

9 IN 10 STUDENTS' MENTAL HEALTH IMPACTED BY COST OF LIVING

A quarter of students say financial worries are having a major impact on their mental health, as increasing numbers cut down on essentials, according to the new research.

A survey of more than 4,500 UK university students, carried out by the National Union of Students (NUS), found that 96% are making cutbacks, with over half spending less on food, another half heating their homes less regularly, and one in ten cutting back on sanitary products. Three quarters also report socialising less to save money.

More than a quarter of students are left with less than £50 a month after covering rent and bills, and 42% are surviving off less than £100.

These findings come as more than 1,000 people wrote to their MPs demanding urgent student cost-of-living support in the Budget. Less than one in 10 students think the Government is doing enough to support them with the cost of living.

Students are increasingly turning to their family or savings for help, but 77% said the cost-of-living crisis had affected the income of someone who supports them financially, highlighting that alternative sources of support are drying up.

The survey found no significant improvements for students since the last survey in June, despite the introduction of support for energy bills this autumn.

Despite soaring inflation and energy bills, the undergraduate student maintenance package in England has risen just 2.3% this year and students have been excluded from existing government support.

The NUS called on the Chancellor to announce a student support package as part of the Autumn Statement, which fell on International Day of the Student.

A further 7% of students think the government has done enough to help them, lower than in June, and 11% think their student support is sufficient to cover energy bills. NUS warned that those who cannot



rely on family to top up their student support are risking their studies by picking up more work or dropping out of education entirely.

Students and parents have been urging MPs across the country to stop neglecting them. They echoed NUS' calls for a student support package, which would include tying maintenance support to inflation and giving students access to Universal Credit.

NUS has also called for a cap on spiralling student rent, a boost to hardship funds and adjusted maintenance loan thresholds to reflect changes to family income. In the long term, NUS is campaigning for changes to secure the future of students, including the return of maintenance grants, more affordable housing, and ultimately the abolition of tuition fees.

Chloe Field, NUS Vice President Higher Education, said: 'The Government must take action urgently to relieve the pressure and implement our proposals. Until they do, institutions must step in to support their students with the cost of food, rent, and energy. Students are our future nurses, teachers, and other key workers, and we need support now to protect everyone's future.'

BDA Student Committee Chair, Paul Blaylock, added: 'I'm saddened but

unfortunately not surprised by these findings from the National Union of Students; it reflects the reality we hear shared by representatives at every meeting of the BDA Students Committee. That's why the BDA Student Committee manifesto calls on government to provide a package of financial support that covers both the living costs of dental students and their tuition fees, as well as calling for access to the NHS bursary for all dental students. To help the BDA fight for more support for student wellbeing and finances, the BDA is currently conducting primary research to quantify levels of student debt and its impact on educational outcomes and wellbeing.

'Surprisingly, a 2021 survey by the BDA Benevolent Fund – the UK charity supporting dental students, dentists, and their dependents – found that most dental students who faced financial issues did not access financial support. I'd really encourage any dental students currently facing financial hardship to speak to their universities about hardship grants, as well as speaking to the BDA Benevolent Fund, who can offer support for cost-of-living expenses.'