

Canterbury Private Sector Student Accommodation Survey 2011

Prepared for

University of
Kent

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1.0 Foreword

This is the 2011 Canterbury private sector student accommodation survey undertaken by Jakuta Ltd in conjunction with The University of Kent.

A student's choice of accommodation has a major impact upon their time and experience at university and, after tuition fees, is one of the largest financial outlays a student will make during their time at university.

The world of higher education is at present preparing for one of the most radical transitions in its history due to government decisions to cut funding and allow an increase in student fees. Universities are becoming more competitive to attract high student numbers and the student private rental sector has its part to play in this.

Having previously worked together on a small scale survey in 2010, both Jakuta Ltd and The University of Kent looked to capitalise on this initial information by developing a more extensive, informative and groundbreaking survey in 2011 which would provide an insight into the experience of a student tenant as a whole as well as detail how various factors may influence and affect the market.

Major issues that were focused on were the ways in which students found private accommodation, how aware students were of tenancy deposit and accreditation schemes, what proportion of students have cars, how students finance their rent, how they interact with housemates and local resident neighbours, how the rise in tuition fees may affect the private rental sector and what student satisfaction rates with various aspects of their tenancy were.

To get an accurate overview of the Canterbury student rental market as a whole, a significant number of Canterbury Christ Church students were surveyed in addition to University of Kent students. Additionally, demographic profiling of respondents was undertaken to produce an insight into how issues and factors affect the range of students that Canterbury is home to during term time.

Canterbury City Council figures state that there are 25,353 university students in Canterbury attending one of the city's three universities – The University of Kent, Canterbury Christ Church and the University of the Creative Arts.

Council figures also state that there are 8577 students living in 2350 houses of multiple occupation (HMO's) in Canterbury, creating an average of 3.65 students per household.

Average rent per room (not inclusive of bills) in Canterbury stands at approximately £350 per month, resulting in an average household generating £1228 in rent each month. This

calculation estimates the rent generated by Canterbury's private student rental sector to be approximately £36 million* per annum and a significant contributor to the local economy. With the amount that student tenants spend collectively on groceries, household items and in local businesses throughout the academic year, their overall financial contribution to the local economy is even greater.

The subjects of student housing, student's impact upon the local community and so called 'studentification' are contentious issues which draw many commentators on all sides. This survey was designed to provide a clear, data driven insight into this sector and allow relevant parties such as the University the ability to take proactive measures to not only enhance student welfare and their overall experience in the private rental sector, but to have a positive effect on the market as a whole.

*A number of students sign a 12 month contract which sees them pay half rent over the summer months of July and August. The above calculation does not take this into account.

2.0 Executive Summary

A significant majority of students located their student property directly through a letting agent, with the completion of tenancy agreements peaking in February yet remaining to be signed consistently in other months throughout the year. Social media is starting to make a visible impact upon how students find properties with nearly 5% of students stating that they found their most recent accommodation through Facebook.

Students view an average of between 2 and 3 properties before signing a tenancy agreement; however a significant proportion stated that they viewed more than 5. Poor location was the most cited factor for students not choosing to live in a specific property. The vast majority of students did not feel pressurised into signing an agreement by their landlord or letting agent.

Over one third of students did not pay a refundable deposit for their most recent property, with many landlords now opting to implement a non refundable administration fee. Over half of those students who did pay a deposit were either not informed of any tenancy deposit scheme or were unsure if they had been made aware of one. The highest percentage of students paying a non refundable administration fee paid between £100 - £149.

Nearly half of all students surveyed cited a landlord as the person in charge of maintaining their property on a daily basis, with a letting agent accounting for over 40%. Students suggest that the majority of their households consist of between 4 to 5 occupants.

The highest percentage of contract lengths are for a 10 months full and 2 months half rent paid over the summer months of July and August. 80% of students were asked to provide a UK homeowner as a guarantor and nearly 70% of students were charged rent in advance.

The accreditation scheme continues to have a low profile amongst students with 65.5% stating that they did not know whether their property was accredited under the Canterbury Student Housing Accreditation scheme. 52.7% of those students who stated that their property was accredited, cited the landlord or agent being part of the accreditation scheme as 'fairly important' or 'very important' in their decision to rent the property.

One third of students were not made aware of the rubbish collection and recycling arrangements by their landlord upon moving into a property. A further third of all students surveyed suggested they regularly keep a car at their accommodation with approximately 10% suggesting they keep a car at their accommodation on an occasional basis.

Over 1 in 5 students state that they have had a dispute with a local resident or non student neighbour at some point whilst living in off campus accommodation with noise ranking as by far the highest reason for this.

Just under 60% of students state that they finance their rent from their student loan, with just under 35% stating their rent is paid by a parent or relative. A significant proportion of students – over 30% - state that they have at some point fallen into financial difficulty whilst paying their rent, however the majority of students whom this affected stated that their landlord or agent was understanding about this.

Just under a quarter of all students surveyed stated that whilst living in off campus accommodation they had at some point had a disagreement with a housemate or housemates which had made them consider moving before the end of their contract. Only 45% of those who this applied to chose to seek advice on this, with parents or relatives being the most likely person a student would consult with.

Non European and European students pay significantly higher non refundable administration fees and are more likely to pay rent in advance than UK students.

Nearly 40% of students stated that the rise in tuition fees would make them less likely to go to university if they were applying now, with nearly the same amount saying they would be less likely to live in the private rental sector once the increase in tuition fees comes into effect.

Students in general remain 'fairly satisfied' with all aspects of their tenancy on which they were surveyed, including the quality of accommodation, the general condition of the property, the neighbourhood as a place to live, the value for money for rent and the service provided by the landlord or letting agent.

3.0 Methods

Jakuta Ltd worked with the University of Kent to develop a quantitative survey, designed to take no more than ten minutes for a respondent to complete.

A partnership with one of Canterbury's leading student nightclubs – Chill - was developed to offer students the incentives of (A) entrance into a prize draw to be one of three winners to win a private booth and night of VIP treatment at Chill and (B) an instant ticket or code for discount entry to Chill on completion of the survey.

Jakuta used both online and offline methods to retrieve surveys which included:

- Email shots to students via the university
- Facebook adverts directing students to the online survey
- A pop-up displayed on the Jakuta owned StudentTenant.com directing students to the online survey
- Face to face surveys taken at Chill nightclub
- Face to face surveys taken at Christ Church students' union
- The distribution of 2000 flyers promoting awareness of the survey around the CT2 postcode area and University of Kent campus

4.0 Results

4.1 Demographics

506 Canterbury students were surveyed falling into the following demographics:

Gender

Male: **45.6%**

Female: **54.4%**

Student Status

Home (UK): **84.5%**

European: **10.3%**

Non European: **5.2%**

Age Range

18-20: **56.7%**

21-24: **37.7%**

25-29: **4.4%**

30+: **1.2%**

Year:

Foundation: **1.2%**

1st Year: **23.8%**

2nd Year: **36.5%**

3rd Year: **31.3%**

4th Year: **0.8%**

Post Graduate: **6.3%**

University:

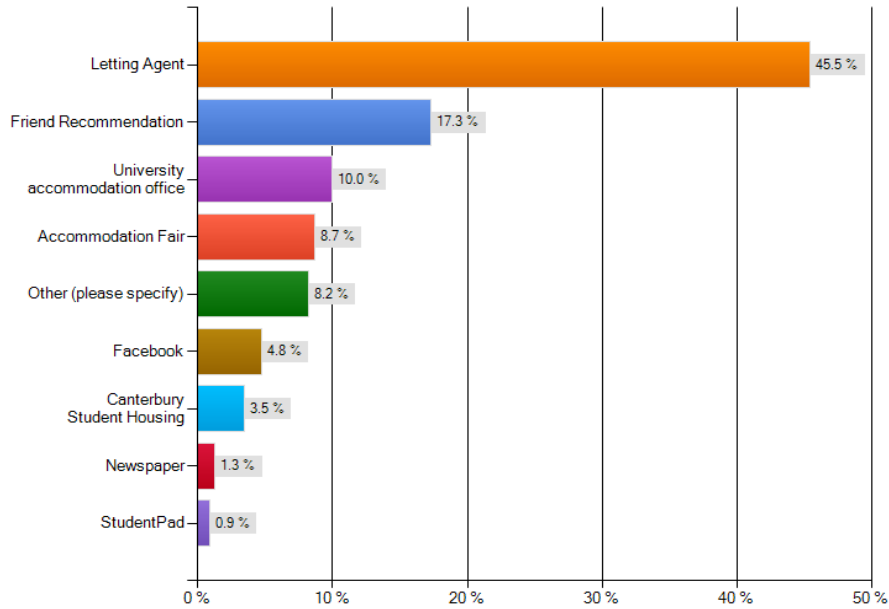
University of Kent: **66.3%**

Canterbury Christ Church: **32.1%**

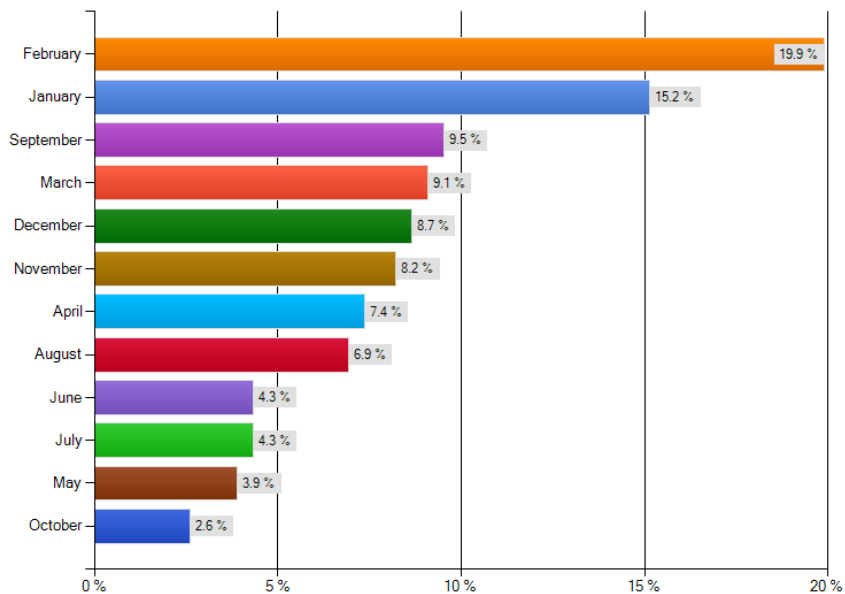
University of the Creative Arts: **1.6%**

