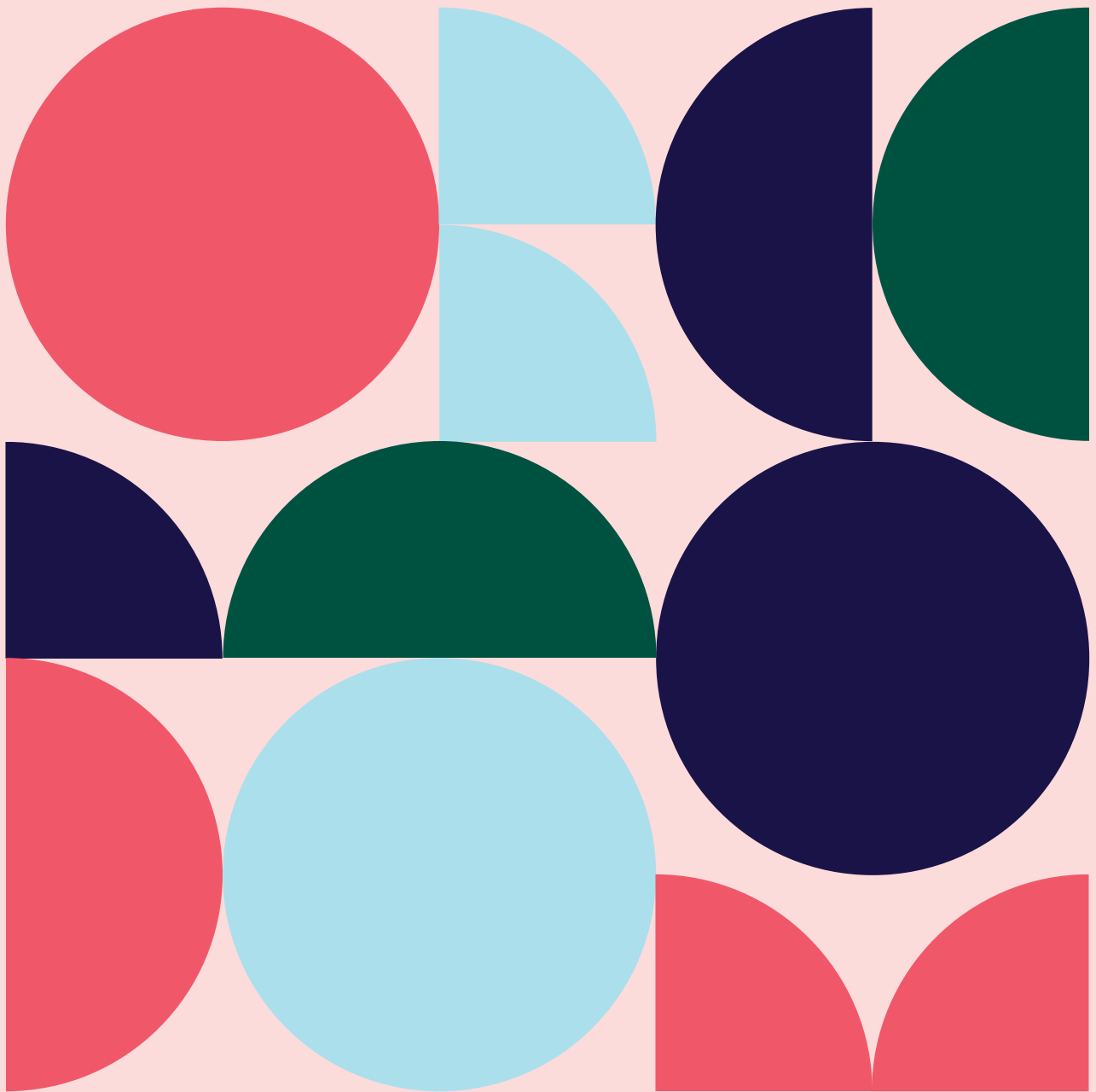




National Student Survey Results, 2026



Bristol SU

Prepared by Tasha Suresh
Senior Insight Researcher
July 2026

Executive Summary

The National Student Survey (NSS) gathers final year undergraduate students' opinions on the quality of their courses. Data collection at UoB took place from 27th January to 30th April 2026. Every university in the UK takes part in the NSS and the data gathered supports university endeavours to improve student experiences, including the services they provide.

This report provides a summary of key findings that are pertinent to Bristol University Students' Union.

