the british
psychological society
promoting excellence in psychology

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[1]. 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[2] and 28,395 undertaking postgraduate study or research. There were 8,225 staff in Psychology and Behavioural Sciences[3].

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.

---

[1] 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

[2] 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

[3] 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

Satisfaction with Teaching and Learning

Summary
When asked **'to what extent do you agree with the following: I am satisfied with how teaching and learning is being delivered on my course'**, 66% (n=740) of students strongly agreed or agreed that they were satisfied with how teaching was being delivered on their course. 12% (n=134) neither agreed nor disagreed and 22% (n=253) strongly disagreed or disagreed. Students were most satisfied when teaching and learning were delivered face to face or a combination of face to face and online. See Figure 1.

International students
Findings from the survey carried out in 2020 showed that international students were significantly more impacted by the change of delivery format in teaching compared with non-international students. In the 2021 follow-up survey however, no differences were found in the satisfaction of how teaching and learning were being delivered between international (n=245) and non-international students (n=870).

Students with a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition
The survey carried out in 2020 found that students reporting a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition were significantly more impacted by the change of delivery format in teaching. In the 2021 follow-up survey however, no differences in satisfaction of how teaching and learning were being delivered were found for students reporting a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition (n=245) compared with students who did not report these (n=838).

Students studying in Scotland
In the 2021 follow-up survey, students studying in Scotland (n=139) were significantly less satisfied with how teaching was being delivered compared with students studying in England (977)*. See Figure 2. Students reported how teaching was being delivered for their lectures, seminars, lab sessions, supervision and group work. The most striking difference was found for lectures, where 87% were taking place online in Scotland compared with 28% for England. See Figure 3. These differences are likely to reflect differences in national Covid-19 guidance for universities published by the English and Scottish Governments.

Figure 1: Satisfaction by type of teaching delivery

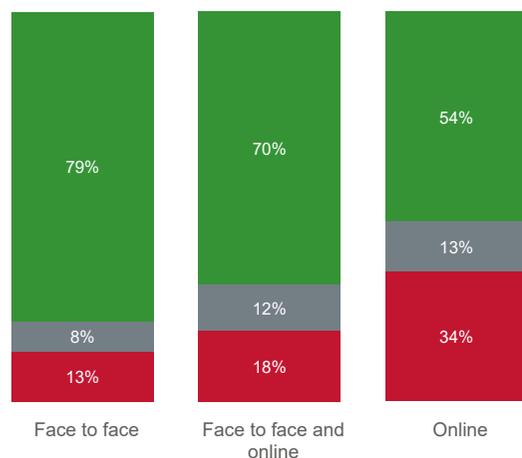● 1. Strongly Disagree / Disagree   ● 2. Neither agree nor disagree   ● 3. Strongly Agree / …

Figure 2: Satisfaction by Nation

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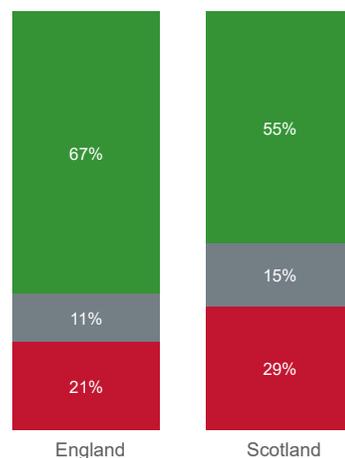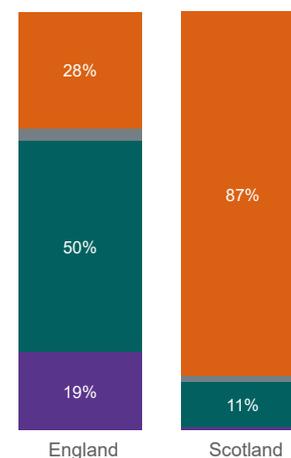

Figure 3: Delivery of Lectures by Nation

● Face to face   ● Face to face and online   ● Not applicable   ● Online

*There were too few respondents from Wales (n=8) and Northern Ireland (n=3) to include them in the analysis

Student Wellbeing (1)

Summary

When asked **'over the last 12 months how much do you think your wellbeing needs have been met by your university?'**, 19% (n=208) of students agreed that their wellbeing needs had been met to a great extent, 57% (n=638) agreed that their needs had somewhat been met, 18% (n=206) thought that their wellbeing needs had been met very little and 7% (n=75) said that their wellbeing needs had not been met at all by their university.

