



State of Canadian Student Living 2026

16 cities

6,000+ students

22 schools

State of Canadian Student Living 2026

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This report is a work of non-academic research that includes aggregated housing preference data from students across Canada. To ensure anonymity, there was no personal information collected. Personal information includes, but is not limited to name, gender, and age. Data was collected independently from September 2025 to December 2025 by Studenthaus Inc. There is no link between any personal information and the data collected. Housing preference data and email addresses are stored securely and separately by Studenthaus Inc. Every effort has been made to cite the works referenced in this report. All images used in this report are from the public domain.

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Introduction

About.

Studenthaus is a company building consumer intelligence for the real estate industry. It was created to help new projects and policies reflect the needs of young Canadians. Over the past 3 years, the company has grown from a group of full-time students focused on local impact to a team working on Canada's largest student housing projects.

This year's Canadian Student Living Survey was the culmination of the relationships, expertise, and capital that we have spent the past two years building. From September to December 2025, we worked with 25 full-time students who helped us reach students on the ground at their local campuses as paid Research Interns. I personally spoke to thousands of students and visited 15 cities to help our interns collect as many responses as possible.

Most responses came from asking students on campus to fill out the survey or through partnerships with student unions. As part of this research, we gave away \$2,400 in \$100 grants to random students that completed the survey. This brings our total given away to students well over \$10,000 since 2023.

It has taken three years of practice, but surpassing 6,000 student responses on this survey tells me that we have built the first iteration of a real engine that lets us understand student living at the city level. This is demand-side visibility that housing data typically lacks.

As part of the launch of this report, we have released a dashboard that allows you to visualise our data and understand how different types of students experience housing in Canada. You can explore this on our [website](#) or reach out to learn more about city-level insights.



Julian Wells

Founder and CEO, Studenthaus
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Summary.

Key Data Points.

6,039

student responses from 22+ post-secondary institutions and 16+ Canadian cities.

\$1,146

is the national average monthly rent for students living away from home.

64%

of students find their rent affordable, driven by family support on rent payments.

59%

of students would be interested in living in off-campus student housing.

55%

of students living in their family home would move out if they could afford to.

66%

of students rank cost as the number one factor when choosing a place to live.

Recommendations.

For everyone: Treat students as a microcosm of society, not a monolith.

1 Just like other segments of society, students don't all share the same opinions. Not every student wants to live in a basement suite with others or in a studio alone. This report highlights how unique each persona is. Create options that reflect that diversity.

For policymakers: Develop specialized funding streams for off-campus student housing.

2 Building student housing helps students and the rest of the market. Institutions lack the capacity to build the scale of on-campus housing required. We need dedicated funding that makes it easier and faster to build different kinds of off-campus student housing.

For developers: Build mid-market student housing that prioritizes function over flair.

3 80% of the student market in most cities wants to live with other students. A small group can afford top of market prices. Find ways to deliver functional student housing that appeals to the broader market at a reasonable price through partnerships or new policy.

Demographics

Demographics.

State of Canadian Student Living 2026

Survey Responses by University (n=6,039)



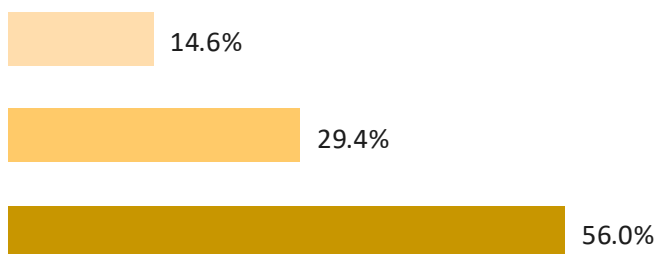
The above map shows the volume of responses in each market that was surveyed as part of the 2025 Canadian Student Living Survey (CSLS) that Studenthaus conducted. In total, there were more than 16 cities and 22 post-secondary institutions covered, with 6,039 total responses. The larger the pin is on the map, the more responses there were at that school.

Greater Vancouver, Kingston, Kelowna, Victoria, and Toronto were the 5 cities that were most represented in the survey. To see a complete list of schools and cities, including their representation in the survey, please explore the interactive dashboard on our [website](#) that further visualises the findings or send our team an email to learn more about accessing city-level data.

Demographics.

Student status: Domestic local, domestic mobile, or international?

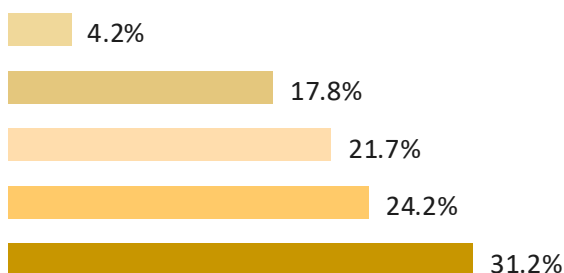
■ Mobile ■ Local ■ International



We defined domestic mobile students as those coming to their school from out of province or from more than 45 minutes away by car. Domestic local students are that are from less than 45 minutes away from their school and predominantly live at their family home.

What is your year of study?

■ 1st year ■ 2nd year
■ 3rd year ■ 4th year or more
■ Grad student



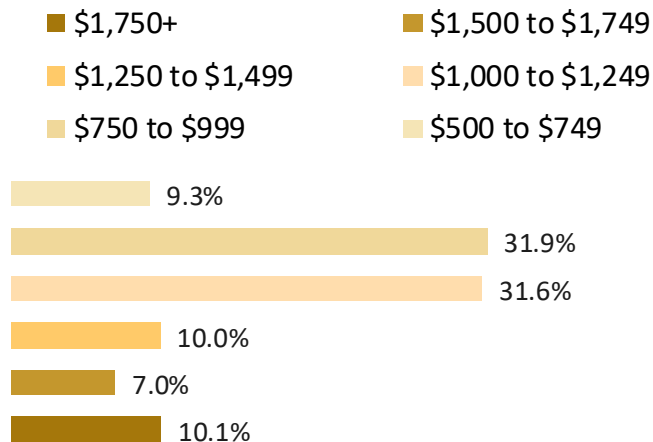
First-year students make up the largest cohort at 31.2%, with representation decreasing in subsequent years. Graduate students account for just 4.2% of respondents. This skew toward undergraduates suggests housing needs are most acute in the first years of study.



