StarRez

2025

State of the Student Housing Industry Report

Contents

About this Survey

Now in its second year, StarRez's 2025 State of the Student Housing Industry Report draws on proprietary survey data from 418 institutions – a significant increase from last year. This growing participation underscores the industry's commitment to data-driven decision-making, and collaboration across the global student housing community.

This year's report delivers an even more comprehensive look at growing trends, persistent challenges, and emerging opportunities shaping student accommodation. Designed for housing professionals, university administrators, and sector stakeholders, the report provides year-over-year comparisons, new topic areas, and deeper insights to help institutions stay competitive, student-centered, and financially resilient in an ever-changing landscape.

**Special Thank You to Those
Who Completed the 2025 Survey**

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to the success of the 2025 State of the Student Housing Industry Survey. Your insights have been invaluable in shaping this report.
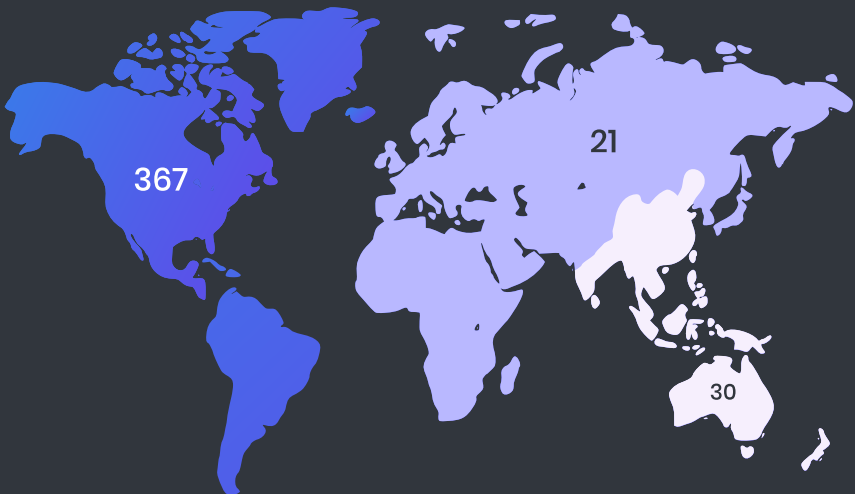
About this Survey

Institution Sample Composition

Responses collected between February 10th and April 14th, 2025.

Region

418 Total Responses

● AMER - 367   ○ APAC - 30   ● EMEA - 21

COMPLETED SURVEYS	
459 IN 2025	368 IN 2024
INSTITUTIONS	
418 IN 2025	340 IN 2024
SURVEY QUESTIONS	
55 IN 2025	30 IN 2024

367   21   30

Housing Platform

418 Total Responses

307	47	23	9	9	9	13

StarRez   The Housing Director (THD)   Mercury   eRez Life   Jenzabar   None / Manual   Other*
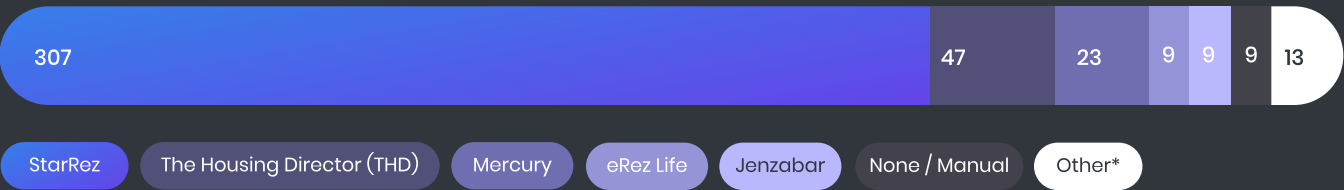
*Less than 5 institutions using Academe Solutions, Banner, CBORD, Kinetic, MCR Housing, Symplicity

About this Survey

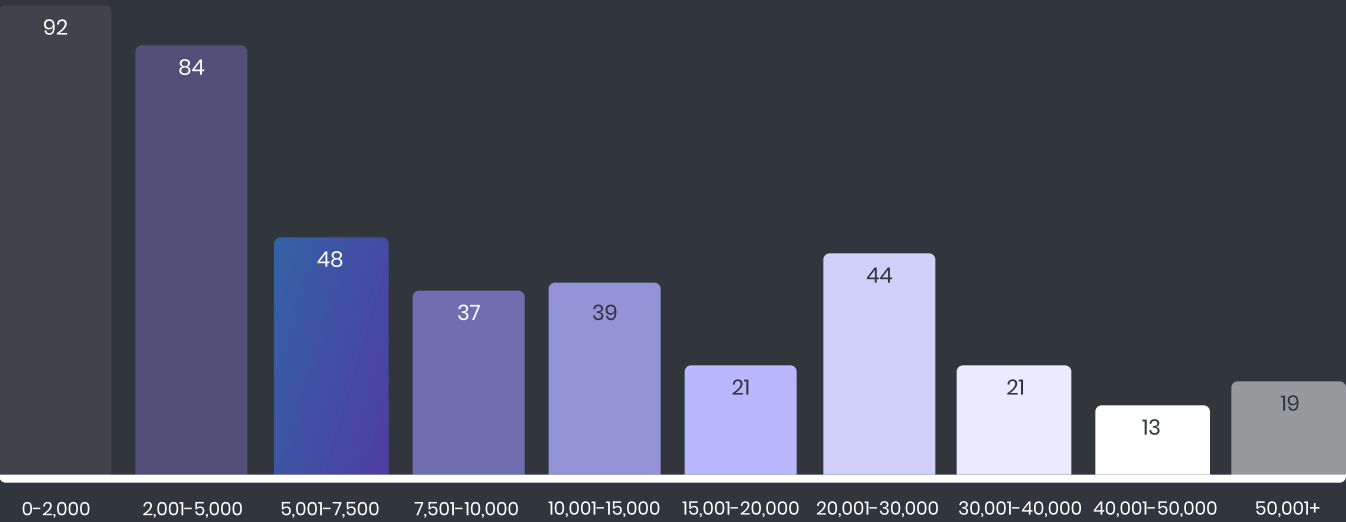**Total Number of Beds and Total Number of Residents**

418 Total Responses

Total Number of Beds Per Housing Operation	Total Number of Current Residents
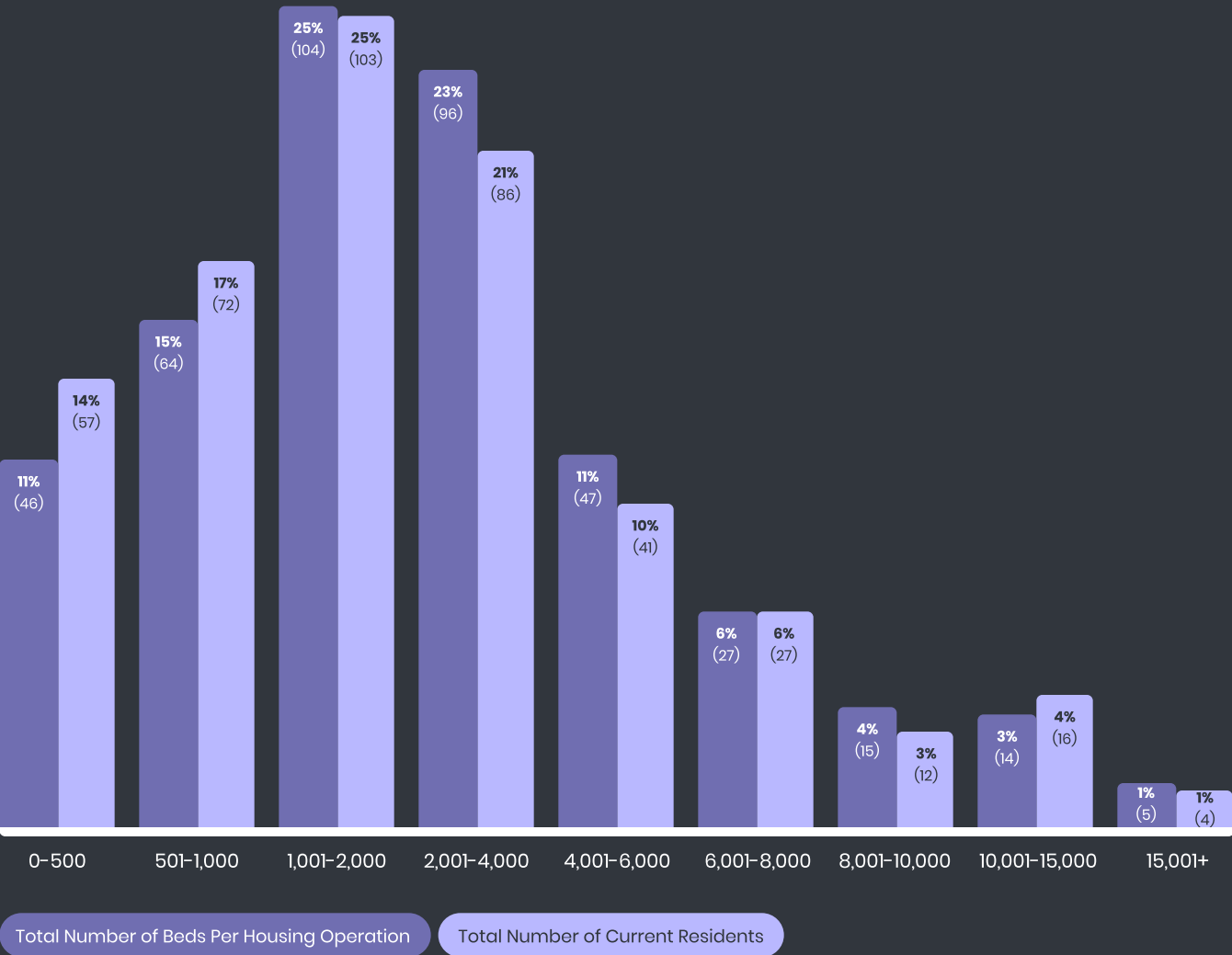
About this Survey

Total Full-Time Undergrad And Grad Enrollment

418 Total Responses

Range	Value
0–2,000	92
2,001–5,000	84
5,001–7,500	48
7,501–10,000	37
10,001–15,000	39
15,001–20,000	21
20,001–30,000	44
30,001–40,000	21
40,001–50,000	13
50,001+	19

Survey Respondent Role Primary Focus

Role	Value
Housing Operations & Assignments	244
Residence Life & Student Engagement	66
Leadership & Administration	59
Business & Finance	11
Property Management	7
Conference & Guest Services	4
Facilities & Maintenance	3
Other	24

Executive Summary

The student housing landscape is in flux. As student needs evolve, staffing pressure mounts, and housing models expand beyond traditional boundaries, the industry is facing a critical inflection point. The 2025 StarRez Student Housing Industry Report uncovers the trends, insights, and opportunities shaping the future, and what housing teams can do to stay ahead.

This year's findings are anchored in four defining themes:

The Student Experience Is Evolving →

Today's students are redefining what it means to live on campus. Students now expect housing to support mental health, privacy, identity-based connection, and purposeful community. Students want housing that supports well-being and creates space for belonging. Data shows that inclusive programs, Living Learning Communities (LLCs), and mental health-responsive housing directly correlate with higher resident satisfaction and retention. Institutions that invest in holistic, student-first experiences are seeing results.

Staff Are Facing Mounting Pressure →

Behind every successful housing operation is a team stretched thin. Professional staff satisfaction has improved year-over-year, but burnout still looms. The strongest predictor of staff well-being? Operational support. Teams with digital tools, automation, and clear role alignment report the highest satisfaction and retention. The message is clear: to keep staff engaged, institutions must reduce friction, eliminate paper-heavy workflows, and right-size their teams for sustainability.

Executive Summary

Operational Maturity Drives Outcomes →

Operational efficiency has become a strategic driver of success. Institutions that implement partial or full automation in billing, room assignments, and communications are achieving stronger staff satisfaction and resident outcomes. Paperless processes and proactive roommate matching save time, boost retention, elevate the resident experience, and build institutional resilience. Digital transformation is now a competitive advantage.

Institutions Must Look Beyond Campus Walls →

The traditional housing footprint no longer captures the full student journey. Off-campus transitions, international student needs, and rising competition from PBSA (Purpose-Built Student Accommodation) and co-living providers demand a more connected housing strategy. Yet, only 17% of institutions currently offer off-campus resourcing or solutions. As occupancy stabilizes and students explore external options, campuses must think bigger – integrating on- and off-campus housing, supporting transitional needs, and engaging global populations with flexible, inclusive solutions.

This thematic structure reflects the core pillars of a successful housing program; prioritizing resident satisfaction, empowering staff through efficient operations, and sustaining growth through strategic revenue management.

Together, these insights will provide a powerful view of where the industry stands today and where it's headed next.

The Student Experience is Evolving

Demand for privacy, mental health, and inclusive community is rising.

Here's what's changing:

Students expect more privacy, mental health support, and inclusive communities than ever before. As their expectations evolve, so must the housing environments and programs designed to support them.

- ✓ Privacy
- ✓ Mental Health Support
- ✓ Inclusive Communities

What it means for you:

Housing professionals have a growing opportunity - and responsibility - to align physical spaces, services, and programming with these rising priorities. Institutions that do this well are seeing measurable gains in satisfaction and retention.

Satisfaction Is the Signal, Retention Is the Result:

Why Evolving Student Expectations Matter More Than Ever

As the student experience evolves, so do the factors that influence whether students feel at home and whether they stay. The data shows that today's residents prioritize privacy, mental health support, and a strong sense of belonging. In response, housing teams are reevaluating how they measure satisfaction and adapt to shifting needs.

Satisfaction Is Still Strong, But the Bar Is Rising

In today's housing landscape, satisfaction is shaped by shifting student expectations around privacy, wellness, inclusion, and connection. While most institutions continue to deliver positive residential experiences, a year-over-year dip in satisfaction suggests that meeting these evolving needs is becoming more complex and more critical.

In 2025, 73.3% of institutions reported high resident satisfaction (75–100%), with over half falling into the 75–89% range. While this reflects a broadly positive experience, it also marks a 6.9-point drop from 2024, when satisfaction levels reached 80.2%.

Resident Satisfaction Rates in 2025

73.3% of institutions report high resident satisfaction (75–100%), continuing a positive sentiment trend.

- 90-100% Satisfaction Score
- 75-89% Satisfaction Score
- 50-74% Satisfaction Score
- 25-49% Satisfaction Score
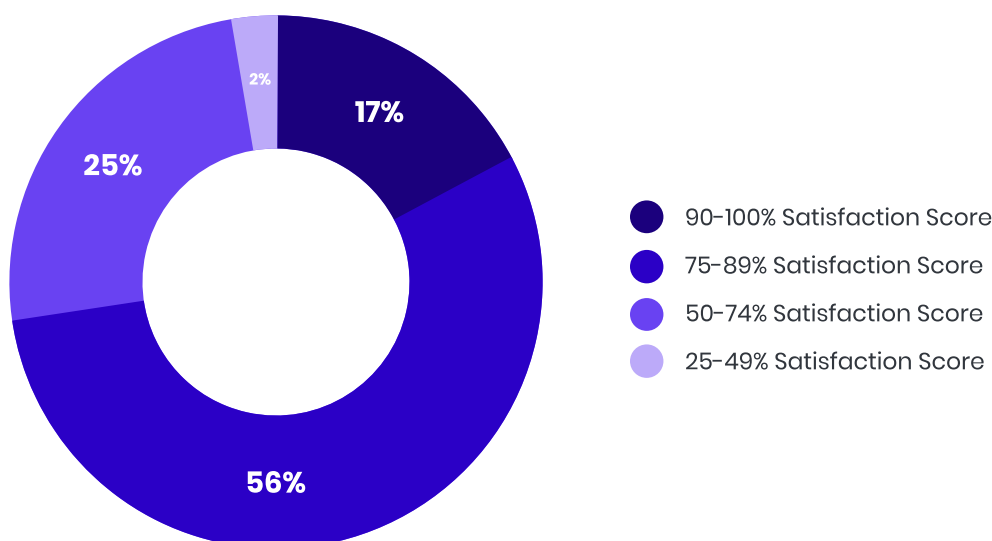
Resident Satisfaction Declines from 2024 to 2025

High satisfaction ratings dropped by 6.9 points from 80.2% in 2024 to 73.3% in 2025.

2024 Resident Satisfaction · 80.2%	
2025 Resident Satisfaction · 73.3%	

While small, this downward trend signals rising expectations that some institutions may be struggling to meet. As students seek more autonomy, support, and purpose from their living environments, even good isn't always good enough.

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Your Takeaway:

Dig into your resident satisfaction data to pinpoint where expectations aren't being met, whether it's privacy, mental health support, or a sense of community. Small, targeted improvements in areas like roommate matching, wellness programming, or LLC offerings can help close the gap and re-energize the resident experience.

It's Not Just Where They Live, It's How It Feels

As the student experience evolves, residents are placing greater value on how their environment supports both personal well-being and social connection.

> Satisfaction is shaped by how well physical spaces and community experiences work together to create a sense of home.

When asked what most influences resident satisfaction, institutions pointed to three leading factors: room conditions and furnishings, sense of community, and amenities. These aren't just perks, they're the foundations of a positive student living experience.
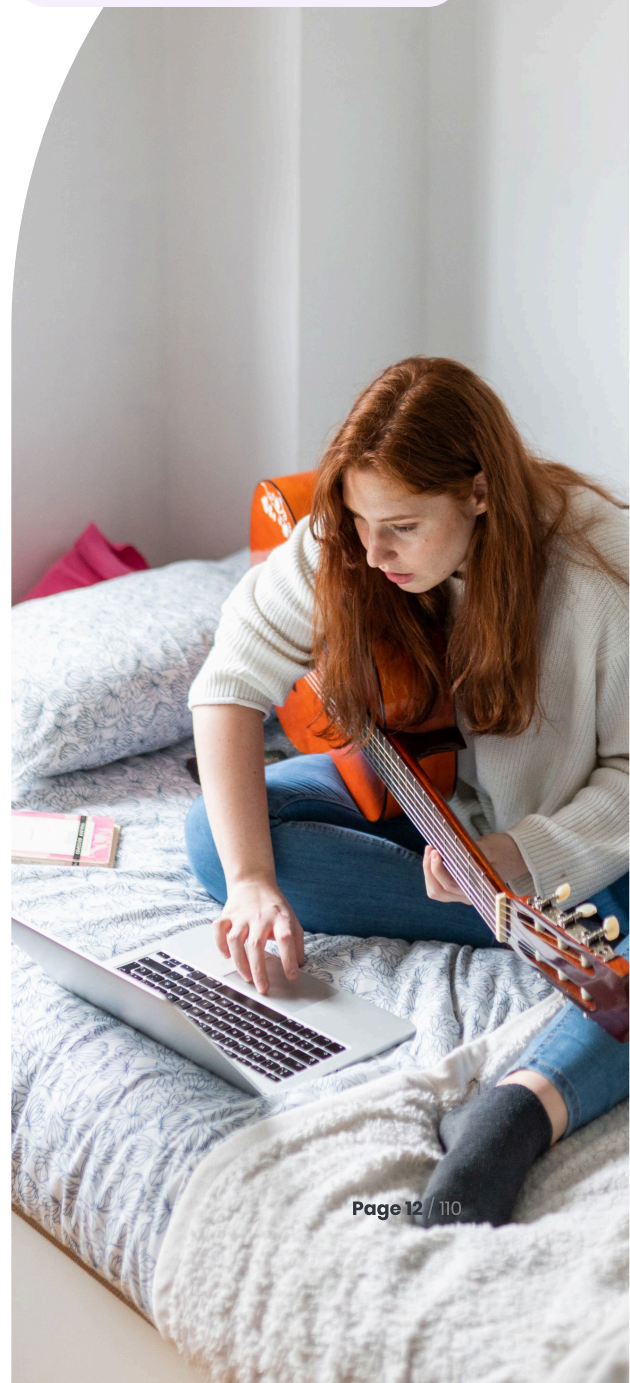
- ✓ Room Conditions & Furnishings
- ✓ Sense of Community
- ✓ Amenities

Exceed Expectations with StarRez Intelligence

StarRez Intelligence enhances resident engagement by enabling personalized communication at scale—matching students with tailored housing options, sending timely updates, and anticipating support needs before they arise.
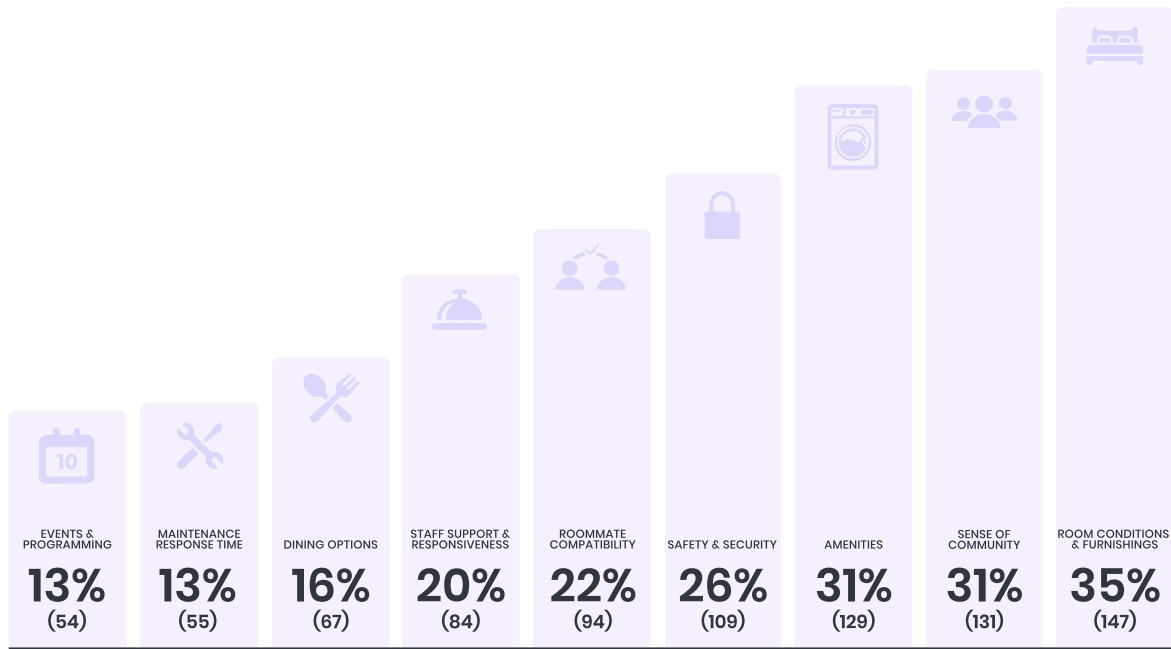
Learn More

Top 3 Drivers of Resident Satisfaction in 2025

Room quality, community, and amenities are the most influential factors shaping resident satisfaction, according to institutions.

EVENTS & PROGRAMMING	MAINTENANCE RESPONSE TIME	DINING OPTIONS	STAFF SUPPORT & RESPONSIVENESS	ROOMMATE COMPATIBILITY	SAFETY & SECURITY	AMENITIES	SENSE OF COMMUNITY	ROOM CONDITIONS & FURNISHINGS
13%	13%	16%	20%	22%	26%	31%	31%	35%
(54)	(55)	(67)	(84)	(94)	(109)	(129)	(131)	(147)

Today's residents expect housing that's not only functional but also comfortable, inclusive, and engaging. Clean, well-furnished rooms, vibrant social environments, and quality amenities are now baseline expectations, not bonuses.

Your Takeaway:

Prioritize updates that enhance both the individual living experience and the collective community feel. Invest in room upgrades, create spaces that spark connection, and ensure your amenities reflect what student value; wellness, identity, and inclusion.

Facilities, Finances, and Food: Essentials That Make or Break Experience

Today's students are more aware, more vocal, and less willing to compromise on the basics. The Association of College and University Housing Officers – International (ACUHO-I) highlights this shift, citing "growing resident expectations" as a key factor behind the development of their Core Curriculum.
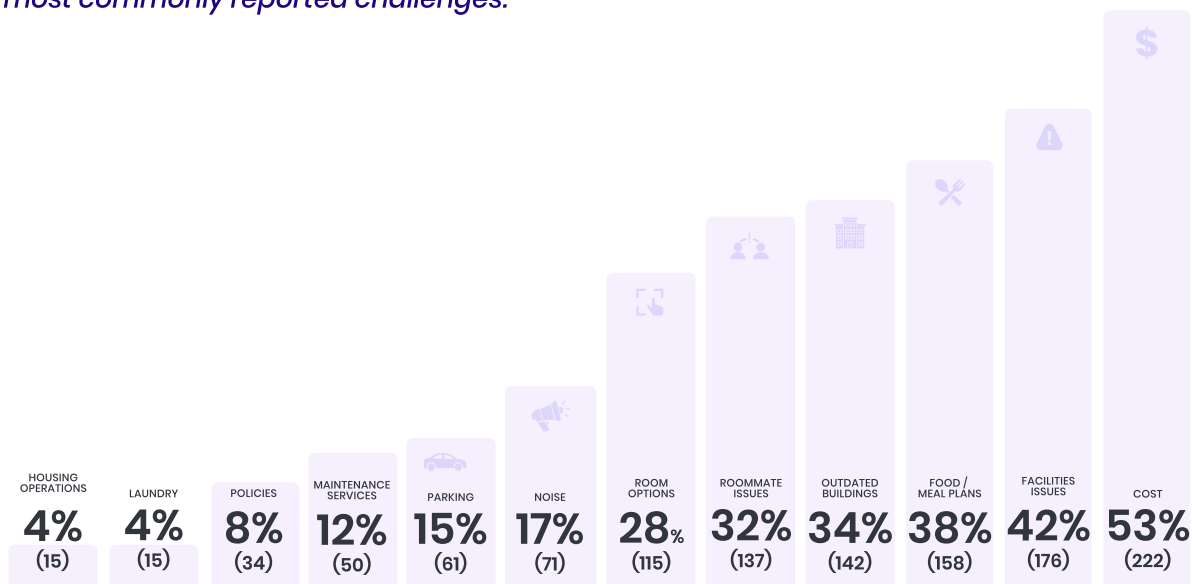
> From the condition of their space to the cost of living and the quality of their community, students are making one thing clear: meeting expectations is no longer enough, exceeding them is the new standard.

The top resident frustrations in our survey include cost (222 mentions), facilities issues (176), and food/meal plans (158). These concerns speak to foundational aspects of the student experience, and when they fall short, satisfaction and retention are at risk.

Top Resident Frustrations in 2025

Cost, facility-related issues, and dissatisfaction with food or meal plans were the most commonly reported challenges.

HOUSING OPERATIONS	LAUNDRY	POLICIES	MAINTENANCE SERVICES	PARKING	NOISE	ROOM OPTIONS	ROOMMATE ISSUES	OUTDATED BUILDINGS	FOOD / MEAL PLANS	FACILITIES ISSUES	COST
4%	4%	8%	12%	15%	17%	28%	32%	34%	38%	42%	53%
(15)	(15)	(34)	(50)	(61)	(71)	(115)	(137)	(142)	(158)	(176)	(222)

These pain points reveal a disconnect between rising expectations for quality, affordability, and comfort and the limitations of legacy housing infrastructure and support models. If left unaddressed, they can erode trust and push students to seek alternatives.

Your Takeaway:

Prioritize a strategic review of your most common service gaps. Focus investments on high-impact areas like facility upgrades, affordability messaging, and roommate compatibility tools. Even incremental improvements in these areas can make a measurable difference in satisfaction and signal to residents that their concerns are being heard.

Listening Is the First Step:

Why Tracking Satisfaction Matters More Than Ever

In an era where students expect housing to support their well-being, identity, and autonomy, understanding their lived experience is essential. Tracking resident satisfaction is how institutions stay aligned with what matters most.

71% of institutions report actively tracking resident satisfaction, showing a widespread commitment to improvement. But that leaves nearly 1 in 3 institutions without formal feedback mechanisms, risking blind spots in an increasingly experience-driven environment.

Most Institutions Actively Track Resident Satisfaction in 2025

71% of institutions report measuring resident satisfaction, highlighting a sector-wide focus on continuous improvement.

Tracks · 70.8%	Does not Track · 29.2%

Institutions that prioritize student voice through regular satisfaction tracking are better equipped to adapt and respond to rising expectations. For those not yet measuring resident sentiment, this represents a missed opportunity to surface challenges, build trust, and drive retention through meaningful change.

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Your Takeaway:

If you're not already tracking satisfaction, start now with tools that are quick, accessible, and student-centered. If you are, dig deeper: look for trends across demographics, room types, or LLC participation to shape more targeted strategies.

From Gut Feeling to Data-Driven:

*How Institutions Are Getting Smarter
About Student Feedback*

As students become more vocal about their needs for privacy, wellness, inclusion, and connection housing teams are shifting from informal feedback to more structured, actionable insights.

> Tracking resident satisfaction isn't just about checking a box, it's about staying in tune with what matters most in an evolving student experience.

