



British Active Students Survey: 2017/2018 Report



Forewords

Baroness Tanni Grey-Thompson, Chair, ukactive

ukactive has a long standing vision and commitment to create an active, healthy society within an environment where people can fulfil their ambitions.

The student population are our future leaders, teachers and carers. Through supporting them to be active we are helping them learn positive habits for a lifetime of healthy behaviour, as well as long-term employability and productivity, which is vital for society as a whole.



In 2017, the ukactive Research Institute, in collaboration with Precor and Scottish Student Sport released a key report highlighting the important role physical activity can play in a university student's life. This year, with the additional collaboration of British Universities & Colleges Sport (BUCS), the research has been expanded across Britain.

This report, the 'British Active Students Survey', not only demonstrates how meeting the recommended levels of physical activity can provide the greatest health benefits, but by being active in some way can lead to improvements for students.

Today's young people are the least active ever and we need a serious shake-up of the school day to save Generation Inactive from a lifetime of ill-health. But for this to be successful, we need opportunities and support throughout education so that as young people become adults, and as they progress into higher education, physical activity is a habit and not a chore.

We all know the dangers of physical inactivity. It is as dangerous to an individual's health as smoking, and nearly twice as many premature deaths can be attributed to physical inactivity as obesity. The findings of this report provide a great opportunity for higher educational institutions to incorporate opportunities and support for all students to lead an active lifestyle for physical, mental and social wellbeing.

Over two million students are currently enrolled in universities. Higher educational institutions (HEIs) present a critical link in ensuring regular physical activity is maintained into adulthood. Creating positive behaviours towards physical activity through university opportunities can lead to a healthy workforce and better health in older age, supporting the long term sustainability of the NHS.



Forewords

Professor Sir Ian Diamond, Chair, BUCS

Being active, most serious commentators would agree, has multiple benefits for a healthy lifestyle, impacting positively on physical and mental well-being. For many students an active lifestyle supports their management the stresses associated with coursework deadlines and regular examination diets. For a significant number of students, activity takes place within clubs and societies, be they competitive or recreational and, for these students, the gains from being active are further multiplied as new students gain an early sense of belonging to their institution; a set of friends, many of whom last for life; and co-curricular skills that enhance employability and engender the sense of growing as an active citizen.



So far so good, yet not every student is active and among the inactive are many who would like to take more exercise. Some face competing challenges from needing to undertake paid work to make university economically sustainable. Others are metaphorically tripped up by the disruption of moving away from home or by the competing pressures of academic study. As universities move ever faster to put the student experience at the heart of everything they do, it behoves them to take an evidence-led approach to ensuring that everything is done to maximise the proportion of students who are active.

This is where this excellent report comes in. For the first time, a very large number of students in universities across Great Britain have reported on the good things about being an active student; on the positive aspects of activity and on the barriers to being active. And it makes instructive reading: active students perform better, are more confident of their employability and have better mental well-being. Lecturers will be pleased to know that it is the competing challenges of studying rather than socialising that impacts on taking exercise, yet will still want to reflect on how to encourage a positive work-life balance.

In summary this report provides, for the first time, a picture of the landscape of student activity and the evidence on which to base policy so as to maximise the physical and mental well-being benefits of activity amongst all our students. I commend it to you.

Steve Carter, Managing Director, Precor UK

Higher education, whether it's college or university, is a time of growth – mentally, physically and emotionally. Exercise and sport plays a crucial role in how students deal with this life changing period, as the previous research done with ukactive and Scottish Student Sport showed. Which is why we have chosen to expand this research to include BUCS, to delve further into the important the role physical activity can play in a university student's life.



Offering options is the key to successfully driving engagement and encouraging all students to become active and that's why Precor believes in the importance of ensuring the availability of fitness for all. This is supported by providing them with technologically-advanced equipment and tools, such as Preva networked fitness that enables them to set goals, log and track their fitness activities. With a versatile, high-quality product range across all areas; cardiovascular, strength, functional and group training, Precor can provide every facility with choices to help them find the right solution for their needs and their students' needs.

However students are inspired to take up fitness and sport, we can see from the research findings it not only helps boost their overall self-esteem across a number of areas, but also gives them confidence to achieve strong grades and succeed. At Precor we are dedicated to partnering with educational facilities to ensure students have access to the latest equipment that delivers an exercise experience to support and complement their academic learning.

Executive Summary

Active students have higher wellbeing, inclusion and perceptions of employability and attainment compared to inactive students. This report shows that when universities invest in opportunities and provide students with support to be physically active it can lead to more positive outcomes. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have an important role to play in the physical and mental wellbeing of their students, whilst ensuring they have the skills needed to excel.

The 'British Active Students Survey', conducted at the end of 2017, followed on from the 2016 inaugural active student survey. The 'Scottish Active Students Survey' indicated that students who were active had higher wellbeing, inclusion and perceptions of attainment and employability compared to inactive students. This was reflected in students who participated in sport and were members of a gym compared to those who participated in just sport or were just members of the gym, or those who participated in neither.

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. HESA data indicates there are 2,317,880 students enrolled in HEIs and 1,587,410 (68.5%) under 25 years of age. Across the UK, a quarter of 16–24 year olds do not meet the recommended levels of physical activity highlighting the crucial role HEIs have in supporting this population to be physically active.

The 'British Active Students Survey' has built upon the evidence previously reported, expanding the survey by collecting responses from students across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. A total of 6,891 students from 104 HEIs were represented.

Just over half of the respondents were meeting the Chief Medical Officers' (CMO) guidelines on physical activity (more than 150 minutes moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity each week), with 7.1% classified as inactive (less than 30 minutes moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity each week). Over half of respondents (53%) were both members of a gym and a sports club, with around 1 in 5 members of either a sports team or gym.

Participation in regular physical activity as well as sports participation and gym membership was found to improve students' personal wellbeing, mental wellbeing, social inclusion and perceived academic

attainment and employability. Students who were classified as fairly active scored better across these outcomes compared to inactive students. Similarly, students who were members of a gym or participated in sport in isolation scored higher than those who took part in neither. **These results highlight the importance of doing some activity. Participation in sport and gym are required for the greatest benefits, as well as meeting the recommended levels of physical activity.**

In order to engage more students in regular activity, it is important to understand the barriers to leading an active lifestyle so that HEIs can provide specific support to students. This research found that being too busy with studies was the biggest barrier (74–79%). However, active students stated they spent more time studying than inactive students. The next highest barriers were too busy socialising (23%) or that activity options were too expensive (23%). Only 4% of respondents indicated a lack of support from their university. Body confidence and student sports culture feeling unwelcoming were more frequently reported barriers for females. This suggests **universities are providing good levels of support yet barriers still exist. Refreshing this support may be required to help reduce these specific barriers with wider collaboration across institutions.**

There is a clear association between activity levels in students and personal wellbeing, mental wellbeing, social inclusion and perceptions of attainment and employability. These results highlight the great importance of leading an active lifestyle for students, not only for the well-evidenced benefits to physical wellbeing, but the wider benefits to students' current and future wellbeing.