Financials

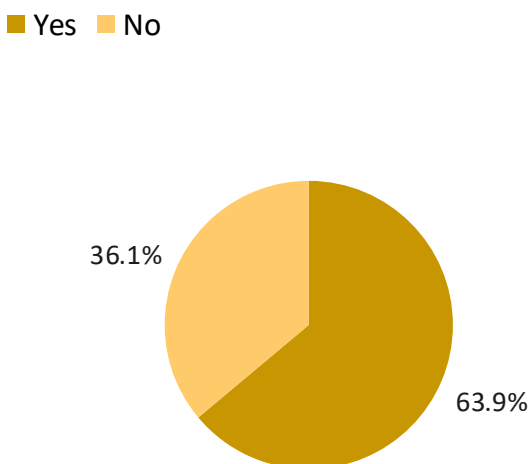
Financials.

How much do you individually pay for rent every month?



The average rent paid per month by students living away from home was \$1,146.22, with a median of \$1,000. International students pay approximately \$140 more per month than domestic mobile students. Over 60% of students pay within the bands of \$750 and \$1,250 per month, while just 27% pay more than \$1,250.

Do you consider your rent affordable for your situation?

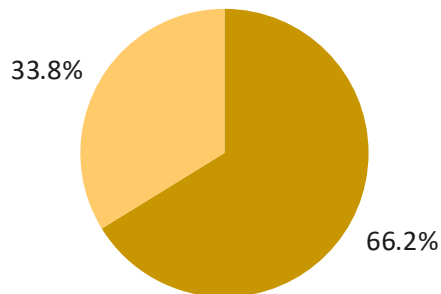


Nearly 64% of students living away from home consider their rent affordable. Domestic local students are most likely to find their rent affordable (66%), while international students, paying the highest rents on average, are least likely (63%). Affordability perception in Halifax and Guelph are well below the national average, while London and Montreal are well above the national average.

Financials.

Does your family help pay for rent?

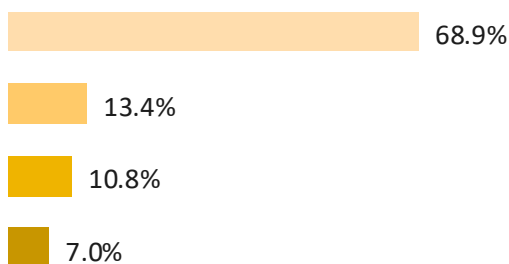
■ Yes ■ No



Only students that live away from their family home were asked this question, meaning that this percentage does not include those that receive support via a free or discounted place to stay. Notably, there is a 15% gap in affordability perception between students that have all their rent paid by family and those that receive no family support.

What percentage of rent is covered by your family?

■ 25% ■ 50% ■ 75% ■ 100%

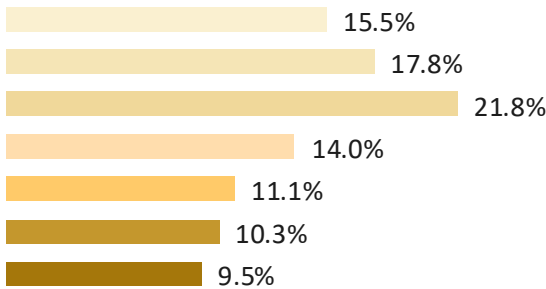


Students with partial family support (25-50%) report lower affordability than those with no help at all. This suggests that partial contributions may signal financial strain without tangibly easing it. Only at 75% coverage or higher does family support begin to correlate with improved affordability perception, with a 22% gap in affordability between those receiving 25% and 100% support.

Financials.

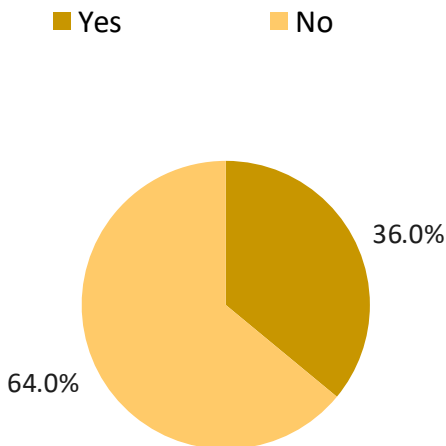
What is your family's estimated household income?

- \$300,000+
- \$200,000 to \$299,999
- \$160,000 to \$199,999
- \$120,000 to \$159,999
- \$80,000 to \$119,999
- \$40,000 to \$79,999
- Under \$40,000



Students pay similar rent regardless of family income, with medians identical at \$1,000 and means ranging only from \$1,076 to \$1,210. Yet affordability perception varies dramatically. 52% of students from households earning under \$40,000 find rent affordable, compared to 71% from households earning \$300,000 or more. This 19% gap highlights that the affordability crisis is driven by what student families can support.

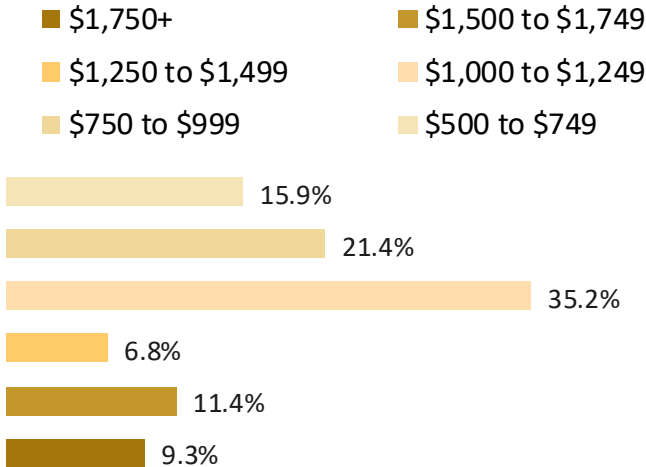
Do you have any student debt?



More than one-third of students carry student debt. Those with debt are significantly less likely to find rent affordable (55% affordability) compared to those without debt (71% affordability), a 15% gap. This unsurprisingly indicates that debt compounds housing strain. Students who are borrowing for tuition have less capacity to absorb rent, even at similar income and rent levels.

