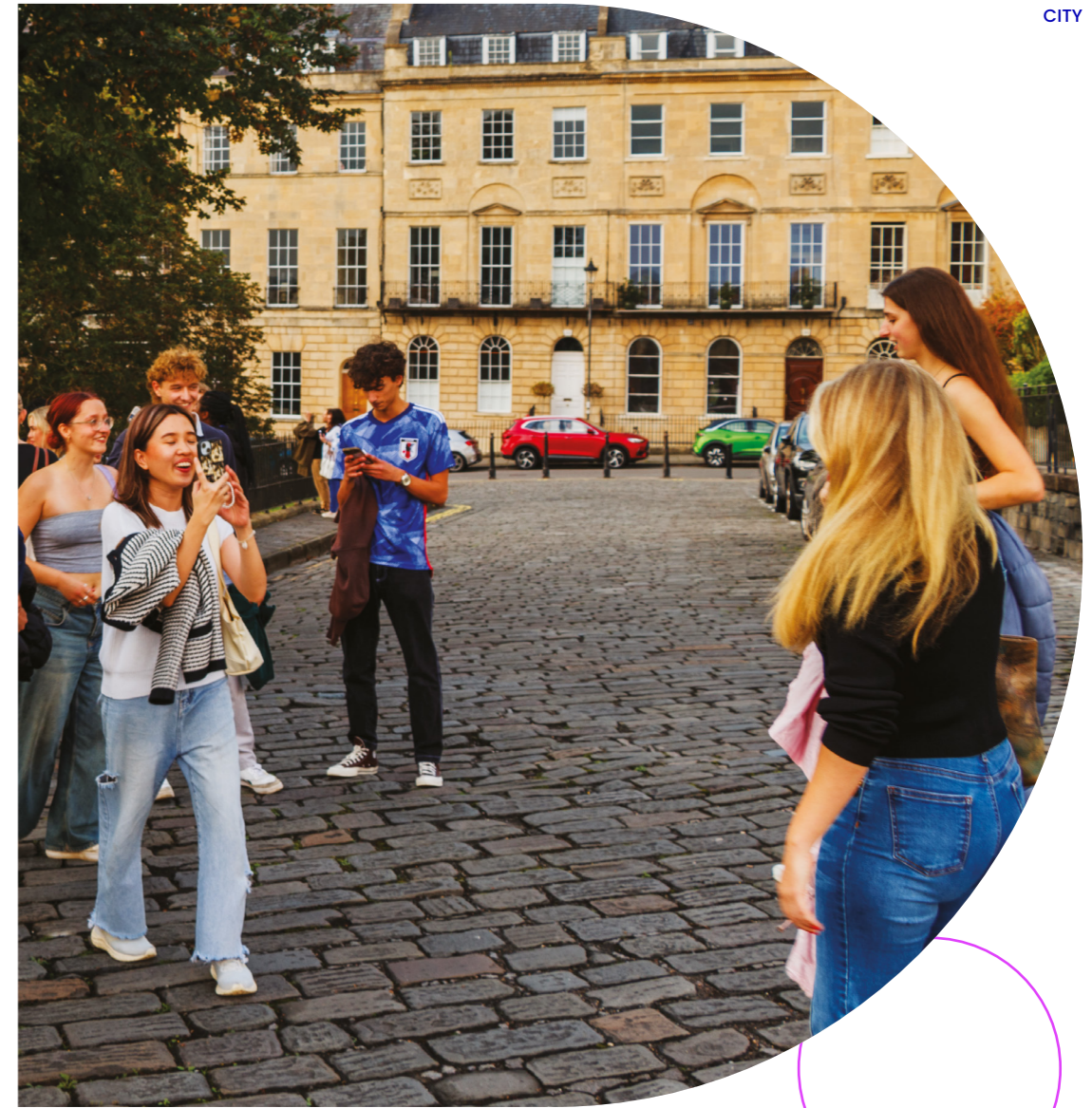


3

Bath will be the best city in the world to be a student



We love our city. We chose Bath because it offers a rich history and vibrant culture - and we love that it's designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We think a great student city should offer a great living and learning environment with high levels of safety, beautiful surroundings, and a close-knit community. Its growing business community also offers opportunities for professional growth and career advancement.

We expect Bath to be our home - and many of us would like it to become our home after graduation. But for too many students, accessing housing that is affordable, of a reasonable distance from campus, safe and conducive to learning, is not possible.

We believe that students are citizens, and that both student-focused facilities and enhanced influence of students will improve their learning and personal growth, and the success of the city as an economy and community.

