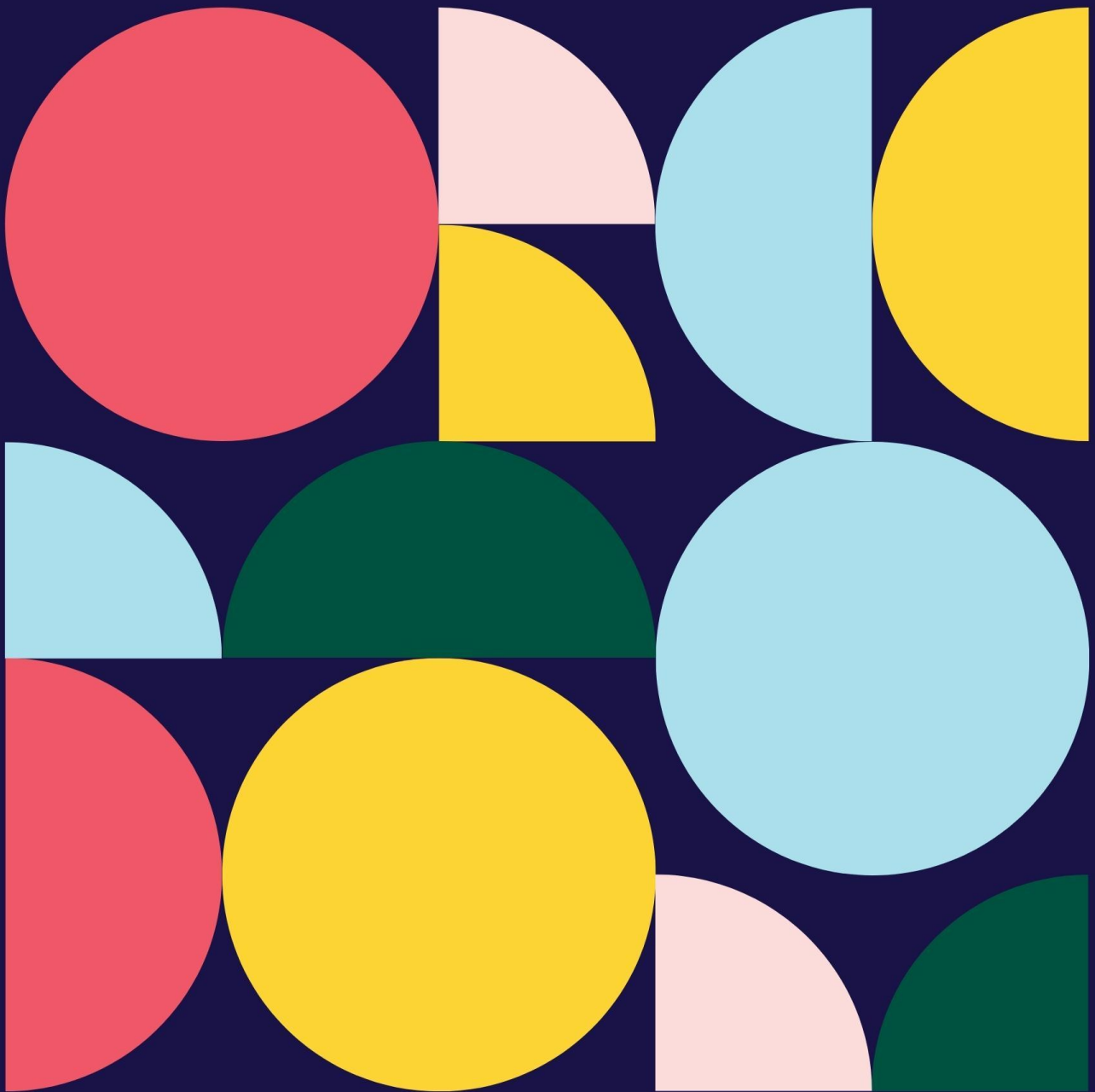




Bristol SU's Housing Report 2024



Bristol SU

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This research was commissioned by Bristol SU's Student Living Officer and delivered by Bristol SU's Research and Insight Team. For any enquiries about the research, please email bristolsu-insight@bristol.ac.uk

This report was authored by Jenna Hart (March 2024)

Executive Summary

In recent years, Bristol has faced significant challenges regarding housing. Rent has increased rapidly throughout the city, and availability of housing is not meeting the demand. Important pieces of research have been conducted throughout the city highlighting the sheer scale of the issue. One such piece of research is from the Bristol Living Rent Commission, which argues that the price of rent has accelerated, there is a lack of availability, and a huge number of people are living in unacceptable conditions. Bristol's housing situation has also been widely reported across the news, as part of the UK's cost of living crisis.

This report will provide a deeper insight into the impact of the renting crisis on University of Bristol students. There are over 30,000 students at Bristol, therefore it is important to understand their experiences in the city. This report sheds light on the housing issues that are impacting their university experience.

The following research questions will be addressed:

- What is the current situation for University of Bristol students living in private rented housing in Bristol?
- How has this situation impacted their university experience?
- What support can we, as a University and Students' Union, put in place to alleviate the issues that students are facing?

Commissioned by Bristol SU's Student Living Officer, this research project aims to highlight how students currently feel about their private rented housing. The survey, which gathered 570 responses, focussed on three themes: finding private rented housing in Bristol; the cost and conditions of private rented housing; and the distance from university campuses. Students were asked about their experiences of these themes, including whether they perceive their housing as affordable, how they found navigating the rental process, and what changes they would like to see made. A survey was designed to gather holistic data about students' experiences. 13 closed questions and 4 open text questions were asked to provide a thorough opportunity for students to share their views. Students were also asked optional demographic questions to ascertain whether certain groups of students face more difficulties than others.

Focus groups were also conducted to provide underrepresented groups with an opportunity to share their housing experiences. We were particularly keen to hear from international students, students with a disability, care leavers and estranged students, and LGBTQ+ students. In the focus groups, two students identified as having a disability, nine identified as international, seven identified as LGBTQ+ students, and one identified as a care leaver/estranged student. The experiences shared by the focus group participants were similar to the survey findings. Anonymous quotes extracted from the focus groups will be presented throughout the report.

This research also draws on a piece conducted by Bristol SU in 2014-15. Despite being conducted 10 years ago, similar findings were found. In that survey, 75% of students experienced mould or damp in their accommodation, and international students were facing a huge issue with a guarantor. Interestingly, the average monthly rent stated in that report was £396, whereas in this survey, only 4% of respondents stated that they pay below £500 for their rent (either with or without bills), thus demonstrating the significant increase in rent prices. Despite this huge increase in rent, some students state that the conditions of their housing do not reflect the amount they pay.

This report recognises that housing is a significant issue and a difficult challenge to tackle. However, it aims to provide University and SU staff with tangible solutions that can help alleviate this burden for students.

Key Findings

- The average rating, out of 5, that students found the process of finding housing was 1.8.
- Home students' rating for finding a guarantor, out of 5, was 4.05. For international students, it decreased to 2.09.
- The most common amount of rent students pay each month is between £601 and £700 (without bills).
- 37% of students stated the cost of their housing had a 'significant negative impact' on their university experience, while 31% stated the same regarding the conditions of their housing.
- 20% of students had had a 'very negative' experience with landlords.

