

The background features several colorful strings (yellow, pink, blue, purple, green) hanging from the top. Various light bulbs are suspended from these strings. Some are small and simple line drawings, while others are larger and more detailed, showing the filament. One large light bulb is positioned on the right side, and another is at the bottom left.

THE BIG CAMBRIDGE SURVEY REPORT

cusu
Cambridge
University
Students' Union

**THE BIG
CAMBRIDGE
SURVEY**

DEMOGRAPHICS

3427 INITIAL RESPONSES

EACH TRIPOS AND COLLEGE WAS REPRESENTED

King's gave us the most answers, with over **200** respondents.

GENDER



56%
WOMEN

41%
MEN



0.12% other 1.24% non-binary
1.03% prefer not to say

ORIGIN



SEXUALITY

78% STRAIGHT

22% OTHER SEXUALITIES

AGE

63% S.A. UNDERGRADS

4% M. UNDERGRADS

20% S.A. POSTGRADS

13% M. POSTGRADS

*S.A. = Standard Age
M. = Mature

LEVEL

67% UNDERGRADS

8% TAUGHT POSTGRADS

25% RESEARCH POSTGRADS

METHODOLOGY

The Survey was circulated through the CUSU Bulletin, social media and College networks. It was open throughout the Easter vacation and term, and several £100 cash prize draw was offered to a winner chosen at random from those who left their crsIDs when completing it, as well as incentives for the College Committees which returned the highest proportions of responses from their membership. These will be awarded at CUSU Conference in Lent 2017.

The data was then put together and analysed, and the analysis was informed by corresponding data from within CUSU.

Data from the survey has already been used to influence campaigns and work within Cambridge University Students' Union (CUSU) and the wider university throughout the year; for a full report for your College, or if you would like to access any of the data, please email

membership@cusu.cam.ac.uk



WELCOME

Dear student,

Welcome to this year's Big Cambridge Survey Report. Over 3000 of you told us what you thought about life at Cambridge, and so a big thanks must go to everyone who answered: without your answers, we would be in a far weaker position to improve your lives at Cambridge.

Last year's Survey focused on academic parity across the Colleges, and revealed stark differences in students' experiences within faculties and between Colleges. CUSU lobbied for increased transparency on supervision norms, and although the pace of change can be slow at this institution, we remain committed to the vision that all students should have parity of experience here, no matter what their College, background or subject may be.

This year, we are looking at a perennial issue at Cambridge: workload. Across the years that the Survey has run, you have raised this issue consistently, and we delve deeper into it on a spread further into this document. We are not just looking at the workload of those in the Tripos system, but also those who balance teaching work with their studies as supervisors, and their working conditions.

In a time of great turbulence for Higher Education, the importance of central student representation and lobbying not just the University but also on a national level. With data showing the stark ways that student finance, fees and funding affect students' qualities of life, at a time of rising fees for new students and soaring costs of living for everyone, CUSU will be campaigning to ensure that the University is transparent and honest about the costs of being a Cambridge student, and trying to ensure that they do not rise further.

Data on a page cannot change the University: that is down to all of us. Whether you're intrigued, enraged or interested in some of what we have presented here then please do think about acting on it. If you would like to join us in campaigning on the issues raised here, then get in touch - or even think about standing for election yourself.

I hope you find our findings as interesting as we have!



Amatey Doku
CUSU President
2016 - 2017

The Cambridge Academic Experience

When asked what one thing would improve their academic lives, as well as the quantitative questions below, several common themes appeared here: Academic inequality, value for money and curriculum design. Students questioned whether their experience was worth the debt incurred, and many students felt that the curriculum is simply not diverse enough. CUSU is working on this issue this year, and will be bringing your ideas to those involved in curriculum-setting at the top of the University.

“ I did my undergrad at Cambridge as well, and now have as many supervisions in a term as I used to have in a week. ”

“ It seems the richer colleges, or particularly ones that are competing for tripos rankings have significantly better supervisors than those for less wealthy grad colleges. ”

45%
UNDERGRADUATES

49%
TAUGHT
POSTGRADUATES

agreed that their was consistent top quality teaching on their courses.

77%
UNDERGRADUATES

65%
TAUGHT
POSTGRADUATES

felt their course had lived up to their expectations.

COLLEGIATE INEQUALITY

56% UNDERGRADS

50% TAUGHT
POSTGRADS

44% MATURE
STUDENTS

agree that supervision hours for their course are equal across colleges.



When broken down by undergraduate tripos, the lowest-scoring three were:

- 🏷️ **Medicine: 14%**
- 🏷️ **Veterinary Medicine: 27%**
- 🏷️ **Education: 26%**

And when broken down by College, the lowest three were:

- 🏷️ **Hughes Hall: 18%**
- 🏷️ **St Edmund's: 20%**
- 🏷️ **Wolfson: 43%**

In contrast, only **38%** of **undergraduates** agreed that teaching quality for their course was equal across Colleges. This rose to **60%** of **taught postgraduates**.

