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British Active Students Survey: Higher Education 2019/2020 Report

Forewords

Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson

Chair, ukactive

The British Active Students Survey, now in its fourth year, continues to provide us with even greater evidence of the valuable role physical activity can play in students' lives. For the first time this year, the survey combines Further and Higher Education in a collaboration between AoC Sport, BUCS, and ukactive, with support from Matrix Fitness and Sport England.

Further and Higher Education institutions have the opportunity to support their students through a life-changing period. This time helps to shape the skills, behaviours and habits that will be there for students for the rest of their lives. We know that our young people are the least active generation yet, and the evidence generated through this research demonstrates how physical activity could benefit many more students – if it is supported across educational institutions.

The British Active Student's Survey 2019/2020 findings, presented across two reports, support the previous insight across both populations. Students who undertake some physical activity gain some benefits, but students meeting the recommended levels of regular physical activity and those participating in both gym and sporting activities gain the greatest health benefits.

We know that regular physical activity is good for us, from the many physical and mental health conditions that physical activity can not only help to manage, but also prevent. As COVID-19 changes our society, regular physical activity can help to reduce infection, the damage caused by infection, and play an integral role in the rehabilitation of people recovering from the virus. The health and fitness sector, including the services provided by Further and Higher Education, form an essential public service to support recovery and prevention of disease.

By promoting and providing opportunities for regular physical activity, we can support students across any institution to develop positive health and lifestyle behaviours. It is our duty to ensure these opportunities are available across our institutions.

Professor Craig Mahoney

Chair, British Universities College Sport (BUCS)

There has arguably never been a more vital time to promote the importance of an active lifestyle. As we continue to feel the impacts of COVID-19, physical activity and sport has, for many, provided individuals with strength, focus, routine and, crucially, aided mental health and wellbeing.

Sport brings us together. It enhances us. Not only physically, but mentally and I believe it should be a staple part of every student's educational journey - I have witnessed first-hand the fascinating link between physical activity and academic success.

University is a major milestone in our lives, and at times it can be challenging. Sporting opportunities provided by universities give students the chance to foster a real sense of belonging, and to harness and release any feelings of worry at assessment time into physical activity, or into their performance out on the playing field.

It is why the ground-breaking work by BUCS is so important.

As Chair of BUCS, it is with great pleasure that I welcome the return of the British Active Student Survey for Further and Higher Education research. In partnership with ukactive, and AoC Sport, the study explores physical activity levels of students at UK universities and colleges, helping us to gain an even better understanding of the relationship between sport and wider health and wellbeing, academic attainment and employability.

As leaders in student physical activity, this momentum is something we as a sector must continue to build on. Having the evidence to demonstrate that active students are more confident of their employability and have better mental wellbeing is crucial. It provides us with the data to influence, raise the profile of and educate the wider sector on the importance of engaging students to live an active lifestyle.

However, we must not forget those students who are not as active. They should be a clear focus and our sector must work directly with, and speak directly to, these students to promote the benefits of physical activity. Ensuring more students have access to the endless opportunities sport and increased physical activity can provide is a vision I share wholeheartedly with BUCS.

This report provides evidence that builds on the findings from 2017/18. It paints a picture of the landscape of student activity on which to base strategic decisions to maximise the physical and mental wellbeing benefits of activity amongst all our students.

The sporting provision offered to students by universities across the UK is truly world-class and is increasingly showcased on a global scale. I would encourage the sector to work together with us, to keep building on the tremendous work done so far, to learn from one another, think innovatively and help our students to drive change.

Collectively, we must inspire students to participate in sport and physical activity alongside their studies, to realise the benefits, and most importantly, encourage them to make the most of their educational journeys having enjoyed a dynamic, well-rounded and inclusive university experience.

Mike Diaper

Executive Director Children, Young People, & Tackling Inactivity, Sport England

Sport England is pleased to once again support the British Active Students Survey for the 2019/2020 year. For the first time the same survey has been issued to both Further and Higher Education students. The introduction of this collaborative approach emphasises the importance that both AoC Sport and BUCS place on the benefits of physical activity for students and one which Sport England welcomes.

Sport England's vision is for everyone in England to feel able to take part in sport or activity, regardless of age and background. In order to achieve this, we all need to address the inequalities that are present in activity levels and further transform the sport and physical activity offer. We are pleased to be continuing to work in partnership with AoC Sport and BUCS – organisations who have similar missions and hold the expertise across the Further and Higher Education sectors.

Educational institutions, colleges and universities play a key role in the lives of young people as they move through the education system and face new pressures. For many young people who go on to attend Further and Higher Education it is the first time that they have a choice as to whether they want to take part in sport and physical activity. It is therefore important that the offer is aligned to their needs and preferences.

The information collected from this survey will further enhance insight into what helps youngsters live active lives. The survey responses will continue to help to understand the motivations and barriers that students face, allowing institutions to ensure that the opportunities available address these to encourage participation.

We know from our Active Lives Children and Young People survey that as we get older levels of enjoyment, competence, confidence, knowledge and understanding around physical activity decrease. We know that enjoyment is the biggest driver of activity – while all of the reported attitudes make a difference, enjoying sport and physical activity makes the biggest difference to activity levels. Colleges and universities provide an opportunity for this to be addressed.

Aside from physical wellbeing, we also know that being physically active provides many more benefits. These can include improving a person's confidence or their self-esteem and helping to reduce stress and anxiety. There is also a positive association with being active and improving mental wellbeing. We know also that loneliness is most prevalent in 16-24 year olds and students, however leading a healthy lifestyle can have a positive impact on this.

Whilst the number of people who are classified as active is encouraging, there still remains a significant proportion who are taking part in less than 30 minutes of activity per week.

The results from this British Active Students survey confirm that there is further work to be done to understand and provide an appropriate offer to ensure that everyone understands the benefits of physical activity and has the opportunity to take part.

Executive Summary

BRITISH ACTIVE STUDENTS SURVEY: HIGHER EDUCATION 2019/2020

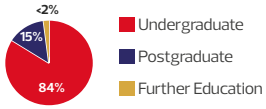
Who took part?

9,013 students

101 institutions

66% female 33% male

Level of study



Mainly undergraduate

What did they do and how active were they?

Students were asked what kind of activity they took part in:

- Just gym **22%**
- Just sport **17%**
- Both gym & sport **42%**
- Neither gym or sport **19%**

Those who took part in sports were asked what type of team/club they participated with:

- BUCS **59%**
- Intramural **20%**
- Both **21%**

Students were asked how much activity they did ***in a week***, which was grouped by Sport England's Active Lives categorisations to allow comparison to national data.

	Inactive <30 mins	Active 150 mins+
Survey population	14%	76%
AL (16–24 years)	17%	74%
AL (25–34 years)	21%	67%

How did their wellbeing metrics compare?

Personal Wellbeing average scores:
Where 0 = 'not at all' and 10 = 'completely'

	Inactive	Active
Happiness	5.9	6.5
Life satisfaction	6.3	6.9
Feeling worthwhile	6.4	7.1
Anxiety (inverse scale)	5.1	4.8

Social Inclusion average scores:
% answering 'never' or 'rarely' to 'I feel':

	Inactive	Active
Left out	34%	40%
People barely know me	34%	43%
Isolated from others	41%	51%
People are around me but not with me	40%	50%

Mental Wellbeing scores (SWEMWEBS):
agreement to positively worded statements
Where higher scores equal higher mental wellbeing (35 = highest score)

Inactive 20.6 | Active 21.8

Loneliness average scores:
% answering 'rarely' or 'hardly ever'
During the past week have you felt lonely?

Inactive 22% | Active 27%

Social Trust average scores:
% answering 'agree' or 'strongly agree'
To what extent do you agree or disagree that most people in your local area can be trusted?

Inactive 41% | Active 47%

How does this impact attainment and employability?

Students were asked what grade they expected to get:

	Inactive	Active
1st	35%	36%
2.1	50%	53%
2.2	5%	4%
3rd	<1%	<1%
Pass	9%	7%

Students were asked about their confidence of finding a job within six months of finishing university:

	Inactive	Active
Very or fairly confident	51%	61%
Not at all/lack confidence	15%	12%

What are the barriers and motivators?

Students were asked what the barriers and motivators to exercise were. The options which the highest percentage responded to are below.

Biggest motivators:
To benefit my health **14%**
As a stress relief **12%**
To improve my body image **11%**

Biggest barriers:
Too busy with studies **32%**
Activity options are too expensive **13%**
Too busy socialising **11%**

Background

The British Active Students Survey (BASS) has been jointly delivered by BUCS, AoC Sport, and ukactive, to identify the impact physical activity is having on students in Further and Higher Education across the UK. BASS aims to investigate and provide evidence of the association between students' physical activity levels and the types of activity they are doing, with a range of factors including personal and mental wellbeing, social inclusion and loneliness, barriers and motivations to exercise and sport, and perceptions of academic attainment and employability.

BASS has evolved from inception in 2016/2017 and the undertaking of the Scottish Active Students Survey[1] across Scottish Higher Educational Institutions (HEIs). Following the successful implementation of the survey and positive impact of the findings, in the academic year of 2017/2018 the survey was expanded across British HEIs for BASS HE 2017/2018[2]. The first investigation into Further Education students was undertaken in 2018/2019 with BASS: Further Education[3]. Findings to date have shown that, generally, physically active students score better across the variables measured compared to fairly active or inactive students. Similar findings are also present in students who took part in sport and attended the gym, compared to students who did neither. The 2019/2020 academic year saw the BASS collect responses from both Further Educational Institutions (FEIs) and HEI students in the same survey for the first time.

Recent research has called for a paradigm shift in the way FEI and HEI students are supported to be physically active, due to the proportion of students not meeting the recommended levels of activity[4]. There is a dose-response link between increases in physical inactivity with better mental health, and lower incidence of self-harm, and suicidal attempt[5]. Physical activity is seen as a positive intervention to support students with managing their mental health, and can provide a suitable support alongside mental health services[6]. It has been argued that college and university students should be supported to increase their physical activity levels, and that this is a responsibility that is shared between the educational institutions, policy makers, and welfare organisations[5].

There are currently just under 2.4 million students enrolled in Higher Education with 1.6 million (69.2%) aged 24 or younger, and a further 263,280 (11.0%) aged between 25-29 years[7]. The closest age comparison to Sport England's Active Lives[8] data suggests that the majority of 16-24 year olds (74.1%) and 25-34 year olds (67.1%) are classified as physically active. This means they are taking part in 150 minutes or more of moderate intensity physical activity per week[8]. There are less inactive individuals in the 16-24 age bracket (16.5%) compared to the 25-34 age bracket (21.0%). Nevertheless, more than a quarter of these age groups do not meet recommended levels of physical activity. HEIs are vital in supporting this population to meet recommended levels of physical activity and help forge lifelong sport and exercise habits.

The BASS evidence has demonstrated the pivotal role educational institutions can have in supporting students through an often life changing period. As young people get older, adolescents are faced with increasing feelings of life pressures that include exams, body-image, and peer influences[9]. Furthermore, attending a HEI can be a life changing experience for many individuals as they move away from home and are exposed to new experiences and opportunities for the first time[10]. Young people also indicate that exam revision and homework often present as a barrier to participation in sport and physical activity[9].

The evolution of BASS 2019/2020 included adding questions to understand motivations behind physical activity, links to competitive and non-competitive sport, and gather further insights into mental wellbeing, such as levels of student loneliness. Personal and mental wellbeing, employability and attainment perceptions, social inclusion, and barriers will continue to be explored. This report presents the findings from BASS 2019/2020: Higher Education. The findings from BASS 2019/2020: Further Education are reported separately.

Please note, the data collected and presented within this report was collected before the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic and the subsequent restrictions that were put in place. The findings have been presented as such and are not reflective of any changes that may have occurred due to the pandemic and restrictions imposed since.

Respondents

Data for BASS 2019/2020 was collected using an online survey platform which was open for responses between 12th November 2019 and 31st January 2020. The survey was disseminated through various routes across the project partners. These included press releases, social media channels, FEI and HEI newsletters, strategy groups, staff and volunteers. Almost all responses were collected from England (94.3%), with 5.5% of responses from Scotland, and 0.1% from both Wales and Northern Ireland. Given this skew towards England, the generalising of the results presented in this report across Britain should be approached with caution. Students responded from 101 different HEIs. The top three responding institutions based on the percentage of responses against their full time equivalent (FTE) student population were The University of Hertfordshire (5.3%), Royal Holloway University of London (5.2%), and the University of Nottingham (5.2%). These institutions accounted for 2,959 responses, 32.8% of the total 9,013 responses. The top 10 responding institutions can be seen in the table below.

Map of institutions that responded

Only two of the top 10 responding institutions in this survey were in the top 10 for BASS HE 2017/2018[2]. These were the University of Nottingham and University of Leicester. Overall, the current survey had 2,122 more responses, from a total of three less institutions. The top 10 institutions from BASS HE 2017/2018[2] had an FTE total of 183,364 students, who accounted for 5,127 responses (response rate of 2.8%), totalling 74.4% of the overall responses. This compares to the current top 10 that has an FTE total of 196,405 students, who accounted for 6,214 responses (response rate of 3.2%), totalling 68.9% of overall responses. This suggests a similar representation across the top 10 institutions for both surveys.

Top 10 responding institutions by response rate percentage

Institution	Country	Type	FTE	Responses	Rate (%)
University of Hertfordshire	England	Post-1992	14,800	789	5.3%
Royal Holloway, University of London	England	Red Brick	10,615	554	5.2%
University of Nottingham	England	Russell Group / Red Brick	30,990	1,616	5.2%
Harper Adams University	England	Post-1992	2,975	150	5.0%
University of Southampton	England	Russell Group	23,435	733	3.1%
University of Leicester	England	Plate glass	15,485	427	2.8%
University of Sheffield	England	Red Brick	27,065	622	2.3%
University of Leeds	England	Russell Group / Red Brick	32,525	640	2.0%
Manchester Metropolitan University	England	Post-1992	28,895	553	1.9%
University of Stirling	Scotland	Plate glass	9,620	130	1.4%

Demographics

> Two thirds of respondents were female (66.0%), higher than the proportion of the overall HE population (57.1%)[11].

> Respondents ranged between 17 and 76 years of age. 89.5% were aged between 16–25 years, mainly made up of those aged 20 (20.2%), 21 (20.4%), and 22 (17.9%).

> Compared to the overall HE population the survey represents an older sample, as 40.8% of the HE population are aged 20 or younger, with 28.4% aged 21–24 years of age[11].

> Overall, 11.6% of the population surveyed reported having a disability, slightly lower than the college population (13.9%)[11].

> Participants who were White or White British made up the majority of respondents (75.6%), similar proportons to the HE population (74.5%)[11].

> Asian or Asian British students (12.5%) had a higher representation in the survey than the HE population (11.0%)[11].

> Black or Black British (3.2%) were under-represented in the current survey compared to the HE population (7.2%)[11].

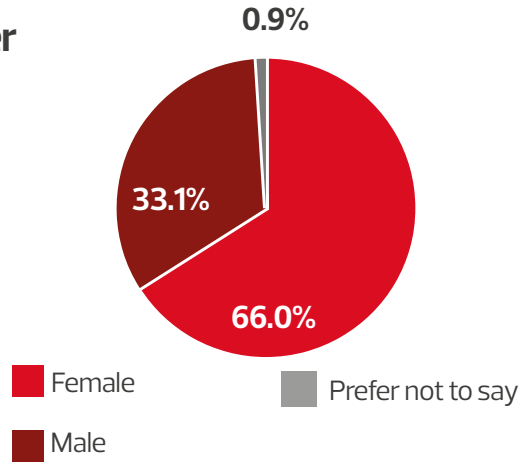
> The majority of respondents reported being heterosexual/straight (82.8%). Similar proportions reported being a gay man (1.3%) or a gay woman (1.7%).

> Looking at the multiple index of deprivation, calculated from a student's home postcode, showed that the number of students increased as deprivation level decreased.

> Deciles six to nine had similar proportions of students (between 11.3% and 11.6%). The area of least deprivation had the greatest proportion of students (16.4%).

