

## Durham Students' Union

### All-Student Survey Results



March 2025

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## Key summary

### Building confidence in the purpose and value of the SU

#### Representation and voice

Positively, the vast majority of students (86%) recognised that Durham needs a collective organisation for all students. Support was particularly strong among first generation students and women. Alongside this, there were reasonable proportions of students who felt empowered to drive improvement and create change at Durham (61%) and reassured that the SU would support them in doing so (57%).

While the proportions of students who agreed that Durham SU represents the views of students effectively (54%) suggests a level of trust in the organisation's decision making, there is clearly further to go as almost one in five students (19%) did not believe this was the case. This may be linked to low proportions of students who believed that they could influence the SU's decisions (26%) and low levels of knowledge regarding how to propose ideas to make change to the SU (26%) and to the University (25%). Levels of understanding appear to be particularly low among Home students and undergraduates.

#### Academic life

Almost three-quarters of students believed that Durham SU represents students' academic interests well. This is much higher than levels observed in NSS because agreement among first year undergraduates, second year undergraduates and postgraduates was particularly high, who are not included in NSS. There was good agreement that it was easy to share feedback about their academic experiences (63%) which indicates that there are effective mechanisms to give feedback.

When it came to academic procedures, students had the highest levels of confidence that they could apply for an extension or submit a Serious Adverse Circumstances Form, however, they had lowest levels of confidence with anything framed around their ability to 'challenge' decisions. Women, home students and undergraduates displayed much lower confidence in areas which required them to 'challenge' or 'appeal' decisions.

Perceptions of the relationships students have with others on their course suggests that there is a highly supportive and mutually respectful environment. However, the evidence suggests that relationships between students may be fraught for some groups of students, including students with a disability, first-generation students, students who work, and Home students from ethnic minority backgrounds, who had much worse perceptions of how respected and accepted other students made them feel.

#### Wellbeing, advice and communication

Students overall believed that the SU gave useful advice, however, few (30%) would turn to the SU for advice which is substantially lower than the SU benchmark of 52%. This coincides with a decline in students who said they would utilise SU avenues for support, and instead, students preferred to turn to departmental or college contacts.

### Service awareness and satisfaction

There are good levels of awareness of the services on offer at Durham SU: of 22 measured, the majority of students were aware of 16 of the 22. The highest levels of awareness related to either Freshers' or social activities; these also correspond to the services most used by students and the services students were most satisfied with. The Kingsgate student space and free tea had middling awareness at 57%, however, it also had relatively high use (27%), suggesting that this space is valued by students. However, Associations had relatively low usage (11%) compared to levels of awareness (73%).

Overall, perceptions of the SU's services were positive and the 13 out of the 22 services included had high levels of satisfaction (defined as 60% of more or students stating they are satisfied with the service). Services which had relatively high levels of dissatisfaction related to student support services including the Student Pantry (35% dissatisfied), ASK - Independent Advice Service (31% dissatisfied) and Nightline (21% dissatisfied).

### Bringing students across Durham together

The vast majority of survey participants (80%) were part of a student group, society or club; doing so through their Common Room and Durham SU were the most common pathways. Students joined a group to meet new people and make friends, to take part in a hobby or interest, to keep fit and active, to develop their skills, and to take a break from their studies. Students' perceptions of student groups were incredibly positive, and they agreed highly that they felt part of a community (80%) and that they felt valued (77%) within their group. Students who don't work alongside their studies, however, reported consistently lower levels of agreement with statements around their involvement and belonging within student groups, societies and clubs.

Students also recognised the positive impact that their involvement in student groups had on their wellbeing (88%), social life (87%) and sense of belonging (86%). Both Business students and Home students from ethnic minority backgrounds were less likely to feel that their social life and sense of belonging has been positively impacted by their involvement in student groups. Further, fewer (54%) felt making them more employable despite skills development being a key reason for joining a club, society or group.

Timetabling (55%) and cost (47%) were the main barriers to participating in activities outside of students' courses. Time was also a key barrier which impacted 37% of students, whether because of a job, volunteering or caring responsibilities. Knowledge acted as a barrier to, with 18% reporting that they are unsure how to get involved and 16% reporting that they do not know what is on offer. At an overall level, students felt the greatest sense of belonging with their student group, club or society (74%) and their College (68%). However, international students, postgraduates and first-generation students had lower levels of belonging within both of these. Postgraduates had found higher levels of belonging their course and international students had found higher levels of belonging in their department suggesting that these groups had found somewhere to belong within Durham but indicates that first-generation students may not.

## Tackling the big issues that hold students back

### Important issues to students and how the SU impacts these

Slightly over half (53%) of students believed that the SU campaigns on issues that matter to them. When presented a list of issues and asked to say which they cared about and which the SU cared about, there was consensus that student wellbeing and student groups, societies and associations were important to both groups. Students also cared about their academic success, the cost-of living and student housing; however, when asked if the SU cared about their academic success, it ranked 13th out of 16.

Instead, students thought the SU cared about equity and diversity, which did feature as the 6th most important issue for students. However, it also thought that the SU cared about support and advice, student rights and student elections, which ranked 10th, 13th and 16th out of 16 respectively on students' priorities.

### Issues that matter to students

Students' perceptions of their induction were mixed. While it helped them to feel comfortable (66%) and have fun (66%), fewer felt that it prepared them to be a University citizen (54%) or learner (45%). Students who have a disability consistently reported poorer experiences of their induction. In the open-ended comments, students said that their induction could be improved through better organisation, administration and communication, creating a more inclusive environment and being mindful of the terminology used, and providing additional support for students to settle into university life.

There were clearly also mixed experiences of housing in Durham with reasonably high proportions reporting negative experiences of the quality of their accommodation (27%) and few students feeling that their accommodation is affordable (30%). Undergraduate students were less likely to feel both that their accommodation was good quality and that it was affordable. While students reported good relationships with flat mates/housemates, there were some indications that relationships with landlords were more strained or were simply not well established. Home students and undergraduates reported less positive relationships with their landlords, whereas students with a disability and first-generation students reported less positive relationships with their flat mates/housemates.

The cost-of-living was having a clear impact on students as almost three-quarters felt that costs were a barrier to participating in extra-curricular experiences. It was also a barrier to learning for 43% of students. These impacts were more highly reported among students who have a disability, first-generation students and students who worked alongside their studies. Key areas students felt contributed to this were the high costs of course materials, equipment for sport, travel, event tickets, and food and drink. Students also referenced spending more time working and more time managing their money and simply worrying about money, which meant they had less time and headspace to engage fully in university life.

Students' social lives, the responsibilities of a role they hold, the skills and experiences they are gaining at university, and the quality of their housing are all having a net positive impact on the student body's wellbeing. The general cost of living, uncertainty for the future and mental health issues are having the worst net impact on the student body's wellbeing, and all three of these issues were more prevalent among women and students with a disability.

## Introduction and method

In 2024/2025 academic year, Alterline was commissioned to support Durham SU with the second phase of a survey ran in the previous academic year. The survey was updated by Alterline and Durham SU to streamline the survey, as well as include new topics. The most notable change to the survey included updating the answer options for the agreement statement questions (changed options are shown in italics and underlined):

- 23/24 answer options: Strongly Agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, *This does not apply to me*
- 24/25 answer options: Strongly Agree, Agree, *Neither agree nor disagree*, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, *I don't know*

As this change is substantial and affects the ability to make any meaningful comparison between the two years, no comparisons have been made where this change was implemented.

The survey ran between 20<sup>th</sup> November 2024 and 19<sup>th</sup> January 2025. The survey received a total of 849 completed responses, demographic breakdowns of the sample can be found [here](#).

The survey sample is broadly representative of the University population in terms of study level. 78% of the survey sample were undergraduates (79% of the population), 12% were postgraduate taught (13% of the population) and 9% were postgraduate researchers (7% of the population). There were slightly more Home students in the survey (75%) than compared to the overall population (69%), however, this is only slightly over the suggested margin of +/- 5 percentage points. Substantive differences were observed across many survey questions between Home and International students, and it is worth considering these differences when interpreting results.

Where referenced the Student Life Pulse (SLP) benchmarking data is taken from the Pulse 1 24-25, which ran from 1<sup>st</sup> October to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2024. This included 10 of Alterline's partner Students' Unions (Anglia Ruskin Students' Union, Christ Church Students' Union, Nottingham Trent Students' Union, University of Salford Students' Union, Hull University Students' Union, University of Northampton Students' Union, Surrey, Lancaster University Students' Union, London Metropolitan Students' Union, and Royal Veterinary College Students' Union).

Quotes from open-ended comments are included in this report. While obvious spelling errors have been corrected for ease of reading, otherwise quotes are included as written by students and may contain spelling or grammatical errors.

A photograph of a person sitting at a wooden table, writing in a notebook. The person's hands are visible, holding a pen and writing on the pages. In the foreground, there is a white coffee cup on a saucer. To the right, a smartphone is lying on the table. In the background, a brown bag is resting on the table. The entire image has a warm, orange-toned overlay.

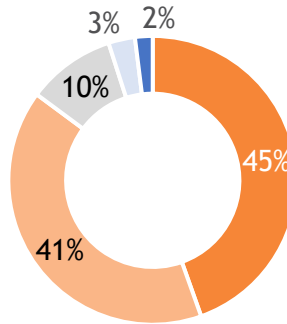
## Building confidence in the purpose and value of the Students' Union

## Representation and voice

### Support for Durham SU as a collective student representative organisation

There was clear support for the existence of Durham SU and its purpose. 86% of students said that they believed that Durham University needed a collective organisation for all students. This is above the stated measure of success in Durham SU's strategy of 80%.

I believe that Durham University needs a collective organisation for all students. Base: All respondents, excluding 'I don't know' (810)



- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

### Demographic differences

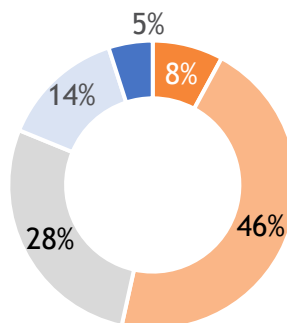


Women (89%) and first in family students (92%) were more likely to agree. Science students (83%), men (82%) and second + generation students (85%) were less likely to agree.

### The effectiveness of Durham SU's representation

While few students agreed that they can influence the decisions made by the SU, there was much greater agreement that it does represent students' views effectively (54%). This agreement is in line with the SLP benchmark of 55%. This implies a sense of trust in the SU's decision-making, even if the paths, or potentially desire, to influence it are more limited.

Durham SU represents the views of students effectively. Base: All respondents, excluding 'I don't know' (779)

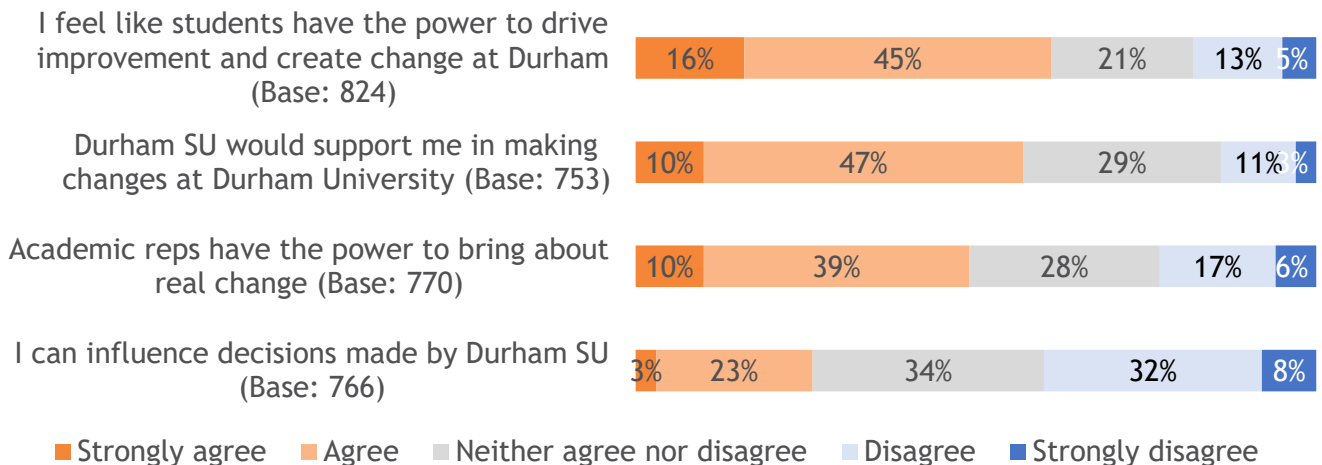


- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

## Empowerment

61% of respondents felt that students have the power to drive improvement and create change at Durham, and 57% felt that the SU would support them to do so. Almost half (49%) also believed that academic reps had the power to bring about real change. However, it appears students only feel this empowerment through student led activities and how the SU support this, but not through their ability to exert influence on the SU itself as only 26% felt they could influence its decisions. This is slightly lower than the SLP benchmark of 30%.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)



## Demographic differences



### I feel like students have the power to drive improvement and create change at Durham

International students (69%), students who do not have a disability (66%) and students who do not work (65%) were more likely to agree with this. Home students (59%), students who have a disability (51%) and students who work (55%) were less likely to agree with this.

### Durham SU Would support me in making changed at Durham University

Second + generation students (60%) were more likely to agree with this. First-generation students (50%) were less likely to agree with this.

### I can influence decisions made by Durham SU

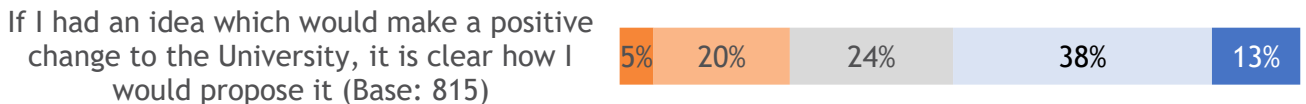
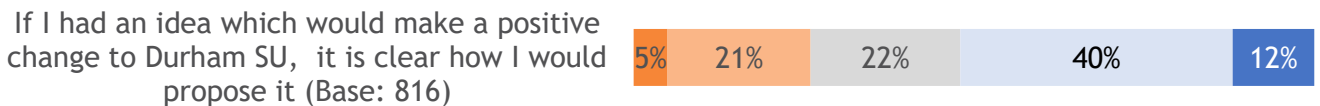
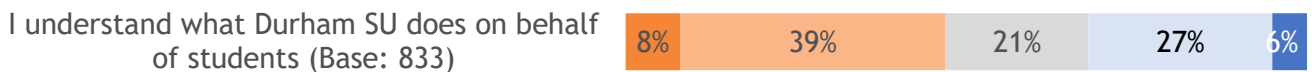
Women (29%) were more likely to agree with this. Men (22%) were less likely to agree with this.

