DON'T DROP OUT

Averting a Covid retention crisis

WONKHE

Why?

- Non continuation the biggest issue of the Autumn.
- We wanted to know whether students are considering dropping out, who is most at risk, and the reasons why they're thinking about it.
- We also wanted to know what they think universities and students' unions could do to help.

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What and how

- Student "settling in" survey
- Codesigned with 30 students' unions
- Distributed to Trendence database and promoted by partner SUs
- Open throughout October
- 7,273 respondents from 121 providers
- Weighted by university

UK trendence RESEARCH

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Weighted respondent profile

- BAME 37%
- LGBT+ 23%
- International 35%
- Disabled 19%
- First year of course 44%
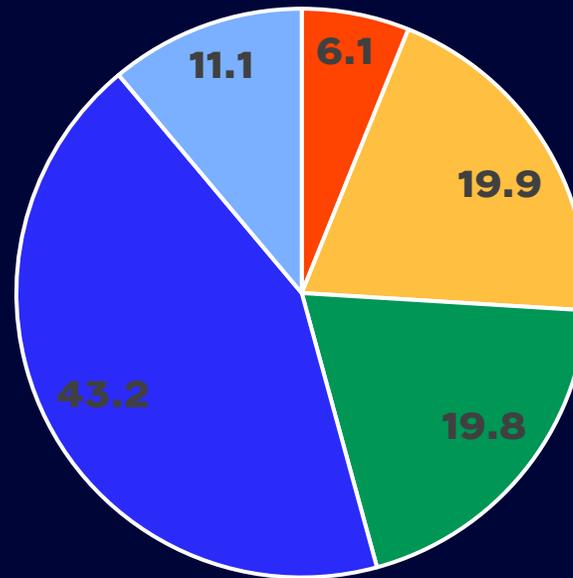
UK trendence RESEARCH
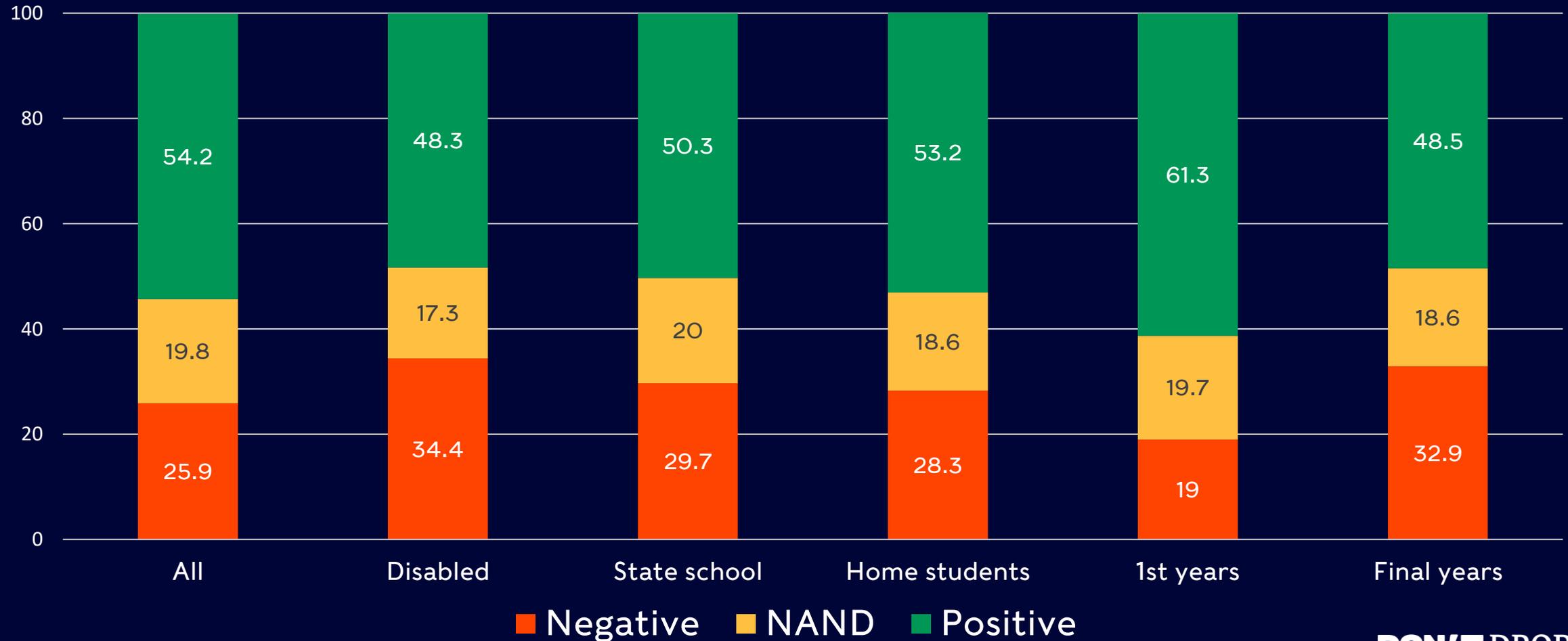
Academic experience: qual

Negative responses focussed on:
1. Interaction with other students
2. Accessing teaching (tech)
3. Interaction with academics
4. Teaching volume
5. (Promoted) expectations v realities
6. Organisation and management
7. Practical components/experience
8. Accessing facilities

Academic experience: qual

Positive responses focussed on:

1. Access to academics & 121 dupport

2. Interactivity of the teaching

3. Academic and institutional "effort" in context

Social and interaction as hygiene not motivator of satisfaction

What's going on?

