

2023



Allianz 

Allianz
Partners

State of Student Healthcare

Annual Report

Disclaimer

This document has been prepared by 5D (Fifth Dimension Research & Consulting), who have conducted market research on behalf of Allianz Partners Australia.

This document outlines the research findings regarding international students in Australia, and their related needs, concerns, attitudes and behaviours around health and wellbeing.

The information in this document is general in nature and based on information available at the time of publishing.

5D is an independent market research and consulting company, based in Sydney, Australia. <https://fifthdimensionconsulting>



What's inside

A message from Miranda Fennell	7
Executive summary	8
Method	10
Student profile	11
Life in Australia	13
Health literacy	16
General health	18
Mental health	20
Sexual health	24
We're here to help	27



List of figures and tables

Figure 1	Country of origin.	9
Figure 2	Survey participant gender.	9
Figure 3	Students were asked to nominate their place of study.	9
Figure 4	Students selected which of the two statements (left or right) applied to them.	9
Figure 5	Student employment status.	10
Figure 6	Student closest job description while in Australia.	10
Figure 7	Student accommodation satisfaction ratings.	11
Figure 8	Student current financial position.	12
Figure 9	Top categories that students find 'challenging to afford' or 'not affordable'.	12
Figure 10	Students' behaviours and attitudes since living in Australia.	12
Figure 11	Students who 'Strongly agree' to statements about living in Australia.	13
Figure 12	Percentage of students who selected. Blue = 'Always', Grey = 'Always' or 'Most of time'.	13
Figure 13	Health professionals students have seen in Australia.	14
Figure 14	Students that 'Strongly agree' or 'Somewhat agree' to statements about the healthcare system.	14
Figure 15	Students that 'Strongly agree' or 'Somewhat agree' to statements about the healthcare system	15
Figure 16	Information sources for students, positive rating % = 'Very good' or 'Somewhat good'.	15
Figure 17	Proportion of young people who rate aspects of health and wellbeing 'very good' or 'excellent'.	16
Figure 18	Proportion of students with reported chronic conditions by country.	16
Figure 19	Proportion of students who strongly, or somewhat agree with each statement.	17

List of figures and tables

Figure 20	Incidence of mental health conditions amongst participants.	18
Figure 21	Attitudes towards mental health (% agree / strongly agree).	18
Figure 22	Proportion of those with a mental health condition who have sought treatment in Australia.	19
Figure 23	Channels / professionals students have sought mental health assistance from.	19
Figure 24	Frequency of feeling lonely.	20
Figure 25	What helps students cope with their feelings of loneliness.	20
Figure 26	What causes students to feel stress.	21
Figure 27	Frequency of students feeling stressed, overall and by financial situation.	21
Figure 28	Students reporting types of contraception methods they're familiar with.	22
Figure 29	Students who have heard of various STIs.	23
Table 1	Correctly answered the true / false statements about STIs.	26





Care Confidence Convenience

International students play an important role in bolstering our nation's economy, and their presence is intricately woven into the vibrant tapestry of our multicultural society.

At Allianz Partners Australia, we take pride in our expertise in international health insurance, aligning our strategic focus with a commitment to closely monitoring key health trends to gain a deeper understanding of our customers and provide them with intentional healthcare solutions.

It is with great pleasure we introduce Allianz Partners Australia's inaugural State of Student Healthcare Annual Report. This report is a comprehensive exploration of the needs, attitudes, understanding, and behaviours of international students and their experience living in Australia, including all aspects of their health and wellbeing.

We are committed to providing a continuum of care rooted in a deep understanding of the unique challenges and needs of international students. This exploration is not merely a statistical exercise but a genuine commitment to providing valuable insights that can shape the future of healthcare for international students.

The insights gleaned from this report will serve as a compass, guiding the way we support students in the moments that matter. In collaboration with our partners across the country, we aim to implement tailored solutions that go beyond health insurance, enhancing the overall wellbeing and experiences of international students in Australia.

The State of Student Healthcare report reflects our dedication to creating intentional healthcare solutions that address the diverse needs of this vibrant and essential community within our society. At Allianz Partners Australia our mission is to ensure international students remain happy, healthy and study ready.



Miranda Fennell
Executive Head of Health
Allianz Partners Australia

Executive summary

As a leading international health insurer, Allianz Partners is committed to ensuring international students have access to comprehensive support for maintaining their health and wellbeing to maximise their experience in Australia.

To better meet the unique health and wellbeing needs of this group, we conducted a cross-sectional survey of 787 international students aged between 17 and 49 who hold an Allianz Care Australia Overseas Student Health Care (OSHC) policy.

This research revealed a range of valuable insights into the needs, concerns, attitudes and behaviours of international students.

Life in Australia

Cost of living

While half of students are satisfied with their quality of life in Australia, the rising cost of living is causing stress. 74% of students reported feeling some type of financial pressure, and many report undertaking budgeting activities to reduce spending.

Safety, inclusivity and community

Feeling safe is an essential need, but only 36% of students reported strongly feeling safe in Australia. 32% report experiencing racism, and one in three worry about being scammed online. Educational institutions and social media are providing a crucial source of social support for students.

Health literacy

OSHC proving useful

Most students say their health insurance policy has been a worthwhile investment. 70% have accessed services already, and few have reported having difficulty finding and accessing services when they need them.

Enhancing students' health literacy

International students report feeling less than confident about navigating Australia's healthcare system due to both the complexity of the system and language barriers. Friends, family and health provider channels like Allianz Care Australia and the Sonder app are the most popular sources of information.

General health

Overall health

While many feel there's room for improvement, international students overall report high levels of general wellness and low rates of chronic health conditions. The use of alcohol, cigarettes and vapes is also low, with a large number abstaining from all.

Cost of living

Students cite financial pressures as a key barrier to accessing healthy foods, particularly fruits and vegetables. Financial status can be directly correlated to access to fresh, wholesome foods.



Mental health

Students aren't accessing support

A third of students are struggling with their mental health, while 41% report having a mental health condition such as anxiety or depression. Despite this, very few are seeking help from GPs and mental health professionals, preferring to turn to friends, family or the internet for information and support.

Loneliness, stress and cost of living

The high rates of general loneliness and stress appear to be key factors affecting the mental health of international students. Cost of living was identified as the leading cause of stress, and those with less financial stress reported lower overall rates of poor mental health.

Sexual health

Consent and contraceptives

A third of international students report being sexually active. Consent is important to students, although there remains some uncertainty around elements of the topic. 17% of students weren't able to identify any form of contraceptive when asked in the survey.

STI awareness

While most students demonstrated a good awareness of STIs, some misinformation was evident. There was little knowledge of safe sex practices and treatment options, indicating that students could benefit greatly from increased awareness and education about sexual health.



Method

Study design and sample

As part of our commitment to international student health and wellbeing, Allianz Partners engaged Fifth Dimensions Research & Consulting (5D) to conduct market, product and customer research.