The 'British Active Students Survey' provides evidence to universities that active students are healthier, happier and more likely to succeed. Effort is needed to enable the 40% of students doing some activity to do a bit more in order to meet the CMO guidelines, and to help those currently inactive to at least move towards the goal of becoming active, and therefore gain the wider benefits associated with leading an active lifestyle. **Collaborative working within HEIs can provide students with activity habits for later life, a positive experience, and further support them achieve academic success and be employable. Universities will benefit due to the higher wellbeing, grades and employability of students.**

Introduction

Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) have a pivotal role to play in the physical and mental wellbeing of their students, whilst equipping them with the relevant skills needed to obtain and excel in later life. Providing students with the opportunity and encouragement to be physically active has been shown to positively influence their physical and mental wellbeing, social inclusion and perceptions of academic attainment and employability¹.

The 2017 'Scottish Active Students Survey'¹ report revealed that students classified as active (more than 150 minutes of moderate to vigorous intensity activity each week²) perceived themselves to have higher average scores for personal wellbeing, mental wellbeing, social inclusion, attainment and employability than students classified as inactive (less than 30 minutes of moderate intensity physical activity per week²). Additionally, those students that participated in sport and were members of a gym perceived themselves to have higher average scores for these measures than students who participated in just sport, who attended the gym in isolation or those that neither participated in sport nor attended the gym¹.

Yet, across the UK, a total of 25.2% of 16 to 24 year olds do not meet the recommended levels of physical activity, which is greater still among the adult population at 38.2%³. With 2,317,880⁴ students enrolled in HEIs and 1,587,410⁵ (68.5%) under 25 years of age, HEIs are crucial in supporting this population to meet the recommended levels of physical activity. This support can create activity habits for later life, helping to reduce adulthood inactivity and improve the associated benefits.

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 (HESA, 2016)⁶. Through regular physical activity, HEIs can help students improve their mental wellbeing, social inclusion and academic success, reaching far beyond sport and help HEIs support teams in the improvement of student wellbeing.

This report looks to build upon the 'Scottish Active Students Survey' findings published in 2017 by the ukactive Research Institute in collaboration with Precor and Scottish Student Sport. By expanding the survey, with

the additional collaboration of BUCS, to include institutions across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, the research aimed to further investigate the associations between mental and personal wellbeing, attainment, employability and physical activity levels of university students across Britain.

Building upon the previous survey, this report presents the findings of a UK-wide survey and looks to investigate 1) if previous findings are replicated across the UK, and 2) what the barriers are preventing students from participating more frequently.



1. https://www.precor.com/sites/default/files/brochures/55497%20Precor%20SSS%20&%20UKActive%20Report_HR.pdf

2. Department of Health. (2011). Start Active, Stay Active: A report on physical activity from the four home countries' Chief Medical Officers. London. Retrieved from https://www.sportengland.org/media/388152/dh_128210.pdf

3. <https://www.sportengland.org/media/13052/active-lives-adult-survey-nov-16-17-report.pdf>

4. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he>

5. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he/characteristics>

6. HESA (2016). Students and graduates. <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students>

Respondents

6,891 students responded to the survey, which was open between November and December 2017. The survey was disseminated through university and student union targeted mailing, social media and other institution-specific methods, such as newsletters and instant messaging. Responses were collated using an online survey tool.

Responses were received from 104 different institutions. A breakdown by country can be seen in Figure 1 (England 78, Scotland 19, Wales 6, Northern Ireland 1). The top 10 institutions determined by response rate as a percentage of full time equivalent (FTE) students can be seen in Table 1. Just over a third of students enrolled in the top two responding institutions, University of Bristol and St Andrews University, were members of BUCS clubs (Table 1).

The University of Bristol and St Andrews University were the highest of the top 10 responding universities. However, of the remaining eight institutions, between 6.40% and 23.26% of FTE students were BUCS members. Averaged across these institutions, 18.59% of the FTE students are members of BUCS. This comparison highlights the students who responded came from across the institutions and the whole of the UK.

Figure 1: Map of institutes that responded



Table 1. Top 10 responding institutions by response rate percentage.

Institution	Country	FTE	Responses	Rate (%)	BUCS Clubs members	BUCS Teams	Non BUCS teams	Intra-mural teams	Fitness classes / week	% of BUCS members of the FTE
University of Bristol	England	21,905	1,077	4.9%	8,000	96	25	116	91	36.5%
St Andrews University	Scotland	8,850	428	4.8%	3,192	61	21	286	41	36.1%
Dundee University	Scotland	10,973	402	3.7%	2,552	62	30	39	46	23.3%
Queen Margaret University	Scotland	3,906	119	3.0%	250	9	2	0		6.4%
University of Plymouth	England	23,155	691	3.0%	3,824	39	35	87	14	16.5%
The University of Nottingham	England	32,125	737	2.3%	5,626	119	32	250	156	17.5%
University of Liverpool	England	24,775	553	2.2%	3,500	74	41	135	52	14.1%
University of Leicester	England	17,825	386	2.2%	1,826	61	14	53	114	10.2%
Newcastle University	England	23,795	446	1.9%	4,250	96	19	325	48	17.9%
Canterbury Christ Church University	England	16,055	288	1.8%	1,067	40	8	23	58	6.7%

Demographics

Just under two thirds of respondents were male (61.9%), a higher proportion compared to UK data (49.3%)⁷. Respondents were most commonly aged between 18–21 years old (65.3%), with an additional 24.2% aged between 22–25 years old. The most common age of respondents was 20 years old, which is only slightly lower than the mean age of respondents (21.8 years old). The vast majority (85.3%) of students who responded identified as White or White British, reflecting the nationally available data (87.8%) with mixed ethnicity (3.7%) making up a higher proportion of respondents compared to the UK data (1.6%)⁶. Overall, respondents were mainly undergraduate students (84.4%) and studied full time (98.7% of all respondents).