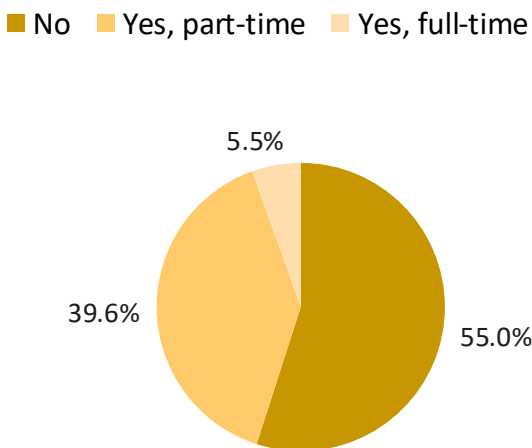
Financials.

What is the max you could realistically afford for rent each month?



Students living away from home report a mean budget of \$1,163, while the mean for actual rents paid is \$1,146. This suggests that students are finding housing slightly below their stated maximum. Students living at their family home who are open to moving out report a lower budget than the national average. This aligns with the price sensitivity that keeps them living at home.

Are you employed while studying?



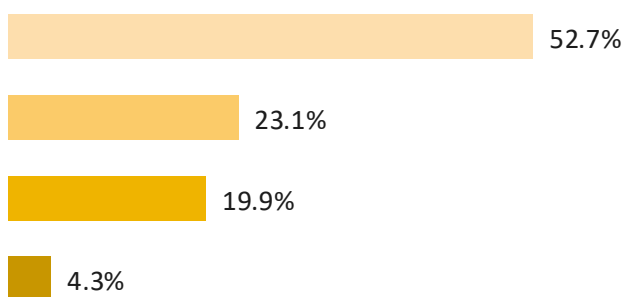
Over half of students (55%) do not work while studying, while 40% hold part-time jobs and just 6% work full-time. Domestic local students are most likely to be employed (59%), while domestic mobile students are least likely (38%). Students who do not work are more likely to receive family rent support (75%) than those working, explaining why unemployed students report higher affordability despite having no income.

Housing Profile

Housing Profile.

What kind of housing do you currently live in?

- On-campus apartment ■ On-campus dorm
- Off-campus apartment ■ Off-campus house



Off-campus housing dominates, with 53% of students living in off-campus houses and 23% in apartments. Housing patterns shift dramatically by year: nearly half of first-year students (49%) live in on-campus dorms, but this drops to just 7% by second year as students transition to off-campus options.

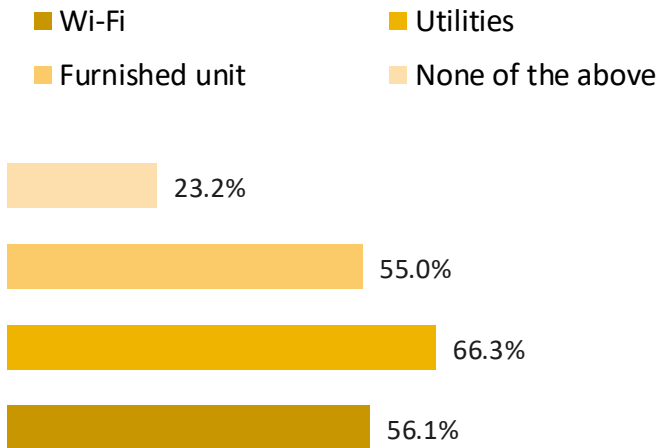
Rank the following from most to least important when choosing a place to live.

- | | | |
|---|-----------------------|-----|
| 1 | Cost | 1.7 |
| 2 | Quality | 2.9 |
| 3 | Proximity to campus | 3.3 |
| 4 | Amenities | 4.4 |
| 5 | Living with friends | 5.4 |
| 6 | Building security | 5.6 |
| 7 | Proximity to work | 6.4 |
| 8 | Proximity to downtown | 6.4 |

Cost ranks as the top priority across all students, but priorities diverge by demographic. Domestic local students are most cost-sensitive, while international students prioritize housing quality more than other demographics. Domestic mobile students, having left their social networks behind, place more importance on living with friends than domestic local students.

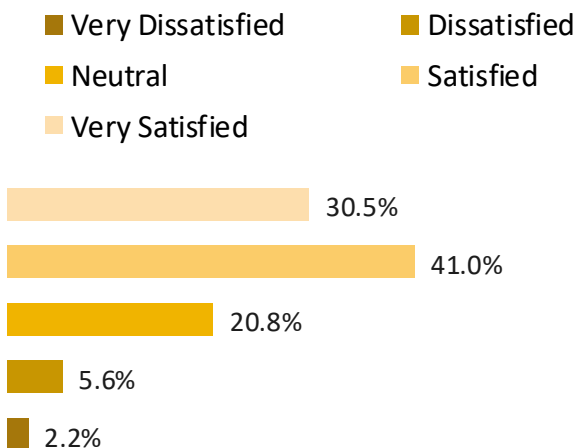
Housing Profile.

What does your rent include? Select all that apply.



41% of students have fully inclusive rent (utilities, wi-fi, and furnished), while 22% pay for everything separately. Among off-campus renters, all-inclusive units cost \$94 more per month on average (\$1,125 vs \$1,031), yet students in these units are far more likely to find their rent affordable (74% vs 56%). The predictability of bundled costs appears to outweigh the higher price tag when it comes to perceived value.

How satisfied are you with your current housing situation?

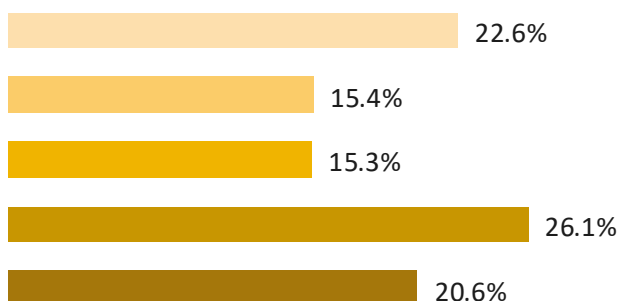


Students rate their housing satisfaction at 3.92 out of 5 on average. However, satisfaction is driven more by perceived affordability than actual rent. Students paying top-quartile rent but finding it affordable report higher satisfaction (4.18/5) than those paying bottom-quartile rent but finding it unaffordable (3.42/5). Feeling like you're getting value matters to students more than what they pay.

