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# Staff survey: June 2022

## Introduction & Background

### Background

Two short Covid-19 impact follow-up surveys were developed for psychology students and staff working within UK universities, with the intention of providing follow-up findings from a larger survey carried out in 2020<sup>1</sup>. These two online follow-up surveys aimed to explore and update on key themes within the context of the Covid-19 pandemic, including: satisfaction with how teaching and learning are being delivered now, how manageable workload is and whether wellbeing needs are being met by universities.

### Sample

The surveys were sent to (i) psychology students (at both undergraduate and postgraduate level), and (ii) academic staff working in psychology departments within UK universities. Calls for respondents were widely circulated through BPS social media channels, BPS Boards and Committees (Research Board, the Education and Training Board and the Partnership & Accreditation Committee) and via direct emails to Heads of Departments and accredited programme leads, who were asked to disseminate the online survey links to their staff and students. In 2019/20 there were 90,680 students enrolled on an undergraduate Psychology degree<sup>2</sup> and 28,395 undertaking postgraduate study or research. There were 8,225 staff in Psychology and Behavioural Sciences<sup>3</sup>.

### Method

Both surveys were conducted via open online links. This method enabled respondents to easily share the survey links with other eligible respondents and secure as many survey responses as possible, as well as for consistency with the method used for the original survey undertaken in 2020. Fieldwork for both surveys commenced on 18th November 2021 and closed on 30th November 2021. These dates were chosen to avoid requesting people to respond during strike action taking place between 1st and 3rd December 2021. 1,127 responses were received for the student follow-up survey and 298 responses were received for the staff follow-up survey.

### Data Analysis

Data from the surveys were cleaned, coded and analysed with a series of non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis) performed in SPSS. The significant findings are presented in this report. Also included are updates on significant findings from the original survey carried out in 2020. For the purposes of this report the term 'significant' is used to indicate that there is a difference between groups and/or over time, and that there is a less than 5% probability of obtaining these results due to chance. Comparisons between some groups, such as between under-graduate and post-graduate students, were not significantly different – because of this, these comparisons are not outlined in this report.

### Limitations

Where the data has been broken down by some sub-groups, such as region, there is reduced statistical power due to small sample sizes; this should be kept in mind when interpreting results. The sampling approach also limits how representative the survey findings are of psychology students/staff in UK universities overall. For example, university staff were encouraged to disseminate the survey to their students and how proactive they were in doing this likely varied by institution. Finally for reasons of practicality, the survey used an 'open' online approach that anyone with the online link could access, meaning it was technically possible (though probably unlikely) for participants to complete the survey multiple times or for participants outside of the target population (i.e. people other than psychology students/staff) to complete the survey.

<sup>1</sup> The British Psychological Society: The impact of Covid-19 on students, staff and Departments of Psychology in UK Universities (2020). <https://www.bps.org.uk/sites/www.bps.org.uk/files/Policy/Policy%20-%20Files/Covid-19%20survey%20report%20-%20impact%20on%20UK%20universities.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). (n.d.) Who's studying in HE. Retrieved 5 April 2022 from <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/students/whos-in-he>

<sup>3</sup> Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA). (n.d.) What areas do they work in. Retrieved 5 April 2022 from <https://www.hesa.ac.uk/data-and-analysis/staff/areas>

## Staff Research

### Summary

When asked 'to what extent do you agree with the following: I have enough time to undertake research', 79% (n=234) of staff strongly disagreed or disagreed that they had enough time to undertake research, 14% (n=42) strongly agreed or agreed, and 7% (n=22) neither agreed nor disagreed.

### Staff with caring responsibilities

Results from the survey carried out in 2020 found that staff with caring responsibilities felt they had significantly less time to engage in research related activities. This was also found in the 2021 follow-up survey, where staff with caring responsibilities (n=140) reported they were significantly less likely to have enough time to undertake research compared with staff without caring responsibilities (n=151). See Figure 1.

### Staff working in Scotland, West Midlands and London area

Staff working in Scotland (n=24), West Midlands (n=34), and London/home counties (n=79) reported that they were significantly less likely to have enough time to undertake research compared with staff working elsewhere in the UK\*. See Figure 2.

