



YOUR CITY SURVEY 2025

THE McMASTER STUDENTS UNION



INTRODUCTION

The Your City Survey was created in 2011 to gather insights on the student experience living in Hamilton. The first iteration of the survey uncovered key challenges students faced engaging with the city. Since then, the survey has been conducted every 3 years in 2015, 2018, and 2021. The regular surveying of students has shown the changing student perceptions of Hamilton.

This year was the first Your City Survey post-pandemic and received a record high of 509 responses revealing the most comprehensive insights on key topics pertaining to students. The following report captures data collected from October to December of 2024, including analysis of key trends and comparisons from previous survey data. It is important to note that although the survey received 509 responses, the sample size varies between questions, as the survey was organized so that some questions could only be answered by students who indicated relevant experience, such as questions about rental experiences for those renting in Hamilton.

This edition of the Your City Survey collected insights on housing, transit, harm reduction, policing, and employment. Housing continues to be a big focus in the MSU's advocacy, especially following the passing of the renoviction bylaw as one of many rental protections we advocated on. However, we continue to meet with key partners on all advocacy priorities such as with city councillors, city staff, police services, community stakeholders, university staff, and more.

The goal with the Your City Survey is also to encourage students to explore the municipality they live in. The results indicate almost 1 in 5 students have never or hardly ever visited areas outside of the university. The overarching goal of our advocacy is to encourage students to take advantage of everything Hamilton has to offer to encourage them to stay post-graduation. When students have access to safe, affordable housing, reliable transit, and a safe community with employment opportunities- they are more willing to stay in Hamilton and contribute to the local economy. Currently, less than half of students are considering staying in Hamilton post-graduation- meaning we lose half the talent and expertise that is trained locally. With insights from the Your City Survey, we hope to advocate for a city that students want to stay in to build a better Hamilton.

Sincerely,



Kerry Yang
Associate Vice-President
Municipal Affairs



Maya Hobbs
Vice-President (Education)

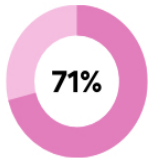
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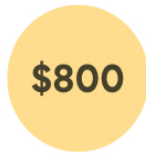


SUMMARY

Housing



students renting in Hamilton



average monthly rent

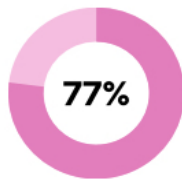


increase in rent since 2021 (\$450)

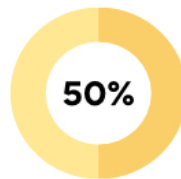


students live with 7+ roommates

Transit & Mobility



rate the HSR bus pass as valuable

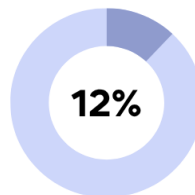


rate the Bikeshare U-Pass as valuable

Municipality

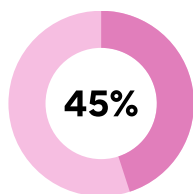
PUBLIC TRANSIT AFFORDABILITY

are students' top priorities



students have never explored Hamilton beyond the campus community

Retention



students would not consider staying in Hamilton post-graduation



students are more likely to stay in Hamilton if they have explored the city

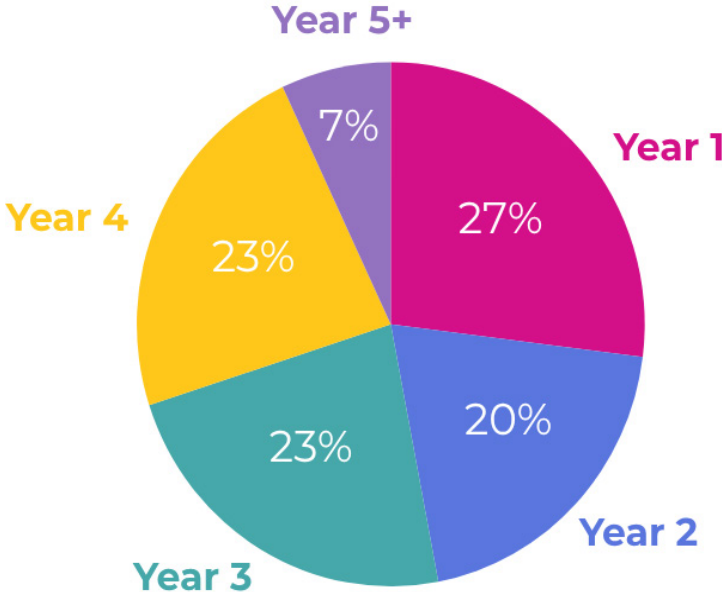
Calls to Action

1. The City of Hamilton should prioritize tenant protections, such as enforcing heating reliability, property maintenance, and building codes, through an improved landlord licensing program.
2. The City of Hamilton should protect and invest in transit and cycling infrastructure.
3. The City of Hamilton should develop or support innovative and accessible food insecurity programs, such as Too Good To Go and subsidized fresh produce boxes.
4. The Hamilton Police Service should engage in regular student and community consultation to build trust and strong relationships.

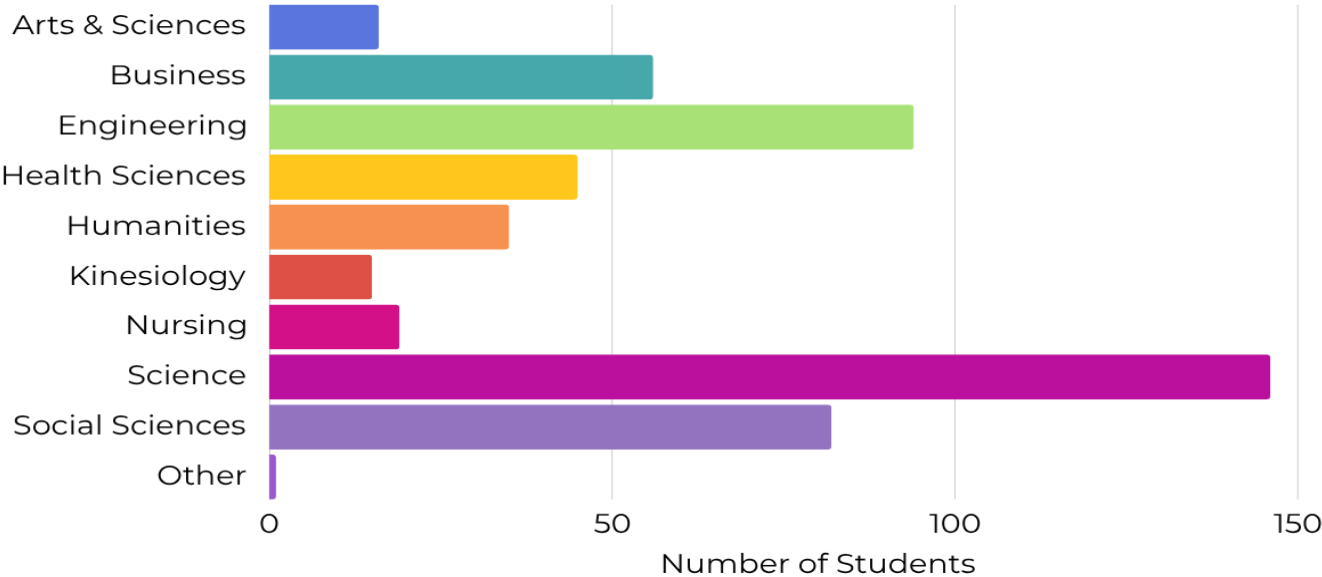
DEMOGRAPHICS

The Your City Survey (YCS) results were representative of the student population at McMaster with an even distribution across years 1 to 5+ as well as proportional distribution across faculties. The lowest ethnic/racial representation was in Indigenous respondents. Women made up the majority of respondents, but students who identify as male or non-binary were also represented.

