OU Students ASSOCIATION

Annual Membership Survey 2022

www.oustudents.com

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Research Summary

An online survey hosted on Microsoft Forms and available to students who could log on using their OU Student Microsoft Office 365 account, with an open copy available on request.

An email invitation was sent to our membership of 180,916 students in w/c 20 October 2022. It was decided that the survey should be in circulation for a few weeks prior to Student Voice Week 2022 to help with marketing of the event. An e-mail reminder was sent to the student sample in w/c 28 November 2022.

- A total of 4,221 students **(2.33%) completed** the survey.

- The was an **increase of 0.19%** of participants based on our 2020 findings.

- This is the **highest turnout on a member-wide survey** conducted by the Association but still fell short of our 5,000 response target.

The survey was designed to last around 20 minutes depending on how much detail the participants decided to include in the free text fields.

A mixture of quantitative and qualitative questions were used, and covered; Association awareness, communications, services & resources, governance & democracy, volunteering and culture.

Statistics from the Association's key performance indicators have been included throughout this analysis.

This helps us to better understand the profile of the students filling out this survey and balance the results against students already engaged in Association activities.

Annual Membership Survey 2023

Prizes

In the 2021 survey we asked students what sort of prizes they would like to see in future competitions and surveys.

The top responses were for technology, shopping vouchers and OU Shop merchandise. With sponsorship from many OU faculties and departments, we were able to offer the following prizes:

1. 1 x Samsung laptop
2. 3 x Samsung Galaxy tablets
3. 5 x £150 shopping vouchers (choice of Amazon or Love2Shop)
4. 5 x OU Varsity hoodies
5. 10 x £25 shopping vouchers (choice of Amazon or Love2Shop)
6. 20 x goodie bags containing Association and Library branded items.

In previous years, OU staff have been excluded from the prize draw. For 2022, it was decided that we would undertake a separate and smaller prize draw for this cohort of respondents.

The prize consisted of 10 x £10 shopping vouchers (choice of Amazon or Love2Shop).

Tell us about your studies

Broadly the same as previous years with the majority of respondents having studied for 3 years or less.

Q2: How long have you studied with The Open University?

- Less than a year
- 1-3 years
- 4-6 years
- 7-9 years
- 10 years

34%
44%
16%
3%
3%
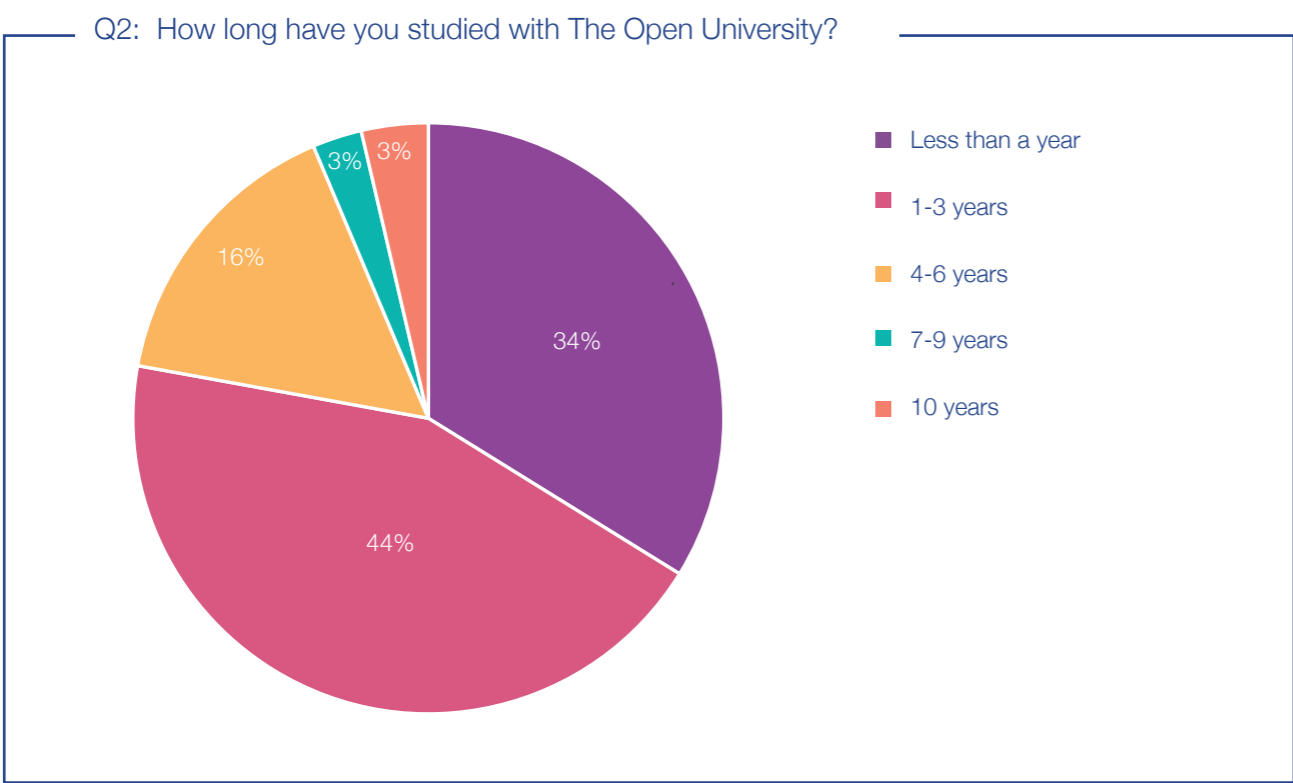
Mostly, the split of students studying different levels has stayed the same in the last 3 years.

However, we saw a slight decline in Apprenticeships and Post Graduate training during the Covid-19 Pandemic, but 2022 saw these figures increase.

Q3: What are you studying towards?

- A Bachelors (BA or BSc Undergraduate)1-3 years
- A Masters (MA or MSc Postgraduate Taught)
- Postgraduate research10 years
- Access, Diploma or Certificate
- One-off module
- Apprenticeship
- None of the above

79%
8%
8%
1%
2%
1%
1%

Q3: What are you studying towards?

A Bachelors (BA or BSc Undergraduate)
A Masters (MA or MSc Postgraduate Taught)
Postgraduate research
Access, Diploma or Certificate
One-off module
Apprenticeship
None of the above

10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

Yearly comparison

When looking at the sample data provided by the OU, we can see that FASS and STEM are the most popular faculties. This corresponds with our findings which shows good faculty representation.

Q4: Which faculty are you currently studying with?

- Faculty of Business and Law (FBL)
- Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Languages Studies (WELS)
- Faculty of Arts and Social Science (FASS)
- Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)
- I am studying an Open Qualiffication (QD or R28)
- Access modules
- Not sure

0% 5% 10% 15% 20% 25% 30% 35%
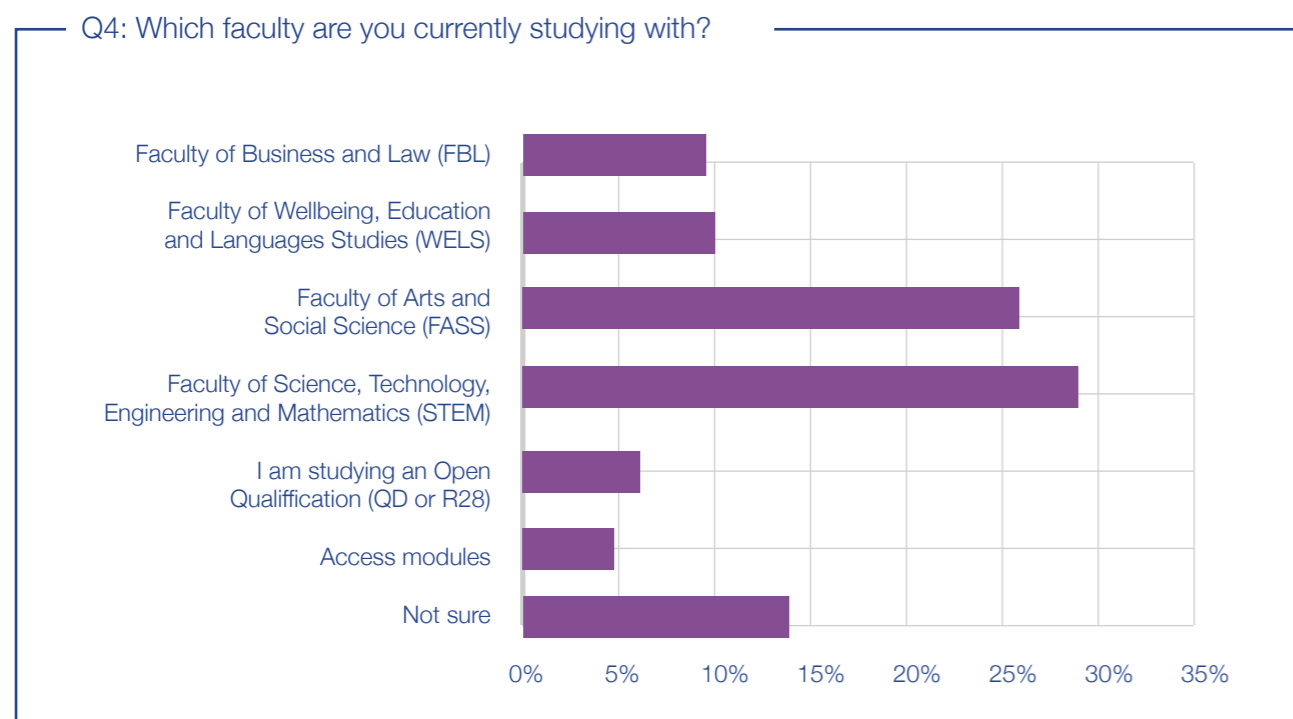
We saw a significant increase in students choosing the option 'online learning was preferred' when asked why they chose the OU. This may be a continued trend following the Covid-19 pandemic.

Studying to develop new skills saw a dip in 2021. For 2022, the number of students selecting this option has increased by two thirds.
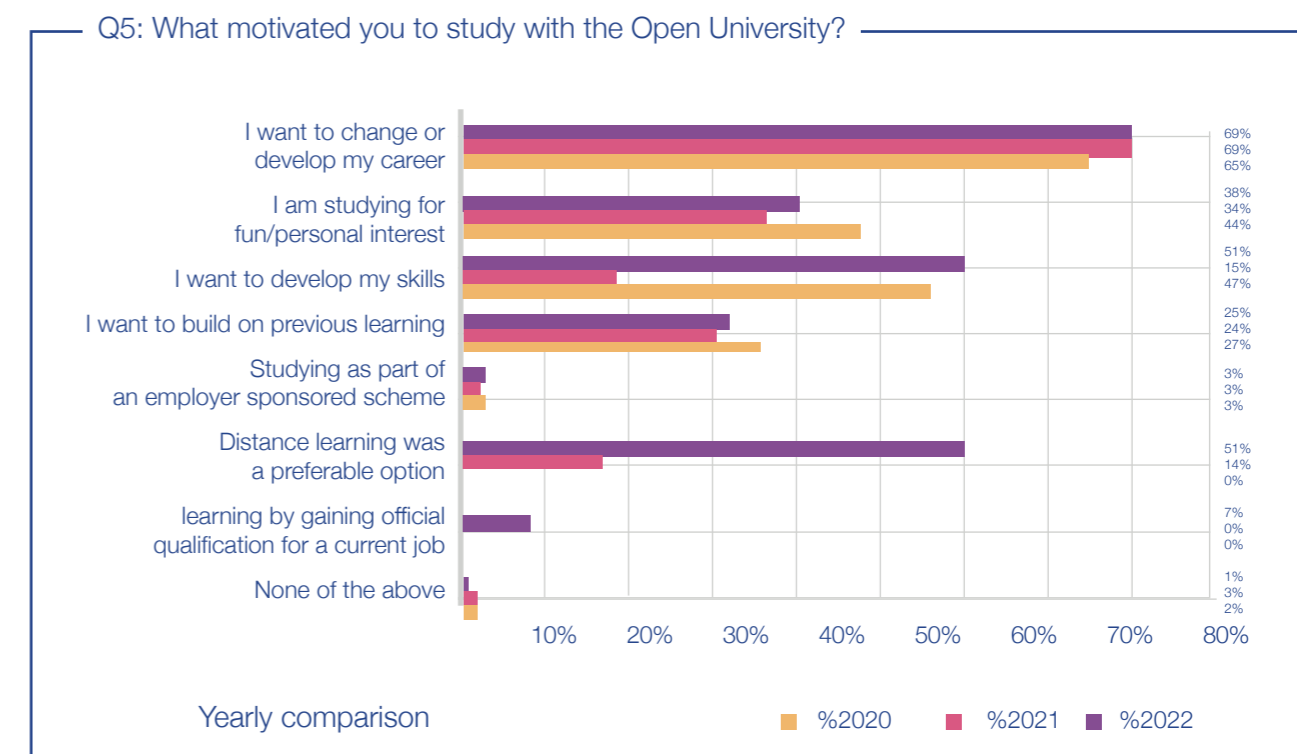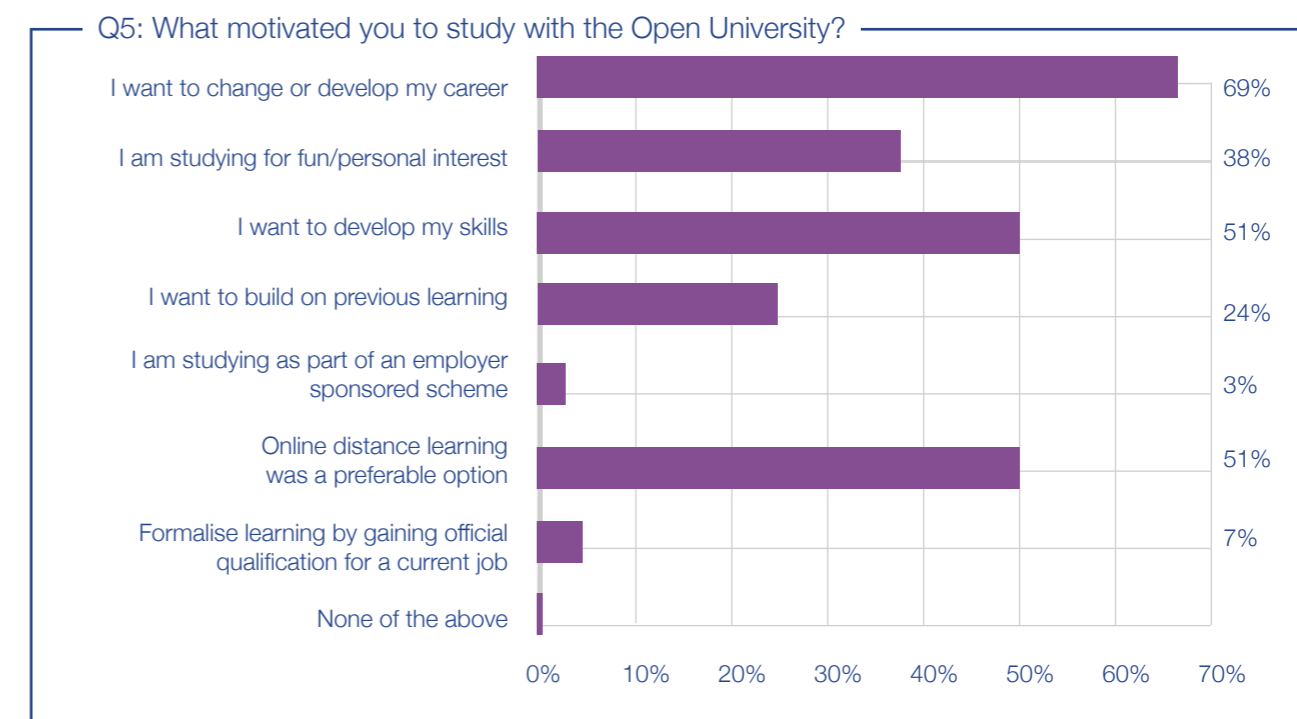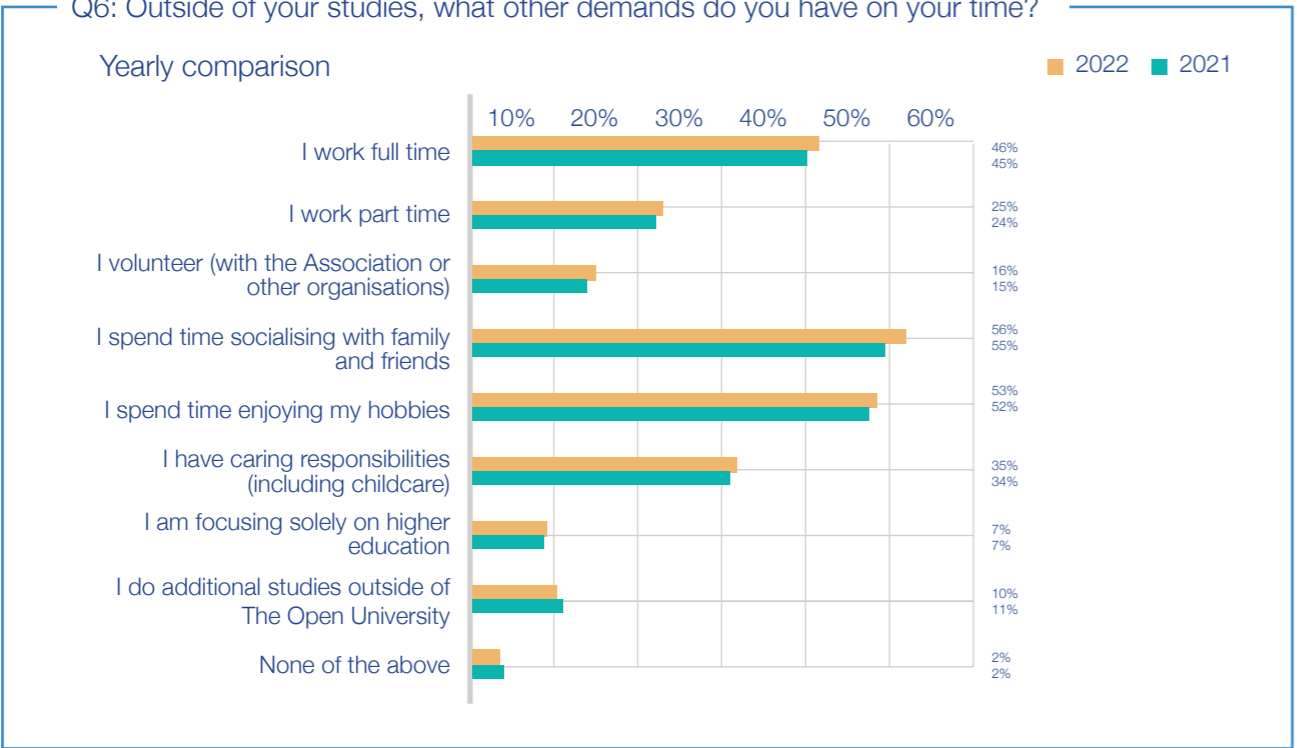
For 2022, we included the option of 'studying to formalise learning' with 7% of respondents choosing this.

