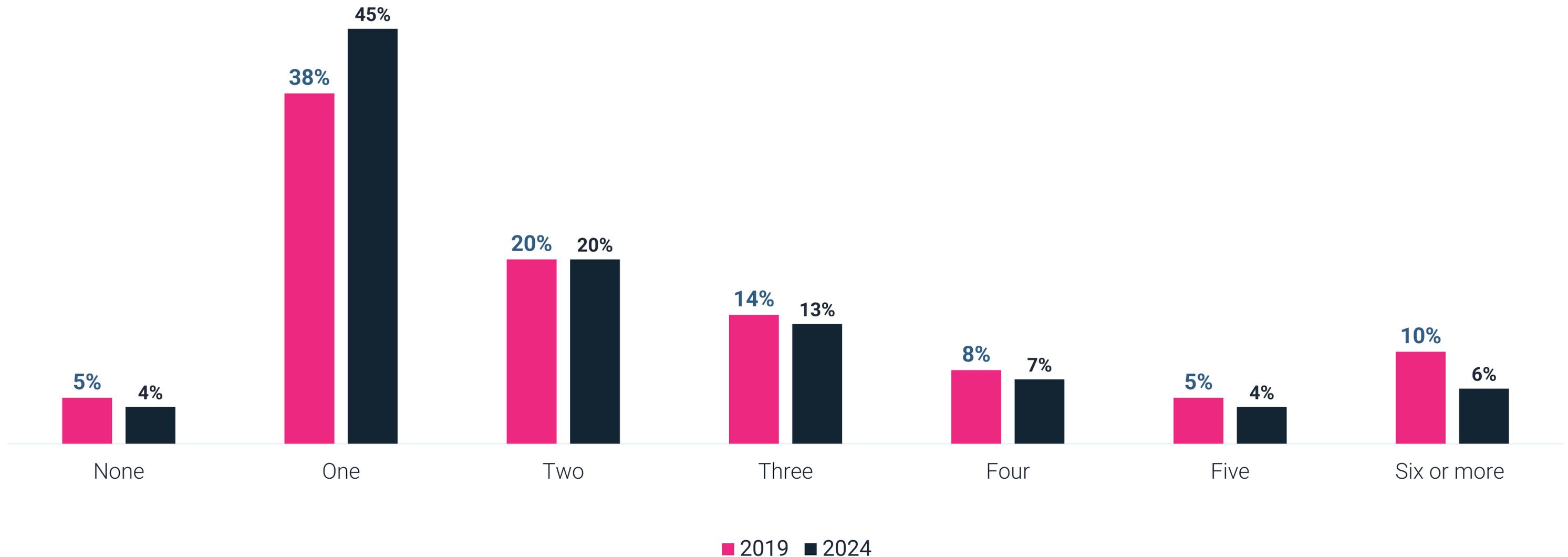


FACTORS IMPORTANT IN CLEARING UNIVERSITY CHOICE ARE SIMILAR TO THOSE CONSIDERED IMPORTANT WHEN APPLYING EARLIER IN THE CYCLE

TOP TEN Clearing survey		NET: Very important and important Clearing 2024	Importance in 2024 Applicant survey
1	The university offering my desired course	95%	N/A
2	The quality of staff/teaching	91%	1
3	The quality of the teaching facilities at the university	91%	2
4	My chance of being accepted based on my grades	86%	N/A
5	The range of modules covered by the course	84%	4
6	Good student reviews	83%	3
7	Academic support available	82%	N/A
8	Graduate prospects	82%	6
9	Likely earning potential after graduation	81%	8
10	The location in the town or city	77%	9