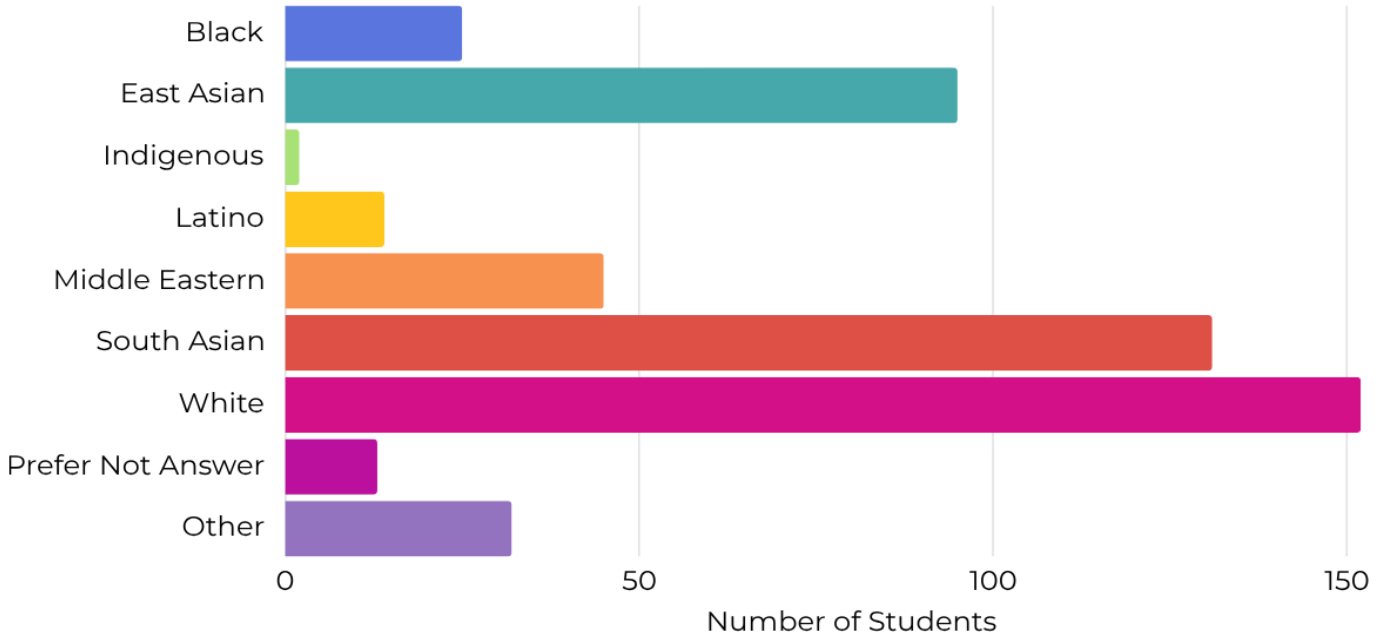
Year



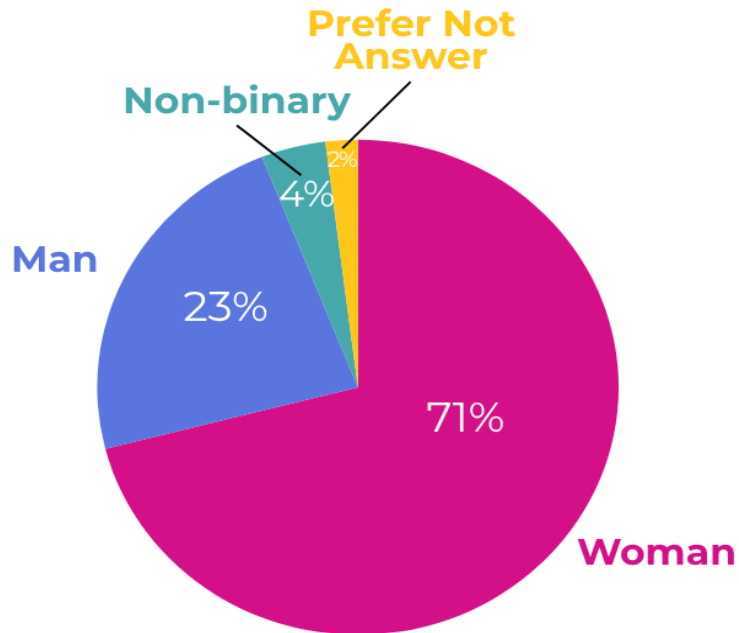
Program



Race and Ethnicity



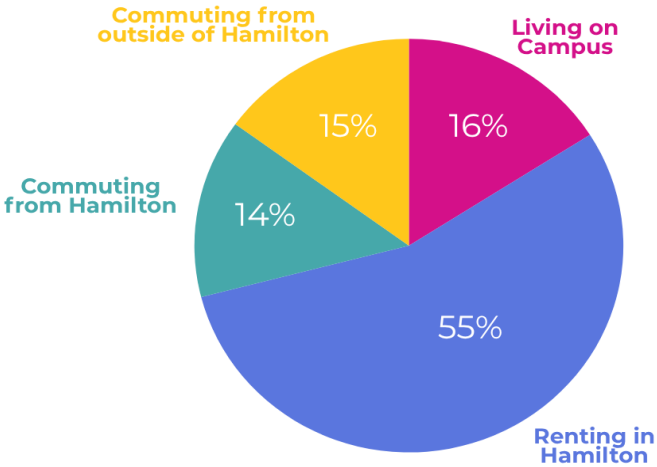
Gender Identity



HOUSING

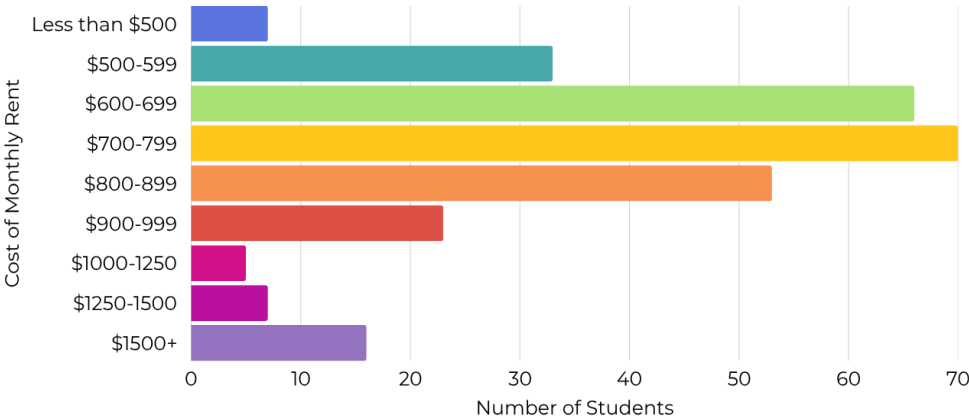
71% of respondents are renters from Hamilton and 14% of respondents are commuters local to Hamilton. As such, most respondents live in Hamilton and are impacted by rental and housing markets. The rising cost of living among students can be attributed to increasing rental rates along with decreasing rental standards¹. As the Rental Housing Licensing Pilot Program comes to an end, these insights can inform advocacy to implement a permanent program across all wards.

Housing Situation



The majority of respondents live in Hamilton; 55% rent off-campus, 16% live on campus, and 14% commute from Hamilton. The remaining 15% commute from outside of Hamilton, meaning 71% of respondents rent in Hamilton and 85% of students live in Hamilton. In 2021, 73% of students rented in Hamilton showing a stable local renter population in the past few years. However, it should be noted that the student population has grown slightly since 2021. In Ontario, 72% of university students report being tenants in 2021, either to their campus residence or a private property².

Cost of Rent



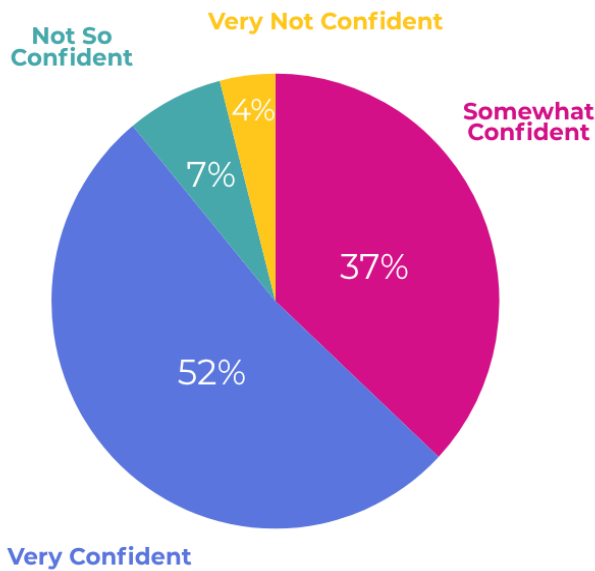
1. "Government of Canada." Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada, September 16, 2024. <https://housing-infrastructure.canada.ca/housing-logement/bill-rights-charte-droits/renters-locataires-eng.html>.

2. Unité de travail pour l'implantation de logement étudiant (UTILE), "On Student Housing in Canada," August 2022, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/604e1456a8cd2bab84c72bc8/6312321ae56ed92137241afb_FLASH_20220902_ENG_VF.pdf.

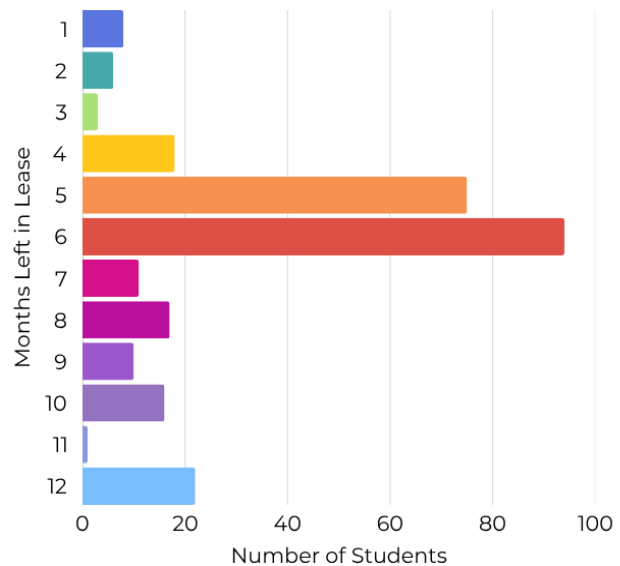
Among all respondents, the average cost of rent is approximately \$800/month. In both 2016 and 2021 surveys, the average cost of rent was around \$450, showing more than a 75% increase over the last 4-8 years. The increase in rent indicates the changing rental market leading to inequities among student renters. The average cost of rent among first and second years is \$830, while the average cost of rent among third and fourth years is \$767. This highlights yearly rent increases where newer students face higher rental costs when signing a new lease.

In Hamilton, the average rent is \$1851 for a 3+ bedroom rental unit, costing \$617 per room, assuming the minimum 3-bedroom unit³. Meanwhile, students are paying on average \$800 to rent a single room in a home shared with up to 12 roommates. In Ontario, the median rent paid by university students is \$1250, whereas the average renter reports a median rent of \$1000⁴. This highlights the vulnerability of student renters in being exploited to pay higher rent, such as through illegal rent increases. When comparing the average student rent in Ontario compared to Hamilton, this figure is higher as it may not account for the unique conditions of student housing in Hamilton. In Toronto, students typically rent out 1-3 bedroom condos to live in Downtown, whereas McMaster students mainly reside near campus in converted family homes.

Confidence to Fulfill Lease



Months Left in Lease

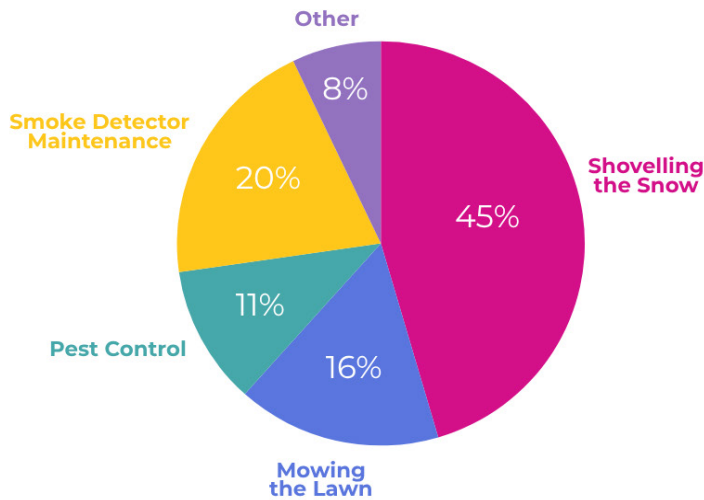


3. Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, "Housing Market Information Portal," CMHC, 2024, <https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en/TableMapChart/Table?TableId=2.1.31.2&GeographyId=35&GeographyTypeId=2&DisplayAs=Table&GeographyName=Ontario#3%20Bedroom%20+>.