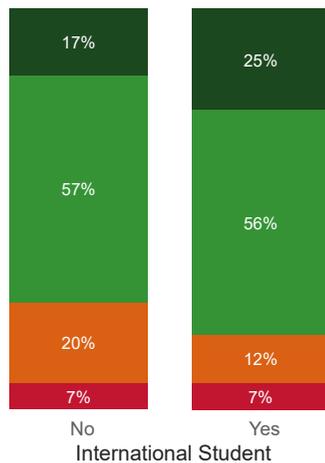**Students with a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition**

The initial survey carried out in 2020 found that students reporting a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition experienced significantly lower wellbeing compared with students not reporting these. However, in the 2021 follow-up survey no significant differences in wellbeing were found between these groups.

International students

International students (n=245) were significantly more likely to have their wellbeing needs met by their university compared with non-international students (n=870). See Figure 4.

21-25 year olds

A significantly lower proportion of the 21-25 age group (n=304) agreed that their wellbeing needs were being met by their university compared with all other age groups. See Figure 5.

Students from Black, Asian and Mixed Ethnicities

A significantly higher proportion of students from Black, Asian and Mixed Ethnicities (BAME) (n=328) agreed that their wellbeing needs were being met by their university compared with white students. See Figures 6 & 7.

Figure 6: Breakdown of participants by ethnicity

- White
- Asian
- Black
- Mixed
- Other

4% 3%
20%
71%

Figure 4: International Students Wellbeing

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

International Student

Figure 5: Wellbeing by Age Group

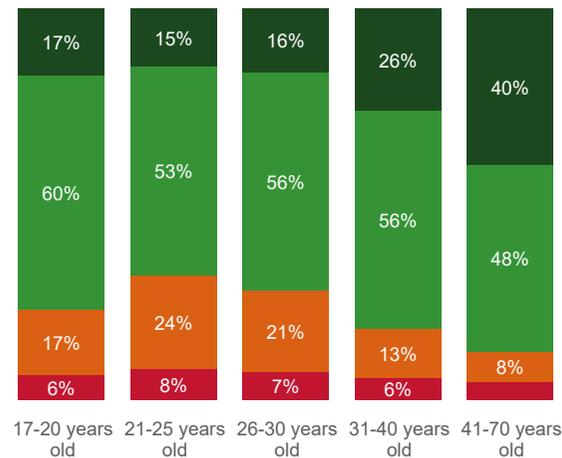● 1. Not at All ● 2. Very Little ● 3. Somewhat ● 4. To a Great Extent
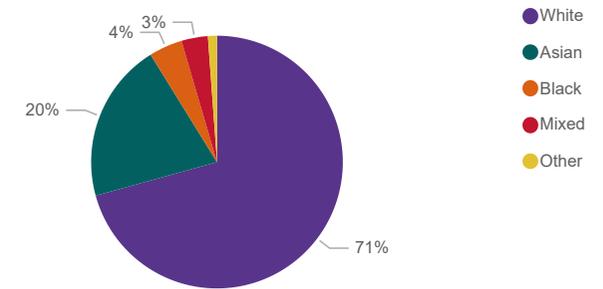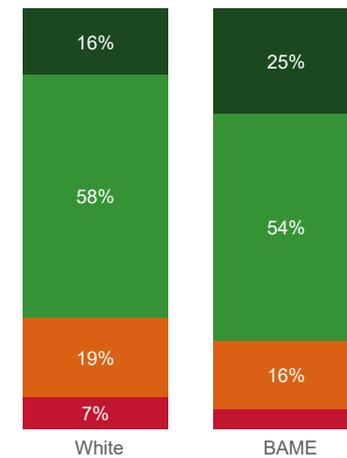

Figure 7: Wellbeing by Ethnicity Group

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

Student Wellbeing (2)

Students studying in the East Midlands

When asked **'over the last 12 months how much do you think your wellbeing needs have been met by your university?'** students studying in the East Midlands (n=146) were least likely to agree their needs were being met by their university, compared with other regions. See Figures 8 & 9.*

