



# STUDENT LIFESTYLE REPORT 2022



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# WELCOME

Welcome to UAC's second Student Lifestyle Report, our annual guide to the views, interests and behaviours of school leavers starting their first year of university.

Almost 50,000 Year 12 students use UAC to start their higher education journey each year, and we're delighted to present many of the opinions and experiences of this diverse and resilient group across the following pages.

For this year's report, we surveyed over 13,000 Year 12 students from across Australia. We asked them about their interests and hobbies, desires and dreams.

Students generously shared their hopes, frustrations and aspirations as they enter a world full of rich opportunities and novel challenges.

This report forms part of UAC's ongoing efforts to contribute to a greater awareness and understanding of these young adults as they start to make their mark on the world.

Some of the many insights revealed include drivers around university selection, brand alignment, income and spending, COVID attitudes and technology preferences.

These insights are mixed with real student voices to provide a truly unique picture of what school leavers are thinking and feeling as they undergo a period of significant change and start university or college.

As we enter the third year of a global pandemic, it has never been more important to listen to and support these students and recognise their drive, their determination, and their passions.

I hope you enjoy learning more about these young adults just as much as we did.



**Kim Paino**  
General Manager  
Marketing and Engagement

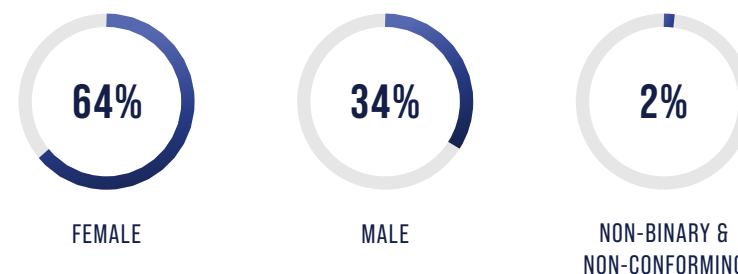
## WHO ARE THEY?

We surveyed Year 12 students completing their secondary schooling in every state and territory in Australia during 2021.

The survey received **13,719** responses.

Students were surveyed between November 2021 and February 2022.

## AGE AND GENDER



The data presented has been weighted to remove any imbalances due to differences in gender participation rates.



# EDUCATION

As Year 12 students around Australia finished their final exams in November 2021 there was an especially deep sigh of relief.

COVID lockdowns, remote-learning challenges and changing deadlines added to the regular demands of studying and planning for life after school.

Eighteen-year-old Lochie summed up the mood of many Year 12 students after a challenging year.

'My experience during senior school with lockdowns and interrupted learning has allowed me to grow . . . I am now more resilient, patient, and have a new-found determination to achieve my goals. I think these qualities will assist me greatly in my university journey.'

In this section we explore the decisions of thousands of students like Lochie as they prepare to start university.

## CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Over half of students (60%) expressed a strong preference for on-campus learning, a slight decrease from 2021 (64%).

Just over a third (37%) favoured blended learning, slightly up from 2021 (34%).

## A PASSIONATE BUZZ

Pursuing their passions at a tertiary level is an exciting prospect for over two-thirds of students (71%).

They are also eager to socialise and immerse themselves in campus life (57%).

## HIRING EDUCATION

Graduate employment outcomes rated very highly (44%) this year, almost doubling in importance compared to last year (23%).

## ACCESS AND QUALITY

While ease of commute (51%) and reputation (47%) are the key factors driving institution selection in 2022, students also look at cost (35%) and inclusiveness (25%) when deciding where to study.

# BIG DECISIONS: WHERE TO STUDY

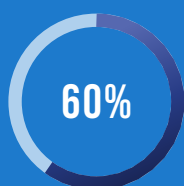
Some of the factors students consider when choosing a uni or college.

Connections with overseas universities  
for exchange programs.

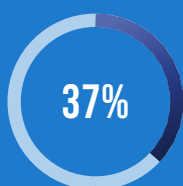
What they have to offer for women in STEM.

Close to the city where friends  
and I can go out after uni.

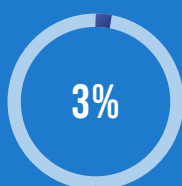
## APPETITE FOR FACE-TO-FACE LEARNING



ON-CAMPUS

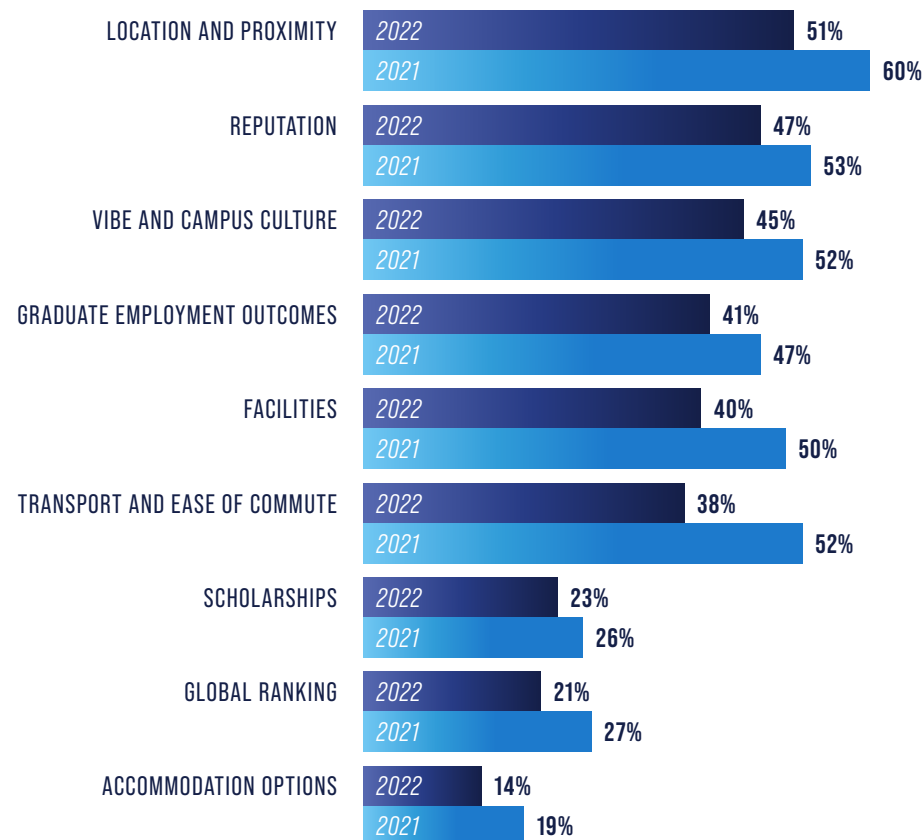


BLENDED

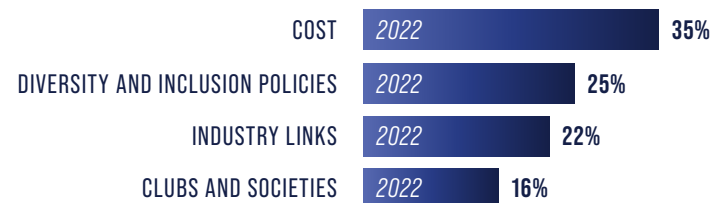


REMOTE

## CONSIDERATIONS WHEN CHOOSING AN INSTITUTION

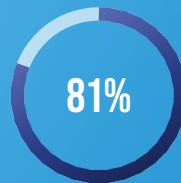


Students identified four additional considerations this year.

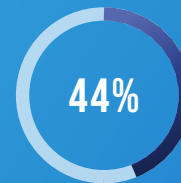


# BIG DECISIONS: CHOOSING A COURSE

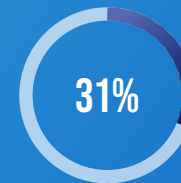
Students say the biggest factor for them when choosing a course is having a strong interest in the areas and topics they will be studying. They also give strong consideration to their prospects of securing work in a related field once they graduate.



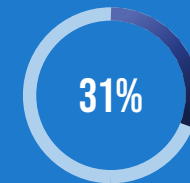
PASSION FOR  
SUBJECT MATTER



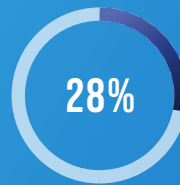
EMPLOYABILITY OUTCOMES  
OF GRADUATES



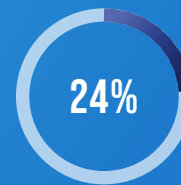
WORK EXPERIENCE/  
INTERNSHIP OPPORTUNITIES



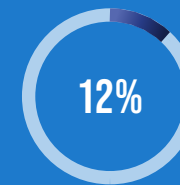
ENTRY REQUIREMENTS/  
SELECTION RANK



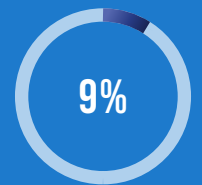
WILL LEAD TO  
CHOSEN CAREER



QUALITY OF  
TEACHING



WORLD UNI  
RANKINGS



INTERNATIONAL EXCHANGE  
OPPORTUNITIES

The average Year 12 student changes course preferences **three** times and receives **two** offers.



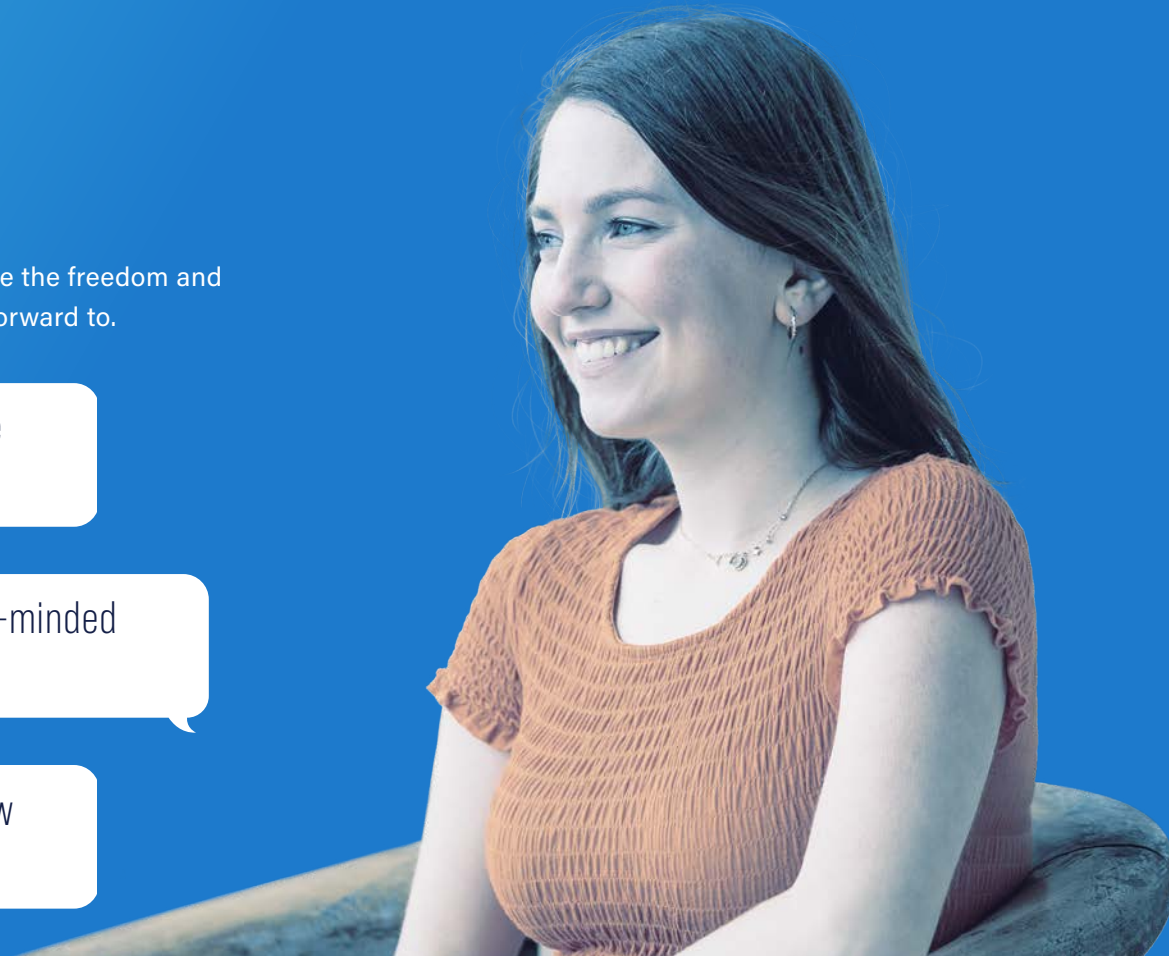
# A NEW CHAPTER

With high school in the rear-view mirror, first-year students are ready to embrace the freedom and independence of university. Here are a few of the things they are most looking forward to.