Q5: What motivated you to study with the Open University?

- I want to change or develop my career — 69%
- I am studying for fun/personal interest — 38%
- I want to develop my skills — 51%
- I want to build on previous learning — 24%
- I am studying as part of an employer sponsored scheme — 3%
- Online distance learning was a preferable option — 51%
- Formalise learning by gaining official qualification for a current job — 7%
- None of the above

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70%

Q5: What motivated you to study with the Open University?

- I want to change or develop my career — 69% 69% 65%
- I am studying for fun/personal interest — 38% 34% 44%
- I want to develop my skills — 51% 15% 47%
- I want to build on previous learning — 25% 24% 27%
- Studying as part of an employer sponsored scheme — 3% 3% 3%
- Distance learning was a preferable option — 51% 14% 0%
- learning by gaining official qualification for a current job — 7% 0% 0%
- None of the above — 1% 3% 2%

10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80%

Yearly comparison   ■ %2020   ■ %2021   ■ %2022

The 2022 findings track around the same as the previous year. It is interesting to note that there is a 2% increase in the demands outside of studies tracks similarly to 2021.

Q6: Outside of your studies, what other demands do you have on your time?

Response	Percentage
I work full time	46.12%
I work part time	24.90%
I volunteer (with the Association or other organisations)	16.14%
I spend time socialising with family and friends	56.11%
I spend time enjoying my hobbies	52.79%
I have caring responsibilities (including childcare)	34.94%
I am focusing solely on higher education	
I do additional studies outside of The Open University	10.44%
None of the above	

Q6: Outside of your studies, what other demands do you have on your time?

Yearly comparison

■ 2022 ■ 2021

Response	2022	2021
I work full time	46%	45%
I work part time	25%	24%
I volunteer (with the Association or other organisations)	16%	15%
I spend time socialising with family and friends	56%	55%
I spend time enjoying my hobbies	53%	52%
I have caring responsibilities (including childcare)	35%	34%
I am focusing solely on higher education	7%	7%
I do additional studies outside of The Open University	10%	11%
None of the above	2%	2%

The graphs show how students found out about the survey. The 'I received the e-mail invitation' option which received the highest percentage of responses (see pie chart), which had as expected, the majority of students selected (89.81%). The remaining options are listed in the bar chart with 'fellow student' and 'social media' being the most popular options.

Q7: How did you hear about this survey?

10.19%
89.81%

■ I received the survey invitation e-mail
■ Other

Q7: How did you hear about this survey? Break down of 'other' options

| Response	Percentage
I'm not sure	1%
The Association Conversation Station (Association pod cast)	0%
I saw a post on the Student Home Bulletin Board	2%
I read about it on The Hoot online magazine	1%
I followed the links on social media	1%
I followed the links from the Association website	2%
A fellow student told me about it	1%
My tutor told me about it	
I heard about it during an online event (Student Voice Week, Freshers, Conference etc)	2%
I'm not sure	0%
	2%

Awareness of the Association

A marginal decline in the number of students who had some form of awareness of the Association when compared to 2021 and 2020. The Annual Membership Survey is a useful tool for the Association in collecting data but also bringing our services and resources to the attention of students. A survey is often the first interaction students may have with the Association and therefore the increase in negative responses to this question can be attributed to this.

However when looking at membership awareness within the students who have some Association awareness, there has been an increase compared to the previous year.

In 2021, only 15% of students who had some sort of awareness also knew what was available to them as a member.

In 2022, this has increased dramatically to 27.7%.

Q8: Did you know you automatically became a member of the OU Students Assoication when you registered to study with the OU?
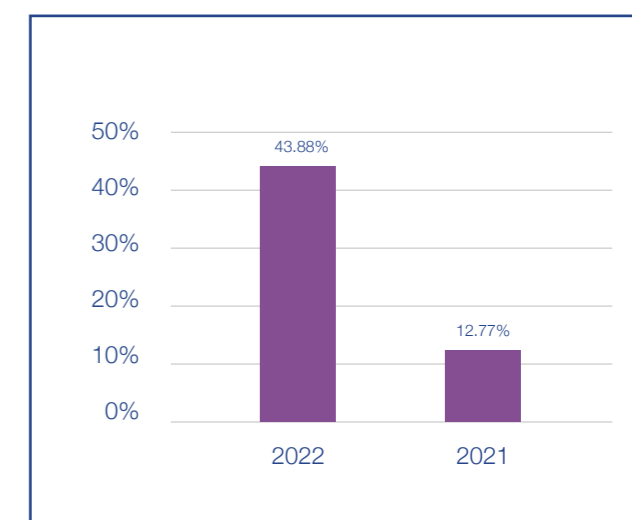

- 25.33%
- 44.32%
- 21.79%
- 8.75%
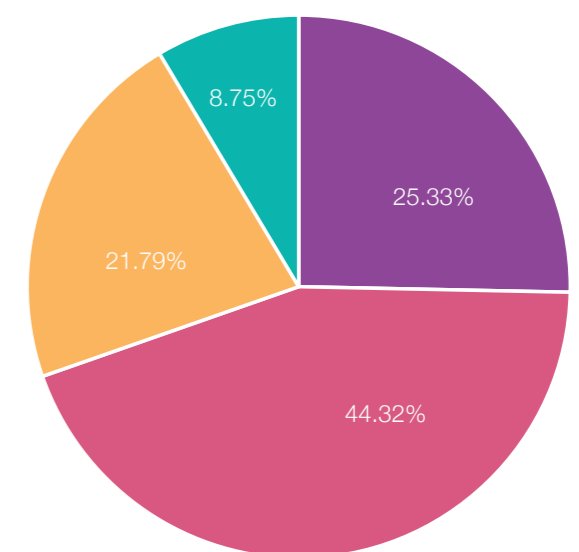
- Yes and I know what is available to me as a member
- Yes but I don't know what it available to me as a member
- No but I have heard of the OU Student Association
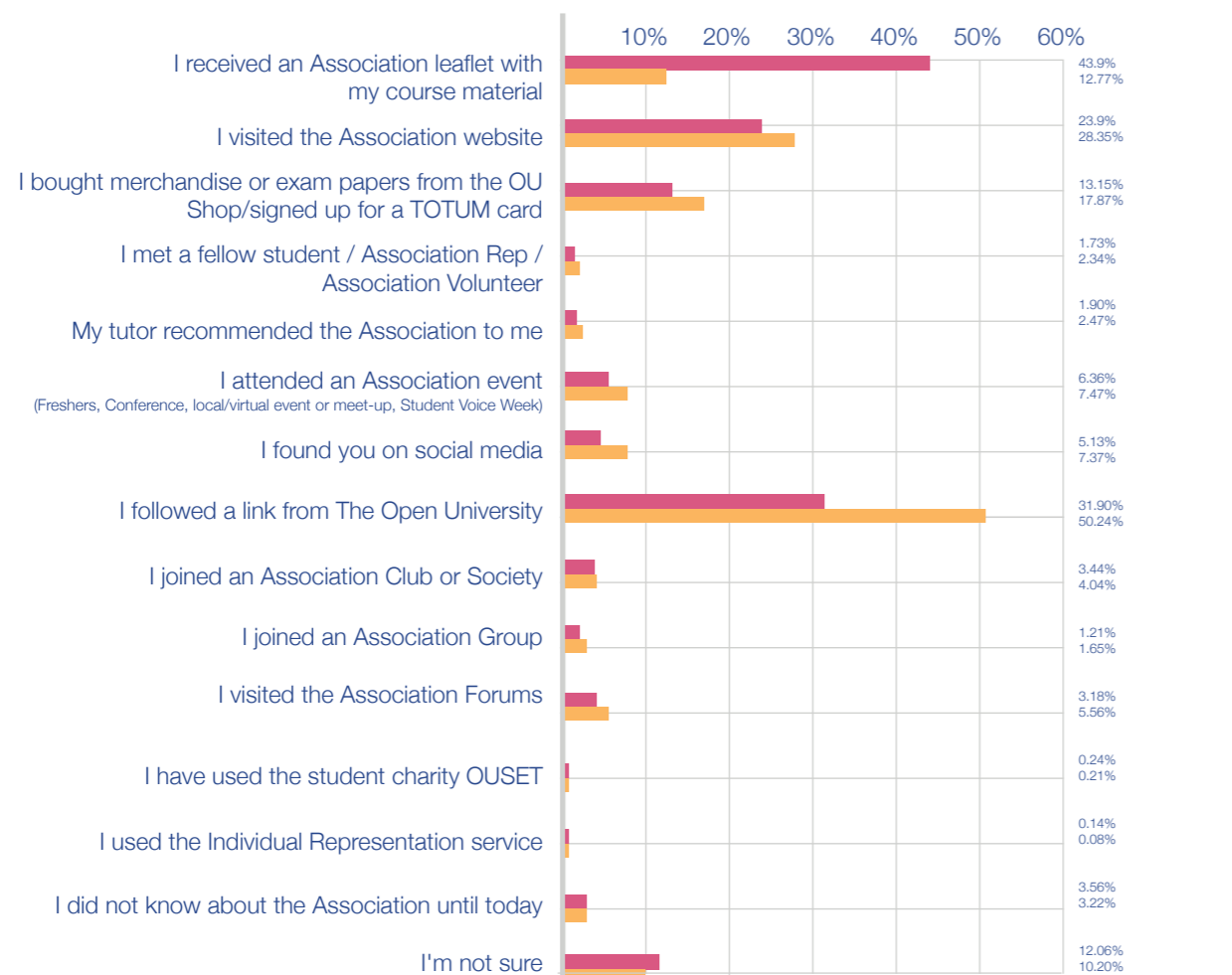- I had not heard of the OU Students Association until today

The decision to include an Association leaflet in all course materials has proven successful with a massive increase of 3.5 times more students selecting that they are aware of the association because of the leaflet. Conversely, there has been a decrease in awareness via OU e-mails.

There do appear to be decreases in most areas, however these are overshadowed by the large increase affected by the course materials leaflet.

I found out about the Association by receiving a leaflet with my course material...
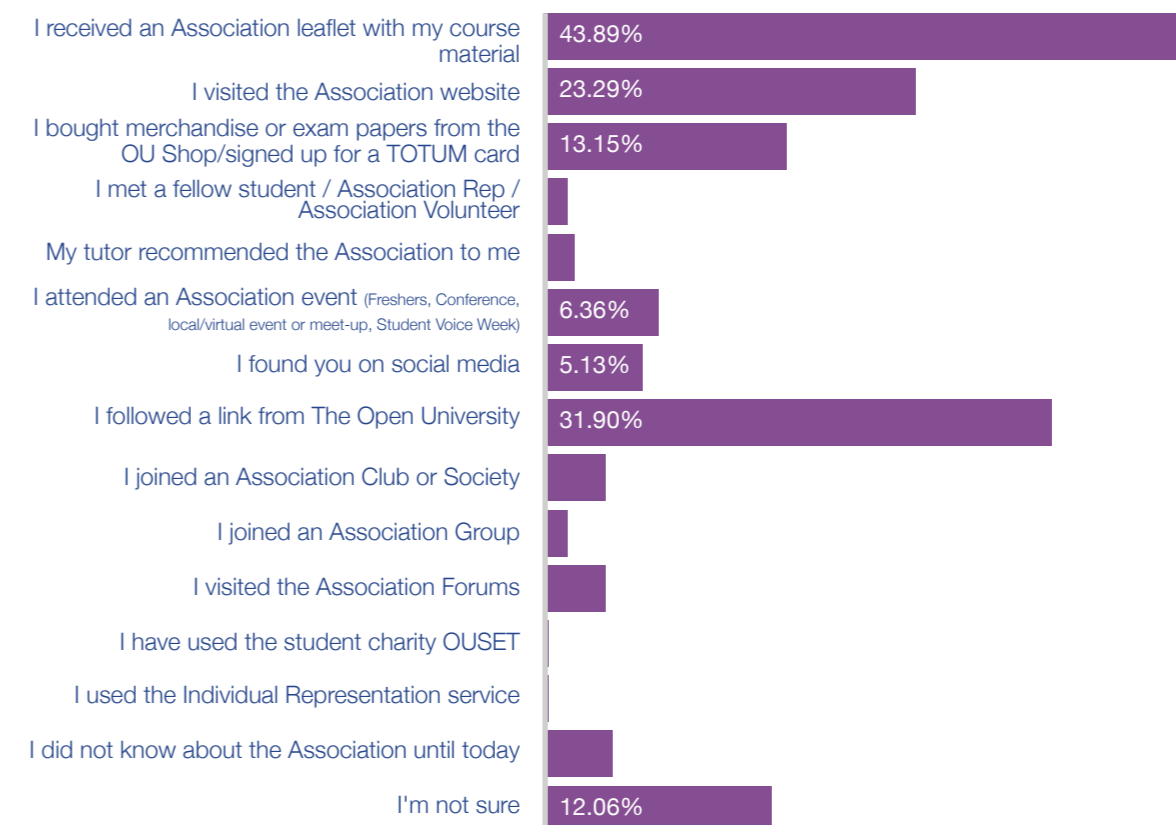

Q9: If you were aware of the Association before today, please let us know how you found out about us?

	2022	2021
I received an Association leaflet with my course material	43.9%	12.77%
I visited the Association website	23.9%	28.35%
I bought merchandise or exam papers from the OU Shop/signed up for a TOTUM card	13.15%	17.87%
I met a fellow student / Association Rep / Association Volunteer	1.73%	2.34%
My tutor recommended the Association to me	1.90%	2.47%
I attended an Association event (Freshers, Conference, local/virtual event or meet-up, Student Voice Week)	6.36%	7.47%
I found you on social media	5.13%	7.37%
I followed a link from The Open University	31.90%	50.24%
I joined an Association Club or Society	3.44%	4.04%
I joined an Association Group	1.21%	1.65%
I visited the Association Forums	3.18%	5.56%
I have used the student charity OUSET	0.24%	0.21%
I used the Individual Representation service	0.14%	0.08%
I did not know about the Association until today	3.56%	3.22%
I'm not sure	12.06%	10.20%

Yearly comparison

Q9: If you were aware of the Association before today. please let us know how you found out about us?

I received an Association leaflet with my course material	43.89%
I visited the Association website	23.29%
I bought merchandise or exam papers from the OU Shop/signed up for a TOTUM card	13.15%
I met a fellow student / Association Rep / Association Volunteer	
My tutor recommended the Association to me	
I attended an Association event (Freshers, Conference, local/virtual event or meet-up, Student Voice Week)	6.36%
I found you on social media	5.13%
I followed a link from The Open University	31.90%
I joined an Association Club or Society	
I joined an Association Group	
I visited the Association Forums	
I have used the student charity OUSET	
I used the Individual Representation service	
I did not know about the Association until today	
I'm not sure	12.06%

Q10 (Open comments) What sort of services and activities do you think we offer to students?

Feedback around the services and activities that respondents expected the Association to support can be grouped under two categories:

1. Services that the Association already offers

Information/signposting

Volunteering opportunities

Clubs, Societies, Freshers, meet-ups

Past exam papers, branded merchandise, discounts

Student representation, advocacy

Peer support

Offering a sense of community to OU students.

"Creates a positive space for students, offers meet ups, clubs, links to students, provides support throughout studies."

"I was really happy to find out that the OU had a student association as I initially didn't think it would have one because of the nature of the OU. The OUSA has helped me to feel less isolated in my studies and gives my confidence knowing I can reach out anytime I need help."

"Support during studies across a wide range of topics, I think of the Association like an "index", you go there to find where to look for the help and support you need!"

2. Services that students might expect from a students' union, but which are within the purview of the Open University and not currently supported by the Association

These are services and activities that student unions might signpost to, so that students starting their OU studies might not be unreasonable to assume that the Association might offer something similar.

These included career advice, networking opportunities (subject-related), study skills, mentoring, study advice post qualification, and financial advice.

These examples suggest that, together with highlighting the services/activities offered by the Association, there is also a need to signpost students to other units within the Open University where they could access additional information/advice.

