

# Strategic Planning Research

A report for Students' Union, University of Greenwich

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# Conclusions and recommendations

## **The Students' Union does not have to be something for everybody – not everyone will want to get involved**

### **Conclusions**

- The Students' Union can be perceived as different things by different people and does not have to be 'all things to all students'.
- Unengaged students who are otherwise satisfied with the University of Greenwich Students' Union and what it offers should not be the focus. Apathetic students simply do not want to get involved.
- Resource may be best used to help find ways of engaging those students who would like to be involved, but don't know how to make the initial step, or those who need particular support, for example disabled students
- It should, however, ensure that students know that the organisation is for all students if they want to access it and use its services.

### **Recommendations:**

- Target limited resources to those students who want to be involved or are in particular need of support and advice (although it's important to communicate to all students the wide variety of services available for all students.



## Increasing relevancy

### Conclusions (1):

- The Greenwich student body is made up of a diverse range of students, but also a large proportion of commuter students, with the majority not identifying as 'typical' students, or not knowing. Perhaps because of this, and the assumption that the common Students' Union is for 'typical student', the Students' Union doesn't appear to necessarily impact on everyday student life for a number of students
- While the Students' Union does not have to be something for everyone, there is, however, an opportunity to increase the perception of relevancy amongst more students; the Students' Union does need to dispel the myth that it's aimed at young students, showing that it is there for everyone should they need it or want to access its services, including, for example, part time students, commuters and parents
- While some students may believe they are happy without interacting with the Students' Union, and indeed indicate satisfaction with the Students' Union the way it is, knowing that there are services on offer that are for different types of students and not just, for example, first years or undergraduates, may serve to increase the feeling that the Students' Union is for all students, including them and may serve to increase feelings of belonging

## Increasing relevancy

### **Conclusions (2):**

- Getting to know your students, as this research has begun to allow, will enable the Students' Union to understand what students want, need and expect from a students' union and ensure the Students' Union is and remains relevant to the lives of students at Greenwich, even to a small extent.

## Increasing relevancy

### **Recommendation:**

- Continuing to conduct research such as this and other pieces carried out to enable insight into what matters to students at Greenwich; this will also allow them to understand that their opinions, experiences and ideas matter to the Students' Union.
- Conduct regular face to face interaction with students can allow the continuation of idea collection
- Provide drop in sessions or a feedback box to allow students to have their say on what matters to them and what they would like to see.
- Promote the results of this research and any other research (perhaps by holding a presentation session, or dropping in after classes) to raise awareness of the research and the Students' Union, and allow students to see that their voice does matter

# Raising Awareness

## Conclusions (1):

- There is an apparent lack of awareness around what the Students' Union can provide and offer its students and a number of respondents appear to feel that the Students' Union is not for them.
- This awareness and feeling of relevancy could increase if students knew more about the organisation and what it can offer. Shouting about what's available can only increase students' interaction with, experience of and engagement with the Students' Union
- While online services are an important aspect of increasing the reach of the Students' Union, particularly for those not regularly on campus, students need to know that it's there and can be accessed.

# Raising Awareness

## **Conclusions (2):**

- The Students' Union team need to get out there on campus and in class throughout the year to ensure that any initial introductions made during freshers' week are not lost amongst the large amounts of emailed information shared at this busy time.
- While not every student will engage, shouting about services will at least allow students to know that the Union is there and is relevant for all students.

# Raising Awareness

## **Recommendation:**

- Face to face interaction will serve to increase the perception that the Students' Union is personally interested in its students and let students know what it can do for them.
- Consistent, year round communication initiatives are needed; holding introductory events throughout the year, or bringing course reps or even lecturers on board to mention the Students' Union before a class would help to ensure the Students' Union was being discussed, signposted regularly and offering personal interaction.
- Regularly talking about the options for accessing the Students' Union, such as online, will allow students to know that the organisation is available and accessible to all students.

# Finance advice and Support

## Conclusions:

- Financial matters are on the minds of students at Greenwich (like students everywhere!) and was also a potential cause of dropping out. Financial advice and support is also a service students believe the SU should provide.
- **Recommendation:** Signposting to options of financial support, particularly for undergraduates struggling to meet the financial requirements of being a student. Perhaps offering drop in sessions or workshops on how to manage money whilst at university would also be helpful for undergraduate students in need of support and advice.

# Employment and aspirations

## Conclusions:

- Students at Greenwich appear to be focused on their career and future employability; they are some of the key motivations and aims for going to university.
- Career and employment support is increasingly required and will ensure the Students' Union will increase in relevancy for students accessing this type of support or advice
- There is opportunity for the Students' Union to become more involved in this important aspect and there are a number of opportunities, including signposting and working in partnership with the Institution and other organisations.



# Employment and aspirations

## **Recommendations:**

- Work with or signpost to the institution or partner careers service
- Explore the provision of employment services and generate a new income stream for Greenwich Students' Union if desired.
- Consider offering practical workshop sessions with regards to interview techniques or CV writing skills.
- Cultivate links with potential employers and work with them to offer placement opportunities or to provide talks or lectures on gaining employability skills.

### Conclusions

- The Students' Union doesn't necessarily impact on the lives of students considered 'non-typical', suggesting students don't realise how they can better make use of it, or access it more.
- This is further emphasised by ongoing perception with regards to the irrelevancy of the Students' Union to particular students
- A number of students are commuters, or are not regularly on campus and therefore not walking past the Students' Union or accessing its physical services; this can lead them to think that the Students' Union simply isn't for them.
- An online presence would increase the reach and availability of the Students' Union services, particularly to those students who are not often on campus, or do not feel they have the time to physically access the Students' Union building.

## Online Presence

### **Recommendations:**

- Offer increased online presence and opportunities for other students to engage online
- Explore the options of a Students' Union app

## Providing a social space and opportunities for socialising

### **Conclusions:**

- Respondents indicated that they enjoy meeting friends and a number of the findings indicated that students would welcome the opportunity to socialise more with other students, and not necessarily just those in their course or class
- Opportunities for social events and activities were indicated by students, particularly those that do not involve alcohol and held at a variety of times to suit the needs of time poor students with other commitments
- Indeed, students believed that it was relatively unimportant for the SU to provide activities involving bars and nightclubs
- A flexible social space would allow different types of students to use the Students' Union and to meet each other.

### **Recommendation:**

- Look into targeted social events and activities suited to different student groups and held at a variety of times
- Explore the viability of a social space, allowing students to meet friends and other

# Democratic involvement

## Conclusions

- The majority of students were not overly interested in being involved in running the Students' Union. However, the recognised the importance of allowing the opportunity to get involved should students want to
- They also indicated the important work the SU had done in the past and that it needed to be promoted and highlighted across the University

## Recommendations:

- Recruit student ambassadors from all walks of student life to promote the benefits of getting involved with the students' union
- Promoting Students' Union 'wins' – shouting out about what the organisation has achieved for its students

# **The Students' Union does not have to be something for everybody – not everyone will want to get involved**

## **Conclusions**

- The Students' Union can be perceived as different things by different people and does not have to be 'all things to all students'.
- Unengaged students who are otherwise satisfied with the University of Greenwich Students' Union and what it offers should not be the focus. Apathetic students simply do not want to get involved while others believe it is up to students themselves to find out how they can get involved.
- Resource may be best used to help find ways of engaging those students who would like to be involved, but don't know how to make the initial step, or those who need particular support, for example disabled students
- It should, however, ensure that students know that the organisation is for all students if they want to access it and use its services.

## **Recommendations:**

- Target limited resources to those students who want to be involved or are in particular need of support and advice

# Increasing relevancy of the Students' Union

## Conclusions (1):

- The Greenwich student body is made up of a diverse range of students, but also a large proportion of commuter students, with the majority not identifying as 'typical' students, or not knowing. Perhaps as a result, the Students' Union doesn't appear to necessarily impact on everyday student life
- While the Students' Union does not have to be something for everyone, there is, however, an opportunity to increase the perception of relevancy amongst more students; the Students' Union does need to dispel the myth that it's aimed at young students, and that it is there for everyone should they need it or want to access its services, including, for example, commuters and parents
- While some students may believe they are happy without interacting with the Students' Union, and indeed indicate satisfaction with the Students' Union the way it is, knowing that there are services on offer that are for different types of students and not just, for example, first years or undergraduates, may serve to increase the feeling that the Students' Union is for all students, including them and may serve to increase feelings of belonging

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- Getting to know your students, as this research has begun to allow, will enable the Students' Union to understand what students want, need and expect from a students' union and ensure the Students' Union is and remains relevant to the lives of students at Greenwich, even to a small extent.



## Increasing relevancy

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- Conduct regular face to face interaction with students can allow the continuation of idea collection
- Provide drop in sessions or a feedback box to allow students to have their say on what matters to them and what they would like to see.
- Promote the results of this research (perhaps by holding a presentation session, or dropping in after classes) to raise awareness of the research and the Students' Union, and allow students to see that their voice does matter

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- There is an apparent lack of awareness around what the Students' Union can provide and offer its students and a number of respondents appear to feel that the Students' Union is not for them.
- This awareness and feeling of relevancy could increase if students knew more about the organisation and what it can offer and what it has done. Shouting about what's available can only increase students' interaction with, experience of and engagement with the Students' Union
- The Students' Union team need to get out there on campus and in class throughout the year to ensure that any initial introductions made during freshers' week are not lost amongst the large amounts of emailed information shared at this busy time.
- While not every student will engage, shouting about services will at least allow students to know that the Union is there and is relevant for all students.

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- Consistent, year round communication initiatives are needed; holding introductory events throughout the year, or bringing course reps or even lecturers on board to mention the Students' Union before a class would help to ensure the Students' Union was being discussed, signposted regularly and offering personal interaction.
- Regularly talking about the options for accessing the Students' Union, such as online, will allow students to know that the organisation is available and accessible to all students.
- Promoting the results of a campaign or a success story can allow students to see that the SU does get things done for students

## Finance advice and Support

### Conclusions:

- Financial matters are on the minds of students at Greenwich (like students everywhere!) and was also a potential cause of dropping out. Financial advice and support is also a service students believe the SU should provide.
- **Recommendation:** Signposting to options of financial support, particularly for undergraduates struggling to meet the financial requirements of being a student. Perhaps offering drop in sessions or workshops on how to manage money whilst at university would also be helpful for undergraduate students in need of support and advice.

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- Career and employment support is increasingly required and will ensure the Students' Union will increase in relevancy for students accessing this type of support or advice
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# Employment and aspirations

## **Recommendations:**

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### Conclusions

- The Students' Union doesn't necessarily impact on the lives of students considered 'non-typical', suggesting students don't realise how they can better make use of it, or access it more.
- This is further emphasised by ongoing perception with regards to the irrelevancy of the Students' Union to particular students
- A number of students are commuters, or are not regularly on campus and therefore not walking past the Students' Union or accessing its physical services; this can lead them to think that the Students' Union simply isn't for them.
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## Online Presence

### **Recommendations:**

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- Explore the options of a Students' Union app



## Providing a social space and opportunities for socialising

### Conclusions:

- Respondents indicated that they enjoy meeting friends and a number of the findings indicated that students would welcome the opportunity to socialise more with other students, and not necessarily just those in their course or class
- Opportunities for social events and activities were indicated by students, particularly those that do not involve alcohol and held at a variety of times to suit the needs of time poor students with other commitments
- Indeed, students believed that it was relatively unimportant for the SU to provide activities involving bars and nightclubs
- A flexible social space would allow different types of students to use the Students' Union and to meet each other.

## Providing a social space and opportunities for socialising

### **Recommendation:**

- Look into targeted social events and activities suited to different student groups and held at a variety of times – for example, events or activities that allow students to experience what London has to offer
- Explore the viability of a social space, allowing students to meet friends and other people in an area that doesn't need to involve alcohol.
- An added benefit of a flexible social space is that it could be somewhere for commuter students to bring their own lunch

# Democratic involvement

## Conclusions

- The majority of students were not overly interested in being involved in running the Students' Union. However, the recognised the importance of allowing the opportunity to get involved should students want to
- They also indicated the important work the SU had done in the past and that it needed to be promoted and highlighted across the University

## Recommendations:

- Recruit student ambassadors from all walks of student life to promote the benefits of getting involved with the students' union
- Promoting Students' Union 'wins' – shouting out about what the organisation has achieved for its students

# Research objectives and methodology

## Introduction

Objective, methodology and survey details

Objective: **Research to inform the Students' Union  
University of Greenwich Strategic Plan**

NUS Insight were commissioned to look in closer detail at this objective and this report presents the research findings of an online survey carried out with **university students** in **November 2015**.

A final sample of **590** was achieved

Prize draw of a share of **£250** to encourage response

The survey was advertised via the NUS extra student database

The survey **took approximately 15 minutes** to complete

## Introduction

### Significant differences

Within the report, a number of questions have been broken down and compared with each other. Where there are any statistical significant differences between answers, they are reported where applicable and to large enough base size ( $n > 30$ ) and are valid at confidence level of 99%. They will be highlighted in an orange box throughout the report.



# Sample

## Introduction

### Sample demographic summary

Online  
Survey

**590**

respondents

- Nearly a third of students (65%) were aged 18-22. 84% were under 30
- There was a female bias in the number of respondents, with females accounting for two thirds overall (66%)
- Over three fifths (62%) were UK citizens
- 65% of respondents were white British
- 10% were a parent or guardian
- 13% considered themselves to have a disability, while 12% were living with someone with a disability and 7% had caring responsibilities





# Introduction

## Sample demographic summary

Online  
Survey

- 9 out of 10 students (91%) were full-time
- 81% were undergraduates
- 60% of respondents studied at the Greenwich campus, with 20% at Avery Hill and 18% at Medway
- Nearly a quarter (23%) were studying business and administrative studies
- 30% of students were living in halls, with 33% in privately rented accommodation and 25% at home
- 7% of respondents had left home due to circumstances beyond their control before they were 18, and 4% had been in care
- For the purposes of this research, those who travelled 30 minutes or less per day to university were counted as non-commuters. This accounted for 45% of respondents

## Introduction

### Focus group sample make-up

Focus  
Groups

# 26

participants

Three groups were held on **Monday 12<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> October**

Group participants were recruited through expression of interest via an online survey, to ascertain their key demographics, level of study and engagement to ensure representation across the groups.

The groups lasted approximately **60 minutes** and they were each paid **£25 for their participation**.

# Introduction

## Stakeholders

Stake-  
holders

**14**  
participants

- 14 stakeholders were consulted during this research
- They were stakeholders selected by the team at the University of Greenwich Students' Union: Union and were from the Institution in various roles, as well as the trustee board

# Research Findings

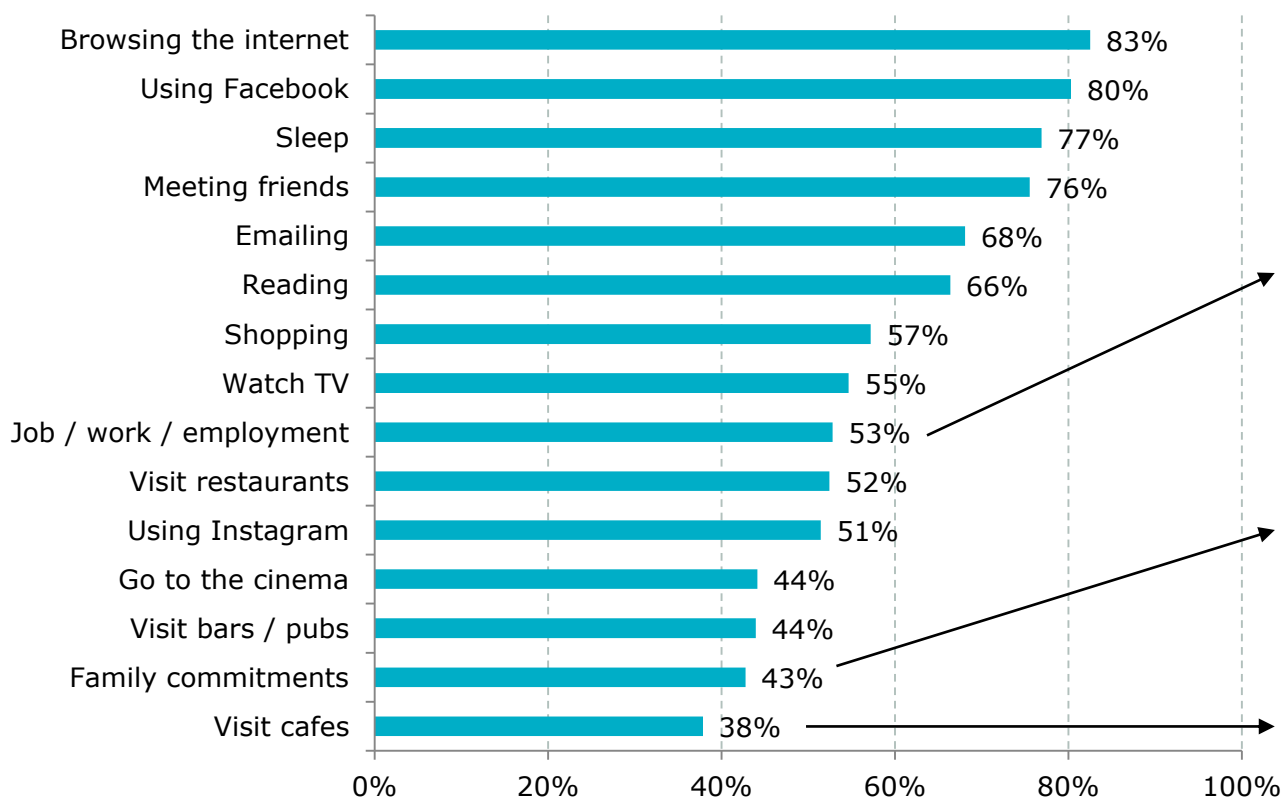
# Getting to know your students:

- Spare time

Browsing the internet, using Facebook, sleeping and meeting up with friends are the most popular activities

Online  
Survey

### Spare time – top 15



Significantly more likely amongst:

- Women
- Part time students

Significantly more likely amongst:

- Women
- Carers
- Parents / guardians
- Part time students
- Commuters

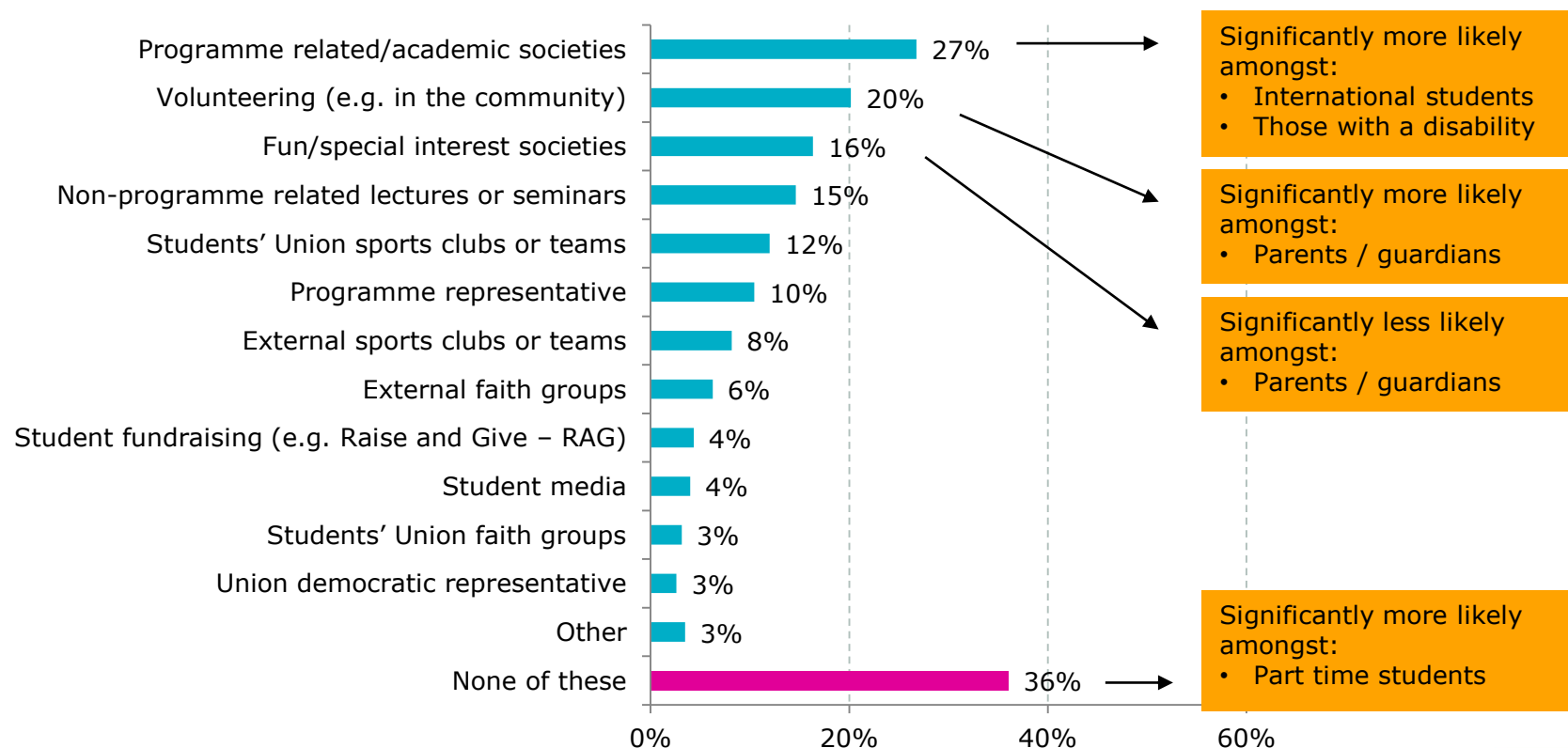
Significantly more likely amongst:

- Women
- Non parents
- Students based at Greenwich

Programme related activities and academic society membership are the most common extra-curricular activities, followed by volunteering. Just over a third indicate no involvement

Online Survey

### Extracurricular activities



Base: 575 respondents. Balance: no reply.

# Getting to know your students:

- Student identity

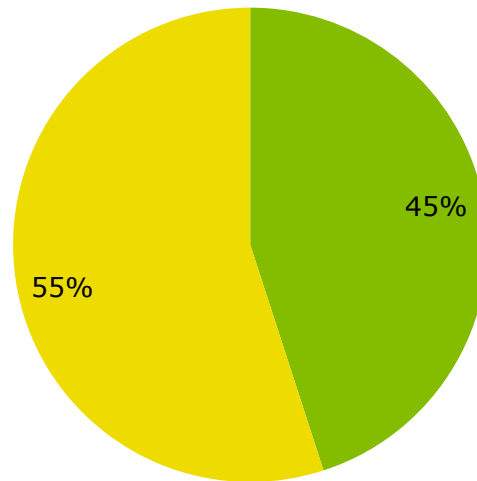


Over half of the sample are classed as commuters

Online  
Survey

For the purposes of analysis, those who don't live in halls of residence and travel for more than 30 minutes per day have been classed as commuters

Commuting students



■ Non Commuter

■ Commuter

Significantly more likely amongst:  
• Students aged 18-29

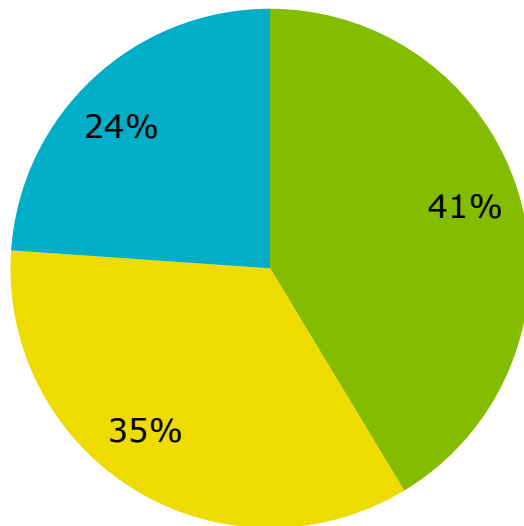
Significantly more likely amongst:  
• Parents / guardians  
• Those living at home / in their own home

Base: 590 respondents.