Key Recommendations

1. Guidance and Signposting

While the issue of housing is one that can't be easily fixed, a tangible solution is to review and update advice and guidance relating to housing. Students are struggling to understand the rental process, and many find themselves in difficult situations with landlords and contracts. Therefore, a way of helping students is to ensure they can access clear information to assist them through this process. Previous research conducted by Bristol SU has also found that while there is an abundance of information across webpages and via different communications, students often find it difficult to navigate and find the information they're looking for. Therefore, ensuring that students have access to clear, specific information about housing will help address some of the issues that they're facing. Developing more resources such as short videos and using social media communications may also help with this, particularly during the peak times of the year when students begin their search for private housing.

2. Housing Advisors

In addition to the first recommendation, students are urging for access to free, impartial advice to assist with their housing enquiries. Housing Advisors can help alleviate students' concerns and provide this support for them. There is a wealth of information on University and SU webpages, however this can be difficult for students to navigate, particularly if they are in stressful situations. Providing students with an opportunity to speak directly to trusted staff members will ensure they know where to turn to for support.

3. Guarantor Scheme

Some universities across the UK have implemented a guarantor scheme, where the university acts as a guarantor for students. International students are hugely impacted by not having access to a guarantor. Guarantors must be a UK resident, have a good credit history, and have sufficient funds to be able to pay the tenant's rent. Finding a guarantor can be extremely difficult for international students who are unlikely to know someone in the UK who can act as a guarantor. Companies can offer this service, however they charge fees. If they don't have a guarantor, they may face having to pay a year's rent upfront, which can amount to over £10,000. Moreover, international students aren't the only group of students that may be impacted by not having a guarantor. Care leavers and estranged students can also face difficulties by not having a guarantor in the UK. Therefore, the lack of a guarantor is impacting a huge number of students, which demonstrates how widespread this issue is.

Some universities in the UK have already established a guarantor scheme for international students. Conversations are already happening at the University and the SU to determine whether this is a

scheme that needs to be implemented. This report shows how significant of an issue it is, and how many students struggle to find a guarantor. Ensuring students' concerns are being addressed, and opening up those conversations, can help raise awareness of their situation and alleviate these issues.

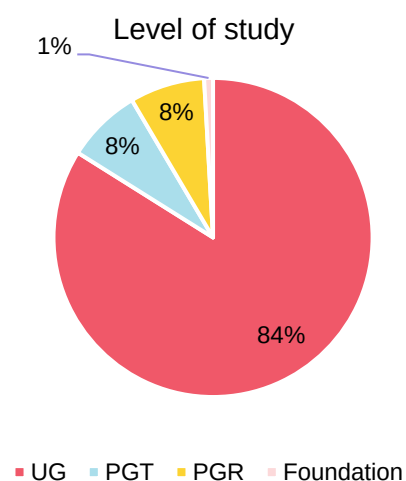
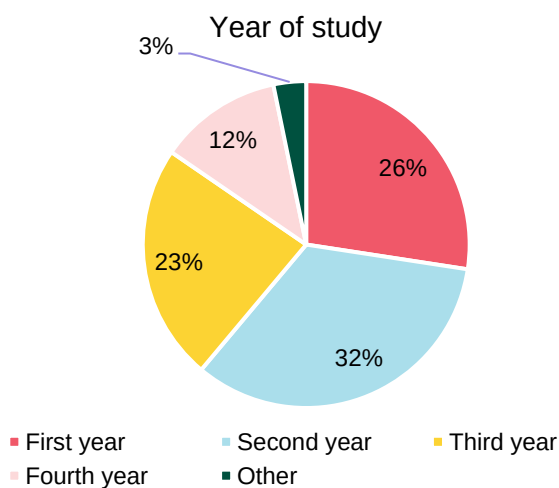
4. Financial Assistance

Students are urging for further financial assistance to help with the increasing rent prices in Bristol. While the university does offer a variety of funding to help students, a recommendation is to review the financial support available specifically for housing. The increasing burden of housing on students is something that is having a detrimental impact on students' finances. Therefore, it would be worthwhile to review whether further financial aid can be provided to Bristol students.

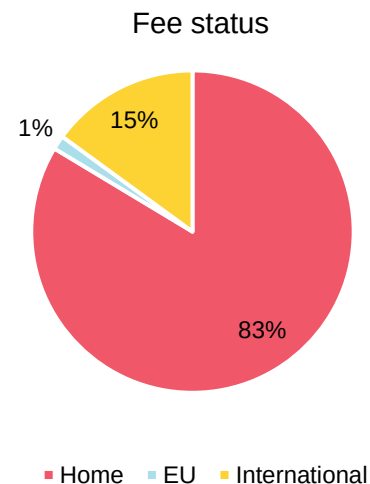
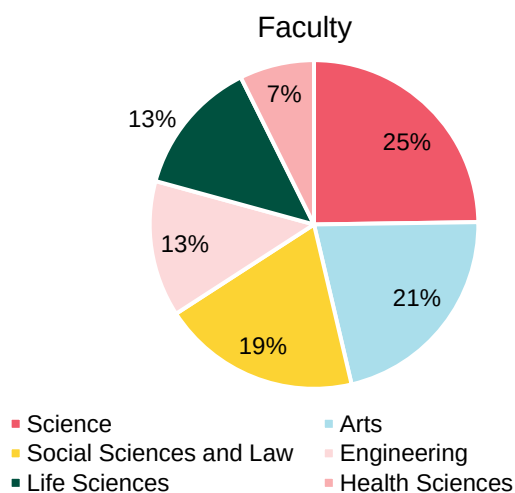
Demographic Overview of Respondents

*Average responses throughout 6 demographic questions was 548

Study Type

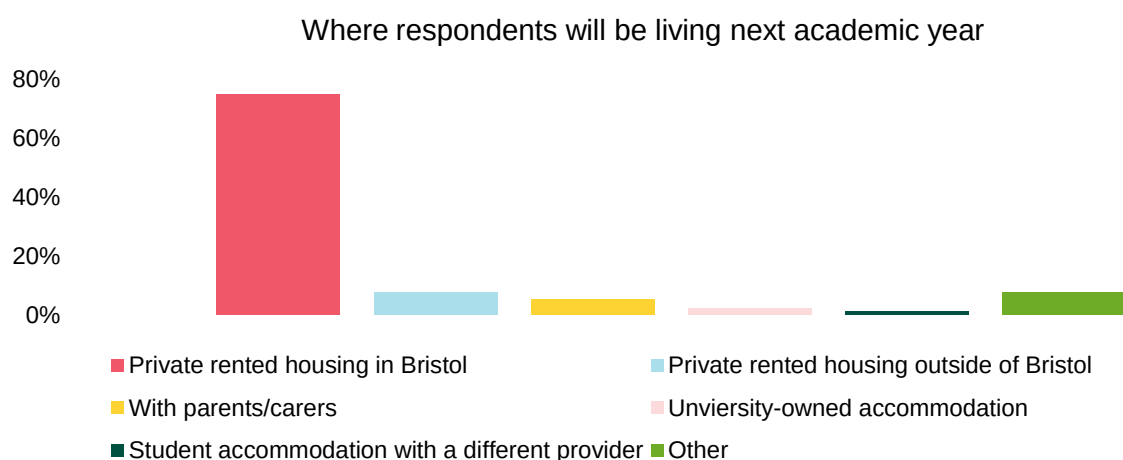
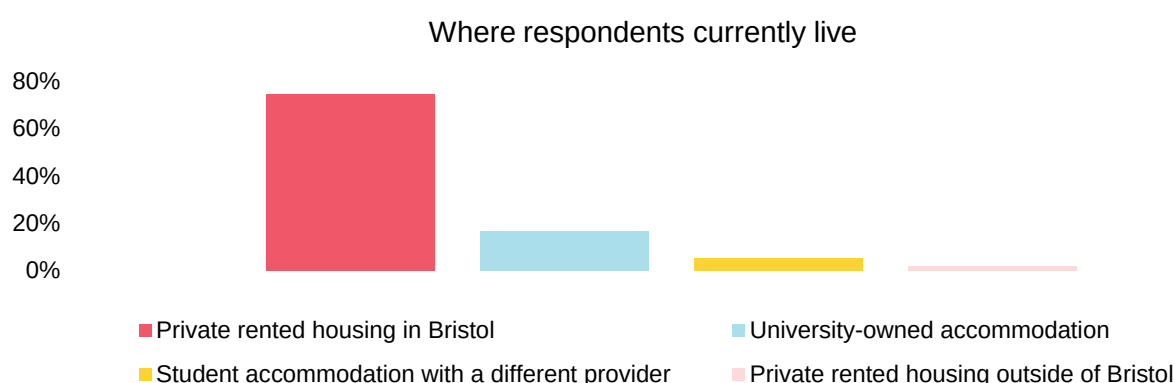


