

VALUE OF HIGHER EDUCATION SPORT: INSIGHTS FROM THE COMPLETE UNIVERSITY GUIDE DATA

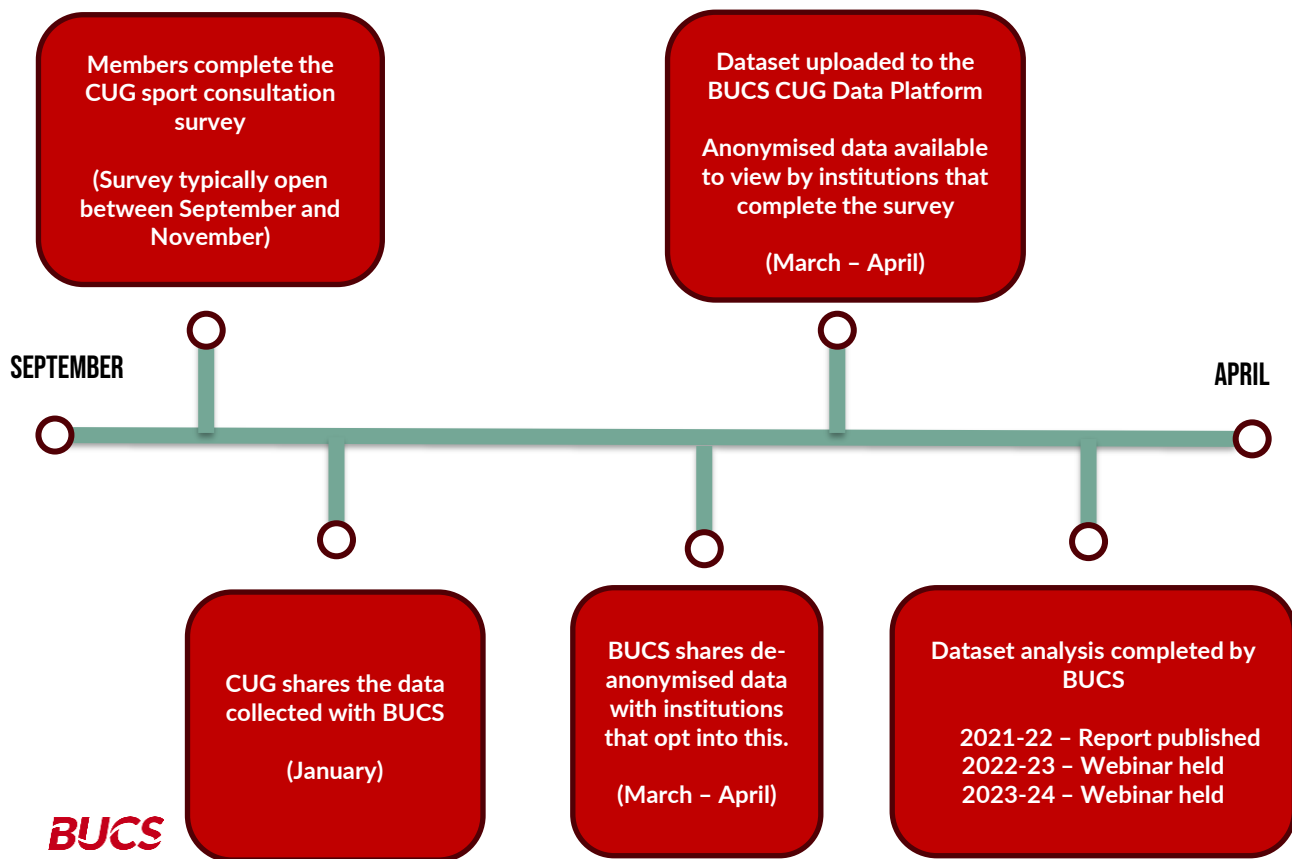
March 2025



AREAS OF DISCUSSION

- Introduction – BUCS x CUG relationship
- Who responded?
- Overall HE Sector contribution to the wider sporting ecosystem
- Current financial position – what is being impacted?
- Higher Education Sport impact on institutions
- University of Hull – Student retention and employability programmes.

BUCS X CUG RELATIONSHIP



BUCS has been partnering with CUG to collect data on sport and physical activity provisions within the higher education sector for the last six iterations of the survey.

The survey is split into two sections. Part 1 covers institutions' sports and physical activity offers, sports volunteering schemes, facilities and student scholarships. Part 2 of the survey deals with areas such as running costs, investment and strategy areas.

The survey was open between September and November 2024. When the survey closed, the CUG cleaned the data and sent it to the BUCS insight team.

The BUCS insight team upload the data onto the BUCS x CUG data platform where institutions are able to benchmark their data against data from other institutions.

Following member feedback that access to de-anonymised data would aid benchmarking and internal advocacy, institutions that completed the survey have been given the opportunity to access de-anonymised information from the dataset.

This data is analysed by BUCS and reported back to the sector. Insights from the 2021-22 data were published within a report, with the insights from the 2023-23 and 2023-24 data reported by a webinar and presentation.

CUG SURVEY AND PLATFORM


We work with a group of members to check and challenge the work we do with the data, improvements to data collection and overall offer to the members.

We have provided the opportunity to institutions that completed the survey to access de-anonymised information from the dataset. The level of data that is available to institutions is dependent on which sections of the survey they agree to share with their institution name attached. Opt in questions for this are included within the survey.