## Knowledge and understanding

At an overall level, slightly fewer than half (47%) of students said that they understood what Durham SU does on behalf of the student body; disagreement is relatively high as 33% do not believe that this is the case. Knowledge and understanding decreased the more specific the question was. Only 26% said that it was clear how they would go about proposing an idea to make positive change to the Students' Union and a similar proportion (25%) said the same about the University. Disagreement across both statements was also high at 52% and 51% respectively. While this appears to contrast with findings around service awareness, this raises an important distinction between understanding what the SU does on behalf of students (i.e. its purpose and impact) and the services it offers. This indicates the need to communicate more clearly the Union's purpose, values and impact.

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)



■ Strongly agree 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Strongly disagree

### Demographic differences



#### I understand what Durham SU does on behalf of students

International students (55%), postgraduates (56%) and Home students from an ethnic minority background (56%) were more likely to agree with this. Sciences students (42%), Home students (45%) and undergraduates (45%) and White Home students (43%) were less likely to agree with this.

#### If I had an idea which would make a positive change to Durham SU, it is clear how I would propose it

Business students (38%), international students (38%) and postgraduates (39%) were more likely to agree with this. Sciences students (23%), Home students (23%) and undergraduates (23%) were less likely to agree with this.

#### If I had an idea which would make a positive change to the University, it is clear how I would propose it

Business students (35%), international students (35%) and postgraduates (37%) were more likely to agree with this. Home students (22%) and undergraduates (22%) were less likely to agree with this.

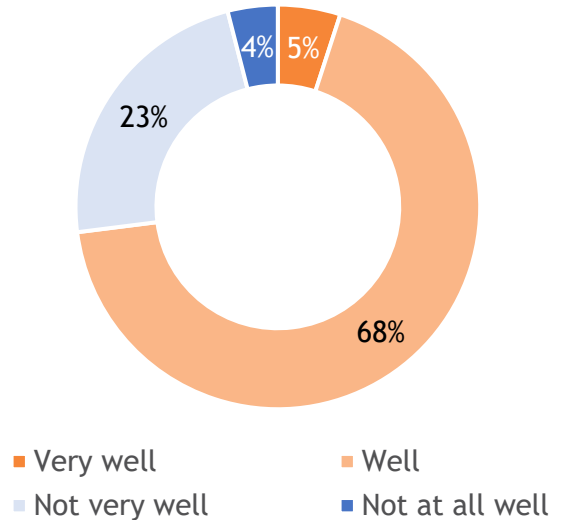
## Academic life

### Representing students' academic interests

73% of students agreed that Durham SU represents students' academic interests. This question is also included in Alterline's Student Life Pulse (SLP) survey where the average agreement among partners was 78%, meaning that Durham SU performs slightly lower than average but still well in comparison.

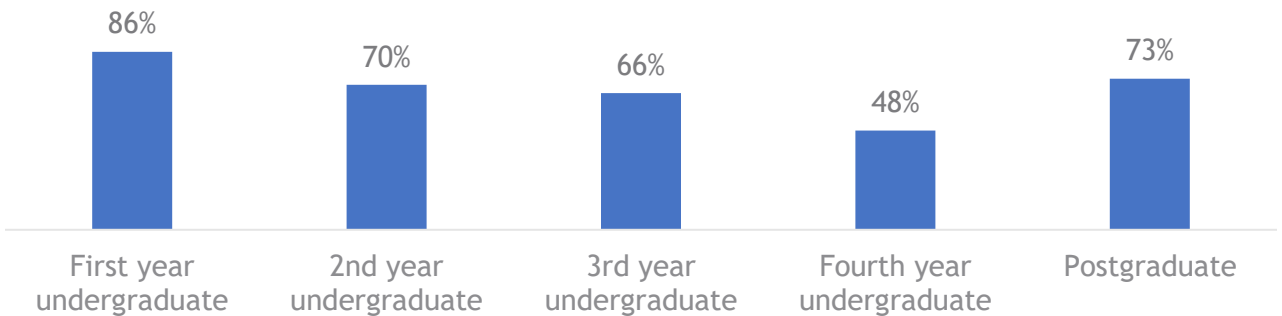
This is substantially higher than the 43% observed in the 2024 National Student Survey (NSS) though it should be noted that NSS surveys final year undergraduates only, whereas this survey contains responses from all study levels. This survey did not establish if undergraduates were in their final year, however, it did require response to which year of study undergraduates were in. When looking at responses by this, we can see a clear trend of agreement declining from first year through to the fifth year of undergraduate study.

How well does Durham SU represent students' academic interests? Base: All respondents, excluding 'I don't know' (838)



### How well does Durham SU represent students' academic interests?

Note, foundation and 5<sup>th</sup> year undergraduates are not included due to low sample sizes



### Demographic differences



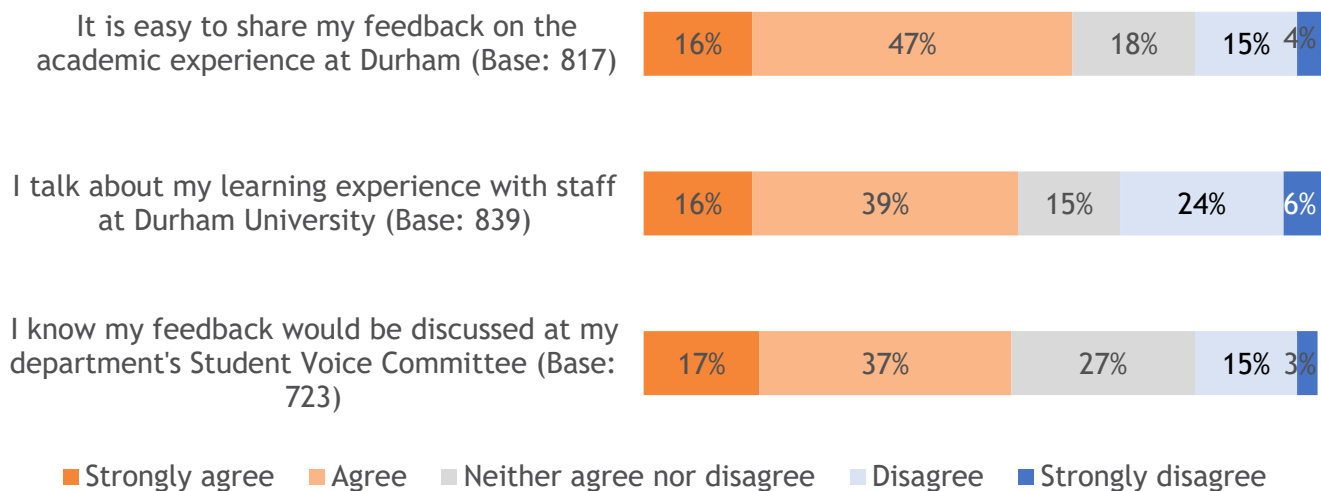
Students who do not work (77%) were more likely to agree with this. Students who work (67%) were less likely to agree with this.

## Feeding back on the learning experience

While results suggest overall that the experience of feeding back on the learning experience is good at the University, there are substantial levels of disagreement across all three statements. While 63% feel it is easy to share their feedback, almost one in five (19%) do not. 55% talk about their learning experience to staff, however, three in ten (30%) do not. Finally, 54% know their feedback would be discussed as their department's Student Voice Committee, but nearly one in five (18%) did not.

### To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)



## Demographic differences



### I talk about my learning experience with staff at Durham University

International students (63%), postgraduates (75%) and students who work (60%) were more likely to agree with this. Home students (52%), undergraduates (50%) and students who do not work (52%) were less likely to agree with this.

### I know my feedback would be discussed at my department's Student Voice Committee

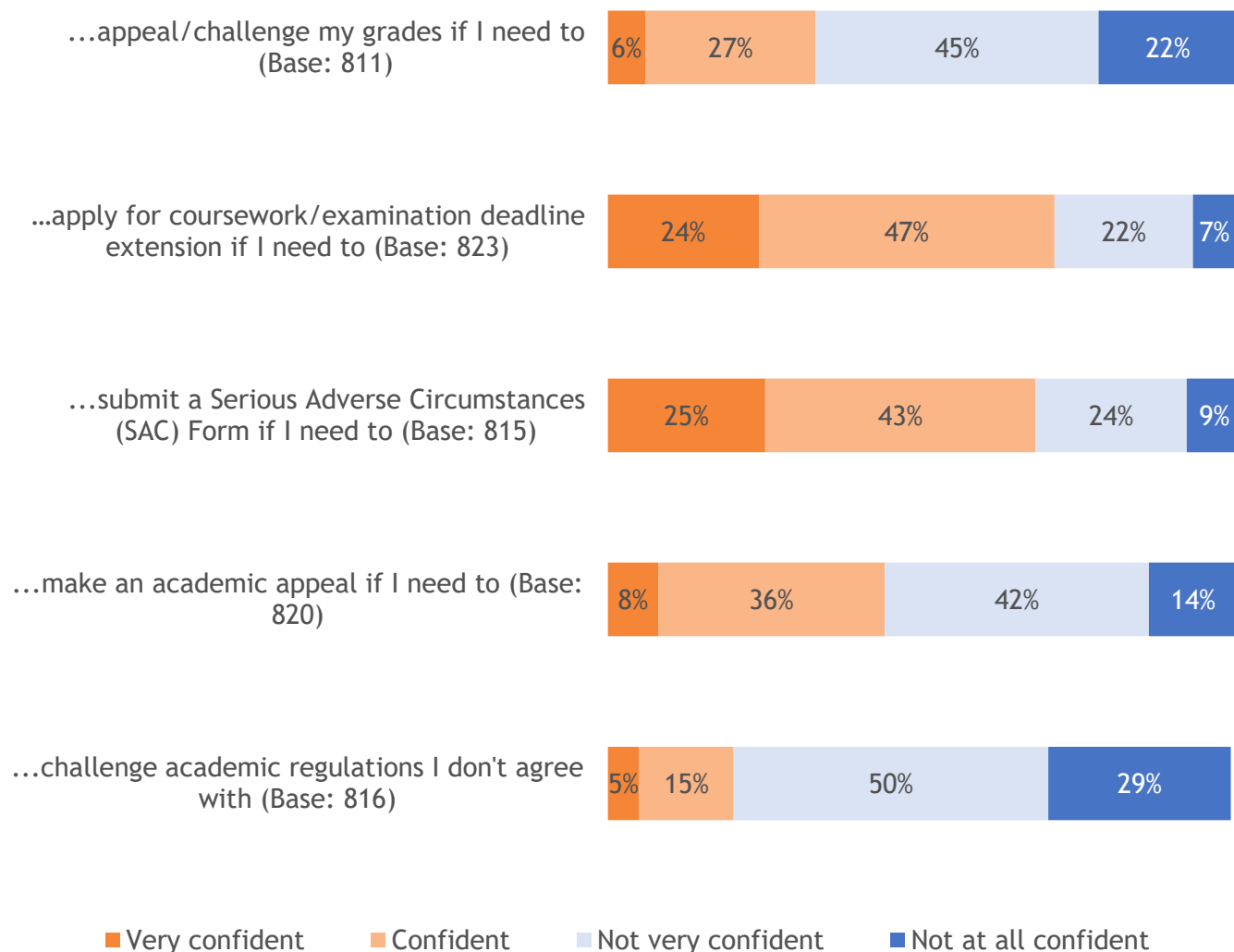
International students (60%) and postgraduates (61%) were more likely to agree with this. Home students (52%) and undergraduates (52%) were less likely to agree with this.

## Confidence in academic procedures

Students had the highest levels of confidence that they could apply for an extension (71%) or submit a Serious Adverse Circumstances Form (68%). Lowest confidence was observed with appealing/challenging their grades (33%) and challenging academic regulations (21%). However, while lower than the first two, confidence that students could make an academic appeal (45%) did not dip quite as low. This is potentially due to a difference in how these are framed, with students showing higher confidence with things that they ‘apply for’, ‘submit’ or ‘appeal’ compared to those that they ‘challenge’.

### To what extent do you feel confident that you can...?

Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected ‘Not applicable’ (Varies)



## Demographic differences



### **...appeal/challenge my grades if I need to**

International students (48%), postgraduates (49%), men (40%) and students who do not work (36%) were more likely to feel confident with this. Arts and Humanities students (26%), Home students (28%), undergraduates (29%), women (30%) and students who work (27%) were less likely to feel confident with this.

### **...apply for coursework/examination deadline extension if I need to**

Business students (59%) were less likely to feel confident with this.

### **...submit a Serious Adverse Circumstances (SAC) Form if I need to**

Arts and Humanities students (74%) were more likely to feel confident with this. Business students (57%) were less likely to feel confident with this.

### **...make an academic appeal if I need to**

International students (56%), postgraduates (59%), men (52%), students who do not have a disability (46%) and students who do not work (49%) were more likely to feel confident with this. Home students (41%), undergraduates (41%), women (41%), students who have a disability (38%) and students who work (37%) were less likely to feel confident with this.

### **...challenge academic regulations I don't agree with**

International students (30%), postgraduates (30%) and men (27%) were more likely to feel confident with this. Home students (18%), undergraduates (18%) and women (18%) were less likely to feel confident with this.

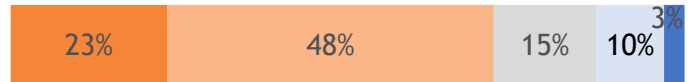
## Relationships with students and staff

There is clearly a highly supportive and mutually respectful environment at Durham University. 85% of students felt respected and accepted by staff and 71% said the same about students. However, the disparity in agreement between these two groups, of 14 percentage points, indicates that students may not be as accepting and respectful towards other students as staff are.

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?**

Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)

I feel respected and accepted by other students at Durham University (Base: 839)



I feel respected and accepted by staff at Durham University (Base: 837)



■ Strongly agree 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Strongly disagree

### Demographic differences



#### I feel respected and accepted by other students at Durham University

Students who do not have a disability (75%), second+ generation students (76%), students who do not work (74%) and Home White students (71%) were more likely to agree with this. Students who have a disability (60%), first-generation students (59%), students that work (65%) and Home students from an ethnic minority background (59%) were less likely to agree with this.

#### I feel respected and accepted by staff at Durham University

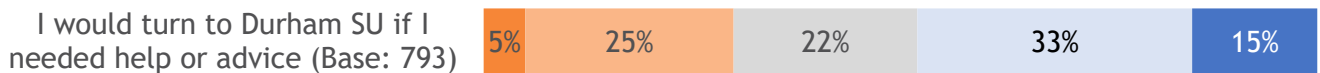
Students who do not have a disability (88%) were more likely to agree with this. Students who have a disability (79%) were less likely to agree with this.