Key Takeaways

- **Increased Positivity:** Student voice (Qs22-24) and perceptions about the Students' Union (Q25) have shown significantly increased positivity from 2025, although the benchmark scores have also increased.

When looking at Q25 specifically:

- **Faculty and School:** The rating for the SU is similar by faculty. Notably, when looking at schools, Education and Teaching reports the highest positivity (82%), while Engineering and Technology the lowest, with a significant difference (70%; 12% lower).
- **Demographic Differences:**
 - **Women** have a more favourable view of the SU compared to men (79%; 7% higher).
 - **Black students** report higher positivity regarding the SU compared to White and Asian students (80%; 4-5% higher). Mixed-race students reported the lowest positivity (70%).
 - For sexual orientation, students who selected "**Other Orientation**" have the lowest positivity (73%; 4% lower), falling from their spot of highest score in 2025.
 - **International students** have a more favourable perception of the SU than UK students (85%; 7% higher).
 - **Students with disabilities** report lower positivity regarding the SU (72%; 5% lower), creating a gap with non-disabled students which was absent in 2025.
- **Open Responses:** Overall, students appreciate the community atmosphere, facilities and events provided by the SU. However, some express concerns about inadequate representation and engagement.
- **Significance Testing:** Opportunities to give feedback (Q22) is the most closely linked Student Voice question to how positively students view the SU. This has implications for lower scoring schools.

Student Voice

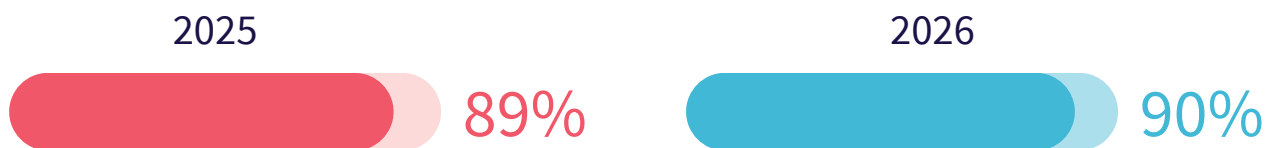
Student voice is measured through three questions (Qs 22-24) which ask about opportunities students have for feedback as well as the value and action on their opinions.

Responses are on a 4-point scale (e.g., “To a large extent” to “Not at all,” and “Very clear” to “Not at all clear”). We report the percentage of students who gave positive responses to these questions, known as their *positivity measure*.

All three questions were answered by all respondents (N = 4511), showing an increase in their positivity measures from 2025 to 2026, with Q22 increasing by 1%, Q23 increasing by 4%, and Q24 increasing by 5%. Q24 is the only rating which sits below the benchmark, at 2% lower. Overall, these results show that while students feel more capable of giving feedback, they are less certain that it is valued and even less sure that it is acted upon.

Q22. To what extent do you get the right opportunities to give feedback on your course?

Benchmark = 86%



Q23. To what extent are students' opinions about the course valued by staff?

Benchmark = 82%



Q24. How clear is it that students' feedback on the course is acted on?

Benchmark = 72%



Students' Union

Q25 asks about the Students' Union specifically:

Q25. How well does the students' union (association or guild) represent students' academic interests? *Benchmark = 79%*

Responses are again on a 4-point scale, this time from “Very well” to “Not at all well,” and positivity is measured in the same way as Qs22-24.

