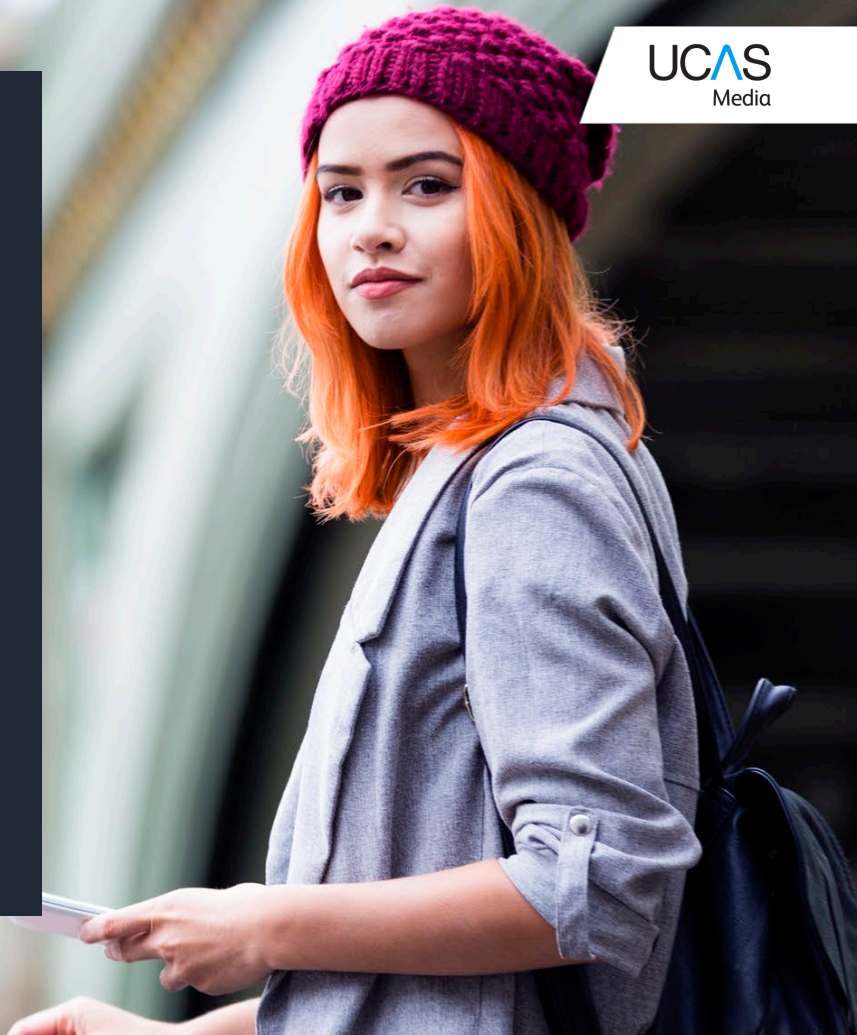


JANUARY 2022

UCAS MEDIA INSIGHT NEWSLETTER



Welcome to the UCAS Media Insight Newsletter – January 2022.

January brings us the application deadline for most courses and providers. For students over the next couple of months, pre-applicants will plan, applicants will narrow down their offers, unplaced students will be researching their options and undergraduates will get stuck into their post-Christmas studies.

But this January is a little different. Things have changed from last year. New motivations and outlooks have emerged, as young people react to both the positive and negative impacts of COVID.

In this newsletter, we're focusing on those who found themselves without a place last year, what their plan might be for this year, and how apprenticeships are emerging as a real consideration in higher education choices.

Let's get stuck in.

What are students doing?