And when broken down by College, the lowest three were:

- Hughes Hall: 18%**
- St Edmund's: 20%**
- Gonville & Caius: 30%**

The faculty of Veterinary Medicine also scored poorly here for taught postgraduates (29%)

ience: Taught Students

SATISFACTION

60% of taught postgraduates were fully satisfied with their teaching & learning at Cambridge so far.

This fell to **48%** of international taught postgraduates.

71% of undergraduates were happy with the amount of contact time they received.

This fell to **62%** for taught postgraduates.



ACCESSING LEARNING

67% of undergraduates agreed that their course was structured enough to allow them to learn effectively.

This fell to **60%** of taught postgraduates, but fell even further to **55%** of self-defined disabled students and **55%** of students with a mental health condition.



Reasonable adjustments are to alleviate any "substantial disadvantage" you may experience due to an impairment or health condition. At Cambridge, this could include things from extra exam time to accessible accommodation - and it is a legal duty under the Equality Act 2010.

UNDERGRADS

SELF-DEFINED
DISABLED
STUDENTS

UNDERGRADS
WITH
MENTAL
HEALTH
CONDITION

56%

47%

43%

agreed that academics had made reasonable adjustments for them when required.

UNDERGRADS

TAUGHT
POSTGRADS

UNDERGRADS
WITH
MENTAL
HEALTH
CONDITION

59%

63%

50%

felt fully supported by their teaching staff.

RESEARCH POSTGRADUATES

Research Postgraduate students sometimes live a 'dual life' at the University: they are both taught and teaching, often as supervisors, and can fall through the gaps between students and academics. Postgraduate researchers often flagged issues with their supervisors as a barrier to their success at Cambridge; as well as the difficulties of navigating departmental or faculty politics when seeking help or a change and the feeling that most activities are focussed towards undergraduates. This was especially prevalent for those who worked away from the main University sites.

11% of students who accessed the Students' Unions Advice Service wanted to discuss their supervisors.

61% of those who asked for support about this issue were female.

“ There's a huge discrepancy between students that did their undergrad here and those that didn't. Some people in my faculty seem to think that I am always inferior compared to students who they've known since they were 18. ”

“ Postgraduate researchers' experiences also varied significantly across the faculties. ”

69% of postgraduate researchers agreed that they were fully satisfied with their Cambridge experience so far.
...This fell to **43.75%** of disabled researchers

76% of researchers felt they had access to adequate resources to complete their studies
...This fell to **43.75%** of disabled researchers



82% of students did think they had a positive relationship with their supervisor...
...but many students also declared a wish to change supervisor in open field sections...
...and this fell to **50%** for disabled researchers

60% 

of researchers agreed that the supervision and training they received was of a consistently high quality...

This ranged between

75%

of researchers in the Faculties of Education and Computer Science & Technology and

58%

in the Faculty of Classics.

68% 

of research students felt their studies had lived up to their expectations



Only **42%** of postgraduate teachers felt that they were properly remunerated for their work.

The most common form of teaching work for postgraduates is supervisions, for which the pay is set centrally. Other academic-related work such as lab support and invigilation carries variable pay.

42% of respondents had taken on teaching work in the academic year **2015-2016** and only **40%** felt they had received enough training to supervise confidently

CUSU has consistently lobbied for better supervisor training from the Central University, and it seems that more work on this is still needed.



53% found that they had an adequate say over how much teaching they required to do. This is starkly divided by gender - Men were far more satisfied with their requirements than women, with:

62% MEN



49% WOMEN

52% agreed that they were happy with the amount of teaching responsibility available. Again, men were far more satisfied than women:

62% MEN



45% WOMEN

Only **37%** found their teaching workload manageable and healthy. This ranged from

15%
in the Faculty
of Divinity
to
87%
in the Faculty of
Mathematics

Or, by
College: **30%**
at Murray
Edwards
to
79%
at Trinity

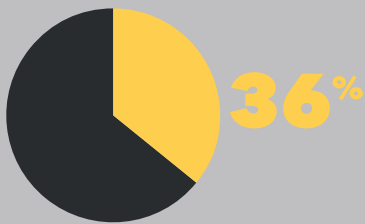
WORKLOAD

The workload of a Cambridge degree is a perennial issue within the University. This year, CUSU will be working on it with the central University. An interesting theme emerges throughout this data: perceptions of workload improve as a student progresses through degree types, which is contrary to the preconceptions many students may have about entering further degrees. A possible reason for this is not that the workload itself becomes more manageable, but that the people who find their workload least manageable, especially disabled students, are not able to progress to further study and so the demographics of the sample size change drastically.

If you don't get the work done the feelings of guilt and frustration from having wasted part of the supervision are sufficiently intolerable that you feel compelled to complete example sheets at any cost.

Students have struggled to manage this year's work load consistently over the past few years and yet no real changes have been made. It seems unnecessary to push students to mental breaking point just for the sake of passing exams.

