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British Active Students Survey: Further Education 2019/2020 Report

Forewords

Baroness Tanni Grey Thompson

Chair, ukactive

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

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

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

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

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

Mike Diaper

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dean Hardman

Director of Sport and Student Experience, Association of Colleges (AoC)

The British Active Students Survey is now in its second year for FE and again provides us with important insight into the levels of activity among the student population and their attitudes towards living active lives. We know that being physically active and participating in sport can be major contributors towards increased mental and physical wellbeing for young people, as well as helping them develop essential skills that will benefit them in all aspects of their lives.

For the Further Education sector, sport and physical activity also play a crucial role in developing a strong sense of community within colleges and ensuring a vibrant, positive experience for students during their college careers. This role will be more important than ever before in light of the current public health crisis, as colleges seek to place themselves at the heart of their local communities and re-engage students in their own college communities following periods away from face to face learning. Sport and physical activity can bring students and staff together as the rebuilding process begins.

AoC Sport, as the lead organisation for sport and physical activity in post-16 education, is therefore committed to continuing in our mission to ensure all students across our member colleges and beyond have access to sport and physical activity opportunities appropriate to their needs and circumstances. The results of this year's survey will help steer our work and decision making as we progress our plans and approach to increasing participation in physical activities and competitive sport.

While this year's survey highlights the strides that have been made in recent years, it also shows that this task will not be easy and that stubborn inequalities and barriers remain. It is fantastic to see so clearly the higher levels of wellbeing, for instance, that physically active students feel, but the proportion of our student population who are inactive remains too high.

Thanks, of course, to our partners at Sport England, Matrix Fitness and ukactive for their support in producing this report and to all respondents from across the country.

Julian Taylor

Commercial Director, Matrix Fitness

In light of recent global events surrounding COVID-19, physical activity has been thrust forward by the government as an important factor in maintaining not only physical, but mental wellbeing. The publication of this study reinforces those benefits for a student population that can often feel under pressure at a time when life changing events, such as moving away from home and friends, are taking place.

It is great to see that the health and wellness of an individual is no longer measured only by physical fitness. A much greater awareness now exists for the need to balance emotional and mental wellbeing, and the results of the survey show the positive impact physical activity has; improving confidence and happiness whilst reducing anxiety and stress.

However, it is clear that the opportunity exists to increase the number of students who benefit from exercise by finding new and engaging methods to overcome objections. Matrix Fitness is committed to working with the education sector and its partners, not only to help with the availability of equipment, but also to find fitness solutions that interest and capture those that have not already been reached.

The British Active Students Survey for 2019/20 provides further insight this year, for the first time collecting data from both Further and High Educations in the same survey. It gives a platform for the sector to validate the work done so far, demonstrating the positive impact, whilst identifying where future efforts are required.

We are grateful to be part of this survey along with partners ukactive, Sport England and AoC Sport and look forward to continuing our work together.

Executive Summary

BRITISH ACTIVE STUDENTS SURVEY: FURTHER EDUCATION 2019/2020

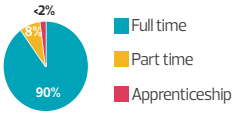
Who took part?

7,169 students

107 institutions

53% female
46% male

Mode of study



Mainly full time

What did they do and how active were they?

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

- Just Gym **18%**
- Just Sport **16%**
- Both gym & sport **16%**
- Neither gym or sport **50%**

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

- AoC competition **59%**
- Non AoC sport **19%**
- Both **31%**

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

	Inactive <30 mins	Active 150 mins+
Survey population	26%	65%
AL (16–24 years)	17%	74%
AL (25–34 years)	21%	67%

How did their wellbeing metrics compare?

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

	Inactive	Active
Happiness	5.6	6.1
Life Satisfaction	5.7	6.3
Feeling worthwhile	5.7	6.4
Anxiety (inverse scale)	4.3	4.6

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

	Inactive	Active
Left out	46%	48%
People barely know me	42%	46%
Isolated from others	52%	55%
People are around me but not with me	48%	50%

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

Inactive **20.6** | Active **21.6**

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

Inactive **33%** | Active **35%**

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

Inactive **28%** | Active **35%**

How does this impact attainment and employability?

Students were asked what grade they expected to get:

UCAS Points	Inactive	Active
16–31	19%	17%
32–47	53%	51%
48–56	28%	32%

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

	Inactive	Active
Very or fairly confident	43%	51%
Not at all/ lack confidence	19%	12%

What are the barriers and motivators?

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

Biggest motivators:
To benefit my health **16%**
To improve my body image **13%**
As a stress relief **11%**

Biggest barriers:
Too busy with studies **27%**
Body confidence/ image **12%**
There are no barriers **11%**

Background

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

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

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

There are currently around 3 million students enrolled in Further Education[7]. The latest Sport England Active Lives[8] data suggests that the majority of 16-24 year olds (74.1%) and 25-34 year olds (67.1%) are classified as physically active. This means they are taking part in 150 minutes or more of moderate intensity physical activity per week[8]. There are less inactive individuals in the 16-24 age bracket (16.5%) compared to the 25-34 age bracket (21.0%). Nevertheless, more than a quarter of these age groups do not meet recommended levels of physical activity. Supporting young adults to be physically active during their time studying at a FEI is important because health behaviours (positive or negative) developed in adolescence can often determine long-term behaviours in adulthood and the rest of life[9].

The BASS evidence has demonstrated the pivotal role educational institutions can have in supporting students through an often life changing period. As young people get older, adolescents are faced with increasing life pressures that include exams, body-image, and peer influences[10]. Furthermore, attending a HEI can be a life changing experience for many individuals as they move away from home and are exposed to new experiences and opportunities for the first time[11]. Young people also indicate that exam revision and homework often present as a barrier to participation in sport and physical activity[10].

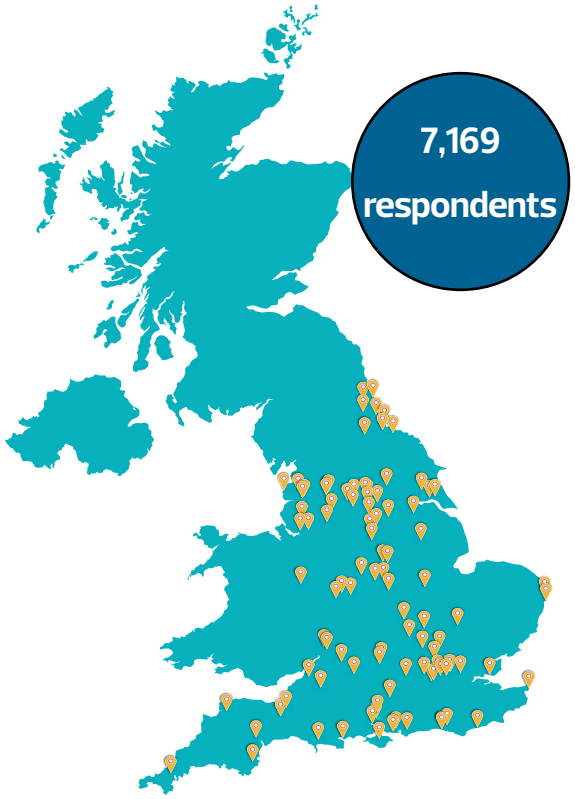
The evolution of BASS 2019/2020 included adding questions to understand motivations behind physical activity, links to competitive and non-competitive sport, and to gather further insights into mental wellbeing such as the levels of student loneliness. Personal and mental wellbeing, employability and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

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

Respondents

Data for BASS 2019/2020 was collected using an online survey platform which was open for responses between 12th November 2019 and 31st January 2020. The survey was disseminated through various routes across the project partners. These included press releases, social media channels, FEI and HEI newsletters, strategy groups, staff and volunteers.

Map of institutions that responded



Almost all responses were collected from England (99.6%), with 21 responses from Scotland, five from Wales and one from Northern Ireland. Given this skew towards England, the generalising of the results presented in this report across Britain should be approached with caution.

Students responded from 107 different FEIs. The top three responding institutions based on the percentage of responses against their full time equivalent (FTE) student population were Warrington and Vale Royal College (31.4%), New College Pontefract (25.7%), and Lincoln College (18.3%). These institutions accounted for 1,649 responses, 23.0% of the total of 7,169 responses. The top 10 responding institutions can be seen in the table below.

Only one of the top 10 responding institutions (Varndean College) in this survey were in the top 10 for the BASS FE 2018/2019[3]. Overall, the current survey had 3,508 more responses from students, from 33 more institutions. The top 10 institutions as part of BASS FE 2018/2019[3] had an FTE total of 53,990 students, that accounted for 2,357 responses (response rate 4.4%), totalling 64.4% of the overall responses. This compares to the current top 10 that has a lower FTE total of 21,560 students, that accounted for 3,607 responses (response rate 16.7%), totalling 50.3% of overall responses. This suggests a broader representation of students across the institutions in the current survey.

Top 10 responding institutions by response rate percentage

Institution	Country	FTE	Responses	Rate (%)
Warrington and Vale Royal College	England	1,810	568	31.4%
New College Pontefract	England	2,310	593	25.7%
Lincoln College	England	2,670	488	18.3%
Priestly College	England	1,920	312	16.3%
Havant and South Downs College	England	4,050	628	15.5%
Hartpury College	England	1,680	252	15.0%
Leeds College of Building	England	890	115	12.9%
Barking and Dagenham College	England	2,810	311	11.1%
Richard Huish College	England	1,820	197	10.8%
Varndean College	England	1,600	143	8.9%

Demographics

› Just over half of respondents were female (52.8%), lower than the proportion of the overall college population (59.7%)[12].

› Respondents ranged between 16 and 63 years of age, with most aged 17 (34.1%) or 18 (38.9%) years of age.

› Compared to the overall college population, the survey represents a younger sample, as just over half of the college population are aged between 25–49 years of age[12].

› Overall, 11.1% of the population surveyed reported having a disability, slightly lower than the college population (17.3%)[12].

› Participants who were White or White British made up the majority of respondents (86.1%), higher than the college population (75.6%).

› Both Black or Black British (college population: 7.4%) and Asian or Asian British (college population: 10.1%) had a lower percentage of respondents to the survey than the equivalent college population[12].

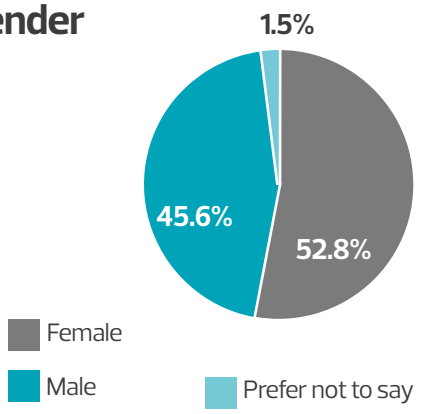
› The majority of respondents reported being heterosexual/straight (82.4%). Similar proportions reported being a gay man (1.2%) or a gay woman (1.7%).

› Multiple index of deprivation, which is calculated from a student's home postcode and groups the population into deciles from 1–10 depending on the relative deprivation of the area, showed that of all the deciles, the two areas of highest deprivation (declles 1 and 2) had the most students, with 14.8% and 12.6% of respondents respectively. This is a similar pattern to what is seen in the overall college population[12].

› Students in the least deprived decile were least represented in the sample with 7.5% of responses, which is lower than the equivalent college population in this decile.

› The majority of respondents (90.4%) were full-time students. Just under two thirds (63.5%) were studying level 3 qualifications, with a further 15.3% studying level 2 qualifications[13].

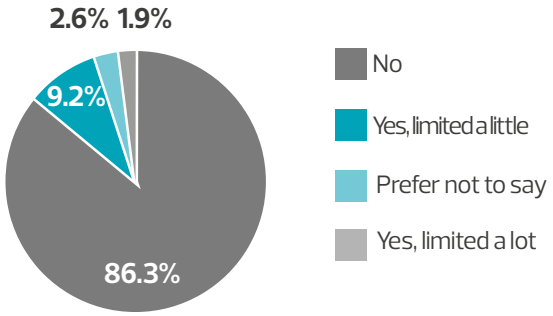
Gender



Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Survey
White or White British	86.1%
Asian or Asian British	5.0%
Black or Black British	3.0%
Mixed	3.3%
Other	1.9%
Prefer not to say	0.6%

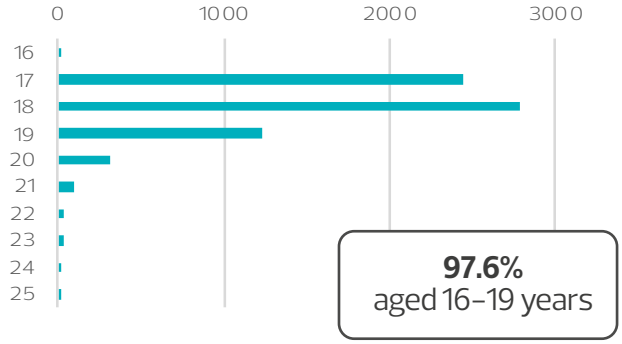
Disability



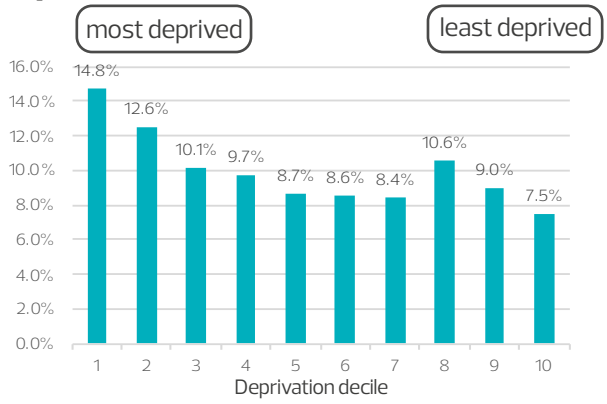
Sexual Orientation

Ethnicity	Survey
Heterosexual/straight	82.4%
Bisexual	7.2%
Prefer not to say	4.7%
Other (please specify)	2.8%
Gay Woman/Lesbian	1.7%
Gay Man	1.2%

