VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON
TE HERENGA WAKA

KŌRERO MAI ‘26

STUDENT VOICE SURVEY

TOPLINE REPORT

SEPTEMBER 2026





AT A GLANCE

Students continue to value the University's core educational experience. However, wellbeing, financial pressure and competing responsibilities are limiting some students' capacity to participate, connect and continue

ACADEMIC SATISFACTION

82%

83% in 2025 – Change is not statistically significant

TEACHING QUALITY

78%

Not asked in 2025 – New question from 2026

CONSIDERED LEAVING

26%

Not asked in 2025 – New question from 2026

PROUD TO BE A STUDENT HERE

75%

75% in 2025 – No change

CONNECTION TO COMMUNITY

40%

43% in 2025 – Change is not statistically significant

POOR WELLBEING

56%

50% in 2025 – Change is statistically significant but relatively small

SATISFACTION WITH SERVICES*

79%

Question changed in 2026 – Similar measure in 2025 was 82%

*Before 2026 respondents were asked to provide one measure of satisfaction for all services and facilities combined. The approach changed in 2026 with respondents being asked to provide three measures of satisfaction, one each for 'student support services' (77%), 'university services' (81%) and 'university spaces and facilities' (79%). The figure provided here for 2026 is the average of the three measures

ABOUT THE EVIDENCE

The survey provides a substantial university-wide evidence base, with some important qualifications

Survey conducted in **Tri 2, 2026**

All enrolled students invited

3,094 usable responses received

RESPONSE RATE

16%

The response rate declined from 26% in 2025, but the respondent profile remained broadly aligned with the wider student population



Broadly representative of the student population across:

- Age
- Ethnicity
- Domestic and international status
- Level of study
- Taught and research status

Important qualifications

- Faculty and gender were the main areas of over- or under-representation
- Response counts vary because of question routing, the modular survey design and item non-response
- Results are based on unweighted responses
- Qualitative percentages show the proportion of comments mentioning a theme, not the proportion of all students holding that view

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Teaching, learning and academic relationships remain major strengths

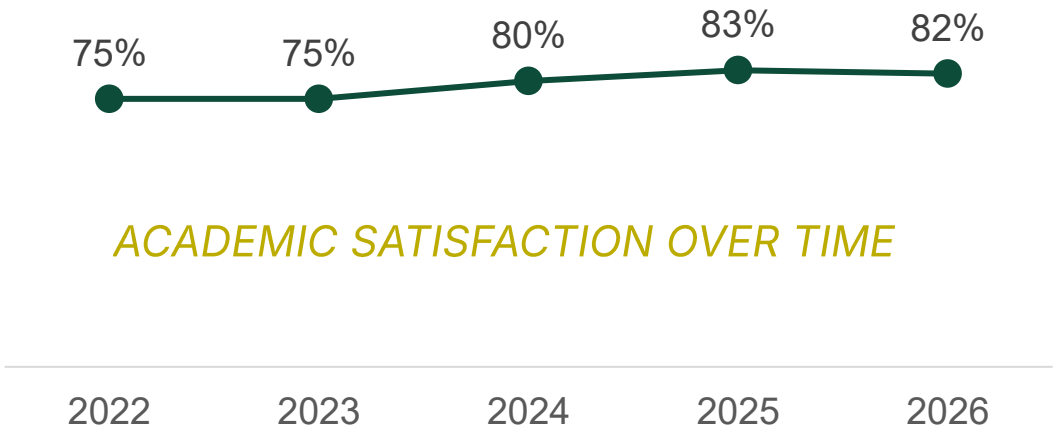
82% satisfied with their overall academic experience

78% rated the quality of teaching as good or excellent

88% of taught students happy with availability of lecturers outside of class

88% of research students were satisfied with their primary supervisor

93% understood the academic requirements of their programme



ACADEMIC SATISFACTION OVER TIME

"All of my lecturers have been very passionate about their subjects, and it has stimulated my interest in them."

Quality teaching, engaging curriculum and supportive academic relationships are institutional assets that should be actively protected

What students value most

Among 1,931 comments about the best aspects of the academic experience:

- **47%** interesting and engaging courses or content
- **34%** learning, knowledge and intellectual growth
- **30%** engaging and knowledgeable teaching staff
- **26%** academic support and approachable staff

CONSISTENCY OF THE ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

Students are asking for greater consistency, clarity and coordination

"Assignment deadlines across papers are often clustered together with little coordination between courses."

What students most want improved

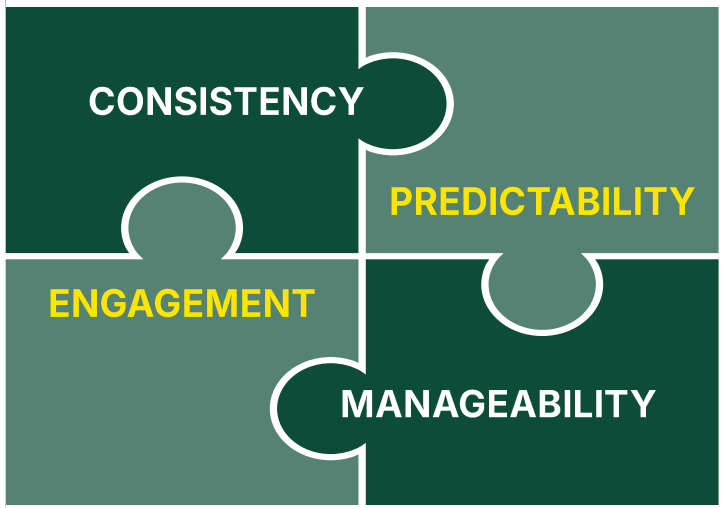
Among 1,802 comments about the academic experience:

- **24%** communication, information and course organisation
- **23%** teaching quality and lecturer engagement
- **22%** assessment design, clarity and fairness
- **22%** academic support, advice and staff availability
- **12%** workload, time pressure and course coordination

Students' concerns are interconnected:

- **Unclear information** increases uncertainty and workload
- **Inconsistent teaching or assessment** affects understanding and confidence
- **Delayed support or feedback** makes progression more difficult

Students are generally happy with the academic model, but they want to see a reduction in avoidable variation across courses and programmes



STUDENT CIRCUMSTANCES

For many students, study is one of several major demands on their time and energy

64% UNDERTAKING PAID WORK

19% WITH CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES

29% DISABILITY OR HEALTH CHALLENGES

Recurring obstacles to academic work or success

32% COMPETING JOB RESPONSIBILITIES

29% FINANCIAL ISSUES

21% FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES

26% of respondents had seriously considered leaving their studies

Among those who provided reasons:

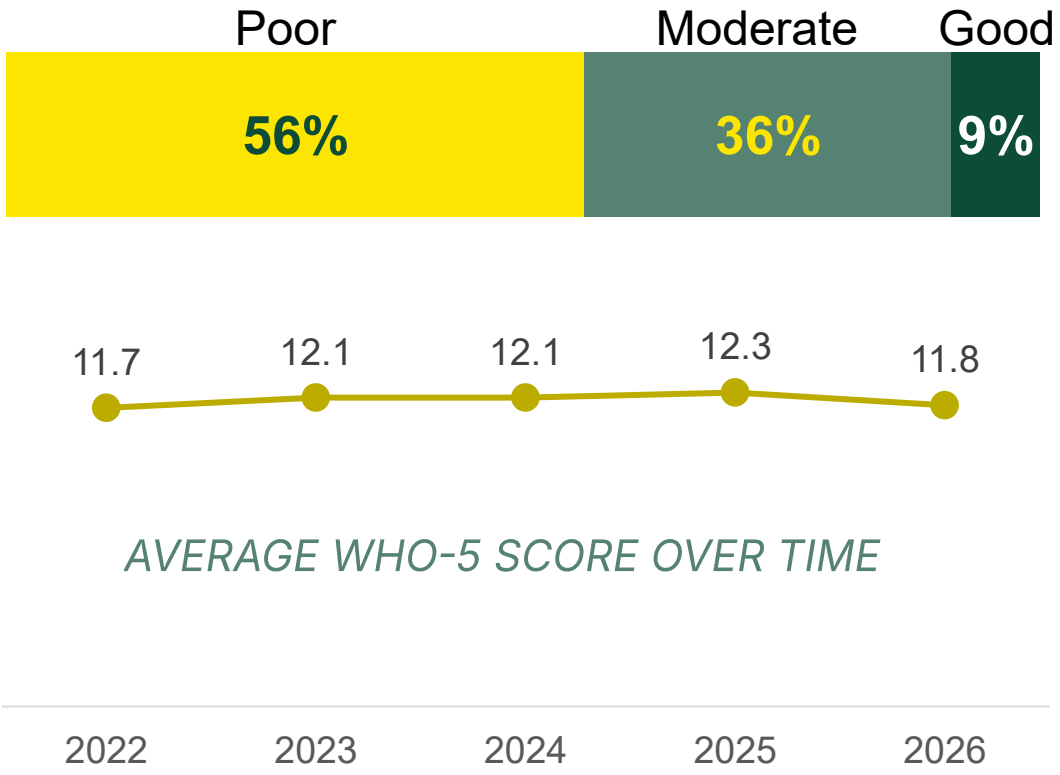
- **55%** wellbeing issues
- **45%** financial issues
- **25%** difficulty managing academic workload
- **19%** family responsibilities
- **18%** job responsibilities