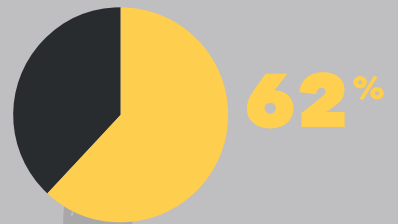
STUDENTS WHO THINK CAMBRIDGE IS A HEALTHY & POSITIVE PLACE TO STUDY



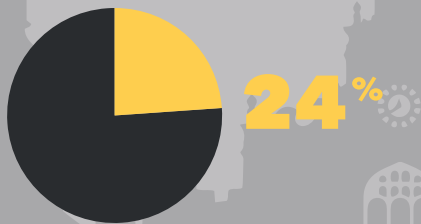
UNDERGRADUATES



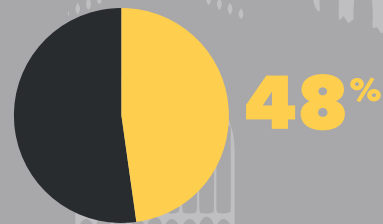
TAUGHT POSTGRADUATES



RESEARCH POSTGRADUATES

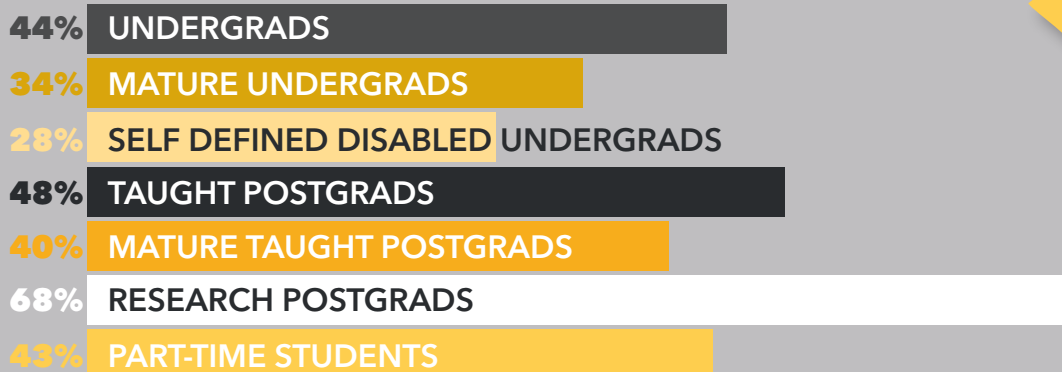


STUDENTS WITH A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION



STUDENTS WITHOUT A MENTAL HEALTH CONDITION

STUDENTS WHO THINK THEIR WORKLOAD IS MANAGEABLE AND HEALTHY



Mature students fare comparatively badly here across the study types. This is not necessarily due to there being a heavier workload at mature colleges, but because of other barriers to accessing the University that mature students face: namely, financial ones. Mature students are more likely to fund their studies with paid work, or to have families to support alongside study.

UNDERGRADUATE TRIPOSES BY WORKLOAD:

THREE WORST		THREE BEST	
Architecture	23%	Theology & Religious Studies	68%
Human, Social & Political Science	24%	Classics	65%
Asian and Middle Eastern Studies	26%	NatSci: Geological Sciences	63%

WORKLOAD STRUCTURE

With short terms, something that was flagged in the open field sections was that workload at Cambridge for taught students is not just about volume, but also about structure and where 'flashpoints' of high workload come throughout the year.

49% of **undergraduates** agreed their workload was well spreadout throughout the year, and 49% throughout the term. This dropped for **undergraduates who self-defined as disabled**: 38% felt it was spread throughout the year, and 39% throughout the term.

Taught postgraduates felt their work was slightly more manageable: 48% agreed it was spread throughout the year, and 50% throughout the term.

ACADEMIC & PAID WORK

A much higher proportion of undergraduates than graduates use wages from a non-academic job to fund their living costs:



Research postgraduates were asked about their teaching workloads and, of those who had taken on teaching, only 37% felt their teaching workload was manageable and healthy and only 27% felt fully supported in their teaching responsibilities, in contrast to 64% of respondents who felt fully supported in their academic work.

If students have to use the vacation period to work, it could alter their perceptions of their academic workload, as time the University assumes they are resting is also spent working.

COST OF LIVING

The cost of living and studying in Cambridge is rising rapidly, and different groups of students are responding to this differently. Particularly interesting is the financial situation of mature students, whose Colleges have the highest proportions of students experiencing financial difficulties and who are more likely to work a non-academic job to fund their studies. Similarly, the financial difficulties experienced by EU and overseas students are worth exploring, and more can be read about them in the Spotlight on International Students.

Students who lived in College spent around **£125** per week on rent

55% of those who lived in College were satisfied with the value for money of their accommodation & **75%** with its quality
12% of those who lived in private accommodation were satisfied with its affordability, and **43%** with its quality

Mature students were much more likely to pay their fees using **personal finances**, compared to standard age students.

23% > 7%

And much more likely to **fund their living costs** with them, as opposed to standard age students.

37% > 27%

30% of students found extra costs from the Colleges problematic.

This rose to as much as

59% of Newnham students,
52% of Gonville & Caius students
52% of St Edmund's students

and fell to

9% of Emmanuel students



Although

67% of undergraduates fund their living costs with student finance

77% also need support from their families and

31% topped up their loans with personal finances

LIVING COSTS

Undergraduates most commonly spend **£40 - £50** on living costs (excluding rent)

The most common spend for graduates was over **£100** per week



HIDDEN COURSE COSTS

💡 The average amount of **undergraduates** having problems with **hidden course costs** is very low at **10%**. However, it rises to **30%** for **graduate students**.

