



**Annual Membership Survey
Soft Launch results**



Students
ASSOCIATION

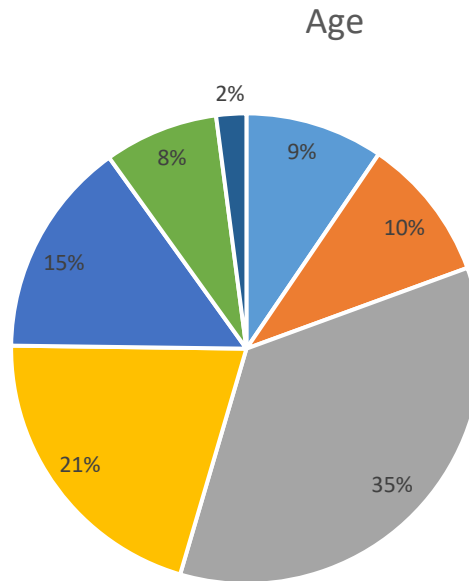
Results overview

- The survey launched on 17 February 2020 to a representative sample of 30,000 students provided by the Student Research Project Panel (SRPP). This excluded all students who were flagged to take part in the 2020 National Student Survey (NSS)
- A prize draw was used to incentivise the survey and offered participants the chance to win one of three £100 vouchers for the ir choice of Amazon, Love2Shop or Restaurant Choice.
- The survey closed on 30 March 2020 with 293 respondents. We have attributed the low response rate to CAMEL mailings being reserved for COVID-19 communications and the use of a representative sample reduced the amount of promotion that could be carried out using the Association communication channels.
- We would like to thank all the student who took part, the Student Experience team for sending the initial communications, SRPP for providing the data and everyone at the Association and Central Executive Committee who contributed to the design of the survey.

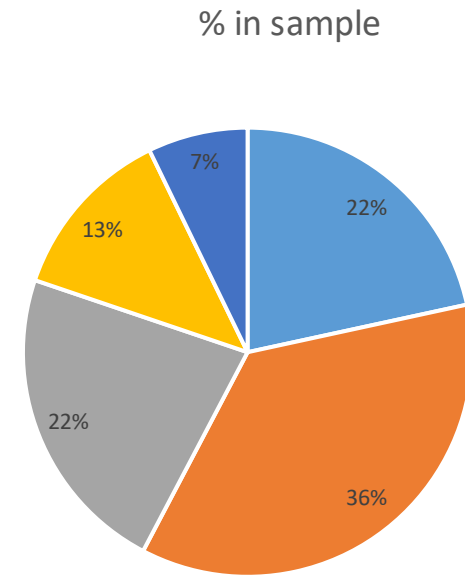
Who replied?



The survey age brackets differ slightly from those set out in the representative sample by SRPP. However, the survey results broadly tracks the representative sample with 55% of participants aged 34 year or under



- 18-21
- 22-24
- 25-34
- 35-44
- 45-54
- 55-64
- 65 and over

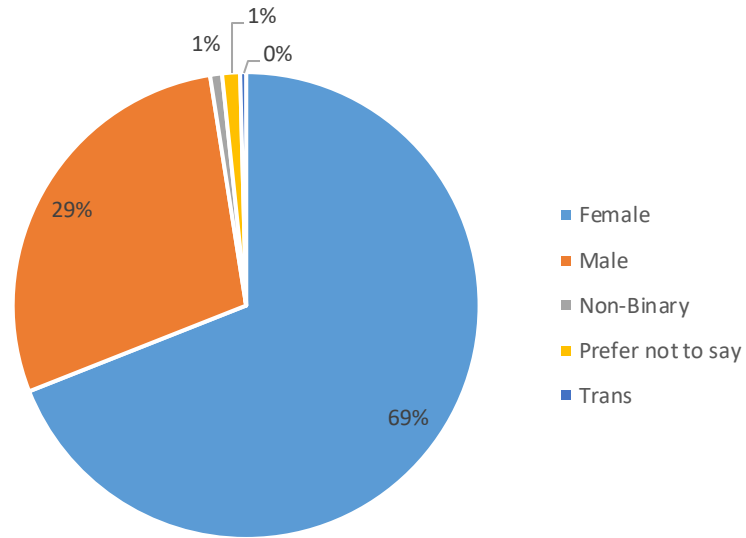


- Under 25
- 26-35
- 36-45
- 46-55
- 56 and over

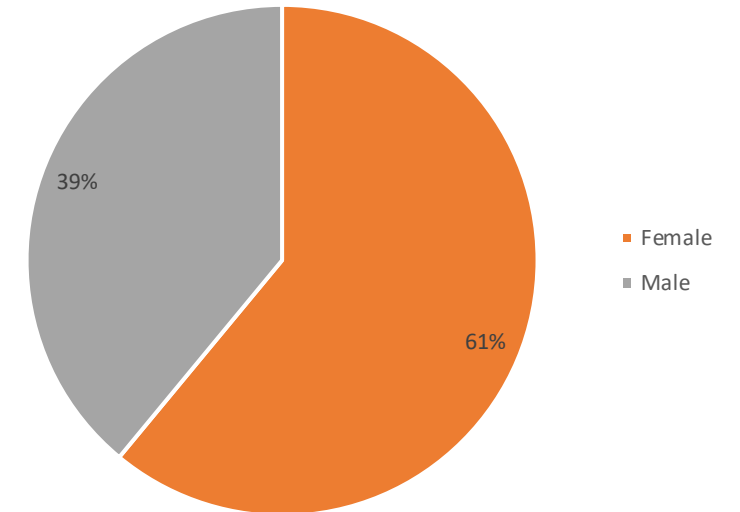
Gender Identity

We asked students to select their gender identity from the following options; female, male, trans, non-binary or prefer not to say. Although we have been provided data by the OU regarding gender, the options only cover male and female. At the time of writing this report, the OU confirmed that they are looking to expand the options available to be more inclusive.

Gender



% in sample



Region of study

On the whole, the data collected from the survey tracks the representative sample with the exception of Northern and Southern England. Interestingly, the representative sample indicates that only students from within the UK are in the sample. However, 7% of participants are from outside of the UK.

The UK

Region	Number of survey participants	% of survey participants	% in representative sample
East Midlands	21	9%	6.4%
East of England	19	8%	9%
London	16	7%	8.7%
Northern England	28	12%	16.1%
Northern Ireland	9	4%	4%
Scotland	31	14%	14.7%
South East England	19	8%	6.2%
South West England	26	12%	6.9%
Southern England	8	4%	8.5%
Wales	17	8%	7.4%
West Midlands	14	6%	6.5%
Yorkshire	15	7%	5.6%
Prefer not to say	2	1%	n/a

Rest of the World

Region	Count
US	1
Vietnam	1
Sri Lanka	1
South Africa	1
Europe	11
Israel	1
China	1

The survey asked participants to give more detail on their ethnicity than the OU would normally record. Groupings have been made to assess more clearly whether our survey tracks to the representative sample.

