



A multifamily survey

**ENTRATA**  
**2026**  
**RESIDENT**  
**REPORT**



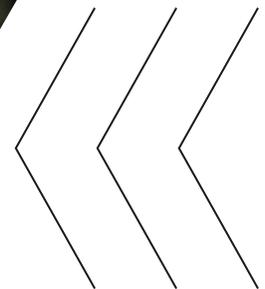
**STUDENT EDITION**

# Introduction

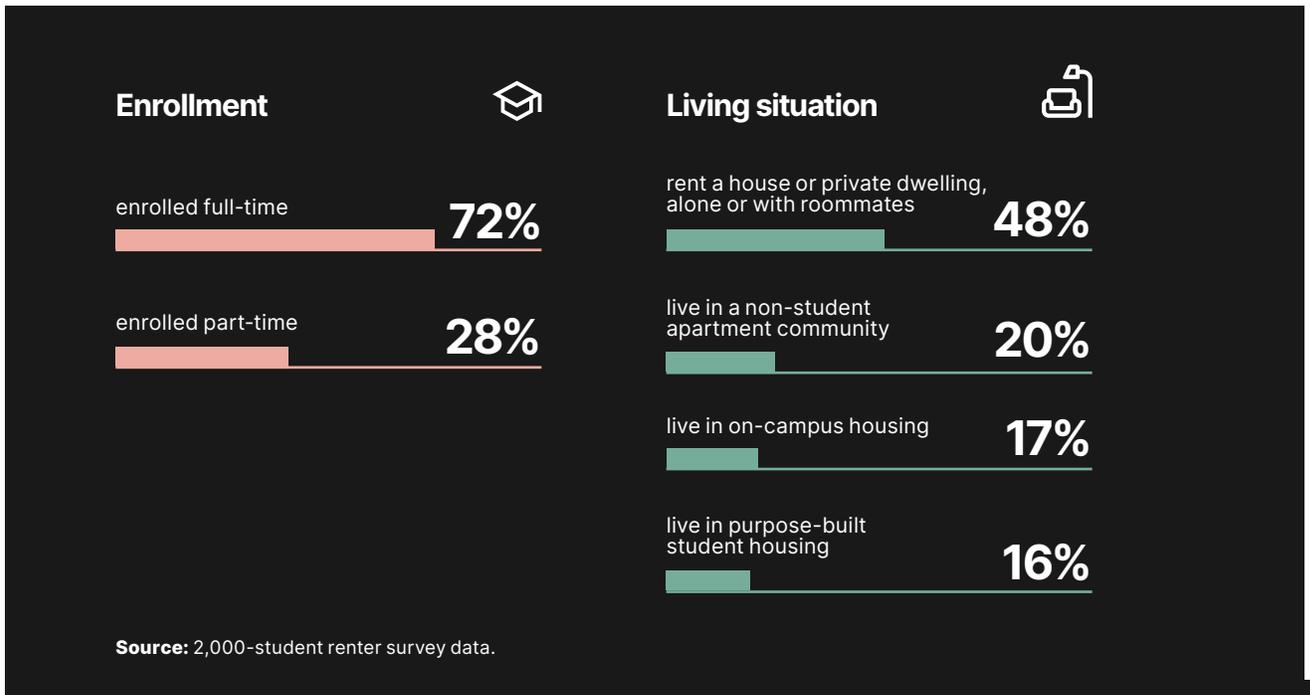
Today's student renters are tomorrow's multifamily residents. Their habits, preferences, and expectations offer an early signal of where the industry is headed. As student renters graduate into the conventional market, owners and operators need to pay close attention to this segment. The shift is happening faster than many expect.

In January 2026, Entrata surveyed more than **2,000 student renters**. The results show that most students now live off campus and engage with housing much like mainstream renters. As they move from on-campus housing into off-campus apartments and houses, their priorities evolve. Decisions shift away from being purely price-driven toward a more nuanced definition of value rooted in clarity, responsiveness, and flexibility.