*Foundation, 5th year and 6th year all 1% or below



These demographics show that there was a fairly representative split between years of study and faculties. However, Undergraduate students and Home students are heavily over represented in this sample. This is a limitation of surveys as respondents are self-selecting. Demographic correlations will be drawn between different groups to ensure a more thorough level of analysis. It would also be worthwhile conducting a similar piece of research for specific groups of students, for example, Postgraduate-specific research or further analysis of students in different demographic groups. This can be achieved through implementing focus groups, to target underrepresented groups, which are planned to take place this academic term. This would enable a further opportunity for students to share their experiences and the support that they need.

Which type of housing are students currently living in?



Most of the sample are living in private rented housing in Bristol (75%). A further 17% are currently living in university-owned accommodation and 5% living in student accommodation with a different provider. 2% of respondents stated that they are living in private rented housing outside of Bristol. For the next academic year, 75% of respondents stated that they'll be living in private rented housing in Bristol. Interestingly, the percentage of those living in private rented housing outside of Bristol increases to 8%. A further 5% will be living with parents/carers. As most respondents are currently living in private rented housing, or will be next academic year, this means that the survey is reflective of the target population, and the insights that can be drawn from this sample reflect the current situation regarding private rented housing for students in Bristol.

Other demographics

Students were also asked to provide information about their protected characteristics. Students were asked to provide information about whether they identified as disabled, came from a low socio-economic

background, whether they identified as LGBTQ+, if they were a mature student, whether they are a care leaver/estranged student and if they came from a forced migration background. If there is a strong correlation between demographics and experience of private rented housing, this will be addressed throughout the report. To view these demographics, please see the appendix.

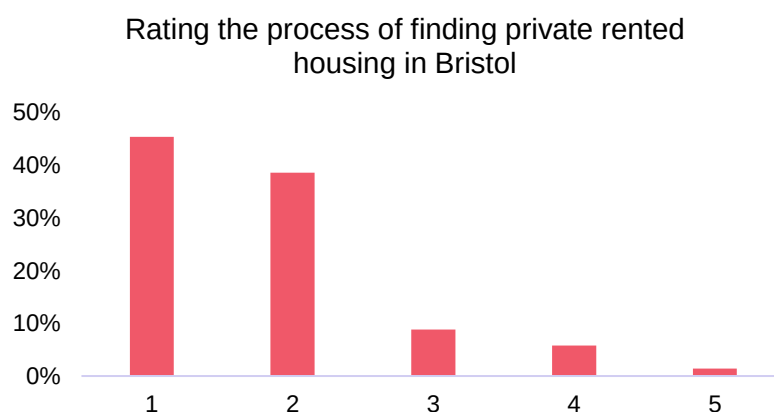
Finding Private Rented Housing in Bristol

The first section of the survey aimed to analyse students' experiences of finding private housing in Bristol. Finding housing is a significant part of the university experience, and this research highlights the struggles that students face during this process. Students can begin their search for housing as early as November, which can bring a multitude of challenges, such as not knowing who their housemates will be, struggling to balance the stress of finding a house, and not having the finances in place to afford housing for next year. Building an awareness of the current situation for students can help address and alleviate the challenges that they face.

On a scale of 1-5, how was the process of finding your private rented housing in Bristol? (568 responses)

1 = very difficult, 2 = difficult, 3 = neither difficult nor easy, 4 = easy, 5 = very easy

Average Rating: 1.8



As shown by the chart, out of 568 responses, the average was 1.8. 45% of respondents stated that they found it 'very difficult', while a further 39% stated it was 'difficult' finding their private housing. Only 1% of respondents stated that it was 'very easy'. This question highlights how difficult it is for students to find housing in Bristol. Reasons for this include the lack of availability, not understanding how the rental process works and not being able to find housing within their budgets.

"It was a hellish experience" – Focus group participant

Which groups had rated the process as the most difficult? (Ordered from lowest average score)

Demographic group	Average rating of finding housing in Bristol
From a low socio-economic background (124 responses)	1.61
International/EU students (91 responses)	1.67
LGBTQ+ students (221 responses)	1.75

Mature students (76 responses)	1.75
Transgender students (38 responses)	1.77
Students with a disability (128 responses)	1.77
Care leavers/estranged students (8 responses)	2.0*

*This high number is likely attributed to the limited sample size. It is not necessarily reflective of this demographic.

Those from a low socio-economic background had the lowest average rating for finding housing in Bristol, with that cohort of students responding with an average of **1.61**. Despite there being little variation between each demographic group, it still shows that this is an issue for multiple groups of students. It also highlights how important it is to determine demographic correlations between different groups of students, to better understand which groups face more difficulties during the search for housing.

This research then proceeded to look at which agencies students are using in Bristol. This is to determine how students feel about using agents in Bristol, and whether any further support is needed to provide students with a better experience of using them.

Using agencies in Bristol

If you found your property through an agency, which agent did you use? (423 responses)

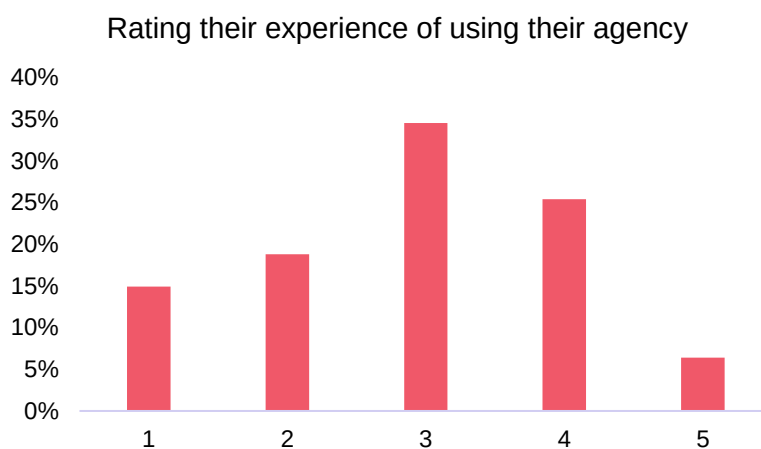
From this question, over 60 agents were listed as ones that students had used. This demonstrates the sheer number of agents that students can use, and how overwhelming it can be for students to know which agent is the most suitable for them. The most common agents that students had used were Digs (14%), Bristol SU Lettings (12%), and Flatline (8%).

