



# Mental Distress Survey Overview

Prepared by  
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# Background, Objectives and Method

# Background

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This survey represents one of the initial steps to understanding mental health, and provisions to support mental health, in a place of study.

In addition to informing the work of NUS in this area, the outcomes will be used by the press and PR team during Mental Health Week 2013



# Objectives

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1. To increase NUS' understanding of mental health issues among students (briefly)
2. To understand the level and standard of support services offered to students who suffer mental health issues (i.e. mental illness or symptoms of mental illness) by their institution / place of study.

# Methodology

<b>Method</b>	Online quantitative questionnaire (approx. 10 minutes) sent out via email, with cash prize incentive
<b>Sample</b>	Students (from NUS extra database AND promotion via NUS officers)

## Key timelines

Activity	Timing
Questionnaire finalised	Wednesday 1 <sup>st</sup> May 2013
Fieldwork Start (first sample send – 30k)	Tuesday 7 <sup>th</sup> May 2013
Second sample send - 30k)	Friday 10 <sup>th</sup> May 2013
Fieldwork End	Monday 10am 13 <sup>th</sup> May
Delivery (excel file and summary)	Wednesday 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2013

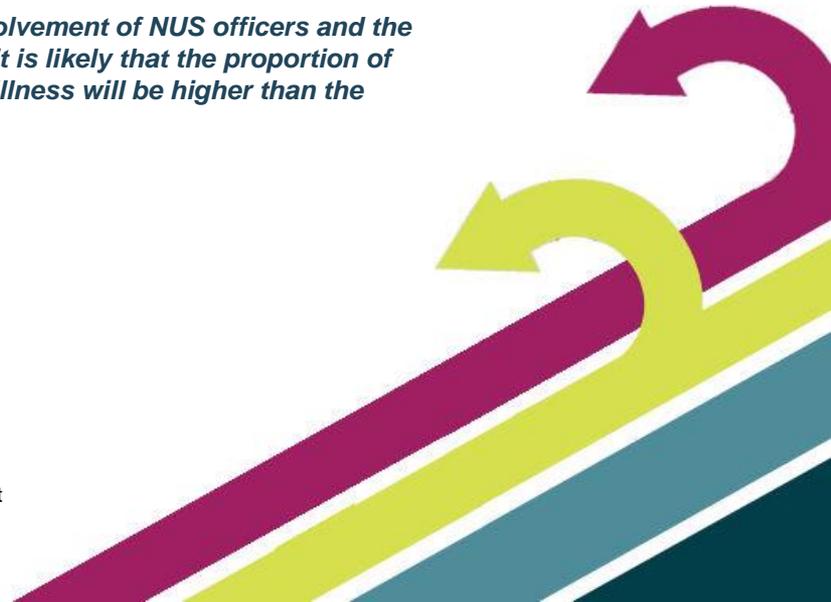


# Overview for students in Higher Education.

# Sample profile of diagnosed/self-diagnosed mental health

67% (893)	I have never been diagnosed with a mental health problem
6% (82)	I have previously been diagnosed with a mental health problem, but I don't believe this diagnosis currently applies to me
8% (109)	I believe I have a mental health problem, but am not seeking a diagnosis
2% (20)	I am currently seeking a diagnosis for a mental health problem
10% (134)	I have been diagnosed with a mental health problem, and I believe this diagnosis still applies to me
7% (98)	Prefer not to specify

*Please note that due to the nature of the promotion of the survey (incl. the involvement of NUS officers and the invitation text which stated that the questionnaire was about mental distress) it is likely that the proportion of students stating that they experience symptoms of mental illness or a mental illness will be higher than the actual incidence in the population*



# Profile of diagnosed/self-diagnosed mental health problem – Differences by student demographic.

67% (893)

I have never been diagnosed with a mental health problem

*NOTE: comparisons are made to the above stat only – so where a % is shown in brackets, it is the proportion of the students who fit the demographic/student demographic criteria mentioned that stated that they 'have never been diagnosed with a mental health problem'. Please note, as mentioned, the proportion experiencing a mental health problem is likely to be overstated here, however the differences stated below are likely to be true.*