The 2023-24 data is now available on the platform alongside the data from 2021-22 and 2022-23.

EXAMPLE

The screenshot on the right shows the performance support and scholarship areas. As you see, of the 17 institutions selected, 14 do have a sports scholarship programme and 3 do not. The 14 who do have a sports scholarship programme support 56 students on average and these scholarships are generally both cash and financial support as well as services/facility access.

**BUCS**
British Universities
and Colleges Sport

HomePart1/2FacilitiesActivitiesVolunteeringCostings + NumbersPerformance Support

Performance Support ⓘ

[Download CSV](#)

Support Role	Total Responses	Is it offered?	If offered, is it provided by accredited professionals?
Performance sport manager	13	10	8
Coaching (sport specific)	13	9	7
Strength & conditioning facility	13	13	12
Strength & conditioning coaches	13	13	13
Testing (gait testing, strength testing etc)	13	13	12
Sport medicine (physiotherapy, massage, podiatry, rehab)	13	13	13
Sport nutrition	13	11	11
Sports science	13	9	9
Performance athlete life skills (career support, transition support etc)	13	12	11
Athlete mentoring	13	11	10
Sport psychology	13	11	11

Scholarship ⓘ

[Download CSV](#)

Question	Total Responses	YES	NO	Total Number	Average
Institution has a sports scholarship (or equivalent) programme	17	14	3	0	0
Number of students are supported by a sports scholarship programme	14	0	0	783	55.93
Institution is a nominated TASS delivery site.	17	7	10	0	0
Institution offers TASS Scholarships or Winning Students?	7	7	0	0	0
Institution holds TASS Dual Career Accreditation?	7	7	0	0	0
Institution offers academic flexibility for performance athletes	16	13	3	0	0
Is the sports scholarship just Cash / Financial Support?	14	0	14	0	0
Is the sports scholarship just Services / Facility Access?	14	1	13	0	0
Is the sport scholarship Both?	14	13	1	0	0

WHO RESPONDED?



BUCS

WHO RESPONDED?

127 institutions responded to at least one section of the survey (79% of all BUCS member institutions)

Part 1 – 127 responders
Part 2a – 99 responders
Part 2b – 80 responders

Compared to the 2022-23 there was an increase of 8 responders to part 1, an increase of 11 to part 2a and an increase of 7 to part 2b.

REGION/NATION	% RESPONDERS BY REGION/NATION
EAST	5%
EAST MIDLANDS	8%
LONDON	17%
NI	2%
NORTH EAST	4%
NORTH WEST	11%
SCOTLAND	11%
SOUTH EAST	10%
SOUTH WEST	11%
WALES	6%
WEST MIDLANDS	7%
YORKSHIRE	8%

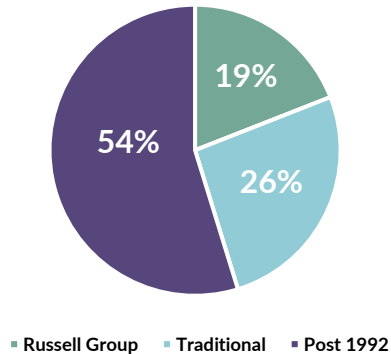
REGION/NATION	% OF RESPONDERS BY NO. OF BUCS MEMBER INSTITUTION IN THE REGION/NATION	
EAST	67%	0
EAST MIDLANDS	83%	0
LONDON	76%	3
NI	100%	0
NORTH EAST	100%	1
NORTH WEST	78%	1
SCOTLAND	88%	0
SOUTH EAST	93%	0
SOUTH WEST	74%	1
WALES	100%	1
WEST MIDLANDS	90%	0
YORKSHIRE	59%	1

The survey responses showed a good representation of institutions across regions and nations.

The table on the right shows the representation of BUCS member institutions in terms of total members in the region/nation. The coloured boxes show the increase in the number of responses by region/nation compared to the previous year. There were consistent numbers of responses in East, East Midlands, Northern Ireland, Scotland, South East and West Midlands. London, North East, North West, South West, Wales and Yorkshire saw a year-on-year increase in responses.

SUMMARY OF RESPONDERS

RESPONDERS BY TYPE OF INSTITUTION



This corresponds to:

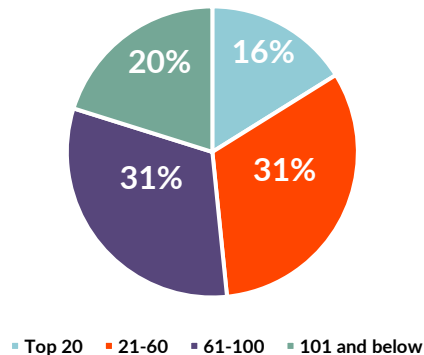
79% of all BUCS member institutions (+5 percentage points).

100% of BUCS Russell Group institutions (+4 percentage points).

87% of BUCS Traditional institutions (+3 percentage points).

91% of BUCS Post 1992 institutions (+8 percentage points).

RESPONDERS BY BUCS RANKING



This corresponds to:

100% of BUCS Top 20 institutions (no change).

100% of BUCS 21-60 institutions (+2 percentage points).

98% of BUCS 61-100 institutions (+13 percentage points).

57% of BUCS 101 and below institutions (+5 percentage points).