### Female staff

Results from the survey carried out in 2020 found that compared to other gender groups, female staff reported a significant decline in time to carry out research. However, in the 2021 follow-up survey no differences were found between females (n=192) and other gender groups (n=106).

Figure 1: Research by Caring Responsibilities

● 1. Strongly Disagree / Disagree ● 2. Neither agree nor disagree ● 3. Strongly Agree / Agree

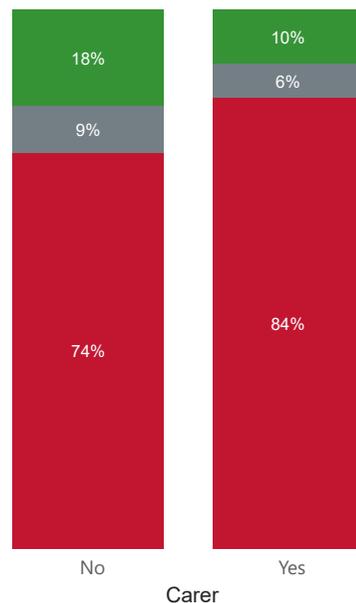
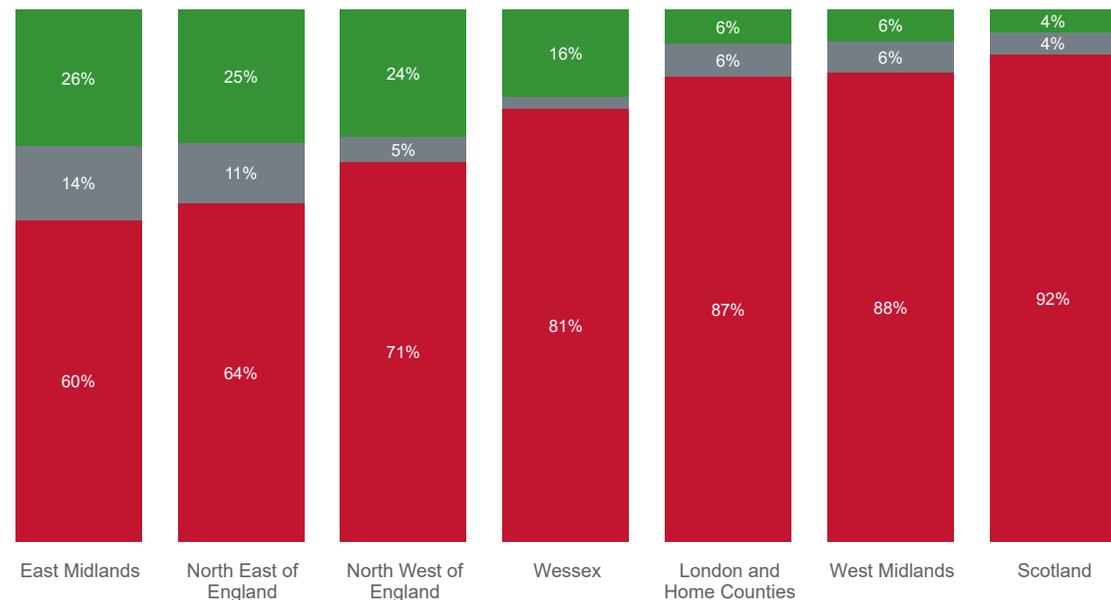


Figure 2: Research by BPS Branch

● 1. Strongly Disagree / Disagree ● 2. Neither agree nor disagree ● 3. Strongly Agree / Agree



\*There were too few respondents from BPS Branches East of England (n=2), Northern Ireland (n=1), South West of England (n=4), Welsh (n=3), and Northern Ireland (n=3) to include them in the analysis

## Staff Wellbeing

### Summary

When asked 'over the last 12 months how much do you think your wellbeing needs have been met by your university?', 10% (n=30) of staff agreed that their wellbeing needs had been met to a great extent by their university, 41% (n=123) agreed that their needs had somewhat been met, 35% (n=104) thought that their needs had been met very little and 13% (n=40) said that their wellbeing needs had not been met at all by their university.

### Staff reporting a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition

Staff reporting a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition (n=64) were significantly less likely to agree that their wellbeing needs had been met by their university, compared with staff who did not report this (n=223). See Figure 3.