## **KEY:**

More likely to have been diagnosed with a mental health problem (i.e. lower % of above statement)

Less likely to have been diagnosed with a mental health problem (i.e. higher% of above statement)

- **Subject of study** → **History and/or philosophy** (49% of n=56) and the **written arts** (50% of n=54) students are slightly less likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem (so they are more likely to have experienced one).
  - Whereas students on **medical & dentistry courses** (78% of n=73uw) or **business related subjects** (77% of n=149uw) are more likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem.
- **International students** → **International students** (77% of n=231uw) are more likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem compared with **students that are UK citizens** (64% of n=1054uw)
- There is no difference by **year of study**.

# Profile of diagnosed/self-diagnosed mental health problem – Differences by demographic.

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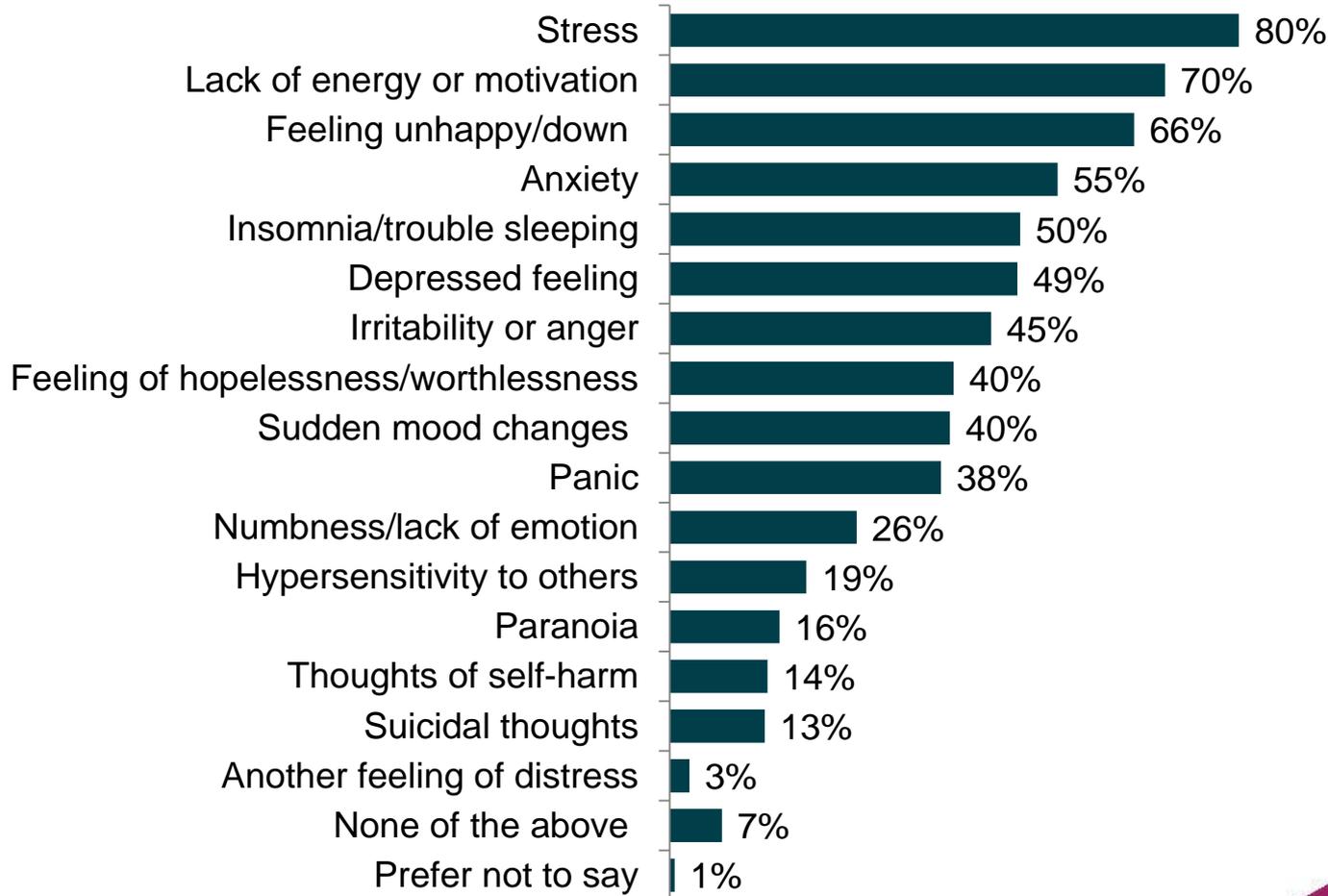
More likely to state that they have been diagnosed with a mental health problem (i.e. lower % of above statement)