A third of students don't identify as a typical student, with a further quarter not sure

Online  
Survey

### Typical student



■ Yes

■ No

■ I don't know

Significantly more likely  
Amongst:

- Younger students
- International students

Significantly more likely  
Amongst:

- Carers
- Parents/ guardians

Base: 590 respondents.

**B5. Would you define yourself as a typical student?**

Of those who do consider themselves a typical student the largest proportion of students reported that they study hard. Having an active social life was also felt by a number to be part of the typical student lifestyle.

Online  
Survey

### Those who say **yes**, they are a typical student

#### Main themes

- **Study**
- **Social life**
- **Work/life balance**
- **Similar to others**

**"Money** problems constant **stress**." (3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 23-29)

"I have the typical **time management** issue, balancing between study time and play time. I have the typical **worries** regarding my **future career** after graduating." (Postgraduate aged 18-22)

"I am committed to my **study** but still wish to have a **social life** outside." (Postgraduate aged 30-39)

"Do all that is expected of me - **work hard** and **play hard**!" (First year undergraduate aged 18-22)

"I am a student! **All students** are **typical students**. And different." (First year undergraduate aged 23-29)

The most frequently reported reason for students classing themselves as not typical was that they do not socialise or drink as much as they felt a 'typical' student would. For students who said that they did not know, the most common response was that they did not know what 'typical' would look like.

Online  
Survey

### Those who say **no**, they are not a typical student

#### Main themes

- **Not as socially active**
- **Mature student**
- **Employed**
- **Don't live on campus**

"I see student life as living in halls and having a large social life, I have come back to uni as a **mature student** to concentrate on my degree to further my career." (3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 23-29)

"I am **older** than most students, have extensive **work experience** and do **not live on campus**." (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 50-59)

"I have a **full time job** & **don't socialise** at uni." (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)

"I **don't drink** a lot or go to many social events." (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)

#### Don't know

- **Don't know what typical is**

"I **don't** think you can **define** a **'typical'** student" (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate aged 23-29)

"**Not sure** what a **typical student** is. Everyone is **unique** in their own ways and we are all **individuals**." (3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)

Those in focus groups based their perceptions of a 'typical student' on age, time on campus and extra-curricular activities

Focus  
Groups

## Typical Student

### Age

"I do feel like I'm a typical student, just because I suppose **most people** are **around my age** on the course ." (Participant 3, Group 1)

### Coursework

"I do feel like a typical student. I'm studying, I'm **always studying**." (Participant 8, group 4)

### Time on campus

"I guess I'm a typical student. I'm a **full time** student and do things with the **student union**." (Participant 6, group 3)

### Extra-curricular activities

## Not a typical Student

### Age

"I feel like a **mature student**, not a typical student, because I'm **older**." (Participant 5, group 4)

### Time on campus

"I don't think I'm a typical student, actually because I **only come to uni once a week**." (Participant 1, group 3)

### Extra-curricular activities

"No because I'm not involved in a lot of **extracurricular activities** like organising, volunteering events or charity events." (Participant 1, group 2)

## Summary

- Understanding more about the student population at Greenwich, such as what they are interested in and what makes them tick is important; knowing a little more about the student body can assist with framing any student-facing communications strategies and activities with students.
- Students at Greenwich enjoy solitary activities such as surfing the internet and using social networks, but they also like to meet up with friends. Most students enjoy taking part in a number of extra-curricular activities, although a third indicate they don't get involved in any.

## Summary

- 45% of students at Greewnich can be classed as commuter students.
- Just under half feel like typical students; typical students are believed to work hard, socialise and balance life and studies. The question of being a typical student was believed in the groups to focus on age, coursework and participation in extra-curricular activities.

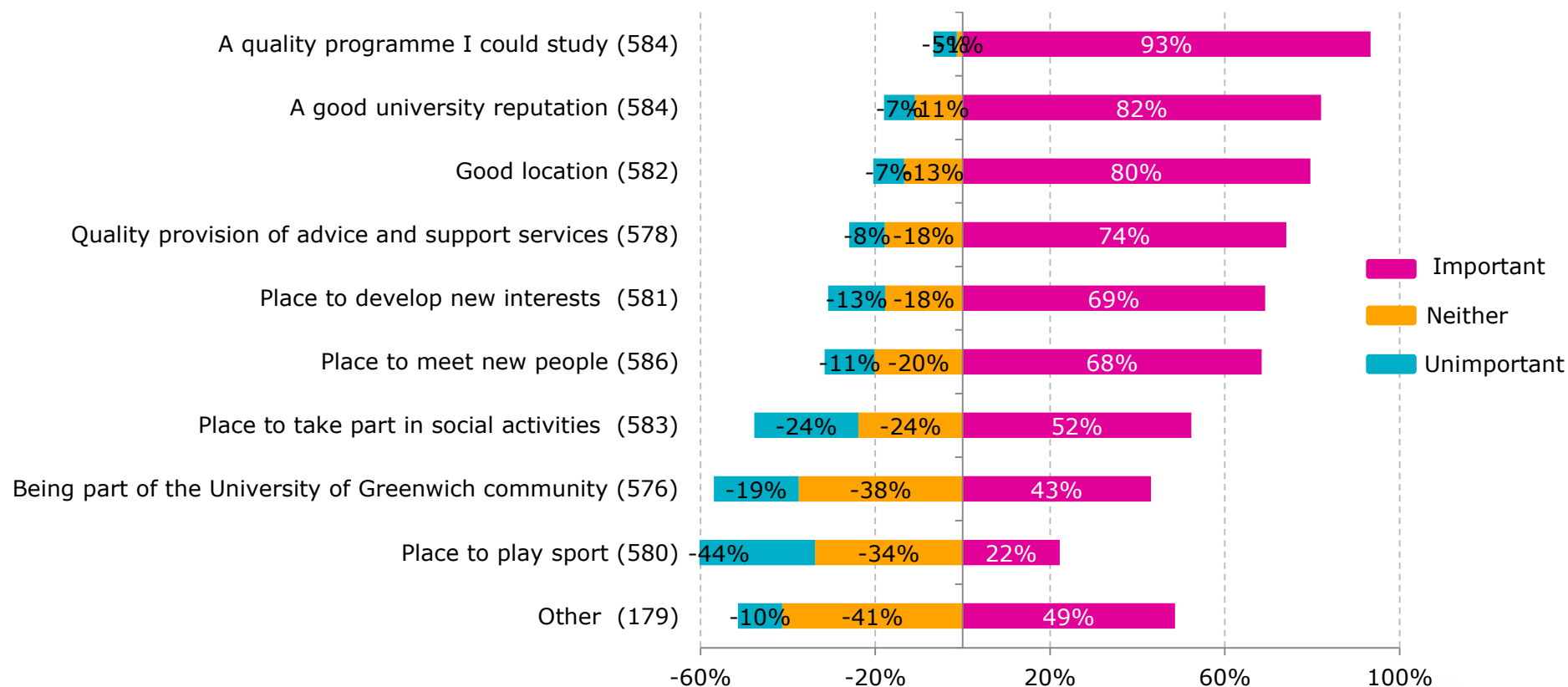
# The university journey



The course and reputation of Greenwich, along with the location were the most important factors in choosing at which university to study. Being part of the Greenwich community and a place to play sport were of less importance

Online Survey

### Importance of factors when choosing Greenwich



Base: (in brackets). Balance: no reply.

**B1. Thinking back to before you began your studies, how important, if at all, were the following when you were choosing to study at the University of Greenwich?**

**Being part of the Greenwich University community** is significantly more likely amongst **International students** and **full time students**

**A place to meet new people** is significantly more likely amongst **undergraduates, full time students, non commuters** and those living in **halls of residence**

**A place to play sports** is significantly more likely amongst students based at **Medway**

**A place to take part in social activities** is significantly more likely amongst **younger students, women, international students, full time students** and those living in **halls of residence**

## Motivations were similar amongst focus group participants

Focus  
Groups

### Main motivations to study at Greenwich...

*"I liked the **specification of the course.**"*  
(Participant 3, group 4)

*"Greenwich does the **degree that I want to do.**"* (Participant 4, group 3)

*"The **two year accelerated degree**"*  
(Participant 2, group 3)

- **Course content**

*"I liked the **look of the course.**"* (Participant 4, group 3)

- **Location:**

- **Close to home**

*"**Close to where I lived,** so easy to travel and save money instead of staying on the campus." (Participant 2, group 2)*

*"It's **near enough to me to travel.**"*  
(Participant 2, group 3)

- **Beautiful surroundings**

*"The **area is nice.**"*  
(Participant 2, group 2)

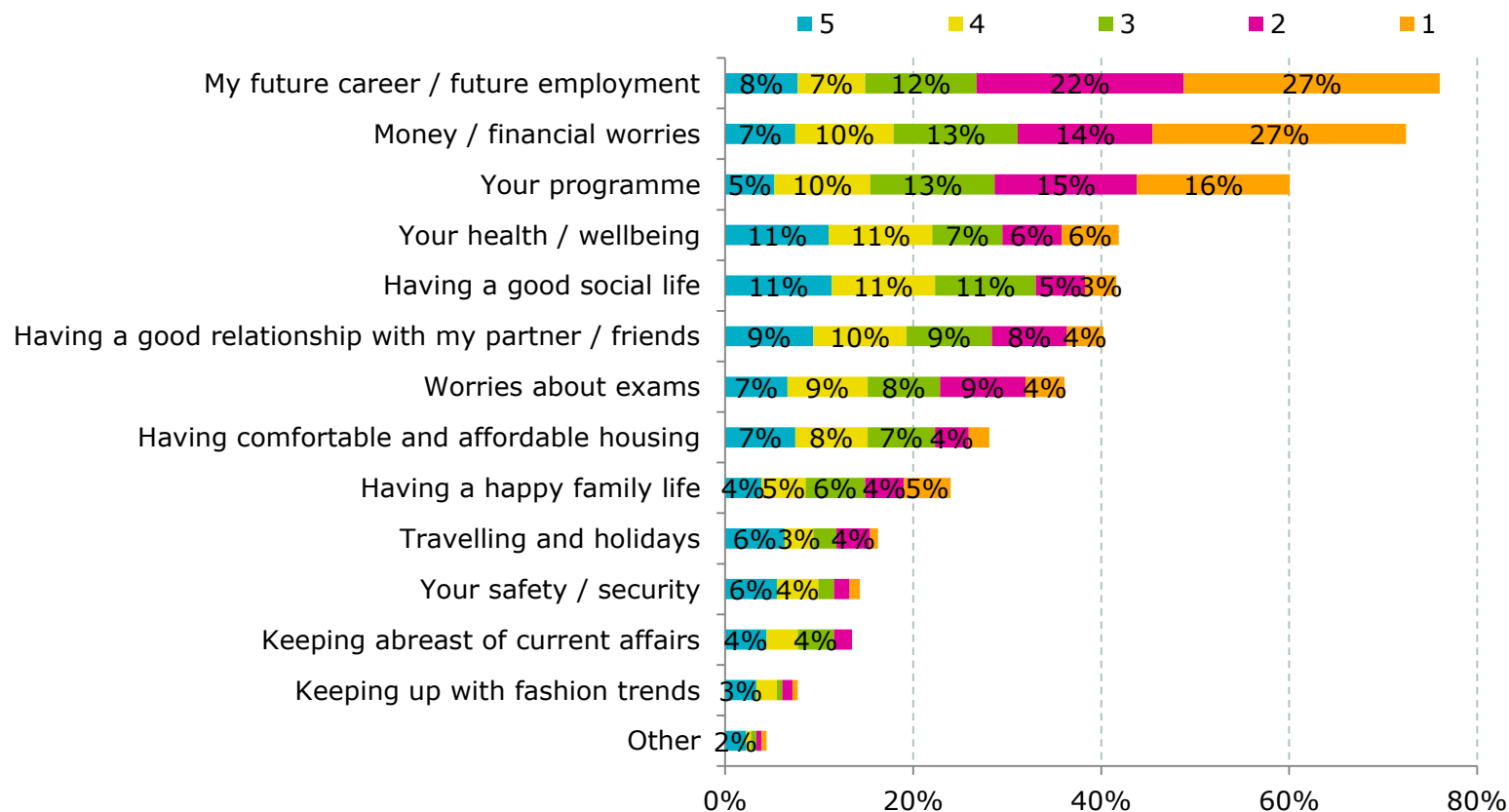
*"I just thought it was **beautiful,** the campus and everything, and it's **close to home.**"*  
(Participant 2, group 1)

*The **location helped me as well,** because it's **not too far from London.**"*  
(Participant 1, group 4)

# The main things on students' minds whilst at university were their future career and employment and money worries

Online  
Survey

## Top things on students' minds



Base: 363 respondents. Balance: No reply

**B2. And now you are at university, using the list below, please tell us your top five things that are on your mind whilst at university?**

There are a variety of matters that are currently on student minds; like the online respondents, money is a big matter. They also indicated work / life balance and life at university in general

Focus  
Groups

### Most common things on students' minds...

- **Money**
- **Work / life balance:**
  - **Jobs**
  - **Family**
  - **Social activities**
- **University life:**
  - **Deadlines**
  - **Depleted number of classes**
  - **Poor quality teaching / classes**

**"Thinking about money all the time."** (Participant 3, group 1)

**"Money definitely, you need more money, that's my big worry."** (Participant 2, group 3)

**"Balance family and college."** (Participant 1, group 1)

**"How will I manage my time with social stuff and studying and working."** (Participant 5, group 3)

**"The stress of the work because it has to be done within deadlines and stuff."** (Participant 6, group 4)

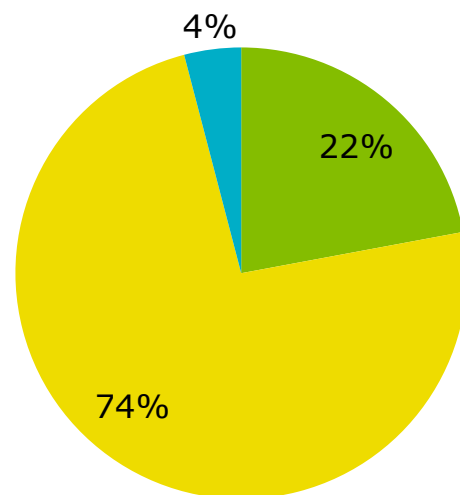
**"The feedback time... It was meant to be 15 days but we ended up waiting three months for a piece of coursework feedback."** (Participant 3, group 1)

**"I regret my choice... you're investing, for example £9,000 per year for university maybe you expect quality from your studies, which I don't."** (Participant 1, group 2)

Just over one in five respondents claim to have seriously considered leaving university

Online  
Survey

### Seriously considered leaving university



■ Yes

■ No

■ I don't  
know

Significantly more likely  
Amongst:

- UK students
- Those with a disability

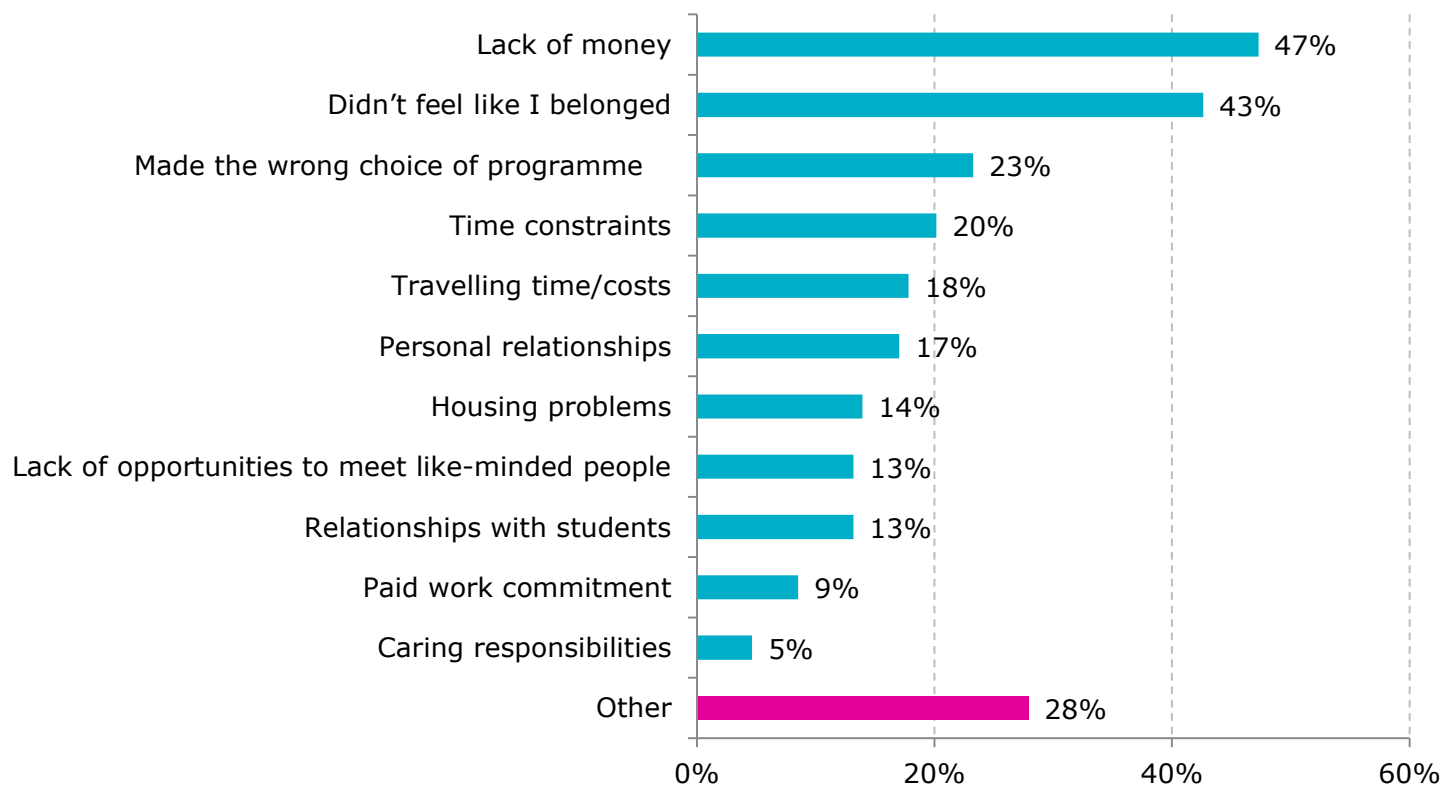
Base: 589 respondents. Balance: no reply.

**B7. Have you ever seriously considered leaving university?**

A lack of money is the most common reason for having considered leaving their studies, followed by not feeling they belong

Online  
Survey

### Reasons for seriously considered leaving university

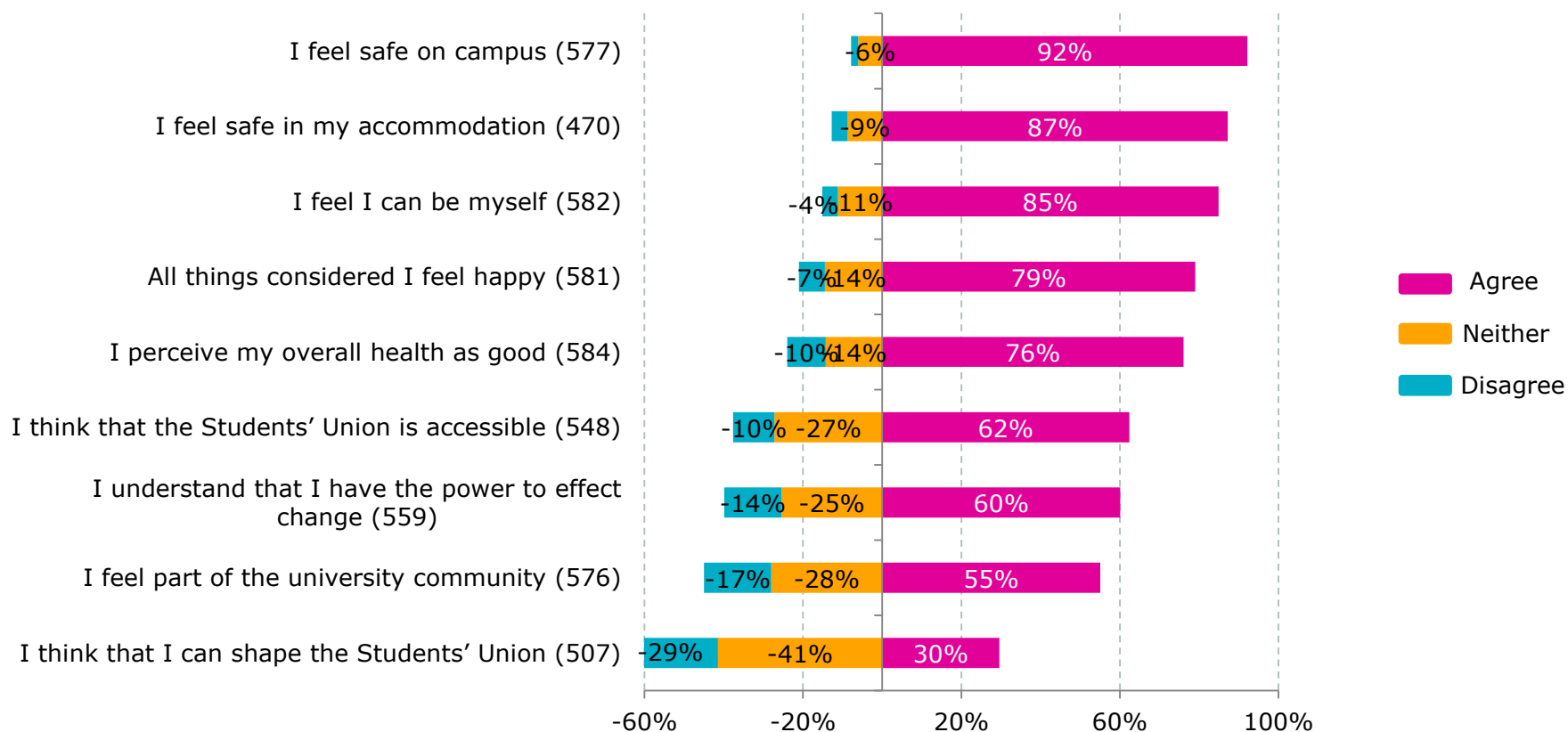


Base: 129 respondents. Balance: those who haven't seriously considered leaving university and no reply.

