



cuSU

the big
cambridge
survey

2018!

2018 SURVEY REPORT

demographics

1,898 INITIAL RESPONSES

• **RESPONSES FROM ALL COLLEGES AND FACULTIES** •

GENDER

63% Women
33% Men
2.22% Non-binary
0.53% Other
1% Prefer not to say

ORIGIN

73% Home
14% EU
14% Non-EU

SEXUALITY

66% Straight
23% LGB
7% Prefer not to say
3% Other

AGE

74% S.A. UG
3% Mature UG
15% S.A. PG
8% Mature PG

LEVEL

77% UG
10% PGT
13% PGR

* S.A. = Standard age UG= Undergraduate PG=Postgraduate

methodology

This year's Big Cambridge Survey was circulated through CUSU's social media channels, the CUSU Bulletin, communications sent from Sabbatical Officers and other student networks, including college committees and CUSU campaigns. The survey opened at the beginning of Easter term and closed in mid-July, at the end of the handover period between CUSU's Sabbatical Officer teams. Some incentives were included, including two prizes of £100 provided to randomly selected survey participants, and a separate prize of two tickets to a Little Mix concert.

Welcome



Welcome to CUSU's Big Cambridge Survey report! Firstly, I'd like to say a big thank you to all of you who took the time to complete the 2018 survey, your responses are immensely valuable to us, providing us with the facts and evidence to help us improve your experience of Cambridge.

CUSU runs the Big Cambridge Survey in order to identify the major student concerns, and to use the information we collect to evidence our work to improve life at university for our members. In doing so, we make datasets on particular issues available to student groups such as JCRs and MCRs, faculty representatives and student rent campaigns on request. The large volume of requests on data about student accommodation issues has influenced us to devote a much larger section of the report to these issues than in previous years, and we will continue to adapt our survey reporting to the issues highlighted most by students over time.

Whilst Cambridge is world renowned for its teaching and academic excellence, its responsibilities to its students are not just academic. This report highlights that many students are experiencing stress and anxiety as a direct result of studying here and that many don't feel comfortable coming forward to the University about these issues. This is deeply concerning. The University has a duty of care to its students and it must not shy away from thinking seriously about whether its current structures get the best out of students not just intellectually, but also in terms of their wellbeing.

This report highlights that whilst Cambridge is slowly moving forward, there is still lots of work to be done. I really hope that this report galvanises you to get involved in helping us make change at the University, be it by sitting on your JCR or MCR, getting involved in a CUSU Campaign, or even just filling in the next Big Cambridge Survey. Together we really can make a difference and help make the changes the University so desperately needs.

As always, thank you for your time and support in changing Cambridge for the better.



Evie Aspinall

CUSU President 2018-2019



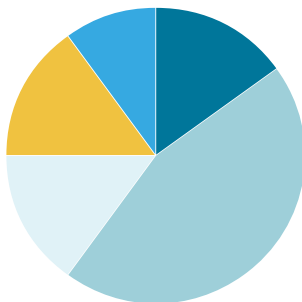
Academic experience

taught students

We asked all students on undergraduate and Masters degrees what one thing would improve their academic experience at Cambridge. Some of the most common responses referred to the structure of the academic year, the level of choice of study topics and healthier attitudes to life outside of studying.

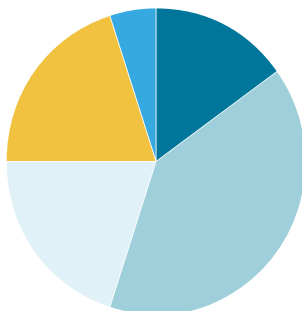
The course work is so intense and due so quickly that everything else in my life seems to suffer because of it. I understand Cambridge is intense but even an extra week per term might do something to spread out the tsunami of expectations.

How far do you agree with the following?
-I have consistently received top quality support from my supervisors



Strongly agree Agree Neutral
Disagree Strongly disagree

How far do you agree with the following?
-I am fully satisfied with my teaching and learning experience in Cambridge so far



Strongly agree Agree Neutral
Disagree Strongly disagree

More coordination between different papers on my course so that deadlines don't all fall at the same time.

Most students expressed positivity about the quality of their supervisions, but there were minor exceptions. Less than half of the students in Psychological & Behavioural Sciences and Music agreed that they consistently received top quality support from my supervisors.

Most students also felt similarly about the quality of overall teaching they received, although less than **50%** of students in Medicine, Land Economy and Chemical Engineering agreed that their teaching was of a consistently high standard.

Academic experience

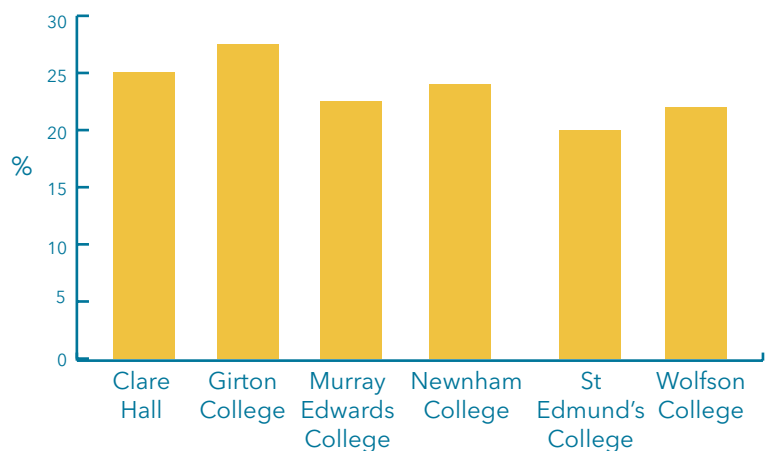
taught students

In past years, our survey has shown that students perceive significant differences between colleges in the quality and amount of supervision available to undergraduate students. This appears to no longer be the case, with no more than **30%** of students at any individual college believing they receive lower-quality supervisions.

However, while the majority of students at all colleges believe their teaching quality to be of an equal standard, the largest minorities of disagreement existed at women-only and mature-only colleges.

The belief that supervision that supervision quality is unequal was also more common in Medicine than other subjects, with **24%** of students thinking so.

I receive a comparable quality of teaching to students at other colleges
% Disagree- Top 6



I am fully satisfied with my teaching and learning experience in Cambridge so far

Top 3 Colleges

68%

Sidney Sussex College

67%

Darwin College

65%

Queens' College

Bottom 3 Colleges

36%

Newnham College

40%

St Edmund's College

45%

Girton College

The collegiate system can mean you end up being a student at a College that blatantly doesn't care about your subject, resulting in significantly less support/attention you might otherwise get studying a different subject or at a different college.

Academic experience

taught students

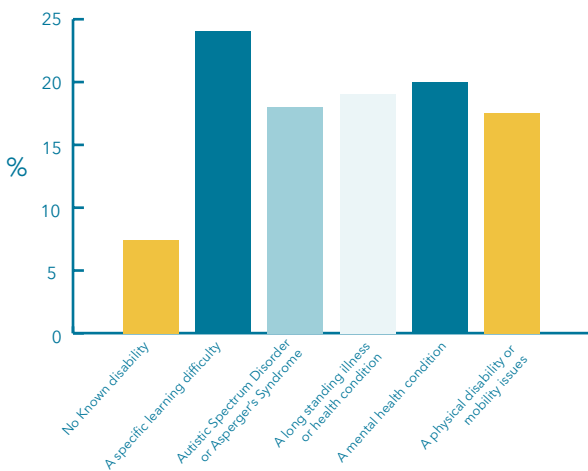
A large number of students at Cambridge require reasonable adjustments in order to study effectively. A significant number of these students have argued that the university does not effectively implement such adjustments.

The response of supervisors to mental health, some can be quite insensitive when I have to explain that I haven't managed to do some of the work.

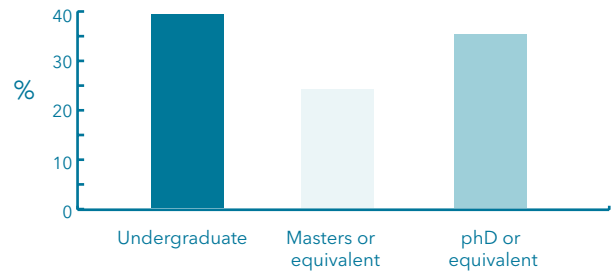
Students who require adjustments in order to study effectively also have an overall lower satisfaction rate with their academic experience at Cambridge.

