



## **Media Central**

Mental Health & Education Research

August 2020

# Introduction

Media Central has unparalleled and trusted access to the biggest youth audience in the country through its Music & Youth regional network. Part of its remit is not only to entertain, but to also act as a responsible source of information and trusted voice for our country's young people. Our stations recognise the challenging times that young people find themselves in currently, from feelings of uncertainty around education to effects on mental health.

As the impact of Covid-19 continues to affect everyday life, Media Central with Spin1038 and Spin Southwest conducted some research amongst young people to gauge how the pandemic has affected them – particularly when it comes to their education, uncertainty around their future, and the mental health impacts this is having.

In order to make sense of how young people are feeling at this time, we conducted a survey with 419 Leaving Cert Students who were due to sit their Leaving Cert Exams this year, and 714 College & University Students to explore their fears and hopes at this time.

Across all our Music & Youth Stations, the programming teams are continuing to work hard to keep our young listeners informed and entertained and most importantly be a source of advice and trust and we are incredibly proud of the work they are doing. Radio is one of most accessible and trusted mediums in which people have and will continue to turn to in these uncertain times.



● **Spin**  
**Leaving Cert Survey**

**Objective:**

1. Gauge how leaving cert students were feeling during the Covid pandemic

**Number of Respondents: 419**

**Format:** Online survey across SPIN1038 & SPIN South West.



July 2020  
Youth Survey

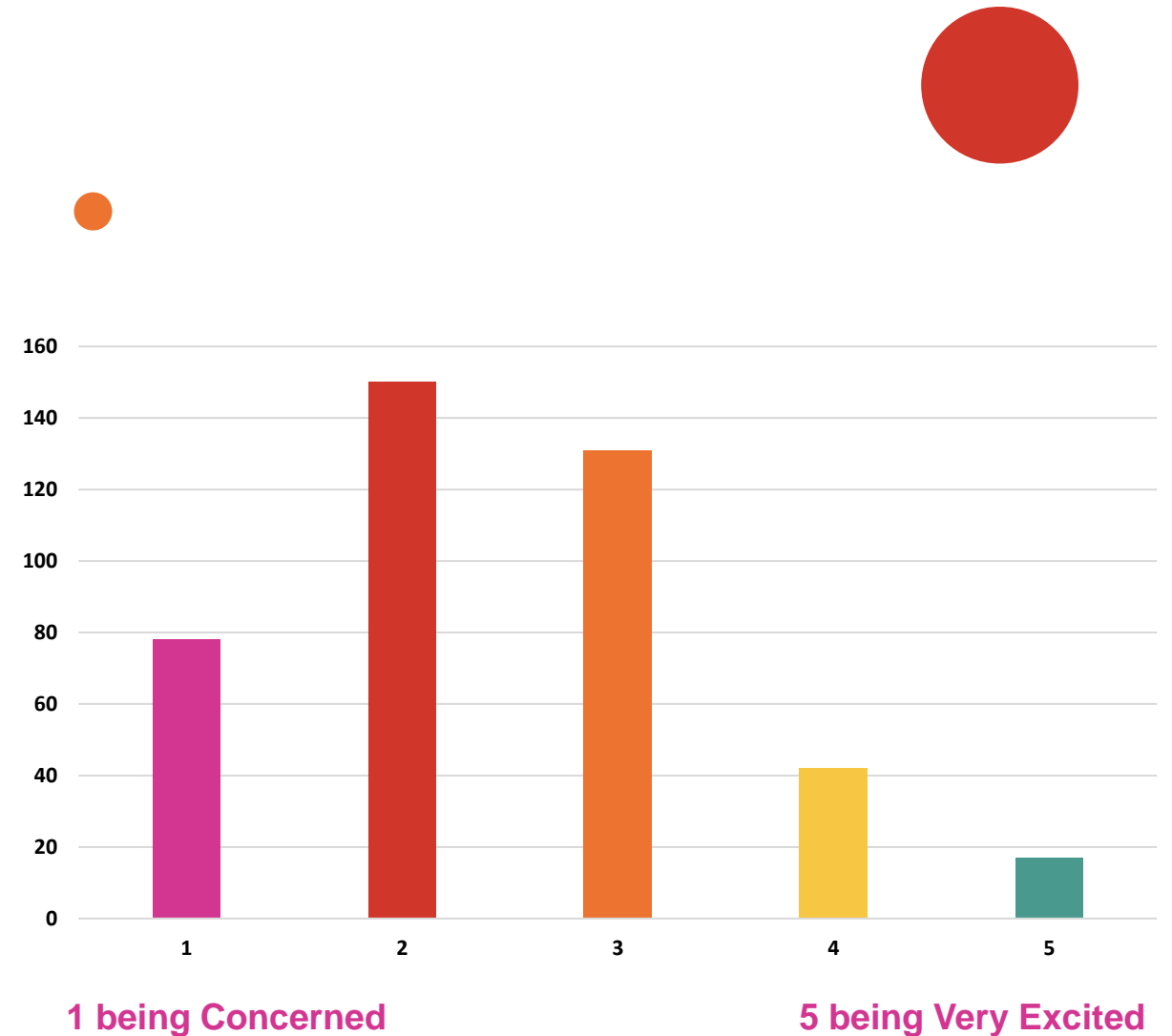


# Leaving Cert Research Findings

# How are you feeling about the upcoming results?

Young people are feeling mostly concerned about their results

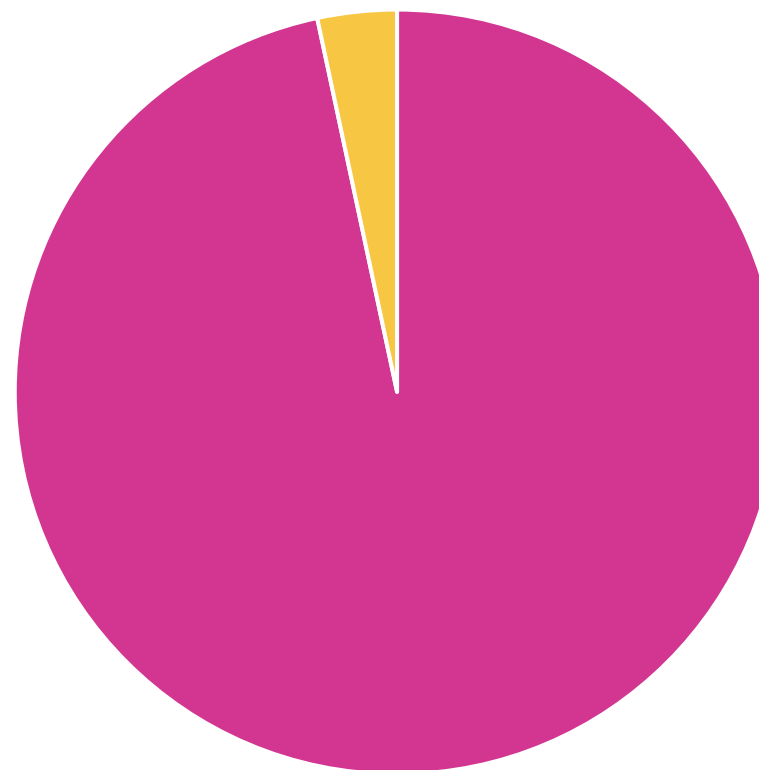
- Students who have sat the leaving cert have a lot of concern over upcoming results
- 55% of students have indicated levels of concerns around results
- *Note students would probably have had high levels of concern with or without pandemic*



