

# Money and Mental Health

Student Financial  
Understanding and Wellbeing



blackbullion 

Sheffield  
Hallam  
University

# Money and Mental Health: Student Financial Understanding and Wellbeing

To better understand the financial concerns of students, as well as their overall financial understanding, Blackbullion partnered with Sheffield Hallam University to produce this study: Money and Mental Health — Student Financial Understanding and Wellbeing.

The data in the following study was gathered from a survey of 1196 students on Sheffield Hallam Campus and distributed by the university Student Services Department.

The study seeks to examine students' understanding of key financial topics (taxes, credit cards, interest rates, etc), the impact financial pressure has on mental wellbeing, and the specific financial worries of students.

## Study aims



Assess student understanding of key financial topics, such as debt, saving, and taxation



Begin to understand the relationship between financial capability and mental wellbeing



Identify which financial worries concern students most

# Survey Summary

## Key findings



**67%** of students feel their financial situation negatively impacts on their degree studies



**95%** feel stressed by their financial situation



**50%** of students worry that they will run out of money for basic essentials (such as food, toiletries, and clothes)



**63%** do not fully understand bank accounts

Figures have been rounded to the nearest 1%



# Results

Key findings from the student survey  
conducted at Sheffield Hallam University

# The impact of finances on student mental well-being

In recent years, mental health and wellbeing have been at the centre of discussion in higher education. As recently as June 2018, Education Minister Sam Gyimah outlined a new charter with the intent of ensuring 'mental health support for students is a top priority for the leadership of all universities.'<sup>1</sup>

While the importance of this cannot be understated, it is crucial that universities seek to understand mental health within the important context of the student demographic, rather than in isolation.

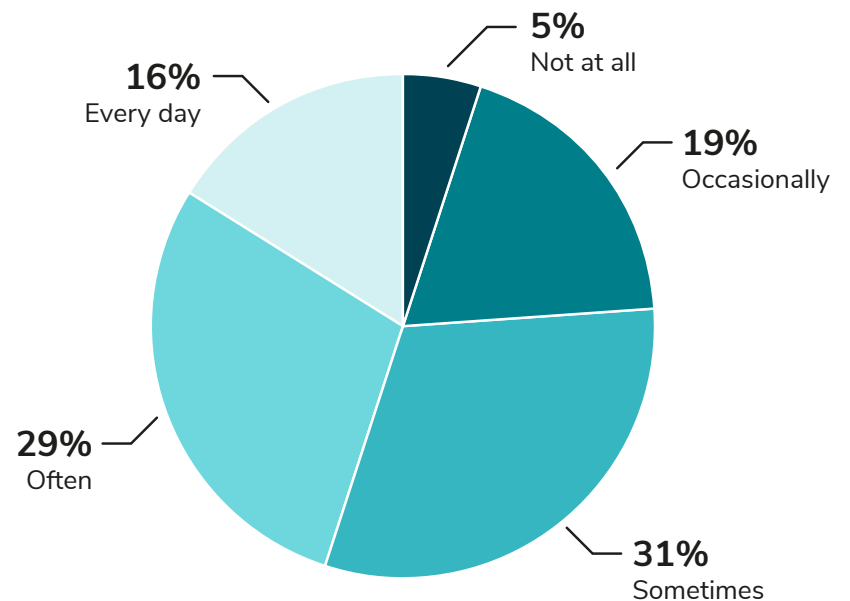
Students are one of the one of the poorest demographics<sup>2</sup> in the UK, and there is mounting evidence this has a considerable impact on their mental health<sup>3</sup>. The results from our latest study with Sheffield Hallam highlight the negative effect financial worries have on mental health and wellbeing.

When asked, 95% of students admitted they felt stressed by their financial situation, with 45% stating they felt stressed either often or every day.

Markedly, 67% of students felt their financial situation impacted on their degree studies, while 78% confirmed it had a negative impact on their emotional or mental well-being (Figure 1.2 & 1.3).

Figure 1.1

To what extent do you feel stressed by your financial situation?



*"I worry that I will never climb out of debt."*

Student, Sheffield Hallam University

Figure 1.2

Do you feel your financial situation impacts your ability to study for your degree?