- A large number of dissatisfaction comments relate to online learning, preferring face to face and being disappointed at the "amount" of face to face on offer.

- But a closer look suggests students are that dissatisfied with "online" teaching are not unhappy with it per se; they are unhappy at not being able to access it or unhappy that it fails to provide social interaction.

- In a large number of cases there appear to be significant differences in approach to and quality of online teaching between modules/classes for individual students.

- Meanwhile those happy with online teaching praise the individual support they get from academic staff or interaction with peers.

- Even where students do express being unhappy with online teaching, they often contextualise that as problematic because they have moved unnecessarily to the local area to experience it, rather than "it" itself.

Key drivers of academic dissatisfaction

- Inconsistency across programmes
- Inconsistency with others
- Inconsistency against expectations
- Academic isolation from other students and academics
- Organisation and management

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I am satisfied with the wider student experience so far this term

% agree
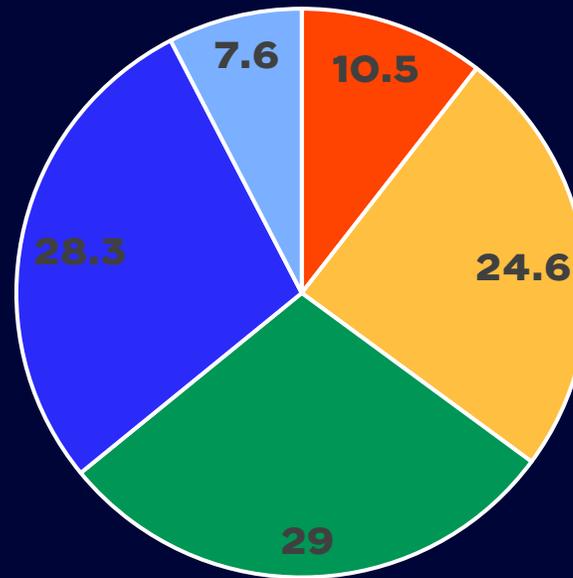
🟥 **Definitely disagree**	🟧 **Mostly disagree**	🟩 **NAND**	🟦 **Mostly agree**	🟦 **Definitely agree**

Pie chart values: 10.5, 24.6, 29, 28.3, 7.6

Wider experience cut by characteristic

	All	Disabled	State school	Home students	1st years	Final years
Positive	53.7	30	29.1	33.1	41.9	30.5
NAND	20.2	28.9	32.3	28.8	29.5	29.5
Negative	26.1	41.1	38.6	38.1	28.6	40

Negative ▪ NAND ▪ Positive

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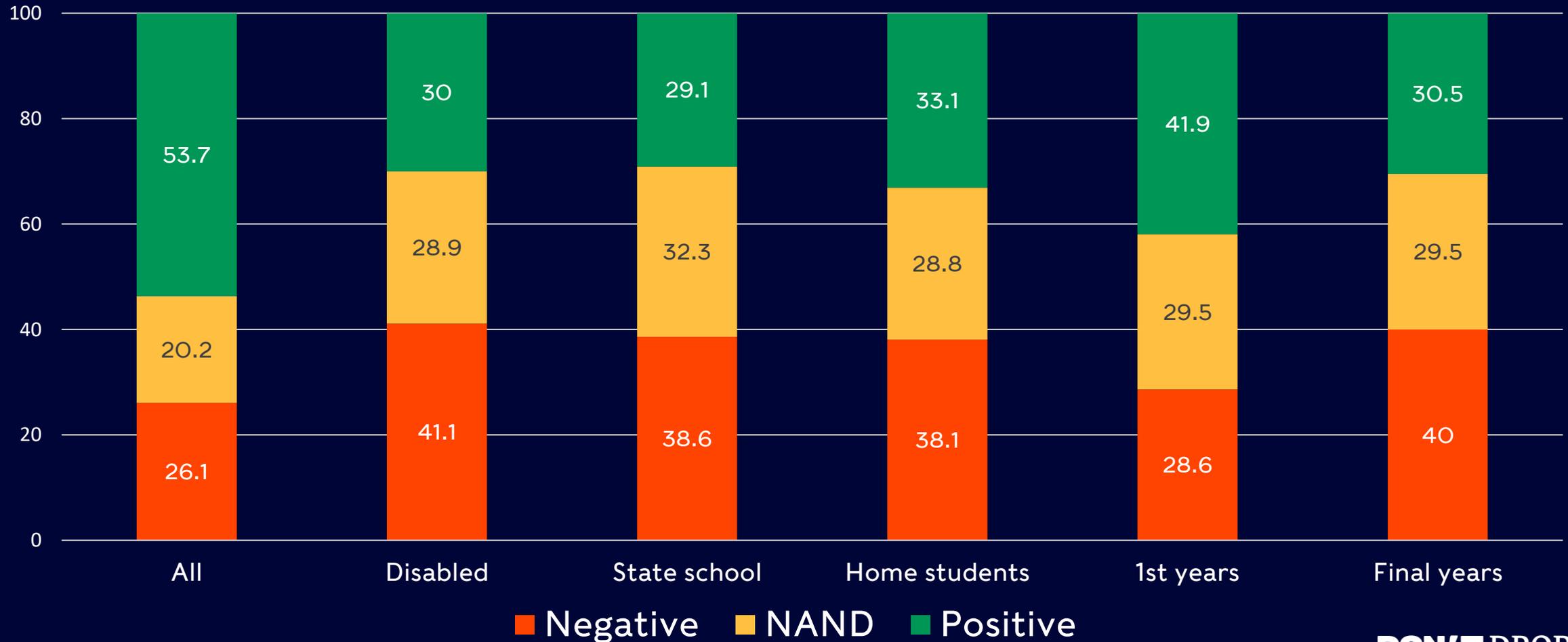
How often, if ever, do you feel lonely? May 2019

