

STUDENTS & MONEY



VARSITY
VIBE

Student Spend Report 2025

ABOUT THIS REPORT

The Varsity Vibe Student Spend Report provides valuable insight into the student economy on an annual basis. As South Africa's first and most reputable student discount platform, Varsity Vibe has access to over 1.7 million students whose input is vital to this study.

In conjunction with the identification of primary sources of income and the categorizing of student expenditure, the following report speaks to the general spending behaviour among the student population and provides an opinion on what this behaviour may indicate about South African youth and their relationship with money.



WHO RESPONDED?

13 780 REPOSSESSES

22%
First Year

25%
Second Year

25%
Third Year

12%
Fourth Year

11%
Post-grad

4%
Part-time

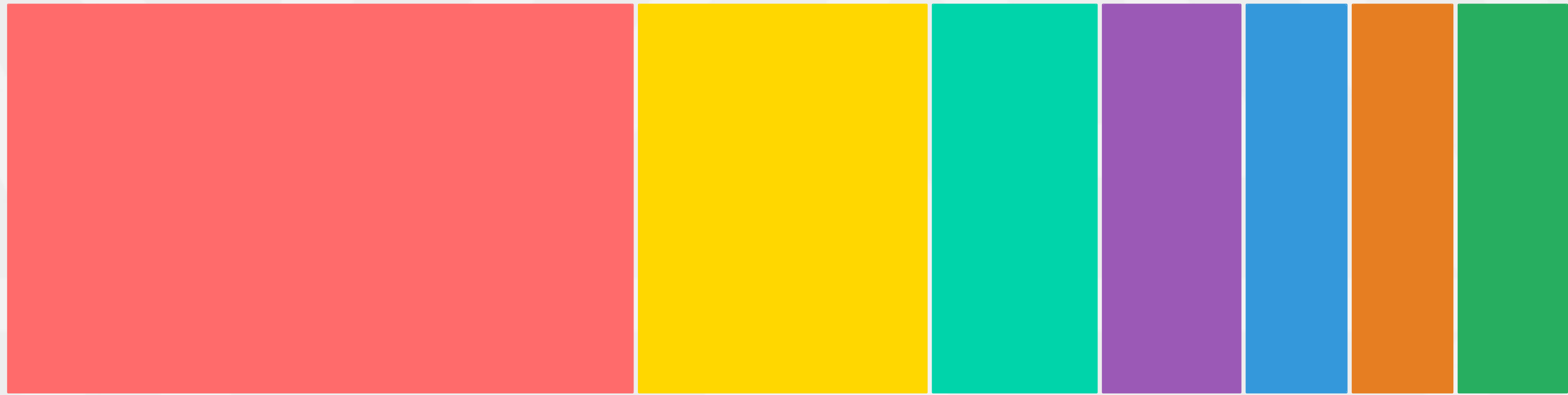
WHERE ARE THEY FROM?

Of the 13 780 respondents, 45% come from Gauteng, 18% come from the Western Cape and 11% come from Kwa-Zulu Natal.

With regards to the distribution of qualifications among respondents, 22% are Commerce students, 15% are Humanities students and 11% are Education students.

WHERE IS THE MONEY GOING?

Average monthly spending breakdown:



R3 729

Rent

R1 717

Household

R977

Clothing

R820

Entertainment

R595

Grooming

R594

Travel

R646

Savings+

Betting: R40 • Mobile: R318 | TOTAL AVERAGE MONTHLY SPEND

R9 436



Students were most shocked by the cost of groceries and cleaning (44.92%), food (32.90%) and travel (25%).

They were least surprised by the cost of electricity and gas (10%), household appliances (9%) and tech and gadgets (8%).

While tech, gadgets and household appliances are once-off costs normally covered by parents or included in furnished accommodation, meaning students rarely engage with these costs, electricity and gas are recurring with one unit costing between R2.50 and R4.75.

Students may not be surprised by this cost because it is either included in their rental or covered and paid for directly by a third party.

GOOD TIMES COME FIRST

Only 13% of respondents were shocked by the cost of social events and only 17% were shocked by the price of entertainment.

Though the cost of all goods and services continues to rise, it appears that students in South Africa prioritise experiences more than previous generations did and are more willing to part with their money if it guarantees a good time.

HOW IS UNIVERSITY FUNDED?

43%

Bursaries

Monetary reward/grant for educational expenses

33%

Financial Aid

Government/institutional/private funding for tuition & living

31%

Parents/Family

Direct family support for university costs

Note: Categories overlap — students may draw on multiple funding sources simultaneously.



THE REAL COST

4/10

Students rate living on a student budget

Mental health suffers the highest impact at 21% followed by the social life of respondents at 18% and finally, diet at 16%.

Suffering the least at only 7% was the grades of the respondents. It is evident that students value their education and see a need to prevail despite their circumstances.



KNOW IT. DO IT.

Most students are informed on ways to acquire financial assistance and of the importance of budgeting. Implementation seems to be the only area where students are struggling.

76% of respondents know how to apply for financial aid, 60% of respondents know their monthly university fees and 62% of respondents budget monthly.

Of the respondents who budget monthly, however, only 18% stick to the budget while 19% do not. The remaining 62% only stick to the budget sometimes.