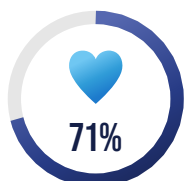
The opportunity to study at a tertiary level and expose myself to new people, ideas and social situations.

Studying things that interest me alongside like-minded people and with more self-direction.

I'm keen to start my career journey as well as meet new people who might potentially be my lifetime friends.



## WHAT'S MOST EXCITING YOU ABOUT STARTING UNI?



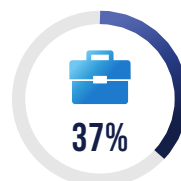
PURSuing  
MY PASSIONS



UNIVERSITY  
SOCIAL LIFE



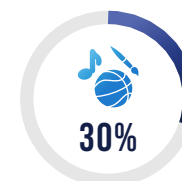
MEETING  
NEW PEOPLE



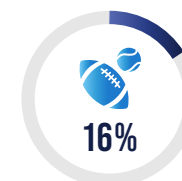
NETWORKING FOR  
FUTURE CAREER



STUDYING AT A  
TERTIARY LEVEL



JOINING CLUBS  
OR SOCIETIES



SPORTING  
ACTIVITIES

# FRIENDS, FREEDOM, FULFILMENT

What are students looking forward to as they start university?



## PURSuing PASSIONS

'Getting back into the learning environment I enjoy!'

**Leilani, 18**

'I have grown up in a rural area, so I'm really excited to try out hobbies and interests that I've never had the chance to try safely. Like learning parkour and trying out all kinds of restaurants because I am a bit of a foodie.'

**Ben, 17**

'Learning about something that truly interests me.'

**Alexa, 18**



## CAREER

'Starting a university course in a career that I decided on way back in Year 8 and understanding the theory behind sound and audio.'

**Lily, 17**

'Working towards my future career and a stable life, hopefully.'

**Annie, 17**

'Taking another step closer to my dream of becoming a doctor.'

**Al, 17**



## INDEPENDENCE

'Finally starting a new chapter of my life and developing my independence.'

**Danielle, 17**

'Moving out of home, doing what I want to do and finding my identity.'

**Scarlett, 18**

'I'm excited to make connections, discover myself and develop as an individual.'

**Ryan, 17**



## PERSONAL GROWTH

'I am so keen to experience university life and mature into the person I want to become.'

**Chris, 17**

'Intellectually improving myself in hopes of further understanding the world around me.'

**Tommy, 18**

'Challenging myself and striving towards my goals whilst seeing my goals being accomplished through hard work and commitment.'

**Christian, 18**



## NEW BEGINNINGS

'Experiencing the different dynamics of university compared to high school and becoming more independent and meeting new people.'

**Lucia, 17**

'Adulthood, new beginnings, new friendships, more freedom and no more school and toxic relationships.'

**Andy, 17**

'The journey and opportunity to make a real change in the world.'

**Jordan, 18**



# SPEND

Headphones or homewares? Side hustles or savings? Thrifting or buy now, pay later?

There's a lot to consider as school comes to an end. It's a time of exciting possibilities for students, a chance to discover new hobbies and develop a personal style.

The opportunity to finally explore interests or pursuits that are truly their own.

A hitherto closed world of choices and enticements beckons . . . if they have the financial firepower required.

In this section we examine what students are looking for from brands and businesses and the key factors driving student buying behaviours. We also reveal the top brands, how students earn money and the increasing importance they place on value.

## PAYDAY

While over half (57%) of students have a job to fund their lifestyle, for many others, starting uni means becoming acquainted with work for the first time.

## WORK TO PLAY

Students are putting their money to work hanging out with friends (61%), dining out (38%) and keeping themselves fashionable (40%).

## VIRTUAL SHOPPERS

Although half of students still visit physical retailers, over one-third (39%) do the majority of their shopping online.

## VALUING DURABILITY

Over a quarter of students (27%) said that when choosing which brand to buy, they consider value above all else. One-fifth (20%) consider durability as the key factor.



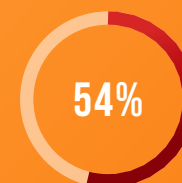
# INCOME AND SAVINGS

**91%** of students try to save money each week.

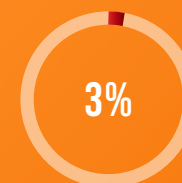


## PRIMARY INCOME SOURCE

**57% – INDEPENDENT**

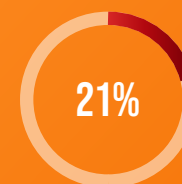


PART-TIME/CASUAL WORK

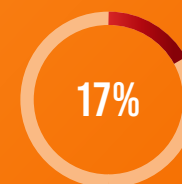


FULL-TIME WORK

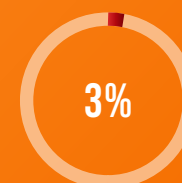
**43% – DEPENDENT**



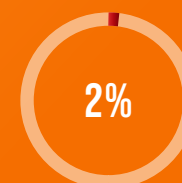
PARENTS



LOOKING FOR WORK



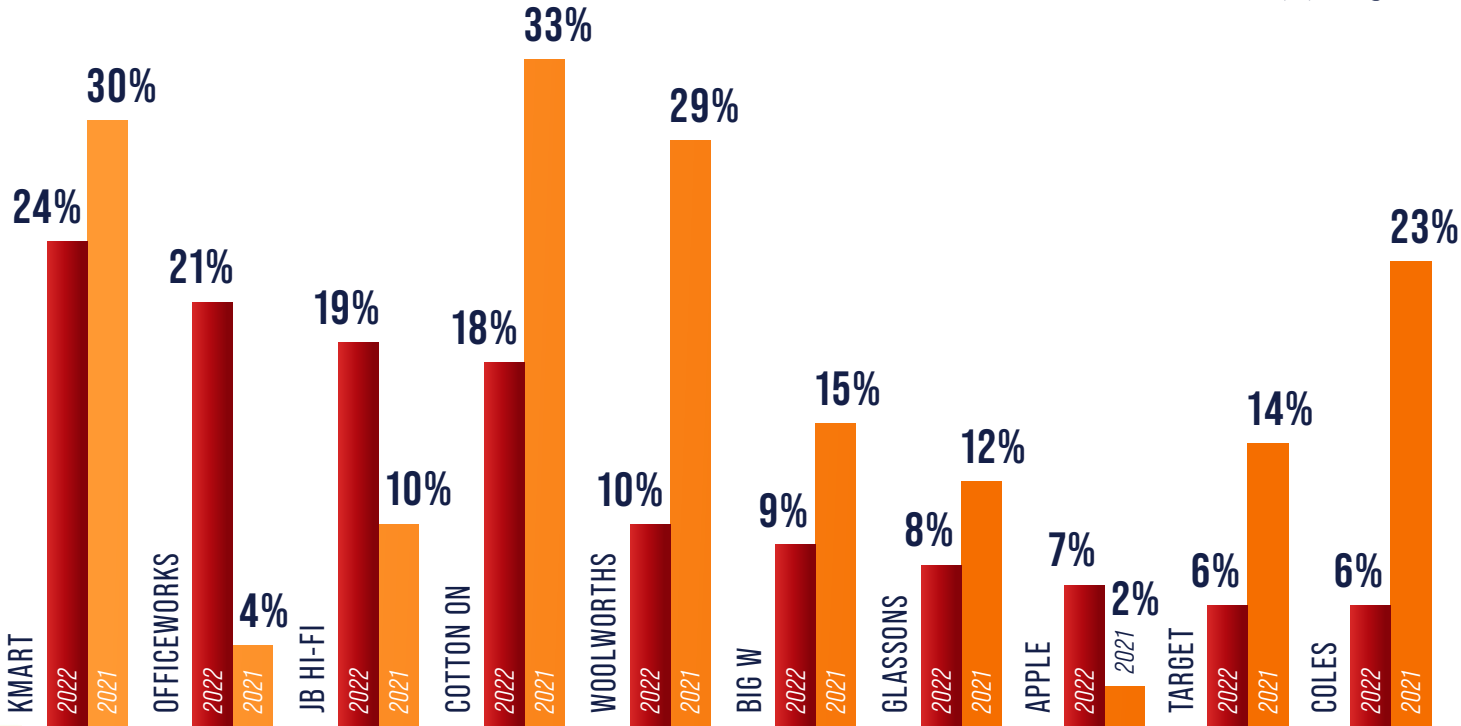
GOVERNMENT ASSISTANCE



SAVINGS/GIFTS

# TOP-SHOPPED STORES

99% of students consider discounts when shopping.



## WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE WAY TO SHOP?



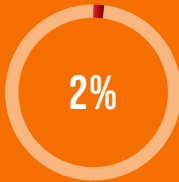
VISITING PHYSICAL STORE



ONLINE



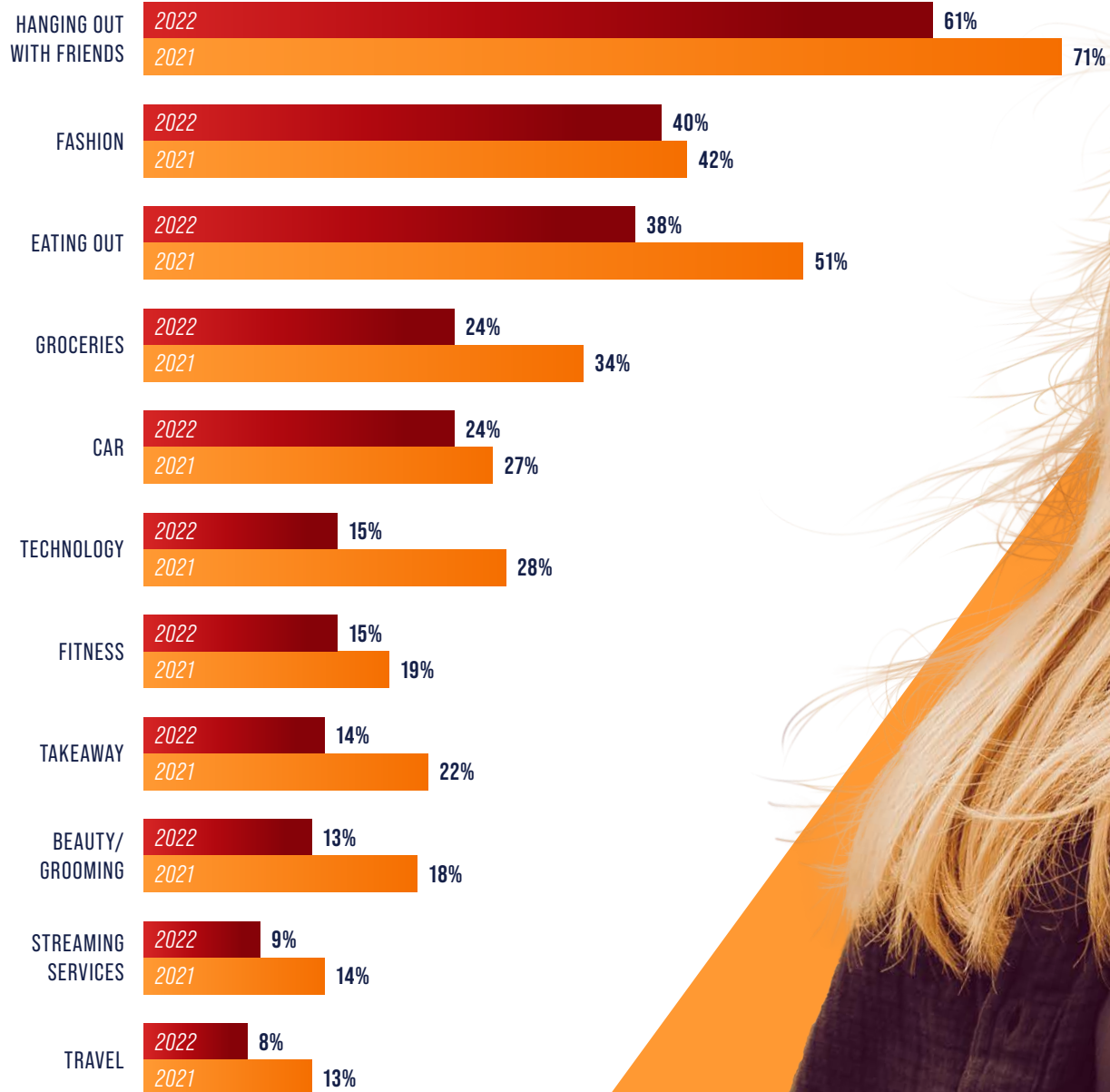
THRIFTING



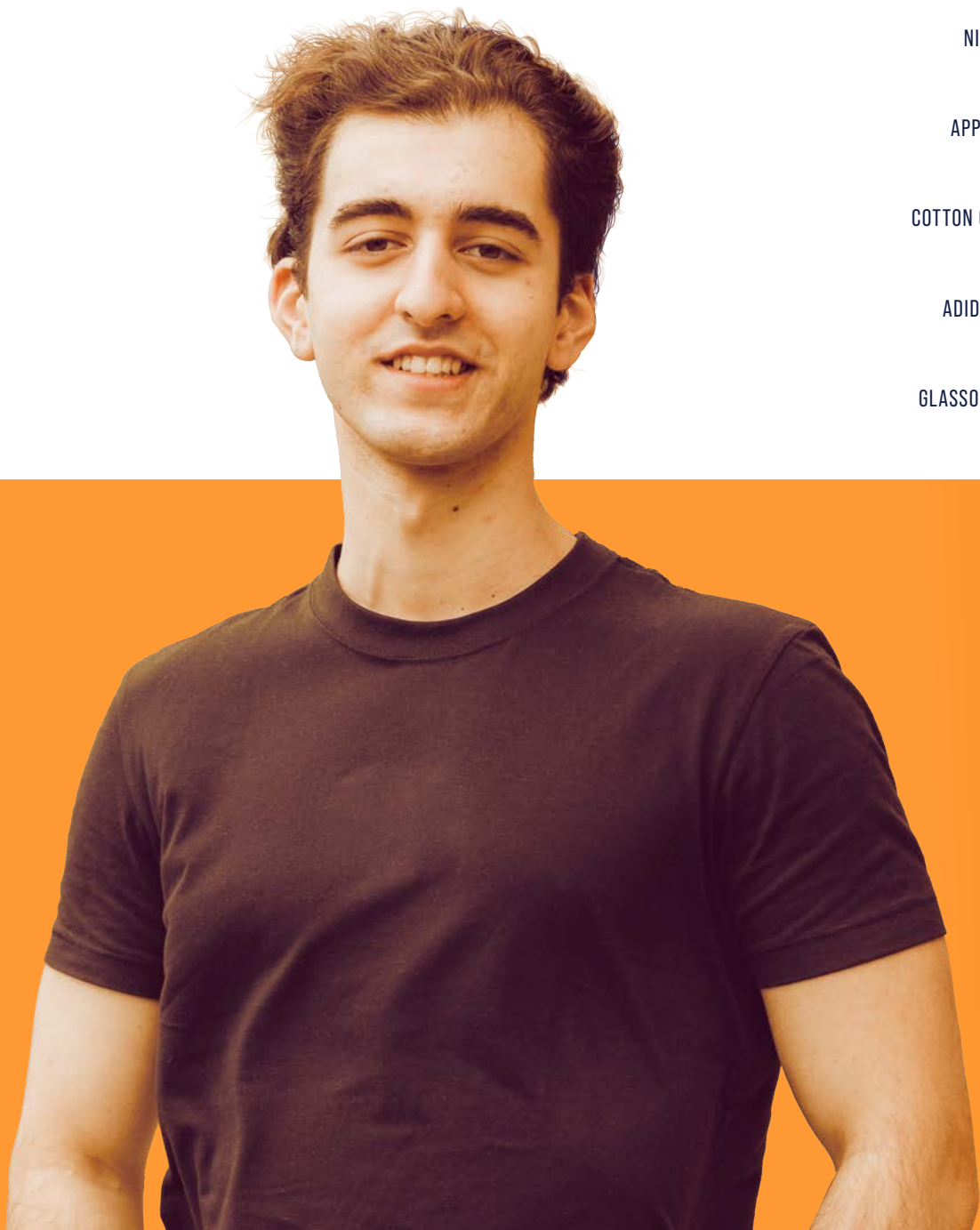
DISLIKE SHOPPING



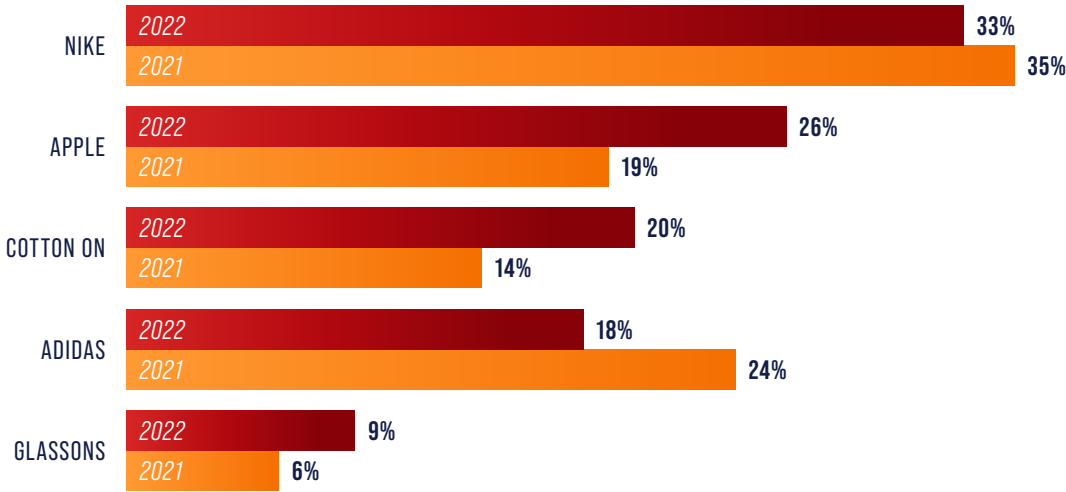
# MAIN SPENDING CATEGORIES



# FAVOURITE BRANDS



## TOP FIVE OVERALL BRANDS



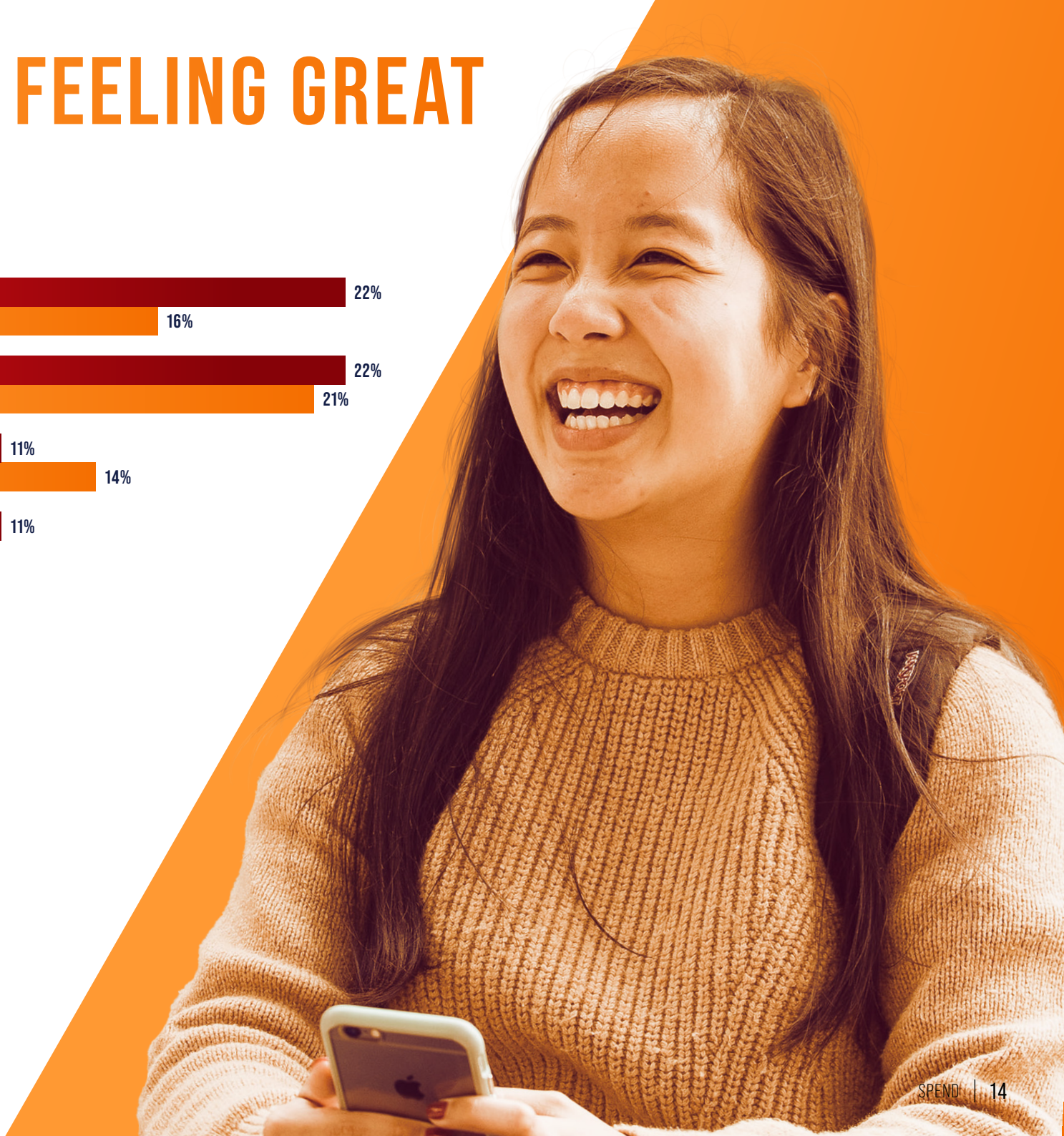
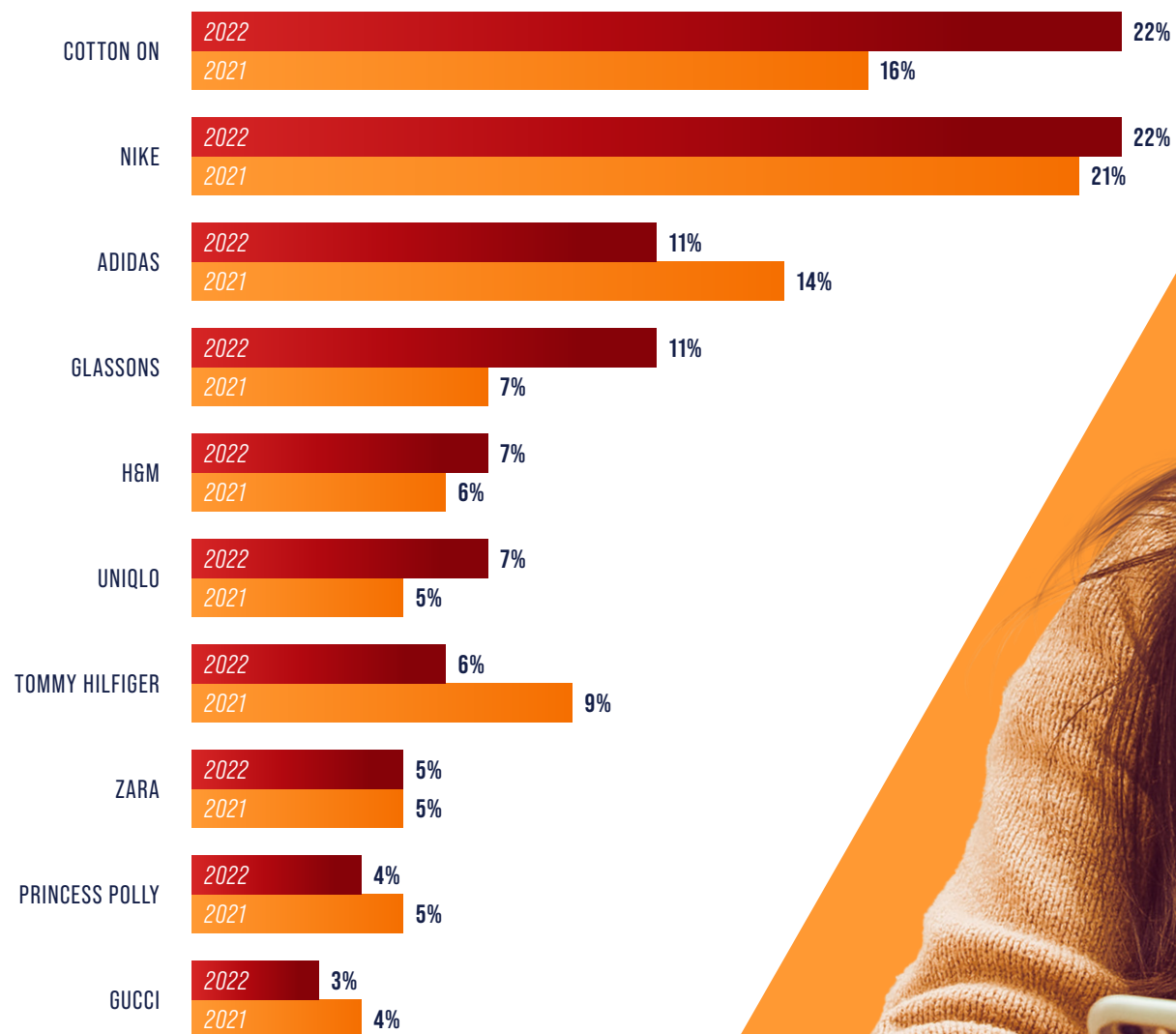
## WHY DO YOU CHOOSE ONE BRAND OVER ANOTHER?