💡 When split by **undergraduate tripos**, we found that **92%** of **Architecture students** had problems with the **cost of their course**.

💡 **70%** of students who received the Cambridge Bursary found extra costs from their Colleges or courses problematic.



38% UNDERGRADUATES



49% RESEARCH POSTGRADUATES



56% TAUGHT POSTGRADUATES

reported that finances had had a negative impact on their time at University

When sorted by College, graduate and mature Colleges all show that they have the highest proportions of students experiencing financial difficulties:

Hughes Hall

60%

Clare Hall

58%

Wolfson

56%

EU & International Students perceive more financial difficulty than their Home counterparts:



39%
HOME



49%
EU



50%
INTERNATIONAL

46% of undergraduates were worried about the amount of debt they incurred and when split by gender, this shows women & non-binary students are disproportionately worried:



49%
WOMEN



61%
NON
BINARY



34%
MEN

HEALTH & WELLBEING

What are the effects of studying at Cambridge?

Over half **52%** of undergraduates found dealing with **stress and anxiety** a problem in student life. This fell to **47%** of research students and **43%** of taught postgraduates.

52% UNDERGRADS

47% RESEARCH STUDENTS

43% TAUGHT POSTGRADS



Those from certain liberation groups were disproportionately affected by this, with **83%** of those who self-defined as disabled declaring this a problem and **87%** of those with a mental health condition. **62%** of LGBT+ respondents found it a problem, **78%** of non-binary people, **59%** of women. BME students were the only group to declare this less of a problem, with **45%** declaring it so.

31% of undergraduates reported that Cambridge had a negative effect on their **PHYSICAL HEALTH**.

23% of taught postgraduates and

24% of research postgraduates agreed.

This rose to **51%** of those who self-defined as disabled.



54% of undergraduates reported Cambridge had a negative effect on their **MENTAL HEALTH**.

37% of taught postgraduates and

42% of research postgraduates agreed.

This rose to **71%** of students who self-defined as disabled.



There is a definite disparity of experience here between post- and undergraduates. This does not necessarily mean that support mechanisms are better for these groups - one of the things highlighted in the comments was the perceived **lack of tutorial support for graduates and targeted graduate support** - but that the demographics of those entering graduate study are very different and so they are in fact less likely to ask for help.

HEALTH & WELLBEING



Support at Cambridge

It seems there is still significant stigma surrounding seeking help or support at the University, and this was often flagged as especially pertaining to male students. For other students, a lack of diversity in the people giving support made them less likely to seek help, as did the perceived lack of tailored support for mature and graduate students. The fear of being seen to 'waste time' was often cited, and many respondents felt they needed to acknowledge that their issues were present but because of well-publicised waiting times for support, they felt they should not detract from those who 'really needed it'.

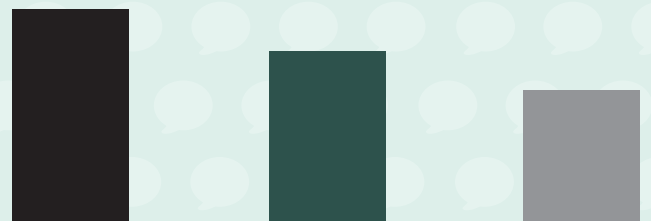
“ I don't feel like my issues are as important as other people's. everyone is so busy here ... I wouldn't want to seek help only to feel like I was wasting time, or that I should have gone through different channels first ”

“ The system protects itself: if I complained about my supervisor, I'd be complaining to one of his friends. ”

57% of Undergraduates were confident in seeking help from the University on education issues. This fell to **27%** when asking about personal issues. **33%** of Masters students and **30%** of PhD students were confident asking about personal issues.



81% of Undergraduates felt they had received good quality and caring support for mental health from their welfare officers, but only **65%** felt this for their senior tutors. This fell further for LGBT+ students to **50%**.



Best Colleges for Tutorial Support (Senior Tutors)

93%

Hughes Hall

100%

Corpus Christi College

100%

Downing College



Best Colleges for Tutorial Support

86%

Jesus College

87%

Corpus Christi College

88%

Gonville and Caius College

STUDENTS MAKING CHANGE

A pervasive stereotype of life at Cambridge is students only interested in their courses, paying little attention to the world outside the Cambridge bubble: we know that's not true. Students here are hugely likely to take part not just in campaigning and social change but also in club or society activity which contributes to the University and Colleges as a community. However, not all students feel that their voices are heard by the University, College or representative structures when they want to change something: CUSU is committed to an effective central students' union and to empowering our members.



55% of students think activism is an important part of student life

24% were involved within the University

28% were involved outside the University



95% of undergraduates engage in club or society activity at some point in their university life...

...this drops to **85%** of graduate students

55% of students thought their club and society activity was well supported by their College...

...falling to **44%** within the University



Graduate students cited issues such as time and the ways that their working days were structured, as well as family commitments which meant they were unable to take part.