## Wellbeing, advice and communications

### Overall perceptions of Durham SU's advisory role

While 57% of students believed the SU provides useful advice to students, fewer (30%) would turn to the SU for advice. Agreement that Durham SU provides useful advice to students is similar to the SLP benchmark (61%), however, 52% among the SLP benchmark would turn to the SU if they needed help or advice. We have had multiple collegiate partners on Student Life Pulse in the past and their results were not consistently lower than the benchmark so, while the collegiate nature of the University may play a part in this, it may not be the only explanation for lower results.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?. Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)



■ Strongly agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree

### Demographic differences



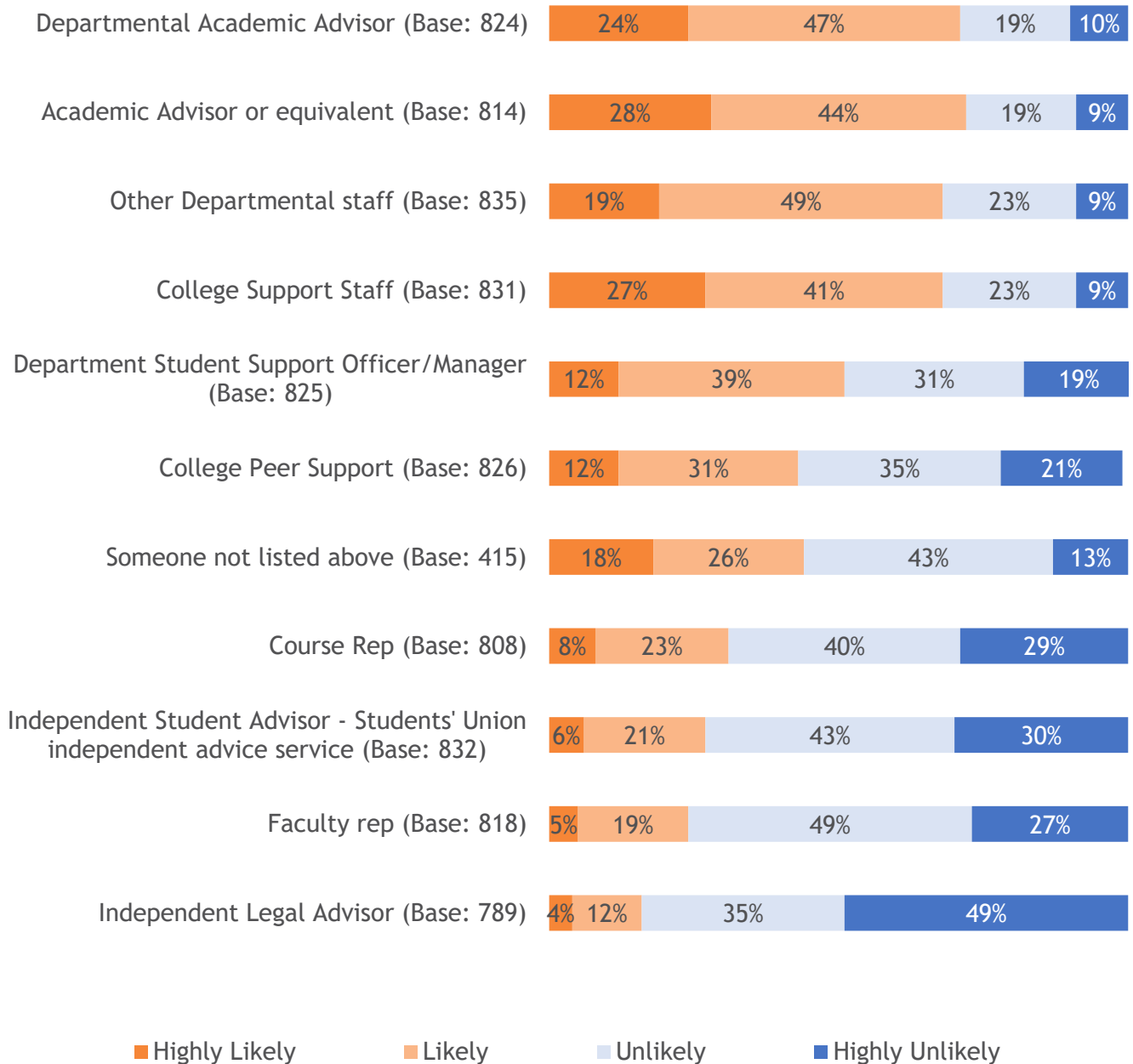
#### I would turn to Durham SU if I needed help or advice

Business students (42%), international students (46%), postgraduates (47%) and first-generation students (37%) were more likely to agree with this statement. Home students (24%), undergraduates (25%) and second + generation students (28%) were less likely to agree with this statement.

## Sources of support

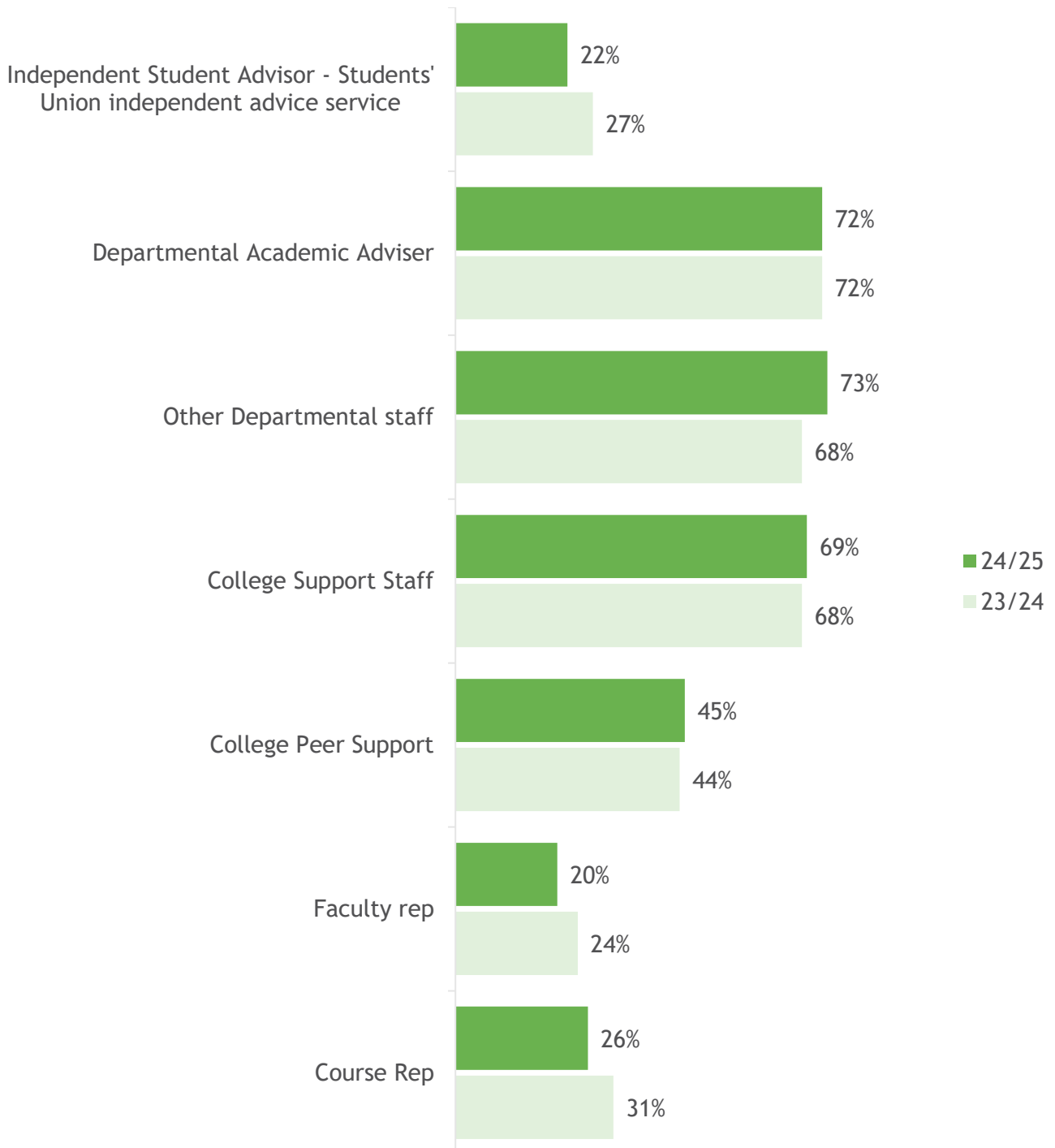
Students showed a preference to access support through departmental and college contacts over SU contacts and independent legal advisors. Those who said they would go someone not listed above referenced their friends/peers, tutors, supervisors, disability or mental health support, their family or religious leaders.

If you need advice and support at University, how likely are you to speak to the following people? Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'Not applicable' (Varies)



There has also been a decline in students who said they would utilise SU avenues (Independent Student Advisor, Faculty rep and Course rep) since last year's survey, whereas there has been an increase in those that would consider other departmental staff. This may be linked to recent restructuring of student support and efforts made to promote these as an avenue for support.

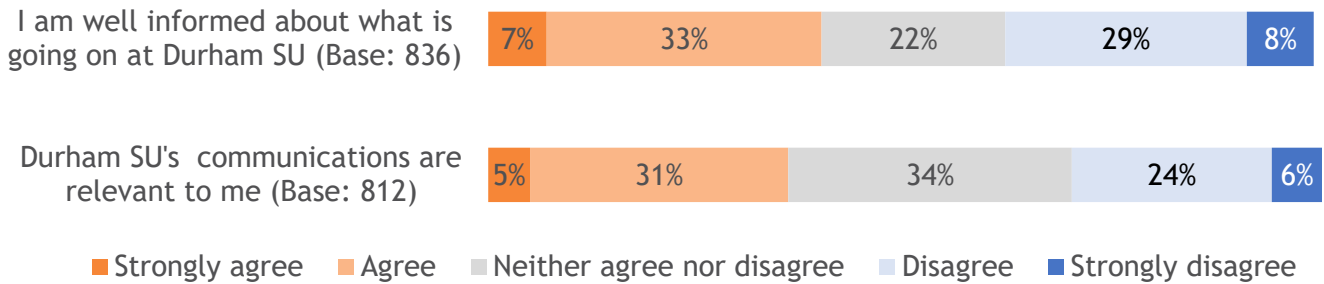
If you need advice and support at University, how likely are you to speak to the following people? Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'Not applicable', showing likely responses only



## Perceptions of Durham SU's communications

Perceptions of Durham SU's communications are mixed. While 40% said that they are well informed about what is going on, 37% disagreed. Similarly, 36% believed Durham SU's communications were relevant to them, but 30% disagreed. Agreement that students are well informed is similar to the SLP benchmark of 43%, however, agreement that communications are relevant is lower than the SLP benchmark of 42%.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?. Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)



### Demographic differences



#### I am well informed about what is going on at Durham SU

Students in the Social Sciences Faculty (35%) were less likely to agree with this.

## Service awareness and satisfaction

### Awareness and use of SU services

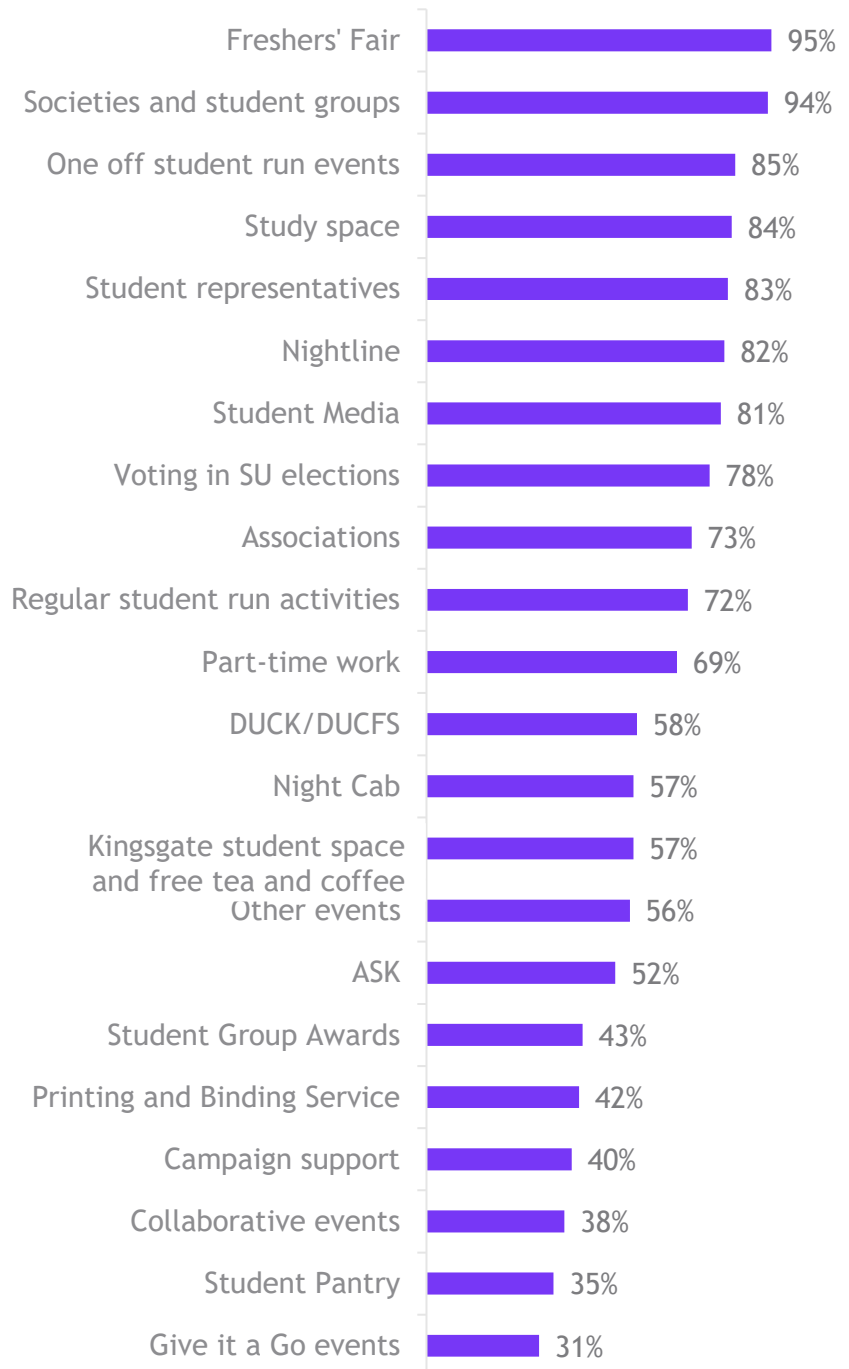
Of the 22 services measured, the majority of students were aware of 16 of these. The services that had the highest awareness related either to Freshers' or social activities; this included Freshers' Fair (95%), societies and student groups (94%) and one-off student run events and activities (85%). There was also high levels of awareness of study space (84%), Nightline (82%) and Student Media (81%).

