

Housemates

Student Demand Research Survey

A study into student booking demand during the pandemic.

February 2021

Enquiries

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Acknowledgements

Housemates would like to thank all of the students who participated in this survey and shared their points of view, without whom this survey would not have been possible.

Housemates

Housemates, founded in 2018, is a student-first, end-to-end platform that enables operators to manage bookings on accommodation at scale within minutes, all on one SaaS-based platform, whilst also providing students with a comprehensive marketplace product from which they can find, view and book accommodation in just a few clicks.

Housemates works with stakeholders in every area of the student accommodation industry, including students, purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) operators, universities and partners to ensure speed, security and accessibility to students and operators on a global scale.

The purpose of this research was to find out more about the effect that COVID-19 has had on accommodation booking behaviour for 2021/22 and beyond.

Get Involved

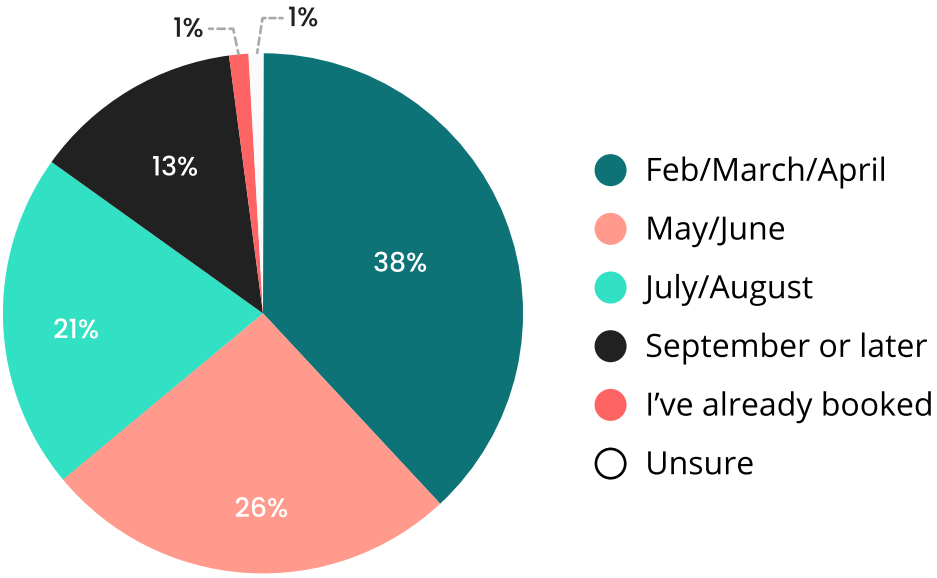
Housemates is led by data. If you would like to learn more about what we do or work with us on future research or data projects, you can contact our CEO Lydia Jones directly at lydia@housemates.io.

38%
want to book in Feb/Mar/Apr

61%
want to book from May onwards

1%
already booked

When do students plan to book for 21/22?



38% want to search and book in Feb/Mar/Apr as they think there will be **more options**. They also **won't have to rush** to book during summer. Some think there are **better discounts** at this time.

61% want to search and book from May onwards because they are unsure of **COVID restrictions** or they want to wait for **UCAS confirmation.**