Students at Greenwich have a strong sense of safety. They feel they can be themselves and are generally happy. However, they are simply not sure if they can shape the Students' Union

Online  
Survey

### Agreement with statements



Base: (in brackets). Balance: those who answered don't know / not applicable or prefer not to say

**B9. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements about your time at university?**



**I feel happy** is significantly less likely amongst those **with a disability** and **carers**

**I feel I can be myself** is significantly less likely amongst **carers**

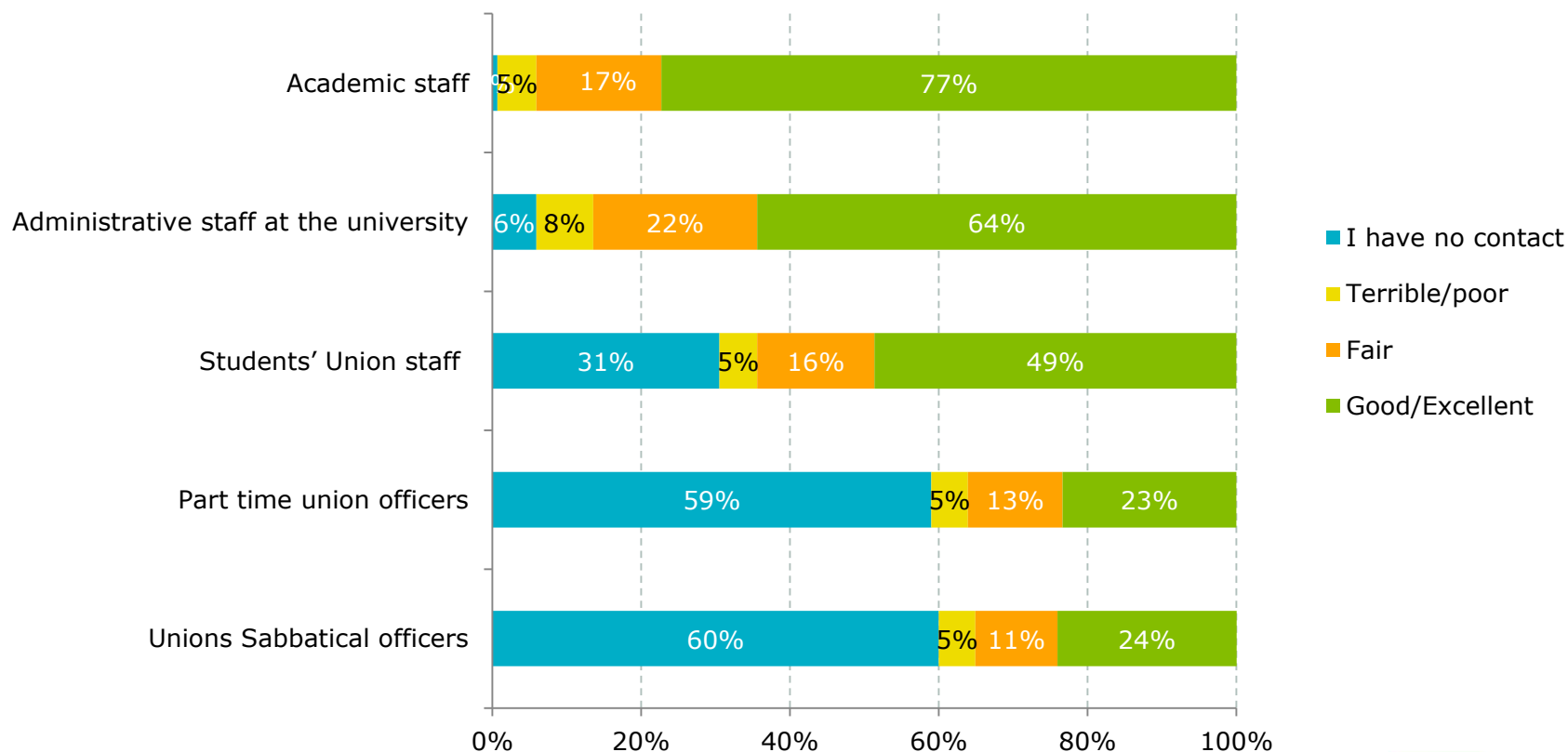
**Having the power to affect change** is significantly more likely amongst **UK Citizens**, those **with a disability** and **parents**

**The SU being accessible** is significantly more likely amongst **full time students**

Contact with academic staff is considered to be good / excellent by the majority of students. Just under half believe their contact with SU staff is good / excellent, but 60% indicate they have no contact with Unions Sabbatical officers

Online  
Survey

### Quality of interactions



Base: 590 respondents.

**B10. How would you rate the quality of your interactions with the following people you may come into contact with whilst at university?**

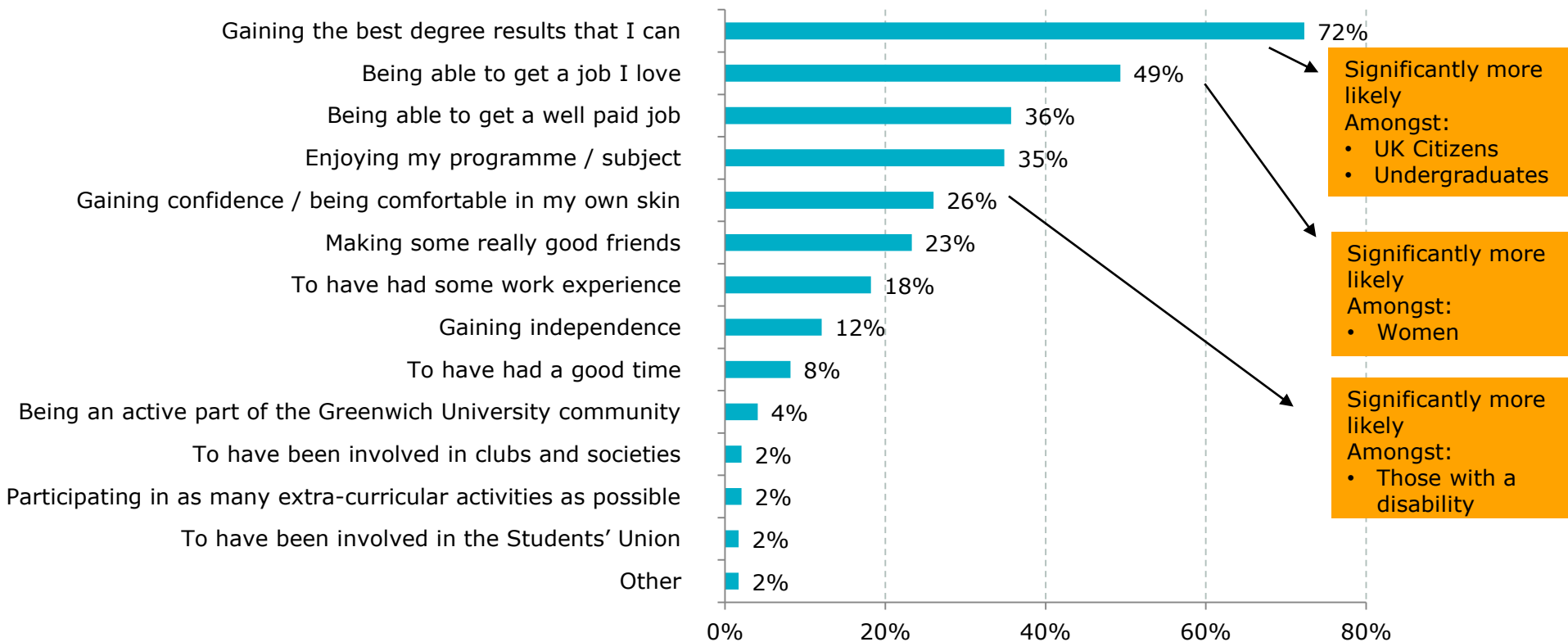
**Having no contact with SU Staff** is significantly more likely amongst:

- Those living with someone with a long term health problem
- Carers
- Postgraduates
- Part-time students
- Those who live in their own (owned) home

The most important aim on graduation for students is to gain the best degree results they can. Only a very small proportion want to have been involved in the SU

Online Survey

### Aims by graduation



Base: 588 respondents. Balance: no reply.

**B11. Thinking to the future now, which of the following are the most important for you to achieve by the time you graduate?**

Participants recognise the importance of networking with their peers, along with the importance of gaining employability skills and good grades

Focus  
Groups

## Key things to gain from time at university

### ➤ Network

- Professionally
- Friends

**"Networking**, having a good network of people to be able to talk to, to get into the industry." (Participant 3, Group 1)

**"Making friends."**  
(Participant 1, group 3)

### ➤ Employability skills

**"Prepare us for what's coming next**, like placement and experience." (Participant 2, Group 1)

**"Getting the skills that would be useful for a job."** (Participant 2, Group 1)

### ➤ Grades

- Good degree
- Quality of learning

*"I just want the actual **bit of paper** and the photo on my mantelpiece."*  
(Participant 2, group 3)

**"Getting the best grades I can get."**  
(Participant 2, Group 2)

### **Before starting university**

- Course content, reputation and location are the main motivators to studying at Greenwich

### **At University**

- Future career, money worries and balancing life and studies are the main things on Greenwich students minds
- Just over one in five have considered leaving university, mainly due to money worries and the feeling of not belonging
- Students generally feel safe at Greenwich university and are generally happy and in good health
- They don't feel, however, that they can shape the future of the Students' Union
- Interactions with University staff are felt to be positive. The majority of students, however, have little contact with officers, particularly what can be considered 'less typical' student types

### **After University**

- Students are concerned with getting the best degree they can in order to get the job they want. Enjoyment of subject is also important, as is gaining confidence and feeling comfortable in their own skin, especially amongst disabled students
- Students in the focus groups appeared particularly focused on their employment opportunities, with regards to networking whilst at university and gaining employability skills as well as a good degree

# Perceptions and experience of the Students' Union



A large proportion of participants felt that the Students' Union was for all students. They also focussed strongly on the union's support role, from general assistance with problems to more specific issues such as academic support and social development.

Online  
Survey

### What is the SU for?

#### Main themes

- **Students at the institution**
- **Support**
- **Representation**
- **Social**

*"**Supporting students** when things are going wrong, supporting students to develop a sense of **belonging** with other students." (Postgraduate, aged 50-59)*

*"For **every student** in the University of Greenwich." (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate, aged 18-22)*

*"A students' union is for giving students a **place** they can go to for **help and support** in issues they have with their tutors. It is also a place for **socialisation** and meeting new people." (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"They **represent** us, they are our **voice** in the university and they are basically student **representatives**." (3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"I think that Students' Union **help** the students, especially the new ones to **feel involved** in the university life. It helps the students to be more **active**, more opened to **new challenges**." (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

Base: 452 respondents. Balance: No response.

**C1. Thinking about students' unions in general, who do you think a students' union is for?**

## A variety of thoughts....

- **Representation of students**
- **Social opportunities**
- **Wider Student experience**
- **Opportunities for students**

"I think it's role is to make sure the **student voice is heard** but also to help **students and academics work together.**"

"To help give **students a rounded experience** of University."

"To **develop and encourage participation** in Societies and Events."

"They provide a **number of opportunities** for students to gain transferable skills via working and volunteering with the SU and taking part in societies."

"To **support students achieve their maximum potential** in relation to their time at University especially from a sporting, social and welfare perspective."

Participants believe that a Students' Union should support students, be the voice of students, and enable them to meet other students by attending events, joining societies and taking part in extra curricular activities

Focus  
Groups

### Main themes

#### ➤ Support students:

- Academically
- Well being
- Employability

### Opinion of a students' union

**"Looking after students."**  
(Participant 8, Group 4)

**"Educational-wise** they should be there to help us as well."  
(Participant 4, Group 1)

**"Employability skills, volunteering stuff with the student union."**  
(Participant 4, Group 3)

#### ➤ Voice of students / student body

**"Voice of change."**  
(Participant 1, Group 4)

**"To voice the opinion of students."**  
(Participant 3, Group 2)

#### ➤ A place to go:

- Extra curricular activities
- Events
- Social

**"Social hub."**  
(Participant 4, Group 1)

"I see it more as a **recreational thing**, like with all the societies and a chill space." (Participant 2, Group 4)

A large proportion of students reported that the role of the students' union is to support students in their university life. Within this, a considerable number felt that this helped them to optimise their time while at university.

Online  
Survey

### Describing the role of the SU to a friend

#### Main themes

- **Help / support**
- **Improve university experience:**
  - **Social / events**
  - **Representation / campaigning**
  - **Community / friendly / a place to go**

*"Working on behalf of the students to **affect change** and organise a **community**." (2nd year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"Make you feel **welcome**, organising **events** for all to participate in." (1st year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"**Represent** all students and **make changes** where necessary to improve all aspects of the student experience at Greenwich." (2nd year undergraduate aged 50-59)*

*"The people who are there to **look out for you** and **stand up for you**." (3rd year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"A **fun environment** with cheap food and drink options with pool tables and music." (2nd year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

The views of focus group participants were similar; they suggested that the role of the students union is to represent students whilst improving student lives through a variety of methods

Focus  
Groups

### Role of the Students' Union:

- **Representing students**
- **Improving students lives**
- **Creating a community -  
bringing students together**
- **Support students**
- **Break from studies**

**"Representing** the students' best interest."  
(Participant 3, Group 3)

"Make sure the **students have better and nicer student life.**" (Participant 6, Group 2)

"[making]**Student life obviously better.**"  
(Participant 2, Group 2)

**"To help** as well build skills and to be prepared for the graduate." (Participant 1 Group 2)

"They're putting on **events and trips and stuff**, the opening facilities are that you can come and relax. It's just something that is like a **break away from studies basically.**" (Participant 2, Group 2)

The top four words associated with Students' Union University of Greenwich were helpful, friendly, active and fun. It is also associated with support and information, as well as its accessibility and diversity.

Online  
Survey

### Words to describe the SU



# Perceptions of the Students' Union

Stake-  
holders

"Over the last two years at least, **far better organised and much more effective.**"

"An organisation that has **worked hard over the past 3 years to build a relationship with the University** and to more **effectively operate and deliver services** and activities on behalf of a diverse student body. I consider that the UoG SU is currently the **best it has been** in over 20 years."

"**Very active and very visible** at key University meetings and events. A very organised SU."

## Main themes...

- **Positive/ Improving**
- **Organised**
- **Hard-working and enthusiastic**

"It is **well managed and positively perceived** by the University."



## Three words to describe the Students' Union

Stake-  
holders

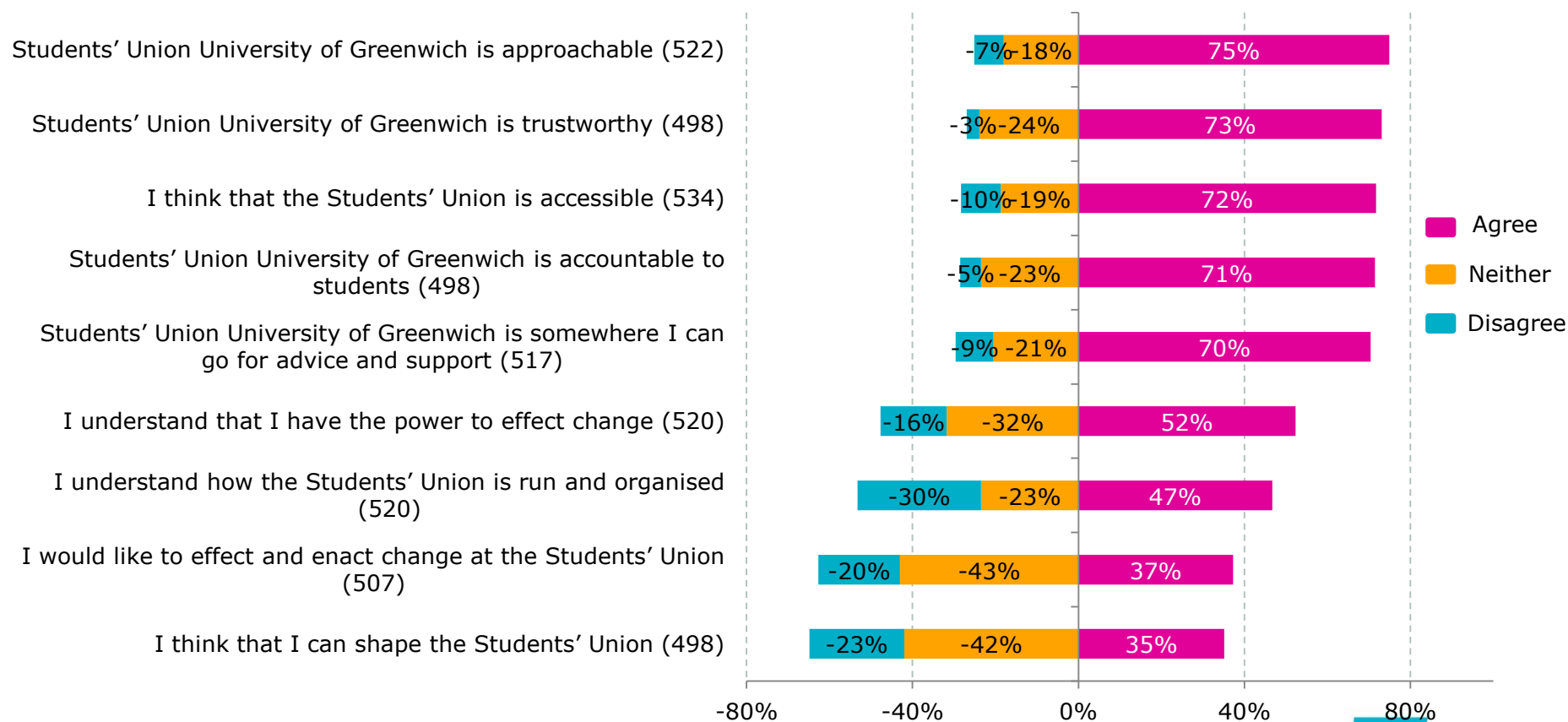




Students were generally positive about the Students' Union at Greenwich. Less agreement was evident, however, in understanding how the SU is run and taking part in how it is run and shaped

Online Survey

### Agreement with statements about SU



Base: (in brackets). Balance: those who answered don't know / not applicable or rather not say

**C4. To what extent, if at all, do you agree with the following statements about your Students' Union?**

# Impact of the Students' Union on the institution...

Stake-  
holders

- **Encourages students to get more involved / student voice / link between institution and student**

"A **very large impact**; SUUG help to shape the organisation's policies and impact heavily on how the institution relates to student."

"The SU play a **vital role in encouraging students to be prepared** to come forward and contribute more fully to the future direction of the University."

- **Helps form policy**

"Allows us to **engage with students** in what we do and ensure students' voice are heard."

"Assist my department to **develop services in line with feedback from students**. Assist in developing effective policies and procedures which are understood by all."

"The **student voice is welcome** and is taken into consideration within the sphere of my operation and, more widely, across the University. For example, the SU significantly influenced revisions to the extenuating circumstances regulations and procedures."

# Strengths

Stake-  
holders

## Strengths of the Students' Union

- **Committed / enthusiastic / passionate**
- **Hardworking / motivated**
- **Involved in the student experience**
- **Eager to change / improve**

**"Hard working,** committed to the cause and on an upward trend."

**"Elected officers are passionate,** knowledgeable, confident and assertive."

**"Fantastic support team that work incredibly hard** to put on great things for the students."

**"Focus on improving the students' experience."**

**"Eager to change and improve offer."**

**"Unafraid to modernise and do things differently;** creative thinking about defining optimal services for all students."

# Weaknesses

Stake-  
holders

"**Short-term nature of elected posts** so it is difficult to build continuity and develop activities further; uncertainty about the President in particular, year on year."

"**Lack of continuity.**"

"Perhaps **slightly under-resourced.**"

"Very **variable Sabb teams** that sometimes are only there for their own CV not to really represent the student."

"Perhaps **not understanding the bigger picture** in the HE landscape."

## Weaknesses of the Students' Union

- **Democratic structure**
- **Under resourced**
- **Officers**
  - **Motivations**
  - **Understanding of HE landscape**

## Summary

- Students and stakeholders believe the students' union to be primarily for its students and to provide support to and represent the student body
- It is also expected to improve the student experience by providing events and being a place for students to go to and meet other students
- The University of Greenwich Students' Union is described as helpful, active and friendly and supportive
- However, while the SU is thought to be approachable, trustworthy and somewhere students can go for advice, there is less agreement that students feel they can shape change at the SU, or indeed that they know how to or even want to
- Stakeholders believe the SU is committed, passionate and hardworking; however, the democratic structure is felt to be a weakness and they believe it's under-resourced

# Use of Students' Union services

Support and advice came out as overwhelmingly the most popular service for the students' union to provide. Within this, students commented on a number of specific areas for help, including support for international students, employment opportunities and financial advice.

Online  
Survey

## Main themes

## Services the SU should provide

- **Support/ advice**
  - **Financial advice**
  - **Academic**
  - **Employability**
- **Events /societies / activities**
- **Facilities /spaces**

*"Students to students **academic support.**"  
(Postgraduate aged 50-59)*

*"More **opportunities** relating to **employability.**" (3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"**Finance planning** and **help with housing.**" (3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"Should offer a **place** for students to **relax** and serve reasonably priced food and drink." (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"A **variety of clubs** that would make every type of student get involved." (3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

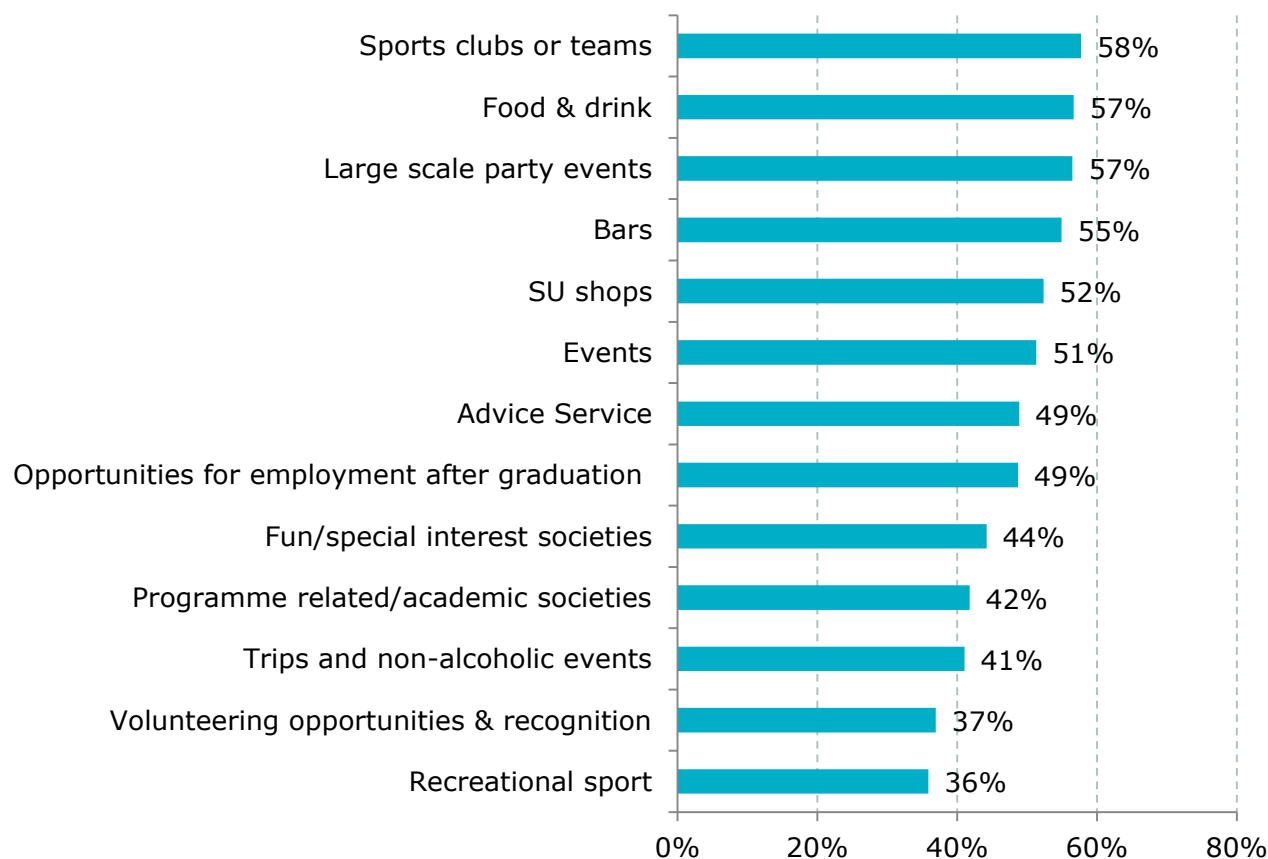
Base: 275 respondents. Balance: No response

**D1. What services, if any, do you think the students' union should provide for its students?**

Students are most aware of sports clubs or teams, food and drink services and party events

Online  
Survey

### Awareness of SU services – top 13



Base: 577 respondents. Balance: no reply.