Between 2024 and 2025, the use of formal surveys jumped from 46% to 64%, signaling a clear move toward quantitative, systematic feedback collection. At the same time, reliance on word-of-mouth dropped sharply (from 27% to 15%), showing that institutions are phasing out anecdotal approaches in favor of consistent, scalable data.

Comparison of Resident Satisfaction Measurement Methods: 2024 vs 2025

Use of formal surveys rose from 46% in 2024 to 64% in 2025, reflecting a growing emphasis on structured feedback.

	2024	2025
Surveys	46%	64%
Word-of-Mouth	27%	15%
RA Records	19%	17%
Other	4%	4%
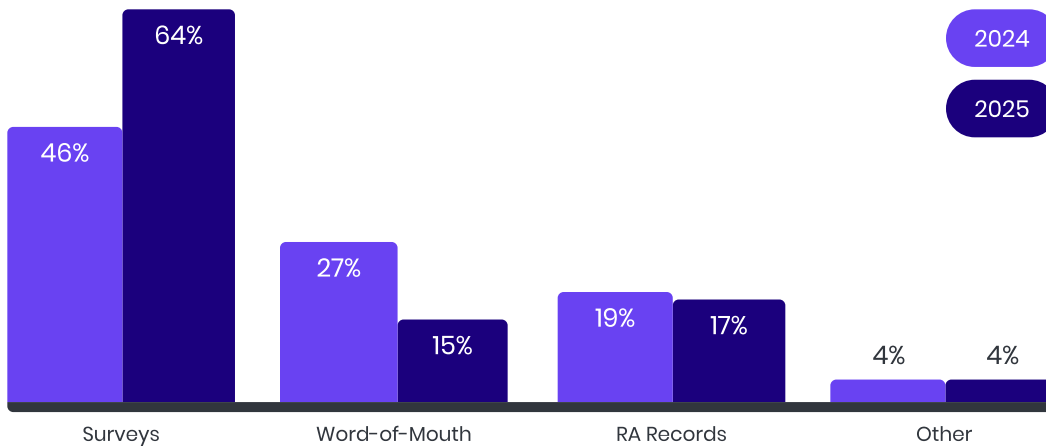
Today's students expect to be heard, and institutions are responding with more intentional, data-driven strategies. Surveys are becoming the preferred method to capture resident sentiment, helping housing teams move from assumption to insight.

Your Takeaway:

Invest in modern, mobile-friendly survey tools that meet students where they are. Use the data to identify trends, close gaps, and build programs and spaces that reflect what students are truly asking for. Listening is powerful, but acting on what you learn is where transformation begins.
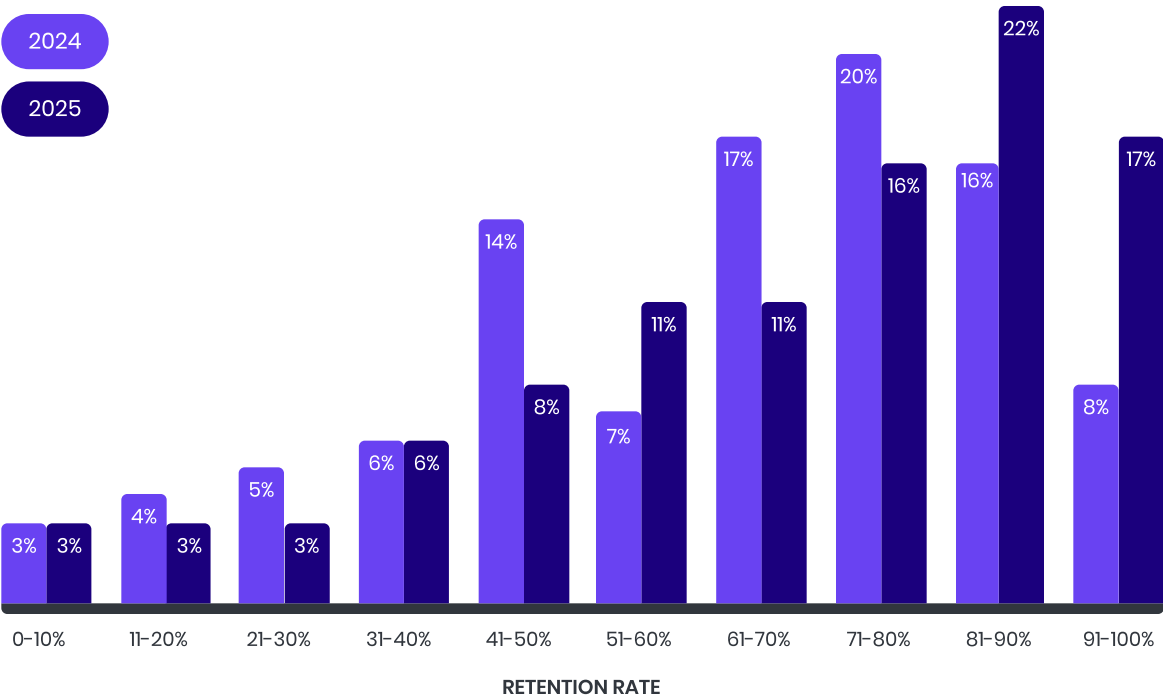
More Students Are Staying:

A Win for Thoughtful Housing Strategies

As housing teams place greater focus on student well-being and engagement, the results are starting to show as resident retention is rising.

This year, percentage of institutions reporting very high retention (91–100%) more than doubled, jumping from 8% in 2024 to 17% in 2025. Retention rates in the 81–90% range also increased, from 16% to 22%. Meanwhile, mid-range retention (41–70%) dropped significantly, suggesting many institutions are climbing the performance ladder.

Resident Retention Rates Improve in 2025

Institutions reporting very high housing retention (91–100%) more than doubled from 8% in 2024 to 17% in 2025.

| Retention Rate	2024	2025
0–10%	3%	3%
11–20%	4%	3%
21–30%	5%	3%
31–40%	6%	6%
41–50%	14%	8%
51–60%	7%	11%
61–70%	17%	11%
71–80%	20%	16%
81–90%	16%	22%
91–100%	8%	17%

RETENTION RATE

As we previously covered, resident satisfaction declined from 80.2% in 2024 to 73.3% in 2025. Yet during that same period, retention improved significantly, with the number of institutions reporting 91–100% retention jumping from 8% to 17%. While this might seem contradictory at first glance, the data suggests that targeted improvements in high-impact areas like Living Learning Communities (LLCs), mental health support, and residential fit are driving retention gains. These efforts appear to be moving the needle on student success and persistence, even as broader satisfaction scores face pressure from systemic challenges.

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Your Takeaway:

Rising retention is a strong signal that evolving housing strategies such as increased mental health resources, engaging programming, and better residential alignment are paying off. Focus on identifying which student needs are most strongly tied to staying power on your own campus. Use retention data as a diagnostic tool: track shifts over time, connect them to changes in housing services or amenities, and involve students in feedback loops to understand what's helping them stay, succeed, and thrive in your community.
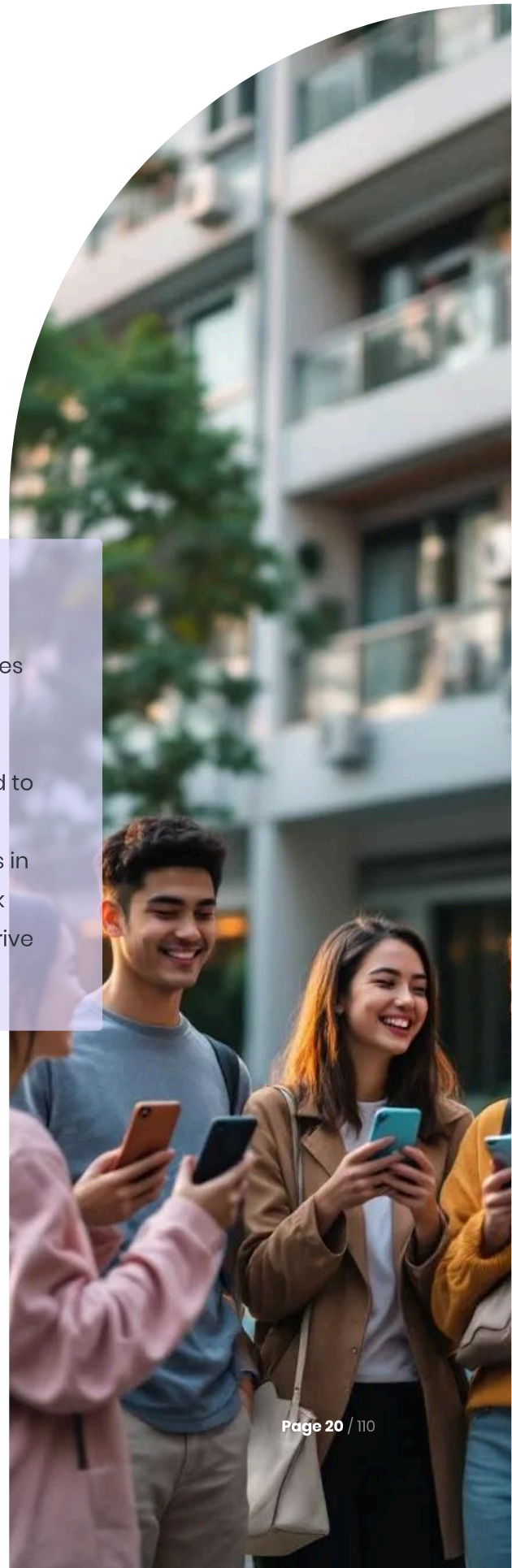
Independence is the New Expectation:

How Housing Preferences Reflect a Changing Student Experience

Students today are redefining what it means to "live on campus." Gone are the days when shared bedrooms and communal bathrooms were the norm. Data from this year's survey shows that Apartment-Style housing is the most requested option at 70% of institutions, and a significant portion of students now rank single rooms as their top housing preference.

> This shift signals more than just a desire for privacy; it reflects a broader evolution in the student experience.

Today's residents value autonomy, personal space, and environments that mirror real-world adult living. They are looking for housing that supports mental wellness, academic focus, and a greater sense of control over their daily lives. For housing teams, this is a call to action: meet students where they are by designing spaces that feel less like dorms and more like home.
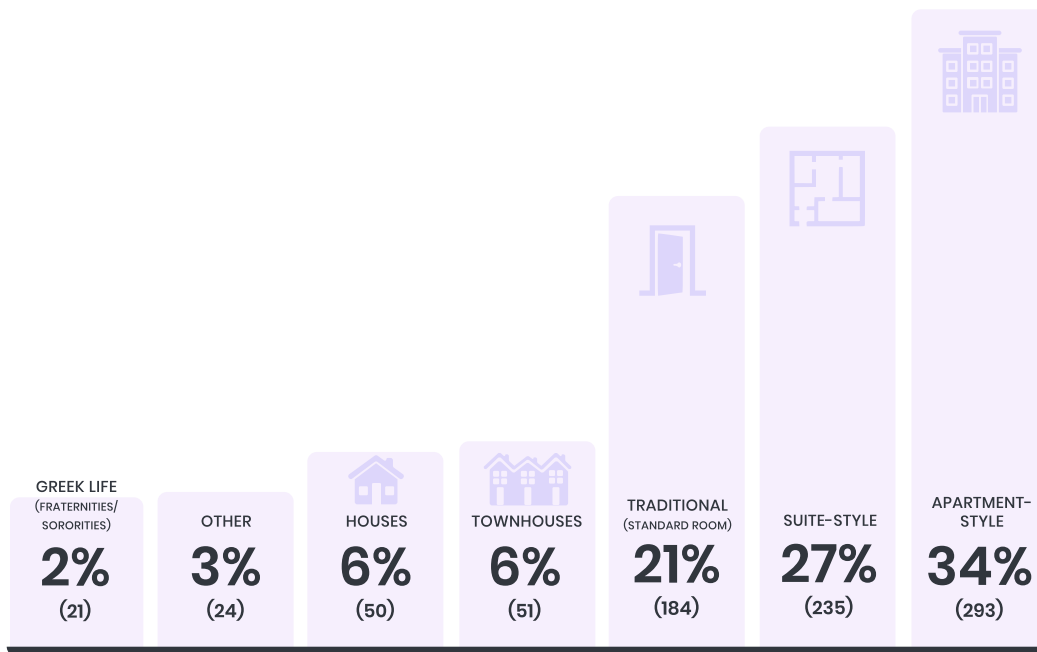
Apartment-Style Housing Tops Student Wishlists

Last year, institutions told us what types of housing they offered. Traditional residence halls topped the list, with apartment and suite-style options close behind. But this year, we went further to examine what students actually want. The answer is clear, apartment-style housing leads student demand by a wide margin, signaling that privacy, independence, and in-unit amenities are what students today are looking for. The era of standardized dorm living is fading. They want personalized spaces that mirror adult life and support their well-being.

Apartment-Style Housing Tops Student Preferences in 2025

Apartment-style options are by far the most requested housing type among students, outpacing all other styles.

GREEK LIFE (FRATERNITIES/ SORORITIES)	OTHER	HOUSES	TOWNHOUSES	TRADITIONAL (STANDARD ROOM)	SUITE-STYLE	APARTMENT-STYLE
2%	3%	6%	6%	21%	27%	34%
(21)	(24)	(50)	(51)	(184)	(235)	(293)

Students are demonstrating a clear preference for spaces that feel like home. Full kitchens, private bedrooms, and semi-independent layouts are increasingly seen as essential, not optional. This shift in preferences reflects a maturing student mindset and a desire for environments that match their growing autonomy.

Your Takeaway:

Take a hard look at your housing mix. If traditional halls still dominate, consider phased renovations or the addition of suite/ apartment-style units. Prioritize layouts that support privacy and functionality without sacrificing opportunities for connection.

Privacy is Personal:

The Rising Demand for Single Rooms

Today's students are navigating academic pressure, social dynamics, and mental health challenges in new ways - and where they live plays a major role in how they cope. Privacy isn't just a preference, it's part of how students manage stress, recharge, and feel safe. The student experience is shifting, and housing must shift with it.

51% of institutions report that more than half of their applicants now prefer single rooms, while another large group (28% of institutions) sees moderate demand in the 26-50% range. Preferences are trending toward solitude.

Rising Demand for Single Rooms in 2025
51% of institutions say over half of their applicants now list single rooms as their top housing choice.

Legend:
- More than 75%
- 51-75%
- 26-50%
- 10-25%
- Less than 10%

Chart values: 28%, 23%, 28%, 16%, 5%
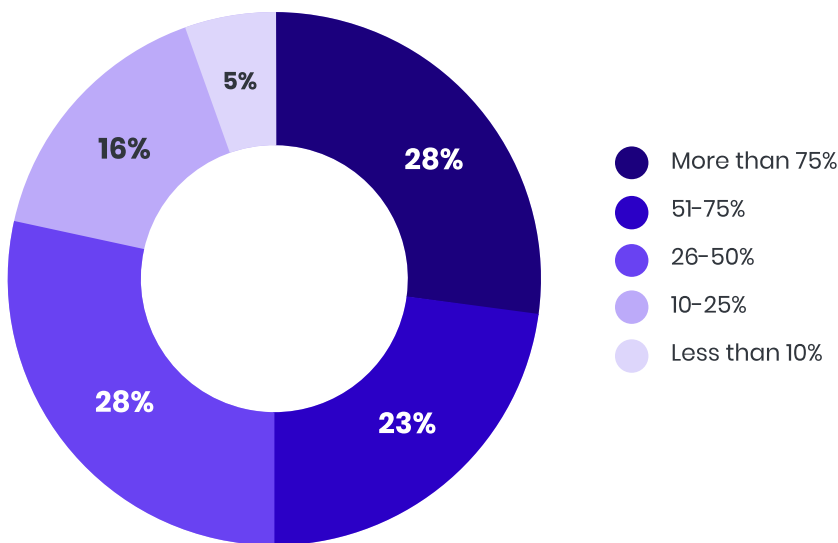
This wide variance reflects diverging student needs. For some, shared spaces are energizing, but for others, they're overwhelming. Institutions risk mismatches - and potential mental health strain - if their housing mix doesn't reflect these evolving preferences.

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Your Takeaway:

Start with a housing preference and technology audit. If demand for single rooms or suite-style privacy is rising, look for flexible design or assignment solutions that align with student expectations—even within existing inventory. At the same time, assess your tech stack for opportunities to streamline systems and better support wellness, autonomy, and a personalized housing experience. Small shifts in layout, policy, or platforms can make a big impact.

Belonging by Design:

Why Resident Programs, Events, and LLCs Are the Heart of the Student Experience

Students today want more than a place to sleep - they want a place to belong. Data shows that the most well-attended programs in student housing are social events and recreational activities, underscoring a growing need for connection, stress relief, and community. But students also seek deeper, purpose-driven experiences, which is reflected in the rising popularity of academic and identity-based Living Learning Communities (LLCs).

These initiatives aren't just programming - they're scaffolding for success. As students navigate complex academic, social, and emotional landscapes, they gravitate toward environments that feel inclusive, aligned with their values, and designed to help them grow. Housing teams that prioritize intentional, student-centered programming and LLCs are redefining what a "residential experience" really means, and gaining ground on satisfaction, engagement, and retention as a result.

Connection is the Catalyst:

Why Social Programming Still Leads Student Engagement

Students today are under pressure - academically, emotionally, and socially. In this environment, connection isn't just a nice-to-have, it's essential. The student experience is shifting toward one that prioritizes community, connection, and well-being. Resident programs must meet students where they are: seeking safe spaces to belong, unwind, and recharge.

When asked which events draw the highest attendance, 90% of institutions named social events - by far the top choice. Recreational activities also perform strongly, while wellness and cultural programs follow. Educational and career events consistently draw smaller crowds, suggesting that students are more likely to engage when programs offer relaxation, fun, and a sense of community. This highlights the need to build connection first, then layer in learning and development.
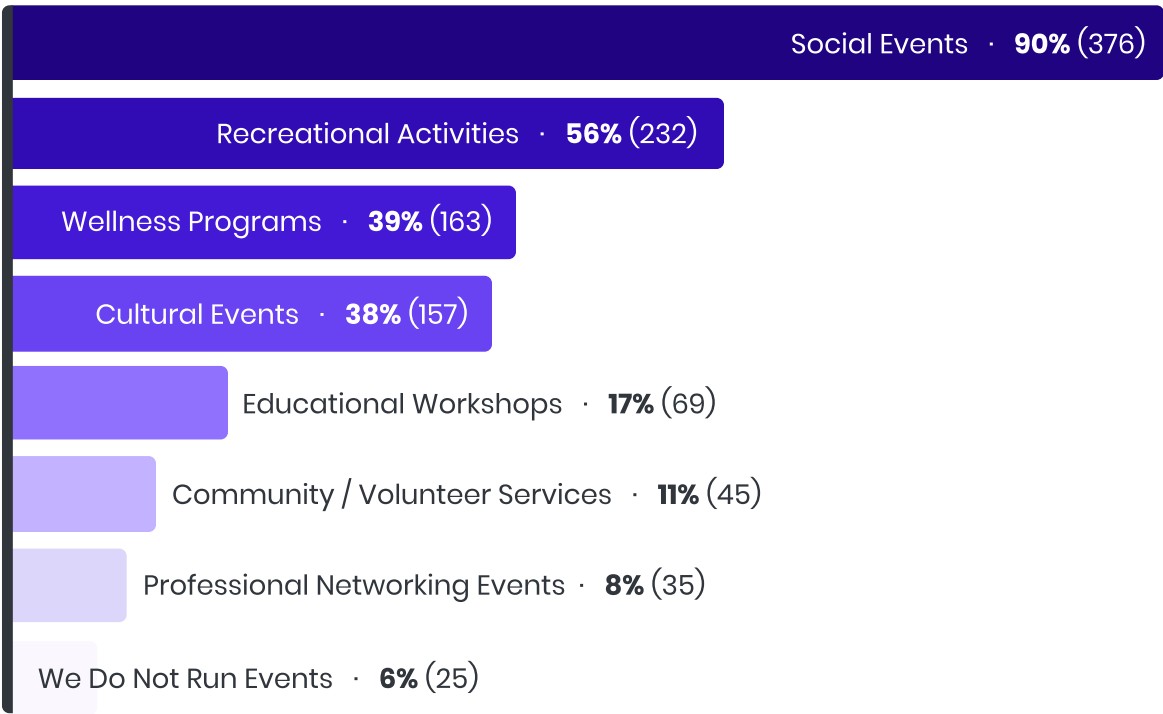
SACRAMENTO STATE

Innovative Community Management
Discover how Sacramento State University used strategic programming to build a stronger, more connected residential community. From a range of different types of events to intentional engagement, they're redefining what student connection looks like.

Read the full story on starrez.com.

Social Events Dominate Resident Programming in 2025

90% of institutions identified social events as their most popular or well-attended programs.

Social Events · **90%** (376)

Recreational Activities · **56%** (232)

Wellness Programs · **39%** (163)

Cultural Events · **38%** (157)

Educational Workshops · **17%** (69)

Community / Volunteer Services · **11%** (45)

Professional Networking Events · **8%** (35)

We Do Not Run Events · **6%** (25)

"The [StarRez] programming feature has been really great for staff, for residents, for getting a fuller picture of resident engagement."
– ADAM DOWRIE, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR FOR ORGANIZATION AND PLANNING AT SACRAMENTO STATE

It's clear that students are looking for relief from stress and opportunities for meaningful connection. Events that are overly formal, academic, or career-focused may miss the mark unless they also foster personal connection or emotional safety.

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Your Takeaway:

Design your event calendar around what matters most to students now: belonging, well-being, and connection. Prioritize high-energy, low-pressure events - and look for ways to blend social connection with wellness or academic support. A trivia night can also be a study session. A paint-and-sip can also open doors to mental health conversations.

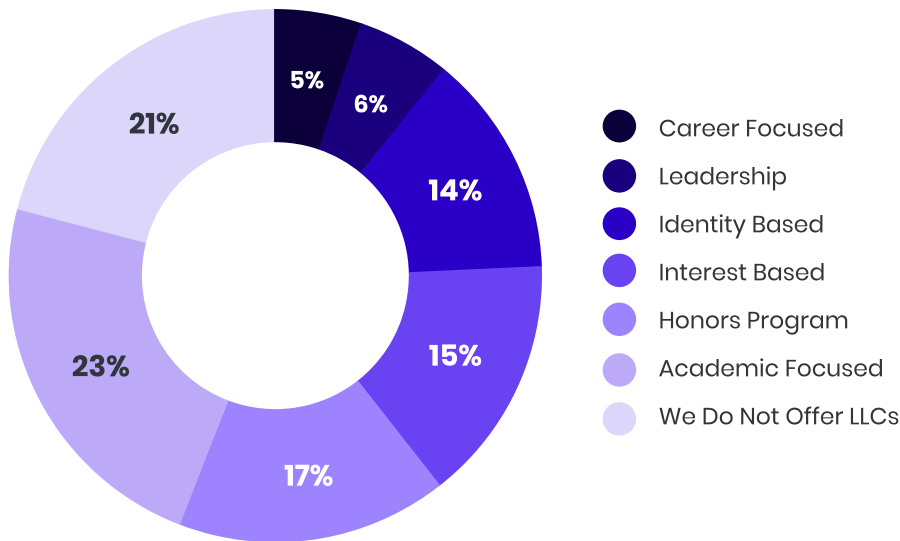## Students Want Purpose and Belonging Where They Live

As the student experience evolves, residents are increasingly drawn to communities that align with their academic goals, identities, and passions. Living Learning Communities (LLCs) are strategic levers for improving belonging, academic engagement, and overall well-being.

And the data backs it up: 23% of institutions say academic-focused LLCs are their most popular, reflecting strong demand for intellectually enriching environments. Identity-based LLCs are also gaining traction, offering safe spaces for students to connect around shared backgrounds and values. Meanwhile, only 21% of institutions report not offering any LLCs at all, signaling that these programs are becoming standard practice, not just special initiatives.
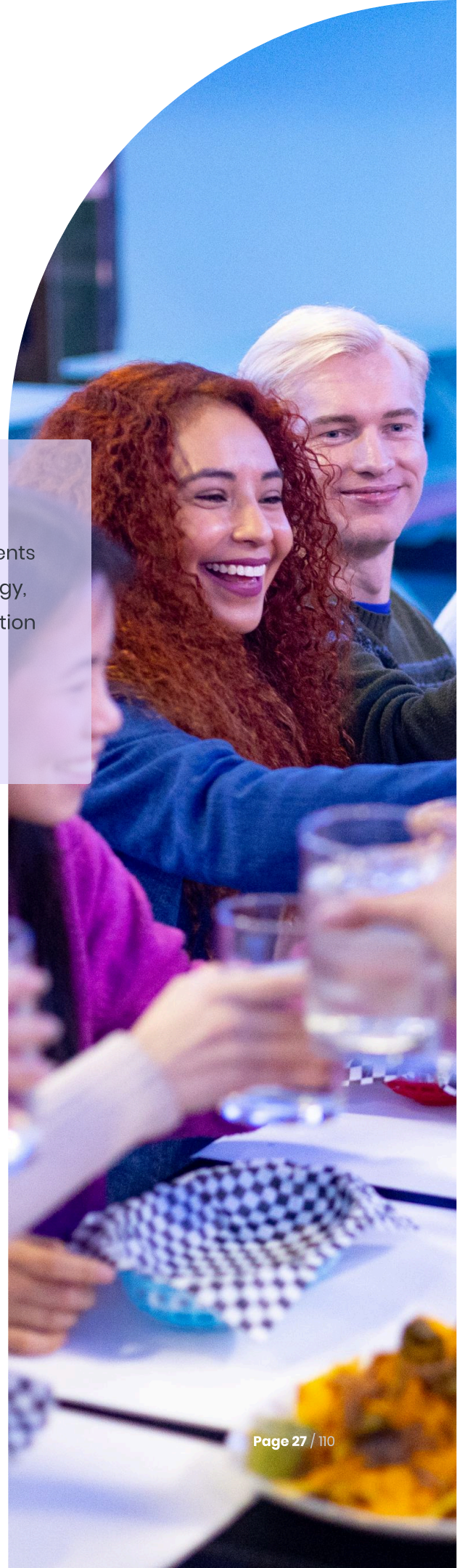
Academic-Focused LLCs Lead in Popularity in 2025

23% of institutions report academic-themed Living Learning Communities as the most requested among students.

Legend:
- Career Focused
- Leadership
- Identity Based
- Interest Based
- Honors Program
- Academic Focused
- We Do Not Offer LLCs

Chart values: 5%, 6%, 14%, 15%, 17%, 23%, 21%

Academic and identity-based LLCs provide the structure, support, and shared purpose today's students crave. Institutions that invest in these communities are better equipped to support retention and success goals amidst the growing expectations of modern residents.

Your Takeaway:

Design or expand LLCs that align with your institution's academic strengths and student identities. Focus on creating communities where residents can pursue intellectual growth and feel a deep sense of belonging. Prioritize collaborations between housing, academic affairs, and DEI offices to launch LLCs that support both retention and inclusive experiences.

LLCs Are Strategic Drivers of Retention

We were curious if institutions that offer popular Living Learning Communities report higher resident satisfaction. According to the survey data, approximately 74% of institutions that offer LLCs report that over 75% of their residents are highly satisfied.

Want to dive deeper into what makes LLCs so impactful?

Check out our blog What Makes a Successful Living Learning Community? for practical tips and strategies to build communities that boost satisfaction, connection, and retention.

LLCs Linked to Higher Resident Satisfaction in 2025

74% of institutions with Living Learning Communities report high satisfaction levels among more than 75% of their residents.

>75% Resident Satisfaction · 74.2%	<75% Res Satisfaction · 25.8%

The finding that 74.2% of institutions offering Living Learning Communities (LLCs) report over 75% resident satisfaction reinforces the idea that LLCs are strategic drivers of retention. These communities support student needs and expectations by integrating academics, wellness, and community - offering a more holistic and personalized housing experience. As students increasingly seek privacy, mental health support, and thoughtfully designed spaces, LLCs are emerging as a compelling solution, helping institutions meet demand while fostering a sense of belonging that is critical to both retention and overall student success.

When Housing Doesn't Fit:

What Room Change Requests Reveal About Today's Students

The student experience is evolving - and with it, so are student expectations of where and how they live. Room change requests are signals. Whether driven by a need for privacy, conflict with roommates, or a lack of belonging, these requests offer a window into how well housing assignments align with the emotional, social, and personal needs of today's residents. By examining the frequency of requests and how institutions manage them, we gain critical insight into satisfaction gaps, shifting preferences, and the operational flexibility needed to support student well-being.

Reducing Room Changes Starts with Getting Assignments Right

Room change requests are often a sign that something isn't quite working - whether it's a mismatch in roommate compatibility, unmet expectations around privacy, or a lack of connection to the residential community. As the student experience evolves, minimizing these disruptions is key to supporting stability, satisfaction, and mental well-being.