Most students are informed — implementation is the challenge.

76%

Know how to apply for financial aid

62%

Budget monthly

60%

Know their monthly university fees

LET'S TALK BUDGETS

OF THOSE WHO BUDGET — DO THEY STICK TO IT?

Always: 18%

Sometimes: 62%

Never: 19%

GLASS HALF FULL?

61%

When asked what they believe their chances of finding work are, 22% of respondents said they would definitely find work, 46% said they'd probably find work, 28% responded with maybe and only 0.56% responded saying they don't think they'd find work. Despite youth unemployment rates in South Africa sitting at 61%, students remain optimistic.

LIFE AFTER GRADUATION

63%

Unemployed for a long period

59%

Not finding any work

47%

Job not in field of study

14%

Not finding job in field

11%

Adapting to work-life balance

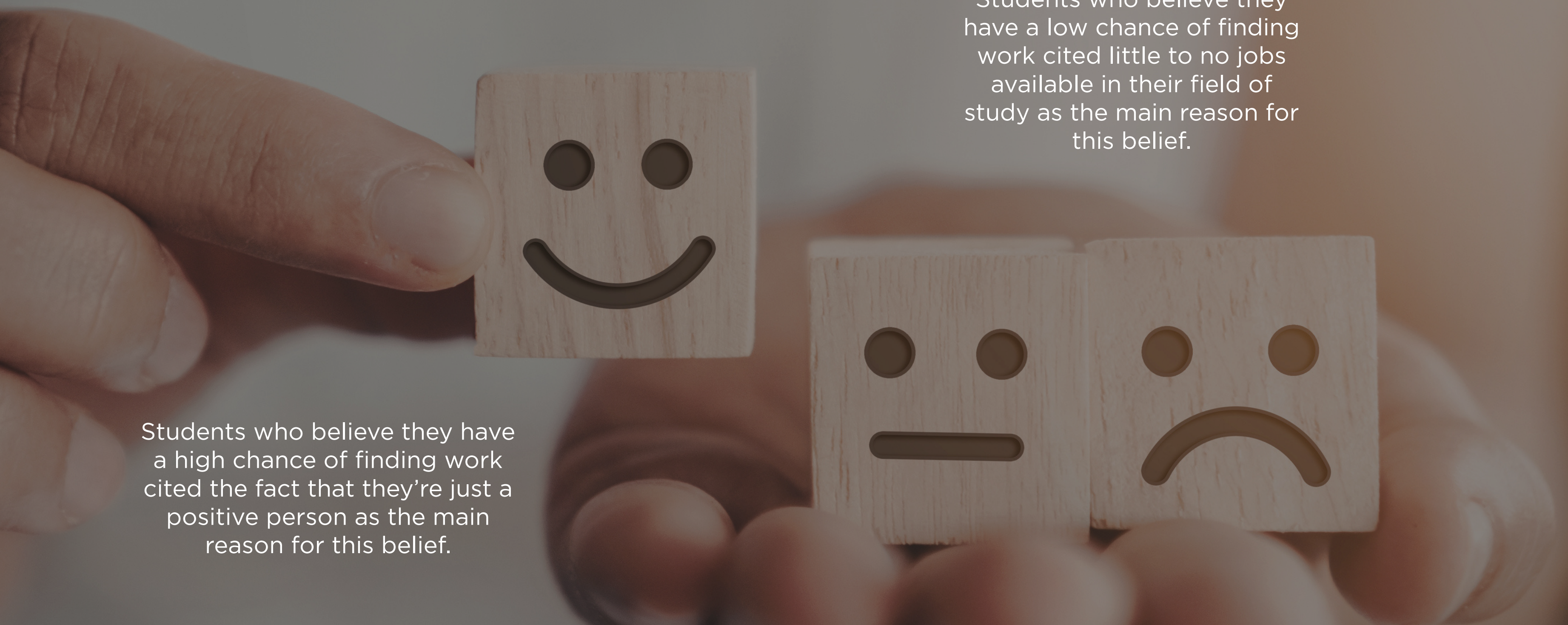
Very few students worry about work-life balance students are focused on the fundamentals: Finding employment.



MIND OVER MARKET

Students who believe they have a low chance of finding work cited little to no jobs available in their field of study as the main reason for this belief.

Students who believe they have a high chance of finding work cited the fact that they're just a positive person as the main reason for this belief.



WORTH IT?

98%

Though students are deeply unsatisfied with the standard of living on a student budget, an overwhelming majority still believe that university is worth it.

Students see the benefits of tertiary education beyond academics as 35% say attending university helps develop personal growth and soft skills like critical thinking and communication.



KEY TAKEAWAYS

Students spend more than they earn, but prioritise academic success above all.

Most students know how to budget, but struggle to follow through.

Bursaries & financial aid are critical, but awareness gaps remain.

Students are cautiously optimistic despite a 61% youth unemployment rate.

98% still believe university is worth it.



**Have any questions?
We'd love to hear from you**
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Varsity Vibe connects over 800,000 South African students and youth with brands, through exclusive deals and discounts. Varsity Vibe has helped over 200 brands build lasting relationships with the youth market, driving sales and revenue, throughout its 13-year history.

