University of Salford Sustainability Skills Survey 2024/2025

Key findings for University of Salford from the SOS-UK Sustainability Skills Survey 2024/2025

Executive Summary

81% believe sustainable development is something which places of study/apprenticeships should actively incorporate and promote.

83% believe sustainable development is something which all courses in places of study/apprenticeships should actively incorporate and promote.

65% state that sustainable development is something which they would like to learn more about

Key findings

81% agree that the University should teach skills and understanding that positively impact society and environment

75% say that knowing the University limits its negative impact on the environment and society makes them proud to be a student here

83% agree that sustainable development is something which all courses should actively incorporate and promote

62% said how seriously a university takes environmental issues was important in deciding where to apply to study

Key findings: Experiences of education and sustainability

72% feel like their education has at least somewhat prepared them to meet the challenges of climate change

58% feel like their education has at least somewhat prepared them to meet the challenges of the nature crisis

73% say the University takes action to limit its negative impact on the environment and society

73% say being a student at the University of Salford encourages them to think and act to help the environment, and other people

Key findings: Jobs and Employers

66% say whether a role contributes to tackling climate change will be important when applying for job

67% say whether a role contributes to tackling the nature crisis will be important when applying for jobs

59% say they want their job to actively contribute to sustainable development

72% would accept a salary £1000 lower than average to work in a company with a good social and environmental record

60% would accept a salary £3000 lower than average to work in a company with a good social and environmental record

60% would accept a salary £3000 lower than average to work in a job that contributes to positive social and environmental change

Summary

The survey results highlight a strong commitment among students to sustainability and its integration into their education. 81% of respondents believe the University should teach skills and understanding that positively impact society and the environment, signalling a clear expectation that sustainability is not an optional extra but a core component of academic programmes. This aligns with the growing global emphasis on equipping graduates with the knowledge and competencies to address pressing environmental and social challenges.

Furthermore, 83% agree that sustainable development should be actively incorporated and promoted across all courses, reinforcing the need for a whole-institution approach where sustainability is embedded in curricula rather than confined to specialist modules. This expectation reflects students' recognition that sustainability is relevant across disciplines, from business and engineering to health and the arts.

Students also value the University's institutional responsibility: 75% say that knowing the University limits its negative impact on the environment and society makes them proud to be part of Salford. This sense of pride suggests that sustainability is not only an academic priority but also a reputational factor that influences student identity and belonging.

The findings show encouraging progress in preparing students for global challenges: 72% feel their education has at least somewhat prepared them to meet the challenges of climate change, and 58% feel prepared to address the nature crisis. While these figures are positive, they also indicate room for improvement, particularly in strengthening content and experiences that address biodiversity and ecological issues.

Students perceive the University as taking meaningful action: 73% believe Salford acts to limit its negative impact on the environment and society, and the same proportion say that being a student here encourages them to think and act in ways that help the environment and other people. This suggests that sustainability is influencing both institutional practices and student behaviours, creating a culture of responsibility and engagement.

The survey underscores the growing importance of sustainability in career choices. 66% of students consider whether a role contributes to tackling climate change important when

applying for jobs, and 67% apply the same criterion to roles addressing the nature crisis. Additionally, 59% want their future job to actively contribute to sustainable development, demonstrating that sustainability is not only an academic concern but a professional priority.

Students are even willing to make financial trade-offs for values-driven employment: 72% would accept a salary £1,000 lower than average to work for a company with a strong social and environmental record, and 60% would accept £3,000 less for a role that contributes to positive social and environmental change. This willingness reflects a generational shift toward purpose-driven careers and highlights the need for universities to prepare graduates for roles in the green economy and socially responsible sectors.

Recommendations

The findings from the 2024–25 survey reaffirm the importance of embedding sustainability across all aspects of university life. Students expect their education to equip them with the knowledge, skills, and values needed to address climate and nature challenges, while also valuing visible institutional leadership. To meet these expectations and strengthen alignment with the University Strategy (2025–2030), the following actions are recommended:

- Embed Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) across all programmes, ensuring sustainability principles are integrated into learning outcomes and assessments. Greater emphasis should be placed on ecological literacy, biodiversity, and global justice themes to close gaps identified in the survey.
- Expand experiential and applied learning opportunities, including live briefs, community projects, and sustainability-focused internships, enabling students to connect theory with practice and develop real-world problem-solving skills.
- Increase visibility and communication of sustainability achievements, through initiatives such as a University-wide Sustainability Impact Dashboard, enhanced presence at open days, and consistent messaging across prospectuses and digital platforms.
- Reinvigorate student engagement with sustainability, by updating the Sustainability Communications and Engagement Plan continuing Go Green Salford and adding interactive challenges, and optional micro-credentials to deepen understanding and maintain interest.
- Strengthen employability links to the green transition, by embedding sustainability into careers guidance, expanding Green Careers Week, and building partnerships with employers in low-carbon and nature-positive sectors.
- Enhance collaboration with the Students' Union, supporting joint initiatives and student-led projects through funding and recognition schemes to create leadership and ownership of sustainability action.

- Accelerate progress toward Net Zero Carbon and biodiversity goals, prioritising renewable energy adoption, circular economy practices, and sustainable transport options across campus operations.
- Monitor and report annually on sustainability integration and engagement, using data to inform continuous improvement and ensure accountability for strategic objectives.

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Introduction

The University Strategy (2025-2030), “Innovating to Enrich Lives”, commits to creating a sustainable, equitable, just, healthy, creative and prosperous society.

One of our four delivery themes is “Improving Environment & Sustainability”, which explicitly calls for building an environmentally sustainable university, supporting placemaking and the Greater Manchester Net Zero target. Our university ethos of innovation, social impact, and civic responsibility is reflected in our sustainability strategy, action and impact.

Guided by our values of Collaboration, Ambition, Inclusivity, and Integrity, we create partnerships, set bold sustainability targets, ensure community-wide benefits, and support regional and national climate goals.

The University of Salford Sustainability Strategy received final approval in early 2024-25. Developed from a broad consultation across students, colleagues and partners our strategy sets out a clear vision for a Net Zero Carbon campus by 2038, a stronger focus on Education for Sustainable Development, and deeper engagement with local and global communities to drive impactful change.

Our Sustainability Strategy focuses on three key areas:

✅ Sustainable Campus – Aiming for Net Zero Carbon by 2038, reducing energy use, embracing the circular economy, and embedding sustainability into decision-making.

✅ Sustainable Impact – Working with our supply chain as well as integrating Education for Sustainable Development into all taught programmes, prioritising sustainability in research, and tracking contributions to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

✅ Sustainable Communities – Sharing expertise, fostering partnerships, and supporting local and global sustainability efforts.

As a university, we have an opportunity to ensure that our graduates are empowered and equipped to tackle and cope with sustainability challenges, the importance of which is reflected in our Education Delivery Plan. Sustainability is relevant to all disciplines, and our vision is that all learners are supported to develop the knowledge, skills, values and behaviours necessary to be empowered and equipped to take action to support

sustainability, and tackle and cope with the environmental, social and economic challenges we face today and in the future.

Students Organising for Sustainability (SOS-UK) are an education charity focusing on sustainability in a student context. They have asked students across HEIs every year since 2010 to feed back on their attitudes towards learning for sustainable development, via an online survey. This enables monitoring of sustainability perceptions over time, and thus gives insight for both individual and general HEI insights into student interest of sustainability, and the potential for meeting these interests if they are not already met.

The survey in 2024-25 included 264 responses from University of Salford students. The survey is promoted as a skills survey rather than sustainability-specific in order to capture as wide a range of opinions and experiences as possible. This allows the organisation to monitor progress in positive perceptions towards sustainability and highlight where the interest in sustainability education has been met, in addition to areas for improvement.

Data Considerations:

This University of Salford report draws on comparisons with the last SOS-UK Skills Survey UK-wide report, published in 2025. Data points and percentages were rounded down for 0.0-0.5 and rounded up for 0.51-0.99. The cited texts are only representative of sampled textual entries that students were asked to provide and are neither conclusive nor exhaustive in nature.

Except for demographic related discrete questions and those with specific choices, respondents were asked to respond to questions using a Likert scale. For example, the scale used the following criteria: - Not at all important, not important, neither important nor unimportant, fairly important, very important, don't know, not applicable or

- Strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, strongly agree, don't know, not applicable

The graphs contained showed the combined percentage of positive answers which stated 'somewhat agree' and 'strongly agree' or 'somewhat important' and 'very important'.

Respondent Details

The 2024/2025 national online Sustainability Skills survey was completed by 11397 students in total during October and November 2023 to build on the data gathered by research carried out since 2010-11. The survey received 264 respondents from University of Salford.

Table 1 Survey Response Rates

Year	University of Salford Responses	National Responses
2019-20	181	8900
2020-21	326	8344
2021-22	<100	8500
2022-23	102	9303
2023-24	269	11,397
2024-25	264	9973

Figure 1 shows the distribution of these respondents across the four schools at the University of Salford. In 2024-25 the majority (33%) of respondents were a part of the School of Science, Engineering and Environment and the School of Art, Media and Creative Technology has the lowest response of 7%. This differs from 2023-24 where the largest response was from the School of Health and Society (38%) and Salford Business School had the lowest respondent rate of 12%. In both years around 20% of respondents did not define their school.

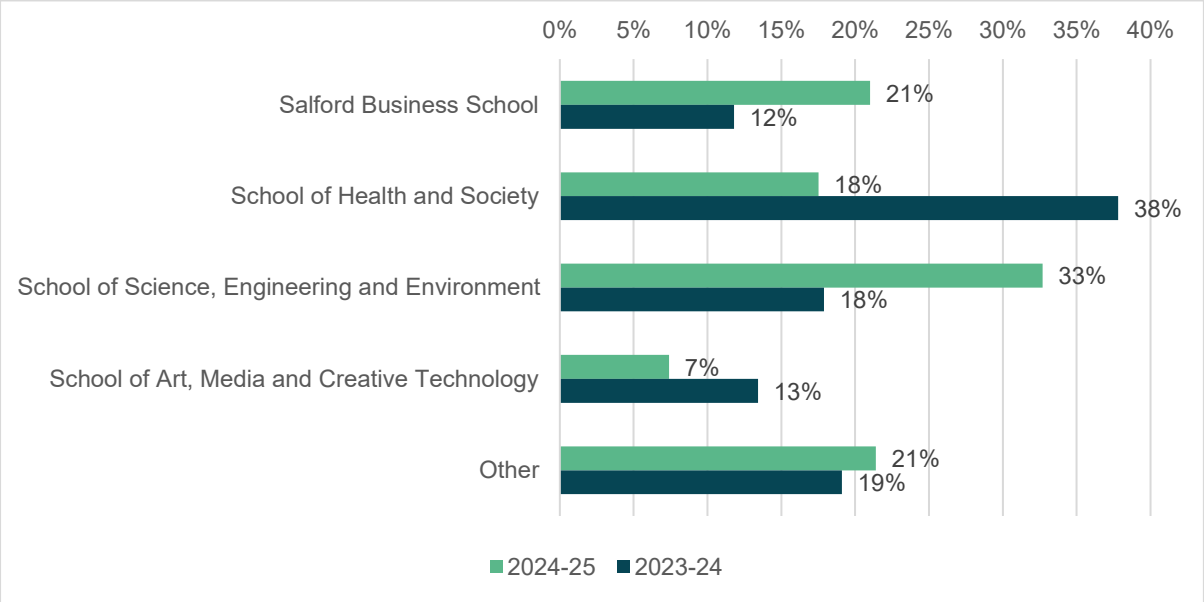

Figure 1 Distribution of respondents across the University of Salford Schools for 2024-25 compared to 2023-24

Figure 2 shows the distribution of respondents across different levels. For both this and the previous year the majority of respondents (39% and 45% respectively) are in their first year of study, whilst the fewest number were in year 4, 5 or above.