# LOOKING GOOD, FEELING GREAT

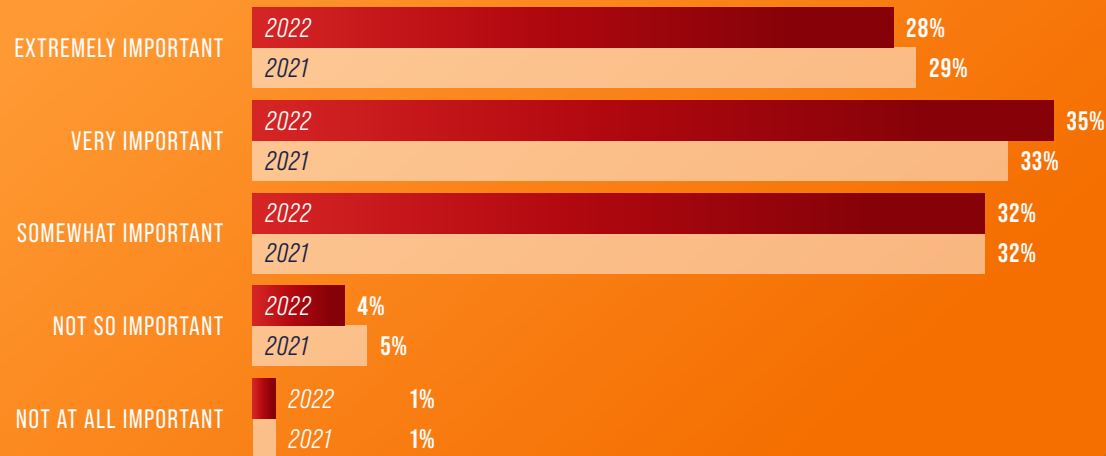
## POPULAR FASHION BRANDS





# SPENDING INFLUENCES

## IMPORTANCE OF DISCOUNTS



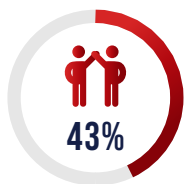
Two-thirds of students say discounts play a significant role when they are deciding what to buy or when to make a purchase.



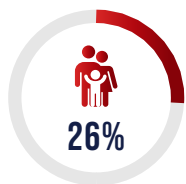
## KEY SPENDING DRIVERS



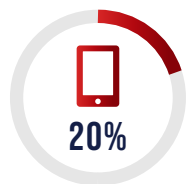
DISCOUNTS/OFFERS



FRIENDS



PARENTS



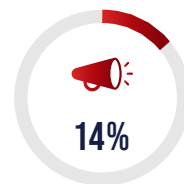
SOCIAL MEDIA



ONLINE REVIEWS



BRAND LOYALTY



ADVERTISING

# PRE-UNI PURCHASES

A sample of what students are intending to buy before starting uni or college.

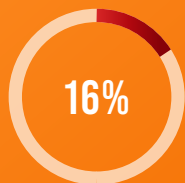
Mechanical keyboard, printer, and a laptop stand for better posture.

Webcam for online classes, and appropriate clothing: nurses watch, scrubs etc.

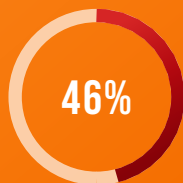
Skincare, a set of bed sheets and things for a new living space.

New backpack, sketch books, pencils and paints.

## THE PURCHASING TIMELINE



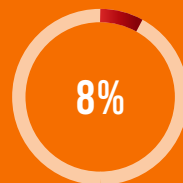
WHEN UNI STARTS



1-3 WEEKS BEFORE

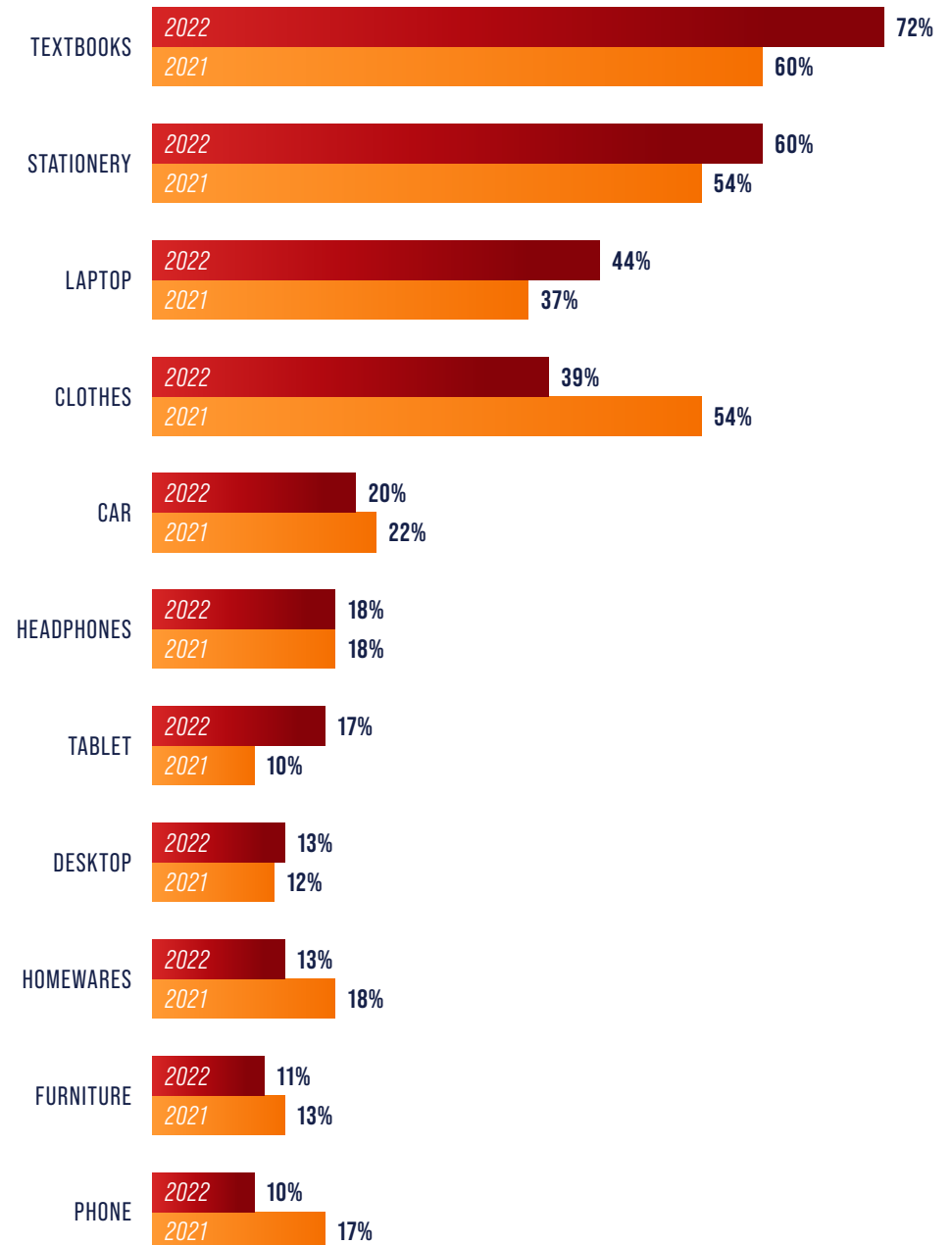


1 MONTH BEFORE



2 MONTHS BEFORE

## WHAT STUDENTS BUY BEFORE STARTING UNI



# LEISURE

Every senior student in Australia can describe the significant impacts COVID has had on their social life during the last two years.

Families and friends were separated, often for months at a time, as various state-based restrictions put pause to in-person activities and gatherings.

Despite this, students still found plenty of ways to wind down after a rough day or a long week.

Whether competitive gaming, sewing, painting miniatures or flying drones, hobbies helped school leavers blow off steam and fill their spare time.

Read on to see their favourite ways to stay healthy, consume (or create) content, and kick back.

## FEEL THE BURN

Exercise was rated as a primary pleasure for nearly half (44%) of students. In fact, just under a quarter (24%) say they exercise more than five days a week.

## STREAMING AHEAD

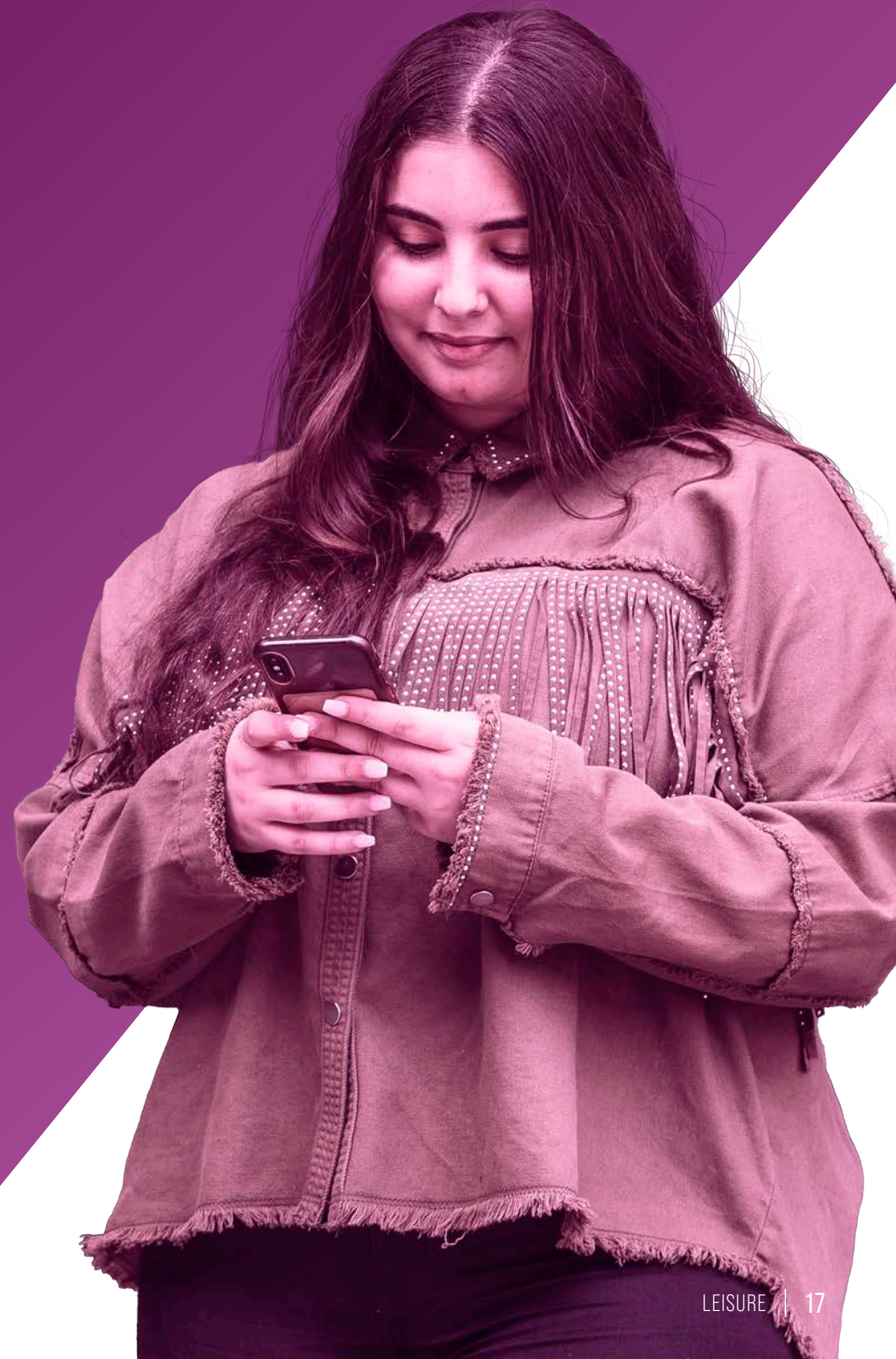
Spotify increased its dominance as the preferred music streaming platform for 17 and 18 year olds (84% in 2022 vs 82% in 2021).