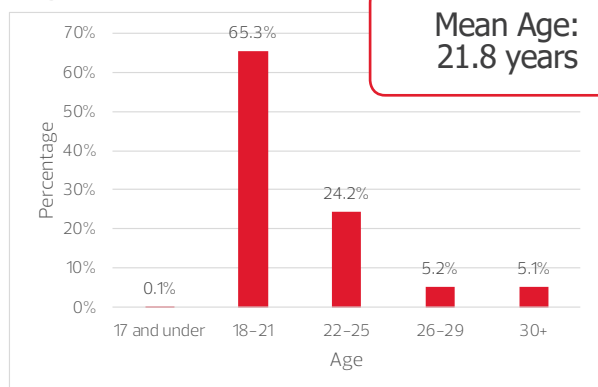
Gender

Gender	Percentage
Male	61.9%
Female	36.4%
Trans man	0.2%
Trans woman	0.1%
In another way	0.7%
Prefer not to say	0.8%

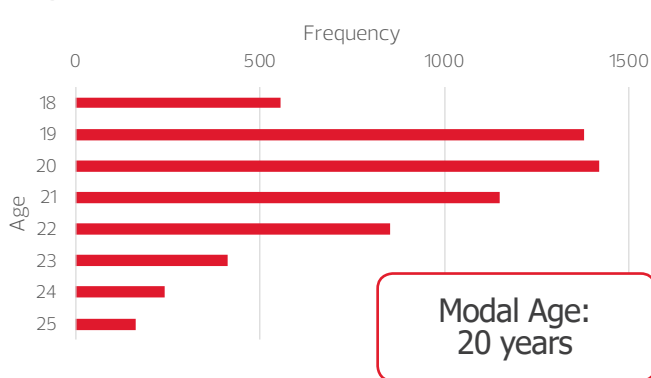
Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Survey	UK %
White or White British	85.3%	87.8%
Mixed	3.7%	1.6%
Asian or Asian British	7.5%	7.3%
Black or Black British	1.7%	3.2%
Other	1.8%	1.8%

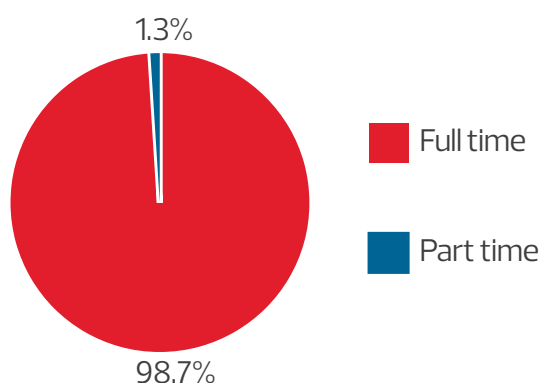
Age Distribution



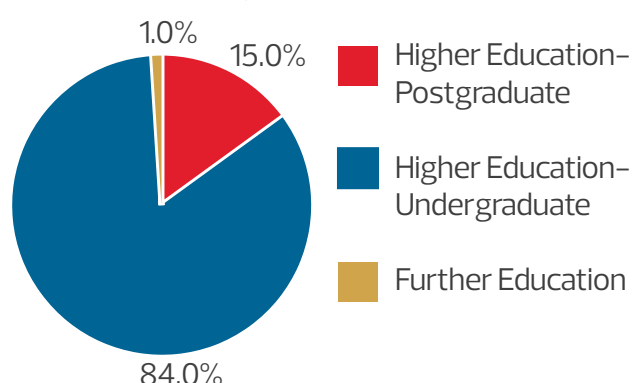
Age Breakdown



Undergraduate Study Mode



Level of Study



7. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census/2011census/2011censusdata>

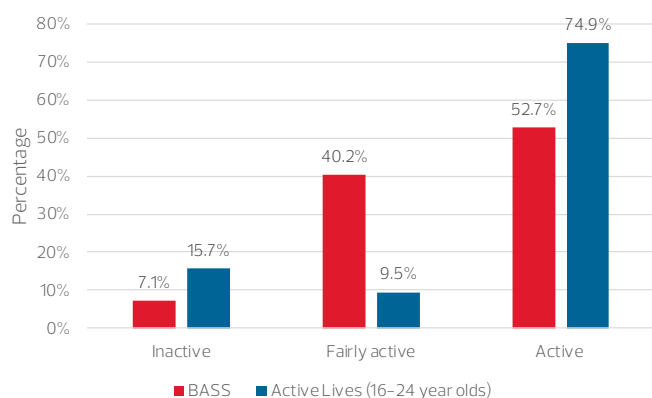
Physical Activity

Just over half (53%) of respondents reported meeting the CMO guidelines for physical activity and were classified as active. Less than 1 in 10 respondents (7%) were classified as inactive, indicating they completed less than 30 minutes moderate to vigorous intensity physical activity each week. The remaining 40% of participants were classified as fairly active, taking part in some activity (more than 30 minutes) but not enough to meet the CMO guidelines (less than 150 minutes). These activity classifications are used for the remainder of the report.

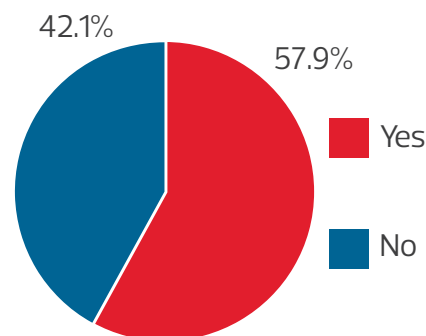
Compared to 16–24-year-old respondents of Sport England's Active Lives survey³, the student population that responded to the survey had a lower proportion of active individuals. However, the proportion of fairly active respondents was more than double the proportion of the UK population in this category.

When asked if they were aware of how much physical activity they should be taking part in, over two fifths (42.1%) of respondents didn't know how active they should be.

Activity levels of respondents and UK overall population



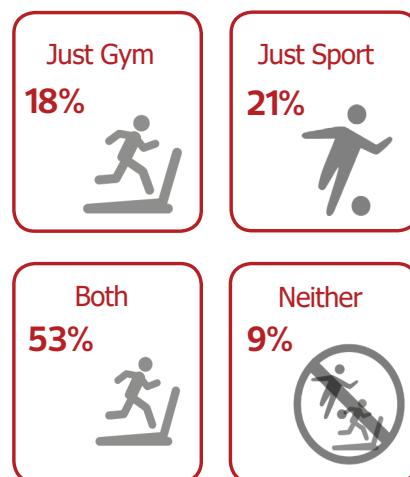
Are you aware how much physical activity you should be doing (CMO guidelines)?



Around 1 in 5 students were members of a sports team but not a gym (21%). A slightly smaller proportion of respondents were members of a gym but not a sports team (18%). Whilst over half of respondents (53%) were both members of a gym and a sports club.

Of those who were members of sports clubs, just under two thirds (64%) were with a university-based club only. A further 30% were members of sports clubs both in and outside of university. Only 6% were members of sports clubs solely outside of university. Of those who were members of a gym, 79.0% were members at their university or college facility.

Respondents who were both members of sports clubs and gyms were the most likely to be active (64.0%), compared to those who were only members of sports clubs (50.8%) and those who were just members of a gym (38%). Those who were only members of a gym were most commonly fairly active (52%) as were those who were not members of a sports team or gym (52%). Just over 3 in 10 respondents who weren't members of a gym nor a sports club were classified as inactive (30.2%).



Respondents to the survey took part in a large variety of sports clubs. Most commonly these were team sports such as football, rugby, netball and hockey. However, there were also many respondents who participated in less mainstream sports such as ultimate Frisbee, Futsal, quidditch and korfbal, showing the wide variety of options available to encourage students, no matter their interests, to be more physically active.