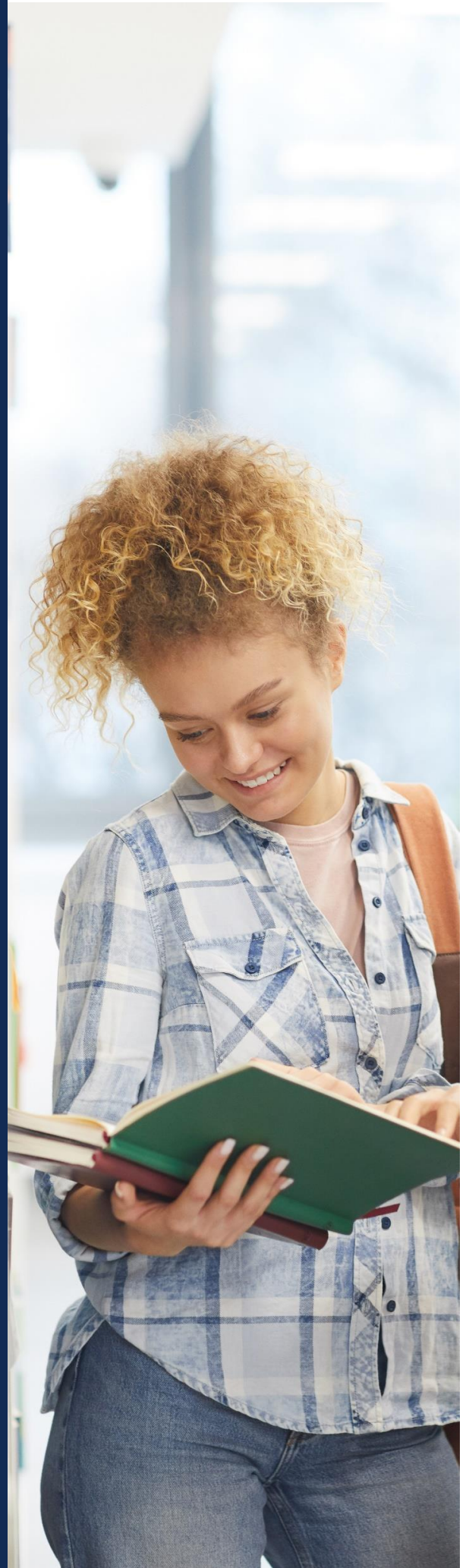
In late 2023, 5D contacted students who held an active Allianz Care Australia Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) policy and asked them to complete a 20-minute online survey to share their thoughts and opinions on themes related to their health and wellbeing.

Promotion and recruitment

787 students attending partnered institutions or education colleges participated in the study, representing ages from 17 to 49. Demographic information, such as age, gender and country of origin, was self-reported by students as a part of the survey.

The data collected was weighted to age, gender and country of origin to align with Allianz Partners' student profile data.

Participants were recruited via an email sent to approximately 36,000 students who had consented to receiving marketing material from Allianz Partners. Students who completed the survey received a \$10 to \$20 GiftPay gift card.



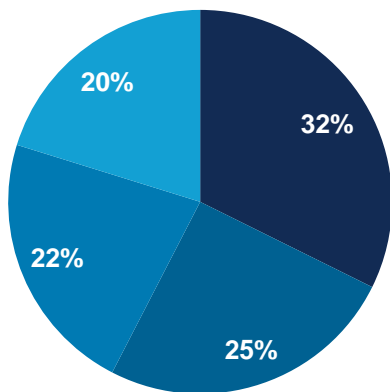
Student profile

High on the to-do lists of incoming international students is organising their health insurance. With OSHC specialised to Australia, it's imperative the messaging around this mandatory requirement for students is clear and accessible, particularly when 81% of students are taking out an OSHC policy for the first time, and 11% of respondents are unsure of their OSHC policy type.

This insight feeds into a discussion of health literacy and our collective responsibility in ensuring international students can confidently navigate Australia's healthcare system.

Country of origin

Among the 787 students surveyed, the majority originated from China and Hong Kong, with South Asia (India, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka), other countries (South America, Europe, UK and USA), and other Asian countries (Philippines, Malaysia, Vietnam, Indonesia, Singapore, Japan, Thailand, South Korea) following in order of representation.



- China/Hong Kong
- South Asia
- Other countries
- Other Asia

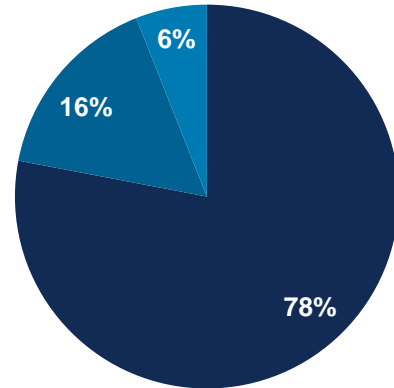
Figure 1 Country of origin.

Gender



Figure 2 Survey participant gender.

Place of study



- University
- Private college/TAFE
- English language college or other

Figure 3 Students were asked to nominate their place of study.

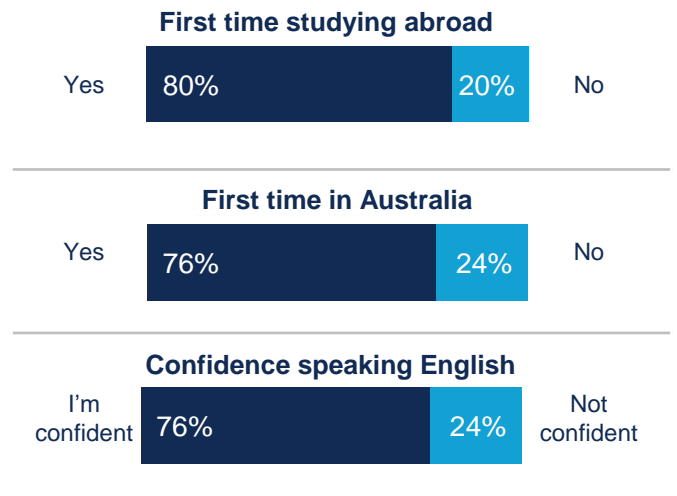


Figure 4 Students selected which of the two statements (left or right) applied to them.



55% of students from Hong Kong or China are confident speaking English.



The average age of student participants was 24.9 years, ranging from 17 to 49 years.

Student profile

Working in Australia

70% of students are either currently employed or actively seeking employment, while 23% have no intention of seeking work in Australia. Notably, students from China/Hong Kong are less likely to work, with 51% falling into this category.



Students who are currently employed work an average of 21.4 hours per week.

- Employed
- Looking for employment
- Not employed and no plans to work

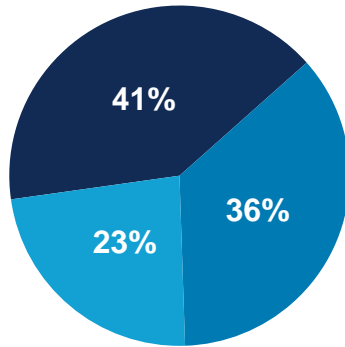


Figure 5 Student employment status.