## DEAD AIR

The news isn't so good for FM disc jockeys though, with less than one-fifth (18%) of students tuning in to listen to music on the radio.

## NETFLIX ON TOP [AGAIN]

For the second year running, Netflix took out the top spot (60%) as students' favourite entertainment brand.





# RELAX AND RECHARGE

Here are a few of the hobbies occupying the class of 2021.

DJing and producing music.

Self-care in the form of skincare, exercising, meditation and journaling.

Dancing, sewing and candle-making.

Building and servicing computers and model trains.

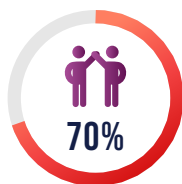
Astrophotography and flying drones.

Streaming to a humble little community every weekend on Twitch.

Going to markets to find cute and unique handmade items.

Making and eating jerky.

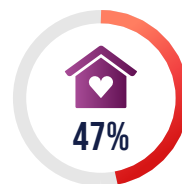
## FAVOURITE PASTIMES



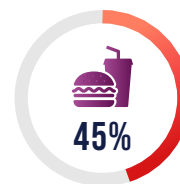
HANGING WITH  
FRIENDS



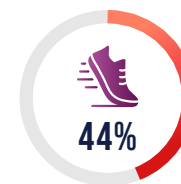
LISTENING TO  
MUSIC



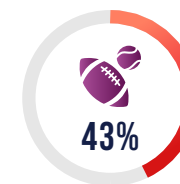
TIME WITH FAMILY



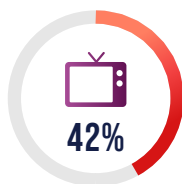
EATING OUT



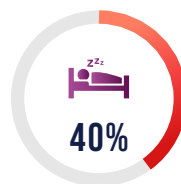
EXERCISING



PLAYING SPORTS



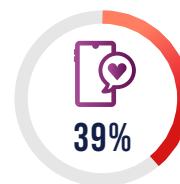
BINGEING TV



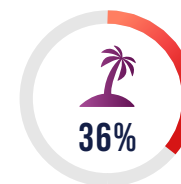
SLEEPING



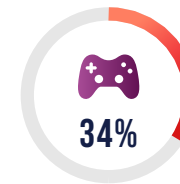
READING



SOCIAL MEDIA



BEACH DAYS

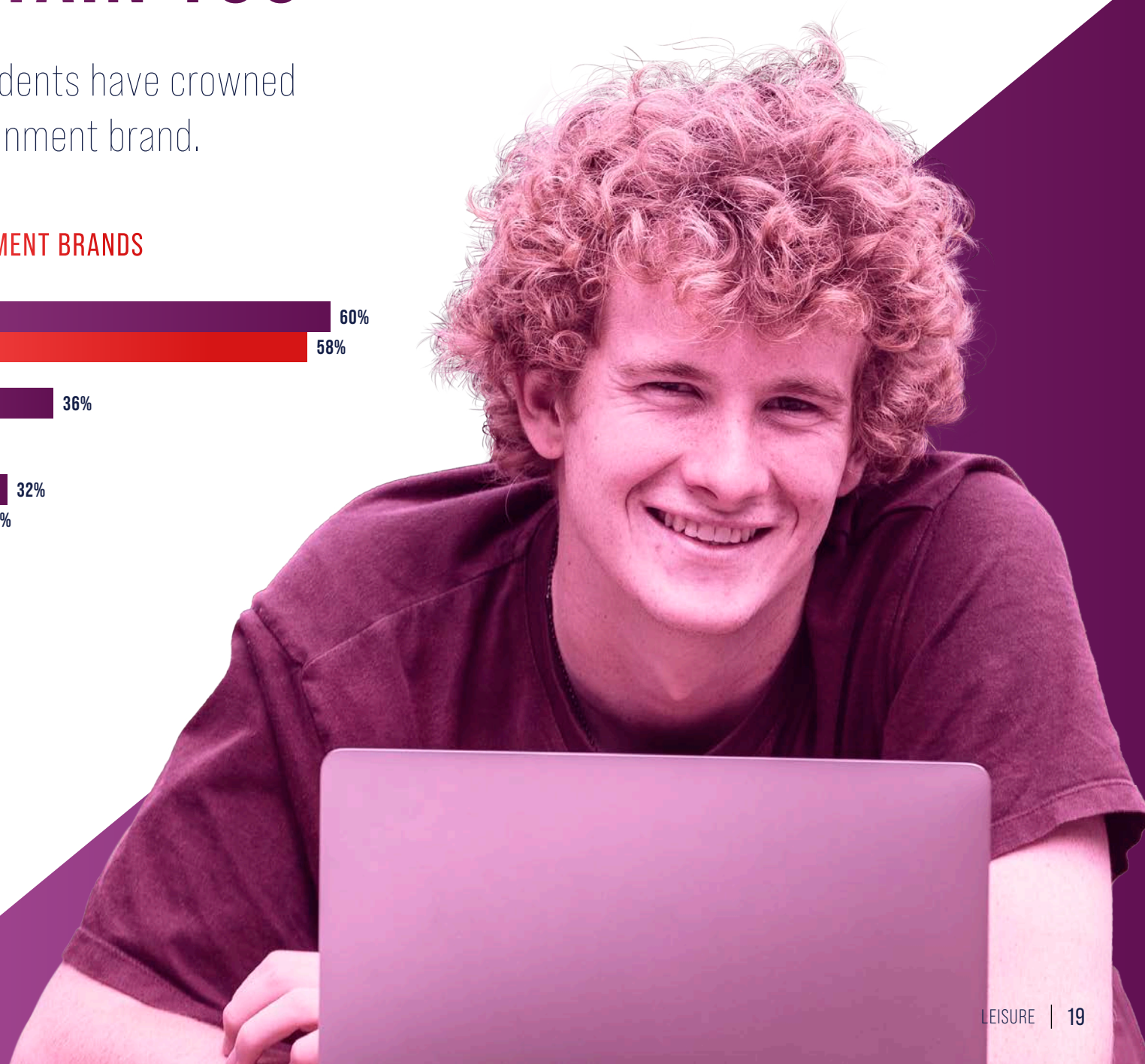
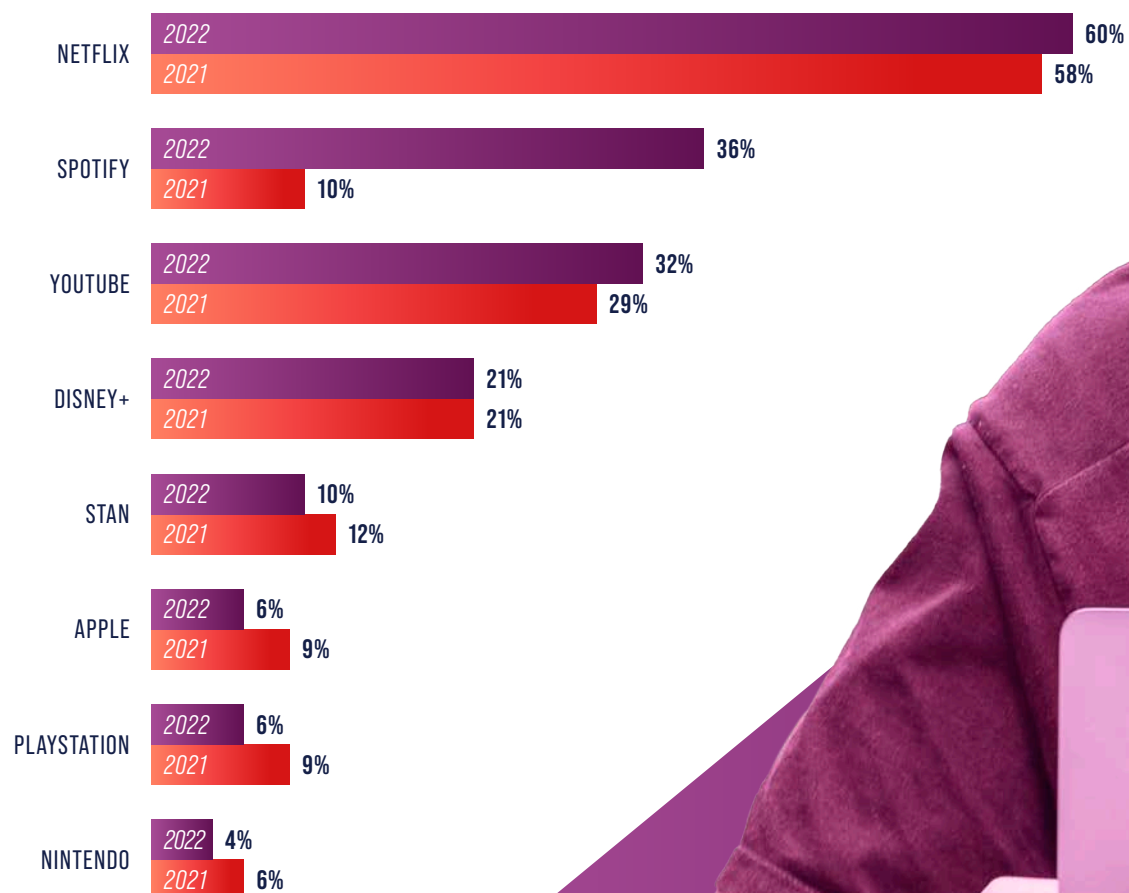


GAMING

# LET ME ENTERTAIN YOU

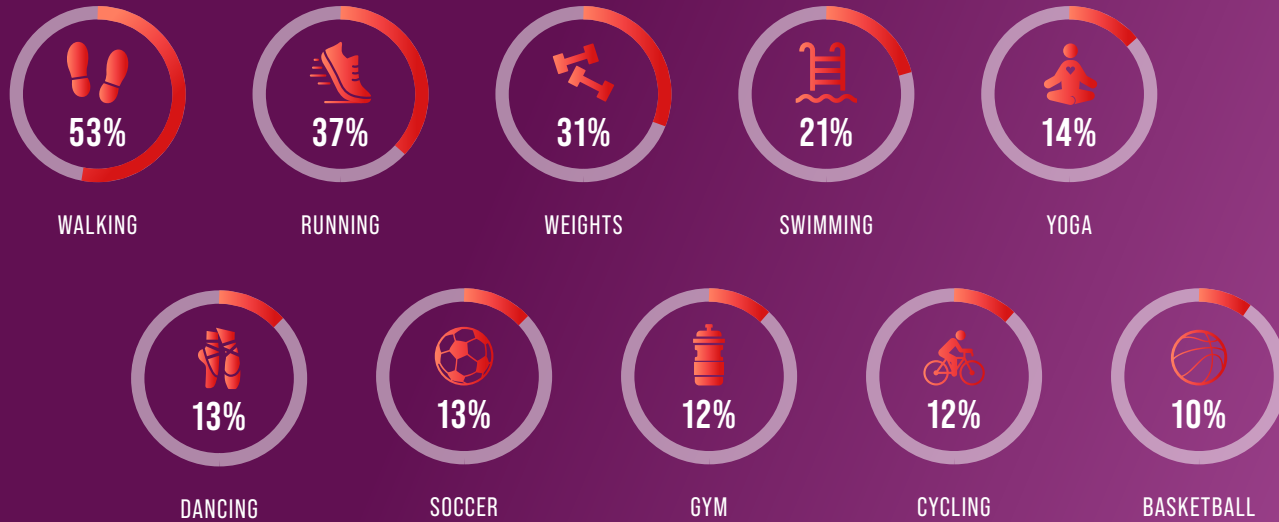
For the second year running, students have crowned Netflix as their favourite entertainment brand.