Students were then asked to rate the agent that they had used on a scale of 1-5. While letting agents in the city aren't necessarily affiliated with the University or Bristol SU, this data can still help with understanding what further support students need during their search for housing.

On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate your experience of using this agency? (484 responses)

1 = very negative, 2 = negative, 3 = neither negative nor positive, 4 = positive, 5 = very positive

Average rating: **2.9**



The average rating for this question was 2.9, placing it into the 'negative' category. This shows that a high number of students are having a negative experience using agencies in Bristol.

Demographic Groups and Experiences with Agencies

The average rating for using an agent does differ between some groups of students. For those who identified as disabled, their average rating was 2.65 (105 respondents), and for those without a disability, their average rating was higher at 3.04 (316 respondents). Furthermore, for those who identified as coming from a low socioeconomic background, their average score was 2.69 (102 respondents), whereas for those who don't come from a low socioeconomic background, their average score was 2.99 (317 respondents).

In addition, for those who are a mature student, their average rating was lower than non-mature students, at 2.77 (58 respondents) compared to 2.97 (374 respondents). This demonstrates that certain groups of students are rating their experiences as more negative than others, and therefore suggests that further support needs to be put in place for specific groups of students.

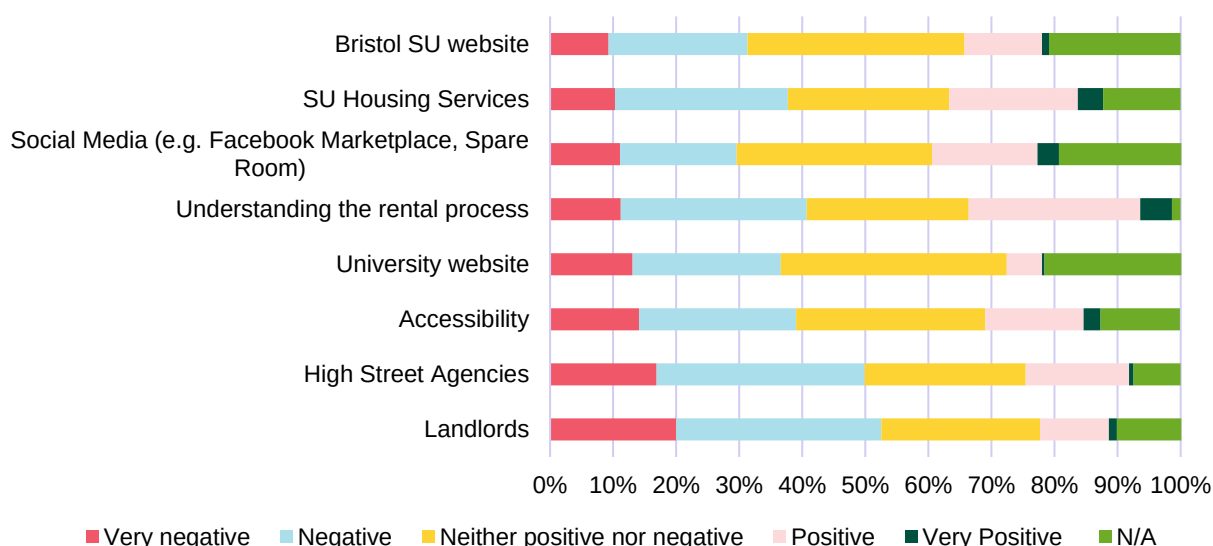
*For any further analysis of specific demographics, please send your request to bristolsu-insight@bristol.ac.uk.

Factors influencing the search for housing

Continuing the theme of searching for housing in Bristol, this research also aimed to understand how students found different aspects of the housing search. Aspects that were analysed include the University and SU websites, housing services, high street agencies, landlords, understanding the rental process, accessibility, and social media. These aspects were chosen as they can play a significant part in students' experiences of finding housing. Comparing all these elements together will also help determine where further support provisions are needed to help students through this process.

How was your experience with the following during your search for private rented housing in Bristol? (558 responses)

Rating different aspects during the search for private housing



This graph depicts a holistically negative experience of the student housing journey. While some elements are rated positively, the responses lean much more towards negative ratings.

Landlords

'Landlords' had the highest rating of negativity, with 20% of respondents stating that they had a 'very negative' experience. A further 33% stated that their experience with landlords was 'negative'. Only 11% of respondents stated that the experience was 'positive' and 1% stated their experience was 'very positive.' This demonstrates the sheer number of negative experiences that students have had with landlords in Bristol. This correlates with the open text comments that were received in the survey, as a huge number of students mentioned having difficulties with their landlords and finding themselves in challenging situations.

"There needs to be a legal crackdown on landlords who do illegal things and get away with it" – Focus group participant

High Street Agencies

The second most negative rating was regarding 'high street agencies', where 17% of respondents stated that their experience was 'very negative' and 33% stated 'negative'. This is synonymous with the above question asking students to rate their experience with agencies. A huge number of students are clearly having negative experiences with agencies, therefore it is imperative that students are getting the information and support they need to navigate using these agencies.

Accessibility

Following this, 'accessibility' was the third most negatively rated aspect, with a further 14% stating that experiences of this were 'very negative' and 25% stating 'very negative.' Only 16% rated this 'positive' and 3% 'very positive'.

Negative ratings for 'accessibility' do differ between demographic groups. For those who identified as disabled (120 respondents), those who stated their experience was 'very negative' increases to 26%. This is a huge increase compared to the overall survey respondents, showing how students with a disability face even more difficulties during their search for housing.

University/SU specific themes

This question also sought to analyse students' experiences of using the University and SU's website during the search for their housing. Regarding the university website, 13% of students rated their experience 'very negative', 24% 'negative', 36% 'neither', 6% 'positive' and 0.5% 'very positive'. A further 22% stated 'N/A' which likely means that they did not use it.

Regarding the Bristol SU website, 9% rated it 'very negative', while 22% rated it 'negative'. 34% rated it 'neither', 12% rated it 'positive' and 1% rated it 'very positive'. 21% stated 'N/A for this option.

This implies that some students are not finding the websites a useful resource that they can use during their search for housing. While there is a huge amount of information on the webpages, students may not find what they are looking for, particularly if they are in stressful situations and need to access information quickly. It may be worth conducting further research, such as journey mapping, to better understand how students use the websites in regard to housing.