# Are you planning on going to college/ university?

Nearly all respondents hope to continue their education

- 97% of respondents intended on progressing to College / University

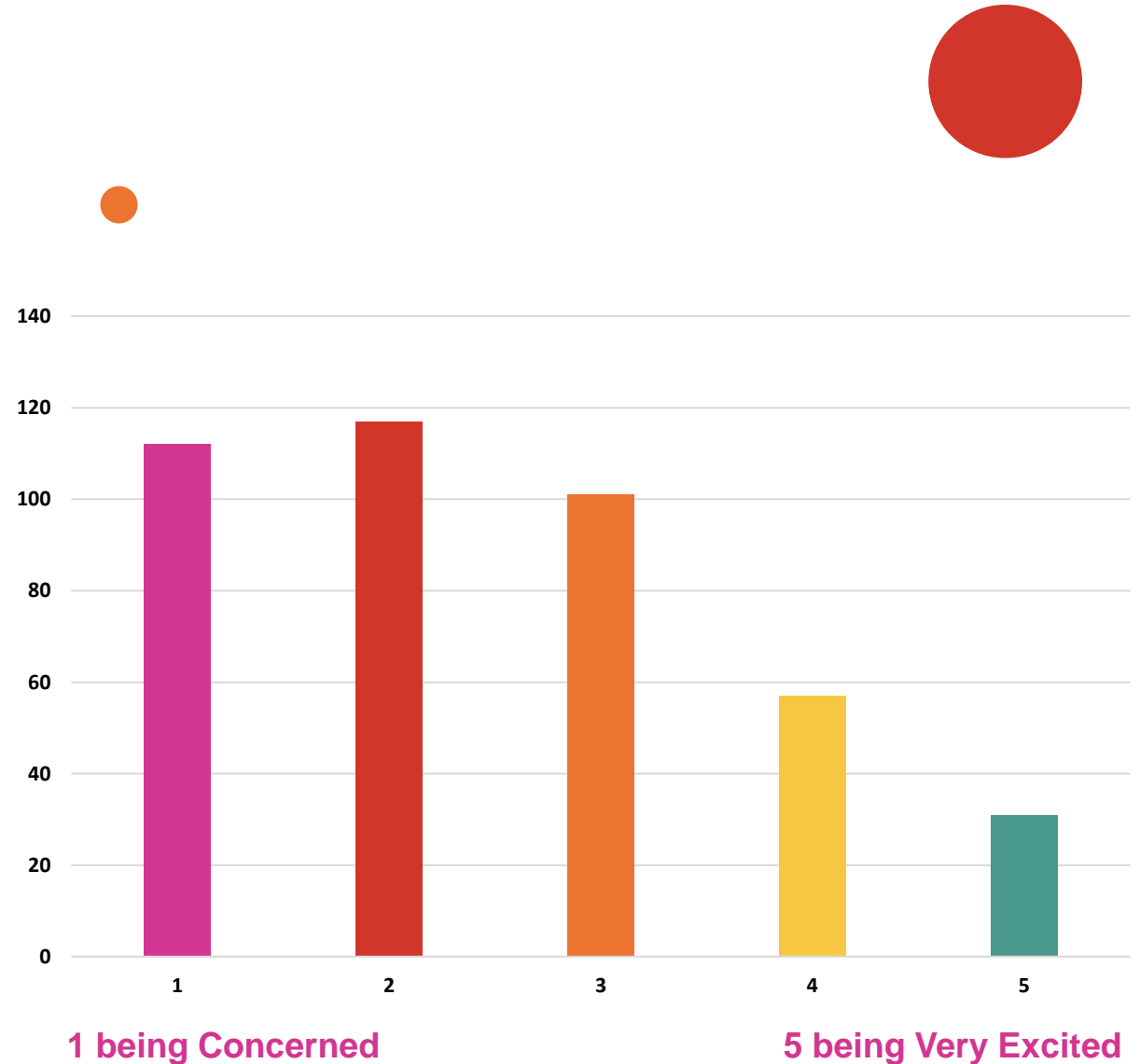


■ YES ■ NO

# How are you feeling about your first term in college?

Respondents are more concerned than excited about starting college

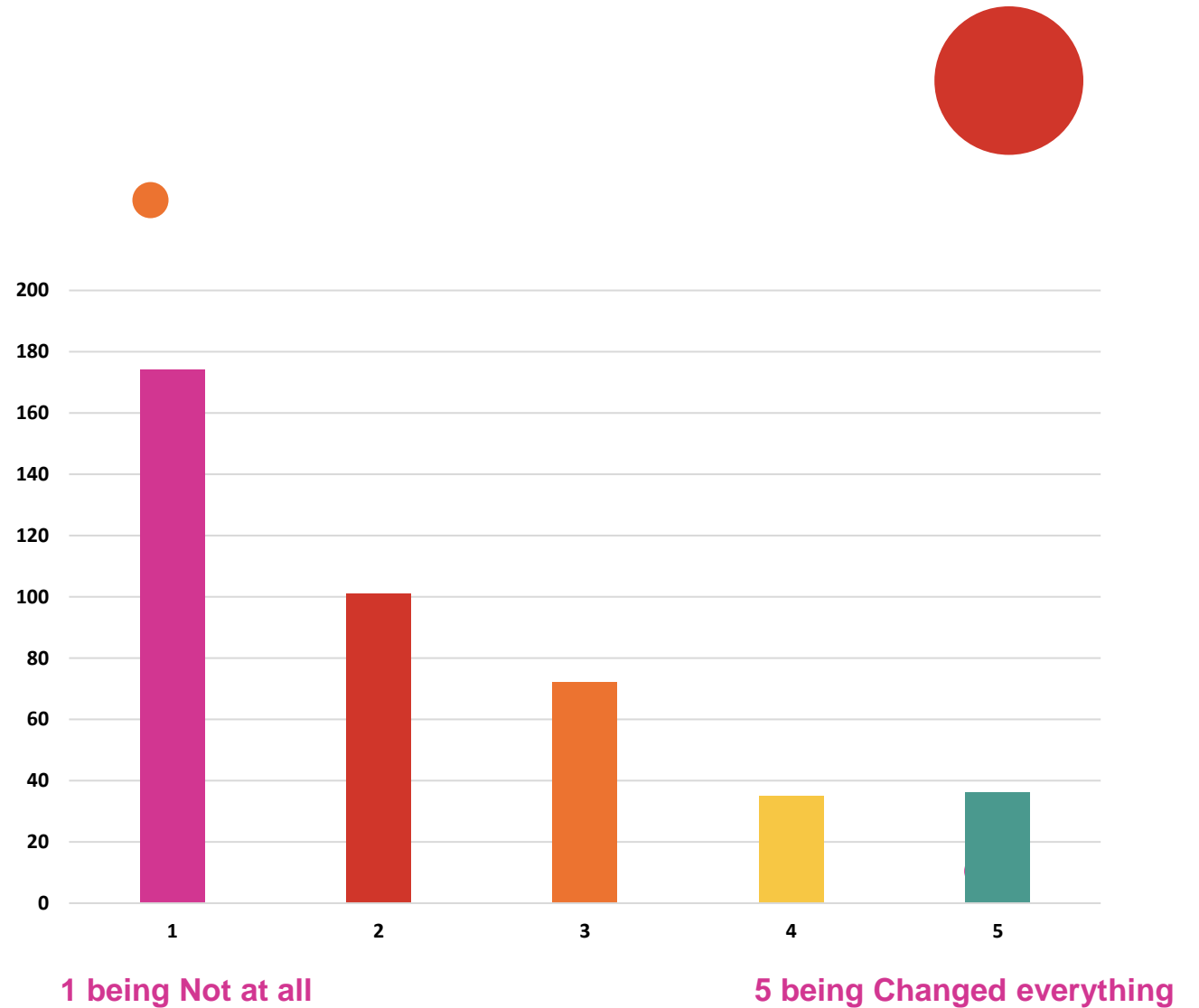
- 55% of students have indicated levels of concerns around their first college term on the back of Covid-19
- Only 21% of students have expressed any level of excitement around starting college.



# Has COVID-19 made you reconsider what college you want to go to?

COVID-19 has not caused reconsideration of college choice

- 17% of students are reconsidering their college choice on the back of Covid 19

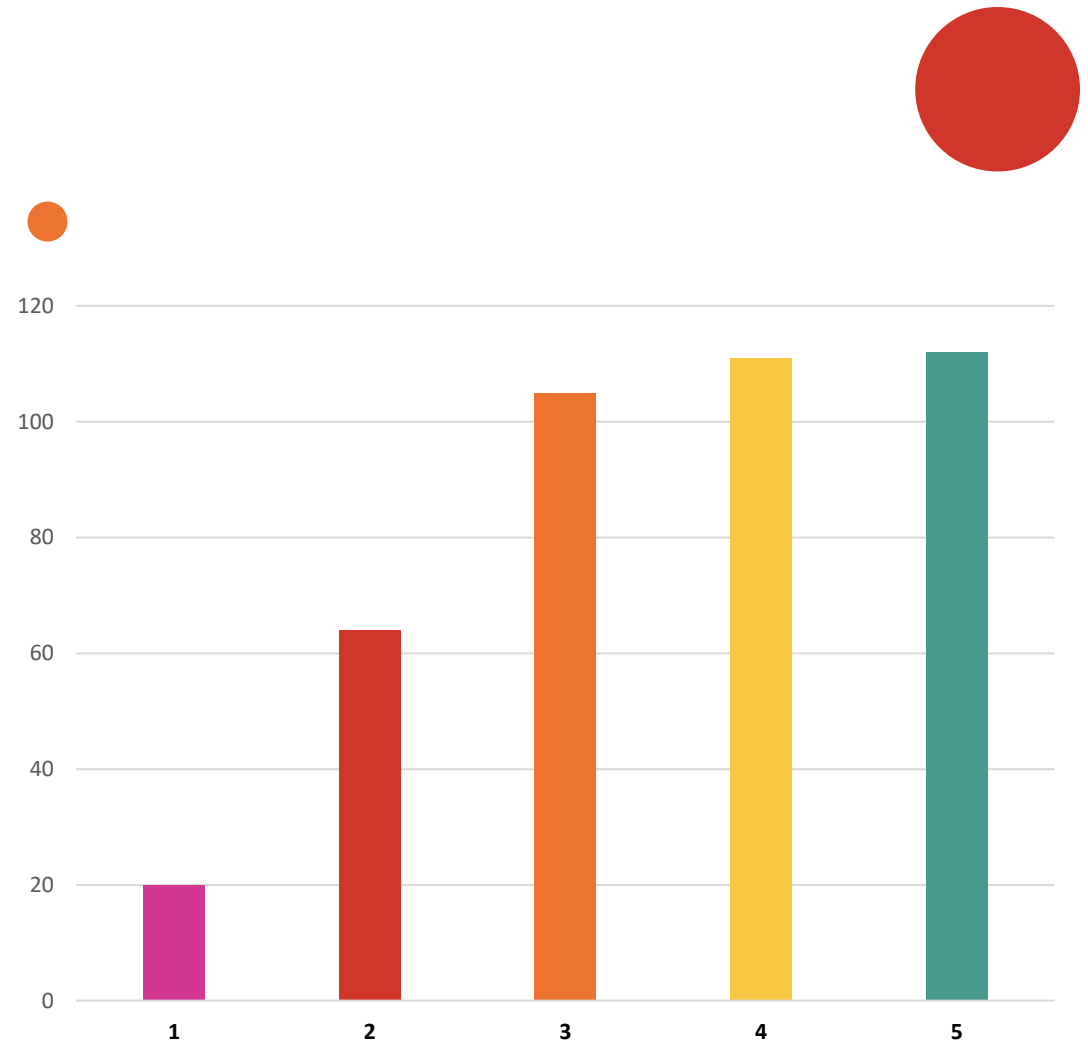




# Do you feel COVID 19 has affected your mental health?

Young people feel COVID-19 has negatively affected them mentally.