On ucas.com

WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

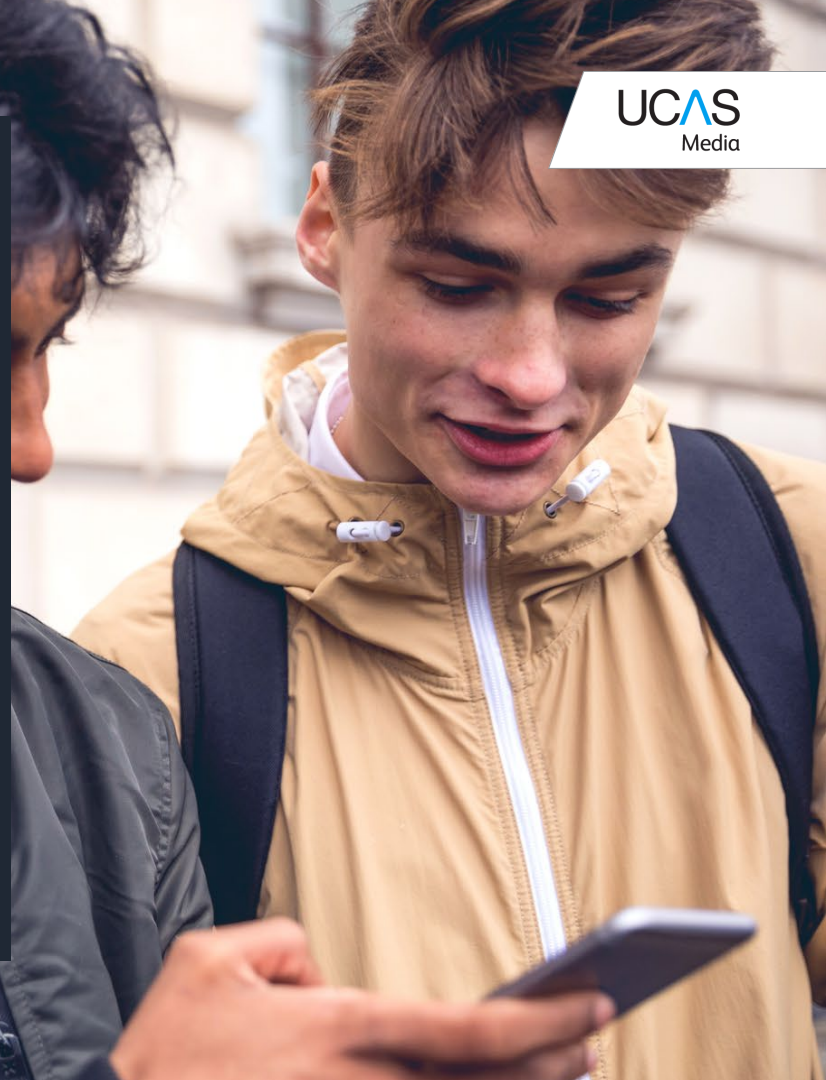
TOP SEARCHED FOR SUBJECTS ON UCAS SEARCH IN DECEMBER 2021

Position for
December 2021

=	1	Psychology
=	2	Law
=	3	Nursing
▲ ¹	4	Medicine
▼ ¹	5	Business

▲ ³	6	Computer science
▼ ¹	7	Physiotherapy
▲ ²	8	Criminology
▼ ²	9	Economics
▼ ²	10	Midwifery

▲
Change in
position since
December 2020



WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

UCAS.COM USERS: TOP 10 NON-UK COUNTRIES IN DECEMBER 2021



Position for
December 2021

▲ ²	1	China
▼ ¹	2	United States
▼ ¹	3	India
▲ ¹	4	Ireland
▲ ³	5	Nigeria
▼ ²	6	Hong Kong
=	7	France
▼ ²	8	Pakistan
=	9	United Arab Emirates
=	10	Spain

▲
Change in
position since
December 2020

WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

UCAS.COM USERS: TOP 10 UK CITIES IN DECEMBER 2021



Position for
December 2021

=	1	London
▲ ¹⁴	2	Croydon
▼ ¹	3	Birmingham
=	4	Manchester
▼ ²	5	Glasgow
▼ ¹	6	Leeds
▲ ³	7	Belfast
▲ ³	8	Liverpool
=	9	Edinburgh
▼ ⁵	10	Bristol

Change in position
since December 2020

POSTCODE DISTRICT MAP



WHO'S ENGAGING WITH UCAS?

