

Santa Monica College

Student Housing Market and Demand Analysis Updates

May 4, 2026

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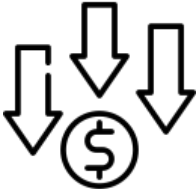
1.

Overview

Strategic Objectives



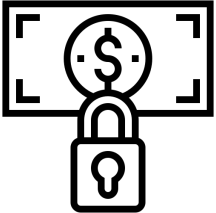
Increase student retention



Provide cost effective housing and basic needs and concerns for student's financial viability



Support financial viability (break-even) for SMC



Improve financial accessibility for students

2026 Updates

The following qualitative and quantitative research efforts were undertaken to assess updated demand, unit preferences, and rent tolerances for new student housing for SMC students:

- Intercept Interviews
- Online Survey
- Rental Market Analysis
- Demand Analysis



2.

Intercept Interview Summary

Student Intercept Interviews (March 10, 2026)

Two Volz Company consultants conducted tabling on March 10, 2026, from 9:30 AM–1:00 PM at the Basic Needs Resource Fair and 1:30–3:30 PM outside the library.

Interviewee Profile

- Predominantly traditional college-aged (18–22); Majority are single with no dependents.

Campus Environment

- SMC campus has a strong, engaging atmosphere with students showing high levels of connection and enthusiasm for campus life.

Living Situation & Affordability

- Most students live at home and have limited exposure to the rental market due to affordability constraints.
- Students are highly cost-conscious and consistently gravitate toward the most affordable housing options.

Current Housing & Location Preferences

- For students who already rent, there was a trend of living near UCLA in purpose-built student housing.
- Strong familiarity with the Bundy campus, with many viewing it as a desirable housing location.

Transportation

- Many students rely on public transit to commute to campus.

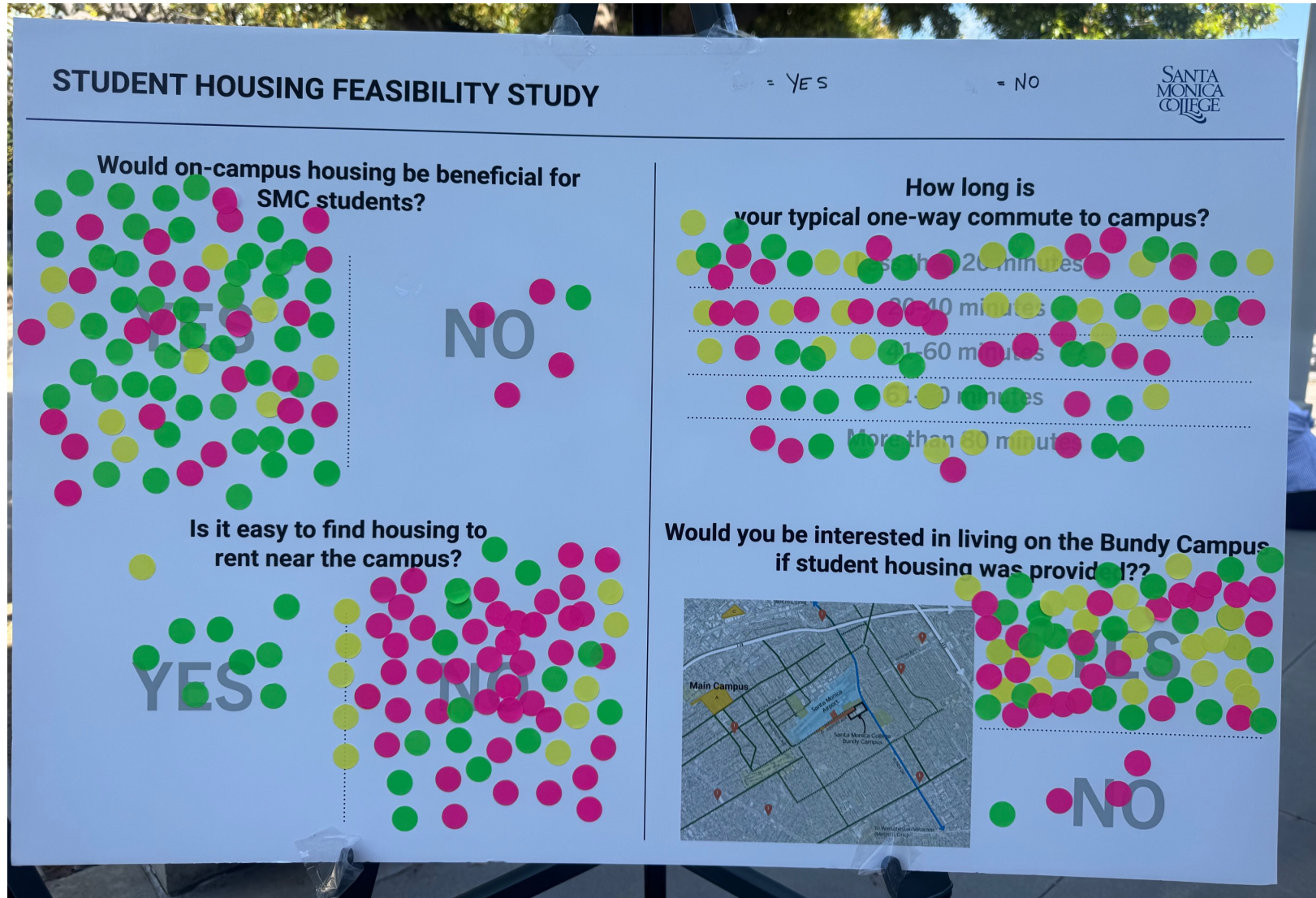
Unit Type Preferences

- Semi-suite units generated the most interest due to added privacy and in-unit bathrooms.
- Traditional singles were appealing, but many ultimately selected doubles due to lower cost.
- 4BR units with double occupancy were often perceived as too crowded.

Diverse Needs Among Renters

- A smaller group of current renters preferred more independent options (Studio/1BR Apartment) and showed interest in similar unit types if offered.

Student Intercept Interviews (March 10, 2026)



Note: sticker color variation does not indicate distinct categories or values.

Student Intercept Interviews (March 10, 2026)

WHICH UNIT TYPE DO YOU PREFER? – SINGLE STUDENTS

SANTA MONICA COLLEGE

Please place a sticker under your preferred unit type and rent.

Unit Type	Price	Occupancy	Bedrooms	Bathrooms	Kitchen/Lounge
Traditional Double	(\$)	2 People Per Bedroom	1 Bedroom	0 Bathrooms	A Big Common Kitchen, Lounge and Bathroom
Traditional Single	(\$\$)	1 Person Per Bedroom	1 Bedroom	0 Bathrooms	A Big Common Kitchen, Lounge and Bathroom
4BR Apartment Double	(\$\$)	2 People Per Bedroom	4 Bedrooms	2 Bathrooms	1 Kitchen / 1 Living Room
Semi-Suite Single	(\$\$)	1 Person Per Bedroom	2 Bedrooms	1 Bathroom	A Big Common Kitchen and Lounge
4BR Apartment Single	(\$\$\$)	1 Person Per Bedroom	4 Bedrooms	2 Bathrooms	1 Kitchen / 1 Living Room

Community Bathroom

Community Kitchen

Community Lounge

Note: sticker color variation does not indicate distinct categories or values.

3.

Survey Findings

Online Survey

- Duration: March 11 – March 27, 2026
- Total Responses: 2,412
- Distributed to all current students via student emails and Instagram advertisement
- Margin of Error: $\pm 1.9\%$



Santa Monica College is assessing interest in providing quality, affordable student housing on the campus. This brief survey is designed to solicit your input about desirable unit types, rates, and amenities.

To show our appreciation for you taking the time to complete the survey, we are offering ten (10) awards of \$50 and one (1) award of \$500 to randomly selected respondents who complete the survey and enter a drawing. Please respond, even if you do not anticipate ever living in student housing. Your input will inform the decision-making process and have an impact on the future of the potential student housing.

This survey is confidential. Responses will be analyzed and reported in a manner that protects the identity of respondents. You must be a current student to take the survey and, of course, your participation is voluntary. Thank you for participating. Remember, your feedback matters!

Enrollment Status

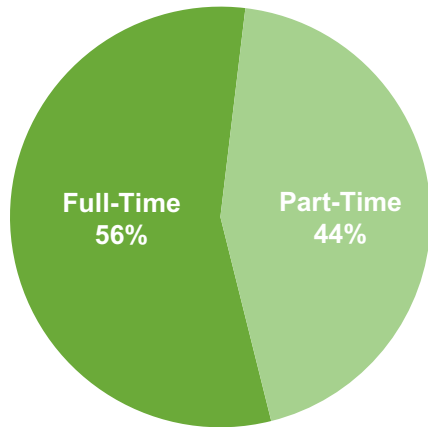
Full-Time vs. Part-Time

There is an 8-percentage point increase in full-time representation relative to the 2023 survey. In Spring 2025, 37% of credit students at Santa Monica College were enrolled full-time (12 or more units).*

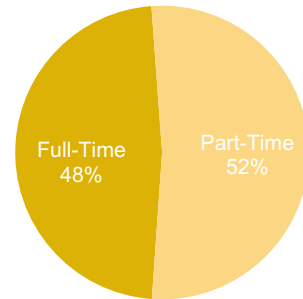
Interest in Enrolling Full-Time If Student Housing Were Provided

In 2026, 54% of part-time students indicated they would consider enrolling full-time (12+ units) if student housing were provided at Santa Monica College, demonstrating sustained interest in increased course load tied to housing availability. This is consistent with the 2023 survey (55%).