Continuation is shaped by the interaction of personal, financial, academic and institutional factors

WELLBEING AND DISTRESS

Wellbeing remains the clearest area of concern

WHO-5 wellbeing



The decrease in 2026 was statistically significant, but the year-to-year change was modest and does not represent a large shift in overall wellbeing

PHQ-4 psychological distress

31% MODERATE OR SEVERE DISTRESS

40% MET SCREENING THRESHOLD FOR POSSIBLE ANXIETY

26% MET SCREENING THRESHOLD FOR POSSIBLE DEPRESSION

The central concern is not only the annual change. It is the underlying prevalence of limited positive wellbeing and psychological distress, and its relationship with engagement and continuation

WHO-5 (World Health Organization Well-Being Index) and PHQ-4 (Patient Health Questionnaire-4) are validated screening measures of wellbeing and psychological distress. Results indicate population-level trends and should not be interpreted as clinical diagnoses.

BELONGING AND CONNECTION

Students feel positive about the University, but do not always feel connected to its community

Positive relationship with the university

79% would encourage a friend to study here

75% are proud to be a student here

70% feel they belong at the university

The connection gap

40% feel connected with the student community

16% frequently attended clubs, societies, or social events

14% frequently interacted with students through sport or exercise

What students say would help

Among 581 comments about community and connection:

- **47%** more social events and shared activities
- **21%** stronger peer connection within courses
- **20%** clubs, societies and student-led communities
- **18%** connection across campuses, faculties and disciplines
- **15%** welcoming and cross-cultural connection

"Just more icebreakers in class maybe? I don't really meet with people that are within my lecture, and see them more as faces."

Connection should be built into courses, cohorts and the wider student journey, alongside accessible clubs, events and student-led activities

SERVICES AND SUPPORT

Students are generally positive about services once they reach them

77%

Satisfied with **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES** used

81%

Satisfied with **UNIVERSITY SERVICES** used

79%

Satisfied with **SPACES AND FACILITIES** used

Finding help and accessing help are the main areas where friction occurs

Main areas of friction for **Student Support Services**

- **25%** access, capacity and waiting times
- **24%** awareness, signposting and navigation
- **16%** communication, responsiveness and follow-through

Main areas of friction for **University Services**

- **29%** clearer information, awareness and service navigation
- **19%** communication, updates and responsiveness
- **13%** digital systems and online usability

"A full list of all these services, what they do and how to use them."

Service quality is only one part of the student experience. Awareness, access, responsiveness and resolution are experienced as one support journey

Individual service-experience measures use the redesigned 2026 experience scale and form a new baseline for future reporting

NAVIGATION AND COHERENCE

Students experience the University as one system, even when it is organised as many separate services

The same issue appeared across multiple areas

Academic experience
- Course organisation
- Assessment information
- Timely communication

Digital environment
- Inconsistent Nuku structures
- Fragmented platforms
- Difficulty finding information

Student support
- Unclear service roles
- Difficult access pathways
- Limited follow-through

University services and campus
- Administrative coordination
- Event promotion
- Maps, rooms and wayfinding

"There are far too many different websites with no clear central hub."

Additionally…

- **21%** often or always struggled to find the room or space they needed on campus

Students are asking for…



A CLEARER STUDENT FRONT DOOR

The recurring request is not simply for more communication. Students want clearer, coordinated and easier-to-find information, with more obvious pathways through both digital and physical environments

STUDENT PRIORITIES, STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT…



STUDENTS' PRIORITIES

Students' stated priorities reinforce the wider survey findings

What is the one thing the University should improve on next year?

Based on **1,339 comments**

20% community, belonging, events and student life

18% student support, wellbeing and pastoral care

17% teaching quality, course design, academic experience

16% affordability, fees and financial support

15% communication, information, administrative processes

11% equity, inclusion, accessibility, cultural responsiveness

"Facilitating more community and connection amongst students."

"Measures to alleviate the impact of the recent cost of living increases on students."

"Providing more consistent, timely, and easy-to-find information across all courses and university services would make a big difference to the student experience."

Students are not calling for one isolated initiative. They are asking for a more connected, supportive, manageable and coherent university experience

Comments could be assigned to more than one theme
Percentages should not be added together

STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

Four overarching strategic priorities emerge

1. Strengthen connection and belonging

Create sustained and inclusive opportunities for students to build relationships through courses, cohorts, clubs, activities and shared spaces

2. Protect educational and support fundamentals

Maintain a strong focus on teaching quality, course organisation, academic guidance, wellbeing support and responsive services

3. Reduce financial and practical barriers

Recognise how affordability, paid work, caring responsibilities, disability, health and access to flexible participation shape engagement and continuation

4. Make the University easier to navigate

Improve communication, signposting, administrative coordination, digital integration and physical wayfinding around the student journey

The opportunity is to preserve what students value while removing the pressures and friction that make it harder for them to participate, connect and succeed

THE OUTCOME WE ARE SEEKING

A more connected, supportive and navigable student experience

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

SHARE	Communicate the findings transparently with students, staff and other relevant groups
RESPOND	Identify existing initiatives that address the four strategic priorities (page 13) and clarify gaps
PRIORITISE	Determine where institution-wide coordination or investment would have the greatest impact
TRACK	Establish a focused set of measures for monitoring progress through future Kōrero Mai surveys and other evidence
CLOSE THE LOOP	Show students how their feedback has informed decisions and improvements

Students have told us what they value and where the experience creates friction

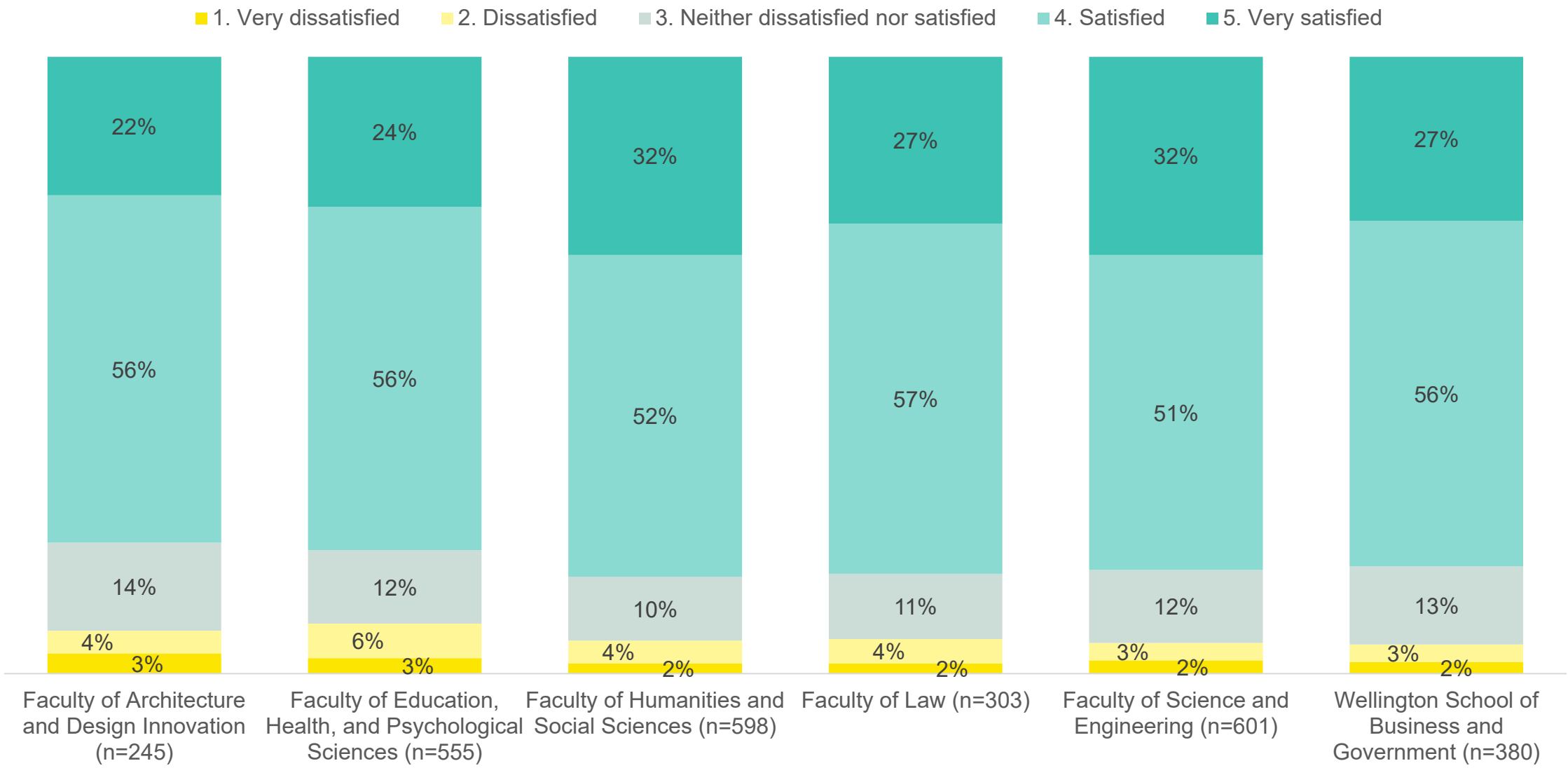
The next step is to make the institutional response visible