> The majority of respondents (97.9%) were full-time students. Additionally, 83.8% were undergraduate students whilst 14.6% were postgraduate students.

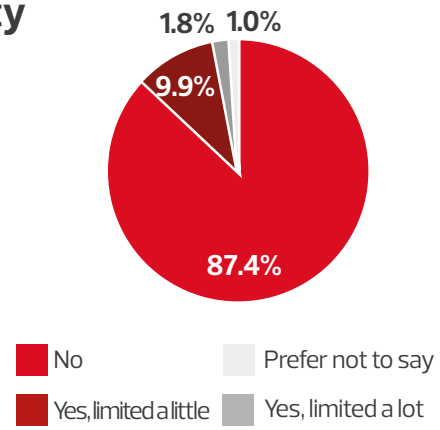
Gender



Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Survey
White or White British	75.6%
Asian or Asian British	12.5%
Black or Black British	3.2%
Mixed	4.5%
Other	3.1%
Prefer not to say	1.0%

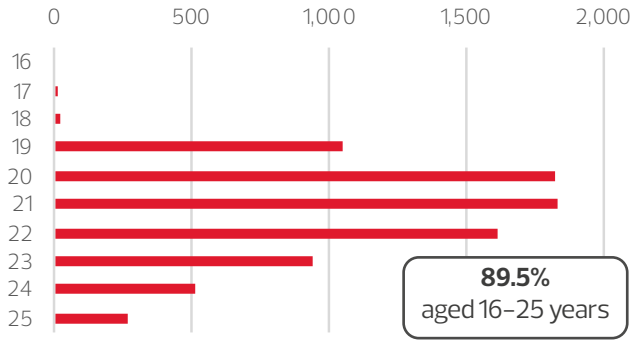
Disability



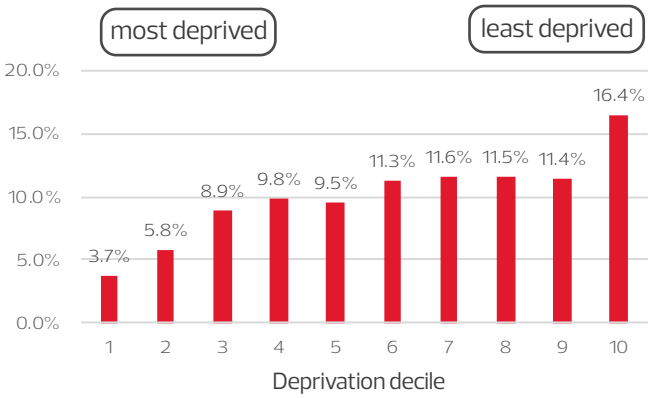
Sexual Orientation

Ethnicity	Survey
Heterosexual/straight	82.8%
Bisexual	8.5%
Prefer not to say	4.2%
Gay Woman/Lesbian	1.7%
Other (please specify)	1.5%
Gay Man	1.3%

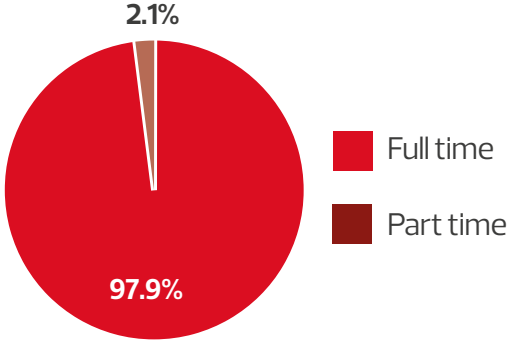
Age



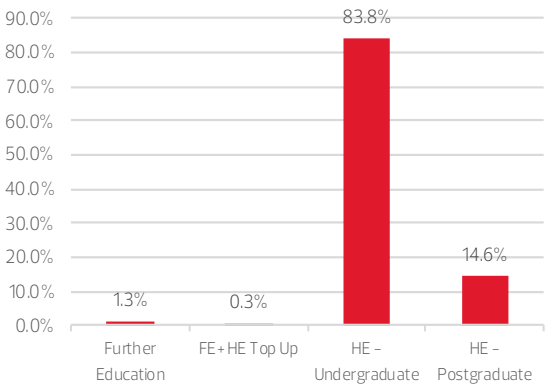
Deprivation



Undergraduate Study Mode



Level of Study



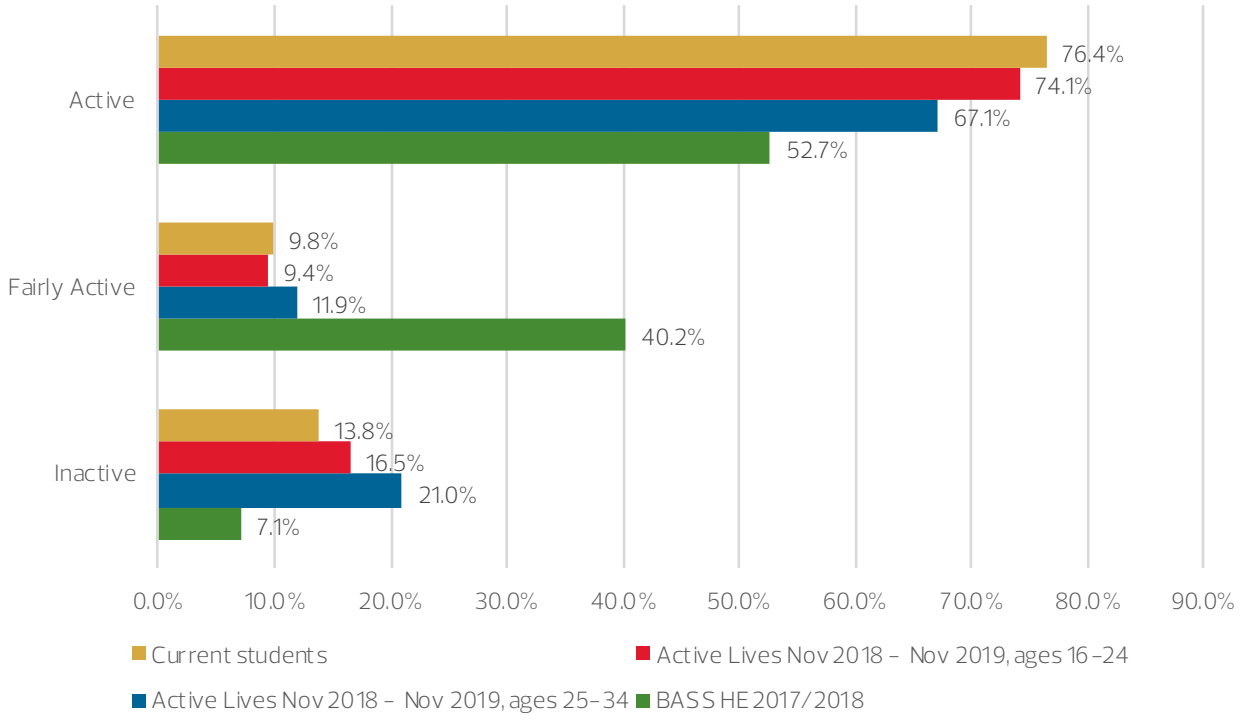
Physical Activity

Just over three quarters (76.4%) of HE students are classified as being active, which involves taking part in at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week. Inactive (completing under 30 minutes per week) students made up 13.8% of the population, with 9.8% classified as fairly active (between 31 and 150 minutes). The physical activity levels were grouped in accordance with Sport England's Active Lives survey[8] to allow for comparison to national data. The Sport England activity classifications, that correspond with the UK Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) guidelines[12] are used throughout the remainder of the report.

Comparing the student activity levels from BASS 2019/2020 with Active Lives data (for 16-24 and 25-34 year olds to reflect the student population) shows that the majority of students are classified as active (76.4%), and this proportion is higher than the national data for 25-34 year olds (67.1%), but similar to that of 16-24 year olds (74.1%)[8]. The student population has a low proportion of inactive (13.8%) individuals compared to Active Lives data for 16-24 year olds (16.5%) and 25-34 year olds (21.0%)[8]. The fairly active category was similar for the student population (9.8%) compared to 16-24 year olds (9.4%), but lower than 25-34 year olds (11.9%)[8]. BASS 2019/2020 has a higher proportion of active and inactive students compared to the BASS: HE 2018/2019[2].

Big differences can be seen in the activity levels of students when comparing the breakdown within the current study to the BASS HE 2017/2018[2] findings. The current survey had a higher proportion of both active and inactive students, and a lower proportion of fairly active students. This change in the proportion of students within each activity classification group aligns the present survey data closer, but not exactly, to the national Active Lives data as discussed above. This highlights that the population of students surveyed for BASS 2019/2020 is more representative of the general population by age than BASS HE 2017/2018[2]. Although there are more active students in BASS 2019/2020, the proportion aware of the current physical activity guidelines remains consistent at 57.1%.

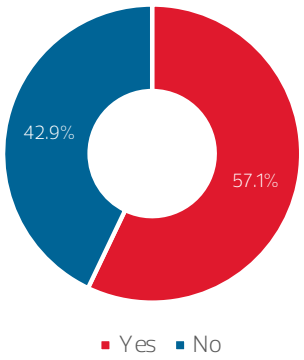
Physical activity levels of the survey respondents compared to Sport England's Active Lives data



Awareness of physical activity guidelines

Students were asked if they were aware of the current CMO physical activity guidelines, and how much activity they should be doing on a weekly basis to reach these guidelines. The majority of students were aware of these guidelines (57.1% of respondents). The guidelines state that individuals should be reaching 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity physical activity. This would classify them as 'active'.

Awareness of the physical activity guidelines



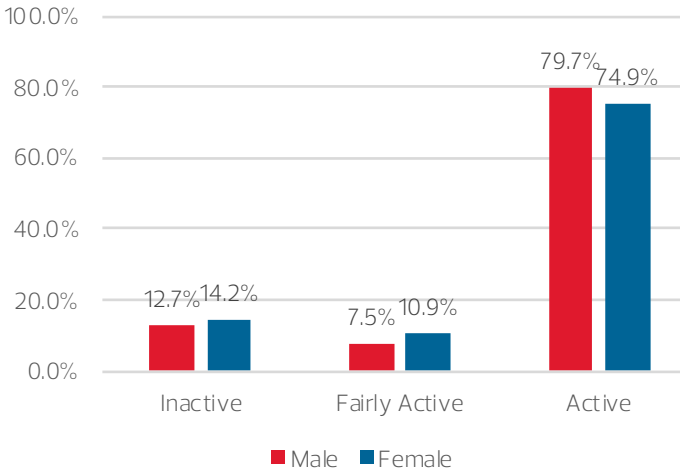
Physical activity by gender

Physical activity levels by gender reveal that slightly more males (79.7%) reported being physically active compared to females (74.9%). This is reflected in slightly higher proportions of females reporting they are inactive (14.2% vs 12.7% for males) or fairly active (10.9% vs 7.5% for males), however these differences between males and female physical activity levels were small. Compared to Sport England's Active Lives data[8] males (65.8%) have a slightly higher proportion of active individuals than females (61.9%), with both lower than the data from this survey. Females (25.7%) have a higher proportion of inactive individuals than males (23.7%) within the Active Lives data[8], higher than the present findings.

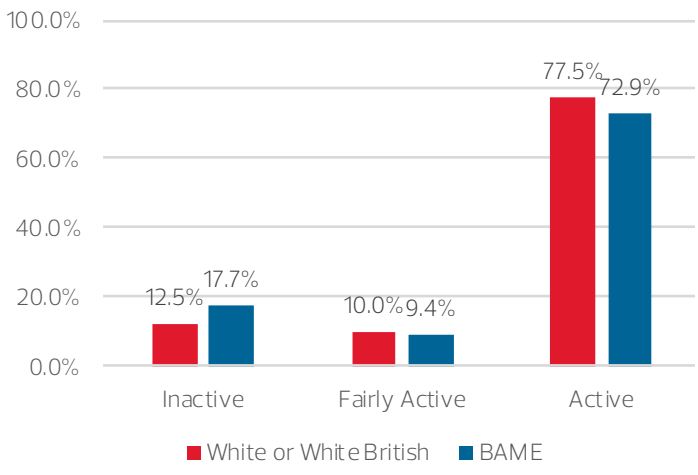
Physical activity by ethnicity

Physical activity levels by ethnicity reveal that White or White British students have a higher proportion of active students (77.5%) compared to Black, Asian, Mixed Ethnic groups (BAME; 72.9%). This is reflected in the inactive proportion of BAME students (17.7%) being higher than White or White British students (12.5%). Similar trends were seen within the Active Lives data[8], in that White or White British individuals had a higher proportion of active individuals, and a lower proportion of inactive individuals. However, the Active Lives data showed less active individuals and more inactive individuals for both groups[8].

Physical activity levels by gender



Physical activity levels by ethnicity



Type of activity

The type of activity participated in was classified into four groups (Just Sport, Just Gym, Both, or Neither). Overall, 64.0% of the respondents used a gym, with 21.9% using a just a gym and 42.0% using a gym in addition to participating in sport. Overall, 17.4% of students participated in just sport and 18.7% took part in neither gym or sport. Comparing this data to BASS:HE 2018/2019[2], a smaller percentage of students took part in just gym, but a higher percentage took part in just sport, whilst double the proportion of students took part in neither.

Of those that used a gym, 70.0% used a college or university facility which was the most popular facility choice. Budget gyms (10.1%), private gyms (9.9%), and leisure centres (6.4%) were less frequently utilised. For those who took part in just sports, 63.5% took part in just university sport whilst 23.3% took part in both university and non-university sport, with 13.2% only participating in sport outside of university. Where students participated in both gym and sport, 63.5% attended a gym and participated in university sport, 7.5% attended a gym and took part in non-university sport, whilst 29.0% attended a gym and took part in both university and non-university sport.

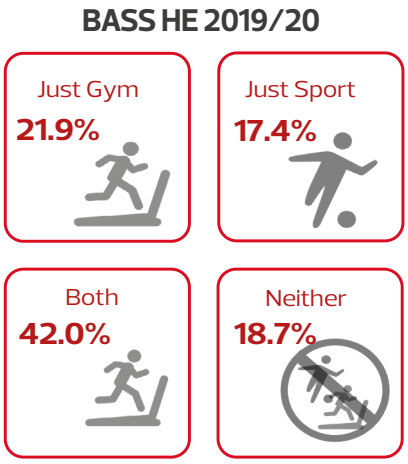
Physical activity levels of FE students planning to attend a HEI

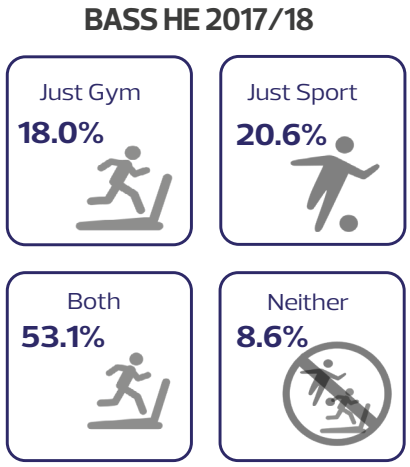
Data collected from FEI students as part of the BASS 2019/2020: Further Education report suggests that the activity habits of students who selected they would go on to continue their education at university, are different from the current HE population, with a lower proportion of active students (65.6%), and a higher proportion of inactive students (24.5%) than the current BASS 2019/2020 Higher Education population.

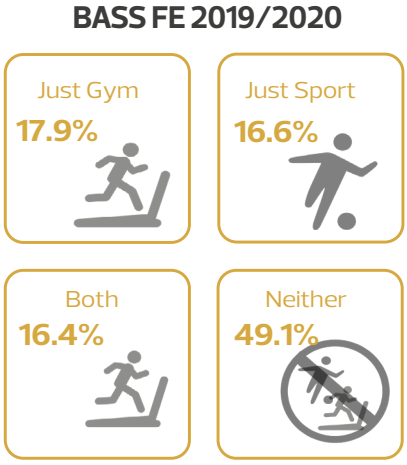
Furthermore, a far higher percentage of the future HEI population are taking part in neither gym or sport (49.1%), with the greatest difference seen for participants of both gym and sport, with only 16.4% of future HEI students participating in both. The future HEI students have a smaller percentage of participants taking part in just gym (17.9%) and just sport (16.6%).