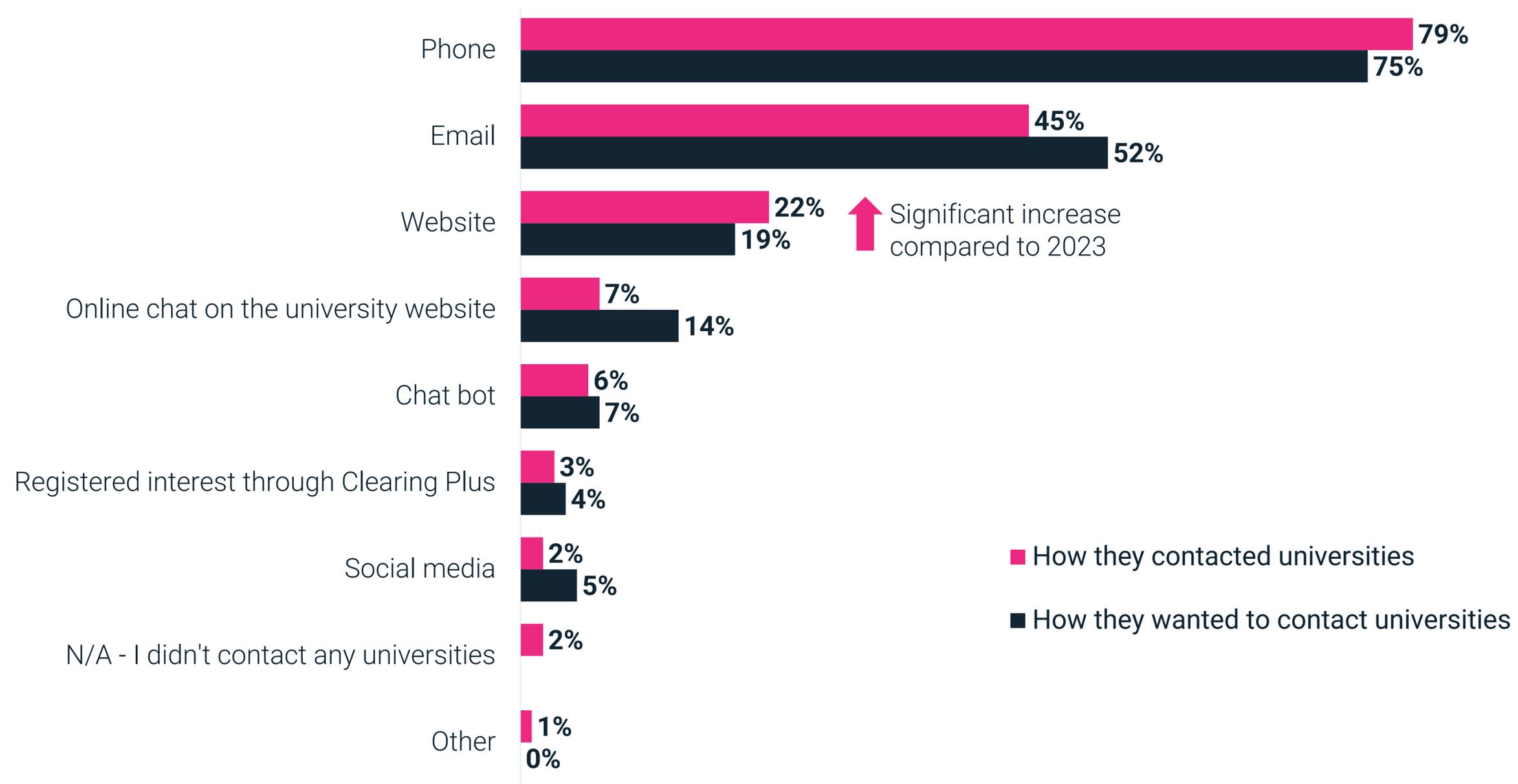
45% HAD ONLY CONTACTED ONE UNIVERSITY OR COLLEGE ABOUT COURSES IN CLEARING

TREND DATA: HOW MANY UNIVERSITIES OR COLLEGES... DID YOU CONTACT ABOUT COURSES IN CLEARING? 2019 TO 2024



Q: How many universities or colleges... Did you contact about courses in Clearing? (Base 2024: 59203)

THE MAJORITY CONTACTED UNIVERSITIES BY PHONE OR EMAIL TO DISCUSS FINDING A PLACE IN CLEARING. METHODS USED WERE LARGELY IN LINE WITH THE METHODS THEY WANTED TO USE



Q: How did you contact universities or colleges to discuss finding a place through Clearing? Please select all that apply.. (Base: 5913)

Q: How would you have liked to have contacted universities or colleges to discuss finding a place through Clearing? Please select all that apply. (Base 5,868)



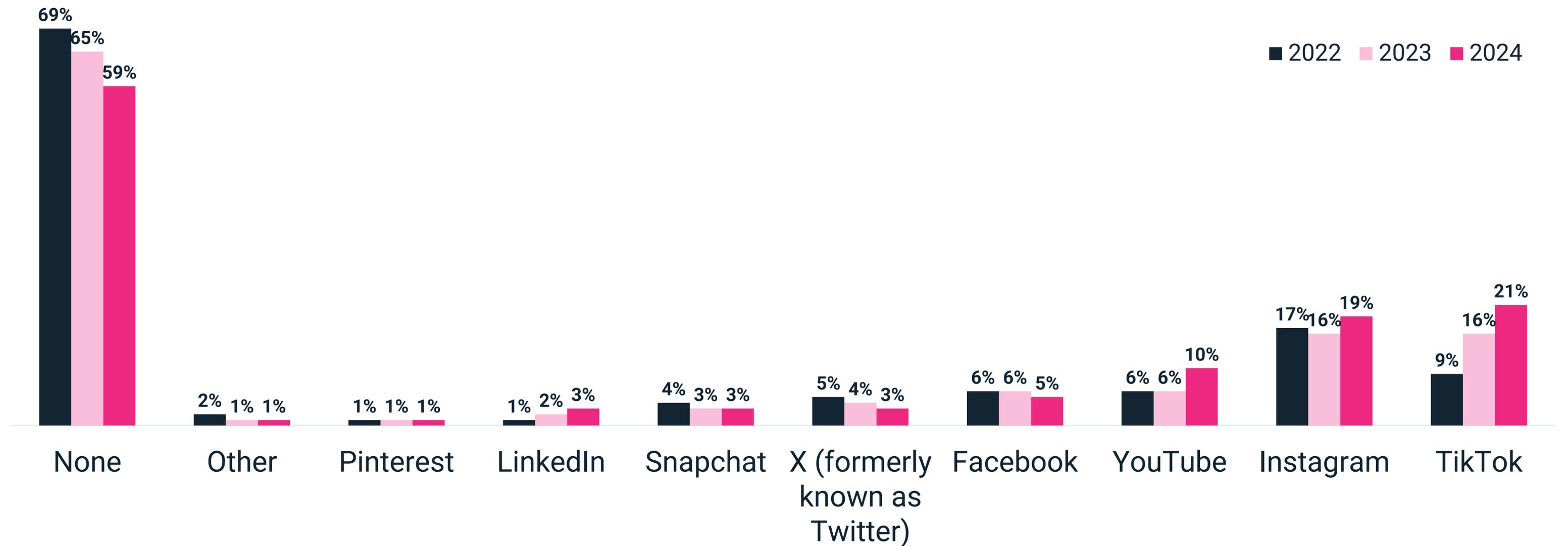
“WhatsApp support was amazing. I was able to contact them easily and get responses quickly”