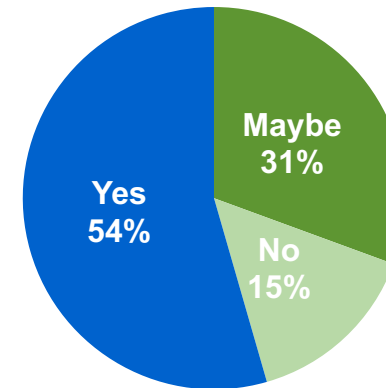
Enrollment Status (2026)



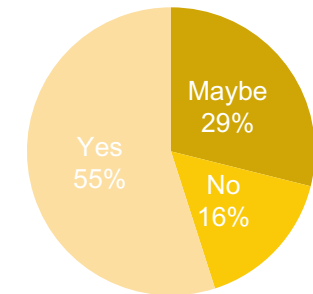
Enrollment Status (2023)



Interest in Enrolling Full-Time If Student Housing Were Provided (2026)



Interest in Enrolling Full-Time If Student Housing Were Provided (2023)



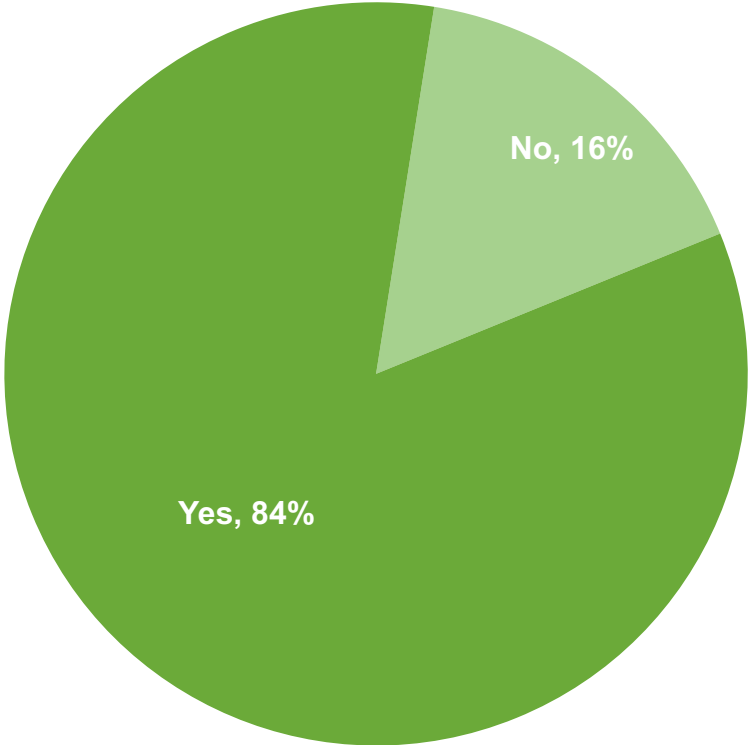
*Data from California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart was used to compare against the survey profile.

Enrollment Status

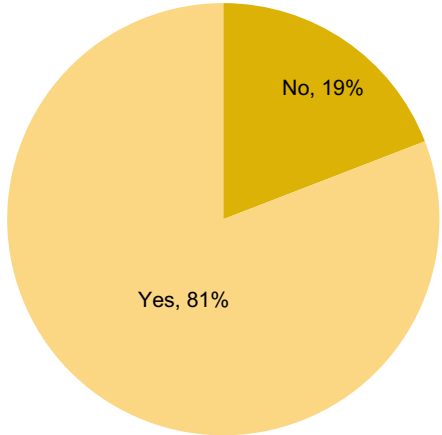
Intention to Transfer to a Four-Year

84% of respondents in 2026 indicated plans to transfer to a 4-year institution, up from 81% in 2023—a 3 percentage point increase.

Intention to Transfer to a 4-Year (2026)



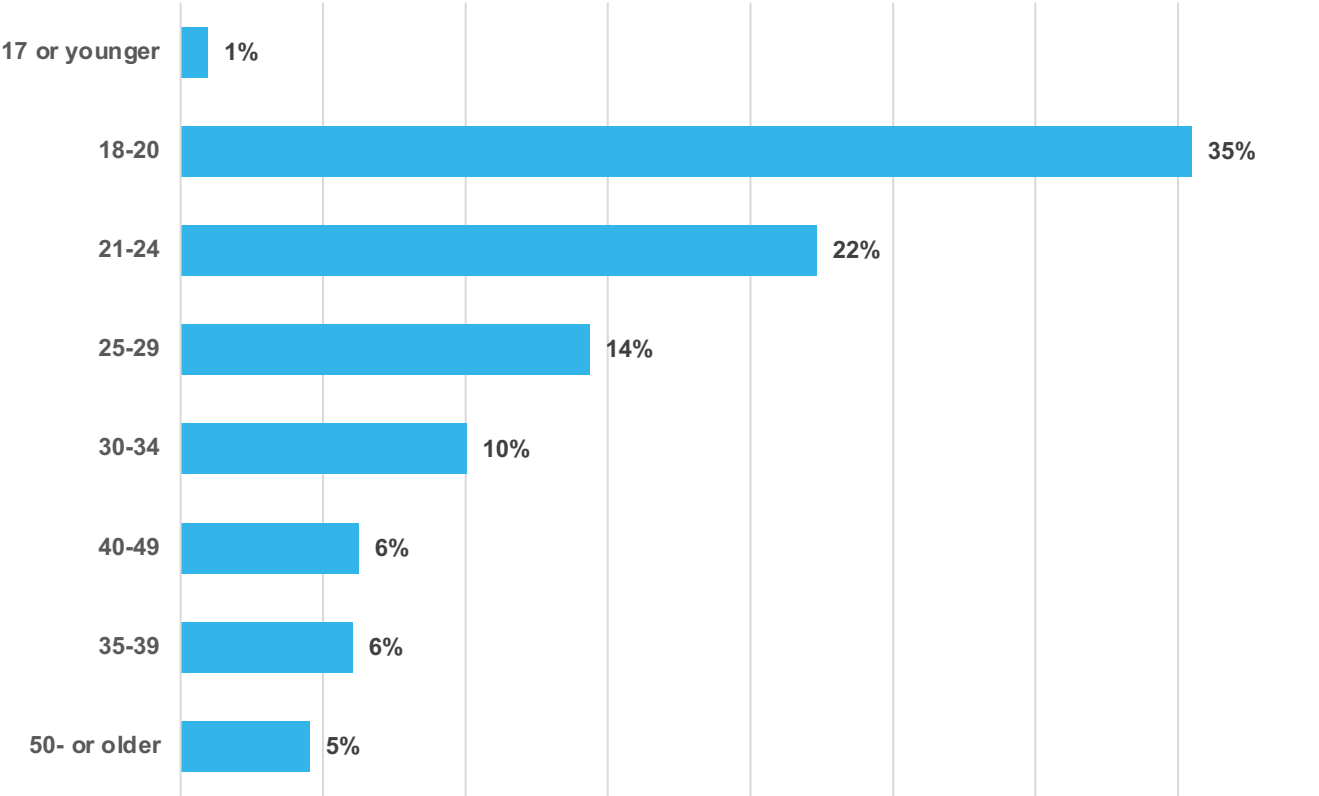
Intention to Transfer to a 4-Year (2023)



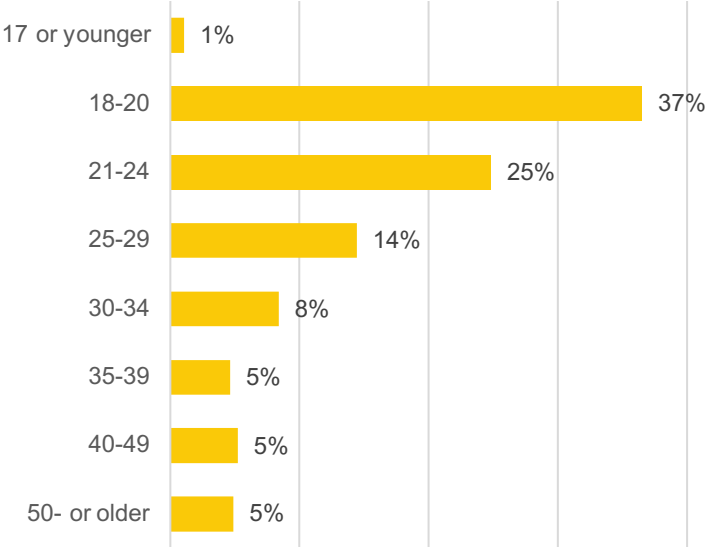
Age

The respondent base remains predominantly traditional college-aged, with 57% between ages 18–24, closely aligning with Spring 2025 enrollment data, in which 56% of the student population was under age 24.

Age (2026)



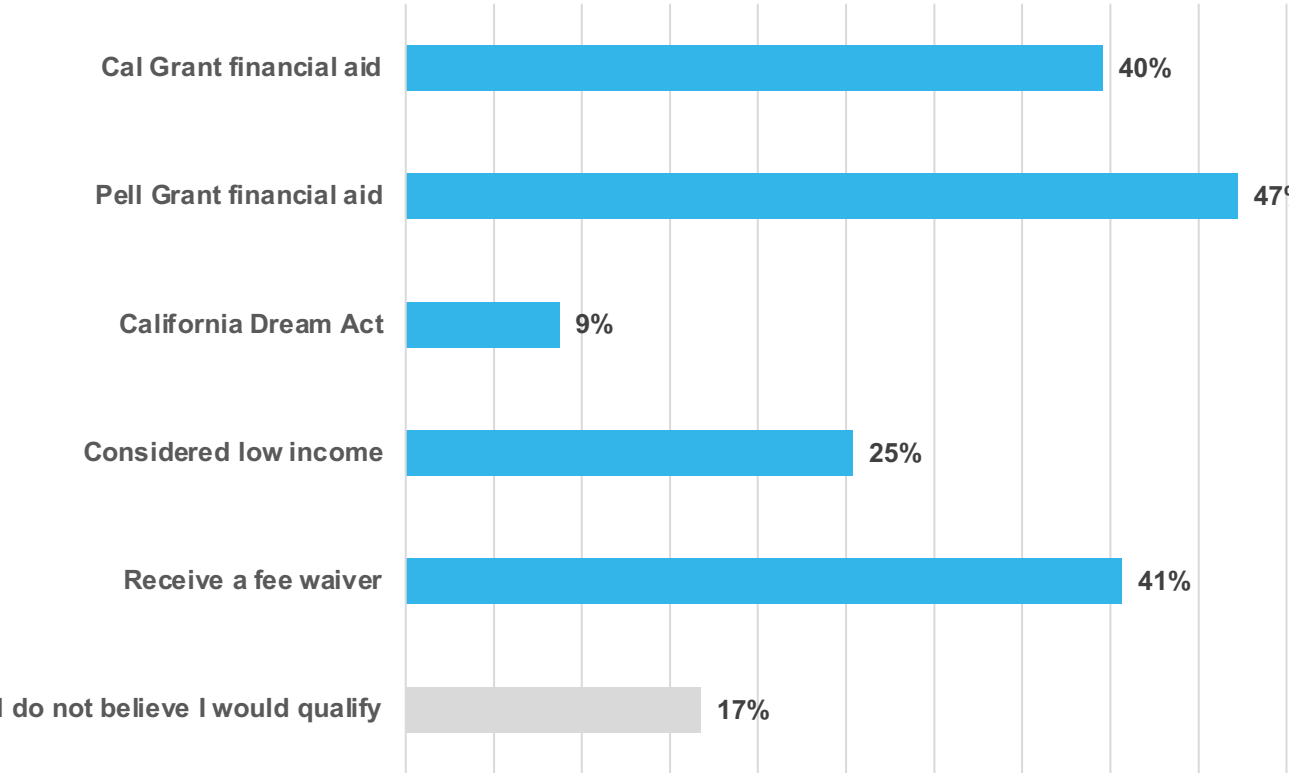
Age (203)