The chart above outlines the spread of responders by type of institution; the majority of responders are Post-1992 institutions. The box shows the proportion of BUCS members who responded for each type of institution, showing a good representation of BUCS members from each type of institution. This box also shows how the representation for each type of institution has changed from last year by percentage point difference.

The chart above outlines the spread of responders by BUCS points ranking. As reported in the box, institutions ranked 1-100 are well-represented while those ranked 101 and below are less well-represented. All but two institutions in the BUCS top 100 responded to the survey. The box also shows how the representation of each ranking bracket has changed from last year by percentage point difference.

CONTRIBUTION TO THE WIDER SPORTING ECOSYSTEM



Workforce (across 68 institutions)

2,597 full-time equivalent positions

Spending



Annual spending on sport (running costs)
(across 67 institutions)

£171,892,127

Planned facilities investment in the next 5 years (across 57 institutions)

£245,846,195



Gym Memberships (across 78 institutions)

238,264 full gym memberships
(student and staff)



Volunteers (across 116 institutions)

26,772 participants in sports volunteering programmes per annum



Classes (across 119 institutions)

93,495 available slots per week across 4,516 classes



Athletes (across 103 institutions)

5,502 athletes supported through scholarships

Scotland (from 88% of BUCS members institutions in the area)
 Other Water Facilities – 9
 Gym/Fitness Facilities – 43
 Other Gym/Fitness Facilities – 48
 Cycling/Athletics – 1
 Other – 3

North East (from 100% of BUCS members institutions in the area)
 Other Water Facilities – 5
 Gym/Fitness Facilities – 12
 Other Gym/Fitness Facilities – 14
 Cycling/Athletics – 1
 Other – 4

North West (from 78% of BUCS members institutions in the area)
 Other Water Facilities – 7
 Gym/Fitness Facilities – 44
 Other Gym/Fitness Facilities – 38
 Cycling/Athletics – 3
 Other – 4

Yorkshire (from 59% of BUCS members institutions in the area)
 Other Water Facilities – 6
 Gym/Fitness Facilities – 26
 Other Gym/Fitness Facilities – 30
 Cycling/Athletics – 7
 Other – 4

Northern Ireland (from 100% of BUCS members institutions in the area)
 Other Water Facilities – 4
 Gym/Fitness Facilities – 11
 Other Gym/Fitness Facilities – 13
 Cycling/Athletics – 0
 Other – 3

East Midlands (from 83% of BUCS members institutions in the area)
 Other Water Facilities – 5
 Gym/Fitness Facilities – 44
 Other Gym/Fitness Facilities – 52
 Cycling/Athletics – 4
 Other – 7

Wales (from 100% of BUCS members institutions in the area)
 Other Water Facilities – 3
 Gym/Fitness Facilities – 36
 Other Gym/Fitness Facilities – 28
 Cycling/Athletics – 6
 Other – 4

East (from 67% of BUCS members institutions in the area)
 Other Water Facilities – 2
 Gym/Fitness Facilities – 14
 Other Gym/Fitness Facilities – 18
 Cycling/Athletics – 2
 Other – 3

West Midlands (from 90% of BUCS members institutions in the area)
 Other Water Facilities – 3
 Gym/Fitness Facilities – 33
 Other Gym/Fitness Facilities – 30
 Cycling/Athletics – 3
 Other – 4

London (from 76% of BUCS members institutions in the area)
 Other Water Facilities – 4
 Gym/Fitness Facilities – 71
 Other Gym/Fitness Facilities – 56
 Cycling/Athletics – 4
 Other – 4

South West (from 74% of BUCS members institutions in the area)
 Other Water Facilities – 3
 Gym/Fitness Facilities – 46
 Other Gym/Fitness Facilities – 35
 Cycling/Athletics – 3
 Other – 19

South East (from 93% of BUCS members institutions in the area)
 Other Water Facilities – 5
 Gym/Fitness Facilities – 35
 Other Gym/Fitness Facilities – 42
 Cycling/Athletics – 2
 Other – 8



CURRENT FINANCIAL POSITION – WHAT IS BEING IMPACTED?



CHALLENGES FACED OVER THE LAST FIVE YEARS

It's important to consider the information in the following slides in the context of the past five years. This has been an eventful period, including the Covid-19 pandemic, the cost-of-living crisis and rising inflation, and current budgetary pressures in the higher education sector.

Cost-of-Living

Rise of
Inflation

COVID-19

Budget
pressures

ANNUAL SPENDING AT INSTITUTIONS SINCE 2021-22..

Total annual spend on sports (including staffing, consumables etc - not capital investment)
Direct institution comparison (across 47 institutions)



The larger jump seen between 2021-22 and 2022-23 is likely due to the catch up in different areas of sport provisions following COVID-19. Although there are year-on-year increase, it is unlikely that the scope of the sport provision has increased; it's more that institutions are getting less value for money when running their departments and looking at further income opportunities to help fund these increases.

IN THESE TOUGH FINANCIAL TIMES, WHERE HAS THE IMPACT BEEN FELT?