"Advice support with exams or finances"

"Financial advice, pastoral; study skills development, careers advice"

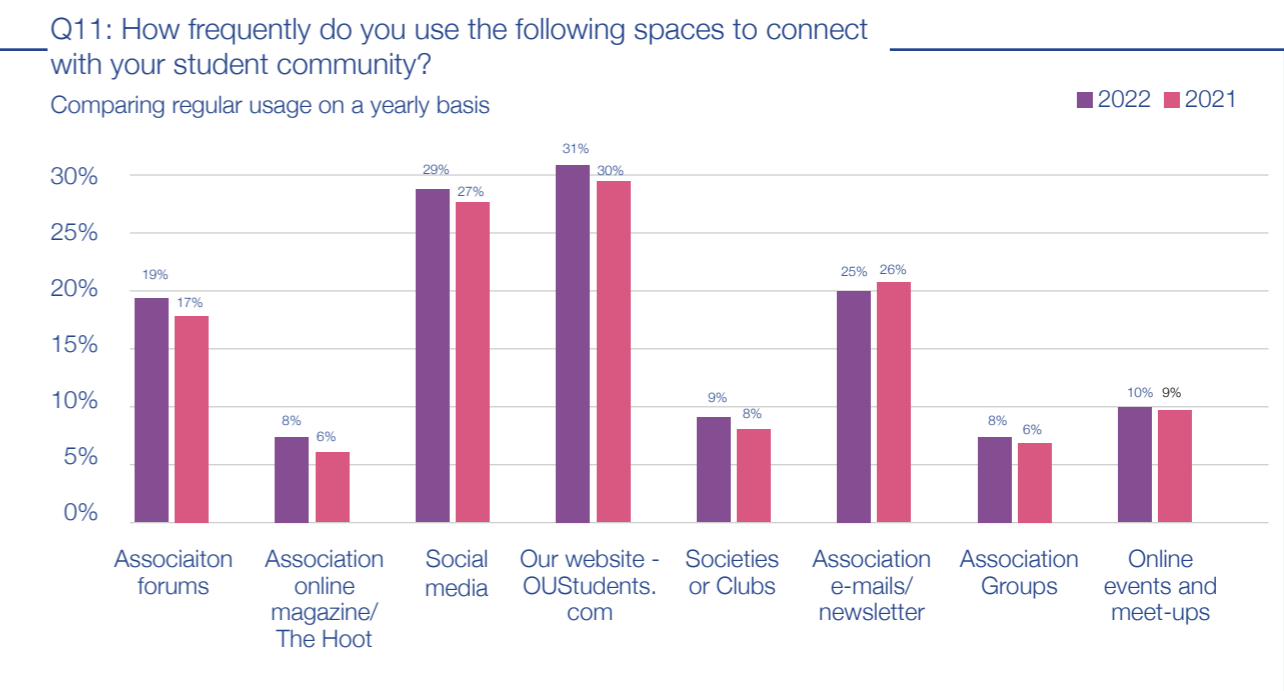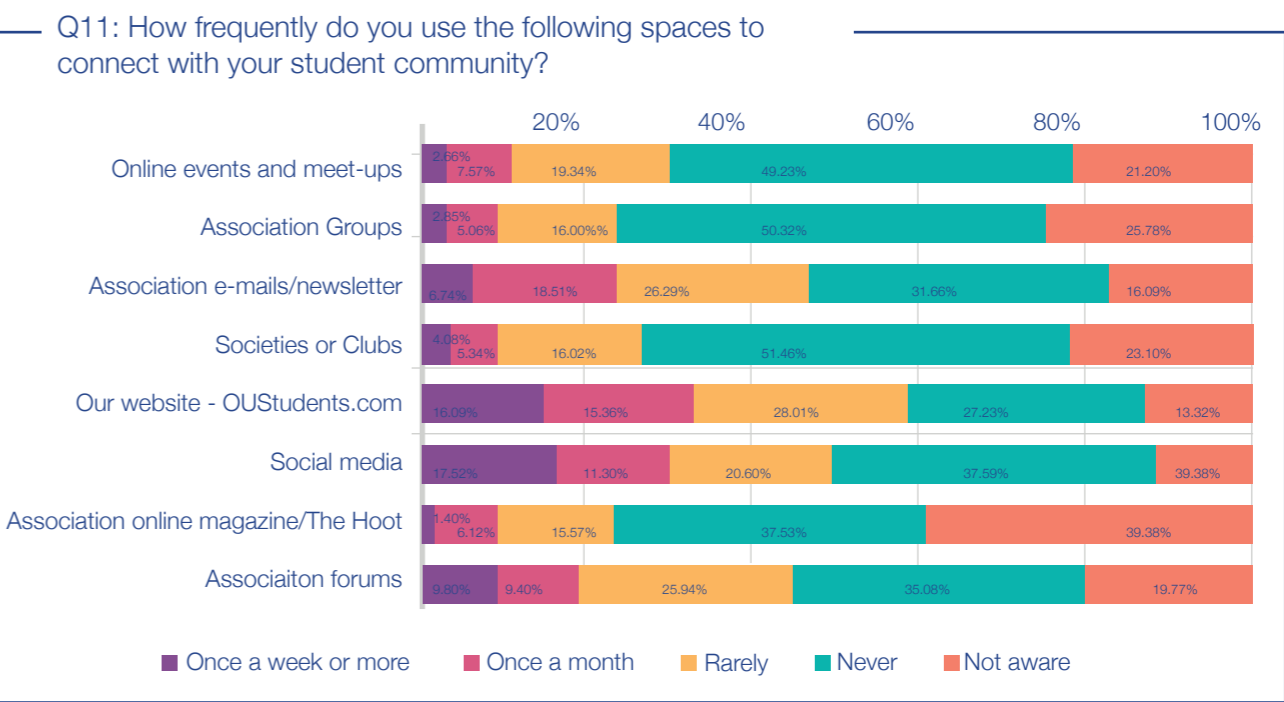*"Help in linking qualifications to jobs, help in cv writing"*

"Internships, career aid, help find jobs, help socialising between other students and/or people involved in the area of the studies such as professors, speakers etc"

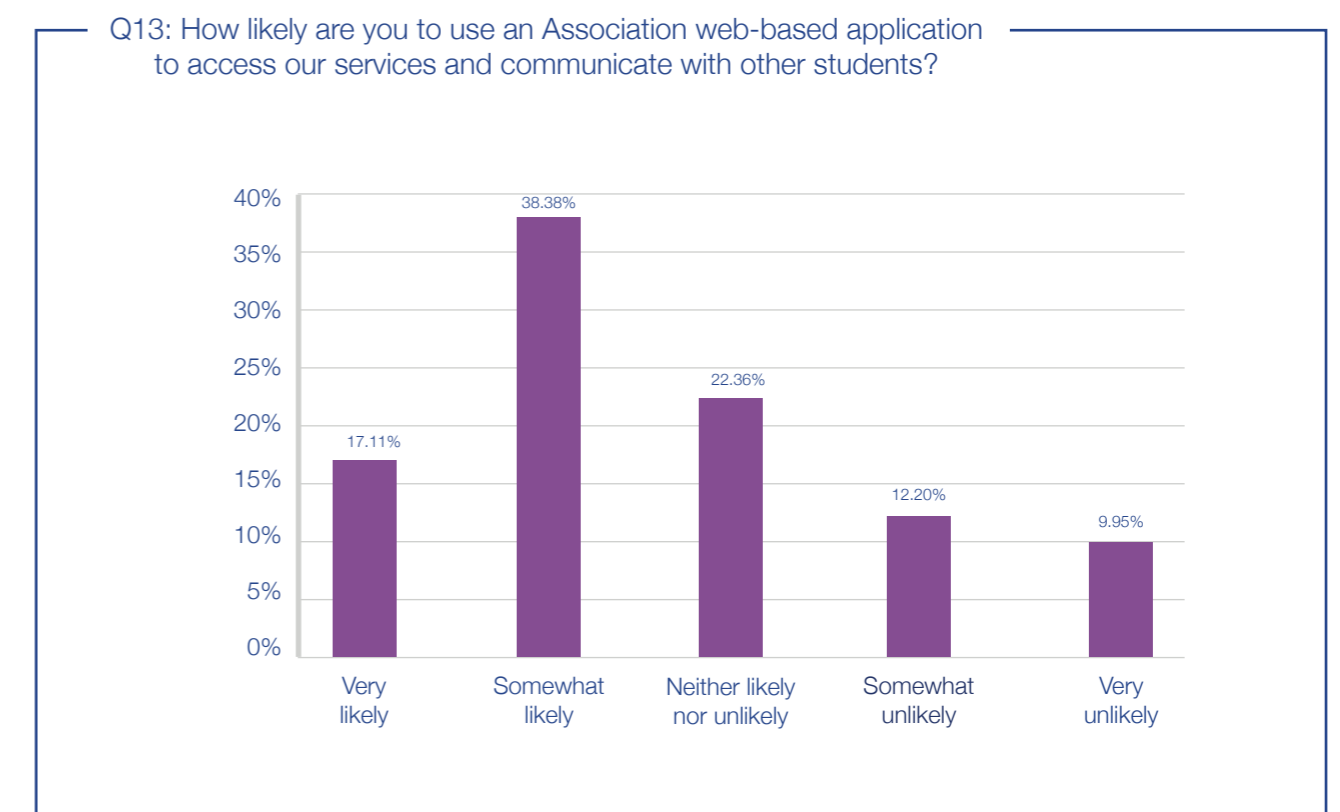SLT Priority Areas
Association Awareness

Communication

Respondents selecting 'never' for this question has decreased with the exception of Groups which has roughly stayed the same. It is reassuring to see a steady increase in regular usage of our online communities, with our website, social media accounts and newsletter remaining consistently popular.

Q11: How frequently do you use the following spaces to connect with your student community?

	Once a week or more	Once a month	Rarely	Never	Not aware
Online events and meet-ups	2.66%	7.57%	19.34%	49.23%	21.20%
Association Groups	2.85%	5.06%	16.00%	50.32%	25.78%
Association e-mails/newsletter	7.21%	18.51%	26.29%	31.66%	16.09%
Societies or Clubs	4.08%	5.34%	16.02%	51.46%	23.10%
Our website - OUStudents.com	16.09%	15.36%	28.01%	27.23%	13.32%
Social media	17.52%	11.30%	20.60%	37.59%	39.38%
Association online magazine/The Hoot	1.40%	6.12%	15.57%	37.53%	39.38%
Association forums	9.80%	9.40%	25.94%	35.08%	19.77%

Q11: How frequently do you use the following spaces to connect with your student community?

Comparing regular usage on a yearly basis

	2022	2021
Association forums	19%	17%
Association online magazine/The Hoot	8%	6%
Social media	29%	27%
Our website - OUStudents.com	31%	30%
Societies or Clubs	9%	8%
Association e-mails/newsletter	25%	26%
Association Groups	8%	6%
Online events and meet-ups	10%	9%

There appears to be more appetite for using online social spaces to connect with students. Forums continue to be the favourite method. Facebook has seen a slight decline of 1% with platforms such as Instagram and WhatsApp becoming more popular.
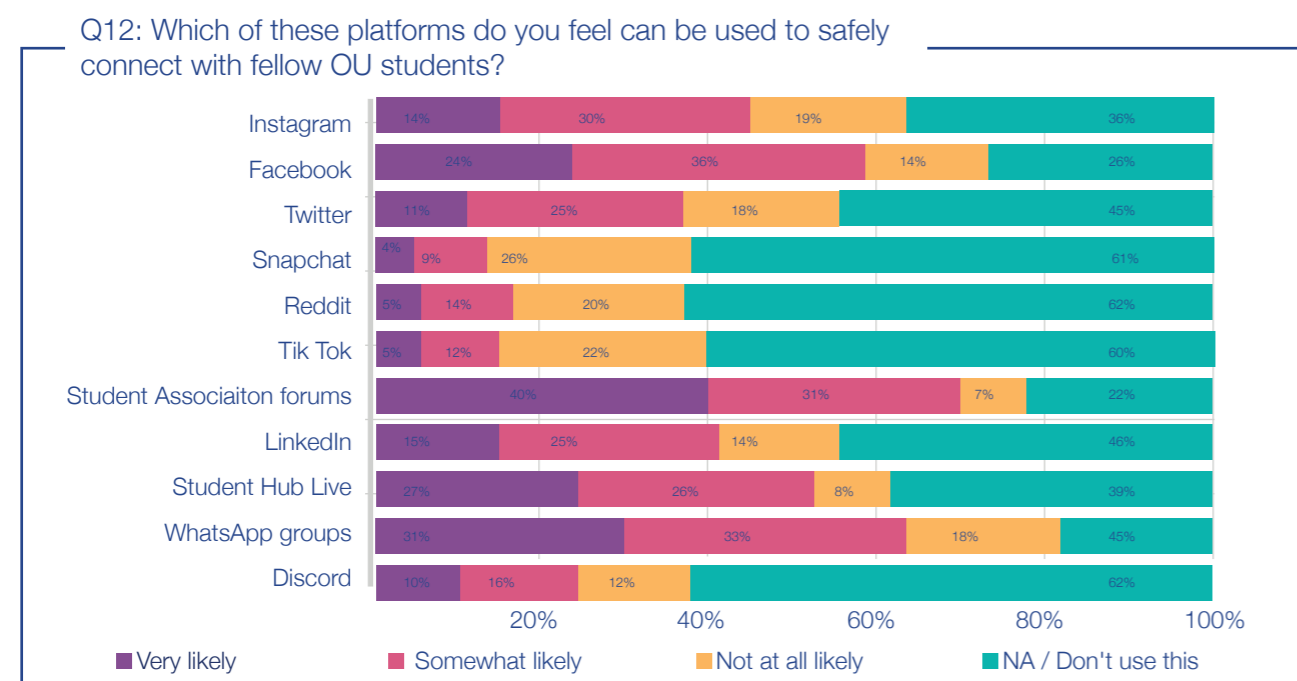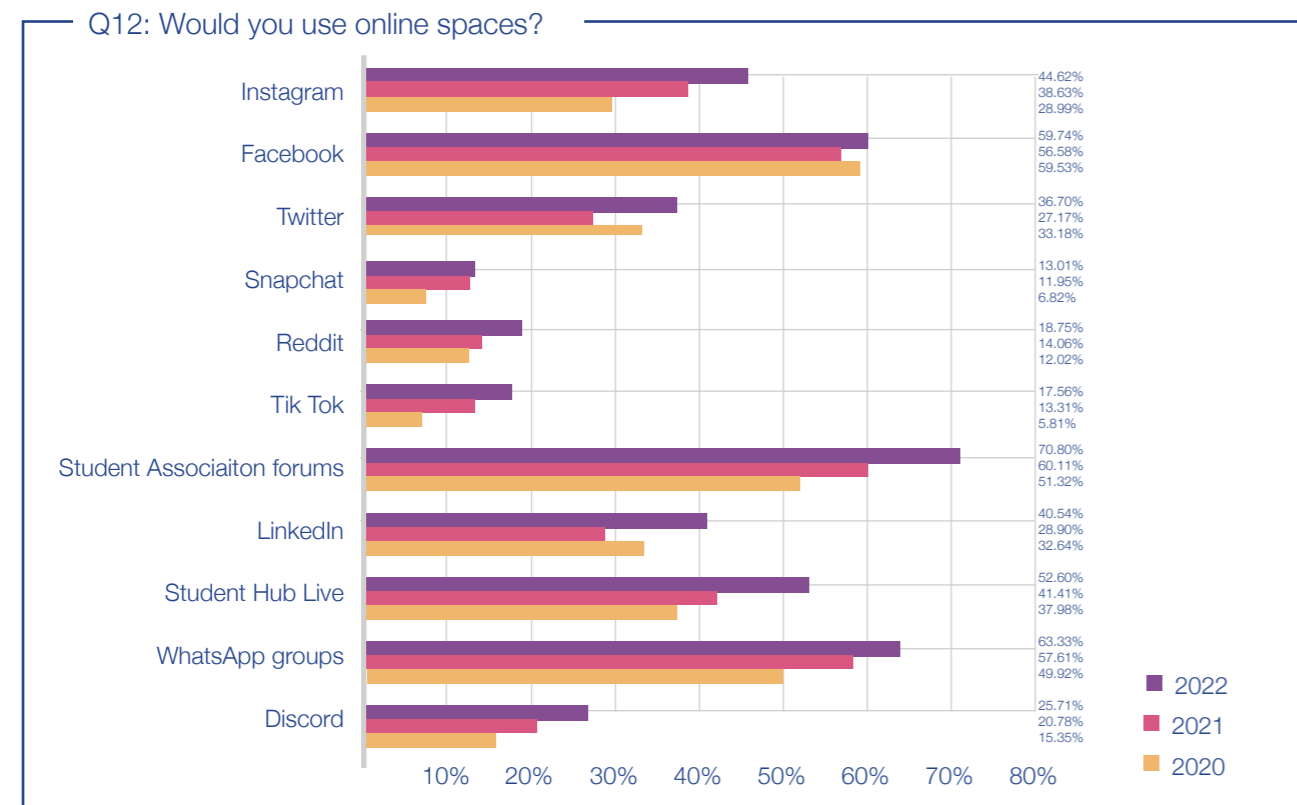
We asked students about their desire to interact with students using an app. This question was previously part of the broader question about using various online social spaces.

Q12: Would you use online spaces?

Platform	2022	2021	2020
Instagram	44.62%	38.63%	28.99%
Facebook	59.74%	56.58%	59.53%
Twitter	36.70%	27.17%	33.18%
Snapchat	13.01%	11.95%	6.82%
Reddit	18.75%	14.06%	12.02%
Tik Tok	17.56%	13.31%	5.81%
Student Associaiton forums	70.80%	60.11%	51.32%
LinkedIn	40.54%	28.90%	32.64%
Student Hub Live	52.60%	41.41%	37.98%
WhatsApp groups	63.33%	57.61%	49.92%
Discord	25.71%	20.78%	15.35%

Q12: Which of these platforms do you feel can be used to safely connect with fellow OU students?

Platform	Very likely	Somewhat likely	Not at all likely	NA / Don't use this
Instagram	14%	30%	19%	36%
Facebook	24%	36%	14%	26%
Twitter	11%	25%	18%	45%
Snapchat	4%	9%	26%	61%
Reddit	5%	14%	20%	62%
Tik Tok	5%	12%	22%	60%
Student Associaiton forums	40%	31%	7%	22%
LinkedIn	15%	25%	14%	46%
Student Hub Live	27%	26%	8%	39%
WhatsApp groups	31%	33%	18%	45%
Discord	10%	16%	12%	62%

Q13: How likely are you to use an Association web-based application to access our services and communicate with other students?

Very likely	Somewhat likely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Very unlikely
17.11%	38.38%	22.36%	12.20%	9.95%

Students selecting either 'very likely' or 'somewhat likely' in 2021 came to 29.43%. This has increased to 55.49% in 2022, showing that the introduction of a web based app would be well received by students.

Q14 (Open comments) Communicating with the Association

SLT Priority Areas

Communities and Engagement

EDI and Accessibility

Respondents placed a high value on the safety of online spaces, and some preferred spaces that were actively moderated.

Some respondents felt social media to be an unregulated space which could potentially include people who were not OU students.

Some online platforms were considered more 'serious' or more 'fun' than others, and respondents engaged with them depending on whether they were looking for academic-related or community-related content.

Lack of time was often cited as a reason for not wishing to engage on social media.

"Having only one official platform gives students more security. On whatsapp, for example, in unmoderated groups, I have noticed that students tend to be more racist or rude. An official, controlled platform would instead regulate these attitudes and give people more freedom to be themselves."

"I prefer communication directly through the OU where I know other students are verified, versus random users on social media who could be anyone."

"I prefer LinkedIn for it professional purpose, and WhatsApp for overall communication with fellow students on the same modules as myself. I dislike gimmicky mediums such as Tiktok, Insta, snap, etc, as I feel these provide little to no academic, career, or professional use"

Communities and Engagement

EDI and Accessibility

Feedback around a dedicated Association app

The functionality of receiving notifications would be an important aspect to consider.

The ability to have such a dedicated space, separate to social media platforms that students might use for work or family, would be a draw for respondents.

Respondents also commented on the need for log-in verification that would ensure that all those participating in an online space were genuine OU students

"I work full time, if I receive a notification and i think it is of interest to me I will check it out when I have the time. with some platforms you wont receive the notification"

"An app would keep it separate from my private life, rather than having a whatsapp group that I would probably end up muting and not check again. I want to be able to access info when I need them, not 24/7"

"I would prefer to be in touch with other students somewhere that is monitored. I have already begin to notice some students are keyboard warriors. I deliberately chose not to join any whatsapp groups and I left the facebook group for my module as it was very toxic."