**2,000**  
Student Renters

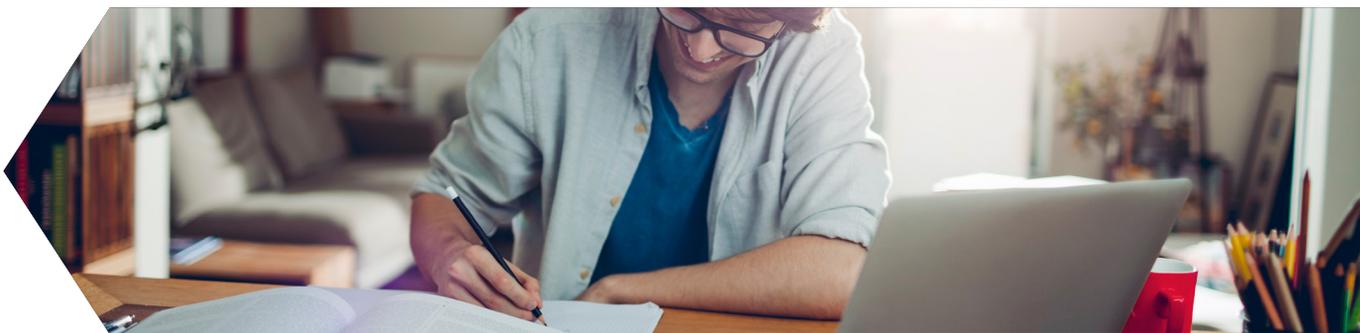


# Demographic Breakdown



Student renters consistently prioritize fast, functional service over high-end luxury experiences. They expect digital convenience without losing access to real people, along with pricing and amenity options that adapt to their circumstances. Technology and automation play an important role, but trust, transparency, and ease of issue resolution ultimately determine satisfaction and retention.

For owners and operators, the implications extend well beyond student housing. Student renters are aging into the broader multifamily market and bringing these expectations with them. Understanding what they value today provides a clear advantage in attracting, retaining, and serving the next generation of renters across all property types.



## Student renters entering the mainstream

Student renters are reshaping mainstream rental expectations rather than sitting outside them. Once considered a niche market, student renters now influence both traditional multifamily and student housing. Increasingly, they offer a preview of what tomorrow's renters will expect and, in many cases, are already living in conventional multifamily communities.

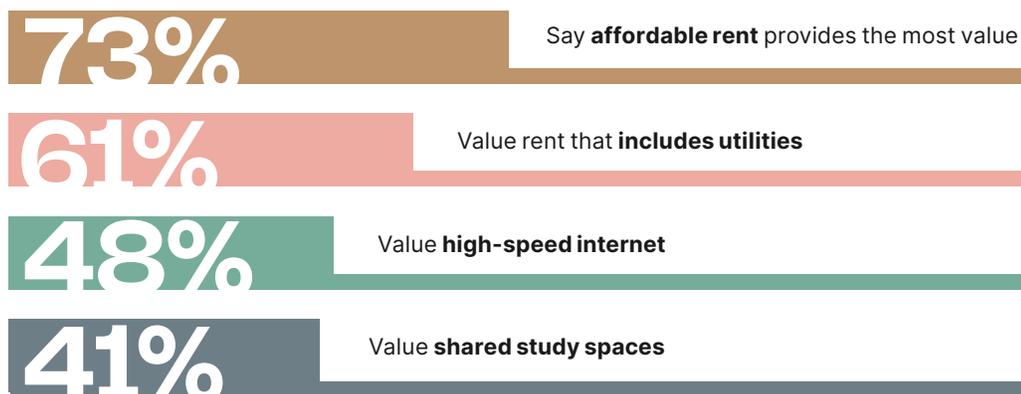
- **68%** of respondents are not living in student housing, either on or off campus
- **Nearly half** live in houses or private dwellings

Their behaviors, expectations, and decision-making increasingly mirror those of conventional renters, particularly those living in off-campus apartments. Multifamily operators should stop viewing student renters as a “someday” opportunity and begin engaging them as residents today and for the long term.