Student employment industries (%)

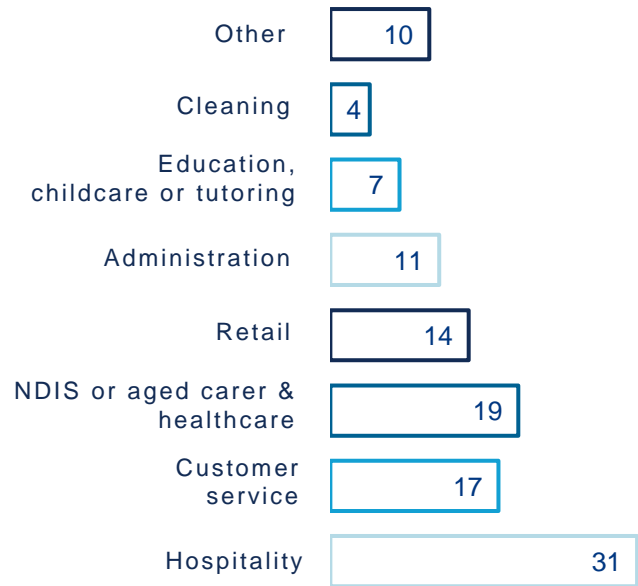


Figure 6 Student closest job description while in Australia.



Life in Australia

Overall satisfaction is high, but rising costs and social inclusion remain a concern

For international students, moving to Australia means more than just receiving a world-class education.

Many come here expressly to seek out a higher standard of living and a better quality of life, and they're finding it. Half of students are satisfied with the quality of life they enjoy in Australia, and very few rated it poorly.

However, the recent increases in the cost of living have introduced an added strain, with some finding it challenging to find accommodation and effectively manage their finances.

Similarly, while international students are happy with their social lives overall, those over the age of 25 are less sociable, reporting lower overall satisfaction with their relationships and quality of life.

Accommodation affordability is top of mind

For most international students, moving to Australia is the first time they'll be living outside of their family home. This combined with the challenges of navigating the housing market in a new country and the recent increases in rental costs, it's no wonder that two-thirds of students reported challenges in finding affordable housing in Australia.

Where are students living?

Share housing is a popular option, with 51% of students choosing this living arrangement. 23% of South Asian students surveyed reported sharing a bedroom, reducing their costs even further.

Private student accommodation is the preferred accommodation type for students from China and Hong Kong, with 24% choosing this option.

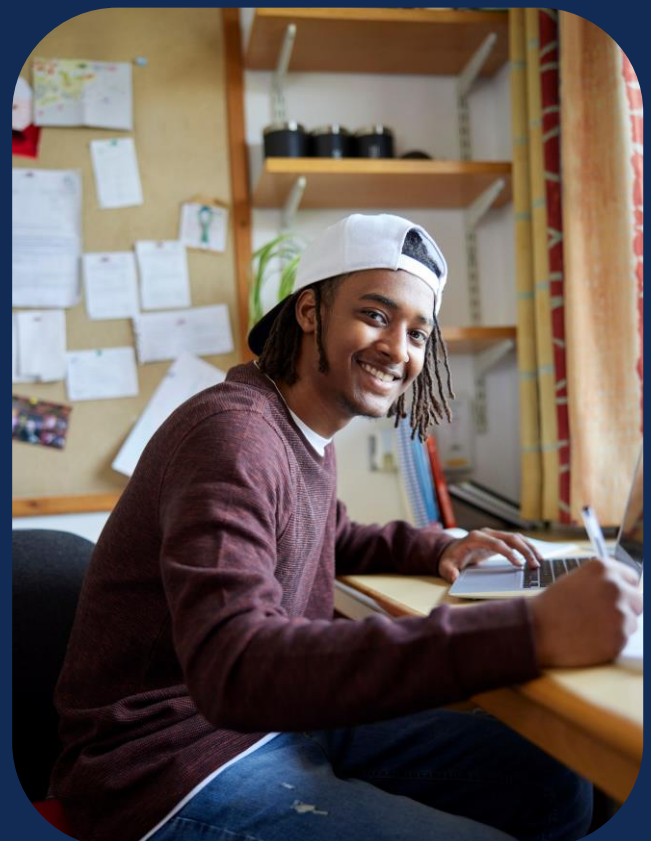
Only 1 in 10 students can afford to rent and live on their own in Australia. The majority of students are happy with their current accommodation, however those living on their own are the happiest, with a satisfaction rating of 92%.

Happy with current living arrangement **85%**

Comfortable with who they live with **86%**

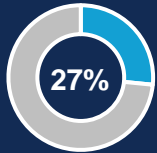
Feel safe in current living arrangement **96%**

Figure 7 Student accommodation satisfaction ratings.



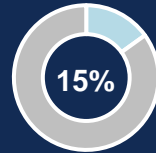
Life in Australia

Many students are actively reducing spending to meet their financial commitments.



Secure

Able to meet all financial commitments and have not had to reduce spending



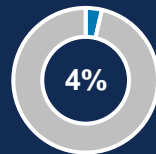
Stressed

Unable to meet financial commitments unless they receive assistance from welfare groups or family and friends and reduce spending



Vulnerable

Able to meet all financial commitments, but only because they have been reducing spending, drawing down on savings or accessing credit



Hardship

Unable to meet their financial commitments no matter what assistance they receive and have depleted their savings and significantly reduced spending

Figure 8 Student current financial position.

Cost of living pressures are impacting international students

International students are especially vulnerable to the rising cost of living in Australia, and it's no surprise that financial management is a key concern for this demographic.

Around 75% of students report experiencing some sort of financial strain, and many are actively reducing their spending to ensure they can meet their essential financial commitments.

Students from Asian countries other than China and Hong Kong have reported experiencing financial vulnerability.

Unexpected expenses are a common stressor

While most students are comfortable meeting their day-to-day expenses like rent, groceries and utilities, many report struggling to set aside appropriate funds for unexpected or irregular obligations.

Additional costs, such as medical expenses incurred due to an emergency or the cost of a last-minute flight home, have the potential to upend a student's financial position and have a lasting impact on their financial security.

How are students budgeting?

Over 75% of students reported taking steps to reduce their spending and proactively manage their finances. These behaviours are more prominent among South Asian students, who are also more likely to have difficulty meeting financial commitments.

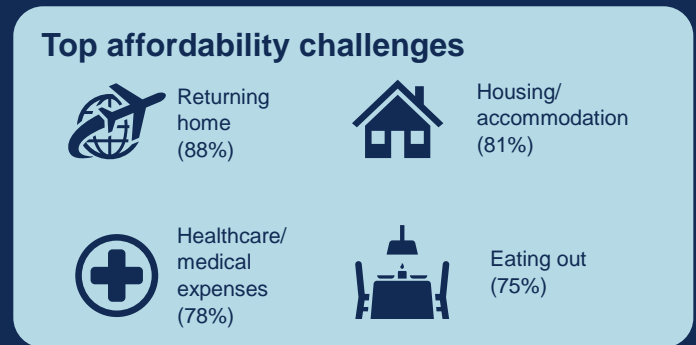


Figure 9 Top categories that students find 'challenging to afford' or 'not affordable'.



Figure 10 Students' behaviours and attitudes since living in Australia.

Life in Australia

Students have concerns over safety, inclusion and social support

While many students are excited about starting a new life in Australia, safety concerns were prominent for students and their families.

1 in 3 students reported feeling welcome in Australia, however, students from Hong Kong and China felt less safe than those from South Asia. Experiences on campus were ranked highly, with students feeling safer on campus than anywhere else.

Digital safety is also a concern, with 1 in 3 students reporting they're worried about being scammed online.