69.8%
haven't booked due to lockdown uncertainty

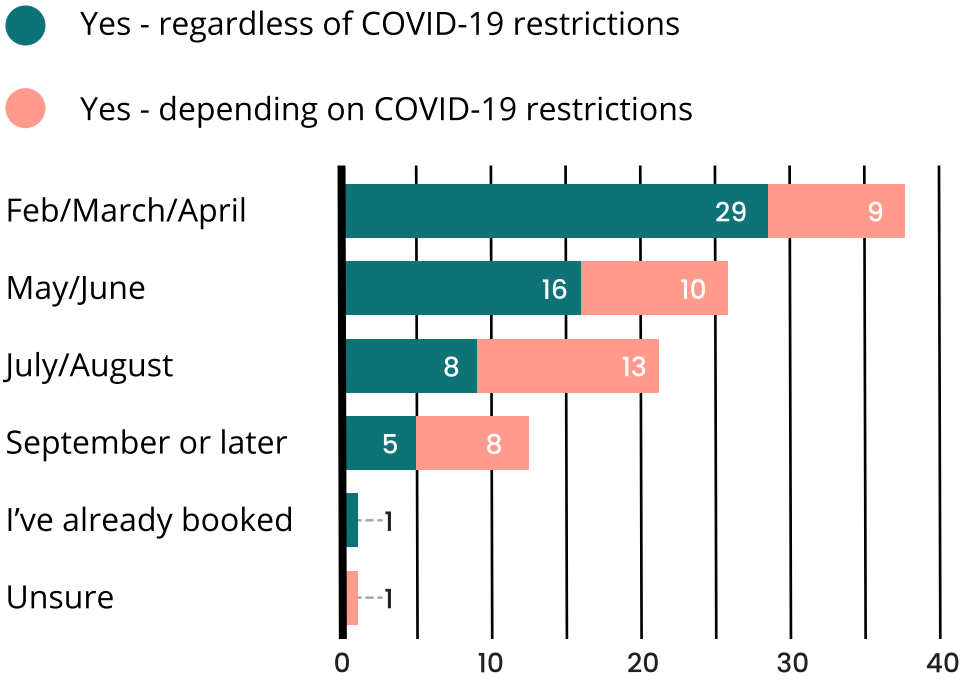
40.3%
haven't booked due to uncertainty around face-to-face teaching

30.2%
haven't booked due to being unable to attend viewings

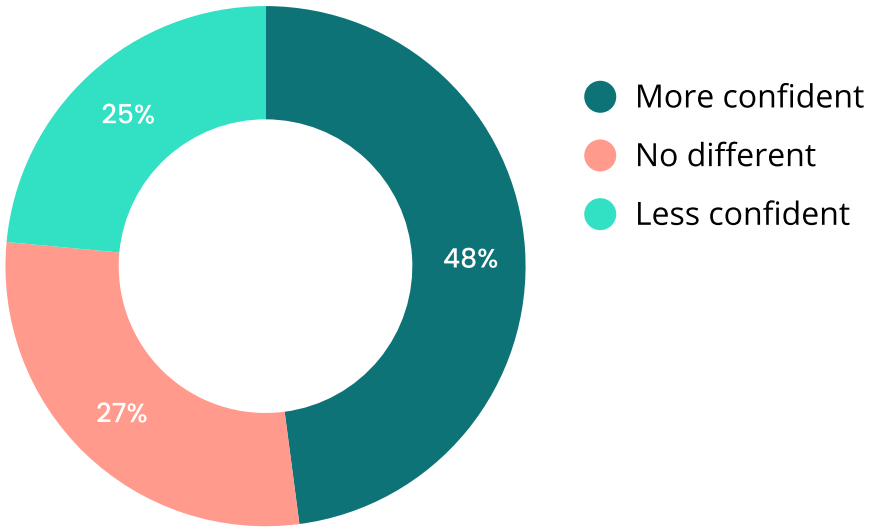
29.5%
haven't booked due to lack of protection against COVID in tenancy agreements

Impact of COVID on booking

Do you intend to book accommodation in the next few months?



If you live or study in England, how has the proposed lockdown easing roadmap made you feel about booking accommodation?



83%
Students preferred 9-12 months contract length which covers a full year or academic year.