## Tangible value beats perceived luxury almost every time

Today's student renter is price aware, not price obsessed. They scrutinize rent closely but will accept higher prices when benefits are tangible, immediate, and easy to understand. At the core, student renters want to know, “What's in it for me?”

Inclusions like high-speed internet, utilities, and dedicated study spaces go a long way toward creating the tangible value they prioritize. These features reduce friction, keep costs predictable, and support academic success. Amenities like gyms and pools are appreciated, but they are not decisive on their own.



Only 25% of student renters surveyed say they are willing to pay more for a better experience, whether through convenience or savings elsewhere such as a shorter commute.

# How value expectations change by living situation

Value priorities vary by housing type, and those differences provide important signals for operators.

**Purpose-built student housing** residents are the most price sensitive and transactional. They expect standardized amenities and bundled services and are highly sensitive to rent increases.

- **50.5%** focus almost entirely on monthly rent
- **Only 27.1%** say amenities and services meaningfully influence value

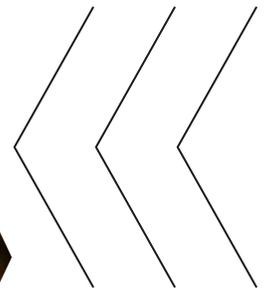
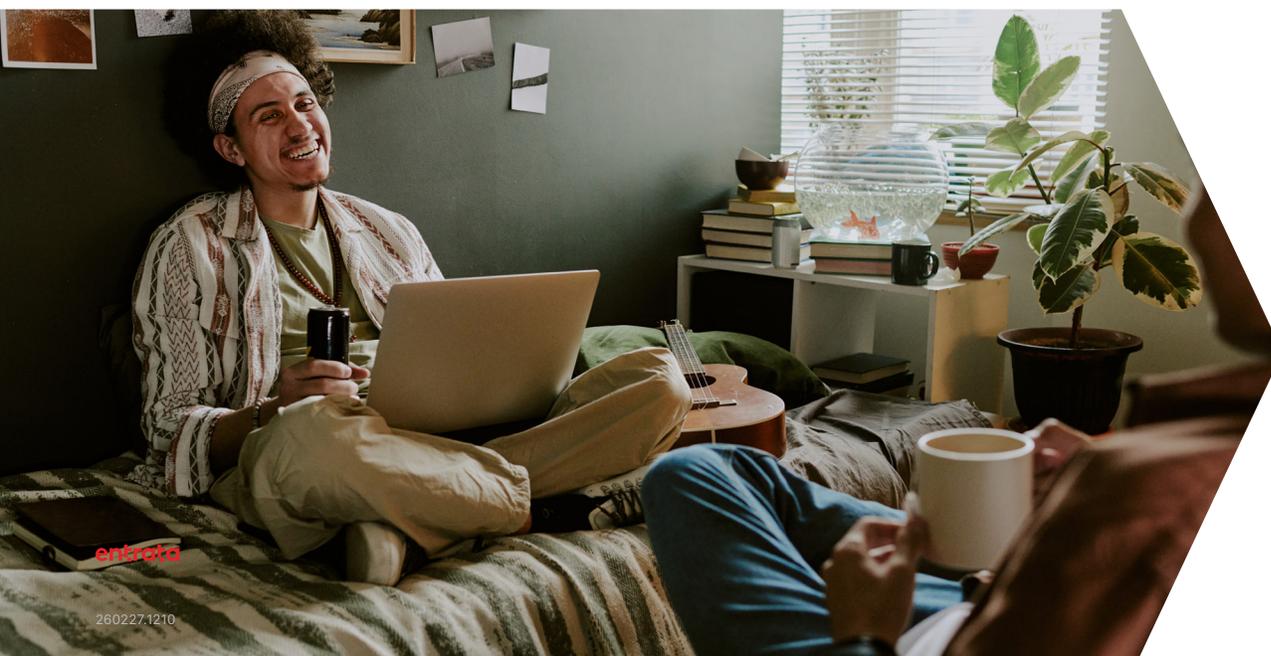
**On-campus and off-campus apartment residents** begin to evaluate housing more like mainstream renters, weighing convenience, inclusions, and experience alongside price.