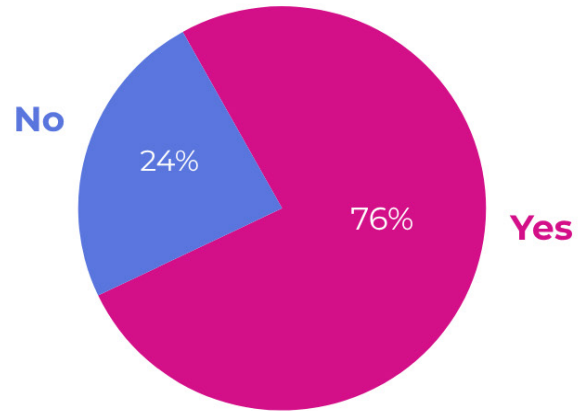
4. Unité de travail pour l'implantation de logement étudiant (UTILE), "On Student Housing in Canada," August 2022, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/604e1456a8cd2bab84c72bc8/6312321ae56ed92137241afb_FLASH_20220902_ENG_VF.pdf.

There were more respondents feeling very confident in paying rent with 1-3 months left in their lease compared to 10-12+ months left. 89% of respondents reported feeling somewhat or very confident. However, almost 70% of students reduce spending in other areas to afford rent, according to the Ontario Undergraduate Student Survey run by the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance. Therefore, this should not be a holistic picture of financial stability among student renters.

Rental Maintenance



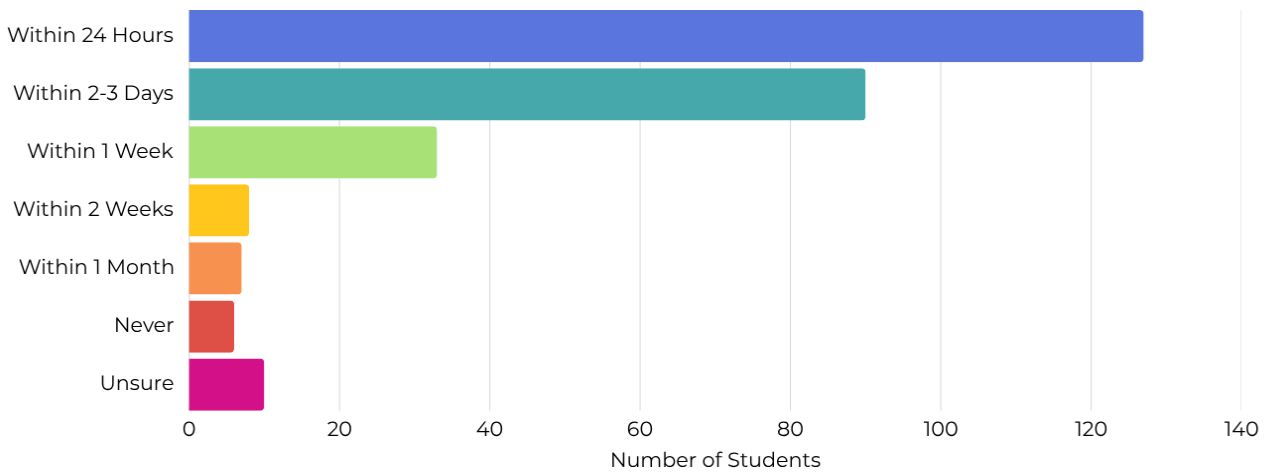
Providing Equipment for Maintenance



The Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) requires landlords in Ontario to maintain rental units in good repair and comply with health, safety, housing, and maintenance standards. Additionally, the Property Standards By-law in Hamilton outlines the minimum standards for property maintenance including obligations for landlords to conduct pest control, maintaining yards such as shovelling and lawn care, and replacing safety features such as alarms and detectors. Despite this, 45% of respondents report being responsible for shovelling snow, 16% for mowing the lawn, 11% for pest control, 20% for smoke detector maintenance, and 8% for other maintenance responsibilities. Of these respondents, 24% report not being provided equipment to do so. In Canada, 43% of students report living in an apartment in need of repairs⁵. This highlights the prevalence of landlord abuses and exploitative measures taken on student renters to fulfill landlord duties at the tenant’s own cost.

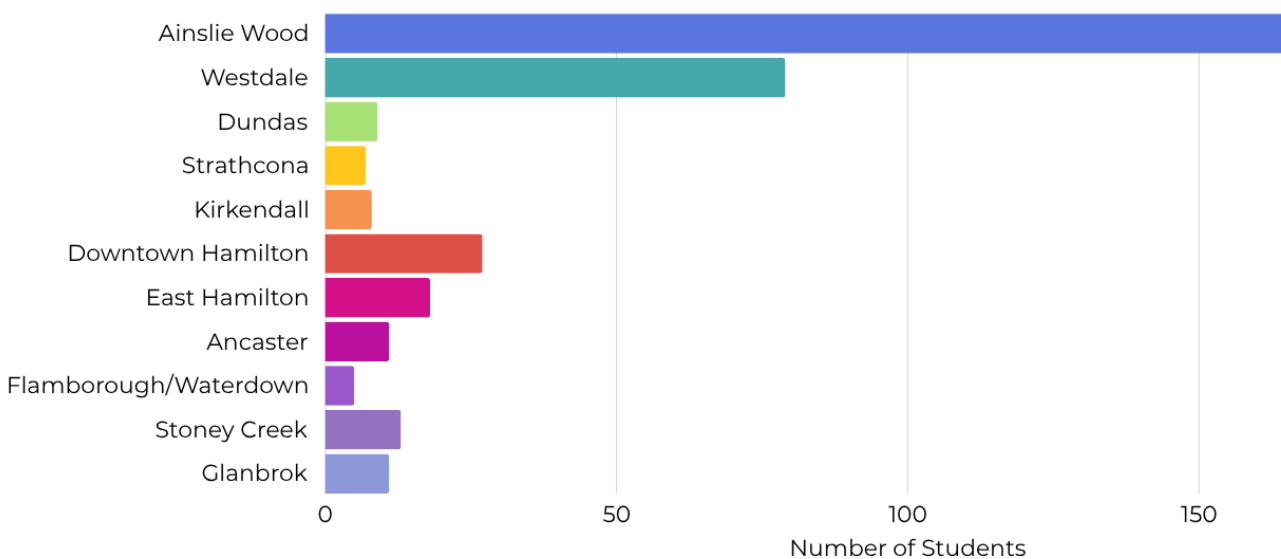
5. Unité de travail pour l’implantation de logement étudiant (UTILE), “On Student Housing in Canada,” August 2022, https://cdn.prod.website-files.com/604e1456a8cd2bab84c72bc8/6312321ae56ed92137241afb_FLASH_20220902_ENG_VF.pdf.

Landlord Response Time



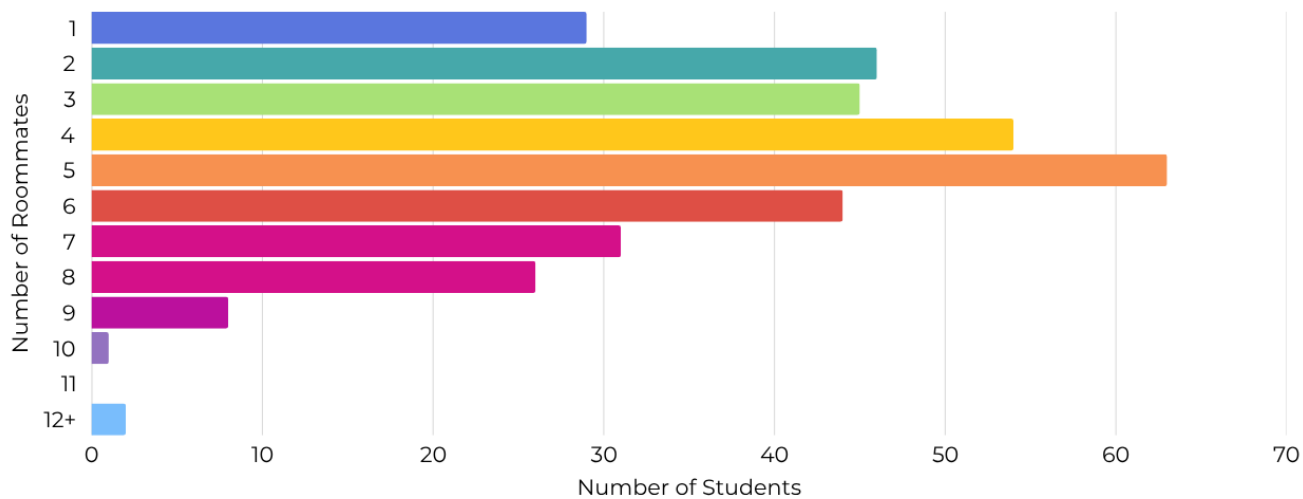
While the majority of respondents report landlord responses under 3 days, almost 20% wait at least 1 week to receive a response. 45% of respondents report responses within 24 hours, 32% within 2-3 days, and 12% within a week. While some concerns may lack urgency, others may require quicker response times, such as for essential repairs. For the 20% of respondents waiting extended periods for landlord response, they may be without essential services such as heating, electricity, or water. In 2016, 39% of respondents reported a response within 24 hours, 36% within 2-3 days, 16% within a week, 4% within 2 weeks, and 4% within a month. These figures have remained relatively stable over the past 14 years, meaning landlord response has not diminished or improved, despite more modern and efficient methods of communication.

Rental Geography



Students live across Hamilton. Although the neighbourhoods nearest campus are the most densely populated by respondents (Ainslie Wood with 47% of renters and Westdale with 22% of renters), 31% of respondents live in other neighbourhoods across the city. There is a slight increase in renter density in Downtown Hamilton and East Hamilton compared to other neighbourhoods, both of which have upcoming transit developments with the upcoming LRT. This may suggest that transit developments will lead to greater dispersion of student renters across the diverse neighbourhoods in Hamilton.