% agree

Daily 12.4
Weekly 26.4
Less than weekly 42.6
Never 18.6

■ Daily   ■ Weekly   ■ Less than weekly   ■ Never

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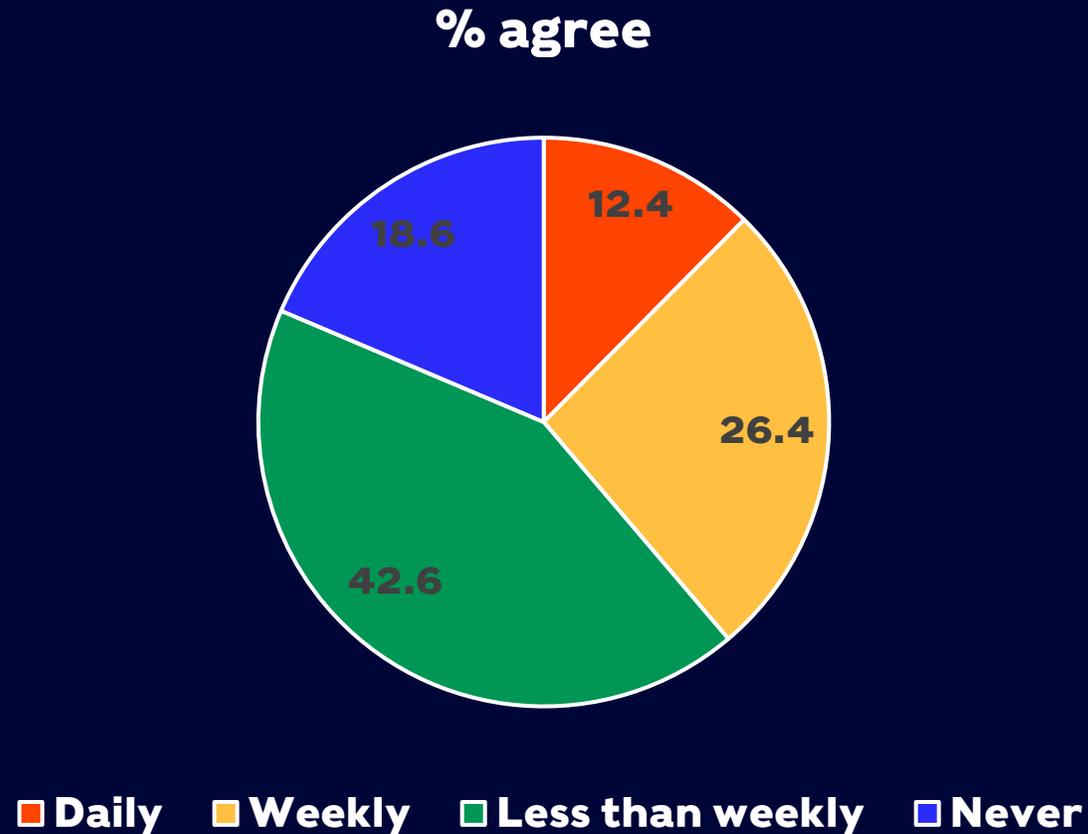
How often, if ever, do you feel lonely? Oct 2020

% agree
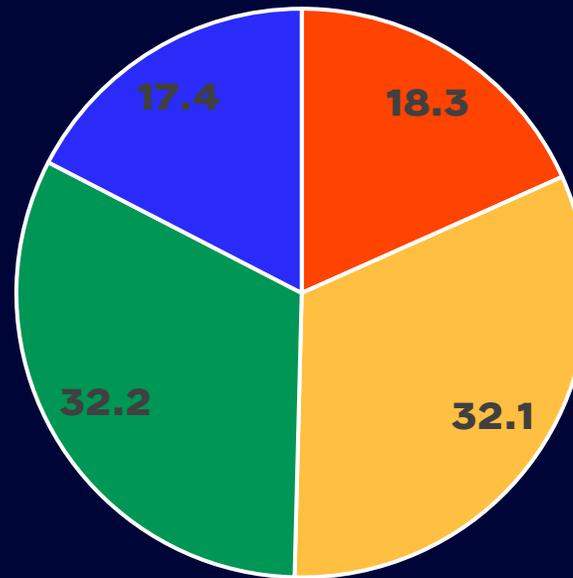
Pie chart showing: Daily 18.3, Weekly 32.1, Less than weekly 32.2, Never 17.4