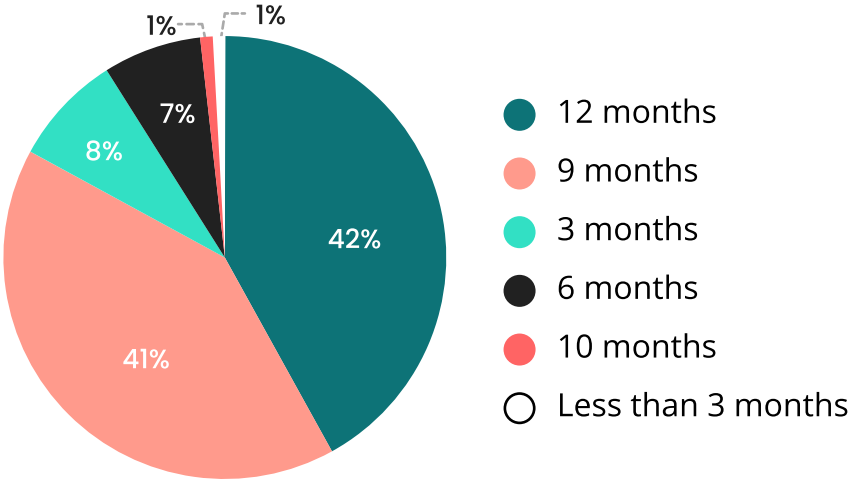
vs

17%
Students preferred less than 6 months due to of COVID-19 uncertainty.

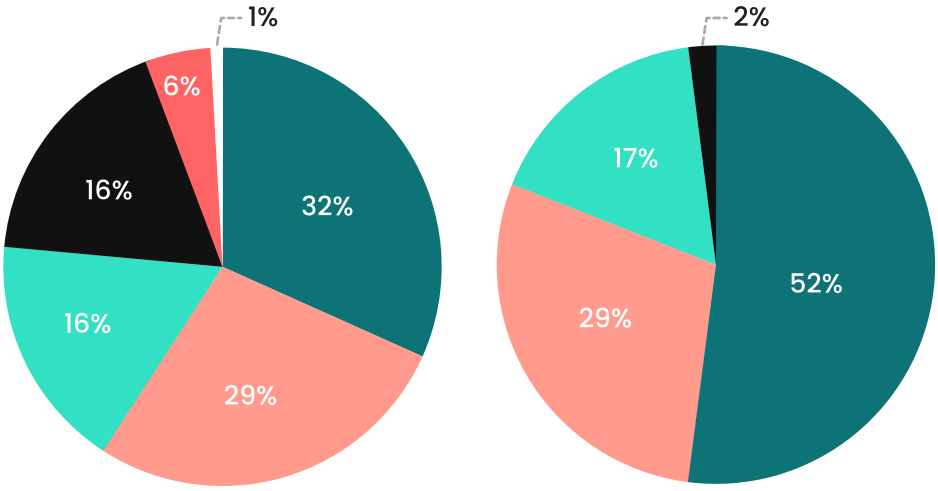
- Shared student house or flats with private landlord/letting agency (HMOs)
- Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA)
- University provided halls
- Living at home with family or guardians
- Not at university this year
- Private Flat

Accommodation Preferences

What is your preferred accommodation contract length for 2021/22?



Comparison of preferred accommodation type:



2020/21
13%↑

In demand for PBSA.
Students value the on-site facilities, ease in making friends, close proximity to campuses and especially security

2021/22
20%↑

In demand for HMOs.
Many students think HMOs are easier to find, more affordable and more spacious. They also feel they have more privacy and independence. Some are moving away from PBSA due to bad experiences this year.