It was not always the case that students had greater awareness of social activities. Some of the lowest awareness was seen for social experiences including collaborative events (38%) and Give it a Go events (31%).

Other services which had lower awareness may be explained by the fact they are likely targeted towards subgroups of students, including Student Pantry (35%), campaign support (40%), Printing and Binding Services (42%) and Student Group Awards (43%).

The most highly used services corresponded well to the services students were most aware of: Freshers' Fair (81%), societies and student groups (64%), study space (51%) and Student Media (34%). However, there were some services which had high awareness but low

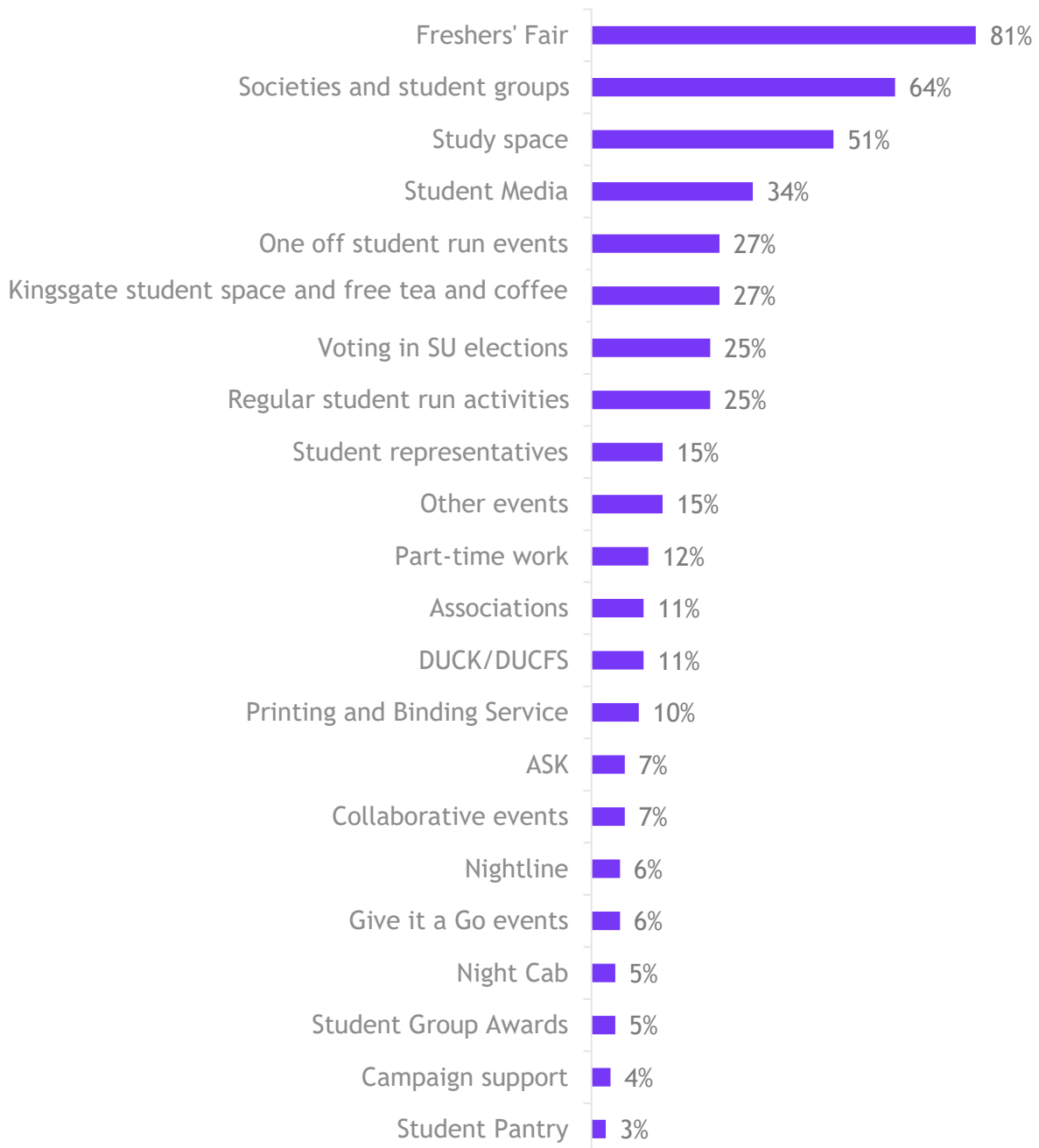
Durham SU services respondents had heard of. Base: All respondents (847).



use. This included part-time work (69% aware, whereas 12% had used), Associations (73% aware, whereas 11% had used) and Nightline (82% aware, whereas 6% had used). While this is expected in the case of part-time work and Nightline, the discrepancy in the case of Associations, which have the potential for a wider reach, may be worth further investigation.

The Kingsgate student space and free tea and coffee also had an interesting relation between those who were aware of it and who used it. It had middling awareness at 57%, however, it also had relatively high use (27%). This may suggest that this space is quite valuable to students.

**Durham SU services respondents had used.** Base: All respondents (847).



## Satisfaction with SU services

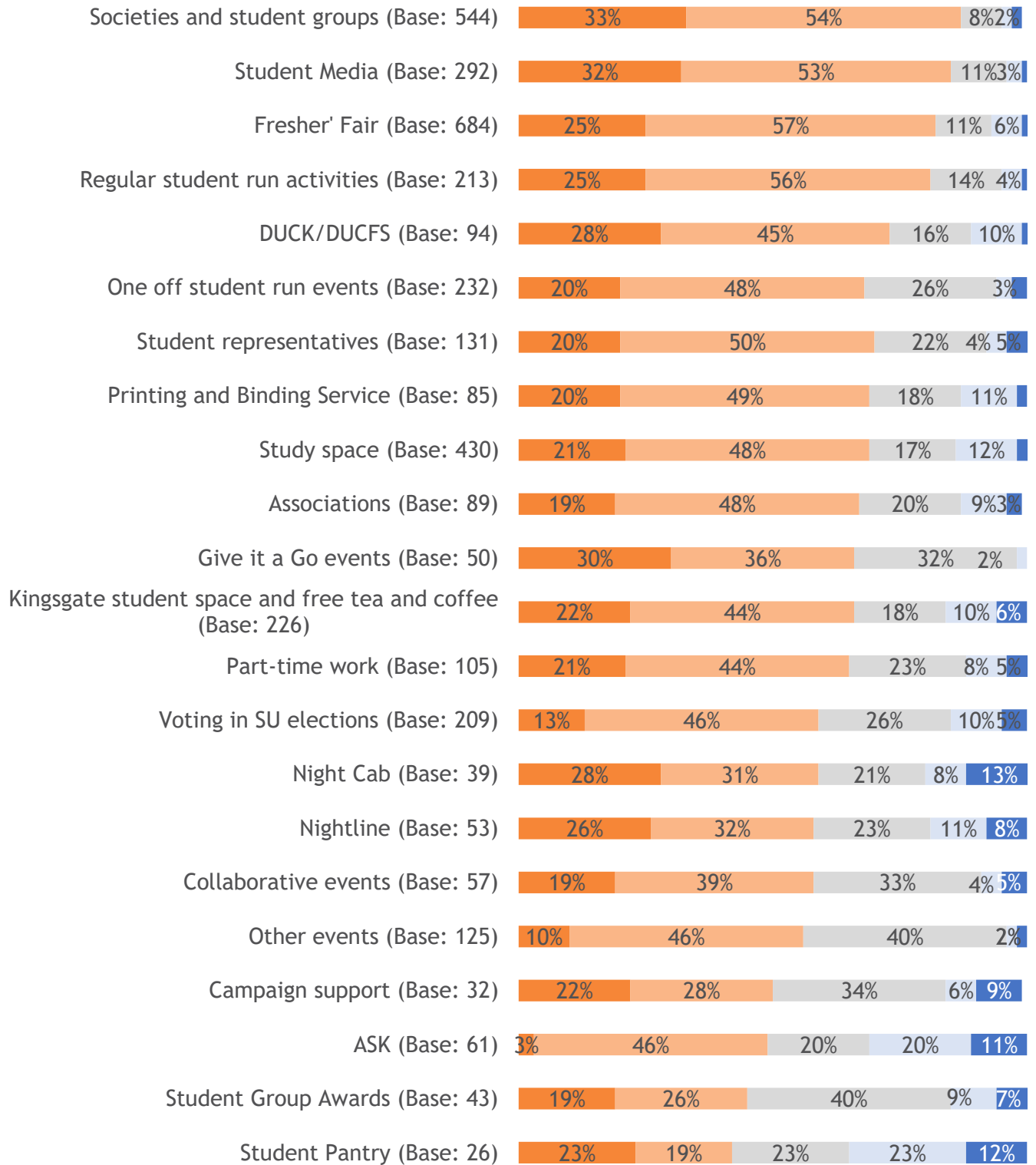
The following page shows the responses students gave when how satisfied or dissatisfied they were with the services they had used. Positively, 13 out of the 22 services included had high levels of satisfaction (defined as 60% or more of students stating they are satisfied with the service). In line with levels of awareness and use, the services with the highest levels of satisfaction were societies and student groups (88%), Student Media (86%), Freshers' Fair (82%) and regular student run activities (81%).

When considering the services which had lower levels of satisfaction, some of this was driven by high levels of neutrality, which does not necessarily indicate that it would be a priority to understand what is driving lower levels of satisfaction with these services. This included collaborative events (while 58% were satisfied, 33% were neutral), other events (while 55% were satisfied, 40% were neutral), campaign support (50% were satisfied, 34% were neutral) and Student Group Awards (44% were satisfied which was similar to the 40% who were neutral).

However, some services had relatively high levels of dissatisfaction, all of which fell under the category of services to support students. This included the Student Pantry (35% dissatisfied), ASK - Independent Advice Service (31% dissatisfied), Night Cab (21% dissatisfied) and Nightline (19% dissatisfied). While it is understood that the Night Cab is not on offer anymore, there may be value in further investigation of students' experiences of the Pantry, advice service and Nightline to understand why high levels of dissatisfaction are experienced.

Further, some of the more highly regarded services also had substantial pockets of dissatisfaction, which also may be worth further investigation, particularly given that these represent services which have higher levels of use meaning levels of dissatisfaction impacts more students. This included study space (69% were satisfied, but 15% expressed dissatisfaction) and the Kingsgate student space and free tea and coffee (66% were satisfied, but 16% were dissatisfied).

Satisfaction with Durham SU services. Base: All respondents who used that service (Varies).



■ Very satisfied 
 ■ Satisfied 
 ■ Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied 
 ■ Dissatisfied 
 ■ Very dissatisfied

A photograph of a person sitting at a wooden table, writing in a notebook. The person's hands are visible, holding a pen and writing on the pages. In the foreground, there is a white coffee cup on a saucer. To the right, a smartphone is lying on the table. In the background, a dark-colored bag is resting on the table. The entire image has a warm, orange-toned overlay. The text "Bringing students across Durham together" is written in white, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

Bringing students across Durham together

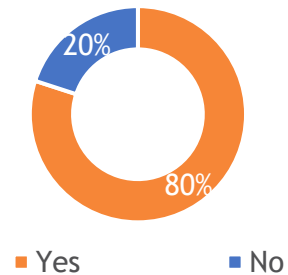
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## Bringing students across Durham together

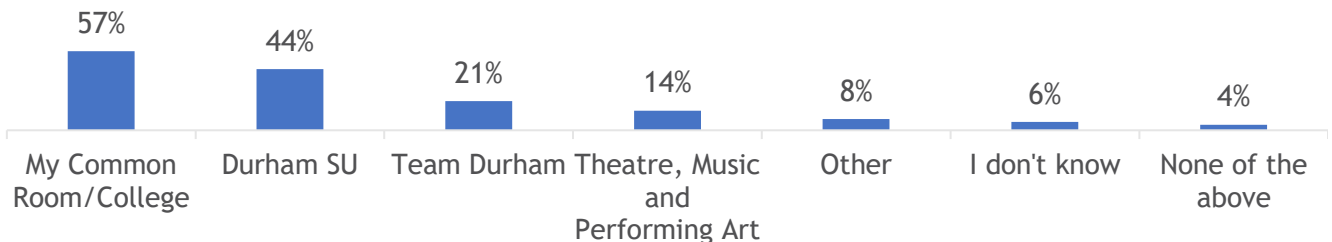
### Membership of student groups, societies and clubs

80% of respondents stated that they are a member of a Durham student group, society or club. Involvement in student groups, societies and clubs is at a similar level to previous academic year, which was at 79% in 23/24. Over half of those who are a member believed their student group, society or club is part of their common room or college (57%) and 44% said it was through Durham SU. However, it should be noted that the question only tests which organisation students think their group is part of, and does not measure whether they are correct about this. Over one in twenty (6%) of students did not know what organisation their student group, society or club is part of, which is expected due to the complex nature of the offer at Durham.

Are you a member of any student groups, societies or clubs at Durham? Base: All respondents (847)



My student group, society or club is part of... Base: Respondents who are part of a student group, society or club (681)



### Demographic differences



#### Membership of a student group, club or society

Arts and Humanities students (85%), home students (84%), undergraduates (88%) and second + generation students (85%) were more likely to be a member of a student group, club or society. International students (69%), postgraduates (53%) and first-generation students (69%) were less likely to be a member of a student group, club or society.

#### The organisation students engaged in groups, clubs and societies through

- Social Sciences students (52%) and undergraduates (46%) were more likely to engage through Durham SU.
- Arts and Humanities students (22%), Home students (15%) and students who report a disability (18%) were more likely to engage through Durham Student Theatre, Music and Performing Art.
- Home students (59%) and undergraduates (59%) were more likely to engage through their Common Room (59%).
- International students were more likely to engage through another organisation (12%).
- Undergraduates, Home White students (23%) and men (28%) were more likely to engage through Team Durham (23%).

Reasons students gave for joining a society, club or group included:



### Social and community

A common reason students gave for joining a society, club or group was to meet new people and make friends. Students liked socialising with others and feeling part of a community.