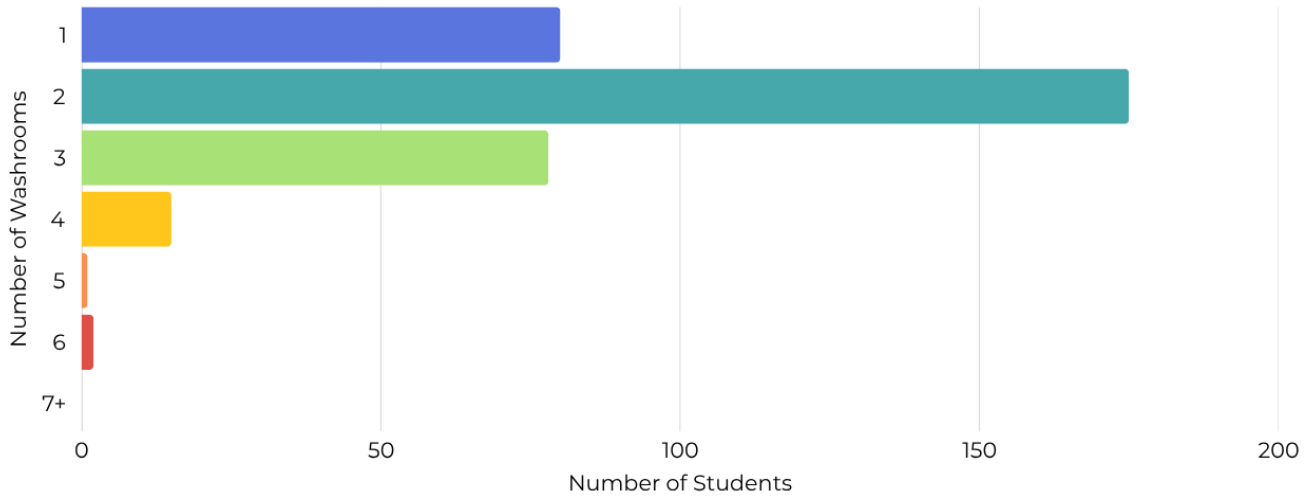
Number of Roommates



In Ontario, 69% of students renters live with less than 3 roommates. However, in Hamilton, this is often not the case with rental units having up to 12+ tenants⁶. ‘Student housing’ often refers to large houses subdivided into half a dozen rooms– sometimes even converting living rooms– with students sharing kitchens and washrooms. While on average, respondents report 4.5 roommates, almost 1 in 5 respondents live with 7 or more roommates. Among students living in near-campus neighbourhoods (Ainslie Wood, Westdale, Kirkendall, and Strathcona), the number of roommates was higher, averaging at 5 roommates. In the 2016 and 2021 YCS, the majority of respondents reported living with 5 other roommates, showing a decrease from the overall average, potentially attributed to the pilot landlord licensing program.

6. Kelly Bennett, “‘Overcrowded’ Hamilton House near McMaster Has 12 Bedrooms,” CBC, March 23, 2017, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/hamilton/overcrowded-12-bedroom-hamilton-house-1.4035008>.

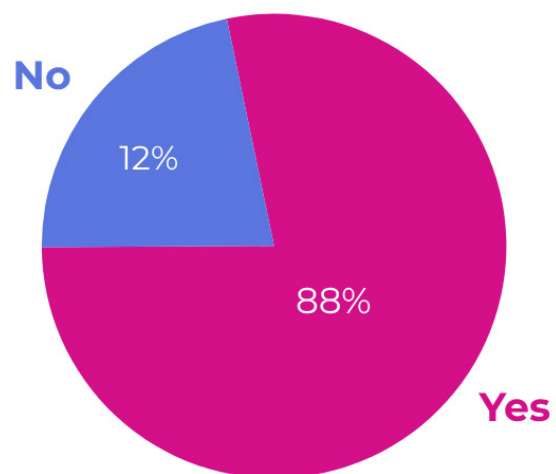
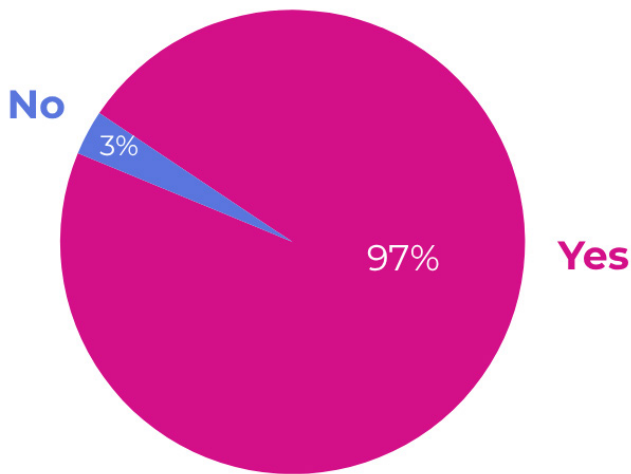
Number of Washrooms



Respondents report averaging 2 washrooms to share among all roommates. Given that most students live with 5 roommates (and up to 12), this means multiple people can be sharing 1 washroom.

Do you have a Window in your Bedroom?

Do you have Reliable Heating?



The Ontario Building Code states the requirement for a window in bedrooms⁷. Despite this, 3% of respondents report not having a window in their room, a clear violation of the building code. This is the same percentage of students from 2016, showing a lack of progress in targeting illegal room standards for missing windows.

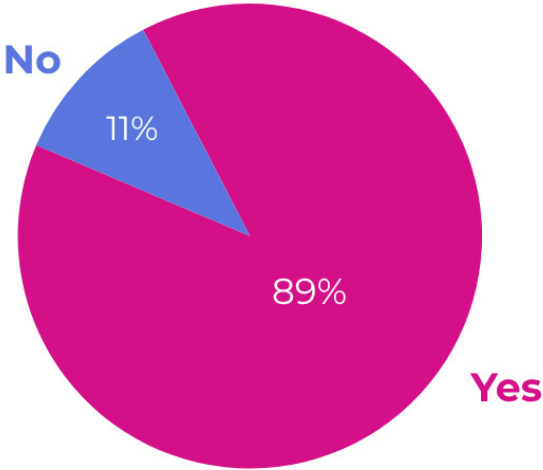
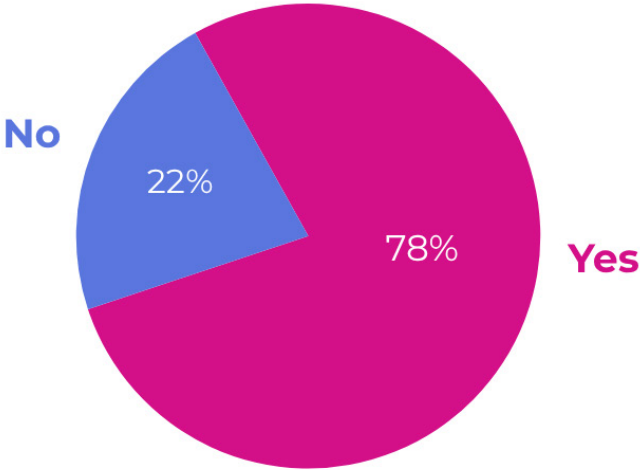
The Hamilton Heat By-law 04-091 mandates adequate heat provided from September 15 to May 15 of

7. The Ontario Building Code Online, "The Ontario Building Code | Window Areas," Buildingcode.online, 2018, <https://www.buildingcode.online/474.html>.

at least 20°C in all areas using a permanent heating appliance⁸. However, 12% of respondents report not having reliable access to heating. This is compared to 13% in 2016.

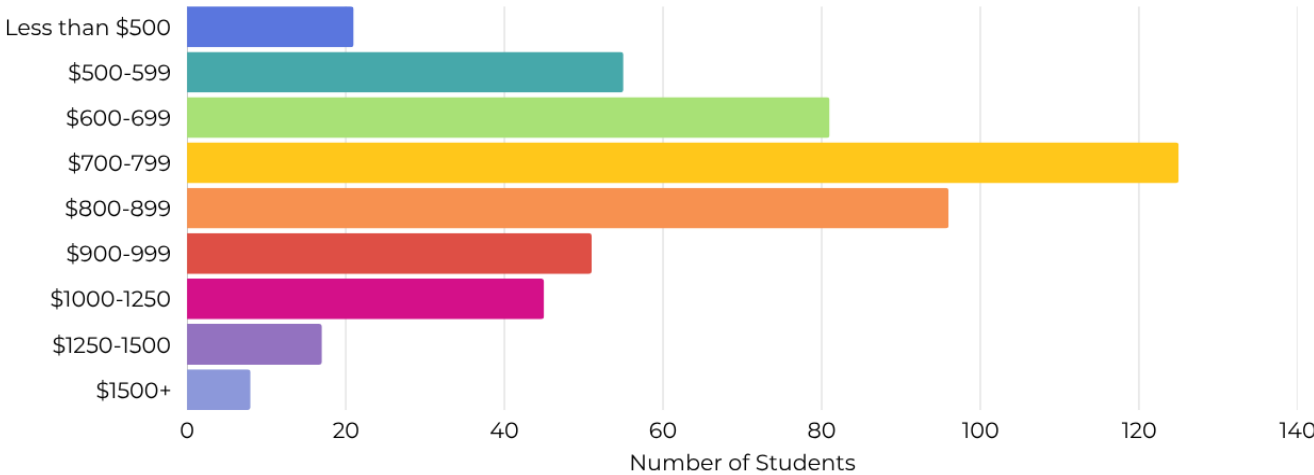
Do you have Air Conditioning?

Is It Reliable?



Although there is not currently a cooling bylaw, there are increasing incidents of harm from extreme heat on rental properties. Among respondents who rent, 22% report not having any air conditioning units, while 11% of those with air conditioning didn't have reliable access to cooling. In 2016, 34% of respondents who rented did not have air conditioning, showing a 12% increase in cooling in the past 14 years. However, almost 1 in 4 students are still without cooling.