Classes (average number of bookable instructor-led group exercise classes available per week)

2021-22

36 classes



2022-23

41 classes



2023-24

38 classes



Scholarships Being Offered (percentage of institutions that run a sports scholarship programme)

83% of institutions



83% of institutions



82% of institutions



Scholarship Athletes (average number of students supported by a scholarship per institution)

55 athletes

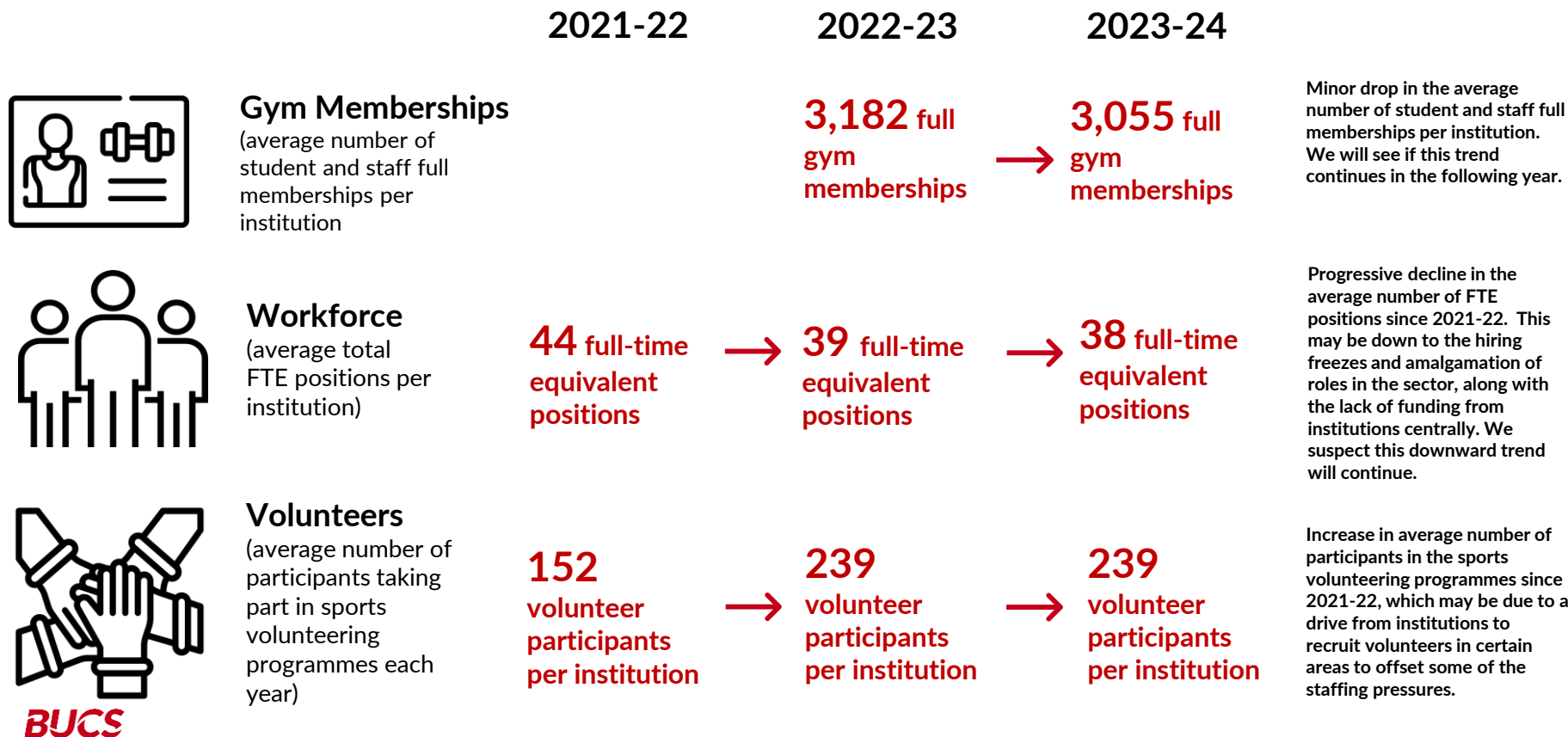


56 athletes



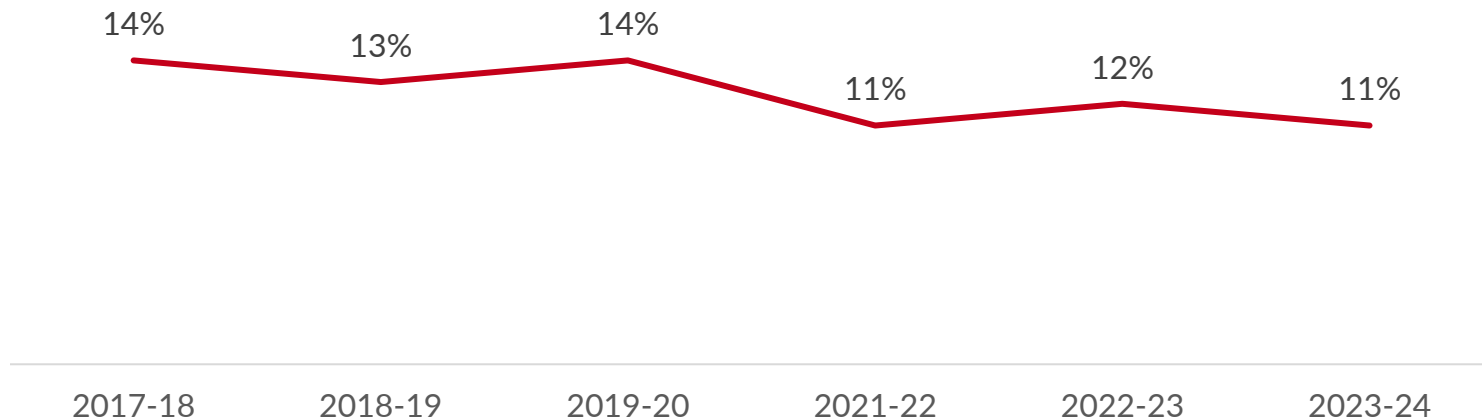
53 athletes

IN THESE TOUGH FINANCIAL TIMES, WHERE HAS THE IMPACT BEEN FELT?