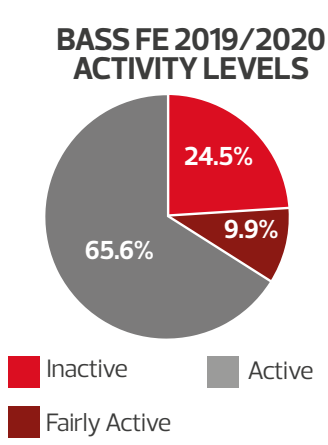
The results are similar when comparing the physical activity levels and types of activity for the BASS 2019/2020: Further Education report as a whole to the sub-sample who reported that they would go on to continue their education at university. Furthermore, the demographic results are also similar between the two populations, with the exception of the full FE sample having a slightly higher proportion of females.

The similar demographic breakdowns and activity levels within the FE population as a whole and those intending to attend a HEI, also produce similar findings for the wider variables analysed and discussed here. The BASS 2019/2020: Further Education report provides an in-depth analysis for the FE population of all metrics presented here.





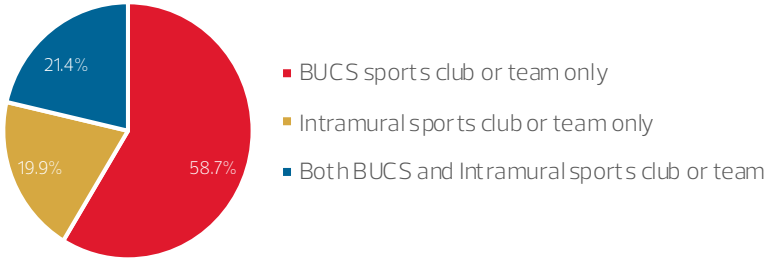




Competitive and non competitive sport

For those students that take part in university sport, just over half participate in BUCS sports clubs or teams only (58.7%). Intramural sports clubs or teams only were participated in by 19.9% of students and both BUCS and intramural were participated in by 21.4% of students. Football (7.4%), Netball (6.8%), Rugby (6.3%), Hockey (5.4%), and Swimming (3.8%) were the five most popular sporting activities of the 101 different activities chosen.

Breakdown of competitive and non-competitive sport



Volunteering

Volunteering within sport provides a great opportunity for students to take on additional responsibility, develop transferable skills and support their team or local community, with Active Lives data indicating that 18.1% of 16-25 year-olds and 9.1% of 25-34 year-olds have volunteered twice in the last year[8]. The primary volunteer role within a university was admin support (59.4%) followed by leadership (16.4%) and coaching (8.6%) roles. Outside of university, coaching (44.1%), leadership (19.9%), and game official (13.0%) roles were most frequent. This demonstrates that as well as participation in sport, students are involved in volunteer opportunities through sport.

	Sports volunteering within university (n=5,836)	Sports volunteering outside of university (n=1,000)
Leadership (manager/captain)	16.4%	19.9%
Coaching	8.6%	44.1%
Admin	59.4%	7.1%
Game Official (e.g. referee)	3.3%	13.0%
Management Team	6.0%	6.4%
Other	6.2%	9.5%

Experiences of Exercise and Sport

Key Findings

> Active students rated their experiences of exercise and sport higher than fairly active and inactive students, as did students who took part in both sport and gym when compared to each in isolation.

> Knowledge of how to learn more skills through different activities and self-efficacy were also rated higher amongst the more active students.

> Understanding why sport and exercise are good for students was positively rated by all activity levels and type of activity categories.

Experiences of exercise and sport were measured amongst the university population using Sport England's Active Lives Children and Young People survey questions[13]. Overall, a large percentage of students 'agreed or strongly agreed' that they enjoy participating in sport (90.1%), they feel confident when they play sport (72.5%), they find sport easy (53.5%), they understand the benefits of participation (97.7%), and they can improve their skills by taking part (74.6%). Confidence in participation (16.2%) and ease of participation (28.1%) were the two categories with the highest rating of 'disagree or strongly disagree'. Two-thirds (76.3%) of students 'agree or strongly agree' that exercise and sport help their self-efficacy (ability to achieve goals), with only 6.8% 'disagreeing or strongly disagreeing'.

Experience by activity level

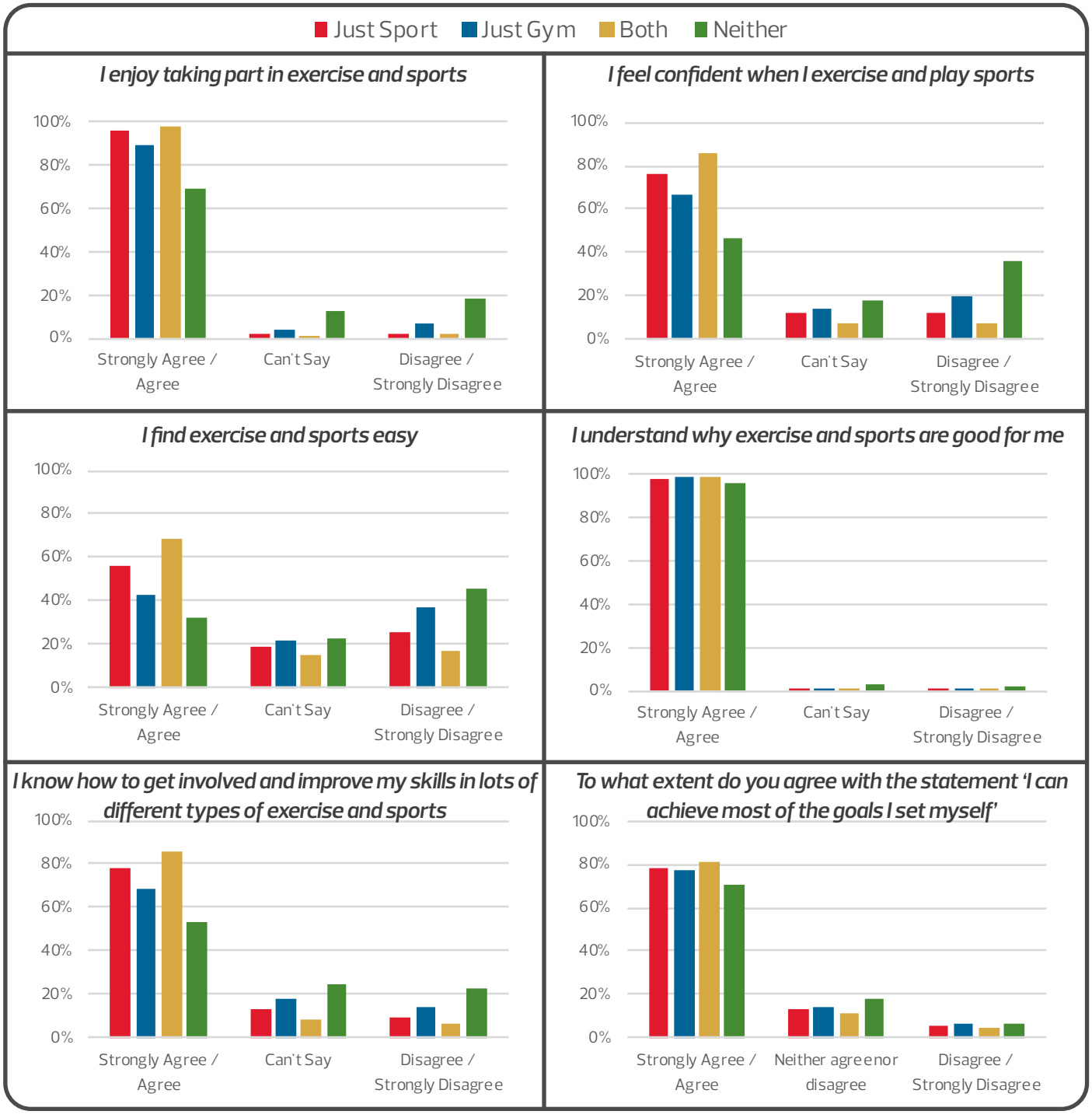
A high percentage of active students 'agreed or strongly agreed' that they enjoyed exercise and sport participation (93.3%), felt confident participating (75.5%), found it easy (57.8%), and understood why it was good for them (98.0%). For the questions on enjoyment and confidence factors, the percentages of fairly active and inactive students who 'agreed or strongly agreed' was 85.9% and 60.3%, and 75.1% and 53.5% respectively. All levels of physical activity participation had a high level of agreement that they understood why exercise and sport was good for them.

Active students highly rated their ability to get involved in different exercises to improve their skills, with 79.1% selecting 'agree or strongly agree' to this statement. This was higher than fairly active (61.5%) and inactive (58.9%) students. For self-efficacy (achieving goals), a similar trend can be seen with 78.6% of active students 'agreeing or strongly agreeing' that exercise and sport helps with this, with fairly active (71.9%) and inactive (66.4%) students agreeing to a lesser extent than this.

Experience by activity type

Students who took part in both gym and sport had the highest percentage of participants select 'agree or strongly agree', that they enjoy exercise and sport (97.5%), felt confident doing it (85.4%), and find it easy (68.2%), when compared to inactive and fairly active students. Those who participate in just sport 'agree or strongly agree' that they enjoy exercise and sport (95.3%), felt confident doing it (76.1%), and find it easy (55.7%), to a greater extent than those who participated in just gym. Similar trends can be seen across students getting involved in different activities to learn new skills (both: 85.9%; just sport: 77.8%; just gym: 68.3%), as well as self-efficacy (achieve goals) (both: 81.5%; just sport: 78.5%; just gym: 77.2%).

Participants who took part in neither gym or sport had slightly higher levels of agreement than disagreement for confidence when participating in exercise and sport (agreement: 46.5%; disagreement: 36.1%), with the highest levels of disagreement being recorded on the finding exercise and sport easy question (45.9% 'disagree or strongly disagree'). There were high levels of agreement with knowledge of why exercise and sport are good for me across each of the four categories.



Personal Wellbeing

Key Findings

> The student population had worse personal wellbeing scores than the nationally representative data.

> Active students had better feelings of life satisfaction, worthwhile, happiness, and anxiety.

> Participants in both sport and gym scored best across all personal wellbeing metrics with just sport higher than just gym across all metrics.

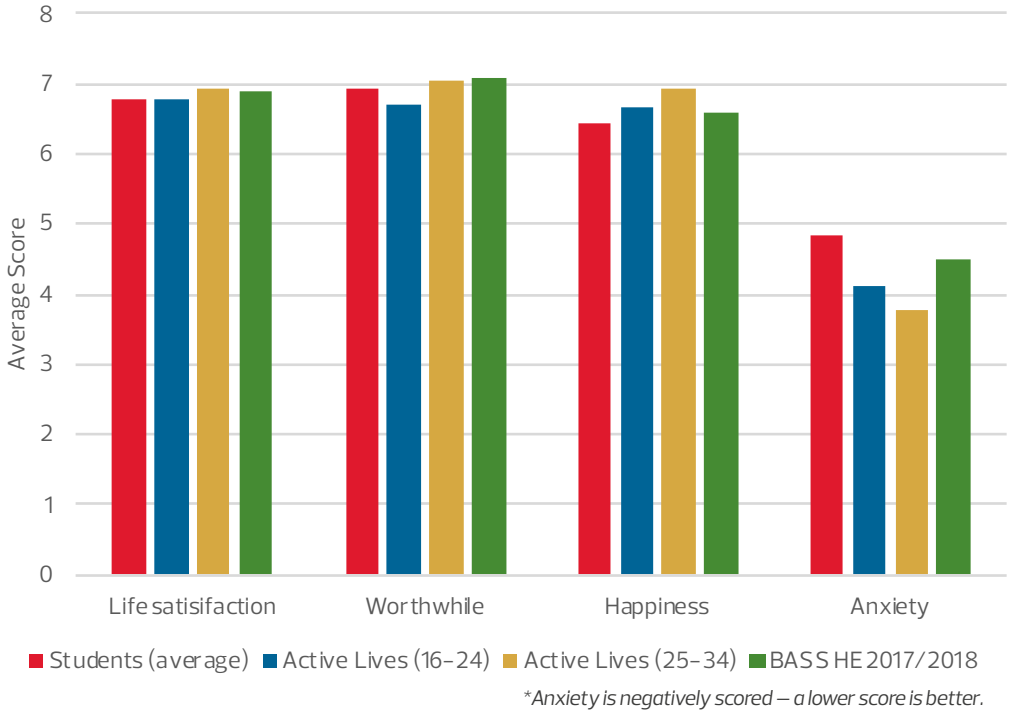
> Compared to BASS HE 2017/2018, personal wellbeing improved slightly, except for anxiety which got worse. This was most apparent for active students.

Personal wellbeing scores for students compared to Active Lives

The personal wellbeing of students overall, as measured through the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Personal Wellbeing questions[14], was better for the questions on life satisfaction and feeling worthwhile than 16-24 year olds from Active Lives data[8]. However, all other comparisons to nationally representative data[8] for 16-24 year olds, and 25-34 year olds, were worse for the student population.

Comparing the personal wellbeing scores of the current students to previous BASS HE 2017/2018[2] findings reveal similar scores for life satisfaction, feeling worthwhile, and happiness, while anxiety scores were worse in the current survey.

Personal wellbeing scores of respondents and overall UK average

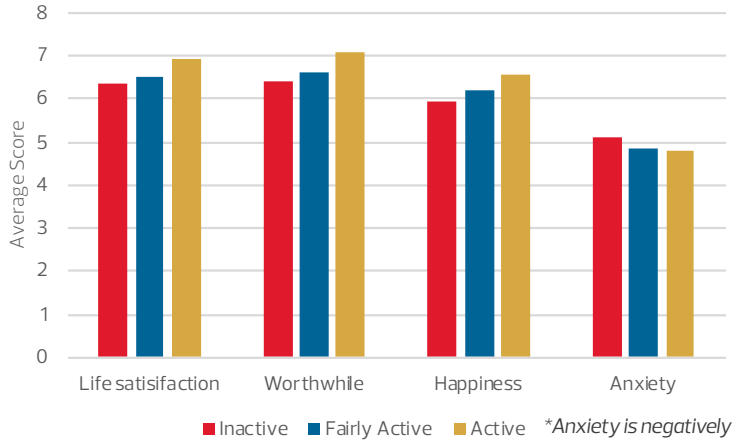


**Anxiety is negatively scored – a lower score is better.*

Personal wellbeing scores of respondents by activity level

Students who were classified as physically active scored higher for life satisfaction (6.92), feeling worthwhile (7.06), and happiness (6.54) compared to fairly active (6.51, 6.62, 6.17 respectively) and inactive (6.33, 6.39, 5.94 respectively) students. Feelings of anxiety were highest for inactive students (5.10), with active students the least anxious (4.80). These trends are similar to those previously reported in BASS HE 2017/2018[2]. However, in the current BASS HE 2019/2020 findings, the active and fairly active students had lower life satisfaction, feelings of worthwhile scores, and happiness scores than the previous results by between 0.19 and 0.28. The greatest difference came for the active students, who had higher anxiety scores in the present survey by 0.54. Ordinal regression examining the linear relationship between physical activity group and each element of personal wellbeing showed that students with higher physical activity were at increased odds of having better feelings of happiness (OR = 1.36 [95%CI = 1.26 to 1.47]), life satisfaction (OR = 1.44 [95%CI = 1.33 to 1.57]), worthwhile (OR = 1.49 [95%CI = 1.37 to 1.61]), and anxiety (OR = 1.19 [95%CI = 1.09 to 1.29]).