"[It's a steep learning curve learning about housing and the rental process]" – Focus group participant

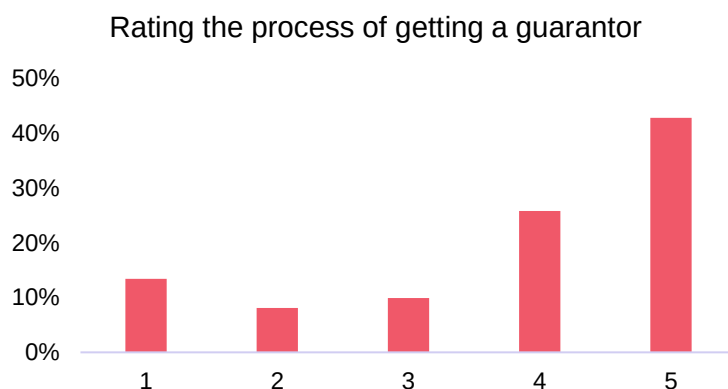
Finding a Guarantor

Guarantors are someone who will sign a legally binding contract or deed to say that they will pay a person's rent on their behalf if they fall into arrears. They must be over 18, UK based and in receipt of a provable income that would cover their share of the rent. In most cases, students must have a guarantor to be able to sign a contract for private housing. If they don't have a guarantor, they are sometimes asked to pay a year's rent upfront, which can be upwards of £10,000. They can also ask a guarantor service to act as a guarantor, however there are usually fees attached to this. To assess the current situation, this research analyses the process of finding a guarantor, and whether certain groups of students are more disadvantaged than others.

On a scale of 1-5, how did you find the process of getting a guarantor for your private rented housing? (507 responses)

1 = very difficult, 2 = difficult, 3 = neither difficult nor easy, 4 = easy, 5 = very easy

Average rating: **3.8**



International Students

It is widely known that international students have more difficulties finding a guarantor than home students. This is because they are more likely to not know a UK resident who can act as a guarantor. To analyse international students' experiences of finding a guarantor, their responses were compared against home students.

Home students (responses = 426)	International/EU students (responses = 70)
Average rating: 4.05	Average rating 2.09

The above table demonstrates a significant difference between home and international students when it comes to finding a guarantor. International students are facing a much bigger disadvantage in their search for housing, and this is a significant barrier that will impact their university experience.

Moreover, it is not only international students that may struggle to find a guarantor. Those who identified as coming from a low socio-economic background (113 question respondents) had an average score of **2.99** for this question. Care leavers and estranged students are also another group impacted by this. In this survey, 8 respondents identified that they were a care leaver or estranged student. Out of 7 responses to this question,

the average score for finding a guarantor was **2.4**. This demonstrates that students who may already face other barriers are being unfairly disadvantaged when it comes to finding a guarantor.

What further support, if any, do you feel would be beneficial for you during your search for private rented housing in Bristol? (Open-text question, 320 responses)

This open-text question provides students with an opportunity to express their views about the further support they would like to see. Comments mainly included the cost of housing, the lack of availability and students being in difficult situations.

*If you would like to access all open text comments, please contact bristolsu-insight@bristol.ac.uk.

“Some kind of housing fair where agents come and speak about what’s available” – Focus group participant

“More support with difficulty finding housing, and with supporting us through difficult housing situations. Landlord caused a lot of stress and SU could provide no help. There isn’t enough housing in Bristol, and especially not enough student housing from Uni of Bristol.”

“The supply doesn’t meet the demand. And most accommodation in the private sector has problems and should not be let legally but are... The university has also had oversubscription problems in the past and its problems is affecting us now as there’s a lack of housing.”

“More information and clear instructions on what the process is like, what warning signs to look for in a contract and how to set up bills - this can be especially challenging for international students, or students with anxiety or neurodivergency such as autism.”

“The condition of student housing is appalling, properties lack maintenance, the majority contain mould which is extremely dangerous. The monthly price that students are paying is not at all reflected in the quality of accommodation. The University of Bristol should offer support in terms of defending the rights of its students to do decent, safe, and affordable housing and not allow landlords to take advantage of its students.”

Recommendations

- Some students appear to be struggling to understand the rental process. They also find it difficult to navigate situations such as dealing with difficult landlords and understanding their rights as tenants. Therefore, something that would help is incorporating housing workshops and information sessions into students’ timetables. This could be throughout induction, or during peak times when students begin their search for housing.
- Signposting and advising students, particularly during difficult situations, will help them understand their rights as tenants. Having housing advisors would ensure students know who to reach out to when they are faced with housing issues. This could be introduced through drop-in sessions to ensure students receive the help they need.
- Raising awareness of the struggle to find a guarantor, particularly for international students, will help alleviate that burden. Introducing a university guarantor scheme is a huge undertaking, but even

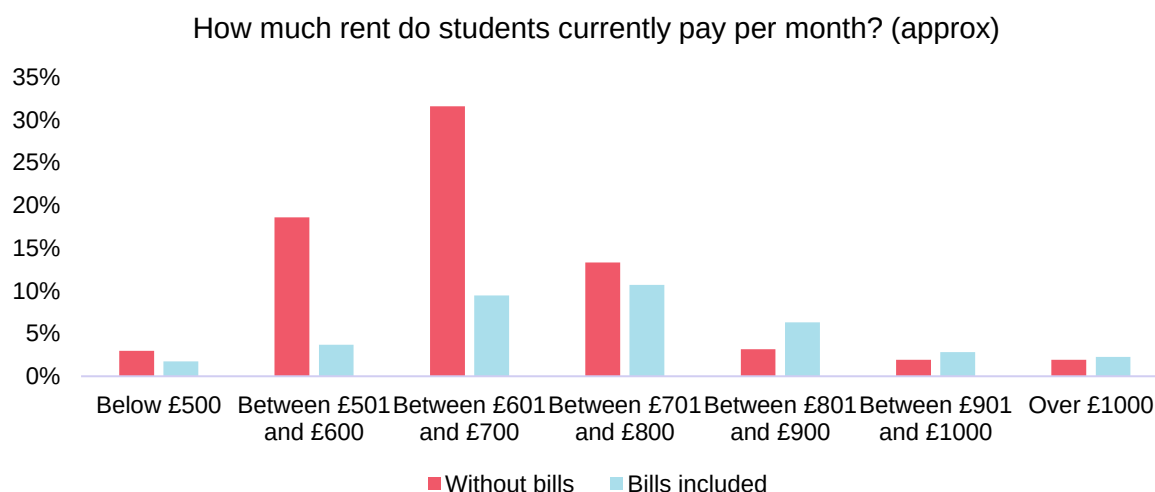
simply acknowledging this problem, and continuing conversations about this topic, will make a huge difference to students' university experiences.

The Cost and Conditions of Students' Private Rented Housing

This part of the research aims to uncover the cost and conditions of private housing for students. It also analyses the impact that these have on the student experience. The cost of private rented housing has increase significantly in recent years in Bristol and the wider area, however the impact of this increase can be detrimental to students. A higher number of students are having to work longer hours alongside their studies to be able to afford their rent. Some students' conditions of their housing do not reflect the amount of rent they pay, therefore some may find themselves in unsuitable housing, which will negatively impact their physical and mental wellbeing.

Approximately how much rent do you currently pay per month for your private rented housing? (630 responses)

*Some students may have selected two options, one for without bills and one for bills included. The below graph is an approximation of this calculation.



Most respondents (32%) selected paying between £601 and £700 per month, without bills. A further 19% pay between £501 and £600 without bills included. Only 3% pay below £500 without bills and 2% with bills included. Even more surprisingly, 2% of respondents stated that they pay over £1000 (without bills) and a further 2% paying over £1000 with bills included.

