

Textbooks are *not* a luxury

reading list
foundation



Research report prepared by The Reading List
Foundation

March 2016

Introduction

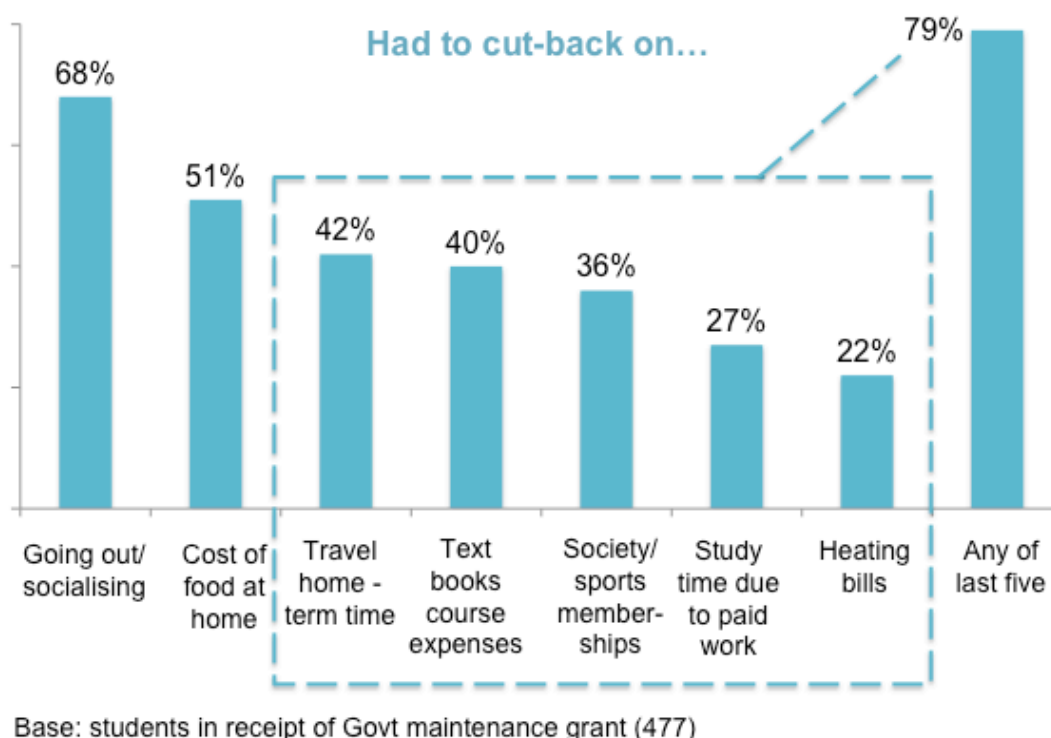
This report presents new research carried out for the Reading List Foundation by YouthSight, the award-winning specialist youth research agency, and IPSOS-MORI, one of the UK's leading research companies. The research describes the financial pressures undergraduates from lower-income households in England currently face during their studies, and contrasts this with the financial benefit enjoyed by millions of older graduates. The Reading List Foundation exists to inspire people to fund or co-fund a younger student's reading list, providing practical, financial and emotional help during their first year of studies.

Textbooks are *not* a luxury

New research commissioned by The Reading List Foundation from YouthSight, the specialist Youth research agency, shows the extent of the financial hardship undergraduates from lower-income households are facing in their time at university¹.

Without the same degree of access to the 'bank of Mum and Dad' as students from higher-income households, lower-income students have to cut back in areas that are arguably key to their academic and emotional welfare while studying.

While it is perhaps understandable that students have to cut back on socialising and going out, **two in five have had to cut back on spending on textbooks** or other course materials. If you include travel home in term-time, society memberships, study time due to having to take on paid work and heating bills – as many as **four in five (79%) have had to make cut-backs in key areas due to financial pressures**.



¹ Survey of 763 undergraduates domiciled in England, January 2016, by YouthSight

Financial pressures affect emotional wellbeing

The impact of the available student finance on students who receive a maintenance grant is not just financial though. As well as having to cut back on what should be seen as essentials (e.g. textbooks, heating etc), **nearly half (47%) say they were affected by worries about finances** in their first year² – significantly more so than is apparent among students from higher-income households (37%).

A £110billion contrast

From 2016 onwards, Government maintenance grants are being withdrawn for English students starting at University. So for the first time in the current tuition fee era there will be no central grant support for students from lower-income households. In comparison, the majority of current politicians (from both sides of the House), as well as millions of others, enjoyed a university education 'tuition-fee free', often with grant support along the way. Many will have graduated with no meaningful student debt, compared to current students who will typically graduate with debts of £44,000³ and rising. With the withdrawal of maintenance grants this could rise to an **average student debt of over £50,000 for students from the poorest households**.

New research from IPSOS-MORI carried out for The Reading List Foundation found that **47% of graduates in England have benefitted from a university degree without having to pay tuition fees**⁴. This equates to over 4 million adults in England. With typical university tuition fees currently valued at £27,000 for a three-year course, in today's prices this makes for a free benefit worth around

£110 billion

We can make a difference

We believe this contrast in fortunes is glaring – but we believe we can do something about it. The Reading List Foundation looks to award £250 Reading List Scholarships – in the form of a Blackwell's Bookshops Smart Card - to high-achieving students from lower-income households in their first year at University. The award will fund, or go towards funding, a student's first year reading list. These Scholarships are funded by people who believe these students deserve support and encouragement – a wave of 'micro-philanthropists' supporting young people taking the first steps of their future careers.

² The research focused on the First year as this is the focus of support from The Reading List Foundation

³ Institute for Fiscal Studies; IFS Report R93; Crawford and Jin; April 2014

⁴ Survey of 1,680 adults aged 18+ in England, January 2016, by IPSOS-MORI

Importantly, **we encourage donors to make their contribution personal** – for instance directing it to their old school or college, or a school or college in their local community.

We believe these Scholarships will make a difference. With 40% of students from lower-income households cutting back on textbooks because of financial pressures, and a further 39% prioritising textbooks but cutting back in other key areas, the need is clear. The YouthSight research showed **70% of students from lower-income households said receiving a Scholarship would have made a big difference** to their first year at university. We can make this big difference.

We are small but ambitious – we would like to see a Reading List Scholarship in every state-funded Year 13 in England. That's over 3,000 'big differences', which would cost approximately £800,000 a year, or

0.0007%

of the value of the free tuition given to older graduates.....

About The Reading List Foundation

We passionately believe:

1. Students from lower-income households aspiring to go to university deserve greater financial support than they will receive post-2016
2. We, the generations who benefited from free university education, are often in a position to help
3. Directing Scholarships to the school we went to, or the community we live in, makes donations more personal and powerful
4. We can all be philanthropists – it's not the preserve of millionaires.

The Reading List Foundation exists to inspire people, including the generations of graduates who received a free university education, to help support those who are following in their footsteps, while facing much greater financial pressures. We do this through awarding Reading List Scholarships – awards of £250 to fund a student's reading list in their first year at University. Awards are given to high-achieving students from lower-income households.

We are Exeter-based, but look to support students in state-funded schools across England.

We have three founding trustees - Alan Terry, Mark Thomas and Maria Williams. Alan handles the day-to-day functioning of the charity, and can be contacted here info@readinglistfoundation.org

Thank you

In compiling this research, we would like to thank YouthSight, the award-winning specialist youth research agency, from whom we commissioned the research among their panel of undergraduates, as well as IPSOS-MORI, one of the UK's leading research companies, from whom we commissioned the research among the general public.

The Reading List Foundation

Registered Charity Number 1164690

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