TOP UG PAGES ON UCAS.COM IN DECEMBER 2021

Position for
December 2021

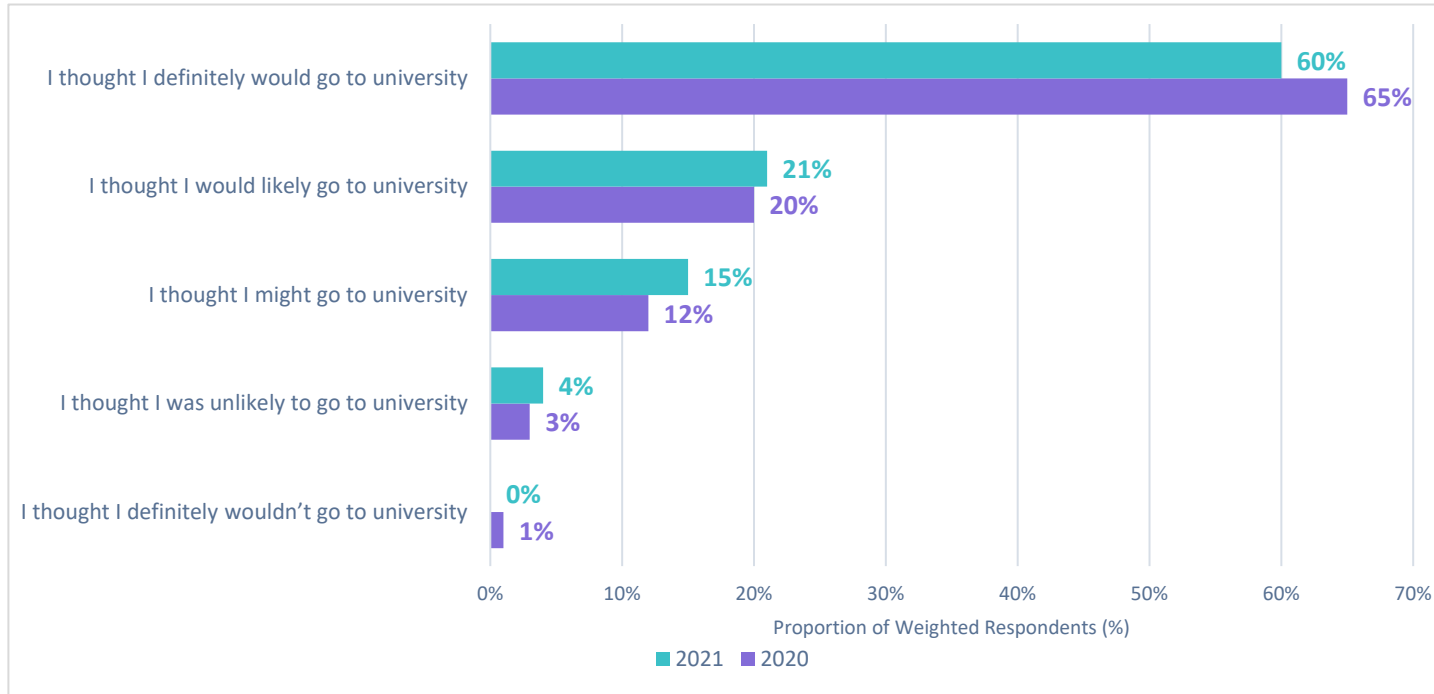
1 ▼	1	How to write a UCAS Undergraduate personal statement
▲ 5	2	Applying to university
2 ▼	3	Tracking your UCAS application
1 ▼	4	Filling in your UCAS undergraduate application
=	5	UCAS undergraduate: When to apply

▲
Change in
position since
December 2020

Unplaced applicant survey 2021

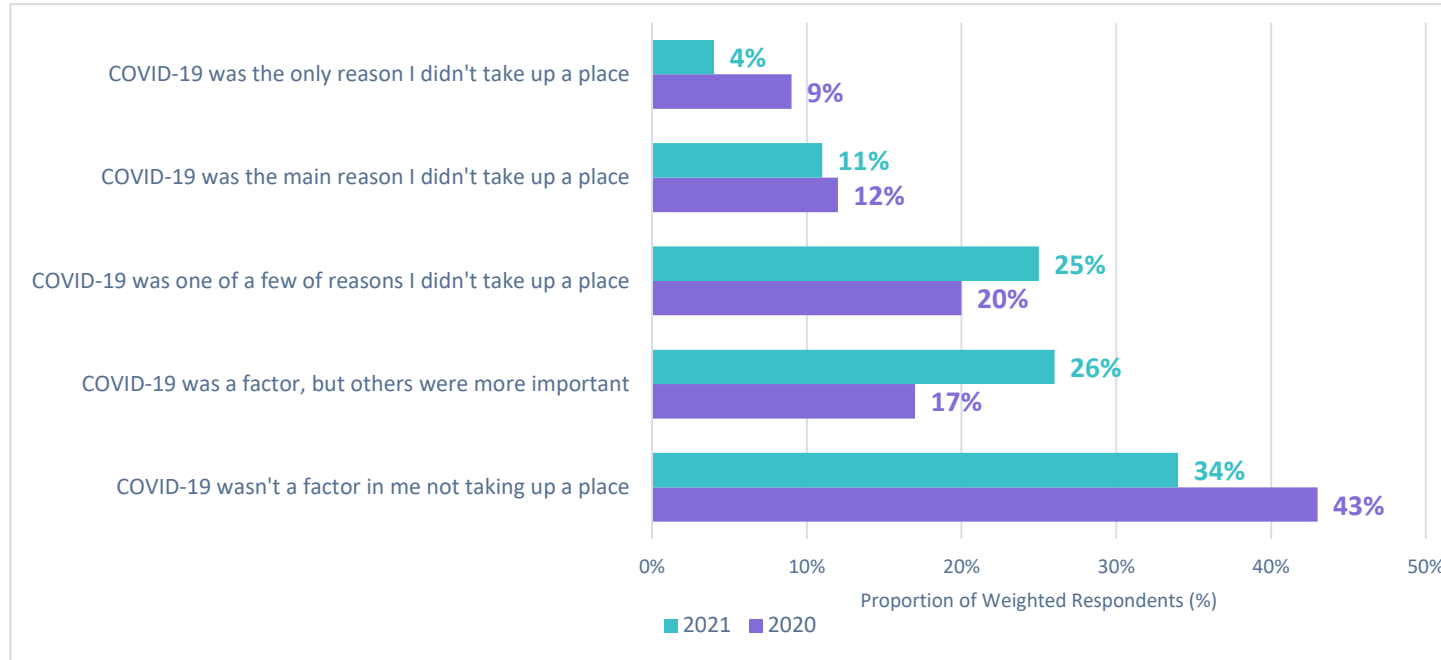
Key findings from our surveys sent to unplaced applicants in 2021