Personal wellbeing scores of respondents by activity level

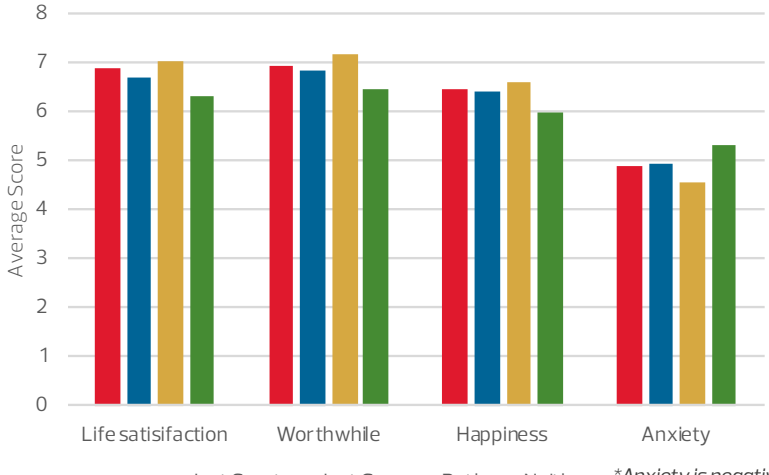


**Anxiety is negatively scored – a lower score is better.*

Personal wellbeing scores of respondents by activity type

Students who participated in both sport and gym had the highest scores for life satisfaction (7.03), feeling worthwhile (7.18), and happiness (6.62) compared to either sport or gym in isolation, and neither. Furthermore, students who participated in just sport had higher life satisfaction (6.87), worthwhile scores (6.94), and happiness (6.46) than those who participated in just gym (6.70, 6.82, 6.40 respectively). For anxiety, students who participated in both sport and gym were least anxious (4.58), while students who participated in neither were most anxious (5.33), with similar results for just sport (4.89) and just gym (4.94). The trends for students taking part in both gym and sport are again similar to the BASS HE 2017/2018 data[2], although anxiety is worse in the current study for each of the activity type categories by between 0.21–0.38. Participants in neither gym or sport activities had better scores for feeling worthwhile in the current study.

Personal wellbeing scores of respondents by activity type



**Anxiety is negatively scored – a lower score is better.*

Mental Wellbeing

Key Findings

> Mental wellbeing remains constant overall but below representative comparison data.

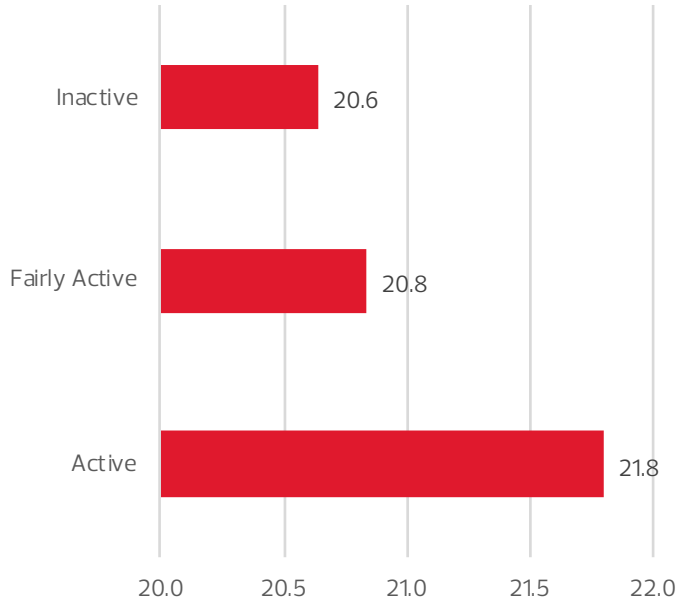
> Active students and those that participate in both sport and gym have better mental wellbeing than those less active or take part in sport or gym in isolation or not at all.

> Mental wellbeing has decreased slightly compared to previous BASS HE 2017/2018 findings. This occurred in both the active and fairly active groups as well as all activity types (just gym, both gym and sport, and neither gym or sport).

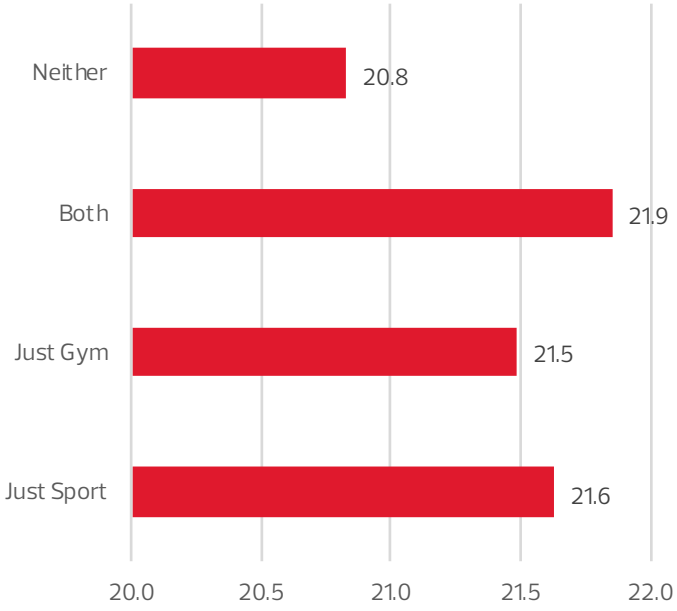
Mental wellbeing of the overall student population sampled has remained constant, with only a slight reduction from 21.9 (out of 35) in the BASS HE[2] findings, to 21.5 in the current survey. Students reported feeling positive about their mental wellbeing to a lower extent when compared to the 2011 Health Survey for England[15] (the most recent comparison available), where the average score was 23.6. Mental wellbeing is measured using the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) which indicates feelings of optimism about the future, relaxation, how problems are dealt with, and how close people feel to others.

By physical activity level, active students have the highest mental wellbeing (21.8), with inactive (20.6) and fairly active (20.8) having similar mental wellbeing scores. This differs to BASS HE 2017/2018[2], with active and fairly active students having slightly lower mental wellbeing in the current survey and inactive students remaining constant. Ordinal regression examining the linear relationship between physical activity group and mental wellbeing showed that students with higher physical activity were at increased odds of having higher mental wellbeing (OR = 1.45 [95%CI = 1.33 to 1.58]). Similar to personal wellbeing, participation in both gym and sport produces the highest mental wellbeing score (21.9) which was slightly higher than just sport (21.6) and just gym (21.5). Participants in neither gym or sport had a mental wellbeing score of 20.8. Compared to BASS HE 2017/2018[2] data, both gym and sport, just gym and neither gym or sport categories all scored slightly lower in this survey, with just sport the same.

Mental wellbeing scores of respondents by activity level



Mental wellbeing scores of respondents by activity type



Social Inclusion

Key Findings

> Active students feel more socially included than fairly active and inactive students.

> Social inclusion was higher amongst participants of both sport and gym, with just sport or just gym showing similar social inclusion values.

> Likewise, more active students and those participating in both sport and gym have higher social trust and feel more belonging to their institution.

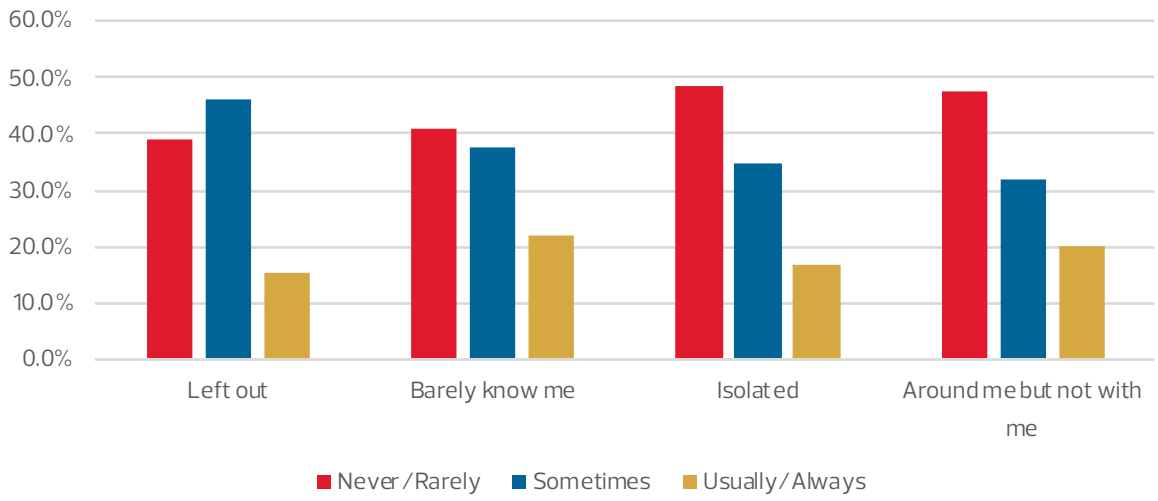
> Compared to BASS HE 2017/2018, social inclusion has decreased to a small extent overall, and by activity level and activity type, with the exception of inactive students.

Social inclusion was measured using the PROMIS Social Isolation 4a questions[16].

Students were asked to select from: never, rarely, sometimes, usually or always in repsonse to the following statements:
> I feel left out
> I feel that people barely know me
> I feel isolated from others
> I feel that people are around me but not with me

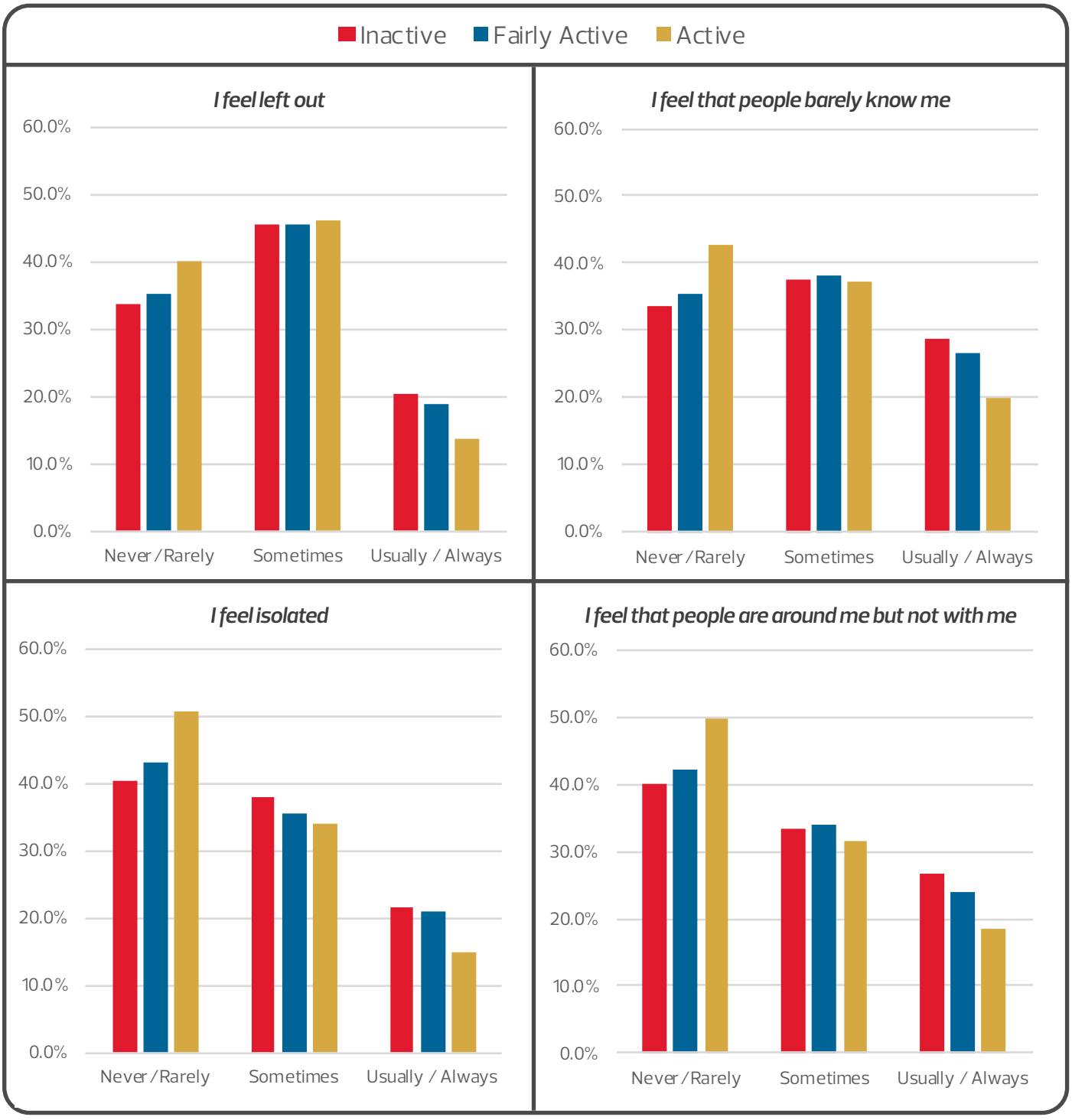
Findings indicate that 'never' or 'rarely' were the most frequent responses to the statements on feeling like people barely know me (40.8%), feeling isolated (48.7%), and feeling like people are around me but not with me (47.7%). Feeling left out was the statement that most frequently had the option of 'sometimes' (46.0%) selected. Feeling that people barely know me was the lowest scoring question for social inclusion, in terms of the number of people selecting 'usually' or 'always'. These findings follow previously reported trends in the BASS HE 2017/2018[2] report, however social inclusion has reduced between 3.8 to 6.3 percentage points across the measures overall.

Social isolation scores of respondents



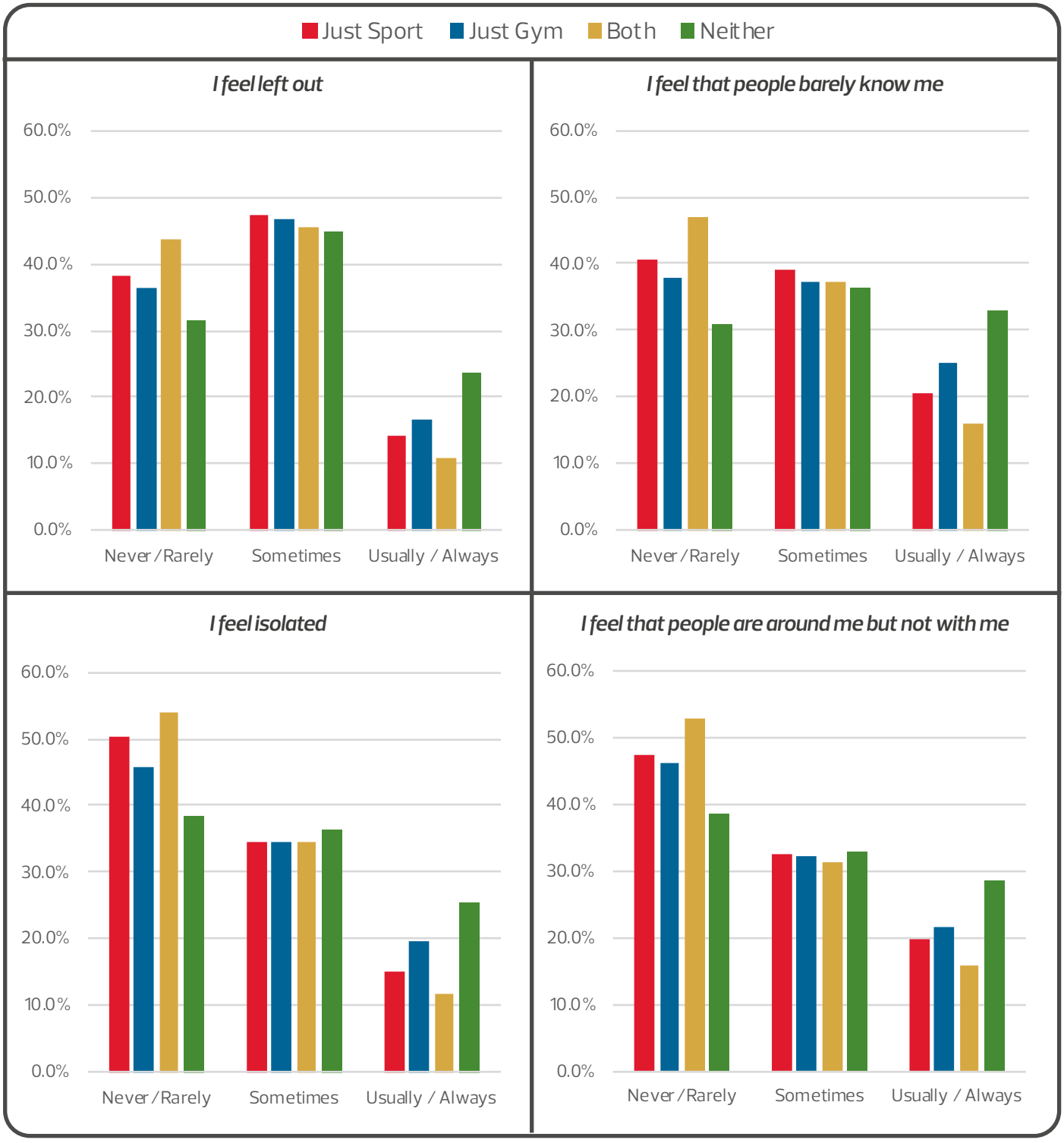
Social isolation by activity level

Of the activity levels, the active students most frequently report that they 'sometimes' feel left out (46.1%) and 'never or rarely' feel people barely know me (42.7%), feel isolated (50.9%), or feel that people are around me but not with me (49.8%). Response levels for feeling left out 'sometimes' are consistent across the activity classifications. Inactive students' rated each of the four items as 'usually or always' more frequently than the fairly active or inactive students. Compared to BASS HE 2017/2018[2], the current findings show a similar pattern in that active students feel more socially included. However, the current findings show small decreases in the percentage of responses of 'never or rarely' for feeling left out, feeling people barely know me and feeling people are around me but not with me, with a small increase for feeling isolated suggesting a reduction in overall social inclusion. Active and fairly active students rate their social inclusion lower in the current survey across the measures. Ordinal regression examining the linear relationship between physical activity group and social inclusion showed that students with higher physical activity were at decreased odds of feeling isolated (OR = 0.74 [95%CI = 0.67 to 0.8]).