4.2 Looking for Accommodation

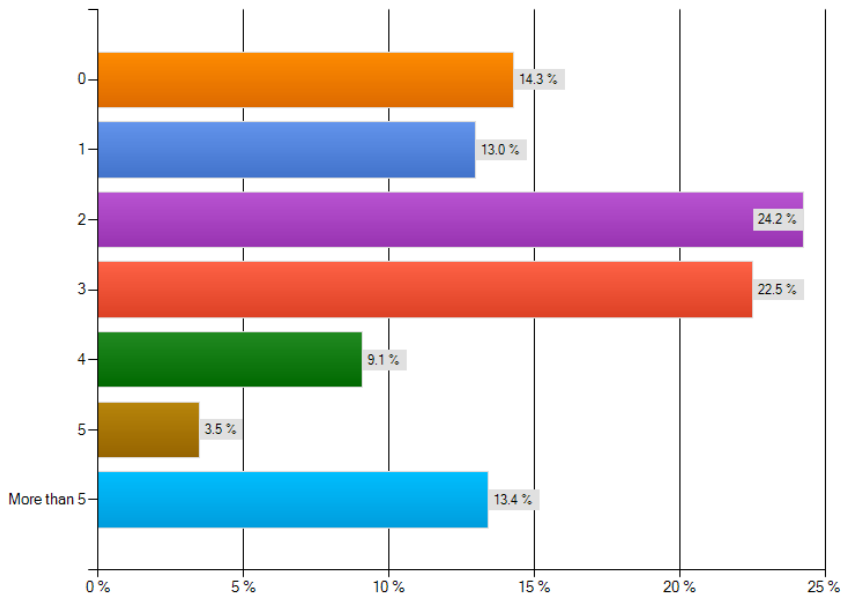
How did you find your most recent student accommodation?



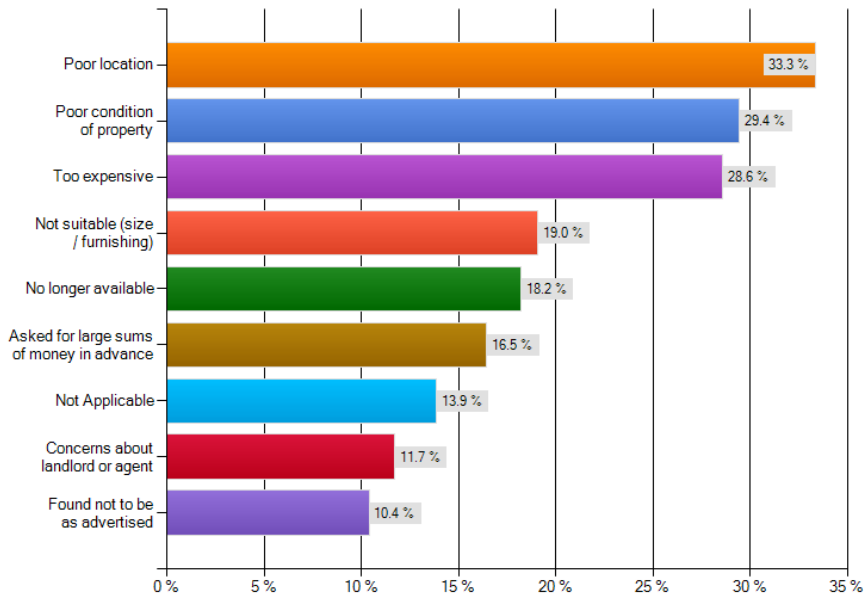
When did you sign your tenancy agreement



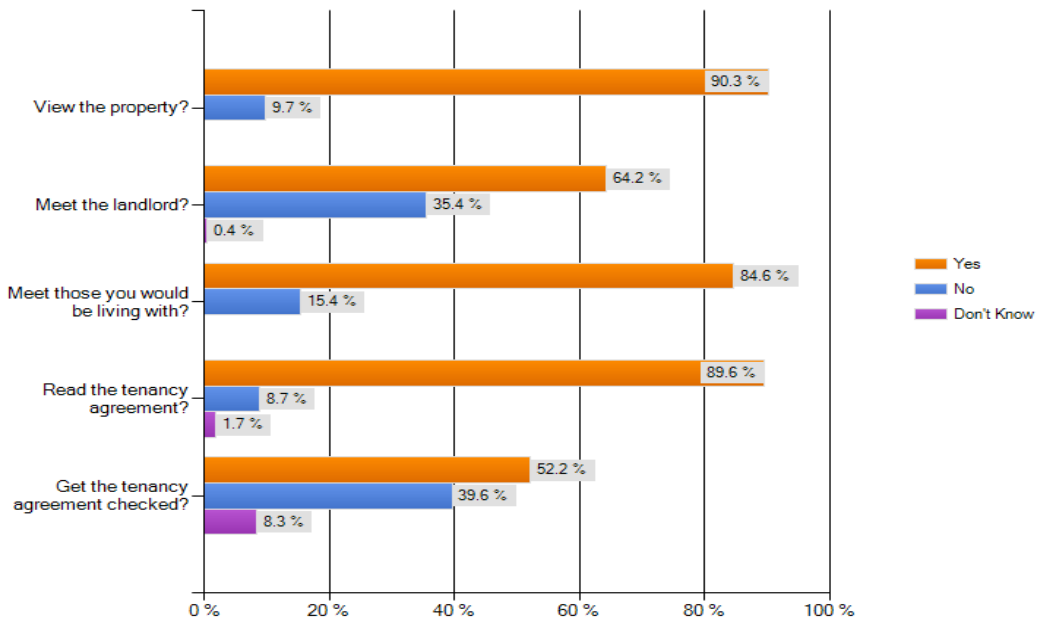
How many properties did you view before signing one?



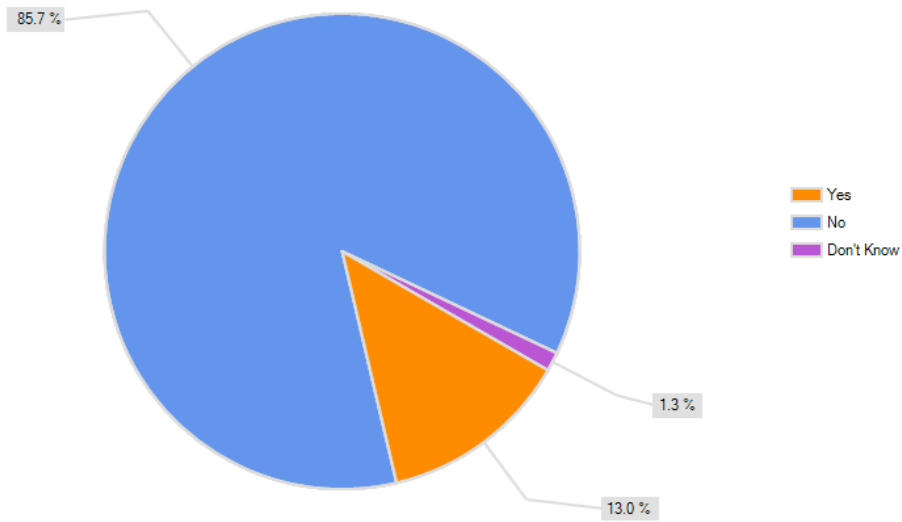
If you considered properties other than the one you eventually chose, what were your reasons for this? Please tick all that apply.



Before signing the tenancy agreement did you:

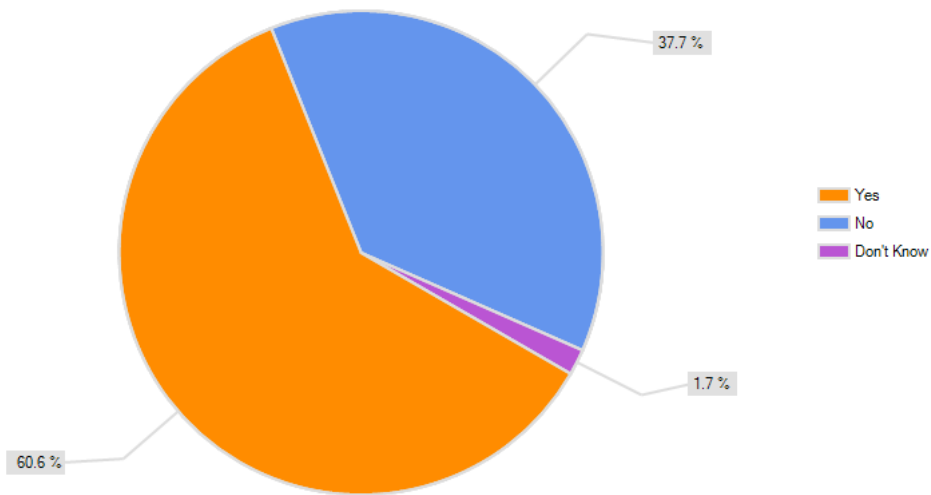


Did you receive any pressure from the landlord / agent to sign?