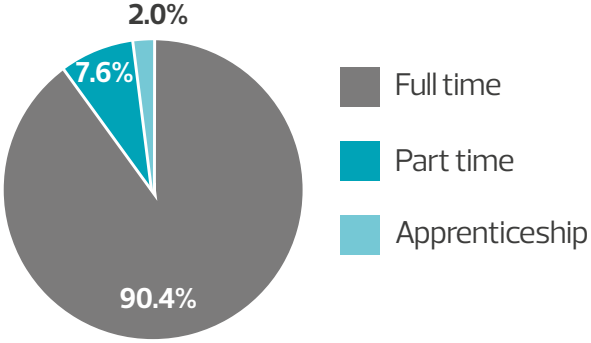
Age



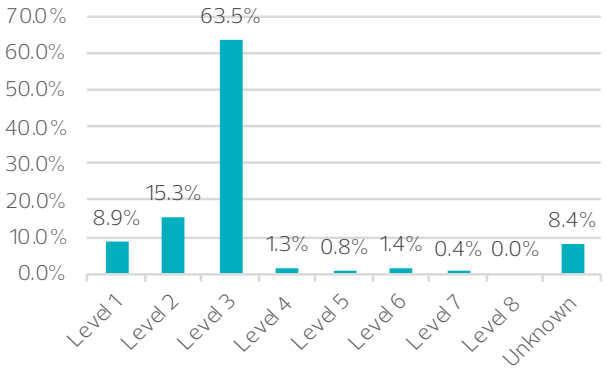
Deprivation



Study Mode



Level of Study



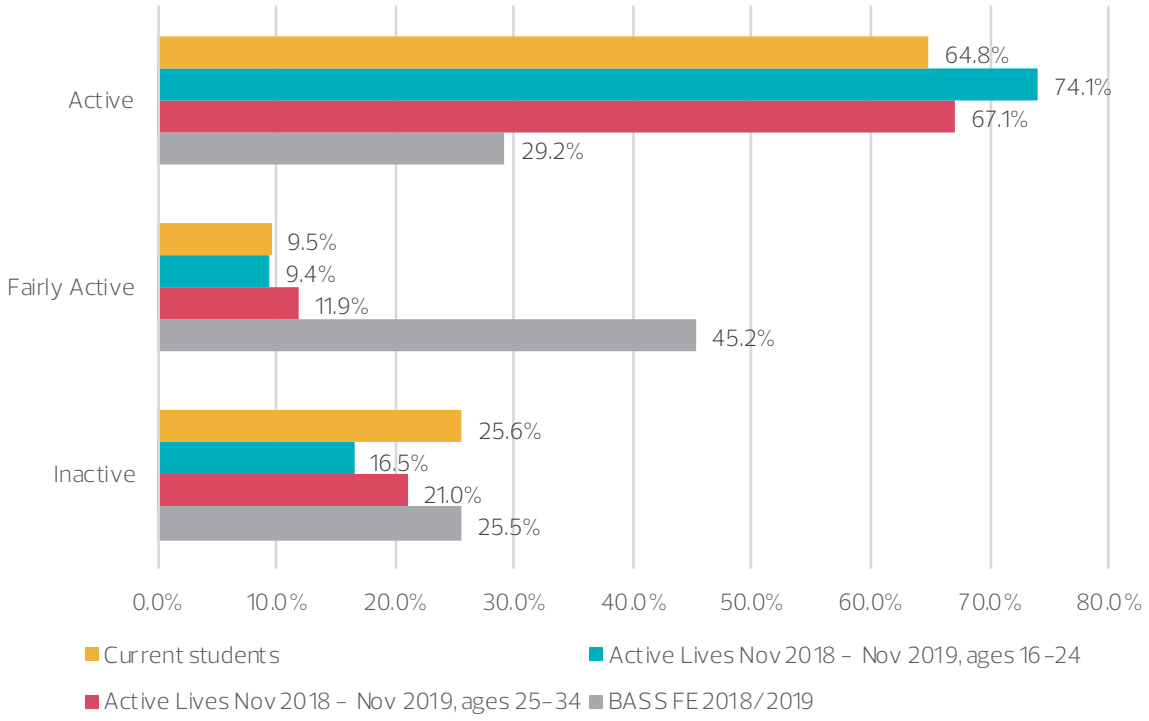
Physical Activity

The majority (64.8%) of FEI students are classified as being active, which involves taking part in at least 150 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week. Just over a quarter (25.6%) of students were classified as inactive (completing under 30 minutes per week). The physical activity levels were grouped in accordance with Sport England's Active Lives survey[8] to allow for comparison to national data. They differ slightly from the UK Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) guidelines[14] that suggest 16 to 18 year olds are measured against the children's guidelines which do not allow for comparison. The Sport England activity classifications are used throughout the remainder of the report.

Comparing the student activity levels from BASS 2019/2020 with Active Lives data (for 16-24 and 25-34 year old to reflect the student population) reveals that although the majority of students are classified as active (64.8%), this proportion is lower than national data (67.1% and 74.1%)[8]. Additionally the student population surveyed has a higher proportion of inactive individuals (25.6 vs 16.5% and 21.0% for Active Lives data[8]). The fairly active category was consistent across national and the student population.

Big differences can be seen in the activity levels of students when comparing the breakdown within the present study to the BASS: FE 2018/2019[3] findings. The current survey had a higher proportion of active students and lower proportion of fairly active students than the previous version, whilst the proportion of inactive students remain similar. This change in the proportion of students within each activity classification group aligns the current survey data closer to the national Active Lives data as discussed above. This highlights that the population of students surveyed for the BASS 2019/2020 are more representative of the general population by age. When segmenting by activity levels throughout the remainder of the report, this greater representation across the activity levels provides more confidence for any associations made. Although there are more active students in BASS 2019/2020, the proportion aware of the current physical activity guidelines remains consistent at 58.1%.

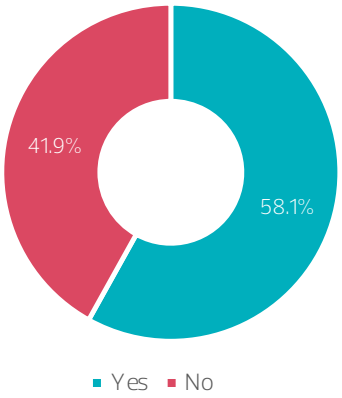
Physical activity levels of the survey respondents compared to Sport England's Active Lives data



Awareness of physical activity guidelines

Students were asked if they were aware of the current CMO physical activity guidelines, and how much activity they should be doing on a weekly basis to reach these guidelines. The majority of students were aware of these guidelines (58.1% of respondents). The guidelines state that individuals should be reaching 150 minutes a week of moderate intensity physical activity. This would classify them as 'active'.

Awareness of the physical activity guidelines



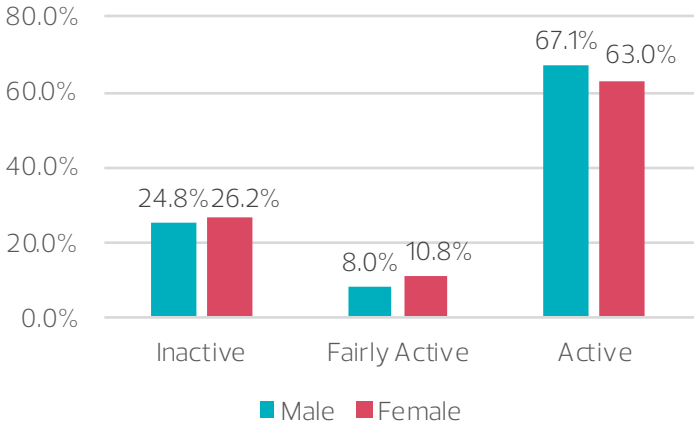
Physical activity by gender

Physical activity levels by gender reveal that slightly more males (67.1%) reported being physically active compared to females (63.0%). This is reflected in slightly higher proportions of females reporting they are inactive (26.2% vs 24.8% for males) or fairly active (10.8% vs 8.0% for males), however these differences between males and female physical activity levels were small. Compared to Sport England's Active Lives data[8], males (65.8%) have a slightly higher proportion of active individuals than females (61.9%), with both lower than the data from this survey. Females (25.7%) have a higher proportion of inactive individuals than males (23.7%) within the Active Lives data[8], both being lower percentages than the survey findings.

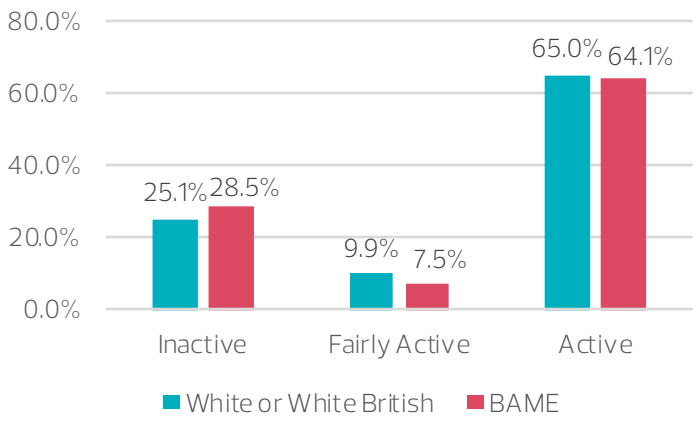
Physical activity by ethnicity

Physical activity levels by ethnicity show that White or White British students have a slightly higher proportion of active students (by 0.9%) than Black, Asian, Mixed Ethnic groups (BAME), suggesting both groups are similarly active. However, BAME students have a higher proportion of inactive students (28.5%) compared to White or White British students (25.1%). Similar trends were seen within the Active Lives data[8].

Physical activity levels by gender



Physical activity levels by ethnicity



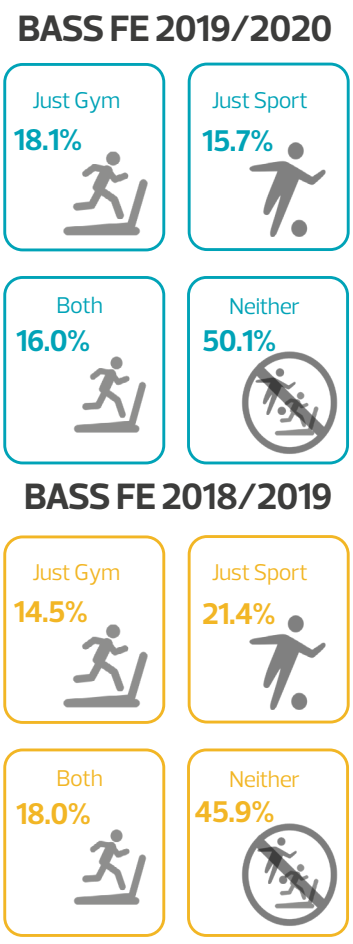
Volunteering

Volunteering within sport provides a great opportunity for students to take on additional responsibility, develop transferrable skills and support their team or local community, with Active Lives data indicating 18.1% of 16-25 year-olds and 9.1% of 25-34 year-olds have volunteered twice in the last year[8]. The primary volunteer role within a college was admin support (76.9%) followed closely by leadership (8.6%) and coaching (8.2%) roles. Outside of college, coaching (48.4%) and leadership (21.6%) roles were most frequent. This demonstrates that as well as participation in sport, students are involved in volunteer opportunities through sport.

	Sports volunteering within college (n=1,153)	Sports volunteering outside of college (n=1,005)
Leadership (manager/captain)	8.6%	21.6%
Coaching	8.2%	48.4%
Admin	76.9%	2.7%
Game Official (e.g. referee)	2.7%	9.9%
Management Team	1.6%	4.7%
Other	1.9%	12.8%

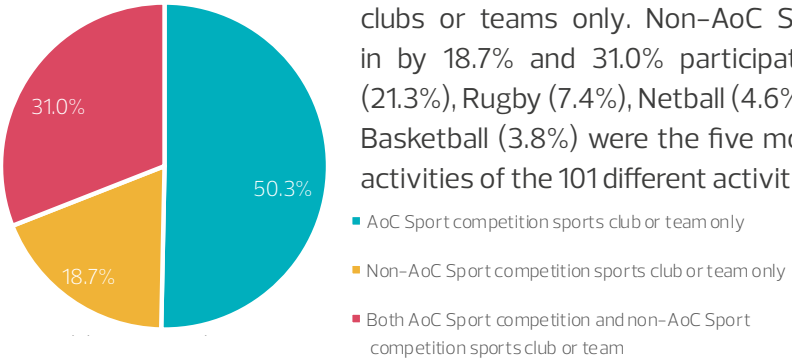
Type of activity

The type of activity participated in was classified into four groups (Just Sport, Just Gym, Both or Neither). Overall, 34.2% of the respondents used a gym with 18.1% using a just a gym and 16.0% using a gym in addition to participating in sport. Only 15.7% of students participated in just sport. Half (50.1%) of the respondents took part in neither gym or sport. Compared to BASS:FE 2018/2019[3], a higher percentage of this population took part in just gym, as well as neither gym or sport. This meant a lower percentage taking part in just sport and both gym and sport.



Of those that used a gym, 21.8% used a college or university facility. The most popular facility was a leisure centre (38.0%), with private gyms (19.6%) and budget gyms (7.5%) also used. For just sports participation, 60.0% took part in sport outside of college only, whilst 16.1% took part solely in college sport. Just under a quarter (23.9%) took part in sport at college and out of college. Where students participated in both gym and sports, 44.9% attended a gym and participated in non-college sport, 14.2% attended a gym and took part in college sport, whilst 40.9% attended a gym and participated in both college and non-college sport.

Breakdown of competitive and non-competitive sport



For those students that take part in college sport, just over half participate in AoC Sport competition sports clubs or teams only. Non-AoC Sport is participated in by 18.7% and 31.0% participate in both. Football (21.3%), Rugby (7.4%), Netball (4.6%), Dance (3.9%), and Basketball (3.8%) were the five most popular sporting activities of the 101 different activities chosen.