For us, being the best city is about three things:

- ① Safe, affordable and near to campus housing that is conducive to learning.
- ② An approach to student employment that helps us to integrate earning and learning.
- ③ City infrastructure that recognises us as citizens of the city and potential long-term residents, employees and business owners.

Students told us:

Housing

The subject of housing, and particularly privately rented accommodation, has been a key concern for students for a long time. The SU has included issues related to housing in its Top Ten priorities seven times since 2010/11, demonstrating that this isn't a new or time specific issue.

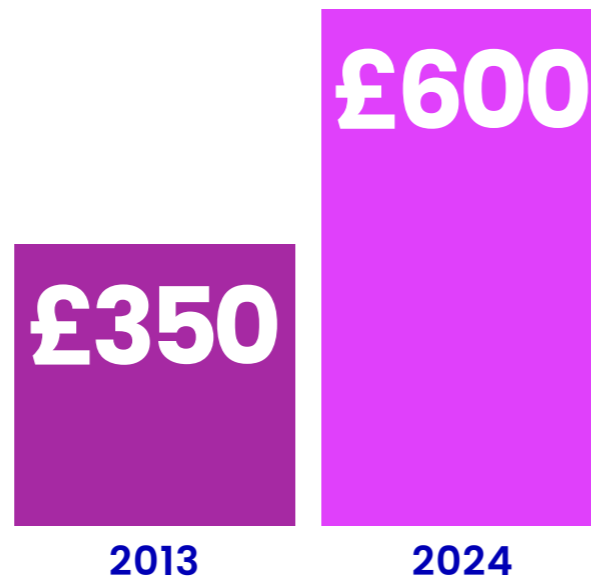
Students told us during the *Together We Shape Tomorrow* engagement that rents are high, and the quality of housing is poor. In the eleven years between private sector housing surveys of students in Bath, the average monthly rent (exclusive of bills) has increased from £350 to over £600, and students experiencing problems with the condition of their property increased from 67% to 86%. 62% of students in the *SU Housing Survey 2024* felt that their accommodation did not represent good value for money, and almost half of students said that they could not definitively say that they would be able to afford their accommodation for as long as they needed it. Our international, particularly postgraduate, student community are paying higher rents, often for expensive private purpose-built student accommodation, perceived as a more safe and higher quality option and to avoid issues with guarantors when dealing with landlords and letting agents.

High rents combined with a highly competitive market for rented student accommodation has left students feeling pressured by lettings agents and landlords to sign for properties either without viewing them, or with very little time to consider if it is the right property for them.

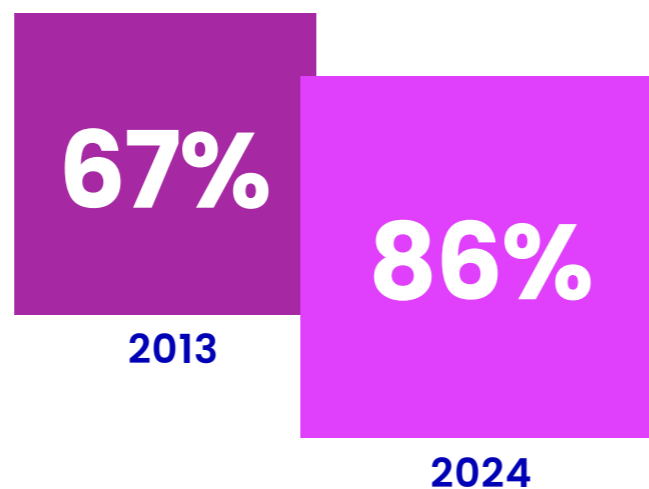
Disabled students also told us that their choice of accommodation was very limited in the private sector, with students more likely to have to take a property because there were no other options available to them.

"Demand too high, places going within an hour, so no other choice but to grab immediately." - Home fee payer, Undergraduate (Housing Survey 2024)

AVERAGE MONTHLY RENT



PROBLEMS WITH CONDITION OF HOUSING



High rents and a highly competitive market has left students feeling pressured by lettings agents and landlords

Many students sign without viewing the property or with limited time to decide



"Landlords also put unfair pressure on tenants to make a choice. We did a house viewing at 5 o'clock one afternoon, and we got a call at midnight that day demanding a decision." - Home fee payer, Undergraduate (Housing Survey 2024)

Students on placement, and doctoral students, found it particularly difficult to secure housing due to either not being able to attend viewings in person or properties all being taken by the time they are in a position to secure accommodation.

"We didn't end up viewing any due to all of us being on placement at the time and the letting agency stating we would lose the house if we waited to view it when one of us was able to."