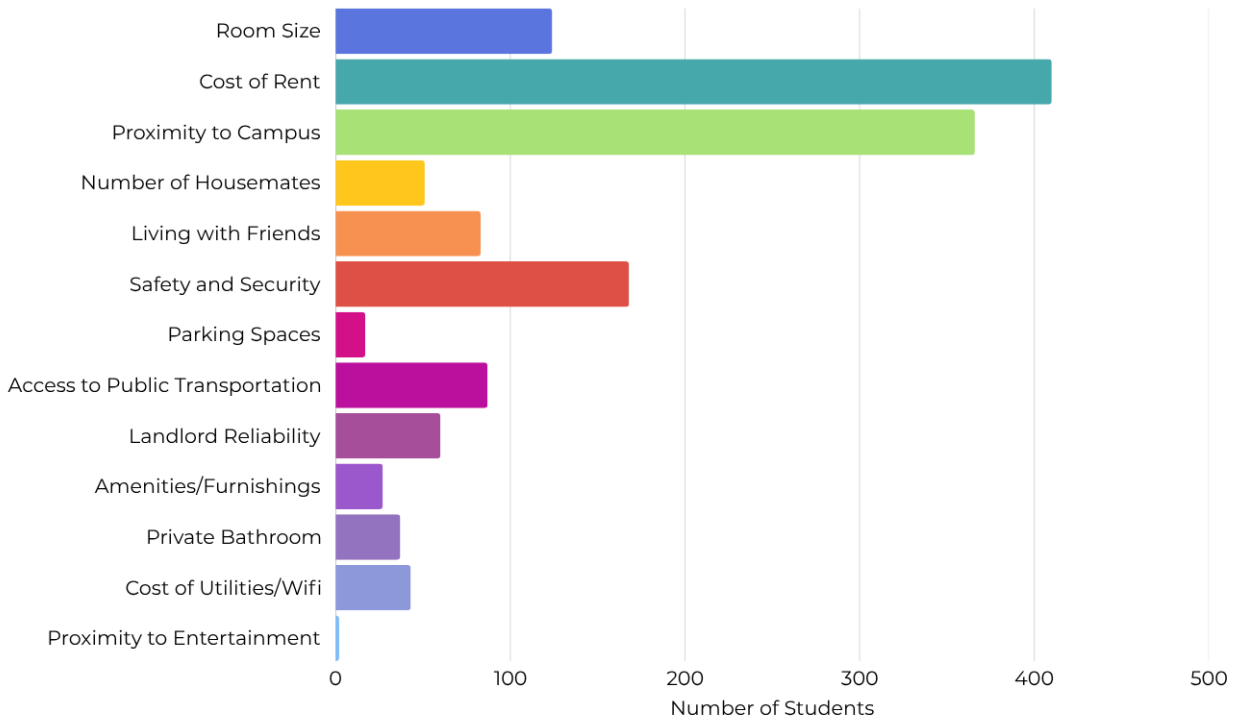
Peak Rental Affordability



8. City of Hamilton, "CITY of HAMILTON BY-LAW NO. 04-091 ADEQUATE HEAT BY-LAW Being a By-Law to Require the Supply of Adequate and Suitable Heat for Rental Residential Premises," August 12, 2016, https://live-city-of-hamilton.pantheonsite.io/sites/default/files/2022-01/04-091_consolidated_last_revised_may_26_2017.pdf.

While most respondents report the \$700-799 range being the peak of their affordability, the average rent is \$800 a month. Overall, the average rent is higher than the average rental affordability.

Rent Priorities

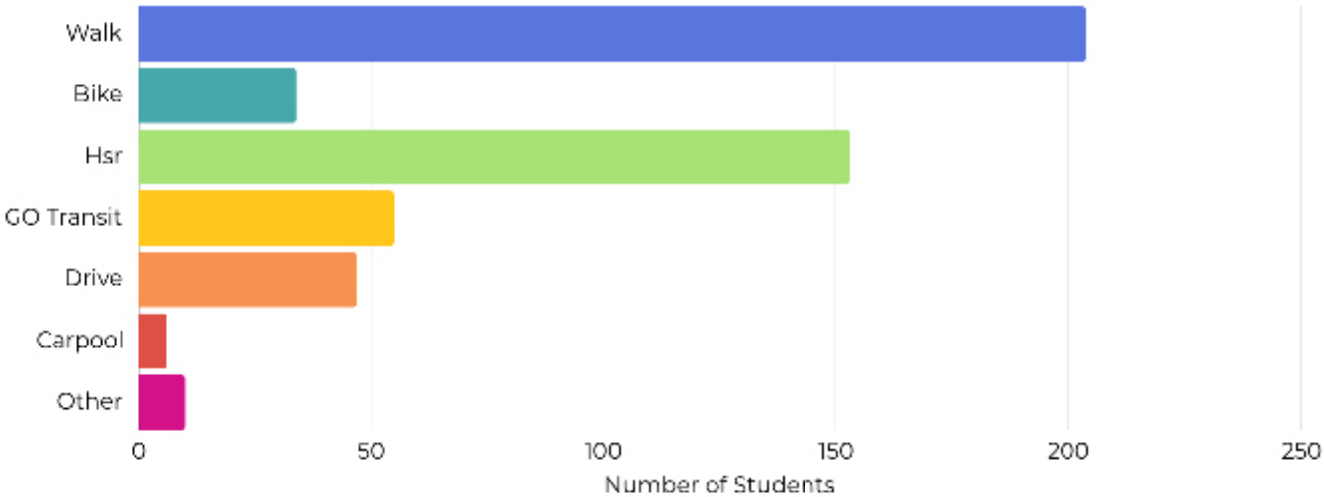


The largest considerations respondents make when renting are cost of rent (28%) and proximity to campus (25%), which is mirrored in the 2016 YCS where respondents ranked these priorities the highest as well. The next highest priority is room size (8%) and safety/security (11%). Living with friends, access to transportation, landlord reliability, and number of housemates are also considerations for some respondents. Parking spaces, amenities, private bathroom, cost of utilities, and proximity to entertainment are lower priorities for respondents. In 2016, landlords ranked the 3rd highest priority (of 6 in total), showing a decline in prioritization for quality landlords in the rising competitive rental market focused more on availability.

TRANSIT

McMaster students account for 20% of the City of Hamilton’s transportation budget⁹ through the McMaster Students Union contract with the Hamilton Street Railway (HSR). This year, the MSU partnered with Bikeshare for highly subsidized biking subscriptions, allowing students to access and ride Sobi bikes year-round. In the first year of this partnership, student ridership has increased along with quickly developing cycling infrastructure¹⁰. The City of Hamilton has committed to prioritizing cycling infrastructure, despite changes to provincial legislation around bike lane development¹¹. As such, these insights are vital to informing advocacy and development of transportation in Hamilton.

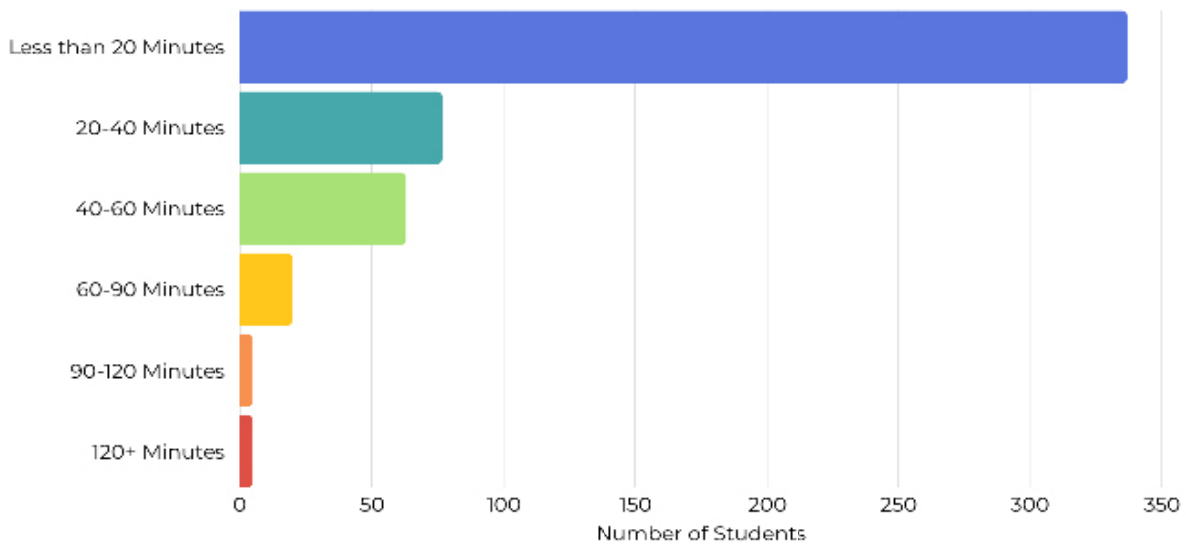
Primary Method of Transportation



Respondents use diverse methods of transportation to get to campus. 40% report walking as their primary mode of transportation, followed by 30% reporting the HSR, 11% for GO transit, 9% for driving, and 7% for biking. For those living in near-campus neighbourhoods, 53% report walking, 32% report HSR, and 11% report biking. In 2016, 64% walked, meaning students have increasingly chosen HSR and Bikeshare as primary modes of transportation.

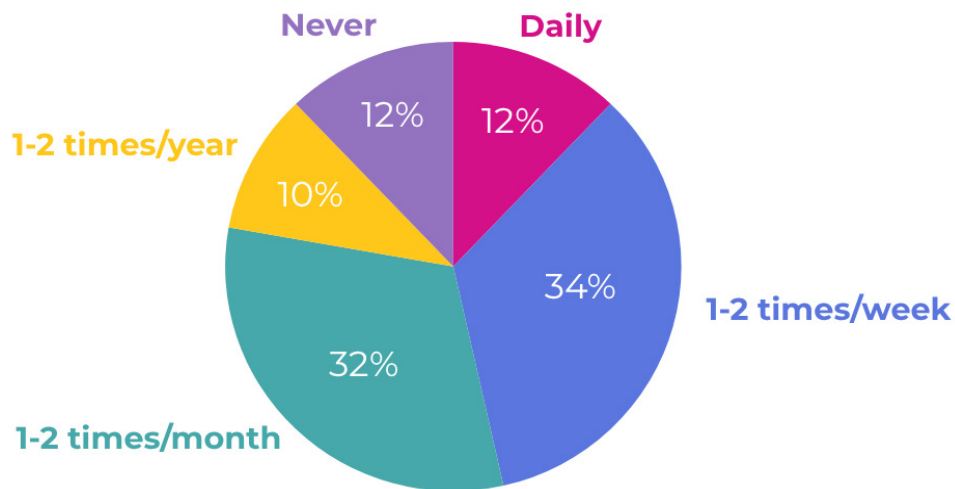
9. McMaster Student Union, “MUNICIPAL PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION,” 2024, <https://msumcmaster.ca/app/uploads/2025/01/Hamilton-Municipal-Budget-Submission-2024-2025.pdf>.
 10. City of Hamilton, “Hamilton’s Cycling Master Plan | City of Hamilton,” www.hamilton.ca, March 15, 2025, <https://www.hamilton.ca/city-council/plans-strategies/master-plans-studies/hamiltons-cycling-master-plan>.
 11. Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), “Province to Introduce Legislation Governing Bicycle Lanes | AMO,” Amo.on.ca, October 16, 2024, <https://www.amo.on.ca/policy/finance-infrastructure-and-economy/province-introduce-legislation-governing-bicycle-lanes>.