Q: When you submitted your UCAS application, how did you feel about going to university?



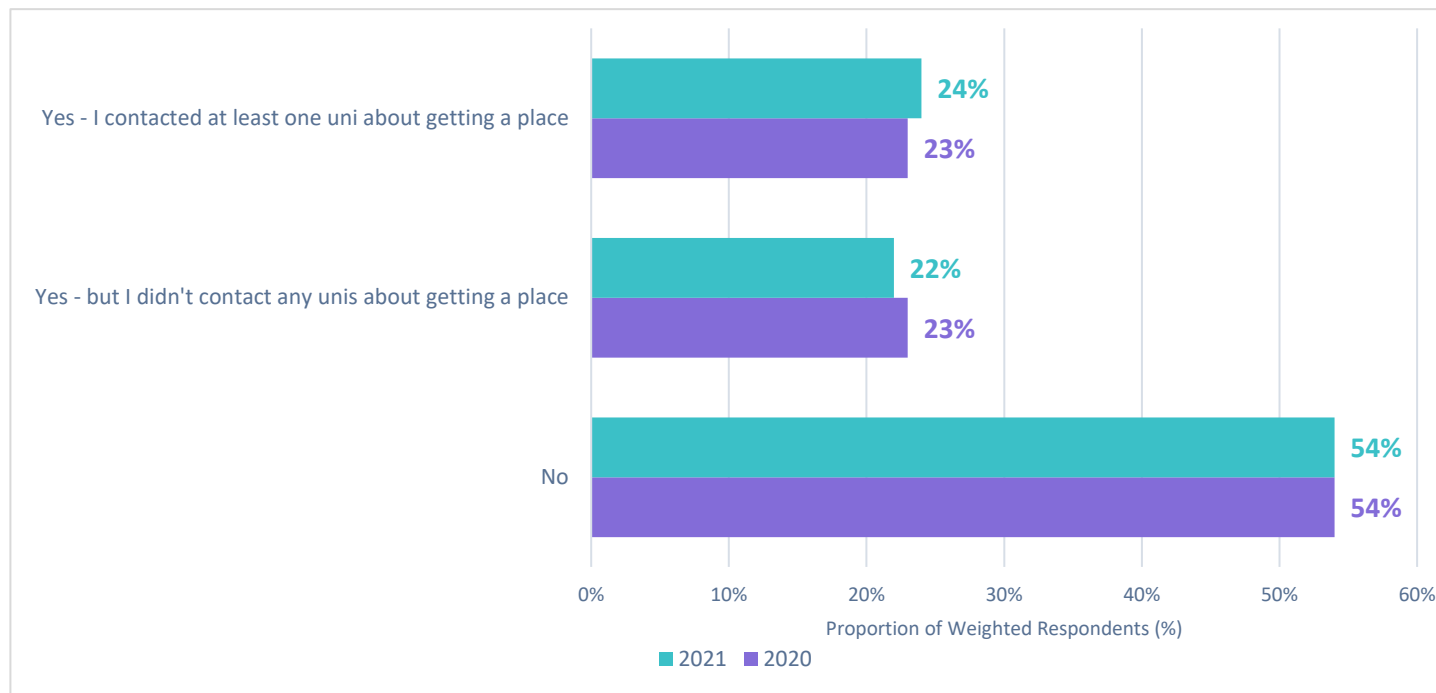
When unplaced applicants submitted their UCAS application, 81% thought they would definitely or likely go to university.

Q: How much of an impact do you feel the coronavirus outbreak had on you not taking up a place at a UK university or college this year?