SUPPORTING DETAIL AND TECHNICAL APPENDICES



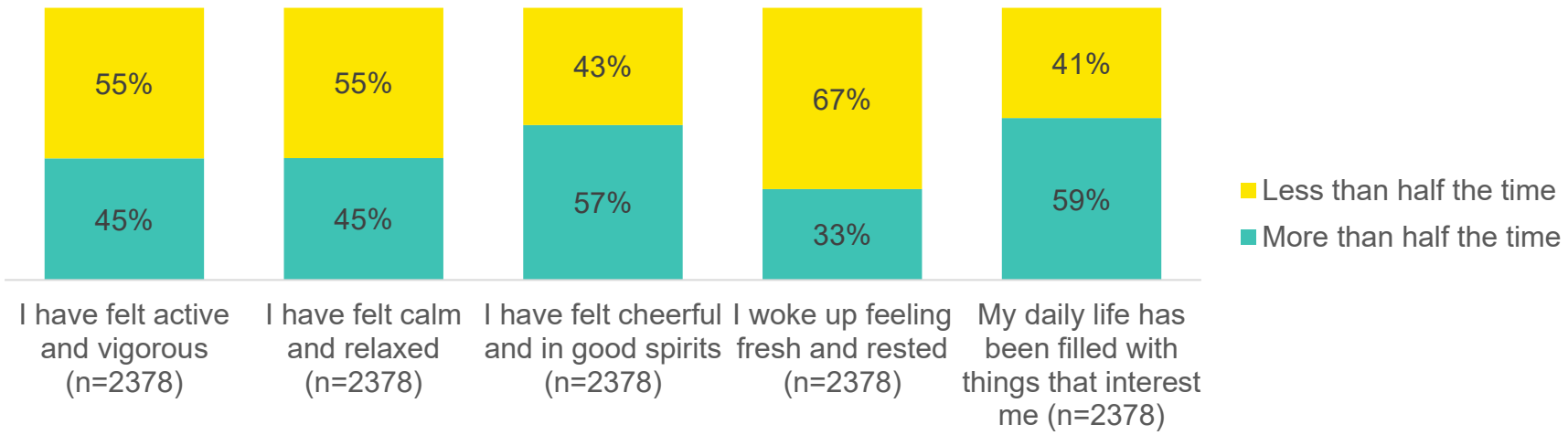
APPENDIX 1: ACADEMIC SATISFACTION BY FACULTY

Percentage of respondents ‘Satisfied’ or ‘Very satisfied’ with their overall academic experience, 2026, by Faculty

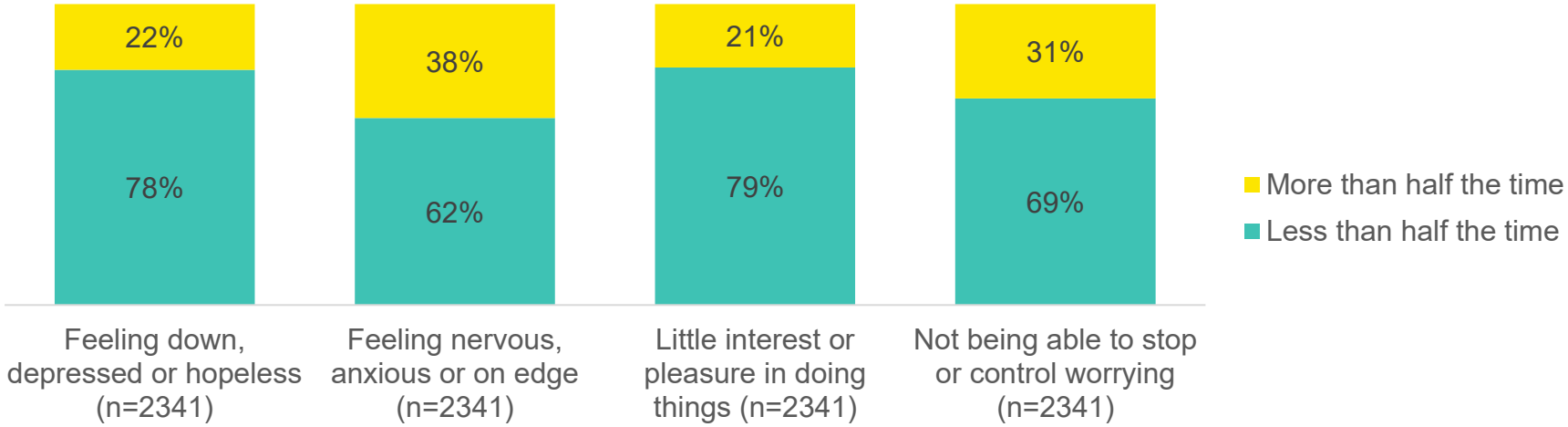


APPENDIX 2: DETAILED WELLBEING MEASURES

WHO-5 questions, 2026. Please indicate how you have been feeling over the last two weeks…



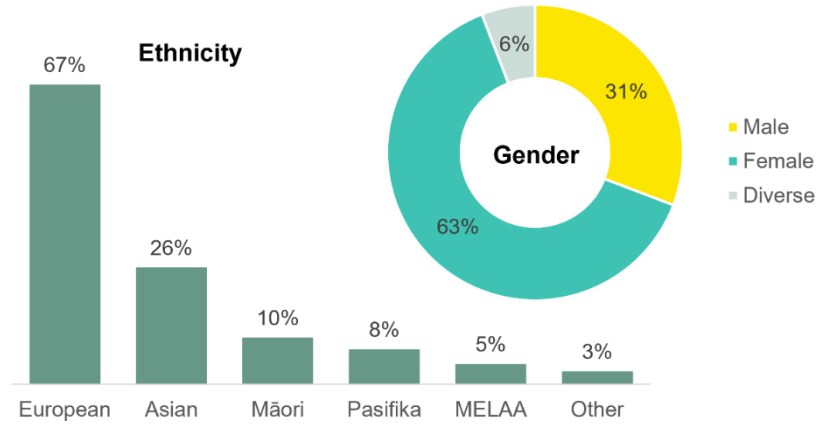
PHQ-4 questions, 2026. Over the last two weeks, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?