While 41% of institutions report fewer than 10% of residents request room changes, a larger group (53%) fall into the 10%+ range, where requests are more frequent.

Room Change Requests Rise for Many Institutions in 2025

53% of institutions report that more than 10% of their residents submitted room change requests last year.

Legend:
- 51-75%
- 26-50%
- 10-25%
- Less than 10%
- Not Sure / Not Collected

Chart values: 8%, 41%, 44%, 7%
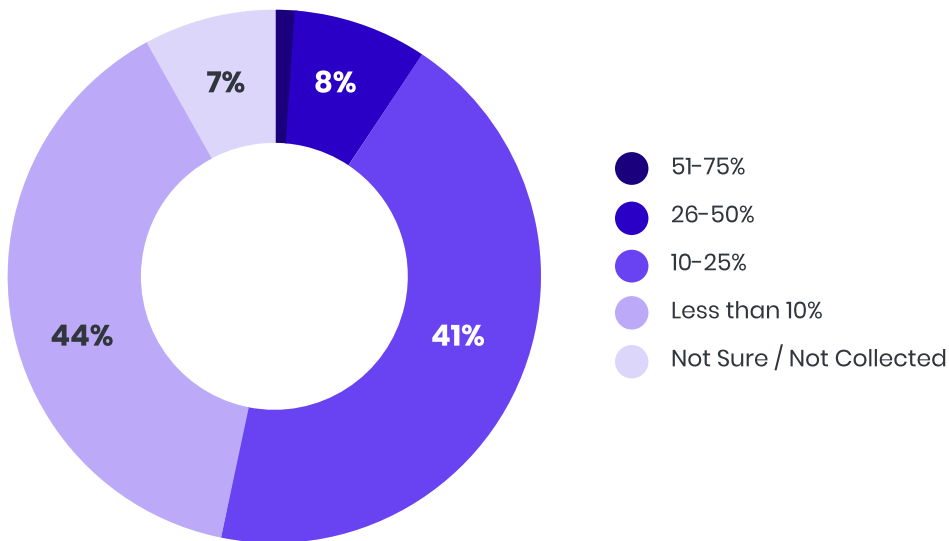
Institutions that consistently keep room change requests under 10% may be benefiting from strong roommate matching, clear expectation-setting, or housing options that better align with student needs. Those with higher rates might be facing friction due to limited privacy options, inconsistent onboarding, or a lack of support when issues arise.

💡

Your Takeaway:

Empower residents with tools that put them at the center of the experience. Use preference-based roommate matching and self-selection to help students start in the right place, and support them with online room swap options to make changes easy when circumstances shift. When students feel more in control, it reduces stress, builds trust, and leads to better long-term housing satisfaction.

Digital by Default:

*How Students Expect Room
Changes to Be Managed*

As student expectations evolve, so too must the way institutions respond to housing concerns.

> Today's residents expect quick, transparent, and accessible processes, especially when something as personal as their living situation is on the line.

The method by which room changes are handled isn't just operational; it's part of the student experience.

A majority of institutions (57%) now manage room change requests through online systems as opposed to manual processes, reflecting a clear move toward tech-enabled, student-friendly workflows. However, 24% of institutions still rely on in-person requests and 8% use paper-based systems, indicating that some campuses have yet to modernize this critical touchpoint.

UTSA.

**See streamlined room change management in action.**
Learn how UT San Antonio transformed their housing operations with a digital-first approach that puts student needs first.

Read the full story on starrez.com.

"

Room swaps [in StarRez] put the ownership on the students and frees us up to focus on escalated issues like ADA accommodations or urgent roommate conflicts... We've seen a complete shift in student expectations. They don't need to reach out to us with every concern. They go to the portal first, and they know how to make it work."

– BAILEY FARMER, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF HOUSING ADMINISTRATION,
THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT SAN ANTONIO

Room Change Requests Go Digital in 2025

57% of institutions now use online systems to manage room change requests, though a quarter still rely on in-person methods and 8% use paper forms.

- 24% In-Person
- 57% An Online System
- 8% Physical Paper Forms
- 11% Other
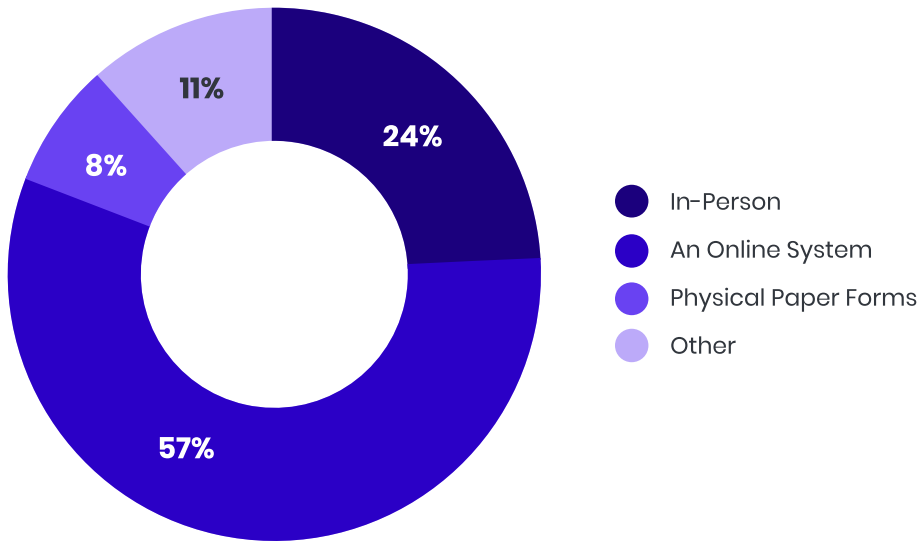
Students increasingly expect frictionless digital experiences across all aspects of campus life, including housing. Institutions that still rely on outdated or manual methods may be unintentionally adding stress to already frustrated residents.

💡

Your Takeaway:

If your room change process still requires paper forms or in-person appointments, it's time to rethink the experience. Upgrade to a self-service, digital system that empowers students, improves turnaround time, and frees up staff to focus on proactive support - not paperwork.

Beyond Compliance:
Building a Student Experience That Cares

Today's students expect more than a roof over their heads; they expect to be seen, supported, and included. As the student experience evolves, so too does the definition of what makes a residential community truly livable.

Accessibility, accommodations, and wellness are core to how students evaluate the quality and care of their housing experience. From the rise in Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) to growing demand for gender-inclusive housing and mental health support, institutions are being called to rethink what support looks like on campus. The data shows a clear trend: campuses that proactively invest in responsive living environments are better positioned to meet the diverse needs of today's residents and keep them engaged, healthy, and on track for success.

Accessibility Requests Are Low, But Expectations for Inclusive Housing Are Rising

As campuses become more diverse and student needs more nuanced, accessibility is becoming a central pillar of the residential experience. Even if accommodation requests appear low, expectations for proactive support are on the rise.

60% of institutions report that fewer than 10% of their housing requests involve accessibility accommodations. However, 25% report moderate demand (10–25%), and another 8% handle higher accommodation volumes (26–75%) revealing that while high demand isn't widespread, it's significant enough to require system-level readiness.

Disability Accommodation Requests Remain Moderate but Meaningful in 2025

While 60% of institutions report low request volume (<10%), over one-third handle moderate to high levels, highlighting the need for adaptable housing systems.
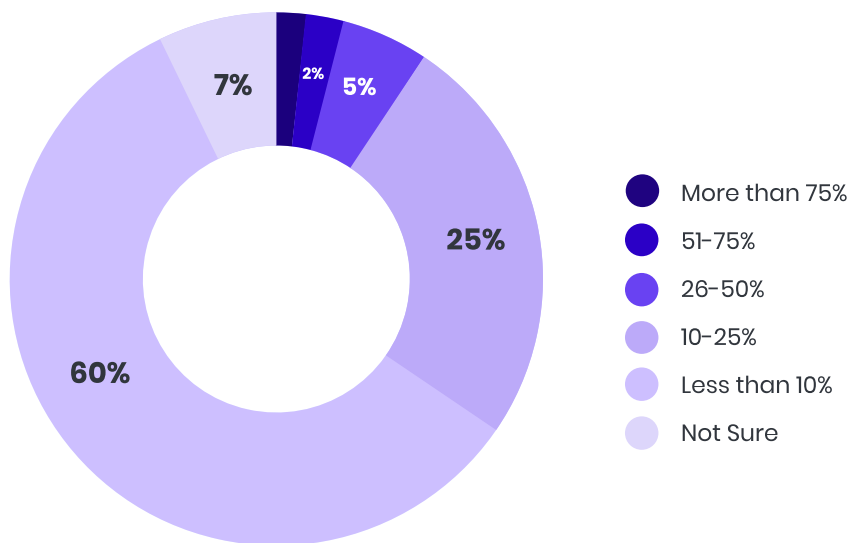
GONZAGA
U N I V E R S I T Y

Looking to improve your accommodation process?
See how Gonzaga University built a more transparent and resident-friendly system for managing approved accommodations.

Read the full story on starrez.com.

- 2%
- 5%
- 7%
- 25%
- 60%

● More than 75%
● 51–75%
● 26–50%
● 10–25%
● Less than 10%
● Not Sure

Low reported numbers don't necessarily mean low need. Gaps in awareness, inconsistent data collection, or stigma around requesting accommodations could be masking demand. And as mental health and neurodiversity enter the accessibility conversation, housing teams will need to broaden both their definitions and their offerings.

💡

Your Takeaway:
Audit your accessibility support, not just in terms of physical space, but in policies, communication, and proactive outreach. Ensure students know their options and feel safe asking for what they need. Build flexible systems that can adapt to rising or latent demand and design with inclusion in mind from the start.

Emotional Support Animals Are on the Rise, And So Is the Need for Mental Health-Responsive Housing

Emotional Support Animals (ESAs) are becoming a more common part of campus life. In just one year, the number of institutions reporting only 1–2% ESA presence fell significantly, while those seeing 3–10% or more nearly doubled.

For the first time, some campuses report ESA populations exceeding 10%.

> This trend points to a broader shift: students are increasingly seeking out emotional and mental health accommodations as part of their residential experience.

For housing teams, this means rethinking policies, training, and support systems to ensure that both students and staff are equipped to navigate the complexities that come with a more emotionally diverse resident population.

Navigating the rise of Emotional Support Animals?

Explore how campuses are adapting policies, facilities, and support systems to meet growing ESA demand.

Read the full blog on starrez.com.

> "
> Housing selection looks identical for all students, but it's set up to support students with accommodation requests. We strive to give those students the same online experience."
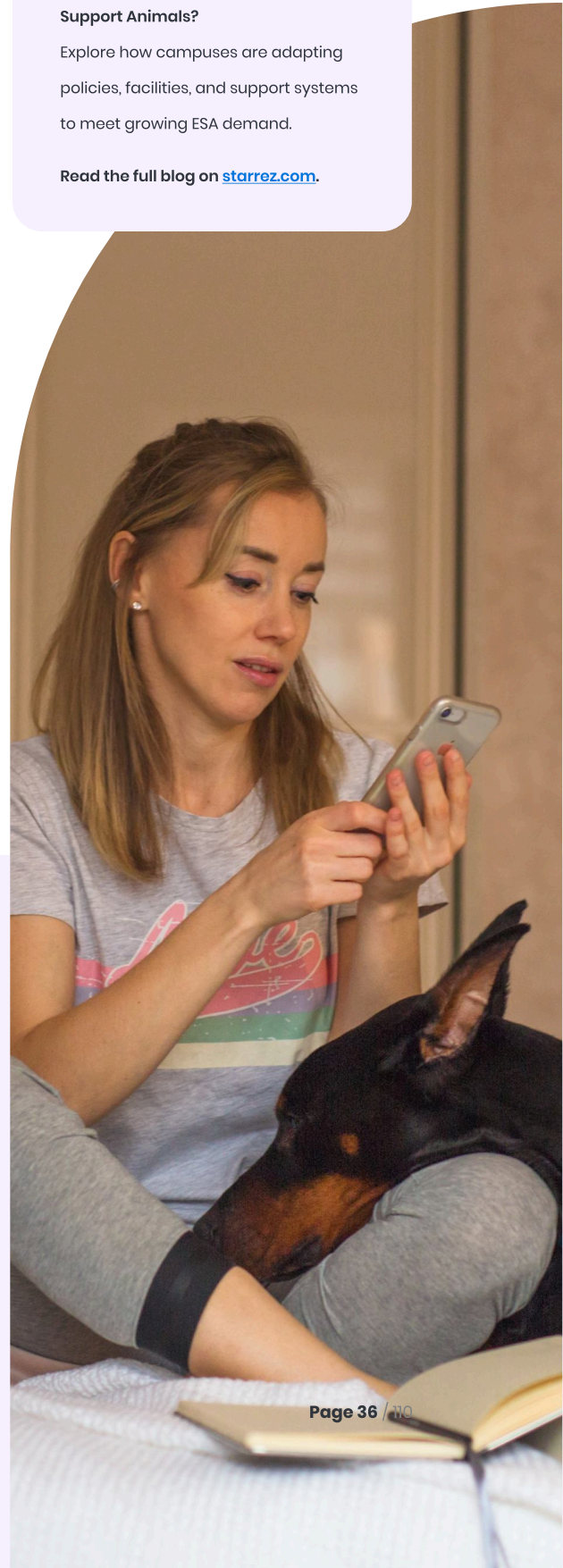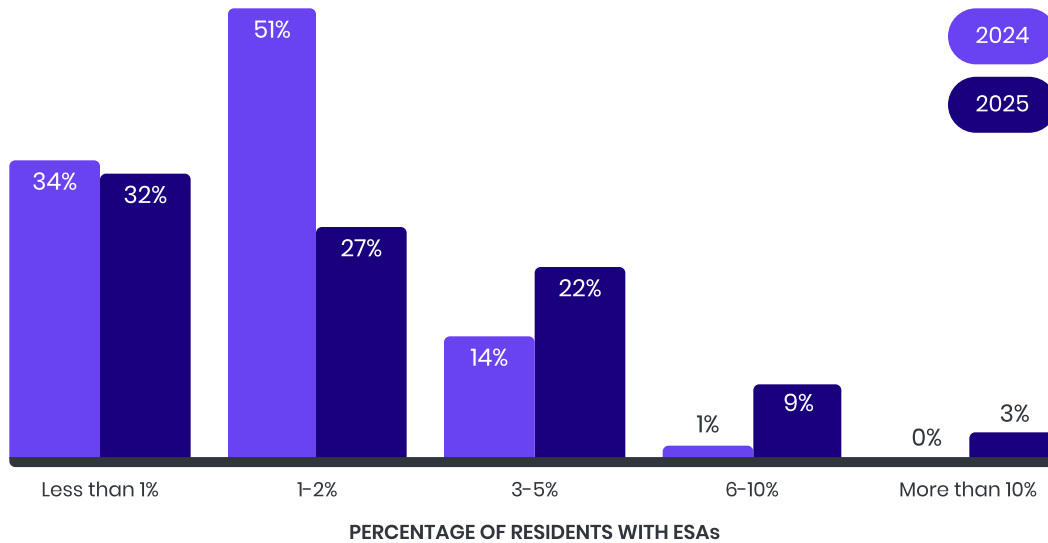>
> – LISA OWENS, ASSOCIATE DIRECTOR, GONZAGA UNIVERSITY

Emotional Support Animal (ESA) Presence Grows in 2025

Institutions reporting 3–10% or more of residents with ESAs nearly doubled, while low-reporting institutions (1–2%) declined sharply.

Legend: 2024, 2025

Percentage of residents with ESAs	2024	2025
Less than 1%	34%	32%
1-2%	51%	27%
3-5%	14%	22%
6-10%	1%	9%
More than 10%	0%	3%

PERCENTAGE OF RESIDENTS WITH ESAs

As ESA numbers climb, institutions must consider the broader implications: policies, housing assignments, training, and facilities all need to adapt. The trend also highlights a larger cultural shift: students expect their living environments to accommodate their emotional wellness as much as their physical comfort.

Your Takeaway:

Review your ESA policy framework and operational readiness. Are your teams trained? Are your spaces adaptable? Build processes that support mental health without friction, and communicate clearly with residents to reduce confusion. Just as important, leverage a configurable platform that allows you to track approvals, streamline assignments, and access real-time data. Tools like advanced search and reporting can be invaluable in critical moments, whether it's locating a lost animal or ensuring care for an ESA when a student unexpectedly takes medical leave. The right system can turn policy into practice with empathy, speed, and clarity.

Gender-Inclusive Housing Holds Steady, But Growth Has Slowed

As campuses continue to navigate how best to serve a diverse student population, gender-inclusive housing remains one approach that some institutions have adopted to support flexibility and inclusion. However, this year's data indicates that momentum in expanding these offerings has slowed.

From 2024 to 2025, the percentage of institutions offering gender-inclusive housing dipped slightly from 73% to 69%,

while those not offering it rose from 23% to 26%. The percentage of institutions in the process of implementing gender-inclusive housing held steady, with a small increase from 4% to 5%.

BOSTON UNIVERSITY

See inclusive housing in action.

Learn how Boston University built a gender-affirming housing process that prioritizes safety, identity, and student choice.

Read the full story on starrez.com.

Slight Decline in Gender-Inclusive Housing Offerings: 2024 vs 2025

The percentage of institutions offering gender-inclusive housing dropped from 73% in 2024 to 69% in 2025.

73%
69%
23%
26%
4%
5%

2024
2025

Available
Not Available
Currently Implementing

GENDER INCLUSIVE HOUSING AVAILABILITY
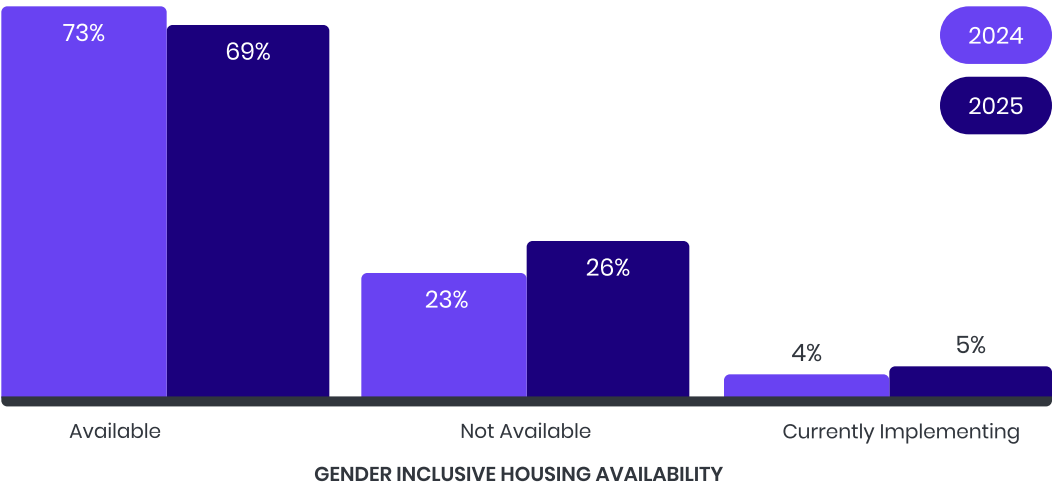
Every student has different needs. And part of that is figuring out how StarRez can help us support those students in navigating a complicated process."

– TOM AMOS, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF ASSIGNMENTS AND TERRIER CARD OFFICE AT BOSTON UNIVERSITY

These shifts may reflect changing institutional priorities, resource limitations, or evolving policy landscapes.

💡

Your Takeaway:

Whether your institution currently offers gender-inclusive housing or is exploring future options, managing these assignments effectively requires adaptable systems. Platforms like StarRez can help operationalize a variety of room assignment models, supporting transparency, preference tracking, and communication, regardless of the housing framework your institution adopts.

Wellness Is the Priority, And Students Are Asking for More Than Just Events
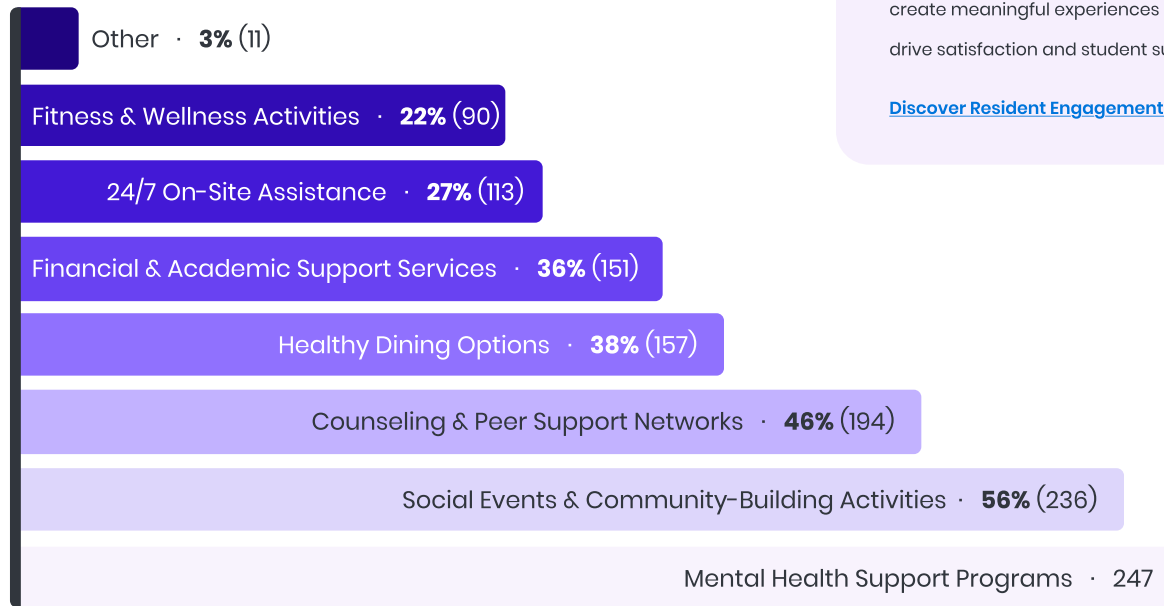
Students are navigating college life with heightened levels of stress, anxiety, and isolation – and they're no longer quietly coping. Wellness has become central to the student experience, not a bonus. In our survey, the top resident requests included mental health support programs (247 responses), community-building activities (236), and peer counseling networks (194), underscoring a clear call for both emotional support and meaningful connection. Institutions that embed wellness into residential life – not as an add-on, but as a foundation – will be better equipped to meet rising expectations and improve overall satisfaction.
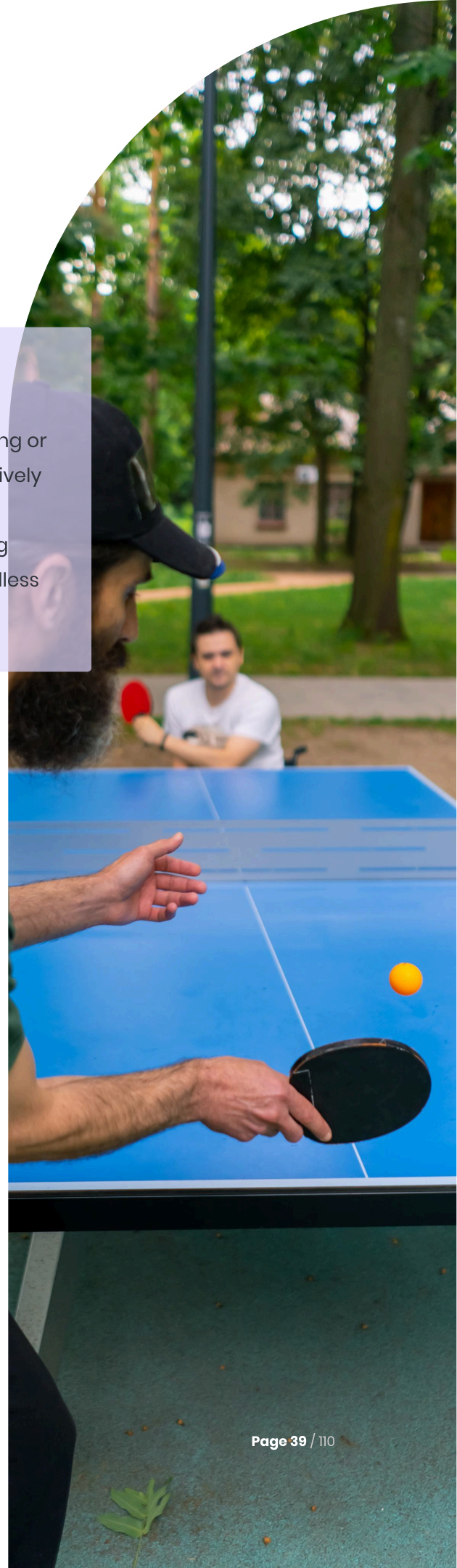
Top Wellness Initiatives Requested by Residents in 2025

Mental health programs, community-building events, and peer counseling networks lead resident requests, highlighting a strong need for emotional and social support.

Other · **3%** (11)

Fitness & Wellness Activities · **22%** (90)

24/7 On-Site Assistance · **27%** (113)

Financial & Academic Support Services · **36%** (151)

Healthy Dining Options · **38%** (157)

Counseling & Peer Support Networks · **46%** (194)

Social Events & Community-Building Activities · **56%** (236)

Mental Health Support Programs · 247

Want to boost connection, inclusion, and engagement across your residential communities?
Explore how StarRez Resident Engagement Programs can help you create meaningful experiences that drive satisfaction and student success.

Discover Resident Engagement Programs

Students want a residential experience that supports both their mental health and their social lives. Providing access to therapy alone isn't enough. They're looking for consistent, embedded opportunities to connect, decompress, and find belonging.

Your Takeaway:

Integrate wellness into the core of your housing strategy. Pair mental health resources with frequent community-building programs, empower peer support networks, and collaborate across student affairs to deliver a holistic wellness experience that students can see and feel.

Beyond the Residence Hall:
Supporting Students Through the Off-Campus Transition

As the student experience becomes more personalized and complex, the transition to off-campus living marks a critical turning point. For many students, this move represents newfound independence, but it can also bring stress, isolation, and a drop in campus connection. Institutions are increasingly realizing that how students exit on-campus housing is just as important as how they enter. To maintain continuity in wellness, engagement, and retention, housing teams must think beyond the residence hall and align on- and off-campus strategies to support students holistically, wherever they live.

## Don't Let Them Drift: The Off-Campus Transition Deserves Strategic Attention

As students move off-campus, the support they've come to rely on often fades while their needs don't. The transition to off-campus housing marks a critical moment in the student journey, and how institutions manage this phase can significantly shape student well-being, academic focus, and continued connection to campus life.

60% of institutions say the transition to off-campus housing has a moderate to significant impact on the student experience. Without intentional support, students may disengage, struggle with wellness, or lose their connection to campus. Institutions that take this phase seriously have a chance to improve outcomes, strengthen retention, and extend their student experience beyond the residence hall.

Off-Campus Housing Seen as Major Influence on Student Experience in 2025

60% of institutions say the shift to off-campus living moderately or significantly impacts students, underscoring its broader effect beyond just housing.
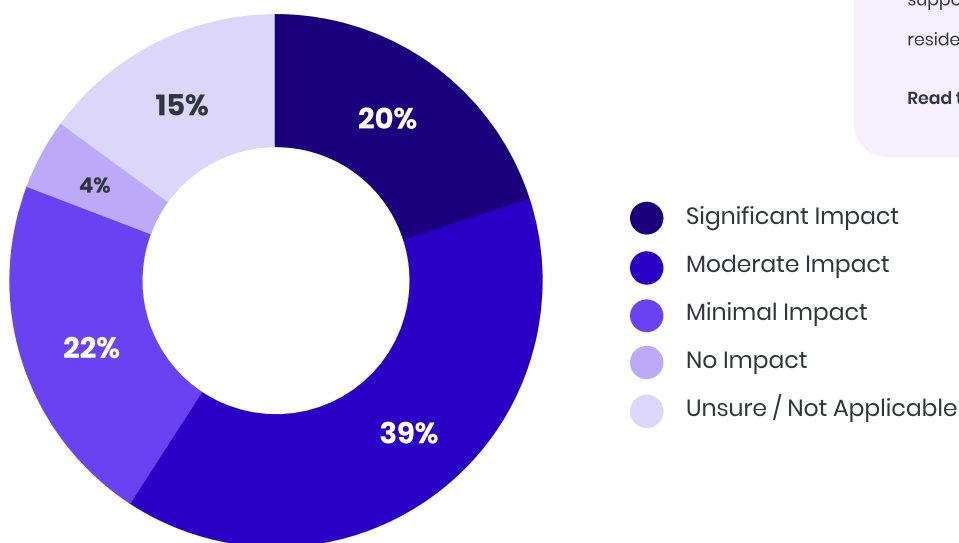
TEXAS STATE ®

Looking to improve your off-campus housing strategy?

See how Texas State University built a seamless transition process that supports students beyond the residence halls.

Read the full story on starrez.com.