“Live chat on university websites was a great option and worked well for me”

“Text messaging would be quick and efficient way to get updates or ask questions, especially during busy times like Clearing”

41% OF CLEARING RESPONDENTS USED SOCIAL MEDIA TO SEARCH FOR CLEARING PLACES - TIKTOK, INSTAGRAM AND YOUTUBE SAW THE GREATEST INCREASES

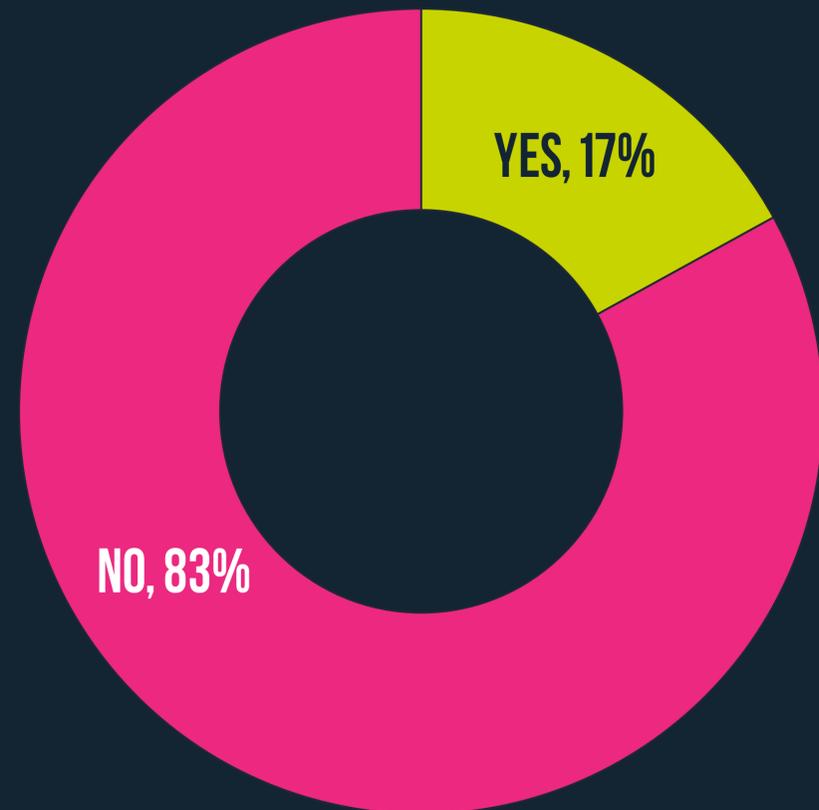
TREND DATA: SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS USED TO SEARCH FOR CLEARING PLACES



Q: Which, if any, social media platforms did you use to search for Clearing places? Please tick all that apply. (Base: 2236 who used social media)

WHAT INFORMATION IS MISSING FROM UNIVERSITIES?

Q: When you were searching for a place in Clearing, was there any information or support that you wanted from universities or colleges that you didn't get? (Base 5,865)



"The accommodation process was unclear, and some universities didn't inform me until it was too late that there would be no accommodation left for Clearing students."

"A lack of information about how long processes would take caused anxiety, especially around whether I was 100% confirmed a place."

"As I am trying to move to part time at my current job, it is extremely difficultwithout knowing rough finish times"

"I wanted more information about bursaries or financial support specific to Clearing applicants, as this was a big factor in my decision-making."

WHAT INFORMATION IS MISSING FROM UNIVERSITIES?

“Disability access, I use a wheelchair so it's important to know the practical logistics of getting around. Ideally this information would be available even in simple terms on the website.”