Experiences of Exercise and Sport

Key Findings

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

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

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

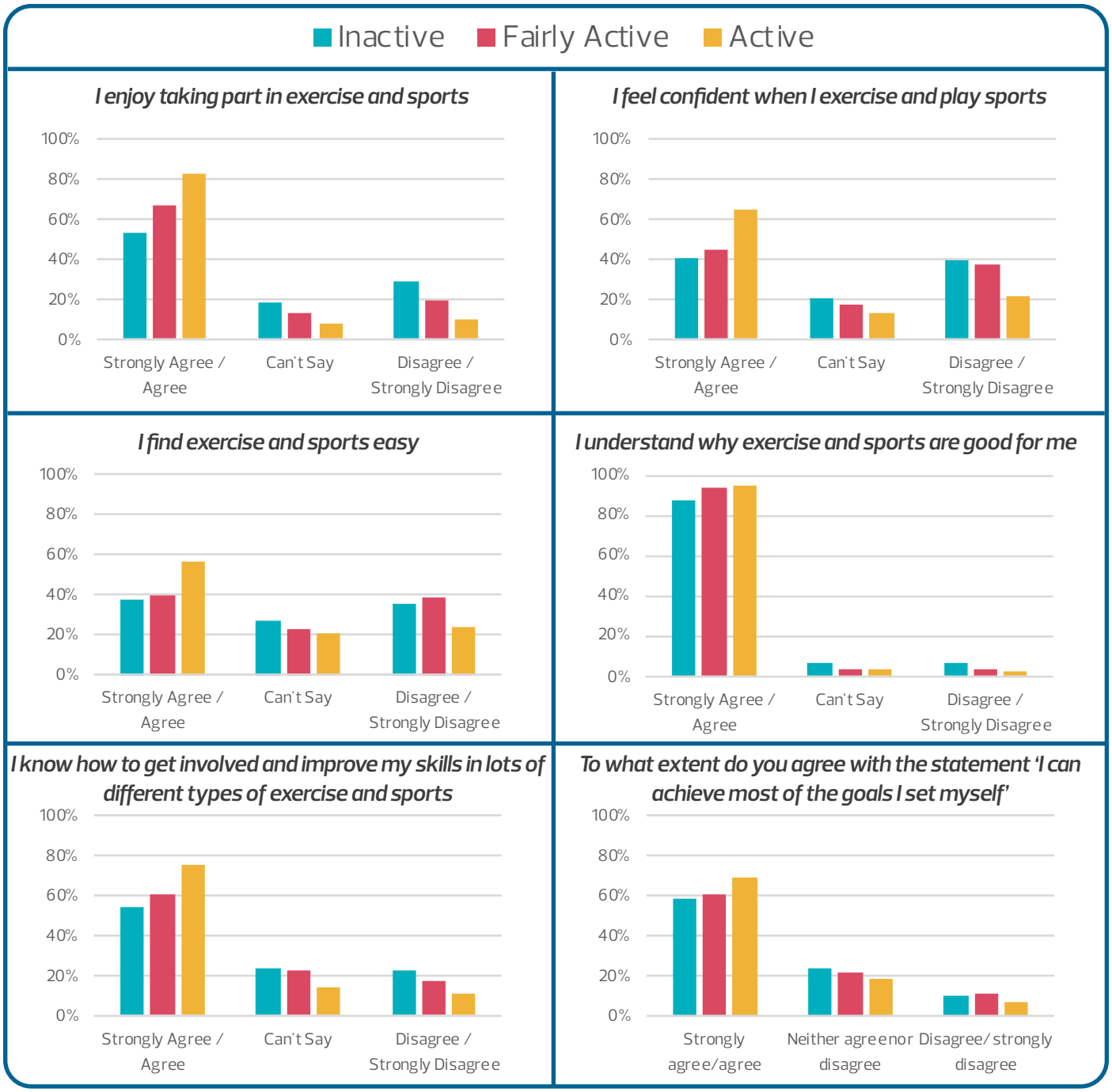
> Comparison of the current findings to BASS FE 2018/2019 reveal consistent experiences of exercise and sport.

Experiences of exercise and sport were measured amongst the college population using Sport England's Active Lives Children and Young People survey questions[15]. Overall, a high percentage of students 'agreed or strongly agreed' that they enjoy participating (73.3%), they feel confident (56.7%), they find it easy (49.7%), they understand the benefits of participation (92.5%), and can improve knowledge (68.2%) through exercise and sport. Confidence in participation (27.5%) and ease of participation (28.0%) were the two categories with the highest percentage of 'disagree or strongly disagree' responses. Two-thirds (66.2%) of students 'agree or strongly agree' that exercise and sport help their self-efficacy (ability to achieve goals), with only 8.6% selecting 'disagree or strongly disagree' Compared to BASS FE 2018/2019[3], overall experiences of exercise and sport remained consistent across both surveyed populations.

Experience by activity level

A high percentage of active students 'agreed/ strongly agreed' that they enjoyed taking part in exercise and sport (82.1%), felt confident when exercising and playing sport (65.0%), found exercise and sports easy (56.2%), and understood why exercise and sports were good for them (94.4%). Both fairly active (67.1%) and inactive (53.2%) students had high levels of 'agreement or strong agreement' that they enjoyed exercise and sport. All levels of physical activity had a high percentage of respondents who 'agreed or strongly agreed' that they understood why exercise and sport was good for them. Three quarters of active students (75.0%) strongly rated ('agree/ strongly agree') their ability to get involved in different exercises to improve their skills, a greater proportion than fairly active (60.0%) and inactive (54.0%) students.

Compared to BASS FE 2018/2019[3], experiences of exercise and sport by activity level generally remained consistent across each experience measure and by each activity level.



Experience by activity type

Students who took part in both gym and sport had the highest percentage of students 'agree or strongly agree' that they enjoy taking part in exercise and sport (95.0%), felt confident when exercising and playing sport (85.5%), and found exercise and sports easy (73.6%). A high percentage of those who participate in just sport 'agree or strongly agree' that they enjoy taking part in exercise and sport (92.0%), felt confident when exercising and playing sport (76.8%), and found exercise and sports easy (64.9%). This was to a greater extent than those who participated in just gym. Similar trends can be seen in the knowledge of how to get involved and improve skills (both gym and sport: 88.9%; just sport: 81.2%; just gym: 73.1%), as well as self-efficacy (ability to achieve goals) (both gym and sport: 74.8%; just sport: 67.4%; just gym: 67.9%). Participants who took part in neither gym or sport had fairly evenly split responses between 'agree or strongly agree' and 'disagree or strongly disagree' for confidence when participating in exercise and sport (agreement: 39.1%; disagreement: 40.7%), as well as finding exercise and sports easy (agreement: 36.8%; disagreement: 37.4%). There were high percentages of students in all categories who 'agreed or strongly agreed' with having an understanding of why exercise and sport are good for them.

Personal Wellbeing

Key Findings

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

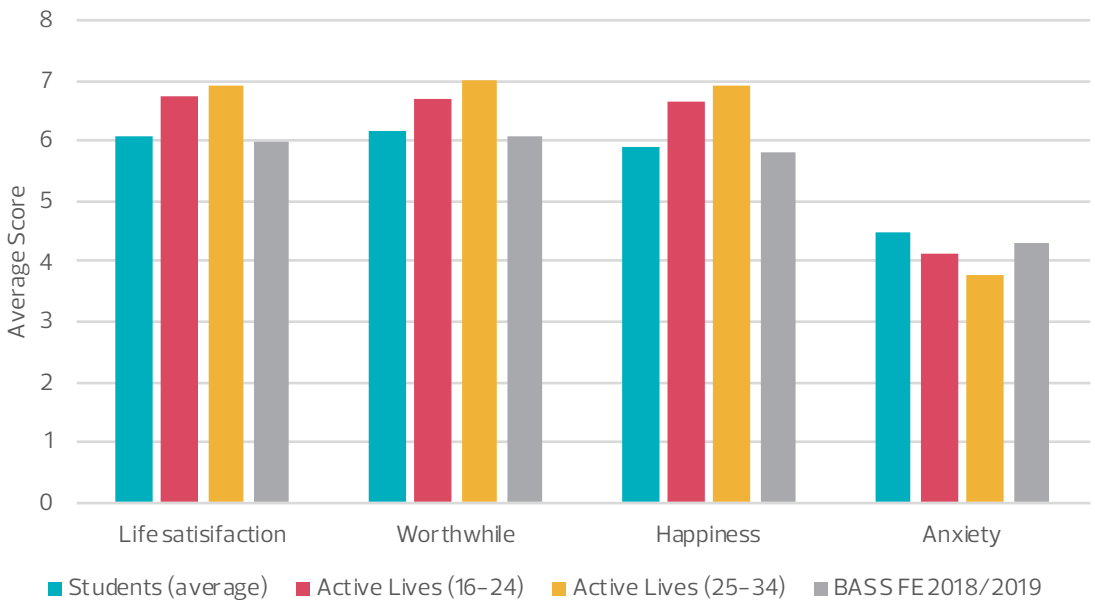
> Active students had higher life satisfaction, felt more worthwhile and had higher happiness levels, while inactive students had the lowest levels of anxiety.

> Participants in both sport and gym scored best across all personal wellbeing metrics, with just sport higher than just gym across life satisfaction, feeling worthwhile and happiness, with just gym participants having a better anxiety score.

> Personal Wellbeing remained constant from the previous BASS: FE 2018/2019 overall, improving for inactive students and those taking part in just gym or neither gym nor sport, but worsening for fairly active and active students.

The personal wellbeing of students overall, as measured through the Office of National Statistics (ONS) Personal Wellbeing questions[16], was worse than the scores of nationally representative data[8] for 16-24 year olds, and 25-34 year olds. This was similar to the previous BASS FE 2018/2019 survey[3], with the greatest change in anxiety which increased by 0.2 overall.

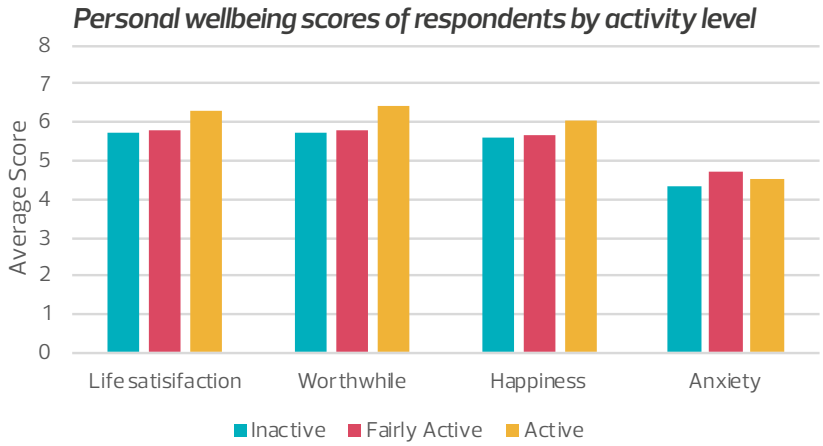
Personal wellbeing scores of respondents and overall UK average



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

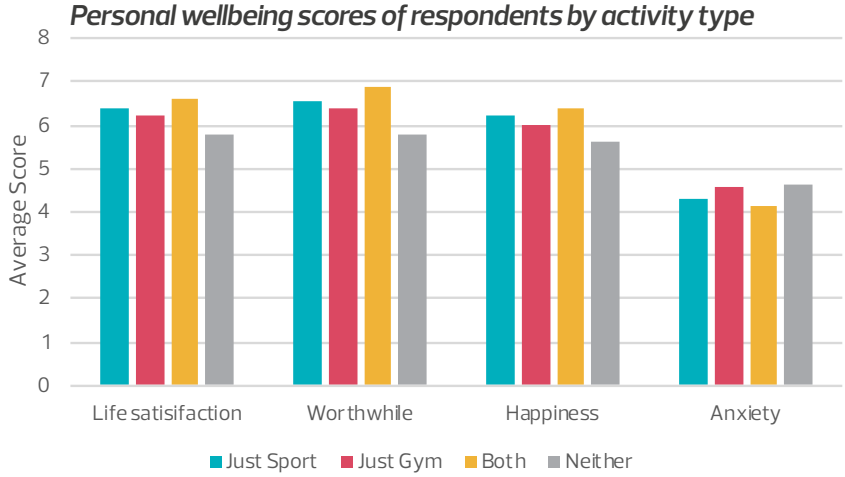
Personal wellbeing scores of respondents by activity level

Students who were classified as physically active scored higher for feelings of life satisfaction (6.28), feeling worthwhile (6.41), and happiness (6.08) compared to fairly active (5.82, 5.81, 5.66 respectively) and inactive (5.71, 5.73, 5.59 respectively) students. Feelings of anxiety were highest for fairly active students (4.71), with inactive students the least anxious (4.31). Compared to the previous BASS FE 2018/2019[3] findings by activity levels, inactive students had improved scores for life satisfaction, feeling worthwhile and happiness by approximately 0.3. Fairly active and active students had worse Personal Wellbeing scores across all items by approximately 0.4, except for the happiness score for fairly active students which was constant. Ordinal regression examining the linear relationship between physical activity group and each element of personal wellbeing showed that students with higher physical activity were at increased odds of having higher feelings of happiness (OR = 1.22 [95%CI = 1.14 to 1.31]), life satisfaction (OR = 1.28 [95%CI = 1.19 to 1.38]), and worthwhile (OR = 1.68 [95%CI = 1.49 to 1.89]). There was no interaction between physical activity group and feelings of anxiety.



Personal wellbeing scores of respondents by activity type

Students who participated in both sport and gym had the highest scores for life satisfaction (6.62), feeling worthwhile (6.87), and happiness (6.39), compared to either sport or gym in isolation, and neither sport or gym. Furthermore, students who participated in just sport had higher scores for life satisfaction (6.39), feeling worthwhile (6.56), and happiness (6.25) than those who participated in just gym (6.24, 6.38, 5.98 respectively). For anxiety, students who participated in both sport and gym were least anxious (4.11), while students who participated in neither sport or gym were most anxious (4.65). This was slightly higher than just sport (4.60), which in turn was higher than just gym (4.32). Comparing the breakdown by activity type to the BASS FE 2018/2019 data[3],the current results were similar, with any differences between scores (either positively or negatively) approximately 0.2 points. Those who took part in just gym, or neither sport or gym had better scores for life satisfaction, feeling worthwhile and happiness compared to BASS FE 2018/2019[3], but worse anxiety scores. Anxiety was also worse for just sport participants, who also had decreased life satisfaction, whilst participants in both sport and gym had higher happiness scores. However, all differences were minimal.



Mental Wellbeing

Key Findings

> Mental wellbeing scores remain constant overall but below representative comparison data.

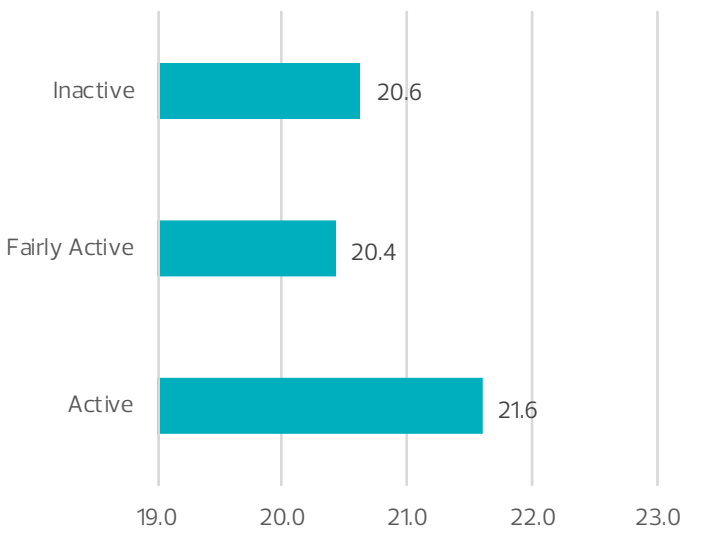
> Active students and those that participate in both sport and gym have better mental wellbeing than those less active or take part in sport or gym in isolation or not at all.

> Mental wellbeing overall remains similar to BASS FE 2018/2019, with small improvements in the scores of inactive students and those who take part in both gym and sport, neither gym or sport, and just gym, but reductions for fairly active and active students, and just sport participants.