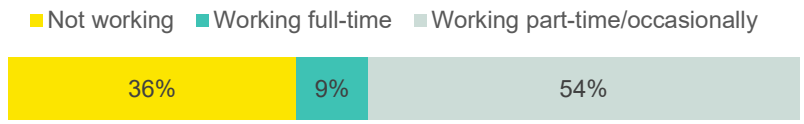


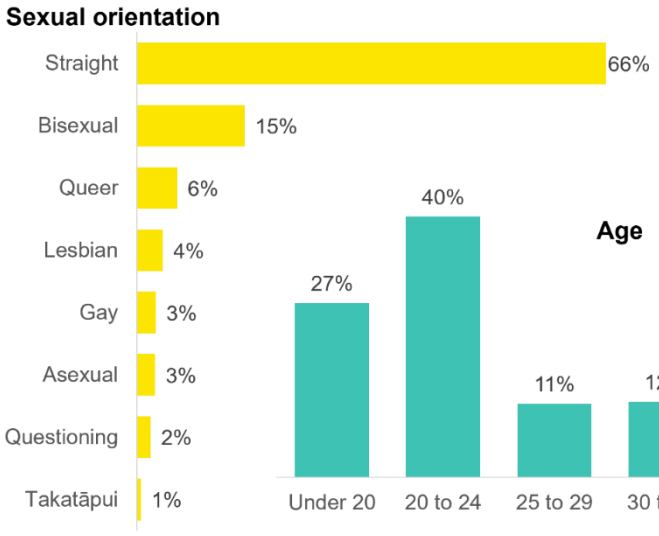
APPENDIX 3: RESPONDENT PROFILE

		Survey Respondents (n=3,094)	Student Population (n=~20,000)
Faculty	Faculty of Architecture and Design Innovation	9%	11%
	Faculty of Education, Health, and Psychological Sciences	19%	13%
	Faculty of Graduate Research	8%	7%
	Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences	20%	28%
	Faculty of Law	11%	10%
	Faculty of Science and Engineering	20%	19%
	Te Kawa a Māui (Iho)	1%	0%
	Wellington School of Business and Government	13%	15%
Age Group	25 and Over	33%	30%
	Under 25	67%	70%
Gender	Male	31%	40%
	Female	63%	58%
	Diverse	6%	2%
Ethnicity	European	67%	67%
	Māori	10%	11%
	Pasifika	8%	6%
	Asian	26%	24%
	MELAA	5%	4%
	Other	3%	2%
International / Domestic	Domestic	80%	81%
	International	20%	19%
Taught / Research	Taught Student	91%	90%
	Research Student	9%	10%
Student Type	Undergraduate Student	66%	68%
	Postgraduate Student	31%	30%
	Non-matriculated Student	3%	3%

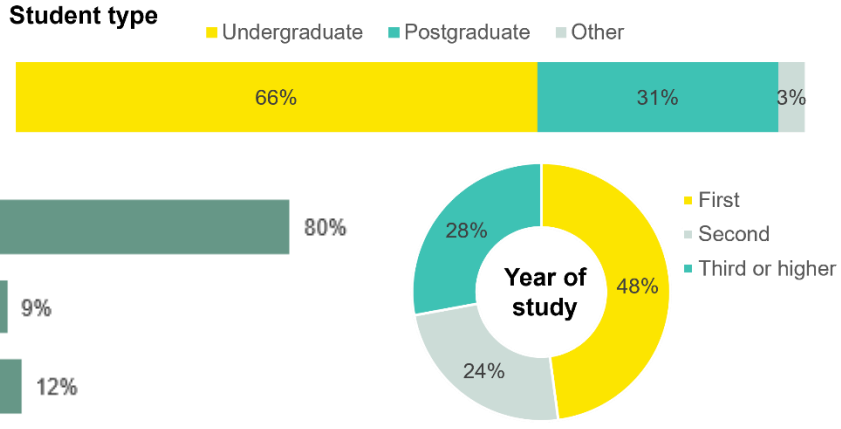
APPENDIX 3: RESPONDENT PROFILE

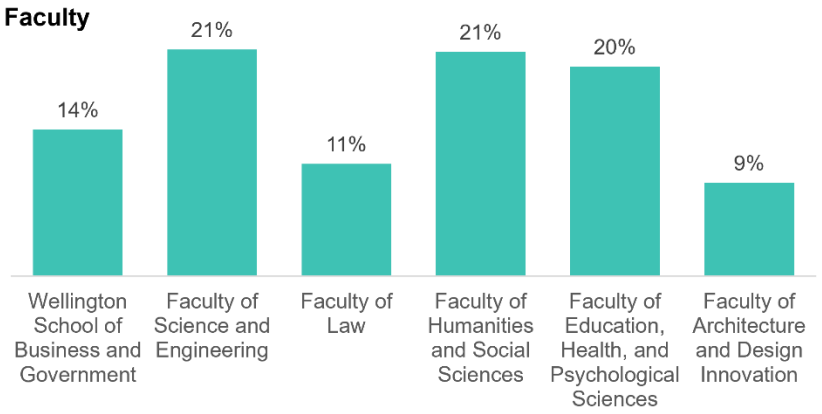


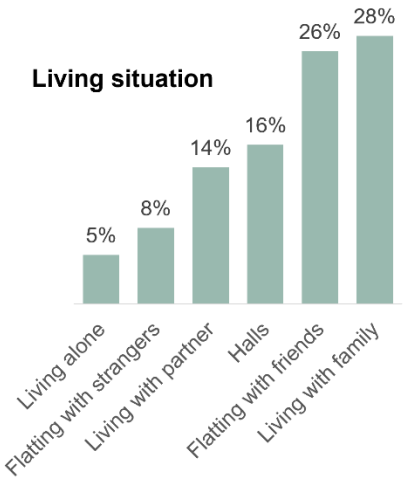


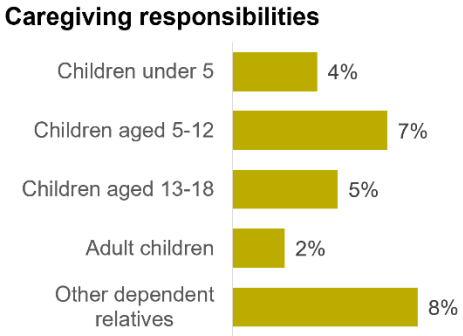






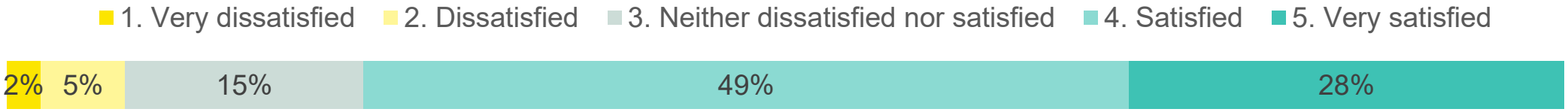




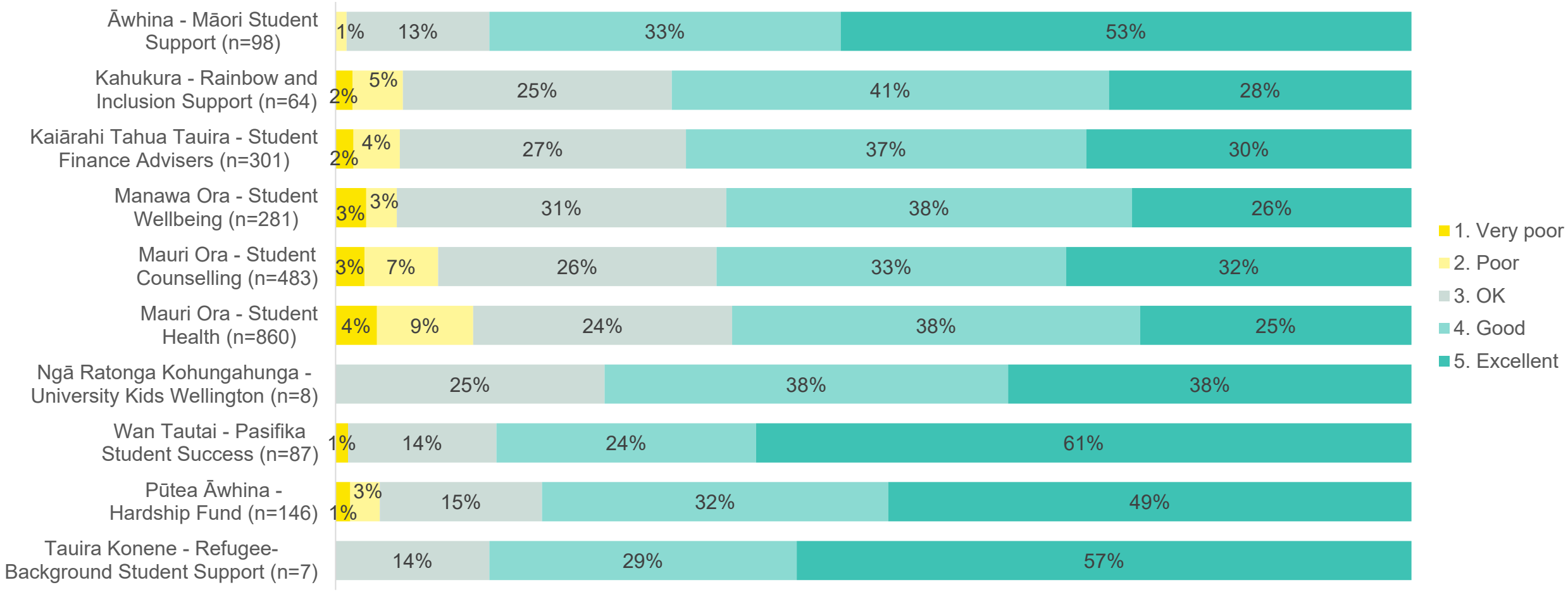


APPENDIX 4: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Overall, how satisfied are you with the Student Support Services you've engaged with over the past 12 months? (n=1997)