- 20%
- 39%
- 22%
- 4%
- 15%

● Significant Impact
● Moderate Impact
● Minimal Impact
● No Impact
● Unsure / Not Applicable

When students move off campus without structured support, they may lose touch with the very systems (community, resources, and stability) that help them thrive. This can impact everything from retention to mental health.

💡

Your Takeaway:

Universities should treat the off-campus transition as a key part of their housing strategy. Supporting students beyond residence halls doesn't have to mean adding new staff. Exploring partnerships with platforms like College Pads can offer first-time renter resources and support through dedicated portals. By extending guidance, community touchpoints, and housing information into off-campus life, institutions can ensure students remain engaged and well-supported, wherever they live.

Supporting the Shift Off Campus Can Boost Student Wellness, If Institutions Lean In

As students shift to off-campus living, the stakes go far beyond securing a lease. This transition marks a critical juncture that can shape wellness, retention, and academic performance. When done well, it ensures continuity of care, maintains engagement, and strengthens institutional trust.

According to the data, 72% of institutions believe that making the off-campus transition easier would improve student wellness and success. Yet support strategies remain inconsistent and in some cases, nonexistent.

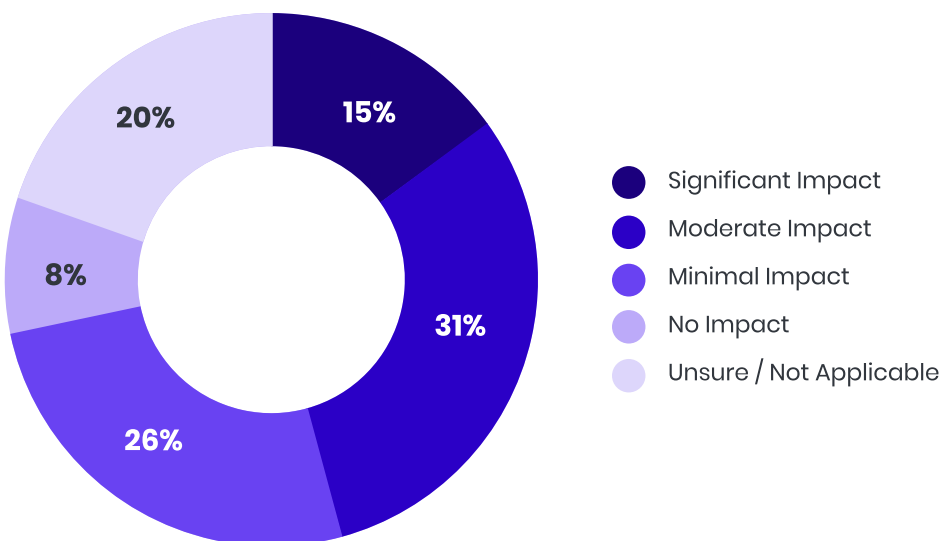**Time to strengthen your off-campus housing strategy?**

Explore how partnering with College Pads (now a part of StarRez) can help connect students with verified listings, streamline the search process, and improve the off-campus experience.

Learn more about our **Off-Campus Housing Platform**.

Easing Off-Campus Transitions Could Boost Student Wellness and Success in 2025

72% of institutions believe a smoother move to off-campus housing would have a positive impact on student outcomes.

15%

31%

26%

8%

20%

● Significant Impact
● Moderate Impact
● Minimal Impact
● No Impact
● Unsure / Not Applicable

The off-campus transition is about continuity of care. With 78% of undergraduate students living off campus, this phase now represents the norm, not the exception. Institutions that downplay its importance risk leaving the majority of their students without the support systems they need to thrive, opening the door to disengagement, academic struggles, and reputational risk.

💡

Your Takeaway:

The off-campus shift is one of the most complex and stressful milestones for students and families, filled with financial, emotional, and logistical unknowns. Make it part of your student success strategy. Whether through digital guides, partnerships with off-campus platforms like College Pads, or continued access to on-campus resources, institutions that invest in this experience are better positioned to support students holistically and maintain a seamless housing journey beyond the residence hall.

"

Texas State grows and grows every year, and we saw a need to have off-campus housing for students supported by a marketplace that could easily connect students to those options. College Pads helped us understand and market our local housing inventory in ways we had never done before."

– TYLER BARSTOW, OFF CAMPUS LIVING SENIOR COORDINATOR, TEXAS STATE UNIVERSITY
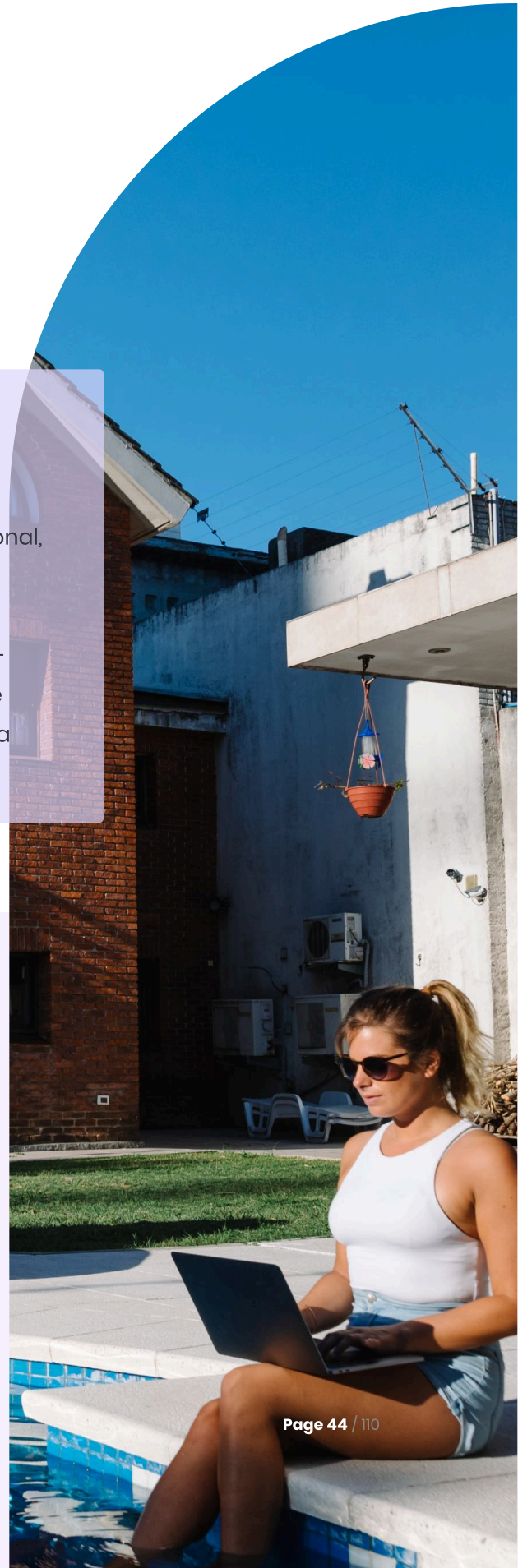
Staff Are Facing Mounting Pressure

Satisfaction improves with automation and right-sizing, but burnout looms.

Here's what's changing:

The 2025 findings reveal growing strain on the operational core of student housing: the staff who make everything run. As student expectations rise and resources remain stretched, many teams are operating at or beyond capacity. Burnout is a real and rising threat across housing operations.

What it means for you:

This moment demands more than temporary fixes. The data points to clear strategies for relief; automation, process improvements, and strategic right-sizing are essential to protecting staff well-being and sustaining service quality. Housing leaders must now prioritize building resilient, scalable teams that can meet today's demands while preparing for tomorrow's growth.

- ✓ Automation
- ✓ Process Improvements
- ✓ Strategic Right-Sizing

Staffing Under Pressure:

Finding the Right Balance to Sustain Success

As student expectations climb and operational demands intensify, housing teams are being stretched thinner than ever. In 2025, we examined not just how institutions are building their teams, but how they're balancing capacity, leadership, and front-line support to avoid burnout and deliver results. This year's data also adds a closer look at Resident Assistants (RAs) - a critical student role that blends peer mentorship with operational execution.

The right staffing mix of professional, graduate, and undergraduate team members is essential for a sustainable housing model. Professional staff provide strategy and consistency, while RAs and graduate assistants offer relatable, on-the-ground support that drives community and responsiveness. In an era of rising pressure, getting this balance right isn't just important, it's urgent for ensuring long-term team resilience and student satisfaction.

Lean Into Intelligent Automation

StarRez Intelligence can help alleviate this strain by using AI to simplify communications, automate routine tasks, and surface real-time insights that reduce administrative burden—giving teams time back to focus on student success.

Learn More

Diversification in Professional Staffing:

Lean Teams and Growing Giants

As housing teams face growing demands with limited resources, the 2025 data reveals a clear split in staffing strategies. Over half of institutions continue to operate with just 1–10 professional staff (holding steady at 51.67% in 2025), highlighting the persistent reliance on lean teams to manage complex operations. At the same time, a small but growing segment is scaling up significantly. The percentage of institutions with 150+ staff grew from 3.63% to 5.26%, suggesting that some campuses are centralizing or expanding services to meet evolving needs. This widening gap signals a need for institutions to reassess whether their staffing models are truly sustainable in today's high-demand environment.
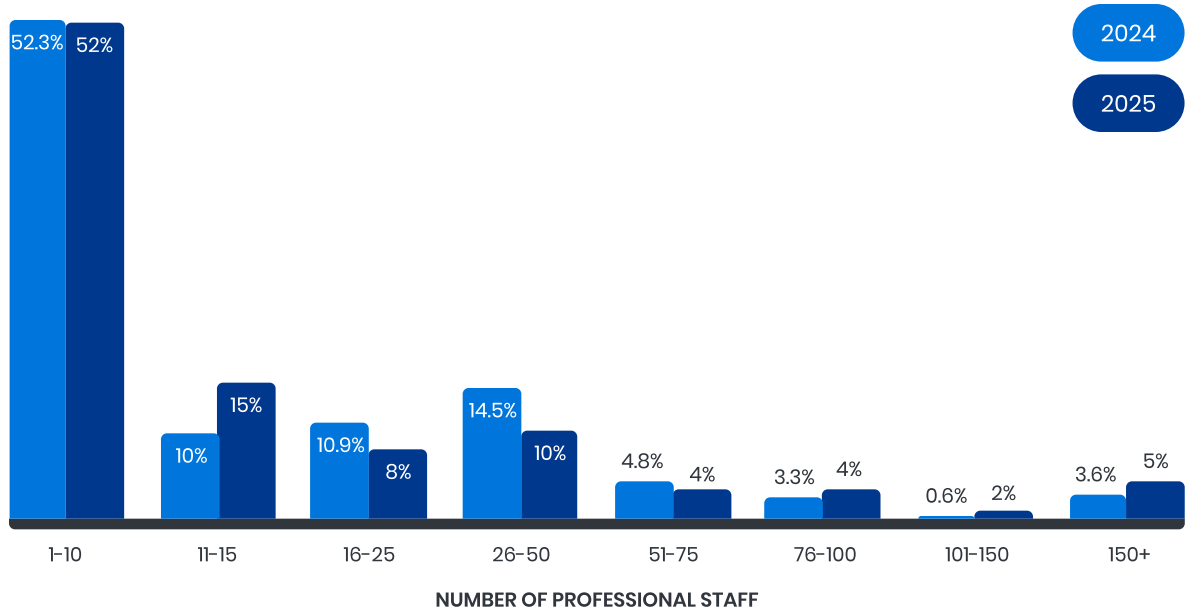
Lean Housing Teams Remain the Norm: 2024 vs 2025

In both years, over half of institutions reported having just 1–10 professional staff, with 51.67% doing so in 2025, underscoring continued reliance on small teams.

2024

2025

Number of Professional Staff	2024	2025
1–10	52.3%	52%
11–15	10%	15%
16–25	10.9%	8%
26–50	14.5%	10%
51–75	4.8%	4%
76–100	3.3%	4%
101–150	0.6%	2%
150+	3.6%	5%

NUMBER OF PROFESSIONAL STAFF

This emerging diversification suggests a widening gap between housing programs that are under-resourced and overextended and those that are scaling up through strategic growth. Without careful planning, smaller teams risk burnout, while larger operations must ensure that rapid expansion comes with the right structures, systems, and support.

Your Takeaway:

Whether you're leading a lean team or growing into a large-scale operation, the priority is the same: align staff size with service demands. Assess whether your current staffing model is sustainable, and explore where automation, restructuring, or reinvestment could ease pressure and strengthen outcomes.

Shifting Student Roles:

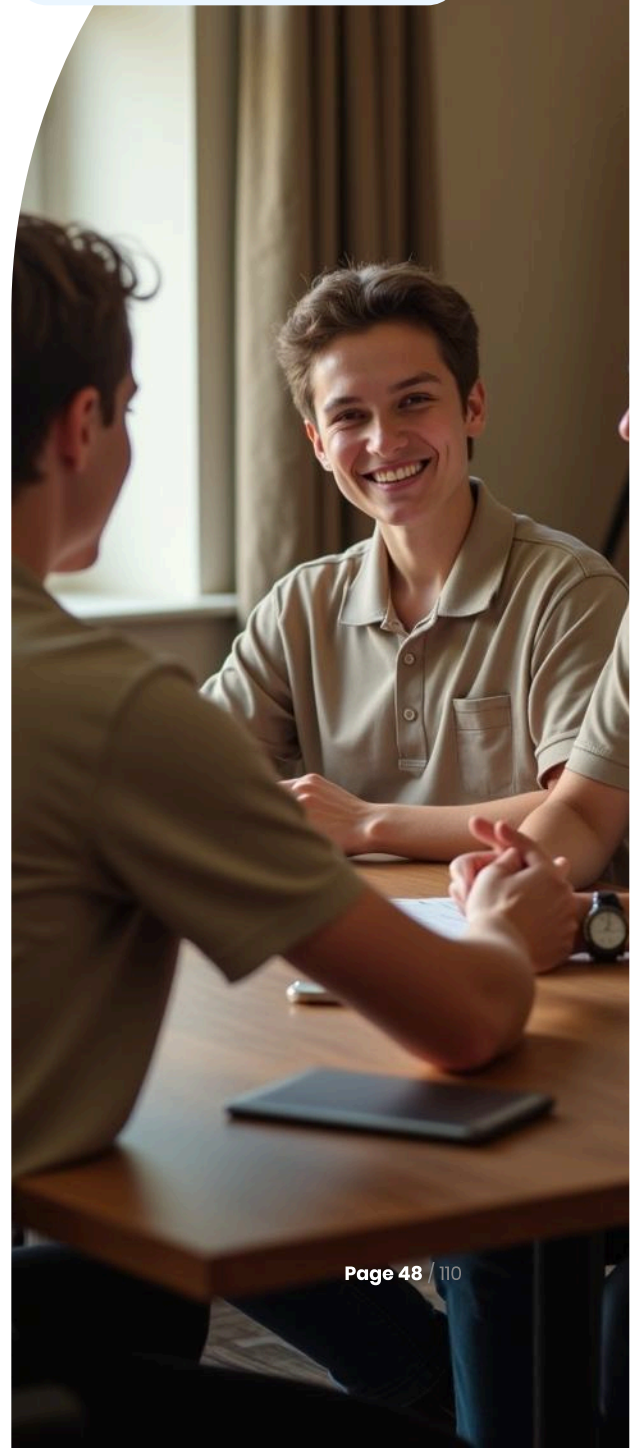*Institutions Are Moving Toward Leaner Undergraduate Staff Models*

The traditional model of large undergraduate staff teams is fading.

> Institutions are scaling back and rethinking how they deploy student workers in housing operations, likely in response to budget pressure, staffing efficiency goals, and growing expectations around student employment.

This year, the percentage of institutions with 1–10 undergraduate staff nearly doubled, jumping from 21.95% in 2024 to 43% in 2025. At the same time, large teams of 150+ student staff declined significantly, dropping from 18.60% to 11%.
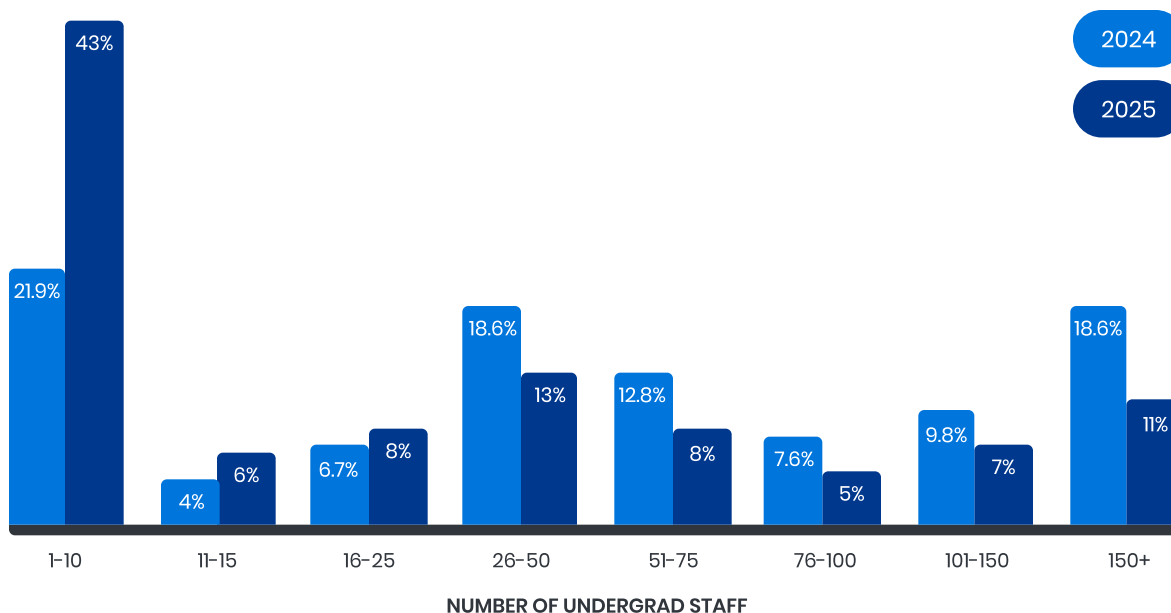
🚀

To support this shift, invest in training that empowers staff to fully leverage your housing platform. **StarRez Academy** offers role-based, on-demand learning to help teams streamline operations, reduce manual work, and deliver smarter service with less strain.

Shift Toward Smaller Undergraduate Staff Teams: 2024 vs 2025

Institutions with 1–10 undergrad housing staff nearly doubled in 2025, while those with 150+ saw a sharp decline, signaling a move toward leaner student staffing models.

Legend: 2024, 2025

Number of Undergrad Staff	2024	2025
1–10	21.9%	43%
11–15	4%	6%
16–25	6.7%	8%
26–50	18.6%	13%
51–75	12.8%	8%
76–100	7.6%	5%
101–150	9.8%	7%
150+	18.6%	11%

NUMBER OF UNDERGRAD STAFF

This shift points to a restructured approach: housing teams may be favoring smaller, more focused student staff groups or reallocating responsibilities to professional teams and technology. Large student staff models may no longer be feasible, or necessary, in an environment demanding streamlined operations and measurable impact.

💡

Your Takeaway:

Review your student staffing structure and ask: are roles aligned with today's operational needs and student expectations? Consider how peer mentorship, centralized service hubs, or technology can supplement staffing while maintaining high-touch support where it matters most.

Resident Assistants:
The Scalable Backbone of Community Support

As institutions seek to deliver high-touch support with limited resources, Resident Assistants (RAs) are emerging as a flexible, scalable solution. Their role as peer leaders remains vital to resident engagement, safety, and community building - especially as student needs grow more complex.

RA teams are most commonly mid-sized, with 24% of institutions reporting 26–50 RAs. However, staffing levels vary widely across operations, showing that RA programs are highly adaptable to the scale and structure of each campus.
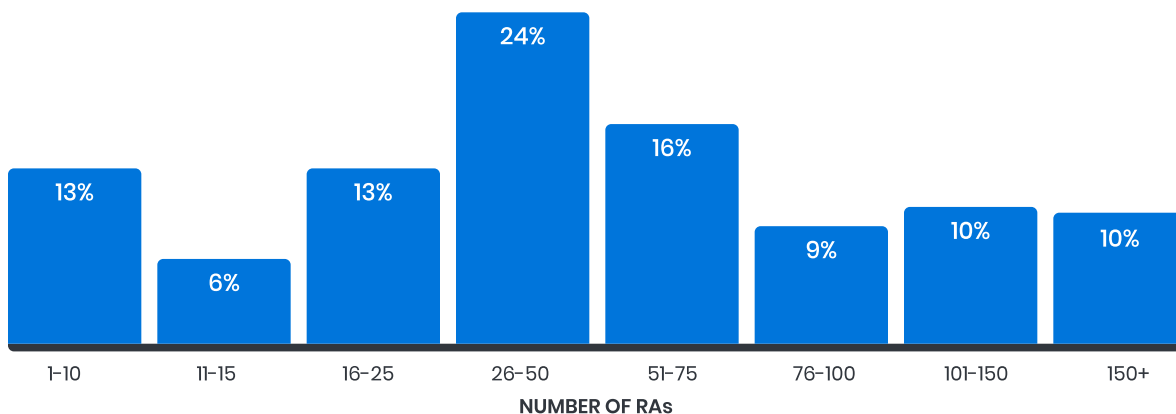
Loyola Marymount University

Want to see a standout RA program in action?
Discover how Loyola Marymount University built a high-impact RA team that strengthens community and supports student success.

Read the full story on starrez.com.

Resident Assistant Staffing Levels Vary Widely in 2025
While 24% of institutions report mid-sized RA teams (26–50), staffing structures differ significantly, adapting to each campus's unique scale and needs.

Number of RAs	Percentage
1–10	13%
11–15	6%
16–25	13%
26–50	24%
51–75	16%
76–100	9%
101–150	10%
150+	10%

NUMBER OF RAs

> Our Resident Assistants feel empowered to help residents to complete and update the Roommate Agreement."
>
> - BRANDON HOLMES, ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF OCCUPANCY AND SYSTEMS AT LMU

The broad distribution of RA team sizes suggests that institutions are tailoring their RA programs to fit specific operational goals and resident populations. The mid-range appears to be the "sweet spot" offering enough coverage to support student well-being without becoming unmanageable.

💡

Your Takeaway:

Regularly assess your RA-to-resident ratio and training resources to ensure your program is right-sized for your housing model. Whether your operation is compact or sprawling, RA programs offer a flexible staffing strategy that can grow or contract with your needs without compromising the student experience.

Staff-to-Resident Ratios Reveal the Realities of Managing Growth

As campus housing populations grow, so does the complexity of meeting students' daily needs, and the data makes it clear: larger communities require more substantial and intentional staffing structures.
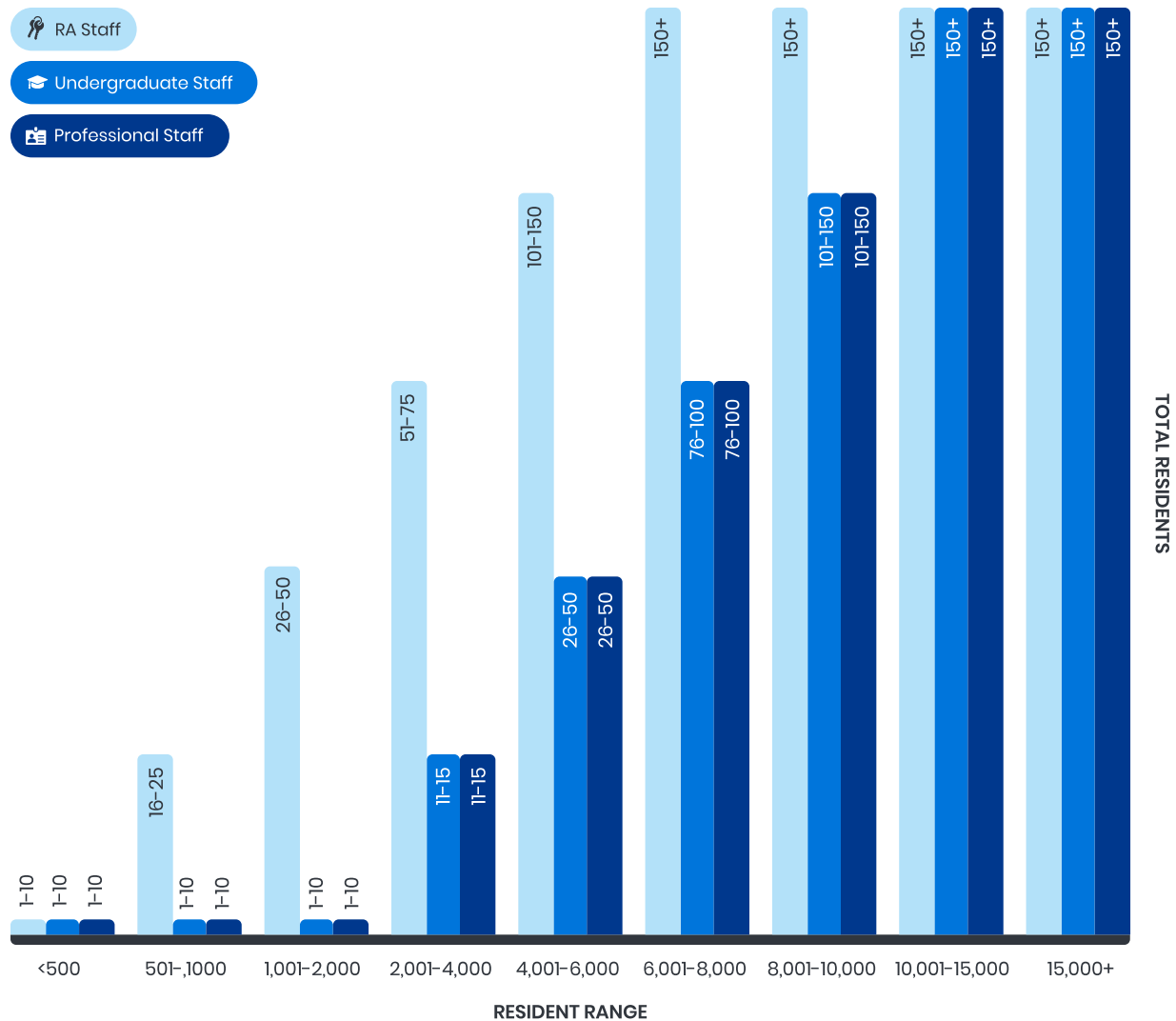
Across professional staff, undergraduate staff, and Resident Assistants (RAs), staffing levels scale in proportion to resident volume. Smaller housing populations typically operate with leaner teams, while institutions with 6,001+ residents often deploy 150 or more RAs, highlighting the critical role of peer leadership in maintaining safety, connection, and responsiveness in high-density environments.
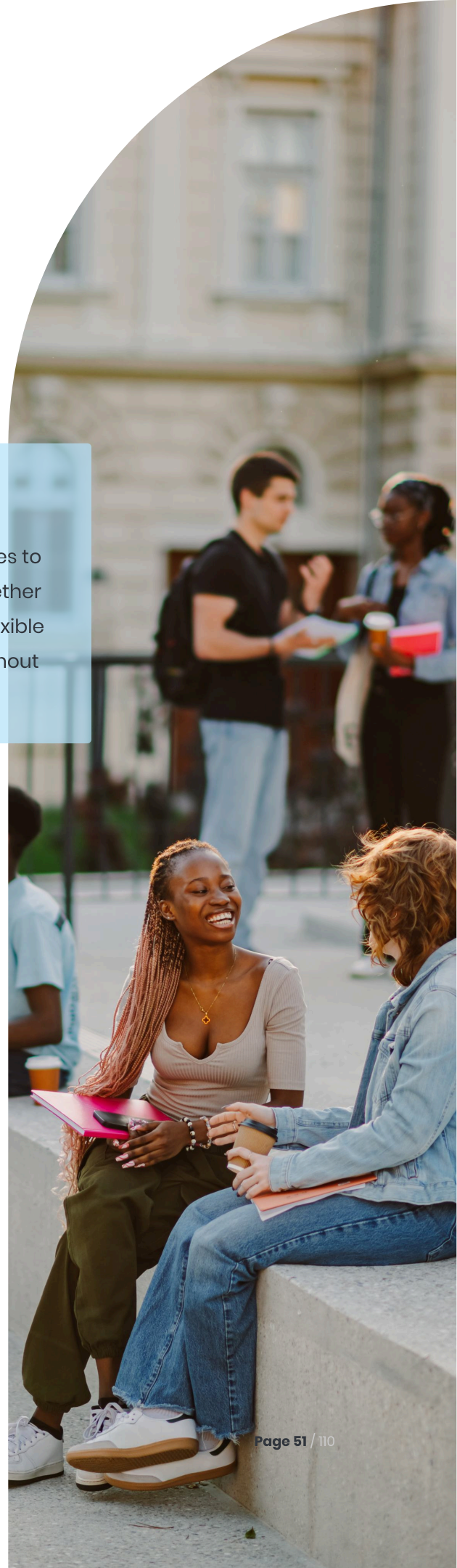
Staff-to-Resident Ratios Scale with Community Size in 2025

Larger housing populations require significantly more staffing (especially RA teams) to support student safety, engagement, and operational responsiveness.