Personal Wellbeing

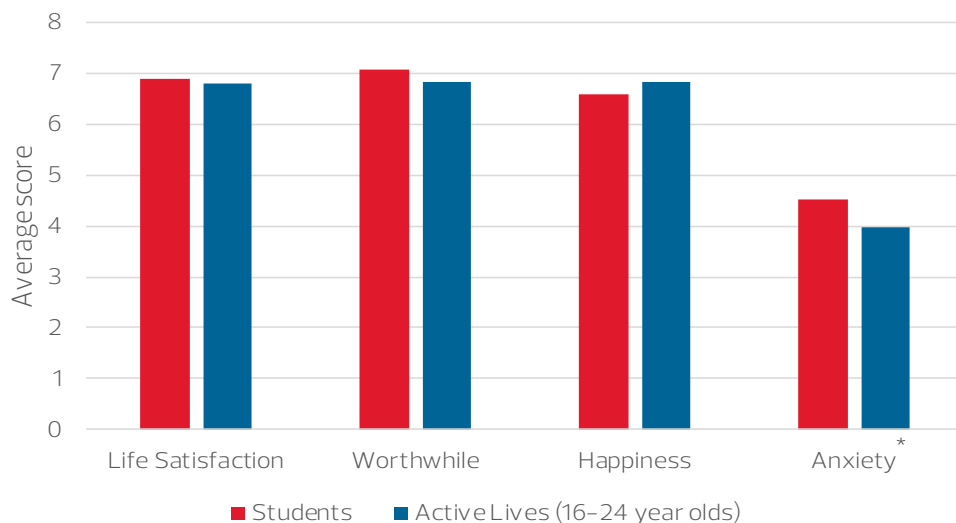
Key Findings

- >> Promotion of regular physical activity and participation in both sport or gym memberships improves the personal wellbeing of students.
- >> The highest personal wellbeing scores were found for those students who were classified as being active or those that take part in both sport and are members of a gym.
- >> The combination of sport and gym participation produced higher personal wellbeing scores than either in isolation. Providing students with both options increases the opportunity to see better personal wellbeing when compared to doing neither.

On average, students perceived most positively that the things they do in their life are worthwhile, closely followed by their perceptions of their life satisfaction. Students perceived themselves to have medium levels of anxiety, scoring 4.51 out of 10 on average (where a higher score indicates greater levels of anxiety).

Overall, respondents' average scores for life satisfaction and worthwhileness were better for the surveyed population compared to national data for 16–24 year olds⁴. However, levels of happiness and anxiety were worse. Those who were classified as active scored better in all four aspects of personal wellbeing than those classified as fairly active or inactive. Ordinal regression showed that compared to the inactive group, the odds were greater for those in the active group having higher life satisfaction (OR 1.899 [95%CI 1.294 to 2.788]), thinking life was more worthwhile (OR 1.724 [95%CI 1.177 to 2.525]), and having higher happiness (OR 1.680 [95%CI 1.150 to 2.455]), and the odds were lower for them having higher anxiety (OR 0.574 [95%CI 0.393 to 0.838]). Students who were classified as active had higher life satisfaction and worthwhileness compared to the Active Lives survey³, with happiness at a similar level and anxiety worse. These students' results reflect the findings from the 'Scottish Active Students Survey' report¹.

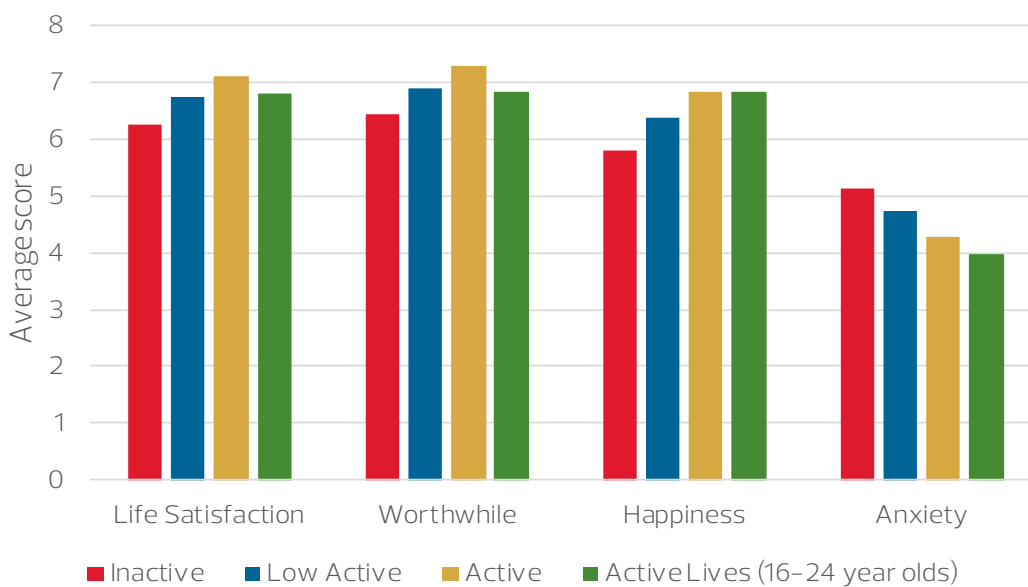
Personal wellbeing scores of respondents and overall UK average (16–24 year olds)



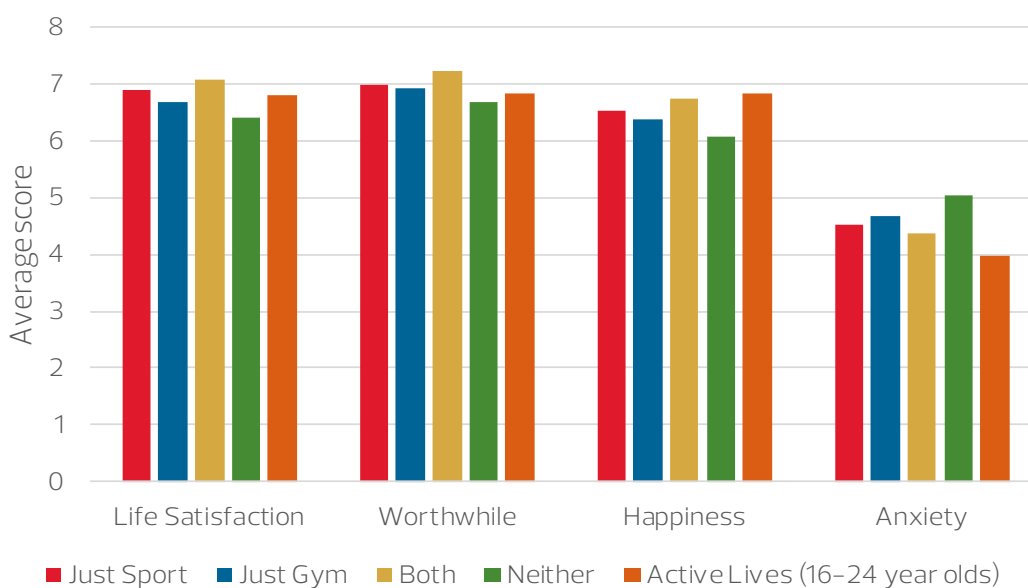
*Anxiety is negatively scored – a lower score is better.