Figure 8: Student wellbeing by BPS Branch

Figure 9: Number of responses by BPS branch

● 1. Not at All   ● 2. Very Little   ● 3. Somewhat   ● 4. To a Great Extent
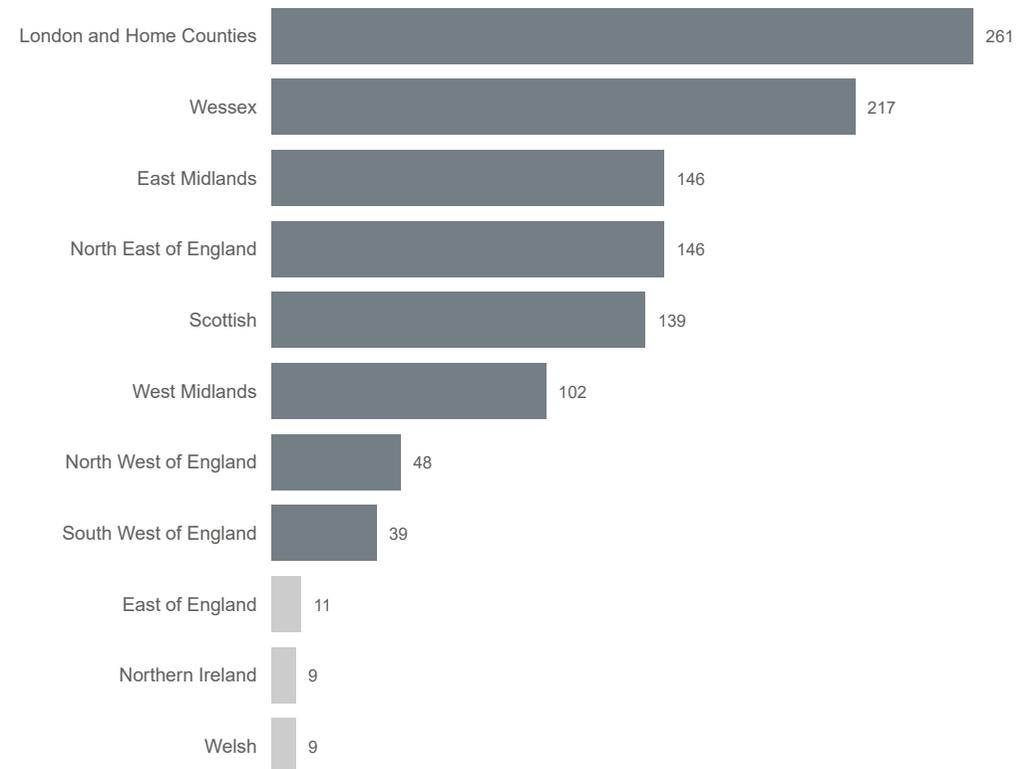
*There were too few respondents from the BPS Branches East of England (n=11), Northern Ireland (n=9) and Wales (n=9) to include them in the analysis.

Student Workload

Summary
When asked **'to what extent do you agree with the following: my workload is manageable'**, 56% (n=623) of students strongly agreed or agreed that their workload was manageable, 20% (n=224) neither agreed nor disagreed and 25% (n=279) strongly disagreed or disagreed.

Students with a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition
Students reporting a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition (n=245) reported that they were significantly less likely to be able to manage their workload compared with students who did not report these (n=838). See Figure 10.
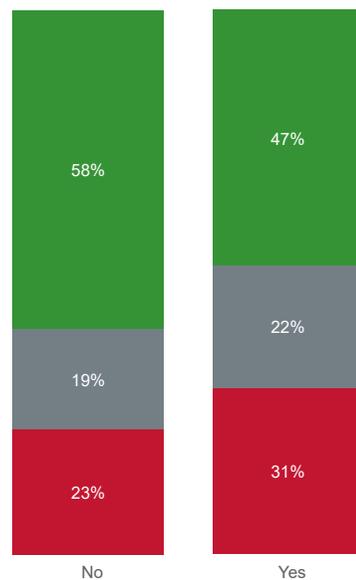
Full time students
Full time students (n=1081) were significantly less likely to report that their workload was manageable compared with part time students (n=45). See Figure 11.

Student workload by gender
Students who identified as male (n=1388) were significantly more likely than students who identified as female or non-binary to report that they found their workload manageable. On the other hand, students who identified as non-binary (n=28)* were significantly less likely to report that they found their workload manageable than either male or female identifying students. See Figure 12.

Figure 10: Workload and disability

Figure 11: Type of study and workload

Figure 12: Gender and workload

*There were too few respondents from other gender groups (n<5) to include them in analysis.