- Only 20% of respondents said that Covid-19 has not affected their mental health in some way.
- 54% said that Covid-19 has in some way affected their mental health negatively.



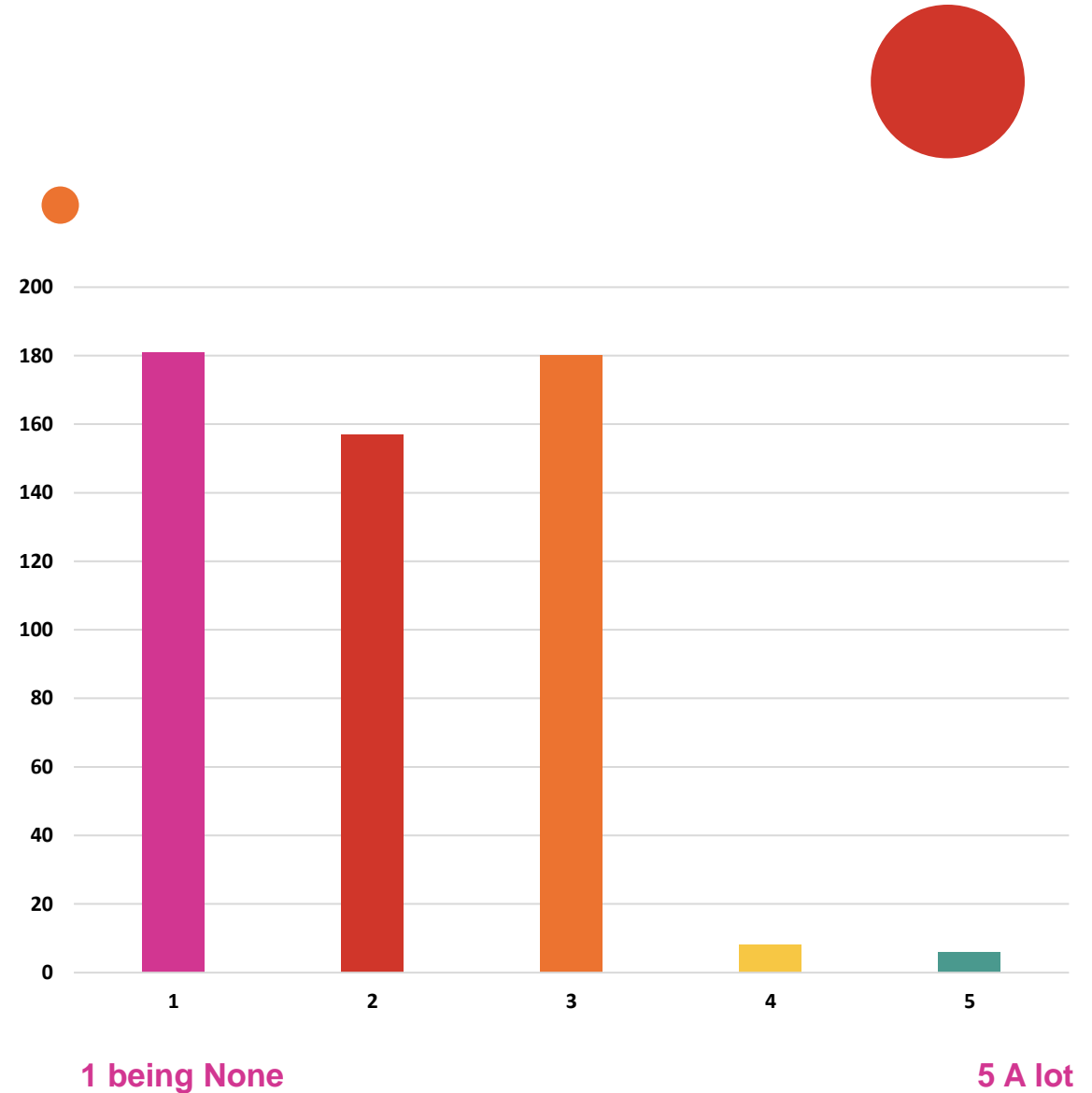
1 being - Not at all, I'm fine with it

5 being - Yes, it has affected my mental health negatively

# Do you think that Government/ Dept. of Education are giving you enough support?

Young people do not feel supported by Government.

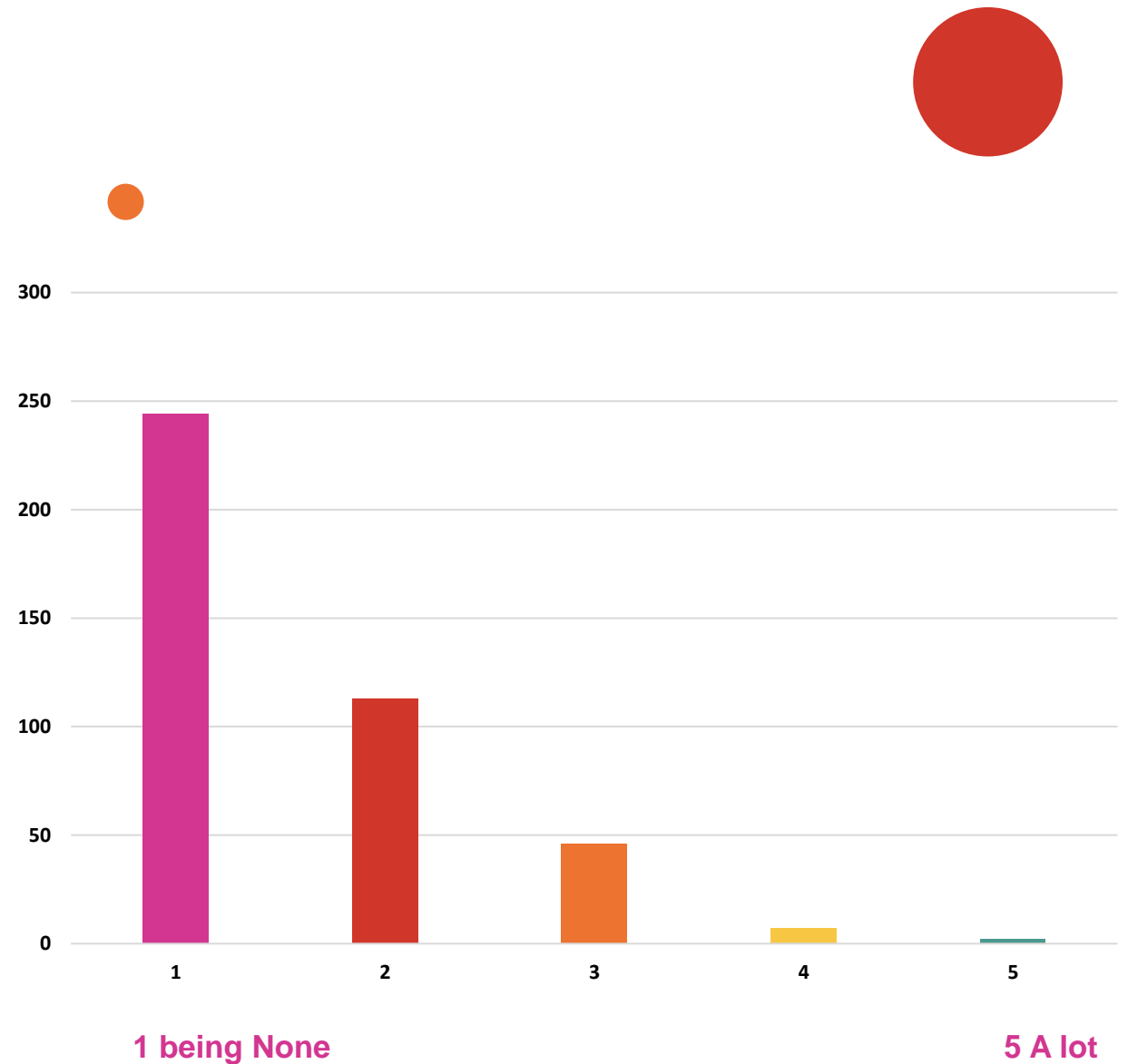
- Leaving Cert Students clearly do not feel the Government is doing enough to support them
- 64% of respondents have said the Government has done very little or nothing to support them



