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How is the rising cost of living affecting students?

(extract)

As UK household costs and bills increase, university leaders have warned students are at risk of becoming “the forgotten group in the cost of living crisis”. According to the Office for National Statistics (ONS), over three-quarters of students are “concerned” rising costs may affect how well they do in their studies. Black students, students aged over 25, and students from lower socio-economic backgrounds are likely to be hardest hit by rising costs of food, transport, rent, and energy. This Insight considers how UK students are affected by the rising cost of living and the support available.

Renting continues to be the biggest expense

The average student’s largest monthly expense is rent, accounting for about 45% of monthly living costs. The 2021/22 Accommodation Costs Survey by Unipol and the National Union of Students (NUS) found the UK average annual rent for purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA) to be £7,374. This is a 16% increase since the last survey in 2018/19. Privately provided PBSA and private landlords are more expensive than university accommodation, which suggests issues of affordability are likely to continue as private providers dominate the market.

How have food prices affected students?

With the price of food and non-alcoholic beverages rising by 16.4% in the 12 months to October 2022, many students are facing increasing food insecurity. The NUS published its Cost-of-Living Research in November 2022. Its online survey polled 4,500 UK students in October 2022, and found over a quarter had less than £50 a month after paying rent and bills (PDF). In the Student Money Survey 2022, one in 10 students said they had used a foodbank in the past academic year and almost half (47%) admitted “money worries” had negatively impacted their diets. Similar results were found by the ONS in its Student Cost of Living Insights Study which polled 4,201 university students in England between October and November 2022. It found 62% of students said they were spending less on food shopping and essentials in response to rising costs.