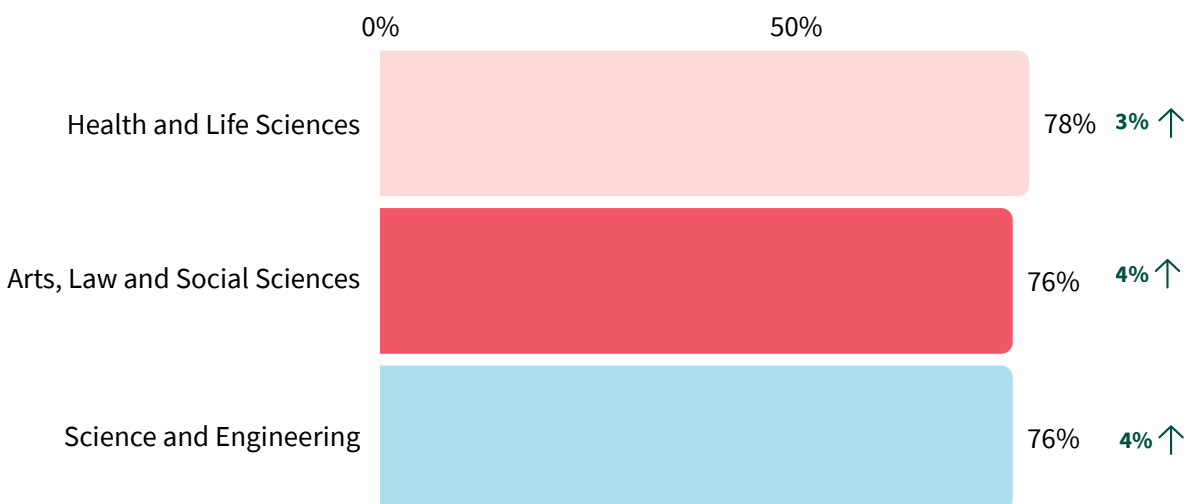
Just like the questions within Student Voice, the positivity measure for Q25 has gone up from 2025 (N = 3914) to 2026 (N = 4511), with a 2% increase. This question was answered by all respondents in 2026.



Since Q25 is most pertinent to the Students' Union, we look at results by important aspects such as faculty, school, and demographics. We also compare Bristol University Students' Union to the 24 other Russell Group Student's Unions.

Faculty

All three faculties view the SU with similar positivity, with Health and Life Sciences (N = 1038) at 78%, 2% higher than Arts, Law and Social Sciences (N = 2725) and Science and Engineering (N = 1204).



*Red and Green arrows represent change in scores compared to 2025

*Analyses were conducted for those who responded “this does not apply to me” but no trends were found to explain the discrepancy

School

When viewing the positivity measure by school (CAH Level 1), most schools hover between the average at 76-78%. The highest positivity rating came from the Education and Teaching school at 84%, while the lowest came from the Engineering and Technology school at 67%, marking a significant 17% difference.*

School (from highest to lowest positivity)	Positivity %	School cont. (from highest to lowest positivity)	Positivity %
Education and teaching	82 2% ↓	Subjects allied to medicine	77 0%
Biological and sport sciences	82 2% ↑	Social sciences	77 8% ↑
Combined and general studies	81 2% ↓	Law	75 2% ↓
Business and management	80 2% ↑	Language and area studies	75 3% ↑
Computing	80 3% ↑	Design, and creating and performing arts	74 6% ↓
Veterinary sciences	80 4% ↑	Psychology	72 5% ↓
Mathematical sciences	79 8% ↑	Physical sciences	72 1% ↑
Medicine and dentistry	78 2% ↑	Historical, philosophical, religious studies	70 2% ↑
Geography, earth, environmental studies	77 1% ↓	Engineering and technology	70 3% ↑

Demographics

Student demographics were analysed to determine if certain groups perceive the Students' Union (Q25) differently. Major differences among groups are highlighted:

*Gender differences do not account for the score variations across schools

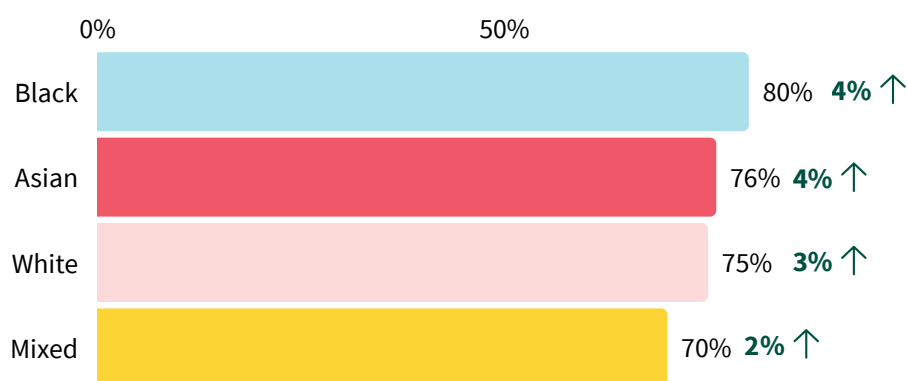
Sex

Women (N = 2632) report significantly higher positivity regarding the SU, with a rate of 77%, compared to men (N = 1879), who show an 7% lower rate of positivity at 69%, narrowing the gap by 1% compared to 2025.