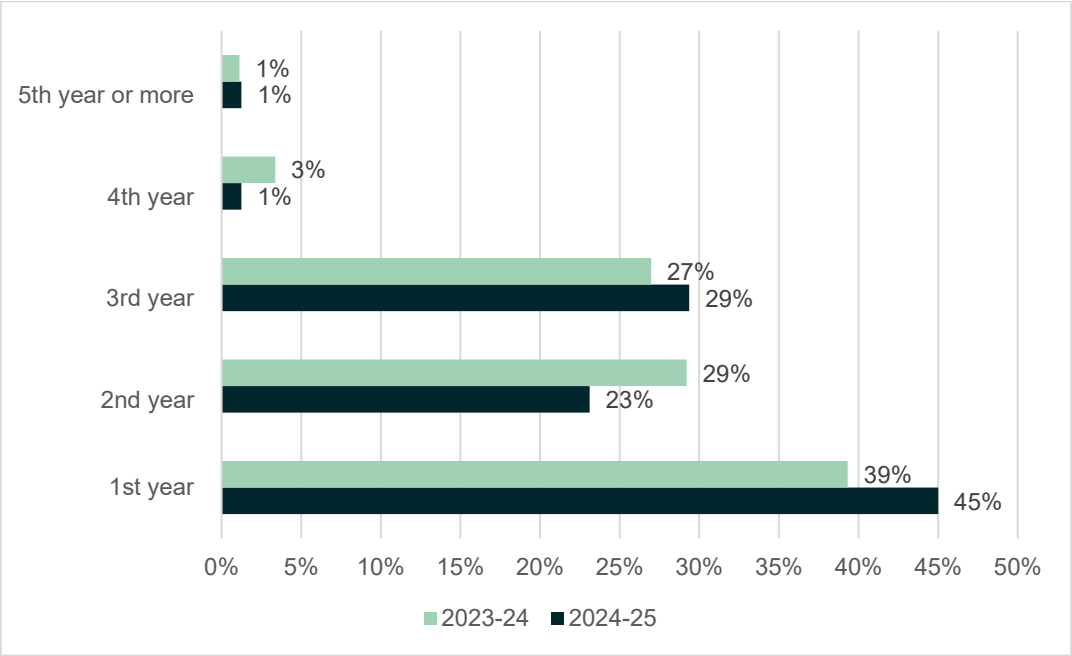

Figure 2 Year of study of respondents, %

Factors affecting student choice of place of study

Figure 3 shows a bar chart detailing the importance of a range of factors that influenced University of Salford respondents when selecting their place of further study. The data from University of Salford students highlights that while traditional factors such as employment prospects (93%), teaching quality (88%), and course reputation (86%) remain dominant in influencing study choices, ethical and social responsibility considerations are increasingly significant.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI): 82% of respondents rated the institution's commitment to progressing EDI as important, with over half (52%) considering it very important. This demonstrates that students value inclusive environments and expect universities to actively promote fairness and representation.

Environmental Responsibility: 62% of students indicated that how seriously the university takes its role in environmental issues is important, with 34% rating it very important. This places sustainability ahead of league table positions and attractiveness of location, signalling a shift toward socially conscious decision-making.

Broader Social Impact: Similarly, 62% valued the institution's role in economic, political, and cultural issues, reinforcing the expectation that universities act as responsible global citizens.

While sustainability and EDI are not yet the top drivers compared to career outcomes, they are core differentiators for prospective students. Strengthening visible commitments, such as transparent sustainability goals, inclusive policies, and community engagement can enhance institutional appeal and align with evolving student priorities.

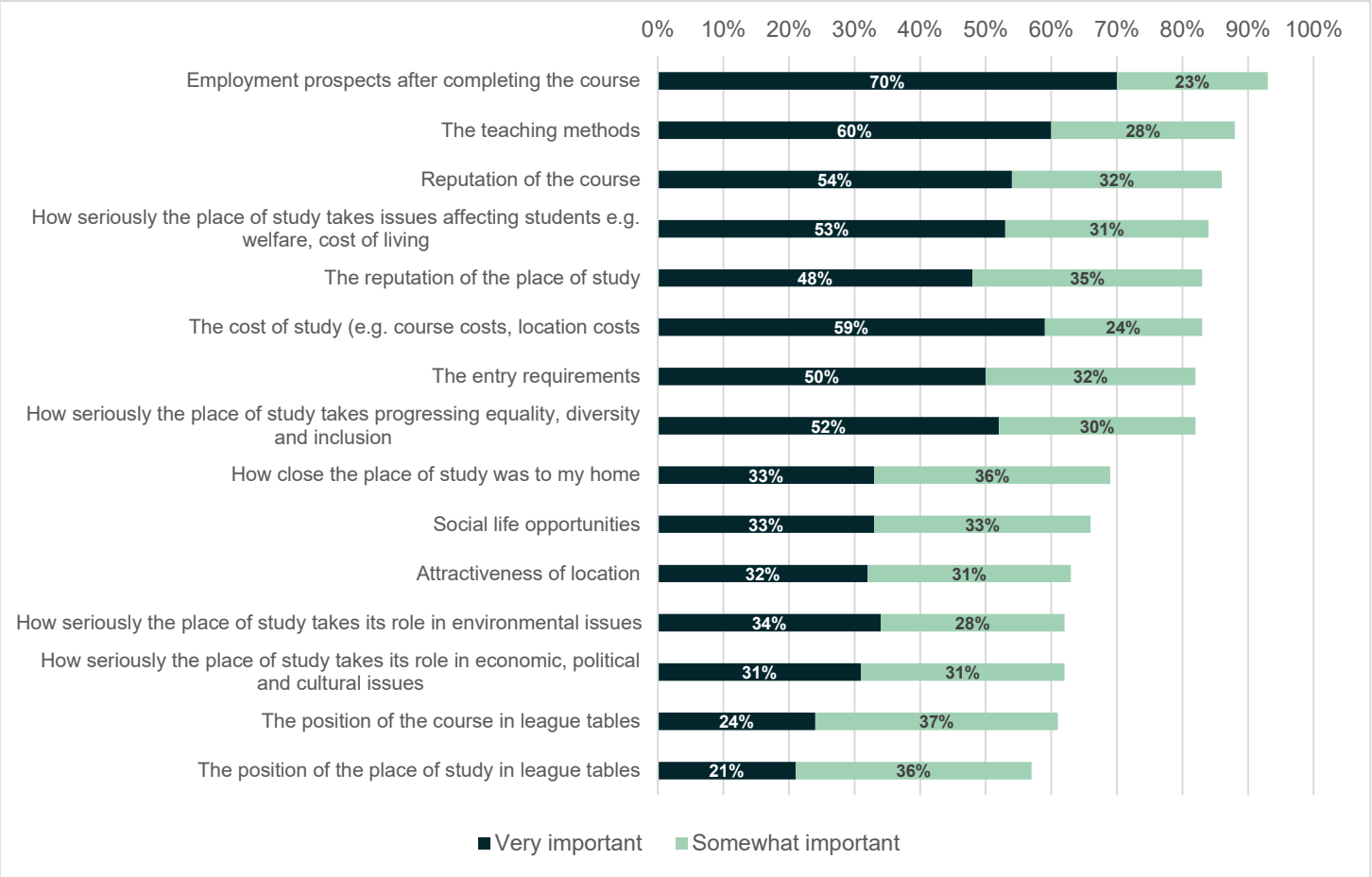

Figure 3 This importance to respondents of various factors when choosing their place of study

When looking at the responses from University of Salford respondents over time, while both factors matter, the emphasis on environmental sustainability has grown sharply in recent years, surpassing other societal roles. This trend highlights the need for strong environmental strategies and visible commitments to attract and retain students.

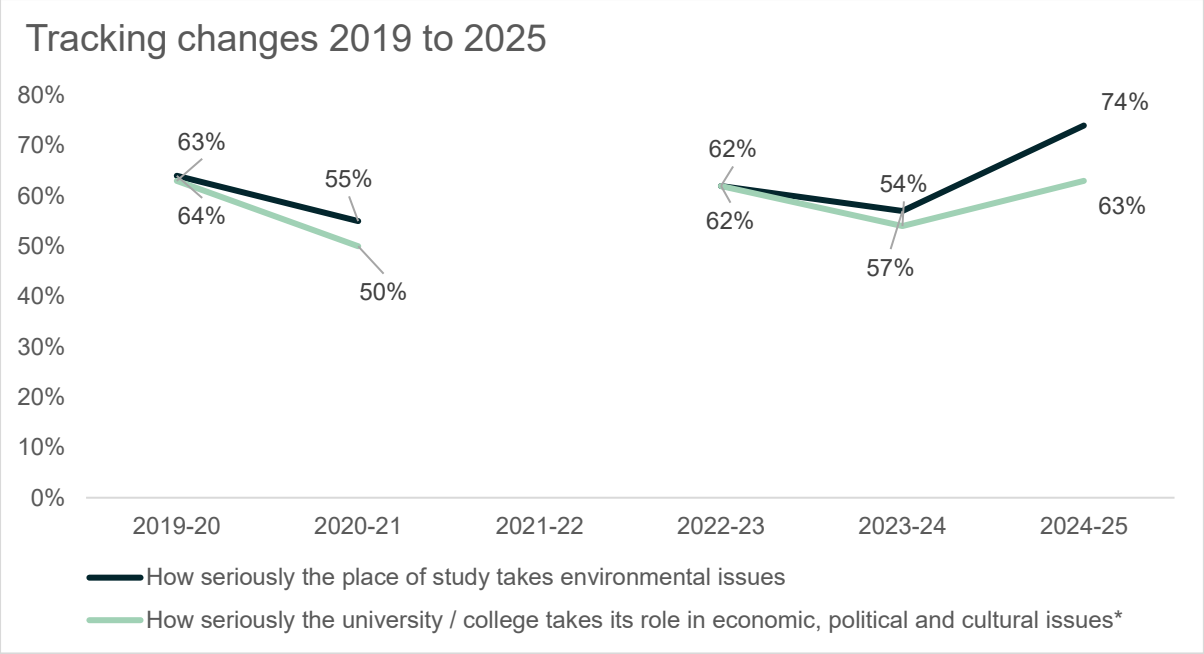

Figure 4 Tracking changes in % of University of Salford respondents agreeing with each statement over time

Student sustainability expectations for the University

Respondents were asked the extent to which they agree their place of study should help them make a positive difference to society and the environment. The majority (89%) of respondents agreed that their place of study should be obliged to do so, representing a 6% increase from 2023-24 and supporting a gradual increase in agreement over time.

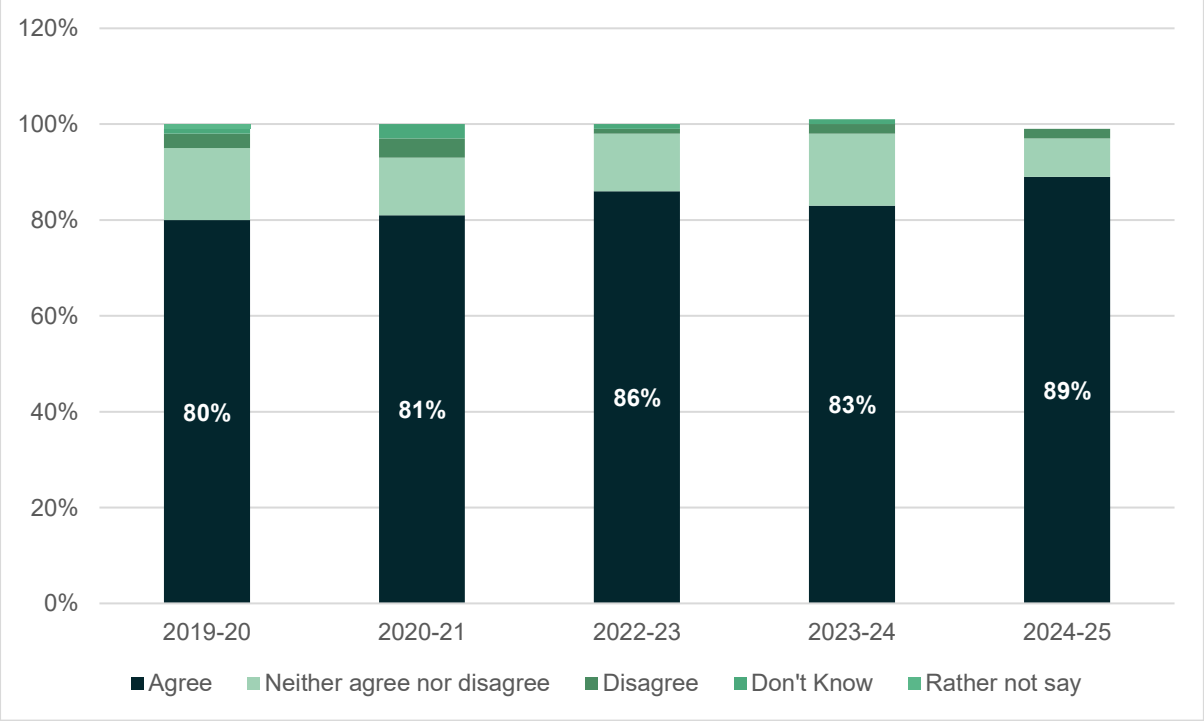

Figure 5 % responses to Q. How much, if at all, do you agree that places of study/apprenticeships like yours should be obliged to develop students'/apprentices' understanding and skills that make a positive difference to

society and the environment as part of their courses? Question text 2019-20 to 2023-24: 'To what extent, if at all, do you agree places of study should be obliged to develop student's social and environmental skills as part of their courses?

Respondents were also asked whether they expect their place of study to take action on sustainability. Survey results from 2019–2025 show consistently strong support among University of Salford respondents for embedding sustainability in education, though recent years indicate a slight decline in some areas:

While overall support remains strong, the downward trend for institutional responsibility (from 92% to 81%) signals a need for renewed commitment and visible action on sustainability across all levels of education.