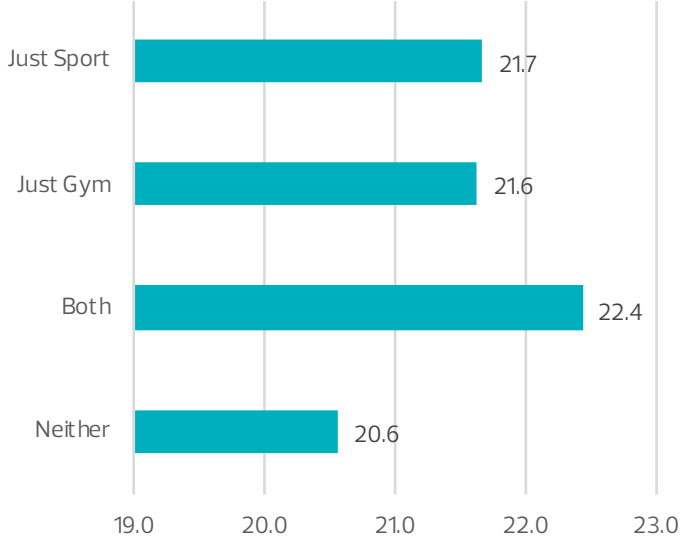
Mental wellbeing of the overall student population sampled was 21.2 out of 35, which remained constant from the BASS FE 2018/2019[3] result of 21.1 out of 35. Students reported feeling positive about their mental wellbeing to a lower extent when compared to the 2011 Health Survey for England (the most recent comparison available[17]), where the average score was 23.6. Mental wellbeing is measured using the Short Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS) which indicates feelings of optimism about the future, relaxation, how problems are dealt with, and how close people feel to others.

By physical activity level, active students have the highest mental wellbeing (21.6), with inactive (20.6) and fairly active (20.4) having similar mental wellbeing scores to each other. This differs to BASS FE 2018/2019[3], with the inactive students scoring higher than the fairly active students in the current survey. Furthermore, the active and fairly active groups had higher scores for mental wellbeing, while the inactive group had lower mental wellbeing compared to BASS FE 2018/2019[3]. Ordinal regression examining the linear relationship between physical activity group and mental wellbeing showed that students with higher physical activity were at increased odds of having higher mental wellbeing (OR = 1.30 [95%CI = 1.20 to 1.40]). Similar to personal wellbeing, participation in both gym and sport produced the highest mental wellbeing score (22.4), higher than the overall population. Just sport (21.7) and just gym (21.6) have similar mental wellbeing scores, however, participation in neither sport nor gym produces the lowest mental wellbeing score of all activity types of 20.6. All of the physical activity type categories had higher mental wellbeing scores when compared to previous BASS FE 2018/2019[3] data (with the exception of just sport), however the greatest difference was only 0.4.

Mental wellbeing scores of respondents by activity level



Mental wellbeing scores of respondents by activity type



Social Inclusion

Key Findings

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

> Students who participate in both sport and gym feel more socially included than participants in either just gym or just sport.

> The more active students have a greater sense of belonging to their institution, as do those who participate in both sport and gym, and just sport.

> Ratings of social trust are higher amongst the more active students and participants of both sport and gym, and just sport.

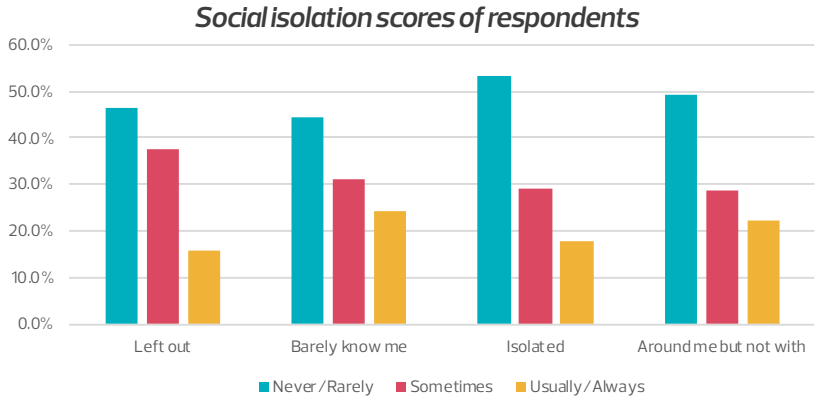
> Social inclusion trends remained constant from BASS FE 2018/2019 although the percentages selecting 'never/rarely' feeling isolated has reduced slightly across each activity level and primarily those participating in just sport.

> Social trust remains constant although this has been measured using a different metric.

Social inclusion was measured using the PROMIS Social Isolation 4a questions[18].

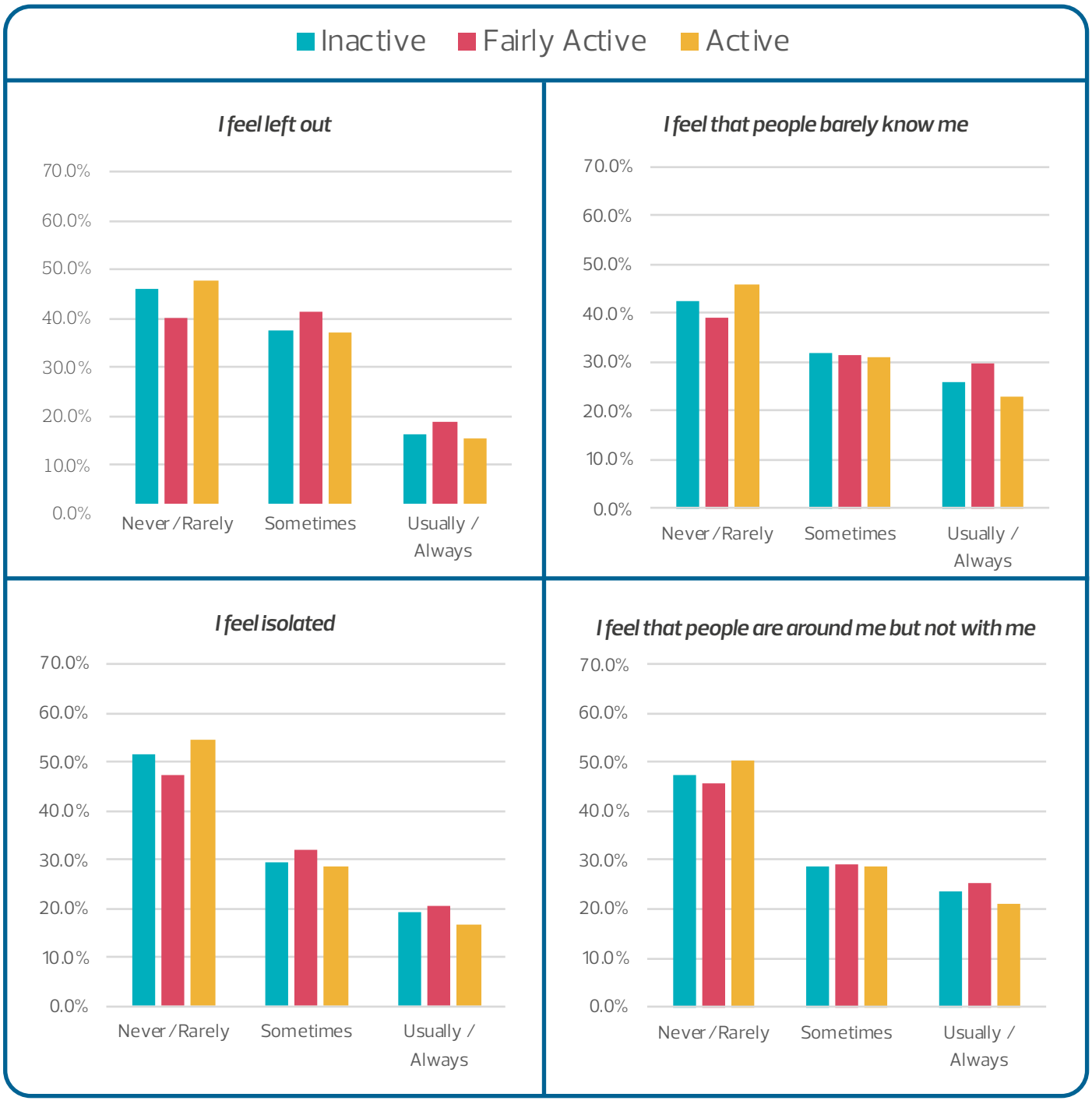
Students were asked to select from: never, rarely, sometimes, usually or always in repsonse to the following statements:
> I feel left out
> I feel that people barely know me
> I feel isolated from others
> I feel that people are around me but not with me

Social inclusion findings show that 'never or rarely' was the most frequently selected response for feeling left out (46.4%), feeling that barely know me (44.4%), feeling isolated (53.1%) and feeling that people are around me but not with me (49.1%). Feeling that people barely know me was the lowest scoring question for social inclusion, in terms of the percentage of respondents selecting 'usually/ always'. Although the percentage of responses for 'never/ rarely' are between 1.4–3.5 percentage points lower in the current survey compared to BASS FE 2018/2019[3], the overall social inclusion trends are the same, suggesting little overall change.



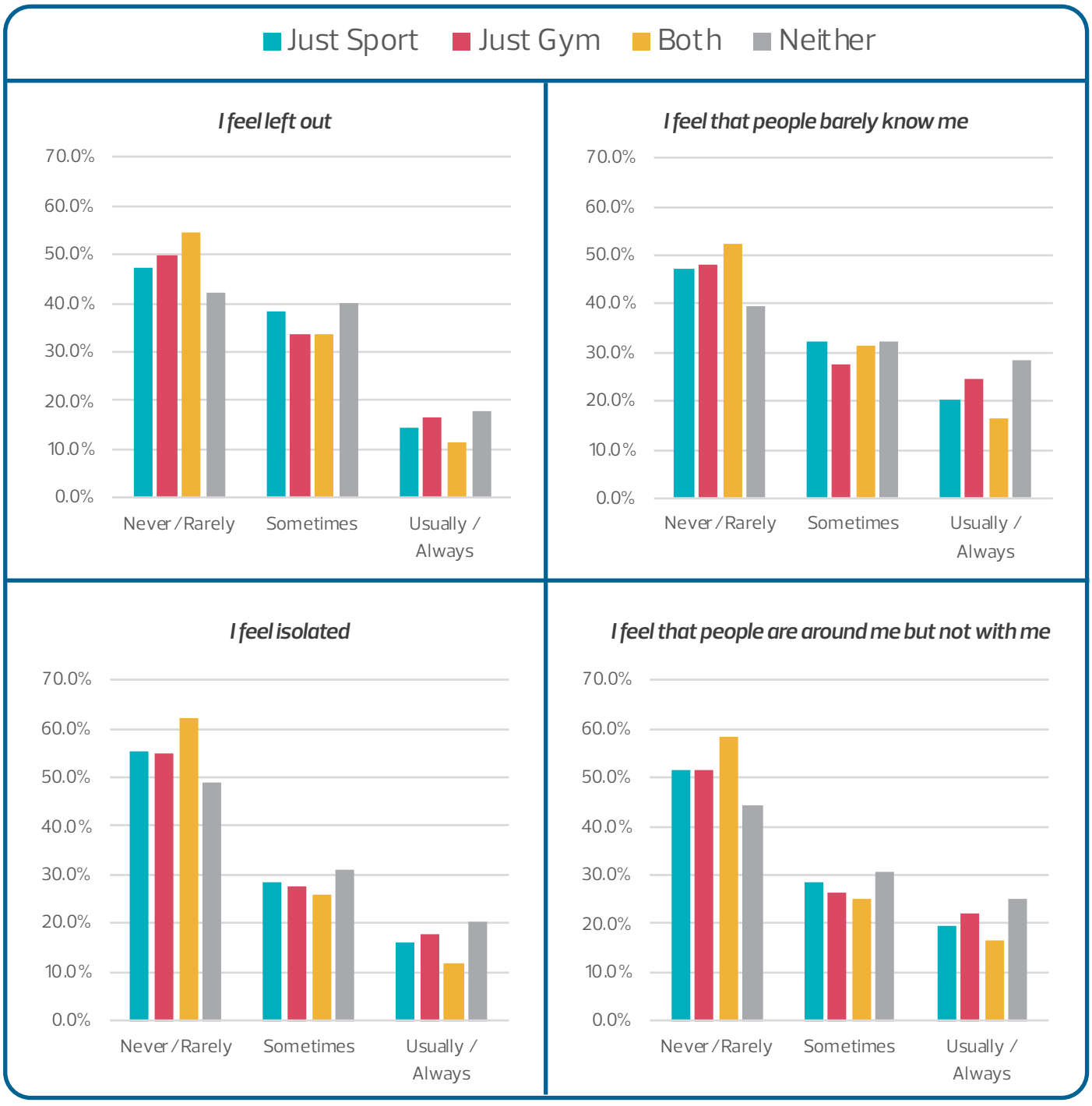
Social isolation by activity level

Of the three activity levels, the active students most frequently report that they 'never or rarely' feel left out (47.6%), feel that people barely know me (45.9%), feel isolated (54.6%), and feel that people are around me but not with me (50.2%). For each of these four items, inactive students report slightly lower levels of social inclusion (46.1%, 42.4%, 51.5%, and 47.6% selecting 'never/ rarely' respectively), which are all higher percentages than fairly active students. Fairly active students report higher levels than the other activity groups of 'usually or always' feeling left out (18.6%), feeling that people barely know me (29.6%), feeling isolated (20.6%), and feeling that people are around me but not with me (25.3%). Compared to BASS FE 2018/2019[3], there were reductions across all the metrics and activity levels for the percentage of students responding 'never/rarely'. The biggest difference was for inactive participants for the question on feeling people barely know me, with a reduction of 13.2 percentage points in the current survey. Ordinal regression examining the linear relationship between physical activity group and social inclusion showed that there was no interaction (OR = 0.95 [95%CI = 0.88 to 1.03]).