## POPULAR ENTERTAINMENT BRANDS

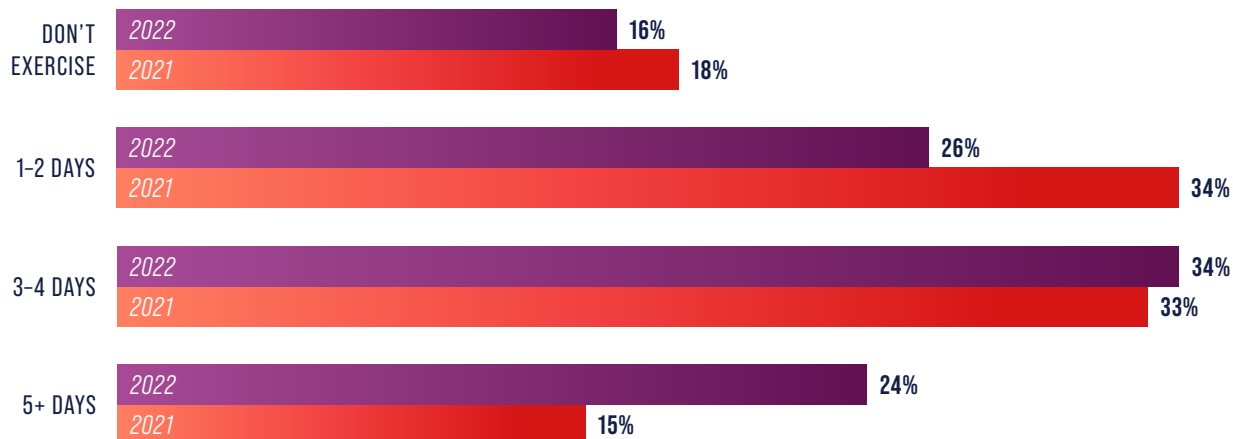


# HEALTH AND WELLNESS

## FAVOURITE FITNESS ACTIVITIES



## WEEKLY EXERCISE FREQUENCY



73% of students don't belong to a gym.

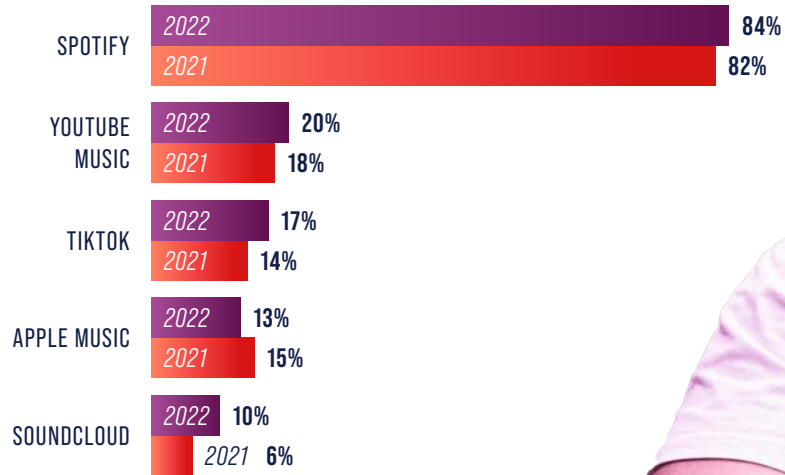
25% are planning to join one.





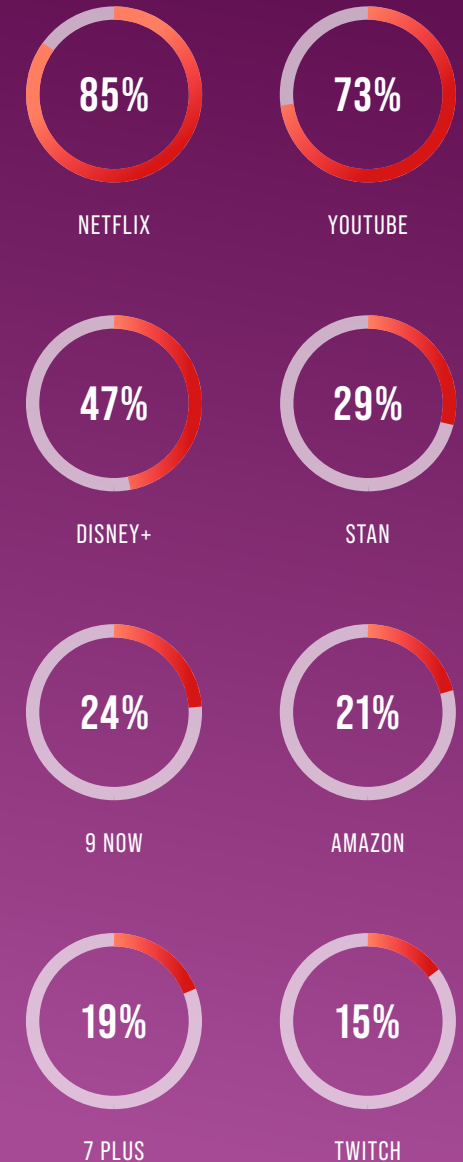
# WATCH AND LISTEN

## LEADING MUSIC PLATFORMS



Physical media is growing in popularity, with **21%** of students now listening to CDs or records (up from 3% in 2021).

## TOP VIDEO STREAMERS



# TECHNOLOGY



During a year of remote learning, virtual hangouts and social distancing, technology played a dominant role in the lives of school leavers.

Many completed an entire school term of home learning, sat trials in their bedrooms and attended online graduation ceremonies.

Physical connection was replaced by online communities, and DMs, likes and group chats helped friends stay in touch.

## #INSTATOK

Instagram was the top social network again this year, with 8 in 10 students (83%) looking to the 'gram for entertainment and connection.

TikTok is gaining momentum, with over half (51%) of students using the platform daily. Only 1% of students don't use social media.

## PING ME AN EMAIL

Over half of students (60%) prefer businesses to contact them by email, a dramatic shift from last year's strong preference for SMS (53% in 2021 vs 23% in 2022).

When checking emails on devices, it's phones first (67%), with 41% checking whenever they receive a notification.

## SAMSUNG CHASES APPLE

Apple held its lead as the top tech brand (85%) for the second year running, although Samsung gained significant ground this year (36% up from 21% in 2021).

This strong mindshare among school leavers is unsurprising considering that over three-quarters (78%) own an iPhone.

## SMART SHOPPERS

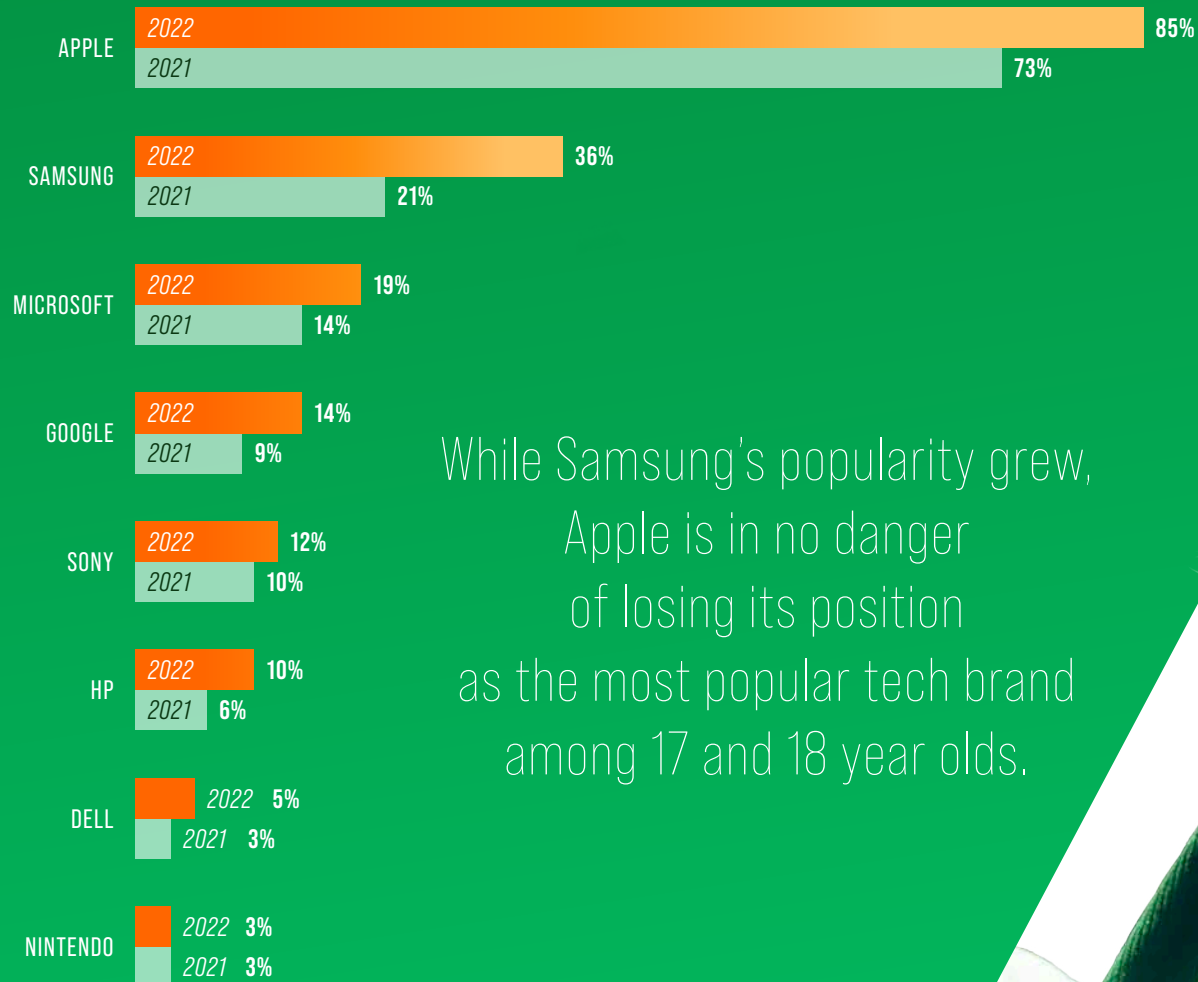
Around one-third (30%) are planning to purchase a new phone within the next year, with one-fifth (20%) looking to buy within the next six months.

Long battery life (54%), the price of the handset (52%) and the available storage capacity (34%) are the main factors when considering what to buy.



# TRENDING TECH

## POPULAR TECH BRANDS



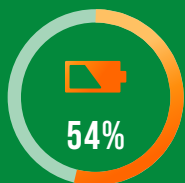
While Samsung's popularity grew, Apple is in no danger of losing its position as the most popular tech brand among 17 and 18 year olds.





# DAILY DRIVERS

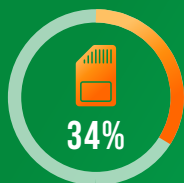
## MAIN CONSIDERATIONS WHEN BUYING A NEW PHONE



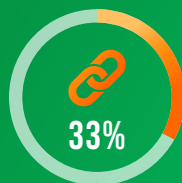
BATTERY LIFE



PRICE



STORAGE CAPACITY



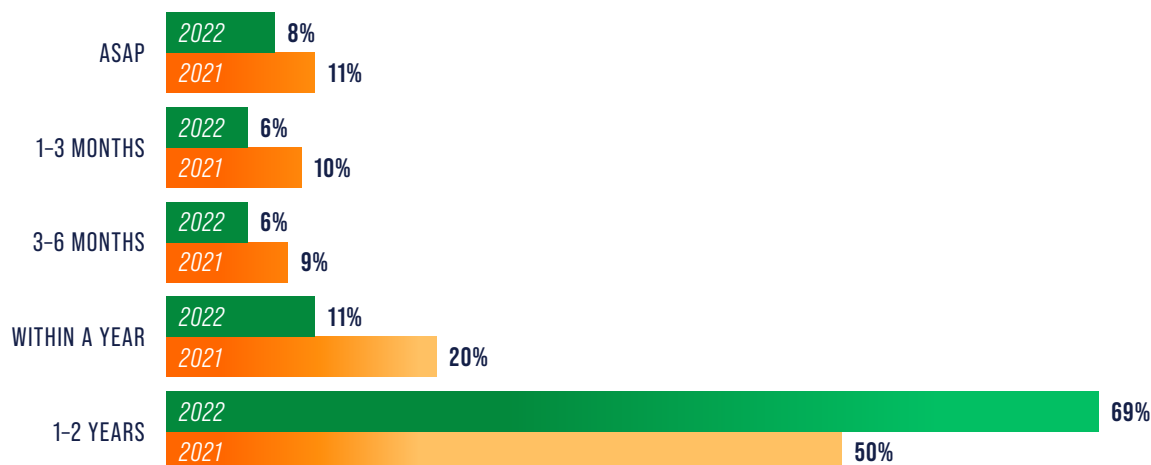
DURABILITY

Students are also looking for a high-quality camera (29%), speedy performance (22%) and a brand they know and trust (19%).