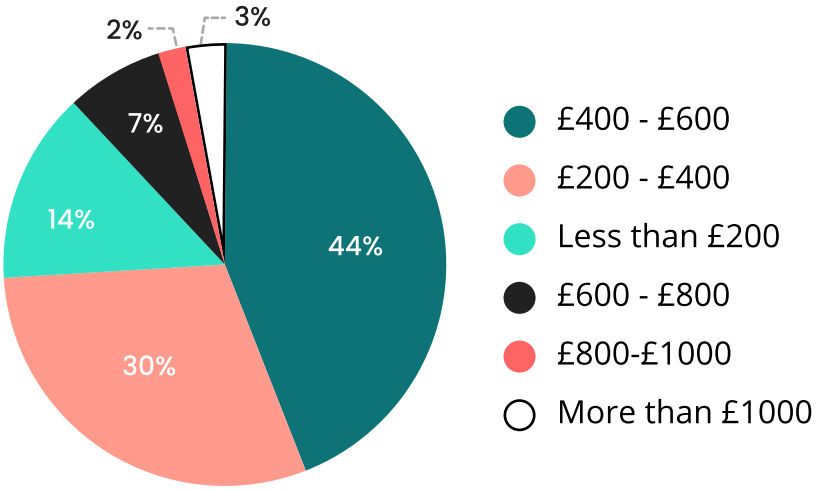
Budget Breakdown

74%
say their budget is between £200 and £600

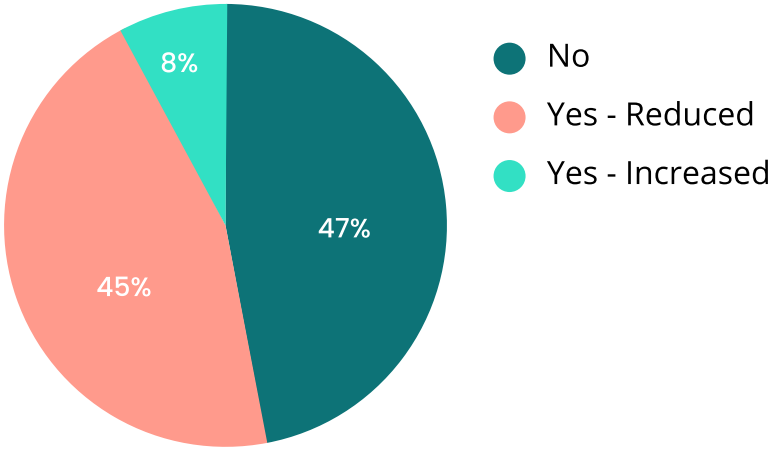
31.8%
say their budget is reduced because their families are less able to support

29.5%
say their budget is reduced because they've lost jobs and are less able to support themselves

What is your monthly budget for accommodation?



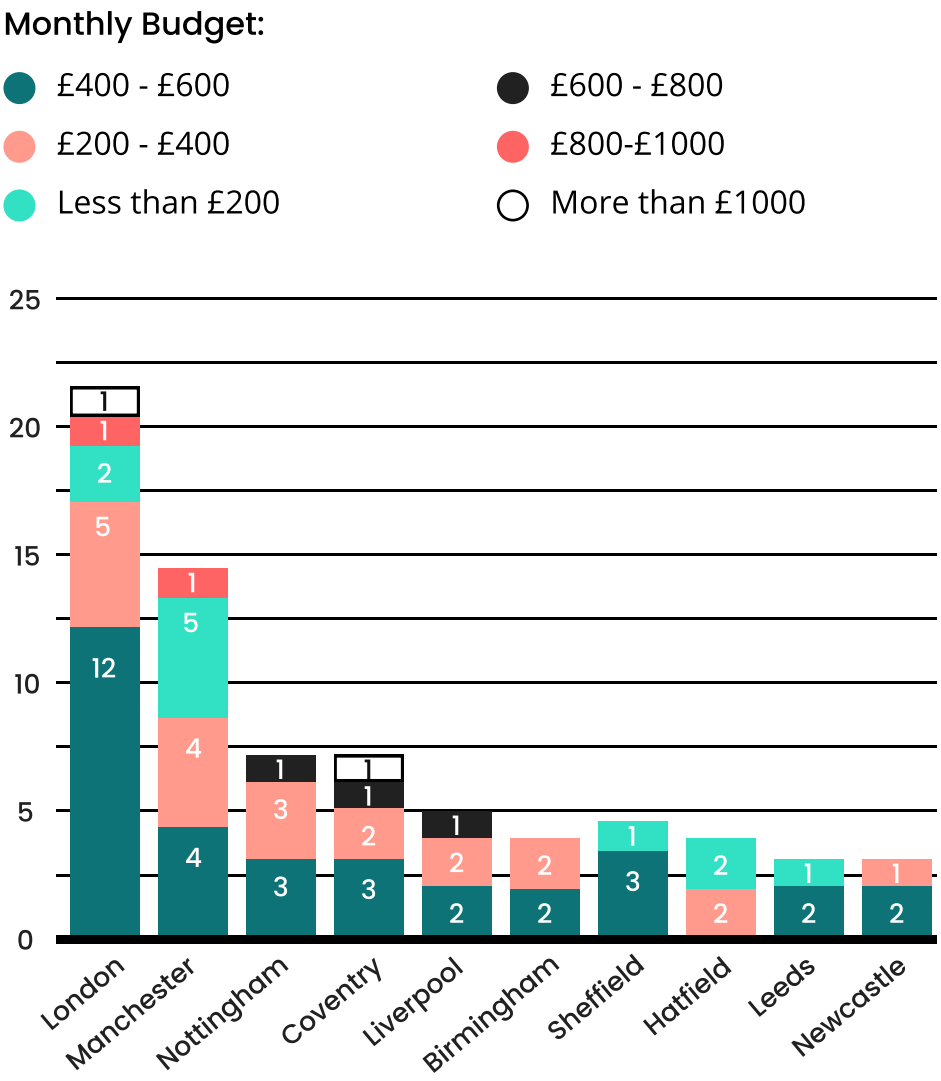
Has your budget been impacted by COVID-19?