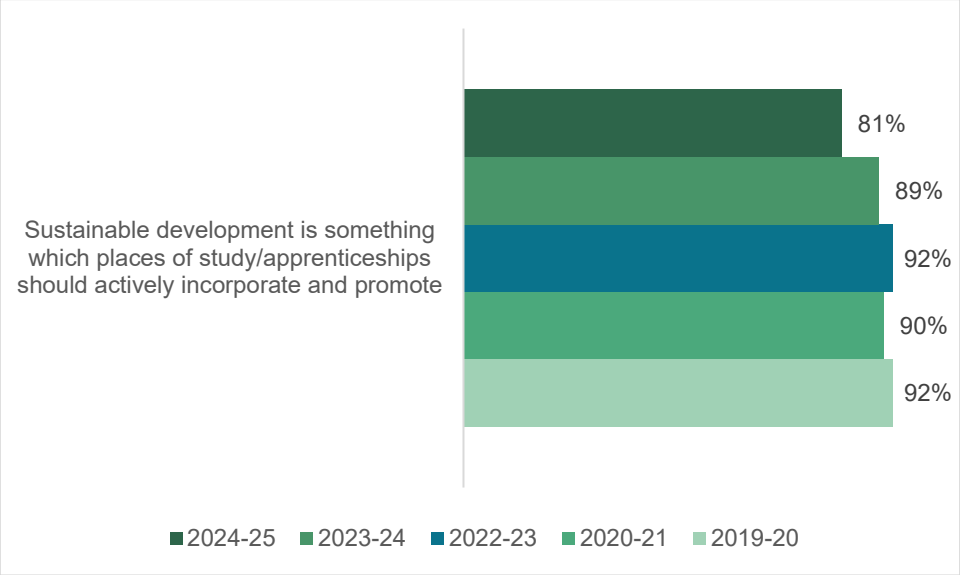

Figure 6 % of University of Salford respondents who agree that Sustainable development is something which places of study/apprenticeships should actively incorporate and promote

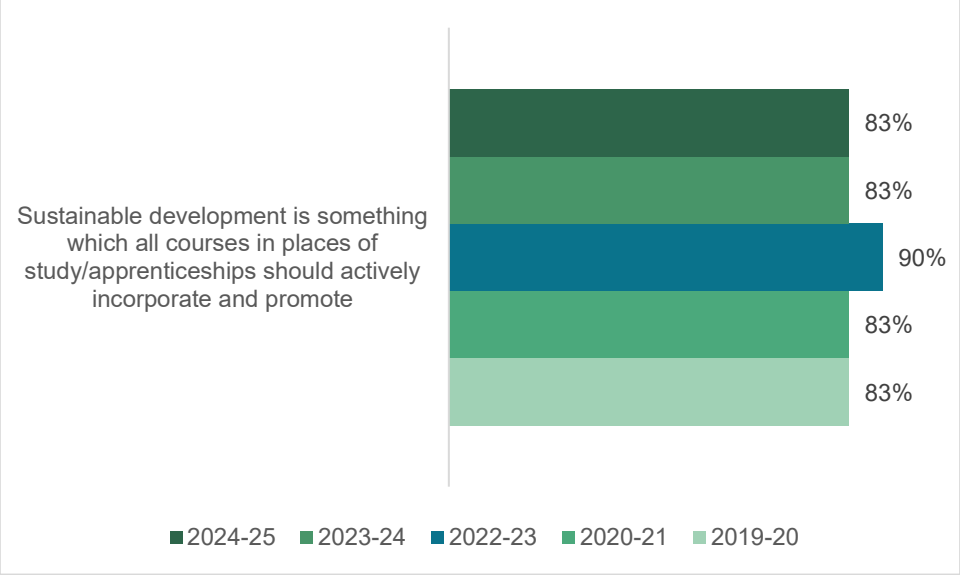

Figure 7 % of University of Salford respondents who agree that Sustainable development is something which all courses in places of study/apprenticeships should actively incorporate and promote

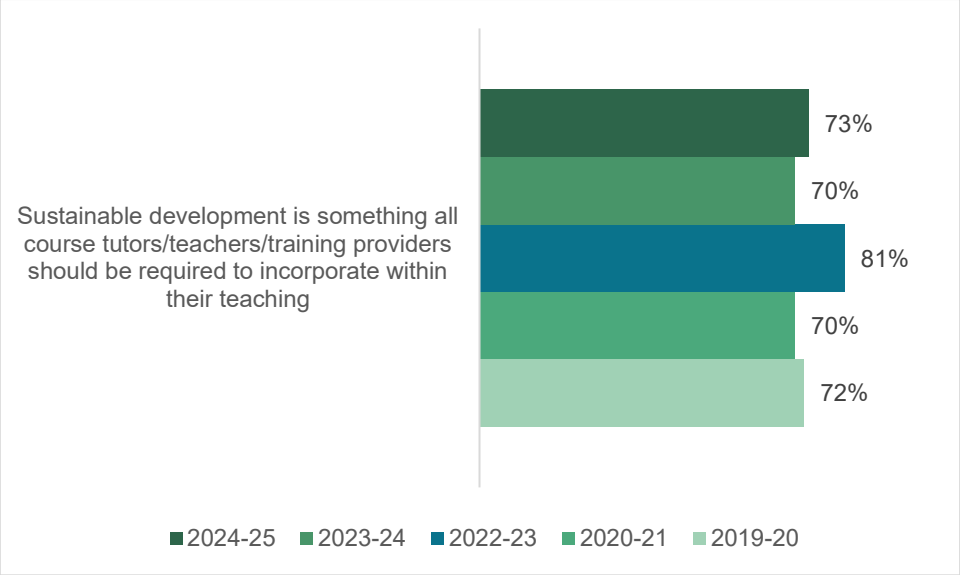

Figure 8 % of University of Salford respondents who agree that Sustainable development is something all course tutors/teachers/training providers should be required to incorporate within their teaching

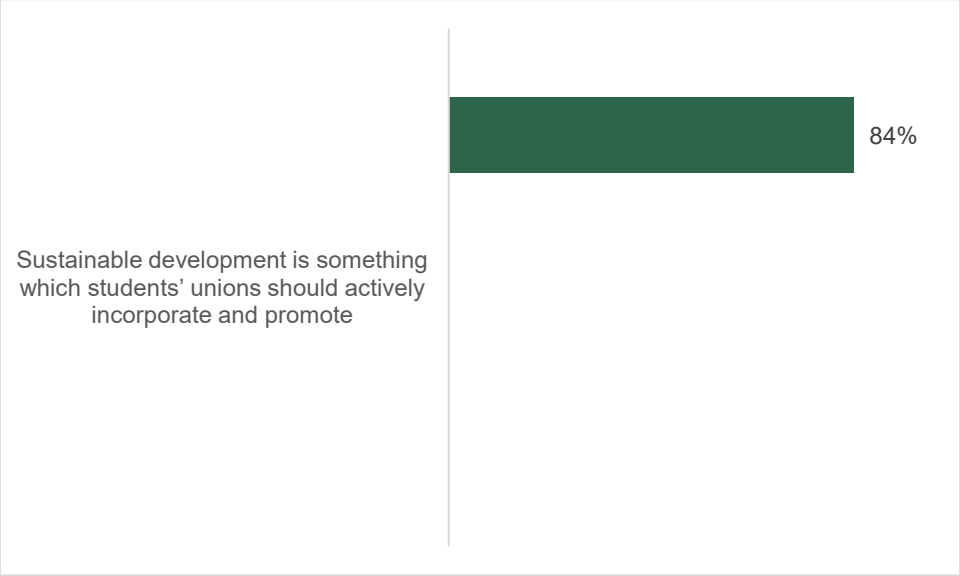

*Figure 9 % of University of Salford respondents who agree that Sustainable development is something which students' unions should actively incorporate and promote *New for 2024-25 Survey*

Student perceptions of the University in terms of its sustainability action

The University of Salford's sustainability efforts have seen fluctuating student perceptions over the past five academic years. In terms of institutional action to limit environmental and social impact, confidence was relatively strong in 2019–20 (77%) but dropped in 2020–21 (70%) which could be due to a lack of visibility as on campus attendance was impacted by Covid-19. A significant improvement occurred in 2022–23 (84%), suggesting successful initiatives or communication during that period. However, subsequent years saw a decline to 73%, indicating challenges in maintaining momentum or visibility.

Students' pride in the university's sustainability actions, first measured in 2022–23, started high at 83% but has steadily decreased to 75% in 2024–25. This downward trend may reflect a perceived gap between stated commitments and visible outcomes.

The Students' Union shows gradual improvement, rising from 58% in 2019–21 to 68% in 2024–25, though still trailing behind university scores. This suggests an opportunity for stronger collaboration and visibility of SU-led initiatives.

Encouragement for students to think and act sustainably mirrors the institutional action trend: a peak in 2022–23 (77%) followed by a dip and partial recovery (73% in 2024–25). Opportunities for student involvement, measured for the first time in 2024–25, scored 72%, indicating a promising foundation for engagement.

The data provides clear evidence for increasing visibility and communication of sustainability achievements and future ambition through multiple channels. Inclusion of measurable impact successes would build trust and pride. Further integration of sustainability into the curriculum and extracurricular activities will increase engagement opportunities. Strengthening the collaboration around sustainability projects with the Students' Union will also boost engagement and perceptions.

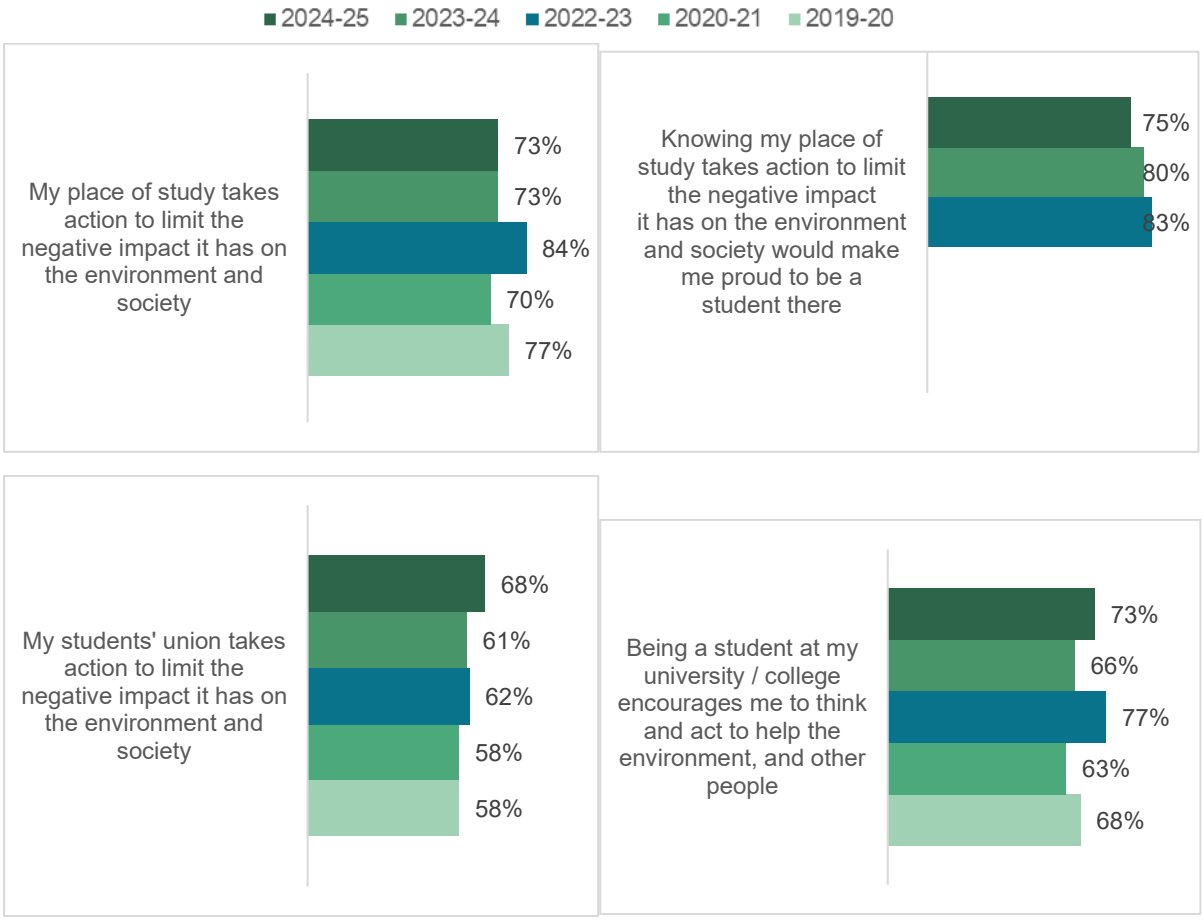

Figure 10 % respondents who agree with the above statements

Figure 11 % respondents who agree with the above statement

Sustainability-related skills and understanding

Respondents were asked which skills and/or understanding for sustainability had been covered in their teaching.