Less likely to state that they have been diagnosed with a mental health problem (i.e. higher% of above statement)

- **Age** → Students **aged 18-20** are more likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem (73% of n=487uw) than older students
- **Gender** → **Females** (64% of n=824uw) are less likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem compared with **males** (72% of n=444uw) – so females are more likely to have experienced one.
- **Ethnicity** → students of a **white: British** ethnicity are less likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem (62% of n=806uw) . Those who define themselves as **black** are more likely to state that they have *never* experienced one (87% of n=108uw).
- **Sexuality** → **Heterosexual students** are (70% of n=1102uw) are more likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem than gay/lesbian/bisexual students.
- **Caring responsibilities** → whether you are a student caring for children or an adult or neither, there appears to be no impact on whether you self-define or have been diagnosed with a mental health problem.
- **Students with a disability, impairment or long-term health condition** → **Students with a disability, impairment or long-term health condition** are less likely to state that they have *never* been diagnosed with a mental health problem (39% of n=215uw)

# Symptoms of mental distress experienced by students

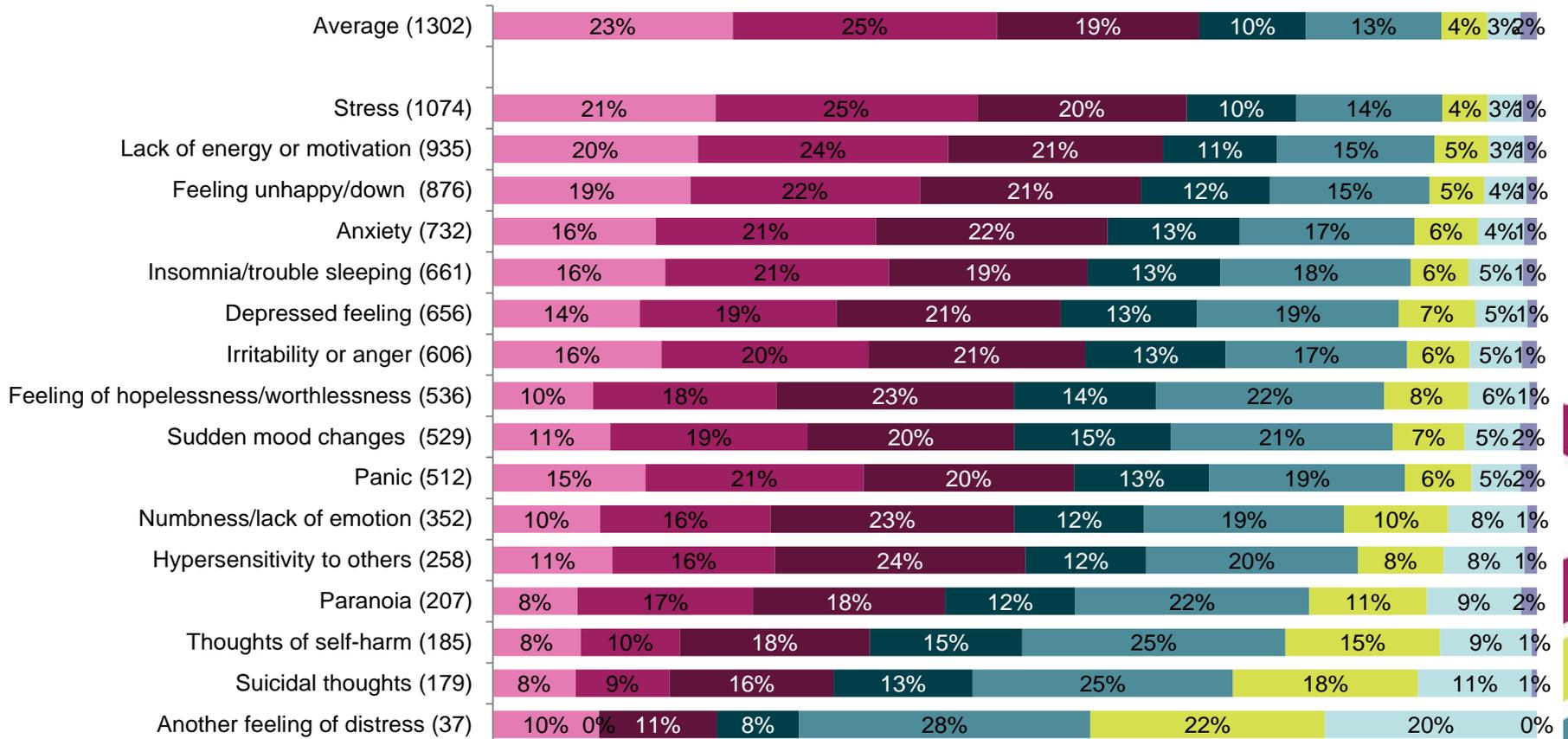
For HE students, stress is the most often felt feeling of mental distress, followed by demotivation and 'feeling down'.