82% of students wanted a voice on ethical issues within the University but only **52%** felt that their voice was listened to.



Only **3%** on postgraduate supervisors felt they would be able to change or influence their working conditions while **19%** were confident in changing their faculties or departments This is in contrast to **30%** of undergraduates



26% of students were confident that an idea for change would be fully followed through in the University. compared to **57%** who were confident in their ability to change and influence their College

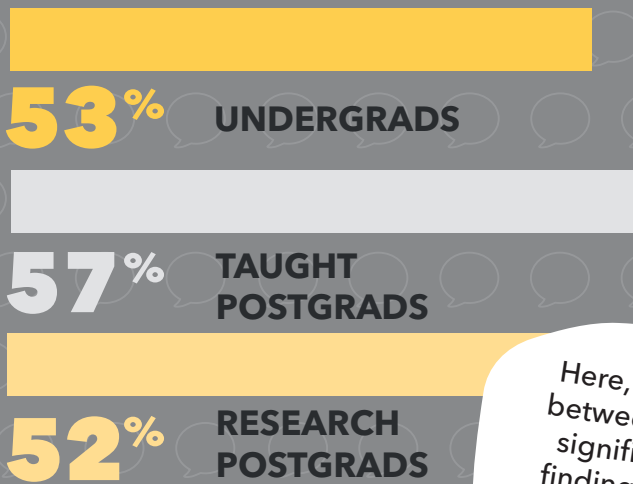


71% of undergraduates felt that their Common Room was a positive force within their College this fell slightly to **63%** of taught postgraduates and **68%** of research postgraduates

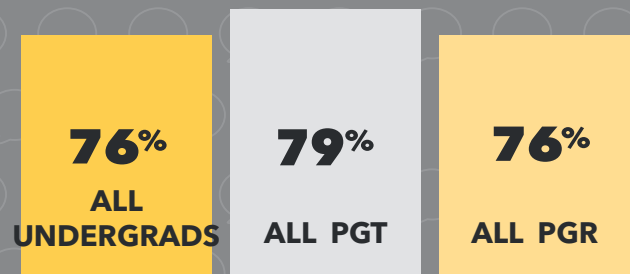
CAREERS: WHAT'S NEXT?

Having to find a job after university weights heavy on Cambridge students' minds, at every level of education. It seems a fear of being seen as 'over-qualified' is also prevalent: the further through academia a student progressed, we can see they become less confident of finding employment at an appropriate level. This could, of course, also be down to the scarcity of jobs within academia.

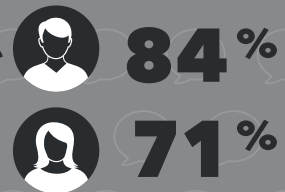
💡 Confidence in finding paid employment at an appropriate level decreases as level of education increases:



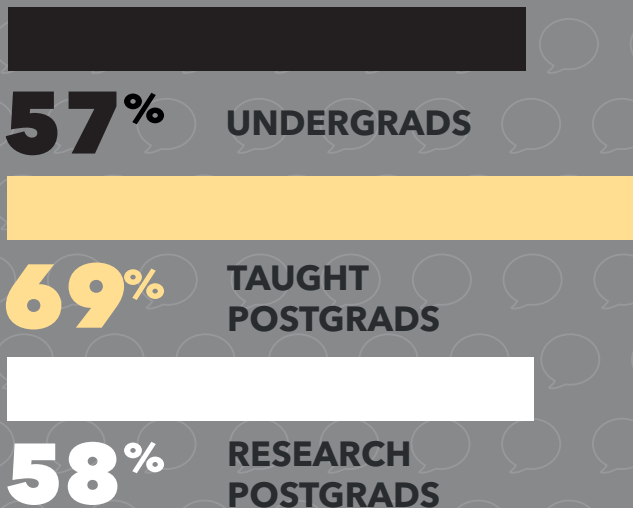
💡 Not just confidence in finding paid employment at a level for which someone is educated, but confidence in finding it at all:



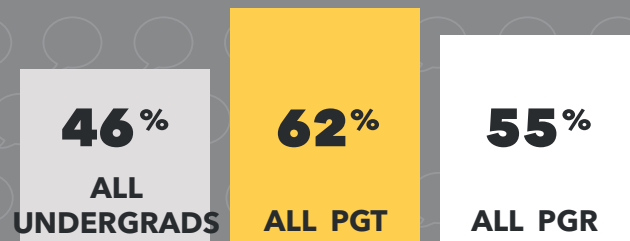
Here, there is a large disparity between genders, with women finding paid employment than men. Non-binary students and students of other genders were also less confident.



💡 Confidence of finding employment in a job of someone's choice is even lower:



💡 This contrasts with the relevant students' views that their courses have prepared them with the skills for employment:



💡 74% of postgraduate researchers felt their programmes provided them with adequate development opportunities.

INEQUALITY AT CAMBRIDGE

Structural inequalities within society are re-made within the walls of the University, despite efforts to the contrary. Bursaries and financial support are seen to go some way towards levelling the playing field, however as you can see from the quotations on this spread, there are many facets of Cambridge life that student funding does not stretch to, and so social divisions throughout the student body can not yet be fully ironed out. Additionally, many students flagged their perceived need to 'catch up' with peers in subjects not traditionally taught in state schools, including Latin and Greek, and the whiteness of Cambridge.