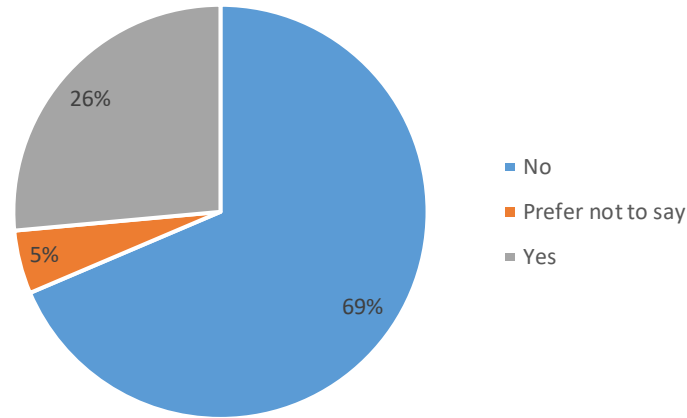
	What is your ethnicity?	% of survey participants	% in representative sample
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi	2	0.83%	
Asian or Asian British - Indian	1	0.42%	
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	3	1.27%	
Asian or British Asian - Chinese	1	0.42%	
Other Asian Background	2	0.83%	
		3.77%	3.8%
Black or Black British - Caribbean	3	1.27%	
		1.27%	3.6%
Other Ethnic Background	2	0.83%	
Arab	1	0.42%	
Gypsy or Traveller	1	0.42%	
		1.67%	0.9%

	What is your ethnicity?	% of survey participants	% in representative sample
Mixed - White and Black Caribbean	3	1.27%	
Other Mixed Background	1	0.42%	
		1.69%	2.6
White - British	135	55.6%	
White - English	27	11%	
White - Irish	7	2.82%	
White - Scottish	12	4.93%	
White - Welsh	10	4.3%	
Other White Background	23	9.45%	
		88.1%	86.8
Prefer not to say	8	3.5%	
		3.5%	2.3

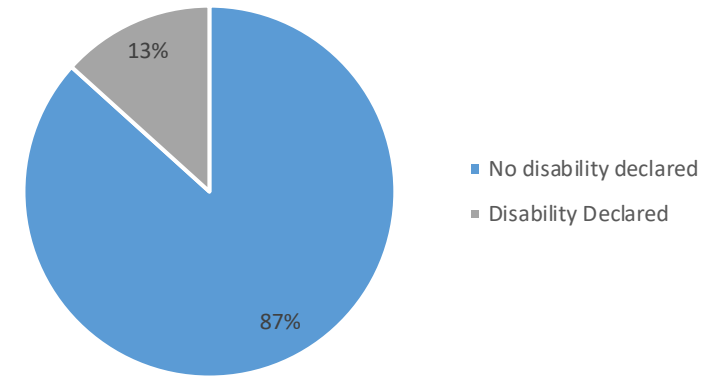
Disability

The number of survey participants who consider themselves to have a disability is double that of the representative sample. This could be dependent upon the way the OU have phrased their question in order to capture this data. We used the phrase 'do you consider...' which leave it open to interpretation by the participant leading to a difference against the way the OU defined the term disability.

Disability marker



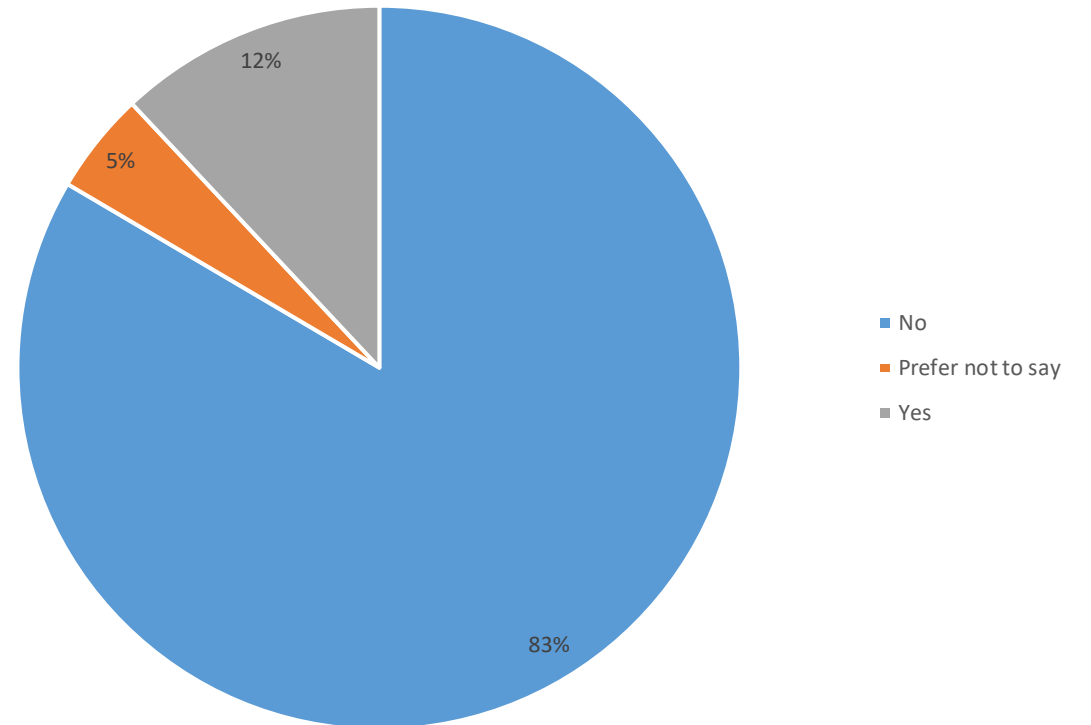
% in sample





The majority of survey participants do not identify as LGBT+. The OU do not hold reliable data on student LGBT+ status that we can compare our results to. When students were asked about their awareness of our LGBT+ group, PLEXUS, 73% of students who are identified as within the demographic gave a positive response about being awareness and willingness to take part in the group.