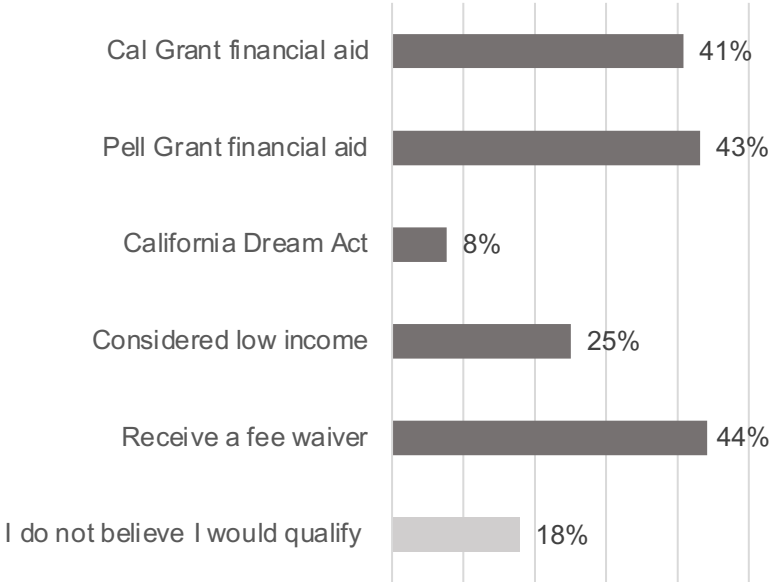
Low-Income Students

83% of respondents are considered low-income students and meet the eligibility criteria for the California Community Colleges Affordable Student Housing Construction Program. Overall, the respondent profile remains consistent with the 2023 study.

Students Eligible for Low-Income Criteria (2026)*



Students Eligible for Low-Income Criteria (2023)*

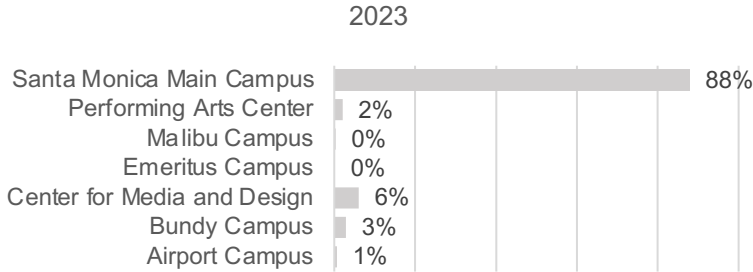
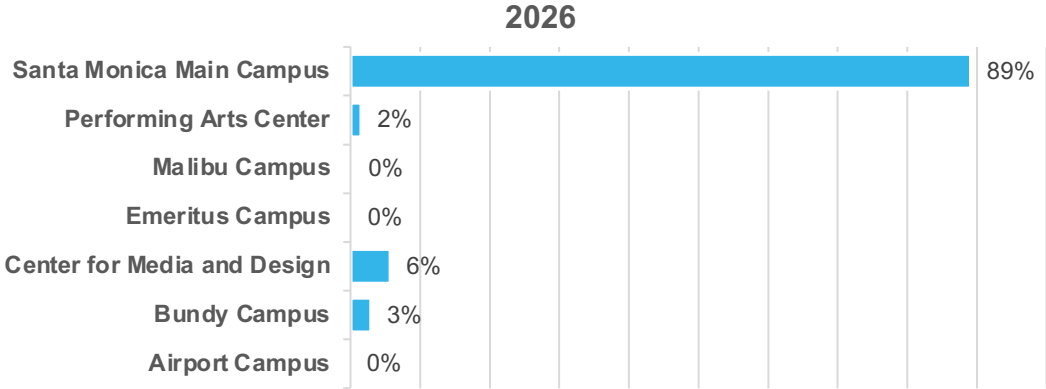


*Respondents could select one or more of low-income criteria that apply. The "I do not believe I would qualify" option was exclusive.

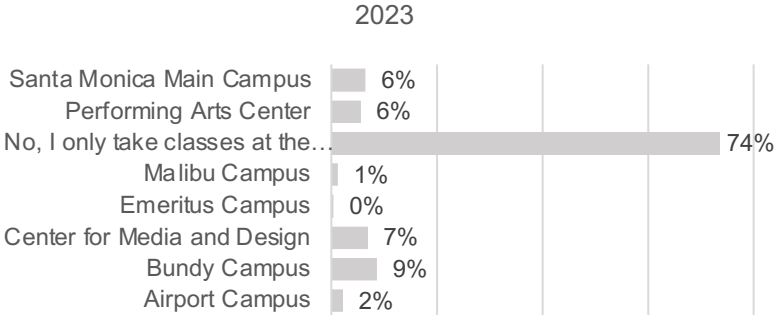
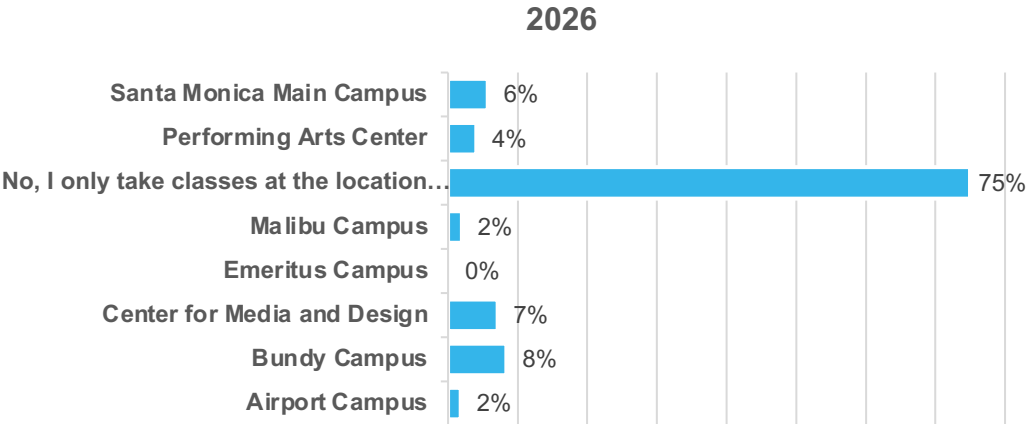
SMC Campus Location

The 2026 results show that class activity remains highly concentrated at the Santa Monica Main Campus, with 89% of students taking the majority of their classes there—essentially unchanged from 88% in 2023.

Where do you take the majority of your classes?



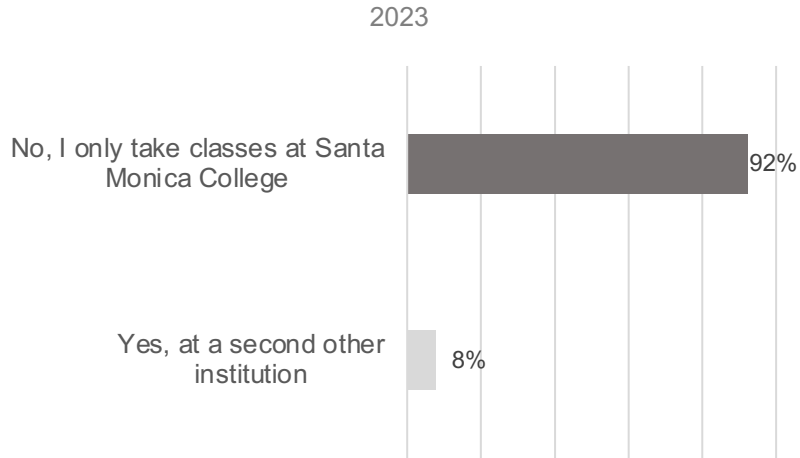
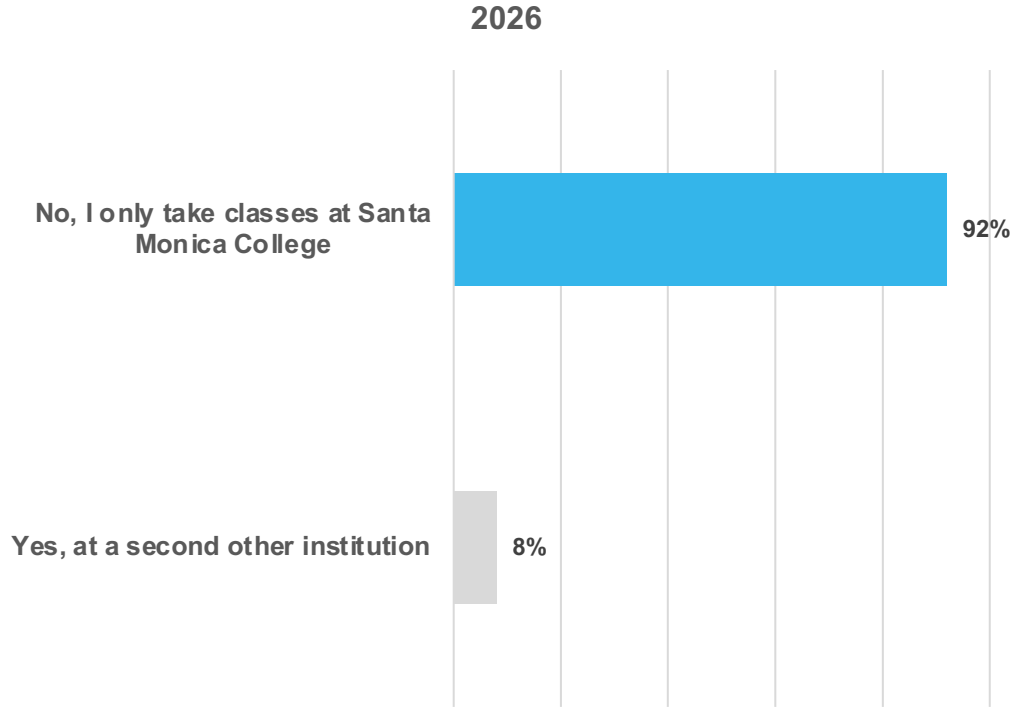
Do you take classes at any other location of Santa Monica College? Select all that apply.