■ Daily   ■ Weekly   ■ Less than weekly   ■ Never

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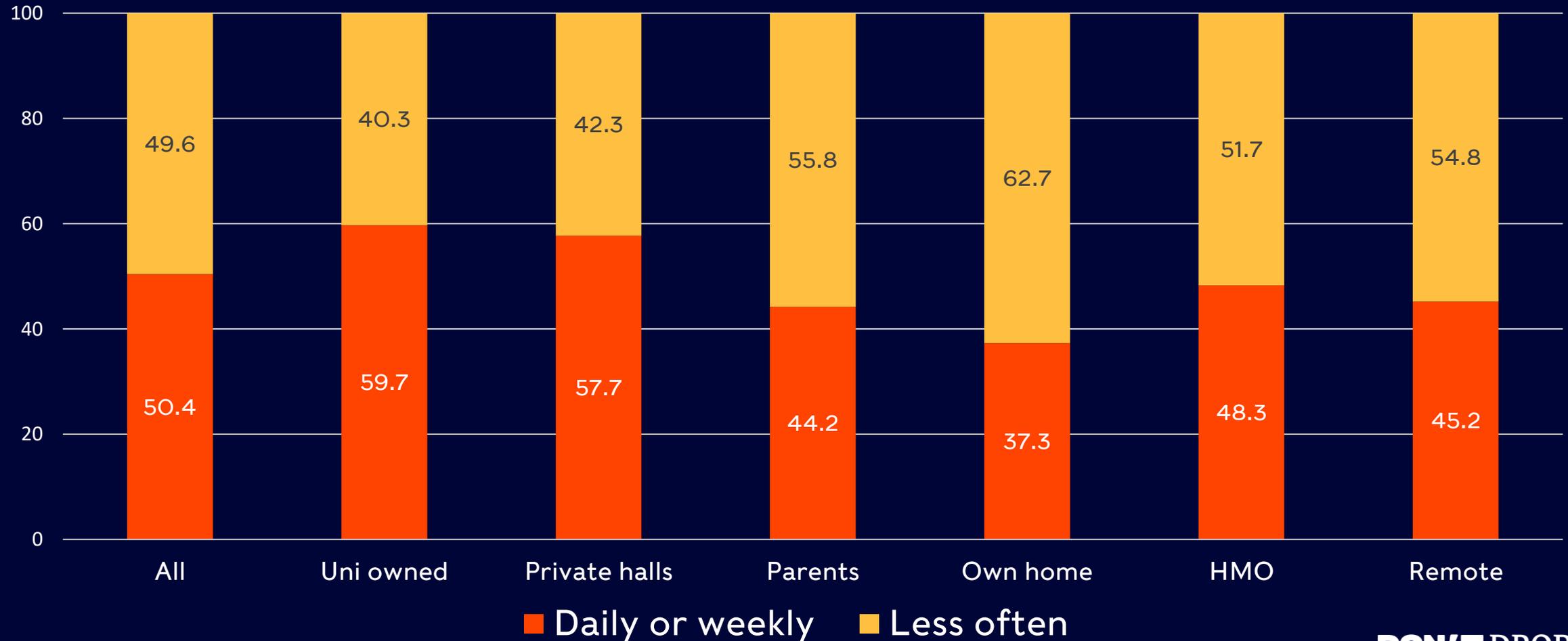
I feel part of community of staff and students May 2019

% agree
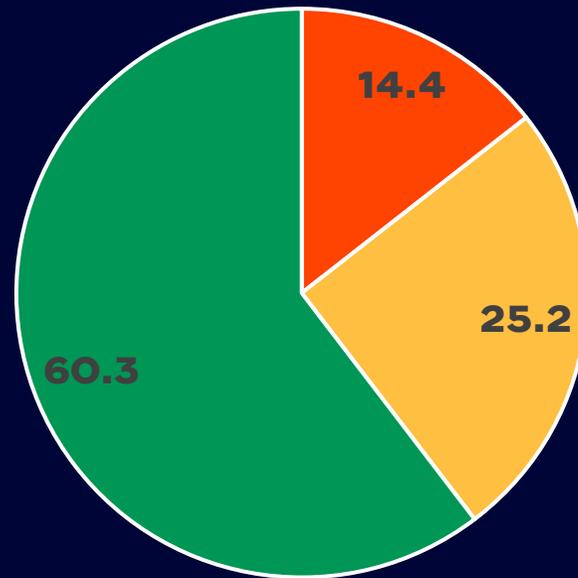
- Disagree or strongly disagree
- NAND
- Agree or strongly disagree

Pie chart values: 14.4, 25.2, 60.3

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I feel part of community of staff and students Oct 2020