Racism still a concern

Concerns about safety appear to be warranted, with 1 in 3 students reporting they've encountered racism during their time in Australia. This rate is higher among Asian students from countries other than Hong Kong and China, at 43%.

A small proportion of students reported violent incidents, such as being subject to physical violence (5%), sexual harassment (4%), sexual assault (2%) or rape (1%). Encountering violence, racism or discrimination has a deep and lasting impact on students' sense of safety and security.

Institutions and social media are helping foster strong relationships

For many international students, one of the biggest challenges they face in Australia is building a new support network.

Universities are providing an invaluable social resource for students, with 76% of respondents stating they felt supported by their institution. 55% reported social media platforms helped them feel connected, with the use of social media higher amongst students from China and Hong Kong (69%).

When it comes to making new friends, sharing a cultural background seems to be a great place to start. 68% of students reported connecting with others from similar cultures, finding the familiarity and sense of community a great comfort in a new country.

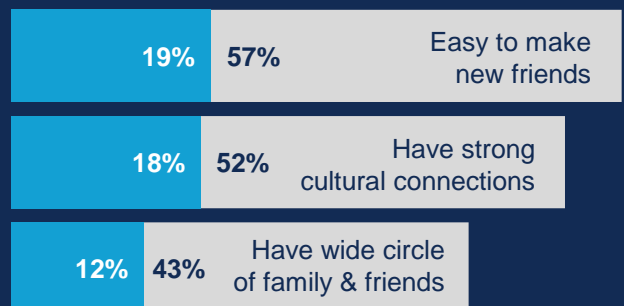


Figure 12 Percentage of students who selected. Blue = 'Always', Grey = 'Always' or 'Most of time'.

Health literacy

Students are making great use of OSHC
Overseas Student Health Cover (OSHC) may be a visa requirement, but that doesn't mean students aren't seeing the value in this product. 66% believe health insurance is a worthwhile investment and say they feel their health insurance provider really cares for them. A further, 67% say they've found their health insurance aligns with their health care needs.

2 in 3 students feel positive about their OSHC policy

OSHC makes it easy for students to access healthcare when and where they need it, which is more important than ever when they're far from home. 64% of students say healthcare is easy to navigate in Australia, and 71% have accessed services already. Thankfully, just 18% have needed to seek medical treatment at a hospital.

Additionally, 28% of students has engaged in ancillary health services provided under an extras policy, such as dentistry, psychology and physiotherapy. While counselling and therapy are less commonly used, students who do use these services attend frequently, visiting at least once every three months.

2 in 5 students who visit psychologists do so every 3 months

Key health professionals accessed by students



Figure 13 Health professionals' students have seen in Australia.

International students could benefit from enhanced health literacy

For international students, getting sick or injured can be an overwhelming experience, especially when it comes to finding appropriate care.

While a majority of students feel confident, they understand their OSHC policy and what it covers, many feel less confident in their ability to navigate the Australian healthcare system. This is due to both the complexity of an unfamiliar system and language barriers.

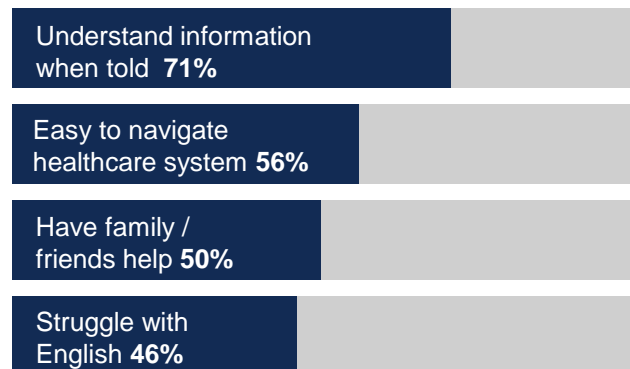


Figure 14 Students that 'Strongly agree' or 'Somewhat agree' to statements about the healthcare system

Health literacy

Confidence is high when dealing with health professionals

While accessing care can be challenging, most students report they have no trouble asking questions or understanding information provided to them about their health.

Understanding health professionals

81%	GP
80%	Nurse in clinic
80%	Physiotherapist / Chiropractor
79%	Pharmacist
76%	Dentist
75%	Doctor or nurse in a hospital
74%	Psychologist / Counsellor

Figure 15 Students that 'Strongly agree' or 'Somewhat agree' to statements about the healthcare system.



When it comes to asking questions, students are most comfortable engaging with nurses and pharmacists.

Where are students turning for support

When they have questions about healthcare, the majority of students are turning to friends and family for help. However, only half of students' report having access to this type of support.

Following personal support networks, health provider channels are the next most trusted source. These include websites like Allianz Care Australia, which has a range of tailored health and wellness resources for international students, and apps such as Sonder, which is an ancillary benefit for eligible Allianz Care Australia OSHC policyholders.

Other sources, like government websites and educational institutions, aren't quite as popular to access but are highly rated by those who turn to them for information.

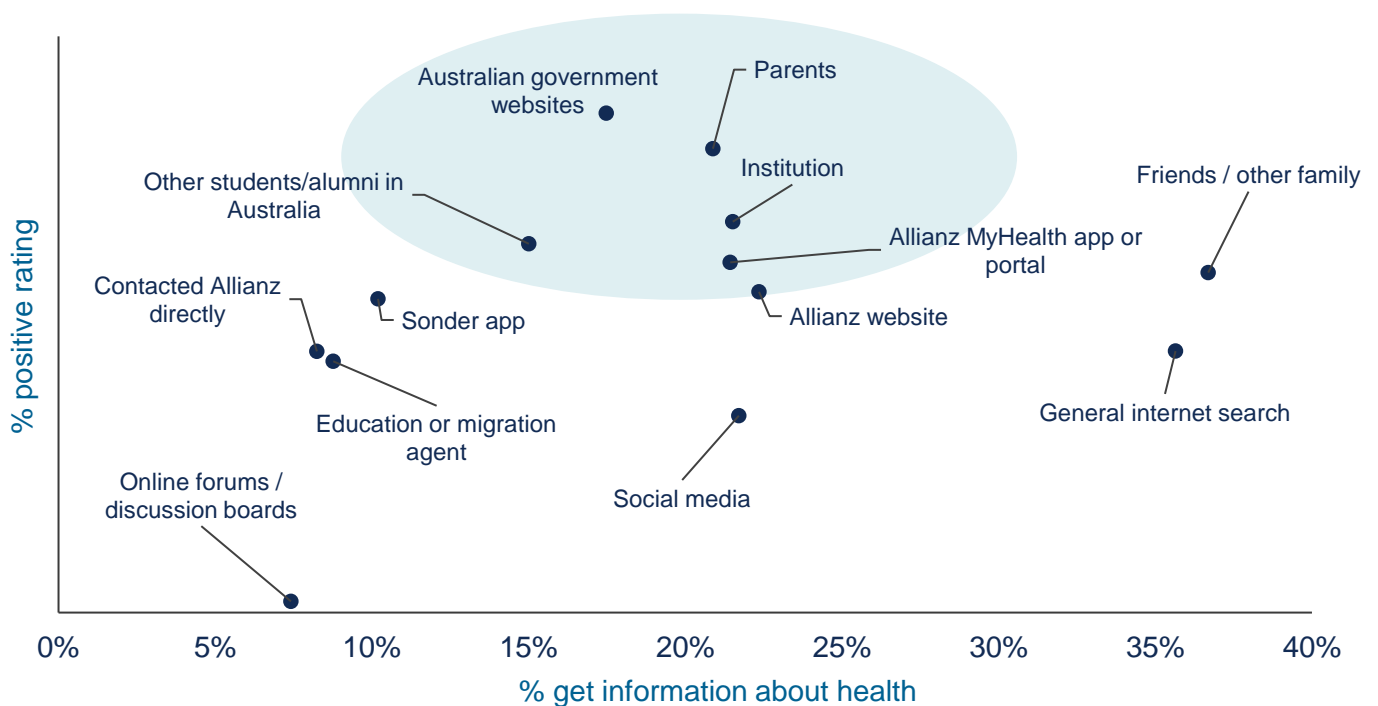


Figure 16 Information sources for students, positive rating % = 'Very good' or 'Somewhat good'.