Social isolation by activity type

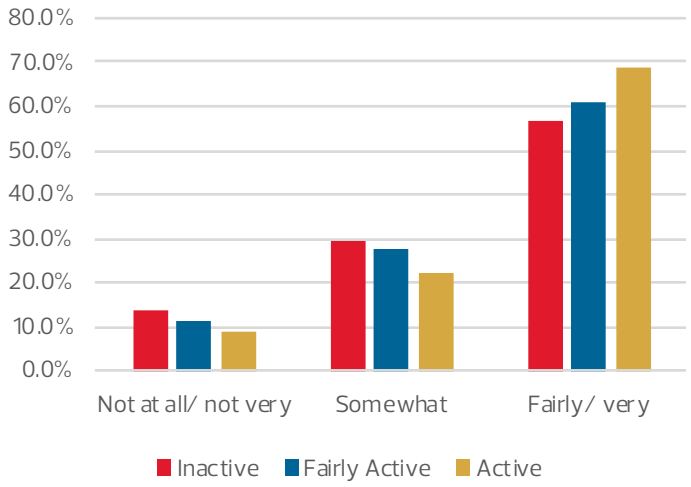
For all activity types, the item with the highest percentage of people selecting 'sometimes' was feeling left out, with response levels of 45.5% for both, 47.3% for just sport, 46.8% for just gym, and 44.9% for neither. Participation in both sport and gym was highest for 'never' or 'rarely' feeling left out (43.6%), barely know me (46.9%), isolated (53.9%), and around me but not with me (52.8%). When looking at 'never' or 'rarely' responses, just sport was higher than just gym across all four questions. Across all four questions, those who participated in neither sport nor exercise had the highest percentage of 'usually' or 'always' responses. Compared to previous BASS HE 2017/2018 research[2], there were similarities in the current results in that just sport was higher than just gym for social inclusion, and both gym and sport was higher than either in isolation. However, although the pattern remained consistent there were reductions in ratings of 'never or rarely' across all four measures for each activity type (with the exception of just gym for people barely know me which did not change).



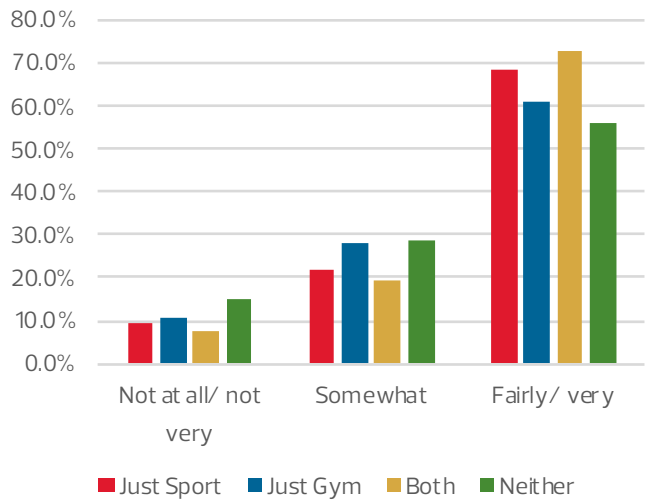
Feeling of belonging

When asked about how much they felt they belonged to their institution, the majority of students selected 'fairly' (39.4%) or 'very' (27.1%). The more active students had a greater sense of belonging to their institution, in terms of the percentage of students selecting 'fairly' or 'very' (inactive: 56.8%, fairly active: 61.0%; active: 69.0%). By activity type, participants in both sport and gym and just sport had similar response levels for 'fairly' and 'very' with 72.9% and 68.8% respectively, followed by just gym (61.1%) and neither (56.3%).

Feelings of belonging to an institution by activity levels



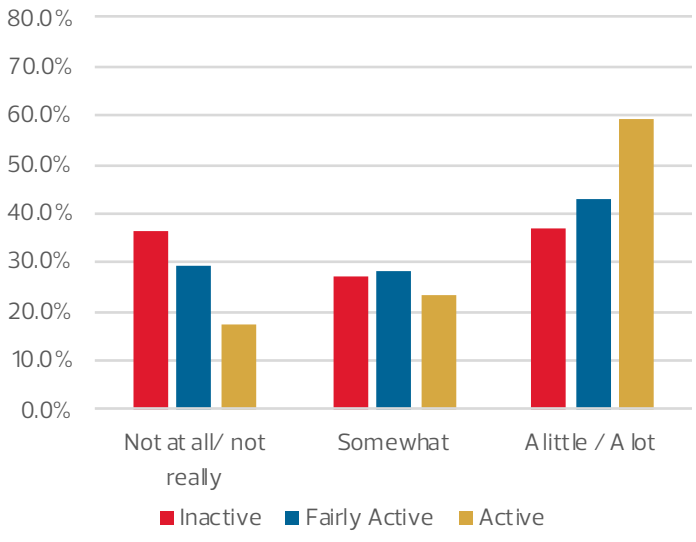
Feelings of belonging to an institution by activity type



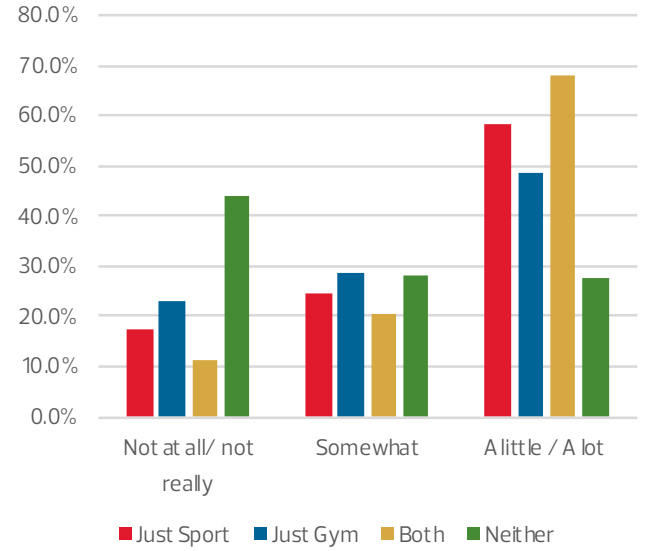
Changes in feeling about your future

When asked if students thoughts and feelings about their life and future had changed positively as a result of being involved in sport, exercise or physical activity, the majority of active students rated this as 'a lot or a little' (59.1%), as did a large percentage of fairly active students (42.8%). A similar percentage of inactive students rated this as either 'a lot or a little' (36.8%) or 'not at all or not really' (36.3%). The majority of participants in both sport and gym rated this as 'a lot or a little' (68.1%), as did just sport participants (58.1%). Just gym participants had a slightly smaller percentage selecting 'a lot or a little' with 48.5%. Those who participate in neither most frequently rated this as 'not at all or not really' (44.2%).

Changes in feeling about your future by activity levels



Changes in feeling about your future by activity type



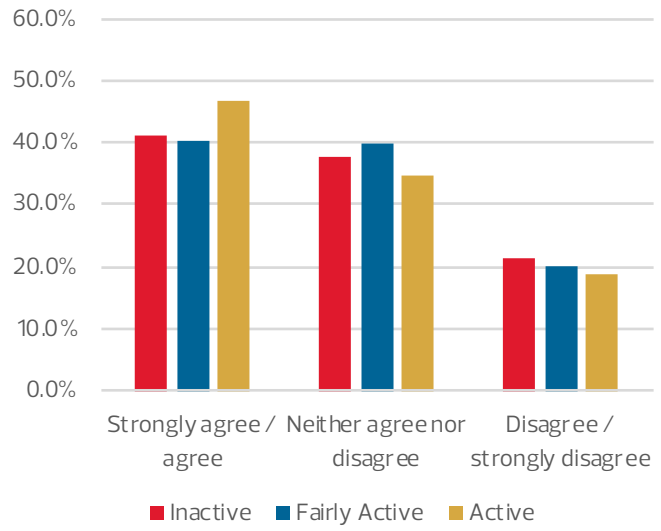
Social trust

Social trust was measured using Sport England's Active Lives measure[8]. The survey revealed that 45.2% of respondents 'agreed or strongly agreed' that people in their local area could be trusted, whilst 19.3% 'disagreed or strongly disagreed' with this statement. Overall, 35.5% of students 'neither agreed or disagreed'. Compared to Active Lives data[8] which reports trust as an average of 3.15 out of 5 for 16-24 year-olds and 3.29 for 25-34 year-olds, students in the survey scored an average of 3.26, suggesting they are trusting to a similar degree as the wider population.

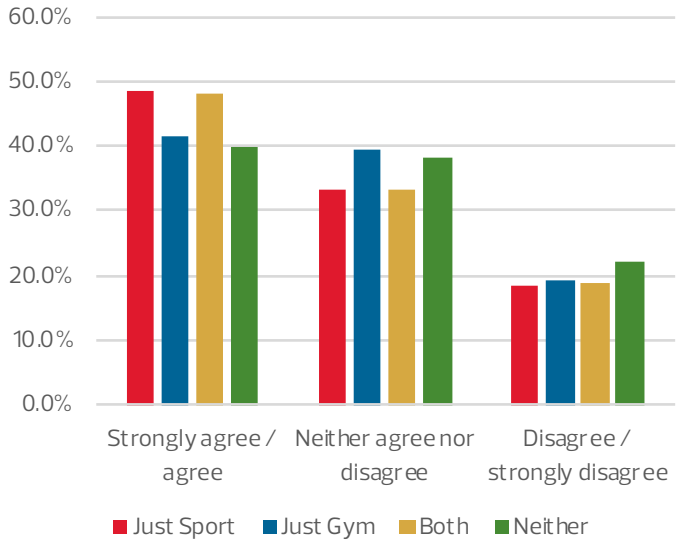
The percentage of respondents selecting 'agree or strongly agree' was highest for the active students (46.5%), with inactive students reporting slightly higher levels (41.0%) than fairly active students (40.3%). Inactive students had a slightly higher percentage of respondents selecting 'disagree or strongly disagree' (21.3%) than fairly active and active students (19.8% and 18.9% respectively). Compared to Sport England's Active Lives, trust was slightly lower, but followed the same pattern of more active individuals having more trust[8].

By activity type, both sport and gym (48.0%) and just sport (48.5%) had similar response levels for 'agree or strongly agree'. Just gym and neither sport or gym also had similar levels at 41.3% and 40.0% respectively.

Social trust by activity levels



Social trust by activity type



Loneliness

Key Findings

> Active students reported feeling lonely occasionally or hardly ever to a greater extent than fairly active or inactive students.

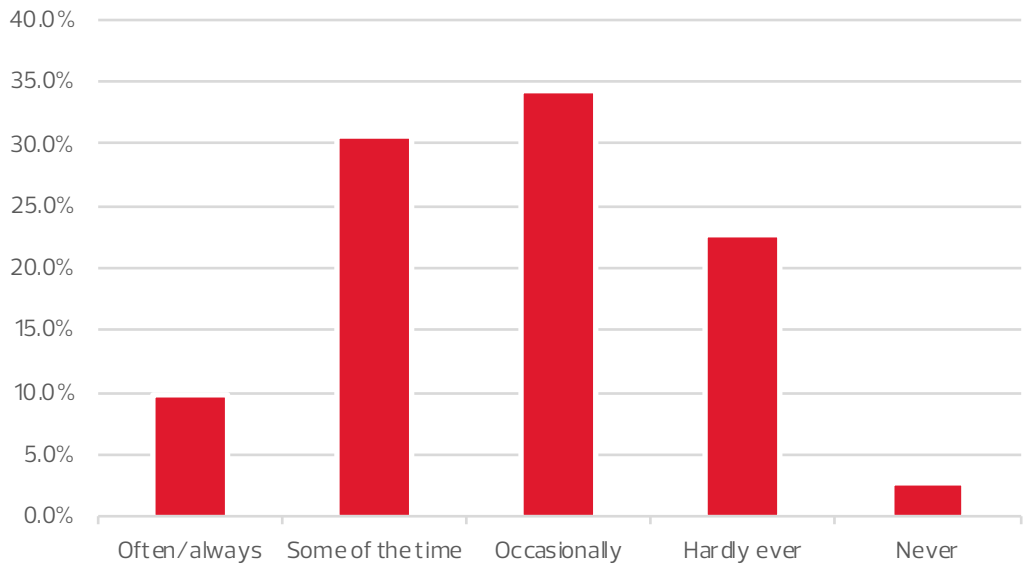
> Inactive students rate feeling lonely often or always more than the other classifications.

> Students with higher physical activity levels were at decreased odds of feeling lonely.

> Students who participated in both sport and gym were likely to 'hardly ever' feel lonely.

Loneliness was measured by asking students how lonely they had felt in the last week, similar to Sport England's Active Lives[8]. Overall, when asked if they had felt lonely during the previous week, 30.5% of students stated that they had 'some of the time', 34.2% 'occasionally', and 22.7% 'hardly ever'. Compared to Active Lives[8] data, the respondents here were lonelier in terms of the number of respondents selecting 'often or always' (BASS – 9.9%; Active Lives: 16-24 year olds – 12.6%, 25-34 year olds – 8.4%).

Overall loneliness scores

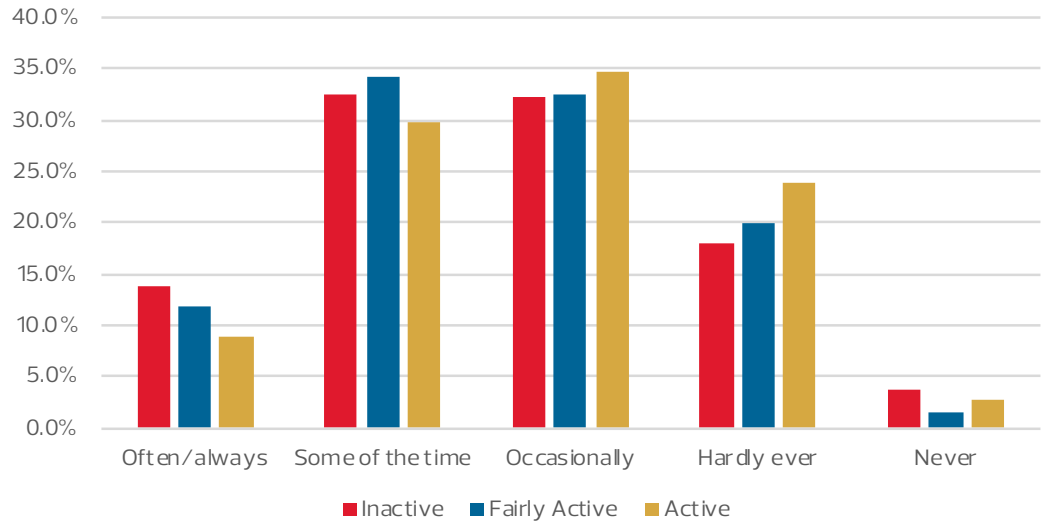


Loneliness by activity level

By physical activity level, active students rated feeling lonely 'occasionally' (34.8%) and 'hardly ever' (23.9%), more frequently than fairly active (32.5% and 20.0% respectively) and inactive (32.1% and 17.9%) students. Fairly active students rated feeling lonely 'some of the time' (34.3%) more than inactive (32.5%) and active (29.7%) students.