Main Findings and Recommendations

Summary
Students were more satisfied with how teaching and learning were being delivered at the end of 2021 than they were in 2020. This may reflect fewer Covid-19 restrictions being in place at the time of the follow-up survey fieldwork and more teaching and learning taking place face to face, compared with when the initial survey took place in 2020. Workload continues to be hard to manage for certain groups, such as those with a disability and those who identify as non-binary, and more work should be done to understand how to better support these students.

Satisfaction with Teaching
- Students were most satisfied with teaching and learning when it was delivered face to face, or a combination of face to face and online. They reported the least satisfaction when teaching and learning were delivered entirely online.
- In 2020 international students and those who reported having a disability were not as satisfied with how teaching and learning was being delivered on their course, compared with non-international students and those without a disability. These differences were not found however in the 2021 follow-up survey.
- Students studying in Scotland were significantly less satisfied than those in England with how their teaching and learning were being delivered. In Scotland lectures were predominantly delivered online. It is important to bear in mind the context when interpreting this finding, as at the time of fieldwork (November 2021), universities in England and Scotland were working within different Covid-19 guidance published by the English and Scottish Governments respectively. Scottish universities were subject to stricter restrictions that lasted for longer, including cancelling in-person events and offering a blend of in-person and digital provision.

Recommendation: Universities that are delivering teaching online should consider reintroducing face to face teaching or a mix of face to face and online teaching, as this could increase students' satisfaction with how teaching is delivered.

Student Wellbeing
- Three quarters of students reported that their wellbeing needs had been met to a great extent/somewhat by their university.
- In 2021, no significant differences in wellbeing were found between students reporting a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition and those who did not report these. This differs from the results of the initial survey conducted in 2020, when those with a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition reported lower overall wellbeing.
- Students aged 21-25 years old and students studying in the East Midlands were significantly less likely to agree that their wellbeing needs were being met than students in other age groups or regions.

Recommendations: Universities should investigate why 21-25 year olds are less likely to say that their wellbeing needs are being met. For example, does this group of students have different wellbeing needs that could be better addressed? Universities based in the East Midlands should review the wellbeing needs of their students and explore factors that could improve wellbeing.

Student Workload
- A quarter of students (25%) strongly disagreed or disagreed that they could manage their workload.
- Full time students were significantly less likely to be able to manage their workload.
- Students who identified as non-binary were significantly less likely to be able to manage their workload than students identifying as male and female. This finding is based on 28 responses and should be treated with caution. Further research with a larger sample of students identifying as non-binary is needed.

Recommendations: Universities should investigate whether the workload of their full time students is suitable. Universities should also investigate why their students who report having a disability, impairment, learning difference or long-term condition, and those who identify as non-binary, might feel less able to manage their workload.

Comparisons between student and staff 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 is the BPS doing to support students?

In this survey, the majority of students reported that their wellbeing needs had been met by their university. The BPS intends to supplement the support offered by universities by providing students with advice and resources about careers in psychology and guidance on employability. The BPS also offers free or affordable events for students that could help them in their studies, through deepening their understanding of particular topics and developing their networks.

Reliable and accessible careers pathway advice and resources
The BPS careers strategy is now well underway in terms of implementation and outlines our aim to become the go-to careers companion for BPS members and those with an interest in a future career in psychology. The BPS wants to support the exploration of possible career options in psychology, enable effective planning of psychology careers, and cultivate and celebrate the achievement of a career in psychology. We aim to achieve this through: development of online and printed resources to support students, developing a comprehensive programme of events focused on careers and across our member networks, and by feeding into a review of standards through our Education and Training Board, Education and Training Pathways work.

Reliable and accessible employability advice and resources
During 2021 the Education and Training Board undertook work to explore what current gaps there were in skills and what employers wanted their graduate workforce to bring to their organisations. Work is now underway with key stakeholders to develop employability guidance and resources. This aligns closely to the careers strategy outlined above.

Free/affordable online events for students
The BPS is evaluating its current provision of events for students and an expansion of these to ensure a better coverage of studying psychology and careers-based events. As a step towards better student engagement, the BPS offered free student membership in academic year 2021/22 to all those on year one accredited undergraduate, conversion and wellbeing practitioner programme of study. This scheme is set to continue in academic year 2022/23 but with a streamlined process to improve access. Through these channels we will also be able to promote engagement with students and offer more student focused initiatives.