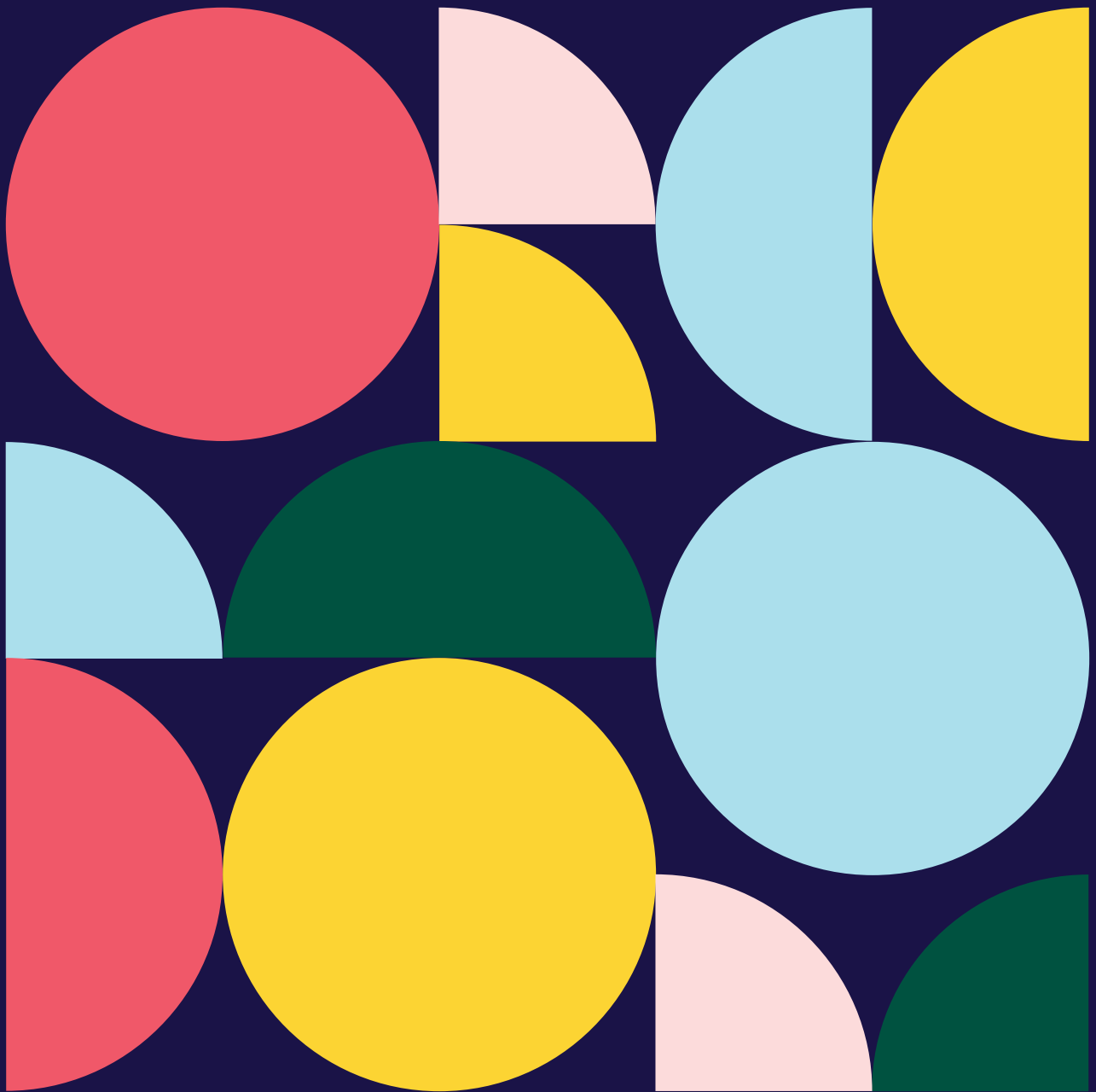




Student Work-Life Survey



Bristol SU

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Introduction

During their election campaigns, Mia Stevens and Gurvin Chopra (Undergraduate and Postgraduate Education Officers at Bristol Students' Union) spoke with many **students struggling to balance academic responsibilities with part-time work**. As students working part-time themselves, they recognised that for many at the University of Bristol, **employment is not optional or just extra income**, but essential to afford living and studying in the city. A recent survey by Advance HE and HEPI observed a dramatic **12% increase in undergraduates working alongside their studies**: from 56% in 2024 to 68% in 2025.