# Frequency of experiencing symptoms of mental distress

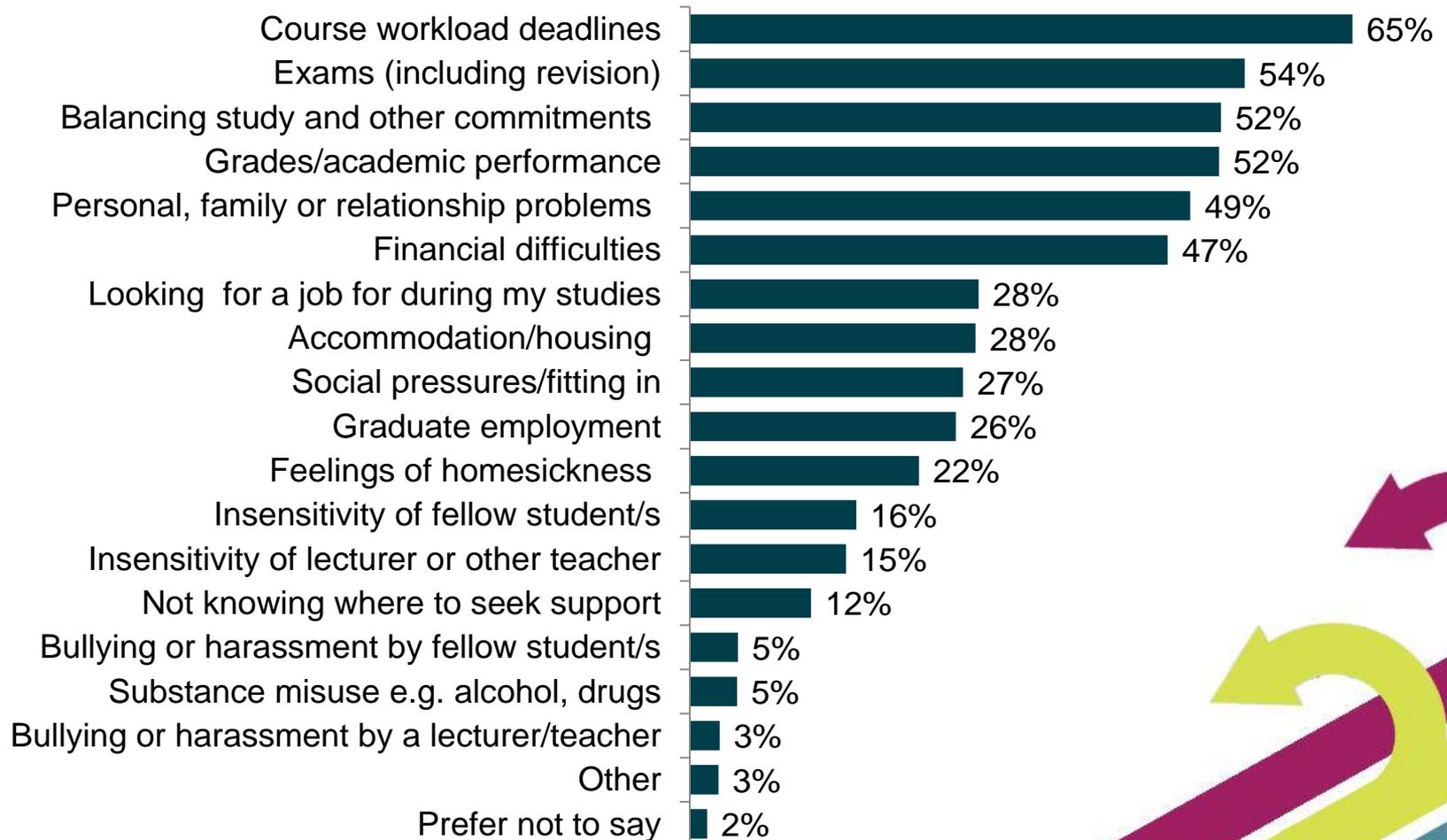
The more 'common' feelings of mental distress are experienced less often. And vice versa – those feelings that are experienced by fewer students are experienced more often, highlighting their severity.