STUDENT SPORT CLUB/SOCIETY MEMBERSHIPS CONTINUE TO FAIL TO REACH PRE-COVID LEVELS

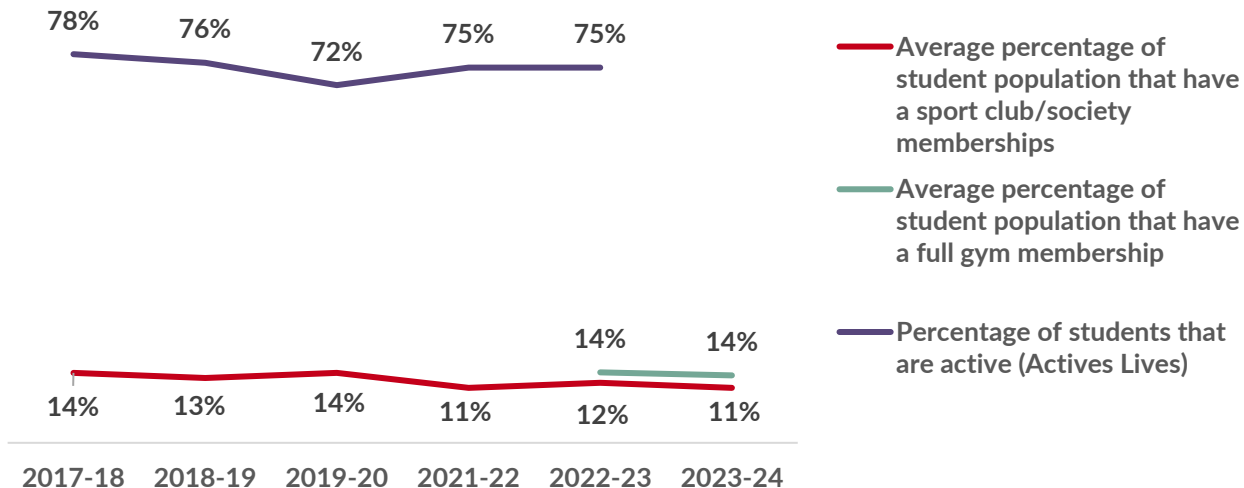
AVERAGE NUMBER OF SPORTS CLUB/SOCIETY MEMBERSHIPS (AS A PERCENTAGE OF STUDENT POPULATION)



The average number of sports club/society memberships as a percentage of student population has not recovered to pre-pandemic levels. This is likely to be an impact from the cost-of-living crisis, with the findings from the BUCS research on this topic centring around students having less available time and money to invest in sport.

HOW DOES THIS COMPARE TO STUDENT GYM MEMBERSHIPS AND ACTIVITY LEVELS?

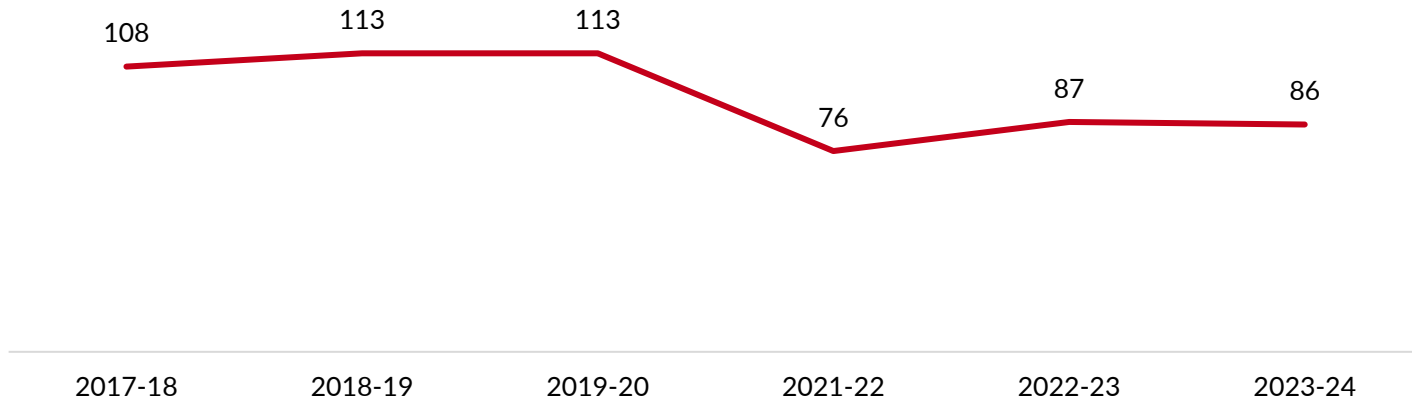
ACTIVITY LEVELS AND STUDENT MEMBERS BY STUDENT POPULATION



This graph shows the average number of sports club/society memberships as a percentage of student population against percentage of student population that have a full gym membership and percentage of students that are active (using the Sport England Active Lives data). These datasets track in a similar direction, giving the indication that students are less likely to be active in general, rather than students moving away from student sport clubs/society to an alternative sport offering.