Commute Time to Campus



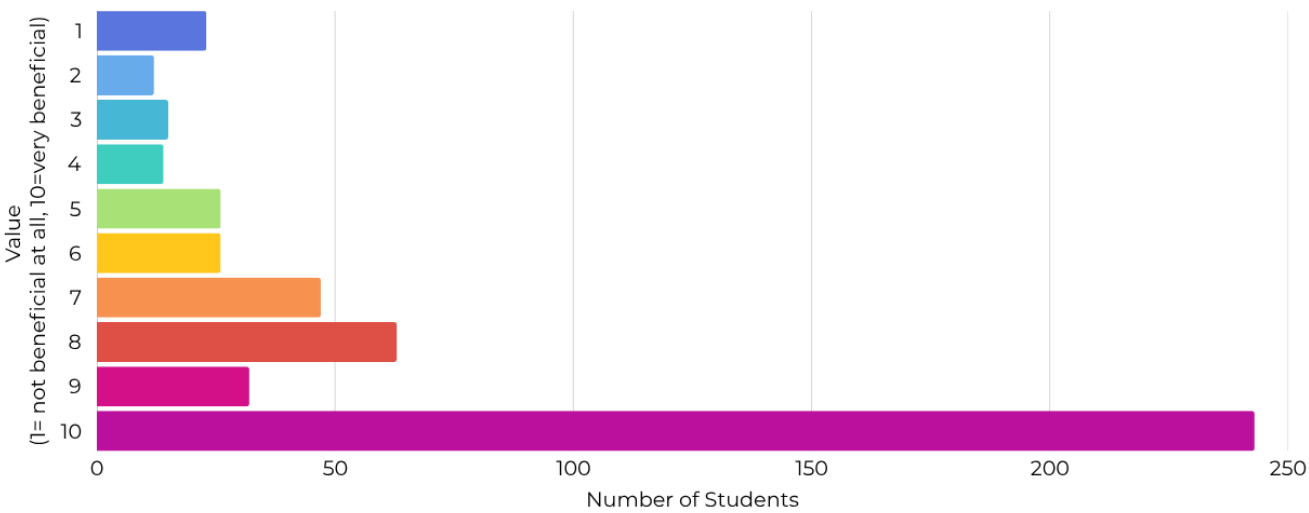
Most respondents (66%) report their commute to campus to be under 20 minutes, while 15% report spending 20-40 minutes and 12% taking 40-60 minutes. 6% of respondents report a commute longer than 1 hour. The average commute length is 24 minutes- 25 minutes among HSR riders, and 11 minutes among bikers.

Students Exploring Hamilton



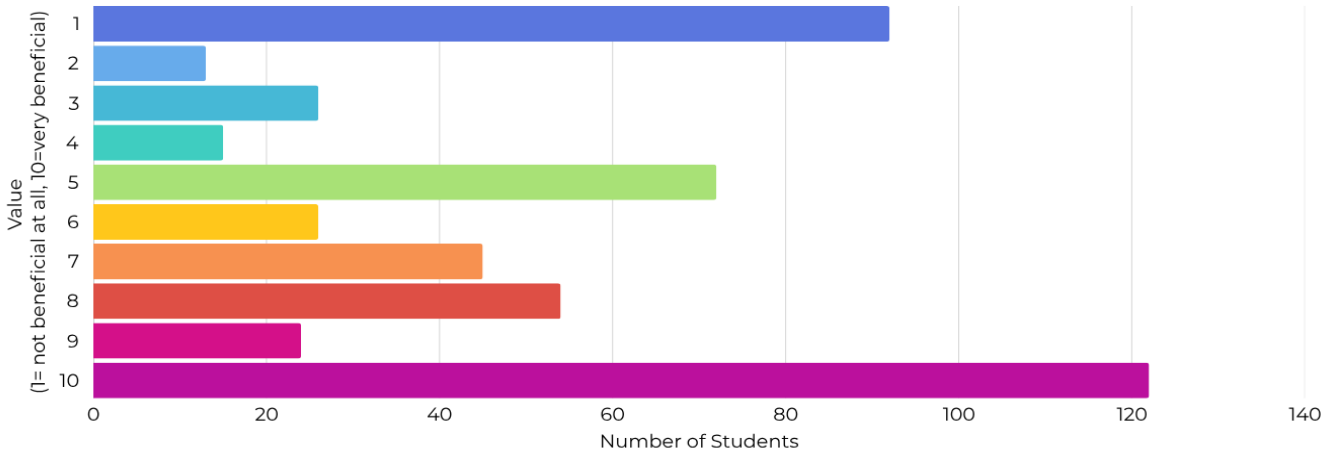
Respondents engage in their municipality outside of their home neighbourhood and campus neighbourhood at varying levels. 12% engage in their municipality daily, 34% at a frequency of 1-2 times per week, 32% at 1-2 times per month, 10% 1-2 times yearly, and 12% have never. The average is 2 times per week, which is higher among those who report biking as a mode of transportation (2.35 times a week). This suggests that respondents who report biking as transportation are more engaged in their municipality and leave the campus community more frequently.

Usefulness of HSR (1= Not Beneficial At All, 10= Very Beneficial)



The HSR pass allows students to ride freely in Hamilton as a MSU member. 49% of respondents rate the value of the pass at a 10 out of 10. 77% of respondents rate it at a 7 or above.

Usefulness of Bikeshare (1= Not Beneficial At All, 10= Very Beneficial)

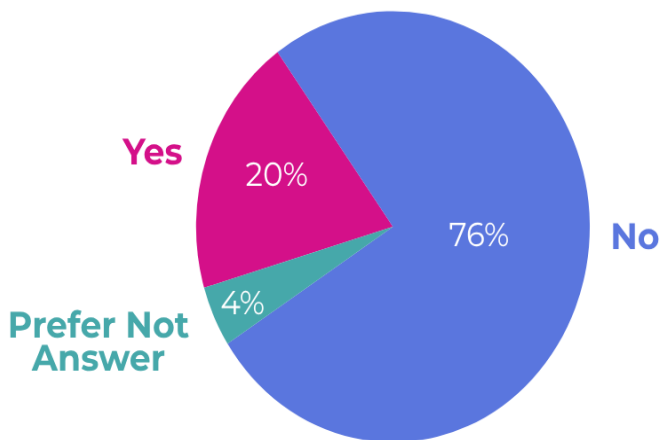


The Bikeshare U-pass allows students to ride freely in Hamilton as a MSU member. 25% of respondents rate the value of the pass at a 10 out of 10. 50% of students rate it at a 7 or above. Given the first year of the U-Pass, the value of the Bikeshare pass is not yet comparable to that of the HSR pass, but still shows high engagement and value perception.

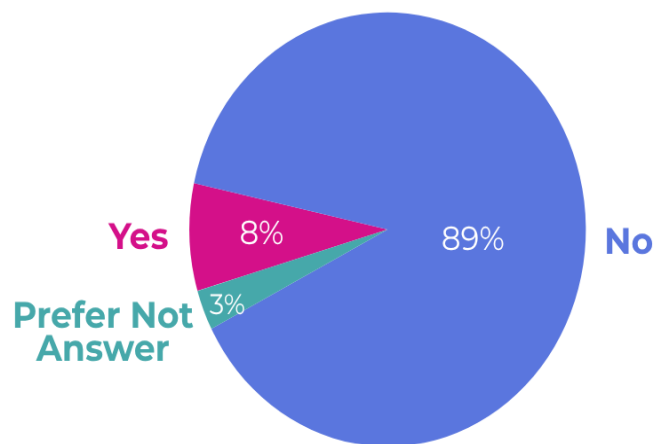
FOOD SECURITY

Food insecurity has been on the rise among university students¹². The food service monopoly on campuses makes it hard to advocate for healthier or more affordable options, given the lack of competitive market in food sources¹³. Food insecurity often presents in post-secondary institutions as a lack of access to affordable, fresh, healthy, and quality options. Although there has been increased food bank usage across campuses, many students struggle with the stigma and culture around accessing support for food insecurity¹⁴. Greater awareness of food insecurity and more accessible and innovative solutions are required to combat food insecurity among university students.

Experiencing food insecurity



Accessing support



20% of respondents report experiencing food insecurity, yet only 8% of respondents report accessing support for food insecurity. This highlights barriers to food security supports, such as due to stigma, availability, and quality.

12. University of Waterloo, "Helping Students Struggling with Food Insecurity | Waterloo News," Waterloo News, January 30, 2025, <https://uwaterloo.ca/news/impact-stories/helping-students-struggling-food-insecurity>.

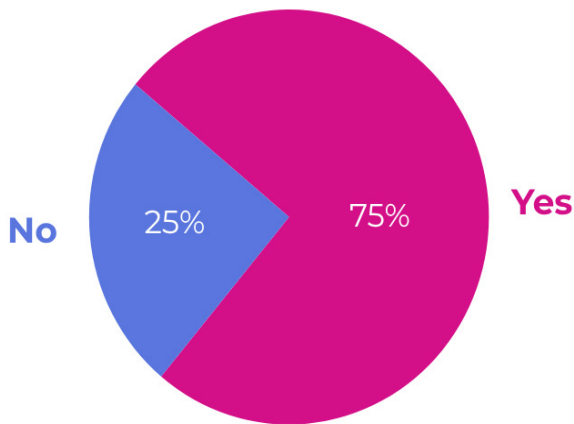
13. Canadian Federation of Students, "FINAL REPORT a Look at Food Accessibility and Affordability in Ontario. Canadian Federation of Students -Ontario Task Force on Campus Food Services," n.d., <https://cfsontario.ca/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/CFS-2013FoodReport.pdf>.