LGBT+ marker

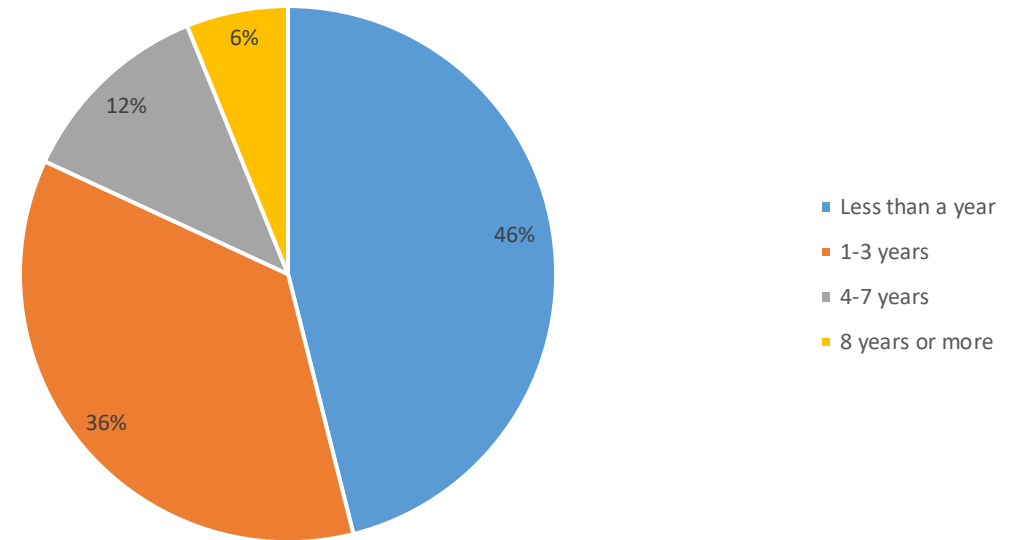


About your studies

Length of study

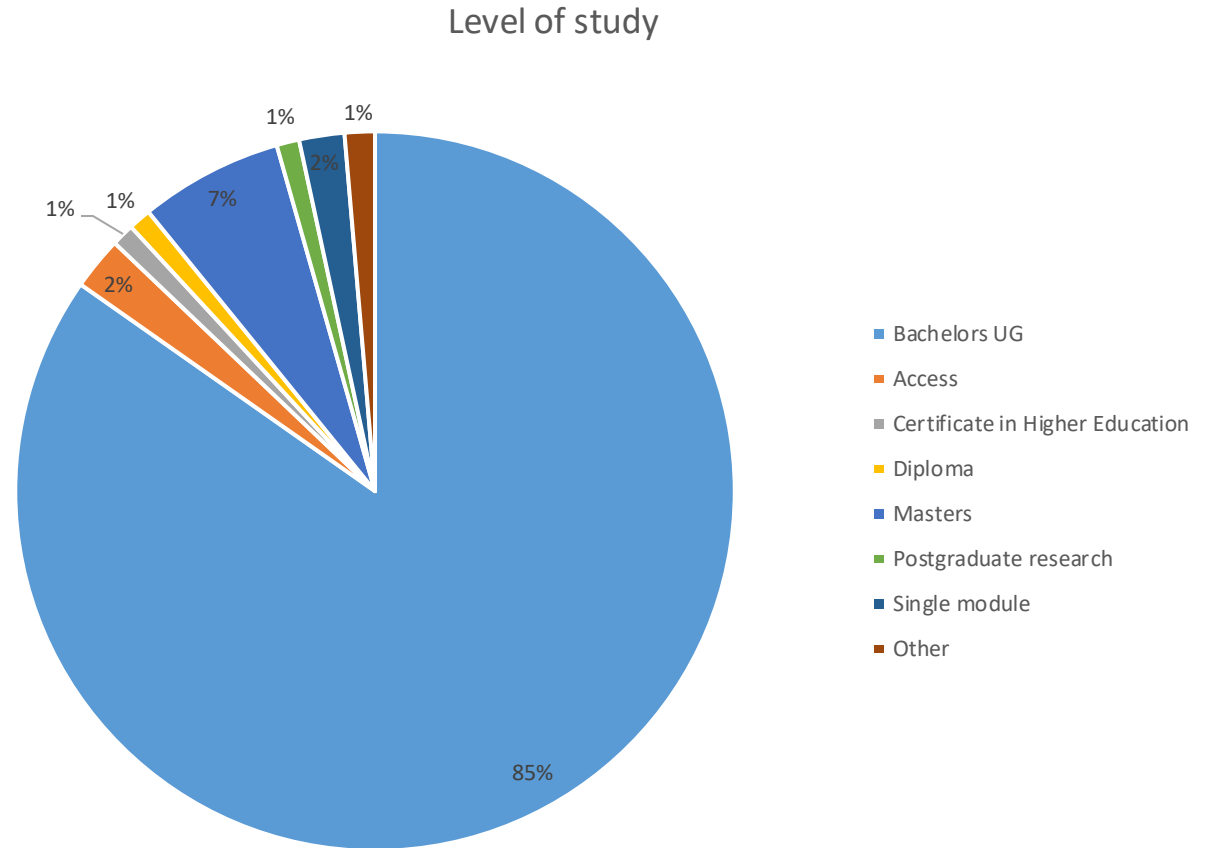
Interesting to see that 82% of participants have been studying with The Open University for 3 years or less. We could ask the SRPP to include length of study in their sample info for the full-scale AMS launch. If the survey timings and our social media comms coincide with Freshers, then we might continue to see more new students responding.

Length of study



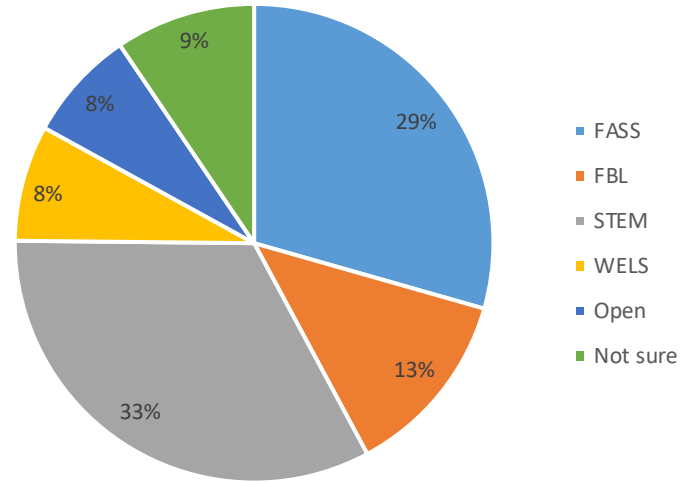
Level of study

The small cohort of students (1% or 4 participants) who selected 'other', rather than a prepopulated option, advised they are studying Postgrad certificates, Undergrad Foundation or had completed their degree.

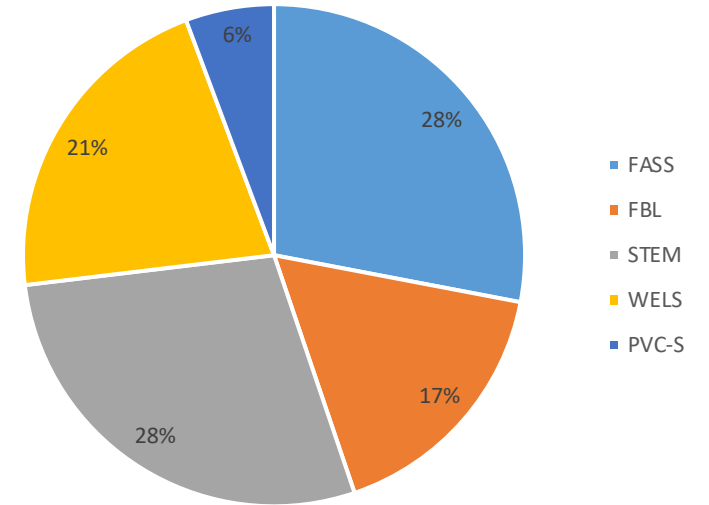


The faculty selected by participants tracks the representative sample provided by SRPP. The exception here is WELS, which recorded a significantly lower number of participants completing our survey.

Faculty



% of each faculty in sample

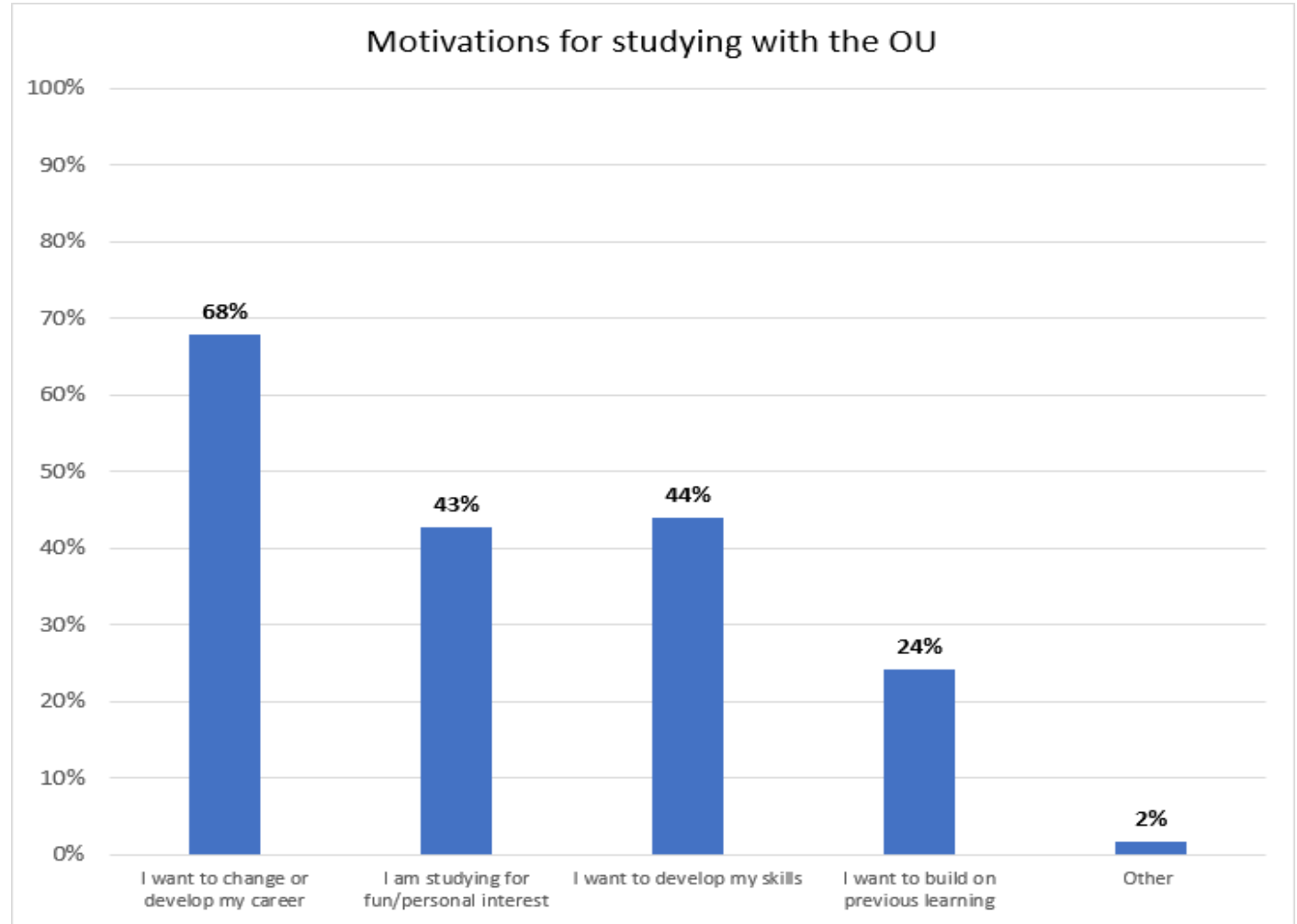


Motivation to study with the OU

68% selected 'wanted to change or develop my career'.