While **61%** of non-disabled students are fully satisfied with their educational experience, the same applies to only **50%** of those with a specific learning difficulty, **35%** of those with autism, **40%** of those with a mental health condition, and **39%** of those with a physical disability.

My learning needs have been accommodated by teaching staff
% Disagree



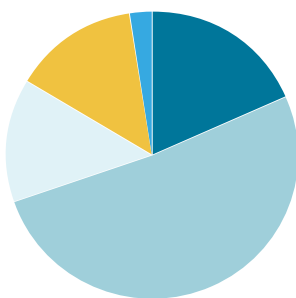
Net agreement that "your educational experience at Cambridge is value for money"



Another group that often express dissatisfaction with their educational experience is Masters students. These students often cite high costs and limited contact hours as major grievances.

I am happy with the amount of contact time I receive per week

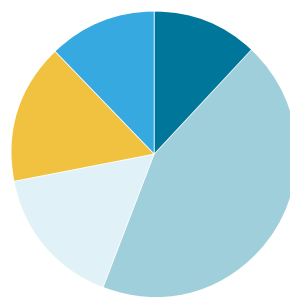
UG students



Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

I am happy with the amount of contact time I receive per week

Masters students



Strongly agree Agree Neutral Disagree Strongly disagree

"The university seems to view the MPhil more as a business than a part of its mission. This is unfortunate. It would do well to increase the resources and amount of supervision given to MPhils and graduates more generally."

Cost of living

Colleges and faculties regularly require students to incur additional costs as part of their degree. Our results show that the distribution and impact of these costs is unequal across colleges, departments and student demographics.

The ridiculously high fees and costs of living for Cambridge are extremely limiting when you do not have any or a very limited parental financial support, and when you do not have any funding help from the University either.

“How far do you agree that your college is successful in ensuring that financial issues and limitations do not get in the way of students’ academic success?”

Top 3 colleges

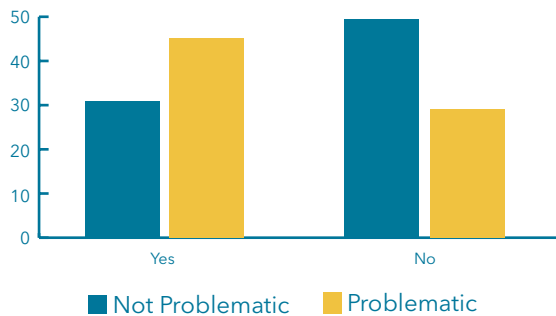
St John’s - **85%**
St Catharine’s - **75%**
Christ’s - **72%**

Bottom 3 colleges

St Edmund’s - **14%**
Hughes Hall - **17%**
Lucy Cavendish - **30%**



Q. How problematic have you found extra costs and charges from your college to be?
- By family receipt of low income benefits



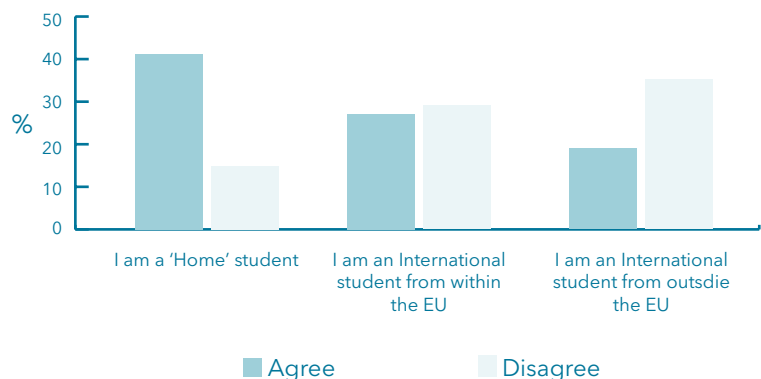
Students from some colleges were much more likely to find extra costs from their college to be a problem. A majority of students at Newnham, Lucy Cavendish and St Edmund’s found this problematic, compared to just **9%** at Darwin and **12%** at Churchill and St John’s.

Women were also more likely to find these costs problematic, with **52%** compared to **37%** among men.

Relatively few students (**10%**) state that extra costs and charges from their department or faculty are a problem for them.

However, there is a notable exception in Architecture, where **93%** of respondents had a problem with these costs.

Q. Do you agree that the university is successful in ensuring that financial issues and limitations do not get in the way of students’ academic success?



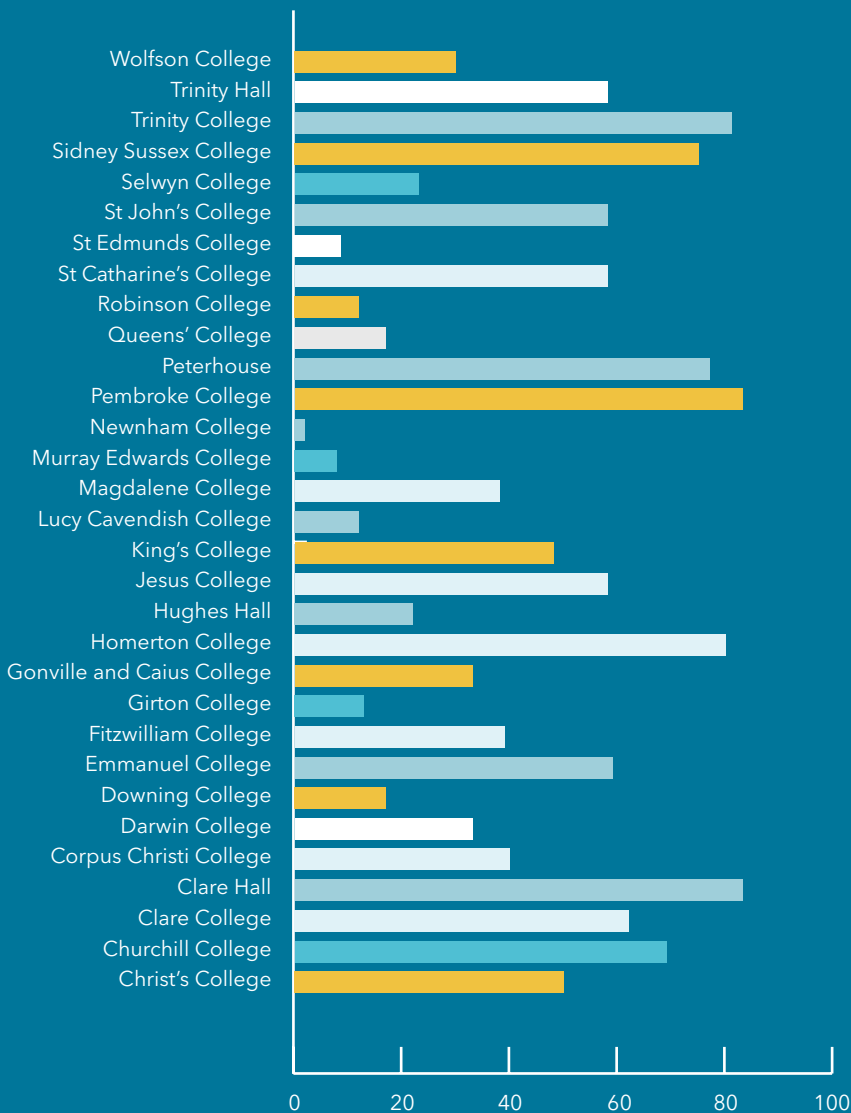
Spotlight on: *rent*

Issues related to rent and accommodation have been raised increasingly by Cambridge students within the last two years, with student rent campaigns emerging in a number of colleges.

These campaigns represent the majority of data requests from the 2016-17 **Big Cambridge Survey**. As such, we have aimed to give a greater focus to these issues in this year's report.



Do you think the rent prices in your college are fair?
- % Yes



Beyond quality and cost, students at 7 colleges were also more likely than not to say that they were dissatisfied with their relationship with their college on accommodation matters.

Such results put evidence to the claims made by student rent campaigners that colleges are unresponsive and unhelpful when challenged by students about accommodation concerns.

Students whose families had at some point been in receipt of low-income benefits were significantly more likely to state that their rent was unfair than others (**52%** to **37%**).