General health

Overall health and quality of life

Between moving overseas, commencing their studies and making new friends, it can be hard for international students to prioritise their health.

While very few felt they were doing poorly across aspects of general health, quality of life, socialisation and relationships, it's clear many students feel there's room for improvement.

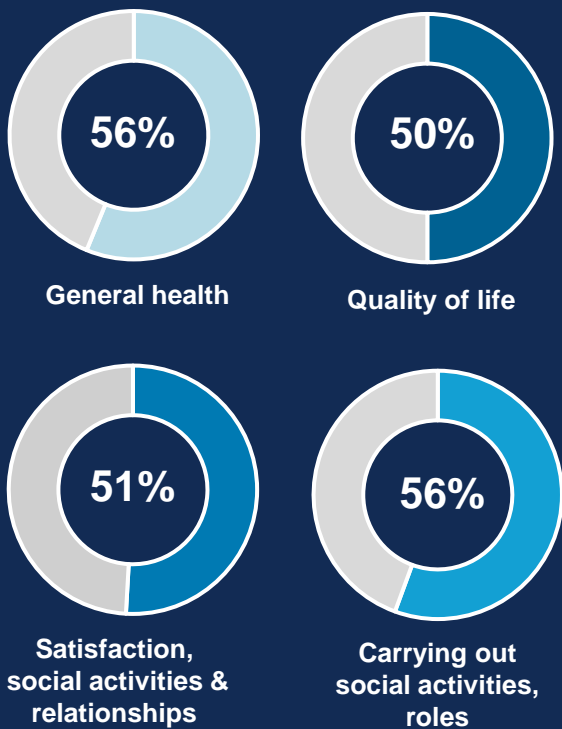


Figure 17 Proportion of young people who rate aspects of health and wellbeing 'very good' or 'excellent'.

Overall health by sex

49% of females rate their overall health as very good or excellent, compared to 63% of males.

Few international students report chronic health conditions

To some extent, the relatively low general health assessment provided by students in this research can be linked to the 12% who report suffering from chronic conditions, the most prominent of which are asthma, endometriosis and polycystic ovarian syndrome (PCOS).

This is corroborated by the data, with those reporting a chronic condition more likely to rate their health as 'fair', while those without were more likely to rate their health as 'excellent'.

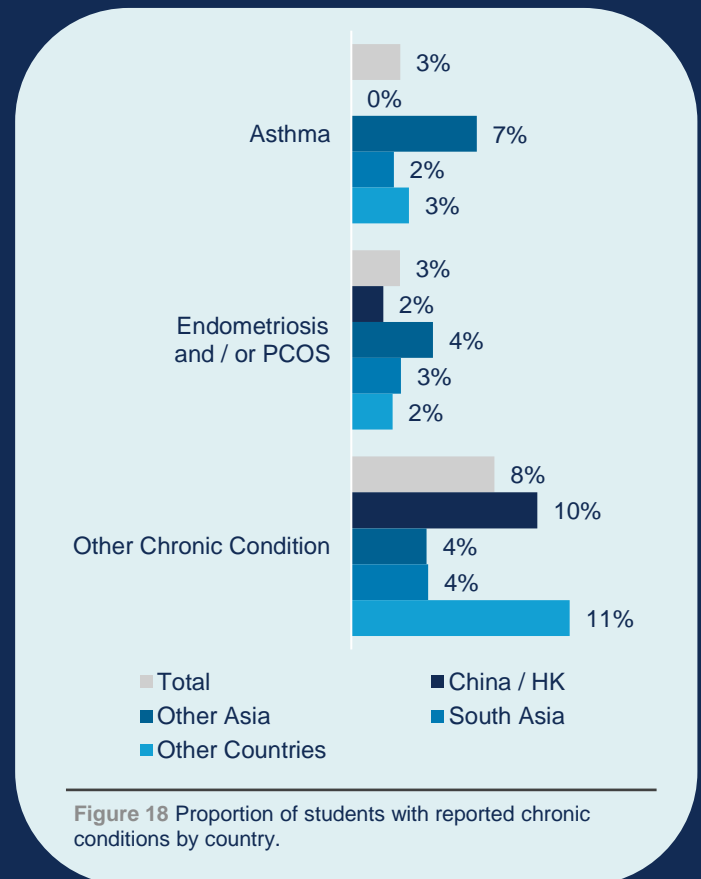


Figure 18 Proportion of students with reported chronic conditions by country.

General health

Alcohol and nicotine use

Most students consume alcohol less than once a month. Alcohol consumption is not an area of concern for international students. In fact, the 58% of respondents who drink at all report doing so in moderation, averaging two to three standard drinks per session.

Minor country-based differences were observed, with students from South Asia being less likely to choose to consume alcohol compared to other countries.

Only 1 in 10 international students smoke or vape

Students are also avoiding nicotine and the risks of smoking, with very few reporting that they use either cigarettes (5%) or electronic vapes (7%).

Of those who do vape or smoke, Male students are 11% more likely to smoke or vape than females. As well as students from China and Hong Kong are the most likely to be daily users, while students from other areas of Asia are more likely to smoke only in social situations.

Financial challenges make it hard to maintain a healthy diet

Cooking at home is one of the easiest ways to maintain a well-balanced diet and reduce spending. Most students are taking advantage of this, with three-quarters reporting they regularly cook meals at home.

Despite this, students say they are struggling to eat a healthy diet due to grocery affordability. Affordability plays a role for 36% of students who strongly or somewhat agree that they can't afford to eat fresh fruit and vegetables.

With the cost of living rising, fresh produce like fruits and vegetables becomes less accessible to those living on a tight budget.

In fact, a student's financial status is directly correlated with their ability to maintain a healthy and varied diet. Over half of students facing financial stress or hardship are unable to afford fresh, healthy food options.