“

To make good use of my spare time, meet new like-minded people and have positive social experiences

First year undergraduate Home student



### Fun and enjoyment

Students joined a club, society or group to take part in a hobby or interest. They wanted to spend time doing something they enjoyed or were passionate.

“

Its extremely engaging and I have a lot of fun

Third year undergraduate Home student



### Sports and fitness

Clubs, societies and groups made students feel that they are being active, keeping fit and improving their health (physical and mental).

“

Exercises and team sports keep me healthy and happy

International PhD student



### Personal development

Students felt that clubs, groups and societies helped them to develop new skills and enhanced their employability through networking and activities for their CV.

“

I want to feel as if I am growing as a person alongside developing the necessary skills for a career

Second year undergraduate Home student



### Break from academics

Clubs, groups and societies gave students a break from their studies. Students felt it was important to de-stress and to break up their workload.

“

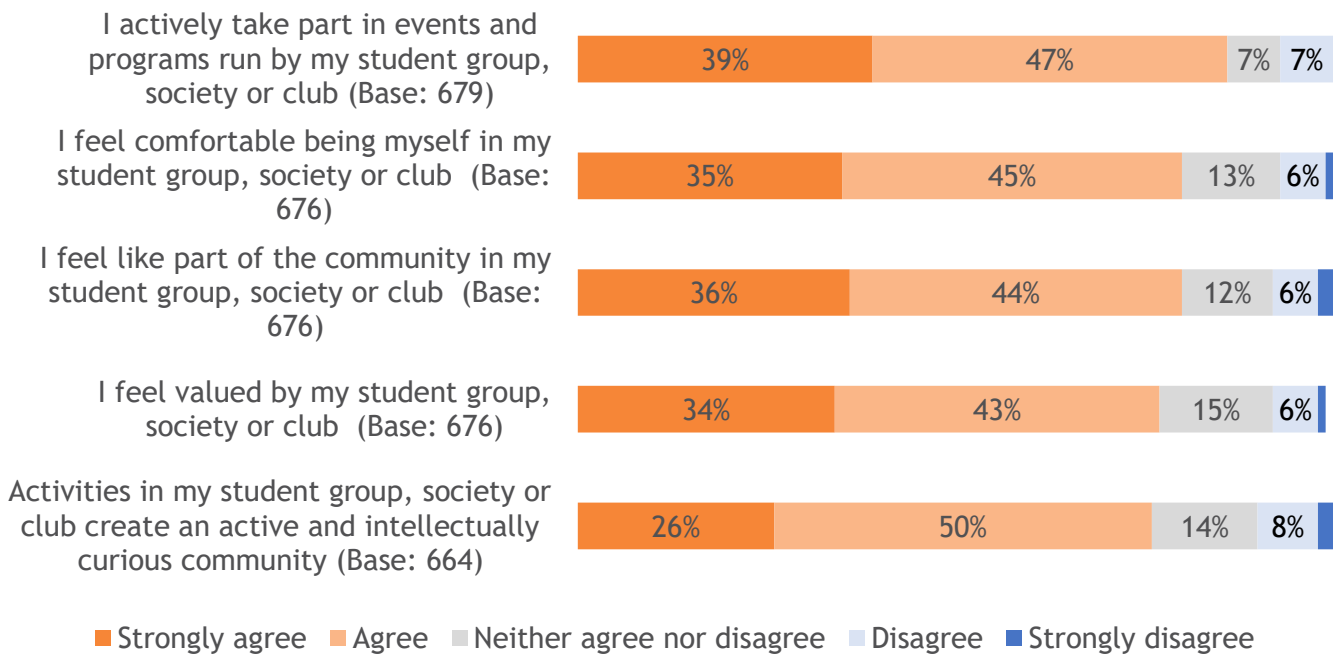
It gives me some relief from thinking about dissertation worries or academic activities

Third year undergraduate Home student

## Experience of student groups, societies and clubs

Students reported being highly engaged in the groups they take part in, as 86% of those who are member of a student group, society or club agreed that they actively take part in events/programs. This is likely due to the incredibly positive perceptions that students hold about their involvement. 80% of students who are members of a student group, society or club agree that they are comfortable being themselves in the group, and the same proportion agree that they are part of the group’s community. 77% also say that they feel valued by their student group, society or club and 76% felt its activities created an active and intellectually curious community.

**To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?.** Base: Respondents who are a member of a group, club or society, excluding those who selected ‘I don’t know’ (Varies)



### Demographic differences



#### I actively take part in events and programs run by my student group, society or club

Students who work (90%) and Home White students (88%) were more likely to agree with this. Business students (76%), students who do not work (84%) and Home students from ethnic minority groups (72%) were less likely to agree with this.

#### I feel comfortable being myself in my student group, society or club

Undergraduates (81%) and students who work (85%) were more likely to agree with this. Postgraduates (70%) and students who do not work (76%) were less likely to agree with this.

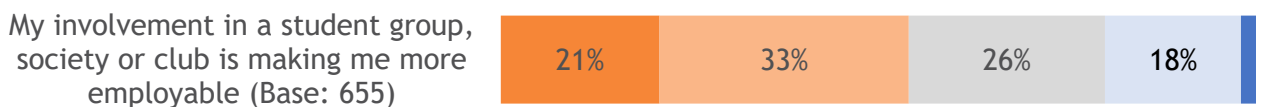
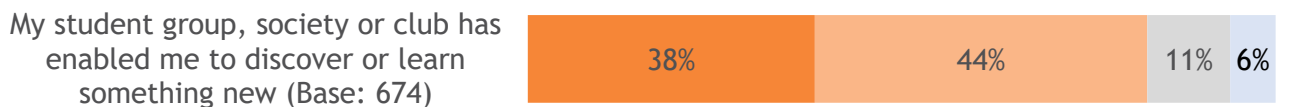
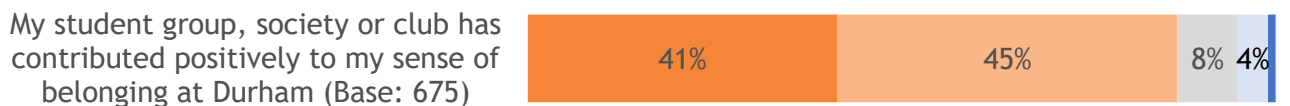
#### I feel like part of the community in my student group, society or club

Students who work (85%) were more likely to agree with this. Students who do not work (77%) were less likely to agree with this.

## Impact of student groups, societies and clubs

Students were highly positive about the impact their group, society or club had on their experience. 88% said it had a positive impact on their wellbeing, 87% said it had a positive impact on their social life, 86% said it contributed positively to their sense of belonging and 82% said it helped them to discover or learn something new. However, only 54% said it had made them more employable, despite skills development being a key reason for joining a group, society or club.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?. Base: Respondents who are a member of a group, club or society, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)



■ Strongly agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree

## Demographic differences



### **My involvement in a student group, society or club has a positive impact on my wellbeing**

Home students (91%) were more likely to agree with this. Business students (78%) and international students (82%) were less likely to agree with this.

### **My involvement in a student group, society or club has a positive impact on my social life**

Home White students (89%) and students who work (90%) were more likely to agree with this. Home students from ethnic minority backgrounds (78%), Business students (77%) and students who do not work (85%) were less likely to agree with this.

### **My student group, society or club has contributed positively to my sense of belonging at Durham**

Home White students (88%) were more likely to agree with this. Home students from ethnic minority backgrounds (78%) and Business students (77%) were less likely to agree with this.

### **My involvement in a student group, society or club is making me more employable**

Students who work (63%) were more likely to agree with this. Sciences students (49%) and students who do not work (49%) were less likely to agree with this (49%).

## Barriers to engaging with opportunities outside of students' course

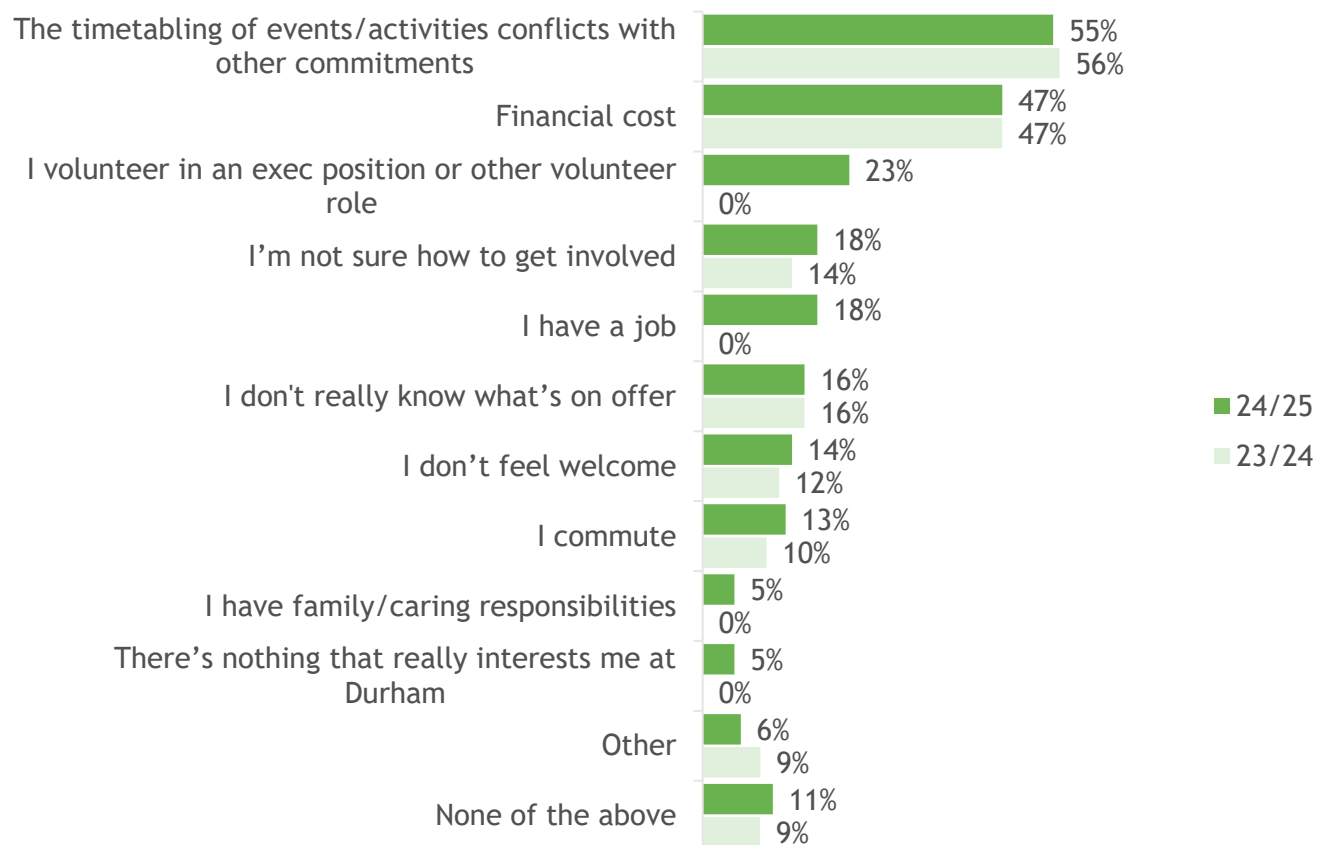
Timetabling was the most common reason students gave that impacted their participation in activities outside their course (55%) followed by financial cost (47%). Both remain relatively consistent with last year's results.

Not having the time to take part precluded some students from engaging with opportunities as 23% said that volunteering and 18% said that having a job impacted their participation in activities outside of their course. Combined, these factors impacted 34% of students which is higher than observed last year (23%). A further 5% of students also referenced having caring responsibilities; when combined with those who volunteered or had a job, this amounted to 37% of students who referenced other responsibilities as a barrier.

Knowledge also appeared to be a barrier. 18% said they were unsure about how to get in involved, an increase of four percentage points on last year, and 16% said they did not know what was on offer.

People who selected 'other' referenced the impact their disability, mental health condition or social anxiety had on their access to activities, and others said that there were not groups available for them, due to being postgraduates, mature students or non-drinkers.

**Do any of the following impact your participation in activities and opportunities outside your course?**  
Base: all respondents (847)



## Demographic differences



### **Financial cost**

Social Sciences students (53%), women (50%), students who have a disability (55%) and students who work (56%) were more likely to report this barrier. Men (38%), students who do not have a disability (45%) and students who do not work (42%) were less likely to report this as a barrier.

### **I volunteer in an exec position or other volunteer role**

Social Sciences students (29%), undergraduates (25%), women (25%), Home White students (26%) and students who work (31%) were more likely to report this barrier. Science students (42%), postgraduates (15%), men (17%), Home students from an ethnic minority background (15%) and students who do not work (18%) were less likely to report this barrier.

### **I'm not sure how to get involved**

International students (25%) and students who do not work (21%) were more likely to report this barrier. Home students (15%) and students who work (12%) were less likely to report this barrier.

### **I have a job**

Home students (19%) and first generation students (29%) were more likely to report this barrier. International students (13%) and second + generation students (13%) were less likely to report this barrier.

### **I don't really know what's on offer**

International students (24%) were more likely to report this barrier. Home students (13%) were less likely to report this barrier.

### **I don't feel welcome**

International students (20%), women (17%), students who have a disability (18%), first-generation students (19%) and Home students from an ethnic minority background (20%) were more likely to report this barrier. Home students (12%), men (8%), students who do not have a disability (12%), second + generation students (13%) and Home White students (11%) were less likely to report this barrier.

### **I commute**

Science students (15%), international students (18%) and postgraduates (26%) were more likely to report this barrier. Arts and Humanities students (8%), home students (11%) and undergraduates (9%) were less likely to report this barrier.

### **I have family/caring responsibilities**

Postgraduates (10%), first-generation students (9%) and students who work (7%) were more likely to report this barrier. Science students (3%), undergraduates (4%), second + generation students (4%) and students who don't work (4%) were less likely to report this barrier.

### **There's nothing that really interests me at Durham**

First-generation students (8%) were more likely to report this barrier. Second + generation students (4%) were less likely to report this barrier.

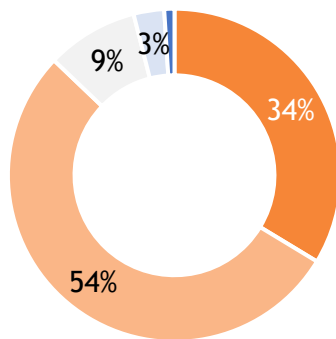
## Awareness of social groups and events

88% of students at Durham agreed that Durham SU offered a wide range of student groups, clubs and societies for them to get involved in, with 34% strongly agreeing with the statement. This is higher than the SLP benchmark which is at 70%. However, many fewer students know how to set up their own student community, society or event (27%). This is compared to 54% of students who disagreed with this statement.