Inactive students rated feeling lonely 'often' or 'always' (13.7%) more than fairly active (11.8%) and active (9.0%) students. All of these responses are higher than Active Lives[8] data percentages for 16-24 year olds (8.1%) and 25-34 year olds (8.2%). However, looking at these age groups by activity level, shows less loneliness for 16-24 years old who are inactive (15.7%) and active (12.5%)[8]. Ordinal regression examining the linear relationship between physical activity group and loneliness showed that students with higher physical activity were at decreased odds of feeling lonely (OR = 0.80 [95%CI = 0.74 to 0.86]).

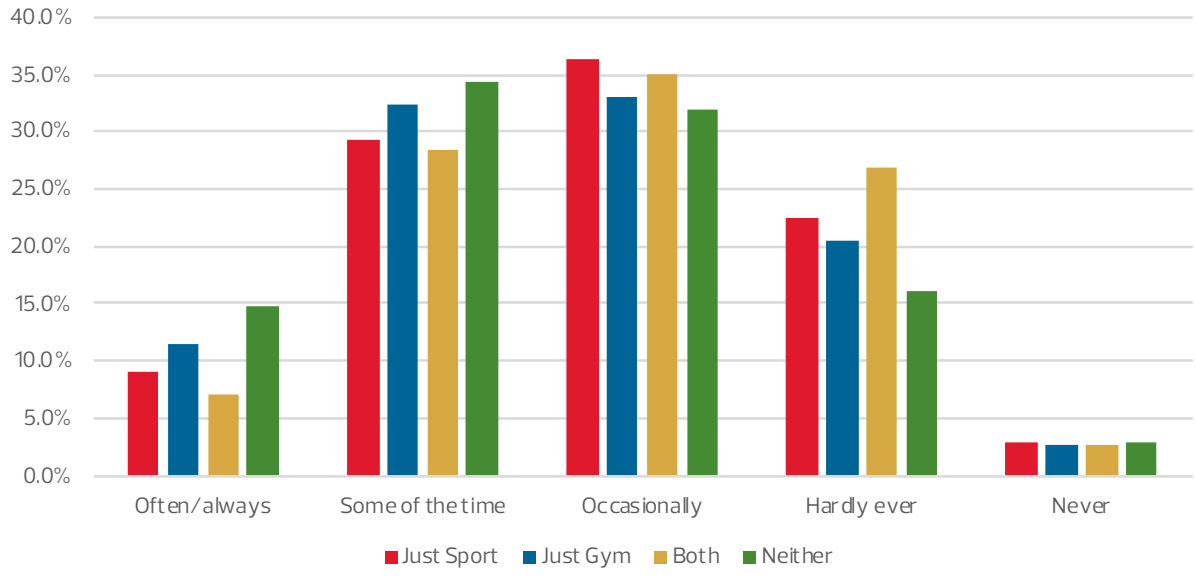
Loneliness by activity level



Loneliness by activity type

Similarly, all activity types had similar ratings for each loneliness response, with the exceptions of both gym and sport being higher for feeling lonely 'hardly ever' (26.9%). Participation in nether gym or sport had a higher rating of 'always' or 'often' (14.8%) or 'some of the time' (34.3%) compared to either activity type in isolation or both. Just sport had higher ratings for 'occasionally' and 'hardly ever' compared to just gym, with the opposite evident for 'often' or 'always' and 'some of the time'.

Loneliness by activity type



Perceptions of Attainment

Key Findings

> The majority of students perceive their attainment to be within the top two categories of a 1st and 2:1.

> More active students perceive their academic attainment to be higher than those classified as less active.

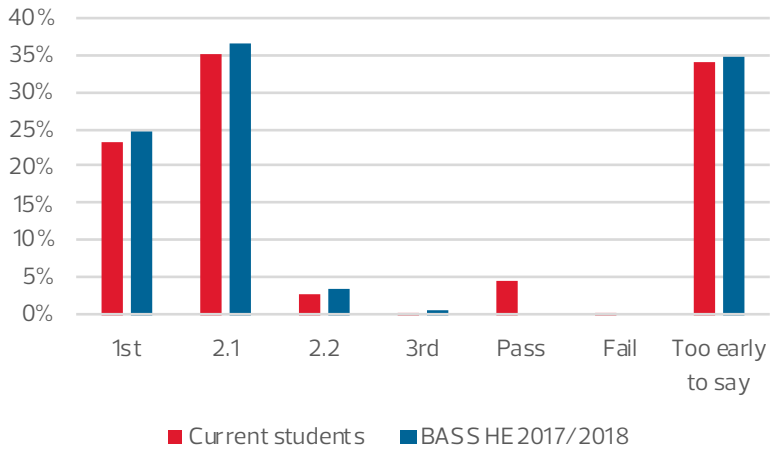
> Just gym and neither participants perceive their attainment to be higher for a 1st than just sport or both, with both higher for a 2:1 achievement.

> Participants of both sport and gym, just gym and just sport spent more time studying than those doing neither sport nor gym, as did active and fairly active students compared to inactive.

> Perceptions of academic attainment were similarly high overall and by activity levels and type when compared to BASS HE 2017/2018, although slight reductions were seen due to changes in the possible question responses.

For undergraduate students, academic attainment was measured through the students' prediction of their final grade. Postgraduate students were asked to provide their actual undergraduate grade. Overall, the majority of students believed they would achieve either a 1st (23.2%) or 2:1 (35.2%). However, 34.0% of students believed that it was too early to say. Compared to previous BASS HE 2017/2018 findings[2], this population perceive their attainment to similarly high, however the previous survey did not have the 'too early to say' option which impacts the comparison throughout.

Overall attainment levels

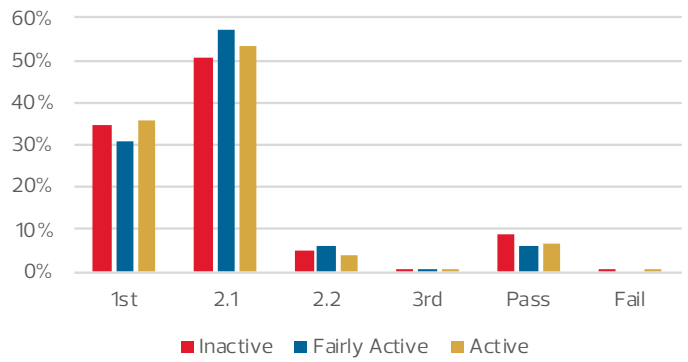


Attainment by activity level and type

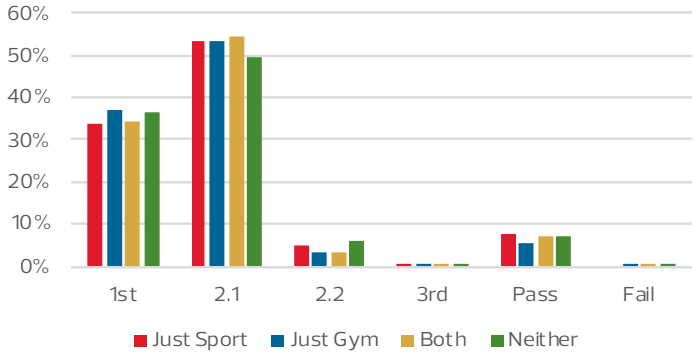
By activity level, inactive (34.5%) and active (35.7%) students predicted that they would achieve a 1st to a similar extent, with fairly active students slightly lower (30.9%). The majority of students from each activity classification thought they would achieve a 2:1. By activity level, this option was the most often selected by fairly active students (57.0%), followed by active (53.3%) and inactive (50.4%). Of those who rated their predicted attainment as a 2:2, this was selected most often by fairly active (5.9%) and inactive (5.2%) students. Compared to previous BASS HE 2017/2018 findings[2], fairly active and active students had a lower levels of expectation of achieving a 1st, while all activity groups had similar responses for achieving a 2:1 or 2:2. Ordinal regression examining the linear relationship between physical activity group and perceptions of academic attainment showed that there was no interaction for undergraduates (OR = 1.07 [95%CI = 0.96 to 1.20]) or postgraduates (OR = 1.05 [95%CI = 0.81 to 1.36]).

By activity type, students who take part in just gym (36.9%) or neither gym nor sport (36.6%) reported a higher percentage of respondents who predicted achieving a 1st, although just sport (33.6%) and both gym and sport (34.3%) were similar and only slightly lower. Participants in both gym and sport had the highest percentage of respondents who predicted achieving a 2:2 (54.7%), however just sport (53.1%) and just gym (53.3%) were only slightly below this, with neither gym nor sport lower again at 49.5%. Compared to BASS HE 2017/2018[2], just gym participants had lower expectations of achieving a 1st or 2:2, and just sport participants had a lower perception of achieving a 2:1.

Attainment by activity level



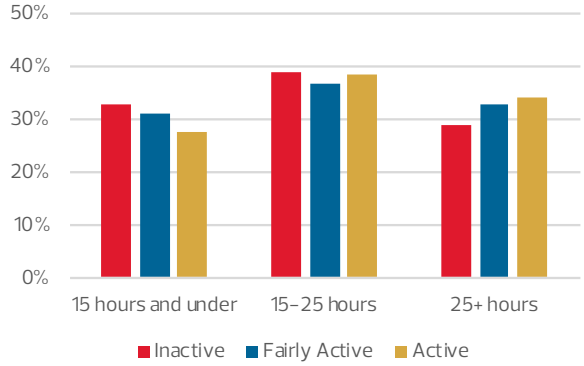
Attainment by activity type



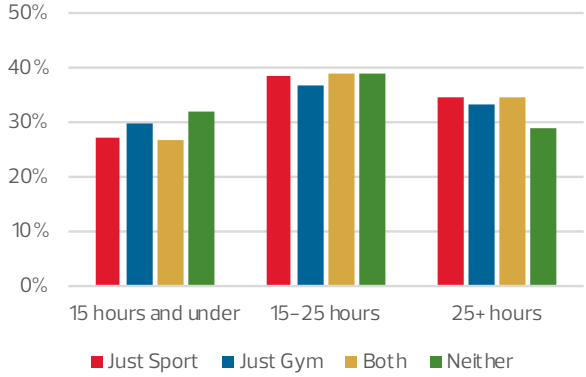
Study time by activity level and type

Time spent studying can be linked to academic attainment. Active students were the group with the highest percentage of respondents who studied for more than 25 hours (34.1%), compared to fairly active (32.6%) and inactive (28.7%) students. The opposite trend can be seen for doing less than 15 hours of study with inactive students (32.5%) having a higher percentage of respondents selecting this option than fairly active (30.9%) and active (37.3%) students. This suggests students who spend time taking part in sport and exercise and being active do not limit the time they have available for studying. By activity type, those who take part in both sport and gym (34.5%) and just sport (34.4%) have the highest proportion of students studying for 25 hours or more a week. Just gym (33.5%) has a similar proportion, with those who take part in neither gym nor sport the lowest (29.1%).

Study time by activity level



Study time by activity type



Perceptions of Employability

Key Findings

> To succeed academically and to enhance employability were the main reasons given for attending a HEI, as well for attending a specific institution.

> Employability skills were similarly rated across the majority of options by activity level and activity type.

> Confidence in being employed within six-months was highest for students who participated in both sport and gym, as well as those who were more active.

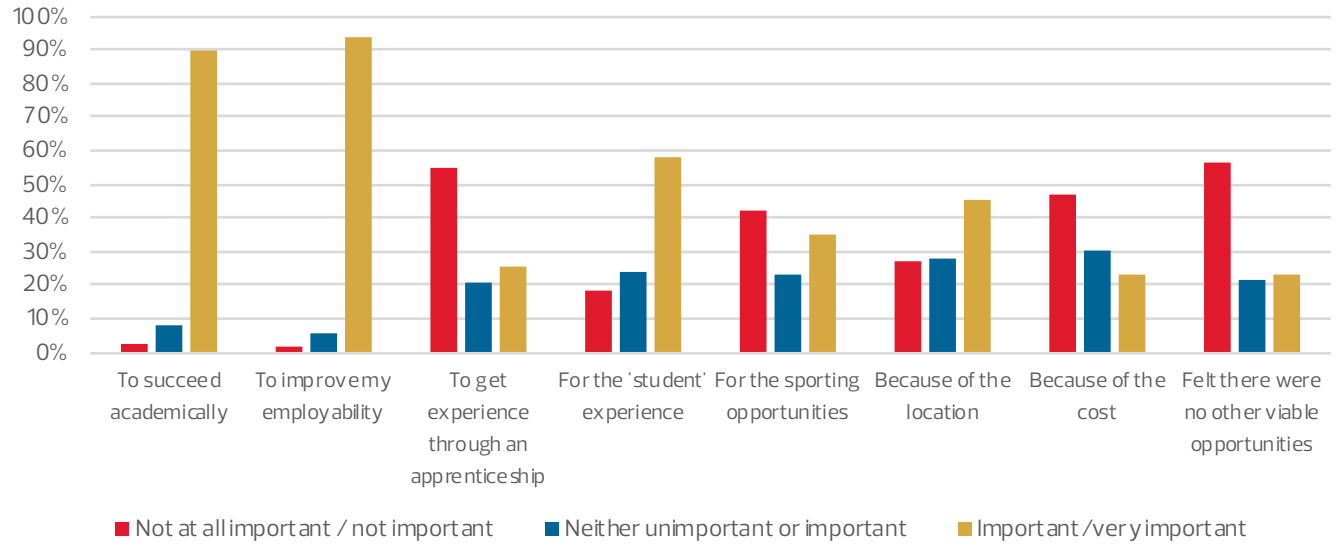
> Confidence of finding employment after education, and rating of employability skills remained consistent across this and the previous BASS HE 2017/2018 survey.

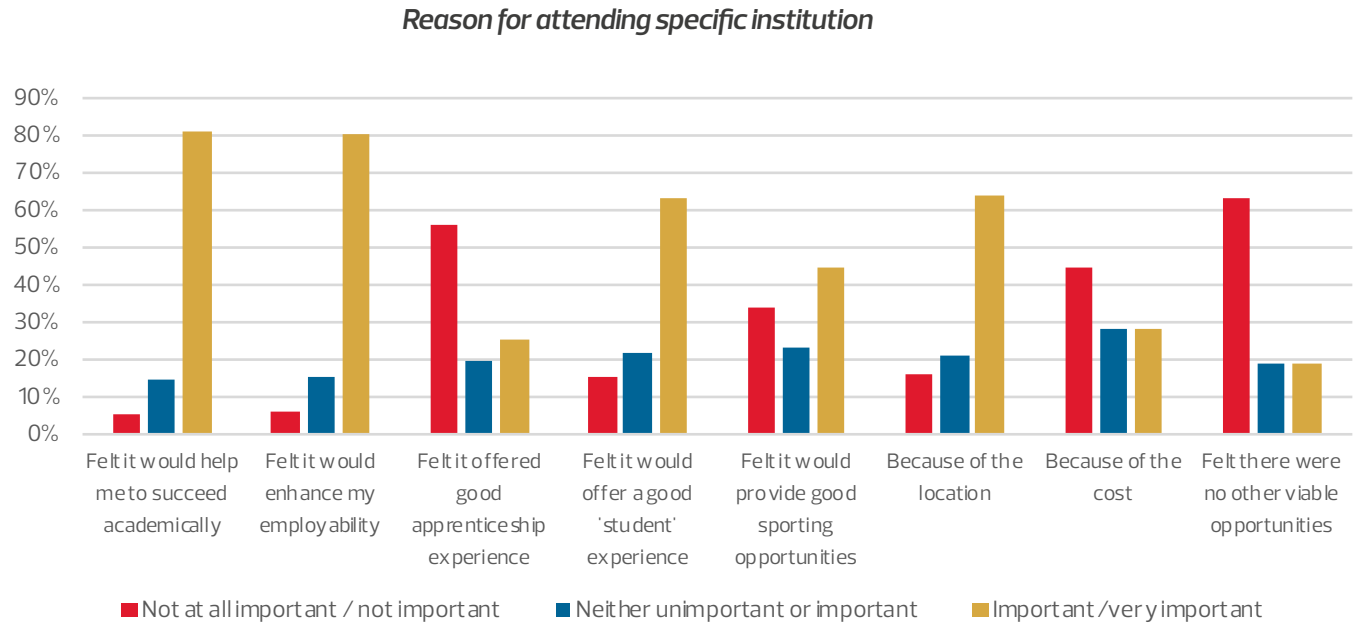
The perceptions of employability were examined through a number of questions that looked at reasons for attending a HEI, students rating of key employability skills, students' perception of whether sport or exercise improves employability. This also included asking if they mention sport or exercise when applying for jobs, and finally their confidence in being employed within six-months of finishing their course.