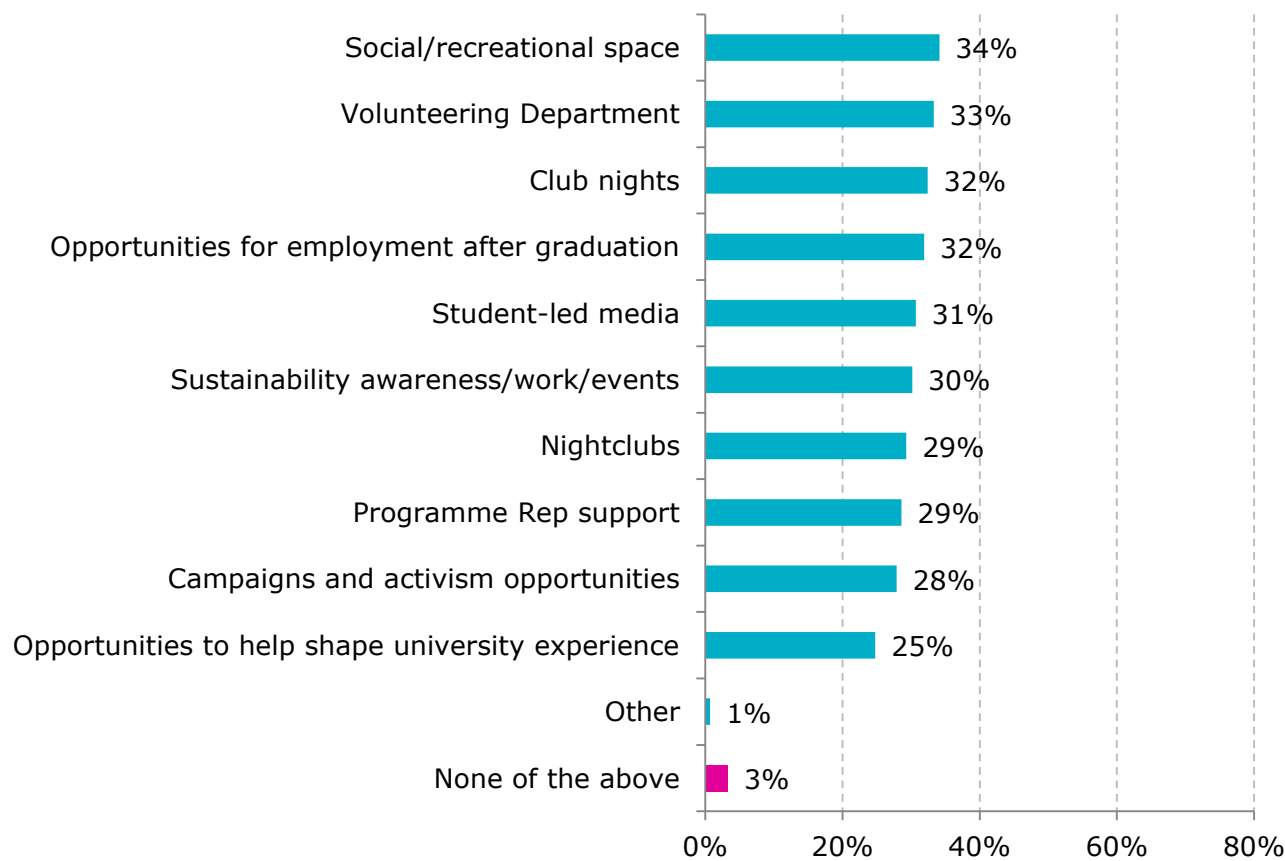
**D2. Please could you select from the list below, which services or functions, if any, you are aware of on one of the university's campuses...**



Less awareness is evident of involvement with the SU, such as opportunities to help shape student experience and campaigns and activism

Online  
Survey

### Awareness of SU services – bottom 10



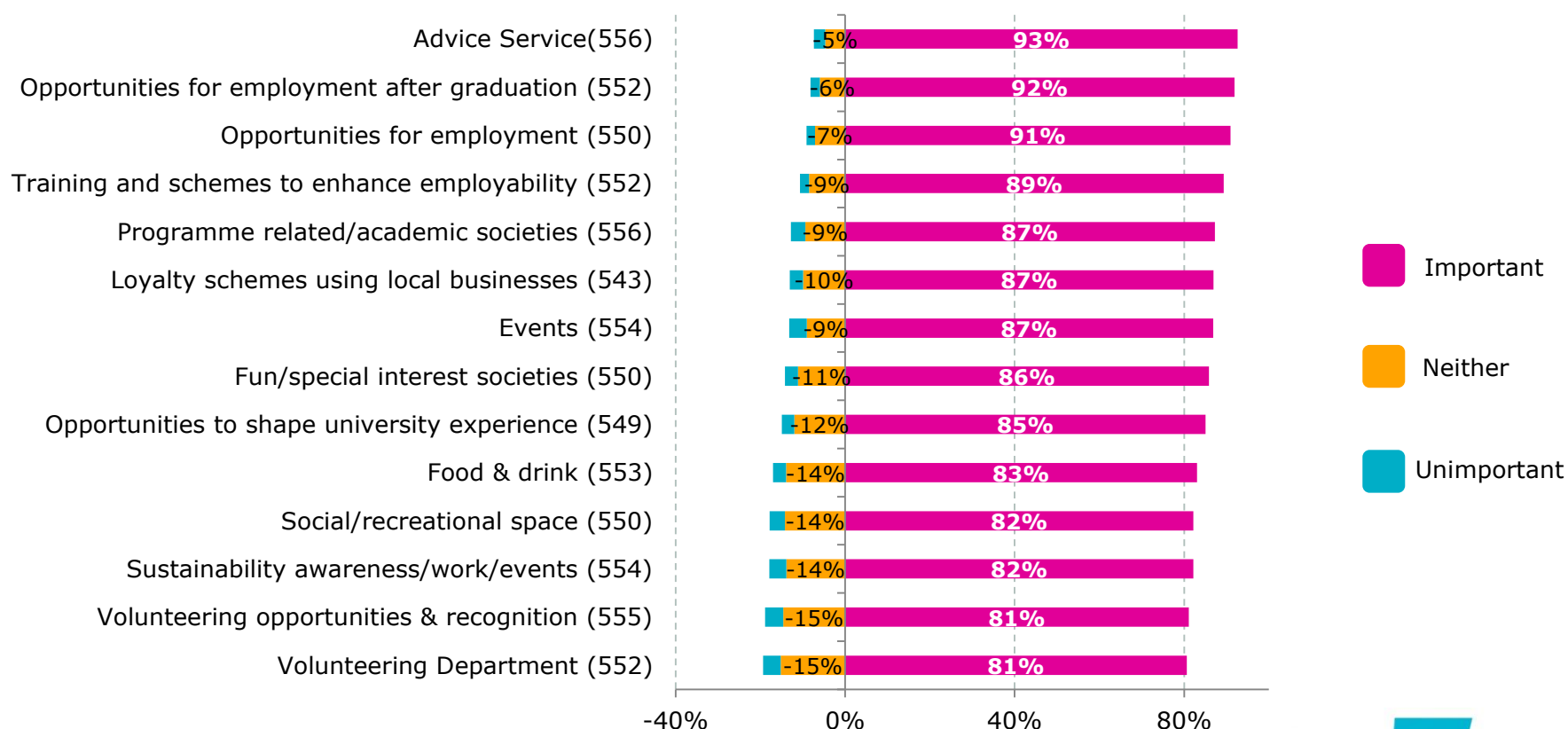
Base: 577 respondents. Balance: no reply.

**D2. Please could you select from the list below, which services or functions, if any, you are aware of on one of the university's campuses...**

## A number of services are considered to be important

Online  
Survey

### Importance of SU provision



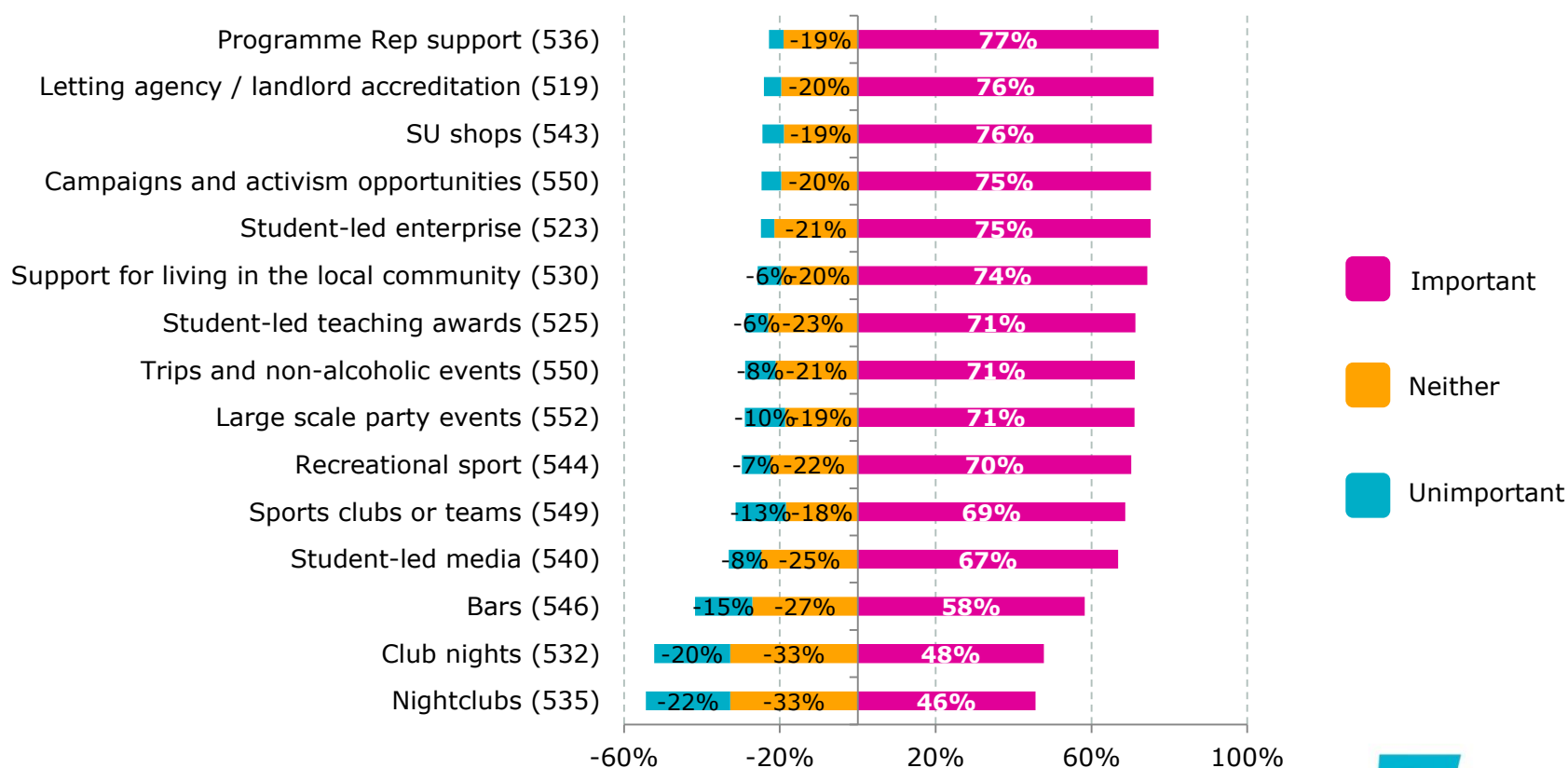
Base: (in brackets). Balance: No response

**D3. Thinking specifically about your students' union, how important, if at all, is it that your students' union offers the following services or functions, in your opinion?**

## Of less importance are alcohol related services and provisions

Online  
Survey

### Importance of SU provision (continued)



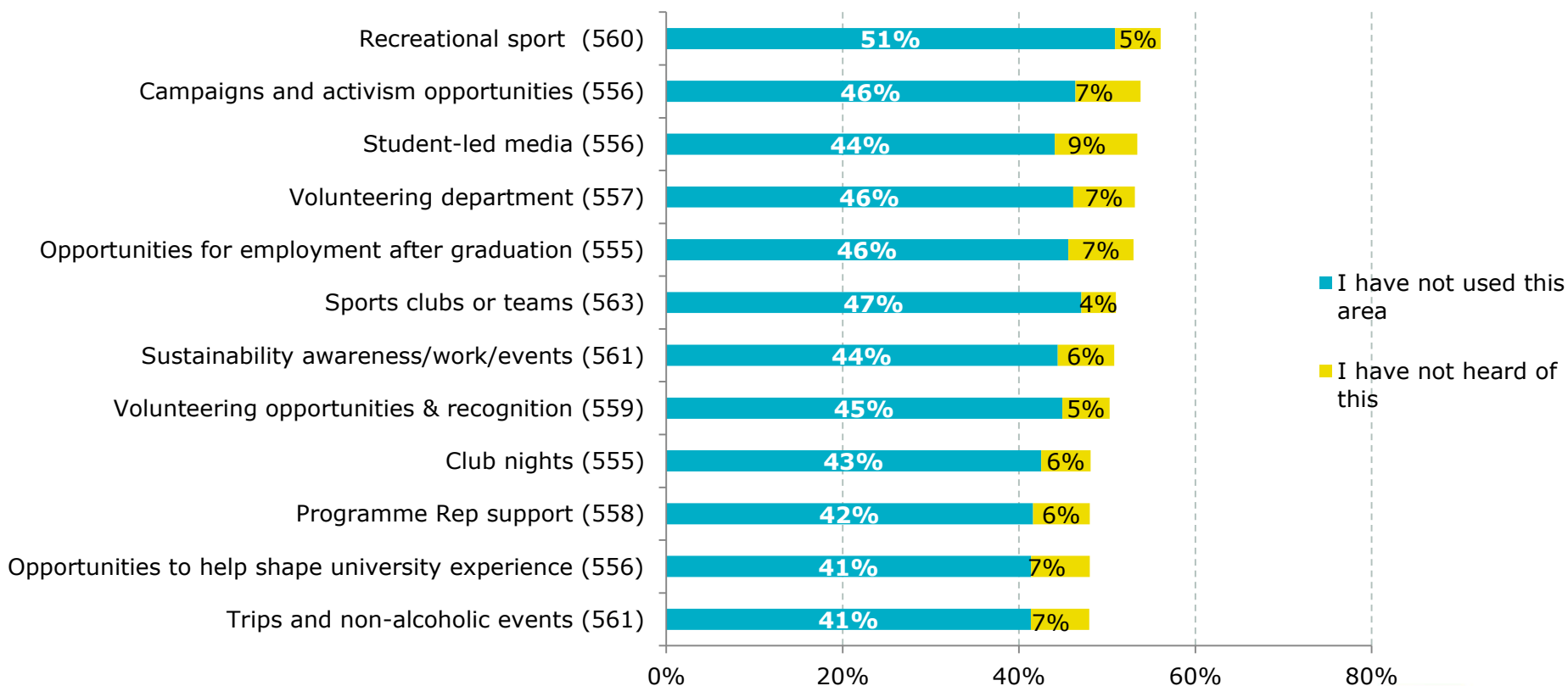
Base: (in brackets). Balance: No response

**D3. Thinking specifically about your students' union, how important, if at all, is it that your students' union offers the following services or functions, in your opinion?**

Along with recreational sport, student led activities were the least used services. Volunteering and employment opportunities were also not used by the majority

Online  
Survey

**Proportion of those who have not used /  
have not heard of this service**

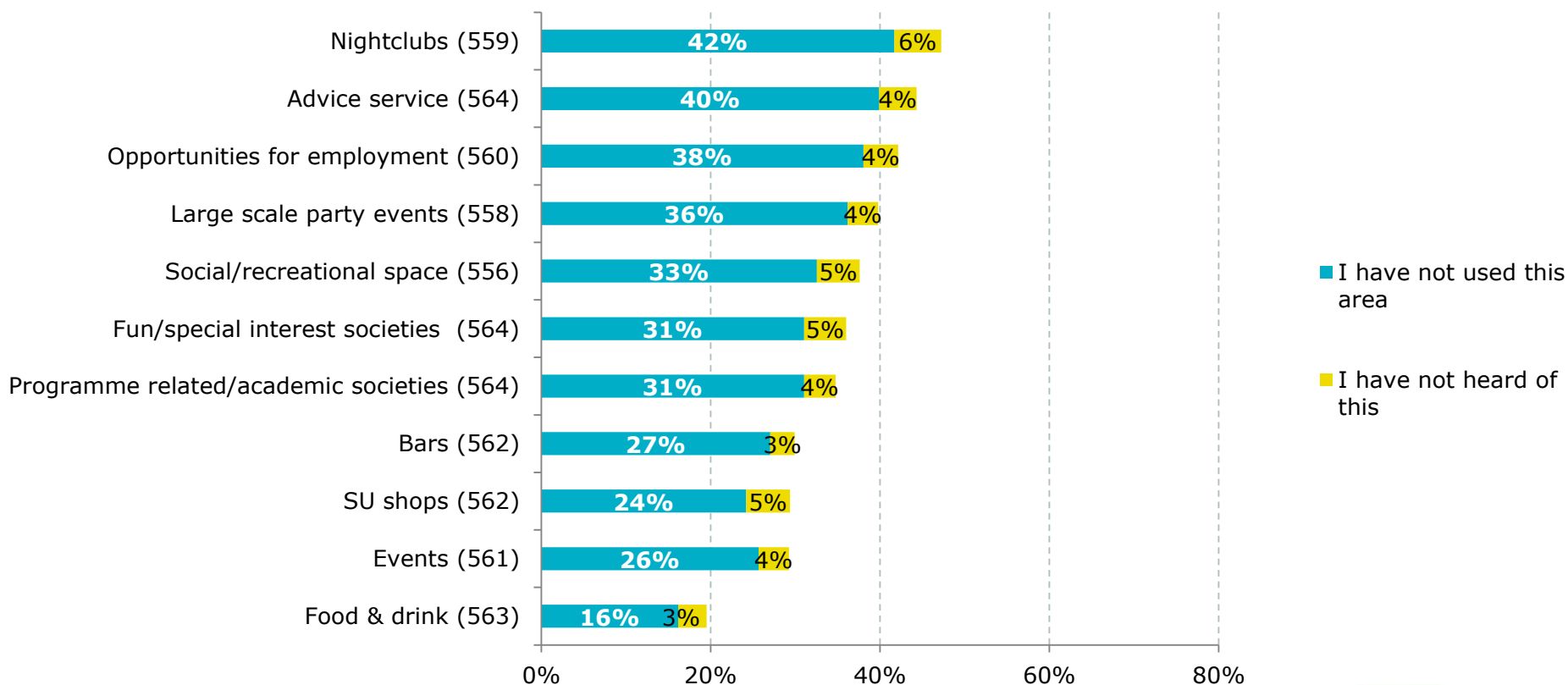


Base: (in brackets). Balance: no response / have used services

## Food and drink, events, the SU shops and bars are the services most used by Greenwich students

Online  
Survey

### Proportion of those who have not used / have not heard of this service (continued)



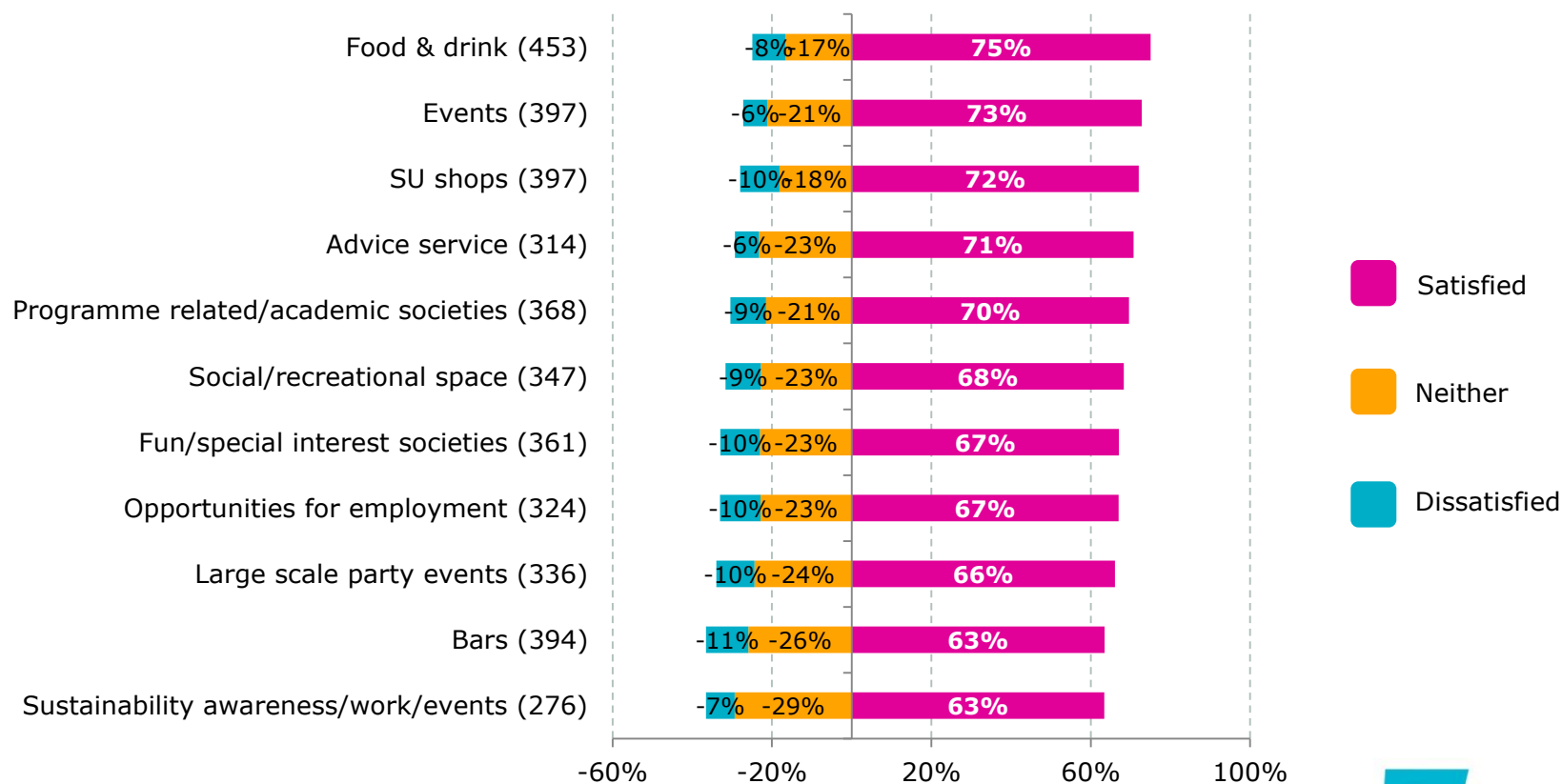
Base: (in brackets). Balance: no response / have used services

**D4. Thinking about the areas you may have used or have heard about, how satisfied, if at all, are you with the following services or functions?**

For those who have used the following services, there appears to be quite high satisfaction, particularly with regards to the food and drink.