Campus Location – Other Institutions

The 2026 results indicate that the vast majority of students remain exclusively enrolled at Santa Monica College, with 92% reporting they do not take classes at any other institution—unchanged from 2023.

Do you take classes at any other college, university, or educational institution?

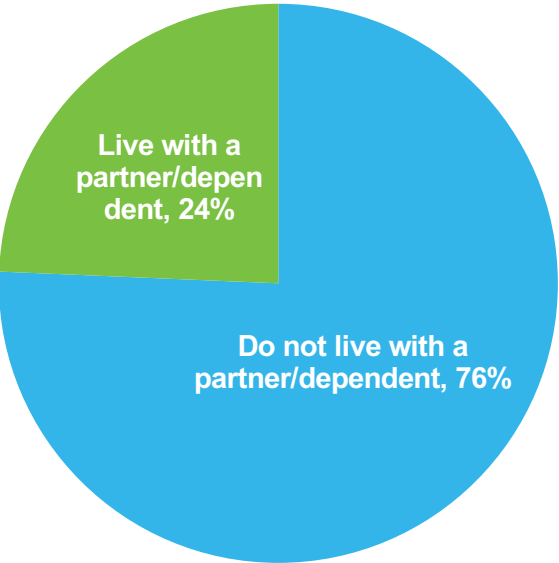


Current Living Conditions

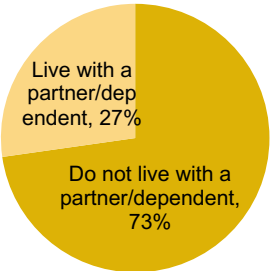
Majority of Students Not Living with a Partner/Dependent

The respondent base is predominantly single, with 76% not living with a partner or dependent.

Household Composition (2026)



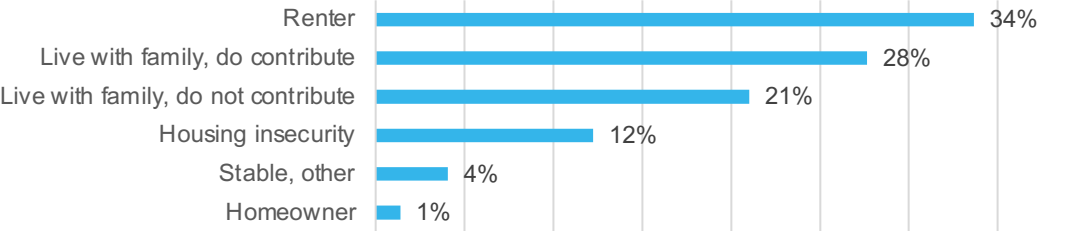
Household Composition (2023)



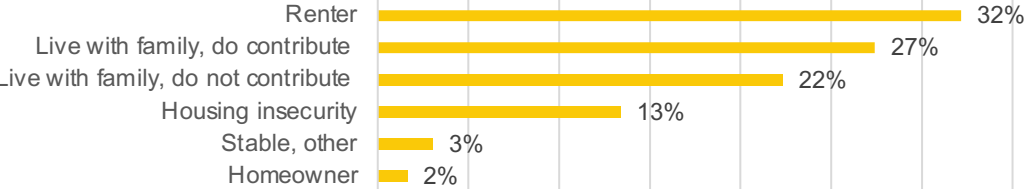
Living Conditions

Living conditions remain broadly consistent with 2023, with renters representing the largest group (34%), followed by those living with family and contributing (28%) or not contributing (21%). Housing insecurity remains notable at 12%, indicating a persistent subset of students facing unstable conditions.

Living Conditions (2026)



Living Conditions (2023)

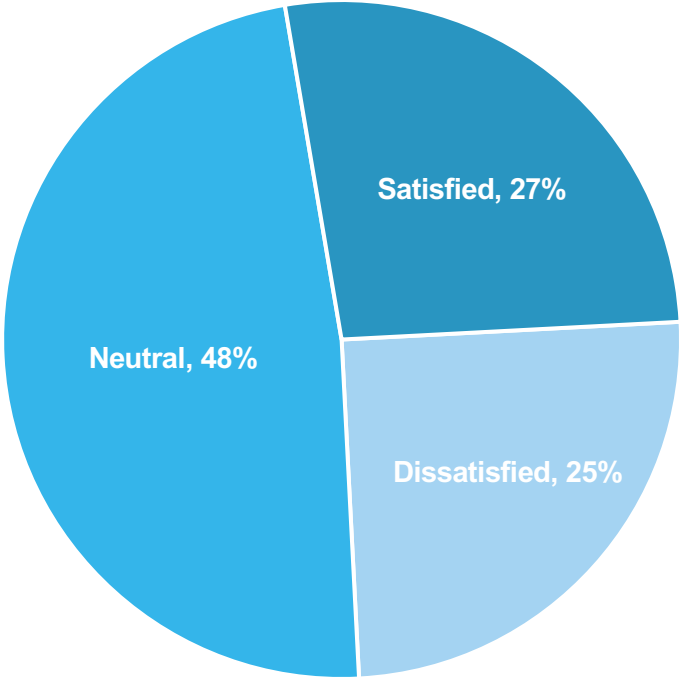


Current Living Conditions – Satisfaction

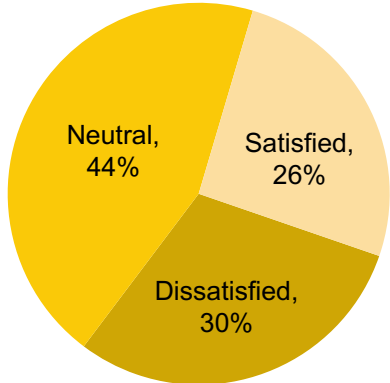
Satisfaction

Satisfaction with current housing shows a slight improvement compared to 2023. While nearly half of respondents remain neutral (48% vs. 44%), dissatisfaction decreased from 30% to 25%, and satisfaction increased slightly from 26% to 27%.

Satisfaction with Current Housing (2026)



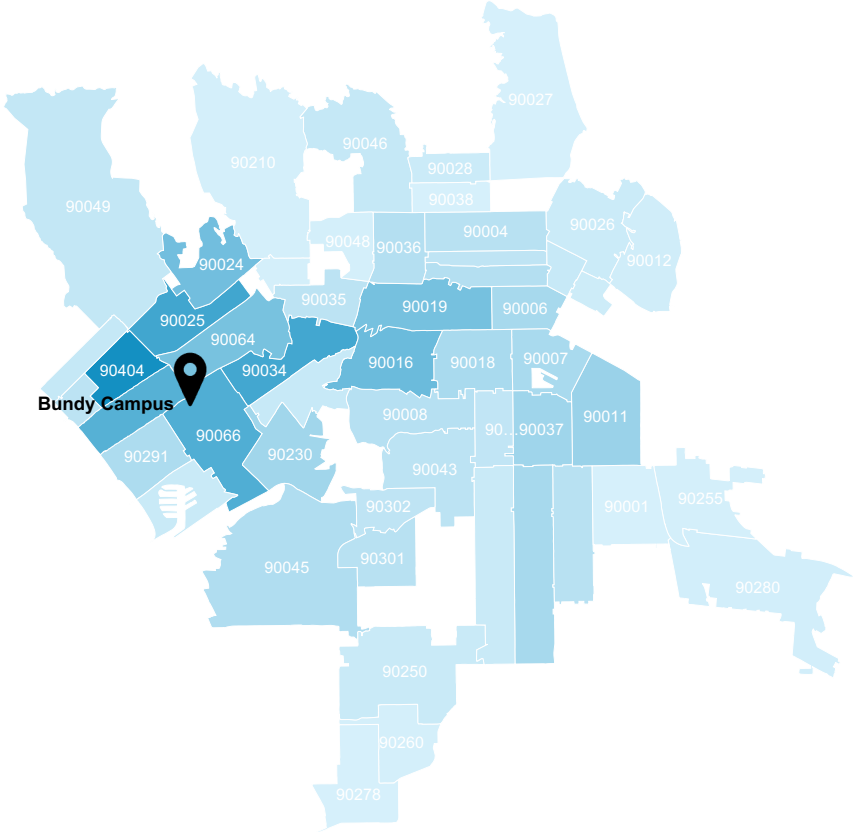
Satisfaction with Current Housing (2023)



Current Living Conditions – ZIP Codes

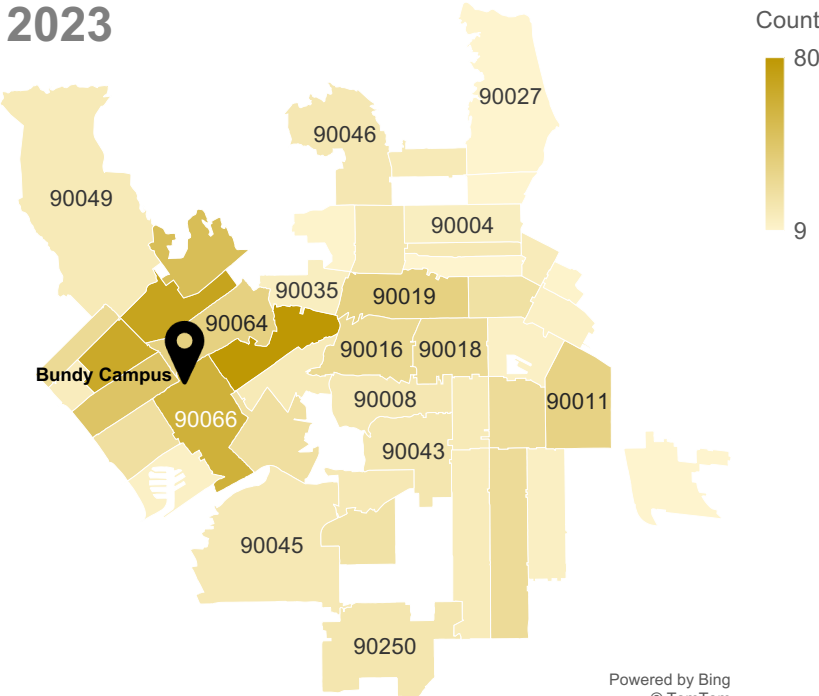
In 2026, the geographic distribution of respondents is more dispersed across a wider range of ZIP codes compared to 2023. While areas near the Bundy Campus remain a key concentration, students are spread throughout surrounding neighborhoods. Notably, respondents extend to farther ZIP codes such as 90280, indicating that some students are commuting from longer distances.