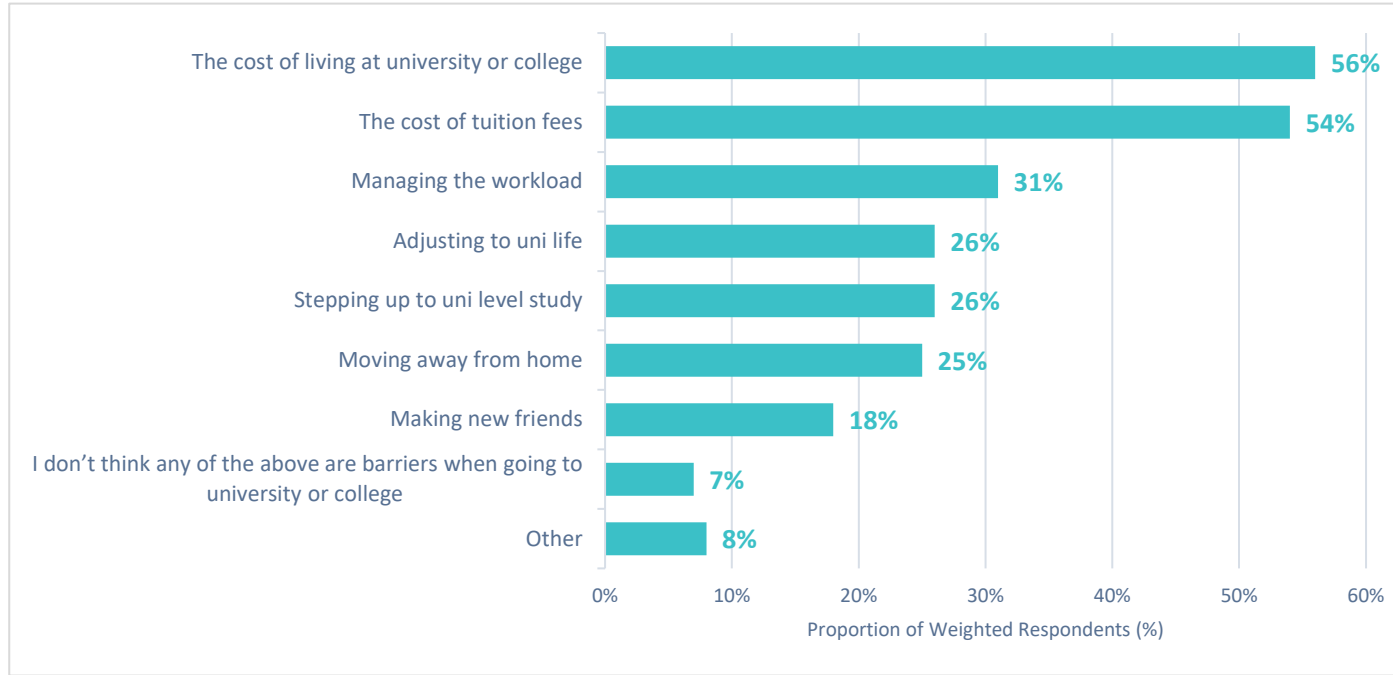
4% of unplaced applicants in 2021 said that the coronavirus outbreak was the only reason they didn't take up a place at a UK university or college that year, down from 9% in 2020.

Q: Did you look at the courses available in Clearing this year?