Legend:
- RA Staff
- Undergraduate Staff
- Professional Staff

Chart data (Resident Range → RA Staff / Undergraduate Staff / Professional Staff):

Resident Range	RA Staff	Undergraduate Staff	Professional Staff
<500	1–10	1–10	1–10
501–1000	16–25	1–10	1–10
1,001–2,000	26–50	1–10	1–10
2,001–4,000	51–75	11–15	11–15
4,001–6,000	101–150	26–50	26–50
6,001–8,000	150+	76–100	76–100
8,001–10,000	150+	101–150	101–150
10,001–15,000	150+	150+	150+
15,000+	150+	150+	150+

TOTAL RESIDENTS

RESIDENT RANGE

Ultimately, there's no one-size-fits-all staffing model, but it's clear that right-sizing matters. Institutions that successfully scale their support systems as resident populations grow are better positioned to preserve quality, reduce burnout, and deliver consistent, community-focused experiences.

Sustaining Staff Satisfaction and Retention Requires Strategy

In 2025, staff satisfaction and retention continue to be critical pillars of successful housing operations. This year's expanded survey includes year-over-year data, offering a clearer view of how satisfaction levels and retention trends are shifting across the industry. By understanding these drivers, institutions can identify opportunities to strengthen staff culture, retain top talent, and build more resilient housing teams.

If You're Not Measuring Staff Satisfaction, You're Missing a Strategic Opportunity

While staff satisfaction is improving across the industry, most institutions still aren't formally tracking it, leaving them with potential blind spots in team engagement, burnout risk, and retention outcomes.

- ⊘ Team Engagement

- ⊘ Burnout Risk

- ⊘ Retention Outcomes

Only 34% of student housing teams track professional staff satisfaction, while 66% do not, indicating that the majority of institutions are operating without a clear view of staff sentiment.

Most Institutions Don't Track Professional Staff Satisfaction in 2025

Only 34% of student housing teams measure staff satisfaction, leaving two-thirds without formal insight into team sentiment and engagement.

No · 66.3%	Yes · 33.7%

Without regular feedback, it's difficult to identify pain points, recognize high-performing teams, or spot early signs of burnout. What gets measured gets managed, and satisfaction is no exception.

💡

Your Takeaway:

Establish simple, consistent ways to track professional staff satisfaction, whether through surveys, check-ins, or digital tools. Use that data to inform decisions, foster engagement, and create a culture where staff feel heard, supported, and more likely to stay.

Measuring What Matters:

How Leading Institutions Track Staff Satisfaction

For the institutions that do measure staff satisfaction, the tools they use are evolving, pointing to a growing commitment to listening and responding to staff needs in more structured ways.

Among institutions that do track professional staff satisfaction, surveys are the most commonly used method, followed by retention rate analysis and word-of-mouth feedback. This mix reflects both formal and informal approaches to understanding staff well-being.

Surveys Lead as the Primary Tool for Measuring Staff Satisfaction in 2025

Institutions that track professional staff sentiment rely most on surveys, followed by retention data and informal feedback, blending structured and anecdotal insights.

SURVEYS	STAFF RETENTION RATE	WORD-OF-MOUTH	OTHER
39%	**29%**	**25%**	**7%**
(102)	(74)	(64)	(19)
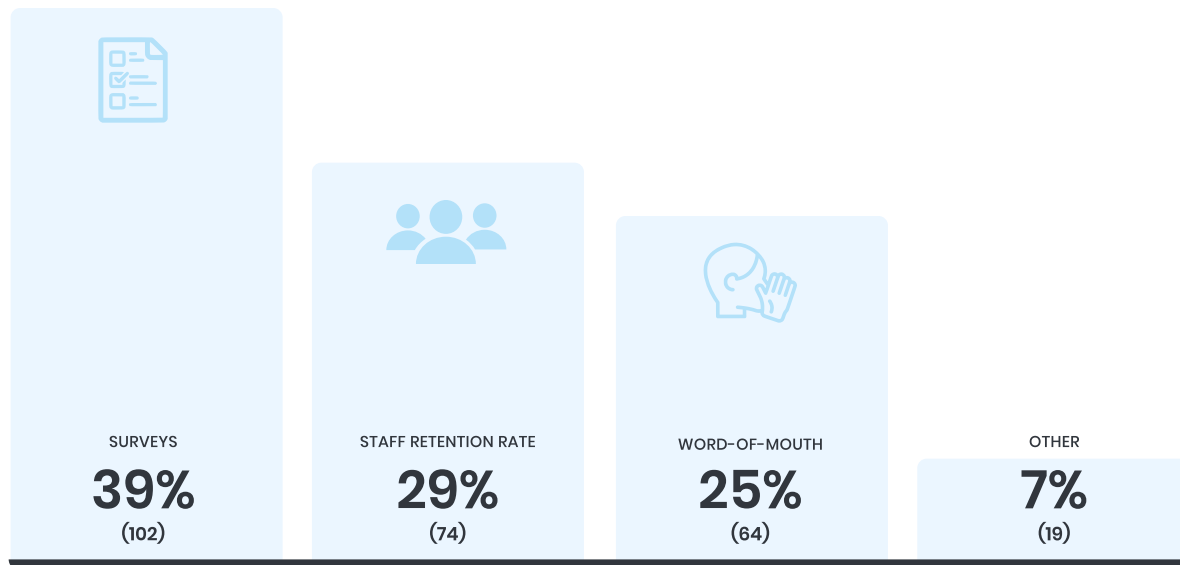
Surveys provide consistent, scalable insights. Relying heavily on word-of-mouth can leave leadership reactive instead of proactive. Institutions that adopt structured measurement tools are better positioned to identify trends early and take targeted action.

Your Takeaway:

If you already track staff satisfaction, evaluate the effectiveness of your current methods. If not, start small by introducing periodic pulse surveys or integrating satisfaction metrics into performance reviews. The more you listen, the more resilient and engaged your teams will be.

Staff Satisfaction Is Rising:

Now Comes the Work of Sustaining It

In a year marked by rising operational pressure, professional staff satisfaction is actually improving - a strong signal that targeted investments in culture, clarity, and capacity are making a difference.

- ✓ Culture
- ✓ Clarity
- ✓ Capacity

In 2025, nearly 80% of professional staff report being satisfied or very satisfied with their roles, with 28% in the 90–100% range. This marks a significant jump from 2024, when just 70.6% reported high satisfaction, a nearly 9-point improvement year over year.

Professional Staff Satisfaction Improves Sharply: 2024 vs 2025

High satisfaction rose from 70.6% in 2024 to nearly 80% in 2025, a nearly 9-point increase in one year.
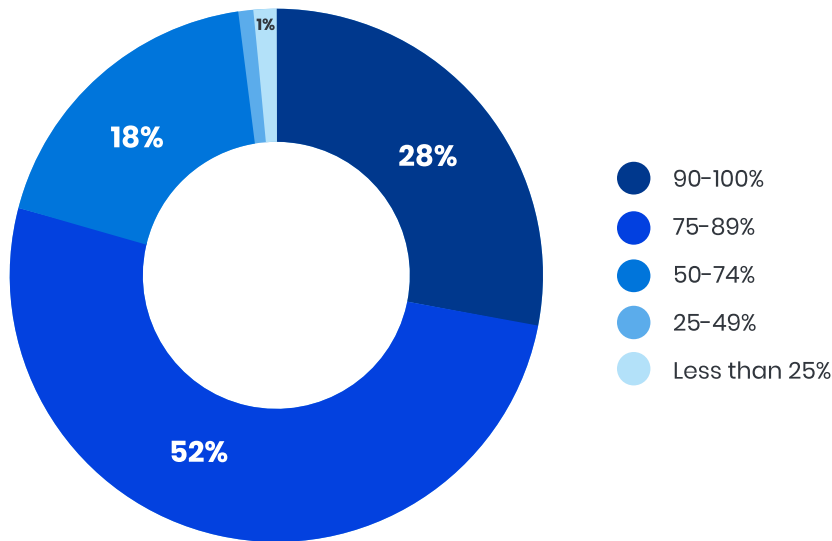
2024 · 70.62%   2025 · 79.5%

High Levels of Professional Staff Satisfaction Reported in 2025

Nearly 80% of professional staff are satisfied with their roles, including 28% of institutions reporting satisfaction rates in the 90–100% range.

●	90–100%
●	75–89%
●	50–74%
●	25–49%
●	Less than 25%

This upward trend suggests that many housing operations are making smart moves, whether through better communication, process improvements, or culture-building efforts. But satisfaction can be fragile, especially when teams are stretched thin.

💡

Your Takeaway:

Don't let momentum stall. Continue reinforcing what's working (automated systems, flexible structures, recognition practices) and regularly check in with staff to stay ahead of burnout. A satisfied team today is your foundation for long-term retention tomorrow.
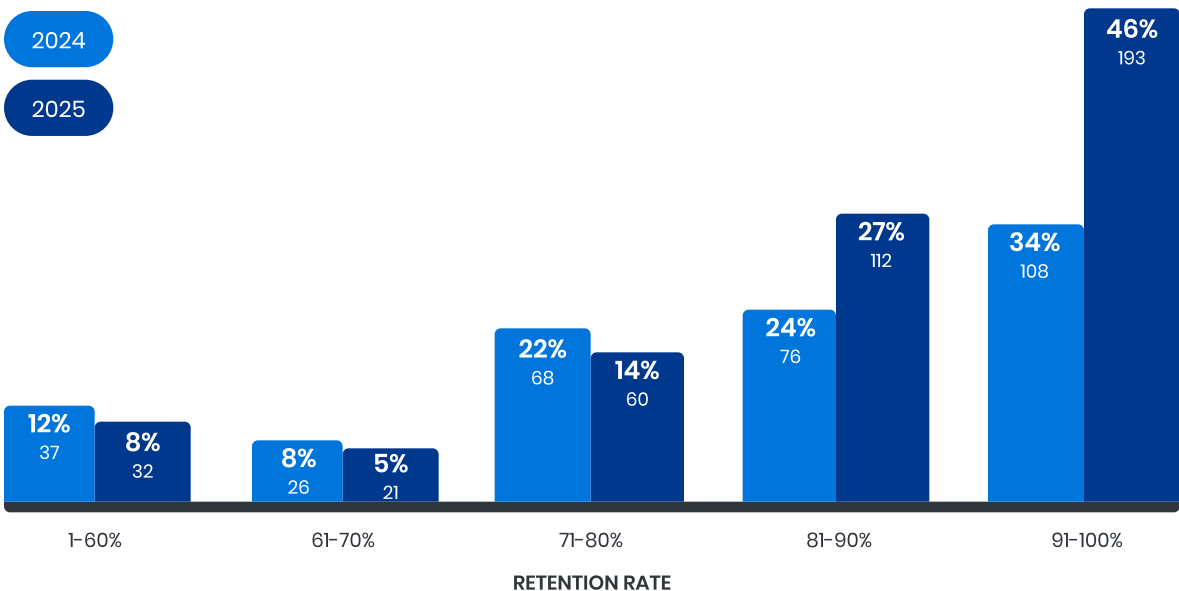
Retention Is Rising & Now It's Time to Maintain It

Staff retention across student housing operations is on the rise, signaling that efforts to improve workplace culture, satisfaction, and operational support are gaining traction. Institutions reporting very high retention (91–100%) increased from 34% in 2024 to 46% in 2025, while those in the 81–90% range also grew from 24% to 27%. At the same time, low retention rates (1–60%) fell from 12% to just 8%, suggesting that fewer campuses are struggling with high turnover.

Professional Staff Retention Rates Improve
Across the Board: 2024 vs 2025

Institutions reporting very high retention (91–100%) rose from 34% to 46%, while low retention rates declined, indicating reduced staff turnover.

	2024	2025
1-60%	12% / 37	8% / 32
61-70%	8% / 26	5% / 21
71-80%	22% / 68	14% / 60
81-90%	24% / 76	27% / 112
91-100%	34% / 108	46% / 193

RETENTION RATE

A deeper look reveals why: institutions with higher professional staff satisfaction are also achieving the strongest retention rates. Most campuses reporting 90–100% satisfaction also fall into the 91–100% retention tier, and the majority of data clusters between 75–100% satisfaction and 81–100% retention. This confirms that satisfaction is a leading indicator of workforce stability.
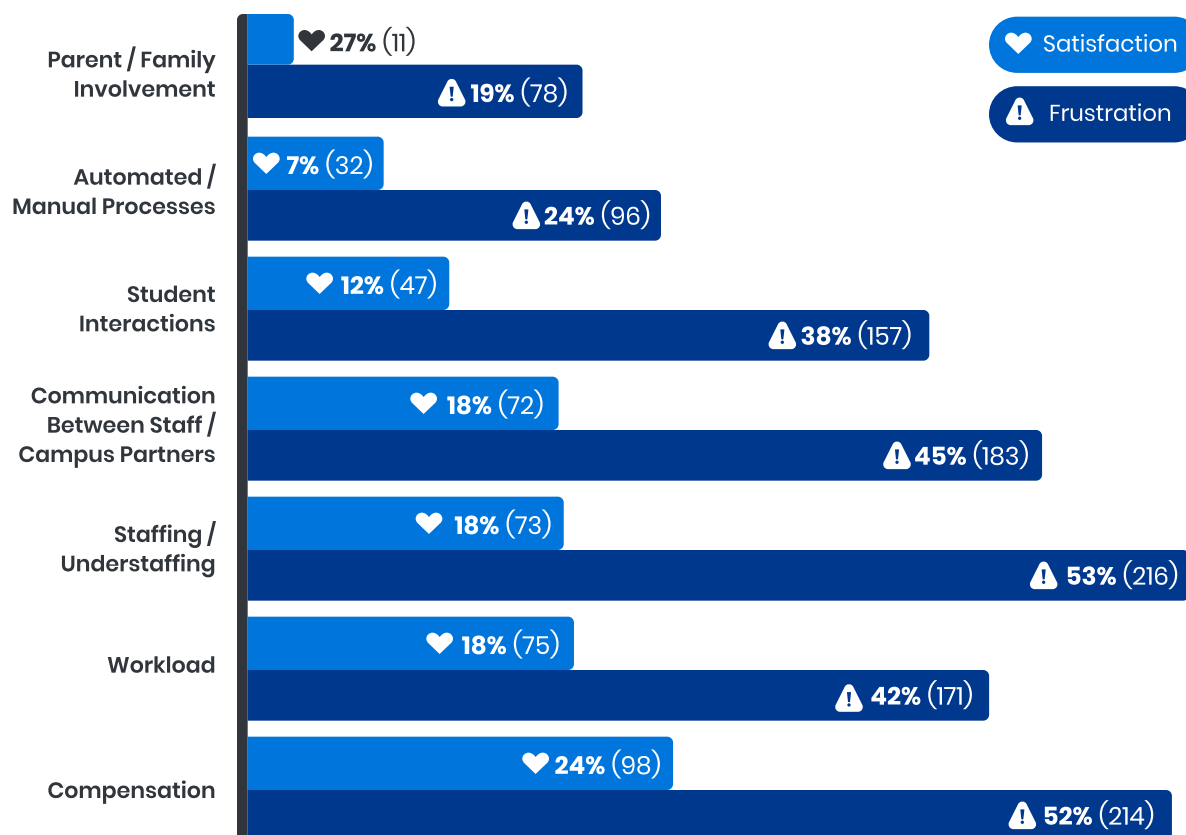
So, What Drives Staff Satisfaction?
It's the Fundamentals.

As housing teams take on more responsibility, the formula for keeping staff satisfied and committed is clear: get the fundamentals right. Institutions overwhelmingly cited fair compensation, balanced workloads, and adequate staffing as the top drivers of satisfaction - echoed by the top challenges staff face. Understaffing and compensation led the list of frustrations, closely followed by workload, reinforcing that addressing these core issues is the most effective path to improving morale and retention.

Top Drivers of Professional Staff Satisfaction & Frustration in 2025
Fair compensation, manageable workloads, and sufficient staffing levels are the most influential factors in keeping professional staff satisfied. Understaffing, compensation concerns, communication, and heavy workloads are the most common challenges, pinpointing key areas for improving morale and retention.

♥ Satisfaction
⚠ Frustration

Parent / Family Involvement
- ♥ 27% (11)
- ⚠ 19% (78)

Automated / Manual Processes
- ♥ 7% (32)
- ⚠ 24% (96)

Student Interactions
- ♥ 12% (47)
- ⚠ 38% (157)

Communication Between Staff / Campus Partners
- ♥ 18% (72)
- ⚠ 45% (183)

Staffing / Understaffing
- ♥ 18% (73)
- ⚠ 53% (216)

Workload
- ♥ 18% (75)
- ⚠ 42% (171)

Compensation
- ♥ 24% (98)
- ⚠ 52% (214)

The same issues driving satisfaction are also driving frustration, meaning the path to improvement is well-defined. When teams feel underpaid, overworked, or unsupported, morale suffers. When those needs are met, satisfaction and retention rise.

Your Takeaway:

Conduct an honest review of your staffing ratios, workload distribution, and compensation structure. Strengthen cross-campus communication channels and empower managers to advocate for their teams. Small shifts in how you support your staff can lead to lasting improvements in engagement, stability, and performance.

Operational Maturity Drives Outcomes

Paperless processes, automation, and proactive roommate matching boost both experiences and retention.

Here's what's changing:

As student expectations climb and staff bandwidth shrinks, housing teams are turning to technology to do more with less. Paperless systems, workflow automation, and smarter roommate matching are becoming standard practices that redefine how housing operations function.

✓ Paperless Systems

✓ Workflow Automation

✓ Smarter Roommate Matching

What it means for you:

Operational maturity isn't just about tech adoption – it's about strategically aligning systems and processes to drive better experiences and outcomes. In this section, we explore how forward-thinking institutions are evolving their roommate matching, room assignment strategies, and core operational workflows to increase efficiency, improve satisfaction, and boost retention.

The Role of Roommate Matching in Student Success

As institutions modernize their housing operations, roommate matching is emerging as a key lever for improving the residential experience. The right match can boost satisfaction, reduce conflict, and increase a student's sense of belonging from day one.

In this section, we look at how campuses are evolving their roommate matching strategies, especially for first-year residents, who often arrive without existing social ties, and returning students, whose preferences are shaped by past experiences. By examining the methods behind effective matching, we gain insight into how operational choices are shaping student connection and long-term retention.

First-Year Residents:

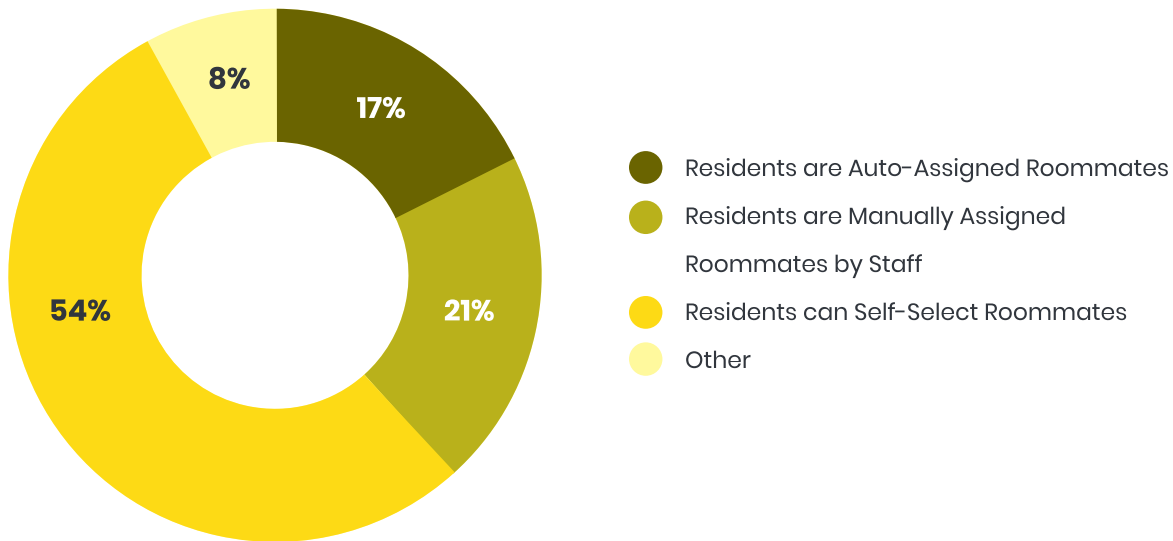*Balancing Autonomy & Support in Roommate Matching*

For students just entering college life, the roommate experience can shape everything from first impressions to long-term campus engagement. That's why roommate matching for first-year residents is a critical touchpoint in building early connection and comfort.

54% of institutions allow first-year residents to self-select roommates, making it the most common method by far. Manual matching by staff (21%) and automated assignment (17%) are still in use, often for students who don't submit requests or who need more structured support.

Self-Selection Leads Roommate Matching Methods for First-Year Residents in 2025

54% of institutions let first-year students choose their own roommates, while others rely on manual or automated matching to support unpaired residents.

17%

8%

54%

21%

- Residents are Auto-Assigned Roommates
- Residents are Manually Assigned Roommates by Staff
- Residents can Self-Select Roommates
- Other

The rise in self-selection reflects a broader shift toward student autonomy. But it also raises questions of equity and logistics, particularly for students arriving without established networks or who need guided support in navigating roommate compatibility.

💡

Your Takeaway:

Offer a hybrid roommate matching model that honors student choice while providing structured support for those who need it. Consider tools that combine questionnaire-based compatibility, transparency, and optionality, helping first-year residents feel both empowered and supported.

Returning Residents:

*Prioritizing Autonomy in
the Roommate Experience*

For returning students, roommate matching becomes less about logistics and more about preference. These students have built connections, understand their needs, and expect more control over their housing choices.

✓ Building Connections

✓ Understanding Needs

✓ More Control Over Housing Choices

This year's data shows that 79% of institutions allow returning residents to self-select their roommates, indicating a strong emphasis on autonomy for experienced students. Manual assignment (12%) and auto-assignment (3%) are rare, reinforcing this student-led approach.

Ready to simplify roommate matching and boost satisfaction?
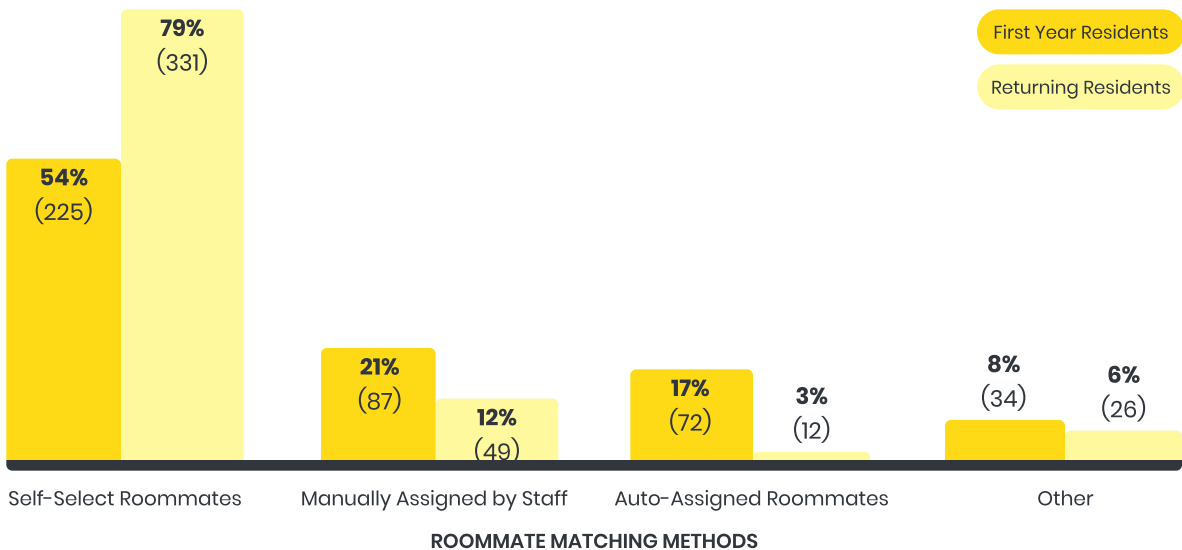Explore how the StarRez Room & Roommate Solution streamlines assignments with smart tools that balance student choice and operational efficiency.

Learn More

Returning Residents Given More Roommate Choice in 2025

79% of institutions allow returning students to self-select roommates, far surpassing rates for first-years and highlighting a student-led matching model.

First Year Residents

Returning Residents

79%
(331)

54%
(225)

21%
(87)

12%
(49)

17%
(72)

3%
(12)

8%
(34)

6%
(26)

Self-Select Roommates   Manually Assigned by Staff   Auto-Assigned Roommates   Other

ROOMMATE MATCHING METHODS

This high rate of self-selection reflects trust in returning residents' ability to manage their own living situations. It also allows housing teams to allocate resources elsewhere, as less staff intervention is required.

💡

Your Takeaway:

Continue prioritizing self-selection for returning students, while ensuring clear processes and platforms for making roommate choices. Provide guidance only when requested, and focus staff energy on onboarding first-years and improving the overall housing experience.

How Room Placement Reflects Operational Maturity

The room assignment process is a strategic opportunity to enhance the student experience and drive retention. Institutions that embrace automation, paperless workflows, and data-informed decision-making are leading the way by streamlining assignments and giving students more voice and flexibility in where they live.

In this section, we explore how campuses approach room assignment for both first-year residents and returning students. These strategies highlight how operational maturity transforms a behind-the-scenes task into a meaningful part of a student's housing journey.

First-Year Residents & Room Assignments

For first-year students, room assignments are a foundational part of the residential experience - shaping early impressions, social connections, and sense of belonging. Institutions are increasingly seeking the right balance between structured placement and student autonomy, using room assignments as an opportunity to enhance both comfort and operational efficiency.

The data shows a near-even split in strategies: 36% of institutions use auto-allocation, 35% allow self-selection, and 28% rely on manual placement, reflecting a broad move toward flexible, mature housing operations that blend automation, personalization, and staff oversight to meet diverse student needs.

Room Assignment Methods for First-Year Students Are Evenly Split in 2025

Institutions report a nearly equal mix of auto-allocation (36%), self-selection (35%), and manual placement (28%), highlighting a flexible, student-centered approach to housing.

UNIVERSITY OF OREGON
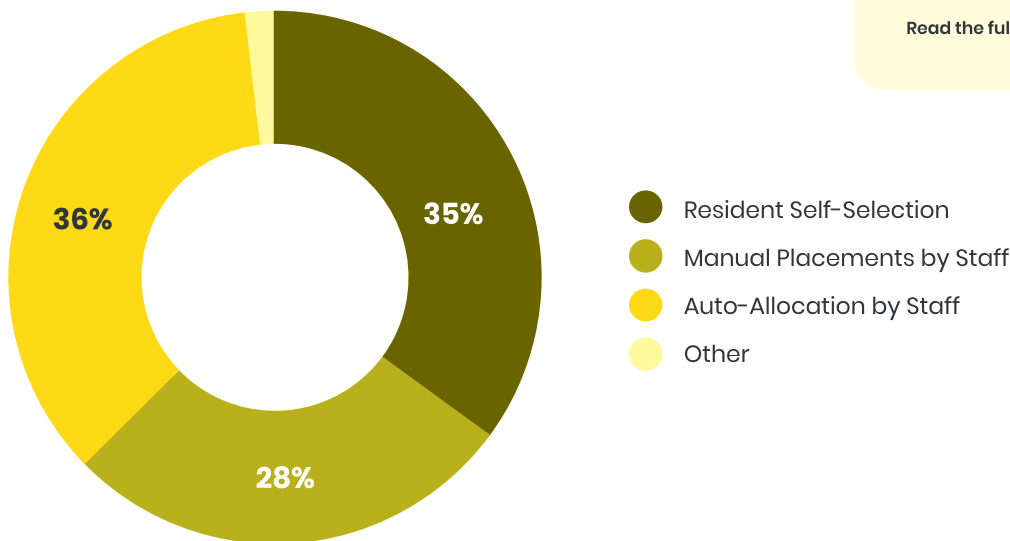
Curious how self-selection improves the first-year experience?
See how the University of Oregon used online room self-selection to boost student satisfaction and streamline first-year housing placements.
Read the full story on starrez.com.

35%

36%

28%

- Resident Self-Selection
- Manual Placements by Staff
- Auto-Allocation by Staff
- Other

This near-even distribution suggests institutions are experimenting with different models based on capacity, philosophy, and student demographics. Structured placement provides consistency, while self-selection supports agency and personalization, both valuable in shaping first-year success.

💡

Your Takeaway:
Refine your first-year room assignment strategy by layering operational tools with student-centered flexibility. Use automation to scale, manual placement where needed, and self-selection where appropriate - all within a system that reduces paperwork and enhances transparency.