2026



Powered by Bing © TomTom

2023

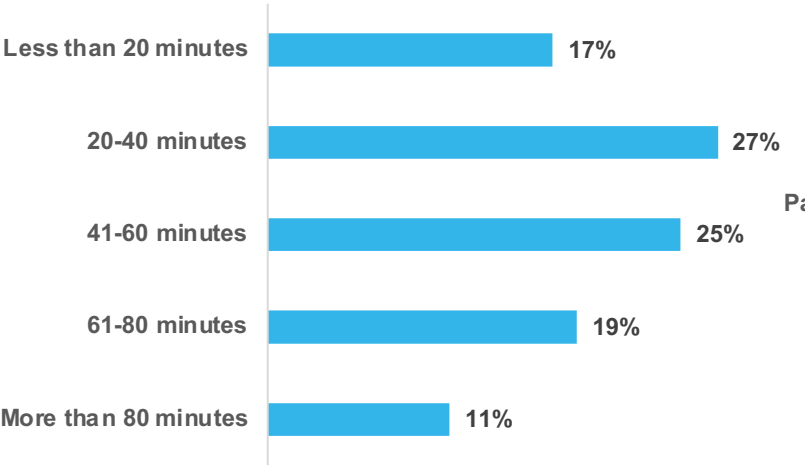


Powered by Bing © TomTom

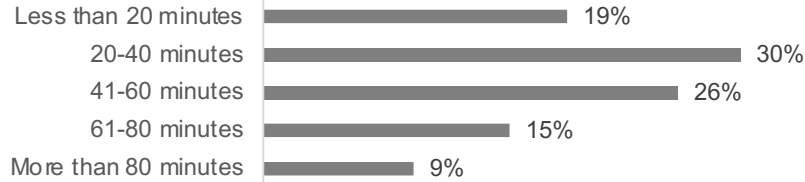
Current Commute Conditions

Commute times have modestly increased from 2023 to 2026, with shorter commutes (under 40 minutes) declining from 49% to 44% and longer commutes (over 60 minutes) rising from 24% to 30%. Mode share remains largely consistent from 2023 to 2026, with personal vehicle steady at 46% and a slight increase in public transit use (35% to 39%).

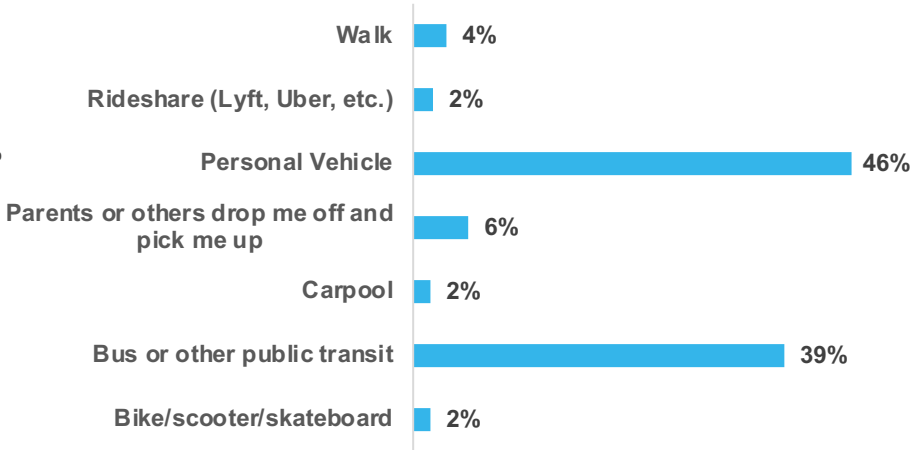
How long is your commute? (2026)



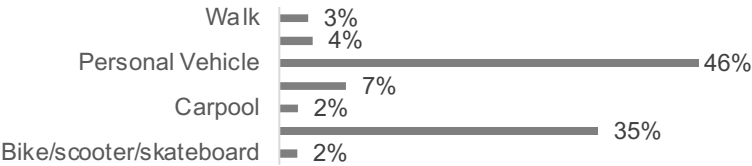
(2023)



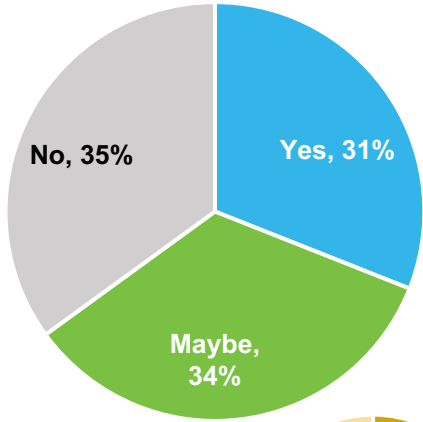
How do you commute? (2026)



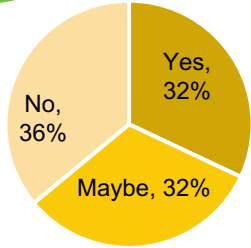
(2023)



Would you bring a vehicle to student housing? (2026)



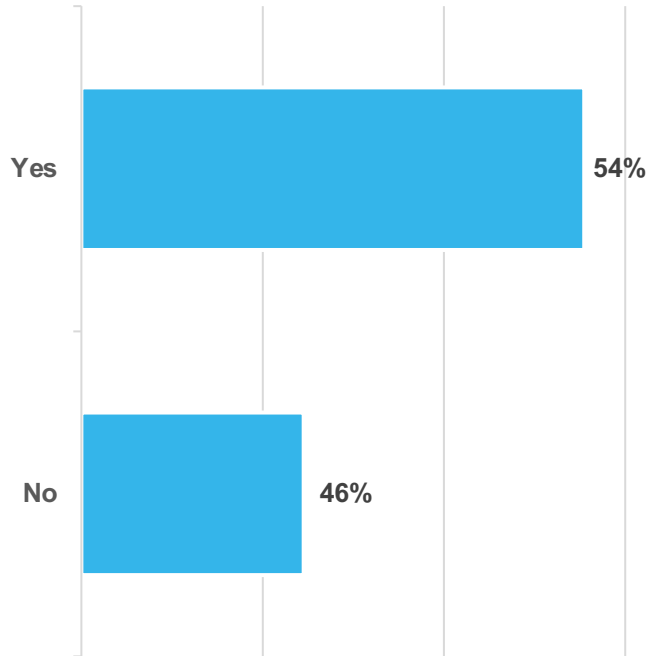
(2023)



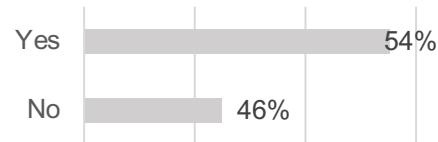
Renters

54% of renter students had to find housing when coming to SMC (2023/2026).

Did you have to find housing when coming to Santa Monica College? (2026)

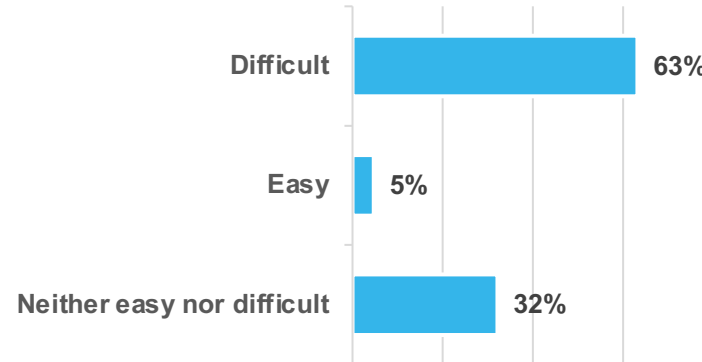


Did you have to find housing when coming to Santa Monica College? (2023)

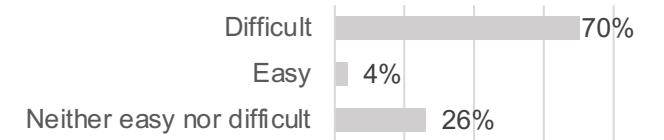


The majority of those who had to find housing when coming to Santa Monica College still find it difficult housing within budget near Santa Monica College.

Experience of Finding Housing within Budget (2026)