Online  
Survey

### Satisfaction with SU services

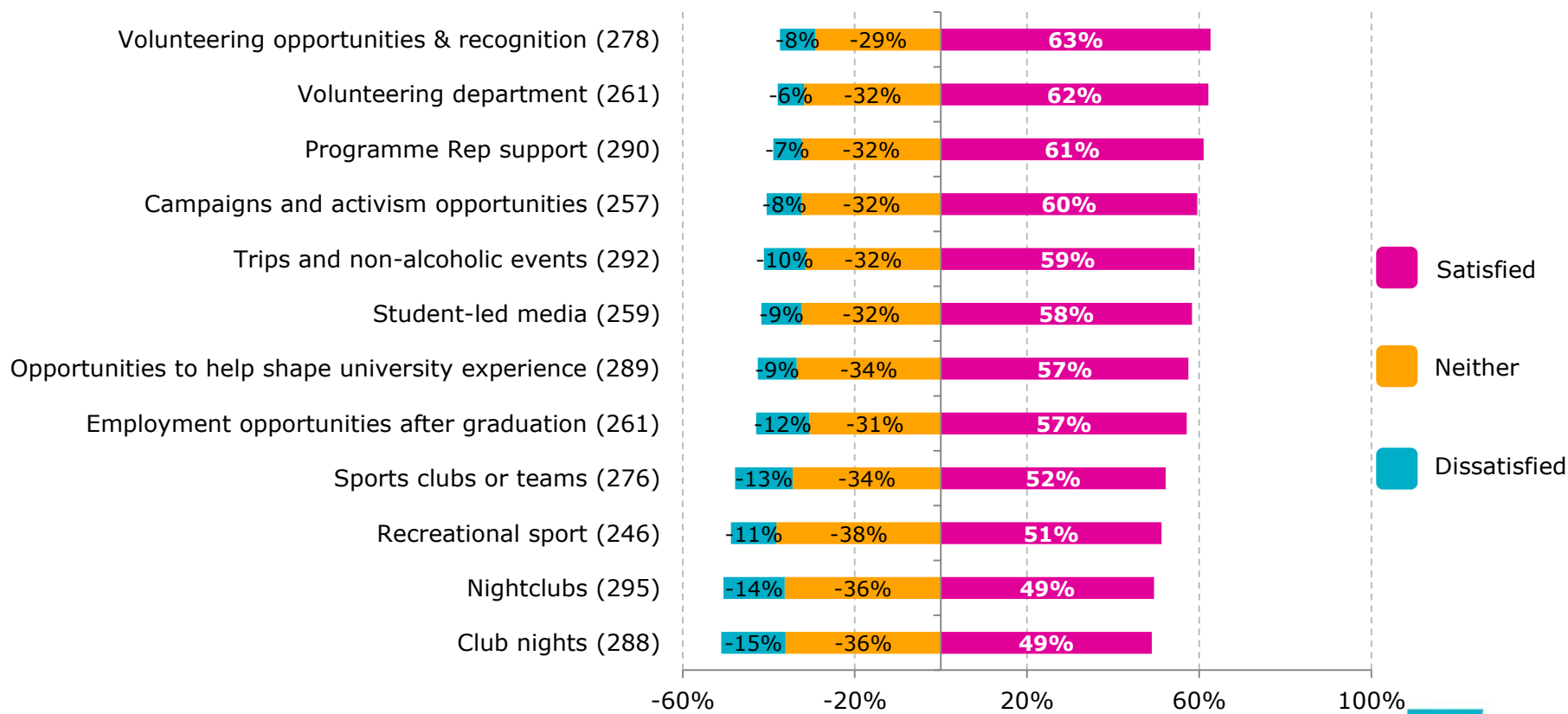


Base: (in brackets). Balance: no response / have not used services

# The nightclubs and club nights offer least relative satisfaction

Online  
Survey

## Satisfaction with SU services (continued)



Base: (in brackets). Balance: no response / have not used services

The type of new service which was suggested most frequently was support and information, with a wide range of individual suggestions including cycle training, LGBT support and mentors. Inclusive services for mature students and international students were also popular

Online  
Survey

## Main themes

- None
- Support/ information
- Societies / events
- Inclusive / catering for all
- Employment opportunities

## New services the SU could provide

"More **signposting** of the **services** it **already provides**."  
(1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate, aged 18-22)

"Greater **connection with local employers** and employment agencies to offer more part time or temporary work, and a greater **selection of societies**." (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate, no age given)

"I can't think of any. Just **keep the diversity**."  
(3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)

"More focus on **International Students**." (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate, aged 18-22)

"Activities that would appeal to **mature students** and those that live **off-campus**." (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 50-59)

"Longer **shuttle bus** services."  
(Postgraduate, aged 18-22)

Base: 229 respondents. Balance: No response.

**D5. What services do think Students' Union University of Greenwich could provide for students like you, that it isn't already providing?**



## Summary

- Students suggested that the SU should provide services related to support and advice related to finance, academic support and employability skills.
- Social events and a space for students were also highlighted
- With regards to services already provided, students were most aware of sports, food and drink outlets events, bars and shops
- Less awareness surrounded opportunities to get involved in shaping the SU and life at university
- Most services were thought to be of importance, but of relatively less importance are the bars, nightclubs and club nights – indeed these also offered the least satisfaction

# Engagement with the Students' Union

Engagement with the SU is perceived to mean being kept informed, participation and investing time with the organisation

Focus  
Groups

## Meaning of engagement

### Being kept informed

**"Being kept informed...**  
having information  
positively given to the  
student body."  
(Participant 1, Group 1)

"It should be like having  
something to do, the  
person really wants to join,  
**really wants to know  
what's happening..**"  
(Participant 8, Group 1)

### Participation / involvement

"I think engagement is  
just about **taking part.**"  
(Participant 1, Group 3)

"I think **participating** in  
elections or voting for  
someone, have a say in  
changing  
something, that's  
engagement." (Participant  
1, Group 2)

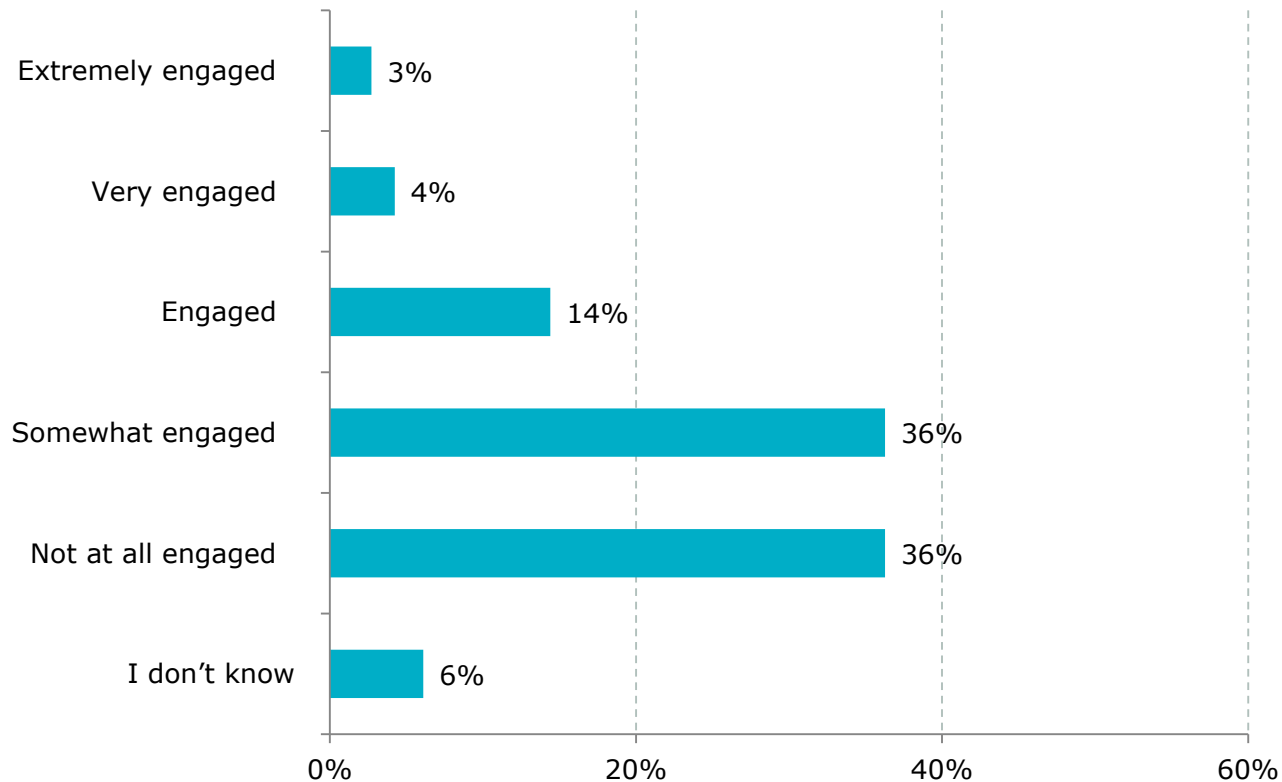
### Invested time

"I think feeling like you've  
got something  
**invested in that  
organisation,** as far as  
engagement is concerned.  
So feeling like they are  
actually working on your  
behalf and that is really  
happening." (Participant  
7, Group 1)

Almost one in five consider themselves very – extremely engaged, with 57% claiming to be engaged to some extent. However, a third are not engaged at all

Online  
Survey

### Engagement with SU



Base: 590 respondents.

The majority of students who felt that they were engaged with the SU had a high level of involvement, being part of a society or club, or an employee or officer of the union. The most popular reasons for not feeling engaged were that students were not involved with the union or activities, and that they know very little about the union

Online  
Survey

## Main themes

## Reasons for level of engagement with SU

### ✓ Engaged

- **Part of society /team / club**
- **Employee / rep / officer etc.**

✓ *"I **run a society**, I am part of others, **use the facilities** from time to time and know I can get in touch whenever I need to.." (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

✓ *"I am a part-time **officer**, programme **rep** and student **councillor**." (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

### ✗ Not engaged

- **Haven't engaged**
- **Lack of awareness**
- **Not got time/ had the chance**

✗ *"I **don't really know how to engage** with the SU?" (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

✗ *"I **don't feel I have time** to as I have to balance a lot of things already." (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

✗ *"I **do not participate** in any activities." (Postgraduate aged 23-29)*

Base: 366 respondents. Balance: Students did not identify themselves as engaged / not engaged / no response

Those who are engaged with the Students' Union indicate that they have gone on trips, have voted in election, are a member of a society and simply know what's been going on at the SU

Focus  
Groups

## Engagement with the Students' Union

Main themes of those who feel involved

- **Being involved with the Students' Union**

- **Attending trips**
- **Participating in elections**
- **Member of societies**
- **Course student representative**

*"I'm an **executive of a society**, so I link with the union." (Participant 6, Group 4)*

*"I'm one of my **course students representative** for this year, so I feel engaged." (Participant 5, Group 4)*

*"**It's important for us to be engaged in all sorts of activities**" (Participant 6, Group 3)*

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- **Knowing what's happening at the SU**

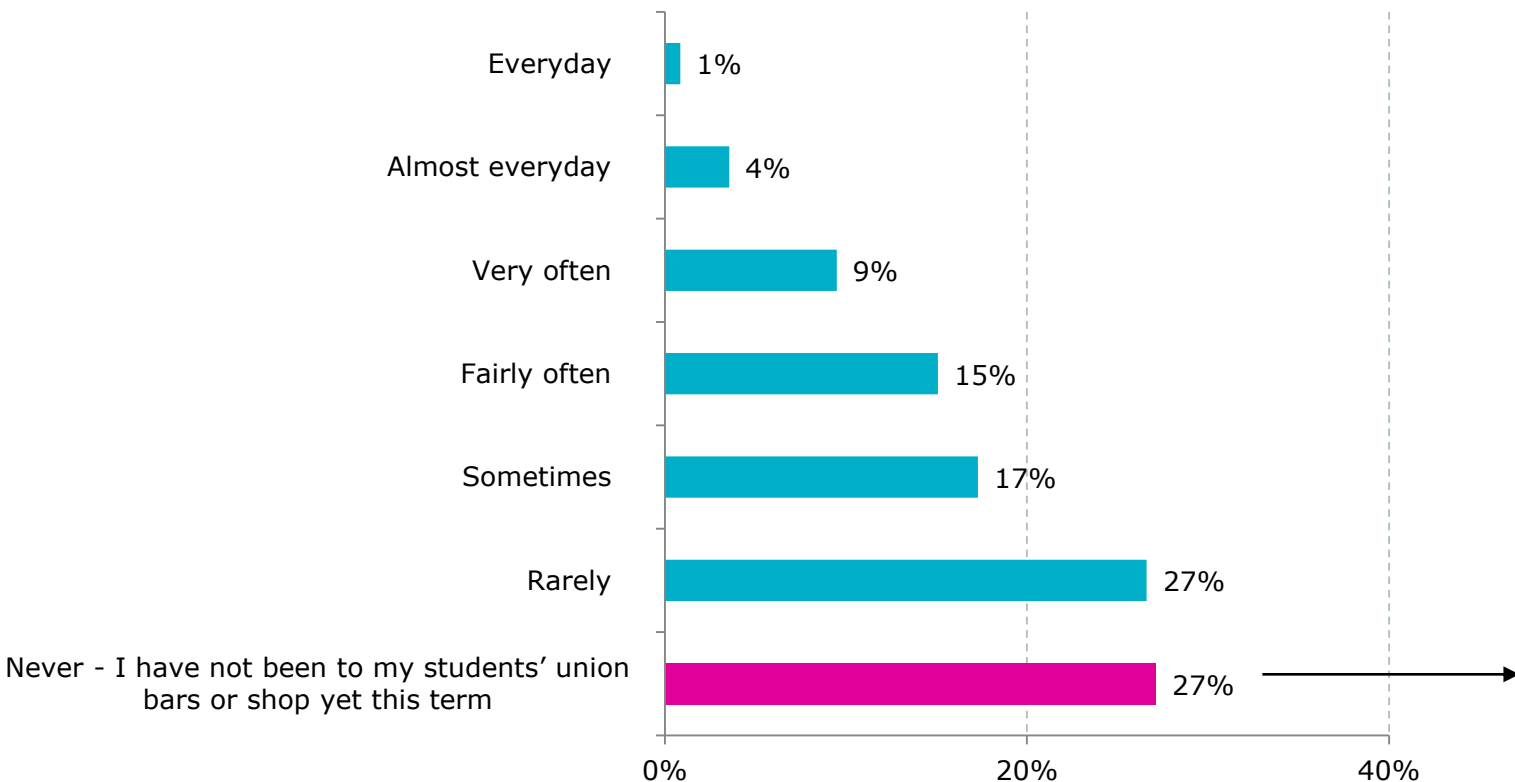
*"I **receive emails** about what's happening, social activities and extra curricular activities. So **that's how I feel engaged**." (Participant 7, Group 4)*

*"[Students who live on campus] get **engaged automatically**... They're **aware of everything** that's happening on campus" (Participant 7, Group 3)*

There are a mixture of touchpoints with the SU bars and shops. Just over a quarter indicate they have never been to the SU, particularly carers, parents / guardians, postgraduates and commuters

Online  
Survey

### Frequency of visits to SU bars and shop



Significantly more likely Amongst:

- Those living with someone with health problems
- Carers
- Parents/ guardians
- Postgraduates
- Commuters

Significantly less likely Amongst:

- Those living in halls of residence

Base: 590 respondents.

**E3. Approximately how often, if at all, have you visited one or more of the following so far this term: Bar Latitude (Greenwich), Sparrows Bar or Village Shop (Avery Hill) or Coopers Bar (Medway)?**

The most common reasons given for not visiting the bars or shop were a lack of time, often because of studying, and that they are not in a convenient place. Where location was an issue, students frequently commented that they lived off campus.

Online  
Survey

## Main themes

- **Logistics – location, timing**
- **No time**
- **Not enough info e.g. where it is**
- **Nothing of interest / not needed**
- **Feels like it's 'not for me'**

## Reasons for not visiting the bars or shop

*"I **don't live on campus** so it isn't ideal" (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"Have **not had time** to go to the shop and am not interested in the bars." (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"I **do not drink alcohol** and so do not feel comfortable in bars and **do not live at Avery Hill** so have not been to the shop." (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"**Haven't needed to** as of yet, it's a bit different at postgraduate" (Postgraduate aged 23-29)*

*"I **don't know where** they are also I have **no interest** in going" (4<sup>+</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

Base: 93 respondents. Balance: Have visited bars or shop / no response

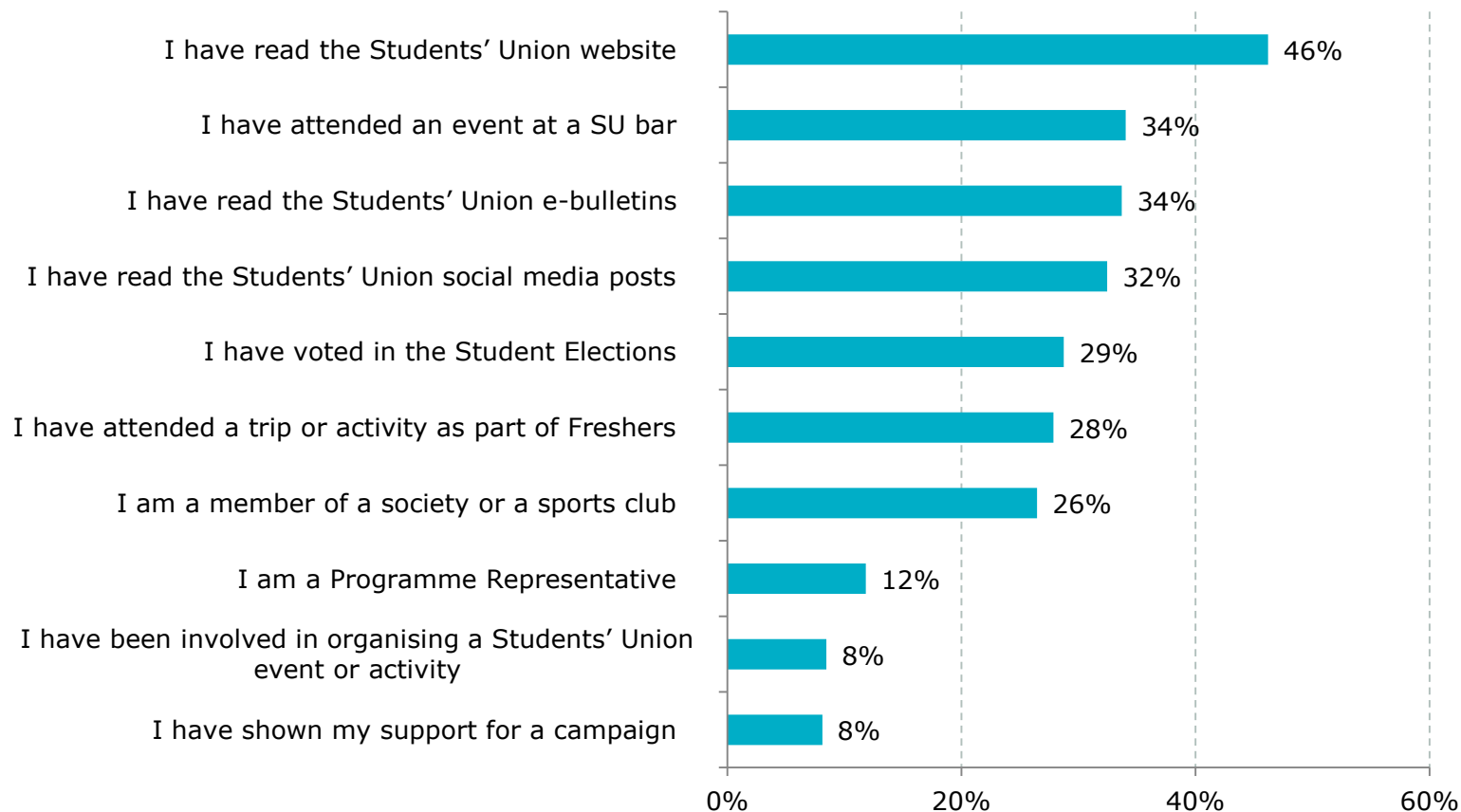
**E4. Why have you not visited the Students' Union?**



Reading the SU website is the most common interaction.

Online  
Survey

### Involvement with SU services



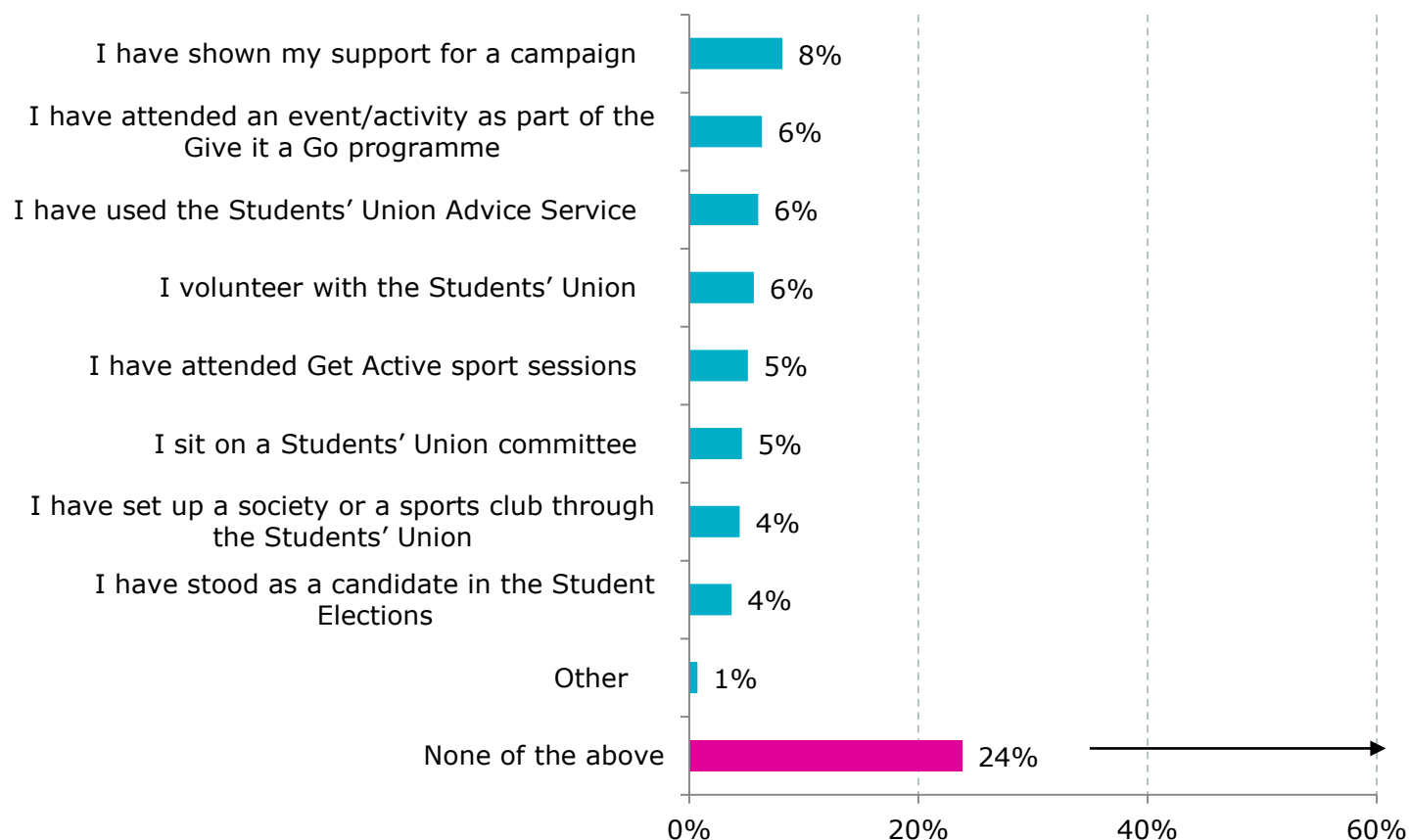
Base: 567 respondents. Balance: no reply.