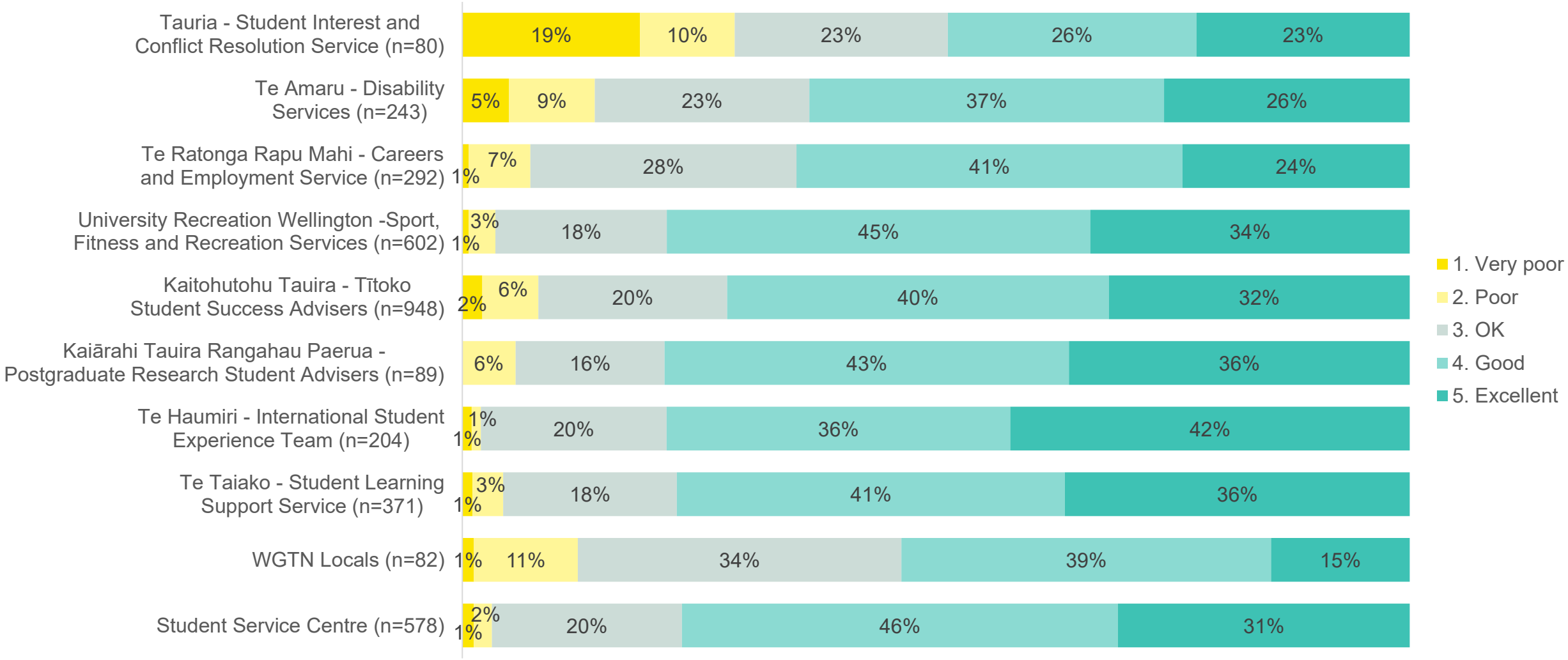


Thinking about the last 12 months, please rate your experience of the Student Support Services listed below.



APPENDIX 4: STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

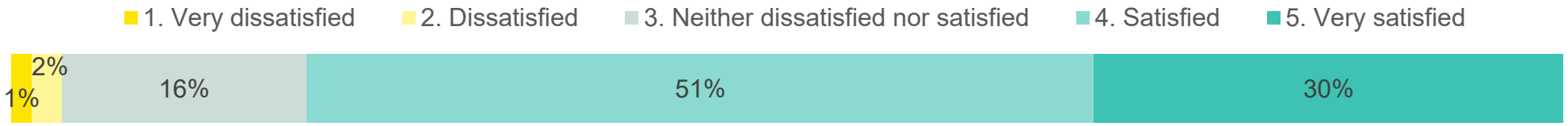
Thinking about the last 12 months, please rate your experience of the Student Support Services listed below.



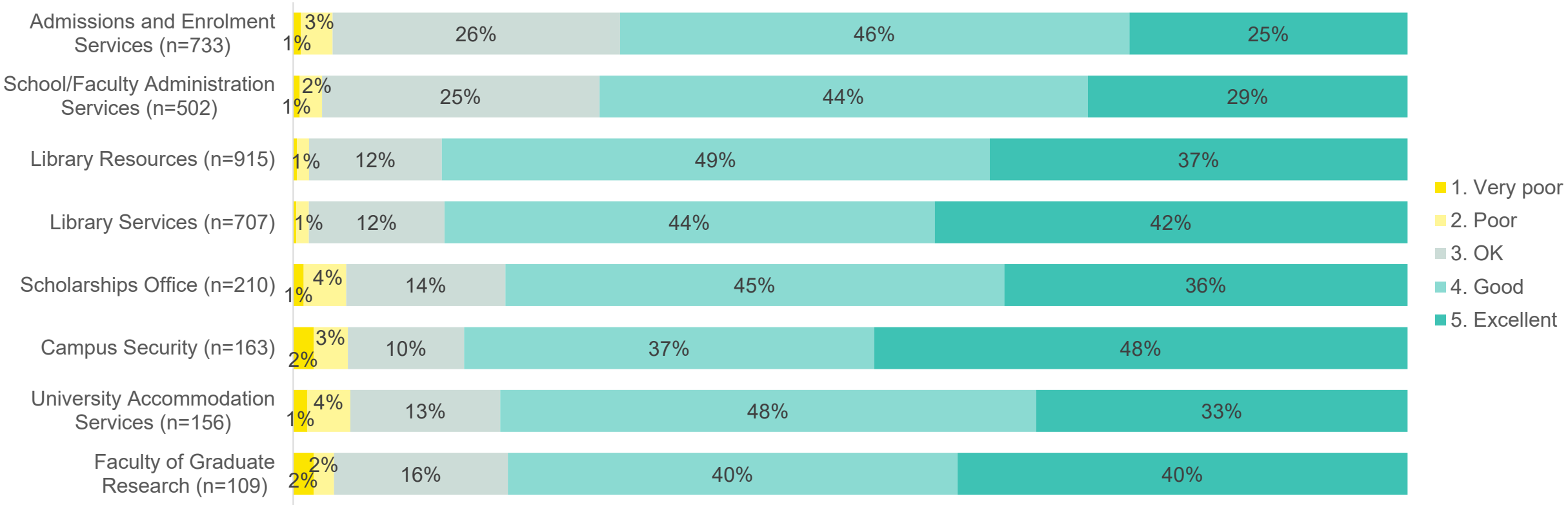
These questions were only asked of those who had reported that they had used the service in the last 12 months. As the question wording and response categories differ from those used previously, results from 2026 are not directly comparable with earlier years and should be interpreted as a new baseline for future trend reporting.

APPENDIX 5: UNIVERSITY SERVICES

Overall, how satisfied are you with the University Services you've engaged with over the past 12 months? (n=1102)



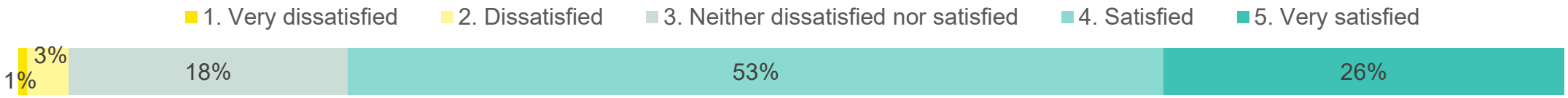
Thinking about the last 12 months, please rate your experience of the University Services listed below.