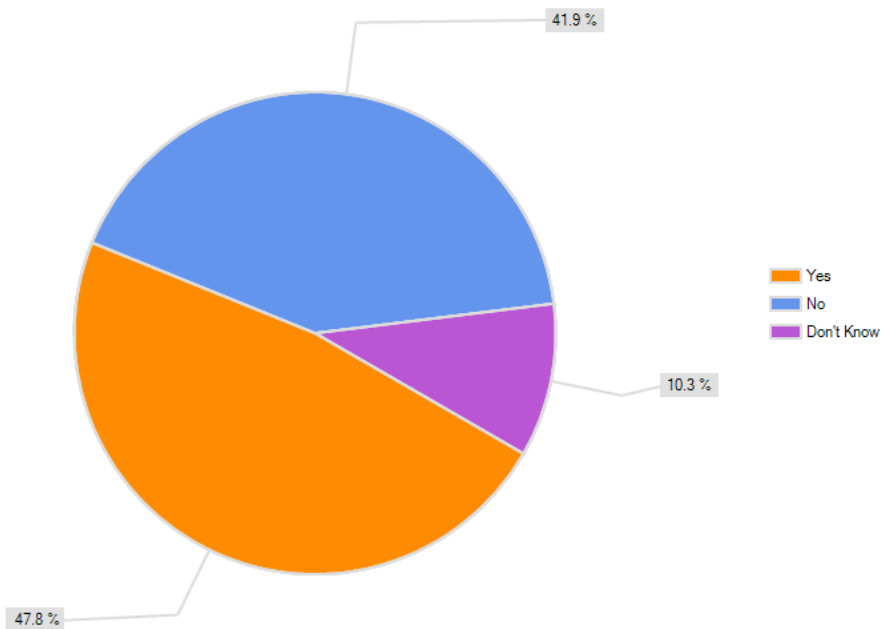


4.3 Deposit and Administration fees

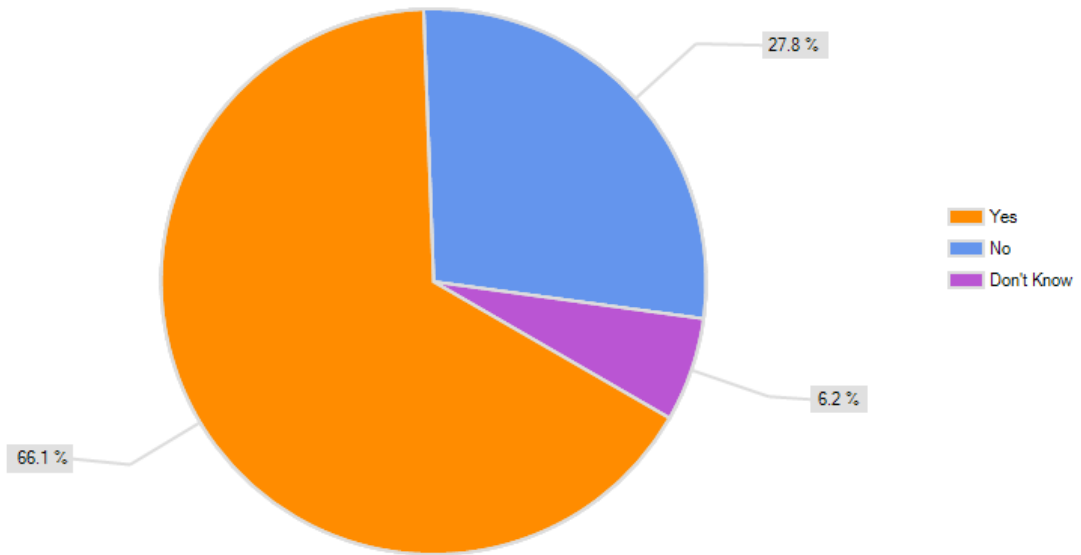
Did you pay a refundable deposit?



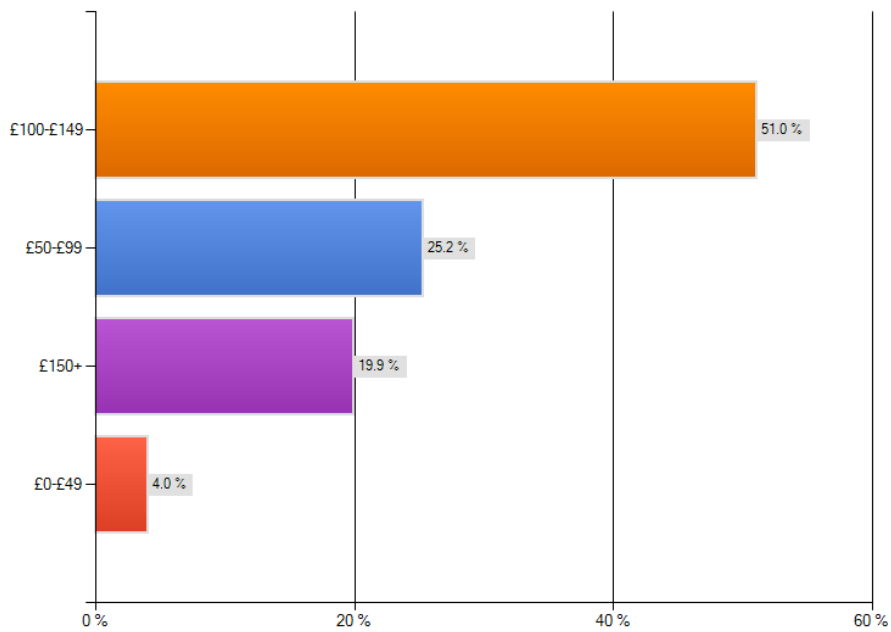
Were you made aware of any tenancy deposit scheme?



Did you pay a non refundable admin fee?

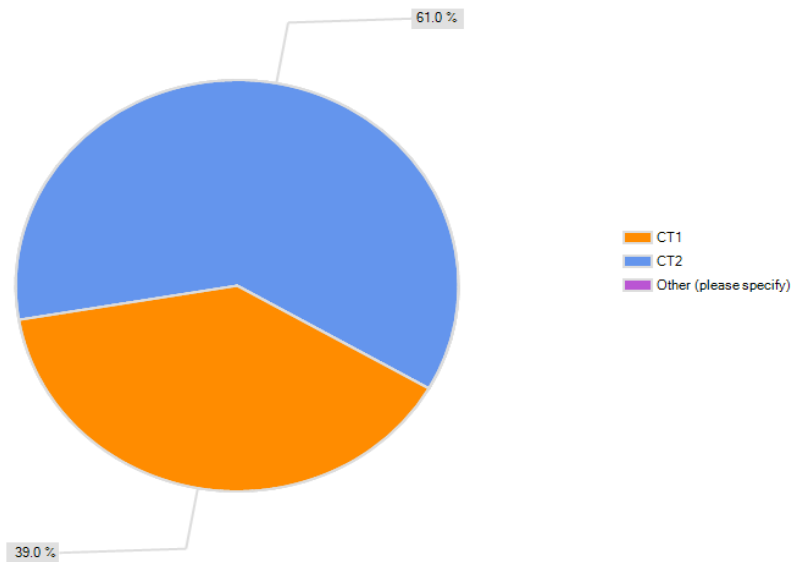


How much per person?

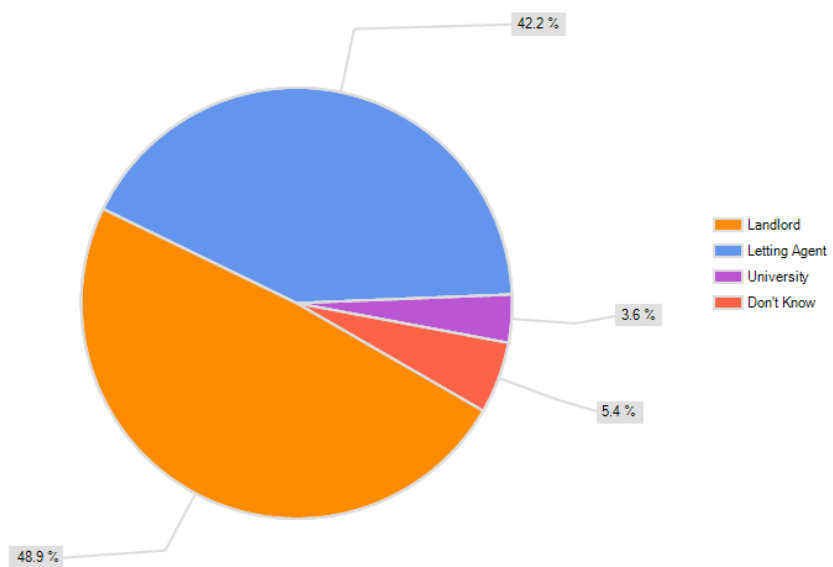


4.4 Your Tenancy

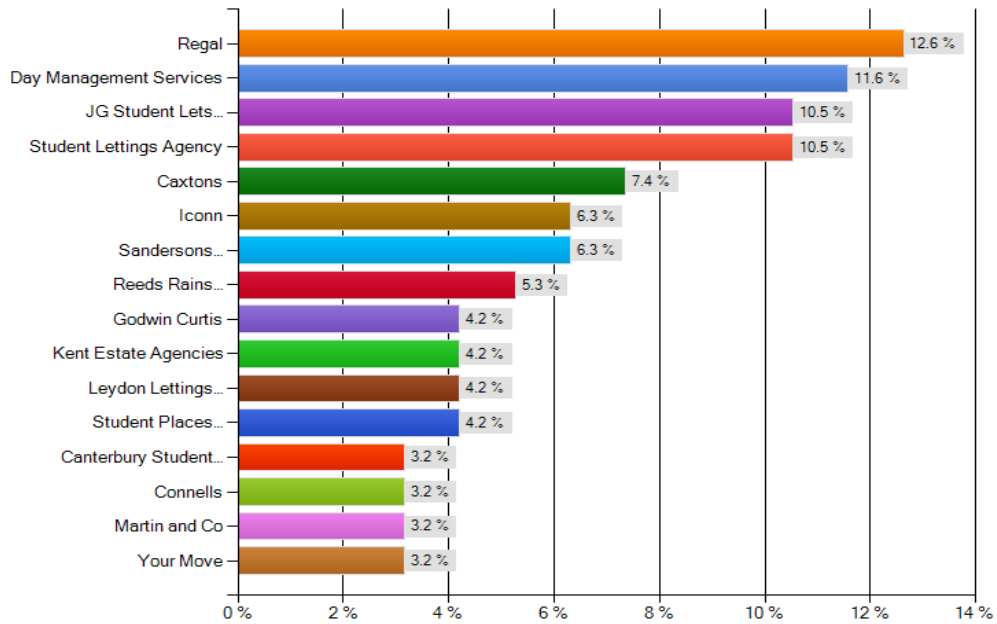
Which postcode area do you live in?



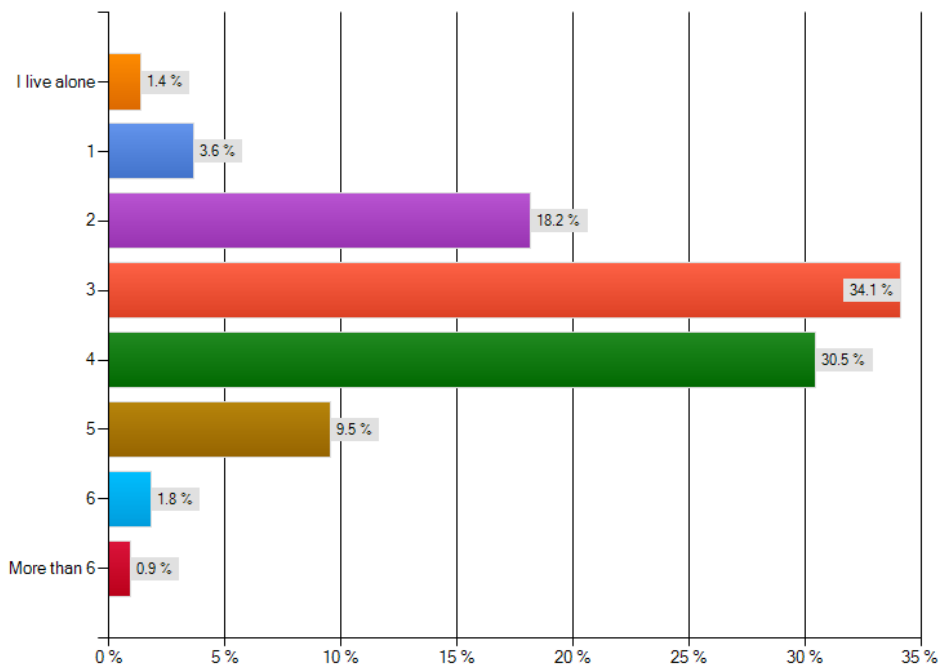
Who manages your property on a day to day basis (dealing with repairs and complaints etc)