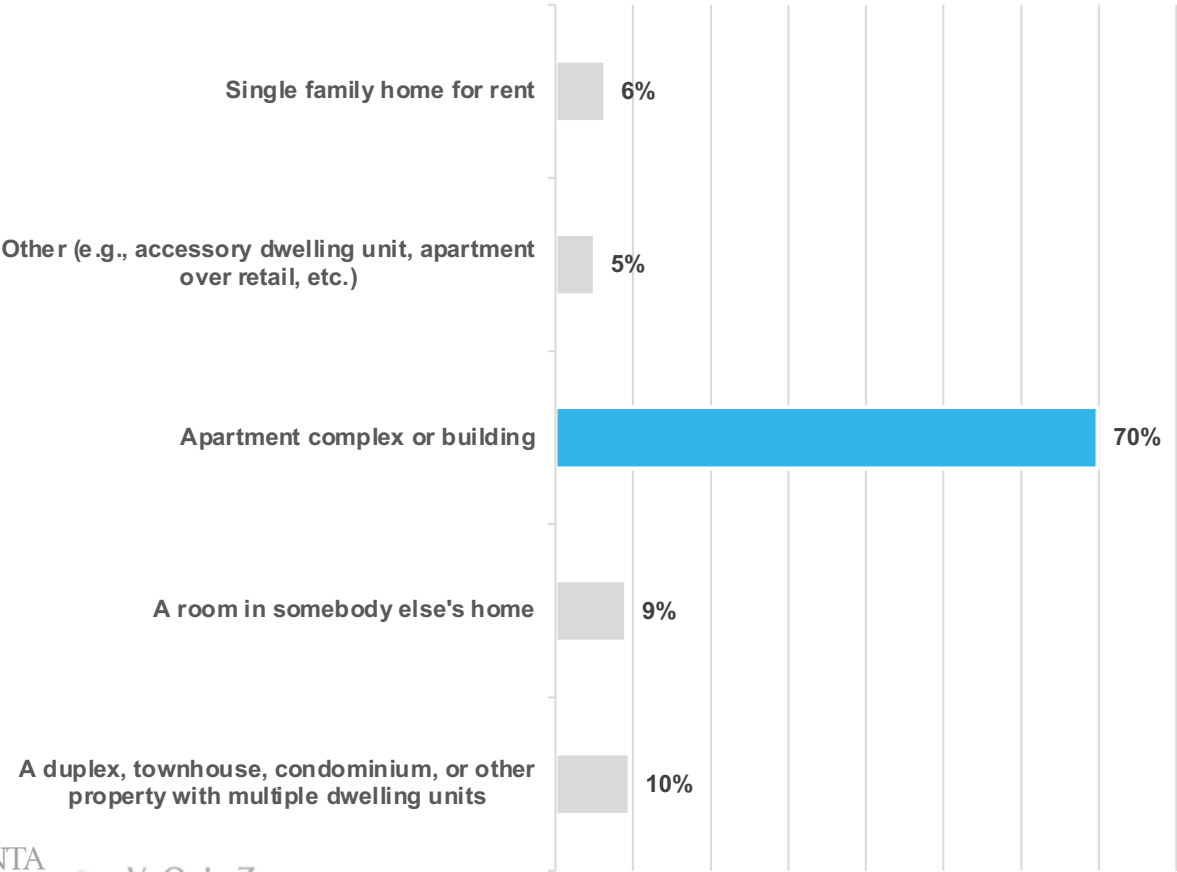
Experience of Finding Housing within Budget (2023)



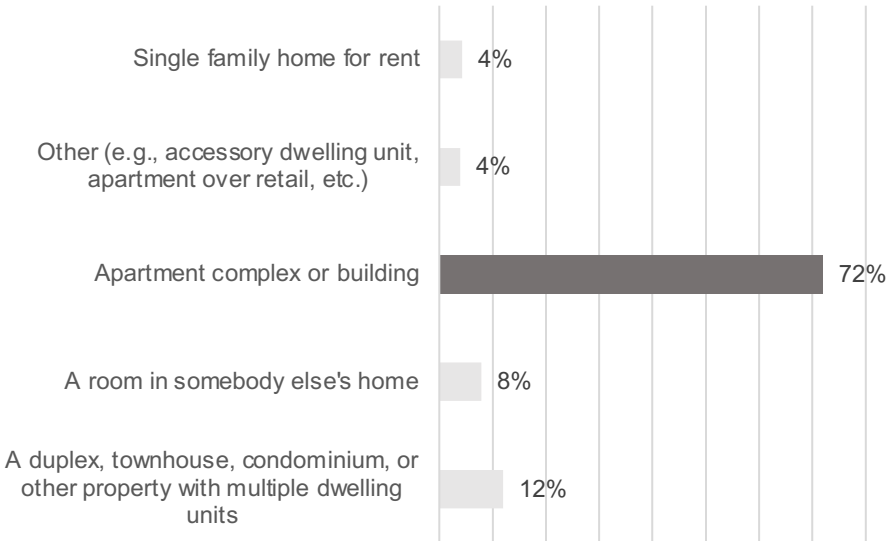
Renters – Current Rental Housing Type

Apartment complexes or buildings remain the dominant type of rental housing, with a slight decline from 72% in 2023 to 70% in 2026.

Current Rental Housing (Renters Only 2026)



Current Rental Housing (Renters Only 2023)

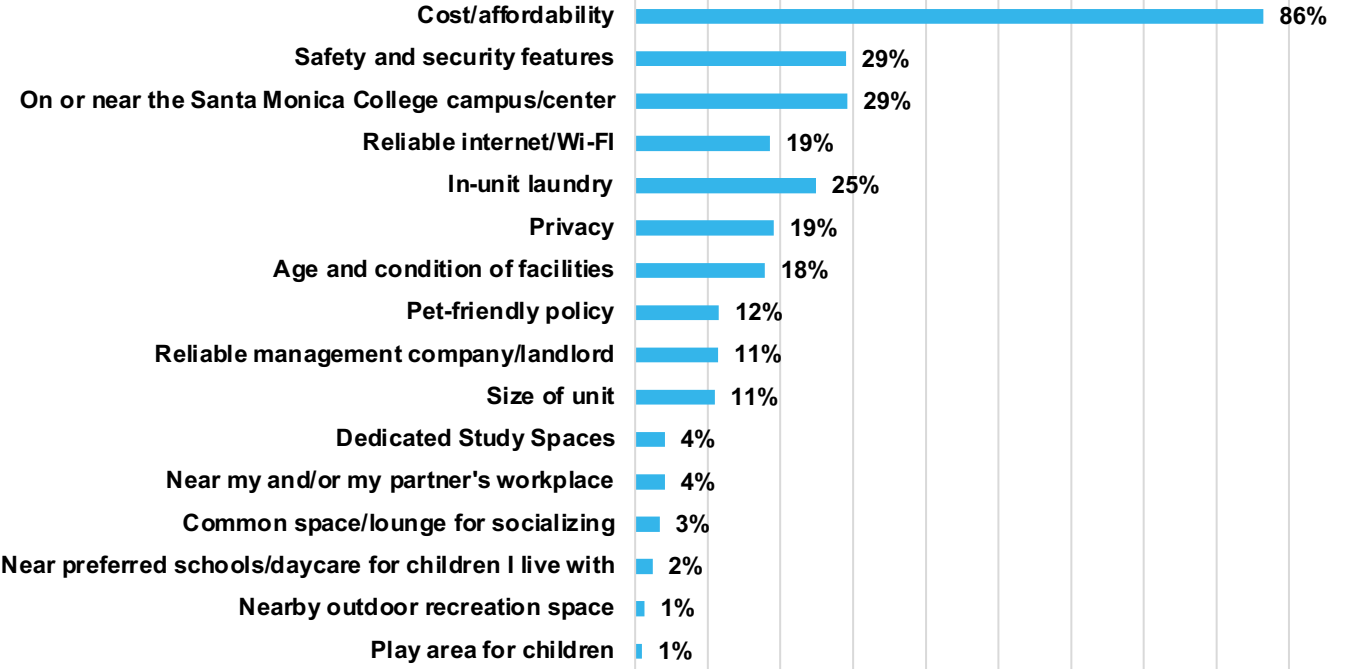


Important Factors for Housing Decisions

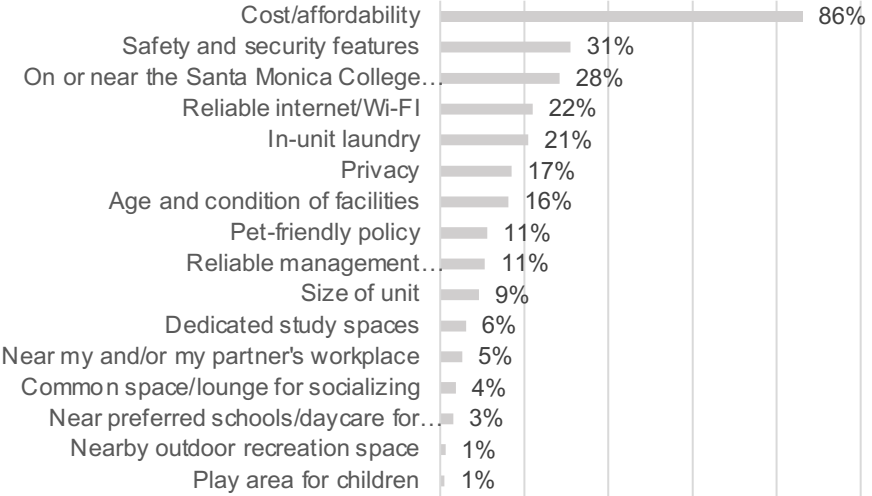
Cost/Affordability remains the most important factor when deciding where to live, followed by safety and security features and campus proximity.*

Which of the following factors are most important to you when deciding where to live?

2026



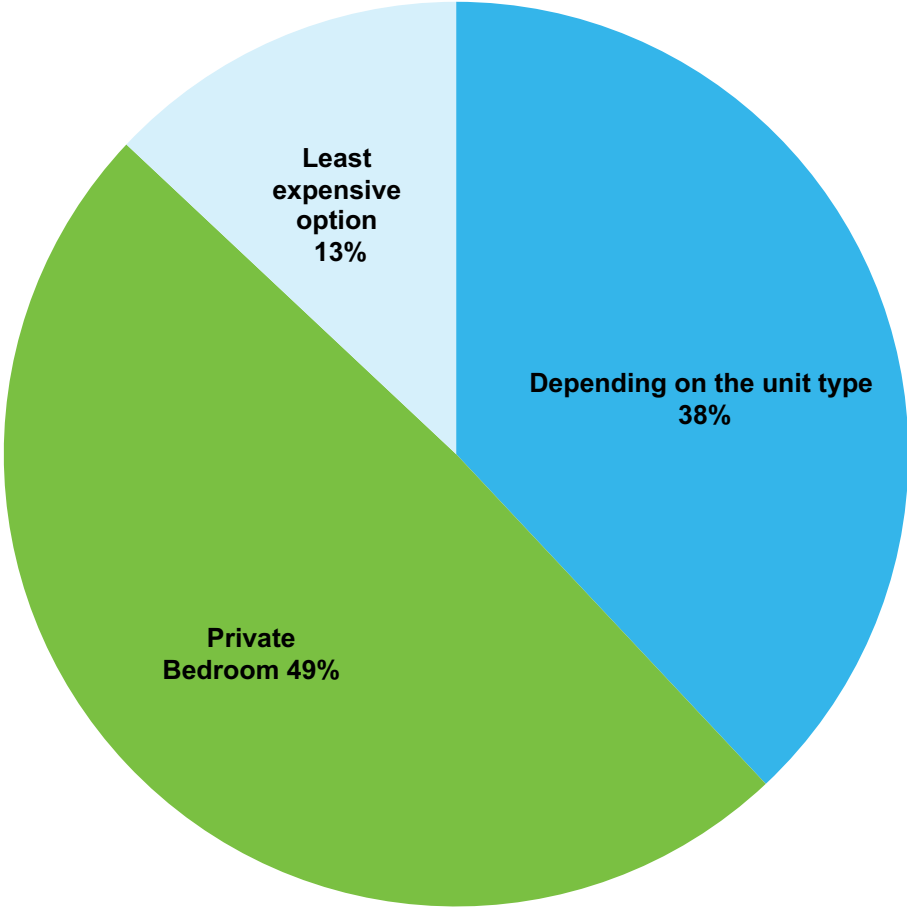
2023



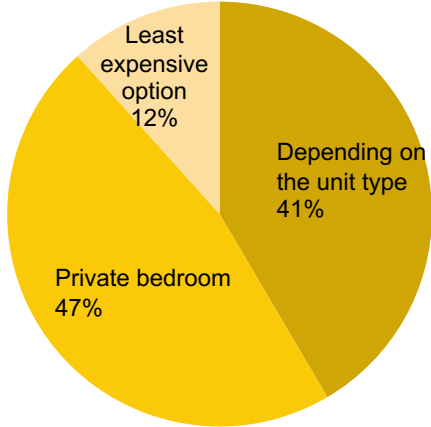
Affordability vs Privacy

In 2026, preferences among single students continue to reflect a strong balance between privacy and affordability. Nearly half (49%) prefer a private bedroom, a slight increase from 47% in 2023. At the same time, 38% indicate their preference depends on unit type, slightly down from 41%.