Social isolation by activity type

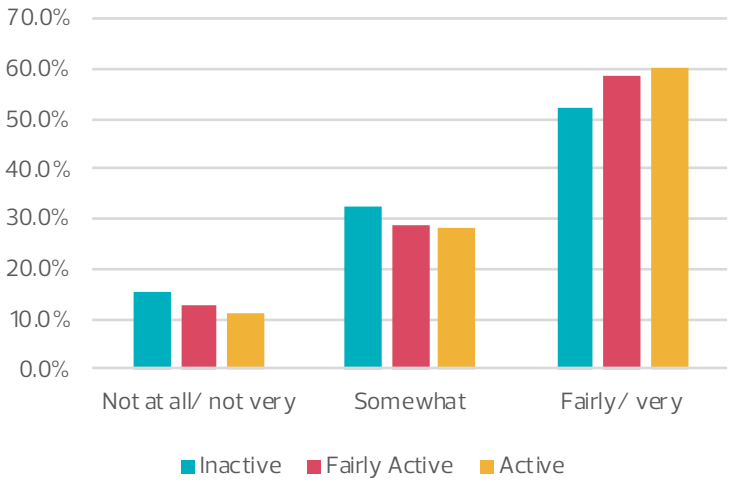
Feeling left out (54.7%), feeling that people barely know me (52.2%), feeling isolated (62.1%), and feeling that people are around me but not with me (58.3%) were all most frequently rated as 'never or rarely' by students who participated in both sport and gym. Just gym participants rated feeling left out (49.9%) and feeling that people barely know me (48.2%) as 'never or rarely' more frequently than just sport (47.4% for both measures). For feeling isolated, the 'never or rarely' rating for just sport (55.2%) was slightly higher than just gym (54.7%), but the percentages selecting 'never or rarely' for feeling that people are around me but not with me were the same for both groups (51.6%). Participants who took part in neither sport or gym selected 'usually or always' for feeling left out (17.6%), feeling that people barely know me (28.4%), feeling isolated (20.2%), and feeling that people are around me but not with me (25.0%) to a greater extent than any other group. Compared to previous research[3], participants in just sport had lower ratings of 'never or rarely' in the current survey, with similar results seen for the other types of activity.



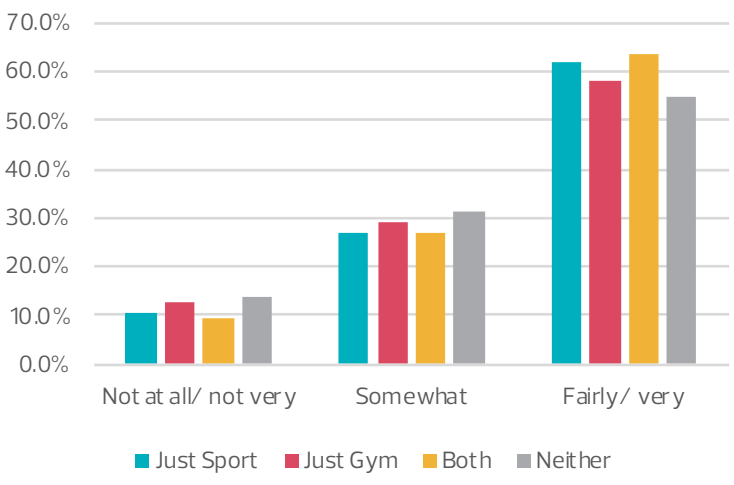
Feelings of belonging

Feelings of belonging to the student's institution was rated as 'fairly' (37.8%) or 'very' (20.1%) by the majority of students. This was reflected in activity levels, with the more active students feeling a greater sense of belonging to their institution (inactive: 52.1%, fairly active: 58.4%; active: 60.2%). By activity type, participants in both gym and sport (63.4%) and just sport (62.3%) had similar ratings of 'fairly' and 'very' for feelings of belonging to their institution, followed by just gym (58.0%) and neither gym or sport (54.8%).

Feelings of belonging to an institution by activity levels



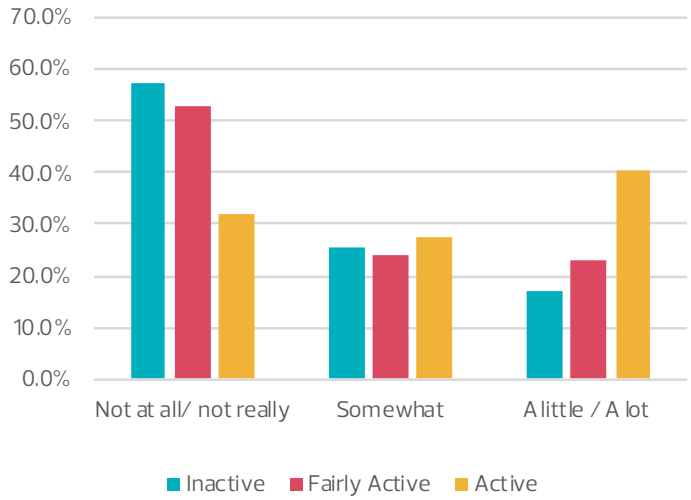
Feelings of belonging to an institution by activity type



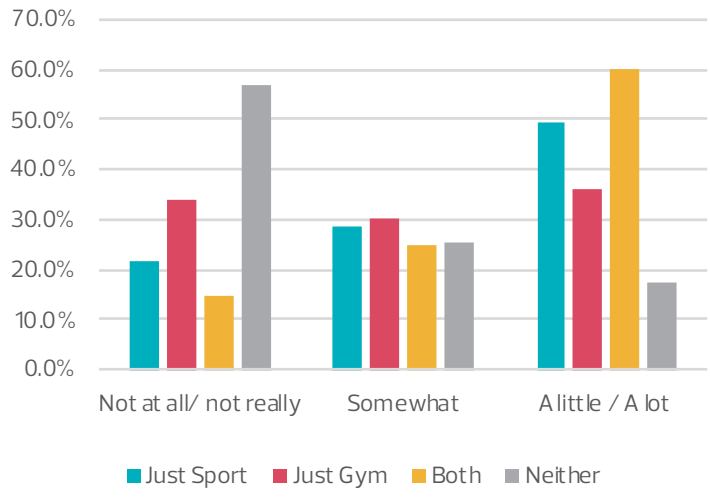
Changes in feeling about your future

When asked how much students thoughts and feelings about their life and future had changed positively as a result of being involved in sport, exercise or physical activity, the most frequent response for active students was 'a lot or a little' (40.3%) but inactive and fairly active students rated this as 'not at all or not really' most often (57.6% and 53.1% respectively). Similarly, participants in both sport and gym rated this as 'a lot or a little' most often (60.4%), as did just sport participants (49.5%). Response from just gym participants were similar across 'a lot or a little' (36.0%), 'somewhat' (30.1%), and 'not at all/ not really' (33.9%). Those who participate in neither most frequently selected 'not at all or not really' (57.1%) in answer to this question.

Changes in feeling about your future by activity levels



Changes in feeling about your future by activity type



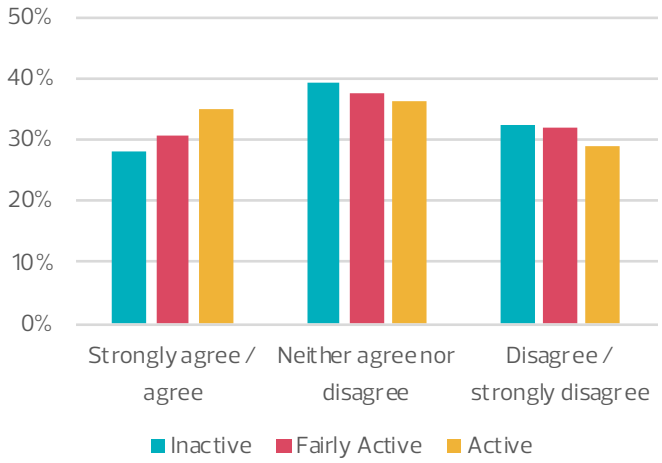
Social trust

Social trust was measured using Sport England's Active Lives measure[8]. The results revealed that 32.8% 'agreed or strongly agreed' that people in their local area could be trusted whilst 30.2% 'disagreed or strongly disagreed' with this statement. Overall, 37.1% of students 'neither agreed or disagreed'. Active Lives data[8] reports trust as an average of 3.15 out of 5 for 16-24 year-olds. and 3.29 for 25-34 year-olds, compared to 2.97 for the current survey, suggesting students are less trusting than the overall population. Comparison to BASS FE 2018/2019 cannot be directly achieved as the current survey used an updated measure. However, the current survey had a higher proportion choosing the neutral option ('neither agree nor disagree') compared to BASS FE 2018/2019[3] .

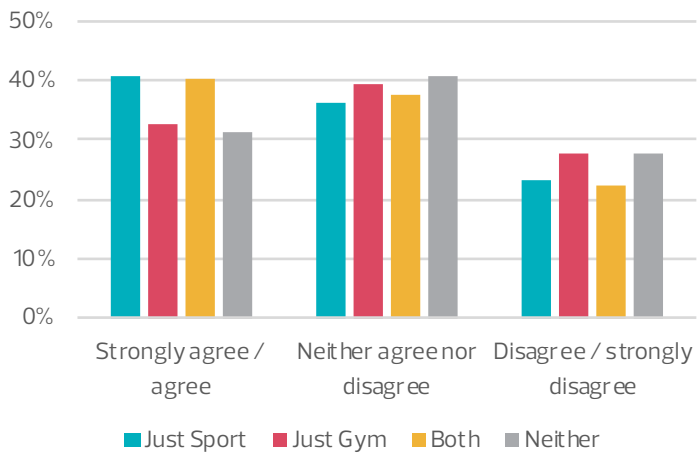
Levels of agreement ('strongly agree or agree') were higher the more active students were, whilst the percentages of students indicating 'neither agreement nor disagreement' decreased as activity levels increased. Inactive students (32.6%) had slightly higher disagreement levels ('disagree or strongly disagree') than active students (29.0%). Compared to Sport England's Active Lives, social trust was generally lower, but followed the same trend of more active individuals having high levels of trust[8]. Compared to BASS FE 2018/2019[3], findings were similar with active participants more trusting and inactive participants less trusting.

By activity type, participants in both sport and gym (40.2%) and just sport (40.6%) had similar levels of agreement ('strongly agree or agree'). Participants in just gym and neither sport or gym had higher levels of disagreement ('disagree or strongly disagree') (27.5% and 27.9%) than the other activity type categories. Compared to BASS FE 2018/2019[3],findings were similar with just sport and both sport and gym participants being more trusting and just gym and neither sport or gym participants being less trusting.

Social trust by activity level



Social trust by activity type



Loneliness

Key Findings

> Of the activity levels, feeling lonely 'often or always', and 'some of the time' was most frequently selected by fairly active students, with active students reporting this the least.

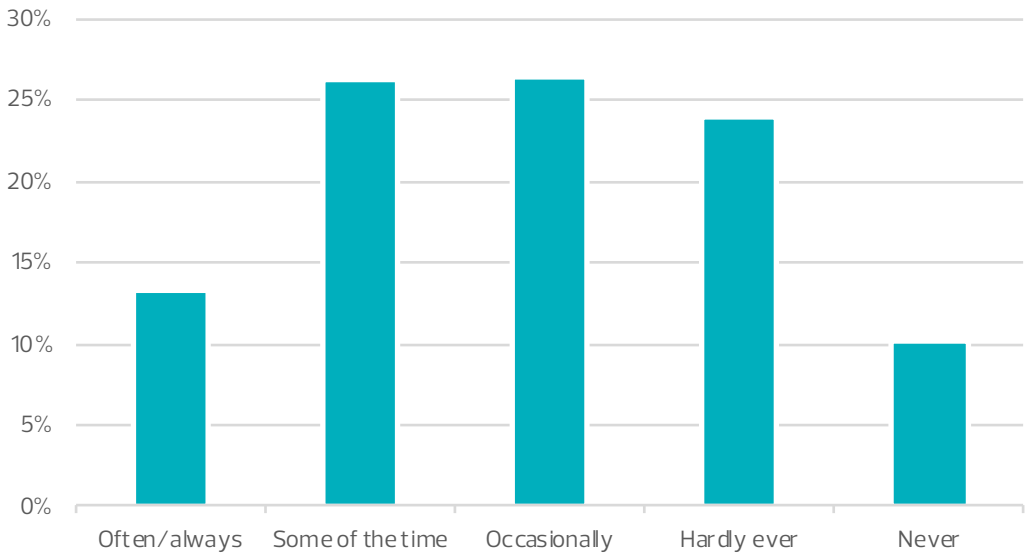
> Active students were at decreased odds of feeling lonely compared to fairly active and inactive students.

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

> Responses, both overall and by activity level and activity type, were clustered around the central three options rather than the positive or negative extremes.

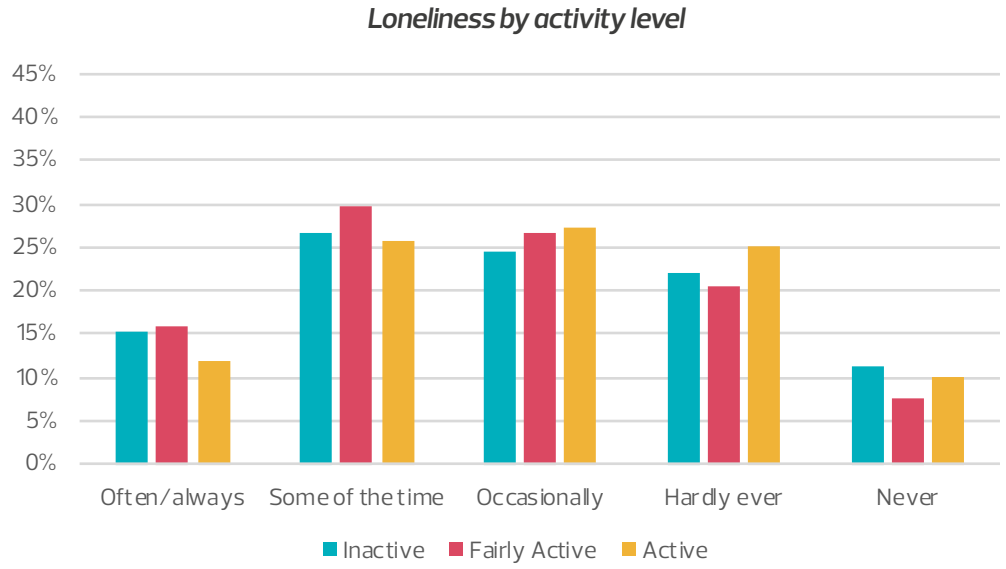
Loneliness was measured by asking students how lonely they had felt in the last week, similar to Sport England's Active Lives[8]. Overall, when asked if they had felt lonely during the previous week, students most frequently responded with 'some of the time' (26.3%), 'occasionally' (26.4%), or 'hardly ever' (23.9%). Comparing the 'often or always' responses to the Active Lives[8] data showed the respondents of the survey were lonelier (BASS – 13.2%; Active Lives: 16-24 year olds – 12.6%, 25-34 year olds – 8.4%). Loneliness levels changed in the current survey compared to BASS FE 2018/2019[3] and were more clustered around the central three options, rather than the extreme options. A direct comparison is not possible due to a change in the question and response options in the current survey.