■ Once an academic year 
 ■ Once a term 
 ■ Once a month 
 ■ Once a week 
 ■ More often than once a week 
 ■ Daily 
 ■ All the time 
 ■ Prefer not to say



# Mental distress triggers

The contributors to feelings of mental distress are primarily course and work related. These are key triggers across all symptoms/feelings. Those experiencing the more 'severe' symptoms/feelings are more likely to have more triggers.



# Who do students confide in about their feelings of mental distress

The majority of students will tell their friends and family about their feelings of mental distress. The other possible places to share these feelings are used with much lower incidence. Just over one-quarter do not tell anyone

<b>26%</b>	<b>Did not tell anyone about their feelings of mental distress</b>
<b>58%</b>	<b>Told friends</b>
<b>45%</b>	<b>Told family</b>
<b>15%</b>	<b>Told doctor / GP</b>
<b>14%</b>	<b>Told an academic member of staff*</b>
<b>10%</b>	<b>Told counselling services at place of study*</b>
<b>5%</b>	<b>Told advice/support services at place of study*</b>
<b>5%</b>	<b>Told disability services at my place of study*</b>
<b>3%</b>	<b>Told other health professional</b>
<b>2%</b>	<b>Told mentor or peer support group</b>
<b>2%</b>	<b>Told my students' union advice centre*</b>
<b>1%</b>	<b>Told other helpline service</b>
<b>0%</b>	<b>Told nightline</b>

\*21% of students shared their feelings of mental distress with their place of study and/or their students' union



# Formal services used regarding feelings of mental distress

In terms of using services, 64% do not use any formal service for advice / support in relation to their mental distress. Of all the services available, a doctor/GP is the services most used.