# Are there any brands that are supporting you with the current situation?

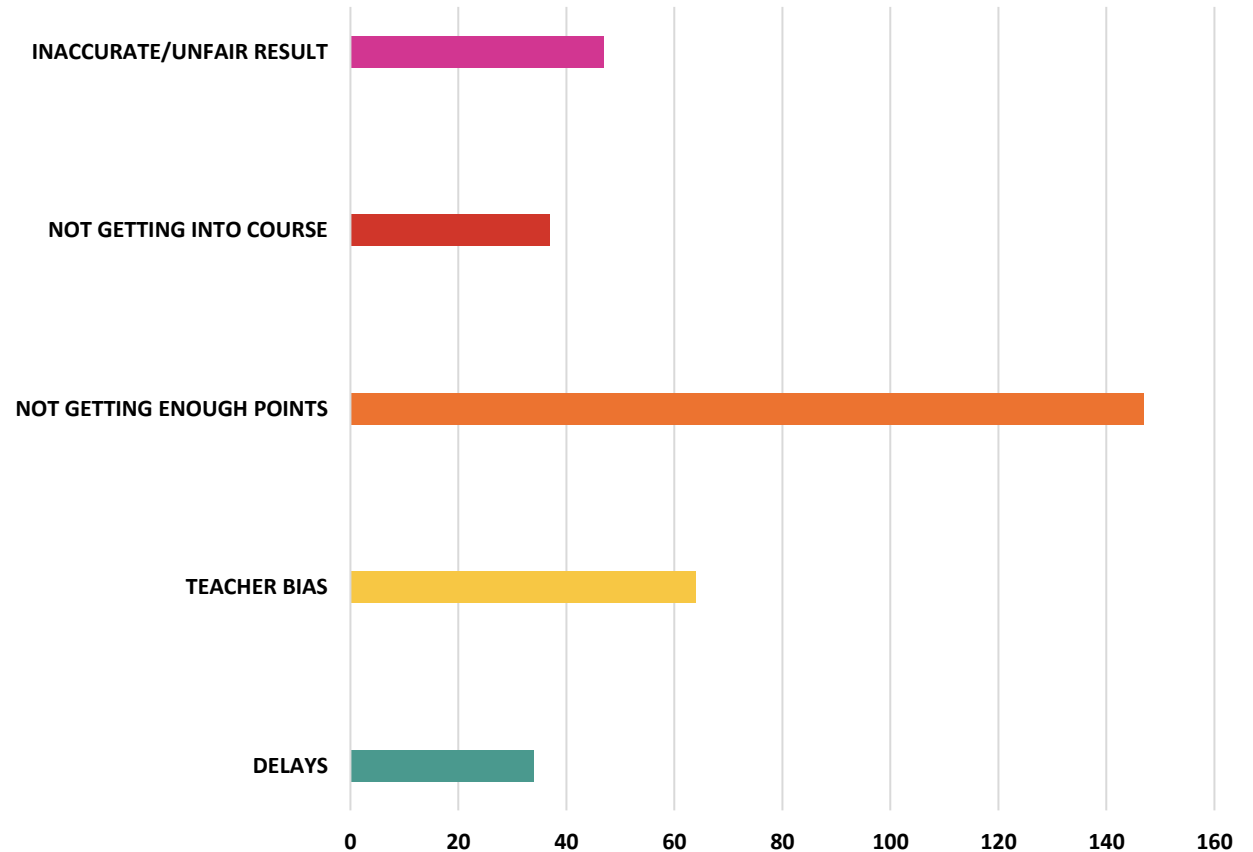
There are no brands lending support to young people.

- Leaving cert students clearly do not feel there are any brands doing anything to support them
- 87% of respondents have said that very few or no brands are supporting them

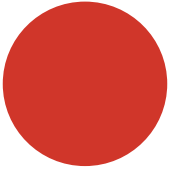


# In no more than 15 words, describe what your biggest worries / concerns about the results are

- There are many concerns expressed by students around upcoming results
- Not getting enough points / not getting into chosen course is not an unusual response
- Unfair results, teacher bias and delays are concerns expressed repeatedly that are purely Covid-19 related




# In no more than 15 words describe what your biggest worries / concerns about the results are....



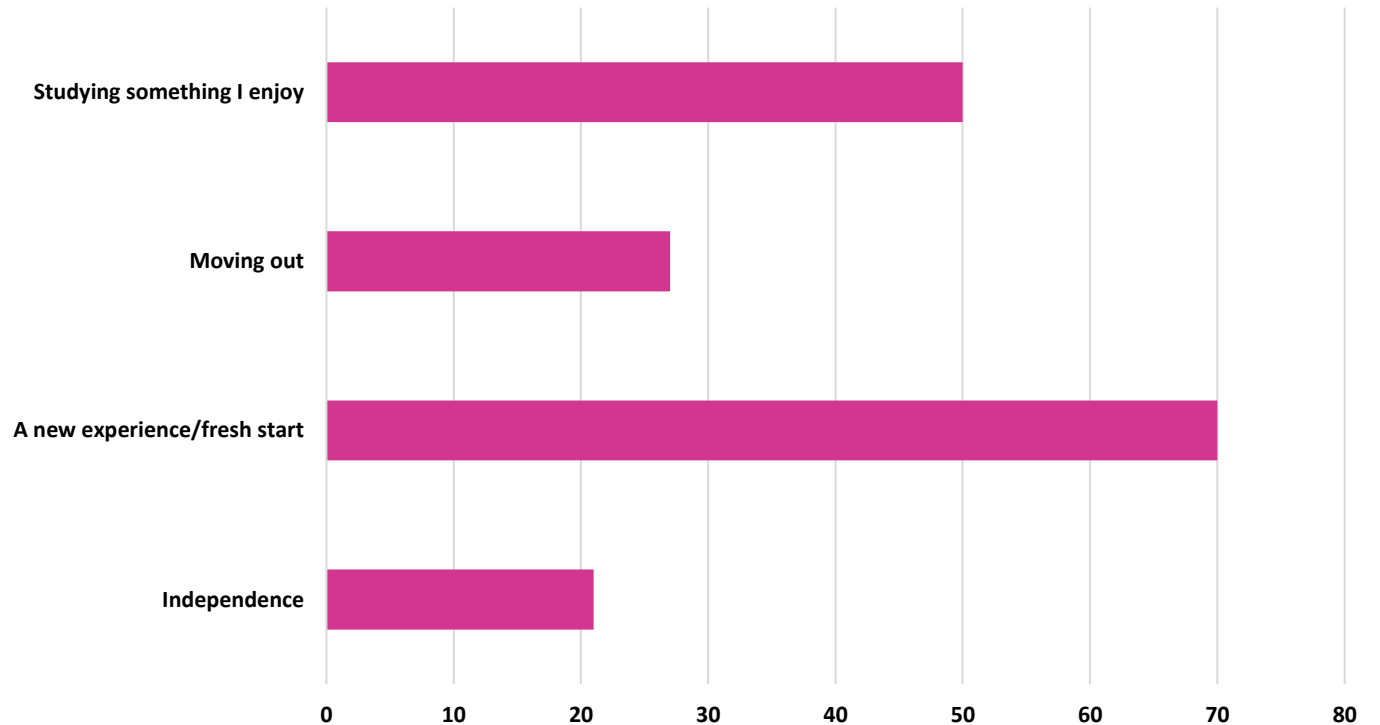
DELAYS	TEACHER BIAS	NOT GETTING ENOUGH POINTS	NOT GETTING INTO COURSE	INACCURATE/UNFAIR RESULT
34	64	147	37	47
<p><i>"My biggest concern is getting the results so late. It doesn't allow much time for students to prepare to start this new chapter of their lives. I also fear the prolonged wait will hurt leaving cert students mental health by overthinking the results."</i></p> <p><i>"The delay in results is my biggest stress, I'm eager to do well"</i></p>	<p><i>"I hope that the results are fair and not bias on who the teachers liked the most"</i></p> <p><i>"I'm concerned that our results will be biased based on teachers opinions"</i></p>	<p><i>"Not getting the points that I've aimed for or have wanted for the past 2 years. This is because I feel I didn't get the chance to prove myself to my teachers"</i></p> <p><i>"Not getting results I had been aiming for if I sat the leaving cert"</i></p>	<p><i>"That I won't get into my dream course"</i></p> <p><i>"Not getting my course due to past results"</i></p> <p><i>"Missing out on my top course because I know I would have achieved it in an exam situation"</i></p>	<p><i>"There is a high possibility that results will be inaccurate and that we will not receive the results that our teachers predicted for us because all results have to fit into a bell curve. The delay in the release of results will also negatively impact the beginning of college and the ability of students to find accommodation"</i></p> <p><i>"Will the results be done fairly, will I get the points needed for the course, how will our unfinished practicals be graded"</i></p>
<p><i>"The timeframe we have to decide where we want to go, accommodation, whether or not we appeal our grades etc."</i></p>	<p><i>"I'm concerned that whoever is grading them doesn't account for the work you can put in from the mocks to the leaving certificate"</i></p>	<p><i>"That I will fail maths due to doing poorly in my mocks and not showing that I can pass the real thing because of my previous grade"</i></p>	<p><i>"I'm afraid my friends won't get a chance to pursue their dream course"</i></p>	<p><i>"That they aren't an accurate reflection of my ability"</i></p> <p><i>"That all the effort I put in for the mocks won't be recognised and that my grades will be focused on my 5th year results which don't reflect my true work and will result in me not getting the course that I really want"</i></p>





# In no more than 15 words describe what you are most excited about going to college for the first time.


- Students' aspirations and excitement related to college would not seem to be dictated by Covid-19.
- Moving out of home, independence and new experiences still are most important.



