



UCAS

The Clearing  
Connection.

# DECLINE MY PLACE – REAL REASONS. REAL RETENTION MOVES.

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# DECLINE MY PLACE- DAY 28 DATA

**6.3%**

USED DMP

- 6.3% of all applicants used DMP
  - 42,920
  - (+1.4% since 2024)

**60.5%**

DMP USERS PLACED

- 60.5% of those using DMP are now placed
  - 25,960
  - (+2.8% since 2024)

**37.1%**

CLEARING USED DMP

- 37.1% of people placed in Clearing used DMP before finding their place

# DECLINE MY PLACE MOVEMENT



# OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

## Objectives

- What are the different uses of Decline My Place?
- What are the segments using it?
- When are decisions made?
- Could anything be done differently to respond to leaving triggers?

## Methodology

- UCAS 2025 Clearing survey (Day 28 data cut)
- 1,462 Decline my Place respondents
- 3 x focus groups with UK students who considered or used Decline My Place



# WHOSE STORIES ARE WE HEARING?

## DECLINE MY PLACE

(41% of Clearing survey respondents)

## DECLINE FIRM CHOICE

(59% of DMP respondents)

## DECLINE INSURANCE CHOICE

(30% of DMP respondents)

## DECLINE CHANGE OF COURSE

(10% of DMP respondents)

# UNDERSTANDING WHAT DRIVES THOSE DECISIONS



# THREE WAYS STUDENTS WALK AWAY FROM AN OFFER

Push factors: What influenced your decision to decline your original university? Top reason

## DECLINE FIRM CHOICE

**34%**

I changed my mind about the subject I wanted to study

## DECLINE INSURANCE CHOICE

**57%**

I didn't want to go to my insurance choice university

## DECLINE CHANGE OF COURSE

**40%**

I was offered a different course which I didn't want to study



# THREE WAYS STUDENTS WALK AWAY FROM AN OFFER

Pull factors: Which factors influenced your decision to choose the university you're going to?

## DECLINE FIRM CHOICE

- 46% I preferred the course
- 42% I preferred the location of the university/college
- 33% Better reputation
- 30% Closer to home
- 27% Better graduate prospects

## DECLINE INSURANCE CHOICE

- 48% I preferred the location of the university/college
- 43% Better reputation
- 42% I preferred the course
- 32% Better graduate prospects
- 24% Closer to home

## DECLINE CHANGE OF COURSE

- 53% I preferred the course
- 27% I preferred the location of the university/college
- 18% Better reputation
- 16% Closer to home
- 15% Better graduate prospects

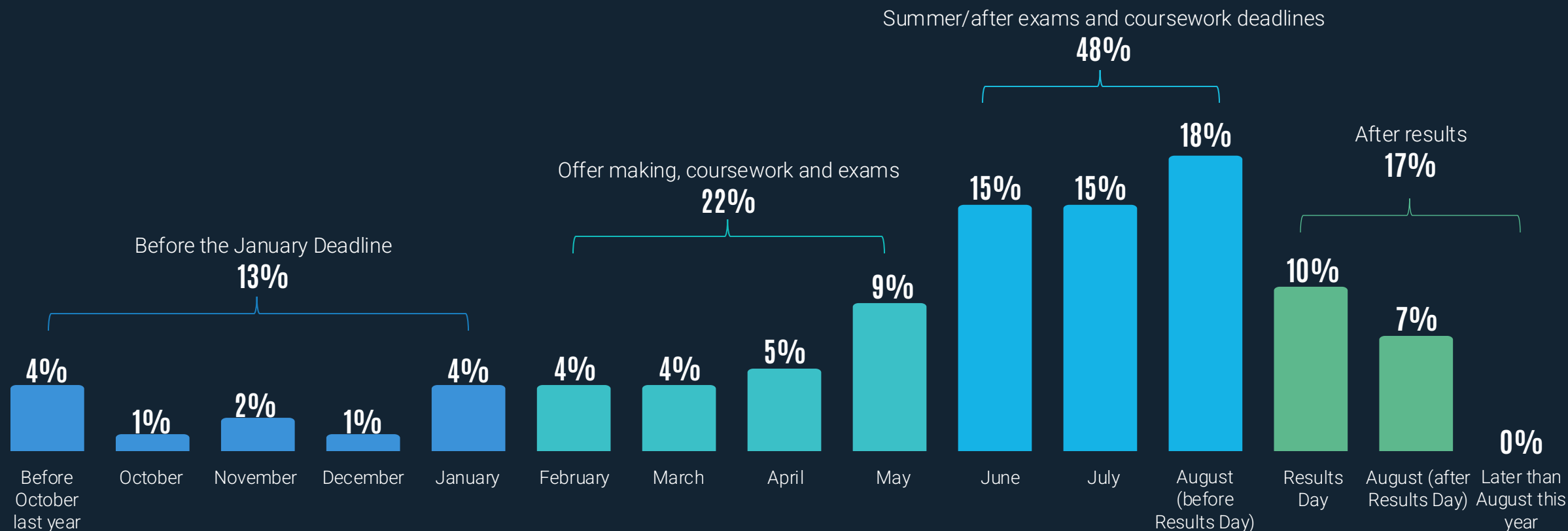
Q: Which factors influenced your decision to choose the university you are going to, over the university you were originally placed at? Please select all that apply.

