

# Meat and dairy consumption, and environmental attitudes

Student Opinion

August 2025



Students Organising  
for Sustainability  
United Kingdom

# Key findings

**54%**

of student respondents reported eating about the same amount of meat as a year ago

**46%**

said they would consider eating less meat in the future

**50%**

agreed that eating less meat and dairy is an effective way to reduce environmental impact

**25%**

said they are currently making such dietary changes for environmental reasons



# About the research



## Background

Research has shown that a complex relationship exists between **meat and dairy consumption, and environmental attitudes**. We wanted to find out how these relationships played out amongst students.

To do this, we mirrored research carried out by environmental charity **Hubbub**, whose research, amongst other findings, found key **differences in attitudes and beliefs exist between different gender identities**.

## Methodology

Student data was collected by Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS UK) in June 2025, with **1057 higher and further education students** participating.

The survey was distributed through the **National Union of Students'** student database as part of a wider omnibus survey covering multiple topics. Respondents were incentivised to participate through a cash prize draw.

## Making comparisons

Throughout the report, we compare our findings to Hubbub's polling which was conducted over four waves between **May 2023 and November 2024**, and captured a nationally representative sample of **12013 UK adults**. Gender demographic categories differ between SOS UK ('Man (including trans man)' and 'woman (including trans woman)') and Hubbub ('Male' and 'female').

It is important to note differences in methods, sample size and timing between the two pieces of research. Significant differences are only reported to a 99% confidence level.

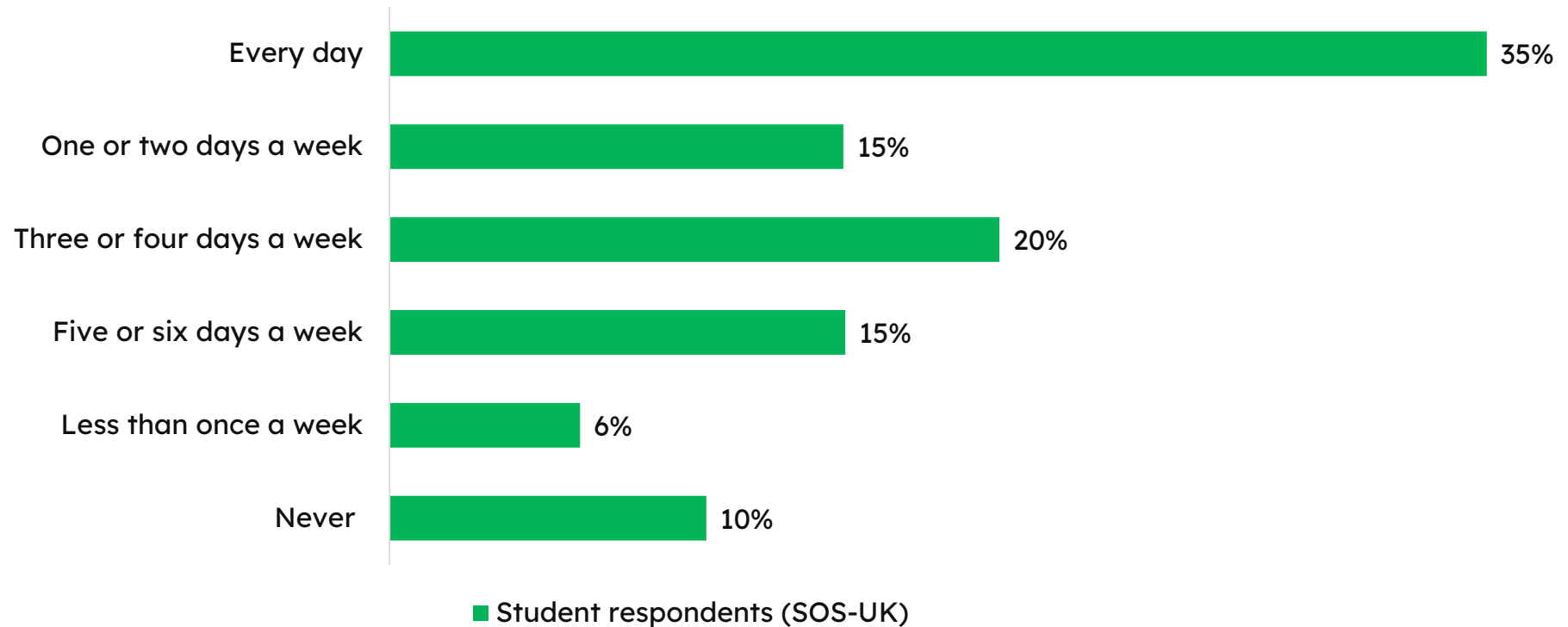


# Research findings



# Meat consumption habits

Student respondents were asked how often, if ever, they eat meat. Daily meat consumption was reported by **35%** of student respondents, while only **10%** reported never eating meat. 1 in 5 (**20%**) of respondents said that they eat meat three or four days per week, while **15%** reported eating meat one or two days a week, or five or six days a week.

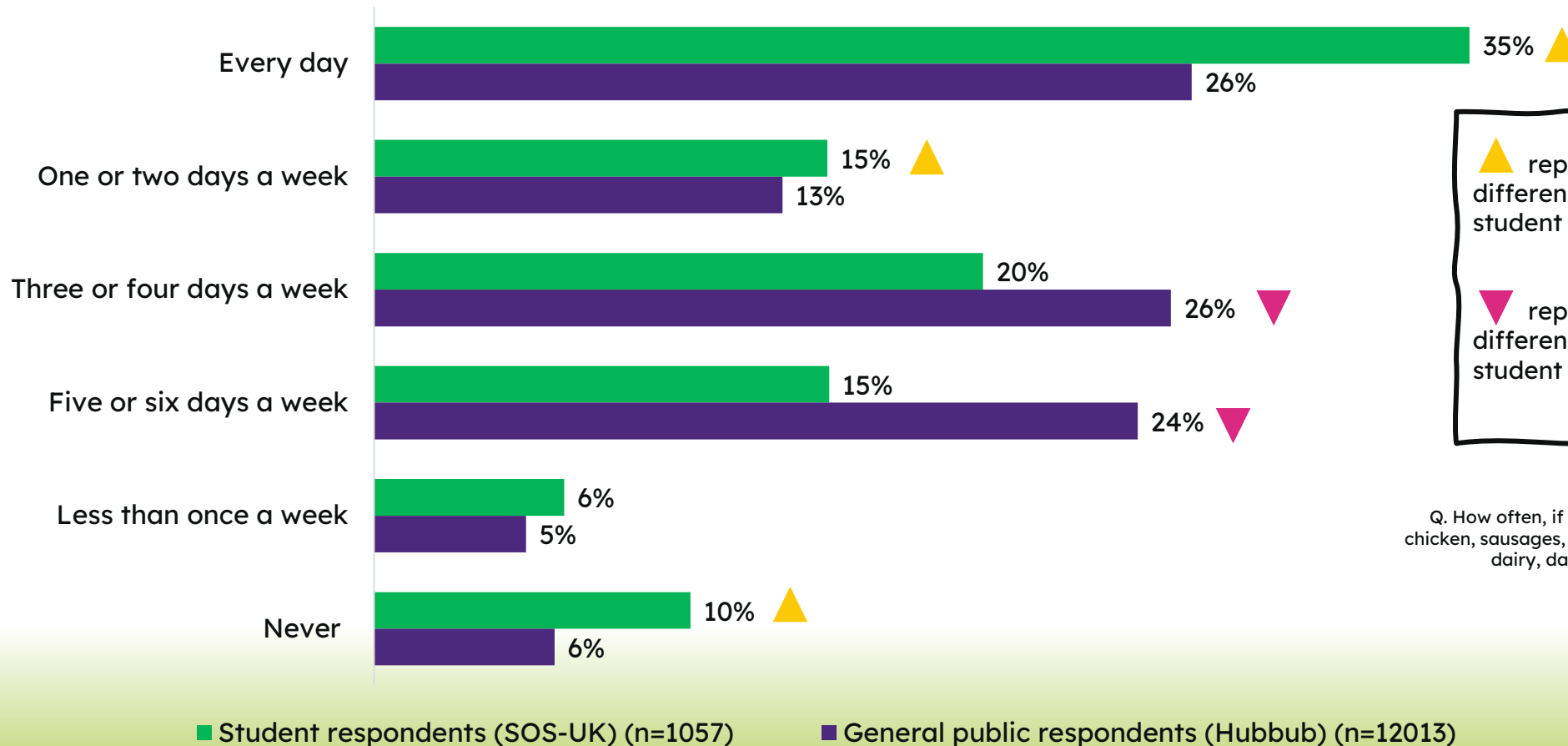


Q. How often, if ever, do you now eat meat? This includes chicken, sausages, bacon, ham, beef, lamb etc. but excludes dairy, dairy products, eggs, fish and fish products.  
SOS-UK (June 2025) Student base: 1057.