Overall loneliness scores



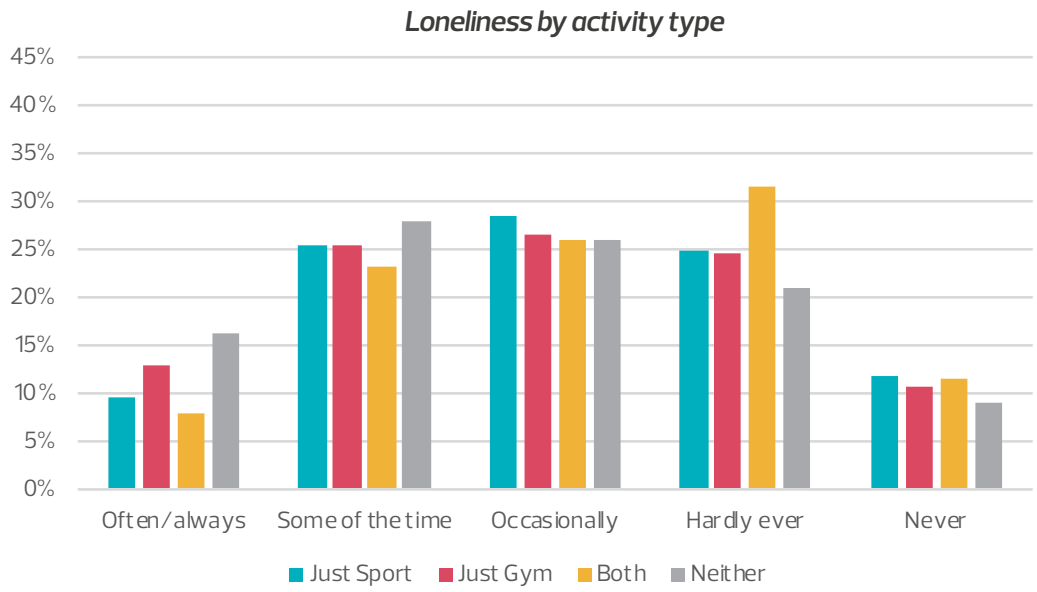
Loneliness by activity level

By physical activity level, fairly active students were the population who most frequently rated feeling lonely 'some of the time' (29.6%) or 'often or always' (16.0%), which was higher than Active Lives data (16-24 year olds – 8.1%, 25-34 year olds – 8.2%)[8]. Of all activity levels, active students had the highest rating of 'occasionally' (27.2%) or 'hardly ever' (25.1%), whilst inactive students rated 'never' feeling lonely the most frequently of the groups (11.4% of the time). Active students (12.0%) and inactive students (15.3%) had similar responses of 'often or always' compared to the 16-24 year old Active Lives data (active: 12.5%; inactive: 15.7%), but this was higher than the 25-34 year old group (active: 7.7%; inactive: 10.8%)[8]. Ordinal regression examining the linear relationship between physical activity group and loneliness showed that students with higher physical activity were at decreased odds of feeling lonely (OR = 0.92 [95%CI = 0.85 to 0.98]).



Loneliness by activity type

Similarly, each activity type had a similar response level for each loneliness answer option. The exception to this was the both sport and gym group, who 'hardly ever' felt lonely 31.5%, which was noticeably higher than any other group. When looking at the 'often or always', and 'some of the time', responses, participants who took part in neither sport or gym rated both of these the highest out of all activity types (16.1% and 27.9% of respondents). The biggest difference between just gym and just sport participants was for 'occasionally' feeling lonely (26.4% and 28.4% of respondents), indicating fairly similar feeling amongst these students.



Perceptions of Attainment

Key Findings

> The majority of students predict their attainment to be within the middle category of three.

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

> Just gym, and both sport and gym participants perceive their attainment to be higher than participants in just sport or neither gym nor sport.

> Participants of just gym and just sport spent more time studying than the other groups, as did active and fairly active students compared to inactive students.

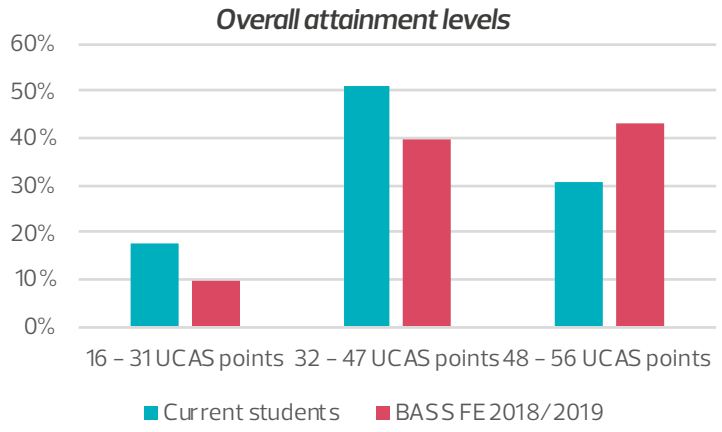
> Overall academic attainment perceptions are lower than BASS FE 2018/2019, with active students, and participants in just gym and both gym and sport having higher representation in the 48–56 UCAS points category.

Academic attainment was measured through the perception of the students and the grade that they expected to achieve at the end of the academic year. Due to the breadth of courses and study levels within FE, the grades provided were transformed into UCAS points and averaged to ensure that students studying one subject could be compared to those studying more than one subject or course. The table below provides an overview of the three UCAS point groupings and associated grade examples[19].

UCAS points group	Equivalent grade
16 – 31 UCAS points	Pass/Grade D or E/Level2/3
32 – 47 UCAS points	Merit / Grade B or C / Level 4/5/6
48 – 56 UCAS points	Distinction/Distinction* / Grade A/A* / Level 7/8/9

Overall attainment levels

Overall, the majority of students predicted their attainment to be in the middle category of 32–47 UCAS points (51.3%). The upper category was predicted to be achieved by 30.9%, whilst the lowest category was predicted to be achieved by 17.8% of students. Compared to previous BASS FE 2018/109 findings[3], the current population predicted their attainment to be lower overall, with a higher percentage of participants within the 32–47 UCAS points category.

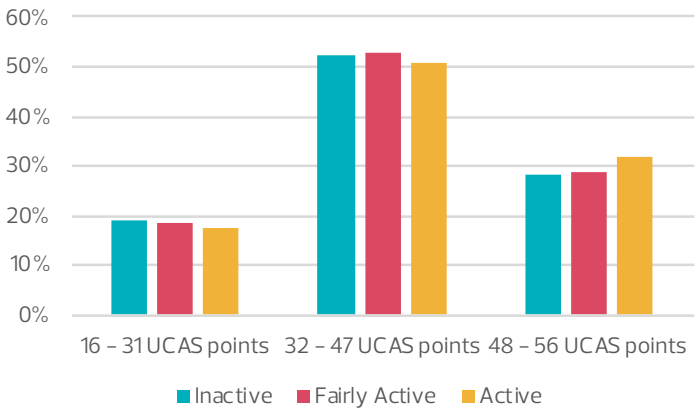


Attainment by activity level and type

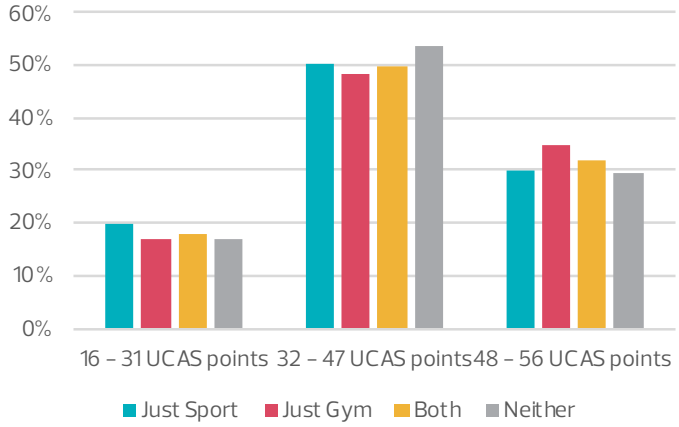
By activity level, there is a slight trend of more active students (32.1%) reporting more frequently in the top category of attainment than fairly active (28.8%) and inactive (28.4%) students, with the opposite visible in the low attainment category. The middle attainment category was the most often selected across all activity levels, with fairly active students (52.7%) and inactive students (52.7%) responding slightly more frequently to this than active students (50.7%). Comparison to BASS FE 2018/2019[3] attainment by activity level showed similar response levels by each UCAS category. Ordinal regression examining the linear relationship between physical activity group and perceptions of academic attainment showed that there was no interaction (OR = 1.06 [95%CI = 0.96 to 1.17]).

By activity type, students who take part in just gym (34.6%) or both gym and sport (32.0%) report more often in the top attainment category than the other groups. Just sport participants have the highest response level within the low attainment category (19.9%), whilst neither gym or sport have the highest response level within the middle attainment category (49.8%). Comparison to BASS FE 2018/2019 findings[3] attainment by activity type showed a higher percentage of both gym and sport, and just gym participants selecting the top attainment category in this survey.

Attainment by activity level



Attainment by activity type

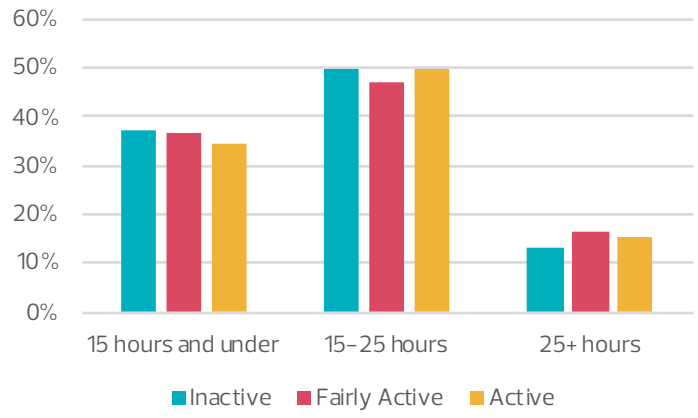


Study time by activity level and type

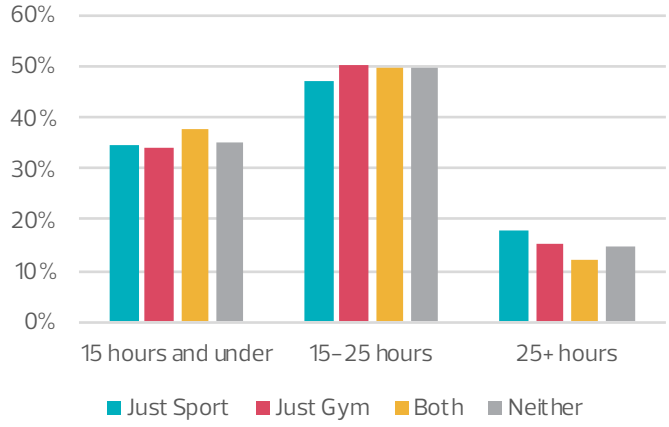
The amount of time spent studying can be linked to academic attainment. Active (15.6%) and fairly active (16.3%) students had a higher proportion of students studying for 25 or more hours a week than inactive students. The same proportion of inactive and active students (49.8%) study between 15 and 25 hours a week. This suggests that the the time spent by an active individual on sport and exercise does not limit the time they have for studying.

By activity type, just sport (18.1%) and just gym (15.5%) groups have the highest proportion of students studying for 25 hours or more a week. For studying between 15 and 25 hours a week, just gym (50.3%), both gym and sport (49.7%), and neither gym or sport (49.9%) had similar levels of response. Students who participate in both gym and sport (38.1%) have the highest proportion in the 15 hours or less category, slightly higher than students who participate in neither gym or sport (35.3%).

Study time by activity level



Study time by activity type



Perceptions of Employability

Key Findings

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

> Employability skills were similarly rated in 7 out of the 10 skills by activity level and activity type.

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

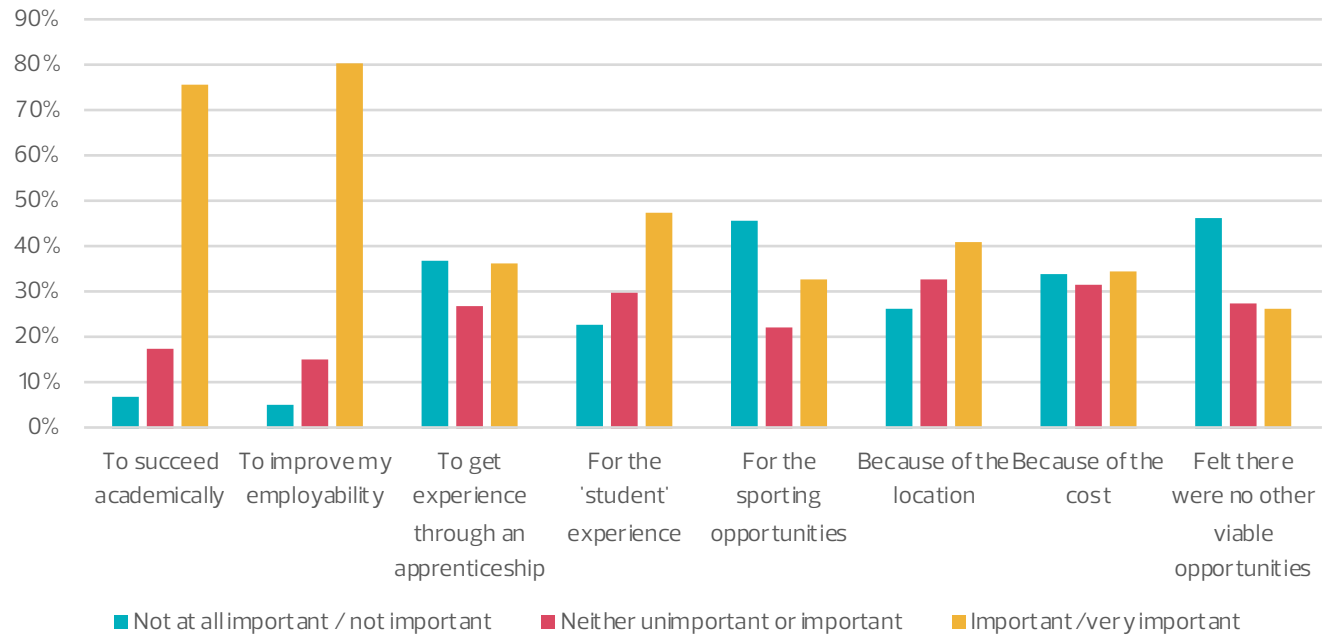
> Overall rating of employment skills was consistent from BASS FE 2018/2019, with employment confidence slightly higher for the current students.

The perceptions of employability were asked through a number of questions that looked at: the reasons for attending a FEI, students rating of key employability skills, students' perception of whether sport or exercise improves employability or acceptance to a HEI, if students mention sport or exercise when applying for jobs or HEIs, and finally their confidence of being employed with six-months of finishing their course.

The students' plans post FE were predominantly to attend further study (58.2%), with a quarter (25.2%) planning full-time employment and a further 6.3% planning part-time employment. Travel was planned by 4.4% whilst 6.0% of students had other plans.