Figure 12 What skills are currently covered in teaching?

Respondents were asked whether any of the above skills and understanding has been covered in the teaching they had experienced so far. The responses showed that currently teaching strongly emphasis core academic and interpersonal skills. The highest coverage

was for using different types of knowledge and ideas (78%), followed by collaboration and communication (73%) and critical thinking (72%). This suggests that teaching is effectively addressing foundational cognitive and social skills.

The responses also suggest that goal-setting and cultural awareness are well integrated as setting clear goals and planning (71%) and understanding and appreciating different cultures (71%) are also high.

Thinking about own thoughts and feelings (68%) and considering short- and long-term options (61%) are slightly lower, suggesting that metacognitive and future-oriented skills are present but less emphasised.

Skills related to cultural norms and values (57%), power and influence in society (57%), and sustainability issues (53%) are among the lowest. Impact on communities (52%) and impact on nature (51%) are the least covered, suggesting there is an opportunity to increase consideration of social responsibility and environmental impact in teaching.

Overall, the responses suggest that teaching strongly supports knowledge integration, collaboration, and planning, but systems thinking, sustainability, and societal awareness are less well embedded.

Student expectations for learning about sustainability

The longitudinal data from 2019–2025 indicates fluctuating but generally moderate interest among University of Salford respondents in learning more about sustainable development. Initial interest was 69% in 2019–20, followed by a slight decline to 66% in 2021–22. A notable peak occurred in 2022–23, where interest rose to 79%, suggesting heightened engagement during that period. However, subsequent years show a downward trend, with 67% in 2023–24 and 65% in 2024–25, marking the lowest level recorded. This pattern suggests that while sustainability remains an area of interest, recent declines may indicate the need for renewed strategies to maintain student engagement and integrate sustainability learning opportunities effectively within curricula.

These findings align with national trends reported by SOS-UK, which consistently show that approximately 60–65% of students across UK higher education express a desire to learn more about sustainability, despite variations in institutional delivery (SOS-UK, 2024). The SOS-UK report also suggests that the decline in demand may stem from cost of living pressures, reduced media coverage of climate change, and greater curriculum integration, though further research is needed to confirm.

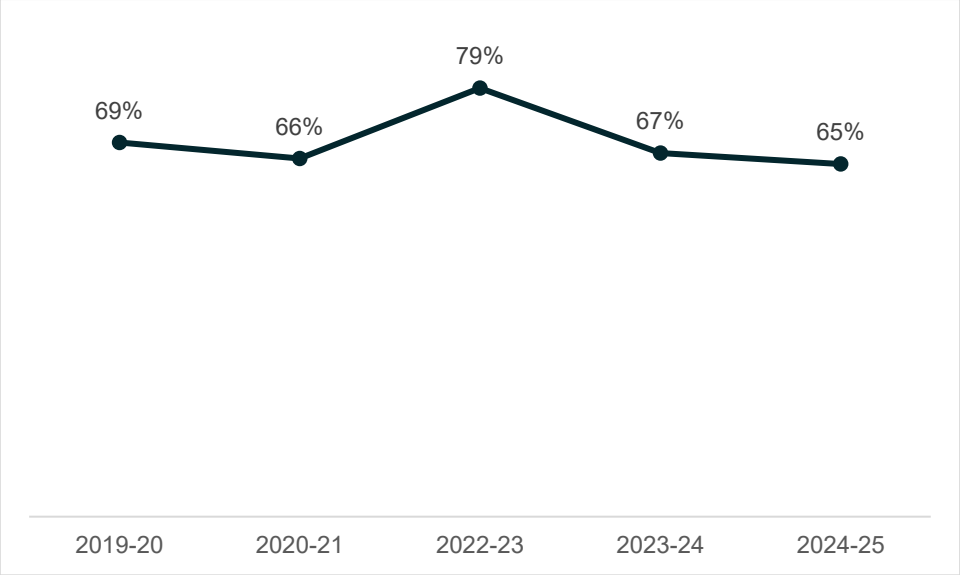

Figure 13 % students who agree that Sustainable development is something which they would like to learn more about

Respondents were also asked why they would like to learn more about sustainable development. Respondents see sustainable development as urgent, universal, and deeply interconnected with environmental, social, and economic well-being. Their motivations span:

- Personal values (love for nature, responsibility to future generations),
- Professional goals (career relevance, ethical practice),
- Practical action (daily habits, advocacy),
- Continuous learning (skills, strategies, innovations).

There is a clear call for knowledge that is actionable, multidisciplinary, and future-focused, enabling individuals to contribute meaningfully at personal, professional, and societal levels.

A summary of the key themes and some quotes are shown in the table below.

Table 2 Summary of key themes and quotes from why respondents would like to learn more about sustainable development.

Environmental Protection & Climate Action	***Future Generations & Ethical Responsibility***
• Strong emphasis on mitigating climate change, protecting habitats, wildlife, and ecosystems. • Recognition that sustainability is essential for preventing environmental degradation and ensuring a livable planet.	• Many respondents express concern for leaving a better world for their children and future generations. • Sustainability seen as a moral obligation to avoid repeating past mistakes and resource depletion.
"It's a no-brainer. Sustainability is essential if we're to limit our impact on the planet. We need immediate damage control to prevent environmental catastrophe."	*"Leaving the Earth in good condition for the next generation is important for me."*

Professional & Academic Relevance	***Practical Application & Advocacy***
• Desire to adopt sustainable practices in daily life and become more mindful of individual impact. • Interest in cultural change, making sustainability a shared value within families and communities.	• Interest in actionable steps to promote sustainability locally and globally. • Desire to become sustainability ambassadors and influence peers, workplaces, and communities.
"I would like to learn more to apply it in my future career."	*"How we, as students can encourage sustainable development in our place of learning."*
Personal Growth & Lifestyle Integration	***Continuous Learning & Skills Development***
• Desire to adopt sustainable practices in daily life and become more mindful of individual impact. • Interest in cultural change—making sustainability a shared value within families and communities.	• Recognition that sustainability is complex and evolving; respondents want to stay updated and gain extra skills. • Curiosity about challenges, strategies, and holistic approaches to sustainable development.
"I want to learn more so I can actively promote sustainable development in my life."	*"There's always something more to learn, to make one think, reflect, and hopefully contribute to change."* *"While I consider myself well educated in the topic, there's always more to learn and I always want to be striving to do better."*
Global & Social Dimensions	***Innovation & Future-Oriented Thinking***
• Awareness of interconnected issues: climate change, poverty, social inequality, and resource depletion. • Sustainability viewed as a pathway to healthier societies, economic stability, and social equity.	• Interest in new technologies and innovations that support sustainability. • Belief that sustainable development is "the future" and key to rebuilding societies and ecosystems.
"The number of people in the world means that we all have to find smarter ways of consuming the world's resources."	*"As an architecture student, in the future my choices could have large impacts on the environment."*

Student expectations for the University sustainability action

When asked what actions they would like to see the University take to improve its performance on sustainability, many respondents felt the university is doing well but could increase awareness and visibility of current efforts. Some expressed uncertainty or had no suggestions, often due to being new to the university which highlights the need for timely engagement with students on sustainability issues.

Based on the survey feedback, several key areas have emerged for enhancing sustainability efforts:

1. Awareness & Education

Integrate sustainability across all disciplines and offer interactive projects (e.g., relating to the UN SDGs).
Provide optional lectures, workshops, and volunteering opportunities.
Organise monthly awareness days and a Sustainable Development Week.
Collaborate with local organisations and encourage green technology projects.

2. Communication & Engagement

Improve communication between the university and Students' Union.
Establish a sustainability touchpoint and increase event frequency.
Share regular updates via email and awareness campaigns.

3. Waste Reduction

Reduce paper usage, plastic packaging, and single-use plastics.
Implement comprehensive recycling and composting programmes.
Promote reuse and proper waste disposal.

4. Energy Efficiency & Infrastructure

Adopt energy-efficient building designs and smart technology.
Expand renewable energy use (solar, wind, geothermal).
Incorporate green spaces and wildlife-friendly areas.
Pursue green certifications for campus facilities.

5. Transportation

Promote bike-sharing, walking, and carpooling with incentives.
Offer free or subsidised public transport and add EV charging stations.
Reduce reliance on air travel for research; increase online events.

6. Food & Retail

Provide more plant-based food options.
Incentivise sustainable purchasing and remove harmful brands.

7. Practical Initiatives

Host eco-friendly pop-up events, litter-picking sessions, and wildlife surveys.
Fund green research projects and encourage student-led initiatives.

8. Additional Themes

Promote health and wellbeing alongside sustainability.
Greater focus on decolonisation and innovative transport solutions.

Some quotes include:
"My course this year, we have a group coursework on looking at the UN sustainable goals and WHO global challenges. I feel like other courses should incorporate this into other courses if it is possible and in an interactive way."
"The amount of plastic wastes littering I have noticed on campus is essentially alarming… the university could engage in enlightenment programs to further drive the need for proper waste disposal."
"The new buildings should incorporate something like solar panels or a roof garden to promote diversity in bugs and birds rather than being plain and grey."
"Promote cycling and carpooling with incentives, and consider adding more electric vehicle charging stations."
"Offering more plant-based food."
"Have a sustainable development week where students and staff can collaborate on small and easy projects related to sustainable development, which will be fun, interactive and educational."

Sustainability issues covered in teaching

The data indicates that sustainability-related teaching has focused primarily on ethical and wellbeing dimensions. Topics such as accountability and ethics (57%), health and wellbeing (56%), and cultural diversity and equality (54%) are the most frequently reported as addressed, suggesting strong emphasis on personal and social responsibility. Environmental issues, while present, receive moderate attention. Climate change (46%) and waste, water, and energy (42%) are reported as covered by less than half of respondents, and ecosystems and ecological principles (29%) and biological diversity (36%) are even less prominent. This points to a gap in ecological literacy and systems thinking. Broader societal and historical themes, such as citizenship and democracy (22%) and colonialism and its influences (18%) are least covered. These areas are critical for understanding global justice and the historical context of sustainability but appear underrepresented.

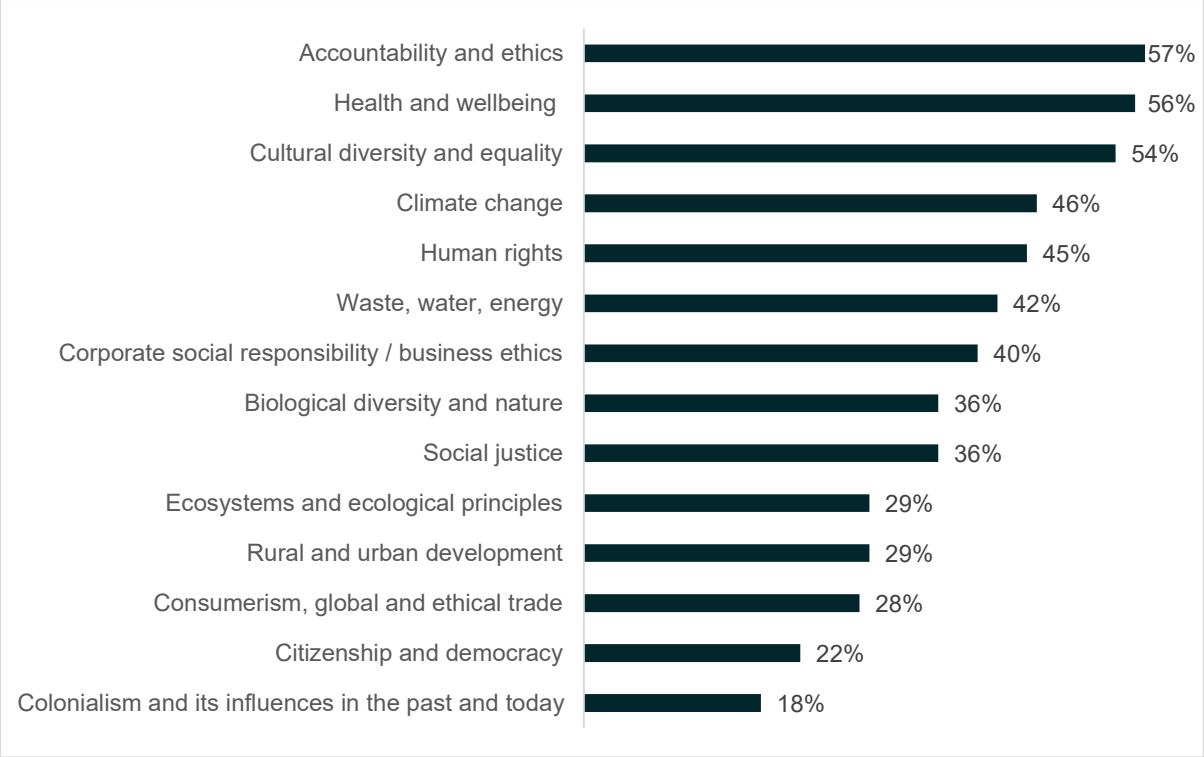

Figure 14 % responses by University of Salford respondents to the question Thinking about your time at your current place of study, which of the following issues have been covered in teaching so far?