# Meat consumption habits

Comparing general public and student polling reveals several differences in meat eating habits. The most notable is in daily meat consumption, reported by **35%** of students compared to **26%** of the general public. In contrast, general public respondents are more likely to report eating meat five or six days a week. Whilst more likely to say they eat meat every day, student respondents are also more likely to say they never eat meat compared to general public respondents (**10%** compared to **6%**).



▲ represents a higher significant difference from general public to student polling.

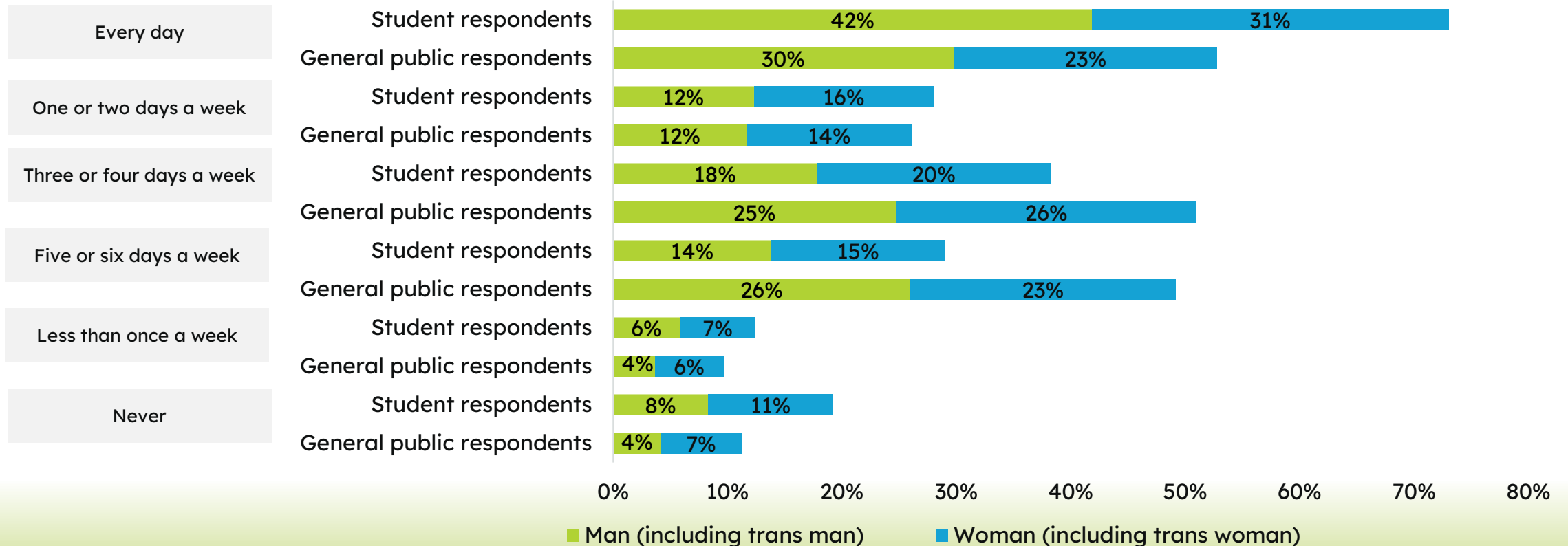
▼ represents a lower significant difference from general public to student polling.

Q. How often, if ever, do you now eat meat? This includes chicken, sausages, bacon, ham, beef, lamb etc. but excludes dairy, dairy products, eggs, fish and fish products.



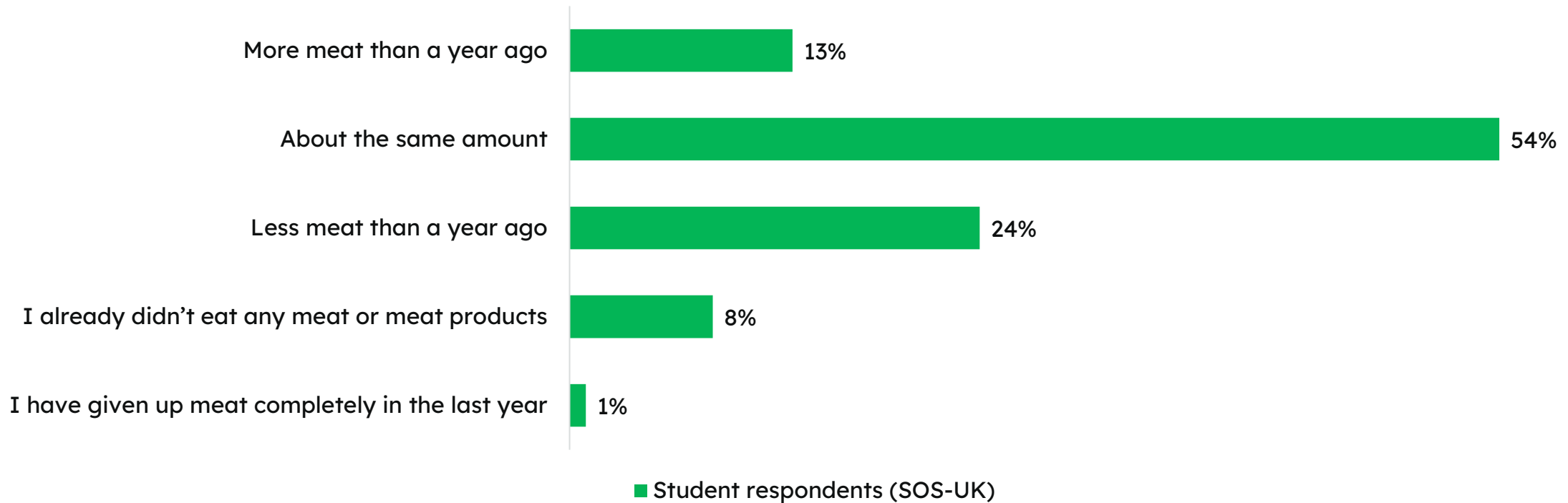
# Meat consumption habits and gender differences

Daily meat consumption is higher amongst male respondents in both student (42%) and general public (30%) polling compared to female respondents, with male student respondents being significantly more likely to report eating meat daily than male public respondents. Additionally, female student respondents are more likely than their male counterparts to report never eating meat – a trend also reflected in the general public polling.



# Changes in meat consumption habits

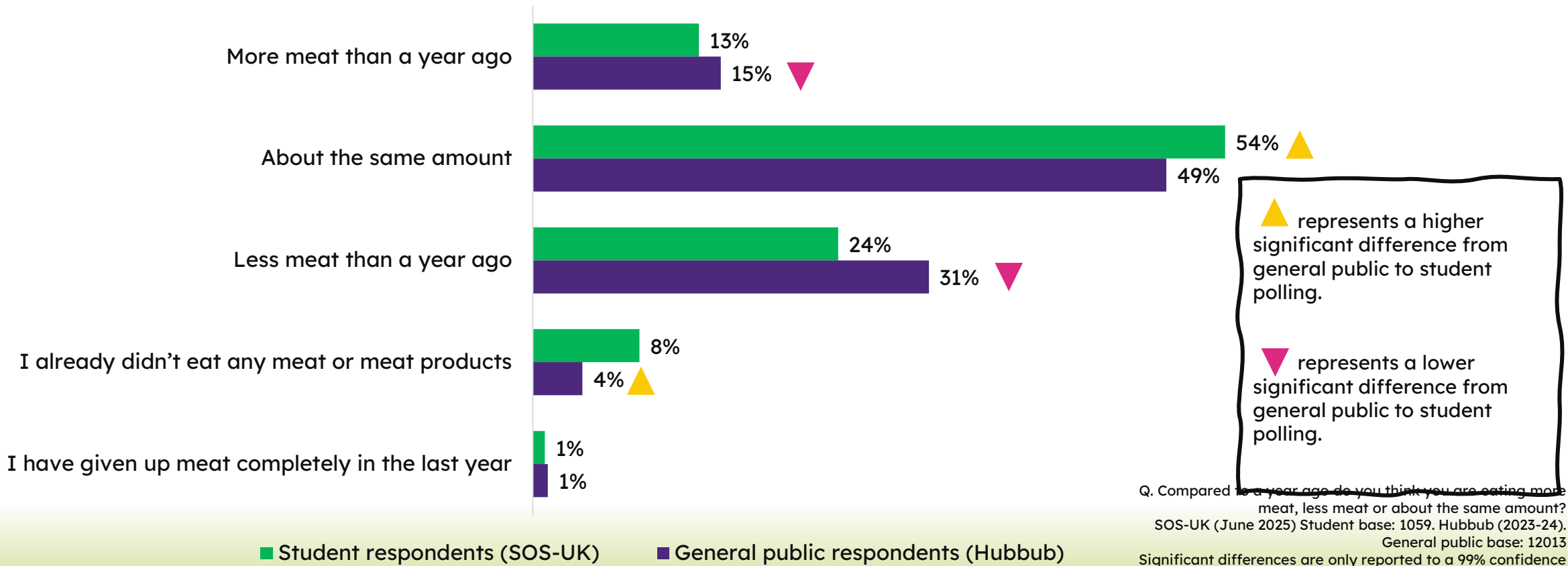
Student respondents were asked whether their meat consumption had changed compared to a year ago, and the most common response was that it had stayed about the same (54%). Nearly a quarter (24%) said they are now eating less meat while conversely, 13% reported eating more meat than a year ago.