Options entered by students in the 'other' box included;

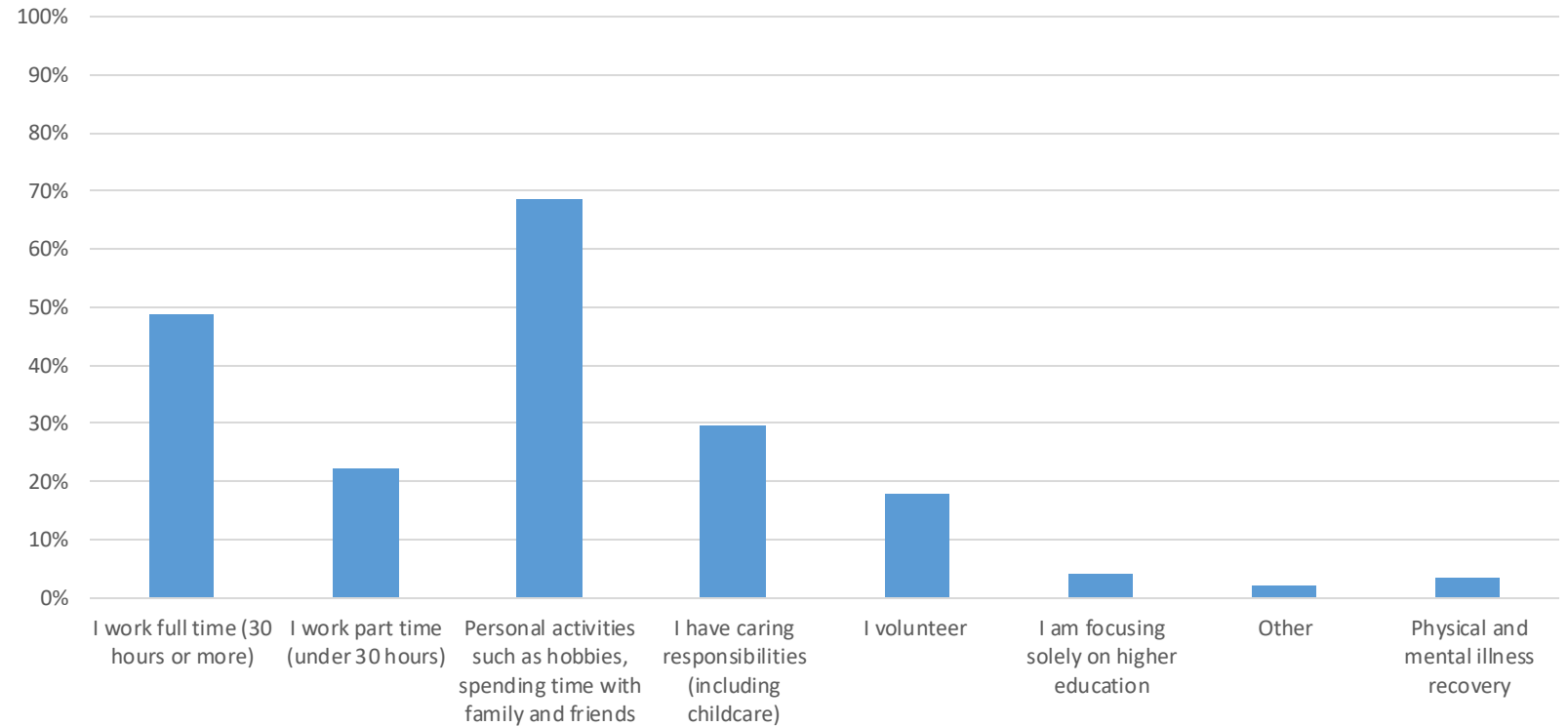
- Wanting a degree to avoid missing out on future opportunities
- To help my mental health
- Traditional university wasn't working for me
- Cheaper than brick universities



Demands on time (outside of study)

69% selected personal activities (hobbies, socialising), 4% focusing solely on HE, 49% work full time (30hrs or more).

Commitments outside of study



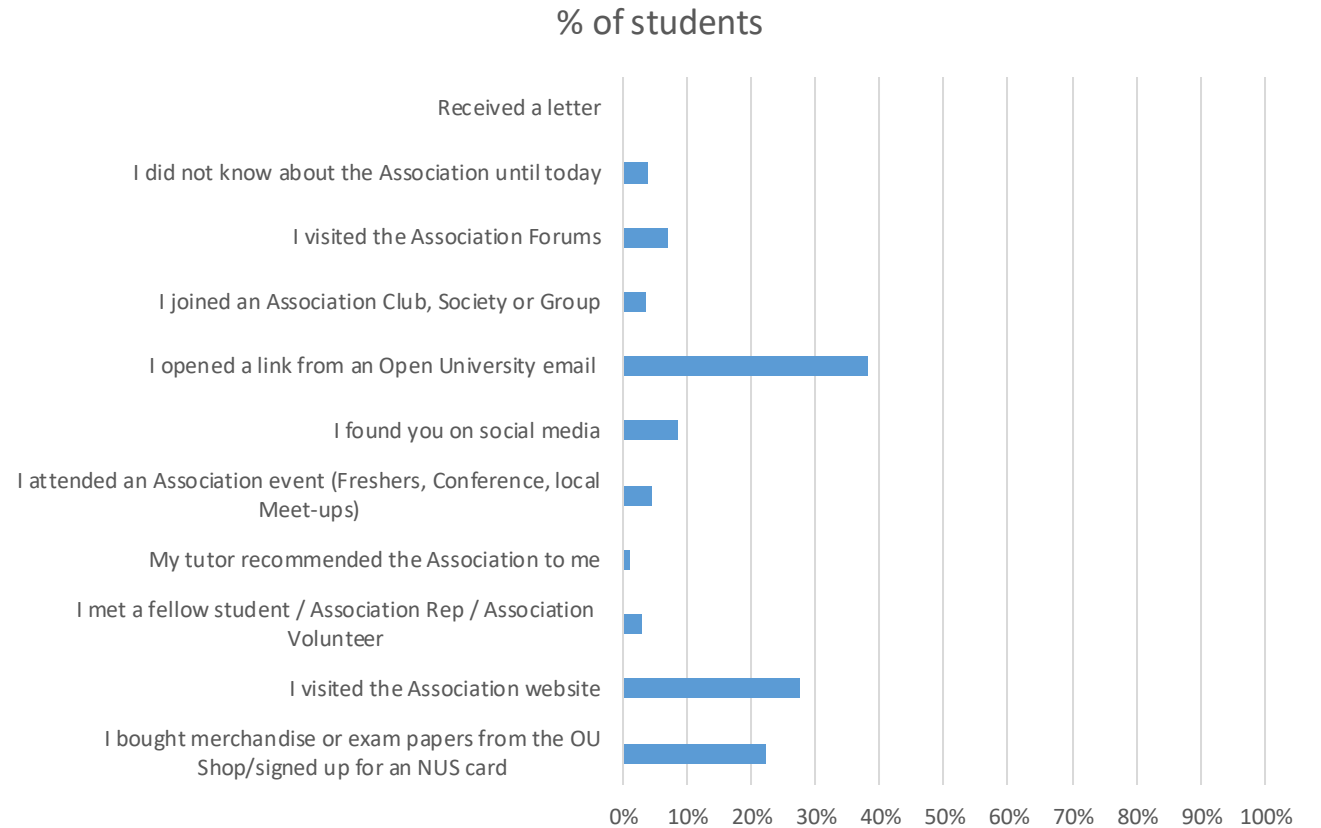
Awareness of the Association



Did you know that you automatically became a member of the OU Students Association when you register to study for the OU

68% were aware of their membership but only 20% of total survey participants understand what it means to be a member.