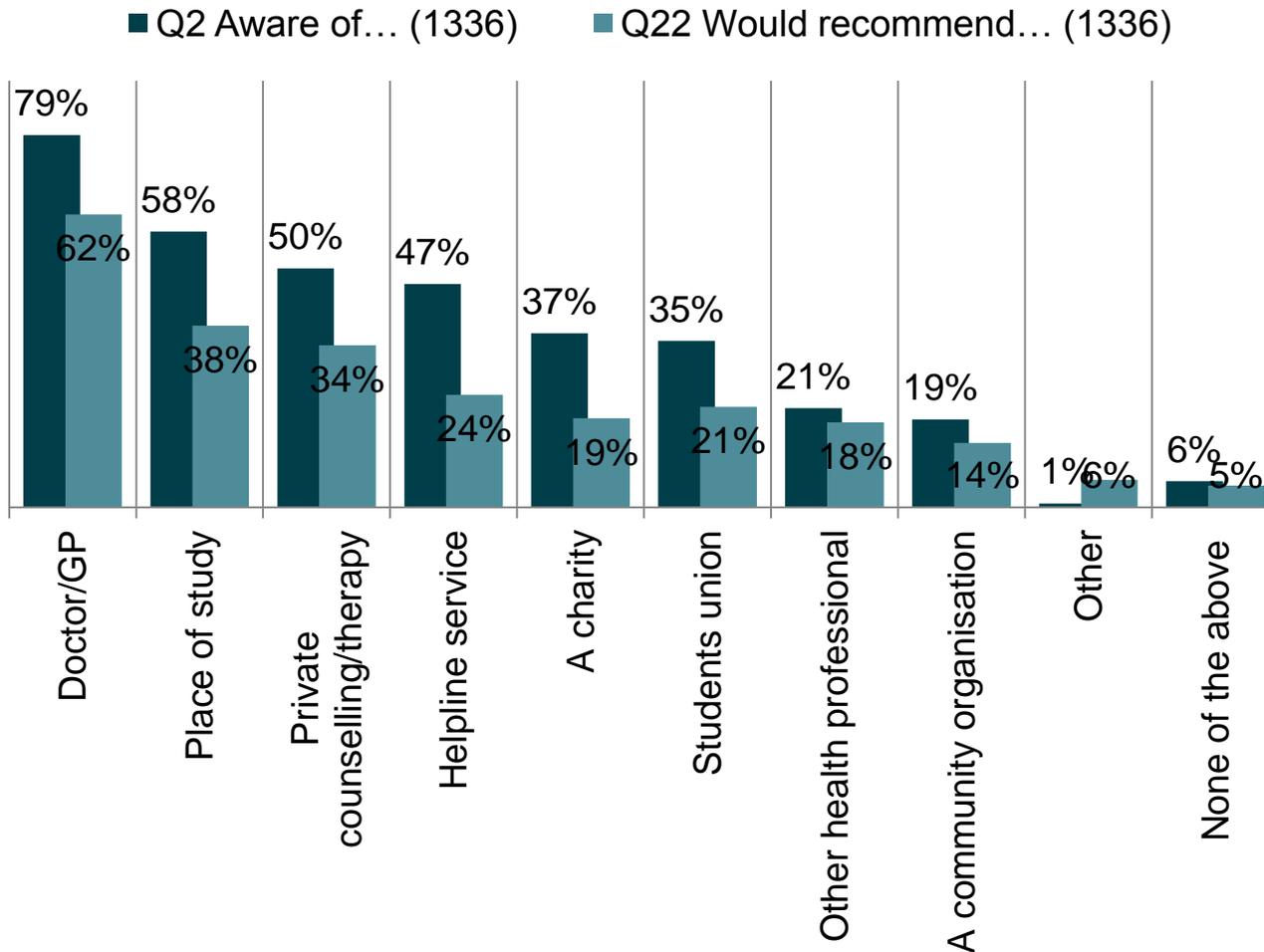
<b>64%</b>	<b>Did not use any 'formal' services for advice/support in relation to their mental distress</b>
<b>23%</b>	Rec'd advice/support from <b>doctor/GP</b>
<b>15%</b>	Rec'd advice/support from <b>place of study*</b>
<b>9%</b>	Rec'd advice/support from <b>private counselling/therapy</b>
<b>4%</b>	Rec'd advice/support from <b>other health professional</b>
<b>3%</b>	Rec'd advice/support from <b>students union*</b>
<b>3%</b>	Rec'd advice/support from <b>services offered by a charity</b>
<b>3%</b>	Rec'd advice/support from <b>helpline service</b>
<b>2%</b>	Rec'd advice/support from <b>services offered by a community organisation</b>
<b>3%</b>	Rec'd advice/support from <b>other</b>

\*17% of students used the advice / support services from their place of study and/or their students' union



# Level of awareness and potential recommendation of advice / support services for mental distress

Students are most likely to be aware of and recommend their GP/Doctor. This is followed by their place of study and private counselling / therapy.



\*68% of students are aware of advice / support services from their place of study and/or their students' union

\*47% of students would recommend advice / support services from their place of study and/or their students' union to someone who they thought needed it.



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services limited