- **47.4%** say amenities, services, and price matter most
- **Only 22.1%** focus almost entirely on rent

**Students renting houses or private dwellings** fall somewhere in between. They are pragmatic and willing to accept trade-offs such as fewer amenities, but still expect the basics to work reliably.

- **38.2%** focus primarily on price
- **36%** say services and amenities still matter

When defining “good value,” owners and operators should prioritize transparency and usefulness over luxury or flashy amenities. Properties win by making value obvious and easy to understand.



## One size does not fit all

A one-size-fits-all approach does not work for student renters. They want optionality when it comes to pricing, amenities, and location. Fixed bundles limit appeal, while flexible, build-your-own options expand it. Students want the ability to trade amenities for price or pay more for convenience, depending on their circumstances.

- **34%** would accept higher rent for convenience or better services
- **31%** prefer fewer amenities for lower rent
- **34%** say it depends on their financial situation

Certain amenities consistently justify higher rent, including gym access, faster maintenance response times, and free printing or study resources. For off-campus student housing, a premium positioning around service quality, technology, and communication can be effective, as **37%** of this group is willing to pay more for convenience and premium services.



## Speed over luxury

Most student renters prioritize functionality over flair. Fast responses, quick issue resolution, and clear communication matter far more than concierge-style service.

- **50%** expect property management to be responsive and efficient
- **22%** want proactive and communicative service
- **20%** prefer a transactional relationship
- **Only 7%** expect a hospitality-style experience

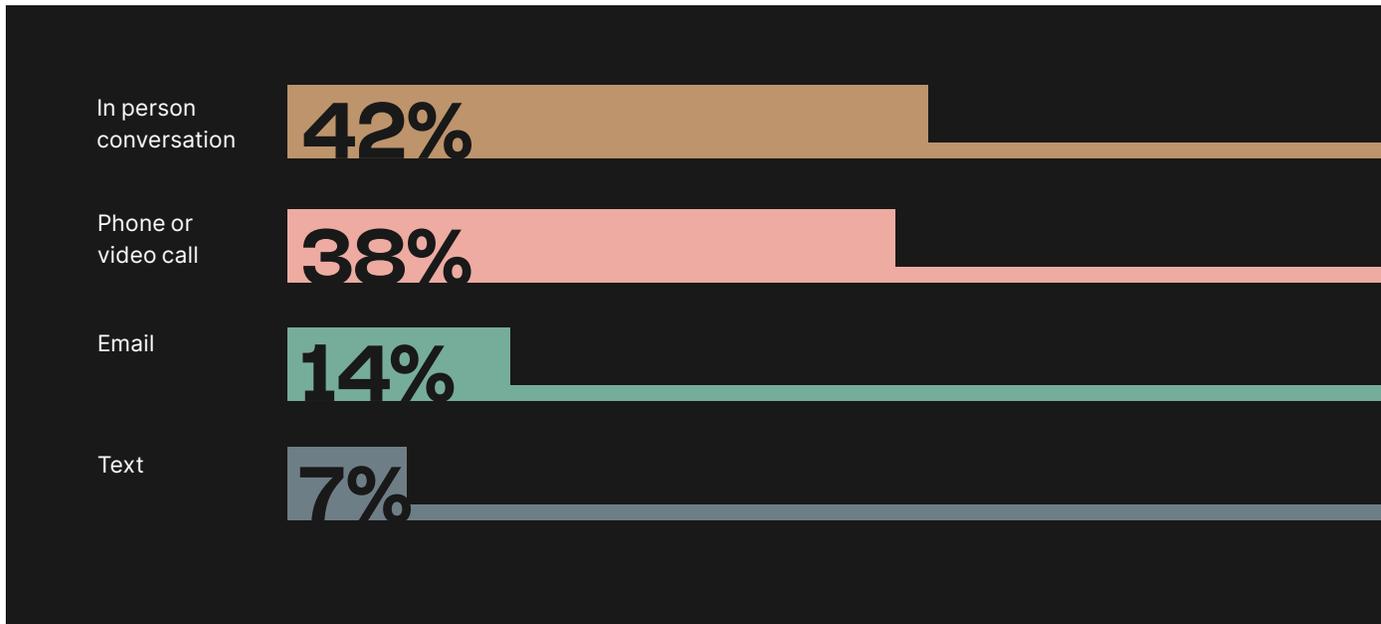
Responsiveness matters across all renter types, but expectations vary slightly by housing situation. Off-campus renters are more likely to expect proactive communication, while those in purpose-built student housing are more accepting of transactional service.