Housing Profile.

How many roommates do you have?

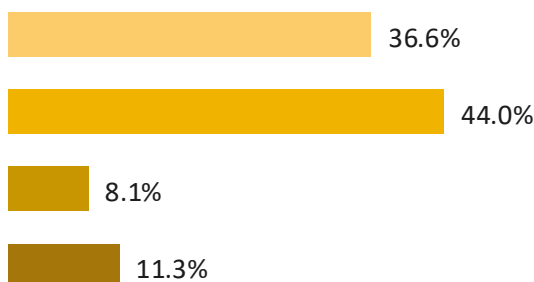
■ Zero ■ One ■ Two ■ Three ■ Four or more



Roommate patterns shift dramatically throughout the student journey. 1st years average just 1.1 roommates, but this jumps to 2.7 roommates by 2nd year as students move into shared off-campus houses, and stays steady until graduation. Graduate students return toward independence, averaging 1.5 roommates. Each additional roommate saves roughly \$150/month.

Why do you have roommates?

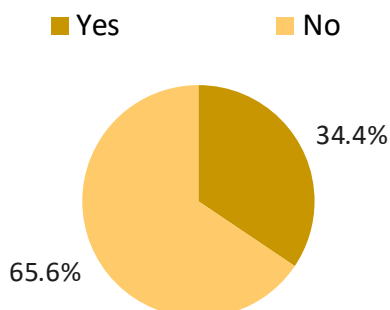
■ Assigned by school ■ Couldn't find a unit for one
■ Wanted to live with others ■ To cut costs



Social connection edges out finances as the top reason for having roommates: 44% want to live with others compared to the 37% just looking to cut costs. Motivations are different by year of study. 1st years are largely assigned roommates (37%), while undergrads in years 2-3 peak on social reasons (52%), and graduate students are primarily cost-driven (66%).

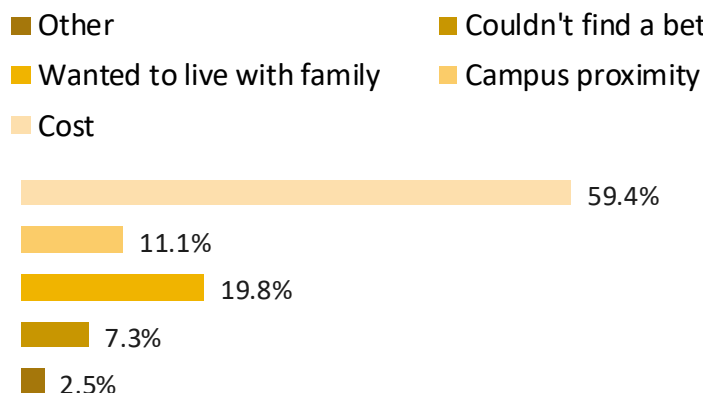
Housing Profile.

Do you currently live in your family home?



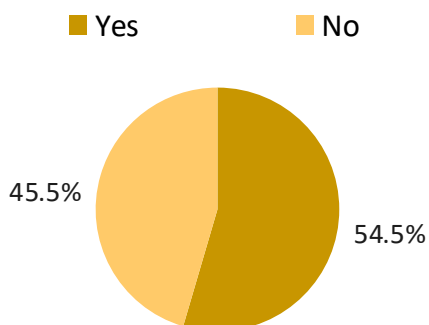
Over a third of students (34%) live in a family home, driven almost entirely by domestic local students. However, this is primarily a cost-driven decision. 55% of students living at home say they would move out if they could afford to.

What made you choose to live in your family home?



Cost is the dominant reason students live at home: 59% cite the expense of moving out, while only 20% say they genuinely wanted to live with their parents. Another 11% stay for proximity to campus, and 7% couldn't find a better option.

Would you ever move out from your family home before graduating?



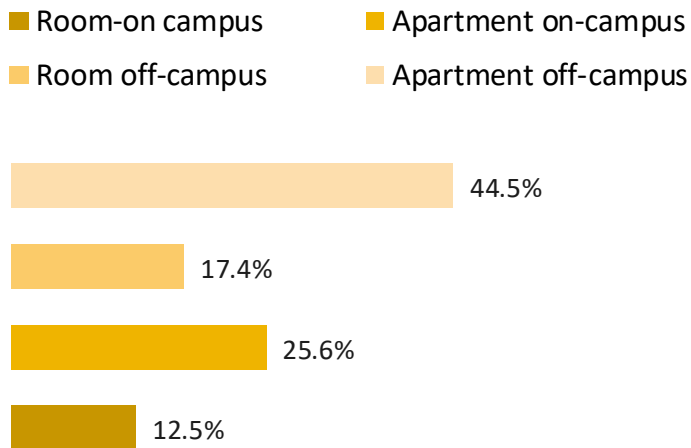
Over half (55%) of students living at home would move out before graduating if they could afford it. When segmented by the different reasons, 68% of those who couldn't find a better option would leave, compared to 36% of those who genuinely wanted to live with their parents.



Housing Priorities

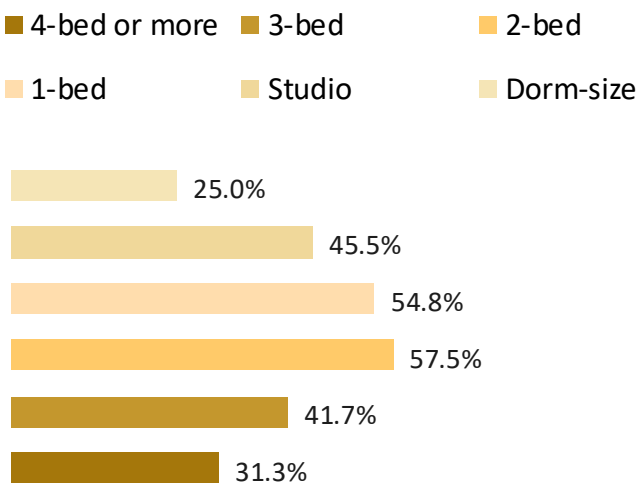
Housing Priorities.