Base: All 1449, Firm 852, Insurance 437, Course change 139



# FROM SLOW WOBBLE TO SHARP JOLT

When those declining their firm choice started to think about applying elsewhere



# THE REALITY CHECKS HITS OVER SUMMER

## Practicalities become clearer over summer

- Commute length, travel cost, comfort with moving out
- New university often significantly closer to home



*"I'm about 30 minutes out from London so [my previous choice] is quite far... It would either be a crazy train every morning, which obviously I wouldn't do, or I'd have to live out and I just didn't feel comfortable right now moving out. So, I thought I'd just stay at home and take a train to London every day."*



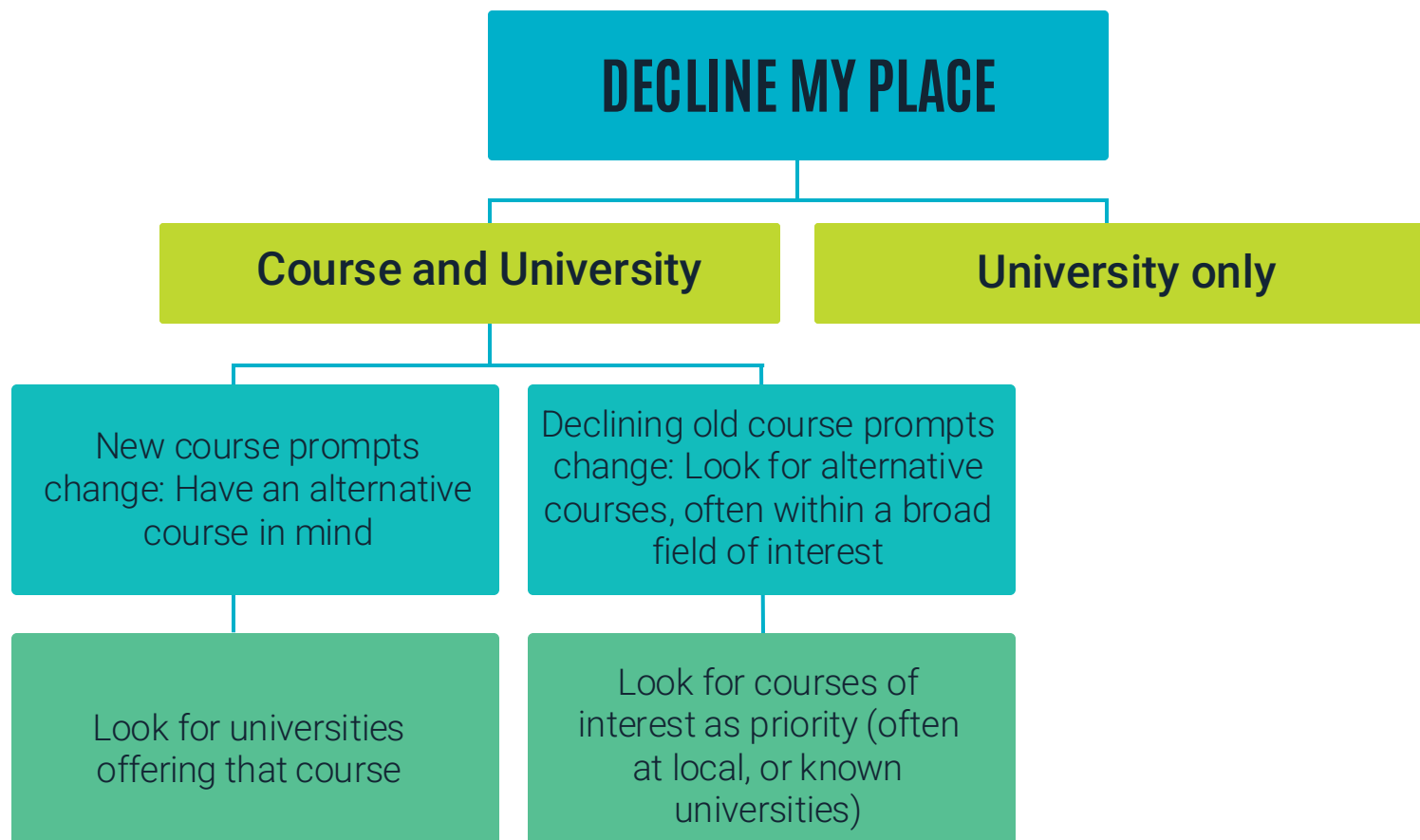
*"[The new choice] is a lot closer to me... where I'd have to get a train every day and it'd be a lot more financially, a lot more money and just harder to do every single day."*