There is an implicit expectation of wealth in terms of may balls and formal hall. It is assumed that most people have money

“ I often find myself less well read, because we did not study things at school and I do not have academically able parents. In addition, I often find myself turning down social opportunities as my finances do not match those of most of my peers ”

GETTING IN



20.89% of students felt their educational background had had a negative impact on their time at Cambridge



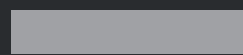
This ranged between **24%** of undergraduates



13% of taught postgraduates



18.39% felt their social background had a negative effect on their experience



This rose to **22%** of mature students



35% of disabled students

THE IMPORTANCE OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT



44% of non-EU international students agreed with the statement:

“Without financial support I would not be able to continue with my studies”

in comparison to **20.5%** of home students

“ Coming from Hong Kong, it's definitely slightly harder to fit in such a white institution (I find myself constantly trying to fit in) ”

THE IMPORTANCE OF FINANCIAL SUPPORT

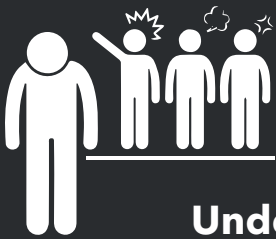


25% of students said that the availability of **financial support** had strongly influenced their choice to study at Cambridge...



...this rises to **41%** when only **postgraduate researchers** are considered

This does not necessarily mean that the intake of PGR students is suddenly more socially diverse, but that PhD funding acts as a way of validating projects and submissions, treating research more as a job with a certain amount of salaries to pay



PREJUDICE AT CAMBRIDGE

50% of students felt Cambridge was free from prejudice as a place to live and study
Under (**49.45%**)

46% of students have been **verbally harassed** while in Cambridge

This rises to **64%** of **disabled students**

42% of students had been **sexually harassed...**

and **10%** had been **sexually assaulted**

12% of students felt that crimes committed against them had been motivated by **hate and prejudice**

15% of BME students had observed others being affected by prejudice based on race or ethnicity

7% reported being **directly affected**



20% of disabled students had also been affected by prejudice based on **gender**

Non-binary students, LGBT students and disabled students consistently reported **higher rates of discrimination** based on protected characteristics

SPOTLIGHT ON: INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

39% of EU students and **44%** of overseas students agreed with the statement
"Without financial support I could not afford to continue with my studies"

Just over **11%** of Cambridge undergraduates are international students, while the postgraduate community is far more international, with **24%** of confirmed offer-holders in 2015-16 from the European Union and **41%** from overseas. Across all study types, **17%** of respondents to this Survey were Overseas students (international students from outside the European Union) and **16%** were from the European Union. When analysing the data, we recognised that **there is no homogenous experience for international students**, and so have looked at the **experiences of EU and non-EU students as distinct entities** throughout the report.

The Big Cambridge Survey data this year tells a clear tale that some of the key issues international students face at the University are **financial**. Cambridge is able to offer financial support to EU undergraduates with the Cambridge European Bursary Scheme, which offers up to £3,500 to European undergraduates and is means-tested. Only **2%** of this year's respondents received the Cambridge European Bursary, but nearly **20%** of EU students (**18.02%**) ranked financial support as a key factor that made them choose Cambridge, and this rose to **25%** for overseas students. In comparison, **13%** of students from the UK chose this.

63% of EU students and **60%** of overseas students agreed that financial aid had had a positive impact on their experience, while nearly half of international students felt that their financial situation had had a negative impact on their time at university: **50%** of EU students and **49%** of overseas students.

While a significant proportion of international students felt that their courses were value for money (**62%** of EU students and **60%** of overseas students) they still believe this less than home students (**68%**). As tuition fees are set to continue to rise for students, the need for financial support for those who cannot access student loans seems only to increase, if the University wishes to seat itself as a key player in the global education system, it needs to continue to offer financial aid to attract the best and brightest from across the globe.

SPOTLIGHT ON: DISABLED STUDENTS

This year, we asked respondents not only whether they had certain health conditions but also **whether they self-defined as disabled**.

Of those who responded to the Survey, **3% of respondents defined themselves as disabled**, while **25% of respondents had a health condition**. The most common among them were mental health conditions, such as **anxiety** or **mood disorders** (**9%** and **10%** of respondents respectively). Of those with health conditions, **25%** of respondents considered their disability to be invisible. The disparity between those who could self-define as disabled and yet do not is interesting and requires further research to ascertain the reasons why.

The experiences of disabled students can be seen picked out throughout this report, but it is worth especially exploring the how the Cambridge learning environment affects those undergraduate students who are disabled.

Only **47%** of disabled undergraduates felt that reasonable adjustments were consistently made for them.

55% of those undergraduates who self-defined as disabled felt there was enough structure in their courses to allow them to work effectively, in contrast to **70%** of those with no known disability. College teaching staff were perceived as significantly more supportive to disabled students than staff within the Faculties, with **74%** of disabled undergraduates agreeing that they felt fully supported by their College teaching staff, in comparison to **51%** agreeing that they felt fully supported by teaching staff in their Faculty.