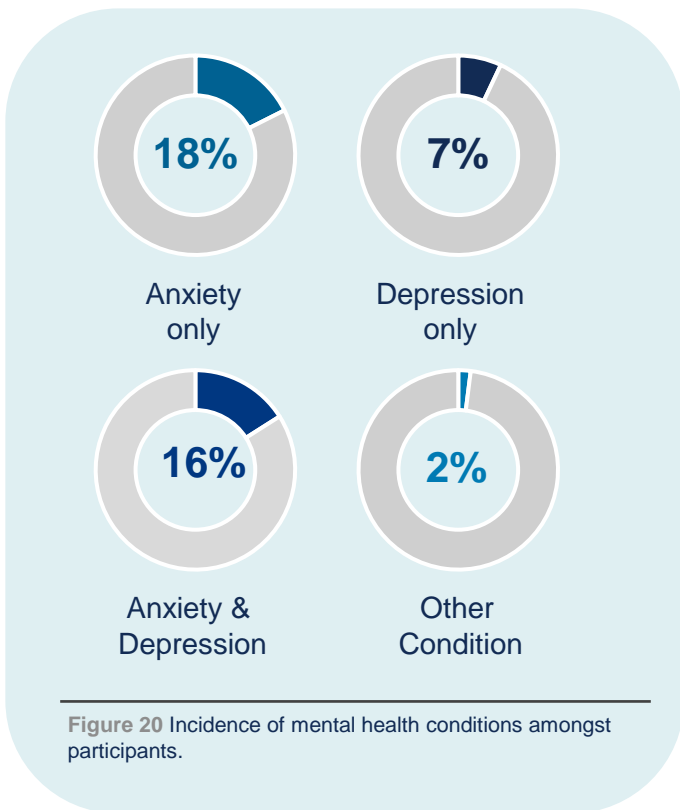


Figure 19 Proportion of students who strongly, or somewhat agree with each statement.

Mental health

41% of students have a mental health condition

It's clear that mental health is a key concern for international students in Australia. Almost half of students report they have a mental health condition, the most common of which are anxiety (18%) and depression (7%) or both (16%). The challenges that come with international study, such as distance from support networks, culture shock and feelings of isolation can exacerbate pre-existing conditions.



Looking deeper, anxiety is more prominent in female participants at 40% against their male counterparts at 29%. Students from South Asia are less likely to suffer from a mental health condition or concern (56%) compared to students from other countries (41% overall).

33% of students are struggling with their mental health

Shockingly, a third of students report struggling with their mental health, and just under a third say they feel their life has no meaning. These statements highlight the need for health providers and institutions to work together to provide accessible and meaningful mental healthcare and support for international students.



Figure 21 Attitudes towards mental health (% agree / strongly agree).

86% of South Asian students reported regularly missing their friends and family from home, while students from China and Hong Kong were significantly less likely to agree with this (65%).

Students from South Asia are more likely to state they have a clear purpose (83% vs. 74% overall) but are also more likely to agree that they often feel low or down (58% vs. 46% overall)

Students aren't accessing support when they need it

Only 1 in 5 students have sought treatment for their mental health

Despite the prevalence of international students experiencing mental health challenges, very few seek treatment or support. This points to a need for improved health literacy measures and clear pathways for appropriate care.

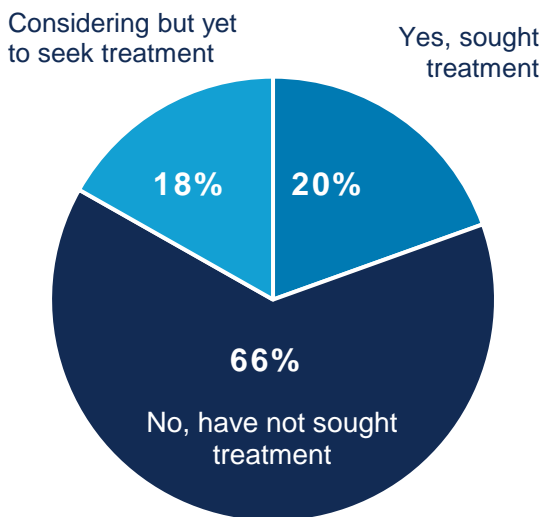


Figure 22 Proportion of those with a mental health condition who have sought treatment in Australia.

Students are more likely to turn to friends and family or the internet for mental health information rather than more trusted sources like those from their institution, health insurance provider or qualified health professional.

Students from China and Hong Kong are more likely to seek mental health information from third parties, this is due to their reliance on social media.

South Asian students are more likely to seek mental health information from Allianz Partners sources including the website and the Allianz MyHealth App or Portal.

Most students who do seek help, do so through a GP or counsellor.

Online or app-based resources, like Sonder, are also popular, as digital tools offers students instant support on demand. Further promotion of these tools could help increase support-seeking behaviours among international students. Of students who sought support, the majority were satisfied with the help and guidance they received, regardless of where they went.



Figure 23 Channels / professionals students have sought mental health assistance from.

Loneliness & stress

International students experience high rates of loneliness

A possible cause of poor mental wellbeing among international students in Australia is loneliness. Often, international students find it hard to settle in, make new friends and connect with their campus community which can lead to feelings of homesickness and isolation.

77% of students reported experiencing feelings of loneliness occasionally or some of the time.

Despite being less likely to suffer with mental illness, students from South Asian countries are significantly more likely to report feelings of loneliness all the time (13% vs 9% average).

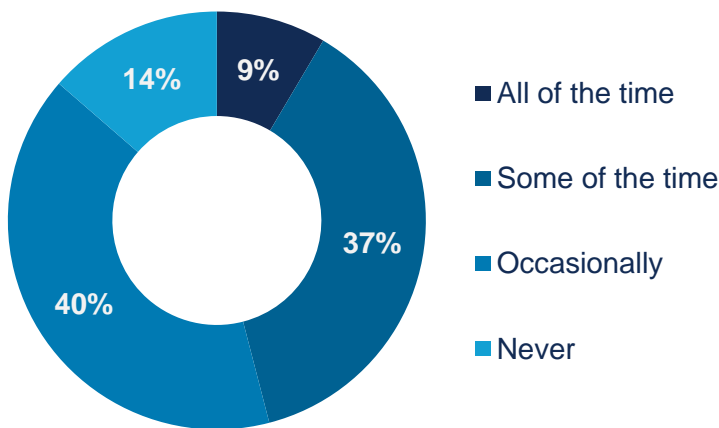


Figure 24 Frequency of feeling lonely.



Only **37% of males** will reach out to others (family or friends via phone or video call) compared to **58% of females** who experience feelings of loneliness

Combating loneliness

When it comes to addressing loneliness, male students are less likely to reach out to friends and family by phone or video. Interestingly, many reported engaging in solo pursuits as a method for combatting feelings of isolation, in particular engaging with music, movies and television shows.