Q. Compared to a year ago do you think you are eating more meat, less meat or about the same amount?  
SOS-UK (June 2025) Student base: 1059

# Changes in meat consumption habits

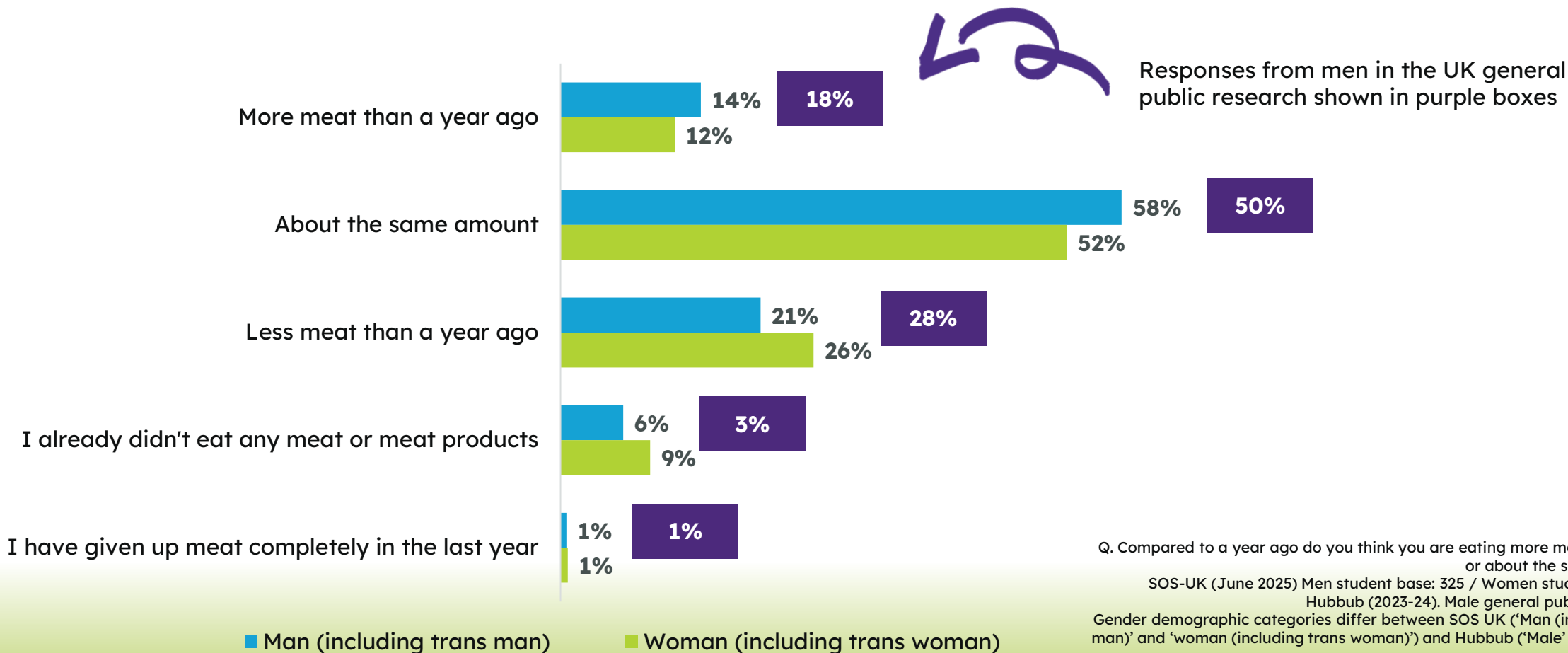
Comparing student and general public polling highlights key differences in changing meat consumption habits. Fewer students report reducing their meat intake (**24%**), compared with public respondents (**31%**). Additionally, a higher proportion of student respondents say their consumption has stayed about the same (**54%**) in comparison to the public (**49%**).



Q. Compared to a year ago do you think you are eating more meat, less meat or about the same amount?  
 SOS-UK (June 2025) Student base: 1059. Hubbub (2023-24).  
 General public base: 12013  
 Significant differences are only reported to a 99% confidence level.

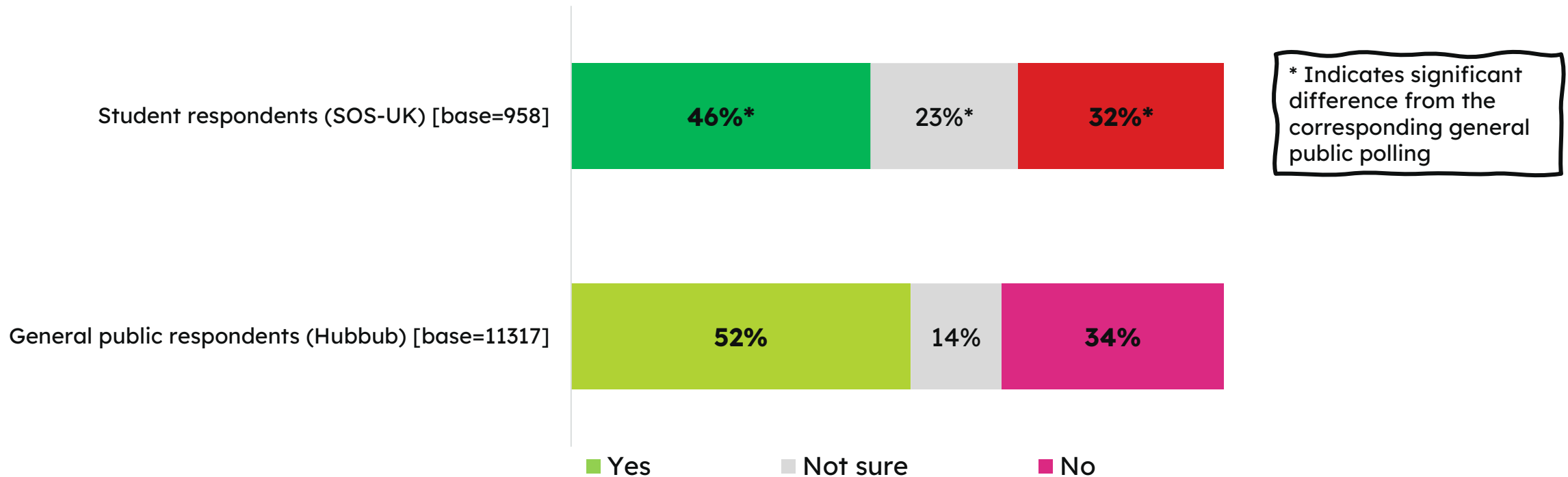
# Gendered differences in meat consumption habits

Exploring changes to meat consumption highlights several differences according to gender. A higher proportion of male student respondents report eating more meat than a year ago (14%), compared with female students (12%). However, male student respondents are less likely than male general public respondents to report this (18%).