Encouraging to see that most participants found out about the Association from an Open University e-mail. However, we know from previous research that students often do not understand the difference between the Association and the OU communication channels.



What do you think we do

This question was designed to challenge the participants to consider the role of the Association within their own student experience. Nearly 35% of participants cited support with studies, wellbeing and signposting to University resources, however 10% of these participants admitted to guessing that support was within the Association's remit.

35% of participants cited study support, wellbeing and signposting to University resources, however 10% of these participants admitted to guessing that support was within the Association's remit. 11% of participants commented that main role of the Association is to represent Student Voice.

I assume you are a hub for student support and organising events for OU students that can help with their studies and networking. I also imagine that you are able to help students if they have any issues that might be affecting their studies.

Initial perceptions - by joining a student body it would enable me to keep up-to-date with OU student information, get direction with queries I may have regarding student clubs and Associations, and signposting to areas of help I may need as a student.

...create a social community of students, which is invaluable when you are distance learning

You put forward the students views on any changes that the university are intending to implement. [...] It also is there should the student have a complaint to support them in that complaint and to investigate it.

Culture

Let us know how you feel about the Association...

The high levels of neutral or N/A selected here may be linked to the fact that only 20% of participants who said they had both awareness of the Association and an understanding of what it offered. Several participants mentioned that they felt positively about the culture at the Association just from receiving the survey, even though they had little awareness.

% The Association is an open and inclusive organisation that is accessible to all.

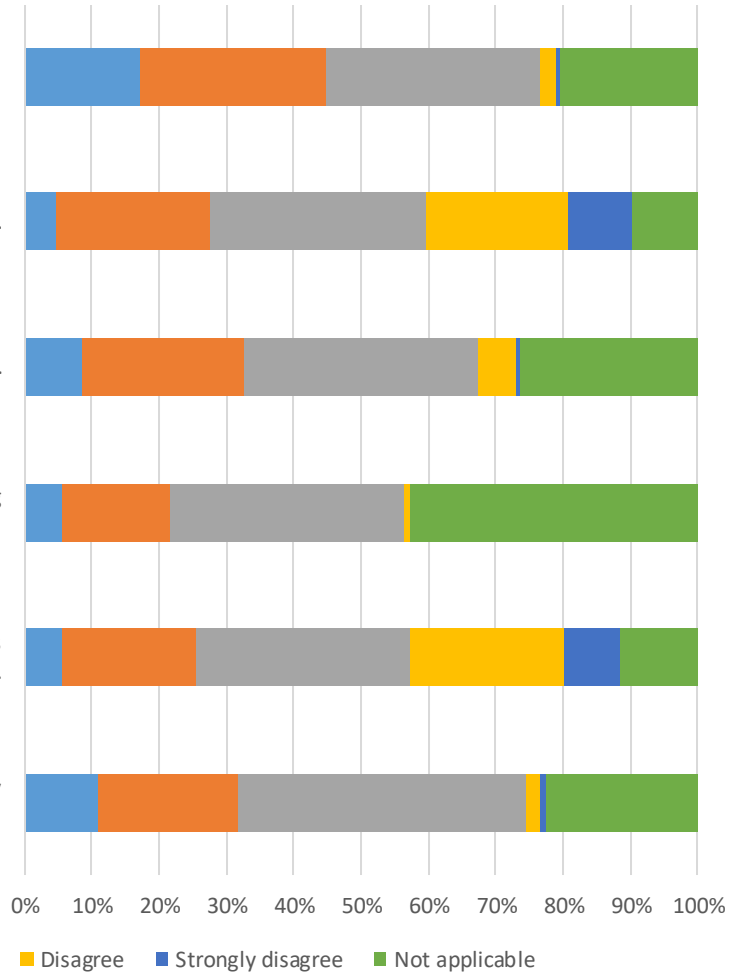
% I understand how the Association works with the University.

% It is easy to get in touch with the Association.

% I find the Association events and spaces are friendly, caring and collaborative.

% I feel well informed about the activities and opportunities provided by the Association and I know how to get involved.

% I feel the Association contributes in a positive way to my student experience.





Let us know how you feel about the Association... (continued)

In the comments section, participants commented that they selected neutral for the above options as they did not have experience of interacting with the Association. Several participants mentioned that they felt positively about the culture at the Association just from receiving the survey, even though they had little awareness.

It sounds amazing but I've not heard of it before.

Being an older student, feel that things are more geared generally to younger students.

I wish there would be more interaction with international students. I would like to actually meet with fellow students.

I really don't know much about the organization at all. Your survey has made me realize how much I didn't know.

What would you hope to gain from being involved with the Association?

The top responses in this free text question were surrounding peer support, personal development and being part of a social community. Although many of the participants had little to no awareness of the Association prior to this survey, only 7% commented negatively, choosing either 'I don't know' or 'I'm not interested'.

The comments we received around personal development included words such as 'confidence', 'fulfilment' and 'improving existing skills'. This demonstrates the Association's role in adding value to students' learning experience by offering volunteering and networking opportunities. The value of the social communities that the Association offers was highlighted by words such as 'companionship', 'connection' and 'friends'.

Knowledge of what was happening at the university and what its plans are. A good space to meet like-minded people. Help and support if I need it.

A community feel, support from other students & student friends.

To be a better, more helpful version of myself.

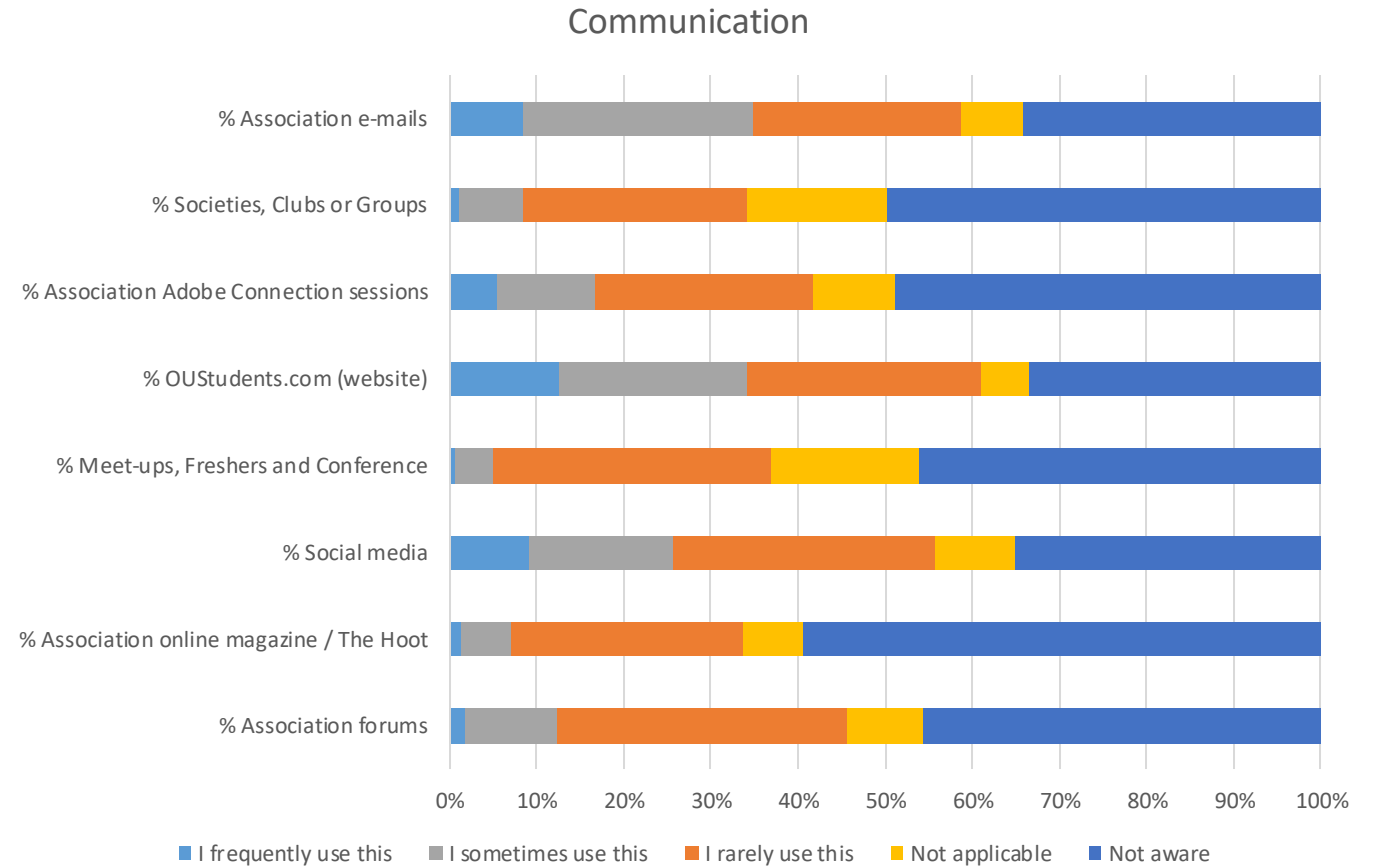
'I am now going to go about finding out how to become more involved and would hope from that to find support and a general feeling of more involvement with my studies and in return to offer support and get involved.'