TOP AND BOTTOM 3 COLLEGES (QUALITY)

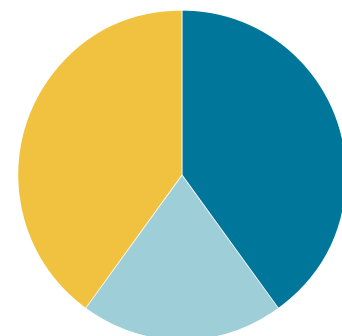
Trinity (92%)	Wolfson (37%)
Downing (91%)	Lucy Cavendish (47%)
Robinson (90%)	Magdalene (50%)

TOP AND BOTTOM 3 COLLEGES (VALUE)

Trinity (90%)	Newnham (10%)
Homerton (80%)	Girton (15%)
Peterhouse (79%)	Murray Edwards (21%)

Q. Do you think the rent prices in your college are fair?

- Undergraduates



■ Yes ■ Unsure ■ No

Spotlight on:rent

89% of students responding to the survey, including **97%** of undergraduates, told us that they live in accommodation rented from the university or one of its colleges. The most obvious concern from the results of our survey is the vast inequalities of expense, satisfaction and value for money for students at different colleges across the university. While the overall satisfaction with the value for money of university-provided or college-provided accommodation sat at **51%** of respondents, this ranged from a staggering **90%** of students at Trinity College, to only **10%** at Newnham College, with results of the remaining colleges distributed fairly evenly across the gap.

While the distribution of student satisfaction with accommodation quality was somewhat better, disparities remained clear, with over **90%** of students at Trinity, Robinson, Downing and Jesus colleges satisfied, while less than half of respondents at Wolfson and Lucy Cavendish saying the same.

“**The university or colleges cannot be ethical while rent is this high.**”

Of concern also was the fact that students at 7 colleges (Girton, Hughes Hall, Lucy Cavendish, Magdalene, Murray Edwards, Newnham and Queens') were more likely than not to say that they were dissatisfied with their relationship with their college on accommodation matters. Such results put evidence to the claims made by student rent campaigners that colleges are unresponsive and unhelpful when challenged by students about accommodation concerns.

The clearest expression of college inequalities in accommodation provision can be found in the figures of the average rents paid by respondents to the survey. Respondents from Pembroke College reported the lowest average rent, at **£113.52** per week. In contrast, respondents at Robinson College paid an average of **£171.69**. Assuming a 28-week contract, such a disparity will result in an average student at Robinson College being over **£1600** worse off than one at Pembroke College, solely as a result of their college rent prices. While this is an extreme example, the differences are still significant when the most expensive colleges are compared to the college with the median rent, Corpus Christi, with a student at Corpus still likely to spend around **£1000** less on rent annually than a student at Robinson.

The large inequalities in college rents were also reflected in the perceived fairness of rent by students. Alarming, at roughly half of the constituent colleges, a majority of respondents thought that their college's rent prices were unfair. Most shocking is that at three colleges, less than **10%** of students agreed that their rent prices were fair, a figure falling as low as **2%** at Newnham College.

Spotlight on:rent

These inequalities also result in adverse conditions for particular groups, as while **46%** of all undergraduates living in college agree that their rent prices are fair, this figure falls to **29%** for Postgraduate Research students, most likely due to the relatively high rent prices at Mature- and Graduate-only colleges. Also of concern is that students whose families had at some point been in receipt of low-income benefits were significantly more likely to state that their rent was unfair than others (**52%** to **37%**).

Senior members of college have no idea the hardships often faced by graduate students. Stipends do not increase in line with the cost of living and as a result students may struggle to afford rent for even college provided accommodation!

We also asked survey respondents whether they were satisfied with the impact living in college has had on their student life. In most cases, the large majority of students responded positively to this question. However, there were a few exceptions, most notably at Girton College, where only **44%** of students were satisfied with the impact of living in college, suggesting that more can be done to ameliorate the impact of the distance between Girton and the rest of the university.

Our survey also asked about the experiences of those students who rent their accommodation from private providers. These students accounted for **9%** of all respondents, including **27%** of mature students and **40%** of PhD students. It was very clear from the responses of these students that the experience of renting privately can be an overwhelmingly negative one for many Cambridge students.

Shockingly, **75%** of the respondents who rent their accommodation privately stated that they were dissatisfied with the affordability of accommodation in Cambridge, including **40%** who were "very dissatisfied". But affordability was not the only issue these students found with private renting, with **54%** dissatisfied with the ease of finding accommodation and only **24%** satisfied with the support provided by the university when searching for accommodation. Moreover, over **20%** of respondents were also dissatisfied with their relationship with their landlord and with the quality of their accommodation.

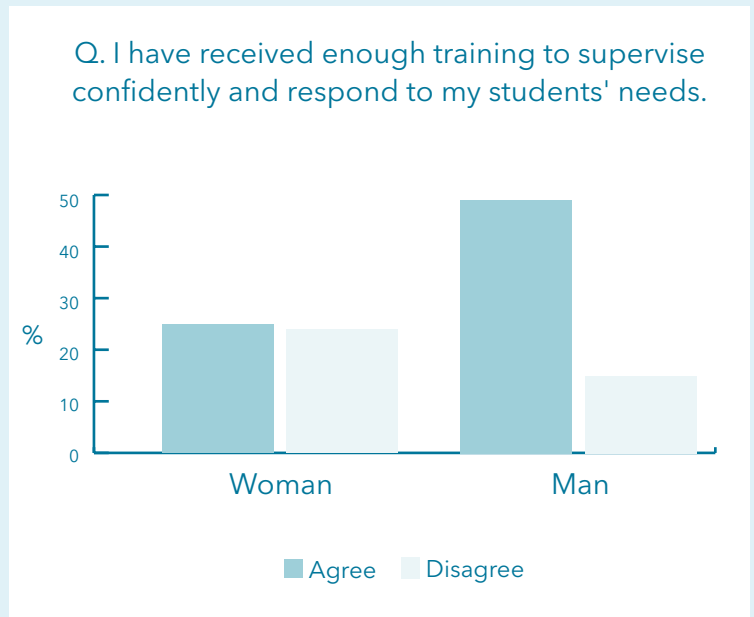
Such evidence demonstrates that accommodation issues are a serious issue for Cambridge students across the university, and that focus on college inequalities should be continued and expanded, while more support and focus also needs to be given to students renting in the private sector, a disproportionate number of whom are postgraduate students. Given that college actions play a significant role in driving up property prices in the city, there must be serious conversations about how colleges can work best for their members and other Cambridge students when managing their properties.

Research students teaching & supervision

Many postgraduate students undertake teaching responsibilities alongside their core research work. Our research shows identifiable differences in which postgraduate students are given teaching responsibilities and some dissatisfaction with the training and support available to postgraduate teaching staff.

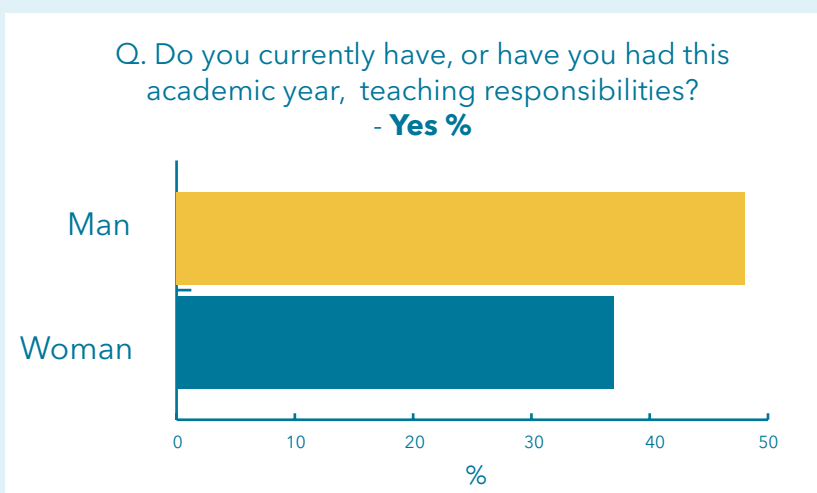
A quarter of all PGR students with teaching responsibilities disagreed that they had received enough training to supervise confidently and respond to student needs. In particular, those in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences were more likely to disagree than agree that their training had been adequate.

21% of all those with teaching responsibilities believe that they are not properly remunerated for their teaching responsibilities.



Student opinion on the support offered to PGR teaching staff varies across faculties. Net agreement that "I am fully supported in my teaching responsibilities by my department and/or college" sits at **22%** among students in STEM subjects, but only **3%** among those in the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, with almost as many disagreeing as agreeing.

Across all questions regarding teaching, including the opportunities available, STEM students were happier.