"I'm a PhD student who got an offer the summer before the semester. I met the other PhD students in my department who got their offers around the same time because the interview process was late. ALL of us struggled a lot to find a place to stay. University accommodation was full, and there were very few properties."

Students told us about poor living conditions. 39% felt that their accommodation was not in a good condition, and 35% felt that it did not provide them with a good place to study, (Housing Survey 2024) leading to students seeking alternative spaces.

Significant numbers of students are living in properties with damp or mould present and felt uncomfortably cold in their homes and 1 in 5 are living in homes with electrical or gas hazards. These poor conditions are having a negative impact on students' academic studies and general wellbeing. For many of our students they do not know their rights as a tenant or feel that tenants do not have enough rights or know where to turn to for support.

"Horrendous sickness during the period without a boiler. This was also during exam season, so I lost valuable revision time."



1 IN 5 STUDENTS ARE LIVING IN HOMES WITH ELECTRICAL OR GAS HAZARDS

Student employment

Students told us that the impacts of the increases to cost of living is having an ongoing impact on all aspects of the student experience. Funding is not comfortably covering housing costs, students are reducing or skipping meals to save money, and increasing numbers of students report that the cost-of-living impacts are having a negative impact on their mental health.

We know from the *Together We Shape Tomorrow* engagement that students see positive impacts in the opportunities they have to make friends and build communities through SU clubs and societies, and that students who engage are more likely to feel that they belong and are less lonely (*Be Well Surveys 2021, 2022, 2023*). However, increases to cost of living are impacting this. A third of students have reduced their engagement with extra-curricular clubs and societies and 44% have reduced socialising with friends to save money (*Together We Shape Tomorrow Survey May 2024*).

One way that students are trying to resolve this issue is through working part time. Over half of students are working alongside their degrees, with 77% saying that this is because of the increases in cost of living.

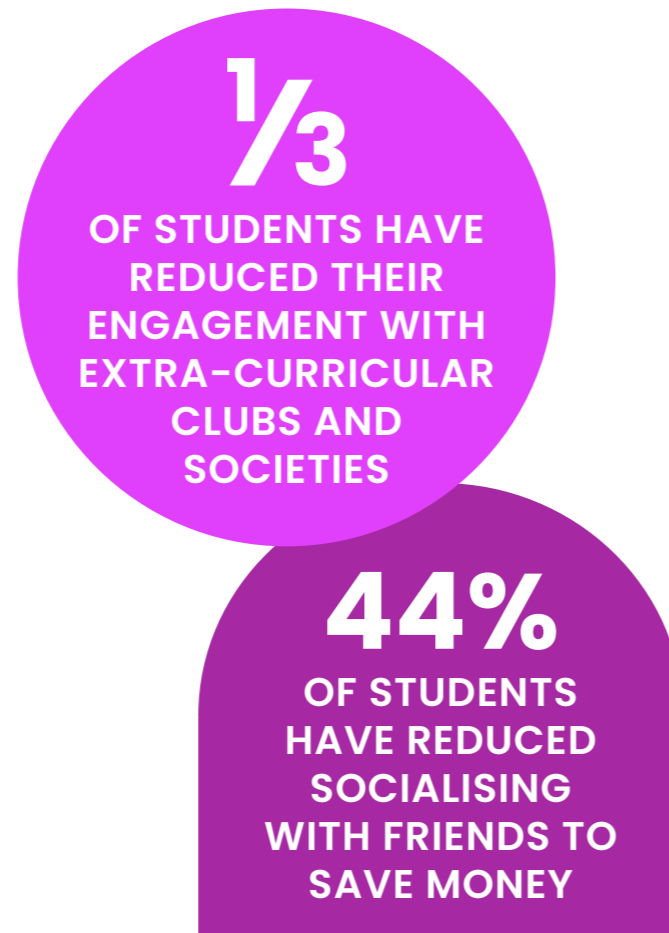
Most students are working between 1 and 11 hours a week, however 10% of students are working more than 23 hours a week alongside their studies.

"I have to work 60 hours a week in order to be able to support myself which directly and negatively impact every other aspect of my life." - PGT distance learner, male, home fee payer

Whilst working provides much needed financial support for students, the impacts on their studies and wider student experience is apparent.