To explore this issue further, **a survey of 139 working students examined:**

- Average weekly hours worked
- The impact of part-time work on wellbeing
- How employment affects academic performance and social life.

Key takeaways

- Many students are forced to work long hours to fund their education. Nearly **30% of students work more than 15 hours weekly, with 14% exceeding 20 hours**.
- Although 80% of students feel they manage to balance work, studies, and personal life:
 - **35%** have **skipped classes** due to work,
 - **34%** report a **negative impact on their wellbeing**,
 - **77%** say work affects their studies: costing them **time, energy, and, in some cases, academic progress**.

Next Steps

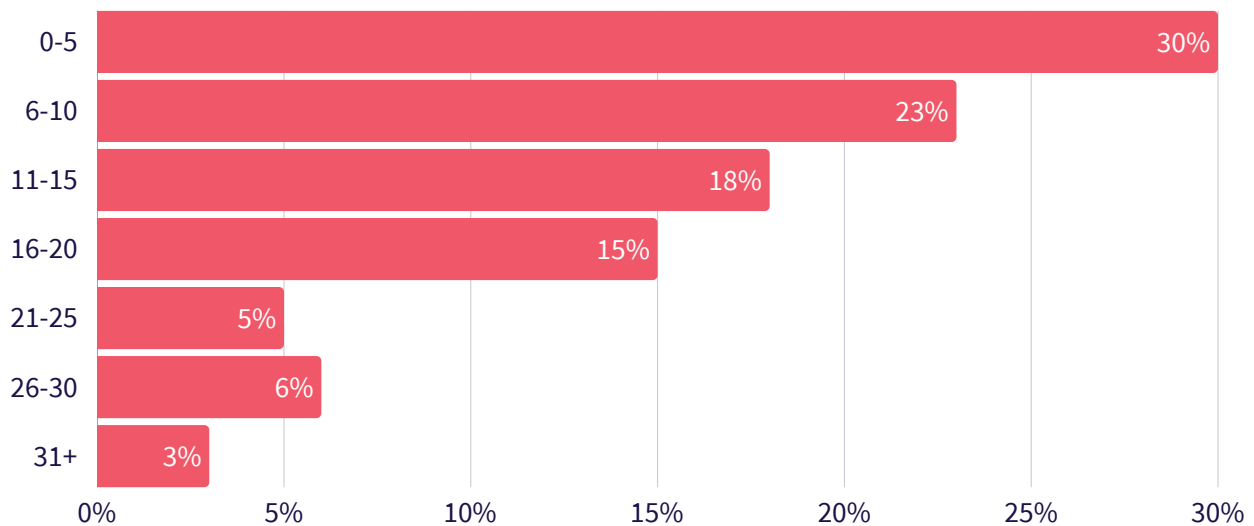
This initial survey highlights that **many students are working part-time**, often beyond recommended hours, **bringing a range of challenges for both students and the University**.

- While the small sample size limits demographic analysis, it signals **the need for broader research to capture a more representative picture** and explore variations across student groups.
- At this early stage, the Officers propose that a University-wide cultural shift may be needed: one that recognises **student employment as a norm** and **provides the necessary support to help students balance work and study** without compromising their wellbeing or academic experience.

Hours Worked

On average, how many hours do you work in a week?

N = 130



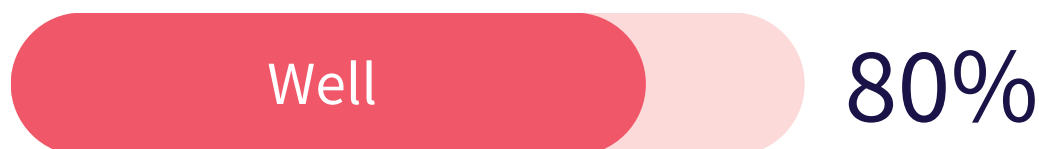
Universities recommend students limit part-time work to 15 hours per week for undergraduates and 20 hours for postgraduate students. In the survey, **53% of students said they work up to 10 hours per week** alongside their studies, while **29% work more than 15 hours, including 14% who exceed 20 hours.**

Work-Life Balance

How well do you balance your work, studies, and personal life?