Not only are women less likely to have teaching responsibilities than men, they are also less likely to be satisfied with the teaching opportunities available to them.

While **59%** of male students are satisfied with this, only **44%** of female students feel the same.

Research Postgraduates

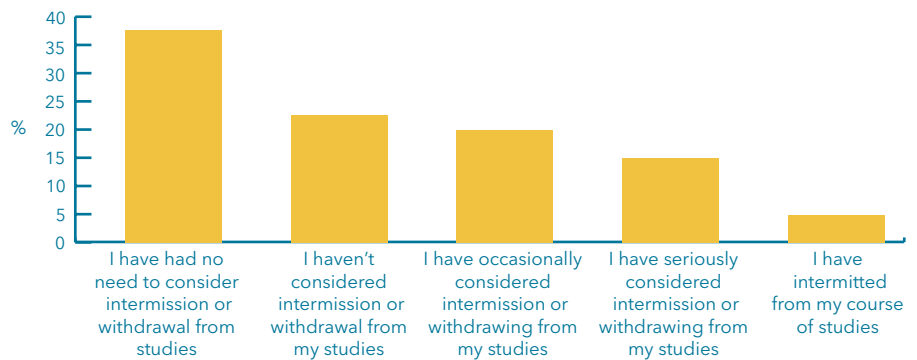
academic experience

Postgraduate Research students make up an increasing proportion of the university, with Cambridge's total postgraduate population now close to half of all students. Often functioning both as teaching staff and students, PGR students face a different range of issues to undergraduates, with their academic life heavily impacted by supervisor relationships and research resources.

Mental health issues among PGR students are common, with **55%** of PGR students stating that they have experienced problems with their mental health in the past year.

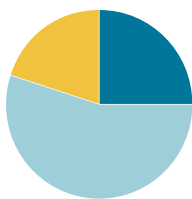
Despite often being perceived by undergraduates as "between" undergraduate students and academic staff, only **31%** of PGR students would feel comfortable seeking help from the university on personal issues.

Q. To what extent have you thought about intermission or leaving your course of study?
- PGR students



Q. Do you agree that your program provides you with adequate opportunities for professional and career development?

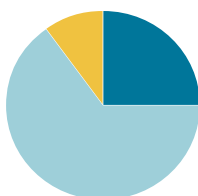
- AHSS students



Legend: Neutral (Dark Blue), Agree (Light Blue), Disagree (Yellow)

Q. Do you agree that your program provides you with adequate opportunities for professional and career development?

- STEM students

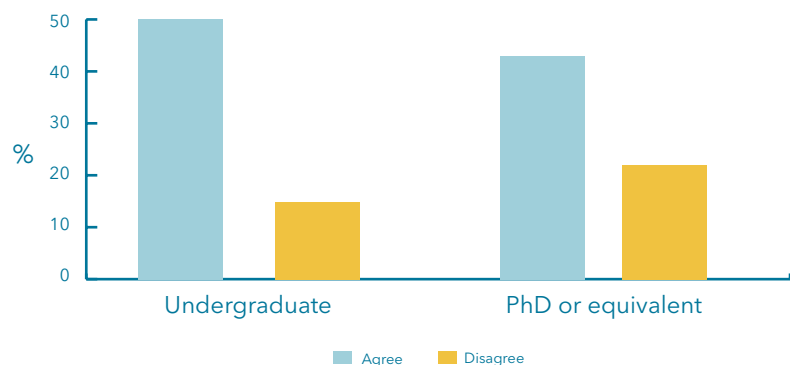


Legend: Neutral (Dark Blue), Agree (Light Blue), Disagree (Yellow)

PGR students display less faith in student representative structures and university governance in general.

Only **39%** of PGR students agreed that research students could enact change to their teaching and learning experience if they wished.

Q. How far do you agree that policy, an idea for change or an issue of concern, once agreed upon or reported, will be followed through by the relevant people - in your faculty



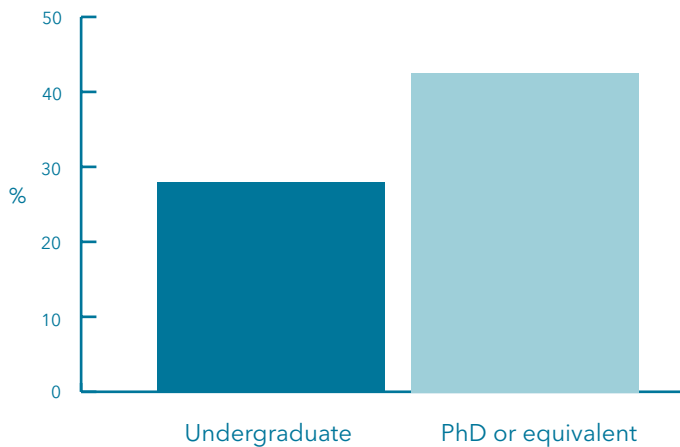
Research Postgraduates *academic experience*

PGR students were largely positive about their academic experience as researchers, particularly with regards to their supervisors. However, it is important to recognise that for the **13%** of students expressing dissatisfaction with their supervision, this may represent a major issue.

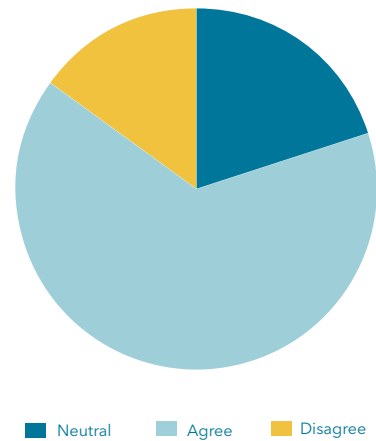
63% of PGR students agree that they are fully satisfied with their academic experience which is higher than the rate among undergraduate students.

While a majority (**62%**) of PGR students agreed that their research workload was manageable and healthy, this number fell as low as **48%** in Clinical Medicine and Engineering, with agreement lower across STEM subjects in general, where laboratory research may take up a greater work burden.

Q. How far has your financial situation impacted upon your experience as a student at university?
- % Negative impact



Q. How far do you agree with the following - All of the supervision I receive is consistently of a high quality



"The university makes PhD students who are not UK or EU pay absurd fees and will not offer them financial support of any kind once they are here. The university's standing is dependent partially on the research I spend most of my time here doing, yet I live hand to mouth and will spend the rest of my life repaying a massive loan."

Spotlight on: *mature students & student carers*

“ I believe there should be more support for undergraduate students in Mature colleges. I feel there could be more activities to engage this group of students. ”

The concerns of mature undergraduate students and students with caring responsibilities can often go unraised in Cambridge due to their relatively small numbers. In our survey we found a pattern of relative dissatisfaction amongst these students on almost every major issue, compared to the responses overall.

Respondents from both groups were twice as likely than respondents overall to have grown up in a household in receipt of low-income benefits, and were significantly more likely to state financial support as vital to their education. Yet it is clear that these students still face significant financial challenges during their education, with the proportion of student carers and mature undergraduate students stating that their financial situation has had a negative impact on their time at university, being respectively **16%** and **26%** higher than the average. By large margins, both of these groups are less likely to agree that the University is successful in ensuring that financial issues and limitations do not get in the way of students' academic success. A shocking **20%** of student carers said they had personally experienced harassment due to their socio-economic background.

But it is not just financial issues that are raised by these students. Both groups, and mature undergraduates in particular, are significantly less happy with their academic experience than other students. They are less likely to state that their workload and health are manageable, and less likely to be happy with the amount of contact time they receive per week (the latter seeming to emerge from concerns at mature-only colleges). **64%** of mature undergraduates disagree that Cambridge is a healthy and positive place to live and study.

Student carers and mature undergraduates are respectively **10%** and **20%** less likely to be satisfied with the welfare support offered by their college. These students also feel detached from the student communities in their college, with both groups less likely to know who their college representatives are, and less likely to believe their JCR or MCR represents them effectively.

Spotlight on: *access*

Widening access to Cambridge University, and ensuring a good experience for students from under-represented backgrounds who are admitted, are major issues for our university community. Evidence from this year's Big Cambridge Survey shows the importance of some work already being done, and the need for further work in specific areas.

On a positive note, the impact of the Cambridge Bursary scheme remains strong and positive, with **79%** of students who grew up in a household in receipt of low-income benefits stating that financial support had a large positive impact on their student experience, with **71%** of all bursary recipients echoing this.