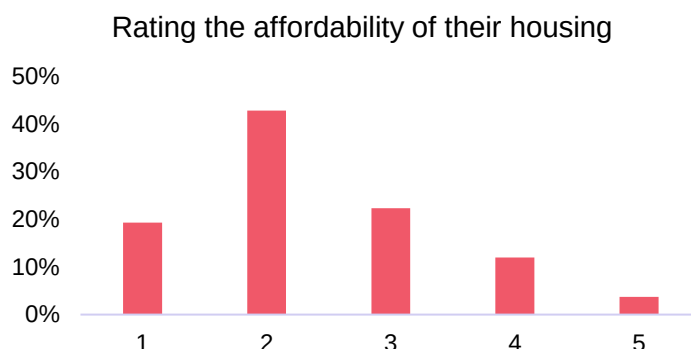
For comparison, the average monthly rent cited in Bristol SU's 2014-15 housing report was **£396**. It is no surprise that rent would have increased between the years since that report was published and now, however it still demonstrates the sheer increase of rent for students in Bristol. The increase of maintenance loans has not matched this, therefore students are struggling more than ever.

“Rent was raised from £600 to £1000 per person per month” – Focus group participant

On a scale of 1-5, how affordable would you rate the cost of your current accommodation? (566 responses)

1 = very unaffordable, 2 = unaffordable, 3 = neither unaffordable nor affordable, 4 = affordable, 5 = very affordable

Average rating: **2.4**



It must be noted that the meaning of ‘affordability’ differs between each individual. What is considered affordable for some may not be for others. However, with such a high percentage of students rating their housing as unaffordable, it can be argued that this issue, along with the cost of living crisis, is impacting a huge number of students.

Affordability and comparison between different demographic groups

International students	2.5
Students from a low socio-economic background	2.3
Mature students	2.3
Disabled students	2.1
Care leavers/estranged students	1.6* (very small sample size)

Despite there being a slight difference between some demographic groups, it does demonstrate that intersectional factors can impact how affordable students find their housing. This survey shows that housing is unaffordable on average, however, some groups of students will be impacted more significantly than others.

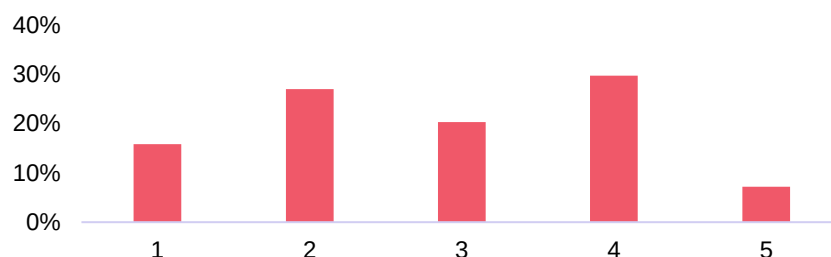
*“I’m so busy with three jobs that I have no time to go to housing advice workshops” –
Focus group participant*

On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate the conditions of your private rented housing? (552 responses)

1 = not very good, 2 = not good, 3 = neither good nor bad, 4 = good, 5 = very good

Average rating: **2.9**

Rating the conditions of their housing



The cost of housing is not the only issue that students are facing. The conditions of students' housing is also having a significant impact. As shown above, the average rating for their housing conditions was 2.9. The conditions of their housing are also likely to be worse if students can't afford better quality housing. Therefore, this is another burden that they are facing.

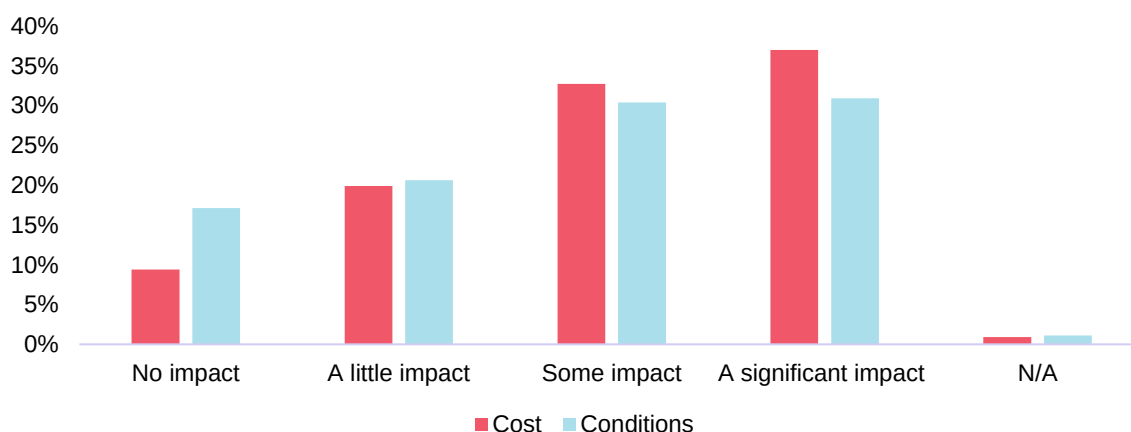
"Condition of housing is really poor for what you're paying" – Focus group participant

The Impact of the Cost and Conditions of Private Rented Housing

Not only does this research analyse the cost and conditions of private rented housing for students, it also seeks to address the impact that these have on students' university experiences. The cost of living crisis is having a huge impact on students across the country. This survey aims to better understand how students are impacted by the cost and conditions of their housing.

Have the cost or conditions of your accommodation ever negatively impacted your university experience? (563 responses)

The negative impact of the cost and conditions of housing



Responses to this question show that the cost and conditions of students' housing is having a hugely negative impact on their university experience. 37% of respondents stated that the impact of the cost was 'significant', while 31% stated the impact of the conditions was 'significant'.

A further 33% stated that the cost had ‘some impact’, while 30% said the conditions had ‘some impact’. Only 9% of respondents stated that the cost had ‘no impact’ and a further 17% stating ‘no impact’ for the conditions. Therefore, not only are the cost and conditions of housing an issue, it’s an issue that is having a profound impact on students’ university experiences.

“[Students are] missing seminars and classes due to low energy as their housing situation is making them feel ill” – Focus group participant

“Sleep issues and insomnia” – Focus group participant

Is there anything else that you would like to say about the cost or the conditions of your private rented housing? (Open text question, 269 responses)

“My asthmatic boyfriend couldn’t breathe [because of the mould]” – Focus group participant

“I have had to consistently stretch outside of my budget to afford rent/bills/living costs which led to me working around 20hrs a week last year (night shifts) and this severely impacted my health.”

“Was left struggling with our landlord not doing repairs, and our landlord tried to illegally kick us out. They have been awful and it has severely impacted my studies, and I have felt like I don’t have any support from the SU or the Uni.”

“My rent has increased from £500 a month to £775 (starting next year) for a house that has had very little maintenance in that time. Lots of my possessions have been ruined by mould, the radiators have been broken in the winter periods of our tenancy and have taken months to be fixed, and once we were left without a working shower for nearly two weeks. The letting agents are also rude and patronising. Overall a terrible time.”

“I find it ludicrous how the prices have gone up so drastically this year. It’s impossible to find a place that I can afford, even if it’s further out from campus.”