### Staff working in the East Midlands

Staff working in the East Midlands (n=43) agreed significantly more that their wellbeing needs had been met by their university compared with staff working elsewhere in the UK\*. See Figure 4.

### Staff with caring responsibilities

Results from the survey carried out in 2020 found that staff with caring responsibilities had significantly lower wellbeing than staff without caring responsibilities. However, this was not found in the 2021 follow-up survey, where no differences were found between staff with (n=140) and without caring responsibilities (n=151).

Figure 3: Staff Wellbeing by Disability

● 1. Not at All ● 2. Very Little ● 3. Somewhat ● 4. To a Great Extent

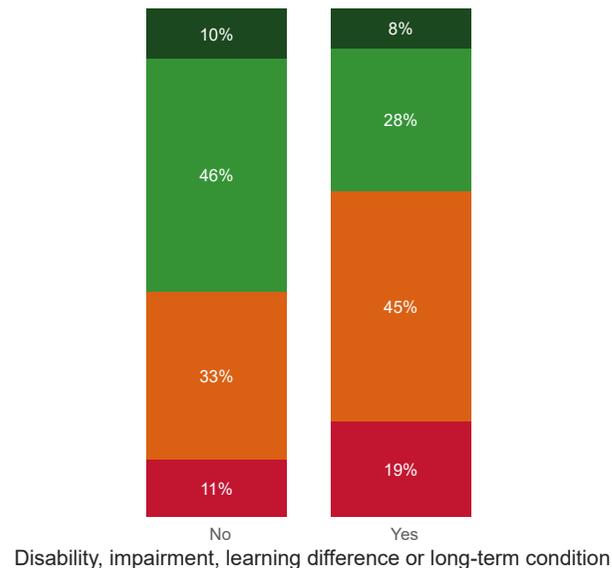
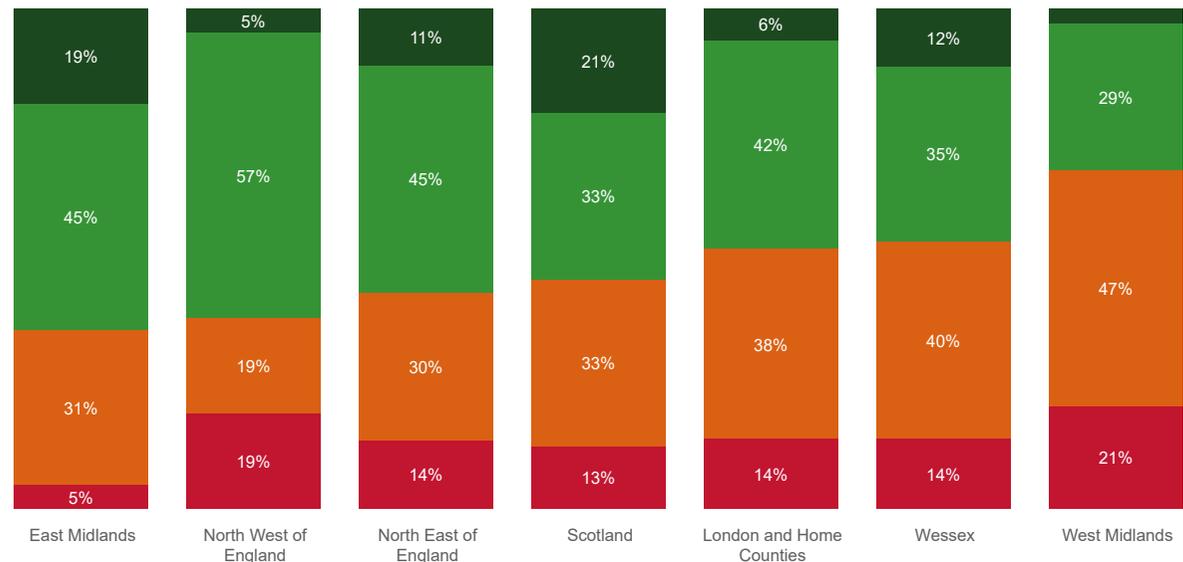


Figure 4: Staff Wellbeing by BPS Branch

● 1. Not at All ● 2. Very Little ● 3. Somewhat ● 4. To a Great Extent



\*There were too few respondents from BPS Branches East of England (n=2), Northern Ireland (n=1), South West of England (n=4), Welsh (n=3), and Northern Ireland (n=3) to include them in the analysis