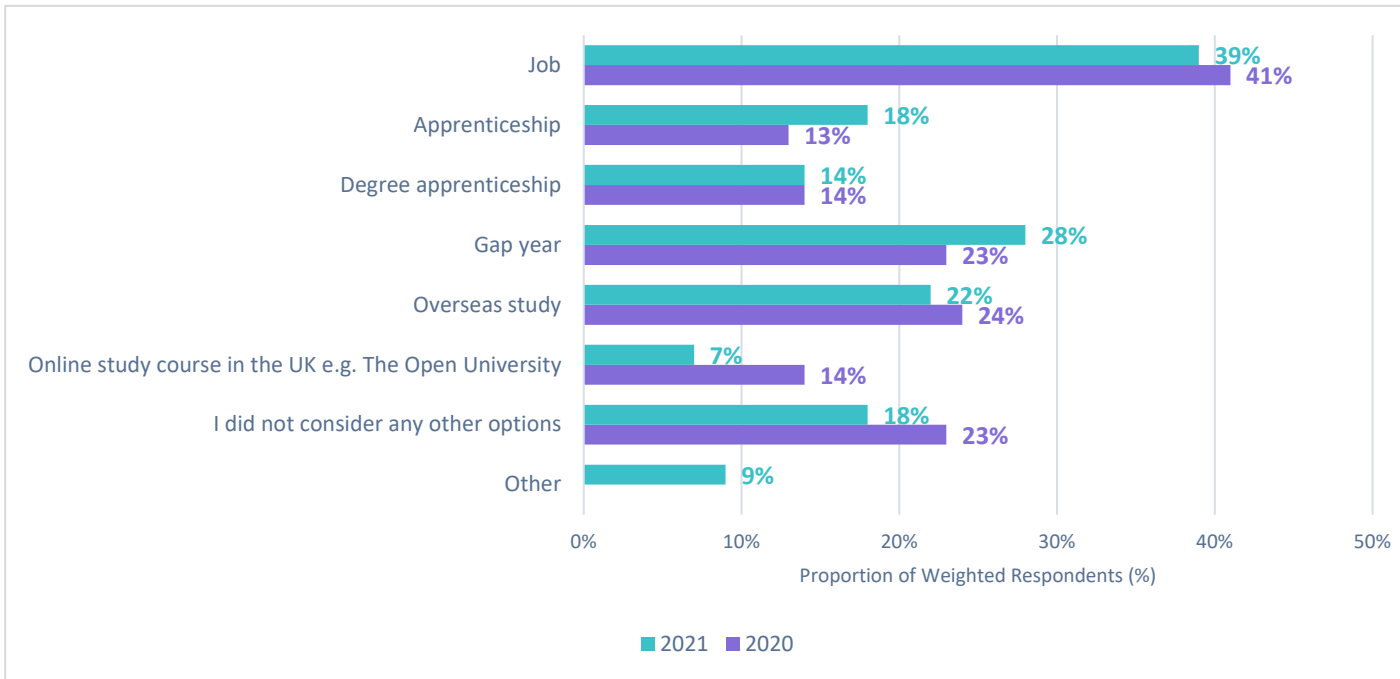
46% of unplaced applicants looked at courses available in Clearing but less than half of this group didn't contact any unis about getting a place.

Q: Which of the following, if any, do you feel are some of the biggest barriers when going to university or college? Please select all that apply.



Over half of unplaced applicants feel that the cost of living at uni or college, and the cost of tuition fees, are the biggest barriers to going to uni or college.

Q: Thinking about when you applied to university through UCAS, were you also considering any of the following options at the same time? Please tick all that apply.



Alongside applying to UCAS, interest in apprenticeships and gap years increased the most since 2020.

How COVID has changed the journey of unplaced applicants.

It was a strange year for the pandemic. We witnessed both the height of its disruption **and** the beginning of its end. But it still played an influential role in decision-making, particularly for the two thirds of students who found themselves not taking a place at university or college.

46% looked for alternative courses, but less than half of those followed up on those plans. As for what may have tempted them away this year, interest in apprenticeships and gap years saw the highest growth (+5% each) whilst online study fell the most (-7%). That may come as no surprise after numerous years of remote learning in school and sixth form. Whilst there has never been more opportunity to gain qualifications from a distance, there has been lower appetite.

But despite having matured alongside the pandemic, seeing both its longevity and its potential future impacts, young people tell us that finances still present the biggest barriers. Over half of all unplaced applicants felt that money was the main blocker for further study, both in living costs and tuition costs – dwarfing considerations of workload and moving out.

And when we asked them for their plans for the next year, 48% said that they intended to enter employment (less than 2020) whilst a 20% will reapply through UCAS.

What does this mean?