AVERAGE NUMBER OF INTRAMURAL TEAMS PER INSTITUTION ALSO CONTINUE TO FAIL TO REACH PRE-COVID LEVELS

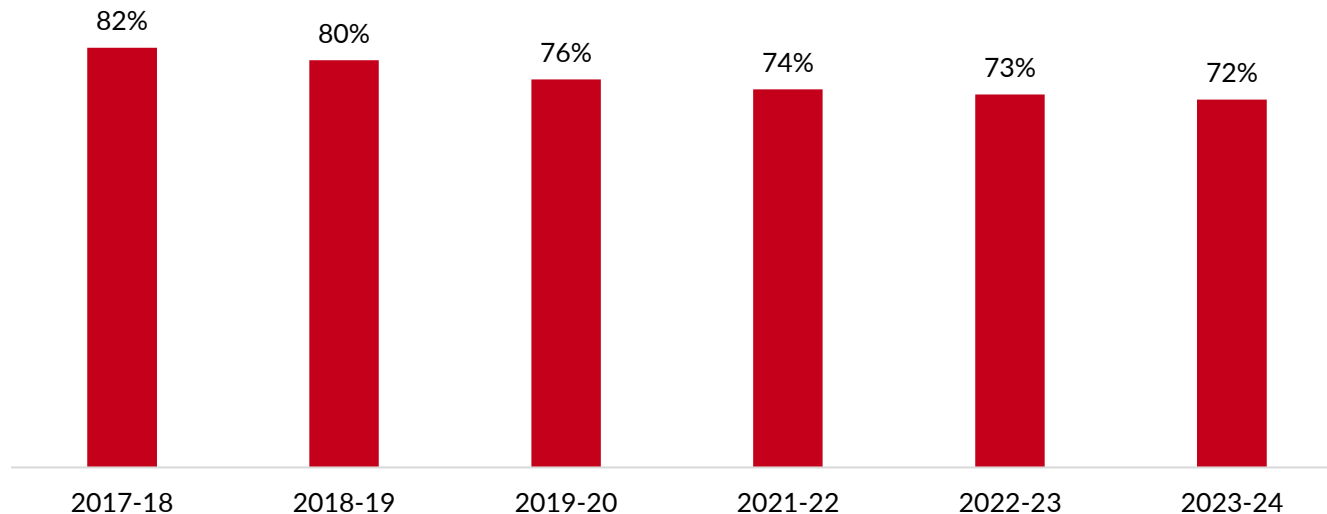
AVERAGE NUMBER OF INTRAMURAL TEAMS PER INSTITUTION



Linked to the previous slides, the average number of intramural teams are also failing to hit pre COVID-19 levels, with the rise seen in 2022-23 plateauing in 2023-24. There are a few reasons why this might be the case. First, the growing commuter student population means some students are on campus less and they would need to travel (in many instances a significant distance) to campus specifically for this. It might also be the case that current students do not like these structured sessions as much as previous generations of students. Finally, to plug financial gaps, institutions might be re-allocating facilities space to commercial opportunities rather than recreational sport. Ultimately, there appears to be less engagement in this type of activity.

GRADUAL, CONTINUAL DECLINE OF THE PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONS THAT OFFER INTRA MURAL COMPETITIONS

PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONS THAT OFFER INTRAMURAL COMPETITIONS



DESPITE THE FINANCIAL CHALLENGES, INSTITUTIONS ARE RESISTING INCREASING GYM MEMBERSHIPS COSTS

AVERAGE GYM MEMBERSHIP COST	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
STUDENT - FULL MEMBERSHIP	£152.94	£153.71	£158.09
STUDENT - OTHER MEMBERSHIP	£109.61	£97.35	£100.53
STAFF - FULL MEMBERSHIP	£216.48	£219.16	£219.11
STAFF - OTHER MEMBERSHIP	£161.96	£152.80	£151.20

Based on the data above, institutions seem to have generally resisted increasing gym membership costs for students and staff. There has been minimal change across both full and other (this could be semester only for example) memberships.

HIGHER EDUCATION SPORT IMPACT ON INSTITUTIONS



BUCS

DISENGAGED STUDENTS PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMMES SHOW A SLOW GENERAL DECLINE IN PREVALENCE

PERCENTAGE OF INSTITUTIONS THAT OPERATE A SPECIFIC PHYSICAL ACTIVITY PROGRAMMES TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION OF THOSE WHO ARE DISENGAGED FROM SPORT/ACTIVITY

91%

2017-18

92%

2018-19

89%

2019-20

83%

2021-22

86%

2022-23

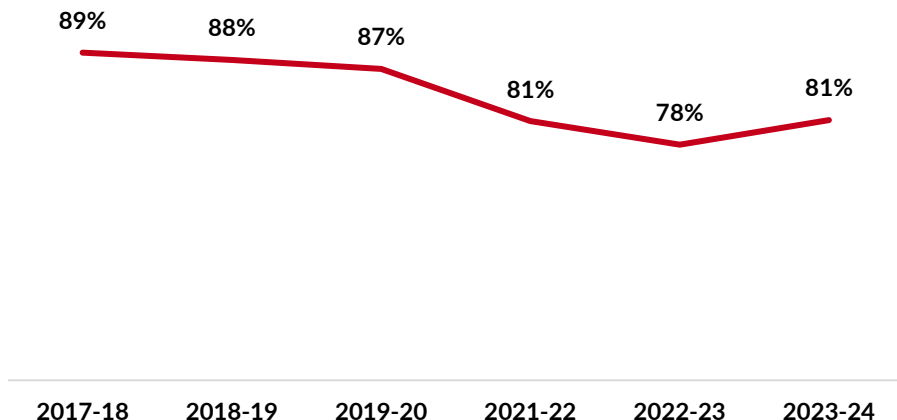
84%

2023-24

There has been a steady, slow decline in the number of institutions that operate a specific physical activity programme to increase participation of those disengaged from sport/activity, although a high percentage of institutions still run these opportunities.