Desired housing type



Apartments, both on- and off-campus dominate student preferences (70%), but only 27% currently live in one. The majority (53%) live in off-campus houses, yet just 17% prefer a room-based setup. This gap illustrates a significant opportunity in mid-market student housing. Students want the privacy and independence of apartments, but the cost and availability have held them back.

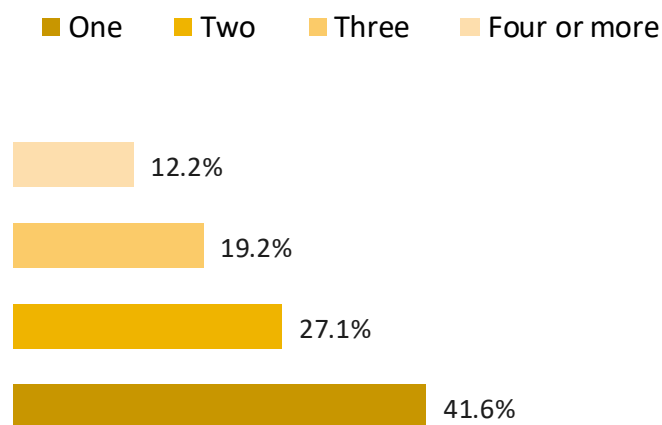
What unit size(s) would you be open to when looking for somewhere to live? Select all that apply.



Mid-size units are most popular, with 58% of students open to 2-bedrooms and 55% to 1-bedrooms. Preferences differ by demographic. Domestic mobile students are most open to larger shared units (37% consider 4+ bedrooms), while international students favor smaller, more private configurations (only 19% want 4+ bedrooms).

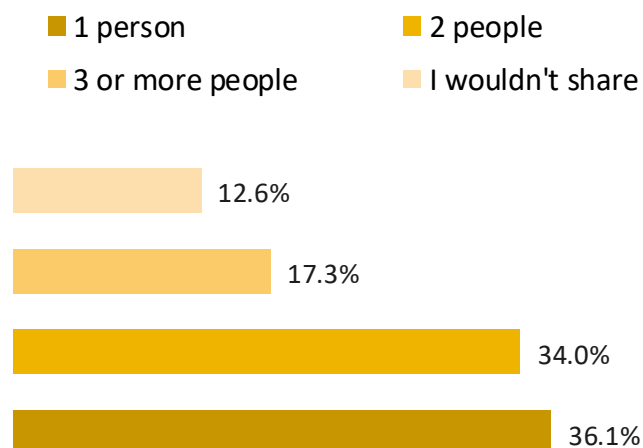
Housing Priorities.

How many roommates would you want to have?



One roommate is the most desired arrangement (42%), followed by two (27%). International students show the strongest preference for minimal sharing, with 53% wanting just one roommate compared to 39% of domestic mobile students. There's a notable mismatch between reality and preference. Among students currently living with four or more roommates, 54% would prefer fewer.

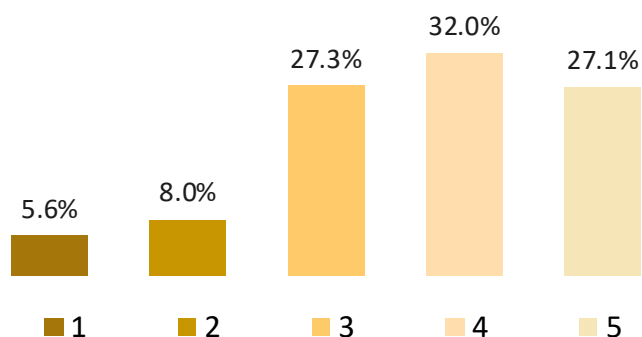
What is the maximum number of people you would be willing to share a bathroom with?



Most students prefer bathroom privacy. Only 17% are willing to share with three or more people, while 36% will share with at most one person and 13% would not share at all. Domestic mobile students are most flexible (21% open to 3 or more people), while international and domestic local students are more privacy-conscious (just 13% would share with 3 or more).

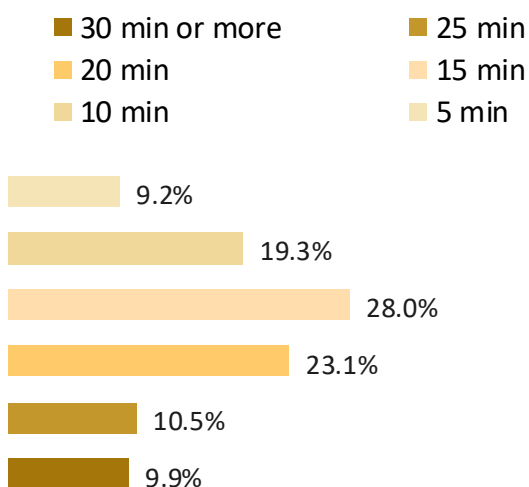
Housing Priorities.

How much would you like to live in an off-campus student housing building on a scale of 1 to 5?



Students rate interest in purpose-built student housing at 3.7 out of 5, with 59% expressing interest (4-5 rating). Off-campus renters show the strongest demand (61-63% interested), while students already in on-campus apartments are least interested at 42%. With significant interest in every market surveyed, opportunity exists for the right product across Canada.

How long would you commute to campus by transit to live in student housing within your budget?

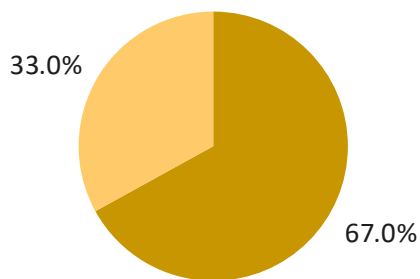


10-20 minutes is the sweet spot, with 70% of students in this range. Over half (57%) wouldn't commute more than 15 minutes, and 80% stop at 20 minutes. Tolerance varies by current habits and city. Students with sub-15-min commutes are protective of that proximity (only 31% would accept 20+ minutes), while those already commuting 30+ minutes are more flexible (60% would accept 20+ minutes).