Analysing the results based upon whether respondents participated in sport or were members of a gym, showed that **those who reported that they took part in sport and were members of a gym had the best personal wellbeing scores**. Those who took part in sport or had a gym membership in isolation scored better than those doing neither. Participating in sport or having a gym membership in isolation drew comparable results, however those just participating in sports reported slightly better levels of personal wellbeing. Participating in just sport yielded higher levels of life satisfaction and participating in both and each in isolation yielded higher worthwhileness compared to the Active Lives survey³. The Active Lives survey³ was better for happiness and anxiety.

Personal wellbeing scores of respondents by activity level



Personal wellbeing scores of respondents by activity type



Mental Wellbeing

Key Findings

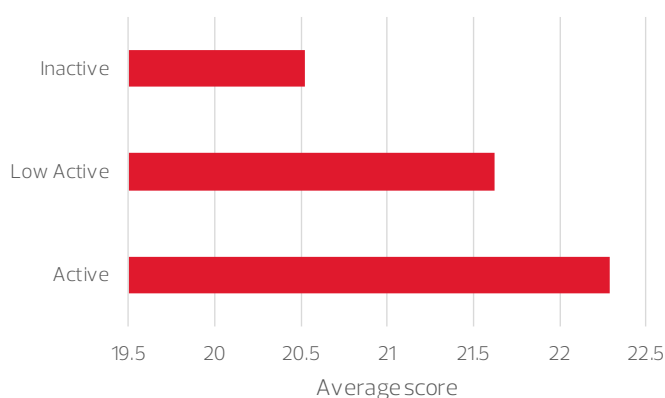
- >> Promotion of regular physical activity and participation in both sport or gym memberships improves mental wellbeing in students.
- >> The more active students had higher mental wellbeing scores than those who were classified as fairly active or inactive. Similarly, students who participated in sport and the gym scored higher than either in isolation.

Overall, the mean mental wellbeing was 21.9 out of 35. This is lower than the most recent benchmark for this scale reported in the 2011 Health Survey for England where the average score was 23.6 out of 35⁸.

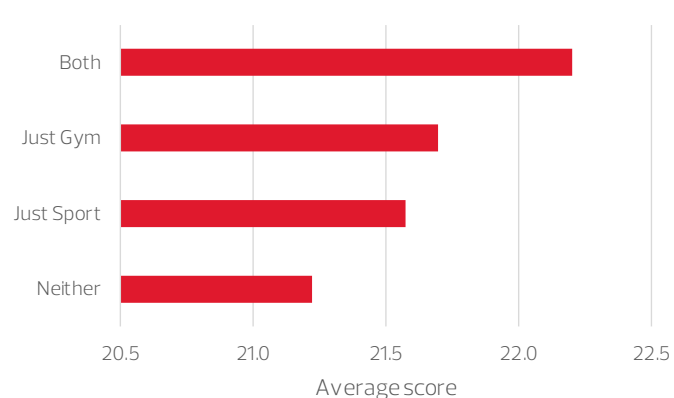
When segmenting the results depending on respondents' activity levels, a similar pattern to the results of the personal wellbeing questions was found. Students who were classified as active had the highest average mental wellbeing score (22.3). The average score of those who were fairly active (21.6) was worse than that of the active students but better than the average score for inactive students (20.5). Ordinal regression showed that compared to the inactive group, the odds were greater for those in both the active group (OR 2.046 [95%CI 1.403 to 2.981]) and fairly active group (OR 1.748 [95%CI 1.292 to 2.364]) having higher mental wellbeing scores.

Segmenting the results based upon whether respondents were members of a sports club or a gym revealed that students that took part in sport and had a gym membership had the highest average mental wellbeing (22.2). Those who were either a member of a gym or a sports club in isolation scored next best, with those who were just members of a gym (21.7) having a slightly higher mental wellbeing compared to those who were just members of a sports club (21.6). Both of these scores were higher than the average for those who were members of neither a gym nor a sports club (21.2).

Mental wellbeing scores of respondents by activity level



Mental wellbeing scores of respondents by activity type



8. <https://digital.nhs.uk/catalogue/PUB09300>

Social Inclusion

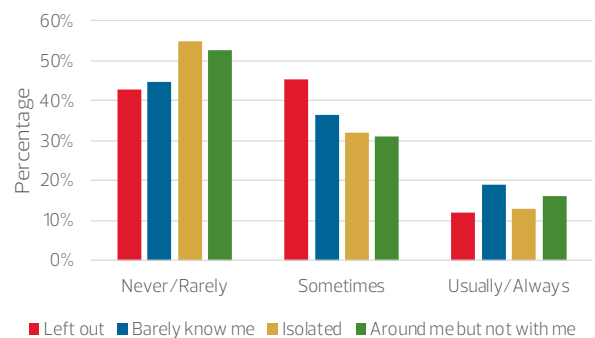
Key Findings

- >> Physical activity and participation in both sports teams and being member of a gym improves students' social inclusion.
- >> The highest levels of social inclusion were seen in active respondents
- >> Having activities available through sports teams and gym membership, and taking part in both, produced the highest levels of social inclusion. Members of sports teams only were less socially isolated than those who were members of a gym only.

For each of the four questions asked, over 40% of respondents indicated that they had never or rarely experienced these feeling of isolation, signifying positive levels of social inclusion.

Feeling that people barely know me (19.0%) and that people are around me but not with me (16.2%) were the two statements that had the highest proportion of students indicating that they usually or always felt this way.

Social isolation scores of respondents



However, when looking at the responses to each of the four statements for only the inactive students, the proportion of respondents indicating that they always or usually experience each of the feelings is between 9–12 percentage points higher than the overall averages. Almost a third of inactive respondents (31%) indicated that they usually or always feel that people barely know them. Investigating the results of active students revealed, over 47% of respondents stated that they had greater feelings of social inclusion. Ordinal regression showed that compared to the inactive group, the odds were lower for them feeling left out (OR 0.608 [95%CI 0.405 to 0.914]), and that people are around them but not with them (OR 0.547 [95%CI 0.369 to 0.810]) for the active students.

Social inclusion scores by activity levels



For all four statements, the proportion of respondents who usually or always experienced feelings of social inclusion was higher for those who were only members of a gym (by 2–4 percentage points) than those who were only members a sports club. However, the segment indicating that they were most likely to experience feelings of social inclusion were those who are members of a gym and a sports club.