SPORTS DEPARTMENTS ARE LESS LIKELY TO TAKE REFERRALS FROM STUDENT SERVICE DEPARTMENTS WHERE IT IS FELT THE INDIVIDUAL WOULD BENEFIT FROM BEING MORE ACTIVE..

DO YOU TAKE REFERRALS FROM STUDENT SERVICES DEPARTMENTS
(I.E. COUNSELLING/HEALTH SERVICES) WHERE IT IS FELT
INDIVIDUAL STUDENTS WOULD BENEFIT FROM BEING MORE ACTIVE?

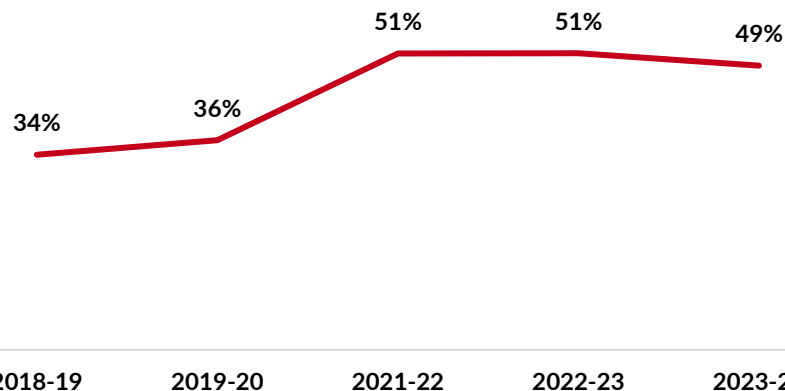


There has also been a decline in the percentage of institutions that are taking referrals from student service departments where it is felt students would benefit from being more active and these are yet to reach the prevalence of pre-COVID-19 pandemic. There are still a majority (4 out of 5) of institutions offering this however it will be interesting to continue to track this data.

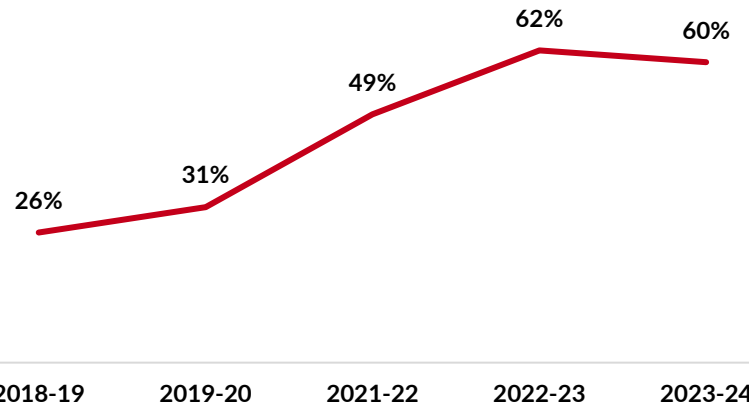
It may be a case that these programmes have been set up in recent years and are the first to go if cuts have to be made. However, the physical and mental wellbeing benefits of sport and physical activity are well-documented and this is therefore an area where sport departments can demonstrate their wider impact.

HOWEVER, SPORT AND PHYSICAL ACTIVITY ARE INCREASINGLY SUPPORTING KEY UNIVERSITY GOALS

DO YOU OPERATE ANY OTHER SPECIFIC PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OR SPORTS PROGRAMMES AIMED AT IMPROVING GRADUATE EMPLOYABILITY?



DO YOU OPERATE ANY OTHER SPECIFIC PHYSICAL ACTIVITY OR SPORTS PROGRAMMES AIMED AT IMPROVING TRANSITION AND RETENTION?



These graphs demonstrate that sport and physical activity are increasingly being used to support key university goals such as graduate employability, student transition and student retention. These types of programmes can help sports departments prove the value of sport in higher education. We hope to see these numbers continue to rise in the coming years.

Student retention and employability programmes

Sophie Johnson-Read
Sports Development Manager



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Active Wellbeing Programme

- Exercise referral programme for University of Hull students to help with retention
- Improve overall wellbeing through sport and physical activity
- Bespoke six week programme to that individual which can include sport, fitness, gym access, personal training plus nutritional advice
- Dedicated mentor to support student throughout
- Three touch points – week 1, 3 and 6
- Students complete a wellbeing questionnaire at the start / end of the programme to measure impact of programme
- Led by sports development team and fitness



Active Wellbeing Programme



- Post programme, students are offered a reduced gym membership to continue accessing the gym, classes or sport from active wellbeing
- Another check in 4 weeks later to check in on student and progress since leaving the programme!

Referrals

Referrals come through the wellbeing team, academics, professional services such as student hub, accommodation services who can refer students all throughout the year.

Programme funded by student success.