45% of students say their budget has been reduced as a result of COVID-19 whilst 47% say their budget has remained the same. Only 8% say their budget has been increased.

£400–£600
is the most common budget amount across cities

Budget Breakdown by term-time cities (%)

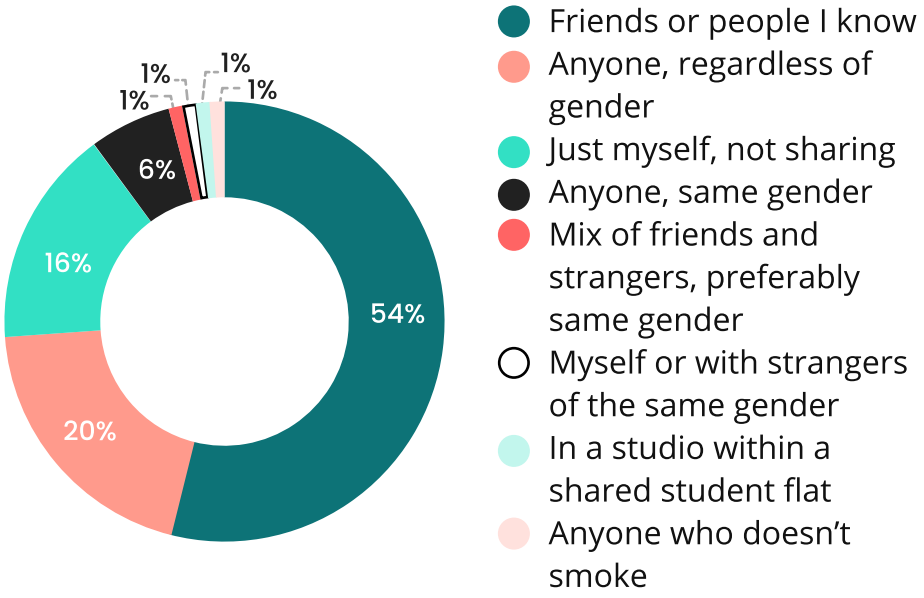


54%
want to live with friend or people they know

Group of 3
is the most popular number of students per group booking

Booking preferences

Who are you looking to live with?



How many people do you intend to live with?