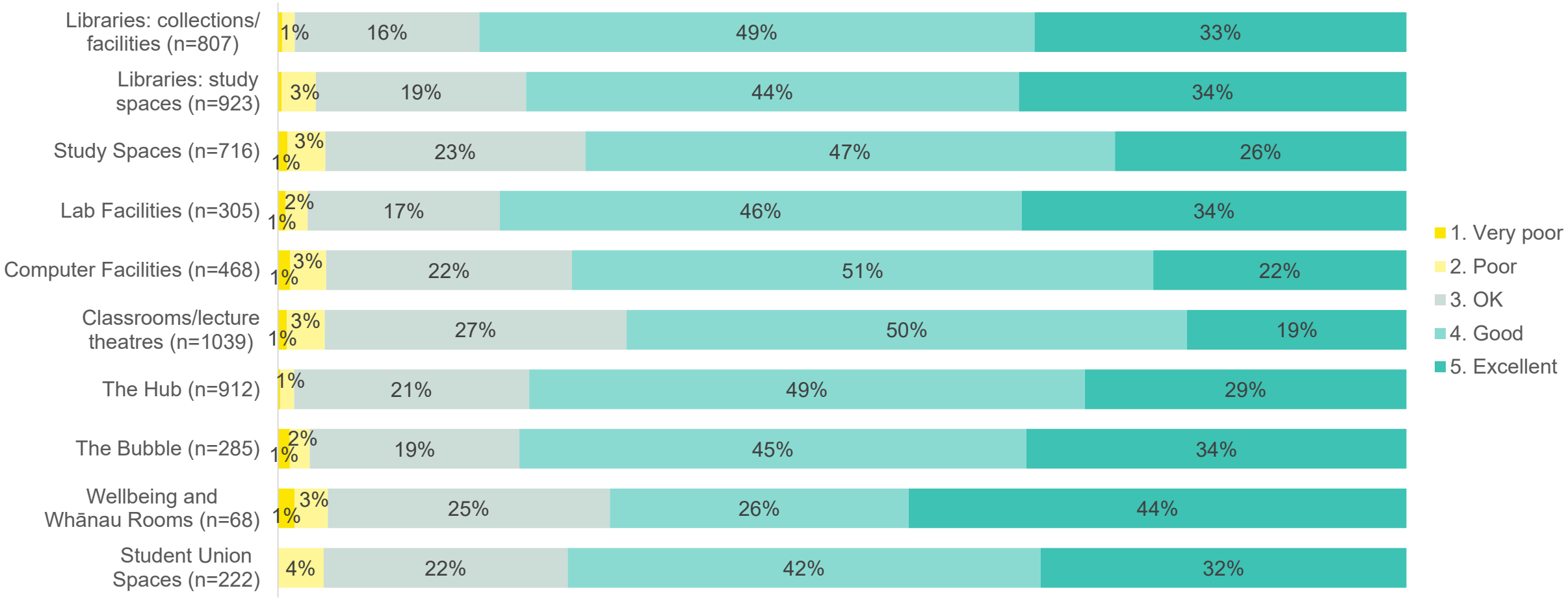
These questions were only asked of those who had reported that they had used the service in the last 12 months. As the question wording and response categories differ from those used previously, results from 2026 are not directly comparable with earlier years and should be interpreted as a new baseline for future trend reporting.

APPENDIX 6: SPACES AND FACILITIES

Overall, how satisfied are you with the Spaces and Facilities you've engaged with over the past 12 months? (n=1150)

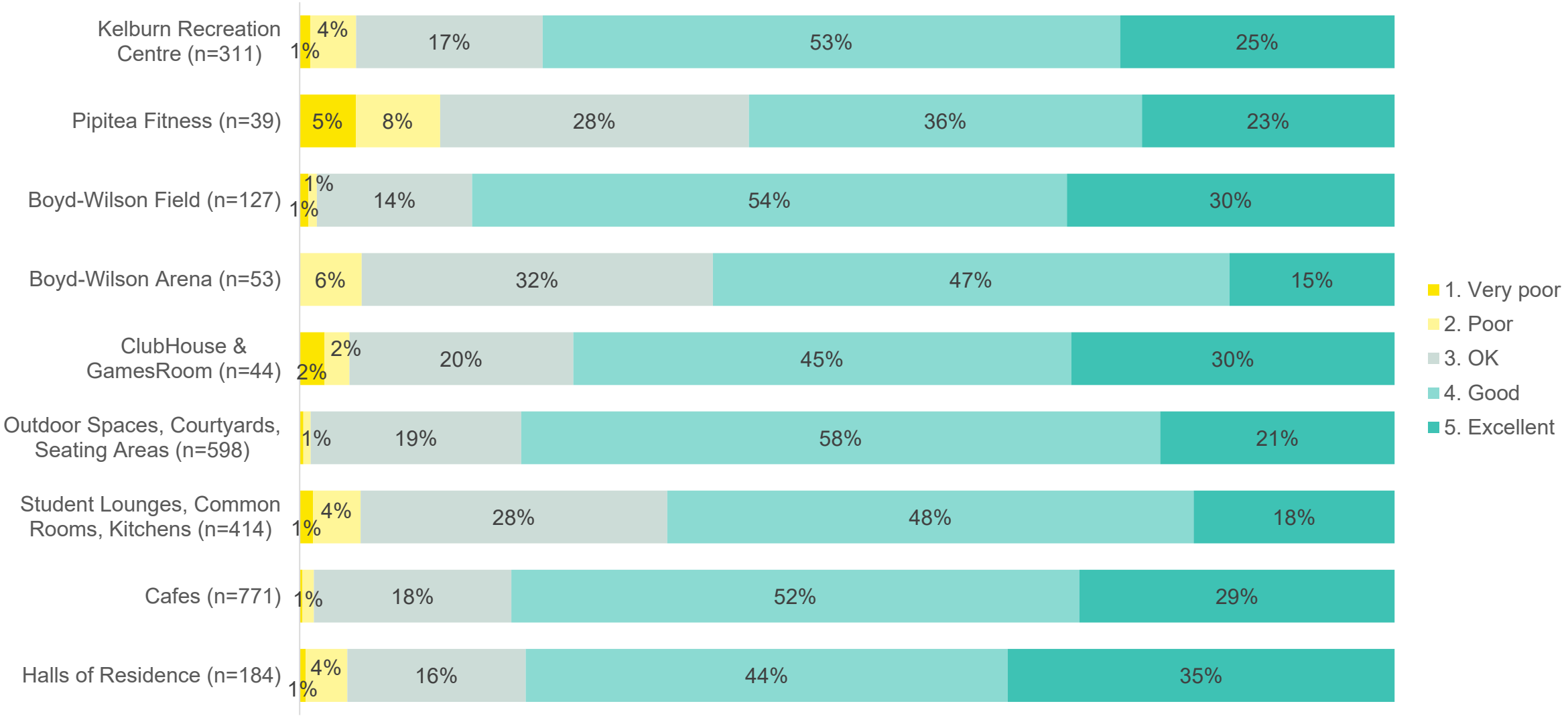


Thinking about the last 12 months, please rate your experience of the Spaces and Facilities listed below.