## Digital-first, but not digital-only

Student renters expect technology-enabled efficiency paired with easy access to real people when it matters. While digital channels are preferred for routine interactions, students want human support for more complex or high-stakes conversations.

- **74%** prefer digital communication (**33%** text, **23%** email, **18%** mobile app)
- **26%** prefer analog channels (**16%** phone call, **10%** in person)

For serious conversations, preferences shift toward human interaction.



Transparency and escalation paths are critical to building trust in digital-first workflows.

## Comfort with AI depends on the interaction

Student renters are most comfortable using AI for simple, low-risk tasks and less comfortable with AI for consequential conversations.

- **38%** prefer AI for simple tasks and humans for complex issues
- **32%** prefer mostly human interaction with some automation
- **16%** prefer human-only interaction
- **14%** prefer AI for everything

Comfort levels vary by housing type. Off-campus renters are more open to hybrid AI and human workflows, while those in purpose-built student housing often require more reassurance and transparency to build trust.

**Highest comfort level:**

Low-risk, informational, or task-based interactions (i.e., questions, maintenance, tours)

**Medium comfort level:**

Routine but financially meaningful actions (i.e., paying rent)

**Low comfort level:**

High-stakes, consequential conversations (i.e., lease terms, rent)



## Apartment vs. houses

Today's student renter is tomorrow's conventional renter, and as they age into the next phase of their lives their expectations will start to evolve as will their wants and needs. Currently, nearly half of all respondents are renting a house or private dwelling. The primary advantages of renting a house vs. renting an apartment include more privacy, more space, fewer rules, lower rent, the ability to choose roommates, and more inclusive pet policies.

When it comes to renting an apartment, the biggest advantages are better amenities (**52%**), faster maintenance response times (**46%**), professionally managed (**40%**), more convenient (**40%**), community spaces (**38%**), individual leases (**36%**), and a feeling of community (**22%**).

## Direct, concise communication preferred

Regardless of channel, student renters want communication to be brief and efficient.

- **40%** prefer short explanations with the option to ask questions
- **36%** want information quickly and directly
- **20%** value detailed explanations
- **Only 4%** prefer ongoing conversations

Clear, honest communication and transparency matter most. Outside of rent increases, students are most likely to move out when they feel ignored or experience poor communication.

## Conclusion: student renters are shaping what comes next

Student renters are no longer a niche segment. They represent both an early signal of future expectations and a growing share of today's rental market. As more students live off campus, the distinction between student housing and conventional multifamily continues to blur.

The future of renting is defined less by luxury and more by clarity, responsiveness, and flexibility. Student renters reward operators who communicate directly, resolve issues quickly, offer transparent pricing, and provide meaningful choice.

Technology plays a critical role, but it is not a replacement for trust. Digital tools and AI are most effective when they remove friction from routine tasks while preserving easy access to real people for high-stakes moments. Operators who strike this balance will strengthen relationships, improve retention, and scale service without sacrificing experience.

Student renters do not simply grow out of student housing. They grow into the expectations that will define the next generation of multifamily residents. Operators who adapt early will be better prepared for the future of renting.

To learn more about how Entrata can help your property meet the ever-changing needs of the Student renter,

**request a  
demo today.**