# Attitudes toward reducing meat consumption

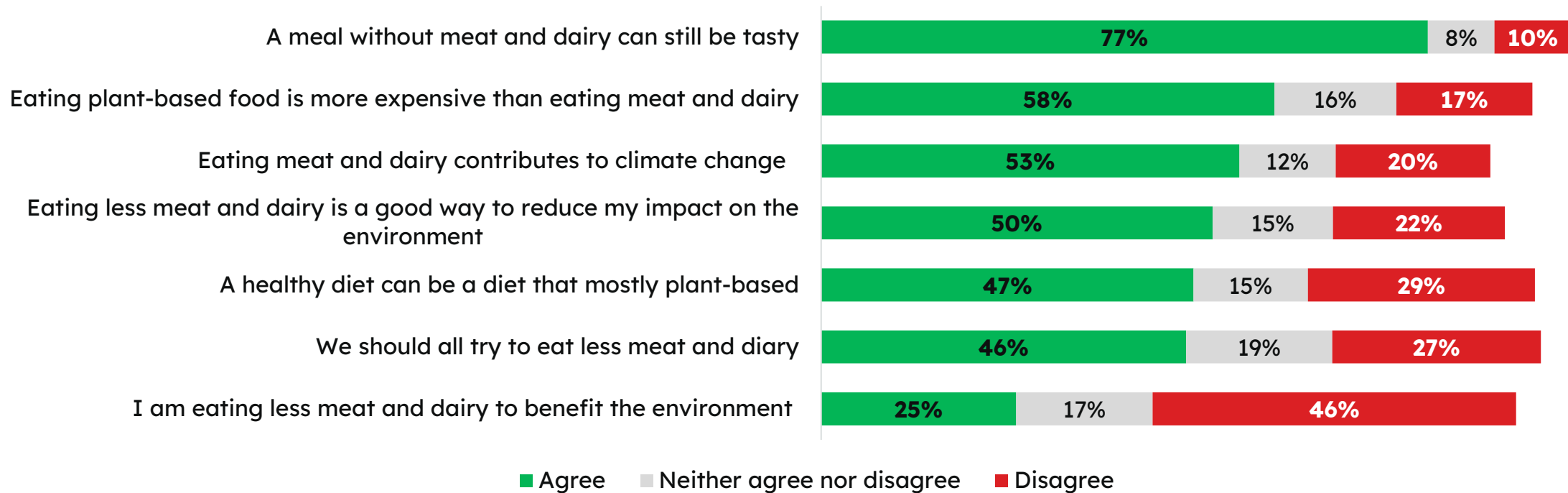
Respondents who currently eat meat were asked if they would be willing to consider eating less meat and fewer meat products in the future. Under half (**46%**) of student respondents said they would consider reducing their meat consumption, compared to **52%** of general public respondents. 3 in 10 student (**32%**) and general public (**34%**) respondents said they would not consider this.



Q. Would you be willing to consider eating less meat and fewer meat products in the future at all?  
SOS-UK (June 2025) Student base: 958.  
Hubbub (2023-24). General public base: 11317

# Attitudes and beliefs about meat, dairy and the environment

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with a range of attitude statements. Most respondents agree that a meal without meat or dairy can still be tasty (77%). Half (50%) agree that eating less meat and dairy is a good way to reduce their environmental impact, but only a quarter (25%) agreed that they are eating less meat and dairy to benefit the environment.

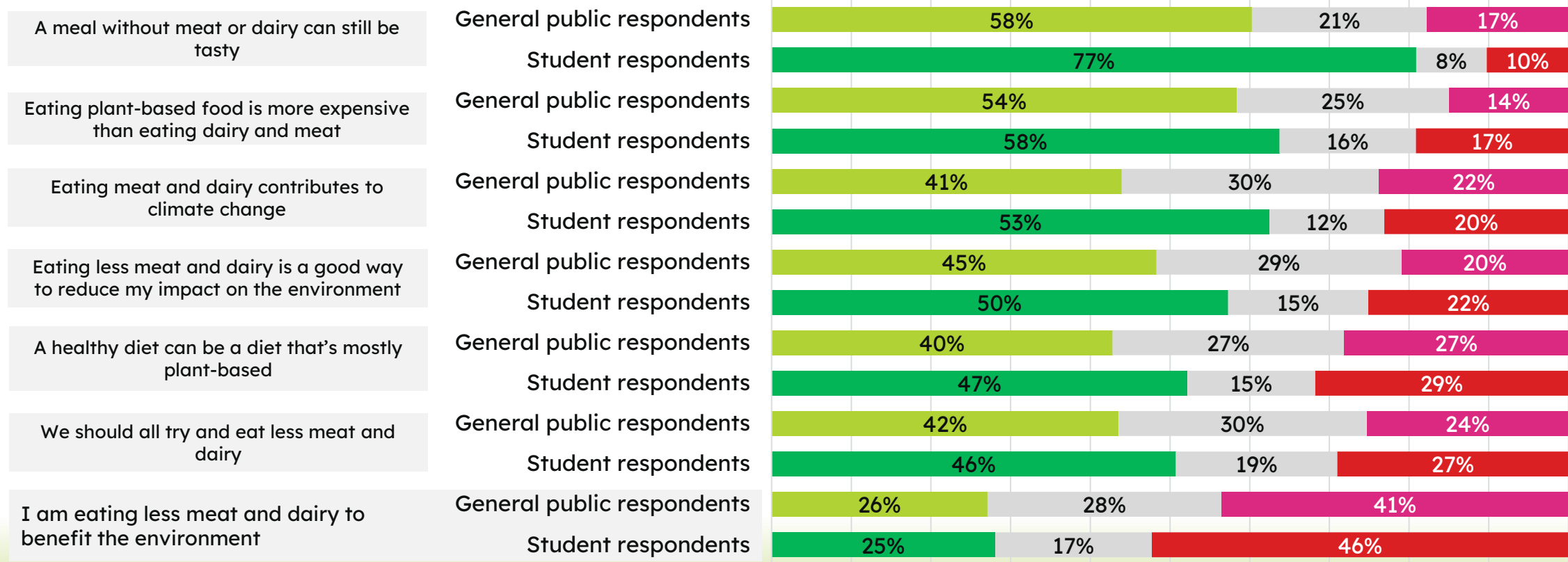


Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements in terms of eating meat and dairy?  
SOS-UK (June 2025) Student base: c1050 / Balance: Don't know, no response



# Attitudes and beliefs towards meat, dairy and the environment

Attitudes towards meat, dairy and the environment differ between student and general public polling. More students agreed that a meal without meat or dairy can still be tasty (77% compared to 58%), and over half (53%) said that eating meat and dairy contributes to climate change, compared with 41% of the general public.

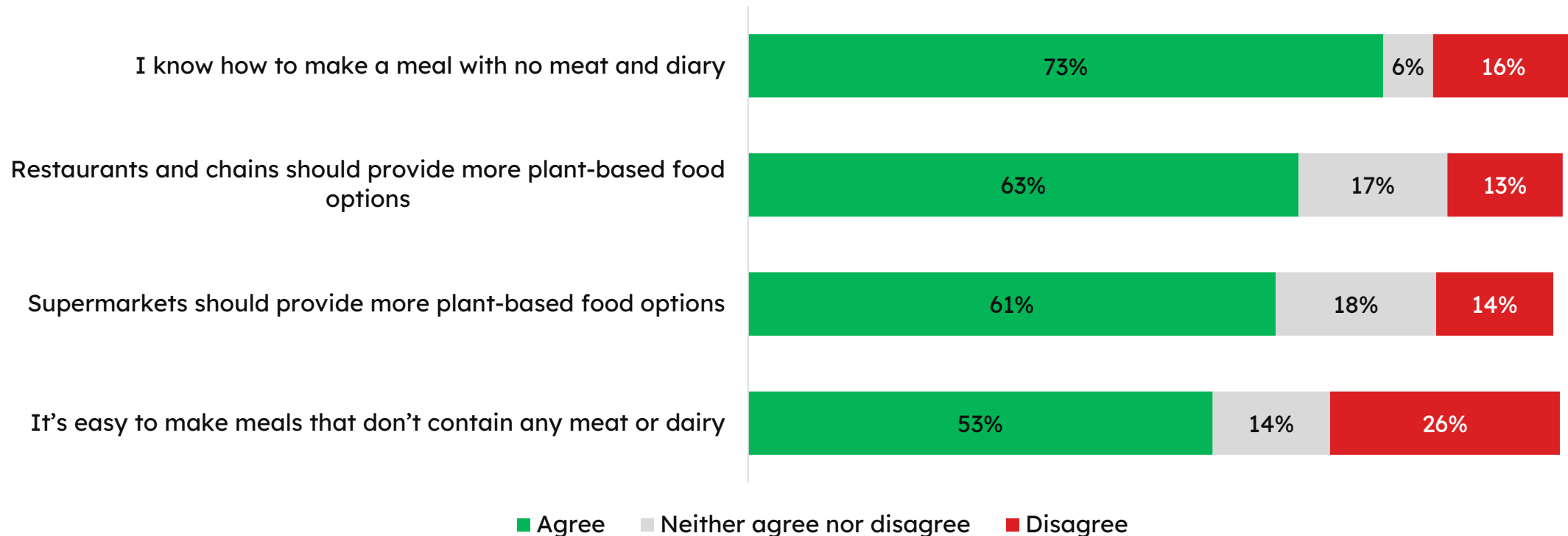


■ Agree ■ Neither agree nor disagree ■ Disagree



# Behaviours and practical considerations

Respondents were asked to what extent they agree or disagree with a range of attitude statements on preparing and purchasing meat-free meals. Most respondents agree that they know how to make a meal with no meat and dairy (73%). Additionally, a similar proportion agree that restaurants (63%) and supermarkets (61%) should provide more plant-based food options.