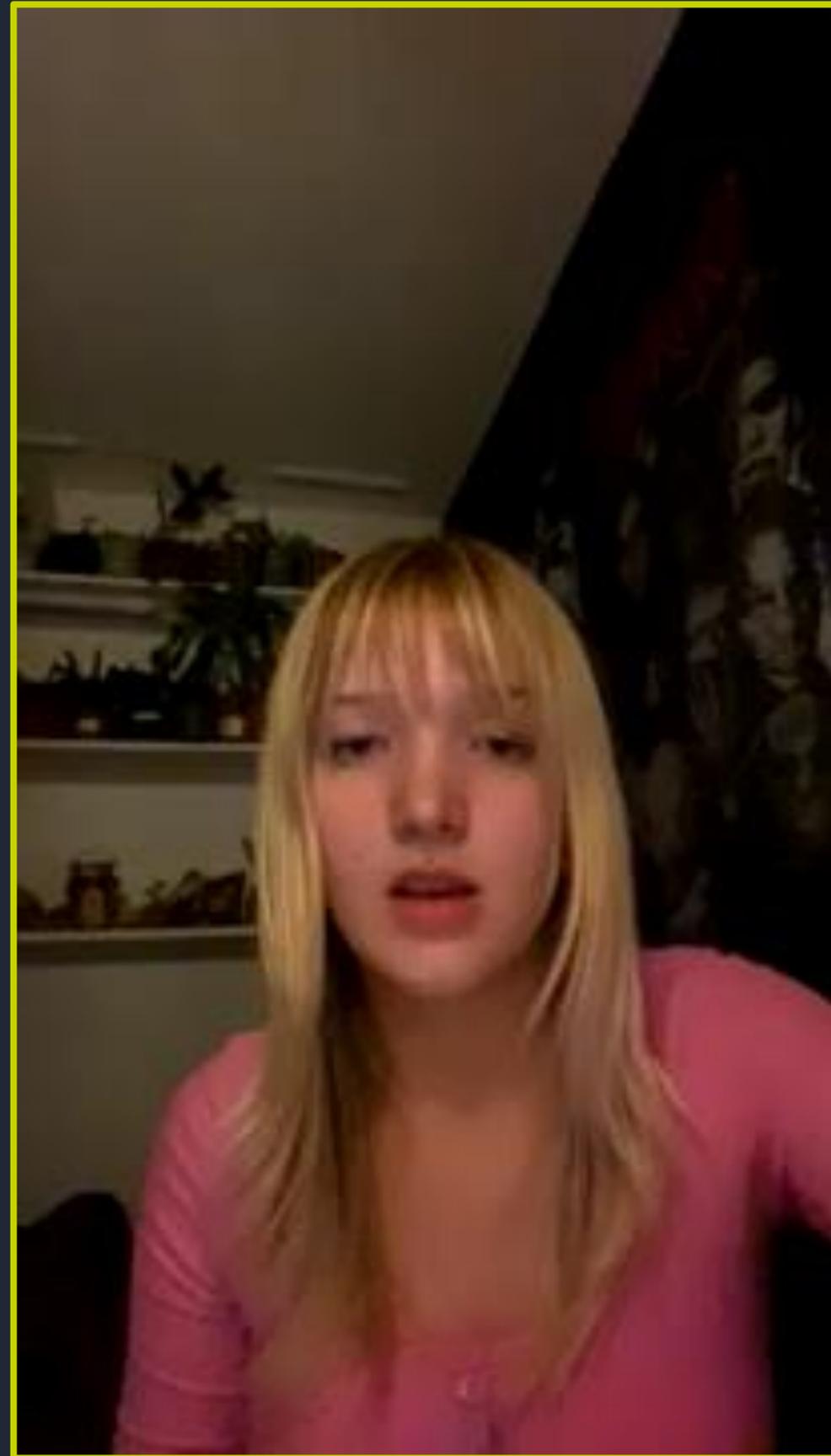


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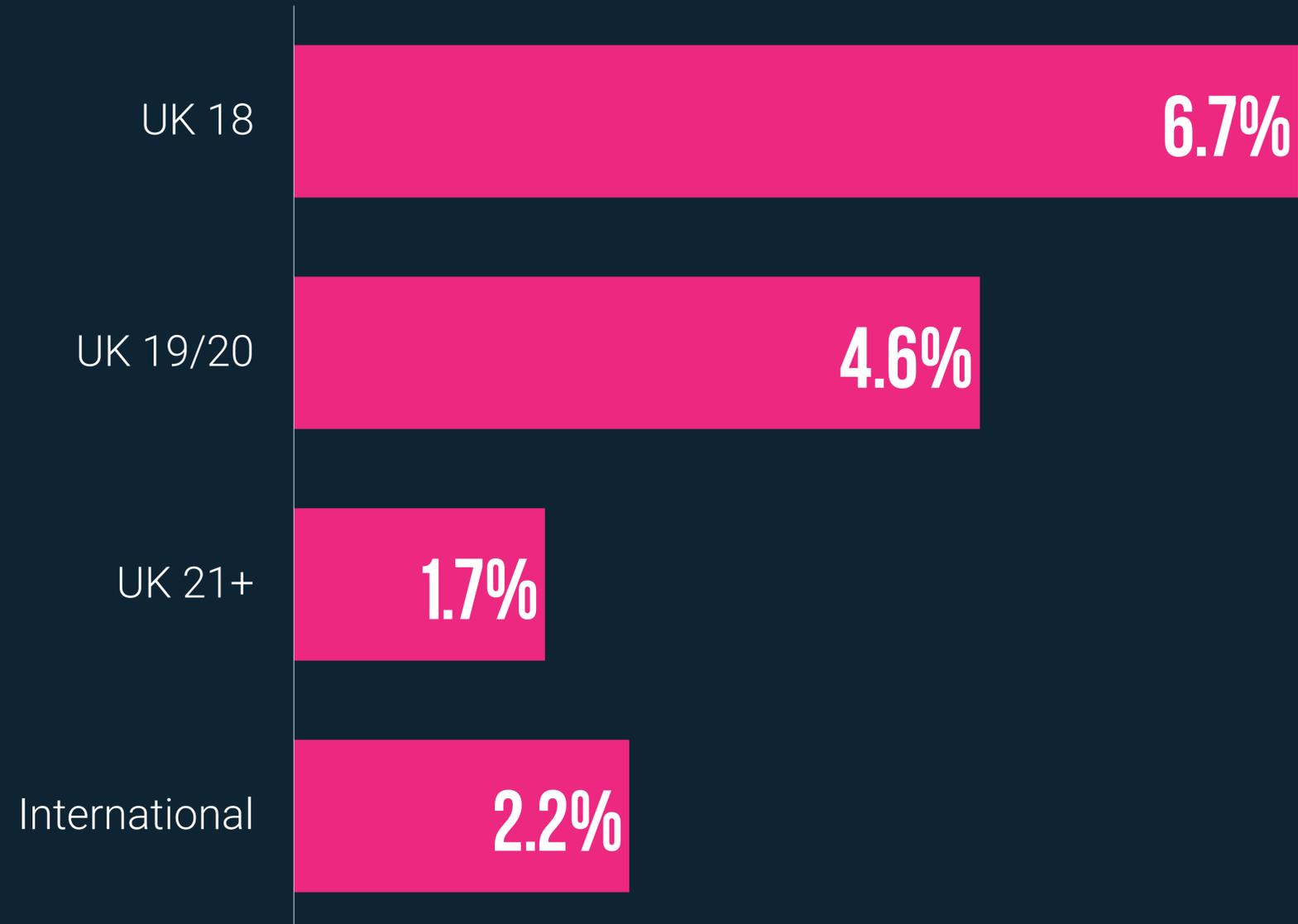
MIND-CHANGERS