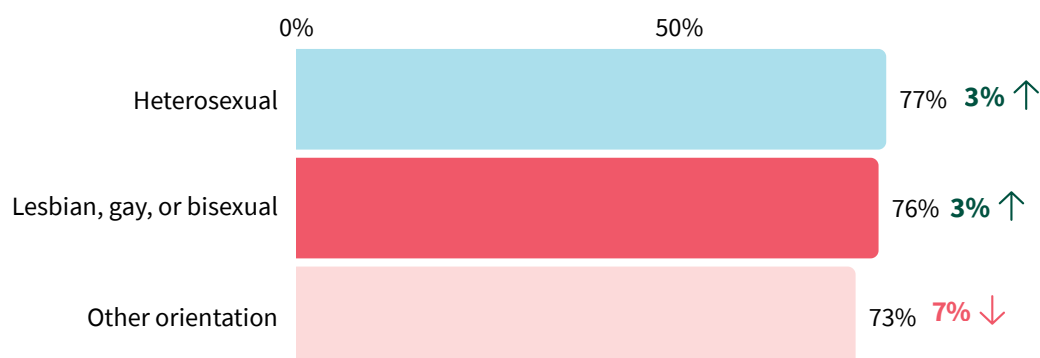
Ethnicity

Ethnicity is reported for UK domicile students only. Black students (N = 99) report the highest positivity regarding the SU, with a rate of 80%, compared to Mixed students (N = 292), who have a positivity rate of 70%, 10% lower. Asian students (N = 302) and White students (N = 2681) continue to fall in the middle with a positivity rate of 76% and 75% respectively. Overall, the positivity rating has increased from 2025 across all groups, with groups maintaining their rank.



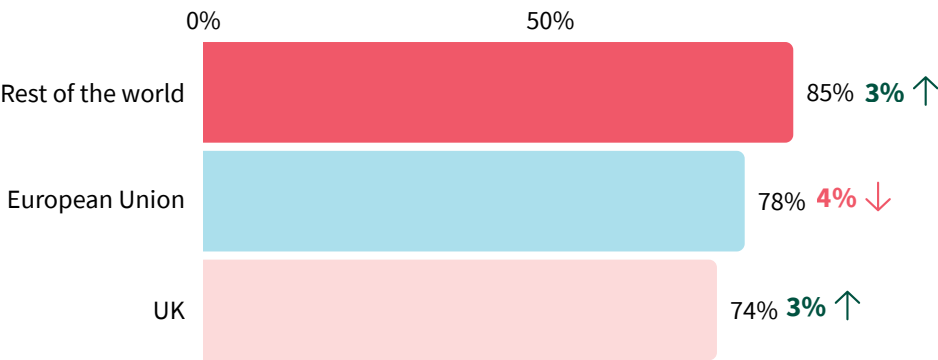
Sexual Orientation

Other orientations (N = 100) report the lowest positivity rate at 73%, 7% lower than 2025. Heterosexual students (N = 2936) has increased from 2025 to 77%, reporting the highest positivity rating in 2026, followed by lesbian, gay, or bisexual students (N = 717), at 76%.



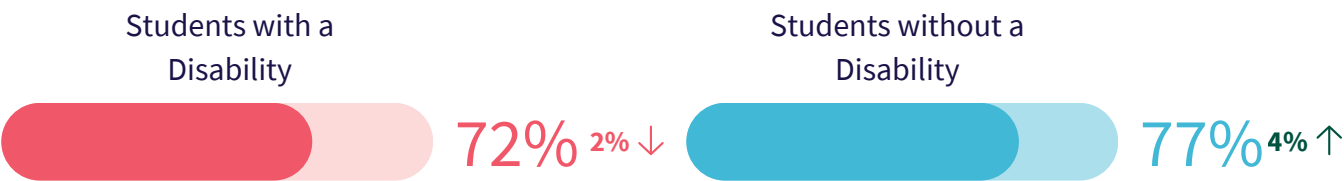
International Students

International domicile students (N = 883) continue to report the highest positivity rating, at 85%. EU students (N = 94) report an average positivity rating of 78%, decreasing by 4%, whilst UK students (N = 3534) report 74%, increasing by 3%. The significant 11% gap between International domicile and UK students continues from 2025.