27%

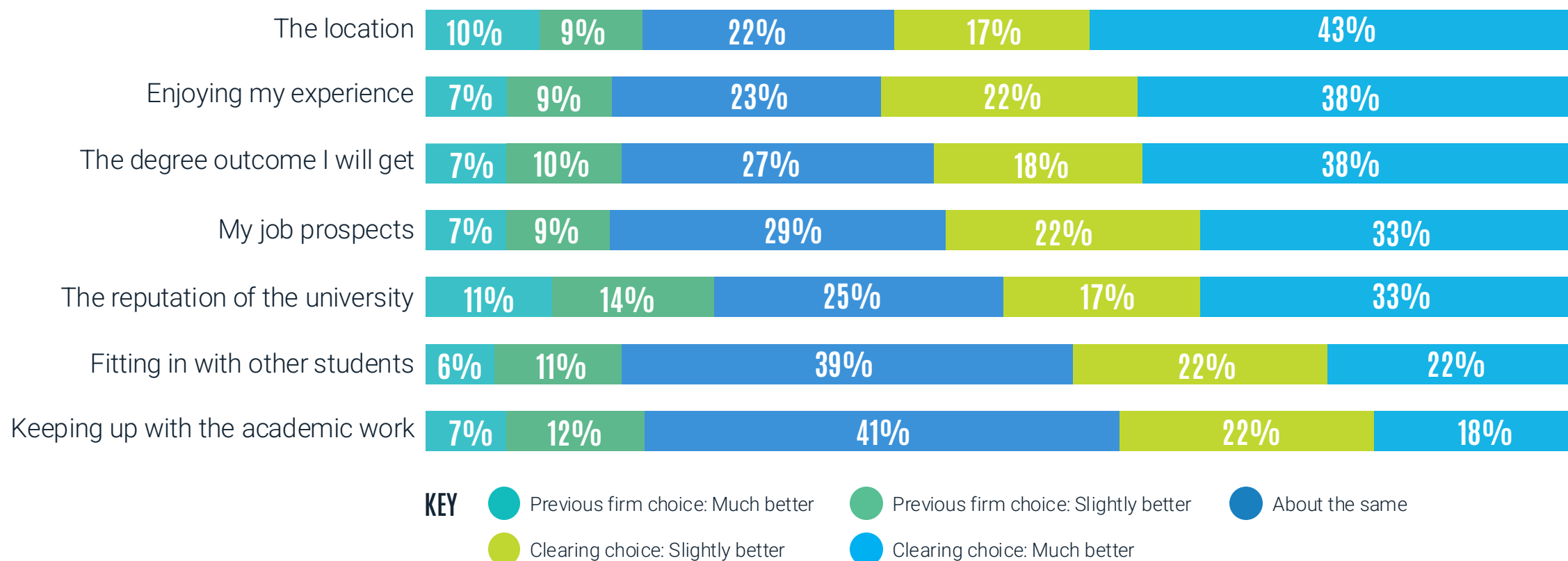
Of all DMP declined their place as the university was closer to home.