Well = % Well + % Very well

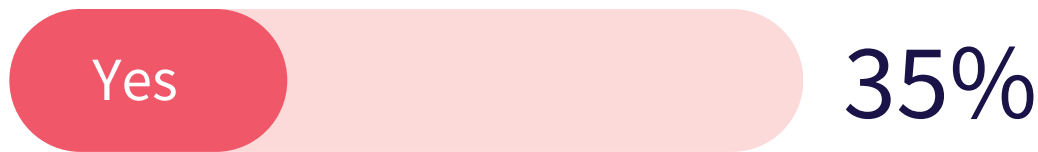
N = 137



Despite many working long hours alongside their academic commitments, **80% of students feel they manage to balance** their work, studies, and personal life well.

Have you ever had to miss classes or academic deadlines due to work commitments?

N = 138



Although 80% of students said they balance their work, studies, and personal life well, **35% admitted to skipping classes due to work commitments**. This suggests that part-time jobs do, in practice, interfere with academic attendance, regardless of students' efforts to maintain a balance.

Impacts on Wellbeing and Studies

How does working impact your well-being?

Positively = % Somewhat positively + % Very positively

N = 130

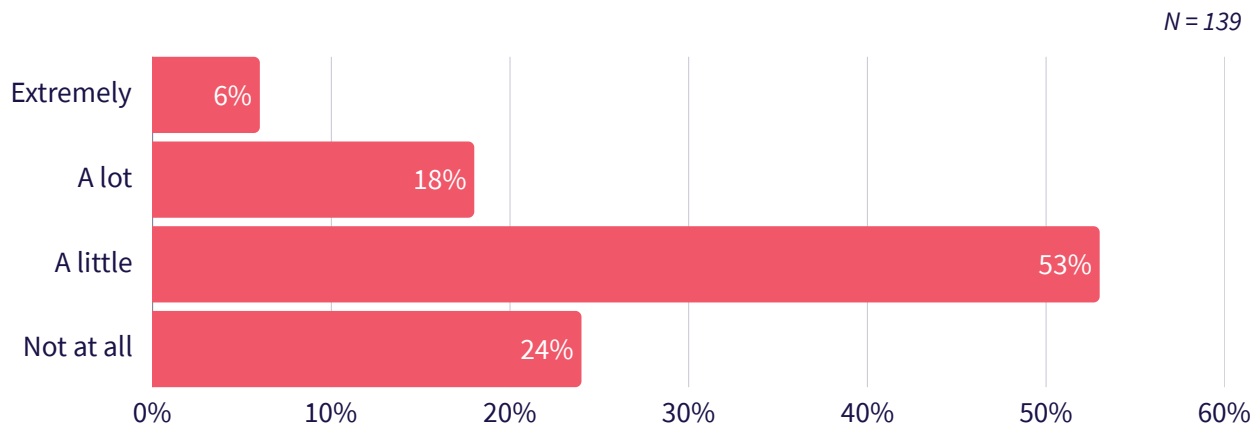


Two thirds of students said they feel part-time work positively impacts their wellbeing, due to the structure, financial stability, and skills it provides. Concerningly, **34% feel it negatively affects their wellbeing**, reporting that the physical and mental strain of balancing commitments was a key challenge.

“Splits your priorities. But also motivates and energises when there are no lectures to get you out and about.”

“Having days where I have to switch from work-brain to student-brain ... is hard on overall fatigue and burn-out and concentration; physical and mental exhaustion; timing - trying to fit in study time around classes and work and exercise and social time ... all time feels pre-allocated and takes the fun out of being a student.”

How much does working affect your studies?



In what ways does working affect your studies?

In the open text comments, students who work part time highlighted that they face **struggles which their non-working peers do not**, with some having to treat work as a top priority in order to stay afloat. For example, they reported having **less time for study and extra curricular activities such as participating in societies, socialising less and missing classes, negatively impacting their academic progress**. They felt these issues are exacerbated by the physical and mental fatigue of working, worsening mental health and increasing burnout, stress and tiredness.

N = 107

“I often feel overwhelmed because I have little time to do anything else other than work and study. My social life has suffered, which means my mental health has worsened. I’ve been more tired too, which has taken an impact on my studies.”

“As a self-funded international PGR, I have to work to cover living expenses. I am only allowed to work 20 hours a week, meaning I have to budget living as an adult on part time work. Work has to take priority until I hit those 20 hours so that I am not homeless and can eat. Part time school is not an option for international students, so work is much more a worry and focus than my actual research.”

“Leaving the library at 3pm when everyone’s still working is really annoying, it means waking up earlier and being more tired than others. I used to work around 26 hours a week and it felt impossible to do Uni work alongside it, I missed a lot of stuff.”

“On the weekends it is harder to study due to tiredness from my shifts, during exam period it was particularly hard as I felt I had to revise even after a particularly exhausting shift.”