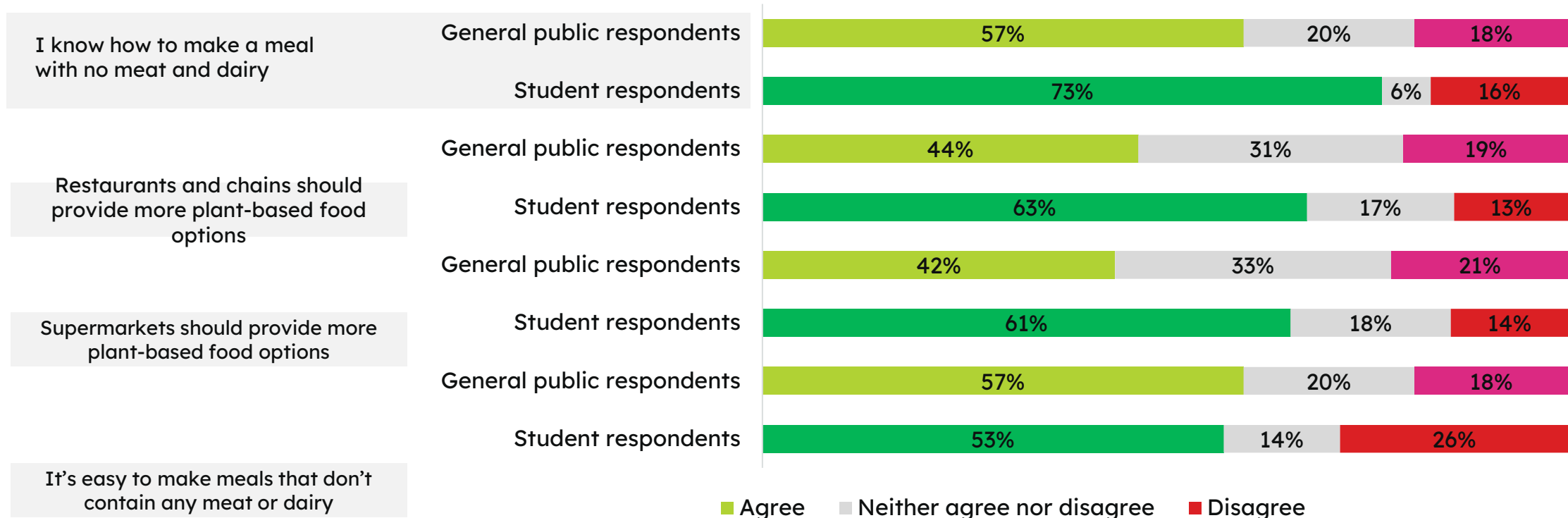


Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements in terms of eating meat and dairy?  
SOS-UK (June 2025) Student base: c1050



# Behaviours and practical considerations

Behaviours and practical considerations about meat and dairy varied amongst student and general public respondents. Nearly three quarters (73%) of student respondents agreed that they know how to make a meal with no meat and dairy, compared to 57% of public respondents. Additionally, more students agreed that restaurants, chains and supermarkets should provide more plant-based food options than public respondents.

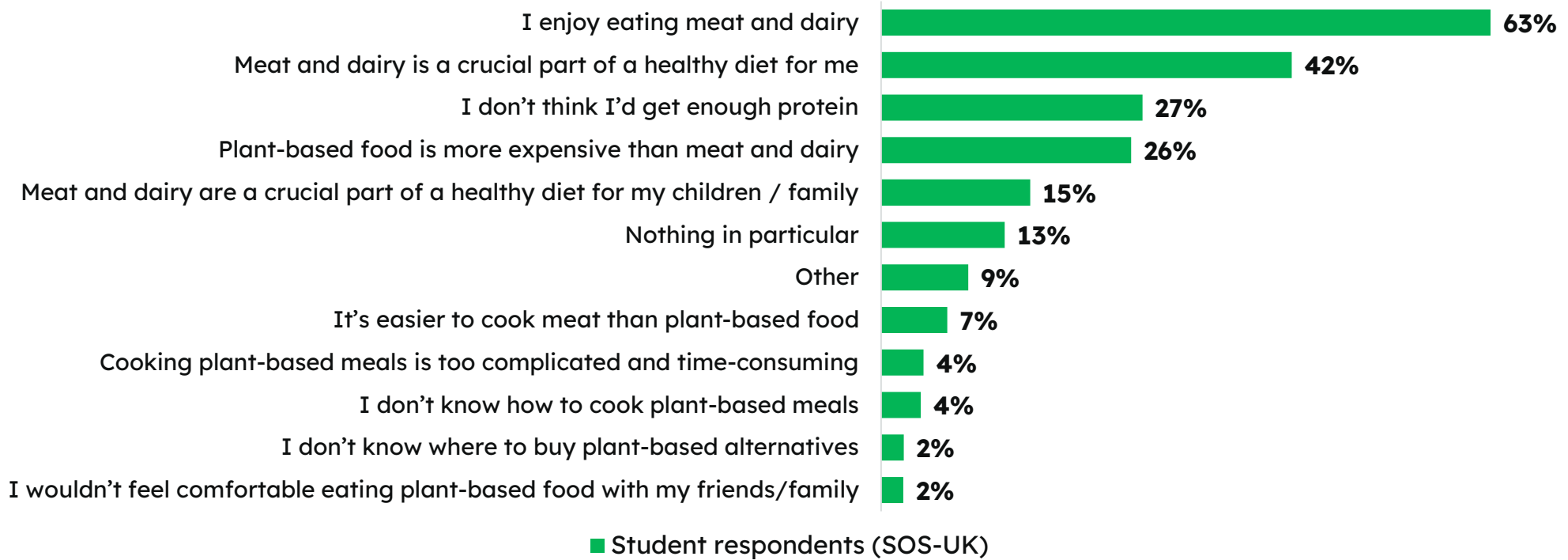


Q. To what extent, if at all, do you agree or disagree with the following statements in terms of eating meat and dairy?  
 SOS-UK (June 2025) Student base: c1050  
 Hubbub (2023-24). General public base: c11243



# Barriers to reducing meat consumption

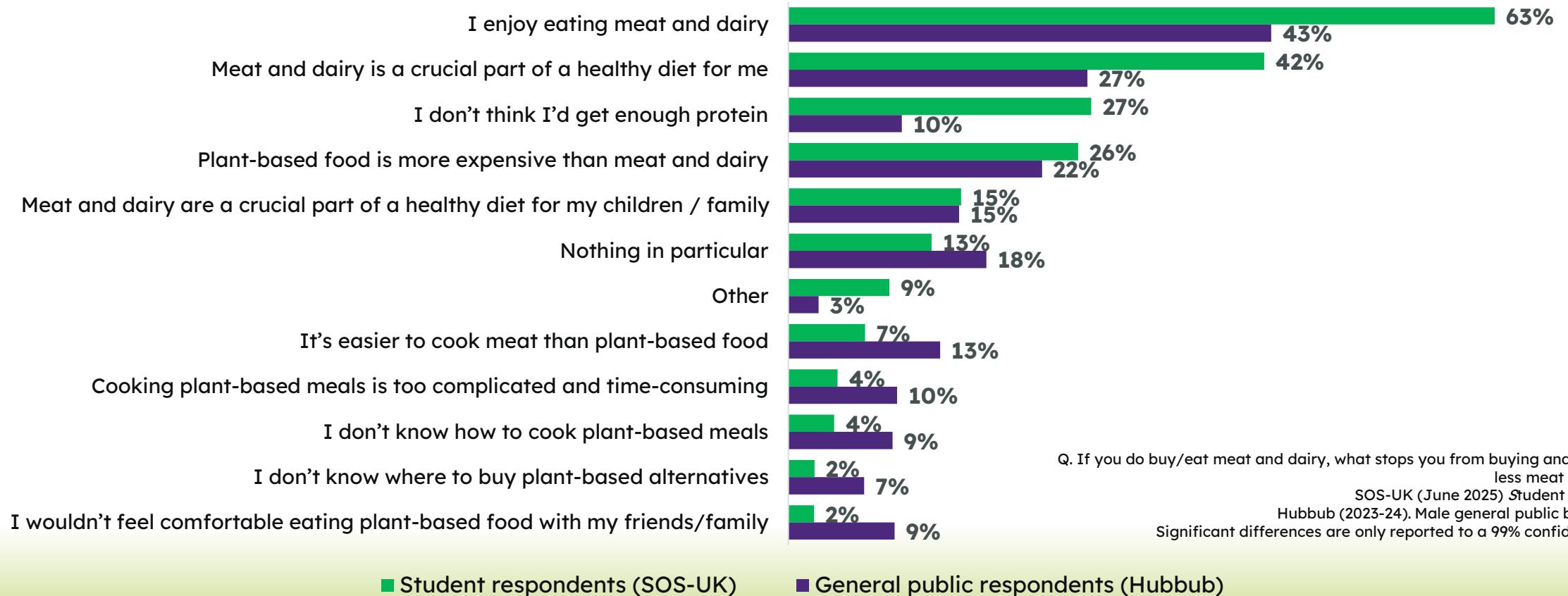
Respondents were asked what prevents them from reducing their meat and dairy consumption. The most common reason was enjoyment (63%), followed by perceived maintenance of a healthy diet (42%). Over a quarter (27%) reported concerns about protein intake. Only 2% said that a barrier was not knowing where to purchase plant-based alternatives or eating these around friends/family.