Recommendations

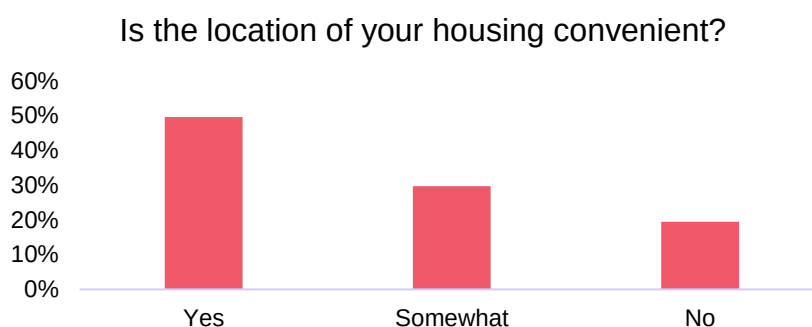
- Ensuring students have access to clear information about their rights as tenants will also help them understand what to do if they are living in appalling conditions. For many students, this is their first time renting, therefore they are unaware of their rights as tenants. Ensuring they can speak to university staff about the conditions of their housing would help them navigate difficult situations.
- Raising awareness of the sheer amount of rent students are paying, and how a significant number are financially burdened by this, helps acknowledge how difficult it is to be a student renting in Bristol. Assessing whether students should receive more financial help, specifically for private housing, will help to reduce this burden, and overall help improve their university experience.
- While the cost of housing is a huge issue, and a difficult one to control, something that would help is ensuring students get the financial information they need, such as expectations of how expensive

housing is and how to budget. This could be implemented through talks, drop-in sessions, and workshops.

The Distance from University Campuses

The final theme of the survey analyses the distance of students' private rented housing from university campuses. This helps to understand how convenient the location of their housing is, and whether there needs to be any further support provided to those students who live further away from the city.

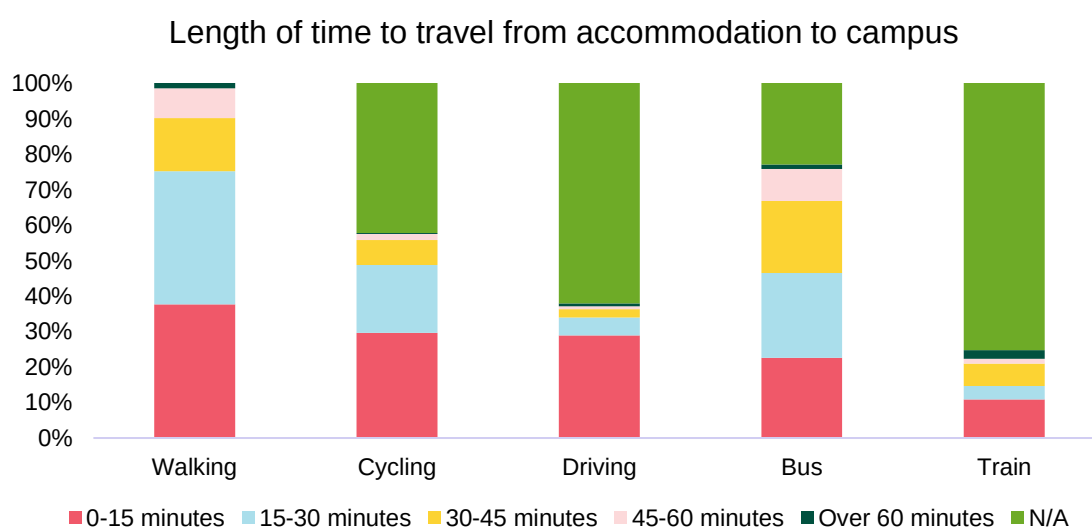
Do you feel that the location of your private housing is convenient for your studies? (563 responses)



50% of students stated that the location of their housing was convenient, while 30% stated that it was 'somewhat' convenient. A further 20% stated that it wasn't convenient.

To further assess this theme, students were also asked how long they spend travelling from their accommodation to campus.

How long do you spend travelling from your accommodation to campus? (533 responses)

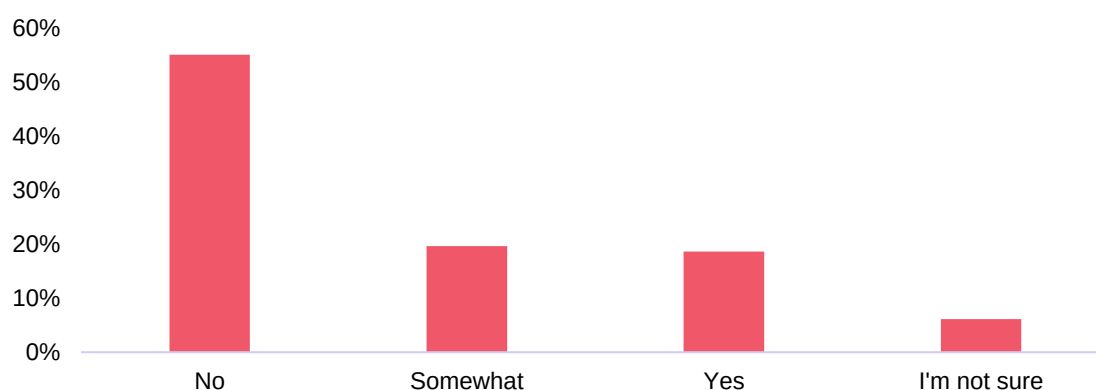


Most respondents stated that they walk to campus from their accommodation. 38% of students responded that it takes them between 0-15 minutes to walk to campus. A further 38% stated it takes between 15-30 minutes walking, while 15% of students stated it takes between 30-45 minutes to walk to campus. Getting the

bus to campus was the second most popular option. 23% stated it takes 0-15 minutes via bus, 24% 15-30 minutes, 20% 30-45 minutes and 9% 45-60 minutes. Fewer students drive, cycle, and get the train.

It is interesting to note, from a sustainability point of view, that 29% of respondents, selected 'driving' between 0-15 minutes. Whether this is their regular mode of transport, or whether students are simply stating how long it would take them to drive, may not be clear. However, if it is the former, it is interesting that they aren't using public transport. Comments have come up in previous research suggesting that some students are dissatisfied with public transport in Bristol. This may be something to analyse further in future research.

Do you feel that the location of your private rented housing has impacted your university experience in a negative way? (555 responses)



As the above shows, the location of students' housing has a less negative impact than the cost or conditions. 55% of respondents stated that the location hadn't negatively impacted their university experience, while 20% stated it had 'somewhat' had a negative impact. A further 19% stated that the location had impacted their university experience in a negative way. Despite this impact being less negative, it still must be addressed that almost 20% of students do feel that the location of their accommodation is negatively impacting them. Some noted in the open-text comments that they couldn't afford housing close to campus as it was too expensive. Therefore, this is another burden that students are facing. Those who cannot afford city-centre housing are going to face further disadvantages which will negatively impact their university experience.

For those who answered 'yes' to the above question, the percentages for different demographic groups do increase. For example, 23% of students with a disability answered yes, 36% of those from a low socio-economic background answered yes, and 24% of those with ethnicities other than English, Welsh, Scottish, Northern Irish or British answered yes. This shows that, again, different demographic groups are being more negatively impacted than others.