"I prefer using communications set up and managed by the association, they feel safer and are more carefully moderated"
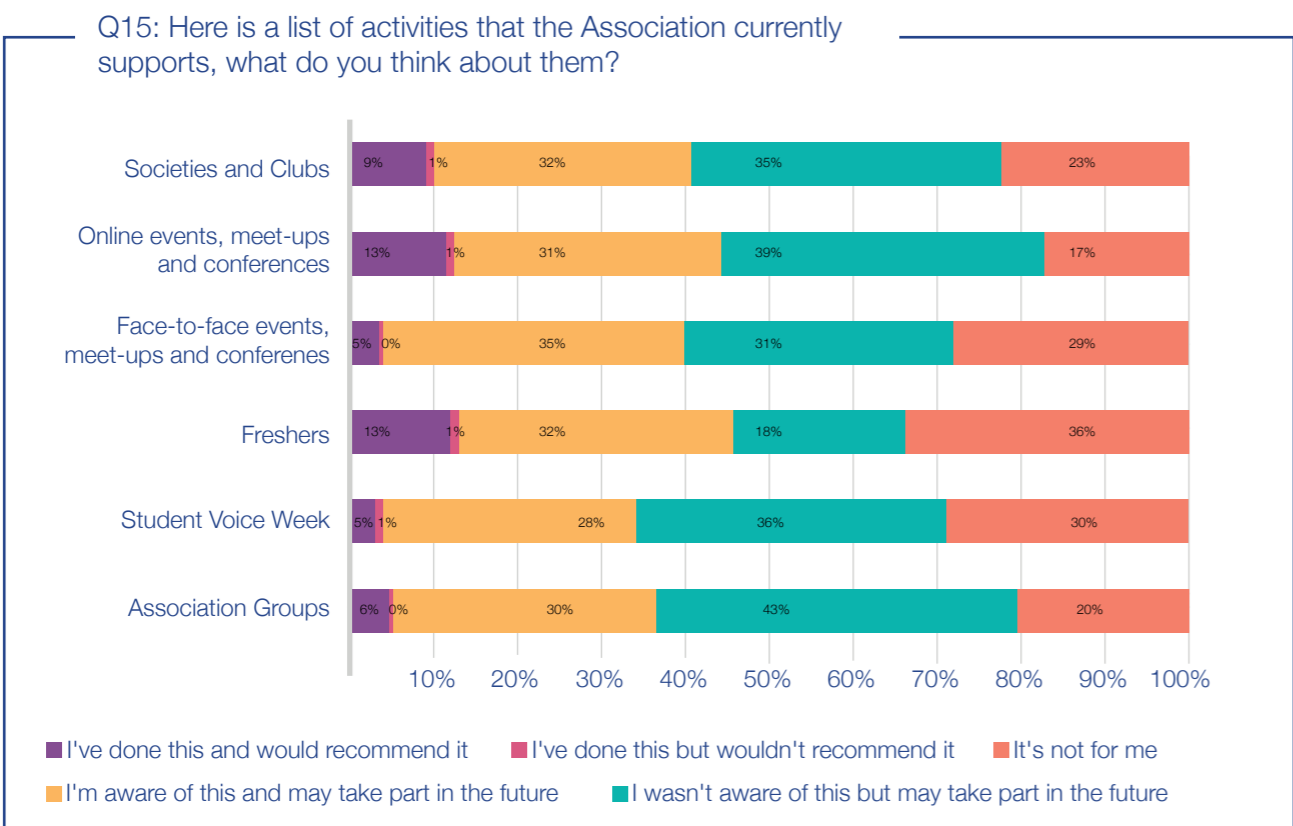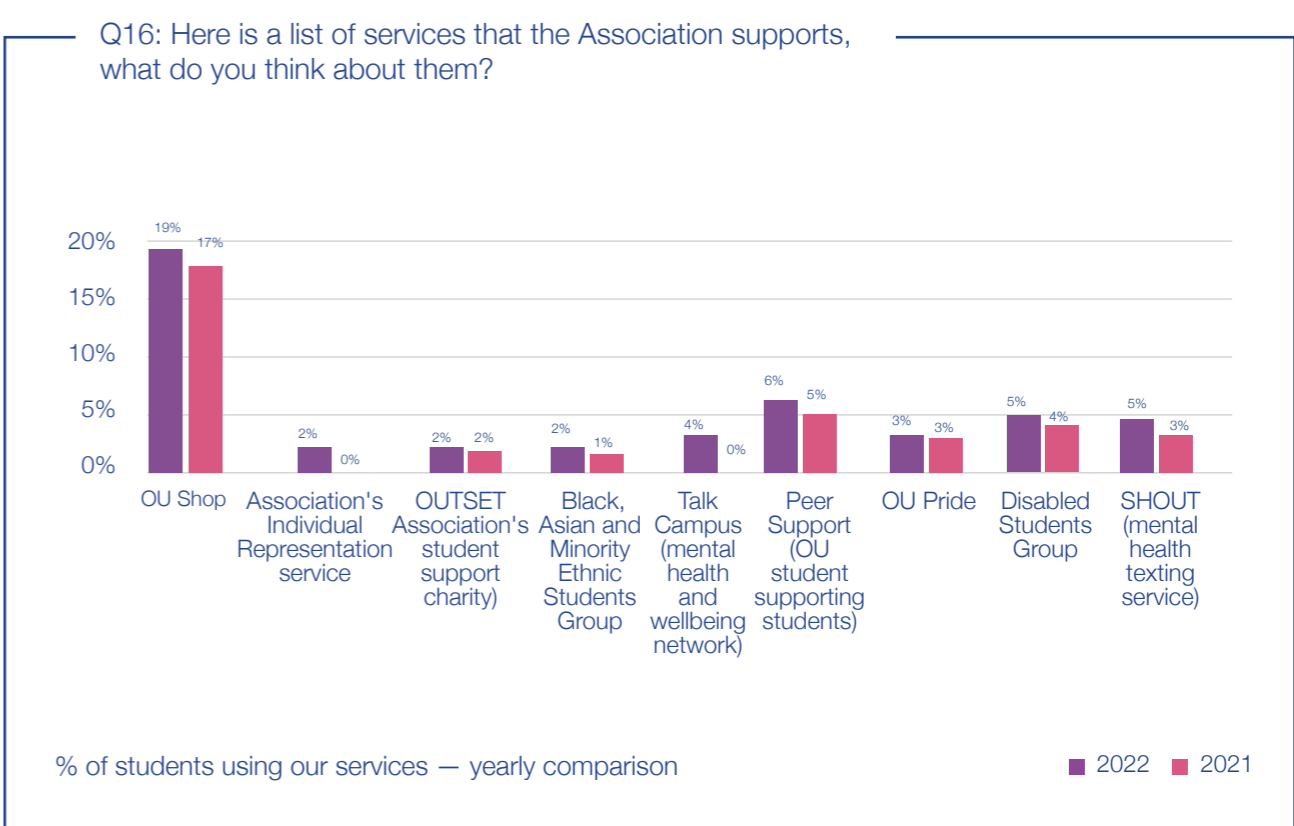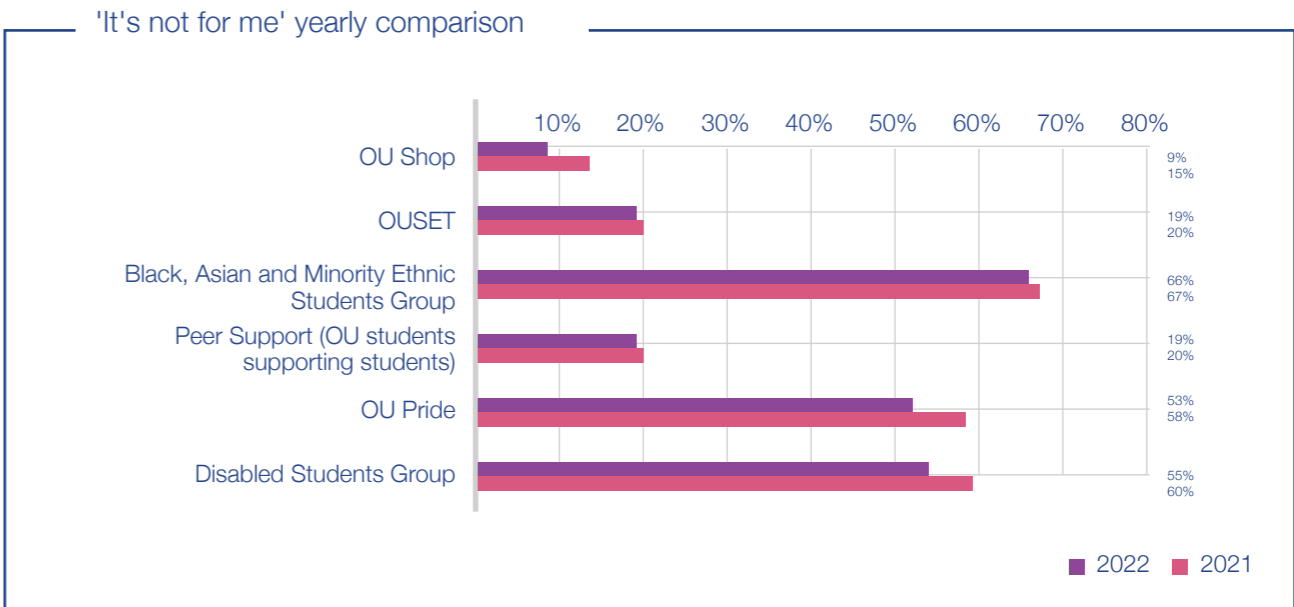
Services & Activities

We have seen an increases in students using our services across the board here showing students have a desire to be involved in Association activities. Freshers and meet-ups/conferences continue to be popular in 2022.
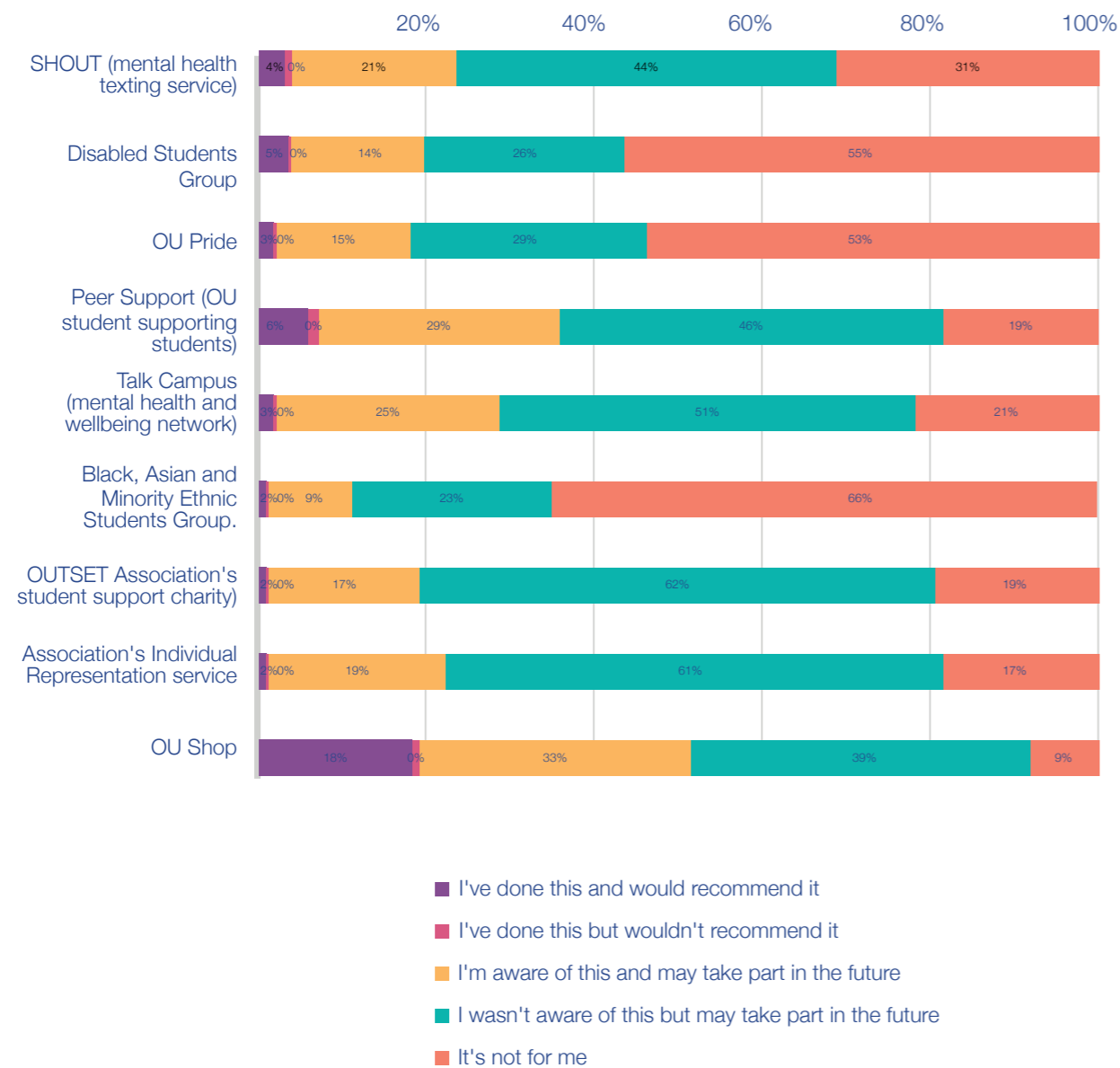
Q15: Here is a list of activities that the Association currently supports, what do you think about them?

% of students using our services — yearly comparison

■ 2022 ■ 2021
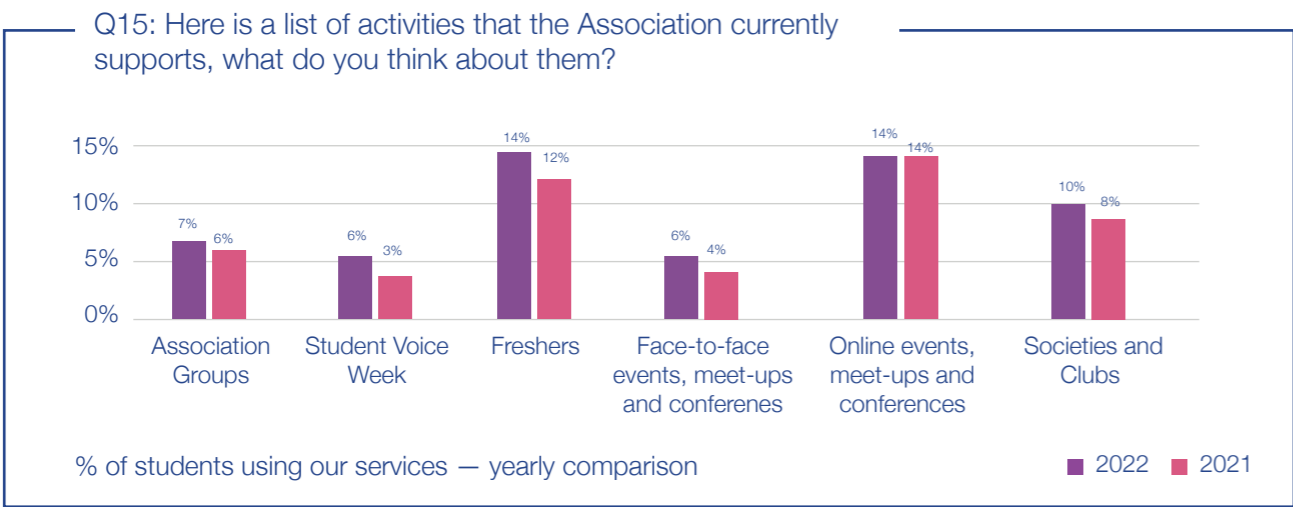
This graph shows the percentage of students using our services compared to 2021.

Q15: Here is a list of activities that the Association currently supports, what do you think about them?

■ I've done this and would recommend it
■ I've done this but wouldn't recommend it
■ It's not for me
■ I'm aware of this and may take part in the future
■ I wasn't aware of this but may take part in the future

The OU shop continues to be a popular service offered by the Association and has the best awareness against other services. When looking at the yearly comparison of the 'it's not for me' option, you can see that each area is reducing for 2022 which shows that relevance of services is improving.
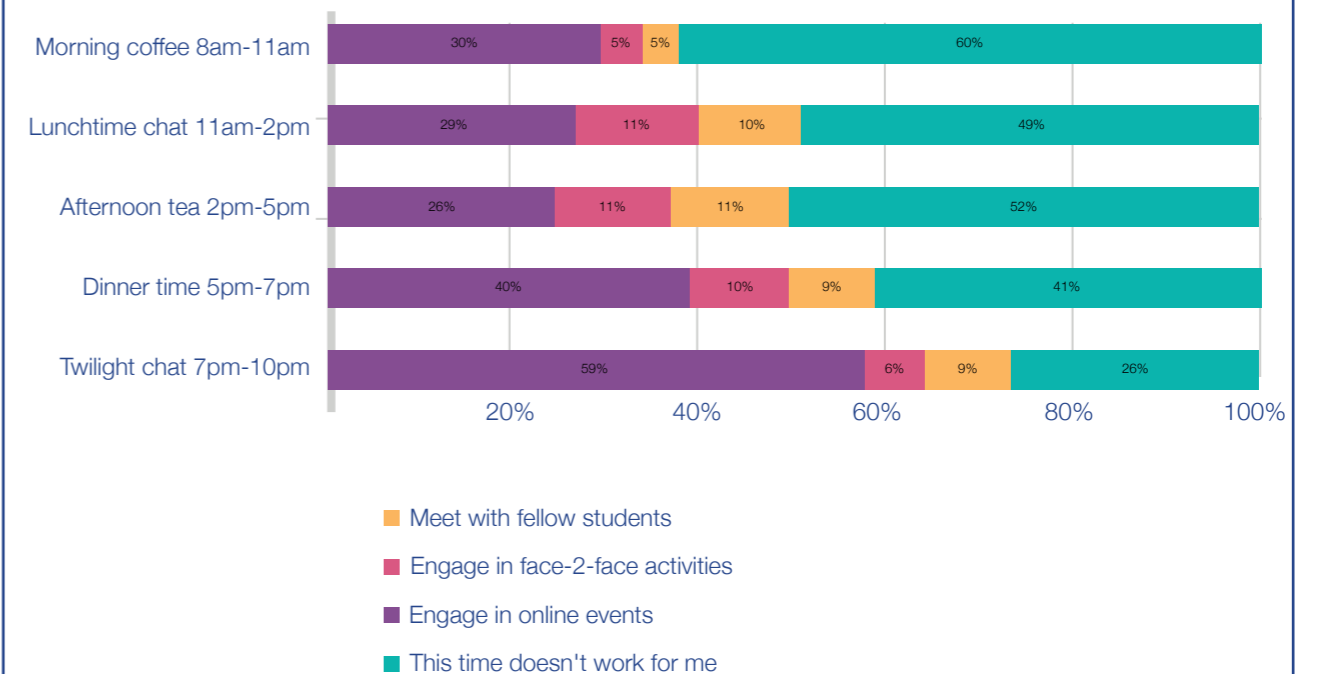
'It's not for me' yearly comparison

■ 2022 ■ 2021

Q16: Here is a list of services that the Association supports, what do you think about them?

% of students using our services — yearly comparison

■ 2022 ■ 2021

Q16: Here is a list of activities that the Association currently supports, what do you think about them?