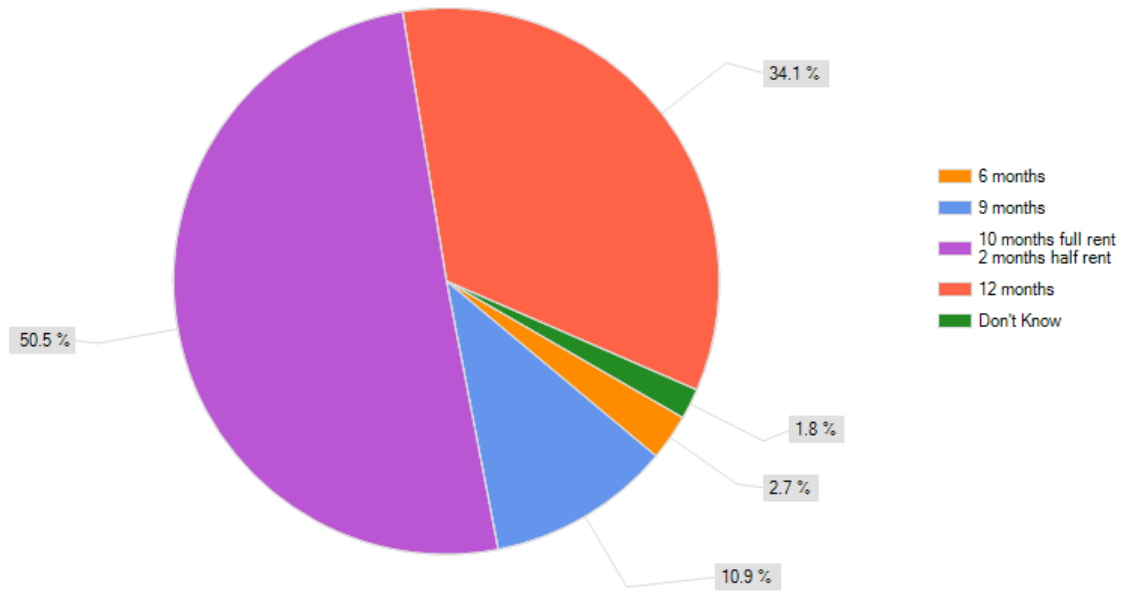
Which letting agent?



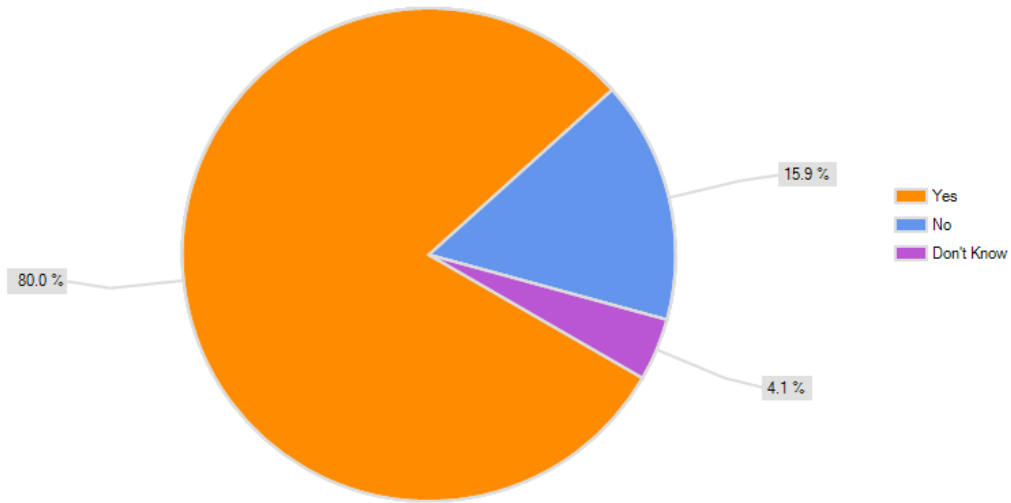
How many people do you live with?



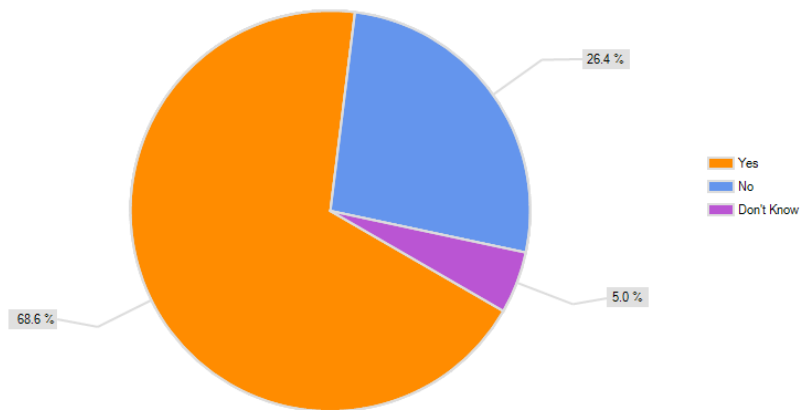
How long was your contract?



Were you asked to provide a UK based home owner as guarantor?

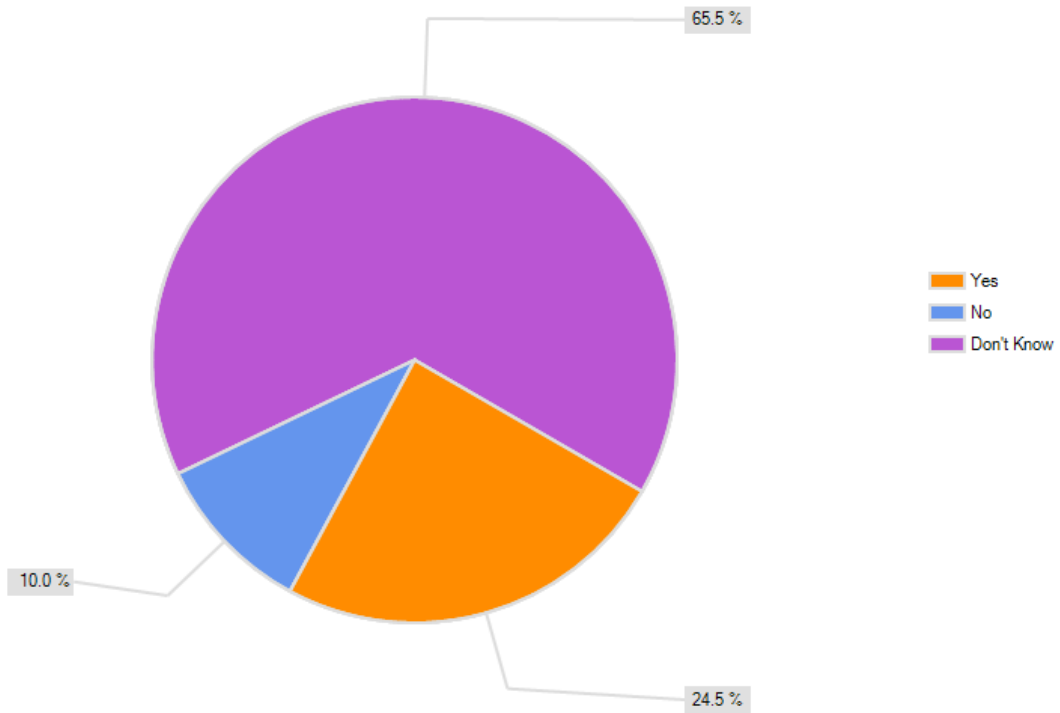


Were you charged rent in advance?

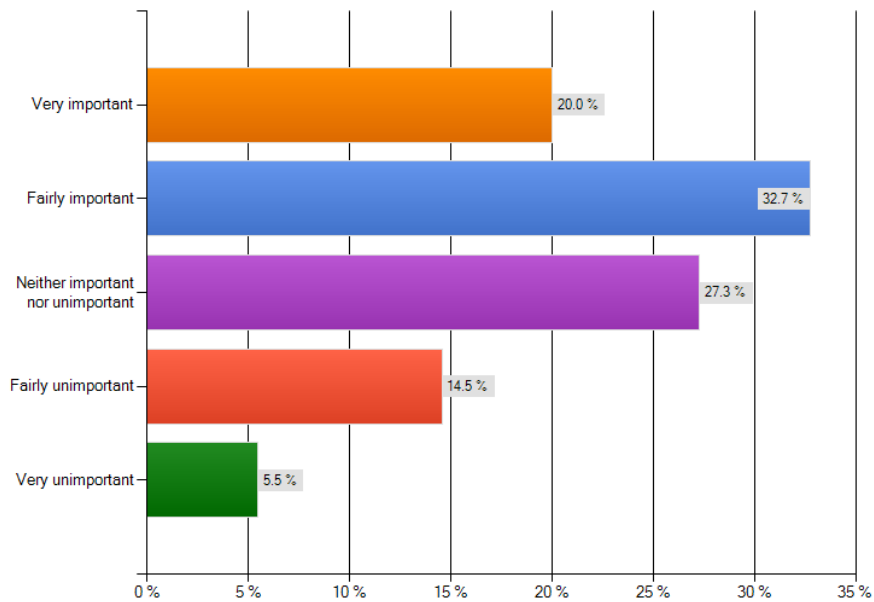


Students who answered yes were asked how much rent they were charged in advance. The average came out at **£574**, with a range of **£80 to £8000**.