# PUSHES AND PULLS OF 'DOUBLE SWITCHERS'



# WHICH IS BETTER - THEIR CLEARING CHOICE OR THEIR ORIGINAL FIRM?

Which is better your firm choice or the course you found in Clearing? Firm choice decliners



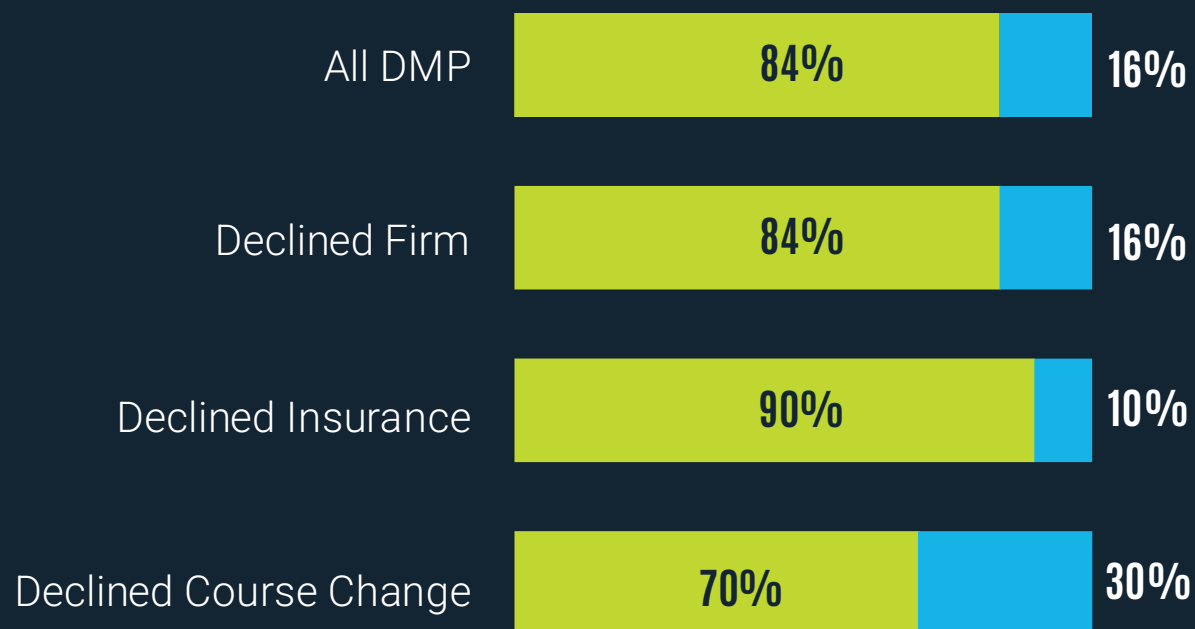
# UNDERSTANDING WHAT MIGHT HAVE MADE A DIFFERENCE



# BY THE TIME THEY PRESS DECLINE, IT'S ALREADY LATE

Was there anything your previous university could have done to encourage you not to decline your place?

KEY ● Yes ● No



Q: Is there anything your previous university could have done to encourage you not to decline your place with them?  
Base: All 1458, Firm 855, Insurance 438, Course change 142



# WHEN FIRM BECOMES FRAGILE - WHAT STRENGTHENS COMMITMENT

## Holding on to firm-choice students

- Keep excitement alive after offer – avoid a silent summer.
- Make it obvious who to talk to about doubts or questions.
- Normalise wobble and signpost support.



*"Tell students what life would look like, how many times I would be in a week etc. Very stressful not knowing as a student who lives over an hour away"*



# 16%

Of Firm-Choice Decliners believed their university could have influenced their decision to stay



# DECLINE MY PLACE STUDENT 2025 ENTRY

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## THE SILENCE AFTER THE OFFER

What really drives students to decline their place?

# THE VISIBILITY WINDOW

## WHEN ARE APPLICANTS' CHOICES VISIBLE?

- You'll only see an applicant's other choices after they've responded to all their offers.