Impact of this learning

When asked about what impact, if any, had learning about any of these sustainability related issues had most respondents reported a positive influence including lifestyle changes, career alignment and broadened perspectives. The responses suggested that industry relevance matters, linking sustainability to students' fields (media, arts, healthcare, business) deepens engagement. The responses also emphasised the emotional dimension as sustainability education evokes both empowerment and anxiety, highlighting the need to provide support. Responses also suggested that many experienced these themes in a passive way suggested a need for more interactive and supportive approaches.

Table 3 Key themes from the impact of sustainability learning responses

Behavioural Change and Sustainable Habits	Strong evidence of lifestyle changes: • Reducing waste, conserving energy, recycling, composting. • Conscious purchasing (avoiding palm oil, ethical brands, second-hand items). • Awareness of carbon footprint.	*"It has made me more aware of my carbon footprint" and "I now make more conscious purchasing decisions."*

Career Aspirations and Professional Responsibility	Sustainability learning influences career choices: • Students aim for roles aligned with environmental stewardship, ethical business, and social responsibility. • Healthcare students emphasise culturally sensitive care and global health improvement.	*"I now prioritize roles that align with sustainability goals" and "I aim to help other world scientists and health practitioners find solutions."*
Industry-Specific Awareness	Recognition of sustainability challenges in: • **Film/TV industry**: Influence on global attitudes and responsibility for accurate messaging. • **Healthcare**: Cultural competence and equitable treatment. • **Business**: CSR and ethical trade shaping career decisions. • **Built environment**: Sustainable design and planning.	*"It really helped open my eyes to what an integral role the film industry plays in sustainability."*
Interconnectedness and Systems Thinking	Understanding links between disciplines and long-term impacts: • Economics, geography, history, health, and sustainability are interconnected. • Awareness that small actions have cumulative effects.	*"Learning these principles has made me realise just how complex sustainable development is."*
Cultural Awareness and Social Justice	Increased empathy and respect for diversity: • Exposure to different cultures and perspectives. • Commitment to equality and inclusion.	*"Got to know more and understanding more about different culture background in university."*
Personal Growth and Ethical Mindset	Students report becoming more mindful, tolerant, and intentional: • Ethical decision-making and accountability. • Desire to advocate for sustainability in communities.	*"It has made me more conscious about my actions on every aspect in life."*
Emotional Impact	Mixed emotional responses: • Hopeful for positive change and motivated to act. • Some feel anxious or depressed about global challenges.	*"It's both made me feel depressed at the state of the world, and occasionally hopeful for positive change."*
Negative or Limited Impact	A minority report: • Passive learning with no personal effect. • Stress from workload or deadlines.	*"We learnt it passively so it hasn't affected me in any way."*

Learning linked to climate change, nature and colonialism

Climate change learning

The University of Salford response data indicates that while basic concepts of climate change and mitigation strategies are relatively well addressed (19% extensively covered), significant gaps exist in areas such as adaptation, social equity, and future impacts on daily life and jobs, with 35–40% of students reporting no coverage.

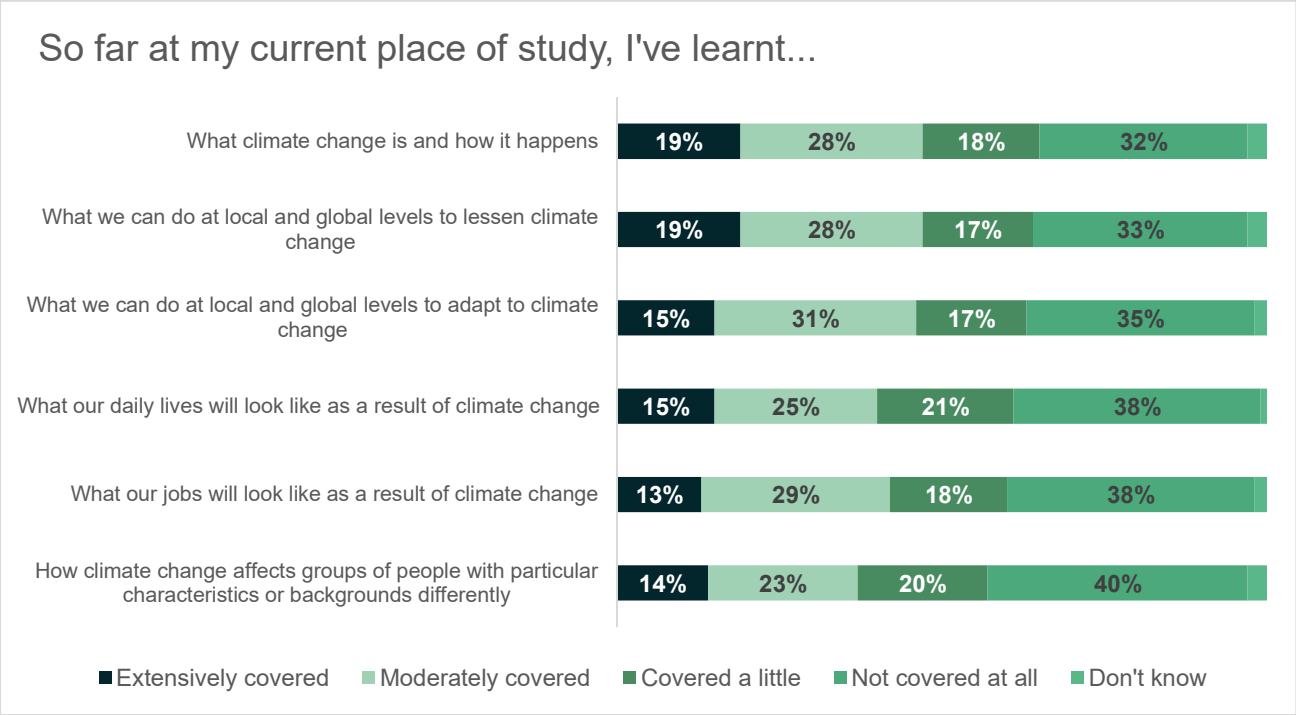

Figure 15 % responses by University of Salford respondents to what is covered in teaching linked to climate change

Nature learning

The data on nature learning shows that coverage of key topics is generally low, with only 12–15% of students reporting extensive coverage and an average of 43–46% saying topics were not covered at all. While basic concepts such as what the nature crisis is and how it happens, and actions to lessen nature loss, have slightly better coverage (15% extensively, 23–24% moderately), areas like adaptation strategies, daily life impacts, job implications, and social equity remain significantly underrepresented. This indicates that most students are leaving with limited understanding of practical and future-oriented aspects of biodiversity and nature loss.

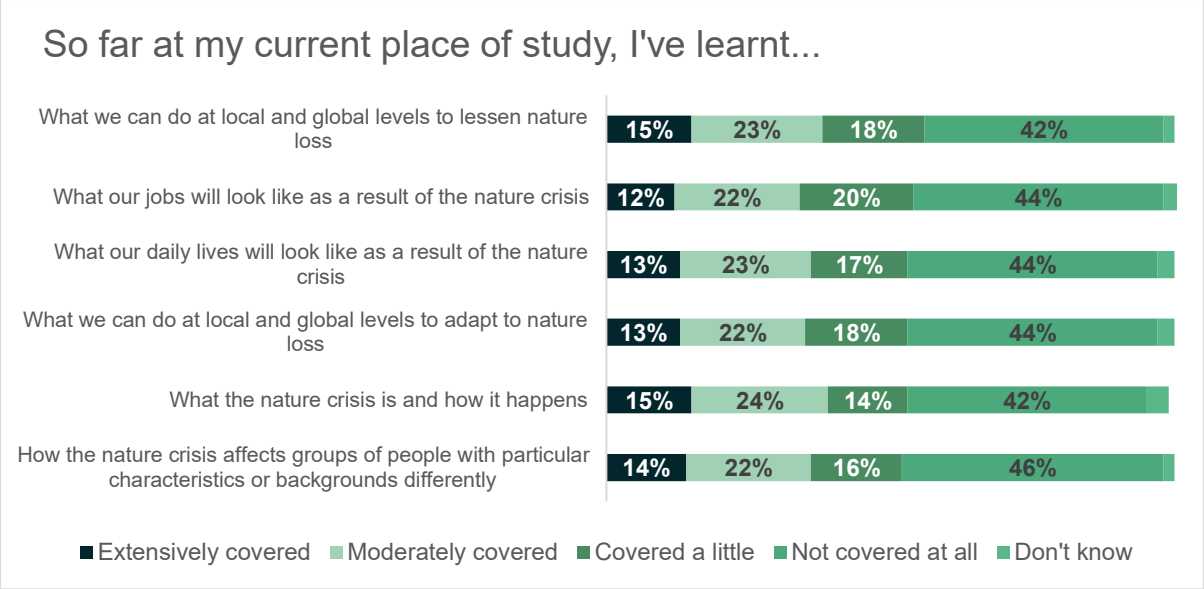

Figure 16 % responses by University of Salford respondents to what is covered in teaching linked to nature

Colonialism learning

The data on colonialism learning shows a mixed picture: while global and underrepresented perspectives are relatively well integrated (22–24% extensively covered and only 19–24% not covered at all), critical connections between historical processes like colonialism and current issues such as climate change remain underemphasised, with 41% reporting no coverage and only 15% extensively covered. Similarly, understanding how teaching content is shaped by colonial legacies is limited (37% not covered at all). Overall, foundational and contextual aspects of colonialism are less addressed than cultural perspectives, indicating a need for deeper integration of historical analysis into sustainability and social justice education.

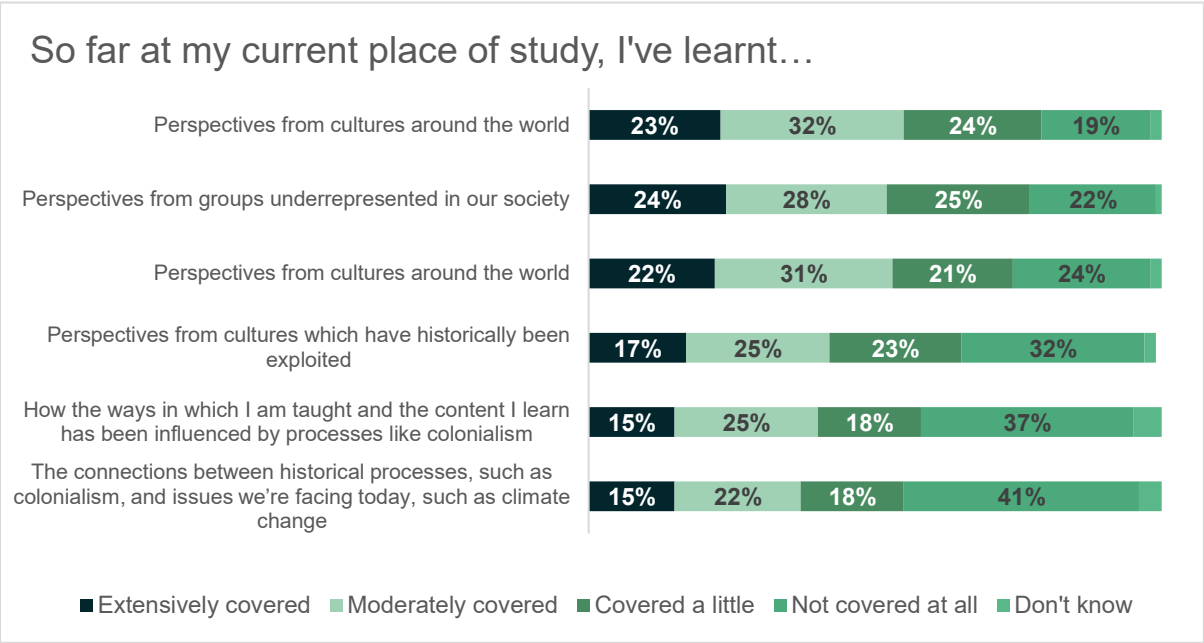

Figure 17 % responses by University of Salford respondents to what is covered in teaching linked to colonialism

Preparation for current sustainability challenges

Respondents were asked how prepared by their education do they feel to meet current sustainability challenges. The data suggests that while most respondents feel their education has provided at least some preparation for sustainability challenges, the level of preparedness varies across issues. Education appears strongest in addressing climate change, with 72% feeling at least somewhat prepared and 19% completely prepared. Preparedness for inequality linked to climate and nature crises is slightly lower but still significant at 66%, with 17% completely prepared. However, education seems weakest in preparing individuals for the nature crisis, where only 58% feel at least somewhat prepared and just 9% completely prepared. Across all areas, around 13–20% feel not at all prepared, and a small proportion (3–7%) are unsure, indicating gaps in sustainability education, particularly regarding biodiversity and ecosystem challenges.