**E5. Which of the following, if any, activities have you ever been involved in at your students' union?**

Involvement with the SU, with regards to supporting a campaign or in organising events is less common. Almost a quarter have never been involved

Online  
Survey

### Involvement with SU services (continued)



Significantly more likely  
Amongst:

- Part-time students
- Commuters

Significantly less likely  
Amongst:

- Those based at Greenwich
- Those living in halls of residence

Base: 567 respondents. Balance: no reply.

**E5. Which of the following, if any, activities have you ever been involved in at your students' union?**

The most frequently cited reason for not engaging with the SU was a lack of time. Others indicated a lack of interest and a lack of information

Online  
Survey

## Main themes

- **Time / commitments**
- **No interest / not needed:**
  - **Myself – too much effort required / lack of confidence**
- **Lack of information / communication**
- **Logistics (location, timings etc)**
- **Not inclusive – feel like its not for me:**
- **/ lack of variety**

## Reasons for not engaging more with the SU

*"I don't have the **time** for more in addition to **uni** and **part time work**."  
(2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"I have had **no problems** with my time at university, so **do not need to contact** the Students' Union."  
(2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"I don't really know how to, I'm **probably too shy**."  
(First year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"I'm **not sure where/how I can engage**."  
(Postgraduate aged 23-29)*

*"**Live too far** to stay behind too late."  
(3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 23-29)*

*"I think most of the services are used by **national students rather than international**."  
(Postgraduate aged 30-39)*

Base: 331 respondents. Balance: No response

**E6. What, if anything, are the main three things stopping you from engaging with the Students' Union more than you currently do?**

Those who don't believe they are engaged highlight their lack of time to get involved and the perceived lack of presence of the organisation throughout the campus

Focus  
Groups

## Barriers to engagement with the Students' Union

### ➤ Lack of time

**"Not having enough time."**  
(Participant 1, Group 2)

**"I haven't got a lot of time** to actually come to things."  
(Participant 1, Group 1)

**"I think its time management,** because there's a lot of outside study and the course requirements are quite high."  
(Participant 1, Group 4)

### ➤ Lack of presence on campus

**"Just seeing more of them on campus** rather than in the building. More of a presence on campus, because **I don't see that that much.**" (Participant 6, Group 1)

**"The SU is here and this is its hub, but they are not actually out there in the university itself."** (Participant 7, Group 1)

**"Maybe because at Medway we don't actually have a hub, a centre for students' union."** (Participant 5, Group 4)

Whilst discussing barriers, participants also mentioned that student apathy plays a major role: it's up to students to get to know the SU if they want to, and some simply do not want to get involved

Focus  
Groups

### The Students' Union does what it can, but students simply do not want to be involved

*"My impression has been they are doing all they could do, well almost everything they can do, and it's about the sort of student that comes to this university in the first place."  
(Participant 6, Group 3)*

*"I don't think a lot of them are engaged but I don't see that as the students fault or the universities fault really. Anyone who wants to get engaged can so I think it's like they said, it's really good, like positive."  
(Participant 5, Group 3)*

### It's up to students to get involved

*"Students have to go and be **proactive**, so initiate contact with them if they need them for anything" (Participant 5, Group 4)*

### Apathy amongst students

*"Some people just **aren't bothered**, they're like "I'm just going to come in for lectures and seminars and do my work, then go home." (Participant 4, Group 3)*

*"It means to me that the **people that are already involved are probably maybe 70% to 80% of the people that would be interested in those activities** anyway." (Participant 6, Group 3)*

Students want to see a social space and a variety of events to suit the different kinds of students studying at Greenwich

Focus  
Groups

## Main themes

### What do students want from the Students' Union

- **Social space**
- **Variety of inclusive events**
- **Different locations and different times**
- **Integrating students – allowing them to get to know other students outside of their course**
- **Promote events outside of the university – throughout London**

"There ought to be a **social space** where you can get teas and coffees and this kind of stuff. I think you need a space that is fairly near the bar that actually caters for people who **do not drink alcohol.**"  
(Participant 3, Group 1)

[Social events] "**Vary the timings and places so a range of people can get there**" (Participant 1, Group 1)

"Possibly you might like to have an **event in the afternoon.**"  
(Participant 7, Group 1)

"I would like **to know people**, maybe make some social events."  
(Participant 5, Group 1)

"And also I think they started this year to announce like different events that **are outside university . So where you can go in London** and central for events and exhibitions and all this."  
(Participant 1, group 2)

## What do students want from the Students' Union

- **Flexible space**
- **Additional support around employability skills**

"I'd say a **place for guidance and support** as well as for engaging in either **extracurricular activities** or recreational, or volunteering, charity, so it covers a really **broad spectrum** in terms of what they do. You can **gain skills** from it, but then you can just go somewhere to **relax**." (Participant 6, Group 4)

"It looks mostly like a bar. I think it certainly **should be a great deal more**." (Respondent 1, Group 1)

"Can I just add **volunteering**, you could just come here and help out, you can get the best of both, work and study. So you can **package your CV** and stuff." (Participant 3, Group 2)

"Help with their future jobs, like **placements**." (Participant 8, Group 1)

"Getting the **skills** that would be **useful for a job**." (Participant 4, Group 4)

Promotion is key!

### Other ways to increase engagement

#### ➤ Finding out about what's going on and how to get involved

[Emails from SU] "Send it out for the month, **so you could work it around your studies.**"  
(Participant 7, Group 1)

"I think mainly communication and more involvement. They have a variety of stuff that they do but I think more of asking people what they want, and then facilitating that." (Participant 2, Group 1)

"I think just that there should be more advertisement about the students that actually care who they were. The same as like voting for vice-president or like in the country or whatever, people actually have to know what they are voting for or are giving their votes for."  
(Participant 5, Group 3)

#### ➤ Presence on campus

"A good idea would be for them to actually **have it on campus, in a room on campus.**"  
(Participant 7, Group 1)

"I think to start with they should make a group of people who are building stuff online and even on the boards, they should tell us about different groups, different awareness." (Participant 8, group 1)

"In every school, why can't the Students' Union have a board? I'm sure they could get agreement from the faculties. You know there's a Students' Union board for that week and you know if you got there you find out what's happening or possibly if there's a meeting there will be some information about it."  
(Participant 7, group 1)



Promotion is  
key!

## Other ways to increase engagement

### ➤ Promote outside of the Students' Union

"I think more physical presence so we **actually see them** and not just hear about it, and **not just ignore emails.**"  
(Participant 6, Group 4)

"Getting a **better and more physical presence** out within the students and lecture halls and stuff like that. "  
(Participant 1, Group 4)

"I think to **promote more stuff out of student union**, like posters in the uni or emailing so that people can actually know what's going on instead of actually travelling here and finding out."  
(Participant 2, Group 2)

### ➤ Promotion throughout the year

"Apart from **open days**, when everyone is really applying for uni, that's when you **see them around campus.**"  
(Participant 3, Group 1)

"One of things is they **focus so much on Fresher's Week...** so you're full up with information and leaflets, you're drowning in them, and then it literally goes down like that for the **rest of the year.**"  
(Participant 7, Group 1)

"I think **apart from the Freshers' Fair**, you **don't really hear much else about societies and stuff.** It's just that one day and then it's gone." (Participant 2, Group 4)

# Engagement with the SU

Stake-  
holders

## Type of engagement with Students' Union

### Main themes

- **Regular interaction with the sab team / elected officers**
- **Collaboration on campaigns / specific projects / committees**

**"Regular interaction**  
with both elected  
officers via USEC and  
other groups."

**"Formal engagement** with SU  
elected sabs and faculty officers  
through the University's  
governance structures; the  
welfare officer through appeals,  
complaints & Ecs."

**"Collaborated** on the NUS  
Student Green Fund Sustainability  
Hub project."

"SU representatives are  
**invited to Welfare Forum,  
Team meetings and  
Disability Named Contact  
meetings.** We are working  
together on the Time to  
Change Pledge."

## Summary

- Engagement means different things for different people, but students in the focus groups indicated that if they were kept informed, then they believe they were engaged. Others believed it took more effort with participation or with investing their own time
- Over half of students claim to have some level of involvement with the SU
- While most students have visited the SU bar or shop at some point, over a quarter have never visited due to location, lack of time and not knowing where they are
- Involvement with the SU is most evident with regards to having read the website. Interactions requiring more effort or investment of time are less common
- There are a number of barriers to engagement identified by students including lack of time and other commitments, but also a lack of interest in what's on offer.
- Others indicate they don't know what they can get involved in or where they can get involved, while others believe it's not relevant to them

### **Overcoming barriers**

- When discussing how to remove these barriers, a number of students in the focus groups believed that the SU did all it could do to encourage involvement, it was simply up to students to make that effort
- Others suggested other offerings the SU could put in place to encourage engagement such as a flexible social space not just for the consumption of alcohol and a variety of locations and times for events.
- They also suggested that the SU could be a link between students who may not be on the same course as other like-minded students they would like to meet
- The need for support in employability skills was also discussed
- Communication and promotion was also highlighted throughout the focus groups as being key to increasing engagement. If students don't know what's available, they are not able to get involved

# Understanding of the Students' Union

A mixture of understanding of how the Students' Union is run was evident amongst participants

Focus  
Groups

## How is the Students' Union run?

### Good level of understanding

*"There are four students that are kind of helping voice opinion. Students helping voice opinion."*  
(Participant 1, Group 2)

*"There's the president and the vice-president for education, welfare and sports."*  
(Participant 4, Group 1)

### A general knowledge

*"I was thinking just maybe a bunch of students, a mix of students and mature students from outside uni or this uni."*  
(Participant 6, Group 1)

*"There are elections, I did vote."* (Participant 1, Group 1)

*"Harry Hodges is the president."* (Participant 7, Group 3)

### Don't know

*"I have no idea."*  
(Participant 2, Group 1)

*"What's the student council?"* (Participant 7, Group 1)

*"I don't really think I know the structure of it. It was never explained."*  
(Participant 5, Group 4)

Students generally thought it was important that they could be involved if they wanted to; they had seen evidence of students having been involved and believe it's important to have a say

Focus  
Groups

## Importance of being involved

### Seeing evidence of something being done

*"I think they made some changes with the bus, they stay later now, there is later bus journeys, because they used to leave, I think the last bus was 5 something or 6, now they made it until 8. So **they have made changes, which has been noticed**, so it's good." (Participant 2, group 2)*

*"Because they are elections where everyone can participate, you **are free to get involved everywhere**. You can organise events." (Participant 1, group 2)*

### Having a say

*"It gave some **confidence that they do have power** and it can actually be done if you actually voice your opinion correctly. So yes [it's important]." (Participant 3, group 2)*

*"I'd **like to get involved** with being able to say what's helpful **towards our course**." (Participant 3, group 1)*

However, most of their comments around getting involved focused on not knowing how to get involved

Focus  
Groups

## Raising awareness that students can get involved

**"Why hasn't that information been disseminated? And whose responsibility is it to disseminate it?"**  
(Participant 7, Group 1)

**"The school should be saying 'this is your rep and this is the person you go to' if you've got problems and we will have a meeting several times a semester or whatever."** (Participant 7, group 1)

**"To tell people that these are the societies and this is how we work and this is how the Students' Union works."**  
(Participant 8, Group 1)

## Found out how to get involved by themselves – but should this have to be the case...?

**"The only reason I actually found out was because I helped out with Fresher's so I was a volunteer two weeks before uni even started."**  
(Participant 4, Group 1)

**"I do think it's also very important to know that it's not just about the people who can participate and who turn up. Because even if the others don't show it doesn't mean they're not interested."**  
(Participant 1, group 1))



Some students in the focus groups believe that the SU is responsive, and that it's up to students to proactively seek involvement or answers...

Focus  
groups

## Responsiveness of the Students' Union

- **It's up to the student to be proactive with the Students' Union**
- **The Students' Union is responsive as it seeks students opinions, e.g. by sending out surveys**

"They can be **responsive if you go to them**, they do try to **make an effort** to change." (Participant 6, Group 4)

"I feel like sometimes students have to **take that step to get involved** rather than the students' union pulling you in constantly." (Participant 4, Group 3)

"They're **always sending out surveys**." (Participant 2, Group 4)

I think they are **trying to respond**, even last year they create the ticket prices for the buses I guess on different campuses, so I think they are responsive." (Participant 1, Group 2)

"**I think it depends on what you want to do**. I've already submitted them a campaign and they've already had meetings on my behalf." (Participant 4, Group 1)

...however, others claimed more effort needed to be made, while others simply didn't know

Focus  
groups

## Responsiveness of the Students' Union

- **Some students perceived that because they didn't have an interaction with the SU, the organisation needs to improve responsiveness for current members**
- **Some students simply don't know how responsive the SU is because they've never had the experience**

*"I'm more practical, so it **can't just be something through email**, or something viral, it should be something where students can **meet and interact** with the Union."  
(Participant 5, Group 4)*

*"I think to improve responsiveness because **sometimes we're waiting for two weeks to answer different questions or to help us to book a room to provide us with details of budget for society or things like that.**"  
(Participant 1, Group 2)*

*"**I wouldn't know.**"  
(Participant 3, Group 2)*

*"**I've not used them.**" (Participant 1, Group 3)*

## Summary

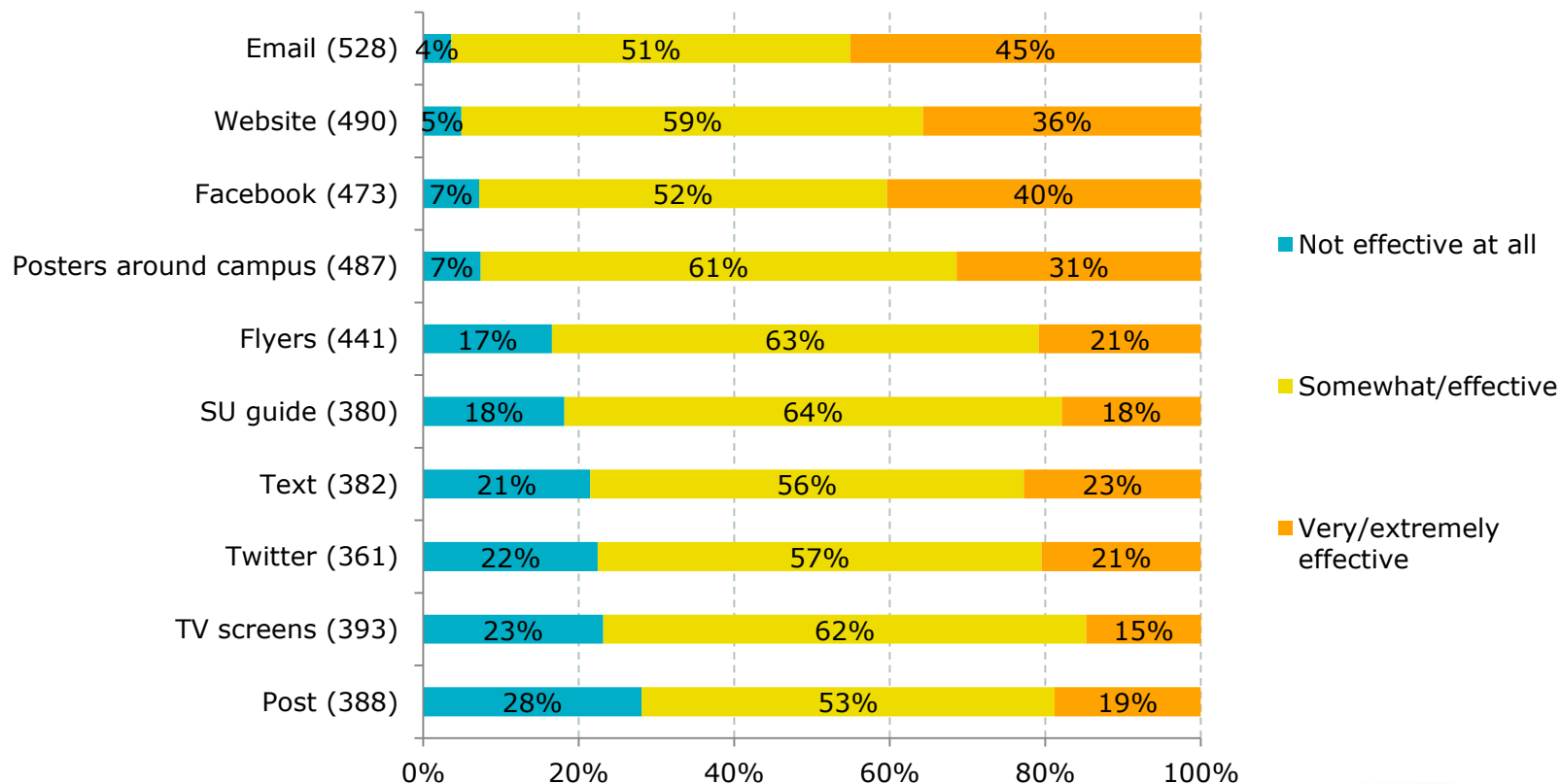
- A variety of knowledge about how the SU is run was evident across the groups
- While it's clear that the majority of students don't want to get involved in the running of the SU, they believe that it's important for students to have the opportunity if they want it, and they also cited some evidence of the work done by the SU
- While some students believed that the SU needed to do more in raising awareness about how students could get involved if they wanted to, others believed that it's up to the student themselves to find out as much as they can in order to get involved

# Students' Union communications

Email, website and facebook are considered to be the most effective methods of communication. Post and TV screens are thought to be relatively less effective

Online  
Survey

### Effectiveness of communication methods



Base: (in brackets). Balance: no reply or don't know.

**F1. How effective do you think these methods of communication, that the union uses, are?**

Where students suggested ways to improve communication, face-to-face methods such as talking more to students and being seen around on campus were most popular. Facebook was the social media platform that was mentioned most often.

Online  
Survey

## Ways for SU to improve communication

### Main themes

- **They can't / good already**
- **Face-to-face**
- **Social media**
- **More info in general**
- **Flyers / posters**

"I am **well aware** of Student Union's activities **via email and website** and I am satisfied with it." (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 23-29)

"Be more **clear** about what **fun opportunities** there are to take part in." (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)

"More advertisement around campus e.g. **flyers, posters, computer screens.**" (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)

"Get out of the office more. Walk around on campus and **speak to students.**" (3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)

"**Invite** all new students to **follow** their **social media** page once enrolled." (3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 23-29)

Base: 241 respondents. Balance: No response

**F2. How could the students' union improve its methods of communication with you?**

## Summary

- Most methods of communication highlighted were considered to be effective, particularly email, Facebook and the website
- Suggestions for improving communication centred around face to face and increased use of social media

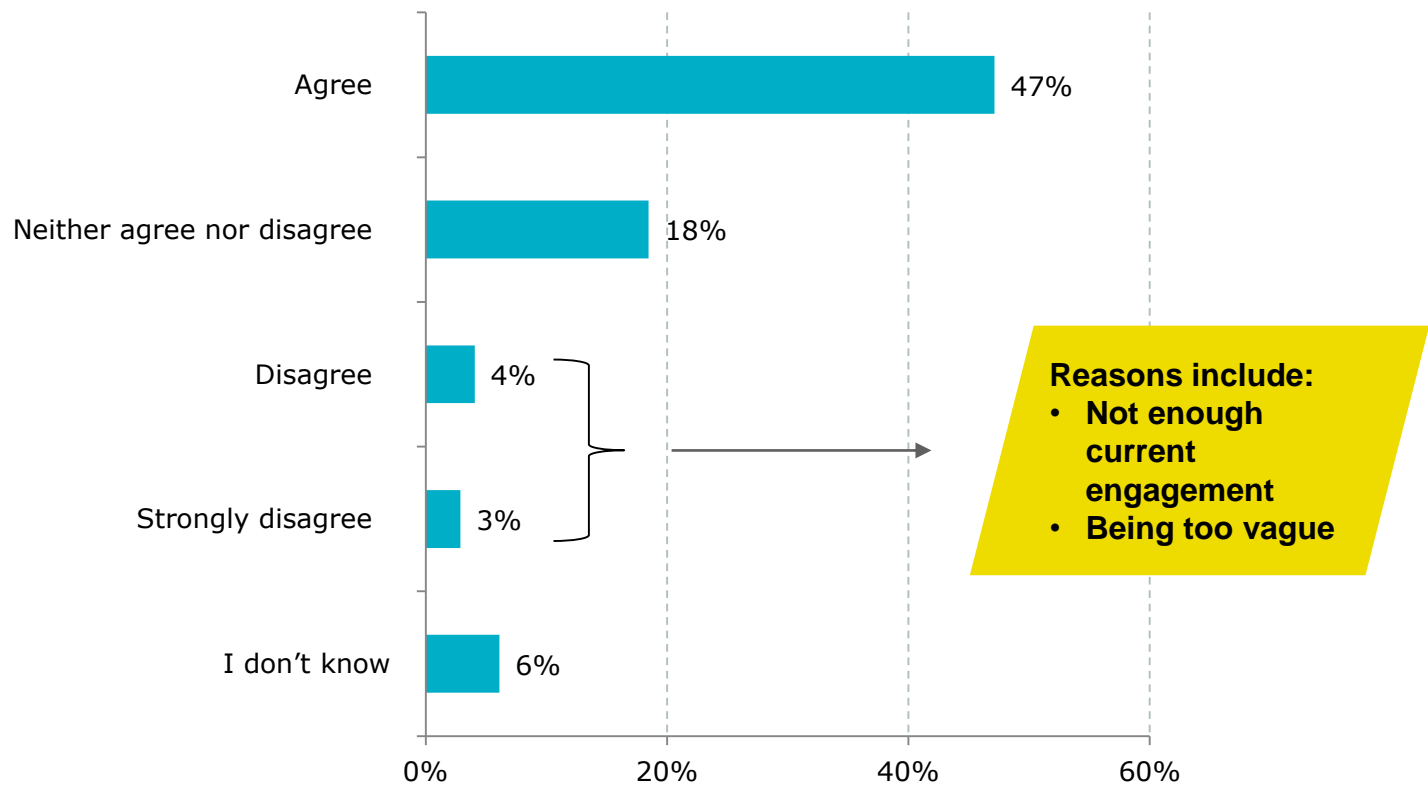
# Mission and Vision



Over two thirds believe the vision to be appropriate

Online  
Survey

### Agreement with SU vision



Base: 590 respondents.

**G1. We'd like to share the 'Vision' with you. Vision: A thriving and successful organisation which engages with its members and the University. To what extent do you agree that this is an appropriate 'Vision' for Students' Union University of Greenwich?**

The largest proportion of students who responded thought that the vision reflected what the students' union is already doing. They also felt that as a students' organisation it is important to engage with students so that it can remain representative of their views.

Online  
Survey

### Reasons for **agreeing** with appropriateness of SU vision

#### Main themes

- **Union is currently doing this**
- **Important to engage with students**

"The **union** is very **good at engaging** with members of the uni."  
(2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)

"They seem to **reach out** and create an **inclusive environment** for its students offering help and change."  
(First year undergraduate aged 18-22)

"Because student **union** have to be a **link between students and administration.**"  
(4<sup>th</sup> year + undergraduate aged 23-29)

"Very true, **the more students get involved, the better the results.** United we thrive."  
(Postgraduate aged 18-22)

"If members are **not engaged**, they are extremely **unlikely** to **participate** in the students' union's matters."  
(Postgraduate aged 23-29)

Base: 166 respondents. Balance: Did not agree with vision / no response

**G2. Why do you say that?**

However, those in the focus groups believed it was ambiguous and broad, with little evidence

Focus  
groups

Vision: A thriving and successful organisation which engages with its members and the University.