% agree

- ■ Disagree or strongly disagree
- ■ NAND
- ■ Agree or strongly agree

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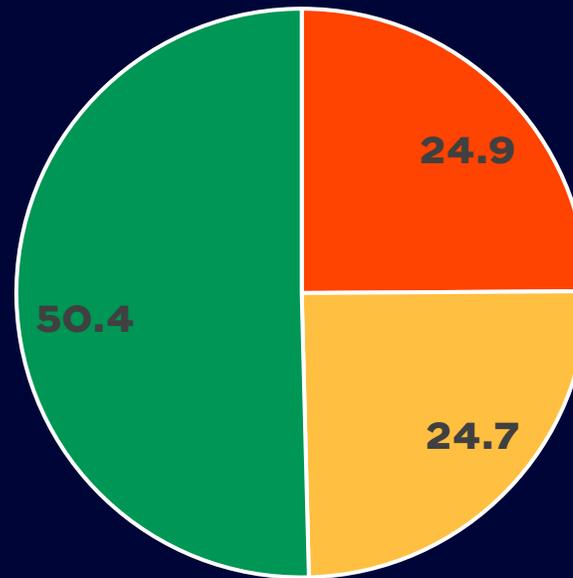
How often do you consider dropping out of your course?

% agree

3.7
8.9
20.8
66.5

■ Every day ■ Every week ■ Less than weekly ■ Never

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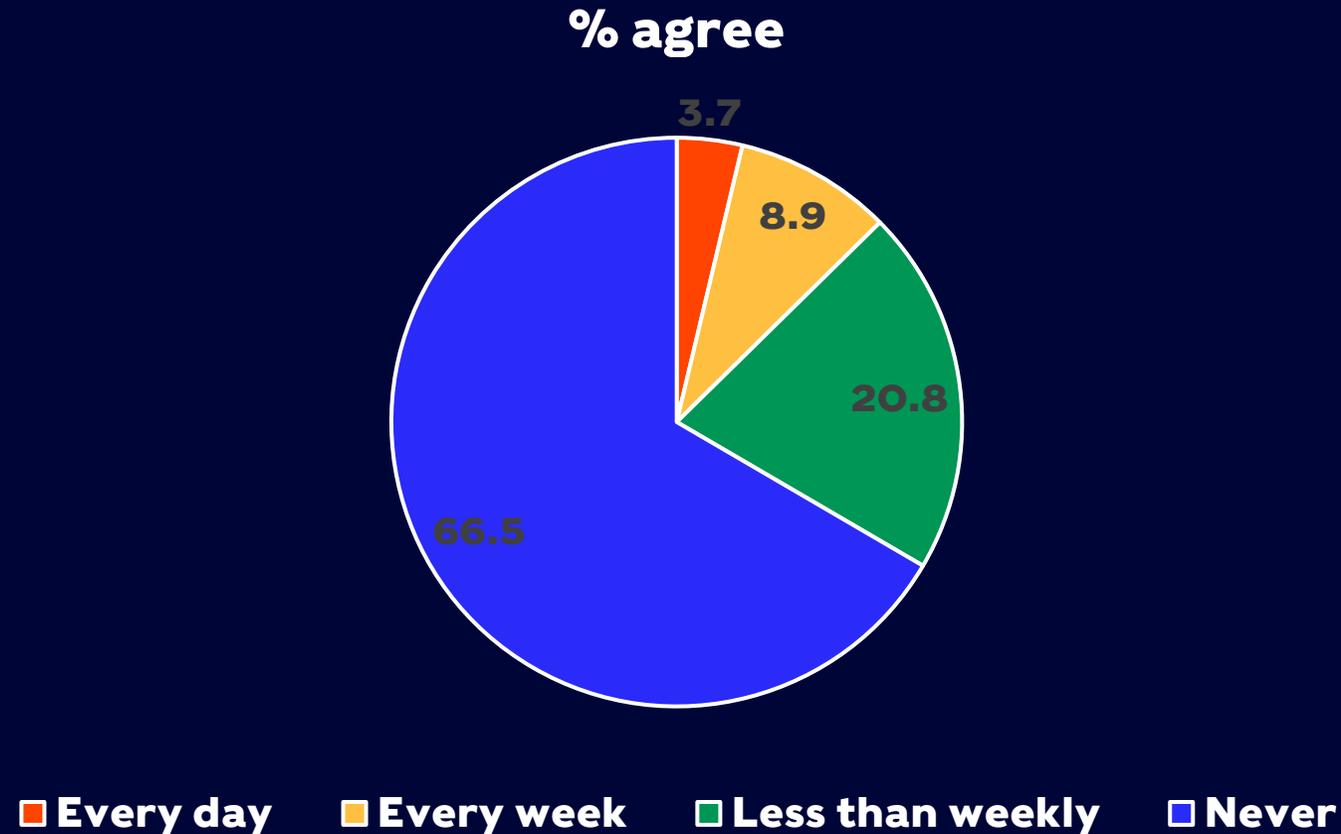
In the following slides...