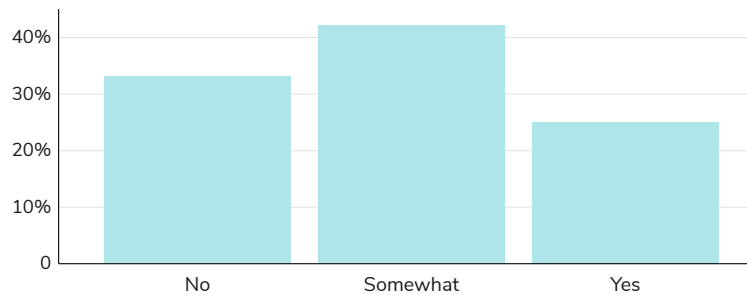
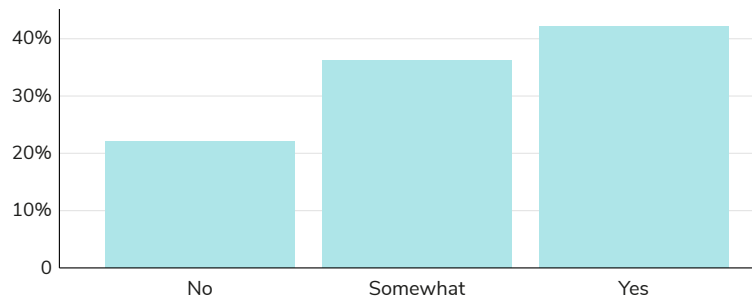


Figure 1.3

Do you feel your financial situation negatively impacts your emotional or mental well-being?



We understand that raising awareness of the bi-directional links between financial capability and mental health in universities (and beyond) is an important undertaking within the higher education sector in the coming years.

To further this discussion, and inform strategic approaches to effective student support, Blackbullion is collaborating with University College London to produce an academic report examining the links between financial capability and mental wellbeing. This is set to be published this coming November.

1. New package of measures announced on student mental health <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/new-package-of-measures-announced-on-student-mental-health>
2. NUS: 'Working-class students face poverty' <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/education-4385775>
3. UK students' mental health affected by financial worries <https://www.timeshighereducation.com/student/news/uk-students-mental-health-affected-financial-worries>

# Students are still financially aspirational

Through the responses, we were also able to discern the particular financial concerns of students. In short, what they worry about most when it comes to their money.

Strikingly, the majority of students were most worried about saving for the future. 58% of students selected this option.

In a media culture dominated with stories of student debt, hopelessness, and uncertainty, it was revealing to see that the reality is still a generation hoping for a better financial future.

*“I signed to Blackbullion to learn more about budgeting, I want to learn all the different ways to save money.”*

First Year Student, King’s College London

Moreover, a previous study<sup>4</sup> at York St John University showed the greatest financial topic of interest for students was mortgages, with 51% stating they would like to learn more about them. A further 46% opted for saving, and 45% selected tax.

It appears students are still financially aspirational<sup>5</sup>, and keen to do more to improve their financial literacy by advancing their knowledge in learning subjects such as mortgages, savings, and taxation.

In situations like these, self-directed learning platforms such as Blackbullion<sup>6</sup> empower students, providing them with a flexible way to develop financial education in key financial topic.

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4. Student Survey — Understanding Student Financial Worries <https://www.blackbullion.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Student-Survey-York-St-John.pdf>
  5. Student Survey — Understanding Student Financial Worries <https://www.blackbullion.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Student-Survey-York-St-John.pdf>
  6. Blackbullion <https://www.blackbullion.com/for-universities/>

# Pervading student financial concerns

Yet, despite the seemingly financially aspirational elements of the student body, 50% also worry they will run out of money for basic essentials (including food, toiletries, and clothes).

Furthermore, 40% of students polled are concerned they will have to dedicate too much time towards working, using up time allocated towards their degree. The results from other questions suggest this concern is well founded, considering over two-thirds of students stated their financial situation negatively affects their studies.