Housing Priorities.

All else equal, would you pay \$250 extra per month to live 5 min from campus instead of 45 min?

■ Yes, pay \$250 extra ■ No, live further away



67% of students would pay \$250 extra per month to live 5 minutes from campus vs 45 minutes. Interest is highest among those who already have short commutes (73% of students with sub-15-minute commutes said yes), suggesting proximity is a premium worth protecting. Students currently commuting 30+ minutes are less willing to pay (57%), possibly having adapted to the trade-off or facing tighter budgets.

Rank the following lease lengths from most desirable to least desirable.

1	12 months	1.7
2	8 months	1.9
3	24 months	2.7
4	36 months	3.7

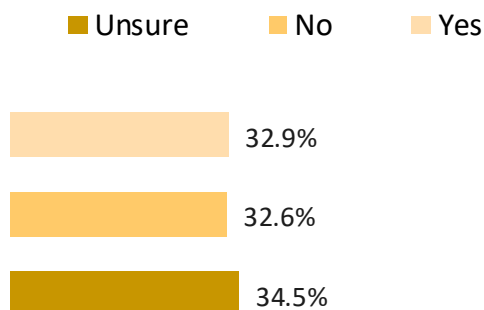
12-month leases are the favourite, closely followed by 8-month with 36-month ranked last. Preferences are consistent across demographics, income levels, and housing types. The only slight variation appears around future plans. Students planning to leave their city slightly favor 8-month terms, while those staying prefer 12-month. Overall, students are a transient group, so lease flexibility matters universally.

Housing Priorities.

Rank these factors by importance in your choice of school.

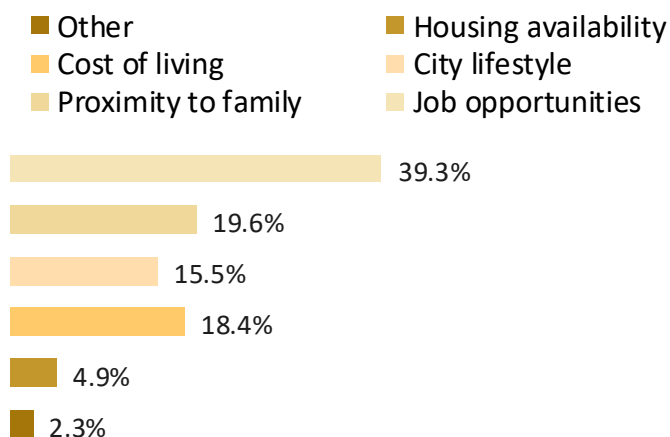
1	Program quality	1.8	Program quality dominates school choice, followed by housing availability. Notably, housing beats considerations like scholarships and campus social life suggesting students recognize that in today's housing crisis, finding a home is critical to academic success.
2	Housing availability	3.1	
3	Scholarships	3.2	
4	Campus social life	3.3	
5	Proximity to family	3.8	

Do you see yourself staying in your city after graduating?



Students are evenly split on staying post-graduation, and retention ultimately varies dramatically by city. Major metros like Toronto, Vancouver, and Calgary retain nearly half their students, while university towns struggle.

What is the most important factor in the decision to stay or leave?



Job opportunities lead at 39%, but the deciding factor shifts by intent. Students planning to stay are anchored by social ties, while those leaving are drawn by city lifestyle and jobs. The undecided are also waiting on jobs, with nearly half citing employment as the factor that will tip their decision.



Amenities

Amenities.

Rank these in-unit amenities from most to least valuable.

1	In-suite laundry	2.6	In-suite laundry, full-size kitchen, and air conditioning form a three-way tie for most valuable in-unit amenities. Furnished units and outdoor space rank lower. Here international students diverge notably, logically valuing furnished units far more than domestic peers.
2	A/C	2.6	
3	Full kitchen	2.6	
4	Furnished	3.4	
5	Balcony or patio	3.9	

Rank these in-building amenities from most to least valuable.

1	Study lounge	2.8	Student selection of in-building amenities highlights the importance of utility. Functional amenities consistently beat social ones. Quiet study lounges rank first, followed by outdoor space, and fitness centres. Social amenities like events programming and games rooms rank last. Students want spaces that support their daily routines over curated community experiences, with minimal differences in priorities here across demographics.
2	Outdoor space	2.9	
3	Fitness centre	3.1	
4	Coworking space	4.3	
5	Events or socials	4.9	
6	Wellness room	5.0	
7	Games room	5.1	

Amenities.

Rank these neighbourhood spaces from most to least valuable.

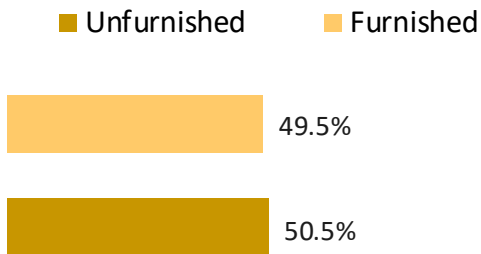
1	Grocery store	2.3	<p>Grocery stores rank first by a wide margin (2.29), nearly two full points ahead of the next closest amenity. Banks and restaurants rank last. There is virtually no variation across demographics, income levels, or housing types. Every student segment agrees that proximity to a grocery store is what matters most.</p>
2	Pharmacy	4.1	
3	Green space	4.3	
4	Gym	4.4	
5	Coffee shop	4.4	
6	Fast food	5.4	
7	Bank	5.4	
8	Restaurant	5.7	

Rank these outdoor amenities from most to least valuable.

1	Walking paths	2.5	<p>Walking paths rank first, well ahead of sports fields, nature reserves, and landscaped parks which cluster together. Playgrounds and dog parks rank last, illustrating that students are a demographic without many children or pets. Variation across segments is minimal for this category.</p>
2	Nature reserve	3.7	
3	Sports fields	3.7	
4	Landscaped parks	3.8	
5	Cycling paths	4.4	
6	Playgrounds	4.8	
7	Dog parks	5.2	

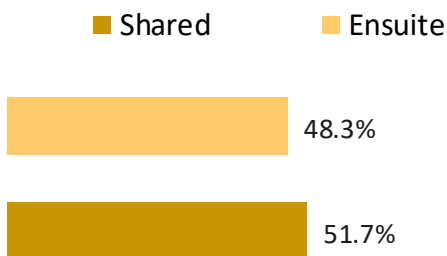
Amenities.