Activity	I've done this and would recommend it	I've done this but wouldn't recommend it	I'm aware of this and may take part in the future	I wasn't aware of this but may take part in the future	It's not for me
SHOUT (mental health texting service)	4%	0%	21%	44%	31%
Disabled Students Group	5%	0%	14%	26%	55%
OU Pride	3%	0%	15%	29%	53%
Peer Support (OU student supporting students)	6%	0%	29%	46%	19%
Talk Campus (mental health and wellbeing network)	3%	0%	25%	51%	21%
Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Students Group.	2%	0%	9%	23%	66%
OUTSET Association's student support charity)	3%	0%	17%	62%	19%
Association's Individual Representation service	3%	0%	19%	61%	17%
OU Shop	18%	0%	33%	39%	9%

Legend:
- ■ I've done this and would recommend it
- ■ I've done this but wouldn't recommend it
- ■ I'm aware of this and may take part in the future
- ■ I wasn't aware of this but may take part in the future
- ■ It's not for me

As with previous years, the most popular time of day to engage students in Association activities is 7pm - 10pm. The times quoted are in GMT.

For 2022, we added different types of events that students may want to get involved with. Online events remained popular for 7pm-10pm. Face-to-face events were popular for lunchtime 11am-2pm and more social events were preferred for late afternoon 2pm-5pm.

Q17: What is the best time of day for you to engage with Association activities?

Time	Engage in online events	Engage in face-2-face activities	Meet with fellow students	This time doesn't work for me
Morning coffee 8am-11am	30%	5%	5%	60%
Lunchtime chat 11am-2pm	29%	11%	10%	49%
Afternoon tea 2pm-5pm	26%	11%	11%	52%
Dinner time 5pm-7pm	40%	10%	9%	41%
Twilight chat 7pm-10pm	59%	6%	9%	26%

Legend:
- ■ Meet with fellow students
- ■ Engage in face-2-face activities
- ■ Engage in online events
- ■ This time doesn't work for me

Communities and Engagement

EDI and Accessibility

Results for 2022 remain very similar to previous years. Students seem eager for Association events related to their study area, personal circumstances and careers.

The careers services was a topic discussed at the 2023 OU student consultation.

More signposting from the Association for OU services to support students after their studies is needed.

The events listed under the 'other' option were:

Career-related events

Creative writing events

Disability awareness events

Environment and sustainability events

Local events

International students-focused events

Events with external/guest speakers

"Creative writing events that are also available online. The ones offered so far were all face-to-face, but I am abroad and could not go."

"Jobs fairs, stalls with different people to talk to, relaxed, can bring children, can turn up any time, can come and go as able"

Q18: What sort of student events do you want to attend?

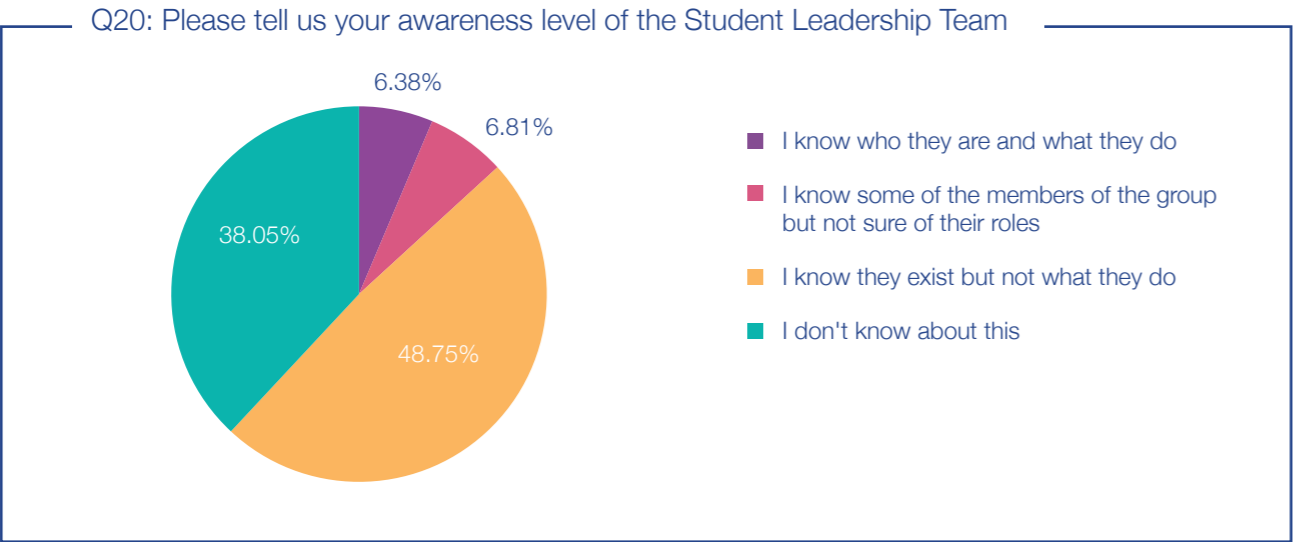| Event	%
Events specific to study area (e.g guest lectures/talks etc)	83.69%
Events specific to personal interest (e.g, creative writing, gardening, sports etc)	57.35%
Events for specific personal circumstances (e.g parents, carers, veterans etc)	27.77%
Consultations of focus groups on student issue	24.45%
Careers advice and employability workshops	47.52%
Special events such as Pride Month, Black History Month, University Mental Health Day etc	27.58%
Drop-in's with Association reps	12.75%
Other	

This is a new question for 2022 and was added to support the review of the Peer Support offering. Responses show that students would like to see a chat function introduced. The majority of students would like to see this service provided by trained operators which can include current and other students.
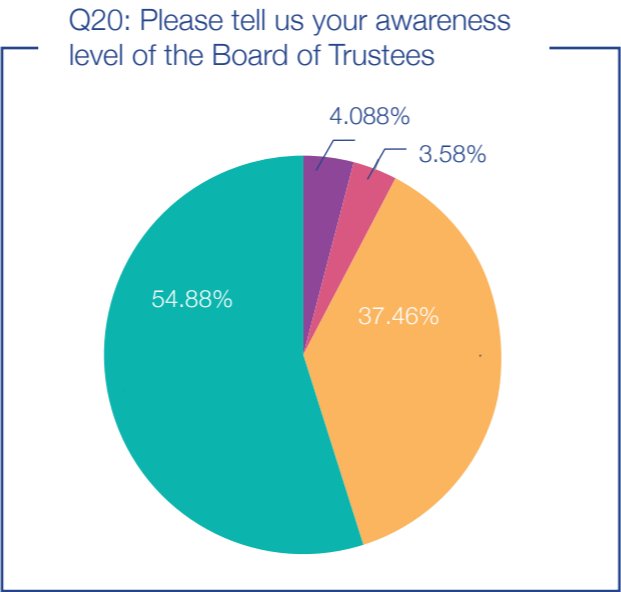
Q19: Distance learning can be challenging and at the Association we are looking into ways that we can support students. Tell us how you feel about peer-to-peer support by selecting your answers for the statements below.
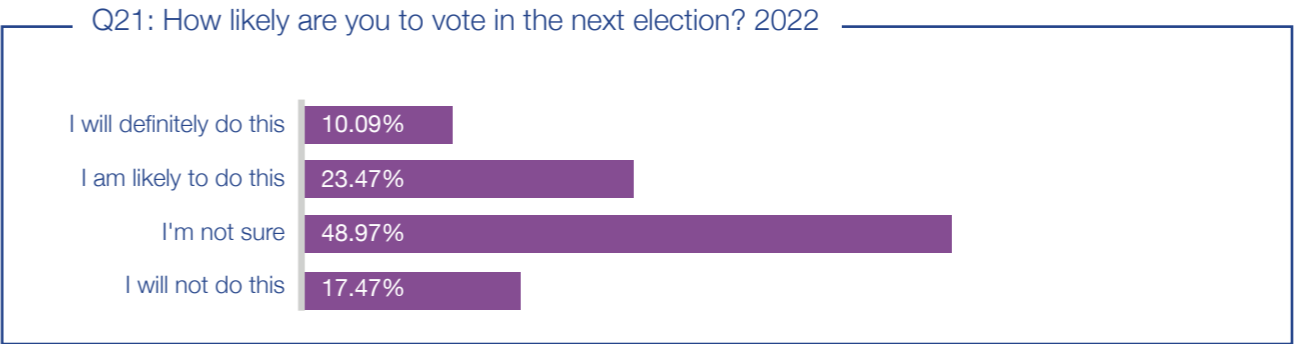
Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not applicable
I like using chat functions on websites when seeking assistance (e.g. on banking websites or online shopping websites)	30%	32%	19%	8%	7%	4%
It would be important to me that I remain anonymous when using a peer-to-peer support service.	15%	19%	38%	16%	6%	5%
I would be likely to use a peer-to-peer service if I faced personal difficulties (e.g. seeking tuition fee support, disability support).	14%	34%	25%	13%	8%	6%
I am aware of the Peer Support Service currently offered by the Students Association	7%	19%	22%	29%	16%	7%
I would only use a peer-to-peer support service if I knew that it was a safe space (e.g. with trained supporters and moderators).	27%	38%	22%	5%	2%	5%
It would be important to me that the student helping me remains anonymous, so that I don't know who they are.	10%	16%	41%	19%	8%	6%
I would be likely to use a peer-to-peer service if I faced study-related difficulties (e.g. struggling with motivation or confidence).	22%	41%	21%	8%	5%	4%
I would be interested in using a service where current students assist other students in need of support.	26%	37%	25%	5%	3%	4%

■Strongly agree ■Agree ■Neutral ■Disagree ■Strongly disagree ■Not applicable

Governance & Democracy

Q20: Please tell us your awareness level of the Student Leadership Team

6.38%

6.81%

38.05%

48.75%

- I know who they are and what they do
- I know some of the members of the group but not sure of their roles
- I know they exist but not what they do
- I don't know about this

Awareness of both groups has increased from an average of 35.95% in 2021 to 53.54% in 2022. Although 'I know who they are and what they do' is still low, numbers are steadily increasing based on 2021 figures.

Q20: Please tell us your awareness level of the Board of Trustees

4.088%

3.58%

54.88%

37.46%

We are starting to see an increase in students responding that they are likely to or definitely will vote or stand in elections. The most notable change is the shift from the 2021 figure of 23.02% students responding that they are 'not sure' about standing in the elections to 73.18% in 2022.

Q21: How likely are you to vote in the next election? 2022

I will definitely do this	10.09%
I am likely to do this	23.47%
I'm not sure	48.97%
I will not do this	17.47%

The process for standing was reviewed prior to the 2022 elections to make the process simpler and more appealing. The 2022 election saw the highest number of students putting themselves forward for positions and the highest number of voters.

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Q21: How likely are you to vote in the next election? 2022

I will definitely do this	10.09%
I am likely to do this	23.47%
I'm not sure	48.97%
I will not do this	17.47%

Q21: How likely are you to stand in the next election? 2022

I will definitely do this	
I am likely to do this	
I'm not sure	73.18%
I will not do this	22.57%

Vote in the next Association student elections? 2021

I will definitely do this	8.14%
I am likely to do this	23.49%
I'm not sure	51.58%
I will not do this	16.79%

Vote in the next Association student elections? 2021

I will definitely do this	
I am likely to do this	
I'm not sure	23.02%
I will not do this	72.96%
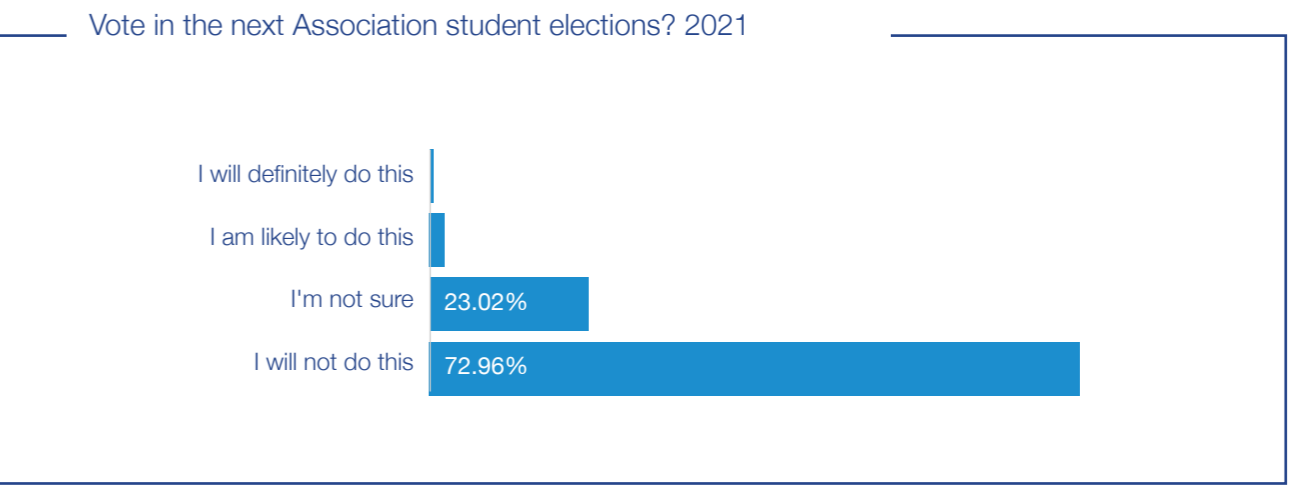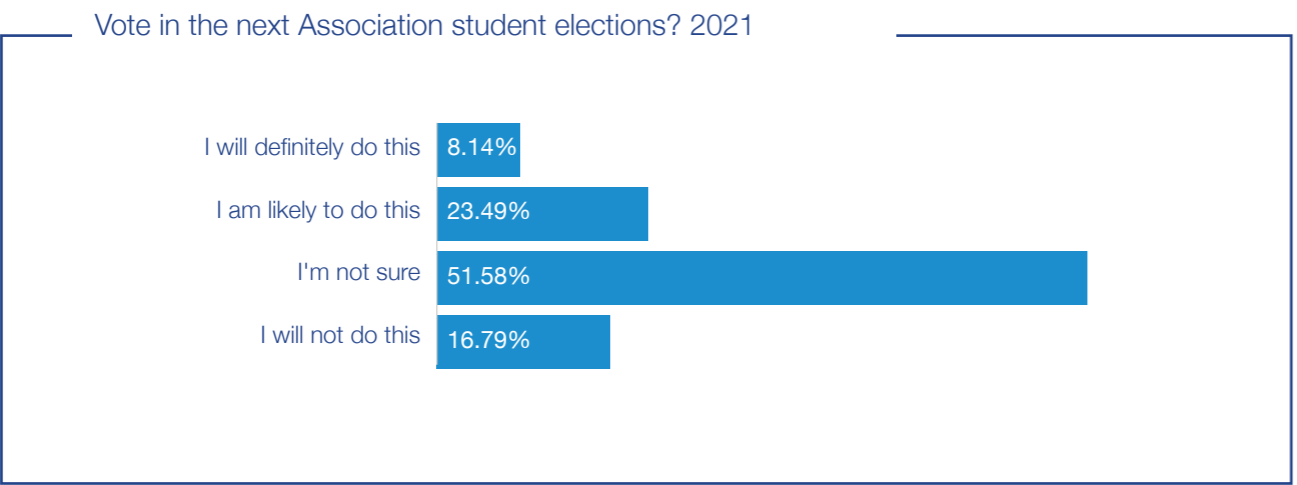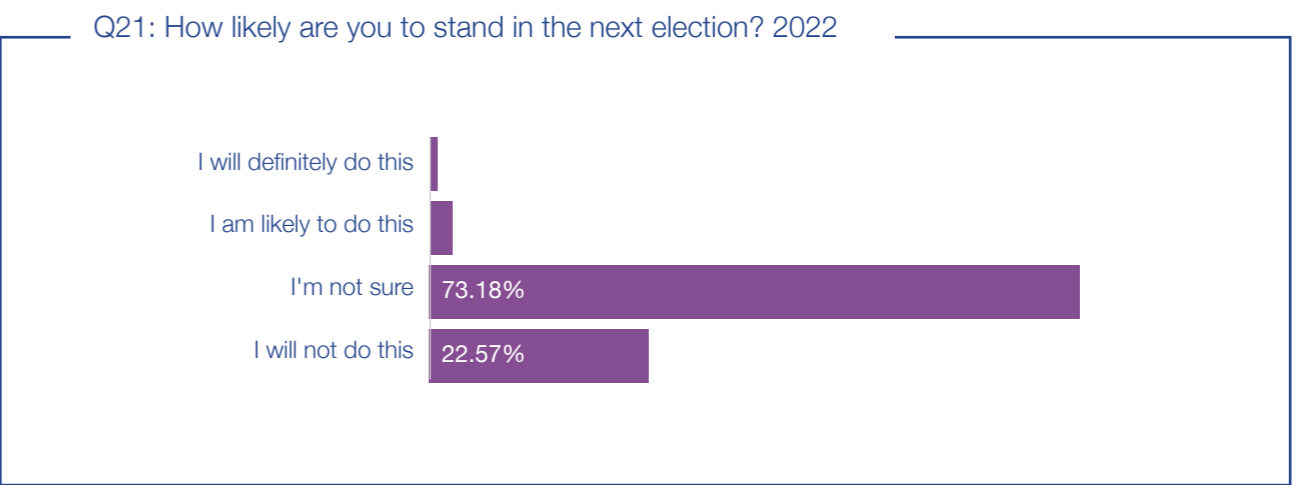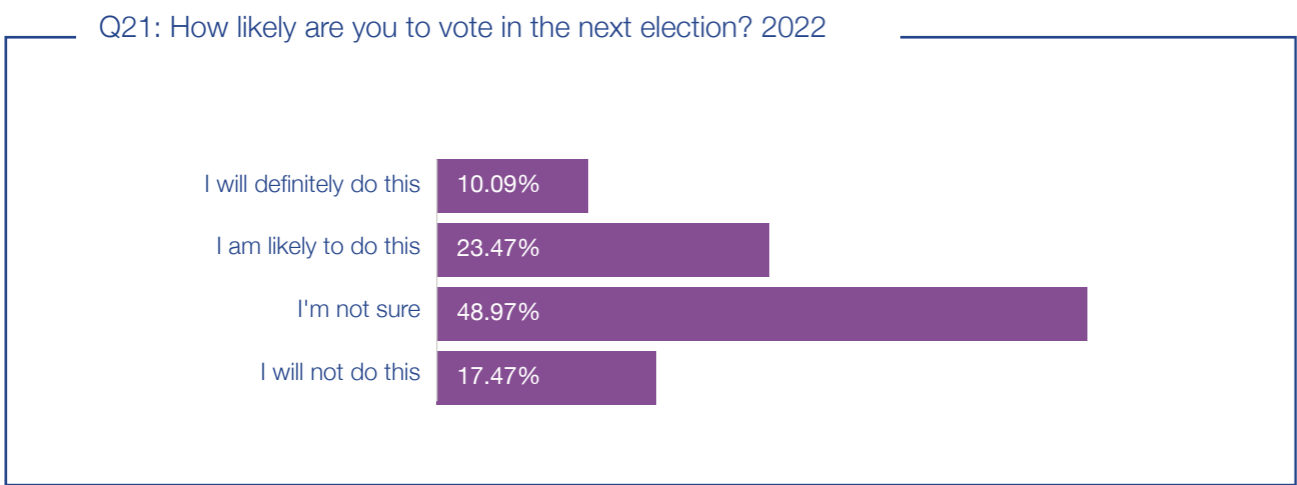
Q22 (Open comments) What would motivate you to vote and/or stand for a position in the Association elections?