14. Food Banks Canada, "How Campus Food Banks Are Helping Students Stay Hungry for Knowledge, Not Food," Food Banks Canada, August 27, 2023, <https://foodbankscanada.ca/how-campus-food-banks-are-helping-students-stay-hungry-for-knowledge-not-food/>.

POLICING & SECURITY

Students deserve to feel safe and protected in their community and on-campus. Safety includes various factors, from lighting, to policing, to infrastructure. The density of student rental neighbourhoods around campus calls for specific safety concerns to be addressed. While some students called for more police presence to increase safety, other reports indicate the negative effects of police presence¹⁵. As such, building trust between police and community members is crucial for those relationships to thrive. This year, the body-worn camera policy and use-of-force incident in Ward 1 has increased conversation around policing¹⁶. The Your City survey data suggests students tend to trust the Hamilton Police Services to some extent, with a smaller population where relationships need to be targeted for a holistic sense of safety and protection.

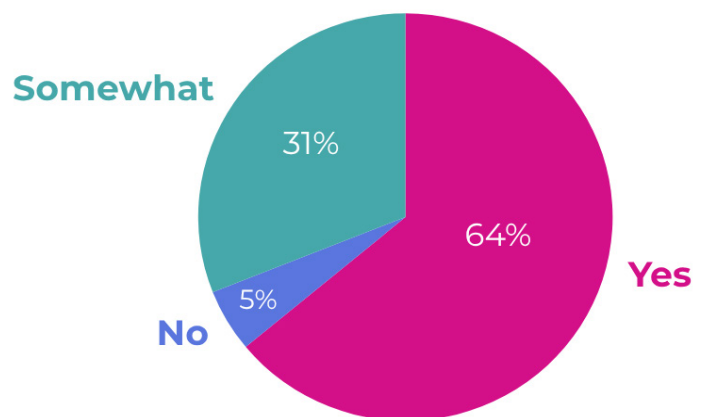
Do you feel you have Adequate Lighting in your Neighbourhood?



25% of respondents felt they did not have adequate lighting in their neighbourhood. Near-campus neighbourhoods were overrepresented in this figure, with 65% being from Ainslie Wood and 21% from Westdale. A student shared in the survey that “we need more street lighting, it is so dark when walking at night we can’t even see our feet”.

Do you feel Safe where you Live?

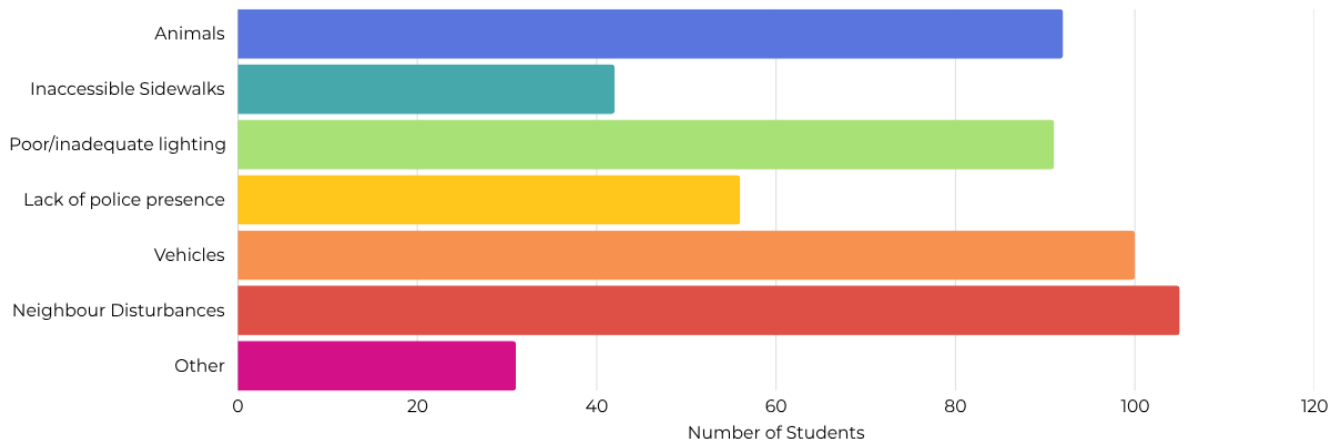
64% of respondents report feeling safe where they live, however, 31% report feeling somewhat safe, while 5% expressed feeling unsafe. In Canada, 17% of student renters have reported feeling unsafe in apartments¹⁷.



15. Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health, “The Effects of Policing on Certain Student Populations - Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health,” Centre for Innovation in Campus Mental Health, June 23, 2022, <https://campusmentalhealth.ca/toolkits/crisis-response/whole-campus-approach/effects-of-policing/>.

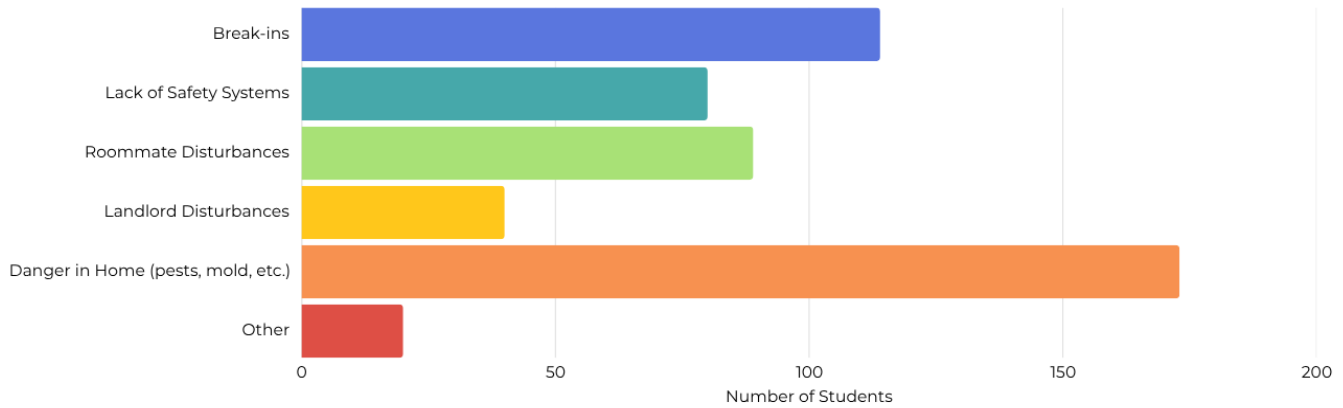
16. Zayn Brar, “Memorial Held for Erixon Kabera Following Fatal Police Shooting,” Thesil.ca, November 28, 2024, <https://thesil.ca/memorial-held-for-erixon-kabera-following-fatal-police-shooting/>.

Outdoor Safety Concerns



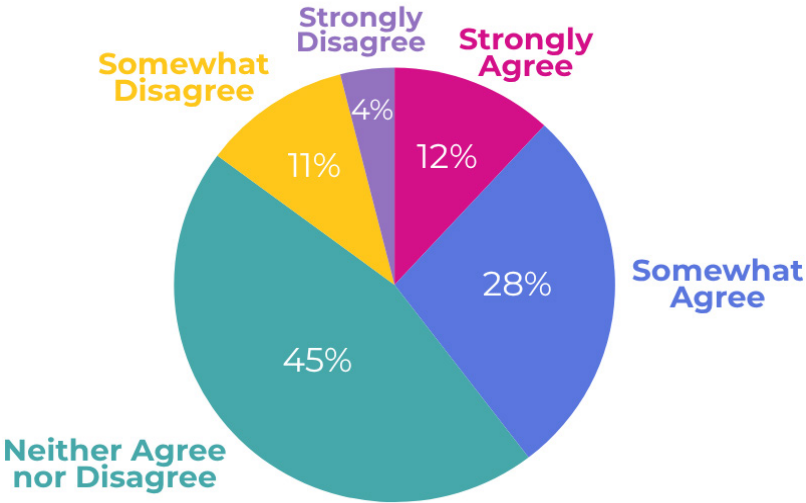
The outdoor safety concerns are varied, from lighting, animals, vehicles, to neighbour disturbances. Some respondents also report safety concerns surrounding inaccessible sidewalks and lack of police presence.

Indoor Safety Concerns



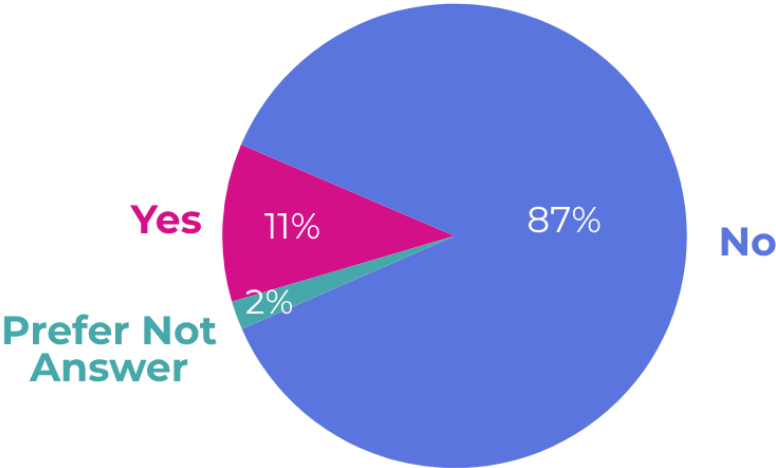
Respondents reported their biggest indoor safety concerns as dangers within the home such as pests and mold. However, respondents also reported concerns with break-ins, lack of safety systems, roommates disturbances, and to a lesser extent, landlord disturbances. In 2016, the largest concerns were break-ins, mold, and pests, showing consistency over the years.

The Hamilton Police Service is responsive to the needs of my community.



The perception of the HPS is key to the safety and security of McMaster students. 40% of respondents somewhat or strongly agreed that the HPS was responsive to the needs of their community, while the majority, 45%, neither agreed nor disagreed. The smallest proportion of respondents at 15% either somewhat or strongly disagreed with the statement. This demonstrates a general trust or neutrality towards the HPS that can be improved through targeted efforts.