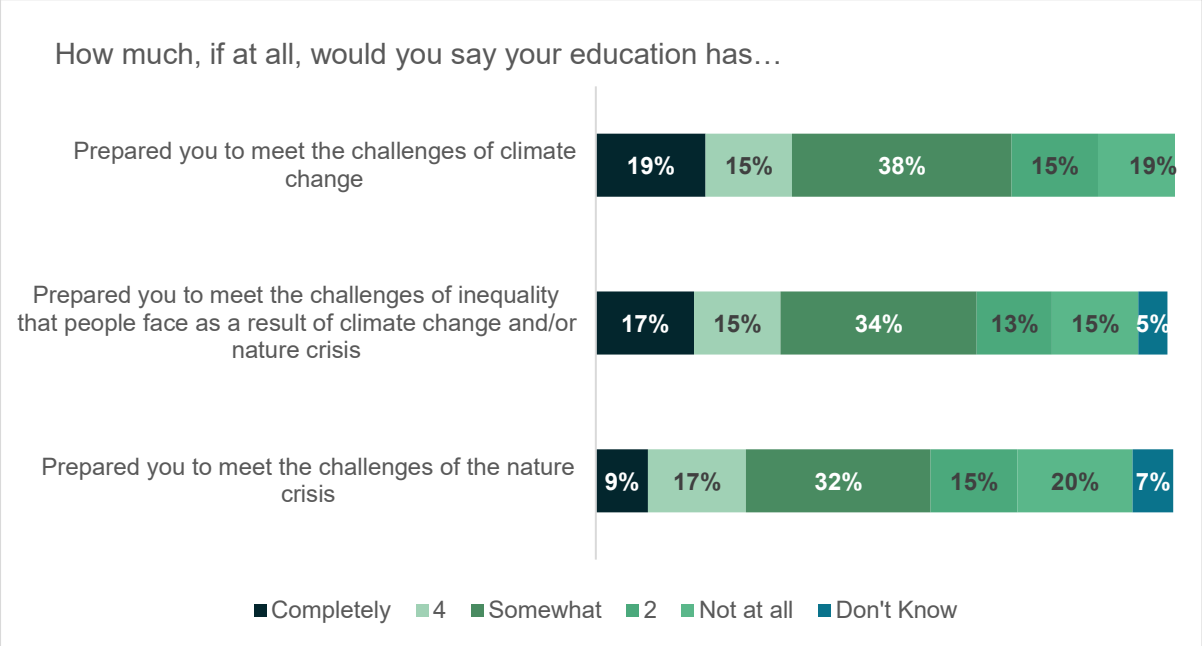

Figure 18 % response by University of Salford students on influence of education in preparedness for sustainability challenges

When comparing to national data for this question the University of Salford respondents report feeling significantly more prepared by their education to address sustainability challenges compared to national averages. For climate change, 72% of Salford respondents feel at least somewhat prepared versus 56% nationally, showing a 16-point advantage. Similarly, 66% of Salford respondents feel prepared to tackle inequality linked to climate and nature crises, compared to 48% nationally, a notable 18-point gap. Preparedness for the nature crisis is closer, with Salford at 58% and the national figure at 55%, indicating only a slight edge. Overall, Salford respondents demonstrate stronger confidence in their education's role in equipping them for sustainability issues, particularly in climate change and social inequality.

Table 4 University of Salford data compared to national data for at least somewhat prepared

How much, if at all, would you say your education has…	At least somewhat prepared – University of Salford respondents	At least somewhat prepared – National respondents
Prepared you to meet the challenges of climate change	72%	56%
Prepared you to meet the challenges of inequality that people face as a result of climate change and/or nature crisis	66%	48%
Prepared you to meet the challenges of the nature crisis	58%	55%

Preparation for 'green' jobs and ways of working

Respondents were introduced to the effect tackling climate change and nature loss and achieving sustainable development will have on ways of working and the types of job available before being asked how much they think their education has prepared them for this. The survey reveals a substantial knowledge gap about future sustainability-related roles and practices, with over 20% know nothing and a further 4–5% are unsure. However, when looking at preparedness, the University of Salford shows stronger results compared to the national average: 58% of respondents at Salford feel at least moderately prepared for both new types of jobs and new ways of working, versus 49% and 51% nationally. This suggests that while overall awareness remains low, Salford is ahead of the national benchmark in perceived preparedness, indicating a relative strength.

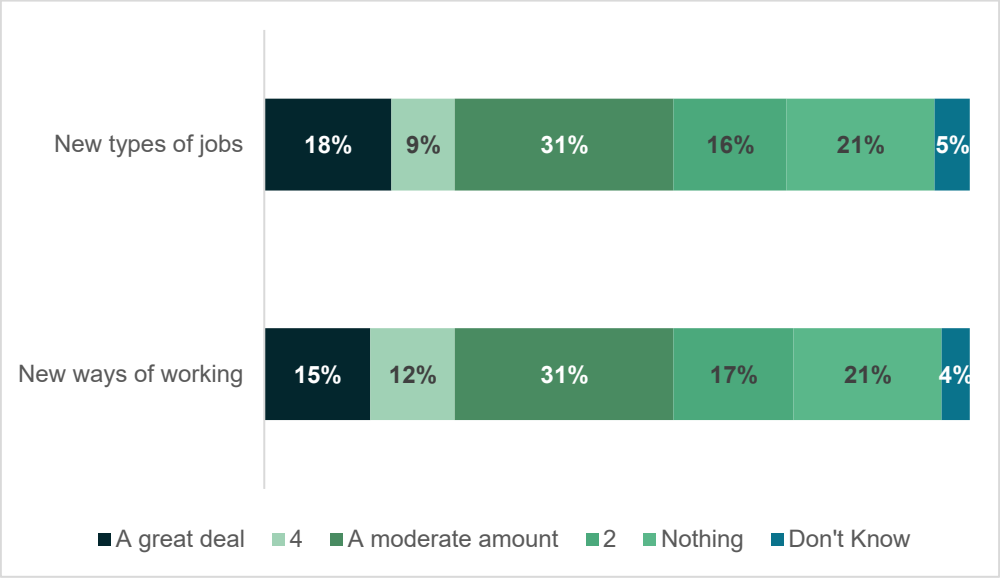

Figure 19 Preparedness for 'green' jobs and ways of working

Skills for new ways of working and new jobs

Respondents were further asked what skills and understanding do they think will be important for people to have for the new ways of working or new types of job needed to tackle climate change and the nature crisis. Key themes from the responses included:

- Environmental Focus: Climate change, sustainability, renewable energy, and water scarcity dominate the discussion. Circular economy and conservation are emerging priorities.
- Skill Requirements:
    - Analytical & Technical: Data analysis, systems thinking, computing, and technical know-how.
    - Project & Collaboration: Project management, teamwork, and communication are essential for implementing sustainability initiatives.
    - Problem-Solving: Critical thinking and adaptability to address complex challenges.
- Values & Mindset: Ethical awareness, adaptability, and lifelong learning are emphasized as industries evolve.
- Technology Integration: Green technologies and renewable energy solutions are central to future roles.

The image below shows a word cloud created from the responses highlighting key words such as climate, people, sustainability, crisis, change, communication, technologies and empathy.

Figure 20 A word cloud created from the responses of skills and understanding important for new types of working and new jobs

Sustainability skills and future employment

Respondents were asked how important they think it is for their future employers that the people they hire have sustainability skills and understanding. The University of Salford respondents strongly believe sustainability-related skills are critical for future employability. Across all surveyed competencies, 77%–85% of respondents rated them as important, with collaboration and empathetic communication ranking highest (85%). Other top priorities include considering impacts on communities (83%), integrating diverse knowledge sources (83%), and strategic planning (82%). Skills such as systems thinking, cultural awareness, and understanding societal power dynamics also scored highly (77%–81%). Overall, students view sustainability skills, particularly collaboration, inclusivity, critical thinking, and long-term planning as essential for future employers.

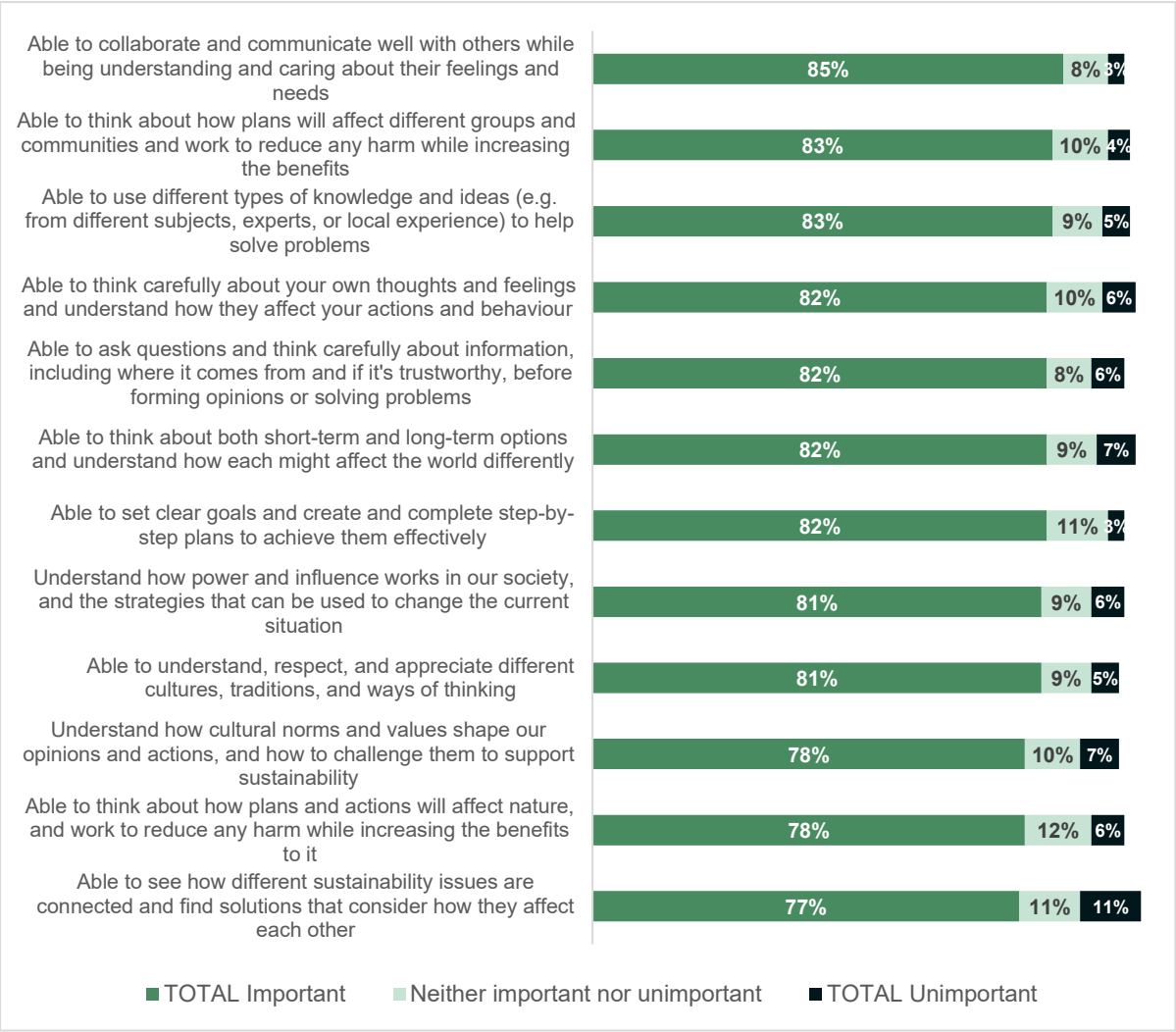

Figure 21 How important University of Salford respondents think it is for their future employers that the people they hire have these skills and understanding (balance: no response, Don't know)

Comparison of skills important to employers vs coverage during teaching

The data indicates a mix of alignment and gaps between the skills emphasised in teaching and those students believe are important for future employers. Core competencies such as integrating diverse knowledge (78% coverage; 83% importance), collaboration and communication (73%; 85%), and critical thinking (72%; 85%) show strong alignment, suggesting these foundational skills are well addressed. However, sustainability-specific skills reveal notable disconnects: systems thinking and linking sustainability issues are covered by only 53% of students despite being rated highly important (77%), and considering impacts on communities and nature is similarly underrepresented (coverage 52% and 51%; importance 78%). Cultural awareness for sustainability, while seen as important (78%), is not widely covered. These gaps highlight the need to strengthen curricula in sustainability-focused competencies to better prepare graduates for the expectations of employers in a rapidly evolving, sustainability-driven job market.