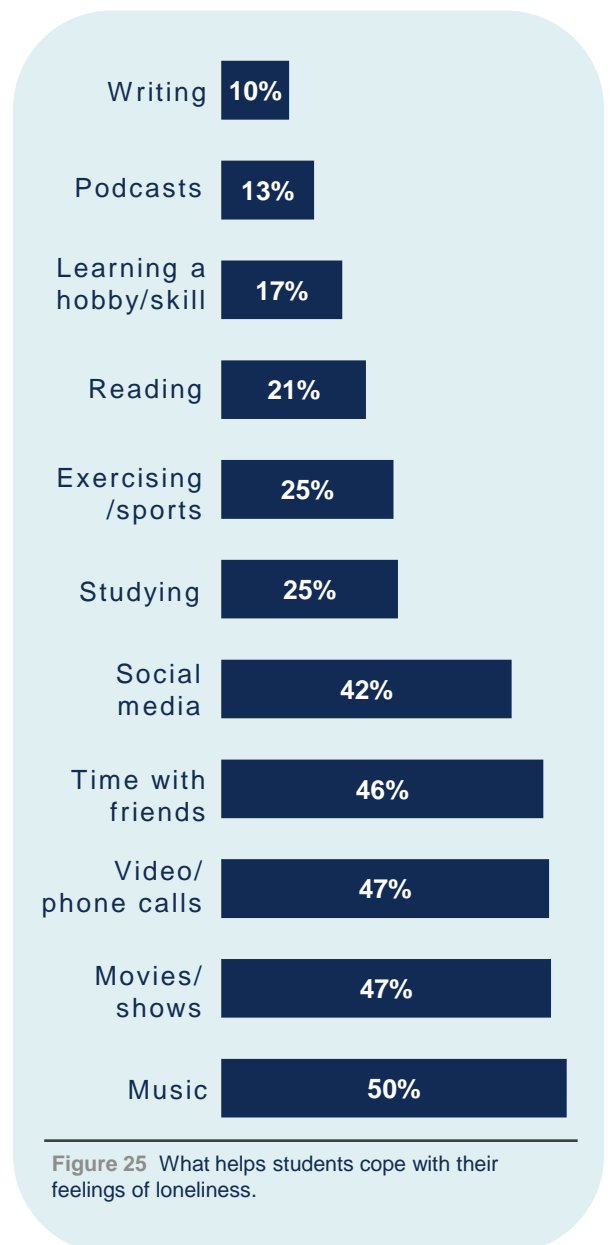


Figure 25 What helps students cope with their feelings of loneliness.

The link between mental health, stress and financial hardship are clear with cost of living significantly underpinning feelings of stress.

Stress factors vary by country

When it comes to stress, students from China and Hong Kong are more likely to feel the pressure of exams, while students from elsewhere in Asia feel more stressed about studying throughout the semester. This could be linked to the higher rates of employment among individuals from places other than China and Hong Kong, with students needing to carefully balance work and study.

Interestingly, students report similar methods of tackling stress to those used for loneliness, with the notable exception of studying, which is less popular as a means of reducing stress.

63% of students report cost of living as a key stressor

It's clear that the recent cost of living pressures across Australia have impacted international students significantly, particularly their mental health. Cost of living was identified as the top cause of stress for students, highlighting the importance of this issue.

Top causes of students' stress

- 63% Cost of living in Australia
- 55% Studying for exams
- 48% Studying during the semester
- 38% Social situations/ relationships
- 27% Lack of support in Australia
- 3% Other

Figure 26 What causes students to feel stress

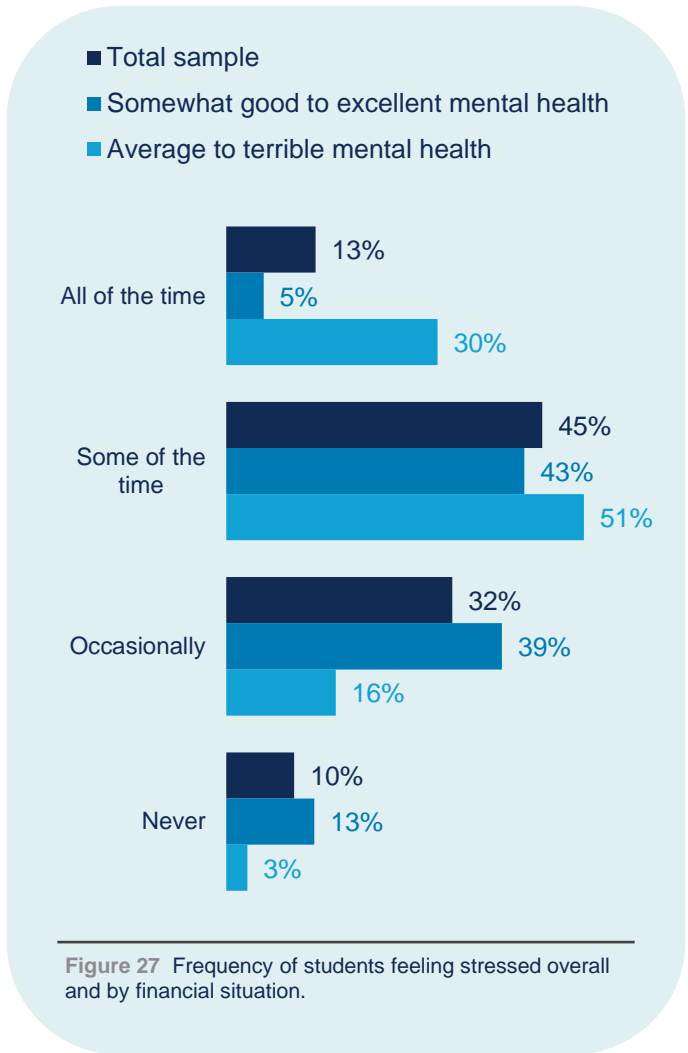


Figure 27 Frequency of students feeling stressed overall and by financial situation.

Financial status is a major factor influencing mental wellbeing.

It's also clear that the more financial stress international students experience, the worse their mental health becomes. Only 31% of students experiencing monetary stress reported that their mental health was very good or excellent, compared with 64% of financially secure students.

Sexual health

Many students actively prioritise and engage with aspects of their sexual health.

Sexual health is a fundamental aspect of the wellbeing of international students. While most students are aware of key issues and risks, some are still lacking in basic knowledge.

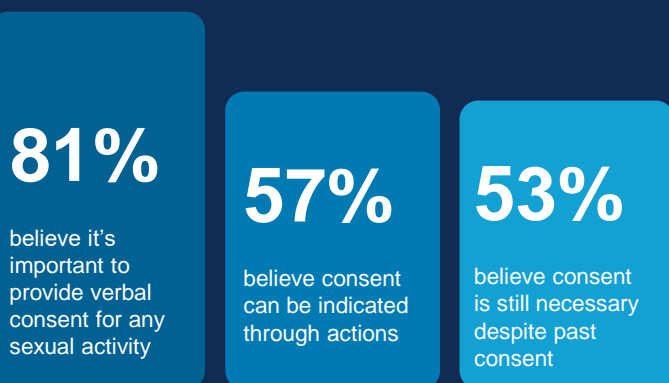
One-third of students (33%) are sexually active, however, 21% opted not to disclose their status. Students from countries outside of Asia are also more likely to be sexually active, and 8% of respondents identified as being lesbian, gay or bisexual.

While a vast majority (81%) believe their peers should be open to talking with their partners about sexual health risks, only a third do so.

Consent matters for students

International students take consent seriously. More than half of the respondents affirm the necessity of obtaining verbal consent from a sexual partner, even if consent had been given in previous encounters. The emphasis on verbal consent is particularly pronounced among women, with 66% emphasising its importance.

However, there seems to be some uncertainty around important elements of this topic, such as whether actions count as consent and if consent needs to be ongoing.



Students show a lack of contraceptive awareness

It was clear access to sexual health education was varied across cultural backgrounds with some students unfamiliar with basic concepts.

For example, 17% of students surveyed did not know of any forms of contraception, and on average, international students were only aware of two methods.