Communication

Which of these do you use to keep up to date with the Association?

Awareness of most communication methods are low. Although results recorded for 'I frequently use this' were much lower than the other categories, the top communication methods were Association e-mails, the OU Students website and social media.

Previous research has shown that students often mistake communications from the Association with those from the OU and this was echoed in the comments from question 11 asking participants to give more information about their communication preferences.



Which of these do you use to keep up to date with the Association?

Around 16% of participants used the free text space in question 11 to confirm that they were not aware of the Association, with some participants advising that this survey had inspired them to investigate more of what the Association has to offer.

There was a real mix on how participants preferred to receive communication from the Association. This ranged from participants finding it easier to communicate via e-mails as they could process information and respond at their leisure, to those who preferred to see communications in their news feed via social media.

emails and magazine are provided to me, sort of reminding me its there so I read them, social media I sometimes use if I look at my usual notifications which aren't often.

I was unaware of this things but will be exploring futher.

Other than incidental mention I am unaware of the association. I agreed to take part in the survey to find out more.

'on the OU web site, it gives information of up and coming events etc, I use the Abdo for lectures etc'

Which of these do you use to keep up to date with the Association?

Around 7% of participants comments that they prefer not to use social media networking sites to communicate. Some participants felt that they were missing out on Association news and networking with other students due to their decision not to use social media.

We received comments from participants who highlighted their frustration about accessing events from overseas which shows the need to ensure that events are accessible for all.

...it doesn't seem to be of much relevance to an overseas student like myself- in these days of technological advances, i think you need to get away from F2F options and offer more opportunities via conference calling/Skype-type of tech

I am not on Facebook, so unfortunately I miss out on a lot of activities.

Leaving abroad, is not easy to attend face to face meetings which I would like. Due to time difference, online sessions don't usually work for me

All of the societies are based on using social media which isn't accessible to all.

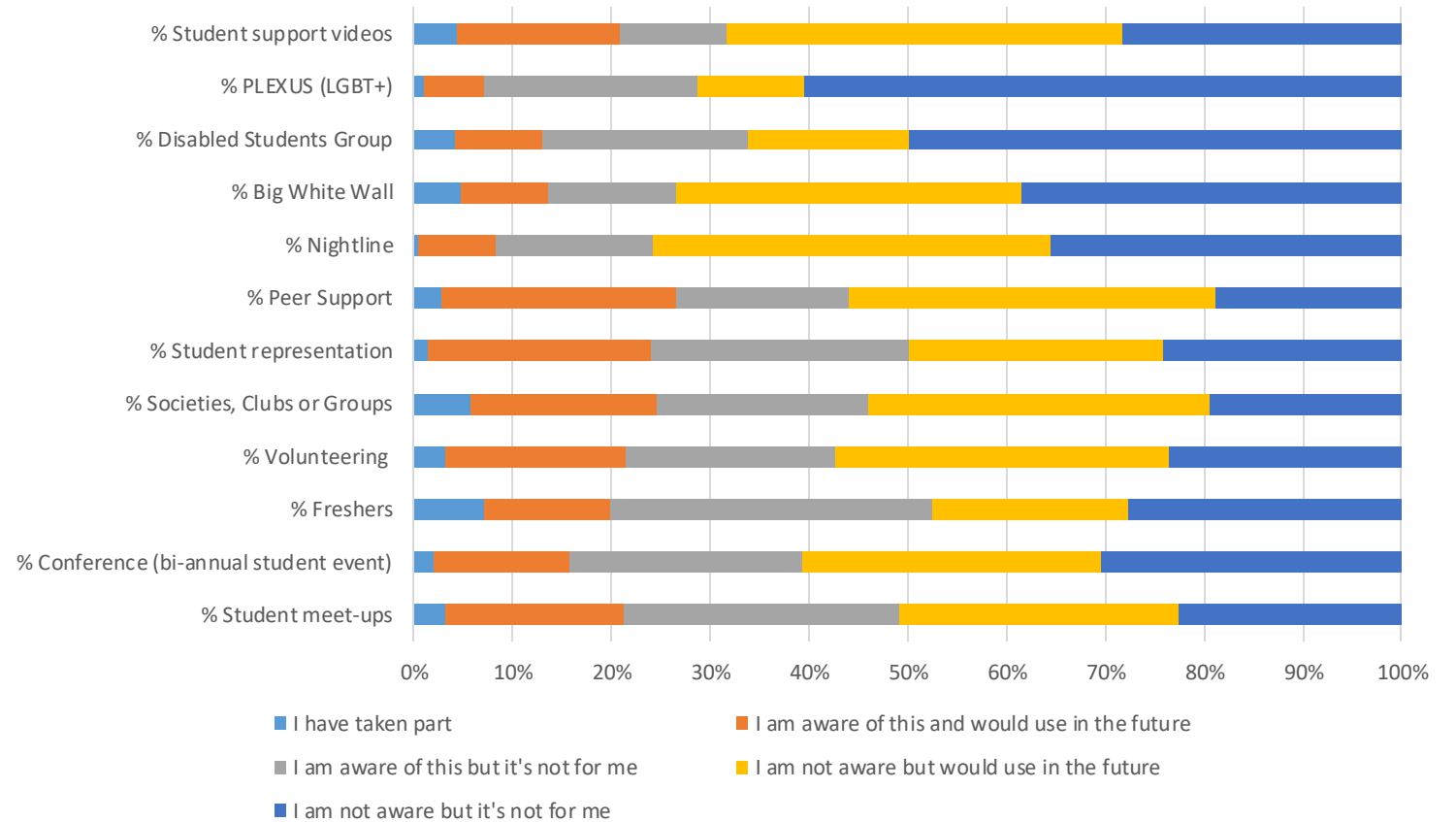
Services & Activities



Here is a list of activities and services that the Association supports. Did you know about them?

With such a high percentage of participants who have studied with the OU for less than a year, it's unsurprising to see low percentages for 'I have taken part' across all services. There are promising results for Peer Support and mental health initiatives such as Nightline and the Big White Wall with high results for both 'I am not aware but would use in the future' and 'I am aware of this and would use in the future'.

Services & Activities



Which of these do you use to keep up to date with the Association?

This survey worked well to promote the Association services and activities and generated many comments from participants about wanting to get more involved. The comments below demonstrate the value of regular communication with the entire membership population.

...I don't have much experience with activities and services, but there are a few I would like to get involved in.

I was not aware of most of the options, so when I do get a chance I will do more research and look into all of these so that I can get the help needed and also give something back to who also needs the help.

I am aware of the support and would use it willingly if I needed it. I would also recommend it to others if I thought they were struggling

I was unaware of a lot of the options above, the idea of volunteering is one that appeals greatly to me, so I would be interested to know more information about that.