The main reasons for attending FE and rated as 'important or very important' by the most students were to improve employability (80.3%) and to succeed academically (75.6%). This was mirrored in why the students had chosen their specific institution, with 'they felt it would help them succeed academically' (69.9%) and they 'felt it would enhance employability' (67.4%) selected most often. Specific institutions were also chosen for the experience (52.1%) and location (51.2%).

Reason for attending FE

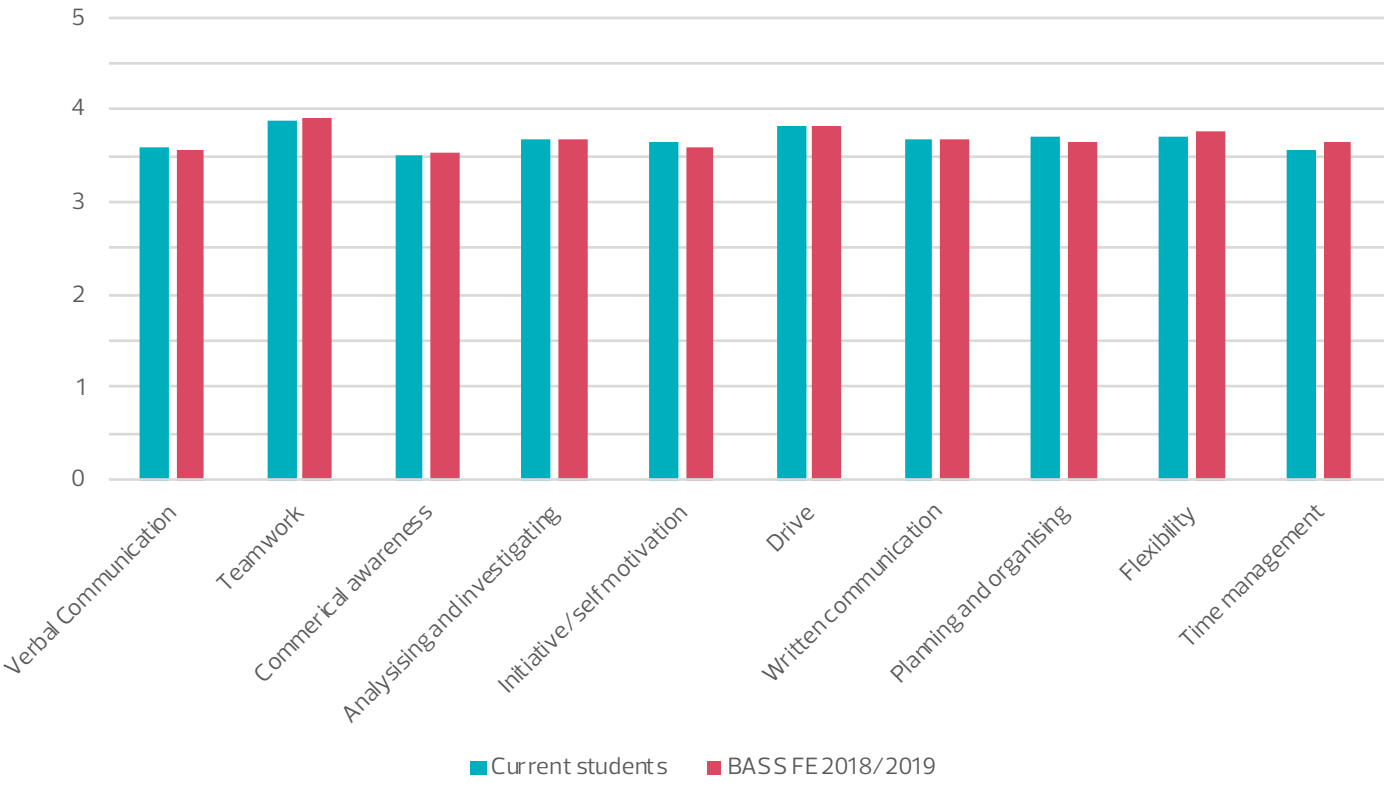


Reason for attending specific institution

Key employability skills

Students were asked to rate themselves from 1 to 5 on a variety of key employability skills, with 1 being 'very weak' and 5 being 'very strong'. Overall employability skills ranked by average score were consistent in this survey with findings from BASS FE 2018/2019[3].

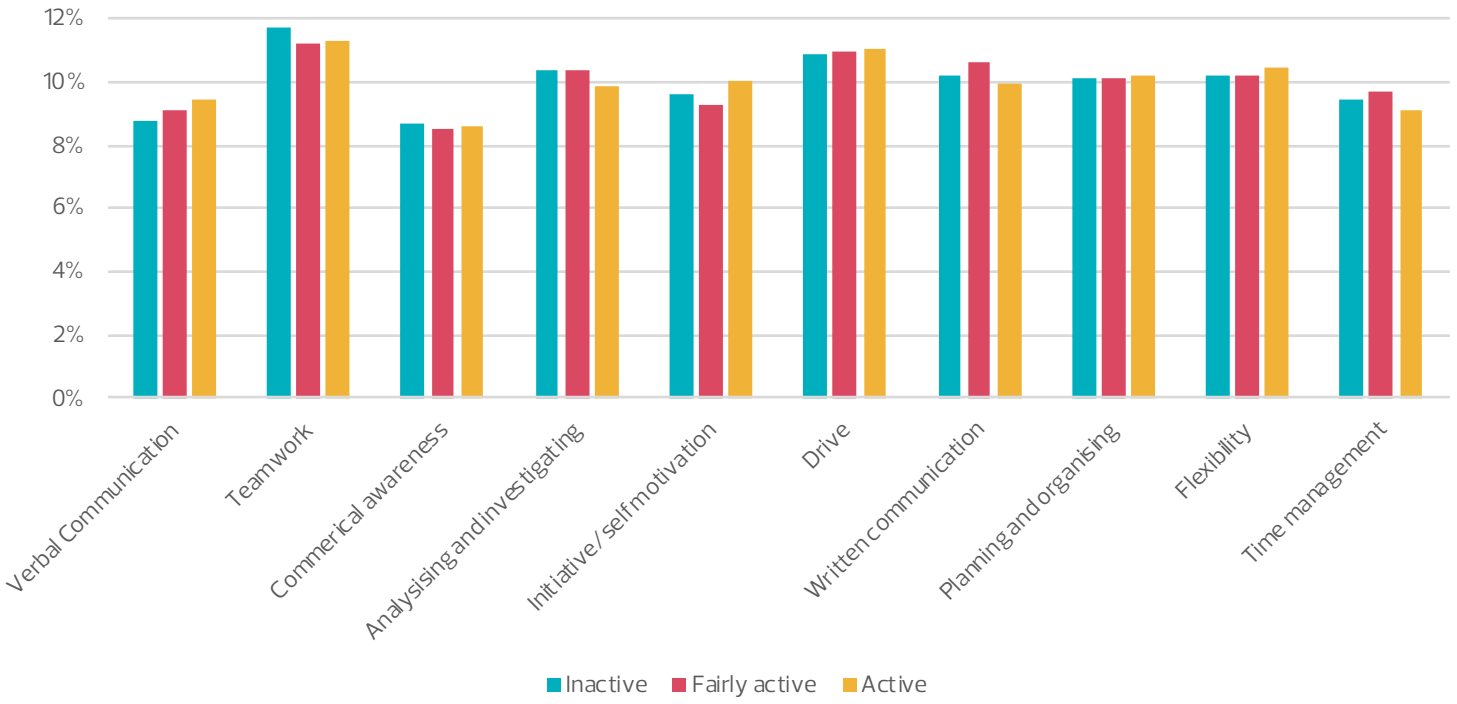
Key employabiility skills: average score



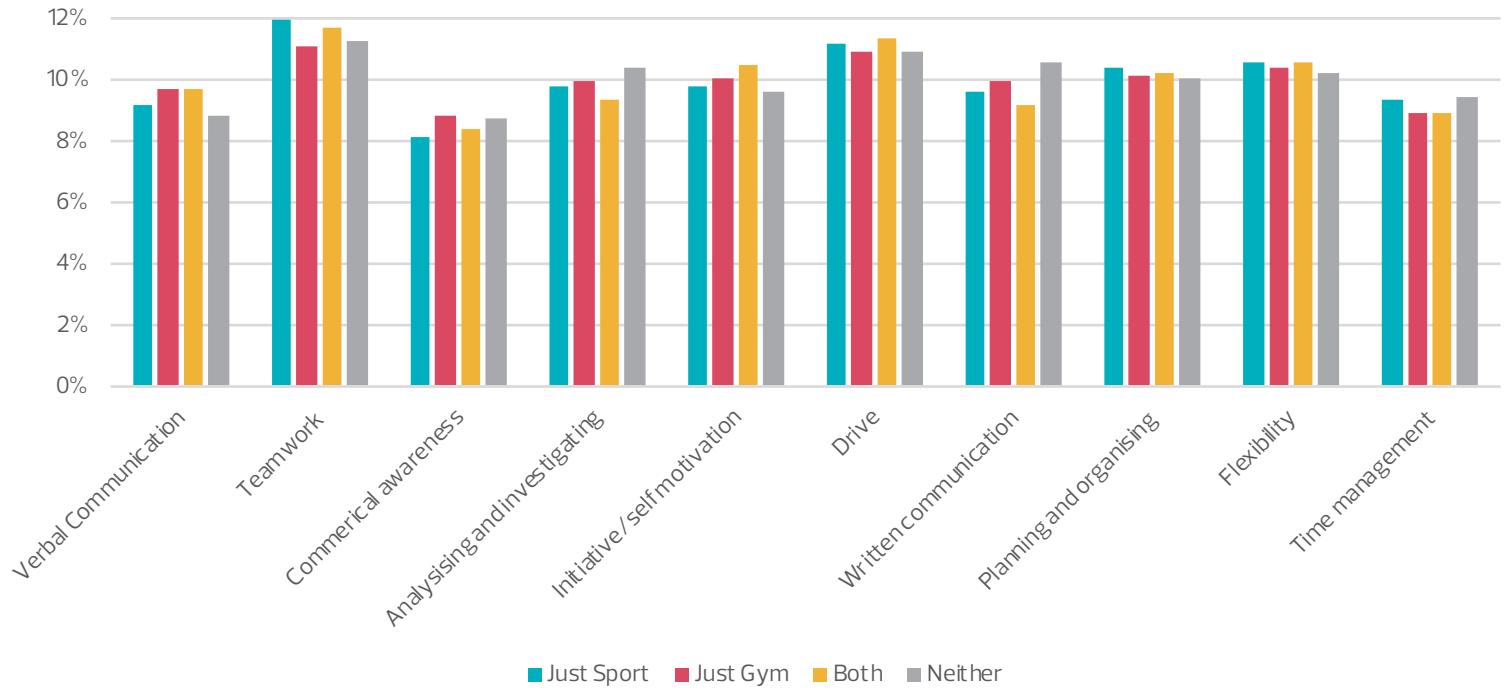
Key employability skills by activity level and type

The breakdown by activity level and type looks at the percentage of students who rated the skills as 'high' (by giving answers of 'strong' or 'very strong'). Segmenting the grouping of high by activity level shows that all three activity groups similarly rated the 10 employability skills, with the greatest differences between groups seen for verbal communication which was higher for active students (9.4% of responses), as was initiative/self-motivation (10.1% of responses). Written communication was rated high most often by fairly active students (10.6%). Employability skills by activity type saw variation across the categories. The greatest difference was seen for written communication which was lowest for participants in both (9.2% of respsonses) and highest for neither (10.4% of responses).

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



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

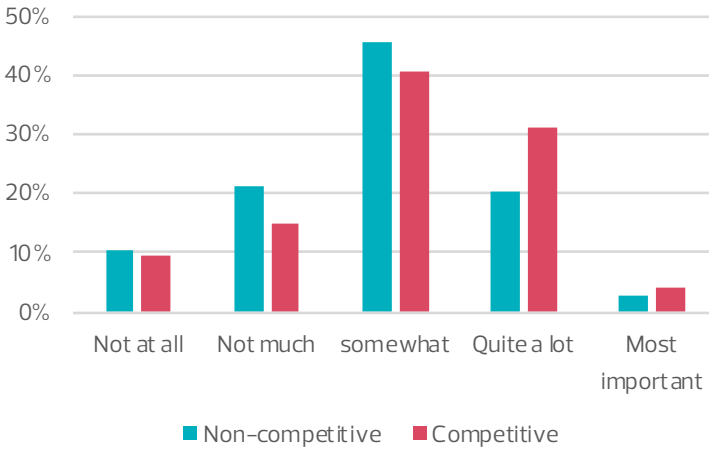


Impact of sports participation on employabilty

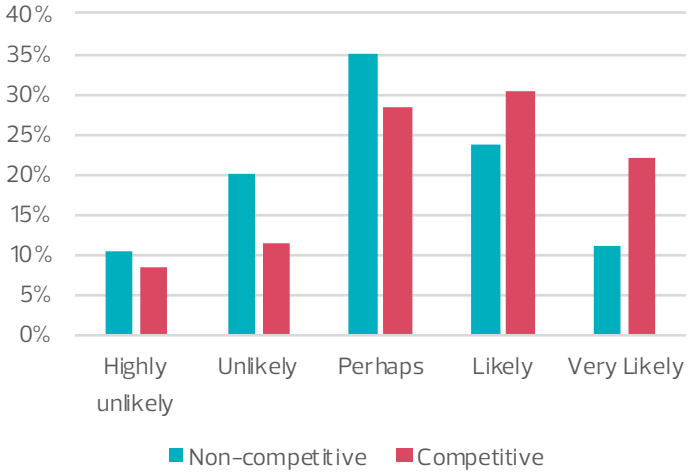
Students were asked the extent that they felt participating in competitive and non-competitive sport improved their employability or acceptance into a HEI. Students tended to think that non-competitive sport was less influential than competitive sport, with a smaller percentage of non-competitive sport participants selecting 'quite a lot' or 'most important'.

For those students that participate in sport, either competitively or non-competitively, they were asked how likely they are to refer to this when applying for jobs. Participants who competed competitively were more inclined to rate this as 'likely' or 'very likely'. Non-competitive participant most frequently selected 'perhaps', indicating that they may, but also may not, refer to sport.