**Durham SU offers a wide range of student groups, clubs and societies that I can get involved in**

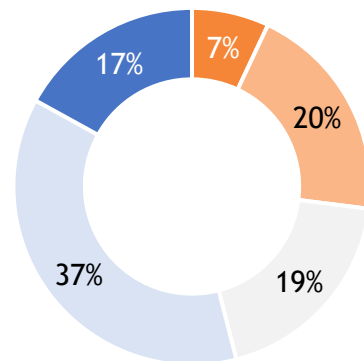
Base: All respondents, excluding 'I don't know' (818)

- Strongly agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree



**I know the process of starting up my own student community, society or event at Durham SU**

Base: All respondents, excluding 'I don't know' (791)



## Demographic differences



**Durham SU offers a wide range of student groups, clubs and societies that I can get involved in**

Arts and Humanities students (91%), undergraduates (89%) and women (90%) were more likely to agree with this statement. Business students (78%), postgraduates (80%) and men (83%) were less likely to agree with this statement.

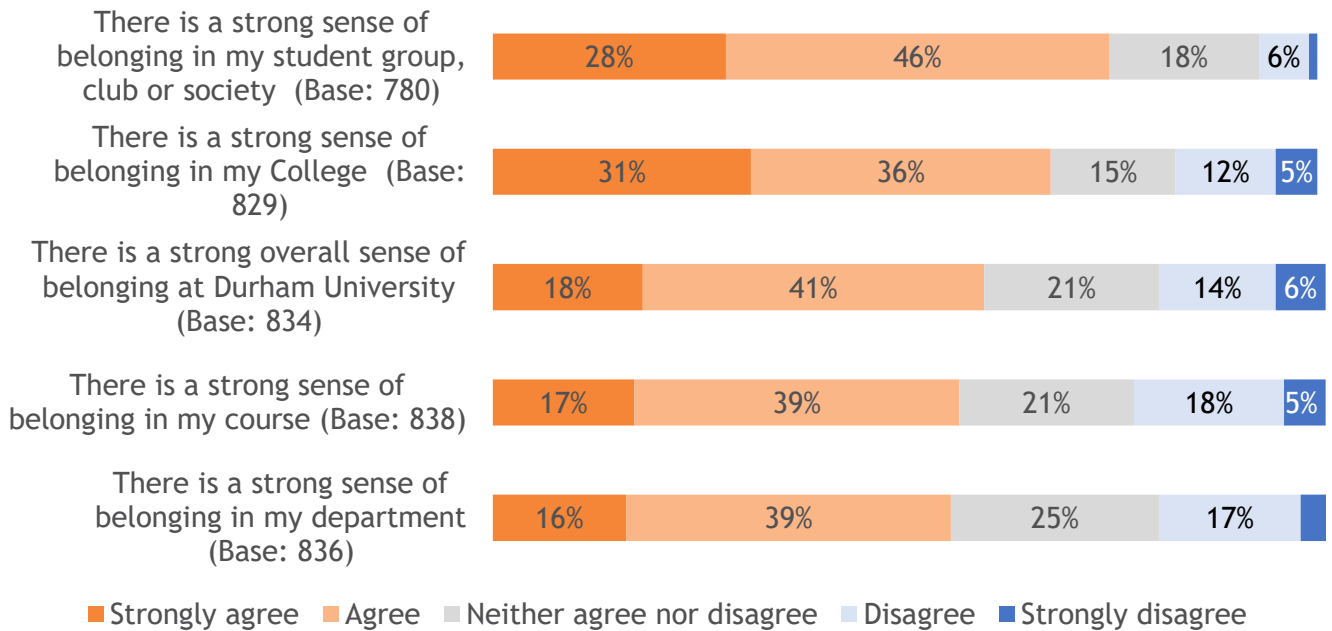
**I know the process of starting up my own student community, society or event at Durham SU**

Postgraduates (34%), students who have a disability (34%), first-generation students (33%) and students who work (36%) were more likely to agree with this statement. Undergraduates (25%), students who do not have a disability (25%), second + generation students (25%) and students who don't work (22%) were less likely to agree with this statement.

## Belonging at Durham

Students felt the greatest sense of belonging in their student group, club or society (74%) and their College (68%). Both of which saw reasonable proportions strongly agree that this was the case (28% and 31% respectively). There were also high proportions who felt there is a sense of belonging on their course (56%) and in their department (54%), though there were substantially fewer that felt this strongly (17% and 16% respectively). This translates into 59% of students believing that there is a strong sense of belonging overall at Durham, which indicates that there is more sense of belonging among smaller groups than among the wider student body.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?. Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)



### Demographic differences



#### There is a strong sense of belonging in my student group, club or society

Home students (76%), undergraduates (78%) and second + generation students (77%) were more likely to agree. Business students (61%), international students (69%), postgraduates (58%) and first-generation students (69%) were less likely to agree.

#### There is a strong sense of belonging in my College

Home students overall (70%), specifically Home White students (72%), undergraduates (70%), second + generation students (70%) were more likely to agree. International students (61%) Home students from an ethnic minority (60%), postgraduates (58%), first-generation students (60%) were less likely to agree.

#### There is a strong overall sense of belonging at Durham University

Men (65%), students who do not have a disability (65%) and second + generation students (61%) were more likely to agree. Women (57%), students who have a disability (46%) and first-generation students (53%) were less likely to agree.

#### There is a strong sense of belonging in my course

Postgraduates (71%) were more likely to agree. Undergraduates (52%) were less likely to agree.

#### There is a strong sense of belonging in my department

International students (63%) and postgraduates (72%) were more likely to agree. Home students (52%) and undergraduates (50%) were less likely to agree.

A photograph of a person sitting at a wooden table, writing in a notebook. The person's hands are visible, holding a pen and writing on the pages. In the foreground, there is a white coffee cup on a saucer. To the right, a smartphone is lying on the table. In the background, a brown leather bag is resting on the table. The entire image has a warm, orange-toned overlay. The text "Tackling the big issues that hold students back" is written in white, sans-serif font across the middle of the image.

Tackling the big issues that hold students back

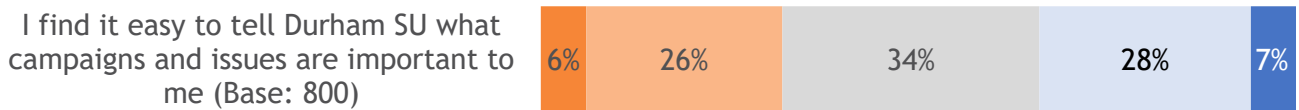
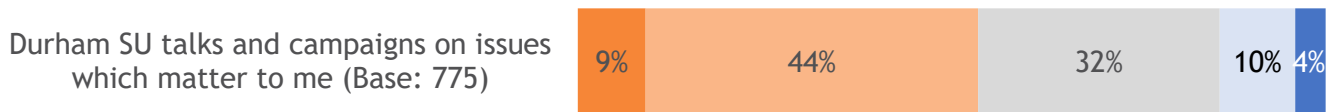
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## Important issues to students and how the SU impacts these

### Perceptions of the issues Durham SU focuses on

Overall, 53% of students agreed that Durham SU campaigns on issues which matter to them. Active disagreement was not high, which indicates that the SU is not necessarily campaigning on the wrong issues; however, that 32% were neutral suggests that students do not have good awareness of what is happening. This may link to the how easy students felt it was to tell Durham SU what is important to them: 32% agreed it was easy while slightly more, at 35%, disagreed this was the case.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)



■ Strongly agree 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Strongly disagree

### Demographic differences



#### I find it easy to tell Durham SU what campaigns and issues are important to me

Business students (45%), international students (41%) and students who do not have a disability (34%) were more likely to agree with this. Home students (29%) and students who have a disability (25%) were likely to agree with this.

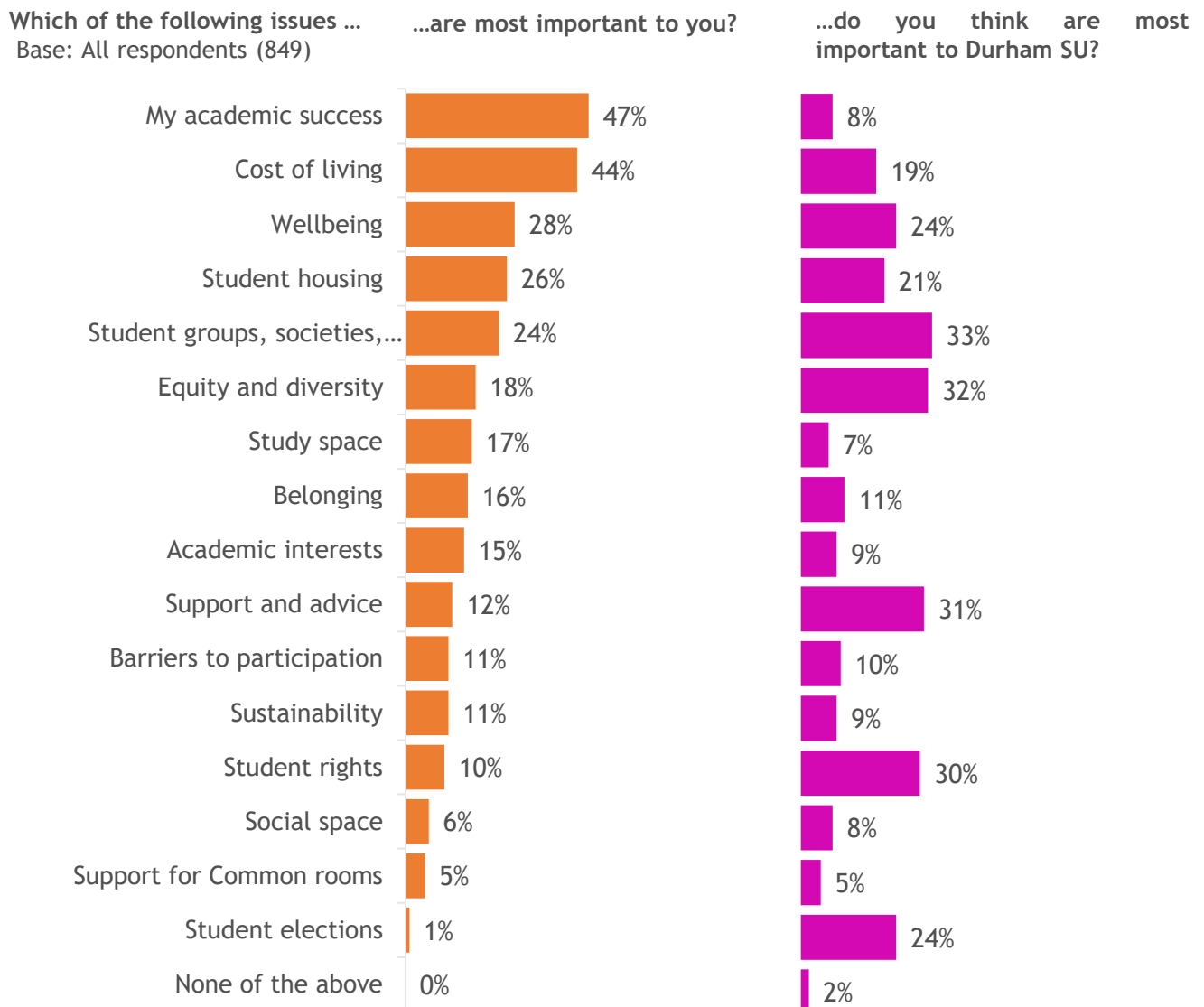
#### Durham SU talks and campaigns on issues which matter to me

Women (58%) were more likely to agree with this. Men (45%) were less likely to agree with this.

## Aligning with issues that are important to students

The top five issues which students felt were important to them were their academic success (47%), cost of living (44%), their wellbeing (28%), student housing (26%) and student groups, societies and associations (24%). Out of these, two were in the top five issues students thought the SU cared about: their wellbeing (24%) and student groups, societies and associations (33%). The largest discrepancy was seen regarding the importance of academic success; while this was the top ranked issue that students cared about, it ranked 13<sup>th</sup> place out of 16 for the issues students thought were important to the SU.

Other issues students thought were highly important to the SU were equity and diversity (33%), support and advice (31%), student rights (30%) and student elections (24%). Equity and diversity ranked 6<sup>th</sup> out of 13 issues for students, meaning this is not that misaligned. However, the remaining ranked 10<sup>th</sup>, 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> out of 16 respectively in terms of what students cared about hinting at another disconnect in how issues are communicated. The difference between levels of



Importance placed on support and advice may indicate that this term is more generic, and students would communications focus on the key issues (academic success, cost-of-living, wellbeing, and housing) rather than a more generic advice offer.

## Demographic differences (top five issues only)



### **My academic success**

Students who do not have a disability (51%) were more likely to say this was important to them. Students who have a disability (37%) were less likely to say this was important to them.

### **Cost of living**

Home students from ethnic minority backgrounds (29%), postgraduates (51%) and first-generation students (51%) were more likely to say this was important to them. Home White students (41%), undergraduates (42%) and second + generation students (42%) were less likely to say this was important to them.

### **Wellbeing**

Home White students (30%) and women (31%) were more likely to say this was important to them. Home students from ethnic minority backgrounds (20%), Business students (19%), Arts and Humanities students (22%) and men (23%) were less likely to say this was important to them.

### **Student housing**

Home students (29%), men (32%) and students who don't work (29%) were more likely to say this was important to them. International students (19%), women (41%) and students who work (23%) were less likely to say this was important to them.

### **Student groups, societies and clubs**

Sciences students (30%), home students (27%), undergraduates (28%), men (30%) and students who do not have a disability (27%) were more likely to say this was important to them. Business students (15%), international students (17%), postgraduates (12%), women (21%) and students who have a disability (20%) were less likely to say this was important to them.

When asked about any other issues that were important to them, students generally emphasised the importance of inclusivity and accessibility (particularly for disabled students), wellbeing support, representation, housing and social opportunities.



Student disabilities. The general approach to aspects of wellbeing and disability by the su is very surface level and performative; having very little impact on people who are suffering with long term, chronic, or severe difficulties. People need sensible, well thought out campaigns and services, rather than stop-gap, performative vanity projects run by students who have no idea what the reality of student life is for those truly suffering.

Home Master's student

“

Having the SU on the side of the students rather than in sense as collaborating with the university and shutting down our voices.

Fourth year undergraduate Home student

It was also common for students to highlight the importance of employability support, support for bullying and harassment, and dealing with misconduct.