**CHANGING YOUR
MIND**
**BEFORE RESULTS
DAY**



1 IN 20 PLACED APPLICANTS ARE MIND-CHANGERS AND USED DMP TO GET THERE





I ONLY
PROPERLY
RESEARCHED
THE UNI AFTER
MAKING IT MY
INSURANCE
AND DECIDED
THAT IT
WASN'T RIGHT
FOR ME

67%

DECLINED THEIR
FIRM CHOICE

30%

DECLINED THEIR
INSURANCE CHOICE

52%

HAD CHANGED THEIR
MINDS BEFORE
RESULTS DAY

And an additional
20% were
considering it
depending on
their grades



MIND-CHANGERS: PUSH FACTORS

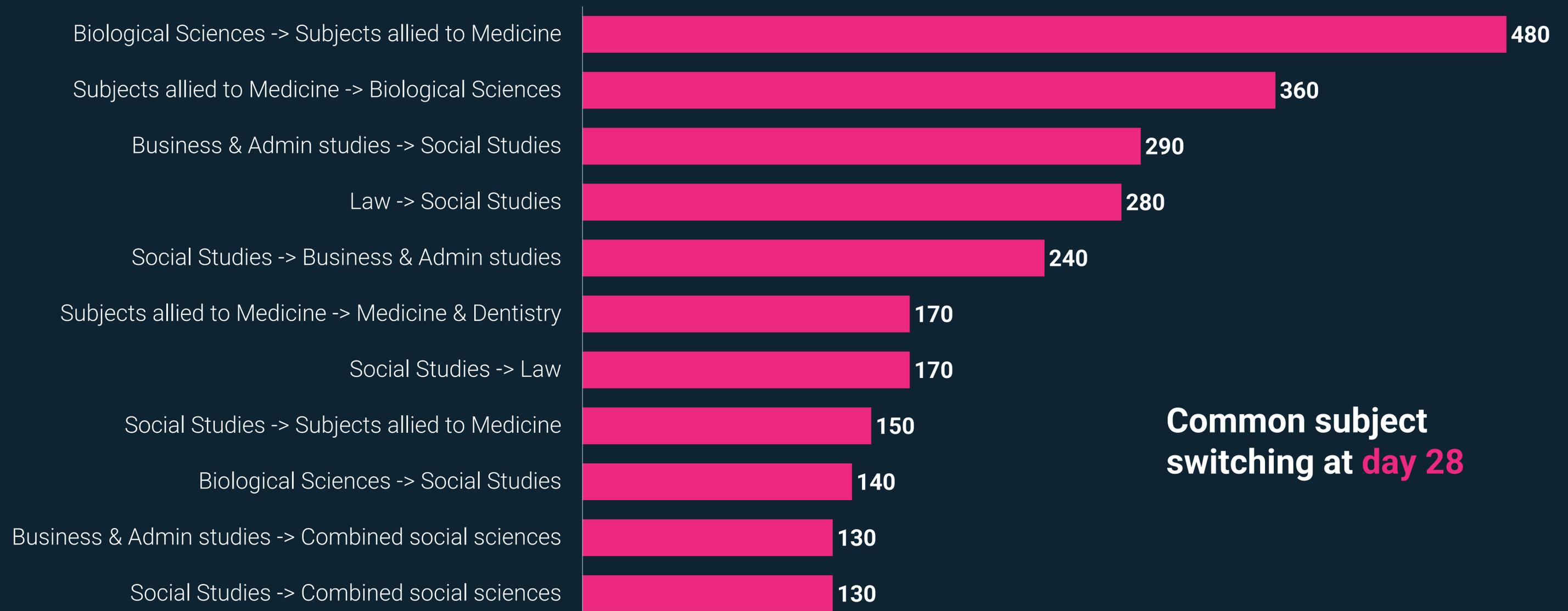
DECLINING THEIR PREVIOUS UNI

- 31% changed their minds about the **subject** they wanted to study
- 23% change in **personal circumstances**
- 17% wanted to **live somewhere cheaper**



MIND-CHANGERS MOVEMENT

TOP 10 MOST COMMON SUBJECT PATHWAYS



**Common subject
switching at day 28**

BEING CLOSER TO HOME AND COSTS

“I realised over time that I wanted to stay closer to home, and the clearing process helped me find a university nearby that still offered the course I wanted.”

“I changed my mind after visiting my firm choice university on an open day. The experience didn’t meet my expectations, so I started looking at other options through Clearing.”