Social inclusion scores by activity type



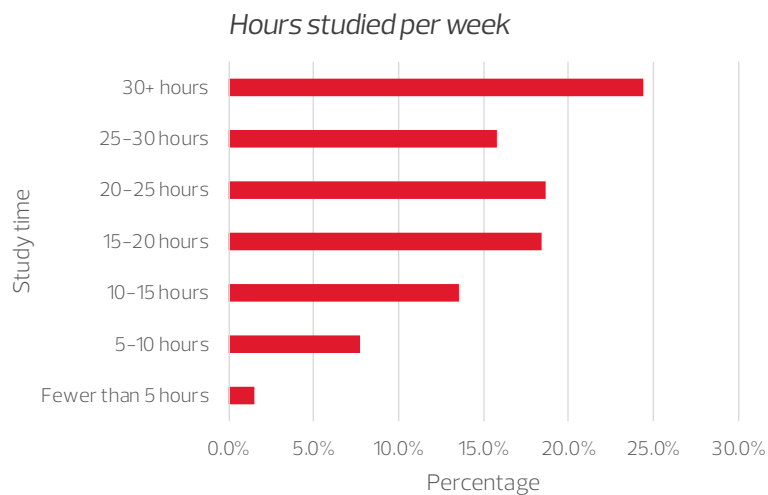
Perceptions of Attainment

Key Findings

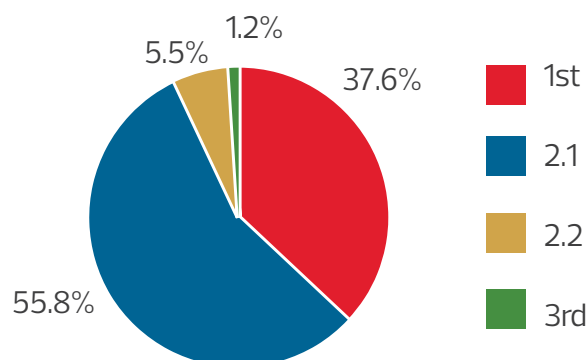
- >> Students who were classified as being active perceived themselves to be more likely to achieve high attainment, with the inactive population the least likely to achieve this level.
- >> Providing students with the opportunity to take part in physical activity also has a positive effect on perceived attainment, as students who took part in just gym or just sport perceived themselves to have the highest attainment, followed by those who participated in both.

To gain an understanding of students' perceptions of their attainment, respondents were asked to provide a prediction of the final grade they expected to achieve at undergraduate level. Those studying at postgraduate level were asked to provide the grade they had already achieved at undergraduate.

High attainment (1st or 2:1) was reported by 93.4% of the overall respondents, with the majority expecting to achieve a 2:1. Most commonly, students indicated that they spent 30 or more hours a week in classes or private study with only 10% of respondents indicating that they studied for less than 10 hours a week. 27.2% of those who were classified as active spent 30 or more hours a week in classes or private study compared to 21.4% of fairly active and 19.5% inactive. These results suggest that even though the active students spent more time being physically active, this did not impact on the time they spent studying.



What grade do you expect to achieve at the end of this year?



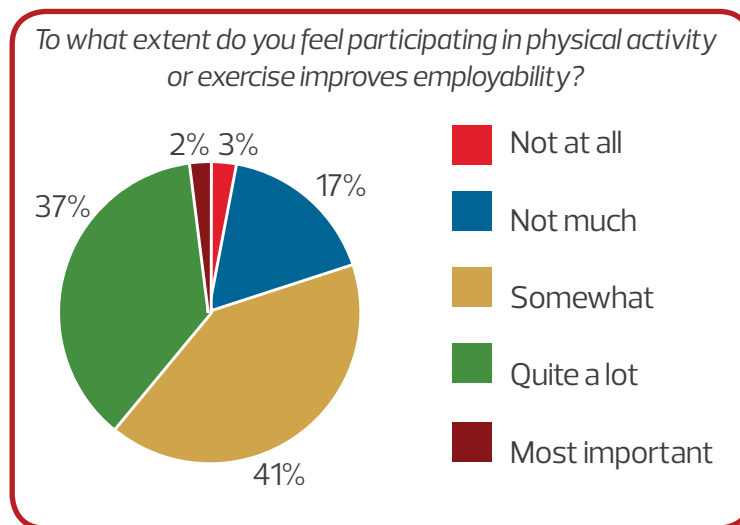
Perceptions of Employability

Key Findings

>> Students who were physically active on a regular basis rated themselves higher on 8 out of the 10 employability skills, with 'teamwork' and 'drive' the two highest scoring skills, as well as higher employability traits. Active students were most confident they would be employed within six-months of graduating.

>> Students who had access to, and took part in, sport and attended the gym perceived themselves to have higher employability skills for 6 out of the 10 measures. Communication, leadership and self-promotion were the top-rated employability traits for this group.

Initially students were asked to identify the extent to which they believe participating in physical activity or exercise improves employability. Most commonly respondents selected "Somewhat" closely followed by "Quite a lot". A further 2% of respondents indicated that they thought it was the most important factor when applying for a job.



Students were subsequently asked to indicate to what extent they perceived themselves to have 10 key employability skills. Overall, respondents rated themselves at the upper end of the 5-point scale for all employability skills with a minimum average score of 3.6 for Commercial Awareness. On average, teamwork was the skill that the students rated themselves highest for (4.29 out of 5).

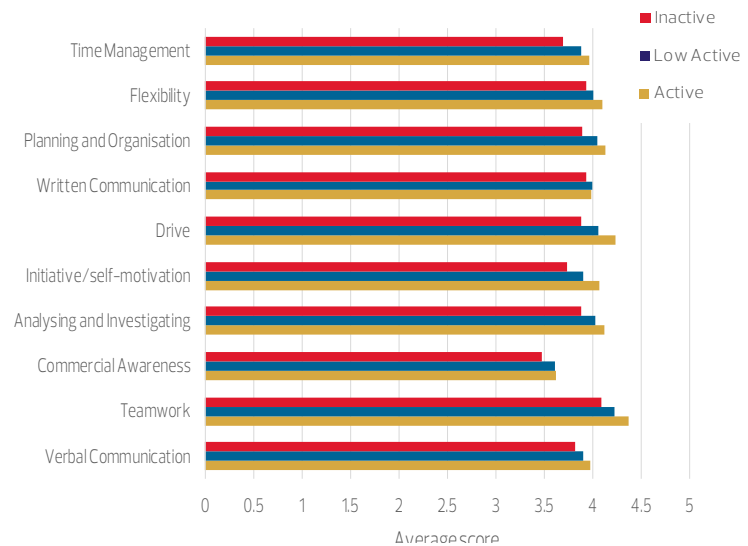
Segmenting responses to this question by respondents' activity levels, it was found that active students rated themselves higher on 8 out of the 10 employability skills, with teamwork and drive the two highest scoring skills. The two skills that were not ranked highest by active students were written communication and commercial awareness, which were ranked highest by the fairly active.