- Daily or weekly = At risk
- Less often or never = Not at risk

Drop out risk by characteristic

	All	Disabled	State school	Home students	1st years	LGBT
Less often	87.3	79.5	82	84.6	86.5	82.6
Daily or weekly	12.7	20.5	18	15.4	13.5	17.4

■ Daily or weekly   ■ Less often

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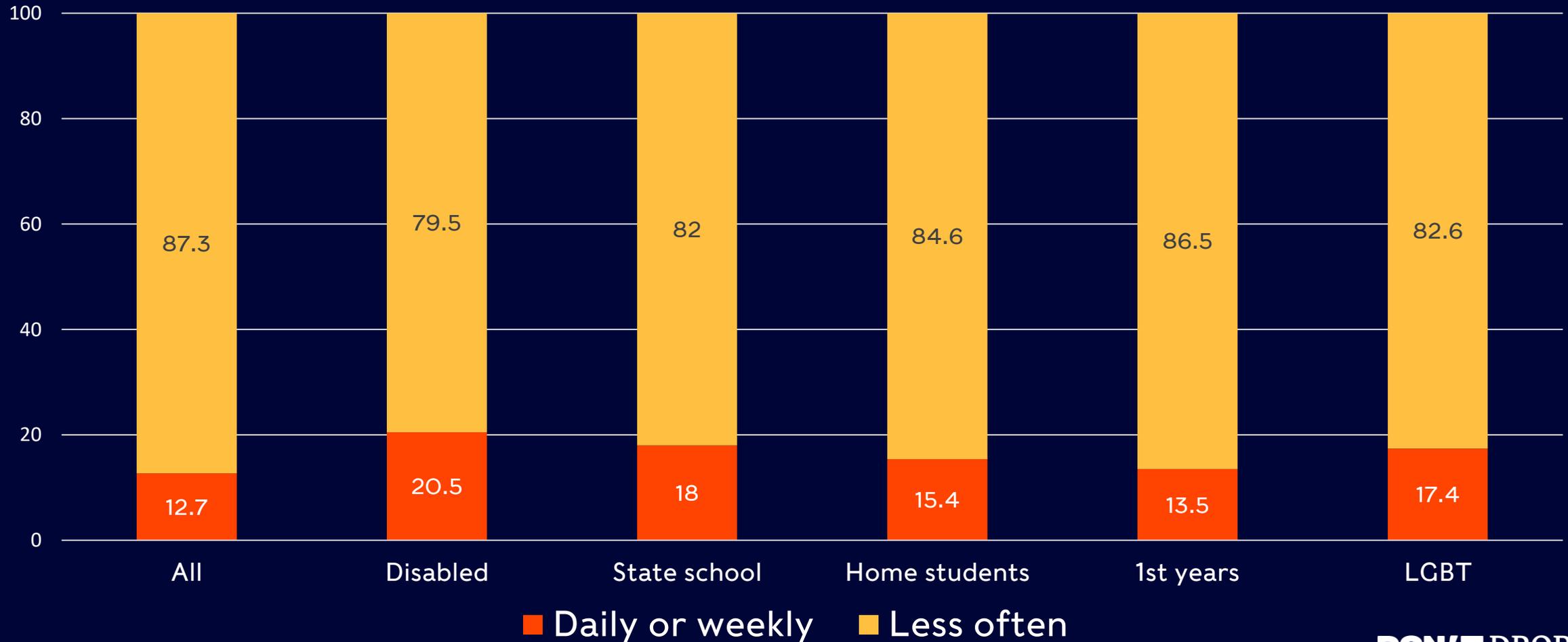
Drop out risk by academic satisfaction