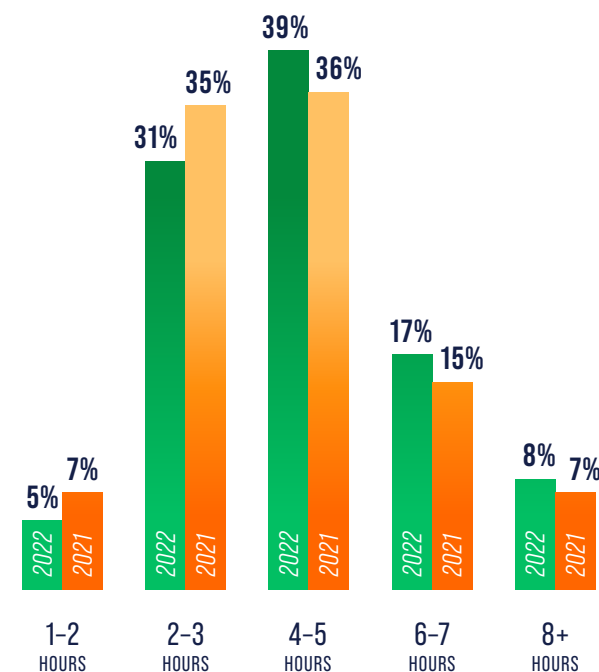
Apple dominates the smartphone market for this age group with **78%** of students owning an Apple iPhone.

**13%** of students currently use a Samsung.

## PHONE UPGRADE TIMELINE



## DAILY PHONE TIME

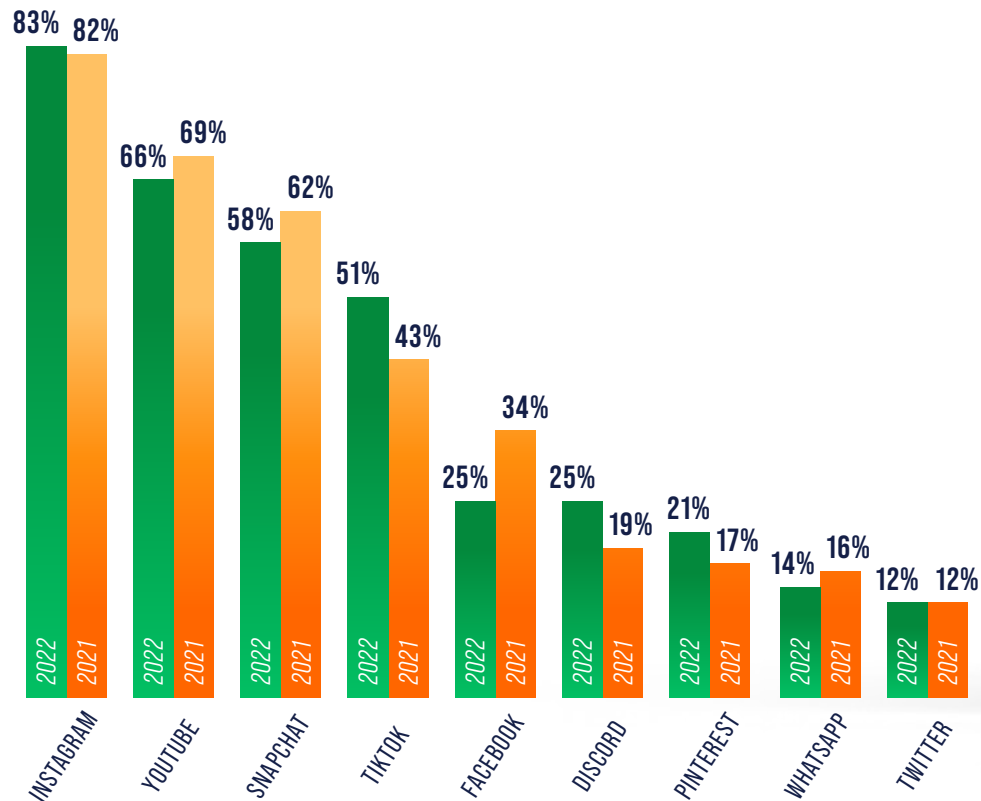


# INSTA-GRATIFICATION

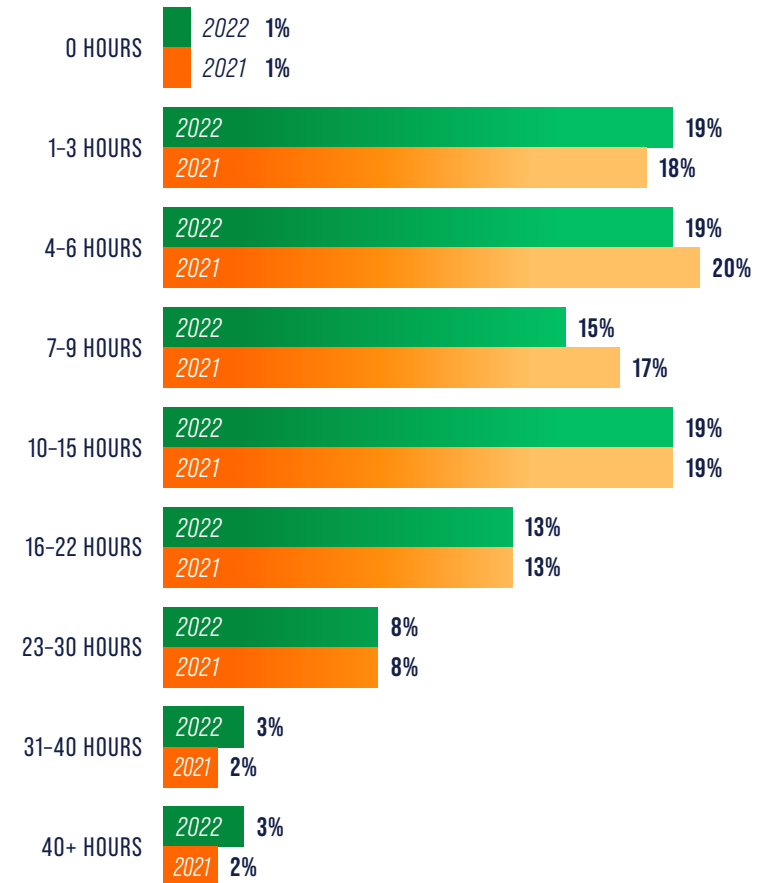
Instagram, YouTube and Snapchat held their positions as the top three online platforms among students.

Tiktok, Discord and Pinterest also gained ground while Facebook and WhatsApp usage fell. Weekly social media screen time remained largely unchanged from 2021.

## FAVOURITE SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS



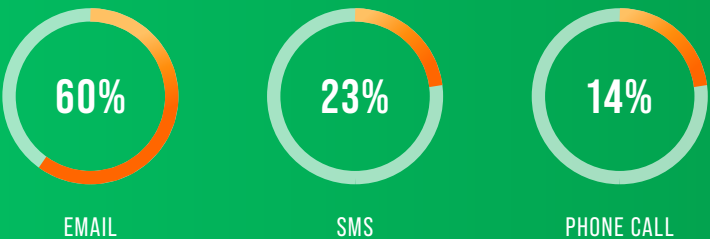
## WEEKLY TIME SPENT ON SOCIAL MEDIA



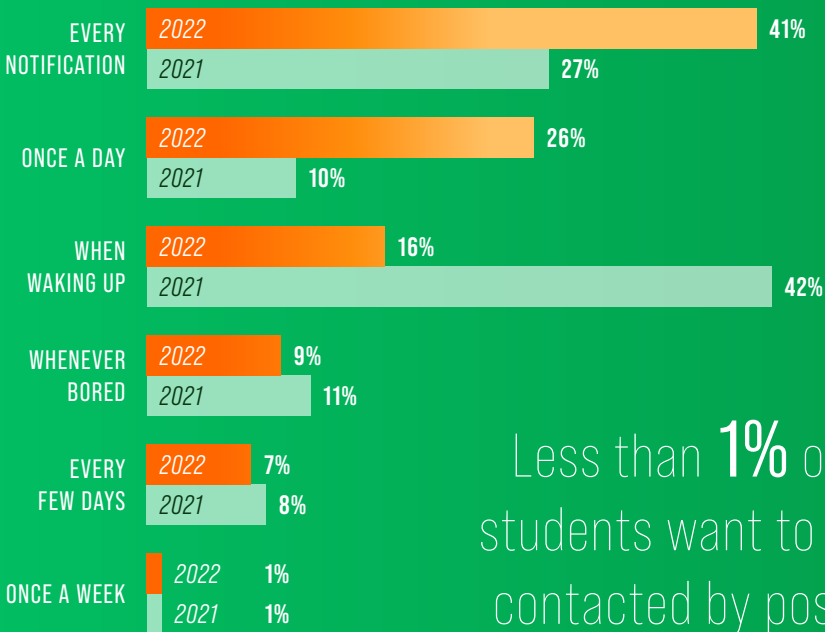
# SEND ME AN EMAIL

Students flipped the script this year, expressing a strong preference for email communication over text messages, reversing their 2021 preferences.

## PREFERRED CONTACT METHOD



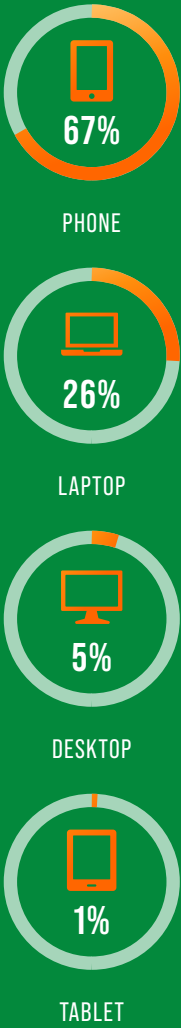
## WHEN EMAILS ARE READ



Less than 1% of students want to be contacted by post.



## WHERE EMAILS ARE READ





# FUTURE

After a year like no other, we were curious to know how students found 2021 and what they were hoping to accomplish and experience in 2022.

The general sentiment was that despite facing a range of challenges, they felt ready to move on and start actively pursuing their goals.

In this final section of our report, we examine what students are excited about, what keeps them up at night and what they are planning to do with their new-found independence.

## MENTAL HEALTH

In a troubling finding, mental health emerged as one of the dominant concerns for students.

Mental health rated as a key concern for exactly half of students, a notable increase from last year (44% in 2021).

## FINANCIAL FEARS

Financial security is a vexing issue for 6 in 10 (59%) students, with two-fifths (41%) also anxious about the challenges of finding work.

Almost one-fifth (19%) were actively looking for jobs, with many finding the process difficult given their lack of experience or reduced customer demand due to COVID restrictions.

## FULL-TIME STUDY

It's goodbye to gap years, with full-time study the preferred choice for three-quarters (75%) of uni hopefuls.

## HITTING THE ROAD

Travel is top of the agenda for students, with only 29% not planning on taking a holiday within the next six months.

Over half (56%) say they will evaluate their destination's COVID case numbers when deciding where to visit.



# HOPEs

## WHAT ARE YOU EXCITED ABOUT?

'My self-discovery and healing journey. I am looking forward to how much I am going to learn about myself this year. I cannot wait to explore new things and my freedom as I am a young adult now. I'm also looking forward to creating new friends and experiences. Putting myself first this year is going to be amazing as I can finally focus on what I truly want as a person in this life whilst learning every day.'

**Kate, 18**

'Being able to enjoy life and trying to get back into a solid lifestyle after a long two years of dealing with COVID.'

**Malakai, 18**

'Meeting new friends and experiencing learning about my passion for music full-time and at a high level. I am also excited about putting out my own music next year, both on my own and with my band.'

**Max, 17**

'I have always had helicopter parents. They have wrapped me with bubble wrap. Entering university was the time I saw my sister become her own person and it's my turn. I look forward to finally being able to speak up and make my own choices, even if they're wrong sometimes.'