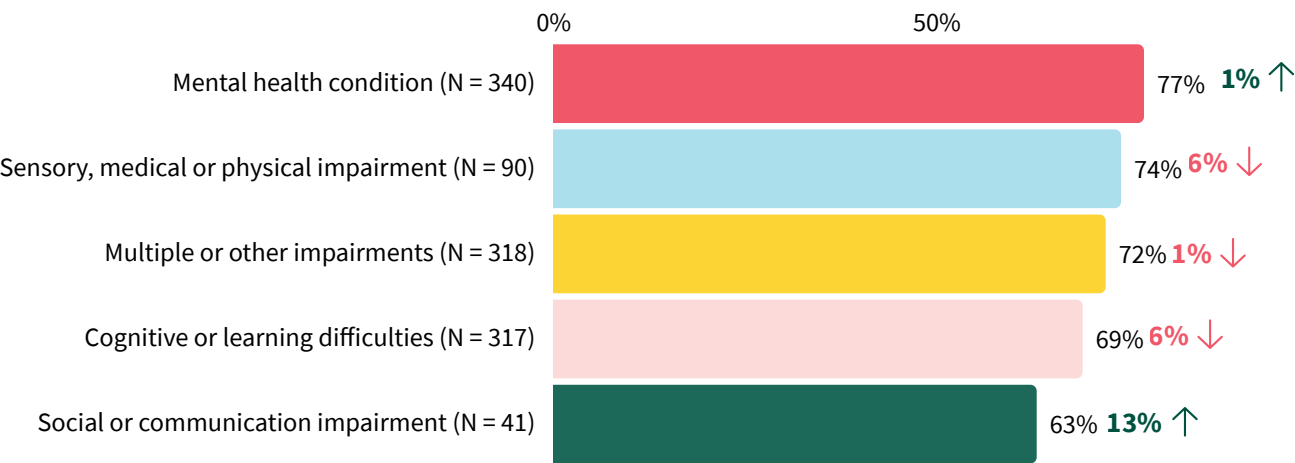


Students with a Disability

Students with a disability (N = 1106) have a positivity measure of 72%, decreasing by 2% since 2025, whilst students without a disability (N = 3405) report 77%, increasing by 4%, and creating a 5% gap between groups which was absent in 2025.

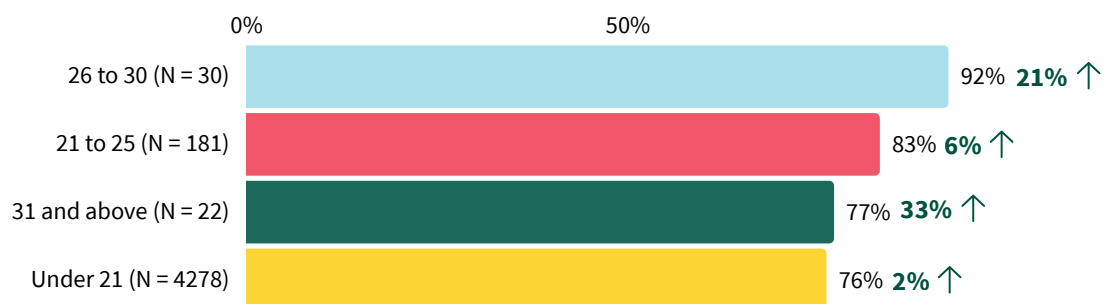


Further examination of disability types revealed that individuals with mental health conditions, sensory, medical or physical impairments, and multiple or other impairments tend to express higher positivity with the SU on average, in a 72-77% range. In contrast, those with social or cognitive impairments, report significantly lower ratings. Notably, those with sensory, medical or physical impairments, and those with cognitive or learning difficulties, have decreased positivity ratings by 6% since 2025, whilst those with social or communication impairments have increased by 13%.