The students' plans post HE were predominantly to gain full-time employment (66.1%), with 20.9% planning further education and a further 8.3% planning to travel. Part-time employment was planned by 2.5% whilst 2.3% of students had other plans.

The main reasons for attending a HEI and rated as 'important' or 'very important' most frequently were 'to improve my employability' (93.5%) and 'to succeed academically' (90.0%). This was mirrored in why the students had chosen their specific institution, with the options 'felt it would help me succeed academically' (80.5%) and 'felt it would enhance my employability' (79.9%) chosen most often. Specific institutions were also chosen for the experience (63.1%) and location (63.5%).

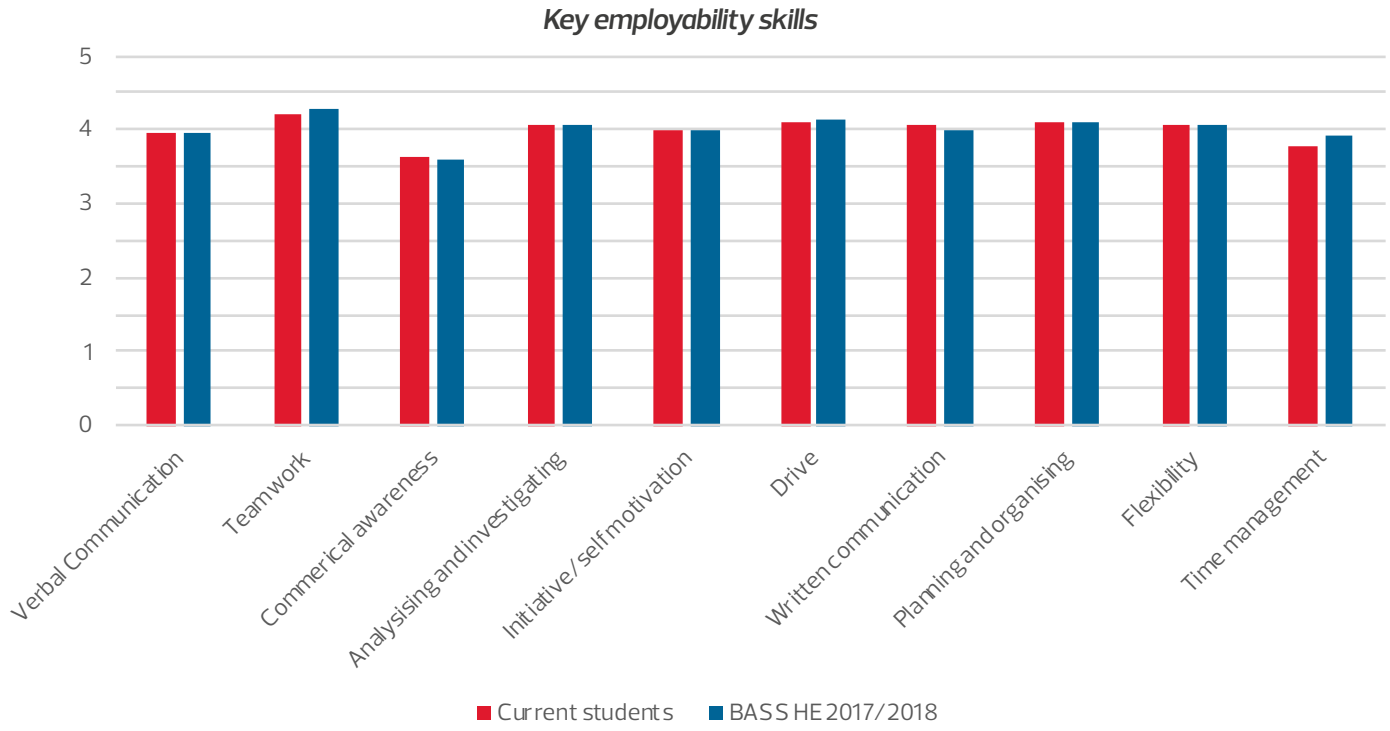
Reason for attending HE





Key employability skills

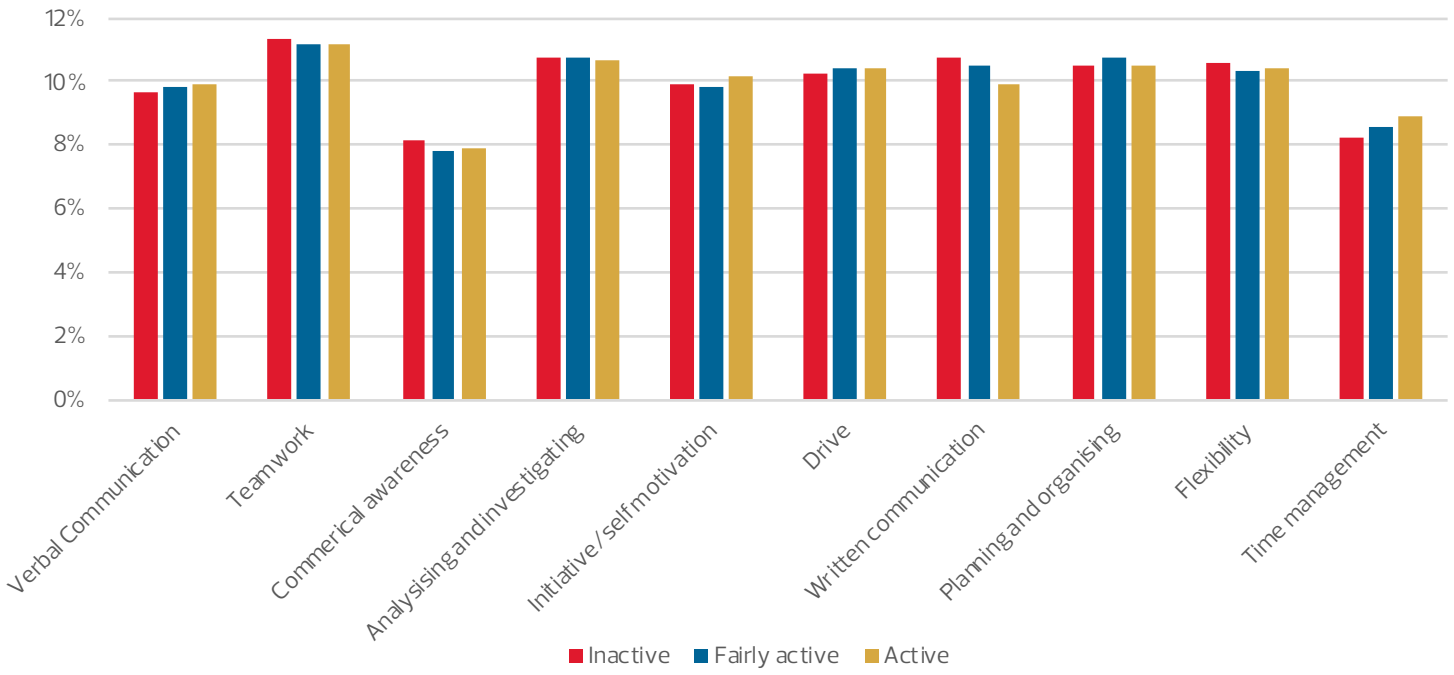
Students were asked to rate themselves from 1 to 5 on a variety of key employability skills, with 1 being 'very weak' and 5 being 'very strong'. Overall, employability skills ranked by average score were consistent in this survey with findings from BASS HE 2017/2018[2].



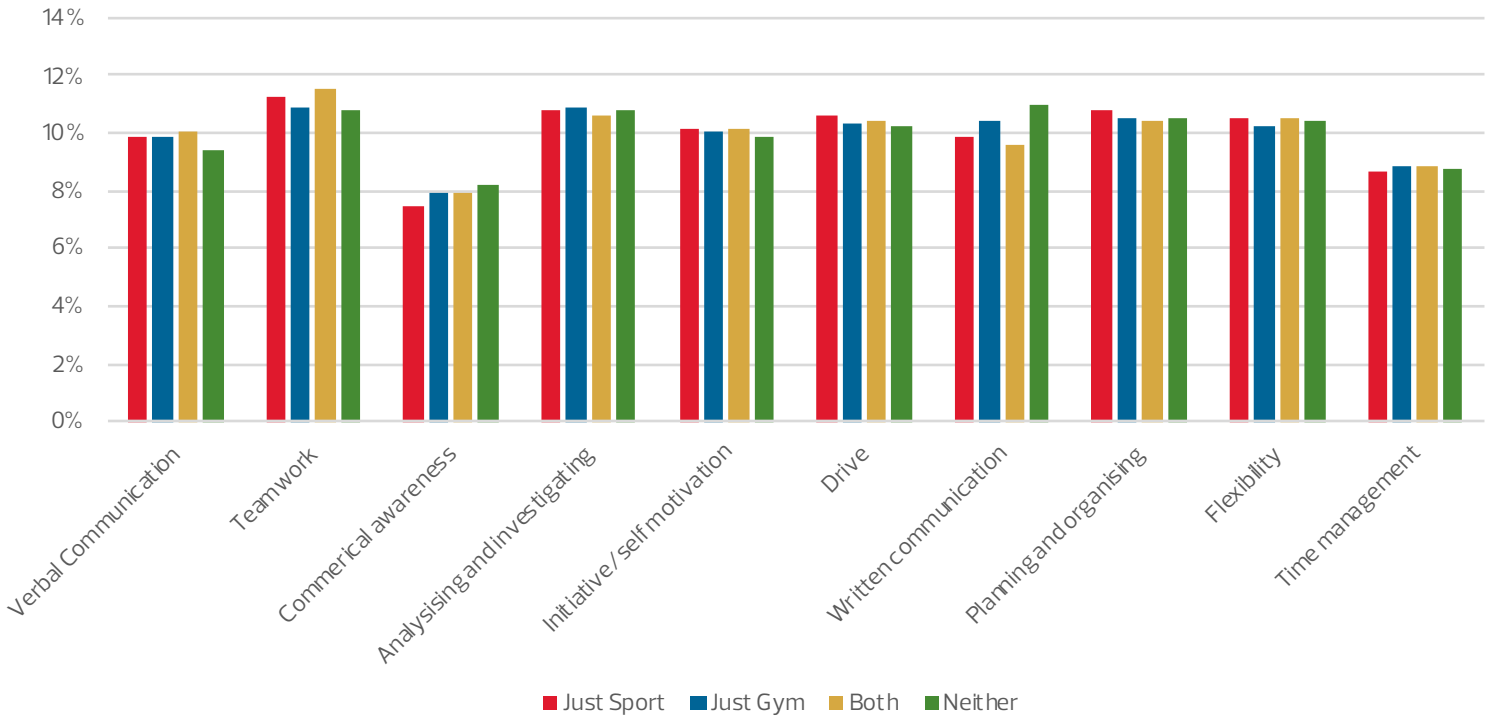
Key employability skills by activity level and type

The breakdown by activity level and type looks at the percentage of students who rated the skills as 'high' (by giving answers of 'strong' or 'very strong'). Segmenting by activity level shows that all three groups similarly rated each of the 10 employability skills, with the teamwork rated the highest by all three groups, and commercial awareness the lowest by all three. The biggest differences were for written communication, which had a larger percentage of inactive students (10.7%) rate this as high compared to active students (9.9%), and time management, with a larger percentage of active students (8.9%) rating this as high compared to inactive students (8.2%). Employability skills were similarly rated within each activity type group for six out of the 10 skills. Of the ten skills, participants in both gym and sport had the biggest percentages rating high in verbal communication (10.1%) and teamwork (11.6%). Commercial awareness and written communication saw the largest ratings of high from participants of neither sport nor gym, with 8.2% and 11.0% respectively.

Key employability skills by activity level: percentages rating their skill as high



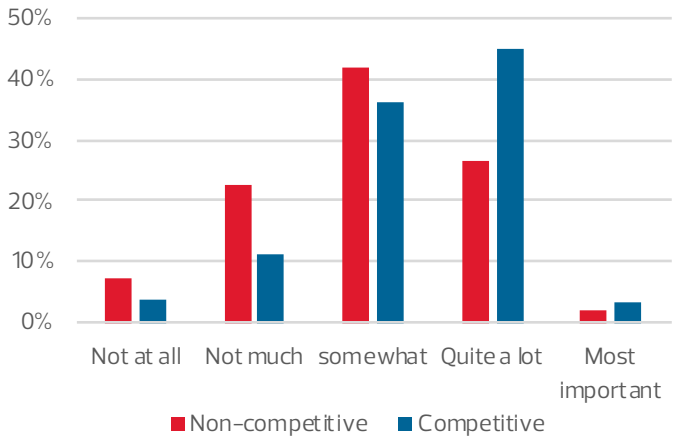
Key employability skills by activity level: percentages rating their skill as high



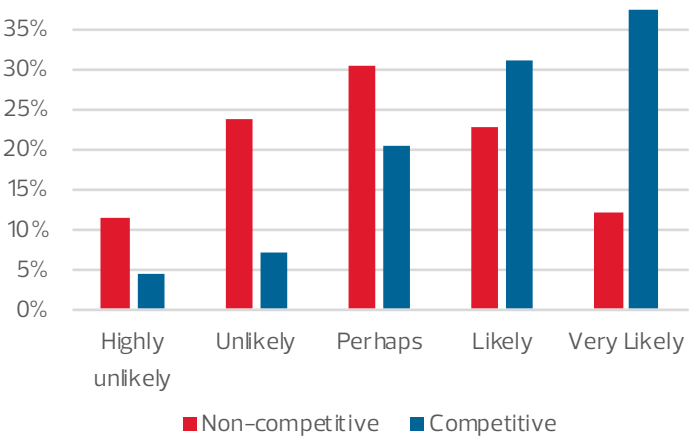
Impact of sports participation on employability

Students were asked about the extent to which that they felt participating in competitive and non-competitive sport improved their employability. Students tended to think that non-competitive sport was less influential than competitive sport in improving employability. For those students that participate in sport, either competitively or non-competitively, they were asked how likely they are to refer to this when applying for jobs. Participants who competed competitively were more inclined to rate this as 'likely' or 'very likely'.