# In no more than 15 words describe what you are most excited about going to college for the first time



INDEPENDENCE	NEW EXPERIENCE / FRESH START	MOVING OUT	STUDYING SOMETHING I ENJOY
<p style="text-align: center;">21</p> <p><i>“Independence of living in student accommodation”</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">70</p> <p><i>“Meeting new people studying in a different environment and getting the opportunity to live outside the family home”</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">27</p> <p><i>“Moving out and starting my own life as a independent adult”</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;">50</p> <p><i>“To cut out what I didn’t enjoy from the LC and focus on my interests”</i></p>
<p><i>“New atmosphere. New people. More independence in being who I want to be”</i></p>	<p><i>“I’m excited for a fresh start, and hopefully forget about the past few months”</i></p>	<p><i>“To move on from the whole leaving cert chapter and start afresh”</i></p>	<p><i>“Freedom to learn about subjects I personally have chosen”</i></p>



It is clear that young people are feeling the effects of Covid-19 and there is much uncertainty around their Leaving Cert, results and future.

Anxiety and concern caused around delays in results being available, and not getting the results they deserve, whether through teacher bias, or being unable to have the opportunity to sit examinations, is extremely prevalent amongst the respondents surveyed.

The majority of respondents reported the pandemic affecting their mental health negatively, and noted a lack of support from both government and brands.

Despite this, and encouragingly, while some respondents expressed some concern about what college / university life will look like this year, most still look forward to starting 3<sup>rd</sup> level education and the independence and new opportunities it brings.

# Conclusion





July 2020  
Youth Survey

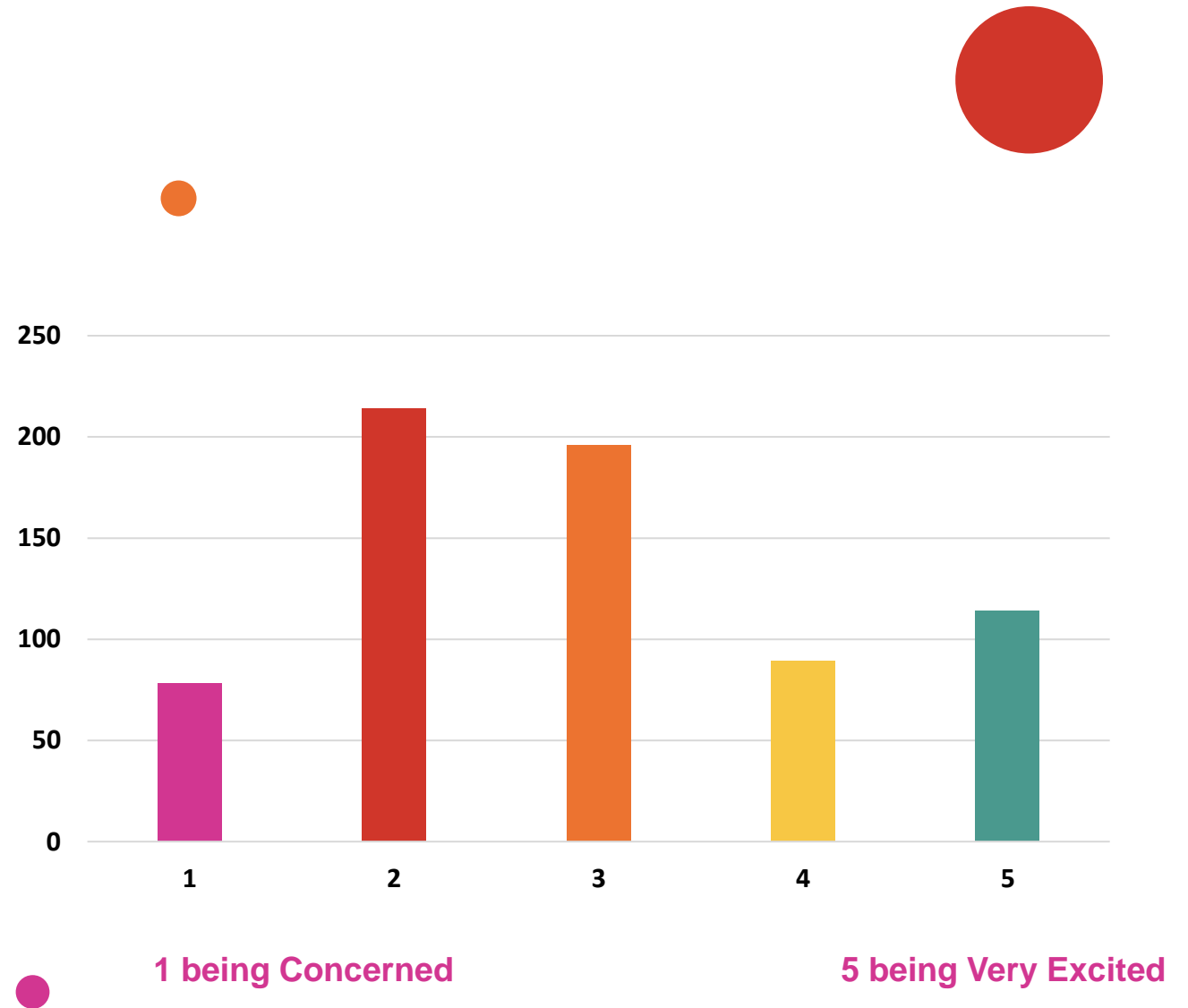


# College & University Research Findings

# Are you looking forward to returning to college this year?

Students are worried about a return to college during/post Covid-19.

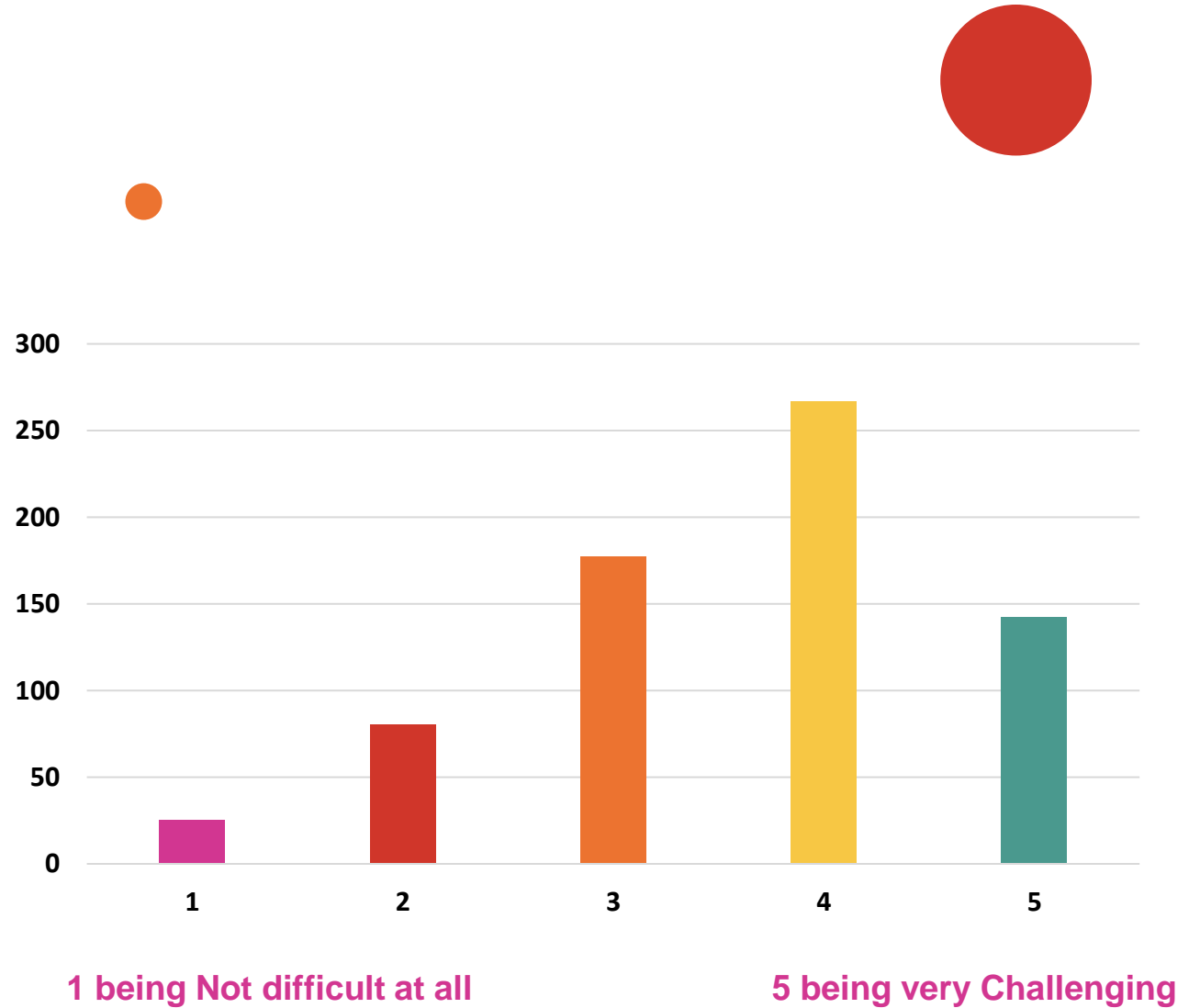
- Less than a third of students expressed levels of excitement at the thought of returning to college.
- 42% of students have indicated levels of concerns around returning to college



# How did you find studying for and doing your exams online this year – was it more difficult?

Most students found studying and sitting exams online more difficult.