## Staff Workload

### Summary

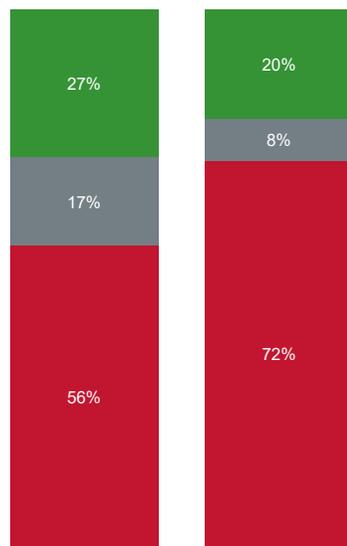
When asked 'to what extent do you agree with the following: my workload is manageable', 60% (n=179) of staff strongly disagreed or disagreed that their workload was manageable, 26% (n=76) strongly agreed or agreed and 14% (n=43) neither agreed nor disagreed.

### Staff reporting a disability impairment, learning difference or long-term condition

Staff who reported a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition (n=64) reported that they were significantly less likely to be able to manage their workload compared with staff who did not report these (n=223). See Figure 5.

Figure 5: Workload by Disability

● 1. Strongly Disagree / Disagree ● 2. Neither agree nor disagree ● 3. Strongly Agree / ...



Disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition

### Staff working in the East Midlands

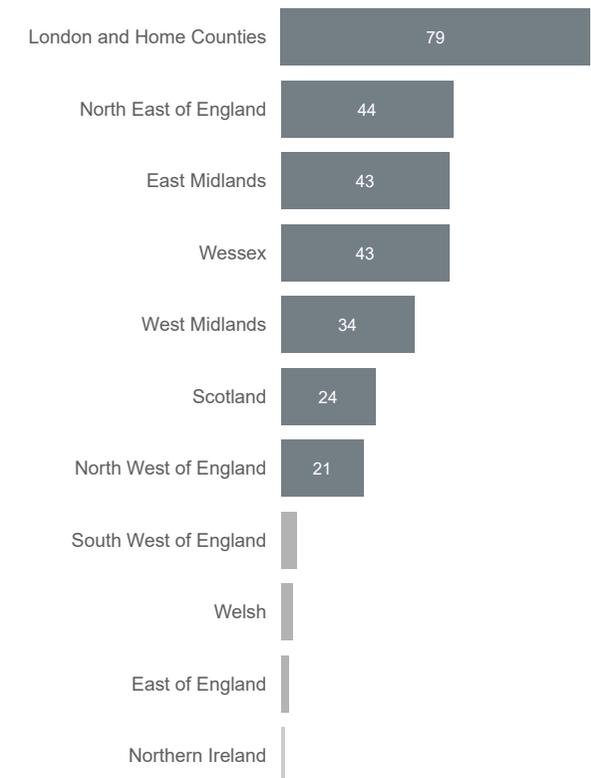
Staff working in the East Midlands (n=43) agreed significantly more that they were able to manage their workload compared with staff working elsewhere in the UK\*. See Figures 6 & 7.

Figure 6: Workload by BPS Branch

● 1. Strongly Disagree / Disagree ● 2. Neither agree nor disagree ● 3. Strongly Agree / ...



Figure 7: Number of respondents by BPS Branch



\*There were too few respondents from BPS Branches East of England (n=2), Northern Ireland (n=1), South West of England (n=4), Welsh (n=3), and Northern Ireland (n=3) to include them in the analysis



## Main Findings and Recommendations - Staff

### Summary

Overall, staff reported that their workload remained difficult to manage, with only a quarter of staff agreeing that their workload was manageable. This was also found in the survey carried out in 2020. Staff continue to report that they do not have enough time to undertake research, with only one in seven reporting that they had enough time to undertake research. In terms of staff wellbeing, only half (51%) of staff that responded agreed that their wellbeing needs had been met by their university over the last 12 months.