Autonomy by Design for Returning Resident Assignments

As students progress through their campus journey, they expect more freedom in choosing how (and with whom) they live. For returning residents, self-selection has become the norm.

In 2025, 74% of institutions use self-selection for returning residents, compared to just 35% for first-year students. Use of auto-allocation drops to 5%, and manual placement falls to 19%, signaling a shift toward resident-led decision-making.
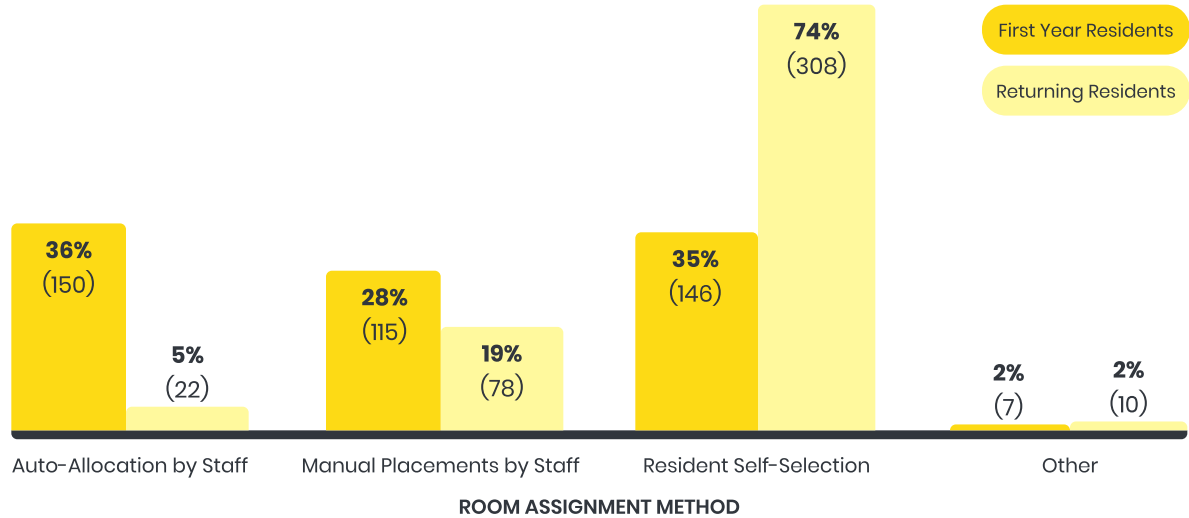
AI's Impact on Modern Housing Operations

With tools like StarRez AI, institutions can take automation even further, transforming data into insights, predicting patterns in occupancy and resident needs, and streamlining decision-making across the housing lifecycle.

Learn More

Returning Residents Drive Room Selection Autonomy in 2025

Self-selection rises to 74% for returning students (more than double the rate for first-years) while auto-allocation and manual placement sharply decline.

Chart legend: First Year Residents, Returning Residents

Room Assignment Method	First Year Residents	Returning Residents
Auto-Allocation by Staff	36% (150)	5% (22)
Manual Placements by Staff	28% (115)	19% (78)
Resident Self-Selection	35% (146)	74% (308)
Other	2% (7)	2% (10)

ROOM ASSIGNMENT METHOD

> " Living on campus for at least the first year contributes to student success by building community and connecting students to services that support them through the transition to college life...Room assignment satisfaction plays an important role by allowing students to focus on their college transition."
>
> – ASSISTANT DIRECTOR, RESIDENCE LIFE FOR OCCUPANCY AND SYSTEMS, UNIVERSITY OF OREGON

This approach in room assignments aligns with the reality that returning students already understand the campus environment and often have established preferences. Empowering them to choose reduces administrative overhead and increases perceived fairness and satisfaction.

💡

Your Takeaway:

Ensure your self-selection process is simple, transparent, and supported by digital tools. Empower returning students with choice, while offering clear communication and flexible systems that scale with demand.

From Manual to Modern:

How Operational Maturity Transforms Housing Workflows

As housing teams face rising demands with limited resources, automation and paperless processes are emerging as critical tools for driving efficiency, reducing burnout, and improving the student experience.

In this section, we examine how institutions are modernizing core housing operations and transitioning from manual workflows to integrated, tech-enabled systems that free up staff time and enhance service delivery. These operational upgrades aren't just about convenience; they're directly linked to stronger retention, higher satisfaction, and more resilient housing programs.

Housing Teams Are Embracing Automation While Maintaining a Human Touch

Student housing teams are embracing automation, but they're doing it strategically. Rather than fully automating every process, most institutions are opting for partial automation to strike a balance between efficiency and the human touch that residential life depends on.

This thoughtful approach reflects a key aspect of operational maturity: using technology to streamline workflows, reduce staff burden, and improve service delivery without losing the personal connections that matter.
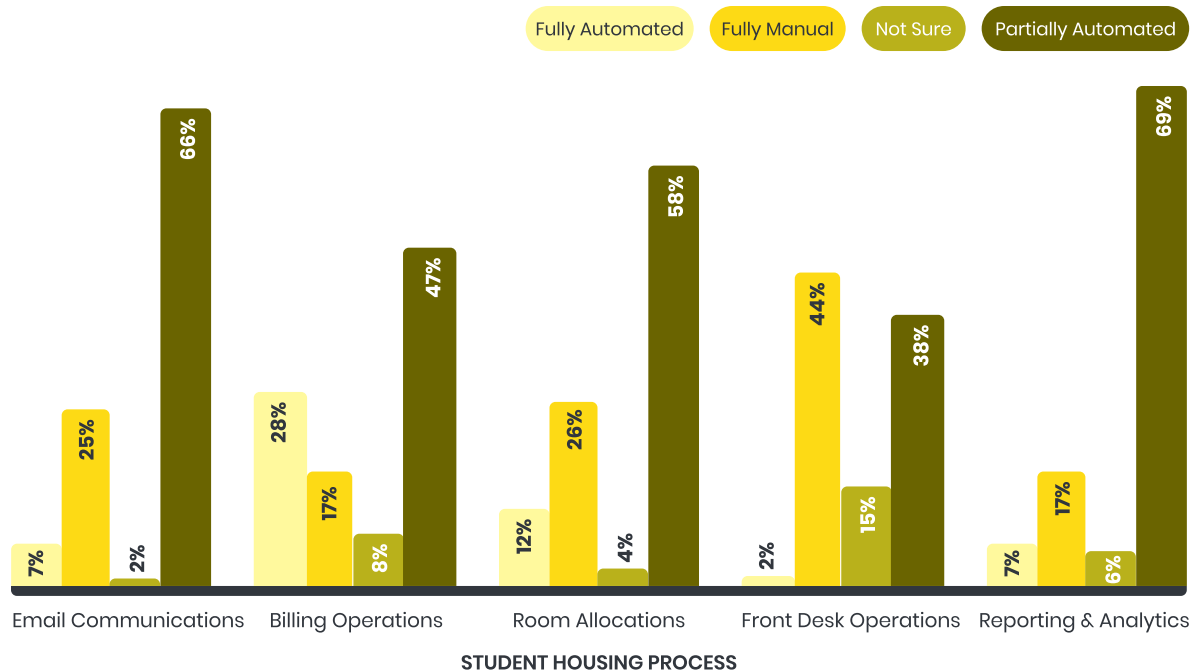
✅ Streamline Workflows

✅ Reduce Staff Burden

✅ Improve Service Delivery

Ready to automate your billing processes?

Save time, reduce errors, and improve transparency by automating your housing billing processes with StarRez. Explore how our billing and finance features can streamline operations and enhance the experience for both staff and residents.

Learn more about StarRez's Billing & Finance tools

The data backs this up: 69% have automated reporting and analytics, 66% email communications, 58% room allocations, 47% billing, and 38% front desk operations, showing a widespread shift toward smart, scalable systems.

Student Housing Operations Embrace Automation in 2025

Most institutions have automated core functions like reporting (69%), communications (66%), and room assignments (58%), driving efficiency and scalability in housing operations.

Legend: Fully Automated | Fully Manual | Not Sure | Partially Automated

Student Housing Process	Fully Automated	Fully Manual	Not Sure	Partially Automated
Email Communications	7%	25%	2%	66%
Billing Operations	28%	17%	8%	47%
Room Allocations	12%	26%	4%	58%
Front Desk Operations	2%	44%	15%	38%
Reporting & Analytics	7%	17%	6%	69%

STUDENT HOUSING PROCESS

This preference for hybrid systems reflects the need for human oversight in areas that impact resident satisfaction, while still leveraging tech to reduce manual tasks. Notably, front desk operations remain the least automated, highlighting the ongoing value of face-to-face service in residential life.

💡

Your Takeaway:

Review where your team is spending the most time on repetitive tasks and identify opportunities for smart automation. Focus on areas like reporting, billing, and communications where partial automation can quickly reduce workload without sacrificing the student experience.

Going Paperless:
*Digital Transformation Is
Becoming the New Standard*

Housing operations are undergoing a digital transformation, moving swiftly away from manual, paper-based systems toward scalable, tech-enabled processes that improve both efficiency and the student experience.

✓ Scalable Processes

✓ Tech-Enabled Processes

✓ Efficient Processes

61% of institutions now operate in a hybrid model, while 36% have fully transitioned to digital systems - a number that continues to grow. With only 3% still relying primarily on paper, it's clear that traditional workflows are becoming obsolete. For institutions, going paperless isn't just about saving time, it's about reducing errors, increasing transparency, and building a foundation for long-term growth and agility.

abodus student living

Ready to ditch the paperwork and streamline your operations?
See how PBSA Abodus went fully digital with StarRez to enhance efficiency, reduce admin time, and deliver a seamless resident experience.
Read the full story on starrez.com.

" StarRez revolutionised how we operate by reducing manual tasks and increasing automation, which has allowed our team to focus on providing a more personalised experience to students. This has resulted in higher student satisfaction, fewer booking errors, and a more responsive customer service model."
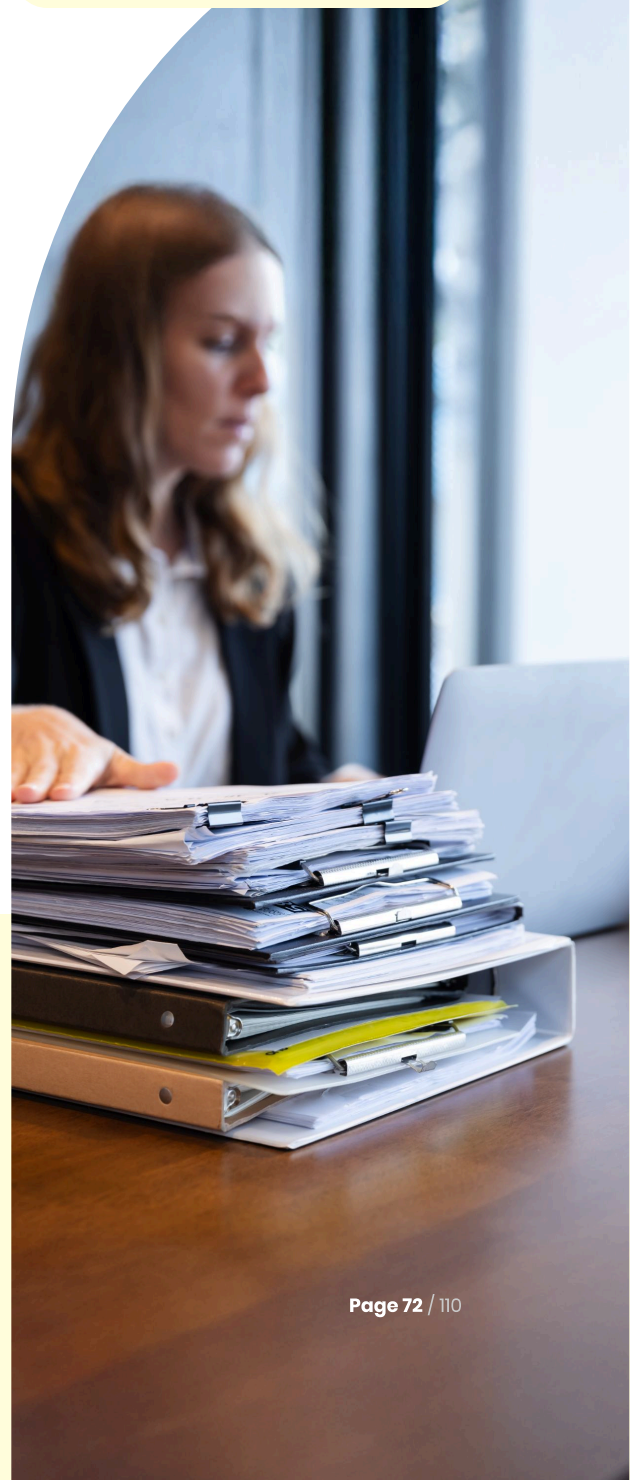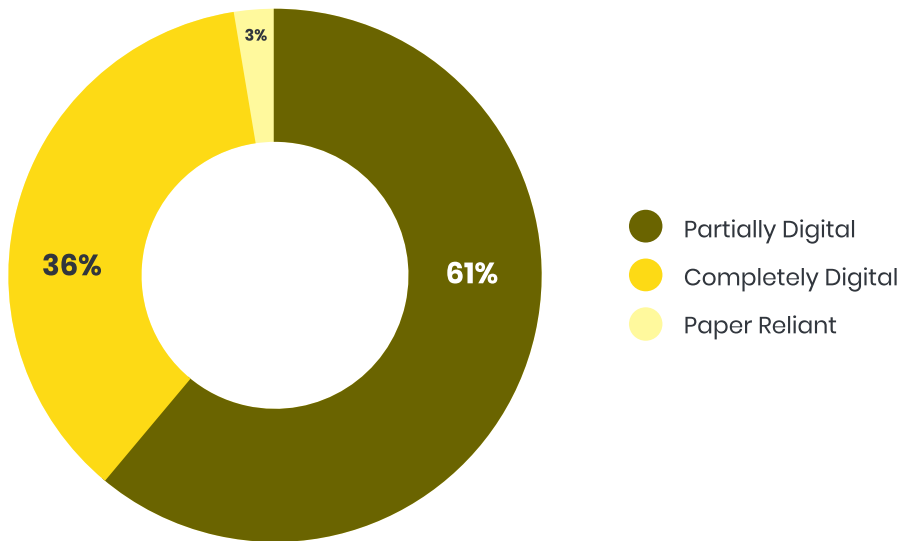
– KATHERINE AUSTIN, DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS, ABODUS

Housing Operations Move Toward Fully Digital Workflows in 2025

36% of institutions are now fully paperless, while 61% operate in hybrid mode, leaving just 3% reliant on paper-based systems.

3%

36%

61%

● Partially Digital
● Completely Digital
● Paper Reliant

Most housing teams are well underway in their digital transformation, with many nearing full implementation. Today, 36% of institutions operate fully paperless, while 61% use a hybrid model, and as we previously covered, 57% manage room change requests online, demonstrating steady progress across key operational areas. While levels of digital maturity vary by process, the overall trend is clear: the industry is moving toward more modern, student-centered systems that support mobile-first expectations and real-time service delivery.

💡

Your Takeaway:

If your team is still relying on paper for key workflows, now's the time to make the switch. Look for digital solutions that integrate across functions from assignments to billing and position your operation to scale efficiently.

Institutions Must Look Beyond Campus Walls

PBSA/PBSH, off-campus transitions, and international growth require new thinking.

Here's what's changing:

The 2025 survey data makes it clear: institutions must look beyond campus walls to stay competitive and meet student needs. From the rise of off-campus housing demand to international enrollment growth and new revenue models, the student housing landscape is no longer confined to residence halls.

This year's findings highlight a shift toward more interconnected, market-aware strategies, with institutions increasingly exploring off-campus offerings, global student support, non-academic year revenue strategies, and diversified approaches to pricing and occupancy management.

✓ Off-Campus Offerings

✓ Global Student Support

✓ Non-Academic Year Revenue

✓ Occupancy Management

What it means for you:

To stay competitive, institutions must embrace a broader, more flexible and comprehensive housing strategy. This year's data reinforces that student expectations, international growth, and evolving housing markets are reshaping how and where students live. Institutions that proactively adapt through market-aligned pricing, differentiated housing strategies, non-academic year revenue opportunities, and off-campus partnerships will be better positioned to meet demand, support diverse populations, and ensure long-term financial sustainability.

Rethinking Occupancy:

Demand Is Growing,
But It's Not All On Campus

As student demographics shift and enrollment rebounds, housing demand is rising, but it's no longer limited to traditional on-campus models. Institutions must now consider how Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA), off-campus partnerships, and international student growth are reshaping where and how students want to live. Understanding occupancy trends in this broader context is key to meeting demand, staying competitive, and creating flexible housing strategies that reach beyond the residence hall.

Occupancy Is Holding Steady, But the Pressure Points Are Shifting

In 2025, student housing occupancy remains strong across the board, but the distribution of occupancy rates is evolving. Institutions reporting occupancy rates of 85–89% increased from 11% to 15%, while those in the 95–96% range declined from 17% to 13%. Notably, the percentage of institutions achieving 99% or higher occupancy rose from 13% to 15%, underscoring sustained demand for well-positioned housing programs.

These changes are not primarily driven by declining enrollment. In fact, total postsecondary enrollment grew by 3.2% in spring 2025 compared to the previous year, with undergraduate enrollment increasing by 3.5%. This suggests that factors such as new housing inventory, student preferences, and strategic de-densification efforts are influencing occupancy patterns.
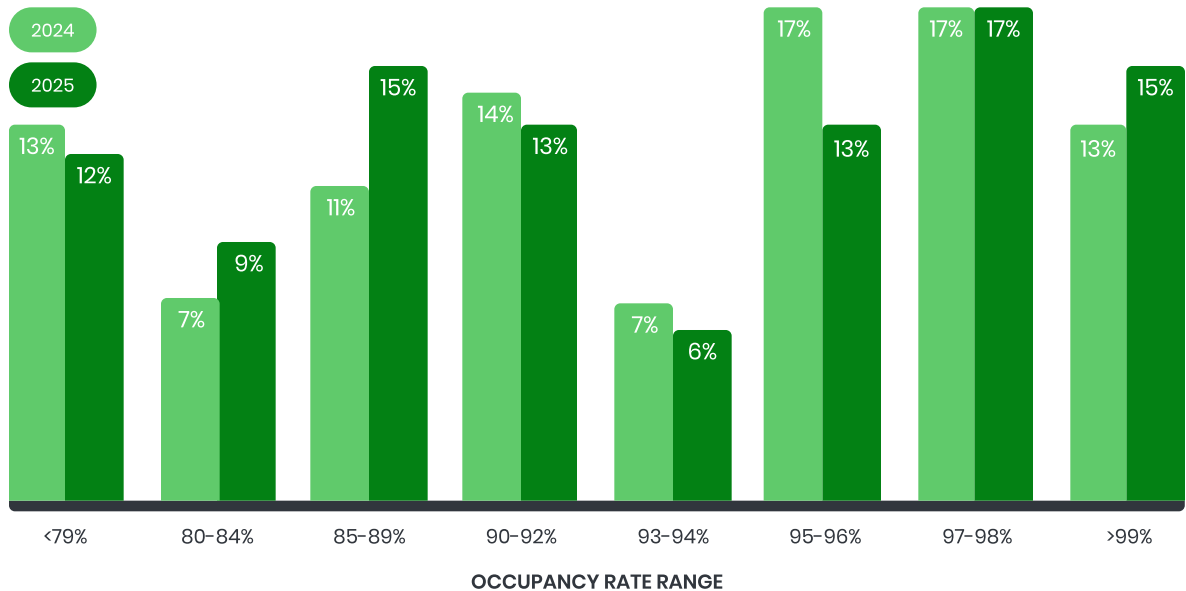
Occupancy Rates Hold Strong with Shifts in Distribution: 2024 vs 2025

Institutions reporting 99%+ occupancy rose from 13% to 15%, while mid-range (85–89%) also grew, showing consistent demand alongside subtle shifts in capacity utilization.

Legend: 2024, 2025

OCCUPANCY RATE RANGE	2024	2025
<79%	13%	12%
80-84%	7%	9%
85-89%	11%	15%
90-92%	14%	13%
93-94%	7%	6%
95-96%	17%	13%
97-98%	17%	17%
>99%	13%	15%

As students explore alternatives like Purpose-Built Student Accommodation or Housing (PBSA/PBSH) and off-campus options, on-campus housing must compete more intentionally on experience, value, and adaptability to maintain high occupancy and long-term appeal.
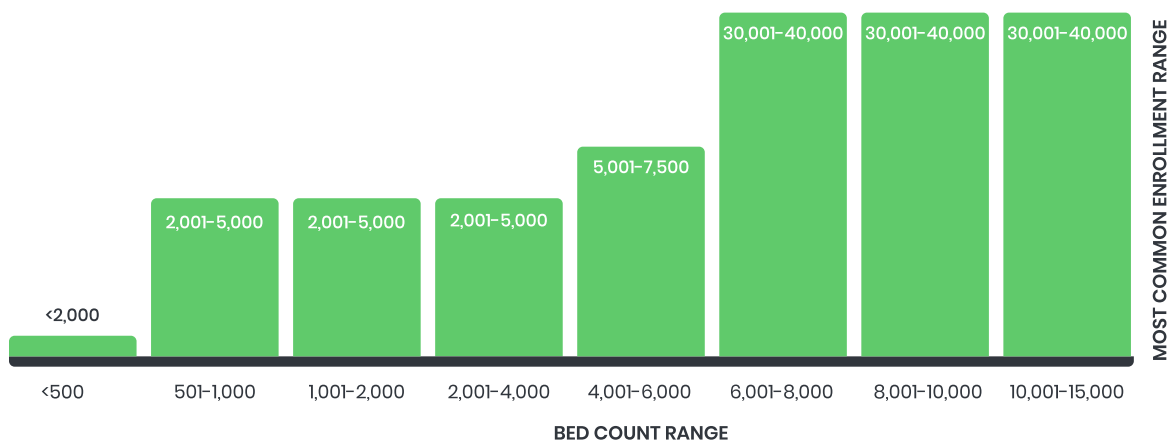
Your Takeaway:

Monitor occupancy trends not just as capacity metrics but as indicators of market alignment. Strengthen your value proposition, revisit density policies, and explore partnerships with off-campus housing platforms to remain attractive in a diversified housing landscape.

Our analysis of institutional data shows a persistent and significant gap between student enrollment numbers and available on-campus housing. Across all bed count ranges, institutions most commonly report enrollment levels that far exceed their on-campus bed capacity. For instance, housing operations with 4,001–6,000 beds most often serve institutions with 5,001–7,500 students, and those with 6,001–8,000 beds are linked to schools enrolling between 30,001–40,000 students. This trend is consistent across ranges, highlighting a widespread strain on campus housing infrastructure.

The On-Campus Housing Crunch:
Enrollment Outpaces Bed Availability

Institutions with 30,000+ students report only 6,000-15,000 beds — leaving up to 70% of students to seek off-campus housing.

MOST COMMON ENROLLMENT RANGE

Bar	Value
<500	<2,000
501–1,000	2,001–5,000
1,001–2,000	2,001–5,000
2,001–4,000	2,001–5,000
4,001–6,000	5,001–7,500
6,001–8,000	30,001–40,000
8,001–10,000	30,001–40,000
10,001–15,000	30,001–40,000

BED COUNT RANGE

Your Takeaway:

On average, nearly 57% of students do not have access to on-campus housing based on the data provided. This demonstrates a compelling need for institutions to rethink how they support students who are inevitably pushed into off-campus living. From planning intentional transitions to off-campus environments to forming partnerships with nearby housing providers and offering more robust support services, universities should treat off-campus life as an extension of the student housing journey, not an afterthought.

Housing Demand Is Leveling Off, & That's Not a Bad Thing

Student housing demand is stabilizing, with a notable drop in institutions reporting "very high" demand (down from 52% in 2024 to 33% in 2025) and a corresponding rise in "moderate" and "high" demand categories. This shift points to a more balanced, predictable housing market.

Industry-wide, this trend mirrors what leaders are calling a "return to pre-pandemic norms." According to Student Housing Business, while rental growth and lease-up velocity have cooled slightly, current performance remains within the top historical ranges—suggesting normalization, not decline.
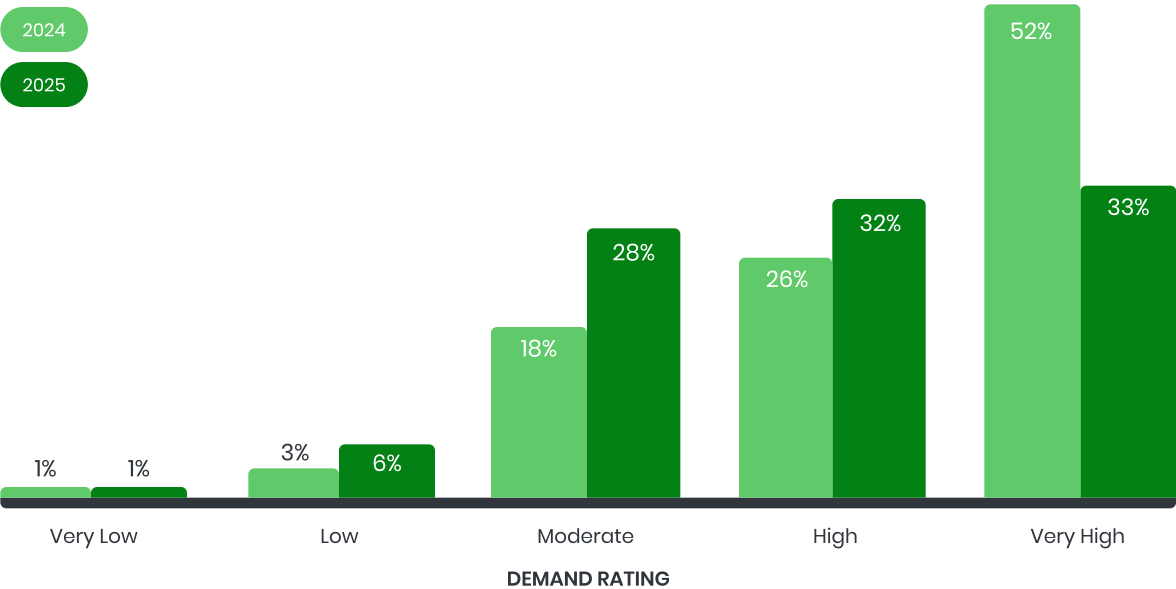
While demand is still strong, institutions must move away from planning for extremes and instead focus on flexible strategies, accurate forecasting, and off-campus alignment to meet evolving student needs without overextending resources.

✓ Flexible Strategies

✓ Accurate Forecasting

✓ Off-Campus Alignment

Student Housing Demand Stabilizes in 2025

Institutions reporting "very high" demand dropped from 52% in 2024 to 33% in 2025, while moderate demand rises by 10 points year-over-year, indicating a stabilizing market.

2024
2025

Demand Rating	2024	2025
Very Low	1%	1%
Low	3%	6%
Moderate	18%	28%
High	26%	32%
Very High	52%	33%

DEMAND RATING

The era of extreme demand may be cooling, but this opens space for smarter, more sustainable planning. Institutions must look beyond their own walls, partnering with private providers, optimizing unit mix, and adapting to changing enrollment patterns.

💡

Your Takeaway:
Use this period of occupancy stability to fine-tune your housing strategy. Model different demand scenarios, assess local market saturation, and align your offerings with enrollment forecasts and student lifestyle preferences.

Pricing with Perspective:
Strengthening On-Campus Competitiveness

As students weigh more living options than ever - including off-campus rentals and commuter lifestyles - on-campus housing must compete on more than just proximity. Traditional cost-based pricing models are giving way to more strategic approaches that consider market trends, student expectations, and local affordability pressures. Institutions are turning to market analysis, competitive benchmarking, and flexible fee structures, including rethinking application fees and deposits, to ensure their pricing reflects real-world value.