*“I worry that I won’t have enough time to work on a regular basis while studying, as my workload will increase in third year.”*

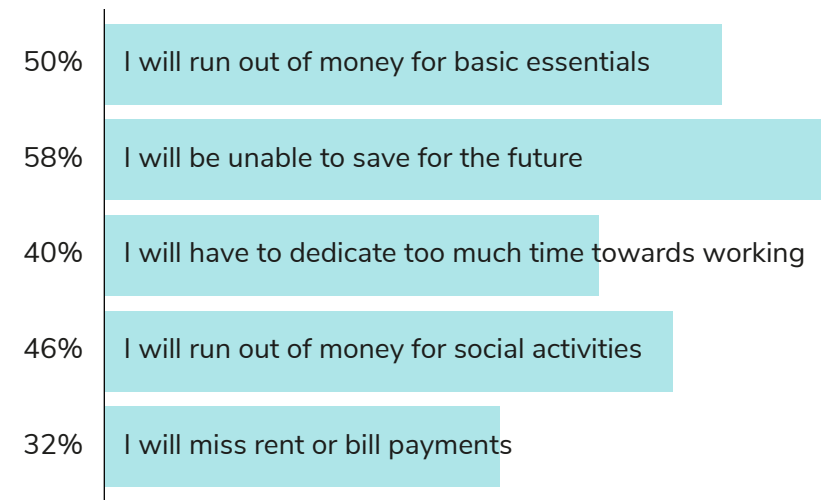
Student, Sheffield Hallam University

Finally, nearly a third of students (32%) were worried about missing rent or bill payments entirely.

This study indicates that students could benefit from a deeper understanding of the skills and approaches to effectively manage their finances month-on-month. For instance, by utilising basic budgeting and financial operations (such as standing orders) effectively.

Figure 1.4

What worries you the most about your financial situation?



1195 people answered this question (with multiple choice)



# Overall student financial understanding

While results from this study (and others in our series<sup>1</sup>) highlight students' desire to be financially aspirational, in reality students typically lack the underlying education necessary to realise these aspirations.

When asked about their understanding of financial concepts, students' responses reinforced this. Only 42% of students stated they fully understood loans, with a disconcerting 31% stating they did not understand them at all.

Similarly, 27% of students did not understand credit cards, with 26% understanding them 'to some extent'. Furthermore, over a third of students (34%) did not understand interest rates.

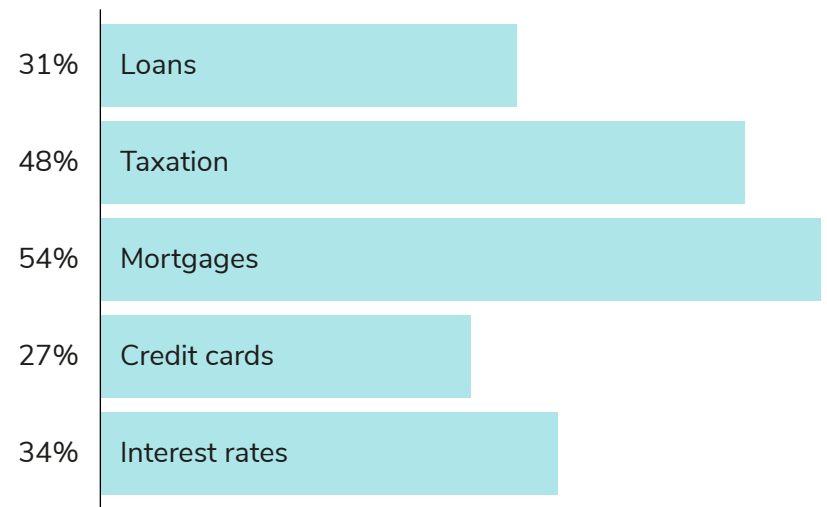
*"I worry a lot that I won't have enough student loan to last me the full semester."*

Student, Sheffield Hallam University

A further 48% of students were found to not understand taxes, with 25% suggesting they understood them 'to some extent'.

Figure 1.5

Lack of student understanding of key financial topics:



1. Blackbullion University Resources <https://www.blackbullion.com/universityresources/>

# About



## Sheffield Hallam University

Sheffield Hallam University (SHU) is a university located in Sheffield, South Yorkshire, England. The 11th largest University in the UK, SHU provides a student body of all ages, nationalities, and disciplines, with the skills they need for modern working life.

SHU believes that success is not about institutions or equipment, but about giving individuals the opportunity and support they need to make a difference.

For over three years, Sheffield Hallam University has partnered with Blackbullion to provide its' 30,000+ students with access to the financial education they need.



## Blackbullion

Blackbullion is an award winning edtech company on a mission to make the world money smart.

With clients in 5 countries, Blackbullion is deployed across multiple student service departments to maximise student success by enhancing retention, recruitment, and diversity initiatives. It is our goal to ensure engaging and effective financial education is embedded at every point where people and money intersect on campus.

## References

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