SLT Priority Areas

Association Awareness

Representation

Motivations for voting in the elections

Respondents commented on the need for more information about candidates, and also suggested different ways in which such information could be made available for the student body.

Clarity around key ideas in candidates' manifestos, as well as the campaigns that they would like to lead, was an important consideration.

Learning about how the elected student representatives had served the interests of the student community, and the impact of their role, was also key to engaging with the elections process.

"I think more outreach about who is running and the reasons why they are running would make me vote. At current, I have no idea why the position exists and at the last election I didn't know anything about the candidates. A newsletter showing each candidate would have helped."

"Clear Manifesto that touches distance learning students"

"If I got emails regarding elections which included a synopsis of each rep and what they want to bring to the community. If there are issues that directly affect my course and, generally, teaching across the OU, I will vote."

Motivations for voting in the elections

Remuneration for elected representatives came up regularly in feedback to this question.

The ability to gain transferable skills was a driver for some respondents, and they also stressed on these being accredited qualifications that they could add to their CVs.

"If I knew I could meet the time commitment and my health was stable to take on workload. Also if travel to MK wasn't compulsory or potentially partially reimbursed."

"If I knew there would be a benefit to my studies or career prospects as a result (e.g. having it be something that bolsters job applications)"

"I feel that the association can be quite cliquey and unwelcoming to new members who want to get involved"

"I think the first tutorial of each year should be a range of people coming to talk about all of these opportunities."

A lack of confidence in being able to take on the role, not having a good understanding of the role, or not having the relevant skills was a barrier for respondents to stand in the elections.

A lack of time was cited by respondents as the main reason for not standing in the elections.

Q23 (Open comments) What would you like your elected student leaders to be doing to effectively represent your voice to the University?

SLT Priority Areas

Representation

The key areas mentioned by respondents as needing better representation were:

Help with student finance

Better availability of face-to-face tutorials

Disability and mental health awareness

Representation for PhD students and international students

"A representative of on-campus PhD students"

"A serious and concerted approach to bring the plight of the disabled student and carer student to the fore."

"Campaigning for more face-to-face tutorials"

"advocating how important it is that course fees remain affordable , so that more people can achieve study with the OU."

"Speak about international students or have a specific group which speaks for international students."

"Be more visible. I would like to see news updates on who has been elected and then updates on what they are doing for the students."

This is a new question for 2022. There is a good level of awareness of the Association representing academic interests to the OU. However the mechanism of the CCRs and how they work has low awareness.

As with previous years, this survey works well as a way to promote different services and activities at the Association, so we would hope to see an increase in future years. There is an average of 46.78% awareness over the different options

Q24: Awareness of how the Association interacts with the OU to support students

	Yes, I am aware	No, I am not aware
A key activity at the OU Students Association is to represent students' academic interests to the University		2687 / 1526
The Association's Central Committee Representative (or CCR) role has been designed to give a voice to students academic interests at university committees		1583 / 2630
All CCR volunteers are your fellow students		1819 / 2394
Any current OU student can apply to become a CCR		1819 / 2419

■ Yes, I am aware   ■ No, I am not aware

Q25 (Open comments) What does the term 'academic representation' mean to you?

The feedback suggests that while most respondents would connect the term 'academic representation' to fellow students taking their voice forward within the OU's academic governance, a few respondents thought that the term meant an OU member of staff.

This points to the need for unpacking the term for students and communicating the work done by the Central Committee Representatives, particularly in the run-up to the National Students Survey.

"A system in which students are recruited, trained, and empowered to represent your academic interests to the University by collecting your feedback and translating it into positive change."

"Advocating for students' interests, championing student issues and speaking on behalf of the student body."

"Representing different students from different backgrounds and those with different challenges. These types of issues are openly discussed and chosen students representing them are visible to other students in the university."

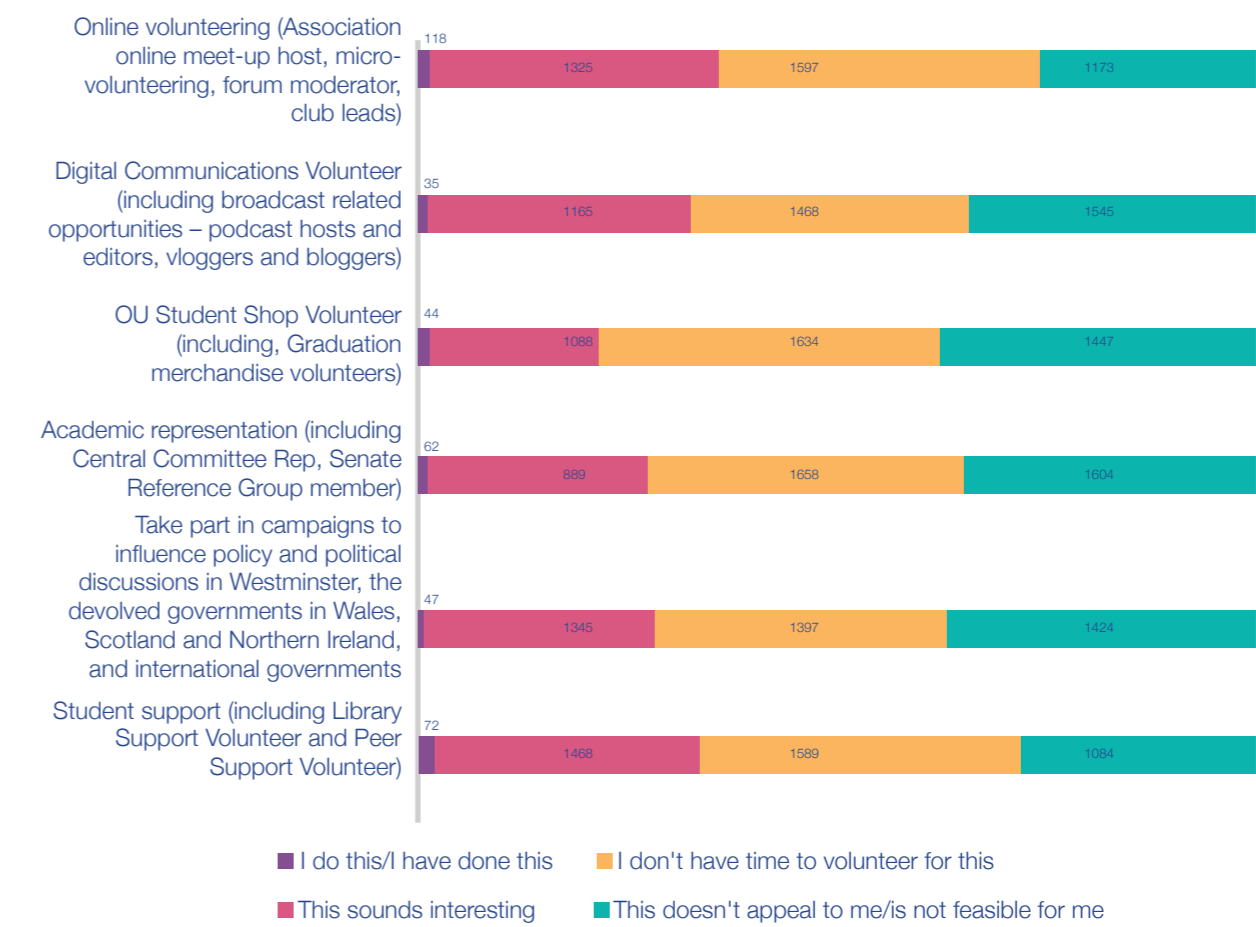*"A rep from the uni? A tutor?"*

"A University representative so an OU staff member"

Volunteering

Online volunteering, campaigning and student support remain the top 3 most popular volunteering opportunities with an average increase of nearly 2% in each area for students being interested in taking part. 2022 sees a small increase to respondents selecting 'I don't have time' which correlates with the statistic of over 70% of students being in some kind of paid employment whilst studying.
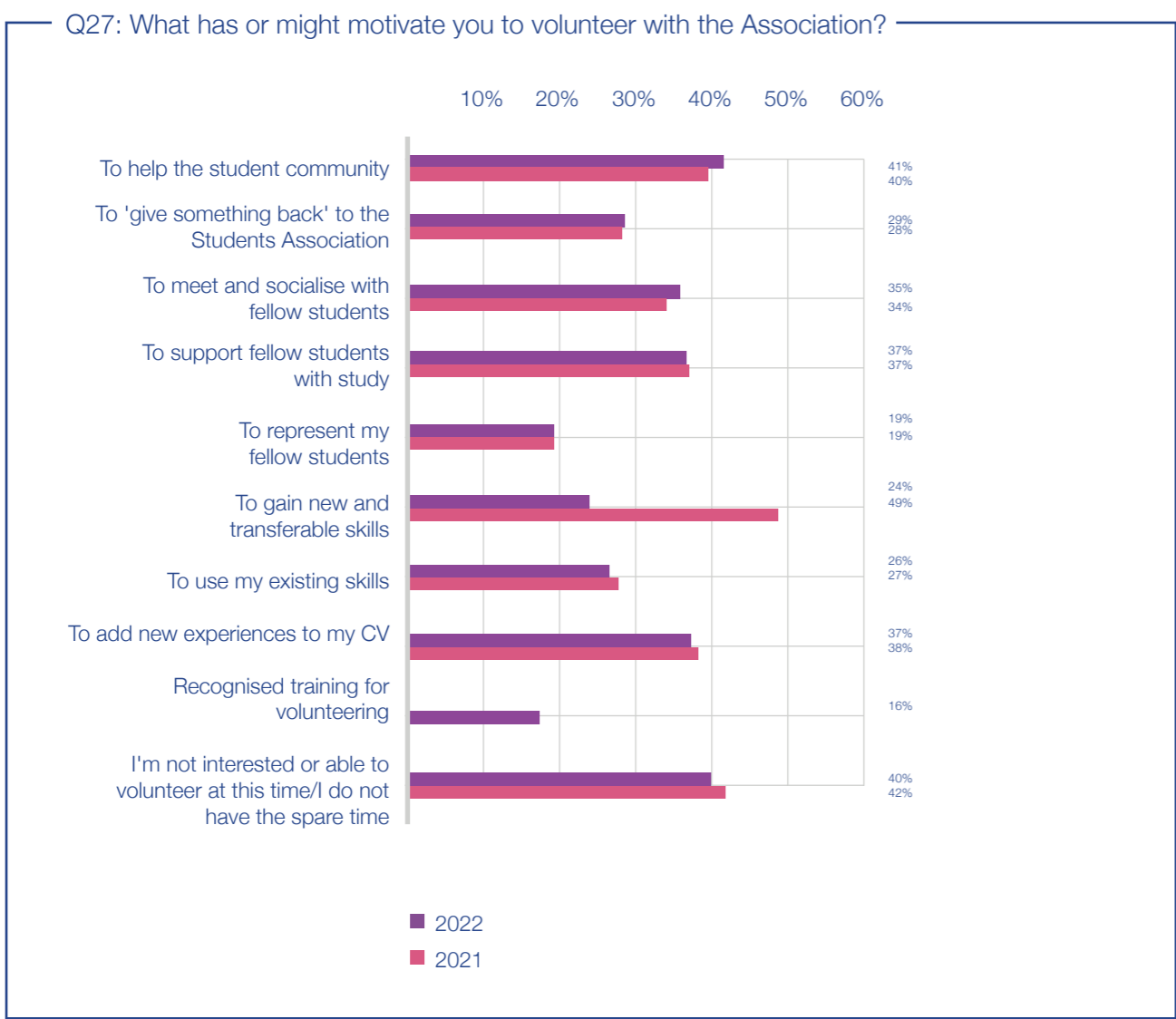
There has been an average 5% reduction in respondents selecting 'this doesn't appeal' based on the findings from 2021. This shows that our current volunteering offering is attractive to students.

Q26: Are you aware that Student Association offers the following volunteering opportunities for all students at the Open University to get involved in?

	I do this/I have done this	This sounds interesting	I don't have time to volunteer for this	This doesn't appeal to me/is not feasible for me
Online volunteering (Association online meet-up host, micro-volunteering, forum moderator, club leads)	118	1325	1597	1173
Digital Communications Volunteer (including broadcast related opportunities – podcast hosts and editors, vloggers and bloggers)	35	1165	1468	1545
OU Student Shop Volunteer (including, Graduation merchandise volunteers)	44	1088	1634	1447
Academic representation (including Central Committee Rep, Senate Reference Group member)	62	889	1658	1604
Take part in campaigns to influence policy and political discussions in Westminster, the devolved governments in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, and international governments	47	1345	1397	1424
Student support (including Library Support Volunteer and Peer Support Volunteer)	72	1468	1589	1084

2022 sees the number of respondents selecting 'gain new and transferable skills' halve as a motivation for volunteering.

This may be in part due to the new option for 2022 'recognised training' which 16.5% of respondents selected.

Q27: What has or might motivate you to volunteer with the Association?

	2022	2021
To help the student community	41%	40%
To 'give something back' to the Students Association	29%	28%
To meet and socialise with fellow students	35%	34%
To support fellow students with study	37%	37%
To represent my fellow students	19%	19%
To gain new and transferable skills	24%	49%
To use my existing skills	26%	27%
To add new experiences to my CV	37%	38%
Recognised training for volunteering	16%	
I'm not interested or able to volunteer at this time/I do not have the spare time	40%	42%

■ 2022
■ 2021

Q28 (Open comments)

Are there any volunteering opportunities you believe would be beneficial for students to get involved in now or in the future?

Is there any particular training you would like to see?

Communities and Engagement

EDI and Accessibility

Volunteering opportunities

Respondents were interested in undertaking a variety of roles, and suggested different types of volunteering opportunities. Opportunities to engage with their local communities - particularly around charities, food banks and environmental projects – was a big draw for many respondents. There was also interest in opportunities aligned to subject area and roles with external organisations (but in a way that these would be facilitated/signposted by the Association).

Befriending/buddy services

Opportunities with external organisations

Opportunities for international students

Opportunities related to social media and blogging

Opportunities with local charities and fundraising events

Community outreach, such as with food banks

Environmental projects

Lack of time was cited as the main reason for being unable to undertake volunteering roles; however, some respondents mentioned that having paid opportunities, or discounts offered to volunteers, would motivate them to undertake volunteering.

SLT Priority Areas

Communities and Engagement

EDI and Accessibility

"A befriending service for isolated students"

"Helping students from abroad to socialise and help them with studies. Also it would be very important to have multicultural volunteers so they can help people from the same country."

"If there was ever a "live chat" function, a good volunteering idea would be to put our fellow students on the other end of those chats and effectively signpost our peers to the appropriate pages, services or support when they need assistance."

"As the Student Association continues expanding, I would love to be more local volunteering opportunities for international students…an ability to meet with - and take part in - volunteer groups local to other regions with the backing of the Open University and the Students Association."

"Perhaps volunteering opportunities in study-specific sectors, for example volunteering in the legal sector"

"Local community work for charities who are desperate for these roles"

SLT Priority Areas

Communities and Engagement

Training: A key theme from the feedback was an interest in gaining accredited qualifications as part of volunteer training. The following types of training were mentioned:

Communication (writing, public speaking, presentation skills)

Active listening

Leadership

Transferable skills

Advocacy/Campaign training

Conflict resolution

Mental health training
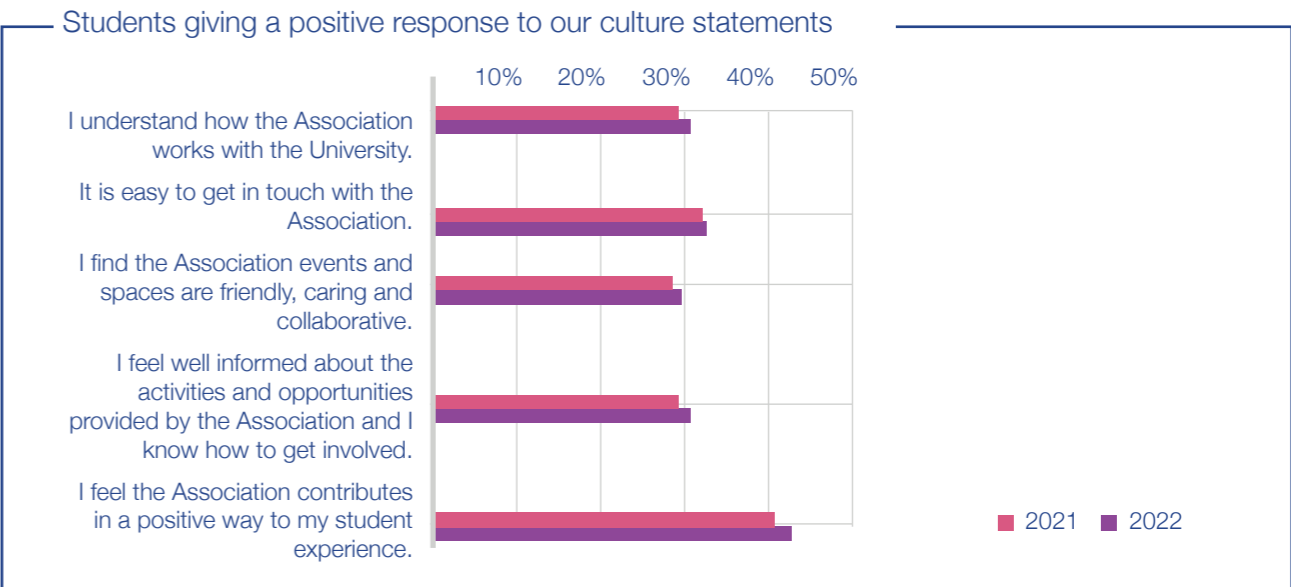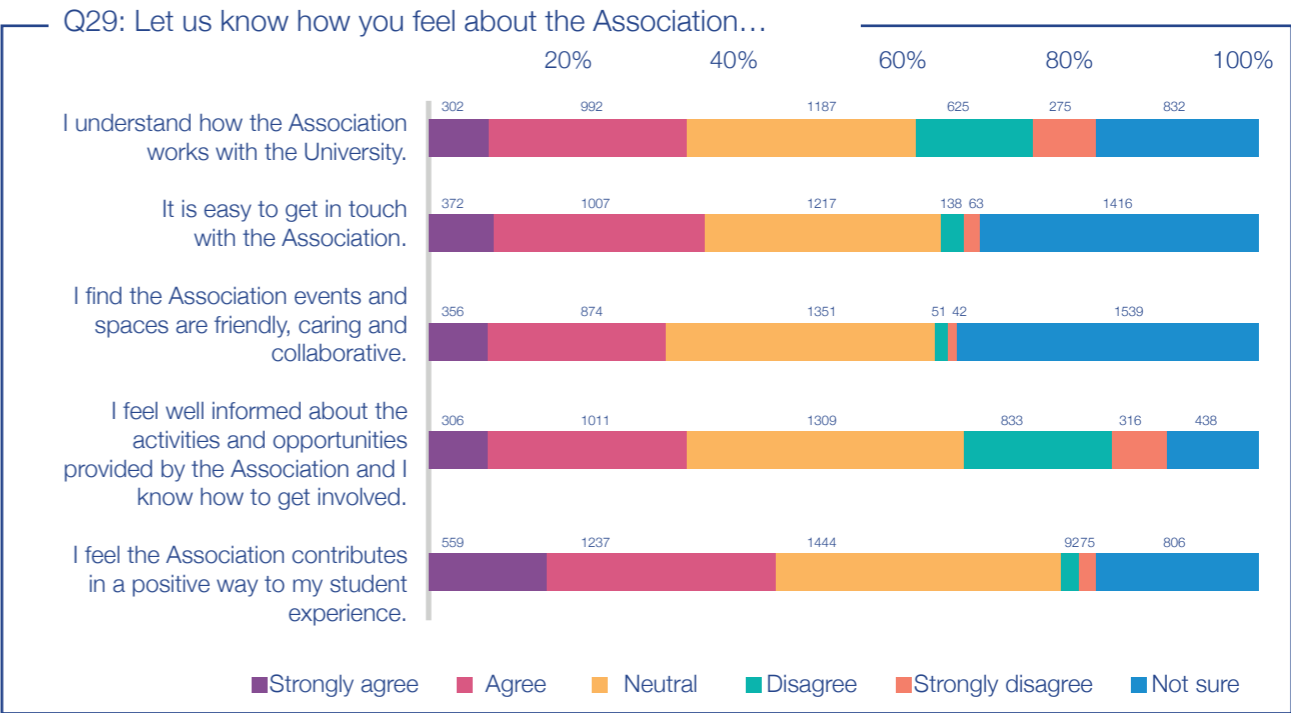
Skills relevant to sitting on committees