Age

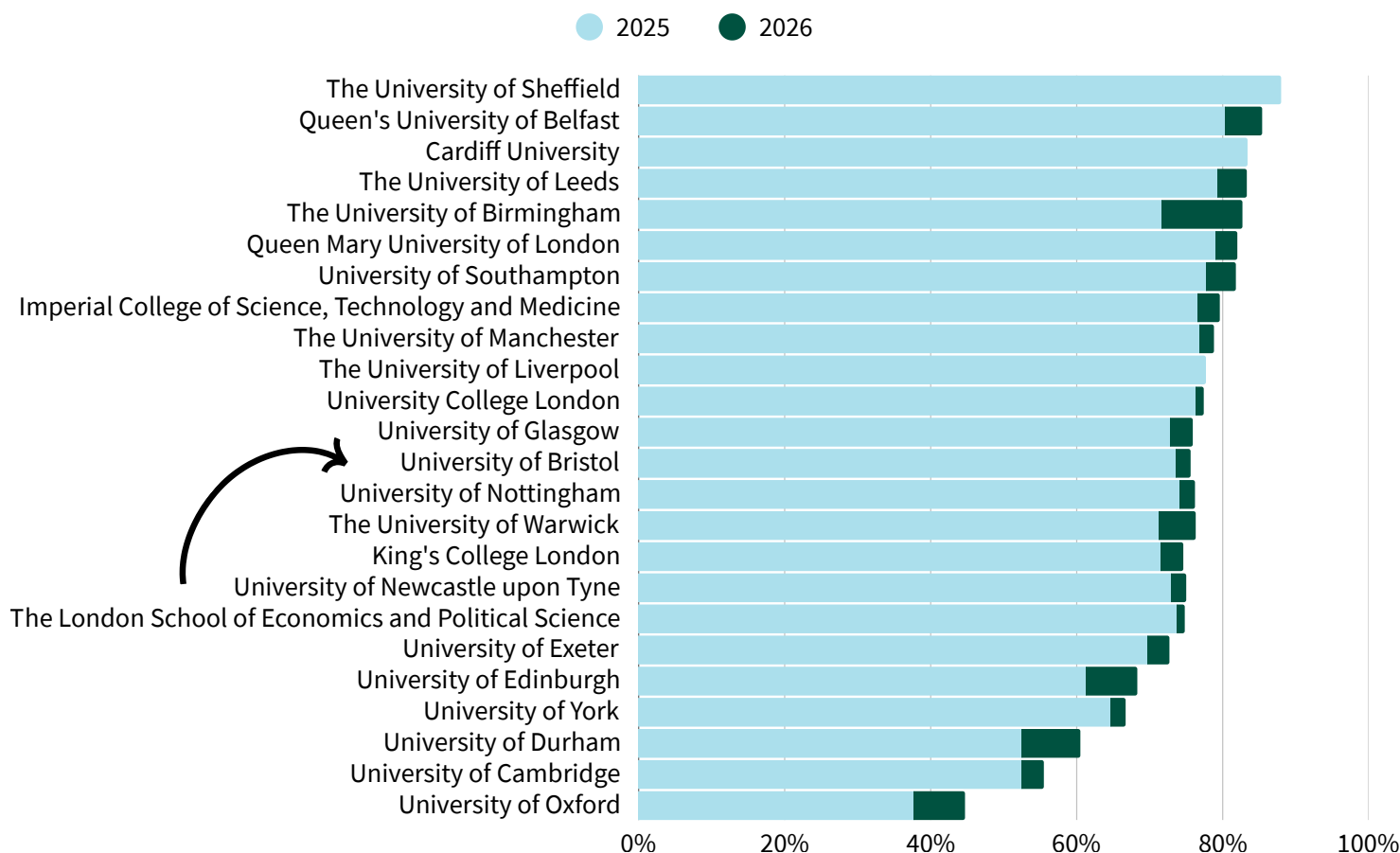
All age groups have increased positivity ratings in 2026. Students aged 26 to 30 report the highest positivity rating, at 92%, a significant 21% increase from 2025, whilst students under 21 report the lowest rating of 76%, a 2% increase from 2025. In 2025, positivity generally decreased with age, whereas there is no apparent age trend in 2026. The significant percentage increases for those aged 26 to 30, and 31 and above, may be due to small sample sizes.



Russell Group Student's Unions

On average, Russell Group Student's Unions experienced a 4% increase in their positivity measure for Q25. Bristol SU experienced a 2% increase in positivity, keeping its rank of 13 out of the 24 universities. This year, the average positivity score across these universities is 75%, with Bristol University surpassing this at 76%.