Table 5 Comparison between University of Salford respondents on what 'skills' have been covered in teaching vs what they perceive as important for future employers

	Coverage during teaching	% agree	Importance to future employers	% agree
Most commonly covered/ most important	Able to use different types of knowledge and ideas	78%	Able to use different types of knowledge and ideas (e.g. from different subjects, experts, or local experience) to help solve problems	83%
	Able to collaborate and communicate well with others while being understanding	73%	Able to think about how plans will affect different groups and communities and work to reduce any harm while increasing the benefits	83%
	Able to ask questions and think carefully about information	72%	Able to collaborate and communicate well with others while being understanding and caring about their feelings and needs	85%
Least commonly covered/ least important	Able to see how different sustainability issues are connected and find solutions	53%	Able to see how different sustainability issues are connected and find solutions that consider how they affect each other	77%
	Able to think about how plans will affect different groups and communities	52%	Able to think about how plans and actions will affect nature, and work to reduce any harm while increasing the benefits to it	78%
	Able to think about how plans and actions will affect nature	51%	Understand how cultural norms and values shape our opinions and actions, and how to challenge them to support sustainability	78%

Factors considered when applying for jobs

While practical factors such as work-life balance (91%), good starting salary (86%), and career progression (82%) remain top priorities, the data clearly shows that sustainability is a significant consideration for students when choosing jobs. Two-thirds of respondents rated roles that contribute to tackling climate change (66%) and the nature crisis (67%) as

important, and an even higher proportion (82%) value working for organisations that make a positive social and environmental impact. Additionally, 79% consider contributing to local community development important. These findings highlight that sustainability is not a marginal concern, it is a mainstream expectation among future graduates and should be integrated into education as well as career pathways and employer engagement strategies.

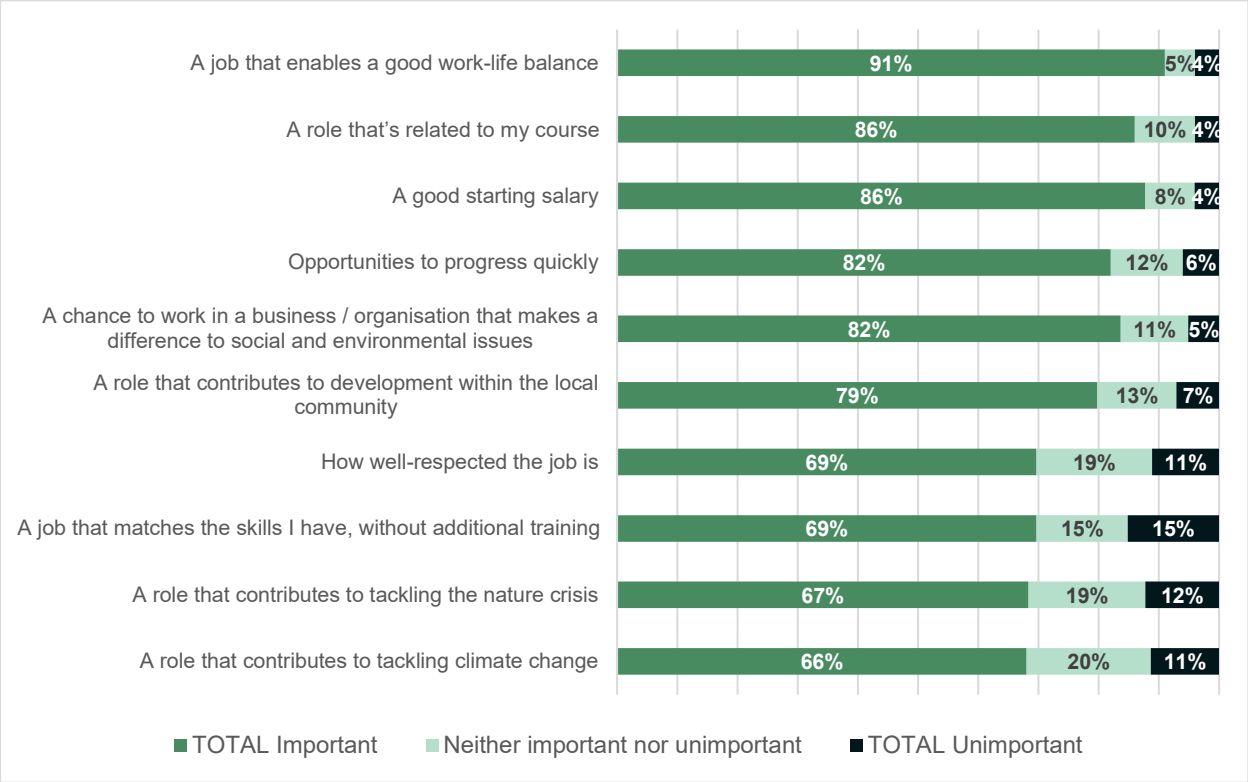

Figure 22 Factors considered by University of Salford respondents when considering applying for future jobs

Environmental and social credentials and contributions of employers

The data shows a consistent preference among graduates for roles in organisations with strong environmental and social responsibility, even when this means accepting lower salaries. In 2024–25, 72% of respondents would choose a job paying £1,000 less at a company with a strong sustainability record, compared to 28% who would opt for a higher-paying role at a company with poor practices. Similarly, when the salary difference is £3,000, 60% still favour the socially responsible employer. This trend persists across five years, indicating that ethical and sustainability considerations outweigh financial incentives for most graduates, though the gap narrows as salary differences increase.

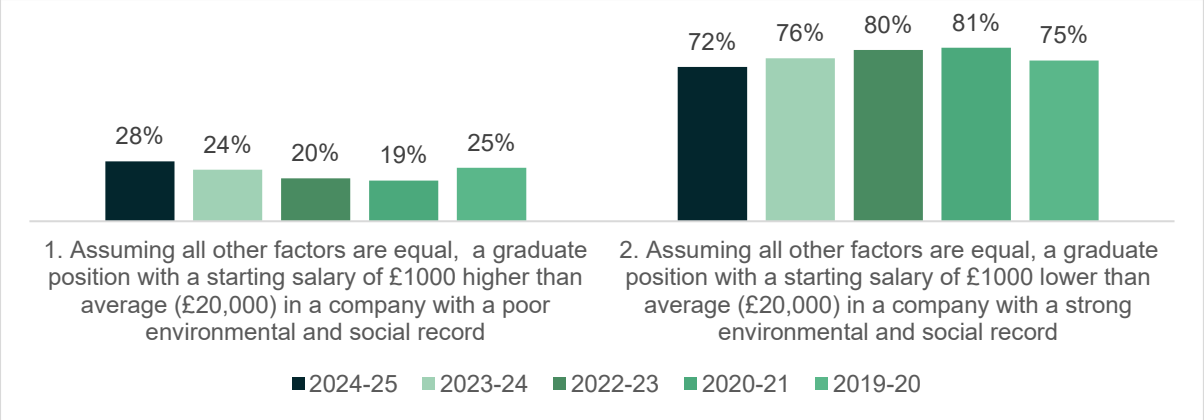

Figure 23 University of Salford respondents desire to work for employers with positive environmental and social credentials (£1000)

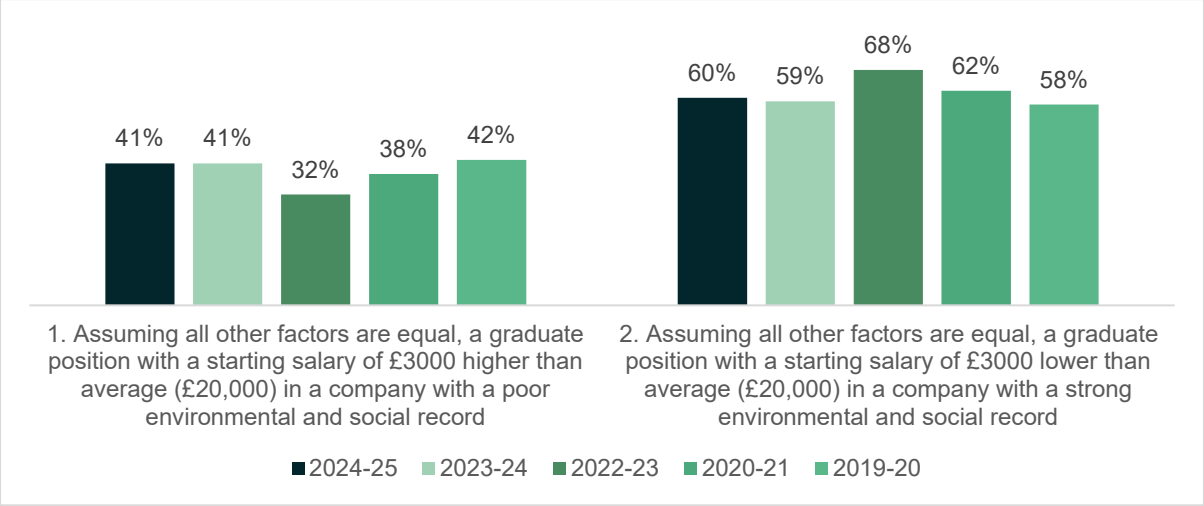

Figure 24 University of Salford respondents desire to work for employers with positive environmental and social credentials (£3000)

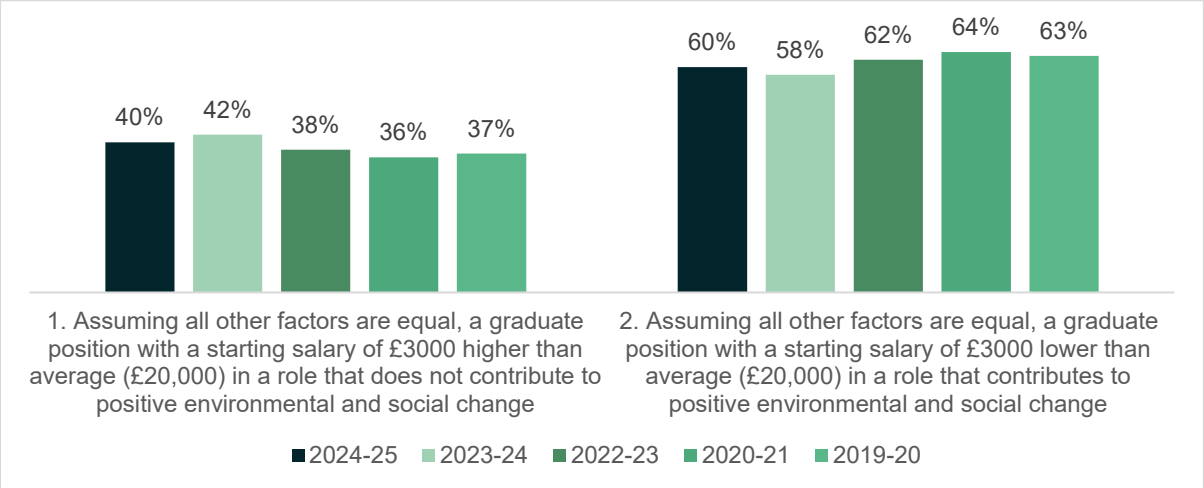

Figure 25 University of Salford respondents desire to work for employers who contribute to positive environmental and social change

Figure 13 illustrates the alignment, and lack of alignment, between respondent perceptions of sustainability factors in three key areas: their importance in the curriculum, their importance to employers, and the coverage these factors currently receive in the curriculum.

A consistent observation across most factors is that respondents recognise a high level of importance for employers, with the coral line representing this trend staying above 70% for nearly all categories. Interestingly, factors such as ‘understanding how human activity is affecting nature’ and ‘using resources efficiently to limit impact on the environment’ both top the chart in terms of perceived importance for employers and align closely with respondents' views on their importance within the curriculum. However, there is a significant divergence in where these are covered in the curriculum. This comparison highlights that while importance to respondents and their beliefs of importance to employers align closely, the gap between coverage needs to be reduced.