I am in aware of a lot of the above, I would benefit from a new letter or more booklets surrounding this from when I started my module

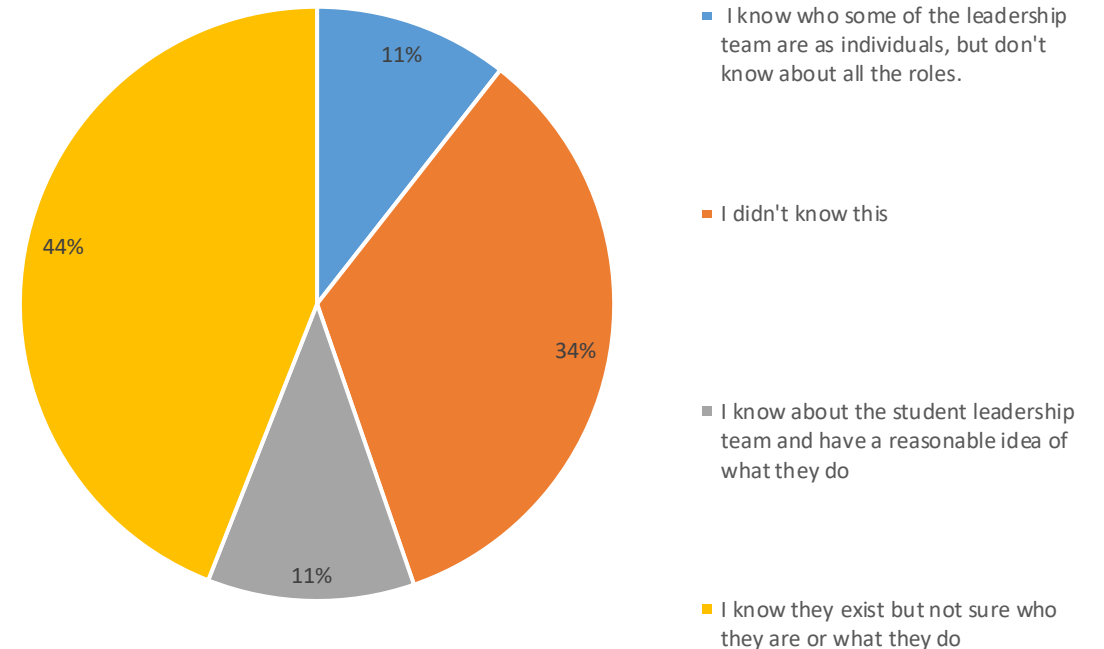
Governance & Democracy



Were you aware that the Students Association is led by an elected student team (the Central Executive Committee)?

This chart shows that participants have a reasonable awareness of the CEC but a low awareness of who they are and their role in supporting the student community. Many students stated student representation as a key function of the Association. This indicates that students may have a basic awareness of the CEC but may not necessarily associate their function with representation.

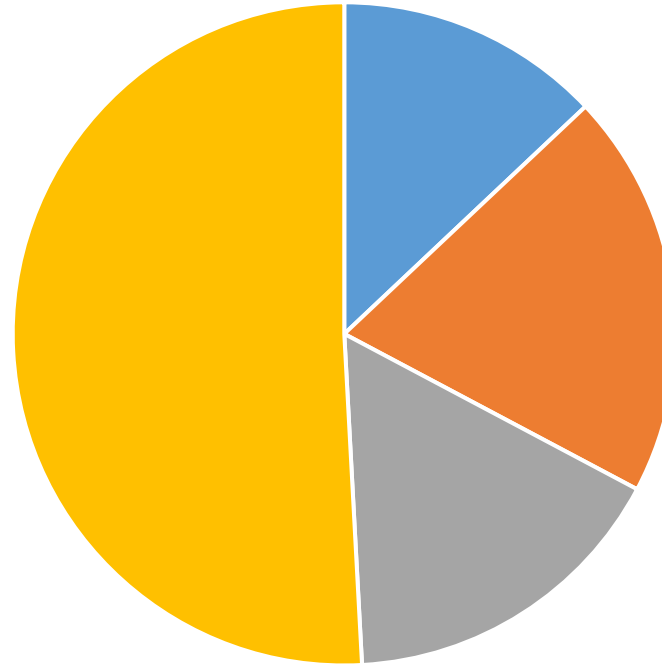
CEC Awareness



Voting and standing in the 2020 elections

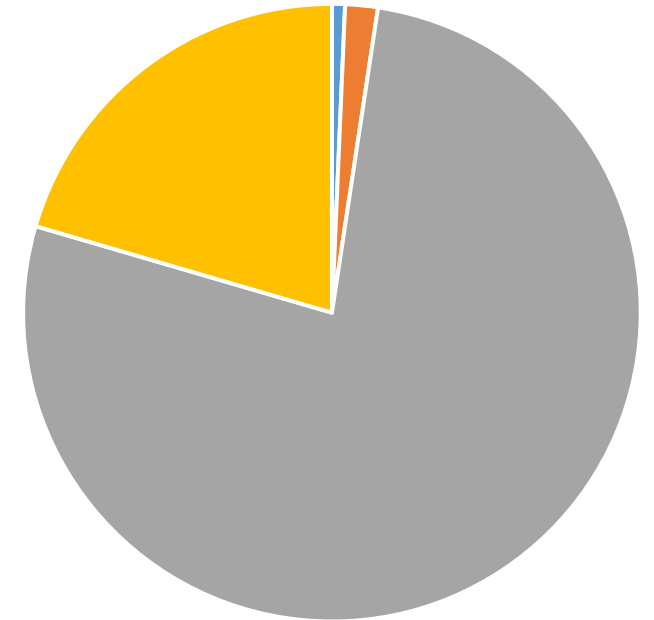
The high percentage of participants who selected 'not sure' for these questions indicates a lack of understanding in how elections and voting can impact the student community. This is reflected in the comments. The survey was in circulation around the time that the more streamlined elections process was active. It is not possible to differentiate between those who have experienced the newer process.

Vote in the Association's 2020 Elections?



■ I will definitely do this ■ I am likely to do this
■ I will not do this ■ I'm not sure

Stand for a position in the Association's 2020 elections?



■ I will definitely do this ■ I am likely to do this
■ I will not do this ■ I'm not sure

Voting and standing in the 2020 elections

Although many participants felt that they were unable to commit to standing for a role within the CEC due to time constraints, comments show that participants were willing to engage with the process by voting.

I feel like I don't really know enough about the whole thing, the candidates, and the roles to vote in an election.

As I don't know a lot about the elections, I don't see myself going up for anything. Also I do have a lot on and I don't know what the Committee does.

I am aware of the support and would use it willingly if I needed it. I would also recommend it to others if I thought they were struggling

As I'm a busy person already, I don't feel as if I want to add anything else to my schedule by standing for position in the associations however I think it will be interesting to vote and take part in the process.

I would need to look into it more before voting. I also just don't have the time to put myself forward for a position.