Students who were members of both a sports team and the gym perceived themselves to be better in 6 out of the 10 skills, when compared to those who were just members of a sports team, those who were just a member of a gym and those who were members of neither. The skills this group perceived they were best at were once again teamwork and drive. Those who were just members of a gym perceived their employability skills to be higher for time management, planning and organisation, and analysing and investigating, while those who were neither gym nor sports club members had the highest perceived levels of written communication.

Average scores for key employability skills

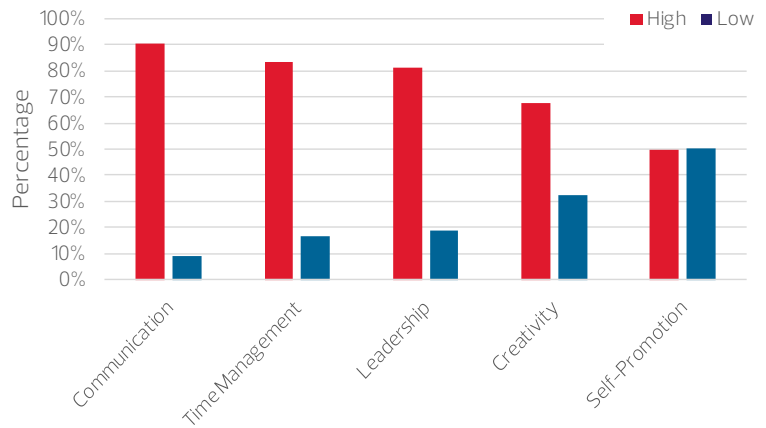


Average scores for key employability skills by activity type



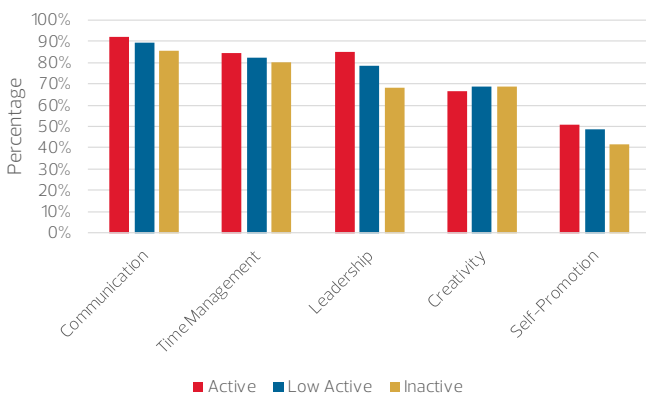
Students were also asked to rate to what extent they perceived themselves to have five key employability traits. Their ratings were split into high perception (3 or 4) and low perception (1 or 2). Overall, respondents rated themselves highly in communication, time management, leadership and creativity, whereas self-promotion was rated slightly lower. The more active students generally perceived themselves to have higher employability traits in all areas, except for creativity which was roughly equal across the three activity categories.

Percentage of respondents with high and low perception of their key employability traits

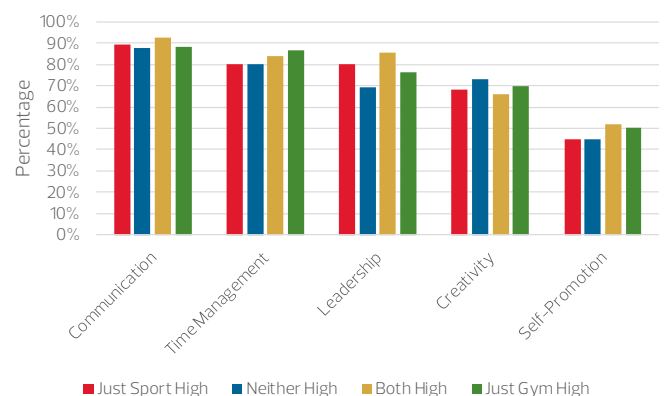


By activity type, communication, leadership and self-promotion were perceived to be highest by those who were members of both a gym and a sports club. Time management was perceived to be highest for those who were just members of a gym, and creativity for those that were neither a member of a gym nor a sports club.

Perception rating of key employability traits by activity levels

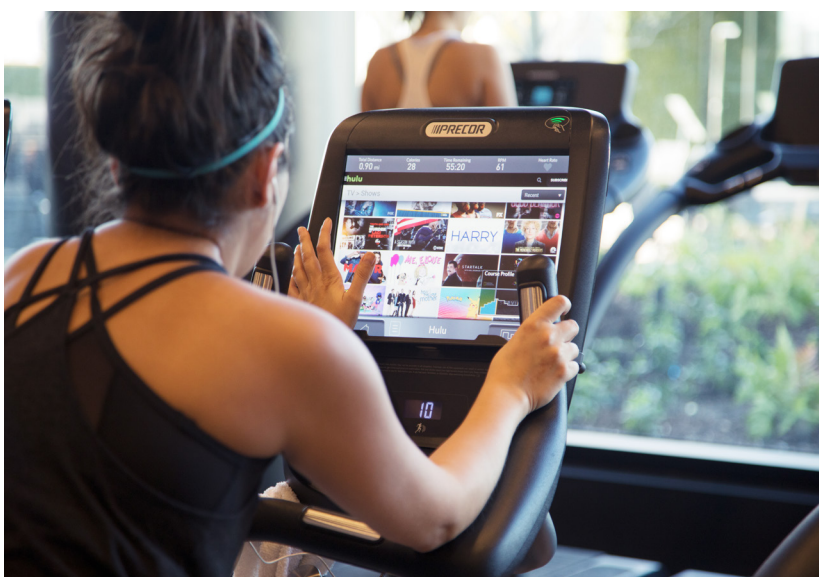
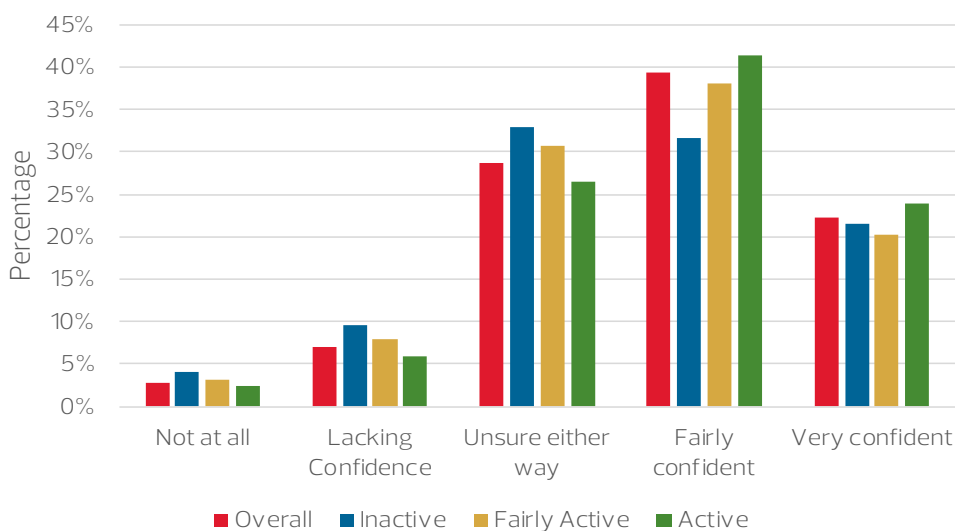


Perception rating of key employability traits by activity type



Finally, students were asked to rate how confident they were that they would be employed within six months of graduating. Overall, the majority of respondents were either fairly or very confident they would be employed within six months (61%). A higher proportion of those who were active responded this way (65%) compared to those who were fairly active (58%) and those who were inactive (54%).