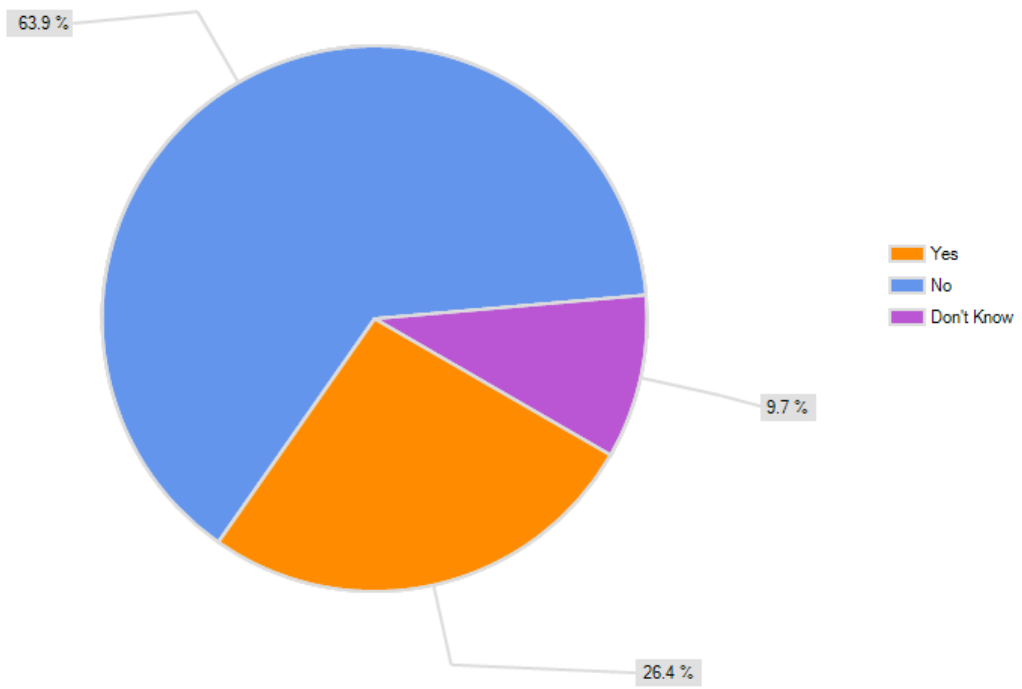
Is your property accredited under the Canterbury Student Housing accreditation scheme?



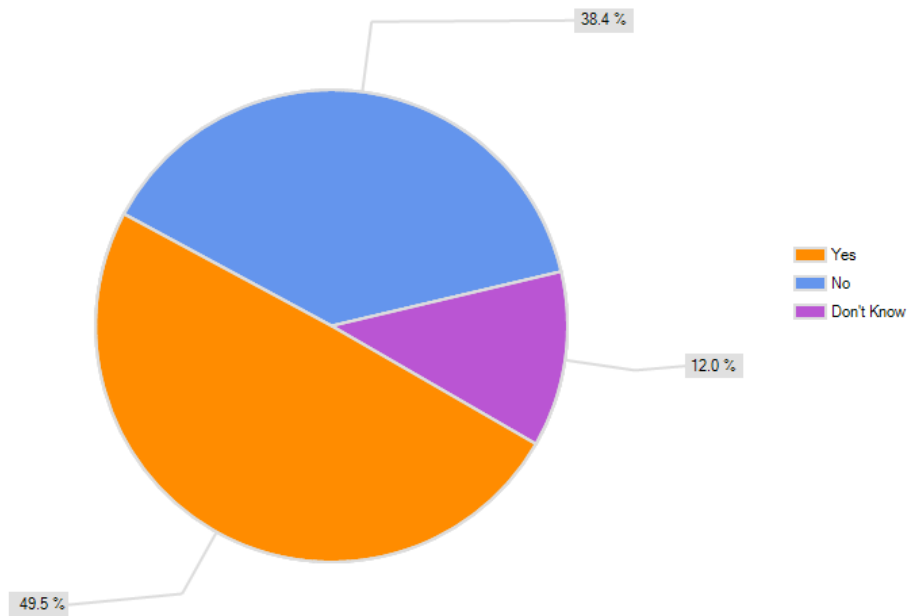
How important was the fact your property is accredited in your decision to rent the property?



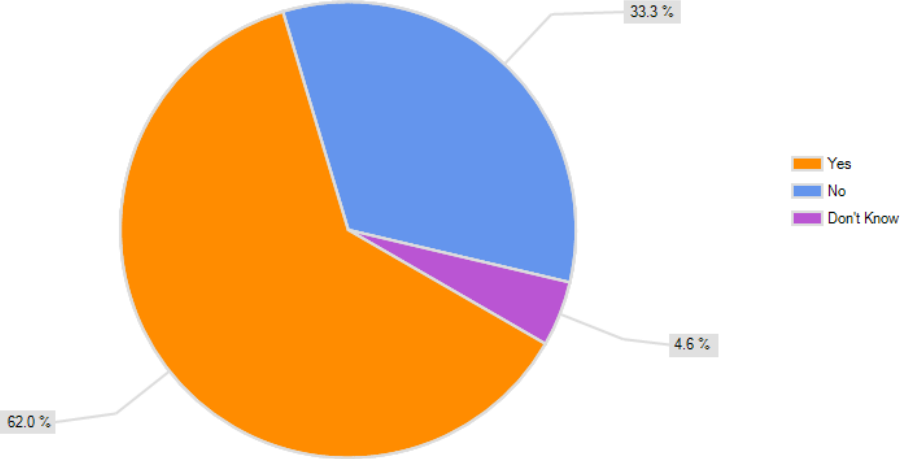
Did your landlord or agent provide a cleaning service?



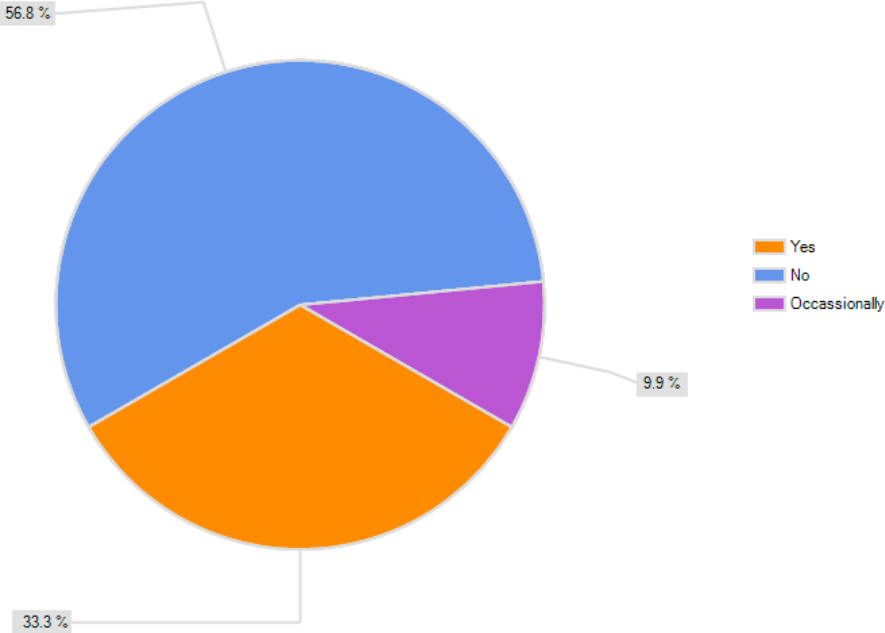
Did your landlord or agent keep the garden and exterior of the property tidy?



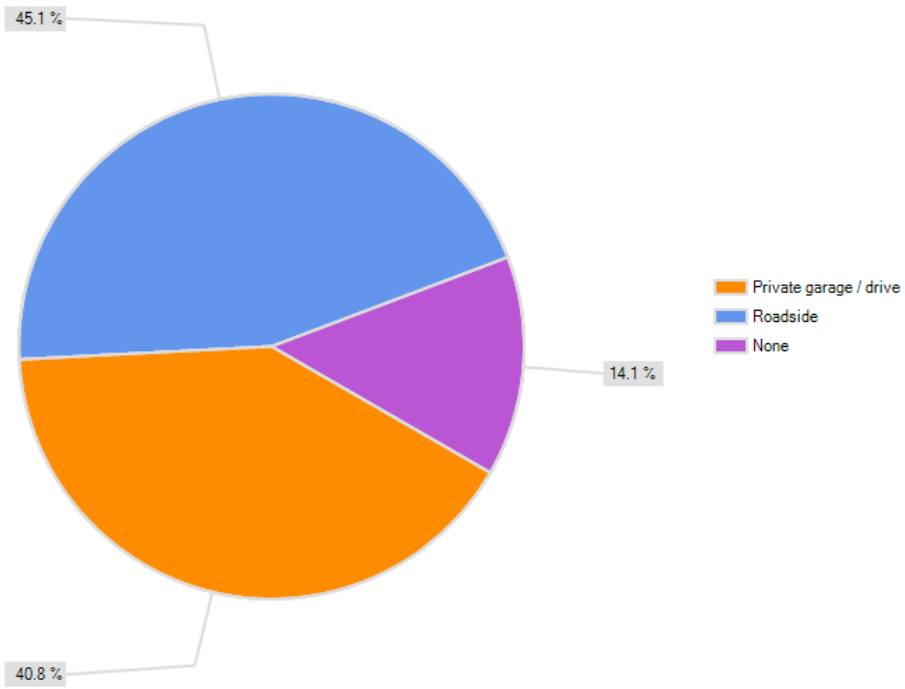
Were you informed by your landlord or agent of the rubbish collection and recycling arrangements upon moving into your property?



Do you keep a car at your accommodation?

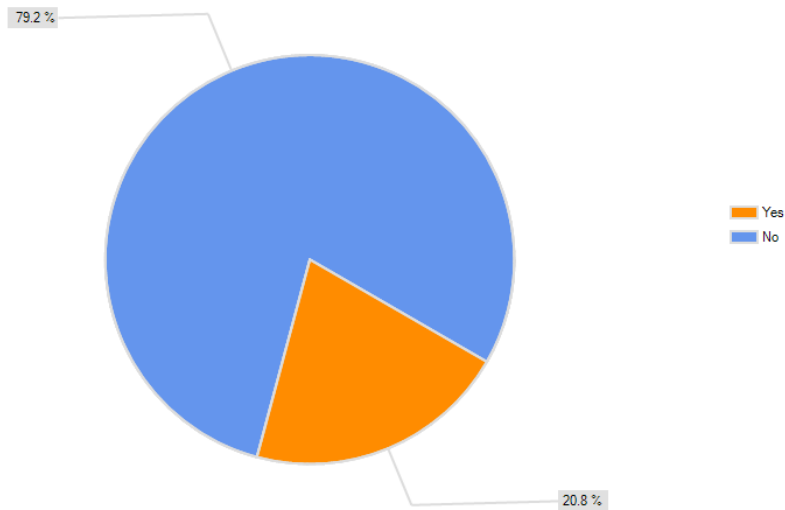


What parking is available at your property?