“

Tackling instances of harassment (physical, verbal, sexual, online) from students towards other students in the community, I feel the SU could do more to push the university to take action against students who exhibit or act harmfully against other students

Third year undergraduate Home student

“

The complete lack of repercussions for the hate speech, racism, homophobia, and islamophobia peddled by Durham Union time and time again.

Third year undergraduate international student

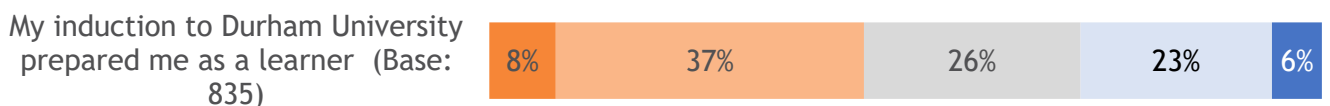
While there was broad alignment between the importance students put on equity and diversity and the importance they believed the SU placed on it, such comments to add additional context to the particular student groups who need further support and issues which need to be tackled may suggest that there is scope to be more granular in how the SU communicates about this topic.

## Issues that matter to students

### Induction

Perceptions of induction were mixed. There were reasonably high levels of students who believed their induction helped them to feel comfortable (66%) and to have fun (66%) which suggests that induction is a welcoming and fun environment. Agreement also reasonably high regarding perceptions that induction eased students' transition (61%) and how it prepared them to be a citizen of the University Community (54%) and a learner (45%). However, there are substantial proportions that did not agree with each of these statements indicating that improvements could be made to the way in which induction prepares students to learn and belong within the University.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?. Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)



■ Strongly agree 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Strongly disagree

## Demographic differences



### My induction to Durham helped me to be comfortable at Durham

Students who do not have a disability (69%), students who don't work (69%) and White Home students (67%) were more likely to agree. Students who have a disability (59%), students who work (61%) and Home students from ethnic minority backgrounds (52%) were less likely to agree.

### My induction to Durham University helped me to have fun

Undergraduates (69%), men (72%) and students who do not have a disability (70%) were more likely to agree. Postgraduates (55%), women (64%) and students who have a disability (60%) were less likely to agree.

### My induction to Durham University was a smooth transition into Higher Education

Men (66%), students who do not have a disability (64%) and Home White students (60%) were more likely to agree. Women (58%), students who have a disability (54%) and Home students from ethnic minority backgrounds (49%) were less likely to agree.

### My induction to Durham University prepared me to be a citizen of the Durham University Community

Students who do not have a disability (59%) were more likely to agree. Students who have a disability (43%) were less likely to agree.

### My induction to Durham University prepared me as a learner

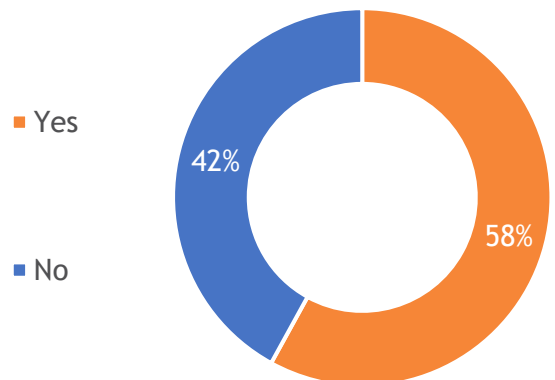
International students (57%), postgraduates (56%) and students who do not have a disability (47%) were more likely to agree. Home students (41%), undergraduates (43%) and students who have a disability (38%) were less likely to agree.

58% of students surveyed said they joined a student group or society as a result of meeting them at the freshers' fair. Home and undergraduate students are more likely than their peers to have joined a student group or society as a result of meeting them at the freshers' fair.

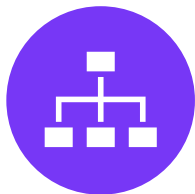
This is a decrease from the previous academic year, when 65% of students agreed that they had joined a student group or society as a result of meeting them at Durham SU's Freshers' Fair. *Please be aware that this may be due to changes in answer options.*

Did you join a student group or society as a result of meeting them at Durham SU's Freshers' Fair?

Base: All respondents (847)



Students thought that induction could have been improved through better organisation, administration and communication; creating an inclusive environment; and providing additional support.



### Better organisation, administration and communication

Students wanted clearer communication during the induction process and they felt that there was not enough promotion of some events. Students wanted the SU to provide them with more information about the SU's role in their university life and how the SU, colleges and university works, such as reps, societies, services, and how to navigate induction, Freshers' Fair and matriculation.

Students also mentioned that it was difficult to access information on the SU's website or social media. They found it particularly difficult to find information about events to attend, timetabling and how to get around.

“

Sometimes the links to instagram/facebook groups are incorrect so would be helpful to have these all up to date actively on the Durham SU website, also would be good to have information on how to join student groups throughout the year, not only in freshers week/refreshers.

Third year undergraduate home students



### Creating an inclusive environment

Students felt that the induction was most suited to undergraduate students who attended UK private schools and entered university at 18 years old. There could be more done to ensure those who are not from these groups feel included and understand the terminology used. They also mentioned more inclusion for groups such as religious groups, LGBTQ+ students, students with disability and ethnic minorities.

“

I had never heard of Matriculation, and thus was completely unprepared on the day. It is elitist to assume that students (particularly those that went to State school and non-Russel Group universities) will be aware of these rituals. This should be more clearly and accessibly communicated prior to such events.

Home PhD student



## Providing additional support

Students would have liked more support to settle into academic life, manage their finances and budget, manage their wellbeing, and integrate socially. More guidance was desired on the transition into university and this particularly impacted international students who wanted more support to transition to a new country.



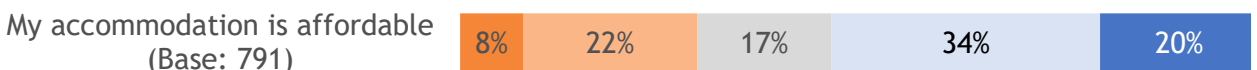
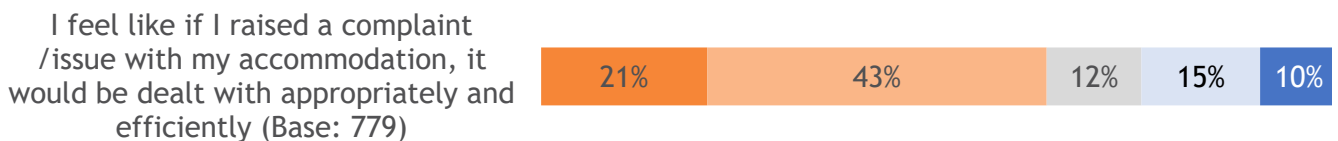
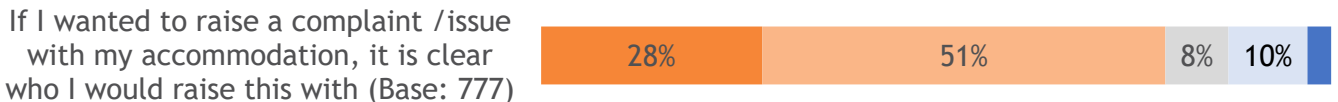
Perhaps more resources emailed to new students about settling in and talking about how daunting it can be moving to uni. It is something not too spoken about but so common and its important for people to know they are not alone when they feel homesick or unsure about their new lives at uni.

First year undergraduate Home student

## Student housing

Regarding complaints, 79% of students agreed that they knew who to raise a complaints or issue with, but a smaller proportion (64%) believed that this would be dealt with appropriately and efficiently. As found in the SU's recent housing survey, students reported that it was often difficult to get their landlords to respond to, and act upon, complaints.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements? Base: All respondents who live in rented property during term time, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)



■ Strongly agree 
 ■ Agree 
 ■ Neither agree nor disagree 
 ■ Disagree 
 ■ Strongly disagree

Regarding other perceptions, students appeared to have more mixed opinions. While 61% felt confident they could secure term-time accommodation and 53% thought their accommodation was high quality, 24% and 27% of students disagreed with each statement respectively. Few students would agree that their accommodation is affordable (30%), although this does mean that there are substantial numbers of students who are able to afford their accommodation. However, slightly over half (54%) did not feel it was affordable suggesting that this remains a key issue faced by students and may explain why the 'cost of living' resonated more as an important issue to them than 'student housing'.

## Demographic differences



### **I feel like if I raised a complaint /issue with my accommodation, it would be dealt with appropriately and efficiently**

Students who do not have a disability (67%) were more likely to agree. Students with a disability (58%) were less likely to agree.

### **I am confident in my ability to secure term-time accommodation**

Men (69%), students without a disability (64%) were more likely to agree. Women (59%), students with a disability (55%) were less likely to agree.

### **My accommodation is high quality**

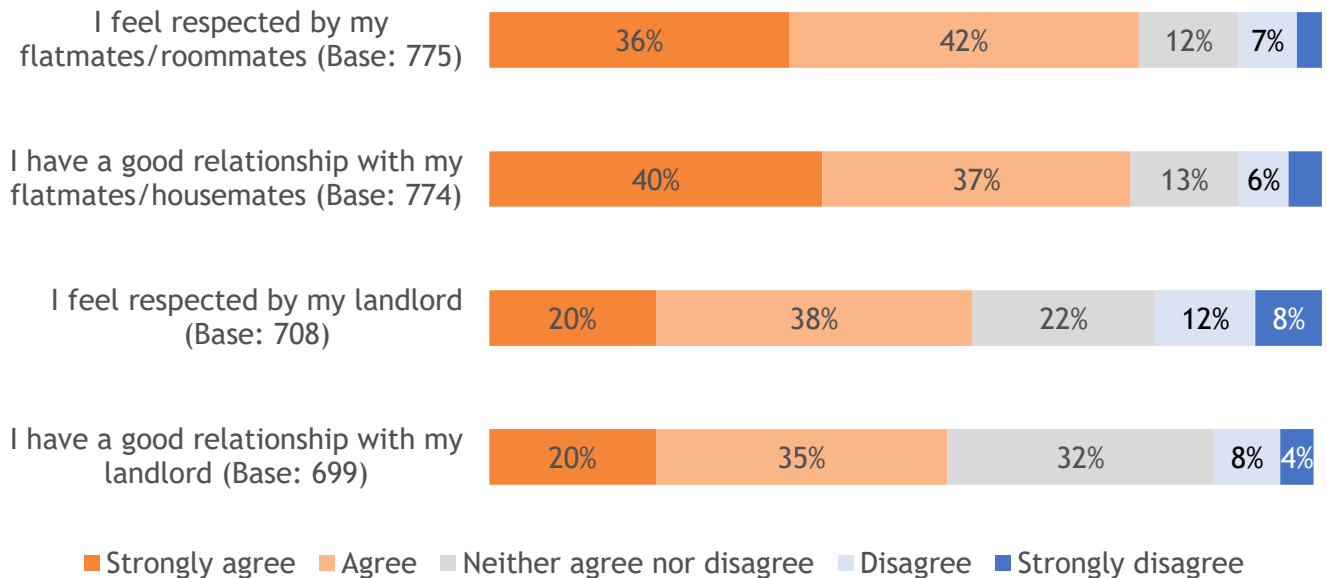
Postgraduates (60%) and students who do not work (56%) were more likely to agree. Undergraduates (51%) and students who work (48%) were less likely to agree.

### **My accommodation is affordable**

International students (37%), postgraduates (41%) and Home students from ethnic minority backgrounds (39%) were more likely to agree. Home students (27%), White Home students specifically (25%) and undergraduates (27%) were less likely to agree.

Students generally have a better relationship with the flatmates/roommates than their landlord. Nearly 8 in 10 students feel respected by (78%) and have a good relationship (77%) with their flatmates/roommates. However, only 55% reported that they had a good relationship with their landlord and only 58% said they felt respected by their landlords. Disagreement that students felt respected by their landlord was relatively high (20%) indicating that this is a cause for concern for students. However, 32% of students were neutral about whether they had a good relationship with their landlord, which may indicate that they do not know or that they do not have a relationship with their landlord.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?. Base: All respondents who live in rented property during term time, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)



## Demographic differences



### I have a good relationship with my landlord

International student (62%), postgraduates (65%) and students who do not have a disability (59%) were more likely to agree with this. Home students (53%), undergraduates (52%) and students who have a disability (48%) were less likely to agree with this.

### I feel respected by my landlord

International student (67%) and postgraduates (71%) were more likely to agree with this. Home students (55%) and undergraduates (54%) were less likely to agree with this.

### I have a good relationship with my flat mates/housemates

Students who do not have a disability (80%) and second + generation students (81%) were more likely to agree with this. Students who have a disability (71%) and first-generation students (67%) were less likely to agree with this.

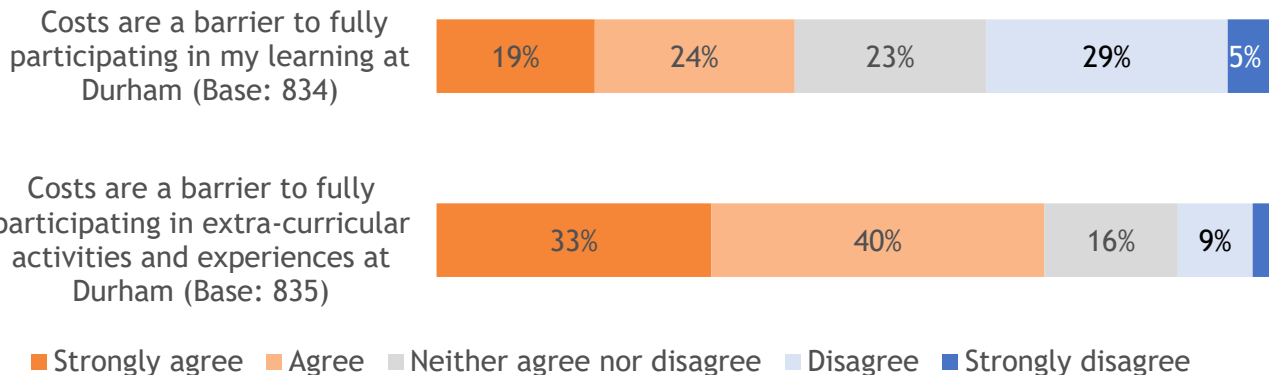
### I feel respected by my flat mates/roommates

Students who do not have a disability (83%) and second + generation students (81%) were more likely to agree with this. Students who have a disability (69%) and first-generation students (71%) were less likely to agree with this.