APPENDIX 6: SPACES AND FACILITIES

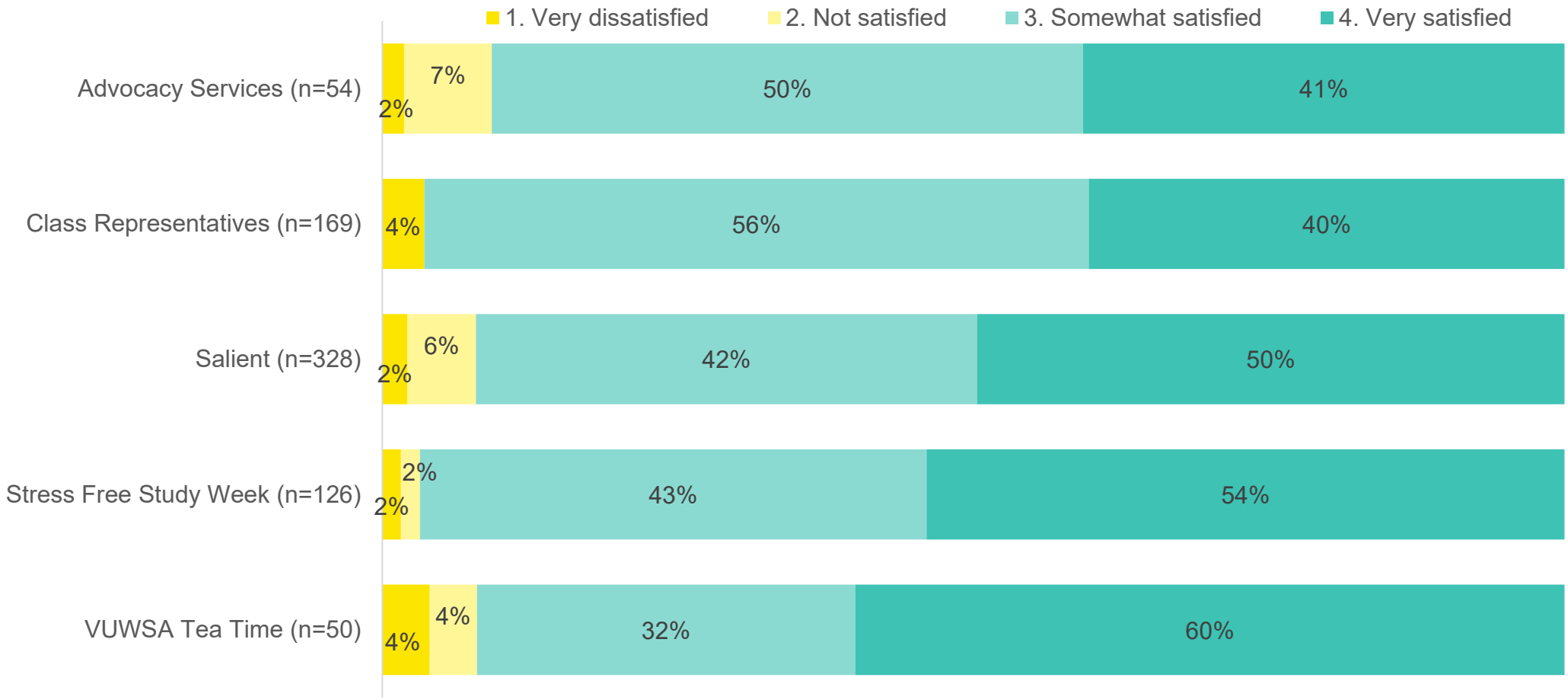
Thinking about the last 12 months, please rate your experience of the Spaces and Facilities listed below.



These questions were only asked of those who had reported that they had used the service in the last 12 months. As the question wording and response categories differ from those used previously, results from 2026 are not directly comparable with earlier years and should be interpreted as a new baseline for future trend reporting.

APPENDIX 7: VUWSA

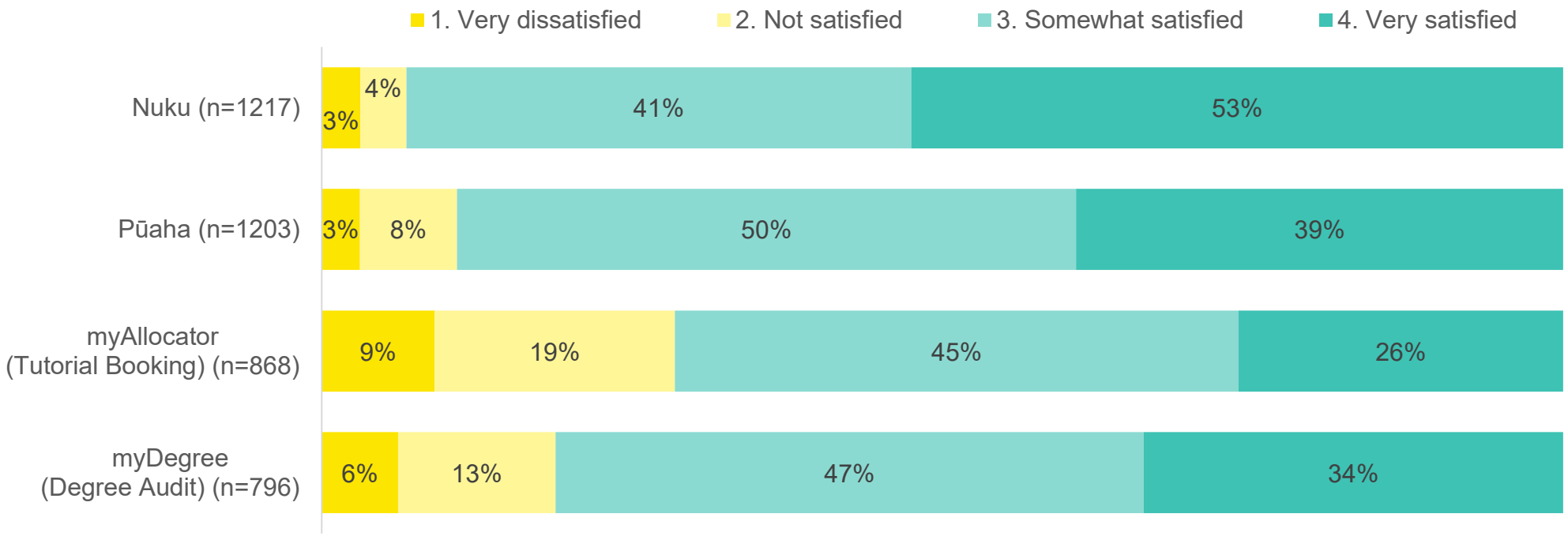
How satisfied have you been with the VUWSA services or events you reported using or attending, over the past 12 months?



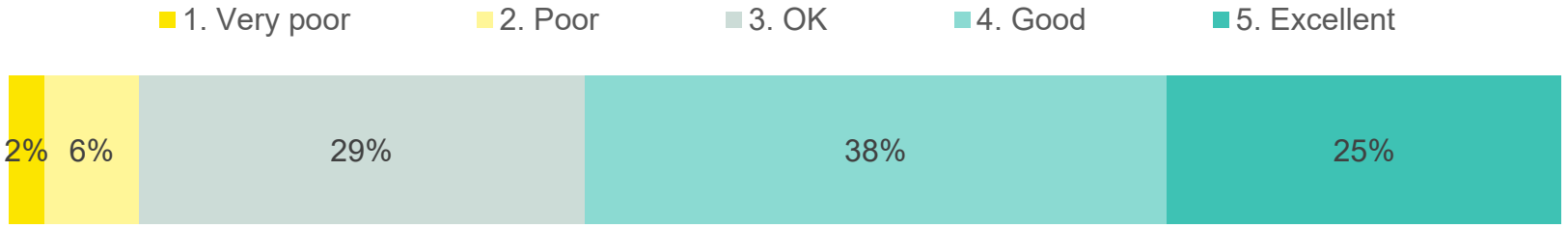
Satisfaction results include only respondents who reported using or attending each service or event. Some results are based on small numbers and should be interpreted with caution.

APPENDIX 8: DIGITAL TOOLS AND AI

Thinking about the last 12 months, how satisfied are you with these digital tools/platforms/apps…