> To remain a compelling choice, on-campus housing must align its pricing strategy with both market conditions and the lived experience it offers.
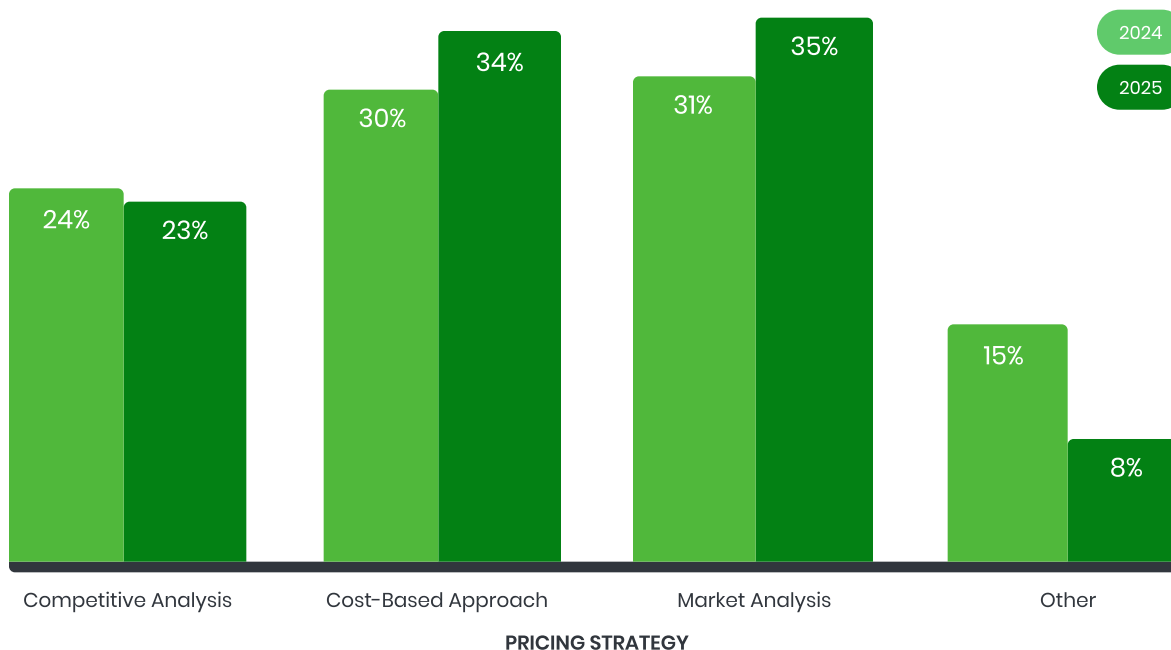
Pricing Strategies Are Getting Smarter & More Market-Driven

Institutions are shifting toward more formal, data-informed pricing strategies that align with both market trends and operational costs. In 2025, use of market analysis and cost-based pricing both increased, while reliance on informal or "other" methods dropped by nearly half. This reflects a growing emphasis on transparency, financial sustainability, and competitiveness, as students increasingly compare on-campus housing options against off-campus alternatives. Institutions that adopt clear, analytical pricing models are better equipped to justify rates, attract residents, and remain responsive to shifting market dynamics.

Housing Pricing Strategies Grow More Data-Driven: 2024 vs 2025

Use of market analysis and cost-based pricing rose in 2025, while informal methods declined, signaling a shift toward transparency and competitive positioning.

Legend: 2024, 2025

Pricing Strategy	2024	2025
Competitive Analysis	24%	23%
Cost-Based Approach	30%	34%
Market Analysis	31%	35%
Other	15%	8%

PRICING STRATEGY

These shifts point to growing consistency and sophistication in pricing practices. Institutions are moving away from loosely defined or historically based approaches and embracing transparent, measurable strategies, helping ensure fairness, sustainability, and competitiveness in a more complex housing market.

💡

Your Takeaway:
Review your pricing model annually using market and cost benchmarks. Eliminate legacy pricing approaches and adopt data tools that align your rates with both student expectations and your institution's financial sustainability.

Application Fees and Deposits Are Standard, But There's a Shift Toward Affordability and Access

While the majority of institutions (71%) still charge an application fee or deposit for student housing, a growing minority (29%) have eliminated these upfront costs, signaling a shift toward greater equity and access. As students increasingly factor affordability and inclusivity into their housing decisions, institutions must carefully evaluate whether their fee structures support or hinder access - especially for first-generation and low-income students. Removing or reducing fees can serve as a competitive advantage and a tangible step toward more student-centered housing practices.

Most Institutions Still Charge Housing Fees in 2025, But Change Is Underway

71% of institutions require an application fee or deposit, while 29% have removed them, reflecting a shift toward more accessible housing practices.

| Fee or Deposit Charged · 71.1% | No Fee or Deposit · 28.9% |

Fees may aid in operations and planning, but waiving them can improve yield and reduce financial barriers. Institutions trying to reach underserved or cost-sensitive student populations may benefit from reevaluating this practice.

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Your Takeaway:

Assess the purpose and impact of your housing fees. Consider flexible models, like refundable deposits or income-based waivers, to support enrollment and access goals without compromising operational efficiency.

How Much Do Fees Really Cost?

Most institutions keep housing application fees and deposits modest. 59% of respondents report fees and deposits represent just 1% of annual housing costs, but a notable 12% charge fees exceeding 4%, which can pose significant barriers for financially vulnerable students. As housing affordability becomes a key decision factor, even small upfront costs can influence where students choose to live, or whether they apply at all. In a competitive and equity-focused environment, institutions must ensure that fee structures are transparent, reasonable, and aligned with their goals for access and retention.

Housing Fees Typically Modest, But Some Pose Barriers in 2025

59% of institutions say fees or deposits equal just 1% of annual housing costs, but 12% exceed 4%, creating potential access challenges for some students.

Legend:
- More than 4%
- 4%
- 3%
- 2%
- 1%
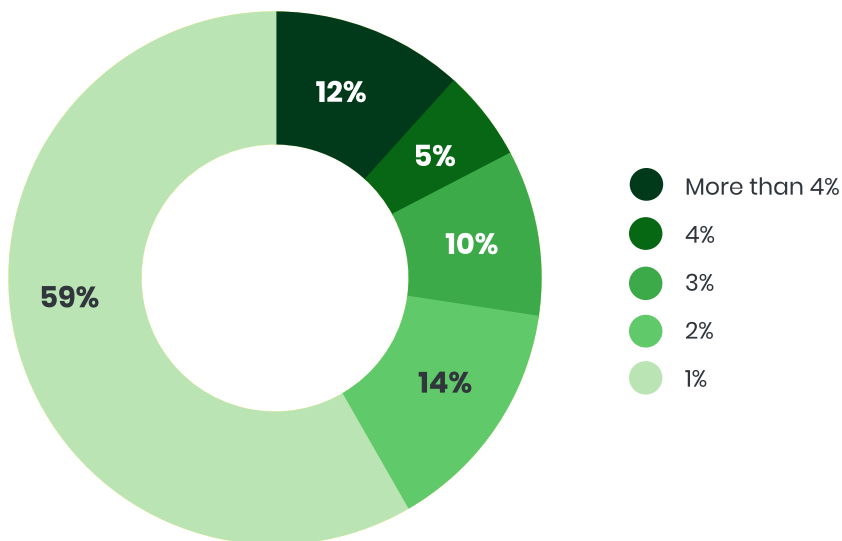
Most institutions are successfully keeping fees accessible, but higher-than-average fees may deter applicants, especially when students are comparing cost across housing options, including off-campus.

Your Takeaway:

Benchmark your fees as a percentage of total cost and consider the student perspective. If your fees are above industry norms, explore ways to scale them back or offer fee waivers without compromising operational integrity.

Global Residents, Local Strategies:

*Rethinking Housing for
International Growth*

As international enrollment rebounds, student housing teams must look beyond campus borders to attract, accommodate, and retain global students. From year-over-year increases in international residents requiring housing to shifting preferences for private spaces and culturally specific needs, supporting this population requires more than just bed space - it demands targeted marketing, flexible housing options, and cross-departmental coordination.

In this section, we explore key data points, including international student occupancy, housing preferences, top markets, and preferred communication channels to help institutions strategically align their housing models with the realities of a global student population.

- ✓ International Student Occupancy

- ✓ Housing Preferences

- ✓ Top Markets

- ✓ Preferred Communication Channels
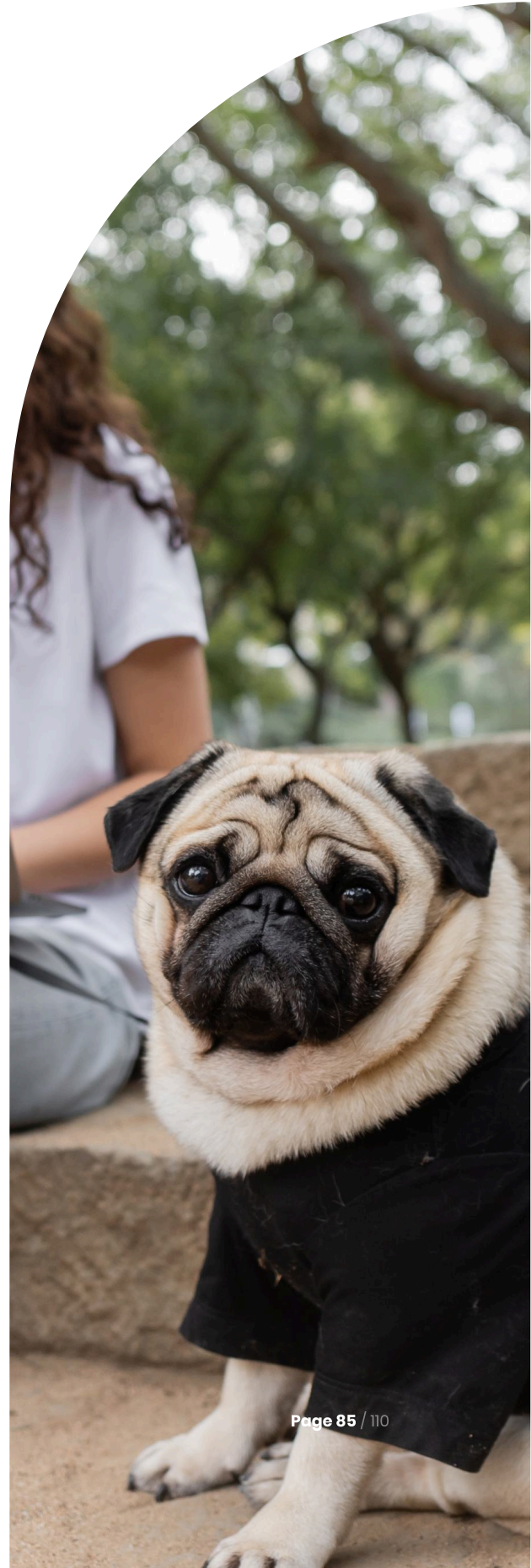
## A Closer Look at International Student Residency

As institutions expand their global reach, understanding where international students live, and how many campuses serve them, is becoming increasingly important. The data shows that over half of institutions (51%) house fewer than 10% international students, while nearly 20% serve international populations of 26% or more. This wide distribution highlights the need for differentiated housing strategies.

> Some campuses may need only modest adjustments, while others require tailored offerings, cultural support, and infrastructure designed for global residents.

International Student Housing Populations Vary Widely in 2025

While 51% of institutions house fewer than 10% international students, nearly 1 in 5 serve populations of 26% or more, highlighting the need for tailored housing strategies.

Legend:
- 76-100%
- 51-75%
- 26-50%
- 11-25%
- Less than 10%
- Unsure / Not Applicable
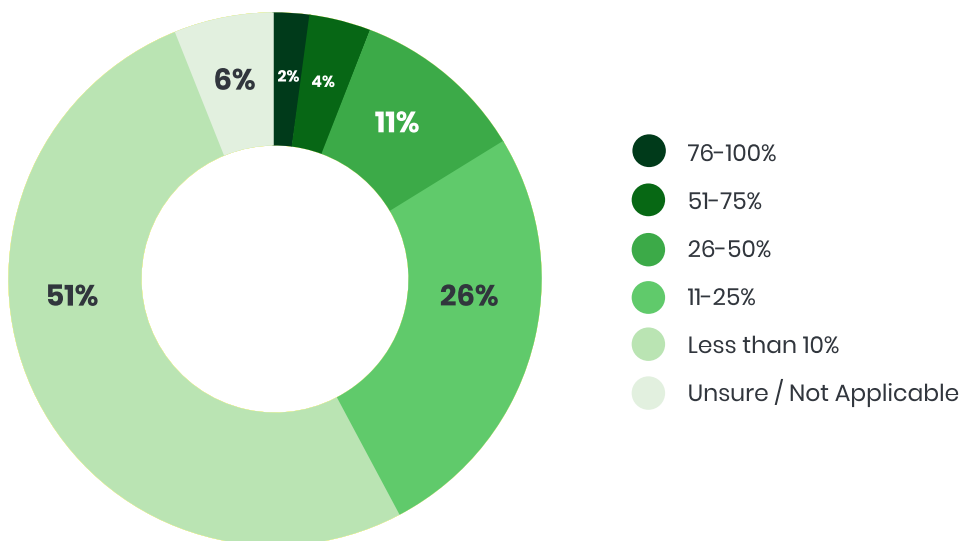
International student populations vary widely across institutions, which means a one-size-fits-all housing strategy won't work. Campuses with higher international enrollment will need more intentional support structures, while those with smaller populations can still benefit from targeted inclusivity efforts.

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Your Takeaway:

Assess your international resident percentage and segment their needs. For institutions with growing international populations, consider investing in multilingual resources, culturally reflective spaces, and partnerships with international student services.

More International Students Are Seeking Campus Housing

With international enrollment rebounding post-pandemic, many institutions are seeing an increase in housing demand from international students. While 47% report no change, nearly 40% of institutions are experiencing growth, including a notable 6% who saw significant increases. This rising demand suggests institutions may need to scale or adapt their housing inventory, particularly for students seeking guaranteed placements, culturally sensitive accommodations, or simpler visa and residency processes.

International Housing Demand Grows for Many Institutions in 2025
Nearly 40% report rising demand from international students, prompting a need to scale housing options and support systems post-pandemic.

Significant Decrease	Slight Decrease	No Change	Slight Increase	Significant Increase
3%	9%	47%	34%	6%
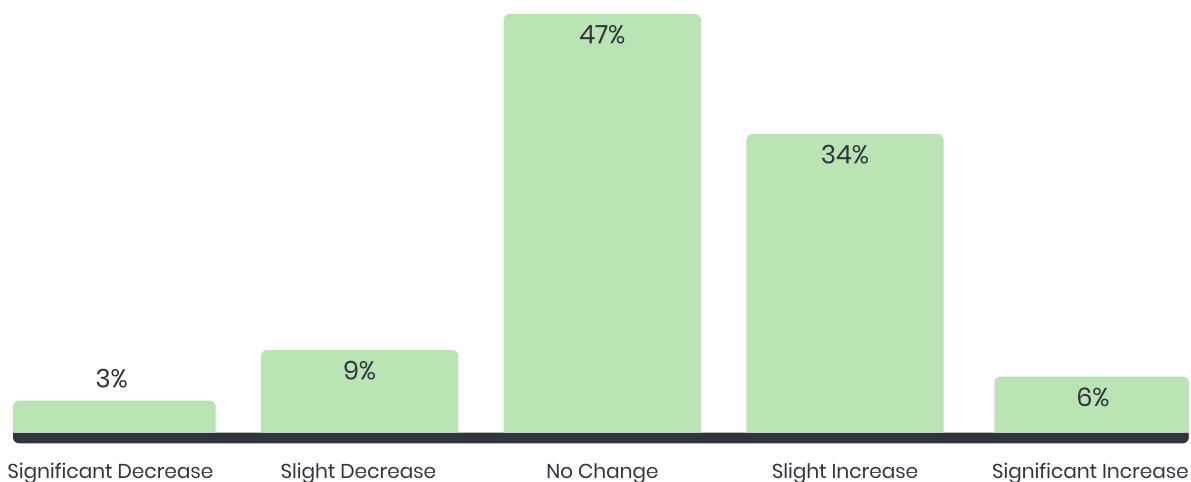
As demand grows, institutions risk falling behind if housing supply or support services don't scale accordingly. Ignoring this trend could lead to unmet needs, negative experiences, or missed enrollment opportunities.

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Your Takeaway:
Proactively plan for increased international housing demand by reviewing capacity forecasts and expanding housing options that offer privacy, safety, and ease of access. Collaborate with admissions and international offices to anticipate surges in specific populations.
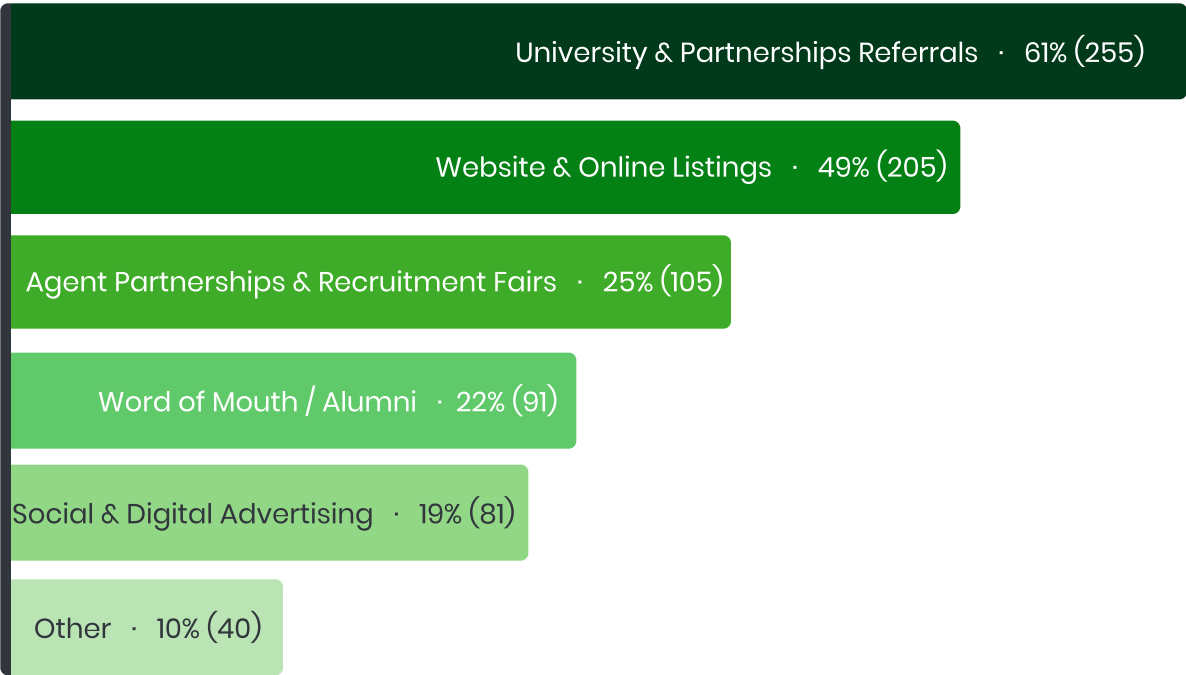
How Institutions Reach International Students:

Trusted Channels Lead the Way

To attract international residents, institutions are relying heavily on trusted networks and digital visibility. The most common strategy is university partnerships and referrals, which offer built-in credibility and established pipelines. Institutional websites and online listings follow closely, underscoring the importance of having clear, accessible housing information for students researching from abroad. These findings point to a strong foundation but also highlight untapped potential in social media and alumni-driven storytelling, which could expand reach and deepen engagement in key regions.

Institutions Prioritize Trusted Channels to Market Housing to International Students in 2025

University partnerships and online visibility lead current strategies, while opportunities remain in social media and alumni storytelling to boost global engagement.

University & Partnerships Referrals · 61% (255)

Website & Online Listings · 49% (205)

Agent Partnerships & Recruitment Fairs · 25% (105)

Word of Mouth / Alumni · 22% (91)

Social & Digital Advertising · 19% (81)

Other · 10% (40)

Institutions that rely solely on traditional channels like referrals and websites may miss students exploring housing options on social platforms or through informal peer networks.

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Your Takeaway:

To reach more international students, strengthen your marketing strategy by incorporating student testimonials, social media content, and alumni ambassadors (particularly in top target regions) to build credibility and visibility across digital touchpoints.

Shared or Private?
Tracking Preferences Among International Students

Understanding international students' living preferences is key to creating housing models that resonate across cultures. The majority of institutions report a strong preference for shared housing, with 33% indicating that most international residents choose shared accommodations, often due to affordability. However, 14% report that students prefer private or studio-style rooms, suggesting growing interest in more independent living. With 29% of institutions unsure about their students' preferences, there's also a clear call for better data collection to guide future housing design and inventory planning.
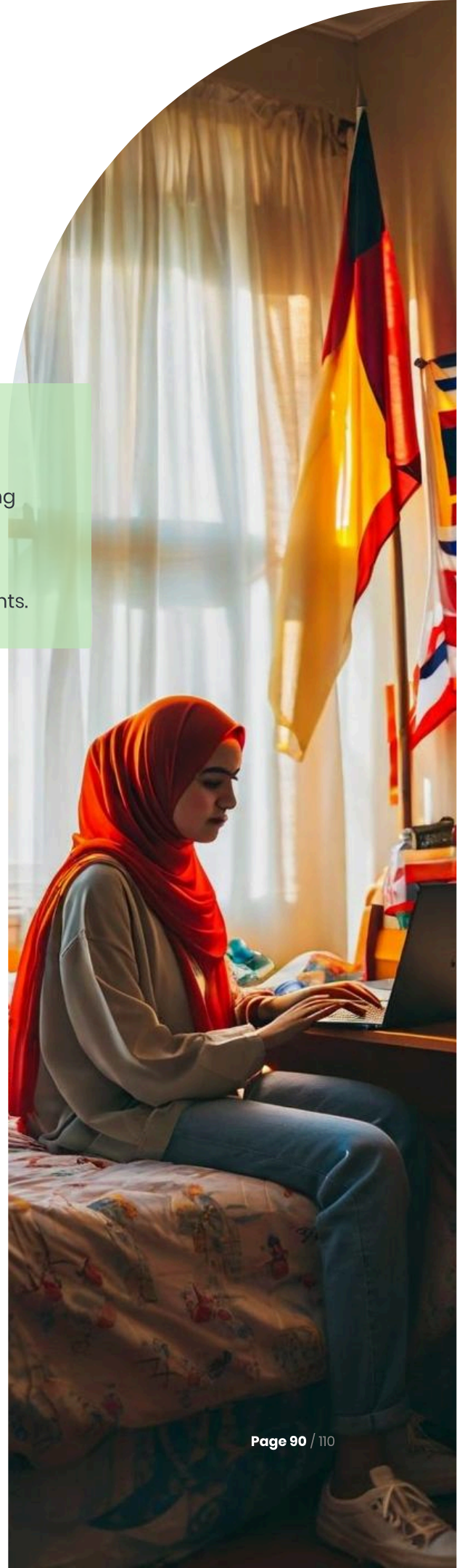
Shared Housing Preferred by International Students, But Data Gaps Remain in 2025

33% of institutions say most international students choose shared housing, while 14% prefer private units and 29% remain uncertain, signaling a need for improved tracking.

Legend:
- Mostly Private
- Even Split
- Mostly Shared
- Unsure / Prefer Not to Say
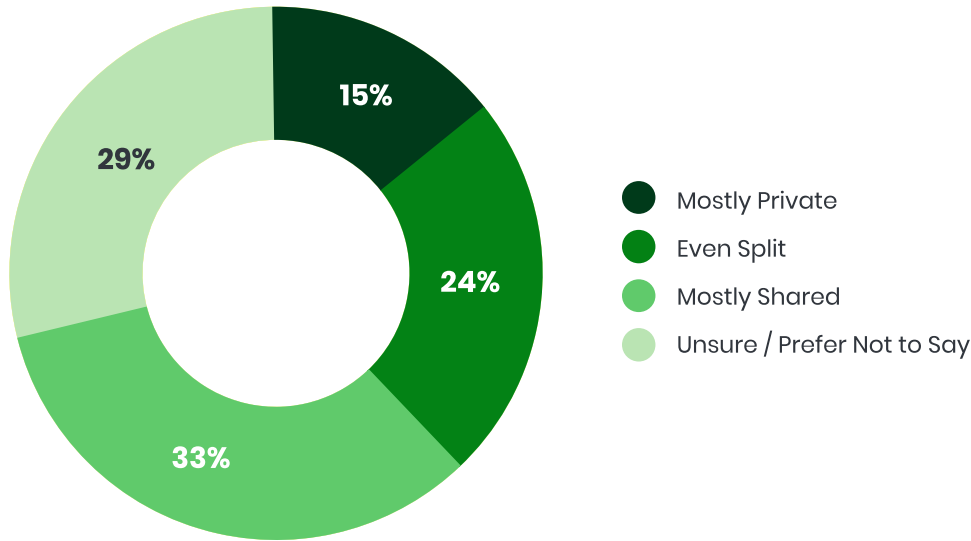
Most international students still choose shared accommodations, but growing interest in private housing and widespread institutional uncertainty suggests a shifting landscape and an urgent need for better data.

Your Takeaway:

Enhance your housing application or post-occupancy surveys to capture accurate preference data by residency status. Use those insights to guide room type investments, set pricing tiers, and shape future housing stock.

# Where Institutions Are Focusing Their International Housing Strategy

To support global recruitment and housing planning, institutions continue to prioritize China and India as top international markets, followed by Europe and Southeast Asia. These regions offer consistent enrollment pipelines and opportunities for long-term engagement.

> While Latin America, North America, and the Middle East receive moderate focus, emerging interest in "other" regions, including Africa and Central Asia, signals that institutions are beginning to diversify their global housing strategies in pursuit of new partnerships and untapped student populations.

China and India Remain Top International Housing Markets in 2025

Institutions continue to prioritize China, India, Europe, and Southeast Asia, while growing interest in emerging regions signals a shift toward more globally diversified housing strategies.

China · 43%

India · 40%

Europe · 38%

Southeast Asia · 31%

Latin America · 28%

North America · 23%

Middle East · 21%

Other · 19%
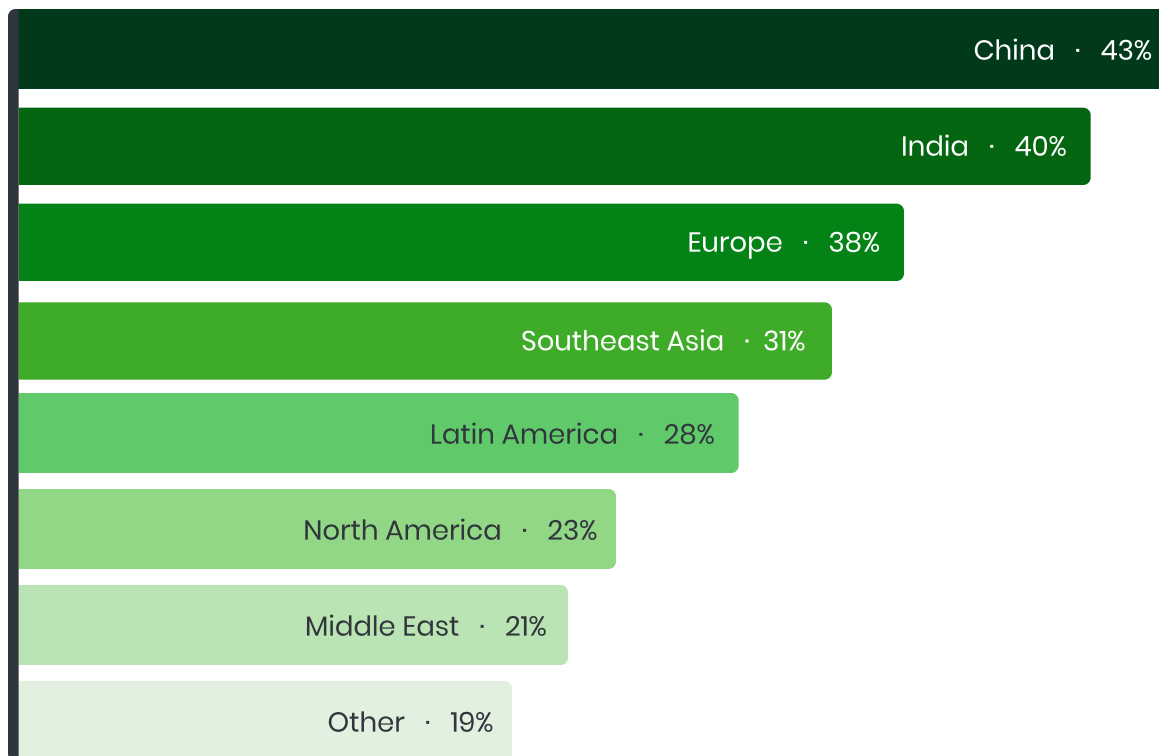
While established markets remain strong, institutions may be over-concentrated in a few regions. There's potential risk in this limited scope, and opportunity in reaching underrepresented markets with tailored housing messaging and services.

Your Takeaway:
Diversify your international outreach by aligning housing support with recruitment efforts in emerging regions. Customize housing content for key markets and offer translated resources or country-specific FAQs to better connect with diverse audiences.

Rethinking Revenue Beyond the Academic Year

As student housing evolves, so too must the financial models that support it. Institutions can no longer rely solely on academic-year occupancy to sustain operations, nor can they depend on summer conferences and short-term housing to fill the gap. The data reveals a decline in non-academic housing revenue, an uneven reliance on event-based income, and a growing need to strategically align housing assets with external partnerships, flexible offerings, and emerging markets. In this section, we explore how institutions are re-evaluating off-cycle revenue strategies and why looking beyond campus walls is critical to long-term financial resilience.