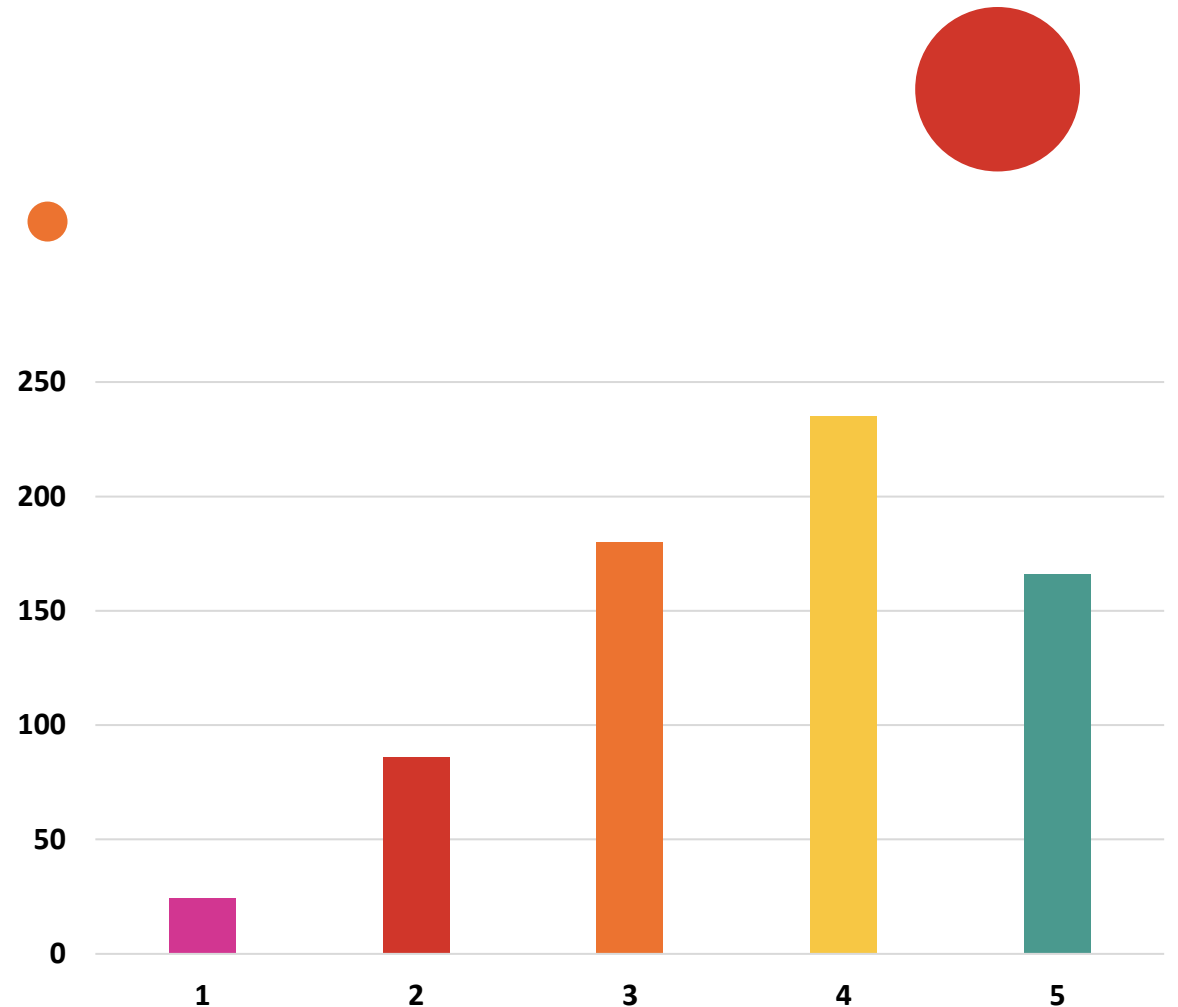
- 59% of students found the process of studying for and sitting exams online challenging.
- Less than 5% had no difficulties.



# Do you feel that Covid 19 has affected your mental health?

Young people feel COVID-19 has negatively affected them mentally.

- Only 16% of students said that Covid-19 has not affected their mental health in some way.
- 58% expressed that Covid-19 has in some way affected their mental health negatively.

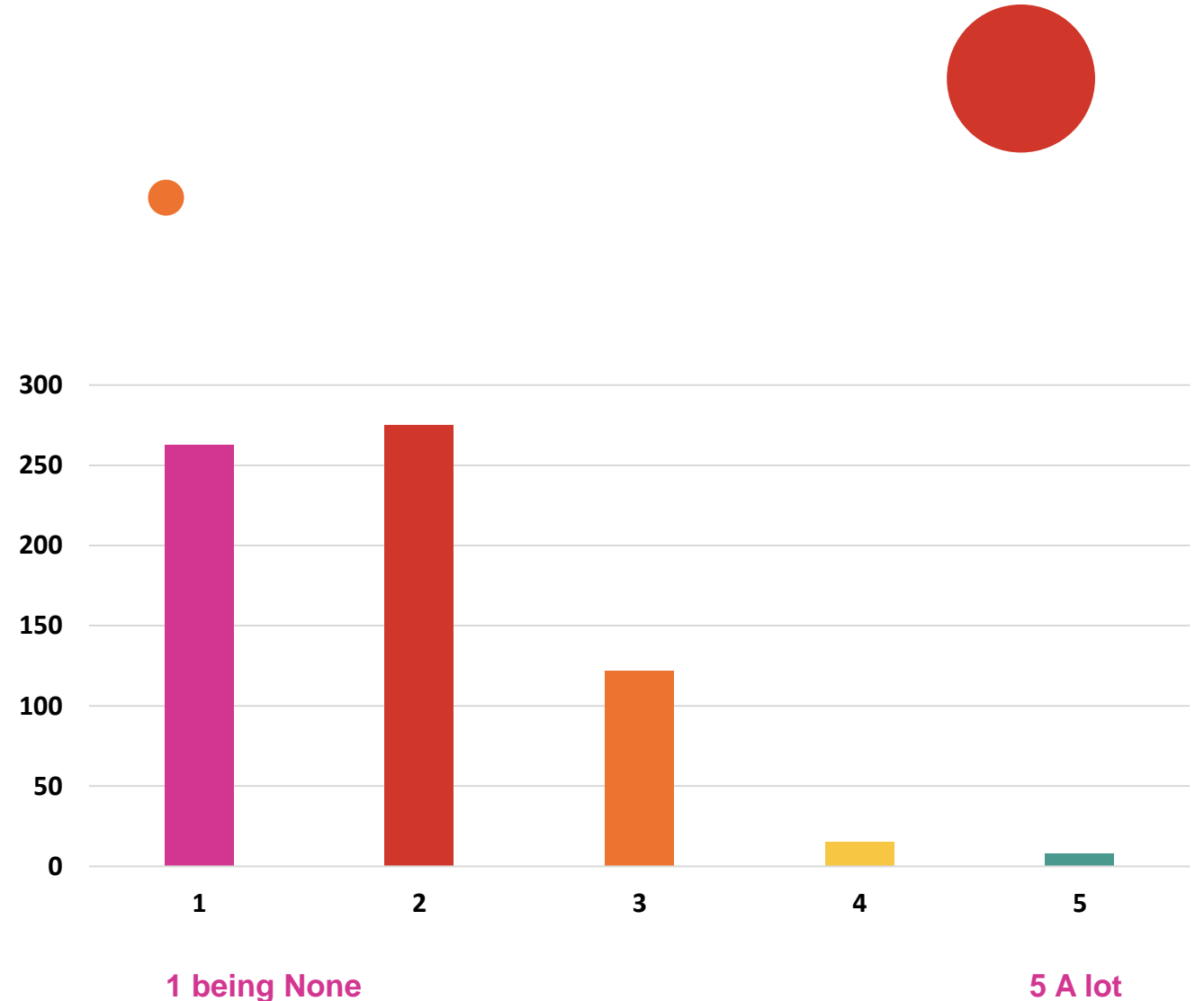


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5 being - Yes, it has affected my mental health negatively

# Do you think that Government/Dept of Education are giving you enough support?

Young people do not feel supported by Government.