However, **56%** of the former group nonetheless state that their financial situation has had an overall negative impact on their experience as a student at university, significantly higher than the overall average of **32%**. This group is also significantly more likely to be concerned about repaying future debts incurred from education costs (**71%**) and more likely to have found extra costs from their college to be problematic.



It's important to have a balanced intake of people from all financial and social backgrounds. But, making them feel welcome, safe and included when at Cambridge is probably the greatest issue.



In general, both students from households in receipt of low-income benefits and the larger group of students in receipt of the Cambridge Bursary agree that the university is successful in ensuring that financial issues and limitations do not get in the way of students' academic success, although they are more circumspect on this issue with regards to their colleges. While **85%** of students at St John's College agree that their college is successful in mitigating financial issues for students, less than half of the students at 14 colleges, including all mature colleges, felt the same. Of the standard-age colleges, only students at Murray Edwards net disagree that their college is successful at this.

Beyond statistics on finances, there are other issues worthy of note. This includes the fact that whole **73%** of students from households receiving low-income benefits believed they had experienced mental health issues at Cambridge, while only **59%** of all respondents said the same. Moreover, these students were significantly more likely to have considered intermission or leaving their course (**58%**) and that they had been affected by prejudiced attitudes based on their social or socio-economic background (**56%**). **52%** of these students disagreed that their rent was fair, compared to **40%** of all respondents.

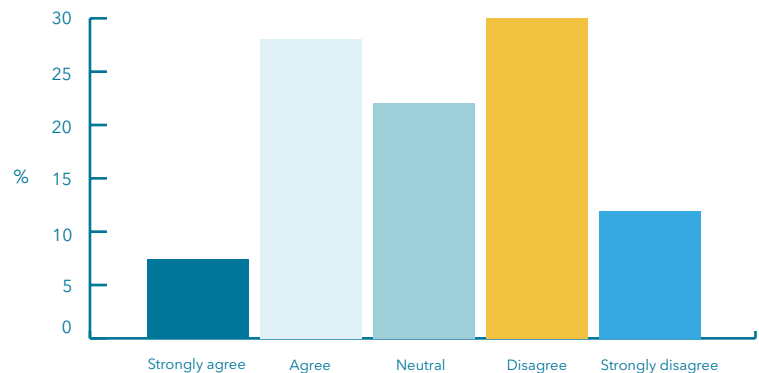
Health & Wellbeing

Students are divided on the question of whether Cambridge is a positive place to live and study.

The following groups are most likely to disagree:

- LGB students (**53%**),
- Students with mental health conditions (**62%**)
- Muslim students (**51%**)
- Jewish students (**53%**),
- Black students (**79%**)

Q. How far do you agree that Cambridge is a healthy and positive place to live and study?



TOP 3 COLLEGES FOR STUDENTS COMFORTABILITY SEEKING SUPPORT ON PERSONAL ISSUES:

1. Robinson College (**51%**)
2. Sidney Sussex College (**45%**)
3. Homerton College (**42%**)

TOP 3 COLLEGES FOR SATISFACTION IN TUTORIAL MEETING FREQUENCY:

1. Christ's College (**90%**)
2. Fitzwilliam College (**88%**)
3. Emmanuel College (**88%**)

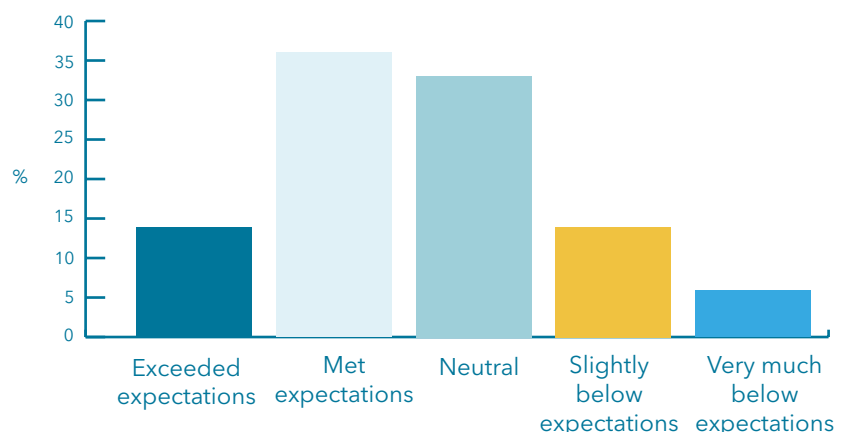
Only **33%** of survey respondents stated that they felt confident seeking help from the university on personal issues.

These figures are even lower for BME and non-EU international students, with only **20%** and **23%** feeling confident seeking help.

Students overwhelmingly agree (**89%**) that Cambridge is a safe place to live and study, with only **2%** disagreeing. However, **16%** of respondents report being affected by crime at some point during university.

However, some groups of students are more likely than others to believe more needs to be done by the university to keep students safe. **16%** of LGB students, **25%** of black students, **15%** of Hindu students and **23%** of Muslim students think the University should be doing more.

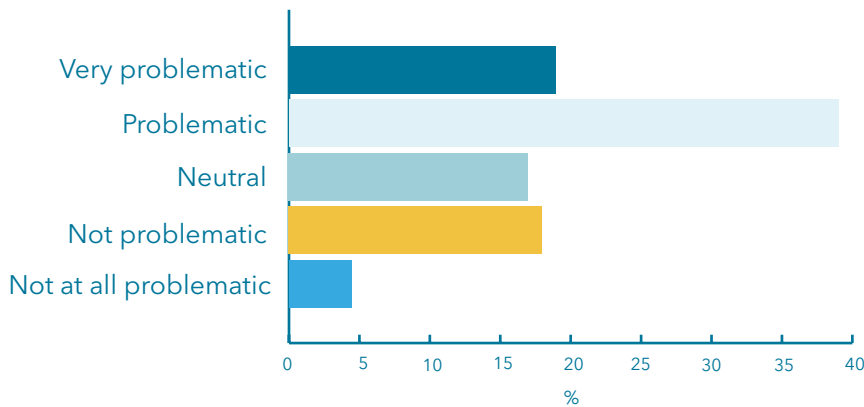
Q. Do you feel the following things have lived up to your expectations? - Pastoral support



Health & Wellbeing

Many students at Cambridge report negative impacts on their physical and mental health during their studies, with these effects being experienced more often and more severely by some groups than others.

Q. How far is dealing with stress and anxiety a problem for you in your student life?



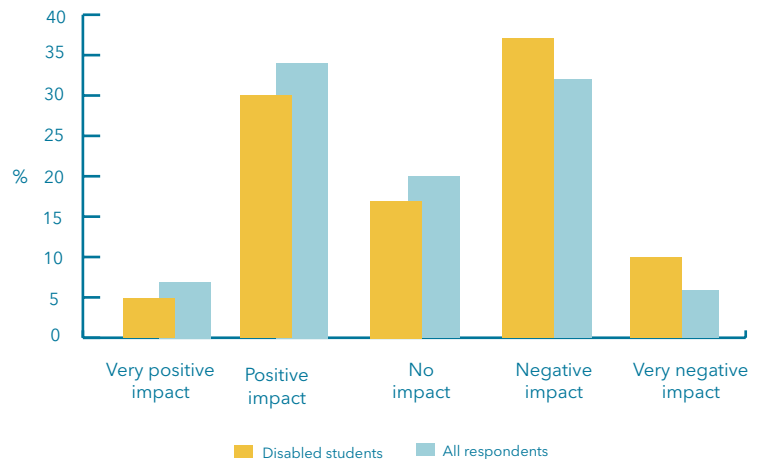
A shocking **59%** of students report having experienced problems with their mental health during their studies. This rises to **63%** among women, **69%** among disabled students, and **78%** among Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual students.

The work of JCR and MCR welfare officers in aiding the lives of their fellow students is widely recognised, with only **12%** disagreeing that they provide satisfactory support.

However, this number sits at **21%** among non-EU international students, who may face barriers to engaging with college life.

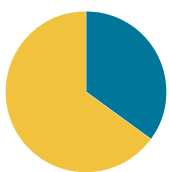
While only **21%** of survey respondents stated that their time at university has had a negative impact on their ability to study, figures were worse among disabled students, with **45%** of those with specific learning difficulties, **46%** of those with Autistic Spectrum disorder, and **41%** of those with mental health conditions citing a negative impact.