“The closer it got to starting, I decided I didn’t want to dread going to university for a course that I picked. I found a new course through Clearing that made me excited about studying again.”

“The accommodations available were too expensive, and my maintenance loan wouldn’t cover the total costs, so I opted for a different university.”



MIND-CHANGERS: PULL FACTORS

CHOOSING THEIR NEW UNI

- 48% preferred the **location**
- 47% preferred the **course**
- 36% better **reputation** (up from 31% in 2023)
- 30% **closer to home**
- 26% better **graduate prospects**



REPUTATION, THE FULL EXPERIENCE AND **BEING VALUED**

“I received better grades than I expected, so I decided to apply through Clearing for a higher-ranking university that I hadn’t initially considered.”

“It offers better future opportunities and aligns closely with my career aspirations compared to the other choice.”

“Much more diverse group of extracurriculars offered by the institution”

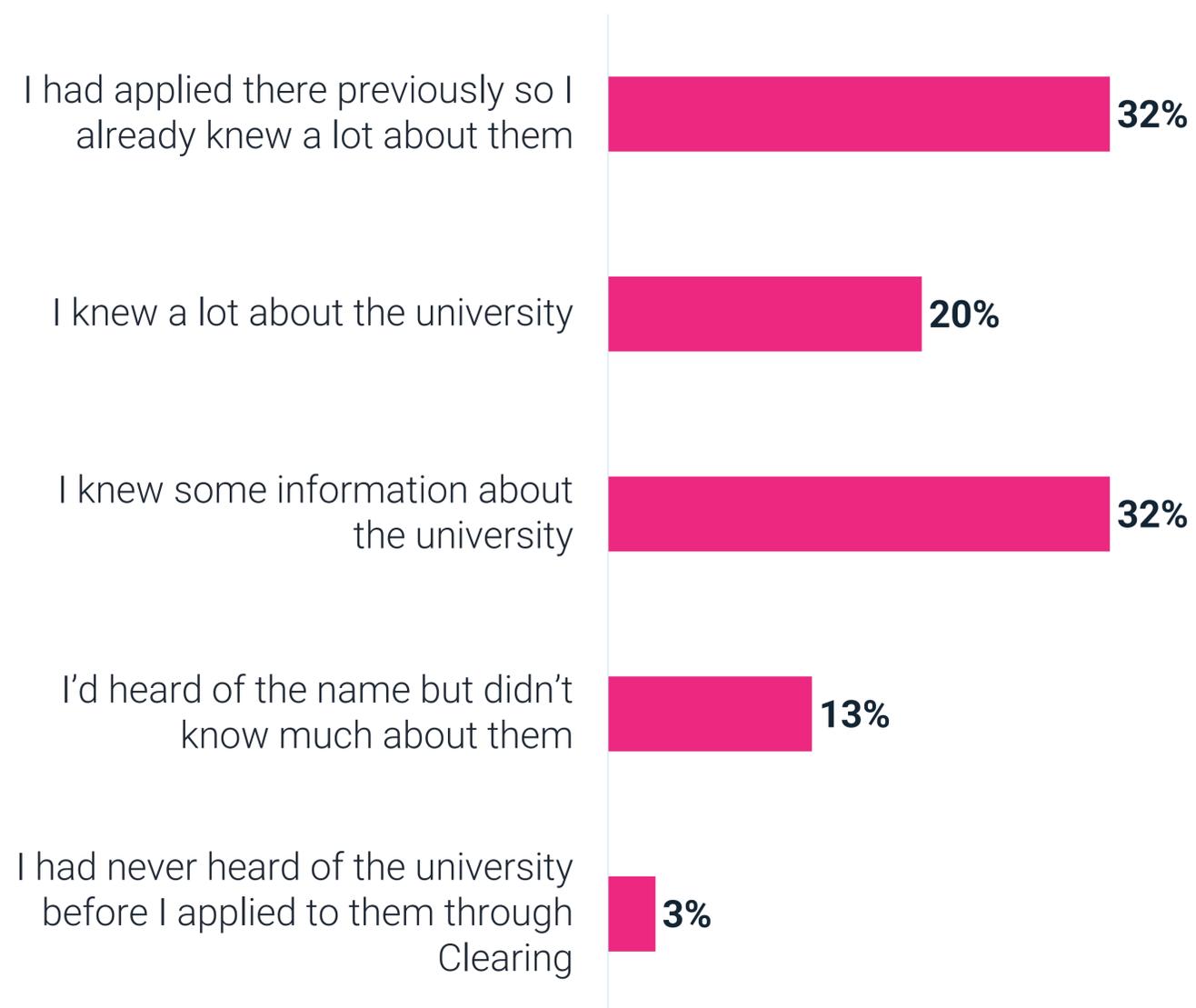
“The university was more responsive to my queries during the decision-making process, which made me feel valued.”