Affordability vs Privacy (single students only) (2026)



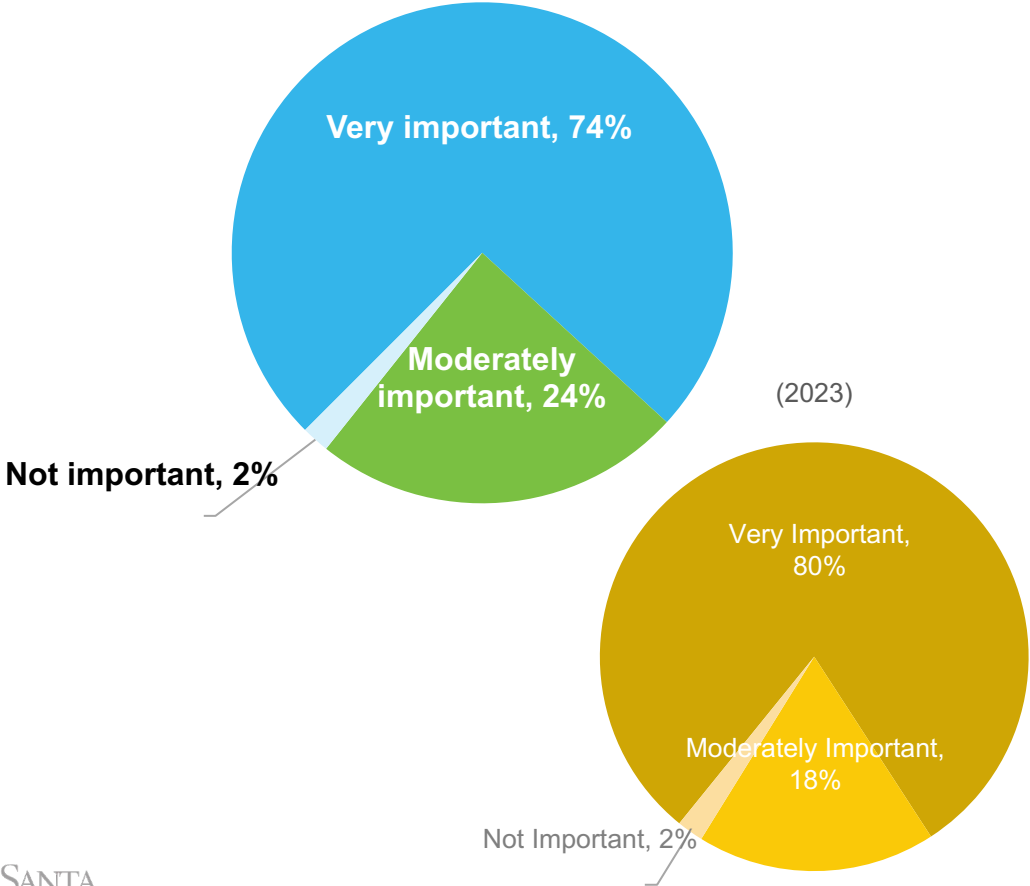
Affordability vs Privacy (single students only) (2023)



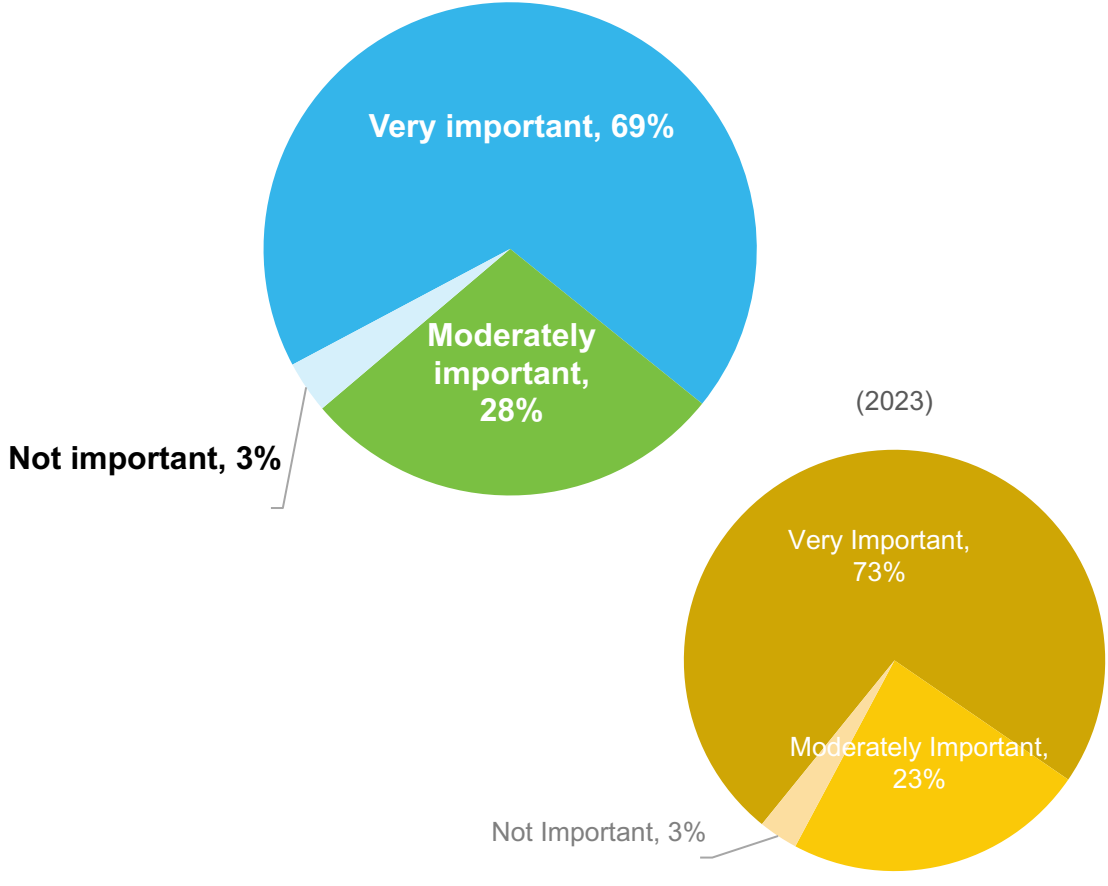
Importance of Student Housing

The majority of the respondents still believe that student housing would be important for recruitment and retention at Santa Monica College.

Importance for Recruiting New Students (2026)



Importance for Retaining New Students (2026)



Additional Thoughts from Students

Affordability is the biggest concern raised

- Current price estimates are too high, limiting accessibility
- Housing would be highly beneficial if offered at realistic student-friendly price points

Strong support for on- or near-campus housing

- Emphasis on reducing long commutes, improving academic success, and supporting international and housing-insecure students

“Co-living student housing options would be great.”

“Affordability is important for students”

“A lot of current SMC students wished there was student housing near campus!!”

“Especially with gas prices, living near the college is important. The time spent commuting could be better spent studying.”

3.

Market and Rate Analysis

Market Overview



Population Decline: Santa Monica has an estimated population of 90,729 as of July 2024 and an annual population change of -2.5% from April 2020 to July 2025 (-0.5% for the City of Los Angeles).¹



Rent Correction: The vacancy rate of the Santa Monica submarket is 8.0% as of April 2026. As of April 2026, rents have decreased 8.1% year over year in Santa Monica. The median rent is \$2,328, significantly below its March 2025 peak of \$2,527. Rents are softening, but Santa Monica remains one of the most expensive rental markets in Southern California.²



In the broader Los Angeles multifamily market, approximately 11,000 net new units were delivered over the past 12 months; 505 units in Santa Monica. 275 units are currently under construction in Santa Monica.³ Santa Monica is still described as a “**seller’s market due to chronic scarcity.**”⁴



As housing pressure persists, the City is actively expanding transitional housing and services for the homeless due to ongoing need.⁵

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/santamonicacitycalifornia>

² <https://www.smdp.com/santa-monica-posts-sharpest-rent-decline-in-los-angeles-metro>

³ CoStar

⁴ <https://juliettehohnen.com/is-now-a-good-time-to-buy-in-santa-monica-an-honest-2026-market-analysis>

⁵ https://www.surfsantamonica.com/ssm_site/the_lookout/news/News-2026/February-2026/02_20_2026_Santa_Monica_Could_Move_Homeless_Services_Outside_the_City.html

Unit Types and Rates Tested

Single Non-Low-Income Students

- Traditional Residence Hall, Single-occupancy, \$1,705 per month per person
- Traditional Residence Hall, Double-occupancy, \$1,430 per month per person
- Two-Bedroom Suite, Single-occupancy, \$1,870 per month per person
- Four-Bedroom Apartment, Single-occupancy, \$2,145 per month per person
- Four-Bedroom Apartment, Double-occupancy, \$1,788 per month per person