Confidence levels of being employed six months after graduation by activity levels



Barriers to being active

Despite the benefits associated with taking part in physical activity being widely recognised and publicised there are still students failing to meet the CMO guidelines for activity. To help understand why this is the case, respondents were asked to identify the main barriers preventing them from participating.

Overall, the fact that students were too busy with studies (which for the majority of respondents to this survey constituted over 4 hours per day) was the most commonly cited barrier to further participation (76%). However, as stated previously, just over a quarter of active students spent 30 or more hours a week in classes or private study, higher than other activity classifications. This suggests that although being too busy with studies, students who take part in regular physical activity can find time. The next most frequently reported barriers were that students were too busy socialising (23%) or that activity options were too expensive (23%). **Encouragingly, only a small proportion (4%) of respondents indicated that a lack of support from their university presented a barrier to their participation.** As universities are providing support already yet barriers still exist, it could be suggested that this support could be re-framed to encourage time management for both study time and physical activity.

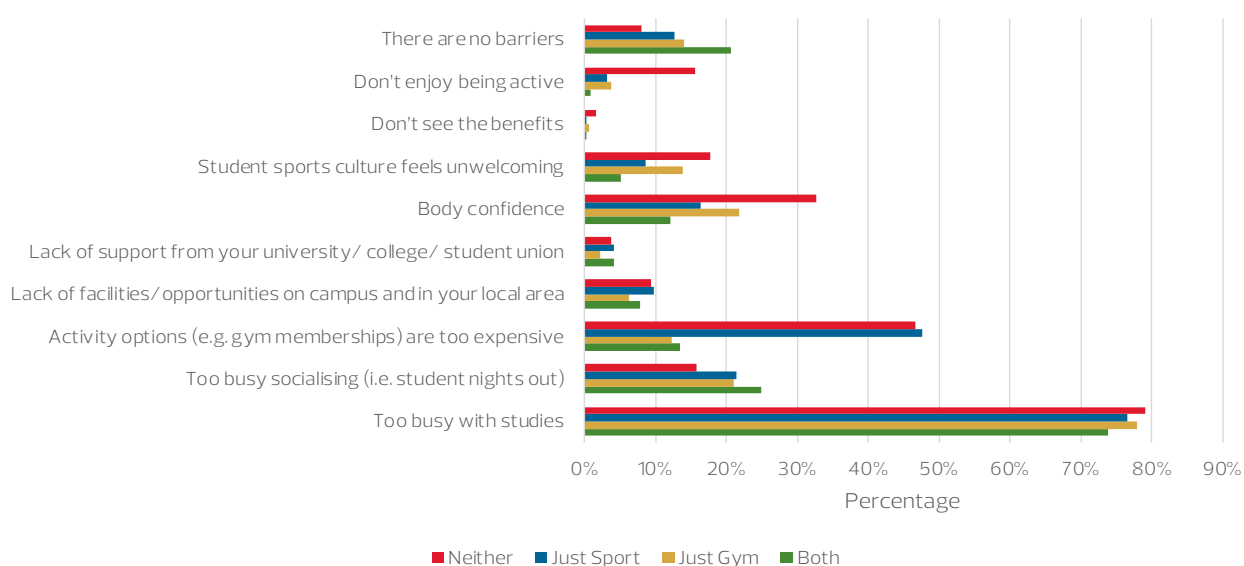
To provide the most appropriate support to the correct people it is important to understand which barriers are more pertinent for which demographic groups. As such, the responses to this question have been segmented by respondents' demographics and physical activity levels.

The biggest barrier for respondents failing to meet the CMO guidelines (fairly active and inactive students) was that they were too busy with their studies (83%). Of the remaining barriers, the three most commonly selected by this group were "Activity options are too expensive", "Too busy socialising" and "Body confidence" (26%, 25% and 22% respectively).

For all ages the proportion of females selecting "Body confidence" and "Student sports culture feels unwelcoming" as barriers to participation was higher than the proportion of males. As stated above, universities are supporting students, however refreshing this support may be required to help reduce these specific barriers with wider collaboration across institutions.

Almost double the proportion of males compared to females (22% compared to 13%) indicated that they felt there were no barriers to them being more active. The proportion of participants indicating that they were too busy socialising to participate decreased as age increased. However, the remaining barriers had very little variation when comparing the results based upon respondents' age.

Barriers to activity by activity type



Summary and conclusions

Universities who invest in opportunities and support for their students to be physically active are providing the platform for them to benefit from increased mental wellbeing, social inclusion and perceptions of academic attainment and employability. The evidence collected on the barriers to leading an active life provide insight for the higher education sector and for tailored support to students of all activity levels to help increase their participation in physical activity. These results highlight how collaborative working within HEIs can provide students with activity habits for later life, a positive experience and further support them to achieve academic success and be employable. There is a positive link between sport engagement and employment⁹. Universities also benefit due to the higher wellbeing, grades and employability of students.

The findings of this research reveal that active students scored higher than inactive students across each of the five areas assessed. Furthermore, students that participated in sport and attended a gym elicited better outcomes than those attending either in isolation or those attending neither.

Just over half of the student population surveyed were currently meeting the CMO guidelines on physical activity. Additionally, 40% of students were doing some activity but not enough of to meet the guidelines. The results from this survey provide evidence to not only the sports departments within HEIs, but also to the wider academic and support staff. These findings might aid in enabling them to support the 40% of students doing some activity to do a bit more in order to meet the CMO guidelines and to help those currently inactive at least move towards the goal of becoming active, and therefore gain the wider benefits associated with leading an active lifestyle.

We can conclude from this survey that there is a clear association between activity levels in students and personal wellbeing, mental wellbeing, social inclusion and perceptions of attainment and employability. These results highlight the great importance of leading an active life for students, not only for the well-evidenced benefits of physical wellbeing, but the further benefits to mental wellbeing, social inclusion, attainment and employability.



9. <https://www.bucs.org.uk/page.asp?section=18560§ionTitle=Value+of+Sport>



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