People per group	%
other	20
2	13
3	21
4	12
5	12
6	11
8	3

78%
want to book in groups of minimum 2 people or are willing to share with at least 1 other student

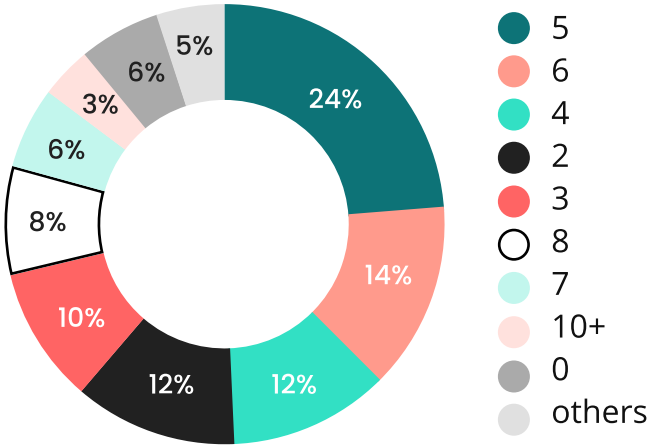
5%
want to book and live on their own

65%
are willing to share a flat with 4 or more students

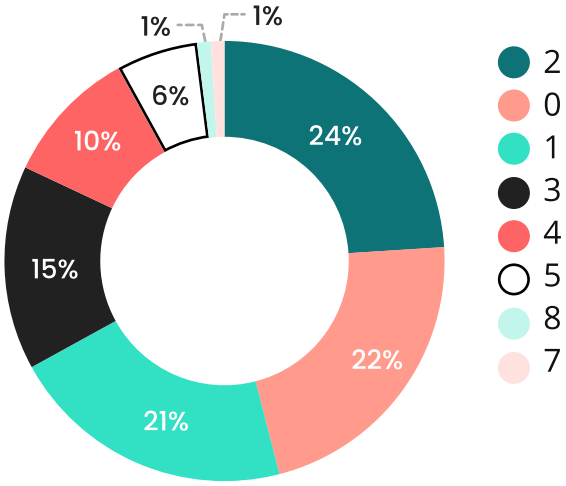
Booking preferences

Number of beds per flat:

Maximum no.



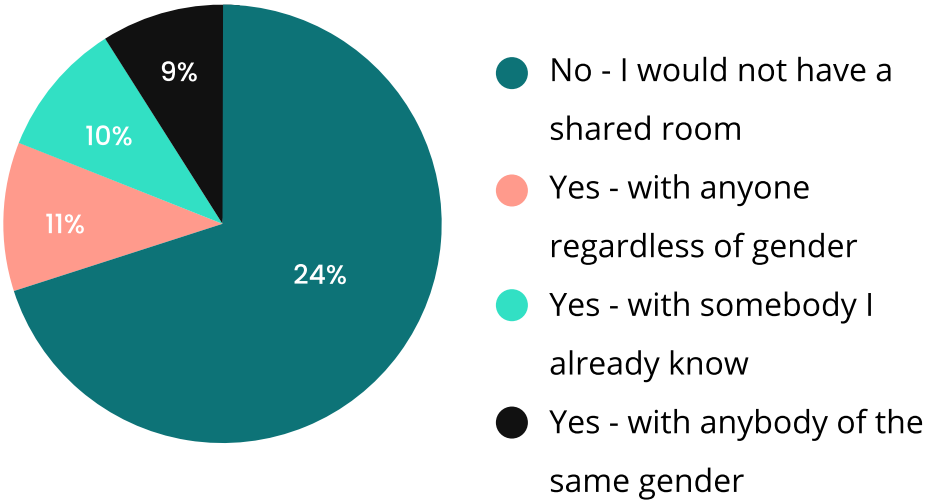
Minimum no.