Would you rather pay \$150 extra per month for a furnished unit or go unfurnished and save the money?



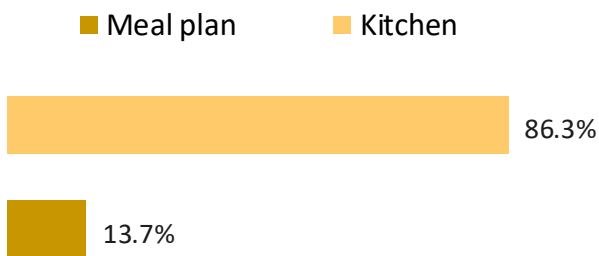
Students split evenly overall on paying \$150 extra for furnished units. International students strongly prefer furnished (63%), while domestic local students prefer to save the money and go unfurnished (56%). This mirrors student ties to their local markets.

Would you rather pay \$150 extra per month for an ensuite or save the money and stick with a shared bathroom?



Students split nearly evenly on paying \$150 extra for an ensuite bathroom. Graduate students are the exception, with 61% willing to pay for privacy, suggesting bathroom preferences mature alongside academic progression.

Would you rather pay \$1,000 extra per month for access to a meal plan or save the money and have access to a kitchen?

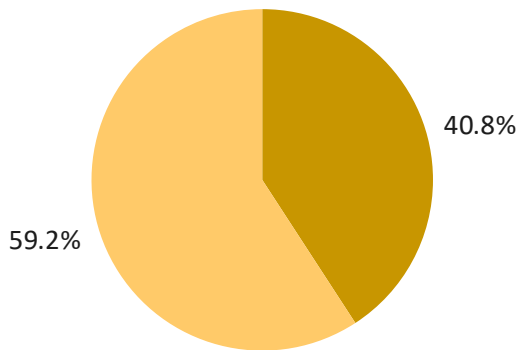


Students overwhelmingly prefer kitchen access over a \$1,000/month meal plan. First-year undergrads show the most meal plan interest at 21%, but this drops to just 10% by fourth year as students gain confidence living and cooking independently.

Amenities.

Would you rather pay \$50 more per month to have a gym in your building, or save the \$50 and lose the gym?

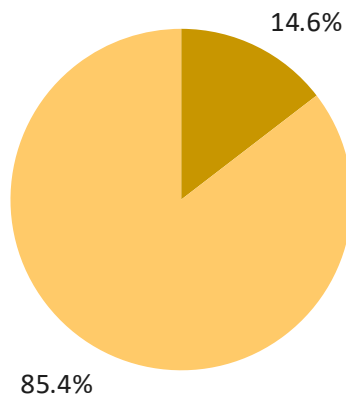
■ Gym for \$50 extra ■ No gym



Most students (59%) would skip a building gym to save \$50 on monthly rent, likely because campus gyms are already included or heavily discounted in tuition. International students show the most interest at 47%, suggesting convenience and proximity matter more when navigating an unfamiliar city.

Would you rather pay \$50 more per month to have a games room in your building, or save the \$50 and lose the gym?

■ Games room for \$50 extra ■ No games room



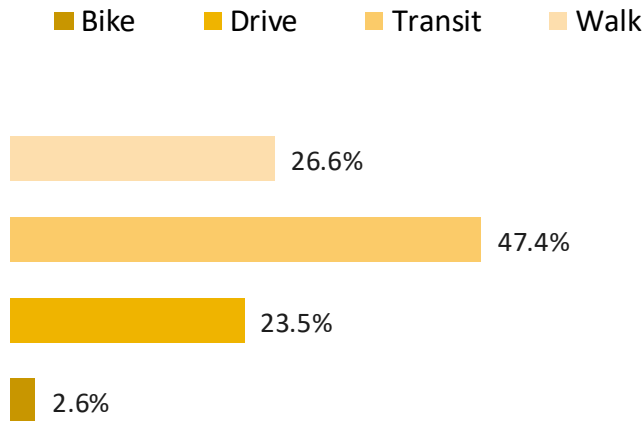
Games rooms rank as the least valued building amenity, with 85% of students preferring to save \$50. At the same price point, a gym attracts nearly three times more interest. International students show the most interest (19%), but the sentiment is clear that games rooms and other less functional amenities are not needed, if builders can leverage the extra space to build more units and lower the overall rent.



Transportation

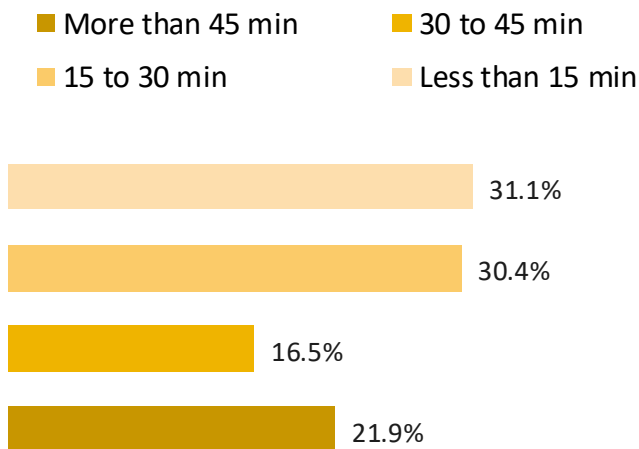
Transportation.

How do you commute to school?



Only students that live off-campus answered this question. For them, public transit leads, followed by walking and driving. Commute method is tied to living situation more than preference. 35% of domestic locals drive because they commute from family homes. At the same time, international students rarely drive (8%) and domestic mobile students walk most (38%) because they live closest to campus.