“The lecturer came highly recommended, enhancing the academic appeal.”



52% HAD
APPLIED TO THE
UNIVERSITY
PREVIOUSLY OR
KNEW A LOT
ABOUT THEM
PRIOR TO
DECLINING THEIR
PLACE

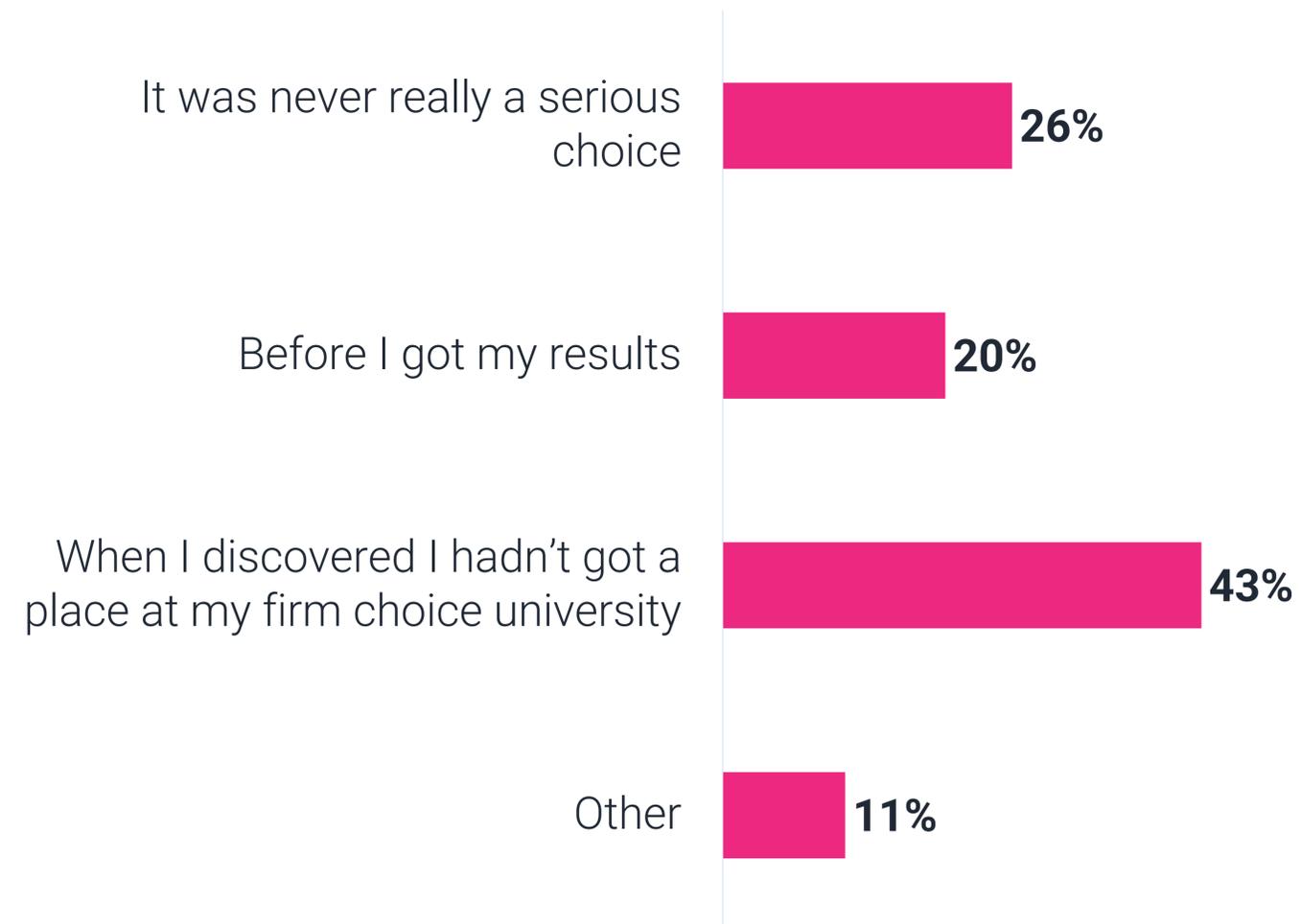
WHAT WAS THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH THE UNIVERSITY THEY SWITCHED TO?