30%
of students would share a room with somebody depending on the circumstances

Booking preferences

Roomshare preferences



With 58% of students only looking to pay £400 or less and 30% willing to share a twin room with others, a lot of them can fit in this segment for affordable renting where they can share rooms with their peers.

42.2%
say double bed is in the top 3 features they look for in an accommodation

39.5%
say an ensuite is in the top 3 things they prioritise when booking

39.5%
say distance to university is in the top 3 things that are most important

Accommodation feature preferences

86.8% of students prioritise **affordability** when it comes to accommodation which is widely known.

Group bookings for twin rooms should be looked at an affordable accommodation option for the 30% that would share a room with friends or other students.

67.4% of students say that **high speed wi-fi** is in the top 3 important features they look for in an accommodation.

65.1% of students say that **all bills included** is in top 3 important features they look for in an accommodation.

These are features offered by majority of PBSAs which can attract students.

33.3% of students value **social areas, on site facilities and security** as the top 3 things they look for when booking accommodation.

Flexibility

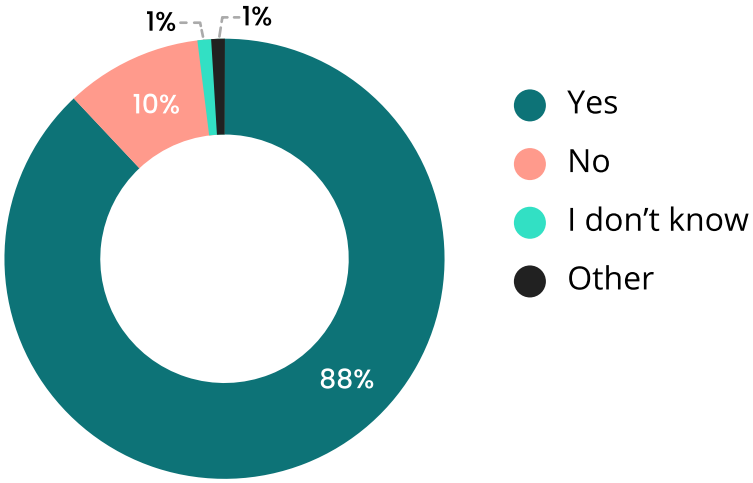
45% say that more flexibility in tenancy contracts would help them feel more comfortable booking accommodation

67.4% say that better cancellation policies for COVID-19 would help them feel more comfortable booking accommodation

65.1% say that ability to cancel the contract if they quit university would help them feel more comfortable booking accommodation

Booking experience

Would you use a platform which allows you to book your accommodation in minutes by paying a reservation fee without any waiting?



88% would use a platform that allows them to book accommodation in minutes by paying a reservation fee

Enquiries

lydia@housemates.io

Conclusion

Covid-19 restrictions have planted uncertainty on students and have had a heavy impact on their lives, with over 60% of those we surveyed planning to book from May or later.

Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA) has seen a 13% increase in demand due to the negative experiences students have faced with private landlords and letting agencies throughout the pandemic.

Benefits such as on-site facilities, social activities, high security and included bills are highly important to students when it comes to choosing PBSA over renting through a letting agent or landlord, as is the perception of PBSA as a modern, clean and high-quality place to live.

Despite this, students are looking for further flexibility in terms of tenancy contracts, cancellation policies and booking periods in order to accommodate their changing needs in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic - which PBSAs are in a unique position to offer.

Affordability is also a major factor, with many students indicating that their budget has reduced. Shared twin rooms are an option that an increasing number of students are looking for in order to meet their new budget.

There is further work required to educate students on the total cost of PBSA compared to other forms of renting, as students tend to perceive it as more expensive. Though, with bills included it tends to be a closer competition than thought.

There is also a concrete demand for an instant booking platform like Housemates on the market and the vast majority of students are looking to book online. With booking demand predicted to bounce back up from the end of May onwards as further positive news around COVID-19 lockdown easing is confirmed, now is an excellent time to join the Housemates platform in preparation for this demand.

Housemates