"Governance, how to conduct meetings, documentation and follow through"

"I would like to see recognisable certifications with any training offered. At this time I would not consider working for free, and a legitimate certificate of some kind would be the only thing that might make it worth it."

"Public speaking workshops"

Culture & Values

On average, positive responses to this culture questions continue to rise. However, 2022 saw a slight dip of 1% in positive responses for Association events and spaces being 'friendly, caring and collaborative'. The Association is undertaking reviews of their Groups and Clubs to ensure that these activities remain a safe place for students to network and share their student journey.
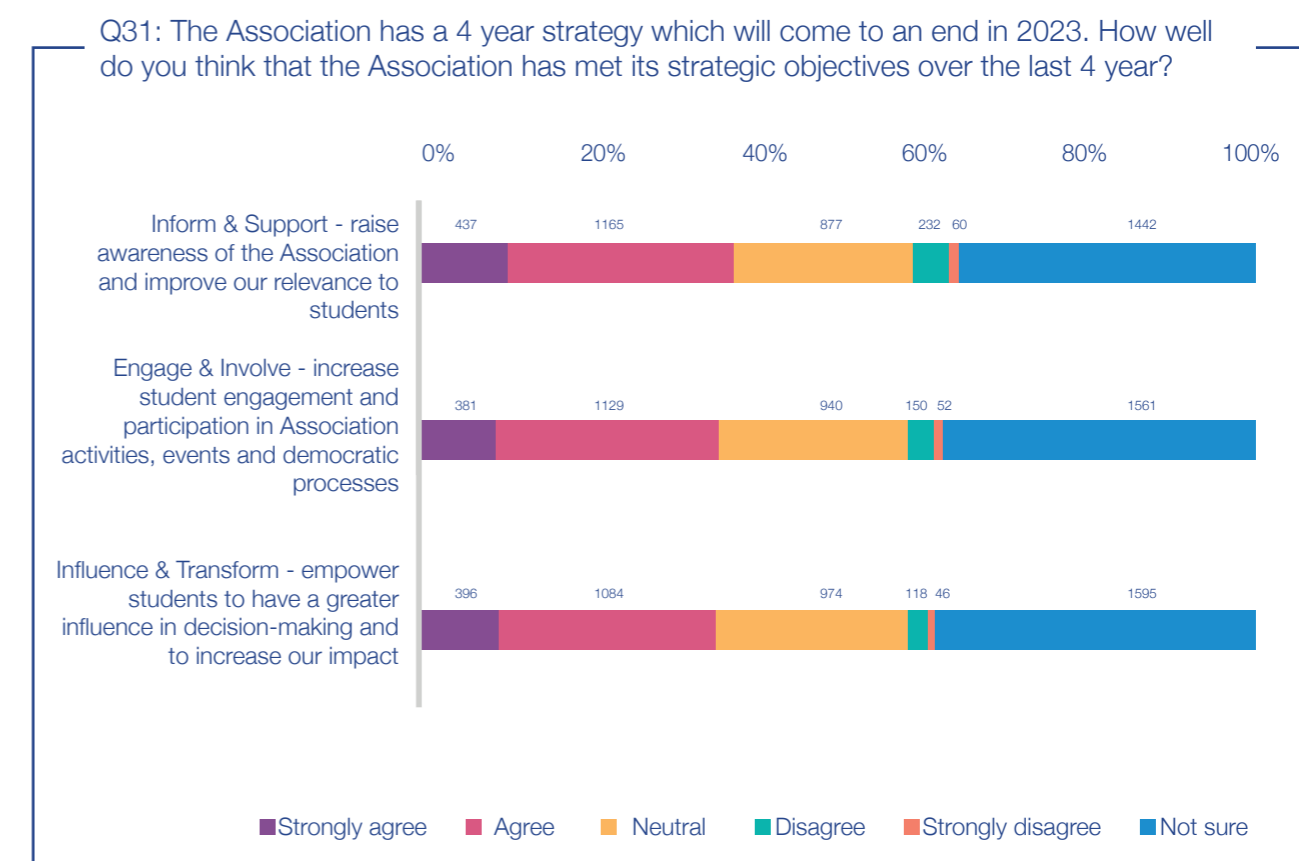

Q29: Let us know how you feel about the Association…

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
I understand how the Association works with the University.	302	992	1187	625	275	832
It is easy to get in touch with the Association.	372	1007	1217	138	63	1416
I find the Association events and spaces are friendly, caring and collaborative.	356	874	1351	51	42	1539
I feel well informed about the activities and opportunities provided by the Association and I know how to get involved.	306	1011	1309	833	316	438
I feel the Association contributes in a positive way to my student experience.	559	1237	1444	92	75	806

Students giving a positive response to our culture statements
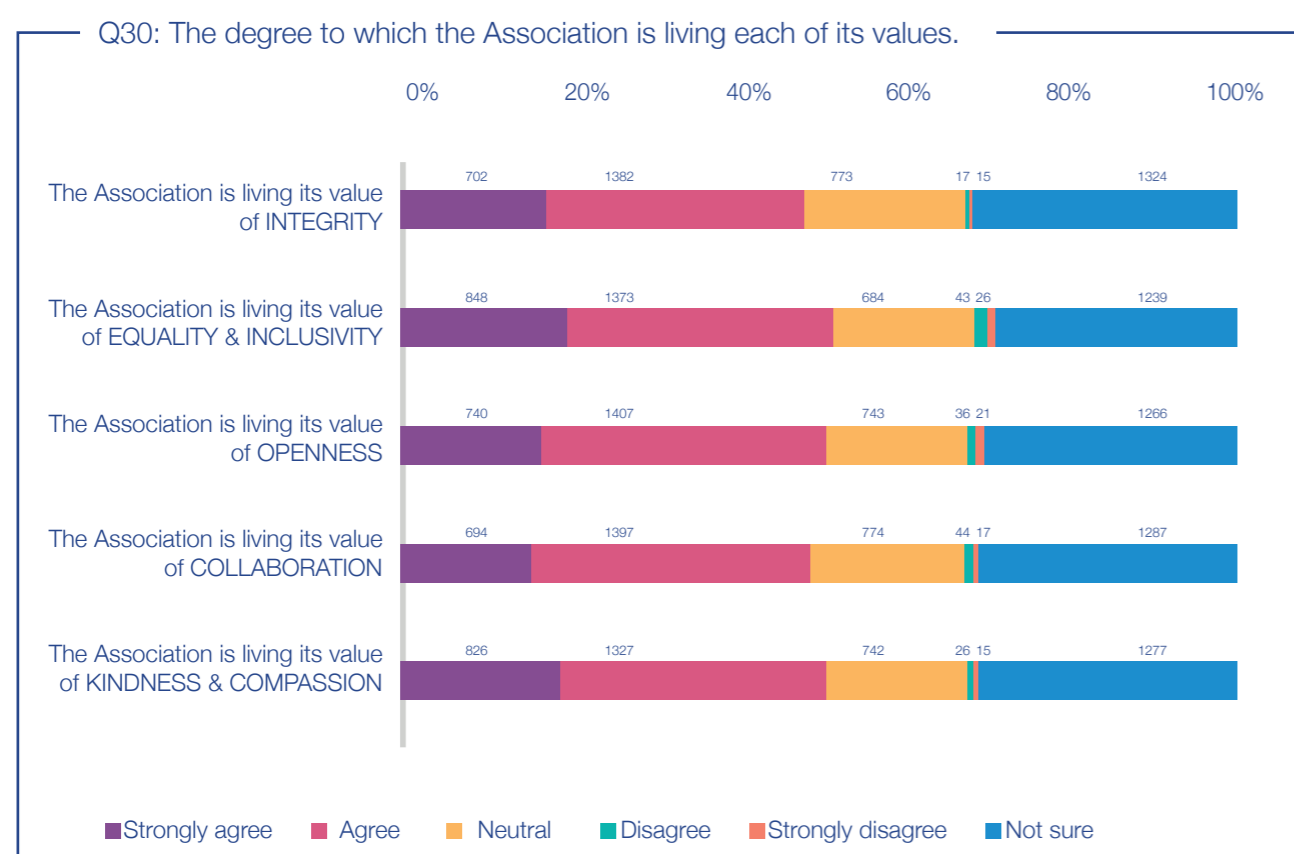
2021   2022

On average 50% (4% increase against 2021 figures) of survey respondents have a positive response to our values, with all statements receiving an increase in positive responses.

The average of positive responses now outweighs the average of neutral or not sure responses.

This was a new question for 2022, introduced as the Association began to wrap up its current 4 year strategy. There is a high proportion of respondents selecting 'Neither agree or disagree' or 'not sure' and this may be due to the large proportion of the respondents having only studied with the OU for 3 years or less, or having low awareness of the Association.

When looking at 'strongly agree' and 'agree', on average 36.33% of respondents felt that the Association had met its 3 key objectives.

Q30: The degree to which the Association is living each of its values.

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
The Association is living its value of INTEGRITY	702	1382	773	17	15	1324
The Association is living its value of EQUALITY & INCLUSIVITY	848	1373	684	43	26	1239
The Association is living its value of OPENNESS	740	1407	743	36	21	1266
The Association is living its value of COLLABORATION	694	1397	774	44	17	1287
The Association is living its value of KINDNESS & COMPASSION	826	1327	742	26	15	1277

Q31: The Association has a 4 year strategy which will come to an end in 2023. How well do you think that the Association has met its strategic objectives over the last 4 year?

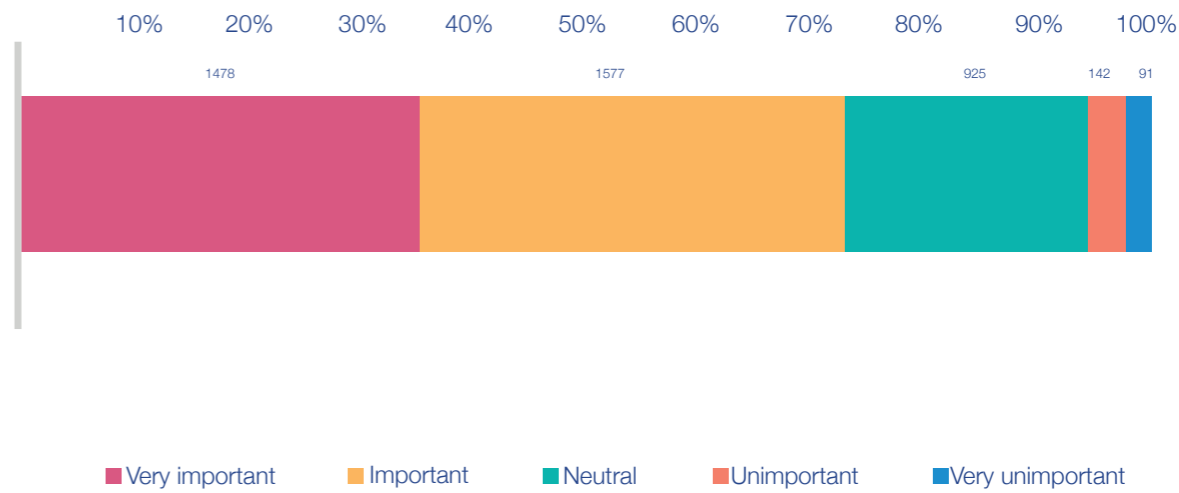|	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
Inform & Support - raise awareness of the Association and improve our relevance to students	437	1165	877	232	60	1442
Engage & Involve - increase student engagement and participation in Association activities, events and democratic processes	381	1129	940	150	52	1561
Influence & Transform - empower students to have a greater influence in decision-making and to increase our impact	396	1084	974	118	46	1595

Sustainability

Students were given 6 sustainability priority areas and asked to sort them into importance based on their circumstances. The top 3 options can be found in the graph below. The other options included talks about sustainability and environment, responsible purchasing and working with external environmental and sustainability organisations.

Q32 Sustainability is important to us at the Association. Here is a list of areas we would like to work on, please rank them in order of importance as part of your journey with us.

Events (such as community litter picks)	Reducing travel	Engaging with the OU on their sustainability practices
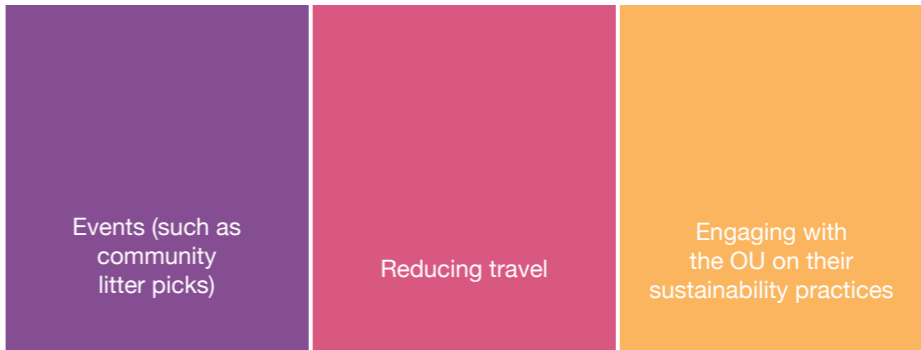
Q33 How important are the environmental and sustainability practices of the Association to you?

10%	20%	30%	40%	50%	60%	70%	80%	90%	100%

1478   1577   925   142   91

■ Very important   ■ Important   ■ Neutral   ■ Unimportant   ■ Very unimportant

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

For 2022, we added questions about EDI activities at the Association in an effort to understand student engagement in these issues.

There is an appetite among respondents to hear more about the activities and take part in focus groups.

Although getting involved with article writing and becoming an EDI champion scored slightly lower there was still an interest from students to take part.

Q34: Please indicate if you would like to learn more about and/or engage with the Association around EDI-related activities.

	Yes I would be interested in this	Not sure, I would need more information	No, this is not for me
Learning more about the Association's campaigns on EDI issues	1217	1657	1339
Receiving regular updates through the Association website/Hoot online magazine/newsletter	1459	1349	1405
Participating in EDI-focused activities and events (such as attending talks/ conferences, contributing to EDI research)	933	1554	1726
Contributing content (such as writing an article for the Association website or magazine)	782	1341	2090
Joining the Association's 'calls to action' as a volunteer (such as becoming an Association EDI champion, or joining EDI-related task and finish groups)	568	1496	2149

■ Yes I would be interested in this   ■ Not sure, I would need more information   ■ No, this is not for me

Category	Value
Study related advice or signposting	2071
Student finance and bursary advice or signposting	2541
Finance and benefit related advice or signposting	2211
Opportunities for online interactions with other students	2650
Opportunities for face-to-face interactions with other students	2087
To provide representation at the OU (to advocate for positive change, including reasonable adjustments, where necessary)	2466
To provide useful resources relevant to the Group's community	2015
Mental health support advice or signposting	2905
Counselling signposting	2105
To find community among people with whom I may have shared identity or experiences	1923
Other	118

SLT Priority Areas

Communities and Engagement

EDI and Accessibility

Respondents added the following comments as part of the 'other' option; these comments are similar to other feedback received throughout the survey, such as the need to offer support to postgraduate research students, targeted support for student who fall under groups such as single parents/carers, better signposting to help with careers advice, and the need for respect and inclusivity in the working practices of all Groups.

"financial and bursary advice should have its own dedicated group and these are issues common to all students irrespective of their identity"

"A carers support group"

"A PGR group/ community"

"Careers support"

"Moderators of these groups should themselves have protected characteristics. It is important to have representation in moderation and leadership positions.".

Q36 (Open comments) Are there any other ways in which you would like to be involved in our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) work?

The feedback to this question mentioned resources and training around allyship, together with the need to recognise groups such as single parents, neurodiverse students, carers, and international students.

"Anything that promotes people from poverty into studying"

"as a single dad I feel left out. All groups are single mums!"

"Neurodiversity I believe is often misinterpreted and believe this should be explored more."

"I would love more opportunities to be involved in EDI work. As part of a Support Group, I have participated in some EDI representation already. However, I am only able to represent from my own experiences and would love to learn what EDI means to others to become a better and more compassionate ally."