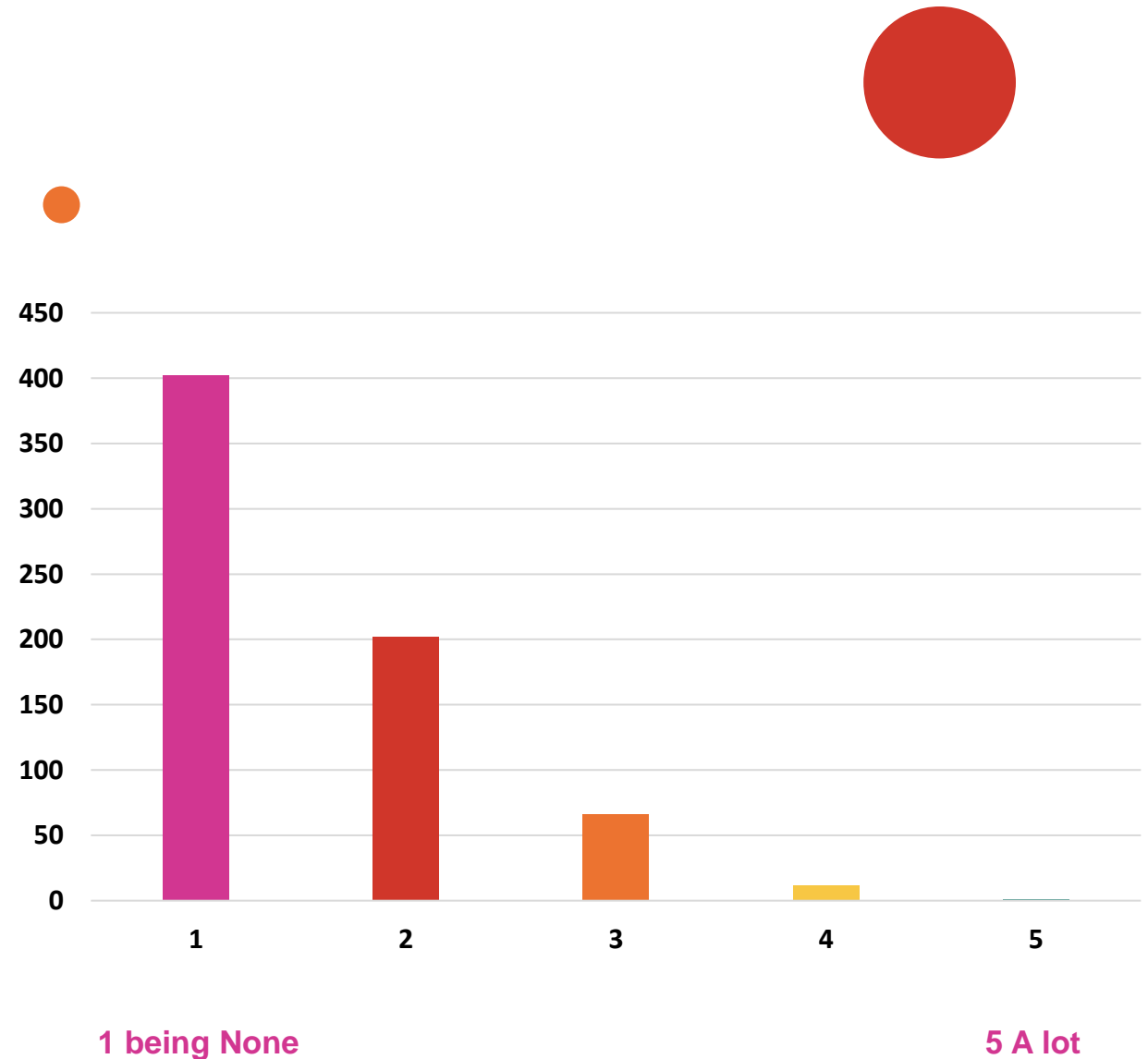
- College and University Students clearly do not feel the Government is doing enough to support them
- 79% of respondents have said the Government has done very little or nothing to support them



# Are there any brands that are supporting you with the current situation?

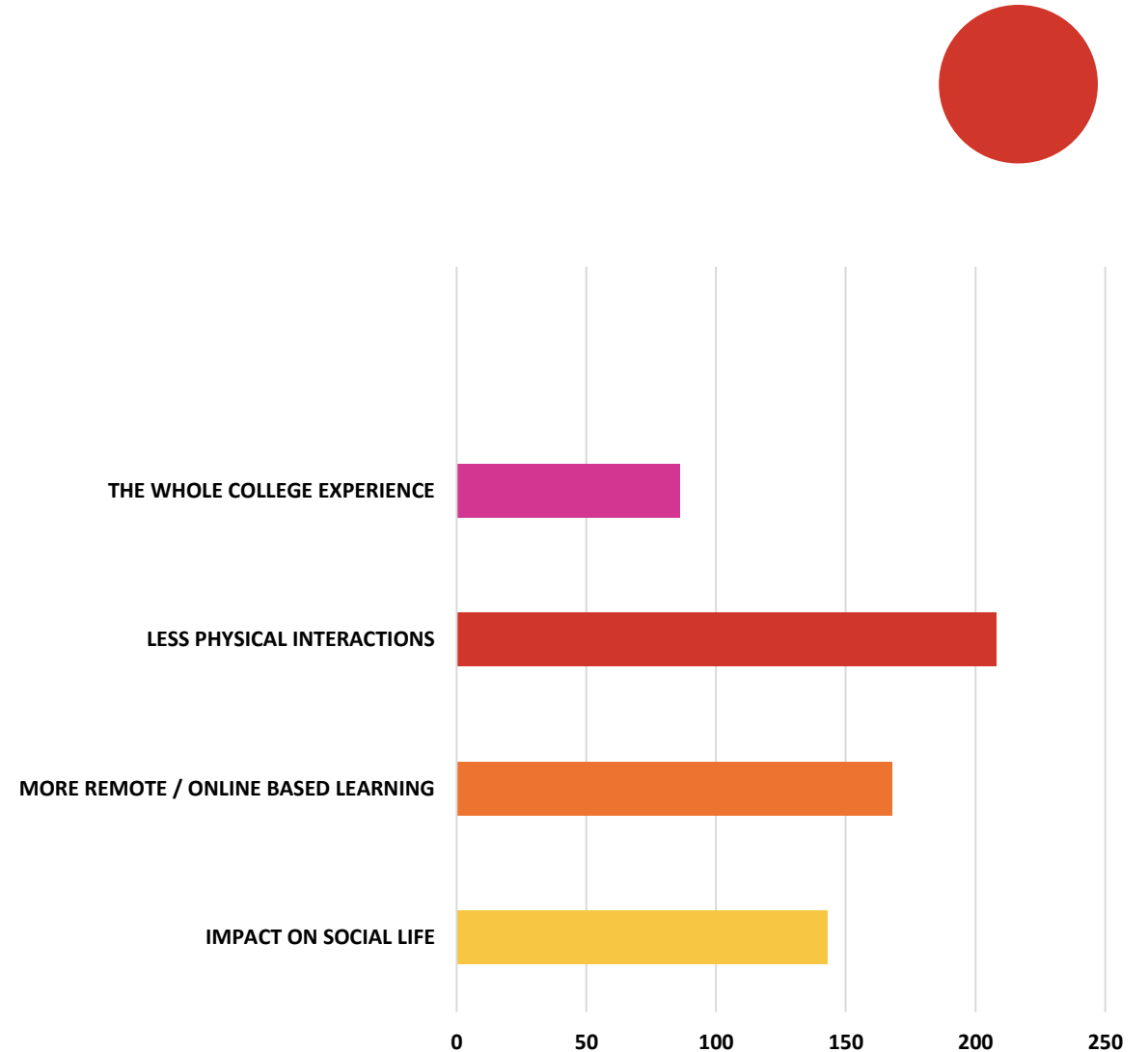
There are no brands lending support to students.

- College /University students clearly do not feel there are any brands doing anything to support them
- 88% of respondents have said that very few or no brands are supporting them

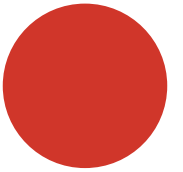


# In no more than 15 words describe what you are expecting to be different upon your return to college this year?

- There are many concerns expressed by students around a more isolated college experience both academically and socially.
- The entire college experience or 'everything' being different was a common feeling amongst respondents.