Q. If you do buy/eat meat and dairy, what stops you from buying and/or eating less meat and dairy?  
 SOS-UK (June 2025) Student base: 1043

# Barriers to reducing meat consumption

While reasons varied between student and general public polling, the most common reason for both was enjoyment, cited by **63%** of students and **43%** of general public respondents, with students significantly more likely to report this. There was also a significant difference in concerns about protein intake: **27%** of student respondents said they wouldn't get enough protein, compared to just **10%** of general public respondents.



Q. If you do buy/eat meat and dairy, what stops you from buying and/or eating less meat and dairy?

SOS-UK (June 2025) Student base: 1043

Hubbub (2023-24). Male general public base: 12013

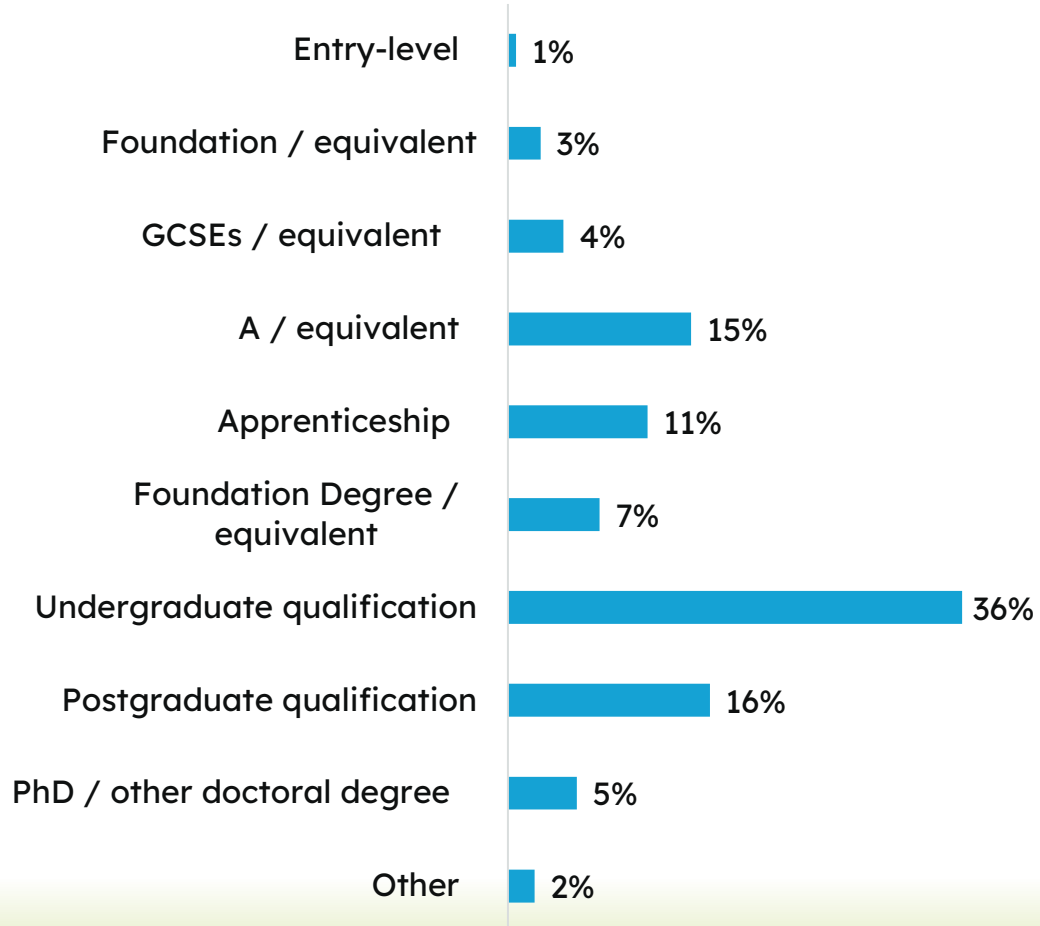
Significant differences are only reported to a 99% confidence level.



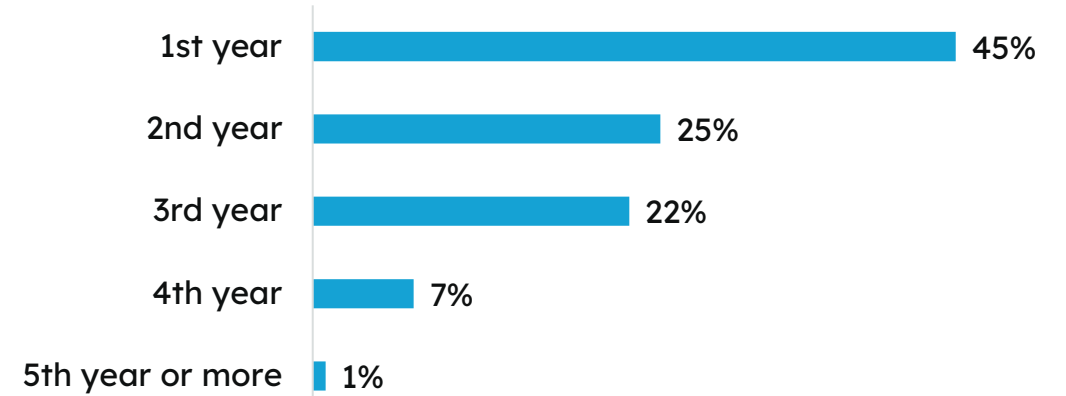
# Student demographics



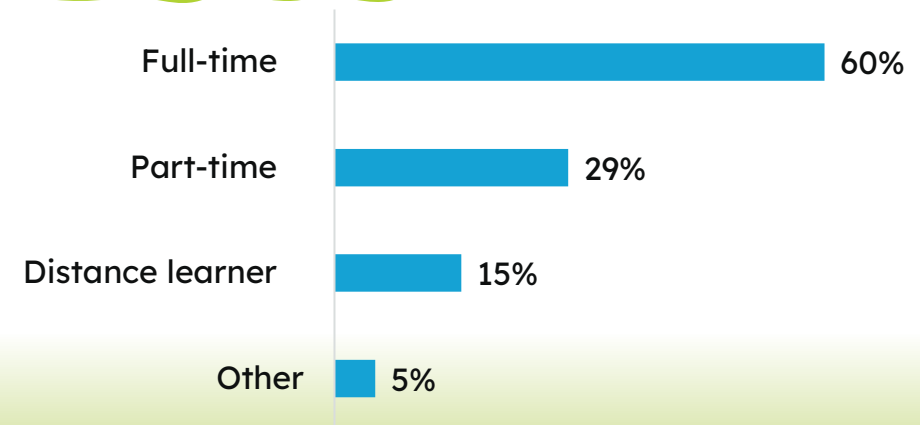
## Study level



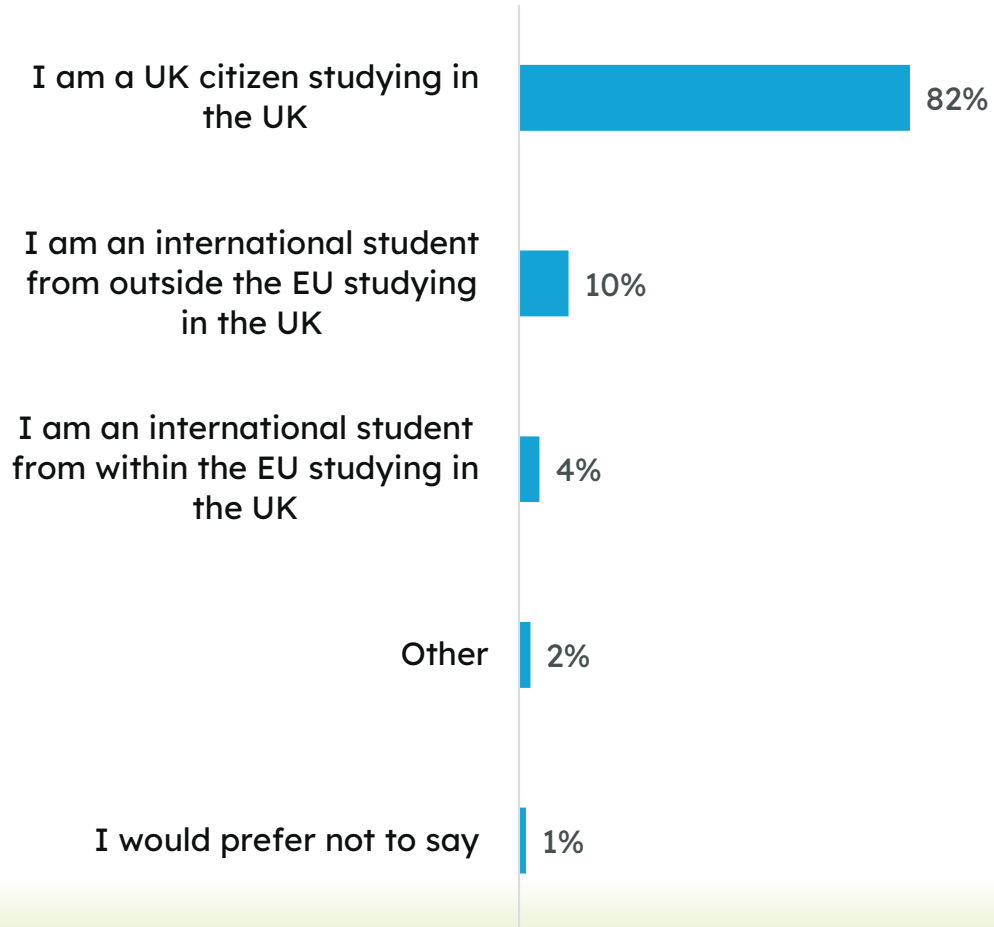
## Year of study (UG only)