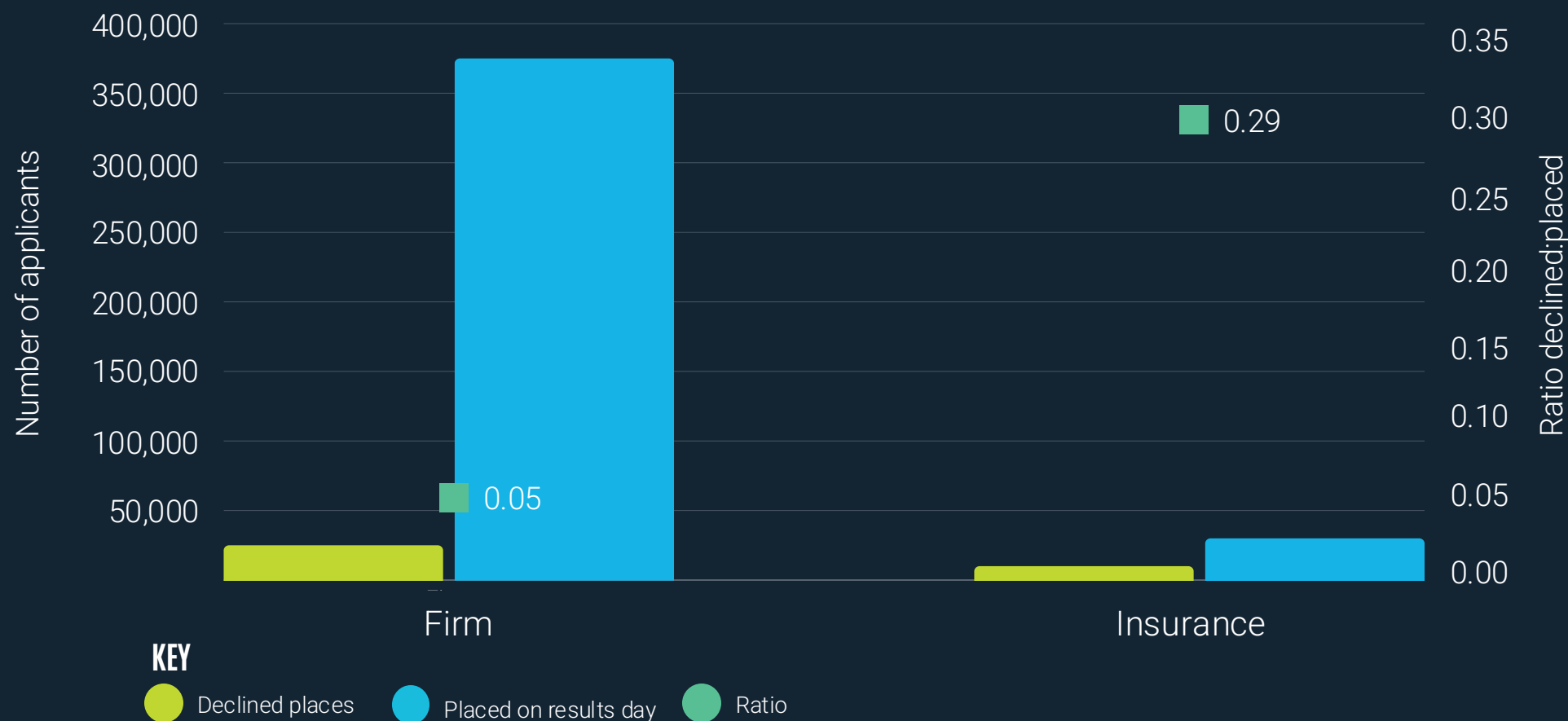
## COMMUNICATING WITH INSURANCE OFFER HOLDERS

- You can contact applicants who have chosen you as their firm or insurance choice, but you must not try to influence them to change those choices.



# DECLINING MAIN SCHEME CHOICES (2024)

Illustrative ratio between status of declined choice and status of applicants places on JCQ results day 2024



# CAN YOUR INSURANCE FEEL LIKE A REAL CHOICE?

## Reducing insurance declines

- Treat insurance students as a live audience, not just a backup.
- Be upfront about accommodation costs and allocation.

**10%**

Of insurance decliners  
believed their university  
could have influenced their  
decision to stay.