Retention

We meet with students at the start of the programme to outline expectations, 100% commitment and share the three-strike system.

If the programme isn't right for the students, we refer back to the original source.

Impact

Helps with retention, attainment levels, sense of belonging, overall happiness and connection to the University IF students engage with the programme.

University of Hull Participation Grant

Funding to remove any financial barriers for students to participate in extra curricular activities.

Students could apply for funding to access sport, join a society or participate in social sport programme all year long if they meet the following criteria:

1. A student with a residual household income of less than £25,000 as assessed by Student Finance England
2. An international or EU student
3. A mature student (aged 25 or over on the first day of the current academic year)
4. A student who has declared a disability
5. Students eligible for our Humber Grant as a care leaver, young adult carer or those assessed as estranged by Student Finance England
6. A student with dependents

06/05/2025



University of Hull Participation Grant



- Applications are live from September until funding has been allocated.
- Applications collect data such as degree, home address, year of study, criteria, why they have applied for funding and how it will help them.
- If successful, they'll receive funding within two weeks to join a club / society or programme.

Applications

Students must prove that they have joined a club, society or programme by providing membership confirmation via email.

They must also complete a short questionnaire on how the funding has helped them plus a short testimonial

Advertisement

This is advertised to students upon arrival, student canvas/ portal, welcome fair, wellbeing team plus social media.

Impact

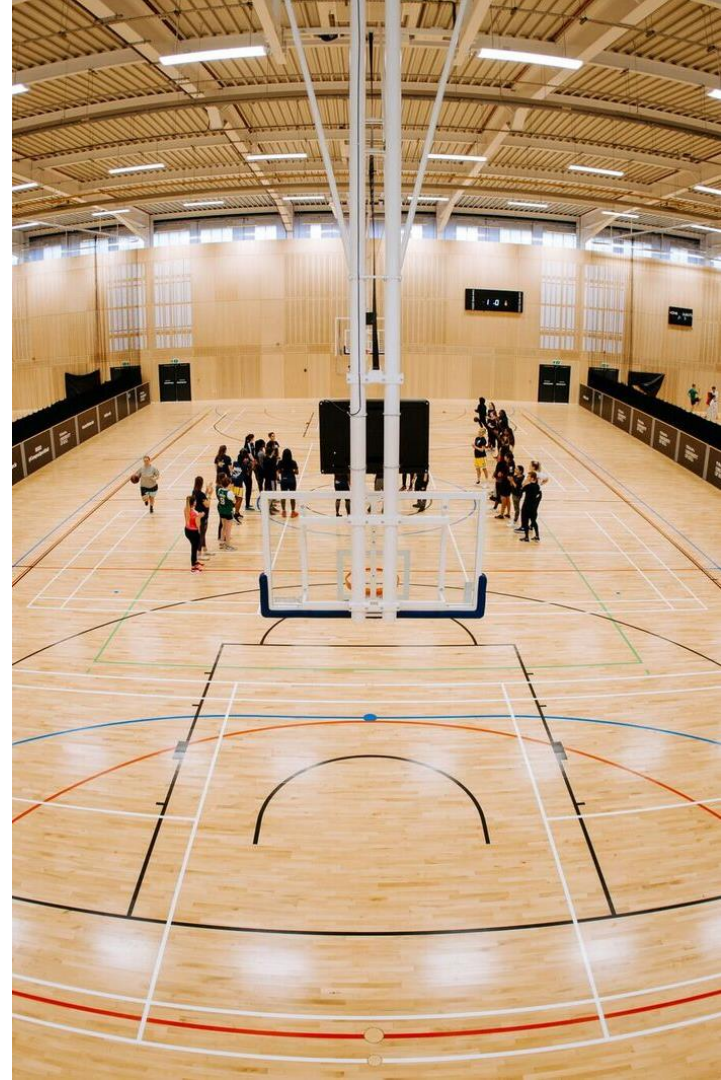
All funding was spent from Sept-March 2025

Questions asked;

- Would you have joined the programme/ society if the funding wasn't allocated?
- How has the funding helped towards your student experience?

Employability: Workforce Programmes

- Two workforce programmes: Football Leadership Academy (FLP) plus University of Hull Sport & Active Wellbeing workforce
- FLP is focused on Football / Futsal opportunities on campus
- UoH Sport & Active Wellbeing workforce includes sport, fitness, performance



Employability and workforce



- On campus placement opportunities
- Introductory meeting collects information such as career aspirations, skills they'd like to develop and what they would like to achieve
- Dedicated mentor with monthly meetings and work plan
- Fully funded uniform and qualifications to support development
- Remove any barriers to develop!

Partners

Careers service delivers workshops such as CV writing, job applications, interviews

External providers deliver workshops bi-monthly to educate and provide further opportunities to our students

Reward and recognition

Bi-monthly workshops

- Reward recognition
- Educational workshop
- Reward recognition and so forth

Helps with student engage, value our volunteers and simply to spend quality time together away from volunteering

Great for student engagement!

Impact

We collect data on skills developed, qualifications and experience gained but we'd like to go further by collecting insight in job satisfaction post University.

- Did volunteering help?
- How did it help?
- Which skills did you gain from volunteering which are now transferrable in to your current role.

Future

- Develop data collection for workforce programme to prove impact post graduation
- Train more staff on the active wellbeing programme to support with referrals

06/05/2025



Thank you

Sophie Johnson-Read
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-END-