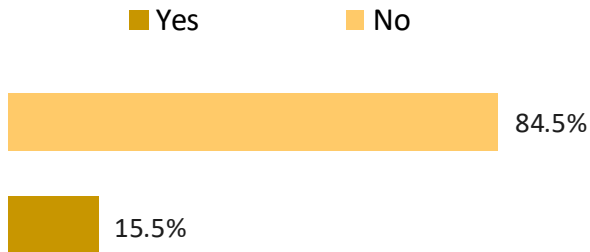
How long is your commute to school?



62% of students commute under 30 minutes, but this varies drastically by living situation. Students living independently cluster under 15 minutes (48%), while those in family homes accept 45+ minute commutes (44%), trading proximity to campus for the financial benefits of staying home.

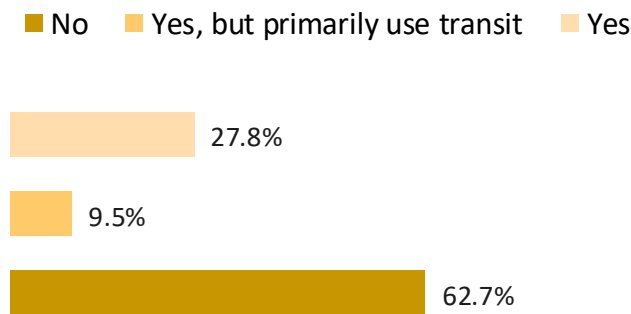
Transportation.

Do you own a bike and use it during the school term?



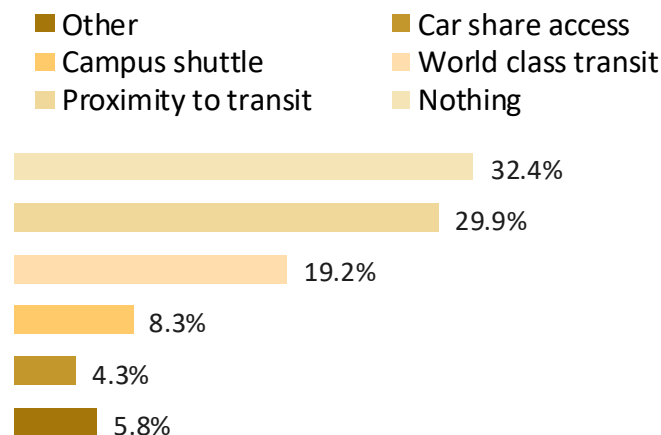
Only 16% of students own and regularly use a bike. Victoria stands out, with a high of 35%, likely due to bike-friendly infrastructure and mild climate, while most other cities hover between 10 and 20%.

Do you currently own a car?



Only 28% of students own and use a car, while 9% own but primarily use transit. Car ownership reflects city infrastructure more than preference. 59% of Kelowna students own cars, while Vancouver ownership sits at just 13%, mirroring each city's transit infrastructure.

What would incentivize you to completely avoid using a car?



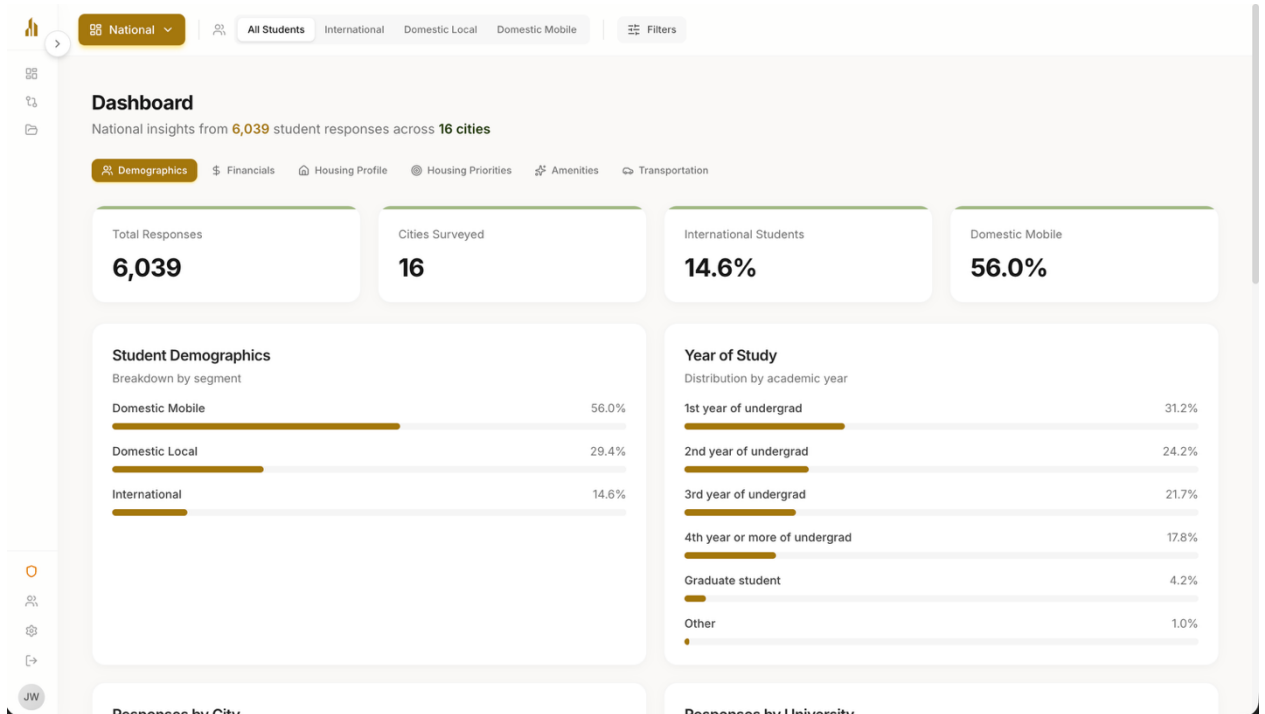
A third of students say that nothing would convince them to avoid car usage. For the rest, proximity to transit and necessities, along with a world-class transit network are the top things that would persuade students to stop driving. Of all car owners, those who already use transit are most open to change. Transit infrastructure makes a difference.

Appendix



Data Access.

State of Canadian Student Living 2026 is the national summary. Unlock the full picture with our interactive dashboard.



All 16 cities and 22 universities from the survey, with the ability to filter insights across every single data point.

[Learn More](#)



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