Perception of sport participation improving employability



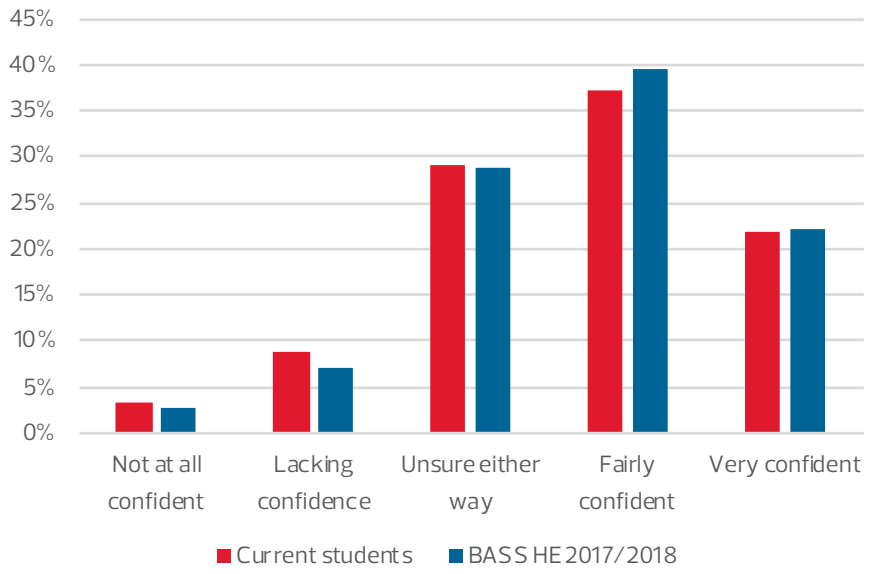
Likelihood of referring to sport during a job application



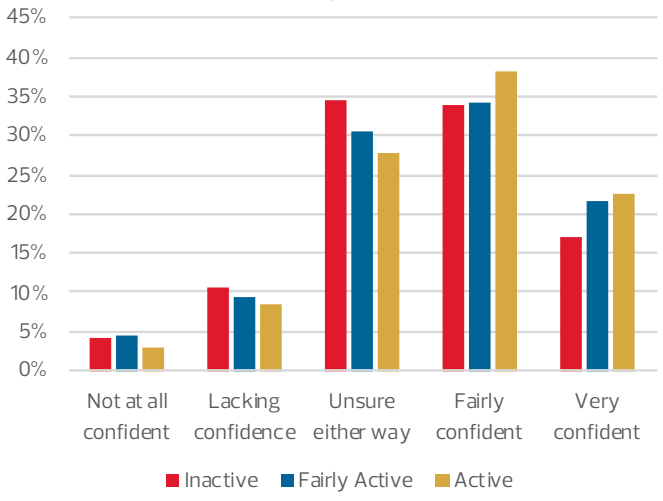
Confidence in finding employment

Confidence in being employed within six-months of finishing their course was rated slightly higher by the current students when compared to BASS HE 2017/2018 findings[2], although findings are similar. Employment confidence was similarly rated by each activity level classification. However, 'fairly confident' (38.1%) and 'very confident' (22.6%) were selected more by active students than fairly active or inactive students. The employment confidence was fairly consistent with BASS HE 2017/2018 findings[2], with the biggest changes for inactive students who have slightly lower confidence in the current survey, as did active students. In the current survey, fairly active students had a higher rating of 'very confident' but a lower 'fairly confident' rating. Irrespective of activity level, only a small proportion of students were low in confidence in finding employment. By activity type, students who participated in both gym and sport selected 'very confident' 23.6% of the time, a similar amount to those in the just gym group (23.4%). Both gym and sport participants (38.6%) and just sport participants (38.2%) selected 'fairly confident' more often than the other activity types. Comparing the employment confidence by activity type with BASS HE 2017/2018 findings[2] revealed consistent confidence levels, although within the current survey participants of neither gym or sport had a higher confidence of finding employment.

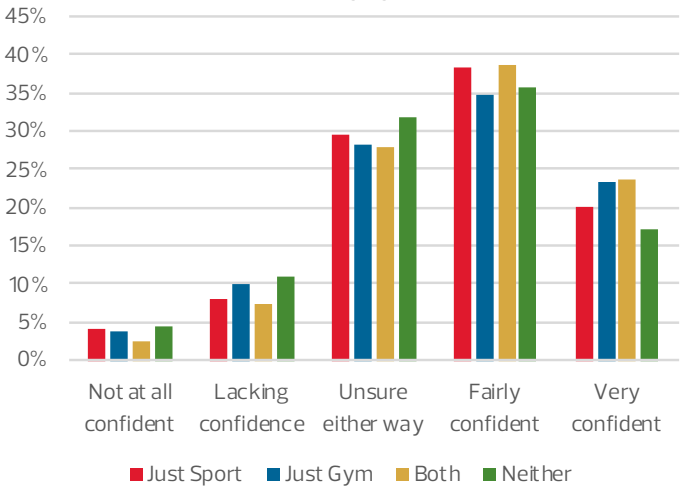
Confidence of being employed within 6-months



Confidence of being employed within 6-months by activity level



Confidence of being employed within 6-months by activity type



Barriers & Motivators to Being Active

Barriers

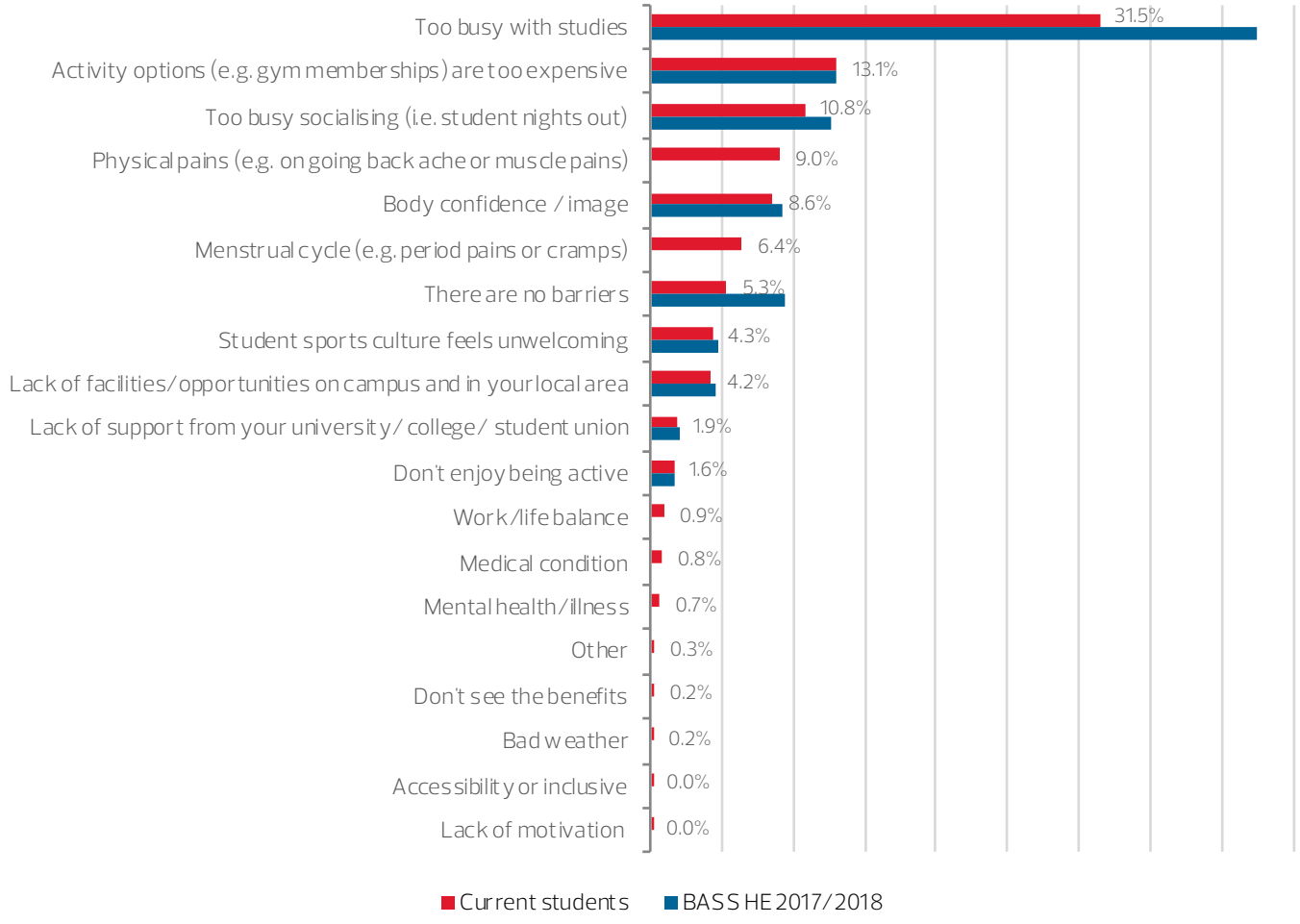
A wide range of factors can influence the ability and inclination for students to take part in physical activity. Students were asked to select all the barriers and motivations that applied to their participation in physical activity.

The barrier to physical activity that was selected most often was being too busy with studies (33.3% of students). The activity options (13.8%) and too busy socialising (11.4%) were the next two biggest barriers. There are no barriers was selected 5.3% of the time. Lack of support from university or college was again rated as a minimal barrier to physical activity (1.9%), as was accessibility or inclusivity (0.0%, n=5).

The barriers to participation were similar to previous BASS HE 2017/2018 research[2] although there were more options in the current study which may have caused the slight differences, primarily seen with 'too busy with studies' being selected less frequently in the latest survey.

Segmented by gender, the biggest differences were seen in body confidence and image, with more females than males reporting this as a barrier (9.3% vs 6.5%). For the option 'there are no barriers', this was selected 10.0% of the time by males compared to 3.5% for females. The biggest motivators were to improve physical health (14.4%), as a stress relief (11.8%), to improve body image (11.1%), enjoyment of physical activity (10.4%), and to help with mental health and wellbeing (10.1%). No comparison to previous data is available as this question was not previously asked.

Barriers to being active



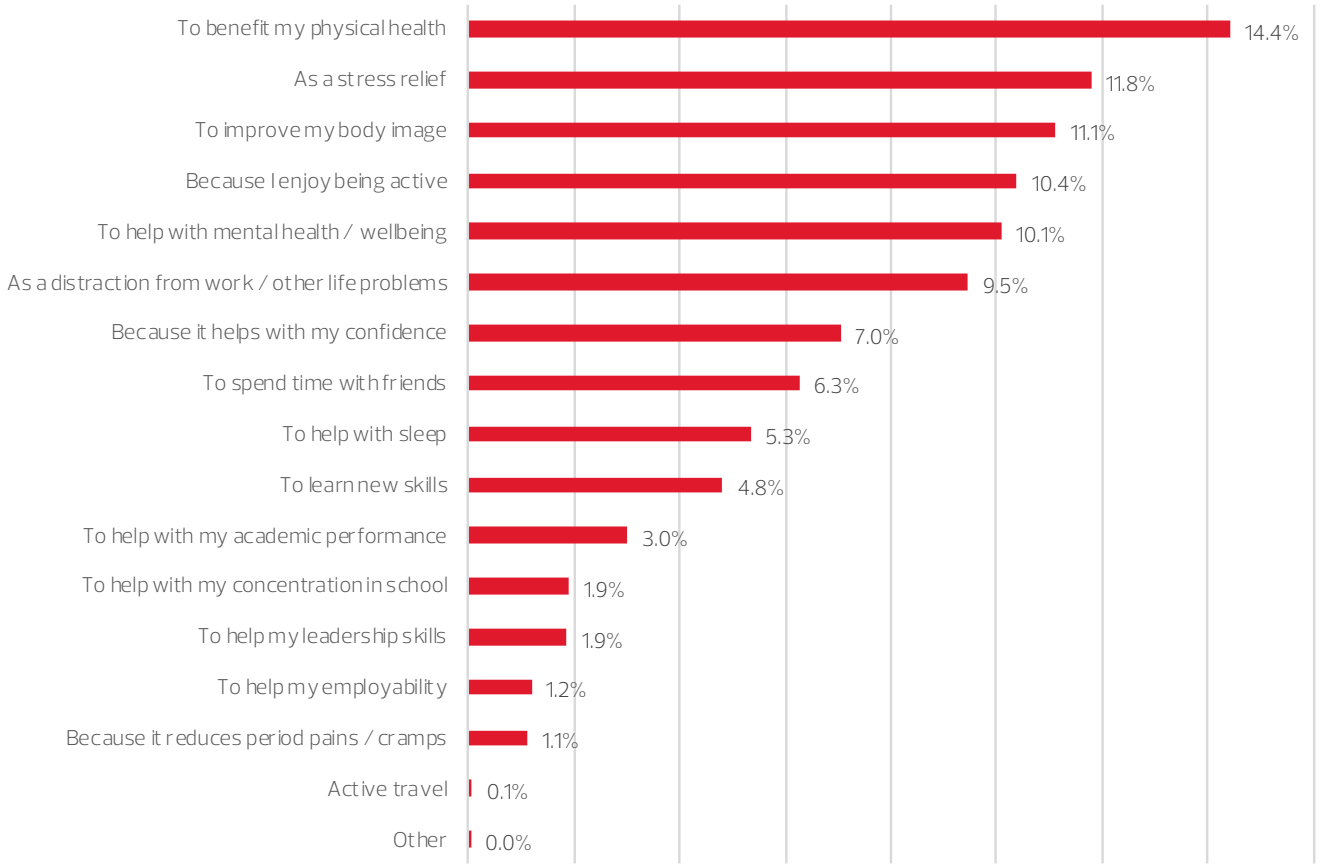
* percentages on the graph relate to the current students only

Motivators

The biggest motivators were to improve physical health (chosen 14.4% of the time), as a stress relief (11.8%), to improve body image (11.1%), enjoyment of physical activity (10.4%), and to help with mental health and wellbeing (10.1%). No comparison to previous data is available as this question was not asked in previous surveys.

By gender, the biggest differences were for stress relief, with 12.3% of females selecting this compared to 10.8%, and to help with mental health and wellbeing (10.7% females vs 8.9% males). For males, spending time with friends was selected 7.1% of the time compared to 5.8% for females.

Motivators to being active



Summary and conclusions

This year saw the third BASS undertaken with Higher Education students, and the first time the survey has been completed in conjunction with Further Education. This report looked to build on the evidence produced to date[1-3] to further understand motivations behind physical activity and potential barriers, as well as the link between personal and mental wellbeing, social inclusion, loneliness and social trust, and academic attainment and employability perceptions.

Generally across the population studied, which includes 9,013 students from 101 different HEIs (primarily based in England), students who are classified as active and those that take part in both sport and gym receive the greatest benefits across the metrics measured. Furthermore, fairly active students scored better than inactive students across these metrics, as did just gym and just sport participants compared to participants in neither sport nor gym. Although there are minimal differences between just sport and just gym, participants of sport in isolation have slightly better outcomes. Although both personal and mental wellbeing follow this trend, overall both measures are lower for the student population than a sample from national data, further suggesting continued support is required in these areas.

The current survey had a higher proportion of active students than the BASS HE 2017/2018[2], aligning more closely to national activity data from Sport Engalnd[8]. The current findings across all variables measured are similar to those presented in the BASS HE 2017/2018[2] across all physical activity levels and activity types.

National data suggests that more than a quarter of HEI age individuals do not meet the recommended levels of physical activity[8]. The role of Higher Education is vital in combating this and can be realised by providing opportunities for students to be physically active. Clear barriers and motivations are presented within this report which can help institutions develop approaches to overcome these and support students during their studies. The growing understanding that is being developed through continued BASS research on the role of physical activity provides compelling evidence to ensure that all areas of an educational institution are aware of the valuable role regular activity can play in supporting students.

Although this survey was distributed across the UK, the majority of respondents attended a HEI in England. As such the results may not be reflective of those across the other home nations and it remains a limitation of these findings. However, given the trend across this report and the previous reports[1-3] it is unlikely the findings would change dramatically in other home nations.

The British Active Students Survey 2019/2020: Higher Education provides a clear association between physical activity levels and the type of physical activity with feelings of personal and mental wellbeing, social inclusion, loneliness and social trust, and academic attainment and employability perception. HEIs have a vital role in support their students through an often life changing period. Promoting and providing opportunities for regular physical activity can support students across an institution and as such should be encouraged institution wide.

BASS 2019/2020 Higher Education provides a clear association between physical activity levels and the type of physical activity student take part in, and a range of metrics including feelings of personal and mental wellbeing, social inclusion, loneliness and social trust, and academic attainment and employability perception. HEIs have a vital role in supporting their students through an often life changing period. Promoting and providing opportunities for regular physical activity can support students across an institution and as such should be encouraged institution wide.

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