## Cost-of-living

43% of students agreed that the costs are a barrier to fully participating in their learning, whereas 34% disagreed, indicating varying experiences at the University. However, the impact on students' outside of the course was much more apparent, as 73% of students agreed that the costs are a barrier to fully participating in extra-curricular activities and experiences and only 11% said that they disagreed with this statement.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?. Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'I don't know' (Varies)



## Demographic differences



### Costs are a barrier to fully participating in my learning at Durham

Business students (57%), international students (52%), postgraduates (54%), students who have a disability (53%), first generation students (57%) and students who work (52%) were more likely to agree with this. Sciences students (39%), home students (40%), undergraduates (40%), students who do not have a disability (39%), second + generation students (38%) and students who do not work (52%) were less likely to agree with this.

### Costs are a barrier to fully participating in extra-curricular activities and experiences at Durham

Social sciences students (77%), women (78%), students who have a disability (84%), first generation students (81%) and students who work (80%) were more likely to agree with this. Men (63%), students who do not have a disability (70%), second + generation students (70%) and students who do not work (70%) were less likely to agree with this.

Students told us that that they had been unable to participate fully in activities because money caused stress and impacted their ability to focus, the cost of materials or equipment was too high, the cost of travel was too high, the costs associated with social events were too high, and because they needed to spend more time working.



### Stress and ability to focus

Students mentioned that the time that they spent managing their money by budgeting and cutting costs where they can was distracting them from their studies. They also referenced that they were constantly preoccupied and stressed due to money, which meant they couldn't focus on their studies.

“

I have had to debate several times whether I should continue with my programme or drop out because tuition is so high. I saved for 3 years, and as an international student, all of my savings go towards tuition, leading to a great deal of stress that detracts from my ability to study.

International Master's student



### High cost of materials or equipment

Students mentioned that the high cost of materials meant they were unable to engage fully with their course. Items students struggled to afford included textbooks, electronic devices, software, stationary, and printed. Students mentioned that they could access books from the library but that there are frequently no copies available. Equipment costs, such as specific equipment or clothing to be able to take part in sports or societies, was a barrier to joining and participating. Sports had a particularly high financial commitment which was off putting to those whose interest was more causal.

“

Living in Durham as a student is quite expensive when you come from low middle class family. Most of my Student maintenance loan goes towards my rent, thus I'm left with just enough money to cover my monthly expenses such as food, streaming services like Spotify and Amazon prime, Mobile plan and gym membership. After covering all these expenses, I can't afford to join the sports societies I really want to, like boxing. The gear is costly, and the membership fee is also too expensive for me.

First year undergraduate Home student



### High cost of travel

Travel costs stopped students from attending university, social events, course fieldtrips and society training sessions. This was exacerbated by the high cost of living in Durham which meant students lived further away from the University.

“

During my second year I was unable to attend any lectures and many of my seminars as I was commuting because I was unable to afford accommodation in Durham or anywhere nearby. Also most of my time would be spent commuting so having enough time to focus on my assignments was also an issue.

Third year undergraduate Home student



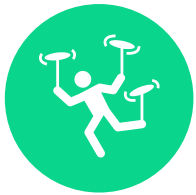
## High costs associated with social events

The costs associated with event tickets, particularly balls, and subscriptions to be a member of a society or club limited students' involvement in social events. They also referenced the money spent on elements such as food and drink when socialising, which meant they limited the frequency in which they took part in such activities. Such spending was not considered essential and students felt that they could not justify that.

“

The JCR fee took £200 as soon as I started by pressuring me saying 95% of students do it, having just arrived and dragged to it to pay by reps, however i am yet to see any benefit of it, I still have to pay for use of the gym, college sports and the library has open access. bearing in mind when the overall amount of my maintenance loan (which is the full amount) is split over the year, excluding my rent, I am only left with £350 per term, which the majority went on this amount and I was unable to cancel and get a refund. I do not like how they preyed on new nervous students wanting to make sure they are doing the right thing to get such a significant fee. This now holds me back from paying for societies, formals and clubs as then the costs from these all together go into the hundreds.

First year undergraduate Home student



## Time spent at work

Students felt that they are unable to afford university without working alongside it and spent a significant proportion of their time doing so. However, this meant that they were unable to fully participate due to constraints this put on their time.

“

I do not have full access to resources that would help my academics and it is too expensive to properly engage in activities outside of education, making it difficult to relax and recharge before engaging in academics. Due to the cost of living, I have also had to work two jobs since coming to university, massively impeding the time I can dedicate to academics.

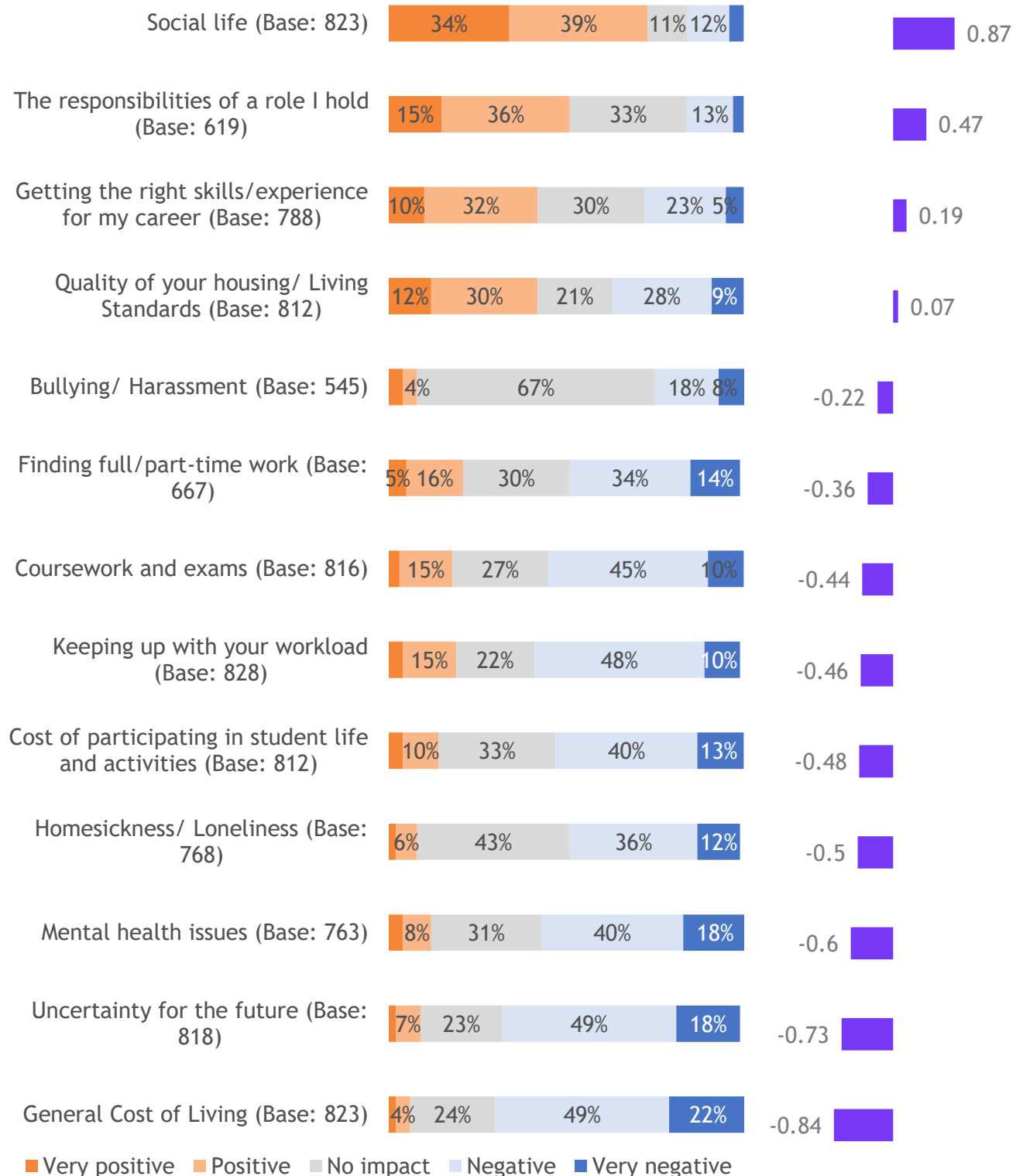
Third year undergraduate Home student

## Issues impacting student wellbeing

The following page shows the responses students gave when asked to tell us whether a range of factors had a positive, negative or no impact on their wellbeing. Overall, four factors had a net positive impact on the student body: the social life, the responsibility of a role they hold, getting the right skills/experience for their career and their quality of housing/living standards. The remaining nine elements had a net negative impact on the student body, with the factors which had the most impact being the general cost of living, uncertainty for the future, and mental health issues.

**What impact had the following had on your personal wellbeing?** Base: All respondents, excluding those who selected 'Not applicable' (Varies)

Frequencies are shown on the chart on the left. The chart on the right shows the net impact of this element on their wellbeing, ranging from -2 to +2, where -2 is very negative and +2 is very positive.



## Demographic differences (three most negative statements only)



### **Mental health issues**

Arts and Humanities students (65%), home students (63%), undergraduates (60%), women (64%) and students with a disability (79%) were more likely to report this has a negative impact on them. Business students (41%), international students (43%), postgraduates (51%), men (42%) and students who do not have a disability (47%) were less likely to report this has a negative impact on them.

### **Uncertainty for the future**

Arts and Humanities students (73%), social sciences students (73%), women (72%) and students with a disability (72%) were more likely to report this has a negative impact on them. Business students (55%), men (55%) and students who do not have a disability (64%) were less likely to report this has a negative impact on them.

### **General Cost of Living**

Home students (72%), women (73%), students with a disability (80%), first generation students (79%) and students who work (76%) were more likely to report this has a negative impact on them. International students (63%), men (63%), students who do not have a disability (66%), second + generation students (67%) and students who do not work (67%) were less likely to report this has a negative impact on them.

# Sample demographics

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## Survey sample demographics

### Academic Disciplines

	%	Count
Accounting	1%	11
Anthropology	5%	43
Archaeology	5%	42
Biosciences	7%	63
Chemistry	4%	38
Classics and Ancient History	4%	34
Computer Science	3%	29
Earth Sciences	2%	21
Economics	4%	38
Education	3%	28
Engineering	4%	35
English Studies	6%	55
Finance	2%	14
Geography	6%	48
Government and International Affairs	6%	55
History	6%	47
Law	5%	41
Management and Marketing	5%	40
Mathematical Sciences	8%	64
Modern Languages and Cultures	7%	56
Music	2%	14
Philosophy	4%	38
Physics	7%	61
Psychology	6%	50
Sociology	6%	51
Sport and Exercise Science	1%	8
Theology & Religion	3%	27
NET	100%	847

### Home / International

	%	Count
I am a UK citizen studying in the UK	75%	635
I am an Irish citizen studying in the UK	1%	9
I am an international student from within the EU studying in the UK	4%	36
I am an international student from outside the EU studying in the UK	20%	167
NET	100%	847

### Study Level

	%	Count
I'm a foundation year undergraduate	1%	12
I'm a 1st year undergraduate	31%	262
I'm a 2nd year at undergraduate	19%	164
I'm a 3rd year undergraduate	20%	168
I'm a 4th year undergraduate	7%	61
I'm a 5th year or above, undergraduate	0%	2
I'm a postgraduate studying for a masters degree or equivalent professional qualification	12%	99
I'm a postgraduate studying for a PhD or doctoral	9%	79
I'm a degree apprentice	0%	0
NET	100%	847

## Survey sample demographics

### College

	%	Count
Collingwood	6%	51
Grey	8%	64
Hatfield	4%	35
John Snow	9%	72
Josephine Butler	10%	81
South	6%	48
St Aidan's	5%	42
St Chad's	3%	27
St Cuthbert's Society	5%	46
St Hild and St. Bede	6%	49
St John's	5%	41
St Mary's	5%	45
Stephenson	7%	61
Trevelyan	5%	39
University	6%	55
Ustinov	4%	38
Van Mildert	6%	53
<b>NET</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>847</b>

### Term time work

	%	Count
I work during term time	29%	242
I am self-employed/work freelance during term-time	8%	69
I don't work during term time	63%	536
<b>NET</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>847</b>

### Identification with assigned sex at birth

	%	Count
Yes	93%	787
No	4%	31
Prefer not to say	3%	29
<b>NET</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>847</b>

### Ethnicity

	%	Count
White - English	45%	383
White - Scottish	1%	12
White - Welsh	1%	12
White - British	12%	98
White - Northern Irish	1%	11
White - Gypsy or Irish Traveller	0%	0
White - Roma	1%	5
Any other white background	9%	74
Mixed / multiple ethnic - White and black Caribbean	0%	3
Mixed / multiple ethnic - White and black African	0%	3
Mixed / multiple ethnic - White and black African	0%	0
Any other mixed / multiple ethnic background	5%	39
Asian or Asian British - Indian	4%	31
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	1%	11
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	0%	4
Asian or Asian British - Chinese	9%	74
Any other Asian / Asian British background	3%	27
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - African	1%	7
Black/African/Caribbean/Black British - British	1%	9
Any other Black/African/Caribbean/Black British background	0%	0
Arab	1%	5
Jewish	0%	0
Latin/South/Central American	1%	5
Mixed British and Latin/South/Central American	0%	0
I would prefer not to say	3%	28
Any other ethnic group	1%	6
<b>NET</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>847</b>

## Gender

	%	Count
Man (including transgender man)	32%	273
Woman (including transgender women)	60%	511
Non-binary	2%	21
Transgender	0%	3
Gender Fluid	0%	3
Prefer not to say	3%	27
I prefer to self-describe	1%	9
NET	100%	847

## Sexual Orientation

	%	Count
Heterosexual (or 'Straight')	60%	505
Gay/lesbian (or "Homosexual")	5%	45
Bisexual	17%	147
Queer	4%	31
Pansexual	1%	6
Asexual	2%	21
Prefer not to say	10%	86
I prefer to self-describe	1%	6
NET	100%	847

## Term time living arrangements

	%	Count
Living in college accommodation	41%	351
Living in private student halls/accommodation	5%	40
Living in rented student house/flat	40%	340
Living in other rented housing	8%	64
Living in a property you own/mortgage	3%	23
Living with my parent(s)/guardian(s)	3%	26
Other	0%	3
NET	100%	847

## Additional demographic questions

Row % Count	Yes	No	Prefer not to say	I don't know	NET
Do you consider yourself to have a specific learning disability, other disability, impairment or long-term health	26%	66%	5%	4%	100%
	217	558	42	30	847
Are you a first-generation university student? This means your generation is the first in your family to attend un	26%	70%	3%	1%	100%
	221	591	23	12	847
Would you describe yourself as estranged from your family?	4%	89%	4%	2%	100%
	36	753	38	20	847
Do you receive the Durham Grant?	25%	69%	2%	4%	100%
	210	586	19	32	847

alterline

**Alterline**

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