Have you ever received a fine for bylaw infraction



11% of respondents have received a fine for a bylaw infraction (parking ticket, nuisance partying, noise complaint, etc). These fines ranged from \$0 (warning) to \$2000. However, it is important to note that the parking bylaw near campus is often a 2-hour maximum, whereas classes are often 3 hours. Respondents have expressed targeting in the system: "I feel that city parking by-law unfairly patrols the neighbourhoods around the school, which seems like a type of direct targeting of students."

MUNICIPALITY

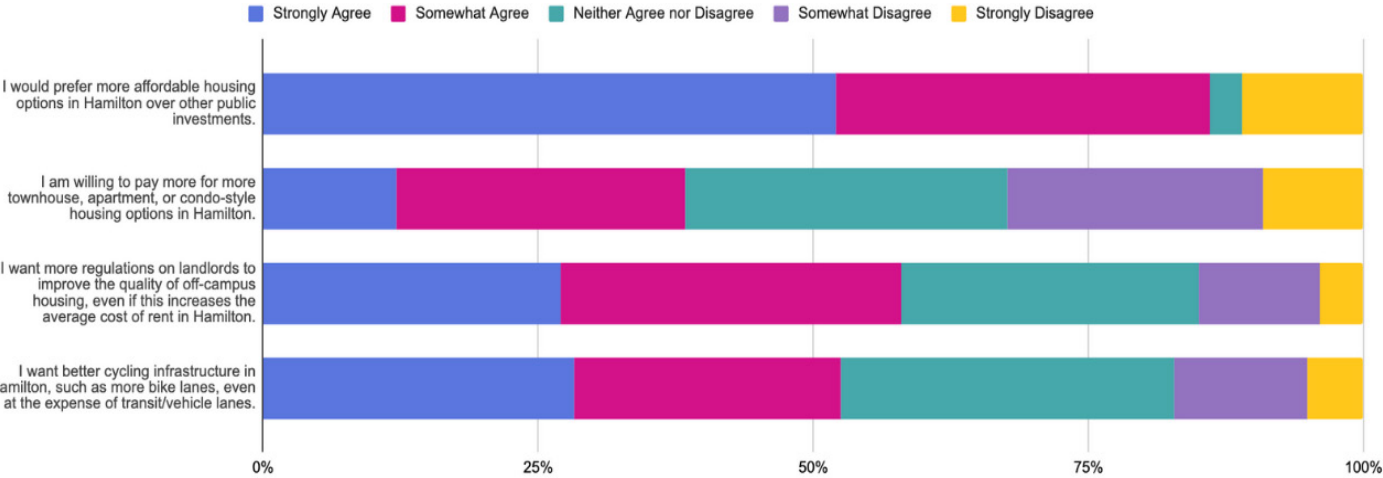
There are many factors that might influence where students choose to settle after graduation. Although some students commute from their home communities, most students are Hamilton citizens renting or living in our many neighbourhoods. As such, it is important to better understand what draws students to the municipality they choose to live in.

Ranking important attributes in a city

Attribute	Value	Difference (2015)	Difference (2011)
A vibrant community where people are 'out and about' using public parks, trails and recreation areas, attending farmer's markets and living in a healthy environment.	70%	-21%	-20%
Places to work, professional job opportunities, and an environment that is friendly to entrepreneurs.	66%	-21%	-13%
Authentic local places to have dinner, meet for coffee, hear live music, or just hang out as well as the ability to attend art openings, theater, and cultural festivals.	73%	-13%	+9%
A community that's easy to get around via public transit.	81%	-5.5%	+9%
A community where I can afford to live, work, and play.	78.5%	-11.5%	-1.5%

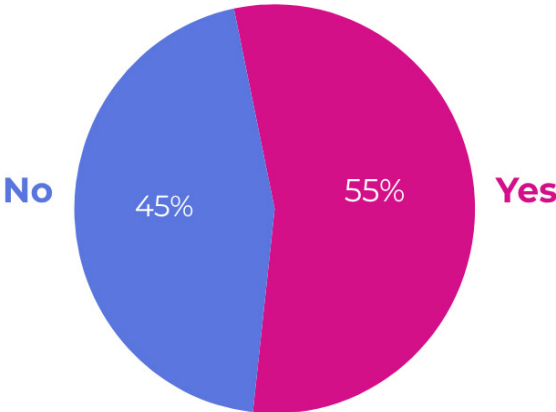
A ranking of 7 or above on a 10 scale (1 being not valuable at all and 10 being very valuable) was included in the percentage of students indicating value.

Preferences in a City



Affordable housing is rated as the strongest preference for respondents, even at the cost of other public investments, whereas expansion of housing options is the least popular. Over 50% agreed with more landlord regulations for improved off-campus housing, even at the cost of increased average rent, as well as better cycling infrastructure, even at the expense of other transit lanes. Respondents shared that: “Even if landlords have rules and regulations which protect their tenants, those rules are still often broken and tenants (especially students) can have a hard time having the courage to stand up against our landlords, for fear of being evicted or causing issues which further reduce their quality of landlording”. This highlights the nuanced challenges of tenant rights abuses, where students are in a vulnerable position to defend themselves against landlords, even when they are aware of tenant rights and protections.

Would you consider living, working, or studying in Hamilton after graduation?



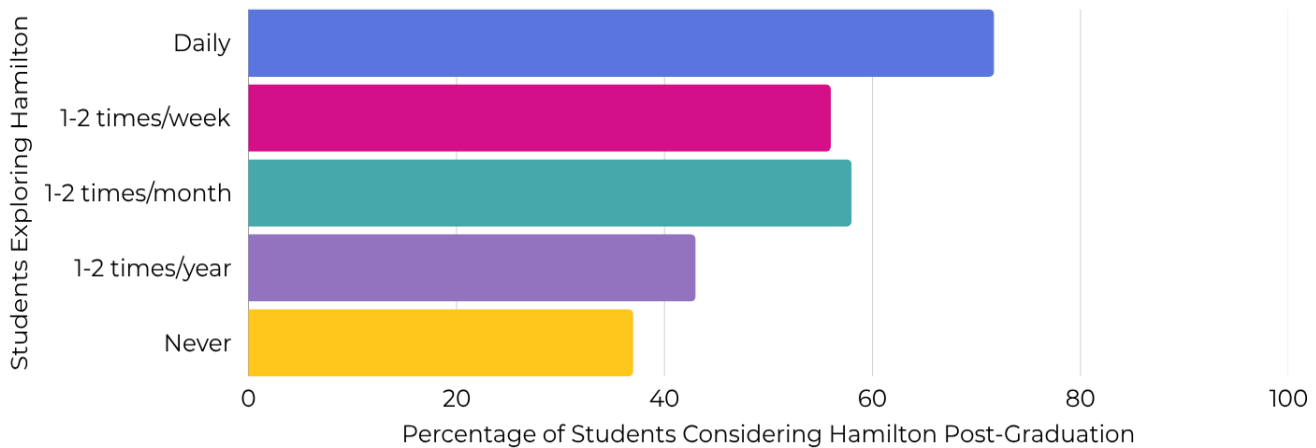
55% of respondents would consider staying in Hamilton after graduation, leaving 45% who would not. In 2011, roughly 20% said yes, 40% stated no, and 40% stated maybe to whether or not they would consider staying in Hamilton. In 2016, 40% stated yes, 25% stated no, and 35% stated maybe.

Respondents share diverse insights on reasons for staying or leaving Hamilton, such as “I don’t feel safe enough to stay in Hamilton after graduation if I can help it”. Respondents also feel a sense of helplessness in housing conditions: “There needs to be more regulations for student housing prices and landlord behaviours.. I know many students who struggle to find decent housing for <\$1000 with a respectful landlord that follows the bylaws. It is sad to know that so many of my classmates live in such terrible conditions”. Another respondent shares: “Improving the quality of off-campus housing shouldn’t mean prices increase... Safe housing is a human right”.

Respondents are also concerned about transit and infrastructure: “Hamilton continues to build on top of old infrastructure which makes transportation of any kind difficult. The time it takes to get to places should not be as long as it is. The streets need fixing, some lanes are highly confusing, there should be increased regulations for cars in each neighborhood and more stop signs. Some areas are very unsafe for students/pedestrians due to reckless drivers and poorly built streets that need visible road signs. Even buses have difficulties navigating the streets because of the limited space they have to complete their route which of course leads to traffic buildup behind them. This really needs to be addressed for everyone’s safety”.

Despite these concerns, 55% of respondents are still considering staying in Hamilton. Respondents share that “there are more opportunities to interact (outside school, house and work) compared to my hometown”. Hamilton has many factors unique to this municipality, however, many respondents are not experiencing everything the city has to offer, with more than 1 in 10 respondents never leaving their neighbourhood beyond campus.

Impact of Municipal Engagement on Student Retention



It is clear there is a relationship between a student’s engagement with Hamilton and their intent to stay post-graduation, demonstrated by the frequency of visits to off-campus neighbourhoods and respondents’ likelihood of staying in Hamilton. Respondents who report engaging with their municipality daily have the highest likelihood of staying in Hamilton, at 72%, followed by 56% for those visiting 1-2 times a week, 58% for those visiting 1-2 times a month, 43% for those visiting 1-2 times a year, and finally 37% for those who have never visited an off-campus neighbourhood. These figures clearly show the impact that exploring, engaging with, and ultimately belonging to a community can have on students.

Students who explore their municipality daily are almost two times more likely to stay in Hamilton post-graduation compared to those who have never explored. Respondents who have explored their municipality in any capacity, whether daily or 1-2 times per year, are still more than 1.5 times more likely to consider staying in Hamilton post-graduation than those who have never explored.

The MSU has always been committed to retaining talent and encouraging students to explore their municipality. This is the mission behind the Explore Hamilton campaign, which highlights businesses, attractions, and offerings in the City of Hamilton catered to students. These figures further outline the need for advocacy and partnership among the MSU, McMaster University, the City of Hamilton, and community partners, to integrate students into the diverse municipality where they live and learn. When students engage in their municipality, they become part of something bigger than what their university experience alone can offer.

CONCLUSION

Our goal is to encourage students to engage with their municipality to find everything Hamilton has to offer. While every city struggles with issues like affordability, transit, policing, and food insecurity, these challenges don't define Hamilton. It's the city's vibrant spirit, collective resilience, and diverse community that truly set it apart. We hope that these findings and insights are useful to community stakeholders in informing your work.

The 30,000 students who come here to learn, can also become 30,000 committed Hamiltonians here to stay.