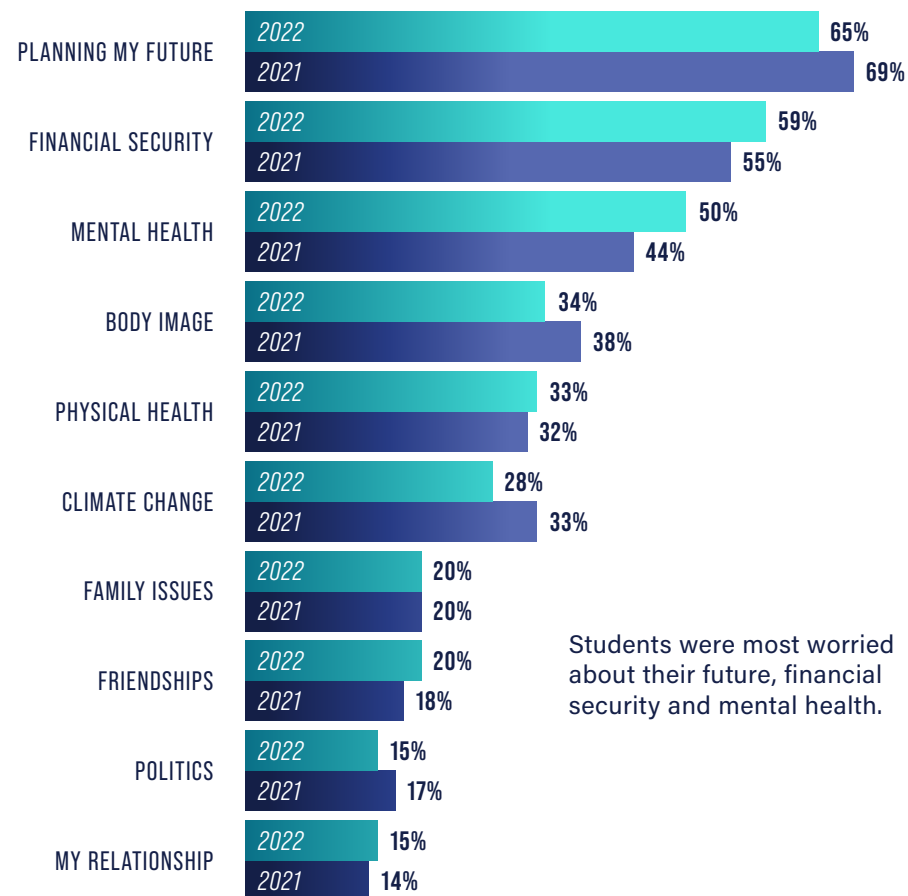
**Joanne, 18**

'I am most looking forward to making an income while starting a career or expanding my education. Also fixing broken relationships, getting my own place, saving money and getting more independence.'

**Will, 18**

# FEARS

## WHAT ARE YOUR CHIEF CONCERNS?



Students were most worried about their future, financial security and mental health.

This year we asked students to indicate if they were concerned about four additional issues: personal finances, job hunting, COVID and university entry. A significant number of students rated these issues as important to them.



# LOOKING FOR WORK

'Job hunting is a struggle as I need to find a job that will pay enough to cover my accommodation since I am unable to get Youth Allowance and my parents are unable to support me moving from Albury, Victoria to Wollongong, NSW.'

'I am scared due to COVID and it's caused me to have anxiety about working even though I would love to get back into the workforce.'

'It has been hard to find a suitable job that is compatible with my university timetable.'

'I struggle with anxiety and low self-esteem issues so I tend to hold back on taking new opportunities.'

'It's slow. I think what is holding me back from applying to a lot of places is the nerves because I've never been employed before so I don't know what to expect from it.'

I'm waiting until the COVID-19 situation gets better before I start applying for a job.

'It's been a struggle, solely because this will be my first time working ever and I have a lack of experience in the workforce. But I hope my positive attitude and determination will make me eligible soon at a work place.'

'I have a job one night a week in child care, but need another and it's very hard currently. I'm applying locally, as businesses are having to cut hours down. This makes it hard because now there are lots of people applying due to advertising positions. But I'm not giving up.'

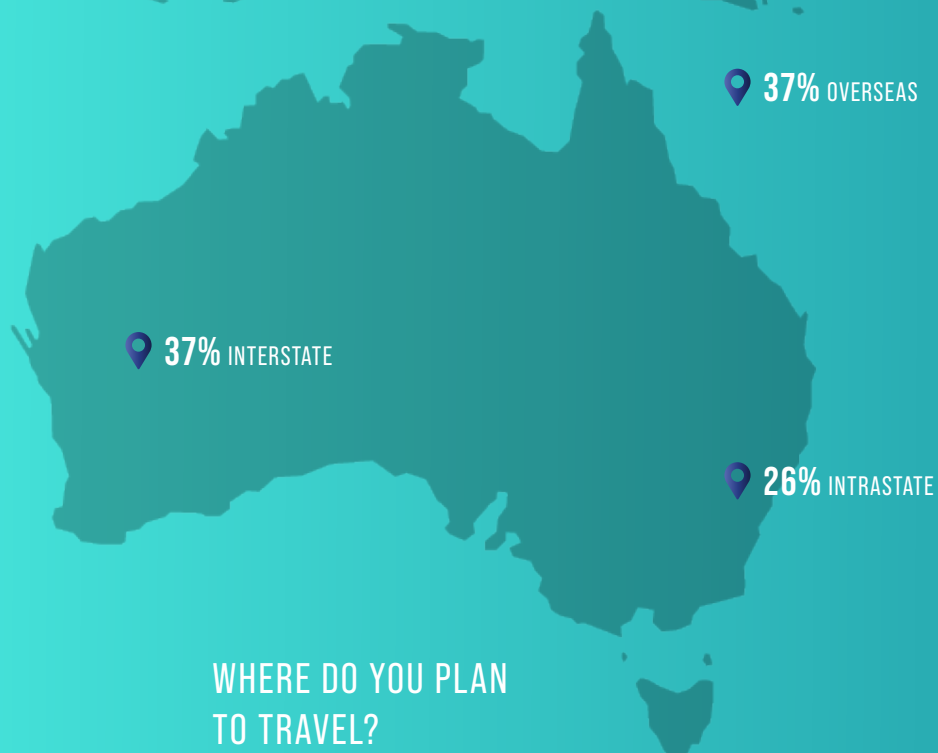
'It's difficult as not many casual jobs are available at the moment for students who have not yet had any experience. Most jobs require experience.'

'It's not going that well. I'm trying to look for a job that meets my dad's expectations but also my preference.'

'Job hunt is not so great. There's been a lot of setbacks recently that have made it challenging to even begin looking for a job.'

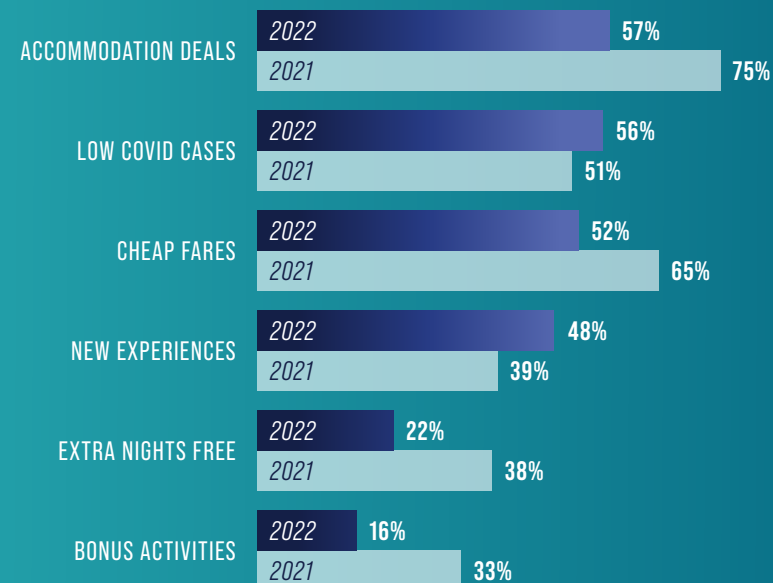


# TRAVEL TIME



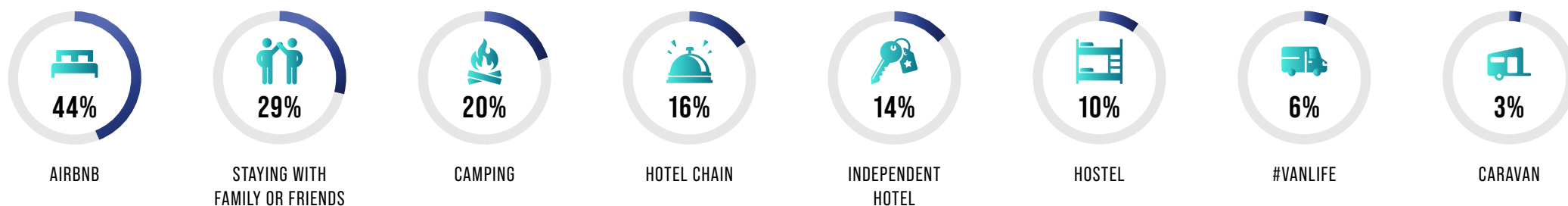
WHERE DO YOU PLAN TO TRAVEL?

## KEY MOTIVATORS TO TRAVEL



While frustrating, rising COVID cases and travel restrictions haven't dampened students' desire to travel. An impressive 71% are planning a trip in the next six months.

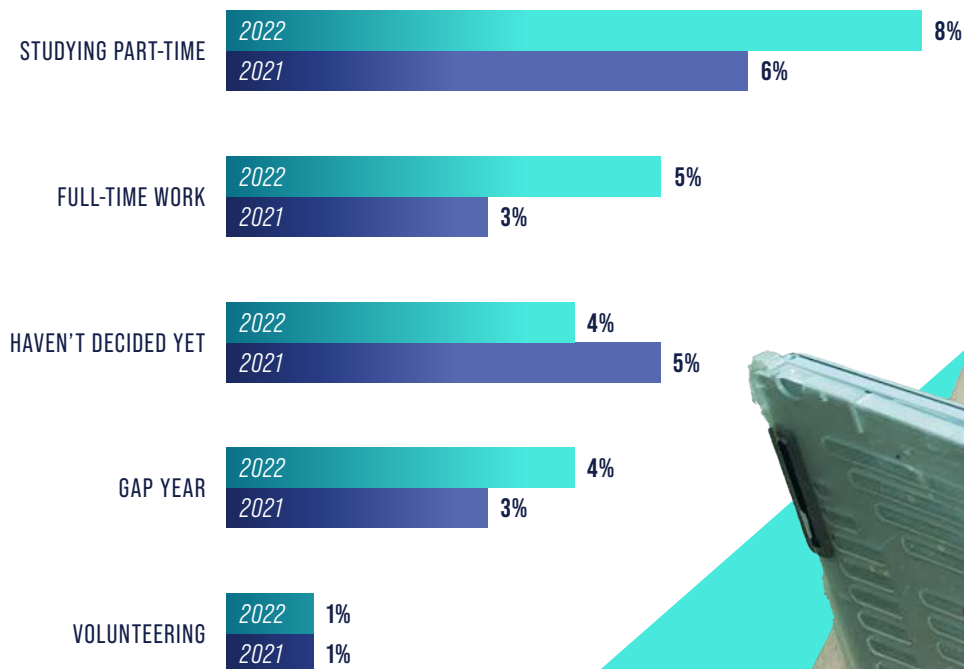
## PLANS FOR NEXT AUSTRALIAN HOLIDAY



# PLANS FOR 2022

75% of students intend to study full-time, with a gap year considered an unappealing choice for many due to COVID uncertainty.

## THE ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS



# A YEAR OF OPTIONS

WHAT ARE STUDENTS PLANNING FOR THE YEAR AHEAD?



## WORKING

'Working part-time and growing my streaming career until it develops into a liveable job.'

**Emma, 18**

'Starting a new job to earn money to put towards buying an investment property so that when I decide to study and pick my life career I have financial stability from the house income.'

**Heather, 18**

'I'm deferring for a year while I do a tattoo apprenticeship.'

**Riesa, 17**



## GAP YEAR

'Taking a year to focus on improving my health and wellbeing, trying new things, volunteering, and finding and investing in my passions.'

**Imogen, 18**

'A gap year while I wait to be able to join the police.'

**Jess, 18**



## STUDYING

'I'm excited to study international law and learn more about how our global society functions.'

**Jovitta, 17**

'Going to uni and studying. Spent two years working hard to get here so it feels like a big achievement.'

**Ella, 18**



## UNSURE

'I've no idea really, just what awaits me in the future, whether it be bad or good. After all, the future is undetermined, and life is one bumpy road.'

**William, 18**

'I'm not quite sure. Getting my first car? Potential to travel around? Overall freedom? We'll just have to see what happens.'

**Lochlan, 18**





# THANK YOU

If you would like to discuss any of the findings or information presented in this report, please contact:

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## ABOUT UAC

The Universities Admissions Centre (NSW & ACT) Pty Ltd (UAC) was established in 1995 and is the largest tertiary admissions centre in Australia. Owned by universities in NSW and the ACT, our mission is to provide excellence in admissions services and promote equity of access to tertiary education.