Demographics data for University of Salford respondents in 2024-25

Gender

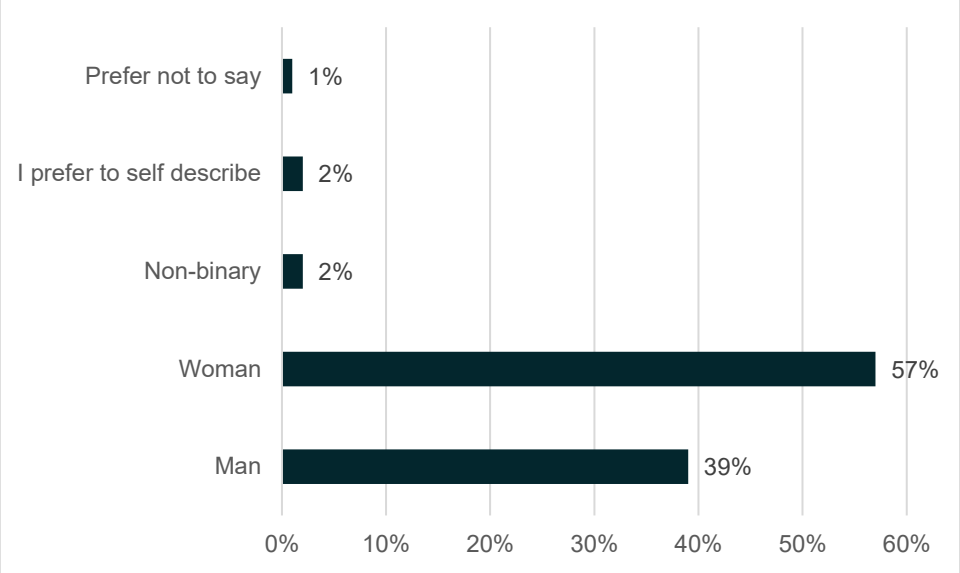

Figure 26 Gender of University of Salford respondents in 2024-25, %

Nationality

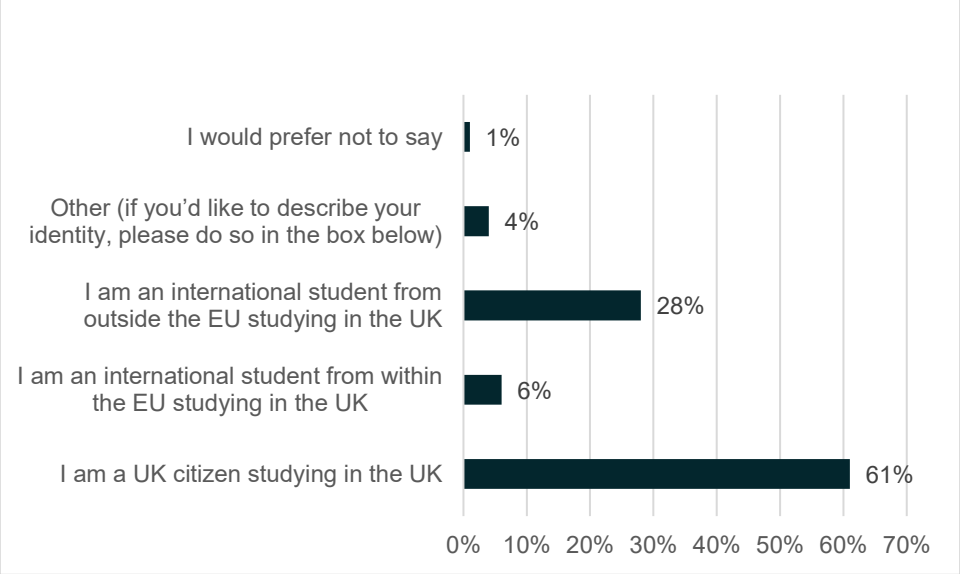

Figure 27 Nationality of University of Salford respondents in 2024-25, %

Ethnicity

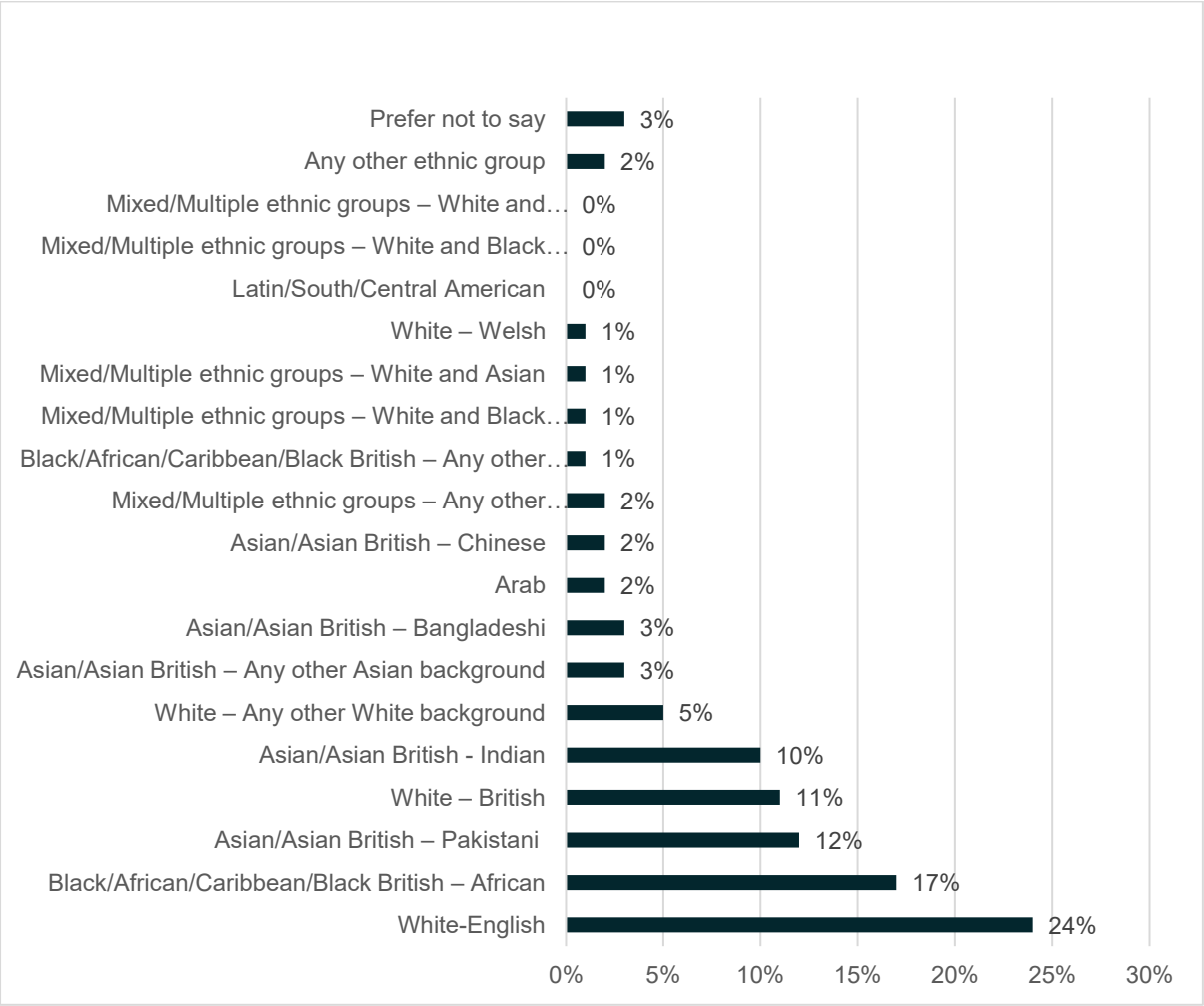

Figure 28 Ethnicity of University of Salford respondents in 2024-25, %

Disability

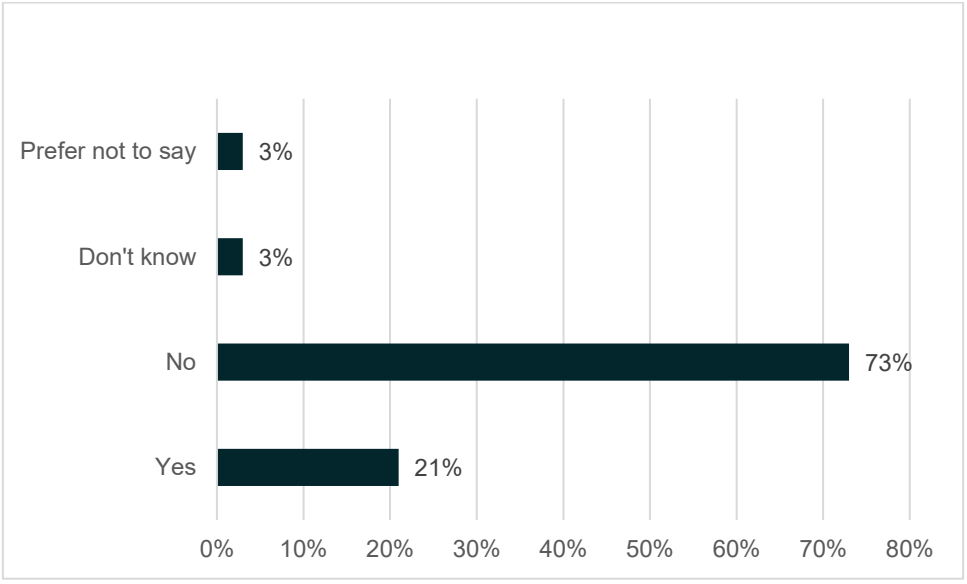

Figure 29 Disability of University of Salford respondents in 2024-25, %

Disability description

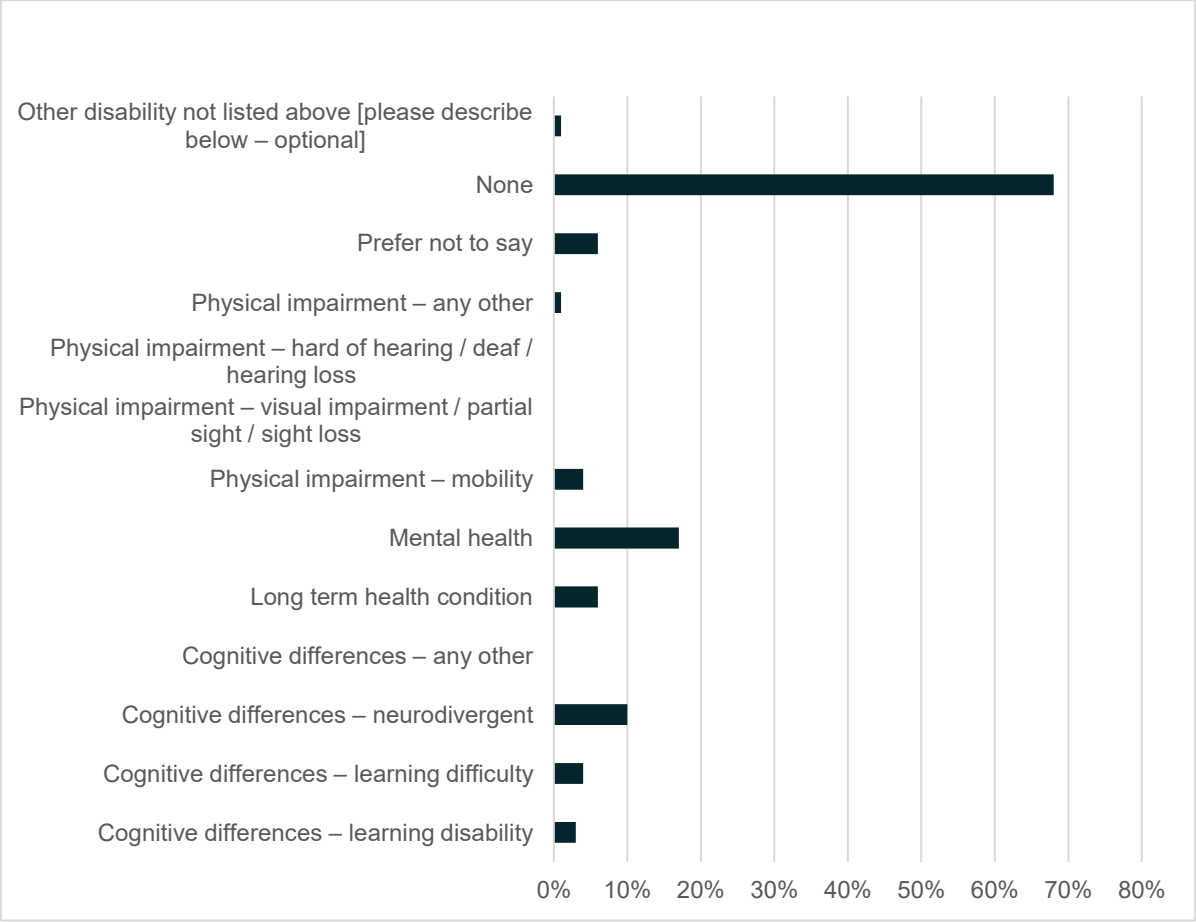

Figure 30 Disability description provided by University of Salford respondents in 2024-25, %

Further information on the University of Salford Sustainability Office and its initiatives, including education for sustainable development, can be found here: www.salford.ac.uk/environmental-sustainability

For any questions, please contact: sustainability@salford.ac.uk