Perception of sport participation improving employability or HEI acceptance



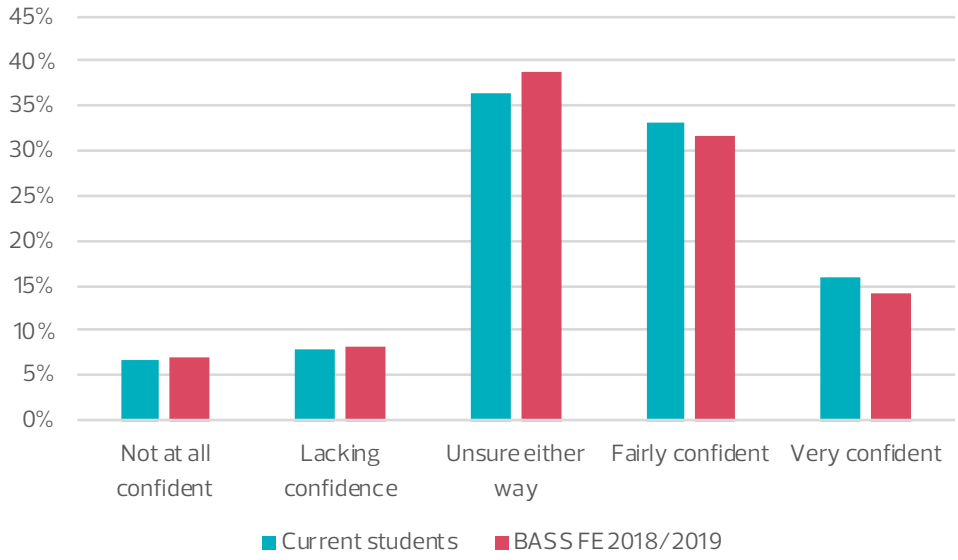
Likelihood of referring to sport during a job application



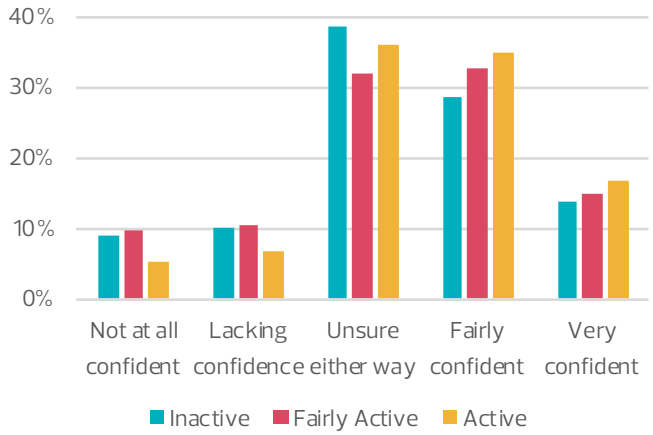
Confidence in finding employment

Confidence in being employed within six-months of finishing their course was rated slightly higher by the current students when compared to BASS FE 2018/2019 findings[3]. Employment confidence was similarly rated by each of activity level in the current survey, with a reasonably similar split of responses across the levels . However, active students selected 'fairly confident' (35.1%) and 'very confident' (16.8%) more frequently than fairly active or inactive students. The levels of employment confidence were consistent with BASS FE 2018/2019 findings[3], with the biggest change being a higher proportion of fairly active students selecting 'very confident' in the current survey. Irrespective of activity type, only a small proportion of students were low in confidence in finding employment. By activity level, students who participated in both gym and sport were more likely to say they were 'very confident' (24.0% of responses), compared to just gym (19.1%), neither gym or sport (13.3%) and just sport (12.0%). These trends were similar to those reported in the BASS FE 2018/2019 report[3].

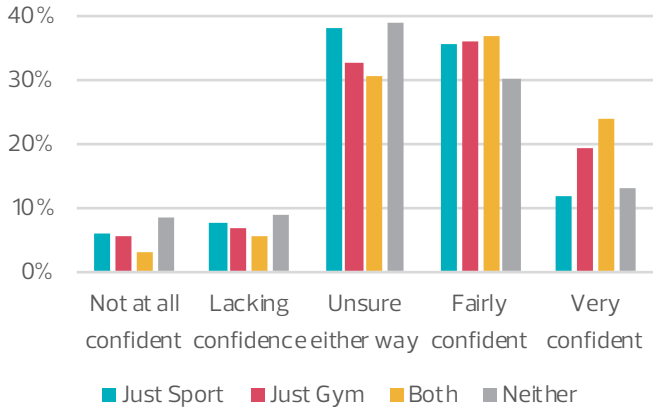
Confidence of being employed within 6-months



Confidence of being employed within 6-months by activity level



Confidence of being employed within 6-months by activity type

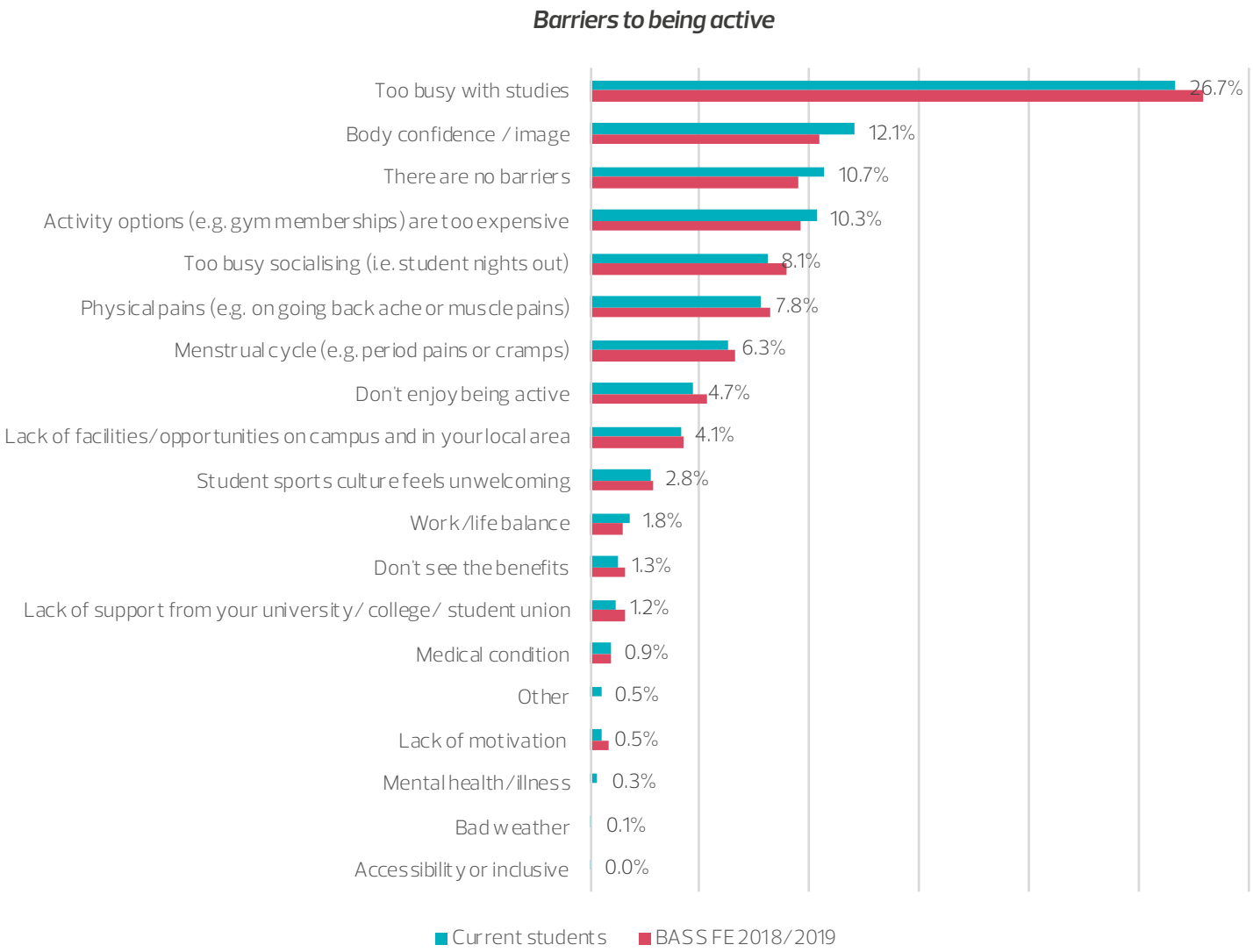


Barriers & Motivators to being active

Barriers

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

The barrier to physical activity that was selected most often was being too busy with studies (26.7% of students), followed by body confidence or image (12.1%). There are no barriers was third most commonly selected (10.7%), ahead of activity option being too expensive (10.3%). Lack of support from university or college was rated as a low barrier to physical activity (1.2%), as was inclusivity or accessibility (0.0%, n=3). The barriers to participation and the ranking of these is very similar to previous research[3]. Segmented by gender, the biggest differences were seen in body confidence or image, with 13.8% of females selecting this as a barrier compared to 8.7% of males, activity options being too expensive (11.2% of females vs 8.8% of males), and physical pains (8.1% of females vs 7.1% of males). Too busy socialising was selected as a barrier by 9.0% of males and 7.6% of females.

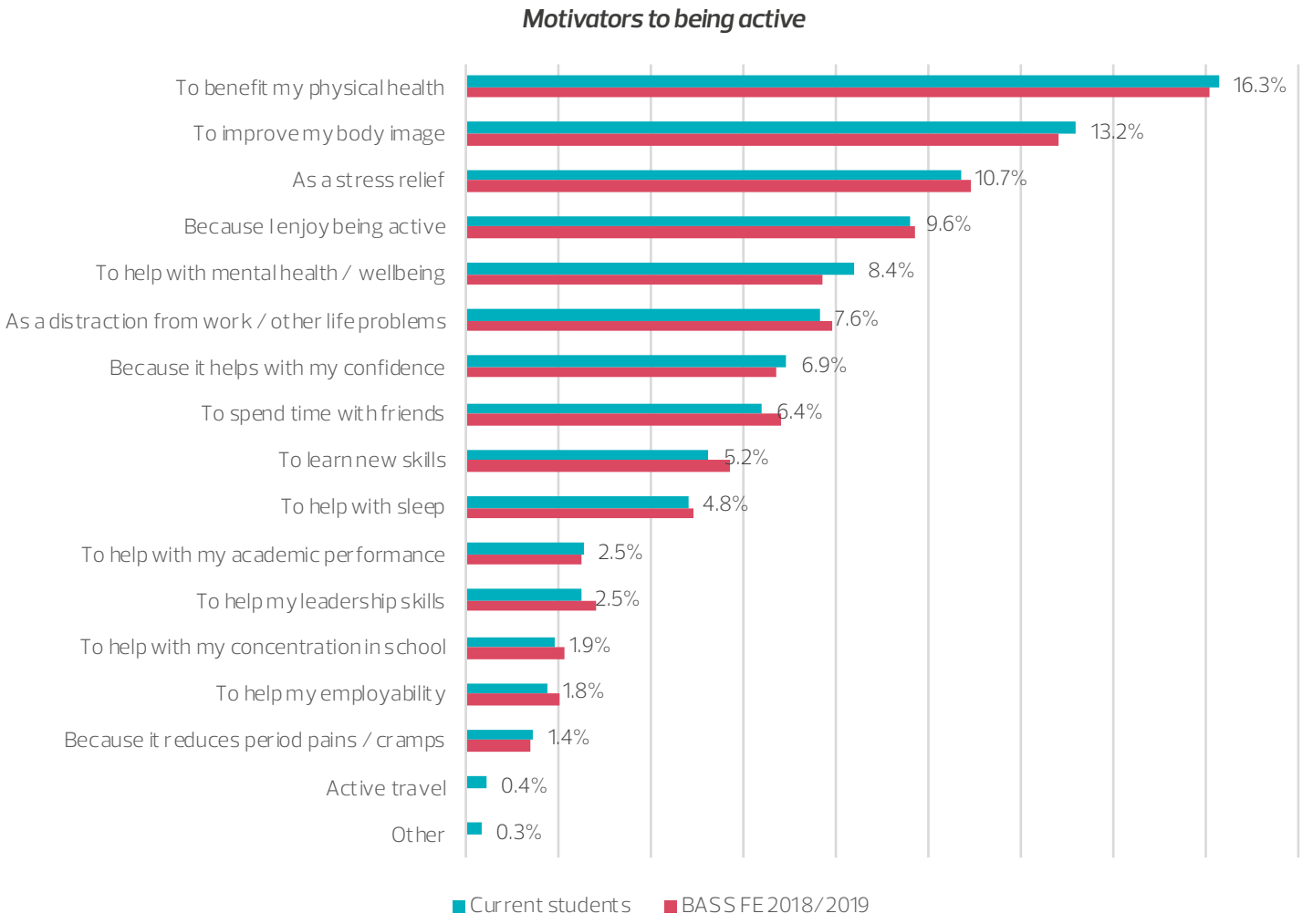


* percentages on the graph relate to the current students only

Motivators

As with the barriers, motivations for students to be physically active were similar to previous research[3]. The biggest motivations were to improve physical health (16.3% of students), to improve body image (13.2%), and as a stress relief (10.7%). To help with mental health and wellbeing (8.4%) was selected more frequently than in the previous survey (7.7%)[3].

By gender, the biggest differences were seen in stress relief (11.6% of females vs 9.8% of males), improving body image (14.3% of females vs 12.1% of males), helping with mental health and wellbeing (9.4% of females vs 7.2% of males), and as a distraction from work (8.1% of females vs 7.2% of males). Motivators that higher percentages of males chose were: enjoyment of activity (11.0% of males compared to 8.5% of females), to spend time with friends (7.4% of males vs 5.6% of females), to learn new skills (6.0% of males vs 4.6% of females), and to help leadership skills (3.2% of males vs 1.8% of females).



* percentages on the graph relate to the current students only

Summary and conclusions

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

Generally across the population studied, which includes 7,169 students from 107 different FEIs (primarily across England), students who are classified as fairly active rate higher than inactive students across the metrics measured. Likewise those who take part in either sport or gym activities in isolation score higher than participants in neither activity. However, students classified as active, and those taking part in both sport and gym, receive the biggest benefits from activity and report the highest scores in the metrics measured. Participation in either sport or gym in isolation is better than doing neither sport nor gym activities. Although both personal and mental wellbeing follow this trend, overall both measures are lower for the student population than national data, further suggesting continued support is required in these areas. The current survey had a higher proportion of active students than the BASS FE 2018/2019[3], aligning with national activity data from Sport Engalnd[8]. The current findings across all variables measured are similar to those presented in BASS FE 2018/2019[3] for all physical activity levels and activity types.

National data suggests that more than a quarter of FEI age individuals do not meet the recommended levels of physical activity[8]. The support that FEI's can provide their students in taking part in activity is vital, as health behaviours (positive or negative) developed in adolescence can often determine long-term behaviours in adulthood and the rest of life[9]. Further Education provides the link between compulsory schooling and either working life directly or attending university for continued education. The role of Further Education is therefore vital, and can be enhanced by providing opportunities for students to be physically active. Clear barriers are presented within this report, which can help institutions develop approaches that can support students to overcome these. The growing understanding that is being developed through continued BASS research on the role of physical activity provides compelling evidence to ensure that all areas of an educational institution are aware of the valuable role regular activity can play in supporting students.

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

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

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