"More Allyship training and events aimed at the whole student community to enable inclusion and increase the chance students will engage with this topic to become an ally and support these changes"

"Perhaps by organising international events with students from different countries (sharing foods, traditions, etc)"

Demographics

The 2022 survey saw a shift in the age of respondents. Nearly 60% of the respondents in 2022 were aged 35 and under. This is an increase of 3% in this demographic when looking at 2021 figures. This matches the % of students in the sample data.

Q38 Please select your age

- Under 25's — 24.60%
- 26-35 — 34.84%
- 36-45 — 20.89%
- 46-55 — 11.36%
- Over 56 — 8.27%
- Prefer not to say — 0.03%
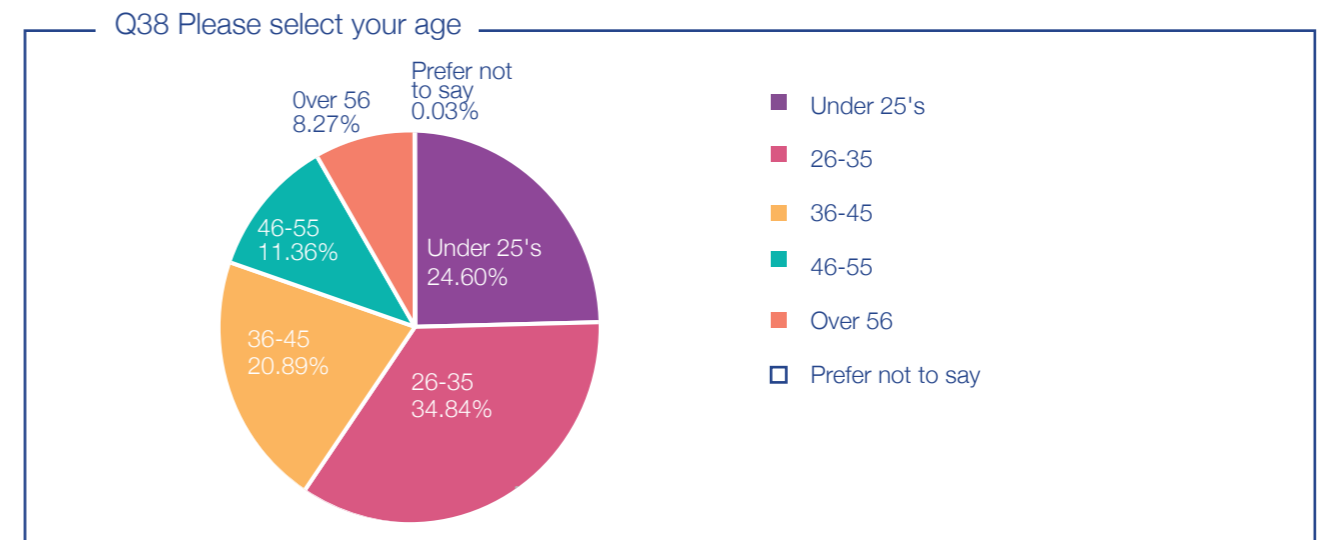
The figures are broadly the same as previous years with students selecting 'female' increasing slightly and above the sample figure of 62.6%. The OU continues to have limited data about the different gender identities (other than male/female) so it is not possible to compare this to sample data.

Q39 Gender Indentity

- Male — 30.72%
- Femaile — 65.27%
- Trans — 0.62%
- Non-binary — 2.27%
- Prefer not to say — 1.12%
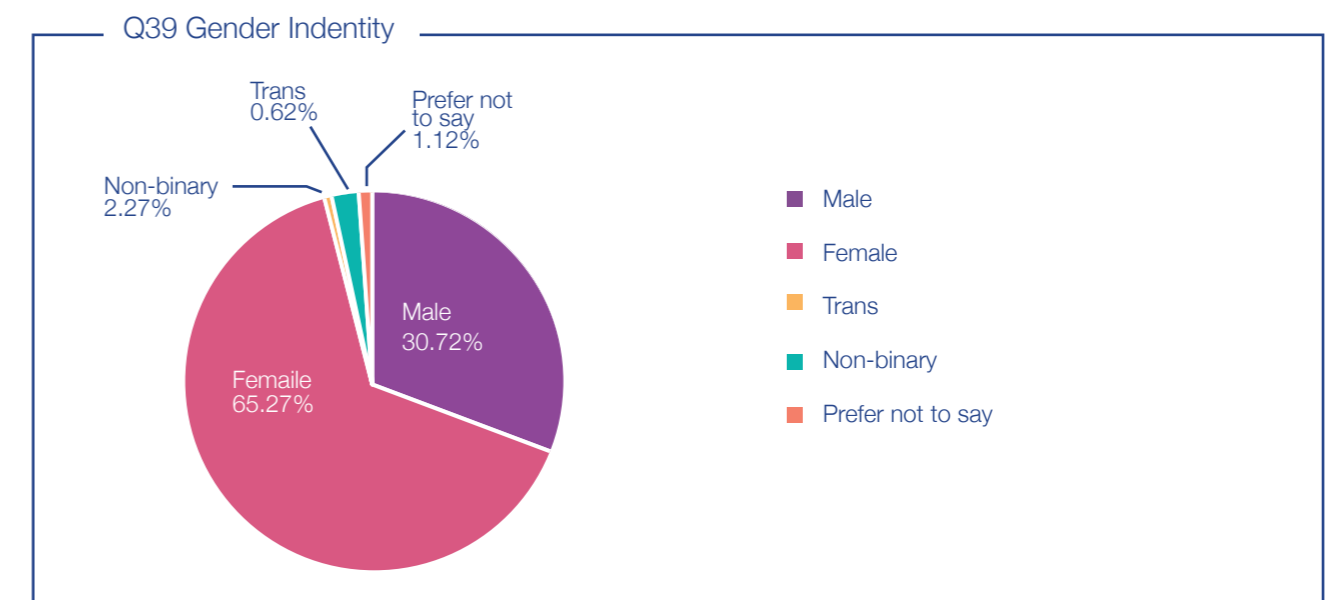
Q41 (Open comments) As an overseas student, how would you like to get involved with the Association?

Communities and Engagement

"Career opportunities in UK and PhD options in OU. Also network with other overseas students on the challenges of studying outside UK"

"If I had the available time I would happily engage with the HOOT publication, further I think online meet ups with other students to create a sense of community would be beneficial to the experience of oversees students"

"Give input on how student life is outside the UK while studying with a UK based university in terms of finance, language etc."

"it would be nice to organize nationwide events with fellow students who are studying from the same country/area"

There has been a 10% increase in white students completing the survey. This more closely matches our sample data. There has been a reduction of around 11% in students selecting 'other ethnicities' which is more representative of the sample.
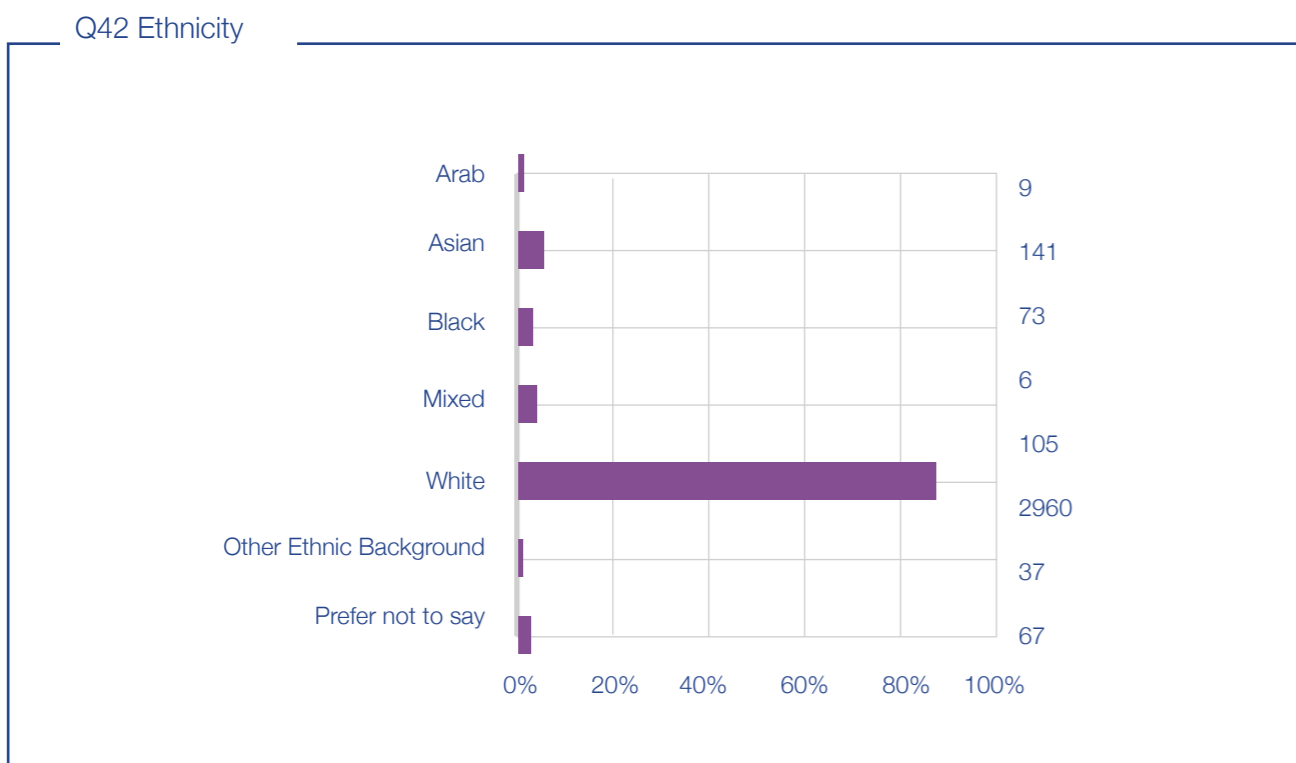
The results show a 3% reduction in students declaring a disabiltiy'. a form of disability. The biggest change was a 4% increase in respondents selecting the 'neuro-diverse'. Reports on some of the language not being the most up to date accepted terms - we will be changing the language for the 2023 survey

Q42 Ethnicity

Ethnicity	Count
Arab	9
Asian	141
Black	73
Mixed	6
	105
White	2960
Other Ethnic Background	37
Prefer not to say	67

Q43 Do you consider yourself to have a disability?

5.94%
13.66%
19.95%
57.45%
10.24%

- Yes (physical impairment)Female
- Yes (mental impairment)
- Yes, I am neuro-diverse
- No, I don't have a disability
- Prefer not to say
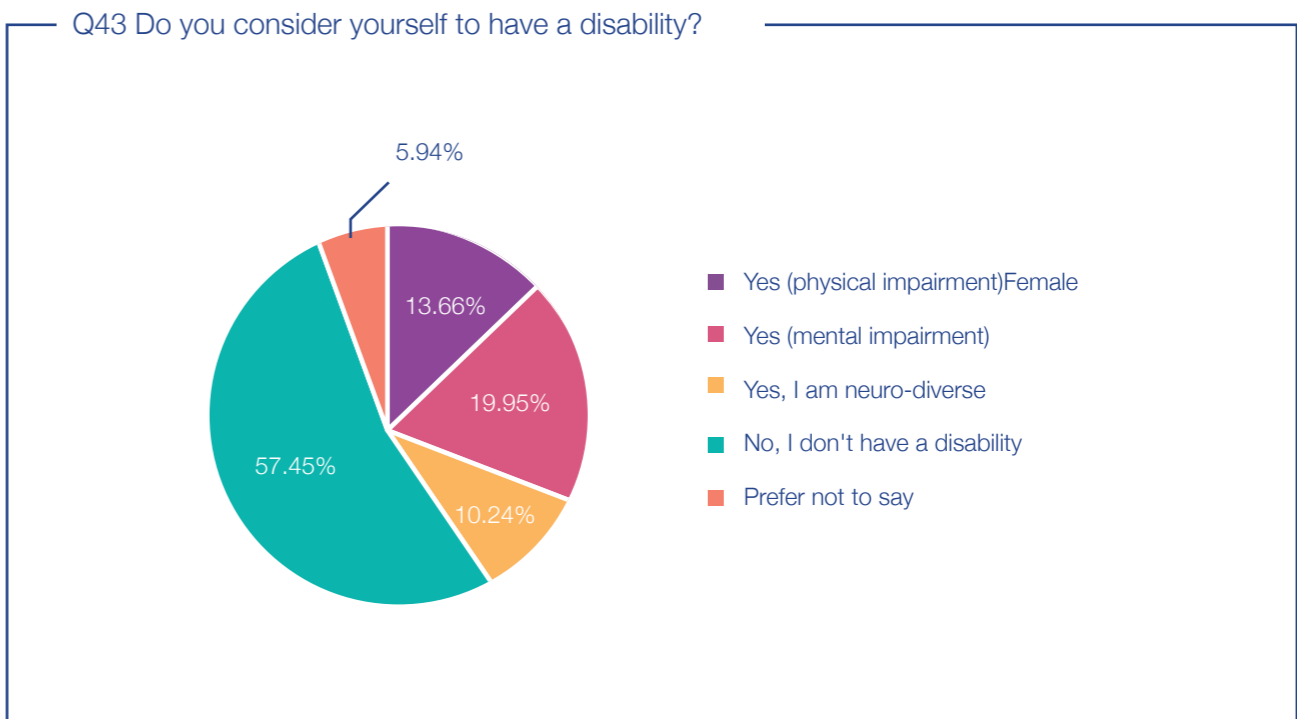
This question contains the following definition of disability The Equality Act 2010, section 6, defines a person as having a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial or long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

This effect must have lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months, or for the rest of the life of the person.

(Q45 Thinking about undiagnosed special educational needs, please consider the statements below…) This is a new question for 2022. It was introduced to ensure that we are offering the best services to support students during their OU studies. There is no formal data from the OU to compare these numbers to.

Over 30% of respondents selected either 'yes' or 'not sure' when asked if they suspect they have an undiagnosed special educational need. Over 40% of these students advise that they struggled to access support due to the lack of diagnosis. Unsurprisingly, 65% of these students thought it would be helpful to have more signposting to support.

Q44 Do you suspect that you may have an undiagnosed special educational need?

- Not Sure 11.21%
- Yes 19.19%
- No 69.60%
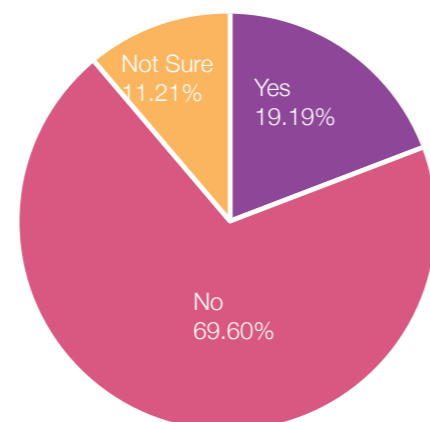
I have had difficulty accessing support due to a lack of diagnosis

- Not Sure 22%
- Yes 41%
- Maybe 22%
- No 15%
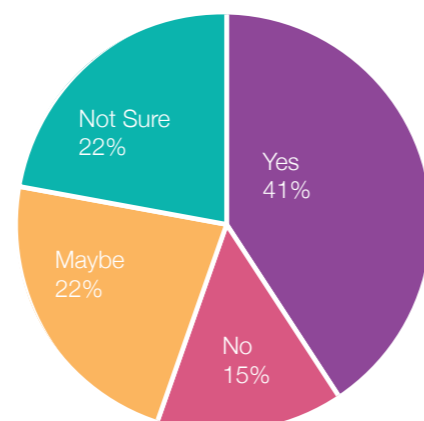
I would welcome a 'one stop hub' with support and signposting to help obtain a diagnosis

- Not sure 8%
- Maybe 23%
- Yes 65%
- No 4%
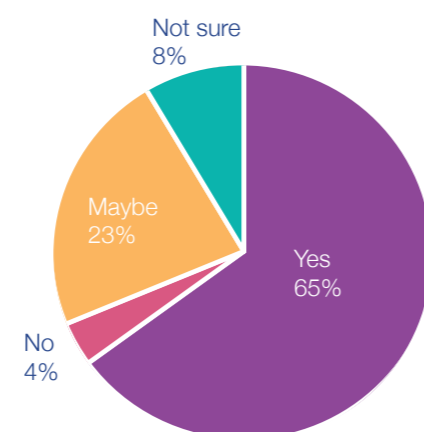
There is little change from the 2021 figures for these questions.

Q46 Do you identify as LGBT+?

- No 76.81%
- Prefer not to say 3.65%
- Yes 19.54%
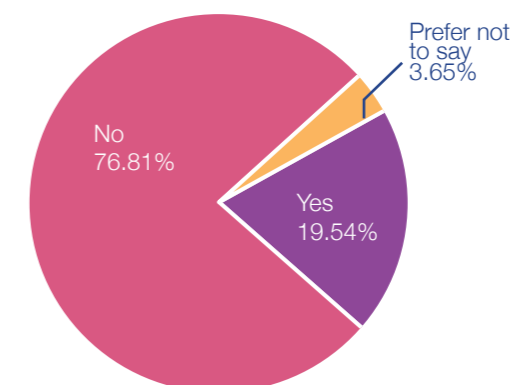
Q47 Do you consider yourself to be care-experienced?

- No 91.67
- Prefer not to say 3.65%
- Yes 7.6%
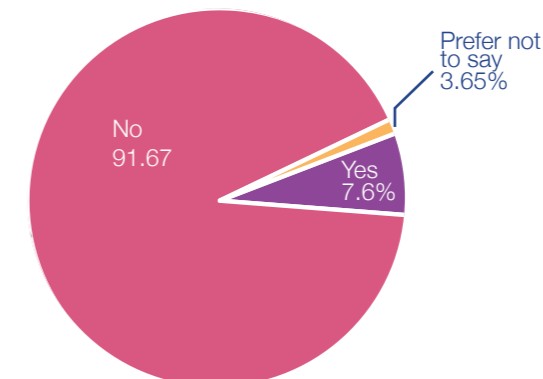
Areas for improvement (All open comments)

SLT Priority Areas

Communities and Engagement

Association Awareness

These comments point to different areas where the Association could improve the way it engages students, and is relevant to the survey as a whole.

The isolation suffered by postgraduate research students came up throughout the survey feedback:

"Although I know PhD students are included within the association it feels like it's more aimed at distance learning undergraduates."

"The other students I connect with are fellow PhD students rather than undergrads. So again I'm not sure the association methods really work for me as a PGR based on campus. Would be nice to have a PGR section to the association which could allow us to connect to all the other PGRs both based on campus, those with residency waivers and those based in affiliated research centres round the world."

"Please support the cellar bar and pavilion. It is a vital missing part of campus culture that is monopolised by catering team. It should be student / volunteer lead. Open a few times a week and not for profit. We all miss the social atmosphere and I'd gladly work one evening a week to support this."

Annual Membership Survey
2022

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OU Students
ASSOCIATION