Q: Thinking about the university or college you were placed at through Clearing, how much do you feel you knew about them before applying to them through Clearing? (Base: 1965 decline my place respondents)



WHEN DID 'DECLINE MY **INSURANCE PLACE**' RESPONDENTS MAKE THAT DECISION?



Q: You said you declined your insurance choice, at what point did you decide you were not going to go to your insurance choice university? (Base 599 decline my place respondents who declined their insurance choice)



SHIFTING MINDSET FROM FIRM TO INSURANCE

“When my original firm contacted me with an offer, it changed my plans, and I decided not to pursue my insurance choice.”

“My insurance offered me a place with a change of course that I did not want.”

“When I decide that studying physics might be too stressful, I started exploring other options and chose not to go to my insurance university”

“It was a ‘just in case’ university but it stayed that way until results day and so only then I realised what it would be like for me to go to my insurance and I did not like that idea at all.”



RESPONDENTS WHO HAD DECLINED THEIR INSURANCE UNI WERE MORE LIKELY TO HAVE CHANGED THEIR MIND FOLLOWING A VISIT, AND MORE LIKELY CHOOSE A UNI WITH BETTER GRADUATE PROSPECTS OR REPUTATION

DECLINING THEIR PREVIOUS UNI

	Declined Firm	Declined Insurance	
I changed my mind about the subject I wanted to study	36%	24%	▼
After visiting the uni, I decided I no longer wanted to study there	12%	17%	▲

CHOOSING THEIR NEW UNI

	Declined Firm	Declined Insurance	
There are better graduate prospects	24%	30%	▲
They have a better reputation	31%	41%	▲
I prefer the accommodation on offer	12%	18%	▲
This university was closer to home	33%	26%	▼

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**HOW WOULD YOU
IMPROVE
CLEARING?**



COMMUNICATION IS KEY

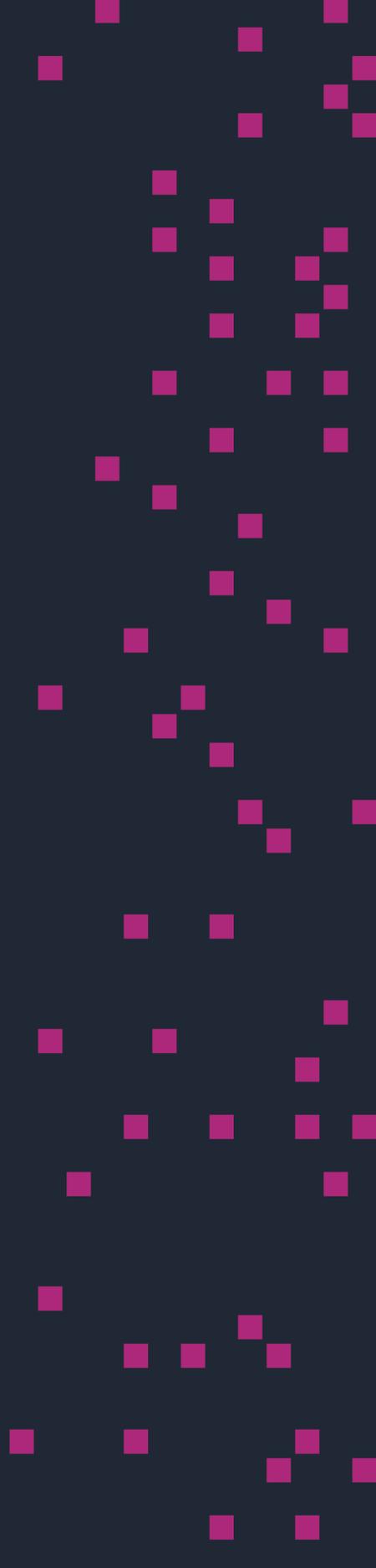
“Improve transparency about required grades and the likelihood of acceptance. Many students were unsure if they could reapply for a course they'd previously been rejected from or if their grades would be sufficient.”

“Universities should list their Clearing courses and requirements earlier, ideally before results day, to allow more time to research and prepare.”

“Reduce phone wait times by hiring more staff or providing additional contact methods like live chat or WhatsApp. Long delays caused frustration and stress.”

“Enhance communication during the process, such as regular updates on application status, estimated timelines for confirmation, and verbal offer follow-ups with immediate email confirmation.”





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**KEY
TAKEAWAYS**



KEY TAKEAWAYS

1

ENGAGE STUDENTS EARLIER AND CONSISTENTLY.

2

ADDRESS EMOTIONAL AND PRACTICAL CONCERNS.

3

PRIORITISE ACCOMODATION AND FINANCIAL TRANSPARENCY.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

4

SUPPORT STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND SPECIFIC NEEDS.

5

ENHANCE DIGITAL TOUCHPOINTS.

6

EMPOWER MIND-CHANGERS WITH INFORMATION.



YOUR QUESTIONS AND THOUGHTS...

WE'D LOVE TO HEAR YOUR
QUESTIONS AND INSIGHTS.