Q25 Positivity Measure Compared by Russell Group Student's Unions



Q25 Positivity Measure Compared by Russell Group Student's Unions

University (ranked by 2026 results)	2025	2026	% Diff (2024 - 2025)	Benchmark	Rank change
1. The University of Sheffield	88%	88%	0%	76%	0
2. Queen's University of Belfast	80%	85%	5%	77%	+1
3. Cardiff University	83%	83%	0%	77%	-1
4. The University of Leeds	79%	83%	4%	77%	0
5. The University of Birmingham	72%	83%	11%	78%	+12
6. Queen Mary University of London	79%	82%	3%	78%	-1
7. University of Southampton	78%	82%	4%	77%	0
8. Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine	77%	81%	4%	76%	+1
9. The University of Manchester	77%	79%	2%	77%	-1
10. The University of Liverpool	78%	78%	0%	78%	-4
11. University College London	76%	77%	1%	77%	-1
12. University of Glasgow	73%	76%	3%	77%	+2
13. University of Bristol	74%	76%	2%	76%	0
14. University of Nottingham	74%	76%	2%	76%	-3
15. The University of Warwick	71%	76%	5%	76%	+3
16. King's College London	72%	75%	3%	78%	0
17. University of Newcastle upon Tyne	73%	75%	2%	77%	-2
18. The London School of Economics and Political Science	74%	75%	1%	77%	-6
19. University of Exeter	70%	73%	3%	77%	0
20. University of Edinburgh	61%	68%	7%	76%	+1
21. University of York	65%	67%	2%	76%	-1
22. University of Durham	53%	61%	8%	76%	+1
23. University of Cambridge	53%	56%	3%	76%	-1
24. University of Oxford	38%	45%	7%	73%	0

Open-Responses

Students were given the opportunity to leave comments, including positive feedback, negative feedback, and their thoughts on the best aspects of Bristol University as well as areas needing the most improvement. Each student could respond to one, none, or all of these categories. A total of 2118 provided positive feedback, 2143 students left negative comments, and 1596 commented on the best aspects and areas for improvement.

Positive Responses

Of the positive responses given, 55 students left positive feedback about the SU and its services. Key topics included:

- Welcoming and accessible **student societies** (N = 27)
- Good variety of **events** and extracurricular activities, including **sport** (N = 23)
- Strong sense of **community and belonging**, with welcoming spaces and staff (N = 26)
- Effectively **advertised** events and opportunities (N = 6)
- **Trust** in the SU itself, with students describing it as supportive and well-run (N = 11)



“

An excellent university with a strong support structure around teaching, mental wellbeing, and extracurricular activity. The environment encourages students to explore different opportunities, with many societies and activities available to stay engaged outside of academics.

”

“

Intramural sports offerings from the SU are pretty amazing. I play 11 a side football and the scale of the operation is massive, but pretty well managed. It has been a really fun and important part of my university experience.

”

Negative Responses

A total of 30 students left negative feedback about the SU and its services. Key topics included:

- The SU **not listening** to or representing student voice in decision-making (N = 10)
- **Bureaucracy, fees and funding barriers** making it hard to run or join societies (N = 8)
- Perceptions of **mismanagement** of the SU (N = 7)
- Concerns about **representation**, where the SU focuses on niche issues vs. the wider student body (N = 7)
- Removal of **associate memberships** and its impact on societies (N = 4)



“

Some of the student-facing representative roles at the university don't fully reflect the range of perspectives across the wider student population. Many of the discussions and priorities can feel quite concentrated around specific social issues, which means other viewpoints or experiences can sometimes be underrepresented.

”

“

SU could improve student engagement.

”

Significance Testing

Statistical tests were conducted to determine any associations between students' scoring of the 'Student Voice' questions (Q22-Q24) and Q25 (the SU question).

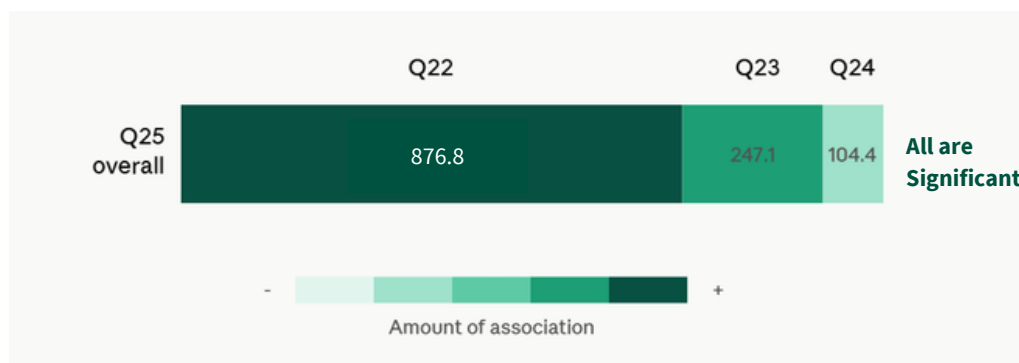
Q22: "To what extent do you get the right opportunities to give feedback on your course?"