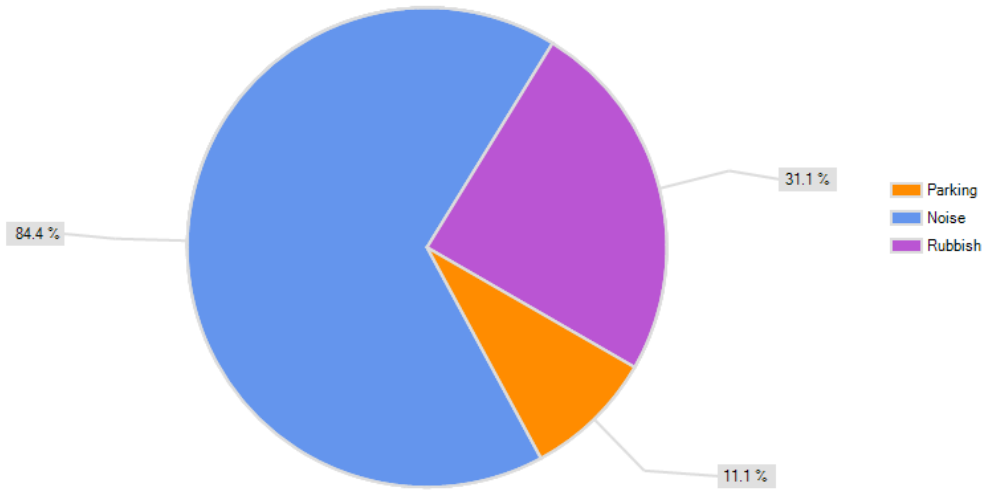


4.5 Student Relationships

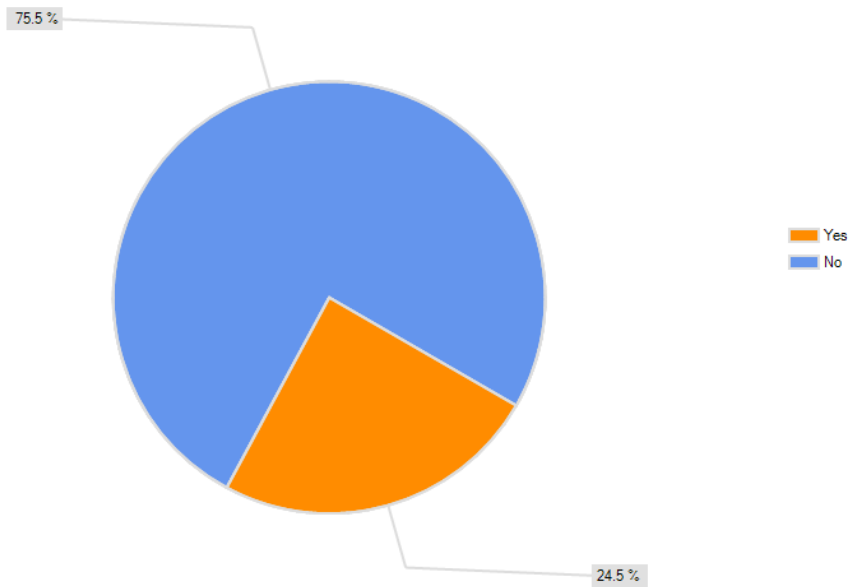
Whilst living in off campus student accommodation, have you ever had a dispute with a non student or local resident neighbour?



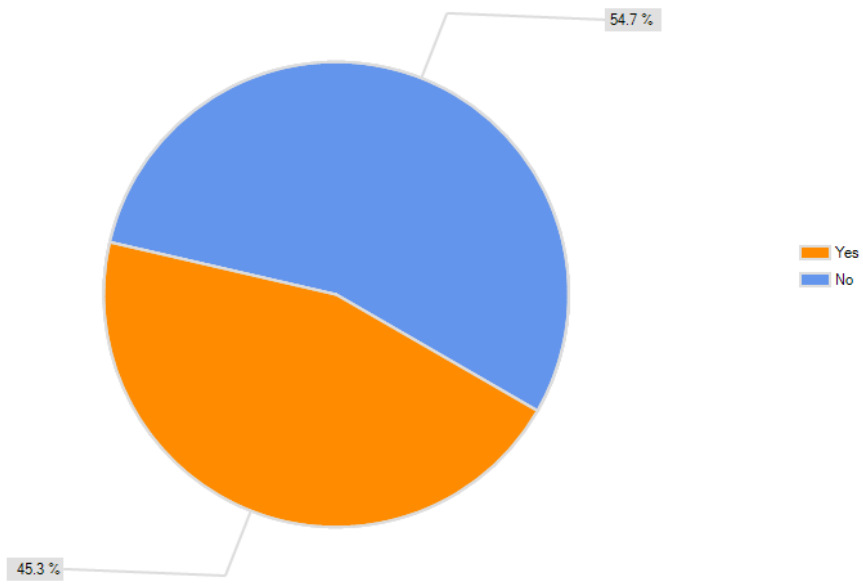
Was this dispute about: (please tick all that apply)



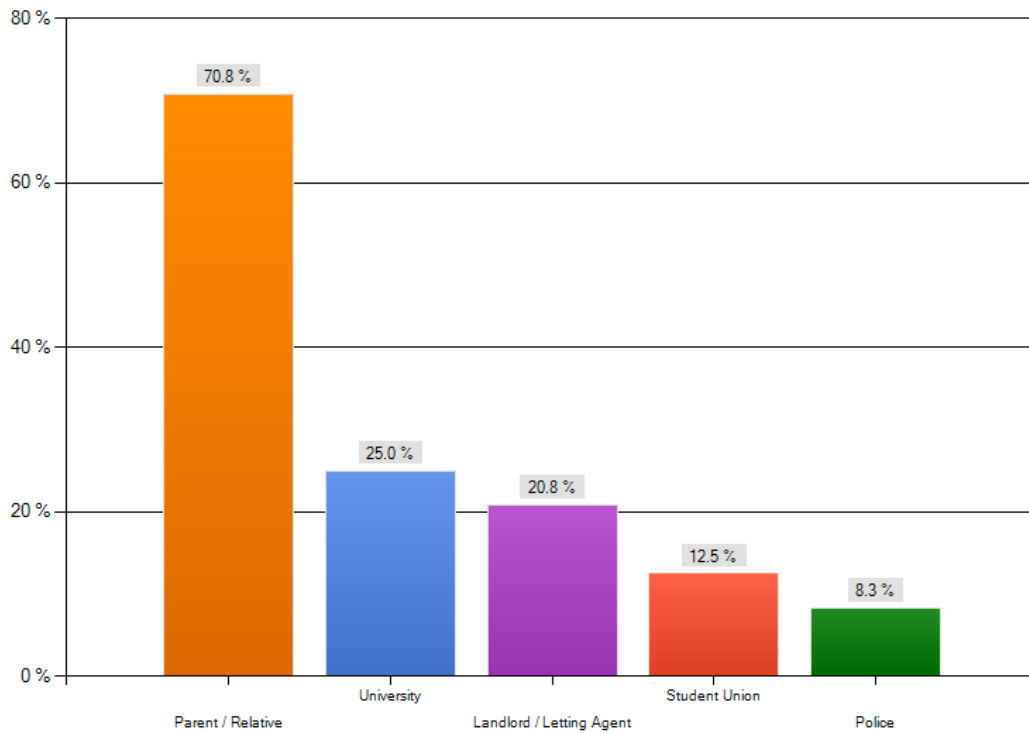
Whilst living in off campus accommodation, have you ever had a dispute with a house mate or house mates which has made you consider moving before the end of your contract?



Did you seek any advice on this?

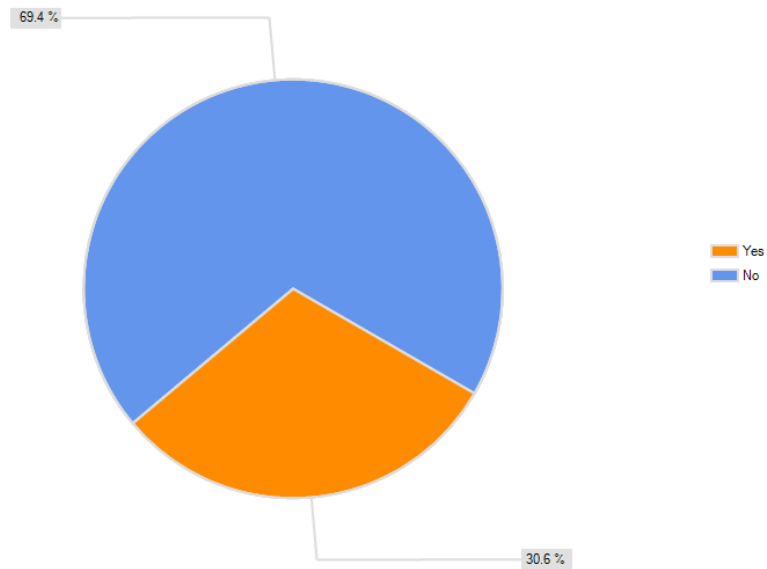


From where or who? Tick all that apply.

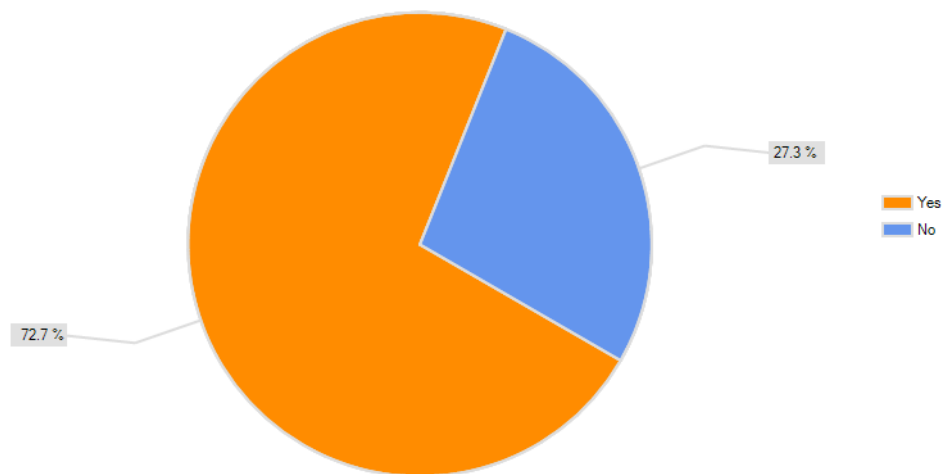


4.6 Financing Rent

Have you ever run into financial difficulty whilst paying your rent?