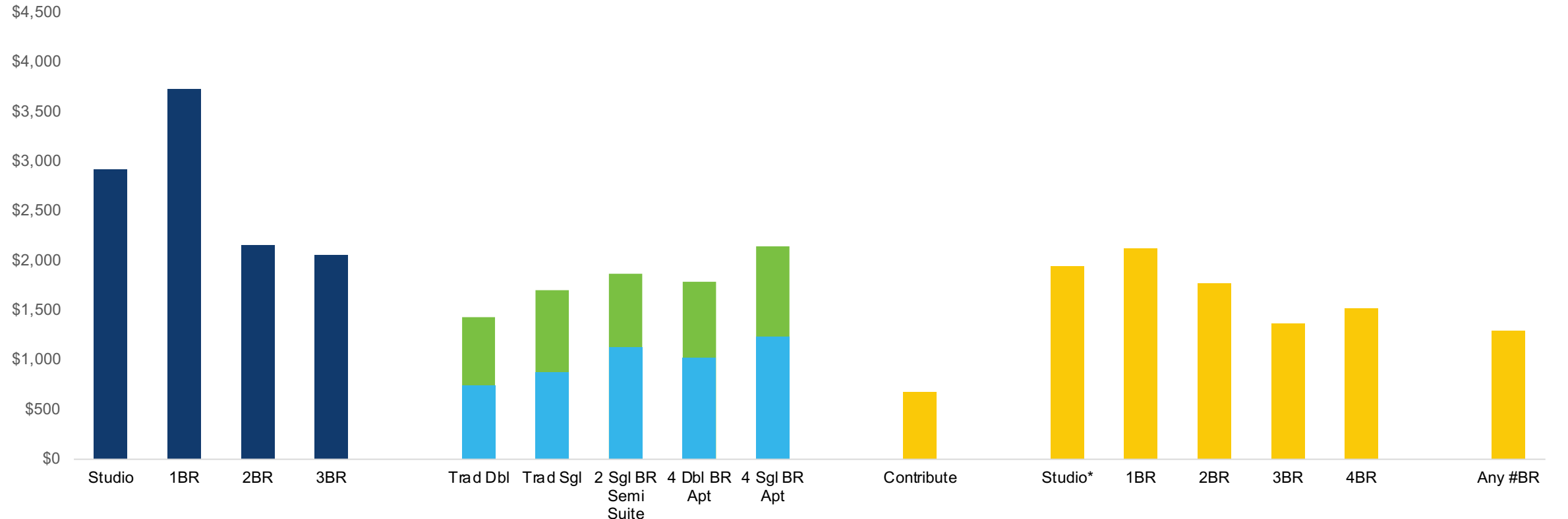
Single Low-Income Students

- Traditional Residence Hall, Single-occupancy, \$880 per month per person
- Traditional Residence Hall, Double-occupancy, \$743 per month per person
- Two-Bedroom Suite, Single-occupancy, \$1,130 per month per person
- Four-Bedroom Apartment, Single-occupancy, \$1,234 per month per person
- Four-Bedroom Apartment, Double-occupancy, \$1,026 per month per person

Family Students

- Studio Apartment, \$2,805 per month
- One-Bedroom Apartment, \$3,135 per month
- Two-Bedroom Suite, Single-occupancy, \$3,960 per month

Single Student Housing Cost Comparison (per person per month)

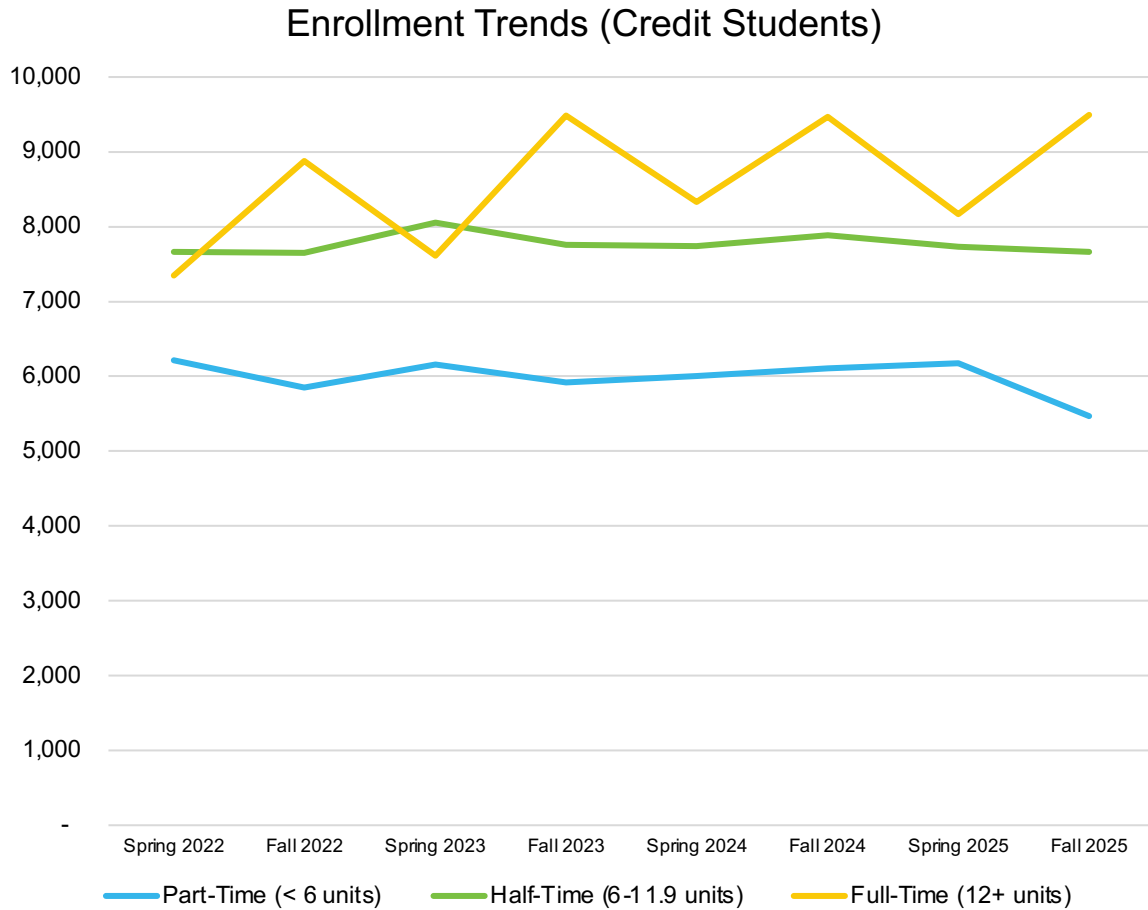


*Data inputs greater than \$10,000 are excluded
 **Respondents' portion of rent and other living expenses every month

4.

Demand Findings

Enrollment Trends and Growth Assumption



(Source: California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office MIS Data Mart)

The following assumptions were used for the demand calculations:

- Average headcount between Fall and Spring semester
- 1% annual growth rate applied

Semester	Fall 2024	Spring 2025	Average
Full-Time (12+ units)	9,467	8,166	8,817
Half-Time (6-11.9 units)	7,882	7,809	7,846
Part-Time (< 6 units)	6,104	6,173	6,139
Total Unduplicated Headcount (Credit Students)	23,453	22,148	22,801

Demand and Unit Preference – Single Non-Low Income

Year		2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Full-Time		1,570	1,586	1,602	1,618	1,634
Part-Time and Half-Time		1,388	1,402	1,416	1,430	1,444
Total Demand		2,958	2,988	3,018	3,048	3,078
UNIT TYPE PREFERENCE - FULL-TIME (BED COUNT)						
Traditional Single	28.9%	454	458	463	467	472
Traditional Double	18.5%	291	294	297	300	303
2BR Semi-Suite Single	17.8%	279	282	285	288	290
4BR APT Single	5.2%	81	82	83	84	85
4BR APT Double	3.7%	58	59	59	60	61
UNIT TYPE PREFERENCE - PART-TIME/HALF-TIME (BED COUNT)						
Traditional Single	42.6%	591	597	603	609	615
Traditional Double	11.1%	154	156	157	159	160
2BR Semi-Suite Single	14.8%	206	208	210	212	214
4BR APT Single	1.9%	26	26	26	26	27
4BR APT Double	1.9%	26	26	26	26	27

Note: Numbers displayed are rounded for clarity but may total unexpectedly.

Demand and Unit Preference – Single Low-Income

Year		2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Full-Time		1,665	1,682	1,699	1,716	1,733
Part-Time and Half-Time		1,711	1,729	1,746	1,763	1,781
Total Demand		3,377	3,410	3,445	3,479	3,514
UNIT TYPE PREFERENCE - FULL-TIME (BED COUNT)						
Traditional Single	45.8%	763	770	778	786	794
Traditional Double	15.6%	260	262	265	268	270
2BR Semi-Suite Single	14.4%	240	243	245	247	250
4BR APT Single	13.6%	227	229	232	234	236
4BR APT Double	3.3%	55	56	56	57	57
UNIT TYPE PREFERENCE - PART-TIME/HALF-TIME (BED COUNT)						
Traditional Single	45.0%	770	778	785	793	801
Traditional Double	14.1%	241	244	246	248	251
2BR Semi-Suite Single	18.2%	311	314	317	320	323
4BR APT Single	10.6%	181	183	185	186	188
4BR APT Double	1.1%	19	19	19	19	19

Note: Numbers displayed are rounded for clarity but may total unexpectedly.

Demand and Unit Preference – Family

Year		2026	2027	2028	2029	2030
Full-Time		354	358	361	365	369
Part-Time and Half-Time		232	234	237	239	242
Total Demand		586	592	598	604	610
UNIT TYPE PREFERENCE - FULL-TIME (UNIT COUNT)						
Studio	32.5%	115	116	117	119	120
1BR	27.3%	97	98	99	100	101
2BR	40.3%	143	144	146	147	148
UNIT TYPE PREFERENCE - PART-TIME/HALF-TIME (BED COUNT)						
Studio	36.6%	85	86	87	88	88
1BR	25.6%	59	60	61	61	62
2BR	37.8%	88	89	90	90	91

Note: Numbers displayed are rounded for clarity but may total unexpectedly.

The image features a solid blue background with several palm trees in silhouette. The trees are of varying heights and are scattered across the frame. In the center, the text "Thank you!" is written in a white, bold, sans-serif font. To the right of the text, there is a small, dark, vertical post with a spherical top, possibly a light fixture or a marker.

Thank you!