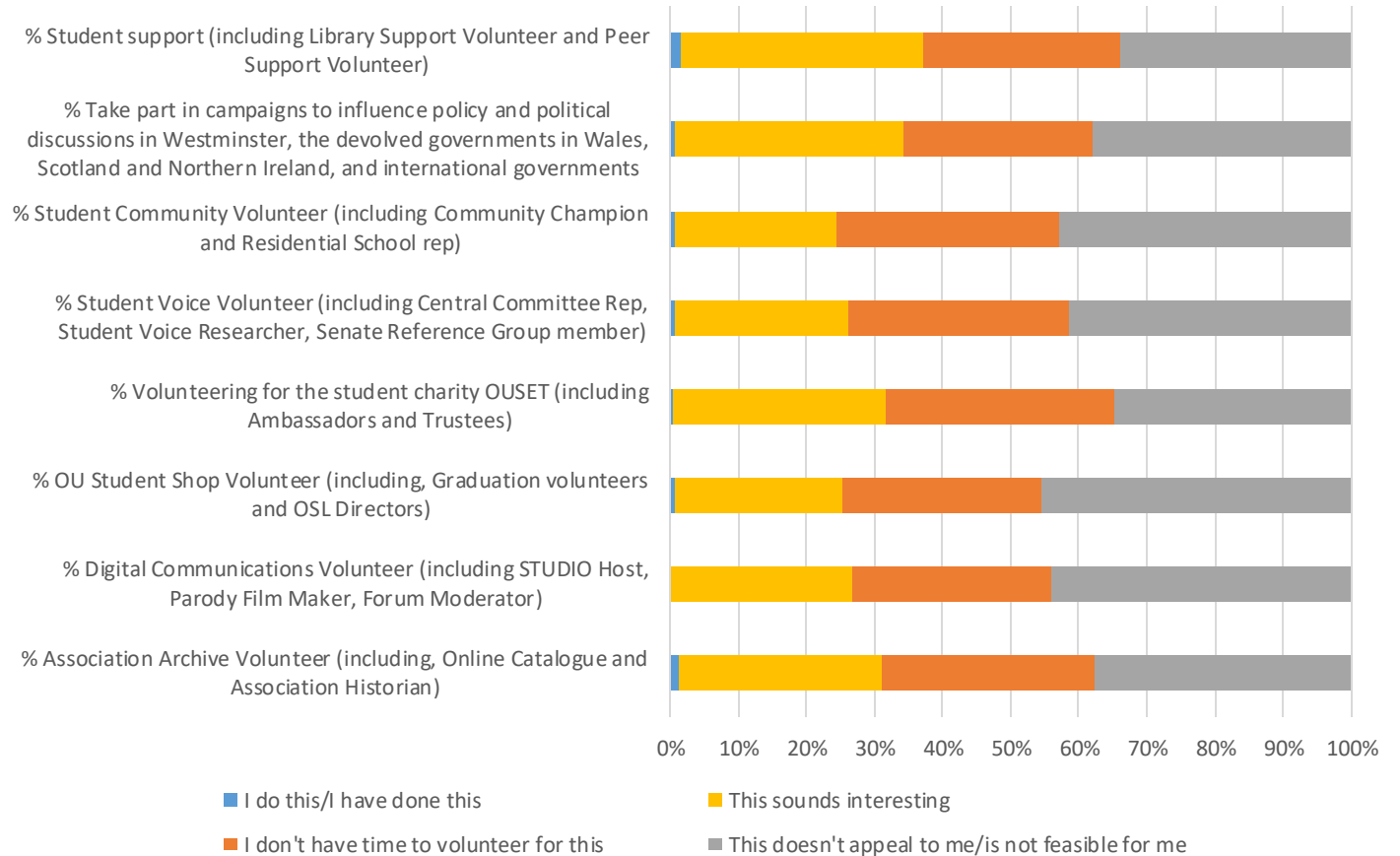
Volunteering

What do you think about these volunteering opportunities?

As with the Support Services, it is unsurprising to see low numbers of 'I do this/I have done this' against volunteer opportunities given the high percentage of newer students who took part in this survey.

Around 48% of participants stated that they work full time and of this cohort, 72% stated they did not have time to volunteer with the Association. This highlights the requirement for flexible and micro volunteering.

Volunteering

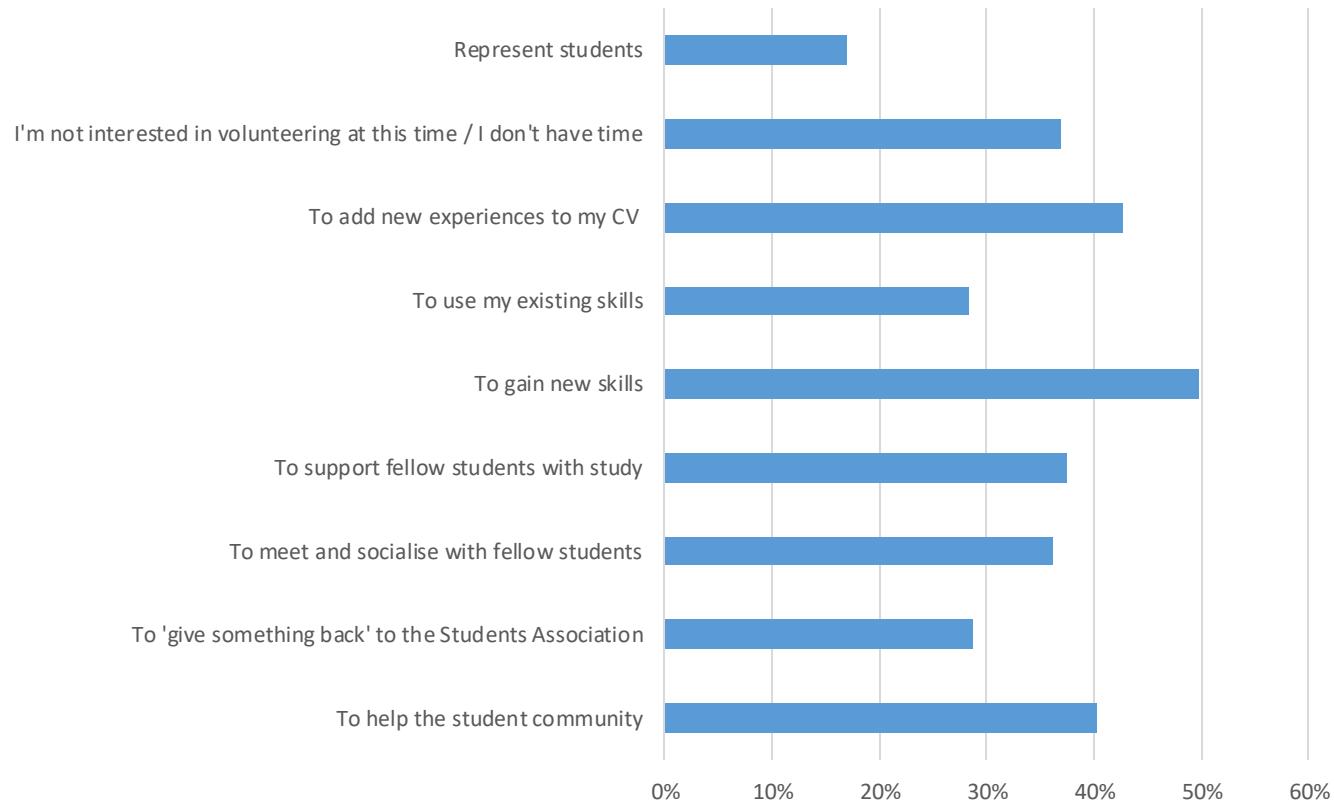


What might motivate you to volunteer with the Association?

The majority of student's name add adding new skills/experience to CV and supporting the student community as top reasons to get involved with volunteering at the Association. Representation scores poorly here which coincides with the results regarding standing for election.

Adding experience to your CV has performed highly when compared to previous research. Usually the motivations weigh more on the altruistic giving-something-back side; for example, only 20% of respondents selected 'to add new experiences to my CV' during the Volunteering Research Project (2018). That had been targeted at existing volunteers, the difference here being the high number of new students who don't currently volunteer.

Motivation to volunteer



Volunteering at the Association

Besides the expected comments from participants about time and schedule holding them back from volunteering with the Association, many participants commented that they were unable to volunteer as they lived too far away or preferred not to interact in face to face scenarios. This highlights the need to make volunteering opportunities more accessible to those who prefer to work behind the scenes or online.

I am not a very social person so volunteering at a students association wouldn't be a great fit for me. I prefer to leave that to people who thrive in people-facing positions.

I feel like I don't really know enough about the whole thing, the candidates, and the roles to vote in an election.

I am always looking to gain/learn new skills so this sounds like it would be a good opportunity, meeting and socialising with new people is always a good thing, especially when you all have a shared interest.

I am a person keen to help other where I can but have health issues that would prevent me from doing a good job socially.

I think volunteering anywhere, is an invaluable thing to do. to do something for nothing is the hardest thing a human being can do. its human nature to expect something in return. but to learn to do things out of the goodness of who you are.



**OU Students
Association**

PO Box 397
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes
United Kingdom
MK7 6BE

Contact us at

-  www.oustudents.com
-  [@OUstudents](https://twitter.com/OUstudents)
-  fb.com/OUstudents
-  instagram.com/oustudentslive