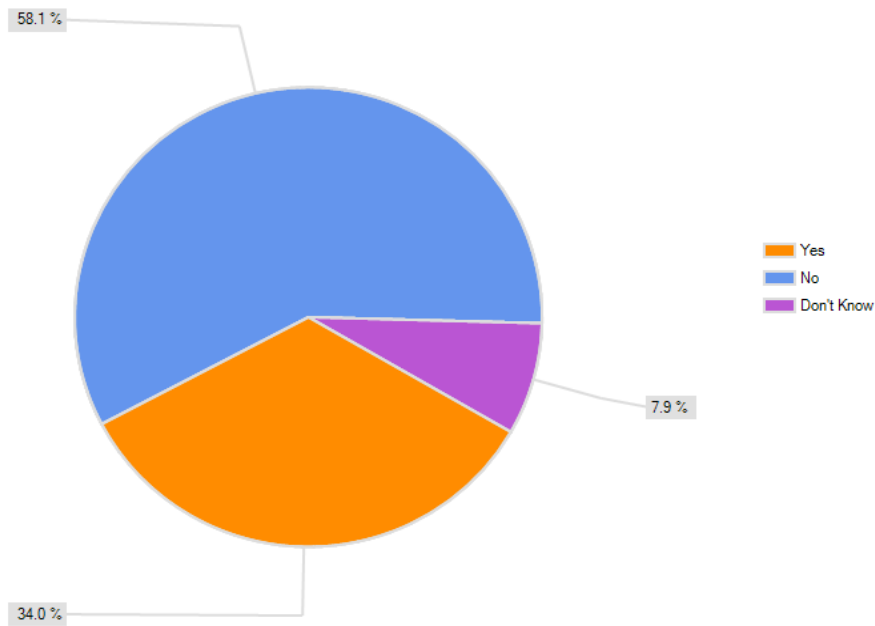


Was your landlord / agent understanding about this?

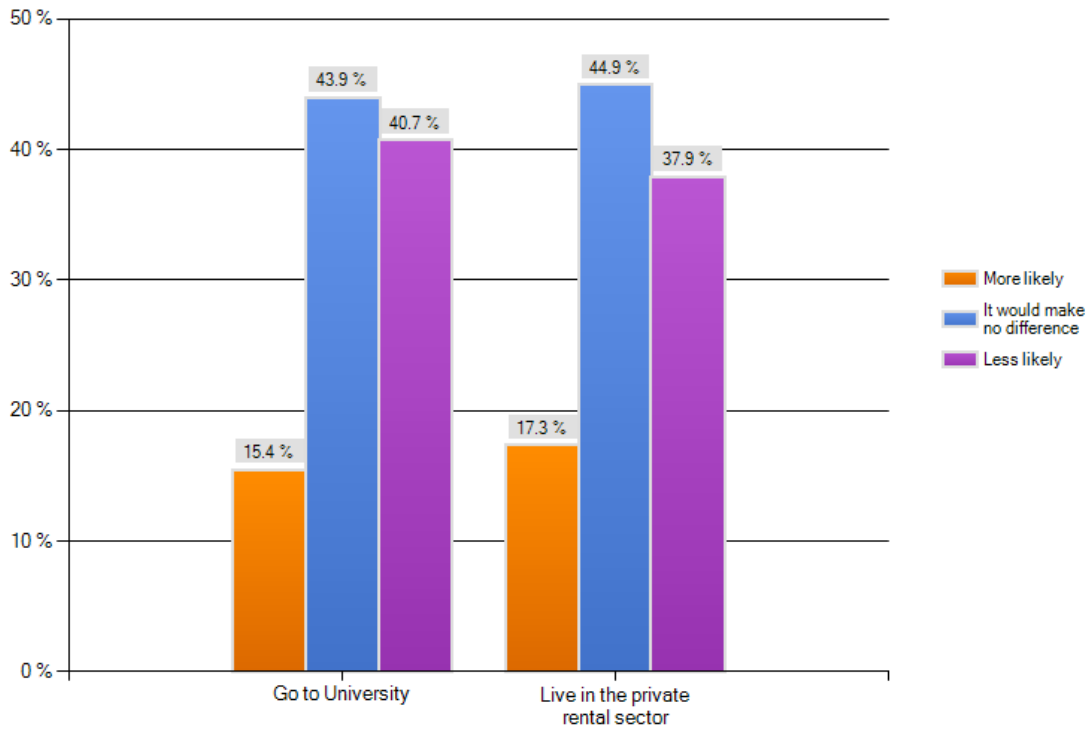


4.7 The University and Fees

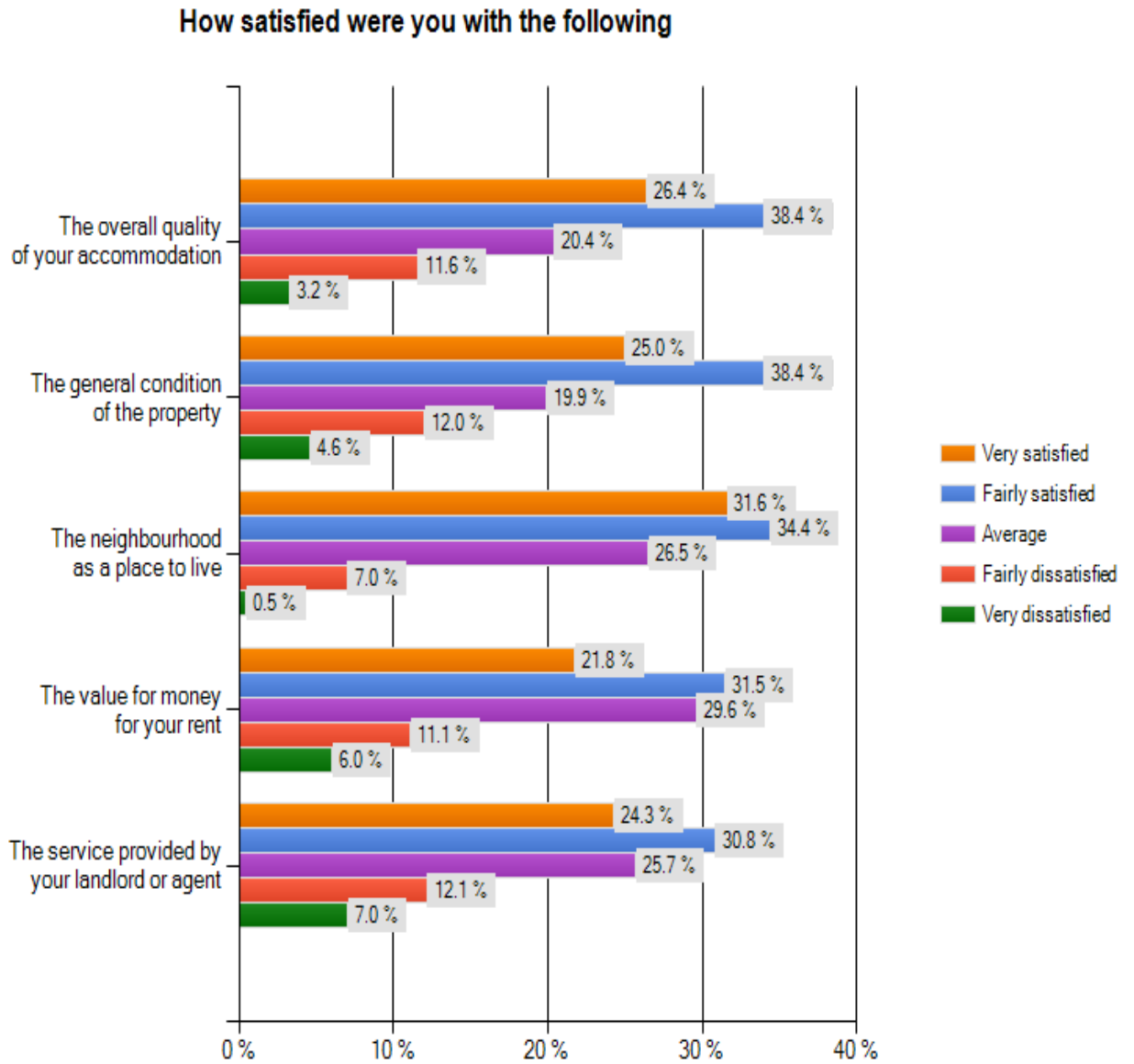
Do you feel that the university gave you enough information about moving into the private rental sector before you moved into your property?



You may have heard that from 2012 university tuition fees are rising from approximately £3000 per year to approximately £9000 per year. Would this have any effect on your decision to:



4.8 Student Satisfaction Levels



5.0 Cross Tabulation and Comparisons

5.1 Student Status Comparisons

45% of Non EU students viewed no other properties before moving into their current dwelling as opposed to just **12.6%** of UK students and **13.6%** of EU students.

59.1% of EU students and **54.5%** of Non EU students stated 'too expensive' as the main reason they did not choose to live in a property they looked at. Only **23.7%** of UK students said being 'too expensive' was a factor.

90.9% of EU students and **90.9%** of Non EU students paid a refundable deposit in comparison to just **55.6%** of UK students.

66.7% of Non EU students paid a non refundable admin fee of over £150. Just **16.7%** of UK students stated they paid this much with **30.8%** of EU students saying they paid over £150.

75% of Non EU students had a contract for 12 months in comparison to **31.6%** of UK students.

62.5% of Non EU students did not provide a UK homeowner as guarantor as opposed to just **11.1%** of UK students who did not provide this.

87.5% of Non EU students paid rent in advance, **90.9%** of EU students paid rent in advance and **65.3%** of UK students paid rent in advance.

23.8% of UK students were 'very satisfied' with the service provided by their landlord or agent, **28.6%** of EU students were 'very satisfied' with this service, as were **25%** of Non EU students.

81% of EU students have their rent paid by their parent or relatives, **87.5%** of Non EU students have their rent paid by a parent or relative, in comparison to just **27.3%** of UK students. No Non EU students surveyed had ever run into financial difficulty whilst paying rent, however **30.5%** of UK students had, as had **42.9%** of EU students.

43% of UK students state they would be less likely to go to university with the rise in tuition fees as opposed to **30%** of EU students and just **12.5%** of Non EU students. **38.7%** of UK students state they would be less likely to live in the private rental sector with the rise in tuition fees, as would **38.1%** of EU students and **14.3%** of Non EU students.

5.2 Male vs Female

9.4% of males viewed over 5 properties when searching for a student house as opposed to **16.8%** of females who viewed more than 5 properties.

Poor location was the major factor for males when choosing a property with **37.7%** of males saying they decided against renting a property because of this reason as opposed to **29.6%** of females. Poor condition of the property was the major reason why female students declined to rent a property they had viewed with **32.8%** stating this as a reason in comparison to **25.5%** of males.

26% of males stated that their property was accredited under the Canterbury student housing accreditation scheme, as did **23.3%** of females. **27.6%** of female students who stated that their property was accredited said that this was a 'very important' factor in choosing the property as opposed to just **11.5%** of males.

28.1% of male students stated that they did keep a car at their accommodation in comparison to **37.6%** of females.