# In no more than 15 words describe what your biggest worries / concerns about the results are....



COLLEGE EXPERIENCE	LESS PHYSICAL INTERACTIONS	MORE REMOTE / ONLINE LEARNING	IMPACT ON SOCIAL LIFE
86	208	168	143
<p><i>"I expect the whole experience to be difficult and going into an important year I'm apprehensive about it"</i></p> <p><i>"I think everything will be different and the experience won't be the same at all unfortunately!"</i></p> <p><i>"A change in the whole collage experience"</i></p> <p><i>"Everything will be or feel different"</i></p> <p><i>"Everything honestly"</i></p> <p><i>"My whole college experience, meeting friends, lectures, studying, travel to college"</i></p>	<p><i>"Less in person college time, I expect it to be uncertain and stressful as we have no clear guidelines and no timetable until September"</i></p> <p><i>"Isolated, stressful and home-based. Much less of a social setting"</i></p> <p><i>"Less social events, more formal environments and new teaching methods"</i></p> <p><i>The learning itself, with it being online and missing the social aspect"</i></p> <p><i>"Less socialising. Less interactive learning. Different experience"</i></p> <p><i>"Less time to socialize and more awkward online lecture"</i></p> <p><i>"I expect much less human interaction which is what makes the college experience amazing"</i></p>	<p><i>"Delivery and quality of modules, expected to do the same level of work to the same degree but the learning environment is not the same"</i></p> <p><i>"Continued online learning with near zero in class learning"</i></p> <p><i>"Not being able to use the library or attend lectures"</i></p> <p><i>"Looks like the majority of my class will be online which is the worst case scenario for me."</i></p> <p><i>"Most stuff will be online which I find challenging as lecturers often don't care enough to answer questions when it's not face to face"</i></p>	<p><i>"Societies and sports will be more limited and less opportunities to make new friends"</i></p> <p><i>"Undoubtedly my social life will be changed dramatically from what I experienced last year in collwge. I anticipate to have little to no face to face lectures with my course mates which will have a major impact on my outlook of college life."</i></p> <p><i>"Social aspects such as making friends whilst also social aspects of group projects etc"</i></p>



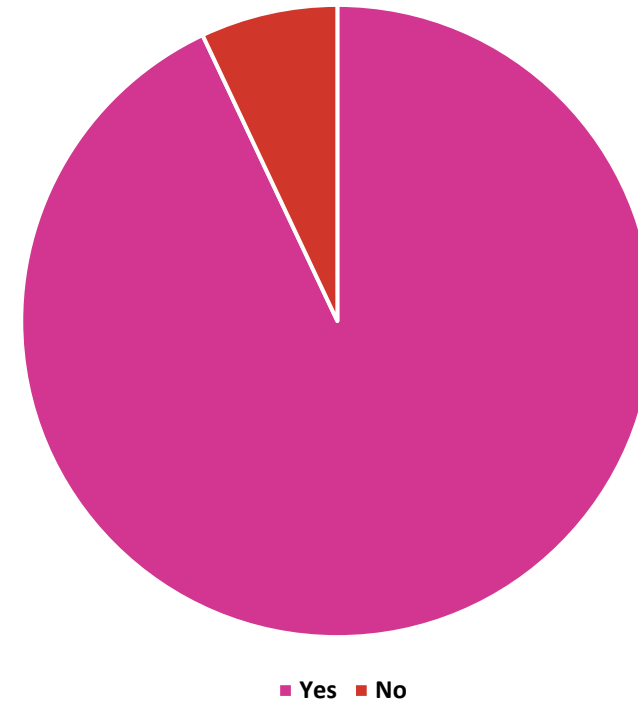




# Do you get stressed over exams?

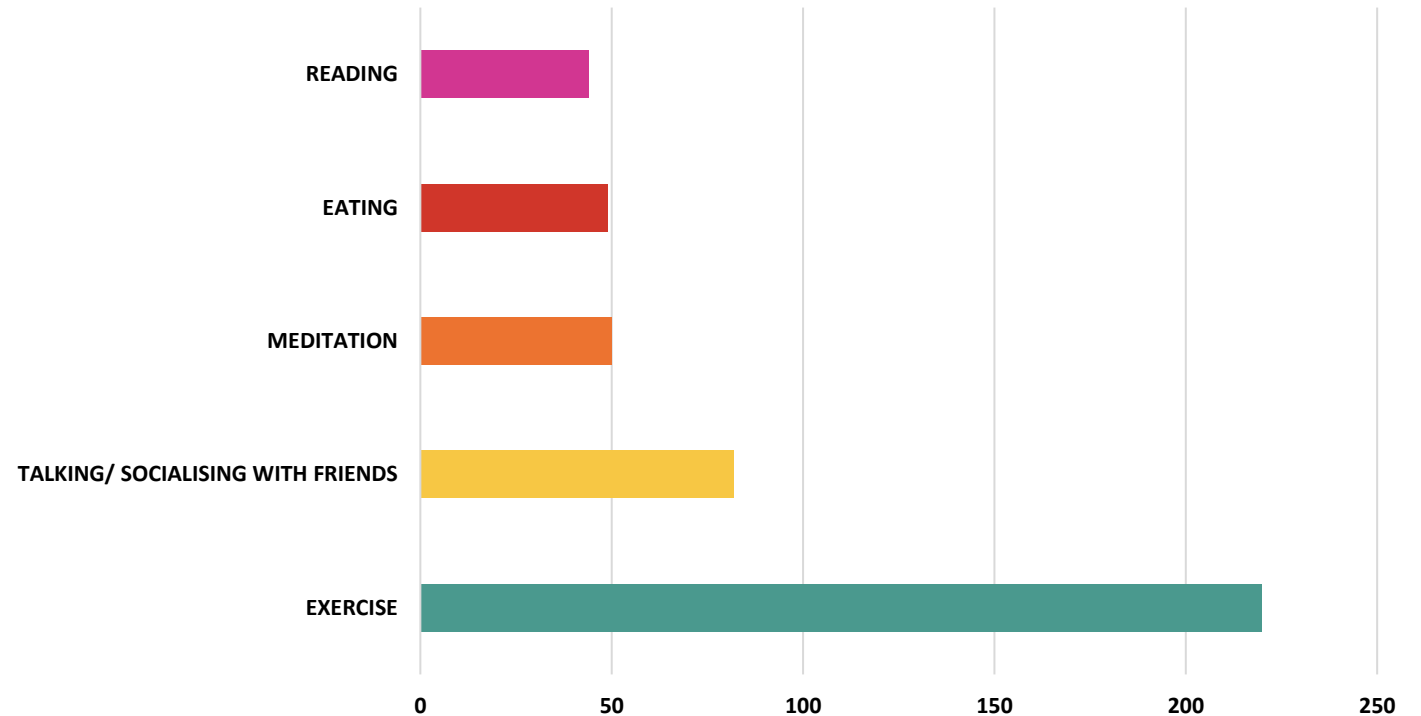
The vast majority of students find exams stressful.

- 93% of respondents reported feeling stressed over exams.
- *Note students would probably have had high levels of concern with or without pandemic*

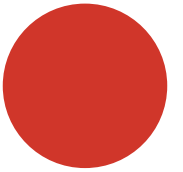


# Do you get stressed over exams and how do you relieve this stress?

- Almost all respondents reported feeling some level of stress at exam time.
- Exercise and talking to or socialising with friends were cited as the most popular means to relieve stress at exam time.




# Answer the following question in no more than 15 words: Do you get stressed over exams and how do you relieve this stress?



EXERCISE	TALKING / SOCIALISING WITH FRIENDS	MEDITATION	EATING	READING
220	82	50	49	44
<p><i>"Exercising is the best stress relief for pre exam stress"</i></p> <p><i>"Exercising on a regular basis was a stress reliever for me"</i></p> <p><i>"I do get stressed. I try to exercise &amp; take time away from study etc to stay fresh."</i></p> <p><i>"I get very stressed. I usually gym but I don't feel that's safe at the moment"</i></p> <p><i>"I use exercise as a relief from exam stress, be it a walk or gym"</i></p> <p><i>"Sometimes but runs and swims in the sea help me destress"</i></p>	<p><i>"Fortunately I don't have many but yes and I relieve by spending time with my friends"</i></p> <p><i>"I get very stressed so hanging out with friends or going out helps"</i></p> <p><i>"Talking with friends and family, planning a big celebration as something to look forward to after the exams"</i></p> <p><i>"Yes and by sharing this exam season stress with friends and meeting for study breaks etc"</i></p>	<p><i>"I do yoga and meditate"</i></p> <p><i>"Yes and meditation"</i></p> <p><i>"Yes I do, I meditate and practise breathing techniques"</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, I meditate in the evenings and do something I like to unwind."</i></p> <p><i>"Yes. I meditate before sleep"</i></p>	<p><i>"Yes- socialising, gym &amp; fuelling myself with good fooddddd"</i></p> <p><i>"Yes very stressed I eat bad food lol"</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, comfort food and taking short breaks"</i></p> <p><i>"Extremely stressed, go to bed early and eat healthy foods"</i></p> <p><i>"Yes, lots of chocolate"</i></p> <p><i>"I usually end up eating a lot of chocolate, it helps!"</i></p>	<p><i>"I read a book and talk to family and friends"</i></p> <p><i>"I relieve stress by relaxing &amp; reading a book"</i></p> <p><i>"Yes. Take time to do something that relaxes me in the evening such as reading or watching Netflix"</i></p> <p><i>"Yes ! Listen to music or read a book"</i></p>





It is clear that third level students are feeling the effects of Covid-19 and there is much uncertainty around college/ university life from both an academic and social perspective.

Most respondents report expecting college life to be very different upon their return with more remote / online-based learning, less time spent on campus and reduced access to teachers and lecturers.

The impact of this can also be seen on respondents' expectations around the impact on the social aspect of college / university life with less opportunities to make friends, enjoy extracurricular activities and socialise.

The majority of respondents reported the pandemic affecting their mental health negatively, and noted a lack of support from both government and brands.

# Conclusion





Thank you