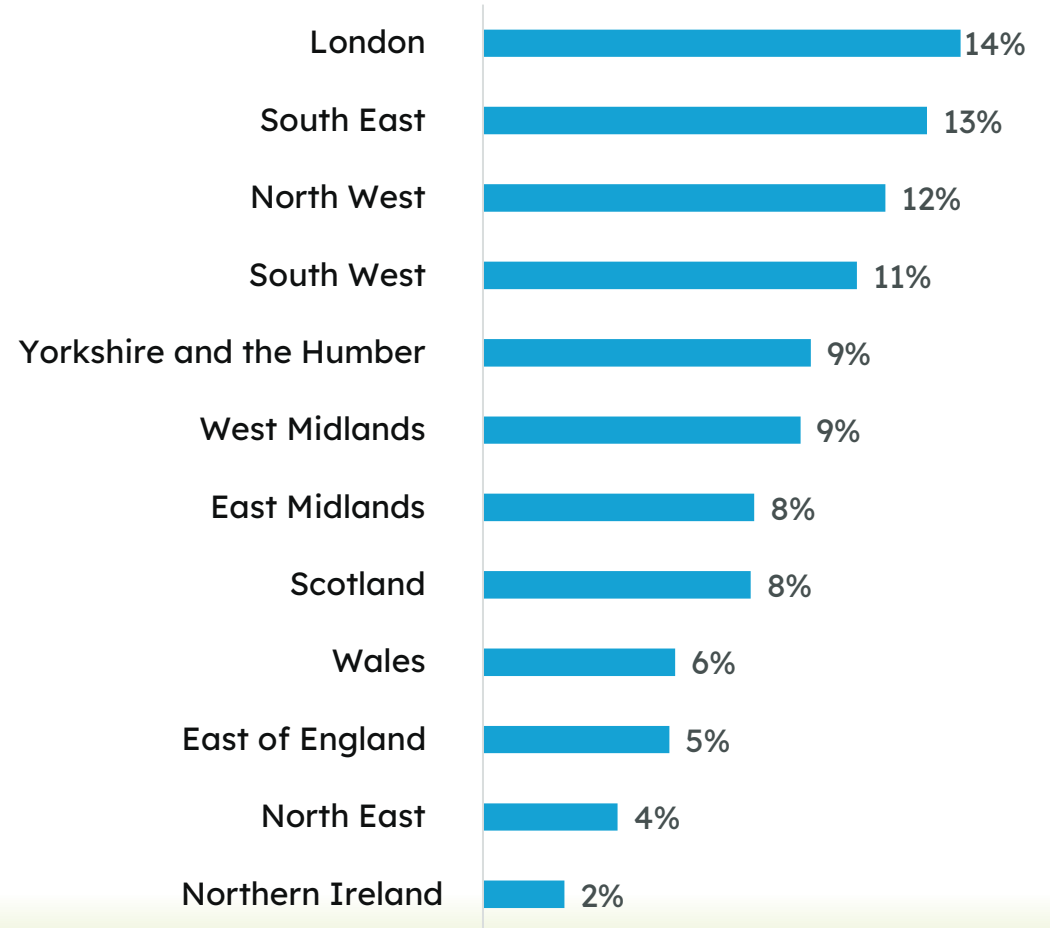
## Mode of study



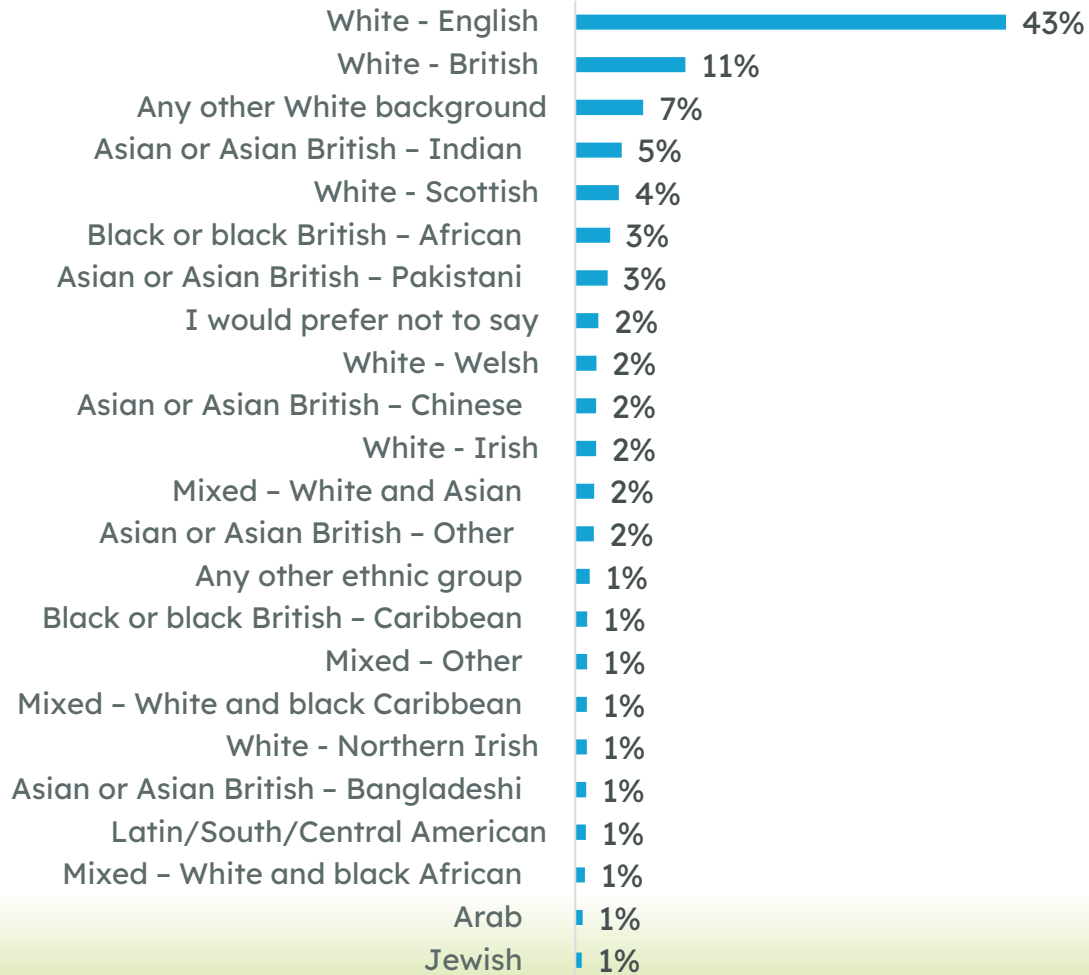
## Nationality



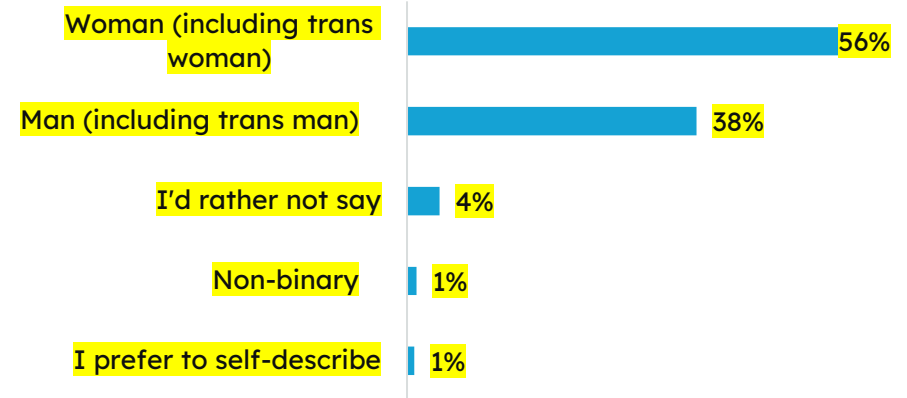
## Region



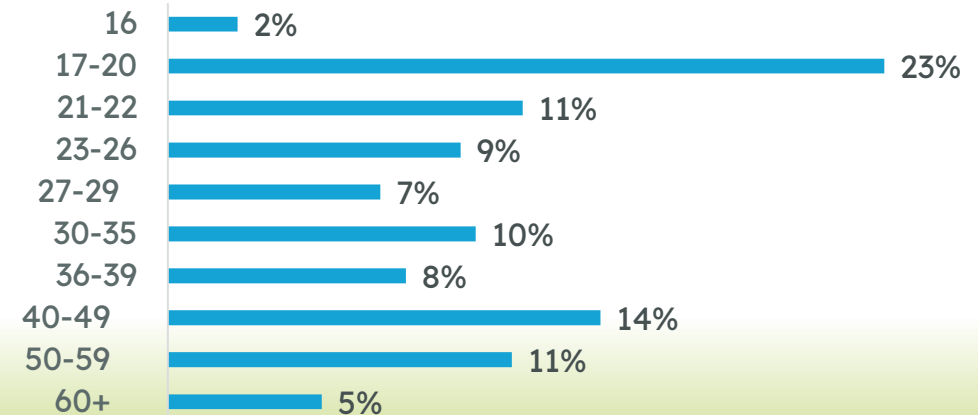
## Ethnicity



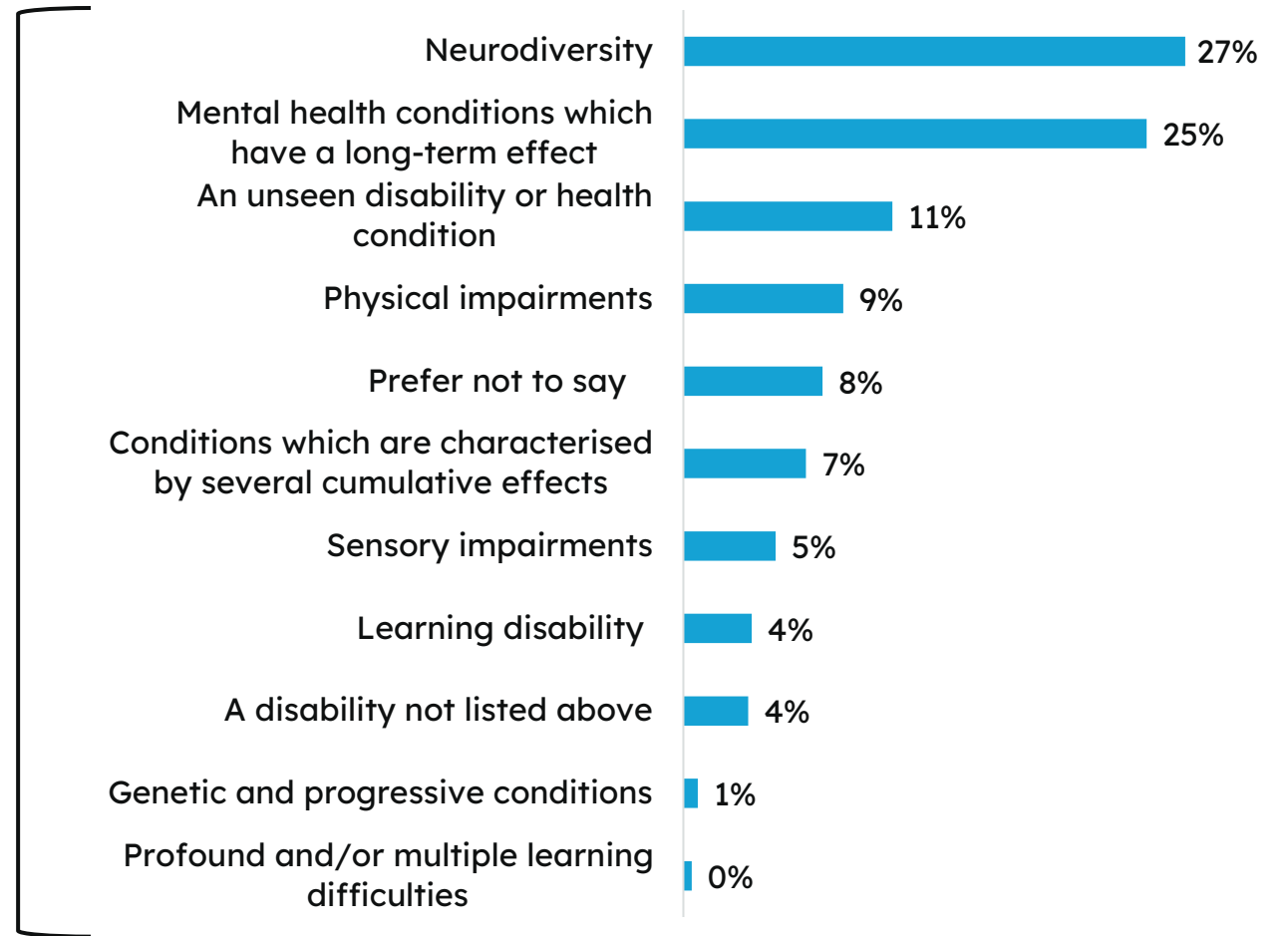