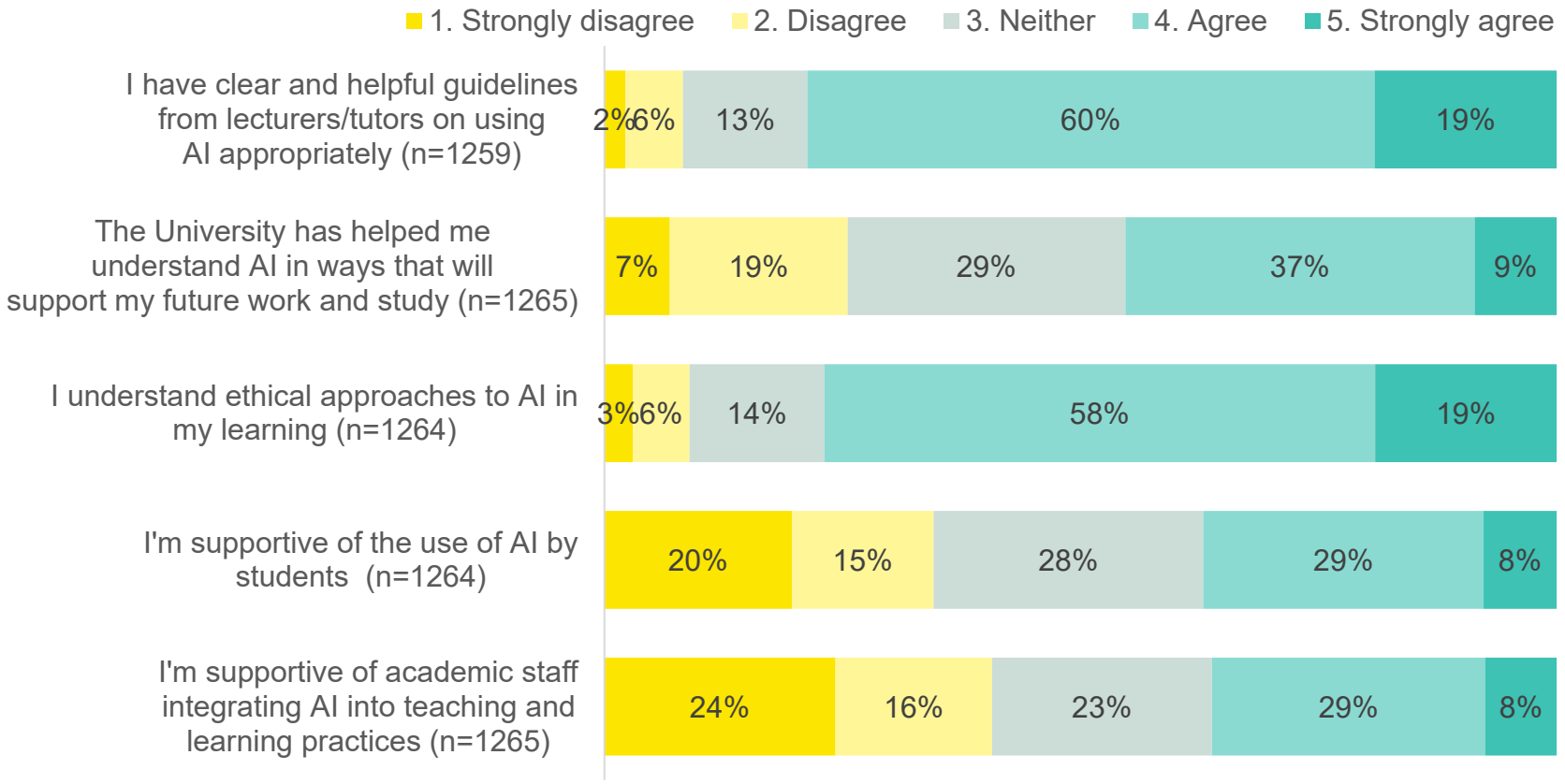


Thinking about the last 12 months, how would you rate your experience with the Digital Solutions Support Service? (n=610)



APPENDIX 8: DIGITAL TOOLS AND AI

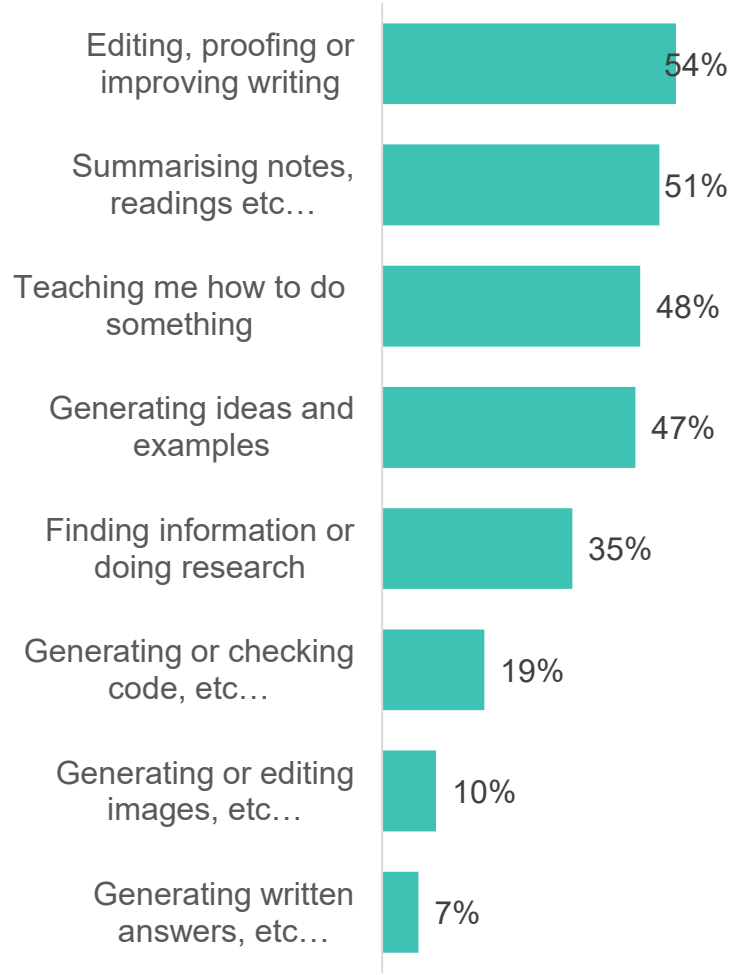
Regarding Generative Artificial Intelligence (AI) use, to what extent do you agree/disagree with the following…



How often have you used AI to support you in your coursework or studies so far this academic year? (n=1247)



What do you use AI for? (n=1002)



APPENDIX 9: COMPLETE IMPROVEMENT PRIORITIES

Students were asked to identify the one thing the University should focus on improving next year. **1,339 students provided a comment**.

Rank	Theme name	Theme description	Count and percentage	Rank	Theme name	Theme description	Count and percentage
1	Community, belonging, events and student life	Requests for stronger student communities, more opportunities to meet people, livelier campuses, inclusive events, and better support for clubs and societies.	261 / 19.5%	9	Digital systems, online learning and technology	More reliable, integrated and user-friendly digital systems, alongside consistent use of Nuku, accurate online information, recorded teaching and accessible online learning.	90 / 6.7%
2	Student support, wellbeing and pastoral care	Calls for visible, accessible and responsive academic, personal, health and wellbeing support, including counselling, Mauri Ora and proactive assistance for students who are struggling.	236 / 17.6%	10	Access across campuses, remote study and scheduling flexibility	More equitable provision across Kelburn, Pipitea and Te Aro, with flexible study modes, online options and scheduling that recognises remote, working and caring students.	76 / 5.7%
3	Teaching quality, course design and academic experience	Improvements to teaching practice, lecturer capability, course content and organisation, assessment design, marking, feedback, workload and course availability.	227 / 17.0%	11	University priorities, funding choices and staffing	Concerns about institutional priorities and resource allocation, including funding for student-facing services, academic programmes, clubs, teaching staff and technical staff.	67 / 5.0%
4	Affordability, fees and financial support	Reducing the financial burden of study through lower or stable fees, scholarships, grants and more affordable food, housing, transport and other essential costs.	220 / 16.4%	12	Postgraduate research and supervision	Better postgraduate orientation, supervision, supervisor training, research support, funding, doctoral stipends, academic development and dedicated facilities.	53 / 4.0%
5	Communication, information and administrative processes	Clearer and more timely information about courses, assessments, services and requirements, alongside simpler processes, reliable advice and better coordination between areas.	206 / 15.4%	13	Artificial intelligence use, policy and academic integrity	Clearer and more consistent approaches to AI, including academic-integrity expectations, ethical use, staff and student capability, and protection of authentic learning.	48 / 3.6%
6	Equity, inclusion, accessibility and cultural responsiveness	More equitable and accessible teaching, services and facilities, with stronger recognition of disability, culture, identity, family responsibilities and diverse student circumstances.	145 / 10.8%	14	Sustainability and environmental responsibility	Stronger environmental action, including recycling, composting, reduced waste, reusable products, lower emissions, greener campuses and transparent sustainability commitments.	44 / 3.3%
7	Campus facilities, study spaces and maintenance	More and better-quality study and teaching spaces, including seating, quiet and group rooms, power outlets, bathrooms, heating, maintenance and renewal of older facilities.	140 / 10.5%	15	Transport, parking and getting to campus	More affordable and accessible public transport, additional or cheaper parking, better campus connections and support for students travelling to placements or commuting long distances.	44 / 3.3%
8	Careers, employment and practical opportunities	Stronger preparation for employment through career guidance, internships, paid placements, industry connections, networking and practical learning opportunities.	105 / 7.8%				

Comments could be coded to more than one theme where students identified several distinct priorities. Percentages therefore indicate the proportion of comments mentioning each theme and should not be added together.