- **Ambiguous and broad**

*"It doesn't really mean anything."  
(Participant 6, Group 1)*

*It's really broad though, isn't it."  
(Participant 7, Group 1)*

*"I think not only to engage but to be closer to it and to word that."  
(Participant 1, group 2)*

*"Its ambiguity. It's like okay, what's the criteria for successful? What does that mean? What does thriving mean? And engages? That could mean possibly somebody turns up once a term. It's far too broad."  
(Participant 7, Group 1)*

- **Can see evidence of this – but needs to reach out more**

*"It's good at doing things that active members of the union want but it's not so good at outreach and getting what the general student population wants."  
(Participant 4, Group 3)*

*"Well it is successful, it does engage, it's just whether people want to actually cooperate."  
(Participant 3, group 2)*

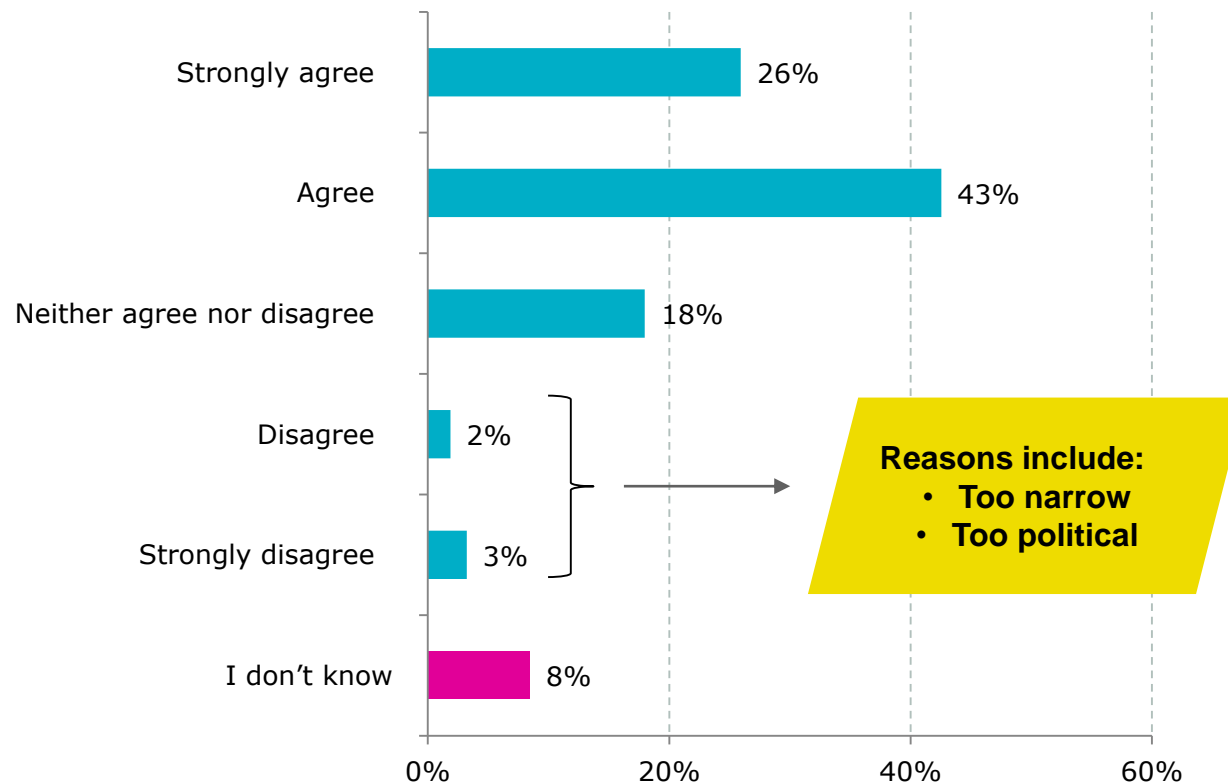
*"It is successful and it is engaging with its members and the university, but it could engage more. So things like partly true and partly not true, there is stuff that can be improved."  
(Participant 2, group 2)*

*"As a vision, yes, you'd want that. You're not going to say anything detrimental are you? Whether they're actually doing it at the moment I don't know, I think they need to know a bit more about who the student actually is."  
(Participant 2, Group 3)*

69% agreed that this is an appropriate mission for the SU

Online  
Survey

### Agreement with SU mission



Base: 590 respondents.

**G3. Now we would like to share the 'Mission' with you. Mission: SUUG is a democratic organisation run by students, for students, to represent student views to the University and to provide support services for its members. To what extent do you agree that this is an appropriate 'Mission' for Students' Union University of Greenwich?**

The largest proportion of respondents felt that the mission encompassed what the students' union is or should be doing. Students also approved that it was student-oriented so that it could represent the views of its members.

Online  
Survey

### Reasons for **agreeing** with appropriateness of SU mission

#### Main themes

- It is what the SU does / should do
- Student oriented
- Students should decide what happens in the SU

*"I feel like this is **what the student union represents.**"  
(3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"Says **what I want the SU** to be!" (3<sup>rd</sup> year undergraduate aged 30-39)*

*"Students should have a **voice** and **this is our way** of doing that." (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"As students we need a **organisation** to **represent us.**" (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 23-29)*

*"The **centre** of the SU is and should be the **students.**" (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

Base: 138 respondents. Balance:

G4. Why do you say that?

## Summary

- The majority of students in the online survey believe the vision and mission to be appropriate for the SU because they see evidence of what is mentioned and it's what an SU should be doing

# The future of the Students' Union

# Threats

Stake-  
holders

*"**Student apathy** and a sense of the SU not been relevant to the life of the average student."*



*"**Students who really do not connect** with the union's ethos or modus operandi."*



*"**Lack of engagement** from a large proportion of the student body (not unique to Greenwich)."*



*"**Lack of funding** from the University."*



*"**Change of CEO.**"*



## Threats to the Students' Union



- **Student apathy / engagement**
- **Funding**
- **Threats / changes to leadership**
- **Officers / democratic election process**

*"**Frequent change in Sabbatical Officers** reduces consistency of interaction with our service."*





## Opportunities for the Students' Union



- Closer partnership with institution
- Wider student engagement
- The student experience

**"Much wider engagement,**  
closer partnership with the  
University around all elements  
of the student experience."



**"Working with the university** to  
achieve common, shared goals and  
objectives."



**"Greater  
involvement  
with  
institutional  
decision  
making** Great  
engagement  
with  
students."



**"To make an *impact*  
in students' lives."**



**"Better engagement with  
students,** particularly those  
who live at home."



**"Offering a *student  
experience* in London  
that the other Universities  
do not offer."**



The largest proportion of respondents felt that that SU should focus on events and societies, such as club nights, sports and trips. Students commented that there should be more equality regarding activities available on the different Greenwich campuses.

Online  
Survey

### Future SU goals

#### Main themes

- **Events / societies**
- **Inclusion of all students**
- **Support**
- **Involvement/ engagement among students**
- **Facilities**
- **Employment / work experience**
- **Communication**

*"To ensure that **all students** feel as though they have been **heard** and **have support**." (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"**Talk to more new students** and give us more information on what we could do/achieve." (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"**Improvement** of the quality of **events** and variety of **bars/sports** clubs on offer at the Medway campus." (Postgraduate aged 23-29)*

*"Gather **international students** with locals and the EU students, make **more friendly environment**." (2<sup>nd</sup> year undergraduate aged 18-22)*

*"Ensuring there are a wide-range of **work opportunities** for students and advertising more of them." (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate aged 23-29)*

*"Ensuring more students are **engaged** in their **activities**. Ensure they have **more feedback from students** so as to know how they can be more helpful." (1<sup>st</sup> year undergraduate aged 30-39)*

Base: 273 respondents. Balance: No response

**G5. Thinking about the long term goals of Students' Union University of Greenwich, what do you think Students' Union University of Greenwich should focus on over the next few years?**

## Promotion is key

- **Letting students know you are here and what you do**

"Knowing a bit about the **representatives.**"  
(Participant 3, Group 4)"

"Making sure that **everybody knows that the Union is there, and what they do and what goes on**, even if they don't actually use it, so that they know that it is there." (Participant 8, Group 4)

"They should be **promoted** as a two-way street institution that is **looking after students.**"  
(Participant 7, Group 1)

- **Not just email...**

"I don't just need to see you, I **need to connect with you** and I don't feel like they're connecting at all, except emails and that, but that doesn't work with everybody.." (Participant 5, Group 4)

"Be **proactive**, like have a **newsletter** or something where it says, we've resolved this issue or we're dealing with this." (Participant 5, Group 4)

"It is **physical presence.**" (Participant 5, Group 4)

Providing events to suit the variety of students at Greenwich was considered important, and acting as a conduit between students who may otherwise not meet

Focus  
groups

### Events to suit the variety of students

"When there are activities **focus on the timing** for them and stuff. There are some activities, you know when we started with the film society, it was like in the evening." (Participant 4, Group 3)

"Maybe doing more things on **campus during the day** so more people could be involved." (Participant 7, Group 3)

"Speaking personally as a **mature student** I'm just **never here during the evening**. So that for me is part of the equal opportunities aspect." (Participant 1, Group 1)

"Making **more events, new events**, to get everyone engaged. A **wide range** of events for everyone...What about the people that don't have money?" (Participant 2, group 2)

### Allowing students to get to know each other

"I guess I'm looking for is some kind of **pan school focus**, in the sense of whereby possibly an event could be organised that would really **lobby different schools**." (Participant 7, Group 1)

"**Communication and integration**, just knowing people from **different backgrounds** doing different courses, and just seeing how their life is to yours, it would be a good thing." (Participant 4, Group 1)

"It's just a place to go where you want to **meet new people** and if you just want to **get involved** with whatever is going on." (Participant 3, Group 2)

Understanding the variety of students at Greenwich and finding out what they want was also a key suggestion

Focus  
groups

## Extending the reach and relevance of the Students' Union

- **Understanding  
the variety of  
students at  
Greenwich**

*"I think just being aware of certain people when it's necessary. I'm a mature student now and I haven't heard anything from the mature students officer."  
(Participant 6, Group 1)*

*And I think they should target every student. I think the SU mostly target the 19-20 year olds, they don't really target the mature or the post grad."  
(Participant 5, Group 1)*

*"I think I'd make equal opportunities a part of it in the broadest possible sense, in that unless you take into account everybody's needs and think about who might not be hearing about you, you can't possibly help everybody."  
(Participant 1, Group 1)*

- **Finding out what  
students want**

*"General feedback from students, maybe there should be a survey or something before the start of uni, so they can know what are the needs of students and who can they facilitate that."  
(Participant 2, Group 1)*

*"I think it should be about collecting information. To try to address people with niches, people with disabilities, people with special needs because nobody talks about it."  
(Participant 3, Group 3)*

# The future of the Students' Union

Stake-  
holders

**"More students involved in the SU**  
so that more students benefit. In particular making sure that students from diverse backgrounds are well integrated in the SU."

**"High level of student engagement** with the SUUG."

**"A key player in the life of the university,**  
completely integrated into decision making and every aspect of university life, providing a wide range of services to students."

- **Wider reach amongst students**
- **Become an integral part of attending university for students**
- **Increased partnership / relationship with Institution**

"I very much hope that the student union will be seen as a **key part of all student's lives** and will be seen as an integral part of the overall going to University experience."

"Work **closely with staff** to better promote the role of students in curriculum design and learning teaching experience."

"Working **very closely with key University staff** and to be seen as active collaborators."

## Summary

- Raising awareness of what's on offer is considered important for the future of the SU
  - indeed it was highlighted throughout the focus groups
- Understanding the different kinds of students at Greenwich is vital in order to know more about them and their needs of a students' union and ensuring that it's relevant to an increasing proportion of the student body

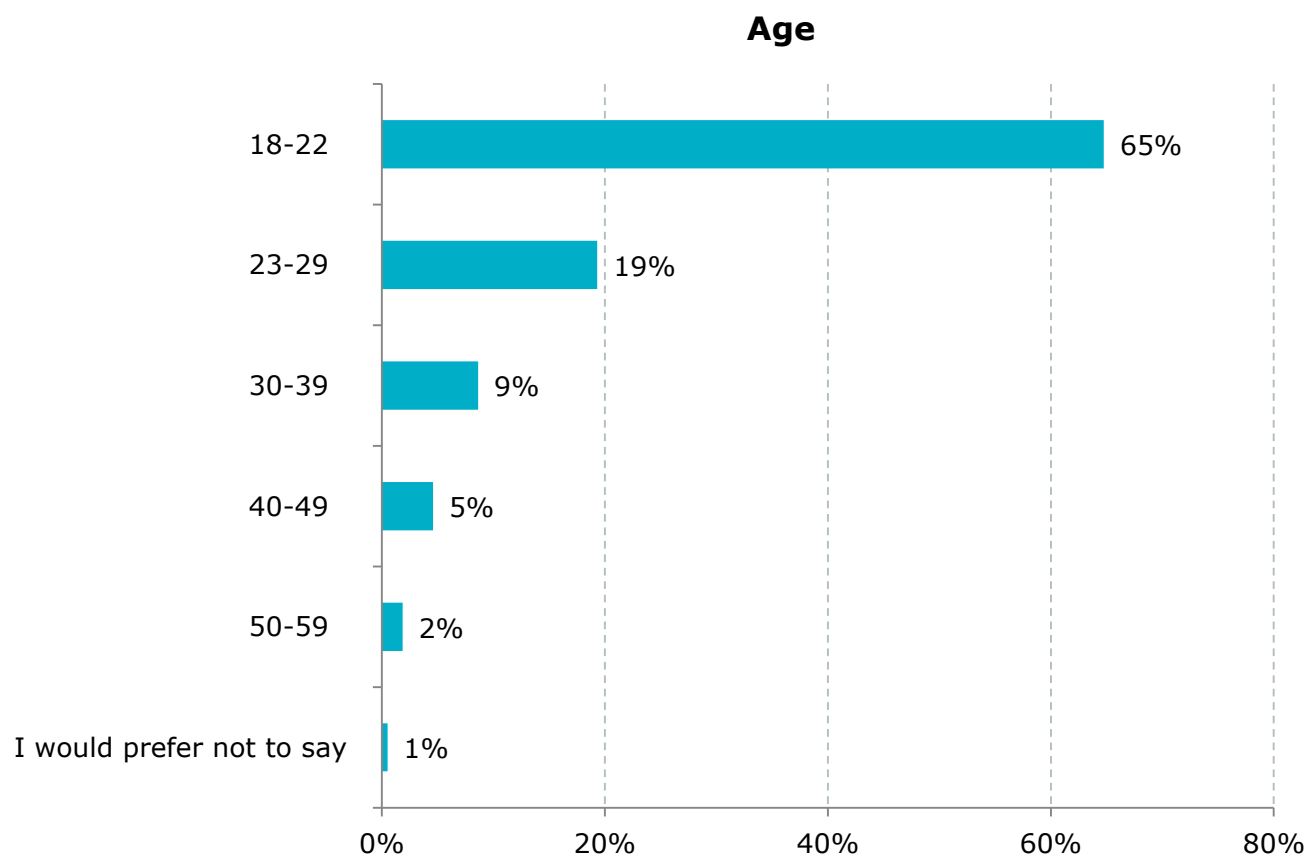
# Demographics



# Focus group demographics

Focus  
Groups

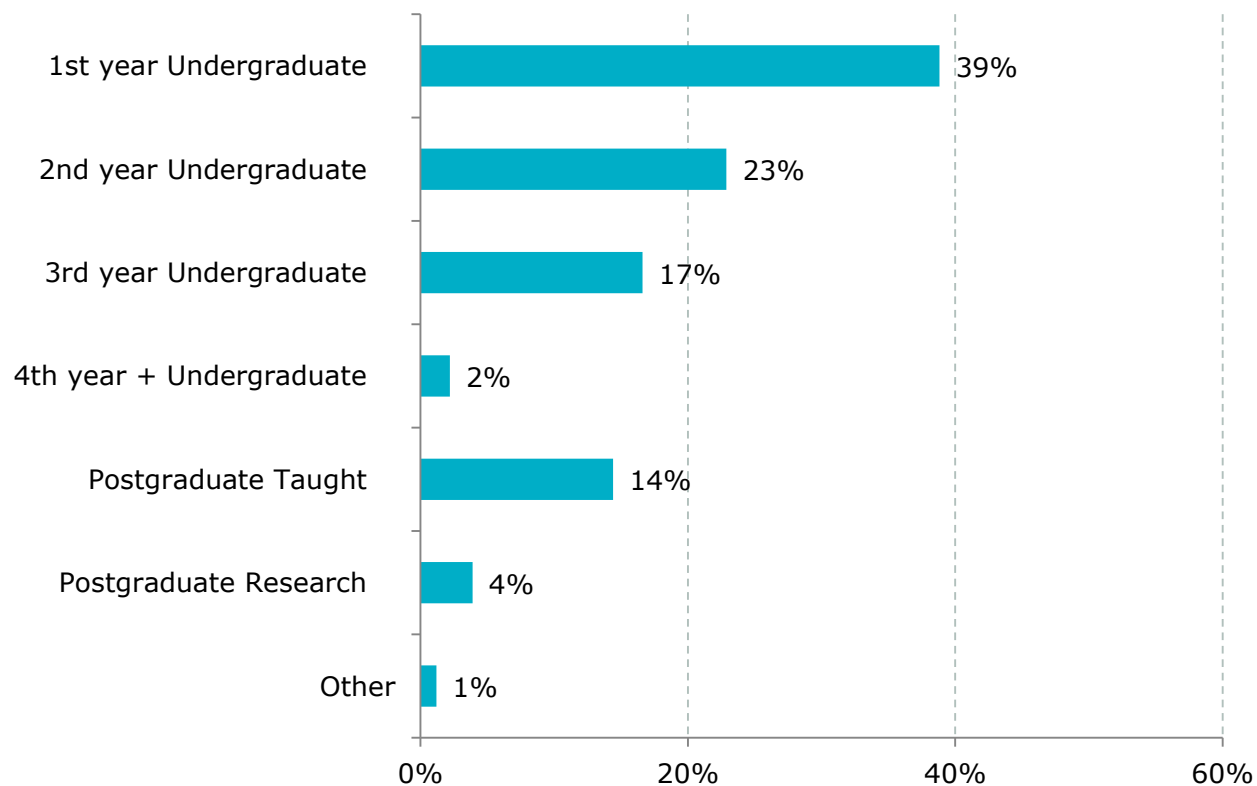
	Group 1 Greenwich Campus	Group 2 Greenwich Campus	Group 3 Avery Hill Campus	Group 4 Medway Campus
Age	18-22 = 3 23-29 = 3 50-59 = 1 Prefer not to say = 1	18-22 = 3	18-22 = 4 30-39 = 1 40-49 = 1 50-59 = 1	18-22 = 5 23-29 = 1 Prefer not to say = 2
Gender	Women = 4 Men = 4	Women = 2 Men = 1	Women = 4 Men = 3	Women = 5 Men = 3
Year of study	1st year = 1 2nd year = 4 3rd year + = 1 Postgrad = 2	1st year = 1 2nd year = 1 3rd year+ = 1	1st year = 2 2nd year = 3 3rd year = 2	1st year = 1 2nd year = 2 3rd year+ = 3 Postgrad = 1 Undeclared = 1
Subjects	Creative arts and design  Business and administrative studies  Law  Computer science  Architecture, building and planning	Computer science  Game design and development  Combined	Education  Subjects allied to medicine  Psychology	Subjects allied to medicine  Engineering  Biological sciences



Base: 590 respondents.

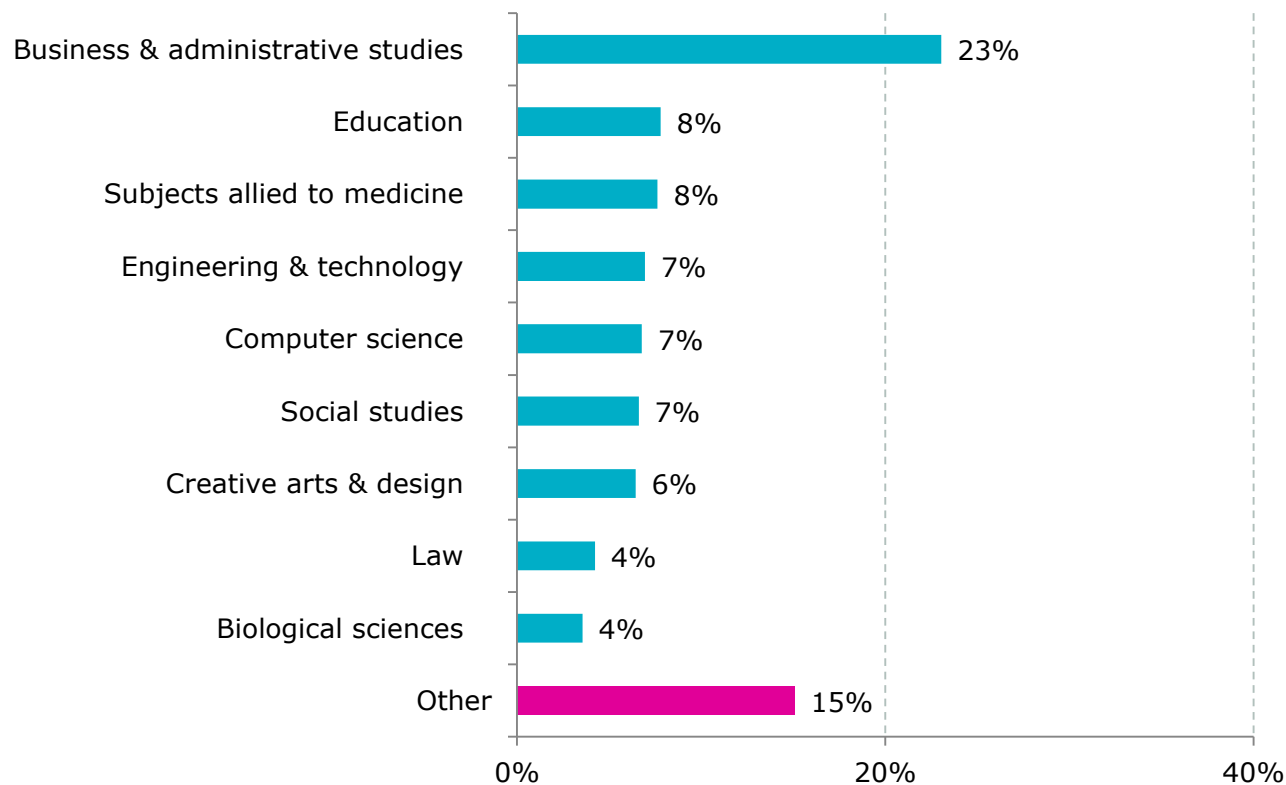
**A2. How old are you?**

## Level of study



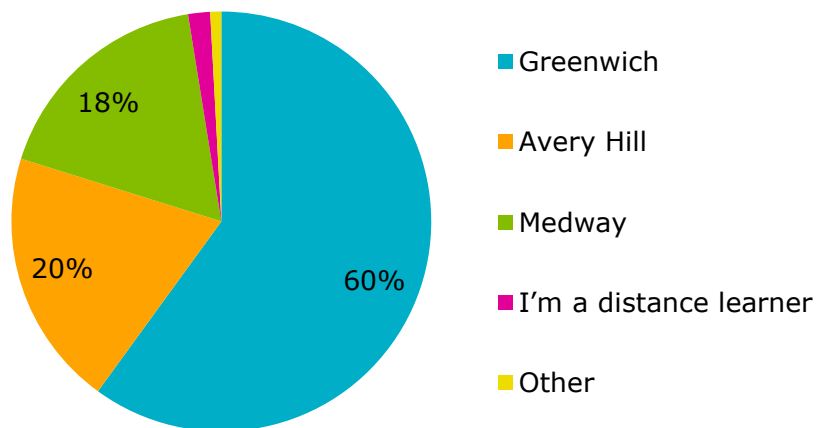
Base: 590 respondents.