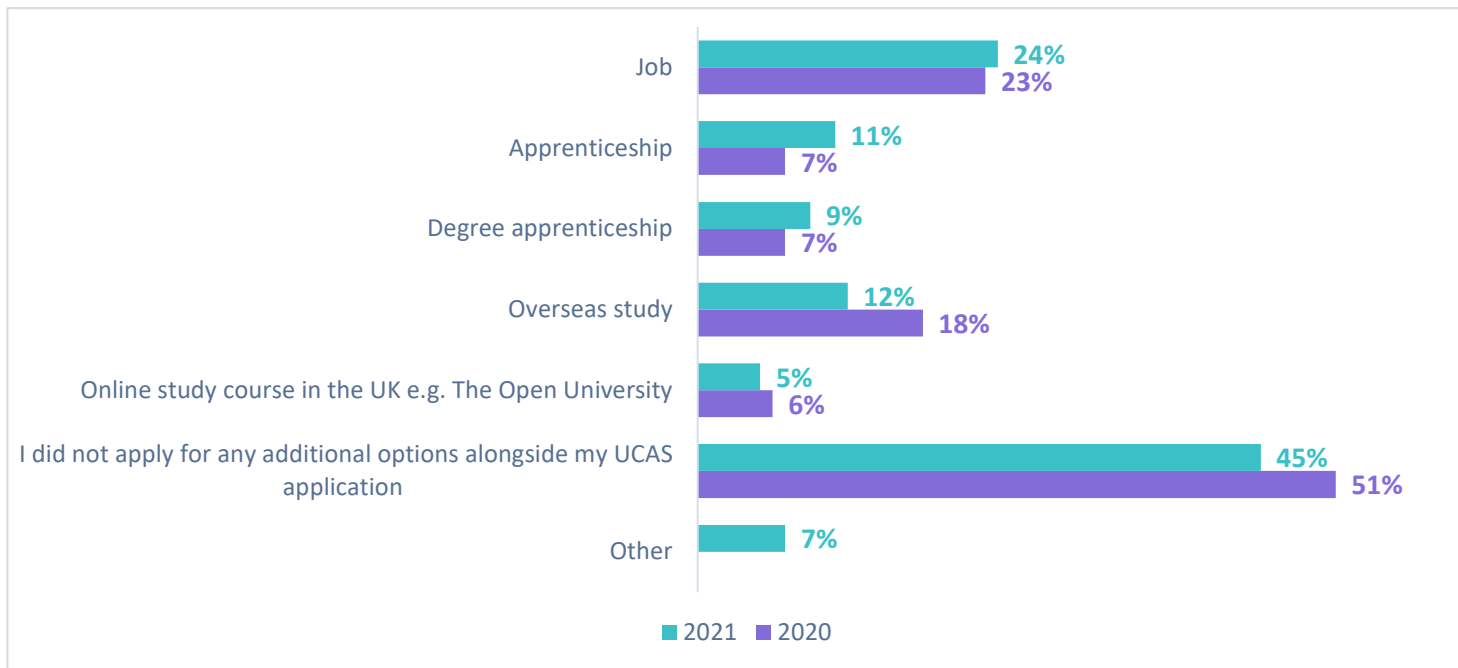
COVID has changed the priorities, plans, and decision-making of young people all across the world. Some new behaviours are here to stay and some aren't. But what seems apparent from the figures discussed here is that many applicants are looking for elsewhere when their original plans fall through.

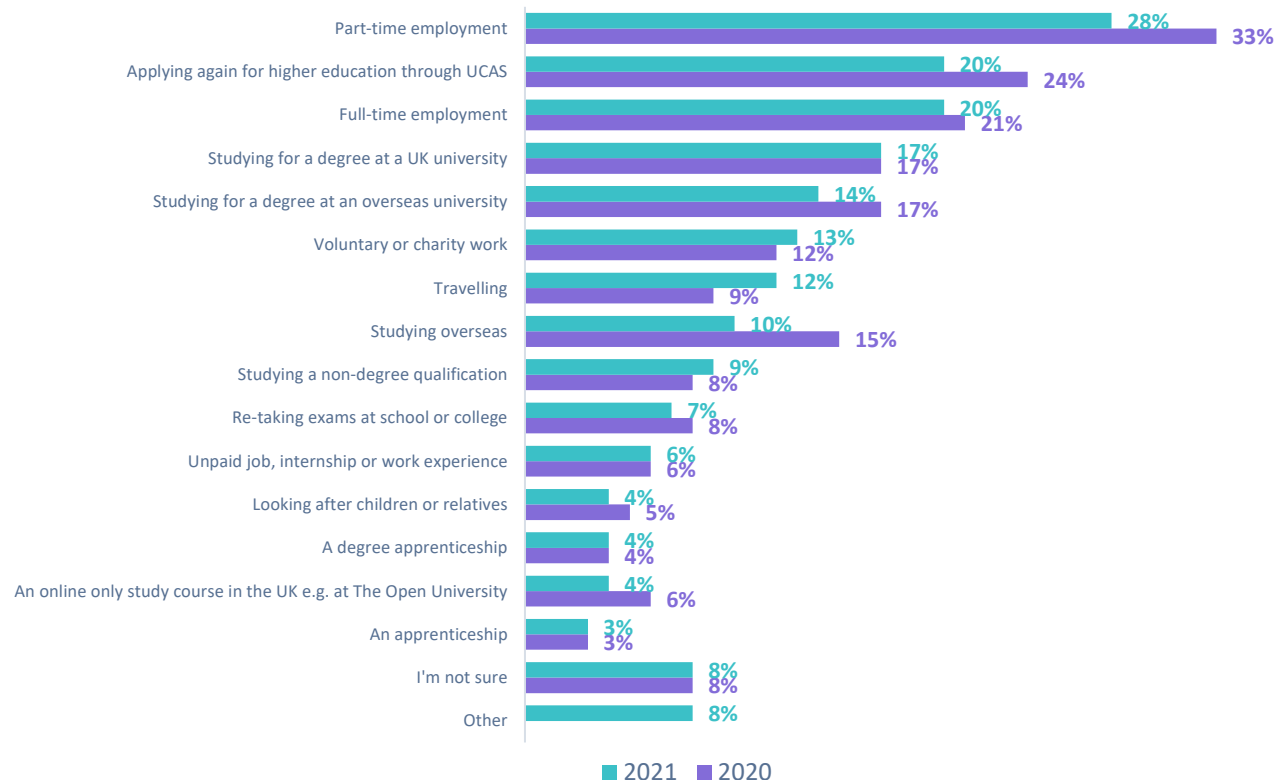
For universities, clear messaging about the benefits of this pathway and quickly following up on applicants who don't meet their grades are essential to keeping their attention at the end of the cycle.