Q23: "To what extent are students' opinions about the course valued by staff?"

Q24: "How clear is it that students' feedback on the course is acted on?"

Q25: "How well does the students' union (association or guild) represent students' academic interests?"

Pearson's Chi-square results for Q25



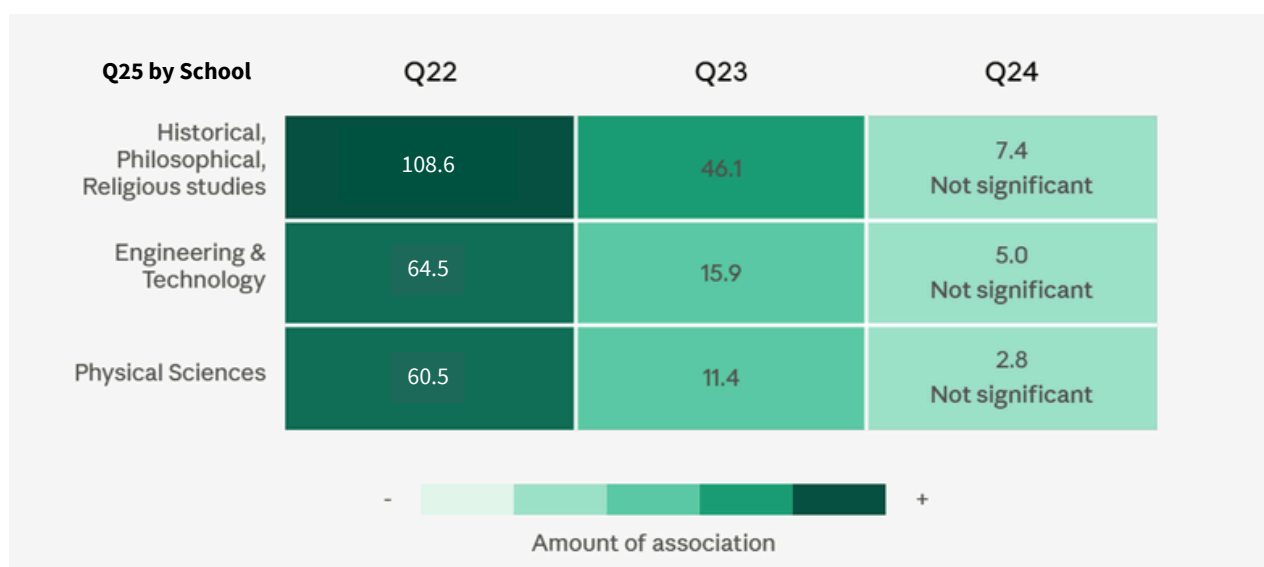
Each 'Student Voice' question has a statistically significant association of scores with Q25. Therefore, **students who felt they had good opportunities to give feedback, and believed their opinions were valued and acted on, were also more likely to rate the SU positively, mirroring last year's trends.**

Particularly, Q22 had the highest association, meaning **feeling heard (or at least having the chance to be heard) strongly shapes how students feel about the SU.**

In 2026, the **relationships between these variables has become notably stronger**, 2-3 times larger than in 2025.

Schools with low Q25 positivity scores

The same statistical tests were conducted while isolating student responses from the 'Engineering and Technology', 'Historical, Philosophical and Religious studies', and the 'Physical Sciences' schools separately (schools with the lowest positivity scores for Q25, respectively).



Across all three of the lowest-scoring schools, **Q22 showed the strongest link** with how students rated the SU, consistent with the overall university-wide trend. Additionally, Q23 showed a moderate, significant link in every school. However, unlike last year, **none of the three schools showed a significant link between Q24 and Q25 in 2026**. This is a shift from last year, when Social Sciences was in the bottom three schools for Q25, and showed significant connections across all three 'Student Voice' questions.

This could mean students from lower scoring schools...

- **May feel the SU is present but not effective:** Students are aware of feedback opportunities, but may not associate leaving feedback as influencing the SU's efforts, or don't believe the SU is making a difference.
- **Don't see results from feedback:** The absence of a link with Q24 in 2026 suggests students in these Schools don't associate the SU's work with visible outcomes.
- **Are not being reached:** Even if the SU is doing the work, communication or visibility may be falling short.