*"More detailed information on what the course content covered despite a lower global reputation"*

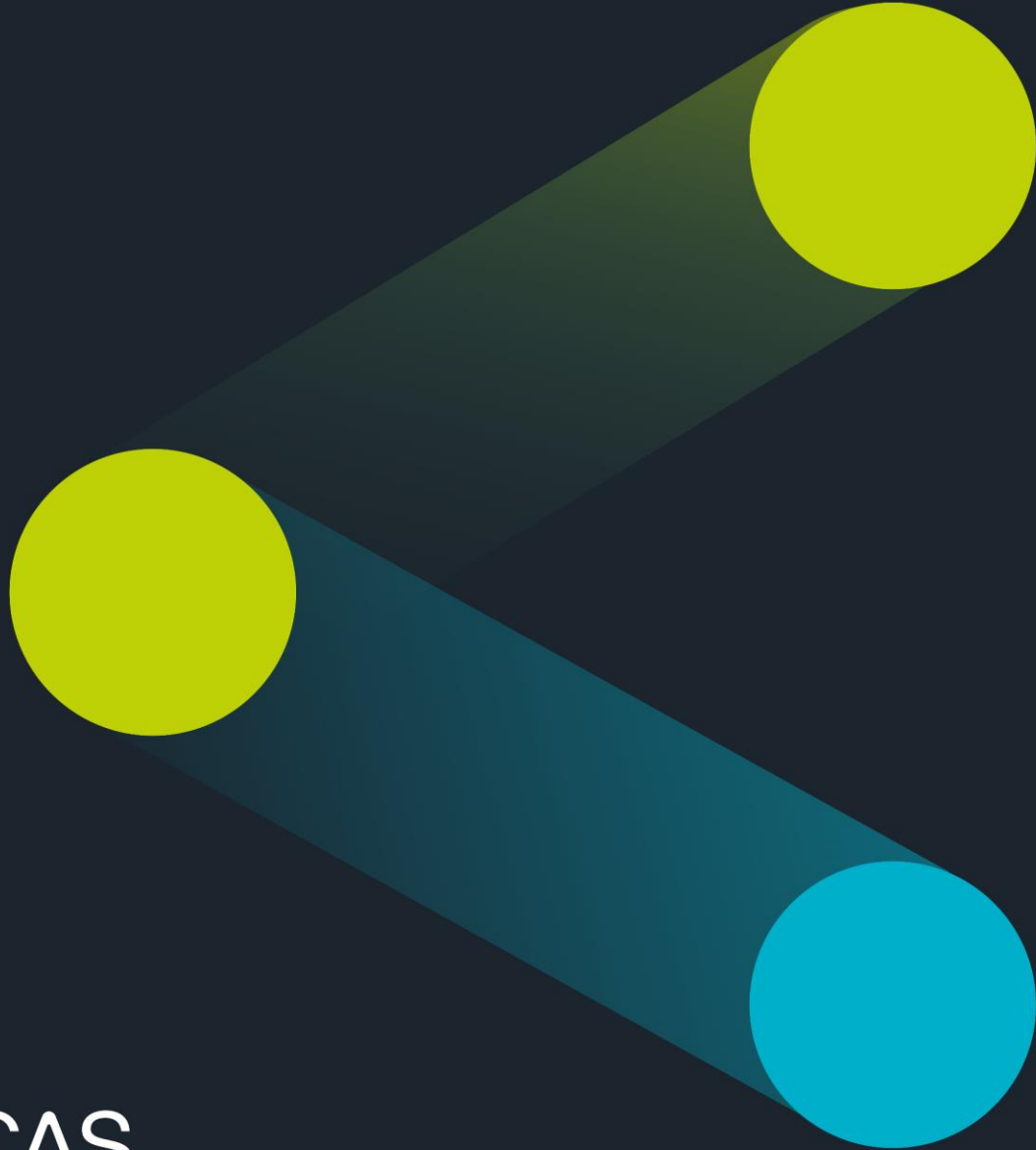
*I wrote to them with few questions about the course curriculum and prospects few times. They rudely refused to answer any."*

*"They could have had better communication about the lack of accommodation"*

# TURNING DECLINE MY PLACE INTO BETTER CLEARING DECISIONS

- Treat every post-offer moment as make-or-break
- Tighten your communication joins
- Make support visible, early and personal
- Build your 'wobble window' plan now
- Use what students tell us works.
- If you fix the points of confusion, you reduce Decline My Place





# The Clearing Connection.

Real choices.  
Real signals.  
Real outcomes.