- ✅ External Partnerships
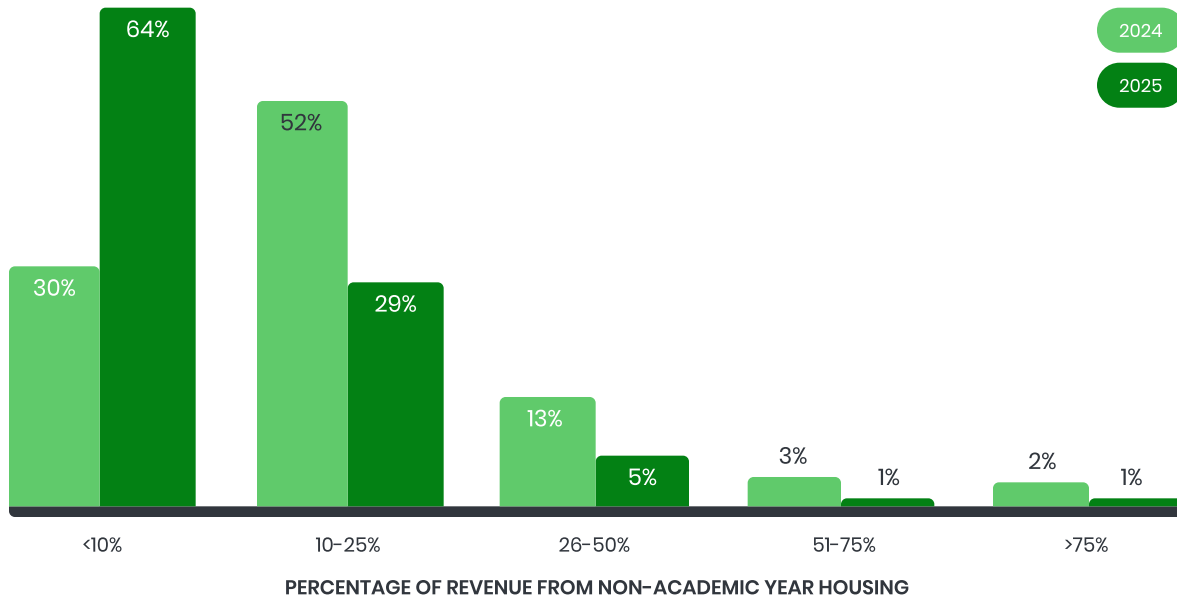
- ✅ Flexible Offerings

- ✅ Emerging Markets

Non-Academic Year Housing Revenue Is an Untapped Opportunity

The contribution of non-academic housing to total revenue has declined significantly, but that presents a clear opportunity for reinvestment and revitalization. In 2025, 64% of institutions reported earning less than 10% of their total housing revenue from summer, conference, or short-term stays - more than double the 30% who said the same in 2024. Only 7% now report earning more than 25% from non-academic housing, down from 18% the year before.

Non-Academic Year Housing Revenue Drops in 2025, Opening Door for Growth

64% of institutions now earn less than 10% of housing revenue from summer or short-term stays (up from 30% in 2024) while high-revenue contributors dropped sharply.

Legend: 2024, 2025

Bars:
- <10%: 30% (2024), 64% (2025)
- 10–25%: 52% (2024), 29% (2025)
- 26–50%: 13% (2024), 5% (2025)
- 51–75%: 3% (2024), 1% (2025)
- >75%: 2% (2024), 1% (2025)

PERCENTAGE OF REVENUE FROM NON-ACADEMIC YEAR HOUSING

Rather than signaling the end of seasonal revenue, this trend points to an underleveraged area with high potential. With the right systems and marketing in place, campuses can turn vacant summer beds into a powerful revenue stream, particularly through conferences, internships, study tours, and pre-term programs.

Your Takeaway:

Don't let non-academic housing revenue fade quietly. Use modern conference and event tools (like StarRez's integrated solution) to centralize bookings, streamline communication, and maximize occupancy during off-peak seasons. A well-run Conference & Events strategy can drive year-round value, support recruitment goals, and increase return on your existing housing assets.

Conference Housing Is an Untapped Revenue Opportunity for Many

While non-academic revenue overall is trending down, 59% of institutions still report meaningful income from conferences and events, proof that with the right model, these programs can strengthen the bottom line. The remaining 41% represent an untapped opportunity: campuses that have yet to unlock the value of seasonal housing, short-term rentals, and event hosting.

Looking to add conference and event housing revenue?

Discover how the StarRez Conference & Events solution helps institutions maximize financial results, simplify logistics, and deliver a seamless guest experience year-round.

[Learn More](#)

Conference and Event Housing Still Contributes Meaningfully in 2025

59% of institutions report revenue from conferences and events, while 41% have yet to tap into this opportunity for supplemental income.

Yes · 59.3%	No · 40.7%

Conference and event housing is a strategic option for campuses with the infrastructure, staffing, and location to support it effectively.

Your Takeaway:

Position conference housing as value-added rather than core revenue. Prioritize academic-year operations while maintaining the capacity to host high-quality, seasonal events where there's clear institutional ROI.

# You Don't Need 100 Events to See a Financial Return

Most institutions (76%) host fewer than 50 events per year (58% just 25 or less), showing that conference and event housing doesn't need to be high-volume to make an impact. At the same time, campuses hosting over 50 events, particularly the 11% running more than 100 annually, are likely seeing major financial returns that help fund academic-year operations.

UNIVERSITY CENTER

Want to enhance your event guest experience while boosting efficiency? See how University Center Chicago used StarRez's Events solution to streamline operations and deliver a more personalized, professional touch to every event.

Read the full story on starrez.com.

Most Institutions Host Fewer Than 50 Events Per Year, But Impact Can Be Significant in 2025

76% of campuses host under 50 annual events, yet those running 100+ (11%) likely realize major returns, demonstrating the scalable value of conference housing.

1-10	11-25	26-50	51-100	101-250	251-500	501+
31%	27%	18%	13%	6%	3%	2%
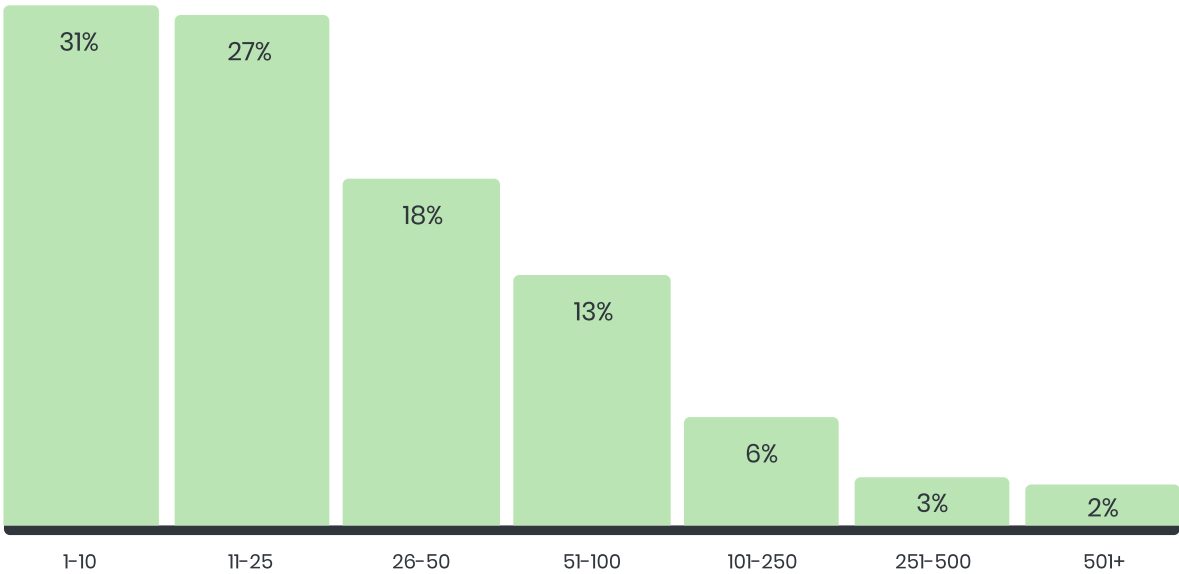
> " Moving to one solution has helped us streamline operations & greatly enhanced the customer experience."
>
> – JAKE HOLTZ, DIRECTOR OF SALES AND OPERATION, UNIVERSITY CENTER CHICAGO

Even modest seasonal programming can drive meaningful revenue, especially when it fills otherwise vacant space and brings new audiences to campus. For institutions with the capacity and strategy to scale, high-volume event hosting can evolve into a powerful, self-sustaining business line.

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Your Takeaway:

Start small with a focused summer or shoulder-season event strategy. Build momentum, then scale operations gradually with the right systems, staff, and tools in place. A platform like StarRez makes it easy to manage events of any size, so you can grow your program without overextending your team.

Housing and Summer Rentals
Are the Heart of Event Revenue

When it comes to monetizing the conference and events season, housing is the top driver: 161 institutions report hosting conferences on campus, while 144 offer summer housing rentals. This reinforces that short-term occupancy is the go-to strategy for turning unused beds into supplemental income.

Short-Term Housing Drives Revenue During Conference & Events Season in 2025

Most institutions boost income by hosting conferences (161) and offering summer rentals (144), turning vacant beds into valuable short-term revenue.
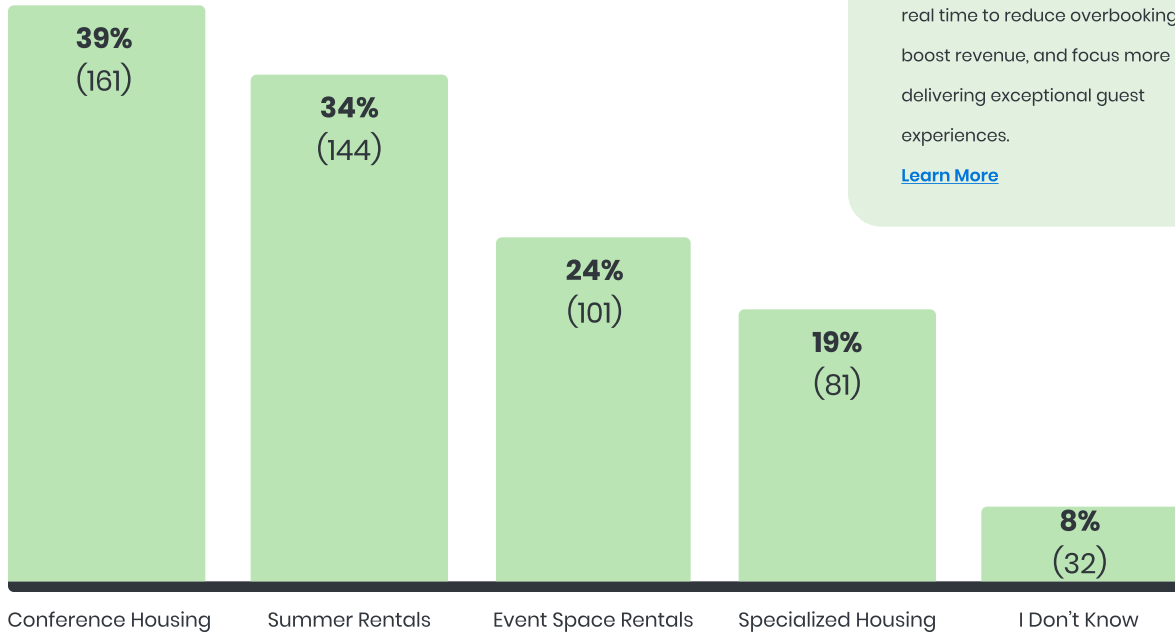
Maximize occupancy with StarRez Channels: our one-stop platform to manage 450+ OTA listings like Airbnb, Expedia, and Booking.com. Synchronize inventory, pricing, and availability in real time to reduce overbookings, boost revenue, and focus more on delivering exceptional guest experiences.

[Learn More](#)

39%
(161)

34%
(144)

24%
(101)

19%
(81)

8%
(32)

Conference Housing   Summer Rentals   Event Space Rentals   Specialized Housing   I Don't Know

Event season revenue relies heavily on making physical housing assets work harder during the summer. However, over-reliance without a scalable model can strain resources or lead to inconsistent results.

Your Takeaway:

Build a flexible summer housing strategy that includes pricing tiers, targeted marketing (e.g., youth programs, professional development, research groups), and clear revenue goals. Ensure it's integrated with maintenance and turnaround plans to protect academic-year readiness.

Leveraging Off-Campus Housing for Positive Outcomes

Off-Campus Strategy:
A Growing Piece of the Housing Puzzle

With housing demand rising and on-campus space often maxed out, institutions are beginning to recognize the strategic value of off-campus purpose-built student accommodation (PBSA). Yet, only 17% of institutions currently leverage an off-campus housing strategy, while

Looking to simplify off-campus housing for your students?
Partner with College Pads to provide a trusted, student-friendly platform that connects renters with verified listings and streamlines the entire off-campus housing experience.
Learn More

83% still rely solely on campus-managed housing. This signals a major opportunity: as more students seek flexible, high-quality living options, schools must look beyond campus borders to meet expectations and maintain satisfaction.

Off-Campus Housing Strategies Remain Underutilized in 2025
Only 17% of institutions currently use off-campus housing to meet student demand—revealing a major opportunity to expand capacity and enhance satisfaction.

Using P3s · 17.5%	Not Using P3s · 82.5%

Institutions that don't incorporate PBSA into their housing strategy risk falling behind as students seek better options elsewhere, especially in urban or high-demand areas.

Your Takeaway:
Develop a formal off-campus housing strategy that includes vetted PBSA partnerships. Collaborate with trusted off-campus housing platform providers to extend your housing ecosystem while ensuring consistency in student support and experience.

Housing Extends Beyond the Campus Gate & Management Models Are Evolving

When institutions offer off-campus housing options, they're increasingly doing so through diverse management models. Some retain direct oversight to extend the student experience off campus, while others rely on third-party management to scale without stretching internal teams.

> This variety reflects a growing awareness that student housing isn't limited to residence halls, and the way it's managed should evolve to reflect that.

**Unify and Simplify Complex Housing Ecosystems with AI**

StarRez AI supports a seamless on- and off-campus experience by connecting data across housing types, identifying student support gaps, and helping institutions manage complex resident journeys with greater insight and care.

[Learn More](#)

Off-Campus Housing Management Models Diversify in 2025

Institutions balance direct oversight with third-party partnerships to support off-campus housing—expanding the student experience beyond traditional residence halls.

Legend:
- Different Department
- Third Party
- Housing Office
- Not Applicable

10% — 38% — 49%
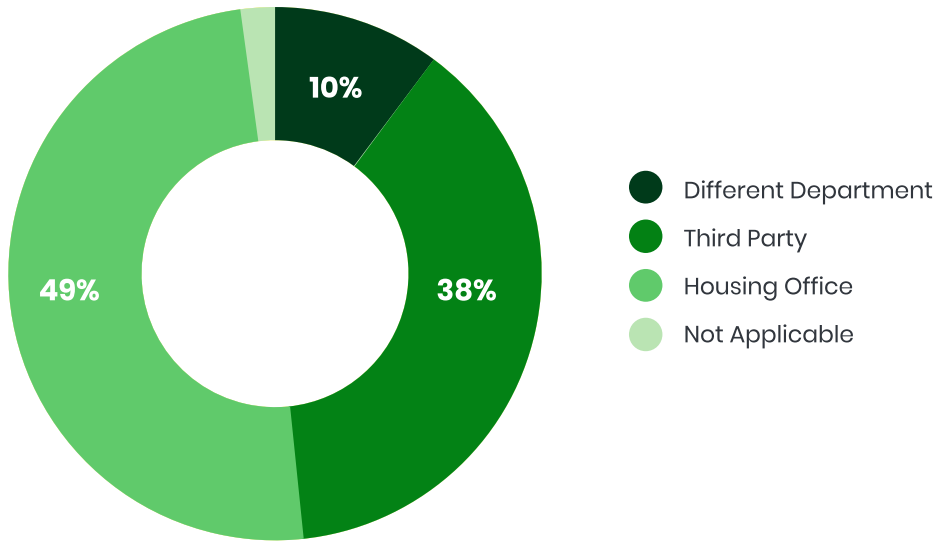
To support students across their full housing journey, institutions must adopt flexible management structures that maintain service quality, regardless of location.

Your Takeaway:
Evaluate your capacity to manage off-campus housing in-house vs. through external partners. Prioritize consistency in communication, safety, and student support across all housing types to deliver a seamless experience.
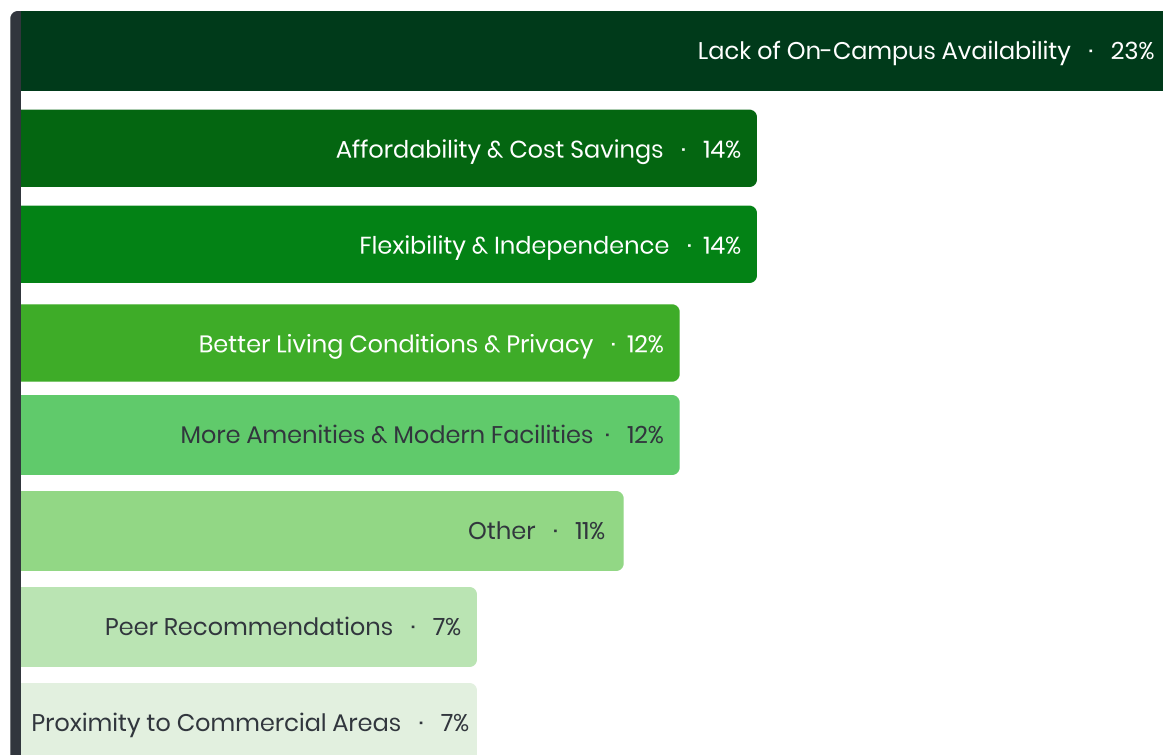
Why Off-Campus Living Is Gaining Ground

The student push toward off-campus housing isn't just about lifestyle, it's about availability. Lack of on-campus space is the top driver, but students also cite privacy, independence, and better amenities as reasons for going off campus. The message is clear: off-campus housing isn't just overflow, it's becoming the housing of choice for many.

Availability, Privacy, and Amenities Drive Off-Campus Housing Choices in 2025

While limited on-campus space remains the top reason, students increasingly prefer off-campus options for greater independence, privacy, and upgraded living features.

Lack of On-Campus Availability · 23%

Affordability & Cost Savings · 14%

Flexibility & Independence · 14%

Better Living Conditions & Privacy · 12%

More Amenities & Modern Facilities · 12%

Other · 11%

Peer Recommendations · 7%

Proximity to Commercial Areas · 7%

If institutions fail to recognize off-campus housing as a somewhat preferred (and not just necessary) option, they risk losing students to providers that offer more appealing, student-focused experiences.

Your Takeaway:

Work with PBSA partners to co-create options that align with your campus culture and values. Partner with an off-campus housing platform to centralize and verify listings, simplify the search process, and help students make informed decisions as first-time renters. Ensure that students moving off campus can still access campus services, orientation materials, and a sense of belonging.
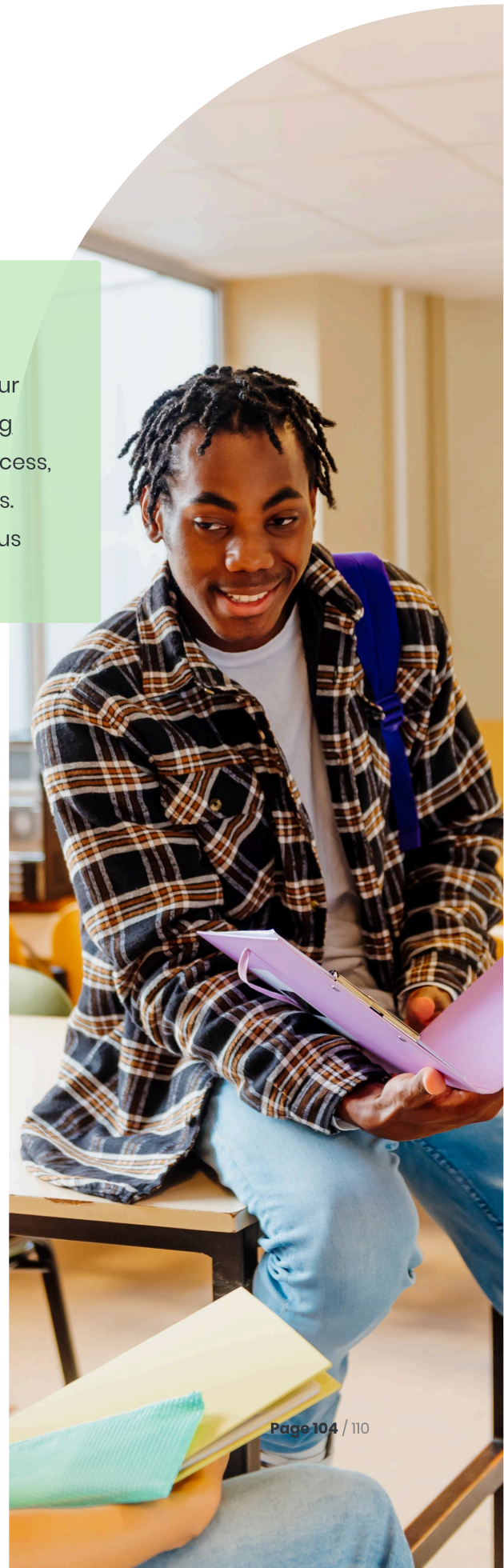
The Rise of BTR and Co-Living:
A Wake-Up Call for Student Housing Leaders

As more students explore off-campus options, Build-to-Rent (BTR) and Co-living communities are becoming increasingly competitive, especially in urban areas where these models offer modern amenities, flexible leases, and appealing lifestyle experiences. While 27% of institutions report moderate to high competition, nearly a third (29%) are unsure, highlighting a major knowledge gap in how these alternatives could impact traditional housing demand.

Build-to-Rent and Co-Living Competition Rises in 2025
27% report moderate to high competition from off-campus lifestyle housing, while 29% are unsure—signaling a need for greater market awareness and strategy.

Unsure	Nonexistent	Low	Moderately High	Extremely High
29%	10%	18%	27%	16%
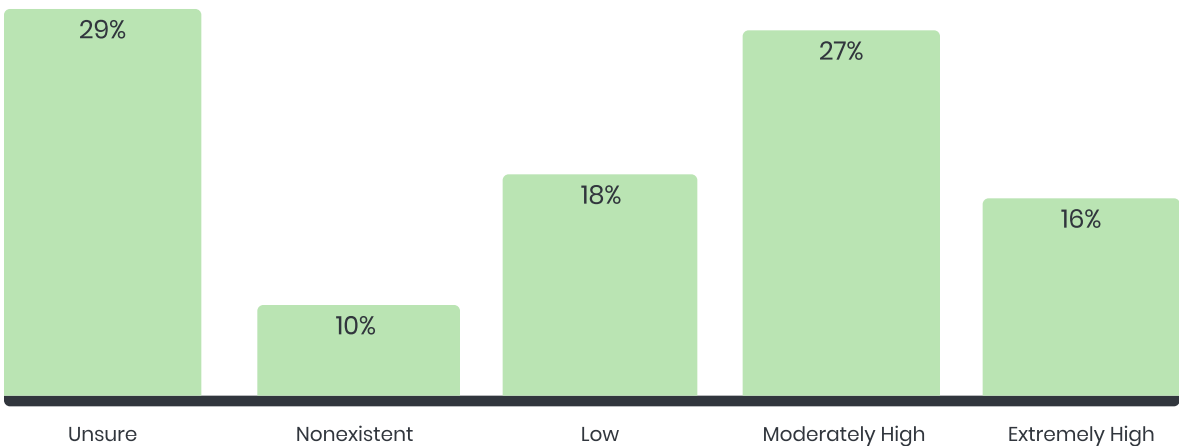
Institutions that overlook emerging housing competitors may lose students to off-campus options that offer more convenience, autonomy, or value. Without a clear understanding of the broader housing ecosystem, it's difficult to support students - or remain competitive.

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Your Takeaway:
Start treating off-campus housing as a strategic extension of your student experience. Build internal visibility into local BTR and Co-living markets, and consider how a cohesive on- and off-campus housing strategy can help you retain students and support them, wherever they choose to live.

Looking Forward:
Staying Ahead in 2025 & Beyond

As the 2025 data makes clear, the student housing industry is evolving and transforming. From shifting student expectations to operational demands and strategic opportunities beyond the residence hall, institutions are navigating a more complex, student-centered landscape than ever before.

1. Student-Centered Design is the New Standard

What We Learned:

- ✓ Privacy, mental health support, and belonging are now core expectations.
- ✓ Apartment-style housing and single rooms are increasingly preferred.
- ✓ Emotional Support Animals (ESAs), accessibility needs, and inclusive communities are shaping housing preferences.
- ✓ Living Learning Communities (LLCs) are proving to be high-impact drivers of satisfaction and retention.

2. Staff Resilience Requires Strategic Investment

What We Learned:

- ✓ Staff satisfaction and retention are rising, but workloads and compensation remain critical challenges.
- ✓ Institutions that track and act on staff feedback are achieving better outcomes.
- ✓ Lean undergraduate staffing models are becoming the norm, while RAs remain a scalable solution for resident support.

3. Operational Maturity Drives Student and Staff Success

What We Learned:

- ✓ Paperless processes, automation, and smarter roommate matching are correlated with better satisfaction and retention.

- ✓ Self-selection is now the norm for returning students, while first-year matching needs balance and support.

- ✓ Partial automation is the sweet spot for efficiency without losing the human touch.

4. Beyond the Hall: Expanding Your Housing Vision

What We Learned:

- ✓ Students are living (and wanting to live) beyond the campus more than ever.

- ✓ Off-campus transitions impact wellness, retention, and connection. PBSA and co-living are rising forces in the housing market.

- ✓ International students expect private, culturally aware, well-communicated housing support.

Final Thought

The institutions leading the future of student housing are those who listen deeply, act boldly, and adapt continuously. Whether it's transforming physical spaces, reimagining operations, or redefining student support, your next move matters.

> Because when housing works, students thrive, staff stay, and your whole community rises.

Get The 2025 Readiness Checklist

Looking to turn insights into action? The 2025 Readiness Checklist distills the most important takeaways from this year's report into a practical, easy-to-use tool your housing team can reference year-round. From optimizing operations to supporting off-campus transitions, this checklist will help you assess your strengths, spot opportunities, and stay ahead of industry trends.

Click below to download your copy of the checklist and start planning smarter today.

Get the Readiness Checklist

Student-Centered Design is the New Standard

Staff Resilience Requires Strategic Investment

Beyond the Hall: Expanding Your Housing Vision

Operational Maturity Drives Student and Staff Success

Ready to Evolve Your Housing Strategy On and Off Campus?

Whether you're looking to enhance the student experience, reduce staff burnout, streamline operations, or expand your off-campus housing footprint, StarRez is here to help. Our global-leading housing and residential community software empowers institutions to deliver seamless, student-centered experiences both on and off campus.

Talk to a StarRez representative today to explore how we can support your next phase of growth.

StarRez

StarRez is the global market leader in student housing software and residential community management. Its easy-to-use, all-in-one platform integrates all aspects of housing management, from application to occupancy to maintenance, providing a seamless experience for occupants and administrators alike. StarRez offers our community members both the robust capabilities of a large organization and the care, knowledge, and personalized service of a small business.

With offices in the United States, Australia, and the UK, StarRez is a trusted partner of more than 1,300 community members across 25+ countries, managing more than 3 million residents. Visit starrez.com to learn more.

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