"I have not been able to take any extra activities or be able to join clubs as I barely have time to study. If it comes to studying, I treat it as a priority, so I do not fall behind, but definitely I had few under-slept nights after work which did affect my health."
- PGT distance learner, male, home fee payer

"I can't spend as much time on the extra learning things for my course, like extra readings to develop my learning. I'm only able to do the basic readings and assignments required for my course."
- UG third year, female, home fee payer



City infrastructure

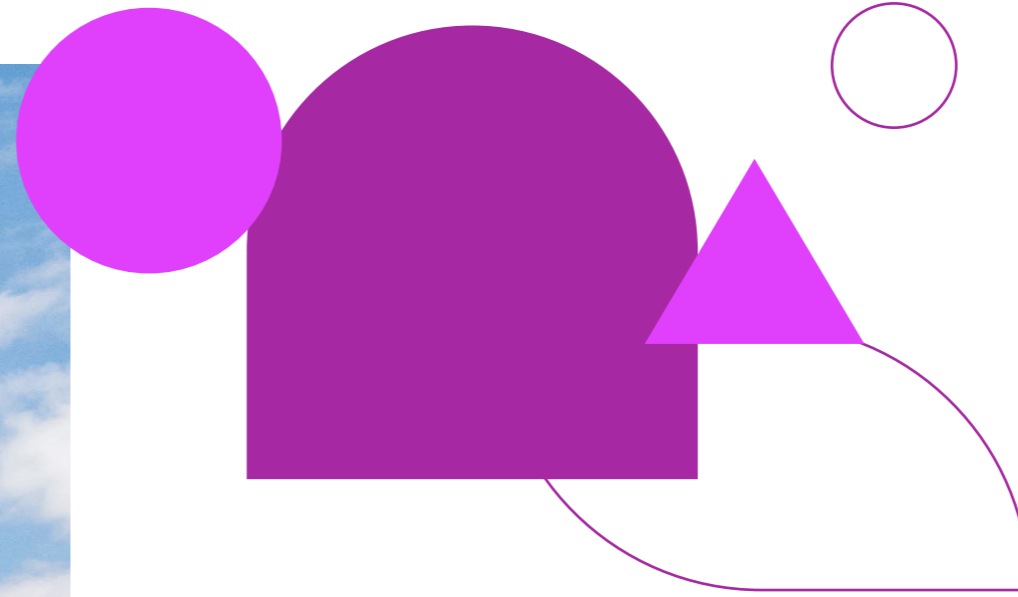
64% of students do not feel part of the local community where they live (*Housing Survey 2024*), with students picking up on anti-student rhetoric from long term residents leaving them feeling that they are not welcome in Bath.

"Lots of hostility towards students, women threatened legal action and shouted slurs and derogatory terms to one of our housemates because we were awake at 7am? Apparently too early?"

The city transport infrastructure for students getting to campus is highlighted year on year as one of the biggest issues faced by students in Bath. Students feel that the service provided is not value for money when faced with increasing prices, long delays at peak times, and overcrowding particularly at the start of each semester.

A quarter of students told us that they were reducing their travel to campus in 2023/24 to save money, with students missing lectures and other campus activities to reduce travel costs.

Increasing numbers of students report that the cost-of-living impacts are having a negative impact on their mental health



On housing, we want to see:

- ❶ A jointly owned student living strategy between the Council and universities in the city that seeks to guarantee that all students will be able to access affordable, safe, suitable and nearby accommodation – which includes bespoke support for the differing needs of PGT, PGR and international students in relation to housing.
- ❷ A city-wide housing accreditation approach that gives students assurance over safety and standards in their housing, and a city-wide approach to students knowing their rights as tenants, working towards all students in the city having access to redress assistance when a need to tackle a rogue landlord arises.
- ❸ Support for international students to access housing through a University guarantor scheme.

On employment, we want to see:

- ❶ A University-wide student employment strategy that seeks to maximise the number of opportunities for paid employment for students in the University's workforce, including supervisory and managerial roles as well as technical training and qualifications.
- ❷ The University to use its supply chains and wider influence to promote good student employment in the city, acting as a hub for opportunities and promoting good practice that strikes a good balance of flexibility between students and employers.

- ❸ Policies and practices in the University that recognise that students are often in employment to make up for student loan deficits, changing assessment loads and timetables to ensure that students can balance earning and learning.

On city infrastructure, we want to see:

- ❶ A strategy to secure affordable, accessible and reliable transport – with deeper collaboration between partners over cost and demonstrable improvements to service and a commitment to sustainable transport initiatives, including cycling and walking, to reduce the environmental impact of student travel.
- ❷ A commitment to working with partners to create social spaces for students to meet, collaborate, and relax, ensuring that the city offers more than just retail, sleeping and dining options. Existing space (e.g. vacant retail space) should be transformed into functional areas for students, addressing their needs for study, co-working, and social interaction, while integrating students into the broader community and economy.
- ❸ A plan on student integration in the city, with a programme of events that engenders collaboration between students and the city's long term residents involving science, business and the arts.