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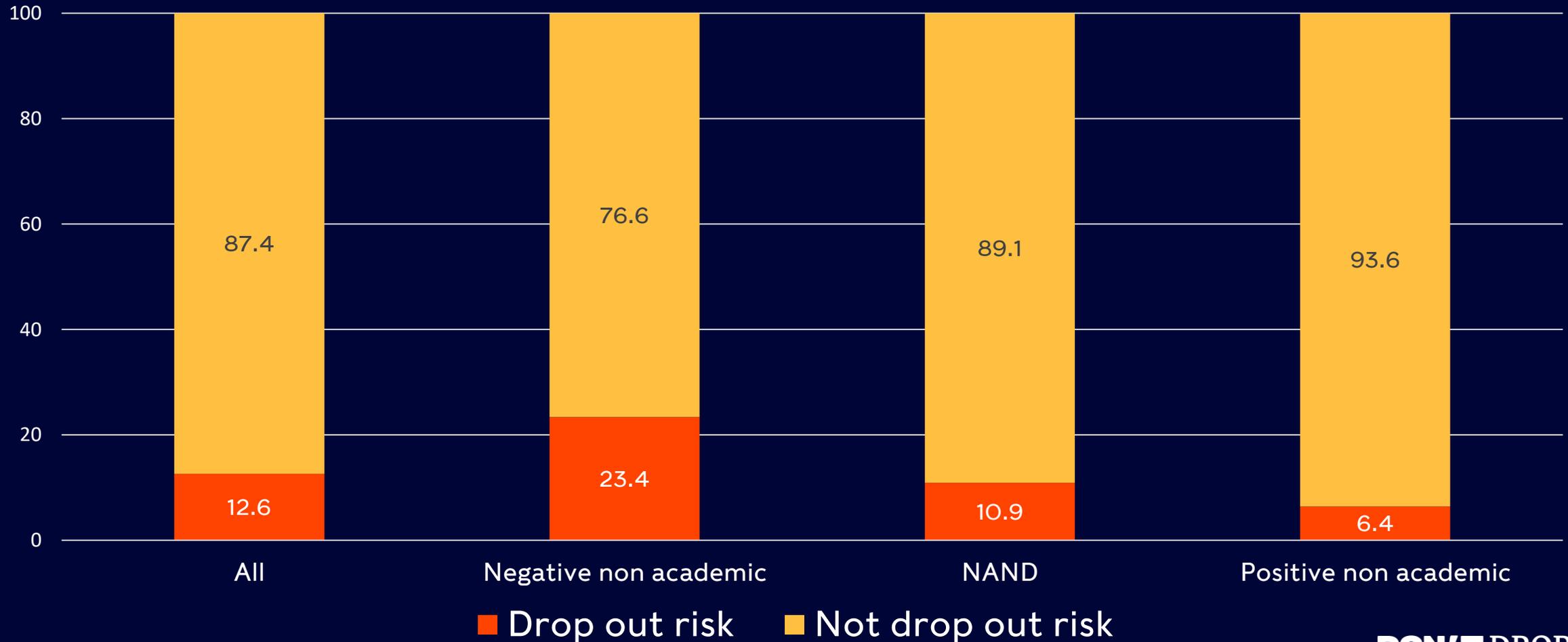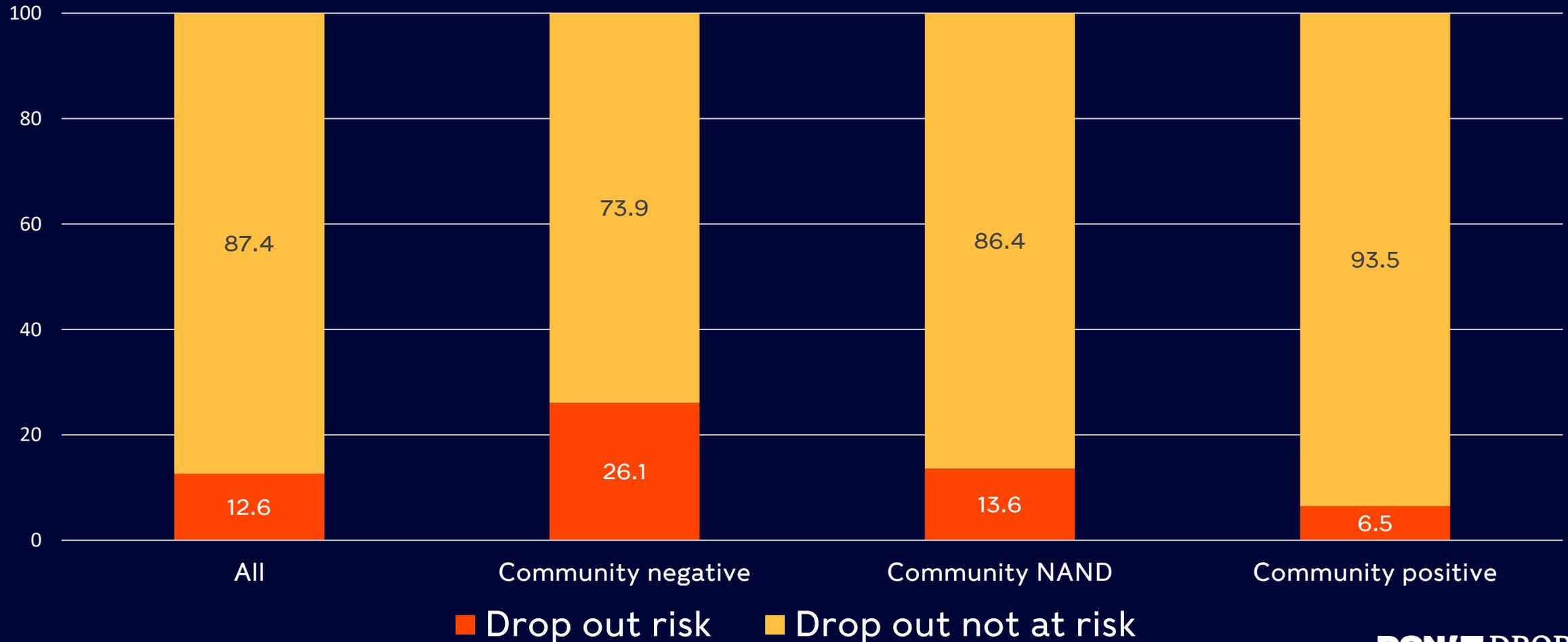
Drop out risk by loneliness

	All	Daily lonely	Weekly lonely	Less often lonely	Never lonely
Less often	87.4	68.5	87.1	94.5	93
Daily or weekly	12.6	31.5	12.9	5.5	7