Q. How far has your student experience at Cambridge had an effect on: - Your general wellbeing



Q. To what extent have you thought about intermission or leaving your course of study?

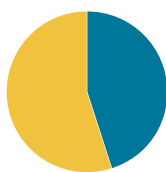
All respondents



Considered Not considered

Q. To what extent have you thought about intermission or leaving your course of study?

Disabled students



Considered Not considered



Spotlight on: *international students*

“ **International students have to pay 3 times the tuition fee of EU students. Visas expire soon after graduation and it is hard to apply. The difficulty of visa applications causes lower chances to find jobs in UK. Many funds and scholarships are EU only.** ”

International students, both those from EU and non-EU countries, face different issues during their time at Cambridge to students from the UK. Some of this is positive, such as the fact that international students are substantially more likely to find Cambridge to be a healthy and positive place to live and study and less likely to be concerned about paying back debts from their education. However, most of the differences point to challenges not faced by home students.

For instance, while **72%** of home students feel fully supported by their college teaching staff, this number falls to **62%** among EU students and to **48%** among students from outside the EU. Moreover, with a large proportion of international students being postgraduates, it is in responses from this group that we find some of the more concerning data. Amongst postgraduate students from the UK, net satisfaction on the availability of teaching opportunities stands at **44%**. This figure stands at **17%** amongst international postgraduates, suggesting that teaching opportunities may not be distributed fairly amongst home and international students.

Evidence also suggests that international students face financial challenges during their studies at higher rates than undergraduates. Unlike home students, international students from both inside and outside the EU are more likely than not to say that their financial situation has had a negative impact on their student experience, while also being notably less likely to agree that their educational experience is good value for money. Students from the EU are also much less likely to agree that their university rent is fair, with only **28%** saying so, compared **46%** of home students. Meanwhile, international students living out of college are also far less likely to be satisfied at the ease of finding private accommodation in Cambridge.

Finally, and perhaps most concerning, there is significant reporting of racist and xenophobic attitudes by international students. For instance, **36%** of students from outside the EU report being affected by prejudiced attitudes based on race or ethnicity, while **30%** of EU students and **38%** of non-EU students report being affected by prejudiced attitudes based on nationality. Most alarming of all: **18%** of non-EU international students report experiencing racial- and nationality-based harassment, with **10%** of EU students reporting nationality-based harassment.

Spotlight on: *disabled students*

Disabled students face many challenges in their student experience that other students do not. For the purposes of presenting our results, the grouping of disabled students refers to those respondents who selected one or more disabilities from a list provided. Detailed breakdown of responses by condition is mostly not reliable due to low overall numbers, except from those reporting a specific learning difficulty or mental health condition.

There are notable differences in experience of workload and course structure for disabled undergraduates, with **44%** of disabled students disagreeing that their workload is manageable and healthy; a number that falls to **27%** amongst non-disabled students. Similarly, only **40%** of disabled undergraduates agree that deadlines on their course are structured in a way that allows them to work effectively, compared to **55%** of their non-disabled peers. Only **46%** of disabled undergraduates agreed that they were fully satisfied with their teaching and learning experience at Cambridge, including only **40%** of those with a mental health condition. In contrast, **61%** of non-disabled students felt the same way.



The inflexibility of deadlines is hard, but the university's unwillingness to take extenuating circumstances into account actively harms disabled students.



These numbers are worse still for disabled postgraduate students, with only **48%** fully satisfied with their teaching and learning experience, compared to **71%** of non-disabled postgraduate students. The difference between those strongly agreeing that they were fully satisfied (**8%** and **21%** respectively) also demonstrates the large difference in experience for disabled students. Disabled postgraduate students are also disproportionately likely to disagree that they have access to all the resources required to complete their research and vastly less likely to find their research workload manageable and healthy.

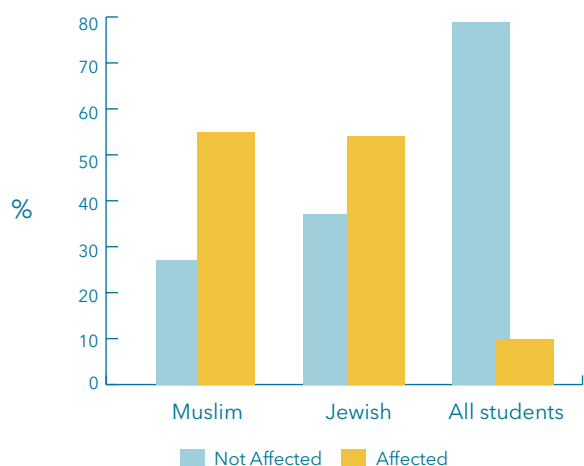
Beyond purely academic issues, disabled students also report experiencing high levels of prejudice, with **45%** saying they have experienced prejudiced attitudes based on their health, compared to only **8%** of non-disabled students saying the same. As many as **18%** report experiencing harassment based on health issues.

Disabled students are also more likely to say that life at Cambridge has had a negative effect on their physical and mental health, general wellbeing, confidence and ability to study, with **65%** of disabled students having considered intermission of leaving their course of study, while only **28%** of non-disabled students have considered this.

Inequality at cambridge

A number of different groups of students report experiencing prejudice and harassment at Cambridge at higher rates than other students. BME students and women in particular report prejudice and harassment during their studies. International, disabled and LGBT+ students, as well as those from certain religious groups, also face these problems at high numbers.

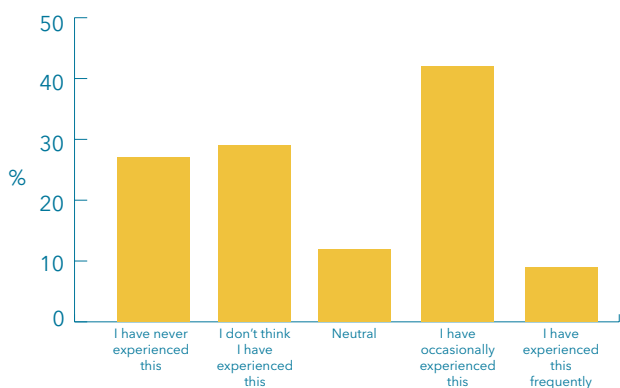
Q. How far have you been affected by prejudiced attitudes towards the following at Cambridge: Religion



Muslim and Jewish students also experienced religious harassment at higher rates than other students with **24%** and **35%** respectively having experience religious harassment in their time at university.

EU and Overseas students also report prejudice based on nationalities, with **30%** and **38%** respectively having experienced this, including **10%** and **18%** of each group having been harassed because of their nationality.

Q. How far have you been affected by prejudiced attitudes towards race or ethnicity at Cambridge: BME students



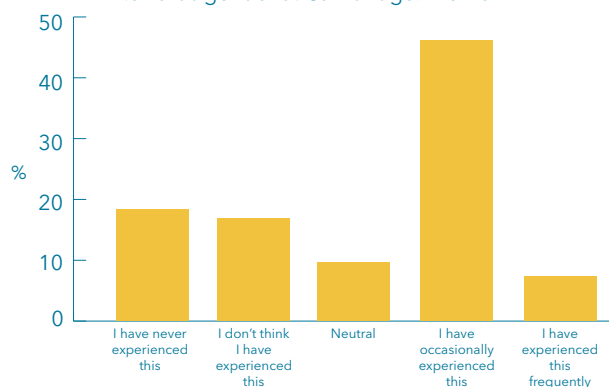
BME students at Cambridge report high rates of prejudice at University, with over **40%** of South Asian, South East Asian, Arab and Mixed Race students reporting experiencing prejudiced racial attitudes, with **83%** of black students stating the same.

International BME students reported experiencing racial prejudice at particularly high rates, with **26%** of BME international students having been personally harassed based on their race.

Students have an overall negative view of how equal their university is, with only **35%** of all respondents agreeing that Cambridge is free from prejudice as a place to live and study. This falls to:

- **28% among women**
- **31% among lesbian, gay and bisexual students**
- **29% among disabled students**
- **4% among black students**

Q. How far have you been affected by prejudiced attitudes towards gender at Cambridge: Women

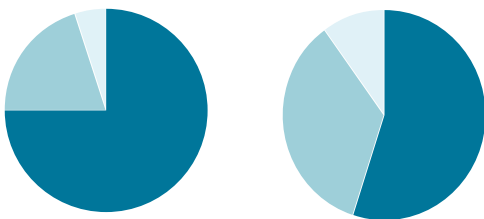


Inequality at cambridge

Q. Do you believe you have experienced issues with your mental health in the past year regardless of whether you have been formally diagnosed?

students from low income families

Other



■ Yes ■ No ■ Unsure

According to our survey results, **58%** of students whose family received low income benefits have considered intermitting or withdrawing from their course of study, while only **38%** of their peers have considered this.