### Staff Research

- Only 14% of staff reported that they had enough time to undertake research.
- Staff with caring responsibilities were significantly less likely to have enough time to undertake research compared with staff without caring responsibilities. This was also found in results from the 2020 survey.
- Staff working in Scotland, the West Midlands and London/home counties were significantly less likely to have enough time to undertake research compared with staff working elsewhere in the UK.

**Recommendations:** Universities should investigate ways to allow staff more time to undertake research, which can also be linked to finding ways to improve staff workload. Initiatives to help support staff with caring responsibilities to undertake more research should be explored.

### Staff Wellbeing

- Just over half (51%) of staff agreed that their wellbeing needs had been met by their university (over the last 12 months).
- Staff reporting a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition were significantly less likely to agree that their wellbeing needs had been met by their university, compared with staff who did not report a disability.
- Staff in the East Midlands were more likely to agree that their wellbeing needs had been met by their university compared with staff working elsewhere in the UK.

**Recommendations:** Universities should investigate how they could better support staff wellbeing, especially for staff with a disability. Universities in the East Midlands may have effective strategies in place for supporting staff wellbeing they could share with other institutions across the UK.

### Staff Workload

- The majority (60%) of staff strongly disagreed or disagreed that their workload was manageable.
- Staff reporting a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition were significantly less likely to be able to manage their workload compared with staff who did not report a disability.
- Staff in the East Midlands were more likely to agree they can manage their workload than staff in other regions.

**Recommendations:** Universities should investigate how to improve staff workload, especially for staff with a disability. Universities in the East Midlands may have effective strategies in place for managing staff workload they could share with other institutions across the UK.



## Comparisons between staff and student findings

While students were more satisfied than in 2020 with how teaching was being delivered as lockdown restrictions were eased, staff continued to report that their workload was difficult to manage. This may suggest that a return to face-to-face provision of teaching, while beneficial for students, has not sufficiently eased staff workload. Workload was difficult to manage for both staff and students who have a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition. Regarding wellbeing, students were more likely than staff to feel as though their wellbeing needs are being met by their university.

## What has the BPS been doing to support staff?

### Guidance on course delivery

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, staff had to change their model of course delivery from face-to-face to online. We know from this survey that at the time of fieldwork (November 2021), a significant proportion of lectures were still being delivered online, particularly in Scotland where restrictions were stricter and lasted for longer. The BPS has provided timely and clear guidance to departments on flexible course delivery and moving courses online, or to blended (face to face and online) delivery. This work continued as the situation became clearer and lockdown measures were reduced. In 2021, the BPS produced additional guidelines for programmes with online and distance learning delivery models. This guidance will now be regularly updated as further knowledge and insight into best practice is gathered. Support, advice and guidance were provided to ensure that where in-person assessments were affected, alternative arrangement could be made which satisfied the need to evidence competency, without disadvantaging learners or programmes.

### Guidance on moving research online

For staff conducting research, the BPS Research Board established an online hub for links to resources for moving research online, best practice guidance, templates for consent forms and participant information, and ethics guidance for conducting research with human participants during Covid-19<sup>1</sup>. The Guidelines for Conducting Internet Mediated Research were also revised<sup>2</sup>. These resources are intended to support staff in psychology departments who (as this research has demonstrated) may have little time to conduct research.

### Guidance and support on more diverse course material

The student survey found that certain student groups (those with a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition and non-binary students) felt less able to manage their workload. Improving how inclusive the Psychology curriculum is may help to remedy this. The BPS training committees have been tasked at diversifying the curriculum, ensuring there is a move to a more inclusive and culturally diverse curriculum. This is also a major part of the work the BPS is contributing to when updating the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Subject Benchmark Statement. The QAA Benchmark Statement provides a reference point against which outcomes can be measured and refers to a particular specification of programme characteristics and indicative standards. Through this work the BPS will be able to further enhance our own accreditation standards to ensure that equality, diversity and inclusion forms a cross cutting consideration when designing curriculum and developing teaching, learning and assessment strategies which can then be monitored via the accreditation process.

<sup>1</sup> British Psychological Society. Retrieved 25th May 2022 from <https://www.bps.org.uk/coronavirus-resources/research-resources>

<sup>2</sup> British Psychological Society. (2021). *Ethics Guidelines for Internet-mediated Research*. <https://www.bps.org.uk/news-and-policy/ethics-guidelines-internet-mediated-research>