This indicates further education and awareness of the variety of contraceptive options available would be highly valuable to international students who may otherwise unknowingly put themselves or others at risk.

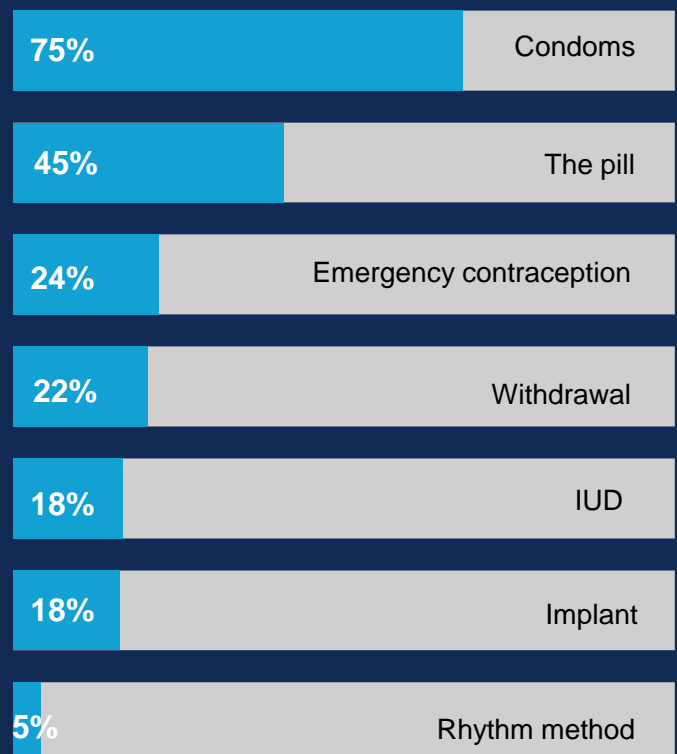


Figure 28 Students reporting types of contraception methods they're familiar with.

Students demonstrated notable knowledge gaps on Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI)

Overall, students have some awareness of sexually transmitted infections (STIs), with 83% able to identify at least one. Many understand the serious consequences of STIs and recognise that anyone can be at risk.

STI awareness by infection type

Human immunodeficiency virus (HIV)

Students demonstrated awareness of HIV, particularly with elements of transmission. Misunderstandings still exist around prevention and the relationship between HIV and other STIs.

Human papillomavirus (HPV)

When it comes to awareness of HPV, commonly known as genital warts, students demonstrated some knowledge of the virus and vaccine. However, misinformation still remains.

Notably, a majority of respondents believe that a person must have penetrative sex to contract HPV, and 40% believe that the HPV vaccine prevents pregnancy.

Herpes simplex virus (HSV)

Students were least aware of HSV. Almost half believe herpes is caused by the HIV virus and that infection is not permanent. 52% believe that genital herpes is only infectious when open sores are present.

Chlamydia

There is sound awareness of chlamydia, with 61% of students answering related questions correctly. However, while respondents were mostly able to identify the symptoms associated with this STI, knowledge gaps around transmission were evident.

Gonorrhoea

Awareness of gonorrhoea was generally low. Students were able to identify previous infection doesn't cause immunity, half of students believe a gonorrhoea vaccination exists.

Hepatitis B & C

Of the students who had heard of Hepatitis B (42%), 78% were aware a vaccination exists. When it comes to Hepatitis C, a majority of students were able to identify the risks associated with sharing syringes. This was higher among women and those identifying as gay, lesbian or bisexual.

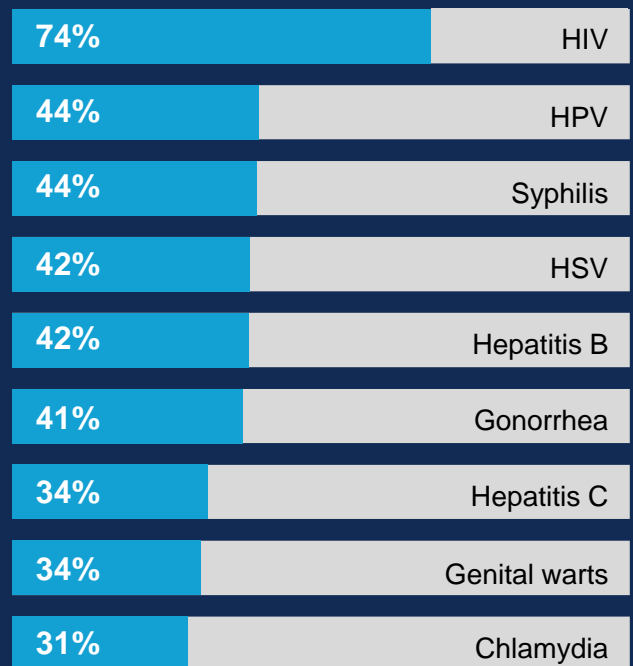


Figure 29 Students who have heard of various STIs.



Students from China and Hong Kong are generally less aware of the different types of STIs

Students lack knowledge of STI prevention and treatment options

Statements	Answered correctly
Condoms used during sex, help to protect people from getting HIV	88%
HIV can be spread through coughing or sneezing near other people	73%
The pill (contraceptive) protects a person from HIV	70%
Human papillomavirus (HPV) is caused by the same virus that causes HIV	57%
Someone can take pills (Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis [PrEP] or Post-Exposure Prophylaxis [PEP]) to stop them from getting HIV	54%
Genital herpes is caused by the same virus as HIV	60%

Table 1 Correctly answered the true / false statements about STIs

While there was some STI awareness, it's clear that there is a worrying lack of awareness of safe sex practices. Only 1 in 3 students were aware of the HPV vaccine, and more than a quarter didn't know condom use could also prevent STIs.

STI testing rates among international students are also a matter of concern. Notably, the key barriers preventing students from accessing care, such as the belief testing is expensive (43%) or the perception that conversations with partners are difficult (47%), would be easily alleviated by increased education in this area.

Expanding learning avenues for enhanced sexual health awareness

It's clear that international students require more opportunities to learn about sexual health topics, including contraception, STIs and consent. This is particularly true for students who come from cultural backgrounds where stigma and taboo may

have prevented them from gaining this knowledge earlier in life. It's vital international students have access to safe and convenient channels to find information and advice on sexual health.

Where do students turn for help?

When seeking information on sexual health, most international students (31%) say their first port of call is the internet. 27% say they turn to family and friends for help and advice, while 25% find support via social media platforms. Women are more likely than men to seek out advice and support from a health professional, such as a GP.



Chinese and Hong Kong students place greater emphasis on social media, with 37% relying on these platforms, and their educational institution (20%) against the overall average of 13%.

We're here to help

This report was prepared by Allianz Partners in partnership with Fifth Dimension (5D).

This document outlines the research findings regarding international students in Australia, and their related needs, concerns, attitudes and behaviours around health and wellbeing.

The information in this document is general in nature and based on information available at the time of publishing.

For any questions about this report, please contact:

healthresearch@allianz-assistance.com.au



Share your feedback

Your expertise and perspective would greatly contribute to our understanding of the State of Student Healthcare Report's strengths and areas for improvement.

Your feedback will help us refine future reports to ensure they remain compelling and relevant to your international student cohort.

Please scan the below QR code to submit your anonymous feedback.