45% of students whose family received low income benefits stated that their social background has had a negative impact upon their experience of university.

Similarly, **43%** of students who attended a state comprehensive school said that their educational background had impacted negatively on their time at university.

% of those experiencing prejudiced attitudes based on social or socio-economic background by 'home' region



45% of Postgraduate Research students who attended state comprehensive schools agreed that they were happy with the amount of teaching responsibility...

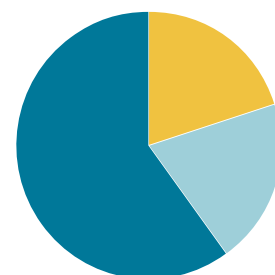
Compared to **55%** of those who attended private schools and **57%** of those who attended state grammars.

Only **29%** of PGR students from state comprehensives feel fully supported in their teaching responsibilities...

Compared to **40%** of those who attended private schools.

Q. How far has your financial situation impacted your experience as a student at university?

All students from families in receipt of low income benefits



■ Negative ■ Positive ■ No impact

Spotlight on: *gender*

“ I don't think the university is doing enough at senior levels to deal with racism and sexism especially in the public-schooled undergrad community. ”

Female students experience Cambridge differently to their male counterparts, from facing sexist prejudice to holding different attitudes about the student voice within the university.

On matters of finance for example, only **35%** of male students in the university report being worried about repaying future debts incurred from education costs. This number rises to **53%** among female students, with only **16%** of women respondents saying that they have “no concerns” about their student debts. Perhaps related to this is the fact that while **66%** of male students are confident that they will find paid employment at an appropriate salary after graduation, only **46%** of female students feeling the same way.

There are large disparities between the welfare outcomes for men and women in their time at Cambridge. **65%** of female students report that stress and anxiety is a problem for them, compared to **43%** of male students. Furthermore, while the reported net impact of student experience on male students' mental health is shocking at **-20%**, this is still better than the **-40%** statistic for female students. While male students are more likely than not to agree that Cambridge is a healthy and positive place to live and study, the same cannot be said for women at Cambridge, with only **33%** agreement from female respondents.

The survey displays appalling statistics on the experiences of prejudicial attitudes by female students at Cambridge, **54%** of whom say that they have been affected by prejudiced attitudes based on gender, with **32%** stating that they have experience direct harassment based on their gender. While response rates from non-binary and transgender students are of limited statistical significance, it is worthy of note that **61%** and **59%** of these groups respectively report experiencing direct harassment because of their gender identity; a powerful indictment of transphobia in Cambridge.

One issue that women at Cambridge are more positive about is central student representation. **67%** of women respondents agreed that activism and volunteering are important to student life, much higher than the **43%** of men agreeing to the same statement. Moreover, while net confidence in CUSU's representation of students sits at a lowly **-13%** among male students, the number is a much better **23%** among female students.

Spotlight on: *sexuality*

The results of the survey show clear differences in the experiences of Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual (LGB) students compared to heterosexual students. LGB students were notably more likely to have come from a family in receipt of low-income benefits than their heterosexual counterparts (**16%** v **7%**), and this is reflected in greater financial concerns expressed by these students. For instance, while **43%** of heterosexual students stated that they were worried about repaying future debts, while **58%** of LGB students are worried about this.

The differences are wider on health issues. While **24%** of heterosexual students say that their experience Cambridge has had a negative impact on their health, **46%** of LGB students feel the same way. Similarly, there is a gap between the rates at which heterosexual and LGB students report having experienced mental health issues during their time at university (**51%** v **78%**). **52%** of LGB students report having considered intermission or withdrawing from their course, compared to **35%** of heterosexual students, and only **26%** of LGB students agree that Cambridge is a healthy and positive place to live and study.

“**Socially, it feels imperative to defend your identity at all times in Cambridge as there is such an implicit bias...it can be upsetting when academic staff completely dismiss LGBT narratives.**”

Also of note is that while only **9%** of heterosexual students believe more needs to be done to improve student safety in Cambridge, this number sits at **16%** for LGB students, including a high of **20%** among lesbian students.

43% of LGB students, including **60%** of lesbian students, report having been affected by prejudicial attitudes based on sexual orientation. Worse still, **28%** of LGB students, including **44%** of lesbian students, report having personally experienced harassment targeted at them because of their sexuality. While net agreement that Cambridge is free from prejudice as a place to live and study sits at **-4%** among heterosexual students, this falls to **-17%** for LGB students.

Spotlight on: race & ethnicity

Race is one of the biggest issues facing Cambridge, in terms of staff and their treatment in their work (and the lack of support they can receive) and in terms of student access, and even the construction of knowledge and courses in the institution. Cambridge will never be able to progress as a leading institution of the future unless it can begin to seriously dismantle some of these issues

Black and Minority Ethnic students face many difficulties in their time at university that are not experienced by their white counterparts. For instance, **52%** of BME students report experiencing racially prejudiced attitudes during their time as students, with **26%** having experienced direct racial harassment. Unsurprisingly then, net agreement that Cambridge is free from prejudice as a place to live and study sits at **-21%** among BME students, notably lower than among white students (**-8%**). Further evidence of prejudicial attitudes can be seen by the fact that while only **21%** of white students said that their social background had had a negative impact on their experience at Cambridge, **32%** of BME students said the same, including **34%** of BME students from the UK.

BME students also report different experiences of their academic life at Cambridge. For example, while **63%** of white students agree that their learning needs have been accommodated by teaching staff, only **51%** of BME students feel the same way. Moreover, while net agreement that degree workload is "manageable and healthy" sits at **10%** amongst white students, this falls to **-4%** among BME students, with BME students from the UK particularly likely to disagree at **-16%**.

BME students are also less likely to feel comfortable seeking help from the university. On educational issues, only **49%** of BME students, including **44%** of BME home students, feel comfortable seeking help, compared to **59%** of white students. Worse still are the statistics on confidence seeking help from the university on personal issues, where **37%** of white students feel comfortable, compared to **20%** of BME students, including **18%** of BME home students.

In particular, it is alarming to note just how much less positive BME students from the UK are about the experience of living and studying in Cambridge. Net agreement that Cambridge is free from prejudice sits at **-8%** amongst white students, but **-21%** among BME home students. Meanwhile, net agreement that Cambridge is a healthy and positive place to live and study sits at **-5%** among white students and **-21%** among BME home students.

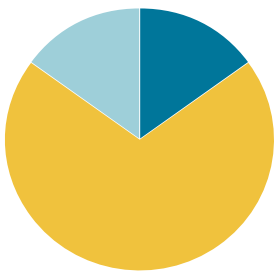
JCR / MCRs

JCRs and MCRs play a vital role in student life at Cambridge, functioning as representative organisations in college-level decision-making, and as core parts of social life for many students. Our research shows that the vast majority of students view their JCR/MCR positively, but the level of this can vary amongst different groups of students.

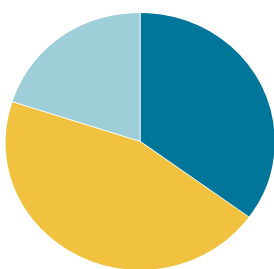
24% of respondents stated that they are involved in volunteering on their College Committee. The level sits at **26%** among undergraduates and **18%** among postgraduates.

I am confident that my JCR or MCR (or equivalent) represents me and enacts change on my behalf within my College:

White Students



Black Students



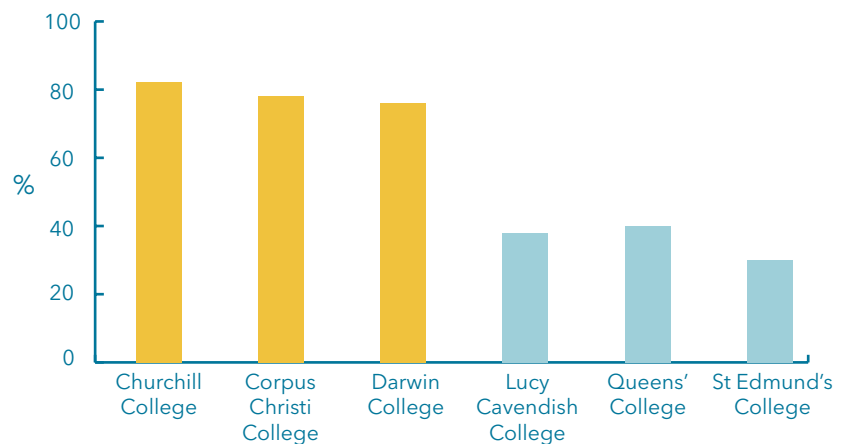
■ Neutral ■ Agree ■ Disagree

Only **13%** of all students disagree that their JCR or MCR represents them and enacts change on their behalf.