## Top ten subjects of study



Base: 590 respondents.

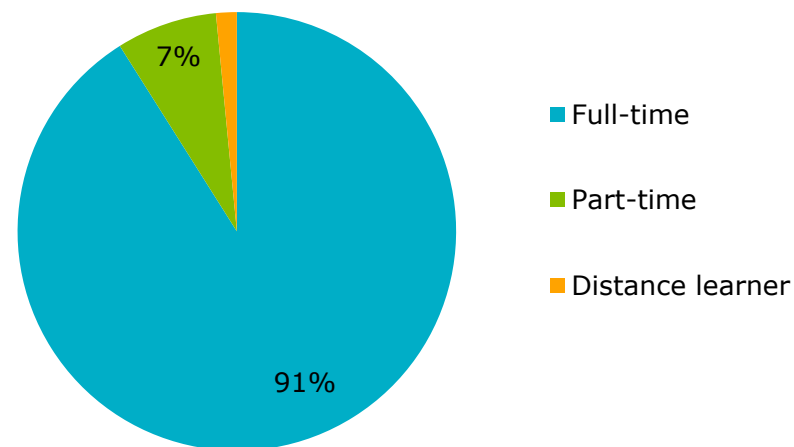
**Campus**



Base: 590 respondents.

**A5. At which of the following campuses do you study?**

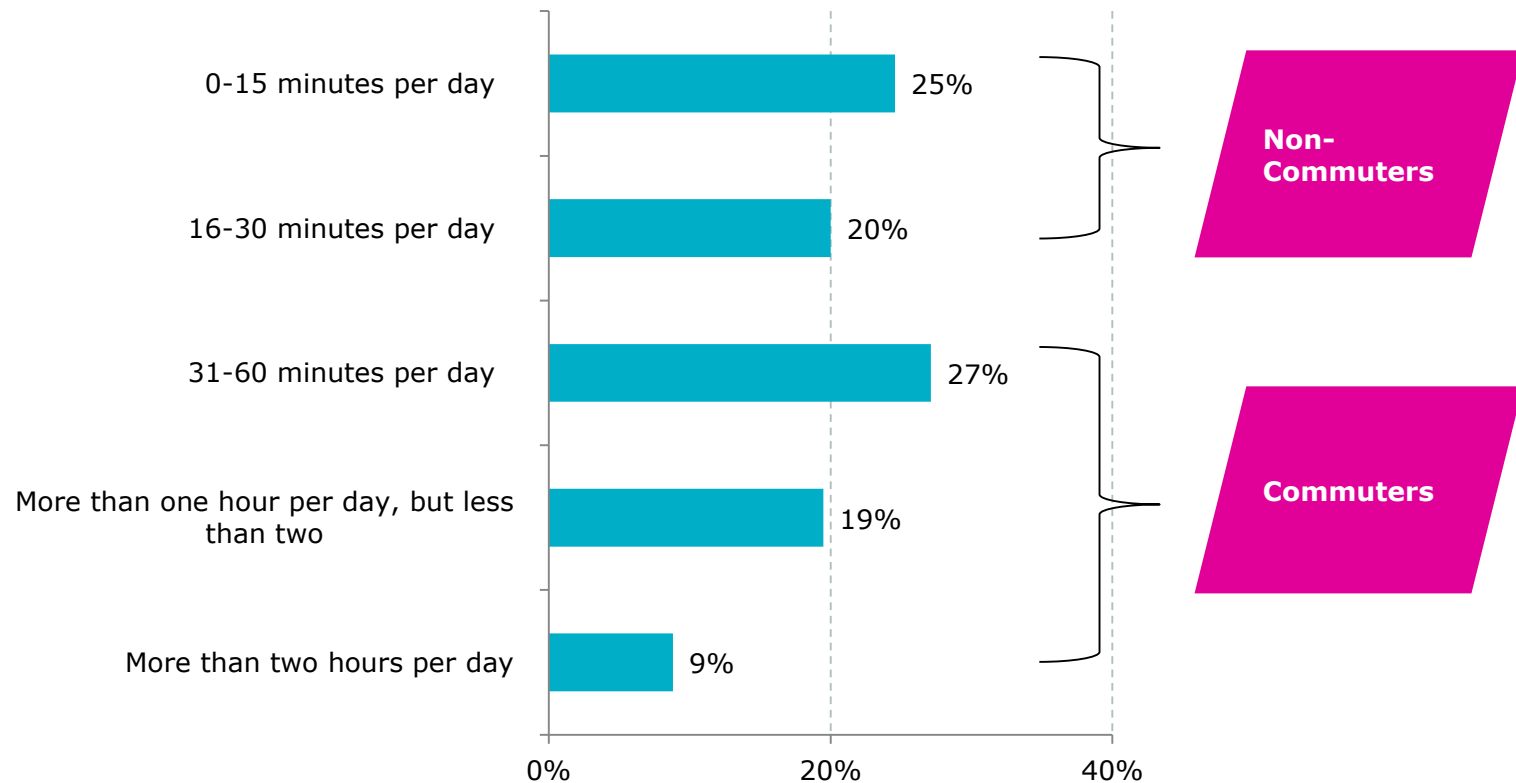
**Full or part time**



Base: 590 respondents.

**A6. What is your mode of study?**

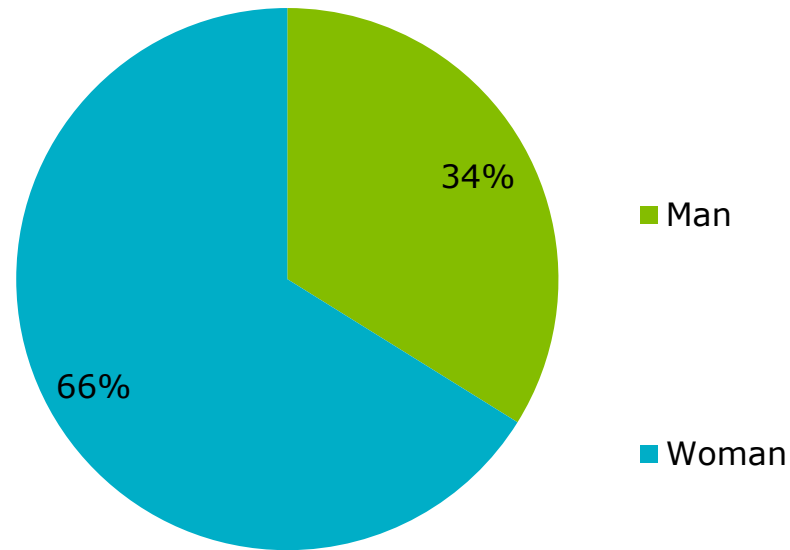
## Travelling time to university



Base: 590 respondents.

**A7. Approximately how long do you spend travelling to and from your accommodation to university on the days when you have scheduled programme requirements on campus?**

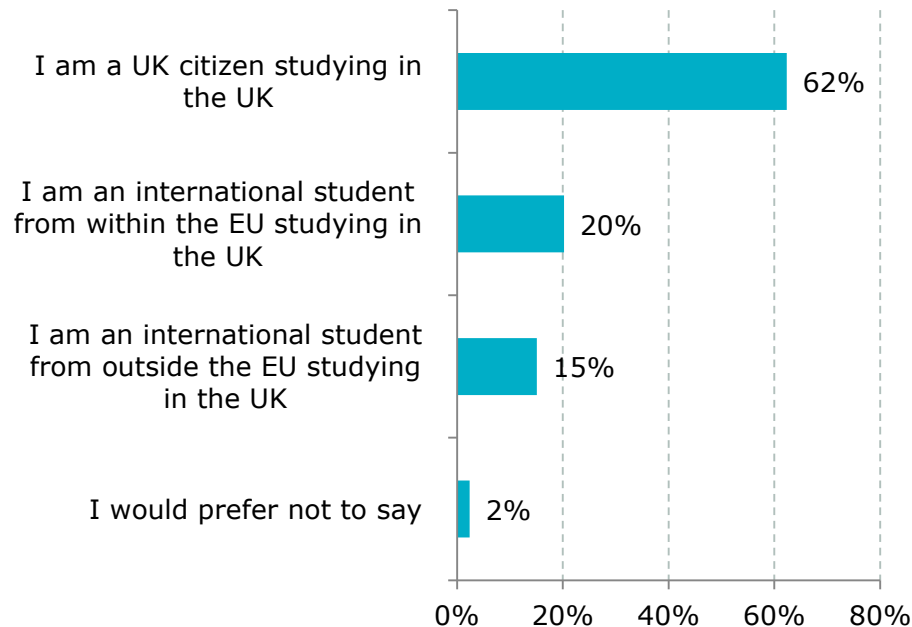
## Gender



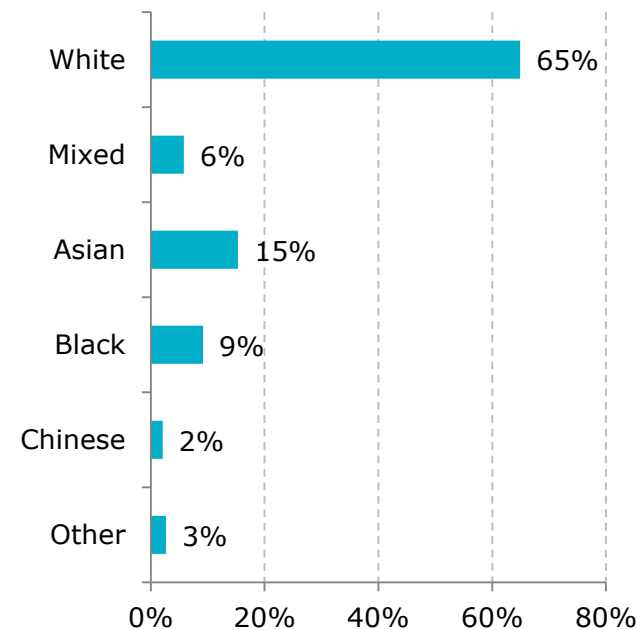
Base: 583 respondents. Balance: no reply.

**H1. How do you prefer to think of yourself?**

## Citizenship



## Ethnicity



Base: 584 respondents. Balance: no reply.

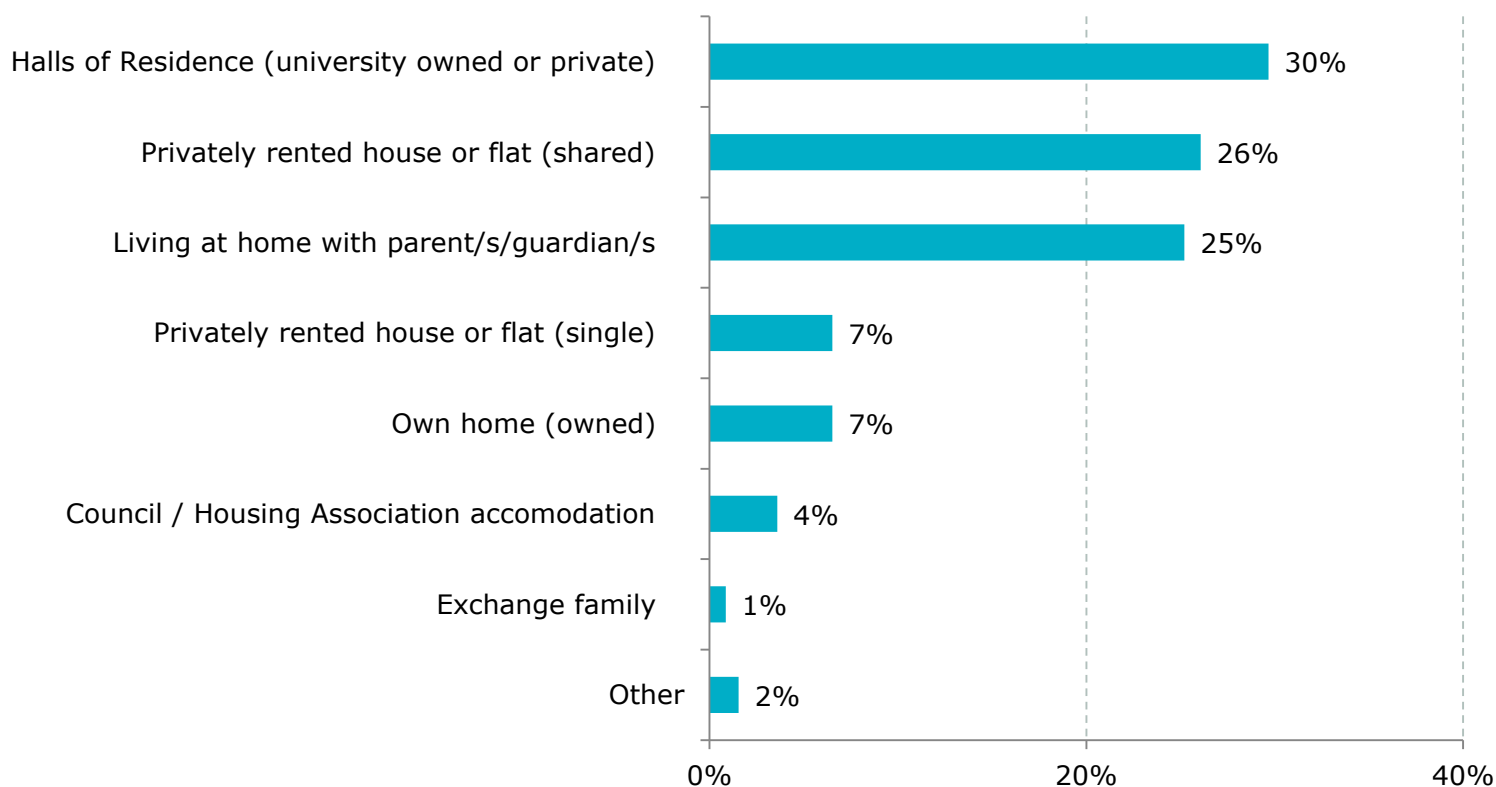
**H2. Which of the following statements best describes you?**

Base: 567 respondents. Balance: no reply

**H3. And to which of the following ethnic groups do you belong?**

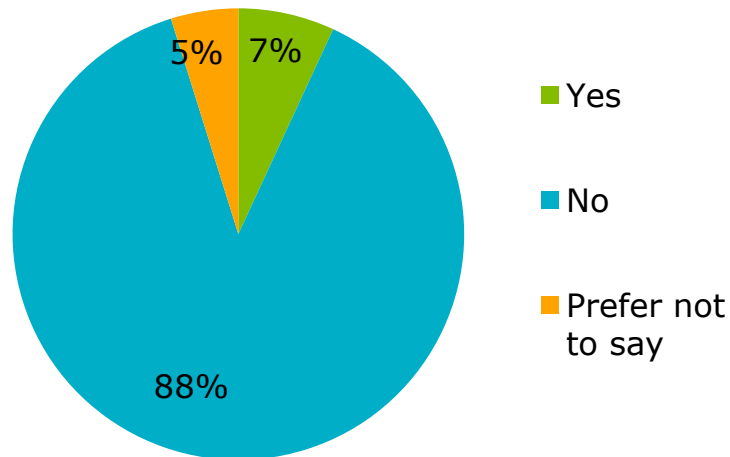


## Term time living arrangements



Base: 583 respondents. Balance: no reply.

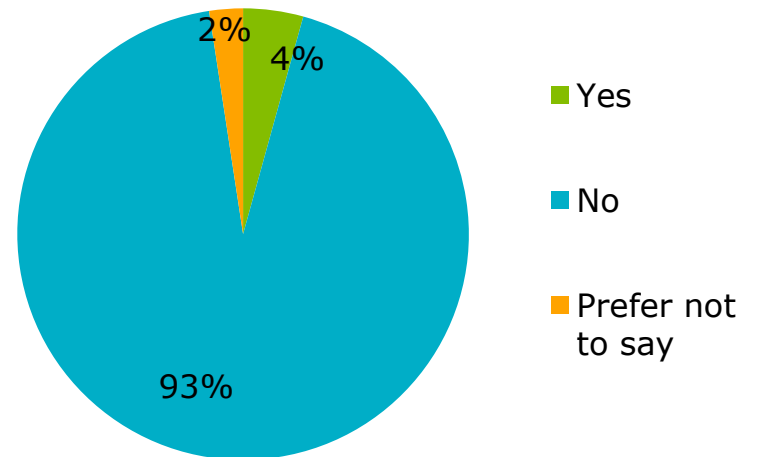
## Left home due to circumstances beyond control before age 18



Base: 435 respondents. Balance: those living at home with parent/s/guardian/s and no reply.

**H5. Did you leave home due to circumstance beyond your control before the age of 18?**

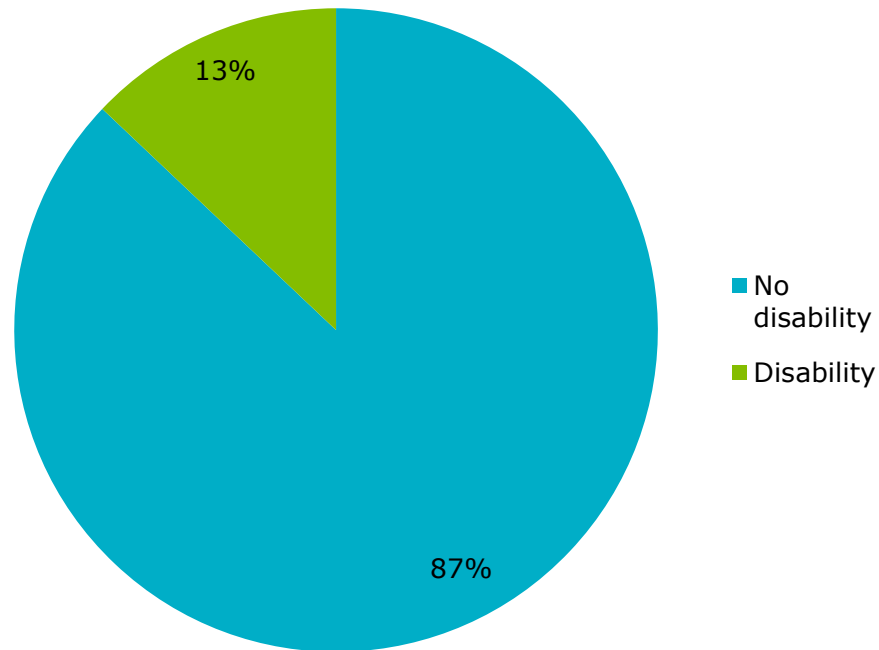
## Been in care



Base: 582 respondents. Balance: no reply.

**H6. Have you ever been in care?**

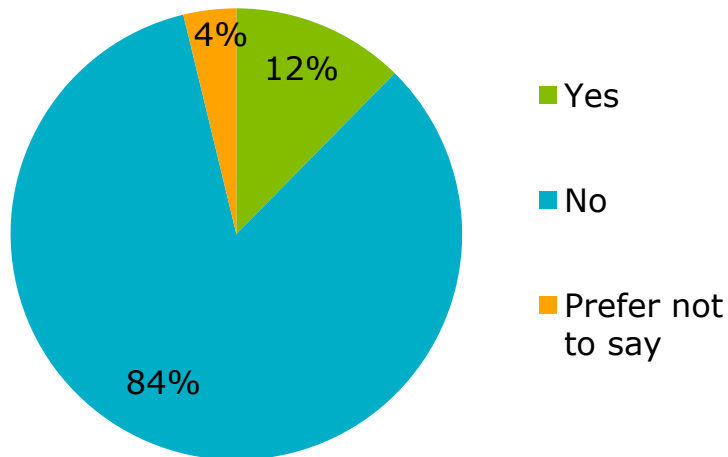
### Disability



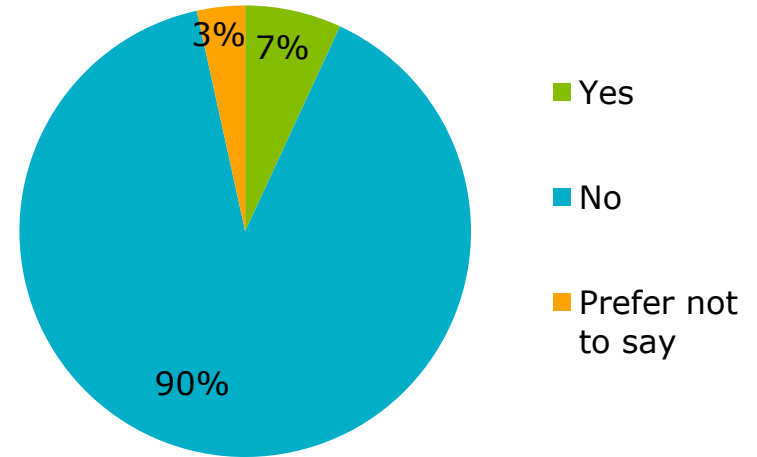
Base: 541 respondents. Balance: no reply and prefer not to say.

**H7. Do you consider yourself to have a disability, impairment or long-term health condition?**

## Living with someone with a disability



## Caring responsibilities for someone with a disability



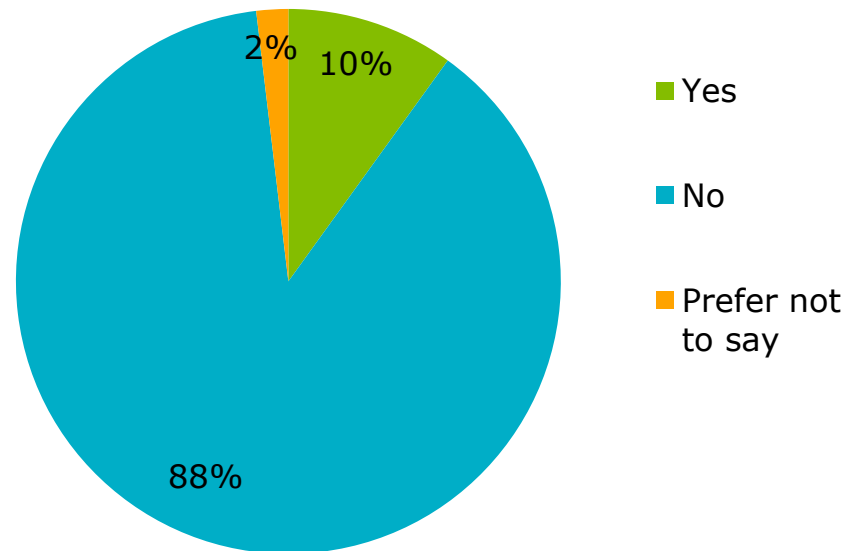
Base: 582 respondents. Balance: no reply.

**H8. Do you live with someone with a long term health problem?**

Base: 580 respondents. Balance: no reply.

**H9. Do you have any caring responsibilities for someone with a disability or a long term health problem?**

## Parent/guardian



Base: 583 respondents. Balance: no reply.

**H10. And finally, are you a parent or guardian?**

A report for Students' Union, University of Greenwich

**December 2015**

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