Daily or weekly **Less often**

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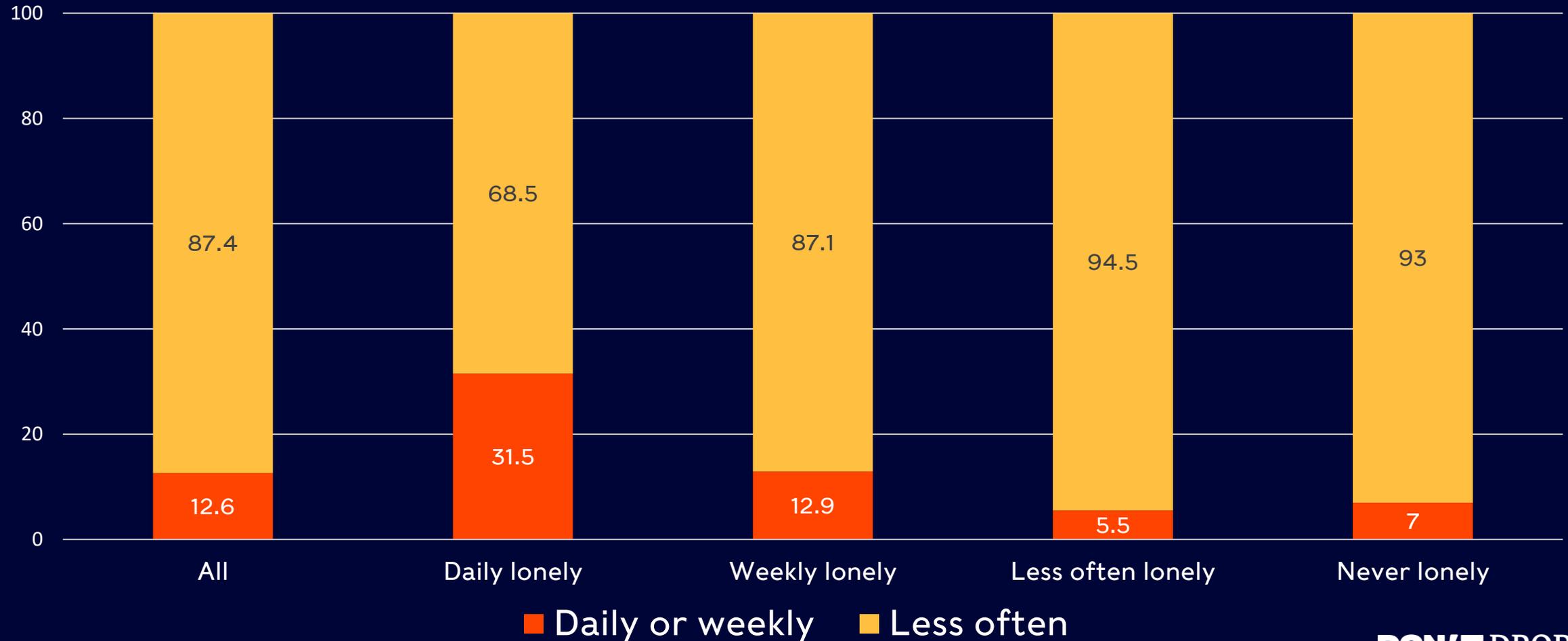
Happiness (9 or 10 agree)

- ONS Young people 2019: 32%
- HEPI/Advance HE 2020: 14%
- Wonkhe/Trendence Oct 2020: 8.2%

- Rating 5 or less – 45.9%

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Drop out risk: qual

1. Isolation and loneliness
2. Academic confidence (often related to isolation and loneliness)
3. "Missing out" (academic, co curricular and extra curricular)

Wider experience: qual

Almost all comments on isolation and loneliness

Suggestions:
1. Safe face to face activity
2. More online activities – course, interest, student characteristic
3. More proactive outreach

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I understand my rights and entitlements as a student and how to complain if unhappy

% agree

Definitely disagree: 5.8
Mostly disagree: 15.5
NAND: 18.6
Mostly agree: 39.3
Definitely agree: 20.9

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Rights understanding by drop out risk

	Drop out daily	Drop out weekly	Drop out less often	Drop out never
Rights positive	31	35	55.3	65
Rights NAND	18.4	28.6	24.2	17.3
Rights negative	50.6	36.4	20.5	17.7

■ Rights negative ■ Rights NAND ■ Rights positive

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Rights understanding by drop out risk

	Academic disagree	Academic NAND	Academic agree
Rights positive	38.3	49.5	72.7
Rights NAND	23	28.4	14.8
Rights negative	38.7	22.1	12.5

■ Rights negative   ■ Rights NAND   ■ Rights positive

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Rights understanding: qual

Key themes:

- A large number do not understand their rights.
- Many worry that complaining would not achieve anything or that it would harm their academic career.
- Many either do not understand the basis on which they might make a complaint, or trust that it would achieve anything.

Conclusions

- Students regard this term's provision as antisocial education – teaching is artificially separated from social activity and it is being assumed that the former can be successful without the latter.

- Students are much less happy than usual, are expressing confidence fears, worried about dropping out and are bitterly lonely.

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