TOP 3 COLLEGES IN AGREEMENT:

Newnham College - **85%**
 Corpus Christi College - **84%**
 St Catharine's College - **78%**

An idea for change or an issue of concern, once agreed upon or reported, will be followed through by the relevant people in your college.
 Top 3 and Bottom 3 - % agreement

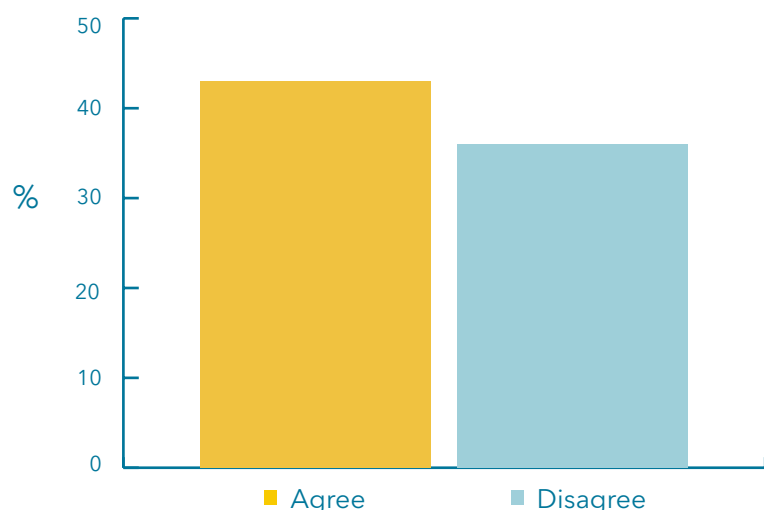


While students at all colleges are more likely than not to agree that they are well represented by J/MCR committees, the large gaps above demonstrate the wide range of student opinion on whether colleges take commitments made to students and student representatives seriously.

There is net agreement at all but one college (Queens') that student views are represented well in colleges. The highest agreement is at:

- **Clare Hall - 86%**
- **King's College - 85%**
- **Churchill College - 81%**

Q. How far do you agree that your Common Room (JCR, MCR or equivalent) is...? - An integral part of your student life



Cambridge-wide student activism

Involvement in student societies, volunteering and campaigning is an important part of student life at Cambridge. We asked students about their involvement in societies, in their college common rooms, and about how well they felt represented on key student issues. There are marked improvements in how students view CUSU, but there is still work to be done; while it is also necessary to note disparities in access to extra-curricular activities.

We asked "What do you think is the most important ethical issue facing the University of Cambridge?"

TOP 5 THEMES:

Fossil Fuel Divestment.....	33.2%
Access to Cambridge.....	17.5%
General Environment.....	8.1%
Racism.....	3.8%
Inequality at university.....	3.6%

59% of students think that volunteering and activism is an important part of student life.

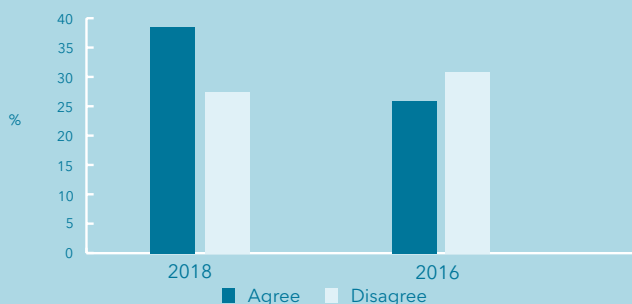
33% of students are involved in volunteering or campaigning in the university.

31% of students are involved outside the university.

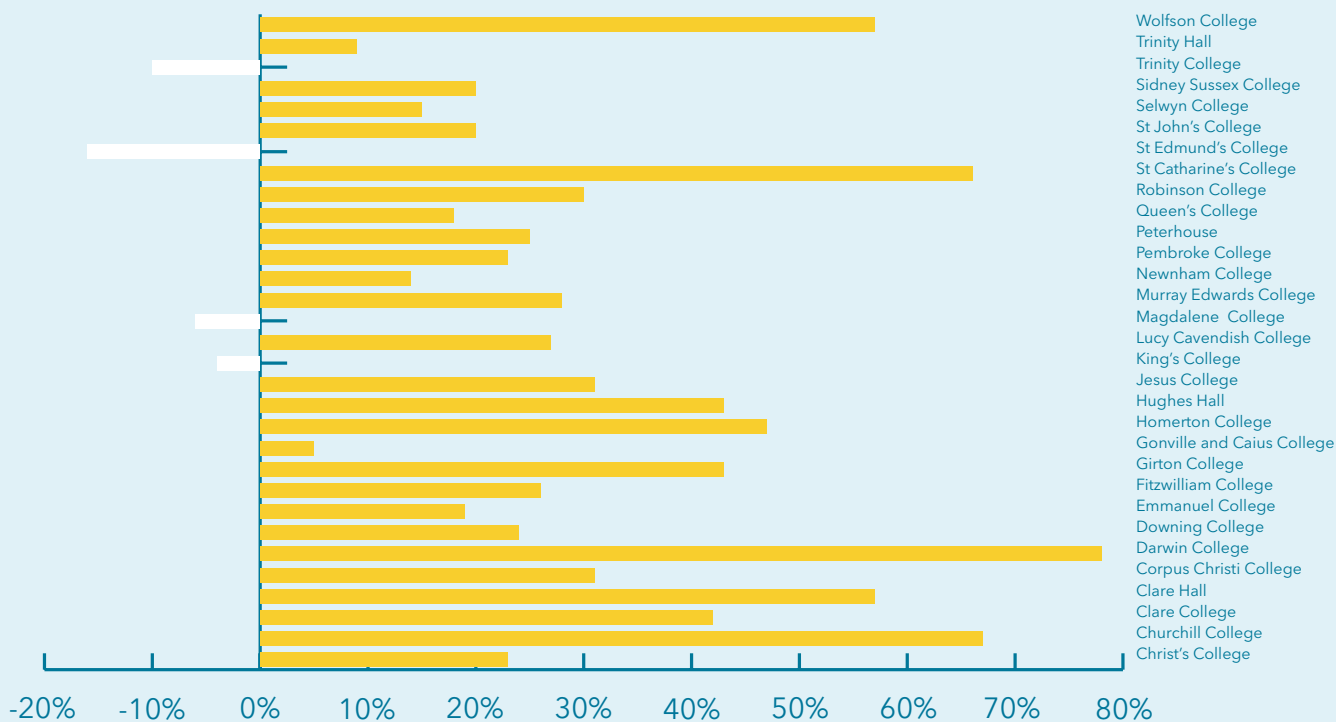
81% of Undergraduates engage in club and/or society activity more than weekly, compared to **53%** of Masters students, and **59%** of PhD students.

The most important issue is the terrible wages, hours and treatment of all non academic staff. It's shameful that they're treated so badly when their job is to help give us a good environment within which to work.

I am confident that CUSU represents me and enacts change on my behalf



Q. How confident are you that: Your college is committed to acting in an ethical and environmentally friendly way (net agreement %)



Thank you

& what's next

THANKS FOR READING!

It's our hope that this report can let you know what the biggest issues affecting life at Cambridge University are, and that it has been able to shine a light on some aspects of the Cambridge experience that you may not be familiar with.

But the report is only one part of why we run the Big Cambridge Survey, and we want to make sure that the results we've collected help to energise and inform work to change our university community for the better. If any of the information in this report has made you want to get involved, then we want to hear about it.

If your college committee, student group or just group of friends want support to get involved with campaigning activity, talk to us on **sabbs@cusu.cam.ac.uk**. You can find out lots of information about how to get involved with CUSU's work on our website at **www.cusu.co.uk**

If you would like the entire data set for your college or subject, or a breakdown of the data on a particular question or issue, please get in touch with **membership@cusu.cam.ac.uk** and we'll consider your request and provide what we can.

Finally, our **2019 survey is now open!** In order to make sure we continue to have a strong dataset on the issues that matter to students, fill in our survey at **www.surveymonkey.com/r/BigCamSurvey2019** and share to your friends as well!



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