More worryingly, however, is that disabled students were significantly less likely to agree that they knew where to go if they had problems with their courses, with **69%** agreeing to this in comparison to **81%** of those with no known disability. It is also worth noting that only **46%** of disabled students felt their learning style had been accommodated by teaching staff, in contrast to **62%** of those with no known disability, and only **47%** of disabled students felt that reasonable adjustments had always been made for them if needed.

Reasonable adjustments are alterations which can be made to a learning environment or requirements on the student which aim to remove "significant disadvantage" that could be incurred because a student is disabled. In Cambridge, these will normally be detailed in a Student Support Document produced by the Disability Resource Centre. It is part of the University's duties under the Equality Act that they are followed, and so with under half of undergraduates perceiving that they are consistently receiving the support that they need, there is still some way to go.

SPOTLIGHT ON: MATURE STUDENTS

Mature students make up a fairly significant proportion of the student population at Cambridge, with four Colleges dedicated to mature undergraduates and graduates. The majority of mature students are graduates (a graduate is mature if they begin a degree after the age of 25), and this was reflected in our response rates, with **22%** of our mature responses from mature undergraduates, and **78%** from mature postgraduates. The statistics here reflect both groups.

One area where there is a disparity between the experiences of mature and standard age students is **extracurricular activities**.

Mature students were far more likely to be involved in volunteering activity outside of the university than standard age students, with **32%** of mature students across the study types involved in volunteering outside of the University, in comparison to **26%** of standard age students. They were less likely to be involved in this inside the University, with **22%** involved here as opposed to **27%** of standard age students. **43%** of mature students felt that they were able to make the most of the extracurricular activities available to them.

Mature students also felt less well-represented to their Colleges by their College committees (**50%**, as opposed to **64%** standard age students), and agreed less that their College committees were an inclusive body (**56%**, as opposed to **66%**). However, mature and standard age students were almost equal in agreeing that their College representative structures were positive forces within their Colleges.

Given the makeup of the survey respondents, and of mature students within the University, this can not just be seen as a question of mature student representation and involvement, but also of graduate student representation and involvement. **When asked about barriers to their participation in extracurricular activities, mature students flagged their lack of time when balancing study and childcare, as well as financial limitation and the difficulties of living out of College, or the transient nature of their courses.** This was especially true for PGCE students.

While these issues will not disappear overnight, when the University continues to reach out towards mature and graduate students, it has a duty to attempt to ensure that they are able to fully participate in Cambridge life, not just academically but fully.

**"There is academic pressure...
and a lack of space for older grads"**

SPOTLIGHT ON: STUDENTS WITH BURSARIES

I am not as well off as a significant amount of my peers so have to work a majority of the holidays in order to pay college bill, which most others don't have to do - they have more time to relax/study with their time off

Cambridge offers undergraduates from the UK or European Union with a household income of less than £42,650 the ability to claim a bursary for living costs over their time at University. This year, we asked whether students were in receipt of the bursary to begin to contribute to a clearer picture of the experiences of students from a lower income background at the University. Corpus Christi, Sidney Sussex and Trinity had some of the highest proportions of students on a Cambridge Bursary.

The Cambridge Bursary does in some ways act as a leveller: **students with the bursary were not more likely than their peers to worry about the debt they were incurring**, with **34%** worried about this, in comparison to **33.5%** of undergraduates across the board. **70%** felt the the University was successful in ensuring that financial limitations did not stand in the way of someone's academic success.

Students with bursaries were only slightly more likely to find extra course costs difficult, however, with **33%** finding extra College costs problematic, as opposed to under **31%** of undergraduates across the board.

34% of students with a bursary felt that their financial situation had negatively impacted their time here, as opposed to **38%** of undergraduates across the board. **32%** agreed that **"Without financial support I could not afford to continue with my studies"** and **14.5%** agreed that financial support meant that they were not disadvantaged by not being able to take on a job during term time.

The costs of Cambridge life came up repeatedly when students were asked to comment on the ways that finances had affected their time here, with many feeling that although they had enough money to live, there was still a disparity between the socialising opportunities wealthier peers could access, such as May Balls and Formal Hall. Here, **20%** of students receiving the Bursary agreed that it allowed them to enjoy life as a Cambridge student in the same way as everyone else.

The Cambridge Bursary Scheme is intended not just as a source of support but a financial leveller. We can see here that it in some ways it fulfils this purpose, but, in an age of rising costs of living, whether it will continue to do so remains to be seen. CUSU hope to release research into the experiences of students from a low income background as the year goes on.

SPOTLIGHT ON: GENDER

This year, **56%** of respondents to the Big Cambridge Survey defined themselves as female, **41%** as male, **1%** as non-binary and **0.12%** as of an other gender. **1.03%** did not wish to declare a gender. Throughout the Survey, gendered differences in the experience of Cambridge students became apparent, and one of the particularly striking areas where this was prevalent was when discussing careers and future plans. As the sample of students who identified as non-binary or with an other gender is small, this will focus on those who identified as men and women.