Recommendations

- Produce more resources to help students identify which areas would be suitable for them to live, including average cost, distance from campuses, and general information about the local area.
- Provide further public transport assistance for those living further away from campus, so that they are not unfairly financially burdened by not being able to afford to live closer to campus.

Is there anything else that you would like to share about your experience with private rented housing in Bristol? (Open-text question, 178 responses)

This last survey question provides a final opportunity for students to share their thoughts about their experience of private rented housing in Bristol. The recurring themes throughout the responses are how expensive housing is, how competitive it is, the unsuitable conditions that they've had to live in and many being in difficult situations with landlords. Out of 178 responses, **all of them stated negative experiences.**

"Very difficult market... Hard to find somewhere that isn't already taken. Most prices are way too high for the majority of students, so you have to look further away, which negatively impacts social life, travel etc."

"An absolute joke, all the good/cheap houses are passed among friends while the expensive ones go back on the market. Unaffordable for students from poorer backgrounds."

"I think students are an easy target to be taken advantage of, and many landlords and lettings agencies exploit students knowing there will be little repercussions for their actions. They need to be made more accountable for poor living conditions and law breakages that they think students won't catch because it's their first time renting."

"It's much less of a headache if the university can act as guarantor for international students... we're able to pay 25k/yr but apparently not able to afford rent."

"The Landlords are terrible and also the process of securing a rented house is very classist and inaccessible. If you do not have a guarantor you cannot rent the house. Those from less privileged backgrounds will not have the same opportunity and access to high incomes. Class divides at Uni are very apparent when talking about renting."

"[I'm] unaware of any support that is available from the university" – Focus group participant

Conclusion

To conclude, there is a clear and significant need to address the multiple issues that students are facing in regard to housing. The sheer cost of rent, the lack of availability, and the appalling conditions are causing huge issues for students. These issues are also having a hugely negative impact on their university experience, which can then be detrimental to students' wellbeing.

This report acknowledges that the issue of housing is one that cannot easily be fixed. However, the recommendations throughout are seen to be tangible solutions to this problem. Firstly, ensuring students can access support and impartial advice from University and SU staff will help alleviate any housing issues that they face. Secondly, creating more resources and guidance to support students as first-time renters will help them understand their rights as tenants. Thirdly, acknowledging the issue of guarantors, particularly for international students, helps to understand the extra difficulties that they face during the rental process. Finally, using this research to campaign for better housing conditions for students, and collaborating with internal and external stakeholders, will help raise awareness of the current situation and improve students' housing experiences in Bristol.

Next Steps

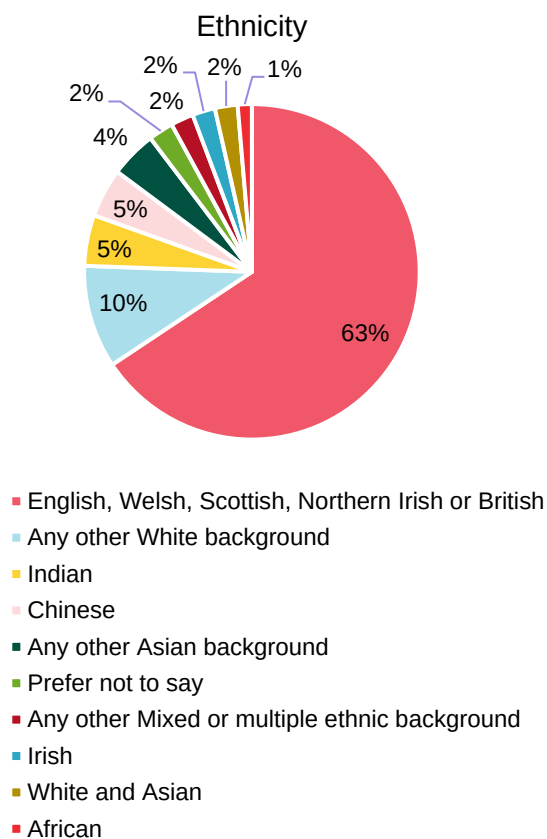
- While this survey has provided a significant insight into the current housing situation for students in Bristol, holding focus groups will help analyse this issue even further. This will also provide underrepresented groups a further opportunity to talk about their experiences.
- This report will be shared with Bristol SU staff, University of Bristol staff and external stakeholders. This will help to inform wider research across Bristol and the higher education sector to better understand students' experiences with private housing.
- There is scope for this to be an annual piece of research, in collaboration with the next Student Living Officer, to ensure that we, as a University and SU, are using evidence and insight to better understand the current housing experience for students.

References

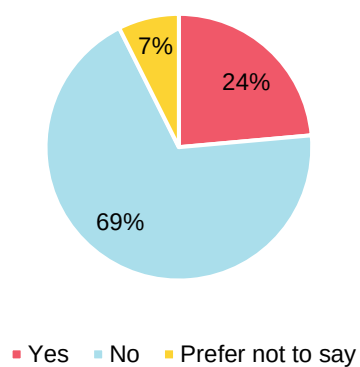
Bristol Living Rent Commission (2023)

Phipps, Tom (2015) *Student Housing Survey*, Bristol SU

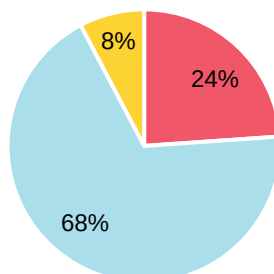
Appendix: Survey respondents' demographics



Come from a low socio-economic background

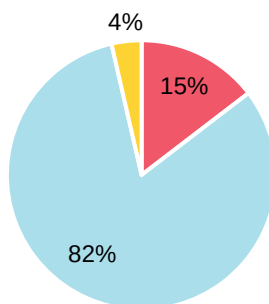


Identify as disabled



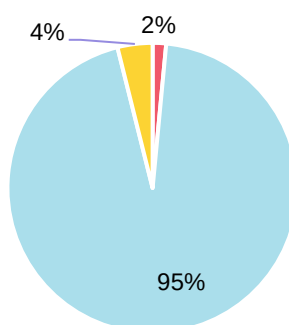
■ Yes ■ No ■ Prefer not to say

Mature Student



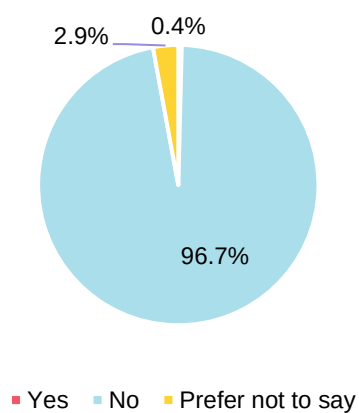
■ Yes ■ No ■ Prefer not to say

Care leaver/estranged student

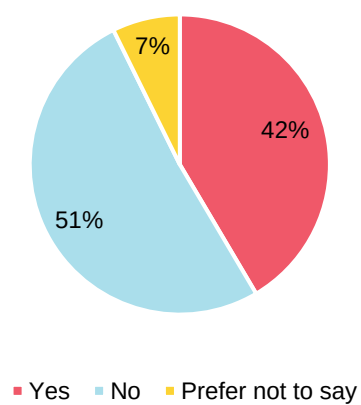


■ Yes ■ No ■ Prefer not to say

From a forced migration background



Identify as LGBTQ+



Identify as transgender