26.3% of male students state that they have had a dispute with a local resident neighbour as opposed to **16.2%** of females.

24.2% of males state that they have run into financial difficulty whilst paying their rent in comparison to **35.9%** of females.

16.2% of males state that they have had a dispute with a housemate or housemates which has made them consider moving before the end of their contract as opposed to **31.6%** of females.

38.4% of males state that the rise in tuition fees would make them less likely to go to university whereas **42.6%** of females state that this would make them less likely to go. **35.7%** of males state that the rise in tuition fees would make them less likely to live in the private rental sector whilst at university, in comparison to **39.7%** of females.

5.3 University year comparisons

34.9% of 1st years stated that they kept a car at university, compared to **28.4%** of 2nd years and **36.0%** of 3rd years.

10.4% of 1st years, **9.2%** of 2nd years and **9.0%** of 3rd years found their accommodation from the university accommodation office.

47.9% of 1st years, **43.7%** of 2nd years and **46.2%** of 3rd years found their accommodation directly via a letting agent.

11.6% of 1st years state they have had a dispute with a local resident neighbour, as opposed to **23.2%** of 2nd years and **20.8%** of 3rd years.

23.3% of 1st years responded that they have fallen into financial difficulty whilst paying their rent, compared with **32.9%** of 2nd years and **31.2%** of 3rd years.

5.4 Financing Rent

18.7% of students whose parents or relatives pay for their rent have fallen into financial difficulty whilst paying it as opposed to **35.7%** of students who pay for their rent from their student loan. Students who work part time to help pay their rent are the most likely to experience financial problems with paying rent with **46.7%** stating that they have fallen into financial difficulty at some point.

6.0 Suggestions

- A significant majority of students find their property direct through a letting agent. The University needs to offer students a valid reason or incentive for students to find a property from university sources if this is to change.
- 13.4% of students are viewing more than 5 properties before deciding upon one. Students could be advised to think about and request information about factors of influence before arranging a viewing. Poor location is the major factor why students do not choose a property. If students are made aware of local area information such as the distance from town / universities / amenities etc, it may well cut down unnecessary viewings.
- Only 52.2% of students had their tenancy agreement checked. The University could produce an annotated tenancy agreement giving a clear explanation of legal terms, highlighting criteria that should definitely be included and the type of terminology students should be cautious of in a contract.
- Students who pay a deposit should have more information about tenancy deposit schemes as only 47.8% stated that they had been made aware of a scheme.
- The lack of student awareness about the accreditation scheme is an issue, as is the fact that only just over half of the amount of students whose properties are accredited cited it as a 'fairly important' or 'very important' factor in their decision to rent the property. Students need to see tangible and logical reasons for choosing an accredited property if the scheme is to have real value.
- 33.3% of students claim they were not made aware of the rubbish collection and recycling arrangements when moving into the property. A campaign to the students and to landlords and agents could be run at the start of the academic year to ensure they are made aware of this information.
- 1 in 5 students have had a dispute with a local resident / non student neighbour whilst living in off campus accommodation, with a significant majority of these disputes being about noise. The University could create an awareness video distributed to students via email and Facebook, promoting good relationships with local residents and getting them to empathise with the effects late night student noise can have.
- Almost a quarter of students have had a dispute with a housemate or housemates which has made them consider moving mid contract, however over half of these students chose not to seek any advice on this. 1st year students are finding properties as early as November and choosing housemates they may only have known for less than 2 months. Students should be made aware that disputes

between housemates can happen and to think carefully about who they choose to move in with at an early stage.

- A dispute resolution service could be created to assist students who are having difficulty with housemates. Parents / relatives should also be made aware of this as it is where most students who are experiencing difficulties turn for advice.
- A list of students wanting to swap houses could be created, facilitating the movement of those whose disputes cannot be settled through a resolution service. Information on student's lifestyle habits and preference of housemates could be taken to help relocate them to a household they are more comfortable in.
- Over 30% of students have fallen into financial difficulty whilst paying their rent. More information and advice is needed in this area. The University could give advice to students about how and when to pay rent, especially if students are paying rent out of their student loans or are working part time to pay for it, as these groups are more likely to experience financial difficulty than those students whose parents or relatives pay for their rent. The University could also liaise with landlords and letting agents to ensure that their rent collections are as synchronised with the student loan installments as possible.
- There is a measured difference in Non EU and EU student financial requirements in comparison to those of UK students, with higher admin fees being payable and a significantly higher percentage paying refundable deposits, presumably as landlords and agents are wary of not having a UK based guarantor for the student as a safety mechanism should the student default on their rent. The data shows however that Non EU students are significantly less likely to fall into financial difficulty with rent than UK students. Landlords and agents could be made aware of this and issued with equality guidelines from the University.
- No significant data was retrieved from this survey about the return of student deposits due to the fact that the vast majority of all students surveyed had not moved out of their property and had therefore not gone through this process yet. A further survey could be run at the end of the academic year to retrieve data from this area.

7.0 Conclusions

Satisfaction levels of students in general and within varying demographics are, in the main, at a satisfactory level or above, with only a minority of students claiming they were 'fairly dissatisfied' or 'very dissatisfied' with any aspect of their tenancy. The survey has highlighted various aspects which need to be addressed such as greater student awareness about rubbish collection and recycling arrangements, tenancy deposit schemes and getting tenancy agreements checked.

The survey has raised a number of issues about the University's role in the private accommodation sector. With the majority of students finding their property directly from a letting agent and being unaware of the student accreditation scheme, the University can look to exert a greater influence over the sector by utilising the direct contact it has with its students and providing them with greater information about specific landlords, agents and local areas.

The other main factors this survey has highlighted are the necessity for greater advice and awareness to be created about issues such as student relationships with local residents, with their housemates and with more practical aspects of living in off campus accommodation such as financing their rent.

Significant numbers of students have stated that the rise in tuition fees would have had an effect on their decisions to both go to university and to live in the private rented sector. Whilst current students may be in a position to state they would be less likely to go to university and live in the private rental sector as a comment on their distaste for the rise in tuition fees, it must be recognised that the rise in fees could have a significant impact upon the private rental sector as more students opt to live at home and commute to the nearest university in order to save expense and manage debt.

If considerable numbers of students do opt to stay living at their family home and commute to university it will ultimately make the Canterbury private student rental market more competitive. An interesting figure shown from the data acquired however is that the rise in tuition fees is less likely to have an impact on EU and Non EU students' decisions to both go to university and live in the private rental sector. If this proves to be the case, landlords and agents may have to increasingly look to this market to fill properties.

8.0 About Jakuta Ltd

Jakuta Ltd is a business angel backed company based in Canterbury, Kent which specialises in the analysis of the student rental sector.

Through the development of the StudentTenant.com platform – a website which incorporates tenant feedback into the lettings process - and bespoke research carried out for clients, Jakuta Ltd offers an advanced insight into local student rental markets.

Jakuta Ltd has been piloted in Canterbury and is now in the process of national expansion. We welcome contact from universities, letting agents, landlords, property investors and any other business or institution with a vested interest in student rental markets who would like to know more about our nationwide development and progression.

9.0 Appendix A

At the end of the survey respondents were asked if there was anything else they would like to state about their time in the Canterbury private student rental sector. These are a selection of the comments. Specific landlord and letting agent names have been removed. Spelling, punctuation and grammar are as posted.

Had heard some real bad stories from friends renting with other agents/landlords, we were really lucky to have one as good/understanding as xxxxx.

Everyone who takes a tenancy agreement with xxxxx should be warned and allowed to meet their landlord.

xxxxx is an amazing business and my landladies are the best I've come across. Definitely recommend them!

Too expensive and university should have more halls, especially for returning students. There should be a certain amount of campus accommodation allocated for second and thirds years instead of always having new first years or foundation to first year student as their priority. As well as this students should be given the chance to live on campus at least once while at university.

Hales Place is a terrible place to live. Many student agencies will tell students that it is an ideal place to live but it is inconvenient both for university and town. It is also grotty in appearance.

The bus service that runs from the University to the town is on the whole, extremely good. However, the buses stop running at 11.45pm - leaving many students unable to get home after this time, without it costing approximately 9 pounds. There should be a night bus service that runs to make sure off-campus students (especially first years living on their own) can get home safely.

Mr xxxxx is a horrid landlord, I would not recommend him. He comes over unannounced and is very aggressive, past tenants have told us after we moved in about him coming over when they weren't in and finding him going through their things, and we came home once at 9 o'clock at night to find him and a man unknown to us in our house, he doesn't wait for someone to open the door when he comes round. The only positive thing to say about him is that when there is difficulty to pay rent he is understanding.

Very well kept house, good landlord- happy to help. However, bedroom severely undersized.

House is in poor quality, despite us telling the landlord about problems to do with a leaking roof and subsequent damp, they just sent us a very condescending letter with a leaflet from Canterbury Council titled "dealing with damp" despite us telling them it was the roof leaking. We have told them several times about many aspects of the house that need fixing, but they pick and choose what they want to listen to, and what they can be bothered to fix. Our rent is £320 per month, which I consider very bad value considering the state of the house. Had I known about the problems with damp before I moved in, I most likely would not have chosen the house. When being shown around the letting agent knew absolutely nothing about the house, and gave zero advice.

Accommodation for students in the Canterbury area is appalling. Neither the landlords or letting agents care about the state of house or persons residing there. All they care about is getting their money and nothing else. Our fire alarm was beeping for a month 24/7 before someone came round to check it, and this was only after bombarding them with emails, phone calls and visits. They exploit students because we have very little experience of private sector housing.

There is by far not enough uni provided accommodation because i was promised i would get a place but then they said "sorry were full" and i had to get a private house, meaning that i had to pay a massive deposit and rent when i wasn't ready to.

students needs more help from university, some of us had many problems which we had to deal with it alone...nobody was there for you, even the council..

Getting help for issues in the house e.g. shower coming off the wall, is really hard - was bounced back between agency and landlord. Eventually got help, but very late, however wasn't finished properly. Worried about getting deposit back, took nearly 3 months on previous tenancy and was charged unfairly for the place being 'dusty' - they checked about a month after we had moved out. Most items in house seem quite old and have had to be replaced.

pretty good experience overall

The landlords and letting agents behave shockingly; they seem to believe that they can get away with whatever they feel like when they are dealing with students. A lot of accommodation is of a pretty abysmal standard, which isn't really reflected in the pricing. Another issue is that almost all letting agents and landlords won't except EU students who can't provide a UK guarantor (which is most of them, really) or insist that they pay something like 3 months rent up front as a deposit.

Students are evil and a lot of residents make us feel like this!

I feel very lucky that I ended up with the landlords I did, but I know from other students that in general the houses and services offered are not good value for money.