When discussing future plans, there was consistently a significant gap between the confidence of men and women in finding employment. This was greatest in answer to the question "How confident are you that: You will find paid employment upon leaving university?" where **84%** of male respondents expressed confidence in comparison to **71%** of women respondents. The gap widened further in when respondents answered whether they would be confident in finding employment in a job of their choice, with **68%** of male respondents and **53%** of female respondents expressing confidence in this.

53% of female students expressed confidence in finding a job of their choice after University.

When asked about their confidence in finding paid employment with a salary at an appropriate level, **64%** of men were confident, in comparison to **46%** of women respondents. Relatedly, women students were more debt-averse than men, with **35% of female students reporting a significant level of worry around repaying debts**, in comparison to **26%** of male students. Similarly, when students were asked if they felt well-supported by the University in their search for employment, **50%** of men agreed in comparison to **44%** of women.

It seems that these results and opinions still reflect the patriarchal structures at play in society, wherein men are taught that they will be respected and to have confidence in their opinions, while women grow up with and graduate into imposter syndrome in many workplaces.

Over the past few years, and certainly within universities, understanding of the structural issues at play has become more widespread, and hard evidence of this, such as the gender pay gap, has become more well-publicised. It is therefore possible that female students here are not only less confident in graduating into jobs with appropriate salaries because of the economic climate and the availability of graduate jobs, but because they are more aware that they are statistically likely to be paid less. The University cannot itself undo and level out the effects of a patriarchal society in the comparatively short time a student is here, however it almost certainly can do even more to build up the confidence of and support female students.

SPOTLIGHT ON: SEXUALITY

Only **36%** of LGB students agreed that Cambridge was a healthy and positive place to study

This year, **18%** of respondents identified as Lesbian, Gay, Bi, Asexual or Other. While we do take in data on the gender that a person identifies with, we do not take in any data on whether they self-define as trans, hence the references in this section to LGB rather than LGBT.

Broken down, 4.37% of our responses came from those who identified as Gay, 1.15% from those who identified as Lesbian, 8.81% from those who identified as Bi, 1.56% from those who identified as Asexual, 1.85% from those who identified with a sexuality not listed and 4.02% from those who did not wish to declare a sexuality. These were then grouped together in order to provide a significant sample size. LGB+ students were represented across the modes of study.

The Survey results highlight that support for these students can still be perceived as lacking. LGB research postgraduates were less satisfied with their Cambridge experience than straight students, with **62%** agreeing that they were fully satisfied, in contrast to **70%** of straight students.

For LGB students, the responses we received about sources of support bear looking at. Only **36%** of LGB students agreed that Cambridge was a healthy and positive place to study, in contrast to **47%** of straight students. LGB students felt more supported by their College Welfare officers than their Senior Tutors, with **58%** of students who had sought support for things related to mental health agreeing that it was good quality & caring from their Senior Tutors, and **73%** agreed this regarding Welfare Officers.

The appreciation of support from Welfare Officers show, especially in contrast to the ratings for central University services, local sources of support which are accessible and student-led remain invaluable.

SPOTLIGHT ON: THE BME STUDENTS' EXPERIENCE

This year, **23%** of our answers came from **BME (Black and Minority Ethnic)** students. The highest proportion of answers within that came from Chinese or South East Asian non-British students (**5%** of the Survey respondents).

In recent years, there has been much discussion about the nature of curriculum design in UK universities, and criticism of current arts and humanities curricula as “pale, stale and male” and in need of diversification and liberation. With this in mind, it is worth diving into the experiences of the next generation of academics who may be best placed to lead those changes: **BME postgraduate research students**.

33% of BME researchers had taken on teaching responsibility in the past academic year, significantly less than the average for all research students, which was **42%**. **85%** of BME researchers found their teaching workload to be manageable and healthy. However only **45%** of BME researchers were happy with the amount of teaching which was available to them, in comparison to **52%** of researchers across the board. Only **45%** felt that they had adequate say over how much teaching that they were required to do. **67%** felt adequately supported in their teaching, slightly higher than researchers across the board (**64%**) and **61%** felt their training was adequate.

All in all, this bodes poorly for building a more diverse academy in the future. More work from the students' unions is certainly needed to ascertain the reasons why **BME researchers are either being offered or taking up teaching responsibilities at a below average rate**. Without a concerted focus on this, change can only come slower.

Under a third of BME research students (**33%**) were able to take on teaching responsibilities in the past two years.

THANK YOU & WHAT'S NEXT

Thanks for reading!

We hope that this report has been useful and illuminated some aspects of Cambridge life that you may not be familiar with.

However, if this data stays on the page and does not inspire you to action, it's not worth much: if anything has pleased, enraged or shocked you then we want to know about it - and we want to help you act on it.

If your College committee or student group would like support with campaigning activity, talk to us on president@cusu.cam.ac.uk

If you would like the entire data set for your College or subject, please get in touch with membership@cusu.cam.ac.uk and we will consider your request.

And finally, if you want to act fully on any of the things you've seen here, run for election and for a position with the power to act centrally within the University. Have a look at www.cusu.cam.ac.uk/elections for more information.




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