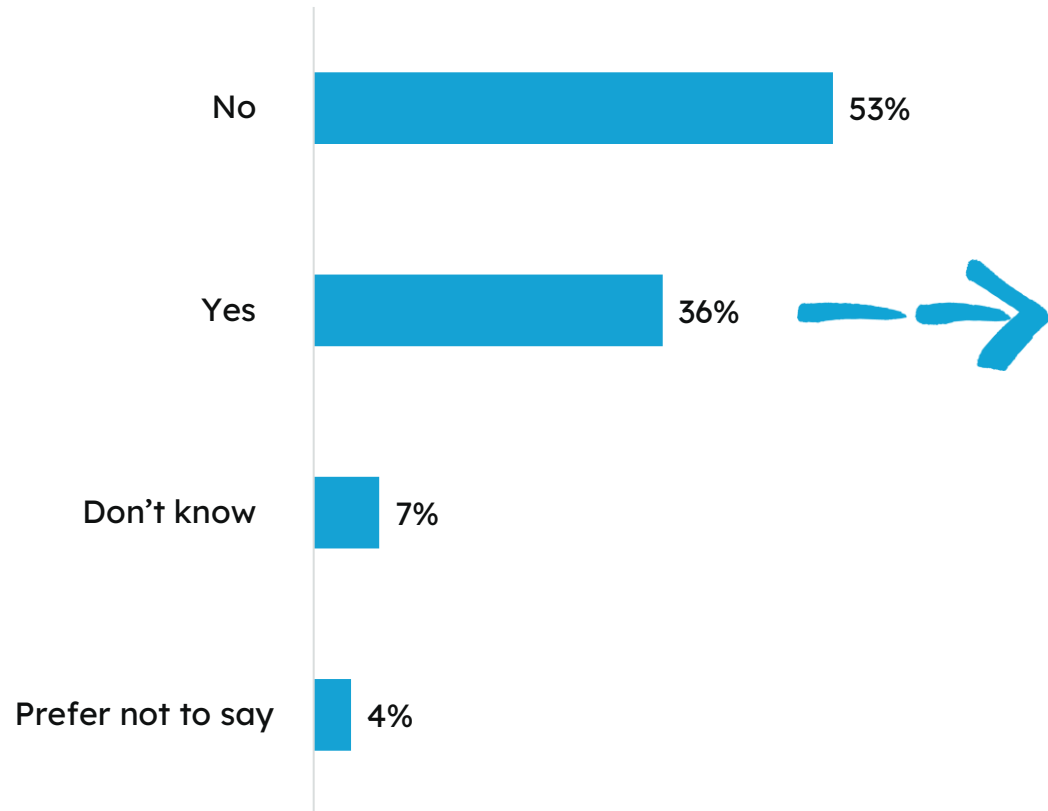
## Gender identity



## Age



# Disability





**Students Organising  
for Sustainability  
United Kingdom**

Check out more research from SOS UK at our [research hub](#)

Get in touch at [research@sos-uk.org](mailto:research@sos-uk.org)