And for 2022, there are opportunities to convert the 20% reapplying...



Q: And which, if any, did you apply for alongside your UCAS application? Please tick all that apply.





**Q: What will you be doing over the next 12 months?
Please tick your main activities only.**

UNPLACED APPLICANT SURVEY 2021

KEY FINDINGS

- When the unplaced applicants submitted their UCAS application, **81%** thought they would definitely or likely go to university.
- 4% of unplaced applicants in 2021 said that **COVID-19** was the only reason they didn't take up a place at a UK university or college that year, **down from 9%** in 2020.
- Over half of unplaced applicants feel that the **cost of living** at uni or college, and the cost of tuition fees, are the biggest barriers to going to uni or college.
- Alongside applying to UCAS, interest in **apprenticeships** and **gap years** increased the most since 2020.
- During the next 12 months, **20% intend to reapply** for higher education through UCAS.



THE RISE OF APPRENTICESHIPS IN 2021

WHAT WE'RE SEEING ON UCAS CAREER FINDER

We've seen **50% growth** in students searching for apprenticeships, careers and internships on Career Finder during the last 12 months, with applicants expressing an interest in apprenticeships increasing to 47% in 2021 (and this is continuing to rise for PAD23). Top searches on Career Finder in the last 12 months are:

1	Engineering	6	Finance
2	Law	7	Marketing
3	Business	8	Psychology
4	Nursing	9	Degree apprenticeships
5	Accounting	10	Paramedic

If you run **apprenticeships**, you can list these on **UCAS Career Finder** for free – we're expecting to see a peak in activity during **National Apprenticeship Week (7-11 February)** so get in touch if you'd like to list your opportunities on the site in time.

How apprenticeships are joining the COVID race.

UCAS Career Finder is our online portal for apprenticeships, internships, and graduate jobs – advertising vacancies from employers like Virgin Media, the BBC, and Jaguar Land Rover. With almost 5000 live apprenticeship vacancies, it's a hot bed of opportunity for young people.

And with that 50% growth in searches for apprenticeships, plus The Guardian's prediction of their important role in the post-COVID economic rebuild (with many employers planning to resume recruitment ASAP) it could be about to get even busier. Early signs from our pre-applicant database suggest the same with 47% of applicants signing up to receive information.

Industry shares the confidence of academia when it comes to apprenticeships. 70% of employers say that apprenticeships will be vital to their recovery, whilst 66% of those who already hire apprentices say that they bounce back quicker from pandemic-related economic challenges – thanks to their apprentices.

The nature of apprenticeships – comparatively low financial commitment, recruitment of mouldable youth, shared responsibility with a training provider – makes them an attractive option for employers. In a post-COVID world, where organisations may exhibit higher risk aversion but also need bigger wins, apprentices might be a safer way to grow – for both parties.

What does this mean?

The incoming boom will likely increase competition for places and may create more demand than supply.

For apprenticeship providers, this is both great news for existing programmes **and** a positive environment to launch new programmes in. Full steam ahead.

For universities and colleges, there's going to be a lot of noise about apprenticeships – if you offer them, now's the time to make the most of UCAS' reach in this space.



More looking forward, less looking back.

This January has seen us, again, in a very unique position. Not only are we still in a global pandemic, but for the first time since it began we can begin to plan a year that may bring some sense of normality back to the world again.

Planning that year without acknowledging the irrevocable changes, however, won't do anybody any good. Unplaced applicants are going in new directions, apprenticeship demand looks fit to burst, and we're all going to need to speak to students differently this time around.

We'll be sharing how students are thinking and feeling about their application and exams in March, which will help you with your communications and planning for conversion and Clearing.

We'll be back next month, with more insight, from January.

If you have any questions in the meantime, or you need access to more data like this, [get in touch](#).

Get in touch

For further information and insights contact your UCAS Media account manager or email us at ucasmediaeducationteam@ucas.ac.uk.